

Birth of Costume in Indian Cinematic World Part 2

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Film making process can be divided into three stages namely: **Pre-production, Production and Post-production** (Bension, 2008). Pre-production is the planning phase, which includes casting, location selection, set/costume creation and overall scheduling. Production involves the actual making of the film i.e. all activities which are part of the shooting process. Post-production activities include editing, recording, advertising and marketing.

The creation process of costumes is being discussed in eleven steps, an introduction to which is available in part one. The first four steps are discussed in part one. The fifth, seventh and eighth steps are discussed in this article.

[\[Click here to read Part one\]](#)

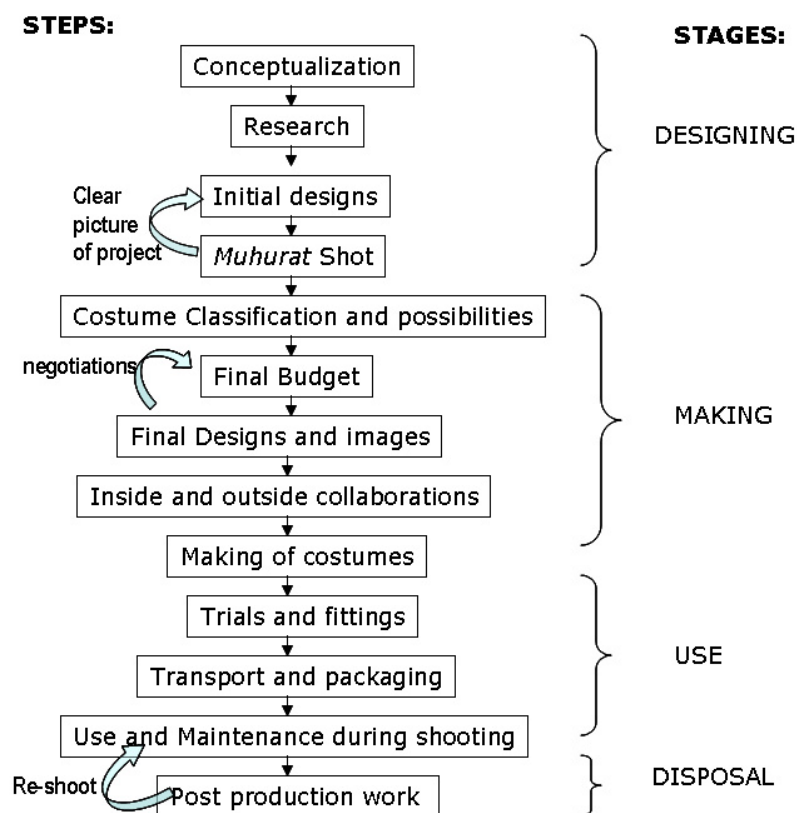


Figure 2: A flowchart of steps and stages of costuming process for Indian film industry

Costume classification and related possibilities

Scene division for costumes includes understanding the list of all characters and extras in each scene and **character division for costumes** requires knowing about individual character's changes through the film. The above give rise to the final **dress plot** for the film and **costume arc** for each character respectively. The practices

followed by different designers vary while doing routine analysis of script for noting down costume classification regarding number of scenes and characters in a movie. In cases of those film projects for which such wardrobe outline is prepared formally by costume design team, it automatically provided a quick check on general appearance of all characters with descriptions of scene numbers and locales. On the basis of this information the design team gets clear about the costume budget, number of costumes to be custom made, amount to be spent on the primary costumes and rented costumes, shopping of ready-mades, the gradual effects to be connoted through costumes, extent of authenticity or stylization to be introduced.

On the basis of the above information, costumes can be sorted into three categories:

- (i) To be rented
- (ii) To be bought
- (iii) To be made

The shopping for those which can be attained from outside is considered as the first step by most designers except for when shooting schedule demands a change. The costumes to be rented are mostly checked as a second step followed by making of the rest of the costumes on customised-basis.



Plate 2: Special Effects in-charge Arun Patil

Actions and adventurous scenes are a staple of film industry, and create a demand for prior planning of some costumes. These are for stunt doubles or actors involved in tasks which will dirty, disintegrate or ruin the costume which might be required later. Thus actions, stunts and other destructive parts of shooting demand the use of costume multiples. These copies were required to be made at the same or sometimes lesser levels of detailing. Different terms are used for them like **costume 'doubles', 'duplicates', 'copies' or 'multiples'**.

Another area for which the designer has to bring in special arrangements in the costumes to be prepared is the special effects (also referred to as SFX in industry parlance) to be given in the film. Special effects director Arun Patil (Plate 2), stated a list of special effects required for films. Regarding the role of costuming for these, the effects which require costuming inputs were differentiated from others during study (Table 2).

A few examples of costuming inputs for such actions are like 'bullet hit', which entails rigging the actor's body with a packet of red coloured solution depicted as blood when the packet ruptures and for a 'flame scene' (where actor has to be shown inside or close to flames), a fireproof or fire retardant dress needs to be worn beneath the costume.

Table 2: Special effects and requirement of costuming inputs

Kind of Special Effects generally provided by SFX department			
	Costuming inputs not required		Costuming inputs required
1.	Pyrotechnics like explosion	5.	Shooting effects like bullet, arrow hit
2.	Atmospheric effects like fog, rain	6.	Miniature effects
3.	Fireworks like 'Arial display'	7.	Rigging effects
4.	Remote control jobs	8.	Make-up effects like extra fat figures, corpse
		9.	Flame scene

Designers stated that in general there is requirement of a set of three costume multiples for simple stunt scene. One for the actor while not doing the stunt, one which is loose enough for introducing stunt tools like rigging and special padding, and one for the stuntman/woman. The SFX manager responded that many stars have regular stunt doubles with similar body stature. The casting manager, assistant directors or stuntmen/women agencies provide the significant measurements of stunt person. The kind of action and number of costume multiples required, directly affects the designer's final choice of material, serviceability to be incorporated and styling for the costume. It is tried that the costumes for stunt-scenes are restricted to items which are available in quantity in clothing stores. Easy to duplicate styles were selected like solid colour shirts, loose pants, and simple jeans. Garment styles, fabrics and colours were chosen which could easily incorporate mechanical tools and also spotlight the dramatic effects of stunt and action damage e.g., a bloodstain from bullet hit may not show up enough on a dark colour to make its narrative and emotional impact, hence a lighter colour fabric might be used to maximize the dramatic effect of the consequences of the action.

A **costume miniature** is another special requirement that film career puts on a dress-designer (traditionally used term in Indian film industry for a costume designer) or the art direction department which makes these small costumes. These are required to be put on the miniature models of characters prepared by the SFX department to create miniature scenes of conditions like an imaginary scene, a burning house or a drowning ship. A previous experience or practice at making miniature clothes for dolls or dressing up small dummies with historic costumes or fashion collections is of help for this task.

Final budget

At first level, the production decides about an approximate total amount to be diverted towards the project's costumes, as part of the initial budgeting of the entire production. According to producers this total figure has to include four major heads,

- (i) Purchase of material, supplies, equipment, costumes or the 'new costumes budget'
- (ii) Facilities like costume storage, costume making workroom, transport trailers etc.
- (iii) Payments of the personnel like fee for the designer, dressmen etc.
- (iv) Wardrobe-renting and maintenance related services

In Indian film industry for most cases the costume designer is given a charge for only a particular set of costumes, like 'the costumes of all the lead characters' or 'the costumes of certain dance sequences'. Different designers are asked to do different set of costumes for a film depending on their individual specialty, expertise, their link with one star actor or availability of resources with them. Veteran designer Bhanu Athaiya during her interview pointed this out to be one of the most serious drawbacks for authenticity and harmony to be maintained in the costumes of a production.

The costumes of '**song and dance sequences**' are given special significance and extra budget leverage by the film makers in India. Budget negotiations are a common scenario for the film industry except for cases where producer has specific interest in the look of characters (Figure 2). The overall decision making is in the hands of the production manager and the main producer. Most of the smaller details regarding financial decisions for costumes throughout making of the film are discussed with the unit production manager. The working style of the members has always been informal and flexible rather than corporate and professional, with having its own advantages as stated by respondents.

Final costume images

At this stage, it is expected of the designer to do insightful use of the formal elements of design to illuminate the characters and crystallize the narrative while presenting final costume designs.

A. Design related aspects

The understanding of elements (line, colour, shape and texture) and principles (balance, rhythm, contrast and harmony) of design is a basic requirement for this step of the process (Table 3). As expressed by eminent designer and script writer Shama Zaidi, members dealing with creative areas in film making need to have their design sensibilities specially developed along with the capacities to translate them for the medium. The ability to use these concepts under practical situations is the main challenge and a prerequisite for success in this trade according to assistant designer Mansi Shukla. Many examples were quoted by directors when they specifically asked for a design aspect or central colour in costumes. The designer has to then find combinations meaningfully and tastefully to augment the vision of the director. According to national award winning costume designer Leena Daru, colour also acts as a tool to solve many of the figure problems if the designer is trained to direct attention to the appropriate facets of an actor's figure on the screen and disguise the flaws.

Table 3: Relevance of elements and principles of design for film costuming

No.	Element/Principle	Relevance to film-costuming
1	Colour	Rectifying figure-flaws Evoking feel/mood of character, scene, theme
2	Line	Mutual arrangements between characters Flatter or disguise particular aspects

3	Shape	Introduce signifiers for a period Body shaping devices frequently used Augment comic potential Manipulate emotional appearance
4	Texture	Enlargement on screen is manifold Create mood, Introduce roughness or sleekness in character
5	Contrast/Harmony	Establish enmity or coordination between characters Depict positive/negative, lead/sub-ordinate characters
6	Visual balance	Introduce element of stability or disturbance Signify characters in alliance or conflict

For comedy or melodramatic movies, shape and design of the costumes have a specific contribution to augment the comic or emotional potential of the look of the characters. In many initial movies of veteran actor Raj Kapoor, he deliberately adorned a shabby appearance through costume items. Selecting the texture of the materials to be used for costume making for the films is incomparably important. More than in any other medium, cinematic costumes have to be made with maximum consideration for the texture of the material used. The 75mm screen enlarges and zooms in on the minutest details of the surface of costumes and even small shortcoming might get transformed into a blunder there. In all, the visual messages of the costumes need to be matched with that of the story.

B. Final illustrations and rendering

The final costume illustrations are important not just for the presentations or conferencing but also during the process of costume making in the workshop. The realist and detailed drawing styles are more suited for this craft. Sketches should show front and back views with proportions, design and pattern details. They help in exchange of notes with the pattern master and tailor, record keeping and further checking between the main designer and the design assistants (Plate 3). It is best to come up with a distinct '**character arc**' of costumes for each character in the movie. This arc shows in a linear way the major costume changes for a character over a period of time described in the story, showing at a glance the effect of the course of events in a series of looks of the

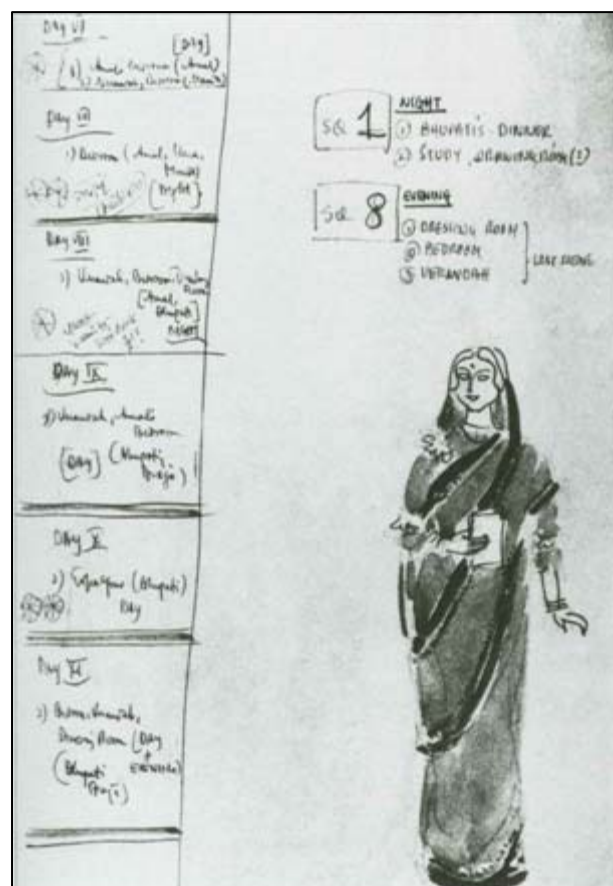


Plate 3. A costume illustration with noting by Satyajit Ray, from his 'Khero Khata' or design note book. Source: NFAI

character. Ideally the character arcs of the main actors must also be put against each other and analyzed as to how they will appear with each other in the frames and the impact they make on each other's looks.

In reality there were only few projects in Indian film industry where this level of pre-planning is achieved, because most of the times the complete or practically full character arc of none of the lead actors is decided at the beginning of the film due to changes in the script throughout the process of film making. Although off late such projects which follow planned working patterns have increased.

Thus at the end of above discussed three steps, we enter the costume making area i.e., workshops where the above designs are realised into actual dresses that we see on screen. Part – III of this article series will contain information on overview about the making of the costumes along with ways of collaborating with peripheral services to get them made or rented for film projects. At the end a concise description about packaging and transport of these costumes will be done.

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