

From Odisha to New York: The Inspiring Story of Bibhu Mohapatra

Published on 31 Dec 2025 | By IFI Correspondent



Bibhu Mohapatra's story is one of courage, resilience and relentless creativity. Born on June 7, 1972, in **Rourkela, Odisha, India**, Mohapatra's earliest lessons in fashion came from his mother, who taught him to sew and instilled in him a deep appreciation for textiles and craftsmanship. These early experiences sowed the seeds for a remarkable design career that would span continents.

In 1996, Mohapatra moved to the United States to pursue higher education. His first stop was **Utah State University**, where he earned a master's degree and juggled academic ambitions with hands-on jobs — from cleaning dorms to vacuuming floors — all while sketching and honing his creative instincts. It was here he began to see fashion not as a hobby, but as his life's calling.

Finding His Path in Fashion

After Utah, Mohapatra moved to **New York City** and enrolled at the prestigious **Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT)**. While still a student, his talent was recognized with the FIT Critics' Award for Best Evening Wear Designer — an early accolade that hinted at greater things to come. After graduating, he gained valuable experience working with iconic American brand **Halston** and later spent nine years as design director for **J. Mendel**, where he developed expertise in luxury design and team leadership.

Launching a Name in Fashion

In **2008**, at the height of a global financial downturn, Mohapatra launched his eponymous label. The venture was far from smooth: one large order for three \$50,000 coats helped keep the fledgling brand afloat in its first year, and a **2017 restructuring through bankruptcy** allowed him to reset and future-proof his business.

Despite setbacks, Mohapatra's artistry and refined aesthetic began drawing attention from global fashion circles. His garments — known for luxurious fabrics, sublime tailoring and subtle references to his Indian heritage — would go on to dress influential clients and celebrities worldwide.

Dressing Icons & Breaking Barriers

In 2010, Mohapatra was inducted into the **Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA)**, a recognition of his growing influence in the design world. His creations have graced the likes of **Michelle Obama**, Lupita Nyong'o, Jennifer Lopez and Viola Davis, making him a respected name on red carpets and in elite fashion circles.

Beyond the runway, Mohapatra's creative reach extends into costume design, including work for the Washington National Opera — a testament to his versatility in translating narrative and culture into garments.

Heritage & Craftsmanship at the Core

Throughout his career, Mohapatra has maintained a deep connection with his roots. His designs often incorporate textiles and techniques inspired by **Odisha's hand-woven silks and ikat** fabrics, and he actively advocates for the preservation and global recognition of traditional Indian craftsmanship.

He also supports emerging talent through initiatives like *The India Society*, helping students pursue education and careers in fashion and the arts — blending mentorship with philanthropy.

Beyond Fashion: Personal Strength & Resilience

Mohapatra's journey is about more than fashion. Along the way, he has navigated personal and professional challenges, emerging with a stronger sense of purpose. He openly embraces his identity and credits family and loved ones with providing the support that empowered him to be his authentic self — a critical foundation for his creativity and leadership.

A Legacy of Style and Substance

Today, Bibhu Mohapatra stands as a global ambassador of luxury design rooted in cultural heritage. From humble beginnings in Odisha to the runways of **New York Fashion Week**, his path exemplifies how passion, perseverance and deep respect for tradition can create a lasting legacy — not just in fashion, but in the creative world at large.

For more style updates & exclusive fashion stories follow indiafashionicon.com

DISCLAIMER: THE VIEWS/CONTENTS EXPRESSED/PRESENTED HEREIN, WITHIN THIS ADVERTORIAL AND PROMOTIONAL FEATURE ARE THE SOLE AND EXCLUSIVE RESPONSIBILITY OF INDIVIDUAL CLIENTS/EXPERT/THEIR AUTHORISED REPRESENTATIVE/PUBLISHER, TO WHICH EFFECT, PUBLICATION HOUSE/ITS REPRESENTATIVES/AFFILIATES ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE/LIABLE WHATSOEVER.