

End of an Era: Bandhgala Uniform Discontinued for Railway Staff

Published on 14 Jan 2026 | By IFI Correspondent



Indian Railways has officially discontinued the use of the *bandhgala* — a distinctive high-neck coat that has long been part of senior staff uniforms — in what the government calls a broader effort to remove lingering colonial influences from official dress codes. The decision was announced by Union Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, who described the garment as a remnant of British-era conventions.

From Royal Courts to Railway Platforms: The Bandhgala Story

Contrary to being purely colonial, the bandhgala has deep roots in Indian sartorial history. Often referred to colloquially as the “prince suit” or “prince cut,” the bandhgala *originated in the princely state of Jodhpur in Rajasthan* and evolved over centuries before appearing in formal and ceremonial wardrobes across the subcontinent.

Fashion historians note that the garment represents a fusion of indigenous Indian court attire — such as the Mughal-era *jama* and *angrakha* — with later adaptations influenced by British tailoring styles in the 19th century. This blend helped shape what came to be known internationally as the Jodhpuri jacket, a formal coat with a stand-up collar and snug silhouette.

Government Position: A Symbol Worth Retiring

The current government’s move is part of a wider cultural push to eliminate symbols it perceives as tied to colonial rule. Officials argue that removing these elements from everyday public service — including dress codes — is necessary to promote a more *Indian-centric identity in institutions*.

Railways Minister Vaishnaw has emphasized the need to identify and remove all such remnants, saying the exercise is not limited to uniforms but part of reshaping official culture in a post-colonial context.

Contested Legacy: Heritage or Colonial Vestige?

While the government labels the bandhgala a colonial relic, fashion experts and cultural commentators point out the irony that the garment itself grew from Indian traditions long before its adoption in formal colonial-era uniforms. In fact, the bandhgala has become a *distinctly Indian fashion staple* over the decades, worn widely at weddings, state functions, and cultural events.

Critics of the decision see the move as oversimplifying the garment’s layered heritage, arguing that its true origins reflect indigenous court culture rather than mere colonial borrowing. Supporters, however, endorse the larger goal of de-colonizing institutional symbols and promoting indigenous identity.

What’s Next for Railway Uniforms?

Details about replacement uniforms for railway officers are yet to be formally announced. Officials say new attire will likely draw inspiration from *Indian design sensibilities* and be better suited to modern administrative and climatic needs, but the exact form and rollout plan remain under discussion.

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