

Shefalee Vasudev's Stories We Wear: India's Hidden Fashion Narratives

Published on 17 Jan 2026 | By IFI Correspondent



At a moment when fashion conversations are dominated by fleeting trends and social media aesthetics, veteran journalist **Shefalee Vasudev** has released a new book that reframes how we think about clothing in India. *Stories We Wear: Status, Spectacle and the Politics of Appearance* — published by Westland — is a thoughtful exploration of how garments reflect identity, history, politics and lived experience across Indian society.

Clothing as Cultural Memory

In *Stories We Wear*, Vasudev argues that clothing is far more than fabric stitched into form — it's a **repository of personal and collective stories** that reveal who we are and where we come from. Drawing on personal essays and cultural commentary, she shows how attire carries silent but powerful narratives about class, aspiration, memory and belonging.

Through vivid storytelling, the book treats everyday garments — from simple saris and uniforms to khadi and airport fashion — as *archives of lived experience* rather than mere objects of style. Vasudev's writing bridges the gap between fashion and cultural truth, inviting readers to look deeper than surface beauty.

Examining India's Fashion Landscape

One of the book's central themes is how clothing interacts with India's complex social fabric. Vasudev critiques the *fashionisation* of traditional textiles like **khadi**, noting that despite repeated high-profile showcases and institutional backing, its transformation into mainstream fashion often misunderstands its cultural essence and rich heritage.

She also shines a spotlight on *airport fashion* — a uniquely Indian phenomenon where celebrity sightings and paparazzi culture turn mundane travel outfits into symbolic performances of mobility, status and aspiration. This phenomenon, she suggests, speaks to a shift in how fashion signals social mobility in contemporary India.

Unflinching Personal Narratives

The book doesn't shy away from difficult topics. Certain chapters, such as "Fire Exit" and "Last Rights," explore how clothing intersects with trauma, grief and identity in deeply human terms. Reporting these stories demanded sensitivity and empathy, reflecting the author's commitment to portraying fashion as intertwined with life's most profound experiences rather than as superficial ornamentation.

Beyond Trends and Glamour

Vasudev — a seasoned editor and cultural commentator known for leading **The Voice of Fashion** and chronicling Indian fashion for decades — challenges the notion that fashion is the exclusive domain of celebrities, runways and

global brands. She highlights how ordinary people participate in fashion — consciously or unconsciously — and how their everyday choices reflect deeper cultural forces and identities.

Her reflections underline a poignant insight: while the word *fashion* may seem inaccessible or intimidating to many, clothing itself is a universal language — a way of expressing selfhood, desire and belonging without uttering a word.

A Book for Curious Minds

Stories We Wear is more than a fashion book; it's a **cultural investigation** that encourages readers to see clothing not as decoration but as a living archive of human experience. Whether it's a casual sari, a school uniform, a designer outfit or khadi draped with intention, each article of clothing in India carries a story worth listening to.

Available now through major retailers including Amazon, the book appeals to anyone curious about the intersection of fashion, society and identity — offering readers a richer, more nuanced way to understand what we wear and why

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.