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## Refashioning Style from the Outside-In: A Pakistani Diasporic Response

Sidra Sohail Khawaja

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# **Refashioning Style from the Outside-In: A Pakistani Diasporic Response**

### **Abstract**

Pakistan's traditionalists and modernists hold opposing political, religious, social and nationalist views creating a constant tension within the culture. This tension creates a fashion industry with two extremes, one side reflecting traditional influences and the other reflecting western trends. I address the tension by analysing the craft and context of traditional Pakistani men's clothing and incorporating traditional construction techniques into garments that reflect aspects of both points of view. In a series of five looks, I extract from influences like Persian, North Indian, Afghani, Colonial and Neo-Colonial, to generate hybridized garments that offer a new perspective, blending traditional elements with the global vocabulary of fashion.

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## 1. Problem Statement:

Pakistan was formed on the belief that Muslims of India had their own culture, food, language, music and art. However, demand for a separate state was heavily based on religious justification. Early leaders of Pakistan promised a democratic land with Islamic laws and modern values. To this day, Pakistan struggles to define its national identity, torn between modernism, traditionalism and an Islamic state. Along with other arts, the local fashion industry is numbed by the binaries of modernism and traditionalism. Simply stated, in Pakistan, modernism is associated with westernization, and traditionalism is tied to Indo-Persian cum Islamic identity. According to writer and entrepreneur Sourabh Yadav, westernization is defined as the influence of western political systems, democratic values, individualism, capitalism, and cultural norms.<sup>1</sup> The opposing influences of westernised modernism, versus national-cum-Islamic identity, which shape Pakistan's broader culture, also drive its fashion industry.

Due to the desire of consumers in Pakistan to connect with global trends and developments without losing connection to their heritage, fashion designers struggle to maintain a delicate balance. Given the historical clash between Muslims of the subcontinent and western ideologies in the early to mid-20th Century, there is a perception that embracing western culture poses a threat to Pakistan's cultural and traditional values. This leads to political and ideological tension and results in a lack of growth in the arts and fashion.

The lack in clarity regarding the cultural identity in Pakistan has a direct impact on the clothing worn by Pakistanis living outside of Pakistan. When the diaspora seeks to reconnect with its native cultural identity, it finds itself caught between the extremes of Muslim identity, national identity and westernized modernism.<sup>2,3</sup> This cultural and ideological ambiguity can lead diasporic individuals to form their own interpretations of Islam and modernism, resulting in the dilution of authentic Pakistani fashion in global contexts. As a result, wearing traditional clothes becomes a cultural performance.

1 Sourabh Yadav (MA), 'Western Culture - 10 Examples, Characteristics & Values (2023)', 30 December 2022, <https://helpfulprofessor.com/western-culture-examples/>.

2 <https://tribune.com.pk/author/50>, 'Muslims First, Pakistani Distant Second Say Majority: Gallup Poll', The Express Tribune, 4 May 2011, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/161704/muslims-first-pakistani-distant-second-say-majority-gallup-poll>.

3 '(21) PARTITION OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN: Story of Independent India Episode 01 | LinkedIn', accessed 1 July 2023, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/partition-india-pakistan-story-independent-episode01-arjit-raji/>.

## 2. Limitations:

Little has been written about the impacts of political turmoil on the fashion industry and consumer mind-set of Pakistan. The intention of this paper is to define the current semiotics or symbolism of clothing in Pakistan. It will be done by identifying the existing meaning of clothing in Pakistan, which informs my design work and decision-making process.

Secondly, this paper is critical of the binary notion that everything needs to be either one thing or the other, a choice between an Islamic identity, national identity, or a modern identity. It is important to understand that issues are multifaceted and influenced by various factors. Facts and examples provided in this paper are chosen to identify patterns of political development in Pakistan to trace how political ideas shift consumer behavior in fashion. By analysing a series of influential politicians and their political messages, the paper will identify ideas that resonated with the people of Pakistan over time. We are what we wear, and what people believe in is often manifested through fashion. By analysing a series of leaders and their political ideas, the paper will identify the will of the people, as expressed through fashion.

Lastly, this paper is written from a diasporic perspective, recognizing the dynamic nature of culture and the ever-changing nature of semiotics. It reflects the viewpoint of my personal experience, shaped over time, by many conversations and interactions with people from Pakistan and the diaspora.

### 3. A Brief History of Conflict at Home:

The conflict between traditionalists and modernists in Pakistan stems from the colonial era, when the British Raj imperialized India imposing English systems of education, technology, law, language, taxation and economics.<sup>4</sup> Post-Partition, Indo-Muslims feared that secularism was weakening the Muslim society of India. This created a need for an independent state for Indo-Muslims demanding to be recognised as a separate nation with distinct cultural traditions, values, customs and religions, which eventually led to the creation of Pakistan; a separate homeland for Muslims outside of Hindu-majority India

#### 3.1 Traditionalism in Pakistan:

Traditionalism means to preserve and practice ancestral beliefs and customs. Although religious identity is more prominent, Pakistan's traditional identity is intricately woven from both religious and cultural heritage. Indo-Muslims firmly believed in their distinct identity, creating a Muslim nation. Pakistan perceived itself as separate from Arab & Persian Muslims, and also as separate from Hindus in India. Pakistan is also comprised of multiple cultures mainly of Balochis, Pakhtuns, Kashmiris and Punjabis. Thus, in Pakistan, traditionalism includes the practice and preservation of cultural music, language, art and values, along with the practice of Islamic law.

#### 3.2 Modernism in Pakistan:

Modernism in Pakistan is rooted in British imperialism, when systems of education, science, technology and communication were used to establish western dominance over the natives of India. In a contemporary context, globalization is shaped by western superpowers like Europe and the U.S. Thus, in the context of this paper, in Pakistan, modernism equals westernism; meaning, it is seen as modern to embrace western laws, policies, cultural values, language, scientific studies and technological advances.

<sup>4</sup> Trevor Getz, 'READ: Tools of Imperialism (Article) | Khan Academy', accessed 30 June 2023, [https://www.khanacademy.org/\\_render](https://www.khanacademy.org/_render).



Image 1 (TOP)

A group of men wearing Balochi *shalwars*. The Balochi *shalwar* is baggy, with a lot of gathers in the inseam. The gathers fall along a diagonal line.



Image 2 (BOTTOM)

An example of *pathani shalwar*. The *pathani shalwar* is long but less voluminous from Balochi *shalwar*.



Image 3 (TOP)

An example of Punjabi *shalwar*. The straightest of all *shalwar* with the least drapery.



Image 4 (BOTTOM)

A group of Pakistani young males wearing *shalwar kameezes*, paired with various items, like Sindhi shawls, *kheris*, slippers, sneakers, glasses and coats.

#### 4. Fashion and Symbolism:

In his book *The Fashion System*, Roland Barthes asserts that by naming and describing a physical garment, it acquires language, forming a “rhetoric code.” These rhetoric codes can transform garments from physical things into symbols, or even icons. Symbols and icons communicate social, cultural or ideological meanings, relative to identity.<sup>5</sup> To understand how modernist and traditionalist ideologies manifest as symbolic meaning for Pakistani fashion consumers, it is useful to briefly analyze a series of political movements from early in the nation’s history, exemplified by the translation of Quaid’s Vision and the opposing ideologies of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Zia-ul-Haq. Each of these important leaders had a profound impact on Pakistan’s identity, which can be understood through the lens of fashion and self-expression. I will analyze how the political ideologies of these three individuals led to shifts in consumer behavior.

##### 4.1 Quaid’s Vision:

In his inaugural speech, the founding father of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, emphasized that Pakistan was a modern, Islamic, democratic state, meaning, it was founded on principles of Islamic laws, but with tolerance toward all religions, races and ethnic groups.<sup>6,7</sup> In a broadcast speech to the people of the United States of America, which was recorded on February 26, 1948, he said:

The constitution of Pakistan has yet to be framed by Pakistan’s Constituent Assembly. I do not know what the ultimate shape of this constitution is going to be, but I am sure that it will be of a democratic type, embodying the essential principles of Islam. Today, they are as applicable in actual life as they were 1300 years ago. Islam and its idealism have taught us democracy. It has taught us equality of man, justice, fair play to everybody...In any case Pakistan is not going to be a theocratic state to be ruled by priests with a divine mission. We have many non-Muslims, Hindus, Christians, and Parsees but they all are Pakistanis. They will enjoy the same rights and privileges as any other citizens and will play their rightful part in the affairs of Pakistan.<sup>8</sup>

5 Justice McNeil, ‘The Fashion System: How the World Is Reflected in Fashion Rhetoric’, Justice McNeil, August 2015, <https://justice-mcneil.weebly.com/the-fashion-system.html>.

6 Sajid Mahmood Awan, ‘Quaid’s Vision of State: Perspective and Prospects for Pakistan’, n.d.

7 <https://tribune.com.pk/author/54>, ‘Pakistan: Modern State, Traditional Leadership’, The Express Tribune, 30 October 2013, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/624821/pakistan-modern-state-traditional-leadership>.

8 ‘Jinnah’s Vision of a Democratic Welfare State’, accessed 20 July 2023, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/878192-jinnah-s-vision-of-a-democratic-welfare-state>.





Image 5

Fatima Ali Jinnah, also titled *Madr-e-millat* (Mother of the nation), seen in *gharara* or *sharara* (a wide-leg flared pant) with head veiled with a *dupatta* at the reception in Karachi, 1947.

He asserted that Pakistan will not be a theocratic state. In his Presidential Address to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on 11 August 1947, he insisted:

You are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship in this state of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed, that has nothing to do with the business of State."<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, the early days of Pakistan's fashion scene saw the reflection of Quaid's Vision of modernism, forward-looking religion and Indo-Persian heritage. It was a reflection of a modern descendant of Muslim nations and empires like the Ottomans, Persians and Arabs, however, placed in the subcontinent and also distinct from its Hindu counterpart, India. Pre-Partition, Muslims wore all types of clothing, from formal western wear to *saris*, from *dhotis*, *angrakhas*, *ghagras* paired with *shalwar* or *churidar pajamas*.

<sup>9</sup> 'Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah', accessed 20 July 2023, [https://pakistan.gov.pk/Quaid/quotes\\_page2.html](https://pakistan.gov.pk/Quaid/quotes_page2.html).



Image 6

A group of students in English attire sitting on the lawn of the University of Punjab, Lahore, 1946.



Image 7

Benegal Shiva Rao (left), a leading journalist and politician, seen in *churidar pajamas*, a tight-fitting pants with gathers at the ankle, worn with a *sherwani*; a long formal fit garment constructed like suit a jacket.



Quaid-e-Azam frequently wore shewanis—traditionally worn by Muslim-Indian nobles—as an intentional expression of national identity. Meanwhile, also echoing Muslim-Indian nobles, Fatima Jinnah, Quaid’s sister, known as the mother of the nation, wore *ghaagras*, *sherwanis*, *churidar* and aligarh *pajamas* paired with *kameez*, and covered her hair with *dupattas*. Government officials followed their example, and as a result, *sherwanis* and *ghaagras* came to be seen as the national clothing of Pakistan.

Until the 1970’s, it was common to see a mix of western and traditional attires worn in Pakistan. Pakistanis were able to embrace their heritage while also embracing modern ideas and changes. High-end European designers were finding an audience in Pakistan. Still, Pakistani clothing also retained elements of Indo-Persian influence. For example, saris and dhotis—which are associated primarily with Indian and Bangladeshi culture today—were still common in Pakistan before the 1970’s. However, traditionalism and modernism clashed when extreme liberation was countered with extreme Islamization between 1970’s and 1980s.



Image 8

A Pakistani man wearing a *dhoti*, paired with a *kameez*. A *dhoti* is a long piece of fabric tied around the waist, used to cover the legs. In rural areas, it is commonly worn by men, and sometimes also worn by women.



Image 9 (TOP)

Hafeez Jalandhri, the author of the National Anthem of Pakistan, with his wife and daughters in 1954. His wife (second from the left), is wearing a *sari*, while his three daughters are all wearing *shalwar kameez*.



Image 10 (BOTTOM)

Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founding father of Pakistan, wearing a sherwani during his visit to Dhaka in April, 1948. A sherwani is a hybrid garment, combining the formal length and flow of a kameez with the shoulder and sleeve construction of a western suit jacket. Sherwanis celebrate heritage while also embracing progress



Image 11

Rural women migrating during the Partition, in 1947. The women are wearing *shalwars*—balloon-shaped pants that gather at the waist—paired with *kameez*, which are long, knee-length shirts. Their heads are veiled by *dupattas*—long pieces of fabric used by women from the subcontinent to cover their hair and upper bodies.

#### 4.2 Zulfikar Ali Bhutto:

In a push toward what was seen as social and economic progress in 1971, Bhutto's government planned for a modernized Pakistan. Bhutto envisioned what he called a "Secular Islam" and successfully detached religion from politics. Bhutto popularized the slogan, "Islam our Faith, Democracy our Policy, Socialism our Economy."<sup>10</sup> Until then, liberal lifestyles were restricted to urban centers and elites. Bhutto projected a modern and liberal Pakistan, inviting everyday citizens to embrace liberalization.

In the 1970's, during Bhutto's era, Pakistan embraced western influences. Westerners, including self-styled, "hippies," mixed with Pakistani nationals in night clubs, where, together, they drank alcohol and smoked cigarettes. Women could be seen wearing form-fitting maxi dresses and *saris* while men wore western suits. However, the western influence and its impact on lifestyles was still limited to liberal urban centers. Working class and rural areas remained more traditional; both men and women mostly wore *shalwar kameezes*. Although Bhutto's vision was liberal and he, personally, was fond of western suits and

<sup>10</sup> 'Pakistan - YAHYA KHAN AND BANGLADESH', accessed 30 March 2023, <https://countrystudies.us/pakistan/19.htm>.



Image 12

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, wearing a *shalwar kameez*. Bhutto was the first political leader in Pakistan to embrace the traditional clothing of working-class citizens.

branded whiskeys, he often wore a *shalwar kameez* while delivering speeches at home or abroad, becoming the first leader to embrace the clothing of everyday people.<sup>11</sup> This gave Pakistan a new, recognizable sense of identity, and soon the *shalwar kameez* made its way into the high-end fashion scene. Ready-to-wear brands like Teejays became popular in the 1970's with their contemporary take on the attire.

Bhutto's regime also faced opposition from Islamist parties, leading to tension and civil unrest.<sup>12</sup> Bhutto's normalization of Western influences and subsequent criticism, set the stage for Zia's radical Islamization, altering Pakistan's cultural landscape.

<sup>11</sup> Shahjehan Saleem, 'Power Clothing: How the Politicians of Pakistan Defined Fashion', Diva Magazine (blog), 30 July 2019, <https://www.divaonline.com.pk/power-clothing-how-the-politicians-of-pakistan-defined-fashion/>.

<sup>12</sup> admin, 'Ouster of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto', Story Of Pakistan (blog), 1 June 2003, <https://storyofpakistan.com/ouster-of-zulfikar-ali-bhutto/>.





Image 13

Teejays: a contemporary take on the *shalwar kameez*, from the 1970's.

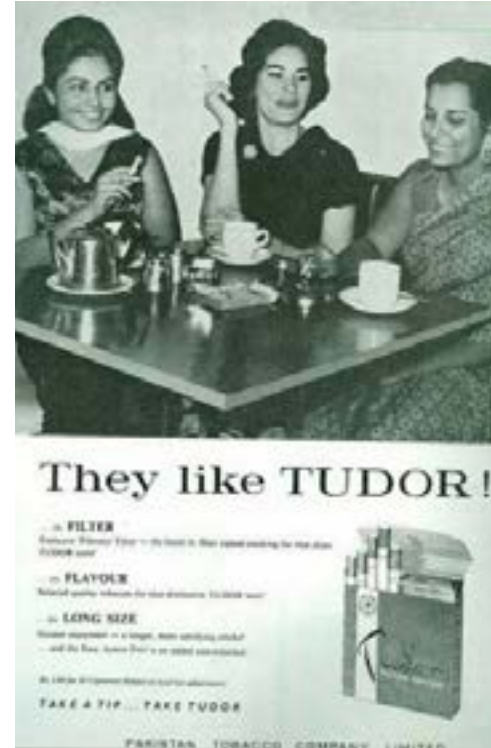


Image 15 (TOP)

A 1963 ad for Tudor cigarettes. Tudor was a product of the Pakistan Tobacco Company, specifically branded to attract female customers. Women in the ad are smiling, wealthy, cosmopolitan and dressed in a sleeveless dress (left) and a *sari* (right).



Image 14

Nusrat Bhutto (second from the left), the wife of Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, shown with a group of models, during a film debut in 1973 in Pakistan. The women are wearing *saris*, maxi dresses and off-shoulder gowns.



Image 16 (BOTTOM)

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (right) with wife his Nusrat Bhutto drinking wine at a formal party.

### 4.3 Zia-Ul-Haq:

In 1977, General Zia-ul-Haq, a military officer, led a coup, overthrowing the Bhutto government and imposing martial law in Pakistan. Reacting to what he regarded as damage to Pakistan's Islamic culture, during the Bhutto years, Zia oversaw the Islamization of Pakistan. The new Constitution, under Zia, reflected a fundamental interpretation of Islamic Law.<sup>13</sup> With this shift came a push to redefine Pakistan's national identity. Zia-ul-Haq spoke Urdu with an Arabic accent, and he called for fundamentalist Islamic punishments for crimes, like the amputation of thieves' hands, the stoning to death of adulterers, and he banned the payment of interest in the banking system. Zia's regime implemented 8th-Century Arab interpretations of Islam in Pakistan. Zia's regime required women to wear baggy *shalwar kameezes* and to cover their heads with *dupattas*. He banned women from wearing *saris*, which were deemed immodest. For men, while Bhutto popularized the *shalwar kameez* as an expression of his populist views, Zia's government made the *shalwar kameez* compulsory, and required government officials to also wear a vest over the *kameez*, while representing Pakistan on trips abroad.<sup>1415</sup> This proved to be a turning point, when *shalwar kameez* became known as the official national clothing of Pakistan.

13 Steven R. Weisman and Special To the New York Times, 'THE "ISLAMIZATION" OF PAKISTAN: STILL MOVING SLOWLY AND STILL STIRRING DEBATE', The New York Times, 10 August 1986, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/08/10/world/the-islamization-of-pakistan-still-moving-slowly-and-still-stirring-debate.html>.

14 Anna's Studio, 'Evolution of Pakistani Fashion Industry', Medium (blog), 18 September 2021, [https://medium.com/@anna\\_studios101/evolution-of-pakistani-fashion-industry-4eb33ab3400e](https://medium.com/@anna_studios101/evolution-of-pakistani-fashion-industry-4eb33ab3400e).

15 Aamna Haider Isani, 'The Way We Wore', DAWN.COM, 08:57:13+05:00, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1043025>.

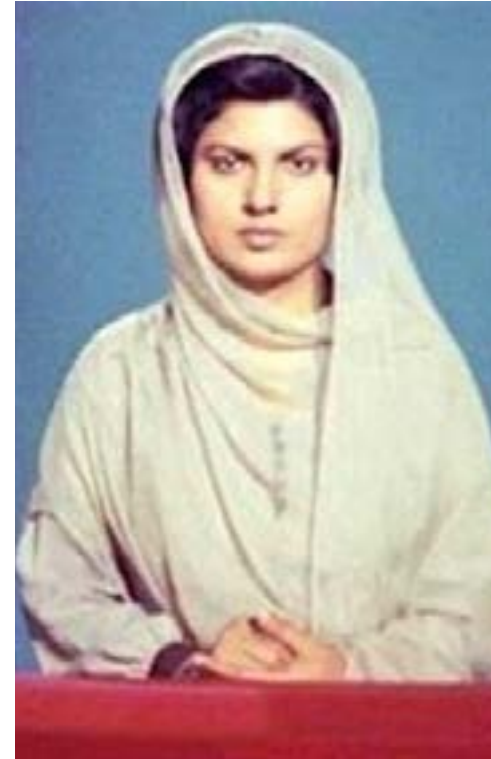


Image 17

*Dupattas* were made mandatory for female journalists appearing on television, under the rule of Zia-ul-Haq.



Image 18

A news anchor wearing a gray vest over his *shalwar kameez* appearing on Pakistan Television (PTV)



Image 19

The strict clothing rules of the Zia government meant *shalwar kameez* were worn by all, leading to designer label versions like these. It became common practice, during this time, for women to cover their chests with *dupattas* draped around their shoulders.

#### 4.4 Moderation:

Following the restrictions of the Zia-ul-Haq regime, the people of Pakistan sought balance and moderation between the influences of tradition, religion and modernism. By the early- to mid-2000's, this took the form of Pervez Musharraf's campaign for what he called, "Enlightened Moderation". His push for a balanced approach to both tradition and modernity reflected in politics, culture and fashion choices. Before his time, western clothes and traditional clothes were styled in separate outfits but his era saw a blend of western clothing items like denim pants with local cotton *kurtas* (knee length shirts) in men's and women's-wear. Attitudes toward moderation continue to this day, exemplified by brands like Khaadi, Ethnic, Generations—and more recently—Raasta. These companies sell clothes that reflect aspects of modern, western apparel and ethnic wear, producing blended shapes and silhouettes, combined with local fabrics and prints.

#### 4.5 Takeaways:

Having established this context, it is possible to draw the following conclusions about the fashion scene in Pakistan. 1) Political leaders have had a powerful influence on fashion consumption. 2) Pakistan's fashion industry has traditionally been consumer-driven. 3) The choice to wear a *shalwar kameez*, today, involves a type of performance, and is designed to express nationalism. 4) Zia's extreme Islamization, confusing Pakistan's Indo-Persian identity with an Arab one, casted ambiguity on Pakistan's cultural identity.

Firstly, just like elsewhere, leaders, celebrities and powerful people contribute to the symbolic meaning of clothing. It can be said that some of the most influential people in Pakistan are politicians rather than artists or celebrities. They play an important role in shaping people's attitudes, which affects fashion consumption.

Secondly, it can also be said that Pakistan's fashion industry is consumer-driven than producer-driven. Taking Teejays as an example, local designers contemporised the *shalwar kameez*, but only after Bhutto popularised it, making it desirable among wealthy consumers. In Pakistan, the market mostly responds to the needs and desires of consumers, as opposed to designers shaping trends.

Thirdly, traditional clothing draws on Islamic traditions, blended with European shirt construction dating from colonial times. For example, the *shalwar kameez* is a newer generation of earlier Turkish and Persian clothing, adopted by the Mughals, which got modernized with the addition of shirt collars, cuffs and

plackets during colonial times. Islamic clothing, including *abayas* and *jalabiyas*, observe Islamic principles of modesty. Since Pakistan's formation, its leaders dressed carefully and intentionally, to assert a distinct national identity. And lastly, Pakistan has a history of confusing national identity with religious identity. This is evident in the example of Bhutto treating *shalwar kameez* as a symbol of the people, followed by Zia treating *shalwar kameez* as a symbol of Islam, forcing all men to wear it.

These takeaways shape my work in various ways. Firstly, I design pieces and take a lead in the narratives instead of depending on the politicians to shape my thinking. I have dissected the aspirations of the people of Pakistan by analyzing key political ideologies and introduced my own nuances from a diasporic perspective. Being in a global setting allows me to understand the potential for Pakistani clothing to find its place in diverse settings. By creating a collection that embodies the culture and the religion of Pakistan, but which is also relevant to the global conversation taking place in the fashion industry, I question the role. I counter the narrative that religious expression cannot or should not be fashionable or that traditional clothing belongs only in traditional settings. Secondly, I take a lead as a maker and not a politician. I experiment with clothing to inspire the consumer and create a new form of representation rather than relying on political officials to represent Pakistan on a global scale. My work takes the creative lead and proposes new ideas to consumers, rather than following the trends.

Thirdly, to make things global, I have not disregarded the authentic representation of Pakistani heritage. Although traditional clothing items like *sherwani* and *shalwar kameez* are tied to a nationalist tradition, they are based on principles of Islam. My work embraces both representations, brings traditional details to items that can be worn to stylish, fashion-oriented settings, traditional setting and even to religious sectors. Rather than relegate *shalwar kameez* to be worn only by Pakistani expats or only within closed diasporic communities, I see an opportunity to apply the lessons of traditional clothing to inspire and inform the global fashion-scape, and to infuse the emergent modest-wear industry.

Lastly, Pakistan tends to look to its Indo-Persian heritage for cultural identity, to 8th Century Islam for religious identity and westward for modernism. In my work, I look purely at Pakistan; what modernism means there, what cultural identity looks like and how religious identity translates into fashion. My work shifts the narrative to Pakistan's capacity to be a modern state while embracing

its religious and cultural traditions by balancing all elements, instead of following one definition. With more experimentation from designers, Pakistan has the potential to contribute to contemporary conversations about the future of fashion.

## 5. Current Situation

In 1996, Imran Khan founded the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) "Justice Movement" party, promising a corruption-free government. Despite initial failure, it gained popularity in 2011 and challenged the ruling party, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). In 2013, PTI failed in the elections but alleged rigging. In 2018, PTI won, but Khan was later removed through a no-confidence motion. This led to civil unrest and eventually, to yet another brain-drain in Pakistan.<sup>16</sup> Currently, more than 11 million Pakistanis live outside Pakistan as foreign expats.<sup>17</sup>

## 6. The Diasporic Dilemma:

To gain insight into connections between clothing and identity, I conducted an in-depth interview with a Pakistani expat, named Dr. Alia, natively Pakistani, born and raised in the United States. She has only visited Pakistan a few times. Her style has changed dramatically over time, from wearing a *hijab* over *shalwar kameez*, to dressing in ready-to-wear American styles. Living in the US, she was always seen as Pakistani; however, upon visiting Pakistan, she also felt like an outsider. This intermingled identity reflected in the evolution of her personal style over time. She explained the struggle to balance her ethnic and religious background with the cultural context of the US, where most readily available clothing is designed to be form-fitting or revealing.

Because the origins of Pakistan's traditional values are complex—the nation's Indo-Persian culture, or the foundations of Arab-centered Islam—she developed her own interpretations. She said that when she visited Pakistan and wore an Arab-style *hijab* over *shalwar kameez*, she was subjected to verbal hostility, because people perceived her as different. Although Pakistan is a Muslim-majority state, Pakistani religious practices are distinctive. In Pakistan, it is seen as modest for a woman to cover with a *dupatta*, while covering with an Arab-style *hijab* is seen, by some, as regressive. "There are circles (even) in the US who stay up-to-date with Pakistani trends, but I'm not in those circles. They are very toxic." She found this social pressure toxic and withdrew, distancing herself

<sup>16</sup> 'Country's Brain Drain Situation Accelerated in 2022', The Express Tribune, 12 December 2022, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2390704/countrys-brain-drain-situation-accelerated-in-2022>.

<sup>17</sup> 'Labour Migration in Pakistan (ILO in Pakistan)', accessed 4 July 2023, <https://www.ilo.org/islamabad/areasofwork/labour-migration/lang--en/index.htm>.



both from Pakistani expats and from local cliques. This feeling of isolation is very common in the diasporic community.

This is common in the diaspora. Many expats withdraw and feel equally uncomfortable in the clothes of the host nation and in the clothes of their homeland. The way Dr. Alia relates her relationship with shopping and fashion is representative of a situation experienced widely:

I feel my style is more grounded and blended now. I stopped shopping in the malls. I just buy online from very specific brands (but now) I feel like they have Gen-Z styles going back to baggy pants and looser casual wear which makes easier it now. I wear long dresses to work...and matching sets that are hip.<sup>18</sup>

Although she feels more grounded in her style now, it is mostly due to current trends. I can't help but pose a question: what happens when the current style becomes outdated, and the new thing is no longer comfortable? Or, what happens when it becomes difficult to find loose-fitting, longer dresses? Influenced by the context, people follow the styles and trends of their surroundings that can also respect their personal, religious and cultural values. This could be either because of what is available or due to direct influence of the popular style at the time. Due to confusion between religious and cultural identity, it is not uncommon for diasporic women to wear Arabic clothing items like *abayas*, men can be seen wearing *jalabyas* (ankle length, loose-fitting garments) and *thobs* (full length and collars), especially to the mosques.

On the other hand, cultural identity for many Pakistani expats translates into desiness. Desi refers to the culture and the people of the subcontinent—people from India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. However, desi fashion is heavily influenced by India, due to popular Bollywood movies and easy access to international Indian brands. Although there are similarities between Indian and Pakistani clothing, traditional Pakistani clothing is still very distinctive. Many Pakistani expats can be seen wearing Indian-style *saris*, *kurtas* and *sherwanis*. In contrast, the modernist diaspora tends to embrace westernized interpretations of modernism. In the mix of Arabized Islam, Indian-influenced Desi identity, and Westernized modernism, Pakistan's own unique identity within the Pakistani diaspora is diluted.

## 6.1 Response of a Designer:

With the diaspora scattered globally, there is an opportunity for Pakistani fashion to extend its reach. However, the diaspora's detachment from traditional clothing reduces this opportunity, limiting Pakistan's designers and makers to regional influence. "Now, I express my Pakistani identity (only) with jewellery and shawls," commented Dr. Alia, expressing a sentiment I have heard time and again in conversations with Pakistanis living abroad. I am concerned that traditional garments are becoming regionally limited within the diaspora. This implies that these traditional-wear items are primarily associated with and worn by Pakistanis living either in Pakistan or abroad.

My work reflects two aspects of my experience: I am Pakistani, and for most of my life I have lived outside Pakistan. I see an opportunity in the global marketplace for Pakistani fashion. My work reflects the visual symbolism of Pakistani streetwear and combines it with western details, creating hybridized garments. Like Dr. Alia, many people of Pakistani heritage look for modest garments with a baggy, loose fit. My work is inspired by traditional Pakistani garments like baggy *shalwars* and long *kameezes*, over-sized shirts and custom-tailored clothes. My work enables people living within the diaspora to find new ways to connect to their cultural roots, while also embracing the current styles within their expat environments.

Being part of the Pakistani diaspora exposes me to a diverse audience. By creating clothes that merge traditional and contemporary details, I intentionally challenge the perception of ethnic-wear. My work reflects my belief that traditional Pakistani clothing—or any other type of traditional clothing—does not only belong within one community. Every tradition can contribute meaningfully to the conversation surrounding globalization.

Creating greater visibility, globally, for clothing inspired by traditional Pakistani garments is also critical because, like many ethnicities, Pakistanis are frequently misrepresented in the international media. Pakistan, for example, is often mis-identified as a Middle Eastern country with people dressed in Pashtun attire, or depicted as a poor country with mud buildings. There is an abundance of inaccurate footage used by the international media to depict Pakistan. For example, the Amazon Prime series, *Homeland*, portrays Islamabad—which, in reality, is a quiet, well-planned city—as a violent, dilapidated place, with street

18 Azmat, Alia. Interview. Conducted by Sidra Sohail. April 2023

signs written in Arabic and filled with conflict and riots.<sup>19,20</sup> Speaking inaccurately about the rights of, “...poor women throughout the Middle East,” former Boston Herald columnist and frequent Fox News guest Adriana Cohen dismissively says “Pakistan should spend less time worrying about how it is represented in the U.S. media, and focus more on solving its problems.”<sup>21</sup> My work’s intention is to celebrate the rich heritage and multifaceted history of Pakistan’s people and fashion, while also embracing the new and growing influence of multiculturalism within Pakistan’s diaspora.

Simultaneously, within Pakistan, I envision an experimental space for local designers, empowered to think globally, not just regionally. I propose a clothing line that responds to—but is not limited to—Pakistani consumers. My vision is to align the rich, local tailoring craft of Pakistan, with the language of contemporary streetwear, to serve both domestic and international customers. I believe this is what is needed to initiate a shift from a consumer-driven market toward a producer-driven market.

## 7. Precedents:

The use of fashion as a tool has the ability to change people’s attitudes toward a community, an individual, or even a whole country on a global scale. In the previous section, I traced the three main trends impacting Pakistani fashion: a modernizing, westernizing one; a traditional, national one and an Islamizing one. These are often viewed as opposing and mutually exclusive. In this section, I will highlight the possibilities for hybridization, providing examples from Japan and the US that fuse modern and traditional details.

### 7.1 Hip Hop:

Hip Hop fashion started in the late 1970’s in the Bronx, a borough of New York City, when youth living in low-income neighborhoods started experimenting with music, dance and rap in house parties. Fashion was an integral part of the cultural experiment. In certain black communities, even today, designer clothes are seen as a status symbol.<sup>22</sup> As elsewhere, people would show up to show off

<sup>19</sup> ‘3 Horrific Inaccuracies in Homeland’s Depiction of Islamabad’, The Week, accessed 4 July 2023, <https://theweek.com/articles/443043/3-horrific-inaccuracies-homelands-depiction-islamabad>.

<sup>20</sup> Iffah Abid Kitchlew, ‘Hollywood’s Relentless Discriminatory Depictions of Arab Characters’, The Daily Q (blog), accessed 2 July 2023, <https://thedailyq.org/10468/magazine/hollywoods-relentlessly-discriminatory-depictions-of-arab-characters/>.

<sup>21</sup> Pakistan Angry over Portrayal of Country in New Season of Homeland, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e7kgXmpoW6M>.

<sup>22</sup> Claudia, ‘Logos, Luxury and Status Symbol. Fashion & History!’, Friday Scoop (blog), 27 March 2021, <https://fridayscoop.com/logos-luxury-and-status-symbol-fashion-history/>.



Image 20

Dapper Dan’s good friend Walter Peterson, aka Cha-Cha (left), and Peterson’s brother Gene, wearing Dapper Dan’s reversible Louis Vuitton-print/ mink coat in the late 1980’s.

their best clothes. Second-hand, loose-fitting, hand-me-down clothing with logos from high-end European brands like Gucci, Louis Vuitton, or Fendi became the staple styles of these parties.<sup>23</sup>

Daniel Day, famously known as “Dapper Dan,” realized the power of possessing clothing from high-end brands that express wealth, status and sophistication. He opened a fashion shop in 1982. Deploying the power of fashion, Dapper Dan would appropriate or, as he would say, “blackenize” the Parisian luxury trends and aesthetics. He would cut up high-end materials like leather and then screen print logos onto them, creating customized items like jackets and caps, which had never been seen with the logos of high-end brands before. His customers “especially minorities” in his words, would ask for more G’s, F’s, L.V.’s and MCM’s, as they craved the status of symbols.<sup>24</sup> By doing so, Daniel Day turned the struggle of Hip Hop into a symbol of wealth. He made Hip Hop luxury.

By the early 1990’s, Hip Hop had gained success and established a

<sup>23</sup> ‘The Evolution of Hip-Hop Fashion: Origins to Now - He Spoke Style’, accessed 14 October 2022, <https://hespokestyle.com/hip-hop-fashion/>.

<sup>24</sup> Cassell Ferere, ‘TIME’s 100 Honoree Dapper Dan Is “Blackenizing” Fashion with Symbolism And Gucci’, Forbes, accessed 16 October 2022, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/cassellferere/2021/12/30/how-time100-honoree-dapper-dan-plans-to-blackenize-fashion-through-symbolism-once-more/>.



Image 21

On the left, Olympic medalist Diane Dixon, wearing Dapper Dan in the 1980's; on the right, a look from Gucci's Resort collection, in 2017.

reputation for itself and, inevitably, for Black communities in the U.S, in politics, sports, music, literature and the fashion world. Black celebrities like Michael Jordan, Tupac Shakur, and Snoop Dogg rose to world-wide fame, gaining a young audience from across the world who looked up to these celebrities and copied their styles. Fashion trends around the world began turning away from European styles, in favor of Hip Hop influences. The impact of the shift in fashion trends and influence became even more apparent in 2017 when Gucci replicated an original custom piece by Dapper Dan for their Cruise collection. After facing backlash for appropriating a Dapper Dan look, Gucci invited the designer to collaborate, and in 2018, worked with him to launch his first official collection.

Hip Hop—originally associated with poverty—became a symbol of luxury and style, thanks to Dapper Dan's efforts. As the Pakistani diaspora grows and nurtures its own community of creative entrepreneurs, Dapper Dan's use of hybridization to generate mass appeal offers a pathway to success.

## 7.2 Yohji Yamamoto

Yohji Yamamoto grew up in post-war Japan, raised by a single mother, who was a seamstress.<sup>25</sup> In 1972, he emerged on the Japanese fashion scene with his label, "Y's;" in 1977 he presented his first full line; and in 1981 he made his global debut in Paris. His upbringing shaped his political views: "I was a war widow's son, so I became naturally—almost instinctively—political."<sup>26</sup> He joined his mother in the atelier and joined fashion school on her advice.

High-end western fashion, at the time, was tied to western traditions of the earlier centuries: symmetrical hems, carefully finished seams, and distinct styles for both genders; high-end fashion was still sexy, elegant, gendered and colorful. By the early 1980's, the status quo was being challenged by Hip Hop and Punk. Clothing of the era was defined by bold, bright colors, dramatic silhouettes and oversized suits with shoulder pads. Punk influences included leather jackets, studded belts, and band t-shirts.

Fashion was used by Punk and Hip Hop fans as a form of political expression. Hip Hop and Punk were both political-cum-fashion movements. Yamamoto's political views shaped his work and reflected the era's melding of fashion and politics. "During fittings on the customer's body, and kneeling down and fixing the length, I was thinking, 'I want to make some kind of mannish

<sup>25</sup> 'Yohji Yamamoto', Fashion Elite, 20 September 2016, <https://fashionelite.com/profile/yohji-yamamoto/>.

<sup>26</sup> 'Yohji Yamamoto', The D'Vine, accessed 2 April 2023, <https://www.the-dvine.com/blog-4/yohji-yamamoto>.





Image 22

Three examples of Yamamoto's work: asymmetric shapes and monochromatic tones, with torn fabric details and unfinished seams and hems.

outfit for women"<sup>27</sup> he told Imran Amed of Business of Fashion, a leading digital authority on the global fashion industry. By the late 20th century, he would become known for challenging the fashion norms of the day—a pioneer of the anti-fashion movement. His work reflected his rebellious intentions, rejecting bright colors and producing mostly black collections, with androgynous silhouettes. "In the city, [there are] so many fashions, so many colors, so many decorations, it looks very ugly. I felt I should not make people's eyes disturbed by using horrible colors"<sup>28</sup> he said.

On the one hand, Yamamoto infused his work with the Japanese philosophy of *wabi-sabi*—a search for beauty in imperfection, impermanence and incompleteness. At the same time, he embraced the western appreciation for self-expression and non-conformity. As a result, he questioned prevailing notions of what Japanese fashion meant, while also challenging the gender norms of western fashion. His work is characterized by monochromes, simplicity, asymmetry, unfinished edges and natural fabrics, reflecting traditional Japanese preferences, and his draping shows influence from kimono construction, but he

<sup>27</sup> 'Inside Yohji Yamamoto's Fashion Philosophy', The Business of Fashion, 15 May 2016, <https://www.businessoffashion.com/videos/news-analysis/inside-yohji-yamamotos-fashion-philosophy/>.

<sup>28</sup> 'Inside Yohji Yamamoto's Fashion Philosophy'.

also adds western items like belts, denim pants and jackets.

My work is inspired by this hybridity and willingness to reflect multiple—sometimes conflicting—influences. I am inspired to embrace traditional sensibilities while also challenging the global perception of what it means to make clothing in Pakistan. Pakistan's fashion originates from the social and cultural conditions of Pakistan, but there is no reason why it needs to be relegated to the region. My work shows that the tradition of Pakistani clothing can be easily merged with streetwear to create hybridized garments and outfits.

## 8. Investigations:

I divided the research in three parts: Form, Materiality and Function. In my primary research, I investigated form by gathering images from the internet and from my relatives. I also visited Pakistan, to gather a sense of what streetwear means in Pakistan. I examined aspects of different street scenes in Pakistan, such as busy urban marketplaces, where shop owners combine the traditional *shalwar kameez* with worn-out blazers or vests; corporate streets, where business professionals wear western suits and ties; rural streets where tribal attire is common, and where children wear oversized, mismatched, hand-me-down clothes; and urban streets, where young people wear hoodies and jeans.



Image 23

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Khan is wearing a *shalwar kameez* with formal boots.

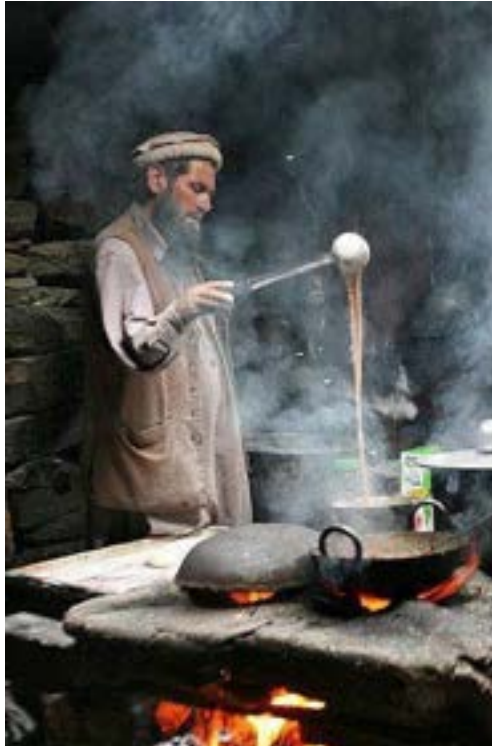


Image 24

Street food vendor wearing stained, over-worn, loose-fitting vest with *shalwar kameez* and *pashtun* style cap



Image 26

A small boy, working in a rural village, wearing oversized, hand-me-down clothes.



Image 25

An example of Pakistani street fashion: western styles and branded clothes, paired with accessories.

### 8.1 Form:

Form is believed to be the most impactful aspect of fashion. It serves as a means to express one's identity, enhance body proportions, and create an overall visually pleasing appearance.

I began my creative research process by draping a traditional *shalwar* on a mannequin to understand how details like gathers, pleats and the hems fall to create abstract shapes, and to experiment with ways of making design variations in real time, as seen in images 27&28. I then photographed the arrangements and sketched over the images to envision new shapes and silhouettes. My goal was to maintain details like pleats and gathers, and to keep the *shalwar's* distinctive balloon shape, while also incorporating details from the construction of western pants. While these sketches show women's wear, I realized part-way through my research that the streets of Pakistan are mostly dominated by men. For my design work, it is important that I reflect the streets of Pakistan as authentically as possible. For that reason, I shifted my collection from womenswear to menswear.



Image 27



Image 28

Having made that decision, I made a series of collages. Collaging is a modern technique used by fashion houses to create unique shapes and silhouettes. Different garments or details like pockets and zippers are cut out to create shapes, color choices and an overall feel for the collection. I used Pakistani garments like *shalwars*, with coats and vests from Pakistan, and I merged them with western items like flared pants, oversized shirts and backpacks. Image 29 shows an example of collages; jewellery styled with vests layered with *sherwanis*; a loose-fitting shirt layered on top of a *shalwar kameez*.



Image 29

Illustration of collage technique: from left; a vest paired with a *shalwar*, without the *kameez*, to imagine a more casual/styled look; an oversized red shirt, with a backpack, layered over a *shalwar kameez*; a formal vest, paired with contemporary flared pants—a shape that is atypical in Pakistan; a formal vest and jacket, paired with a shawl cum pant detail; and on the far right, pants with the balloon profile of a *shalwar* on the bottom half, shifting to denim on the top half.



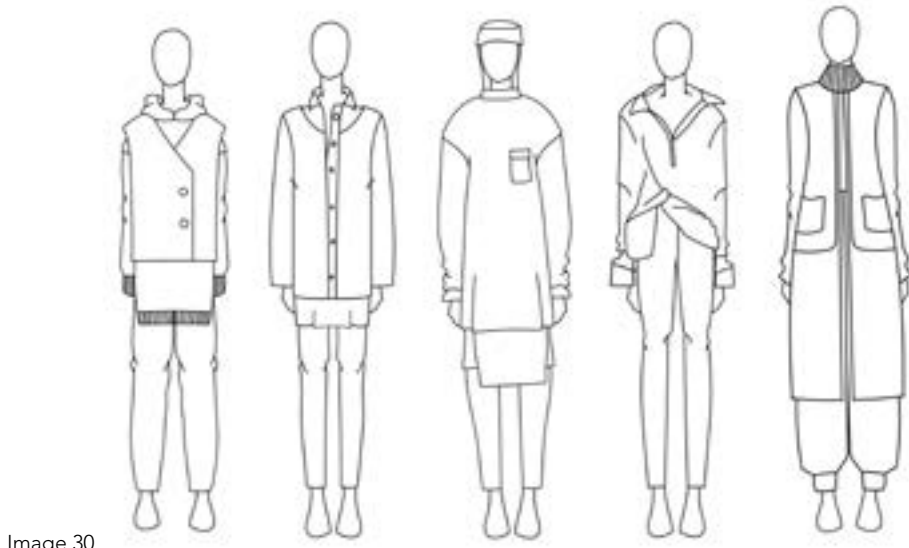


Image 30

Sketches of silhouettes referencing Pakistani-wear. From the left: a distinctive styling of *shalwar kameezes* with vests, inspired by Zia's era; a mid-length coat (rare in Pakistan), layered with a vest; a long, oversized sweater, with *kameez-and-nawabi* pants; an oversized shirt, paired with straight pajamas; a *sherwani*, layered with a worn-out vest paired with Balochi style *shalwar*.

Tracing the collages, I sketched silhouettes that remained recognizably Pakistani, but that introduced minor variations. For example, the first sketch in Image 30 is a vest over a *shalwar kameez*-shaped garment reflecting Zia's era. The fifth sketch, from the left, reflects Quaid's choice of a *sherwani*, paired with the type of worn out vest seen in urban street markets; a styling choice that would be unusual in Pakistan, even though both elements are very common on their own.

To begin the second phase of my process, I used deconstructed *shalwar* patterns and employed the pattern manipulation technique. Pattern manipulation is a technique used to alter or transform clothing patterns to create unique designs or shapes. This process helped me contemporise the traditional garments of Pakistani-wear. For example, the first sketch from left, that looks like a *shalwar* later became pants after the process of fabric manipulation. I laid out the *shalwar* pattern, which looks nothing like the shape of a modern pair of pants. I drew patterns for pants from the *shalwar* while maintaining the integrity of a *shalwar* pattern.

Image 31 shows a *shalwar* pattern laid flat. In image 32, I drew a pants pattern from the existing pattern. I started by simply adding a crotch shape at CF while maintaining the diagonal waist. The waists are usually straight or

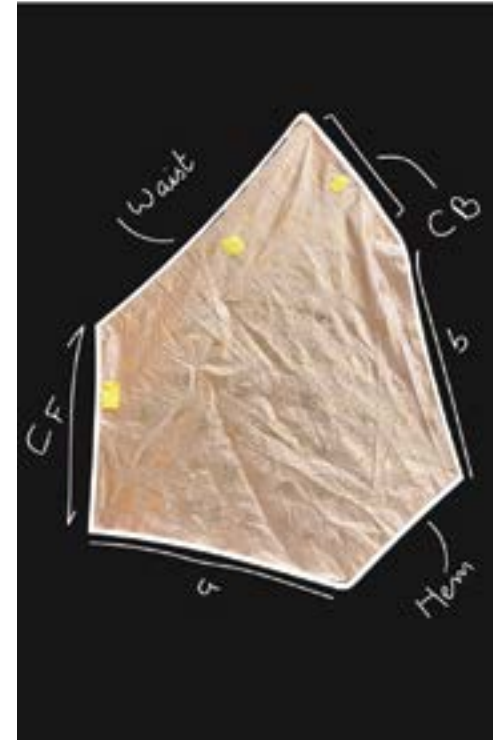


Image 31

Part of a *shalwar* pattern laid flat, digitally labeled: CF (center front), CB (center back), hem and waist. Note: This is an authentic *shalwar* pattern, and it does not have a crotch shape in the CF.



Image 32

A pattern drawn from a *shalwar*, digitally labeled CF (center front), CB (center back), hem and waist. Note the addition of a curved crotch shape to CF and CB.

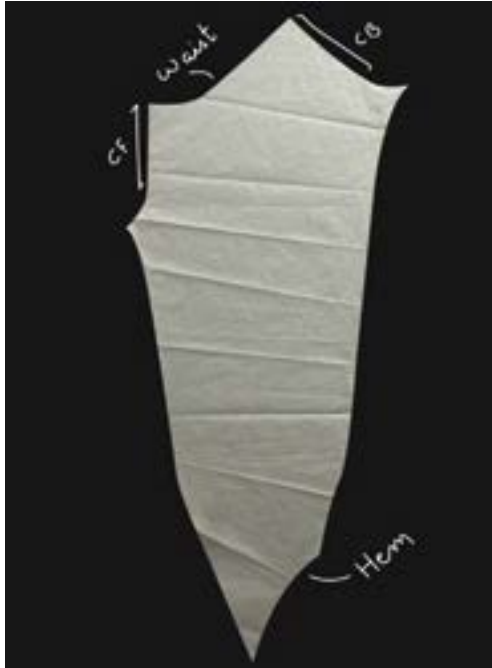


Image 33

A variation of the pattern illustrated in image 32, digitally labeled CF (center front), CB (center back), hem and waist.



Image 34

Outcome of pattern developed in image 33.

slightly curved in a standard modern pair of pants, however by making the waist diagonal, and aligning the measurement of seam a and b, the basic pant pattern changes shape completely. The inseam also becomes diagonal for the pants to fit correctly. The outcome of the pattern was unexpected.

This exercise also allowed me to establish my own unique patterns that I continue to develop more from while also helping me establish my own unique visual language driven from a Pakistani diasporic perspective; mixing visual and pattern language of Pakistani and contemporary clothes. Image 33 illustrates another variation of the same pattern. With a more generous cut, extra fabric gave the pant leg the balloon silhouette of the *shalwar*.

In addition to manipulating the traditional *shalwar* pattern to create a contemporary interpretation, I also reversed the process and transformed a pair of dress pants—introduced in Pakistan by the British, during the colonial era—into a *shalwar*-shaped pair of pants, by adding a more generous leg and then tapering in toward the leg hem. I incorporated the gathers and pleats of a *shalwar* into the waist, to achieve a contemporary, hybridized *shalwar*.

I used pattern manipulation to navigate the differences between traditional Pakistani patterns modern pants. Modern pants are easily accessible across the globe. By turning *shalwars* into pants, I make them accessible to a



Image 35



Image 36

global audience with the intention of finding a global market for Pakistani wear. By reversing the process and turning pants into *shalwars*, I add to the vocabulary of global street fashion. I repeated a similar process with the *kameez*. With the *kameez*, I traced its pattern, made minor changes to the hem length, armhole and neckline, and then turned it into an elongated, stylized hoodie, maintaining the integrity of the *kameez*. Image 37 illustrates the outcome of *kameez*-turned-hoodie pattern.

## 8.2 Materiality:

During my research, I found that in Pakistan, the most-used fibers are cotton and linen. Cotton is a versatile fiber, which can be used to produce a range of fabrics, from corduroy to fleece. I sourced fabric swatches like 100% cotton knits, cotton fleece. Linen is a plant-based fiber mostly found in plain, woven fabrics. I selected knitted cotton fabrics, because they are most commonly used in streetwear, for T-shirts and hoodies.

I sourced materials from Korea, Pakistan, London, the United States and Qatar. Living as an expat, I am accustomed to sourcing fabrics globally. The intention is not to recreate *shalwar kameez* or other traditional garments in different materials but to translate the diverse influences of the Pakistani diaspora. As I did when considering issues of form, I chose and sourced the



Image 37

materials to reference traditional and contemporary points of reference.

Additionally, an important component of my research, I visited Pakistan in person, to survey the look and feel of contemporary fashion there, on the street and in various settings. Informed by what I saw while traveling, I decided to use medium-weight *khadi*, in place of denim, for use in pants. *Khadi* is a hand-spun and hand-woven fabric from Pakistan, made primarily of cotton. It is an artisanal heritage, handloom textile, crafted entirely by hand by spinning threads on a *charkha* (a spinning wheel) to weaving on a handloom.<sup>29</sup> *Khadi* is valued for its durability, sustainability and heritage value within Pakistan. Medium-weight *khadi* cotton fabric is long-lasting and drapes similarly to cotton denim. I added linens which are not very common in global street wear and added corduroys and fleece which are not very common in Pakistan, to shake things up and defy expectations. As I did with considerations of form, I hybridized traditionally Pakistani materials with materials commonly associated with streetwear, creating dialog.

## 8.3 Functionality:

Functionally, these clothes serve to preserve cultural values and celebrate the craft of Pakistan, while contributing to the language of global fashion. Pakistani clothing has a distinctive appearance, characterized by long hem lengths, ranging from the knee to mid-calf. Lower hems serve the function of modesty and create a distinctive appearance tied to national identity. I have deliberately decided to maintain these hem-lengths in most of the collection. If paired with other streetwear garments like shorts, these hem-lengths will add freshness to the aesthetic language of global streetwear as well as to Pakistan's street fashion.

Inside Pakistan, there is pressure to dress in traditional clothing—even for non-citizens. On the other hand, there can also be peer pressure from colleagues, friends, and other non-traditional communities to wear relevant, fashionable clothes. This collection is designed with sensitivity to this delicate situation by providing aspects of traditional clothing and offering attention to modesty, while also incorporating details from contemporary streetwear. An example is the hoodie, made from fleece fabric, following the cuts and construction of a *kameez*. These clothes can easily be worn to the mosque, to a traditional gathering or be styled with an existing, casualwear wardrobe.

29 'What Is Khadi? A Hand-Spun and Hand-Woven Textile – The Craft Atlas', accessed 2 August 2023, [https://craftatlas.co/crafts/khadi#:~:text=Khadi%20is%20a%20hand%2Dspun,wheel\)%20to%20weaving%20on%20handloom.](https://craftatlas.co/crafts/khadi#:~:text=Khadi%20is%20a%20hand%2Dspun,wheel)%20to%20weaving%20on%20handloom.)

## 9. Outcomes:

The outcome of my work is a series of five looks, or a capsule collection, that embraces the changing face of Pakistan's diasporic culture. The diasporic culture is a blend of traditional values and the current environment. In Pakistan, the traditional identity is a complex mix of religious and national identity. This complexity complicates things for the diaspora. The collection is a reflection of these intertwined realities that embraces the ever-changing nature of fashion. The garments are designed to be recognizably Pakistani and reference its national identity by including details from traditional wear, while also being positioned to appeal to a broader, global market. The images invite people to view traditional-wear in a new light and invite various people from different backgrounds to see themselves in "Pakistani" clothing. The collection challenges the need to categorize clothing as either traditional wear, national clothing or contemporary fashion; it crosses these borders and intentionally blurs the lines.

In the photographs, In the photographs, I staged the clothes in a Pakistani style, maintaining the over-all silhouettes while mix-matching with basic streetwear items like T-shirts, tanks, sneakers and flip-flops. Image 38, for



Image 38

Left: an over-sized shirt referencing hand-me-down clothes from rural areas paired with straight-fit pants; a nod to *nawabi* pants and *churidar* pants.

Right: a vest paired with T-shirt and *shalwar*-shaped pants.

example, illustrates the type of over-sized, hand-me-down, worn out shirt seen in the rural areas of Pakistan, paired with *nawabi pajamas*, *pajamas* from the old days worn by the Muslim royals of India. Usually, in Pakistan the clothing for different classes is distinctive. For example, certain royal outfits have remained unchanged for decades. By pairing royal *nawabi* pajamas with an oversized shirt, reminiscent of the rural areas of Pakistan, I create an intentional clash and challenge the expectations of Pakistani fashion. On the other hand, a vest is commonly worn with a *shalwar kameez* or a suit in Pakistan. I have paired a vest with a T-shirt, to acknowledge a new generation of fashion in an urban setting. The outfit in Image 39 shows a long-hemmed red shirt, recalling a *kameez*, beneath a sweater—a staple of global streetwear—paired with *nawabi* pajamas. The combination of clothing worn by nobles and clothing worn by working class Pakistanis creates a positive tension.



Image 39

a blue sweater, common in urban streetwear, layered with red shirt drawn from a *kameez* pattern, paired with straight pajamas/pants.



Image 40 shows two looks; the one on the left contains the silhouette of the *shalwar kameez*, while the one on the right recalls outfits from the early days of Pakistan, with the hem length and structure of a *sherwani*. *Sherwanis* are normally worn with Punjabi *shalwar*. Punjab is regarded as the cultural heart of Pakistan and is its fashion center. Balochistan, on the other hand, is geographically and culturally isolated, and the Baluchi people are less affluent. By pairing a *sherwani*--a garment associated with cultural elites--and a Balochi *shalwar*, I am intentionally defying expectations. By doing so, I make a point of acknowledging the many diverse voices that form Pakistan.

Image 41 is reflective of Zia's era of vests over *shalwar kameezes*, however, in this case, the *kameez* is a hoodie that can be styled with shorts or track pants. The garments are cut and stitched like a *shalwar kameez*, with minor changes, using materials like fleece and corduroy; fabrics typical of global street fashion but not of Pakistan. In Image 42 is another version of a vest over a *shalwar kameez*, turned into a stylish overcoat. On the left is a navy sweater paired with a tank top. The mixing of various elements of royalty, working class and urban fashion allows me to challenge fashion preconceptions that exist within Pakistan.



Image 40

Left: a mid-calf length jacket with *sherwani* construction—formal shoulders and a flared hem—paired with a Balochi *shalwar*.

Right: a *kameez*-inspired hoodie with a Punjabi *shalwar*-inspired pair of pants.



Image 41

A *kameez*-inspired fleece hoodie, paired with a corduroy vest and *shalwar*-influenced pants.



Image 42

Left: an over-sized sweater revealing a white tank top, paired with *nawabi* pants.

Right: an over-coat worn over a plain white T-shirt and *shalwar*-inspired pants.

## 10. Conclusion:

Historically, Pakistani designers have looked to the west for fashion inspiration. Many in the west see ethnic wear as regressive, irrelevant and archaic. In an attempt to both preserve and represent ethnic art and design, Pakistani designers often appropriate local fashions by using stories, motifs and colors and turn them into street items like pants, hoodies, shirts or western dresses. The process isn't always inclusive of the makers or their techniques--especially the tailors--endangering the longterm health and sustainability of Pakistani craft.

The project's outcome is threefold. First, it is an ethnic wear collection, designed to counter the global perception of ethnic art and design, by hybridizing techniques and insight from western fashion with the patterns and details of traditional Pakistani clothing. Technical details are intentionally designed to allow the garments to be sewn by any traditionally trained Pakistani tailor. Second, the project outcome is informed by traditional Pakistani garments in order to celebrate the craft of Pakistani tailors and create broader appreciation, and a broader, international market for their skills. By using contemporary fashion design techniques like collage and pattern manipulation, I intend to push traditionally trained tailors, and I avoid mindlessly adopting western standards. Third, the project outcome offers a new perspective, merging Islamic traditionalism and western modernism. Pakistani clothing is developed on Islamic traditions. As mentioned earlier in the paper, Pakistani clothing is a new generation of Islamic clothing blended with colonial influences. Due to tension between western and Islamic social habits, it is natural for Pakistani or other Muslim people to be uncomfortable with aspects of western influence. However, because the Pakistani diaspora is scattered so widely, exposure to western media and western cultural influence is unavoidable. My work starts a conversation about Pakistan's past, present and future, and acknowledges cultural shifts.

## 11. Future Directions:

Although my work is Pakistan-centric, as someone living in the diaspora, I belong to a wider and more diverse community. As a designer, I want to make work that helps to change the way people view ethnic wear. I intend to showcase my work on the international stage, by entering competitions, participating in shows and exhibiting in galleries, in order to start conversations about the semiotics of ethnic wear. I also plan to launch my own collection. I am currently in the process of seeking feedback from the Qatari market by displaying three items from my collection at THE///PROJECT, a local menswear brand, in Mina District, Doha branch. I am also lending my clothes within my friend groups with diverse lifestyles; from young men with an active night life, to young entrepreneurs to more traditional young boys. My aim is to develop and display my work in reference to Pakistani culture, while also sharing images of items from my collection styled and placed in diverse settings paired with other streetwear items like shorts, scarves, sneakers and caps. Images 43 & 44 feature my friends wearing clothes from my collection to a meeting and a nightclub, paired with items from their own wardrobes.



Image 43



Image 44



Streetwear items like hoodies, tees etc. are not gender exclusive, meaning both genders could easily wear them. Thus, I am also currently seeking feedback from young women, especially those practicing modesty. I do so keeping in mind the religious identity of Pakistan. Islam has a diverse history that spans many diverse nations. Pakistani-wear is already modest. I am asking modest women about my collection in hopes to keep pushing the ideas of modest-wear beyond cultural clothing.

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