



## MR. MANISH MALHOTRA

Indian Fashion Designer,  
Entrepreneur and Filmmaker

Taken by the Editorial Board

**YT:** As someone who started his journey in the fashion designing industry with minimal knowledge and training, you have emerged as one of the most accomplished fashion designers in India. Having worked in this dynamic industry for such a long period of time, how did you manage to develop your skills while applying your creativity in different projects?

**KT:** Browse and observe, interact with the young generation about their needs and aspirations. It can be challenging to keep up, but what keeps me going is my curiosity towards this ever-changing world of trends and still infusing my bit of individuality to their taste.

**YT:** You have, from a very young age, been passionate about fashion designing, because of which you chose a career in the fashion industry over your established family business. Given the uncertainty of success in pursuing an art, how did you gather the courage to pursue fashion designing when you had a well-planned future already laid out for you?

**KT:** Well, art can help alleviate uncertainty. Of course, there is no guaranteed solution to overcome obstacles, so I chose to take as much advice from artists and designers as I deemed fit. I learnt on the go. I took every opportunity to observe and learn from it, and my passion took me forward. We all have different circumstances and ways of approaching artistic practice, and in the end, only you can decide what is best for you.

**YT:** As the world grows smaller because of social media, our lifestyles are being influenced by the best of all cultures. When it comes to bridal couture and wedding collections, how do you think the fusion of Indian and western silhouettes is influencing fashion designing today?

**KT:** Today, both men and women want contemporary styles and vintage charm to blend. I believe fusion wear leaves ample room for getting as creative as one can be with their choice of clothes. It allows the person to break away from the norms. Our designs cater to such demands and need to have a heavy western and Indian influence in one outfit.

But then, when it comes to traditional as well, I have always believed that we should keep the tradition intact where we celebrate our age-old crafts and embroideries and give a modern twist with our cuts.

**YT: You played a key role in the 'Behind the Mask' campaign which aims to assist the artisans and craftsmen who lost their livelihood during the pandemic. As a member of both the Bollywood and the fashion industry, do you think that these artisans and craftsmen do not get the deserved recognition? What can be done to supplement their craft by the government and the society alike?**

**KT:** We have been working with local artisans for decades now. Mijwan Welfare Society is an NGO which is very close to my heart, where I work with Shabana Azmi and Namrata Goel to empower women who produce some of the most beautiful chikankari work for the Manish Malhotra brand. I believe that we are in a position where we should listen to their voices, build on their strengths and think out of the box. They preserve our age-old crafts and hone their skills for years. Therefore, we should collectively address that and help them in every possible way to encourage and support them.

**YT: Your work involves dealing with several high-profile clients and understanding what they exactly want. After almost 15 years of the launch of your label, which now has an established brand name, do you think that interpersonal skills are a necessity in the fashion industry so that one's craft can be used effectively to meet the needs of the client?**

**KT:** In absolutely any industry, confidence is important even when you lack validation. Optimism works even when you feel low and defeated and most importantly, love and passion for what you do will always show in your work which people will recognize and appreciate. All of this helps you to

strike the right conversations where you will find yourself talking about subjects that will flow naturally, hence enhancing your interpersonal skills. Of course, when that happens, it automatically helps you develop this skill further, gradually understanding the needs of your audience.

**YT: Fashion is always evolving, morphing, and transforming and thus, it is very important to keep up with the trends and be mindful of the changing environment. In instances wherein your personal views are contrary to the existing trends, how do you maintain objectivity and take initiatives against your intuition for the benefit of the organization?**

**KT:** Every day comes with a new trend, something more fun and exciting than yesterday, and it is so natural to go where everyone else is going. But I am very well aware of my traits, goals and prioritize them over everything else. Also, I have been known to work with my intuition, so no matter what the trend is, if I am not feeling it, I am not succumbing to it just because everyone is. For me, I choose to create my own.

**YT: When you design costumes for a movie, the work has to be done keeping in mind the demand of the script. In such instances, are the costumes designed solely based on the storyline or do you try to incorporate the current trends in those designs too? In the latter scenario, how do you ensure that these trends blend perfectly with the storyline?**

**KT:** The script is very important when it comes to movies. You cannot have someone look glamorous if the character they are playing is a simple one. The style of the character helps the audience understand the story better because not only do they see them act the character but they also see them look the part which makes it convincing. So, I have always stuck to the character, no matter what the on-going trends are.

**YT:** For an already established brand in the fashion industry, creating trends is more important than catering to the existing ones. Having already established a brand name for your label, do Bollywood movies play a significant role in helping market the brand and its new collections or are these projects merely a source of generating revenue?

**KT:** The fashion in movies has always influenced our real life. All of the looks that I created on screen, turned into some of the most iconic looks for the audience. Whether it is Kareena Kapoor in 'Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham' and 'Jab We Met' or be it Priyanka Chopra and Deepika Padukone's sarees in 'Dostana' and 'Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani', and many more. Till date, we have requests from clients to replicate the look for them which is a big compliment and for which, I am grateful.

**YT:** You have become more than a destination for timeless Indian fashion and your creation spans across broad spheres of Bollywood, styling, diffusion and everlasting bridal and customized designs. What message would you like to give to the students of St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Kolkata to motivate them to pursue their dreams?

**KT:** Work hard, stay focused and learn to love whatever you do. I truly believe that if you love what you do, you will never feel like it is work. Be passionate and driven and at the end of it all, never give up.