FASHION TRENDS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON OUR CULTURAL AND SOCIAL IDENTITY

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Abstract : The aim of the article is to focus on matters of clothing which act as a symbol of cultural & social identity. Fashion portrays our individual culture; it is our self- expression, a non-verbal form of communication. Every country has unique characteristics that are portrayed through clothing, their customs, language, and folklore. Changes in culture influence the fashion that is created in that culture or area. The design and fabric selection are also influenced by culture, for example using indigenous materials creates a strong local identity. Culture is one of the pillars of the fashion industry and patterns; fabrics and garments represent our social and cultural values in many ways. Every trend has its roots somewhere in history. There are socio cultural changes occurring in the society and world fashion may have been taken over by western outfits, but some people still make it a point to stay connected with their traditional dress. Even after the strong Impact of the Britishers, we Indians have kept our tradition and carried it forward, but the ongoing and upcoming western trends are influencing our Indian society at large. We need to promote our cultural heritage so that the superficial layer of other cultures vanishes and showcases our Indian culture and trends globally to keep our treasure alive. It is our commitment to take these rich Indian traditional costumes, having long cultural continuity, globally.

IndexTerms - **Fashion trends; Social identity; Culture; Impact on future**

INTRODUCTION

India's has contributed yoga, zero, architecture, heritage, traditions to the world. Another significant contribution that must be added to the list is fashion. India has long been an inspiration to the international fashion. Diversity and influences that designers can draw from every region is immense, and no other country can come close to it. Indians are recognized for their eye-catching beauty and fashion as well as for their rich hereditary arts and crafts, which is evident with the widespread of priceless paintings and sculptures spread across the subcontinent.

The impact of Indian Culture on global fashion is not recent. As the fashion market began its expansion to different continents, Indian clothing brands have gained enormous popularity in the globally. This popularity is due to the comfort, durability, extensive style and designs that are available along with the flexibility of the clothing for various occasions. Adding to which, the eye-catching appeal of the garments is also one of the factors to its popularity.

In this article, we have tried to comprehend the impact of the Indian culture on international fashion; how traditional Indian clothing have become relatable words in the global fashion market.

Fashion is something we deal with every day. There have been a lot of changes and evolution in the history of fashion. Fashion can affect the economy of a country or the whole world. It serves as an art form and can affect someone's personal life. Fashion can be considered as one of the biggest factors that affects the society and that can be affected by the society. It has always been there and will be present for as long as humans exists. Trends or styles are really what the fashion world go round- a new trend catches on, designers make their own versions, the public buy these products, the trend fades and a new trend emerges. Trends exist in all fields such as; clothing, footwear, accessories, makeup, body piercing, tattooing, plastic surgeries, Interior Design or furniture, though trends in clothing are more famous than any other. Designers are frequently introducing new trends in clothing. Some examples of the latest trends that have become popular are: - Retro style, Bell Bottoms, Bobby print, Chiffon sarees, Anarkali's suits, Mumtaz saree, velvet garments, skinny pants, etc. The Society is a community of people living in a country or region and sharing customs, laws, and organization. In our society there are various classes, and each have their unique way of dressing and lifestyle. We need to keep in consideration every class of people while speaking about society. The garments we wear depict our personality, having positive as well as negative impact on our society. The innovations and talent of the new generation and designers is worth complimenting. They have popularized the Indian trends globally. On the other hand, the new trends are projecting a negative impact in minds of the people, especially with girls, skirts are getting shorter, and the neck lines are getting deeper. Due to this current scenario, India's heritage and tradition is getting lost. The new generation is blindly aping the West, there very few who still prefer the traditional Indian apparel in functions and rather prefer the LBD and that LITTLE will soon become TINY. All these are under the garb of freedom of expression and women empowerment.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

• To study the latest fashion trends in India.

•To examine the emerging trends in apparel sector in India.

• To understand the apparel trends of ancient India.

• To analyze the challenges faced by the society due to the current fashion trends and its impact in India

• To think on the degree of influence on later generation due to new fashion trends in India.

FACTORS THAT AFFECT FASHION AND SETS THE TRENDS

'Nothing is constant except for change!' Fashion is nothing but an everchanging trend. This term is associated with clothes and accessories majority of the times. People relate fashion to what they wear. Though fashion is a wider concept, it has narrowed down to fabric, apparel, and accessories in modern times. The following factors affects / influences the Trends 1) Social norm 2) Fashion education, 3) Mass media, 4) Peer groups, 5) Social criticism 6) Environment 7) Customs, traditions, 8) Religion, 9) Work, 10) Leisure activities 11) Wealth or change in income, 12) Inspiration by friends, 13) Changing trends and Values, 14) Influence by family members, 15) Education, 16) Age

There is limited literature on fashion trends of India and little emphasis is placed on the impact of these trends on society on the above parameters. Dr Parul Bhatnagar (2012) professed in her book 'Traditional Indian Costumes and Textiles' that, it is "Costume" which establishes his/ her individual identity in society, and which also links up with social hierarchy. According to Anamika Pathak (2008) Indian costume is outcome of nearly four thousand years of history wrought with significant political, economic, social, and cultural upheavals and influences. The costumes which form an integral part of any historical dominant culture in India has also gone through several crucial transformations. According to Usha Kulshreshtha and Radha Kashyap, Clothes may make us self- confident, jolly, free, or they may make us self-conscious, shy, sensitive, and restrained. They determine how much we go into society, the places we go to, exercise we take. Sharon Lee Tate in the book 'Inside Fashion Design' says that inevitably, constant exposure to different cultures and the way people interpret fashions around the world influences fashion trends. To study and understand the present scenario of fashion apparel trends in India and their impact in context of the history of clothing, descriptive and case study approach has been taken to see the degree of impact on future. Also, the research consists of application of secondary data, which has been collected from the reports, journal, previous studies, books, websites etc.

EVOLUTION OF FASHION IN INDIA

The present Indian village bears little resemblance to its predecessor of about six thousand years ago. For centuries, Indian Costumes and Textiles have been admired for their great aesthetics and cultural values. Humans are naturally attracted to clothes and their proper utilization on the unclothed body is not ugly, on the contrary it is beautiful and pleasing. Clothing not only to cover the body and embellish it; they also constitute a significant non-verbal medium of communication that establishes the cultural identity of a person's community or country of origin at any given historical period. They aid in understanding fashion trends prevalent during historical timeframe. It has been observed that fashion trends change directions every ten to twenty years. History is testament to the fact that man has throughout been investigating and innovating for their need fulfillment. It can therefore be stated that their essential love of nature has been manifested directly or indirectly in all such creations. Human needs, socio-geographical conditions and our economic status are fully represented therein. Particularly, the traditional dresses exhibit the influence of social life, seasons and field of work. The historical continuity of fashion can be a guide in the prediction of fashion trends (Sproles, 1981). There are three main sources – archeological evidence, literary references, and actual costumes- that establish crucial proofs in the reconstruction of the history of Indian costumes. The archeological history of Indian textiles starts from the Indus Civilization (4000 BC), followed by Buddha period, the Maurya and Sunga Periods (c. 324-72 BC), the Satvahana Period (c. 200BC-AD 250), the Kushan Period (c. 130BC-AD 185), and the Gupta Period (c. AD 4th-5th)

Indian Fabrics were always treated as exotic and the British fell in love with our cotton and indigo. These Indian textiles impressed the British tastes before the Raj. But once they started ruling, everything changed, a new culture emerged and so did a change in cultural identity. A glaring difference was apparent in the dressing of the British and Indians. After looking at the clothing choices of the Britishers, Indians felt degraded, they thought that their customs and costumes showcased illiteracy and so stopped wearing their native clothes. And thus started the revolution, Indians tried to change their clothing choices and followed the British people. "The process of imitation and adaptation are central to our understanding of creativity. Human cultures evolve through a continuous exchange of ideas, beliefs, habits, and forms. Dressing habits constitute a fertile plain in which this exchange takes place." (Artemis Yagou: 2009). Though many trends came and went but the impact and rise of a "westernized" society in India was a result of the British Raj. Though this trend did not last for long.

PRESENT TREND

Presently, you can describe Indian clothing industry experiencing a blossoming stage. Versatility in Indian clothing styles reflects the diversity in India. Clothing is undergoing amazing changes in this globally. Fashion is the reflection of the society. Many influential personalities in history have also impacted fashion, but nevertheless however competitive and innovative the Fashion industry maybe, it must follow the "Fashion Cycle", which has no specified period. Some styles stay for longer periods of time, some become obsolete early, whereas some styles are repeated years after they were declined. Thus, we can say that fashion changes with time and is always evolving to suit the taste, lifestyle and demands of the society. A new trend is introduced every day. We see people having their own different and unique choice of dressing, some love to dress in a peppy and trendy manner, some love casual dressing, some may prefer voluminous clothing whereas some prefer sober clothing. Still, there are a few who like Indian costume and dresses. The focus is on the current generation. Trends change according to the change in peoples taste in all kinds of apparels. Many Indian designers have established prominent places in the fashion market. Innovative and exciting designs created by designers have made a great impact on uplifting Indian clothing trend in the international market and have increased the acceptability of Indian clothing globally. In the present times the fusion of Indian and Western garments giving a contemporary look is in great demand garments across the globe. Indian clothing trends have continued to evolve over the passing of time. Technical and smart textiles are paving their way when we talk about the recent trends and future of apparel. Technical textiles are the fabrics that have been developed with the technologies providing added value to the wearer. From flying dresses, self-illuminating textiles to the dresses which give protection to elderly from fractures or may have anti-aging properties. Some of the popular trends in apparels are off-shoulder one-piece dresses, ripped

jeans, Neon funky T-shirt, bra tops, colorful coats for women, floral pants, shrugs, harem pants, formal skirts, trousers, jumpsuits, kaftan/poncho shirt, palazzo, tunics, LBD, etc. "Leggings seen as a fashion forward statement in the 80s is now a universal trend that has become mainstream fashion and this versatile fashion are the fashion world's latest obsession (Apparel Online, 2011).

RECENT TRENDS
The survey analysis shows that growth of 20-30% is expected in fashion trends in next 5 years and therefore the forthcoming trends will be at larger scale and may influence a larger population. The prominent question and excitement are which trend will become popular?

IMPACT ON SOCIETY
There can be a discussion about the positive or negative effect of fashion trends on people of today, regardless, it can be agreed that the apparel industry has grown to become very popular and influential. Society consists of the population including infants, small kids, teens, adults, working population, and senior citizens. There are varied categories with different age groups, profession, and mindsets, thus the effect or the influence of the fashion trends will differ from category to category or say individual to individual. Fashion has never been constant and is rapidly changing. The age when the impact of anything is at peak is between 10-24 as at this age, we are vulnerable and ready to adapt to change without differentiating between what is actually good and bad. As per research it was found that more than half 55% of the urban youth in follow latest trends in lifestyle, clothing etc. Over time, we have realized that there is positive as well as negative impact of fashion trends on society. Some of the impacts are shared below.

POSITIVE IMPACT
• New and innovative designs and trendy looks are invented.
• Designers are given a chance to express their talent in the Apparel industry.
• There are limitless opportunities available in the Apparel sector.
• The new fashion enhances the look of an individual giving them a fresh and modern look.
• Being fashionable and stylish helps to attract the opposite sex and get noticed by someone they like.
• Though the world is full of diversity and varied cultures, Fashion and apparels unite everyone. It connects people globally because fashion is easily communicated from one city to the other.
• Your appearance and how you express yourself creates the first impression people have of you.
• The popularity of Fashion and apparel trends is visible on television, magazines, and internets and other social media and influences people.

NEGATIVE IMPACT
• The present generation is inclined towards western culture forgetting Indian culture and ethnics.
• They are more interested in the latest Hollywood fashion and trends than their own country. They have shown a preference for western outfits rather than traditional outfits.
• Young girls emulate the zero size that are projected by fashion industry, leading to dangerous health disorders like anorexia, mental health issues, body mutilation and sometimes even committing suicides.
• The appealing and daring advertisement of the latest apparel and trends projecting what's hot and what's not has a strong influence on the teens.
• Indian fashion has also been influenced by the global scenario in the economic perspective.
The survey indicates that there is an importance and demand of apparels and so to ensure the future, we need to take some major and frequent steps. Designers are already working hard to create new and innovative Indo-western garments combining the traditional costume with the modern and western look preferred by the present generation.

IMPACT IN FUTURE
The rich textiles of India are popular and valued in counties across the globe, whereas Indians themselves are unaware of the treasure they have gained. The evolution of Indian fashion has been visible over the years, combining both the traditional and modern look. With a strong western influence on Indian culture, we may see future of fashion very different from its past, paving the way for a futuristic style. The. Globalization, interconnectedness of people through social media and the easy accessibility of diverse cultures, are likely to force a convergence of fashion trends in architecture, music, and apparel.

SUGGESTIONS
Fashion has truly become a serious business in India (Textile Trends, 2010). The styles should be created keeping in mind our rich and diverse Indian culture and textiles. We should not blindly follow the global trends. With the popularity of the "MAKE IN INDIA" concept we can carry our tradition forward by:
• Increasing the usage of 'made in India' apparels.
• Increase in employment by ornamenting dresses with Indian embroidery and promoting it globally.
• Beautiful and innovative styles can be introduced in our Indian costume for acceptance by the youth as they always on the lookout for change.
• By wearing traditional costumes in the festivals and rituals so that the tradition can be passed on to the coming generations.

CONCLUSION
The main aim of the article is to understand how we are impacted by the ever-changing apparel trends. There have been noticeable changes in fashion over the centuries but still the Indian culture and treasures are kept alive by our ancestors even after the strong influence of Britishers. But now we can see the influence of western culture and new fashion trends are more influential which is not only changing the fashion choices but also the minds of generations. We can see the Indian youth adopting western trends, the West getting influenced by Indian culture and practices. The present society wants to get modern, but this doesn't mean to blindly follow the west. Indian fashion today is about change, price, brand, confidence, and position, but nevertheless, we can conclude that the beauty lies within ourselves and not in the trends. It is your choice whether you want to get influenced by prevailing trends or create

your own trend and become an influencer. "Don't be into trends. Don't make fashion own you, but you decide what you are, what you want to express by the way you dress and the way to live." —Gianni Versace.

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