

1920s FASHION: DAWN OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION

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Abstract: The 1920s commonly called **Roaring Twenties** was a period of economic prosperity with a characteristic cultural shift, large-scale development and use of automobiles, telephones, movies, radio, and electrical appliances. This was the time of economic and social development. At the emergence of the 1920s, the world was still whirling from the First World War. The struggle had ended just over a year before the new decade began, had an essential and permanent effect on society, culture, and fashion. The Fashion trends of women were truly reflecting the newly found liberation of women. Indispensable to these new styles was a sense of minimalism that had not previously been seen in women's fashion.

Index terms- Roaring twenties, cultural shift, commercial evolution, women liberation.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The 1920s commonly called **Roaring Twenties** was a period of economic prosperity with a characteristic cultural shift, large-scale development and use of automobiles, telephones, movies, radio, and electrical appliances. Countries saw quick business and commercial evolution, augmented consumer demand, and introduced significant new changes in lifestyle and culture. The media, funded by the new industry of mass-market advertising driving consumer demand, focused on celebrities, especially sports heroes and movie stars, as cities rooted for their home teams and filled the new palatial cinemas and gigantic sports stadiums. Democracy was at its rise and women were getting voting rights. The essence of the Roaring Twenties was marked by a universal sense of innovation connected to [avant-gardism](#) and a break from the customs. Everything appeared to be possible through modern technology. New technologies, especially automobiles, [moving pictures](#) to [radio](#), brought "modernity" to a large part of the population. Formal decorative frills were shed in favor of [practicality](#) in both daily life and architecture. At the same time, [jazz](#) and dancing rose in popularity, in opposition to the mood of World War I. This period often is denoted as the [Jazz Age](#). Paris set the fashion trends for Europe and North America. The fashion for women revolved around freedom and getting loose. Commemorated in movies and magazine covers, young women's fashions of the 1920s set both a new trends as well a social statement and it was a break-off from the rigid [Victorian](#) way of life. These young, rebellious, middle-class women, labelled 'flappers' by older generations, completed discarded the corsets and dressed in slinky knee-length dresses, which exposed their legs and arms. Cosmetics, during this time became extremely popular.

2.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

Objective of the present study is to identify, understand and discuss the Fashion of 1920s and its relation to society. It also aims to study the relation between women's liberation and Fashion of this decade.

3.0 DATA & SOURCES OF DATA:

The data has been collected from various websites and books

4.0 FINDINGS: DAWN OF THE MODERN ERA

The 1920s was a period of deliverance, transformation, and also a movement towards the modern era. Fashion in the 1920s mottled all over the decade but one could see the perceptible transformation from the previous fashion statements and eras. The Women's Rights Movement era started to propagate and change ethically, communally and economically. The people in society had now started reacting to the new world and it reflected new lifestyle for everyone but primarily for women. Women now had a desire to express themselves

and live how they wanted to. Women considered Fashion as an important means of self-expression. They wanted to exhibit their newly found freedom and modern lifestyle, which resulted in women abandoning the constrained fashions of previous years. At the start of the decade, women began emancipating themselves from the constricting fashions by wearing more comfortable apparel. Women now felt free-spirited and just merely desired to have a little fun again. Explicitly, women were enduring a greater sense of individuality as well as independence.

4.1 CHANGING ROLE OF WOMEN

The 1920s is considered to be period of social revolution, coming out of World War I, culture changed as inhibitions distressed out and the youngsters commanded novel experiences and more freedom from old controls. A new woman could be seen as a "flapper" who was reckless danced, drank, smoked and voted. This new woman cut her hair short, wore lots of make-up, and partied. She was known for being light-headed and taking risks. New occupations opened for single women in offices and schools, with remunerations that helped them to be more independent.

Noteworthy deviations in the lives of **working women** happened in the 1920s, which had never occurred before this ever. **World War I** had temporarily allowed women to enter into industries such as chemical, automobile, and iron and steel manufacturing, which were once considered unsuitable work for women. Black women, who had been traditionally padlocked out of factory jobs, began to find a place in industry during World War I by accepting lower wages.

The attainment of suffrage resulting in feminists transferring their efforts towards other goals. Groups such as the **National Women's Party** sustained the political fight and proposed the **Equal Rights Amendment** in 1923 and functioning to eliminate laws that used sex to discriminate against women, but several women moved their focus from politics to challenge traditional definitions of womanhood.

The fashion of the 1920s has enormously changed the attitude of how women wanted to be professed. This important decade has greatly influenced our fashion today. Before the roaring twenties hit, women had to deal with not having the same rights as men, and were often dictated what and what not to wear. Women had to contest the system to magnify their given rights and also stood up for how they wanted to express themselves. Before this time period Women felt caged up. They spoke and no one listened, they had had enough and stood up for what they wanted and started to do what they wanted to do, to make themselves happy.

4.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF 1920s FASHION

The Fashion obviously was well-defined itself as the fashion of the modern era. This period became recognized as the "**Roaring 20s**". World War 1 was lastly over; art and artistic expression were alive again, and with it came new and colourful cloths and materials. The roaring 20's was an era that saw the Harlem Renaissance, ladies elective and a sudden increase in prosperity for the middle-class.

Hats, shoes, dresses, handbags and jewellery all perfected each other, creating a fashionable style that was both unique and tuneful. To get the full impact of this style it needs to be seen in living colour as black and white snaps simply don't do it impartiality.

Due to the new technology available allowing movies to have both sound and color, the movie industry in Hollywood propagated very fast, as did the number of Cinemas showing the films. In 1919, laws were passed for the Prohibition of the consumption and even possession of alcohol, making it illegal. Due to these laws, the Decade provided some of the best known gangsters a means to create vast wealth by opening illegal bars called speakeasies that rendered alcoholic drinks to individuals that visited these launches.

Jazz was prevalent music of choice and some of the best known musicians were jazz musicians including Duke Ellington and Al Jolson. A popular dance of the times was known as the Charleston.

4.3 WOMEN'S FASHION:

1920s fashion for women is often mentioned to as revealing and flamboyant. Trends such as **lengthy gem bracelets, bobbed hair, cloche hats**, thin knee-high dresses were a mark of 1920. Many fail to see that 1920s fashion was also very erotic, elegant and contemporary. 1920s fashion was a lot more than the cliché Flapper dresses that so many individuals connect with the era.



As new prospects ascended, women started to shed the restraining clothing of the previous centuries. Corsets were overlooked and replaced with looser fitting camisoles.

Designers gained more liberty of manifestation with the new dresses and tops of the twenties. Colourful, flamboyant materials displayed the joy the women which was because of the end of the war and their new self-determination and liberation. As the 1920s came to a close, one can see how the apparels became more contented for females and much less constricting causing in a slimmer outline for females.

During this epoch, manufacturers of women's apparel established better production techniques. The designs created during this decade were joyful and fun loving, 1920s fashions were made long-lasting yet inexpensive. So even working-class families could avoid to step out in style with clothing that held up well to manifold usages. This triggered pronounced social change that was inspired by 1920s fashions to binge beyond the wealthy and social elite and spread across to all classes.

Ladies fashion in the 1920s was perceptibly and almost offensively flamboyant Turning their back on the more deterring, tubular dresses of the 1910's, the liberated women of the time turned to more comfortable clothing such as short pants or skirts.

In the years 1880-1910, the ideal female profile would resemble the letter "S". Ladies would force themselves into corsets and squeeze their waists down to often below 20 inches in diameter. This would raise their ribcage producing a prominent chest or "pigeon front". The sides would be pushed back and the rear raised or padded to produce the lower curve of the "S". Skirts were full length, often touching the floor as the sight of an ankle was considered rather racy. 1920s fashion brought change and women began flattening their busts and removing their corsets creating a less shapely look which became known as "Garçonne" which was French for "boyish".

Colourful silk tights also came back into fashion for those who could afford them. A unpremeditated and/or sport variety was also made from cotton lisle. 1920s fashion had tights being folded just above the knee and kept in room with garters.

A popular women's outfit of the time became a straight-lined chemise matched to a close-fitting cloche hat. In Europe, a hairstyle called the "Bubikopf" was becoming widespread..

Dances like the Charleston where presented allowing women to truly enjoy their new found freedoms, colours and fashion and to complement it the seams had risen to just below the knee, . Shorter hair, make-up and a greater work force participation all defined the new woman of the 1920s and set a exclusive but defined pathway for 1920s fashion.

Corsets and bustles of previous eras were swapped with **camisoles, bloomers or a chemise**. Short hair styles such as the Bob cut, the Marcel Wave or the Eton Crop developed popular as women started to adopt a more masculine look (women also started to flatten their hips and breasts to achieve that "boyish" look).

Swimsuits

1920s fashion saw bathing suits become more revealing as women started to express their new freedom. Bathing suits were either short taffeta outfits – favored by older women – or tight, sleeveless woolen tank suits with pre-fitted undershorts which only covered down to the mid-leg. Bathing caps became a necessity as ladies needed to protect their bobbed hair styles from getting wet. People of this era also became interested in health-foods and exercise. Sun bathing also became popular for many. Men's swim wear usually consisted of tank suits and under shorts, commonly made from wool to enhance the body's natural shape.



4.4 CONTRIBUTION OF FASHION DESIGNERS:

Fashion designer **Coco Chanel** was one of the more unfathomable fashion figures of the 1920s. who was recognized for her avant-garde designs. The clothes that she designed were a mixture of wearable, trendy, comfortable, and sophisticated. She was the one to introduce an unlike aesthetic into fashion and to empower freedom. She is considered to be the pioneer for women wearing pants and for the **Little Black Dress**, which were signs of a more independent lifestyle.

4.5 CHARACTERISTIC FLAPPER LOOK:

Fashion Designer Coco Chanel, the iconic flapper had been the one to bring about revolution in the Fashion Industry during the decade. The flapper and flapper image actually became visible in 1926 and even then was only in style for about three years. Characteristic flappers were women who exhibited a daring attitude and were primarily liberated women who didn't adhere to the formerly innocent housewife image. A flapper frequently had a bob haircut, a shorter than average dress, a flat chest, with lots of make-up, drank illegal alcohol, smoked with a long cigarette holder, bared her limbs and danced the Charleston.

This appeared a radical change from the typical American housewife to the thoughtless rebel. The flapper dresses hassled above the knee hemlines and construed straight, sleek shapes. This was the first time in centuries women's legs were being seen in a garment.

Flappers treasured jazzing up their outfit and also their image. Most flappers' dresses were festooned with jewels and intricate beading.



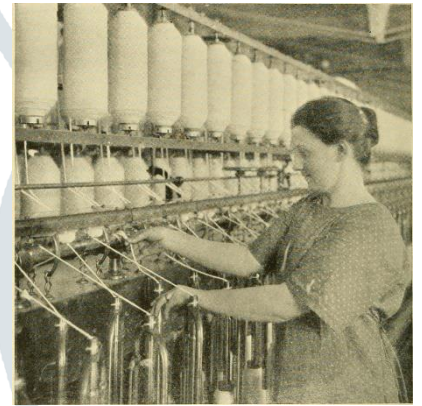
The main purpose of the flapper appearance was to look virtually boyish somewhat than looking feminine.

4.6 CLOTHING PRODUCTION

1920s fashion, it is interesting to note, was still being made either at home, or by tailors and dressmakers. Ready to wear fashion of the industrial age didn't exist until the 1930s. The design houses of Paris would assemble two collections on an annual basis; a fall assembly and a spring collection. Each designer would then display their new creations on models in their salons. The designs would then be bought, replicated and altered to suit the physique of the wearer. This process would often require several fittings and the time and skill of seamstresses, tailors and their apprentices. 1920s fashion designs had to be simplistic abundant to be reproduced and altered without too much added expenditure.

The nineteen twenties developed as the first century where mass produced goods were categorically available and certainly made a substantial impression on everyone's lives. Mass produced apparels became accessible to more women who could afford them.

Since it was easier for women to make dresses at home it was also simpler for sweatshops to produce simple fashions. The styles were simple and uncomplicated, together with the increase in mass production, created fashion which was easily attainable to women of all income levels. Styles for all classes now were being heavily influenced by the newly depicted movie stars.



4.7 TRENDSETTERS

1920s fashion was also influenced by **celebrities like today**. People wanted to emulate their favourite stars, like Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks. The 1920s was also a time when people started identifying and appreciating the works of different **fashion designers**. Women's fashions were influenced by designer Coco Chanel, Greta Garbo, Clara Bow, **Anna May Wong**, **Louise Brooks**, **Dolores del Rio**, **Colleen Moore**, **Josephine Baker**, and the actress Marlene Dietrich. These women designed and wore more androgynous styles, with indeterminate hemlines and straighter, flowing dresses, and occasionally even pants. Men were predisposed by people such as Charles Lindbergh and F. Scott Fitzgerald.

4.8 WOMEN'S HAIR & MAKEUP

The poufy hair styles of the 1910s were gone as women started trimming their hair. More modern and stylish cuts such as the Bob Cut, the Marcel Wave, the Eton Crop or shingled styling's increased in acceptance and popularity. Individuals that resisted this trend would often draw their hair back and knot it with a chignon.

For 1920s fashion, cosmetics was simple: Cream rouge circling the cheekbones, eyebrows plucked and thinly pencilled in and pale powder. Vivid red lipstick was used to emphasize the "Cupid's bow" of the upper lip, and to embellish the width of the "P" on the lower lip. Thus producing what we now know as the "Rosebud Pout".



5.0 CONCLUSION:

1920s witnessed tremendous experimentation in women's fashion and part of that exploration was due to the commencements of the women's freedom movement that turned political in later years. Clothing has always been a reflection of economic, political and social condition of the society hence the change in women's clothing was now indicating the changing position of women in society in 1920s.

Regular people perhaps saw the movie star's fashion and make their own adaptations of it to create dynamic Fashion. During this time, Art had a predominantly extraordinary effect over the 1920s clothing. Bright textures were very popular throughout 1920s as compared to previous times when blacks, grays, and neutrals were so very popular. Fashion & Textile Designers began experimenting around with geometric arrangements and shapes. Lighter, brighter, and shorter became the new expectations of clothing in the 1920s,

Fashion designers began experimenting freely with more daring silhouettes and started using numerous fabrics, colors, textures, and patterns in their collections. All accessories right from hats, shoes, stockings, handbags to jewellery all came together in impeccable synchronization to generate an exclusive and elegant style .

As women gained more rights and World War I forced them to become more independent, flappers came to be, mass-produced garments became available, and artistic movements increased in popularity, one can see how the fashions from the roaring twenties characterized the time and redefined womanhood..

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