The Survival Secret of Indian Women Clothing

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Abstract

Women's garment is one of the symbols of urban landscape in India. Today we can see that despite passing historical ages and colonialism of Britain and also arriving modernism in to this country, women's clothing has not been changed; this has identified and preserved the cultural landscape in India. Garment and textile industry in India have an old background. This industry is extremely money making and so many management actions have been occurred to preserve it. Although there are big malls with famous brands, we can see Indian people wear cloths which are made in their own country and also women use their traditional garments. This process is succeed by numerous management, economic and cultural practices; in parallel with government policies in India, supporting domestic industry, custom legislation for imported goods, publicity, garment export beyond country border and creativity in printing and swing technics also played a crucial role in textile industry and make Indian garment a selected option by Indian women. Now it's the question, what is the main survival secret of this garment in many passed years? What made Indian garment chosen by Indian women?
This article is based on author's perception of urban landscape in India and also theoretical studies.

Keywords

Textile industry, Garment, Women, Cultural landscape, India.

Introduction

"Garment" -the most prominent cultural symbol- is the most important and significant symbols of ethic and also the most ready witted cultural indication which is promptly affected by acculturation beyond various human society. Yet some people believe, cultural domination achieves through clothing at first1. In addition, by changing people garment in a society, their life and productivity style will also change and some revolution in social life structure will happened. Furthermore, human being,in his social life, always use symbols to communicate and convey his message. "Clothing" is one of the most evident of these symbols which has its specific words. It is one of the most affective and useful ways in order to making identities. Identity -as a communication concept- is a criterion for distinguish the similarities and differences which is tied to our life roots and style. Clothing in this context is a symptom of individual's identity. Now, the only purpose of clothing is not just protecting, but let alone its aesthetic aspects, indicates one's personality and identification which also represent an individual's social level, power and influence. Some effective factors in clothing are climate, work and career, war and social development. Moreover,

we can't deny the role of traditional and cultural ceremonies like religious rituals, festivals and mourning ceremonies in forming the genre and color of garment (Fig.1). Traditions, customs and people's clothing are significant factors which aid legibility and identify in an environment. Cultural landscape is the result of interaction between human and its surrounding area, in which the presence of man is crucial.

"Cultural landscape is dynamic and collaborative" Based on world heritage of UNESCO definition. Cultural landscape is clearly distinguishable from people active intervention. In actual fact, based on urban landscape definition, cultural landscape is formed by human presence and its quality whether physically or his impression on his environment. It can be perceived that people with his particular clothing make space legible and identified. It's not the only factor which makes a space identified, but it's one of the most important features in city's cultural landscape. India is one of the countries which have arranged various actions to protect its cultural landscape. Preserving women clothing is one these actions. Despite passing historical periods, arriving modernism, women presence in social activities, Industrial development in India and so forth, still we can see Indian, specifically

Fig. 1.The symbolic wedding ceremony of "Shiva" and "Pavarotti". The garment of women who carry the poppets, is traditional Indian style,Udaipur, India. Photo: Shahrzad Khademi, 2012.
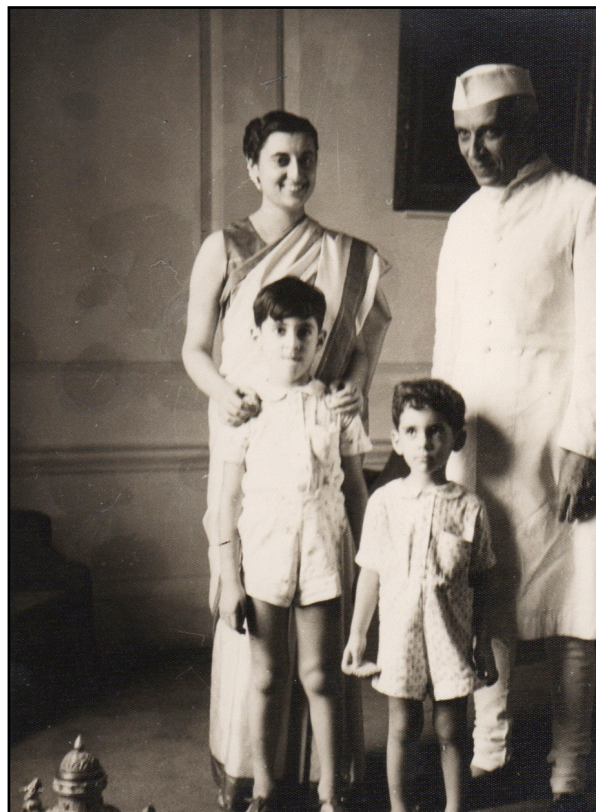

Fig. 2.Jawaharlal Nehru with his daughter Indira and grandsons, 1950s. Source: www.oldindianphotos.in

Indian women wear their original garments. In other words, although there are many changes in landscape of Indian cities and also building modernization, we can still distinguish Indian urban landscape by a photo (Fig.2). Now it's the question, what made women's Indian clothing survival? There are numerous economic, cultural, political and social factors in order to answer this question, which will come in follow.

Hypothesis

Indian government is made women clothing protected and revival by creating a proper economic, social and cultural context and also investment in textile industry and through this action conserves its country cultural landscape.

Indian economy

Textile industry in India is one the most avant-garde textile industries in the world. Although textile industry in India has not been organized until a few years ago, "change scenario" after "economic liberalization" has been begun since 1991. "Economic liberalization" has provided a proper context for textile industry in India; so that India is one of the most successful countries in this industry in the world. India imports very little textiles, with an import value of less than $1 billion in 2002, and more than half came from other Asian countries and territories. Bangladesh, by contrast, imported about 84 per cent of its textiles from the five big Asian countries and territories, but replacing Japan with India)KyvikNordås, 2004). Textile industry plays a crucial role in Indian economy. 27% of all trades in India are devoted to textile exportation. In addition, textile industry is 14% of whole industrial production in this country; this amount is approximately 4% of GPD and 17% of export revenue. Textile industry in India is the largest industry in terms of job creation in this country. This industry, not only in its portion offers jobs directly, but also in sub sections provides same opportunity indirectly. Textile industry and garment export during 2008-2009 valued about 20.02 billion USD in India, which is about 11.5% of all exporting of this country; whereas all imported textile during same years was only 2.33 billion USD (Bayati, 2011). There is no doubt that both China and India will gain market shares in the European Union, the United States and Canada to a significant extent, but the expected surge in market share may be less than anticipated, as proximity to major markets assumes increasing economic significance and tariffs are increasingly restraining trade

due to the fact that products cross borders several times (KyvikNordås, 2004). In addition, as far as India is concerned, there are a number of restrictions on the textile and clothing industry, including export quotas on cotton and cotton-based fibers in order to ensure that the domestic clothing industry has access to cheap local inputs (Ibid). Excessive domestic consumption, considerable export potential, creativeand risk-taking entrepreneurs, utilize the last technology in producing high quality fiber of raw materials and also government supportive policies, are the strength point of textile industry in India (The static and strategic department of Association of Iran Textile Industries, 2013).

• **Tax law**

There are different taxes in India, the method of calculation of which vary and depends on these taxes. Customs duty stands fourth after income tax, corporation tax, and service tax (mapsofindia.com). That is, importing goods, garments, and textile to this country requires heavy taxation.

• **Inexpensive workforce**

Textile industry in India, by nature, requires massive human workforce. Thus, it plays a prominent role in developed countries rather than underdeveloped countries. To resolve its problems rooting in its unskilled workforce, India is taking measures such as provision of insurance coverage for workers, attention to technical knowledge, understanding and recognizing the identity of textile workers, allocation of more benefits to the workers in exchange for long-term working commitment, and fostering a sense of occupational permanence among the workers (Fig.3). Although textile industry in India benefits from inexpensive workforce, the price of energy, the bank interest, and the customs tariff rates are high. In addition, the companies have to adapt themselves to the conditions of global market and in the market's competition the companies survive which have innovation. Activities such as investment on research and development sections as well as textile design sections are of great significance and can be considered as a key factor contributing to the success of the enterprise[2].

Creativity in design and renovation of Indian garments

In this circumstance, India's society hears the warnings that if not adjust Sari to today's life of Indian women, the new generation will forget this

Fig.3. Small knitting fabric workroom associated with cheap labor, are among the factors which made textile industry prospered in India. Photo: Shahrzad Khademi, Varanasi, India, 2012.

traditional garment. To believe this warning, one can mention Japanese Kimono as an example. As this garment is limited to religious rituals or wedding ceremonies. Indian cloth designers, using this slogan that cloth is a good canvas for innovations, attempt to save Sari from oblivion and by creativity revive Sari. On the other hand, some designers do not agree with fundamental changes in Sari. Neda Mahmood, an Indian cloth designer, states that she finds no problem with width and length of Indian fabrics. She only seeks lighter fabrics (Papi, 2011). Except for Sari, other garments such as SalwarKameez, GhagraCholi, and Kutra are among India's traditional garments which Indian women wear while working as they are more comfortable (Fig.4). There are numerous designing and manufacturing companies which by using innovative fabric and cloth design have opened the door to a greater reception of Indian clothes by Indian women. The variety of colors advanced sewing technologies, using Indian motifs on the clothes, and the variety

Fig.4. Examples of Indian women garments. 1.salwarkameez 2.Ghagracholi 3.Kurta. Source: www.indusdiva.com

of clothes extensions are among the factors contributing to their success. All the mentioned factors along with other factors such as Bollywood movies, wearing Indian clothes by popular actors and actresses, the measures government took for prosperity of garment and textile industry, and provision of a favorable context for women to choose their clothes from among Indian designed clothes or famous international brands. What is the policy of the government for using Indian clothes by women? Dictation or freedom of choice?

What are the factors contributing to prevalence of a type of garment?
• The first and foremost factor is the method of presentation. When a cloth is presented as the national and mandatory cloth, no matter how much it is in line with the culture and traditions of the country, it receives a negative reaction.
• The next factor is in-group advertisement. In addition to the role of media, seeing and prevalence are two interacting factors. Fashion and cloth design are not directly advertised. They instead come into vogue as they are seen on others. This impact is doubled when seen on a star or athlete.
• Tagging is used to distinct oneself from others for the purpose of self-expression rather than for self-awareness and also in response to a sense of belonging to a micro culture or a collection of micro cultures. That is, a piece of cloth bear a Nike tag sells not only for its quality but the cloth is also a representative for a living style or a thought.
• Accessibility and affordability are the other factors. In today's world that a global economy has formed and people have easy access to high quality western clothes, there is no reason to use highly priced and less accessible local clothes (www.avayefarhangi.blogfa.com).

Sociology and government's politics for developing Indian dresses
According to Fakouhi, a sociologist and instructor in university, "the Indians are really patriotic, and this is not for their common language, religion or tradition; since thousands of languages, cultures and religions are used there". Although his audience studied in Western countries, they like to put on costume in ceremonies. Their clothes are of two types: in ordinary situations or at work, they put on their Western clothes. On the other hand, for special ceremonies, they use their costumes. Most women wear Sari (Indian traditional dress for women). An inter-

esting point is that, one can hardly find a TV channel in India not showing the Indian programs. This is while the modern India is among the most advanced countries in modern technologies and humanistic sciences milieu. Ali Bolookbashi, a distinguished researcher and anthropologist from Iran, considers two clear and hidden identities and cultures. Clear identities refer to the clothes and behaviors that other can see by their eyes. Traditional cloth is a symbol and identity. Cloth is a kind of material extracted from culture and every country has its own clothes which are in harmony with environment and culture of that country. The clothes transmit from one generation to other and based on this fact, the current social system is generated. The existence of such varieties in women clothes are more than of men. In many regions in the world, for instance India, existence of traditional sources cause using these clothes in modern society and exporting them to other countries for example example Western countries. But lack of obligation is a fundamental condition. That is, the voluntary choice of clothes has a fundamental role in choosing clothes. The countries that culturalize successfully are those which eliminate obligation.[3]

Preserving traditions to protect cultural landscape
Voicing the distinctive Indian attitude towards past time, Nehru said that India is like an "ancient palimpsest" much like the "collage of time" discussed by Lynch, on which "layer upon layer of thought and reverie had been inscribed", and where all layers presently coexist to create the complex personality of India (Nehru, 1946: 47).
In a culture that believes in a cyclic view of time, it seems highly impracticable to use a concept like the U.S. National Register of Historic Places "period(s) of significance" to denote sometime in the "ancient past" for purposes of preservation. In India, features considered to be historically significant change over time. Not only do figures and events acquire fresh stature or fall into disgrace, but entire aspects of the past become newly worth saving or ripe for discarding (Lowenthal & Marcus,1981: 220).
This aspect of Indian culture needs periodical revision of "age" and "manifesto" homogenize it for keeping cultural landscape preservation process. Now the importance of intangible forms of heritage in India (e.g. customs, rituals, folklore, techniques, etc.) as opposed to only tangible material objects (e.g. buildings, landscapes, etc.) necessitates the abandonment of universal criteria of historic "integrity" and "authenticity". Finally, any attempts at

cultural landscape preservation in the context of a developing country like India must be closely tied with overall infrastructure development—including (but not limited to) promoting employment, sustaining traditional crafts, and alleviating poverty (Jain & Clancy, 2011).

Conclusion

India is a populous country consists of different religion with different traditions. Although Indian people have different religion, they live together peacefully and respect each other. This trait also exists in Indian government. The key success of Indian government -after supporting Indian producer, custom duties, advertising, inexpensive workforce, tax law and creativity in design, renovation of Indian garments and etc.- is freedom of clothing; which means Indian garment is the choice of Indian women and not an official obligation from government.

Indian government attempt to preserve its culture and traditions through protecting women clothing in two ways; firstly, made women traditional clothing as a part of its society identity and secondly, revitalize cultural landscape of India through this action, while in this contemporary world which all contractions are moving rapidly in to global style, an Indian city preserves its identity through protecting its cultural landscape.

Endnote

1. From the article: "Garment, cultural symbol" published in www.seemorgh.com

2. From the article: "strength and weak point of textile and garment industry of India" which is published in May 11th 2011 in www.kohanjournal.com

3. From discussion among Naser Fakouhi and Ali bolookbashi published in www.anthropology.ir

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