Research Paper

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Traditional Royal Costumes of Maharaja of Baroda State: A Contemporary Approach

Textiles

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Ms. Gurvinder Kaur Gundev — Teaching Assistant, Department of Clothing and Textiles, Faculty of Family and Community Sciences, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara, Gujarat, India

Prof (Dr.) Anjali Karolia — Head, Department of Clothing and Textiles, Faculty of Family and Community Sciences, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara, Gujarat, India

ABSTRACT

Maharajas are always known for their lavishness, jewels, big palaces, wealth and their outstanding bold attire. This research was conducted on one such Maharaja of Baroda state who was the eighth richest during his time. The researcher found it interesting to note that the design pattern and constructional details were looked into profoundly. The style and fashion undoubtedly is followed since time unknown.

The main objective of the research was to study the garment constructional details of the Maharaja's costume which he wore differently on different occasions.

It was revealed that two main garment styles most commonly worn by the Maharaja were Achkan and Angarakha with very interesting cuts and details which were made in ponderous textiles like kinkhabs, brocades, fine pellucid chanderi.

Angarakha was with a double breasted pattern with kalis which gave a flair to the garment and was worn on occasions like darbar, casual meetings etc. Achkan on another part was very formal wear which was worn on occasions like coronation and had the pattern where it was interestingly noticed to have hidden pocket in the princess line at the back and the buttons precisely seven in number with their monograms engraved on it.

Trimmings on the costumes were also very elaborate where a lot of surface ornamentation with gold and silver zardosi embroidery was done to complete that look of the garment.

It was concluded from the study that the garment's constructional detail was an important aspect of even the royals since olden days. These details can serve as a royal element in androgynous fashion as well as would create a fashion revolution.

Introduction

India is known for its rich, colorful and varied heritage of clothing each representing cultural tradition of its own. Reflecting true colorfulness and grace, Indian costumes offer world the amazing styles resulting out of intermingling of cultures.



Fig 1:Maharaja Sayajirao in Angarakha
Source:-http://lafayette.org.uk/bar8151.html

The word "Maharaja" – literally means "great king" – conjures up a vision of splendor and magnificence: ropes of pearls, huge diamonds, jeweled turbans, elaborately carved furniture, shimmering textiles in every imaginable color.

The fables encompassed a variety of characters, situations and circumstances and recount the extraordinary adventures of chivalrous and righteous kings and evils despots of a by gone era who ruled vast kingdoms, and fought incredible and fierce battles. They told of treacherous palace intrigues and conspiracies or escapades of strong and courageous Maharajas.

They lucidly described the untold wealth the Maharaja possessed in invaluable gold and jewels luxurious palaces and priceless stables of horses, elephants and camels.

The evolution of the Gaekwads is one of the most remarkable episodes in Indian history. In the 17th century, they were farmers. By the mid-18th century, they had become the rulers of the *Baroda* state, and by the early 20th century they assumed the status of the eight richest families on earth. The Gaekwads trace their origins to Pune- to a Maratha *Kshatriya* clan by the name of Matre, meaning minister. Legend has it that in the 17th century, a prosperous farmer called *Nandaji* had become a militant protector of cows, gaining the nickname "*Gae-kaiwari"* (one who protects cows). This label stuck to the family, but was simplified to "Gaekwad".

For centuries, Indian textiles have been admiring great aesthetic and functional qualities. In ancient times, designers in India belonged to various regional schools through the country. It was their fine creative instincts and extraordinary skill that gave Indian textiles their remarkable beauty. There are many renowned designers in India who's keen interest and desire to propose something new lead them to the path of ethnicity which help them in the creation of their extravagant collection and help to enrich their knowledge with the boons of royalty.



Fig 2:Maharaja Pratapsingh in Achkan Source: Central Library Baroda.)

The researchers got the inspiration to take up this topic as a study was from the royal textiles and costumes of Rajasthan royal family and by the 150 years celebration of The Maharaja Sayajirao III of Baroda. Researcher felt a need to document costumes of the royal family of Baroda as the costume had many mystic features made in a spirited manner. The study has an ambitious initiative to encapsulate the costumes of the royal family of Baroda (Gujarat-India). The study conducted would help to keep that evergreen element of fashion alive in the designer world, it would add some retro elements to fashion world and give an overall new look to upcoming generation. It will also provide a data-base record of the rich legacy of the Indian royal family of Baroda (Vadodara) and will provide a great historical account of costumes of the royal family of Baroda (Gaekwad) which would be useful to the textile students all over the world to enrich the knowledge about the Indian heritage.



Fig 3: Achkan
Source: Maharaja's personal collection (Madav Baug)

The main objective of the study was to understand the constructional details of the royal costume and to prepare drafting instructions of the various garments of Maharaja in order to thoroughly comprehend the cuts and details of the garment which he wore differently on different occasions. Also to look for the designers who are following the trends of taking inspiration from royal costumes and designing a collection for various purposes and to suggest a few possible designs which would serve a style statement for both men as well as women, taking inspiration from costumes of Maharaja.

Methodology

In view of the framed objectives the present study was divided into three phases. First phase includes incipient study second phase includes data collection third phase includes documentation and analysis. Questionnaire was prepared to interview the Royal family members of the Gaekwads, in order to get the first hand information through open-ended questions in relation to their costumes and its details.

The costumes like *Achkans* and *Angarakhas* were collected from the people belong to the same kin of the Maharaja of Baroda and some of them which were preserved in the palace and museum, were studied in detail for its fabrics used, colours, designs, cuts, and number of pieces in the garment, amount of the fabric required and styling of it.

Results and Discussions

The findings of the study revealed many things about the royal textiles and costumes of the Gaekwad dynasty. *Angarakha* and A*chkan* were the two main upper garments which were seen in most of the pictures which the researcher collected from various sources. The royals also used to wear many times the costumes which were inspired from the western culture like formal suits and coats. These were mainly seen at the time of various foreign trips they used to go for. One thing was very firmly noticed and also reported while interviewing that each Maharaja of the family had different taste of fashion.

*Achkan*s were the most popular garment in Gaekwads. Keeping in mind about the occasions, functions, the most of the family members were seen to be in *Achkan. Achkan* of Gaekwads had in itself many specific highlighting features which make it distinct and out-standing. The main feature about *Achkan* is the seven buttons opening in front. And three buttons on each sleeve. These buttons were made of gold or silver with the monogram of Gaekwads on it.

The fabrics of these *Achkans* were also worth making note of which were woven in heavy brocade fabrics or *kinkhabs* which gave a firm bodily fit to the garment. Basically *Achkan* were mostly worn on formal occasions like *darbar,* a formal meeting.

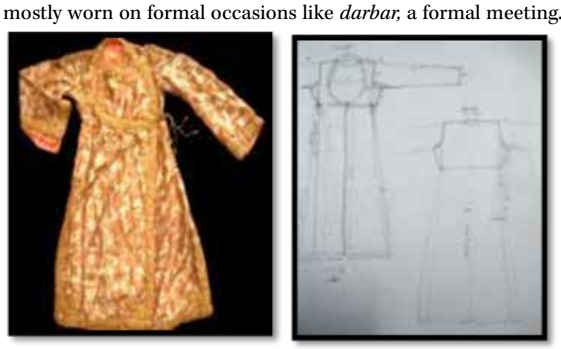

Fig 4: Angarakha
Source:- Maharaja's personal collection (Madav Baug)

Achkans (fig 2) were constructed using lining with neat finished edges. The garment had no seams visible on the wrong side of it. The front part of the garment had two waist darts, one was placed across front pocket and another was just beside the side seam falling from the inner frontal armhole. The side seam was eliminated by extending it to the princess line at the back. The princess line at the back had a hidden pocket which was of about ten to twelve inches long to keep enough things and still maintain the look of a crisp dress not allowing it to add on the bulk on the lower part of the body. These *Achkans* were made in Chinese collar which fitted accurately around the neck. At the center front for the collar to stand straight was put a hidden metal buckle of equal width which kept it in a perfect shape though-out the day. As mentioned earlier the garment had precisely seven buttons in the centre front. The sleeve was a typical set-in sleeve with two panels. The sleeve panel seam lines were carefully matched with the armhole dart and the back princess line falling from back armhole.



Fig 5:Maharaja Sayajirao in Angarakha
Source:http://ww.itimes.com/photo/maharaja-sayajirao-gaekwad-iii-the-history-of-gaekwad

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The total fabric required for this garment was about twice the length plus the sleeves and extra for the trimmings which made up to 2.5 meters of the main fabric plus the same amount of fabric for the lining.



Fig 6: Ritu Kumar collection for Wills-Lifestyle, India 2013

Angarakha was another main garment worn by the Gaekwads. This garment was made fully of Brocade, pure *chanderi* fabric or even of simple plain pure cotton as the occasion demanded royals used to pick up the garment to give the best impression.

Mainly *Angarakhas* were worn by the maharajas during any royal functions like coronation, marriage or even royal *darbar*s' with Maharajas of different states.



Fig 7: Umang Hutheesing's Design Inspired from Godess Parvati
source:http://www.verveonline.com/125/fashion/hutheesingh.shtml

Angarakha is an upper garment worn mostly by men. These were many times lavishly embroidered with sequences like diamonds, precious and semi precious pearls, beads and embroidered with gold and silver threads. This gave them a royalty in itself. Many a times Maharajas also used to get their monogram embroidered onto their garment to flaunt their dignity towards their royalty. There are many pictures in which the *sewak* (attendants) are also seen wearing an *Angarakha* which is embroidered with the monogram of Gaekwads.

Angarakhas were mainly made in full length till calf or knee as per the height of the wearer, with full sleeves and broad double breasted front with an oval shaped pattern at the chest. The upper front had a double breasted yoke with a wide circular neckline attached with chords to tie at the highest shoulder point to secure it. The sleeves were with gussets to add on the ease and comfort. The double breasted yoke was attached with the *kali* or a line panels. These panels gradually increased towards bottom to add the flare. Cords were stitched with decorative bells at the ends to be tied and secured around the waist. The number of panels can be increased and decreased on the basis of the waist girth and the flare one required. The fabric used for this garment was usually a finer variety of brocade or fine muslin. It kept the flare crisp without adding the bulk. Below Angarakha which was made of fine muslin maharaja used to wear a simple *kurta* to restrict the translucency of the fine muslin.



Fig 8: Ritu Kumar collection inspired from Royal costumes Lakme Fashion Week 2013

The lower garments which were commonly observed by the researcher were*churidar*, *pyjama*, breech, and formal trouser.

India a country where every state has a different flavor, a unique culture and a distinct valuable craft, 29states reflect diverse influences and hence increases the potential of the country "INDIA" to provide the much needed new flavor, and a muse for the designers. Indian designers have long experimented and presented the exotic creations embellished with the uniqueness of the Indian craft and techniques. India's rich culture and history of the Indian Kings, their Heritage and clothing and the westernization during the British Raaj has long been, quite an impact on the fashion world in the different eras. Indian culture has been quite an Inspiration for the International designers and many a times there have been beautiful Interpretations and Indian culture has been quite appreciated and implemented various times ,leading to the creation of some spectacular collections.



Fig 9: Jean Paul Gaultier, Louis Vuitton, Hermes, Valentino-Source: http://blog.jaypore.com/2015/07/28/indian-craft-meets-international-design/

The fashion world has taken notice of this country's rich heritage, bright colors beautifully blended with exotic hand-crafted techniques of embroidery and weaving, all unique & impactful. The Vibrant flavor, the strong Interplay of techniques has inspired not only the Indian Designers but has also attracted some of the precious jewels in the fashion Crown of the World.



Fig 10: Ritu Kumar's Designs inspired from Royal India

Designers of national and international repute are working towards designing their new collections taking inspiration from the royal wardrobes.

If talking only about Gujarat's hidden in the narrow by lanes of the region are some of the richest mines of Indian fashion, thanks to talented *karigars* and ornamental designs. Complementing them are the talents of young designers like Shyamal and Bhumika Shodhan of which the state surely has no dearth.

A designer like Umang Hutheesing says "I have been surrounded by rich aesthetics since childhood. I didn't need a professional degree to learn about fine craftsmanship, and balance of design… I grew up with these. As a teenager I used to design outfits of family and friends," says the self-confessed revivalist who took up the task of designing royal garments since 2010. 'The Shaded Collection', a collection by Umang showcases delicate chiffons and *chanderis* coyly romancing with celebratory hues such as fuschia, saffron, emerald and turquoise. Each ensemble imbibes innate femininity as the colours flow from one shade to another with fluid ease. A step away from the traditional ornate bridal collection, the timeless collection offers sartorial choices to make a woman feel like a royal princess irrespective of her age. It has classical costumes but in contemporary fittings. The utterly breathtaking designs carry with an ethereal charm. For this collection as well, Hutheesing was inspired by India's rich cultural legacy.

On the other hand international designers like, John Galliano for Christian Dior, Marc Jacobs for Louis Vuitton, Alaxender Mc Queen, Gianne Versace to name a few. The Hollywood celebs also have often expressed their love for the Indian Culture by adorning the Indian Attires. Right from the Red Carpet to award ceremonies various times the Indian culture and Traditional form of dressing has got the world to Notice and appreciate the Richness and Glory of the country.

Conclusion

The unique cuts seen in the costumes of royal are serving the fashion styles not only for their own Indian culture but also for the western style and trend setters. One would truly say that it's the amalgamation of classic design in contemporary form attributing the India's opulent pelf.



Fig 11: Designs inspired from *Achkan* and *Angarakha*

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