

## Conventional Regal Costumes: A Modern Approach



### Textiles

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### ABSTRACT

*Tales of queen their beauty and their meticulous clothing has always been a delightful topic to talk about. Their way of living, the conjunctures have always seemed so interesting to be acquainted with. The researcher felt a need to document this spectacular, mystical at the same time glorious assortment of Maharani's (Queen) of Baroda State costumes. The objective of the research was to study the garment's constructional details, its cuts, style, pattern and the construction of all these in a perfect contemporized fit.*

*On studying the details it was revealed that Maharanis mostly wore a nine yard saree which was draped in a typical style with a blouse always of hip length made in brocade and chanderi tissue. Chanderi was mostly used on sleeves to give a sheer look, it added to the overall aesthetic value of the garment.*

*The Maharani's costumes which she wore on different occasions were studied carefully and it was observed that the blouses she wore were of very interesting patterns. Some of them included a jacket styled garment called Fituhi which was worn over a choli the short blouses; Fituhi also had pockets in front. Another style was of long hip length blouse was seen in princess line pattern from neck, shoulder, as well as armhole all in one for the better fit.*

*Trims were also an interesting point of documentation. It is a captivating truth to apprehend with, where this research can take our Indian Fashion industry to a new level.*

### INTRODUCTION

India is the land of crowning glory. The terrain of different kings and queens was always in renown for the textile tradition laid by them and their families. It reflects the diversity of the country, cultural ethos, and the relationship for their creativity and originality. The evolution of taste and fondness of Indian royalties has been traced through traditional court clothing.

Royal textiles and costumes have always been a delightful topic to talk about. Royals have their own styles of dressing. Their costumes were so attractive which gave them rich and elegant look. The Maharaja was considered hero of the land and Maharani as beautiful, elegant and motherly figure who resided in beautiful palaces.



**Fig:1 Maharani Jamnabai wearing a choli**

**Source:** <http://longliveroyalty.tumblr.com/image>

The word "royal textiles and costumes" conjures up a vision of splendid magnificent: ropes of pearls, elaborate garments, shimmering textiles, beautiful cuts and details of the garments.

Clothing of women is never still. Every movement allows her attire to be viewed afresh. She constantly re-arranges its drape

over the head, the shoulders and around the ankles. The lifting of the head permits not only a glimpse of her cooled eyes and jewelled hair, but also the detail of the weave of the embroidery, colour and pattern, of the garment. The smallest detail, such as the fine edging of her sari borders, consist of embellishments revealed in a most enticing manner. India has always been famous for its exquisite and colourful costumes worn in different parts of the country. Costume, with the passing of time, underwent certain changes. These changes occurred due to the changes in the environment of the people, caused mainly by outside influences. People in different province of India developed their own unique individuality through diversity in construction of the garments and its ornamentation techniques.

One such family was Gaekwads of Baroda. Royal Gaekwad ladies had played an important role in the Indian history, though they remain behind the screen, but the better half of Maharaja has worked in an effectual manner for the Baroda state. These royal ladies were well-known for their love towards the tradition textiles, their love towards saris in chanderi and rare cotton paithani was so immense that most of the collection of saris in their royal wardrobe were especially designed and order from various secret sources. If one wants to witness it by themselves one must see in the paintings by Raja Ravi Verma also called as the royal painter.

It is therefore most appropriate and timely that such important part of India's history to be preserved at this crucial juncture for the edification of the future.

### OBJECTIVES

The main objective was to study the constructional details, its cuts, style, pattern and fit of the garments and the different textiles in gold and silver used for it for the royal females of Baroda. To study the methods used for taking measurements of the royals. Also to project these styles in today's fashion horizon supported by different designers who are working towards elevation of these designs by practising these mystical details and cuts in their collection. Lastly also to suggest some designs which may serve as inspiration for newer trends and style lines with the correct fit.

## PURPOSE

Indian textiles have been admiring great aesthetic and functional qualities and there are lots of princely states in India which have their exclusive collection of textiles and costumes. 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. Gaekwads had their own style of clothing but were never looked upon with interest by any of the designers. Gaekwad family has always loved their textiles and has preserved them from generations. They have a rich record of their intricate and precious textiles.

Hence this study was carried out with the purpose of studying the Royal Costumes and Textiles of Gaekwad women of Baroda.

## METHODOLOGY

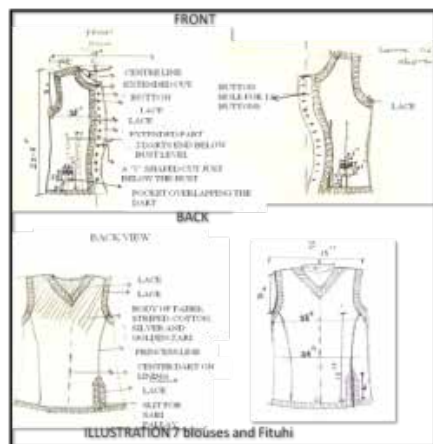
In analysis of the framed objectives the present study was divided into three phases. First phase includes incipient study second phase includes data collection third phase includes documentation and analysis. To achieve the objectives open-ended questions were framed keeping in mind the main objective.

Garments were collected from the members of the royal family and were studied in detail for the fabrics, colours, designs and construction. The costumes like blouses and *fituhi* which were preserved in the museum were also studied carefully in order to understand the incise and features of the garments.

Photographs and paintings of the Maharanis (Queen) were taken and a careful study of their garments was made.

Preparation of pattern draft and fit samples was done, to evaluate in order to thoroughly comprehend the design line and cuts.

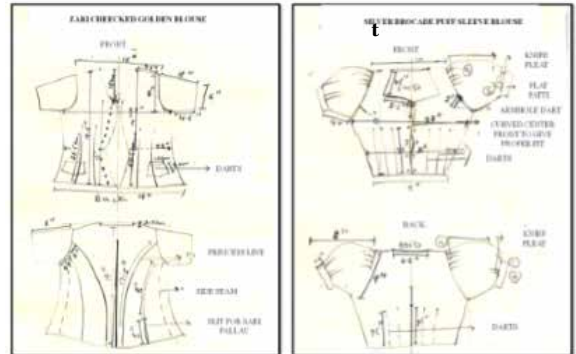
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS



**Fig:2 Fituhi (waist length jacket) Source: Royal Family's personal collection**

Findings of the study revealed that the Maharani wore the Mara-

tha style of sari which was always in nine yards and was called *nauvari sari*. It was made of silk or tissue with golden zari on the border (*Kinar*) and pallu (*Padar*). Flowers and vines



motifs were the hallmark



**Fig: -3 Blouses and fituhi (jacket) in heavy gold and silver brocade were worn by the royal females. Blouses were seen to have various length variation with two pockets attached to it. Design and pattern for these blouses were unusual. Source: Royal Family's personal collection**

of the Gaekwads costume designs. They also wore bird motifs, usually peacock, as it symbolises royalty.

The upper part of the body is clothed by and close front fastening bodice called *choli*. (see fig: 1) This garment was tight, well fitted bodice that cover the breasts and had sleeves which are short in length it use to fall in the middle of the upper arm. This was a kind of indigenous brassiere that held the breast in position by means of two strings. The two pairs of strings were attached at the bust level in center front of the choli which is tied at the center front in order to give a proper and well fit to the body.

*Choli* had fine border on the sleeves, lower edge of the bodice and also on the front stitching lines of the bodice, called *Katori*. *Choli* were seen in the paintings of 18th and 19th centuries especially in the Maharani Jannabai's paintings. By the 1930s the women of Baroda had came out of *parda* and took to wearing a sleeveless, richly embellished waistcoat over their *choli*/Blouses known as *fituhi*. The Blouses worn by the Maharani's of Baroda was so different from the any other. They were stitched by the tailors in Baroda itself. These graceful Blouses were made up of brocade, Tissue, *Chanderi*, and Cotton fabrics and were Indian in origin. These blouses do have lining inside in as they are made up of very fine and translucent fabrics like tissue, lining used were of satin, silk and cotton.

It cannot be said that in which century it was first worn but it was the part of their clothing. It was usually worn over the *choli* in order to cover the exposed part of the body. These *fituhi* the eleven piece garment (see fig: 2) was featured with buttons and laces in front and back, all together ten to thirteen buttons were attached to the *fituhi* all have pockets in front in order to keep

their hankies, study also revealed that they might use these pockets in order to keep *tobacco* in it. Length of the *fituhi* was normally 19-21" but it always cover the band over which sari was draped. The *fituhi* had golden laces round the neck, armhole, and lower edge and over the pockets. This piece of apparel was always worn over the half sleeve *choli*.

The cut of the *fituhi* were different and always have slit at the back in left side so that pallu can pass through it without hiding the blouse. All the blouses have a 'V' shaped cut on the center front placket at the bust level over which the buttoning was done which gives the proper fitting, darts were given just below the bust level. The back of *fituhi* was designed by using princess line in it. Measurement was taken by raising the bust up for proper fitting. The shape and the fit of the blouses were so perfect that it gives the corset look (see fig 4)



**Fig:-4 Maharani Chimnabai Saheb wearing a corset fit Blouse which is the main highlighting feature of her costume as the blouse resembles the corset fit which was a fashion in Europe.**

Gaekwad women wore blouses made of *Chanderi* and brocade fabric. The sleeves were a noticeable aspect of all the blouses. Puff sleeves were in fashion then. Maharanis were seen in corset blouses with puff sleeve (see fig: 3). Other blouses were seen in plain half sleeves with front buttoning. All the blouses were of mid hip length. One of the important feature of all the blouses seen was that all the blouses had two pocket in front and a back slit for sari *pallu* and the 'V' shaped cut on the centre front placket over the bust line in order to give a proper fit and shape to the breasts. The blouses worn by the Maharani was unusual in design and pattern.



**Fig:- 5 Shruti Sancheti's collection "Saaj"**

It was decided by the tailors itself they use to stitch their blouses according to the fashion. The blouses and *fituhi* worn by them were always in brocade and *Chanderi*. One of the unusual point which the study came across was that the tailors use to put lead balls in the lower edge of the blouses (hemlines) so that it can stay straight and do not go up and remain in proper shape. During the measurement bust was pushed up and then the measurement was made so that a proper fit comes this was purposely done because no brassieres were used and well fitted garment was required.

In the twenty-first century (today) blouses with front buttons are worn with the Sari. The length and the style depended upon personal taste.

Fashion is not the only consideration in developing a garment. The overall appearances (style) as well as the utility value also have to be appropriate. The style, colour, decoration, material, trimmings and technique are fundamental of design. Today's fashion world is full of renowned designers who have created and are still creating a mark in this creative field by just playing with the cuts and details of the garments by taking inspiration from the traditional ones in order to create something innovative. Designer like Shruti Sancheti's, whose collection was meant for the vivacious women who celebrate her legacy of textiles and craftsmanship and yet has a voguish approach towards fashion. The 'Saaj' collection (see fig5) by her was showcased at Lakme Fashion Week Winter Festive 2013. Shruti's collection revived the beautiful weaves of Maharashtra which was a finely crafted line. The collection was giving a maharashtrian flavor with the *Paithani* embroidery along with *Aari* work and *Resham*.



**Fig:- 6 Collection presented by different designers on the Ramp**

Source: <http://www.pinkvilla.com/fashion/celeb-fashion/tarun-tahiliani-collection-lakme-fashion-week-summerresort-2014>

Other designer like Shyamal and Bhumika launched their collection in Lakme Fashion Week in Mumbai, The *Maharaja* collection which symbolises authority in its colours, cuts and embellishments. Reminding us of the grandeur of the Mughal courts, the collection presents the finery of the fabrics crafted with perfect grace. In true royal couture fashion, each embroidered motif has been custom designed for a specific silhouette. Bold details



and striking designs have been incorporated to leave a lasting impression

The designers have coordinated the women's wear with the men's ensembles recreating a couple dressing concept that used to be a part of the royal *darbaars*. Silhouettes had been largely inspired by the Mughal era *chogaas* and *kalidaar lehengas*. The embroideries had been inspired by heritage architecture and carvings. Another well known designer Ritu kumar (see fig 6) has uncovered many of the last surviving examples of traditional royal clothing in her book 'Costumes and Textiles of Royal India' and has celebrated the rich legacy of textiles and craftsmanship. The in-depth study of the evolution of Indian royal costume spans the centuries from the first representations of clothing in ancient India, through the reign of the Mughal emperors and the days of the British Raj, to Indian independence and royalty in the present day.

There are some more well known designers like Tarun Tehliyani, Manish Malhotra, and many other who had worked upon distinctive silhouettes in order to bring forth a collection inspired from the splendour of India's regal kingdoms depicting the designers interpretation, which symbolizes authority and affluence in colour, cuts and embellishments. By means of bold and striking designs.

## CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the rich Indian treasure of textiles is yet safe maintaining its very own identity. The Geakwad's, Royal family of Baroda state has also such exquisite collection of the splendid and magnificent collection of textiles and costumes which they wore and used in its original form by not mixing it with another textile and gave justice to the textile as well as increased the esteem. Each textile has its unique importance in the family whether it is on any royal function or occasion. Textiles were stored in *Khanji Khana* and proper records were maintained. The costumes made out of these textiles were magnificent, playing an important role in maintaining the majestic appearance as well as the status of the family.

The fabrics also made it the family's identity not only in India but through the world. It had also given a platform to different well known designers to take brainwave from the tradition and to show case the new outlook by adding the spices of creativity and ornamentation.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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