

Taste, Ideology and Clothing in Colonial India

*Dissertation Submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of*

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ANUPAMA



Center for Historical Studies

School of Social Sciences

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY

NEW DELHI 110067

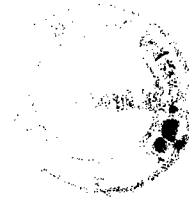
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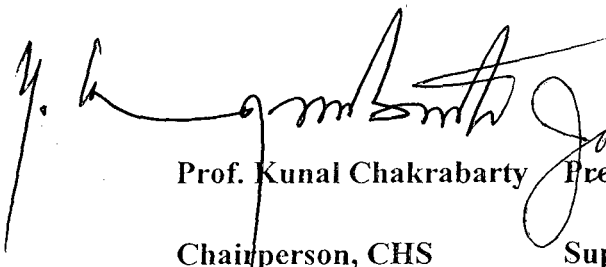
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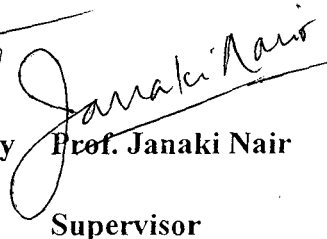
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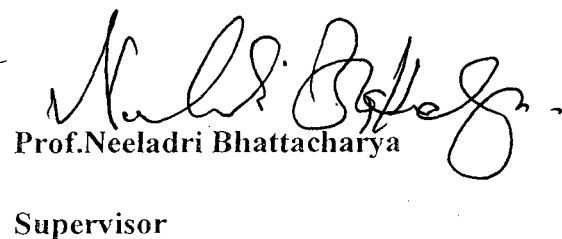


CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


Prof. Kunal Chakrabarty
Chairperson, CHS


Prof. Janaki Nair
Supervisor


Prof. Neeladri Bhattacharya
Supervisor



CHAIRPERSON
Centre for Historical Studies
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110 067, INDIA

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Abbreviations

AIWC	All India Women Conference
CNG	Ceylon National Congress
CWVG	Collected works of Mahatama Gandhi
<i>ILM</i>	<i>Indian Ladies Magazine</i>
NCWI	National Council of Women of India
NMML	Nehru Memorial Museum and Library
SS	<i>Subaltern Studies</i>
<i>TOI</i>	<i>Times of India</i>
WIA	Women's Indian Association

Introduction

This work proposes to study the history of fashion and clothing in the modern period with specific focus on the changes in the clothing trends in colonial India. I will study this by analyzing three influential overlapping and competing forces and their role in transformations in sartorial styles etc. The period this study will look at is 1900 - 1940. This study will also focus on how dress is a medium which offered avenues for an exploration of the self, especially to Indian women.

Late - nineteenth century and early - twentieth century witnessed several political, social and economical changes in the Indian subcontinent. In this period, one of the crucial changes that took place was the reform of women. This arose due to the need to project an image of India which was superior to the western civilization. Indian women became the site of contest. The image that was projected was complicated as, on the one hand, women were to be modern and, on the other, Indian women had to be represented as superior to western women. Superiority of Indian women was proclaimed by asserting the virtues of modesty and chastity. Indian women became the bearers of tradition. One way this was accomplished is by reforming the way women dressed. A whole range of changes: such as in education, law, notions of beauty, ideals of tradition and modernity got linked to changes in styles of clothing.

The drive of the British to civilize Indian's clothing affected men and women to a great extent. There were moral constrains in adopting something that was western. And at the same time the need to maintain tradition was inherent in the notion of dress. Existing studies show that men emulated western styles easily whereas Indian women's adoption of elements of western fashion was a slow process. My study seeks to analyze this process of change. What were the changes which made women and men experiment with new styles, fabric and color? Did women's entry in the public realm create the need for dress reform? Change in the position of woman was possible due to several historical changes like national movement, social movements, women's movement, work opportunities and education. With the coming of print culture, photography, and a popularization of different activities like shopping, dancing, theatre going affected clothing styles of women to a large extent. I will emphasize how the popular culture and

different changes offered opportunities to Indian women to explore themselves. These social transformations also made the entry of women in public arena possible and acceptable to some extent. This, in turn, led to a drive to abolish purdah. Thus, dress reform of women became the most important concern of social reformers and nationalists. New notions of taste and styles were also created by the market, as new styles of clothing were available for purchase and advertised widely creating new desires, new needs. Some Indian women incorporated only a few elements of western styles, whereas others were more open to new fashions. This work seeks to explore some of the ways in which market forces, new social, religious or political ideologies such as caste movements, religious or ethnic concerns, nationalism, and emerging conceptions of the (individuated or dignified self) affected and transformed styles of dressing while producing new tastes and recasting social relations.

My effort will be to look into these aspects through a study of print media such as newspapers, magazines and books. In addition, I will look at images and advertisements which are an influential source for the study of sartorial changes in this period. During the early twentieth century, there was a spread of print culture, and print became an important medium for the discussion of different issues. I will analyze the themes around dressing and fashion discussed in the English and the vernacular journals. The exploration of the differences in opinion expressed in different platforms, in different papers, complicates our understanding of social changes. Indian and European fashions were widely discussed in journals. Publicists and reformers argued passionately about how Indian women and men ought to dress, what styles of clothing were appropriate.

Most of the print media used in the study targeted the Europeans, and educated middle class Indians. Ordinary and working class women obviously could not afford, socially or economically to adopt the clothing styles and expensive fabrics of garments that were advertised through or discussed in newspapers. The journals did not intend to address any class or religion in particular, but there was a politics of inclusion. Most of the essays that appeared in these journals talked of the ideal dressing for an Indian woman or Hindu women. Muslim and Christian women were not included in the discussion.

Most existing works on clothing show how dress becomes an important aspect of identity formation and the presentation of self. Many of them suggest that sartorial conventions do not only represent individual identities but also express the behavior of groups. My study also seeks to explore how clothing helps to understand the nature of collective as well as individual identities.

In the Indian context, studies have largely focused on the symbolic dimension of clothing in the colonial period. One of the earliest to explore the symbolic meaning of clothing was Bernard Cohn. He sees dress as part of a wider issue concerning the nature of the relationship between the British ruler and the Indian subjects.¹ Amongst the many themes that Cohn explores in his famous essay 'Cloth, Clothes and Colonialism: India in the Nineteenth Century' is the controversy around turban (headgear for Sikh community).² Cohn argues that the Sikh turban became standardized and a fixed marker of Sikh identity as a result of the British attempt to classify Sikhs in the army. Prior to British rule this turban was not considered a necessary part of the Sikh costume. The author also focuses on how clothing was seen by the British as a marker of difference, as means of emphasizing separation and distinction.³ He demonstrates that the British sought to reinforce their separateness from the Indian population by strictly adhering to British standards of dress and by encouraging Indians to dress in an Indian manner. This 'Orientalisation of the clothes' was to be seen in all spheres, like the army, the household, and the bureaucracy. As consequence of this cultural politics of dress, the identity of Sikhs came to be inextricably associated with the turban

The link between clothing and identity, and the cultural clash over the question of clothing, has been the subject of K. N. Pannikar's essay 'The Great Shoe Question:

¹Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, p.13.

²Bernard Cohn, 'Cloth, Clothes and Colonialism', in edited by Annette and Schneider, *Cloth and Human Experience*, Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989.

³Clothes were used for maintaining hierarchy in the Mughal period. Mughals, through their grandeur maintained the rank divisions in the society. They balanced power relations in the society by giving gifts and presents.

Tradition, Legitimacy and Power in Colonial India.’⁴ Through the study of shoe regulation of 1854 and the controversy that raged around, Panikkar shows how tradition too becomes a site of contest. In 1862 Manockjee Cowasjee, an assessor, was denied entry into a court by a judge of *Fauzdari Adalat*. He was asked to remove his shoes before entering the court since the judge assumed that taking off shoes was a part of Indian custom, a way of showing respect. Pannikar shows how the contest was not between a judge and an assessor but was between somebody who had authority and somebody who claimed his right to entry. The controversy led to a debate over how to interpret tradition, who had the knowledge of tradition, and which tradition was to be accepted as the authentic one. The controversy showed how the appropriation of indigenous tradition and the creation of cultural hegemony was a process marked by struggles over interpretation. This struggle often became intense since issues of clothing were linked not only with question of identity but also of power and domination.

Similarly, C. A. Bayly explores symbols attached to the meaning of cloth in the pre - colonial India and how it was transformed in the colonial period.⁵ He throws light on the role of cloth as transmitter of holiness, purity and pollution. He studies commodity in the context of its meaning as understood by the people in India. It is interesting to see the way Bayly establishes an inextricable link between cloth as a commodity and cloth as a powerful medium through which people convey emotions. He shows how the meaning of clothes had to be appropriated to accommodate social and political changes.

In this light, the color or fabric of dress becomes crucial. It is seen as a transmitter of person’s quality and sin and thereby suggests that clothes can be seen as a source of power. Bayly states that European textiles seeped into the Indian market due to different reasons. He sees such changes as a reflection of changes in Indian culture, and the desire of Indian rulers for novelties. However, in the colonial period the earlier symbolic

⁴K. N. Panikkar, ‘The Great Shoe Question: Tradition, Legitimacy and Power in Colonial India’, *Studies in History*, 14, 1, 1988, pp.21-26.

⁵C. A. Bayly: ‘The Origins of Swadeshi (home Industry): Cloth and Indian Society’, in edited by Arjun Appadurai *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

function of the clothes - like protection and legitimacy - were used by the Indian nationalist to create awareness of *swadeshi* goods.

One of the recent works on clothing by Emma Tarlo discusses dress as an ideological sign at a great length. Her book *Clothing Matters* traces various sartorial dilemmas in colonial India and contemporary Gujarat.⁶ The book shows how clothing can be crucial to identity formation and how it can become a site of resistance.⁷ Tarlo shows how in the early nineteenth century Indians reacted in many different ways in confronting new cultural norms. This can be seen in the way they made choices about how to dress. Driven by economic concerns and the desire to civilize, the British celebrated western modes of dressing. But Indians reacted to this in multiple ways. Considerations of caste and religious codes led some Indians to see the adoption of European clothes as a taboo. Others adopted what has been termed by Tarlo as modern aesthetic approach to Indian dress. So in the nineteenth century we see many professional Indian men wearing western clothes to work while putting on Indian clothes at home. Gradually over time European fabrics began to be widely used by men and women, though by and large women tried to dress in 'traditional' Indian styles. Indians incorporated few elements of western clothing into Indian dress. Some indigenous people who were ideologically influenced by the virtues of western dress imitated the colonizer. The imitation was to such an extent that they actually urged changes in the form of covering the body like tribals and South Indians among whom the preferred styles were more western. But the process of cultural confrontation was complicated. We see even women negotiating new attitudes and styles, imbibing new ideas of aesthetics, carving out spaces to wear European dress, even as they continued to publicly conform to traditional mores. Sometimes they added accessories like shoes, blouses, petticoats, jackets to their Indian dress, sometimes they wore seemingly traditional Indian clothes, but these were made in western fabrics, colors, and designs; they wore the distinctive sari but changed the way it was worn. In this way they

⁶Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*.

⁷Ibid., p. 76. Hansa Ben was a daughter in - law of a school teacher in a village in Gujarat. She was accused by him for immodesty for wearing a jacket sweater in front him. She had covered her face but the sight of the sweater worn over the sari invoked criticism from the elder members from the family. However in spite of the accusation she continues to wear it. This kind of show of resistance is compared with the nationalist use of cloth as a symbol of resistance.

incorporated the latest trends from Europe and gave them an Indian form, and conversely, retained Indian clothing but transformed their styles. In essence, the Indians in the colonial period sought to resolve the dilemmas of clothing and shaped their identity through a complex negotiation over clothing matters.

In the early - and mid - twentieth century the personal problem of 'what to wear' became public. Clothes also became part of the *Swadeshi* movement and a symbol of resistance to imperial power. Tarlo illuminates how the earlier the problem of clothing was not central to the public political debates but Gandhi used clothing as a means to communicate with the people of India, and transformed clothing into an important site of struggle against colonialism. Overall, her work can be considered to be an important comparative analysis of clothing, that focuses on people's individual choices and the social constitution of clothing matters.

The logic of Gandhian politics of clothing is explored in Susan Bean's important work, 'Gandhi and Khadi; Fabric of Indian Independence'.⁸ Bean suggests that Gandhi rediscovered the significance of clothes in Indian life. The need to revive Indian industry made Gandhi promote Indian goods and clothes. Gandhi encouraged occupations like hand spinning and weaving. He felt self - reliance was essential to fight against foreign exploitation and domination. The Gandhi cap represented a mode of challenge to British officials. It also provided a form of unity, symbolically tying people of different regions and belonging to different castes and creeds, into one unity. As the Gandhi cap became popular it came to signify a nationalist assertion against imperial power.

The history of dress in the colonial context is not linked only to a history of resistance. Many within the colonial countries willingly adopted Europeans styles, seeing this as a sign of status and modernity. This is a theme explored carefully in Nira

⁸Susan Bean, 'Gandhi and Khadi, Fabric of Indian Independence' in Annette and Schneider, *Cloth and Human Experience*, Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989.

Wickramasinghe's work *Dressing the Colonised Body*.⁹ She focuses both on the question of resistance and domination, as well as adoption and emulation of dress codes.

At one level, dressing became a form of political rebellion and clothing was used as means to create identity and invoke pride. Dress reform in Ceylon was part of a programme to restore Sinhalese pride in their culture. Wickramasinghe shows the complexities within these attitudes. For instance, there was no celebration of any nationalist dress in the Independence Day celebrations. The first Prime Minister was clad, in fact, in a western hat and a tail coat. In Ceylon, dress was perhaps not seen as symbol of western domination. It created avenues for people to experiment with modernity.¹⁰ Here the movement for national dress was not linked to a fully-fledged resistance to British dress. Some adopted the national dress where as others continued to dress according to convenience.¹¹ The Ceylon National Congress (CNG) encouragement to national dress was not because of resistance against the British.¹² CNG continued to use other European favors like honors but they still preached the benefits of a national dress.¹³

Wickramasinghe's book hopes to overcome the shortcomings in *Subaltern Studies* (SS). She suggests that SS in looking at nationalism ignores to study elements of material culture like clothing and food, and fails to show how material culture is produced by

⁹Nira Wickramasinghe, *Dressing the Colonised Body; Politics, Clothing and Identity in Sri Lanka*, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2003.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, *Dressing the Colonised Body* is not only an account on changes in clothing and how transformation of self took place after Sri Lanka gained its independence. The author traces how modernity brings changes in rural Sri Lanka. For example, food habits underwent changes with the import of foreign products. One of the most prominent changes was the coming of sewing machine. The act of sewing itself was a break with the past. It was sold more as a status symbol than as necessity. The advertising strategy in the sale of these machines was an appeal to the housewives. The advertisement's target was to harp at the nationalistic sentiment of the people. Products were marked as patriotic products. In this way nationalist appeal paved the way for sale of goods.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 80.

¹²Early nationalist invented a staid national dress for men a white sarong and shirt draped with white shawl and declared the kandayan or up country sari - the osariya to be the most adequate dress for women.

¹³Dress also played a very important role in defining political roles of Sinhalese women in the beginning of the twentieth century. It was felt that the foreign customs should be discarded by her.

human agency in the process of social interaction. Clothes need to be seen as critical to processes of classification, differentiation and distinction.

Another set of work looks at how clothes become an important mode of classification and serve to mark the distinction between wealthy and poor, high caste and low caste, man and woman, east and west, not just between the colonial masters and colonized subjects. The conflict around clothing and caste is discussed by Udaya Kumar and Hardgrave. Udaya Kumar's essay 'Self, Body and Inner Sense: Some Reflections on Sree Narayana Guru and Kumaran Asan' begins with a story in which women's feelings about clothing are described.¹⁴ He narrates the story of a woman in the late - nineteenth century who first encounters the blouse. Seeing her in a blouse her mother in law ridicules her, calling her a slut. She is forced to conform to her mother - in - law's wishes in public, but she still wears the blouse in her own bedroom in the presence of her husband. The blouse was seen as a mark of westernization, a mark of loss of tradition.

Kumar explores how ideas of the body and the self are reconfigured in this period, and how notions of clothing were changing, along with notion that the body had to be a marker of caste. He studies this aspect in the light of the works of Sree Narayana Guru (reformer sage) and Kumaran Asan (disciple of Sree Narayana). Narayana Guru argued against caste distinction and stressed the opposition between true and false differentiation of the body of humanity. His works make a plea to free human body from markers like caste.

We get a different perspective from Hardgrave's work, 'The Breast Cloth Controversy: Caste Consciousness and Social Change in Southern Travancore'.¹⁵ Hardgrave shows how dress was critically linked to caste consciousness and social change in Southern Travancore. Here people of low caste were not permitted to approach places inhabited by high castes. A Nadar had to maintain a distance from a Nambudiri

¹⁴Udaya Kumar, 'Self Body and Inner Sense: Some Reflection on Sree Narayana Guru and Kumaran Asan', *Studies in History*, 13, 2, 1997, pp. 247 - 240.

¹⁵Robert Hardgrave, 'The Breast Cloth Controversy: Caste Consciousness and Social Change in Southern Travancore', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol 5:2 June, 1968, pp. 171 - 87.

Brahmin and a Nair. The Nadar women were not permitted to carry water on their hips as was the custom among high caste. They were not allowed to cover their upper part of body. Missionary activities in the region changed attitudes, and converted Nadars began to vest themselves with the attributes of higher status. This led to the breast - cloth controversy. The traditional dress of the converted Nadar women violated Christian notions of modesty. So the lower castes were allowed by the government of Travancore to cover their bodies with short bodice or jackets but the declaration did not refer them to dress like upper caste women. However, the short bodice did not satisfy the social aspiration of Nadar women. Thus, they began using the upper cloth as worn by upper caste.

This act led to trouble. The Nairs of south Travancore were furious and began to terrorize the Christian converts. Schools were interrupted, books were thrown and the women were beaten for wearing the upper cloth as a prolonged cultural battle ensued. These incidents clearly illustrate how cloth or dressing can be a mode of social aspiration and also a site of struggle to change ones caste markers. It also shows that how caste identity was sought to be made visible, how it was stamped on the appearance of a person. Hardgrave considered the breast - cloth controversy as a critical to the constitution of community self - consciousness. His focus is not so much to understand clothing and dress as such, but to study how caste transformation takes place.

Few works which have studied the clothing of Indian women focus on impact on colonialism. The sources that I have looked at, suggest that sartorial changes operated within the colonial ideologies and also in opposition to the imperialism. Emergence of notion of market and consumption was new to the Indian context. This worked as a force which was independent of wider political, caste and religious ideologies. Thus, we need to look at a set of works which will help us understand consumption and fashion in the Indian context.

Most studies on clothing in western countries focus on the subject of fashion. Mary Blanchard's essay 'Boundaries and the Victorian Body: Aesthetic Fashion in Gilded Age America' traces the history of the Aesthetic Movement in America and the

shifts in gender boundaries.¹⁶ In the period from 1870 to 1880, women used their bodies as public art forms to defy the early moral conventions imposed on them and also to assume a cultural agency in society. The crucial change in this period was a shift in attitude towards women's fashion. By creating this new image of women as individual artists they changed the traditional concept of females being objects of artists.² This perception of the female as an artist experimenting with cultural boundaries was a part of the formation of gender identity.

The new aesthetics of fashion paved the way for women to express themselves and Victorian parlors were transformed into theatrical environment. To understand the complexity of this movement one has to study the aesthetic of dress. Aesthetic dress was seen as an intimate wear exposed in public.³ This essay argues that the single most important characteristic of the aesthetic was that it was worn in public and it brought an intimate dress into public view under the name of an artistic innovation. However this unconventional dress was criticized by the Victorian moralists, journalists and entrepreneurs.⁴ Thus, this essay shows how artistic dress became more than a symbol of rejection of domestic confinement. It announced the creation of an aesthetic self. The women presented themselves to public gaze, for public viewing. Blanchard explores the notion of dress as a performance. In crossing the boundaries women became artists and used dress to create a new self. The significance of dress was realized in the act of wearing, in the performance of dressing.

Elizabeth Wilson's *Adorned in Dreams* adds much to the understanding of how fashion and dress fits into our complex society.¹⁷ While it traces the history of fashion from twelfth century to twenty - first century, Wilson's central effort is to understand the idea of modernity. As I will argue in the next chapter, Wilson considered significant changes in clothing as fashion. We need to point out that fashion has to be seen as an outcome of dominance of market, increase in mass production and styles, changes in the

¹⁶Mary Blanchard, 'Boundaries and the Victorian Body: Aesthetic Fashion in Gilded Age America', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 100, No. 1, Feb 1995, pp. 21 - 50.

¹⁷Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity*, Berkely: University of California Press, 1998.

notion of taste etc. She argues that fashion is essential to the world of modernity. Growth of trade and capitalism had an impact on dress and it created a notion of fashion as changing styles. Fashion came to be seen as a phenomenon of the city. Crucial changes in the history of fashion came in nineteenth century with the industrial revolution. Along with this, new modes of entertainment like movies, fashion magazines, dancing, sports and photography influenced fashion in a phenomenal way. Everyday clothes, uniforms and sportswear became increasingly popular and gradually displaced the luxurious and laced dresses. Men seem to abandon all pretensions to beauty, and desire for beauty came to be a reflection of femininity and effeminacy. Women also adopted styles without exaggerated hoops or panniers. Fashionable dress now hid sexuality as well displayed it. It sought to draw attention in an ambivalent way. Some part of the body had to be concealed and some part had to be revealed. Such changes in the aesthetics of fashion are explored in this volume. James Laver develops an argument of 'shifting erogenous zones', exploring why in different periods in history different portions of the female body comes to be seen as erogenous. Thus, in the process of exploring the relation of dress and sexuality, the relation of clothing and morality is outlined. In this context, fashion is seen as a continuous dialogue between the natural and the artificial.

Wilson suggests that in the twentieth century there was a marked change in attitudes. She also points out that as capitalization increased, people felt the need to display their social status. In this context, fashion acquired a new significance, as due to increased mass production class boundaries became lesser distinct (it was possible due to the imitation of expensive clothes). In this way the book traces how fashion and dress became an essential medium of status and distinction. Thus, it examines fashion from a cultural point of view rather than behavioral aspect.

Seeing Through Clothes offers a different view from Wilson. Hollander does not see clothes as a cultural by product or personal expression but links it to the tradition of image making.¹⁸ This volume explores various ways in which clothing is represented in different art forms like sculpture, painting, theatre, movies etc. in western civilization.

¹⁸ Anne Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes*, London: Avon Books, 1980.

The importance of clothing in art is analyzed in the context of real life clothing. The study attempts to answer such questions. For example, can we consider representations of clothing to reflect the sartorial trends of a particular period? It helps us to interpret forms of clothing in images. It also shows how clothing is portrayed in images and the considerations behind such portrayal. We see clothing does not provide an image to a person but actually becomes an image of a person's identity and personality. The book elucidates how different modes of art choose and alter the sartorial trends of society to justify their art. It shows how various aspects of clothing like, drapery, nudity dress is seen and interpreted in different epochs.

Hollander sees changes in fashion and dressing styles to be a reflection of behavior of people. She shows how dress or costume of actor is not only a part of play. It is a way to attract imagination of the audience. The dress worn by the actor was supposed to provide a public sense of clothing. Here the idea of making connection with the audience is celebrated. For her the spectator of the dress becomes a crucial factor in the wearing of a particular dress. The impression imparted by a costume defines the choice of clothing. The author feels that the look of the cloth is important and says that it can be considered as one of the reason for change. For instance, she says that the transformation of jeans into the dominant mode of fashion was not because of the new appearance that it gave to the wearer, nor was it driven by the idea of comfort. Hollander notes that, "the actual reason was visual indigestion from and discontent with the mini skirt, combined with the general visual acceptance of blue jeans and other trousers on women."¹⁹

A certain image of dressing for women or man gets entrenched in everyone's clothing consciousness. In this context, questions of morality also get associated with clothing. Hollander shows how appropriate clothing had to be kept in mind by the artist of antiquity, the renaissance or the contemporary world. Her work also shows how the ideals of feminine beauty changes and how it gets represented in sculpture or paintings. Clothes in visual or literary images reflect the dressing trends of the period in which it is done, and it also reflects how the human body is seen at a particular time.

¹⁹Ibid.

This dissertation will consist of three main chapters along with the introduction and the conclusion.

Drawing upon the arguments of Emma Tarlo, Susan Bean and Bernard Cohn, among others, Chapter I seeks to analyze the influence of nationalism on clothing in India. The chapter will focus on how the ideology of nationalism affects dressing choices, how clothing practices are gendered, and how new notions of fashion were popularized. It will explore how dress reforms were linked to the definition of specific notions of modesty and tradition, and how changes in clothing helped express new notions of self.

Chapter II will analyze notions of modesty and shame through a micro study of the veil (*purdah/ghunghat*) in colonial North India. Focusing on Hindu women, the chapter will study the debates around the practice of *purdah*, and analyze the responses of society to changes modes of dressing. An attempt would be made to see how personal experiences of women were different from the nationalist and reformist discourse on *purdah*.

The culture of the market will be analyzed in the third chapter. It will explore the realm that, in many ways, existed beyond the influence of nationalism. I will try to trace how consumption pattern affects styles of dressing, and how advertisements and market economy create new notions of styles and taste? I will analyze how consumption was an important means of identity formation and how it gave women opportunity to challenge existing roles within the house hold. The gender disparities that appeared in the advertisements of this period can tell us a lot about the making of clothing cultures.

Chapter 1

Defining and Presenting the Female Body

Most studies on the history of fashion suggest that it hardly existed in earlier times, and this has led to a debate about its origin and development. Gilles Lipovetsky points out that fashion (as we understand it today) emerged in the west in the latter half of the nineteenth century.¹ On the other hand, Elizabeth Wilson traces the emergence of fashion to the fourteenth century which marked the proliferation of more elaborate styles of men and women's clothing.² In order to trace a longer history of fashion in the west, I focus on crucial tipping points in women's clothing from about the nineteenth century. This study makes an attempt to trace the gradual emergence of discourse on fashion in India, largely through analysis of fashion columns addressed to the white and indigenous elite women as they appeared in early 20th century Indian newspapers and magazines. This chapter will also focus on whether notions of fashion and dressing generated new ideas of the self, particularly among elite and middle class women.

Fashion can be defined as a system of dressing and presenting oneself which is determined by a variety of factors such as the fluctuations of the market, the symbolic importance of status, the proliferation of designs, the availability of new materials and technologies, and perhaps most important, mass production. Valerie Steele defined it, "most commonly, fashion can be defined as the prevailing style of dress or behavior at any given time, with the strong implication that fashion is characterized by change".³

According to Wilson, there was a marked shift in sensibilities about dress in fifteenth and sixteenth century Europe, when it increasingly began to seem embarrassing to wear out - dated clothes.⁴ In Europe, it is argued that increased trade was one of the main reasons for the growth of fashion. Expansion of trade led to growth of cities which

¹Gilles Lipovetsky, *The Empire of Fashion: Dressing the Democracy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002, p. 55.

²Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*, p.20.

³Valerie Steele, *Encyclopedia of Clothing and Fashion*, Volume II, London: Thomsan Gale, 2005, p.17.

⁴Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*, p. 20. The significant change in history of fashion that has been cited in this paragraph has been taken from this book.

in turn was responsible for the breakdown of the hierarchical society of feudal times and the rise of the bourgeoisie. All these factors, taken together, resulted in the growth of cloth production and augmented international exchange which gave a new meaning to the concept of clothing. The Industrial revolution powerfully enhanced mass production.

Wilson opines that it was England, the centre of industrial revolution, where early seeds of fashion germinated and “everyday riding clothes - sports clothes - of woollen cloth in quite colours, evolved into the normal dress of modern man and quite ousted the brocade, lace and velvet that had once been *de rigueur* for the man of fashion about town...”⁵ By the nineteenth century, women and men abandoned make up. The early nineteenth century saw a marked divergence in the social and economic roles of men and women. By the early nineteenth century women’s role in society was narrowing and dress began to distinguish gender in more exaggerated ways. Now dress was not only seen as marker of beauty but it created femininity. Women’s dress began to distinguish gender in more exaggerated way. By the time of the First World War, which offered women many opportunities to enter the public work domain of factories and businesses there was another shift towards increasing convenience and mobility for women.

Elizabeth Wilson has studied fashion as cultural phenomena. She regards all changes in ways of dressing as fashion and, thus, traces the origin of fashion back to fourteenth century. At the same time, her work elucidates how the arrival of mass production and its effects stimulated fashion. She shows how previously there were little variations in styles of clothing but as capitalism expanded, the need for new markets for relentlessly new products led to a heightened interest in increasing levels of consumption, through advertising the ephemeral nature of fashion.⁶ While mass production led to the blurring of class distinction, the role played by fashion managed to lever some advantage by foregrounding questions of taste and distinction. In the western world, fashion was not same for all the classes and regions.

⁵Ibid., p. 27. The changes in clothing that follow this quote took place in England.

⁶Kenneth Bindas, ‘Review’, *Adorned in Dreams* by Elizabeth Wilson, *The History Teacher*, 1990, pp. 127-128.

Lipovetsky, on the other hand, sees variations in clothing and attitudes of looking at the self as a democratisation of fashion. Fashion and its influence on the self are outlined in his work. It is pointed out that with fashion, human beings begin observing each other and appreciate each other's looks.⁷ Fashion has been seen as a medium to present oneself resulting in self - observation.⁸ According to the author, as true elegance began to be determined with discretion and absence of show, fashion took on a democratic appearance.⁹ The emergence of popular sports for women played a critical role in the democratic revolution vis a vis feminine appearance.¹⁰

By the late nineteenth century, only women's sport began to advance rapidly.¹¹ Throughout the 1920s, education became a focus of the youth and adults alike. The increase in education also increased participation in sports such as swimming, tennis, golf and horse riding that became an important part of college sports' programs. Thus, it also led to dramatic changes in the clothing worn during participation in such sports. Lipovetsky points out that activities such as golf, tennis, cycling, swimming, hunting, winter sports and automobile driving helped in modifying the women's clothing slowly at first, then much more quickly after the First World War.¹² Sports also made a crucial contribution to the changing lines of women's clothing in general, by creating a new aesthetic ideal of femininity.¹³ Due to the effects of sports the image of a slim and modern woman emerged.¹⁴ In this context, Anne Hollander points out that, "feminine

⁷Lipovetsky, *The Empire of Fashion*, p. 29.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., p. 59.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 61.

¹¹Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*, p. 160.

¹²The cardigan sweater came in with golf; around 1890, the bicycle allowed for bouffant pants drawn below the knee and in 1934, summer shorts; at the turn of the century, swimming gave impetus to the innovation of sleeveless bathing suits with a rounded décolleté, followed in the 1920's by one piece suits left backs completely exposed. Lipovetsky, *The Empire of Fashion*, p. 61.

¹³Ibid., p. 62.

¹⁴Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes*, According to the author, the strong appeal of female slimness in twentieth century was primarily result of social and economic changes rather than because of development of aesthetic style. p.152.

emancipation from many physical and moral restraints, the increasing popularity of sports for women, together with new possibilities of gaining employment and political power, all eventually contributed to this new physical ideal..."¹⁵ This led to simple clothing for women.¹⁶

One of the most crucial changes in the 1920s was the simplification of the lines of clothes for women, and this change was christened the "era of democratic appearance" (a term used by Lipovetsky which was symbolized by fashion designers such as Coco Chanel).¹⁷ Subsequently, new notions of consumption emerged and display of wealth in clothing was identified as a reflection of poor taste. Fashion decrees originated in Paris, the epicentre of haute couture, and its distinct style was followed by all up - to - date women around the world.¹⁸ Thus, one can argue that the twentieth century was marked by a shift to individuality in clothing and new ways of looking at fashion.

This study focuses on similar themes in the Indian context. Could fashion claim the same kind of success in the Indian setting? Are trajectories traced by fashion similar to those what were traced in the west? If not, what were the crucial points of departure? The search was on in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century for an ideal Indian costume. The long experience of colonialism, and the deliberately fostered idea that everything western was superior was increasingly being challenged by Indian cultural nationalists. In addition, as I have already said in the introduction, cloth came to attain symbolic status that it had never had in the past, through its link with movements for political freedom, and the end to British rule in India. Its symbolic presence in the political movements was undeniable¹⁹ and hand spun/hand - woven cloth created its own caste, gender and class hierarchies.²⁰

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Lipovetsky, *The Empire of Fashion*, p.62. Lipovetsky discusses the shift to image of slim, modern women. In her work sports has been given credit for making crucial contribution to the changing lines of women's clothing by creating a new aesthetic ideal of femininity,

¹⁷Ibid., p. 59.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Cohn, 'Cloth, Clothes and Colonialism'.

However, there were also other important changes in Indian society that changed the way in which clothing was seen in this period. With the expansion of the supply of new designs, fabrics and styles, the consumption of clothing in India shared some features of the expanded consumption patterns in the west, though with significant differences, intersecting with concerns about proclaiming nationality, and defending tradition as well.²¹

By the beginning of the twentieth century in India, the Indian newspapers and magazines began to carry regular columns on dress and clothing. These columns introduced notions of western fashion into the discussion of dress the Indian setting. French and London fashion was also discussed in great detail. A more regular focus on Indian notions of dress began in the 1920s in some newspapers. One can say that the English newspapers began to address notions of fashion and taste to a more general audience from the beginning of twentieth century. For example, in the case of *Indian Ladies Magazine* (henceforth *ILM*), Emma Tarlo suggests that, “through constant comparisons and suggestions, *ILM* processed the latest ideas from Europe into a new Indian form, providing continual reassurance that the Indian woman could be fashionable without sacrificing her traditional means.”²² In these columns, “fashion” was always derived from the west, and uncritically disseminated, the vernacular journals in particular made “fashion” coterminous with the “west” as a pernicious influence on national culture, and was severely criticised. At the same time, there was a recognised need for modernising Indian dress styles particularly for women. The interest of Hindi journals was in the reform of dress styles of women without forsaking traditional notions of modesty in the new forms of clothing. The criticism of western clothing and ‘fashion’ was harsh in vernacular journals as compared to the English newspapers. One can say that, in the 1920s there began a quest for an Indian dress alongside and opposed to the emphasis on European fashion in the English and in some vernacular journals.

²⁰Hardgrave, ‘The Breast Cloth Controversy: Caste Consciousness and Social Change in Southern Travancore’.

²¹Douglas Haynes, A. McGowen, T. Roy, and H. Yanagisawa, *Towards a History of Consumption in South Asia*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010.

²²Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, p.47.

The main sources for this chapter are English newspapers like *Madras Mail* (Madras), *Times of India* (Delhi) and an English journal called *Indian Ladies Magazine* (Madras). In addition, I will also focus on debates in vernacular journals which circulated in North India, such as *Chand* (Allahabad), *Chaturvedi* (Agra, Kanpur, and Benaras), *Kamla* (Benaras), and *Madhuri* (Lucknow) etc.

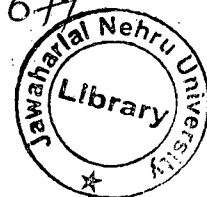
This chapter attempts to trace transformations of sartorial styles of Indian women in the colonial period, both within the private domain of the house and as women began entering public spaces.²³ In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, women in India sculpted new identities through such different registers as education, social reform movements, caste movements and nationalism.²⁴ Alongside this, new norms of conjugality, work opportunities, conversion movements and transformed sexualities offered women opportunities for exploring a sense of self and independence. For example, Aparna Basu and Malavika Karlekar locate the sense of self that was developed by turning to personal experiences of prominent women of twentieth century India.²⁵ Their study describes how women like Sarala Devi Chaudhurani, Sailabala Das, Anasuya Sarabhai, Shakuntala Pranjpye explored new notions of independence arising from new social and political opportunities, such as access to education, the emergence of new ideals of married life and work opportunities. These changes allowed the entry of some women into the public arena. However, the changes also posed a threat to the existing social order and the presence of women outside the realm of the home met with criticism and disapproval.

An analysis of different reactions towards women's entry into the public sphere reveals that there were sharp critiques of the educated women in particular, which led to the surveillance and scrutiny of how women presented themselves in public. Those who were perceived as fashionable and imitated western culture were singled out for attention

²³Malavika Karlekar, *Revisioning the Past: Early Photography in Bengal - 1875 - 1915*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005.

²⁴Satyadev Vidyalankar, 'Mahilaon ki jagriti - parda kaise choda' in *Parda*, Calcutta: Adarsh Hindi Pustakalaya, 1936, pp. 141 - 205.

²⁵Aparna Basu and Malavika Karlekar, *In So Many Words: Women's Life Experiences from Western and Eastern India*, New Delhi: Routledge, 2008.



and critique. They were often caricatured as irresponsible, destructive of the home and morally suspect. There was an association of the westernized woman with female liberty, unbridled sexuality, and forms of independence that were unsuitable to family life. However, these caricatures were countered by advocates of western education and by women themselves.

What were the changes that came about in the clothing of educated women? In particular, I would like to see considerations that lay behind the choice of clothing. Several arguments were made for directing societal change and redefining roles of women within the rubric of broader westernization. The westernisation of Indian clothing was severely discouraged by some sections, such as the nationalists and the reformers. Although the changes in clothing were not same for women from all classes, regions and castes, they attracted different kinds of attention and critique. This chapter focuses largely on elite and middle class educated women.

What did it mean for women to dress for a public appearance? What elements of modesty, conservatism and national identity were produced through sartorial choices and styles? How did dressing for participation in political movements, for the home, or for appearance in front of a photographer alter the styles of the women? How did female dressing begin to convey a sense of character or type in this period? What new aesthetics of dressing were generated by the compulsions of asserting national identity, anti-colonialism or modesty? Has the history of fashion and clothing in Indian setting been somewhat overwhelmed by the nationalist discourse? What other kinds of influences and trends have therefore been eclipsed? For instance, what scope was there for the emergence of fashion which implies ideas such as individuality, choice and taste in opposition to collective, ascribed identities and roles? Where clothes and styles of dress, and bearing might have signified caste, community or gendered status and identity, the new styles of clothing freed dress from such strict connotations, and anchored it in new meanings and choices of individual making. These are among the questions that this chapter will attempt to answer.

Austerity, Renunciation and the Culture of *Khadi*

Without doubt, the most important political influence from the late nineteenth century was the nationalist movement and its attempt to build a new unity of Indian people. Cloth and clothing were central symbols in the Indian struggle to define a national identity and women were important bearers of this identity. In this discourse the emphasis was on *khadi*, austerity, renunciation of expensive and foreign cloth and resistance to western styles.²⁶ Roles were defined for the Indian women and by the Indian women both within the space of home and in public arena. The woman's role as a mother, wife and daughter was emphasized as a way of fulfilling duties to the family as well as nation.²⁷

Some of the earliest attempts to redefine Indian/national dress emerged in Calcutta. Tarlo points out that the Tagore family was prominent in the search for both a new Indian aesthetic and a new Indian dress.²⁸ She describes how Jyotirindranath Tagore, brother of Rabindranath Tagore attempted to combine the Indian and European dress elements without giving more importance to either one of them in the 1870s.²⁹ He tried to invent a national dress which would combine both Indian and European features within a single garment.³⁰ He submitted a design of trousers which was decorated with the addition of a false dhoti fold in front and behind.³¹ However, his invention did not meet with great success. Yet he could be considered as one of the first to realise the importance of dress in stating or foregrounding a new national identity. In early 1905, Rabindranath Tagore found a different solution to the problem of defining national dress. He tried to prove that *chapkan* which was often considered as Muslim dress, was in fact a

²⁶Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, pp. 22 - 61

²⁷Karthyayani Ammal, 'The Ideal of Indian Womanhood in Home, Social and National life', *Indian Ladies Magazine*, Volume XVI, No 4, February, 1917, pp.111 - 118

²⁸Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, p. 58.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., Jyotirindranath Tagore was not satisfied with combination of European and Indian garments or opting either Indian or European dress thus, he sought to invent such dress.

³¹Ibid., p. 59. He did not considered dhoti to be appropriate for business and found trousers to be too foreign.

combination of Hindu - Muslim dress elements, and thus could represent a composite Indian dress.³² This attempt also failed as it was primarily associated with Hindus.

Malavika Karlekar looks at the issue of new dress styles through a study of various studio and family photographs.³³ She points out that in the nineteenth century; a need was felt for designing an appropriate dress of women.³⁴ This need arose as the figure of the companionate wife was most desirable among westernised men of Bengali society.³⁵ So just as reformers advocated education for women others also took up the task of reforming women's attire.

Karlekar states that "the women from Tagore family, in particular Jnanadanandini Debi, daughter in law of Debendranath Tagore, were instrumental in bringing about innovative sartorial changes, some of which combined elements of western styles with the indigenous sari."³⁶ Jnanadanandini, wife of Satyendra Nath Tagore, advised women in an article in *Bambabodhini Patrika* that dress could be adopted on the basis of English, Muslim, and Bengali traditions but still one could retain Bengali traditions.³⁷ She gave her own example as someone who wore shoes, stockings, bodice, (*angiya cachli*), blouse (*jama*), and a short skirt like petticoat with a sari draped over it.

Sarala Devi also describes the introduction of a new way of wearing sari by her *mejomami* (second aunt) in her autobiography.³⁸ She remembers that her *mejomami* (Jnanadanandini Debi) was credited for innovating the *Takurbari sari/Brahmika sari*

³²Ibid.

³³Malavika Karlekar, *Revisioning the Past: Early Photography in Bengal - 1875 - 1915*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005.

³⁴Ibid., p.93.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid., p. 94.

³⁷Ibid., p. 95.

³⁸Ray, *The Many World of Sarala Devi*, pp. 75 - 76. Sarala Devi says that the second evolution in the Bengali way of wearing sari took place after the Delhi Durbar. The Maharani of Coochbehar Suniti Devi and the Maharani of Maurbhanj Sucharu Devi, who were also present at the Durbar influenced the new way of wearing the sari in conformity with the other princely ladies.

which was slightly modelled on the Parsi *garo* and Gujrati way of draping sari. However, she retained the mode of wearing the loose end of the sari in traditional Bengali fashion. Some of the studio photographs showed that women wore blouses which were modelled on current practices from west. One can also see new accessories being used by these women such as buttoned shoes,³⁹ western gowns⁴⁰ etc. In this context Karlekar points out that the blouses were elaborate, modelled on current styles of gowns and blouses prevalent in the west: thus high collars with ribbons, frills, jabots and brooches were popular from the 1870's till the turn of century and a few women also wore mutton chop sleeves, peaked at the shoulder.⁴¹ Along with these, shawls, closed shoes and brooches completed the ritual of westernised elite female dress. The new style of wearing the sari with blouse and chador was known as the 'Brahmika sari'.⁴²

These examples reflect the change in dress styles that took place in Bengali families in the nineteenth century. It also indicates the favourable attitude of Bengali reformists to western ideals. The Brahmika sari had gained immense popularity and was considered as appropriate wear for Bengali women both inside the home and in public. These were partial attempts at reforming clothing styles, and it was really only Gandhi who enabled a larger mass shift to *khadi* and to spinning.

Any discussion of clothing in colonial India must begin with the nationalist fetish about *khadi*. The discourses of khaddar were also woven around the roles of women within the emerging nation. The adoption of *khadi* made a way of participating in political life and it also enabled women to participate in public struggles and agitations.⁴³ Yet there was no singular or uniform adoption of *khadi*: rather, most of the women

³⁹Karlekar, *Revisioning the Past*, p. 103, One image probably of a couple belonging to Brahma Samaj suggested by Karlekar, shows wife in a sari draped in Parsi style, blouse and buttoned shoes.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 98 - 99, According to Karlekar, Photographs of Sarala Devi Chaudharani and Sushma Sen shows them to be wearing elaborate blouses that were modelled on the upper half of a western gown.

⁴¹Malavika Karlekar, *The Tagores and the Sartorial Styles: A Photo Essay*, New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2010.

⁴²Karlekar, *Revisioning the Past*, p. 95.

⁴³Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, According to Gandhi, *khadi* was a suitable means of enabling women to enter the public political sphere without appearing sexually provocative or immodest. p.110.

involved in the national movement experimented with *khadi*. Sometimes they used it to create an appearance that was national in character and identity. They were also women who did not accept *khadi* in spite of being nationalist. While *khadi* suggested simplicity and a certain lack of aesthetic value in dressing, attempts were made to introduce such elements and alter the meanings imposed from above or elsewhere. There were, on the other hand, several constraints in the adoption of *khadi* for the Indian woman.

Emma Tarlo's work suggests that in India the *khadi* sari and simplicity of dress were also identified with widowhood, and posed a further threat of pushing husbands towards other well dressed women.⁴⁴ This probably discouraged some women from wearing *khadi*. Political leaders like Sarala Devi Chaudhrani, women from the Nehru family and a few other elite women observed *swadeshi* and wore *khadi* sarees (an image from *Chand* shows. Swarup Nehru, wife of Motilal Nehru, protesting in front of a foreign cloth market). Sarala Devi Chaudhrani showed that *khadi* can be made attractive and be fashionable.⁴⁵ Yet, there were few exceptional women as well who did not maintain simplicity in their clothing such as Sarojini Naidu and Kamla Nehru (Jawaharlal Nehru's wife) who retained some form of decoration in their saris.⁴⁶

Sarala Devi Chaudhurani's experiments with clothing throw light on the problems presented by what was appropriate to wear in a public space. She solved the problem by adopting simplicity in dress and adhering to *khadi* for which she was appreciated by all, including Gandhi. He said approvingly:

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Basu and Malavika Karlekar, *In So Many Words*, p.2. Sarala Devi Chaudhurani was the first women political leader in this Indian freedom movement and belonged to a Hindu - Brahmo community, which had played a leading role in the nineteenth century reform movement in Bengal. Her mother was the daughter of Maharshi Debendranath Tagore and elder sister of Rabindranath Tagore. Sarala's father Janakinath Ghoshal was a nationalist.

⁴⁶Ibid., p.111. Tarlo points out in her work that despite playing a major role in the nationalist movement, Sarojini Naidu refused to sacrifice her feminine dress for plain coarse *Khadi*. She wore rich Indian silks except at times of grave political crisis and even beautified her *khadi* by dyeing it. She believed in the economic benefits of *khadi* but not aesthetic merits or in the benefits of austerity. One cannot agree that *khadi* was inherently unfeminine. Sarala Devi's experiment showed that *khadi* too could be feminised and had the potential of being beautiful. Tarlo here is operating with a certain pre-given notion of what constitutes feminine clothing.

Thanks to Sarala Devi, she has shown that it is possible to make saris out of khaddar. She thought that she could best express herself during the National Week by wearing Khaddar sari and Khaddar blouse. And she did it. She attended parties in her khaddar sari. Friends thought it was impossible. They thought that a woman who had never worn anything but the finest silk or the finest Dacca muslin could not possibly bear the weight of heavy khaddar. She falsified all fears and was no less active or less elegant in her khaddar sari than in her finished silk saris.⁴⁷

He pointed out in conclusion that her example showed that a new aesthetic could also be fashioned out of khaddar. Sarala Devi's successful experiment with *khadi* is significant as it represented her choice to identify with nationalist ideals. Gandhi's words of praise made Sarla Devi the exemplar for other Indian women, an elite woman who had abandoned her luxurious life and adopted simplicity. The idea was to increase the appeal of *khadi* dress. Gandhi achieved this aim by presenting *khadi* dress as aesthetic, light enough to be worn by any women (accustomed to light weight saris) elegant and fit for all occasions from parties to political events.⁴⁸ This addressed some of the concerns faced by some political women. Gandhi saw Sarala Devi with admiration and love. When he came to Lahore and stayed at Sarala Devi's house as a family guest, a close friendship grew between both of them.⁴⁹ Rajmohan Gandhi's biography of his grandfather suggests that they even contemplated marriage but this relationship was brought to an end by pressure from close relatives.⁵⁰ Sarala Devi and other members of Tagore family set the standards of beauty and fashion in this period. Sarala Devi's autobiography *Jeevaner Jharapata* (translated by Sukhendu Ray as '*The Many Worlds of Sarala Devi*') shows how new notions of fashion can be constructed. She narrates:

My clothes, made entirely from Indian materials that I regularly wore even on special occasions like weddings or Maghotsav festival started getting

⁴⁷'The uses of Khaddar', *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, 20 March 1920 - June, 1920, pp.250 - 51

⁴⁸One of the reasons for the encouragement of *khadi clothes* was the economical loss that India was facing due to consumption of foreign clothes. Thus, Gandhi and the nationalist adopted means of *khadi* as a solution and it also became symbol of a resistance against the colonial rule.

⁴⁹Basu and Malavika Karlekar, *In So Many Words*, p. XIV.

⁵⁰*Ibid.* For more details on Sarala Devi's and Gandhi's relationship please refer, Rajmohan Gandhi's, *Mohandas: A True Story of a Man, His People and an Empire*. New Delhi: Viking, 2006.

noticed. Women came to realise that one could be equally fashionable or trendy without a stitch of imported material. I recall that at one stage my friend could not stand my Indian *nagara* shoes, being accustomed to foreign made high heel footwear. However the day came soon when those who were most hostile to my *nagras* rapidly converted to Swadeshi mode and they would have nothing other than *nagras* to adorn their feet.⁵¹

Sarala Devi's experiments with *khadi* and Indian cloth were represented as a good resolution of the dilemmas of maintaining national identity as well as aesthetic value. Her experiments with Indian clothing led to new ways of looking at Indian materials. She showed that fashion and style can be displayed even in Indian dress and without using elements of west. Her experiments showed that it was possible to redefine the idea of beauty. Wearing *khadi* could be seen as a sign of high fashion if it was imbued with symbolic value. Here, we notice that wearing *khadi* and using Indian material did not always lead to presentation of self in ascetic clothing. It had the potential of creating a fashionable appearance and it was accepted as such by a few people.

Similar constraints were also faced by ordinary women as the nationalist reformers appealed to them to renounce expensive clothing or foreign cloth for the good of the nation.⁵² Thus, one can say that dress became a means for some women to fashion a political persona in the national movement. It became a way to exercise power for the good of the nation. *Khadi* was also adopted by many ordinary women who became active in the national movement. By and large rural women were reluctant to adopt white *khadi* and could not afford the elaborate *khadi* worn by the small urban elite.⁵³ *Khadi* was accepted wholeheartedly by some nationalist women whereas some nationalist women like Sarojini Naidu and Sailbala Das wore them occasionally.

Sailabala Das was the adopted daughter of Uriya nationalist Madhusudan Das. We get to know from her autobiography that she rejected Gandhi's offer to take up

⁵¹Sukhendu Ray, *The Many World of Sarala Devi: A Diary*, New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2010.p.163.

⁵²Gopi Krishna Mehta, 'Marwari auraton ki vesh bhusha', (Dressing Style of Marwari Women), *Chand*, volume 1, July 1931, pp. 314-319.

⁵³Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, p. 111.

charkha.⁵⁴ She did not believe in the economic values of *Khadi* and argued with Gandhi. She said, "No, the charkha will never bring salvation to India or solve its economic problems. But it is good for cultivators. They can grow cotton in their own fields and can make their own dhotis, saris, and *gamcha* (hand spun towels). But the middle and rich classes will never take to it." Sailbala's rejection was primarily against taking up charkha and popularising it. She did not have reservations against wearing *khadi* on few occasions as when this argument with Gandhi took place. She did not believe in the spiritual and economic value of *khadi* and thus did not agree to be associated with swadeshi movement.

Gandhi presented *khadi* as a form of cloth which was spiritual as well as good for the nation. It is interesting to note the benefits of *khadi* which were outlined in *Stri Darpan*. A female writer in article '*khadi aur hamari behene*'⁵⁵ commented:

1. *Khadi hamare desh ka vastra hai.* (Khadi is the dress of our nation).
2. *Khadi mein svabhiman chipa hai. Hum ise pehen kar ek svatantra vayu mandal mein vicharane lagte hain.* (In Khadi lies our dignity. It gives us the feeling as if we are roaming in a clean and open environment.)
3. *Garibo se sahyog hota hai, log sadgi sikhatehain, nagaro ke vishale fashion se door rehet hain. Aapadgrast ablaon ka sahas khadi vesh valo se jaldi padta hai.* (It supports the poor, people learn simplicity. It keeps people away from the poisonous fashions of the city. It increases the confidence of destitute and helpless women.)
4. *Khadi adhik tikau hoti hai. Charke se abroo bachati hain.* (Khadi is more durable. It saves our pride.)
5. *Khaddar swalamb sikhata hai.*⁵⁶ (Khaddar teaches self - respect.)

⁵⁴Basu and Malavika Karlekar, *In So Many Words*, p.24.

⁵⁵Kumari Rajrani Devi Vidushi, '*khadi aur hamari behene*', *Stri Darpan*, volume 41, No 4, October 1928, pp.158-168.

⁵⁶Ibid., pp.158 - 159.

This article presented various advantages of *khadi*. One of the interesting things to note is that *khadi* is presented as the means by which the modesty of women may be protected. In journals like *Stri Darpan* and *Chand*, *khadi* is seen as de - eroticising the body and encouraging simplicity. The emphasis on *khadi* as a form of protection was linked with its association to a de - erotised body. In most of these vernacular journals it was largely considered to be national dress. In these discussions, *swadeshi* and *khadi* signified simplicity and austerity.

*Bharatvarsh mein poshak sambandhi sabse naya fashion hai Gandhi cap, khadi ka kurta, khadi ki dhoti, aur chappal mardo ke liye, aur khadi ki sari, khasi ka jumpher aur chappal striyon ke liye...fashion ab jayega nahi, rahega. Hame usse bhagne ki aavashyakta nahi, vah hamere liye videshi nahi, apne sharir ko sunder aur akarshak banana aur is prakar ki poshak dharan karna ki uske bhitar se vah adhikadhik sundar jan pade, vayakti aur rashtra ke liye hitkarak hai.*⁵⁷

(Among Indian clothes *khadi* is the newest fashion, for men the options are Gandhi cap, *khadi kurta*, *khadi dhoti*, *khadi chappals* and for women *khadi sari*, *khadi jumper*, and *chappals* are available. Fashion is here to stay. There is no need to be apprehensive, it is not alien to us, and such attire makes one look good and attractive, and brings the best out of the person. It is good for both the people and the nation.)

We get a different kind of argument in *Sudha* where *khadi* is seen as new form of fashion and this becomes the basis for using clothes popularised by Gandhi.⁵⁸ The author points out that Gandhi cap, *kurta*, *dhoti* and sari made of *khadi* were among the new items of fashion. He further says that, orthodox people used to discourage new fashions because they used foreign and fine cloth. Initially confused by Gandhi's espousal of pure, *swadeshi* and coarse cloth, these orthodox critics of fashion realised that *khadi* could be attractive and remain beneficial to both nation and person.

Although *khadi* was praised in this article, it also discussed the question of properly presenting oneself. *Khadi* use is discussed as combining elements of beauty with several practical benefits. *Khadi* wearing did not necessarily mean renunciation of the

⁵⁷Thakur Shrinath Singh, 'fashion rahe ya jaye', *Sudha*, volume 1, No 1, August 1934, pp. 46 - 49.

⁵⁸Ibid.

fashion. At the same time, fashion is made synonymous with western clothing, and this collapsing of two different categories was common in the vernacular press in particular. However, Gandhi was considered singlehandedly responsible for bringing the power of clothing into the nationalist realm, as noted by several scholars such as Susan Bean, Bernard Cohn and Christopher Bayly.⁵⁹ Gandhi was also responsible for outlining a special role for Indian women which they could play from even within the sphere of the home. This appeal to the Indian women was linked to the larger movement of *Swadeshi* and the need to revive the Indian clothing industry. The ideas of Gandhi on the national role of women in supporting *swadeshi*, are evident in the following lines from a speech delivered at Bombay in 1919.

All I mean is that it is essential that women make their contribution to the developments taking place in the country. Women work in their home is well enough. The *swadeshi* vow too cannot be kept fully if women do not help. Male alone will be able to do nothing in this matter. They have no control over children; that is women's sphere. To look after children, to dress them, is the mother's duty and therefore, it is necessary that women should be filled with the spirit of *swadeshi*. So long as that doesn't happen men will not be in a position to take the vow... (CWMG Vol.18: 23)⁶⁰

Gandhi's here spells out a role for the ordinary women while remaining confined to the home. This meant upholding the moral order of society by educating children and preparing them for the nation. He separated the work of the husband and wife and allocated different roles by treating them as equals.⁶¹ For Gandhi, the women's sphere was home and he defined their work in the realms of the household. He also talked about women being responsible for wasting money on foreign cloth. However, he held men responsible for the women who were influenced by western fashion. He said that it was men who were responsible for the idea that women must have English cloth, as they suggested that English cloth was good to wear. He offered a solution for such act by saying that men's opinion had given the women their wrong idea, but we must correct it

⁵⁹Cohn, 'Cloth, Clothes and Colonialism', and Bayly, 'The Origin of *Swadeshi* (home industry): Clothes and Indian Society, 1700 - 1930'.

⁶⁰'Speech at Women's Meeting, Bombay', *CWMG*, (Volume 18: 23), 8 May, 1919.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, *CWMG*.

now. Later in his career, he also emphasised the entry of women into public political practice, and enabled the entry of large numbers into the non - cooperation and civil disobedience movements.⁶²

Writers like Vina Majumdar, Geraldine Forbes and Devaki Jain have recognised Gandhi's contribution towards transforming the status of women.⁶³ However, his ideas on women are critiqued by writers like Madhu Kishwar. Sujata Patel attempts to incorporate notions and ideas of Gandhi on women and the changing ideas about gender roles which shaped Gandhi's attitude to women and nationalism over four decades. Patel notes that his first statement on the role of women in nation building appeared around 1916 during the time he toured India and asked wives, mothers and sisters to involve their men in military service to serve during the First World War.⁶⁴ She also points out that his ideas on women crystallized between 1917 and 1922.⁶⁵ Gandhi began by placing women in the family as a creative subject and then he emphasised their role in national resurgence. One of the important realms in which such resurgence could begin was through the adoption of *khadi* which combined economic independence with redefined ideals of women as a mother, wife and daughter.

However, one cannot say that all women were influenced by ideals of Gandhi.⁶⁶ Sujata Patel notes in her work that only women from middle class families or those whose male members were involved in the nationalist movement were influenced by these ideals.⁶⁷ Some women remained unaffected by the *Swadeshi* movement in this

⁶²Sujata Patel, Construction and Reconstruction of women in Gandhi' in E. Thorner and M. Krishnaraj ed., *Ideals, Images and Real Lives: Women in Literature and History*, Mumbai, 2000. For more information, please refer this article.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 298.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 297.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 290. *Khadi* was adopted by large number of women out of their love for 'bapu', and as a duty towards the nation. We can't say however, that all women of India adopted *khadi* and observed *swadeshi*. Some adopted *khadi* clothes following pressure from their husbands. All Congress women volunteers had to stick to khaddar throughout their political life.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 290.

period. Some were influenced by western fashion, some were ignorant, some were conservative and others were defining new lives for themselves under the influence of other movements.

The nationalistic discourse on clothing encouraged women to generally observe simplicity in dress and renounce expensive and foreign clothing. One such view put forward by *Chand* in the 1920's was that women should sacrifice their luxurious life and their desire to adorn themselves.⁶⁸ It highlighted women's contribution to the nation by featuring those women who had never stepped out of their homes, but who were now helping their husbands and sons in the national movement by giving up the luxurious life. The essay pointed that the women who always wore silk clothes and expensive ornaments and were accustomed to an easy life, sacrificed all worldly happiness and worked for the Non - Cooperation movement.⁶⁹ These were held up as examples for other Indian women to follow. Similarly other articles in *Chand* also echoed these themes. Women were ridiculed against imitation of western fashion. The expenditure in the foreign clothing was seen as detrimental to the nation. One of the ways by which women were expected to contribute to the nation building was through spinning.

Pratapchandra Jain accused women who adopted western fashion by saying, "women of our country are imitating western women and trying to make themselves fashionable. They don't like their old clothing but like new gaudy clothes. They don't wear either the sari or *odhni*."⁷⁰ Here sari and *odhni* were presented as symbols of modesty and simple and cheap clothing. This statement becomes clear from Savitri Devi Viyani's account.⁷¹ She was the wife of Brijlal Viyani who was an active member of congress committee. She narrates that when she got involved in the national movement, she discarded her traditional Marwari *ghagara* and adopted sari and *odhni*. Jain believed

⁶⁸ *Chand* was a monthly journal and was published in Allahabad. Some of the editors of *Chand* were Ramrakh Singh Sahgal, Shri Nand Kishore Tiwari and Munshi Navjadik Lal Shrivastava.

⁶⁹ 'bhartiya mahilaon ke karya', *Chand*, January 1923, p. 206

⁷⁰ Pratapchandra Jain, 'bhartiya mahilayen aur fashion', *Chand*, pt 1 No 4, September 1926, p. 581

⁷¹ Vidyalkar, *Parda*, p. 153.

that Indians wasted money on foreign clothing and believed that those were responsible for following fickle fashions (his criticism is against imperial countries) wanted to make India hungry and dependent. The author pointed out that the zamindars, merchants and their servants were worried as a big part of their income went on women's adornment. As a result, they couldn't save money for the education and health of their children.⁷² The writer advised women to discard gaudy clothes if they wanted the good of their family and nation. They were urged to spin cotton and wear home spun *khadi* and clothe their husbands and children in it. Giving up fashion and gaudy clothes was necessary if one were to be a good mother, wife, or nationalist.

In the nineteenth and twentieth century, textbooks were circulated in North India which were meant to educate women in household affairs⁷³, on right behavior to be observed, importance of exercise, importance of education, cleanliness⁷⁴, beauty tips and other issues. These textbooks also criticized women for spending money in clothing and adornment. Several writers concurred that the recent trends in fashion were distracting women from their traditional duties as good mothers and wives and making them self-indulgent while encouraging a life of laziness. Suruchi Thapar points out that accompanying the critique of western ways was a critique of social habits in Indian society. She says that if fashion was regarded as western and bad, then Indian women were also held responsible for adopting it.⁷⁵ Habits borrowed from the west were criticised:

*Is nayi roshni ki maya ne stri samaj mein kayi avgun paida kar diye hain.
Unme ek vilasata hai. Ajjal striyan apne balo ki tarah tarah se swarane , din*

⁷²This adornment could also refer to gold ornaments, which were hardly part of western fashion but in this article there is a clear reference to western influence as responsible for women's spending habits.

⁷³Shrimati Jyotirmayi Thakur, *Striyon ko kya janna chahiye*, (What Women Should Know) Prayag: Sahitya Mandir, 1934. This book carries chapters on: need of women education, household work, right behaviour, clothing, beauty, stitching, health and exercise.

⁷⁴Chaturvedi Dwaraka Prasad Sharma, *Mahila hitaishini*, (Well - Wisher of Women) Lucknow: Naval Kishore Press, 1924. This work gave women suggestion to improve clothing, keep home and self, clean, importance of education for women and health.

⁷⁵Suruchi Thapar Bjorkert, *Women in the Indian National Movement: Unseen Faces and Unheard Voices, 1930 - 42*, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2006, p. 237.

*bhar nayi nayi poshake badalne, saj dhaj kar hava khane jane, cinema, theatre aadi mein baithne ke liye jitni utavali dikhayi deti hain utni aur kisi bat mein ve dilchaspi nahi leti. Unki tadak bharak, cham chum dekh kar aur striayan bhi unhe sabse adhik sobhagyashali samajhsti hain aur unka anukarn karne ke liye pagal ho uthi hain.*⁷⁶

(This western influence has corrupted our women folk. It is lavishness. It is astonishing to see the kind of interest they take in dressing their hair, trying new apparels, hanging out, and going for the movies in theatres etc. Their lifestyle tempts other women as they see them to be fortunate.)

The emphasis of these discussions was on the susceptibility of women, who were easy targets of western lifestyles. They were not criticised so much for adorning themselves but for spending money in items of clothing and beauty. We see that the criticism of women is virulent in these texts. Women were represented as crazy about matters of their clothing and jewellery, and addicted to going out and entertaining themselves. There was thus a critique of those who were spendthrifts and squanderers, and a celebration of women who renounced luxury and riches to live simply. The home in a sense was seen as homologous with the nation. This opinion of women being responsible for saving the national income and tradition by clothing themselves and family was similar to Gandhi's discussions about the role played by the women in nation building.⁷⁷ However, suggestions were made to help women dress in a simple and aesthetic manner. We see how in the process of defining clothes for the Indian women, nationalist discourse harped on the models of ideal women. The iconic image of women as fulfilling duties towards nation and family was reiterated in these debates. These images were put forward to retain and glorify a distinct Indian identity. However, women

⁷⁶Pundit Chandradeep Narayan Tripathi, *Stri siksha sar*, (Summery of Women's Education) Calcutta: Hindi Book Agency, 1934, p. 232.

⁷⁷Gandhi also spoke about the wealth going into foreign hands. He said that, "India has to part with 60 crores (annually) to foreign countries. Four crores are wasted in this manner on silk and the remaining 56 crores on cotton fabrics. Formerly our mothers and sisters used to spin in the homes and that helped preserve India's self - respect and honor. That work is taken over by mills. Outside the Bombay Presidency, women are now observing the *swadeshi* vow. In Madras, Bengal and other parts, cloth for women is made by the Indian Mills. Here, however, women generally use expensive foreign clothing." *CWMG*, (Vol 18: 23), 8 May 1919.

who did not conform to such an image were criticised and perceived as a threat by the nationalist and the orthodox section.

Although Indian men who wore either western clothes or clothes made from foreign fabrics were also mocked the focus of these discussions was women. Writers used fashion as a tool to raise questions about women's independence, choice and taste in clothing, control over finances and role in family and nation making. These concerns reflected standard nationalist and patriarchal concerns. Indian women belonging to different communities became targets of this critique such as Marwari women⁷⁸ and Punjabi women.⁷⁹ Thapar points out that, fashion was discussed as not only about western ideas, but also a form of colonial exploitation. Western goods such as high heels were replacing Indian goods.⁸⁰ Thus, contributors encouraged the use of indigenous goods like the *khadi* saris and derided the consumption of colonial goods that further drained the Indian economy.

The discussion on austerity, renunciation and *khadi* emphasised on three different issues: first, the question of wearing foreign cloth versus hand spun cloth, second, wearing fashionable clothes versus wearing simple clothing, third, being lavish, spending lot of money versus saving money. These issues are not synonymous. As I have already pointed out, the biggest criticism was blind imitation of western civilisation and western fashion. Clothing was merely one aspect of this larger critique.

Clothing and Mimicry

In the Indian subcontinent, debates around clothing were marked by a rigid resistance to western clothing among those who were either traditionalists or nationalists. However, we need to point that there is difference between foreign clothing and western fashion. Discarding foreign clothing would mean boycotting cloth manufactured by the British. Western fashion related to fashion trends in Western countries like Britain, France and America which could influence styles of dressing elsewhere. Often, articles in magazines

⁷⁸Gopi Krishna Mehta, 'Marwari auraton ki vesh bhusha', *Chand*, 1 July 1931, p. 314.

⁷⁹ Prof. Jagadish Chandra Shastri, 'Punjab ka mahila samaj', *Chand*, January 1934, p. 377.

⁸⁰Bjorkert, *Women in the Indian National Movement*, pp. 238 - 239.

and the newspapers blurred the distinction between western cultural influence and western fashion and often used them interchangeably. At the same time criticism was directed against the adoption of European clothes and against westernization of Indian clothing. According to Tarlo, "the westernisation of Indian garments was a gradual and subtle process, far less controversial than the actual adoption of European garments themselves."⁸¹

Being dressed in European clothes was not only a matter of self - representation but it was also a means by which one was judged by others. There were undoubtedly privileges in dressing like the proverbial English gentleman or English lady. However, it was resisted on many grounds. The major driving force to reject western fashion was the need to preserve national identity and tradition, and women were perceived to be the bearers of that tradition. It would be necessary to talk about the criticism of men in western clothes: was it as virulent as in the case of women?

From the nineteenth century, a great deal of cultural criticism has been expended on the imitators. The initial designations for the figure of excess mimicry were *nakal pasands* and imitators. Afsaneh Najmabadi shows that in early 20th century Iran, emulation of Europeans was seen with fear of effeminacy, and it were the men who were criticised.⁸² Similar caricatures of men as the *firangi' ma'ab* (European in thought and appearance) were part of the modernist critique. However, in colonial India, both men and women were criticised but the prime figure of modernity's excess was the female. In the early 20th century it was the figure of westernised, educated women who was severely mocked. Most often they were described as women who had observed only European manners, fashion and half-baked education (*Ardhasikshita*). Critical satire and cartoons in journals and popular art form such as Battala prints exaggerated the excesses of men and

⁸¹Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, pp. 47 - 48; She pointed out further, that for Indian men it was a means of looking respectable without having to desert one's Indian identity. She also says that the British admired this type of Indian professional dress since it was smart and decent without being too close to their own dress. Women also used European fabrics, colors and designs but retained Indian sari and thus, incorporated latest trends from Europe by giving them a new Indian form.

⁸²Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Women with Moustaches and Men without Beards*, England: University of California Press, 2005.

women through a series of commodities like the European apparel, shoes, walking sticks and umbrella.⁸³ The critique of women presented them to be neglecting home and family. They were ridiculed for the new habits like reading, listening to songs, travelling in open coaches etc. However, the critique of superficiality and empty mimicry was very harsh especially for women and occupied space in the conservatives as well as the modernist discourse.

A section of writers used clothing as means to promote nationalist concerns. One of the reasons cited for denouncing western clothing was the specific climatic condition of India. An essay in *Chand* pointed out that western clothing clearly did not suit Indian climatic condition and therefore Indians should not adopt clothing style that would affect health adversely. 'vastron ka swasthya par prabhav' (Effects of Clothes on Health) pointed out that people in the west kept many clothes for different occasions.⁸⁴ Similarly, Indians also tried to follow them and acquire many clothes. While people living in cold climates needed more clothes, Indians did not since the country was warm, and clothes made from materials like fur or leather was unnecessary. He called Indians lovers of imitation, 'nakal pasand' and criticized them for adopting foreign made items. Later, in the article the author also attacked Indian men and their taste for waist coats, tailored suits etc. He suggested that Indians needed a *dhoti* only (men's waist cloth, worn by draping and tucking), a *bandi* and one *angharkha* (long sleeved long coat worn by men). While it is unlikely that many Indians wore such clothing, the exaggerated criticism was aimed at the elites who had taken to wearing western clothes.

*Bharat ko hi dhekiye yah ek garam desh hai. Yahan par fur, un chamde aadi dvara bane huye kapdo ki tanik bhi avashyakta nahin hsi fir bhi 'nakal pasand' log kabhi nahi manege. Fashion ki cheese man kar thet videsh se hi inko mangvakar istemal mein layenge. Hum bharatvasiyo ko keval dhoti, bandi, kurta tatha angrakhe ki aavashyakta hai...*⁸⁵

⁸³*Chand* carried cartoons which criticized the westernized, half educated women and they were represented as neglecting housework, child care and husband. The images also depicted women to be going for movies, busy in their academic work and ignoring the ill child. In such caricatures the image of man was the passive recipient of the women's wishes and often shown to be taking care of child or doing house work. These cartoons denoted the threat of reversal of gender roles.

⁸⁴Dr. Ravi Pratap Srinate, 'wasrto ka swasthya par prabhav', *Chand*, December 1933, p. 291.

⁸⁵Ibid.

(India is a tropical country; and there is no requirement of clothes that are made up of fur, wool and leather, but these 'copycat' people will not mend their ways. Considering them as fashionable, they will import them from west, dhoti, kurta and anghrakha is all we Indian need.)

Similar concerns were also raised by another journal *Chaturvedi* which was noted for its nationalistic and conservative content.⁸⁶ Once more, western fashion and imitation were criticised:

*Purushon ne bhi ab sahib banne ki khub nakal ki hai. Sir se pair tak sab bhes European ka ho gaya hai. Kahan toh yeh garam desh aur kahan sheet pradhan desh ki posish. Coat platoon tak toh ganimat thi, par hat ne sara gud gobar kar diya hai, kyonki khal ka rang toh badal lena in bhale admiyon ke hanth mein hain nahin, jo pakki nakal kar sake, tab log inko desi isai samajh sakte hain...*⁸⁷

(Men too are trying to imitate the 'sahibs'. From head to toe, they all are dressed up as Europeans. However, they forget that there is no need for such clothes in a tropical country like India. It was fine as long as they were wearing coat and pants but the introduction of the hat has spoiled everything. Since it is impossible for these wise men to change the colour of their skin, they camouflage themselves as Indian Christians.)

The satirical tone of the statement made the ridicule stronger. The 'hat' became the symbol of mimicry of the European. The criticism of those who adopted western style clothes was also a veiled critique of Indian Christians, whose wholesale shift to suits and hats had been made in.

As already pointed out, we need to take into consideration that not many men wore western dress in their daily life. Some men retained Indian clothing at home and

⁸⁶*Chaturvedi* was Hindi journal published from Agra, Kanpur and Lucknow. Some of the editors were Radha Krishna Chaturvedi and Visveswar Dayal Mishra. It was a community journal in which most of the writers came from *Chaturvedi* caste probably high caste. Even women writers in this magazine were from the same community and most of the times relatives of some male writer. This journal can be marked for its nationalist and orthodox tones.

⁸⁷Shri Baijnath Chaturvedi, 'vayasano ki bharmar', *Chaturvedi*, November 1924, pp. 32.

wore western dress at work place.⁸⁸ Emma Tarlo has called this choice of mixing English and Indian styles of dress as a 'moral aesthetic approach' adopted by the Indian men.⁸⁹ This kind of solution was not met by criticism compared to the overall renunciation of traditional clothing by some Indians. Kamta Prasad Guru, one of the writers of the journal *Madhuri* cited government services as reason why a few Indian men wore western clothing. He did not deny the overwhelming influence of western dress in the world but he said that it would be difficult for Indians to leave it immediately. So, he suggested that Indians could at least wear a protective sign of caste: also, since the tie was a religious sign (chinh) of Christians, Indians Hindu should abandon it.

jin Hindustani logo ne is videashi pahnave ko grahan kar liya hai, unse use chudwana sadhya nahi hai, yadapi itna avashya ho sakta hai ki ve is poshak ke sath apni jatiyata ka koi chinha surakshit rakh sakte hai, nektai angrejo ka niji dharmik chinha hai jise issa masih ke cruse ka bohdh hota hai, ataev, Hindustani hinduon ko use chod de chahiye. Keval use chod dene se unke vetan mein sambhavat koi kami na hogi, aur na ve unche pado se vanchit rakhhe jayenge, sath hi ve samay padne par angrejo aur isayon se jinme nektai ka visesh prachar hai alag samjhe ja sakege...

(For Indians who have already taken to foreign clothing, it is not easy to make them relinquish such clothes. Nonetheless, in clothing, they still can retain a mark of their caste. To English people, tie symbolises a personal totem i.e. cross and for this particular reason Hindu Indians must abandon it. Just leaving the tie from their attire will not do any harm to their salary and will not deprive them from high posts. At the same time, when the requirement comes they would be able to mark themselves as different from the English and Indian Christians wearing tie.)

According to the writer, this would retain modes of distinction between religions.⁹⁰ Though Prasad was critical in his writing, he advocated steps which could mark the distinction between European and Indian identity as well as difference in

⁸⁸Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, p. 53.

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 9. It was also used when a significant proportion of the Indian population were buying English made clothes. According to the writer, the moral aesthetic approach was therefore linked to the more general idea that Indian textiles and crafts were under 'threat' and required 'revival'.

⁹⁰Kamta Prasad Guru, 'vesh bhusha mein shistachar', *Madhuri*, volume 3, No 3, November 1924, pp. 502 - 506.

religious identity. He argued for Indian clothing and Indian culture. The focus of his article was to suggest a way of retaining a critical distance not just from the west, but from Christianity itself, and thereby remain distinct from other groups in India, such as the British or Indian Christians.

In the process of locating and defining dress for Indian men and women the reformers published articles on the difference between east and west and Indian fashion and western fashion. In some cases men as well as women who adopted elements of western fashion in their dress were criticised. However, in the case of women the criticism was more scathing. Men were often exempted from sharp mockery due to the purported necessity of wearing western dress at the work place. Women were, however, caricatured as following the whims of western fashion.

Another section of writers opposed all changes and transformations that threatened to democratize gender relations. Educated women were more strongly criticized than others. Education was held responsible for exposing women to fashion and to the corrupting influence of western culture. *Chand* did not support education for women if an addiction to fashion and western culture was the outcome. This was reflected in the text and also some of the images in *Chand*. In these representations of educated western women, the high heeled sandals became the emblematic sign of what was wrong with fashion, a metaphor of the corrupting influence of western fashion. This issue can be linked to the larger debate on reasons that were given as to why Indian women should not be educated. They were caricatured as immoral, uncaring and spendthrift. In a cartoon published in *Chand*, the caption said:

*Ardh Sikshita Madam', devi ji rat ko Mr. Champat Rai ke saath theatre dekhne gayi thi, is samay shrimati ji couch par shayan kar rahi hain aur bechare pati devta bibi sahibha ki agyaanusar "gulabi Jutiyan" par paolish kar rahen hain aur man hi man kah rahe hain jo meri is halat ko dekh kar hanse parmatma kare who bhi is halat mein fasein.*⁹¹

⁹¹'ardha sikshita madam', *Chand*, July, 1926.

(Half educated madam went to theatre with Mr. Champat Rai last night and is taking rest on the couch. The poor husband is polishing his wife's pink sandals as per her orders and is cursing his destiny).

Caricatures of educated women as irresponsible and neglectful of home and family were prevalent in nineteenth century Bengal. Ania Loomba points out that the image of the woman who overstepped her bounds or misused her education was taken from memsahibs or Englishwoman who neglected her home and husband.⁹²

A similar opinion was reflected in one editorial in *Chand* which commented that, women who were born in the cradle of fashion, western civilisation and luxury, were obstructions in the progress of women's *samaj* (community).⁹³ According to the writer, these were responsible for blocking the campaign for woman's education. It further pointed that girls who came out of schools learned only two things, fashion and English culture. Indian dressing was being moulded according to western concepts, and according to the journal, fashion was akin to adultery (*vyabhichar*). The pernicious western influence made parents hesitate before sending their daughters to schools. Even the *Madras Mail*, an English daily newspaper from Madras, and a serious advocate of fashion commented: "Indian women on the whole are more conservative than their western sisters but it is the more enlightened and educated women who impetuously imitate and ape foreign custom..."⁹⁴

We see how educated women became the objects of mockery and suspicion. The new habits adopted by the educated, such as watching movies, shopping, and reading, travelling for work or pleasure, came in for criticism. It was felt by some sections that these activities made women neglect their family and household. Freedom in every sphere of life was seen as good as long as it did not adhere to western assumptions. All Indian educated women became objects of criticism. C.P. Kalyani Amma reacted to such criticism and said that: "Mr. Menon is of the opinion that all our ills stem from English

⁹²Ania Loomba, 'The Long and Saggy Sari', *Women: A Cultural Review*, 8:3, 1997, pp. 278 - 292.

⁹³Editorial, 'sampadakiya vichar', *Chand*, 1926, p. 336.

⁹⁴Indian women, 'An Informal Talk', *Madras Mail*, 1 September 1931, p. 11.

education. If all the books were burnt, if all the *ravukkas* (blouses) and jackets were dumped in the canal, if the older ornaments found favour with us again and *Kalyani Kalavani* served once more as our major past time, Mr. Menon's anger towards us may subside a bit..."⁹⁵

Women writings in the early twentieth century showed emergence of sense of self and individuality. Voices emerged to argue for women's education and independence. However, it can be said that the limited women's activism that operated in this period raised questions of education, health and independence but at the same time did not challenge the patriarchal set up. Kalyani Amma responded against Mr. Menon, a writer who accused women of imitating the western woman, spending too much and not respecting the husband.⁹⁶ In the context of adoption of clothes, she says that they have been adopted in accordance with the changing times.⁹⁷

The critique of the educated women needs to be located in the general fear of the decline of a moral order. The public space was considered to be unsafe for women's chastity. In this discourse, while the stress was on protection of women, one can say that it raised questions about woman's independence and mobility and thus, attempted to forbid women from tasting outside freedoms. Another argument made in this context was that Indian women adorned themselves for public spaces such as fairs and railways, and dressing had become a way of showing off wealth. Such worries were reflected in regular columns on fashion such as the suggestions of Sister Susie in *ILM*.⁹⁸

⁹⁵C.P. Kalyani Amma, 'The Craze for Imitation', in J. Devika's *Her Self: Early Writings on Gender by Malayalee Women 1898 - 1938*. Kolkata: Stree, 2005, pp. 37 - 40.

⁹⁶Ibid. Puttezhattu Raman Menon was a prominent intellectual and public figure in early twentieth century Cochin (Kochi). In this article he launched a vitriolic attack on modern minded young women as the chief perpetrators of a shallow and superficial modernity. He perceived the major resources of this modernity to derive from blind imitation of western dress, habits, manners, language, attitudes and tastes. Response to this criticism came from Kalayani Amma in the next issue of journal *Lakshmi bhayi*.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 40.

⁹⁸Sister Susie is probably Cornelia Sorabji. Her younger sister's name was Susie Sorabji who was actively involved in school work. Probably, Cornelia used her sister's name as Susie. However, there is no direct information on her identity as in all articles the name 'Sister Susie' had been used. I have made this link on the basis of internet searches. I got this information by typing sister Susie and got to know that she was actively involved in social work and a school was named after her in Poona. Cornelia Sorabji's family was

When however, we, Indian women, begin to study the fashions of the western world and try to imitate them in detail, then I think it will be time for us to hang our heads in shame. Why should we imitate what is western? When Western fashions do not sometimes suit Western people, how can they suit us? May I be allowed to enumerate some of the fashions that we do not want? These are only suggestions...⁹⁹

Sister Susie pointed to a different reason for not wearing western clothes. She focused on the idea of suitability and said that western clothes sometimes did not even suit western people. As a solution, she criticised both short and sweeping skirts, as she found them to be unhygienic and uncomfortable.¹⁰⁰ The second suggestion was that there was no need for the saris to be too tightly twisted or folded around the body. According to her, this way of wearing sari was 'Un - Indian and exotic'. Instead, she preferred an elegant and simple way of draping the sari, to produce a beautiful effect.

Sister Susie's suggestions can also be understood as a fear of westernised modernity. They reflected a certain kind of standard patriarchal and nationalist anxiety which was against the use of cosmetics and western fashion. This kind of emphasis on retaining modesty in clothing was linked to the dress reform of the early twentieth century. The women's movement in India emerged in the 1920's. It was responsible for consolidating changes that had been initiated by social reforms and challenging the range and variety of roles women could play in the society.¹⁰¹ All India Women's Conference (AIWC) played a crucial role in development of women's movement since the time it was founded 1927.¹⁰² The members of AIWC focussed on issues like women's education, child marriage, age of consent, purdah and right to vote. Their efforts facilitated women's

also known for their contribution in social work. The primary sources also mentioned Cornelia Sorabji's name as one of the writers in *ILM*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cornelia_Sorabji, Accessed on 10th April, 2009.

⁹⁹Sister Susie, 'Our Fashion Suggestions', *ILM*, volume 2, No 8, March 1929, pp. 434 - 435.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹Shahida lateef, *Muslim Women in India: Political and Private Realities 1890 - 1980s*, New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1990.

¹⁰²Aparna Basu and Bharti Ray, *Women's Struggle: A History of the All India Women's Conference 1927-2002*, New Delhi, Manohar Publishers, 1990.

development to some extent. The demands of AIWC also gained support from popular nationalists like Gandhi and Nehru. These movements ushered in new consciousness around looking at women's issues. By the mid - 1920s imparting education to women had become an important concern. As we have seen, this was also the time when political women and ordinary women began participating in the national movement. All these changes lead to the redefinition of the roles of women. This change was reflected in women's writings and journals.

In the 1930s, there were two kinds of notions that prevailed about modern Indian women. One of the views that emerged in *ILM* was that she had forgotten her duties in the process of fighting for her rights. Another view which emerged was that those modern women who were educated and still fulfilled their duties should be given credit.¹⁰³ These views were markedly different from the writings of the 1920s when educated women were blamed for being blind followers of fashion. This change can be traced over a period of time in the essays written by women journalists. Welcoming the changed scenario, Manjari Krishnan commented:

The Indian woman is no more the shy housewife that she used to be, nor she has become a thoroughly westernised one blindly and indiscriminately imitating all that comes out of the west by way of fashion or recreation. The most outstanding feature of the modern development of women's movement in India is that with gradual infiltration and absorption of the foreign education into their lives, they have begun to think and work towards the betterment of their position and the breaking up of a system that has kept them bound in unjustifiable limitations.¹⁰⁴

The editor of the magazine also appreciated the modern woman and her qualities.¹⁰⁵ According to her, modern woman was not shy and her dressing could not be blamed for being immodest as her dressing sense was sensible. Modern woman was credited with qualities that would make life more tender and refined. K. Sathianandhan praised modern woman for having a beautiful mind, clear expression, sympathetic nature,

¹⁰³Manjari R Krishnan, 'The Womanhood of India', *ILM*, volume 5, No 9, May June, 1932, p. 400.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵K. Sathianandhan, 'Who is the Ideal woman?', *ILM*, volume 1, No11, June 1928, pp. 367 - 369.

gentle wit and described her as having 'a lily in her soul, a rose in her heart and the song of the thrush'.¹⁰⁶

This kind of argument countered the approach which saw educated women as a threat to societal order. The appreciation of modern woman was based on a belief in her commitment towards her work, balanced behaviour, sensible dressing and several other qualities. The women's movement was responsible for bringing this change, and as the author explained, facilitated the breakup of old systems and unjust traditions. A woman was seen as possessed of a rational intellect which enabled her to make the right choices. The woman was thus praised for qualities which she acquired due to education. She could combine efficient home making and a career at the same time. Suruchi Thapar argues that a modern woman was expected to bridge the existing gulf between the educated man and his uneducated counterpart without challenging the gender specific roles.¹⁰⁷

Western civilisation and fashion were therefore not always criticised. By the mid twentieth century, newspapers and journals increasingly gave suggestions about improving one's clothing style by incorporating elements of western fashion. How then were elements of fashion combined with apparently contradictory ideals like tradition, nationality and modesty?

Women and the Contradictory Influences of Fashion

Fashion by definition emphasizes individuality, choice, and taste as opposed to clothes satisfying the dictates of community, status or tradition. If we look at the discourse on fashion in the nineteenth century we see a familiar negotiation, an effort to answer a set of question. How to be modern without being western? How could one change tastes and styles without renouncing Indianans, without rupturing the relationship to tradition? What did being Indian mean? Did it mean that western fashion had to be abjured? We have different people giving different answers to such questions. Furthermore, what scope existed for the emergence of fashion in opposition to collective identities like nation and region? How were modesty and nationality produced through sartorial choices?

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷Bjorkert, *Women in the Indian National Movement*, p. 229.

Clothing could thus not be entirely delinked from its former role of signifying community status, hierarchy etc., but had to incorporate the new demands exerted by the need for mobility, convenience, and new notions of modesty in the public sphere as well. Ania Loomba has suggested that the body of the gentlewoman was implicated in the construction of an ideal woman.¹⁰⁸ In this the notions of refinement and modesty are culled from both western and Indian discourses. She notes Indian woman was moulded in explicit opposition to the spectre of western virago and the ideal woman was imagined in Indian clothing. According to her, such clothing became a site for various debates about modernisation, tradition and class identities. Western woman was seen as the erotic woman, they were seen to embody sensuousness in the way they walked, talked, dressed, and interacted with males. Thapar points out that the Bengali and Hindi tracts presented the image of *kulastree* (calm, covers up body, dresses simply) and distinguished from the *baishya* (seeks male company, parts of body, dresses simply) which was often used for the European women.¹⁰⁹ It was argued (journal *Maharathi*, 1927) that Indian woman can look modern and attractive without projecting themselves as sex objects as Western women do. This suggests that the notion of modesty in the Indian context was seen as a presentation of self as de - eroticised body. Modesty was implicated in the notions of *lajja*, (Shame) modest behaviour, concealing skin and shyness.

To begin with, it was pointed out in *Madras Mail* that Indian women had some inbuilt advantages over her western counterparts:

Indian women are now seen in public: may they be an example to all our Indian women, so that our land may soon be able to boast of her charmingly dressed daughters. A simple artistic effect is all that is needed, for we need not, like our western sisters, trouble about the cut of our dress or about changing fashion.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸Loomba, 'The Saggy Sari', p. 283. She pointed out that the debates revolved around the way sari was draped to look like a dress or in a way blouses were pleated and in adoption of accessories like pins and brooches which would make the sari more efficient or give it a different aesthetic an through shoes.

¹⁰⁹Thapar, *Women in the Indian National Movement*, p. 240.

¹¹⁰L.P.S, 'Fashion Notes for Indian Women', *Madras Mail*, 4, May 1929, p.23.

The garment that was draped rather than cut, namely the sari, permitted the Indian woman to be timeless and beyond fashion, rather than a slave to it. Women's entry into the public sphere was made possible and celebrated because Indian fashion was constant, and less of a preoccupation.

Not many women wore western clothing, so these comments were aimed at elite and middle class educated women who were influenced by western fashion. The newspapers and journals in which fashion discussions appeared were generally in English. So, we may presume that the readers of these journals were Europeans, Indian elites and the educated middle class. The *Madras Mail* which had largely British readership did not talk of nationalist themes and modesty so much as other contemporary journals and magazines. On the contrary, the Indian journals such as *ILM* and *Times of India* emphasised notions of modesty, set up ideals of beauty that were subordinated to duty, whether to nation, community or family.

There is a need to analyse different print cultures, and the spaces they provided for different classes of people; in English, educating people to new tastes and habits, and in Indian/vernacular press, educating people to perform their duties to the nation. In what ways could fashion be defined in the Indian context? We have seen that a constant comparison was made between western and Indian discourses on fashion, with the latter always defined in opposition to the former. However, the discussion on fashion was linked to the question of creating demand and taste for new kinds of clothing via the market as opposed to the fashioning new ideals of womanhood subservient to the nation.

Loyalty to one's ascribed culture was to be maintained in styles of dress, though the burden of such loyalty fell largely on women. The necessity of preserving/creating a national spirit derived from tradition was emphasized in Indian clothing,¹¹¹ but Indian women were above all expected to remain formally traditional in their clothing choices. The differences between western and eastern cultures were also cited as reasons for condemning fashion. Yet these distinctions were mapped on to the notion of suitability, in other words within the discourse of fashion itself, though what was upheld was a

¹¹¹Indian Women, 'The Foreign Spirit among Indians', *Madras Mail*, 9 April 1928, p. 9.

conservative ideal of cultural modesty. For example, sleeveless blouses were rejected on the ground that it was not appropriate for Indian women, especially those who had brown skin.¹¹² Sleeveless clothes were seen as an imitation of modern western customs. Another reason for disapproving sleeveless fashion was given by the writer for the *Madras Mail* is captured as; “to go without sleeves is an imitation of the modern western custom of appearance as much in nature’s garments as it is permissible to do. Why imitate a custom which is so much against our traditions?”¹¹³ Thus, western custom was rejected on the grounds of tradition. The specific concern expressed was about what parts of the female body were to be revealed and what concealed. How furthermore was culture to be expressed through covering, rather than uncovering the limbs?

An article in *Madras Mail* purportedly by an Indian woman said that the much talked about preservation of national spirit seemed to be more in theory than practice and that there was a tendency towards Anglicization in almost everything.¹¹⁴ She pointed further, that there were many currents of thought and that it was difficult to choose one to follow. She offered a solution for it and said that if one was Indian at heart then one would eventually be an Indian in manner.¹¹⁵

The presentation of a clear nationality in dress had to be learned through a refashioning of the self. This was in turn linked to the individuality of a person. In *ILM*, individuality was determined by two factors. One was the method of wearing clothes¹¹⁶, and the second was deportment and carriage¹¹⁷ which would set off the garment. In *Madras Mail*, women were said to be responsible for maintaining individuality while

¹¹²L.P.S, ‘Fashion notes for Indian women - Sleeveless styles condemned,’ *Madras Mail*, 4 May 1929, p. 23.

¹¹³‘Foreign Spirit Among Indians’, p. 9.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

¹¹⁶Sister Susie, ‘Fashion Notes’, *ILM*, volume 5, No 12, November, December 1932, p. 575.

¹¹⁷‘Our Fashion Suggestions’, *ILM*, volume 7, No 3, May June 1935, p. 93.

being true to nationality.¹¹⁸ At one level this is a contradiction: since one is a reflection of a community identity while the other is a notion of self - delinked from other, primordial identities. These ideas were expressed in different ways:

Therefore, the only thing we can do is to be true to our individuality basing it on our nationality. Here it is that the women of India can score; for they have been living in the backwaters of life and with their more plastic and emotional natures, they have been storing up the impressions of the outside world as men never can, in a vast and unchanging treasure house of experiences and idealities. It is from them therefore that we must call the traditions for our maxima and precepts of life, on which to base the onward march, for we must not forget that mere conservatism will not do, leading as it generally leads to stagnation.¹¹⁹

According to the writer, conservatism alone led to stagnation, but an obligation to reflect national identity was the woman's, since she absorbed, without being absorbed herself, the tides of fashion and change. The responsibility of Indian women towards national identity was through a new notion of individuality. Another argument considered Indian women's nature to be conservative and so traditional clothing was suggested for them.¹²⁰

In a different article, *Madras Mail* presented Indian women as conservative in nature and suggested that Indian women keep to their saris as European clothes were unbecoming, it discussed in the context of new style of hair bobbing, shingling, cropping and so on.¹²¹

The focal point of the discussion in the fashion columns in *Madras Mail* about French and London fashion was the importance of dressing according to individual attributes. So it is crucial to compare the categories to see if they were similar or different in India and elsewhere. French and London fashion discussions focussed more on themes related to style, elegance, current fashion, cut of the dress, and design. Discussions of

¹¹⁸'Foreign Spirit Among Indians', p. 9.

¹¹⁹Ibid.

¹²⁰An Observer, 'Indian Women - An Informal Talk', *Madars Mail*, September 1931, p. 14.

¹²¹'Foreign Spirits Among Indians - Coiffure', p. 9.

Indian fashion were buttressed by ideas of modesty, shame, nationality and tradition. In some cases European fashion was discussed in terms of nationality and modesty but the burden of retaining these did not fall so much on European women as it did on Indian women.

Ideals of modesty, shame and culture were emphasized by the vernacular journals. Discussions around fashion also questioned male attitudes. Thapar pointed out that in the Hindi journals, it was argued that the youth, under the influence of modern ideals were depriving the women of her natural talents and making them objects of display.¹²² Women were presented as adorning themselves for the men. Writer of *Chaturvedi* magazine commented:

*Isme koi sandeh nahin aj kal ke balak , balikaon ko fashionwali banne ka anurodh karte hain, ve apni striyon ko apne mitron se milne julne aur apni mandli ke sadasyon ke sath hans karne ityadi hi ko sabhyata samajhte hain parantu lajjà mein hi hamari sabhyata hai jisse humko kisi dasa mein hath se na jane dena chahiye.*¹²³

(There is no doubt that men are persuading their women folk to be fashionable, they think that only by meeting their friends and cracking jokes with them will make them progressive. But modest behaviour is the mark of our tradition and we should not abandon it under any circumstances.)

In this article by Shrimati poorna Devi titled 'hamari kuprathayein' (our evil systems), it is suggested that men should be held responsible and not women. However, the burden of saving tradition fell upon women's shoulders. New norms of conjugality were not supported by some sections. Men who went abroad to study were often seen as influencing their wives and modelling their married lives on Victorian examples. The Victorian model of marriage emphasised companionship. However, this kind of change in the institution of marriage and place of women within the home met with considerable criticism. Appearance of women in public and their mixing freely with men other than

¹²²Bjorkert, *Women in the Indian National Movement*, p. 253.

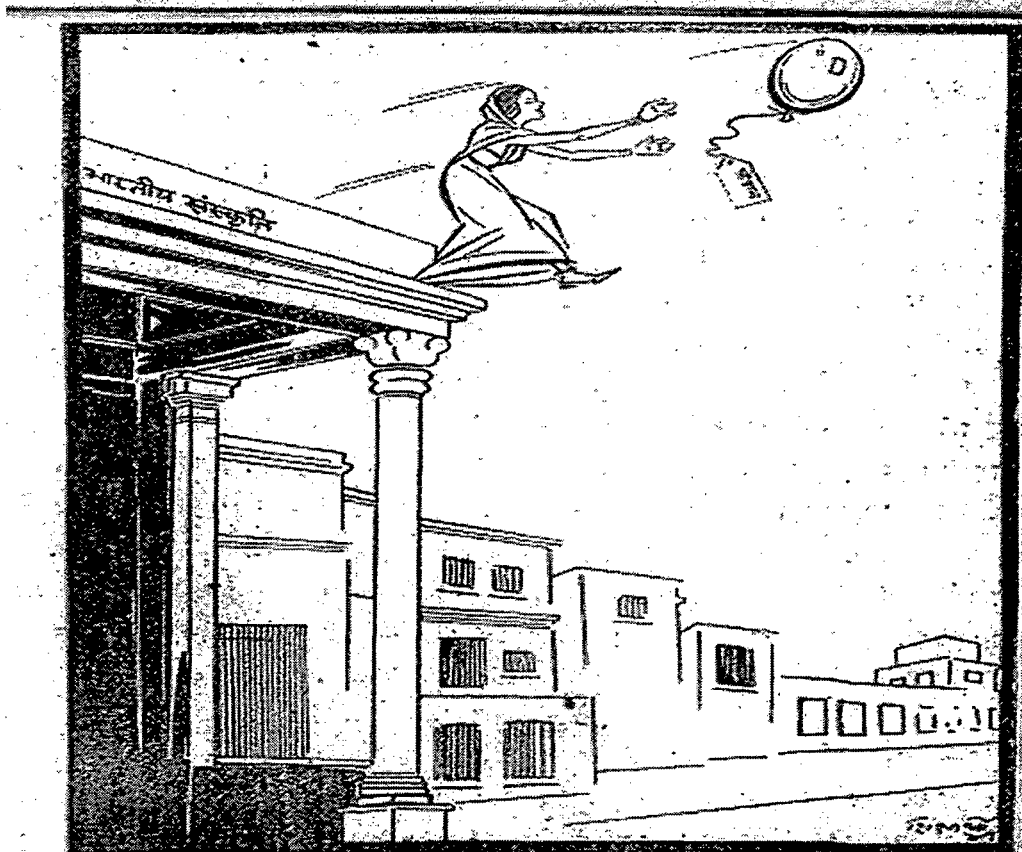
¹²³Shrimati Poorna Deviji, translated by Leeladhar Chaturvedi, 'hamari kuprathayein', *Mahilaank, Chaturvedi*, volume 16, No 1,2, April May 1930, p. 31.

family members were considered to be European lifestyle and tradition. The writer appealed women to retain modesty and shame against insistence from men of their family. Thus, again the burden of upholding morals of tradition fell upon women. Similarly, images of fashionable woman were used as examples of those who had been corrupted by influences from the west.

Figure 1 shows an Indian woman falling off from the high pedestal of Indian tradition/culture in attempt to catch fashion. The caption below the image '*Paschim ki hava mein nayi sabhyata ka rangin gubbara*' (colourful balloon of new civilization brought by the winds of west) caricatures the follower of fashion. The woman is represented as someone who is unaware of the consequences of her action, since she does not pay attention to the fact that she is falling. Instead, she is happily trying to catch the balloon which is a symbol of fashion. Although she is represented as chasing fashion, she is not entirely western in appearance. However, use of shoes and lack of veil indicates the influence of the west.

Western fashion was also seen as incongruous for Indian women. *Madras Mail* cautioned Indian women against attempting any kind of standardization of fashion since dressing was based on individual taste. So, the resolution of combining elements of Indian and western in dressing was rejected by the author, "Therefore, I hope, I may be pardoned, when I say, how incongruous is the style with the fashion of the sari. It is bad enough to see cropped head over topping English frocks, irrespective of whether they adorn old or young. How much worse it is it is to see them with the graceful Indian drapery?"¹²⁴

¹²⁴ibid.



पश्चिमकी हवामें नयी सभ्यताका रंगीन गुब्बारा ।

Figure 1: Woman and influence of the West ("Colourful balloon of new civilization brought by winds of the west")

Source: Kamla (1932)

Many writers thus discouraged western dress and hair. To make their appeal stronger the writers emphasized that fashion of short/bob hair did not even suit European women. Thus, such hairstyles were not suited to Indian saris. These discussions invoked ideals like taste and presented it as essential element in dressing. However, taste is not only generated through dressing but it's an acquired skill which is determined by a variety of factors, such as education, socialisation, market forces etc.

Columns in the *Madras Mail* commented sharply on the weak points of Indian dressing and suggested ways to improve it. These were alternatives to westernized dress

forms which brought out the uniqueness of the Indian sari, which was presented as the most graceful dress if some things were kept in mind. In the process of suggesting ways of dressing, *Madras Mail* also defined new codes against show of wealth and westernization:

They do not seem to realize that the object of dressing is not to show people that they are rich and can afford to buy expensive clothes but to dress in such a way that they may produce a pleasing effect, and give an impression of taste and beauty to all those who may chance to look at them. We do not wish to become westernized in our habits; it will do us no harm to dress more prettily at night than we do during the day.¹²⁵

The above excerpt taken from *Madras Mail* indicates that dress was a means for the presentation of a person's taste and not wealth. It also pointed out that Indian women were not aware of the potential of dress as a means of creating a pleasing appearance and that it could be a medium for displaying one's beauty and taste rather than just an indication of westernization.

Indeed, the display of wealth in dress could result in a lack of artistic effect in overall appearance which the majority of Indian women did not produce in their clothing.¹²⁶ Though they bought expensive saris and wore jewels studded with sparkling gems and they were unable to create an overall impression on the critical eye.

Fashion columns pointed out that Indian women's clothes were an inappropriate combination of colours for the sari, blouse and footwear.¹²⁷ However, the author reminded the readers that the skill of overall appearance was not because of lack of artistic taste but carelessness about producing a general effect. In the end, the sari was represented as the most graceful dress if worn properly.¹²⁸

¹²⁵L.P.S, 'Fashion Notes for Indian Women', *Madras Mail*, 15 June 1929, p. 28.

¹²⁶L.P.S, 'Fashion Notes for Indian Women', *Madras Mail*, 4 May 1929, p. 23.

¹²⁷Ibid.

¹²⁸Ibid.

Harmony had to be observed in overall dressing to achieve the desired effect. Therefore the lack of harmony between blouse and sari was discussed along with suggestions about what kinds of blouses Indian women should wear. For instance, it was suggested that “the blouse need not be of the same colour, but the colour scheme can be made to match and if the wearer does not possess a coloured blouse which will not match a particular sari, a simple white blouse will look extremely pretty.”¹²⁹ More suggestions were given for Indian women to follow: for instance, it was brought out in the article that a simple Magyar blouse with loose comfortable sleeves cut a little above the elbow and a V neck which is not too low but at the same time not too high, gives a cool charming effect.¹³⁰ New styles were allowed when it confirmed the ideal traditional image of woman.

Though the columns of the *Madras Mail* offered some criticism of European fashion, and questioned its appropriateness, it suggested and even encouraged westernization of Indian clothing to a limited extent, in the style of blouse design, or in hair style and footwear. The fashion columns in *Madras Mail* on French and London fashion discussed different types of dresses like evening long gowns and dresses for day wear; these were new concepts adapted to the Indian context.

Even the *Indian Ladies Magazine* suggested ways of improving clothing, though it was more conservative than *Madras Mail*. It reiterated cultural nationalist sentiments by looking deeper into the Indian traditions. It is important to place *ILM* on a different register, as its writers were mostly female. Some of the prominent women associated with this journal were Kamla Saththyanadhan (editor), Cornelia Sorabji, Sarojini Naidu, and Annie Besant.¹³¹ It was highly praised and acclaimed as it was written by Indian women, and thus, promoted education of women. The magazine was probably read by a large

¹²⁹Ibid.

¹³⁰Ibid.

¹³¹The Saththyanadhan families were exceptionally distinguished in terms of their contribution to the growth of Anglican Church in South India and to the development of education in India especially for women to the policy making of Indian National Congress and the first government after Independence, <http://www.wmcarey.edu/carey/electronic-books/articles/jackson--caste-culture-conversion.pdf>, Accessed on 10th April, 2009.

number of educated, European and South Indian women. Until the 1920's this magazine glorified the ancient Indian ideals of womanhood. The writers encouraged women to be of a sweet gentle nature, with a commitment towards home and family, chastity etc. But from the 1920s, the new roles of women in the home, and in social, political and national life were stressed in the articles.

In the context of fashion, writers were against blind imitation of western fashion. Most of the fashion suggestions were written by Sister Susie. According to her, fashion was the blind imitation of the people who were supposed to be leaders of the society and knew what was 'in' for clothes. She noted further that for people it did not matter if a particular style suited the person or if it was producing a disharmonious effect but what mattered was whether they were in fashion.¹³² Sister Susie's statement attacked some people for simply opting for one type of fashion.

For Sister Susie, beauty was not a simple matter but made up of different factors like perfect dressing, fine figure and features, attractive manners and liveliness of expression. She stressed that the greatest thing was to know oneself.¹³³ Importance of thoughts and actions in the creation of self was highlighted. Sister Susie believed that the real personality could be hidden under prejudiced thoughts, ignorance, moral cowardice and sentimentalism. Her columns gave equal importance to the personality of the person along with dressing. It was reflected in the way hairstyle¹³⁴, makeup, footwear¹³⁵, and ways of walking, manners and attitude was discussed. In an article Elizabeth Craig (writer of magazine *Dress and Beauty*) women were supposed to pay attention in matters of hair, the shape of the head, balance of features, and the formation of figures. Suggestions were given in this direction. However, the idea was to prepare oneself for the gaze of the man. She quotes an impresario who gave his views of what makes woman really attractive:

¹³²Sister Susie, 'Fashion Notes', *ILM*, volume 2, No 8, March 1929, p. 434.

¹³³ Sister Susie, 'Fashion Suggestions', *ILM*, volume 7, No 4, July and August 1935, pp. 135 - 137.

¹³⁴Sister Susie, 'Our Fashion Suggestions', *ILM*, February, 1932, p. 330.

¹³⁵Sister Susie, 'Our Fashion Suggestions - Our Footwear Suggestions', *ILM*, January 1929, pp. 320 - 321.

Perfection of form and feature, and faultlessness in style and technique are not enough for him, he says, when he chooses the chorus girls for his revues. He needs something more, viz. some individuality of charm or genius, 'which can so irradiate women, that even plain and ugly actresses can, within a few minutes of their entrance, persuade us that they are among the most beautiful women in the world. The first thing he looks for natural poise and balance of manner. This means a fine deportment and quite an easy walk when in movement and a beautiful repose when in rest; one of the most important points of the latter being a graceful handling of the hands and feet. The figure also can always be made shapely in approximate proportion to the size, so long as there are no foolish ideas to special requirements, which may not be suitable...¹³⁶

These qualities were searched in women for the purpose of a performance on the stage by the impresario. But as it appears in the column of 'Fashion Suggestions' in this journals it seems this kind of discussion was aimed at Indian women. The idea of grace is celebrated here. Here the strict control of gestures signifies distinction from the rest of woman. It becomes a marker of authority. *A Cultural History of Gestures: From Antiquity to the Present Day* by Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg helps us to understand the cultural politics of presentation of self beyond the notions of dress and fashion.¹³⁷ Gesture has been defined as a significant movement of limb or body or use of such movements as expression of feelings or rhetorical device.¹³⁸ The book analyses how the body served as a location of self - Identification and demonstration of authority. Gestures were transmitters of political and religious power in medieval society. They were markers of social distinction. Gestures can convey different messages, emotions, reactions and expression of a person. In this volume gestures are seen as a product of the needs of society to maintain separation, impose domination etc.

Thus this magazine contributed to setting trends to be followed by women and produced new norms for the fashion conscious. Bodily practice itself was altered to suit the dictates of elegance and fashion. It specified the right way of walking, the careful

¹³⁶'Our Fashion Suggestions', *ILM*, volume 8, No 3, May June 1935, pp. 93 - 94.

¹³⁷Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg, *A Cultural History of Gesture: From Antiquity to the Present Day*, United Kingdom: Polity Press, 1991.

¹³⁸*Ibid.*, p.1.

position of the hands while sitting and talking and a certain notion of the body shape.¹³⁹ In an attempt to redefine women's behaviour, it restricted her manners by setting strict trends in woman's personal area. The *Times of India* also carried columns on western fashion especially from Paris and London and ways of improving Indian dress styles. The *Times of India* was the most outspoken newspaper which emphasised ideals like tradition and nationality, presenting Indian culture and civilisation to be superior than west. One of the crucial themes that were foregrounded in this newspaper was the superiority and gracefulness of the Indian sari.

The sari was glorified for different reasons and writers constantly debated its popularity in the 1930s. It was even debated whether the sari could be worn by European women, with one columnist Safi, suggesting that European women could wear it as an evening dress.¹⁴⁰ Writers for *Times of India* differed from the other newspapers/journals discussed so far, since they emphasised an exchange of ideas about fashion from both sides. One columnist, Mina, even expressed the hope that the "evening dress of Europe would resemble the sari in the years to come and frocks will become a thing of past."¹⁴¹ She also pointed out that most Indian women clung to the traditional sari in spite of outside influences. She was in favour of abandoning the nine yard sari for the more manageable six yard one. But, there were other authors who opened options for women by confining women to strict regulations. Joan Williams commented:

Fashions in India do not undergo the same changes as in England, America or France; here women of the east are much more staple and conservative in their ideas of dress. Almost every caste and creed has its own orthodox ideas on the dress problem, and the method of wearing dress and jewellery marks the social rank and the caste of the wearer. So long as a woman keeps within the recognized regulations of the dress customs of her

¹³⁹Sister Susie, 'Our Fashion Suggestions', *ILM*, volume 1, No 6, November December 1934, pp. 247 - 248.

¹⁴⁰Safi, 'Dress Reform in India: Could European Women Wear the Sari?' *Times of India*, 13 April 1937, p. 14.

¹⁴¹Mina, 'The Beauty of the Sari: Already Affecting Western Design', *Times of India*, 7 May 1936, p.15.

class, she may indulge in the matter of colour, design, or material all of which offers an extensive range of variety.¹⁴²

On the one hand, these authors attempted to posit the superiority of east over west. On the other they advised women to leave conservatism behind but retain traditional dress. Joan Williams's argument was aimed at addressing problems associated in different caste (as it has been mentioned in the article that every caste and creed has its own dress problems).

The sari was praised for other reasons too. It was represented as a costume which reflected continuity with ancient dress. In this context Sally commented, "sari as a costume has stood the test of ages. It has survived the whims and fancies of Indian womanhood through several centuries and still retains its original form and simplicity."¹⁴³ This article also pointed out that in spite of uniformity of sari it was worn in different manners in different regions of India.¹⁴⁴ The Punjabis, the Bengalis, the Marathis, the Tamils, the Coorgs, and the Parsis all wore the sari in distinct ways. R. Hurry considered the dress of Marwari women to be most attractive if it was judged by western standards.¹⁴⁵ According to the author, the tight fitting bodice, gaudy and multi coloured skirt and a flimsy cloth thrown over their shoulder gave them appeal which was unmatched by any other Indian costume.

However, there were dissenting voices in this discourse which focussed on the disadvantages of the sari. Despite presenting the sari to be the best dress, a few authors did not consider it fit for the working woman or sports woman. According to Mina, it hindered growth and so it was uncomfortable for business women and professional

¹⁴²Joan Williams, 'The Fascination of the Eastern Sari: Simplicity and Symmetry of Line of Classic Styles of Ancient Greece' *Times of India*, 12 September 1932, p.13.

¹⁴³Sally, 'Beauty of the Sari: Has Stood the Test of Time', *Times of India*, 22 October 1935, p.13.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

¹⁴⁵R. Hurry, 'Ancient Origins of Modern Fashion: Dress of Indian Women', *Times of India*, 25 October 1932, p. 11.

women like nurses.¹⁴⁶ The author of 'The Conquering Sari' stressed that the sari was unfit for tramping the hills, climbing fences in cross country walks, playing tennis, running on the sands, climbing two steps of a bus with an overcoat over one arm, a bag and an umbrella in the other etc.¹⁴⁷ Sari was also considered to be dangerous in the domestic sphere, when it came in the way of cooking. Similar argument for not wearing sari was given by Hemanta Kumari Chaudhuri (1868 - 1953). The choice of western dress was made over sari as gown was considered convenient. She describes in 1900 in her book *Antahpur* that why few Bengali women opted for western gowns.¹⁴⁸ She notes:

As a result of the advent of the English race to this country and through intermingling with them, it is not only the case that our husbands, sons and brothers learnt to wear coats and trousers. We too began to use various kinds of chemises, petticoats, bodices and jackets. Prior to this we had no national dress for women, the wearing of which would preserve one's self - respect. Perhaps because of this, many Indian women wore the clothes of the English ladies. Many abandon the sari to wear the gown for the sake of convenience in moving out of doors...¹⁴⁹

The personal account shows the consideration behind donning such items which were seen to be the result of western influence. The lack of a national dress and comfort in clothing is cited as the reason by Chaudhuri. It suggests that the process of emulation was started by men and was followed by women. The sari was also seen to be hampering mobility. If some columnists in the *Times of India* wrote that the sari was the most graceful dress and presented as the ideal costume for Indian women, there were others who preferred clothes that gave women freedom of movement.

Almost all fashion columns in these English newspaper and journals discussed clothing in the public realm or in the context of activities home. The discourse of clothing took place in context of what should be worn to a meeting, a party, sports events, at

¹⁴⁶Mina, 'The Beauty of the Sari: Already Affecting Western Design' *Times of India*, 7 May 1936, p. 15.

¹⁴⁷'The Conquering Sari - Most Graceful Dress in the World', *Times of India*, 30 January 1936, p.13.

¹⁴⁸Hemant Kumari Chaudhuri, 'Women's Dress', Malini Bhattacharaya and Abhijit sen's edited *Talking of Power: Early Writings of Bengali Women from the Mid Nineteenth Century to the Beginning of the Twentieth Century*. Kolkata: Stree, 2003. pp. 88 - 93.

¹⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 91.

college, to fairs, etc. The distinction between private clothing and public clothing did not appear at all. It seemed as if new types of clothes and western clothes were adopted by women only in the public space. There was no discussion about what should be worn within the household except when the dangers of cooking were discussed. One can also say that with the entry of women into public space, it was felt crucial to improve her appearance in public and that's why dress reform aimed at spaces outside home.

The readership of vernacular journals was no doubt larger than English journals as they were circulated over many regions in North India and Bengal. There were more men and women who could read Hindi during this period.

We have already discussed that *Chand* presented nationalist and patriarchal worries prevalent during that time. Though it aimed to educate women and make them aware of national and international news, it also redefined codes of conduct for women. *Mahila* welcomed the changes in women's dressing.¹⁵⁰ According to its authors, the new fashion of wearing jacket or blouses without sleeves was much better in covering body than the old custom of wearing sari without blouse or inner clothing.¹⁵¹ They believed that one should not be concerned about issues of modesty as any new form of cloth did not defy norm of modesty if compared to the custom of women bathing in scanty sari.¹⁵² One of the female writers did not mock women who followed western fashion.¹⁵³ Instead, she criticised men for their preference for educated and fashionable women. According to the writer, it was such attitude of men which compelled women to adopt fashion. This theme was also pointed by other writers in the magazine *Kamla*.¹⁵⁴ *Kamla* acknowledged the spread of fashion and also justified the new form of clothing due to new needs. Savitri

¹⁵⁰ *Mahila* was a monthly magazine in Hindi which was published in Calcutta. Its editor was Sita Devi.

¹⁵¹ Shri Mohan Lal Nehru, 'fashionable', *Kamla*, July 1940, pp. 9 - 11.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Shrimati Kiranmayi, 'mahilaon ko fashion kisne sikhaya', *Kamla*, May 1941, pp. 6 - 8.

¹⁵⁴ *Kamla* was published in Benaras. Some of the editors were Shri Jagganath Prasad (Founder), Shri Babu Rao Vishnu Paradkar and Shri Shanti Priya Dwivedi from 1939 to 1941.

Devi Shukla suggested new ways of dressing as necessary for women who worked.¹⁵⁵ However, she emphasized ideals like 'shistachar' (etiquette) in the new kind of dressing. Articles that were published in journals like *Mathur Vaishya Hitaishi*, *Manorama*, *Stri Darpan*, *Kamlini* reflected anxiety about women following western fashion and culture advertised in English papers and journals. While *Sudha* carried articles promoting fashion, most of the articles focussed on upholding traditions. Indian women were asked to retain modesty and a sense of shame in their behaviour.

Conclusion

This chapter looked at the influence of the nationalist ideology on clothing of men and women, with a special focus on women's dress reform. Nationalism was a dominant influence on the clothing choices of Indian men and women in the early 20th century. Gender differences were very significant in this process since men were more easily corrupted, and women became the bearers of nationalist virtue and tradition via the refashioned sari. The discourse on nationalism focused on a criticism of west. It also emphasized ideals like simplicity, austerity, modesty and nationality.

Later, the focus shifted to themes like individuality that was asserted through one's dress. What were the chances of fashion as it was promoted in English columns succeeding in finding an audience? The presentation and definition of the Indian body was crucial in this movement. In this context, everything related to woman was a focus of attention, from items of clothing, behaviour, footwear, hairstyle and mannerisms. Newspapers and journals during this period emerged as significant sites for popularising or criticising dress reform and fashion, and the adoption of these styles by women.

The discourse on clothing was also marked by a constant search for 'an ideal Indian costume'. The iconic costume for Indian women was supposed to fulfil all the requirements in the dress. It was supposed to represent nationality, tradition, modesty. Along with these ideals, it was also expected that such costumes should reflect a person's taste and aesthetic skills. The sari emerged as the most popular choice for the Indian women which fulfilled all these criteria. It's crucial to note that in almost all the journals

¹⁵⁵Savitari Devi Shukla, 'naya aur purana pehanava', *Kamla*, April 1939, pp. 44 - 45.

it was the 'Indian woman' who was the centre of discussions. No distinction was made on the basis of different caste, class or community except in one or two articles. This chapter also located the discussions on dress in the context of the fear, anxiety and apprehension towards women's entry into the public sphere. The debates reflected predictable worries of the nationalist, reformers, orthodox sections about the loss of control over women. However, such criticisms were countered by advocates of women's independence and education. The voices favouring women's independence could not be considered as feminist as this freedom was to be exercised within some limitations. The freedom which women enjoyed in increased mobility and in experiments with clothing were over determined by nationalist ideology and insistence on women as the bearers of the reformed Indian identity. The market drew some converts too, though largely from the upper echelons of society. Through the 1920s and 1930s there were signs that women themselves were joining the debate, vociferously demanding adherence to reformed codes in some instances while others approved of choices made by women themselves. A new aesthetic which combined mobility with elegance and at the same time a particular Indian tradition was brought into being, which enabled women to participate in public life, without being threatened. What then of the practices of veiling and unveiling, of covering and uncovering which were hotly debated throughout the late nineteenth century in some parts of India? What sorts of resolutions were made possible by the gradual distancing from clothing as signifiers of gender and caste hierarchy, or as signifiers of ethnicity? This merits separate discussion, and will be taken up in the next chapter.

Chapter 2

Modesty, Modernity and the Politics of Veiling

Historical works on the purdah system have tried to grapple with various meanings of the word purdah. The literal meaning of purdah as “curtain” has been used by writers like Hanna Papanek and Eunice De Souza.¹ However, it is most commonly used to define the system of secluding women and enforcing high standards of female modesty in South Asia. Most of the studies suggest that sartorial conventions do not only represent identities but also express behavior of groups, communities and religions. Along with this, they also shaped individualized notions of shame, modesty and piety. In order to trace a longer history of purdah in India, I will examine various trends of veiling or *gunghat* among Hindu women as they were transformed in the twentieth century. Purdah is seen as forming one of a series of patriarchal constraints on women’s bodies, ranging from complete segregation or the development of separate gendered spheres to actual physical coverings of women and space as it occurred in colonial North India. However, moves to uncover women were not the only forces at work in India at this time. Equally important were new forms of covering naked bodies, which had earlier signified dominated caste status, in other parts of India.

Throughout the nineteenth century and early twentieth century purdah was prevalent in North India. Indrani Sen points out that by the late nineteenth century purdah became a subject of interest as it had become an important item on the social reform agenda.² It became a widely debated topic marked by a divergence of opinions. Broadly, we can locate three approaches in the studies on purdah. First, we have studies that look at purdah as means of seclusion and sexual control. These are often colored by the colonial imaginations of India as a dark country. For instance, works by Indrani Sen and Eunice De Souza.³ They present a picture of life in purdah as depressing and unhealthy.

¹Hanna Papanek and Gail Minault, *Separate Worlds: Studies of Purdah in South Asia*, Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1982.

²Indrani Sen, *Memsahibs' Writings Colonial Narratives on Women*, New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2008.

³Eunice De Souza, *Purdah: An Anthology*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press. 2004.

Second, there are studies that refute the earlier approach and show *zenana* as space where women get opportunities to explore themselves.⁴ They focus on the virtues of segregation and point out that purdah is not only a form of veiling or seclusion but also a code of conduct.⁵ Laura Weinstein's work shows through a study of Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh II that *zenana* was a sanitized and modernized domestic space and in this manner it defends the long term institution against the critiques of late nineteenth century reform movements.⁶ Third, there are works which seek to understand purdah in context of social relations and group behavior.⁷ These also highlight that veiling was not only means of seclusion but it bound women with a strict code of behavior within the house and outside. However, most of the works focus on the purdah system of Muslim women and few on lives of Bengali and Hindu women.⁸ These works highlight notions of shame and modesty as inseparable traits from feminine values and dressing.

In the first chapter, I have noted that there was a need felt to change the dress of Indian women when they entered public spaces. In this project, the women's body became a site of contestations over the meaning and necessity of saving tradition. The early twentieth century Indian women's movement was partly influenced by the feminist movement in west, but also responded creatively to nationalist agendas. The nationalist project reflected two concerns: first, to reform women and change the way in which they were perceived. Second, the image projected was to be such which would be superior to the women in west. Thus, conservatism was discouraged but tradition and modesty were encouraged. These changes led to reform of appearance and identity of the Indian woman. This also resulted in a drive to abolish system of veiling. It was not only a

⁴Reina Lewis, 'On Veiling, Vision and Voyage', *Interventions*, 1: 4, 1999, pp. 500 - 520.

⁵Dagmar Engels, *Beyond Purdah? Women in Bengal 1890 - 1939*, Delhi: Oxford University Press. 1996.

⁶Laura Weinstein, 'Exposing the *Zenana*: Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh II's Photographs of women in Purdah', *History of Photography*, 34:1, 2, 2010. pp. 2 - 16.

⁷Papanek Hanna, 'Purdah: Separate Worlds and Symbolic Shelter', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 15, No, 3 June 1973, pp. 289 - 325.

⁸Himani Banerjee, 'Textile Prison: Discourse on Shame (*lajja*) in the Attire of the Gentlewoman (*bhadramahila*) in Colonial Bengal', *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, Vol.19, No. 2, 1994, pp.169 - 193.

system of covering one's face and body but can be understood as a set of rules and regulation of right conduct. The zenana or the inner room for women also marked a separate sphere and segregated women. While other social norms related to separate spheres, segregation, gendered normative codes did operate throughout India, there were regions, classes and social groups for whom these questions were different.

In the twentieth century, several issues related to purdah were reflected in the vernacular journals and books. The focus of the essays in the journals and textbooks (that aimed at educating women) during this period was to remove the evils prevalent in the Indian society. The articles, images and the books discussed disadvantages of purdah system among different Hindu communities. The overall tone was reformist. But there were limitations in the level of independence women should experience after abolition of purdah. In this context, the dress of the women was also debated on a large scale. The lobby in favor of purdah raised fears of the moral downfall of women and gave traditional arguments to criticize the reform movement. The overall stand of these journals on purdah was ambiguous, in short.

This chapter is an attempt to trace the politics of un/veiling. I will try to locate the significance of this ideology in shaping clothing choices in the context of purdah. I will focus on sartorial changes in different communities and states in North India. For instance, purdah system was practiced in the most rigid manner in Bihar and among the Marwari community. As already mentioned, the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century was marked by a drive to bring about changes in the status of women. It was facilitated by the nationalist movement, several kinds of reform movements, and the women's movement as well. Women's organizations such as the All India Women's Congress strengthened the movement against purdah and put forward the need to bring changes in the existing systems which subordinated women. These organizations operated within nationalism and sometime challenged patriarchal controls. Consequently, new definition of looking at self emerged. Women began to enjoy rights which were within some limitations. These provided avenues to women to explore themselves and enjoy various rights which were within some limitations. Along with this, the anti - purdah movement drew on reasons like deterioration of women's health, new means of

transport, lack of communication among family members, and the insignificant personality of purdah women as the basis for their campaign. These changes created the scope for women to come out of purdah and life of seclusion.

This change posed a threat to the elder members of the families as well as orthodox sections of society. This is linked to a larger critique of the educated woman and her moral decline. However, these caricatures were countered by the advocates of modern education.⁹

Thus, the present chapter seeks to explore changes in the purdah system of Hindu women in the period 1900 to 1940. These discussions must be set in the context of anti - purdah movements among Muslims as well which would help trace the differences and similarities in the nature of movement. However, the focus is on elite, middle class and especially educated women.

The main sources for this chapter are vernacular journals that were published and circulated in North India. These are *Stri Darpan* (Kanpur and Prayag), *Nok Jhok* (Agra), *Mathur Vaishya Hitaishi* (Kanpur), *Saraswati* (Allahabad), *Kamla* (Banaras), *Kanya Manoranjan* (Allahabad), *Kamlini* (Allahabad), *Kanya Sarvasva* (Prayag), *Madhuri* (Lucknow), *Sudha* (Lucknow), *Manorama* (Allahabad), *Chand* (Allahabad), *Maryada* (Allahabad, Banaras), *Chaturvedi* (Agra, Kanpur and Lucknow) and *Mahila* (Calcutta). In addition to the journals, I have also looked at works in Hindi which were published between 1900 - 1940. *Times of India* also throws light on the widespread debate on purdah in this period.

It is important to place the discussions of the journals and the books in the Hindi literary sphere. Francesca Orsini points out that from the nineteenth century onwards, the importance of journals as a medium to foster Hindi as a public language was realized by

⁹Satyadeva Vidyalankar, *Parda*, Calcutta: Adarsh Hindi Pustakalya, 1936. It contains experiences of women who had practiced purdah in their life. After coming in contact with the nationalist or by getting influenced by their husbands, these women abolished purdah and became influential leaders in the national movement. I shall discuss their experiences in detail in my paper later.

the pioneers of Hindi literature.¹⁰ Early Hindi journals were considered to be very important as they expressed critiques of colonialism and set the tone for Indian patriotism. The author traces the growth of Hindi journalism in this period. She describes that with the coming of *Saraswati* under the editorship of Mahavir Prasad's Dvivedi, centre of Hindi journalism shifted from Calcutta to United Province. This magazine was said to have ushered in a new era in Hindi literature.¹¹ Similarly, *Madhuri* that came in 1922 under the leadership of Dularelal Bhargava was considered to have an impact on the literary sphere. Both of them carried essays on historical and contemporary issues of public interests. Orsini notes that most of the contributors of these two magazines were renowned scholars.¹² There were a few newcomer writers as well who wrote in this journal. *Madhuri* was associated with writers like Premchand and Visvambharnath. Short stories that appeared in this journal, gave it huge popularity. *Madhuri* provided a platform for writers coming from different schooling backgrounds and literary *samskaras* (traditions) and thus, provided a common space for the expression of opinions. These were the pioneer journals which made the Hindi public sphere popular. Along with these, there were number of women's journals which took up the 'women's question' and gained popularity among the female readership. Women's voices started appearing in the journals by 1920s. Few journals which discussed women's issues on a wide scale are *Chand* and *Stri Darpan*. Issues like women's role based education, values and ideas about womanhood were discussed. This kind of literature was termed as *stri upyogi* literature by Orsini. By the 1920's, all the mainstream journals started a women's section and carried articles on purdah, child widowhood and so on. However, women's contributions to these magazines was limited at first, though, as Orsini suggests, it was a sign that female readership was recognized but as a separate group with special concerns. Orsini presents *Chand* as pioneering a breaking with this trend of *stri upyogi* and bringing issues

¹⁰Francesca Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere 1920 - 1940: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 52. What follows in this paragraph has been taken from this book.

¹¹Ibid., p. 53.

¹²Ibid., p. 55.

of women to the centre.¹³ This history of the Hindi journals would help us to locate the space they provided for the discussion of purdah.

What were the reasons given by the nationalists and the reformers for changes in purdah and the dress of North Indian women? Who was presented as a role model? This chapter lays stress on the burden of responsibility women were given to uphold the moral orders of society, family and community. Did the anti - purdah movement advocate equal rights for women and separate identity? This paper will begin by questioning the basis for the observance of purdah. I will try to analyze the justification given by the Muslim reformers and religious leaders regarding veiling/unveiling of Muslim woman. I will see how idea of fashion emerges in debates around purdah in these journals. The chapter is divided into three sections. First, it deals with the arguments in support of purdah. The second section discusses arguments given by those who opposed purdah. Third, it will analyze opinions and experiences of women in purdah. I am not trying to emphasize that there were only two types of opinions that emerged in the purdah movement. These were not water tight sections and so reflected overlapping concerns. In the context of Muslim woman, there were three camps of opinion.¹⁴ First, those who were totally opposed purdah, second those who wanted to lessen its restrictions by providing creative interpretations of religious instructions and third, those who wanted to maintain the system as they believed that its modification would be a threat to Islamic law and national honor. However, the women's movement conceptualized the problem differently, across this tripartite division.

Shame, Lust and the Unveiled Woman

What was the sudden need to justify the system which was supposed to have ancient history? The entry of women into the public sphere, as a result of the changes in education, the modernized family form, and job opportunities was seen as posing a threat to society. Women were caricatured as shameless people who behaved immodestly in

¹³Ibid., p. 267.

¹⁴Siobhan Lambert Hurley, *Muslim Woman, Reform and Princely Patronage: Nawab Sultan Jahan Begam of Bhopal*, New York: Routledge, 2007, p. 102.

public places like stations, *ghats* and bazaars, in front of *pujaris*, *maulvis* and local vendors. The new codes of morality and conduct and of public appearance were therefore outlined for women in the process of coping with their sudden visibility in the public sphere.

More than the question of *purdah*, it was the origin of veiling that took up much of the space in the print media. Story was used to legitimize the use of *purdah* in the present period. The orthodox members of the society argued that as it was an ancient tradition so it should continue in the present times. Chaturvedi Dwarka Prasad Sharma seems to be in favor of veiling and against clothing of Bengali women. He comments:

*Prachin kal mein kulin gharane ki striyon mein purdah system awashya prachalit tha. Ataev vartaman kal mein bhi striyon ko us prachin kalin padyati ko parityag karna uchit nahi. Isliye kehna padta hai ki striyon ki poshak aisi honi chahiye ki jisse parda system ki raksha bani rahe.*¹⁵

(*Purdah* system was practiced by the upper caste women in Ancient India, that's why women should not abandon veiling. So I have to say that women's dressing in the present should reinforce this system)

History was deployed favorably to claim that the ancient tradition was well suited to the present as well. However, it is important to note that the above reference has been made in the context of women from upper class/caste families.

New modern sites like the railways, schools, markets, political spaces were seen both as a boon and a bane. Broadly, there were two approaches to these sites where women appeared. Firstly, there were arguments which saw the entry of women to these places as threats to public morality and required a reinforcement of *purdah*. In the other kind of writing, *purdah* was seen as an obstacle to independence and strong female identity. While, this section argued for the abolition of *purdah*, it also raised the need for an appropriate form of dressing and modesty.

¹⁵Chaturvedi Dwarka Prasad Sharma, *Mahila hitaishini* (well wisher of woman), Lucknow: Naval Kishore Press, 1925, p. 144.

चाँद



हमारे रेलवे स्टेशनों का दृश्य

परदा न करने वाली स्त्री का स्टेशन पर दिखाई देना मानो बिजली का गिरना है। रेलवे कर्मचारी, मुसाफ़िर कुली-कवाड़ी—सभी जिस आशापूर्ण नेत्रों से देखने लगते हैं, यह उसी का साधारण दृश्य है !!

Figure 2: Railways stations and the perils of purdah (“Scene of our railway stations: The appearance of woman without purdah at station is like thunderbolt. This is an ordinary scene - of how railway staff, passengers and porters start looking with lustful eyes at a woman without purdah.”)

Source: ‘Vyanga Chitravali’, Chand (1930).

Figure 2 taken from *Chand* helps to elaborate one of the arguments. It shows that appearance of women without purdah is like a thunder bolt and it attracts gaze of men from the opposite community and from lower classes. This reflects the anxiety faced by one section of society who did not favor female presence outside the home without properly concealing their identity. In most of the images, women were presented as vulnerable to the gaze of men if they were unveiled. Probably, the aim was to warn women from interacting with these kinds of men. These men were shown to be taking advantage and gazing women. Similarly, patriarchal sections raised worries about protection of women’s modesty in public and among strangers. The battle was not to protect woman but to protect her modesty which was representative of Indian community and culture. The threat was perceived at such sites of modernity. The projection of home

as a secure space and public spaces as dangerous is merely a tool of these sections to regulate women's independence and freedom.

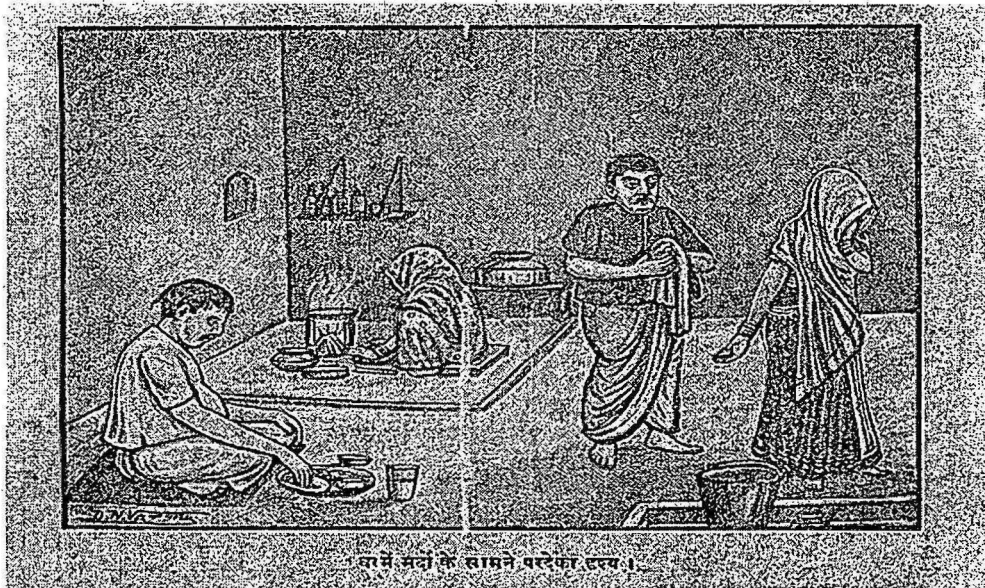


Figure 3: Purdah at home (“Scene of purdah in front of men of the family”)

Source: Satyadev Vidyalkar, *Parda*

Similarly, appearance of women at some public locations such as bathing ghats/railway stations was seen as dangerous. Public interaction with unrelated males such as local vendors in the bazaars was criticized. Often women's clothing was scrutinized and considered to be vulgar and inappropriate at these places. Women were perceived to be susceptible to harassment and mockery from all the men outside. Most of the images in the journals showed women being gazed at by pundits, *maulvis*, bangle sellers, utensil seller etc. For example, Figure 3 and 4 show the contrast in women's behavior in home and outside. Women were mocked for being too outspoken to these men and consequently these women were considered to be hypocrites. They were criticized for adopting fake purdah which allowed them free conduct in public. This kind of 'hypocrisy' for which women were blamed became paradoxically the reason for demanding the removal of purdah of clothing, while adopting instead shame and modesty in attire and behavior. While opposing purdah, such articles seemed to support the seclusion of women by advocating restrictions to be observed in public. Furthermore, the

porter or the utensil seller in these images is recognizably Muslim are caricatured into a stereotypical image of a Muslim. These images reinforced the ideals of modesty and burdened women with responsibility to preserve honor of community and religion. This is a reflection of anxiety about the freedoms women enjoyed.

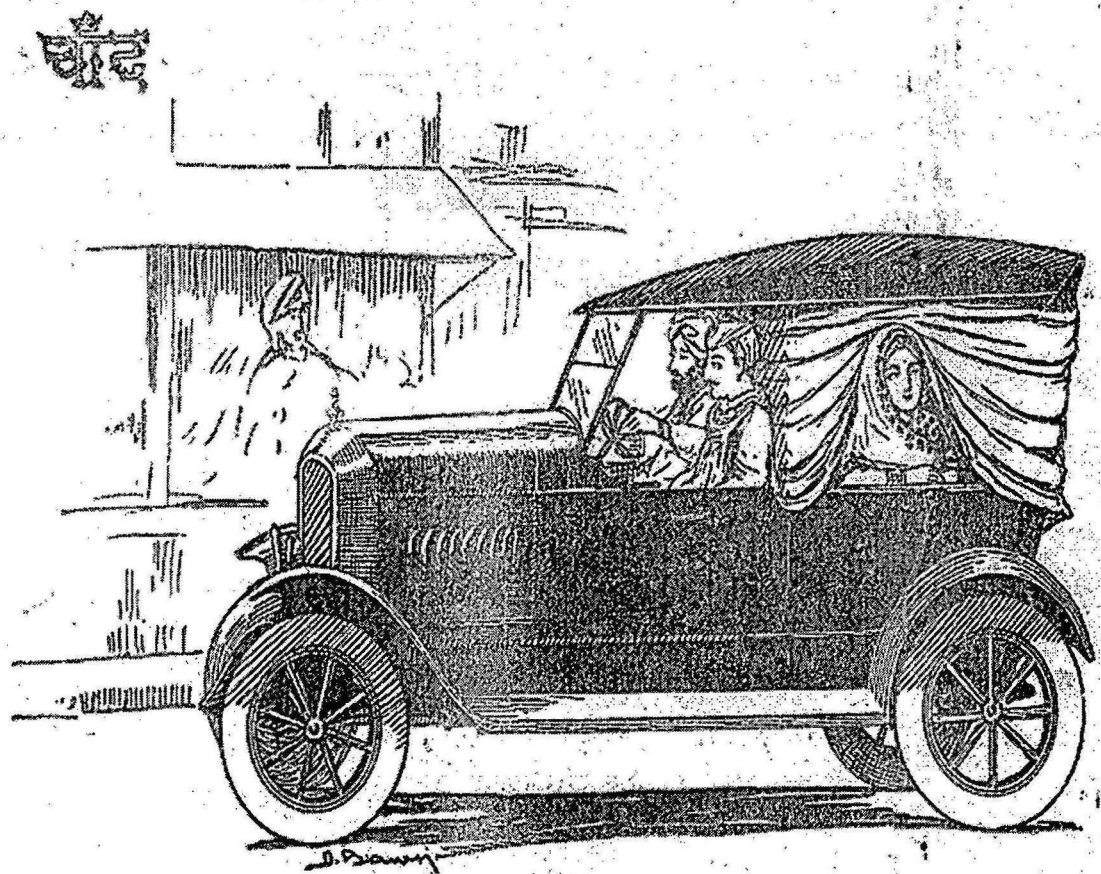


Figure 4: Purdah before utensil seller (“Same women behave shamelessly before the utensil seller in the absence of men of their family.”)

Source: Satyadev Vidyalkar, *Parda*

Charu Gupta points in her work that women’s access to public life posed a threat to the orthodox society who perceived these changes as moral decline of the society.¹⁶ The interaction of women with unrelated men was seen as most dangerous to women’s modesty and honor. Women were not only considered as victims, in fact they were criticized for being ignorant and talking in a shameless manner to the people outside family while veiling themselves in front of the male members of the family. Women were complicit in this act of curious gazing: they invited the male gaze by themselves gazing the world shamelessly, peering out of a car in which they are screened from the world. This is reflected in Figure 5.

¹⁶Charu Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community: Women, Muslims and the Hindu Public in Colonial India*, Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001, pp. 142.



आजकल के पर्वे का स्वरूप
 पर्दे के भीतर से भी हो, दिख सकता है सच संसार !
 कभी-कभी बस यह सुलता है, हो जाता है बय्यभार !!

Figure 5: Curtained carriages and purdah (“True image of today’s purdah: world can be seen even from behind purdah, when it is opened sometimes it leads to fiasco”)

Source: Chand (1929)

Gupta argues that modern developments became reasons for advocating purdah and for the renewed demand for separate female and male spaces, resulting in more demands for *zenana* coaches. A need was felt to make separate arrangements for *purdahnashin* ladies so that their access to market places, shops, or exhibitions could be less problematic. We get instances of special purdah arrangements to be made at exhibitions, sales and public meetings. It seems that by these steps purdah was reinforced and getting acceptance. One can argue that women were negotiating with old rules by

observing purdah and in this way were creating avenues to explore themselves. Another way to look at it is that the coming of modernity intensifies the discourse of purdah. As no code was taken for granted, everything appeared porous, open and fluid thus, opens to the gaze.

This figure indicates another standard anti - purdah argument. It has captured the worries of this section vividly. '*Aj kal ke parde ka swaroop*' (true image of today's purdah) shows a woman peeping from a curtained wagon. The image presents a woman's curiosity to look outside as something dangerous. The private vehicle suggests her elite status as during this period very few elite people could afford it. Designer sari and ornaments marks rich status of the woman. During this period, a curtained wagon was a special arrangement in which women were allowed to travel, but the look outside was not encouraged. The woman is visible to an invisible spectator, though there is a man standing in the shop beside who makes no eye contact. The caption also warns women against taking such steps as that would lead to unwanted consequences. The visibility of this woman to the world is seen to be dangerous.

Meyada Yegenoughlu stressed that the veiled women of the colonized societies like Arabia and India were the objects of desire and fantasy in the eyes of the colonizer.¹⁷ Most of the literature in the west attempted to reveal the hidden secrets of veiled women of the orient. An image of veiled women was perhaps an attempt to present her as representative of Indian culture and tradition.

Another image from the journal *Saraswati* shows women with banners viewed by a pandit and a *maulvi*. It reflects opposing views to participation of woman in the national movement. This image is titled as 'Pandito aur maulviyon ki pareshani'. The comments in the caption are: "*Pandit: jab auratein hi parde mein na rahengi tab swaraj le kar kya hoga. Maulvi: beshak ab yeh desh hamre rahne layak nahi rah gaya.* (Pandit says, "If women will not stay in purdah then what is the need to take *swarajya*. Maulvi comments,

¹⁷Meyada Yegenoughlu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism*, London, Cambridge University Press, 1998. p. 39.

“certainly this country is not fit for you and me to live).”¹⁸ This image makes a satire on the orthodox sections. We see how the religious section makes mockery of women in the nationalist procession. Both pandit and *maulvi* in the image seem to have considered themselves to be protectors of the moral order of the society. They criticize the unveiled women in public. This view was opposed to women’s entry into the realm of politics. Another way to look at this image can also be to show the reaction of few male members who required women to stay at home. This quote indicates the changes that took place due to the freedom movement of India. Women’s public appearance was acceptable and even encouraged. Other changes, like work opportunities, new conjugal and domestic roles, education and social movements also encouraged women to emerge from seclusion.

This did not stop or prevent the production and circulation of images of ideal domestic women. The *Times of India* suggested that, “the orthodox Indian woman is trained to aspire to the ideal wifhood since childhood. The focusing of all her aims and interests to her husband and home is indirectly encouraged by purdah...”¹⁹ This is another kind of argument which supported the institution of purdah. In this case purdah becomes the institution for molding women into ideal wives and home makers. It was considered necessary for them to be uninfluenced by all kinds of distraction. This kind of argument does not take women’s opinion into account and simply strengthens patriarchal norms.

It is clear that some of these arguments were made in the context of high class women in India. Since most of these journals were published and circulated from North India; I would surmise that the target audience was elite and middle class educated men and women from North India. The issue of religion does not appear directly in the discussion of pro purdah arguments. Ancient Indian ideals were reinterpreted to either support or reject purdah. On the other hand, the purdah movement for Muslim women revolved around issues of religion, sanctity of Islam and nation. It is crucial to bring out that there were practically no discussions about purdah Muslim women in these vernacular journals. But it is crucial to look at sartorial changes among Muslim women.

¹⁸‘hasya aur vinod’, *Saraswati*, volume 31, No 5, November 1930, p. 558.

¹⁹P.K., ‘The Purdah’ *Times of India*, 8 July 1933, p. 21.

Religion emerged as the dominant explanation for the legitimate use of purdah among Muslims. An article in *Times of India* described the debate on women's suffrage in the legislative assembly in 1922.²⁰ The resolution of women suffrage found much support, and the opposition was feeble. The article pointed that Maulvi Mia Asjadulla defended the purdah system. The article commented that the Maulvi quoted from the Koran to show that the most sacred of man's possessions is privacy and particularly the privacy of women. Against the view that the institution of purdah had the sanction of the Koran, an Indian woman said, "Islam never intended to keep women in seclusion. The Prophet intended to teach good manners and decency to both sexes. He did not advocate a prison life for women."²¹ So we see that teachings in the Koran about women were interpreted in different ways. However, there were some women who supported the cause of franchise but still advocated purdah. For example, Yar Jung Bahadur pleaded for emancipation of Muslim women but wished that Gosha women should remain in seclusion.²² There were modernist like Sultan Jahan Begum and Sayyid Mumtaz Ali who sought to increase women's participation without seriously challenging the institution of veil. Sultan Begum ruled Bhopal from 1901 to 1930. She used Qur'anic verses on modesty and mobility (24: 30 - 1 and 33: 59).²³ She asserted that these passages ordered women to wear a full veil over their faces and bodies if they had to go out at all. Her focus remained on the need for purdah to protect women from insult and molestation. In the context of health, she believed that seclusion actually was responsible for improving woman's health as it saved her from contagious diseases. The Muslim purdah movement in the 20th century also reiterated more or less similar reasons cited in vernacular journals. However, there was difference in context of focus on religion. In the discussion on Hindu women, the ideals of community and nation were invoked in order to support purdah, whereas religion was reinterpreted to justify veiling among Muslim women.

²⁰Special Correspondent, 'Woman Suffrage Another Advance Debate in the Assembly', *Times of India*, 2 February 1922, p. 9.

²¹An Indian woman, 'Behind the Veil - Disabilities of Women in Seclusion', *Times of India*, 15 January 1935, p.14.

²²Indian Woman, 'Behind the Veil', *Times of India*, 15 January 1935, p. 14.

²³Hurley, *Muslim Woman, Reform and Princely Patronage*, p. 104.

Both Hindu women and Muslim women were seen as the bearers of virtues and honor. Thus, one can say that purdah was the institution which controlled women's sexuality. The need to preserve the modesty of women was argued by the orthodox sections and women inside the household, tradition, and religion were glorified. However, there were counter arguments that opposed purdah. In the arguments against purdah we should take note of divergence of views. While one section argued for complete independence others argued for opposition to purdah though the freedom was to be exercised within limits.

Against seclusion

This section looks at the arguments put forward to discourage purdah. It will emphasize how the modern period brought changes in dress and the mobility of women. This section will focus on the initiatives taken by the women organizations and their effort to remove purdah.

The opponents of purdah glorified women in ancient India and said that purdah was not followed by women and they participated equally in all activities. Supporters of freedom gave examples of Sita and other women who did not follow a life of seclusion. Images of these women were glorified to be followed as role models. In this process, the women in the ancient India were presented as the epitome of knowledge, chastity, bravery, purity and strength even without purdah.

The history of purdah in India was once more turned to. Purdah was generally considered to have come to India during Muslim rule, adopted by women to protect themselves against abductions and the bad gaze of Muslim rulers who were always represented as lascivious and perpetual threats to the chastity of Hindu women.²⁴ Some authors argued that while protection of modesty necessary under Mughal rule, there was no need of purdah in '*angreji rajya*'.²⁵ This kind of argument was also used to question

²⁴Dev Narayan Dwivedi, 'parda: aithasik aur samajik drishtipat', *Kamla*, volume 1, No 2, November 1939, pp. 113 - 118.

²⁵*ibid.*

the system of veiling in front of family members, since if the very basis of purdah was to protect against outsiders, then there was no need to hide one's face in family.

usne to adhikar ek se dono ko de dale hain

Kintu yaha tak huye swathrat yahan purush matwale hain,

Nari hai purusho se nirbal, jyon hi unko bhan hua,

*Tyon hi anuchit bal proyag ka swarth hetu nij dhayan hua.*²⁶

This quote valorizes the idea of equal rights and independence. This argument held men to be responsible for subordination of women in seclusion and depriving them from air and freedom.²⁷ The poet laments the condition of women and held men responsible for the deprived state of women. He writes, god gave equal rights over air and gave independence to both of them. He considers men to be selfish and says that they realized that women were weaker than men. In the process of criticizing men the poet holds them to be responsible for subjugating women in home. This subordination was seen as a reason for illiteracy and weakness among women, so in the process of critiquing men he reinforces the weakness associated with women. However, he argues for independence, equal rights and freedom from seclusion.²⁸

As public spaces became more accessible to women, there was a change in the way woman was perceived. The anti - veil section put forward the need to make women confident and brave. According to the journals that were circulated in North India, veiled women attracted unwanted attention from men whereas unveiled women walked freely. It was emphasized that the hidden identity of the female seemed to attract more attention and curiosity among the opposite sex rather than the exposed face. This statement can be illustrated by looking at Figure 6. This image shows two women on a platform. The woman in *ghunghat* becomes a subject of mockery and voyeuristic gaze whereas lady without purdah does not seem to attract any attention.

²⁶Devi Prasad Gupt 'parda pratha', *Sudha*, volume 5, No 2, March 1932, p. 229.

²⁷Vidyalankar, 'Parda', p.85

²⁸'parde ki pratha', *Stri Darpan*, volume 42, No 3, September 1928, p. 99.



प्लेटफॉर्म का दृश्य

("Without purdah")

("With purdah")

Figure 6: Scene on Platform

Source: Chand (1929)

This figure presents a recurrent theme which was given to advocate abolition of purdah.

It would also be crucial to point that the unveiled woman is sketched as a confident woman and wearing modern shoes. On the other hand, the woman in *gunghat* seems to be shy and lacks confidence. The people gazing at the women in purdah appear to be from different religious communities. For example: the fourth man from the left side is wearing a long cap and has a beard whereas, another man wears a turban. A woman in purdah becomes a symbol of old tradition and victim to mockery from all male sections of society irrespective of communities.



Figure 7: Scene on the street (“Everyone is looking at the woman in *gunghat* whereas the woman without *pardah* is walking freely and nobody is gazing at her”)

Source: Satyadev Vidyalkar, *Parda*, p. 48.

Arguments favoring abolition of *pardah* reiterated this theme of identity formation and freedom. Most of the images in the journals and books discussing the issue of *pardah* showed that females in *pardah* attracted attention of men whereas unveiled women walked freely without being stared at by anyone.

It was widely discussed that the hidden face and covered body of a women aroused curiosity in men to inquire about her beauty and looks. An unveiled women’s beauty was already present and did away the need for speculation. This is also reflected in the next image (Figure 7). The contrast in the representation of both the women is to be noticed. The unveiled woman walks freely without being targeted by the men on the streets. She is holding a book which suggests that perhaps she is educated. She also wears a sari and blouse which was seen as a sign of progress among the Marwari community. On the other hand, the woman in *gunghat* is stared at by all the three men who are present in the street. This kind of behavior of men was understood in the magazines as to be result of concealed things being desirable.

Women as the objects of desire prevailed in the discourse of anti *pardah*. Men were ridiculed to break the social boundaries. Even women were caricatured as being

unchaste and flirting with other men and criticized for taking advantage of their hidden identity. This theme is depicted in the journals. The following quote captures the virulent attack on the men who gazed women. The author of *Parda* commented:

Idhar Parda karne wale samajo ki avastha usse bilkul bhinn hai. Unme stri purushon ke netra itne kamjor ho jate hain aur hridya itna dheela pad jata hai ki paraspar anke char hui ke vasana jag uthi hai. Parda wali stri ko samne jati hui dekh kar purush yah jan kar santosh nahi kar leta ki uske bheetar bhi wahi prani hai jo uske ghar mein uski ma aur bahin ke roop mein vidyaman hai. Parantu parde ke bhitar ki vastu ke samband mein uska manasik vyapar turant shuru ho jata hai. Vah uske bare mein anuman lagane lag jata hain, Utsukta se bhare huye hridya se vah uska vishleshan karne lagta hain. Yah sab vyapar , seema ka yaha tak ullanghan kar jata hai ki uske prati avazkashi hone lagti hai. Parde mein rahne wali stri ki kamjori, sahas ki kami aou virodh karne ka abhav sada swachand purush ko itna nirrlaz bana deta hai ke vah shitachar , sabhyata aur maryada sabko hi tak par dhar deta hai, door jane ki jaroorat nahi, station ke platform, gadio ke dibbe (coach) aur sharo ke raste mein aise kitni he ghatnaye pratidin ghatti hain.²⁹

(Condition of purdah communities is completely different from the ones who don't follow this system. In such societies, even an exchange of glances, between men and women, can lead to sexual arousals. Man does not seem to understand that the veiled woman has the same bodily parts which his sister and mother back home possess. Even a look leads to his imagination and he starts assuming things beneath the veil. And with a curious heart, he starts analyzing the veiled woman. This crosses all the boundaries and translates into lewd comments. Her weakness, lack of confidence and her inability to resist the male gaze, makes men shameless and he loses his manners, limits and dignity, and one doesn't need to go far as such scenes are rampant in our railway platforms and streets.)

Therefore the lack of a moral order and the rise of unacceptable behavior becomes the argument to abolish purdah. This would prevent the objectification of women as mere sexual entities. The veil is seen as a hindrance to confidence and subsequently leads to the woman's failure to resist the male gaze. Women were therefore supposed to build

²⁹Vidyalankar, *Parda*, p. 48.

strong character and personality which would drive away all kinds of unwanted attractions.

In this context, models of bravery like Rani Lakshmibai were recalled. Stories of brave women resisting harassment were emphasized as building strong character.³⁰ Stories of reform and everyday problems stressed the need to break the system. For example: cases of the mixing up of brides at the station and of lost wives at the *ghats*, platforms and stations. *Mathur Vaishya Hitaishi* seems to have a reformist angle and carried a series of play on purdah which depicted these problems during travelling and visiting *ghats*.³¹ In one of the stories, a bride from a Brahman family gets exchanged with another bride from a Kayastha family at the station. Both the brides realized that they had come to the wrong family only when they reached their in-laws place. There were also cases of few men making a mistake by addressing a different veiled woman thinking them to be their wives. These cases cited in the magazines were allegedly based on real events. Travelling in trains with ladies was supposed to add a burden on men as they had to undertake the responsibility of looking after the women of their family as well as the luggage. Even women who travelled in the *zenana* coaches were monitored by their men. In most cases they were represented as dependent on men. In one of the stories, wife and daughter of an orthodox school teacher were shown as lacking confidence. They were not able to take care of themselves when the school teacher was not able to board the train. In spite of being in a *zenana* coach, both mother and daughter panicked and started crying. This incident made the school teacher realize that education and freedom are necessary for women.

These stories represented women as shy, ignorant and vulnerable in new situations. The lack of education, the persistence of purdah and the seclusion of the home were seen as the reasons for weak personality. As a result women were seen as unable to adjust in a new situation. These stories suggested that the women who stayed in seclusion were not familiar with the outside world and thus there was a need for them to come out

³⁰A Punjabi woman bore all the comments of gang of Muslim men, until she lost patient and slapped one man. As a result, all men ran away.

³¹Babu Roshan Lal Gupt, 'parda', *Mathur Vaishya Hitaishi*, volume 3, No 8 - 11, September, November 1940, p. 10.

of their cocoon and taste the new freedom. In order to be able to do that they were supposed to have a strong character and confidence. Subsequently, this argument also advocated the need for women to be educated women. However, these stories had a reformist tone and all of them suggested that purdah should be abandoned. Therefore Independence, freedom and identity formation became reasons to abolish purdah.

New conjugal relations also became the basis for abolition of purdah. Instances were given in the articles of the journals of everyday problems within the household because of purdah. As a result, a need was felt to do away with purdah within in the household. Unlike Muslim women, purdah in Hindu families was observed as soon as marriage took place. Some women also observed purdah in their natal home. As we have already seen, the dominant argument about the introduction of purdah was to protect one's chastity from foreign invaders and Muslims rulers. Articles in these journals commented that there was no need to veil oneself in front of the husband, father in law or father. Why were women following purdah in front of their own kin? In an article, the author asked if these women considered their family members to be immoral, requiring them to hide themselves.³² The strictness of the social norms regarding purdah can be studied with the help of an incident that took place in Bihar. We get a picture of a very rigid purdah system in Bihar. In an earthquake that took place in Bihar on January 22, 1934, it was said that three females died because they observed purdah in Monghyr. Two women had actually survived but since an elder male member of the family came in front of them, they were forced to hide, and they could not come out from under the debris.³³ Rural women faced the problem of attending to their bodily needs as they could not go out during the day. In some families, the purdah system was so rigid that women were confined to a separate space of home and even their husbands were not allowed to meet them during the day time. This kind of arrangement by the elder members of the family was sometimes given as a reason by men to have licentious relations outside marriage. Satyadev Vidyalankar considered purdah to be one important reason for the large number

³²Chandravati, 'stri jati ki kuch mahan samasyayein', volume 2, No1, February 1929, p. 92.

³³Vidyalankar, 'parde ka dushparinam' in *Parda*, p. 66.

of prostitutes in Awadh.³⁴ Those men who got involved with prostitutes were considered to be dissatisfied with their domestic lives. He pointed out these men were not able to talk to their wives openly and in the night they could go to their room only after a certain time. Keeping the lights on and talking in a loud voice was considered to be bad manners. The author narrated the story of the Marwari man who had lost his attraction for his wife and the reasons he gave were bad dressing and purdah. The work suggests that a need was felt for the wives to act as companions by playing roles beyond ideal mother and wife. Purdah was considered to be an obstacle in fulfilling this idea and was seen as a symbol of an old tradition.

Purdah also blocked communications between elder members of the family and the new brides of family. Since women did not interact freely with the male members of the family in upper class/caste homes, the only mediators between them were the servants. This resulted in the interference of middle men and consequently caused distrust and animosity between elder members and women. The story 'parda' vividly captured this problem.³⁵ The protagonist Shanta and her father in law did not share a healthy relationship. Her father in law Govind Swaroop was an orthodox man who was critical of the younger generation, including his son Ram Swaroop and daughter in law. The distance between them widened all the more when Ram left town for work. As pointed out earlier, the only link between the male members and the inner quarter were helpers who often acted as middle men. In Shanta's house too Basanta (the carrier of palanquin) became the only mediator between Shanta and her father in law. However, Basanta made up stories and created misunderstandings between the two. As a result Govind Swaroop began accusing Shanta of immorality. In this story the protagonist is not a passive recipient. But here, she did not have any choice and she felt helpless because of purdah system. This story offered an example of the problems that occurred at home. It also provided as a role model, as in the end, Ram came to rescue Shanta and took her along to Agra. In Agra she realized that the misunderstandings were caused because of purdah and she got rid of it. This change was also accepted by her father in law and he realized that

³⁴Ibid., p. 50.

³⁵Chaturbhujji, 'parda', *Stri Darpan*, Volume 18, No 2 August 1926, pp. 896 - 903.

although his daughter in law was not in purdah, she was modest in behavior and clothing. In these debates men share the responsibility of breaking purdah as a result of problems faced at these public places. But the real responsibility was laid upon women.

In addition to these arguments, initiatives of political institutions support of nationalist leaders, institutionalization of purdah and need for medical aid weakened the purdah system. In the early decades of the twentieth century number of women organization emerged in India. The Women's Indian Association (WIA) which was set up in 1917 aimed to advance the interests of women by bringing together for self-development, education and service to others.³⁶ The National Council of Women in India (NCWI) was founded in 1925.³⁷ It sought to remove the economic disabilities among women. The members of NCWI supported a *purdahnashin* fair and agitated for a Purdah Park. Minault points out that the question of modesty seemed to influence many of decisions made by the NCWI. This organization encouraged women to opt for professions where they could work exclusively with women. In the process of improving conditions of women they reinforced purdah by supporting reserved seats, purdah parks and separate schools. According to the author, the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) was the most outspoken organization on the subject of purdah. It too supported purdah parks, separate compartments for women in trains and *zenana* education, but it insisted that Indian women should break this system. AIWC condemned actual veiling of the females that was responsible for the confinement of women and segregation of roles. It also raised the concern of health for women. Its work plan for the year of 1929-30 was abolition of enforced seclusion of purdah and prevention of child marriage act.³⁸ Bihar constituent conference of AIWC in 1938 under Mrs. Anusuya Bai Kale condemned the purdah system as restraining women from attaining good health, education and culture and demanded its abolition.³⁹

³⁶Geraldine Forbes, 'From Purdah to Politics in India: The Social Feminism of the All India Women's Organization', in *Separate Worlds*, pp. 214 - 243.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 224.

³⁸'All India Women's Conference Business Session', *Times of India*, 22 January 1930, p. 6.

³⁹'No Support to Divorce Bills, Bihar Women's Decision', *Times of India*, 15 November 1938, p. 7.

Shaheeda Lateef studies the contribution of Muslim leaders in women's movement.⁴⁰ In the context of purdah she says that, all the women leaders had realized that purdah was the instrument through which women were denied their rights and it was uniformly and routinely denounced.⁴¹

One incident became emblematic of the whole approach to purdah among the more politicized Muslims. Bibi Amman, mother of Muhammad and Shaukat Ali (Prominent Muslim leaders who published the journals, *Comrade* and *Hamdard* to attack the British government) supported the Khilafat cause even after her sons were imprisoned in late 1921.⁴² At a mass meeting in the Punjab, Bi Amman lifted the veil of her burqa to speak to the crowd. She explained the reason of her action. She said that all the people who were present were like her sons and daughters, and so there was no need to veil in front of them. Gail Minault points out that the action of Bi Amman elucidated that dichotomy between what a respectable women could do and what political activity had begun to break down during this period of religious and national turmoil. Minault says that all the Muslim women remained within the boundaries of traditional feminine roles while engaging in a limited form of political activity. According to her, they continued to observe purdah with very few exceptions.

Other avenues were also opened up in the purdah movement. Bombay Provincial youth conference declared that the purdah system and dowry should be done away with. It called upon youths to form organizations and rebel against these institutions.⁴³ Several purdah parties were organized for Muslim women and Hindu women. These parties provided an all women space where women could get together. However, it was mostly attended by elite women from rich and princely families. An article in *Times of India*

⁴⁰Shahida Lateef, *Muslim Women in India: Political and Private Realities: 1890's - 1980s*, New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1990.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 84.

⁴²Gail Minault, 'Purdah Politics: Role of Muslim Women in Indian Nationalism', in *Separate Worlds*, pp. 245 - 259.

⁴³'Youth and India's Progress', *Times of India*, 22 January 1928, p. 6.

points out that more women were going out of purdah simply to avail of medical facilities in public hospitals.⁴⁴ As there were some hospitals with no female attendants or doctors there were concerns about the treatment of women, and the need for easy medical access urged many women to discard their purdah.

We see that the anti - purdah movement was prevalent all over India and strongest in North India. We can take note of ambiguity in some of the arguments. The nationalist and the reformist project of anti-purdah negotiated women's freedom within the old ideals of tradition and modesty. Even the women's movement was not exempt from this tendency to assert the need for decency and decorum in public life, while claiming certain freedoms. Purdah was thus replaced by other ideals such as a proper sense of shame and character. What did women themselves feel and say about experiments with purdah?

New Subjectivities of Women

When more and more women began to voice their opinions in the 1920s and 1930s, there were clear indications that self - definition, self - respect, health, independence and even fashion (new ways of dressing) were their reasons for opposing purdah.

*Yadi Mein pati hoti to apne pyare patidev ko (Jo uss samay meri patni hote aur band khidki ki sans se - jab mein ghar se bahar jane lagti mujhe dekhne ka prayatin karte) ek dam parde mukt kar deti. Ve jis manushya se chahte, milte; mein kabhi kisi prakar ki appati nahi karti.*⁴⁵

(If I was husband, then I would have freed my beloved husband (who would have played the role of my wife, trying to look at me from a closed window) from purdah. (I would have given him freedom to talk to anybody he wanted and I would have not raised any objection.)

The quote describes the wish of an unknown woman about ending seclusion in the home. She wishes to break away from the barriers imposed by purdah, and explore freedom. While there is a clear indication of love for the husband, since she addresses

⁴⁴'Custom of Purdah Breaking Down, More Women Attend Hospitals', *Times of India*, 22 June 1939, p. 2.

⁴⁵Thakur Shrinath Singh, *Youvan saundarya aur prem, bhartiya dhampatya jivan ki mahatvapurna samasyaon par kuch gambhir vichar*, Prayag: Sahitya Mandir, 1930, p. 168.

him as beloved (pyare), there is an admission of the inability to break seclusion on her own. It was also an appeal to men to experience the pain of seclusion.

Narratives of women who abandoned purdah suggest that confidence and independence became the new aspects of their identity. Satyadev Vidyalkar's book carried a separate chapter which describes such personal experiences of women. Women who were involved in reform organizations for education, against purdah and in support of nationalism narrated their experiences in several letters. These women wrote that they felt confident and acquired a new identity after coming out of life in seclusion. Now they desired mental and physical freedom.⁴⁶ Sarasvati Devi from Bihar, active member of Congress recounted that there was no fear of travelling outside the home or meeting new people.

Their experience shows that the husbands of these women helped them to gradually overcome their fear and to challenge the words of elders. In this process, they redefined notions of modesty.⁴⁷ However, these women had to face lot of resistance from the community and elder members of the family. One of the writers describes how her mother in law cried for two days when she went to jail during picketing, since she believed that her daughter in law had lost all modesty.

Removal of purdah resulted in transformation of their overall attire. Women's experiences reveal that women rarely became westernized after removing purdah.⁴⁸ In many cases, they abandoned heavy jewellery and adopted the *khadi* sari. This was one of the reasons cited in the journals for breaking the purdah system. This argument suggested that women had become ignorant about the outside world and, thus, they had become preoccupied with adorning themselves in heavy saris and expensive jewels. In this context, people who did not favor the education of women caricatured them as spendthrifts and blamed them for following the dictates of fashion.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 147

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 158 - 201.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 150.

While many women were convinced of the nationalist ideals of simplicity, austerity and sacrifice, the debate of purdah generated space for the adoption of new styles and designs in dressing which was often regarded as the fatal attractions of fashion.

Criticism of fashion in the context of veiling occurred from two different standpoints. One position argued that women without the constraints of purdah, women adopted too much of fashion. Many were criticized for taking advantage of the new freedom. Raj Kumari Devi criticized women who loved fashion and said that the decline of purdah had led women to indulge in a lavish lifestyle.⁴⁹ She said that women could be granted independence as long as they didn't take advantage of their freedom. She pointed further that, "if Hindu women roam in fashionable attire they will attract bad men". So we see that threat of women being objects of male attention reflected in this kind of argument. Here fashion was used as a means to criticize women's choices in clothing, but also in their wider lifestyles. The writers propounding such an idea equated fashion with westernization, though it subsequently became an object of criticism.

As opposed to women's bodies being marked by community, honor, shame and modesty, they were also marked by class. In most of the articles, women in Punjab were said to be ardent followers of fashion. Generally they were criticized for dressing up and travelling. Punjab was considered as Paris of India.⁵⁰ One Punjabi writer Ram Pyari Khanna commented on this kind of criticism⁵¹ by defending the influence of fashion among Punjabi women. She said that, "women adopted fashion because of their husbands." She blamed men for persuading women to adopt fashionable clothes so that they are not considered as left behind. However, she advised women to take a middle path so that they can impress their husbands as well as be economical. In many articles men were held responsible for leading women to a fashionable life.⁵² So this argument

⁴⁹Raj Kumari devi, 'parde ka abhav aur fashion ka jamav', *Manorama*, volume 6, No 4, June 1929, p. 381.

⁵⁰Purna Devi Ji, 'parda ki buraiya', Speech at *Akhil Bhartiya Mahila* Conference in Lahore Translated by Leeladhar Caturvedi, *Chaturvedi*, volume 16, No 1, May 1931, p. 31.

⁵¹ Ram Pyari khanna, 'hamari fashion parasti', *Kamla*, June 1940, p. 234.

⁵²Kiranmayi, 'striyon ko fashion kisne sikhaya', *Mahila*, May 1941, pp. 6 - 8.

considered unveiled females as a threat to the moral order of society. We see that the male attitudes are questioned in the context of purdah.

The second stand on purdah was that veiled women followed fashion. They were criticized for their love of expensive clothing, cream, powder, and heavy jewels. The idea of dressing according to one's personality is expressed by a writer. Kumari Prabhavati noted that those women who were healthy and beautiful looked good when they followed fashions. She pointed further that if weak or veiled women adopted fashion they would become objects of mockery.⁵³ Similarly, Lakshmi Narayan Chaturvedi blamed veiled women for fashion, or rather for the adoption of new styles in clothing.⁵⁴ By this logic, women who were healthy could adorn themselves. Women thus became targets of criticism both if they adopted new styles of dress, and if they kept to old traditions.

The adoption of fashion was seen as a destructive influence by some sections of nationalists and reformers.⁵⁵ The essay 'naya aur purana pehanava' captures the dilemma of throwing away old forms of dressing and adopting new restrained forms of attire.⁵⁶ The author advocated a restricted wardrobe consisting of one sari, one blouse, and one jumper, along with an inner inside jumper, one pair of slippers, two bangles and one pair of earrings. All these changes allowed women to have gain mobility which was not possible in purdah. She pointed in the end that the question of what to wear and how to wear it was directly linked with purdah. If women reformed their clothing then purdah was not considered necessary. To enhance modesty, saris could neither be thin nor gaudy. This was especially true for those women who travelled outside the home and were posted in such jobs as teachers, doctors and professors. Women from Bombay especially Parsi women gained recognition for their dressing styles. They were considered to have

⁵³Kumara Prabhavati, 'striya aur fashion', *Kamlini*, May 1935, p. 7.

⁵⁴Lakshmi Narayan Chaturvedi, 'parde ki pratha', *Chaturvedi*, September 1921, p. 27.

⁵⁵Hemant Kumari Chaudharani, 'hamara pahirava', *Manorama*, volume 2, No 6, March 1929, p. 599. Suggestions were given to improve clothing. For instance, an article 'hamara pahirava' mentioned that the sari should be worn in such a manner that it would not unravel even when a woman was attacked.

⁵⁶Savitri Devi Shukla, 'naya aur purana pahanava', *Kamla*, April 1939.

developed the best sense of dressing and skilled in choosing economical modes of dressing.⁵⁷

This section has explored what it meant for ordinary and political women to abandon purdah. Their experiences show that they felt a new sense of confidence. There were perhaps women who felt more confident by adhering to the codes of purdah. However, the writers had started to advise women to adopt new dressing styles and use western materials while focusing more on the removal of the veil. Here again, the adoption of fashion did not mean that women were free to choose any style but within some constraints, and above all only by conforming to the given codes of conduct.

Conclusion

Early twentieth century books and journals focused on the need to improve the conditions of women. Purdah was seen as the most important reason for the subordinate condition and bad health of women. These journals offered reasons for the abolition of purdah. Most journals were ambiguous on the issue of purdah. On one hand, they discouraged purdah but on the other, they selectively supported it. Notions of shame and *lajja* emerged as the highest virtue of women. In this context, *Stri Darpan* emerged as the most outspoken magazine in discussing women's issues. It reiterated the nationalist stand. Particularly since women from the Nehru family were involved as editors and contributors. Similarly, *Mathur Vaishya Hitaishi*, despite having a community specific name, was reformist. *Sudha* appears to have been more oriented towards discussion of women issues. The regular section on *Stri Samaj* in *Sudha* expounded views on the evils that prevailed against women, taking examples those women who were symbols of courage and moral strength. This approach of *Sudha* made it distinct from other journals as magazines like *Stri Darpan* which glorified ancient Indian women for their courage and knowledge.

Fashion was exhaustively discussed in these journals. *Chaturvedi* carried the most conservative views whereas *Kamla* and *Manorama* seemed to favor slight westernization. *Kamla* and *Manorma* put forward the need for a new kind of clothing and style and

⁵⁷'bhartiya striyon ka pahnavā', *Kamla*, December, 1941, p. 170.

therefore saw 'fashion' as the need of the hour. Reform of clothing was considered to be an important prerequisite to the abolition of purdah. One can say that all these journals had different reasons to discourage or encourage purdah. However, they became a powerful medium in the twentieth century to educate and arouse consciousness among women who could read and had access to these magazines.

Women were burdened with the responsibility of upholding ideals of modesty, shame and tradition. To break from purdah these women had to gain the support of their husbands and young men of the society. Young men were advised to save sisters and mothers from harassment. Similarly, women themselves were motivated to build up their moral and physical strength so that they could face all the dangers of the new world. One very interesting proposal was made in a meeting which directed women to boycott any marriage which imposed institution of purdah. So we see how even in this context, the burden of reform fell on women. The anxiety of the reformers against the public entry of women resulted in portrayal of women as vulnerable, ignorant and foolish.

The step to abolish purdah seems to be a significant development in this period. Vernacular journals acted as spokesperson for women's issues and offered a platform for debates on the status of women. The very fact that these debates were taking place on such a wide scale reveals that the Indian woman's position acquired a significant place among the social problems that needed to be reformed. Clothing styles in the Indian subcontinent were however not only influenced by nationalism, or other social and political movements. There was a strong force which had an effect on the clothing choices and introduced different tastes in clothing uninfluenced by all these factors and that was the operation of the market. In the next chapter, I pay closer attention to advertisements and new forms of consumption as a factor that shaped clothing choices of Indian men and women in the twentieth century.

Chapter 3

Selling Point: A History of Consumption and Clothing

Aristocracy in dress

Do you want to look like everyone else or do you prefer that others should wish to look like you?

An air of distinction and style is imparted to wearers of clothes tailored at the house of Oakes.

Oakes and Co. Ltd.

Figure 8: Advertisement for Oakes and Co. Ltd.

Source: Madras Mail, 19 June 1927, p.10.

By the mid - twentieth century, Indian newspapers were replete with clothing advertisements such as the one above. These advertisements appear common at first look, but on closer scrutiny they reveal a variety. They open up avenues for historical analysis of India during the colonial period. The above quote captures the ideology behind the sale of commodities. It attempts to create a desire for distinction; it celebrates style as an object of desire. The reader who becomes the target is presented with the option of alternative identities, one that will merge her into a faceless collectivity, and another that will mark her out from others. The idea of difference becomes the central selling point of this ad. The caption 'Aristocracy in Dress' attracts the immediate attention of the reader. Not many advertisements on clothing during this period celebrated the ideals of aristocracy.

There are a few studies on consumption in the Indian subcontinent but there is no serious research on the politics of advertisements especially prior to 1940. In the context of Britain, Thomas Richards's work *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England* examines the birth of commodity society and the origins of advertising.¹ His work throws light on the growth of advertising in England from 1851 to 1914. Richards points out that

¹Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851 - 1914*, New York: Stanford University Press, 1990.

the origin of the advertising can be traced back to the Great Exhibition of 1851 in England. The idea of spectacle generated by the Great Exhibition was used by the advertisers in subsequent years. The Great exhibition was responsible for making the advertisers realise that a regular spectacle had to be created in order to make commodities saleable and desirable. This exhibition also made the early advertisers understand the idea of power and authority. The image of Queen Victoria was celebrated, used in souvenirs, insignias and icons. Icons became the driving force in the advertising industry. After tracking the origin of advertising, Richards focuses on the different ways in which commodities were represented till 1914, when a remarkable change in advertising took place.

Similarly, Judith Williamson's book *Decoding Advertisement* critically analyses the meaning and ideology behind advertisements.² Advertisements, she feels, sell false ideas to people and convey deceptive messages about products. She says: "we are told something about a product and asked to buy it. The information that we are given is frequently untrue, and even when it is true, we are often being persuaded to buy products which are necessary."³ Williamson also explores the use of signs and symbols, and the considerations behind the focus on various themes and emotions invoked by the advertisements.

In the Indian context, as I have mentioned, there is a dearth of work on the culture of advertisements. A recent work on consumption, *Towards a History of Consumption in South Asia*, offers a collection of essays which examines the consumption patterns during late - nineteenth and early - twentieth century.⁴ Prashant Kidambi, Kaushik Bhaumik, Abigail McGowon, and Douglas Haynes argue that consumption patterns and attitudes played an important role in the process of creating an Indian middle class. Kidambi study of Bombay shows that there was a culture of growing material expectation, and a new life style. Life styles became a marker of difference

²Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising*, London: Marion Boyars Publishers Ltd, 1978.

³Ibid., p. 17.

⁴Haynes, *Towards a History of Consumption in South Asia*.

amongst the middle class in Bombay. New items of clothing and new lifestyle were adopted to assert a distinct status. Bhaumik studies how the process of consuming new goods and entertainment was adopted by young men, reflecting new cultural roles. According to him, fashion provided a realm of freedom to them and it allowed them to challenge old norms and rules. Similarly, McGowan notes that shopping played an important role in the creation of new identities for women. The consequent fear of gender role-reversal created patriarchal anxieties. Haynes's article also explores the theme of class identities. He suggests that new consumption patterns shaped middle class identities and was responsible for defining the idea of middle class.

The main sources for this chapter are the advertisements themselves. In addition to these, I will rely on a few images from Priya Paul collection that have been used in essays collated by Tasveer Ghar Digital Archive. The three newspapers I will focus on are: *Times of India* (Delhi), *Bombay Chronicle* (Bombay) and *Madras Mail* (Madras). The period selected for this chapter is 1900 - 1940. These English daily newspapers were circulated during this period in Western India, North India and South India. This chapter will not focus on how vernacular sources promoted consumption. Clearly, fashion and consumption were an integral part of the discussions in the Hindi journals we have studied earlier. But these journals did not carry advertisements.

Javed Masood's article 'Catering to Indian and British Tastes' traces the origin of advertisements in India. He points out that the first classified advertisement in India appeared in *Hickey's Bengal Gazette* in 1870, in Calcutta.⁵ According to him, modern Indian advertising can be traced to the late 1920s and early 1930s when the English companies, J. Walter Thompson and D. J. Keymer's laid the foundations of professional advertising in India. However, major changes in the world of advertising came only after the 1940s when indigenous advertising agencies were established. I trace the development of advertisement before this moment of change. In particular, I analyze the various ways in which advertisers addressed people and affected their clothing choices.

⁵Javed Masood, 'Catering to Indian and British Tastes: Gender in Early Indian Print Advertisements', Tasveer Ghar, available at www.tasveerghar.net/cmsdesk/essay/96/index.html, p.1.

Douglas Haynes highlights the nature of the English dailies during this period. He suggests that, “the effort to develop brand loyalties were more developed in English newspapers... that they remained oriented toward an audience composed of Europeans and perhaps of those seeking to emulate Europeans more closely”.⁶ Harminder Kaur notes in her article ‘Of Soaps and Scents’ that, in the first decades of twentieth century, the advertisements of soaps in *Bombay Chronicle* only targeted elite Indians. In that period, they were the ones who could read English newspapers.⁷ As these studies emphasize, in looking at advertisements we need to keep in mind the need to study the target readers.

Thus, this chapter attempts to analyse the influence of advertisements on the sartorial transformation of this period. The market was responsible for the creation of an alternative taste for different clothing materials. So I will look at the way alternative tastes and new consumption cultures are created. I will attempt to analyse how advertisements sought to create new identities, of the self as well as a community? Marketing practices addressed men and women differently, targeted different classes and communities in different ways.

So this chapter focuses on the significance of advertising in making clothing choices. In colonial India, capitalism and consumption were restricted and shaped by nationalist ideology. Thus there is a need to look at the spaces which allowed cultures of consumption and fashion to develop in ways that complicates our understanding of nationalism.

Selling Nationalism

By looking at a set of advertisements, this section will argue that the newspapers publicized *swadeshi politics* and provided a space for a nationwide conversation in the 1920s and 1930s. Lisa Trivedi’s article ‘Mapping the Nation: Swadeshi Politics on India’ elucidates how printed materials familiarised a larger reading public with the places

⁶Haynes, ‘Of Soaps and Scents’, *Towards a History of Consumption in South Asia*, p. 186.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 260.

where *khadi* was being produced and sold, and in this way they associated the material goods of the Swadeshi movement with specific places that were defined as locations within the nation.⁸

The popularisation of *swadeshi* ideals was reflected in the advertisements published in *Bombay Chronicle*. It was an English daily started by Pheroz Shah Mehta in 1913 and was considered to be a prominent nationalist newspaper of this period.⁹

The advertisement issued by Khadi Bhandar (Figure 9) reveals the nationalist ideology of clothing which was marked by the desire to resist foreign cloth and emphasis the use of *swadeshi* (indigenous goods) items.¹⁰ Haynes elaborates that in this movement cloth had become a symbol for the nationalistic contest.¹¹ We know that Congress activists of the 1930s advocated the boycott of foreign cloth and urged middle classes to use simple homespun textiles.

KHADI AT REDUCTION

“SWARAJ WOULD BE A MOCKERY WITHOUT THE USE OF KHADDAR” - Sarojini Devi - so if there is anything untouchable it is the foreign cloth and the national week is already begun today.

Remember - Jalianwala Bagh and the Congress mandate to BOYCOTT FOREIGN CLOTH.

Bombay Khadi Bhandar offers you a unique opportunity in Khadi at reduced rates.

Khadi Bazar - National week.

Figure 9: Advertisement for Khadi Bhandar

Source: Bombay Chronicle, 5 April 1931, p. 9.

⁸Lisa Trivedi, ‘Visually Mapping the Nation: *Swadeshi* Politics in Nationalist India, 1920 - 1930’, *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol 62, No.1 February, 2003, pp. 11 - 41.

⁹It was a nationalist paper but still most of the articles that were published in this newspaper aimed at the urban elite masses. This is reflected in the focus of European fashion, current affairs etc.

¹⁰The *swadeshi* politics was based on encouragement of production and consumption of *khadi*.

¹¹Haynes, *Towards a History of Consumption in South Asia*, p. 193

Trivedi describes how Congress volunteers used the exhibition and lantern tours to popularise Swadeshi movement.¹² She focuses on the importance of visual culture in the rise of nationalist politics in India. The lantern shows and slides suggested that national disasters could be curbed by *swadeshi* program. Trivedi points out that the spinning wheel and the Swadeshi movement were presented as concrete solutions that anyone could adopt in times of nation crisis. By looking at the advertisement from the Khadi Bhandar (Figure 9), one can argue that similar mechanisms were used by the advertisers to exploit the popular mood. The caption 'Swaraj would be a mockery without khaddar' becomes the central focus of this ad. It has been pointed out by Trivedi that, 'choosing to take up *swadeshi* politics was both a personal, local choice and a national one'.¹³ We see in such advertising how audiences were expected to imagine themselves to be a part of a new community defined by the kinds of products they consumed.

As I have argued, advertisements provided an important platform for the campaign of *swadeshi*. In the extract quoted above, it is stressed that home rule cannot be completed without the use of *khadi*. It also encourages people to observe *swadeshi*. The message in bold letters to boycott the cloth reflects the focus of the advertisement. Similarly, other advertisements in *Bombay Chronicle* echoed these themes. These advertisements generally did not contain any image. Some advertisements of Bombay Swadeshi stores carried four lines with minimum details. This suggests that these types of advertisements could have been produced without employing any professional artists. However, after 1933, the advertisements of *swadeshi* and *khadi* became less frequent.

Till 1924, in this newspaper, very few ads on clothing items were published. Products like complexion cream, medicine and cigarettes were widely advertised.¹⁴ These products were made by local industries and some were also imported from outside India.

¹²Trivedi, 'Visually Mapping the Nation', p. 13.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴It's interesting to note that the beauty products for fair complexion had started appearing by 1924 in most of the newspapers.

Another advertisement issued by Khadi Bhandar, promoted *khadi* clothes and invoked the idea of national dress.¹⁵ The caption said that, 'NATIONAL DRESS - could be held at popular prices' and then *khadi* items like jackets, white cap, *dhoti* and shirts were enlisted with their prices. Chapter of this thesis has argued that the nationalists, reformers and the print media were involved in a discussion that sought to define what was to be considered Indian dress and national dress. In the popular nationalist discourse, homespun clothes were considered to be national dress.

We see how there was an emphasis on nationalism within the space of advertisements. It indicates the possibility of advertisements becoming an important vehicle for the growth of nationalism. Use of popular movements and calls from the nationalist leaders was used by the advertisers to strengthen their product appeal. Trivedi shows that *swadeshi* politics closely linked to popular advertising of the period.¹⁶ However, industries that identified cloth with *swadeshi* symbols shouldn't be necessarily identified as nationalist. Commerce appropriates any slogan that is popular and which will help the sale of commodities. So any local producer could have used nationalist rhetoric to resist imported products. Trivedi shows this instrumental use of nationalist rhetoric through an example of the Bombay Swadeshi League. One of the advertisement of Edsu Fabric depicted India as a place which Bharatmata presided. This image invoked notions of nationality. The writer argues that even the business involved in Bombay Swadeshi League may have actively supported Gandhi's *swadeshi* program, but most likely they made the use of the rhetoric of *swadeshi* politics to increase their profits. However, only *Bombay Chronicle* was full of advertisements like these. This kind of ads invoking national identity did not appear in the other journals that I have looked for this chapter.

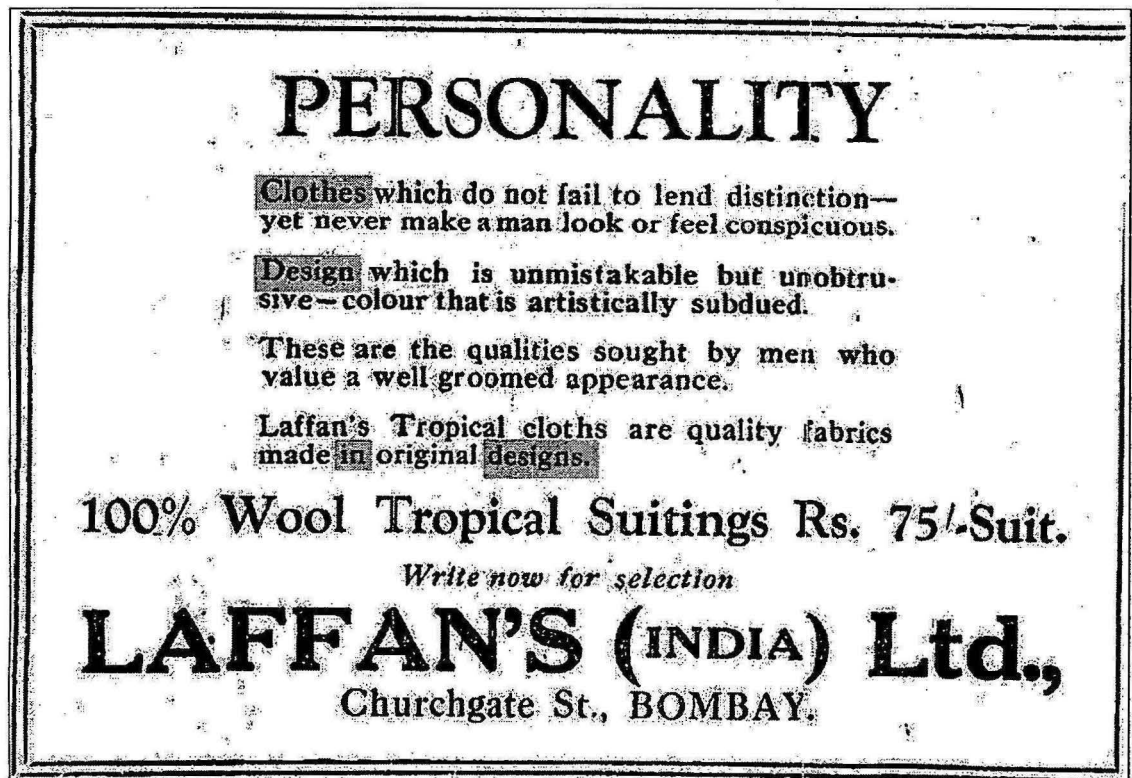
Advertisements of clothing were not always framed in nationalist language. In the next section, I will explore how clothing was linked to new images of persons, and the constitution of a new personality. I will suggest that advertisements tell us about the way clothing was seen as a marker of distinction, taste, family, identity, and individuality. To

¹⁵'National Dress', advertisement for khadi, *Bombay Chronicle*, Monday, 30 January 1928, p. 10.

¹⁶Trivedi, 'Visually Mapping the Nation', p. 23.

define the idea of good dressing it was necessary to imbue a host of other categories with new meanings. It was essential to define the meaning of style, fit, elegance, durability, fashion, and beauty. I will show in the next section how advertisements were implicated in this act of meaning making.

Advertising Distinction



PERSONALITY

Clothes which do not fail to lend distinction—
yet never make a man look or feel conspicuous.

Design which is unmistakable but unobtrusive—
colour that is artistically subdued.

These are the qualities sought by men who
value a well-groomed appearance.

Laffan's Tropical cloths are quality fabrics
made in original designs.

100% Wool Tropical Suitings Rs. 75/-Suit.

Write now for selection

LAFFAN'S (INDIA) Ltd.,
Churchgate St., BOMBAY.

Figure 10: Advertisement for Laffan's Ltd.

Source: *Times of India*, 12 April 1929, p. 2.

The most recurrent themes that emerged in the advertisement of clothing were distinction and taste. Cloth is considered to be the most important medium of creating a difference. Along with this, it is seen as an indicator of the taste of a person, placing him/her in a certain position. Taste is considered to be a marker of class and thus, acts as criteria of classification. Pierre Bourdieu's analysis places taste in the context of social relations and

material capital.¹⁷ According to him, taste is determined by education and personal background of a person. The notion that personality is determined by distinction, taste and smart look were found in a wide range of advertisements of *Times of India*, *Madras Mail* and *Bombay Chronicle*.

'PERSONALITY' (in bold letters) proclaimed one ad for Laffan's clothing. (Figure 10) It declared: 'clothes which do not fail to lend distinction - yet never make a man look or feel conspicuous'.¹⁸ This ad presents distinction, colour, design and personality among the qualities sought by men who valued well groomed appearance. The purchase of the product, the advertisement suggested, would make the personality of the purchaser distinguished. In this context, one can quote Judith Williamson's argument about products being responsible for differentiation.¹⁹ She stresses that consumers differentiate themselves from other people by the choices she or he makes of a product. She further points out that, 'advertisements create systems of social differentiation which are a veneer on the basic structure of our society.'²⁰ We see how the advertisers sold the idea of differentiation. One way of looking at advertisements is that they sell the idea of becoming something that one is not and thus gives rise to the aspiration of becoming a new individual. However, as suggested by Williamson, one does not buy a product in order to become a part of a group but that there is already a feeling that one belongs to that group.

Advertisement of the Bosimi Silk (Figure 11) projected good taste in clothes as a crucial element in dressing. A good taste of Bosimi Silk saris and dresses were presented to attract attention and appreciation. The ad projects the commodity to be desirable for all kinds of occasions like movies, parties and sports. Thus, it signifies the product as the object of desire. As Judith Williamson has shown, the aim of the advertisement is to

¹⁷Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984.

¹⁸Laffan's Ltd, *Times of India*, 12 April 1929, p. 2.

¹⁹Williamson, *Decoding Advertisement*, p. 46.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 47.

connect a mass of people with a product and to identify them with it as a group. She says further, this can only be achieved by connecting them with the products.²¹



Figure 11: Advertisement for Bombay Silk Mills (Bosimi Silk)

Source: *Times of India*, 30 March 1942, p. 8.

The image of two women in the ad became the signifying subjects of the commodity. Both the women were shown to be enjoying the silk items. They do not make any contact with each other or the spectator. The caption 'you will win full marks for good taste if your sarees and dresses are of Bosimi silk' sold the product as the marker of good taste. Another interesting point to be noticed in this advertisement is that both the women represent the elite and middle class women. The assumption of the rich status can

²¹Ibid., p. 51.

be made on basis of the occasions cited and their apparel. In this advertisement taste becomes the marker of status and distinction from others in matters of choice. As this advertisement addresses both European/Anglo Indian and Indian elites through distinctive dress styles, thus, two groups who might otherwise be considered to be antagonistic, has been unified through consumption and taste.

Similarly, other advertisements also invoked new notions of taste among the middle classes. For example: trousers instead of dhoti, new products of fitness and cosmetics. Such changes can also be traced from women's accounts. Sarat Kumari Chaudhrani was an accomplished writer and wrote for journals like *Bharati* and *Balak*. She comments: "The modern woman's taste is also very different from that of the woman of the past. The woman of today does not regard it as good taste to adorn her naturally beautiful arms with strings of round, triangular or square pieces of gold with fancy names. Similarly, they do not take pride in the fact that they possess a Benarasi sari..."²² Clearly this advertisement indicates the changing notions of taste and style - one that emphasized simplicity, and the restrained use of jewellery. It also throws light on changes in status associated with few objects of clothing, such as expensive sari to be a marker of good taste. However, such changes are associated only with the image of modern woman and thus, cannot be applied to all women. But, we should not deny the possibility of such change among other women, as there were a wide range of factors which affected notions of taste in this period.

The claims of these advertisements were varied. Often they sought to establish that well dressed appearance is the most desirable thing among people. An advertisement for one such product, 'Oakes and Co. Ltd.', asserted that 'almost every man has at heart the desire to be well dressed'.²³ Similarly, other advertisements also emphasised that well a dressed man is well received (Figure 12). This advertisement represents probably a British man being received by a girl with flowers.

²²Sarat Kumari Chaudhrani, 'The Modern Age and the Modern Woman' Bhattacharaya and Sen's edited *Talking of Power*, p. 64. Her account is mainly about modern woman and what is expected of her.

²³Oakes and Co. Ltd, *Madras Mail*, 17 March 1915, p. 6.

WHEN YOU'RE WELL DRESSED YOU'RE WELL RECEIVED.

If we turn out your tailoring you are always well dressed. We have the two essentials for perfect fitting—**experience** and an excellent stock of woolsens and experienced men to make them up.

NEW SEASON'S MATERIALS.

Tweeds & Cashmeres.
T A Suitings, a fine selection of light weight tropical Tweeds in Greys and Browns.
Rs. 42-8.

T B Suitings, soft cashmere in new colourings; tropical weight Greys, Browns and Stripes.
Rs. 47-8.

T C Suitings, stylish Tweeds in a specially hard-wearing quality, a big selection to choose from.
Rs. 55-8.



The Men's wear side of our business has been built up to its present large proportions by a close study of men's needs and our decision to supply them at reasonable cash prices.

FOR THE AUTUMN 1916.

Navy Serge Suits.
T D Navy, our big value light tropical weight Serge, soft texture, fast dye.
Rs. 45-8.

T E Navy, the popular suit for Bombay wear, closely woven good wearing Serge of medium weight.
Rs. 55-8.

T F Navy, a special value, part of a purchase before the last rise in prices, splendid wearing fast colour Serge.
Rs. 59-8.

Cool Silk and Crash Suits for the Hot Weather.

CHEFEO SILK SUITS.

No. 1. Heavy weight ribbed pure silk.
Price Rs. 45-8.

No. 2. Fine light weight silk delightfully cool.
Price Rs. 35-8.

MERCERISED TISSORE SUITS.

Duro Dye Drab, light weight fast coloured Tissore.
Price Rs. 13-8 per suit.

The Keepcool Suiting, a smart medium coloured Tissore.
Price Rs. 16-8 the suit.

FAWN DUCK SUITS.

Medium weight fawn union duck, hard wearing.

Price Rs. 14-8 the suit.

Whiteaway, Laidlaw & Co.,

Where a man is known and his tastes understood.

BOMBAY.

The Arcade for every article of men's wear.

Figure 12: Advertisement for Whiteaway Laidlaw and Co. ("When you are well dressed, you are well received")

Source: Times of India 3 October, 1916, p. 4.

The meaning behind dressing is to create a notion of self that will be pleasing to oneself and others. One dresses not only for the self but also for the public and this theme is illustrated in the advertisement. Chapter I has explored the idea of 'dressing well'. Selecting clothes according to one's personality was new in the Indian context and it was

borrowed from the styles followed in the west. Most of the advertisement presented a European man. It is interesting to note similarities in the claims advertisements make and the comments made by the writers in same newspapers.

The advertisements generated other ideas like dressing well, looking elegant and being beautiful. These became the selling ideology of many commodities - dresses, accessories and shoes. In advertisements of these products, style, smartness, quality and fit were regularly emphasised.



for your
SERVANTS CLOTHING



The Chapkan.

WE have a large stock of LALIMLI materials for Servants' wear, in various weights and shades at prices ranged to suit all. We make a speciality of Chapkans, Achkans, Syces Coats, Tunics, Knickers, etc., etc. These garments are strongly recommended for their hard serviceable wear and smart appearance—every garment **PURE WOOL** throughout. As an example of value we quote:—

Material, Rs. 4 per yard, 54" wide.			
CHAPKAN or ACHKAN		SYCES SUIT	
Plain	With facings	Plain	With facings.
		Collar & Cuffs only	
Rs. 11-8	Rs. 12-8	Coat, Rs. 8-8	Rs. 9.
		Knickers, Rs. 4-12	
Facings:—Khaki, Blue, Green, Scarlet or Olive Brown.			
Measurements required are:—		Measurements required are:—	
Length of garment; length of sleeves; from middle of back; around chest, and around neck.		Height of man; length of sleeves from middle of back; chest, waist, and neck measurements.	

When ordering please specify whether for Hindu or Mahomedan Servants.
Samples of above and other materials gladly sent upon request.



Syces Suit.

CAWNPORE WOOLLEN MILLS CO., LTD., CAWNPORE

Write for Samples to Dept. No. 3. S.A.A. 41.

Figure 13: Advertisement for Cawnpore Woollen Mills Co.

Source: Times of India, 23 December, 1927, p. 7.

Uniforms for servants were also presented to reflect smartness and style. In *Madras Mail*, one advertisement for servants' dress is marketed as follows: 'Lal Imli pure wool - servants clothing, dress your servants and they will conduct themselves smartly. Dress them in Lal Imli and they have clothes which are at once smart and water resisting'.²⁴ This advertisement reveals how dress is supposed to determine behaviour, and how employers were being persuaded to be sensitive about the clothes that their servants wear.

It is crucial to trace the origin these industries. This will help us to understand the content of the advertisement clearly. The Cawnpore Woollen Mills Co. Ltd. was set up as *Kambai Putli Ghar* in 1874, for the manufacture of army blankets with about 250 workers.²⁵ It was a public company till 1914. The mill grew into the largest woollen spinning and weaving undertaking of India, while it turned out all types of woollen clothes and fabrics, blankets, knitting yarns etc. Its product with 'Lal Imli' as trade mark, for pure woollen materials gathered a countrywide reputation.²⁶ During the First World War, this mill was put at the disposal of the Government and it worked to meet army needs. In the year 1920, the Cawnpore Woollen Mills Co. Ltd. came under the management of British India Corporation.

Lal Imli advertisements for servants appeared in *Times of India* too.²⁷ We see how every advertisement, even the ones which advertises the same product is often different from each other. Williamson points to this feature of advertisement making. She says that the use of different images is to create the differences within the advertisements of same products. The advertisement that appeared in *Madras Mail* did not carry any image, whereas the one in *Times of India* had images of two servants in uniform (Figure 13). The

²⁴Lal Imli, *Madras Mail*, 23 December 1927, p.7.

²⁵Surendra Nath Singh, *Planning and Development of an Industrial Town*, Delhi: New Gian offset Press, 1990. P.92. what follows in this paragraph has been taken from this book.

²⁶Ibid. Just near the mill gate there was a red tamarind tree which bore red colored fruit and so it attracted the attention of people as well as the members of the officials. Thus they associated the trade mark of the Cawnpore Mills as 'Lal Imli'.

²⁷Lal Imli, *Times of India*, 15 August 1919, p. 11.

caption asks consumers to specify the religious identity of the consumers.²⁸ One servant is attired in *chapkan* and wears syees suit. On the basis of this one can assume that since *chapakan* was associated with Muslim dress in this period, then maybe it was the prescribed uniform for Muslim servants and consequently the syees suit was suggested for Hindu servants. Issues of caste or religion did not appear in the captions of these advertisements, but distinctions appeared in the representations of the communities. The target readers for these ads were no doubt European classes and the elite Indians. This is reflected in the representations of the two servants and the kind of dress that they are wearing. The use of domestic help was not uncommon among the elite and rich Indians, but the idea of uniform for servants was part of British ideology. Uniform also invokes discipline and creates uniformity. As opposed to other themes of distinction, items of clothing meant for working class emphasizes uniformity, and underlines the subservient status of the servants.

Along with these, comfort and health became the important themes invoked in the advertisements, especially in woollen clothes and undergarments. Advertisements of Lal Imlí wools claimed to protect adults and children from severe chills.²⁹ Thus, it projected an image of being the protector of families from illness. Comfort and the importance of healthy clothing was part of new emerging themes in clothing. Items of clothing meant for underclothing emphasized ideals of comfort. The advertisements for underwear (Figure 19) depicted comfort and durability to be among the desired qualities. Subsequently they invoked the idea of economical wear. The advertisements which encouraged economical wear projected the clothing to be durable and have a long lasting appearance. Contrella hand prints presented the material to be resilient against the effects of regular washing.³⁰ It was advertised as material which would retain its beauty and finish even after several washes. This made the dress suitable for frequent wear. What is being said is that what appears cheap is actually is more expensive and the seemingly expensive is not uneconomical.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Lal Imlí, 'What to Wear', *Times of India*, 3 March 1908, p. 12.

³⁰Contrella Hand Prints 'Cheerful Economical Wear', *Times of India*, 15 July 1944, p. 6.

Similar themes were depicted in the advertisements for Viyella garments (Figure 13). The advertisements highlights the features of the product as excellent in appearance, comfortable to wear, very durable, and hence, economical. One of the striking things to be noticed is the presentation of a nuclear family.

“Viyella”
(Regd. Trade Mark)

*the high-class washing material
with the delightfully-soft finish,*

**for every member
of the family.**

Unequaled for Shirts, Pyjamas,
Blouses, Nightdresses & Underwear.

Excellent in appearance;
comfortable to wear;
cannot irritate the most
sensitive skin; very dur-
able therefore economical;
and

**DOES NOT
SHRINK.**

Obtainable made-up
into smart well-
finished garments or
by the yard from all
high-class Drapers
and Storers.
Name of nearest sent
on application, by
“Viyella”
27a Viyella House,
Newgate St., London.

See the
“Viyella” label
on the selvage.

Viyella

Figure 14: Advertisement for Viyella Clothing.

Source: *Times of India*, 7 January, 1915, p. 7.

Probably it was one of the strategies of the advertisers to exploit the models of family in the west. I will look at a set of two advertisements which represent the image of the family. The advertisement for Viyella clothing represents a nuclear family (Figure 14).³¹ Haynes suggests in the context of the depiction of nuclear family that advertisements were clearly tapping into new models of family life that were emerging in cities with large population of middle class migrants.³² One can take note of the westernised clothing worn by every member of the family. I have pointed out earlier that some of the Indian advertisements were exact replica the British advertisements. This partly explains the depiction of westernised family in the advertisements. But such representations also idealised notions that were seen as modern, not just western.

Viyella clothing yarns was produced by the British Hosiery firm, Hollins and Co.³³ This name Viyella was based on the valley road named *Via Gialla*. Hollins and Co. had acquired a mill near this road in 1890 for early production of Viyella. Later their office shifted to Nottingham.

The caption 'for every member of the family' promises to fulfil the needs of all members. The image of a happy family and caring parents is projected in the illustration. Javed Masood has pointed out that the most distinct feature in terms of the representation of women seemed to be the sharp contrast between the European and Indian facial features and lifestyle as if different ads were made for the readers of different classes or identities.³⁴ By looking at the advertisements one can say that this feature in the representation was also applicable for the images of men. The comparative study of this image with another one will illustrate the statement more clearly. We saw that the Viyella advertisement represented the western lifestyle and attire of the family.

³¹Viyella, *Times of India*, 7 January, 1915, p. 7.

³²Haynes, *Towards a History of Consumption in India*, p. 206.

³³Viyella, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viyella>, Accessed on 17 July, 2011.

³⁴Masood, 'Catering to Indian and British Tastes', p. 1.



COTTON FUTURES a different story!

India's largest group of textile mills is still concentrating on war production. . . . Uniforms, uniforms and more uniforms! But, when the war is over, the "INDU" group will have a different story to tell. When final victory is won this mighty organisation will switch over from drab khaki to colourful fabrics.

Think what the combined resources, the combined experience, and the combined output of the "INDU" Big Six can accomplish! Suitings, Shirtings, Dhotees, ~~Sarees~~ and Dress Materials. The "INDU" group is planning ahead.

THE "INDU" GROUP OF MILLS

JACOB MILLS
RACHEL MILLS
E. D. MILLS



ALEXANDRA MILLS
MANCHESTER MILLS
TURKEY RED DYE WORKS

The INDIA UNITED MILLS LTD

INDIA'S LARGEST TEXTILE GROUP
2,30,000 SPINDLES & 6,670 LOOMS

MANAGING AGENTS:

MESSRS. AGARWAL & CO.,

E. D. SASSOON BUILDING, DOUGALL ROAD,
BALLARD ESTATE, BOMBAY.

Figure 15: Advertisement of India United Mills Limited.

Source: *Times of India*, 1 January, 1945, p. 7.

Contrary to this, the advertisement issued by the India United Mills represented the image of a traditional Hindu family (Figure 15).³⁵ The clothing of the members of the family suggests that they were influenced by the nationalistic ideology - the man can be seen wearing a Nehru cap.

The dress of the women also reflects the traditional costume worn by the Indian woman. This way of wearing saree with the blouse (three - quarter sleeve) also has a recent history. We have seen in Chapter I, that the sari emerged as the most suitable costume for Indian ladies, symbolising tradition and modesty. The family looks to the future, a future to which the child points. There is expectation in their looks. The mill promises to change the focus of its production to meet the needs of ordinary people. Subsequently it would produce colourful fabrics. The advertisement also indicates that the war was seen as creating a dull atmosphere. We see how both the advertisements celebrated the image of nuclear family. The difference between the facial features and clothing is also a significant thing to notice.

A very important aspect of this advertisement is the reference to the war and war time production as having given many textile mills the breaks they needed. Amiya Kumar Bagchi's work *Private Investment in India* points out that in the late - nineteenth century, cotton mill industry was one of the major manufacturing industries in which investment was taking place on a large scale.³⁶ Domestic mill production of cotton piece goods was also increasing. He suggests that due to the increase in the domestic demand the Bombay mills turned to the domestic market. World Wars I and II presented a major break in colonial policy and offered unique opportunities to industrialists of all kinds, cloth industries being the major beneficiaries.

³⁵India United Mills, *Times of India*, 1 January, 1945, p. 7.

³⁶Amiya Kumar Bagchi, *Private Investment in India 1900 - 1939*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1972, p. 9.



Figure 16: Advertisement for U Gobindram dresses.

Source: *Times of India*, 13 December 1938, p. A 23.

As already pointed out, the representation of women in the advertisement was marked with difference in the way European and Indian women were presented. The difference in their attire is the most significant thing to be noticed apart from the facial features, for example, Gobindram represents images of two women in Indian and western clothing (Figure 16).³⁷ We see how the woman on the top represents an image of an Indian woman. She is clad in sari with the part of the sari draped over her head, whereas, the woman below wears a gown and also the posture suggests her modern outlook. However, it's not sure if this woman is a European or Indian as just on the basis of clothing she can't be referred as European. Also the facial features of both the women do not indicate a big difference. As opposed to this representation of woman, we find

³⁷U. Gobindaram, *Times of India*, 13 December 1938, p. A 23.

difference in the way European women's image was illustrated. The image resembles European women and it is reflected in the dress and features (Figure 17).³⁸ Women in this ad are shown to be dancing at Christmas parties with men. Most of the advertisements took advantage of the festive season and this was also the time when clearance sales were organised. This ad also indicates a contradiction between the image and the caption. The ad urges to buy 'Mysore silk to save Indian industry'. If we take note of the manufacturer of the product, we get to know that it is produced by *swadeshi* stores. So, on one hand this ad aims at Indians whereas, on the other hand the representation is aimed at European readers.

EXQUISITE Silks
FOR XMAS DRESSES!

Wear elegant Mysore Silks at Christmas parties. They are available in a variety of beautiful shades and designs. Mysore Silks wear well and wash splendidly—losing none of their fine colours. They are 100% pure silk. Call at your nearest stockist, today.

BUY MYSORE SILKS AND HELP AN INDIAN INDUSTRY.

Mysore SILKS

Sole Agents:—The Mysore Products, 131, Princess Street, Bombay.
 Leading Stockists:—
 1. The Mysore Silk Depot, Swadeshi Market, Kalbadevi, Bombay.
 2. The Bombay Swadeshi Co-operative Stores Ltd., Bori Bunder, Bombay.
 3. The Mysore Government Industries Prospect Chambers, Hornby Road, Bombay.

Figure 17: Advertisement for Mysore silk.

Source: *Times of India*, 23 December, 1937, p. A2.

³⁸Mysore silk, *Times of India*, 23 December 1937, p. A2.

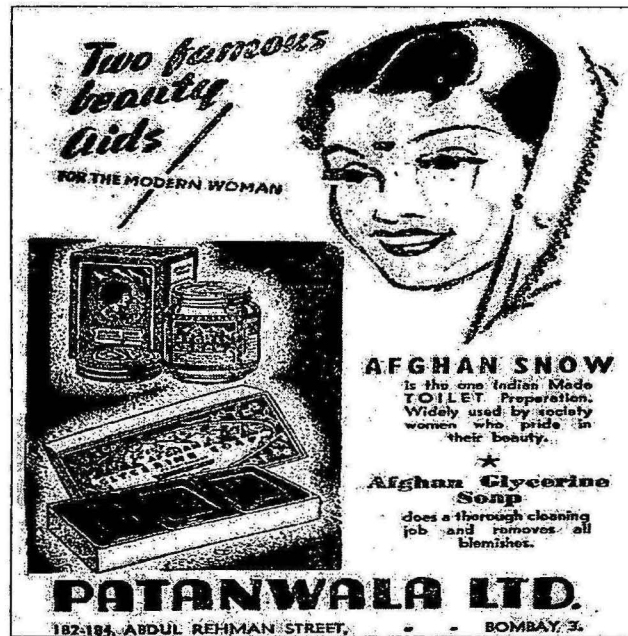


Figure 18: Advertisement for Afghan snow and Afghan Glycerine soap.

Source: *Times of India*, 6 September 1943, p. 6.

The model of the 'modern woman' also emerged in the discourses of advertisements. The modern woman is caricatured as someone who is smart and efficient - someone who could be credited with the ability to balance housework and education. She was admired for her choice of clothing as well. Individualism was presented as one of the ideals she demanded in the choice of adornment. West and Watch Company glorified such a model of the modern woman. Similarly, a cosmetic advertisement also represents the image of a modern woman (Figure 18).³⁹ We see how the image of modern women reinforces the image of a woman who has a traditional appearance.

This section explored how advertisements shaped sartorial choices, and how the market created different ideals in taste, distinction and style. The representation of women was one of crucial focus of the advertisements. However, the advertisements did not only present woman to be traditional in appearance but also reinforced traditional roles set for woman.

³⁹Patanwala Limited, *Times of India*, 6 September 1943, p. 6.

Have you the Figure that Men Admire?

In this section I will explore how advertisements reinforced gendered stereotypes in appearance and roles. I will examine the opportunity clothing offered to women to explore their identities. I will also focus on the anxieties of the orthodox and the patriarchal sections.

Javed Masood points out that besides using women to attract the male gaze, the advertisements projected older male centric roles of woman. Even while depicting modern and western life style, the advertisements reaffirmed older gender stereotypes.

The themes generated by the ideals of the advertisements marked a distinction in terms of men's clothing and women's clothing. In advertisements for women, smart appearance, style, dainty look and fashion were the factors that were to be considered. Whereas, for men appearance, quality, distinction became the selling point. The idea of modern fashion was the driving force in women's clothing, and only few men's advertisements invoked the notion of fashion. Sports clothing was advertised for men and not for women. Can we say that probably the demand of sports clothing was not high among Indian women? Can we link it to the discourse which arose in the mid - 1920s regarding what Indian women should wear while playing tennis? However, a solution that was given to women was that they should wear sari only and drape it properly. During this period sports activities in colleges and school were popular among males and females. Why then is this not taken into account in advertisements?

Women in the images appeared to be engaged in the household works like washing, taking care of the child, and concerned about household problems. Most of the detergent advertisements - such as Lux - showed women washing clothes. Similarly, baby products also represented women. No advertisement showed men engaged in household works. They were represented in a standing position enjoying the look of their dress. Gender disparities were most sharp in the advertisements of undergarments. Men shown in such advertisements were represented as sturdy figures and engaged in discussions. Men were usually shown to be talking or smoking. On the contrary, women were shown admiring themselves; some of them were also represented as posing in a seductive way.

The advertisement for Ramada wear (Figure 19) shows two sturdy men talking to each other.

Ramada TM

**THE HIGHEST-GRADE OF
PURE-WOOL UNDERWEAR
YET PRODUCED**

That the best is cheapest applies to one's underwear more than to almost anything else, because initial cheapness there almost invariably means sacrificing bodily comfort, whilst it may also easily mean sacrificing one's health.

"Ramada" is the last word in luxurious pure-wool underwear. It is shaped as knitted, is unshrinkable, and made in all the usual woven garments for ladies, gentlemen and children.

THE BEST STORES
AND OUTFITTERS
STOCK "RAMADA"

WM. HOLLINS & CO. LTD.
Weaving & Finishing Spinners since 1773.
Beverly St., London, E.C. 2, England.

Hollins
DAY & NIGHT
WEAR

Figure 19: Advertisement for Ramada Underwear

Source: *Times of India*, 21 March 1921, p. 14.

'Celanese' Lingerie

We have just received the latest productions in TRICOT—SATIN STRIPE—MILANESE in dainty garments and charming colours.

Vests from	Rs. 6-8	Directoire	
Cami Bockers	Rs. 9-8	Knickers from	Rs. 4-12
Trinity Set	Rs. 13-8	Princess Slip ..	Rs. 8-8
		Night Dress ..	Rs. 13-6

Special Display **Asquith & Lord** Ladies Salon.

Figure 20: Advertisement for Asquith and Lord Lingerie.

Source: *Times of India*, 15 November 1927, p. 7.

As opposed to this, women, especially in lingerie advertisements, were presented admiring themselves in the mirror or doing makeup (Figure 20), reaffirming stereotypes about women being interested only in beautifying themselves.

In such portrayal, the target audience was not only women but men. Anne Hollander's work points out that some of the art works during Renaissance period painted images of women admiring themselves in the mirror.⁴⁰ She stressed that 'looking in the mirror is traditionally supposed to mean looking at something for truth that is really false: but the falsity in the mirror is somehow felt to be generated out of the viewer's own falsity of heart, of soul, of intention'.⁴¹ The representations in the images showed similarity with these paintings. Probably, advertisers used popular representations of women in the advertisements. John Berger's work *Ways of Seeing* throws light on this aspect.⁴² He points out that the mirror was often used in the work of art as a symbol of

⁴⁰Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes*.

⁴¹Ibid, p. 393.

⁴²John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, Penguin Books, London: 1972. The paragraph that follows has been drawn from this book.

vanity for woman.⁴³ However, he commented later that the real function of the mirror was to make the woman connive in treating herself as a sight, as the figure being looked at, complicit in voyeurism.

John Berger charts out the similarities between publicity images and oil painting. Berger says that, 'oil painting before anything else was a celebration of private property'.⁴⁴ He uses the language of oil painting, as oil painting was a celebration of private property. Linked to this, was a sense of confidence to own a work of art. Both use some form of historical or moral reference. The coloured photograph reproduced the same color and texture for the spectator as the oil painting did for the buyer. Both the mediums use the spectators' sense of acquiring the real thing which the image represented. The difference between oil painting and publicity images is crucial for our understanding of the mechanisms of advertisements. Berger suggests that oil painting showed something which the spectator already had and it was meant for his own surrounding. On the other hand, publicity aims at a future life by persuading the spectator to be dissatisfied with his life. The second difference was in terms of the idealized spectator of the image. Who was the art for? Oil painting was for somebody who made money out of the market, and publicity was for one who constituted the market. Oil painting was painted in the present tense as one of the pleasures a painting gave to the owner was the thought that it would convey the image of his present to future descendants. Whereas, publicity uses future tense and aims at what one would become.

Berger's work is crucial for studies in visual culture. His analysis of woman's representation in art work also helps to place the advertisements in a different context. He comments that a woman's presence was different to that of a man and it indicated her own attitude to herself.⁴⁵ According to him, women watched themselves being looked at and the surveyor of women in herself is male. The woman turning herself into an object and as an object of vision was the popular theme in the nude category of European oil

⁴³Ibid., p. 51.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 139.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 46.

painting. Berger analyses the ways in which women were seen and represented in this art. He points out that the objective of painting nude women was to cater to the male spectator's need.⁴⁶ The paintings were based on the idea of a man looking at the woman. The woman was shown to be responding to the male gaze by being aware of the male gaze looking at her. This tradition was used all through the paintings post renaissance and well into the eighteenth century. However, there were also exceptional paintings where the nude women in the picture did not allow the presence of a male spectator. The spectator was not acknowledged in the attitude of the subject of the painting. In modern art this category became less important. Berger shows how the change came in terms of the attitude of questioning and the breaking of earlier ideals. However, he points out that the tradition could be replaced only with the realism of prostitutes. The author asserts that in the modern period the traditional attitude and values could be informed by other media like advertisement and television but for him the essential ways of seeing women has not changed. The ideal spectator is always seen to be a male and the image is designed to flatter males. In the case of advertisements that we are looking at, did the presence of women indicate a male audience? The advertisements produce the stereotype of the woman adorning her-self to attract the appreciation of men.

Such gendered attitudes appear more sharply in products meant for enhancing fitness and for beautifying the body. The notion of women's body was seen in terms of men's choices. Men's fashion and the idea of an ideal body are not perceived in the same manner as women.

Bile Beans claims to give women 'the figure that men admire' (Figure 21).⁴⁷ The central focus of this advertisement is 'desire'. 'Have you the figure that men admire' locates the notion of women's body in wider context. Parameters of ideal beauty have always been studied in context with men's liking. It is also interesting to contrast it with another image for the same product, which says 'how can you get that figure'.⁴⁸

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 63.

⁴⁷Bile Beans, *Times of India*, 3 May 1939, p. 16.

⁴⁸Bile Beans, *Times of India*, 7 June 1939, p.14.

No.
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Have You the FIGURE that Men Admire

She's got that attractive, slim figure so much admired by the opposite sex. She maintains her lovely figure and keeps in perfect health by taking two Bile Beans regularly every night at bedtime. You, too, can gradually melt away those surplus pounds of fat, enjoy radiant health and get the figure that men admire if you take Bile Beans nightly.



OVER 1,000,000 BILE BEANS
ARE SOLD EVERY DAY



All medicine dealers sell Bile Beans. Price: One Rupee a bottle. Write for generous free sample. Enclose Anna Stamp for postage.

This is how Bile Beans act: Bile Beans are prepared from pure vegetable extracts, and, therefore, can be taken regularly every night with perfect safety. They tone up the system, purify the blood and remove fat-forming residue daily. Thus keeping you healthy, happy and slim.

BILE BEANS

GIVE YOU THE FIGURE THAT MEN ADMIRE

Agents:—Messrs. KEMP & CO., Charni Road, BOMBAY.

Figure 21: Advertisement for Bile Beans.

Source: *Times of India*, 3 May 1939, p. 1

This product presents the image of the slim woman as desirable among all women and especially men. This kind of image is in opposition to the way men were portrayed (Figure 12). Men were shown to be authoritative, commanding rather than sexualised. The woman in the image is shown to have a figure which looks attractive when adorned with sari. By looking at the human image one can assume that the advertisement is aimed at a European population whereas, the caption of another advertisement suggests that it is also aimed at Indian women. Most of the discussion on clothing encouraged the wearing of sari on the grounds that it could conceal the real figure of Indian woman. The discourse on clothing in the journals revolved around the idea of keeping fit. *Times of India* also suggested that Indian women needed to develop a figure that could wear all kinds of dresses, especially European dresses. However, such discussions were limited. Tracing the origin of slimness in the western world, Anne Hollander says that the strong attraction for female slimness and physical fitness in the twentieth century was due to the emancipation from physical and moral restraints, and the increasing popularity for sports and employment. Similar changes in the lives of Indian women too point to the possibility of such emphasis on the female body in the Indian context.

Gender separation was emphasised in early advertisements. There was a stark difference in the way men and women were represented. There were also differences in the ideals they generated. We see how traditional roles for Indian and European women were reinforced by the advertisements. During the 1940s most of the ads were direct adaptation of British advertisements and were reprinted in Indian journals. Advertisements redefined traditional roles whereas, the new culture of consumption created new roles for women.⁴⁹

Women were seen as exploring themselves due to the freedom offered by shopping. However, there were limitations. As pointed out by Abigail McGowan there was a shift from a focus on the nation to the family, especially nuclear family. And in this shift, woman bore the responsibility of household purchases. McGowan notes that consumption was increasingly feminised during this period, and this offered to women

⁴⁹Abigail McGowan, 'Consuming Families: Negotiating Women's Shopping in Early Twentieth Century Western India', *Towards a History of Consumption in South Asia*, pp. 155 - 184.

“new freedom of mobility, sociability and control over finances...”⁵⁰ However, this freedom was limited as women were expected to subordinate their desires for the cause of the family.

A woman venturing outside the home was a figure that produced patriarchal anxieties. As we have already seen in the Chapter I, the modern and educated were criticised for being fashionable. This critique can be linked to the wider anxiety about women consumers. Shopping did offer Indian women with new roles within the households but it provoked criticisms. Women were caricatured as squandering all money in items of clothing, cosmetics and shoes. The husband was shown as fighting his wife about expenditure on jewellery.

Tilak’s memoir gives us examples of problems women faced due to the lack of control over consumption. We get such instance of lack of financial control in Sudha Mazumdar’s memoir.⁵¹ Her father had control over the finances and her mother got money through a servant when things had to be purchased. Once when her father was ill, and her mother needed money to meet the family demands, instead of disturbing her husband for mundane problems during his illness Sudha’s mother sold her ornaments. Such instance indicates the powerful control of male members over finances.

Compared to the experiences of these women, Ramabai Ranade, wife of the prominent Maharashtra reformer had control over monetary questions. Her husband gave the entire salary to her and she was made responsible for all financial matters at home. Similarly, Anandibai Karve, wife of another prominent Maharashtra also controlled exercise over family consumption. By citing experiences of women in matters of finances Abigail McGowan shows that for some women control over consumption was a source of power within the household.⁵² According to the author, the choice of commodities also offered them opportunities to explore the public realm. Going to clearance sales in

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Sudha Mazumdar, *Memoirs of an Indian Woman*, edited by Geraldine Forbes, New York: An East Gate book, 1989.

⁵²Op cit., Abigail McGowan, p. 167.

markets offered opportunities to forge new relations. Cartoons in some journals like *Hindi Punch* criticised the possibilities of women making new relations, disrupting traditional codes of behaviour. This was a reflection of male worries about women moving out of the home. Thus, it resulted in the portrayal of women being free, ready to take the opportunity to cross boundaries of home. In the process of controlling consumption and spending their time in shopping rather than working at home, women challenged traditional gender roles within the family. However, the instances that are cited here belong to elite women, and we need to be careful about making sweeping generalisation.

Priya Paul's collection at Tasveer Ghar archive throws light on the emerging notions of consumption and women's freedom. Abigail McGowan's and Sandria Freitag's essays in the collection analyse changing patterns of consumption in the Indian subcontinent through the help of visual culture. Freitag points out that one of the most important everyday themes that were represented in the calendar images was the family, especially engaged in consumption.⁵³ In such images nuclear families were the most popular themes. Here woman's power and the ability to make choice were celebrated. The author charted out that 'the images of family were themselves consumed as models of how the time of modern family ought to be spent every day'. Most of the families were represented as partly westernised, but wearing traditional attire. See for example, the poster of a man and woman buying cloth in a modern shop. In this representation the woman dominates the shopping procedure. However, the posture of the man and the woman suggests proximity. They are also represented as enjoying the experience of shopping together. We need to take note of the traditional dress both of them are shown to be wearing. Here also the sari becomes a symbol of tradition. Personal accounts of Indian women show that some of them got educated, moved to spaces beyond their homes, and adopted western life style, only when their husbands moved out of the ancestral houses.

⁵³Sandria Freitag, 'Consumption and Identity: Imagining 'Everyday Life; Through Popular Visual Culture', <http://www.tasveerghar.net/>.

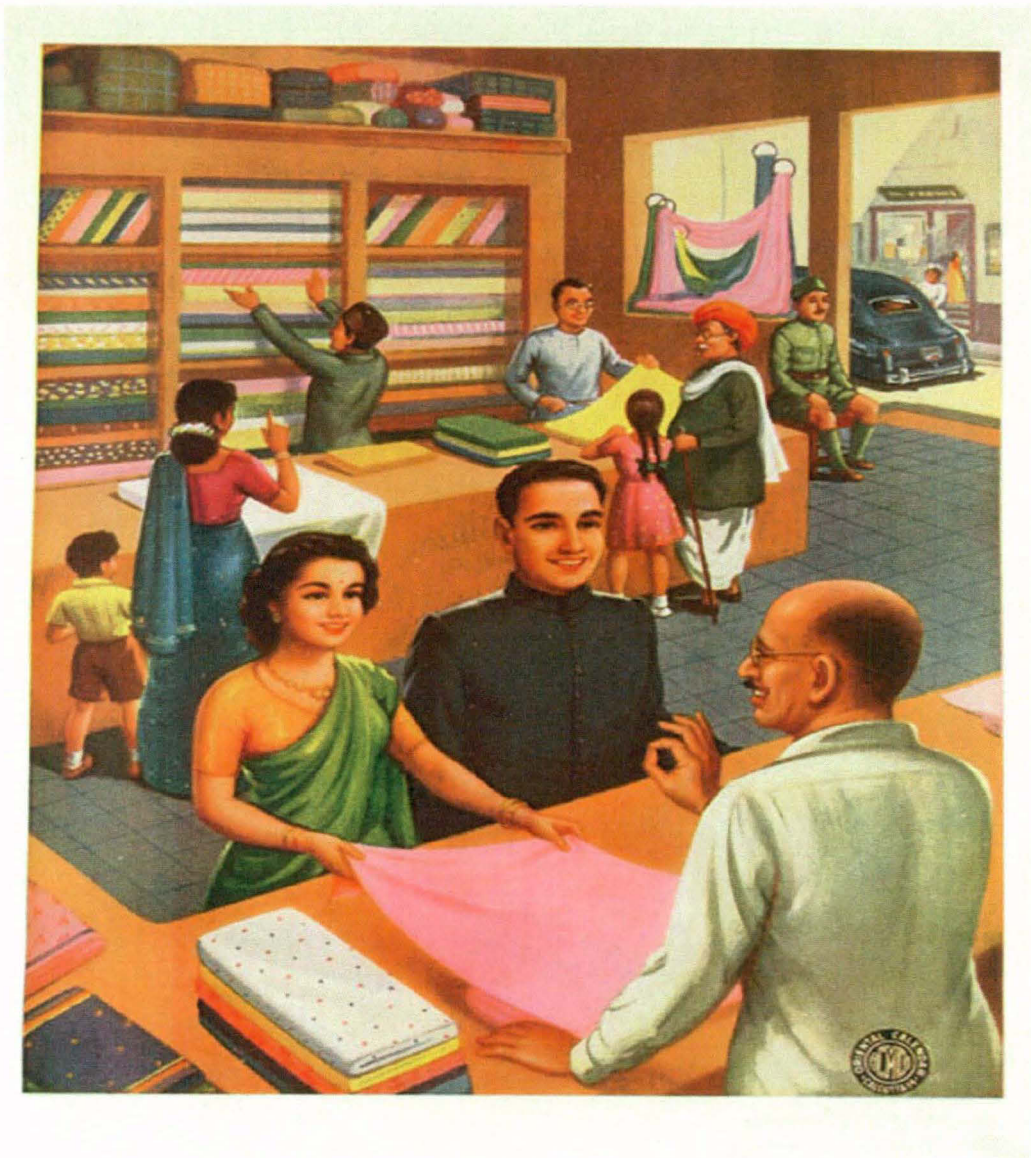


Figure 22: Family in a cloth shop.

Source: Tasveer Ghar

We see couples buying cloth in a modern textile shop. Both woman and man in foreground are wearing more distinctively Indian dress. Chromolithograph, 270 x 360, Circa 1930 - 1940.



Figure 23: Two women outside shop.

Source: Tasveer Ghar

Here we see two women at the open entrance to a garment shop in an urban square, showing the road and surrounding area. Lithographed on paper, with wide wooden decorative frame, circa 1930 - 1940. Both the display table and the women's clothing are embellished with a metallic, open-work fabric and glitter.

Although, women got opportunities to explore themselves outside the realm of the home, these spaces outside were seen as dangerous. One of the images in the essay of Abigail McGowan captures this anxiety in a poignant manner. Figure 23, which is a portrait, shows two women outside a shop. It is interesting to see that there is a big difference in the light and colour used in the poster compared to the Figure 22. In Figure 23, the outside is dark, and the overall tone is sombre, compared to the light, vibrant colours used (in Figure 23) to represent women within the shops accompanied by men and children.

The history of advertising reflects the separation of gender roles. We see how there was a huge distinction in the feelings invoked by the ads for men and for women. The ideology of advertisements harped on traditional models of Indian woman and in this way created stereotypes of women conforming to norms and regulation. However, shopping as an activity offered women certain autonomy, and freedom in matters finances.

Conclusion

This chapter reveals the influence of the market in sartorial changes during twentieth century. It is interesting to note the diversity in the ideals projected by advertisements in different newspapers. *Bombay Chronicle* focussed more on nationalism and carried few advertisements on clothing at least till 1933. As compared to this *Madras Mail* and *Times of India* published many advertisements especially on items of dress. In fact full pages were devoted to advertisements in *Madras Mail*. To take note of the readership one can say, by looking at the content of the newspapers, that all of them aimed at the Europeans, the elite and middle class Indian population. The prices of the commodities cited in the advertisements were very high and, thus, probably beyond the means of ordinary men and the working classes. The women represented were often Hindu and Bengali women. There is an absence of Muslim representations in the advertisements.

I have tried to analyse the strategies of advertising in colonial India. The advertisers used different themes which revolved around improving one's status, identity, social acceptability, health and looks. In this process, they sought to play on the emotions

of spectators, focussing on the question of happiness, nurturing desires and aspirations. The market projected the ideals of the modern, but this was an ideal clothed in tradition. The discourse of consumption, as we saw, also redefined the boundaries and roles for women within home and outside.

Conclusion

Most of the works on clothing in India have focussed on the impact of nationalism. This literature has stressed on the changes that took place in the clothing of men and prominent political leaders. They show that the revolution in dress was largely a male affair and very few changes took place in women's clothing. Women's clothing in India has escaped the historian's attention. The present dissertation attempts to explore the history of women's clothing in modern India. It seeks to understand why women made certain choices about their garment, how clothing styles were linked to issues of identity, and how women sought to explore their sense of self by dressing in new ways, and how sartorial styles became the sight of public debates.

Chapter I of this dissertation has focussed on the influence of nationalism on the clothing of Indian men and women. Through an extensive use of vernacular sources, I have looked at the way debates over clothing were driven by nationalist concerns. Within the domain of the national new ideals of fashion were worked out. I discuss how a debate over clothing styles and fashion allowed a critique of western civilisation. A gradual transition in clothing styles was made possible by mass production, and the use of new materials and designs. I have explored how new notions of taste and fashion were introduced by publicists, with essays appearing regularly in Hindi and English journals. These debates sought to define the Indian national by reflecting on what elements of western styles could be appropriately adopted and what needed to be rejected, and conversely what elements of Indian tradition ought to be celebrated. This chapter also focussed on dress reform movements which sought to define the appropriate dress for women, in the private as well as the public realm.

In Chapter II, the focus shifted to the study of clothing and the politics of veiling among Hindu and Muslim women. This chapter sought to analyse the arguments on purdah, given by the nationalists, the patriarchal sections, and the modernists. Arguments in favour of seclusion of women harped on the ancient models of purity and chastity. The arguments for removal of veil invoked notions of independence, individuality, sense of self, and looked at questions of health and education. However, independence was to be allowed within limits. Clothing, I have tried to show, actually became a site of

surveillance. Despite their difference, both the opponents and proponents of the veil focussed equally on the need to uphold values of tradition and modesty.

Chapter III was an attempt to move away from questions of nationalism, religion and community. It tried to study how cultures of consumption changed, and how this altered clothing choices of men and women. I have looked at a set of advertisements and images to explore their impact on the clothing styles, materials and fashion. I have argued that the advertisements generated ideas of distinction and style, defining what could be seen as comfortable, what enhanced one's appearance, etc. In addition the advertisements projected gender disparities, in notions of clothing, definitions of social roles and sexuality. This chapter shows how fashion is not a restricted concept of changes in clothing but is determined by a variety of factors. It also stressed that new cultures of consumption offered opportunities to women to challenge traditional roles.

This study has emphasised that since the late - nineteenth century efforts of the nationalists, reformers and women's movements in India led to several political, social and legal changes. As we know, the gradual spread of education, the impact of national movement, and greater currency of ideas about social reform allowed the entry of women into the mainstream media and politics. Schools and journals served as platforms where women's issues were discussed leading to increased self confidence among women.

Francesca Orsini argues that women entering public spaces or acquiring self-assurance was fraught with tensions.¹ According to her, it certainly did not mean equality. She points out that the values of 'Indian womanhood' - modesty, sexual chastity and moral purity, self sacrifice and nurturing - were conspicuously present in all the images examined, irrespective of whether they were created by female writers or male writers. Similarly, Suruchi Thapar takes note of the space provided by the Hindi Journals.² She says that the magazines illustrated the ambiguity women felt between the desire for individual self expression and reluctance to challenge existing role models and nationalist constructs.

¹Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere*, p. 305.

²Bjorkert, *Women in the Indian National Movement*, p. 237.

I have shown how these ideals were the focus of writers and publicists. Women who did not symbolise these ideals were represented as 'bad' women. Women were not expected to associate economic independence with the neglect of domestic duties. The values of Indian womanhood were to be replicated in clothing as well. They could adopt certain western trends of fashion, but without losing their individuality, natural aesthetic sense and respectability. Unlike western women, Indian women were expected to look beautiful without vulgar exhibitionism, that is, without a display of the body that would attract the male gaze. Women were supposed to select those values which would facilitate the construction of their individual female identities as well as national identity. I have tried to show how twentieth-century nationalist and patriarchal voices redefined the roles of women and put forward the new ideal of Indian womanhood.

Along with the efforts of the nationalist and reformers the writers of the journals which were published in this period preoccupied themselves with the task of addressing the women's question. These journals introduced new styles of dressing, new forms of garments popular in London and Paris, ways of draping sari in different communities and subsequently they offered women alternative choices in matters of clothing. The fashion columns generated new taste in clothing. Mass production of cloth and imitation of expensive materials allowed Indians to experiment with new materials, designs and styles. All these factors affected sartorial styles of men and women.

Thus, this study has emphasised that women had a range of sartorial choices. Some conformed to patriarchal notions of tradition and modesty, others challenged the prescribed dressing code for women by incorporating elements of fashion from the west, and yet others invented new styles, borrowing from trends in other states in India.

The dissertation has thus attempted to look at the different ways in which the question of fashion and dress was debated. It has explored how dress and fashion symbolised power, identity, and status. On the one hand dress served as an avenue through which women explored their sense of self, on the other, it became a site on which the identity of India itself was constituted.

Glossary

<i>adhunik</i>	modern
<i>ardhsikshita</i>	half educated
<i>angharakha</i>	long sleeved long coat worn by men
<i>behne</i>	sisters
<i>bharatvarsh</i>	Indian subcontinent
<i>chapkan</i>	type of long tunic particularly popular among Muslim men
<i>charkha</i>	spinning wheel
<i>choli</i>	blouse, usually with a short body and short sleeves
<i>dhoti</i>	men's waist cloth, worn by draping, folding and tucking
<i>kaliyug</i>	the fourth age of human history in Hindu mythology
<i>khadi</i>	hand woven cloth. The term was used by Gandhi.
<i>lajja</i>	sense of decency and modesty
<i>memsahib</i>	madam; often used for a European woman
<i>samaj</i>	society, organization
<i>sahib</i>	gentleman; often used for European man
<i>swabhiman</i>	dignity
<i>swatantra</i>	independence
<i>swadeshi</i>	home produce, literally of own country
<i>swalamban</i>	without greed
<i>swaraj</i>	self - rule
<i>vastra</i>	dress/cloth
<i>vyabhichar</i>	adultery
<i>Zenana</i>	women's quarter

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