

Clothing trends in the context of tradition and modernity: A sociological study

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Key Words : Clothing trends, Rural and urban population, Silver screen, Respondent

INTRODUCTION

The present study analyses and explains the dynamic clothing behavior of people residing in Amritsar district. It finds out the impact of mass media in selection, stitching and embroidery of the clothes. Attempt has been made to find out the variations in clothing patterns of rural vs. urban population with special reference to tradition and modernity.

Changes in clothing trends are brought through certain driving factors like technology and mass media. A large number of respondents view that mass media is the driving factor that highlights the changing clothing trends. Silver screen broadcasts the latest designs of apparels which influence the public en masse, thus motivating the viewers for emerging designs and fashion in clothing. Not only this, the pressure of peer group plays an important role in going with the trendy styles of clothing. The higher age group finds the present clothing as more immodest and attention seeking than the young ones who do not find any fault with the present clothing trend. It may be due to the fact that elderly to a great extent rely on the traditional clothing style or pattern rather than the western ones that are more fashion oriented and attention seeker. On the other side, there is acceptance of modern clothing trend which is taken as more comfortable and have aesthetic sense, by the lower age groups. Even the middle aged is accepting, though not fully, the value and comfort of the trendy clothes. Majority of the upper caste respondents lay importance on the

nature of the present clothing as attention seeking. Despite being aesthetic and comfortable, Scheduled Castes and Backward Castes respondents find the present clothing trends as immodest to a great extent.

Clothing trends are influenced with number of factors which are also related to each other. Every individual has his/her view regarding the latest trends and acts accordingly or chooses his apparels. The variables like age, class, caste and the education affect clothing styles along with area wise variation. Further, western/trendy clothes are bought by respondents more in the urban area than in the rural one. The respondents are showing inclination towards western clothing so as to look modern, meaning that western clothes are assimilating gradually in the clothing of Indian society though has not thoroughly replaced the Indian ones. Assimilation of western clothing is more in the urban area than in the rural one, of course its variation depends upon the socio-economic characteristics of the village or ward. Western clothes, especially t-shirt and parallel are more in demand because of the comfort ability. Western clothes are worn both indoors and outdoors. Certainly rural respondents mostly use it as indoor wears; whereas urban respondents both for indoor as well as outdoor use. Moreover, people are even spotted buying second hand imported clothes because of superior quality fabric, stitching details and unique design. This is revealed from the fact that markets of second hand imported clothes are well established in and around Amritsar. Interestingly more than half of the rural respondents are observed to

buy second hand imported clothes for themselves or their family members. Such respondents are equally distributed in all the three villages. The urban respondents do not disclose their liking for such clothes, may be because of their status symbol. The upper class and caste respondents largely select western wear consciously or subconsciously with an attitude of expression of purchasing power, their economic status so to act as fashion leaders. Such tendency is observed among both rural and urban respondents. Age of the respondents too is found to be related with preference for western clothing. The trend is catching up among middle aged respondents of the rural as well as the urban area. A variety of silhouettes and lengths of the dress is prevalent in the Punjab area. This is mainly due to the direct exposure of the public to the media. The respondents dwelling in the rural as well as urban areas have adopted the silhouette though the rural people take up the new trends a little later than the urban areas. *Dupatta* is an integral part of any dress particularly the traditional one and study shows that the respondents still like to wear *dupatta*, but the rural respondents have shown their inclination more towards carrying a *dupatta* than the urban ones. Further, the modern version of the *dupatta* that is stole is used more than the traditional large *dupatta*. The use of stole is more prevalent among lower class respondents than the upper ones, irrespective of rural or urban regions. Though, middle class respondents in the urban area have shown their liking for the stoles, yet a considerable percentage of urban respondents in the upper class category like to wear traditional long *dupatta*. Stole is used largely because of its short length and breadth that make it easy to handle and wear it in all workable conditions. Of course, *dupatta* (traditional one) is carried for formal and social activities like marriage, religious functions, visiting relatives and the like.

The study thus brings out variations in the clothing behaviour of the respondents, showing that rural people differ from the urban ones in the terms of their choice of clothing, silhouettes, length of the dress and use of *dupatta*. Rural people still prefer to retain the tradition of the dress which is more likely preserved by the upper age category. Even the upper class and caste people in the rural area conform largely to the traditional pattern of dress. No doubt, upper class and upper caste people in the urban areas prefer to wear traditional clothing on festival and social gatherings but they equally go for the western clothes which they use as casual wear. Western

clothes are gaining ground because of advertisement, e-magazines, social media and silver screen. It is also gaining popularity because of cost factor, market strategies which are more in favour of the modern clothing than the traditional ones. In other words, new/trendy clothing serves the interest of multinational companies or capitalist market which survives through advertisement and socializes the present generation to go for western clothing; a fact brought out by the present study. The study points out class differences with regard to the fabric, design, colour, embroidery and texture among different sections of class and caste of the society. Lower class goes for durable clothing, may be these relate to traditional and modern because of their work and economic viability. Cost is the most determining factor in the selection of clothing irrespective of the area, age, education and caste. Urban people like to buy clothes depending on their need and desire, largely owing to continuous availability of cash which they save for such purposes. Rural people on the other hand are more governed by the need than the desire because of limited availability of liquid money. Further, the western clothing are equally worn by the male especially jeans and shirts (top in the case of women) or *kurti* (*kurta* among the men) shows unisexual garments and this has been supported by Fraquoh (2013) who states that women dress in 1980's used to display broad shoulder by tucking/stitching pads in shoulder area of the dress: an element of masculinity. This may be the reason for acceptance of western clothing like jeans, tops and *kurtis* among the women. Also the trend is catching up to wear fusion clothes, exhibiting both Indian and Western style of design, silhouette and ensemble {an'samb(e)}. Still the traditional pattern of clothing irrespective of its high cost is preferred on social occasions. Moreover, Sharma (2013) talks of modernity in terms of replacement of tradition by modern forms but the continuity of traditional dresses/clothing pattern on important cultural, social and ceremonial occasions depicts that the demand to meet the need of the people who still hold traditional clothing as important, will continue to boast the Indian clothing market. The people will continue to flaunt their traditional dresses with traditional embroidery; thereby preserving the rich culture and heritage of Punjab.

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