

# Of Attires : Evolution of Fashion

EVER since man tossed aside the fig leaf in search for more modest, hence cover of his modesty, garments of various kinds have proclaimed civilizations! Animal skin or yarn, stitched or draped, the variety and splendour of the garment of different societies speak of their identity with aesthetics being as the weft. For the touch of glamour come the ornaments, both to enhance the beauty and to define the status of the wearer.

While each region of India has different apparel, an interesting folklore found in almost every part of the country highlights the common thread running through the entire weave! The lore has us believing that God appeared in a sleeping man's dream and taught him to weave cloth and that was the beginning of the fabulous Indian weaves!

Some clue of the clothes of our very old ancestors can be had from ancient texts. Rig Veda describes the person's dress as made of the upper garment the *Adhivasa* and the lower garment, the *Vasa*. The ensemble was called *Vasana* or *Vastra*. The material, colour, manner of wearing etc. depended on the occupation of the person: a sage had a different dress code from that of a man who is about to perform a sacrifice and so on.

While all these are intelligent inferences from texts, the sculptures in temples and forts told their story of dress codes in times closer to the present.

Historical events had tremendous influence on dressing and with the con-

quest of Alexander the Great, the Hellenic touch was added to our garments with the element of pleating — the lower or the upper garment is one such. Similarly with the coming of the Sultans and the Mughals, from the 10th to the 15th century, the upper garment was born. All over India, the *choli* was created. One can discern a common strain across the country in the long skirt, blouse and long scarf ensemble. In Uttar Pradesh it is called the *Lehanga-choli* (skirt and blouse) and *dupatta* (head-cover) while in Rajasthan it is called the *ghaghra-choli-odni* (the same three as in UP mentioned above) ensemble. In Assam it is *mekhla chadar*, in Kerala it is *mundu* and in Tamil Nadu it is called *pavadai-davari*.

As in every other aspect of life, in attire too, this one single concept expands to accommodate the aesthetic sensibilities of the different people of India. Some living in deserts, some others along a picturesque coast of undulating terrain and refreshing greens. The manner of wearing this three-piece ensemble also varies, like in the Southern part of India women tuck one end of the *melaku* (as the upper scarf is called there) into the *pavadai* and the other end comes below the right arm and over the left shoulder. In Assam too the style of wearing is similar but in the north, the loose end comes over the head from the back and falls down from the right shoulder.

And catching the falling stars in their clothes, the women of Rajasthan make up

for their arid dry surroundings, in their colourful *lehngas* by embroidering little mirrors into their skirt. The careful Gujaratis, attentive to details, have heavy embroidery on the long skirts while the people of Assam and Kerala, living in lush green surroundings, rob the colour off their garments and go in for stark white allowing a thin border at times.

The men remained more or less where they were, that is with the exception of a few regions, most of them still wore a lower garment: the *dhotti* (unstitched cloth draped around waist) and a towel or *angavastr* on top. The manner of tying the *dhotti* however is very different in the regions. Generally they are all about eight meters in length. While the man from Bengal pleats the front portion with one loose end in his pocket (of the *kurta*) the

man working on the lands opts for a *dhotti* reaching barely to the knees and more like a pair of shorts! They are generally white in colour with borders ranging from a single coloured line to one worked with gold thread. As invaders came and went, they left behind certain styles and thus came the *kurta* (long shirt) for men. Again no region just copied the designs, they had their indigenous designers! Also came the *pajama* or *churidar*. The north which came directly under Mughal rule adopted this dress rather well. The women wore *salwar-kurta* ensembles. While this is now found in every corner of India today, till about ten years back, the dress was worn primarily by the Punjabis and Haryanvis.

When a woman starts talking about clothes, dreams mingle into descriptions and

here's a request for you to stop and start dreaming. The picture is of the Kashmir valley or the Himachal Pradesh. Lovely young girls with red

cheek and radiant skins wear some of the most beautiful versions of the *salwar-kurta* ensemble. They called the upper garment a *pheran*. It is



longer and looser than the *kurta* and is made from the woolen material. Exquisite and intricate embroidery adorn their loose garments, perhaps a legacy from the Hellenic influence. When the blizzard blows across the cold hills of the Himalayas, these people keep themselves warm with the little pot of burning coal that they tie to their waist inside their *pheran*. The men also wear similar clothes, only their *pherans* are even longer!

The tribals across the length and breadth of India still wear the lower garment wound around the waist and an upper garment of recent origin. The lower garment differs in length from area to area. The variety of weaves and symbolism of the designs used by them is however a whole thesis in itself. In Meghalaya, however, with early influence of the missionaries, their upper garment evolved earlier, albeit innovatively! Their dress is made of two square pieces of cloth. One goes below one arm and is tied on top of the opposite shoulder. Another goes across in a similar fashion and is tied at the other shoulder. Sophisticated tribals wear a blouse inside. Both men and women wear similar clothes.

Elsewhere in the country the lower-upper garment ensemble gradually evolved into a *sari*. Some wove designs into their *sari*. Some embroidered them. Some wove it with golden thread. Some captured the beauty of the peacock and yet others the majestic elephant and imagination captured a woman's entirety in these

lovely fabrics. But variety emerged in the manner of draping this on unstitched garment which has come into the twentieth century — all set to stride into the next: Each woman draped it as she found it convenient. The women of Maharashtra were very industrious and patriotic: they wore tight *saris* and ensured easy and agile movement. When the Marathas came to the south, they influenced the women there who wear similar *saris*. These *saris* are longer than the usual ones: the usual ones are six yards in length while this one is nine yards. But in Bengal the length is five meters. The longer *saris* are worn by one segment of the society while the more common version is the six yards. Some wear this over the right shoulder and others over the left.

One part of the story remains untold and that is the one of the *khadi* or the hand-spun cloth. It is associated with the Swadeshi movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi begun in the early part of this century. Even today, all over India there are people who share the same ideology whether they wear the *dhotti* or *pyajama-kurta* of even famous Gandhi cap, all woven by themselves.

As the rustle of silk, the wooden clanging of the hand and loom and the vibrant colours of indigenous dyes clothe the Indian, new designs from all over the world are being incorporated... and the story will grow longer and richer by the next millennium and yet as diverse and unified too.

## Space Market

Continued from page 17  
Corporation of USA, the worldwide distributor of all observation data received from American LANDSAT series of spacecraft, had struck with the Indian Space Department for the reception and distribution of data from the Indian observation spacecraft in the IRS series.

The loss of Landsat-6 spacecraft in a launch mishap in October 1993 had prompted EOSAT to go in for a marketing tie-up with India.

India's first generation earth observation spacecraft, IRS-IA launched in 1988 and IRS-IB data constitutes the mainstay of the National Natural Resources Management System (NNRMS) in India and are being regularly used for mapping forest, wasteland, agricultural activities, water and mineral resources as well as monitoring environmental changes and oceanic dynamics. A vastly improved second generation IRS-IC satellite featuring a better spatial and spectral resolution as compared to IRS-IA and IB has already

been launched and will be operational very soon. The IRS-P2 experimental earth observation satellite launched by the 280-tonne biopropellant Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) in October 1994 has also proved its excellence by providing high quality resources data. No wonder, EOSAT Corporation has evinced keen interest in IRS-P2 satellite data.

India's success in the area

of satellite technology is now well established. A Chinese space delegation that visited the Bangalore-based satellite centre of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) evinced a keen interest in the expertise and capability India has built up in designing and building state-of-the-art remote sensing satellites.

Dr K Kasturirangan, Chairman, ISRO, is fully confident that India is now well-equipped to undertake turnkey contracts for building tailor-made spacecraft. "In satellite technology and application, we have reached total maturity and are comparable with the best in the world," says he. He drives home the point that India can build extremely cost-efficient spacecraft because an excellent pool of highly skilled manpower conversant with all aspects of satellite technology is available in the country.

India is also poised to build its indigenous launch capability. The flawless and text-book perfect launch of the 44mt. tall Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), powered by alternate liquid and solid fuel stages in October 1994, has established Indian competence to place one-tonne class earth observation spacecraft into a polar orbit. By far, the most complex and challenging technological endeavour undertaken by ISRO, PSLV incorporates many innovations in materials technology. This has enabled India to join the ranks of a select group of space farming nations comprising USA, Russia, France, Japan and China. The next flight of PSLV is planned to take place in the near future. After proving the flight worthiness of PSLV it will be used as a workhorse for the routine launching of the IRS series of satellites.

But the significance of PSLV goes beyond just launching satellites from the Indian soil. India can promote it as a vehicle for orbiting lightweight satellites in the low earth orbit. As it is, with the trend towards miniaturisation hitting the global satellite industry, the demand for PSLV class launch vehicles is likely to go up in the coming years. And India is fully prepared to exploit this lucrative launch service slot in the global

space market.

On another front, PSLV is crucial for India to build its own Geostationary Launch Vehicle (GSLV), capable of orbiting 2.5 tonne class communications spacecraft into geostationary orbit, 36,000 km above the equator. Realisation of liquid oxygen/liquid hydrogen driven GSLV is essential for India to achieve absolute "space freedom." Currently the global launcher market is dominated by GSLV class boosters. Many of the technologies and systems developed for PSLV can straightaway be adopted for the GSLV booster. As things stand now in India, the first flight of GSLV is expected to take place in 1998. The take-off of GSLV from Indian soil will mark the emergence of India as a space power of global consequence.

No wonder then that the latest annual report of the Indian Space Department states: "A number of requests from Foreign agencies for some of the high technology products as well as for the transfer of various spin-off technologies have been received. Discussions have been held with several international space agencies to promote Antrix as a potential source for many of their requirements."

The Antrix Corporation Ltd, the business front for the Indian space agency, was set up in 1992 with the object of exploiting the commercial potential of the space agency and to promote the export of its high technology products, services and consultancy. It has made a good beginning by securing orders for study contracts, consultancy and products from various organisations and countries across the world. It has already supplied solid fuel to the Indonesian space agency Lapan. It has also supplied to the Brazilian space agency an earth observation package for use aboard the Brazilian experimental remote sensing spacecraft.

In a landmark development Antrix has signed an agreement with EOSAT to USA to market data from a network of Indian earth observation satellites to Government agencies and companies around the world. Under the 10-year agreement, EOSAT will be the exclusive

worldwide marketing agent for earth observation data from remote sensing satellites operated by India.

India has an ambitious earth observation satellite programme. It has two satellites in orbit and plans to launch two more by 1996. It expects to have at least eight in orbit by 1999.

The information gathered by the satellites is useful in oil and mineral exploration, forest mapping environment planning and crop monitoring. EOSAT said it will sell the data commercially to Government agencies and companies around the world through its data distribution network.

Study contract for the definition of space segment systems and assessment of associated technologies for low earth orbit (LEO) constellation and for the design, implementation and evaluation of a small omnidirectional antenna for the hand held telephone project of the London-based multinational multi-service communications consortium "Inmarsat" was bagged by the Antrix Corporation in the face of stiff global competition. Further, Antrix Corporation has carried out the bench marking of Fortran Programme for IBM, Singapore and conducted training in mission control and satellite systems definition for experts from South Korea and Arab, the consortium of 21 Arab League countries that operate this regional communications satellite system.

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## Insat-2C

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into the 19.2 degrees East slot in December 1988. Three years later, it co-located the Astra 1B. Later, the Astra 1C and 1D were also co-located in the same slot. The Astra satellites provide direct broadcast services over Europe.

### Added Features

Insat-2C is the first of the Insat series to carry Ku band (11 to 14 GHz) transponders. The three Ku band transponders on the 2C are expected to be used for satellite news gathering, for direct inter-linking of major city exchanges and for data services.

With the Doordarshan increasingly relying on the C-band, one of the two S-band transponders on the Insat-2C has been modified for mobile communications. The mobile

services being contemplated are expected to benefit the railways, trucking services and shipping industry.

As with its predecessors, the Insat-2A and 2B, the 2C carries 12 normal C band transponders. But the coverage of two of these transponders has been expanded so that its beam covers an area from parts of North Eastern Africa, Central Asia and West Asia all the way to South-East Asia. The extended coverage would allow television programmes to be beamed to expatriate Indians.

Doordarshan has already leased a C-band transponder on the PanAmSat 4 to beam its international service to the Middle East. The agreement with PanAmSat also lets Doordarshan broadcast the international channel to Europe and the US over the PAS-1's Ku band beam. Courtesy — The Hindu

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