

Pheran Through the Mists of Centuries

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Abstract

The present study is an attempt to find out the historical perspective, different styles and decorative aspects of traditional Kashmiri attire i.e., Pheran. The study focuses on the assessment of modified versions of Pheran which were designed according to latest fashion trends. The most preferred styles were stitched and analyzed by taking opinion of under graduate girls students through a self-constructed questionnaire. The three types of Pheran i.e., Mughal, Kurta and Modern style were designed by flat-pattern method. According to the findings, the most appreciated style among them was Mughal. After taking the source of inspiration from the oriental costumes, various beautiful and attractive designs can be produced. The study will be beneficial in gaining attention of young fashion designers and consumers at national and international levels.

Keywords: Mughal Style, Pheran, Kurta, Kashmir, Cultural Values, Fashion Designer

Introduction

The valley of Kashmir is known as the crown of the Indian subcontinent. In remote past, many foreign visitors of the valley were much fascinated with its beauty and offered glowing tribute to it. They called it as the Switzerland of the Asia, the heaven on earth by Firdausi and meadow of flowers by Persian scholars. The word Kashmir is also believed to be derived from the word 'kashmere', a specific sheep 'pashmina' from which the wool is taken for making the popular Kashmiri shawls (Asotush, 2013). This stunning valley is the inheritor of a fabulous cultural past, famous for its unique textile and apparel products i.e., carpets, pashmina shawls and various clothing items like Pheran etc. Throughout the history the Kashmiris seems to have been involved in traditional pursuits. As the Kashmir valley is surrounded by snow-clad Himalayas, the people cover themselves with different types of heavy weight clothing items. The history of Pheran is as old as Kashmir (Mittal,

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1985) as the famous Mughal emperor, Akbar, introduced it. He introduced loose and long gown, called as Qaba or coat. Pheran or Phyan is the term specified to the traditional Kashmiri attire worn by the Kashmiri people. Its origin dates back to the Mughal era from where the Royal style of this long garment was inspired (Chadha, 2005).

The decorative style of current apparel products was inspired by the classical patterns of Kashmiri shawls, which were patronized by the Moghuls and Persians (Yacopino, 1987). The status and the position of the Kashmiri people in their families are primarily expressed by their dress codes. The elderly men wear head gear (taranga) and women attire themselves with a Pheran (Figure 4&5) and a lungi draped around their waist (Kalla, 1996). The dress was initially designed to protect oneself from the chilly winters of Kashmir. For the protection purposes the Kashmiri women wear Kangris (small wicker work baskets of burning coal) under Pheran (Singh, 1983). It is actually two sets of long coat or cloak constructed with wool or tweed and worn one above the other both by men and women. The Pherans worn by women, belonging to the Muslim Kashmiri society have broad sleeves and are knee length, whereas, the ones worn by the Hindu Kashmiri ladies are ankle length with narrow-sleeves (Gajrani, 2004). These gowns are usually fastened at the neck by strings or buttons. Muslim Kashmiri ladies decorate their gowns with embroidery while Hindu ladies fixed approximately one inch wide ribbon at the neckline and skirt (Bakhshi, 1996). A comparatively modern variation of the phiran and poots extends to below the knees, which is worn with a loose shalwar inside, similar to the costume worn in Afghanistan. The sleeves of this gown were wide open (Bhattacharya & Gupta, 1991). The use of glorious Pheran is decreasing due to the replacement of shalwar, qameez, and other modern costumes.

Clothing plays an immense role in the world of fashion, particularly the ornamental purpose of costume is most important to present the cultural values. The way people dress indicates their taste, life style, cultural values and knowledge about the current fashion trends. As quoted by Liddle (1991) "it is a silent language, which speaks for us". In the past, fashion was segmented and generally the native culture influenced but with the emergence of globalization, we are progressing towards a more global fashion consumerism. Keeping in view the earlier mentioned fact and of today's fashion trends the intermingling of oriental costume, Kashmiri Pheran with the modern fashion techniques can have an overwhelming influence on the local fashion industry. The purpose of the present study is to give a parameter to the local fashion designers to project our cultural heritage in a fascinated way using skill and technical knowledge in apparel designing. Moreover, the study will be helpful in

highlighting and sustaining the oriental clothing culture among the young consumers on global scale.

Methodology

The current research project was divided into following phases:

- i. Assessment of Kashmiri attire (Pheran) from historical perspective: In this phase the different styles of Pheran were thoroughly analyzed at Lahore Museum and Folk Heritage, Islamabad.
- ii. In the second phase the selective samples were designed and prepared using different decorative details according to current fashion trends for the teen age girls.
- iii. After designing, some most attractive styles of dresses were stitched by changing the basic draft and displayed for participants' opinion.

Sample

Fifteen dresses were designed/sketched for teenage girls according to the current fashion trends in desirable colour schemes and displayed on fashion figure for students' observation. The questionnaire comprised on the choices about cutting, type of material, decorative details and basic stitching technique applied in the dresses.

For dress designing the most preferable style i.e. Mughal is included in the present study. The method of flat pattern designing and drafting (Figure 6) was used for the desired pattern line in accordance with the standard procedure. (Hollen & Kundal, 1999).

Evaluation

To assess the popularity of the attire, a master piece pattern of each style was stitched, based on one fourth scale and an ideal figure of teenage. The comparison of old and modified stitched dresses was done by a post-test self-constructed questionnaire regarding the style (Mughal, Kurta and Modern), colour scheme, silhouette line, material and overall impression of the dress. After presenting a brief introduction of study, the questionnaires were provided to the randomly selected undergraduate, teen age students. After analysis, the results were tabulated and graphically presented through bar diagrams.

Results and Discussion

The results regarding comparison of various dresses that were designed and stitched by the Mughal Pheran as a source of inspiration are included in the following section.

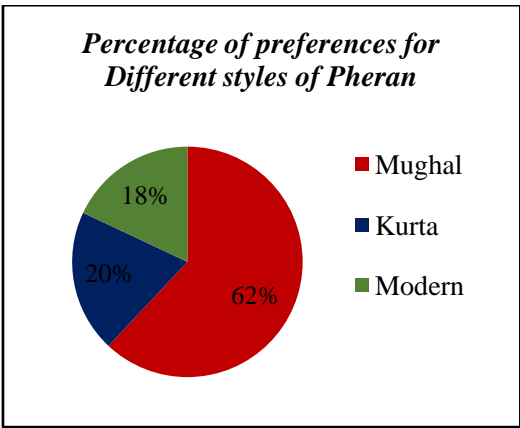
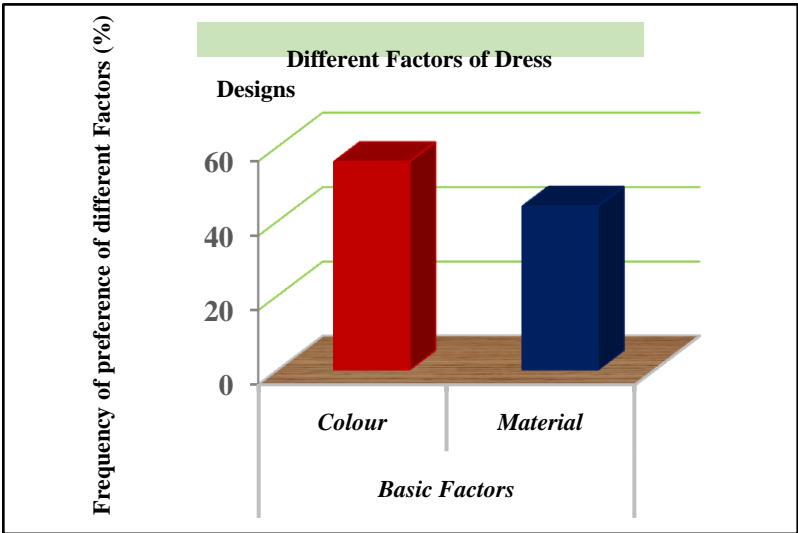


Fig. 1: Order of preference for different styles of dress Selection (Pheran)

Figure 1 presents the percentage of likeness of respondents with respect to different styles while selecting dresses for themselves. According to the findings, the maximum percentage of the respondents preferred the Mughal-cut Pheran as compared to Kurta and modern style dress. The lowest percentage for the most attractive style was found to be corresponded with modified version of outfit. This attraction of the teenage girls for the latest Mughal style Pheran was generally due to its fabulous construction. In the old style Pheran, loosely fitted, long, bodice and heavy weight fabric was used. While the one designed for current study was according to latest fashion trends. The main features for the likeness of the dress were serviceability, rich and delicate embroidery, and formal looking latest cuts.



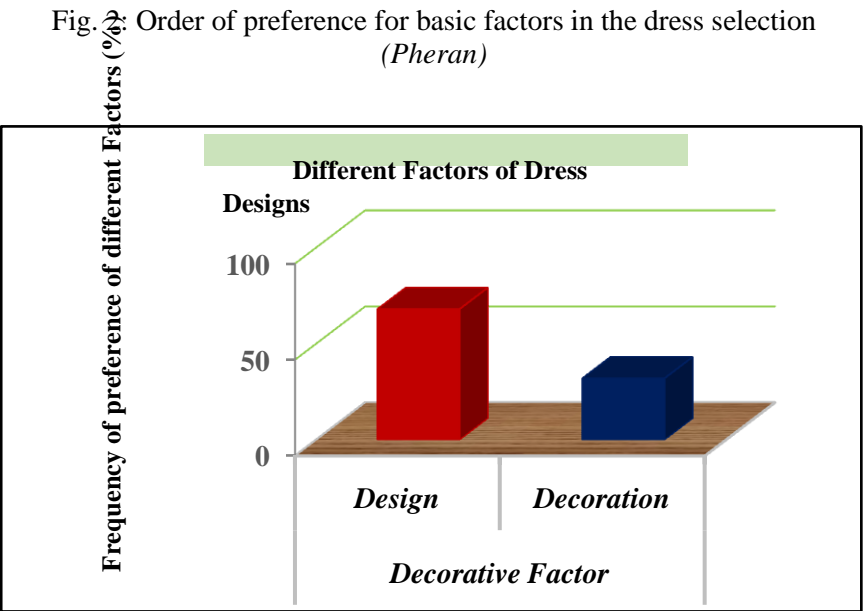


Fig. 3: Order of preference for decorative factors in the dress selection (Pheran)

Figure 2 presents the results with respect to the preference of the basic and the decorative factors of the dress selection. As shown through graphical representation, the maximum percentage of the respondents declared the colour factor, one of the most important feature of the dress as compared to material and other details. As regards the rate of likeness about the decorative factoris concerned (Figure 3), it was found that basic design features of the modified Pheran got attraction of 68% percent of the respondents. The maximum number of respondents, preferred the style of the Pheran, while the other variable i.e., decorative features seemed to be least important.

Today’s designers are well equipped with the basic skills and latest education available in this field. The clients and consumers are intelligent and aware of the quality and esthetic value of the clothing items and workmanship due to the projection of garment industry on mass media. The designers on global level have been forced to turn to unusual source of inspiration from historical and cultural dresses (Kuwar, 2010) mentioned the mobility of the past adorned their outfits with silk embroidery which embellished their splendid garments.

In the construction of the dresses basic consideration was given to the colour and material, which are indispensable in the construction of an appealing dress. The colour preference was more prevalent in choosing a

Mughal style Pheran (in the current study).In a design's philosophy the impact of colour, particularly the vibrant colours like turquoise, dusky pinks and pale yellowish looked more stylish and attractive (She Magazine, 2004).The introduction of latest colour schemes during each fashion season have been carried out by fashion designers, as it assist in stimulating sales (Kuwar, 2010). The variation in the designing, embellishments and patterns have made the pheran trendier and attractive.

Conclusion

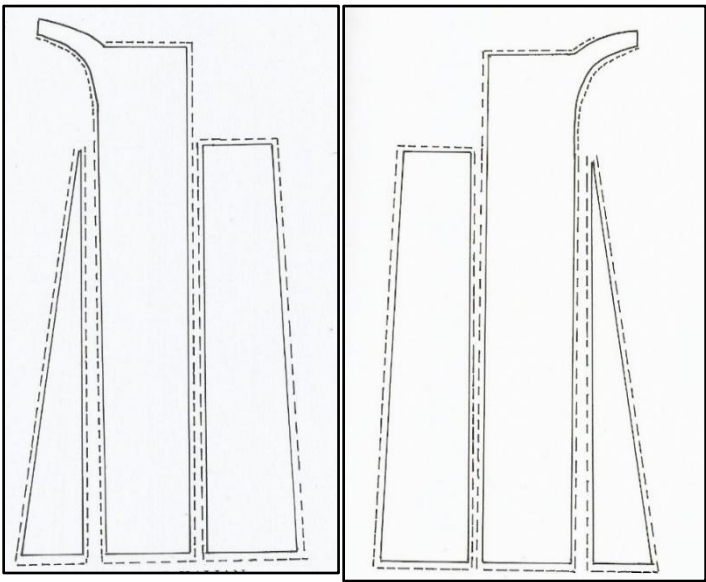
It has been concluded that out of several basic and decorative factors, the maximum percentage of the respondents acknowledged the colour factor as one of the most important feature of the dress. As regards the preference of most attractive style, the Mughal cut-Pheran was more appreciated compared to Kurta and modern style dress. In the dynamic field of fashion designing the variation in the Mughal style Pheran can gain attention of the young customers. The young fashion designers as well as students of textiles and clothing took keen interest in the modified Kashmiri attire and learned to merge cultural costume features with the latest fashion trends.



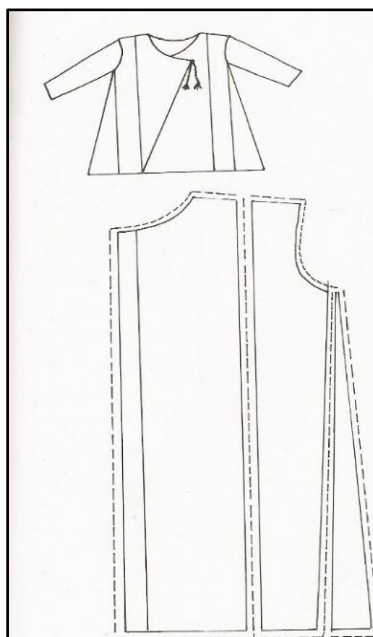
Fig. 4: Original Sample of Mughal Style Pheran



Fig. 5: Ordinary Kashmiri girls dressed in OldStyle of Pheran (Sheikh,2016)



a. Front Panel Left (Kalian) b Front. Panel Right (Kalian)



c. Back Panel

Fig. 6: Draft of Modern Style Pheran

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