

Rise of the Neo- Drape: Redefining the Fashion Identity of India

Swati Rao
Design Researcher, Bangalore, India
swatiraol987@gmail.com
me@swatirao.com

Shalini Sud
National Institute of Fashion Technology, New Delhi
shalini.sud.delhi@gmail.com

Abstract

A sari is synonymous to India and is woven into its identity; it is eternal to its culture and traditions. A sari has been a connotation and a reflection of India's cultural productions in the past and till the present day. With every changing regional boundary, the drape, aesthetics, fabric, motif, pattern of the sari changes, each style being distinct and unique from the rest at the same time reflecting the cultural asset of the region/ culture. The powerful drape that the sari has been is evident through its personification of the Indian identity, as it reflects and adorns each and every change whether social, economic or political. A sari could be noted as a symbolic indicator of the progressive nature of India.

With the Western fashions and dynamic silhouettes that are more prevalent and popular with the Indian youth, the sari seemed to be pushed back and was considered as old school or only for occasional wear. Hence the powerful drape was restricted by the limitations of it not being as fashionable when compared to blue denim or a tunic. Off-lately it has been observed that the Indian designers are making efforts to reintroduce and reinvent the sartorial sari to make it into a more meaningful in the current context and dynamic garment for the modern Indian youth. Young Indian designers are making efforts of producing unique modern day reflections of the Indian sari while retaining the heritage and cultural values through its traditional textiles, motifs and crafts. The reinvention of the sari is definitely the reflection of the modern, more culturally rooted youth. Not only have Indian designers realised the impact of the powerful drape, the Western interpretation of the drape has also led to creation of newer variants which again lead to understanding the fluid nature of fashion identities in the modern globalized world.

The study draws from the changing visual imagery of the sari and unique terminologies that designers use to market the new image of the sari such as: "Divided trouser sari", "Sarmi" (bikini sari), "Sarong sari", and "Gown sari" to name a few. The study draws from the fashion archives and reportage to map the changing imagery of sari and charts the fashion elements that are responsible for this dynamic change. The paper also brings forth the socio-cultural change in perspectives and understanding of fashion by young designers and India as a whole with sari being the medium of investigation of Indian fashion identity.

References: Kaiser, S.B.1990. *The Social Psychology Of clothing* (2nd ed.). New York: Macmillan; Lynch. A. & M.D. Strauss. 2007. *Changing Fashion: A Critical Introduction to Trend Analysis and Meaning*. New York: Berg.