

# THEORIES OF INFLUENCE IN FASHION: THE CASE OF THE KANDYAN KINGDOM OF SRI LANKA

Gayathri Madubhani Ranathunga

## Abstract

Fashion, an essentially dynamic human activity, earns its survival by influencing others. There are assumed to be some kind of theories behind influence in fashion, hence this research aims to find out the base of those influencing process in fashion. Kandyan reign of Sri Lanka (15th Century AD to 1815) was selected for the research. The era is well-known for the strong effects of foreign influences on the dress of royalty and elite, was analyzed in this research paper.

The study began with the observational study of temple paintings, sculptures, sketches of the period. In order to ensure the reliability, the data were cross-checked with different sources. The reinforced concept was compared with formally established philosophy in order to forward timely necessary concepts. "Grounded theory methodology" was selected to the research in order to generate theories of influence.

Research findings show that observational learning depends on the learning ability of people. It was found out that the reliability of the person who is to be observed is very much concerned in this process. Foreign delegate such as European diplomats was always subjected to be observed by the King. The King maintained a close friendship with foreign officers. Respectively, the King was subjected to be observed by native Adigars'. Elite dressed as same as the King. South Indian queens (*randoli*) who were considered as the right heir to the throne were always observed by native queens of *yakadadoli*. Native queens followed South Indian dress styles.

**Keywords:** Kandyan Royalty, Foreign Influences, Observational learning, Fashion

## Introduction

Sri Lanka is located at the southern tip of the Indian cape which has been a famous international naval route and bringing forth foreign influences to the country since ancient time. The Kandyan Kingdom of Sri Lanka situated in the central hills of the country lasted almost 3 ½ centuries from 1474- 1815 (Silva, 2005). The whole period met different foreign influences. At its beginning, South Indian influences gradually descended. The Portuguese colonial occupation exerted an inspired of almost 130 years from 1506. Then next the Dutch lasted for 163 years and the British for 33 years. Foreigners were subjected to observation by royalty and the elite. Foreigners' social etiquettes, customs, religion, language, and dress were fast rooted in Kandyan society. The arrival of Portuguese to Sri Lanka indeed led to greater commercial activities, The Dutch resources in the way of shipping, weapons, and equipment for superior to those of the Portuguese, were directed with greater effort and purpose. Also, the Dutch economic strength was too much greater than that of the Portuguese (Silva, 1981). The political expansion of 1665 and the increase in the lands and subjects of the Dutch in Ceylon influenced deeply their trade policy. This increase in Dutch power strengthened their opinion that they must monopolize the trade in Ceylon (Arsaratnam, 1958). The V.O.C economy activities contributed greatly to the construction of the Kandyan economy. For a long time, there had been considerable trading activity between the Kandyan kingdom and Madura-Tanjore in South

India. This trade, a vitally important one for the Kandyan economy, was disrupted from around 1665-70 when the Dutch annexed a number of Kandyan ports and established a trade monopoly. As we have seen, Kandyan products had to be exported through the V.O.C or its agents, and prices fixed by them well below their real market value. The former Dutch possessions in Sri Lanka were finally ceded to the British at the Piece of Amiens in March 1802. A British Crown colony was established in Sri Lanka, largely, if not entirely, for reasons of imperial strategy (Silva, 1981).

The King Vimala Dharma Suriya I (1592-1604) of, the Kandyan Kingdom dressed more into Western sartorial etiquettes. The earliest known portrait of a Sinhalese King is that of Vimala Dharma Suriya I., in A.D 1602, given in Spilbergen's *Historiael Journal*. 1605 (Paranavithana 1997/Coomaraswamy 1956). According to the image of the King, the costume consists of an extravagant long lower cloth '*tuppotti*' and a jacket for the upper body. The standard jacket of the upper body was made by mixing together different cultural influences. Coomaraswamy (1956) states that items of the jacket are similar to the Western jacket with a collar, cuffs, buttons and silver button chains. It is possible that King Vimala Dharma Suriya I introduced the jacket as an upper garment for Kings as the jacket with long sleeves and a collar (*mante*) which might have been adapted from Portuguese. King of Portugal (1495-1521), Dom Manuel the Fortunate and Portuguese Captains-General, Jeronimo de Azevedo as evident in the sketch of Fergusons description (Ferguson, 1907) and Portuguese Captains-General, Pedro Lopes de Sousa who is depicted in the sketch of Silva and Beumer (Silva, and Beumer, 1988) were depicted with collared jacket. Consequently, King Senarath (1604-35), King Vijayapala (1634-1654), King Rajasimha II (1635-87) to King Narendrasimha (1707-39) wore jackets like Portuguese.

King Vimala Dharma Suriya I (1592-1604 AD) maintained a faithful alliance with the Dutch for the first time as he had many conflicts with Portuguese. The Portuguese tried to conquer the Kingdom of Kandy several times. He was an intelligent King who was able to earn the trust of both native civilians and foreigners. During the young age of Dom Joao (Vimala Dharma Suriya I) was sent to Goa under the commissary of the Franciscan fathers of Colombo. He remained in the College of the Magi for fifteen years. It was recorded that "he learned not only Catechism and good customs but also to read and write Latin" (Perera, 1930). The instructors presumably drew inspiration from the literature of the middle ages and they produced them for the specific purpose of instructing princes, some works of which genre had been composed by the Franciscans themselves. They were able to familiarize themselves with and even imbibe Western thoughts, ideas, and attitudes (Peter, 1983).

## Literature Review

Learning is descriptively described in Psychology. It is important to note that several theories have derived from particular views of learning. "Radical behaviorism provided a foundation for performances analysis and improvement. Ausubel's meaningful reception learning served as the foundation for Reigeluth's (1983) Elaboration theory. Bandura's (1986,1997) work in self-efficacy and social learning theory and Keller's (1983) model of motivational design suggested ways to enhance motivation to learn" (Driscoll 2000). Kaiser (1997) links clothing and social psychology. She (Kaiser, 1997) draws from different disciplines or areas of study (anthropology, consumer behavior, cultural studies, psychology and sociology). Social psychology of clothing encompasses many other areas of study in order to address the question of not only what, but also how appearance means. What these theories all have in common, with the possible exception of behaviorism. Each proposes instructional methods thought to provide the necessary learning conditions for a particular type of learning goal. In this research

paper one theory (observational learning) that its proponents' claims is significantly broader in scope than those mentioned earlier will be discussed. Psychologist Bandura suggested that 'a person will learn by observing another person (Puri, & Tyler, 1998). According to Bandura if this observational learning process needs to be successful the behavior of another should be paid attention to, must be remembered, the observer must perceive that they have the ability to reproduce the model and the observer must be motivated to reproduce the model. To make this learning most effective the model should be an eminent significant one. The person who tends to observe another's behavior should have important quality of intelligence. Utmost attention, memory, intelligence, the ability to reproduce the model and constant motivation to reproduce the model are the essential elements of productive learning. Intelligence involves the ability to learn from experience, thinking in abstract terms and dealing effectively with one's environment (Smith, Nolen-Hoeksema, Fredrickson, Loftus 2003). Intelligence is developed through education.

### **Methodology**

The study began with the observational study of temple paintings, sculptures, sketches of the period. Reliability of the data which was incorporated in the research is of much concern. Pictorial data were cross-checked with different literary sources such as temple murals, particular literature. Finally, the reinforced concepts were compared with formally established philosophy in order to forward timely necessary concepts. The focus of the research is to generate theories of influence on fashion. Therefore, the methodology of the research should be articulated towards the development of theories. "Grounded theory methodology" well accomplishes the target goal and was selected to the research. It is a systematic data analyzing the process. It consists of memoing, coding, concept mapping to discover patterns of concepts. Revision of the theory was needed to validate the theory. The developed theory was compared with the formerly established theory "Observational learning' founded by psychologist Bandura. The theory which was developed through the Kings of the Kandyan era was well matched with Bandura's theory.

### **Results and Discussion**

The early written records well describe the proximity between the King and foreign diplomats. It was noteworthy too that the Sinhalese King associated foreign diplomats as friends. Many foreigners recorded that foreign diplomats, officers, friars were reliable close friends of the Kings. As a result of that, the royalty yearned to copy the western social etiquettes. According to the King Vimala Dharma Suriya I's own words he wanted Kandy to become the Netherlands. The king expresses his feelings as, "candy is now Flanders" (Ferguson, 1927). He used his education, awareness of the Western culture to impress the Dutch admiral. As the royalties gradually learned the Western language, embraced religion, and followed social etiquettes that made a suitable ambiance and encouragement to those who valued the Western way of life. Foreigners' powerful personalities were obviously attractive to the King as they were also great warriors. Ferguson (1927) reviews the visit of Spilbergen to Ceylon in May 1602 concluding historical records. The general had presented the king with 'a portrait of his princely excellency sitting on horseback in full armor as he appeared at the battle in Flanders AD 1600 on 2 July, with which the king was wonderfully pleased'. The King Vimala Dharma Suriya I (1591-1604) expressed his desire by hanging the portrait in his room. According to the original record, the incidence was described as 'the King had the portrait of his excellency hung in his room that it might always be in his sight'(Ferguson, 1927)'.

King Vimala Dharma Suriya I showed great interest in being a close friend of the Dutch. According to the Dutch Admiral Joris Van, Spilbergens records King Vimala Dharma Suriya I had paid much attention to arranging the interior decorations of the royal court in accordance with Western etiquettes. The King had himself shown all Western etiquettes that they followed personally showing them to the Dutch Admiral. According to the Dutch observations, the royal family had learned Western music and the Dutch language, as the King had a collection of Western musical instruments with him. (Ferguson, 1927) It is evident that royalties learned Western languages for both communication and prestige. Gifts were exchanged between the two parties; the friendship was tightened.

Queen Dona Catherine kept Franciscans friars at the royal palace to teach Portuguese language and Western etiquettes to her children. One of the princes tutored by the Franciscans was RajasimhaII(1635-1687)who succeeded Senarat as King in 1635; another was the King Vijayapala, District of Matale of Central hills of the county took a great effort to win over the faith of the foreigner. King Vijayapala was completely converted into the Western way of life as his attitude displayed 'through I am a *chingala* (Sinhala) by blood; I am a Portuguese in my way of affection' (Pieris, 1927). The Prince Vijayapala expected advice from the King of Portugal during political crisis 'I will come to whatever place you appoint. If you send a vessel to fetch me, I shall take a ship. If you direct me to go by land, I shall travel overland' (Pieris, 1927). The dress of King Vijayapala is well described in the collection of letters belonging to him (Pieris, 1927). On his Baptism, he dressed as a Portuguese.

"He was dressed in high black shoes. Lined with white satin, white stockings, and a short cloak lined with white with rich buttons of gold, around bonnet of Black velvet, with buckles of the finest diamonds, and at the base of the aigrette a jewel of great value encircled by a large number of the costliest pearls, with gold lace over a vest of white tissue. Round his neck he wore an eagle set in a scallop shell, adorned and made entirely of rubies" (Pieris, 1927).

The elite of the Kandyan Kingdom exerted influences on their costumes by observing the king. Elite was influenced by collar (*mante*) jacket of the King. When the King is depicted with his attendance in murals, the kings' jacket is shown with three pieces of collar and elites with two pieces collar. The royalty is depicted with long sleeved jackets while elites are with short-sleeved jackets. Usage of gold, wearing Jackets, hats, swords were only for royalties but those privileges had given to elites with some limits (Coomaraswamy, 1956). Robert Knox (1960) says 'non can approach the King'. The second powerful group of the civil society, elites was suggested to wear silver jewelry but only the greats had the privilege of wearing ornaments of Gold (Coomaraswamy,1956). The elites dress was always a rudimentary form of the original royal costumes. Royalties and elites always protected their standard dress by imposing many rules to commoners as it represented their dignity and the social class. D'Oyly' stats that 'the *adhikaramas* also had a right to certain exclusive items of dress, which they jealously guarded against infringement (D'Oyly,1975). Elite wore '*tuppotti*' (body cloth) by observing the king's same long lower clothe. Davy explained that even the quantity of cloths wrapped around their waist is extraordinary size, which is considered as an emblem of dignity (Davy, 1921).



**Figure 1: King of Portugal (1495-1521), Dom Manuel the Fortunate.**(Ferguson, D.1907.The Discovery of Ceylon by the Portuguese in 1506, *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society (C. B)*, Vol.XIX,No.59: 284); **Figure 2: King Vimala Dharma Suriya I(1592-1604 AD) Paranavitana, K.D. trans.1997.*Journal Of Spilbergen:the first dutch envoy to ceylon 1602.*Published by the Author.**



**Figure 3: King Sri Wickram Rajasimhe (Davy, J. 1821. An Account of the Interior of Ceylon and of Its Inhabitants, London: Longman, 107); Figure 4: Elites with short sleeved jackets with the long-sleeved jacket, Gangarama temple mural of 18th Century AD.**

King Kirthi Sri Rajasimha (1747-82) and King Sri Vicrkama Rajasimnga (1798-1815) used handkerchiefs. According to a Dutch record, Lewke Adigar wished to have some special kind of handkerchiefs from abroad. Kandyan chief officers were depicted with handkerchiefs in ivory figures at the Museum in Kandy. Coomaraswamy A., (1956) to remarks that 'elites generally bored holes in their ears, and hung weights in them to make them grow long, like the 'Malabar', but this king not boring his, that fashion almost left off'.

*Mante* jacket was a newly introduced sartorial item for local queens' costume. It shows direct influences of Portuguese fashion. Coomaraswamy (1905) also states that the female jacket shows either Portuguese or Dutch influences. Ananda Coomaraswamy (1956) describes that "The dress of women of high caste consisted of a jacket (*hette*) with *mante* (like that of a man, and a cloth (*helaya*) round the loins arranged in various ways". Sartorial sense similar to the

above is depicted in various temple paintings at Hanguranketha Rajamaha Viharaya, Gangarama Rajamaha Viharaya, Degaldoruwa Rajamaha Viharaya and Dambulla Rajamaha Viharaya of the 18th Century. The painting shows a popular scenery of attending the Buddha by a retinue of royal ladies, on that occasion all wore short-sleeved *mante* jackets and a long lower garment. With the arrival of Queen Dona Catherine, the rest of the local queens were subjected to change accordingly. It is quite visible through pictorial evidence that Sinhalese queens did not follow the same dress styles of Dona Catherine, but were influenced only by some elements such as *mante*, jacket, hair pin, and lace of Western fashions.

Canopy or Kerchief traditionally called as *mottappiliya* was introduced by South Indian dress styles during the Nayakkar Kings reign. The whole body was fully covered by *mottappiliya* according to social laws or religious norms of the South Indian queens. King Narendrasimha's reign onwards ample South Indian Nayakkar queens were fetched. Most of all the Queens of superior status were fetched from South India they led some standards in clothing styles which represented their culture (Dewaraja 1988). *Mottappiliya* was definitely a Queen's dress code because in a wooden panel, where the King and Queen are painted, the Queen wore a *mottappiliya*. This might have directly come from South Indian Nayak Queen's dress etiquettes. It seems that the dress habits of Nayaks' were limited only to themselves. Therefore, the two categories of Queens appeared. Dewaraja (1988) claims that during this period the King's secondary wives were known as *yakadadoli*, meaning iron palanquin, since they were entitled to such a vehicle as opposed to the *randoli* or golden palanquin which was the preserve of the chief Queen. *Yakadadoli* were native consorts who belonged to elite families of the Kandyan Kingdom. According to temple murals they can identify with Canopy or kerchief (*mottappiliya*). This costume might have been arranged using long cloth. The hood part would have been arranged by one edge of the clothing. In the Degaldoruwa temple murals, Nayakkar female royalties are depicted in *mottappiliya*. In the Degaldoruwa murals, two categories of Queens can be identified by their costumes. Some noble women were depicted in *mottappiliya* and some were depicted in *mante* jacket and long lower garment. However, in those paintings, it is clearly evident that the women who wore *mottappiliya* were respected and treated immensely well by the royal family and noble women.

The dress style of *Lansoluwa* (shawl) which is often thrown over the shoulder was a popular item. *Lansoluwa* was a kind of long shawl that had been worn by Sinhalese women for a long period of time. It was normally worn with a simply wrapped cloth (*redda*) for the lower part. However, during the Kandyan reign, *lansoluwa* had been used to cover the woman's head. It seems like the *mottappiliya* of South Indian Queens. In the Hanguranketa, Degaldoruwa, Suriyagoda and Hindagala murals this practice is clearly visible. However, the dress is different from South Indian Queen's *mottappiliya*. *Lansoluwa* had not been used to cover the upper body properly as always it hardly covered the upper body. This etiquette is similar to early Sinhalese women's dress practice. It would have been worn as a fashionable item as it was always adorned with beautiful traditional designs with multiple colors. These women are always depicted with the King. These women definitely resemble local queens. The style of covering the head with the *lansoluwa* would have been adapted to local Queens' dress styles during the Kandyan reign. The Queens of the Gampola era never covered their heads. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the local queens might have made an effort to follow South Indian Queen's *mottappiliya* as foreign queens were considered superior to local queens. Robert Knox (1966) says that "Sinhalese women used to wear well-embroidered cloths when they go out". The dress style *lansoluwa* shows South Indian influences.



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7

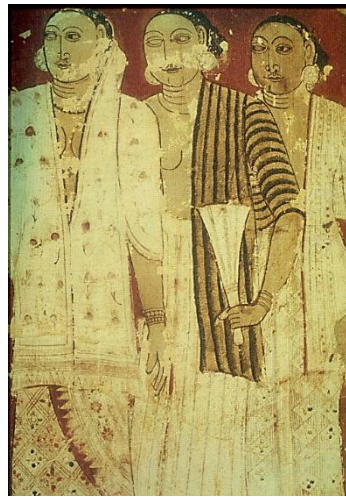


Figure 8

Figure 5: Wooden panel is depicted South Indian queen and King, Museum of Kandy; Figure 6. Murals of Degaldoruwa, Kandy, Figure 7. Davy, J. 1821. *An Account of the Interior of Ceylon and of Its Inhabitants*, London: Longman; Figure 8. A Queen with *Lansoluwa* (Valalagod Murals) (Chatiwongs N., Prematilake L., Silva R., 1990, *Paintings of Sri Lanka* (Valalagoda), Colombo: Archaeological Survey of Sri Lanka, Centenary Publications, Central Cultural Fund).

## Discussion and Conclusion

The royalties and elites learned new dress habits such as trouser, jacket, sandals, and hats. Royalty and elite who belonged to the superior status of the society showed immense interest in foreign dress habits. The royalties as representatives of the superior status always associated foreign diplomats who were more skillful, wealthy, powerful, fashionable hence attractive at that time. Besides, foreigners were always more trustworthy people to the King during the political crisis. It can be suggested that live or symbolic model influenced the Sinhalese royalty and elite. The process of influence on costumes show positive correlation with the psychology theory described as observational learning which affected the evolution of new dress habits in the Kandyan society. Royalty and elite were indeed intelligent to have the ability to fulfill the criteria explained by Bandura.

## References

- Arsaratnam, Sinnappah. 1958. *Dutch Power in Ceylon (1658-1687)*. Netherlands Institute for International Cultural relations.
- Coomaraswamy, Ananda. 1956. *Medieval Sinhalese Art*. Colombo: National Museum.
- D'Oyly, John. 1975 rpt. of 1929 ed. *A sketch of the Constitution of the Kandyan Kingdom*, ed.L.J.BTurner, Published as the CHJ, Vol.24, Dehiwala: Sri Lanka, Tisara Publishers.
- Davy, John. 1921. *An Account of the interior of Ceylon and its inhabitants with travel in that Island*. Dehiwala: TisaraPrakasakayo Ltd.
- Dewaraja, Lorna. Srimathie. 1988 Sec. ed. *The Kandyan Kingdom of Sri Lanka 1707-1782*. Pannipitiya: Stamford Lake (Pvt) Ltd.
- Driscoll, M. P. 2000. *Psychology of learning*. Boston, Allyn and Bacon.
- Ferguson, Donald. 1927. The Earliest Dutch visit to Ceylon. *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society (C. B)*. vol XXX.no 80.
- Ferguson, Donald. 1907. The Discovery of Ceylon by the Portuguese in 1506. *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society (C. B)*. vol.XIX.no.59.
- Kaiser, S.B. 1997. *The Social Psychology of clothing*. New York:Fairchild Publications.
- Knox, Robert.. 1958. *Historical Relations of Ceylon*. Colombo: Tisara Prakasakayo.
- Paranavitana, K.D. trans. 1997. *Journal of Spilbergen: the first Dutch envoy to Ceylon 1602*. Published by the Author.
- Perera, S.G. trns. 1930. *Queyros; Father Fernao De, The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon*. New Delhi: J. Jetty for Asian Educational Services. Volume. II, Book 3-4.
- Peter, W.L.A.ed. 1983. *Franciscans and Sri Lanka*.
- Pieris, Paul .E, 1927. *The Prince Vijaya Pala of Ceylon (1634-1654) from the original documents at Lisbon*, Colombo: CAC pres.
- Puri, B.K. & Tyler, P.J. 1998. *Sciences Basic to Psychiatry*, Churchill: Livingstone, London, New York, Sydney.
- Silva, de Kingsley. Muthumuni. 2005. (The first Sri Lankan Edition), *A History of Sri Lanka*, Colombo: Vijith Yapa Publications.
- Silva, De R.K. and Beumer, W.G.M. 1988. *Illustrations and views of Dutch Ceylon*. London: Serendip Publications.
- Smith, E.E, Nolen-Hoeksema, S. Fredrickson, B.L. Loftus, R.G. 2003. *Atkinson and Hilgard's Introduction to Psychology*. Thomson, Australia, Canada, Mexico, Singapore, Spain, UK, US.