

**Caste, Religion and Culture: Women's Identity and Transition in  
Fashion Among Catholic Women in  
Canacona Goa**

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### **DECLARATION BY STUDENT**

I hereby declare that the data presented in this Dissertation report entitled, “Caste, Religion and Culture: Women's Identity and Transition in Fashion Among Catholic Women in Canacona Goa” is based on the results of investigations carried out by me, in the discipline of sociology, at D.D. Kosambi School of Social Sciences and Behavioural Studies, Goa University, under the supervision of Dr. Mozinha Fernandes and the same has not been submitted elsewhere for the award of a degree or diploma by me. Further, I understand that Goa University or its authorities will be not be responsible for the correctness of observations / experimental or other findings given the dissertation.

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Date: 19/04/2024

Place: Goa University



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## COMPLETION CERTIFICATE


This is to certify that the dissertation report “Caste, Religion and Culture: Women's Identity and Transition in Fashion Among Catholic Women in Canacona Goa”, is a bonafide work carried out by Ms. Swizel Fernandes, under my supervision in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Masters of Arts in the Discipline of Sociology, at D.D. Kosambi School of Social Sciences and Behavioural Studies, Goa University.

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## **PREFACE**

This study is a qualitative descriptive research, which looks at fashion as a tool describing the social aspects related to Catholic women's identities. Women's identities are intimately related to their social roles, which are often prescribed by social structures. An integral part of this research are the institutions of caste, religion and culture. These social institutions are dynamic and as much as they have an impact on the individual, the individuals also affect them.

This process transition is reflected through symbols. The symbolism is depicted through clothes, their colours, status symbols such as gold and more. It also inculcates the deliberation on phenomena such as globalization for the amounting transition in fashion as well as the identities of women. Fashion as a sociological tool has been able to depict the everyday life of women and how it mould and affects their identities. This research also utilises photographs to illustrate various aspects of women's lives.



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# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

The subfield of Sociology of fashion is the primary area for this dissertation. The study utilises fashion as a tool to understand the impact of social institutions such as caste, religion and culture on women's identity and lives. The topic for this dissertation arose from the identification of gap in the available literature on fashion in Goa. Central to this research is the research question: What role does caste, religion and culture play in shaping women's identity?

Fashion can be interpreted as a material social fact that acts as a social force that shapes women's identity. The phenomenon of fashion is not merely about clothes, albeit it is inclusive of prevalent styles, customs, social standing and conduct (Merriam Webster dictionary, 2023). The research documents the life stories and narratives of women about fashion related to the life cycle rituals and major feasts and festivals in Catholicism. Moreover the literature on fashion in Goa is largely historical and descriptive and is not studied sociologically. Therefore the researcher takes this as an opportunity to explore more on sociology of fashion through the lens of gender, culture and religion, in Canacona Goa.

The Catholic caste system has continued, despite the Portuguese rule and several authors have made a reference to this (Cardozo, 2021; Couto, 2004; Gomes, 2003; Henn, 2014; Pandit et al, 1999; Xavier, 1993). Nevertheless these studies are historical and likewise studies done on Catholicism in the new conquest territories such as Canacona are relatively less. Therefore this research was conducted on fashion in Canacona, Goa. The population of Canacona is 45,172(as per 2011 census). The religious segregation of Canacona State that out of 16.52% of Christians. (2011 Census

Report), 2240 Catholics are affiliated to St. Theresa of Jesus Church-Parish, Chaudi, Canacona (as per church records). The wards affiliated to the church are Patnem-Colomb, Char Rasta, Tambewa, Palolem, Nagorcem, Chaudi, Ponsulem, Kindlembag, Mangan, Shingalem, Delem, and Sheller-Jamlimoll.

According to Dokras (2021) the Catholic caste system generally has three main caste categories: the *Bamonnns*, the *Chardos* and the *Sudirs*. In Canacona there are two prominent castes: the *Chardos* and *Sudirs*. Further there are sub-occupational caste groups and some of them dwell in caste based wards. For instance Palolem, Tambewada and parts of Patnem-Colomb have castes such as the *Render* caste, they were toddy tappers by profession; the *Kumbar* caste who were potters and reside in Ponsulem, Kindlembag, Mangan and Shingalem; the *Chardo* caste, they have worked for the Portuguese administration and other civil posts and reside in Patnem-Colomb and areas of Chaudi (this information is based on the initial interaction with the key respondents).

The research views fashion as a social process reflective of culture, caste and religion and the review of literature suggest that women are more prone to the social currents of fashion. Therefore women as well as men from the caste groups of *Kumbar*, *Render*, and *Chardo* castes are the key respondents for this research. These caste groups are used to study the similarities or differences in fashion, religious sanctions and social norms which has an impact on behaviour and dress code. The symbolic meaning and relevance of fashion in Catholic women's lives, is also documented through the research.

## 1.2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature review thematically discusses the key concepts of the research and has identified gaps in the available literature. Identity is one of the key concepts of the study, this is to understand how women's identity is shaped by factors such as caste,

culture and religion. It is evident that the individual identity is a social creation just as the collective-social identity, this involves a sense of group belonging. As suggested by symbolic interactionism, identity consists of the '*I*' (the innate self) and '*myself*' (the exterior-socially expected self). For Mead the innate self (I) is consciously and subconsciously affected by the exterior-social self, which in turn is shaped by the social surroundings (Ritzier, 2008; symbolic interactionism as originally discussed by Mead, 1934).

Sherif and Sherif (1969, p.135) have further elaborated on group identity, which is based on 'conducive' and frequent interaction among group members. The group also has an organised structure, differentiating them from non-members, instilling in them the feelings of 'belonging' as group members. The norms, sanctions, group values, rules help in controlling their behaviour. In this research, the organised group structure is Catholicism, caste and culture; this concept is rudimentary for the research, as it deals with women's identity and their conformity to the social sanctions in contemporary society. It is interesting to note that the extent the impact of this group identity affects the individual identity of women and this is further elaborated in the research.

Culture is another vital element, which is an important factor of social life, composed out of shared collective symbols that shape the lives of its members (Kidd, 2002). Culture is something that gives meaning to an individual and becomes a part of their identity. Similarly, Gherardi (1995) regards culture as a historical product, having elements of permanence and change. Her study encompasses a feministic and gendered standpoint. She has elaborated on organisational culture, which comprises of symbols and beliefs, which are learnt through behavioural patterns and are often expressed by members through their physical appearances and lifestyle. These symbols act as social glue and agents of social control through which social groups attain unity. (Strati, 1992,



p. 578; Gherardi, 1995, p.13). In culmination the concepts of identity and religion are closely related to culture. Therefore this research looks at these structures with the help of the symbolic meaning in fashion that helps in understanding the non-material social fact of fashion and its social relevance.

Culture is dynamic and is immensely impacted by phenomena such as globalization. The cultural theory on globalization has pointed out, that certain elements of culture remain unaffected or superficially affected by globalization (Huntington, 1996). However the theory also suggests that cultural convergence is also taking place. This implies that despite the differences that remain among cultures, there is also an increasing trend of homogeneity among different cultures and this can be seen in the form of “glocalisation [combination of global and local]” (Robertson, 1992) and “hybridisation [fusion of two or more cultures]” (Canclini, 1995). With this concept the research looks at the impact and changes brought in wake of globalization (Ritzer, 2008). This is a necessary component as it encapsulates the historical transitions in fashion and the overall noticeable change in the field.

Fashion is a recurring theme in this research and it is not only about clothes, however it is a combination of different things (this includes accessories along with clothes). It indicates one’s identity and social position and this applies to both the wearer as well as the observer. Therefore fashion reflects individual identity and is also representative of the social, environmental, political and other such factors (Roach and Eicher, 1992). Fashion is defined as a social process by some authors (Aspers and Godart, 2013; Davis, 1991; Simmel, 1904) and it is regarded as a diffusive social phenomenon reflecting the everyday reality of people’s lives (Aspers and Godart, 2013). On the other hand, Davis (1991) has used Blumer’s concept of collective selection, Davis accords social order as a dominant force for changing fashion trends,

where by fashion trends are collectively selected and these are not only caused by psychological or economic factors but have a social undertone to them.

Simmel (1904) propagates that fashion portrays the need for social conformity as well the need to express individual identity and in this bargain to feel included, the individual conforms to the social sanctions, while simultaneously attempts to express individuality (by wearing clothes of one's choice). In order to know more about this dimension of fashion, symbolism in fashion used. Symbolism in fashion implies that a symbol may have more than one meaning (Gherardi, 1995, p.30). This is to state that symbols and social sanctions in fashion are interpreted from the purview of social, cultural and religious context.

The theme of religion plays a crucial role in this research and the focus is on the interplay between culture, caste and identity. Many scholars have done their research on religion (Cardozo, 2021; Chakravarti, 1993; Couto, 2004; Gherardi, 1995; Gomes, 2003; Henn, 2014; Mascarenhas, 2020; Pandit et al, 1999; Singh, 1977; Xavier, 1993) and most of these deal with the complexity of religion in a cultural scenario. The studies have revealed that religion utilises various norms, sanctions and rules to control the social behaviour of its members.

For instance Mhamood (in Fernandes' 'Citizenship in a Caste Polity: Religion, Language and Belonging in Goa', 2020) exemplifies the role of religious ethics in a person's life, as part of the community sentiment. She states that women veil themselves because of the principle of modesty as prescribed by Islam. What propels such behaviour to conform to norms and sanctions are emotions such as 'fear', 'humility' and 'shame', which are linked to the feeling of group belonging.

In a similar fashion, Chakravarti (1993) has traced the working of Brahmanical patriarchy within Hinduism in India. She has interlinked gender and caste to be the

component features of her research. She has utilised sacred Hindu texts to analyse the means of social control coerced on women. The knowledge about socio-religious sanctions caters in dealing with issues pertinent to women. From a feministic stance such studies shed light on the pros and cons of religion on women's lives. Likewise this research has utilised religion and its codes of conduct, norms, and sanctions to understand women's fashion and its role on women's identity and lives.

Focusing on Catholicism (or Christianity), the international research on fashion have been conducted by researchers to understand various dimensions of fashion within this religion (Lutz, 2016; Ngwenya, 2002; Schmidt, 1989). For instance, Schmidt (1989) regards church going Christians as dress loving people and their exterior indicated their spirituality and decency. These were the social expectations for Christians in America. The women in the Massachusetts Bay colony, were not expected to grab the attention of gentlemen by wearing silk, laces in silver and gold and other luxury goods if they did not belong to elite ranks and were even fined if they were found guilty. This occurrence was pertinent to the social order and to the construction and maintenance of social hierarchy of the American society. Clothes symbolised a person's status and also reflected their social position. However, the researcher does not hold a direct sociological outlook and this study entails a historical purview of fashion.

Lutz (2016) has focused on the life cycle ritual of death among widows in Catholicism, in 'Death Becomes Her' by reviewing Victorian mourning attires and rituals. Through her research findings she found that the widows had to mourn the death of their husbands for a year and a day and had to wear lacklustre clothes (the materials of clothes varied across strata). Women during the second year of mourning had to wear, dull and dark colours and the fabric was not supposed to be extravagant. Symbolically the widows were supposed to live in misery as prescribed by the social

sanctions. However like many other studies, this research is also historical and this can be identified as a gap in the literature.

Similarly Ngwenya (2002) has studied symbolism in clothing related to burial rituals in Botswana Africa. Due to frequent deaths (due to AIDS), women have created social groups called as burial societies and these groups bear the cost of death rituals and also empower other women. The members belong to sects such as Protestant Christians, Catholics, Spiritualists and those that subscribe to indigenous practices. Interestingly, Ngwenya has stated about the conflict of interest between these burial societies and pastors from the different Christian as well as indigenous sects. For instance the women believe in dressing the dead bodies for respect whereas the religious traditions are not in favour of the same. They have used dress as a symbol of dignity and honour. Hence this research will analyse the symbolic meaning of life cycle rituals (in the form of the seven sacraments) and festivals and their role in Catholic women's lives.

Caste is an integral part of religion in the pan-Indian scenario. Weber goes on to give the example of the Indian caste system, with the help of the concept of "status honor", he exemplifies the maintenance and persistence of caste system (done through intra-caste and inter-caste distinctions). Weber (1914; Calhoun et al, 2007, p.251-253) in his argument on status honor states that status honor is related to a group; in this scenario despite individuals belonging to the same group and despite sharing a common status, one group or an individual has a superior status than the other. This can be seen in the distinct lifestyle led by those in the status honor category. Therefore this research utilises this concept in context of caste variations to explain the oral history of Catholics in Canacona.

Studies have been conducted on fashion and caste system in India, for instance Kanetani (2006) has done a peculiar study on *odhani* by inculcating sociology of fashion in her research. *Odhani* is a head cloth worn by women in Kutch Gujarat. This head-cover reflects social relationships of women with other members, it also highlights the caste and gender sanctions and norms, and it is also a symbol of marriage for women. Wedding symbols have also been analysed by the researcher, for instance ‘*pero*’ is a wedding clothing for women and every caste has its own colour of *Odhani*, for instance light colours such as pink, red and white (with gold beads) symbolise royalty. Utilising a simple head-cover, the researcher has illustrated the cultural, social, patriarchal dimensions of this society. This research also delves into sociology of fashion and has been inspired by this study done by Kanetani (2006).

Shifting the focus on Catholic caste system in India, Singh (1977, p.62-63) in a nascent fashion has briefed about the Christians in Kerala, namely the Pulayas Christian women and the Syrian Christian women. He remarks that the Pulayas wore ‘dirty’ clothes and had separate churches because the Syrian Christians were hesitant to sit beside them. Singh does not go any further with his research on of the Christian caste system, therefore I identify this as a gap in the literature and therefore this research has been conducted to add this new body of knowledge on Catholicism in Canacona, Goa.

Within Goa there are studies done on religion and caste (Couto, 2004; Mascarenhas, 2020; Robinson, 1995; Rodrigues, 2007; Sakhardande, 2019). To gain a better understanding of the Catholic caste system it is important to grasp the historical context. In accordance with historian Sakhardande (2019), dresses worn by people was based on caste and occupation. Sakhardande (2019) elaborates that the family occupation was based on caste and this in turn decided the women’s attire and work. For instance the pre-Portuguese *Dravidian-Aryan* worked within the four walls whereas

the *Kharvi* women traded fish, harvested shellfish, and assisted their husbands in their respective occupations. Typically the prior would wear navawari saree (nine-yard saree), and would have a lighter complexion (albeit this may also be due to genetics) and this was the beauty standard (this can be traced in the Konkani proverbs as per Suneetha Bai, 2012). The latter category draped a five-yard saree, this peculiar draping gave agility to women to work. This is to state that fashion often describes the social context of clothing and beauty standards in line with the social order, norms and sanctions.

The available literature on the Goan Catholic caste system is descriptive and historical. For instance, Couto (2004), has done an auto-ethnographic case study, she has briefly mentioned about attires worn by the Catholic converts, for instance, the widows and mothers wore a traditional clothing piece known as *pao baju or baju torop*, which was described to cover the body from the head to the ankles and women would veil their heads in such a manner that only the face of the woman was visible. However the social context is not analysed, opening space for social studies.

Similarly, Rodrigues (2007) has described trends and customs in clothing during the 1950's in Goa. She has alluded to the wearing of lace veils by mass-going women, the white colour veils were worn by young girls and adult and older women wore black veils (Rodrigues, p.155). The work is ethnographic and historical, therefore this research does not hold an explanation of the social context behind the occurred events. And hence it can be stated that there is room for sociological studies of such fashion trends in Goa.

Shedding light on the Goan Catholic caste system, Robinson (1995) has done a study on the church organisation of Santosgaon in south Goa. Her study includes an aspect of caste hierarchy, which is maintained because of the *comunidade* system.

She has particularly focused on the *Chardo* and *Sudir* caste and has highlighted the power dynamics within the religious institution, through the celebration of festivals by these castes; however, she has made a brief mention of the caste system. Robinson has also spoken about newly married women and the control over their sexuality through certain rituals. Nevertheless, this study does not mainly focus on gender dynamics and this can be identified as a gap in literature. Thus, this research dwells on the aspect of gender and the associated rituals and festivals among Catholics in Canacona.

The research also focuses on life cycle rituals such as baptism, first Holy Communion, confirmation, ordination (of nuns), marriage and finally the funeral rituals of death. It links these rituals to fashion, which are observed through the narratives of women in different phases of their life, the views of men are also taken into consideration to have a holistic view of fashion. It also provides an insight into social problems faced by women which are otherwise discarded as individual problems, even this aspect is further elaborated in the research.

For instance, the system of dowry which is linked to marriage provides a context of social problems created by it. Braganza (2017) points out to the perpetuation of dowry system and the social issues it has created in Goa, even in the year 2023 such cases exist (Herald, 2023). This aspect of dowry is selected to understand the link between culture and continuation of dowry, this topic is explored with the help of fashion accessories such as jewellery.

Another essential component of the research are festivals and the following festivals are taken into account: the festival of Christmas is the celebration of birth of Jesus Christ and it is a huge deal for people at large. Cardozo (2022) has only discussed about the symbolism in food and the meaning and historic context of Christmas,



therefore I take this as a gap in literature, have tried to find out more about fashion and symbolism in it.

Secondly, Easter is the festival dedicated to fasting, abstinence (from alcohol and meat) and sacrifices (by means of modest living, eating simple food and fasting) (Cardozo, 2022). Braganza (2017) describes the Goan villages to have had a melancholic atmosphere which was more mournful than funerals and people wore black on Good Friday, the church alters were covered in dark violet cloth. Braganza does not further elaborates about symbolism of colours and therefore this can be identified as a gap in literature.

Similarly Regional festivals of Goa such as *San Jao*, feast of St. Francis Xavier, and the feast of St. Theresa of Jesus (the patron saint of the Chaudi, Canacona) are selected for the research. The feast of St. Francis Xavier is celebrated on the 3rd of December in Goa. The saint is revered by people and there are certain restrictions on clothing when visiting the patron saint. Another peculiarity of this feast is that women will put in a lot of effort to dress up in formal mass attires to attend the feast mass, despite long hours of travelling from Canacona to Old Goa.

The next component is the feast of Sao Joao which is celebrated during the monsoon season, it has a religious significance in Catholicism. However, in the recent years there have been multiple changes in the celebration of the festival and hence the research utilises these transitions to explain the occurred changes. For instance the changed style of dressing and the extent of women's participation in such festivals. And lastly the feast of St. Theresa of Jesus, is also used for the research.

### 1.3 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND RESEARCH QUESTION

Based on the identified gaps in the reviewed literature, the major research problem is the lack of Sociological study of fashion, as most of the literature on fashion in Goa is historical in nature. Secondly, despite fashion being universal, it is heavily directed to women and this is accompanied with norm, sanctions, rules and regulations (as suggested in the literature review). Based on this argument the following is the research question: What role does caste, religion and culture play in shaping women's identity?

The motive behind conducting the research is to learn more about caste, culture and religion and its overt and covert implications on women's lives, to know whether or not it stifles their growth or encourages it. The intention is also capture knowledge on Catholic caste which is dwindling but nevertheless it plays an important role in creating individual and group identity. Certain taken for granted aspects of the everyday-social life (such as clothing, sanctions, norms) reveal a lot about the social elements of a society and its social fabric, therefore it can bring about a novel outlook on several social as well as sociological issues. For instance, the cases of dowry deaths are linked to the institution of marriage and therefore it can be sociologically studied.

### 1.4 OBJECTIVES

The study aims to understand the role of fashion in Catholic women's lives in Canacona Goa. In relation to this, the following are the objectives of the study:

- ❖ to understand the role of caste, religion and culture in shaping Catholic women's identity through fashion
- ❖ to document the transitioning social process of fashion across caste among Catholic women
- ❖ to find out the symbolic meaning and relevance of fashion among Catholic women

## 1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

The research is qualitative, descriptive and interpretative in nature, and has used relevant concepts from theories like identity theory (Stets and Bruke, 2000), cultural theory on globalisation (Robertson, 1992; Canclini, 1995; in Ritzer, 2008), symbolic interactionism (Davis, 1991; Mead, 1934, Ritzier, 2008), Durkheim's theory on social fact (Gisbert, 1986), Durkheim's theory of mechanical solidarity (Schiermer, 2014). It can be noted that only certain concepts which fit the data are used, instead of the use of entire theories.

The main aim of documenting fashion or to study symbolism in fashion is to capture the transition in fashion. The research has utilised methods and tools such as life stories which depict the incidences that have occurred in a person's life, through testimonies of the participants. They were consentingly instigated to narrate incidents of caste, culture and religion through their lived experiences. Interviews were conducted among the participants. The frequented style of interview was unstructured interviews. At times couples were also interviewed together. In a non- formal set up, focused group discussions have also been done among the *Render* women, who have also spoken a lot about their life incidents. Similarly case study method has been incorporated for data analysis and to exemplify certain concepts related to the research.

Methods such as participant observation was also utilised to grasp the empirical reality. Participant observation has been a useful tool to document various relevant aspects of the research from the field. Similarly photographs and audio recording tools have been helping tools to document the various manifestations of clothing, based on caste and religion. Narratives have also been used in this research with the aim of documenting the phenomena and experiences relevant to the topic of study. All of these methods, methodological tools and techniques have proved to be necessary and integral

part of the study as it explains not only the material but non-material, socio-cultural and religious lives of the participants.

The number of participants is thirty one, which includes ten men and twenty-one women. The criteria for selecting the respondents included snowball method, to gain more respondents. Factors such as age, caste, phases of life cycle rituals, domicile, and other such criteria are used to gain more depth knowledge on various topics which are relevant to the research. The respondents for this study were in the age category of 18 to 90 years.

In this study, both men as well as women have been taken into consideration and have shared their views on women's clothes and fashion trends. The women have been segregated in the following age categories: the generation Z falls in the time stamp from the year 1996 to the early 2010s, however for the research the age group of women who were selected as respondents belong to 18-27 years of age group; the next group of women are called Millennial generation who come before the Gen Z women, they belong to the time frame from 1980–1995, which implies that these women are in the age group of 28- 44years; even before them are the generation x women, who were born in the years 1966–1979, who are in between the age groups of 45-78; and finally the last category are called baby Boomers or even Boomers, born in the year 1945–1965, aged 79-59, even the people who were born earlier than this fall in these categories is to (Duffy, 2022). The research also makes reference to older women typically referring to Boomer and Gen X women and younger women as Millennial and Gen Z.

## 1.6 DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH AREA

Canacona is the southernmost taluka of Goa, with a population of 45,172 as per 2011 census. The religious segregation of Canacona state that 16.52% are Christians. Overall there are approximately eight churches across Canacona. The church of St. Theresa of

Jesus Chaudi Canacona, is field area of this research, this church has its members residing in the following wards: Patnem-Colomb, Char Rasta, Tambewada, Palolem, Nagorcem, Chaudi, Ponsulem, Kindlembag, Mangan, Shingalem, Delem, and Sheller-Jamlimoll (in accordance with Canacona municipal records 2011). The Catholic composition in Canacona, is 7,994, in line with Canacona municipality records (2011). And as per the church records, approximately 2,840 people are affiliated to the parish of St. Theresa of Jesus church, Chaudi, Canacona. The general caste segregation of Canacona is not like that of the Portuguese old conquest territories (Salcette, Bardez, Mormugao, and Tiswadi).

Dokras (2021) renders the Goan Catholic caste system as the transformation of the Hindu caste system, this modified system had a threefold division. Starting with the Catholic *Bamonn* which was equivalent to the Hindu *Brahmin*. The *Chardo* who can be equated to the Hindu Kshatriyas and finally the *Sudir* caste which is an amalgamation of the *Vaishya* and *Sudir* castes. This last category in Catholicism is an ambiguous group comprising of sub-castes which practice different occupations (Dokras, 2021).

Likewise, there is no certain evidence on what contributes to the existence of the Catholic caste system apart from conversion of the Catholics, and it is still debatable whether or not the rules of purity and pollution exists in the Catholic caste system. Therefore it is difficult to distinguish caste division within Catholicism, therefore this research looks at occupation based caste distinction and kinship networks to identify the caste members selected for the study (*Chardo*, *Render*, and *Kumbar*).

The Catholics of Canacona state that the caste system largely comprises of two main castes. One can find people belonging to the *Chardo and Sudir* caste people. Further, many of the *Chardo* caste people have admitted that their ancestors have

worked for the Portuguese, and many of them were in kinship network. Hirschfeld (1986), has included the meaning of kinship network as in, the scenario of a village having residents with common ancestors and from them the descendants.

When defining the kinship network of the *Chardos*, it is important to note that not every *Chardo* is blood related to each other. It is common knowledge among the kin members that their ancestors, their great grandfathers were siblings who got married and had their descendants. The main ancestral property lies in Chaudi, Canacona. Eventually as the families grew, many of them decided to move elsewhere, since property was available in Patnem-Colomb many decided to move there. Therefore the kinship network, extends from the blood related descendants of the initial ancestors and is applicable to the extended family including consanguinal and conjugal family members. Many of them have their houses in Patnem-Colom and Chaudi. The recent changes that people have observed, is that many *Chardo* caste people have either migrated within Canacona, intra Goa or have migrated abroad, both temporarily as well as permanently.

The nature of the family setup for this caste category according to the respondents was patriarchal in nature, the breadwinner of the family was typically a male member who worked for the Portuguese, as civil servants, policemen, and have even served the Portuguese military in Portugal. The women were usually homemakers, and a few women who were educated were employed as teachers and other such professions. On the other hand the *Sudir* caste can be recognised on the basis of their occupations for instance the *Kumbar* caste were known from their occupation, that is professing pottery. Most of the sub-caste categories of the *Sudir* caste belonged to occupations which were a part and parcel of people's lives, back in the day. There are toddy tappers, who are known as the *Render* caste, they reside in areas such as Palolem,



Patnem and Thembe-Wada. Just as the *Chardo* caste they too have migrated. The oral history of the *Render*s narrates that, their ancestors had migrated from Sanvordem village, in Sanguem taluka of South Goa.

The *Render*s state that their ancestors were in constant search of coconut trees and that they travelled across villages. In order to get the best quality of coconut trees as well as a hospitable climate for the members to settle in, they were not only looking for jobs but for an area where they could grow and prosper. So eventually they reached Canacona, a place with mountains and abundance of trees, which also included the coconut trees. Within the family, the male members were called as the *Render*, would climb the coconut trees and extract the fermented liquid or toddy from the coconut leaves and then this would undergo the process of making alcohol in mud pots. The whole social group was involved in the making of alcohol called *Urrack*. The process of churning and bringing wood was mostly done by women and children. The completed product, which is alcohol would be then sold by the *Render* women, who went to places such as Loliem and Poingunim.

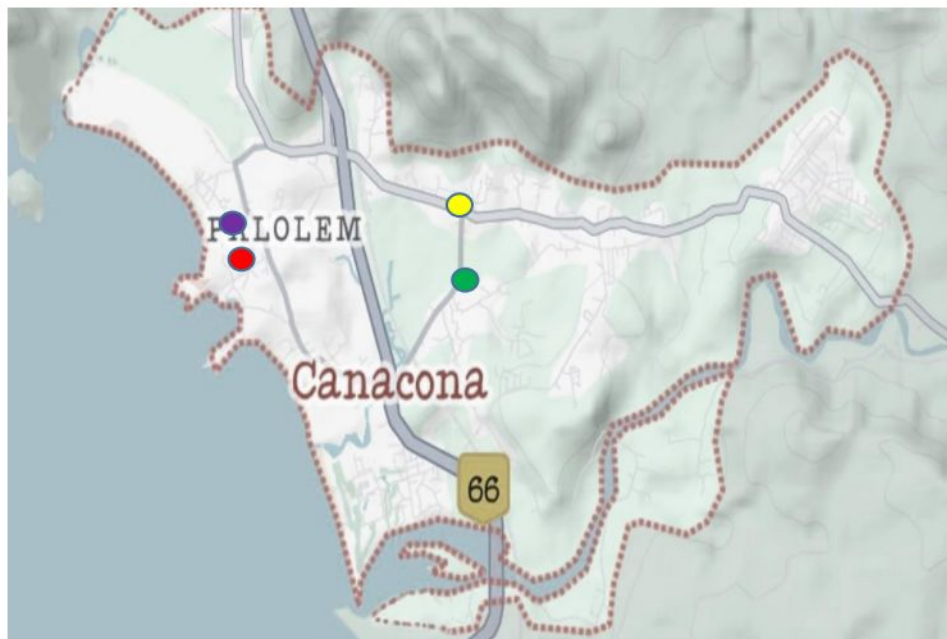
The *Kumbar* caste were potters by profession and had an entire ward named after this profession. The peculiarity of this occupation is that it involves an intense skill which needs to be mastered from a very young age, and is passed down generationally. This skill is usually passed down to the male members of the family, the reason being that the male members would stay behind in the ward practicing the occupation where as women would be married off to another place. The skill of pottery is a complex task, right from collecting the suitable clay to the moulding of the pots and other pottery requires a skilful hand and a lot of instructions, for instance the potter cannot sweat often and cannot even touch sweat or items with sweat in it, as there is a greater chance of breakage of the pottery item when in the process of baking. Therefore the women in



the family, who joined the family after marriage and who did not possess any skills of this profession were not allowed to practice this art. However they were involved in the role of selling the pots, *Chulhas* which are basically clay stoves, and other such baked goods.

Today, only one person in the entire ward of Ponsulem practices pottery as a side business, he is the only Catholic potter over there. He perused this occupation after the demise of his father as an option to survive, during his youth there were others in the ward who professed this profession, however with the opportunities to move abroad and other such alternatives to gain easy money they have left this occupation. He too has limited his pottery work as he works in the transport and supply of LPG cylinders and occasionally makes clay goods. He states that, his father was involved in making the clay products and his mother would then go and sell them. In the case of the Catholic *Kumbars* the profession is slowly fading and only one person is professing the occupation as a pastime activity.

Only a few elements of this community has been added in the research. Each of these caste categories are distinct in their own right and have a different structural basis of functioning as a unit of family and social group. This basic unit of family is then influenced by factors such as caste and Catholicism. This process has a definite impact on identity formation and social life of individuals and it can be subtly noticed through material social fact such as clothes and behaviour. The next sub-topic discusses on this component of identity formation and symbolism in fashion, which shall elucidate how each of these factors impact an individuals.



- -Palolem
- -Chaudi
- -Patnem-Colomb
- -Ponsulem

Picture 1.1: Map of Canacona: The Geographic Location of the Field.

Source: Google Maps. <https://maps.app.goo.gl/tJJ2zFm6QR8cBLes>

## **CHAPTER II**

### **WOMEN'S IDENTITY AND SYMBOLISM IN FASHION**

The chapter is dedicated to the intricacies of women's identity as a part of the larger social structures of caste culture and religion, which are reflected through the symbolism in fashion. It utilises relevant concepts from theories to interpret the symbolism in women's fashion. This discussion is exemplified with the help of the life cycle ritual which are the seven sacraments in Catholicism.

#### **2.1 CONCEPTUALISING IDENTITY AND SYMBOLISM**

Stets and Bruke (2000), have defined the 'self' as an entity that 'knows' to differentiate itself from others. The 'self' has the ability to 'understand' where it fits in a particular society and to 'fit-in' a social group. It can also take on 'roles' as per its social position. The 'self' incorporates meanings and expectations associated with playing the role as a part of their identity (Stets and Bruke, 2000, p. 225).

Even within symbolic interactionism, identity consists of the 'I' (the innate self) and 'me' (the exterior-socially expected self). Mead describes that the innate self (I) is consciously and subconsciously affected by the exterior social self, which in turn is shaped by the social surroundings and social expectations (Ritzer, 2008; symbolic interactionism as originally discussed by Mead, 1934). This is to state that identity formation requires an individual to conform to the social expectation of the social roles. This aspect of social conformity can be materialistically be seen through fashion.

Giddens states that "all social action involves structure, and all structure involves social action..." (Ritzer, 2008, p.397). This implies that individuals do not create social processes, but rather they play their part through social action. Thompson (2008) posits that, it is the structures make the actors produce these social actions for its continuity.

In simple words, the individuals are social actors who play certain roles as part of their identities and as members of certain social structures. They have to fulfil these roles in order to continue as members of the structure and for the smooth functioning of the social structures. Giddens (1986) posits that “social systems are like buildings that are at very moment constantly being reconstructed by the very bricks that compose them” (Giddens, 1986, p.12-13). This implies that the individuals as well as the social structures have an impact on each other.

The intricacies of identity oscillates between roles and social expectations which are to be fulfilled by the individuals. These individuals exist as members of social groups and societies, this demands them to actively work together to fulfil their part in the social processes. Durkheim has used the concept of ‘collective consciousness’, which are beliefs and sentiments of individuals who are a part of the same society or social collectivity. Collective consciousness is a non-material social fact, which is external to and yet cohesive on individuals and can only be studied through material social facts (Ritzer, 2008, p.190). These material social facts can be seen in the form of “collective representations”, which reflects norms and values of the society through symbols.

Therefore symbolism in fashion can be interpreted as a material social fact that reflect the collective consciousness of the social collectivity under study. The research focuses on the identity of Catholic women, who are individuals playing their part as members belonging to the social structures such as caste, culture and religion. And as a part of their identity they are expected to fulfil certain roles, which are a consequence of collective consciousness and hence they can be learnt through the material social fact of fashion and the symbolism that lies in them. The following discussion exemplifies

how women's identities are bound to social structures and this can be seen in the symbolism in fashion of lifecycle rituals.

## 2.2 THE SYMBOLISM IN LIFE CYCLE RITUALS

The rituals that coincide with the major stages of life of a person are lifecycle rituals. Under this framework, every Catholic undergoes these events. This is in the context of the seven sacraments, for instance through baptism a person (usually a child) enters into Catholicism and becomes a part of the Catholic Church. This is followed by the first Holy Communion, where the Catholics receive their first holy Eucharist that symbolises the acceptance of Jesus in their hearts.

On the other hand confirmation which is the completion of the catechetical studies and a person becomes a mature member of the Catholic Church, this is followed by the option of either getting married or choosing the vocation of serving God, that is ordination. Lastly it is the anointing of the sick, which comes prior to death of a person. All of these mentioned life cycle rituals are basically the seven sacraments in Catholicism.

### 2.3.1 Baptism: Symbolism in Dress



Picture 2.1: Baptism of a Child.

Source: Respondents.

To begin with infancy, at this stage the first lifecycle ritual is the sacrament is baptism. Baptism is the phase of entry into Catholicism, the symbolism depicts the ideals of Catholicism. The symbolic meaning of baptism is that it frees a person from the original sin. The original sin in Christianity was committed by Adam and Eve when they consumed the forbidden fruit, this was because they had fallen prey to the temptations of the devil and did not follow the word of God. It is a belief that every person is born with this sin, except Jesus Christ.

Through baptism a child enters Catholicism and is freed from the original sin. This is symbolised through the white apparel worn by the child. The white dress worn during this ceremony is made from either cotton, silk, satin or other type of cloth material. The child is often worn gold jewellery by many people as it is usually a trend which describes the prosperity and wealth of a person. Typically the clothes worn by the child are gender neutral and boys as well as girls are dressed in a similar way.

This is a common trend for both girls and boys to be dressed in such outfits. Likewise it can also be noted, that such trends vary according to people. For instance, Mrs. Dolly has stated that she has six children and all of them were dressed in white silk apparels and were made to wear gold chains during the ceremony. She believes that this was done to show the people that they were prosperous and that this was a common trend among the *Chardo* caste members. She states that her granddaughter is “modern” and she prefers comfort of her child over the social expectation of wearing gold and silk clothes which are uncomfortable and therefore she made her child wear cotton clothes.

This transitioning phenomenon can be equated to Tocqueville’s (1856/1983:96, in Ritzer, 2008) definition of individualism, it is a ‘calm’ feeling that helps an individual citizens to differentiate them from the masses and to withdraw himself in a close knit



circle of family and friends. It is a democratic concept, which gets individuals involved within themselves (Ritzer, 2008, p.96). This can be clearly be seen in this case, on one hand Mrs Dolly was concerned with conformity to group norms by dressing her children in fashion trends which were popular in her caste group. On the contrary her grandchild, does follow the norms off the church but is not bound to caste norms.

Similar narrations have been narrated by the *Render* caste women. However it is interesting to note that, the trends of wearing a gold chain was not that popular during the time of the older generation women. The recent changes followed by the new parents is to dress their children in satin clothes and to make the child wear a gold chain. Therefore it can be stated that fashion trends of dressing vary even among the caste group.

### 2.3.2 The First Holy Communion



Picture. 2.2: Image title: Communion Picture of a Teenager.

Source: Respondents.

The next lifecycle ritual is the first Holy Communion. This event occurs during adolescence. The symbolism in this ritual is that both boys as well as girls are made to wear white clothes. This is typically associated to the purity of the soul and childhood innocence. The first holy Eucharist is only given to children when they learn about



Catholicism and the values of the Catholic Church and Catholicism can be seen as a way of socialising the young, with religious values and morals.

This apparels worn by teenage girls are white which symbolises purity and the innocence of a child. A few of the respondents have associated this colour to the divinity of the Holy Spirit who came in the form of a dove and to god who symbolises light. Therefore whenever the discussion of purity arises it always symbolically portrayed through white colour. The tradition of wearing white colour has continued for a very long time and has been followed till this day, it has become a norm. It is important to note that this is one of the preliminary stages where the notion of ‘purity’ is being introduced in Catholicism. At this stage the notion of purity is not in the context of sexual purity, but rather it’s an introductory stage to familiarize women with further notions of purity. Another evident feature of this life-cycle ritual is the way it introduces the concept of beauty to young girls.

Both the older generation of women as well as the younger generation of women have stated that they were dresses in apparels which were formal and relatively better than the regular clothes for mass. The Gen Z of women had also done make up and elaborate hairstyles. Makeup, dressing, hairstyles and beauty are components rated to fashion as well as the gender norms for women. As suggested by McCabe (et al, 2017) the identity of women is greatly affected by the beauty standards of society.

### 2.3.3 Women and Confirmation

The sacrament of confirmation, is held during a transitioning phase from teenage to early adulthood. The years in between communion and conformation includes catechism which also impart gender norms along with the religious teachings. This is to prepare both men and women to follow the ideals of Catholicism. Women are thought to be pure, that is to abstain from sexual intercourse and to be virgins, as

premarital sex is considered to be a sin. Virginity is an important criteria for purity, Corinthians (Good news Bible, 1811, 6:19-20) 'Do you not know that your body is the temple of God? You are not your own;' this quotation is from the bible, which prescribes 'moral' conduct for women and men.

Since the body is the temple of God, it cannot be corrupted in any form. This implies that wearing modest clothes is a norm for Catholic women. Modesty is reflected through clothes, symbolically this means that a woman should wear 'decent-modest' clothes and has to behave in ways which are pleasing to god. For instance, praying to God, being 'gentle' and 'caring' and this 'ideal' image is also reflected through her clothes. The sacrament of confirmation expects a woman to be a mature member of the Catholic Church. It is believed that a person is bestowed with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and therefore in Goa the Bishop graces this occasion and performs the rituals of smearing oil on the forehead of people receiving confirmation and also bestows a soft slap on the cheek which symbioses strength.

The older generation of women, they believe that women should wear modest clothes, in order to respect the church. One respondent have also stated that those who do not follow such norms are not coming for mass in the love of god but have come for a 'fashion show'. Typically 'sex work' is related to the prostitutes, in the bible and often seen in a derogatory way. This is a negative social sanction which is often associated to women who wore immodest clothes. One of the *Render* women have stated that these women were referred to as '*Kolvonth*', which is a derogatory remark for 'sex workers'. Such remarks can be looked at as negative social sanctions, because they impact a woman's character and social background. Therefore older generation of women and men would ensure that young women would not dress in immodest clothes to protect

the image of the woman as well as the family. However this aspect is slowly changing and has been discussed further in chapter three.



Picture 2.3: Confirmation.

Source: Respondents.

Bringing back the limelight on confirmation clothing for women. The only obligation that the church presents is the code of modesty. Since it is a formal occasion, people are expected to be dressed in formal clothes. The confirmation dress code for older generation of women was formal and they could choose the colour of their dress, this practice was also continued for quite some time, however it has changed today. Then uniform dress colours was established where women could choose the dress pattern, then eventually the patterns are also chosen by the church. There are two reasons for this, one being uniformity and that others don't feel like they are left out and secondly because some of the dress patterns were 'questionable' according to the village priest.

Form the above instance, it is evident that important events such as confirmation require women to be modest, even the village priest has elaborated on the kind of 'distraction', it creates. The purpose here is not to discern the Catholic values but to look at the way women's self-expression and self-image is shaped by social institutions

like religion. Similarly women's bodies have been 'sexualised' to such an extent, that certain clothes can deem them 'vulgar'. This is to state that Catholic women's fashion is both a means of expression that suggests the Catholic values adorned by women and also is a tool of social sanction that immensely affects their self-image.

Another way of group conformity is through the uniform dress code. The practice of wearing uniform colours is not only for aesthetics, as mentioned earlier, some of the girls felt that they did not 'fit' in well with others 'dressed-up' better than them, so also the freedom of self-expression was granted through the choice of dress, which according to religious authorities was 'misused' as some of the outfits worn by these women were not deemed 'fit' as per the norms of modesty of the Catholic church. Therefore the most prominent thing to notice here is that, conformity to community feeling is omnipresent among the Catholics of Canacona, this means that it is the social group that is given more priority than the individual.

Just as suggested by Sherif and Sherif (1969), the social group uses norms and sanctions to control the behaviour of its members to maintain the group structure. This can be further elaborated, it is not a single individual that forms the social structure but rather multiple individuals who are glued together with social values, culture, and ethnicity and so on. This is also the case here, one can notice through the element of fashion, which acts as a tool of control. Therefore it can be said that the process of creation of the social self, that is 'me' is as a result of these very social expectation of the church and its members and this is certainly portrayed through the uniformity of colours.

### 2.3.4 Ordination and Women

The sacrament of ordination for women means to become a Catholic nun and to be the bride of god. The respondents have said that this sacrament requires dedication and a

lot of 'self-sacrifice' and thereby making it one of the 'toughest' choices to make. The women have stated multiple reasons why they did not choose this vocation. One being that, it has a certain calling from 'god' and that not everyone can fulfil such a 'tremendous duty'. Secondly they did not wanted to join the convent because they thought that if they leave then it would 'tarnish' their family name. Thirdly some women claimed that they assumed that it would be a 'difficult job', only to realise that marriage too is equally 'demanding'. While on the other hand a common reason stated by most women irrespective of their age is that they had to give up on everything that's materialistic including fashion. Some have even gone to the extent of saying that if, nuns were allowed to dress like regular women then they too would have become a nun.

As stated by the participants, becoming a nun needs a lot of sacrifices. One of the nuns, belonging to the order of the society of St. Ursula has stated that when the nuns came as missionaries to aid the people they were not welcomed because of their 'foreign appearance'. Therefore the switch was made, from dresses to sarees and even chudidars as well. The respondents have stated that the symbolic value of the nun's attire is that it portrays their vocation and it also gives them the recognition of being a nun. One of the respondents has also stated that, 'anyone can identify a priest, he's the face to remember because he does the sermons. How do we realise who is a nun and who is not? Simple! By her nun outfit'. This this to state that the nuns' outfit is closely related to her identity, therefore it is not just a piece of fabric it has a socio-religious undertone to it. Again Mead's concept of symbolic interactionism comes into the picture, it is not just simple norm of dressing up, for a nun dressing up is the 'act' of conforming to the socially expected identity of being a 'nun'.

Even when the question was asked to the respondents on whether or not nuns should be allowed to wear regular clothes just as the priests, there was a division of

opinions. The older generation of respondents have stated that the nuns should continue to dress the way they are dressing because it is their 'responsibility' as they have 'vowed' before god to do so. On the other hand the relatively younger generation of people are of the opinion that there should be some leniency.

To be a nun one has to be chaste and of modest character, it requires 'self-sacrifice'. And certainly this lifecycle ritual lucidly demonstrates, the way the Catholic social self 'me' is created by Catholicism and it greatly impacts the subconscious self 'I' as well. For instance when the nun was asked about the question on whether she would like to dress in regular clothes, she said that she was fine wearing her nun outfit, because she is 'used to it' nor does she want to stir up a 'controversy' over clothes with people, or the Church. This statement is a testimony itself that she conforms to values, sanctions and norms of Catholicism.

### 2.3.5 The Sacrament of Marriage

The sacrament of marriage is a life altering sacrament just as the sacrament of ordination. It is life altering in the sense that both the older generation of women as well as the younger generation of women have admitted to drastic changes in their lives and can also be seen in their attire and fashion. The shift is a drastic one, from being an unmarried Catholic girl to a married Catholic woman, a lot of changes occur which can be depicted through women's fashion. According to the older generation of women, to be married means that girls have to change the way they dressed and behaved. Women had to wear clothes which signified that she is a responsible woman who has to look after the image of her family. She has to leave her 'girlish' ways such as tying two plats in her hair or wearing clothes that make her look like an unmarried girl. She has to portray herself as 'responsible' and 'respectable' and this is one of the reasons why she has to wear gold.



Overall the rituals related to marriage among Catholics are quite similar. As per the *Chardo*, *Kumbar* and *Render* respondents, marriages were either fixed by the raibaris, who are traditional match-makers or the relatives of the bride and groom would try to find appropriate partners for them. Some of the older generation of women have stated that, in order to gain better proposals women had to be fair, with a good posture and figure. This was to ensure that the girl was fertile and could reproduce healthy children. Even today, such aspects are very relevant especially in an arranged marriage set up.

However the *Render* s prefer to marry their children in Sanvordem, as it was once their ancestral home. The matter of caste is an important criteria, at least for the older generation as this is related to the family honour and prestige. This phenomenon is a common aspect for the *Chardo* and the *Render* caste, as for the *Kumbar* caste, this is not really applicable. The respondents from the prior castes are more concerned with caste based marriage. They equate marriage as a union of two individuals becoming one, and with this two families become one.

Caste was an integral component for the *Render* as well as the *Kumbar* castes, not only because it was related to the prestige but it was also related to the caste based work. For instance, marriage was not only the union of two families but it also meant the addition of a new family member, who would take part in the caste based occupation. Therefore selecting a partner from an appropriate caste was necessary, otherwise the family would be ridiculed by the ward members through gossip. Therefore “prestige” and “gossip” can be seen as sanctions imposed by the institution of caste. After the match was fixed, the families would meet each other and decide on the proceedings of the marriage. This was followed by various rituals, the wedding plans and other such decisions were usually made by the elder members of the family.

The buying of the cloth for the wedding ceremony would soon begin after the proposal was fixed. This is an important aspect for wedding, since women play a huge role in wedding preparation, cloth material to be worn for the wedding is gifted by the groom's as well as bride's side to each respective family member, it is almost like an early invitation for the wedding. Similarly the dressers of the brides maids would usually be in pastels and other such vibrant and subtle colours, because it is a joyous occasion, dull and ominous colours such as black, dark purple, even darker shades of blue were avoided as they are associated with sadness and grief.

Soon after the proposal was fixed the bride had start wearing *Chuddo*, which are colourful bangles in green, yellow, white and even red. This announces to the world that the bride is getting married. The other important rituals which are *Almanchem Jevonn* (giving food to the poor or other people, symbolic of serving food to the dead ancestors), and the other being *Roce* ceremony which involves poring of coconut milk on the bride and groom and is similar to the Hindu ceremony of *Haldi*. The belief is that it is done to enhance the glow of the couple and therefore it's related to beauty and this in turn is a social fashion.



Picture 2.4: Wedding Chuddo of a Bride.

Source: Respondents.



The main event is that of the wedding itself, the bride has to wear a white gown and a white veil. This is symbolic of her purity and virginity. As per the older generation of women, they wore simple white gowns and were not allowed to unveil themselves till the ceremony was over. The reason for this was that the groom should not reject the proposal and leave the wedding after. The respondents have also stated that they did not see their groom until the day of marriage. One of my colleagues have narrated an incident related to the wearing of veil, it happened in Margao that the groom accidentally got married to another woman since she had veiled her face throughout the mass and ever since this incident, the practice of wearing the veil till the end is usually avoided.



Picture2.5: Wedding Reception.

Source: Respondents.

Then for the wedding night women are supposed to wear a white dress with red printed flowers. This symbolises the consummation of marriage and the legitimate breaking of hymen. The norm of virginity is legitimately broken through marriage and this also celebrated through clothes. Values such as procreation and continuity of the bloodline as well as the church are cherished.

The next event is called the ‘second day’ or ‘Appovneacho dis’, this means a formal invite for the groom to visit the bride’s place. On the day of the wedding after the ceremony, some of the family members of the bride come to invite the groom and the family members to visit the bride’s place. They collect the ‘*Vojem*’, which are sweets, brought by the bride. The next ritual is the display of the bride’s trousseau or *Dennem*, which literally translates to gift or blessing, this is basically all of the requirements of the bride, like clothes, jewellery, and other things such as furniture and the like. This is displayed at the groom’s place to show the guests, the family status of the bride. This can lead to either appreciation or humiliation of the bride. Many respondents have, stated that, gold is an important aspect of marriage.



Picture 2.6: A Newly Married Woman Wearing Jewellery.

Source: Respondents

The women have stated that *Dennem* does not only show the family status, however it can also decide the way people choose to treat the bride. All of the married respondents have also stated that they have either witnessed or have experienced cases of harassment and mistreatment because of the lack of jewellery and ‘status’. This can be taunts at home or people giving the silent treatment to women. In a social setup such

as weddings, parties, communions, birthdays, women like to mingle with women of equal status, therefore if one is wearing pricy and up to day clothes along with a lot of jewellery, then women with similar interest join in as a group.

It's a status of wealth, said one respondent, 'birds of the same wings flock together' meaning those who 'flaunt' wealth would also like to associate with like-minded people. Thereby, such women would rather avoid 'poor' women and this becomes a part of a discriminatory practice. Some women have also claimed that their in-laws too were more concerned about this 'wealth-image' as these married women are the ones to wear jewellery and depict the family wealth. Further women also have to dress as per their age and marital status, which has be elaborated in chapter three.

### 2.3.6 The Style of Dressing During Death and Mourning

The last sacrament is anointing of the sick, which takes places when a person is suffering from grave sickness and even when they are on the verge of death. However the research is concerned with what continues after the death of a person. Even the dead women are dressed in a certain way, and there is symbolism in it as well. To begin with women and young girls who are not married are made to wear bridal gowns and are dressed as brides, simply because they never had the opportunity to get married and to signify to the people that she died a virgin.

The married women are made to wear clothes which signify their marital status and the prosperity of her family. The village priest has also seen cases where the corpses are made to wear gold and during the time of burial the gold is removed. Similarly the older women and even widows are dressed in clothes which are similar to mother Mary. On the other hand living widows were dressed as Hindu brides adorned with flowers in their head and are colour *Kaapod* and after this, the lives of the widows become more



simple and dull as they are expected to live under such circumstances. Even the colour of the clothes are dull for such women.

Keneally (2014) has made a reference to the image of “the Mary Immaculate Modest Dress” (Kenneally, 2014, p.567). It was states that women's dress code comes under religious control. In a similar fashion, even in the case of Canacona, the effigy of “Mary Immaculate” is prominent especially in terms of the prescribed religious behaviour as well as dress code for women, and this is quite evident among the older generation of women.



Picture.2.7: The Image of Virgin Mary.

Source: Researcher

## **CHAPTER III**

### **SOCIAL RELEVANCE AND TRANSITION IN FASHION**

Fashion for women is not just a simple matter of clothes, it's a social phenomenon involving various aspects of women's life, which can be depicted through fashion. The relevance of fashion can be seen through the symbols in the everyday lives of women and it is reflected through the changing styles of clothes. The chapter encapsulates incidents of fashion across generations of women in order to highlight the social change that has occurred.

#### **3.1 RELEVANCE OF FASHION IN EVERYDAY LIFE OF WOMEN**

The nature of the ongoing change is often projected through symbols. Fashion is a social fact, which are based on the actual realities of society and are collective representations. These social facts are essentially 'things' which are external to individuals, they are to be seen as things that exist beyond individuals and are cohesive on them. The cohesive role of the social facts comes from sanctions, which are methods through which social control is exhibited and can be in the form of positive sanctions such as rewards or negative sanctions like punishments (Gisbert, 1959). Through this deliberation, fashion can be viewed as a material social fact.

In Durkheim's 'Elementary Forms of Religious Life' (1912), he has exemplified the social role of material facts. Material social facts are tangible and can be seen and observed, they play a profound role in shaping the behaviour and identities of people. Fashion as material social fact involves social sanctions which are used to control the behaviour of individuals. These social sanctions are imposed by social institutions such as family. It is the primary unit of socialisation, the role of family is to instil the non-material social facts such as morals, values and sanctions through,

material social facts such as fashion. In doing so it maintains the social structures such as religion, caste and culture.

### 3.2 WOMEN'S IDENTITY PROJECTED THROUGH FASHION

It is important to understand certain concepts which are relevant to the notion of identity in order to delve in fashion as a projection of women's identity. Stets and Bruke (2000), have done their research on the social theory of identity. They have stated that identity is formed because of the ability of the 'self' to identify itself as an object and its capability of understanding the social position to which it belongs. Mead (Huebner et al, 2015) regards the development of identity through role-playing. This play stage of role-playing can be seen among young girls who play houses and affirm to their gender roles. They learn to take on the role of 'homemakers' and even 'mothers' while playing houses and would even dress and behave like them. Likewise they also play different roles, such as daughters, mother-in-law, wife and more.

The theory of identity posits that 'identity' has multiple layers as the social roles are prescribed by the social structure. These roles have certain expectations to them and each member has to fulfil their part by conforming to the social expectations. These social expectations placed on women can be categorised in the following categories. This is to deliberate on the social expectations associated to women's roles and to look at the changes with the help of fashion.

#### 3.2.1 The Social Dimension of Fashion Across Age Groups

Women belonging to the same age groups have faced similar sanctions related to clothes and fashion. This is due to 'collective selection' where by fashion trends are not caused because of an individual's choice and taste, but rather because of the choices made by a collectivity of individuals (Blumer 1901, in Davis 1991). These collectivities can be class, caste, gender, age and other such factors.

The older generation of women have narrated their life stories about their choice of fashion, which resulted from the social expectation of family, caste and religion. This can be seen through the norm of modesty, where women were expected to cover their bodies as it was a reflection of the upbringing and social background. Modesty is a person's ability to control themselves from giving in to the worldly pleasures. The code of modesty is about not attracting much attention to women's bodies. For example the hem of the dress would be below the knees and women had to wear veils and even hats to cover their head. For women it is mostly associated with the choice of clothes which is not too provocative and seductive. By wearing modest clothes one would signify to the others that the woman was 'pure' which implied virginity (for unmarried girls) and her devotion to god and family. A woman's obedience towards her family and religion was deemed to be 'ideal' because she was also conforming towards her gender roles.

There were various norms on clothing for women to 'fit in' the church, the family and peer-age group category. For instance the norm of wearing a veil was compulsory, or at least covering the head was the norm for women. The black veils were worn by married women, as it looked elegant and it also signified their marital status. The white veils were typically worn by young and unmarried women and girls as it symbolised purity and virginity. Secondly it also signalled that the woman was unmarried because white was associated with purity and virginity, and this was a sign for also attracting marriage proposals.

The style of adorning veils was different for different age categories. The older women would either wear *Kaapod*, which is a cotton saree, draped in a manner that covered their head as well as bodies. Some would use the *Pallu*, to cover their head instead of a lace veil, whereas some would use *Pallu* to cover their shoulders and then

wear a black veil. However this trend eventually has stopped and today very few women wear veils. Today the symbolism in veils has been lost and very few people know about the symbolic value of veils. The contemporary generation of younger women have to follow the code of modesty as well. However this code has become flexible in the recent years. It can be observed that the Gen X women did not wear veils unlike the Boomer women, but followed the code of modesty. Similarly the Millennial and Gen Z women have completely discontinued with the fashion of wearing veils and the code of modesty is also followed subjectively.

### 3.2.2 Sanctions Associated With Women's Clothing

Sanctions are tools of social control which can be seen in the form of positive and negative sanctions, such as rewards and punishments respectively (Gisbert, 1959). As per the older generation of respondents conformity to norms and sanctions was mandatory. The Boomer women wore age appropriate clothes, covered their head for mass and this was socially accepted and applauded. This can be seen as a form of positive social sanction. On the contrary tarnishing of a woman's clothing can be seen as negative social sanction.

The awareness about these sanctions and norms also affect women's choice of clothes. For example, the unmarried women, during the time of Boomer and Gen X women, wore modest clothes and white veils for mass. They were expected to behave in a 'lady like' fashion, where they had to pure in their thoughts and actions and therefore they were modest. They had to differentiate themselves from the 'prostitutes', a derogatory nomenclature for sex workers. The term '*Kalavant*', '*Devlim*' or '*Devdasi*', makes a reference to the temple dancers (Xavier, 1993). According to the Gomantak Maratha Samaj (2023), these women were dancers, who danced for the temple gods as part of their job of looking after the welfare of the temples. They were



eventually were deemed as sex workers because they had to engage in sex work as part of their customary temple duty.

Sanctions can also be seen in the bible, for example Corinthians (The good news bible, 1811, p.6:19) states: “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? ...”. Further it has also been stated that the sexual union of a man and a woman makes them one, which is the union of their spirits. And whoever becomes one with a ‘prostitute’ also becomes one with her ways. It is evident through such sanctions that women are not supposed to ‘seduce’ a man and therefore women had to differentiate themselves from ‘prostitutes’, by way of modest clothes. This was more applicable for unmarried women who had to be ‘virgin’ and abstain from sexual activities, including wearing of seductive clothes. This was more prominent among the older generation of women.

The older generation of women have adhered to norms and sanctions on clothes and this is evident from the above case. However the younger generation of women have witnessed a change in fashion trends. The social set up has changed, unlike earlier times they are less bound to the sanctions. This is because many families are nuclear and the individualism is growing among the millennial and Gen Z women.

### 3.2.3 Marital Status and Fashion

Women are expected to dress as per their age and marital status. While it is true that one dresses as per their individual choice, nevertheless one is also subconscious about the social sanctions and norms associated to clothes and dressing. The older generation has seen drastic changes in their fashion as they have transitioned from unmarried to married women. They were expected to be responsible and they had to wear clothes that depicted their family status, the status of prosperity. This prosperity was depicted through their gold and through the kind of dresses they wore. Women who complied

with the code of modesty and followed the norms were applauded with a 'good-image' by their peers, caste members and family. However those who did not conform to this code were bestowed with negative social sanctions such as gossip. 'Gossip' was a tool of social control as people would 'talk' about kin members and neighbours.

For instance if the Sunday sermon stated that spouses should be devoted to each other and a married woman should only dress for her husband, then people would make an example out of women who do not follow such sermons. For example Marialina is a Boomer woman who wore a body hugging- short dress for mass and this occurred a few times. Eventually Marialina became a topic of gossip, her fidelity to her husband was questioned, her character was questioned, and even the character of her daughters was in question. This gossip affected her and she reverted back to wearing modest clothes. Therefore gossip was used as a sanction to control the behaviour of women. Gossip as a form of sanction would ensure that women wore age appropriate clothes which also depicted their marital status. Gossip was an indirect way of social control. This mentality of modesty stems from Catholicism and since it is followed by an entire age category of women, it becomes a part of the culture. Therefore it can be stated that the social institutions have greatly exercised social control through norms and sanctions.

Women are able to identify what types of clothes are associated to the category of age and marital status. For instance the Gen Z and millennial women have seen their mothers and other married women wearing 'motherly-clothes'. These are the clothes that are worn by married women, especially those women who have children. These clothes are associated to the Gen X and older generation of Millennial generation of

women. These ‘motherly clothes’ are typically comfortable clothes for married women, which fit their ‘age’ and reflect their ‘marital status’.



Picture 3.1: Women Wearing ‘Motherly Clothes’.

Source: Respondents.

Fashion for married women also includes the wearing of a gold band, which symbolises their marriage. They also wear sarees, dresses and *chudidars*, along with accessories along with the wedding band. These women wear clothes not only for the sake of fashion or comfort but also because of other social aspects. Respondents have stated that they don’t want to listen to their mother in law’s taunts on their clothes, about their gold or hem of their skirt. Women have also stated that they are also responsible for projecting the wellbeing of their ‘family image’, which is symbolically expressed through gold jewellery.

Married women shy away from wearing clothes that contemporary younger (mostly unmarried) women wear. The married Boomer and Gen X women have stated that they rarely wear youthful clothes. Because they are no longer youth and only ‘youthful- women’ wear attractive clothes, to garner attention. They state that these clothes are for younger unmarried women because it helps them get ‘good proposals’ because of their beauty. Since they have already been through this phase of life and

have reached a point where they need comfort from their 'hectic life', they now prefer to wear comfortable clothes.

However, this does not mean that women have completely lost their favor in 'dressing-up'. In a consumer age of 'santoor-mummies' (an advertisement projecting youthful looking mothers) and a social media filled with women who look youthful. It has also become a trend for younger generation of Gen X and millennial women to project their age through their clothes but to also look 'ageless'. Therefore the trend of spending money on cosmetics, hair dyes and other 'fashion-beauty enhancing' tools are a necessary component of fashion for women. Even the younger generation of millennial and Gen Z respondents have stated that they want to follow this fashion of 'ageless-beauty', and this is an outcome of the global consumerism culture.

Women and their relationship with clothes is a complex affair. One has to wear different clothes as per the different phases of their lives. The clothes are not merely fabric that is worn by women, it projects their age, family status, marriage status as well as the nature of social control imposed on them. Basically fashion is a means of expressing various roles and identity of women. The unmarried women are bound to the code of modesty and have to stick to the notion of purity. Whereas the code of modesty may have become flexible among the contemporary younger generation of women nevertheless it still persists. Married women have to project their family image through their clothes. Even the widows have norms related to clothing, the Boomer women have stated that they had to wear black clothes for one year to mourn the death of her husband. They had to wear dull colours after the first year, this trend has subsided but the older generation of women still continues with this practice. Even corpses of women are dressed as per their marital status just as mentioned in chapter two.

From a structural functional viewpoint, the structures of social institutions perform the role of allocating fashion trends to different marital categories of women. Sanctions are utilised to control the social behaviour of women and this becomes a part of their identity. This trend of imposing sanctions by institutions such as family, caste, religion become a part of culture. Therefore these social expectations on women's clothing also becomes a part of the cultural expectations imposed on women's identity.

### 3.3 THE DYNAMIC FASHION TRENDS AND WOMEN'S IDENTITY

Over the course of time, fashion trends have changed and nobody wears veils in church except for the Boomer women. Women state that they have stopped wearing veils or have never worn veils because they do not want to look 'outdated' and 'old-fashioned'. One can observe that women's roles have changed and multiplied and they dress as per the demands of their social roles. In contemporary time, women prefer to wear casual clothes for work this includes pants, blouses, skirts, kurta-pants and other such clothes. On the other hand they wear formal and semi-formal clothes to mass. This change can be associated with occupational shift and other socio-economic factors.

The Gen X women as well as older generation Millennials, also regard mass media such as television, films, daily soaps, and fashion magazines to affect their choice of clothes. Comparing this generation of women with the Boomer women, it's noticeable that the clothes worn by this generation has a complex relationship with clothes. They wear clothes as per the roles that are associated to their identity. Gen X and Millennial women, wear one style of apparels for their work and another style of clothes for mass. Comparing all generation of women, there is a stark difference in the way they associate with their roles and the way they project it through their clothes.

As mentioned earlier, the Boomer women have a deeper connection with their roles, as 'women', 'daughters', 'wives' and so forth. This identity is deeply rooted in

their association with the religion, caste and even family. In a group set up, they have always felt the need to conform to norms and code and conduct and this is also applicable to their taste in fashion. For this generation of women, fashion meant nothing more than the physical representation of norms.

The Boomer women's identity is intimately associated with social institutions such as family, religion and caste. In doing so they would follow a routine pattern of adhering to the norms and sanctions that were imposed by these social institutions. In a historical context, the Boomer women have admitted that their life was 'simple', referring to the mechanical solidarity in the society. As described by Durkheim, mechanical solidarity existed in pre-industrial, 'traditional' societies, where people had a strong sense of community and cohesion. It was a result of a common lifestyle and adherence to common beliefs and values by the members of the society (Durkheim's, 1893, in Schiermer, 2014). Mechanical solidarity has existed among the Catholics before the onset of global trends such as globalization.

With the growth of globalization there have been drastic changes in the social setup of the society. Women had to 'respect' and conform to 'morals' and 'values' which were thought to them by their family and religion. These morals and values were about chastity, purity, modesty, obedience and so forth. Morals and values were universally followed and inculcated in their attires by the Boomer women. Secondly it is evident that, women's occupations had a close-knit relationship to their caste and this is applicable to the *Kumbar* and *Render* women. This is to state that their identity was bound to their social group and therefore group identity was more important to them as compared to their individual identity.

Similarly the time prior to the growth of globalization was marked with limited opportunities for work as well as fashion for women. Women were not only bound to



their family morally and socially, but economically as well. This implies that the Boomer women's fashion was not a direct consequence of their own volition but was a consequence of the social roles they played and the social values and morals they adhered to. Therefore it can be stated that this way of dressing has been routinised for the Boomer women and it has been ingrained to such an extent it has become an inseparable part of their identity. This can be further elucidated with the following deliberation.

### 3.3.1 Fashion Across Castes

The concept of identity and fashion are interlinked. Fashion is not only about clothes but it's a mixture of prevailing style and trends, it includes customs and it projects social standing and conduct. Linking this component to the formation and projection of identity of an individual, one can take into consideration the role of caste as a prevalent key component that affects both fashion as well as the identity of women.

### 3.3.2 Traditional Occupations and Dress

The *Render* and *Kumbar* caste women worked for their families who were involved in traditional occupations of making alcohol and pottery respectively. These caste categories are based on occupations and hence the clothing worn by women are also related to their caste based occupations. The matter of caste is a serious topic for the older generation of women as their identities are linked to their caste. The *Kumbars* have stated that the occupation of making and baking mud goods was mostly carried out by the male members. They made clay pots, *Chulhas* which were clay stoves and other earthen vessels, whereas the women sold these pots. Since the income flow of the families was limited, clothes were stitched once or twice a year and most of the older generation has a few clothes which were sufficient for them to wear.

Initially the *Kumbar* women used to wear cotton *Kaapod*, which was later switched to cotton *Vistid*. There are two reasons for this, first of all cotton was cheaper and breathable, which made it easier to work. The reason for the switch from *Kaapod* to *Vistid* was because, it was a lot easier to wear *Vistid* as compared to the cotton *Kaapod*. The cotton *Kaapod* took quite a lot of effort to be draped and washed. Secondly due to vocational training, women from the ward learnt stitching and therefore it was cheaper for the women to wear a *Vistid*.

Just as the *Kumbars* the *Renders* are also an occupational caste group, which has been practicing the traditional occupation of toddy tapping and making *Urrack* which is traditional form of Goan alcohol. This community is not originally from Canacona and has moved to Canacona many decades ago from Sanvordem village, in Sanguem taluka. The occupation requires the collection of fermented liquid from the coconut tree, and this is done by the male members. Further the making of the alcohol itself is group activity as it is a laborious task. The women were the ones responsible for the sale of the alcohol and would travel across Canacona selling alcohol.

The apparels worn by them was either *Kaapod* or *Vistid*, as it served the functional utility of roaming around and the material was also breathable. Just as the *Kumbars* the *Render* women brought this cotton material as it was cheap. Similarly, when the number of tailors increased in vicinity they chose to wear *Vistid*. *Kumbars*, *Renders*, as well as *Chardo* women wore *Kaapod* at Church, this was not a frequent practice among the old conquest territories according to the women who are originally from Margao (but have been married in Canacona).



Dr. Sushila Sawant Mendes has made this statement in the national seminar on ‘Oral Histories and Intangible Culture of Goa’ held in Goa University, on January 20–21, 2024. Wearing flowers on women’s head was avoided and this was an unsaid social practice even among the Catholic women in Canacoana. Albeit there only one syncretic exception, the widows were dressed in red *Kaapod* and had to adorn their head with flowers, this served as a symbol of her marriage. This is a form of syncretism where the older women had to wear clothes which depicted elements of their past lives.



Picture 3.2: A *Chardo* Widow in the Early 1980s.

Source: Respondent.

Apart from the *Kumbars* and *Render* women, the Boomer *Chardo* women wore clothes which were related to their occupation but were different than the above two categories. The older *Chardo* women preferred to wear clothes which suited their age and marital status. The women who were working as teachers and government servants chose to wear clothes which were similar to the clothes which they wore for mass. They draped sarees, wore trousers and dresses.

The older generation of *Chardo* women took pride in wearing modest clothes and jewellery which is the symbol of their ‘well-being’. Since whatever they wear also reflects their family and caste status. They had firm rules in the house on what kind of

fashion was followed by the women of the house. Women were restricted from wearing ‘fake gold’ jewellery, as it was deemed as ‘cheap’ and ‘undignified’. Therefore fashion for these women was not bound to their occupation but rather it was bound to the family norms.

### 3.3.3 Occupational Shift and Transition in Dress

The recent changes such as shift in occupations have brought changes in their life style as well as fashion. Both the *Kumbars* as well as the *Render* castes have witnessed exponential changes in occupations. For the *Render*s it has been because of the occupational shift from making alcohol to running shacks, restaurants, small businesses and other such occupations. Many people have also migrated abroad and overall there is a drastic decline in the number of people who practice toddy tapping and making alcohol. Most of these changes are a result of the direct or indirect impact of tourism, which came into the picture in the early 1990s. Similarly the entire stretch of Palolem is exposed to tourism and have induced various changes in women’s fashion.

This change is observed with the comparison of fashion of the different generation of women. The Boomer and Gen X women are the only age categories of women who wear ‘traditional’ outfits regularly. Whereas the Millennial and Gen Z women prefer to wear clothes which are up-to date with the recent fashion trends, and rarely wear traditional clothes. They are also influenced by the fashion trends followed by the women of the ward, mass-media, social media and are also influenced by their peer groups.

As for the *Kumbar* caste, the changes have been in the shift of occupations. The availability of job opportunities during the Portuguese era both in India and abroad helped improve their financial conditions. However in this bargain, the traditional art of making pottery has been lost, today only one family practices this occupation and

only the name of the ward carries the legacy of the *Kumbar* art profession. The case of the *Kumbars* is of a gradual loss of occupation and a loss of an occupational social group.

Today only one couple practices this occupation and the woman is a Millennial woman. She states that she dresses in clothes that are similar to other women her age, this is a fashion trend that's popular among many Catholic women as well. However, the nostalgic image of a Catholic *Kumbar* woman with pots and clay goods in a cotton *Vistid* or *Kaapod* has now ceased to exist. The woman states that her husband looks after the business and that she doesn't has to sell the pottery like the women in the family originally did. But instead her husband sells these items to the few people who order these goods. The traditional knowledge of the art or even the ethnic knowledge of the fashion and clothes has been lost with the demise of the older generation of women. The couple has also mentioned bout other *Kumbars* in the ward who disassociate for their *Kumbar* identity and have increased their standard of living by working abroad.

In the case of the *Chardo* women they too have witnesses a gradual change in fashion. Firstly, there are cases of inter-caste marriage, because of which women wear clothes of their choice, because the people who used to impose negative sanctions such as nagging, no longer interfere with the married women. The recent changes, such as women's education, paid work, inter-caste marriages and other allied changes, suggest that the norms on clothing and fashion are not as staunchly followed as they used to be.

From the dimension of caste the women, in the caste category did not merely wear clothes to project their caste identity, this was the case for the *Kumbar* as well as *Render* castes. Albeit eventually their clothing became a mark of their identity, for instance the *Kumbar* women would be identified with their clothing and what they sold

(pottery), the pottery almost became an extension of their outfits. Even for the *Render* women, their alcohol containers, and gold bangles were a fashion symbol reflecting their identity. However it is only the *Chardo* women who preferred to flaunt their identity of being a *Chardo*, through their outfits and behavior. Each caste category has had its identity portrayed through clothing and yet with gradual changes in the social world, fashion has changed, what remains of the caste based fashion are memories and nostalgia of women and men, who recall these fashion trends by recalling the women who once wore these apparels.

### 3.3.4 Comparing Changes in Fashion Across Generations

In the case of the Boomer age category of *Render*, *Kumbar* and *Chardo* women. The first two caste categories worked within their communities, either by participating in activities such as helping their families in making alcohol (*Render* women) or by aiding in selling pottery (*Kumbar* women). On the other hand the *Chardo* women worked as teachers and government servants. These women did not wear clothes that would break the code of modesty. This implies the construction of the innate self 'me' was largely impacted by the social environment and social expectations. In this scenario the innate self and the social self are closely connected, so much so that they are inseparable. Therefore the older generation women were largely 'socially- controlled' by social institutions such as religion and caste, and culture and this is evidently seen through their social behaviour as well as fashion.

On the contrary the Gen X and Millennial generation of women view fashion differently. These women have a sense of individuality as a result of social change. Women have started to do paid work outside of their families and caste. Since their occupation is not within the family, they are expected to dress a little differently than the clothes they wear at home or for mass. They consume fashion from mass-media and

have learnt to dress in semi-formal and casual for work. This gradual change in fashion is a result of globalization.

It is an interesting observation, that some of the Gen X and Millennial women were fascinated by traditional norms on clothing. Some of the respondents have stated that they used to wear modest clothes to mass and staunchly believed in the notion of purity. This was likely due the joint family set up in which they were raised. The role of the 'elders' was to socialise the young in social values and morals which are cherished within Catholicism. In doing so the women would internalise these norms and sanctions and incorporate them in their gender roles. They would also do this by observing the clothes and behaviour of their 'mothers', 'aunts' and grandmothers.

Women have also stated that they would stitch or buy clothes which were approved by their elders, either to avoid taunts or to gain praises from them. Eventually this has changed, women have grown older and their families have gotten smaller. Most of the women stay in nuclear families and therefore the amount of social sanctions that they used to have reduced. Since there is no elder in the family to 'nag' negative social sanctions, the choice of clothing for the Millennial as well as the Gen Z women has broadened.

The Gen X and Millennial women wear clothes which they find attractive and fashionable. Even when choosing what to wear, most of these women think about things such as their age, beauty trends, physical attributes, fashion trends of celebrities, and more. To put it in simple words, they buy clothes of their choice, but they do not realise the subtle influence of the social norms and sanctions. These women still follow the code of modesty in church albeit they will wear clothes of their choice.

The Gen Z women are either students or are working. Unlike the previous generations, whose life circumvented around institutions of family, caste and religion,

this generation is prone to the social expectation from family, caste, religion, peers, work and even the virtual reality. Under such circumstances, individualism becomes important as one cannot limit one's identity to a few roles. The contemporary world has different social expectations from different roles, the contemporary women fulfil different social expectations for different roles. In this scenario women are able to balance their roles through individualism, they can identify what clothes are more suited for which role.

The respondents have said that they wear different clothes in different situations. Most of them wear, jeans and tops, pants and shirt for their work and even in educational institutes. Similarly they post pictures on social media wearing trendy clothes such as skirts, frocks, jumpsuits and other sort of trendy clothes. The respondents state that this is 'today's fashion' and since everyone in their age group does this, they too prefer the same. For mass, they do wear formal dresses, trousers and other such clothes. This is to exemplify that women dress as per their social expectations and social roles. Women today, know how to look professional in their professional work, to follow code of modesty in mass, and to wear trendy clothes just as the other peers.

The Gen Z and millennial women have mentioned that, there is not much of a 'restriction' from their parents and that the clothes that they wear are socially accepted. A prominent thing that can be noticed here is that the social control exercised by the social institution of family is relatively lower as compared to the other generation of women (Boomer and Gen X along with the older generation of Millennial women) and there is more importance given to individualism. This is the case for both married as well as unmarried women. Because they are easily available online, they don't cost as much as tailor made clothes and even if they are tailored clothes they prefer designs of



‘their’ own choice. The Gen Z and younger generation of Millennial women have greater freedom to wear clothes of their choice, this is also influenced by globalization.

### 3.4 CHANGES IN FASHION AND FESTIVALS

Just as mentioned earlier, symbolism and transition in fashion varies across age, caste, and marital status and it is also reflected in the festivals. As per the respondents the occasion of feasts and festivals are joyous occasions which are celebrated with joyous emotions and often reflected through clothes. For instance occasions such as Christmas and Easter celebrate the birth and rebirth of Jesus Christ. There is a lot of spiritual preparation and self-sacrifice which is believed to invoke a new life. Since these festivals are most awaited and are significant for the Catholics, these are celebrated with great enthusiasm.

Women have stated that it has become mandatory in the recent years to wear new and celebratory clothes to fit-in the crowd, although it’s not a compulsion it’s an unsaid requirement. It conveys to the others that the family is doing financially well and that they are not grieving. If a woman wears clothes which are dull and she wears them without much gold then people ‘come to know’ that the family is undergoing financial difficulty and if the gold is worn yet the colours are black and white, then this implies mourning the loss of a close one. Typically to avoid the ‘embarrassment’ of a financial loss women prefer to wear whatever gold they have with their best clothes.

For the Gen Z women are inclined towards trendy clothes and accessories that are expensive, if not they should at least look ‘stylish’ and ‘designer’. The fashion trends followed by Gen Z women is linked to the global as well as local fashion trends. The respondents have accounted social media as well as mass media, especially celebrities, social media influencers, luxury fashion brands and other such influences to have an impact on their taste in dress and fashion. They have also stated that, they



are not only influenced by the global trends but also the local ones as well, women are influenced by their family, kin, and even caste members.

The social trends of dressing for Gen X and Millennial women are set by the local women, who are also influenced by mass media. However these women wear clothes that are more suited for their age and marital status and this way of dressing has been passed down across generations. It is evident from the fashion of the Gen Z women that their taste in apparels is greatly influenced by globalization, consumerism and social media. Fashion has been a social trend which is followed by a collectivity of individuals, it cyclical and ever-changing nevertheless it's a perpetual because it is ingrained in social structures. Fashion is used as a 'status symbol' that conveys social status to others, for instance luxury brands will symbolise wealth, wearing makeup symbolises following of beauty trend. This aspect of fashion is so ingrained among women, that they find it to be a regular part of their lives. And therefore they also conform to the social expectations of these global trends. Similarly they also partake in local style of dressing by wearing tailor made clothes and even following the code of modesty to a certain extent.

It's a glocalised trend that the younger women do not only lean towards global trends, but are also influenced by their local communities as well. For instance they'll wear trendy clothes which are nationally and internationally popular, like baggy jeans or a body-con dress. However they'll also wear clothes to mass which are approved by their families, mostly their mothers and even ethnic clothes, which usually implies '*kurta*' or '*chuddidar*', which is pan Indian 'ethnic' clothing. There are two inferences that can be drawn over here, one that the contemporary younger generation of women prefer clothes which have a blend of the global and local.

Apart from this, the festival of *San Jao*, is celebrated in remembrance of St. John the Baptist, who leaped in his mother's womb when Virgin Mary visited the saint's mother. The mythology states that the saint leaped in his mother's womb, therefore in Goa this festival is celebrated by many Catholics by jumping in wells. This is also an occasion where many newly married couples go to the bride's house and the groom is pampered with sweets, fruits, delicacies and even alcohol. However this occasion is not very universally followed. The *Chardo* respondents state that they acknowledge the feast but refrain from engaging activities such as jumping in wells because it's not considered to be 'dignified'. Women state that since, this celebration involves getting wet and drinking, which do not suit women. Similarly getting wet makes women feel uncomfortable as the wet clothes cling to their bodies. Therefore this fashion of celebration is avoided by the *Chardos*. It is evident that the process of gendered socialisation deeply affects women that they differentiate 'good' from the 'bad' based on the values and norms that they have learnt related to their gender.

Similarly, the *Render* caste people have also stated that this festivity was not celebrated like the way it is celebrated today. Implying that grand celebrations of various festivals and occasions such as *San Jao*, have become a part of the Catholic culture. Even carnival for that matter, has come into picture because it attracts 'tourists', this was stated by one of the *Render* respondents in Palolem. The Boomer and Gen X women prefer not to participate in these activities because it involves 'risky behaviour' like drinking alcohol and this is something that they feel women should not do. On the other hand the Gen Z does feel like partaking in such activities because they find it entertaining, but not all of them prefer to engage in these activities. The reason for this is because of 'party-culture' and FOMO (fear of missing out), they feel that in their youth they should enjoy such activities because it is a trend which is globally spread

through social media and even movies. They have stated that they would like to experience their 'youth' before it's gone' and once a person ages, they have to behave in a particular way. This way of acting and behaving is a by-product of social media influence and globalization. An interesting observation is that over the course of time gender values and norms have become flexible in wake of social change due to processes such as globalization.

Feasts and festivals also project the local trends, for instance women prefer to wear formal clothes for the feast of St. Francis Xavier, which is celebrated on the 03<sup>rd</sup> of December every year. Women and their families prefer to go to Old Goa, despite a relic of the saint which is present in Bhatpal, Canacona. Regardless of long hours of travel, Boomer and Gen X women prefer to be dressed in formal attire for the feast at Old Goa. Since it's an occasion of celebration of the patron saint of Goa, women prefer to be formally dressed, this is a social expectation on these women.

A gradual change that has occurred among the Gen Z women that don't want to get involved in the traditions followed by the older women. The reason for this is because they it is embarrassing to travel while being dressed in formal outfits, especially with regard to travelling on public transport. The rise of individuality among women can be accredited to the process of social change and to factors such as education, globalization, change in occupation, as well as changing structures of religion, caste and family. However, the impact varies across generation of women and therefore it can be stated that fashion varies across generations of women and each era marks different stages of social change.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **WOMEN'S IDENTITY IN A GLOCALIZED WORLD**

The identity of women is not simply rested in women's hands alone, it is greatly impacted by the social environment and factors such as culture. Clifford Geertz's states that culture is 'an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and their attitudes toward life' (1973,p.89, in Holton, 2000, p. 142). Alexander and Thompson (2008) define culture as the way of life that is led by people or group, and this is the broadest definition of culture. By these definitions it can be understood that culture is embodied in symbols, and is used to convey meanings and to produce knowledge which is an integral part of people's lives. In this case, fashion can be seen as a form of symbol that conveys certain meanings to people.

Alexander and Thompson (2008) have made a reference to fashion as a consequence of the social and cultural factors. They have attributed the changing fashion and beauty trends to the overall changes in a society and to factors such as globalization. Davies and Egbuchu (2019), define globalization as a process of global expansion of economies along with social structures. This process initially concerned itself with the materialistic and economic aspects of the social world, which have eventually moved towards the cultural realm of societies. In a globalized world, the everyday lives of people are changing and this also affects the culture. This chapter focuses on culture as a dominant factor of social change which has altered women's lives and fashion is used as a tool to view transition in women's identity.

#### 4.1. THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN WOMEN'S FASHION

Culture is universally present and it varies universally as well. Culture is understood at a personal level by each individuals through the various events that occur in a society, these are understood in the context of the particular culture. Alexander and Thompson (2008) have referred to this personal level of understanding as 'cultural explanations', which simply consists of the 'subjective' meanings that people attach to the events that occur in their social world. These meanings are attached to things such as money, power and social institutions, these things have a certain meaning to them. The cultural explanations state that the reason for an individual's actions, behaviour, identity and even fashion is because of the frameworks of meanings that have been 'established' by a particular society.

The meaning to things already exist in the social world, it is the individual that learns about this through the process of socialisation. Socialisation involves family, peers, friends, school, mass media, religion and more. These meanings are deeply ingrained in the individual, that she feels that her choices are a direct outcome of her own volition, when in reality it is because of forces like culture (Alexander and Thompson, 2008). Therefore when it's stated that culture is being changed it implies that certain meanings are also being altered and this is often projected through symbols.

'Symbols' are defined as objects, acts, events, qualities, or relations which have certain cultural meanings associated with them (Geertz, 1973, in Alexander and Thompson, 2008). Fashion is also a part of symbols which convey certain meaning to people. Women's fashion has always been symbolic of various social as well as cultural elements. The following discussion highlights the cultural explanation of fashion and the meaning attached to it, along with the changes that are affecting and altering culture which also changes fashion.

Women were asked, what does fashion means to them? Some of the responses from the younger generation of women were: ‘fashion is a way of dressing, I can express my taste, it shows I’m trend and most people of my age are into it’, some women even said that ‘fashion is being stylish and to stand out’ and they have accounted ‘social media’, ‘peers’, ‘friends’, as the dominant factors impacting their fashion taste. The cultural meaning to fashion in this case implies that fashion is a social trend related to clothes and other associated things such as accessories, and even beauty standards. This trend of fashion is collectively selected and followed by the members of a particular group to ‘fit’ in (Blumer, 1901; Simmel 1904 in Davis, 1991). Under this view, fashion is collectively selected and is also a part of culture.

Fashion trends change and vary across societies and one can also notice that despite the major social phenomena such as globalization the changes in fashion is not uniform. In order for globalization to seep through the social structures, a ‘conductive’ social environment is needed. For instance, Mhamood exemplifies the role of religious ethics in a person's life as part of the community sentiment, she states that women who veil themselves is because of the principle of modesty as prescribed by Islam. What propels such behaviour is "fear" and "shame", the feeling of belonging to a particular community comes with the emotion of fear, the fear of being excluded, or the humility faced by a person if the norms and sanctions are not followed (in Fernandes, 2020). This implies that there is a cultural meaning associated to ‘modest fashion’ in Islam as a result women conform to this, similarly Mhamood also states the rigidity of social sanctions which does not let factors such as globalization to affect women’s fashion.

Similarly this chapter looks at women’s fashion from a cultural angle, which has been greatly altered and has transitioned as a result of processes such as globalization.



## 4.2 GLOBALIZATION AND TRANSITION IN FASHION

Twigg (2007) attributes changes in fashion to social change and social change is caused due to phenomena such as consumerism and globalization. Clothing is a complex mix of identity and the social reality. This process of social transition in fashion can be seen through the oral narratives of women. The incident of *modachem* Cossesanv is fit to explain how globalization affects women's identity and in turn fashion. Cossesanv is a Boomer woman who's known for her bold fashion, vibrant outfits, colorful hair and other such fashion trends. The reason for her fashion sense was a consequence of her working abroad for prolonged period of time, when she finally retired she came to Canacoana and continued the fashion which she followed abroad. She was one of the first women in her ward who did not conform to the code of modesty and therefore in a way to mock her, people labeled her *modachem* Cossesanv. The word *modachem* is derived from the Konkani word *modh* which means arrogance, which implies that one portrays one's worth in an overbearing manner (Konkani Sabdhkosh dictionary, 2020).

At this point in time, such clothes and beauty standards were not widely accepted. Labelling her was an attempt to curtail her deviant behaviour, however this did not stop her from wearing whatever she liked. What can be derived from this case is that, *modachem* Cossesanv, has been affected by globalization and the increased opportunities for women. It can be observed that it occupation that has played a major role in women's fashion trends. The Boomer women's, fashion sense stemmed from their occupations. The *Render* women wore *Kaapod* and *Vistid* because it was more comfortable and socially acceptable.

Even the shift in fashion can be traced to occupational and lifestyle changes, as can be seen among the younger generation of Boomer and Gen X women. Each caste has more or less left their traditional occupations, for instance people from *Render* caste

left their traditional business of toddy tapping and making alcohol in wake of tourism; in the case of the *Kumbar*s they have altogether left the occupation of pottery, with only one exception; whereas the *Chardos* who used to work in various occupations, such as service and other administrative posts during the Portuguese rule, have now shifted to serve the Indian government, some worked as police officers, civil servants, while others migrated abroad for work.

One of the major changes is the rise of education, which has broadened women's choice of career, similarly tourism and improvement in transport and communication have also resulted in lifestyle changes which is also a consequence of globalization. The symbolism in fashion has also drastically transitioned and is further elaborated through the following deliberation. Holton (2000) has done a research on the cultural consequences of globalization and they are: homogenization, polarization, and hybridization of culture. These aspects of change will be explained with the help of fashion.

#### 4.3 DEPICTING CULTURAL HOMOGENIZATION, POLARIZATION, AND HYBRIDIZATION THROUGH FASHION

It is essential to understand the link between fashion and culture in order to understand the relation between globalization and culture and how it affects women's identity. Fashion as a social process is collectively selected according to Blumer (1901); and one of the collective social forces is culture that affects women's fashion. As mentioned earlier, globalization greatly affects culture, while there are positive changes such as the expansion of economies, societies and cultures, it also has a flipside to it. This flipside can be seen through.

### 4.3.1 Homogenization of Culture and Fashion

Homogenization of culture is defined as the process of mixing cultures, which implies merging of the local culture with the global cultures, resulting in similarities in cultures across societies. With the rise in mixing of cultures there is severe erosion of the local cultures because more often than not, the global cultures act as the dominant culture which lead to the suppression of the local culture. This suppression of the local cultures need not always be forced and coerced, it can be subtle and subconscious. This process of homogenization can be illustrated through the shift from traditional apparels to contemporary outfits of the Catholic women.



Picture 4.1: Comparing the Old and New Fashion Trends of Women.

Source: Respondents.

The comparison of the two pictures reflects the change in attire from traditional *Kaapod* to dresses and this trend is quite uniform among the Catholic women in Goa. Women were asked about their changing taste in fashion, to which they responded that it's merely because it is the 'latest fashion'. Many of the respondents have attributed mass media as a cause for change in their fashion. Twigg (2007) states that mass-media such as social media affects women's fashion as they are bound to consume global fashion. The extent of blending of cultures have resulted in the suppression of the local

culture, for instance women were questioned about ethnic clothes and a general response has been the pan Indian '*chuddidar*' or even '*sarees*', however the older generation of women consider *Kaapod* and *Vistid* to be traditional clothes. This example depicts the impact of domination of the dominant pan- Indian and global cultures on women. This has also led to the erosion of traditional knowledge on the different types of dresses of women.

While it is true that Goa is a part of India and therefore the pan Indian outfits are also a part of the Goan culture, the debate is not about *sarees* or *kurtas* to be the traditional clothes, however it is about acknowledging the fact that, what is considered to be traditional by the older generation of women (that is the Boomer and Gen X women) is not the same as the younger generation of women (Millennial and Gen X women). It has to be taken into consideration that Goa's has its own unique history and past. The traditional Goan clothes cannot be replaced with the pan Indian traditional clothes, because in doing so one is dismissing a crucial aspect of Goan history. The clothes are not mere fabric, they are the material representation of women's identity. For instance, the clothes worn by the ancestors of the *Render* and *Kumbar* caste women were not only about fashion, it has shed light on women's lives, the functional value of clothes was related to their identity, their occupation and in turn about the circumstances that they have lived. Simply by reducing the 'traditional' clothing to the relatively newer 'traditional-pan-Indian clothes' takes away the historical value of clothes which were once adorned by the Catholic women.

The more tragic part here is that such instances are often unintentional. If a society is completely immersed in other cultures which are subtly omnipresent, then the society is at a greater risk of losing long held cultural elements. This can hugely impact the sense of belongingness one has to one's social group and gradually it also

affects the individual, it can be in the form of alienation as suggested by Marx (1927, Ritzer, 2008).

#### 4.3.2 The Stigma of Caste and Homogenization of Fashion

Another peculiar intra-Catholic cultural homogenization is that of homogenization of women's fashion, especially the attires. As a part of the oral history, the respondents have stated that there was stigma associated to caste. The *Chardos* have narrated incidents of caste based discrimination which has been done by their own caste members in the past. For instance, Philoza, was a *Chardo* woman, who openly made derogatory remarks towards people who perform occupations involving physical labour and often these people were from the *Sudhir* castes, who worked as potters, toddy tappers or even people who worked in the fields.

When she would go for mass, she would never sit next to people from castes others than the *Chardos*. Respondents have also stated that there was an unsaid division in the church. The people who were wealthy, such as the owner of lands, also known as the *Bhatkars* and castes such as the *Chardos* would occupy the left hand side front benches, on the right hand front side the well- to -do farmers would sit and the castes such as the *Render* and *Kumbar* caste would sit on back benches. This division was also due to the preference of the joint families wanting to sit together as a social unit of family. There have also been cases, when people were openly insulted because of their occupation and caste. For instance, respondents have said that, Philoza, would hold her nose and make faces at women from other castes if they were to even cross paths with her. The stigma of 'dirt' or impurity due to sweat or even their work and living environments has been associated with caste who practiced physical labour.

To do away with this stigma, and to improve the standards of their life, many of these castes such as the *Kumbars* and *Render*s have left their traditional occupations.

It can be widely observed that only the older generation of women wear traditional clothes such as the *Kaapod*. Many women have left their traditional *Vistid* because of the stigma associated with it, stigmas such as their caste based identities. Many Gen Z women are reluctant in accepting their caste based identity, especially from the *Sudhir* caste. In order to do away with the stigma of caste they have opted to move closer to the homogenization of fashion, which is wearing of dresses which are similar to other women and which are not associated to caste.

#### 4.3.3 Polarization of Fashion and Culture

The polarization of culture, refers to the bifurcation of two or more polarities that either support the current form of culture or are counter to it. Polarization, is a relative cause of the domestic cleavages converging due to the national and even transnational amalgamation of cultures, resulting in the suppression of domestic cultures. Nevertheless in terms of fashion, this polarity can be viewed from a different angle. Polarity in fashion can be viewed as a result of the changes in the culture. The way Boomer women dressed and behaved is significantly different than the younger generation of Gen Z women.

An instance of polarization can be seen between the relatively older and younger generation of women. The Boomer women, even today constantly taunt the younger generation of women for the kind of clothes they wear. Comments such as: ‘They are forward’, ‘they don’t have respect for elder and they’re far too gone’, ‘if they want to dress in skimpy outfits then they should avoid dressing at all’. On the other hand the Millennial and Gen Z women find the older women’s fashion to be ‘outdated’, ‘they only like to criticize, what do they know about fashion’. This is the polarity between the traditional views of fashion versus contemporary views of fashion. Likewise these polarities are a result of



generational gap in fashion. Polarization, can also lead to rifts between the members of the same cultures, which also negatively impact the social relations among members.

#### 4.3.4 Cultural Hybridization of Fashion

Cultural hybridization is the mixing of various cultural elements and the formation of a relatively newer form of hybrid culture. On a global level, various local cultures mingle with different cultural elements that results in a glocalized form of culture. In terms of globalization of women's fashion it is not limited to local and national style of fashion but has crossed borders. Hybridization of culture can be seen in the form of clothes worn by women as well as the mixing of global values through cultural products. The widespread information and communication messages about global products are termed as cultural products (Alexander and Thompson, 2008, p.94-95).

An instance of cultural hybridization can be the transition in women's occupation from caste based occupations to occupations based on professional credibility. Among the Boomer women, only the *Chardo* women worked for paid labour as teachers, even so they wore clothes which were quite similar to the outfits they wore for religious ceremonies and occasions and were more in tune with the code of modesty. However if we are to compare the Boomers with the Gen X and Millennial women, the latter category wears different clothes, which are based on the social expectation of their clothes. Many of these women state that this shift in clothes was mostly because of their exposure to mass media such as TV, glamour-fashion magazines, and fashion trends that were trending among their peers. Since the women were expected to dress in this way, because it was followed by their peers and it was socially accepted, they 'didn't bother' with the taunts of the Boomer women, who were their mothers, mother-in-laws, or other distant relatives.

However cultural hybridization also has its limitations. While on a positive side it has brought is greater freedom and variety of fashion for women, on a flip side it has also led to demise of traditional forms of outfits. The diminishing Catholic caste system is also associated with the diminishing cultural aspects of clothes. For instance, the unique style of draping of the *Kaapod* has almost been forgotten, the jewellery patterns and ornaments, have become outdated and have been replaced with newer designs. These elements of fashion were not merely objects of beauty, but also carried the legacy of women's identities and are a part of the Goan historical tradition. However this aspect of cultural hybridization too has its own pros and cons and has played its role in shaping women's fashion as well as identities.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION**

This research shows the impact of caste, culture and religion in shaping women's identities and fashion. Each of these components have impacted the transition in women's identities and fashion. It has been observed that caste, family, neighbours, peers, culture and religion plays an important role in moulding women's identity. These components have played a crucial role in assigning social gender roles to women and this is reflected through the code of modesty, expected through behaviour and clothes for women. The symbolism depicted in lifecycle rituals through seven sacraments focusses on the socialization of women to wear certain type of clothes to depict their different stages of life. Positive social sanctions are associated with conformity and negative social sanctions are assigned upon deviation

It is evident that women's identities are bound the 'collective conscience' of family, caste and religion, these common elements weaves together culture. This is to state that culture has a prominent role to play in moulding identities. The older generation of women have faced relatively more severe forms of sanctions related to clothes, this was due the nature of the social set up. The intimate link between joint family, caste and religion resulted in constant social sanctions being assigned and expectation of conformity to the role of being an 'ideal' woman.

Often this idealism stems from, the effigy of Blessed Virgin Mary, sexual purity and the importance given to virginity. Therefore it was expected of women to conform to the code of modesty, which implies that women's clothes should not be sexually provocative. These values are still revered by the older generation of women. However, the younger generation of women are more prone to individuality. This implies that women's preference in fashion is bound to their individual choice. It is true that the

code of modesty is still continued because it is a huge part of the Catholic culture, nevertheless it has become more flexible in contemporary period.

The roles associated with women, has a huge impact on their identities. The older generation of women, have ingrained their roles as part of their identity, they perform the role of daughters, mothers, wives as well as daughters-in-law. They would keep in mind all the demands from these roles. For instance modest clothes and white veils were supposed to be worn by unmarried women to fit the ideal of being 'pure' which was associated to virginity. Wearing modest and decent clothes was a reflection of their adherence to their religious values and gender roles and hence women had to wear clothes in accordance to their marital status. Another instance of marital status reflected through clothes is that only the unmarried and married women could wear colourful clothes. The widows could not wear colourful clothes as they were expected to live a simple life and to mourn for the loss of her husband. These examples project women's identity and different social roles which they had to fulfill through fashion.

The norms of dressing are staunchly followed by the older generation of women. Over the course of time they did not view gender roles as something as roles but as an integral part of their identity and life as women. On the contrary the younger generation of women have been able to explore their individuality. These women have stated that they wear clothes of their choice and also conform to the code of modesty. This transition gradually began with the Gen X women and has augmented among the Millennial and Gen Z women. Women do realise that they are subjected to certain expectations relating to their social roles and therefore these women will conform to the role of modesty but would not make it an indistinguishable part of their identities.

Similarly, the factor of caste has a huge impact on the fashion choice of the older generation of women. For the Boomer generation of women their occupations

were also linked to their castes. The clothes adorn by them had more functional utility to them and often the kind of clothes they wore for work and for mass was similar. This was true for the *Kumbars*, *Renders*, as well as the *Chardos*. On the other hand the younger generation of women have stated that they wear different clothes for different occasions. Their occupations are not related to their caste. The findings of this research highlights the transition that has occurred in women's lives and their identities through different institutions of caste, culture and religion reflected through clothes.

Globalization as one of the predominant factors has brought drastic changes in the fashion trends as well as women's identities. It has its own set of pros and cons. On one hand this process has led to the growth of individualism among women, by means of increased economic opportunities. On the other hand it is quite evident that it has brought changes in social structures such as religion, caste and even culture.

It is important to acknowledge people's willingness and openness for an economic change which also made them accept the socio-cultural changes. Globalization accounts for change in women's lifestyle and fashion. When this global trend is fused with the local trends, it amounts for cultural changes. The theory of cultural globalization explains this aspect of transition in culture and concomitantly the role it plays in shaping women's identities. The process of homogenization of culture, which is the fusion of the larger dominant global culture with the local culture, often leads to the overshadowing of the latter category. This can be seen in various assumptions about 'traditional clothes' of the Catholic women in Canacona. The younger generation of women presume the *saree* and *kurtas* to be the traditional ethnic wear of Catholic women, whereas the older generation of women consider *Kaapod* and *Vistid* to be the traditional clothes.

The change in viewing the pan-Indian traditional clothes as traditional clothes of Catholic women stems from homogenisation of culture among the younger generations. This amounts for the loss of the unique socio-cultural as well as historical aspects of identities associated with traditional dresses which are being lost in wake of homogenisation of culture. People were also keen on disassociating from the caste stigma linked to their socio-economic conditions. Globalization has also amounted in occupational shift which has also resulted in disappearing caste. Therefore one can rarely find women dressed in the traditional clothes which often project their caste-identities.

The Polarization of culture on the other hand refers to the formation of polarities within the cultural groups. These extremities can be seen in the contradicting views of traditional versus contemporary views held about women's fashion by the older and younger generation of women. This often leads to conflicting views which can cause an imbalance in the social group. The older generation of women do not approve the contemporary fashion of younger generation of women. On the other hand the younger generation of women do not like the 'rigid' mentality of the older generation associated with fashion. This rift often fosters bitter feelings among the two generations of women.

The Hybridization of culture, looks at combination of the global with the local which is glocalisation of culture. This hybridization of culture stems from the historical changes such as the growth of information and communication technology as well as tourism in Canacona. Since the 1990s, these changes have amounted in hybridisation of women's clothes. An instance of this is that of the traditional *Vistid*, women still continue to wear traditional type of *Vistid*, with cotton material and pleats and sleeves. However, today one can observe that *Vistid* has a contemporary twist, some like to add a sweetheart neckline, use different material to wear this dress. This is an example of



hybridization of global and local forms of fashion. Women have stated that their fashion sense has been greatly influenced by mass media, especially social media and the availability of vast variety of option sin materials for clothes is also a consequence of globalization.

The growth of globalization has amounted for the growth of individualism among women. The rise of individuality is reflective of changing social structures such as the family, which has also brought flexibility of the otherwise rigid norms associated to fashion. This deliberation is to state that with the rise of individuality, women have been able to attain more freedom, such as the freedom of wearing fashionable clothes of their choice. Therefore it would be interesting to learn more about the cultural aspect of globalization. To understand why only certain cultures are more susceptible to phenomena such as globalization. And to know what role other factors play in causing or restricting social change. This is the further scope of the study. Further studies can learn more about the social functioning of social structures and the occurring cultural changes. This is to state that fashion can be a tool a lens depicting social reality and social change.

The research been able to identify certain social problems, such as the problem of ill-treatment faced by several women which is related to denem (trousseau) often a subtler form of dowry. In a way, it has been successful at looking at women's lives from a holistic view, which has enabled to identify the problems faced by women. This trend can be seen among the fashion trends related to gold, or even grandiose celebrations which demand lavish clothes and accessories. People often fall prey to such trends, which can pinch them financially.

Symbols have been a key component in learning about fashion and the social aspects attached to fashion through them. Symbols have been documented, such as the

wearing of veils as well as the socio-cultural reasons of dressing in traditional clothes. It has also drawn a comparison between the older generation of women (Boomer and Gen X) and younger generation of women (Millennial and Gen Z) women. Albeit women's identities have been influenced by caste, religion and culture through various norms and sanctions. Their conformity to these norms and sanctions relies on women's willingness to accept them. Often this acceptance or rejection to fashion and social change depends on the way women have been socialised.

Although this research only focuses on women identity and fashion. The further scope of this research can be broadened to other gender categories across different talukas in Goa in the form of a comparative study. The social institutions of caste, religion and culture may have changed but still play an integral role in socialising roles related to the identity of women. Therefore it can be stated that despite the social changes, the 'we' feeling of belong to a particular caste, religion and culture foster group identity. This social set up also help individuals to associate themselves with their social identities and therefore despite several changes women still conform to their 'social' expectations. Learning about identity can bring forward the nature of the social set up and the way it deals with social change. This social change can be studied in multiple ways through social researches such as this dissertation.

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## Appendix I

### Glossary

*Almanchem Jevonn* - A get together of family, friends and neighbours to honour and recall the ancestors. A synonym is '*Bhikraimche jevonn*' or food for the poor.

*Appovneacho dis*- This means a formal invite for the groom to visit the bride's place soon after the wedding to collect the bride's trousseau.

*Bamonnn*- The catholic caste which has similar characteristics of the Hindu Brahmin (Dokras, 2020).

*Brahmin*- Referred to as the caste category to be at the top of Hindu caste hierarchy (Dokras, 2020).

*Bhatkars*- Owners of land, especially cultivable land (Sabdhkosh dictionary, 2020).

*Dennem*- Wedding trousseau of the bride (Konkani Sabdhkosh dictionary, 2020).

*Chardo*- A caste category which is often considered as the Catholic version of Hindu *Kshatriya* caste (Dokras, 2021).

*Chuddo*- Compilation of colourful bangles in green, yellow, white and even red colours, worn by the bride to signal to the world that she is getting married.

*Chudidars*- A pan-Indian form of garment having pants and a torso length till knee length top with slits at either side near the hips.

*Chulhas*- Small earthen or brick stove (Merriam-Webster dictionary, 2023).

*Haldi*- A pre-wedding ceremony celebrated by the Hindus.

*Kaapod*- A cotton *saree* draped by Goan women.

*Kalavant*- Derogatory word for sex workers

*Kumbar*- A sub-caste category within sudir caste, who worked as potters.

*Pallu*- The end piece of the *Kaapod*, which was pleated and hung from the shoulder, used to cover the head or back of the person wearing the *Kaapod*.

*Raibaris*- People who are traditional match-makers in Goa.

*Render*- A sub-caste category within *sudir* caste, who practiced toddy tapping and made traditional alcohol or Urrack.

*Roce*- The anointing and blessing of the bride and groom symbolically through coconut milk and oil. Ceremony which involves poring of coconut milk on the bride and groom and is similar to the Hindu ceremony of Haldi

*San Jao*- A festival celebrated in remembrance of St. John the Baptist, who leaped in his mother's womb when Virgin Mary visited the saint's mother.

*Sudir*- A caste group within Catholicism which is an amalgamation of the Vaishya-sudir.

*Urrack*- alcohol made from the steamed juices of fermented fruit liquid such as toddy.

*Vaishya*- The third category in the Hindu caste system, who are involved in the commercial and agricultural occupations (Dokras, 2020).

*Vojjem*- Konkani word for burden but in the wedding context it involves sweets and other food items given as a token to the bride's in-laws.



## Appendix II

### Pictures



Picture 5.1. Interviews with Respondents.

Source: Researcher.



Picture 5.2: *Roce* Ceremony during 1960s.

Source: Respondents.



Picture 5.3: Clothes Worn During Good Friday.

Source: Researcher.



Picture 5.4: Weddings in the Mid to Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Source: Respondents.



Picture 5.5: Older Women Wearing *Kaapod*.

Source: Respondents.