

## **THE INFLUENCE OF OBSERVATIONAL LEARNING ON FASHION: THE CASE OF KANDYAN KINGDOM OF SRI LANKA**

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The Kandyan era of Sri Lanka (from 15<sup>th</sup> Century to 1815) was a well demarcated era in dress evaluation in the history of Sri Lanka. During this era, Western (The Portuguese, The Dutch, and The British) and Eastern (South Indian and Siamese) influences played a pivotal role in influencing the fashion of costumes. Various designs, colour, novel dress items and patterns, silhouette, accessories, headdresses, materials, and methodology of wearing were introduced to the Kingdom through foreign influences.

Many historical records, temple murals testify that foreign costumes had been considered by the Kings of the Kandyan Kingdom as symbols of displaying their high social status to the society. Foreigners were always subjected to thorough observation by locals. Foreigners' social etiquettes, customs, religion, language and dress were fast rooted into Kandyan society. Foreign fashions trickled down from royalty and the elites to commoners. Royalties showed immense interest in Western dress habits. The royalties were always associated with foreign diplomats, who were more skillful, wealthy, powerful, fashionable hence attractive at that time. Foreigners were always more trust worthy people to the King during political crisis. As a result of that the royalty yearned to copy the Western social etiquettes.

Therefore, it can be suggested that live or symbolic models influenced the Kandyan King. The elite people also got some influences on their costumes by observing the king. This process of influence on costumes has been described as observational learning by the psychologist Bandura. According to his theory, a person will learn by observing another person. According to Bandura the person who tends to observe another's behavior, should have an important quality of intelligence. Ancient royalties and elite people were indeed intelligent people otherwise they may not have got such a high position. Therefore, they have the ability and the intelligence to fulfill all the criteria explained by Bandura.

The methodology of the research was based on the 'Grounded Theory Method'. The analysis is explored through actual descriptions made by observer participants, historical records, murals of the period and finally through a comparison of the elements of theories of former philosophers. Validity is tested from triangulation and comparing with formerly established theories related to the field.

Observational learning had effects on the evolution of new dress habits in the Kandyan society. The royalties and elites learnt new dress habits such as trouser, jacket, sandals and hats under foreign influences. According to the above discussed influencing process (observational learning), it is clear that always a reliable person is subjected to observation by fashion followers. These Reliable persons then became fashion icons.