CHAPTER - II
THE NATURE OF FASHION

From the Classical Theories of Simmel and Veblen to the Semiotic study of Fashion and the Post modernism of Jean Baudrillard, fashion as a process has acquired new dimensions and meanings. The distinguishing feature of fashion from other social processes is the inherent contradiction within the fashion system; This is the well known 'patriarchal double bind:' that requires the interest of women in the aesthetic production as gendered subject in order to be a full woman, while at the same time condemning fashion as a trivial occupation for silly girls. It is this ambivalence regarding fashion that sets it apart from other aspects of social life.

The intent of this chapter is to introduce the 'nature' of "fashion" as understood by sociologists, social psychologists and also by the "new fashion theorists". The study of fashion is of necessity an interdisciplinary one and accordingly we have drawn upon a variety of approaches to illustrate its various facets. The objective of this chapter is therefore twofold; firstly, to discuss various aspects of the nature of the fashion system, and secondly, to describe some of the essential features of fashion as a social process.
Sociologists see fashion as a part of culture. Culture may be understood as a signifying system, as a way in which society's experiences, values and beliefs are communicated through practices, artifacts and institutions. The 'Collins Dictionary of Sociology' defines culture as:

"the way of life of an entire society including codes of manners, dress, language, rituals, norms of behaviour and systems of belief."

Further, fashion also forms an important part of those aspects of material culture which govern the production and use of artefacts or the material products actually used by the society, namely, clothing.

2.1 ETYMOLOGY

The etymology of the word fashion relates it back via the Latin Factio, which means making or doing, to Facere, which means to make or to do. The original sense of fashion, referred to activities; fashion was something that one did unlike now, when fashion is something that one wears. The original sense of fashion also refers to the idea of a fetish, or of fetish objects, facere also being the root of the word `fetish'. And it may be that items of fashion and clothing are the most fetishised commodities, produced and consumed within capitalist society. Various
definitions of Fashion have been suggested as follows:

Roland Barthes defines fashion as:

"A system of meanings, one which differentiates between clothes, stressing the significance of detail and locating the wearer within a constantly changing symbolic order".

Polhemus and Procter (1978) have pointed out that in a Western society the term "fashion" is often used as a synonym for the terms "adornment", "style" and "dress".

Polhemus and Procter 1978:9

"Elizabeth Wilson defines fashion as: "Modes of behaviour or dress in which the key feature is rapid and continual changing of style".

Elizabeth Wilson 1985

While studying fashion it is important says Malcolm Bernard in "Fashion as Communication" to understand that while all clothing is an adornment, not all adornments are fashions. It could also be said that, while all clothing is an adornment, not all clothing is fashion, for the same reason. And it could be said that while all fashion is adornment, not all fashion is clothing.
2.2 NATURE OF FASHION

Fashion and clothing are seen having an ambivalent status, at once both positive and negative and this is related to the ambivalent status of creative or cultural productions in general, and is further complicated by its relation to gender.

Fashion is rightly or wrongly, primarily associated with Women (Wilson 1990:209). It may be argued that fashion and clothing are therefore valued in relation to the status of women. In other words, cultural valuation accorded to women and feminine values, at least metaphorically, transposition fashion and clothing. That is, either 'worshipped' unreasonably or 'dismissed' as secondary phenomena. Barthes after Freud refers to this phenomenon by saying that fashion 'reproduces, on the level of clothing, the mythic situation of women in Western civilisation, is at once sublime and childlike' (Barthes 1983:242). There are two options open to women, sublimity or childishness, and these are reproduced or carried over the realm of fashion and clothing.

This ambiguity of status is alluded to in the art historical work of Pollock and Parker titled 'Old mistresses', Pollock and Parker contend that when men are engaged in cultural production, it is more likely to be
referred to and valued as transcendence and revelation, and when women are engaged in cultural production, it is more likely to be dismissed as mere fancy. When men are engaged in cultural production, the results of that production are more likely to be called art, and when women are engaged in it, the results are more likely to be called Craft or Design.

For Simmel, fashion is "feminine," because through the mechanism of imitation and distinction women can find in fashion what is denied to them elsewhere. Patrizia Calefato (1997) says that Simmel's definition of "feminine" is both an ideological judgement on the detention of women within the socio-cultural dualism - "masculine/feminine", and the expression of a whole system of values which interpret fashion according to the predetermined schemes of a patriarchal society.

2.3 CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE FASHION PROCESS

The fashion process in modern times can also be seen as a dynamic mechanism of change through which a potential fashion object is transmitted from its creation to public introduction, discernible public acceptance, and eventual obsolescence. Fashion process is a special case of the general life-cycle and fashions have the most distinct life - cycles of all consumer products (Sproles 1981). Conceptually it occurs in six sequential phases:
1. **Invention and introduction.** It refers to a source of fashion objects, such as a fashion designer, entrepreneur, or consumer innovator which creates an object that is noticeably different from its predecessors.

2. **Fashion leadership.** A small section of the most fashion-conscious consumers adopt and introduces the fashion to the public.

3. **Increasing social visibility.** Fashion spreads cumulatively; fashion as it receives increasing endorsement from new fashion-conscious consumers, thus becomes more visible among a wider range of social groups and in varied life-styles.

4. **Conformity within and across social groups.** Fashion achieves social legitimacy, and the compelling forces of conformity, communications, and mass marketing propagate widespread adoption of a given mode of fashion.

5. **Social saturation.** Fashion becomes a daily occurrence in the lives of many, and in fact becomes overused, thus setting a stage for its decline.

6. **Decline and obsolescence.** New fashions are introduced as replacements of the socially saturated fashion, and use of the old fashion recedes.
The above process as follows:

**STAGES OF THE FASHION PROCESS**

1. **INVENTION AND INTRODUCTION**
2. **FASHION LEADERSHIP**
3. **INCREASING SOCIAL VISIBILITY**
4. **CONFORMITY WITHIN AND ACROSS SOCIAL GROUPS**
5. **SOCIAL SATURATION**
6. **DECLINE AND OBSCURENCE**

The fashion industry is highly globalised. A garment might begin its life in a sweatshop in South Korea or Sri Lanka and end up in a shopping mall in Houston, Texas. It might start at one of the giant Italian mills near Lake Como and end up on the bargain rail of a boutique in Singapore.

A Japanese designer may not show his collections in Tokyo but may do so in Paris which is more convenient for foreign store buyers. So the sample clothes are flown from Japan to France for fashion week. After the catwalk show watched by the world’s press and buyers, the
samples remain in Paris for 2 weeks for the stores to place orders while
the press file their excited first reactions to the new shapes to their new-
papers.

In due course the samples are flown on to Yamamoto's press office
in Manhattan. American magazines, have checked with the store buyers
which pieces they are ordering, need to photograph them for their
collection issues. A New York fashion editor has the brainwave of
styling the pictures in the Seychelles, so the Japanese clothes are again
packed into trunks and flown back across the Atlantic, to be
photographed on a Swiss model by a German photographer.

Three months later, when the pictures are published, a jet-lagged
Kuwaiti woman flicks through a copy of the new *Vogue* in her hotel
bedroom. Her eye is caught by a air of black copra trousers being
modelld underneath a palm tree.

'Those I like; she thinks, and directs her limousine driver to the
designer stor.

Back in Kuwait she wears the trousers to an all-girls tea party.
Later they are delivered to the Meshal dry-cleaner on Sharq Jabr
Mubarak Street. And there, since the never troubles to collect them, they
remain, a modest addition to the hundreds of thousands of pounds' worth of unclaimed Arab designer cleaning.

This view of the diffusion of fashion and its eventual obsolescence must however be seen as a part of the capitalist system of production and reproduction of class positions, Marxist thinking, (which will be described later in chapter three) would view the fashion system largely as involved in the reproduction of class identities. However, it is equally true that the fashion system is responsible for stimulating and shaping consumption patterns. As a keen observer and insightful critic of the inner working of the fashion industry, Nicholas Coleridge (1988) has described the functioning of the fashion industry which he names the 'Fashion Conspiracy' in the following way:

"But the fashion conspiracy is not simply a conspiracy of expensive clothes being marked up around the world, it is a conspiracy of taste and compromise: the prerogative of the international fashion editors in determining how the world dresses, and how their objectivity can be undermined, the despotic vanity of the designers and the ruthlessness of the store buyers in distributing their immense 'open to buy' budget. Often the conspiracy is a conspiracy of silence. A magazine goes to great lengths to make bad clothes look good, because the designer is
advertising heavily in its pages. Major designers exert extraordinary pressure on department stores for more prominent square-footage while simultaneously pirating ideas from smaller rivals. Department stores, in turn, condone espionage to add a particular label to their designer room.

The invention of licensing (the means by which designers rent their names to the manufacturers of to and sardine cans) has heightened paranoia since it emphasizes the chasm between the successful and the less successful. Fashion designer Pierre Cardin has 840 licences, ranging from scuba-diving suits to designer igloos, which produce an estimated annual personal income of $10 million. French Fashion designer Yves Saint Laurent, already licensed up to his sun-glasses, is pledged to a massive escalation over the next three years, and is vying with Italian designer Gianni Versace to be the first designer to gain a full listing on a stock market. A designer by his labour builds up a reputation which is his cultural or symbolic capital in the field of fashion. The device of a license permits him to convert some of this cultural capital into economic capital. The average fashion designer has one or two licences or perhaps none at all. This is not surprising; one of the structural characteristics of the later phase of capitalism, called monopoly capital, is the concentration of economic power on the production side in a few hands. Thus most
industries are dominated by a few large firms. In this sense, the fashion industry today is typical of any other industry in monopoly capital.

All the time, however, the prospect of attracting the first licensee becomes more remote. The designer billionaires in their Italian palazzos and French chateaux retain staff to administer their licencing deals and to solicit new ones, and with every new licence their celebrity is more firmly established. It is a conspiracy to perpetuate income from endorsement, which looks set to continue for the next fifty years.

Designers like Ralph Lauren, Calvin Klein and Yves St. Laurent whose fashion empires are richer than entire third world countries have generated a powerful new force in the world economy: 'designer money'. More significantly, designer money has transformed the social status of designers. Few fashion designers before the mid-seventies were regarded as even half-respectable. At the most basic level, fashion designers were not asked to dinner by their customers. If they were invited to a customer's wedding they were seated inconspicuously at the back. This is no longer so. The relentless growth of the designer empires, and their diversification into billion-dollar licensing arrangements, has upscaled them to the status of Chief Executive Officers of multi-national corporations.
"We have become world businessmen," the New York designer Oscar de la Renta, told Nicholas Coleridge. "In the old days fashion designers - seamstresses really, made and sold only dresses; today we sell a lifestyle to the whole world. We have moved into more and more areas of influence, and this has made a huge difference to how we are perceived. It has made the career more socially acceptable. And I think that in the end all social structures come to depend on power and influence. And, of course, on the influence and power that money brings." (Quoted by N. Coleridge in 'The Fashion Conspiracy').

2.4 FASHION, MODERNISM AND CAPITALISM

An essential feature of the fashion system is rapid and continual change of styles. This perpetual change is created by the fashion industry, by advertising and mass media. Indeed, we may assert that the prevailing standards of beauty are more or less arbitrarily imposed on the consumer by the fashion system. The move from long skirts to short skirts has exactly the same fashion value as the opposite move, and both moves will precipitate the same effect of beauty.

Fashion may be presented as a series of novelties: it may be seen as one shape, colour, texture and so on replacing another, endlessly. These novelties, these new things, are not novel or new for very long,
and fashion soon adapts to even the most outrageous designs. As Fox-Genovese suggests, shock is one of fashion’s tools of the trade ‘what fashion can always coopt is the outrageous’ (Fox-Genovese 1987:9).

Consequently, what was once shocking and outrageous becomes taken for granted. The system that was supposedly being opposed soon recuperates and may even benefit from the shock. To give an example one can think of the way in which punk clothing may now be purchased on any high street in mind Fox-Genovese points out the ‘painful irony in social rebels’ having to view the signs of their rebellion sported in exquisite materials by those they thought they were rebelling against’ (Fox-Genovese 1987:9).

We asked our respondents about their knowledge of new sources of fashion in ‘which western influence’ was a very big factor for LSR and ‘media’ for Gargi. It is interesting to note that shock value of fashion too was recognised as an important component of fashion.

Calefato contends that if clothing is a language then fashion is a system of verbal and non-verbal signs through which this language expresses itself in the context of modernity. Certainly fashions existed prior to what is commonly called the "modern period", though always among elite and thus restricted circles, coexisting with the dress and
customs of various social groups"

**TABLE 2.1: SOURCES OF NEW FASHIONS BY COMPOSITE INDEX OF STATUS LEVEL**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of New Fashions</th>
<th>L.S.R. College Composite Index of Status Level</th>
<th>Total Composite Index of Status Level</th>
<th>Gargi College Composite Index of Status Level</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Middle</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>Lower Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIA-T.V</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FASHION SHOWS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLLEGE</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAPER GROUP</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WESTERN INFLUENCE</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOVIES &amp; ACTOR</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TO SHOCK PEOPLE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MYSELF &amp; MY STYLE</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Braudel presents a version of this in volume one of 'civilisation and capitalism'. He says that where society remained more or less stable fashion was less likely to change.

(Calefato (1997).

Flugel’s version of distinction between costume and fashion which can be seen as 'fixed' and 'modish (or fashionable)' types of clothing is related to 'certain differences of social organisation (Flugel 1930:129). According to Flugel, the differences between these two types of clothing may be most clearly understood in terms of there opposite relations to
time and space. This is neither as difficult nor as complicated as it sounds. Basically, fixed costume 'changes slowly in time... but varies greatly in space' and modish costume 'changes very rapidly in time... but varies comparatively little in space' (Flugel 1930:129-30).

Polhemus and Procter develop these ideas still further. They explicitly identify fixed dress with anti-fashion and modish dress with fashion. They drop all the value-laden and potentially offensive references to whether a culture is western or non-western. And they develop the analysis of the political connections between fashion, anti-fashion, and between different social and cultural groups, in relation different conceptions of time. These ideas are introduced and pursued by looking at two gowns that were the objects of much attention in 1953, Queen Elizabeth II's coronation gown and a gown from Dior's 1953 collection.

The Queen's coronation gown, they suggest, is 'traditional, 'fixed' and anti-fashion... designed to function as a symbol of continuity' (Polhemus and Procter 1978:12). Dior's 'tulip line' dress, however, was fashionable. It 'announced that a new season had arrived' and, in being different to the 'princess line' which had preceded it in 1951, functioned as a symbol of discontinuity and change. Items of anti-fashion, like the
Queen's robe, are meant to stress continuity, in this case the continuity of the monarchy and the British Empire. They are concerned with the maintenance of the status quo. Items of fashion, like Dior's dresses, are meant to emphasise discontinuity or change, and Polhemus and Procter show how the New Look of 1947 was replaced by a whole series of new looks. Polhemus and Procter relate these two gowns and their functions to the understanding of time that they reflect.

"Time as they say, drawing on the work of Evans Pritchard, 'is a socio-cultural concept which reflects and expresses a society's or a person's real or ideal social situation."

Polhemus and Procter 1978:13

The concept of the time itself can be used to express a culture's views about the world and its contents. The analyst can see, then, in a person's or a society's understanding of time, how that person sees or would like to see herself/himself as we saw the perceptions of girls from LSR and Gargi. Whereas LSR girls saw themselves as modern, independent, self aware and self willed, the Gargi girls were traditional, home bound, having conservative ideas about sexuality and women's issues. This understanding of time is itself expressed or reflected in dress. "traditional anti-fashion adornment is a model of time as continuity, (the
maintenance of the status quo) and fashion" say Polhemus and Procter, "is a model of time as change." This can be seen by looking at the difference of attitudes between LSR and Gargi regarding Dress and sexuality. (See Table 2.4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2.2: PREFERENCE FOR DRESS BY COMPOSITE INDEX OF STATUS LEVEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREFERENCE FOR DRESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composite Index of Status Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FASHIONABLE &amp; NEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNFASHIONABLE &amp; NONDESCRIPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMFY/SIMPLE/SMART/LEGENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASUAL DENIM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMART MAY NO BE IN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EThNIC SUIT, SALWAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JEANS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JEANS/SALWAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2.3: FEELING ABOUT WEARING A DRESS THAT EMPHASIZES THE BODY BY COMPOSITE INDEX OF STATUS LEVEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feeling about wearing a dress that emphasizes the body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composite Index of Status Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMFORTABLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNCOMFORTABLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHERS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25
TABLE 2.4: IS IT WRONG FOR WOMAN TO FLAUNT HER SEXUALITY? BY COMPOSITE INDEX OF STATUS LEVEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is it wrong for Woman to flaunt her sexuality?</th>
<th>L.S.R. College</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Gargi College</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Composite Index of Status Level</td>
<td></td>
<td>Composite Index of Status Level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Middle</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>Lower Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>47.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>42.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Craik (Jennifer) however asserts that both Simmel's and Flugel's this theoretical frame works, with their rigid distinction between traditional and modern has produced a remarkably inflexible and unchanging analysis of fashion. Moreover, it fails to account for the circulation in clothing codes and stylistic registers in non-European societies. The relation of bodies to clothes is far deeper than the equation of fashion with the superficial products that 'consumer culture' allows. Clothing is neither simply functional nor symbolic in the conventional sense.

On the other hand Calefato feels that it would be legitimate to define fashion as part of the "new media" even though in specialist jargon this expression indicates simply "digital" media, while fashion as a sign - system has existed in periods prior to that of mass technical reproduction. However, fashion has been permeated and "reinvented" by the new
technology and the new media. For example, the current widespread use of communication gadgets shows as if they were a part of one's own look. Digital wrist watches, electronic diaries, portable computer, not to mention the gadget that has become today's most typical example of high status of modern cosmopolitan person, the cellphone.

If fashion is a discourse in a civilisational sense, then Simmel, and Veblen would explicitly link the development of fashion to the emergence of individualism, economism and consumerism. Simmel observes:

"This motive of foreignness which fashion employs in its socializing endeavours, is restricted to .......... Civilization, because novelty which foreign origin guarantees in extreme form is often regarded by the primitive savages as evil. This is certainly one of the reasons why primitive conditions of life favour a correspondingly infrequent change of fashions. The Savage is afraid of strange appearances; the difficulties and dangers that beset his career cause him to scent danger in anything new which he does not understand and which he cannot consign to a familiar category. Civilisation however transforms this affliction into its very opposite. Whatever is exceptional, bizzarre, or conspicuous, or whatever departs from customary norm, exercises a peculiar charm upon the man of culture entirely independent of its material justification. The
severance of the feeling of insecurity with reference to all things new was accomplished by the process of civilisation".

Simmel (1973:173)

Craik rejects this argument that the term 'fashion' refers exclusively to clothing behaviour in capitalist economies, that is, where certain economic exchanges are invoked in the production, circulation and distribution of clothes. There are fashions and fashions. While western elite designer fashion constitutes one system it is by no means exclusive nor does it determine all other systems. Just as fashion system may be periodised from the late Middle Ages until the present, so too contemporary fashion systems may be recast as an array of competing and inter-meshing systems cutting across western and non-western cultures. Nonetheless, fashion under capitalism exhibits peculiar features such as planned obsolescence. Western European fashion is pivoted around the concept of 'newness, and nowness'. Consequently, fashion is deemed to have no inherent meaning beyond serving as a means to an end; namely, the eternal perpetuation of the system of newness that depends on the desire to acquire each new mode. The consumer relation is specific to western capitalist fashion systems but not necessarily to every system of fashion. Fashion systems can be and have
been constructed around other economic or symbolic exchanges.

2.5 FASHION AS LANGUAGE OF THE BODY:

Patrizia Calefato observes in her article in the Journal of Fashion Theory,

"Clothes, coverings, the objects with which we adorn ourselves, the signs that engrave and decorate us are the forms through which our bodies relate to the world and to other bodies. Just as language is the device for shaping the world that is typical of the human race, so in every society and culture, dress is a form of projection or simulation, of the world, valid both for society and for the individual, expressing itself in signs and objects through which the human body is placed, temporally and spatially, in its surroundings. Language is articulated by syntax, a system of rules that guarantees its internal connections and makes their expression possible. Dress is articulated by a sort of socio-cultural syntax, which could be called "Costume" in the context of traditional societies and ritual functions, "Fashion" in the context of modernity and aesthetic functions."

We asked our respondents about their relationship to their clothes and majority of LSR girls said that clothes were "Most Definitely" an expression of their inner selves.
TABLE 2.5: AFFECT OF FASHION BY COMPOSITE INDEX OF STATUS LEVEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clothing as an expression of one self</th>
<th>L.S.R. College</th>
<th>Gargi College</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Composite Index of Status Level</td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOST DEFINITELY</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOMETHING</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even in the most diverse historical, geographical and social contexts, human beings have always had a unique relationship to clothes, to objects that cover, and to the "artificial" signs of the body: a relationship based on the conviction that the internal connections between these elements, as between them and the human body, are governed by a rigorous logic, whether collective or idiosyncratic. Claude Levi-Strauss (1962) has given this phenomenon an exemplary definition in his anthropological study of what he calls "bricolage": the "savage" art of associating objects that are apparently devoid of any reciprocal connection. From the point of view of the subject who creates it, however, the collection of such objects presents itself as an organized and homologous system with respect to the "world" indeed as a language or to use another expression, a sign system, a "piece" of society materialized in objects, styles, rites, modes of the body's appearing; all of which are
parts of material and nonmaterial culture.

Craik (1994) in 'The Face of Fashion' says clothing does a good deal more than simply clad the body for warmth, modesty or comfort. Codes of dress are technical devices which articulate the relationship between a particular body and its lived milieu, the space occupied by bodies and constituted bodily actions. In other words, clothes construct a personal habitus. These codes of dress constitute an important part of the culture of a society.

Bourdieu in "Language and symbolic power" gives the concept of 'Habitus' which refers to specialised techniques and ingrained knowledge which enable people to negotiate the different departments of existence. Habitus includes 'the unconscious dispositions, the classification schemes, taken-for-granted preferences which are evident in the individual's sense of the appropriateness and validity of his taste for cultural goods and practices as well as being inscribed on to the body through body techniques and modes of self-presentation.

Fashion is also a sign system, a category in which signs act as mediators between modes of production and ideological institutions (Rossi-Landi 1985,5). Conceiving of fashion as a sign system means not only considering its signification but also its significance (Morris 1964).
The former concerns the fact that something has meaning, the latter the value of that which is meant. Fashion as a system of human behaviour is based on evaluations, preferences, and aesthetic judgements. A value-situation is one in which individuals behave according to their preferences. This is, by definition, a relational situation, since the values at stake in human behavior are never merely objective, nor merely subjective, the fashion sign system can be analyzed in the light of these relational values which include rules, methods, and social institutions, for example, one can see the effect of values of religion and family on dress codes.

Today fashion is a means of mass communication, that is reproduced and diffused according to its own laws, while at the same time it comes into contact with other mass media systems; above all with specialized journalism, photography, cinema, marketing and advertising. At par with these systems, fashion can also be defined as a reproducible art, form, and as a "worldly" secular art and as such a cultural form. Its "ceremonies" can thus be performed equally in the atelier of famous designers and in front of the mirror at home, though in each case they will have a different esthetic Value. Because of its "everyday" aspect, we may sometimes speak of styles or a "look" leaving the term "fashion" to
indicate the realm of haute couture only. When we do so, the meaning will either be made clear or will be clear by reference to the context. However, once we are aware of the multiplicity of references, we can adopt its use with greater efficiency than terms such as "style" or "look". In order to express a complexity of tensions, meanings and values relative not only to the dimension of dress but also to the binomial "fashion and worldiness" fashion is articulated as the body's appearing in the world.

What Bourdieu calls "Habitus" is somewhat related the concept of "Identity kits" given by Goffman who gave great importance to impression management, particularly in the context of people's actions and interactions. In his writings he used drama as an analogy to illustrate the manner in which individuals assume roles. He contended that we have "Identity kits" that includes our clothes and related accessories. These are used to lend credibility to the roles we play in our everyday lives. An increased awareness of the role of "identity kits" can enable us to more effectively explore our internal worlds so that we can improve understanding of our motives and their degree of congruence with the impressions that are presented to others.

Goffman's work has been termed as the dramaturgical school of interactionism because it focuses on the ways actors manipulate gestures
to create an impression in a particular scene. Goffman tends to emphasize the process of impression management, per se, and not the purposes or goals toward which action is directed. Much of Goffman's analysis thus concentrates on the form of interaction itself rather than on the structures it creates, sustains or changes. For example, Goffman has insightfully analyzed how actors validate self-conceptions, how they justify their actions through gestures, how they demonstrate their memberships in groups, how they display social distance, how they adjust to physical stigmas, and how they interpersonally manipulate many other situations.

"Douglas observes that "Man needs goods for communicating with others and for making sense of what is going on around him. The two needs are but one, for communication can only be formed in a structured system of meanings."

Douglas and Isherwood 1979:75

She implies first by that fashion and clothing may be used to make sense of the world and the things and people in it, that they are communicative phenomena. She implies, secondly, that the structured system of meanings, a culture, enables individuals to construct an identity by means of communication.
Malcolm Bernard in 'Fashion as communication' (1996) says that communication is an ongoing process that guides and shapes our interactions with others; personal appearance is one medium for such communication. A knowledge of the role of clothing and appearance cues in interactions with others can help us to better understand ourselves and others. Such knowledge can increase awareness with respect to the relationship between verbal and nonverbal communication. So that the two might be more consistent with one another. When there are inconsistencies, perceivers find it difficult to formulate a consistent impression.

We may find many situational variations within a given culture and time frame. A bikini is acceptable on the beach but not in the office. The fact that body exposure is not the only issue in modest behavior, is also illustrated by an example of a girl on a beach in her underwear. Although such attire could very likely expose less skin than a bikini, it would be socially unacceptable because of its "inappropriateness" for the situation. Goffman (1965) has referred to such discrepencies in standards for body exposure as being "orientational" He has suggested that modesty in dress depends upon the degree of "Looseness" in a given situation. Some situations allow for more looseness than the others. There are
settings where a higher degree of modesty is expected, in deference to the situation. For example a person is generally expected to dress more modestly for religious or church activities than for other social activities.

2.6 FASHION AND CLOTHES AS A BOUNDARY

Simmel speaks of a boundary that fashion creates by its coming and going, the "in fashion out of fashion" dichotomy, whereas Cavallaro and Warwick (1998) speak of clothing as a 'boundary' between private and public, defining yet de-individualizing its subject. On the other hand Wilson (1985), Flugel (1930) and Barthes (1982) speak of clothing as a boundary between self and non self.

Simmel writes that the kind of temporality created by fashion has the formal fascination of a boundary, of a beginning and end, a coming and going. Fashion reproduces this alternation and it generates feelings such as approval and envy that for Simmel are the means by which objects are appropriated, either with envy in their individuality or with approval in their universality.

If fashion tends to change, as Simmel says, then it is also true that it tries to change with a minimum of effort, and so it imitates the past with a kind of circular movement, or eternal return. Simmel also
underlines how the fascination with fashion lies in the disparity between its wide diffusion and its essential transience, in what he calls our "right to betray" it. In using the concept of betrayal, Simmel is not attempting the reconstruction of a social reality in fashion, nor does he use scientific or sociological categories. Rather, he singles out the structural dichotomy inherent in fashion, which is both the systems distinguishing feature and the reason for its endless reproduction. In its classical status in the context of modernity, fashion is not simply a social system with fixed laws; rather it tends to modify its own institutions and laws because of its characteristic "right to betray". Calefato contends that we follow fashion because values are proposed not in an authoritative but in a paradoxical way. Fashion admits something and then immediately contradicts it, its rules are both institutional and subversive; its pragmatics are perverse.

For Cavallaro and Warwick, (1998) in defining dress as instrumental to the forging of margins and boundaries, it should be stressed that 'margin' and 'boundary' are not interchangeable concepts. In fact, whilst the boundary divides and frames, the margin blurs distinctions and frontiers. It is one of the paradoxes of dress to be both a margin and a boundary at one and the same time. As boundary, it frames the body and separates it from the rest of the social world, thus
functioning as a kind of container or wrapper. Dress as boundary is meant to trace a neat line between self and other: the limitation of psychological accessibility. As margin, on the other hand, dress connects ensemble, and the private to the public. This cohesive action holds the advantage of releasing the individual subject to the possibility of collective interactivity and communication, yet it erases its very individuality.

Wilson observes that:

"Clothing marks an unclear boundary ambiguously, and unclear boundaries disturb us. Symbolic systems and rituals have been created in many different cultures in order to strengthen and reinforce boundaries, since these safeguard purity. It is at the margins between one thing and another that pollution may leak out. Dress is the frontier between the self and the non-self".


Flugel used the term "ambivalence", to refer to the conflicting desires to conceal and yet emphasize the body through clothing. This ambivalence causes individuals to find socially acceptable means of attracting others, if that is their desire. He stated "Clothes, in fact, as articles devised for the satisfaction of human needs, are essentially in the nature of compromise; they are an ingenious device for the establishment
of some degree of harmony between conflicting interests". This harmony in part is negotiated between the wearer and the perceiver during the course of interaction.

Cavallaro and Warwick contend that The power of dress to threaten boundaries between self and non-self, the individual and the collective, discipline and transgression, is emphasized by items of clothing such as masks and veils, which epitomize duplicity and the co-existence of concealment and revelation, presence and absence." Such aporetic garments invite an examination of the workings what Foucault (1980) has conceptualized as the gaze, and relatedly, of issues pertaining to truth and simulation. The ambiguously screening garment conceals and arrests the flow of the gaze whilst simultaneously stimulating it, by provoking and increasing the desire for discovery and possession, hence effecting a magnification of the erotic. The veils fascination lies in the prospect of unveiling, just as the attraction of dress in general has to do with its greater or lesser ability to intimate the possibility of removal. In Barthe's words:

"Is not the most erotic portion of a body where the garment gapes?... it is intermittence....which is erotic, the intermittence of skin flashing between two articles of clothing.... between two edges.... it is the flash itself which seduces. or rather the
staging of an appearance as disappearance”.

Roland Barthes (1990), The pleasure of the Text.

2.7 FASHION AS DECEPTION

Fashion and clothing present curious and ambiguous profiles. From the one side the profile looks attractive and seductive with the world of fashion being glamorous, receiving a lot of glossy media coverage and the look and style in fashion affecting all of us even without our knowledge. From the other side however, the profile looks much less attractive. As Sapir notes "the term fashion may carry with it a tone of approval or disapproval".

Sapir (1931:139)

In as early a work as the dialogue known as 'Greater Hippias', for example, which some attribute to Plato, who was writing around 400 BC, clothes are linked with beauty. However, they are linked with beauty in the context of fraud that is perpetrated on those who seek the beautiful (Plato, 'Greater Hippias, 294 a-b in Hamilton and Cairas eds 1961:1547).

This attitude still prevails till today which, i-D magazine points out that for some people 'to be fashion conscious' or 'fashionable' is still
deemed to make you "fickle', 'shallow', 'dumb', 'ephemeral' and 'fascist'. These phrases may be thought of as part of some kind of 'collective unconscious'.

Todorov says in 'The poetics of Prose' (1977)

"Given fashion's penchant for obfuscating the very distinction between deception and truthfulness, even the boundary between telling lies and telling the truth becomes precarious and uncertain: the language of dress ironically intimates that all telling, by dint of its complicity with strategies of narrative elaboration, is at least potentially, a form of lying"

At the same time, the simultaneously aesthetic and commercial status of fashion images and commodities also problematizes the nature of the boundary between contrasting concepts of value.

Malcolm Bernard (1996) in says, that examples of everyday phrases that suggest the deceptive nature of clothing or dress abound. When, for example, one wants to say that some people are dressing in a way that is too young for them, one says that they are mutton dressed as lamb'. Whether this phrase applies as easily to men as it does to women (and it is unlikely that the phrase is ever applied to men), the idea, which the notion of clothing conveys, is that of deceit. Clothes are being used
to 'pull the wool over one's eyes', to fool one, as when people speak of someone being a 'wolf in sheeps clothing'. Indeed this phrase was the only copy in a series of advertisements for wool in the early 1980s (compare Imsie (1986). For example, again the idea is that a person (and here it is unlikely that the phrase is ever applied to a woman) who is one kind of person uses clothes in order to appear as another, less threatening, kind of person. The idea which dress is used to convey here is, again, deception.

The criticism that fashion and clothing are deceptive has two aspects. The first is that fashion and clothing are in the business of dressing something up as something else, that they take the body and disguise it or present it as something that it is not. It is the claim that fashion and clothing impose meanings on a raw material that either does not originally have any meaning or which has a sort of natural meaning. The second is that fashion and clothing may be used to mislead, to make people respond in ways that they would not or should not. The difference between these two aspects may become clear only when the responses to them are considered, elicited from female students of two colleges in Delhi metropolis.
TABLE 2.6: BENEFITS OF BEING A FASHIONABLE GIRL BY COMPOSITE INDEX OF STATUS LEVEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits of being a fashionable girl</th>
<th>L.S.R. College Total</th>
<th>Gargi College Total</th>
<th>L.S.R. College Composite Index of Status Level</th>
<th>Gargi College Composite Index of Status Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Middle</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEEL GREAT</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIVES CONFIDENCE</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOES NOT HELP</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THINKING OF PEOPLE</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To understand how fashion is used to make people respond in the way they may not otherwise we asked our respondents what they thought were the benefits of being a fashionable person. To this 31% of our respondents from LSR replied that being fashionable makes people think "they can't take you for a ride", as a fashionable girl is seen as smart and clued up. This been has called 'Impression Management' by Goffman.

The first criticism presupposes either that there is some original, pure and meaningless thing that fashion and clothing then come along and turn into something else, or that there is some natural meaning to this original thing that fashion and clothing distort. The original thing that is intended is the body. The flaw in the claims that either the body has no meaning, that it is pure and 'natural' in some sense, or that it has some natural meaning that is always and every where the same, shows up most
clearly when looking at photographic or art-historical studies of the nude. As Hollander (1983), Clarke (1956), and any of Mopplethorpe's collection of photographs (1983) will testify, the nude and naked human body is deeply and sometimes shockingly, meaningful. Moreover, the meanings that are ascribed will change in time; *Renoir's nudes, Man Ray's nudes, Titian's nudes, Bonnard's nudes*- all mean different things. It is, therefore, very difficult to uphold the idea that there is first of all a meaningless thing that fashion and clothing then adorn and make meaningful. And it is very difficult to uphold the idea that there is any natural meaning to the body that is everywhere and always the same.

The second criticism, that fashion and clothing are deceptive in that they may be used to mislead, applies equally well to all means of communication, Dressing one thing up as another is, after all, not unknown in television, radio or the print media. However, it is no defence of fashion and clothing to say that every one else is doing it, except insofar as it may be impossible to conceive of any other means of communication. If it is the lot of human communication to have to use one thing (a word, a sign, a picture, or a sound, for example) to stand for another thing, then dressing one thing up as something else seems to be a definition of communication. Alas, representation (using one thing to
stand for something else) seems to be the lot of human communication.

A less flippant-sounding defence of fashion and clothing would be to point out that the charge of misleading and disguising one thing as another presupposes the possibility of some pure essence that could be communicated if only it were not for all those clothes and fashions. As noted above, the existence of this pure and unadorned essence is unlikely, given that even nudity and nakedness are cultural constructions, the meaning of which vary from place to place and from time to time. Further, it presupposes the possibility of some channel of communication that is itself neutral, that could transmit a message without transforming that message in some way.