

## INTRODUCTION

India is emerging as a strong knowledge economy therefore globally people have been intrigued by India; be it the Taj Mahal (Tourists' delight), Yoga (holistic fitness), Ayurveda (natural healing), Bollywood (*Kitsch* entertainment). Where each signifies the favored fashion and lifestyle trends; notably towards Indian fashions, apparel and textiles. India has a rich legacy of heritage textile traditions and wide range of ethnic costume traditions comprising versatile draped silhouettes and classic tailoring techniques; across the subcontinent, suitable to the terrain, weather and the regional socio-cultural influences due to various invasions and the colonial past.

Indians have always taken great pride in adorning themselves and have always expressed their aesthetics through the clothes they wear, the homes they reside in, the products they use in day to day living. Besides aesthetics the products are a good example of design where form follows function. The use of indigenous materials to make all products has been the way of life. The shepherds have used wool from their livestock to spin superfine yarn. Learning to innovate further they weaved it into a fabric, used innovatively as shawls/mantles/*kambals* to keep them warm. This is the kind of innovation that is also the need of the hour in form of efficient supply chains and sustainable product life cycles. Innovations like these have been a part of daily life since generations.

There is continued interest for classical Indian dress silhouettes, heritage textile crafts, accessories, and grooming practices among the western ateliers ever since the colonial past; where Indian cotton was the raw material for feeding the British mills during industrial revolution in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century & Pashmina wool shawls are a luxury fashion classic.

Technological advancement & innovation has brought the civilization a long way since the Indus valley civilization. Then women draped saris without a blouse, but adorned themselves with metal and bead jewelry and styled their long hair in plaits or a bun ornamented with fresh flowers. Moving ahead in the dynastic time women draped their sari over a bustier-*angavastram*, hair continued to be long and beautifully ornamented, jewelry became a mark of socio-economic status. Further as time passed by and the Moghuls invaded India and made it their home, the sari worn

by the Indian Hindu women became a sign of their religious affiliation. Simultaneously the innovation of pattern cutting and sewing and along with a sense of modesty led to Hindu women wearing a hand stitched *choli* & covering their head with a veil- *ghunghat* (*muslim word Purdah*).

While these cultural exchanges continued in all aspects of life, the Europeans; Portugese, English, Dutch & French came to India for trade and later formed colonies along coastal India. The British formed one of the biggest colonies in India, as history has it they went on to gain complete political control over India, right from Shimla (Summer capital) in the north , Delhi- as the capital city, till Madras( Chennai) in southern end, from Gujarat in the west to Bengal in the eastern end. They ruled over India for over 100 years, their influence on the language spoken, education & government system, trade and economy and also the clothing style was immense. The Industrial revolution that began in Europe had an influence on India too. As with any change or innovation there was a good outcome as well as many adverse effects on the Indian handloom weaver, who was highly exploited or rendered jobless due to the entry of the mill-made fabric produced in the English mills in England as well as in India; Mumbai and Ahmedabad .

In India wherever one goes, one still finds women wearing the sari. For them it is not a costume or an outfit for show. It is a part of their lives and few would seldom question about the reason why they wear it. Few women may find it cumbersome to put it on every morning; some may complain about the physical discomfort of moving about in the sari. Even today in the face of globalization many Indian women identify with the sari.

The sari permits us to go back at a thousand years in terms of design. It is conceived on the loom as a three-dimensional garment with variables in pattern, weave, and structure between its inner, outer end-pieces and its two borders, which provide drape, strength and weight, while the body or field enhances its drape. All these elements help to maintain the form of the sari when it is worn. (Chisti, 2010). Despite more than hundred variations of the sari draping styles, it is a very versatile garment; one size fits all and has a sustainable life cycle too. Ethnic craft sustenance design directions & vintage fashions of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have created a gradual shift towards the handloom and hand embroidered masterpieces of Indian crafts persons.

The Sari (a rectangular length of fabric 6 / 9 yards) continues to be an integral garment draped by the Indian woman since the Harappan times. India continues to be a melting pot of myriad cultures while weaving its rich cultural tapestry. The Indian women have maintained their identity through their dress- the Sari; amidst all these cultural exchanges.

The three distinct parts of the sari are:

1. **The border** along the selvages
2. **The body/ field**
3. **The end piece** known as *pallu* / *palla* / *Paddar* / *anchal* in various regions of India.

The sari is the traditional local draped garment of a region (described in several languages simply by the local word for 'cloth'; lugda, dhoti, pata, seere, sadlo, kapad). Along with the variation in nomenclature the sari draping style differs across various regions of India, as the **Bengali Sari**, **Seedha palla style**, **6 yards sari**, **9 yards sari**, **two piece sari** and the **Nivi Style sari**. As the civilizations developed and expanded in the different geographic regions of the Indian subcontinent; various regions/subcultures evolved the sari draping style which imparts a very unique regional identity to the wearer .

Simultaneously varied regional textile crafts of dyeing, printing, embroidery and weaving exquisite fabrics for saris flourished. Noteworthy examples of exquisite Indian heritage textiles being the Patan Patola (Gujarat), the Kalamkari prints of Andhra Pradesh, the Chikankari embroidery of Lucknow & the Benarasi Brocades (Uttar Pradesh), the Paithani brocades of Paithan, (Maharashtra) etcetera.

During Harappan times women draped only a strip of cloth, later referred as- the *sattika* in Prakrit language. A bustier-*angavastram* was adopted during the middle ages with the sari, hair continued to be long and beautifully ornamented. Jewelry became a mark of socio-economic status.

The Muslim invaded India and ruled for almost 700 years, however the Indian Hindu women continued to wear the sari; it became a sign of their retained cultural identity.

As per the trickle across theory of clothing, eventually the Muslim women from all socio-economic classes also adopted the sari; getting lured by elegance and versatility of the sari drape of the Hindu women and the beautiful Indian sari textiles. Another reason for adoption of the airy sari drape; over the tailored salwaar kameez (which was appropriate for colder, hilly regions in North Western India) in the Gangatic belt; was the hot and humid climate. A sense of modesty led to women wearing a hand stitched choli (blouse) & covering their head with a veil- *ghunghat* (*muslim word Purdah*).

Author and journalist Seema Goswami writes, ‘In the days before India was divided in the name of religion, wearing a sari or *shalwar kameez* wasn’t a function of which God you worshipped. What you wore pretty much depended on where you lived. In Punjab, women wore the *shalwar kameez* irrespective of whether they were Hindu or Muslim. And in Uttar Pradesh, Bengal and Bihar, they wore the sari, whatever their religious persuasion’ (Goswami, 2010).

The British formed one of the biggest colonies in India & ruled India for over 100 years (mid 18<sup>th</sup> century to 1947AD) the Indian women have maintained their identity through their dress-the Sari; amidst all these cultural exchanges. The Industrial revolution that began in Europe had an influence on India in 1940s. In wake of this Mahatma Gandhiji led the Indian freedom struggle and propagated the *Khadi* (hand spun and handloom fabric) and the *swadeshi* movement. During this time the Indian women were still behind the scene, they were either serving the British *Memsahab* and her family as domestic help or they were the wives/daughters of British approval seeking business community or the government officials. These Indian women started wearing chiffon saris from European mills, teamed it up with lacy petticoats and frilly sari blouses; this was their innovation in adapting the European fashion sported by the lovely *memsaheb*. On the other hand the freedom struggle in the decade of 1930-1940 saw active participation from women from all social classes. The *Satyagrahi* women (freedom fighter) adopted almost a dress code for themselves, in form of a Khadi sari & choli - blouse, draped in the *Nivi* style. This modern style of draping the sari was a neutral innovation to the regional sari draping styles: the *Nivi* sari style conceived by Gyanodanandini Tagore (Nobel Laureate, poet Rabindranath Tagore’s sister-in-law)

went on to become a national dress for Indian women from late 19<sup>th</sup> century till date, a classic example of unity in diversity.

The influence of western fashion on the Indian Sari Fashions during the colonial times is visible two folds, one in terms of exploration of new materials where the French chiffons and laces were imported for the elite class. The use of these light weight saris led to the practice of attaching a strip of 6-8 inch wide fabric on the hem of the sari to enhance the fall/drape, and this led to the colloquial reference of this fabric strip as “Fall”.(The traditional sari and draping styles do not require attachment of “the fall strip” due to their woven borders, hence ready to be worn once off the loom.) The second influence being the practice of wearing an undergarment; a frilly petticoat for obvious reasons of modesty and decoration too in most cases, and the transition from the traditional bodice, choli to blouse became evident.

Apart from their European extravaganzas, the royals also got together in the Calcutta season organized by the British. This was the melting pot of fashion and culture in India. All these multicultural exposures transformed their attires back home. The royal women retained their saris in India, however included more modest blouses and decent petticoats with them. The saris worn in the 20th century were of chiffon exported from Europe. This trend caught on with the entire royal clan. The flip side of this however was that it caused a crisis that decreased their patronage to the high-skilled weavers. The Rajputs continued to wear the cholis but added a kurti over it. The choli got transformed into the blouse of today in a step by step transformation. The choli that ended at the bust line lengthened to cover more area, the backless cholis got their backs, the kasanis or tie-cords were replaced by hooks or buttons in the front, the ethnic fabric of blouses became more sophisticated and either complemented or supplemented the sari.” (Kumar, 2000)

The contemporary sari is as much a product of new developments in fashion and publicity as it is of powerlooms and companies. The *Nivi* style of draping the sari was invented in the nineteenth century and in the following decades became fashionable among the growing number of women beginning to appear in public life, including those active on the platforms and demonstrations of the anti-colonial movement. Their images became widely known through the press coverage of political activities. The *Nivi* style also featured in iconic nationalist propaganda images, such as the sari

unfurled as the map of Mother India, by Raja Ravi Verma. Following independence, government information posters, film stars, politicians and ambassadors popularized the sari further. It was adopted as an official uniform in the army, police and national airline, and as an unofficial one for teachers and bureaucrats. The ultimate self consciousness; that what one was wearing was not simply the traditional local draped garment of a region but rather ‘the Sari’, the emblem of the nation as a whole’. (Banerjee and Miller, 2003)

Post independence era (1947 onwards) brought social emancipation, better opportunities for trade, education, entertainment- cinema, exposure to the western culture though limited. Few women began to work as teachers, clerks, social workers etcetera paving way for many more to join later. India in the 1960’s became a more self-sufficient nation and Mrs. Indira Gandhi was elected as the first woman prime minister of Indian 1966. Indian women took great inspiration from the way she carried herself in a minimal, prim handloom sari & short hairstyle, an example of power dressing (Fig.5). According to anthropologists Banerjee and Miller, this provided the foundation for the adoption of the sari as a symbol of India itself. This association was cemented when, under the guidance of that consummate politician, Mrs. Gandhi, the sari for a while became central to the construction of a visual image of India both internally and abroad. This nationalist appropriation of the sari was confirmed in the popular mind by Mrs. Gandhi’s triumphant visits to the USA in 1970s, which many women still recall’. The *Nivi* sari, co-ordinated with the blouse and petticoat also continues till date as a uniform for hospitality industry, Government agencies like police etcetera and a dress code for workwear and formal settings, also an Indian example for power dressing.

On the other hand, innovative commercial development of art silk-rayon & polyester fabric was a substitute of the expensive silk chiffons. From the 1960s the mills also began importing synthetic yarns from Japan. In 1970s, synthetics production advanced from spun yarn to 100% polyester filament. This allowed for much sharper printing high color saturation, thereby offering a totally new look in saris. The new polyester chiffons and satins combined a low maintenance ‘wash and wear’ practicality. Till about the 1970’s the Indian women wore the sari draped in their regional style. Thereafter the sari consumption pattern has changed; they started

giving up their traditional saris for cheaper mill made ones due to various reasons discussed in this study. It was important to reference Praful Shah, Garden Silk Mills' Managing Director explanation in the same book by Banerjee and Miller, "The sari was seen as a traditional costume. Garden wanted to present it as a modern garment, a contemporary form of fashion attire. One of the major producers at that time was Garden Silk Mills, whose 'perfume' synthetic saris, called 'Dralon', caught the attention of urban women through advertising in magazines and newspapers. These ads featured the company's popular eight-petaled flower logo and the catch slogan 'when you see a flower, remember Garden'. 'Garden creates a new woman' was the ad line for seven years in the 1970s. In a country where daylight is strong, the light, fresh and dainty floral prints became a runaway hit. The sari got redefined for the modern woman".

The new Garden look broke away from the traditional pattern of pallus and borders and instead introduces all-over prints in colors fashionable in the west. The pastel look, in a variety of floral print became the mainstay of 'that Garden look'. Garden, along with other companies such as Reliance (who launched their 'only Vimal' brand) used the faces of well-known beautiful women to advertise its products. Through novel design and skillful marketing, the synthetic sari, previously thought of as a hard-wearing economy garment, became an expression of chic and modernity among the middle classes (Banerjee & Miller, 2003).

The western influence of the "flower power" generation was innovatively adapted in form the psychedelic prints in their saris by the women, if they had not yet adapted to a wide bottomed salwar-kameez or closer still the bell bottom pants and maxi dresses. The psychedelic print sari drape was influenced by the trend of extremes like the mini & maxi dress lengths; in form of a tie-up short sari blouse & a sari draped with a short pallu. Completing the look with a bouffant hairstyle or a bob cut.

Subsequently the sari with all the marital signs (a streak of *Sindoor* in the hair parting, *Mangalsutra* around the neck) continues to be considered as the ideal costume for Indian women, as it conveyed cultural affiliation yet a modern look. This trend was seen evidently on screen icons like Rekha, Jaya Bhaduri Bachhan etcetera. Sari was draped to perfection with a long pallu & a well cut sari blouse. Dwyer comments, 'the

sari is laden with cultural meanings of nostalgia, tradition, womanhood, nationalism and social status, the full range which are developed in the Hindi movie’.

As women started to learn the tight rope walk of being a homemaker and a working professional, they had to innovate and adapt to this new role, they continued to drape the sari for special occasions like festivals, weddings, social & formal gatherings and adapted to more practical garments for work wear. Work wear/ formal saris was also an innovative trend for some women from conservative families, as they continued to wear sari for all occasions. This was seen as new trend in apparel categories for Indian ethnic wear for women: the occasional wear and the work wear. The occasional wear further categorized as party wear, bridal saris, designer saris etcetera. The sari has evolved in its form and function and is draped for the following functions: Daywear, Work wear and Occasion wear.

The Indian women have been an integral part of the family, and been confined to home. Social visionaries worked relentlessly towards women’s empowerment post-independence and emphasized on education as the roadmap to attain it. Till about the 1970’s the Indian women dressed in their regional style and patronized the traditional textiles in the neighboring areas. The most sought after textile though was the *Banarsi Sari* for the bridal trousseau in the northern, eastern and western states, but down south the *Kanjeevaram brocades* found favor. The sari consumption pattern of the women in rural India has also changed post the 90’s, they have given up their traditional saris for cheaper mill made ones inspired by the television soap operas and also for practical purpose of affordability, visual appeal & maintenance.

The Sari has not only been iconic for the geographic region but also the material /fabric that it is made up of, also the degree of ornamentation on it or the very draping style convey the socio-economic status of the woman draped in that sari. According to Rita Kapur Chisti, author of the book, *Saris: Tradition and Beyond*, “There are at least 108 ways to drape a sari. It is safe to say that worldwide, no garment has stood the test of time as has the sari.”

The sari symbolized womanhood in Hindu culture hence the coming of age was signified by a transition from a skirt-blouse (Ghaghra-choli) / Trouser-Tunic (Salwar-Kameez) to a more grown up garment; the sari. Even in contemporary India the sari is



often a preferred ensemble for a school farewell party, the first cousin's or friends' wedding or to convey that a young lady is ready for courtship and /or marriage.

Goswami observes that when a woman wears a sari she not only looks different, she feels different as well. Her walk becomes more sinuous as she sways her hips gently to negotiate walking within its loosely draped fold. She holds herself a bit straighter, emphasizing the curves of her bosom and her bottom. She definitely feels more feminine, more alluring and more pulled together. This is evident through literary findings, paintings, sculptures, films about the land of Kamasutra, the Khajuraho temples, and the miniature paintings to its transition today. The sari is the most versatile garment because the wearer can show as much or as little as she likes! (Goswami, 2010)

Upon surveying some of the major arbiters of taste, from politics, film and television soap opera. These compliment the development of branding and the impact of major companies. The big players in the commercial sector seek to influence what we wear through manufacturing, advertising and sponsoring powerful and seductive images that people want to emulate. The eccentric sari shopper is never likely to encounter the kind of fashion hegemony which means that in Western markets flares or long jackets may disappear entirely if they are not part of that season's styles. While 'fashions' in saris do happen, they are likely to guide only a small proportion of new sari buying each year. Women may buy one sari which is 'trendy', but will usually ensure it is inexpensive in case it is no longer wearable the following year. More expensive saris are rarely bought according to such short-lived trends, for as we have seen, the influences on taste go far beyond the latest soap operas to include fondly remembered national leaders and the timeless classics of a vast legacy of films, as well as regional, family and personal traditions (Banerjee & Miller, 2003).

The Indian woman has adopted and assimilated a great variety of apparels in her costume like the sari, the *ghaghra choli*, *shalwar kameez*, western fashions like skirts, trousers, denims, dresses, gowns. Along with occasion appropriate clothing for each of the roles she has acquired as a mother, daughter, wife, sister, friend, student, co- worker, boss, homemaker, entrepreneur, global citizen etcetera. The sari alone has a market size of INR 24,020 crore = **USD 4.920 billion**, which forms almost 41% of womenswear market in India (Tecknopak 2010).

The Fashion System gains momentum when women participate in the mainstream of the society. The Indian aesthetics absorbed the western fashion and technological trends gradually throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Indian fashion scene began receiving its due credibility and attention from 80's onwards: hence this research focuses on decades the 80's (closed economy), 90's (opening up of the Apparel Industry), new millennium 21<sup>st</sup> century to understand the Indian Fashion System. The new millennium has seen revolutionary change across the socio-economic diaspora of India due to humongous efforts of the past and the globalization. The Indian women are seeking higher education, step-up from their conventional role as homemakers, mothers, wives along with a professional life and social life independent of the family, due to personal interests and inclinations. The information technology has brought the world closer and sudden economic growth has given the Indian women a great emancipation in terms of their sartorial practices. As these neue Indian women gear to take on various social and professional roles and lifestyles, they have embraced new garments in their wardrobe to meet these roles. The Internet and satellite television not only provides the information on latest world fashion trends but also an access outreach, even to tier 2 cities of India by means of online E-commerce portals and tele-shopping.

These neue Indian women have frequently migrated for education and work opportunities from their native cities. These migrations have in a way set them free from the native community also led to an increase in inter-caste marriages, cosmopolitan social groups, and liberation from being known only by ones marital status; there are conservative pockets yet across India. Hence the internet gives them that opportunity of convenience, independence and familiarity to fit-in in the new place and role and ascertaining the upward mobility through the fashion look: **the represented garment**. There are also concerns for ascertaining one's own identity in the new place hence inclusions of ethnic fashions for festive occasions. Limited information of a local market and accepted dress codes and quality (which conventionally was passed down by family and friends in the neighborhood) there is rise in purchase of fashion on online platforms.

Various initiatives by the Indian government towards women's empowerment, and the society being sensitized towards equal opportunities for both the genders has led

to both parents/partners working in a family , which gives more disposable income for fashion and a huge spurt in retail brands both in the brick and click format. The open markets have led to democratizing access to fashion both in terms of availability and affordability for people across the socio-economic pyramid. Citing India's demographic and socio-political scenario, the top fashion brands are anchoring on this opportunity and are influencing the Indian fashion system as all levels of the fashion value chain. The economic liberalization of India in the 1990's had a curious by-product in Indian fashion. During the festival season, heavily-embellished ensembles are flooded in the market. Even veteran designers like Tarun Tahiliani and Ritu Kumar had to give in to clients' demands of outrageous clothes that flaunted the affluence of crystals, diamonds and gemstones. The well travelled, globally aware woman of today understands that less is more. The 21<sup>st</sup> century Indians are globe-trotters and assimilate fashion acquisitions from their foreign tours along with their identity intact in indigenous dressing, which have been given a postmodern uplift by home born designers. This fusion space that we are living is where the transition from the represented garment to real garment is making the Indian Fashion system so dynamic and interesting.

**Purpose of the study**

The sari remains the biggest clothing category: Indian women and the sari form the core of history and legacy that's what the numbers suggest. Saris dominate the women's ethnic wear segment by 53 per cent market share, while salwar-kameez constitutes 38 per cent of women's ethnic wear market. The remaining 9 percent is contributed by petticoat and blouse (Kumar, 2013).

There are a few designers and brands that have experimented and taken the sari category to a newer level. Indian fashion designers have become popular across the world for their ethnic wear lines, their Indian bridal wear and Bollywood collections. In 1985 Satya Paul was one of the first designers to come out with prints on saris, which were abstract, geometrical and completely in sync with regard to color and fabrics. Brands like Anokhi and Fabindia have greatly helped in popularizing the ethnic wear, which has been sourced from handloom clusters following the traditional methods of vegetable dyeing, block printing, etcetera.

### **Statement of Problem**

Reviewing the theories for fashion change and reasons that explain the changes occurring in the world; these are compelling to understand the semiotic interpretations of the Indian Sari. Research has been carried out on designing and development of various apparel categories and documenting changes in fashion trends and documentation of traditional textiles but little research has been conducted on semiology of Indian apparel / costumes especially the Indian Sari. The purpose of this study is to recognize what does the sari mean for Indian women, Indian fashion system and industry.

This study has been taken forward based on the work of the scholars from diverse backgrounds like: **Communication theorist McLuhan** was ahead of his time, writing about technology in the 1960's, his arguments seem even more relevant today in the internet age. McLuhan argues that the proliferation of electronic technology has extended our biological senses of sight and sound beyond their normal range. He is saying that through technology such as the telephone or television we are able to communicate instantaneously across the globe, which consequently impacts by speeding up the global economy and social life. McLuhan argues that due to technology and its instant communication we feel as close to someone on the other side of the globe as if they were in our own village. Therefore we can understand why McLuhan says we are in a 'global village'. With easy access to internet communication is real time without a lag.

**The French Postmodern theorist Jean Baudrillard** in 1980's stated we now live in a world increasingly dominated by images and signs, which have become our primary reality. They are **simulations** of reality and we therefore live in a state of hyper-reality, which has no reality beyond itself. We can use Las Vegas and Disney World as examples of hyper-reality as they do not reference reality.

**SB Kaiser in the symbolic interaction (SI) theory** of 1991, proposes that fashion change thrives on cultural tensions that contribute to individual articulations of styles that are at least initially ambiguous. These negotiations, they say, enable fashion subjects to grapple with ongoing cultural tensions in subtle but complex ways and because these underlying tensions are never completely resolved, the process of fashion change continues endlessly.

The preference for *salwar-kameez* and saris is a regional choice. In the northern regions of India, it is the preferred apparel for both regular and festive occasions as it has been a traditional garment across generations. Even other regions prefer saris for special occasions. While Tier-I cities tend to be strongly governed by a traditional usage of the sari, the ethnic wear category is increasingly becoming the most sought-after category, as it offers both convenience and conformity. The focus tends to be on comfort fabrics, such as cotton, with the mid-fashion quotient. The study specifically aimed to review the changing sari trends and factors that affect this change; while at the same time conserving the heritage costume tradition of sari draping and textiles.

**The objectives of the Study:**

- I. To understand the semiology of fashion apparel.
- II. To study the semiotic meaning of the Indian sari with the changing role of women in society.
- III. To study the semiotic interpretation of the Indian sari by trade organizations / industry and designers.
- IV. To analyze and interpret the semiotics of the sari for trend mapping.
- V. To analyze the semiotics and interpret the Indian fashion system.

**Delimitations of the study**

- I. Study is limited to willingness of respondents to answer the survey on personal clothing choices, especially the saris.
- II. Study is limited to respondents and case studies in urban cities.

**Scope of study**

The sari is worn for almost 5000 years, across the Indian subcontinent and has been adapted to the changing socio- political scenarios over centuries. It is essential to understand the semiology of garment which is woven in 2 dimensions and draped in

more than 108 ways in three dimensions (Chisti, 2010); by women pan India and each sari is a unique expression of the wearer. The tacit meaning of the sari: a fabric, a garment, a cultural symbol, heritage textile, sheer utility, national identity, sustainability needs to be studied.

This study dwells upon the semiotic study of Indian Sari; an integral part of the Indian fashion system with a special emphasis on womenswear. There is opportunity for in depth study of the Indian fashion system and this research would make the documentation of the changing sari styles accessible but also meaning, symbolism, tacit meaning and evolution of the sari. It would also reveal the factors that have brought the evolution.

Although the sari preferences and meanings are likely to change over the course of time, decoding their meaning in this study shall not only serve the purpose of academic interest but also be inspirational to the designers of successive generations to redesign newer saris and drapes. The sari could be noted as a symbolic indicator of the progressive nature of India. With the western fashions and dynamic silhouettes that are more prevalent and popular with the Indian youth, the sari seemed to be pushed back and was considered as old school or only for occasional wear. Hence the powerful drape was restricted by the limitations of it not being as fashionable when compared to blue denim or a tunic. It has been observed that the new Indian designers are making efforts to reintroduce and reinvent the sartorial sari to make it into a more meaningful in the current context and dynamic garment for the modern Indian youth. Young Indian designers are making efforts of producing unique modern day reflections of the Indian sari while retaining the heritage and cultural values through its traditional textiles, motifs and crafts. Documentation in terms of database or models would become essential reference point for future research and helpful in creating the Indian fashion vocabulary. The reinvention of the sari is definitely the reflection of the modern, more culturally rooted youth. Not only have Indian designers realized the impact of the powerful drape, the western interpretation of the drape has also led to creation of newer variants which again lead to understanding the fluid nature of fashion identities in the post-modern globalized world.