Aesthetical Modifications in Iranian Costume Design after the Islamic Revolution

Abstract:

The issue of fashion and costume design is a core subject within the Iranian cultural discourses. The paper at hand mainly deals with this question that how the social events and the discourses arising from it have influenced and directed the trends of fashion and dress designs? The basic theory of this paper followed a process-researching methodological approach in social changes that occurred after the Islamic Revolution and its effect on the fashion paradigms. With the advent of the Islamic Revolution (1978), the black 'Chador' became a representation of an ideological current, as a negation of social distinction between the rich and the poor clothing as well as the symbol of resistance to the former regime. During this period, the 'fashion aversion' paradigm, in the sense of people's indifference to fashion, was the dominant idea behind selecting dresses, implying the in-clination towards a simple life and refuting the fashion class distinction.

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By the end of the war (1988) and in the duration of reconstruction of the society, women enrolled in social activities. In the beginning of 1990s, the social presence of women increased and Hijab revealed its limiting features in performing physical activities more; hence, long and loose 'Mantos' became more common. The 'fashion aversion' paradigm formed in this period as a means of rejecting cultural invasion in selecting costumes, through focusing on Hijab and formal dress as an Iranian traditional culture.

During the reform era (1997-2005), the civil society had to not only make political choices but also democratic dress code ones within itself. Diverse clothing choices available contributed to the modification of monotonous Chador color as well as the uniformity of Manto, in a way that at the beginning of 2000s, it resulted in the emergence of a wide range of colors and dresses. Clothing turned into an indication of personal will and political liberty; therefore, costumes, particularly that of the women's, became diversified significantly during the political reform era. Manto, which partly served as a unified female cover during 1990s, developed later as an aesthetic one. Its semiotic system changed in a way that it became the symbol of distinction and variety by means of the creation and innovation in pattern, sewing and fashion design more than being a symbol of unity in the beginning of 2000s.

Developments of this period led to the formation of fashion tendency paradigm that was looking for a kind of aesthetic Hijab following the body released from an official discourse with a focus on the diversity in dresses and choices.

But the political critics, with its emphasis on political unification (as it was in 1980s) or cultural traditionalism (as it was in 1990s), raised the idea of "enjoining good and forbidding wrong" to show that the development of tendency to fashion was the result of western cultural invasion and the satellite became the main factor influencing that. After the political change (2005) and the rebirth of fundamentalism, cultural values returned to the circumstances prevailing at the beginning of the revolution and once again, clothing became the center of attention and the use of national Chador became an up to date issue. The plan of chastity and Hijab was approved in Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution and police force performed it as a project and strategy to ensure social security and was taken against the poorly veiled or "bad Hijab", but its examples were so controversial that the National Institute of Fashion and Clothing was established (2006) in order to determine the exact meaning of suitable dress as well as national and Islamic fashion.

During this period, the Islamic fashion tendency paradigm was formed to unify the standards of Islamic clothing on one hand and recognizing the class distinctions and personal choices on the other. However, the policies determined for controlling the dress codes didn't allow the emergence of an opportunity to grow variety in fashion designs.

This paper explains different paradigms such as "anti-fashion", "fashion aversion", "fashion tendency" and "Islamic fashion tendency" that are formed within the vicissitudes of the patterns of "combative veil", "religious veil", "traditional veil" and "aesthetical veil" which have been formed in the context of political and social developments in Iran.

Key words: Hijab, Iranian Fashion Dress, Fashion Aversion, Traditional Veil, Aesthetical Veil.

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