[Original Article]

The characteristics of contemporary Indian fashion designs using traditional handicraft
- Focusing on Sabyasachi Mukherjee, Manish Malhotra, and Ritu Kumar -

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Abstract

Traditional culture contributes to the diversification of modern fashion design and the inheritance of local cultural identity. This study aims to identify the characteristics of traditional handicrafts reflected in modern fashion design in India. For this purpose, it focused on Sabyasachi Mukherjee, Manish Malhotra, and Ritu Kumar, who are currently leading the Indian fashion design field. The methodology involved conducting literature research and analyzing case studies. In the literature, the techniques of Indian traditional crafts such as embroidery, dyeing, and weaving were examined and five design elements of traditional crafts were defined. Through content analysis of 30 images from the three designers' Instagram accounts, the design characteristics of traditional handicrafts expressed in contemporary Indian fashion design were derived: cultural inheritance using traditional Indian clothing items, traditional materials and practices applied to contemporary clothing, craftsmanship that artistically improves complex details using embroidery techniques, various combinations based on the traditional meaning of colors, and narrative expression using patterns containing India's cultural identity. Incorporating these traditional handicrafts into fashion design, closely linked to everyday life, aids in conveying and enhancing their significance. The cases demonstrate the successful integration of conservation into contemporary fashion design. This study sheds light on the application of traditional culture in modern fashion design.

I. Introduction

India is a culturally diverse country with a rich heritage of textiles, clothing, and traditional attire. The art of handcraft weaving thrived across diverse Indian states, each region has its unique clothing styles, fabrics, diverse climate conditions, and embroidery techniques (Jadhav, 2013). This diversity contributes to a vibrant and

dynamic fashion market that creates various tastes and preferences. The distinctive styles elevated Indian hand-woven textiles, garnering appreciation both nationally and internationally for their captivating designs (Nair & Chandramana, 2020).

Recently, the interest in India's cultural fashion has increased globally, India's contemporary fashion style is characterized by the fact that traditional clothing and handicraft methods are reflected and continued into modern styles (Mehta, 2021). The Indian handcraft industry, largely operated at the household level, emerged as a significant source of employment, sustaining the livelihoods of countless skilled weavers. With a legacy spanning millennia, the continuous demand for handcraft weaving lies in its cost-effectiveness, low power consumption, and environmental-friendliness, reflecting a rich tradition of adaptability and innovation in the socio-economic fabric of India (Nair & Chandramana, 2020). Handicrafts and sustainability go hand in hand in the context of the rich craft traditions and cultural heritage of India (Gage & Pasricha, 2020).

Handicraft means making desired products by hand, using traditional skills and tools. A region's long-standing traditional handicraft culture is a cultural heritage that contains the region's long history and identity (Gwak, Seo, & Kim, 2021). These handcrafted textiles combine traditional craftsmanship with modern aesthetics to create a fresh, organic demand. Nevertheless, it has been considered difficult to include in the mainstream fashion system because it requires a lot of time and effort. However, recently, interest in craftsmanship, such as the revival of the craft movement, has been increasing within the creative design industry, and it is being discussed concerning sustainability. Research in the field of fashion design has predominantly centered on crafts such as knitting (Lee & Kim, 2018) or embroidery (Kim & Kwon, 2020), with a limited exploration into their cultural identity and design application so far. Accordingly, this study focuses on traditional handicrafts that contain cultural identity and understands how traditional handicraft

techniques are applied to contemporary fashion design, providing a variety of designs to contemporary consumers who demand newness every day.

Therefore, this study aims to define the characteristics of Indian traditional handicrafts expressed in contemporary Indian fashion designs. This study could provide implications for revitalizing local culture by illuminating local fashion content in the globalizing modern fashion industry. The specific research content is as follows. First, relevant literature research is conducted to define the concept of traditional handicrafts and the design factors of traditional handicrafts in India. Second, this study derives the characteristics of traditional handicrafts applied to modern Indian fashion design through content analysis.

Indian fashion designers sustain traditional handicrafts by seamlessly integrating them into designs, collaborating directly with artisans, reviving heritage techniques, promoting handmade products, showcasing crafts in fashion shows, initiating skill development, emphasizing ethical and sustainable practices, and creating market linkages. These efforts preserve cultural heritage, support artisans, and ensure the continued relevance of traditional crafts in the modern fashion industry (Brown & Vacca, 2022). Thus, the study focused on three Indian fashion designers: Sabyasachi Mukherjee, Manish Malhotra, and Ritu Kumar. The selection of these fashion designers is based on their recent awards and industry influence, and their collections highlight their ability to blend traditional handicrafts with contemporary fashion, contributing significantly to India's cultural and artistic landscape. Data for the last three years from January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2023. In this study, a total of 30 traditional craft images selected by fashion professionals were analyzed.

II. Literature Review

1. Traditional handicraft

Handicraft refers to the manual creation of items using traditional techniques rather than modern ma-

chinery. This sector is characterized by its unorganized nature, decentralized structure, and heavy reliance on labor, resembling a cottage industry where production is carried out on a smaller scale (Jadhav, 2013). Handcrafting is a process characterized by the manual creation of aesthetically pleasing and utilitarian objects. Practitioners, referred to as craftspeople or artisans, employ manual labor in the meticulous production of handicrafts. India, as a hub of diverse handicrafts, classifies these artifacts into distinct categories based on material composition, the nature of labor involved, intended functionality (e.g., accessories, décor, fashion, or utilitarian items), and the demographic origin of the artisans, including delineation by state or regional affiliations, notably within tribal communities (Pulukuri, Kumar, & Rao, 2023).

Traditional handicraft refers to the practice of creating handmade objects or products using age-old techniques, often passed down through generations within a specific cultural or regional context. This form of craftsmanship embodies the rich heritage and artistic expressions of a community, showcasing the skill, creativity, and cultural identity of its artisans. Traditional handicrafts encompass a diverse range of materials and methods, such as weaving, pottery, metalwork, wood carving, and textile arts. These timeless creations not only serve functional purposes but also carry symbolic meanings and stories, contributing to the preservation of cultural traditions and fostering a sense of connection to the past. Through the meticulous craftsmanship involved, traditional handicrafts play a crucial role in sustaining cultural diversity and promoting appreciation for the artisanal skills that have shaped communities for centuries (Vareesha, 2023).

2. Indian traditional handicrafts in the perspective of sustainability

1) Sustainability impact of handicrafts

The concept of sustainability entails maintaining or supporting over time, ensuring its continued existence or longevity through adaptability. The idea of sustainability, ethical production, and responsible consumption is central to marketing campaigns and government policies worldwide, especially in the textile and clothing sector, which is a key focus of the sustainability movement.

Sustainability in the fashion industry encompasses environmental protection, social justice, economic fairness, and cultural validity. Increasing consumer awareness and preference for sustainable products underscore the imperative for sustainability, encompassing the entire life cycle from production to postconsumer use (Jain, 2018). Conserving and maintaining local culture such as handicraft can contribute to the sustainability of the fashion industry. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2015) sees culture as a key driver for development. The Fashion SEEDS project (Brown & Vacca, 2022) defines cultural sustainability as promoting tolerant systems that embrace diversity. This extends beyond fashion discourse to include various communities, locations, and beliefs. In practice, it involves strategies to preserve and honor the cultural heritage of First Nations, ensuring their existence while respecting their unique identity and values. Cultural sustainability in fashion and textiles involves passing down traditional knowledge and cultural expressions through the integration of craftsmanship in modern supply chains (Giliberto & Labadi, 2022). It also includes recognizing and perpetuating sustainability-oriented traits in design, production, and consumption patterns.

2) Indian handicrafts

India exhibits an extensive array of traditional textiles and products, distinguished by their production through manual techniques such as hand spinning and handloom weaving, predominantly employing natural fibers. The inherent sustainability of these artifacts emanates from their composition with environ-

mentally advantageous materials, encompassing natural fibers and dyes. Recognized as an exemplar of ecological responsibility, natural fibers derive from renewable sources. Importantly, the production of items utilizing these natural fibers entails a reduced demand for energy and chemicals, in stark contrast to the environmental footprint associated with synthetic counterparts (Siddhu, 2023).

India has experienced a surge in global demand for traditional and tribal handicrafts, establishing itself as a leading exporter in the industry. In May 2022 alone, handicraft exports reached $120.06 million, reflecting a 1.01% increase from April. Total exports for the fiscal year 2021–2022 amounted to $4.35 billion, indicating a substantial growth of 25.7%. Noteworthy exports encompass shawls, paintings, wooden items, and traditional jewelry, which have gained popularity both in international markets, particularly the US, and domestically. The initiative to globally promote tribal products has generated employment for 10.5 lakh artisans over the past six years, with a significant proportion being women. India's traditional crafts, including jewelry, embroidery, textiles, and others, crafted by tribal communities, are gaining prominence worldwide. With over 3,000 forms of handicrafts and traditional crafts, India continues to reinforce its presence in the global marketplace (Thakur, 2022).

Crafts are vital for showcasing and preserving cultural heritage. In India, the artisan industry engages over six million artisans, a significant portion of whom are women, serving as a crucial source of income for rural communities and individuals from vulnerable socioeconomic backgrounds (Das & Mishra, 2021). Therefore, developing fashion products rooted in these traditional crafts becomes essential not only for sustaining the modern fashion industry but also for preserving local culture.

3. Design factors and characteristics of Indian traditional handicraft

1) Design factors of traditional handicraft

Traditional handicrafts are imbued with a rich tapestry of design factors that encapsulate intentional and creative choices made by artisans. These factors, encompassing aesthetic, functional, cultural, and symbolic considerations, play a pivotal role in shaping the originality and value of handmade products (Sagar & Geeta, 2021; Tadesse & Melesse, 2022) (Table 1). Firstly, cultural influence stands as a cornerstone, with India's diverse cultural heritage intricately woven into its traditional handicrafts. These crafts serve as a living testament to the country's history of artistry, preserving and reflecting the cultural identity of specific regions or communities (Auth India, 2023; Team Dudu, 2023). Artisans, drawing from their cultural background, integrate symbols, motifs, and traditional craftsmanship techniques into their creations. Material selection, the second design factor, is influenced by various factors, including depletion, climate change, alterations in laws, and shifts in preferences. Natural materials, fundamental to traditional crafts, may become scarce or undergo changes, impacting the availability and composition of handicrafts. Adaptations in response to environmental or social shifts are reflected in the material choices made by artisans, contributing to the overall design and aesthetic appeal of the finished product (Pal, 2022). The third factor involves the deliberate use of color and texture. Artisans employ natural dyes, traditional color palettes, and unique textures to enhance the visual and tactile aspects of their handicrafts (Singh, 2007). This deliberate choice of color and texture contributes to the distinctiveness of traditional crafts, making them visually appealing and culturally resonant. The fourth design factor is artisanal skills, a testament to the expertise passed down through generations. Highly skilled craftsmen in India, renowned for their attention to detail and precision, bring traditional handicrafts to life using techniques honed over the years (Jaisingh, 2021). The craftsmanship involved in creating these items elevates them beyond mere functionality, highlighting the

<Table 1> Design factors of traditional handicrafts

Sagar & Greeta (2021)	Tadesse & Melesse (2022)	Chatterje, Tiwari, Misra, & Dhande (2009)	Auth India (2023)	Team Dudu (2023)	Pal (2022)	Singh (2007)	Jaisingh (2021)	**Design factors**
Cultural influence by community identity	Cultural influence by community identity		Cultural influence by community identity	Cultural influence by community identity	Cultural influence by community identity			**Cultural influence**
	Natural resources		Natural resources		Material			**Materials**
Color and texture influenced region		Color and texture influenced region	Color and texture influenced region			Color and texture influenced region	Color and texture influenced region	**The use of color and texture**
Artisan Skill		Artisan Skill	Artisan Skill	Artisan Skill	Artisan Skill	Artisan Skill	Artisan Skill	**Artisan skills**
Symbolism and meaning	Symbolism and meaning	Symbolism and meaning				Symbolism		**Symbolism and meaning**

mastery and dedication of the artisans. Symbolism and meaning constitute the fifth design factor, where traditional crafts convey powerful messages through symbolic elements. Motifs inspired by daily life, such as flowers, plants, animals, and geometric symbols, often carry cultural significance. For example, Mahatma Gandhi's use of the spinning wheel, or charkha, as a symbol during the freedom struggle represents national unity (Das, 2021). Traditional handicrafts, therefore, become carriers of cultural narratives, embodying symbolism and meaning that adds layers of significance to the artifacts.

Thus, the design factors of traditional handicrafts are a harmonious blend of cultural, technical, and artistic considerations, artisans leverage creativity, skill, and cultural influence to create items that transcend mere functionality, becoming embodiments of a rich tradition and craftsmanship. As climate, societal, and cultural landscapes evolve, traditional crafts adapt, reflecting the dynamic interplay of design factors that shape their identity and contribute to their enduring value in the modern world. Based on the discussion, the design factors of traditional handicrafts are defined as cultural influence, materials, the use of color and texture, artisan skills, and symbolism and meaning.

2) Techniques of Indian traditional handicraft

Traditional handicrafts in India serve as a testament to the skill and creativity passed down through generations, with each detailed design showcasing the artistry of talented artisans (Agrwal, 2023). The realm of hand embroidery is a vibrant narrative of India's cultural and craft heritage, with distinct styles reflecting the diversity of different regions. Chikankari, originating in Lucknow over two centuries ago, epitomizes delicate stitching and intricate patterns (Fig. 1). Supported by Nawabs, this craft employs fine white cotton and draws inspiration from Mughal architecture, evolving into a widespread practice involving around 5,000 households, predominantly led by Muslim craftsmen, particularly women (Sawant, Guru, Kulkarni,

& Yadav, 2023). Another exemplary embroidery style is Kantha, characterized by a simple running stitch creating intricate patterns, often depicting gods, animals, and floral shapes. With applications in everyday items through techniques like painting, weaving, and printing, Kantha is a versatile craft with variations like Lepkantha and SujniKantha (Karim, Moniruzzaman, Nizam, Shammi, & Hasan, 2021). Zardozi, a special embroidery style, stands out for its use of 24-karat gold and silver threads, crafting beautiful motifs on fabrics like silk. Practiced mainly by the Muslim community, this intricate craft involves long hours of handcrafting, often incorporating gemstones like diamonds and pearls. Cities such as Delhi, Lucknow, Agra, Hyderabad, and Jaipur are notable hubs for Zardozi craftsmanship (Singh, 2007).

Dyeing and printing constitute other significant aspects of traditional handicrafts in India. The dyeing process involves adding color to fabrics using natural, organic, or synthetic dyes, reflecting the country's diverse heritage through vibrant and intricate color patterns. Bandhani is a method of tying small knots and then dyeing them different colors to create specific patterns (Fig. 2). Ajrak, a printed shawl and tiles made in places like Pakistan and India, is known for its use of natural dyes, including indigo, and holds cultural significance in the region (Guru, Thennarasu, Panigrahi, & Kumar, 2022). Batik, derived from the

word "ambatik," involves adding designs to fabrics through wax-resist dyeing. Another technique, Ikat, meaning 'to bind,' is a unique way of dyeing yarn before weaving, creating distinctive patterns, especially in Single Ikat where the yarn is tie-and-dye woven with a plain weft (Samyukta, 2021).

The weaving technique is equally crucial to traditional handicrafts, with India's rich history tracing back to the Indus Valley Civilization. Each state in India boasts unique and impressive weaving styles, contributing to the regional identity. Banarasi silk (Fig. 3), originating from Varanasi, stands out for its ornate appearance and intricate silk patterns. Introduced in the 17th century, this craft flourished during the Mughal rule and remains a traditional choice for Indian weddings and celebrations (Stephen, 2021). Pashmina, derived from the wool of the Chyangra goat, is crafted by the Changpa tribe in Kashmir. Known for its thin shawls featuring various designs, Pashmina gained worldwide fame, especially in Europe during the 18th century, and is considered a luxury fabric (Hedge, 2019).

Hence, traditional handicrafts in India showcase a kaleidoscope of skill, creativity, and cultural diversity. From intricate embroideries like Chikankari and Kantha to the opulence of Zardozi, each technique is a testament to the craftsmanship passed down through generations. Dyeing and printing techniques like Ajrak and

<Fig. 1>
Hand embroidery of chickakari
Adapted from
Lucknow Chikankari Dress365day.
(2023). https://www.instagram.com/

<Fig. 2>
Dyeing and Painting of Badhini
Adapted from
Shameer Khan. (2022).
https://www.instagram.com/

<Fig. 3>
Weaving of silk
Adapted from
Banarasi Sare Hub. (2022).
https://www.instagram.com/

Batik add vibrant colors and cultural significance, while weaving styles such as Banarasi silk and Pashmina contribute to the regional identity. These traditional handicrafts not only preserve cultural heritage but also continue to be celebrated globally for their uniqueness and artistry.

III. Method

1. Research method and procedures

This study adopted a mixed research method with a case study for deciding the designers' cases and a qualitative content analysis method using images for the analysis. Content analysis is a research method that systematically investigates and interprets the content of texts, media, and communications to identify patterns, themes, and meanings to draw conclusions and insights. Content analysts do not collect data from physical events like many researchers, but from texts that have been written for a purpose and analyzed with that in mind (Wani, 2021). Content analysis can be approached in two ways: quantitative and qualitative. While quantitative content analysis gives meaning to the frequency of occurrence of words rather than their meaning, qualitative content analysis extracts meaning (Glaser & Laudel, 2009/2012). This study applies qualitative research methods because it requires understanding not only the visual elements of fashion design but also the content behind them through the perspective of Indian traditional culture, that is, extracting and interpreting meaning. There is much discussion about the analysis procedures of qualitative research methods, but this study followed the analysis procedures presented by Lee and Kim (2014) including the first step of establishing an analysis framework, the second step of categorization, and the third step of conceptual connection of categories. In this study, the design elements of traditional handicrafts described in Chapter II were analyzed as a framework.

According to Eisenhardt (1991), four to ten subjects of analysis are appropriate, 10 were selected per designer, and according to Thomas (2006) as it is important to acquire new knowledge rather than blindly increasing the number of cases, three designers were selected. A total of 30 images were selected for analysis. This study examined the integration of traditional handicraft features in modern Indian fashion design. It analyzed the design characteristics of contemporary Indian fashion that incorporate traditional handicraft techniques, focusing on photos from the Instagram accounts of three contemporary Indian fashion designers. Instagram was launched in 2010 and is now very popular around the world, with over 1 billion people using it every month (Rodriguez, 2021). On Instagram, people can share photos and videos, and communicate with others by leaving comments or sending direct messages (Smith, 2021). The Instagram accounts of fashion brands and designers serve as fashion communication channels to communicate directly with followers and provide information about their designs (Tomovska, 2020). In addition, images were collected from each designer's Instagram account to facilitate the collection of Indian fashion design data in Korea.

The analysis examined the last three years of data, from January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2023, to identify recent fashion design trends. Sabyasachi Mukherjee uploaded 2,300 Instagram posts, Manish Malhotra uploaded 1,098 posts, and Ritu Kumar uploaded 848 posts. The researcher initially gathered a total of 150 images, with 50 images selected from each designer's Instagram account, showcasing traditional Indian handicraft techniques. Subsequently, a panel of fashion experts selected 10 images from each designer, for a total of 30 images, reflecting design elements related to traditional crafts. The fashion experts comprised three graduate students holding master's degrees or higher in fashion design. The hired fashion experts received a sufficient explanation from the authors about the design elements of traditional handicrafts and were hired to objectively select images that clearly showed the five elements.

2. Contemporary Indian fashion designers

This research focuses on three fashion designers; Sabyasachi Mukherijee, Manish Malhotra, and Ritu Kumar. There are not many examples of Indian designers in previous studies, but they were selected for the following reasons; mentioned in previous research as representative of contemporary Indian fashion designers and well-known for using traditional Indian craft(Bhandari, 2011; Kim, 2016; Nagrath, 2003) and experienced as award-winning designers in recognition of their design value.

Sabyasachi Mukherjee (SM) is an Indian fashion designer widely acclaimed for crafting exquisite traditional wedding dresses. He was recently honored for his exceptional artistic contributions at the India Art Fair ceremony held on April 26, 2022. The awards, presented annually preceding the India Art Fair, aimed to recognize the outstanding achievements of both established artists and emerging talents. Mukherjee was acknowledged for his 'inimitable body of work' (PTI, 2022). His adeptness in incorporating traditional Indian fabrics and techniques into contemporary designs has garnered international admiration. His success stems from his meticulous attention to detail and his ability to evoke nostalgic sentiments through his creations, which resonate with people worldwide (London Rag, 2023).

Manish Malhotra (MM) a prominent figure in the Hindi film industry for over 33 years, revolutionized costume design by introducing the concept of styling, notably showcased in Ram Gopal Varma's 1995 musical romance, Rangeela. His significant contributions were further recognized when he received the IIFA award for styling in costume design on May 21, 2023 (Patel, 2023). He is a renowned fashion designer known for his work in Bollywood, Tamil, Telugu, and Hollywood movies. He embarked on his career journey in 1998 with his brand Reverie-Manish Malhotra, focusing on modeling and runway fashion. He demonstrates a profound appreciation for Indian craftsmanship and actively supports regional handicrafts through his collaboration with the 'Mijwan Welfare Society,' an NGO established by Kaifi Azmi and currently helmed by Shabana Azmi (Vogue India, 2017).

Ritu Kumar (RK) was honored with the DNA Women Achievers award in the fashion category on May 3, 2023, recognizing her remarkable contributions to the field (Goswami, 2023). Known for her distinctive style, Ritu Kumar seamlessly blends ancient Indian craftsmanship with contemporary trends. Her designs prominently feature natural fabrics and traditional techniques, particularly showcased in her exquisite saree collections. Within her boutiques, patrons can discover meticulously crafted apparel and accessories crafted from premium materials such as silk, cotton, and leather. She ardently champions handloom textiles, considering them an integral aspect of India's cultural heritage (Kamth, 2018).

IV. Analysis and Result

The 30 images were analyzed correspondingly according to the five elements of traditional handicraft design, which are cultural influence, materials, the use of color and texture, artisan skills, and symbolism and meaning as follows.

1. Cultural inheritance using traditional Indian clothing items

Modern Indian fashion designers have reinterpreted traditional Indian clothing items in a contemporary style. 〈Fig. 4〉 is a bridal lehenga designed by SM, known for being popular among Indian brides who love to wear her creations on their wedding day. The traditional lehenga is a heavy three-part attire consisting of a long skirt, blouse, and dupatta. However, in this case, the traditional form of the amalgamation of luxurious ethos is based on fostering innovation within contemporary Indian fashion. The intentional juxtaposition of traditional embroidery techniques and modern printed appliqués signifies the designer's insight into

blending heritage and avant-garde elements. ⟨Fig. 5⟩ depicts a dhoti-inspired ensemble comprising two separate pieces. One component consists of a short kurta, while the other is draped around the hips and thighs, with one passed between the legs and secured into the waistband, creating the semblance of relaxed, knee-length trousers. The deliberate reinterpretation of the traditional dhoti in a suit format showcases the designer's acumen in integrating heritage elements with avant-garde design. This creation stands as a testament to Sabyasachi's commitment to fostering innovation, contributing significantly to the discourse on the dynamic evolution of contemporary Indian fashion design.

The designs by MM strongly reflect Indian culture and heritage, like sarees and lehenga. Inspired by the grandeur of Indian cinema, Bollywood, his works often blend traditional lehengas with modern elements (Bhargava, 2024). ⟨Fig. 6⟩ is a variation of the traditional lehenga, incorporating cultural influences. ⟨Fig. 7⟩ is a hand-woven sari. A sari is a traditional Indian long piece of cloth that wraps around the entire body. It exemplifies the careful infusion of cul-

tural influences into his creations. These saris combine traditional weaving techniques with indigenous motifs to show an appreciation for India's diverse textile heritage. His hand-woven sarees eloquently express the dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity in Indian textile design by blending authenticity with contemporary sensibilities.

RK emphasizes reviving and preserving indigenous Indian textile traditions, reflecting a commitment to heritage and cultural identity in their respective works (Ians, 2018). ⟨Fig. 8⟩ presents a patchwork of folklore one-piece dress reflecting her profound engagement with cultural traditions. India's folk art epitomizes the nation's cultural legacy, combining simplicity with vibrancy. Renowned for their authentic traditional aestheticism, these artistic expressions demonstrate considerable potential in the global market. Rooted in rural locales, folk paintings intricately weave together distinctive designs and religious motifs, serving as visual embodiments of shared community values and cultural identity (Sharma, 2015). ⟨Fig. 9⟩ presents an organic saree that embodies her nuanced approach to incorporating cultural influences into sustainable

<Fig. 4>
Tulle saree with embroidered and printed applique blouses of Sabyasachi Adapted from Sabyasachi. (2022a). https://www.instagram.com/

<Fig. 5>
Dohti style suit of Sabaysachi Adapted from Sabyasachi. (2023a). https://www.instagram.com/

<Fig. 6>
Lehenga of Manish Malohtra Adapted from Manish Malhotra. (2021a). https://www.instagram.com/

<Fig. 7>
Handwoven saree of Manhish Malhotra Adapted from Manish Malhotra. (2023a). https://www.instagram.com/

<Fig. 8>
Patchwork of folklore of Ritu Kumar Adapted from Ritu Kumar. (2023). https://www.instagram.com/

<Fig. 9>
Organic saree of Ritu Kumar Adapted from Ritu Kumar. (2021a). https://www.instagram.com/

design practices. The sarees relate to Indian cultural elements by incorporating eco-friendly practices while staying true to traditional textile craftsmanship.

SM displayed a gorgeous and grand style that added traditional fabrics, embroidery, and craftsmanship to Indian sari items, while MM displayed design characteristics that blended traditional elements such as sari and lehenga with the modern sensibility of Bollywood style. RK also uses Indian saris and dhoti items but presents them in a more modern way than the other two designers.

2. Traditional materials and practices applied to contemporary clothing

Indian clothing often incorporates cultural elements through intricate embroidery like zari and kantha, vibrant dyeing methods such as tie-dye and bandhani, and traditional weaving styles like Banarasi and Kanchipuram, showcasing the rich diversity and artistic heritage of India in textiles (Sandhu, 2020). Each region has unique textiles, weaving techniques, and decoration, displaying rich textures and tapestry designs. For example, the luxurious silk saris of Varanasi, the vibrant bandhani of Gujarat, and the delicate embroidery of Lucknow can be said to be its hallmarks. Additionally, the use of natural fibers such as cotton, silk, and wool emphasizes sustainability and authenticity in clothing creation, reflecting a harmonious relationship with the environment (Gupta, 2012). Additionally, the traditional materials used in Indian clothing have different applications depending on the region, occasion, and social class. For example, cotton and linen are used by people living in hot tropical regions, especially in northern India (Ghosh, 1995). Velvet, brocade, netting, and organza are often used for special events like weddings or family gatherings. Silk is used during festivals, especially in southern India. Wool, pashmina, and cashmere are mainly used in cooler regions (India Fashion X, 2022). In other words, these traditional Indian materials have cultural heritage more in the scope of their use than in the material itself.

SM draws inspiration from Indian art, culture, and history, often combining traditional craftsmanship with a contemporary sensibility. It draws inspiration from India's diverse cultural traditions, which are reflected in his creations (Khandelwal, 2023). The garments used rich and luxurious fabrics such as silk, velvet, and brocade. ⟨Fig. 10⟩ presents hand-painted and printed pure Indian silk lehengas are paired with matching togas, cinched at the waist with a Sabyasachi multi-purpose Bengal tiger belt (Sabyasachi, 2021a). The hand-printed lehenga is a two-piece garment, one off-shoulder long kurti, and a second long skirt with a belt. Sabyasachi is known for using rich, luxurious fabrics such as silk, velvet, and brocade in her designs. The traditional materials are associated with opulence and are often used on special occasions.

The choice of fabrics and decoration reflects social class and a luxurious aesthetic appropriate for formal occasions (Kapoor, 2022).

MM uses a variety of materials ranging from traditional Indian fabrics such as silk and brocade to contemporary fabrics (Bhargava, 2024). ⟨Fig. 11⟩ is a gold handloom saree designed by this designer that supports the weaves, artistry, handloom, and textiles of India. Complementing this saree is a customized gold handloom intricately embroidered (Manish Malhotra, 2023b). The creation involves skilled artisans using handloom weaving techniques to meticulously intertwine gold zari threads with silk or cotton fabric. They present a keen embrace of traditional materials and design. The use of gold loom sarees in his provided examples demonstrates his dedication to traditional Indian loom weaving techniques and textiles. While Malhotra's designs have a pan-Indian appeal, the specific textiles and weaving techniques may vary based on regional influences. Malhotra's designs often cater to high-profile events and film industry celebrities. The use of intricate embroidery and traditional materials reflects a preference for luxurious and glamorous outfits suitable for special

occasions (Vogue India, 2023).

RK skillfully combines traditional materials with contemporary fashion to create a harmonious blend that suits contemporary style preferences (Nair & Chandramana, 2020). ⟨Fig. 12⟩ is a Mustard dress designed by a designer. The dress is very simple and comfortable due to its lightweight. Steeped in craftsmanship and blended with modern silhouettes which are the signature of the brand, the collection represents an ideal fusion of opulent yet comforting textiles, adorned with surface embellishments executed with exquisite refinement. His dress showcases a thoughtful blend of traditional cotton material and design elements.

SM shows splendor and luxury by using silk, velvet, and brocade, while MM mainly uses traditional Indian fabrics such as silk and loom and traditional embroidery techniques. While these designers showed off fancy and delicate techniques, RK utilized the naturalness of traditional cotton material itself.

<Fig. 10>
Hand-painted and printed pure Indian silk lehenga of Sabyasachi Adapted from Sabyasachi. (2021a). https://www.instagram.com/

<Fig. 11>
Gold handloom saree of Manish Malhotra Adapted from Manish Malhotra. (2023b). https://www.instagram.com/

<Fig. 12>
Mustard dress of Ritu Kumar Adapted from Manish Malhotra. (2021b). https://www.instagram.com/

3. Craftsmanship that artistically improves complex details using embroidery techniques

The assertion that India's traditional embroidery demands extensive time and energy, leading to its avoidance within the modern fashion design industry focused on rapid production and consumption, holds validity. However, in contrast to this trend, contemporary Indian fashion designers are increasingly incorporating labor-intensive embroidery techniques into their creations.

SS further contends that the significance of vibrantly colored, meticulously crafted objects, alongside hand-woven textiles fashioned by skilled artisans, will markedly increase in the future. He asserts that this represents a core strength of India and constitutes a significant contribution to the evolution of fashion. Using traditional techniques and creating luxurious items not only keeps our culture alive but also puts India in the spotlight in the fashion world (Sharma, 2024). The embroidered and sequinned tulle lehenga showcases his design prowess with a distinct emphasis on craftsmanship skills (Fig. 13). The intricate detailing, including elaborate embroidery and sequin work on the delicate tulle fabric, reflects the designer's meticulous attention to precision and dedication to refining traditional techniques. This ensemble stands as a testament to this garment designer has use of traditional hand embroidery techniques. ⟨Fig. 14⟩ is a silk banarasi saree and this showcases his design emphasis on craftsmanship skill means having the ability and expertise to create things by hand using specialized techniques (Hegde, 2019). The intricate weaving and embellishments on the Banarasi silk fabric highlight the designer's unwavering commitment to meticulous craftsmanship. This creation serves as a testament to Sabyasachi's dedication to preserving and elevating traditional handloom techniques within the realm of haute couture.

MM showcases traditional Indian craftsmanship through embroidery and embellishments (Bhargava, 2024). ⟨Fig. 15⟩ is a white-pink chikankari lehenga

with a signature, featuring his signature sparkle, which is a testament to his design emphasis on craftsmanship skills. Signature sparkle" means a special and unique kind of glitter or shine that is easily associated with a specific brand or person. It's like their special touch that makes things sparkle in a way that is easily recognizable and distinctively theirs. The intricate traditional work woven into the fabric, coupled with the distinctive sparkle, showcases the designer's unwavering commitment to exemplary craftsmanship (Fig. 16). The pink lehenga and blouse by the designer, adorned with authentic gold and silver nakshi embellishments, exemplify the meticulous craftsmanship that characterizes his designs. This careful combination of precious metals blends traditional handcraft techniques with luxurious materials. ⟨Fig. 17⟩ is a chikankari lehenga with pearl embroidery. It shows intricate chikankari combined with delicate pearl embroidery, blending traditional handicraft techniques with luxurious embellishments. ⟨Fig. 18⟩ is a classic gold sari, and its intricate embroidery details show a high level of technique.

While SM reflects the craftsmanship of traditional hand embroidery techniques to improve complex details, MM utilizes the luxury of traditional embroidery techniques through craftsmanship in the design.

4. Various combinations based on the traditional meaning of colors

The choice of colors in Indian textiles carries special meaning and symbolism related to emotions and situations. SS showcases exceptional color skills in his designs, incorporating earthy and regal tones like deep reds, royal blues, and rich greens (London Rag, 2023). ⟨Fig. 19⟩ presents a three-piece ensemble, epitomizing his mastery of earthy and regal tones like deep reds, royal blues, and rich greens. The choice of red holds cultural weight in India, symbolizing love, passion, divinity, purity, and marriage (Przybylec, 2021). Red, worn by brides and married women, signifies joy, prosperity, and marital bliss. SS's design captures the essence of feminine mysticism and power associated with this fiery hue, aligning with Hindu astrological connections to Mars (Soni, 2023). Striking color combinations is evident in a two-piece garment featuring a Mysore silk shirt and a digitally rendered

<Fig. 13>
Embroidered and sequinned tulle lehenga of Sabyasachi Adapted from Sabyasachi. (2022b). https://www.instagram.com/

<Fig. 14>
Silk banarasi saree of Sabyasachi Adapted from Sabyasachi. (2023b). https://www.instagram.com/

<Fig. 15>
White pink chikankari lehenga with our signature parkle of Manish Malhotra Adapted from Manish Malhotra. (2021b). https://www.instagram.com

<Fig. 16>
Pink lehenga and blouse embellished in real gold and silver nakshi of Manish Malhotra Adapted from Manish Malhotra. (2022). https://www.instagram.com/

<Fig. 17>
Chikankari lehenga with embroidered pearl of Manish Malhotra Adapted from Manish Malhotra. (2023c). https://www.instagram.com/

<Fig. 18>
Classic gold saree of Manish Malhotra Adapted from Manish Malhotra. (2023d). https://www.instagram.com/

hand-painted wool trouser (Fig. 20). The use of green, symbolizing stability, faith, and prosperity, resonates with life, renewal, and fertility (Huedee, 2019). Green's association with spirituality adds a classy touch, while its prominence during festivals like Holi and Baisakhi signifies the onset of spring and the harvest season (Khan, 2023).

MM, celebrated for vibrant choices, collaborates with artisans to intricately detail ensembles in traditional Indian craftsmanship (Bhargava, 2024). A white embroidered veil statement lehenga symbolizes honesty, purity, and peace. White, often associated with mourning, embodies truth and calmness in Indian culture (Fig. 21). Modern brides, particularly in Gujarat and Assam, opt for off-white and ivory-white attire, reflecting a growing preference for neutral shades. ⟨Fig. 30⟩ introduces a rosette blush crystal sequin saree, where saffron symbolizes the search for light, sanctity, selflessness, and courage (Huedee, 2019). In this figure, the orange or saffron color is the national flag that stands for courage and wisdom, blending yellow's love and red's strength. It's sacred, with a touch of mythological and religious importance, symbolizing things like fire and the sun (Soni, 2023).

RK incorporates a variety of colors in her creations, reflecting India's regional diversity. For example, her designs include vibrant yellows and pinks associated with North Indian festivals (Manjani, 2023). A kaftan dress symbolizes warmth and earthiness through vibrant yellows associated with North Indian festivals (Fig. 22). Yellow, considered religious and auspicious, represents wisdom and is chosen by brides for haldi ceremonies. RK's blue turquoise-colored floral print dress resonates with spirituality (Fig. 23), calmness, determination, trust, and strength (Przybylec, 2021). Blue, often worn during religious events to express devotion and spiritual connection, is linked with Lord Krishna (Khan, 2023). A printed one-piece dress, exemplifies the fusion of tradition and modernity, where gold and mustard colors represent material and spiritual richness (Fig. 24). This interplay between cultural authenticity and evolving fashion contributes significantly to the discourse on tradition and modernity in couture (Soni, 2023). ⟨Fig. 25⟩ presents an asymmetrical printed one-piece dress by RK, featuring white and pink flower colors symbolizing love, compassion, and femininity. Often chosen for bridal attire, these hues embody the nurturing qualities of

<Fig. 19>
Lehenga of Sabyasachi
Adapted from Sabyasachi. (2021b).
https://www.instagram.com/

<Fig. 20> Printed mysore silk shirt with digital of Sabyasachi
Adapted from Sabyasachi. (2022c).
https://www.instagram.com/

<Fig. 21>
New Embroidered veil statement lehenga of Manish.
Adapted from Manish Malhotra. (2023e).
https://www.instagram.com/

<Fig. 22>
Kafttan dress of Ritu
Adapted from Ritu Kumar. (2022a).
https://www.instagram.com/

<Fig. 23>
Turquiose floral print dress of Ritu Kumar Adapted from Ritu Kumar. (2022b). https://www.instagram.com/

<Fig. 24>
Printed dress of Ritu Kumar Adapted from Ritu Kumar. (2021c). https://www.instagram.com/

<Fig. 25>
Printed asymmetrical dress of Ritu Kumar Adapted from Ritu Kumar. (2022c). https://www.instagram.com/

women and are linked to the Hindu goddess of love, Parvati (Khan, 2023).

Designers actively utilized the symbolic meaning of color to reflect the identity of their design collections. Red, royal blue and rich green were used for SM, white, off-white, and saffron for MM, and yellow, turquoise, white, and pink for RK. This means that the traditional meaning of color is skillfully integrated into the design and cultural meaning is reflected through vivid combinations.

5. Narrative expression using patterns containing India's cultural identity

Traditional Indian handicrafts are known for their bright colors and intricate designs and play an important role in India's cultural heritage. Different regions of India have their unique weaving styles using specific patterns that reflect the history, culture, and traditions of that region. The three designers' works show unique narratives using patterns that embody the identity of Indian culture.

SS often incorporates iconic motifs and patterns in his designs. Each collection adds depth and meaning to the garments, allowing them to tell a narrative or

story. <Fig. 26> harmoniously mixes bold colors in a lehenga with flower motifs and the symbolism of a tiger. The designer uses the tiger symbol in each lehenga. In India, flowers hold traditional meaning, and this lehenga showcases cultural significance as it is worn by every Indian bride during her wedding (Saha, 2023). <Fig. 27> is a designer sari with bright floral colors and a flower motif. Floral patterns symbolize beauty, femininity, and nature, featuring various types of flowers and leaves as motifs. (Saha, 2023). <Fig. 28> is the designer's floral print lehenga, featuring red and yellow colors, expressing India's cultural identity through floral patterns.

MM infuses symbolism into his designs, often inspired by cultural motifs and themes. Some collections may carry a narrative or convey specific meaning through chosen motifs. He is known for blending traditional attires with modernity, and this fusion often holds symbolic meanings (Khatib, 2023). <Fig. 29> is a gold lehenga with a flower motif and elegant pattern. Grape vines signify transition and well-being, elephants show strength, and parrots express passion. Paisley motifs symbolize vitality and fertility, while geometric patterns encompass diverse shapes such as ovals, triangles, squares, circles, and diamonds (Kapila, 2017).

RK supports the development of new design ideas that showcase symbolic motifs and patterns, each carrying a story or cultural significance, and a blend of modern and traditional aesthetics (Nair & Chandramana, 2020). <Fig. 31> is a green embroidered Chanderi dress and includes one long one-piece outfit. In India, this dress showcases nature's vibrancy, cultural prosperity, and a harmonious blend of elegance and renewal (Kumari, 2021). <Fig. 32> is a two-piece outfit consisting of a pink printed hat and dhoti pants with a flower motif. Intentionally fusing traditional hats and dhoti pants with contemporary prints, the designs demonstrate the designer's insight into blending heritage elements with contemporary aesthetics (Kumari, 2021). <Fig. 33> is a two-piece

<Fig. 26>
Lehenga of
Sabyasachi
Adapted from
Sabyasachi.
(2023c).
https://www.instagra
m.com/

<Fig. 27>
Floral sarees of Sabyasachi
Adapted from
Sabyasachi.
(2021c).
https://www.instagram.com/

<Fig. 28>
Lehenga of Sabyasachi
Adapted from
Sabyasachi.
(2021d).
https://www.instagram.com/

<Fig. 29>
Gold Lehenga of
Manish Malhotra
Adapted from
Manish Malhotra.
(2021c).
https://www.instagram.c
om/

<Fig. 30>
Rosette blush
crystal sequin saree
of Manish Malhotra
Adapted from
Manish Malhotra.
(2023f).
https://www.instagra
m.com/

<Fig. 31>
Chaderi suit of
Ritu Kumar
Adapted from
Ritu Kumar.
(2021d).
https://www.instagr
am.com/

<Fig. 32>
Pink printed cap
and dhoti pants of
Ritu Kumar
Adapted from
Ritu Kumar.
(2021e).
https://www.instag
ram.com/

<Fig. 33>
Red paisley
printed suit of
Ritu Kumar
Adapted from
Ritu Kumar.
(2021f).
https://www.instag
ram.com/

costume made up of a red paisley patterned suit created by a designer, loose-fitting bottoms called trousers, an upper tunic called a kurta, and a scarf. The designer used traditional dyeing and printing techniques for this garment. This dress represents traditional cultural identity, Indian brides prefer to wear this suit after the wedding (Sumathi, 2007).

Designers used textile pattern motifs that have been handed down for a long time in India to tell the brand's unique story. SM represents motifs and patterns symbolizing the Bengal tiger and nature, while MM uses elephants symbolizing strength, parrots symbolizing passion, and paisley patterns symbolizing life and fertility, respectively, to convey tradition,

vitality, and prosperity. Additionally, RK used plant motifs and traditional dyeing techniques to create a natural mood.

V. Conclusion

In a global context, there has been a notable surge in interest in Indian cultural fashion, which fuses traditional clothing and handicraft practices with contemporary styles. The purpose of this study is to select three representative Indian fashion designers, explore the characteristics of traditional handicrafts related to clothing, and examine how they manifest in modern Indian fashion design. The findings are as follows: Through literature review, this study defines Indian traditional crafts as handcrafted practices passed down through generations within specific cultures or regions. Design elements include cultural influences, materials, color usage, craftsmanship, symbolism, and meaning. Analyzing works of three contemporary Indian fashion designers, the study identifies traditional handicraft characteristics: cultural inheritance via traditional clothing items, materials, and practices adapted to contemporary fashion; intricate craftsmanship with embroidery techniques; diverse color combinations rooted in traditional symbolism; and narrative expressions reflecting India's cultural identity.

Distinguishing design variances among the three designers became apparent. SM adeptly interweaves traditional textiles and artisanal techniques into contemporary Indian apparel design, thereby upholding cultural legacy through exquisite materials and symbolic patterns. Conversely, MM amalgamated traditional Indian components with a contemporary, Bollywood-influenced flair, culminating in selections deeply entrenched in cultural import and elaborate craftsmanship. RK stood out by seamlessly fusing indigenous textile customs and folk art motifs into sustainable designs that reconcile tradition with modernity.

Traditional handicrafts may be limited in meeting the rapidly changing fashion market and the needs of modern consumers. However, traditional handicrafts convey special meanings and stories, helping to preserve cultural traditions and create connections with the past. Additionally, traditional crafts are special because they are made with a lot of thought and creativity. Design elements such as cultural influences, material selection, color, and craftsmanship all come together to make each handcrafted piece unique and valuable. These elements play a significant role in giving traditional handicrafts their special look and feel. The symbolism and meaning behind these artifacts often tell important cultural stories, making them more than just functional items. The application of these traditional handicrafts to fashion design, which is closely related to daily life, contributes to transmitting and enhancing its value. The Indian example shows how conservation can be successfully incorporated into contemporary fashion design.

This study explores how traditional culture shapes modern fashion through the integration of traditional handicrafts in contemporary fashion design. While emphasizing the role of skilled artisans and enhancing understanding of India's cultural identity, limitations arise from analyzing a limited set of images from designer Instagram accounts. Further research on a broader scale, including in-depth interviews with designers, could facilitate a more comprehensive approach to incorporating traditional culture into the fashion system.

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