

CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON THE DRESS OF MODERN CEYLON

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Island of Ceylon is characterized by a fascinating variety of costume that has its origin in the traditions of the past. Old and new are blended effectively in strange patterns that reflect combinations of many cultural influences. Some of these cultural influences are inherent in the racial origin of the people of Ceylon. Other influences have been exerted at various periods of foreign domination and have survived in fragmentary forms. Ancient and modern designs exist side by side and are accepted by the Ceylonese as part of the natural order. Foreigners see a kaleidoscope of many colors and many patterns which seem to lack any principle of unity. Yet the costumes of modern Ceylon have significance and meaning, for they reflect the history and the traditions of its people.

An analysis of the traditional elements in the history of Ceylon shows the predominant influence of India. Ceylon is culturally a part of the great Indian subcontinent. It is physically divided from India by a

thirty-mile wide stretch of ocean called Palk Strait, and the island of Manaar to the north of Ceylon is connected with India by a chain of sandy islets known as Adam's Bridge. There is an old legend to say that Adam's Bridge was built by the monkey people at the request of Rama, an Indian prince. Rama's wife, Sita, had been stolen by the king of Ceylon and the monkey people built a footway of rocks from India to Ceylon so that Rama could lead his invading armies across.

India has influenced Ceylon from the earliest period of Ceylon history. The population of Ceylon is of Indian origin; Sinhalese and Tamil, the indigenous languages have a common root in Indian classical Sanskrit, and Buddhism and Hinduism, the chief religions of the Ceylonese people today had their origin in India. Every great change in India, political, economic, social or religious, had its repercussions in Ceylon and every wave of Indian civilization up to the end of the fifteenth century reached Ceylon and left its mark on the life and thought of the people.

Yet Ceylon has not been influenced by Indian culture exclusively and its position as an island has helped to isolate it from the major upheavals that have shattered India. For instance, Buddhism though it had its origin in India was gradually overwhelmed there by the encroachments

of Hinduism and practically ceased to exist after the Moghul invasions. In Ceylon, on the other hand, the original form of Buddhism which came from India in the third century B.C., flourished in its pure form and is still a source of inspiration to the Buddhist countries of Southeast Asia.

Ceylon lies midway between Europe and the Far East on the trade routes from West to East. It has been known to seafarers through the centuries. The Indians called it Tambapanni, the Greeks and Romans knew it as Taprobane, to the Arabs it was Serendib and to the Portuguese Zeylan. The ancient traders came to Ceylon in search of its wealth. Sopater, a Greek who visited Ceylon in the sixth Century A.D. wrote of Ceylon: "This is the great island of the Indian ocean, situated in the Indian Sea ... It is frequented by a great press of merchants from far countries ... From all parts of India, Persia and Aethiopia come a multitude of ships to this island which is placed as it were midway between all lands; and it sends ships likewise hither and thither in all directions.

From the inner regions, that is from Tzinista and from the other market towns, are brought silk cloth, aloe-wood, cloves and sandalwood and it forwards them to those of the outside, that is to Male in which pepper grows, to Calliana, to Sinda, to Persia, to the country of the

Homerites and Adulis.

And so this Island placed in the midst of India receives goods from all markets and ships to all being itself a great market." (13, p.6-7)

The trade and the strategic position of Ceylon have been of importance at all periods of its history. The Portuguese were the first European people to visit Ceylon. They were attracted by reports of "the fine cinnamon and all the choicest of the seed pearls and all the elephants of India and many other wares and things of great value and profit; and being so near to Malacca and the gulf of Bengala; and being near to Kayal; and lying in the track of all the ships of Malacca and Bengala and none being able to pass without being seen and known of in that part."

(13, p.9) As a result, the King of Portugal suggested that his representative in India should seize Ceylon and establish his residence there.

The Portuguese conquered Ceylon in 1506, but the Dutch in their turn were attracted by the trade in spices and ousted the Portuguese in 1658. The British were more concerned with the strategic importance of Ceylon harbors and they gained control of Ceylon in 1815. The British rule lasted in Ceylon till 1948 when Ceylon gained her independence and became a Dominion in the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Ceylon, today, is a mixture of many races and many cultures, the Sinhalese, the Tamils, the Moors, the Europeans and some smaller minority groups. The Sinhalese constitute 69 per cent of the people and are the descendants of the original Aryan invaders. The Aryans were a group of Indo-European people who settled in Persia and India long before 1000 B.C. The Rigveda, a collection of ancient Aryan hymns describes their life and customs when they were living in the Indus valley. They were mainly a pastoral people but they had some knowledge of agriculture. They lived in tribes and were ruled by kings who were assisted by tribal assemblies called samiti and by domestic priests and chieftains. In Ceylon today the Aryan form of village government still persists in the gansabha while the Aryan form of kingship and central government were features of Ceylon life until the British conquest. (37, p.8)

Aryan society had a broad four-fold division of classes which consisted of the Brahmanas or priests, the Ksatriyas or warriors, the Vaisyas, who followed agricultural and pastoral pursuits, and finally, the Sudras, who were hunters, fishermen and domestic slaves. These class divisions were not rigidly enforced and there was also a fifth class called Samanya or Common, which was formed by irregular intermarriages between the other classes and between Aryans and non-Aryans. These divisions were the

original basis of the caste system which dominated India for centuries and which prevails in Ceylon even today.

(24, p.22)

The ancient Aryan religion was essentially a nature-worship. The early symbols of natural powers were Surya, the Sun; Agni, the Fire-spirit; Indra, the Wielder of the thunderbolt and the rain; and Varuna, the Concealer and Ruler of the night sky. After the Aryans settled down in the Himalayan regions they added other gods to their Pantheon. Vishnu was the ruler of the fertile mountain and the Spirit of life, Lakshmi was the bright goddess of the day; Siva was the Spirit of death, and Parvati, the symbol of Spring, drew Siva away from his meditations and decked the mountain slopes with bridal garlands. The Aryan village had eight gates which symbolized the Wheel of Life and the rite of the Cosmic Cross. It was on this that "the Buddha based his doctrine of the Aryan Eightfold Path--the new Way of Life which would release mankind from suffering." (24, p.28)

The original Aryan settlers in India were constantly being pushed south and east by new streams of their own race. This brought them in contact with the kingdoms of the Dravidians, the most civilized of the non-Aryan races who inhabited India at the time of the Aryan immigration. "The indigenous Dravidian system was in all probability

the foundation upon which the Indo-Aryan economic super-structure was built. The Dravidian tribesmen were generally nomad hunters living in the forest, and their social system differed from the Aryan in being matriarchal instead of patriarchal. The mothers and their children formed the nucleus of a settled society; the fathers were the hunters of a different tribe whose occupation of supplying food for the common meals kept them often away from the village." (24, p.11) In its lowest form the Dravidian culture produced the ferocious forest bandits regarded with horror and disgust as demons by the Aryans. In its highest form it culminated in the powerful Dravidian kingdoms of South India, which resisted the Aryan forces with vigor, but which were gradually subdued by superior force of arms.

It is not very clear whether the Aryans or the Dravidians had the superior culture. Many of the Aryans brought with them to Ceylon the experience of city life and also of agriculture which they had acquired in the plains of Mesopotamia. "Aryan culture was thus gradually differentiated from non-Aryan not only by greater proficiency in the arts of peace and war, but also by the richness and variety of its agricultural resources, for the Aryans brought the millets, barley, wheat, and oil-seeds of Mesopotamia and Asia Minor to supplement the indigenous rice-crops of the non-Aryan agriculturists in the plains

of India." (24, p.15) The Dravidians, too, had attained a high level of civilization and culture before 2000 B.C. The ancient hymns of the Rigveda "are full of references to the existence of the ancient Dravidians and prove their advancement in the arts of life. The 'hundred castles of Sambara', the magnificent cities of the Gandharvas, the 'wealth of Anas', the riches of Vritas--all these tales betoken a civilization which the invaders coveted but could not claim for themselves." (54, p.3) Archaeological discoveries at the ancient cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro in the Indus Valley have revealed a highly-developed civilization of 3000 B.C. which has been identified with the Dravidians.

It is not certain whether the Aryans contacted this early civilization but it is quite definite that through the centuries the Aryan and Dravidian cultures were welded together by a slow process of assimilation. The later Indo-Aryan village system had for its foundation the communal principle of the Dravidian settlement and for its superstructure the spiritual ideals and organization of the Aryans. The matriarchal system and the culture of the Dravidians continued to survive. "Dravidian kings were proud to claim descent, on their mothers' side, from ancient Aryan dynasties. Aryan forest hermits taught useful arts and higher spiritual truths in Dravidian village

schools, so that the cruel Earth-Mother came to be the bride of the Aryan Sun-god and the bringer of prosperity; while the dread Durga--the religious cult of the brigand and outlaw--was transformed into the beautiful wife of the Great Ascetic, Siva, the teacher of spiritual wisdom and the destroyer of ignorance. Popular legends of Krishna, the dark-skinned Indo-Aryan hero ... were interwoven with the folk-lore of Dravidian village life, and he became the Protector of the people from tyranny and wrong, the divine Cowherd who danced with the village maidens at the spring festival and taught the love of God for man." (24, p.15) These gods and goddesses are still worshipped by the Hindus of India and Ceylon.

Dravidian religious doctrines were also blended with Aryan beliefs to make a new philosophy. The Dravidians believed in the transmigration of souls, the idea that souls migrated from body to body and that men were reincarnated in subsequent births. This became the doctrine of Karma, the unalterable principle that men's past actions decided their future births, that the class into which a man was born was the fate to which he was destined, where he must work out his destiny. This philosophy changed the class system of the Aryans into the rigid caste system that is still prevalent in India and to some extent in Ceylon. A caste has been defined as "a group of families internally

united by peculiar rules for the observance of ceremonial purity, especially in the matters of diet and marriage. The same rules serve to fence it off from all other groups, each of which has its own set of rules. Admission to an established caste in long settled territory can be obtained nowadays by birth only, and transitions from one caste to another, which used to be feasible in ancient times, are no longer possible, except in frontier regions like Manipur." (60, p.61)

The Aryan settlers probably came to Ceylon about 500 B.C. attracted by the fertility of the soil, the open coastal plains, the hospitable harbours and the navigable rivers that gave easy access to the interior. Ceylon at that time was inhabited by aboriginal tribes. Legendary histories of Ceylon describe the arrival in Ceylon of Prince Vijaya with seven hundred Aryan followers. Vijaya conquered the aboriginal tribes with the help of Kuveni, a Yakka maiden. He married her and ruled Ceylon with her help, but soon got tired of her and banished her from his home. Later, Vijaya married a princess from India, the daughter of the king of Pandu who arrived with other maidens and a thousand families of craftsmen. (70, p.25) This practice of bringing brides from India was continued by later princes of Ceylon, so that the cultural links with India were constantly renewed.

Vijaya and his followers were of the Hindu faith. A new religion, Buddhism, was brought to Ceylon during the reign of King Asoka of India in 307 B.C. King Asoka sent his son, Mahinda and later his daughter, Sanghamitta, to convert the people of Ceylon to the new faith. King Devanam Piyatissa, who ruled Ceylon at that time, was glad to welcome the missionaries sent by so powerful a king as Asoka and he did all he could to help them in their mission. At that time the people of Ceylon worshipped capricious gods and demons. The new religion brought with it a message of peace and enlightenment and gave a new impetus to the culture of Ceylon. The old gods were forgotten and new buildings such as dagabas (shrines) and vihares (monasteries) were erected with great religious fervor. The Buddhist scriptures containing the Jataka stories of the Buddha's previous births and the moral lessons they embodied became part of the heritage of Ceylonese literature. Buddhism also introduced a note of restraint and simplicity in painting and sculpture. Earlier temple architecture had been characterized by colossal size, excessive ornamentation and heavily sculptured figures of men and animals. The new religion brought with it a discipline that was evident in the fresco paintings of the cave temples of Ajanta and Ellora in India and the contemporary frescoes of Sigiriya in Ceylon. (37, p.54)

Ceylon continued to be influenced by North India during the Gupta period from about 320 A.D. to 530 A.D. Ceylon at that time was part of Aryan India. Its dynasty was of Indo-Aryan origin and Hinayana Buddhism which flourished in Ceylon was representative of the older Aryan culture of Asoka's time. There was no racial or religious antagonism between Ceylon and the Guptas of North India. King Meghavarna of Ceylon had despatched a mission with costly presents to King Samudragupta of India and a splendid Buddhist abbey richly endowed was set up near the Bodhi Tree at Gaya for the benefit of Sinhalese students and pilgrims. Both Buddhism and Hinduism flourished under the Gupta kings who were essentially tolerant. Literature, science, architecture, sculpture and painting also reached a high level during this age. Sanskrit was the language of the learned and was used regularly in the court. The Indian epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana and Sanskrit works such as the Laws of Manu took their final form about this time. (24, p.153-155)

Ceylon felt the influence of the Gupta Aryan Renaissance. Students in Ceylon borrowed freely from the Sanskrit writings to enrich their own language. There was a great surge of literary activity in Ceylon. Books such as the Dipavansa, a collection of verses, and the Mahavansa, an epic, were written in Pali but showed the

influence of Sanskrit in both language and style. (37, p.61) There was also a great advance in architecture. The new shrines were vaulted buildings with brick walls and immense doorposts of stone. No castles were built by the Sinhalese kings, but sometimes they took refuge in rock-fortresses. One of the most famous of these rock-fortresses is Sigiriya, which became the capital in the reign of Kasyapa I. Sigiriya is an unscalable rock rising six hundred feet from the ground with an entrance through the mouth of a huge sleeping lion carved from the rock. Kasyapa erected the royal buildings at the top of the rock and constructed the city by enclosing two oblong level spaces on the sides of the rock with ramparts and moats. (37, p.64) The frescoes of Sigiriya are the oldest noteworthy paintings of Ceylon. They represent either divine musicians or the queens and princesses of ancient Ceylon with their ladies-in-waiting. The influence of Gupta style is seen in the bas-relief of a man and a woman at Isurumuniya, in the figures of the Buddha seated in meditation and the moonstone carved on hard stone at the entrance of the Queen's Palace at Anuradhapura.

The ancient Sinhalese had constant quarrels with the Tamils, the descendants of the Dravidian races who lived in South India. They came to Ceylon in successive waves either as peaceful immigrants or as invaders. The Tamil

king Elara ruled over north Ceylon from 145-101 B.C. In A.D. 1017 the Tamils became so strong that they conquered the whole of Ceylon and maintained their hold until A.D. 1070. Ceylon at that time ceased to be an independent kingdom and became a mere province of the South Indian Tamil kingdom of Chola. (37, p.68) There are two divisions of Tamils in modern Ceylon--the Jaffna Tamils who live in the north and who are the descendants of the Dravidian settlers, and the Indian Tamils who work on the tea and rubber estates and have come to Ceylon only within recent years. Together they make a minority community who constitute about 22 per cent of the population of Ceylon.

Another minority community in Ceylon is that of the Moors, who form 6 per cent of the population. They are mainly the descendants of the Arab traders who were active in Ceylon about 800 A.D. They established their trading depots in the coastal districts where sheltered bays such as Beruwala, Galle and Puttalam gave harbor to their ships. These Moors learned the language of Ceylon and married Ceylonese women. The Indian Moors have come to Ceylon only within recent years. They are of Turkish extraction, light-eyed, fair-skinned, tall and handsome. They form a wealthy group and are actively engaged in trade.

Easy fusion of Indian and Ceylonese races was made possible by cultural and color affinities. The arrival of

the Europeans with their widely divergent cultural and racial characteristics brought in a culture conflict that could not be solved easily by fusion. In a clash between two cultures that are diametrically opposed, the tendency is for the materially weaker to be overwhelmed by the stronger. In the period of the European domination, the indigenous culture was submerged and the European values were adopted without any real understanding of what they meant.

The Portuguese came to Ceylon in 1505 and gradually conquered the maritime provinces. They were interested in Ceylon for its spices and its strategic position on the trade routes to the East. They first obtained permission to build a factory and when they had fortified their position they introduced Christianity. They destroyed the old religious temples and the indigenous idols with great ferocity. They sacked shrine-rooms and laid waste the land so that the Sinhalese of the coastal plains were soon compelled to come to terms with them. The division of the people into Kandyan and low-country Sinhalese began about this time. Kandy was the capital of the hill-country which still remained independent and continued to preserve its independence for 200 years. This explains why indigenous art and culture have flourished in the Kandyan regions while they have been practically lost in the low-country. The people of the low-country intermarried freely with the

Portuguese. Rajavaliya, an old Sinhalese history, speaks of the frequency of these intermarriages. Many of the noble leaders of the Ceylonese as well as many low-caste people coveted the wealth and power of the Portuguese and so made marriage alliances with them. In 1597 Philip I of Portugal was proclaimed king of Kotte, the capital of South Ceylon, but the Kandyan provinces of the hill-country still remained independent.

The Dutch like the Portuguese were interested in the spices of Ceylon. They drove out the Portuguese from the maritime provinces in 1658 after a struggle of 20 years. Ceylon became one of the most valuable possessions of the Dutch East India Company which controlled the trade in cinnamon. The Dutch gave Ceylon its system of Roman-Dutch law, its Dutch Reformed churches, its string of harbor fortresses and its canals.

The British were also interested in the spice trade but were more concerned with acquiring a naval base at Trincomalee, a natural harbor on the east coast of Ceylon. In 1795, the British seized Trincomalee and captured all the Dutch possessions the year after. This conquest, however, did not give the British control of the whole of Ceylon for the Kandyan provinces were still independent. The king of Kandy had despotic powers and his cruelty alienated his subjects. In 1815, the Kandyan nobles helped

the British to capture the Kandyan king and to take over full control of the Kandyan provinces. Later, these nobles grew discontented and plotted against the British but the two rebellions of 1817 and 1848 were easily suppressed.

The British occupation of Ceylon impoverished indigenous art and culture. A society based on personal relations, where the king and his subjects were bound together by unalterable customs and traditions now changed to a society based on the exchange of coin and free trade in land. The old life and the old culture began to be despised, temples fell into decay and memorials of the past were allowed to disappear. The religious, artistic and national life of the people in earlier times had found expression in a culture which all classes shared. The foreign rulers were ignorant of the religion of the people and cared little for their art and culture. Education in the Mission schools consistently ignored the national culture so that originality and initiative were destroyed.

"European culture offered itself as the superior culture of a chosen overlord; there was a compelling social and psychological urge for embracing it and rushing headlong to seek identification with it. It was taken over unnaturally and artificially. It was a graft rather than a growth, and often the indigenous was consciously rejected and

suppressed in the process. But even in those who were prepared to surrender completely their indigenous culture and take over the new values, the surrender was often an incomplete one, for the indigenous elements were too strong to be completely destroyed. The result was a biculturality in the upper- and upper-middle classes that was seldom in harmony for there had been no synthesis. It was superficial and rootless both in its indigenous elements and its foreign elements, for detachment from the indigenous was seldom compensated by a complete entering into of the foreign." (51, p.66)

One of the effects of British colonialism was the creation of this new upper class with its artificial biculturality. The people of this class adopted English as their home language, took English names and copied English manners and customs. They formed a cultural and linguistic group that was quite distinct from the broader groups of the ordinary Ceylonese people. They studied Western cultures and withdrew their patronage from the indigenous literature and art. The early revivals of traditional culture deplored this adoption of Western customs. A modern folk song laments:

"Ape honda sirith okkoma epa una
 Batahira danangen honda de narak una
 Pita rata merata wal de apata honda una.
 Hathara hinawaki lokata apa dakina."

(71, p.220) The translation by Dr. N. D. Wijesekera reads as follows: "All our virtuous customs have been cast aside. All that was good has been spoilt by Westerners. All that is bad in us and in the foreigner has been accepted as good by us. We have become a laughing stock to the world around us." (71, p.220)

Modern Ceylon is aware of its cultural heritage and is anxious to revive it by State patronage. Research has been undertaken on the origins, history and development of art forms in Ceylon, traditional arts and crafts have been revived and education is being reoriented on national lines. Ceylon, today, is making a new adjustment to the cultural impact of the West. Adaptable features are being integrated into the pattern of traditional culture. There is less antagonism because there is more understanding of Western values. In an atmosphere of equality and free exchange, the Ceylonese can learn to adapt the best elements in Western culture to their own particular needs and aspirations.

Meanwhile, the village culture has preserved the traditional arts and customs almost in their pure form. In the Kandyan provinces the survival of the feudal aristocracy and the old system of service tenure for annual ceremonies like the Perahera, a religious festival procession, gave the arts continued patronage. The Kandyan aristocracy became Anglicised but the chieftains retained the traditional

culture for ceremonial purposes. The Kandyan chieftains' dress worn on ceremonial occasions today is a survival of the old traditional court attire of the royal Indian dynasties.

Old and new forms are blended in the panorama of Ceylon dress today. Many of the features which give it its peculiar character have their roots deep in the past; many others are fashions of the moment adopted at the whim of the wearer. The old traditional styles remain because they express the culture of Ceylon more effectively than any others, but new influences too have a share in fashioning the costumes of modern Ceylon.

CHAPTER 2

THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

"Culture is the life of a people as typified in contacts, institutions, and equipment. It includes characteristic concepts and behavior, customs and traditions. No laws of psychology would lead one to expect that the forms of culture would differ much from one group of men to another, or indeed from one century to another; yet so much do they differ that in every politically independent group they are to some extent unique, and as between many culture groups there is in the details of the culture no identity whatever." (68, p.13) A culture is unique and yet it borrows from other cultures the traits that appeal to it. A culture trait does not function in isolation nor independently of other culture traits. Every innovation affects the entire culture.

An analysis of the interplay of cultural factors in the context of history is not an easy task. "Human beings in every time and place are largely unconscious of the conditioning effect of their cultural traditions; and the documents and other artifacts they leave do not give the historian self-evident explanations of the influence of culture on individual actions." (59, p.98) The historian can, however, achieve some understanding of what seems

normal and natural in some period of history and he can separate for analysis some parts of the cultural tradition. Practical skills and factual knowledge, institutional traditions, intellectual and emotional orientation may be viewed as structures with recognizable patterns, for they are interconnected.

A culture can be analyzed in terms of its people, the groups of persons who play an active part in transmitting important skills, learning, or traditions. "Individuals or groups carry and diffuse those elements of the cultural tradition that are rooted in their own experience and meaningful in terms of their particular intellectual and emotional orientation. Thus each group and each individual carries only part of the culture. In particular, it is that part of the whole culture that provides the occupational learning, sets the norms, and sanctions the interests of the group or groups with which the individual is chiefly identified." (59, p.99)

Traditions are forms of social learning as well as group interpretations of the past. New knowledge gives a different interpretation to the cultural tradition and cultural change. In times of cultural disorganization, elements of the inherited tradition, such as basic patterns of behaviour, work routines and intellectual attitudes are seriously disrupted and the culture may seem

to lose much of its internal cohesion. Such periods, however, are generally followed by the emergence of new cultural patterns and new interpretations of the cultural tradition.

The culture approach has a special advantage in the study of social phenomena because it gives relevance and significance to the phases of social life, which in themselves have little meaning. This study attempts to analyse the cultural influences in the dress of modern Ceylon and where possible to evaluate their significance in the social context of today. Ceylon is a complex of many cultures and there are survivals as well as new fashions in the costumes worn by its people. For the purpose of this study, the writer has classified these costumes into the following basic divisions:

Racial--Aborigines, Sinhalese, Tamils, Moors and Eurasians

Regional--Kandyan Sinhalese, Low-country Sinhalese, Jaffna Tamils, Indian Tamils, and Colombo Chetties

Occupational--priests, fishers, toddy-tappers, and gypsies

Ceremonial--Kandyan chieftains, Kandyan dancers, Kandyan drummers, devil dancers and actors in Kolam (masked plays)

National--the universal costume in Ceylon since the era of independence

Social--Wealthy urban socialites and the new middle classes

The roots of every culture lie deep in the past. The background of Ceylon culture is essentially Aryan with a close

admixture of Dravidian traits. There are also superficial cultural influences exerted by the European races and the minority communities that have made their homes temporarily in Ceylon. This study will describe, as far as the evidence permits, the costumes of the Aryans, the Dravidians and the European races at the time they made cultural contact with Ceylon. It will continue with a description of the dress of Ceylon in ancient, medieval and modern times and try to assess how far the old cultural traditions have survived and to what extent new designs of dress have been accepted. The study will also attempt, as far as possible, to evaluate the social significance of the various costumes in the development of the culture of modern Ceylon.

For the purpose of this study, the history of Ceylon costume has been divided into three broad periods which are based on definite changes of style. The Ancient Period dates from prehistoric times to the eighth century A.D. It is characterized by a general scantness of clothing and is influenced fully by traditional Indian styles. The Medieval Period dates from the ninth century A.D. to the eighteenth century A.D. Very little is known of the first four centuries of this period but there is more information for the later centuries. This period is characterized by a greater variety and quantity of clothes and is influenced by the Moghul fashions of India and the European fashions

of Portugal and Holland. The Modern Period extends from the nineteenth century to the present day. British and other Western influences are still subordinate to the Indian tradition. A small minority adopted the costume of the British conquerors but this was only an ephemeral fashion. After Ceylon gained her independence in 1948, there was a definite revival of ancient patterns and Indian traditional styles in the costumes of both men and women.

Review of Literature

A survey of existing literature shows comprehensive material on all aspects of culture outside Ceylon and a remarkable poverty of information concerning Ceylon. The nature of culture and its method of diffusion have been described by Wilson B. Wallis in Culture and Progress. The general principles of culture diffusion have been illustrated by histories of civilization such as Civilization. Past and Present by T. Walter Wallbank and Alastair M. Taylor and The Great Cultural Traditions by Ralph Turner.

There are numerous accounts of the art and culture of India notably The Culture and Art of India by Radhakamal Mukerjee; The History of Aryan Rule in India by E. B. Havell, and India from the Dawn by Mariadas Ruthnaswamy. Indian dress has been described by Jamila Brij Bhushan in

The Costumes and Textiles of India and by Kamala S. Dongerkery in The Indian Sari.

Costumes of the Western world have also been explored and illustrated as required. Most useful for the purposes of this study have been A History of Costume by Carl Kohler, Costume and Fashion by Herbert Norris, Costume of the Western World edited by James Laver, Historic Costume by Francis M. Kelly and Randolph Schwabe, and English Costume by Iris Brooke and James Laver.

Psychological aspects of clothing have been discussed by J. C. Flugel in The Psychology of Clothes, by Lawrence Langner in The Importance of Wearing Clothes, and by Frank Alvah Parsons in The Psychology of Dress. Interesting theories have also been developed by Paul H. Nystrom in Economics of Fashion, by Vance Packard in The Hidden Persuaders and by Thorstein Veblen in The Theory of the Leisure Class.

Although a certain number of books have been written about Ceylon, there is very little definite information about the dress of the people in ancient and medieval times. Scattered references from the Pali Dhammapadatthakatha written in the fifth century A.D. and the Sinhalese prose version, Saddharma-Ratnavaliya, have been gathered by Martin Wickremasinghe, a contemporary writer in Ceylon and by Dr. M. B. Ariyapala in his doctoral thesis Society in

Mediaeval Ceylon. Additional information is given by Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy in his monumental classic Mediaeval Sinhalese Art. There are a few political and economic histories of Ceylon such as The Early History of Ceylon by G. C. Mendis, The People of Ceylon by Dr. N. D. Wijesekera, The Economy of Ceylon by Sir Ivor Jennings, and Ceylon and Her Citizens by I. D. S. Weerawardana and Marguerite I. Weerawardene. These do not emphasize dress particularly but have some incidental references to the subject.

The art and architecture of Ceylon have furnished some descriptions of ancient and medieval dress. The Sigiriya frescoes which were executed some time between 600 A.D. and 800 A.D. have been discussed in detail by Dr. Nandadeva Wijesekera in Early Sinhalese Painting. The Story of Sinhalese Painting by D. B. Dhanapala and Art and Architecture of Ceylon by S. Paranavitana supply further information. Sculptures and temple paintings too have some value in this connection.

Another important source of information has been found in the accounts of Ceylon written at various times by visitors to the island. One of the most famous of these, which is a mine of information about Ceylon in Portuguese times is An Historical Relation of Ceylon written in 1681 by Robert Knox. Many later visitors too have written interesting accounts of their impressions of Ceylon.

Among these may be mentioned The Pearl of India written in 1894 by Maturin M. Ballou, Cotton Goods in Ceylon written in 1916 by Ralph M. Odell, and The World is Catching Up written in 1956 by Harry Riemer. Other descriptive books are The Book of Ceylon by Henry W. Cave, and Romantic Ceylon by R. H. Bassett.

The social organization of Ceylon has been dealt with by Ralph Pieris in Sinhalese Social Organization The Kandyan Period and in a symposium he edited called Some Aspects of Traditional Sinhalese Culture. Bryce Ryan has written Caste in Modern Ceylon and The Sinhalese Village. The New Geography of Ceylon by S. F. de Silva connects historical and social characteristics with geographical facts. The writer has drawn on all these accounts and on current illustrations in the newspapers and fashion periodicals of Ceylon as well as her own observation as a citizen and educator to describe the dress of Ceylon in modern times.

Limitations

This study has been limited to the analysis of the costumes of the men and women of Ceylon. The children of the working classes wear very few clothes or none at all, while the children of the upper classes copy Western fashions. There are a few traditional children's costumes which are undoubtedly survivals from the past. They are

used on ceremonial occasions rather than for everyday wear and as such have been omitted in this study.

Another limitation is the scarcity of source material regarding the subject. There is very little information about the dress of Ceylon in ancient and medieval times. Extremely scattered references have to be gathered from many sources and collated into a consecutive account. Most libraries in the United States do not have extensive collections of books on Ceylon, and for this study books have had to be obtained from many libraries. The dress of modern Ceylon is extremely varied and to the writer's knowledge no attempt has been made before to analyse its special characteristics from an historical and cultural viewpoint.

A further limitation that has been keenly felt in this study is the lack of access to the indigenous literature of Ceylon. Much useful work has been published in local journals and periodicals that are not available for reference in this country. The writer has, however, used all available resources and has had access to the most important contributions to the subject.

Use of this Study

This study attempts to describe the dress of modern Ceylon in terms of its past culture and its present

achievements. This is very relevant at the present time when Ceylon is keenly interested in the revival of her traditional arts and crafts. The roots of the present lie deep in the past and any study that links past with present should help people understand themselves and their cultural heritage with a clearer vision. This study should also serve to fill a gap in the social aspects of written Ceylon history by its description of Ceylon dress through the centuries. Future scholars may use it, too, as a basis for further research on the subject.

CHAPTER 3

ANCIENT CEYLON

The earliest primitive inhabitants of Ceylon of whom there is any record were the aboriginal inhabitants, the Veddas (hunters), the Yakkas (demons), and the Nagas (serpents). The Yakkas and the Nagas may have been legendary figures but the Veddas survive even today in the central and eastern forests of Ceylon.

There is no definite archaeological evidence about the dress of these ancient primitive tribes. No beads, bone or shell ornaments have been discovered and it can only be surmised that these people may have worn loin cloths of barks of trees, leaves of plants and skins of animals. The dress of the Veddas of today confirms this impression. "Some of them wear or did wear cloth made of 'riti' bark. In the popular usage a section of the Veddas is referred to as kola veddo (leaf wearing veddas) and the other section as niri-veddo (Veddas wearing nothing). Certain reeds have replaced the bark. Nudity has completely vanished today." (71, p.23)

These aboriginal tribes were conquered by Prince Vijaya and his seven hundred followers who came from India about 500 B.C. Prince Vijaya was an Aryan and he married a Dravidian princess so that the two cultures were mingled

in Ceylon as they were in India.

Costume of Ancient India

The earliest known civilization of India has been revealed by the excavations at Harappa and Mohenjo-daro (2,500 to 1,500 B.C.). No actual specimens of garments have been found but figurines and statues indicate the type of clothing that was worn at that time. A clay figurine of the mother goddess shows her bare to the waist except for some jewelry. The waist cloth is very scanty and reaches from the waist to the knee. Other figures of female deities are dressed in the same way. The skirt is held up by a girdle of some kind, either strings of beads or bands of woven material which are fastened in front by a brooch. In some cases the skirt is ornamented with a very elaborate bow or a series of large metallic studs. One figure wears a cloak which conceals the arms but reveals the breasts. There are also nude figures of dancing girls. (4, p.13)

Some impression of the costumes worn by the men of this early Indian civilization may be gained from the seal-amulets on which male figures are portrayed. Some of these figures are nude, others wear loin cloths. One statue wears a robe slung over the left shoulder and under the right arm, another is dressed in a long skirt tied round the waist by a cord. The figure of a man engraved on a clay fragment

seems to be wearing breeches or a dhoti. (4, p.13-14)

(The dhoti is a fine cloth worn around the waist and tucked up between the legs to give the effect of draped trousers. It is worn by the men of India) (Figure 1, Appendix)

Elaborate headdresses seem to have been worn by the people of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro. Both men and women are shown wearing a fan-shaped headdress with "curious panier-like erections" on each side. (4, p.14) Some of the female deities have long plaited hair tied with a bow at the end. The hair styles of the men show short hair kept in place with a fillet or long hair plaited and coiled in rings at the top of the head and over the ears. Combs were also worn in the hair. (4, p.14) This picture of an ancient Indian civilization is interesting because it portrays forms of dress that are still prevalent today in Ceylon. The villager usually wears nothing above the waist. Older women too, dispense with a blouse when they are at home in the village. Men generally wear loin cloths or skirts held in place with a belt around the waist. The hair of both men and women is worn long in traditional styles. The women often have their hair plaited and the men often wear a comb.

Impressions of the dress of ancient India after 1500 B.C. have to be gathered from early Indian literature. The exact dates are not certain but a fairly clear picture

of the costume of the period may be formed. According to the Rigveda, a collection of Aryan hymns dated anywhere between 4500 B.C. and 1500 B.C. there seems to have been a general desire among the Aryan people to dress well. People wore two garments, one to cover the upper half of the body and the other to cover the lower limbs. Female dancers wore an embroidered dress and a bride wore a special garment. The goddess of the Dawn is described as "a maiden, who goes to the resplendent and munificent Sun and like a youthful bride before her husband, uncovers, smiling, her bosom in his presence." (4, p.15) She also "puts on becoming attire and smiling as it were, displays her charm." (4, p.15) A hymn to Indra mentions "elegant well-made garments (4, p.15) which could be given as a respectful present.

About 1000 B.C. three garments are described in literature as the dress of the people, an undergarment of silk, a main garment of wool or cotton and an overgarment possibly of animal skins. "Goat skins, skins of antelopes and spotted deer, and in the earliest stages, probably cow-hide, were used for dress." (4, p.15)

The Ramayana, an ancient Indian epic of the fifth or second century B.C. describes the trousseau of Sita, an Aryan princess. She had "woollen stuffs, furs, precious stones, fine silk vestments of diverse colours, princely, ornamental and sumptuous carriage of every kind."

(4, p.19-20) After the marriage, Sita and her companions "all sumptuously dressed in silk ... hastened to the temples of the gods." (4, p.20) The rich garments worn by the Indians are described by a Greek in about 325 B.C. Their "robes are worked in gold and ornamented with precious stones and they also wear flowered garments made of the finest muslin." (4, p.17)

The veil and the bodice for women are also mentioned in the epics of this time. An ancient code of laws insists on modesty in women. "Let no woman go out of the house without permission, nor without a sheet over her dress, nor should she be allowed to run or walk very fast, nor speak with male strangers, unless they be tradesmen, hermits, old people or medical practitioners, nor allow her never to be seen. She should be so dressed that her clothing should hang down to her ankles; and her breasts should never be exposed." (4, p.21) The bodice was tied at the back by a tape as the modern choli is. (Figure 2, Appendix)

(A choli is a short-tight-fitting Indian bodice which leaves the midriff bare and is often held together at the back only with straps or tie-strings. The fashion has been adopted in Ceylon and is very popular among fashionable ladies today.)

The costumes described as being worn by these ancient Indians are similar to the costumes of ancient Ceylon.

Martin Wickremesinghe, a contemporary Sinhalese writer, finds from his study of early literature that the women of ancient Ceylon did not cover the upper part of their bodies. The Dhammapadatthakatha, a Buddhist story, describes how Rohini, a lay devotee, did not come out of her dwelling to meet a Buddhist priest who had come to see her. On being expressly asked to come out, she put on a jacket and explained that she had worn it because of a skin disease. Middle-class women wore only a cloth around their hips when they were at home but covered their shoulders with another cloth when they went out. One or two garments were worn by both men and women just as in ancient India. The breasts were not covered but the upper robe was sometimes used to cover the shoulders. (1, p.320-321)

The costumes of ancient India became more varied as the people became more civilized. The works of the Sanskrit writer Kalidas about 500 A.D. have references to "various kinds of dresses for men and women and suitable for all weathers and occasions ... hunting dresses and dresses worn by repentant and love-sick persons, ... It was possible to know the status of a person by the dress he wore." (4, p.22) Ascetics of this time wore saffron-colored robes made of bark and the women also wore bark dresses knotted on the shoulders. Robbers living in the forests carried quivers of arrows slung across their chests

and wore peacock feathers on their heads. Merchants wore gold ornaments in their ears and on their noses. Newly-married women wore red bodices.

The general costume of women of this period was a short bodice, a waist cloth reaching to the ankles and held in front by a knot tied in the folds, and a draped shawl which covered the body from head to foot and served as a veil. The men wore two pieces of cloth to cover the body, a turban on the head and perhaps a scarf with interwoven gems. "Gems were woven into cloth to keep the body cool in summer." (4, p.22) White wool and silk were used in winter. Patterns of swans were woven into bridal garments and patterns of flamingoes were woven on other silks. The muslins were so fine that they could be "blown away by a breath." (4, p.22) A memorial inscription on a temple dedicated to the Sun-God about 437 A.D. refers to the beauty of the women's dress at that time. "Just as a woman, though endowed with youth and beauty and adorned with golden necklaces and betel leaves and flowers, does not go to meet her lover in a secret place, until she has put on a pair of silken cloths, so the whole of the region of the earth is adorned by the silk weavers as if with a garment of silk, agreeable to the touch, variegated in colours, pleasing to the eye." (62, p.80)

By the seventh century A.D. the tailored type of

costume had been adopted in the northwestern regions of India. A Chinese traveler, Hieun Tsiang, who visited India in the seventh century, described the draped form of costume and mentioned the tailored type. "Their clothing is not cut or fashioned; they mostly affect fresh-white garments; they esteem little those of mixed colour or ornamented. The men wind their garments around their middle, then gather them under the armpits, and let them fall across the body, hanging to the right. The robes of the women fall to the ground; they completely cover their shoulders. They wear a little knot on their crowns and let the rest of their hair hang from their heads. The people wear caps with flower wreaths and jewelled necklets. Their garments are made of Kiau-she-ye and of cotton. Kiau-she-ye is the product of the wild silk-worm ... In north India where the air is cold they wear short and close fitting garments. The dress and ornaments worn by non-believers are varied and mixed. Some wear peacock's feathers; some wear ornaments made of skull bones ... The costume is not uniform and the colour, whether red or white, not constant."

(4, p.23)

Early Indian sculptures and frescoes show fitted as well as draped garments. In Sanchi the bas-reliefs show figures wearing tunics while in Orissa there is a statue dressed in a close-fitting tunic with long sleeves and a

skirt reaching four inches below the knees. A turban is worn on the head and a light scarf is draped around the waist and over the left shoulder. "Among the Ajanta frescoes there is a picture of two holy men; one of them, wearing a long robe reaching to the feet, with full, round sleeves, holds a cup and is touching the head of an elephant; the other who has a nimbus around his head has elaborate drapery in folds like that of a Greek statue." (4, p.19)

The men wore the dhoti or draped trousers as a lower garment. Kings and princes added a close-fitting tunic tied with bows, while men of lower rank wore a long loose garment with a gathered skirt and long sleeves. All classes used a scarf draped around the shoulder or tied around the waist like a cummerbund.

The costumes of women as depicted in these early sculptures show a general absence of clothing. The serving women though poor and degraded are fairly well clothed but the proud Aryan women though richly bejewelled are very scantily clad. "Both at Sanchi and Amaravati the women always wear enormous bangles around the ankles and wrists and generally strings of beads round the neck, but their body clothing is generally limited to a bead belt round the body below the waist. From this belt strips of cloth are sometimes suspended, more generally at the side or behind than in front and sometimes also a cloth worn something

like the dhoti of the male sex, is added, but when that is the case it is represented in the sculptures generally as absolutely transparent." (4, p.20)

Frescoes in the Ajanta caves which date from the second century B.C. to the sixth century A.D. show the same type of costume. "The Ajanta paintings, considered to be the best testimony to the qualities of the ancient art, bear the profound marks of a background of wealth, splendour and cultural magnificence." (62, p.17) The queen is shown (Figure 3, Appendix) wearing jewelled necklaces and girdles with long streamers of cloth behind her and an elaborate head-dress. The attendant slaves wear loin cloths and ornaments of a less elaborate kind.

Costume of Ceylon

It is difficult to assess the exact influence of ancient Indian costume on the dress of ancient Ceylon because there is so little historical evidence. Paintings in caves and temples and on the walls of the rock-fortress of Sigiriya show close affinities with Indian art. The probable date assigned to these paintings is the fifth or sixth century A.D.

The fresco at Hindagala depicts elaborate head-dresses, fine robes and beautiful ornaments worn by men and gods. The relic chamber at Mihintale shows male deities set in heaven

amidst cloud effects. "The upper parts of the bodies are heavily ornamented. Headgear is elaborate. Necklaces, armlets, ear drops are also visible. The dhoti is held together at the waist by a thin strip." (70, p.68)

Similar costumes are depicted in other temple paintings of the fifth, sixth and eighth centuries. A cave at Dimbulagala shows four male figures in an attitude of worship. The upper bodies are bare except for necklaces, armlets, bracelets, ear ornaments and a sacred thread across the shoulder. (The sacred thread is a yellow cotton thread worn diagonally across the body from shoulder to waist by the Brahmans as a symbol of their priestly function.) The lower garment is a striped dhoti after the Indian pattern. (70, p.69)

The costumes of these male figures show a close resemblance to Indian dress of this period. The draped dhoti, the bare upper body and the rich jewelry, together with the sacred thread, worn like a sash over the shoulder is typical of the Indian Brahman or priestly class. There is no indication of the use of the fitted tailored type of garment which had just begun to be established in North India. This suggests that the Ceylonese were more closely linked with South India at this period or that they found the loose type of garment more suitable for the tropical climate of Ceylon.

The costume of the Ceylonese women of the sixth century A.D. is shown most clearly in the Sigiriya frescoes. These show half-figure portraits of women painted on the walls and roof of the caves. The figures are generally grouped in pairs, a queen or a noble lady with an attendant. (Figure 4, Appendix) The mistresses are Aryan types, "pale yellow blondes" or "orange-hued brunettes" while the attendants are of darker "olive-green" complexion. (14, p.9) "The type of feature is Aryan--oval face, thick fleshy lips, but straight almost Grecian nose and forehead. The almond eyes in one betoken Mongolian blood." (70, p. 14) All the women in the frescoes wear a draped lower garment which is passed between the legs to give a short trouser-like effect. This is similar to the Indian dhoti which at that time was worn by both men and women. There are a few folds in front of the draped cloth while a fan effect appears at the back. The cloths are colored red, green or yellow, some have a white border and some are checked with two or three colors.

Only three of the figures wear definite upper garments and these are the dark-skinned attendants. Two of them wear breast-bands tied in a knot at the back and the third wears a short bodice with a bordered hem. The other figures are not completely nude and it has been suggested that they are wearing diaphanous garments which are

indicated by the lines of the neck and the difference of color where the blouse covers the body. "Every female figure is heavily laden with ornaments and jewelry of diverse forms and shapes, no distinction being shown between attendant and lady. Pearls and rubies, green and blue sapphires rival each other in beauty. Gold seems to be the popular metal and flowers also a temporary aid to beauty." (70, p.42) The women wear a series of bracelets studded with gems and gold armllets in the shape of rosettes attached to a band or a cobra-hooded coil and many types of neck-ornaments. A breast-string ornament is worn by one of the ladies. The strings are attached to a central band and hang below the breasts.

The frescoes show ear ornaments in the form of plain and carved rings and gold pendants, rounded scrolls inserted in the distended ear lobe, and small ornaments hung from the end of the ear. There is a variety of head-dress, some are very simple and others elaborate creations with flowers and braids of hair intermingled. The hair is often coiled above the head and topped with a jewelled head-dress. Forehead marks or beauty spots are also worn in imitation of the third eye of the Hindu god, Siva. This is a regular feature of women's dress in South India and Ceylon even today. The Sigiriya ladies carry a variety of flowers in their hands or on metal trays. There are yellow temple

flowers, pink lotuses, blue, red and white water-lilies and golden sunflowers. These ladies may have belonged to King Kasyapa's court or have been representations of divine maidens or lightning princesses. (70, p.43-46) Whatever they may have been they were sources of inspiration to the countless people who visited Sigiriya and left the tokens of their appreciation in verses written on the mirror-like walls. One of these verses speaks of the distress of the visitor at the vision of so much unattainable beauty.

"Having seen, on the mountain side, a long-eyed golden-coloured one who, for the sake of coolness, has put on sweet-scented flowers enveloping her breast-cloth-- (having seen her) my mind has been troubled." (46, Vol. 2, p.201)

The Sigiriya frescoes have undoubtedly been influenced by Indian art forms. Benjamin Rowland Junior comments on the resemblance. "The swelling nubile breast, the tiny waist hardly greater in girth than the neck--the shapely tapered arms and exquisitely flower-like hand--these are all elements of the canon that determined the types of physical beauty in the cave shrines of India. Here these charms are even more provocative through exaggeration. The resemblance of these ladies at Sigiriya to the maidens in the sculpture of Amaravati is interesting for it was from this region, the territory of the Kistna River on the east coast of India,

that Ceylon derived the sculpture style popular at this period ... If these artistic features are specifically Sinhalese so even more evidently are the types, these girls with heavy-lidded eyes with their sharp rather aquiline noses and full lips can be recognized as typical of Ceylon today." (14, p.9) Another writer, Raghavan also finds a parallelism with the women of modern Ceylon. "No one who has seen the Society ladies of Cinnamon Gardens proceeding for worship of the Sacred Relics during the time of their exposition at the Colombo Museum in the summer of 1947, closely followed by their maids with trays of offerings, could fail to be impressed by the parallelism which the Sigiriya representation bears to the women of the present day on their way to perform religious worship." (14, p.10)

There is a revival of the Sigiriya tradition in the costumes of modern Ceylon. Hair coiffures and ornaments have been copied and Sigiriya costumes have been worn in dramatic representations of the period. Many fashionable Ceylon ladies wear diaphanous blouses but they have more undergarments than the Sigiriya ladies had.

It is clear that the costumes of ancient India had a definite influence on the costumes of Ceylon. In these early times Ceylon and India formed a single cultural unit and there was a constant imitation of art forms.

Both men and women wore richly jewelled garments and a wide variety of head-dresses which had developed from a very ancient civilization of mingled Aryan and Dravidian cultures. These costumes were modified through the centuries but the basic principles of fine garments and rich jewelry remained characteristic of the people even in modern times.

CHAPTER 4

MEDIEVAL CEYLON

The influence of India on Ceylon continued through the centuries that followed the Sigiriya period. The four centuries from 800 A.D. to 1200 A.D. are a shadowy period of Sinhalese history and there is very little evidence of the life and art of the people of this time. It was probably a period of conflict and unrest when the old traditions survived as well as they could. In the twelfth century, however, there was a revival of art and literature under the rule of King Parakrama Bahu the Great. This was contemporaneous with the establishment of the Moghul power in North India.

Costume of Moghul India

The Moghuls or Muslims came to India from the Middle East and gradually conquered the whole country. The men wore tailored garments, tight-fitting trousers and a long-sleeved coat fitted closely to the waist and flaring out below in a full skirt. High officials wore gold-embroidered Tartaric gowns with gold and silver belts tied tightly around their waists. Their head-dress was four-cornered in shape and ornamented with diamonds, rubies and other jewels. Turbans and caps of various kinds were also

worn, conical with upturned brims, triangular and dome-shaped. A description of a Moghul king is given by a French traveller Francois Bernier. "The king (Jahangir) appeared seated upon his throne, at the end of the great Hall, in the most magnificent attire. His vest was of white and delicately flowered satin, with silk and gold embroidery of the finest texture. The turban, of gold cloth, had an aigrette whose base was composed of diamonds of an extraordinary size and value, besides an Oriental topaz which may be pronounced unparalleled, exhibiting a lustre like the sun." (4, p.29) Throughout the Moghul period, one of the most fancied articles of men's costume was a painted or embroidered girdle into which a ceremonial dagger was slipped.

The Moghul princesses dressed richly in magnificent silks and brocades in a variety of beautiful designs which were especially woven for them by the court weavers. Paintings of the period show these royal ladies dressed in close-fitting trousers, short bodices, turbans and flowing veils. Pietro Della Valla, an Italian who visited India in the seventeenth century described the costume of the Muslim women he saw. They were dressed in white garments embroidered with gold flowers. "Their upper garment is short, more beseeming a Man than a Woman and much of the same shape with those of men. Sometimes they wear a Turban too upon their heads, like men, coloured and wrought

with gold. Sometimes they wear only silver, for other colours they little use. Likewise their clothes are oftentimes red, of the same rich and fine linen and the Drawers are also either white or red, and oftentimes of sundry sorts of silk-stuff strip'd with all sorts of colours. When they go along the city, if it be not in closed coaches, but on foot, or on horseback, they put on white veils wherewith they cover their faces, as 'tis the custom of all Mahometan women." (4, p.36-37)

Moghul fashions changed as the centuries passed. Men gave up the tight-fitting coats for long loose robes which were open in front. These robes were richly embroidered in gold, silver, white and coloured silks. A later development from this fashion was the sherwani, a long coat reaching below the knees and buttoned down the front. The Moghul turbans too were replaced by caps of many colors, heavily embroidered in gold, silver and colored threads.

The costume of the women also changed from the tight trousers and turbans to voluminous divided skirts and fitted bodices or wide silk trousers gathered and fastened at the ankles and covered by a long silk tunic bound at the waist. Wide scarves of delicate texture draped over the body served as head-dresses and veils.

At some time during the Moghul period the saree was developed as the regular dress for women in contrast to the

dhoti or draped trousers for men. The saree is a long strip of cloth about 48 inches wide and six to nine yards in length which is worn like a skirt over the hips.

(Figure 5, Appendix) To give freedom of movement pleats are folded into the front of the skirt while the free end of the material is draped over the shoulder to form an upper garment. A choli or short close-fitting blouse is usually worn with the saree. (Figure 2, Appendix)

Moghul traditions have had some influence on Ceylon. The kings of Ceylon probably copied the rich costumes and jewelled effects of the Moghul emperors. The sherwani or long coat is one of the official costumes for the men of Ceylon today. Muslim women still follow the later Moghul fashions especially in their wedding dresses. A description of a Muslim bride of India in the nineteenth century could apply equally well to a Muslim bride of modern Ceylon. "She wore a purple silk petticoat embroidered with a rich border of scattered bunches of flowers, each flower formed of various gems, while the leaves and stems were of embroidered gold and silk threads. The bodice was of the same material as the petticoat, the entire vest being marked with circular rows of pearls and rubies. The hair was parted in the Greek style and confined at the back in a graceful knot bound by a fillet of gold. On her forehead rested a beautiful flashing star of diamonds. Her slippers,

adorned with gold and seed pearls, were open at the heels, showing her henna-tinted feet and curved up in front toward the instep, while from her head flowed a delicate kincauli scarf woven from gold thread, of the finest texture and of a transparent sunbeamlike appearance. This was draped round her person and concealed her eyes and nose revealing only the mouth and chin." (4, p.40)

Costume of Ceylon from the Twelfth to the Sixteenth Centuries

The costumes of Ceylon from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries show traditional Aryan-Dravidian characteristics modified slightly by Moghul fashions. Frescoes dated 1200 A.D. from the caves of Dimbulagala and Polonnaruva follow the old traditions of dress on the whole. One figure is elaborately adorned with a conical head-dress, garlands, bangles, ear ornaments and a loosely flowing loin cloth. The sacred thread appears across the body and over the left shoulder. Other figures are nude above the waist but wear rich ornaments and elaborate head-dresses. The Buddha is shown in flowing robes and his devotees are dressed simply without much ornamentation. (70, p.72-76)

The Saddharma-ratnavaliya, a prose work of the thirteenth century describes contemporary social conditions.

The royal ornaments of the king and queen are described in detail. Five treasures were symbols of royalty, the royal sword, the white umbrella, the forehead band, the Yaktail fan and the royal golden slippers. No coronation could take place without these treasures. The king wore a golden robe and was decked with sixty-four ornaments, and a golden crown. The ornaments included necklaces, armlets, bracelets, rings, head, ear and foot ornaments and jewelled waist chains. One interesting item was the avulhara, a beaded breast ornament with strings of beads radiating from a central disc of ivory or buffalo horn. It was worn on the chest and held by strings tied at the back. Another, the inahadaya, was the king's armoured belt. (1, p.68-81)

The Kandyan dancers of today who take part in religious processions wear both the avulhara and the inahadaya. The inahadaya is made of glossy cloth such as satin and cut in the shape of an elephant's trunk. It is decorated with silver studs and brightly colored tassels and worn over the frills of the dancer's skirts. (Figure 6, Appendix)

The queens of Ceylon in the thirteenth century were also very richly dressed with chains of pearls for the neck and arms, jewelled necklaces and bracelets and ornaments for the head, ears, fingers and toes. They wore anklets on their feet and the tilak or beauty spot on their foreheads (1, p.81-84) The tilak was a mark on the forehead

made with colored earth, sandalwood or unguents worn by all Hindu women to represent the third eye of wisdom of the god Siva. It is still an essential part of the dress of Tamil women in South India and Ceylon.

There is very little evidence as to the costume of Ceylon in the next few centuries. It is possible that a garment called the diya kacci was developed at this time in imitation of Moghul fashions. "Diya kacci are undergarments or drawers made in one piece, having a large apron to hang down in front, a narrower flap with less ornament behind and a woven tape to tie round the waist. They formed the most essential undergarment of old Kandyans, and were also a bathing and running costume; diya kacci were worn also by watchmen and messengers." (11, p. 233) Some of these garments were quite plain, others most elaborately ornamented. The belt of a diya kacci was sometimes made in one piece with the rest of the garment. The Portuguese breeches may also have been instrumental in making the diya kacci popular in Ceylon.

The Portuguese came to Ceylon in 1505 urged by a desire for its spices. At that time there were three kingdoms of varying economic and political importance in Ceylon. In the north was the Kingdom of Jaffna, inhabited by the Tamils, who differed in race, language, customs and religion from the Sinhalese. In the central highlands

was the Sinhalese Kingdom of Kandy which preserved its independence throughout the period of the Portuguese and Dutch conquests. And finally, in the western and southwestern areas was the Sinhalese Kingdom of Kotte, which was the richest and most powerful of the three and which exercised some degree of control over the other two. The kingdom of Kotte was first captured by the Portuguese because most of the cinnamon came from there. (20, p.2)

Costume of Portugal in the Sixteenth Century

In the early years of the sixteenth century Portugal was undoubtedly influenced by the prevalent fashions in Spain. Portuguese men of that time wore long, close-fitting hose with slashed breeches reaching over them nearly to the knee, a slashed doublet which was fairly tight, overgarments of various kinds, a cowl-shaped cap, and low shoes rounded at the toes. The doublet was short and buttoned down the front. It was trimmed in different ways and had frills showing at the neck and at the wrists. Later in the sixteenth century, the doublet became sleeveless or had only false sleeves which hung down behind. The real sleeves belonged to an inner jacket of a different color which was worn beneath the doublet. (30, p.218-224) A portrait of the Archduke Charles of Austria painted by Sanchez Coello in 1567 (Figure 7, Appendix) shows a garment

cut on the lines of contemporary body armour and stuffed with bombast to mimic the protuberance on the lower half of a breastplate. The trunks have richly braided panels and the codpiece is obtrusive. The jerkin is worn over a doublet with sleeves slashed between bands of braid. The sleeves are of a different color from the jerkin. (33, p.205)

Sleeves of this type undoubtedly inspired the many-colored effects on the clothes of King Rajah Sinha of Kandy. It is not clear whether the high neckbands, the stockings, shoes and caps worn by the Sinhalese nobles owed their origin to Moghul fashions or Portuguese costume. It is possible that both factors were responsible.

The women of Portugal in the early sixteenth century wore separate bodices and skirts over a richly embroidered chemise. The bodice was stiffly padded and the skirt was stretched over a framework of hoops and tapes so that it showed no wrinkles. (30, p.227-228) A portrait painted in 1518 of Eleanor of Austria, Queen of Portugal (Figure 8, Appendix) shows a bodice and skirt made of a rich gold and red brocade. The bodice is cut square at the neck and shows an inner white cambric tucker. The sleeves are very full "composed of straps of dark velvet striped with gold, caught together at intervals by emeralds in gold mounts." (41, Vol. 3, p. 204) They are worn over full white

cambric undersleeves which puff between the straps. Over these are curiously shaped sleeves of lynx fur attached with an emerald ornament to the strapped velvet sleeve. The skirt is worn over a farthingale and is open up the front to show an underdress of patterned cloth of gold. A jewelled girdle is worn round the waist and the hair is covered with an elaborate head-dress of gold tissue.

The Portuguese head-dress was of Italian origin and was a long tapering network in which the hair was enclosed. The upper end was fixed to the head with jewelled ornaments or a fillet of gold. The lower end which often reached to the ankles was tied with a tassel and decorated with gems or gold coins. The net was crossed and bound with narrow gold bands along its full length and there were jewels set at the points of intersection. The hair was visible inside the net and the wearer obviously added false hair. (41, Vol. 3, p.34-35)

Although it is not certain how far the dress of the women of Ceylon was influenced by Portuguese fashions, the bodices with rich embroidery, the scarves of silk, and the false hair ornamented with silver may be due to Portuguese influence or the culture of Moghul India. Both India and Portugal came under Muslim influence and Ceylon may have learned from both. It is certain, however, that the Portuguese dress must have given an impetus to parallel

forms in Ceylon and that it definitely had a prestige value in the culture of that time.

Costume of Holland in the Seventeenth Century

The Dutch conquered Ceylon in 1658 but had very little influence on the costume of the country. The Dutch fashions differed from Portuguese for they wore loose jackets over the doublets and long wide-topped gaiters of deerskin or colored cloth over their stockings. The Dutch breeches and coats were wide and roomy and were richly ornamented with fluttering ribbons and loops. An interesting development among the Dutch was the "popularity of negligé". Doublets were unbuttoned, collars left open, akertjes or strings left untied." (33, p.265) The Dutch followed this fashion of negligé' when they settled in Ceylon. A British soldier comments on this leisurely habit as follows: "A Ceylonese Dutchman ... rises early, about six, and either goes to walk or sits down by his door in a loose robe and nightcap to smoke a pipe. This with a glass of gin, which is called a soupkie, fills up the interval to seven ... He then gets up, dresses, and goes to business, or more frequently to pay visits ... If they have leisure to prolong their visit they take off part of their dress and put on a little nightcap, which they bring with them on purpose, and then set themselves to smoke and

talk till noon. (3, p.180)

Dutch women of the seventeenth century wore long dresses with broad conical lace fichus round the neck. The sleeves of fashionable dresses were shortened to just below the elbow and were trimmed with broad lace. Narrow caps were worn and the hair was loose on either side of the head or was tied into a knot at the back. The only fashion that the Ceylonese women may have copied from the Dutch is the lace fichu and the knotted hair. Women of Ceylon today often wear blouses trimmed with lace at the neck and sleeves. The popular hair style in Ceylon is the konde or hair knot but this too could be of Indian origin.

Costume of Ceylon in the Seventeenth Century

A very comprehensive account of Ceylon in the seventeenth century is given by Robert Knox, a Scotsman who was captured by the Sinhalese in 1659 and held captive for twenty years by King Rajah Sinha of Kandy. Knox describes in detail the dress of the people of Ceylon from the highest to the lowest. Of the king he writes "His Apparel is very strange and wonderful, not after his own Country-fashion, or any other, being made after his own invention. (24, p.53) The king (Figure 9, Appendix) wore a cap with four corners like a Jesuit's, three tiers high, with a feather standing upright in front and a long band hanging down his

back after the Portuguese pattern. His breeches reached to his ankles and he wore shoes and stockings. His doublet was of one color and the sleeves of another. Knox concludes his description by saying: "but always when he comes abroad, his Sword hangs by his side in a belt over his shoulder: which no Chingulays dare wear, only white men may: a Gold Hilt, and Scabberd most of beaten Gold. Commonly he holdeth in his hand a small Cane, painted of divers colours, and towards the lower end set round about with such stones, as he hath, and pleaseth, with a head of Gold." (29, p.53-54) The king followed the custom of wearing flowers in the hair for both men and women tied their hair "in a bunch behind" (29, p.32) and enclosed the flowers. "There is another white Flower like our Jasmine, well scented, they call them Picha-mauls, which the King hath a parcel of brought to him every morning, wrapt in a white cloth, hanging upon a staff, and carried by people, whose peculiar office this is." (29, p.32)

This description of the king clearly illustrates the mixed cultural influences of the time. The custom of wearing flowers in the hair and especially jasmine is Indian in origin. Woven garlands of jasmine buds are still wrapped in plantain leaves and sometimes covered with a cloth before being distributed by flower-sellers to South Indian women. Indian women even today wear flowers in the

hair as part of their normal dress and the sweet-smelling jasmine has always been a favourite. The rest of the description shows the singular effect of the Portuguese influence. The cap is probably copied from the Jesuit priests of whom there probably were a number with the Portuguese general. The feather may have been copied from a ceremonial cap of the Westerners and the long band as Knox himself points out, is of Portuguese origin. The trousers resemble the Indian dhoti but the style of the doublet, the shoes and stockings and the sword are undoubtedly attempts to achieve the prestige of the Portuguese. It is possible that the Moghul fashions of the aigrette in the turban and the ceremonial dagger slipped into the girdle also influenced the design of King Rajah Sinha's costume.

The nobility of King Rajah Sinha's court were distinguished from the common people by their names and the length of their loin cloths, "which the men wear down half their Legs, and the Women to their Heels: one end of which Cloth the Women fling over their Shoulders, and with the very end carelessly cover their Breasts; whereas the other sort of Women must go naked from the waist upwards, and their Cloaths not hang down much below their Knees: except it be for cold; for then either Women or Men may throw their Cloth over their Backs." (29, p.106)

Here again there is a mixture of indigenous and foreign influences. The women of ancient Ceylon wore no clothing on the upper part of their bodies and the frescoes of Sigiriya show the royal ladies wearing the flimsiest garments or none at all to cover their breasts. Older women in the villages of Ceylon today still wear no jackets at home and carelessly fling one over their shoulders when they go out. Men of the lower classes are usually bare-bodied in the village or when they are at work, except for a loin cloth or a tucked-up sarong. A towel is often thrown across the shoulders when the villager goes out but it is usually removed and held in the hand when he converses with someone he considers his superior. (Figure 10, Appendix)

The noblemen of King Rajah Sinha's court wore doublets of white or blue calico and two cloths about their waists, an inner cloth of white calico and a colored cloth over it. A blue or red sash was tied around their loins and a knife with a silver-carved handle was stuck in the sash. "A compleat short Hanger" (29, p.143) which seems to be another weapon was also carried in a silver-engraved scabbard at their sides. (Figure 9, Appendix) They held painted canes and were attended by bareheaded boys who carried betel bags. The betel bags served as a receptacle for the betel leaves and the nuts that the nobles chewed. "The men for ornament do wear

Brass, Copper, Silver Rings on their Fingers, and some of the greatest Gold. But none may wear any Silk. But the women in their Apparel do far surpass the men, neither are they so curious in clothing themselves as in making their wives fine." (29, p.143)

The noble ladies of King Rajah Sinha's court dressed carelessly at home but when they went out they dressed well. "They wear a short Frock with sleeves to cover their bodies of fine white Callico wrought with blew and red Thread in flowers and branches: on their Arms Silver Bracelets, and their fingers and toes full of Silver Rings, about their necks, Necklaces of Beads or Silver, curiously wrought and engraven, gilded with Gold, hanging down as low as their brests. In their ears hang ornaments made of Silver set with Stones, neatly engraven and gilded."

(29, p.143-144) Their ears were pierced when they were young and the openings were stretched with rolls of coconut leaves so that they stood like round circles on each side of their faces. Their hair was oiled and combed smooth. "Their hair grows not longer than their wasts, but because it is a great ornament to have a great bunch of hair, they have a lock of other hair fastened in a Plate of engraved Silver and gilded, to tie up with their own, in a knot hanging down half their Backs." (29, p.144) The women carried a scarf of "striped or branched Silk" and threw it

carelessly over their shoulders. They also wore one or two silver girdles about their waists "made with Wire and Silver Plate handsomly engraven, hanging down on each side, one crossing the other behind." (29, p.144)

The clothing worn by these men and women is a survival of the Indian tradition. The waist cloths of the men and the gold and silver ornaments are a continuation of old styles of dress. The stretching of women's ears with rolls of coconut leaves is still a common practice among some South Indian women. About twenty-five years ago in Ceylon when immigration laws between India and Ceylon were less strict, the writer observed many of these working class women in Colombo with long swaying lobes of ears, laden with ornaments. Women of India and Ceylon today often braid their hair in long plaits and adorn the braids with silver ornaments. There seems to be a trace of Moghul influence too in these costumes. The fashion followed by the men of wearing daggers in the waist sash and the scarves of embroidered silk carried by the women are characteristic of Moghul dress. It is possible that the Portuguese influence was shown in the canes carried by the Ceylonese noblemen and in the hair styles of the noble ladies, but the Portuguese fashions may have merely reinforced already existing Moghul styles.

Knox also gives a description of the ordinary men

and women in the seventeenth century. The Sinhalese men wore "a doublet after the English fashion with little skirts buttoned at the wrists, and gathered at the shoulders like a shirt." (29, p.101) He wore a red "Tunnis cap" (29, p.101) or a cap with flaps and carried a knife and a short dagger in his belt. The women wore "a Wast-coat of white Callico covering their Bodies, wrought into flourishes with Blew and Red; their Cloath hanging longer or shorter below their Knees, according to their quality: a piece of Silk flung over their heads; Jewels in their Ears, Ornaments about their Necks, and Arms, and Middles." (29, p.104)

The costumes of ordinary men and women rarely show the influence of extreme foreign fashions. The full jackets of the men and the jewelled costumes of the women are undoubtedly a continuation of old Indian traditions. It is possible, however, that the "flourishes with Blew and Red" were imitations of flared and frilled effects on the blouses worn by Portuguese ladies. Knox says of these women, "They are in their gate and behaviour very high, stately in their carriage after the Portugal manner, of whom I think they have learned." (29, p.104)

Caste differences in Ceylon in the seventeenth century were expressed by the wearing of doublets and caps, the length of the loin cloth below the knee and the right

of sitting on stools. For instance, the barbers could wear doublets but could not sit on stools and the potters who were inferior to them could neither wear doublets nor their loin cloths much below the knee, nor could they sit on stools. None of the ranks below the elephant-men, except the potter and the washer could use the end of their cloth to cover their bodies unless they were sick or cold.

That some of these caste differences survive even today is clear from an incident that occurred in 1949 in a village near Tangalle in the south of Ceylon. This is a locality of mixed castes, Goyigama or agriculturalists and Berava or drummers. The Beravas according to an age-old tradition may not cover the upper half of their bodies. (Figure 11, Appendix) Yet fifty Berava school children suddenly appeared wearing banians, which are sleeveless undershirts or vests worn in Ceylon as outer garments. This led to an assault by the Goyigama school children and the offending banians were torn off the backs of the Beravas. A caste feud prevailed for some days and the affair had to be settled by a high-class official. (55, p.293)

The Berava revolt from tradition is typical of what is taking place in Ceylon today. Caste differences are being levelled out for the old distinctions of occupation are no longer effective. The bare upper body is a symbol

of comfort and not of low rank for it has a utilitarian value in the hot damp atmosphere of the low-country. Both high caste and low caste, villager and townsman at home wear a sarong with or without a banian. Caps are no longer worn in Ceylon for they have ceased to have any social significance.

Pictures of the eighteenth century show the king of Kandy wearing an eight-cornered hat with a tree ornament on top, a long-sleeved tunic ornamented at the shoulders with bo-tree leaves and at the wrists with frills. With this he wears loose trousers frilled at the ankles. He also "wore a profusion of jewellery, and carried a jewelled cane". (11, p.32) Chieftains and palace officers wore a four-cornered hat with a tassel while inferior ranks wore a round hat, a waist cloth and belt and no jacket. Wall paintings of this period in the Kandyan kingdom show the diya kacci or one-piece drawers fully established among the lower ranks of the people: Women wore a jacket and cloth or a basic form of the saree where one end of the cloth was flung over the shoulder.

Costumes of medieval Ceylon are characterized by a gradual departure from the nudity of ancient times to greater variety and fullness of clothing. Some men still wore only a loin cloth but the tendency was to copy the jackets and trousers of the Moghuls, the Portuguese and

the Dutch. Underlinen such as the diya kacci began to be worn by the richer classes.

Women's costumes progressed from complete nudity of the upper body to a cloth draped round the shoulders, a breastband, a jacket and finally a basic form of the saree where one end of the cloth was thrown over the shoulder. The profusion of ornament still continued among royal ladies but tended to become more subdued as the breast coverings were increased.

Familiarity with foreign cultures during the medieval period prepared the people of Ceylon for a wholesale adoption of European costume in the next century.

CHAPTER 5

MODERN CEYLON

The costumes of Ceylon in the nineteenth and twentieth century show the influence of Western fashions more definitely than at any previous period. The British annexed the Dutch possessions in 1795 and conquered the Kingdom of Kandy in 1815. They developed plantations of coffee, tea and rubber in the interior and organized an efficient system of transport and communication. Kandy was no longer an isolated kingdom and many of its special characteristics were lost under the impact of new cultures.

Costume of Great Britain in the Nineteenth Century

At the time the British had firmly established themselves in Ceylon, about 1860, a short single-breasted coat or jacket reaching to the middle of the thigh was part of the normal dress of the Englishman. This was worn with a waistcoat, a pair of trousers, a top hat, a bow-tie, shoes and a cane. A gold watch chain was draped across the waistcoat and there was an inner shirt and an overcoat as well. A variety of single-breasted morning coats, double-breasted frock coats and swallow-tail coats for evening wear were also in fashion. Later in the century, knotted

ties, bowler hats and straw hats were introduced. (41, Vol. 6, p.136-146)

English women of 1860 wore a full skirt over a crinoline and many variations of bodice and sleeves. Sometimes the bodice was buttoned right up to the neck and had a narrow collar, at other times it had a low square or V-shaped opening showing a chemisette of lawn or muslin. Deep lace berthas were also set around the neck to match lace frills at the elbows. Both loose and tight-fitting sleeves were worn and there were special forms known as the "bishop sleeve", the "mandarin sleeve", and the "pagoda sleeve". In fact the only constant feature in the bodice was the universally tight waist. (41, Vol. 6, p.147) Later in the century, there were evening dresses with low necks and puff sleeves and day dresses with leg-of-mutton sleeves. There were variations in the skirt as well. Skirts with double or triple tiers and various arrangements of flounces were popular. There were also bell-shaped skirts trimmed with rows of silk ruching at the foot and above the knee. Small bonnets and Gainsborough hats adorned with feathers were fashionable at the time.

Costume of Ceylon in the Nineteenth Century

These English fashions were copied in every detail

by some sections of the Ceylonese during the nineteenth century. The illustration (Figure 12, Appendix) shows a Ceylonese couple of the late nineteenth century wearing contemporary English clothes. The man has a turned-down collar and knotted tie, a waistcoat with a gold watch chain, a single-breasted morning coat with narrow lapels and a pair of trousers. The woman wears a hat trimmed with feathers, a bodice with a lace bertha, elbow-length sleeves with a wide lace frill and a skirt trimmed with rows of lace or ruching with a small train at the back. The writer remembers gentlemen and ladies dressed in this style in the early twentieth century. There are some gentlemen who still dress in this way but the ladies have adopted the Indian saree with all its variations. One interesting survival of the English costume is in the dress worn by the Chetty ladies, the wives and daughters of a wealthy group of landowners, merchants and bankers who live in Colombo. Their dress consists of a long tight bodice buttoning down the front with a high neck, long tight sleeves and a flounced skirt. The skirt is an ingenious combination of Eastern and Western styles for it is a piece of cloth draped spirally from ankles to waist to give a three-tiered effect. The Chetty ladies obviously adapted their sarees to copy English fashions. This style has a special name in Ceylon where it is called the

"suthu seelai" or the wrap-around cloth. The traditional fondness for jewelry was continued through this century.

Maturin Ballou, a visitor to Ceylon in 1894, was amazed at the quantity of jewelry worn by the native women of the middle class. "They wear silver and brass rings thrust through the tops and bottoms of their ears, through their nostrils and lips, their toes sometimes being also covered with small gold coins attached to rings. Their ankles, fingers, and wrists are decked with bangles and rings, while their diaphanous dress is of rainbow colours." (2, p.203) He concludes that it must be due to "an ingrained barbaric fondness for trinkets, which it would seem that they never quite outgrow, as women old and decrepit indulge it to the utmost limit of their means, thus thoughtlessly adding by contrast to their worn and wasted appearance." (2, p.203) The women braided their hair and twisted it into a snood at the back of the head, "a certain quantity being formed into puffs like bow-knots, and the whole kept together with long metallic pins, having ornamental heads of brass or silver." (2, p.204)

Ballou describes here the native women whom he saw acting as nurses to the children of European residents. They seem to have imitated the hair styles of their mistresses and puffed out their hair in soft waves instead of combing it back straight and smooth in the old

traditional style.

The men described by Ballou wore "their jet-black hair long, done up with a circular shell comb in front, which keeps it back from the forehead and the temples, and often have a high shell comb at the back of the head to keep the coil together, all of which gives them a most feminine appearance." (2, p.203-204)

This comb probably made its appearance in Ceylon after the coming of the Portuguese. It has been suggested that the Portuguese insisted that those who attended them should keep their long hair neat by wearing a comb; it seems more likely that the Sinhalese attendants admired and copied the style of the Portuguese comb and royal crown and so created a new fashion in dress. Henry Cave, an Englishman who lived in Ceylon describes this Sinhalese custom as he noticed it in 1908. "Perhaps there is nothing in Sinhalese customs that strikes the stranger from the West more forcibly as being extraordinary and peculiar than the custom which requires the male population of the low country to wear long hair twisted into a coil at the back of the head and a horse-shoe shaped tortoise-shell comb at the top, while the women remain innocent of this form of adornment." ... (10, p.85)

At that time many of the wealthier classes had given up wearing the comb but it was still popular among

the lower classes, whose ambition was to possess a comb of fine lustre and perfect manufacture. Additional combs were used sometimes to mark the higher social position of the wearer. The wearing of the comb was confined to the low-country, an additional factor which indicates Portuguese influence. In Ceylon, today, the comb is rarely worn except by a few men of the older generation. These are generally high-class servants in hotels and residences --the cook-appus or head-servants who control the other servants and are treated with great deference by them. The comb implies that the wearers are of superior rank and that they never carried burdens on their heads.

The comb was also worn in the nineteenth and early twentieth century by the Mudaliyar, a Sinhalese village official, whose costume was a strange combination of many cultural influences. He wore a span cloth as an undergarment like that of a typical Sinhalese villager. Next, he put on a pair of trousers, socks and shoes in imitation of the Englishman. This was followed by a tweed or cotton cloth wrapped round the waist in the old indigenous fashion. A vest, shirt, collar, tie and coat were added in a faithful copy of English styles. Finally, the hair was tied into a knot, a curved tortoise shell comb was set on the head and the whole was surmounted by the topie, the English pith helmet. The writer remembers gentlemen who

wore this strange costume in the early twentieth century, but it is no longer seen in Ceylon.

Costume of Ceylon in the Twentieth Century

European influences have continued to be effective during the twentieth century in the costume of the upper classes and especially in the dress of the men. Eastern men have generally found the Western styles more convenient for business wear as it helps them to deal on even terms with Western associates. At home, however, when they relax the tendency is to wear the traditional garments, which are worn universally by the people of the country.

The great majority of the people of Ceylon today wear four different types of garments, the sarong, the verti, the camboy and the saree. The sarong and the verti are worn by men while the camboy and the saree are worn by women. The sarong is an ankle-length skirt wrapped round the body at the waist and tucked in firmly in front (Figure 10, Appendix). Sometimes it is the only garment worn; at other times it may be accompanied by a vest, a shirt and a coat. The sarong is usually worn by Sinhalese men. The verti is a fine muslin cloth, also ankle-length, which is generally worn by Tamils of the middle and lower classes. It is often ornamented with a narrow border of colored stripes of varying width. It is

worn with a white shirt and a bordered stole. The camboy is a woman's garment and is a printed or checked waist cloth that is bunched at one side of the waist and tucked firmly in at the other. (Figures 13 and 14, Appendix)

The saree is a length of cloth, six or nine yards long and forty-eight to sixty-four inches wide which is worn around the waist like a pleated skirt with one end draped over the breasts and shoulders to form an upper garment. (Figure 5, Appendix)

It has been suggested that the sarong and camboy are of Burmese origin. During the eleventh and the twelfth centuries there was considerable religious intercourse between Ceylon and Burma because both countries professed the Theravada form of Buddhism. This contact still continues for Burma acknowledges the purity of the Buddhist doctrine as taught in Ceylon. It is possible that Indonesian influences also affected Ceylon during the period of the Dutch occupation for the Dutch controlled the East Indies as well as Ceylon. Whatever the cultural contacts may have been, there is a definite similarity today between the costumes of the Burmese and the Sinhalese. Both men and women in Burma wear the longyi, "a simple length of cotton or silk sewn together at the ends so as to form a cylinder." (8, p.48) The upper part is wrapped tightly round the hips and tucked in at the

waist. It is accompanied by a loose white jacket with wide sleeves, which just reaches the hips. Men tie a silk handkerchief on their heads and the women wear a stole around their neck and a flower in their hair. The fine muslin jackets of the women are buttoned down the front with ten buttons and button-loops. For special occasions, the buttons are of diamonds or gold filigree work and for everyday wear of glass or stone to match the longyi. Burmese women bathing at public wells and streams dress in the same way as the Sinhalese women at the village well. Mi Mi Khaing, a Burmese lady describes this practice. Instead of bathing dresses they used the longyi. "This longyi is shaped and wrapped, like the more famous sarong, at the waist normally, but women and girls take it above the bosom when they discard their jackets." (28, p.37)

The verti which is worn by Tamil men in Ceylon today is from South India, where it is called the dhoti. There is a very close cultural contact between the Tamils of North Ceylon and the Tamils of South India, so that there is a constant import of South Indian textiles into Ceylon.

The origin of the saree is a matter of fascinating conjecture. The earliest form of the garment seems to have been a waist cloth, pleated over a knotted end and tucked in at the navel. It is referred to as the "nivi" (15, p.9) or gathers in the earliest Vedic literature.

By 320 A.D. three different developments of the saree had made their appearance in India. The original waist cloth was completed with a close fitting choli or bodice and a scarf-like over-garment; the waist cloth was extended into the primary form of the saree by using a loose end to cover the upper body; and also a peasant style of dress was evolved which consisted of a one-piece garment tied at the waist like a skirt or knotted either above the shoulders or below the arms.

Many variations were introduced through the ages but these three basic types are still worn in Ceylon today: The cloth and jacket are worn by the women of the low-country; the osariya or primary form of the saree with the end thrown over the shoulder is worn by the Kandyan women and the peasant style of dress is seen in the bathing costumes of village women and among the aboriginal tribes. The saree worn by Tamil women such as the tea-plucker (Figure 15, Appendix) is a development of the primary form. Nine yards of cloth are draped around the waist over the shoulder and the loose end is folded around the waist and tucked in at the back in a pleated fan. No underlinen is worn except perhaps a short tight-fitting bodice.

In 1916 Ralph Odell, an American commercial agent, visited Ceylon and commented on the costumes worn by the natives. He found that the workers on the hill-country

estates and in the towns of Ceylon ordinarily wore only a small piece of cloth around their loins. There was a marked tendency among the middle and upper classes, especially in the cities, to adopt the European style of dress. The great majority of the natives, however, were still too poor to afford elaborate costumes and they continued to wear pieces of cloth wrapped around their bodies, with or without a shirt or an undershirt. The women generally wore much more clothing than the men. (42, p.14) Elsewhere, he describes articles of clothing in common use among the people, a sarong, a camboy and a verti.

In 1916, the natives seemed to prefer solid red borders. There were practically no printed sarongs or camboys, the demand being for coloured woven kinds in light and dark checks. Sarongs came in two different sizes. Some were 40 to 48 inches wide and 70 to 80 inches long, and others were 22 to 25 inches wide, and 144 to 170 inches long. The wide sarongs were complete and ready to wear, but the narrow ones had to be cut in two and "sewn together along the two selvages, making a sarong 44 to 50 inches wide and 72 to 85 inches long." (42, p.26) The largest trade was in the narrow sarong, as the natives seemed to prefer a garment with a seam in the centre. Odell's comment on the sale of sarongs is interesting. He says "In spite of the tendency among the natives in the

towns to adopt European style of dress, there appears to be no great diminution in the demand for sarongs in Ceylon." (42, p.27)

The sarong is truly the traditional garment of the men of Ceylon today, whatever their rank or education may be. It is used as a lounge suit at home, and is worn instead of pyjamas at night by the upper and wealthier classes. It is worn all the time by the working classes, who shorten it by tucking it up around the waist when its length hampers them. This is an age-old instinct with the men of Ceylon for the sarong in some form or other has been worn by them through the centuries. If the Dravidians actually had their origin in Egypt, then the sarong is a natural development of the Egyptian loin-cloth. It is a very comfortable form of dress and the first thing a Ceylonese does when he comes home to relax is to get into his sarong. The preference in Ceylon is still for the narrow sarong with the seam in the centre. This seems to be a fashion preference rather than any particular advantage. Most sarongs have seams down the centre and so most men like to have their sarongs sewn in the same way. There is the possibility that the seams make the garment fit more snugly and that the sewn garment with the selvedge seams is stronger than the seamless one. Whatever the reason may be, the men of Ceylon still continue to buy

narrow sarongs and get them cut and seamed together by their wives or the boutique tailor. (Boutiques are little wayside shops generally owned by a Moorman or a Tamil which provide for the simple wants of the villager and the working classes.)

Ceylon today is experiencing a great cultural revival since she became independent in 1948. Racial and regional groups still keep the traditional forms of dress; occupational and ceremonial costumes have changed very little but social patterns have altered and new forms of national dress have been adopted.

Racial and Regional Costume. The aboriginal tribes, the Veddas, still wear the primitive loin cloth and very little else. The Sinhalese villager (Figure 10, Appendix) wears a sarong and a towel thrown across his shoulders in the old traditional style. He is barefooted and has his long hair tied in a knot at the back of his head. The village girl in the low-country wears the Gamboy and jacket which may have been influenced by the Burmese dress but definitely had its origin in the ancient Aryan waist cloth. The hair is tied behind in a knot or hangs loose after a bath (Figure 16, Appendix). Necklaces, earrings, bangles and hair ornaments are always worn.

The Kandyan lady (Figure 17, Appendix) is dressed in an osariya, a form of the saree which is peculiar to the

Kandyan provinces. It is characterized by a pleated frill at the waist and a tapering loose end draped over the shoulder. The lady in the illustration is a film star who has tied a scarf over her knotted hair in an individual style. The family group (Figure 18, Appendix) shows the present Prime Minister of Ceylon, the Honorable Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, wearing an osariya of a richly ornamented green silk and a gold-flowered blouse with sandals to match and jewelled earrings, brooch, necklace, bracelet and rings.

The man pulling a rickshaw (Figure 19, Appendix) is an Indian Tamil. His costume consists of a white turban, a short-sleeved banian or vest and a tucked-up verti or waist cloth which often is colored. The tea-plucker (Figure 15, Appendix) is also an Indian Tamil and is representative of most of the Tamil women in Ceylon. She drapes the nine-yard saree around her body and tucks the loose end firmly around her waist. One edge of the saree is used to cover the head and protect it from the rays of the sun. The woman is decked with a nose-ornament, earrings, bangles and a necklace. Jaffna Tamil women wear the saree in a similar way, but the loose end is gathered into a broad band around the waist and tucked in at the back in fan-shaped pleats. Some of their sarees are heavily embroidered with gold and matched with gold brocade blouses and rich

jewels of all kinds. Silver anklets with tinkling little bells and toe ornaments are also worn in the old traditional Dravidian style. The tilak or beauty spot on the forehead is set off by colored flowers or garlands of white jasmine in the hair.

The Muslim gentleman in Ceylon wears European clothes and a red fez cap. The Muslim lady keeps the old traditional purdah veil and dresses either in a European frock or in an Indian style of saree where the loose end is draped from the back to the front over the shoulder. Eurasians generally follow European styles of summer dress as illustrated in the latest fashion journals, though some of them have adopted Eastern styles.

Occupational and Ceremonial Costume. Buddhist priests in Ceylon today wear a yellow robe which deepens in color to a dark orange as the wearer is elevated in the Buddhist hierarchy. The robe is a copy of that worn by the Buddha and is a long piece of cloth draped around the waist and the shoulder. A pleated palm-leaf fan and a begging bowl complete the costume. Toddy-tappers whose function is to collect the coconut flower juice from the top of the coconut tree naturally wear few garments. Like the coconut pluckers they wear a span-cloth or a G-string when at work. The Karavas, the fisher caste, and the

Rodiyas, a gipsy tribe also wear distinctive costumes. The Karava ladies wear the loose end of the saree over their heads to form a graceful head dress. The Rodiyas are forbidden by tradition to cover their upper bodies. Men and women wear short loin cloths that just cover their knees and the women cover their breasts with a handkerchief tied in halter fashion.

Ceremonial costumes of the Sinhalese people are still preserved in the traditional attire of the Kandyan chieftain, the Kandyan dancer and the drummer. The Kandyan chieftain (Figure 20, Appendix) is clothed in the Indian fashion of the ancient kings of Kandy. There is the eight-cornered hat with the tree ornament, the gold-encrusted jacket and the gold-embroidered cloth that is worn in the draped trouser form of the Indian dhoti. The tilak or beauty spot on the forehead, and the garlands are of South Indian origin while the pointed jewelled slippers and the golden jacket probably owe their existence to Moghul fashions of North India.

Kandyan dancing is part of a religious tradition that has unmistakable connections with Indian dance forms such as Kathakali and Bharata Natyam. The costume of the men for the ritual Ves dance (Figure 6, Appendix) consists of a gleaming silver head-dress in a pattern of rays tipped with little silver Bo-tree leaves, mango-shaped

sheaths over the ears, cobra-hoods over the shoulders and butterfly-shaped wristlets, all in gleaming silver. Other ornaments are a silver throatlet, bracelets, anklets, and a breast ornament (avulhara) of beads in a radiating sun pattern. The waist belt (inahadaya) is cut in the shape of an elephant's trunk adorned with silver trappings and is worn over a five-tiered skirt and a white dhoti. The Kandyan drummer (Figure 11, Appendix) is dressed more simply with a close-fitting pair of trousers, a tiered skirt and a flowing turban. He carries the drum on a band at the waist and wears earrings, armllets, anklets and an amulet necklace. The costumes of both the Kandyan dancer and the Kandyan drummer are of Indian origin.

Ceylon has a number of masked male dancers who follow an ancient Indian tradition. The devil-dancers wear elaborate masks and ornate trappings that are like the costumes of the Indian Kathakalii dancers. A short jacket with long flowing sleeves and five-tiered skirts are worn over close-fitting white trousers adorned with clusters of bells. The Kavadi dancers who dance in front of the Hindu images in religious processions also wear close-fitting inner trousers, short skirts of drapery and elaborate head dresses. The upper body is usually bare and the faces are not masked. All these costumes are survivals of old traditions which had their origin

in India.

National Costume. The national costume in Ceylon became important for all classes after Ceylon gained her independence in 1948. The standard national costume for men in Ceylon consists of a white verti, a long white collarless shirt buttoned to the neck and a bordered stole draped loosely around the neck. Slight modifications differentiate the Sinhalese form from the Tamil. The Tamil shirt is straight with an even hem turned up all around while the Sinhalese shirt is flared slightly at the end and slit at the sides probably in imitation of the English shirt (Figure 18, Appendix). Open sandals accompany both outfits, which are worn equally by both rich and poor without distinction. Both costumes have a common origin in South India.

The national costume for women consists of a saree draped over a blouse or a camboy and tight-fitting bodice buttoned down the front, showing the midriff. Some women omit the blouse while others imitate the latest styles from India and Paris.

Social Costume. Western fashions still continue to influence a small minority of the people of Ceylon. Middle-class men wear a pair of trousers and an open sports shirt to the office while richer men are dressed in full Western

attire, suit, shirt, tie, shoes and socks. Evening wear may be black dress trousers and white dinner jackets in the correct English style or an adaptation of the Indian sherwani, a long coat buttoned right up to the neck, worn over a pair of white trousers or jodhpurs and completed with a white cap.

Society women of Ceylon draw inspiration from the styles of many countries and read the fashion journals of London, Paris, Madrid, Rome, Bombay and Delhi. Fashion parades featuring exotic creations are regularly staged and Ceylon designers vie with each other to produce artistic costumes. Accessories and jewelry from all over the world are combined in original designs and Western styles are adapted freely to harmonize with the traditional lines of the Eastern saree. One of these fashions is the Bow Drape, a version of the saree which was introduced within the last decade. (Figure 21, Appendix) Seven yards of silk are draped around the waist with pleats arranged at one side. The free end of the saree is then twisted twice around the body, caught up at the shoulder by a bow and then twisted twice over the left arm. The blouse is a narrow band across the breast like that worn by the Sigirya women of the ancient frescoes. This style shows a combination of a traditional saree worn with a Western accent and a traditional blouse in the "cold shoulder"

fashion.

Traditional themes like the interlocked swans which were used on ancient bridal garments and unusual necklines are also featured in modern saree designs. (Figure 22, Appendix) The swans are embroidered with mirrors held by rows of chain stitch after the pattern of the Cutch work of India. Gold thread and diamante are used as decoration on filmy materials.

Society brides in Ceylon today combine Eastern and Western fashions in harmonious designs. The bride in the illustration (Figure 23, Appendix) wears the Kandyan saree in the form of a shimmering sheath encrusted with mother-of-pearl sequins specially flown out from Paris. This is combined with a double-tiered frill of tulle at the waist, tulle sleeves to the blouse and a tulle "fall" which forms a slight train. The "fall" is the part of the saree which is draped over the upper body and falls over the shoulder behind. The "fall" is interesting in this design because it is not of the same material as the main saree. It is an example of the popular "made-up" saree where the style lines of the saree are preserved in a combination of different materials. The bride wears antique jewelry in traditional Kandyan designs and a large gold pendant set with a dark stone which once belonged to the last Queen of Kandy. The hair is adorned with a jewelled head-dress

and a wreath of stephanotis and the bouquet is just like a Western bride's, a trail of stephanotis and May Queen roses.

The costumes of modern Ceylon show a revival of Indian traditional designs and the fashions of ancient Ceylon combined harmoniously with Western styles. The Western influence is seen most clearly in the business dress of the gentlemen and the lingerie of the ladies. These are exact copies of Western garments. The majority of people, however, wear a few more clothes than their ancestors and use more varied materials but still follow the old traditional styles of dress.

The men of Ceylon still wear the primitive loin cloth of their ancestors because it is essentially a practical garment for the tropics. The long flowing lines of the saree and the jewelled ornaments worn by the women embody a tradition of beauty that has survived from the earliest times. Old forms of dress persist longer in the villages of Ceylon than in the towns but there is a constant interplay between the two. The lady in the town goes barefoot to the races wearing the cloth and jacket of the village as the very latest development in fashionable attire, while the village woman adopts the high-heeled shoes and the saree once worn by the lady.

Foreign fashions are usually accepted when they are

in harmonious accord with existing traditions. Western trousers and coats for the men, lingerie and housecoats for the women are today an essential part of the costume of Ceylon because they supplement the traditional items of attire. Ancient and modern forms are blended today in combinations of many cultural influences which express with originality and initiative the new spirit and resurgent ideals of an independent nation.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY

The Island of Ceylon has a fascinating variety of picturesque costumes that reflect a blend of traditional and modern cultural influences. The Indian tradition is linked with the origin of the people of Ceylon and it has been reinforced through the centuries by close cultural contacts between the two countries.

Easy fusion of the two cultures was possible because the people of India and Ceylon had cultural and color affinities, but the arrival of the Europeans in Ceylon, the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, the Dutch in the seventeenth century and the British in the nineteenth century, with their widely divergent cultural and racial characteristics brought in a culture conflict that led to the submergence of the indigenous tradition. This tradition was revived, however, when Ceylon gained her independence in 1948.

Today, the culture of Ceylon shows a predominant Indian influence with limited European influences, which affect only a small minority of the people. The great majority still follow the old traditional patterns, modified

through the centuries by environmental conditions, but finding fresh inspiration and new life in the costumes of modern India.

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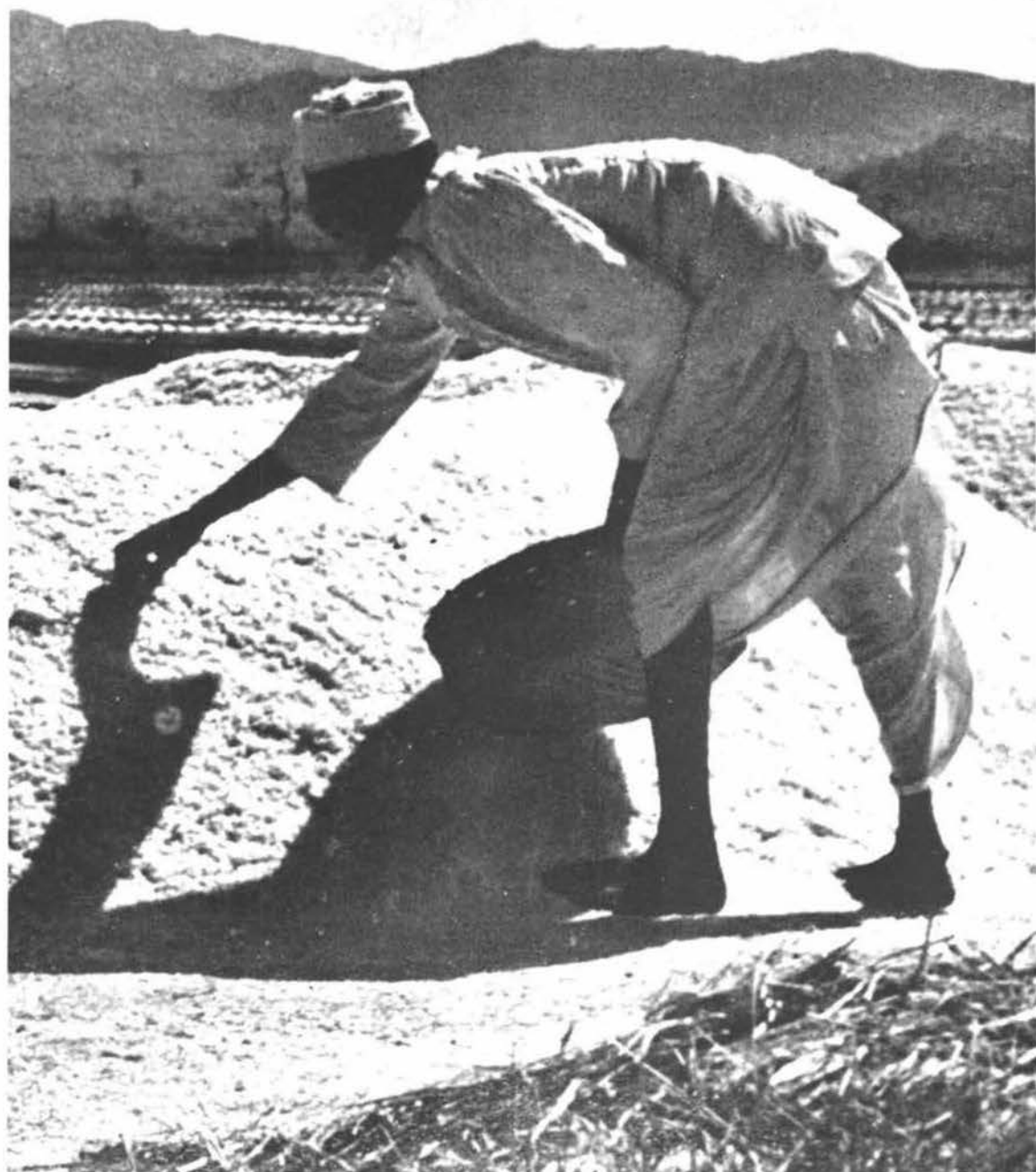


Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Rajah Singah the King of Ceylon.
Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14



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TEA PLUCKER, CEYLON.

Figure 15



Figure 16

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KUMARI BIDILE
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Figure 17



Figure 18



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SINHALESE LADY IN A RICKSHAW, COLOMBO, CEYLON.

Figure 19



Figure 20



Figure 21



Figure 22



Figure 23