

## ***EXTREME BEAUTY: EXTRAVAGANT ELEGANCE OF THE COSTUME OF THE KANDYAN ELITE***

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Objective of the research is based on a dedicated dress fashion which was very much vogue among elite male of the Kandyan Kingdom of Sri Lanka during the 18th century. It is aimed to incubate fashion concepts and introduce fashionable sartorial elements to the field of fashion, inspiring the costume. The Kandyan era was a transitional era (from 16th century to 1815) of the traditional dress which conveyed new meanings through dress, due to many foreign influences spread over the Kingdom.

Kandyan elites were powerful distinguished group who were consisted of high rank officers, drawn from a few families of high caste at the Kings service. Their extensive luxurious costume signified dignity, power and high social standard.



Figure 1: Kandyan Elites

The analysis was explored through historical records, murals of the period and reviewing literature. The analysis was surveyed through socio-cultural, administrative, religious and economic factors of the era. These factors were again analyzed with foreign influences to understand the theoretical base on influence fashion. This has resulted in developing several psychological, social and economic theories to explain how such statuses were instrumental in bringing about influence in fashion.

The Kandyan costume was hybrid formation of Eastern and Western sartorial elements. The dress has an extravagant body silhouette. The dress was arranged by making knots, pleats, folds and frills wrapping around

the body rather than tucking pins or sewing. Foreign costume had been considered by elites as a symbol of displaying their high social status to the society. Exquisite dresses were coupled psychologically with good social status. As well as, it was revealed that live or symbolic model influenced the elites. Elites learnt fashion by observing foreigners and the King. Moreover, peer pressure of their group was very much influential in exerting foreign fashions to their costume. Besides all, the task of the dress was more highlighted than the beauty of the dress. These theories cut across time factors and introduce basic theoretical approaches to the present.

**Keywords:** *Kandyan elite, Extreme beauty, Extravagant dress silhouette, Traditional elegance*