

17

SELECTION OF TEXTILES AND CLOTHING

17.1 Introduction

In the last four lessons you have been learning a lot about textiles. You know about fibres and their properties, fabric construction methods, and the different types of finishes applied to textiles. These finishes give fabric a specific look with the help of which we are able to recognise the fabric. What are some of the other indicators of fabrics which can help you? Similarly, some people wear only cottons as blends don't suit them. So, in that case, how do you get an assurance that what you are buying is according to your requirement? Most of the time the properties are dependent on the fibre content. So it is necessary for all of us to read a marking on the fabric/'Thaan' for making a right purchase.

This is about fabric, but what happens if you have to buy a ready-made dress? With every ready made dress there is a 'lable' which gives the necessary instructions. But most of us have the habit of not looking at these lables.

Let us go in to more details of these and sort out some of the problems related to selection of textiles and clothing.

17.2 Objectives

After studying this lesson you will be able to :

- state the meaning and importance of labels and markings;
- list and establish malpractices in textiles and their labelling;
- establish criteria for selecting fabrics and clothing for different end uses;
- establish criteria for judging quality of textile products and readymade garments;
- evolve criteria for selection of clothing for different age groups.

17.3 Labels and Markings

Today practically everything we buy has a *label* on it. Collect any 10 labels and look at the information given on them. You will find that all of these labels have some written information and/or some graphic display. Labels are made of many types of material—eg., paper, cardboard, fabric, tin or a simple tag attached to the product. In packages these can be a part of the package.

The information on labels includes brand names, pictures, designs, date of manufacture, packing, etc., and any other legal material that the manufacturer may care to put on it.

What about label on the yardage? What you see at the beginning of each fabric or 'Thaan' is called a 'marking'.

As far as consumer goods are concerned, sometimes we just look at the emblem, picture or name by which we may identify the product, eg., Bombay Dyeing or DCM products. These are *brand labels*. There are *descriptive labels*, which give the characteristics of the contents of the package such as size and variety of the products. Besides these types there are *certification labels* that claim approval of some agency other than the producer and clarify that the product meets certain accepted standards. For example, 'Woolmark' is used for pure wool products. There are also *care labels* which give information regarding washing, ironing, storing, etc., of the product.

Another type of labels are designed to tell consumers about composition of a product and what can be expected of it in the way of performance, how it should be cared for and the use to which it may be put. This type of label is called *informative label*. So, to be really effective they must give sufficient information to the consumer. But it is not considered seriously and what all is given on a marking is often not meaningful. For example, a name like Lizybizy is not providing any meaningful information about the fabric.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 17.1

State whether the following statements are true or false:-

- Labels have no pictures.
- Markings are labels on yardage goods.
- Care label gives information regarding washing only.
- Brand labels are not there for fabrics.
- Informative labels provide information about the fabric.

17.4 Malpractices

You all must have heard about various types of malpractices by traders and/or manufacturers of food items or electrical gadgets. Same is the case with the Textiles and Clothing sector. It is essential for all of us to know about these and to do the needful to control these. Some of the commonly observed malpractices in this area are-

- Giving lesser quantity and/or poor quality of the product.

Four mts. of fabric bought for a suit often turns out to be 3.80 mts. when you measure it. The retailer who does this either uses a short measuring rod or stretches the fabric while measuring it.

- Cheating on price.

Traders charge more than the price displayed on the item or on the packet containing goods. They name some tax and add it to the price printed on to the

lable. Or, they may pick up some word on the label, eg., 'silk finish' and charge extra for it.

c). Providing defective goods.

There are many places where traders sell seconds material as *fresh* and charge the price of fresh products.

d) Products with false, misleading and incomplete labels and markings. When you buy fabric for curtains, the marking should tell about light fastness. If it does not, then it is incomplete information. Similarly, the terms used should be meaningful and not misleading. The information provided should be correct. The information provided on the label on a garment is often quite vague and incomplete. For example, a label on a ready to wear garment does not say anything about washing, drying, ironing, and storing of the item.

So it is essential on our part as consumers to be alert and give no chance to the manufacturer or retailer to practice these malpractices and in case of complaint get in touch with concerned people to file our complaint. There is a Consumer Protection Regulation Act (1988) which covers all the above discussed malpractices.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 17.2

State whether the following statements are true or false.

- Malpractices are practiced by local retailers only.
- Consumers can be cheated by labels.
- Providing defective goods is one of the malpractices observed in fabrics.
- We get cheated in the quality of the fabric but never in its quantity.

17.5 Selection of Fabrics for different end uses

When you look around your house you will find that there are various types of fabrics used for different things. Like, fabric used for curtains is different from the fabric used for apparel or the intimate garments. You will find that a particular type is used for a particular end use. The difference in fabric for end use is due to difference in fabric properties which, you know, depend on fibre, yarn, fabric construction techniques and also the finishes given to the fabric. Why do you buy cotton and not synthetics for summer wear?

Let us recapitulate fabric related properties very briefly here and learn how these influence our selection of textiles and clothing.

1. Fibre Properties

You have already studied the properties of fibres in a previous lesson. Do you remember what they are?

They are:

- length and appearance of the fibre
- moisture absorption
- conduction of heat
- strength.

Let us see how these properties influence our selection.

- Length and appearance** : Can you recall fabrics made up with staple fibres and those made up with filament fibres? Yes, you are right. These are cotton, jute and woollen and nylon and polyester, respectively.

How does the length of the fibre influence your selection? You know that fabrics made with staple fibres have a rough look and those made with filaments have a smooth and shiny look. Also, short wavy fibres like those of cotton and wool tend to become dirty very easily whereas long, smooth fibres like silk or synthetics do not become dirty easily and are easy to clean.

Hence, whenever you need cloth with a smooth and shiny look, you will look for fabrics made of filament fibres i.e. synthetics or silk.

Nowadays, some finishes are applied on rough and dull fabrics which give them a smooth and shiny appearance, for example, starched cotton has a smoother look.

- (ii) **Moisture absorption:** Are you familiar with this property of fibres which makes the fabric either absorbent or non-absorbent? Cotton absorbs water/moisture easily whereas synthetic fabrics have low moisture absorbency. When the weather is hot and humid, we prefer cotton clothes because they absorb the perspiration and keep the skin cool. Since synthetic clothes do not soak sweat, they are uncomfortable to wear in summers. Similarly, when choosing undergarments and socks, this property must be kept in mind because those are the areas where maximum comfort is needed.
- iii) **Conduct of heat:** This property refers to the ability of the fibre to conduct heat away from the body. You may recall that cotton and rayon are good conductors of heat and keep the body cool. Silk and synthetic fabrics are poor conductors of heat and wool is a very bad conductor of heat and keeps the body warm. Keep this property of fabrics in mind when you choose clothes for summer or winter. You are probably already doing this by selecting cottons for summers and silks and woollens for winters.
- iv) **Strength:** Property of strength is needed in washing of the fabric. Ease of washing a fabric depends upon the strength of the fibre when it is wet. You know that some fibres become weak when wet. Which are those? Yes, these are wool, silk, rayon, etc.,. Fabrics like cotton and synthetics are extremely strong and can be washed and cleaned easily. Hence, clothes for daily wear, which need frequent washing, must be made of cotton or synthetic fabrics. Delicate fabrics like silk are more suitable for occasional use so that they need not be washed frequently. Being the strongest fabric, nylon is used for industrial purposes and for making parachutes, etc.

2. Fabric Construction Techniques

In your previous lessons you have learnt about various fabric construction methods. Each method, as you know, gives a special property to the fabric: like knitting methods provide stretchability and elasticity to the fabrics so it is suitable for socks, undergarments, woollen sweaters, etc. Weaving provides smooth and firm fabrics so they can be selected accordingly for making dresses for ourselves.

Now that you know that the properties of different fabrics depend upon the method of construction, you can choose the fabrics according to the end use.

3. Finishes Applied

You have studied about various finishes like mercerisation, shrinkage control, water-proofing, etc., which are applied on fabrics to enhance their properties, their appearance, etc. But the question is, does a finish influence your selection? Yes, it does.

Supposing you go to the market to buy cloth for a salwar suit. You know that you will normally need about 4 mts. of cloth. But you will have to buy some extra cloth because it may shrink on washing. But if the fabric has the shrinkage control finish on it you do not have to worry about shrinkage. Similarly, if you need cloth to replace the cloth of your umbrella you cannot buy just any cloth from the market. You will ask for cloth which is water proof. You may remember that finishes are generally applied to improve the look of a fabric. But sometimes, a cloth of inferior quality is overstarched to hide inferiority and thus make it look good. How can you find out the true quality of an over-

starched cloth? Take the corner of the cloth and rub it between your hands. If a white powder shakes out of the cloth, avoid buying it.

So, when you are selecting fabrics, remember that all that shines and looks good may or may not be of good quality. Carefully see what you are buying and for what end use. Knowledge of fabric properties will guide you to take a correct decision.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 17.3

1. Select the correct alternative—

(i) Staple fibres give fabric a _____ look.

- a) rough
- b) smooth
- c) lustrous
- d) shiny

(ii) Filament fibres give fabrics a _____ look.

- (a) dirty
- (b) smooth
- (c) rough
- (d) dull

(iii) _____ fabric does not become dirty easily.

- (a) Cotton
- (b) Organdie
- (c) Denim
- (d) Silk

(iv) Most suitable fabric for making baby garments is _____.

- (a) silk
- (b) cotton
- (c) nylon
- (d) denim

(v) A poor conductor of heat is

- (a) wool
- (b) silk
- (c) cotton
- (d) denim

2. Fill in the blanks:

- i) _____ can be scrubbed hard while washing. (cotton/nylon)
- ii) _____ is used for industrial purposes. (cotton/nylon)
- iii) _____ keeps you warm in winters. (wool/filament)

3. Pick out the statements which are true for woven fabrics.

- i) Made by inter looping yarns

- ii) Have a smooth appearance
- iii) Have a rough look
- iv) Are very absorbent
- v) Are generally stretchable.

17.6 Selection of Ready Made Garments

In today's fast moving life, it is very difficult to take out time for getting clothes stitched. You have to go to the market to buy a fabric, look for a tailor, order stitching and wait till the dress is ready. Or you have an alternative of buying a readymade dress.

There are markets which sell readymade garments at a very low price. The only problem is that these items are not made with your measurements hence may or may not fit you. Hence it is important to know what you should look for when you are buying a readymade dress.

Guide to purchase readymades :

1. **Design of the garment:** The design of any item is guided by four important elements: basic style line, shape form, colour and texture or the type of fabric.

When these elements are put in a completed composition, they make a design which has balance, proportion, emphasis, rhythm and unity. Look around and examine carefully the dresses people are wearing. Why do they look good or bad? Can you see the four elements of design in them?

2. **Fit :** After you have selected a dress from outer appeal, you have to see the size and fit. In fit, we look at the shoulders, bust, waist and length. It should be appealing to the figure. It should not be undersize or oversize. Take the exact measurements of the person and buy the garment accordingly.
3. **Workmanship:** Workmanship means the constructional details. So, look at the wrong side of the dress. Pull one end of the seam to check the durability. All seams should be double. There shouldn't be any puckers in the seams. Check the fasteners and zippers by opening and closing 2-3 times. Check the hemline fold. There should be enough seam allowance. Edges of collars should be well defined. No raw edges should be visible. Pgings, facings, etc., should be neatly done.
4. **Price:** Price factor actually goes along with all other factors. Like the quality of fabric, constructional details, trimmings, embroidery, etc., will definitely influence the price. Normally, we have the idea that high priced garments are expected to be of high quality, but this is not always true. So it is essential on our part to see whether the price demanded actually provides us that much wear or not.
5. **Care and maintainance:** Most of the time we buy a dress and after the first wash we find that the colour of piping spoils the whole dress or sometimes after ironing, the lace gets burnt or that you have to repeatedly spend drycleaning charges even for a cotton suit because its colour is not fast.

For a wise selection of readymade garments we should read the care instructions at the time of purchase and tally with the price. Buy a fabric which requires minimum of care and maintenance.

17.7 Guidelines for Judging Quality of Fabrics

Now, you all are competent in making right purchase of fabrics and ready made garments. Let us summarize here the criteria for judging the quality of fabrics and readymade articles. Following are the points to be considered.

Material:

1. The cloth should be pleasing to touch.

2. Durability of the fabric as you know depends on the kind and quality of the fibre, the tensile strength of the yarn, the amount of twist in the yarn and compactness of construction. A closely woven fabric has a larger quantity of yarns than a loosely woven one and is therefore more serviceable.

Weave:

1. Long floats in weave should be avoided.
2. The strength of the cloth may be tested by applying tension between the two thumbs.
3. Threads should not slope away from each other if the cloth is soundly constructed.

Finish:

1. Note the smell of the cloth, it should be clean and not oily.
2. Look against the light for even dyeing.
3. There shouldn't be any marks or weak places due to uneven finishing.
4. When buying velvets, towels, etc, see that the nap or pile in raised fabrics is dense and fine. Strength, particularly weftways, should not have suffered.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 17.4

State whether the following statements are true or false:

- i) The handle does not effect the quality.
- ii) Durability of fabric depends on compactness of yarns.
- iii) Buying a fabric with long floats is not a good idea.
- iv) You cannot check the strength of fabrics while purchasing.
- v) Finishes applied also effect the quality of the fabric/garment.

17.8 Selection of Clothing for different age groups

You must have noticed that the type of clothes worn change with age. Clothes worn by a school girl are definitely not the same as those worn by a college going girl. Similarly, your grandmother will prefer to wear light and comfortable clothes rather than fashionable ones. So, let us see how the type of clothes worn change with age.

Infant Wear

The clothing requirements from birth to 12 months of age are few. The major requirements of the newborn are for warmth, comfort and cleanliness. Clothes should be soft and light in weight as babies have tender and delicate skin. Since they are sleeping most of the time their clothes should be simple to put on and take off. It is also important that the clothes are easy to maintain. Cotton shirts that slip on or that have double-breasted front openings with snaps are some easy to wear styles. The diapers should be made of absorbent and soft cotton material.

School going Children

Children of this age group are in the growing stage. They like to run about and play and are generally very active. Hence, their clothes must be made of strong and durable fabrics which can take a lot of wear and tear.

You must have noticed that clothes of children of this age group are generally made of synthetic materials and pants are made of denim. While selecting, do take care to see that there is adequate cloth inside the seams which can be opened up to fit rapidly growing children. The clothes must also be easy to launder as they get dirty frequently.

The later Teen Years

This is the age when one starts going to college. Teenagers are very conscious about clothes and want to wear the 'latest' styles. They like to have variety in their clothes because they do not want to repeat the same dress every day. For them, fit and style are important qualities of clothes and construction is not often considered. It is advisable to select clothes which they can mix and match so that they can achieve variety with few clothes e.g. few colours of churidars or salwars can be combined with few 'Kameez' which can go with all legwears. Similarly if a teenaged boy gets a couple of pair of jeans and a few T-shirts, he can combine them to achieve variety in his wardrobe.

Adults

Selection of clothes for adults depends to a large extent upon the type of work that person is engaged in, eg., a woman staying at home will obviously not need glamorous clothes like a TV announcer. A working woman will need clothes which are easy to launder and which do not need much ironing because she has very limited time. She will also prefer to wear clothes which do not easily wrinkle as she must look good till the end of the day. Do you remember which are the fabrics which do not wrinkle easily?

Old age

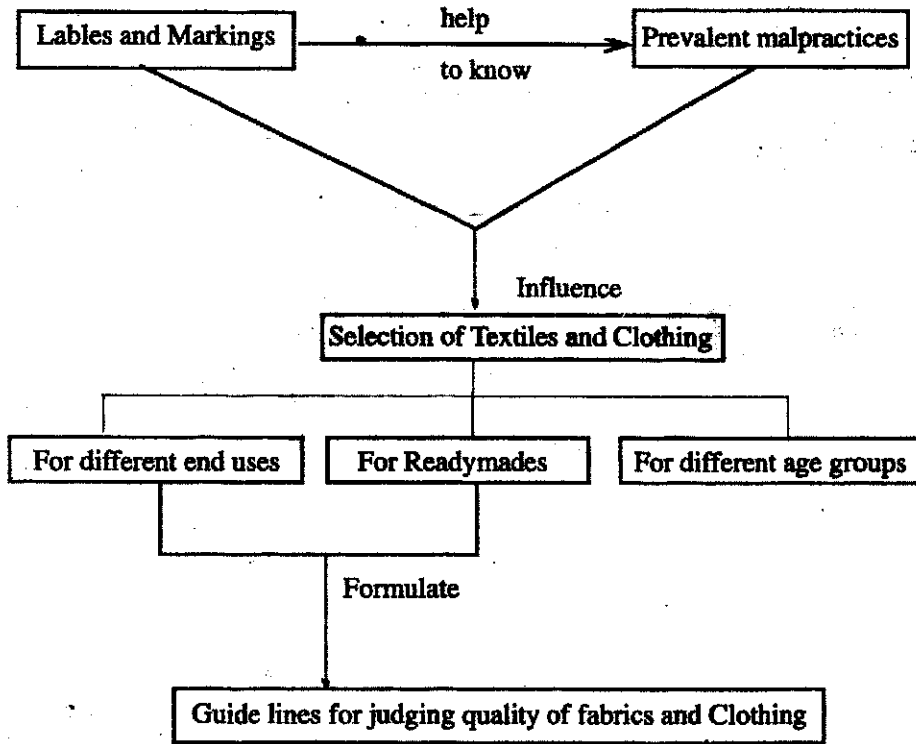
Old age brings its own problems. The body becomes stiff, the eye sight becomes weak and energy level is considerably reduced. You must have also observed that normally old people wear light material, they must be loose and comfortable rather than fashionable. Also, it would be advisable for the clothes to have front openings which are easy to see and manipulate.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 17.5

Match column I with column II

Column I	Column II
1. Baby garments	a) variety to mix -n- match
2. Teenagers	b) denim
3. Active children	c) made of absorbent cottons
4. Pants	d) strong and durable
5. Grandmother	e) glamorous
	f) bright clothes
	g) dresses with front opening

17.9. What Have You Learnt



17.10 Terminal Exercises

1. What is the difference between a label and a marking?
2. What are the different malpractices prevalent in selling fabrics?
3. Collect 10 markings and write about the informative label or marking. State why it is good.
4. What properties will you keep in mind while selecting fabric for curtains?
5. You have to buy a readymade suit for yourself. How will you make a good purchase?
6. You have a college going sister. What fabrics and dresses are most appropriate for her and why?

17.11 ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

- 17.1 a) False b) True c) False d) False e) True
- 17.2 a) False b) True c) True d) False
- 17.3 1 (i)-a (ii)-b (iii)-d (iv)-b (v)-b
2. (i) Cotton (ii) Nylon (iii) Wool (iv) Shiny
(v) Filament
3. (ii) (iv)
- 17.4 1) False (ii) True (iii) False (iv) False (v) True
- 17.5 1) (c), 2 (a), 3 (d), 4 (b), 5 (g)