

How Princess Karam Influenced Schiaparelli and Global Fashion

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Long before modern fashion influencers and red carpet moments, one Indian princess made a lasting mark across the global fashion world. **Princess Karam of Kapurthala** — born Maharani Sita Devi — was a celebrated style icon in the 1920s and 1930s whose elegance reshaped European couture and earned her international acclaim for beauty and taste.

Known to her contemporaries as the “*Pearl of India*,” Princess Karam was admired in major cultural capitals including **Paris, London and New York** for her striking presence in sarees, gowns and luxurious jewels. Designers, editors, and art circles of the era regarded her as an emblem of modern style rooted in tradition.

Royal Muse to a Parisian Legend

The Italian fashion house **Schiaparelli**, founded by visionary designer **Elsa Schiaparelli**, drew direct inspiration from Princess Karam’s distinctive fashion sensibilities. In **1935**, Schiaparelli built an eveningwear collection around draped silhouettes reminiscent of the Indian saree — a tribute to the princess’s influence and personal style. The line, titled “*Stop, Look and Listen*,” incorporated fabric draping techniques that echoed the graceful fall of a saree.

Decades later, the legacy endures: Schiaparelli’s contemporary creative director, **Daniel Roseberry**, revisited the concept in designs worn by global figures such as **Isha Ambani**, whose fusion saree at a high-profile event drew on the same heritage of East-meets-West couture.

A Style Icon of Her Time

Princess Karam’s impact went beyond couture collaborations. At just 19, she was described by *Vogue* as a “*secular goddess*,” a term celebrating her universal appeal and cosmopolitan presence. By age 22, *Look Magazine* had listed her among the world’s five best-dressed women — recognition that underscored how her fashion-forward elegance captivated audiences across continents.

Her wardrobe was legendary, blending high French couture from names like **Coco Chanel** and **Madeleine Vionnet** with Indian textiles, elaborate gems from houses such as **Cartier** and **Boucheron**, and her own instinctive sense of style.

Enduring Legacy

Princess Karam’s influence is an early example of global fashion’s cross-cultural currents — when Indian style helped inspire major Western designers nearly a century ago. Her prominence in fashion history reflects not only personal refinement but also the power of cultural exchange in shaping today’s global aesthetic landscape.

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