

Chapter VIII

Fusion of Mughal apparels in modern fashion and design-

The impact of Mughal dress in Indian life style is found immensely during the modern times. We find the recall of Mughal designing and textiles and its technique in modern era particularly in bridal wear. Almost all the fashion designer of India tried their best to re-use the modern techniques in their designing and created a classic sense in the world of fashion by using the Mughal dress designing.

Designers like Arjun and Anjalee Kapoor brought a new taste of dress designing from Mughal touch. Reminiscing about the Mughal era and bringing the grandeur of the period alive, the latest collection by them has a strong *Jamawar* influence. The gowns, resplendent with ruffles and texture, have a fairytale like feel, the embroidery, interspersed with delicate roses and over-the-top use of feathers, lends glamour to the ensemble. Ethnicity is kept intact, fusing it with modern construction to make the ensemble fit for a modern bride. Fine fabrics, such as rich velvet and Benarasi silk as the base for *lehengas* and *anarkali* suits have been used. Intense thread work embroidery has been meticulously worked upon. Tulle and Cancan has been used to create a lacy, floating look. Deep colours like burgundy, tomato red are used in his designs.¹

According to the fashion designer Anjali Kapoor “*We are presenting garments for the modern woman who is a diva and who likes to create her own fashion statement. The collection Mogul Opera, merges elements from the 17th century Victorian era to the glorious Mughal period, culminating in a beautiful symphony of gowns, lehengas, corsets and sensuous cholis. The collection came to life with bejeweled Lehengas with heavy Zardozi work which used to be the main textiles during the time of Mughal era.*”² (Plate No.28)

Ritu Kumar a famous Fashion Designer who generally work on Mughal touch has taken it upon her to revive many of India's dying traditional embroideries, crafts and weaves. In fact, the profusion of zardozi embroidery got more importance. She researched and brought back this long-forgotten Mughal craft to mainstream fashion and gave a new outlook and liking for this craft which became main pattern for the Indian brides. She brought a new blend of *lehengas* for the brides by giving the touch of Mughal craft into it.³

The design like the floral family, flowered stems, jasmine, rose, and lotus motifs are the most popular. Geometrical designs inspired from various Turkish and Mughal monuments can be found on a number of dresses and the famous Mughal *jaalis* have found an expression in many a designers' works embroideries like Chikankari and zardozi, which originated from Persia (Iran), prevails in modern day fashion in Indian subcontinent.⁴

Rohit Bal is famous for his geometrical motifs that he picks from various Islamic structures. The collection comprised a range of voluminous evening gowns, arabesque motifs in all shades of turquoise, blue and silver. The entire collection was full of pleated outfits, cone-shaped skirts, over-dimensional puff sleeves and ballet inspired tutus. Huge leafy creepers in silver ran across voluminous long skirts; long elegant overcoats and vests came in elaborate jacquards and rich embroidered silks which shows great touch and blend of Mughal era. He brings the Mughal days in his dress.⁵ (Plate No.28)

Sabysachi, the classic fashion designer, brought the Mughal fashion in his long *ghagra choli* and *sherwanis*. He almost used and worked on the different fabrics used by the Mughals. He was known in the fashion industry for bringing old world charm in his dresses particularly the Mughals and showing the world the gorgeous life of the Mughals.⁶

When it comes to use of *Salwar Kameez*, it is the gift of the Mughal world for the Indians. It used to be the main dresses of the royal Mughal ladies but still now in the modern era it is

popular women dress almost worn by every section of the society and in future it will remain the popular dress.⁷

The Mughal Empire, which reigned over Asia and the Middle East from 1526 to 1827, had a profound effect on South Asian arts and culture, especially in terms of weddings among the Mughals. Mughal fashions are most prominent in long *lehengas*, *cholis*, and *pishwas* - flowing floor-length skirts that are most commonly seen in modern Pakistani bridal outfits.

The use of heavy, embroidered silk is also derived from the Mughal Empire - where *kimkhwab* and *Jamawar* silks were popular amongst emperors and their courts. Golden-toned color palettes and contrasting patterns are also features of Mughal fashion design which have been adapted.⁸

Nurjahan had a creative mind. It was under her that the art of decoration reached its zenith. She had a wonderful sense of colour combination and used symmetry in design whether in monuments or in dress designing. She excelled in embroidery and innovated various embroidered works in her dresses. Among them, *dudami* which was flowered muslin was used for gowns, *panchtoliya* a cotton cloth used for veils, the *kinara* a type of silver threaded lace. A dress known as *jammu* consisting of a tight fitting *kurti* up to knee and tight sleeves fastened up to breasts, decorated with frills in front and worn with the *angiya* (jacket) tight trousers and thin cotton *dupattas* became very popular, which is seen in the modern days as young girls used to wear the tight *kurtis* with jeans or trousers.⁸ The symmetry design which was used by Nur Jahan was used by the fashion designer Rohit Bal in Lakme Fashion week collection. The embroidery in dresses is always liked by the Mughal emperors and their begums; the clothes which was embroidered in *chikankari*, *jali* works, *zari* work is considered to be the precious and most costly clothes used by the Mughals. Even today the embroidery work is liked and considered to be the costliest clothes.⁹

While talking about the jewellery, wearing heavy ornaments by the Mughal ladies was always joy of their heart and even today ornament is the passion of the Indian women. Mughal jewellery is unsurprisingly imitated today as well - with its heavy use of gold, shimmering jewels, and thick chains. The Saloni collection from the showroom of Saloni in Mumbai tried to bring back the lost crafts of jewellery making in *jadau* and *kundan* from Mughal collection in modern times.¹⁰

Meenakari is the art of enamelling that was introduced when the Mughals came to India. Beautiful designs of flowers, peacocks, and other traditional motifs are etched into the back of a piece of gold jewellery. These designs are then filled with enamel dust of a specific colour and fired. The result is a gorgeous piece, both in the front as well as the back. . The romance and adventure of this world is captured in the *meenakari* work.¹¹ Jewellery designer Devan brought into lime light his latest collection of ornaments in *meenakari* works which provided in a wide range depicting the reminisce of the Mughal creations. One can feel the Mughal ornaments as design by Devan in modern days by going to the modern Jewellers like Maliram Jewellers and Amrapali Jewellers. The collection in their showroom presents the superb design of the jewellery used by the Mughals which we have seen in the Mughal miniature paintings¹². (Plate No. 29)

In the twentieth century, for formal or semi-formal occasions, a long, full-skirted, narrow-sleeved coat, worn over Jodhpur-style trousers –sometimes called the “Nehru Jacket”–was extremely popular; it even created international fashion. Women’s formal wear at the turn of the twenty-first century consisted of variations of the sari and the *choli*, although westernized fashions lexicon. Whereas clothing traditionally indicated the wearer’s status in Indian society, many of today’s women on the subcontinent express their individual taste through their dress. In addition to the fineness and delicacy of the fabric, Indian textiles were also noted for their brilliant colours and prints.¹³ Cotton, like linen, naturally resists dyes, but

Indian craftsman learned early on the secrets of mordents and dyes and how to manipulate them. Remarkably, India managed to keep the complex technique of cotton dyeing secret from the world until the seventeenth century.¹⁴ Still in this modern era India is famous for various stuffs of cotton as says Ritu Kumar in her book, *In Costumes and Textiles of Royal India Mughal* “customs are all around us - and modern brides have a lot of inspiration to look to from their royal predecessors! From fashion and food to palaces and jewels, the Mughal Empire has left the world with many artistic styles that are truly timeless.”¹⁵

References

1. The Times of India May 7, 2014.
2. Ibid.
3. Ritu Kumar, Edited by Cathy Muscat, *Costumes and Textiles of Royal India*, (University Of Calofornia, 2006), p.115.
4. Kunal Mazumdar, Journalist, Writer, Editor, *Fashion Week*, (Summer, 2009), Published in IMAGES, Bussiness of Fashion, October, 2008.
5. Rohit Bal, Collection at P.C Chandra Jewellery, Delhi Couture week, Sunday, August 25th 2013.
6. Blog of Sabysachi Mukherjee for his Old World Charm from Indianetzone.com.
7. Jill Conda, *The Greenwood Encyclopaedia of clothing through world history 1501-1800* (USA 2008) pp. 212-213.
8. T.V Show in NDTV, *The Big Fat Indian Wedding*, Episode of June 6th 2014.
9. Soma Mukherjee, *Royal Mughal Ladies and their Contributions*, (New Delhi 2001), p. 222.
10. *Ibid*, p. 241

11. The Saloni Collection, Mumbai.
12. Amar Tyagi, *Lets Know Handicrafts of India*, (U.K, 2008), p. 24.
13. Amrapali Jewellers, Office, K-14, Ashok Marg, C Scheme, Jaipur-302001.
14. Jill Condra, *The Greenwood Encyclopaedia of clothing through world History 1501-1800*, (USA 2008), p.214.
15. Ritu Kumar, Edited by Cathy Muscat, *Costumes and Textiles of Royal India*, (University Of Calofornia, 2006), pp. 116-117.