

PREFACE

The medieval period of Indian history begins when the immemorial systems, rules and customs of ancient succession of foreign conquerors imposed new rules and introduced an exotic creed of clothing patterns.

The Mughals were Muslim conquerors of Turkish and Mongolian descent who counted among their formidable ancestors both Genghis Khan scourge of Christendom in the middle ages, and Timur who had swept down from Afghanistan in 1398 to sack the ancient northern city of Delhi. In 1526 Timur's descendant, Babur came to Delhi to stay and its zenith in the seventeenth century, the empire established by him covered all of the Indian subcontinent except for its southernmost tip. In the empire's heartland, Mughal courtly life combined the finest of imported Persian ways and the indigenous traditions of the ancient Hindu kings of Rajasthan, the Rajputs. It emerged as a confident imperial culture, distinctively India, but at its best, flexible and open to ideas from the world outside moulded to give the world in return a cult of mesmerizing art and artifacts from music, architecture to dress and beautification. It is an attempt to present the fashionable life style of Mughals who ruled from 1526 practically to 1803, when British captured Delhi and Agra. The context belongs to the period of reign of the great Mughals, Akbar (1556-1605), Jahangir (1605-1627), Shah Jahan (1628-1658) and Aurangzeb (1659-1707).

With the advent of the Mughals, India witnessed the arrival of many elements which were introduced into the Indian society which intermingled with the culture of that period in course of time. Even the name of the land became more popular as *Hindustan* among the foreign travellers. They not only influenced the political scenario of the country, but also of social, cultural and artistic life of India. From stitched fabrics to extensive use of silk among women and worsted cotton among the male; the embroidery and lace-making were on the same

contour as to the sweetness of Urdu and its poetry in music under the legendary maestros. *Zardozi, chikankari, kalamkari, meenakari*, the famous *kim-khwab* silk brocade weaving of Banaras, *Dhaka malmal*, the leather shoes and sandals of Kashmir, Delhi, Lucknow and Amritsar, leather water vessels of Bikaner, the Kashmir shawls and carpets. The Mughals past in India does not merely linger but overwhelms us.

Mughal age not only saw the intricacies of the emperors and princess in their style of dressing, but also the princesses, queens and other ladies of the royal Mughal harem. The ladies of the Mughal dynasty were almost as royal Mughal harem. The ladies of the Mughal dynasty were almost as remarkable as their male counterparts. Nur Jahan for instance brought a revolution in the manner of dressing of the harem. Purdah system was prevalent but these beautiful and extremely talented women did not let a chance where they could improvise something new for themselves. The accounts of foreign travellers and Gulbadan Begum's *Humayun Namah* tell a tale elaborately dealing with such creative instances.

Rekha Mishra's *Women in Mughal India*, Zenat Causar's *Muslim women in Medieval India*, Tanushree Poddar's *Nur Jahan's daughter* and Soma Mukherjee's *Royal Mughal Ladies and their Contributions* are no less to have a presence to justify Mughal ladies' innovations in dress and dress ethics of the period.

The Mughal dynasty certainly witnessed a great contribution from Akbar to Shah Jahan among the Mughal emperors while Nur Jahan was noteworthy among the empresses. It is very difficult to find exclusive and elaborate information on the textile and hosiery items that survived till date. Scattered and scanty information in different works are not sufficient for a student of history and therefore failed to justify the glorious contribution of that era in a field of fashion and designing.

The present study is therefore an attempt to present collectively and as elaborately as possible in a comprehensive manner on the contribution on the Mughals from the time of Akbar to Aurangzeb with special emphasis on Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Nur Jahan, Shah Jahan's daughter Jahanara, Roshanara, Aurangzeb daughter Zeb-un-Nisa are no less to mention.

It is so mystic and enchanting to see the trend of traditional clothes grow and even in this modern world of computerized design, refined the Mughals which can be seen peeping through the bridal dress, *Sherwanis* and beautiful *Ghagra* and *Cholis*. The *meenakari*, the multi-coloured diamonds hold our breath even today.

I would like to express my special appreciation and thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Bijoy Kumar Sarkar, who have been a tremendous mentor for me. I would like to thank him for encouraging my research and for allowing to grow as a research scholar. His advice on both research as well as on my academic career has been priceless. I would also like to thank my teachers of the History Department: Prof. Ratna Roy Sanyal, Prof. Ananda Gopal Ghosh, Prof. I. Sarkar, Dr. Anita Bagchi, Dr. Dhalia Bhattacharya, Dr. Sankar Kumar Das, Dr. Sudash Lama and Mr. Varun Kumar Roy for their kind cooperation in getting my paper to completion. I want to thank them all for letting my thoughts on paper and for their brilliant comments and suggestions.

A special thanks goes to librarians and staffs of North Bengal University (Darjeeling), National Library (Kolkata), Asiatic Society of Bengal (Kolkata), National Museum (New Delhi), the National Archives (New Delhi) and Calico Museum of Textile (Ahmedabad) for the kind help they extended to me.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Hafiz Sharib Qamar Khan for the help extended by him and his kind assistance in consulting Shariat and some of the Persian scripts.

I would also like to thank all my friends and others who supported me in writing and incensed me to strive towards my goal.

A respectful thanks goes to my father-in law, Mother- in law, my brother-in-law, Rinku and my loving thanks to my daughter, Jeea for all the sacrifices that they have made on my behalf. Their prayer for me was what sustained me thus far.

At the end I would like to express my appreciation to my husband, Mr. Ashis Dey who has spent his valuable time with me and was always my support in the moments when there was no one to answer my queries.

Gouri Dey

Place: Siliguri

Date: 5th June, 2015