

Chapter I

Introduction-

Fashion what we call in modern high-tech world is but a human behaviour. It is in general term, a popular style or practice, especially in clothing, footwear, accessories, makeup, body piercing or furniture all to represent one self in a distinctive manner and style. It is the trend in which a person dresses or to prevailing styles in behaviour. Costume, the more technical term, has become so linked to the term fashion that the use of the former has been relegated to special senses like fancy dress or masquerade wear, while fashion means clothing more generally including the study of it. Aspects can be feminine or masculine, some trends are androgenous. It can be defined as what a specific group of people wear and use during a giving period of time.

It is an art of learning to combine colour, form, pattern and texture for the right effect for the right time, the place and the people. Fashion is a mode of action and a method of conduct, manner and custom or general life to hold social position. It is also an outcome of latest and most admired style in clothes, cosmetics and behaviour. For centuries individuals or societies have used clothes and other adornment as a form of non-verbal communication to indicate occupation, rank, gender, sexual availability, locality, class, and wealth or group affiliation. Fashion is considered as a form of free speech which not only embraces clothing but also accessories, jewellery, hairstyle and body art. Fashion is a language of sign, symbol and iconography that non-verbally communicate meaning about individuals and groups. It enables us to make ourselves understood and rapid comprehension by the onlooker.

People are so aware that others make judgement about them through their clothes and accessories that may run up huge debts to appear to belong to a particular lifestyle. Frequently the rest of their role-set are doing likewise. Those with high status occupations

will wear the clothes they think others expect them to wear. They will not wish to experience role conflict by wearing the incorrect clothing. It is from the clothes a person wears that we get our first impression of personality. They provide mental clues to a person's status and occupational role as well as being a means of confirming to peer group expectations. Clothes also have the utilitarian functions of providing both protections from the extremes of the elements, keeping us warm or cool or safe. They also act as an aid to modesty or immodesty as the wearer so desires. The state of a person's clothes is synonymous with self-respect and is a sign of respectability. It also adds another sign that the person has sufficient status in society to maintain at the cost of time and money, laundering, dry cleaning and repair. To be respectable some expenses has to be incurred in the maintenance of cleanliness and neatness.

One of the most favoured forms of semiotic distinction is fashion. It acts as speechless motivation towards communication in three forms, namely fashion is approved by others then it is copied because of competition and finally it is replaced as it becomes common place and has ceased to fulfil its functions of being distinctive.¹

Designing is a plan to make or work out a plan for device, it is a decorative or artistic work. Designing as a process can take many forms depending on the objects being designed and the individual or individuals participating, it is a composition in art referred to the panning and arrangement of form and colour in two or three dimensional work. Design is the human power to conceive, plan and realize products that serve human being in the accomplishment of any individual or collective purpose. Design when applied to fashion includes considering aesthetics as well as function in the final form.²

The Mughal Empire ruled the South Asian region including current northern India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan from the early 16th century to the 19th century. As the name of the empire, Mughal, which means Mongol in Persian language indicates, the empire was built by a foreign tribe of Mongol origin. Babur, the progenitor of the Mughal Empire, is a direct

descendant of Timur who descended from Genghis Khan.³ The Mughal age was an era marked by many distinctive features and development in almost all fields of architecture and development of different kinds kharkhanas of which apparel designing and applying new fashions of dresses are the prominent. The Mughal were great lovers of art which is found in their buildings and in their dresses.⁴ The Mughals were men of artistic inclinations. They not only brought the Persian culture into India but also mingled with the Indian culture and gave a new form almost in all fields.⁵ R.C Mazumdar is of the opinion that “the Mughal period was entirely an age of innovation and renaissance, but of a continuation and culmination of processes that had their beginning in the later Turko-Afghan period. In fact the art and architecture of that period after 1526, as also of the preceding period, represent a happy mingling of Muslim and Hindu art traditions and elements.”⁶

The Mughal Empire, once an economically and culturally prosperous country, also left many historical works.⁷ Persian historians of the Mughal Empire have written about the fashion, designing, textiles of the Mughal Period.⁸ The historian does not merely log and interpret data, he also portrays life and tells a story about the kings and about their daily activities.⁹ To know about the Mughals, we are fortunate for the sources are numerous and varied and are rich in detail about every facet of life.¹⁰ Memoirs like Babur Nama and Humayun Nama gives a glimpse of the reigns of Babur and Humayun and their life style. But the theme of the fashion in dresses gave a different approach by the historians of Akbar’s reign.¹¹ Abul Fazl’s Ain-i-Akbari and Akbar Nama and Nizam-ud-din Ahmad’s Tabqat-i-Akbari give sober and succinct account of Akbar’s liking for dresses and its innovation and attention towards its development.¹² He was fond of new pattern of dresses and jewellery and it was his personal initiatives that there was development of different Kharkhanas¹³ known as *Toshak Khana* (apparel making), *Farash Khana* (carpets), *Zin-Khana* (saddles and bridles), *Bistar Khana*, (bedding’ and tents for the emperor’s journey),¹⁴ *Zargar Khana* (gold smith department),

Shafa Khana (dispensary), *Chirabafi Khana* (shawl, scraf weaving), *Huqabandi Khana* (silk cords and tapes), etc.¹⁵

The most important autobiography of Mughal period is that of Nur-ud-din-Jahangir. Jahangir ruled for twenty-two years but ill-health and sorrow forced him to give up writing his autobiography in the seventeenth year of his reign, he then entrusted the task to Motamid Khan, who continued till nineteenth year of his reign.¹⁶ *Muntakhab-ul-Lubab* by a Persian historian Khafi Khan also throws light on the social and cultural aspects of the Mughal society during the reign of Jahangir.¹⁷ Jahangir writes about his sisters and other relatives with feeling, he also writes about his beloved wife Nur Jahan with emotion, she had won his heart with her devotion. He frankly writes about his drinking bouts, dinner parties and festivities in the company of women. He describes Nauroz festival, weighing ceremonies. He recounts the magnificent presents of cloth and gold and jewels exchanged with queens and princesses and the liberal allowances made to them. Jahangir was fond of jewellery and his tastes were seen in the use of various kinds of precious gems in his jewelleries¹⁸. Even the military servants who captured diamond bearing territories were liberally praised, such as Ibrahim Khan whose excellent exertions in the spring of 1616 brought the eastern province of Khukra (in Bihar) and its alluvial diamond deposits into the empire's grasp. Jahangir was in habit of covering himself with strings of pearls or precious stones. In 1615 he introduced pearl ear-rings for men. He also mentions of different turban ornaments, a range of jewelled plumes, aigrettes, and turban fringes which formed a central part of Mughal royal dresses.¹⁹

Shah Jahan's period also witnessed the changes in the life style of the Mughals, chroniclers like Qazwini and Abdul Hamid Lahori describes the reign of Shah Jahan, a period of cultural and artistic changes, he brought the Mughal artistic choice to a great height, he was a great builder.²⁰ Under his patronage crafts, industries and commerce flourished in India as never before during the Muslim period.²¹ The chronicler of Shah Jahan says " the carpet industry of

Kashmir and Lahore has developed to such an extent that woollen carpets are prepared at the cost of Rs.100 per yard. Shah Jahan was very fond of splendour and loved gorgeous and flowery dresses with delicate embroidery.²²

Among the contemporary writers of Aurangzeb's reign are Muhammad Kazim of Alamgir Nama, Rai Brindaban of Lubb-ut-Tawarikh, Musta'id Khan of Maasir-i-Alamgir, Ishar Dass of Fatuhat-i-Alamgiri, Bhim Sen of Nuskha-i-Dilkush and Khafi Khan of Mutakhib-Al-Lubab.²³ Aurangzeb was not interested in innovation of new design in clothing, rather he wore very simple clothes and preferred white colour in his dresses being a true Sunni.²⁴

Aurangzeb did not put much attention to the development of *kharkhanas* or any textiles industry. During his reign the number of *kharkhanas* decreased. It suggested that he hated luxuries. Travelogues, or travel diaries, were written by men wanting to capture all that they had seen that was new and strange to them.²⁵

Although the Mughals recorded much of their own activities through their official court chroniclers, these European accounts do much to help us fill in the gaps. For the Mughals, everyday events were mundane and uninteresting, so they were not recorded – for the visiting Europeans however, even the smallest detail of daily life could be fascinating. The Mughals were prone to giving events at court a very 'glossy' sheen. Being able to contrast their observations with European reports can be very revealing, offering a different (if no less biased) angle.²⁶

The European travellers in the Mughal Empire freely wrote about the life of the Mughals. Their sources of information were limited and therefore they collected all they could, whether in the form of detailed information or little anecdotes. Minor matters also being described at length, it is in fact that their importance is great while describing the life style of the Mughals in a minute form.²⁷ Court-scenes, festivals, processions and sketches of the personages are

mentioned by the European travellers with whom they came in contact. Some of the travellers, who visited the royal court, tagged almost everything whatever they had seen around the courts. The foreign travellers have written almost on all aspects of the Mughal Empire. The glimpse of Mughal choice of fashion and the taste of their clothes is also well mentioned by the European travellers in their accounts.²⁸

Many of the European travellers like Sir Thomas Roe, Edward Terry, Francisco Pelsaert, Pietro Della, John De Laet, Peter Mundy, Bernier and Manucci stayed in Mughal court and wrote about the Mughal society.²⁹

According to the account of Captain William Hawkins, he stayed in Agra in 1607 and lived there for five years and collected information about the affairs of the Mughal court and royal family. He recorded information about the Nauroz celebrations, weighing ceremony of Jahangir, Court glamour and Emperor's daily life; he even describes the luxuries enjoyed by the Mughals.³⁰

Sir Thomas Roe's writings known as 'Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to the Great Mughal' presented a vivid picture of the courtly life of the Mughals. He recorded his impressions about the empress, princes, princesses and men and women that mattered in the Mughal court like Jahangir, Shah Jahan, Prince Khusrau, and other nobles and above all Nur Jahan Begum. He also highlights the passion of gems of Jahangir.³¹

Niccolao Manucci writes the most detailed account of the Mughals in 'Storio do Mogor' translated by W. Irvine. It is a source for reconstructing the Mughal history in the line of its development of garments industry.³² Manucci says that the ladies of the harem wear two or three garments each weighing not more than one ounce and worth from forty to fifty rupees each. The account of Manucci is the first hand information about the Life style of the Mughals.³³

Francois Bernier, a French physician and a man of superior education, arrived in India in 1658 and stayed in Agra, portrayed important personalities and described interesting events of the Mughals.³⁴ Being a physician whenever he was taken in Mughal harem he used to be covered from head to waist with shawls before he was taken inside the harem for the treatment of the ladies. He even described the costly dresses of the Begums, perfumed with essences and the use of precious jewellery while touching their pulse. His notices of Mughal society are penetrating because his source of information were many and varied and his stay in the Mughal capital was for long years.³⁵

Peter Mundy's 'Travels' was edited by Lt. Col. Sir Richard Carnac Temple, which is also an valuable source of information³⁶ highlighting the life style of the Mughals. He describes Agra, Fatehpur Sikri and some other cities.

Francisco Pelsaert (a Dutch traveller) came to India in 1620 and lived till 1627. He stayed most of the time at Agra. He wrote about the social structure and administrative system of the Mughals. Pelsaert was in friendly terms with many nobles, who often invited him to their houses. He visited their mansions and received useful information about the working of Mughal Court and royal household.³⁷

Among the later European travellers who visited India during the reign of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb were Peter Mundy, Mandelslo, Tavernier, Thevenot and others. Many of them capture the Mughal society in their accounts during their visit to India.³⁸

In addition to the writing of Persian chroniclers and accounts of foreign travellers, Mughal paintings form a very important source for the study of Mughal fashion and designing. Mughal miniature paintings are available in abundance, it portraits all aspects of Mughal life³⁹. Most of the schools, especially the Mughal one, depicted court life, thus we may have a visual knowledge of costumes, utensils, furniture and other aspects of life. Moreover some

painters were able to transcend the limits of the court art tradition and make a realistic description of the common man's life and work. Mughal painting is a particular style of South Asian painting, generally confined to miniatures either as book illustrations or as single works to be kept in albums, which emerged from Persian miniature painting, with Indian Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist influences, and developed largely in the court of the Mughal Empire. Mughal painters also work without restraints as it were after the reign of Akbar.⁴⁰ From the time of Jahangir onwards they begin to depict the harem scenes with untrammelled freedom. These paintings indeed help in recapitulating the harem atmosphere; delicate almond eyed beauties are depicted bathing, adorning themselves, stretching up to gather flowers from the trees, playing vina or sitar, or languishing by the lakesides or dressed in their finery awaiting their lovers.⁴¹ Paintings of official festivities generally depict birth or marriage of the princes. Paintings recapitulating the harem exclusively, depict scenes of ladies playing chess and chaupar, colouring their feet, enjoying a dance performance or Holi festivals. Paintings provide much of our information about dress in India during 16th and 17th centuries.⁴²

Manuscript illustration of the 12th-16th century usually depicts standardized costume types; in general these represent a continuation of oldest traditions, although a variety of textile designs appear in women's dress. In 15th century manuscript in the western India style, the princes are shown in double breasted coats with heavy floral patterns, evidently the Persian or Indo-Persian dress of the period. Some manuscript also show women wearing long Persian tunics, The Indian women in the manuscript are dressed in a short bodice (choli), and skirt (ghaghra) with starched transparent scrap (orhni), a dress type that continued for several centuries.⁴³

Clothing styles of Indian subcontinent underwent a major change in the twelfth century when Arab Muslims conquered North and Central India. They were followed in later years by the

Mughals from Central Asia. The earlier Muslim women's costume consisted of wide-topped trousers fitting snugly from calf to ankle, a long shirt like blouse called a *kurta* and a fitted outer jacket and *dopatta*. But under the Mughal rule the style of the dress changes. Under the rule of Emperor Akbar there was a influence of Rajput dress in Mughal apparels by which a graceful new style appeared. A pleated open-fronted skirt called a *ghagra* was worn with an apron like panel tucked into the waist to cover the front opening. The upper garment was a short sleeved, breast length blouse called a *choli*. Thus the *ghagra* and *choli* continued to be the basic elements of the Muslim woman dress.⁴⁴

During the Mughal rule along with the clothes, accessories too play an important part with their costume. Jewellery can be quite opulent ranging from chokers and chains around the neck to dangle earrings, arm and wrist, bangles and anklets.⁴⁵ The materials used include silver, gold and mixed metal often with precious and semi-precious stones. The Indian woman has always been anxious to adorn even load herself with a large variety of bulky ornaments.⁴⁶ There was no departure from the traditional custom during the Mughal period.⁴⁷ All the travellers agree, and this is confirmed by their experience, that ornaments were "the very joy of their hearts."⁴⁸ They would deny themselves other necessities but would not forgo ornaments, which had to be totally abandoned when a woman unfortunately becomes a widow.⁴⁹ Ladies were accustomed to the use of ornaments from their very childhood. Each Princess had her own private collection of gems and they rivalled each other in their brilliance. Often they would wear pearls in great profusion, covering their wrists, chests, and ankles. Jewellers were constantly being commissioned by members of the royal household to produce gold ornaments and to mount pearls in the form of the moon, a crescent, or a star, as well as making special items of other gems.⁵⁰

Babur established the Mughal Empire in 1526 which lasted for over 200 years. The Mughals ruled most of the Indian subcontinent by 1600. The Mughal emperors married local royalty,

allied themselves with the local Maharajas and attempted to fuse their Turko-Persian culture with ancient Indian styles. The Mughal dynasty reached its peak during the reign of Akbar and it went into a slow decline after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 and was finally defeated during the 'war of independence' in 1857. This class lived in extraordinary luxury with abundant resources at their disposal. They lived a life of reckless festivity, grand banquets and lavish homes and often had inflated egos. Their food and dress was very costly, and their homes were huge palatial structures. The dress and attire of the rich Hindus and the Zamindars began to change remarkably. They began to like the Mughal dress. Ornamented and pearl-studded glittering, dress, '*salwar*' and '*kamiz*' were adorned by the Hindus and the Muslims alike. In the Mughal Age, the rich and middle class women wore attractive dresses. They used to go out sometimes in palanquins. On the other hand, the condition of the villagers was not very good. They wore ordinary dresses and wooden sandals.⁵¹

The Mughal period, not only a period of experiment and innovation but also a period of continuation of those practices, had their seeds sown in the rule of Delhi Sultans. The Mughals no doubt brought new patterns in their dressing but the root of their dressing styles came from the sultans and the Hindu Rajas.

The style of clothing which the Turkish invaders brought in India was not exclusively Muslim or Arabian. It was, in fact, the product of fusion of the style of various countries such as Transoxiana, Iran, Afghanistan, and Arabia. They had developed a good taste and also talent for refinement in their apparel. In India they were greatly impressed with the skill of Indian craftsman in various fields whether dress designing or the jewellers who were skilled in making different pattern in the jewelleries.⁵² In addition to the fineness and delicacy of the fabric, Indian textiles were also noted for their brilliant colours and prints. Cotton, like linen, naturally resists dyes, but Indian craftsman learned early on the secrets of mordants 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. Indian craftsman had also developed techniques for using dyes to create grid/check patterns, delicate floral prints and complex pictorial scenes on textiles.⁵³

The Mughal rule is considered a 'Golden Age' of delicacies in the sub-continent. It is the least treaded path in the history of the Mughals, which being glorious and vividly colourful is yet known so much less. Moreover, the Mughal gave an impressing impact in Indian culture, its fusion of dresses and its yarn and fabrics are still used in Indian society and have become a part and parcel of Indian culture.

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