Introduction

In India the Mughals established one of the greatest empires. Not only in painting, architecture and poetry, the Mughal Queens and Emperors showed their interest in costume designing and jewellery making. This impassioned interest and royal lifestyle provided the artisans a sense of innovative and creative atmosphere. The Mughal costumes have not disappeared even though the Mughals have been 300 years. In fact in north India most of the ladies wear dresses are influenced by the Mughals. Not only north but from other regions Indian men and women are following the same tradition. Let’s talk about the female dresses these days; we can see Ghaghara, Payjama, farsi payjama, chudidar payjami and salwar are still being worn. On the other hand Men also wear salwar and churidar as their favourite leg wear. And the commonly worn by men and women Angarakha cannot be avoided.

The reign of Mughal is said to be the Golden Era for crafts, creativity textiles and architecture. The fashion was at its height by the 17th century. It included Jamas, Chogas, Patkas, Angarakhas, jutis and many more. These garments were ornamented with elegant embellishments and intricate designs.

One can easily conclude that each of the Mughal Emperors had expertise in the art of ‘Costume Designing’ by analysing them as this form of art drawn their special attention and had been encouraged by them. Each Emperor had drawn his own different dressing style to the trends.

From the time of the first Mughal Emperor Babur the trends of fashionable garments are being experimented. As he brought up in Turkistan, a place with the cooler climate, he used to wear warm clothes. The ‘Chafan’ (a long coat) and ‘Postin’ (a coat made of sheep skin) were the most popular of all clothing. It is supposed that he must not have worn these garments for practical but for the traditional reasons.
The Emperor Humayun was said to be very particular of what to wear. It is said that he had a special cache in his palace to store the garments. In the garments of his time Persian effect can be traced easily.

Akbar was the third emperor of the Mughal dynasty. He Reigned in India for a long period of time. Akbar was responsible for introducing local textiles which were suitable for the climate of India. He promoted Indian as well as imported techniques to flourish the classical forms and designs. Akbar had contributed to garment fashioning and introduced garments as ‘Chakdarjama’ (a cross over tunic). Along with the design formation he had changed the names of few dresses; ‘Jama’ was termed as ‘saggati’, ‘Izar’ as ‘Yar pirahan’ and ‘Shawl’ as ‘Paramnarm’.

After Akbar in the reign of the Emperor Jahangir few new techniques of ornamentation of the garments were introduced; block printing and Kashmiri embroidery etc. It is said that ‘Nadiri’ (a type of overcoat) has been introduced by Jahangir only. We can find only a ‘Bikandar coat’ and a ‘riding coat’ surviving in the museum.

By the time of Shah Jahan all the forms of Art were mingled up with the royal elegance and luxury. The royal garments were heavily embellished and decorated with gold threads.

Aurangzeb was the last Mughal emperor who was responsive to promote the lavish fashion styles and court paintings.

Besides the Mughal emperors, the Mughal Queens have also promoted the new fashion trends. Unlike the ordinary women the queens wore beautiful and precious garments and expensive jewellery.

Queen Jodha Bai (Wife of Emperor Akbar) brought up in Rajasthan. And during her time Mughal fashion got the impact of Hinduism; ‘Lehanga’, ‘Choli’ and
‘Chunri’. Along with the pattern of the costumes, design motifs and different techniques of ornamentation have also been introduced; ‘Bandhni’ (tie & dye), ‘Block printing’ (Chhapai).

Nur Jahan (20th wife of Jahangir) can be considered a lady with the best fashion and designing sense of all the Mughals. She had created new patterns in embellishments and garment styles, different turban and forms of Royal costumes.

The Queen Mumtaz Mahal (the most beloved wife of Shah Jahan) wore beautiful cloths made from the finest materials as muslins, silks and brocades. The pattern of her jewellery was quite different from the other Mughal Queens.

All the above mentioned costumes and jewellery can be proved with the reference of paintings of that era. As the contemporary artist of that time were responsible to paint portraits, court scenes, hunting scenes and others, which have been considered the miniature paintings of Mughal period named ‘Mughal Paintings’. At the time of Humayun these paintings have the Persian influence and during Akbar’s reign the same artist were working in India so these paintings have Indian as well as partially Persian effect. European impact can be noticed in paintings of Jahangir’s time. These paintings provide us the information about the looks of Queen and Emperors.