Review of Literature

The Mughal Emperors and Queens are meant to contribute largely to the world of fashion. It is said that Akbar had a great sense of fashion. He maintained the identity of Hindus and Muslims by their outfits, as the chakdar jama wore by the Hindus was fastened on the left side of the body and by the Muslims on the right. Author B.N. Goswamy describes

“Akbar must have planned on overcoming resistances, reaching out in both directions, that of the conquerors and the conquered, the Muslims and the Hindus, in an attempt to narrow down cleavages and introduce certain uniformity without necessarily destroying separate identities.”

Akbar also modified the vocabulary of fashion. He introduced some new terms for the costumes. Abul Fazal says how Akbar

“…changed the names of several garments, and invented new and pleasing terms. Instead of jama (coat), he says sarbgati i.e. covering the whole body; for izar (drawers), he says yar-pirahan (the companion of the coat)…”

Abu Fazl writes about the Patkas in Akbarnama that the Emperor himself

“…has commenced to wear them double, which looks very well.”

Aurangzeb disliked Hindu customs, he once wrote to Bidar, his grandson:

“Though to weigh the body of a person against gold, silver, copper, corn, oil and other commodities [and giving away the value of the weight in charity] is

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1 Goswamy, B.N. Indian Costumes In the Collection of the Calico Museum of Textiles Ahmedabad 1993 page no. 15
2 Fazl Abul (1907), The Akbarnama- Volume One Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, page no. 87
3 Fazl Abul (1907), The Akbarnama, Volume One, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, page no. 91
not the practice of the country of our ancestors and of the Mohemmadans of this country, many needy and poor persons are benefited by this practice.”

In the Royal Mughal attire the turbans were an essential part. Designer Ritu Kumar defines that the Turban is

“...twenty-five metres long and twenty cms wide. They are usually tie-dyed and worn with the ends left hanging at the back. In former times, the intricacy of the patterning depended on the status of the wearer. Single coloured pagris were used for daily wear, while pagris tie-dyed with lahariya (wavy), mothra (checked) and chunari (dotted) patterns were reserved for special occasions. It requires a consider able amount of expertise to tie a turban well and professional turban dressers, known as pagri bands, were often employed for this purpose.”

Turban was worn to symbolize the honour of the Kings and sometimes of queens too. She again mentioned-

“The most important accessory for an Indian man was his turban, which proclaimed his status, religion, caste and region of origin. To submit a turban to anybody was a sign of total subjugation and the removal of a turban was the most humiliating punishment that could be inflicted on any man....”

In the reign of Emperor Jahangir, Queen Nur jahan designed many designs of outfits and turbans. Abul Fazl wrote about the beauty and attire of The Mughal Queens as,

“there are sixteen constituents by which a woman is adorned: Bathing, anointing with oil, braiding the hair, decking the crown of the head with jewels, anointing with sandal wood unguent, wearing various kinds of dresses, sectarial

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5 Kumar Ritu, (2006) Costumes and Textiles of Royal India, page no. 272
6 Kumar Ritu, (2006) Costumes and Textiles of Royal India, page no. 272
marks of caste, and often decked with pearls and golden ornaments, fining with
lamp-black like collyrium, wearing ear-rings, adorning with nose-rings of pearls
and gold, wearing ornaments round the neck, decking with garlands of flowers
and pearls, staining the hands, wearing a bell hung with small bells, decorating
the feet with gold ornaments, eating pan, and finally blandishments and
artfulness.”

In one of her works Soma Mukharjee mentioned that

“Before this the Indian women never wore stitched dresses or covered
their upper-bodies with a separate garment. But with the coming of the Mughal
culture came a totally different concept in women’s as well as in men’s clothing.”

Costumes of the Mughal period “are so well known that a Mughal miniature
painting can be dated often within five years with no auxiliary method than that of
costume history.”

The fashion trends moved by the Mughals can be traced in even today’s
scenario. It will not be wrong if we will say that without those Mughal impacted
attires our present fashion world is incomplete.

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7 Mukherjee Soma, (2001) Royal Mughal Ladies and Their Contributions, page no. 75-76
8 Mukherjee Soma, (2001) Royal Mughal Ladies and Their Contributions, page no. 81
9 Fabri Charles, (1977), Indian Dress, A Brief History (New Delhi), page no. 2