CHAPTER-9

Clothing should always move with your body. Fashion is an extension of body language. A new garment creates a new posture—and a new attitude—in its wearer.

—Véronique Vienne (1997:160)

Clothing and Social Status

Fashions may vary significantly within a society according to age, social class, generation, occupation and geography, as well as over time. The use of clothing can be a powerful social statement. Luxurious, perfectly tailored clothing in expensive fabrics marks the wearer as wealthy and powerful. Royalty has long assumed the exclusive privilege of wearing unique materials, such as purple-dyed cloth, ermine fur, or feathers of rare birds. Garments with a unique or trendy appearance show that the wearer is knowledgeable about fashion and wants to make a favorable impression. Mahatma Gandhi wore a simple loincloth to show his humility. Excessively worn, soiled clothing may indicate either poverty, illness, or disdain for appearances.

Fashion in clothes has allowed wearers to express emotion or solidarity with other people for millennia. Many modern Westerners have a seemingly wide choice available in the possible selection of their clothes. What a person chooses to wear can reflect their personality or likes. When people who have a specific cultural status start to wear new or different clothes a fashion trend may start; others who like or respect such people may start to wear clothes of a similar style.

The concept of dressing and its connotations for the social fabric of a community is determined by the norms set down by a society at any given point in time. How the high and mighty would dress up and what codes of dress were to be followed by the courtiers, the specific restrictions for the lowly born as well
as the special dressing adopted for ceremonials, marriages and particular festivals. In the North as in the South, India has seen a multitude of customs and practices dictating the form and style of dress of its people. In Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Punjab as in the southern states there were rules of dressing meticulously followed by prince and pauper alike. For example in Rajasthan so rigid were the Rajput diktats on clothing that the lower menials had to carry their slippers on their heads in the presence of the Thakurs. In some parts of the Punjab plains there was a rule that only the Chieftains or Sardars would tie their turbans in a particular fashion and surmount it with a kalgi or serpech i.e. a turban ornament. In certain rank and file there were other codes of dressing followed rigidly like the nihangs always supported and continue to do so the official colours of the khalsa i.e Prussian blue and saffron. They were ornamented with an array of weaponry that was used in those days. They even had headgear peculiar to their clan. Even today the Nihang is easily distinguishable.

Plate: 61

A Couple in Dalliance

Mughal, Shah Jahan Period
Circa ad – 1630 -35,
Paper 30.7 X 19.5 cm,
Acc no. 48.8/58

The above depiction of a couple is vibrantly representative of the differences of class and society as shown by the dressing style and nature of garments. The lady has been shown wearing an emerald green, single piece, probably inner wear garment that is fastened at the back. It has a crew neckline and quarter sleeves. Her
ornamentation comprises a choker in black beads with an oval coral stone at the centre. Also worn around the neck is a necklace made by stringing a gold bead and a black bead alternately. It is wound around the necklace twice. She is wearing a long necklace which is made of black beads and at the empire line it ends in a large gold pendant. On two sides above it are smaller gold motifs made on the same pattern as the larger one. Around the upper arms are two pairs of arm bands. One of them is made up of golden leaf like motif strung on a black thread which is tied on the upper arm. Below these and closer to the elbow are worn circular bands in gold. On the wrists are worn several thin bangles in either enamalware or they may even be glass bangles. She is wearing an emerald in her right finger. She is also wearing a silver ring around her little finger. On the thumb of her left hand is worn an arsi. She is wearing a circular ruby and emerald earring. Her odhani is a sheer and fine material that is barely visible. It is edged in pearls which can be seen at the top of the head where the odhani is covering the head.

The man is wearing a rose pink full sleeved angrakha which opens down the front and exposes his chest. The flaps of the angrakha are bent outwards and the inner lining is visible. It is speckled in leopard-like spots and is on a light beige base. On the front of the angrakha is a thin palm leaf like motif in orange on both edges of the flap. He is wearing a brownish green pair of draw string pyjamas tied at the waist. The only ornamentation is a small ruby bead on a wire strung through the ear-lobe. He is wearing a white and yellow striped turban that is tied with a yellow and green printed band. The loose end of the band is depicted in on the right side of the head. Apparently the lady is from a royal household while the man seems to be of ordinary upbringing.

Dress codes

There are dress codes on certain social occasions and for certain jobs. Schools may require school uniforms; if plain clothes are allowed there may be restrictions. A doorkeeper of a disco or nightclub may judge visitor's clothing and refuse entrance to those who are not exotically or expensively clad.
All over the world there have been distinctions in dress codes in various classes and strata of society. For example the ermine lining for cloaks was considered royal just as the colour purple was also considered royal and continues to be so. The colour obtained from indigo or nil obtained from the indigo plant dye was favoured by the upper classes in Eastern India. Similarly, the colour red is considered auspicious and is worn by most brides in northern and central India while white is sported by the South and the Western brides. These days the colour white is a colour favoured by politicians, the priestly class and is given to widows to wear whereas at one time white was the only colour supported for everyday wear. Till date the tribals in the jungles of central India wear white loin cloths and white shoulder cloths which have been spun from local fibres.

The color black has a dynamics and character all its own. Far removed from the archaic connotation of the negative black and the pristine white, the present day has given a fashionable appeal to black where the formal statement of evening wear is black be it men’s wear or women’s wear. Saffron or ‘bhagwa’ colour is sported by the wandering minstrels or those who have renounced the world.

Then there are the class variations of the economic strata like the white collar, the blue collar, the black collar and the red collar. Each is symbolic of the administrative, worker or service industry class. Clothing may be intentionally oversized for reasons of fashion or personal preference.
The above depiction is of two royal women bathing while some high ranking royal couple indulges in discussion over a messenger pigeon. Two members of the royal clan are standing in front of the horses probably making a decision about having a bath or not. The two nude women are only wearing their ornaments which comprise an elaborate hair ornament that is visible above the ear on one side. The arm bands, wristlets and anklets are all in gold with all others except the anklets having pearl edging. They are being covered by the odhani of the maid who is wearing a yellow printed red skirt that has an orange pleated sash tucked in the front. She is wearing an ochre choli with an edging. She is wearing a pearl string wound three times around her neck. Her odhani is a fine, transparent material that has a gold edging. She is wearing pearl drop earrings.
The two women standing in front of the horses are shown wearing what could probably be the beginning of the sari. They are wearing bright coloured churidars with sashes tucked in at the front. One end of the odhani is tucked in at the waist while the other end is draped around the front off the body to fall over one shoulder. Even at the back the gold edged odhani is tucked into the folds of the pyjama at the waist so that the individual is not hampered while getting on or off a horse. Their ornamentation comprises several strings of pearls around the neck and pearl edging on the arm and wrist bands. Pearls are also largely used in the making of their earrings.

Among the royal couple the lady is wearing a red pyjama and a yellow choli over which she is wearing a sheer angrakha that opens down the front. Her ornaments comprise several strings of pearls that are worn like a cross belt across the front. Pearls decorate her forehead and ears. She is shown wearing a turban in yellow, gold and black. In it is stuck a dark feather edged in pearls and having two prominent pearls stuck in it.

The man is shown wearing a yellow angrakha that is fastened on the left side under the arm. He is wearing a black and gold printed pyjama over which are set the drapes of the angrakha which is in sheer gold. A pale yellow cummerbund is tied at the waist while a similar length of cloth is tucked into the front after being tightly pleated. He is wearing pearl strings around his neck and as bracelets on his wrists. His turban is golden yellow in colour with an edging of pearls. There is a black feather with a pearl edging stuck into the golden turban. A prominent pearl ornament is stuck into the side of the turban. He is wearing his weaponry also like ornaments. It comprises an ornate and decorated saddle. It has a pink rosette pattern on the saddle cloth. He is holding a falcon in one hand and the reins of the horse in the other.

Influence of Society on garments

Costume like architecture, is one of the most visible signs of a civilization. What a person wears is often indicative of his or her personal
and social identity, marital status, occupation and sometimes - even religion. The focussed research on costumes of India would be a particularly difficult subject as it would have to take into consideration the various nuances of a community as far as clothes were concerned. Any such inquiry would have to take into account the size of the sub-continent, its climatically variant ecological zones, its multitude of different people, their rich past, going back about 5,000 years.

Although Indian sculpture and painting from the ancient and medieval periods illustrate the forms and uses of royal apparel, these often lead us into the realms of pure conjecture regarding the texture, feel and other such properties of the cloth material. These properties in turn may have endeared themselves to the wearer and user but the depth of meaning attached to a particular colour, material and its fabrication need to be surmised at. Why a particular material is used in a particular form at a particular historic interval is left to the imagination as there is little if any documentation on these aspects of the sense of dressing up or dressing down in a particular society and within it a particular class of people. Literary references, too, are abundant and detailed, but only rarely do they conjure up a motif, pattern or style with any precision. For most of India’s history therefore we can only try to elicit from these indirect sources a composite, if general, image of the sartorial tastes of its rulers. For the more recent colonial era, however, a sharper picture can be drawn as a result of the many court garments that survive in museums and private collections. These complement richly the evidence from paintings, photographs and other media sources.

Indian dress can be loosely divided into the stitched garments (blouses, salwar kameez, kurta pyjama, lehenga / ghagra, chaniya choli, tunics, gowns, skirts, trousers etc) and the unstitched garments (shawls, chunari, dupatta, odhani, angavastram, veshti, turbans, scarves, saris etc). Over the centuries each region developed its own distinct garment identity. The North, South, East and West even today have easily distinguishable cultural diktats on what is to
be worn at which occasion and what are the appropriate dress codes for men and women of a particular status and social standing. This was seen in the garment’s weave, pattern, embellishments and wearing style. The difference in social standing was reflected in the level of refinement and ornamentation of the cloth as well as the accessories.

Between the 17th and 19th centuries the clothing styles of the Indian subcontinent could be distinguished into the Muslim and Hindu court styles. These evolved across India in different ways. The two most prominent courts which were followed and copied for their couture’ cultures are Jaipur and the Avadh. Both are renowned for their rich literary, artistic and fashionable courtly textile heritage. Tradition and cultural mores over the ages have dictated the form of dress for each section of society. They have been adopted as such over the ages till some upsurgence dictated otherwise.

Indian fashion varies more or less like the dialect vacillations every few kilometers. From one village to another village, from one city to another city. India’s fashion heritage is rich in tradition, vibrant in colors and prepossessing. Ancient Indian fashion garments generally used no stitching although Indians knew about sewing. Most clothes were ready to wear as soon as they left the loom. The traditional Indian ‘dhoti’, the scarf or ‘uttariya’ and the popular turban or ‘pagri’ are still visible in India and continue to be part of Indian fashion.

A major source for making an analysis of early clothes is the visual reference, usually in Buddhist sculptures, cave paintings, medieval miniatures and palm leaf manuscripts. But the picture is incomplete for though the fall and draping of the garments is seen, the interplay of light with the colors, cannot be seen in them. Literary evidence in the writings of court chroniclers and European observers provide valuable insights, but descriptions without illustrations make it difficult to visualize the clothes and the style in which they were worn. The miniatures produced in the 16th and 17th centuries are finely detailed but highly stylized. It is only in the 18th and 19th centuries, in the paintings of European artists as well Indian artists like Raja Ravi Varma and
Sevak Ram that a more realistic and subjective impression of courtly life emerges. By the 19th century, with the advent of photography, a vast volume of photographic portraits of Indian princes was commissioned, where men's costumes were very well documented. Costumes and fashions of royal women though, have been more difficult to document. With the practice of purdah and seclusion to the zenana, queens and princesses were rarely painted or photographed. An opaque picture does emerge through the 19th century literature, stylized miniatures of begums and princesses, paintings of bibis, dancers and courtesans and rare photographs of royal women.

In the 18th century, a gradual synthesis of Muslim and Hindu design took place. With the introduction of machine made fabrics, the aesthetic balance of Jaipur's textile designs was slowly eroded. The influence of British royal dress codes further eroded the tradition as the maharajas added European style regalia in the forms of medals and coronation robes to their garments. Fortunately the handloom centers patronized by Jaipur did not come to a complete halt and continued to produce highly sophisticated textiles until the early 20th century when they were forced to be closed down and the textiles made by them were replaced by cloth made on mechanized looms. A reasonably accurate picture of men's fashions in the Hindu courts of Rajasthan can be drawn from the many painted portraits and photographs that exist of maharajas and their courts, but unfortunately there is not the same fund of visual information on women's clothing. There is a lack of written information as well but ample compensation comes from the Jaipur City Palace Museum Collection. It is one of the country's most valuable resources for the study of textile techniques and Hindu court fashions of Western India. The largest part of the collection consists of formal dresses worn by the royalty of Jaipur.
The scene depicted above shows the variants in the bearing, clothing and ornamentation of the different social strata in society. The lady who seems to be a princess is seated and is the centre of attentions of the old lady on her right. In the background is a maid who seems to be bringing some drink for the two in the foreground.

The tendency seems to be for the royal personages to support clothes in bright and complicated printed fabrics which are teamed with sheer and very fine, see through delicate materials. The hoi polloi on the other hand have access to coarse and thick materials which are in base colors with little or negligent printing or embellishments. The princess is shown wearing a sheer, long, organza type of material that falls along her body with gathers at the empire line and covers the bosom and churidar. The churidar she is wearing is a mustard brown with a dark peacock feather type motif probably block printed on it. The gown she is wearing has a beautiful block printed colourful green and red repeat motif with an edging in pearls that extends all along the length of the gown and the lower end of skirt is edged in golden tissue along the hem line. It is long sleeved having a cuff in the border style at the wrists and the upper arm.
The armholes are edged in golden tissue as is the empire line. Her chunari is amber-dyed in maroon and black with a golden edging. She is shown wearing elaborate jewelry. On her forehead is a big tikka in gold and pearls which is complemented with a side pinning or tadagi in gold, pearls and emeralds, it extends down to the top of the ear. The earrings are in pearls and emeralds that are made in a figure eight motif. Around her neck are five necklaces in gold. Two of them are chokers that are close to the neck while the third is around her crew neck while the fourth is a chain and pendant and the fifth is virtually a rani haar that extends to her navel and ends in a large jewel encrusted pendant. At her feet is a are a pair of payals in gold and pearls and her toes have a few toe rings in gold and pearls. Similar finger rings can be seen adorning her hands.

The old lady who is probably a mendicant is shown giving solicitous advice or reassurance to the maiden. She is probably a mendicant because of the seed strings she is wearing around her wrist and neck. She has short hair which are totally white and her head is totally covered in a kula in red and gold with a golden border and her dupatta is pink in colour and edged in yellow ochre in some coarse material. Her jama is full sleeved and in a thick material that falls from the empire line in many gores. The top of the jama is not visible as it is covered by the dupatta. The bottom edge of the skirt of jama is a thin golden border. In her left hand she is holding a long, thin, staff in metal probably iron like a shepherd’s crook.

The maid in the background is similarly attired like the princess but her ornamentation is much less. She is shown wearing a mehendi green churidar with a chrome yellow upper with full sleeves. She is wearing a sheer orange dupatta that covers her head and falls to her waist. Her ornamentation comprises a forehead ornament in gold and a circular clip on the side. She is wearing bangles and earrings as well as a nose ring.

Indian Dress ware - Ancient fashion in India

The Indian sari has remained the traditional clothing of Indian women. Worn in varied styles, it is a long piece of flat cotton, silk or other fabric woven
in different textures with different patterns. The sari has a lasting charm since it is not cut or tailored for a particular size and suits the wearer no matter how tall, thin, fat or Junoesque she may be. This graceful feminine attire can also be worn in several ways and its manner of wearing as well as its color and texture are indicative of the status, age, occupation, region and religion of a woman. Societal norms over the ages have dictated the form and style of the garments to be worn by various classes of a community. The sari would be accompanied by a tight fitting, short, blouse often called the choli. This evolved as a form of Indian clothing around the tenth century AD and the first cholis covered only the front or the breasts. It was tied at the back with strings and the back was more or less always bare.

No less important is the association of the color of apparel with custom and ritual. Even today, many women in India continue to wear a specific color for each day of the week. Apart from the codes prescribed for religious observances, the change of seasons and rites of passage are also marked by a change in the choice of color. In Rajasthan, for instance, princesses and peasants alike celebrate the advent of Basant (spring) by wearing yellow.
The scene depicted is probably that of a vaidya or a healer visiting the royal apartments where the women have gathered to seek a cure to their many ailments ranging probably from depression to asking for love potions or even looking for a way to enhance their personal attributes in a way to appear more alluring to their lovers.

The scene is of four women who seem to be ailing from some or the other problem. The lady at the bottom of the panel is depicted only upto her face. She is wearing simple earrings and no other piece of jewelry indicating that she is probably a maid who is waiting for her mistress outside the main courtyard of the vaidya’s house. Even the veil that covers her head is in a seemingly thick material coloured an uncomely grey.

Another woman who is waiting at the corner of the courtyard also seems to be a lady in waiting for a royal personage. She is wearing a blue grey, block printed, full sleeved jama over which is draped a dupatta shawl style. It is dark, sheer and probably block printed. It has a broad red and black printed border all around. She could even be one of the lesser royals as she is wearing a
certain amount of jewelry. Her kadae are in gold and are heavy in design. She is wearing two finger rings on her right hand. Since her dress is at variance with the light materials the other two ladies are wearing it can only be surmised that she is probably ill and thus clad.

Another lady who is standing just outside the courtyard is attired in all-white, see-through muslin or voile material [another aspect that identified her from the royal class]. The sheer lightness of the material can be guessed from the fact there are several folds layered on her shoulders in the form of the jama and the dupatta yet they are sitting very lightly on her. Her jewelry distinguished her as a lady of royal birth because despite the simple gold kadae that she is shown wearing she has a number of strings of pearls around her neck. There is a rubies and pearls pair of strings that make a long necklace to her bosom. Two strings of precious stones and pearls lie next to her neck like a choker. Her earrings and forehead ornament are made in precious stones and pearls and have a prominent floral motif. She is wearing a number of rings on the fingers of her right hand.

The main lady who is under consultation of the vaidya is definitely royalty. She is wearing a striped jama over which is draped her sheer yet embellished dupatta. The beadwork on the dupatta is floral in theme and geometrical in design. Her choli is a sheer beige coloured, plain, muslin or voile material. Her dupatta covers a part of her head and is edged in very thin gold. She is wearing several strings of pearls around her neck and wrists. A double string in small golden beads is worn close to the neck like a choker. Her earrings are beautifully made in pearls and precious stones. She is also wearing pearls on her earlobes. Around her wrists are bracelets in gold and precious stones. On her left hand she is wearing an arsi and on fingers of both hands are rings in gold and precious stones.

The vaidya is wearing a white, self printed, see-through angrakha crossed over at the chest. At the waist he is wearing a colourful printed patka in ochre, viridian and vermilion colours. Around his neck he is wearing a long
necklace in small beads probably tulsi seeds and a little shorter than this is supported an elaborated crest shaped pendant in gold suspended on a gold chain. The crest has a ruby or an amethyst [pinkish in colour] at the centre and has a pearl suspended from it at the bottom. On his head he is wearing a simple beige and brown turban with one of the ends coming out at the top of the head like a turra. In his right ear he is wearing a pearl drop. With his right hand he is handing over probably some medicine in a small container to the lady while he holds her left hand probably to reassure her of the efficacy of the contents.

**Strong Influence of Courtly garments: Jaipur**

In 1727 Jai Singh II, the Raja of Amber in Rajasthan, laid the foundations of the new city of Jaipur at the foot of the Aravali Hills and made it his capital one-year later. By the 19th century, Jaipur had established strong links with the British. In 1818, the Subsidiary Alliance was signed. Then king Ram Singh II, developed a close rapport with the resident and introduced gas lighting, waterworks, a lithographic press, medical colleges, and museums modeled on the lines of those found in the Britain of those days.

During this period of peace, the textile crafts became increasingly sophisticated. In Sanganer 10 miles south, the art of hand-block printing and design was developed to a high level and the traditional Jaipuri buti was used. Jaipur specialized in block-printing, and also dyeing and ornamentation. The local craftsmen were experts at crinkling, tie-dye, lahariya, mothra, quilting and the multitudinous skills of braiding, plaiting and trimming. However, Rajasthan was to become best known for its gold thread embroidery and gota work.

The Rajas of Jaipur extended their patronage beyond the boundaries of their own kingdom. Kashmir known for its fine pashmina and complex twill-tapestry techniques, reproduced the Jaipuri buti motifs in weaves. Thus the beautiful patterned shawls that came down from Srinagar became known as
Jaipuri jamevaars. Other fine fabrics were imported from Varanasi and Gujarat. Using their refined embroidery, quilting and patchwork techniques, the Jaipur karkhanas transformed textiles into exquisite garments with a distinct regional identity that proclaimed them as belonging to a particular place.

Some of the ghaghras, cholis and odhnis are among the few surviving women's costumes that could be dated and ascribed to a particular maharani accurately. Most of the garments were made of both coarse and fine cotton and embellished with pure gold and silver gota. Behind the 'purdah' which gave the royal section belonging to the women a seclusion and privacy all their own in the palaces or mahals, the women preferred to go about in unstitched garments. But after the onset of the Mughal realm the norms of purdah changed and the exposure of parts of the body which was a part of Hindu culture and had been acceptable long before the system of purdah was sidelined in the royal apartments. Royal children were dressed in exactly the same way as adults. At durbars the young princes were formally dressed in traditional adult clothes and turbans. During the 17th to the 19th centuries, the origin of each piece, date of its acquisition and price of purchase were meticulously recorded by the royal comptroller.

However, with the abolition of the Privy Purse in 1971 by the government of India, the Jaipur royal family, like so many others, could not afford to maintain its estates and converted its large palaces into hotels. The Jaipur collection, which had survived three centuries of political upheaval, could not survive more than a few decades of democratic rule. Many of the old costumes were sold for a pittance and disappeared without a trace.
This plate is a representation of the class and societal variants in dress code and ornamentation of this particular period. The nobility, the middle level officials, the soldiery and the lower cadre soldiers are depicted here along with the menials like the palanquin bearers. This picture shows four palanquin bearers, two in front two at the back; there are two foot soldiers, two swordsmen and two attendants who seem to have an official bearing. The status and standing of the men in society are apparent from their attire and ornamentation.

The nobleman is shown wearing a white printed or embroidered jama having a a border of a slightly darker tone at the neck and the cuffs of the sleeves. The jama is hooked on the left side of the chest and there is a white fan-like tukma that flares as it falls down to the waist. The skirt of the jama has
a reddish tone. Probably the wearer is having an under-suit below the muslin jama the colours of which are visible through his external garments. At the waist is a white cummerbund wound tightly around. Also around the waist is a golden rope like twisted length that goes around the waist, over the left shoulder onto the chest. At one point it is also seen emerging from behind the back of the seated personage onto the wrist of the right hand. Around his wrists he is wearing two broad kadae which are twisted and end in probably sher muh or lion mouths. He is wearing large finger rings in the last three fingers of his right hand probably pearls and rubies in gold. He has a dagger tucked into the cummerbund. It has two grips, probably wooden or metal, with the blade encased in a grayish-blue scabbard which has a golden clip that goes over the cummerbund to enclose the tip of the dagger. Around his neck he is wearing a single string of pearls which has a pendant of gold and pearls at the very neck. In his ears he has loops with pearls and a ruby strung into them. He is wearing an orange turban which has an ornate coiled back that culminates at the top of the head at the back in a spray of golden tufts. On the frontal side the turban is embellished with a brooch in rubies, pearls and other stones set in gold which have a floral motif. The noble is probably a member of the upper echelons of society as his palanquin is also very ornate and has a special tassel suspended from the roof for holding onto and maintaining an upright posture. It can only be guessed as to his rank. He may even be an official on a mission to collect taxes as would justify the number of guards and soldiers with him.

He is flanked by two attendants who are probably somewhat senior in rank as can be guessed from their dress and bearing. They are wearing white jama and have white cummerbunds at their waists. The cummerbunds have maroon printed fan-like pleats falling down the front of the jama skirt. Tucked in at the cummerbund is a dagger, similar to the one the noble in the palanquin is wearing though less ornate. It has a red scabbard. He is wearing an orange colored pyjami with many churis visible from under the skirt of the jama. He is also depicted wearing maroon colored footwear with a green upper. It has maroon and white embroidery on it. The turban of this man is deep maroon with a white motif printed on it. There is an ornamental coil in yellow tucked in at the
back of the turban. He is wearing no ornaments except for a golden pendant strung on a gold chain around the base of the neck. The only remarkable part of his attire is the multitude of churis at the sleeve of his jama. The attire of both the attendants is similar. The one in the foreground is shown holding a fly whisk. The only point of differentiation of the attending official in the back is the fact that he is wearing earring of pearls and a ruby strung in a hoop and he is also sporting a finger ring in his little finger.

The three swordsmen or slightly higher grade of the foot soldier are also in similar attire. The one in the rear is shown wearing a mehendi green colored jama. The cummerbund at the waist is white and tightly wound. The sleeve has many churis. The skirt has many gores. His turban is white with a red patti at the forehead and a coil in the same colour at the back of the turban. He is having no embellishment at all in the form of any ornaments. He is shown carrying a sword at his shoulder, in a beautifully ornate white scabbard. The swordsman in the front of the palanquin is wearing a white jama with a white cummerbund. He is wearing a yellow and red striped, geometrically printed in a herringbone pattern turban. The back is coiled and tucked in at the top of the turban. He has been depicted wearing hoops in his ears which have a ruby and two pearls in them. He is also wearing a golden pendant strung on a chain around his neck. The long sword that he is shown holding is in a red scabbard which has an ornate tip in filigree work, probably in silver.

Among the others in the frame are four palanquin bearers and one spare person walking along to relieve any one of the bearers. The two in front have been shown wearing white jama that have been buttoned down in the front. They are shown wearing red topi like turbans with a broad white sash tied around them. In their cummerbunds are tucked daggers with golden hilts that have been enclosed in red golden tipped scabbards. The shoes they are shown wearing are red in colour with pointy tips. they are wearing no ornaments except one who is wearing simple golden loops in the ears. This form of ornamentation is a reflection of the class variants in dress among the various levels of society. The bearers at the back of the palanquin are wearing similar
attire but the skirts of their jama are tucked in at the cummerbund to get them away from hindering their feet as they walk bearing the palanquin. striped under skirts, red pyjamis and shoes mark the status of the bearers.

At the foremost position in the retinue is a man carrying a staff, probably a man who showed the way to the entire train as a scout. He has been depicted wearing a blackish green jama with a white cummerbund tied at the waist. One end of the cummerbund is loose and hanging in front of the jama. His turban is a plain length of orange cloth wound around the head. He is supporting no ornamentation at all.

This picture is thus a faithful depiction of the variances in status level of the different members of society. The higher the class the more elaborate the attire and greater the diversification into ornamentation.

Avadh Impact on Courtly Dress

Since 1590, the Emperor Akbar divided the territories of Mughal India into 12 provinces, one of which was Avadh. When the Empire began to disintegrate in the 18th century, many Mughal nobles migrated from Delhi to Avadh. In 1724 an independent court was set up by Nawaab Saadat Khan the appointed governor. By the time Shuja-ud-Daula came to power in 1754, Lucknow, the capital of the province, had developed into a prosperous city where fashionably dressed persons from Delhi, elegant sons of noblemen, skilled hakims, well known troupes of dancers and eminent singers from far and wide were patronized and lived a life of carefree luxury. When Asaf-ud-Daula succeeded his father in 1775, his ambition was to turn Lucknow into the most glittering of all Muslim courts. He embarked on a grand program of palaces and monuments construction while extending his benign patronage to artists and poets, actors, musicians and master craftsmen of gems and jewelry.
In the 19th century the British were slowly taking control of vast territories in India and the Mughal Empire was in rapid decline, but the courtiers of Lucknow seemed impervious to the political upheaval going on around them. They adhered to the traditions of the great Mughal courts and continued with their extravagant lifestyle. Karkhanas were set up in the palace complex to provide clothing for the royal and noble families. These had a combination of tailors, jewelers, embroiderers and their entourage of assistants.

Artisans and craftsmen from Kashmir, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Bengal migrated to Avadh, they were assured patronage. With little or no military activity the Avadhi courtiers took active interest in the fabrication of their clothes and spent a great deal of time supervising the designs. Men preferred layered clothing, which soon became so exaggerated that on an average day, a Lucknavi courtier would have been wrapped in as much as 11 meters of fabric.

Within the zenana, the women had little to do except lounge around and prepare themselves for the nawab’s visit. The fashions evolved with this sedentary lifestyle and became more ornamental. Although an exaggerated amount of fabric was used in the construction of various paijamas, these garments were designed to enhance rather than conceal the begum’s royal person. The way women’s fashion evolved was dictated largely by the need to compete with other begums and courtesans for the attention of the men.

Around the mid-18th century the courtesans of Avadh became very influential. Unrestricted by the purdah system they accompanied the nawabs on their tours and acquired a great deal of property and wealth. They were well trained in music, dance, art and literature, well versed in court etiquette, and introduced new and sensuous clothing styles. Very little of the rich heritage embodied in the royal clothes had survived to tell the story of the fashion of Avadh. The oldest ensemble which
can be attributed to its court is known as the ‘Gown of the Queen of Avadh’, which is now exhibited in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

Plate: 66

**Thakur Padam Singh of Ghanero in darbar.**
Ghanero, dated vs 1782/AD 1725 by Chhajju, 27.2 X 33.2 cm
Prince of Wales, Museum, Mumbai, no. 54, 32

The scene depicts an assemblage of personages sitting in the darbar. There are eight distinctive types of members of various classes seated in a group that seems to be in an informal discussion. There is apparently a poetic session going on in which there are scribes and courtiers as well as royal personages and people of high rank who are sitting along with the Thakur who is apparently highest in rank. The dress and ornamentation of the various classes ranges widely from the whisk bearer to the attendants and the including the courtiers and high ranking officials as also the people of royal birth.
The whisk bearer is depicted wearing a plain white angrakha of apparently a coarse material which has a many gored skirt. At the waist is a broad white cummerbund having a orange-red colored fan suspended from it down the front of the dress. In the cummerbund is tucked a dagger having a brass hilt probably. The fan has an edging of gold, probably to distinguish this attendant from other attendants of the palace. His headgear comprises a large red topa like turban wrapped in many folds but with no ornamentation. In his ear is visible a large golden loop with a golden bead between two smaller pearls. He has very brown colored skin and is shown holding a very ornate fly whisk made up of peacock feathers. At the bottom of the whisk is a golden tassel.

Among all the people represented in the miniature, almost all the males have been depicted as sporting beards and elaborate sideburns almost as if facial hair were a sign of masculinity.

Dress codes for the 21st century

The dress of the common rural people in India is generally simple. It consists of a dhoti, shirt, turban and a pair of shoes. A blanket or chaddar serves as a wrap. The turban has a different style for a Jat, an Ahir, a Rajput, a Bania or a Brahman. There is also a difference in the dress of various communities particularly among women. A Jat woman’s full dress, thel, consist of ghaggri, shirt and a printed orhni (a length of cloth draped over the front and shoulders) the ghaggri seldom falling below the calves. The Ahir woman can always be recognized by her lehenga or peticoat, angia (a tight blouse) and orhni. Her orhni is broader than that of a Jat women. She employs it also to cover her abdomen. It is usually red or yellow, decorated with bosses and fringes, with a fall. The Rajput woman’s dress is similar to that of an Ahir woman. Their orhni may be plain white with silver fringe but without a fall. The dhotis and saris are the favourite items of dress among Brahmans and Aggarwal women.
In the present day dress codes continue to function on certain social norms though the significance they held in the earlier centuries has been much diluted and turned around. The dress codes seen these days are operable for various occasions and for specific jobs.

Early on in life a person gets used to the idea of dress codes. From the day he begins his formal schooling the child becomes acquainted with the idea of a school uniform. Then from the time he leaves an educational institution the dress codes of the office wear and formal and casual attire dictate what a person wears at a particular time of the day. The uniform corollary extends to the uniforms of the army, the uniforms of a particular establishment like a factory or even a hospital etc. Even the dress codes for restaurants right from the doorman to the chef are very particular. In fact, even the doorkeeper of a disco or nightclub may can quickly judge by a visitor's clothing as to which class he or she may belong.

Clothes indicate family status. Colored clothes are worn by the Hindus at weddings. The marriage party colour their duppatas only and the bridegroom his turban. A duppata, kamiz, skirt, pajamas, salwar or ghagra with differences in make and colour is generally the female dress. Among the educated classes in the villages women are taking to saris of different colours. The dresses worn by women display more variety than male attires. The dress also proclaims the caste or community of the woman. A Gujar woman can be known at once from the blue clothes. Round bits of glass are adorned by the clothes of a Gujar woman. Unmarried girls even today tend to abstain from gaudy dresses and wearing of gold jewelry to avoid undue attention.
The distinctiveness of class and society was not so marked by clothing and accessories as by the form of draping their clothes and turbans as also by the use of a particular colour. This is apparent in the line-up of royalty that is seen for the anointing of the king. The king is seated in a white dress. Probably because of its pristine beauty, white has been patronized by the higher classes. The lower sections of society have patronized the darker colours as they can be handled roughly probably and need lesser maintenance. Another aspect could be that since the royalty do not indulge in much work involving the elements of dust and mud they can afford to dress themselves up in white while the others who have to work with the natural elements sport darker tones. Thus, even Krishna who is a prince is seen wearing a red dhoti but this could probably be because of his being a cowherd
prince. Even the boys standing in a line behind the two brothers are cowherds who are wearing striped lion cloths and head cloths.

Most of the courtiers, musicians and dancer are in dark coloured clothes. The only concession to their connection with the royal court is their white patka that is seen tied around almost every waist. The patkas are white with some black woven pattern at the pallavs. Another difference was the manner of tying the turbans. The royalty is seen supporting a woven band across their headgear while the others do not.

Thus the manner of wearing a particular garment and the colours and weaving speak volumes about the class and society to which the individual may belong.

Fashionable clothing

What we place upon our bodies (e.g., clothing, footwear, hats, makeup, and tattoos) adds color, contrast, shape, size, and texture to our primate form. Yet how these distinguish us from others like us or unlike us if a matter that has been much researched over the centuries by various workers. From the adage ‘Clothes make a man’ to the present day fashion pundits giving fashion statements. Each day, all over the world in most fashion houses myriad messages of adornment are broadcast regarding personal information in a continuous stream. They are like gestures frozen in time that give out the right signals about our ethnicity, status, affiliation, and moods and how we respond to our particular placement in society.

We may use clothing cues as uniforms, fashion statements, membership badges, social-affiliation signs, personality signs or signature like a particular colour, cut, accessory or perfume and socio-political-economic signs. It is clothes that take one from the pinnacle of individualism to the societal dressing norms that govern the interactive language of the elite or the poor, the
Among women there seem little barriers of class and society as far as the clothes they wear is concerned. There are, however, distinctive differences in the quality of cloth being used to drape the royalty and those of the lesser ranks. As can be seen from the painting most of the maids and companions are seen draped in thick cloth garments.
The royal personage is planning to have a bath and just the garment that she is draped in can be seen. She is wearing a pink diaphanous, fine garment that has been wound around her at the chest level. She is wearing very little jewelry and it can be seen that the thick skirts, veils and their manner of draping them all around themselves are markedly suggestive of the class they belong to which is at a lesser degree than the royalty. Almost all the women are wearing similar jewelry, an essential part of which is the numerous bangles that they are wearing on both wrists. They could be glass bangles going by their even thickness and unembellished circumference.
Politics of the Dress