Introduction
Emergence & Development of the Multi-Piece Garment
CHAPTER-1

Among the various factors which govern the nature and mode of wearing a dress, some significant ones are the climate of a country, the available natural resources, raw materials as well as the finished products, its industrial outputs and the available knowledge and skill to fashion them into wearable garments and accessories. Other factors that have a bearing on the existent fashion and its norms at a given place and time are the psychological and social mechanisms prevalent in a society. The most poignant factor, however, remains the mood and attitude of the wearer. It is virtually symbolic of the personality of the wearer. All these factors are to some extent limited by the physical attributes or the anatomic features of the wearer as the natural cut or lines of the body determine to some extent the drape and fall of the garment. There is also the very relevant aspect of the economic viability of the accoutrement.

To some extent the influences of other people also impact upon the dress and form of ornamentation of a people. India, for example has been subject to a number of invasions from several quarters with the recent ones being of the European sector i.e. the Dutch, the French and the British. The influences continue to hold sway over the minds of the people as the days of invasions have passed away and the era of electronic media aided information bombardment have come to stay. The avenues of wielding authority over who will wear what may have given way to what should be worn and how. The case in point is the adoption of a particular ensemble as per the diktats of the fashion houses and their periodic forecasts.

It would be necessary to delve further into these factors to ascertain the range and domain of the various forms of dress adopted by the people of various regions as well the accessories that they have designed from their surroundings and resources. A person belonging to hot climate regions generally adopts light and thin clothes, preferring to keep the body bare as far as practicable to allow for easy circulation of air and facilitate the drying up of
sweat and minimizing body odors. On the other hand the person living in cold climatic conditions wears thick and heavy clothing while covering major parts of the body for protection against the extreme cold as well as its after effects like drying up of skin and painful chilblains and sores. Then there are also the people who have been blessed with the habitation of tropical climates where they can wear both thin and heavy clothes, because in such countries the various regions experience changes in climate ranging from moderate to extreme cold during some part of the year while at other times the temperatures vary from very hot to pleasant. India is one such country where there are five seasons going from cold winters to spring to hot summers and russet autumns besides the very wet and humid monsoon or rainy season.

The form of dress and use of ornaments, have been a constant in the development of man. As a constituent element of human culture clothing and accessories have become an index of human societies all over the world to this day and age. Dress and ornaments can be said to be the two important aspects of human life going down the annals of history. At the hunting­gathering stage of the human evolutionary ladder, men might have found that skins of animals gave pleasing warmth. This must have been experienced when prehistoric man first draped the furry skins by tying two pelts together by the paws on their shoulders. From furs they progressed to the use of fibers which were made when fibrous plats may have been beaten into pulp and made into matted cloth and finally woven into clothes. Weaving, dyeing and tailoring resulted in clothes as we know them today. Textures and patterns, designs and cuts – all followed suit to give us the fashion world as we know it today, globally.

The story of a people encompasses their basic experiences and can in no way be deigned completed if it deals merely with campaigns, wars, territorial expansions and the rise and fall of states, while touching upon the social and economic conditions of the people. Such a story of the people, their lives, lifestyle, and thought process as encapsulated in their culture would also be a true depiction of their social institutions, beliefs and forms,
values and inspirations as also their aspirations. The aesthetic qualities like an individual’s love for beauty and refinement, the influences that exercise an internal and external bearing on the material life of the people are most singular as they are the real documentation of the advancement of thought and philosophy at any given age. A historical rendition true to these aspects of the evolution of a people would definitely depend upon the single significant input of fashion trends among people that existed in the various time slots of history.

There has been little or negligible documentation of the trends in dressing of a society in the annals of history but there does exist a large quantity of visual representation in the form of portraits, war scenes, court scenes and royal sittings since the medieval times to help the researcher get adequate material on the form and fashion of clothing in any of the particular stages of history. Numerous drawings, paintings and photographs form the plethora of visual evidence existent have been tapped to attempt an insight into the evolution of various types of dresses and ornaments used by the people at the many stations in the history of a vibrant and dynamic people that inhabited the geographical territories of India.

The Emergence and Development of the Multi-Piece Garment

The need for dressing the body may have emerged from any number of reasons delineated above but how the coverings were modified and developed into the present day raiment is a tale that needs much tracing down the ages. Combinations of several pieces of cloth were used to form the basic dressing of an individual. Thus, multi-piece garment was perceived differently by people settled in various parts of the world. In the Indian context it came to signify the lower garment or trouser, the upper garment comprising the blouse or bustier and the veil. These would be embellished with scarves tied at the waist like the patkas, turbans, odhani, utariya, chunari and shawls. The upper garments would be complemented by long coats termed sherwanis, angrakhas and achkans.
The present research work concentrates on tracing the origin and development of the multi-piece garment from the Sultanate, Mughal, Rajasthani and Pahari episodes of history as evidenced in the Northern parts of India. The details and descriptions have been studied from the pictorial representations in the art pertaining to the particular historical times. The research has focused on the North basically as the region which has seen much turbulence because of invading hordes from the times of Alexander the Great in 326 B.C to the advent of the British in the 18th century.

**Depiction of the Multi-piece: Medieval to Contemporary**

In the evolution of political forms in India, environment factors, economic complexity and religious ideology all played important and interlinked roles. As a first step in delineating the long conjoined history of states and communities in the subcontinent it was thought prudent to follow a specific chronological detailing while taking up the argument for the multi-piece costume in Indian Art through the medieval to the contemporary times. Thus the aspects of history are delimited but to understand better the evolution and production of a particular part of the multi-piece costume would be necessary to go further back in history. It becomes imperative, then, to have a glimpse of the history of the nation over the centuries. For purposes of simplification the different historical periods are being dealt with in the following sections:

1. **Up to 800 B.C.**
2. **From 800 BC to 300 A.D or up to the period when the Gupta monarchy was founded and which marked the beginning of the ‘Golden Period’.**
3. **From 1000 A.D or the initiation of the Sultanate period.**
4. **Up to 1700 A.D. when the Mughal impact gained root.**
5. **From 1700 A.D. up to the 1900 Century wherein the influences of Rajasthani, Pahari and modern garment form prevail.**
6. **From 1800 AD, Colonial times.**
8. Post independence time.

The exact time span of what has been designated as the Medieval or early medieval in Indian history has been argued back and forth by the best historians of our times and most of them have given a wide span from almost A.D 500 to the establishment of Mughal rule. Sometimes the arbitrariness of periodic slots ascribed to historical periods is self evident when it is realized that the Sultanate period of North India encompassed both early medieval and medieval ages and this was true also of the Chola period in South India, as also the Calukya period in the Deccan. Various authors have reflected upon the time boundaries of this period and with little difference most have accepted the medieval period to stretch from A.D 500 to A.D 1200. The major attributes of this period of early history emerged in the spheres of polity, economic sustenance and growth as also social differentiation.

The territorial kingdoms were ruled by Rajanyas or Kshatriyas, finally crystallized into a centralized, highly bureaucratic, state in which the landholding based power hierarchy was absent and all officials were paid salaries from the royal treasury. This period was marked by a highly monetized economy marked by urbanization and urban crafts production and characterized by long-distance foreign trade. The rural units of production were the village communities with strong communal rights. Segregation of the community on the basis of their skills and subsequent livelihood as per the varna system saw the rajanyas, kshatriyas and the brahmanas as the appropriators and disbursers of the social surplus, the vaisyas were the agriculturists and traders and were the main taxpayers, while the sudras provided the servile menial labor.

1 The chronological focus has been dwelt upon by historians like Burton Stein, in 'Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India', Delhi, 1980; G.S. Dikshit in 'Local Self-Government in Medieval Karnataka', Dharwar, 1964; Om Prakash Prasad in 'Decay and Revival of Urban Centres in Medieval South India', A.D. 600-1200', Patna, 1989; David Ludden seems of the 'last century of the medieval period' in 'Chola – Pandya rule in South India', first Indian reprint, Delhi, 1989; in contrast, however, the time span 500-1200 A.D. is taken to represent 'early medieval' in R.S. Sharma's, 'Social Changes in Early Medieval India (circa AD 500-1200)', The First Devraj Chanana Memorial Lecture (Delhi, 1969).

2 This is based on the research outputs of Professor R.S. Sharma cited above.
When we read about the transition to medievalism the essential reference point are the attributes they represent and which in turn it is through the transformation / inversion of these attributes that we arrive at a set of elements and characteristics that marked the beginning of ‘medievalism. The direct route to medievalism is through ‘Indian feudalism’ as per the dominant school of ancient Indian historiography. What constituted medievalism and what constituted Indian feudalism are perceived differently by historians. To better understand the ideological shifts from the medieval to the contemporary it is necessary to have a glimpse of the historical episodes that dealt with the fortunes of prices and paupers in northern India. However, it is necessary to analyze some of these transitions in the early phase of medievalism to better understand the shifts in connotation of chronological labels ascribed to various authors.

Plate: 1

Garments made of hand painted cotton fabrics (18th century)

The reworked ghagra called the skirt is made in heavy base material with a lining to enhance the fullness and an added gathers at the back. The painting of the foliage is in choicest colors, primarily red, violet & indigo. It draws attention as these motifs and colors inspired the floral wallpapers and the furnishing in Europe in the eighteenth century.

Source: Kumar, Ritu. 1999. Costumes and Textiles of Royal India.
Niharranjan Ray\textsuperscript{3} presents a multi-dimensional characterization of medievalism. He traces the beginning of the process to the seventh century and remarks on its becoming more pronounced from the eighth century onwards. He envisages three sub-periods within the medieval:

- [a] Seventh to twelfth century;
- [b] Twelfth to the first quarter of the sixteenth century; and
- [c] First quarter of the sixteenth to the close of the eighteenth century.

While Ray does not specify the major attributes of these sub-periods, he offers a broad package of characteristics which, for him, define Indian medievalism. He makes pointed references to the nomadic incursions into Indian society which were carried out by the Hunas and their predecessors. He also uses these points in history for making comparisons with the developments simultaneously taking place in Europe. Ray\textsuperscript{4} lists these major traits of medievalism in the following:

1. All ruling dynasties became regional, and in this sense their genesis is considered comparable to the emergence of European nation-states.

2. The character of the economy changed from a money economy to a natural economy.

3. In various media of social communication (such as script, language and literature) there was the crystallization of a regional character - a process which offers, again, a 'striking parallel' with European developments.

4. The dominant feature characterizing religion was a proliferation of sects and sub-sects.

\textsuperscript{3} Niharranjan Ray 1974. An Approach to Indian Art. Publication Bureau, Panjab University Chandigarh.

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid.
5. Art activities too came to be recognizable only in terms of ‘regional’ schools [of Art], such as Eastern, Orissa, Central Indian, West Indian and Central Deccan; or in terms of such labels as Pallava and Chola, in which again the regional context is implicit.

When trying to identify the major traits of medievalism and situating these close to European parallels, Ray connected the transition as deriving from a feudal process. His explanations for the genesis of the traits of medievalism have, however, given way, in recent years, to more specific concerns regarding the structure of early medieval India, as well as to a greater accent on substantial volumes of indigenous empirical materials. This exposition has, nevertheless, contributed to the effort to understand the gradual transformation of early historical society.

Plate: 2
Dancers and Musicians,
Delhi or Hansi
Circa: 1820-30
It is often believed that the position of the Vaisya varna, traditionally associated with cattle-keeping, agriculture and commerce, declined gradually as a result of the decline of long-distance commerce, and that the position of the Sudras improved as their numbers swelled through the assimilation of some of the indigenous tribes and foreign elements. The Vaisya peasants of the early historical period were also a majority of the cultivators. Although their economic and social status is believed to have declined because of the decrease in commerce this was the period when tribal and pastoral groups began to get enumerated as cultivators. One specific instance was that of the community called the Gurjaras, who are mentioned as cultivators. It is quite interesting to note that the majority of regionally recognizable cultivating groups, such as the Gurjaras, Kaivarttas, Gavundas, Reddis, Kalitas – what came to be recognized as the Indian peasantry, started figuring in historical records from the Gupta, and more perceptibly from the post-Gupta period while they may have made their original presence somewhere during the Sultanate period as confirmed landholding or landless peasants and farmers.

Down the ages the Sultanate to the contemporary periods of history traversed through the end of the classical age of ancient India [sixth century] or the Gupta period onwards to the Golden age of the South. The Post Medieval and Mughal ages [16th century] contributed to India’s sophisticated textile culture by promoting to the skills of the large population of weavers, dyers, printers, embroiderers and launderers. The last specifically because of their exquisite knowledge and skills of crinkling, heat pressing and finishing textiles. Towards the end of the Mughal era was the gradual disappearance of the jama and the reinstatement of the choga or other related styles of densely patterned tunics and coats which were called Farrukhsiyar chogas because of their being favoured by one of the last Mughal princes’ Farrukhsiyar.
Plate: 3
The British enjoying a nautch (dance) performance at Mahadji Scindia's palace, probably Gwalior.
Painted by an unknown Delhi artist, (c. 1820)
Kumar,Ritu .1999. Costumes and Textiles of Royal India.
The Hosts are seen wearing their Indian attire comprising of the angarkhas, jamas fastened with patkas. Around their head are the turbans wrapped around kullas. The British are seen in their army uniform enjoying the nautch girls perform in their semi transparent peshwaz covered with the orhnis across the front. The kurtis are short with a variety of pajamas.

From here up to the advent of the British the clothing styles seem to have become a popular palette for refinement and experimentation in the various Indian courts. The British came, as many others, to plunder and stayed for two centuries. Their stay in India dealt a dual blow to the garments and textiles business houses in India. The British not only closed India’s erstwhile trade routes to Asia Minor but later on made it the repository of its synthetic and cheap surplus being churned out from its factories. These had a most detrimental impact upon the trade and industry of textiles whereupon it was the clarion call of the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi to boycott all foreign goods and return to the homespun khadi.
Mahatma Gandhi (c.1930)
Kumar, Ritu. 1999. *Costumes and Textiles of Royal India*.

Bapu is seen in a thin cotton cloth draped in a style which was called the dhoti.

The twentieth century and in its wake the twenty first have made for mankind the clothes that they can revel in whether at work or at play – the myriad roles define the variety of clothing. Yet the casual and free natural look seems to be especially catered to by the younger generation.

**The Study of Indian Costumes through Historical Plates**

A body of research carried out on the Indian historical costumes could prove problematic when one attempted to collate the visual evidence with the descriptions of the dresses and ornaments worn during that period in literary and historical accounts by documentation officials of that period. Even though archaeological and visual materials are available for the period under study the real difficulties emerge when one tries to authenticate the information that can be culled from these sources. The descriptions in literary works, are rich in their poetic beauty and elegance, but are not precise enough for one to totally and reliably reconstruct. The plates may show particular colors, motifs
and garments but there is no way that one can assuredly ascertain the
 garment details, the texture of the garments and the preference of that
 particular material at any given time. For example a sheer material could be
 organdie, organza, tissue, or even muslin and in a visual depiction it is quite
difficult to be sure. However, the literal descriptions, which should have been
able to provide all the details, are not so forthcoming. Therefore, this present
research work is unique in the way that an attempt has been to connect the
visual with the literary and obtain an almost realist picture of the dress and
ornamentation of a people. The visual evidence has been obtained from the
various schools of art of the Sultanate, Mughal, Pahari and Rajasthani works
as immortalized in their miniature paintings.

Sometimes, while looking up specific references one may find that the
descriptions are so general that they can fit more than one costume while the
two sets of garments may be totally different from each other. The basic jama
and pyjami combination may be absolutely similar to the next one but closer
scrutiny would bring out the fact that there are subtle differences in the
consumption of the fabric used in the same or similar ensembles, the texture,
the motifs, colour combinations and the surface embellishments. There may
also be certain distinctive differences in terms of the embellishments like
edging [kinari] of the dupatta which may distinguish the commoner from a
royal personage. This is the primary reason that a large number of secondary
sources had to be tapped to be able to get a representative sample for use in
the study. Similarly the descriptions of foreign travelers who visited India
during various periods in its history can be quite confusing though amusing.
For example in the traveler Alberuni's description⁵, he is probably referring to
a dhoti when he speaks of 'turbans used for trousers', and a loin-cloth when
he is speaking of 'a rag of two fingers' breadth bound over the loins.

Similar problems arise with the accounts of most writers. Wherever
they speak of costume, not too much is added to our information although
there is much precision and detail when it comes to their description of the
trade in textiles from different parts of the country. This is understandable

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⁵ B.N. Goswami. 1993. Indian Costumes. Volume V, Historic Textiles of India, Calico Museum,
Ahmedabad
because one of the principal concerns of many of the travelers to India was to document its ongoing trade and further potential. All the same, the information made available is not without interest like the comment of Chau j’ u-kua, the inspector of foreign trade in Fu-kien in the 12th century. He vividly described the dress worn by the ruler of Malabar: “The ruler of the country has his body draped, but goes bare-footed. He wears a turban and a loin-cloth both of white cotton cloth. Sometimes he wears a white cotton shirt with narrow sleeves”6.

Scholars the world over have devoted themselves to the analysis of Sanskrit, Prakrit, Hindi, Arabic and Persian sources, and brought a vast body of information on the various historical periods within the reach of other workers in the field of art history. Despite the large body of material and the inherent difficulties of interpretation and controversy this material, literal, visual and plastic in its art value, provides rich resource for the art historian. And it is such material that the present study relies on for presenting a documentation of the multi-piece costume from the Medieval Period onwards.

The Stitched and the Unstitched in Indian garment history

From time to time arguments have been presented regarding draped materials being the mainstay of clothing in the region. However, many statements have been put forth that place the stitched garments and accessories to have been available even during the Kushana period [1 A.D to 3 A.D] as borne out by the head less statue of King Kanishka who is shown wearing a tunic which could only have been stitched. He is also shown wearing felt boots which again would have been stitched. This negates the observations of earlier scholars like Forbes Watson7, who bear out that the ‘art of sewing came to India only with the coming of the Muslims’. In fact not only was the needle and its use known to Indians from the very beginning of the historic periods but the art of sewing was commonly practiced.

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6 ibid.
7 ibid
The unstitched garments in India have been around for centuries and men and women alike used them for modesty, protection and fashion by simply manipulating their drape and embellishments. These garments are the 'ready to wear' line of Indian dress industry as they leave the looms and are on the physiques of the people. Some of these eternal garments are the Dhoti, Lungi, Chaddra or Tehmatt, as a lower favoured by a large population of men even today; the Uttariya / Dupatta / Odhni / Chunni, or the innocuous veil that covered the woman from head to toe when required or was a graceful addition piece in the multi-piece costume of the North Indian woman besides the evergreen saree, and the Turban or Pagdi / Safa / Pagh. The volume and length of these garments and their style of draping could have led the causal observer to think that the Indians probably were ignorant of the art of sewing whereas this was by no means the truth.

The period of the Sultanates in northern India saw a marked difference in dress ware because of the variations in fabrics, dyes and costumes. But the difficulty of accurately interpreting this information i.e., descriptions regarding fabrics, their texture etc as seen in the paintings from the Sultanate period, still remains a difficult task. One can at best try and find relationships between terms for costumes or verbal descriptions, and the dresses that we see men and women wearing in Sultanate-period paintings, whether of the Indo-Persian style or those that we associate with western India, principally Jaina paintings produced in Gujarat and Rajasthan. For example in the paintings of the Laur Chanda in the Prince of Wales Museum of Bombay, or the Aranyaka Parva of the Asiatic Society of Bombay, or the recently discovered Devi Mabatnitya in the Himachal Pradesh Museum at Simla, the long-sleeved kurta-like garments made of fine cotton material, with fastenings at the right or the left [like the modern day angrakhas], come remarkably close to the early description by Alberuni of the kurtakas worn by Indians which have lappets with 'slashes' both on the right and the left sides. But this kind of close correspondence is not always easy to establish in most other pieces of clothing in the other periods in time.
The Advent of Mughal Influence after Babur’s invasion

At the surface level the Indian political scene was chaotic around 1520 A.D. On the one hand were the agricultural Hindu masses steeped in the complicated rituals and mores of the Hindu religion and a rudimentary social system with its confusing plethora of sects and castes. On the other were the Brahmans who were the custodians of the temples and the schools while the nobles, both Hindu and Muslim, whose power came from landholdings, held sway over the minions. The Brahmans preserved Hindu thought and sought to develop but they could not make much impact because of the lack of royal patronage. It was the advent of the Bhakti movement wherein the local ‘saints’ initiated popular religious movements among Hindus and the Muslims. Islam was carried to the people, and made converts by wandering preachers or holy men known generically as sufis or pirs.

Each Muslim provincial kingdom of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries expressed itself in magnificent buildings which are part of India’s artistic treasures today. In the North Hindu craftsmen and Muslim architects combined to produce a unique Hindu-Muslim style; in the Deccan was constructed a dome for a royal tomb only inferior in size to that of St Peter’s, Rome. These buildings stand, as watchers of the past, in quiet country towns like Jaunpur, Gulbarga and Bijapur, as well as in the busy modern cities like Agra and Ahmedabad. There was also much intellectual activity among Muslim poets and theologians for the princes, although violent in their deeds and ends, were liberal in their patronage of the arts. The cultural life of these courts was exotic and foreign, so that the activity they fostered was frail and isolated from the country as a whole. The main source of this culture was Persia, from where many of the invaders had come, and by whom the Turks, Arabs, and Afghans, had been influenced.

Babur, the first of the Mughals was an outstanding general. He possessed a personal magnetism, the ability to maneuver and to judge

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8 Spear Percival, A History Of India, Vol Two
situations, and the Napoleonic gift of rapid movement. In 1573, on news of a revolt in Gujarat, he marched from his capital Fatehpur-Sikri to Ahmedabad, a distance of 600 miles, with 3,000 horsemen. After 9 days of traveling he defeated a large but astonished army of insurgents on the 11th day from his departure and was back in his capital again in another 32 days. This feat secured Gujarat for the Mughals for a hundred and eighty-five years. His hardest campaigns were against the Rajputs, who remained formidable even though there was no unity. Until subdued these resilient fighters presented a permanent threat to the flank of the Mughal bases of Delhi and Agra.

The Mughals were Turks. The first generations spoke Turkish so that Persian was only a second language. They brought with them salient reminders of their nomadic origin such as the Turkish title Khan, the horse-tail switch, the love of horseflesh and the chase, their drinking bouts, and the architecture of their public halls, which had the décor of their tents. Yet so charmed were they by the radiating Persian culture that they adopted it thoroughly and then adapted it onto the India cultural fabric. The dress of the Mughals was originally Turkish but it was much influenced by Persian refinements. The Persian love of poetry and song found a ready response in Indian hearts and the organization of a mushaira or public assembly of poets to recite poems to a critical audience became an important cultural event in North India. Thus Persia, through the Mughals, came to influence the life and lifestyle of the local population. This ranged from the personal manners and etiquette of the nobility to their refinement in dress and ornamentation. Hindu mannerisms were set aside as rustic and it was this Mughal influence that persisted till it was transcribed into what is today known as Hindustan.
A painted photograph of Maharaja Hira Singh and his son, Tikka Ripudaman of Nabha, one of the important princely states of Punjab.

Painted photographs highlighted the richness and texture of the clothes and ornaments of Indian royalty. pg: 25

India Then & Now, Vir Sangvi and Rudrangshu Mukherjee, Roli books.

History is as old as human beings. Human dress forms went from being articles of mere essentiality to works of art. Thus, along with fulfilling the need for warmth and decency, the wearer used his dress, attire, garments and accessories to express his inherent sense of aesthetics and a deep seated love for beauty. In the hunting gathering stage human beings found the skins and furs of animals gave pleasing warmth when wrapped around themselves. This form of draping made the inroads for the latest in fashion as far as wrap-arounds, shawls, togas, chogas, dhoti, pagri, churi, dupatta, chaddra evolved up to the present day. From fur to fibers beaten into pulp and made into matted cloth, to woven woolen strands through the complex processes of sorting, spinning, scouring, weaving, embellishing and stitching into clothes besides a number of other methods of creating fabric and garment. The materials ranged from coarse handspun to
the refined silks, unfolding a large variety of textures and patterns with the passage of time.

The evolution of accessories especially ornaments to decorate the limbs of the individual progress along similar lines. Pre-historic man might have first adorned his body with animal claws and bones, flowers, fruit-seeds and leaves. They might have used fibers of plants to hang the claws, bones and leaves. Then they played with the idea of using clay ornaments like beads and motifs strung on these fibers and ultimately to the use of precious stones and metals like gold, silver etc. Even some of the hodiernal ornaments are an avid reminder of the form these may have had.

Plan of Research

The psychological, socio-cultural and philosophical moods are some important aspects that influence dress sense in a community. They embody ideas of class and rank as has been dealt with in detail under the title of ‘Politics of Dress’ as well as ‘Class and Society’ in the present study. They give useful insights into the aesthetic sense of the prince and the pauper, the rich and the poor, so to speak. ‘Color and Essence’ as well as the specialized motifs and their ornamentation play a significant role in the presentation of a person. For centuries specific colors have connoted specialized, socially ascribed roles – the eye-catching bridal dresses in red and the steadfast stark white of widowhood - are accepted universally in the northern parts of India. Time, however, is the greatest equalizer – making individual choices. A bride, who earlier was not allowed to wear white for a year, may these days be even seen happily strutting about in pristine whites a few days after the wedding ceremony. Also at various times in the history of the country there have been accentuation of particular silhouettes where despite the rigid purdah system the attraction of clothing and raiment remained a lure among the young and old alike. From the mere covering of wraps for the human form the ‘Silhouette’ has gone to bulky drapes of the Mughal era and come almost full circle to stitched wraps that closely follow the line and length of the body. With
advancement in technology and the evolution of product design and fitting techniques there has been a revolution in the many materials used for the fashion conscious. Garments have gone from a few natural fibers to the myriad of synthetic fibers. These aspects of various forms of garments have been detailed in ‘Body and its Covering’. The study outputs also discuss the wide range of ‘Material and its Drape’. Because there is a wide range of materials that have come to be used as accessories ranging from jewelry to belts, bags, scarves and hats these have been in the chapter dealing with ‘Accessories’. The accessories seem to have evolved as a specialized branch of the fashion scene, for example the zillion dollar perfume industry. Each ensemble in the present day world of brands, labels and signatures carries some cardinal ‘Motifs and Ornamentation’. At each interval of history where fashion may have undergone some revolutionary discovery like corsets and the bikini there has been a signature under which the particular design was being popularized. This was usually a particularly gifted artist who had an eye for detail and in contemporary times came to be recognized as ‘Fashion Designers’.

Plate: 6
Nautch girls from Aurangabad,1830. pg: 117
India Then & Now, Vir Sangvi and Rudrangshu Mukherjee, Roli books.
An Indian Perspective on Women’s Multi-piece Garments

The line and flow of a garment emanates from the “natural” body, and global trends in the multi-piece garment which tend to be “culturally mapped,” rather than developing in isolation. Thus, what the essentialist presents as “naturalized” and puts forth as the “essence” is actually a socially constructed difference produced through material and social practices, discourses and systems of representation rather than mere physical and biological entity. There are, however, marked differences in the western and Indian or even Oriental concepts. While the western woman’s preferred lower attire comprised slit skirts / capris / shorts to ensure that the region below the thighs remained exposed, the Indian conceptualization presents a total contrast. The Indian sari (a six-yard unstitched cloth wrapped around the body and worn with pleats in front), ghagra (a long skirt with many gores or pleats, generally trails behind as the woman walks), the salwar kameez combinations or even the traditional Japanese kimono make sure that only the feet can be seen, nothing above it. Stockings and socks have no parallel in the Indian culture of fashion. The Indian woman tended to keep her feet uncovered to show off her alta (a red-coloured dye with which a bright red border is given to the feet). Then the feet are adorned with anklets and chutki (a toe ring). Such is the importance of the woman’s feet in Hindu custom that when she enters her husband’s house for the first time after marriage, she pushes in a container of rice to usher in plenty and prosperity into the hearth and home. She leaves red impressions of her alta-smeared feet on a white sari or even the floor. In some parts of the county after a woman’s death, her feet are smeared with alta and the impression taken on paper, for a memory keepsake.

From the earliest invasions where the ‘have-nots’ sought out the prosperous ‘haves’ there have been innumerable subtle and not so subtle impositions that have influenced the dress and ornaments of a people. With the advent of Muslim rule in India the ‘purdah’ system was given a new dimension. Similarly the recent happenings in Afghanistan with the Taliban coming into power the dress codes for the women were strictly dictated and
adhered to. Through history this has been evident. Be it the dress of the Kushana rulers and their influence on the Indian dresses or again the assimilation of the foreign and the Indian dressing forms as noticed when the Gupta rulers came into power.

Clothing is a dynamic reflection of the way a people exist and evolve along their cultural norms and mores. Even though clothing and the turn out of an individual has often been seen as a social tool for displaying wealth and position, it is also a significant marker of the progress society has made at a particular period in time. Clothes can reveal priorities, aspirations, liberalism or conservatism as they go a long way towards satisfying simple or complex human emotional needs, and they can be used consciously or unconsciously to convey subtle or overt sexual messages. Clothes contribute tone and hue to our environment and give form to our feelings.

Just as art and society affect fashion, industry, commerce, and science too have a vital role to play in the adoption of particular forms of dress, its popularity across various geographical locations and its growth globally. If one is to take stock of fashion trends over the last two centuries it would be necessary to take into account factors that have had strong impact not only on fashion per se but also the ideas and attitudes held by a community. The wars, apartheid, struggles for independence, women’s movement, industrialization, liberalization and globalization – all impacted upon the sharp turns that fashion took. The social attitudes too changed under the influence of fashion. Women’s skirts or hemlines have traveled higher while the necklines have dipped lower to a point where they have almost disappeared leaving vestiges of string behind to barely hold the garment.

The use of fabrics has also undergone a sea change. Where earlier one was accustomed to the wear natural fibers in their rough or refined forms there is a large range of synthetics luring the eye. Chintz or the Indian ‘chint’, was a printed cloth that was glazed by starch. The prints generally featured designs of flowers, fruits, and birds and have been popular as a furnishing
fabric since the 1600s. Most chintz was originally imported from India but then UK began manufacturing and exporting chintz. Chintz was used to make fashion garments in the 80s.

Ornaments have had an indelible appeal for women of every age, every country, every class and every rank. They satisfied the aesthetic sense of the poor and the rich alike. While the former embellished their limbs with ornaments of the silver like hasli or collar, anklets and gajrae or large hollow bangles, the latter indulged themselves by resorting to the dazzling and beautiful ornaments fashioned in gold and precious gems. Thus, jewelry often displayed a number of things about the person. Essentially his or her economic standing in society, position and rank in their immediate environment, their tastes and aesthetic sense as also their utmost artistic and decorative sense were reflected in the manner of dressing, form and matter. The imposing presence of royalty or army were brought about not only by the bearing of the individual but also the clothes they wore. Clothes played a vital role in the social context as they mirrored the social milieu. Their influence could be noticed from the dawn of civilization and can be traced to the present day.

Design Development of the Multi-piece According to Differing Tastes

Understanding the dual process of differentiation and identification is central to understanding the development of any clothing tradition, for clothes are literally a means of classification—whether of individuals, groups, castes, classes, regions or nations. And in the same way that clothes draw boundaries which exclude those dressed differently, so they encompass and include those dressed in the same way. This is the process of identification. While individuals and groups are not necessarily motivated by the desire to differentiate themselves from others, differentiation none the less results from their actions. And similarly, while individuals are not necessarily seeking to identify with others when they share the same dress, they are none the less

9Emma Tarlo, Clothing Matters.
interpreted as identifying with them. Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classification, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed.

Many scholars, from the nineteenth century to the present, have highlighted the importance of clothes as a means of identification and differentiation in India (Johnson 1863, Watson 1868, Dongerkery 1960). But if differentiation and identification are defined as processes, and if too many diverse groups begin to identify with the same type of dress, then one group (usually consisting of those who first wore the dress) will eventually differentiate themselves by wearing something else. Viewed within this framework, the history of Indian dress forms could be interpreted as a series which form patterns of differentiation both between India and the West and between different groups within Indian society. In each phase, however, there have been certain individuals and groups who do not fit the pattern, but this does not alter the continuity and change of the processes themselves.

Plate: 7
Daughter of the Maharaja of Rewah on a panther which she shot. 1920's
Hunting, a sport by royalty at an early age .. pg:135
India Then & Now , Vir sangvi and Rudrangshu Mukherjee, Roli books.
During the earlier period of British rule in India, European dress gradually gained popularity among the Indian upper classes. Then there was a phase when Indians were totally resistant to Western clothes, often refusing to allow them entry into their houses even when they allowed their use in the workplace. This was under the tenets of the 'Swadeshi movement'.

Despite this, however, European dress gradually came to be regarded by the educated few as a sign of the wearer’s progress and success because of the spread of the British education system and, to some extent, the value system that went with it. This was to have potent results in the future because through this adoption of European dressing styles, the upper-class Indians dissociated themselves from the uneducated Indian majority while at the same time associating themselves with the ruling British elite. The motivation behind this process of adaptation was largely that India’s development could be brought about through cooperation with European values and ideas of progress. Singularly, this cooperation was predominantly male as the Indian women were shielded from all things British lest their pristine values be corrupted. Even then many of the women of the elite houses in India began adopting select features of European dress form like the voluminous petticoats and lacy blouses having puffed sleeves.

Plate: 8

Queen Elizabeth II enjoyed her ride in a Palki, or a traditional Indian Palanquin, pg:74

India Then & Now, Vir Sangvi and Rudrangshu Mukherjee, Roli books.

On the other hand there were several rounds of resurrection of the ethnic form of dress. Many patrons of the arts and craft took to ethnic clothing as a symbol of exclusivity and
uniqueness. This ethnic form of clothing saw the emergence of a new cult of exclusivity in the late 1980s with the development of the so-called ‘Art wear’ fashion. Today this form of ‘ethnic’ fashion has evolved as an exclusive and expensive line of haute couture worn by the wealthy minority who are willing to go to great lengths to make a ‘statement’.

Documentation of the Indian Multi-piece

This piece of research work is envisaged as a useful tool for understanding the emergence and resurgence of various clothing trends in India. Some communities reveal their identity through their dress while others are more concerned with the practical problems of price and availability. What is most significant, however, is the question whether the educated urban Indian can today look ‘Indian’ without being too self-conscious about it. The Indian women had never abandoned Indian styles on a mass scale, and has successfully adapted Indian outfits such as the shalwar kamiz [and influence of the North] and long skirt [an influence of the South] to the whims of contemporary fashion, on a mass scale, with a universal and all encompassing appeal. For men, however, the situation is more complex. European styles have besieged their wardrobes to the extent that now they are considered very much a part of Indian dressing.

At an average the urban women’s wardrobe today might house a collection of clothes ranging from the classically Indian sari; the contemporaneously modern Indian salwar kameez; the glamorously ethnic Kutch work or Gujarati embroidery and mirror work choli or accessories; South Indian and Pune cotton saris and salwar kameez suits as well as some chic western leisurewear like a pair of denim jeans or Capri’s besides a skirt or two coordinated with a number of shirts and tops. A man’s wardrobe would generally contain a number of shirts coordinated with a few basic colored trousers, a pair of jeans, a western two or three piece suit, some coats or jackets besides something ethnic like a kurta pyjama or a simple plain lungi.
for relaxing at home. Some men may even support a khadi kurta over a pair of jeans.

There are mainly two important works\textsuperscript{10} on the dressing and ornamentation of the Indian people. The book by Motichandra is very informative and throws a flood of light on the dress patterns of Indians in different periods. The book provides ample material for the reconstruction of the history of Indian costumes. He has based his work on the literary sources of the different periods as also the important sculptures, terracotta's and paintings in various parts of India. Poets, dramatists and litterateurs, no matter how blessed by the Muses they may be, cannot do full justice to whatever they see before them as can the painter or the sculptor. It is the task of the painter or sculptor to actually portray the inner ideas and places besides putting the object before the people in its physical entity. Most of the books on the ornamentation styles during the various periods in history have discussed materials employed for making ornaments as well as various kinds of ornaments used in different periods. These books no doubt depended on literary and archaeological sources for details about the various aspects of dress and ornamentation.

The antiquities of Harappa as well as the Indus Valley period, besides the earliest documentation in Vedic, Brahmanical and the Buddhist literature have made mention of the living and lifestyle of the people of those times. The scholars of those times like Panini and Kautiliya have also recorded some of the salient features of society and culture. The accounts of Megasthenes and Arrian form a vast source material of local literary and foreign accounts that have been unearthed, translated and transcribed to some extent in the archaeological accounts of this period. They have concentrated on the actual dresses and ornaments worn by a specific people at a particular geographic locale in India. Even the Sunga period's literary account of Patanjali has incorporated various types of dresses and ornaments. Among the

\textsuperscript{10} The two pioneer works on the dress are 'Indian Costume' by G.S.Ghurye, 1966. Bombay Popular Prakashan the 'Prachina-Bharatiya Vesa-bhusa (in Hindi) by Motichandra, Director of Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay.
archaeological materials of this period, the Bodhgaya railings, the stone sculptures and the terracottas from various parts of North Eastern India have contributed to a better understanding of the socio-economic impact upon dressing and ornamentation. The sculptures at Bharut and Sanchi provide ample material for attempting comparative studies of the dress and the ornaments of the people of that period. During the Kushana period, the literary accounts of Bharata Muni and Vatsyayana contributed greatly to the understanding of the social norms and mores that pertained to clothing and the forms of dressing prevalent during that period in that particular location.

Among the archaeological accounts of this period, the sculptures of Gandhara and Mathura figures depicted on the coins on the one hand and the works of Kalidasa as well as the Jaina texts on the other have proved wealthy resources for obtaining information on the fashion and aesthetic lifestyle of the prince and the pauper alike. However, for much of the information one would have to rely upon translations from modern day researchers. Among the archaeological sources, the coins, the stone sculptures, the stucco figures and the terracottas have added to the information detailed in the literal texts. The Mrichchhakatika of Sudraka and the Dasakumaracharita of Dandin have information of the post-Gupta period. Further, the archaeological sources of the post-Gupta period are quite rich. For the period from 7th century AD to the 12th century AD, the literal works like the Harsacharita and the Kadambari of Bana, the Sisupalavadha of Magha, the Kumarapalacharita, the Naisadhiyacharita, the Desinama-mala of Hemachandra and the Ramacharita of Abhinanda are significant resources as are the accounts of foreign visitors to the region viz., Yuan-Chwang, I-tsing, Al-biruni, Abu Zeid and Sulaiman. They are significant as they provide vital information on the subject.

These accounts make important contributions towards the comprehension of facts that have influenced the form of dressing and dress

2 Historical texts.
sense of a people. This was especially so for the people who had close interactions with border areas, foreign invaders and foreign visitors to their environment. This study has also attempted to enumerate how far trade and commerce influenced costume and ornamentation. An attempt has also been made to show how far foreign rulers influenced dress and ornaments used by the men and women at a particular dimension of time and space within the boundaries of the country. The assimilation of the foreign and the Indian dresses has been given the name of fusion in the present day and age and even now the combinations of what formed truly Indian along with the western forms of dress are quite noticeable cross-cultural translations. Common examples are a silken kurti worn with denim lowers or the conversion of the Punjabi suit of salwar and kameez into the parallel pants and a short shirt worn with a scarf or even the ghagras or long skirts giving way to the western short skirts all the while maintaining their ethnic character in print and structure but decreased in length.

The Contemporary Indian Multi-piece

Plate: 9

Malini Ramani wearing a dress she designed, depicting colors of the Indian Flag. pg:51

India Then & Now, Vir Sangvi and Rudrangshu Mukherjee, Roli books.

Independent India saw a return to dressing in the form of machine-made fabrics and foreign styles. A significant development was the popularity of the film industry and its
doyens who were ascribed with certain images, in particular the hero and heroine. They held a powerful appeal for men and women alike though the latter were more taken up by the movie images. Till date the lure of fashion has held sway over the minds and hearts of young and old alike especially in the modern urban areas. With the advent of better electronic media and the increased reach of television into the remotest villages, the rural areas are not very far behind in their passion for looking up to the ‘filmy’ world for direction in fashion.

Thus the changes have been slow in the initial stages but have become rapid in the past decade or so when the garments like salwar kameez and parallel pajama suits [akin to the trouser suits but more comfortable in their cut, embellishment and design] have become the most preferred form of dress in East, West, North, South and Central India. The sari also has its pan-Indian appeal as a formal wear garment while a number of other garments have entered the field which were earlier only the stuff of fashion magazines and films. As the salwar kameez suits are relatively affordable and easier to maintain, they were adopted all over the country as more and more women opted for leaving the threshold to join jobs in various industries. Thus, as office wear it was the ideal choice. Somewhere down the line this particular multi-piece garment was given the connotation of ‘progressive’, showing that those who did not adopt this form of dressing were somehow backward or retrogressive.
Manish Arora
This well known designer of the 21st century is known for the appliqué he has reworked with on to skirts with an assortment of motifs from every day life. The lining of the skirt is for functional purpose and is in a bright magenta pink with tiny hearts. The upper garment is an empire line top with puffed sleeves and a crinkled border in bright tones with a lot of metallic printing. A lot of Accessorisation is seen along with the garment.

The adoption of such clothes also becomes one of the means for upward mobility. There seems to be an interesting race all the time to find newer trends and to tap all possible sources for inspiration in deifying a particular fashion. A universal example is the pair of denim jeans which entered the Indian scene in the late 60s or early 70s and has stayed ever since. Popular as plain garments they have been worn with a series of interesting changes like top stitching in white or orange, then with frayed edges and faded effects called stone wash and acid wash, later on they began to be embellished and today they are being worn with elaborate sequined patterns that run up from the ankle to the knee. This has been largely the influence of the cinema and the small screen largely. How these trends in jeans tend to revolve around the immediate environment is difficult to predict. Thus, the Kutch work mirrored patches may be on the upswing at one time and at another there may be a chase for embellishing all garments with cowrie shells and bells no doubt as per the diktats of the tinsel world!
The appreciation of the ethnic in fashion is somehow linked to the West and its appreciation of the all things Indian as a revival of interest in India’s art and craft heritage. Fashion, seemingly, ‘went ethnic’ in the West before it did so in India. The wave had hit the fashion houses of Paris, New York and London before it came to India. Ethnic chic, thus, became a means of identification with an increasingly cosmopolitan ‘global elite’ who shared common tastes beyond geographical, lingual and cultural boundaries.

We have indeed come a long way from when fashion in all its ramifications was looked down upon by many a middle class Indian as a degradation of Indian values. A fact all the more reinforced by the post-Independence belief in Swadeshi and everything Indian. Fashion was essentially a western import. It was supposed to be meant for the elite, and totally bohemian. But as another generation was exposed to the vision of the 21st Century, and India opened up to the West, there was a need to establish a unique Indian Identity.

Plate: 11
Still from the movie “Hare Rama Hare Krishna”

The multi-piece in India has evolved from the over-used angrakhas, choghas, ghaghra-cholis, achkan, sherwani and much more. Indian fashion is alive and vibrant amongst classes and masses; whatever the decade or the century, it is here to stay. Its comfortable, practical and aesthetically beautiful approach has changed with time now to remain modernized in every aspect. Thus born from the idea of taking traditional Indian fabrics and styles and blending in the western cuts and lines
to appeal to a larger section of the masses in India, the multi-piece in its renewed *avtar* is the mainstay of the garment industry in India. Moving up from select circles it has gained acceptance even in the most conservative households of India as it is a mere reflection of the times of yore when it was the toast of the Indian courtly attire. The evolution of the multi-piece in India had global fashion houses overwhelmed. This dynamic transition needs to be documented now. This repository is essential for the times to come lest the further evolutionary trends sideline the origins of this versatile multi-piece garment. The following chapter details the history of the multi-piece as it progressed and developed.
Body and its Covering