Chapter- 4

The sacred place that threads and weaving held in Indian life is evident from the many hymns in the Vedas. The Hindi-Urdu words for warp and weft are Tana and Bana which have been used by various authors to allude to the ups and downs in an average life. Buddhist literature chronicles the work of skilled weavers and spinners of Kashi who excelled in the weaving of fine muslin, so fine that oil could not seep through it. It was women who spun, and the cotton cloths were washed, calendared, starched and perfumed. There are literary references to the fine cotton muslin which was used to wrap the bodies of emperors and also the Buddha when he attained nirvana or enlightenment.

The woven cloth, textile design and iconography in early India has recorded the advent of textiles into the lives of the people in various ages. The first references were regarding the techniques of weaving and patterning of fabrics which are based on the principles put down in the different Vedas. A very simple example is the emergence and continuity of the trefoil motif discerned on the raiment of the King Priest [a sculpture] from Mohenjodaro. The trefoil motif symbolizes the unity of the sun, the earth, and the water gods. The mystique of the weaver is rooted in customs, traditions, rituals and even the religion of a people. This is even more so for the people of India. The work of the weaver was not merely a labor input nor was it a mere labor of love, it was more a depiction of the weavers, vision, sight and dreams that he wove into the fabric taking episodes from the fabric of his own life or his life's experiences. This created a relationship between him and the cloth that he wove. The cosmos, the ordered Universe, was seen as an endless and continuous fabric with its grid pattern of warp and weft over which is painted the ethos of lives in all its cycles, illusions and dreams. So profound was the influence of the weaver on his creation that many a scholar down the ages was moved to record his workmanship and the genesis of his work of art.
The earliest documentation of woven fabric in the Indian subcontinent is found from the Mohenjodaro finds of the Indus Valley Civilization [2200-1800 B.C]. The word cotton is from the Arabic "al-qattan". The Sanskrit word for cotton is Karpasa. The Greek word Karpasos and the Latin term Carbasus have evidently been derived from Sanskrit.

Until the 18th century the fabrics of India enjoyed undisputed supremacy for 2000 years. A rich picture of the textile art of the Buddhist period emerges through Pali literature when the famous fabrics of Banaras, were virtually worth their weight in gold. Indian silks and muslins went by the name of *textalis ventalis*, denoting `woven air` or feather light fabrics which were prized as articles of luxury and exported to Rome. In a 7th century text Bana refered to expensive textiles manufactured and colored in the tie and dye process in a variety of designs. He also talks of silk and linen cloth being “as fine as the serpent’s slough” and also of “pearl-embroidered fabrics”. Indian textiles were carried by Arab traders to Egypt in the 10th century Gujarat. The famous patola (silk) saris of Gujarat were perfected in this period and exported to Jawa and Bali. The place of honour, however, goes to the fine Dacca mul-mul or muslins which attained the status of a national art involving the most intricate process of spinning, weaving, darning, washing and packing. The delicacy and firmness of the muslin or *malmal khas*, earned for it poetic names like ‘ab rawan’ (running water), *baft hawa* (woven air), and *Shabnam* (evening dew). The patola silk or the wedding sari of Gujarat is a marvel of weaving skill. The whole design is borne in mind when the threads of the wrap and the weft are separately coloured by tie-dyeing according to pre-calculated measurements, and arranged on the loom so that, as weaving progresses with little bundles of warp and weft, the design appears on both sides of the material. Indian brocades were produced by the use of warp and weft threads of different colours and materials suitably woven into intricate designs rooted in their life and culture.

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26 Ibid
Over the centuries the process of fabric and garment development saw itself being recorded by scholars, artists and poets alike, however, the description of the poets could not much be relied upon as they described materials without putting any names to them. Thus, over the centuries the clothing and attire of the royal courts, the kings and queens as well as the activities they indulged in or the large-scale events like a durbar or royal audience, a marriage procession or a hunt prescribed set attire. There were particular colours and materials supported for these events. The royal artists painted these scenes to record them for posterity.

The Rajasthani, the Pahari, the Mughal, the Sultanate and the later Sikh artists recorded in great detail the scenes pertaining to the ordinary lifestyle of the common people as represented by the nayak and nayika in love. They brought out the clothing and accessories supported by both them, especially the nayika who was shown wearing her best to lure the nayak. The hunting scenes shown in the miniatures of the Mughal period have recorded in no small detail the dress and ornamentation of not only the royal personages but also the foot soldiers, the animals like horses, elephants and dogs have also been treated with great care to show their embellishments. Marriage processions were another favoured topic of painting wherein were eulogized the riches of both the sides i.e., the brides side and the grooms side. The two main actors were shown in their complete attires while the entire party is shown in colourful outfits. The main family is given pride of place yet none of the remaining people are ignored. Each is dealt with as befitting his rank and file. These paintings also depicted ordinary market scenes in the later paintings especially those of the Sikh era. The durbar scenes no doubt have been subjects of wonder wherein were shown the array of clothes worn by various members of the aristocracy of a time.

There have also been records on the clothing and dress sense of a people in the manuscripts produced at any particular time e.g. the Babur Nama, the Ain-e-Akbari, the Humzanama, etc. There were also series of painting like the Kangra paintings depicting the Geet Govind, the Ragmalas
and the Barahmasa. The subjects were as diverse as the Bhagvat Puran and the romance of Nala Damyanti. There have also been many outstanding paintings devoted to the art of dressing up or Shringar like the portraits, genre scenes as well as the erotic themes of the kamasutra in the early 19th century as taken up by the Guler artists of the Pahari school. With the conquest of the Kangra valley by the Sikhs, Guler artists came under the patronage of Sikh sardars and devoted their skills to the depiction of the episodes in the life and travels of the first Guru, Guru Nanak in the form of Janam Sakhis.

There have been written records of the observations made by scholars and administrators about the lifestyle and deportment of the times during various periods of history. The British went a long way in chronicling the lives and times of various personages and made copious references to the attire and jewelry of the courtiers and their ladies. Thus, they recorded details of the clothes of the ladies belonging to the Mughal aristocracy and the dresses they wore which were prepared or stitched in the royal karkhanas. The royal karkhanas were manufacturers of silk, brocade and fine muslins of which are made turbans, girdles with golden flowers and drawers worn by women, were delicately fine. These are made even more beautiful when embroidered with intricate needle work. The superiority and fineness of cloth meant for the royal ladies forced Aurangzeb to remonstrate his daughter for not being properly dressed, as ‘her skin was visible through her clothes — but she vehemently protested that she was wearing not one but seven Jamas on her body. This muslin (cloth) was so delicate and fine that when it was spread out on grass and dew fell on it, it was no longer perceptible.

Despite the large body of literature available there are only some sections devoted to the attire and ornamentation of the Indian people for the period understudy. Besides these fragments there are mainly two important works on the dress and two on the ornaments of the Indian people that have attempted to chronicle the history of the people on these two aspects. There are two pioneer works on the Indian form of dress viz., ‘Indian Costume’ by
G.S. Ghurye and 'Prachin-Bharatiya Vesh-bhusha' [Hindi] by Motichandra, Director of the Prince of Wales Museum in Bombay. Ghurye classified his work into various chapters according to the change in the dress patterns and shown therein the evolution of the form, design and embellishment of the dresses worn by Indians from the earliest times down the ages. He has tried to bring out the diversity of dress by concentrating on the nature and mode of dress referred to in the earlier Sanskrit literature. The work depicts a general picture of the dress patterns prevalent in different periods in the North, the South, the East and the West. The book affords some material for the reconstruction of Indian costumes in their historical settings.

The historical aspects of art have been dealt with by scholars like Edith Tomory but the full attention to Indian costumes has been paid by B.N Goswamy. He has utilized to their fullest extent most of the literary sources pertaining to the different periods as well as many of the significant sculptures, terracottas and paintings that gave eloquent descriptions of the dressing style and the socio-cultural relevance of clothing in India. He presents, however, the argument that while archaeological accounts were more valuable as they enriched knowledge by providing physical representations of the objects, the depictions by poets, dramatists and litterateurs, no matter how eloquent and versatile they may be, could not actually create the object before the eyes in a vivid and detailed manner as the painter or sculptor.

Two books on Indian ornaments are ‘Indian Jewelry’ by Jamila Brijbhusan who has discussed the materials employed for making ornaments as well as various kinds of ornaments used in different periods. In various other books as well, the subject has been treated but again only a general picture of the dress and ornaments used by Indians in different periods emerges. One of these works is ‘Handicraft and Industrial Art in India’ by

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Rustam J. Mehta\textsuperscript{29}, and the other is ‘Costume and Cotton Textile’ by Jamila Brijbhushan\textsuperscript{30}.

The post-Indus Valley and pre-Mauryan periods in history, though sparsely represented in art [through sculpture, painting and architecture] have very little recorded, decipherable history and thus the socio-cultural fabric of these periods is not known in adequate details. Thus, the scholar had decided to keep the date and as such the subject under study as commencing from the Sultanate period to the modern or contemporaneous. Thus, the study begins mainly from the end of the Pala-Sena period through the glorious Mauryan period and rule of the Sikh kingdoms down to the 21\textsuperscript{st} century.

**Early Literary Accounts of Fabrics, Clothing and their Exports**

The antiquities of Harappa and their recorded accounts have been examined for the Indus Valley period while the Vedic, the Brahmanical, the Epic and the Buddhist literature have been studied for references to the costumes and ornaments of the people during those periods of history. They have been studied with a view to tracing the evolution and making a comparative study of the personal adornment of the earlier and the Mauryan periods. The work of Panini has been studied by earlier scholars as it affords ample material. For the Mauryan period, the *Arthasatra* of Kautilya, the accounts of Megasthenes and Arrian have also been taken into consideration. These literary and foreign accounts are greatly reinforced by the archaeological accounts of this period, as they reveal actual representations of the dresses and the ornaments worn by the people of North Eastern India. In the Sunga period, the literary account of the Patanjali has been incorporated, as it reveals various types of costumes and types of ornaments.

Among the archaeological materials that give credence to the exploration of the changing scenario in clothing, their wearing and the vision

\textsuperscript{29} Rustam J. Mehta. 1970. Masterpieces of Indian Textiles. Marg Publications, Bombay
\textsuperscript{30} Jamila Brijbhushan. 1958. Costumes and textiles of India. Taraporevala’s Treasurehouse. Bombay
of the designer and wearer of these beautiful creations pertaining to a large part of the period under study can be gleaned from the Bodhgaya railings, the stone sculptures and the terracottas. In the Kusana period, the literary accounts of Bharata Muni and Vatsyayana give vivid details. Among the archaeological accounts of this period, the sculptures of Gandhara and Mathura art forms and figures have found depiction. In the Gupta period, all the important works of Kalidasa as well as the Jaina texts have made copious notes on the dress, material, ornaments and moods for dressing in various situations especially as their dramas and depictions were faithful their times. These works shed a floodlight on the dress and the ornament of the people. Among the archaeological sources, the coins, the stone sculptures, the stucco figures and the terracottas discovered from various ancient sites authenticate the literary expositions substantially. The ‘Mrichchhakatika’ of Sudraka and the ‘Dasakumaracharita’ of Dandin shed light on the post-Gupta period duly collated with the archaeological sources of the same period.

For the period beginning in the 7th century A.D to the 12th century AD, the literary resources become rich and cover many aspects of life ranging from socio-cultural treatises to descriptions of the political and economic life of the people. Harshacharita and the Kadambari of Bana, the Sisupalavadha of Magha, the Kumarapalacharita, the Naisadhiyacharita, the Desinama-mala of Hemachandra and the Ramacharita of Abhinanda have been studied. During this time there were also several accounts made by foreign travelers and envoys or messengers viz., the records of Yuan-Chwang, I-tsing, Al-beruni, Abu Zeid and Sulaiman. Many specimens of the dresses of this period onwards can also be found in the museums of textiles in India e.g., the Calico Museum in Ahmedabad, the Craft Museum Delhi, etc., as they provide ample material for study.

Clothing was very expensive in the ancient and medieval world, because without engine-powered machines it was very difficult to make clothes in large volumes. Most people, therefore, had very few changes of clothing. There were a large proportion of people, however, who probably
owned only the clothes they were wearing. Many children had no clothes at all, and just went about naked.

In the Stone Age most clothing was made of leather or fur, or woven grasses. By the Bronze Age people had learned to spin yarn on a spindle and to weave cloth out of the yarn on looms. Although many clothes, especially coats, were still made out of leather or fur, most clothes were made out of wool (from sheep) or linen (from the flax plant) or cotton. Some rich people wore silk. In the Middle Ages (the medieval period), people invented the spinning wheel, which made the process of spinning yarn about four times as fast. Clothes became a little less expensive but even then most people had only one or two outfits.

The Mauryan Period

Kautiya, the great political scholar and strategist, at the peak of the glory [about 300 AD] of Taxila [now near Islamabad], in his book of economics, the *Arthashastra*, makes mention of Jamdani cloth. He states that the fine cloth used to be made in Bengal and Pundranagar, the earliest urban center in Bangladesh. The antiquity of the cloth goes back to the 4th century BC and accounts of it are also found in the book of the Greek Periplus of the Eritrean Sea. Similar accounts are also available from the records of Arab, Chinese and Italian travelers and traders. Four kinds of fine cloth used to be made in Bengal and Pundra in those days, that is *khouma, dukul, pattroma* and *karpasi*.

By the end of the Vedic period, kingdoms had been established in Northern India and from this point in time onwards the major episodes of Indian history begin to emerge with greater clarity. Villages developed into towns which in turn became thriving trade centers, particularly those where specialized crafts like pottery, carpentry and weaving had been taken to the heights of an art form. The important kingdoms were located on trade routes.
Kingship became hereditary. The death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC left a political vacuum but this was soon filled by Chandragupta Maurya, founder of the Mauryan empire (321-185 BC) in Northern India. He established India’s first large empire that stretched from the far North-West, across the Indo-Gangetic Plain down to the Deccan.

Chandragupta Maurya’s grandson, Ashoka, took up the reins in 269 BC. During his reign, the empire flourished culturally and economically. Towns were expanded, coins were struck in silver and copper and the use of a common script initiated. The increase in the trade of luxury goods and the establishment of artisans’ guilds was a significant stage in the development of India’s textile repertoire.

The art of this period is dominated by images of the yaksha and yakshi, the male and female representations of nature and fertility. Yakshas are generally depicted wearing some kind of loin-cloth or an antariya, which often had tasselled or frilled ends hanging down in front, secured around the waist with a girdle or kaya-bandhan. The torso was bare or draped with a shawl or uttariya. The heads of yakshas were invariably turbaned. The yakshi sculptures are the first in a long tradition or carved figures which represent the fundamental Indian concept of female beauty. The gestures of these fertility goddesses are at once explicit and naive. The rounded breasts, small waist and broad hips of the female form symbolized it as both life-bearing and life-giving. The yakshis were dressed in antariyas, worn short or long, although most of them reach just below the knee. In some rare cases, the yakshis wore an uttariya, but usually their upper bodies were naked. They all wore elaborate headdresses. The head, limbs, torso and ankles of both yakshas and yakshis were depicted as always heavily decorated with jewelry. The uttarayas and antariyas accentuated the human form, and the way they appeared to cling to the body indicated that they were made of very fine, often transparent fabrics.
The Satavahana Period

While Northern India was dominated by the Shungas, Shakas and Kushans, the Satavahana or Andhra dynasty, from the Krishna-Godavari Delta, gained control of Southern and Central India. At the height of its power, the Satavahana Empire (220 BC-AD 236) covered most of Western, Central and Southern India.

In the Buddhist sculptures of the Satavahana period, the figures in stitched clothing were men in the service of the Andhra kings. Canopy-bearers, doorkeepers, attendants, grooms and servants were all depicted in tunics and coats. The cut and style of these garments was quite complicated as compared to sculptures that appeared elsewhere in the country during this time. Some of the shifts worn by the attendants, for example, were raglan-sleeved and gathered around the neck.

The production of cloth and trade in textiles flourished during the Satavahana period. Andhra was one of India's richest textile producing areas. Cotton, indigo and other dye-yielding plants were grown on its fertile land and its many craftsmen were skilled at weaving, printing and dyeing. Paithan (originally known as Pratishanpur) was the Satavahana capital and later became famous for its brocades.

The style of clothing seen on Gandhara figures is predominantly Central Asian. Aside from the ubiquitous uttariya, antariya and kayabandhan, women attendants and milkmaids wore gowns, tunics, blouses with buttons, skirts and pajamas, while soldiers, guards and warriors are portrayed in a wide range of stitched garments. It is evident from the royal statues found in Mathura, that the Kushan kings preferred the structured form of their Scythian clothes to the looser Indian styles. The most striking of these is the life-size effigy of King Kanishka that has a rigid formality. The aesthetic preferences of the ruling Kushan dynasty are reflected in the stark, geometric style of the
long coat and thick boots. This was probably the first evidence of a stitched garment.

The Gupta Period

By AD 320 the Gupta dynasty, led by Chandra Gupta I, was firmly established in Magadha on the Gangetic Plain. The coins minted during the Gupta period carried portraits of the rulers in royal costume depicted in fine details - Chandra Gupta I with his Queen Kumaradevi, Samudra Gupta playing the veena, Chandra Gupta II slaying a lion and Kumara Gupta I riding an elephant.

It is evident from these and many other coins that the Gupta kings liked to wear tunics, trousers and high boots after the fashion of the Kushan kings. The queens are mostly dressed in a two-piece antariya and uttariya ensemble. Some of the coins struck during the reigns of Chandra Gupta I and his successor Samudra Gupta show queens wearing tunics, indicating a wider use of stitched clothing by royal women.

Gupta poetry is scattered with romantic references to clothes, focusing particularly on the sensual nature of women’s clothing. The unstitched garment was the preferred form of dress though there appears to be a greater diversity in the patterning and wearing styles. The erotic and decorative elements of diaphanous veils and a large variety of upper and lower garments are depicted in elaborate detail.

The great poet Kalidasa, writing in the 6th century, tells the tale of Lord Indra and the celestial dancer, Urvashi. He refers to the garment between her breasts which in the presence of the God ‘shook with the tremor of her heartbeat’. Bana, writing in the early 7th century, describes the sensuous nature of the upper garments worn by courtesans ‘...their full breasts fastened with fabrics as they rush about to bring jars of water for the king to bathe. Bharavi, a poet from Southern India, was struck by the seductive movements
of the Gandhara ladies and the provocative way the lower garments were worn 'with their gathers and knot at the navel coming loose...being held indifferently in place by the girdle at the waist, which jingled with movement due to the bells attached to it'. The dramatist, Sudraka, a contemporary of Kalidasa, wrote a play called Mrichhakattikam or 'Little Clay Cart'. One of the more realistic works of the period, it offers a vivid account of the leisurely life in the city of Ujjain where the later Guptas held court. Its central character is the virtuous courtesan Vasantsena. Her antariya is described as being sensual, the flow of the fabric set in motion by 'the wind generated by her quick movements.'

In the Northern Deccan hills overlooking the horseshoe bend of a stream, stand the rock-cut caves of Ajanta, which range in date from the first to the seventh centuries AD. The wall paintings that decorate the chambers are considered to be among the greatest paintings of the ancient world. They depict the splendor of life in the Gupta court. Ablaze with color the interiors have carved pillars, panels, walls and ceilings which are painted with scenes from the Jatakas, stories of Buddha's many incarnations. Images of the Bodhisattva are accompanied by yakshas and yakshis, apsaras, dwarfs, princes and princesses, dancers and attendants and decorative designs of plants and animals.

Remarkable realism and detailing of these images greatly enhances the knowledge of the textiles and clothing of ancient India. Some of the queens are shown wearing gowns and tunics richly embellished with what appeared to be beads or pearls, but mostly they are dressed in unstitched garments. The female attendants are shown wearing tunics, robes and skirts. Apart from the occasional breast band, the upper bodies of most women are left uncovered. Ministers, chamberlains, servants and attendants are depicted wearing tunics. Guards, ambassadors, horsemen, charioteers, foot soldiers and warriors, many of them of foreign origin, are shown wearing kurtas, qabas (coats), pyjamas and antariyas draped in a variety of different ways. The patterned fabrics seem woven, painted, printed or tie-dyed. All the
painted figures are decorated with a profusion of ornaments and are also shown as having elaborately coiffed hair.

The Pallava and Chola dynasties

The Pallava and Chola dynasties dominated Southern India from the 7th to the 13th centuries. They were among the most powerful ruling clans in medieval times. Hinduism developed under their reign. Once the social institutions were established, art, architecture, literature and music flourished. Culture crystallized and the sphere of its influence spread across Southern and Central India, besides having a marked impact on the patterns of life in the North.

The temple played a powerful role in Hindu society. The immensely wealthy temple trusts were controlled by Brahmins who acted as financiers and traded in commodities. They sponsored textile guilds and co-operatives and the craft workshops that were set up around the temples produced the finest fabrics and jewelry for the kings and the gods. The demand for Indian textiles and spices grew and led to a lucrative export trade which in turn led to the development of textile centers of excellence.

The profusion of figurative sculpture of this period provides vital references in tracing the evolution of royal clothing. Although the portrayal of the human form itself differs widely from region to region, the clothing patterns of ancient India which focused on highlighting rather than concealing the contours of the body remained largely unchanged. The carvings in the temples of Khajuraho and Konarak reaffirm the Hindu ideal of physical sensuousness, their belief in the attainment of the divine through the worship of beauty and the belief in fertility and the cycle of life. Regardless of whether the sculptures were patronized by Hindu, Jain or Buddhist dynasties, preference for the unstitched garment prevailed, particularly in the Southern and Central parts of India.
The dancing apsaras painted on the ceiling of the Great Temple at Tanjore (1000 A.D) are draped in fine transparent uttariyas and antariyas. This is in keeping with the Southern tradition, where the celebration of the body is reflected both in paintings and in the use of Chola bronze casting, which has produced two of the world’s most wonderful and voluptuous dancing forms - the Nataraja (the cosmic dance of Shiva, representing the eternal cycle of birth, death and rebirth) and the dancing Krishna. Dancing in temple courtyards per se was an important ritual of worship and was performed by highly skilled dancers. Exquisite jewelry was crafted and textiles woven not only for the aristocracy, but also for dancers who worshipped the gods through their art. The development of these classical dance forms continued unfettered and the stylistic draping of the dance costumes has been maintained in its original form even in the present day.

Besides the cave and temple paintings which kept more or less to the Ajanta tradition, there is little visual evidence of any significant changes in clothing styles until the appearance of the painted manuscripts in the 15th century. The palm leaf was replaced by paper, and brighter colors were introduced to the palette allowing elaborate details. The main subject-matter of most Jain and Hindu manuscripts was religious while the Western Indian school of painting also produced manuscripts of a secular nature, such as the erotic and romantic love stories of the Chaurapanchashika. The informality of style in these paintings helps to build a realistic picture of daily life and clothing customs. The male figures are generally portrayed in long and short antariyas and they all wear some form of decorative headdress. A formal style of turban, similar to the Akbari turban that became fashionable much later on in the Mughal courts, makes its appearance, but jeweled tiaras decorated with tassels are a more common form of royal headgear. Along with these peaked crowns, the kings are shown wearing a profusion of jewelry, although their feet remain bare. There is a strong emphasis on coiffure. Some of the men wear their hair long, usually tied in a knot at the nape of the neck, and most of them sport long or short beards. Women's ensembles are still dominated by the antariya and the uttariya. Worn like a
veil, this upper garment is by now commonly referred to as the odhani. It is
usually made of transparent, fine fabrics and worn with a short, fitted choli.
Like the men, the women are shown wearing ear-rings, necklaces, armlets,
bracelets and anklets, with their hair tied in a bun or in a tasseled plait
adorned with flowers and ornaments. A bindi (dot) is normally painted on the forehead.

Naturally, where there was interaction between neighboring Hindu and
Muslim courts, a synthesis of styles did occur. The men of the Northern
Hindu courts began to include more and more stitched garments in their
clothing repertoire, although these were generally adapted to suit the local
textiles. By the fifteenth century, manuscript paintings show nobles in a
variety of stitched clothes. Chief among them is an early version of what
came to be known as the jama (a word of Persian origin) known as the
takauchiya or chakdar jama (a cross-over robe or coat with a skirt), which had
made its first appearance in the Kushan period.

The clothing of Hindu women, on the other hand, remained largely
unaffected by the arrival of the Muslims. On the whole, unstitched clothing
was still the most common form of courtly dress for both men and women
throughout the medieval period, and new fashions were created not so much
through the introduction of new styles, but through the evolution of textile. The
indigenous Rajput painting style favored flat areas of bright color, shallow
space, and decorative patterning to depict timeless events. In contrast,
Mughal painting featured greater naturalism and a sense of deeper space,
and portrayed both historical scenes and mythic events. Figures are
individualized through lively expression, gestures, and poses. Realistic details
of costume, adornment, personal possessions, architecture, gardens, and
animals abound. Colors are nuanced. This interest in naturalism was fueled
by the prints and paintings brought to the court by European merchants and
missionaries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Exposed to new
ways of depicting the world, Mughal painters experimented with modeling in
light and shadow and other European techniques such as perspective to
create the illusion of volume and depth. Mughal painting evolved during the reigns of the three greatest Mughal emperors. Akbar (r. 1556–1605) commissioned illustrated dynastic histories and translations of Hindu classics into Persian. The artists of Jahangir’s court (r. 1605–27) gratified the emperor’s taste for individual portrait studies of birds, animals, flowers, and members of his court. Shah Jahan (r. 1628–58) shared this interest in lifelike portraits, especially of the royal family and court members, and resumed his grandfather’s interest in history painting.

As Mughal power and patronage waned in the late seventeenth century, some court painters were drawn to the many small Rajput kingdoms. They began to develop increasingly distinct artistic styles. Some drew inspiration from Mughal art, adopting its naturalism, deeper space, more varied colors, and subject matter. Others produced paintings inspired by the indigenous Rajput love of bright color, shallow space, expressive gesture, and mythic subject matter. Still others synthesized elements of both. In the nineteenth century, this profusion of styles, at first vivid and exciting, seemed at a loss for inspiration in the face of India’s changing world. Painting ateliers declined, as the British preferred to build elaborate palaces, and the advent of photography to record royal events further undermined the traditional role of painting at the courts. Pattern—floral and geometric—is another distinctive feature of court art, whether spread across a wall, on a book cover or border of an album leaf, around a dagger hilt, or on a carpet. With straight edge and compass, artists created geometric patterns of intersecting circles upon which they drew grids of equilateral triangles and squares. These in turn could be elaborated into polygons and stars. Vines, leaves, and blossoms grew out of each other in continuous curving patterns. In the period, these floral designs became more and more realistic, so that many flowers could be identified.

**The Development of Attire and Fashion**

Although the courtly culture of the Mughal rulers of the Indian subcontinent is quite well known as it has been much documented in literary and plastic art references. By that point in time a thriving system of
international trade that linked the ports of Southern India with those of ancient Rome flourished and the rich products of India ranging from its textiles to its spices and precious stones were sent off from Indian shores to the places far and wide. The chronicles of the Greek Periplus reveal that Indian exports included a variety of spices, aromatics, quality textiles (muslins and cottons), ivory, high quality metals and gems. As these were considered items of luxury in those days, they were in high demand. While a good portion of this Indo-Roman trade was reciprocal, [Rome in its turn supplying exotic and useful items like cut-gems, coral, wines, perfumes, papyrus, copper, tin and lead ingots], the trade balance was considerably weighted in India’s favor. Often the balance of payments had to be met in precious metals, either gold or silver coinage, or other valuables like red coral (i.e. the hard currency of the ancient world).

India was particularly renowned for its ivory work and its fine muslins (known in Roman literature as 'woven air'). However, these items must have been quite expensive since the Roman writer Pliny (AD 23-79) complained of the cost of these and other luxury commodities that were imported from India. "Not a year passed in which India did not take fifty million sesterces away from Rome", wrote Pliny. This trade surplus gave rise to prosperous urban centres which were linked to an extensive network of internal trade. The literary records from that period paint a picture of abundance and splendour. A Tamil romance the Silappathikaarum (The Ankle Bracelet), (approximately in the late 2nd century AD), provides a glimpse of the maritime wealth of the cosmopolitan cities of South India. Set in the prosperous port city of Puhar (Kaveripattanam), the story refers to ship owners described as having riches that may have well been the 'the envy of foreign kings'. Puhar is portrayed as a city populated by entrepreneurial merchants and traders, where trade was well regulated: "The city of Puhar possessed a spacious forum for storing bales of merchandise, with markings showing the quantity, weight, and name of the owner." The Silappathikaarum suggests that the markets offered a great variety of precious commodities prized in the ancient world. Special streets were earmarked for merchants that traded in items such as coral,
sandalwood, jewelry, flawless pearls, gold, and precious gems. Skilled craftspeople brought their finished goods such as fine silks, woven fabrics, and luxurious ivory carvings to these port towns.

**Trade and Exports: Textiles**

The Chinese traveller Chau Ju-kua refers to Gujarat of the 13th century as a source of cotton fabrics of every color and mentions that every year these were shipped to the Arab countries for sale. Marco Polo, the renowned traveler of the 13th century had recorded the exports of Indian textiles to China and South East Asia from the Masulipattinam (Andhra) and Coromandel (Tamil) coasts in the "largest ships" then known. It is conjectured that the initial development of this trade accompanied the spread of Indian cultural influence in South-East Asia. John Irwin observed that the "textile patterns on sculptures of Indian deities in central Java and elsewhere in the region very probably reflect the prestige cloths in circulation in the late first millennium". Chou Ta-kuan, the Chinese observer of life at the Khmer capital of Angkor at the end of the thirteenth century, wrote that "preference was given to the Indian weaving for its skill and delicacy."

Irwin31 further observed that elaborately decorated Indian textiles were highly valued when he records, "Many spectacular Indian trade cloths, most now two or three centuries old, have been treasured as heirlooms throughout Southeast Asia into the twentieth century, making only rare appearances at important ceremonies or at times of crisis". Prestige trade textiles such as the Patola (double ikat silk in natural dyes) from Patan and Ahmedabad, and decorative cottons in brilliant color-fast dyes from Gujarat and the Coromandel coast were sought after by the Malaysian royalty and wealthy traders of the Phillipines. The port city of Surat (in Gujarat) emerged as the major distribution point for patola destined for South-East Asia, and was frequented by the ships of the Dutch East India Company. "The right to wear patola was widely claimed as a prerogative of the Indonesian nobility, a practice

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encouraged by the Dutch East India Company who distributed patola to local rulers as part of the incentives offered to win local trading concessions and co-operation. Textiles comprised a significant proportion of the Portuguese trade with India. These included embroidered bedspreads and wall hangings possibly produced at Satgaon, the old mercantile capital of Bengal (near modern Calcutta). Quilts of embroidered wild silk (tassar, munga or eri) on a cotton or jute ground, combining European and Indian motifs were commissioned by the Portuguese who had been attracted to Bengal, [as traders in the early centuries AD had been], by the quality of the region's textiles. J.H. van Linschoten, who was based in Goa as Secretary to the Archbishop in the 1580s, observed that Cambay also produced silk embroidered quilts. Textiles from Golconda and further South also found favor in Europe and South East Asia. In the early 1600s, Dutch and English trading settlements were established in Golconda territory. Produced in the Golconda hinterland, kalamkaris - i.e. finely painted cotton fabrics were bought or commissioned from the port city of Masulipattinam. Buying at source enabled the Dutch and English merchants to procure these textiles at rates about 30% lower. 'Palampores' - painted fabrics based on the "tree of life" motif that had become popular in the Mughal and Deccan courts were also highly regarded.

The attractiveness of fast dyed, multi-colored Indian prints on cotton (i.e. chintz) in Europe led to the formation of the London East India Company in 1600, followed by their Dutch and French counterparts. By the late 1600s, there was such overwhelming demand for Indian chintz\textsuperscript{32} (whether from Chittagong in Bengal, Patna in Bihar or Surat in Gujarat, that ultimately French and English wool and silk merchants prevailed on their governments to ban the import of these cottons from India. The French ban came in 1686, while the English followed in 1701. Not all textile producing centres were associated with ports. Several textile producing centres that catered to the internal market, and to the overland international trade were located in Northern and Central India, in the kingdoms of the Rajputs and the Mughals,

each with their own unique specialization. While Kashmir was well known for its woollen weaves and embroidery, cities like Benaras, Ujjain, Indore and Paithan (near Aurangabad) were reknowned for their fine silks and brocades. Rajasthan specialized in all manner of patterned prints and dyed cloths.

**Trade and Exports: Jewelry and Metals**

Tamil texts dating to the 2nd century AD and the chronicles of the 14th century traveler Ibn Batuta of Tunisia, and Europeans who visited the Vijaynagar, or Golconda kingdoms validate the riches and high quality craftsmanship fo the Indian workers be they jewelers or weavers. The ostentatious display of jewels at the Mughal court is borne out by contemporary miniature paintings and a large quantity of extant pieces. Jewelry was worn by both men and women, and was also used in the ornamentation of arms and armour, furniture and vessels. Gems dominate Mughal jewellery. India was one of the major sources and trading centres for precious stones.

Shah Jahan was particularly knowledgeable about gems, and personally supervised some of the works executed in the "karkhanas". Several fine examples of jewelry from the courts of the Mughals and Rajputs, and other regional nawabs can be seen in the collection in the National Museum, including selections from Benaras, Bengal and Southern India. Since the Indian sub-continent invariably carried a trade surplus, precious and semi-precious stones, or gold and silver from the international trade complemented internally mined supplies, leading several visitors to India to note the enormous wealth of some of India's most well known kingdoms. They would describe overflowing treasuries, replete with a variety of precious metals and gems. Bazaars exclusively devoted to trade in precious metals and stones were not uncommon.

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33 A fine collection of these Indian Textiles can be seen in the Calico Museum in Ahmedabad and in the Crafts Museum in Delhi
Motif, Ornamentation and Texture