

CLOTHING ACCORDING TO SOCIAL CLASSES IN THE MUGHAL EMPIRE: A STUDY BASED ON AKBARNAMA MINIATURES



BABÜRLÜLERDE SOSYAL SINIFLARA GÖRE GİYİM: EKBERNAME MİNYATÜRLERİNE DAYALI BİR İNCELEME

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Abstract: Clothing and accessories are important tools for understanding and expressing the social and cultural richness of civilization. The Mughals were a Turkic-Mongol dynasty that ruled over India and its surrounding regions from the 16th to the 19th century, playing a significant role in the development of culture and civilization in that area. The aim of this research is to examine the clothing characteristics of the Mughals as depicted in the miniatures from the Akbarnama. A biography of the Mughal emperor Akbar written between 1595 and 1605. Furthermore, the research aims to determine clothing characteristics based on the social classes of the era. The research follows a qualitative approach. A total of 98 miniatures from the Akbarnama were obtained from the catalogues of various museums. From these miniatures, 65 figures were selected for analysis through purposive sampling. The selection of figures was based on social class determinants. The clothing of the selected figures was analysed through observation forms, and their characteristics were described and illustrated. The obtained data were classified according to social class to reach research findings. Furthermore, the clothing was classified according to social classes, including the king, royals, governors, generals, army men, servers, and laborers, in order to determine the specific characteristics of their attire and dressing styles. This research contributes to the understanding of various social and cultural features of the Mughal era by revealing how clothing changed according to social classes during the reign of the Mughals.

Keywords: Mughal, Akbar Shah, Mughal clothing, clothing, Akbarnama,

Öz: Giysiler ve aksesuarlar, bir medeniyetin sosyal ve kültürel zenginliği anlamak ve ifade etmek için önemli araçlardır. Babürlüler 16. yüzyıldan 19. yüzyıla kadar Hindistan ve çevresinde hüküm sürmüş o bölgede kültür ve medeniyetin gelişmesinde büyük rol oynamış Türk-Moğol kökenli bir devlettir. Bu araştırmanın amacı, Babür imparatorü Ekber'in biyografisi olarak 1595-1605 tarihleri arasında yazılmış olan Ekbername'deki minyatürlere göre Babürlülerin giyim kuşam özelliklerini ortaya koymaktır. Ayrıca dönemin sosyal sınıflarına göre giyim özelliklerini belirlemek de amaçlanmıştır. Araştırma nitel bir araştırmadır. Araştırmada çeşitli müzelerin kataloglarında yer alan ekbernameye ait 98 minyatüre ulaşılmıştır. Bu minyatürlerde yer alan figürlerden 65 figür kasıtlı örnekleme yoluyla araştırmada incelenmek

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üzere seçilmiştir. Figürlerin seçilmesinde sosyal sınıf belirleyici olmuştur. Araştırmanın örneklemini oluşturan figürlerin giysileri gözlem formları yoluyla analiz edilmiş ve özellikleri tanımlanarak ilüstrasyonları çizilmiştir. Ulaşılan veriler sosyal sınıfı göre sınıflanarak araştırma sonuçlarına ulaşılmıştır. Ayrıca, giysiler, padişah, soylular, valiler, generaller, askerler, hizmetkârlar ve işçiler gibi farklı gruplara göre sınıflandırılarak giysilerin özellikleri ve giyinme şekilleri belirlenmeye çalışılmıştır. Bu araştırma Babürler döneminde sosyal sınıflara göre giysilerin nasıl değiştiğini ortaya koyarak dönemin çeşitli toplumsal ve kültürel özelliklerin anlaşılmasına katkı sağlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Babürlüler, Ekber Şah, Babürlülerde giyim, Giyim, Ekbername.

Introduction

Social structure comes into being through the cultural values of a community or the population living in a region. Political and economic developments of a nation decide the social circumstances of the nation, and advancements in governmental systems, arts, literature, culture, and social corporation distinguish the society from human's physiological and behavioural nature (Khurshid, 1997). One of many forms to express our social body is the clothing practice it gives form and a silhouette to one social being in the culture (Hendrickson, 1996). The significance of dressing also set forth a new social identity and becomes the bases of social relationships.

Travelers to Mughal Empire like Francois Bernier, Thomas Roe, and Tavernier, over their era in India, have mentioned the prominence of dress as a status difference and accordingly creating a class. Sir Thomas Roe a British diplomat, in his book 'Journal of the Mission to the Mughal Empire' writes about the systems and classes in the society (Varma, 2010).

Akbar was an extraordinary ruler and was greatly interested in India's culture and arts. He not only expanded his empire but also submerged his political and personal life in Indian culture by showing tolerance for other religions and races and even marrying a Rajput princess (Dimand, 1953: 46).

As the Mughals were the invaders in the subcontinent it is important to mention the social structure of the subcontinent before the Mughals. The subcontinent originally had a faint character of unity and consisted of many small states, which were mostly ruled by the Hindu Rajas or Muslim invaders after the 7th century (Khurshid, 1997).

According to social life, a great contrast was visible between the ostensions upper class and the miserable lower class. There were three tiers in society, with the highest consisting of governors, landlords, clerics, aristocrats, and other noblemen. Common people were classed in the upper middle class i.e. professionals like doctors, bankers, goldsmiths, traders, merchants, etc, and peasants, artisans, and workers were in the lower middle class (Bernier, 1981).

The Book *Akbarnama* is taken into account to understand the social classes in Mughal Empire according to dressing as the book not only

comprises the text but also has illustrations ascribed to it. The biography consists of three volumes; the first two describe his life, journeys, and expeditions, while the third volume explains his established religion named Ain-e-Akbari, 'Ain-e-Akbari' was compiled in the book which is the third volume of Akbar's biography (Khurshid, 1997). *Akbarnama* was originally written in 'Persian' and now translated copies of English and Urdu are available. The book includes the text and illustrates miniature paintings depicting different events of his life. All the miniatures related to *Akbarnama* were painted between 1595-1605 during the reign of Akbar and are based on the original Persian text of the book (Randhawa, 1983). There are three manuscripts of the book found and these miniature paintings are displayed in National Museum (New Delhi), Albert and Victoria Museum (London), and Chester and Beatty Museum (Dublin). As a result, the miniature paintings not only exhibit the events of his life but also expose the culture of his kingdom, and clothing is one of the essences to depict a culture. The garments worn by the emperor Akbar and his subjects show the status, power, designs, and developments in the field of textiles in that era. As the miniatures were painted during the reign of Akbar and the painters were also the witness of the events, the veracity of the events, thus miniatures are supposed to be commensurate with the actual event.

The miniatures are painted from 1595 to 1605, and the commentary in *Akbarnama* mentions some of the names of garments from Mongol and Turkish cultures. The memoir mentions the fabric materials, colors worn on specific days, and the importance of some of the garments and accessories; such as 'Khilat', 'Firman', 'Chilta Hazar Mikhi', 'Daqu', 'Mi'jar', 'The-band' and many more. Different illustrations from 'Akbarnama' shows Akbar wearing gold embroidery on his garments such as long coat, long and short tunic, pelt coats, and long fabric girdle tied over the waist and hip (Goswamy, 1993).

Mongols from Central Asia, at the time of Akbar, used a variety of headgears which included different caps and turbans, varying from region to region, and was a distinction between the ranks and evocative of their belonging homelands. Different animal skins such as black sheep's skin and bark from trees were used by Mongols. Three folded turbans with a heron feather on them were more commonly used among Timur's descendants. The plume was used to dignify monarchs from others and was chosen according to the occasion. The uniform followed all over the country was similar to Mongol attire (Choudhary, 2015).

In the book, the writer Abu-ul- Fazal mentions the dresses of Royal Muslim women in the harem and Hindu women in India. Muslim ladies were fully covered, usually wearing full-length chemise as an undergarment, and another loose full-sleeve dress over it. Royal Muslim ladies sometimes wore up to four layers of dresses. Mostly all Muslim women wore long veils also known as burqas or as Gulbadan Begam mentions head-to-toe dresses in 'Hamza Nama' (Godden, 1980).

Akbar's clothing style was characterized by a blend of Persian, Indian, Central Asian, and European elements. He promoted a distinctive courtly attire known as the 'Mughal court dress' that combined luxurious fabrics, intricate embroideries, and rich colours. Akbar's personal wardrobe was known for its opulence, featuring fine silks, brocades, and embellishments. Akbar's fascination with the Timurid and Safavid cultures attributed to the adoption of Persian and Central Asian elements in Mughal clothing (Choudhary, 2015).

Akbar's sartorial choices extended beyond his own court and influenced the wider culture. The nobility and elites of the Mughal court, as well as regional rulers and aristocrats, sought to emulate his clothing style as a means of displaying status and prestige. This led to the widespread adoption of Mughal court dress among the ruling classes. Additionally, Akbar's encouragement of cultural exchange and his patronage of the arts further influenced clothing styles. The Mughal court became a centre for skilled artisans and craftsmen who created intricate textiles, embroideries, and embellishments. This flourishing textile industry not only catered to the demands of the elite but also influenced popular fashion trends among the general population (Parkash, 2012).

The influence of Mughal fashion extended beyond the court, shaping clothing trends among the ruling classes and the wider population, leaving a lasting impact on Indian fashion and textile traditions. However, despite the enduring inspiration taken from Mughal clothing, there is a noticeable lack of academic research on this topic, indicating a gap that necessitates further studies to preserve these clothing styles and traditions.

Two research studies focused on Mughal imperial costumes and designs during the 16th and 17th centuries. Chaudhary's study (2015) examined the nature of Babur's costumes, including their designs, fabrics, industry, and technical aspects. It highlighted the prevalence of geometric patterns during the early Mughal period, particularly under Emperor Akbar's reign until the rule of Jahangir. On the other hand, Prakash's study (2012) compared Mughal costumes from the 16th to 18th century with the royal costumes of Jodhpur, a former princely state in India. This research aimed to explore Mughal influences on the costumes of Jodhpur's rulers and investigate the clothing worn by individuals associated with the Mughal emperors and the Jodhpur palace. The analysis encompassed various aspects of costumes, including upper and lower garments, belts, headgear, draped clothing, footwear, jewellery, and accessories. Comparing the costumes of Jodhpur rulers and the Mughals revealed both similarities and differences in terms of upper garment length, collars, waistbands, and pants.

The existing literature review reveals a notable gap in academic studies pertaining to various dimensions of the topic. Despite the abundance of books featuring miniatures attributed to the Mughal era, individual

analysis of these artworks in relation to the clothing of that time remains largely unexplored. Furthermore, the impact of social status, cultural influences, fashion trends, lifestyle and occupation, personal preferences, gender, dynamics, and different occasions on clothing within this historical context has not been adequately examined. This lack of scholarly investigation warrants further attention and research.

Research Aims and Methodology

This study aims to analyse the variations in clothing styles based on changes in social status, as depicted in the miniatures attributed to 'Akbarname', a biography of Emperor Akbar written between 1556 and 1605. A qualitative research design was employed, utilizing the direct observation method to examine the differences in clothing according to the social status of the depicted figures. Data collection followed a nonprobability approach, specifically purposive sampling based on the correlation between the book's text and the figures portrayed in the miniatures.

The miniatures and accompanying text were analysed in parallel, with the selection of miniatures based on the social status and type of clothing depicted. Repetitive clothing styles were excluded to ensure a diverse sample. The study focused on three main categories: King (Akbar) and royals, Governors, generals and nobles, servers and laborers. A detailed comparison was conducted within each category, considering the clothing of various individuals. To aid in the analysis, flat drawings were created to visually depict the garments.

The literature review and references for this study were based on the book Akbarname, which provided insights into fabrics, materials, costumes, functionality, and aesthetics. The miniatures analysed in this research were sourced from The Museum of New Delhi, the Chester and Beatty Museum, and The Victoria and Albert Museum. A total of 98 virtual miniatures were collected, each containing multiple figures. From these miniatures, 65 figures were selected for analysis based on their different social statuses. The study comprises 18 depictions of Emperor Akbar, 8 of army men, 22 of servants, entertainers, workers, and transcribers, and 17 of noblemen, governors, and generals. The identification of important characters, such as king, princes, governors, and generals, was facilitated through the use of texts from the book and labelling found within the miniatures.

Based on the identified differences, a comprehensive conclusion was drawn, contributing to our understanding of the relationship between clothing and social status during the Mughal era. The findings shed light on the diverse attire worn by individuals belonging to different ranks within the social hierarchy, and the research methodology employed provides a valuable framework for future studies investigating the significance of clothing as an indicator of social status in historical contexts.

Results and discussions

Literature and illustrations from Akbarnama exhibit a vast variety of garments worn by Akbar and other men during different events, seasons, and places.

Akbar's and Royals Clothing

Emperor Akbar showed a great interest in clothing. According to Akbarnama, he had a wardrobe room with servants. The text states that: 'Akbar had 120 suits in his wardrobe that were made up of 12 bundles, intended as a supply for 12 months. Nasim-ud-din Hasan Kurktarak and Shida Beg were the keepers of the wardrobe' (Fazal, 1602/1927: 63, 1020). The words used by them are 'Tahwildar' and 'KurukTaraq.' 'Kuruk' means fur, and 'Taraq' is the keeper.

Akbar can be seen wearing a 'Jama,' a long outer garment that extends to the ankle, in (Figure 1). Jama was the outerwear used by men, with a tight cross-over bodice stitched to the skirt at the waistline, and the length varied accordingly from knee length to ankle length. The crossover bodice is tied with strings, sometimes decorated with beads on the right waist side. As it is a cross-over wrapped dress, the finished neckline is V-shaped. Another extensively worn dress seen in the miniatures related to the Akbarnama is an ankle-length or ankle-length long tunic opening in the front and fastened by strings or buttons, known as 'peshwaz'. Peshwaz is similar to 'Jama,' but its symmetrical silhouette and opening in the front differentiate it from 'Jama.' The neckline can be V-shaped or round. The front is fastened with gold buttons, silver strings, or strings with tassels at the end, made with expensive jewels, depending on the affordability of the garment owner. These buttons and strings are commonly used for embellishment purposes to enhance the aesthetics of the garment. Sleeve length can vary from full sleeve to half sleeves (Chaudhary, 2015).

Akbar is mostly illustrated wearing striped patterns or solid colours for his dresses. Thus, it can be seen that solid colours and streaks made with gold or silver thread were popular for the upper garments. Some of the jama worn by him are transparent, showing the fineness of the fabric (Mukherjee, 2001), as shown in (Figure 4). A vast variety of textiles mentioned by Abu ul Fazl in 'Ain-i-Akbari' refers to well-crafted silks, wool, and cotton brought from all around the world (Fazal, 1602/1927).

Akbar brought his rich Persian heritage with him, which can be seen in his headgear. A variety of headgear can be seen in the illustrations, mostly voluminous and outstanding. Some are wound around the cap or kulah, also known as the 'Kuladhar turban,' while some are stitched and embellished as one headgear. Fancy fabrics such as silk or fine cotton were used in plain, striped, or brocaded patterns. Akbar's turbans are decorated with strings of pearls, gold or silver threads, and brooches made of gold and jewels in the centre. Furthermore, plumes of heron, white egrets, and peacocks can be

seen on the emperor's turbans only (Untracht, 1997), as seen in (Figures 1 and 4).

The commonly used word for armour and arms was 'Silah.' One of Akbar's armors is saved by the 'CSMVS, The Museum Mumbai' in India, whereas Akbarnama does not illustrate Akbar wearing the armour himself. Akbar and wealthy individuals had their collections of weapons and armour (Irvine, 1903).

In the Persian language, 'qaba' is a type of kaftan or long coat, open in the middle, worn by men. In some narrations, it is ascribed as a priest's robe in Parisian. The book 'Ain-e-Akbari' by Emperor Akbar the Great refers to 'qaba' as 'jama-i-pumba-dar' and explains it as a wadded coat (Fazal, 1602/1927). Sleeves can be tight or have a slit in the front part, making the sleeve hang loosely under the forearm. According to Verma (1978), it is a loose fit over a garment with no fasteners but a binding on the edges. But some literature comments on the buttons and loops starting from under the neckline or collar on the placket of the coat. The fasteners provided functionality and aesthetics to the garment. The neckline and the plackets often have contrasting cotton, silk floss binding, or fur. As Akbar originally came from Central Asia, a land with mostly cold meteorological conditions, the outer garments like 'qaba' or 'jama' were made of heavy fabrics such as wool, felt, leather, animal skins, or fur. Some outer garments drape in the illustrations, showing the bulky character of the material.

Many miniatures do not show the lower garment in detail as it is usually covered by the upper garment, or the figure is sitting with his legs folded, or the long boots are covering the lower garment. In many illustrations, Emperor Akbar is sitting, and the upper garment is draped over the legs, or he is riding the horse wearing long knee-high boots, and most predictably, trousers are tucked into the boots or dressed in a long ankle-length tunic that covers the details of the lower garment. Ansari (1974) added names such as 'shalwar,' 'pyjama,' 'churi-pyjama,' or trousers in his study for the lower garment. The lower garment, which can be seen, is of solid color, as the upper garments were worn in two layers, upper and over garment, and had aesthetic details on them, usually varying from knee to ankle length. It is possible that the lower garment was given less importance (Chaudhary, 2015).

Regarding the miniatures of Akbar in Akbarnama, there are only a few pieces of outerwear worn by him painted in the miniatures, as shown in Figure 3. However, the text does mention his outer wears and robes made from expensive furs, different types of Khilats (robe of honor), and his raincoat (Fazal, 1602/1927). Outerwear consisted of farji, qaba, or fur coats. Farji is a quilted overcoat with no binding, often used as an overcoat. It is shown as a half-sleeve coat worn over a full-sleeve undergarment, but it can have full sleeves in its variation. According to the literature found, farji was

quilted with up to one kilogram of cotton, referred to as 'seer of cotton.' Farji is fitted to the body up to the waist, and the rest is a flowy loose knee-length or ankle-length skirt. The front of the garment is fastened with numerous fasteners or buttons from neck to waist. It has a reverse collar with gold or silver lapels, and the collar can be made of the fur of any animal. Qaba is a front open, full-length, half-sleeved overcoat. It can be simple or embellished with embroidery, jewels, fur, or other ornaments, as seen in (Figure 7).

Prince Sultan Selim asked for a robe of a black fox, which was granted to him along with the robe of a white fox (Fazal, 1602/1907). One of the robes mentioned has sleeves with 7-color embroidery, and the details of the sleeves mention that the 7 embroidered ways of loyalty cover 18,000 species under his generosity (Fazal, 1602/1907: 28). Short sleeves were worn by religious figures and were a sign of asceticism (Fazal, 1602/1907: 89). Tumanba Khan, who was the ancestor of Akbar, while waiting for one of his sons' birth, ordered a generously embroidered robe to be made for the prince to be born (Fazal, 1602/1907: 187).

Mughal emperors had a rich taste for jewels and gems. Emperor Akbar is seen wearing a thumb ring on the right thumb and another ring on the little finger in (Figure 3). He appears to wear the thumb ring regularly. Furthermore, he is seen wearing jewelry like strings of pearls around his neck.

Other accessories include daggers such as 'khanjar,' jamdhar, a sword, archer's rings, 'zingir' or 'shast' hanging from the waistband, a glove, and a hawk.

A variety of shoes are illustrated and worn according to their function and weather conditions. They include knee-high boots, boots with small heels, as well as slip-ons. Felt, leather, animal skin, fur, or velvet appear to be used as materials for shoes.

A shawl, a draped garment, can be seen in a few of the miniatures known as a shawl. One shawl is two-sided with different colors, while the other is semi-transparent and spread across the shoulders. These long rectangular shawls were from the Subcontinent's culture, mostly worn in the winter to keep warm and famously made with Cashmere (pashmina). Shawls made with lighter material are also referred to as 'Dupatta,' which can be seen in (Figure 2), where Akbar is covering his upper body with this fine fabric.

The dressing was not complete without accessories. Some were worn, such as waistbelts, shawls, headgear, and jewelry, while others were carried, such as daggers or beads. Again, all the miniatures of Akbar show that these accessories were part of the dressing and were a way to show one's affordability. Waistbelts, also referred to as cummerbunds in the subcontinent region, are primarily long pieces of cloth folded into a narrow band and tied or wrapped around the waist. They are also known as 'patka'

and are fastened over the tunic. The edges can be left hanging to hip or knee length, or it can be tucked into itself. Akbar, in (Figure 1), can be seen wearing a gold belt on top of patka. The swords and daggers are seen inserted in the waistband, while the attendants and servers are only wearing a single patka on their waists, which are simple without embroidery or fewer embellishments.



Figure 1.



Figure 2.

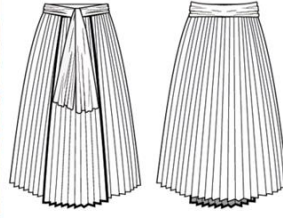


Figure 1. Original miniature and reproduced illustration of Emperor Akbar from accession no: IS.2:3-1896, Akbarnama, Victoria Albert Museum, London.

Figure 2. Akbar in his palace. Accession no: IS.2:29-1896, Akbarnama, Victoria Albert Museum, London.



Figure 3.



Figure 4.



Figure 5.

Figure 3. Emperor Akbar from the accession no: IS.2:53-1896, Akbarnama, Chester and Beatty Museum, Dublin.

Figure 4. Akbar. Accession no: 03.176, Akbarnama, Chester and Beatty Museum, Dublin.

Figure 5: Personal Armour Of Emperor Akbar. Accession no: 22.4028(Helmet), 22.4054(Breastplate), 22.4007(Arms guards). CSMVS, The Museum Mumbai, Mumbai.

Nobels, Governors, and Generals Clothing

Nobles, governors, and generals in the court of Akbar were depicted wearing distinctive clothing that showcased their status and rank. The outer garments of these individuals often featured enhanced floral and geometrical designs, particularly on the interlining or as patterns on overcoats as seen in (Figure 6). The main garments worn by noblemen were the 'jama,' 'peshwaz,' or 'chakdar jama,' which had slits on the sides. These dresses were tight on the chest and tied near the side seam, with a loose-fitting skirt. The positioning of the tie on the dress indicated the religious affiliation of the courtiers: Muslims tied their dresses on the right side, while Hindu courtiers tied them on the left (Fazal, 1602/1927).

In some miniatures from the Akbarnama, noblemen can be seen wearing outer garments. For example, in a miniature depicting Raja Surjan Hada submitting to Akbar, a courtier behind Raja is shown wearing a red 'Aqaba,' which is an overcoat with floral patterns (figure 8). Another notable garment is the fur-trimmed overcoat known as 'gadar,' worn by Ataga Khan, the prime minister of Akbar. This coat has short sleeves and a geometric pattern (Figure 9). Fabrics such as brocade with floral designs were commonly used among the aristocracy.

The term 'khilat' referred to the robe or outer garment gifted by the emperor. A khilat typically included a robe, a turban, and a girdle. It was presented by the king to generals, governors, noblemen, or other individuals of importance to honour them and demonstrate the emperor's appreciation. Some influential people who received khilats from Akbar mentioned in the Akbarnama were Rumi Khan, Adham Khan, Mirza Muhamad Hakim, Bairam Khan, Yadgar Nasir Mirza, Qatb-ud-din (Fazal, 1602/1927: 304-528), and a Khawaja who went for pilgrimage (Fazal, 1602/1927: 1247). Additionally, a 'firman' was a gracious present consisting of a khilat and a horse (Fazal, 1602/1907: 462). The 'Khilat-i-Fathahi' referred to the robe of victory given to generals or army men who achieved success in battle. The 'daqu' was an Arabic name for the pelisse coat or jacket worn by army men and was bestowed upon General Atka Khan (Fazal, 1602/1907:174).

The inner garments worn by these individuals are rarely identified in the miniatures. Some figures show the inner garment visible under the shirt from the neckline and sleeves, indicating a tightly fitted bodice with full or half sleeves. The term 'nimcha' is mentioned in reference to the undergarment, but there is limited information available about the specific details and variations of inner garments worn by different classes (Babur, 1970).

Turbans were the predominant headgear worn by nobles, governors, and generals, similar in style to the emperor but simpler and without plumules. One mentioned headgear in the book is the 'Taj-i-izzat,' the cap of honour, which featured a broader cloth called 'furja' wrapped around to form the number '77' on the front of the cap, representing the numerical value of the word 'Izz' meaning honor (Fazal, 1602/1907: 648). In (figure 7), a nobleman on Akbar's coronation feast can be seen wearing this cap. The headgear colours commonly used by servants were white and red.

Regarding waistbands or cummerbunds, aristocrats were often seen wearing two 'patkas' of varying lengths. One patka, usually of a solid color, was shorter in length and often embroidered with gold and silver on its edges or featured patterns all over (Figure 6.)



Figure 6.

Figure 6. Akbar's general Syed Abdullah Khan informing Akbar about the conquest of Bengal. Accession no: 03.230, Akbarnama, Chester Beatty Museum, Dublin.

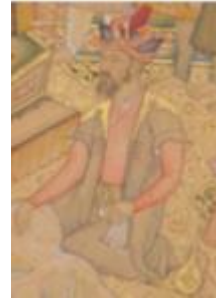


Figure 7.

Figure 7. A nobleman on Akbar's coronation feast Accession no: 03.6, Akbarnama, Chester and Beatty Museum, Dublin.



Figure 8.

Figure 8: A courtier in kings court, Accession no: IS.2:75-1896, Akbarnama, Victoria Albert Museum, London.



Figure 9.

Figure 9: Prime Minister Ataga Khan praying for Akbar's safety, Akbar was struggling riding a difficult elephant named 'Hawa'. Accession no: IS.2:21-1896, Akbarnama, Victoria Albert Museum, London.

Army Clothing

The miniatures from the Akbarnama that depict war scenes showcase the army, with eight selected figures of soldiers, each adorned in intricately crafted armour. These soldiers are illustrated wearing exquisitely designed armour, showcasing the meticulous craftsmanship of the era. These soldiers are depicted wearing exquisitely designed armour, highlighting the attention to detail and craftsmanship of the era. The armour worn by these soldiers is meticulously crafted from materials such as gold and silver, showcasing the opulence and attention to detail prevalent during that time. The armour exhibits exquisite craftsmanship, with steel plates embellished with intricate inlays of gold and silver, as well as small gems. Armour consisted of the helmet, a plated cuirass, a vambrace covering the hand and the forearm, a thigh plate and more often wearing long boots rather than slippers. Cartridge pouches can be seen tied on the waist and a musket is carried in arms (Chaudhary, 2015). All horsemen had to use the armour,

some army men could afford the armour themselves while others were granted by the government, and were subject to a fine in case not turning up with armour. Miniatures show two main categories of armours, first as a coat of mail the closely interlocked rings of metal coving the body and second separate helmet with plates around, the breastplate in the form of a shirt, legs, and arms covering (Irvine, 1903). Irvine (1903) while writing about the armour of points out the difference between the armour of noblemen of high rank and common soldiers. He writes as follows:

‘The armour was worn as follows: - Depending from the cuirass was generally a skirt, which was at times of velvet embroidered with gold. Underneath the body, armour was worn a ‘qabchah’, or jacket quilted and slightly ornamented. Silken trousers and a pair of Kashmir shawls around the waist completed the costume of a nobleman of high rank. As to these quilted coats, we are told elsewhere that ‘common soldiers wore an ample upper garment, quilted thick with cotton, coming down as far as the knee. These coats would deaden the stroke of a sabre (curved sword), stop the point of an arrow, and above all keep the body cool by intercepting the rays of the sun.’

Literature does not show many details about the clothing and armour used by soldiers, but the text uses the word ‘Chilta Hazar Mikhi’ to address a special armour made with thousand nails. ‘Cuirass’ is mentioned within the text a few times (Fazal, 1602/1927). Below figure 10 show the upper body armour, and thigh plate, and vambrace.

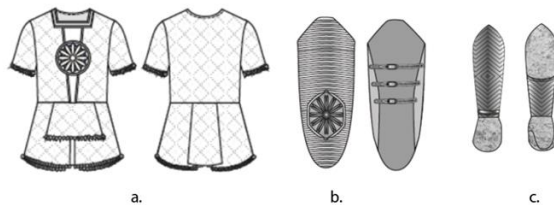


Figure 10. Flats produced from the armour of different soldiers are illustrated in Akbar Nama. **a.** Cuirass, **b.** Thigh plate, **c.** Vambrace (forearm and hand covers)



Figure 11. A soldier fighting in the war. Accession no: IS.2:106-1896, Akbarnama, Victoria Albert Museum, London.

Labourers and Servers Clothing

The workers and attendants in the court and palace of Akbar can be observed wearing simpler clothing compared to the king and nobles. They are commonly dressed in knee-length 'jama' (a long tunic), 'pyjama' (loose-fitting pants), and small turbans on their heads. These workers include individuals serving as fanbearers, food servers, gun holders, and helpers. Their clothing follows similar silhouettes as the king's attire, but the fabrics used are simpler, often dyed in a single color. Some variations in the 'jama' can be seen among the guards, such as the 'chakdar jama' with slits on the sides. In some illustrations, folded 'jama' can be seen tucked into their belts, with a bright-coloured lining visible from underneath, indicating the presence of a lining.

Laborers, such as builders or oarsmen, are frequently depicted without upper garments, with a shawl tied around their chests. They predominantly wear the 'dhoti,' an unstitched cloth wrapped around the waist. Their heads are covered with a simple plain turban.

Illustrations show variations in the leg openings of the lower garments. They can be either straight or tight with gathers on the leg, known as 'shalwar,' 'pyjama,' and 'churi pyjama,' respectively. The lower garments of Akbar, noblemen, and soldiers are mostly solid-coloured, and the leg openings are either tight with gathers or straight but not loose. However, there are a few exceptions, such as an attendant holding a musket who is seen wearing printed or woven designed 'pyjama' in one of the illustrations. Straight or wide lower garments can be seen worn by servants, such as a servant watering the courtyard who has his lower garment folded up to the knees for ergonomic purposes, or some servants involved in water catching or fishing.

Another significant garment of Indian origin is the 'dhoti' or 'langoti,' which was widely used throughout India. It is an unstitched cloth wrapped around the waist. A clear distinction can be observed between Akbar's 'dhoti' (Figure 2) and the oarsman's 'dhoti' (Figure 14). Akbar's 'dhoti' is made of fine fabric, allowing the legs to be visible from underneath, and the fabric has pleats that add elegance to the wearer's appearance according to his status. On the other hand, the oarsman is depicted roughly tying a coarse cloth around his waist.

Babur, the first emperor of the Mughal empire, mentioned in his biography about the difference in social classes, their clothing, and the lower garment. Peasants and lower-class individuals were described as going about naked and using a cloth called 'langoti' to cover their nakedness. This 'langoti' was a piece of cloth that hung down two spans from the navel, with another slip of cloth fastened to it, passing between the legs and tied to the string of the 'langoti' behind. The higher classes also had their own version

of the 'langoti,' which was tied around the waist and thrown over the head (Babur, 1970).

Lighter shawls are referred to as 'dupatta,' and these can be seen worn by the inscriber of Akbar's court, loosely spread over the shoulders, arms, and torso (Figure 13).

Some guards are depicted wearing high boots and holding rifles or sticks. The attendees often wear single-coloured simple leather slippers, with some having the back of the slipper covering the heels.



Figure 12.



Figure 13.



Figure 14.



Figure 12. An attendant of Akbar. Accession no: IS.2:22-1896, Akbarnama, Victoria Albert Museum, London.

Figure 13. An inscriber in Akbar's court. Accession no: IS.29-1896, Akbarnama, Victoria Albert Museum, London.

Figure 14. An Oarsman rowing the boat and reproduced illustration of an oarsman from the accession no: IS.2:3-1896, Akbarnama, Victoria Albert Museum, London.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research paper delves into the profound influence of social status on clothing during the reign of Mughal Emperor Akbar, shedding light on the intricate relationship between attire and social standing. The study reveals a range of findings that underscore the significant role clothing played in signalling one's social status during that era.

Emperor Akbar's extensive and diverse wardrobe, consisting of garments like 'jama', 'peshwaz', and 'qaba' made from luxurious fabrics, showcased his elevated social position. His headgear, embellished with pearls, gold or silver threads, and plumes of prestigious birds, served as symbolic representations of his regal lineage and demonstrated his high rank.

Nobles and courtiers in Akbar's court utilized intricate designs, including floral and geometrical patterns, to adorn their outer garments. These embellishments, coupled with various patterns and slits, emphasized their privileged social status. Accessories such as waistbelts, jewellery,

daggers, and beads further accentuated their attire, serving as markers of wealth and prestige.

Depictions of war scenes in miniatures provided insights into the attire of army men, reflecting their important role as defenders of the empire. Their clothing, made from heavy fabrics like wool, felt, leather, animal skins, or fur, not only fulfilled practical purposes but also symbolized their military position and valour.

Cashmere shawls, crafted from luxurious materials, were utilized as winter garments, while additional accessories like shoes, thumb rings, necklaces, and archer's rings contributed to the social distinction of the wearers.

The research paper also emphasizes the significance of khilat, which exemplified honour and felicitation bestowed upon individuals by the emperor. The khilat, comprising a robe, turban, and girdle, served as a tangible representation of recognition from the highest authority, elevating the recipient's social status.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of Mughal clothing, it is important to consider additional dimensions such as the symbolic meanings conveyed through depictions, the influence of regional and ethnic traditions, the role of courtly fashion and royal identity, and the impact of Mughal attire on contemporary fashion. By exploring these dimensions, researchers can unravel the cultural, social, and historical significance of Mughal clothing as depicted in visual representations.

Furthermore, when studying the relationship between clothing and miniatures in the Akbarnama, it is important to explore various other dimensions. These include the symbolic meaning and iconography conveyed through the depiction of clothing, the influence of regional and ethnic traditions, the significance of courtly fashion and royal identity, and the impact of Mughal attire on contemporary fashion. By considering these dimensions, researchers can gain a comprehensive understanding of the cultural, social, and historical significance of Mughal clothing as depicted in visual representations.

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Electronic Resources

An emerald, ruby, and diamond set gold state pen case and inkwell (Dawat-i dawlat). <https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-6211944>. (Accessed date: 03-12-2022)

Visual Resources

Figure 1. <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O9282/akbar-painting-tulsi/> (Accessed date: 20.09.2022)

Figure 2. https://viewer.cbl.ie/viewer/image/In_03_230/2/LOG_0000/ (Accessed date: 23.05.2020)

Figure 3. <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O9403/akbar-painting-basawan/> (Accessed date: 20.09.2022)

Figure 4. <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O9740/adham-khan-painting-miskin/> (Accessed date: 20.09.2022)

Figure 5. <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O9283/akbar-painting-tulsi/> (Accessed date: 20.09.2022)

Figure 6. https://viewer.cbl.ie/viewer/image/In_03_6/2/LOG_0000/ (Accessed date: 20.09.2022)

- Figure 7. https://cbl01.intranda.com/viewer/image/In_03_53/1/ (Accessed date: 20.09.2022)
- Figure 8. <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O9289/akbar-and-abdur-rahim-painting-anant/> (Accessed date: 20.09.2022)
- Figure 9. <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O9403/akbar-painting-basawan/> (Accessed date: 20.09.2022)
- Figure 10. <https://csmvs.in/collections/personal-armor-of-emperor-akbar/> (Accessed date: 20.09.2022)
- Figure 11. Drawn by Author
- Figure 12. https://cbl01.intranda.com/viewer/image/In_03_176/2/LOG_0000/ (Accessed date: 20.09.2022)
- Figure 13. <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O9292/baqi-muhammed-khan-painting-lal/> (Accessed date: 20.09.2022)
- Figure 14. <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O9302/akbar-painting-kesav-kalan/> (Accessed date: 20.09.2022)
- Figure 15. Museum, London. <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O9283/akbar-painting-tulsi/> (Accessed date: 20.09.2022)
- Figure 16. <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O9296/baz-bahadur-painting-jagan/> (Accessed date: 20.09.2022)
- Figure 17. <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O9302/akbar-painting-kesav-kalan/> (Accessed date: 20.11.2022)

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