

Introspection into the dressing of Rajputs and Mughal Rulers

Dr. Banabina Brahma

Principal, Kokrajhar Govt. College, Assam

Abstract

The Mughals were not only great rulers but only great builders and innovator. The Mughals in the 16th century brought with them the costumes of Turks and Persia. When the Mughals set their foot in India, they had to come contact with the Rajputs, Babur and Humayun fought war with the rulers of Amber and Mewar but they could not subjugate them completely moreover they could not realize the important and friendship of the Rajputs. It was Akbar who could understand the important of the Rajputs so he entered into matrimonial and friendship relation with the Rajputs and appointed them to very high posts in the imperial services. The result was that the Rajputs who had not only stood aloof but had also fought stubbornly. This policy of Akbar towards Rajputs was not only followed by his son Jahangir but also his grandson Shah Jahan.

The relations between the Mughals and Rajputs bought a new assimilation in the cultural and political sphere. The Rajputs contributed freely to social, cultural and artistic achievements and mark its impression on the fashion and artistic life. In line of fashion there was an exchange of costume between Rajputs and Mughals, even Abul Fazl remarks in his Ain-i- Akbari that Emperor Akbar adopted Rajput dresses. The Mughal paintings also describes the synthesis of the clothing pattern of the Mughals, its influence in dress mean not alone of what the Mughals gave to Rajasthan but also what had evolved out of the contact of the two important and prominent races, the Rajputs and the Mughals. When the Rajputs started working in Mughal court and exchange presents they gradually adopted the Mughal dress. The evolution in dress and ornaments of male and female was a result of frequent mixing of the two people of royal status.

Keywords: Harkha Bai, Koran, Kanchuli, Angarli, Dopatta, Lugdi, Ghaghra, Balaband, Angarkhab, Zari, Pyjamas, Kamarband, BundiDesign, Achkan, Pagdi, Ghunghat, ToshakKhana, Jama, Takauchiab, Patka, Bindia Anrag, Mehendi

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*Author's Correspondence

 Dr. Banabina Brahma

 Principal, Kokrajhar Govt. College, Assam

 banabrahma@gmail.com

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Introduction

The Mughal Rajput alliance developed during the sixteenth century in response to the political needs and interests of the two most important ruling elites in the country- the Mughal and the Rajput. The relations between the two developed in the framework of a comparatively slow expansion of the empire, and limited economic growth. This, in turn, led to interval tension which was reflected in increased religious divisiveness and of the reassertion of the principle of regional independence by the Marathas impact on the evolution of Mughal Rajput relations during the period. ¹Akbar is famous for his Rajput policy. He opened a new chapter in this direction. The Rajputs were the leaders of the Hindus in the military field and they were well-known for their bravery. No wonder Akbar, who wanted to found his Empire on the willing co-operation of the Hindus, decided to win over the Rajputs.²

The ruler of Amber, Raja Bharmal was the first one to establish friendly relation with Akbar in 1562. The younger daughter of Bharmal, Harkha Bai, (also known as Jodha Bai) was married to Akbar. Akbar gave complete religious freedom to his Hindu wives and gave an honoured place to their parents and relations in the nobility.³

Rajputs became the Generals of the Mughal armies and were rewarded by way of revenue and land and as revenue and land passed through the generations, so did family loyalty to Mughal rule. Ceremonial and secular patronage

also played a part in the connection between Mughal and Rajput with an elaborate array of, 'non-Islamic symbols to reward and promote solidarity in the heterogeneous cavalry which served them. This they had quite thoroughly done by the end of the sixteenth century. Men were rewarded with the personal robes of the emperor, turban jewels, swords, horses and decorated quivers, never with Koran's. Through military service, marriage and patronage, the Rajputs emerged as a caste whose loyalty was to Mughal court. Akbar, one of the so-called 'grand Mughals' married a Rajput princess making his son and eventual successor Jahangir half Rajput. In turn, Jahangir's son Shah Jahan was also a son of a Rajput mother. Jawaharlal Nehru refers to this period as 'Mughal-Rajput cooperation' and suggests that racially this 'Turk-Mongol dynasty became far more Indian than Turk or Mongol.... The Mughal nobility became progressively Indianized and the Rajputs and others were influenced by Persian culture'.⁴ It is these changes, some of which occurred towards the end of the Mughal period, but continued throughout the Raj period, changed the way Hindus and Muslims viewed themselves and each other.⁵

The Rajput character has been described by Tod in glowing terms. *The Rajput race is the noblest and proudest in India, they are of highest antiquity and purest descent, they have a military autocracy of a feudal type and brave and chivalrous, keenly sensitive to an affront and especially jealous of the honour of their women.*⁶

Mingling of dress between Mughals and Rajputs:

It was useless to expatiate on dress, either male or female, the fashion varying in each province and tribe, though the texture and materials are everywhere the same: cotton in summer, and quilted chintz or broadcloth in winter. The ladies have only three articles of parure; the *ghaghra*, or 'petticoat', the *kanchuli*, or 'corcet'; and the *doppatta*, or 'scarf', which was used to cover the upper part of the body as well as used as a veil. The other items were the *lugdi*, the medieval version of a sari, *angarli* and *kamcholi* types of blouses. Earlier the blouse was tied at the back with strings in order to keep the breasts in place. Later under Mughal influence blouses with front openings came in vogue. Ornaments are without number. For the men, the trousers of every shape and calibre, a tunic girded with a ceinture, and a scarf, form the wardrobe of every Rajput. The turban is the most important part of the dress, and is the unerring mark of the tribe; the form and fashion are various, and its decoration differs according to time and circumstances. The *balaband*, or 'silken fillet', was once valued as the mark of the sovereign's favour, and was tantamount to the courtly "orders" of Europe. The colour of the turban and tunic varies with the season; and the changes are rung upon crimson, saffron, and purple, though white is by far the most the common. Their shoes are mere slippers, and sandals are worn by the common class. Boots are yet used in hunting or war, made of chamois leather, of which material the worrier often has a doublet, being more commodious, and less oppressive, than armour. The dagger of poniard is inseparable from the girdle.⁷

The men wore a dhoti, termed the loin cloth by the British, and a loose fitting, long, shirt or *angarkhab*. A peculiar feature of the shirt was that it was double breasted and the two lapels were secured by pieces of coloured strings or chords. These were always on the left side in case of Rajputs. The simplicity of dress of the earlier rulers gave way under the influence of the Mughals and the nobility took to a short coat, closed at the neck, called the *achkan* with a central row of buttons and tight fitting *pyjamas*. The coats were embroidered with threads of gold and silver. The cloth used was wool, silk or muslin. Both men and women wore shoes, or rather slippers, which were made of leather with a peculiar curved toe. The richer classes had their shoes made from tiger, panthers and antelope skins and ornamented with gold and silver.⁸

The famous head dress of the Rajputs was the turban, *pagdi* or *safa*. In fact, going about without a head dress a *safa* or veil- *ghunghat* was concerned as an ill omen. The turban came in many lengths and was tied with slight variations by different clans and known by different names such as Bundi Shahi, Udai shahi.⁹

The Royals of the state had their own distinctive style of dressing. The turbans are larger and often have jewels or feathers attached to them to signify their stature. To tackle the mammoth task of tying the royal turbans, professional *Pagribands* were employed. Specialized departments such as *Rangbakhana*, the *Chhapakhana* and the *Sivankhana* were

deployed by the princely states to attend to the dyeing, printing and tailoring of the textiles forming part of the royal wardrobe. The *Toshak khana* and looked into the everyday attire of the royal family while the *Kapaddmadra* looked into their dresses on festive and formal occasions.¹⁰ The Rajputs, due to their close association with the Mughal courts adopted the Mughal styles of clothing and preferred richly embroidered brocades and silks from Benares. Exquisite Kashmir shawls and pashminas replaced the local *Dhabla* in their wardrobe.¹¹ The Hindus and Muslim generally put a virtually the same dress and only marked of difference was that whereas the Muslims tied the strings of their coats on the right side, the Hindus did it on the left.¹²

Persian dress was worn by Muslims, but during Akbar's time Rajput dress was adopted. The Mughal Turban different from the contemporary *bakharama* type is not having loose fringed ends sticking out on both sides. The Indian coat or *angarkha*, fastened at the side as in China, was different from the Persian gown that buttoned down the front and fitted loosely.¹³

A garment seen in the paintings from the Akbar's period but rarely depicted in latter periods was called *chakdar jama*. it may be derived from the Rajput court's *takauchiab*. The *chakdar jama* was shaped much like the standard Mughal *jama* except that the skirt fell in four to six long points instead of in the circular hem of *jama*.¹⁴

The impact of Mughal culture on Rajasthan was limited and confined to the court nobility and upper section of the official class, in the religious and cultural life the rulers and the people adhered to a great extent to their traditional beliefs and customs, but their court life, formalities and manners and upper section of the official class, but their court life, formalities and manners were influenced by the Mughals. The Mughal influence came not all at once but it penetrated slowly and gradually and was adopted after long resistance in most parts of Rajasthan but the new pattern gathered round it the traditions of the past, and was stamped with a form that was unique and interesting. Thus, when we speak of the Mughal influence in dress, we mean not alone of what the Mughals gave to Rajasthan but also what had evolved out of the contact of the two important and prominent races, the Mughals and the Rajputs. But when many of the rulers of Rajasthan entered into alliances with the Mughals emperors and began attending the Mughal court and exchanging presents, they gradually adopted the Mughal dress.¹⁵ The portraits of Vijay Singh of Jodhpur and Sawai Jai Singh of Jaipur in full dress with trousers, *Patka*, *chakdar jama* and crested turban with flat folds depicts the dress worn by rulers of Rajasthan in the later parts of our period. The female dress, as sari, bodice and petticoat remained the basic dress after the traditional fashion in Rajasthan. But after Mughal contact it underwent some changes. There were now long bodice, short sari and petticoat at several folds. This kind of evolution in dress and ornaments of male and female was a result of frequent mixing of the two people of royal status.¹⁶

The picturesque and graphic description by the poet Bihari was given a visible form in Mewar paintings especially by means of decorations such as the use of *Bindia*, *Anrag*, *Tika* and *Tilak* between the eye- brows, *Mehendi* on toes and fingers. The style of wearing *pagri* and *jama* in Chavand Ragnala set led some scholars to trace the Mughal influence on Rajputs.¹⁷ However it is to be taken into consideration that this style of wearing is typically Indian in origin which was even adopted by the emperor Akbar himself. The costumes had lost its wider appreciation since the time of Humayun. The prevalence of this type of dress in Mewar does not bear Mughal influence but shows the developed form of the dresses. The stringed coat came into prominence with the influence of Rajput and Mughal styles. A long skirt like coat with strings was a dress worn by middle class people and also farmers. In the paintings belonging to the 16th century the use of turban, scarf, tunic, *patka*, *kamarband* and dhoti is found to be the main dress of the people in Mewar area. The dresses of the upper castes were more fine and costly while those of the lower castes were made of cheap and rather rough.¹⁸ After sixteenth century we see a change in the dress pattern mainly due to fact that Maharana Karan Singh exchanged his turban with that of Shahjahan which was a form of establishing brotherhood. Thus, the Mughal turban entered the domain of art after this event. This style of turban was in use during the reign of Maharana Jagat Singh-I, Raj Singh and Jai Singh. Maharana Amar Singh II had evolved a new design of Pagari and was known as Amarsahi-pag which was a little shorter than the Mughal turban and remained in use upto the reign of Maharana Raj Singh II. The turban of Maharana Ari Singh bears a close

resemblance to the Bundi design.¹⁹ When the Rajput Kingdoms were conquered by the Mughals, starting with Amber captured by the Emperor Akbar in 1562, the Rajput states gradually came under Mughal rule, with the ancient kingdom of Mewar the last of the Rajasthani kingdoms to fall in 1615. Many of the Rajput rulers were given high military rank in the Mughal army, and further ties were forged through the Mughal policy of inter-marriage with the Rajput royal houses. The Rajasthani Rajas thus started to attend the Mughal court and to assimilate many aspect of court culture, which they then took back with them to their own places. From palace architecture to dress and miniature painting, Mughal ideas and aesthetics blended with local styles to form a new post Mughal Rajput culture.²⁰

The term of special interest in this entire description of “*phenta dupatta*” which could mean either a *phenta* and a *dupatta*; or a *phenta* of two widths/double-folded. Both rendering could be valid: for a *phenta* was often worn with a matching *dupatta* or scarf; and a *phenta* could be worn of two widths or double-folded. In either case, one note that the word used in the description *phenta*, no *patka*, although quite obviously the matter is meant. Whether this was common usage at Rajasthani courts is not known; thus far we have used it for the garment consisting of two narrow strips worn by women with a *peshwaz*.²¹

Of uncommon interest are *patkas* that one hardly sees at the Mughal court. A fine, and altogether exceptional, piece is the *patka* worn by Maharana Sangram Singh of Mewar as he moves, seated on horseback, with a whole entourage of companions and courtiers. It is a figurative *patka*, with an extremely daintily rendered scene of a landscape with men and animals moving around in it adorning one of the panels on an end that falls in front. Every detail is clear, every little object in perfect place. The scene is in all likelihood embroidered, which, in itself, would make the garment unusual, for the rest of it seems to be silk brocaded with silk threads and gold *zari*. The refinement of the piece, and the suddenness with which the eye alights on this little detail in the *patka*, are thing for which one is more or less unprepared.²²

The Mughal rule began in India during the 16th century and subsequently, the art of jewellery-making flourished throughout this era. Wearing expensive jewellery marked one's position.

The emperors and empresses as well as courtiers and other people of high ranks were adorned with heavy jewellery beset with huge stones and beads. Various jewellers were hired privately to create magnificent jewellery pieces for the royal family and other important people. Rajasthan, the north-west state of India, served as an exclusive hub for jewellery-making. The Mughal royalty often formed alliances with the Rajput rulers and married Rajput princesses. As a result, the Mughal jewellery was further influenced by the Rajputs and thus began the fine combination of Rajput quaint craftsmanship and Mughal delicate artistry. Some Mughal jewellery pieces were also influenced by the 17th century Europe.

The Rajput Mughal relation not only blended the cultural and political sphere but also mark its impression on the fashion and artistic sphere of life. The Rajput and Mughals exchanged their life styles and gave a new world of fashion which can be seen even after many years of Mughal rule.

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