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The Influence of British Rule on Elite Indian Menswear: The Birth of the Sherwani

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of PhD

School of Culture and Creative Arts
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Abstract

‘The Influence of British Rule on Elite Indian Menswear: The Birth of the Sherwani’ is a study of the influence of politics on fashion and the resulting development of new garments. This research is designed to demonstrate the effect on elite Indian menswear of the two centuries of British rule in India. It is an effort to understand how the flowing garments worn by elite Indian men in the 18th century gradually became more tailored and fitted with the passage of time. The study uses multiple sources to bring to light lesser known facts about Indian menswear, the evolution of different garments and especially of the sherwani. The sherwani is a knee-length upper garment worn by South-Asian men, and is considered to be India’s traditional menswear. My study highlights the factors responsible for the birth of the sherwani and dispels the myth that it was a garment worn by the Mughals. Simultaneously, this study examines the concept and value of ‘tradition’ in cultures. It scrutinises the reasons for the sherwani being labelled as a traditional Indian garment associated with the Mughal era, when in fact it was born towards the end of the 19th century. The study also analyses the role of the sherwani as a garment of distinction in pre- and post-independence India.

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Preface

My fascination with costumes, textiles and India has led me to read about and research them. While teaching the history of fashion at the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), in New Delhi, I felt that there was a lacuna of information on Indian fashion or dress history. It was difficult to find academically researched information on India's dress history during 5000 years of India's existence. Work on western fashion has always intrigued me, and I appreciated the ways in which fashion was studied and analysed. That level of analysis and documentation was wanting in the area of dress history in India, however. Books by Indian authors on the subjects are mostly based on single primary sources like sculpture or texts, and of late they have been based solely on secondary sources. This could lead to faulty analysis. The books published as a result may lead to the spread of incorrect knowledge, which is a matter of major concern. Thus, in order to do justice to India's dress history, I began my research in an era when information had been carefully archived and was therefore likely to be available. This thesis endeavours to bring about a change in the way dress history is analysed and studied in India.

It is rather strange to note that a country which has been famous for its textiles has not been studied for its dress. Books on Indian costume either focus on tribes or concentrate more on gold and silk. These fancy textiles have dominated the writing on the dress of the Indian elite, but their cut and construction have not usually been the point of focus. The world trade in textiles in the 18th and 19th centuries placed India in very high esteem, so India's textiles have been a subject of serious study, even though Indian fashion has not.

The idea of researching the past in terms of fashion history intrigued me and I was overwhelmed to find the accounts in travellers' diaries. During the last 300 or more years, travellers to India from Europe sometimes fleetingly and sometimes elaborately noted Indian contemporary clothing. This research

draws information from those accounts. It has been a sincere effort to understand the development of Indian menswear through the 200 years of British rule.

The sherwani is the garment that is the focus of this research, but the study is more broadly of the factors that influence fashion and fashion behaviour. To begin with, the study included both menswear and womenswear because changes were observed in both, but it was restricted to elite Indian menswear because it was getting too vast to handle. Within the course of the first year, it became apparent that menswear and womenswear were each a complete study in themselves and researching both was beyond the scope of this PhD. During the course of this study it was discovered that the sherwani originated in India during British rule; added to it was the fact that the Indians were unaware of the origins, and considered it to be a Mughal garment. This fascinating discovery is why this thesis revolves around the sherwani. This study has helped me to understand the research process and has widened my knowledge base. It has been a thoroughly wonderful journey.

Acknowledgement

To undertake a multidimensional research on historic fashion in India was a huge task and would not have been possible without the support and help from all quarters. In India and in Britain almost everyone I met was willing to share information. Many individuals and institutions have helped me through the course of this thesis and I wish to thank them wholeheartedly.

To begin with, I would like to thank my supervisors Professor Frances Lennard and Dr Sumita Mukherjee, without whom such nuances in research could not have been possible. They have been very patient and have painstakingly reviewed every piece of my work. I sincerely appreciate their invaluable guidance and critique, without which this project could not have achieved any of its goals. In the same breath I would also like to thank Ms Rebecca Quinton for giving her valuable suggestions during the course of the first year of my PhD as a supervisor, although she could not continue in this capacity for administrative reasons. I would like to thank Ms Rosemary Crill from the South Asian Department of the V&A who offered her guidance and support for this research. Her feedback and suggestions have been immensely valuable.

This research was a challenge for me financially, and I am indebted to my husband, Atul, for helping me to take this plunge and for putting all our savings at stake. I thank him from the bottom of my heart. But all our savings were not enough to undertake such a big project. The fees, travel and living costs in both the countries and the cost of travel between both the countries was very high. It is only due to bursaries and scholarships that I could fulfil my aim and complete this project. I also thank my parents for helping me with my stay in London each time I visited the city. I would like to thank the University of Glasgow for helping me with the following bursaries - the Scotland Saltire Scholarship, the Karen Finch Bursary (consecutively for two years, £5000.00 each year) and research travel awards. I would like to thank Ms Nell Hoare at the Textile Conservation Foundation for helping me with Karen Finch bursaries. I would also like to thank the Pasold Research Fund for the KG

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Thanks to Dr Mary Harlow for helping me to copyedit a part of my thesis. I would also like to thank all the administration team at the University of Glasgow, Ms Susan Howel, Ms Jeanette Berrie and Ms Jill Moore for helping me with my visa and other formalities and getting things sorted out really quickly to help me to carry on with my research. I am thankful also to Oxbridge proofreading services. Thanks are also due to the staff of the University of Glasgow, Scotland, the Centre for Textile Research (CTR), Denmark, the University of Delhi, New Delhi, the National Institute of Fashion Technology, New Delhi, the University of Glasgow Archives, Glasgow, the National Archives, New Delhi, the National Museum New Delhi, the British Library, London, the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, the IGNCA (Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts), New Delhi, the Crafts Museum, New Delhi, the Albert Hall Museum, Jaipur, the City Palace Museum, Jaipur, the Salarjung Museum, Hyderabad, the Chou Mohalla, Hyderabad, the Alkazi Photo Archives, New Delhi, and the Tapi Collections, Calico Museum, Ahmedabad and Fashion Museum, Bath.

The University Archives of the University of Glasgow and the Special Collections (in the library) of the University of Glasgow have provided some very valuable resources for my study. The assistance of Mr Richard Bapty, team leader of the Arts and Social sciences library support team, in helping me to find and to understand how to search for material related to my study was

essential. The Research Ethics committee deserves my sincerest thanks for granting approval to conduct interviews in India for my research. Microsoft Corporation and Google and their eBooks online, have been a great time saver, and to these and to the various libraries in India and the UK I bow my head in reverence.

I would like to thank Dr Mary Brooks from the University of York who gave me permission to access the objects in the Museum Store of York; Mary Faye Prior at the Store helped me to take the close look and pictures that I required. Ms Elaine Uttley at the Fashion Museum Bath deserves my sincerest thanks for letting me study the objects at the museum and for painstakingly helping me with each one of them. I would like to thank Santoshji from Rajasthan Arts and Crafts who kindly allowed me to look at old garments and antique pictures from his collections, which match the collection of any museum in India. He helped me to understand the nuances of various garments used in 20th century India.

I would like to thank Dr Lotika Varadarajan, for sparing her time and for her guidance. I am thankful to Dr Anamika Pathak, Curator at the National Museum in New Delhi for her support, for all the objects that I was allowed to see and study and for the pictures of those objects. Thanks are also due to Mrs Smita Singh, conservator, for her valuable suggestions, and to Mr Rahul Jain for his suggestions and contacts. I would like to also thank Dr Chandramani Singh at the City Palace Museum for her time and information. My sincerest thanks to my mama, mami, Rt. Captain Neeraj Sogani and Mrs Bindu Sogani, Shri Subodh Gupta (tauji), Dr Akhilendra Bhushan Gupta, Mrs Poonam Gupta and Mr Devendra Bhushan Gupta for their support and guidance in Jaipur. Thanks to Dr Shraddha Rameshwar (mausi) and Genral Rameshwar Yadav (mausaji), I would like to thank Mr HAS Jaffri Sahib at AMU and Medi Hassan Tailors in Aligarh, India.

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I would like to express my gratitude and thank my family for the precious support I have received from all quarters. My parents Prabodh and Suraksha Gupta have been my strength and have given me immense support in India and in the UK. My father has travelled with me to various places and helped me to organise my trips for data collection. I thank him from the bottom of my heart. Both my brothers Varad Gupta and Shashwat Gupta have helped me by being there for me, and my sister-in-law Monika Gupta, who has helped me to take many of the photographs that appear on the pages of this thesis, deserves my sincerest thanks. Shri H.P. Gupta, my father-in-law, has been an immense pillar of support throughout my research. Many thanks to my nephew Mr Mudit Mittal and his wife Mrs Devyani K Mittal who have always been ready to help and support me during my visits to London. My friends Nitasha Gaurav, Shagun Pathak, Dolly Bedi, Dr Jyoti Chhabra, Samar Khan, Pooja Singhania, Nishu Siam, Rashmi Pathak, Parul and Maneesh Patel have always been my pillars of strength. Without this help from every sphere of my life, and the critique of my husband and friends, this PhD would not have been possible. I thank Atul from the bottom of my heart. I thank my lovely children, Pratyaksh and Samaksh, who have been very patient with my travels and time away from home for my research, and have always encouraged and helped me to realise my goals. Merely looking at them fills me with all the courage.

Genuinely this research would not have been possible without this immense support from all quarters. There were many more individuals in different institutions who have helped me whose names I do not know, and many friends who have knowingly or unknowingly helped me. Thus I would like to add thanks to all the people whom I know who have helped me to fulfil my commitment to my research. In the end I would like to thank my most revered source, the almighty, for helping me and filling me with strength during the most difficult times.

Author's Declaration

I undertake that all the material produced for examination is my own work and has not been written for me by any other person. I also undertake that any quotation or paraphrase from the published or unpublished work of another person has duly been acknowledged in the work that I present for examination.

Toolika Gupta

Definitions and Abbreviations

AMU - Aligarh Muslim University

Bombay - now renamed Mumbai

Calcutta - now renamed Kolkata

CTR - Centre for Textile Research, Copenhagen, Denmark

Darzi - An Indian tailor

Dhobi - An Indian washer-man

EIC - East India Company

ICS - Indian Civil Service

INA - Indian National Army

Madras - now renamed Chennai

NAI - National Archives of India, New Delhi

Nawab - A nobleman from India. These rich men were also landowners and could also be rulers of small constituencies.

NIFT - National Institute of Fashion Technology, India

Nizam - Rulers of Hyderabad

NM - National Museum, New Delhi

Raja - Ruler of Indian states

Glossary

Achkan - A long coat-like garment derived out of the angrakha and chapkan, originated in Lucknow during the mid-19th century. It has an extension called a balabar, which is tied inside. It has panels on the front and back, and usually has full sleeves. The front panels overlap and are usually secured by buttons in the centre front from the neckline to the waist.

Alkaluk - A Persian collarless garment, which is worn over a shirt and reaches below the knees. It was introduced in India by the Persians who came to India and were appointed soldiers in British-Indian army. It became British Army uniform for irregular cavalry in the early 19th century.

Angrakha - A long tunic-like garment which is collarless but has a bib attached to the front. Its panels are tied to each other in the centre front at the waistline. This garment has evolved from the Persian alkaluk. It was worn by Indian princes and other elite men since the early 19th century.

Antariya - A rectangular piece of fabric worn or draped around the lower part of the body like a loincloth in ancient India. This could be draped in a variety of ways, and could vary in length from mid-thigh to ankle length, depending on class and status. Today the antariya has various names depending on how it is tied like the dhoti, tehmet, etc.

Atma Sukh - A type of quilted choga (see choga for detail), with a lining inside. It may or may not have ties in front.

Bagalbandi - A kind of waistcoat which had an extra panel that would be tied on the inside - side-seam. The name is made by joining two words - 'bagal' means side and 'bandhi' means to tie.

Balabar - A type of tunic like an alkaluk or angrakha, which has four panels and six ties.

Chapkan - A coat or tunic-like garment derived from the angrakha, usually till the mid-calf, but lengths could vary from just below the knees to the ankles. Chapkans had a tight bodice and a higher waistline; they looked like angrakhas but had buttons arranged in a semi-circle around the chest.

Choga or Jubba - This is a long loose robe which is completely front open. It was generally worn by men of upper class over the angrakha. It could be half-sleeved or full-sleeved. It was mostly made of silk or wool and heavily embroidered. The half-sleeve short choga was called a farzi.

Farzi - A short choga - to the knees - which was either sleeveless or half-sleeved (the sleeve ending before reaching the elbows).

Ghundi - These are small, roughly pea-sized, buttons made out of fabric, that are attached to angrakhas as closures instead of ties. They can be closed with loops on the other side of the panel.

Jama - A long tunic-like dress, which has an upper bodice that is attached to the lower skirt at the waist. The length of the jama could be anywhere from just below the knees to almost heel-length; the fullness of the skirt and the length of the garment varied with time. The upper bodice is normally full-sleeved. The garment is completely front open and one side wraps over the other at the front. The lower part is like a wrap-around skirt and the upper bodice has a flap in front which could be worn in either the left or right direction, which is tied by strings. It is seen in most of the Mughal miniature paintings as the favoured article of men's clothing. The styles of jama underwent changes with the passage of time. A belt known as a cummerbund or patka was tied at the waist on top of the jama. It was accompanied by loose or tight trousers or even a dhoti at times. For traveling out of the house or for public functions or occasions a choga was worn on the jama. Depending on the season either a heavy choga was worn over it or a light jacket (sometimes quilted) was worn.

Kayabandh - A fabric belt, tied around the antariya to keep it in place. The name changed to patka during the medieval period, and it was alternatively called a cummerbund or kamarbandh.

Khadi - A coarse, plain-weave fabric made out of hand-spun cotton yarn. This fabric was promoted by Mahatma Gandhi during India's struggle for freedom: he insisted people should spin their own yarn and weave fabric indigenously instead of buying imported fine fabric.

Kimkhwab - A type of brocade made in Banaras using gold and silk.

Mashru - A striped fabric woven out of silk and cotton.

Neema or Nima or Nimjama- A type of undergarment, worn on the upper part of the body, underneath the jama. It is similar to the jama, but reaches just above the knees. It is a half-sleeved garment with small armholes, and its flaps overlap in the centre front with the help of ties.

Pao-posh (written as Bouboches by Bernier) - Slippers worn by Indians. 'Pao' means foot, 'posh' means cover. These were not tied by laces or buttons, but were open like Persian slippers.

Patka - A rectangular piece of fabric used as a belt or girdle to tighten the clothes from the waist. It was also worn so that small and big items, like swords, could be carried in it.

Poshteen - A sheepskin coat with fur lining worn by the Afghans and adopted as uniform by the British Army in the colder months or while fighting in northern or mountainous regions of India.

Pyjama - Trousers that are loose and have been worn in India since the Mughal rule are known as pyjamas. 'Pai' means leg and 'jama' means clothes or robes. They also have specific names like chooridar pyjama, seedha pyjama and so on depending on the style of pyjamas.

Shaluka - A half-sleeve kurta or tunic, reaching up to mid-thigh that could be worn under other garments.

Sherwani - A coat-like garment that originated in Hyderabad in the late 19th century. It has a British influence in its cut and methods of stitching and attachments. It also has an Indian influence (from the achkan and choga) in terms of its length and the way it is worn.

Turban - This was (and still is) Indian men's primary headgear. It is normally an unstitched piece of rectangular fabric. Its length, colour and style of draping vary from region to region. It denotes class, caste, region and religion. It was a very important item of clothing. It still exists in Indian villages but has more or less vanished from cities and towns. Although it is still used during weddings, it is no longer an item of daily wear. During the late Mughal era and the British era, we also see a lot of stitched turbans come into use.

Vaskat – A corrupt form of the word waistcoat. Short sleeveless waistcoats or jackets were known as vaskats.

Uttariya - A rectangular piece of fabric, like a shawl, worn or draped on the upper part of the body by both men and women in ancient India. It could be made of coarse fabric for the poor and fine fabric for the rich.

Illustrations:

The following eight illustrations are drawings made by the author to explain the various types of menswear garments that were worn by the Indian elite. The drawings have been made by observing the garments in miniature paintings. These drawings are not to scale.



Illustration 1 Jama as worn from 1757 to the end of 18th century.



Illustration 2 A type of angrakha worn by the Indian elite since the 1800s.



Illustration 3 An alkaluk: a collarless Persian tunic worn on top of a shirt.



Illustration 4 Chapkans in the 1830s. Later many different styles were also called chapkans.



Illustration 5 The earliest achkans in the 1850s mixed components from the angrakha and the chapkan.



Illustration 6 Achkans from the 1860s onwards.

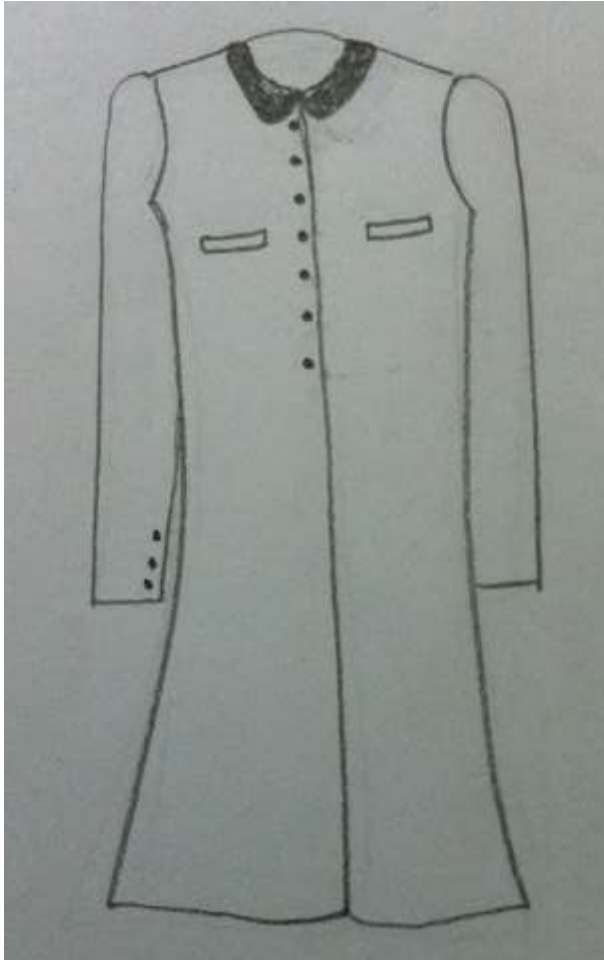


Illustration 7 The earliest sherwanis, 1884-1910s.

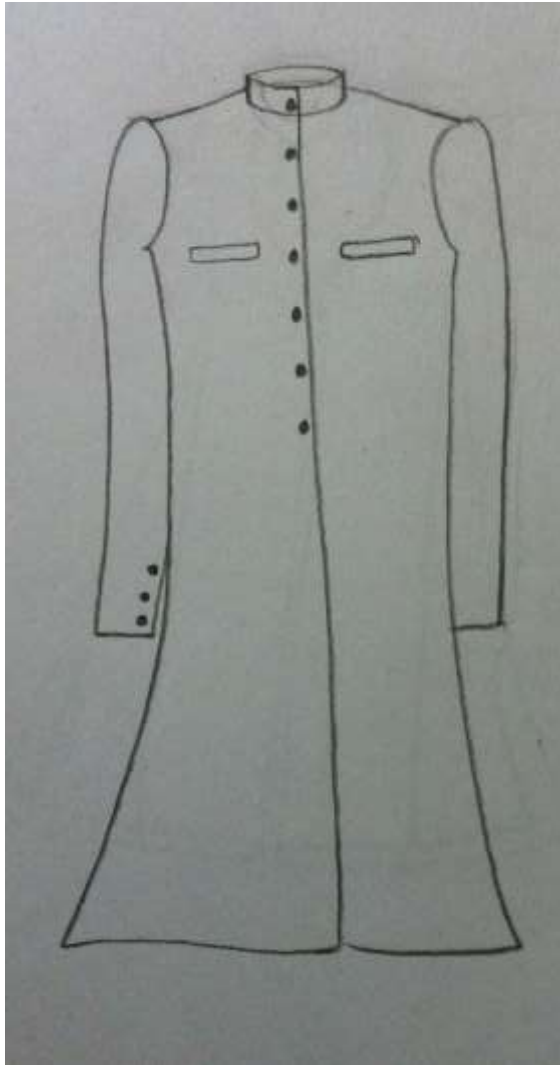


Illustration 8 Sherwani since 1915.

Chapter 1 Introduction



Figure 1-1 Sherwani from the National Museum, New Delhi, Accession no – 62.2917, belonging to early 20th century. Courtesy of National Museum, New Delhi, India

Figure 1-2 Jawaharlal Nehru with Muhammad Ali Jinnah in 1946. This photograph was taken in 1946, before India attained independence. Courtesy of Jawaharlal Nehru Museum, New Delhi.

The sherwani, a piece of ‘traditional’ Indian menswear, is considered one of the most elegant, well-tailored and classic garments in the wardrobes of the elite Indian men, even in this second decade of the 21st century. The sherwani is a knee-length outer garment like a coat, which is made of either plain or patterned fabric and has a high stand-up collar and full sleeves; it usually has 7 buttons from neck to waist. It is open below the waist, for ease of movement. Figures 1-1, 1-2, 1-3 and 1-4 show sherwanis from different time periods and different settings, displaying the important role that the garment has played in the lives of Indian men in the past and at present.



Figure 1-3 An Indian wedding, Uttarakhand, India 2013. The groom wears a modern sherwani, his bride and mother are also pictured. Courtesy of Mr Mudit Mittal (groom).



Figure 1-4 The President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee in his Sherwani on 26th January 2015, India's Republic Day celebrations. Shri Pranab Mukherjee stands with US President Barak Obama to his left and his wife Michelle Obama to his right. To his extreme left is Mr Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India. Modi wears a jacket resembling the sherwani (which is usually worn by Indian politicians in summer). Courtesy of *Deccan Chronicle*.

Figure 1-1 shows a brocade sherwani, displayed in the textile gallery of the

National Museum, New Delhi, India. It is made of a rich silk brocade fabric and was tailored in the first half of the 20th century. Figure 1-2 is a photograph of President Jawaharlal Nehru and M.A. Jinnah (both political leaders) taken in Shimla in 1946. In this black and white photograph, Nehru can be seen wearing his dark-coloured plain sherwani. When India attained independence from British Rule in 1947, Nehru became the first prime minister of independent India (from 15th August 1947 till his death on 27th May 1964). For all his public appearances he wore sherwanis in winter and in the summer he wore a kurta with a sleeveless jacket on top that imitated the sherwani. His sherwanis were also referred to as 'achkans' by many people. In the west, in the 1950s and 60s, when the designers were looking for new looks, Nehru's style became popular. He was the first Prime Minister of independent India and acquired an important status. His clothes were different from those of western leaders. His raised collar came to be known as the Nehru collar in Europe, and the sherwani or achkan began to be identified as an Indian style of dress.¹

The wedding day photograph in Figure 1-3 shows a young groom in his finest sherwani in India in 2013. He can be seen here with his bride and his mother. This young man was born in India, educated in India and abroad, and employed in the United States of America when he returned to India for his marriage in 2013. His family helped him to choose the sherwani he should wear for the big day. The sherwani is considered a traditional garment to be worn on special occasions like marriages and festivals. The bridegroom, his male friends and relatives and the men of the bride's family usually get their sherwanis made for the occasion, although it is not mandatory to wear a sherwani. They have a variety to choose from, they can opt for modern western suits, sherwanis or other fusion garments, which are known as Indo-western garments. But the trend these days is that more educated modern

¹ Michael A Langkjaer, "From Cool to Un-Cool to Re-Cool: Nehru and Mao Tunics in the Sixties and Post-Sixties West," in *Global Textile Encounters*, ed. Marie-Louise Nosch, Zhao Feng, and Lotika Varadarajan (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2014). 229. The Nehru collar was famously adopted by the music group The Beatles in the early 1960s. It became fashionable in Europe and was featured in the film *Help* (1968), TV serials and other films.

Indian men in India or settled in other countries prefer to wear sherwanis on their wedding days because it is considered traditional. This is evident from the online shopping sites that offer exclusive Indian wedding outfits.

Reproduced below is a quote from an online store, Bharat Plaza, which specialises in sherwanis for weddings. There is a huge variety of colours, designs, embellishments and fabrics to choose from, depending on one's ability and willingness to pay. This is one of the numerous online and retail stores in India that provides wedding outfits for men.

Sherwani is a dress that signifies royal impression with a touch of ethnicity and modernity at the same time. Wedding Sherwanis are the traditional attires for Indian, Pakistani, Muslim and other Asian community Grooms. The Traditional Indian and Pakistani Wear Sherwani signifies elegance and style. High Class Wedding Sherwanis in royal look are designed by special artisans and designers of Bharat Plaza. We ensure a perfect combination of culture, color, embroideries with a feel of the Orient and charm of vintage that ooze elegance and create stance for all. You will love to do a Groom Sherwani Suit Shopping at Bharat Plaza with the largest in-stock and ready-to-ship collections. Buy a Sherwani online at Bharat Plaza online store to make your wedding a royal treat for your lifetime.²

The photograph in Figure 1-4 is of India's current President, Dr Pranab Mukherjee, at a high tea celebration on the occasion of India's 65th Republic Day, 26th January 2015. The Indian president stands, in his elegant black sherwani, flanked by his guests of honour for the day, the US President, Barak Obama and his wife, Michelle Obama; also in the picture is India's Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi standing to the right. Modi does not wear the traditional sherwani; instead he wears an Indian jacket with the Nehru collar, as Nehru used to wear in summer. Such jackets are adaptations of the sherwani. In order to bear the heat while retaining a formal and tailored look, these jackets replaced the sherwani during the summer months. They are known as jackets or 'vascuts' (a corruption of the word waistcoat). But Modi wears this jacket in winter, and therefore a shawl can be seen draped

² Bharat plaza, "Wedding Sherwani," <http://www.bharatplaza.com/men/sherwanis/wedding-sherwani.html>. Bharat Plaza accessed 21st Sept 2015

on his shoulder.

Since India's independence it has become customary for the President, the Prime Minister and other leaders to appear in public in their elegant sherwanis or sherwani-imitating jackets, which are similar to the garments shown in Figure 1-4. It has also become customary for the grooms and the men of the marriage party to dress in the finest and fanciest sherwanis, as shown in Figure 1-3. Wedding albums, contemporary cinema and photographs in museums bear testimony to this fact.³

The use of the sherwani is limited to such occasions. For everyday office and formal wear, elite Indian men wear western suits or ready-to-wear shirts and trousers, as is the norm the world over. The sherwani is regarded as a precious possession and a garment to be worn on special occasions. It is considered an integral part of Indian culture and tradition. It is common knowledge in India that the clothes that men wear today, namely the shirt and trousers (commonly called pants in India), the three-piece suit and shoes and socks, have been introduced due to a western or British influence. As opposed to these, the sherwani is the pride of the nation, the 'traditional' garment.

Since it has been labelled 'traditional', most people in the busy population do not question its origin. But as a researcher in fashion history, this question became a mystery that had to be solved. Did the sherwani originate in India or was it borrowed from some other culture? How old is the tradition of wearing a sherwani? In pursuit of answers to these important questions, many interviews were conducted. On being asked if they were aware of the origins of the sherwani, many academics, historians and fashion experts in India replied that the sherwani was a Mughal garment, and thus was considered India's traditional garment.⁴ When probed further, and shown

³ Photographs in the possession of families and other private collections, including Indian cinema, show grooms and politicians dressed in sherwanis from the 1950s to the present day.

⁴ The names have been kept confidential.

Indian miniature paintings of the Mughal time period, or when asked to think of any Mughal miniature painting that they had come across that depicted any man (Mughal or Rajput, or anyone else) wearing a sherwani, most people realised that they had never seen a miniature painting with a sherwani. As the fashion illustrator Meenakshi Singh recalled:

Oh yes, most of the men in miniature paintings wear printed frocks, or something of the sort. Hmm.... I have not seen this kind of collar in any miniature painting. I see your point.... I have never seen a sherwani in a miniature painting. Hmm...that is interesting. So how old is the sherwani?⁵

Since the garment does not feature in Mughal painting or miniatures, it seems less likely that it was common in that time period - and, may suggest that it did not exist at all at the time. Similarly, there is no mention of this garment in any of the books written on Indian historic costumes of the ancient or medieval periods. Therefore, neither the texts nor the visual media support the common knowledge that the sherwani was a Mughal garment. It is thus somewhat perplexing that the sherwani is understood as a Mughal garment. An independent textile historian, Rahul Jain, the author of books on Indian textiles and the curator of a permanent exhibition based on sherwanis in Hyderabad at Chow Mahalla Palace (which opened to public on 29th January 2005) , was also baffled as to the origin of the sherwani. His help in guiding me to sources and resources was invaluable. But when questioned on the construction of the sherwani and whether it looked like other Mughal garments, in terms of structure and not fabric, his response was,

Sherwani is definitely the first 3D garment that we see in Indian costume history, other than that most of them had very 2D patterns. But wasn't it worn by the Mughals? Wait, I think it came in later, and there are women's sherwanis too in Hyderabad, very beautiful pieces, but I am not really sure when

⁵ Meenakshi Singh, fashion illustrator, guest faculty at NIFT New Delhi, interview of 11th October 2014 (in answer to the question of whether she had seen a sherwani in a miniature painting).

they came on the scene or who started wearing them first, we all tend to think of them as Mughal in origin.⁶

The similarities of views among the various people interviewed and the limited information people in general and historians in particular have about the sherwani led to the beginning of this research.⁷

The absence of visual and textual evidence of the existence of the sherwani during Mughal rule and the abundance of visual evidence of the existence of the sherwani since the early part of 20th century further add to the necessity of discovering the origins of the garment. According to common knowledge, the sherwani was worn by the elite nawabs of yesteryear. It is viewed as a garment frozen in time since the Mughals that was worn by all Indian men of a noble background; the Rajput and Muslim colleges have sherwanis as their uniforms to be worn on special occasions, making it a garment that reflects high class and culture. It is important to ascertain the truth of these various beliefs, to trace the origins of the garment and also to assess the factors that led to its birth.

After further considering the facts, I realised that the sherwani, which looks rather modern in its construction, resembles a military tunic or British frock coat more than it resembles the garments worn by the Mughals in their miniature paintings. Since, chronologically, the British Raj came after the Mughal Rule, it can be assumed that if the sherwani was not existent during Mughal rule, it must have originated during the Raj. Furthermore, there is no visual evidence of the British wearing the sherwani, so it was clearly not a British garment which was adopted by the Indians like the other menswear garments worn today. This led to a hypothesis that the sherwani was a garment that is Indian in origin but influenced by the British Raj.

My view was shared by Dr Anamika Pathak. Dr Pathak, the Head Curator of

⁶ Interview with Mr Rahul Jain of 3rd January 2014, New Delhi, India; Mr Rahul Jain is a reputed textile historian and author who has curated many exhibitions on Indian textiles.

⁷ In 2012, when this research started, there was no mention of the sherwani on Wikipedia, although since 2014, a Wikipedia page on the sherwani has been created.

the Decorative Arts Department at the National Museum in New Delhi, India, is researching on menswear during the Mughal era. When asked for her views on the origin of the sherwani, she responded:

Sherwani or achkan was started by the courts; the courts at Oudh and Hyderabad. Achkan I believe started in Awadh whereas Sherwani started in Hyderabad. These new rulers - the Nizams wanted to show power, so they asked their tailors to stitch garments in the British style, so that it can be given the shape of a coat. This coat had begun to symbolize power. Men want to show their power. Even today in India, men wear trousers (called pants) and shirts, whereas women still wear saree or salwar kameez. When the French and English were here, people thought they were in power, and thus men wanted to adopt the style. So the elite group of India started wearing clothes like those of foreigners.⁸

Dr Pathak agreed with my hypothesis that the sherwani has a strong British influence. Most of the curators, art dealers, art collectors, historians and academicians in India find it difficult to believe sometimes that the sherwani is a result of the British influence, so I was glad that someone shared my view. Another idea that has been suggested is that sherwani was a Turkish dress. Mr Jagdish Mittal, an art collector and author, reflected:

Sherwani I believe came as a result of mixing of two types of dress cultures - Ottoman and British. The Ottoman Turks wore loose clothing, but The British wore much fitted tailored clothes, and this Indian fashion of the Sherwani is midway between the two. You see, in Hyderabad you will find a belt on the sherwani, it continued as a result of cummerbund (kamarbandh) from the Mughal period. Around 1865, you will see these sherwanis with the cummerbund. I think the sherwani came only in the 19th Century and was not there before that.⁹

In Turkey the stand-up collar can be seen in the photographs but not in earlier paintings, so it seems to be a late 19th century development, which also seems to be the case in India. The stand-up collar is seen in the elite

⁸ Interview with Dr Anamika Pathak, Senior Curator – Decorative Arts, National Museum, New Delhi of 19th Sept 2013

⁹ Interview with Mr Jagdish Mittal of 6th February 2014, in Hyderabad, India. Mr. Mittal is a connoisseur of art and art collector; he has his own museum and is also an author.

menswear of China, Turkey, Thailand and India, but only after the mid-19th century. This study is limited to India, so the reasons for the adoption of similar garments in other countries are not addressed here. The focuses of this study were on discovering the time period and the factors that led to the development of the sherwani and on understanding how the sherwani become a ‘traditional’ garment of Indian menswear. The word ‘traditional’ implies that a particular object or norm has been in practice for a very long time in the society concerned. When referred to as traditional costumes, articles of clothing achieve a special position, which renders them static. It gives them a sense of continuity, implying that these articles of dress have remained unaltered for a very long time, decades or even centuries. But if the origin of an article is shrouded in mystery then how it came to be thought of as ‘traditional’ is equally mysterious. This study, therefore, also tries to understand the creation of traditions, and to comprehend the reason for the sherwani’s status as traditional Indian menswear.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to understand the influence of British rule on elite Indian menswear. This study begins with the assumption that the sherwani is a result of British rule and that politics is a major influence on menswear. India is a large country and has a varied topography, so there are differences in the climate across the country. It is a secular nation and is home to almost every religion in the world. In spite of such regional and religious diversity, there is a particular garment, the sherwani, that is thought of as traditional Indian menswear garment. Artemis Yagou writes about how fashions evolve. Her belief is that a continuous exchange of ideas and cross-cultural influences spur the evolution of cultures and that imitation and adaptation shape creativity. Fashion or clothing, she believes, is an area in which this can be clearly seen:

The processes of imitation and adaptation are central to our understanding of creativity. Human cultures evolve through a continuous exchange of ideas, beliefs, habits and forms. Dressing

habits in particular constitute a fertile plain in which this exchange takes place.¹⁰

My research also aims to understand the creation and evolution of traditions and analyse the time span of the construction of traditions. One of the objectives of the study is to comprehend the level of adoption of foreign garments and changes in construction of indigenous dress that take place so as to give satisfaction to a certain cultural group. Men and women dress the way they want the world to perceive them. Fashion, image and identity go hand in hand. The factors that influence our fashion choices emerge largely from the various factors that influence the society in which we live. With British India as a case study, this research explores fashion influences, the creation of identities and their reflections in clothing or dress. In order to fulfil the purpose of this study and to put the changes in context, an introduction to costume in India prior to British Raj is given. This study traces the cultural blend of the clothing of elite Indians before British rule to the influence of Persians and Turks during the Mughal rule and the origin of the sherwani. It investigates how the sherwani came into existence, who adopted it and how it became a symbol of Indian nationality and tradition. Thus the purpose of this study is to understand the birth and creation of the sherwani, how it came to be labelled as traditional Indian menswear and why it is a classic fashion garment in 21st century India.

1.2 Research Questions

Historic research on the British Raj abounds. There is vast amount of literature on the 200 years of the British rule in India in various languages, but most of this literature is limited to military, economic, administrative and social history. There are some books on architectural changes or the introduction of new technologies in India, but unfortunately there is a dearth of information on fashion or dress during the era. The clothes that Indians wore, the clothes that the British wore in India and the new clothes that

¹⁰ Artemis Yagou, "On Apes and Aping: Fashion Modernity and Evolutionary Theories in 19th Century Greece," *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture* 13, no. 3 (2009). 325.

came out of the cultural exchange that are still worn in India are all areas that have not yet been very fully researched.

In order to understand these changes, a study of the historical, social, technological, economic and clothing choices of society is needed. To understand the psyche of a people and the factors that influence their fashion choices, academic intervention is needed. The majority of Indian historians do not consider fashion history a subject of serious study, and thus they have ignored the various changes that have occurred in the dress of men and women, so there is hardly any academic research in this area. It is these gaps that this research endeavours to fill. Taking into consideration all the factors that affect fashion, it is intended to study fashion at various tiers of the society. The initial plan was to conduct research in the changes brought about in menswear and womenswear at elite, middle and lower layers of the society, but looking at the vastness of the subject, this was narrowed down to studying only elite Indian menswear. Elite Indian menswear was focused on because it was the elite Indians who most willingly changed their garments and most frequently interacted with the British. Thus the research questions that emerged were:

- Did Indian fashion change as a result of the Raj?
- What was the effect of the British Raj on Indian identity? How did this identity change, and how was this reflected in Indians' clothing and textile preferences?
- What were the kinds of garments that were developed as a result of this new identity? Were they purely western or was there a fusion of different elements? Did Indian culture, geography and economy have a role to play in this process?
- Is India's national and traditional menswear garment the sherwani a product of the British Raj?
- If the sherwani originated during the British Raj, why is it considered a traditional Indian garment, even though clothes that were directly copied from the British are thought of as 'western'?

1.3 Research Methods and Methodology

This section discusses the research methods, including the sources of primary data and the tools used in data collection, before describing the methodology that was adopted to analyse the collected data. As mentioned in sections 1.1 and 1.2, this research has several objectives and five research questions to answer. Various methodological models were explored in order to find the correct approach. Dress history is a relatively new field for academics. There are various approaches followed by researchers depending on the aspect of history, society or dress history that they wish to explore. The study of dress can take various avenues; it could be done purely from an economic, anthropological, gender study or object-based history point of view. It can also be undertaken from a scientific and/or technological point of view, particularly when it involves textile structures such as production, manufacture or garment sizing.

Object based studies have proved very valuable in understanding dress history. Professor Lou Taylor provides a useful introduction to different methods of studying dress history.¹¹ Her approaches include artefact-based studies where the emphasis is on the objects and approaches based on cultural studies, material studies, literary sources, visual analysis, ethnographical approaches and oral history. Giorgio Riello emphasises the importance of artefact study, as does Susan Pearce.¹² According to these authorities, the study of material culture is incomplete until an object is studied. Joan Severa and Merrill Horswill minutely create an observation list and chart every bit of costume for comparison, from the length of the garment and the textile and fibres used to the design of fabric and the construction of the garment.¹³ Their study shows the importance of objects

¹¹ Lou Taylor, *The Study of Dress History* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2002).

¹² Giorgio Riello, "The Object of Fashion : Methodological Approaches to the History of Fashion," *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture* 3, no. Open Access Article (2011). Susan M Pearce, "Objects as Meaning; or Narrating the Past," in *1 Objects of Knowledge* (London: The Athlone Press, 1990).

¹³ Joan Severa and Merrill Horswill, "Costume as Material Culture," *Dress* 15 (1989).

in fashion history. Along with studying the object Pearce argues for the necessity of studying it in its original surroundings. Private collectors and sometimes museums have images of how the object was used which can provide invaluable information for analysis. Lise Skov and Marie Riegels Melchior stress that dress cannot be studied in isolation because there are many factors that relate to it.¹⁴ They go on to say that the study of dress history is in fact a greater study of mankind. Sapir points out that fashion is categorically a historic concept and is unintelligible if it is lifted out of its context.¹⁵ These various authors point to the importance of object study as a method of researching dress history.

Lingley, in her study on medieval China, has argued that it is necessary to devise a methodology to study change based on cross-cultural influences and to understand the impact of the various factors that influence fashion.¹⁶ She rightly suggests that it was not only the fact that the objects were imported that informs us about cultural exchange, but also their make and imagery, which speak volumes in terms of understanding cultural choice and tastes. Thus, in order to understand the changes in fashion and the cross-cultural influence in clothing fully, it is important that both visual and textual information of the time be used in conjunction with one another.¹⁷ These various works in the research of the arts and of dress history in particular have been helpful in developing a methodology for this project. Malcolm Barnard writes of three basic positions that fashion history can take: "history as a backdrop to fashion, history as a context for fashion and history as a product of fashion".¹⁸ He goes on to describe the approach of various dress and fashion historians. His second position, where history is taken as a

¹⁴ Lise Skov and Marie Riegels Melchior, "Research Approaches to the Study of Dress and Fashion," *Creative Encounters Working Papers # 19; Berg Fashion Library* (2010).

¹⁵ Edward Sapir, "Fashion," in *Fashion Theory, a Reader*, ed. Malcolm Barnard (Oxon: Routledge, 2007). 39-45.

¹⁶ Kate A. Lingley, "Naturalizing the Exotic: On the Changing Meanings of Ethnic Dress in Medieval China," *Ars Orientalis* 38 (2010).

¹⁷ Lingley, "Naturalizing the Exotic," 54.

¹⁸ Malcolm Barnard, "Fashion and History / Fashion in History," in *Fashion Theory, a Reader*, ed. Malcolm Barnard (Oxon: Routledge, 2007). 33-38.

context for fashion, justifies the significance of major changes that take place in fashion, or the ways of dressing by people of all classes. Here history becomes a context of fashion studies, and for any analysis a thorough understanding of the context is required.

Mahoney outlines the idea of comparing historical methodologies in order to support one's own thesis.¹⁹ His work was particularly important to this study's understanding of the nuances of different methodological approaches to the study of dress history. Mahoney stresses the importance of comparative study. The chapter on 'Combining methodologies in cultural studies' in *Doing Research in Cultural Studies* aided this study's understanding of creating one's own model for conducting research. The study of dress is rooted in material and the construction of that material, but the study of fashion is deeply rooted in psychology. The study of fashion and dress is therefore a study of material culture and psychology. Material culture is the study through objects or artefacts of the values and beliefs, ideas and attitudes of a particular society at a given time.²⁰ Professor John Styles points out that, rather than being a crude mix of various approaches, the study of dress history has to be a blend of conceptual and empirical work.²¹ In this case the objective of the current project is to trace the evolution of a garment and to understand the reasons behind its emergence and evolution. To do so, various approaches had to be combined, which resulted in the proposed methodology, discussed in section 1.3.1.

1.3.1 Methodological Model Proposed

After analysing the various methodological approaches for the study of dress history, it was felt that the best approach for this study was a five-point approach:

¹⁹ James Mahoney, "Comparative - Historical Methodology," *Annual Review of Sociology* 30 (2004).

²⁰ Jules David Prown, "Mind in Matter : An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method," *Winterthur Portfolio* 17, no. 1 (1982).1.

²¹ John Styles, "Dress in History: Reflections on a Contested Terrain," *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture* 2, no. 4 (1998). 388.

1. CONSUMPTION HISTORY : A study of consumption history done by interviews with tailors, academics, historians, curators and the general public who have memories of the time period, who have studied about the time period, who have resources, who have family heirlooms from the time period or who have access to any oral history or written history. Including access to bills or economic data.
2. LITERARY EVIDENCE: A study of written records or literary references (letters, newspaper articles, personal diaries)
3. VISUAL EVIDENCE: A study of visual references (paintings, prints, pictures and photographs)
4. OBJECTS: An object-based study (actual textiles and dress, articles of clothing and accessories)
5. ETYMOLOGY: A detailed study of the etymology and terminology of Indian garments that were worn before the Raj and those worn after it (words in common usage and their origin)

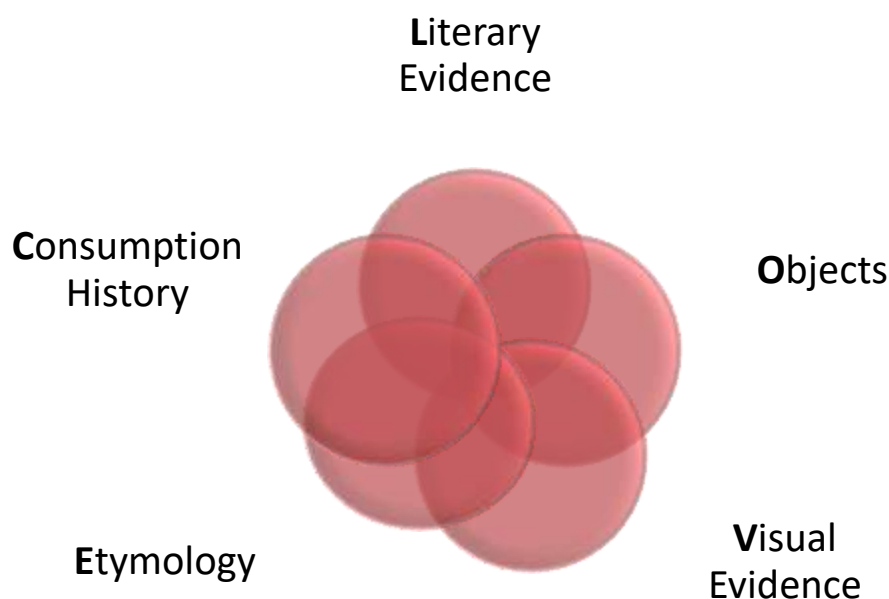


Figure 1-5 CLOVE - Methodological model proposed.

Explanation of the proposed methodological model -

The methodology model as proposed above is in the form of a Venn diagram. The model can be called **CLOVE** - an acronym for Consumption history, Literary References, Object-based, Visual References and Etymology and terminology. The model adopts this five-fold approach in order to study the influences of fashion in a given period in history. The Venn diagram represents certain areas that overlap and certain other areas that do not. This shows that although a lot of information will be collected, not all of will correlate. Ideally, the information that falls in the centre of the diagram where it is reinforced by literary and visual sources, object study, consumption history and a study of the etymology and terminology of fashion, clothing and textile, for a given period of time, in a given geographical location, will yield interesting results.

1.3.1.1 Consumption History

The study of consumption history mirrors human conditions, their objects of

daily use, their means of production and their lifestyles.²² For the purpose of economic history and dress history, it is important to understand patterns of both production and consumption. In business studies 'PEST analysis' (Political, Economic, Social and Technological analysis) describes a framework of macro-environmental factors that is used in strategic management. This time-tested framework analyses various factors as listed above in order to make business decisions about future development. I use this framework retrospectively as a part of consumption history in order to understand how these factors - namely political, economic, social and technological - influenced elite Indian menswear in the 19th century. The focus of the study is on elite Indian men during and after the British Raj, and the object in focus is the sherwani. In order to understand whether the sherwani existed before the Raj, PEST analysis had to be combined with the CLOVE model, where consumption history was largely studied based on existing knowledge of the society and was tallied with the literary and visual proofs and objects in museums. PEST analysis helped to develop an understanding of the culture that existed in India and the technological prowess required to tailor the garments, which in turn helped to identify the foreign influences in dress. Patterns of consumption were studied using interviews and oral information, memories that people had of the time period in question and objects.

Since oral history has been used extensively to discover what people know and think about certain topics for which there is not a lot of archival data, it is important in a study like this to meet people who are connected with the topic under consideration and to get to know their views and opinions through interviews. Lynn Abrams, in her book on oral history, discusses the process and procedure of recording oral history and how to benefit from it as a researcher.²³ She discusses the benefits of oral history particularly that one might chance upon information that has not been recorded previously but

²² Frank Trentmann, *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

²³ Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London and New York: Taylor & Francis, 2010).

she also outlines its negative features, particularly that oral history can be coloured by biases and popular memory. Thus she argues that oral histories should be verified with documentary evidence.

Thus in order to study the subject objectively, it was decided to interview people of different backgrounds who are in some way related to, or have some knowledge of, the British Raj and the clothes that people wore in this period - namely tailors, and fashion designers. They were asked some generic questions like 'what do you think has been the main influence of the British Raj on Indian fashion' and some specific questions, for example the tailors were asked to make a pattern of the sherwani, and to discuss how it has changed over time, whereas the academics were asked questions pertaining to books on the matter and similar questions.

Popular literature, documentaries, cinema and songs which help to understand the political, social, economic and technical history of the time period were referred to. To be able to analyse and study the influences on fashion, it is vital to understand factors in play during a given time period and thus books that describe the contemporaneous scenes written by contemporaneous novelists are very helpful. Novels and stories that portray society to a great extent, like Rabindranath Tagore's works, also convey something of the dress and manners of the period's society.²⁴ An examination of the changing tastes in art and architecture are vital parts of consumption history, and period cinema has visually tried to recreate past times in films like *Gandhi*, *Mangal Pandey* and *Lagaan*. However, even though these creations are close to reality, they are works of fiction, and thus cannot be used as primary sources.²⁵ They cannot be completely ignored though as there is some merit in fiction when it is staged in a particular period. It outlines the culture of the time in which it was written, which helps to

²⁴ English translations of books by Rabindranath Tagore: *Chokher Bali*, *The Post Office*, *The Bachelor's Club*. Documentaries on the lives of freedom fighters of India like Bhagat Singh and Azad.

²⁵ Taylor. 92

strengthen the analysis.

1.3.1.2 Literary or written Evidence

While fiction is a specific form of literary evidence, it has to be balanced by other textual sources. There are various other textual sources used by dress historians to provide evidence of clothing culture.²⁶ The proficiency of certain people at recording, documenting and cataloguing all kinds of information has led to a great availability of data for society in general and for academia in particular. Personal diaries, newspaper reports and articles, as well as documented incidents and government record books, advertisements, pamphlets, letters, etc., form a vast pool of written material that is available for the study of dress history. The detailed descriptions of dress and textiles that were worn for particular occasions at times include information that is not discernible by simply observing the objects. This in no way means that the object becomes less important, but, for example, looking at a gown in a collection will not give a sense of when it was worn, who wore it, how it was worn and where it was worn without supplementing the study of the object with sufficient research into the different styles being worn in different periods and places. Thus objects need to be supported by written sources.

Letters written by friends and family that take pains to describe different aspects of life in a new country include vivid descriptions of people, rituals, customs and sometimes clothes. There are the many letters written by the travellers to India, the Vicereines of India, royalty and the military. The letters written by Miss Emily Eden, who was the sister of George Eden and accompanied him to India when he was appointed the Governor General of India (1835-1842), are a good example.²⁷ These letters include descriptions of fabrics, garments, manners and customs. Such letters, as well as essays, the personal diaries of travellers and tourists, government orders and

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Emily Eden, *Letters from India (1797 -1869) by Hon. Emily Eden*, ed. Elanor Eden, 2 vols., vol. 1 (London: Richard Bentley and sons, 1872).

newspapers, are a valuable source of information.²⁸ In present times, when these resources have been digitised in libraries such as Gale online, which have powerful search engines and are invaluable tools for the researcher. Microsoft and Google have digitised many diaries of travellers, which have been very useful and the books digitised by archive.org, are available at archives.org and I have used them extensively.

Although these written sources contain valuable information, they may also be biased. For example, the revolt of 1857 in India is referred to as 'mutiny' by those who oppose it and as 'the first war for freedom' by its supporters. While these sources can provide valuable information, it becomes very important to look at the facts conveyed by them and to avoid being overly influenced by their views. Sometimes, the author's description of dress helps to understand the type of dress but lacks correct terminology. The descriptions of dress in letters by Lady Dufferin,²⁹ for example, aid an understanding of the kind of garments worn by rulers, but the names of these garments are not known because she did not bother to record them. For her the description was all that mattered: she wanted her mother in England to be able to picture them. The objects that she mentions have been preserved in museums and by antique art dealers in India.

1.3.1.3 Objects

Objects and their relation to people form the basis of material culture studies. The study of dress history is the study of material culture. The study of objects - in this project, garments from the past - can bring to light fine nuances like the pattern of the garments, methods of construction, the fabrics used, labels, the actual lining, size and minute details of embellishment. To get a clearer understanding of the birth of the sherwani, the garments and their patterns had to be studied. Therefore the written

²⁸ Carnaticus, "Four Letters of Carnaticus, Explanatory of His View of the Indian Army, the Missionaries, and Press of India: As Inserted in the Asiatic Journals for May, September, October, and November, 1821," (1821).

²⁹ Vicerene of India 1884-1888.

evidence had to be supported by actual objects.

These details are useful because they inform us about the state of technology at a particular time and also, most importantly, help us to study the evolution of dress. There are many intricacies related to the construction of the garment and how the dress was worn that can be seen and understood better by actually studying the object.³⁰ Because of its invaluable addition to textual and visual evidence, object study takes centre stage.³¹ As the fashion historian Lou Taylor comments, “Object based research does indeed centre on examination of minute detail channelled through a series of patiently acquired skills and interpretative methods.”³² There are many places where one can look for clothing under examination, like museums, antique shops and private collectors. Museums carefully label and keep objects and are expected to have detailed information about them. Theoretically this may be the case, but practically I have found such rigour to be lacking in museums in India. Despite this I have been lucky enough to gain access to the best resources and to meet the right kind of people for my study. Discussions with museum curators and textile conservators in India have been very useful.³³ They have a complete knowledge of their inventories and can help to locate the type of resource that is required by the researcher. To complement this information, different sources have to be used.

The museums in the UK have better researched objects than some of the museums in India. In India, there are also issues related to conservation. For my study I planned to visit various museums in India and the UK. In India, antique shops and private collectors often have older garments. These sources are reliable because the owners have details of the garments, which

³⁰ Ian Woodward, *Understanding Material Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 2007).

³¹ Taylor.

³² Taylor, *The Study of Dress History*, 3.

³³ Ms Smita Singh, an independent textile conservator, discussions from March 2014 to Feb 2016. Dr Jayanti Dutta and Dr Sanjeev Kumar, head of the resource centre, NIFT, New Delhi. Dr Anamika Pathak, National Museum.

match with other sources. Museums in India house a lot of objects, although exact information regarding them may not be easily available. Tailors' shops and boutiques may also offer contemporary versions of garments. But, since during the Raj a lot of material from India was brought to the UK by various private collectors and government agents, a very good collection is available to study in the UK, especially in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

1.3.1.4 Visual References

Visual references include paintings, photographs, prints, sculpture, illustrations, advertisements and other drawings, etchings, etc. These images can be related to the objects and literature. Photographs are an excellent source of information, although they can be staged, and therefore show only an odd garment especially planned and executed for the sole purpose of the photograph, rather than evidence of a fashion. It is therefore important to study the photograph with reference to the written word and objects. Prown reflects on this pure aspect of visual sources: text tells us about the source through the mediation of an observer's perspective, whereas the image is open to interpretation.³⁴

These caveats help us to be aware of any biases that we might have absorbed from our own cultural backgrounds, as Prown mentions, which may hinder our objectivity when we try to interpret materials.³⁵ The study of material culture is the study of the relationship between people and objects. Written material is subject to writers' interpretations, whereas visual material makes understanding certain complexities in some ways more straightforward. Visual references to a toga, sari or himation give a clearer picture of how these draped fabrics look than a written description. To comprehend the look of the garment it is important to be able to "read an

³⁴ Jules David Prown and Kenneth Haltman, *American Artifacts: Essays in Material Culture* (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 2000).

³⁵ Prown.

image”, in Barthes’s words.³⁶ The difference between the achkan and the sherwani, for example, was difficult to understand based on written texts, but the use of visual reference - an image from the British Library - helped to differentiate between the two.

Reading an image brings the notion of trying to understand the construction of the garment into focus. How is it worn? What is the highlight of the garment? Are there particular motifs or choices of fabrics? All these questions help us to analyse a garment better. Apart from easing our understanding of the complexities of drape or pattern, paintings and photographs provide us with backgrounds, even if they are artificially created, giving an idea of the kind of setting the dress was worn in. Images are an excellent source of information and are available in art galleries, museums and archives. The University of Glasgow’s archives and special collections have provided invaluable visual resources. The images, if supported by actual objects, help to understand the garment holistically.

1.3.1.5 Etymology

The etymology of clothing names provides great insight into how or why a name or classification of a type of garment has evolved. Usually the names of clothes either have a meaning in their language or have been derived from some other language through cross-cultural exchange. As a result of British rule, many Indian words have been adopted into the English language and vice-versa. Tracing these terms’ etymology helps to find the origin of the objects to which they refer. For example, the word ‘coat’, which is excessively used in India (the term and the garment), comes from English language; this helps to reveal the fact that this garment was introduced into India by the British.

Indian menswear includes many garments that have British names such as

³⁶ Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," in *Visual Culture: The Reader*, ed. Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall (London: Sage Publications 1999).

shirts, trousers, undergarments, ties, socks and shoes. Some of them have Hindi or Urdu alternatives but some, like 'pants', have none. They are either called 'pants' or 'patloon' the latter being a corrupt form of the word 'pantaloons'. The word 'sherwani' sounds Persian or Urdu, and therefore seems Mughal in origin. An attempt was made to trace the etymology of 'sherwani' in order to find its origin. This search did not meet with much success but gives scope for further research. Other garments being worn in the 19th and 20th centuries also have interesting names and the study of their etymologies helps to understand their probable origins.

1.4 Conclusion

'The influence of British rule on elite Indian menswear: The birth of the sherwani' is a study in dress history that tries to understand the evolutionary changes in elite Indian menswear and to locate temporally the birth of the traditional Indian menswear garment, the sherwani. This study also endeavours to discern the foundations of new traditions in dress or fashion. Is tradition created deliberately? If so, for what reason? Traditions are constructed in the hope of perpetuating something that is thought to bind us to our roots, or to bring together like-minded people, giving a sense of belonging to the members of any type of cult, nationality, religion or region. Clothes are an indicator of distinct identity and the fashion statements of a group of people are an indication of their belief systems and the image that they want to create in the mind of the onlooker. This research tries to answer the questions raised in this chapter by studying India's elite menswear so that changes can be identified and analysed in context.

In order to select the best methodology to suit the objectives of research, the business analytical model of PEST was used in conjunction with the proposed CLOVE model in the hope of ruling out any errors that may occur as a result of too great a reliance on a single model. Consumption history of the 19th and 20th centuries along with literary evidence, object study, visual evidence and etymology have been used for data collection and analysis. In order to establish chronologically the existence or non-existence of the

sherwani and evolution of Indian menswear, the time period from the mid-18th century - the beginning of Company rule - to the mid-20th century - the date of India's independence - was chosen. A study of the sherwani post-independence to the present day was also done.

The thesis has been divided into six chapters including this introduction. The second chapter reviews the existing literature on dress and fashion history and the British Raj; the third chapter discusses and analyses the clothes worn by the Indian elite from 1757 to 1857, as well as the formation of the Indian army and the introduction of uniforms. Chapter 4 is an analysis of the changes in the clothing of elite Indian men and the birth of the sherwani between 1857 and 1914. Chapter 5 traces the history of the sherwani from 1915 to 2015, and discusses whether the sherwani has undergone change in the present times, if so, how and why. The sixth chapter draws together this information.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is a review of the literature on fashion and dress history in general and India's fashion and dress history since the arrival of the British in India and under British rule in particular. It endeavours to answer the research questions raised in the introductory chapter by reading and analysing available literature and scholarly works on the topic and identifying gaps in research. In order to organise the information for clarity and understanding, the chapter is divided into various sections. Section 2.2 is a review of the scholarly work on fashion and dress history. It includes subsections about organisational dress or uniforms (2.2.1) and a discussion on the concept of traditional dress or costume (2.2.2). The literature on the methodology of dress history has already been briefly discussed in Chapter 1. Section 2.3 reviews and assesses the literature on India's dress history and section 2.4 looks at the literature available on British rule in India, as it is relevant to this thesis. British rule in India is divided into two phases - the first phase is 1757-1858, when the East India Company began to rule parts of India. In India this time period is known as the Company Raj ('raj' is the Hindi word for 'rule'). The British who were ruling India at that time were not politicians but merchants, so they can be referred to as the 'merchant rulers'. The second phase, 1858-1947, is when the country came directly under the British crown, and is known as the 'British Raj'.

2.2 Fashion and Dress History

This section is a review of scholarly work on fashion and dress history, including books and papers that deal with the psychology of fashion, and especially with men's psychology of fashion. There have been considerably fewer papers and books published on menswear, as opposed to womenswear or textiles. The richest literature in history of fashion is on western womenswear; in India there is more literature on Indian textiles than on Indian dress or fashion. In order to understand the factors that influence

menswear choices, fashion and dress history papers were studied and parallels in the Indian context were drawn.

‘Fashion’, ‘dress’, ‘clothing’ and ‘costume’ are terms which tend to overlap, and are used interchangeably and synonymously. The dilemmas associated with the use of these terms and other related terminologies have been discussed by Nicklas and Pollen in the introductory chapter of their book titled, *Dress History: New Directions in Theory and Practice*.³⁷ They argue that the word ‘clothing’ is limited to objects that are worn, but that the term ‘dress’ is inclusive of all adornment and decoration of the body. They do not specifically mention whether headgear, footwear and other accessories should be considered dress, but since they write that dress is all-inclusive, it can be assumed that all these objects form a part of it. Borrowing from the work of Joanne Eicher and Susan Kaiser, they define ‘costume’ as dress worn for specific occasions, or what people wore in earlier time periods.³⁸ Therefore the term ‘costume’ implies a type of dress that is mostly stuck in time, whereas ‘fashion’ is dynamic and changes with time.³⁹

Their arguments are based on studies that have been conducted by many dress and fashion historians. They further discuss the distinction between ‘dress history’ and ‘fashion history’. Taylor, who has established dress history as a serious subject of study, prefers to call the area ‘dress history’.⁴⁰ Her studies are firmly object based and she emphasises the fact of collecting dress and objects and studying them, making her work the study of dress and therefore ‘dress history’. This study falls under the purview of both ‘fashion history’ and ‘dress history’: as ‘fashion history’, it deals with the changes in

³⁷ Nicklas and Pollen, *Dress History: New Directions in Theory and Practice*, (London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).

³⁸ S.B. Kaiser, *The Social Psychology of Clothing and Personal Adornment* (Macmillan, 1985); Joanne B. Eicher, *Dress and Ethnicity - Change across Space and Time* (Oxford: Berg, 1999).

³⁹ Nicklas and Pollen, *Dress History: New Directions in Theory and Practice*. 1.

⁴⁰ Taylor; *Establishing Dress History* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004).

fashion with the passage of time and due to cross-cultural influences; as 'dress history', it includes the study of actual objects and their details. Thus the present study is a study of both the tangible and non-tangible aspects of clothing - respectively 'fashion and dress'. The term 'fashion', however, is subject to multiple interpretations.

Fashion theorists like Tortora and Eubank believe that fashion is mostly determined by the affluent portion of society and that everyday utilitarian clothing does not form part of fashion.⁴¹ Teri Agins also believes that everyday clothing does not form part of fashion - she believes that only high fashion does. In her book titled *The End of Fashion*, Agins argues that if a style becomes common due to excessive marketing, then this commonness signifies its end as a fashion.⁴² Here the term fashion is used to refer to uncommon or unique styles of dress among the wealthy; these people are also referred to as members of the 'fashionable societies'. A similar point of view is expressed by Brooke and Laver, who have compiled a detailed account of fashions in the west.⁴³ They regard fashion as a kind of phenomenon that is only for the elite class. They classify the clothes of the rich and the poor by naming them as 'court fashions' and 'peasant dress'.⁴⁴ According to these theorists, 'fashion' is limited only to the elite sections of the society. And, indeed, this may have been the case before the rise of the middle class and before mass production, when power and money were concentrated in the hands of a few.

Hansen explains the distinction between fashion and dress, as it has been

⁴¹ Phyllis G Tortora and Keith Eubank, *Survey of Historic Costume : A History of Western Dress*, 5th ed. (New York: Fairchild Books, 2009).

⁴² Teri Agins, *The End of Fashion: How Marketing Changed the Clothing Business Forever* (New York: Harper Collins, 2000).

⁴³ Iris Brooke and James Laver, *English Costume from the Seventeenth through the Nineteenth Centuries*, (Google: Dover Publications, 2000), <http://books.google.co.in/books?id=cGKxESr0G0oC>.

⁴⁴ Brooke and Laver, *English Costume*; François Boucher, *A History of Costume in the West* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1967).

created by western scholars.⁴⁵ She asserts that fashion's origin is explained by most scholars in terms of the development of a capital production system in the west. With the rise of the middle-class and in a world of plurality, fashion has changed its meaning. Giles Lipovetsky refers to fashion as a social phenomenon, stating that it should be studied at a social level.⁴⁶ This implies that there are various social levels and each social level has its own interpretation of fashion. Kaiser is of the same opinion and defines fashion as a form of collective behaviour that is socially acceptable at a given point in time and is liable to change.⁴⁷ This definition of fashion therefore means that 'fashion' can be different for different people at different points in time. This view is shared by Rouse, who states that fashion is not only about looking good, but also about looking 'right', i.e. socially correct and proper.⁴⁸ Here the terms 'socially correct' and 'proper' signify the importance of social acceptance to fashion. Such acceptance indicates the reason for the Indian elite's creation of a new garment: for propriety and for social reasons, their garments had to look Indian and not western.

Lipovetsky, Kaiser and Rouse emphasise the role of society and social values in determining 'fashion'. Kawamura gives a similar analysis of fashion.⁴⁹ She discusses fashion from a sociologist's perspective and is right in saying that fashion is not only about clothes, although clothes give materiality to the idea of fashion. Fashion is dynamic, it changes frequently, it encompasses not only clothes, but other items of daily use, and it is a complete life-style.⁵⁰ A study of 'fashion history' or 'dress history' therefore cannot be limited to dress; it has to take into account the reasons for changes in dress.

⁴⁵ Karen Tranberg Hansen, "The World in Dress: Anthropological Perspectives on Clothing, Fashion, and Culture," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33 (2004).

⁴⁶ Gilles Lipovetsky, *The Empire of Fashion* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994). 16.

⁴⁷ Kaiser.

⁴⁸ Elizabeth Rouse, *Understanding Fashion* (Oxford, London: BSP Professional Books, 1989).

⁴⁹ Yuniya Kawamura, *Fashion-Ology : An Introduction to Fashion Studies* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2005).

⁵⁰ Rouse.

Diane Crane discusses the important role that clothing plays in the construction of social identities:

Clothing, as one of the most visible forms of consumption, performs a major role in the social construction of identity. Clothes as artefacts “create” behaviour through their capacity to impose social identities and empower people to assert latent social identities.⁵¹

Fashion and society thus become interdependent, because fashion is determined by society, and the dress of an individuals helps to convey their social identity. Quoting Thomas Carlyle, Martin and Keenan argue that clothing is an important part of the culture of any society: “Clothes are society’s way of showing where we belong in the order of things, our role and order in the social pageantry”.⁵² Craik explains the reasons that fashion studies warrant serious scholarly attention. Her study analyses how clothes work as social symbols and help to create identities.⁵³ This concept is valuable from the point of view of my study. Clothes function as social symbols, so they signify the changes that take place in a society during a given historical period. Trade and war have often brought various cultures into contact with each other, causing them to evolve as they borrow elements and create new identities. Artemis Yagou argues that dressing habits evolve continuously due to cross-cultural influences.⁵⁴ She argues that dress was the most visible change in the modernisation of Greece in the 19th century. Her theory can be applied equally to India in the 19th century because India was on the verge of modernisation which had stemmed from the west. In a multicultural environment, with the British controlling the country politically, the dress of the Indian elite underwent changes that reflected the formation of a new identity. Identity is “the fact of being who

⁵¹ Diana Crane, *Fashion and Its Social Agendas : Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000). 1.

⁵² William JF Keenan, *Introduction: ‘Sartor Resartus’ Restored: Dress Studies in Carlylean Perspective* (London, England: 'The Berg Fashion Library').

⁵³ Jennifer Craik, *Fashion: The Key Concepts* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2009).

⁵⁴ Yagou. 325

or what a person or thing is”.⁵⁵ Alison Lurie has an enriching discussion of the language, grammar and vocabulary of clothes.⁵⁶ She begins by analysing how clothes help us to create a perception of an individual before we even talk to them. She argues that clothes have a language of their own, and as is the case with all languages, they have their own grammar too. As with other kinds of language, the clothes too speak either similar or different languages. Theoretically she believes that this vocabulary of dress is as large if not larger than that of any spoken language.⁵⁷ Therefore it is this language of clothes which helps in the formation of new identities. For example, after the French Revolution, the clothing of elite men in France underwent drastic changes: it became more practical and much simpler, in line with the new identity that was being created.⁵⁸

Workman and Studak have argued that men have a need-based approach to fashion while women have a want-based approach.⁵⁹ They insist that men prefer to dress based on their needs, which could be political and social, whereas women wear what they want to wear when they are not involved in actual political roles. Although their research deals with modern American men and women, the psychology of fashion adoption can be considered to be universal. In my study, the focus is on elite Indian men, who changed their dressing sensibilities to suit the political and social changes in the society that resulted from foreign rule.

The study of the occurrence of changes in fashion, and the factors leading to adoption of new fashions is very interesting. Bennett-England has discussed the cross-cultural influences on menswear in Europe during the reign of the

⁵⁵ *Pocket Oxford English Dictionary*, Tenth ed., Indian Edition (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁵⁶ Alison Lurie, *The Language of Clothes* (London: Random House, 1981).

⁵⁷ Lurie, *Language of Clothes*, 185.

⁵⁸ A. Ribeiro, *Fashion in the French Revolution* (Holmes and Meier, 1988).

⁵⁹ Jane E. Workman and Cathryn M. Studak, "Fashion Consumers and Fashion Problem Recognition Style," *International Journal of Consumer Studies* 30, no. 1 (2006).

different rulers.⁶⁰ Movement from one region to another has often led to the intermingling of styles. As argued by Keenan and Crane, the society and culture of a region influences fashion adoption.⁶¹ Zakim also holds society responsible for changes in fashion.⁶² He argues that 19th century menswear became much simpler in order to dissolve obvious differences in society so that a mechanic could look as good as a millionaire. The Americans consciously adopted a simple, similar kind of dressing in order to blur class differences and so that they appeared to all belong to one nation.⁶³ Zakim argues that in such a society, comfort was the biggest factor in changes in fashion and led to the development of 'business coats' and 'office coats'. It can be deduced that men were more practical in matters of dress in 19th century America. Similarly, Hardy Amies discusses the influences that have led to adoption of various styles of sportswear, formalwear and casualwear based on men's needs.⁶⁴

Frings describes three theories of fashion adoption. These theories indicate that fashion sometimes moves from the higher to the lower classes; sometimes from the lower strata of society to the higher; and at other times moves within the same social strata. These are called respectively the trickle-down theory, the trickle-up theory and the trickle-across theory.⁶⁵ Trickle-down theory explains that once the fashion leaders from high society adopt a certain kind of fashion, fashion followers begin to ape it. Fashion leaders are people who make new fashion statements.⁶⁶ Fashion followers, as the name suggests, follow the fashions that have been set by others. The trickle-down theory argues that new fashion senses begin with the upper class. During the time period of my study, the upper class consists of the

⁶⁰ Rodney Charles Bennett-England, *Dress Optional: The Revolution in Menswear* (online: Owen, 1967).

⁶¹ Keenan; Crane.

⁶² M. Zakim, *Ready-Made Democracy: A History of Men's Dress in the American Republic, 1760-1860* (University of Chicago Press, 2006).

⁶³ Zakim, *Ready-Made Democracy*, 187.

⁶⁴ Hardy Amies, *A B C of Men's Fashion* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2007).25, 73.

⁶⁵ Gini Stephens Frings, *Fashion : From Concept to Consumer* (Prentice Hall, 2001). 77.

⁶⁶ Frings, *Fashion*, 77-78.

British rulers in India and the elite Indians. My study therefore is described well by trickle-down theory: it tries to understand the reasons for the adoption of western fashion in India in spite of a climate that does not encourage such clothing. In this case, the politically supreme British become the fashion leaders and the elite Indians saw a need to change their fashion preferences.

2.2.1 Organisational Dress or Uniforms

Studies relating to organisational dress, the dress of the army and other organisations, have also been useful in trying to understand the psychology of the creation and use of uniforms. Pratt and Rafaeli discuss the importance of uniforms and organisational dress in the context of the uniforms worn by nurses in a rehabilitation centre in America.⁶⁷ They focus on the role of dress in an organisation and assert that not only managers but also employees contribute in deciding the uniform of an organisation. This can also be seen in India, although the employees (soldiers or recruits) had no decision making powers, but their dress was considered by the British as more suitable for the Indian climate. The British Indian armies began to consider Indian dress in their uniforms. The value and symbolism of that dress play an important role in generating identities. Rafaeli and Pratt argue that both formal and informal processes in organisations lead to the employees wearing particular attire, which helps to achieve homogeneity in the group and to make it conspicuously stand out in society.⁶⁸ Bernard Cohn, who has researched various aspects of colonialism, has likewise given an analysis of the organisational clothing that the British created in India.⁶⁹ He discusses the salient features that distinguished the army from other armies in an attempt to create a unique organisational identity.

⁶⁷ Michael G. Pratt and Anat Rafaeli, "Organizational Dress as a Symbol of Multilayered Social Identities," *The Academy of Management Journal* 40, no. 4 (1997).

⁶⁸ Anat Rafaeli and Michael G. Pratt, "Tailored Meanings: On the Meaning and Impact of Organizational Dress," *The Academy of Management Review* 18, no. 1 (1993). 32-36.

⁶⁹ Bernard S Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996).

For the study of dress in my period, the single most important factor was the introduction and organisation of well-disciplined armies. Some authors, like Soherwordi, who has given a detailed account of the formation of the army, are more useful than others.⁷⁰ The British brought about the concept of discipline and uniforms, as is emphasised by many authors, including Bernard Cohn, who argues that, in designing the dress uniforms for the officers and men of the Indian army, which included Indians, the British exercised a fantasy of what an “oriental” warrior should look like.⁷¹ Cohn’s work is immensely useful for my study. I have built on his philosophy in order to understand how the army has influenced the fashion of the time period. Kincaid discusses the origins of idea of uniform in the minds of the British, who introduced them not only for the army, but also for the administration, in an attempt to create a unique identity while in India.⁷²

The British Army has been researched by many scholars and historians. Not all of them deal with uniforms, but there are some good resources that help to understand the life of the British soldiers and the impact they had on the Indian soldiers and on Indian populace in general. Richard Holmes describes the lives of the British soldiers in India, and his work is a useful introduction to the experience of the soldiers, the difficulties that they faced in their uniforms and their stories.⁷³

There are also books and websites that are dedicated to the British-Indian army, some of which discuss or have images of uniforms. Stephen Luscombe’s site on the British Army has photographs and paintings of British-Indian army uniforms.⁷⁴ A study of the British-Indian army and its uniforms

⁷⁰ Syed Hussain Shaheed Soherwordi, "'Punjabisation' in the British Indian Army 1857 - 1947 and the Advent of Military Rule in Pakistan," *Edinburgh Papers in South Asian Studies* (2010).

⁷¹ Cohn.

⁷² Dennis Kincaid, *British Social Life in India 1608-1937* (London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., 1938).

⁷³ Richard Holmes, *Sahib: The British Soldier in India* (London: Harpe Collins, 2005).

⁷⁴ Stephen Luscombe, "Uniforms : The British Empire," <http://www.britishempire.co.uk/forces/armyuniforms/uniform.htm>.

was necessary to ascertain the kind of influences that army uniforms may have exerted on society, or vice-versa.⁷⁵ Sylvia Hopkins has discussed the uniforms of the British and Indian soldiers and officers of the British-Indian army, giving an insight into how these uniforms were prescribed.⁷⁶ Her study gives an insight into the initial types of uniforms and the changes that took place with the passage of time.

India under British rule had multiple armies, those of the rajas and those of the British. The British prescribed uniforms for all of them, creating a shared identity in the 18th, 19th and early-20th centuries. V. Longer describes the variety of Indian army uniforms, and his work has been very useful for my study as it has listed the various styles along with their time period.⁷⁷ The role that uniforms have played in the organisation of power in India under British rule and the beginnings of uniform are also discussed by Soherwordi.⁷⁸ All these sources have been very useful in understanding the uniforms of the British-Indian Army.

Jane Tynan notes the differences between ceremonial and combat uniforms. This is a feature of modernity that makes the uniform a symbol of power.⁷⁹ In *The Men's Fashion Reader*, edited by Peter McNeil and Vicki Karaminas, Chapter -7, written by Elisabeth Hackspiel-Mikosch, titled, 'Uniforms and the creation of Ideal Masculinity', has a great discussion on the power of uniforms.⁸⁰ She writes about the 19th century soldier, that wearing the

⁷⁵ A. White, *Considerations on the State of British India: Embracing the Subjects of Colonization; Missionaries; the State of the Press; the Nepaul and Mahrattah Wars; the Civil Government; and Indian Army* (Bell and Bradfute, 1822).

⁷⁶ Sylvia Hopkins, "A Compromise in Clothing: Uniform of the East India Company and Indian Armies C1700-1947," in *Soldiers of the Raj, the Indian Army 1600-1947*, ed. Alan J Guy and Peter B Boyden (Coventry: Clifford Press, 1997).

⁷⁷ V Longer, *Red Coats to Olive Green; a History of the Indian Army 1600 - 1947* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1974).

⁷⁸ Soherwordi..

⁷⁹ Jane Tynan, *British Army Uniform and the First World War : Men in Khaki* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). 11.

⁸⁰ Elisabeth Hackspiel-Mikosch, "Uniforms and the Creation of Ideal Masculinity," in *The Men's Fashion Reader*, ed. Peter McNeil and Vicki Karaminas (London, New Delhi, New York, Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2013).

uniform and its accessories was like encasing the male body into a whole new body armour. This, she writes, shaped men's bodies and minds and helped them to assume a superior physical and mental attitude.

The uniformed man presented himself as an image of the utmost possible physical and mental power.⁸¹

Her discussion brings out the importance of uniforms and the possible reasons of copying the elements from uniforms into articles of daily wear by men. This is very important for my study, as my study tries to trace the evolution of garments, in a time period where uniforms were introduced in India.

2.2.2 Traditional Dress or Costume

Traditional dress or traditional costumes are terms which signify stasis, but Hansen argues that traditional dress has never been a cultural heritage, but rather is a changing practice in anthropology.⁸² Eicher explains that ethnic dress is not static; several case histories show significant change in form and detail, calling into question the accuracy of designating ethnic dress 'traditional' when this term is used to indicate lack of change.⁸³ Similarly, Chapman discusses the 'traditional' frozen image of the Scottish kilts and laces of Brittany.⁸⁴ An interest that was shown in documenting the clothes of the other type of people, and to see them as frozen in time, was a trait of the British, which Chapman argues has led to the concept of the traditional. To avoid possible confusion, Indian authors use the term 'fashion' to describe new styles of clothes and 'traditional' to refer to anything that relates to India in the past. For example, Vandana Bhandari talks about the

⁸¹ Ibid. 124

⁸² Hansen. 372.

⁸³ Eicher. pg. – editorial.

⁸⁴ Malcom Chapman, "'Freezing the Frame": Dress and Ethnicity in Brittany and Gaelic Scotland," in *Dress and Ethnicity* (Oxford, Washington D C: Berg, 1999).

changes in fashion as seen in the Indian film industry.⁸⁵ She argues that these Bollywood fashions in turn have influenced the everyday fashion of the Indian masses since the 1940s, when films began to include everyday subjects as well as mythology. Continuously in her text she mentions an opposition of the traditional and the modern, but she does not really define a timeline for this opposition or even what 'traditional' means in an Indian context.

It is the assertion of latent social identities, Crane argues, that lead to the construction of 'traditions'.⁸⁶ Indian dress has usually been referred to as 'costume' by academics and historians who have written on Indian clothing.⁸⁷ The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines costumes as "clothes worn by an actor who is trying to look different", or "clothes worn by a group of people especially during a particular time in the past".⁸⁸ This association with the India of the past has continued to exist for those who have worked on Indian costume. There is a notion that Indian dress is 'traditional costume'.⁸⁹ There has been little study of how this costume has evolved over the centuries or where it has been located since the time of its inception. The Indian textile traditions and clothing known in India today as 'traditional' rarely have a (researched) date associated with them. Michael Howard discusses the association of ethnicity and dress in Indonesia, and argues that the country's ethnic identity is a result of colonisation: the people of a free country need to distinguish themselves.⁹⁰ This idea helps to clarify the terminology of a 'national' or 'traditional' costume: such clothing

⁸⁵ Vandana Bhandari, "Bollywood Fashion," *Berg Encyclopaedia of world dress and fashion* 4, no. Onlines exclusive (2012).

⁸⁶ Crane.

⁸⁷ See for example Roshen Alkazi, *Ancient Indian Costume*, 2 ed., vol. 1 (New Delhi: Art Heritage, 2001). Roshen Alkazi, *Medieval Indian Costume; India and Central Asia* (New Delhi: Art Heritage, 2008). Vandana Bhandari, *Costume, Textiles and Jewellery of India: Traditions in Rajasthan* (New Delhi: Prakash Books, 2005). Jamila Brij Bhushan, *The Costumes and Textiles of India*, First ed. (Bombay: Taraporevala's Treasurehouse of Books, 1958).

⁸⁸ 'Costume', Merriam-Webster, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/costume>

⁸⁹ Bhandari, *Costume, Textiles and Jewellery of India: Traditions in Rajasthan*.

⁹⁰ Michael C. Howard, "Dress and Ethnic Identity in Irian Jaya " *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 15, no. 1 (2000). 1-29.

helps to create a unique identity. Deborah Durham makes the same point.⁹¹ She argues that the 'traditional' dress of the people of Botswana was in fact copied from the dress of western missionaries. She discusses the ironies of the cultural identity imposed on the people of that region. Similarly, Emma Tarlo comments that the British were rather confused when they saw too many different kinds of Indian dress.⁹² It is this confusion and medley which catches my attention. Different layers of Indian society and people of different occupation wore different clothes, as can be seen in the coloured plates of the time period by the European artists.⁹³ This is rather interesting and leads to the discussion of the sherwani: given this multiplicity, how did a single garment come to represent the Indian nationality?

In a country like India which has been a melting pot of many cultures, religions and social outlooks, what exactly is traditional? How old does something have to be to become traditional and what does this definition entail? These questions have yet to be answered. Claire Dwyer mentions India's first fashion week that was held in 2000.⁹⁴ She goes on to discuss the trans-nationality of fashion between Britain and India, and the mixed identity. Although the article is very good from the point of view of what is happening today in the two countries, as now India is an emerging market, it does not outline the British influence on India during the 200 years of the Raj. Her comments are based on the concept of trans-nationality, but she focuses more on the influence of India on British fashions rather than the other way around. Indian textiles have been traded far and wide, but they have retained their identity as the traditional textiles of India.⁹⁵ The techniques of manufacturing Indian textiles have existed for four centuries

⁹¹ Deborah Durham, "The Predicament of Dress: Polyvalency and the Ironies of Cultural Identity" *American Ethnologist* 26, no. 2 (1999).

⁹² Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters, Dress and Identity in India* (London: Hurst and Company, 1996).

⁹³ Balt Solvyns of Calcutta, *The Costume of Hindustan* (New Delhi: Aryan Books International, 2012).

⁹⁴ Claire Dwyer, Christopher Breward, and David Gilbert *Fabrications of India* (Berg Fashion Library, 2006).

⁹⁵ J. Gillow and N. Barnard, *Traditional Indian Textiles* (P. Haupt, 1993).

but the motifs have changed in response to the market. The influence of Indian textiles on British fashions has been studied by many authors and researchers: there are, for example, studies on paisley shawls and Indian muslins and their impact on the Europeans. In their book on the *Origin of Chintz*, John Irwin et al. discuss the textile trade from India and its effects on the dress of Europeans.⁹⁶ There are multiple papers and books on Indian textiles. The reason for this abundance of data on Indian textiles is global trade. Researchers have focused on the textile trade for obvious reasons, and equally obvious is the reason for not paying attention to Indian menswear: it was unlikely to be exported. But the willingness to classify every possible dress type, the lack of acceptance of plurality in Indian menswear and the failure to acknowledge changing fashions on the subcontinent have led to the idea that Indian menswear is either ‘traditional’, indicating continuity with the Mughal and earlier periods, or modern, indicating the adoption of the western three-piece suit and, in the more modern context, American ‘jeans’. The lack of academic interest in this field has not facilitated this study of the journey of Indian menswear fashion, but it emphasises the importance of this study in terms of filling this gap in the research.

2.3 Dress of Indians Before and During the Raj

This section is a review of the work on India’s dress history especially during the British Raj. Most of the literature that discusses the impact of colonial rule on India focuses on administrative, economic and social impacts; there is hardly any material available on India’s dress history. Ghurye’s book, written in 1966, seems to be the first that discusses ancient Indian costume, although it is rather brief and has been written out of pure interest and inquisitiveness.⁹⁷ The most read book of Indian fashion history (as suggested by the syllabi of clothing and fashion institutes in India), called *Ancient*

⁹⁶ J. Irwin, *Origins of Chintz: With a Catalogue of Indo-European Cotton-Paintings in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto* (London: H.M.S.O., 1970).

⁹⁷ Govind Sadashiv Ghurye, *Indian Costume* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1966).

Indian Costume by Roshan Alkazi, has the best chronological study of India's fashion and costume history.⁹⁸ Alkazi builds her narrative on Ghurye's work and refers to the archaeological evidence that is present in the National Museum, New Delhi. Alkazi was the wife of a theatre artist and analysed sculptural remains to give descriptions of the types of clothes worn in ancient India. Motichandra also describes Indian fashion history with the help of ancient sculpture and texts.⁹⁹ Mohapatra, who is one of the very few academics in India to have written on ancient Indian costumes, writes:

To study the history of Indian costume is to engage in an adventure of vast and absorbing dimensions, for costume depicts life, not only in clothing itself, but also in the wearer and the time at which these were worn.¹⁰⁰

His book *Fashion Styles of Ancient India* is his attempt to understand what people wore in ancient India.¹⁰¹ His primary material includes old sculptures in temples, monuments and available texts. He makes no attempt to trace the evolution of fashion in the last two centuries.¹⁰² Roshan Alkazi's *Medieval Indian Costume*, written in 2008, discusses the clothes that were worn by Central Asians, Mongols, Persians and Turks who came to India during the medieval ages either to loot or to rule the subcontinent, but she does not really discuss what was happening in India, probably due to a lack of resources.¹⁰³ Alkazi gives an account of Scythian and Turkic costume and writes that when the Arabs came to India they wore a robe called the kaba. This, she claims, is what finally resulted in the Indo-Turkic costume including the kurta-pyjama, the achkan and the sherwani.¹⁰⁴ However, Alkazi lacks any

⁹⁸ Alkazi, *Ancient Indian Costume*, 1.

⁹⁹ Moti Chandra, *Costumes, Textiles, Cosmetics & Coiffure in Ancient and Mediaeval India* (Delhi: Oriental Publishers, 1973).

¹⁰⁰ R P Mohapatra, *Fashion Styles of Ancient India (a Study of Kaling from Ancient Times to Sixteenth Century Ad)* (Delhi: B R Publishing Corporation, 1992).

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ghurye.

¹⁰³ Roshan Alkazi, *Medieval Indian Costume* (New Delhi: Art Heritage, 2008).

¹⁰⁴ Alkazi, *Medieval Indian Costume*, 26.

concrete proof to support this supposition.

Jamila Brij Bhushan provides some insights into Mughal costume.¹⁰⁵ Her book is a helpful introduction to the kind of clothes worn in India before the British Raj. There are indications of the type of dress worn around the 18th and 19th centuries in the catalogue of clothes in the Jaipur museum written by the curator, Chandramani Singh.¹⁰⁶ This catalogue is replete with different kinds of dress and the names given to them. Singh writes about the achkan and the angrakha, but there is no mention of the sherwani. In her book on the costumes and textiles in the Salarjung Museum in Hyderabad, Sharma writes that the sherwani was called the achkan when it was first designed; she also writes that it is an upper garment worn by Muslim men.¹⁰⁷

Other museum curators like Anamika Pathak, the curator of the decorative arts section of the National Museum, New Delhi and Dr Goswamy, from the Calico Museum, Ahmedabad, have also written on Indian costumes. Anamika Pathak, describes the development of 5000 years of Indian clothing with the same enthusiasm as and similar nomenclature to Roshan Alkazi.¹⁰⁸ A more useful book for studying garments of the 19th and early 20th centuries through museum collections is by Goswamy, who describes the objects in Calico museums with full size images and also reproduces the paper patterns of various garments, producing a very useful resource.¹⁰⁹

Vandana Bhandari, the Dean of NIFT, and Ritu Kumar, a famous Indian fashion designer, have both written lavishly illustrated books on Indian

¹⁰⁵ Bhushan.

¹⁰⁶ Chandramani Singh, *Textiles and Costumes from the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum* (Jaipur: Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum Trust, 1979).

¹⁰⁷ V.S. Sarma, Salar Jung Museum, and Hyderabad State Museum, *Studies in Indian Textiles: Collection in Salarjung Museum & State Museum, Hyderabad* (Bharatiya Kala Prakashan, 1998). 108.

¹⁰⁸ Anamika Pathak, *Indian Costumes* (New Delhi: Roli Books, 2008).

¹⁰⁹ B. N. Goswamy, *Indian Costumes in the Collection of the Calico Museum of Textiles*, vol. V (Ahemdabad: D.S Mehta on behalf of Calico Museum of Textiles, 1993).

costume.¹¹⁰ While Bhandari documents the garments as they are understood today, Ritu Kumar addresses India's 5000 years of fashion; the information she provides is very similar to that of Roshen Alkazi's book.¹¹¹ There is a lot of confusion about the terms 'achkan' and 'sherwani': both are used interchangeably and referred to as traditional Indian menswear. The advantage of both the coffee table books lies in their pictures, which convey the fashion styles of Royal Rajasthan and Royal India respectively in the last 200 years. A new publication by Swarup on the colonial aspect of costumes is also useful for its images, though retains this confusion of terms.¹¹²

The above sources are useful because of their images, but how, why and when styles of dress changed are not well documented, although Alkazi gives some reasons for developments in dress. Exceptionally, Hansen has given an excellent account of clothing encounters in the colonial world. She writes that indigenous people of high rank, the new elite, and men, rather than women, were the first to incorporate items of western clothing into their wardrobes.¹¹³ She rightly assesses the suit as a hallmark of colonial authority, and sees jackets, coats and trousers as signifiers of status, education and colonial employment. She discusses the impact in general on the colonial world, and also specifically discusses India, saying that some men who adopted western fabrics retained Indian dress styles while others had Indian garments tailored to take on a European look. This gives an idea of the constant innovation in clothing.

Sumita Mukherjee writes about the foreign educated elite of Indians who comprised the new aristocratic class.¹¹⁴ These elite Indians are the focus of

¹¹⁰ Bhandari, *Costume, Textiles and Jewellery of India: Traditions in Rajasthan*. Ritu Kumar, *Costumes and Textiles of Royal India* (New Delhi: Antique Collectors' Club, 2006).

¹¹¹ Alkazi, *Ancient Indian Costume*, 1.

¹¹² Sushma Swarup, *Costumes and Textiles of Awadh from the Era of Nawabs to Modern Times* (Delhi: Roli Books, 2012).

¹¹³ Karen Tranberg Hansen, "Colonialism and Imperialism," in *The Berg Companion to Fashion* (Oxford and New York: BERG, 2010).

¹¹⁴ Sumita Mukherjee, *Nationalism Education and Migrant Identities - the England Returned* (London and New York: Routledge 2010).

my study: because they grew up exposed to a foreign culture, they created a special subculture. Their habits were influenced by those of the British, as noted by Preeti Chopra.¹¹⁵ To the British they were Indian aristocrats and to the Indians they were like the British - sahibs. Christine Furdey writes that the East India Company was established to import Indian goods into Britain, but by the late 19th century, there are records of businesses being set-up in India by the British to encourage the new, western tastes of the new Indian aristocracy.¹¹⁶ Furdey emphasises the fact that Indians of the elite class had begun to consume the objects desired by the British, which enhances the view that elite Indians sought to create an identity that matched that of their British rulers. Elite Indian tastes reflected the latest British fashions. With these sources as the background information, I conducted my primary research in the area of change in elite Indian menswear as a result of British influence.

During the Raj, both Indian and European clothes were common, often together as part of one outfit: for example, shoes and trousers worn with coats in local styles and distinctive hats or a western-style jacket on top of locally styled trousers or dhotis.¹¹⁷ Hansen also discusses women's clothes, rightly asserting that the saree is still a vital element of the Indian women's attire although many articles of European clothing have found favour with the Indians.¹¹⁸ Dar also describes many Mughal and European garments in detail, providing a wonderful discussion of history and costume history with examples. Dar argues that the sherwani and the achkan were derived from Mughal attire blended with European attire.¹¹⁹ He offers a detailed account

¹¹⁵ Preeti Chopra, *A Joint Enterprise: Indian Elites and the Making of British Bombay* (Minnneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

¹¹⁶ Christine Furdey, "Development of Modern Elite Retailing in Calcutta, 1880-1920," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* XVI, no. 4 (1979).

¹¹⁷ Hansen.

¹¹⁸ Karen Tranberg Hansen, "Colonialism and Imperialism," Love to Know, <http://fashion-history.lovetoknow.com/fashion-history-eras/colonialism-imperialism>.

¹¹⁹ S N Dar, *Costumes of India and Pakistan*, 2 ed. (Bombay: D B Taraporevala Sons & Co. Private Ltd., 1982). 76.

of the clothes that were worn in the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th centuries.

In contrast to books on Indian costume, there is a large literature on the history of western fashion, dress and costume, which discusses the factors that influenced fashion and the kinds of silhouettes that were prevalent in last 400 years.¹²⁰ It traces the journey of western fashion, recounting the influences that led to developments.¹²¹ It is the lack of such methodical study and analysis in Indian fashion and dress history which motivates this research. The problem with researched information on dress during this period is that there are hardly any academic studies on clothes, while studies on textiles and their economic impacts are plentiful. These help us to understand the textiles that Indian clothes would likely have been made of, but a lot of confusion surrounds the naming and dating of various Indian menswear garments.

2.3.1 Indian Textiles during Colonial Times

There have been many studies on the establishment of the textile industries during colonial times, and their sustainability in India. Tripathi, Haynes, Kooiman, Roy, Maddison and Harnetty, among others, have all written on Indian textiles and cloth during the Raj as a means of increasing economic growth, dealing with imports and exports, income and revenue, textiles, handicrafts and power looms in various parts of India.¹²² Maddison also tracks

¹²⁰ See for example Tortora and Eubank. J. Anderson Black and Madge Garland, *A History of Fashion* (New York: Morrow, 1975); N. Rothstein et al., *Four Hundred Years of Fashion* (London: V & A Publications, 1984); Lucy Johnston, *Nineteenth-Century Fashion in Detail* (London: V&A Publishing, 2009); F. Boucher and Y. Deslandres, *20,000 Years of Fashion: The History of Costume and Personal Adornment* (H.N. Abrams, 1987); Gertrud Lehnert, *A History of Fashion in the 20th Century*, (Google: Konemann, 2000), <https://books.google.co.in/books?id=JdztAAAAMAAJ>. L. Ugolini, *Men and Menswear: Sartorial Consumption in Britain 1880-1939* (Ashgate, 2007); Faird Chenoune, *A History of Men's Fashion* (online: Flammarion, 1993).

¹²¹ Bennett-England; Brooke and Laver.

¹²² Dwijendra Tripathi, "Birth, Growth and Death of Firms in a Proto Industrial Economy: The Experience of the Ahmedabad Textile Industry," *Indian Historical Review* 16, no. 1/2 (1989). Douglas E Haynes, "Artisan Cloth-Producers and the Emergence of Powerloom Manufacture in Western India 1920-1950," *Past & Present* 172, no. 1 (2001). Dick Kooiman, *Bombay Textile Labour Management, Trade Unionism and Officials, 1918 - 1939* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1989); Tirthankar Roy, "Consumption of Cotton Cloth in India, 1795-1940," *Australian Economic History Review* 52, no. 1 (2012); A.

changes in class structure and economic growth since the Mughals, discussing mainly social and economic impact.¹²³ There is a detailed account of economic activities, although handicrafts are studied as objects of economic value and not as a raw material for fashion.¹²⁴ Maddison makes an interesting social observation: he states that between 1757 and 1857, as the British began to gain control and eliminate the Mughal system of governance, this new found political superiority led to the male members of the new Indian middle class (who worked for the British) to copy the tastes of the British.¹²⁵ Rajan also deals with this subject, although he largely ignores fashion, merely mentioning that western clothes are likely to have a lasting impression on the Indian population.¹²⁶

Books on Indian textiles by Rosemary Crill, J. Irwin, Giorgio Riello, Tirthankar Roy, Lotika Varadarajan, Rahul Jain, Martand Singh and Rta Kapur Chisti discuss Indian textiles in great detail, which would be useful for someone studying traditional Indian textiles, but contain little information on Indian clothing.¹²⁷ The discussion in these books is focused on trade and on the techniques for manufacturing the traditional Indian textiles, which had a global impact.

Over the course of the Raj, patterns of domestic consumption changed and textiles from Europe were being sent to India, with the result that Indians

Maddison, "The Economic and Social Impact of Colonial Rule in India," in *Class Structure and Economic Growth: India and Pakistan since the Moghuls* (Routledge, 1971; reprint, 2006). Peter Harnetty, "Deindustrialization Revisited: The Handloom Weavers of the Central Provinces of India, C 1800-1947," *Modern Asian Studies* 25, no. 3 (1991).

¹²³ Maddison. 1-11.

¹²⁴ Ibid. 13.

¹²⁵ Ibid. 13.

¹²⁶ M. S. Rajan, "The Impact of British Rule in India," *Journal of Contemporary History* 4, no. 1 (1969).

¹²⁷ R. Crill and Sutra, *Textiles from India: The Global Trade : Papers Presented at a Conference on the Indian Textile Trade, Kolkata, 12-14 October 2003* (Seagull Books, 2006). R. Crill et al., *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West* (V & A Pub., 2008); Irwin; G. Riello and T. Roy, *How India Clothed the World: The World of South Asian Textiles, 1500-1850* (Brill, 2009). L. Varadarajan, *Ajrakh and Related Techniques: Traditions of Textile Printing in Kutch* (New Order Book Company, 1983); R. Jain, *Rapture: The Art of Indian Textiles* (Niyogi Books, 2011); Rta Kapoor Chishti, Rahul Jain, and Solange Schnall, *Tissus Indiens: Tradition Et Modernité* (Online: Charles Moreau, 2005).

began to use western fabric instead of their own handloom fabric.¹²⁸ Indeed, Bayly argues that Indian fabric choices were largely influenced by these cloth imports.¹²⁹ This fabric was at least one third cheaper and of better quality than the homespun or hand spun fabric that the Indians were used to. Being able to clothe themselves in this fine fabric became a status symbol for the peasantry. Here, although the foreign styles of dressing, in other words foreign fashions, were not adopted, textile preferences absolutely changed.

2.4 The British Raj

This section reviews the broader literature available on the British Rule in India, including the activities of the British in India, their relations with the Indians and information related to their dress in India. This section also gives some background information on the British Raj reflecting the books that were read in order to understand the historical context. The British ruled India for 200 years, and so it was imperative to understand the key dates of their rule, when they entered into India, how they gained power and how they stabilised themselves as rulers in order to observe changes in clothing. There is a wide range of academic literature on British-Indian history, mainly focusing on the social and economic impact that the British had on India, but for the purposes of this thesis the focus is on those pieces that reference dress or the British impact on India. The aim was to understand the impact on clothing of the Indians. The basic facts of British history can be found in books on the British Raj such as Edwardes's *British India 1772-1947*¹³⁰ and Thompson and Garratt's *History of British Rule in India*.¹³¹ These books are

¹²⁸ Agnes M M Lyons, "The Textile Fabrics of India and Huddersfield Cloth Industry," *Textile History* 27, no. 2 (1996). 172-194.

¹²⁹ C A Bayly, "The Origins of Swadeshi (Home Industry): Cloth and Indian Society, 1700 - 1930," in *The Social Life of Things : Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

¹³⁰ Michael Edwardes, *British India 1772-1947*, Fourth ed. (New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 2011).

¹³¹ E. Thompson and E.T.G.T. Garratt, *History of British Rule in India*, vol. I (Atlantic Publishers & Distributors (P) Limited, 1999).

useful for getting an overall view of India's political situation and society.

Some authors on British India have focused on the clothes that the British wore in India, these are useful resources for my study. Christopher Bayly has argued that early travellers to India in the 17th and 18th centuries were willing to adopt Indian clothing styles, because they wanted to blend in with the Indians and realised that the climate of the country was not suitable for the kind of clothes worn in Britain. These early adventurers adopted Indian manners and lifestyles and were labelled 'nabobs' by the people back at home in Britain because they had managed to amass huge amounts of money and lead a luxurious lifestyle similar to that of the nawabs in India.¹³² These 'white Mughals' or nabobs form a very interesting study in themselves, and prove the influence of politics on fashion. The nabob phenomenon happened in areas ruled by Indian princes and where the British were willing to adopt Indian ways and lifestyles.¹³³ Unfortunately it was cut short by British sumptuary laws which forced the British to dress differently from the natives. But because this research is to study the changing identity of the Indian elite, the nabobs will not be discussed: a detailed discussion on them is beyond the scope of this study.

More importantly, authors who have researched on the dress of the British in India, for example, Donald Clay Johnson and Jayne Shrimpton, argue that even in the hot climate of India, the British did not wear dress that had evolved in India but preferred to follow London fashions.¹³⁴ Dennis Kincaid writes about the 'fashion' interest of Europeans: the British stopped in France and bought new clothes that followed the latest trends, and voguish

¹³² Christopher Alan Bayly, "The Raj, India and the British 1600-1947, (Exhibition Catalogue) at the National Portrait Gallery London from 19th October 1990 to 17th March 1991," (London: Pearson

1990).

¹³³ W. Dalrymple, *White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century India* (Penguin Publishing Group, 2004).

¹³⁴ Jayne Shrimpton, "Dressing for a Tropical Climate: The Role of Native Fabrics in Fashionable Dress in Early Colonial India," *Textile History* 1, no. 23 (1992); Donald Clay Johnson, "Clothes Make the Empire : British Dress in India," in *Dress Sense*, ed. Donald Clay Johnson and Helen Bradley Foster (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2007).

wigs, before travelling on to India.¹³⁵ Shrimpton's essay discusses how the British wanted to be different from the Indians; even if their clothes gave them a difficult time in the Indian heat, their scientists came up with new ideas to tolerate the heat, such as felt belts and sola topis.¹³⁶ This work on British clothing in India provides a useful context on the British fashions in India that may have influenced elite Indian menswear.

Shrimpton writes about the Indian tailor (or darzee as he was called in Hindi and Urdu) and the dhobi (washer man) and their contributions to the life of the British in India. Kincaid¹³⁷ and Shrimpton¹³⁸ both state that tailors in India (particularly Madras) lacked the skill to create new patterns, but they both argue that the tailors had a great ability to copy from given patterns. Such studies are useful for my research.

Collingham's work is a wonderful resource for my study because it draws a rich physical picture of the early British settlers in India, who were addressed as 'sahib', meaning lord or superior, and critically analyses the peculiar habits of the 'sahib' and how he retained his self-image.¹³⁹ Collingham notes changes in both and remarks that, as time changed, and India came under the rule of the British crown, the British became more regimented and stopped wanting to mingle with the Indians, who they regarded as effeminate.¹⁴⁰ Kincaid's study of the British body in India also traces the transformation of the early nineteenth century Nabob from the flamboyant, effeminate and wealthy East India Company servant, open to Indian influence and into whose self-identity India was incorporated, to the sahib, a sober, bureaucratic representative of the crown.¹⁴¹ This aspect is

¹³⁵ Kincaid.

¹³⁶ Shrimpton. 55.

¹³⁷ Kincaid.

¹³⁸ Shrimpton.

¹³⁹ E M Collingham, *Imperial Bodies the Physical Experience of the Raj, C.1800-1947* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2001).

¹⁴⁰ Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*.

¹⁴¹ Kincaid.

important to my study, because it was this image of the elite British sahib that led to the change in the identity that elite Indians wished to create in order to stay at a higher level in the society. Their dress, with its either partial or complete adoption of western modes, indicates the image that they wanted to create of themselves.

2.5 Conclusion

The review of existing literature on fashion and dress history helped to understand the burgeoning interest in the field. The review of existing literature on Indian dress or costume history revealed that there is a large body of research on Indian textiles, but that work on Indian clothing, which is usually referred to as Indian costume, is very limited and often just repeated the same information. There is therefore an immense scope for study in this untapped area. However, since the focus of this PhD was limited to elite Indian menswear during the British Raj, the literature that could throw any light on the time period and on Indian dress was studied and reviewed. It was found that there was enough information on western dress but far more limited information available about what the British wore in India. The review of the literature strengthened the belief that there were changes in the 19th and 20th centuries that were crucial to the people of India in terms of their social and economic impact, but how these changes impacted on Indian clothing has not been investigated. Although some studies indicate that there were changes and newer garments were acquired by the Indians, and that these newer items became the latest fashions, there is very little systematic research in this area.

There were huge gaps in research on Indian fashion, let alone that on elite Indian menswear. My study was not only a study of objects but also of influences, and thus, after a thorough review, the scope of research was further clarified. 'The Influence of British Rule on elite Indian Menswear' is an attempt to understand the factors that influenced changes in fashion and in particular to investigate the origins of a garment, the sherwani, that was introduced in chapter 1. The sherwani, I believe, was a result of the British

Raj, but I have not come across any scholarly article on the subject. The origin of the sherwani is shrouded in mystery and there is often no clear distinction between the sherwani and the achkan in the literature; the terms are used synonymously. Some of the books on Indian costume mention the sherwani, but there is no clear definition and no trace of its origins, which leads to much confusion. Thus the task at hand now is to understand the influences that impacted on Indian fashion and to analyse the influence of the new garments that were born during the British Raj.

Thus, to conclude this section, it can be stated that the history of Indian dress is a largely unexplored area, which needs academic intervention and research. There are very few books on the topic. However, there are books on Indian textiles. This focus on textiles rather than clothing is primarily because India's textile exports have had a worldwide impact. Based on India's 5000-year history, there are books on ancient costume, but hardly any that explores the clothes of 19th and 20th century India. There is a lack of analytical studies on the reasons why the clothing of elite Indians changed during the Raj and the factors that led to this change. The coffee table books on the subject have good images for consultation but lack well-researched or analytical information. Thus there is much opportunity to research these subjects, about which there is not yet much published text.

Chapter 3 The Merchant Rulers and the Introduction of Uniforms, 1757-1858

3.1 Introduction

This chapter studies how the political influence of the new rulers of India began to lead to variations in Indian fashion and dress. It identifies two different developments in this period which began to have an impact on the clothes worn by Indian men: firstly, the rules and regulations regarding the uniforms and the dress of employees (both British and Indian) of the East India Company; and, secondly, the direct influence of the British on the dress of the Indian elite, including the princes and educated men of different independent states of India and the rich merchants of British India. This chapter details the differences between the men's fashions of Indians living in the areas ruled by the British, who will be henceforth referred to as 'British-Indians', and the Indians living in the areas ruled by the Mughals, referred to as 'Mughal-Indians', at the beginning of this period, in order to set the scene for the changes that followed. The time period 1757-1858 has been chosen as this was the time the country had two political heads - the Mughals (who had ruled from early 16th century) and the British, who began their rule under the umbrella of East India Company in 1757. This mixed rule continued for a hundred years until 1857 when, after the first revolt by the Indians, the British ousted the Mughal king and the British Crown took over the responsibility for administering India. An underlying aim of the chapter is to investigate whether the sherwani existed during this time period or not: after the revolt of 1857, Mughal rule came to an end, so if the sherwani did not exist before 1858, then it was surely not a Mughal garment. Thus this chapter analyses the shift in clothing preferences that resulted from the shifting political axis of the country.

The chapter is divided into three sections. Section 3.2 introduces the political and social situation in India during 1757-1858, when the country was governed by the British and the Mughals at the same time. This section discusses the political climate of the country in order to understand the

major factors that influenced people's dress. Section 3.3 deals with the British and Indians living in areas dominated by the British in India: their military and administrative organisations, their fashions and their lifestyles. It is further subdivided into three sections: section 3.3.1 details the ways in which garments of the western type were produced and acquired in India; section 3.3.2 details the introduction of uniforms and sumptuary laws of clothing by the British for the people employed by them, like the army; and section 3.3.3 discusses the clothing of the rich Indian merchants, or banyas, who worked with or for the British. Section 3.4 deals with Mughal-Indian dress, primarily that of the rulers of independent states and other educated men of the time period. It discusses the garments that were in vogue and also tries to identify changes and the evolution of hybrid garments as a result of the Company Raj over the course of a hundred years. The conclusion analyses these cross-cultural influences in fashion, the concept of uniforms and the evolution of new garments, and demonstrates that the sherwani did not exist before 1858.

3.2 Historical Background

This section discusses historical developments from the time the British entered India as traders at the beginning of the 17th century to their conversion to rulers in the middle of 18th century before tracing their journey as merchant rulers from 1757 to 1857. It is important to trace this historical background, since it is in the wake of these wars and shifts in power that the Indian administration developed, leading to education and the introduction of new technologies. The new education system was influenced by the ideals of the company personnel and thus reflected western ideas. This is the time when power was changing hands, with influence shifting from the Mughals to the British, and Indian menswear was evolving as a result.

The British East India Company came into existence in the year 1600, when India was ruled by the Mughals. The Mughal Emperor Akbar's rule extended from modern Pakistan in the west to Bengal in the east and from Kabul in

the north to Bombay in the south by the time of his death in 1605. Akbar's son and heir Salim, known as Emperor Jahangir, then ascended the throne and ruled until 1627. It was during his reign that the British established their presence in India and by the beginning of the 18th century the British had a strong foothold in India. It was the golden age of trade and the beginning of the end of the great Mughal dynasty; after Jahangir, his son Shah Jahan and his grandson Aurangzeb also ruled as the Great Mughal. After Aurangzeb's death in 1707, there were many wars of succession, and men of importance in the Mughal rule began moving out of Delhi and securing for themselves areas which they had earlier controlled.

Thus in the 18th Century, the Mughals controlled Delhi, but were not in control of India. It is in this century that the foundations of various independent principalities were laid in India, with rulers known as rajas, maharajas, nawabs and, in Hyderabad, Nizams. The important states that emerged included Oudh (Awadh), Bengal, Hyderabad and various constituencies of the Marathas and the Rajputana. In 1717 William Hamilton, a British surgeon who helped to cure the Mughal Emperor Farrukhsiyar, won important trading privileges for the East India Company. This was a big achievement because it gave the company exclusive trading rights.¹⁴² This move strengthened the company's position, but was not welcomed by the ruler of Bengal. This in turn resulted in the famous battle of Plassey, which led to the establishment of Company rule in 1757. Because the East India Company (also known as 'John Company' or colloquially '*Jan Company*') began ruling India from 1757 and continued to rule till 1858, this period of Indian history is referred to as the 'Company Raj', meaning Company Rule.¹⁴³

¹⁴² V.A. Smith, *The Oxford Student's History of India* (Clarendon Press, 1919). 225-232.

¹⁴³ Holmes. 44-49.

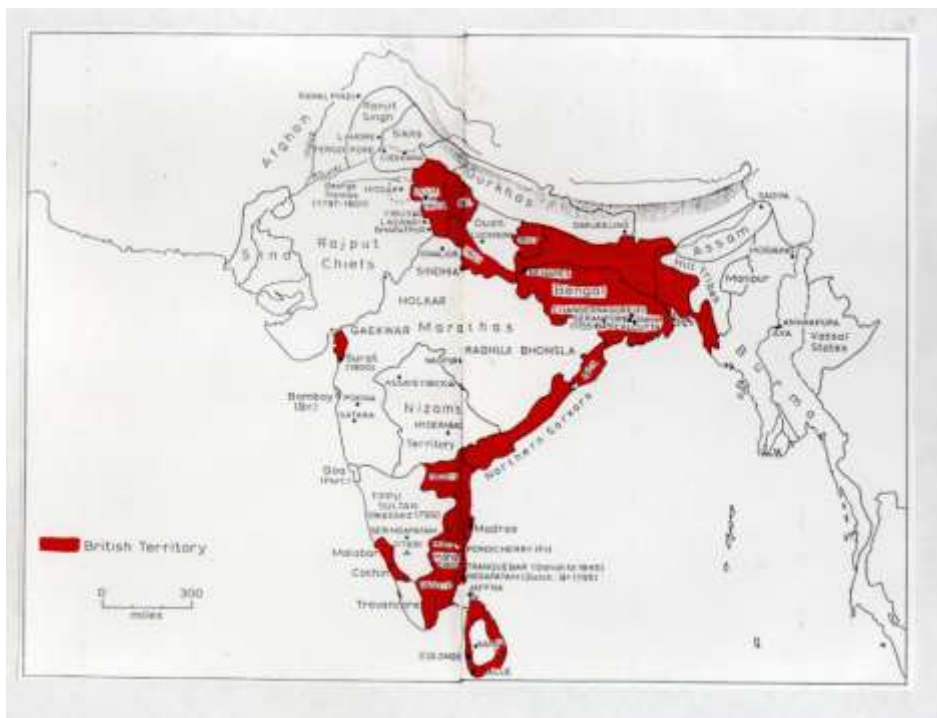


Figure 3-1 Map of India in 1800: the area in red is British territory. Courtesy of <http://peopleofindia1868-1875photos.blogspot.in/2011/11/images-of-british-india.html>

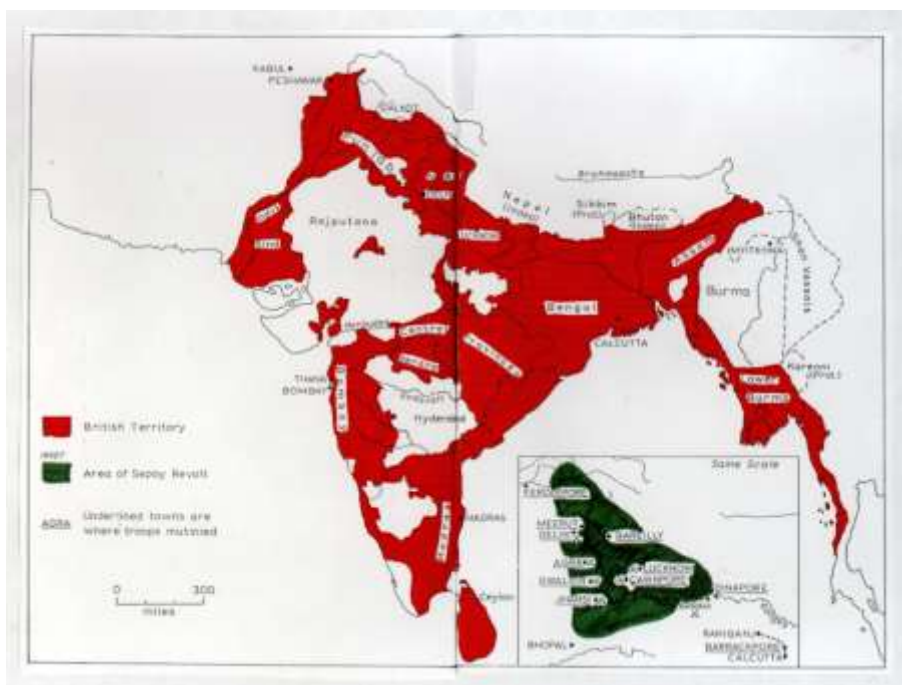


Figure 3-2 Map of India in 1857: the area in red is British territory, the inset area in green is the area of the Sepoy Mutiny. Courtesy of <http://peopleofindia1868-1875photos.blogspot.in/2011/11/images-of-british-india.html>

Until 1757, the Company's major occupation was trade in spices and textiles, but political and military control over a large geographic area, along with the founding of new towns and settlements, created many different types of job at various levels. Along with the army, a strong administration was required, resulting in the creation of the Indian Civil Service (ICS), which was set up to provide effective justice and administration to Europeans and Indians. Warren Hastings became the first Governor General of India in 1774.¹⁴⁴

The Governor Generals of India tried to introduce education and modernity in line with western standards. Schools were set up and the concept of uniforms was introduced in India. With the passage of time, English became a more important language than Persian or Hindustani. Lord William Cavendish Bentinck (Governor General of India 1833-1835) created a landmark in Indian history with his decision to impart English education to the masses. Thus in the areas under British rule, like Bengal and Madras, convent education in English was being imparted based on British principles. Bentinck's Law Officer, Thomas Macaulay, advocated for English education rather than oriental-type education. He thought that it was the duty of the English to convert the natives into good English scholars.¹⁴⁵ Figures 3-1 and 3-2 show maps of India in 1800 and 1857 respectively, and the area in red shows the land acquired by the East India Company. The maps clearly indicate the growing size of the British territory in India over this period. This is an indication of the growing political presence and supremacy of the British.

By the end of 1857, India was largely under British rule and had been influenced by the political changes and reforms undertaken by the British.¹⁴⁶ They had worked hard to establish a rich network of resources and modern machinery to facilitate their business in India. From 1757 to 1858, India had

¹⁴⁴ Smith.

¹⁴⁵ Thomas Babington Macaulay, "Minute on Indian Education," (1835).

¹⁴⁶ Edwardes. 151.

seen progression under the East India Company (EIC), in terms of the opening up of systems of education, transport, industry and business. Hyde Clark, who was an engineer on the railways in India during the first half of the 19th century, described how Britain's technology helped in modernising India, reflecting with pride on the achievements of the EIC in its Indian empire.¹⁴⁷ This modernisation and Anglicisation of the areas under British control influenced dress and clothing preferences. The areas that were not under British control also evolved their dressing styles and habits.

3.3 British India

This section focuses on the clothing practices of the British who came to India for various reasons. It details their clothing preferences and the rules and regulations regarding dress that were imposed on them. It is important to discuss what the British were wearing in India in order to understand how the presence of these clothes influenced the Indian attire. This section also discusses the dress of the Indian elite and of the rich merchants who worked with the British in the areas ruled by them. Another point of discussion is the dress of the Indians of lower, lower-middle and middle-income groups who were employed by the British and had to follow rules and regulations regarding dress and uniform, which were prescribed by their masters.

It is important to understand the difference between the types of clothes that the Indians were used to wearing and the clothing preferred by the British. Only a brief overview of the types of clothing worn by Indians before the arrival of the British is given here for reference, although it is important from the point of view of understanding the cross-cultural influences between the British and Indians during the early years of the arrival of the British in India, before they became rulers in 1757.

When the British first came to India in the early 17th century, they retained their existing mode of dress, as was recorded by Edward Terry, the chaplain

¹⁴⁷ Hyde Clarke, *Colonization, Defence, and Railways in Our Indian Empire* (London: John Weale, 59, High Holborn, W.C., 1857).

to Sir Thomas Roe, the British ambassador to India.¹⁴⁸ His detailed writings tell us that, even in the unbearable Indian heat, the newcomers did not give up their European attire. John Fryer, a surgeon who came to India in the late 17th century, describes a similar situation.¹⁴⁹ Jayne Shrimpton concludes that the British did not change their customs of dress while in India even though they sent Indian fabrics home.¹⁵⁰ The odd exceptions were the nabobs, discussed in Chapter 2.

François Balthazar Solvyns, also known as Balt Sulvyns, was a Flemish painter who lived in Calcutta from 1791 to 1803. By the time he arrived in India, the British had become its rulers and created a new caste of the British rulers on top of the pre-existing Indian caste system. A Sulvyns painting entitled *The Launching of Gabriel Gillet's Armed Merchantman in Calcutta Harbour*¹⁵¹ reflects Calcutta's cosmopolitan character at the end of the 18th century, featuring Indians, Hindu and Muslim, Chinese, Armenians and Europeans.¹⁵² The painting also shows the kind of garments worn by different classes of people.¹⁵³ The Indians are shown in their draped clothing, and the British can be seen wearing the fashions of Europe. As the highest class, they were now more rigid and did not freely mix with the Indians. In 1810, an order was passed by the British government which prohibited the British from dressing like Indians.¹⁵⁴ Another order was passed on 12th January 1826, prohibiting members of civil servants and officers of rank from adopting native style of dress, which were worn by them occasionally.¹⁵⁵ They avoided wearing Indian articles of dress and seeing themselves on a par with Indian businessmen.

¹⁴⁸ E. Terry, *A Voyage to East-India: Wherein Some Things Are Taken Notice of, in Our Passage Thither, but Many More in Our Abode There, within That ... Empire of the Great Mogul: ... Reprinted from the Edition of 1655. With Copper-Plates. Observed by Edward Terry* (printed for W. Cater; S. Hayes; J. Wilkie; and E. Easton, at Salisbury, 1777).

¹⁴⁹ J. Fryer, *A New Account of East India and Persia* (1698).

¹⁵⁰ Shrimpton.

¹⁵¹ Oil on panel, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Inventory number M-26444.

¹⁵² Bayly.25.

¹⁵³ Calcutta.,

¹⁵⁴ Government of India, "Dress to Be Worn by Europeans," ed. Home (Calcutta1810).

¹⁵⁵ Hyderabad Residency, "Government Order," ed. Old Office Records (1826). 150-152.

They wanted to show the supremacy of their race.¹⁵⁶ The British doctors wrote on health and hygiene in India, creating a mythology of contamination by the Indian soil and climate, which led to the British being even stricter in their dress in India.¹⁵⁷ Thus the once friendly British merchants and Indian merchants, who at first thrived under the East India Company, mixing with one another freely, could no longer be seen in the early 19th century period, and the social distance between the British and the Indians began to increase.¹⁵⁸

British dress reflected the latest fashions in Europe, which during this period consisted of the three essential garments that would later become the modern three-piece suit:¹⁵⁹ the coat, the waistcoat and breeches.¹⁶⁰ These clothes were made of rich fabrics and were sometimes brilliantly coloured, and often had gold brocades (for coats and waistcoats). The British continued to follow European fashions. The British population, especially the male British population, in India grew dramatically in the 18th Century. The British merchants and administrators had an active social life which included buffets and European-style dances. The clothing worn at such events also reflected London fashions. The paragraph below describes the style of a typical male of European origin in India.¹⁶¹ Describing European men of late 18th and early 19th century, B.V. Roy, an educated Bengali of British India,¹⁶² wrote that the clothing of the British largely reflected European tastes even after the British had been in India for more than a century:

...a large busy wig tied at the ends, a long coat reaching below the knees, with large sleeves and cuffs, a finely embroidered

¹⁵⁶ Cohn.

¹⁵⁷ Peter Gonsalves, *Clothing for Liberation* (New Delhi: Sage, 2010). 60.

¹⁵⁸ Bayly., 79.

¹⁵⁹ Boucher; Rothstein et al.

¹⁶⁰ Boucher.310.

¹⁶¹ Donald Clay Johnson, "Clothes Make the Empire : British Dress in India," *Berg Fashion Library*.4.

¹⁶² Born in British India in early 20th century, B.V. Roy was educated in the western style, received an MA Degree and was a member of the Corporation of Calcutta. Such men were referred to as baboos by the British.

vest, breeches, buckled tight at the knees, long stockings, and shoes decorated with buckles. The men at this period were very partial to bright colours as well as a profusion of laces and embroideries in their dress.¹⁶³

The 19th century saw changes in British menswear. The coats and frock coats of the British became increasingly simple as time progressed, reflecting changes in Europe; they avoided the use of brocades and fancy fabrics, but placed more emphasis on tailoring techniques. Lord William Bentinck, the Governor General of India from 1828 to 1835, made a concentrated effort to wear plain dark coloured clothing to highlight the social and economic or utilitarian purpose of his posting in India. As David Gilbert writes, during early part of 19th century the image of India was changing:

The nabobs and their sartorial vulgarity had been replaced by men in black frock coats who wished to emphasise their Britishness and to demonstrate the moral and cultural superiority of their civilization. They had come not to revel in the orient but to improve it...¹⁶⁴

From the 1820s and 1830s, menswear, especially which was designed for office work, had more to do with elegance and fine fit than with glitter or embroidery.¹⁶⁵ It was less ornate and more practical. The British in this period began to give more attention to impeccable fit than fancy fabric. Colours became restrained; coats with falling skirts, frock-coats, buttoned waistcoats, buckskin breeches or ankle-buttoned trousers, short boots with socks and low, square beaver hats became very popular among the elite. This also slowly influenced Indian men: over the course of the 19th century dress became more formal, and black wool became the preferred choice for menswear. The British administrators in India who came from Britain reflected these changes in their clothing. For effective administration of the vast number of Indians, the British East India Company introduced the Indian Civil Service (ICS), which was based on a framework known as the cadre,

¹⁶³ B.V. Roy, *Old Calcutta Cameos* (S. K. Chatterjee distributor, Asoka Library, 1946). 34.

¹⁶⁴ David Gilmour, *The Ruling Caste: Imperial Lives in the Victorian Raj* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006). 11.

¹⁶⁵ Rothstein et al.

under which important British officials controlled and administered an area under their jurisdiction and collected taxes from it. These ICS officers were initially all British; they were not rulers in the traditional sense and did not own land, but they were educated and were taught how to administer effectively. They collected revenue and made models of how to administer such a vast nation effectively. They worked for the East India Company and were paid handsome salaries. Their head was the Governor General in Calcutta. It was this system which became the pillar on which the entire British Empire stood.¹⁶⁶ As the century progressed, the education of the ICS improved. ICS officers did not have a prescribed uniform, but wore the formal three-piece suits for their official duties.

While in India, the British would need fabrics and patterns that met their desires; section 3.3.1 discusses how the British living in India got these resources and how this process then influenced Indians, who could afford to buy British styles.

3.3.1 Acquiring and Producing Clothing in India

This section discusses how articles of clothing were acquired by the British while they were in India. It also discusses how these articles began to be produced in India. This information is relevant because it shows the accessibility of foreign goods in India and the ease or difficulty by which they could be acquired or produced. It is also important to know whether the goods could be purchased only by Europeans or were freely accessible to any who could afford to pay. In order to understand how this would have been achieved during the Company Raj, a little background from the 17th century is outlined.

Early travellers brought clothes with them, although they often found that they had to alter them once they reached India, which they found was not

¹⁶⁶ Amit Sen, "History of Indian Civil Service During the British Period," Important India : Discover the Importance of India, <http://www.importantindia.com/1730/history-of-indian-civil-service-during-the-british-period/>. Date accessed – 15/10/2015similar

difficult. The climate in India required constant changes of clothes due to the heat. Travel to India took six months by ship in the early part of 19th century before the construction of the Suez Canal. After the canal opened in 1869, transport was faster and fashion news travelled faster too.

As early as the 17th century, Edward Terry, the chaplain of Sir Thomas Roe, noted the capacity of the people of 'Indostan' to ape and copy everything by pattern. He wrote that the Indians could copy the style of European clothes, shoes and boots etc., even though all of them were very different to their own.¹⁶⁷ He calls it their ingenuity of imitation. From this and other accounts of India in the 17th century it can be surmised that there were many differences in the clothes of the Indians and the Europeans, but that, in spite of these differences, Indians knew the art of copying and had begun to copy and sell products at the bazaars.¹⁶⁸ Their customers included both Indians and Europeans. Terry writes:

The truth is that the natives of that monarchy are the best apes for imitation in the world, so full of ingenuity, that will make any new thing by pattern, how hard so-ever it seem to be done; and therefore it is no marvel if the natives there make shoes, boots, cloaths, linen, bands, and cuffs, of our English fashion, which are all of them very much different from their fashions and habits, and yet make them exceedingly neat.¹⁶⁹

This art of copying the garments exactly has subsequently been referred to by many authors and commentators. The famous advice book, *East India Vade-Mecum*, written by Williamson and published in 1810 gave advice to Europeans travelling to India. Its later edition, published in 1825 and updated by J.B. Gilchrist, gives a detailed account of people in India and their occupations and dress. It tells us of the tailors in India and their ability to copy and create garments. Gilchrist's account indicated that they were indispensable to the households in India and that they could create European

¹⁶⁷ Terry. 129.

¹⁶⁸ Shrimpton.

¹⁶⁹ Terry. 129.

garments if they were given a pattern.¹⁷⁰ Indian tailors, or *darzees*, were used to stitching Mughal garments, but could also copy exact patterns supplied by the British. It was not possible for them to create a European pattern though without a sample of the garment. It was believed that if the *durzee* were given a patched garment to copy, they would be sure to put a patch in the new one too.¹⁷¹ While describing the *durzee*, Gilchrist notes that their salaries are very high because they were the only people who could create coats for men and petticoats for women:

Yet they (*durzees*) are, on the whole, excellent workmen; finishing apparel of all sorts in a remarkably neat manner, and often fitting it with great exactness: but they are devoid of invention; mostly following old patterns, and rarely suggesting the smallest improvement.¹⁷²

Another mention of tailors and washer-men is found in the *Asiatic Annual Register*, published in 1800: the authors write that there is a tailor in every principal town and a washer man at every pond.¹⁷³ The cost of the waistcoats that the tailors made in India in the late 18th and early 19th century and the kind of fabric that was used to make them is described by Roy in *Old Calcutta Cameos*:

For example, vests or waistcoats were made of gold brocade, or blue satin embroidered with silver, or were sprigged and flowered, costing two or three hundred rupees each.¹⁷⁴

Since tailors' copying abilities were good, samples that could be copied were required. Thus Gilchrist also tells young people coming from Britain (after 1825) what they should bring with them to India and what they should

¹⁷⁰ J.B. Gilchrist and T. Williamson, *The General East India Guide and Vade-Mecum, a Digest of Capt. Williamson's Work [the East India Vade-Mecum] with Improvements and Additions* (1825). 130-131.

¹⁷¹ Clay Johnson, "Clothes Make the Empire : British Dress in India." 80.

¹⁷² Gilchrist and Williamson. 130.

¹⁷³ Lawrence Dundas Campbell and E Samuel, *The Asiatic Annual Register: Or, a View of the History of Hindustan, and of the Politics, Commerce and Literature of Asia* (London: J. Debrett, 1800). 59.

¹⁷⁴ Roy.

expect when they arrive.¹⁷⁵ Appendix -I of the book was titled, 'Articles required in an outfit' and lists the things that one should take to India from Britain; there was a separate list for ladies and one for army cadets. The list included undergarments, garments like trousers and shirts, over garments like coats and frock coats, sheets, yardages of fabric - scarlet fabric for coats for example - handkerchiefs, both cotton and silk, socks, stockings and many other items needed for daily wear and use. These lists are indicators of the types of garments that were making their way to India. This list shows that the British in India preferred plain shirts, trousers and frock coats. The list for the cadets is partly reproduced below:

6 Doz. Calico Shirts - These must be quite plain
 1 Doz. night caps
 3 Doz pairs of ½ brown cotton stockings
 ...24 Towels (towels can be procured in India but not much cheaper)
 8 Yards of Flannel...
 1 Blue coat for India
 ...1 regimental Blue Frock coat (this must be made perfectly plain and might be used to land in)¹⁷⁶

Another book called *Real Life in India, Embracing a View of the Requirements of Individuals Appointed to Any Branch of the Indian Public Service, the Methods of Proceeding to India and the Course of Life in Different Parts of the Country* was published in 1847 in London by an old resident of India, who recommends an amazingly large list of clothing that should be taken to India:

72 pairs of socks (48 cotton, 12 silk, 12 woolen),
 72 shirts, 32 waistcoats (24 fine flannel, 6 Holland, 2 dress),
 72 handkerchiefs (48 pocket, 24 fine cambric),
 36 pairs of gloves (24 kid, 12 cotton),
 34 pairs of trousers (12 white dress, 12 duck for riding, 6 holland, 1 cachmere, 2 coloured, 1 dress),
 15 coats (6 holland, 6 white linen, 1 frock, 1 shooting, 1 dress)¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Gilchrist and Williamson.

¹⁷⁶ Gilchrist and Williamson, *The East India Vade-Mecum*, 528-530

¹⁷⁷ Clay Johnson, "Clothes Make the Empire : British Dress in India." 79-80.

In the early 19th century, with the influx of more and more men and women from Britain, tailors, coach makers, milliners and many other professionals came to India.¹⁷⁸ The many adverts in the *Calcutta Gazette* are a useful source for understanding the kinds of fabrics that were being sold in India to the Europeans in auctions and sales in Calcutta. One such advertisement of four pages appears in the *Calcutta Gazette* on 9th September 1784:

Europe Goods. Now landing, and will be exposed for sale in a few days, at Roach and Johnstons...
 Millinery Haberdashery & c.
 Superb Full Dress Suits.
 Elegant Undress ditto, with a great variety of most fashionable articles, both in millinery and haberdashery...
 Jewellery
 Gold watch chains
 Stock buckles and buttons¹⁷⁹

The goods listed include Irish linen for bedsheets, lace, ruffles and many more items. Not only clothing and accessories, but also many items of daily use and tinned food etc. are here listed. These fabrics and other goods were clearly meant for Europeans living away from home. I have not found references to any restrictions on the purchase of these goods, so we can surmise that they were available for all to buy. References to the wealth of Indian merchants exists, and their fondness for European goods, including food, is recorded¹⁸⁰. Roy writes, quoting his father, that around the mid-19th century:

Change of Diet - 'In the manner of eating', he writes, 'we are getting anglicised'. We were a purely vegetable-eating people, taking fish occasionally...¹⁸¹

Therefore it is quite possible that Indians who could afford foreign goods

¹⁷⁸ Roy. 82-83.

¹⁷⁹ Calcutta gazette, W.S.S. Karr, and H.D. Sandeman, *Selections from Calcutta Gazettes of the Years 1784 (-1823) Showing the Political and Social Conditions of the English in India* (1868). 51.

¹⁸⁰ Roy. Roy.

¹⁸¹ Roy. 65.

would go to buy them. For other clothes, like shirts and waistcoats, advertisements appeared in the *Calcutta Gazette* since at least 1796; as Jayne Shrimpton remarks, these are very revealing in terms of the fabrics that were used by the British in India.¹⁸² There were dressmakers from Britain in India who are also documented by Roy; he writes about one Mrs Fay, who settled in Calcutta as a dressmaker and died in 1815.¹⁸³

The ships that took Indian merchandise to Europe brought back European merchandise, thereby giving Indians easy access to foreign goods and material. This helped to shift the tastes of the Indian aristocracy towards British goods. It also brought special clothes that were not made in India for the consumption of the British, out of which formal clothes and army uniforms were made. The scarlet wool of the militia uniforms was bought from merchants in London, as described in the *Calcutta Gazette* of 21st November 1799.¹⁸⁴ The *Calcutta Gazette Extraordinary* of 6th March 1802 features a proposal for the provision of the clothing of the Honourable Company's army, and again their need for scarlet cloth for the havildars of cavalry (most of them were native soldiers in this regiment) is listed.¹⁸⁵

In the early part of 19th century, fashion in England was also experiencing a shift as a result of technological developments and better tailoring techniques. With this increase in fitting and an understanding of science of the three-dimensional body, numerous books devoted to cutting and tailoring, such as *The Improved Tailor's Art* by J Jackson (1829), *Science Completed in the Art of Cutting* by W Walker (1839), *A Practical Guide for the Tailor's Cutting Room* by J Coutts (1848), began to be published.¹⁸⁶

The advances in tailoring techniques of the early 19th century
were concentrated on fit rather than style - which had been the

¹⁸² Shrimpton. 58.

¹⁸³ Roy. 117-118.

¹⁸⁴ Nigel Arch, "William Murdock and John Company: An Eighteenth-Century Militia Uniform," *Costume* 17, no. 1 (1983). 45.

¹⁸⁵ gazette, Karr, and Sandeman. vol. 3, 94.

¹⁸⁶ Boucher. 351-360.

preoccupation of 18th century tailoring. Waist seams evolved from a dart made at the waist to eliminate the crease which appeared when the coats lengthened in body between 1810 - 1820. ... Another innovation which followed was the underarm seam.¹⁸⁷

These new innovations like darts and underarm seams came with the British to India. This contrasts with the patterns of the choga and jama (see section 3.4). These garments, commonly worn by the Indian elite, did not have darts for fitting because they were not supposed to fit as if sculpted to the body. They were based on a kimono-type pattern where rectangular pieces of fabric were joined together with gussets at the underarm to allow free movement of the arms.¹⁸⁸ They could be made a little loose. Darts were then added to the coats to give them a better fit.

3.3.2 Military Uniforms

This section deals with the introduction of military and other uniforms by the British in India. The British needed to maintain armies in order to ensure safety of goods and to protect the land where they were traded. The British East India Company began the formation of Indian armies for each of its three presidencies (Calcutta, Bombay and Madras) in the 18th century in order to fight wars with the Dutch, French and other powers that also sought to control India. The East India Company needed the armies to secure its business concerns and maximise its profits, but could not afford to employ only British men, so had to recruit native soldiers, who comprised the majority of the armies' fighting strength.¹⁸⁹ The British recruited Indians in large numbers and gave them many benefits if they enrolled.¹⁹⁰ Since the armies were created locally, they were not called the Indian or the British Indian armies: until 1858 they remained the presidency armies of Bengal,

¹⁸⁷ Rothstein et al. 62.

¹⁸⁸ Goswamy, V.

¹⁸⁹ H S Bhatia, *Military History of British India, 1607-1947* (Deep & Deep Publications, 2008). 19.

¹⁹⁰ A ratio of 1 Briton: 6 Indians. Before 1857, there were 40,000 British and 230,000 Indian soldiers. See Gilmour. 11.

Bombay and Madras. Major Stringer Lawrence is credited with the formation of the Indian army.¹⁹¹

The recruited Indians were not drawn from the elite, but they gained a special status by being in the army and working for the Company. They were given uniforms to wear and were taught battlefield tactics and discipline, which helped them to gain unrivalled admiration from other people in their villages or cities. There is a folk song from Rajasthan that demonstrates people's admiration for the army. The song is called 'Tharo Naam Likha de Rangroot, Ho ja Paltan Mein', which translates as 'get your name added in the list of recruits, join the battalion'. This song elaborates the benefits of being a recruit, like receiving a pair of boots (as opposed to Indian slippers), a suit (as opposed to an Indian dhoti) and biscuits to eat (as opposed to Indian dry bread, which was associated with poverty). The song describes the benefits of being in the British-Indian Army and the special position a recruit held in Indian society. Uniforms were a new feature in the Indian army and a study of army uniforms in India reveals the influence they had on the dress of Indian men. In India, where rulers and soldiers were always respected, these new recruits in their brilliant uniforms created a niche for themselves, a respect that allowed their dress to influence elite Indian menswear.

Rafaeli and Pratt propose that, in any organisation, dress attributes are symbols that are full of meaning.¹⁹² The homogeneity of sub-groups in an organisation can be symbolised by the kind of dress they wear. Rafaeli and Pratt also refer to the conspicuousness of dress and its ability to distinguish members from non-members. To identify their own men from other Europeans and to ascertain the army men among the large population of the natives that they employed, the army was prescribed uniforms. The British took the concept of uniforms from the Prussians. When King George II introduced military uniforms in Britain in 1742 he explicitly mentioned the

¹⁹¹ Longer.

¹⁹² Rafaeli and Pratt. 37.

Prussian example.¹⁹³ To begin with, in these presidency armies, the recruits themselves had to get uniforms or clothes as directed. But later very strict rules regarding uniform were established and uniforms were supplied by the presidencies.¹⁹⁴ The recruits included British, Arab, Indian, Persian and Turkish men due to the cosmopolitan nature of India. These various nationalities were present in India largely as a result of mercantile activities. Ships and caravans brought all sorts of nationalities to the country and the British recruited the fittest of them. All the men in the army wore the uniforms prescribed by the British and fought wars on their behalf.¹⁹⁵

There were different kinds of uniform for different units of the army. The uniforms borrowed elements from the British army uniforms like the red colour and the cut of the coats. Indian troops mostly wore their own lower garments and had to wear the coats or coatees (coatees were the short coats worn in the army) as prescribed by the head of their unit. The British usually carried their uniform kit from the UK when they came to India. Many colours like blue, green and red were used for coats by the army during this early period, but the red coat was the first uniform prescribed by the East India Company Army in Bengal, so the EIC Army came to be known as the 'lal paltan': 'lal' is the Hindi word for 'red' and 'paltan' means 'regiment'.¹⁹⁶ Gilchrist writes that 'paltan' was a corrupt form of the English word 'battalion'.¹⁹⁷

The number of British army officers coming to India increased after the early part of 19th century, and their dress and discipline began to have more of an impact on the native corps of the British-Indian army, as did native princes' employment of educated British officers to discipline their armies.¹⁹⁸ As early

¹⁹³ A. Maxwell, *Patriots against Fashion: Clothing and Nationalism in Europe's Age of Revolutions* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). 67.

¹⁹⁴ Carnaticus.

¹⁹⁵ Bhatia.

¹⁹⁶ Holmes. 46.

¹⁹⁷ Gilchrist and Williamson. 631-632.

¹⁹⁸ Bhatia., 112.

as 1790 they begin to exercise control of uniform, not only in the regions they ruled directly, but even where they were residing only as the trainers of rajas' armies. As a result, the Indian rajas under British jurisdiction had to follow the commands of the British when it came to the uniforms of their armies. The armies of soldiers under the command of the rajas (called sipahi in the local language, which the British pronounced 'sepoy'), were now asked to follow the British commandments for dress, which developed into uniform.

Clive turned his attention to forming, organizing and training regular battalions of "Sipahis" to augment his military strength. The Madrasi soldiers who had come with Clive formed the nucleus of these battalions, which were to be dressed, trained, accoutred and drilled in the European style. In April 1756, the Madras Government had already decided to dress the Sepoys in red broadcloth "partly to give them better appearance and partly to get rid of surplus cloth". The same cloth and pattern was adopted by Clive for his Sepoy battalions, known as the native regiments, which were trained and officered by the English.¹⁹⁹

Since it was the red troops of Clive who won the Battle of Plassey in 1757, the colour and dress stayed with the British-Indian troops, irrespective of the nationality of the recruits. Due to Indian climate and social factors, the uniforms were also constantly undergoing changes. Regardless of origin, an officer of a given rank of a battalion had to wear the uniform prescribed for that rank. In the *Calcutta Gazette* of 22nd Nov 1798, the uniform of a unit of the Calcutta Corps is described, including their red jackets:

The uniform of the Corps to be a short jacket, scarlet, faced with yellow, yellow buttons with the Honourable company's crest, waist-coat and pantaloons white, with half-boots, black stocks, and round hat with a Fox Tail and black feather.²⁰⁰

The image in Figure 3-3 is of the army troops in 1780: the jackets and the pantaloons match the description given in the *Gazette*. The red jackets have

¹⁹⁹ Longer. 28.

²⁰⁰ gazette, Karr, and Sandeman.ol. 3, 12.

a yellow border (facing), and the soldiers' headgear matches the traditional headgear of the Carnatic region in India.



Figure 3-3 Carnatic Troops of the army in 1780. Source: Private collection.

A letter written by G.F. Grand, the judge and magistrate of Patna court, to Mr J. White, the sub-secretary of Fort Williams, on 28th June 1790 discusses the orders issued to rajas and nawabs about the dress of sepoys:²⁰¹

I have to request you will inform His Lordship in Council that an immediate obedience was paid to his orders regarding the Dress of Sepoys in the pay of Natives of Distinction, Shroffs and others who employed men of this description.

The son of Maha Rajah Culliansingh the Nawab Diliver Jung and the sons of Muneer ul Dowlah have all been furnished with a

²⁰¹ G F Grand Judge and Magistrate of Patna Adawlut, "Letter from Mr. G.F. Grand, Judge and Magistrate of Patna, to Mr. J. White, Sub – Secretary, Reporting the Names of Persons to Whom the Regulations About the Dress of Sepoys Were Sent.," ed. Home (Patna Adawlut, India: Manuscript, 1790).

printed copy of the Regulation, that they have no affable excuse to deviate from it in their future guidance.²⁰²

The military forces included the land army and the marine board. Because they were primarily engaged in trading and merchandising, the British had to maintain a fleet of ships and the people working on these formed a part of the marine board. A letter dated 8th June 1810 written to Robert Scott, the then Secretary to the Marine Board, and forwarded to the Governor General in Council, Lord Minto, requested that the Council prescribe set uniforms for the 'pilot' services of the marine board (which later became the Royal Indian Navy) and that they should not wear any other type of clothing. The letter details the uniforms that should be worn by marine officers of every rank.²⁰³ As can be seen, there is a lot of emphasis on the type of coats to be worn and the colour and number of buttons on each type of coat. There is a very clear class distinction in uniform to allow for clear identification. The stand-up collar was prescribed throughout, as can be seen from this excerpt:

Branch Pilots - Blue Coat, plain blue lining and lapells, stand up collar, and slash cuff, Lion buttons, gilt, in regular order down the lapells, three at the cuffs, one each side of the collar, plain round black (hat?)

Masters- Coat the same, with the exception of buttons which are to be placed 2 & 2 on the lapells, and 2 on the cuffs, none on the collar, hat the same.

Mates-Coat ditto, except buttons, one, two, three on the lapells and one on each cuff, none on the collar, hat as above.

Boatswains or Volunteers - Plain blue coat, Blue lining, without lapells, button the same, in regular order on the right side, round cuff with one button likewise round hat.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ P. Freke, Rick Beeham, and John Meyes, "Uniforms for Marine Officers," ed. Home (Fort Williams, Calcutta, India: Public Department, 1810).

Seamen-Plain blue jacket, with blue lining, Lion buttons full on the right side, none on the cuffs or collar, - hat as above mentioned.

Should the foregoing prescribed dress for the different classes be sanctioned, I presume the distinction necessary to cause an appearance of regularity throughout the service.²⁰⁴

These extracts show the discipline and precision regarding uniform and the hierarchy of dress as planned by the senior officials of the military forces. These prescriptions for dress or uniform established an India that would revel in the glory of its army. Elite Indians, who were rajas, and therefore primarily warriors or military men, would end up copying elements of this costume, albeit in an Indianised version.

It is important to note that the collar mentioned here is the ‘stand-up’ collar, a feature of dress that was unknown in India before this period. Nigel Arch has conducted a study of the uniform of a British Indian army officer named William Murdoch. Murdoch, who was a cooper in the Indian Army in the late 18th century and returned to England in 1800, brought his uniform back with him, which is kept in the Castle Museum at York. Arch writes that the coat of the uniform was double-breasted with a stand-up collar.²⁰⁵ Arch’s description of Murdoch’s uniform, as well as the letter cited above, shows that this type of collar was prevalent in military uniform in the late 18th and early 19th century in the British-Indian army and the Indian army. Another letter that corroborates this fact was written by P. Vans Agnew, Deputy Adjutant General of the Army, to the *Calcutta Gazette*. In this letter, dated 12th October 1810, he prescribes alterations to army uniform, listing 18 amendments.²⁰⁶ The seventh point of the letter is quoted below: it evidences the adoption of stand-up collar for military jackets.

7th - The jackets of Engineers, Artillery, Infantry and Pioneers to be single-breasted, to be made full and long in the waist, and to

²⁰⁴ Freke, Beeham and Meyes, “Uniforms.”

²⁰⁵ Arch. 39-42.

²⁰⁶ gazette, Karr, and Sandeman. 97-101.

be sloped off from the waist to the extremity of the skirt and standing collar: the cuffs to be round and three and a half inches broad. Ten buttons on the front and collar: two and two, four on the cuff, four on the pocket and two behind the waist...²⁰⁷

The excerpts from the gazette and the letters highlight the stand-up collar's introduction into India in the 19th century as a part of military uniform. Other interesting features that were new to India are the buttons, slash cuffs and pockets. Buttons, with buttonholes, sewed onto a placket had never been seen in Indian garments. All these new trims were introduced to Indians via military uniforms and were subsequently assimilated into Indian garments, creating hybrid garments or modern variations of traditional garments, which are discussed below in section 3.4.1. The impact of these uniforms on the psyche of the Indian people was probably very high, due to the fact that the soldiers commanded a lot of respect from the Indian public due to their discipline and training. The soldiers boasted of their achievements and felt superior to those who were not part of the British-Indian Army.²⁰⁸ The British-Indian Army placed a lot of importance on hierarchy and prescribed uniforms accordingly. The native soldiers of the Indian army, even of the highest Hindu caste, saluted any person wearing the uniform of a higher rank, irrespective of his caste, although once they were out of the uniform, the caste system again reigned supreme.²⁰⁹

The importance given to uniforms can be judged by the fact that while socialising and dancing at evening parties, European men in India wore uniforms.²¹⁰ The uniforms were ideal for conveying the idea of an organisation. Rafaeli and Pratt propose that dress homogeneity increases the extent to which an individual will behave more like a part of an organisation

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Bhatia.

²⁰⁹ White. 32.

²¹⁰ W H Carey, *The Good Old Days of Honorable John Company; Being Curious Reminiscences During the Rule of the East India Company from 1600-1858, Compiled from Newspapers and Other Publications*, (Calcutta: Calcutta Quins Book Co., 1964), <https://archive.org/details/goodolddaysofhon00careuoft>. 83.

and less like an individual.²¹¹ This psychology was well understood by the military heads of the British-Indian army, who were careful to instil the practice of wearing uniform. They also took care to maintain the sanctity of proper uniform. It was forbidden to take uniforms casually and to follow the 'unmilitary practice' of appearing without military uniform. An announcement in *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British and Foreign India, China and Australia* of 1836 states that the commander-in-chief of the army insisted that the orders of His Majesty regarding the army uniforms should be followed:

...he insists that when they appear in public, as officers, they shall be dressed as such, in conformity to orders which are in existence.²¹²

Soldiers were strictly forbidden from wearing military caps with plain frock-coats, from casually opening their military jackets and from disrespecting the uniform in any way. The uniforms of the army underwent constant changes due to the impracticality of the dress. The red broadcloth was too warm for the Indian climate, as were the metal helmets. There were incidences of heads being burnt due to excessive heat in the summer months in India.²¹³ This led to discussions in Britain and a more friendly uniform for the natives in the British Indian army was decided upon. The Indian army had its own tailors.²¹⁴ George Graham was a supplier and tailor of army uniforms in India who worked for the East India Company. He made a fortune in India and went back to Britain; his beautiful house now stands in Scotland near Glasgow, a testimony to the riches that he acquired.²¹⁵

²¹¹ Rafaeli and Pratt. 45.

²¹² "Calcutta, Government Orders & c. – Dress of Officers, Nov 8, 1835," *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British and Foreign India, China, and Australia*, (Parbury, Allen, and Company, 1836). 41.

²¹³ Hopkins. 118-119.

²¹⁴ F.J. Shore, *Notes on Indian Affairs* (J.W. Parker, 1837). 415.

²¹⁵ Andrew Charter, *Timelines.tv*, BBC, 2013, accessed on "<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-Tspukvt-0>," in *Timelines.tv*, ed. Andrew Charter (BBC, 2013).

In 1842, a new uniform called the Waffenrock was introduced to the Prussian Military.²¹⁶ This uniform was a blue frock coat, with scarlet facings, that reached to the knees and lapped over the belly and thighs. This was supposed to protect the lower part of the body and keep it dry and warm.²¹⁷ The Waffenrock began to influence the uniforms of the British army. Changes in British army uniforms occurred after the Crimean War of 1854-56, during which the inadequacies of the existing uniform were realised and it was proposed that the new design of the Prussian army uniform should be adopted. As a result, in India in 1854 the duties related to army uniforms were entrusted to an officer designated Superintendent of Army Clothing.²¹⁸ Thus the tunics and frock coats of the British-Indian army were adapted: they became longer, hanging well below the hips; earlier coats had ended at the waist. By 1855, the tunic was accepted universally as an item of military uniform.²¹⁹

Both Indians and the British began to wear similar uniforms. The lower garment varied, as did the headgear, which could be regional, like the Sikh turban, as decided by the British.²²⁰ The red coat with a stand-up collar was by no means the only type of uniform worn in the army. A variety of uniforms were prescribed to the various units of the army, the infantry and the artillery and different regiments, as can be seen in paintings and photographs as well as official accounts of the time.²²¹ As late as 1857, during the Mutiny, different units were wearing different uniforms.²²² The

²¹⁶ Tony Schnurr, "Kaiser's Bunker Guide to Imperial German Uniforms," <http://www.kaisersbunker.com/gtp/waffenrock.htm>.

²¹⁷ Hopkins. 128-129.

²¹⁸ National Archives of India, "International Council of Archives. Guide to Sources of Asian History," ed. National Archives of India (New Delhi: National Archives of India, 1992). 5.

²¹⁹ Hopkins. 129.

²²⁰ Bernard S Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge ; the British in India* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996). 106-107.

²²¹ This image is from www.movinghere.org.uk, Catalogue Reference: vaa/IS.39:7-1987 Image Reference:1

²²² John French, "Betraying the White Queen's Salt: Introductory Notes for the Indian Mutiny, 1857-59 - a Listing of Actions, Ob's, and Uniform Data for All Combattants," <http://www.oocities.org/cdferree/history/cawnpore/Mutiny1.htm>.

soldiers of the Madras army shown in Figure 3-4 wear European-style coatees with Indian pyjamas.

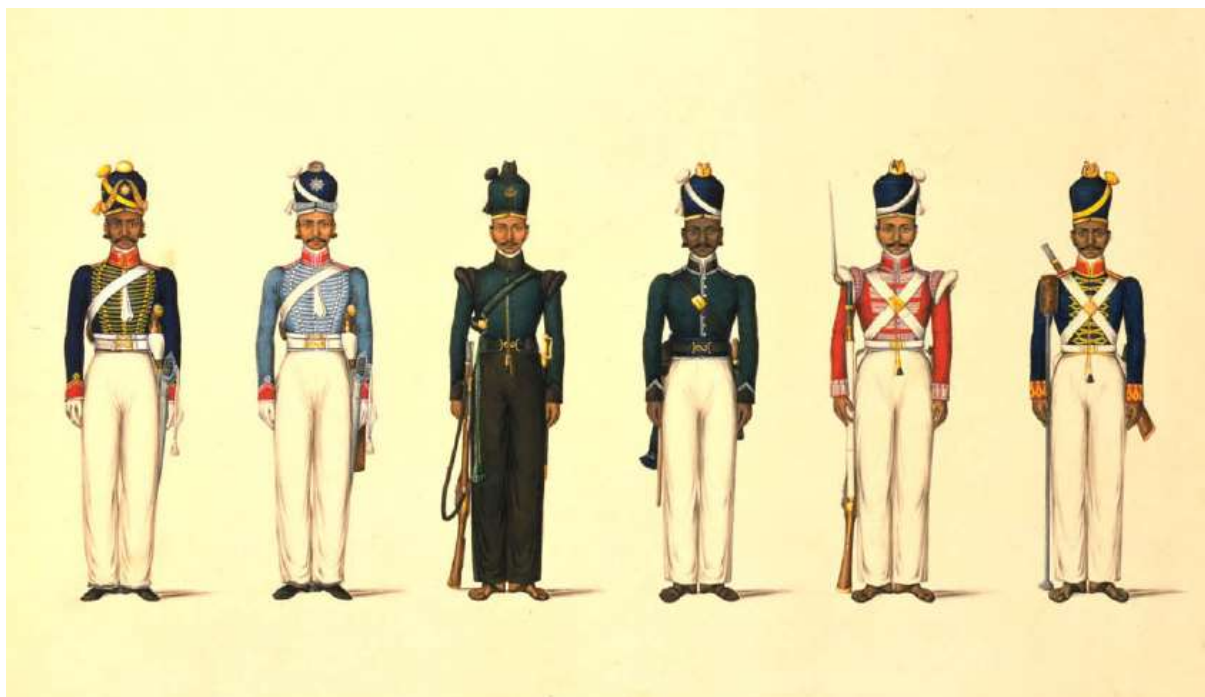


Figure 3-4 **Painting depicting** six figures from the Madras Army, circa 1830. Courtesy of online database of The National Archives: catalogue reference: vaa/IS39:7-1987, image reference: 1.

John French, who has written on army history, points out that a vast array of uniforms existed in British India from late 18th century, including the famous red jackets as well as red, green and yellow alkaluks.²²³ By the beginning of 19th century, a new type of dress, previously not worn in India, began to be introduced as uniform and eventually became associated with the presidency armies. This dress, known as the alkaluk or alkalak, was neither from India nor from Britain, but gained popularity as Indian army uniform. The alkaluk is a collarless tunic or a quilted tunic, worn with a vest inside called a kurdi. The front of the shirt had a bib, which was attached in a u pattern with a piping at the torso. This garment is actually of Persian origin.²²⁴ The word comes from the Turkish ‘arkalik’ - meaning literally ‘something worn on the

²²³ John French, *Armies of the Nineteenth Century: The British in India 1825 - 59*, ed. Ian Heath (Nottingham: Foundry Books, 2006).

²²⁴ A. Schimmel, *Islam in India and Pakistan* (Brill, 1982). 750.

back', a type of jacket. There are many words of Turkish and Persian origin in the Mughal sources. For example words like achkan and chapkan are of Turkish origin too.

Since many Persians came to India and there was a constant influx of Persian merchants and soldiers, this garment seems to have come to India with them. The alkaluk (spelt also as alkalukh, alkhaluk, alkalak) features in the books written by English travellers to Persia.²²⁵ It was worn on the upper body with a lower garment called a shalwar, a garment similar to loose pyjama trousers.²²⁶ Hutchinson, Gregory and Lydekker write that the word alkaluk has been used to describe the dress of Persians -

Over the shirt and the zerejumah comes the alka-luck or close fitting collarless garment, open in front and with sleeves tight to the elbow.²²⁷

The miniature painting of Figure 3-5, painted in Delhi in 1815-16, shows the Indian recruits of Skinner's Horse Regiment wearing the alkaluk.

²²⁵ Charles James Wills, *Persia as It Is : Sketches of Modern Persian Life and Character*, (London: S. Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1886), <https://archive.org/details/persiaasitisbein00willrich>.

²²⁶ H N Hutchinson, J W Gregory, and R Lydekker, *The Living Races of Mankind*, (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1910).

²²⁷ Hutchinson, Gregory and Lydekker, *Living Races*, 236 -237.



Figure 3-5 "A group of recruits to Skinner's Horse Regiment", India, Delhi – 1815-1816, from the 'Fraser Album', from The David Collection, Denmark.
<http://www.davidmus.dk/en/collections/islamic/dynasties/india>.

The term 'alkaluk' is not found in the usual vocabulary of Indian garments today. None of the people I interviewed knew what an alkaluk is, nor does the word exist in Indian (Hindi) dictionaries. The only written records in relation to India that mention this garment are the uniform details of the army. Thus the garment must have entered India with the Persians. Persians were being employed by the British in the presidency armies and they must have bought this garment with them. This may have influenced the new garment, the angrakha, which makes its appearance in the court of Oudh in the late 18th century and the beginning of 19th century. The angrakha is of a similar description to the alkaluk, but is a combination of the under shirt (kurdi) and the alkaluk. It is discussed below in section 3.4.2.

The British decided to adopt alkaluk as the uniform of the irregular cavalry.²²⁸ Sylvia Hopkins also writes on the use of alkaluks.²²⁹ The decision to adopt the looser alkaluk may have been taken in response to the Indian

²²⁸ Julian Saul Markham David, "The Bengal Army and the Outbreak of the Indian Mutiny " (University of Glasgow, 2001).

²²⁹ Hopkins. 120.

heat. Boots seemed to be unbearable in Indian heat, but slippers were not an effective combat footwear, so puttees were adopted instead of boots. Puttees were almost four-inch broad strips of white cotton fabric that were wound around the lower leg, just above the shoes, to the mid-calf. The irregular cavalry also wore Afghan poshteens (sheepskin coats) in colder regions and climates.²³⁰

Thus army uniform in India by the end of 19th century can be categorised as a native dress uniform, the *alkaluk*, for the irregular units and coats or *coatees* that were influenced by British dress for the regular units. David points to the Indians' discomfort in the tight-fitting British-style uniforms and he argues that these personal grievances were the cause for mutiny.²³¹ It is probable that through these uniforms the concept of tailored coats and trims like buttons and pockets disseminated across India.

3.3.3 The Indian Mercantile Class in British India

While the natives of different castes came together as soldiers in the presidency armies, the native business men of British-India were gaining elite status. Trade was the main concern of East India Company and thus British and Indian merchants with similar interests began to socialise with each other, which influenced the dress of Indian merchants living in areas under British control.²³² This was primarily because there were no Indian rulers in these areas, and thus the merchants rose to the status of the elite men. The high society of Calcutta and Mumbai, where the British presence was strongest, saw the intermingling of British merchants and rich Indian merchants, the *baniyas* or *dewans* of Bengal and the *Parsis* and other mercantile classes of Mumbai.

Carey remarks that the British coming to India in mid-18th century believed

²³⁰ Longer. 39-40.

²³¹ David.

²³² Roy. Roy discusses how the British merchants attended weddings and funerals at the homes of their Indian counterparts. It also details how the benefits that accrued to Indian merchants who associated closely with the British.

that the people of India would never change their style of dress or housing, but that in his times (from 1780s), both had changed considerably and that young Indians had altered their mode of dress and lifestyle as a result of the influence of their British rulers. He describes a young Hindu in 1780s and is astonished at his change.²³³

The attachment of the natives of Bengal to the English laws begins now to extend itself to English habiliment. Raja Ramlochun, a very opulent Gentoo, of high cast and family lately paid a visit to a very eminent attorney equipped in boots, buckskin breeches, hunting frock and jockey cap.²³⁴

A Hindu (Gentoo) dressed in such an attire may have been one of a kind, but this incident indicates that as early as the 1780s there was some desire among the Indian elite to dress as English men in well-tailored articles of clothing. The reason for this imitation can be attributed to the success of the British in political and technological spheres and the admiration that the young Indians had for them. Carey gives another example: he writes that a Muslim nabob asked an English tailor named Connor to stitch him two suits exactly like an English admiral's uniform.²³⁵ This practice of copying the British in exactly the same manner, with breeches, coats and wigs, in the late 18th century was restricted to elite families. Elite Indians living in British India had acquired riches with the help of the British. They were not princely families, though; their proximity as traders and merchants to British traders and merchants had won them favours with the British and exposed them to the lavish British lifestyle.²³⁶ They were mostly banians (merchants) or dewans and worked as bankers or accountants in Bengal and other parts of British India.

These rich Indian banyas or merchants invited their European guests to

²³³ Carey., 243-244.

²³⁴ Ibid., 244.

²³⁵ Ibid., 244.

²³⁶ Roy. 109.

lavish weddings.²³⁷ These weddings were the talk of the town and were announced in the gazettes of the time period. Roy cites a marriage ceremony of a rich Bengali merchant that was announced in the *Governmental Gazette* in 1820.

Samachar Darpan 12th Feb 1820 - Babu Ramchandra Sircar has notified in the *Governmental Gazette* that his two sons will be married in the 7th and 11th *Falgun*, and that the 1st and 2nd *Falgun* have been fixed for the entertainment of European Guests....²³⁸

Thus it is in these areas that a mixed British-Indian society developed as the Indian elite educated their children in the manner of the British elite. An example of this in Bengal (Calcutta) is Dwarkanath Tagore (1794-1840), the grandfather of the famous poet, Rabindranath Tagore, who was the director of Union Bank and was a rich merchant, a partner in a firm with the British, which allowed him to establish colleges and contribute to various philanthropic activities with the aim of promoting education in India.²³⁹ It is in this regard that the educated classes now working under the British or those who were now a part of British India rather than Mughal India felt that they needed to copy the customs, dress and manner of the British.

Another mercantile class of British India, influenced greatly by the British, were the Parsi families, who were refugees who had fled from Persia almost a millennium earlier and been given refuge on the west coast of India. They had made the west coast of India - Gujarat, Mumbai and Goa in particular - their home (as had the Portuguese). The Parsis had blended with the Indians and wore clothes similar to theirs, but retained some elements of their own clothing.²⁴⁰ The Parsis were successful businessmen and their proximity to the British led to the development of their own blend of culture and costume. Maria Graham, the daughter of a naval officer and traveller to

²³⁷ Ibid. 61.

²³⁸ Ibid. 61.

²³⁹ Ibid. 22.

²⁴⁰ The Parsis were Zoroastrians who refused forceful conversion to Islam, which meant that they had to flee Persia.

India, where she married Lieutenant Graham in 1809, wrote about India in her *Journal of a Residence in India* in 1812.²⁴¹ She notes that the Parsees were the richest community on the west coast of India.²⁴² The British treated the Parsis as a class apart from the Indians. Just as the British treated the Bengali merchants as friends, they accepted Parsis into their circle of business and social dealings. This exposure to the higher circles of the British resulted in the Parsis' Anglicisation mania: they copied every aspect of British life, from music to sports, literature, ideals and sensibilities.²⁴³ The clothing of the Parsis reflected the amalgamation of the earlier Indian and Mughal styles that they had adopted to blend with the Indians and a mix of British sensibilities. The Parsis started an 'Oriental Cricket Club' in 1848 in Mumbai and were seen playing cricket in their traditional pyjama suits.²⁴⁴ They retained their Indian style of dress (angrakhas, chapkans and chogas), but added shoes and other accessories to their person.

Emily Eden, sister of the Governor General, George Eden, mentions in a letter of 1836 that the newspapers in India carry information about the customs and manners of the British in order to increase the awareness of the Indian people and for the benefit of the British living in India.²⁴⁵ This shows that the Indians were keen to know and learn the ways of the British. They slowly began adopting smaller British items into their dress. The first items of British dress to have been widely adopted in India appear to have been accessories, and shoes seem to have been universally accepted and adopted in India during the Company Rule. Since the British, unlike the Indians, wore shoes indoors, wearing shoes indoors became a status symbol for high-class Indians. Roy writes that native Bengali gentlemen began to adopt shoes, watches and coats, noting that there were no shirts and no buttons on

²⁴¹ Regina Akel, *Maria Graham* (New York: Cambria Press, 2009).

²⁴² M. Graham, *Journal of a Residence in India* (Constable, 1813). 42-43.

²⁴³ J.S. Palsetia, *The Parsis of India: Preservation of Identity in Bombay City* (Leiden, Boston, Koln: Brill, 2001). 153.

²⁴⁴ Palsetia, *Parsis*, 154.

²⁴⁵ Eden, *Letters from India (1797 -1869) by Hon. Emily Eden*, 1.

clothes in his father's youth (1830s-40s).²⁴⁶ As Emily Eden notes, shoes had by 1836 become a status symbol. She describes European shoes being worn by the Indians in the service of the British and how unwilling the Indians were to remove their shoes:

The great shoe question makes a great heart-burning in society. Sir C. Metcalfe never allowed the natives to come with their shoes on. There is a large class here, who say the natives are now sufficiently well-informed to feel the degradation very sensibly, and who wish the natives to adopt European manners as much as possible. George has taken up that opinion, and the charm of being allowed to come before the Governor-General in shoes brought an immense concourse together - such quantities of new stiff European shoes, and many of the men seemed to find it difficult to walk in them.²⁴⁷

There was a gradual shift, and most Indians were uncomfortable with the complete adoption of foreign dress because they valued their own clothes. Instead of adopting western clothing completely, they adopted accessories which signified a change in their status. There were hardly any cases of complete adoption of foreign dress in the early part of 19th century; most Indians retained their own dress, the jama, although there were now changes in the style of the jama too. The jama around 1757 was usually white and flowing, more like an English woman's gown.²⁴⁸ As Emily Eden writes:

There were some splendid dresses among them, and some beautiful turbans, that would have made Madame Carson's fortune, but most of them were in white muslin dresses.²⁴⁹

During the earlier decades of 19th century, the educated Bengalis continued to wear the jama, but the introduction of tighter clothes in the Bengal army and the inclusion of alkaluk as army uniform brought changes to the manner of dress. Around the 1830s and 1840s, the Indian elite in British India began

²⁴⁶ Roy. 65-66.

²⁴⁷ Eden *Letters from India (1797 -1869)* by Hon. Emily Eden, 1.

²⁴⁸ Shrimpton.

²⁴⁹ Eden, *Letters from India (1797 -1869)* by Hon. Emily Eden, 1.

to change their attire from loose jamas to chapkans for daily office wear. Alkaluks do not find mention here, but chapkans (or chupkans or chapkuns) were worn in British ruled areas.

The chapkan evolved out of the alkaluk or angrakha and was a long tunic which was very closely fitted to the body. Indian historians differ in opinion about the origins of chapkan. Some believe it to be of Turkish origin and the others think that it is Persian. Abdul Halim Sharar argues that the chapkan was most likely Turkish in origin, but that it had adopted some European features like buttons.²⁵⁰ It was a simple coat usually without embroidery and made of fine wool.

The word 'chapkan', probably comes from the Hindustani word 'chipakna', meaning 'to stick'. The Hindi dictionary describes it like a type of angrakha.²⁵¹ This garment fitted closely to the upper torso and flared below the waist. According to S.N. Dar, the chapkan was a coat which was in vogue in Lucknow in the latter half of the 19th century and was made by modifying the angrakha. The torso or the upper body of the angrakha was shortened so that its binding could be high enough to measure the chest and proclaim its width (it had a high waistline). The sleeves were made to fit the limbs in order to make their shape more discernible. Instead of tapes or strings, buttons were used as fasteners, arranged in the form of a loop (presumably a semi-circle) on the chest.²⁵² Figure 3-6 is a photograph from the 1850s that shows a young boy wearing a chapkan. This boy belongs to the family of 'scribes', or educated Bengalis. The chapkan too may have had different versions as the jamas did, but Dar's description of the chapkan matches with that of Sharar. Sharar's account is in Urdu; Harcourt and Hussain translate it in English and describe the chapkan as:

²⁵⁰ Abdul Halim Sharar, *Lucknow : The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture*, trans. E S Harcourt and Fakhir Hussain (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999). 170.

²⁵¹ "Hindi Shabdkosh (Hindi Dictionary)," in *Hindi Shabdkosh*, ed. Shyamsundar Das B A (Kashi: Kashi Nagari Pracharini Sabha, 1927). See also the sub-heading "Angrakha."

²⁵² S N Dar, *Costumes of India and Pakistan : A Historical and Cultural Study*, 2 ed. (Bombay: D B Taraporevala & Sons, 1982). 56.

Chapkan, a fitted cape, had the same semi-circular jabot and lapels as the anrakha. The lapels were bow-shaped and sewn with buttons and there was an attractive bow shaped ring of buttons near the neck. Like the balabar, it had a broad gusset fixed to the left side by buttons. This chapkan was made of wool or other thick cloth and was more suitable for winter wear; it was popular in the court.²⁵³



Figure 3-6 A boy from Bengal wearing a chapkan circa 1856. Courtesy of <http://www.oldindianphotos.in>

The word ‘balabar’ is of Persian origin and indicates a garment like an alkaluk; it is also used to denote a wide panel (called a gusset in the quote above) of fabric that was tied at the waist in the anrakha. One such

²⁵³ Sharar. 170.

chapkan, from Assam (near Bengal) and of the late 19th century is available in the stores of National Museum, New Delhi. I could only see the item in the album of the museum; it is made of buff-coloured cotton with white buttons. The written description of the chapkan, maintains that it had a semi-circular row of buttons. Most of the chapkans were made of wool, this is interesting because Indians were not used to wearing wool in Bengal, where the climate does not support it at all. This clearly shows the influence of the British. Another example of the use of chapkan during this time is the portrait of Dwarka Nath Tagore. It shows him sitting on a chair and wearing a chapkan.²⁵⁴ In my opinion it can be dated to around 1830s.

There are chapkans with other features, like an extra balabar, or that are front open; images of such objects can be seen in books like *Costumes and Textiles of Awadh*²⁵⁵ and *Costumes and Textiles of Royal India*.²⁵⁶ These books do not offer an exact definition of the chapkan, although both agree that this garment was introduced sometime during the mid-19th century. The images of chapkans in these books do not feature the semi-circular jabot that Sharar has written about. Thus the chapkan was a version of the angrakha which had a combination of buttons and ties. It could be of various shapes: it could be exactly like the angrakha, and have buttons instead of ties on the upper part, or could be slit from the middle and have buttons.

Jagdish Mittal, an art connoisseur and collector of art and textiles in South India argues:

Chapkan was the favoured garment in the days of the Mughal rule in South India and how when the British made it like the uniform for bearers they wanted to insult the Mughals. This is the feeling that most of the Indians hold and it is the truth. Chapkan is a Persian garment, it is made of fine white fabric, for poor it could be coarse white fabric.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁴ Hindol Sengupta, "Businessman Called Tagore," *The Telegraph*, November 30 2014.

²⁵⁵ Swarup. 102.

²⁵⁶ Kumar. 201.

²⁵⁷ Interview with Mr Jagdish Mittal, 6th February 2014, Hyderabad, India.

However there is no evidence of this chapkan before the 1830s, it is also possible that the term may have been in use, but this specific garment was not present prior to the 19th century.²⁵⁸ The chapkan seems to have become more popular around the 1850s and 1860s and probably evolved from the alkaluk. However, while the alkaluk was prescribed as the uniform for irregular infantry, chapkan was being willingly adopted by the progressive educated class of Bengal. This was a hybrid garment, as is very clear from the use of buttons and choice of fabric, which was usually wool. Its cut followed the pattern of the angrakha but was less troublesome because of its buttons. The chapkan evolved from the angrakha but was stripped of any ornamentation in the form of fancy weaves, fabrics or embroidery. Thus it found favour with the British, and they decided to use it as uniforms for their bearers and other servants.²⁵⁹ It eventually became the uniform for the bearers of native rajas and the British elite in India. Therefore, although this dress originated as a hybrid garment for the educated Indian elite, its adoption as uniform for bearers led to it falling from favour among the elite.²⁶⁰ Although they did not take up the manners of the British in clothing completely, the Indian elite did adopt accessories like shoes, socks and stockings, etc. in order to indicate their affluence or upward mobility. The change was less obvious in the silhouette, but clearly perceivable in the types of fabrics used to make these new garments.

The Indians who were not under the British rule wore Mughal-like garments. It is important to understand the dress of the Indians before British rule as reference for this study and in order to understand the cross-cultural influences on both British and Indians before the instigation of British rule in 1757.

²⁵⁸ The fact that it was made into the uniform of the bearers is correct, as even today in the Royal Indian hotels the guards and the bearers can be found dressed in black or white cotton chapkans, with red cummerbunds and red turbans, white pyjamas and Persian slippers, to fit into the image of royal India.

²⁵⁹ Sharar. 170.

²⁶⁰ Another historian, a former Professor of Aligarh Muslim University, interviewed on 1st February 2014, shared similar views to those of Mr Jagdish Mittal.

3.4 Mughal Indian Dress

This section is a study of the dress worn by the Indian elite who were not directly under the influence of British rule. It observes Mughal dress since the arrival of the British (17th century) to see whether there were any changes to it under the Company Raj.

A brief discussion of Mughal clothing in the 17th century is necessary. Sir Thomas Roe was the British envoy to India who landed on Indian shores in 1615; he often visited the court and wrote in his memoirs that the costumes of Mughals or Indians in general were very different from the European mode of dressing. When the British came to India in the 17th century, the dress of elite Indian men was the jama, the pyjama and the choga. Figure 3-7 is a painting of Dara Shikoh, a Mughal Prince and the son of Shah Jahan. It shows him wearing a jama of printed fabric with a pyjama underneath.



Figure 3-7 Mughal Prince Dara Shikoh 1631-37. The image was first seen at the Exhibition of Mughal Miniatures by British Library in April 2013. Courtesy of Online database of British Library. Add.or.3129,f.59v;

A variety of Rajasthani and Pahari miniature paintings of the 18th century show the costumes worn by Indians at that time. In general the costumes consist of the Mughal costumes as elaborated above, or they consisted of the simple unstitched garments worn by Hindus before the coming of the Mughals. This was also documented by the visitors to Indian courts, like Edward Terry, the chaplain of Sir Thomas Roe, and others. The Indian miniature paintings of the time are also a good source of information about

the kind of clothes worn by the Indian nobility, as are surviving examples of dress, which confirm the fabric and style of dress. Although there are no samples from 17th century, some samples survive from the 18th century. By the mid-18th century, after the beginning of the Company Raj, a few changes are observed in the otherwise more or less accepted court dress of Mughal India.

Sir Thomas Roe felt that the clothes gifted to him by the king befitted the London theatre rather than an English gentleman.²⁶¹ He writes about the costume of the court, include its textiles. In the 16th century the *Ain-I-Akbari*, a complete treatise on the rule of the Mughal emperor Akbar, was written by Abul-Fazal Allami. Allami was one of the nine gems of Emperor Akbar (the 'nine gems' refers to the nine learned men who were Akbar's advisers in matters of science, spirituality, governance etc.), and was a very important man of the time period. He gives an account of the various types of textiles that were made in Hindustan and also lists those that were imported.²⁶² His list of fabrics made with gold, which he calls 'Gold Stuffs', contains a fabric called 'shirwani brocade', another list of silks on the same page also has 'shirwani' as an item.²⁶³ Though sherwani finds a mention here, this is clearly not a garment, but a fabric, most likely imported from Sherwan. This shows that the Mughals were familiar with the term 'shirwani or sherwani', but it is not an item of clothing since it is not mentioned in the list of clothes in 'Ain-I-Akbari'.

While writing about clothes or garments, Fazal writes the names and new terms in use for the garments. There is also a description of the garments worn in the 16th century, Fazal writes that Irani, Mongolian and European articles of wear are in abundance. He writes about various garments like the qaba, jama and farzi, but there is no mention here of the sherwani. Allami

²⁶¹ Donald Clay Johnson, *Colonial Influence on Dress in the Indian Subcontinent* (London, England: 'The Berg Fashion Library'). accessed , 1.

²⁶² Abul-Fazal Allami, *The a-in-I Akbari*, trans. H Blochmann, 10 ed., 3 vols., vol. 1 (Delhi: Low Price Publications, 2014).pg. 98-102

²⁶³ Ibid.pg. 99

writes- 264

I shall not say much on this subject, though a few particulars regarding the articles worn by his Majesty may be of interest.

1. The *Takauchiyah* is a coat without lining, of the Indian form. Formerly it had slits in the skirt, and was tied on the left side; his Majesty has ordered it to be made with a round skirt, and to be tied on the right side. It requires seven yards and seven *girihs*, and five *girihs* for the binding. The price for making a plain one varies from one rupee to three rupees; but if the coat be adorned with ornamental stitching, from one to four and three quarters rupees. Besides a *misqál* of silk is required.
2. The *Péshwáz* (a coat open in front) is of the same form, but ties in front. It is sometimes made without strings.
3. The *Dutáhi* (a coat with lining) requires six yards and four *girihs* for the outside, six yards lining, four *girihs* for the binding, nine *girihs* for the border. The price of making one varies from one to three rupees. One *misqál* of silk is required.
4. The *Sháh-ájidah* (or the royal stitch coat) is also called *Shaçtkhaṭ* (or sixty rows), as it has sixty ornamental stitches *per girih*. It has generally a double lining, and is sometimes wadded and quilted. The cost of making is two rupees *per yard*.
5. The *Sózani* requires a quarter of a *sér* of cotton and two *dáms* of silk. If sewed with *bakhyah* stitches, the price of making one is eight rupees; one with *ájidah* stitches costs four rupees.
6. The *Qalamí* requires $\frac{3}{8}$ s. cotton, and one *dám* silk. Cost of making, two rupees.
7. The *Qabá*, which is at present generally called *jámah i pumbahdár*, is a wadded coat. It requires 1 s. of cotton, and 2 m. silk. Price, one rupee to a quarter rupee.
8. The *Gadar* is a coat wider and longer than the *qabá*, and contains more wadding. In Hindustan, it takes the place of a fur-coat. It requires seven yards of stuff, six yards of lining, four *girihs* binding, nine for bordering, $2\frac{1}{2}$ s. cotton, 3 m. silk. Price, from one-half to one and one-half rupees.

²⁶⁴ *The a-in-l-Akbari*, 3 vols., vol. 1 (Delhi: Low Price Publications, 2014). pg. 93-96

9. The *Farj* has no binding, and is open in front. Some put buttons to it. It is worn over the *jámah* (coat), and requires 5 y. 12 g. stuff; 5 y. 5 g. lining; 14 g. bordering; 1 s. cotton; 1 m. silk. Price, from a quarter to one rupee.

10. The *Fargul* resembles the *yápanjí*, but is more comfortable and becoming. It was brought from Europe; but every one now-a-days wears it. They make it of various stuffs. It requires 9 y. 6½ g. stuff, the same quantity of lining, 6 m. silk, 1 s. cotton. It is made both single and double. Price, from ½ to 2 R.

11. The *Chakman* is made of broadcloth, or woollen stuff, or wax cloth. His Majesty has it made of *Dárái* wax cloth, which is very light and pretty. The rain cannot go through it. It requires 6 y. stuff, 5 g. binding, and 2 m. silk. The price of making one of broadcloth is 2 R.; of wool, 1½ R.; of wax cloth, ½ R.

12. The *Shalwár* (drawers) is made of all kinds of stuff, single and double, and wadded. It requires 3 y. 11 g. cloth, 6 g. for the hem through which the string runs, 3 y. 5 g. lining, 1¼ m. silk, ½ s. cotton. Price, from ¼ to ½ R.

There are various kinds of each of these garments. It would take me too long to describe the *chirahs*, *fauṭahs*, and *dupattahs*, or the costly dresses worn at feasts or presented to the grandees of the present time. Every season, there are made one thousand complete suits for the imperial wardrobe, and one hundred and twenty, made up in twelve bundles, are always kept in readiness. From his indifference to every thing that is worldly, His Majesty prefers and wears *woollen* stuffs, especially shawls; and I must mention, as a most curious sign of auspiciousness, that His Majesty's clothes becomingly fit every one whether he be tall or short, a fact which has hitherto puzzled many.

His Majesty has changed the names of several garments, and invented new and pleasing terms. Instead of *jámah* (coat), he says *sarbgátí*, *i. e.*, covering the whole body; for *izár* (drawers), he says *yárpíráhan* (the companion of the coat); for *nímtanah* (a jacket), *tanzéb*; for *fauṭah*, *patgat*; for *burqu'* (a veil), *chitragupita*; for *kuláh* (a cap), *sís sobhá*; for *múibáf* (a hair ribbon,) *késg'han*; for *patká* (a cloth for the loins), *katzéb*; for *shál* (shawl), *parmarm*; for...., *parmgarm*; for *kapúrdhúr*, a Tibetan stuff, *kapúrnúr*; for *páiafzár* (shoes), *charndharn*; and similarly for other names.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁵ Ibid. pg 94-96

In the 17th century the common form of menswear in India was the jama (or jamah), which was like a mid-shin-length tunic as shown in Figure 3-5. The jama was made of flowing and flowered muslins of the finest quality in summer and of silks and satins in winter.²⁶⁶ Since the jama was a loose garment, it had to be tightened at the waist in order to perform tasks which needed freedom of arm movement without the fabric getting in the way. This was done using a belt known as kamarbandh (cummerbund), ‘kamar’ in the local languages (Urdu and Hindi) means waist and ‘bandh’ means to tie. It was also known as the patka. These waistbands or kamarbandhs were beautifully woven rectangular pieces of fabric; for summer cotton would be used and for winter a warmer fabric like that of a Kashmir shawls. A Frenchman, François Bernier, who travelled in India from 1656 to 1668, writes about Kashmir shawls, noting their beauty, colour, style of manufacture and extreme price.²⁶⁷

Edward Terry describes a garment like the jama which he called a habit, probably for the benefit of his readers. There is a picture of the fashions of India in Sir Thomas Roe’s journal, which also shows the garments worn in the same manner.²⁶⁸ Terry does not use the word jama, but it is clear that the garment that he describes is the jama. The ties with which the jama is fastened are referred to as slips. There were no buttons. Other than the jama, he refers to another coat (an overcoat worn in winter months) which sounds like a choga,²⁶⁹ although it could also be an ‘atma-sukh’. He wrote that this loose coat is made of “either quilted silk, or calico or of our English Broadcloth”. After having described the coats and overcoats, he writes of a

²⁶⁶ Bhushan. 32.

²⁶⁷ François Bernier and Archibald Constable, *Travels in the Mughal Empire Ad 1656 - 1668*, (London,Edinburgh,Glasgow: Oxford University Press, 1891), <https://archive.org/details/travelsinmogulem00bernuoft.402-403>.

²⁶⁸ William Foster, "The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to the Court of the Great Mogul, 1615-1619, as Narrated in His Journal and Correspondence," (London: Printed for the Hakluyt society, 1899). plate between pages 114-115.

²⁶⁹ Singh. 157.

kind of undercoat (there is a mention of another shorter worn inside the jama) which may have been like an undershirt, which was probably the neemjama. It is mostly the jama that is described, however.

During the winter months, a small quilted front-open vest called the sadri was worn on top of the cotton jama to protect against the cold. It was popularised in the early 17th century by Emperor Jahangir.²⁷⁰ Jahangir was the son of Akbar and continued his interest in the textiles of India. His riches are described in the *Jahangirnama* written by the Emperor himself.²⁷¹ In the book he writes about riches and gold fabrics, but does not give a clear account of the type of dress worn, probably because it was well understood by that time. It does not contain detailed information like the *Ain-I-Akbari*. Fazal gives a detail of the types of coats and shawls worn in the 16th century in the *Ain-I-Akbari*.²⁷² He describes, coverings or coat-like garments that were worn in winter to give added warmth, including the quilted choga called the atma-sukh (literally meaning pleasure or happiness of self or soul). This was like a long coat made of cotton in two layers with a layer of fine cotton fibre in between. It was stitched and quilted using the Rajasthani technique which is famous even today. It was given its name by Akbar. Samples of the atma-sukh can be found in the museums at Jaipur and New Delhi. The atma-sukh and choga did not have buttons; they were front-open, loose and not fitted to the body.

Abdul Hamid Lahori from the court of Shah Jahan had written the *Padshahnama* in 1636. This chronicle of Shah Jahan's rule, has many illustrations that go with the text. These illustrations are in the Mughal miniature style and have details of garments painted very well.²⁷³ The

²⁷⁰ Bhushan.

²⁷¹ The Emperor Jahangir and Major David Price, *Memoirs of the Emperor Jahangir*, (London: Oriental Translation Committee, 1829), <https://archive.org/stream/memoirsofemperor00jaharich#page/n5/mode/2up>.

²⁷² Allami, *The a-in-I Akbari*, 1.pg. 95-99

²⁷³ Altavista.org, "Illustrations from the 1636 *Padshahnama* of Shah Jahan Showing Moghul Soldier & Civilian Costume," <http://www.warfare.altavista.org/Moghul/ShahJahan/Padshahnama.htm>.

illustrations in the Padshahnama are in the Mughal miniature style. These miniature style paintings are narratives in themselves, telling stories about the life in the courts. Each of these illustrations have many men painted in them, and this gives a very good idea of the clothing worn by the elite men of the time period.

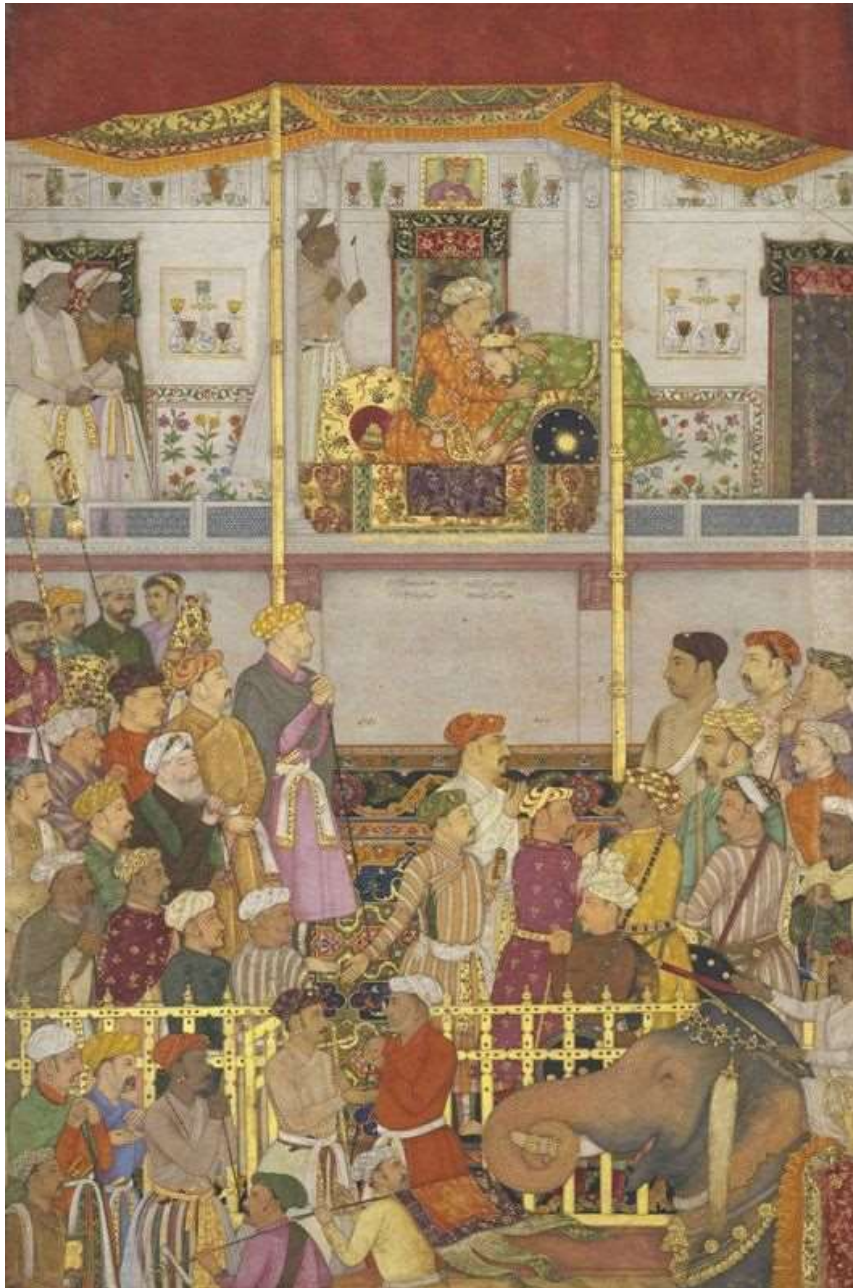


Figure 3-8 Jahangir receiving Prince Khurram at Ajmer. Source: Padshahnama

The illustration in Fig 3-8 is from the Padshahnama, it is done in the

miniature style and shows the latest court fashion of the 17th century. Most men can be seen wearing the colourful jamas made in a variety of fabrics. These miniature paintings of the Padshahnama illustrate well the garments, as described by Terry in detail. After the detail of the upper garments, Terry goes on to describe the lower garment, which unlike the English hose of the time is a loose kind of trouser. This is the pyjama (also spelt pajama): ‘py’ means leg and ‘jama’ means ‘cloth’ or ‘to clothe’, thus pyjama means a garment for the legs. Terry does not use the word pyjama but refers to them as “longer breeches” and likens them to the “Irish Trowsers”. These pyjamas sometimes tapered towards the lower leg, but usually ballooned at the top. Their construction involved a centre seam on the front and back and an extra piece of gusset-like fabric that was added to the crotch for comfort when sitting. They were not fitted to the body but were loose garments and secured at the top with a string inserted by folding the upper edge of the pyjama. The string ran through the entire width of the pyjama and could be pulled and tied in front, and thus was adjustable. It was important for the Indians to wear such loose garments because they were accustomed to sitting on the floor. The pyjamas were also referred to as izars and the strings as izar-bandhs.²⁷⁴ The pyjamas “which come to their ankles, and ruffle on the small of their legs” are referred to as chooridar or churidar pyjamas.²⁷⁵ Although Terry describes in detail the kind of clothes worn by the men in India, he does not use the correct local terminology; instead, for the benefit of his reader uses words like coats and trousers (“trowsers”). It is possible that he did not understand the Indian language and just describes what he saw.

The primary sources like *Ain-I-Akbari*, *Jahangirnama* and *Padshahnama*,

²⁷⁴ Singh.

²⁷⁵ Ibid. 157. These pyjamas can still be seen in India, they are worn by both men and women under the long tunics called kurtas. They are not cut on a strait grain, but rather on a bias and stitched to make the fabric stretchable, resulting in a lot of extra fabric, which is used to create the ruffle on the small of the leg so that there is ease of wearing and air circulation. The appearance thus is of many rings or bangles (called chooris or churis in Hindi and Urdu) around the leg; the etymology of the word thus refers to the choori-bearing pyjama known as the chooridar pyjama.

including Terry's observations and writings have been invaluable not only in terms of the look or style of apparel but also for the details they give about the fabrics used to create such apparel, including silks, taffetas, cloth of silver and gold and calicos. The "grandees" - the elite - Terry writes, use multi-coloured silk to make their garments and also use cloth made of gold and silver. He is probably here referring to Indian brocades. The fabrics he describes sound like the Banarasi silks which were used by the rich to make their clothes. In spite of the use of silk by the rich, the most common cloth seems to have been cotton, woven into a fine lawn. Terry notes that there was some stitching on collars and some parts of upper coats. The use of the word stitching here probably refers to the embroidery of chogas. He also describes Indian headgear, referring to it as "a long wreath of cloth". This headgear comprised rectangular pieces of woven fabric rather than cut and stitched caps or hats - he is obviously referring to the turban or pugari.²⁷⁶

John Fryer similarly notes that the Indians had a rich attire. His observations match those of Terry, although there is a gap of nearly 60 years between the two accounts. Thus we can conclude the kinds of clothes worn in the early and late 17th century are very similar. François Bernier discusses the workshops in the Mughal Empire known as karkhanas, which made clothes and other crafts, at length.²⁷⁷ Emperor Jahangir took an interest in clothes and is credited with inventing a quilted sleeveless jacket called the sadri, which was worn over the jama.

Bernier refers to Indian men's footwear not as slippers or Persian slippers but as shoes. He states that Indian men kept their feet bare inside their shoes (Persian slippers), called jooties or jutis, and that no one wore stockings.²⁷⁸ Terry and Fryer also note that the Indians did not wear shoes or stockings in the British style, but instead wore embroidered slippers. Fryer observes that there are carpets on the floor and that people sat square

²⁷⁶ Terry.

²⁷⁷ Bernier and Constable. 258- 259.

²⁷⁸ Ibid. 258.

legged on the floor and that it was considered ill-mannered to let your legs hang while sitting. According to Fryer, the Indians believed that legs or feet should not be seen while sitting, so someone whose legs and feet were visible while they sat was considered ill-bred.²⁷⁹ Roe also points out that the Indians were used to sitting on the floor; he mentions that he had to request a chairs because he could not stoop, probably due to his tailored clothing.²⁸⁰

All these sources give a reliable picture of elite Indian menswear of the 17th century in India. We can now see whether these fashions continued or changed in the 18th century under the Company Raj by looking at sources from that period. After the downfall of the Mughal Empire and the beginning of company Raj in 1757 there were many rulers who were apparently independent but had actually sold themselves to the British in return for personal power. One such major example is the kingdom or state of Oudh or Awadh. The rulers of Oudh and other states continued to consider the Mughals supreme. In order to show their loyalty to the Mughals they continued to wear Mughal-Indian style garments, but due to the influence of an advanced culture of the British and their political superiority, they began to make minor alterations to their dress, for convenience and diplomacy. Rajputana, Hyderabad, Mysore and the Central Provinces gave India a new elite in the 19th century. Princes and rulers like Raja Ranjit Singh in Punjab (which included present day Kashmir), the Nizams in Hyderabad, the Rajput Chiefs of Rajputana (various provinces like Mewar, Jaipur, Bikaner etc.), the Nawabs of Oudh (or Awadh), the Gaekwars of Baroda and Holkars and Scindia of central India interacted with various European powers, especially the British.

The jama, which was the upper garment of Mughal men, became longer during this period, as is visible in paintings of the mid- and late-18th century, although no particular reason for this can be identified. The Nawabs of Oudh and the Nizam of Hyderabad are seen in longer jamas in the paintings of

²⁷⁹ Fryer. 93.

²⁸⁰ Foster.

mid-18th century. The jamas in this period almost touch the floor and are usually white; the long chogas that were worn earlier became shorter, with half-sleeves known as farzi. The pyjama was still the lower garment. The jamas were now usually made of white muslin, although there are examples of printed jamas too, usually with a white or off-white background. An example of such a jama is on display at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London in the Asian Galleries. These jamas were very voluminous and had an upper bodice that was stitched to an ample lower skirt. Sharar describes the garments of late 18th and early 19th century as double-breasted with a long and voluminous skirt reaching the ankles. He writes that the sleeves were long and left open at the cuff.²⁸¹



Figure 3-9 Painting by Tilly Kettle (England, 1735-1786) of Nawab Shuja al-Daula and his heir apparent, Mirza Amani, future Asaf al-Daula. India, Uttar Pradesh, Faizabad, 1772 (oil on canvas 235 x 165 cm, Musée national des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, MV 3888, INV 10053).

Graham, who spells the word “jamma”, describes it thus:

²⁸¹ Abdul Halim Sharar, *Purana Lucknow*, trans. Noor Nabi Abbasi, Fifth ed. (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 2005). 207.

Jamma - A sort of muslin robe, reaching to the feet, and very full in the skirt; it crosses on the breast, and is tied with an uneven number of points. It is a Mussalman dress, though others wear it.²⁸²

These jamas usually reached the ankle and were often covered either by a choga or a coat in winters; sometimes a coat with half-sleeves known as a farzi was worn on top of a full sleeve jama. Figure 3-9 illustrates the kind of jamas that were the fashionable dress of the Indian elite from just before the beginning of Company Raj until the end of 18th century, as can be seen in the paintings of British artists.²⁸³ John Shore, a judge in upper (north) India, wore Indian clothes and wrote about the Indian jama. He had a great understanding of India and her people. He describes how Hindus tied their jamas to the left whereas the Muslims tied theirs to the right.²⁸⁴ This can be seen in the paintings of the time period. Both the men in the painting (Figure 3-8) are Muslims and their jamas are both tied to the right. This was the only difference between the jamas; the fabric, cut and construction remained the same.²⁸⁵ Similar clothing was evident in the south of India as well: Mohammad Ali Khan Wallah Jah, the Nawab of Arcot in southern India from 1749 to 1775, is mostly seen in paintings wearing a white jama with a rich kamarbandh or patka. He was a Nawab of the Deccan or south India. The court fashion followed similar style throughout the Mughal dominion.

In India, because of the constant annexation of states by the British, the Mughal Empire was declining but the elite still pledged their alliance to the Mughals and followed Mughal styles of clothing. The mixed style of earlier Hindu rulers and the Mughal rulers continued more or less unaltered at the end of the century all across India. The elite Indians Hindus and Muslims

²⁸² Graham. xi.

²⁸³ The style of paintings changed from the 2D Mughal miniatures to the Company-style paintings with a 3D perspective.

²⁸⁴ Shore. 514.

²⁸⁵ J Forbes Watson, *The Textile Manufacturers and the Costumes of the People of India* (London: The India Office, 1866). 55.

continued to wear Mughal-style garments well into the 19th century.²⁸⁶

The respect toward the house of Timur [the Mughal dynasty] is so strong that even though the whole subcontinent has been withdrawn from its authority, no prince of India has taken the title of sovereign. Sindhia shared this respect, and Shah Alam [Shah Alam II] was still seated on the Moghul throne, and everything done in his name. Benoit De Bogne, 1790.²⁸⁷

This respect or association with Mughal India led to the universal concept (when it came to Indian clothing) of Mughal garments being Indian and British garments as being foreign. However, along with the jama, a new garment, the angrakha, can be seen in the paintings of the earlier part of the 19th century, although many people preferred to call the angrakha a jama. These were so called because the word jama had come to denote a term for the upper garment. More specific names begin to appear and, by the 1830s jamas were no longer worn by the elite.²⁸⁸ This was a major change, but it happened rapidly and simultaneously all over India between the 1830s and 1840s.

3.4.1 The Emergence of Hybrid Garments:

This section discusses the emergence of new hybrid garments during the Company Raj. Continuing through the Mughal period, small changes appear in the dress of the Indian elite from the late 18th century till the complete dissolution of Mughal power. Since the hold of the Mughal ruler in Delhi was in decline, the nawabs of Oudh (better known as Lucknow in the present times) became the new fashion leaders. The long flowing jama as worn by the Nawab in the figure 3.8 (circa 1772) is not seen in the paintings at the

²⁸⁶ Forbes Watson, *Textile Manufacturers*, 6.

²⁸⁷ Benoit De Bogne was a Frenchman from Savoy, who was employed by the Scindias, the powerful Maratha rulers of central India, to train their military forces. Although he was French, he served in the British East India Company for a while and was very well-travelled in India. This is his famous quote that summarises Indian politics at the time, as cited in Pratik Gupta, *Maratha Generals and Personalities: A Gist of Great Personalities of Marathas* (Online: Google, 2014).

²⁸⁸ *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British and Foreign India, China, and Australia*. 172.

turn of the century, instead a newer style of garment, looking more like the alkaluk can be seen (figure 3.10).

Figure 3-10 is an image of Sadat-Ali-Khan, the Nawab of (Oudh) Lucknow from 1790 to 1814. Unlike the Nawabs that preceded him (see Figure 3-8), Sadat-Ali-Khan wears a velvet angrakha.²⁸⁹ This garment is long like the jama but its cut and construction are different.

The visibly velvet angrakha (Figure 3-10) had a bib-like structure on the front, which was tied across the chest by a small round button on the top, near the upper shoulder point, on the right. It had lapels coming from both the sides, which were tied in front at the centre of the waistline. It is similar in its look to the alkaluk. The torso was similar to the alkaluk with a U front. The skirt was not as gathered as that of the jama, but it was still circular and had pleats at the sides. Saadat Ali Khan, wears the angrakha with the pyjama and a kamarbandh or patka. The jama had a gusset at the level of underarm in the sleeve, but here in the angrakha it can be seen that no gusset has been inserted. Instead, the area below the underarm is left open. Thus it can safely be said that the alkaluk inspired the angrakha worn towards the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries. Since it was for the court, it was made with brocades and other rich fabrics including velvets, as can be seen in the pictures.

²⁸⁹ The fabric – velvet – finds mention in Ain-I-Akbari. It is not manufactured locally but comes from Europe.



Figure 3-10 Saadat Ali Khan, Nawab of Oudh (Lucknow) from 1798 – 1814. Courtesy of <http://www.royalcollection.org.uk/egallery/object.asp?category=276&pagesize=100&object=401365&row=1412>

The image in figure 3-10 matches well with Sharar's description of the angrakha. Sharar writes that the angrakha was an evolution of the jama that added features of the Persian qaba. It had two front panels, but unlike the jama they did not cross each other on the upper torso. The front panels, instead, created a long 'U' shape in front and were tied to each other at the waist in the centre-front with fabric ties. An extra panel, attached on one side of the shoulder, and on one of the front panels, covered the chest, which would otherwise have been exposed between the two front panels. This centre panel was stitched to the shoulder seam on one side, and could be buttoned from the inside on the other shoulder seam. This centre panel was as long as the angrakha, and at waist level, it was tied to the other side

seam with the help of ties. The skirt was made with fabric panels, rather than gathered fabric, and had less flare than the jama, but there was no particular rule regarding the flare of the fabric, it had ties to fasten it.²⁹⁰

According to Sharar, this garment appears to have developed in Delhi.²⁹¹ But the first images of the angrakha that I have seen are from Lucknow. Swarup writes that the Mughal rulers adopted the angrakha, but it may have originated in Lucknow.²⁹² After the beginning of 19th century, the angrakha was widely adopted by the courts and is seen in many paintings and later photographs. The adoption of angrakha as court dress signifies the importance of army uniforms. The Army uniforms signify a physical and mental power over the others and that is the effect what important men want from their attire.²⁹³ The alkaluk was worn by the men in the army and also by independent rulers from the beginning of 19th century. Evidence abounds in the paintings of Mughal rulers.²⁹⁴ The angrakhas became fancier with time (fig 3-10). While the style of the torso changed, the skirt remained more or less the same as that of the jama. In the first quarter of the 19th century, more buttons appear on angrakhas, initially for decoration only, which would influence the Indian dress later. The buttons during this time period were fabric buttons (called ghundis), which were very small and attached at very small intervals in a row like peas in a pod. The corrupted form of button was called bootam in Hindustani.²⁹⁵

The term 'angrakha' etymologically evolves from two Sanskrit words, 'ang' meaning body or part of body and 'raksha' meaning security or 'to guard', so in a literal sense 'angrakha' means to guard the body, or body armour. This term can be applied to any garment worn on the upper part of the body that protects the chest. This term seems to have been loosely used to denote

²⁹⁰ Sharar, *Purana Lucknow*. 208.

²⁹¹ Sharar, *Lucknow : The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture*. 169-170.

²⁹² Swarup.

²⁹³ Hackspiel-Mikosch.

²⁹⁴ The Mughal exhibition by British Libraray in London in March 2013.

²⁹⁵ Gilchrist and Williamson.

shirts, undershirts and long over garments. Like the term jama, a Persian term meaning cloth or garment for the torso, angrakha began to be used as a term for the upper garments too. Forbes Watson writes that the angrakha is a stitched garment, but found it hard to define. Collecting references to the word from various sources, he writes:

Angarkha, Ungurkha, Angrakha, & c. These names, undoubtedly identical, have been assigned to garments of different characters. Thus one writer states the Angarkha to be a sort of shirt worn under the Jama and tied in two places on each side of the body; and a close observer of details Buchanan says that the Angrakha is a short calico vest with sleeves resembling the Anyga which descends only to the haunches; he states also that the garment, instead of being fastened on both sides, is tied on one side only, viz., on the right by the Hindu, and on the left by the Mahomedan. Another writer informs us that the Ungurkha is a long-skirted gown with long sleeves and closed or covered breasts.²⁹⁶

According to Forbes Watson, there were three definitions of the angrakha (in the mid-19th century). The first is an undershirt, known in the courts as a nimjama, which is tied in two places like the jama and is worn under it. The second definition is a short vest which matches the angrakha worn by people of Gujarat even today. The word angrakhi, is also used for a short angrakha in many parts of India, and Singh says that the terms angrakha and angrakhi are interchangeable.²⁹⁷ Forbes Watson's third definition of the angrakha is a long skirted gown, with long sleeves and a closed or covered breast. This is the kind of garment seen in 19th century India, to which this term has been applied by most museum curators and writers. For the purpose of this study, it is the third definition which is used for the angrakha.

No visual evidence has been found that shows the existence of this kind of angrakha before the 19th century in the Indian courts, and the lack of mention of this word in earlier dictionaries and travel writers' journals also suggests that it was invented, or evolved from an earlier version of a sort of

²⁹⁶ Forbes Watson. 56.

²⁹⁷ Singh. She also said this in an interview of October 2014.

shirt or undershirt, in the 19th century. To visitors to India in the 19th century, thus, the angrakha was a princely garment. It was worn by princes throughout the 19th century. The jamas that existed before the angrakhas were also worn by princes and the business communities like the Parsis and banyas, but the angrakha was the latest fashionable garment. It was also adopted by the other elite communities such as the Marathas. In Marathi, it was probably called the 'Unga' or 'Anga', as is noted in the *Asiatic Annual Register*, when the authors meet the maharajas of Udaipur and Gwalior in 1806: the Scindia

Their dress universally consisted of an unga of white Muslin, with a turban and kamarbandh of the same, and trousers of rich brocade.²⁹⁸

The dress of the maharaja of Udaipur (or Oodaipore) and his men is also described as being very similar.²⁹⁹ The angrakha was a more fitted garment and could be made of muslin, brocades, velvet or imported fabrics from Britain like lace and net, or of quilted cotton. When the princes officially met the Viceroy or were present in ceremonies, they wore angrakhas made of brocades and silks. The angrakha reached the mid-calf, but could be longer, and was worn with any type of pyjama or trousers and/or socks and shoes. Figure 3-11 shows an angrakha made for summer. This angrakha is more than 100 years old and was in the private collection of an art dealer. The fabric of this angrakha is very fine Indian muslin with Indian 'chikan' embroidery. The details of the stitching reveal that the garment was stitched by hand. The sleeve attachments and the area below the underarm have all been fitted well with the help of gussets. This style of tailoring was the Indian or Mughal style. The lower part of the angrakha or the skirt was made using panels.

²⁹⁸ Lawrence Dundas Campbell and E Samuel, *The Asiatic Annual Register, or, a View of the History of Hindustan, and of the Politics, Commerce and Literature of Asia* (London: T Cadell and W Davis, 1809). 71.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.



Figure 3-11 Upper torso of a fine Indian muslin angrakha dated late 19th century, with Lucknow embroidery. Courtesy of Subhashji, Rajasthan arts and crafts, Jaipur.

If the angrakha was very transparent, a sleeveless waistcoat called a ‘sadri’ or ‘bagalbandi’ could be worn on top of it. The angrakha was Mughal in its essence and was adopted immediately by all the princes of India. Angrakhas were worn well into the 20th century, as they began to symbolise the rich ruling princes and aristocracy, since they had an Islamic origin, they looked Mughal, were richly embroidered, were not very fitted below the torso and closely match descriptions of the attire of native Indian Princes. They were worn with Persian slippers and headgear suited to the region or religion of the wearer. It became the identity of Indian Princes and other elite men during the Company Raj.

Although in general the dress of the elite of India continued to be in the style of the Mughals, the case of the Nawabs of Lucknow (or Oudh) in the early 19th century is curious. Ghazi-ud-din Haider, who ascended the throne in 1814, decided to change his title from Nawab to king. He is shown in a famous painting of 1820 by Robert Hume in the Victoria Memorial in Calcutta in a fur-lined robe like a European king; instead of a turban or pugari, he wears a crown (Figure 3-12). This shows the beginnings of change: the Mughals were no longer role models. Although the Nawab can be seen sitting on the floor (Figure 3-13) like a Mughal ruler, but there is also an image of him sitting in a chair (Figure 3-12). The Nawabs of Lucknow, who had sold their seat to the British, and were puppet rulers, wanted to project their

power through the adoption of European items of clothing like the fur-lined cape of the king and the western crown. Although this was an oddity, it showed that the Indian rulers believed in the ways of the west and wanted to copy them. From 1814 to 1847, there were four self-proclaimed kings in Lucknow who were painted in European royal insignia. Although these rulers wore a cape and crown, they also wear an angrakha, made of either velvet, satin or silk, as their basic upper garment.³⁰⁰



Figure 3-12 The Nawab of Oudh, Ghazi-ud-din Haider, wearing an angrakha and a British-style crown. Source: *Costumes and Textiles of Awadh From the Era of Nawabs to Modern Times*, book by Swaroop.

Figure 3-13 The Nawab of Oudh, Ghazi-ud-din Haider, declares himself king in 1818. Portraits by Robert Hume – 1819, 1820. Courtesy of Victoria Memorial Calcutta

Lucknow was taken over by the British in 1858. Paintings of the last ruler of the Lucknow court, Wajid Ali Shah, always show him in a ‘khirkidar angrakha’ - khirki means ‘window’ (see Figure 3-14). His angrakha was known as a khirkidar because he did not wear an undershirt below the angrakha and his bare chest was therefore visible. This type of angrakha

³⁰⁰ Swarup.

became fashionable after he adopted the style in the 1850s.



Figure 3-14 Wajid Ali Shah, the last ruler of Lucknow, deposed by British in 1858. Courtesy of <http://oudh.tripod.com/was/was1.jpg>

There was another significant development in the middle of the 19th century. A new garment which had features of the angrakha and borrowed some features from western garments, like buttons, was born. This was called the achkan. For the first time there is an Indian garment with buttons and buttonholes, which was a major differentiator between the earlier Mughal style and the new European hybridisation. The achkan is an upper garment, developed after the pattern of the angrakha and chapkan with a front opening. The court of Oudh is credited by Sharar as the inventor of the achkan.³⁰¹ The few books that discuss achkan call it a coat in English, which is hardly explanatory.³⁰² The *Hindi Shabdkosh* or the Hindi dictionary of 1927, defines the achkan as a long robe, and states that it has the pattern of the angrakha, but is not very clear about other details:

³⁰¹ Sharar, *Lucknow : The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture*. 170. Sharar may have written exact details in his Urdu work, but the translations in Hindi and English are not very clear and sometimes contradict each other. But repeated readings, dictionaries, discussions with tailors in different parts of India, who have been in the trade for generations, and a study of objects at Rajasthan arts and crafts, Jaipur, revealed what an achkan actually is.

³⁰² The chapkan, achkan and sherwani are all referred to as coats for convenience. This has resulted in a major confusion between the terms achkan and sherwani: most people believe the words to be synonymous, but they are different garments. More discussion follows in section 4.6 Conclusion.

Achkan- (noun): A type of long robe (upper garment), which is made out of stitching 5 panels and one extension (balabar) The extension is tied inside with the help of two fabric tapes or ties, these days buttons are also being used instead of ties.³⁰³

The panels and the extensions, which are tied to the side-seam inside the skirt with fabric ties or buttons, help to identify its origin. The achkan evolved in the 1850s and the word 'achkan' seems to have come into use after the 1860s.³⁰⁴ Although the description that Sharar gives for the achkan matches a painting dated 1852 (Figure 3-15), the name does not appear in any texts. Sharar also writes that it was the last invention of the Lucknow court. The achkan, like the angrakha and the chapkan, had a waist seam, but the waistline had descended from the empire line (as in the case of angrakha and chapkan) to the actual waist, like that of the frock coat worn by British officials. However, while the frock coat had a slit at the back, the achkan had slits on the sides.³⁰⁵ The skirt of the achkan was longer than that of the frock coat, reaching below the knees, but the pattern was not like that of the frock coat. The achkan was made up of panels or gussets like angrakha, and one of them was the extension (the balabar), like the angrakha and the chapkan. This balabar went inside the right skirt and was tied to the side seam to keep the skirt straight and in place. The bodice or torso was front-open and fastened with buttons.³⁰⁶ Sharar writes that the achkan still had the shape of an angrakha but was open in the centre. Going by Sharar's description, the painting in Figure 3-15 shows the Nawab of Jhajjar in an achkan. In this mid-19th century painting, a mixture of styles can be seen in India. The two courtiers on the extreme right wear angrakhas, the Nawab wears an achkan, which has a semi-circular front like the angrakha but also buttons on the front for the opening. His little child, sitting next to him, wears a choga on top of an angrakha, and the British

³⁰³ "Achkan," "Hindi Shabdkosh (Hindi Dictionary)."

³⁰⁴ This term does not feature in Forbes Watson's comprehensive work on Indian costume. See Watson..

³⁰⁵ Dar, *Costumes of India and Pakistan : A Historical and Cultural Study*. 95.

³⁰⁶ Sharar, *Purana Lucknow*. 210.

resident of the court can be seen sitting in European dress.



Figure 3-15 Navab Abd-ar Rehman at his court in Jhajjar, west of Delhi, 1852.
 Courtesy of the British Library and Roli Books sponsored Mughal exhibition in Delhi in December 2014.

The achkan has a very European approach to fit. It looks like the angrakha because of the panel in the shape of a U on the front, but it is actually front-open like a coat and has buttons instead of ties to secure it. It is the first garment worn by the Indian elite that has buttons in the centre-front. Neither the jama nor the angrakha had a front placket like this garment. Another difference was the raised (or stand-up) collar: the angrakhas and the jamas did not have collars, and the achkan was the first garment with such a collar. This is around the same time that the army tunic with a stand-up collar and buttons appeared. This garment has the overall look of an Indian garment due to its embroidery, colour and length, but it has incorporated western elements like the front placket and buttons. This was clearly the beginning of another step in the evolution of elite Indian

menswear.

3.5 Conclusion

India was under the mixed influence of the Mughal and British rule during the 100 years of the Company Raj. Due to these two political heads, and due to the entry of Persians, Turks and Arabs into India, various cross-cultural influences were taking place. This resulted in the evolution of the dress of the Indian elite from the jama of the 17th century to the longer and fuller jama of the 18th century and from the jama to the angrakha in the early 19th century, followed by the chapkan around 1830s and the achkan in the 1850s. These changes in dress happened quickly because of the many cross-cultural influences that were shaping the country. The influence of the Mughals persisted and the British influence was beginning to exert itself. The British, who were the new rulers of India, were beginning to influence fashion choices. In areas under British control, the EIC began to take care of administration, education and the military. They dressed in the latest European fashions and this resulted in the Indian elites under their rule beginning to copy elements of their clothing, especially accessories like watches and shoes.

The British also formed the British Indian Army and introduced the concept of uniform. They recruited natives and for the first time the Indians wore uniform. These uniforms were the red coats, which began to be associated with the British army. They were a constant source of attention and many reforms were undertaken to make them more comfortable to the wearer. Uniform around the late 18th and early 19th century included a stand-up collar for outer garments, which could have had a Prussian influence. Discussion of uniforms is important because the red coat was the first completely foreign garment that the Indians were forced to wear. It was this garment that had a stand-up collar, which later can be seen elsewhere in India in the achkan and the sherwani. It is the first sculpted garment with three dimensions to its cut and pattern, in contrast to the jama and the angrakha, which were loose garments that used ties instead of buttons,

although buttons can be seen on some later angrakhas. Another aspect of the red coat which can be seen in the sherwani is its sleeve attachment: the fitted sleeve attachment of European garments was very different from the gusset attachment of Indian garments.

The people working in the British administration at high ranks were usually British, but the number of people required was large. A lot of native educated men were employed in these offices, bringing a change in the employment conditions of Indian men and creating a new Indian middle class. These men continued to wear some traditional garments but adopted shoes and abandoned turbans; in other words, they wanted to be accepted in the new order of British India and yet still be acknowledged as Indians.³⁰⁷ A major change that appeared in the early part of 19th century is the introduction of buttons instead of ties, although ties continued to be used sparingly. Buttons clearly speak of the inclusion of western elements. Buttons, with buttonholes and the front placket are all western features of dress.

In Mughal India, where there were independent rulers, the British lived as residents at the courts of the Indian rajas, thus influencing the regions even where they did not have direct control. In the regions where the Indian rulers ruled, a new army dress borrowed from Persians, the *alkaluk*, was introduced. The influx of soldiers in the British Indian army from Persia and Turkey and other surrounding regions resulted in changing fashions. The *alkaluk* was worn by British and Indian soldiers alike. This garment, probably later developed into the *angrakha* as we know today. The *angrakha* also had buttons, although ties and strings continued to be used and they were not as voluminous.

The *achkan* is the first Indian garment with a front placket and a stand-up collar, but it does not look like the sherwani. Indeed, none of the garments worn by Indian elite in this period resemble the sherwani. There is no

³⁰⁷ Gilchrist and Williamson.

mention of the sherwani during this period, neither do we come across this word, nor across any painting that relates to the sherwani as we know of it today. Museums have the jamas and angrakhas but no sherwanis from this period. This suggests that the sherwani did not exist between 1757 and 1858; after which the Mughal dynasty ended. Thus it can be concluded that the sherwani is not a Mughal garment, as many people think, but rather was introduced later.

This chapter demonstrates the influence of politics on fashion. The British only began to rule India from 1757, and before then we do not see any British influence on Indian menswear at all, even though the British had been residing in India and working closely with the Mughal rulers since 1614. After 1757 the areas directly under the British East India Company's control seem to have seen a greater British influence on their dress than areas outside British control. The political and technological superiority of the British made them role models for aspiring Indians under their rule. Rich Indian merchants copied their lifestyle, manners and also occasionally dress. Due to the many influences over India in the first half of the 19th century under the supremacy of the Mughal Court, dress remained more Mughal than British style. The court of Oudh or Lucknow emerges as the new role model for menswear, the nawabs gain a status which is rich and idle. This was because the nawabs were only namesake rulers under the British and did not have any effective control over their area. This mock rule continued till the last nawab (fig 3-14), whom the British ousted and finally took over Oudh. The new garments and styles evolved in Oudh during this time. The angrakha, chapkan and achkan emerged as new garments under Company Rule. The jama was no longer worn and was replaced by these new articles of menswear, which continued to be worn well after 1858.

Chapter 4 The Birth of the Sherwani during the Golden Years of the Raj, 1858-1914

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the dress of Indian elite men after India came directly under the rule of the British crown in 1858 and traces the birth or evolution of the sherwani. It argues that politics had a major influence on fashion during the period 1858 to 1914. After 1858 there were no more Mughal rulers in India, and the British crown was supreme. Thus there was no Mughal ruler who could influence fashion. There were, however, rulers of princely states in India who were independent but were frequent visitors to the English court and were influenced by western culture. As a result of imperial rule, there were many changes and India, with its multicultural and vibrant atmosphere, experienced a shift in its clothing preferences. The British East India Company had made the presence of the British felt in the entire country. The British were either ruling the country or employed by native rulers as trainers of the military. Their political superiority and military expertise made them role models for the Indian rulers of independent states. Indians looked to the British for opinions on dress and modernity. It was the British who had prescribed the dress of the army, judiciary and schoolchildren. By 1914 the sherwani had become the dress of the Indian elite.

Since the elite class in India during this period consisted of both British and Indians, this chapter discusses the clothing preferences of the British in India, who were assistant rulers, members of the judiciary, civilians (the ICS) and military men, and the Indian elite, comprised of princes, rajas and educated Indians. This chapter is divided into six sections. After the introduction, section 4.2 outlines the historic background of India between 1858 and 1914 to provide an understanding of its political contexts, including education and development. Section 4.3 describes the suppliers of materials to the British in India, explaining how the British got the kind of clothing they wore and how this influenced the Indian elite. Section 4.4 discusses and

analyses the dress of the British-Indian Civil Service officers (ICS officers) in India, who were much admired in Indian society and were role models for the educated elite. This section also discusses the dress of other administrators and the judiciary, along with the complete adoption of western clothes by certain classes of elite Indians. Section 4.5 discusses the uniforms of the army, regulations and sumptuary laws governing the clothing of various sections of the society. The uniforms of the army have already been discussed in the previous chapter, but there were developments during this period. Section 4.6 discusses the dress of Indian princes; section 4.6.1 additionally discusses the birth of the sherwani during this time.

4.2 Historical Background

This section discusses the political situation of the country in the period from 1858 to 1914, the golden years of British rule. It touches on the technological and administrative development that was taking place in India due to the hard work and discipline of the British rulers, administrators, judges and army. It also discusses the areas that were not directly under British rule, where Europeans lived and had an impact. A century of colonial rule had already passed and changed India, as Clarke, a railway engineer, writes in 1857:

One hundred years after Clive's victory at Plassey we pause to consider its results. We find a vast empire built up under English rule, the Peninsula of India, from the Himalayas to the sea, brought under our influence, and one hundred and fifty millions, of various races, directly or indirectly owing allegiance to us.³⁰⁸

By 1858, British influence had spread all over India, especially in the regions governed directly by the East India Company. After the mutiny or revolt of 1857, India came under the direct rule of the British crown. In her proclamation of 1858, Queen Victoria appointed Lord Viscount Canning the first Viceroy or Governor General of India. She made it clear that Britain did not wish to extend its current territorial possessions and she also confirmed

³⁰⁸ Clarke.1.

that the crown would honour all the treaties signed by the East India Company. It was also clearly stated that the areas under British rule were not to be encroached upon. The Queen proclaimed that the rights of native princes would be protected and expressed her desire for peace and for the social prosperity of her subjects and of the native princes.³⁰⁹ Thus the princes, who feared that the British would annex their lands and levy taxes, were now at ease. Although this did not lead to complete peace and harmony, it ended the internal wars between the British and the Indians, and also those between the rulers of different states. The Indians rajas and merchants, who were already being influenced by the west, were now beginning to use western technology and prowess to rule and organise their territories. They concentrated their efforts less on war and more on progress and prosperity.³¹⁰

Technological developments helped to establish the importance and superiority of the British. They brought their technical expertise, such as electricity, filtered and piped water and improved transportation, to India. Modern amenities were available in both the Indian and British parts of Calcutta by the 1870s.³¹¹ The British long-term vision, which was successfully completed, was to construct railways that would connect the subcontinent.³¹² Roughly, five years before 1858, railways had begun to operate in India, with small railway lines in the north, south-east and west, and by 1880 there were 9000 miles of railway.³¹³ This was a time of growth and progress. Educational institutions were being set up in India by the British in the areas directly under their control and by the princes in consultation with the British in areas where they ruled by proxy; the aim of these institutions was to educate India according to British views. The British

³⁰⁹ Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund, *A History of India*, Fifth ed. (Routledge, 2010).

³¹⁰ Edwardes. 216-230.

³¹¹ Nupur Chaudhuri, "Memsahibs and Their Servants in Nineteenth-Century India[1]," *Women's History Review* 3, no. 4 (1994). 551.

³¹² Clarke.

³¹³ R. Srinivasan, M. Tiwari, and S. Silas, *Our Indian Railway: Themes in India's Railway History* (Delhi: Foundation Books, 2006). 81

westernised India only to a limited degree: it was not practically possible for them to educate everyone and they realised that to control the rest of India they needed only to westernise the elite section of society. Schools and universities like Mayo College, Ajmer, and Rajkot School in Gujarat and colleges in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras were established. Many other institutions, which were established after 1914, were planned in this period. New administrative and judicial policies came into existence, with the higher posts in the ICS, army and judiciary mostly reserved for the British. As Maddison has summarised:

They made changes in the upper layer of the society by replacing wasteful warlord aristocracy with a bureaucratic-military establishment - most of these positions were taken by the English. These were utilitarian technocrats, educated in UK to rule India. They helped to maintain law and order and in turn provided a lucrative source of employment to Britain's rising upper middle class.³¹⁴

During this period, English became the official language of India; the process had already begun in the early 19th century as a result of Macaulay's education policies.³¹⁵ This early-mid 19th century endeavour resulted in the production of educated Indian natives with English thought processes. As a result, more English language schools were in operation in India, educating the Indians in English and other languages, teaching moral science and the science of the western world. The Indians were becoming westernised, and their tastes in everything from architecture and furniture to clothing were changing, as can be seen in the photographs from the period.³¹⁶ Figure 4-1 shows the interior of the Nazarbaug palace at Vadodra (Baroda) in the 1890s. This room does not reflect the interior of a Mughal style court, but rather has a very Victorian look. The items of furniture, like the sofa and the chairs, are new to Indian courts and reflect British tastes. The ruler of Baroda was known to import glass chandeliers from Belgium and use the

³¹⁴ Maddison. 35-37.

³¹⁵ Macaulay.

³¹⁶ Philip Davis, *British Architecture in India 1660 - 1947: Splendours of the Raj* (London: John Murray Publishing Limited, 1985).

latest British furniture; he served his guests on Indian-style golden plates on European-style dining tables.³¹⁷



Figure 4-1 Interior of the palace at Baroda (Vadodra) in 1890. Source: Private collection.

Due to the increased demand for western style goods, many new traders began to establish businesses, increasing the supply of foreign goods in India.

4.3 Suppliers of Materials in India: Shops and Stores

This section focuses on the availability of European goods in India. It discusses the growth of British business in India and the availability of British goods and services in India. India was now an established colony and was

³¹⁷ Rev. Edward St. Clair Weeden, *A Year with the Gaekwar of Baroda*, (Boston: Dana Estate & Co., 1911), <https://archive.org/stream/cu31924024069811#page/n0/mode/2up>.

referred to as the jewel in the crown of the British monarchy. After the railways had been built, new kinds of retail outlets were established in Calcutta, Bombay and Simla. The (building and) opening of Suez Canal in 1869, and other technological developments led to faster travel speeds between Europe and India, and the resultant increased availability of engravings, prints and magazines helped to communicate the latest fashion styles.

Although the British still brought clothing with them from England, lengthy stays in India necessitated the tailoring of clothes in India too. And, indeed, a tailor in India, a *durzee*, could make the clothes for a fraction of their cost in London. Some people got clothing made and then came to India, others did just the opposite. Some young men embarking for India during this time period were advised by those who had spent time in India to only take one good pair of riding breeches and then to get them copied in India by the *durzee*.³¹⁸ With more and more Britons coming to India in the 19th century and with a large requirement to supply prescribed clothing, by the end of the century British tailoring firms began to establish their presence in India. They supplied military clothing and also provided tailor-made garments to the royal family for their visits to India. These tailoring firms would order their fabrics from Europe and supply the elite class (both British and Indians) with the best tailored garments. Their presence in India gave them valuable experience and a position of trust with the Royalty. (These firms were organised and professional unlike the local *durzees*, who could only copy patterns and create duplicates at low costs). Ranken and Co. was a tailoring firm (retail trade) in Calcutta well before 1850, which Christine Furdey describes:³¹⁹

³¹⁸ Charles Allen, *Plain Tales from the Raj*, Fifteenth ed. (London: Abacus, 2014). 43.

³¹⁹ Furdey. 381.

Ranken designed and made uniforms for the Indian Army and was appointed robe-maker to members of the royal family for their Indian tours...³²⁰

Morrison and Cottle (in India) supplied items such as leather belts for the uniforms of servants at the Bengal Club, while Harman and Co. supplied the uniforms themselves.³²¹ The Calcutta retailers had to offer goods and services of quality, variety and price that would persuade the princes not to place orders directly in Europe, and the civil and military personnel not to be outfitted in England before coming to India or while on leave. The Army and Navy stores and other similar stores first opened businesses in Calcutta, but when the capital shifted to Delhi in 1912, many other branches established themselves in Simla and other places. The other mainstay of the elite shops' business was the personal patronage of Indian princes and special colonial client groups. This nobility was mobile and would travel abroad very often. Many rich noble families had accounts with exclusive shops in Europe, so, in addition to getting goods made in India in British stores, some Indians visited Britain to procure authentic British goods.³²²

British tailors and the mail-order system helped to facilitate a greater uniformity of menswear in British India.³²³ A system of uniformity due to technology could be achieved. While books on tailoring had been introduced earlier, one of the first pattern books to be published were those of the English tailor W.D.F. Vincent.³²⁴ Vincent wrote many articles on tailoring in the magazine *Tailor and Cutter*, which was published in England, in the

³²⁰ Ibid. 381.

³²¹ Ibid. 381

³²² G. Devi, *A Princess Remembers: The Memoirs of the Maharani of Jaipur* (Rupa & Company, 1995).

³²³ Donald Johnson, "Colonial Influence on Dress in the Indian Subcontinent," *Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion* (2010). 78.

³²⁴ W.D.F. Vincent, *The Cutters' Practical Guide to Coat Fitting & Making: Embracing Morning Frock & Dress Coats in All Their Varieties, Including Court, Naval, Police Uniforms, Clerical, Juvenile & Working Men's Bodycoats* (London: Williamson, 1890s).

1880s, and by the 1890s had become an authority on tailoring.³²⁵ He later became the chief examiner of the academy run by *Tailor and Cutter*. He wrote many books, including *The Cutters' Practical Guide to Coat Fitting and Making*, in twelve volumes, which describes in detail how to create paper patterns for all kinds of garments - and these patterns would have been useful in India too. These books show many different menswear patterns, one of which is particularly interesting because it relates to the pattern of the later sherwani - that of the frock coat. The clerical (belonging to the clergy) frock coat pattern, as shown in Figure 4-2, depicts the front and back patterns, along with an insert of how the frock coat will look once stitched. The pattern also indicates all the stitching lines, including for the button placements and a stand-up collar. The frock coat of the clergy looks similar to the frock coats worn by other men during the time period. Many clergy men came to India as missionaries and were in contact with rulers and the common people. This style of dressing could also have possible influence on the choice of collar of the achkan and later of the sherwani.

³²⁵ From notes by L W Vincent, "Wdf Vincent."

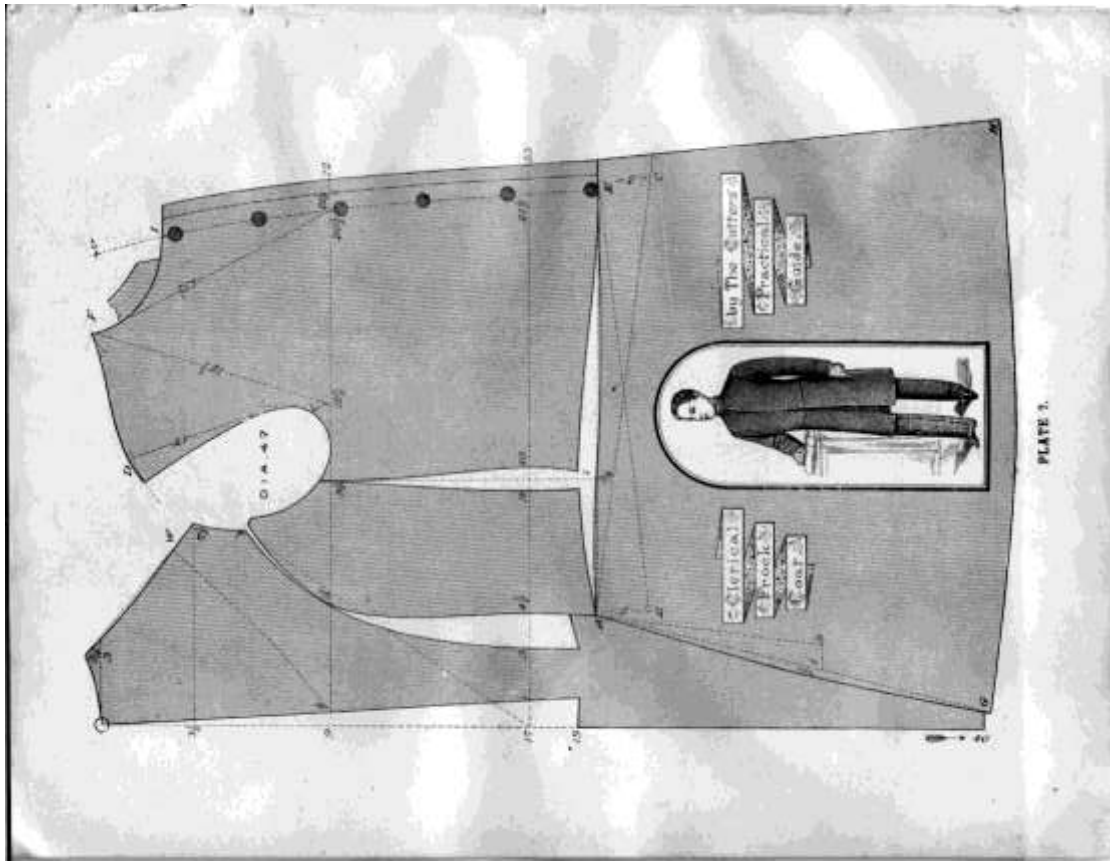


Figure 4-2 Pattern of a clerical frock coat. Source: Vincent, *Cutters' Practical Guide*.

A great uniformity was brought to tailoring techniques by Vincent's standardised paper patterns and by the introduction of sewing machines, allowing retail outlets that sold fabric and created custom-made garments to establish themselves. Towards the end of the century, retailers who sold British goods began to cultivate westernising Indian middle class consumers more explicitly, because richer Indians were beginning to adopt western furniture and other accessories, and Indian men were wearing the coat with their dhotis.³²⁶

Figure 4-3 is an advertisement published in the newspaper *The Statesmen* in 1900 showing the latest menswear cuts from New York and London. According to this advert, Alex Brault is a menswear tailor and outfitter based in Calcutta

³²⁶ Arun Chaudhuri, *Indian Advertising: 1780 to 1950 A.D* (New Delhi: Tata Mc-Graw Hill Publishing Company, 2007). 86, 270.

who claims to be the best tailor. Such adverts would have naturally encouraged well-off Indians to patronise their stores.

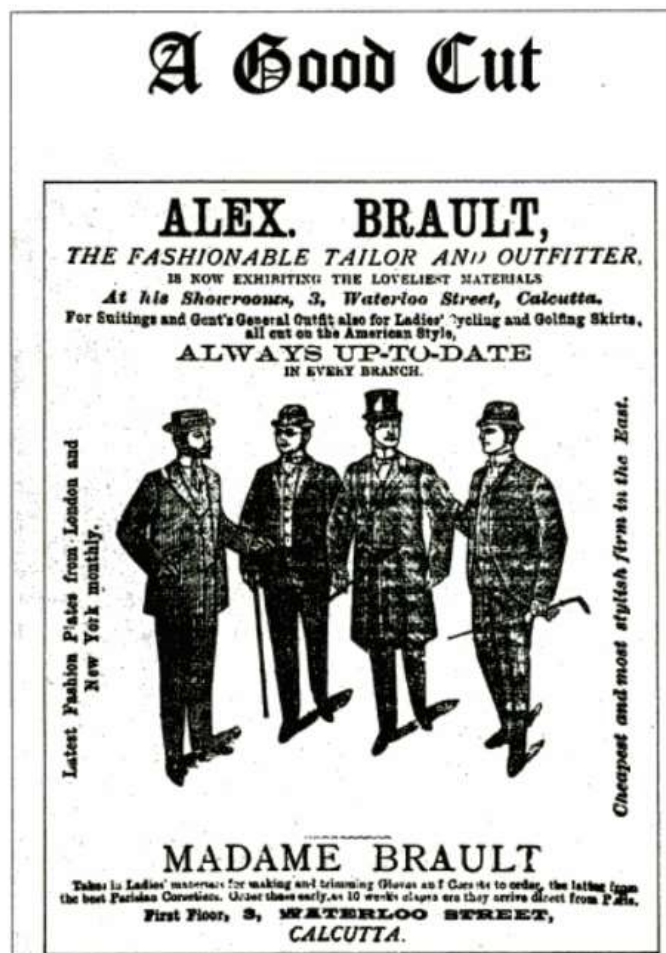


Figure 4-3 Advertisement in *The Statesman*, 1900. Source: Chaudhuri, *Indian Advertising*, 131.

In the period 1896-1913, about 60% of Indian cloth consumption was imported piece goods from the United Kingdom.³²⁷ This was a significant development, because it led the Indians to believe in the superiority of British goods, which were finer, cheaper and could be procured instantly. The first shop in Calcutta to adopt the department-store style of organisation was that of Francis, Harrison, Hathaway and Co., which grew steadily in size and scope

³²⁷ Maddison. 14.

from its foundation as "high class drapers" in 1864. By 1870 the firm had branches in Simla, Lahore, Darjeeling and Allahabad. Europeans shopped in these departmental stores, but there was no restriction on who could shop there. The new style of organisation was formalised in the 1890s.³²⁸ As a result the latest European fashions were available in India.

This led to the Indian elite having easy access to imported materials and fashion. India's many princes and rajas, to whose needs British businessmen were receptive, were a constant source of income. Furdey states that, although initially the East India Company was set up to import Indian goods into Britain, by the late 19th century businesses were being established in India by the British to fan the tastes of the new aristocracy, which was more western in ideas and tastes.³²⁹ She discusses the marketing strategies of these firms to lure the Indian customers, particularly advertisements aimed at native customers in Indian English-language newspapers. However, she goes on to add that elite shops were careful not to compromise their aura of exclusiveness. It is difficult to estimate the amount of the European retail trade with Indian middle class customers (due to a lack of bills and other sources of evidence), but by early 20th century, there was a lot of trade being conducted by mail order within India.³³⁰

4.4 The Dress of the Elite in British India

This section discusses the dress of the British in India and of elite Indians living in parts of British India. After the Mutiny there were different categories of British in India: the Governor General and the other men appointed to political offices, the new ruling caste, the ICS officers, the British Indian army officers, artists, engineers, government residents, religious leaders, tutors and people of many other professions. These

³²⁸ Furdey.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Ibid.

foreigners dressed in the fashions of their own country.

The Indian Civil service was a tiny administrative elite, largely comprised of British men.³³¹ As David Gilmour has suggested, Britain's huge empire in India was controlled by only a few thousand people.³³² In 1858 the Indian Civil Service employed only the most capable British minds. They were taught in England, faced stiff competition and had to undergo rigorous training and entrance tests to obtain their coveted posts. Gilmour addresses the clothing problems they faced: while an army officer was clear about what to wear because of his prescribed uniform, the civilian had to be prepared for all kinds of formality and informality in the extreme weather of India. This complication arose due to the absence of any civilian uniform almost until the end of 19th century. There were no strict directions on what to wear, so the officials adopted a levee dress, which was the latest formal wear.³³³ Gilmour goes on to quote from a clothing list prescribed for young ICS officials by Anne Wison (see Chapter 3), which includes tweed suits, flannel suits, frock coats and dinner jackets in addition to numerous items of daily use.³³⁴

By the 1870s, the British custom of dressing for dinner, in keeping with Victorian fashions, became a norm in Colonial India; even in the remotest jungles this practice was followed in order to establish the supremacy of the British over the natives.³³⁵ The British felt that it cemented their position as rulers and helped to maintain the discipline of their community.³³⁶

If you dined out pre-1914 anywhere in India privately, it was a tail coat, a boiled shirt and a white waistcoat, with a stiff collar

³³¹ Ann Ewing, "Administering India: The Indian Civil Service," *History Today*, 1982 Jun 01 1982. 43.

³³² Gilmour.

³³³ Gilmour, *The Ruling Caste*.

³³⁴ Gilmour, *The Ruling Caste*, 70.

³³⁵ Collingham.

³³⁶ *Ibid*.

and a white tie. Long after they gave this up in England we continued to do it in India.³³⁷

Some images which were accidentally found in a shoe box in the archives of Scotland in Edinburgh in 2012, and are now more than 100 years old, reflect the kind of clothes worn by the men in service and their wives in India in the early 20th century.³³⁸ Two of these images can be seen in Figures 4-4 and 4-5. Figure 4-4 shows a man of high social standing, dressed in the latest style of the early 20th century. Figure 4-5 shows a tennis party, where the men and women (probably ICS officials and their wives and relatives) are taking a break after playing tennis.³³⁹ These social groups became the role models for educated Indians.



Figure 4-4 A man in a linen suit, c.1910s. Source: Mail online 7 May 2012.

³³⁷ Allen. 112, as told to the author by Lt Gen. Sir Reginald Savoy of the British Indian Army.

³³⁸ Nick Enoch, "Days of the Raj: Huge Collection of Photographs Depicting Life in India a Century Ago Are Found in a Shoebox " *Mail Online*, 7 May 2012 2012.

³³⁹ Sanskriti Sinha, "Rare 100-Year-Old Photos of India from the British Raj Era Discovered " *International Business Times*, May 8 2012.



Figure 4-5 The tennis party c.1910s in India. Source: Mail Online 7 May 2012

With the increase in the number of educated Indians, an Act of Parliament of 1870 opened the Civil Service examinations to Indians of merit.³⁴⁰ Indians in British India began to be employed in various offices and the issue of their clothing soon arose. The Bengali officials requested, in the 1870s, that the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal allow them to adopt the European custom of uncovering the head as a mark of respect. These educated men eventually stopped wearing turbans.³⁴¹ They worked indoors in offices built in the British style, so the turban may have lost its significance and utility for them, but it is more likely that they sought to imitate the British. By the 1880s, many successful, wealthy Indians and foreign-educated Indians did not wear turbans on a daily basis and went about their official and informal meetings with their heads uncovered. Furthermore, most of the men employed at middle-level posts in the ICS also wore European clothes in public.³⁴² In the 1880s, the Indians who began to become senior officials

³⁴⁰ Sen.

³⁴¹ Cohn. 134.

³⁴² Ibid. 132.

considered themselves every inch British. This was reflected in their manners and dress. This group was very limited, however, because the number of Indians in the ICS was very low: even in the 1910s, only six percent of the ICS were Indians.³⁴³ Photographs of Indian Civil Servants in the 1910s show them dressed in European fashions. Their clothing can be compared to that of European ICS officials. Their personal collections show them dressed in the three-piece suits that were fashionable in Europe towards the end of 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. They dressed for dinner in the latest dinner jackets, wore linen suits in the summer and wore white shirts and trousers for sports like cricket and tennis.

This era of westernisation created very high standards of living among the wealthy Indians, changing their language (they spoke in English, quoting Shakespeare where they could)³⁴⁴ and clothing. This change was not easily accepted by orthodox Hindus at first, but by 1910, with yet another generation of wealthy Indians having been educated at Oxford and Cambridge, the westernised elite began to be reabsorbed into Hindu society and become an integral part of it. These foreign-educated Indians remained an anglicised elite, excelling in their knowledge of the world, emphasising scientific knowledge and wearing the latest Edwardian fashions.³⁴⁵

For example, Jawaharlal Nehru was born in 1889 to a wealthy barrister named Motilal Nehru at Allahabad, in British India (now in Uttar Pradesh). His family was one of the wealthiest families in Allahabad and his father was a lawyer at the high court. Since his father worked for the British, and was a part of India's anglicised, educated elite, his photographs³⁴⁶ show him in latest British fashion. Nehru studied at Harrow and Trinity College, Cambridge and had private governesses and tutors. Figure 4-6 shows

³⁴³ Gilmour. 50.

³⁴⁴ Harriot Georgina Rowan-Hamilton Blackwood Lady Dufferin, "Our Viceregal Life in India: Selections from My Journal, 1884-88, Vol. 1," (London: John Murray, 1889).

³⁴⁵ Nirad C Chaudhuri, *Culture in the Vanity Bag* (Mumbai: Jaico, 1976; repr., 2009). 75.

³⁴⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru's photographs have been preserved in his house in New Delhi, Teen Murti Bhawan, which is now known as Nehru Museum.

Jawaharlal Nehru in 1903. He is dressed in a coat, waistcoat and trousers, with a tie. He is a wealthy Indian only 13 years of age, but his body language is like that of a mature elite Indian. He is seen in the photograph with his younger sister, who is also dressed in the western style. This is one of many examples of wealthy young Indians of the early 20th century, who had completely adopted western mannerisms and clothing.



Figure 4-6 Jawaharlal Nehru with his sister 1903. He wears a completely western suit. Courtesy of Teen Murti Bhawan, New Delhi.

The other elite class of India were businessmen, including British merchants and the banyas, marwaris and Parsis. Their next generation grew up in schools or colleges with British classmates and friends, and were westernised to a large degree.³⁴⁷ They were as alien to the needs of the poor Indians as were the British. Their fathers had already moved ahead and adopted various accessories used by the British like shoes, which they wore in the

³⁴⁷ Chaudhuri. 75.

presence of the British. This was interpreted by the British as a willingness of these Indians to imitate British gentlemen.³⁴⁸ This next generation of rich Indians, which was educated in the west, adopted Western wear completely; it probably came naturally to them. The adoption of western suit by the working elite is even commented on in a report of the Salaries Commission in Bengal. This report, which investigated the salaries of ministers in 1886, suggests that their salaries needed to be increased because the number of items of clothing they required had become very large, and their type had also changed from the Indian to the Western. The report refers to the dress worn 25 years earlier (1868) as a chapkan, dhoti, mirzai (jacket), Persian slippers and a turban. It lists the current dress (of 1886) as trousers, shirt, an Alpaca chapkan, English boots, stockings, a handkerchief and a turban made of silk or shawl.³⁴⁹ The report describes a chapkan as a tight-fitting cassock. We can conclude that the chapkan was worn with a dhoti as a lower garment in Bengal in 1868, but in 1886 was worn with trousers. The chapkan is the only Indian item of clothing mentioned in 1886 as being worn by the ministers; the rest of the items are completely western.

Since the Company Raj began in Bengal, Bengalis were the first to be influenced by it, and by the late 19th century most of them had willingly adopted western costume. Cohn argues that the wealthier and more flashily dressed Bengalis of the period thought that by adopting European-style of dress they would receive the benefits of modern civilisation. Tight pantaloons instead of dhotis, tight shirts and woollen black coats were the preferred clothing of this class.³⁵⁰ These educated Indians were progressive men who looked up to and imitated the British. They gave up their Indian clothes completely and considered themselves in tune with the times. In

³⁴⁸ Gilchrist and Williamson.

³⁴⁹ Bengal (India) Salaries Commission, "Report of the Salaries Commission Appointed by the Government of Bengal to Revise the Salaries of Ministerial Officers, and to Reorganise the System of Business in Executive Offices, 1885-86 ", ed. Civil Service India - Bengal (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1886). 202.

³⁵⁰ Cohn. 146.

order to do so, they had to adopt British ways completely.

4.5 The Dress of British-Indian Army Officers

This section deals with the uniforms of the British-Indian army (including both British and Indian officers) and the changes in them after 1858. The previous chapter described the introduction of uniform in India by the East India Company. The red coats were the prescribed dress of the army for both British and Indian officers, but warm garments and metal helmets were not appropriate in the Indian heat. When news of the soldiers who had to fight in these outfits reached London, new ways of improving their dress were tried. William Russel, a war correspondent in India in 1858, reported from Lucknow about the tragic situation of the soldiers who had to fight in India's hot weather in their European uniforms.³⁵¹

Variations and newer coats and jackets were tried out. A new version of the tunic based on the Prussian Wafftenrock, was created in around 1858 (see Figure 4-7) which was not double-breasted like the previous red coats and had a high neckline collar that was similar to that of collar of the Wafftenrock. The Wafftenrock had eight 25 mm buttons that closed the front and was made of a high-quality wool fabric.³⁵² The front of this British tunic has eight buttons, and the sleeves have three buttons each, like the Wafftenrock (although some variants had two buttons on the cuff in the Swedish style).³⁵³ It can be seen from the image of this object that it is a highly tailored garment made to fit the wearer. This garment replaced the earlier red coats and became emblematic of the new identity of the Indian army after the demise of the East India Company Army in 1858.³⁵⁴ It was longer than the earlier jackets, which stopped at the waist, whereas these new tunics reached a little below the hips. The style of the buttons and

³⁵¹ Holmes. 32.

³⁵² Schnurr.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Stephen, "The British Empire - Uniforms,"
<http://www.britishempire.co.uk/forces/armyuniforms/uniform.htm>.

embellishments was also different. Though the tunic retained the stand-up collar, its style was different from that of the earlier red coats. This tunic was worn by the Indian infantry, but was by no means the only uniform of the British-Indian Army.



Figure 4-7 Infantry pattern of uniform 1858. Source:
<http://www.britishempire.co.uk/forces/armyuniforms/uniform.htm>.

The alkaluk, term as well as the garment of Persian origin, as described in Chapter -3, had already been established as another type of uniform since the Company Raj. It continued to be prescribed by the British for the British-Indian army. Charles Griffin, an expert on army uniforms, refers to the alkaluk in all of his writings about British-Indian Army uniforms.³⁵⁵ The same term has been used for this dress by John French in his books on Army

³⁵⁵ Stephen and Charles Griffin, "Officer in Full Dress C1860,"
<http://www.britishempire.co.uk/forces/armyuniforms/indiancavalry/skinners1860.htm>.

uniforms, although he spells it 'alkaluk'.³⁵⁶ Sylvia Hopkins describes this uniform as:

In reality it was a collarless tunic, with a band of fabric of the facing colour flanking the centre front opening. The slash cuffs followed the pattern similar to that of the British 1856-68 pattern tunic.³⁵⁷

The alkaluks are mentioned alongside the other types of uniforms worn in the Indian army that were more European in construction, primarily the tunic and the coat.³⁵⁸ Different colours of alkaluks, particularly green and yellow, are described. The alkaluk was sometimes padded and sometimes decorated for extra impact. Figure 4-8 below is an image of a British-Indian officer who wears an alkaluk with heavy embroidery on the sleeves:

These two photos are of the same officer who we are unable to identify. From the amount of gold decoration on his sleeve he would appear to be a senior officer, possibly the commanding officer. His upper garment is a yellow alkalak. It was laid down in the 1863 dress regulations that in the first eight regiments of Irregular cavalry the officers were to wear the alkalak the same as the Indian officers. For the other eleven regiments, the officers were required to wear a tunic. These photographs were taken at a time when yellow came out as a dark colour.³⁵⁹

The officer wears an alkaluk but his helmet (lying on the chair) is European. In other images of Indian Army men in the 1860s, alkaluks can be seen with Indian headgear.

³⁵⁶ French, *Armies of the Nineteenth Century: The British in India 1825 - 59*; "Betraying the White Queen's Salt: Introductory Notes for the Indian Mutiny, 1857-59 - a Listing of Actions, Ob's, and Uniform Data for All Combattants".

³⁵⁷ Hopkins. 131.

³⁵⁸ Longer.

³⁵⁹ Stephen and Griffin.

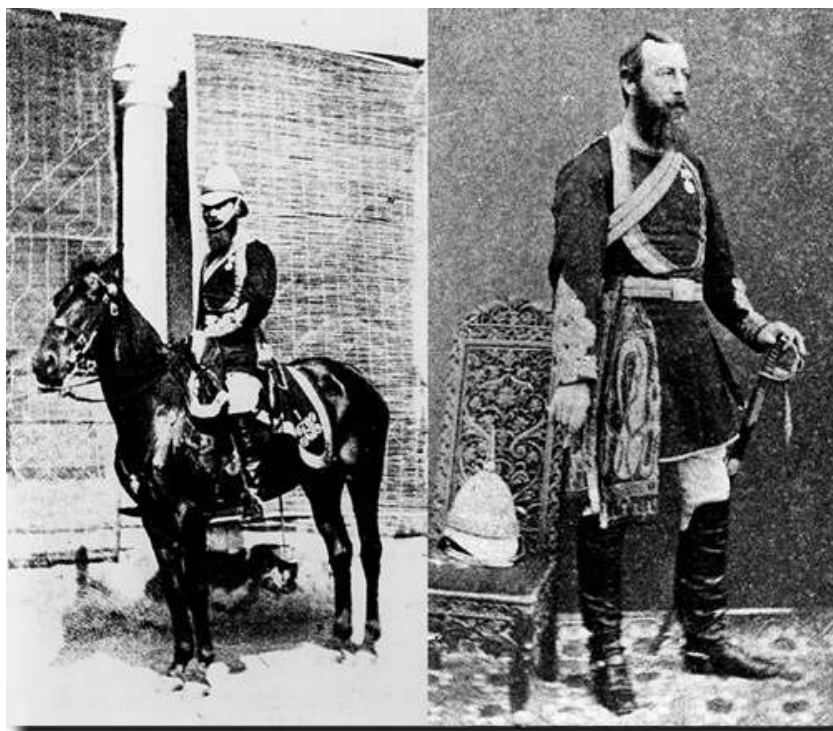


Figure 4-8 British Officer of 1st Bengal Lancers c1860 in full dress. **Source:** <http://www.britishempire.co.uk/forces/armyuniforms/indiancavalry/skinners1860.htm>

The tunics and the alkaluks continued to be worn by Indian army officers during this time, and around the 1880s a new addition to the uniform can be seen: according to Hopkins, the uniform for Indian officers was replaced by Indian tunics called kurtas.³⁶⁰ The section on 'Dress' in *Army Regulations of India 1913, Volume VII, Dress* lists all the different types of army uniforms that were worn up to 1913, showing that alkaluks, tunics, kurtas and frock coats all existed in the Indian army.³⁶¹

Figure 4-9 shows a unit of the cavalry in 1884 dressed in kurtas. The kurta is different from the alkaluk in that it has a front placket and buttons, (the alkaluk did not have a centre-front opening with placket and buttons). The biggest change resulting from the shift from the alkaluk to the kurta was the adoption of the stand-up collar (the alkaluk was collarless). In the image the

³⁶⁰ Hopkins. 131.

³⁶¹ Government of India, "Army Regulations (India) 1913. Volume VII. Dress," ed. Army Department (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1913). 36-41.

only person not wearing a kurta seems to be a bookkeeper or moneylender; he wears an angrakha with a shawl.³⁶² These kurtas were long tunics with a stand-up collar, a long slit for the front opening (at mid-chest level), and were fastened with buttons on the placket. The kurtas could also have chest pockets on either side. Hopkins writes that by 1910, with a few exceptions, the Indian Cavalry units were wearing the kurta.³⁶³



Figure 4-9 Indian Army (cavalry) officers 1884. Source:
<http://www.britishempire.co.uk/forces/armyuniforms/indiancavalry/skinners1884.htm>

The kurta had a trim tailored look for the upper torso that was borrowed from the 1858 tunic, but the lower part of the kurta remained long, unlike the army tunic, reaching to the knees (probably evolving from the alkaluk). The sleeve attachment of the kurta was like that of the tunic, reflecting a British influence on the tailoring. This is also evident in the complete look of this kurta, which was fitted with epaulettes, pockets and buttons on the

³⁶² The word kurta is used today all over India to denote a loose shirt like a tunic that is worn by both the sexes as daily wear. The same garment has a different term in Bengal, where it is called a 'punjabi', probably denoting its origin in Punjab, most likely in the army.

³⁶³ Hopkins. 132.

placket; a raised collar gave it a smart look, and it was tightened with a belt over the kamarbandh. Only the length of the kurta and the use of a kamarbandh are Indian in origin. None of the officers in the picture wears trousers; they all wear stockings and shoes.

Thus a great variety of uniforms that existed in the British Indian army during the late 19th and early 20th centuries borrowed elements from both Mughal-Indian and British styles of clothing, giving rise to an array of garments with various permutations and combinations during the golden years of the Raj. The tailoring styles of these garments, however, reflected a very strong British influence. The fabric used was thick cotton. These uniforms reflect an amalgamation of Indian and British elements in dress.

4.6 The Dress of the Indian Princes and the Creation of Traditional Garments

This section deals with the clothing preferences of the ruling Indian elite during the peak period of the Raj. The independent principalities were spread across India. The sub-continent's geographic vastness and variety of inhabitants created an amalgamation of classes, religions and castes of people with the British ruling class.³⁶⁴ The British wore their clothing wherever they were - in the plains, in the hills, in the hot and humid climate or in the colder regions. This gave them an aura of superiority. Their clothes were seen as the right kind of clothes for a modern man and the elite began to want such tailored clothing. This section discusses the evolution of new garments, including lower garments, during this time period.

The Indian princes who ruled the areas not directly under British control were India's elite class: they were the young progeny of the rajas of the 1850s and 1860s. These princes were sent abroad to study so that they would be intellectually equal to Europeans. They mixed freely with the British but were made aware of their own princely origins. They had responsibilities

³⁶⁴ Edwardes. 176-207.

towards their people and laid down the foundations of new public infrastructure like modern railways and hospitals, thereby beginning an era in Indian history when a mix of Indian and British ideals created a new India in terms of art, architecture, modernity, language, manners and clothing.

Lady Dufferin, the Vicereine of India from 1882 to 1886, travelled extensively in the lands of native Indian princes with her husband, the Viceroy Lord Dufferin. She wrote letters to her mother and maintained a journal in which she noted daily activities, both are useful sources of information on clothing.³⁶⁵ After meeting with various Indian princes and princesses, she notes that the younger generation was being taught English in addition to gaining fluency in local languages. Not only the princes and princesses but even their mothers, the maharanees, spoke fluent English, she writes, citing the example of the Maharanee of Kuch Behar.³⁶⁶ Her diary entries were made in the 1880s, and these young princes grew up by the late 19th century, bringing a strong British flavour to Indian elite life: they employed French architects to construct buildings and British and French residents to train their armies; they used imported fabrics for clothes and Irish linen for table covers and bedsheets; their halls and meeting rooms had Belgian cut glass chandeliers.³⁶⁷ They worked towards the development of their states with British technology and modern means.

The rajas were now educated young men who were modern in their approach. However, in order to satisfy the 'oriental' look needed by the British and the modern look of the times simultaneously, hybrid garments were developed which came to represent the melting pot of Indian culture. These garments could not be labelled western, but they were definitely influenced by British rule. A fusion of Indian and Western dress begins to appear in paintings of 1860s. This was the stage of experiment. One of the first images (Figure 4-10) of such a fusion costume is a painting of Maharaja

³⁶⁵ Lady Dufferin.

³⁶⁶ Kooch Behar or Kuch Behar was a small principality in the far-east of India, close to Calcutta.

³⁶⁷ Weeden.

Sawai Ram Singh of Jaipur in the 1860s. His garments and accessories are a strange mixture of Indian and western styles. This can be interpreted as reflecting the Maharaja's willingness to adopt new features in dress as well as his desire to stay connected with his roots. The maharaja wears modern glasses and his signature turban, showing the region to which he belongs. He wears black leather shoes, and probably wears socks inside them. He has some embroidery on his clothes, but his clothes are not really like those of his predecessors (he does not wear a jama or a choga). He wears a short jacket with a waistcoat inside and trousers instead of pyjamas. A yellow fabric is used as a kamarbandh, the traditional sash worn by the rulers over the jama or the angrakha. This rectangular unstitched fabric lies in the lap of the raja as he sits, showing his Indian background. Unlike the Indian rajas, Raja Ram Singh can be seen wearing a shorter upper garment; to compensate, he uses draped fabric.

The room or studio that is the setting for the painting also evidences western features. The design of the carpet is very different from the Persian motifs common in India, with three-dimensional European floral motifs - pink roses within a frame of pink, light blue and gold. The chairs are also a western feature. Indian kings earlier are normally shown either standing or sitting on a mattress with bolsters for support. In Figure 4-11, in contrast, Maharaja Ram Singh is shown seated on a European chair with a pink cushion.³⁶⁸ There is a table next to him with a flower vase on which he rests his hand. It is in the 1860s, that such European studio photography becomes fashionable among India's elite.

³⁶⁸ This Maharaja was very fond of the colour pink, and had the entire city of Jaipur painted in pink, which is why it is also known as the Pink City.



Figure 4-10 Maharaja of Jeypore, Sawai Ram Singh (1835-1880). Courtesy of Albert Hall Museum, Jaipur.

Changes can also be seen in legwear, with trousers being adopted by elite men. This trouser was known as a ‘patloon’ in local languages, which is probably derived from ‘pantaloons’. This is a word still used today, though now Indians usually referred to trousers as ‘pants’.

Pyjamas or dhotis were generally worn by the Indian elite, which continued to be worn (and are still worn to this day), although they almost never wore the dhotis in public. But many different kinds of pyjamas were worn throughout the 19th century. Pyjamas were either very wide-bottomed, falling straight from the waist, or ballooned at the top but narrower towards the bottom so that they sat with many wrinkles on the lower leg. The end of 19th century saw innovations in the pyjama. Two distinctly new types, the Aligarhi pyjama and the jodhpur, were invented. Aligarhi pyjamas were cut straight, without a gusset, more or less like trousers. These pyjamas were made with trouser pattern, but with a loose seat and lightweight cotton

fabric.³⁶⁹ They were made in Aligarh to be worn with the sherwanis, hence their name.

Jodhpurs originated in Jodhpur, in Rajasthan, and were a combination of the Indian chooridar pyjama and western breeches. They were invented under British rule for their ease of riding. The elite loved to play polo and rode ponies or horses. The Maharaja of Jodhpur was a regular visitor to England and met the English royal family very often. He is credited with the invention of jodhpurs around the 1880s. The jodhpurs were not like pyjamas, in the sense that they did not require a string to tie them, because buttons and gaiters were used. Gilmour writes of the invention of jodhpurs:

Sir Pratap Singh, Maharaja of Idar and three times regent of Jodhpur was an old fashioned Rajput who came over to England for the jubilees and was the inventor of Jodhpurs, the combination of gaiters.³⁷⁰

These princes had billiard rooms and ballrooms built in their palaces and also had special clothes made for games and dances. The Jaipur Museum houses a collection of Raja Ram Singh's trousers, which were made in velvet with gold embroidery. He had a special suit to play billiards in. These clothes borrowed heavily in cut and construction from western suits, but were made in rich velvets with lots of gold embroidery. The trousers were western-style, but a large area was provided for the seat due to the Indian habit of sitting on the floor and the looseness of clothing to which Indian men were accustomed.

These rulers also adopted simple clothes during their leisure time, with a clean cut and without embroidery, like those of British gentlemen, but dressed in traditional attire for public functions, in order to maintain the image of an Indian raja. As early as 1870 there is evidence that the princes began wearing completely western outfits in their personal lives but not in public. Louis Rousselet was a Belgian traveller to India (he was considered to

³⁶⁹ Sharar, *Lucknow : The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture*. 176.

³⁷⁰ Gilmour. 5.

be French by the Indian raja). He visited the courts of the maharajas all over India in the 1870s and notes how the Maharaja of Baroda wore his crimson tunic adorned with jewels (i.e. his Indian attire) for a public procession. This procession, or sowari, was performed so that the Maharajah could display his purchase of 'the Star of the South', one of the most celebrated diamonds in the world.³⁷¹ Rousselet later writes that, when he met the maharajah in his palace after a few days, he wore a European ensemble:

He was dressed in a style which contrasted strongly with the costume he had worn at the Sowari. Tastefully attired in white linen, with European shoes, he did not display the least particle of embroidery, nor a single trinket.³⁷²

The charm of India to the British was in its native princes and their rich flowing costumes. The European travellers to India seemed to have revelled in the glory of India's princes and their wealth. The image of a prince had more to do with flowing silks and satins, gold and brocade work, twisted turbans and jewels. Therefore, in the eyes of the British, a three-piece worsted wool suit was out of question for a maharaja, because it did not suit his image. The adoption of completely western outfits by these independent rulers was never appreciated by the British.³⁷³

To proclaim Queen Victoria the Empress of India, a coronation durbar with full pomp and show took place in Delhi in 1877, under the direction of Lord Lytton. Queen Victoria decided to confer knighthood on the rajas and other people associated with the Indian Empire. The Queen granted respect and recognition to the princes, Viceroy and other political leaders by creating the Order of the Star of India and as a result the princes became loyal to the Queen and were forever trying to impress her. The *London Gazette* of 25th June 1861, announced that the Queen had conferred knighthoods on some of

³⁷¹ Louis Rousselet, *India and Its Native Princes - Travels in Central India and in the Presidencies of Bombay and Bengal*, (London: Bickers and Sons Leicester Square, 1882), <https://archive.org/stream/indiaitsnativepr00rousuoft#page/100/mode/2up/search/dress.92>.

³⁷² Rousselet, *India*, 97.

³⁷³ Cohn.

the strongest independent rulers (see Figure 4-11).³⁷⁴

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THE LONDON GAZETTE, JUNE 25, 1861.

as have, by important and loyal services rendered by them to the Indian Empire, merited Her Majesty's favour.

The Queen has been further pleased to ordain, constitute, and appoint the Right Honourable Charles John, Earl Canning, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, and Her Majesty's Viceroy and Governor-General of India, to be the first Grand Master of the said Most Exalted Order of the Star of India;

And to nominate and appoint

His Highness Nizam-ool-Moolk, Nuwab Tuyinat Ali Khan, Nizam of Hyderabad,
General the Viscount Gough, K.P., G.C.B., some time Commander-in-Chief of Her Majesty's Forces in the East Indies,
His Highness Jyajee Rao Sindhia, Maharaja of Gwalior,
The Lord Harris, some time Governor of the Presidency of Madras,
His Highness Maharaja Duleep Singh,
General the Lord Clyde. G.C.B. lately Com-

Foreign-Office, June 24, 1861.

The Queen has been pleased to approve of Mr. Thomas Lidbetter as Consul at Kurrachee for His Majesty the King of Prussia.

The Queen has also been pleased to approve of Mr. Niel McLachlan as Consul at Leith for the United States of America.

*Board of Trade, Whitehall,
June 25, 1861.*

THE Right Honourable the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade hereby give notice, that, by virtue of a Treaty, signed on the 22nd instant, between Great Britain, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Denmark, Spain, France, Mecklenburg Schwerin, the Netherlands, Portugal, Prussia, Russia, Sweden, and Norway, and the Hanse Towns, on the one part, and Hanover, on

Figure 4-11 A copy of the *London Gazette* of 25th June 1861. Courtesy of Digitization by Google

Each 'Star of India' was given a robe of honour to wear, which was called the mantle of Knighthood -as Cohn rightly labels it, a "mantle of subordination". He describes the garment in detail:

The light blue mantle of the order was lined in white silk and fully covered the body. It fastened with a white silk cord decorated with blue and silver tassels. On the left side of the robe, on the heart, was embroidered in gold thread the rays of the sun and superimposed in diamonds was the motto, "Heaven's light our guide" and a star. The collar was a large necklace made of gold chain with palm fronds and lotuses; in its centre was an emblem of the crown of Great Britain, from which hung a pendant with a portrait of the Queen of England.³⁷⁵

This entire ensemble was European in concept and character, and the fact that it was bestowed on Indians of high rank gave them a feeling of being

³⁷⁴ India Office, "Tuesday June 25, 1861," ed. The London Gazette (London: Foreign Office, 1861).

³⁷⁵ Cohn. 119.

among the elite of the whole Empire. This investiture of titles became a matter of prestige among the Indian princes as well as among the British. The British wore the mantle over their uniforms or levee dress, and the Indian rajas were supposed to wear it over their Indian costume. The mantle had a very powerful symbolic message: the independent rulers had become subordinate to the crown. This implied that they had to abide by the rules of the empire if they wanted to retain their knighthood, with the unspoken rule that they also needed to retain their orientalism for the British. Between this durbar in 1877 and the World War in 1914, the display of orientalism increased, as did the number of occasions where the rajas had to dress in their finery depending on status, roles and regional origins.³⁷⁶

J. Talboys Wheeler recorded the 1877 durbar, photographing and documenting a dazzling array of garments, but not their names, although the textiles used are described: the author writes about beautiful satins, velvets and cloth of gold used by the native princes.³⁷⁷ Wheeler reveals the kind of hybrid costumes that began to appear around this time. The most common garment that was worn by the princes is the angrakha, which was elaborately embroidered with gold. Figure 4-12 is a photograph of the Maharana of Udaipur taken for the coronation album of Queen Victoria.³⁷⁸ The Maharaja can be seen dressed in his angrakha, which was probably made of silk, and is heavily embroidered. The edges of the front panel, the sleeves and pockets have all been embroidered with gold. Even the hem of his trouser-like pyjama has been embroidered. He wears Persian slip-on shoes, without socks, as well as oriental jewellery and a traditional sword.³⁷⁹ He is dressed in all the finery that was expected of a native prince.

³⁷⁶ Ibid. 120.

³⁷⁷ J Talboys Wheeler, *The History of the Imperial Assemblage at Delhi Held on 1st January 1877 to Celebrate the Assumption of Empress of India by Her Majesty, the Queen* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1877). 73-74.

³⁷⁸ Wheeler, *History of the Imperial Assemblage*.

³⁷⁹ Wheeler.



Figure 4-12 The Maharana of Udaipur in an angrakha in Queen Victoria's Coronation album 1877. Courtesy of Special Collections, University of Glasgow.

Most of the angrakhas were more fitted than were jamas, although some of the examples in the museums of Delhi and Jaipur are very voluminous. Lady Dufferin notes the voluminous dresses of the Indian rajas, using the term “petticoats”, but does not use the real name of the garment, which probably were angrakhas with a lot of flare. Her journals conjure the image of Lady Dufferin peeping almost from behind a screen to examine the visitors who came to meet her husband, the Viceroy of India. In the passage below, she describes the dress of the Maharana of Udaipur, whom she sees meeting with her husband, Lord Dufferin at the durbar (court) on 9th November 1889:

The Maharana came to pay his visit this morning, and we peeped in at the solemn durbar. The dresses are always an interesting part of it. Here they wear muslin gowns with very short waists, and with great scarves wound round their bodies much lower down, so that all the gathers of the skirts are above the scarf. Their turban is very neat, with a plain, smooth, slanting point in

it; it looks as if it must be made up before, and not merely tied round the head.

When wearing their court dress they have voluminous petticoats, each one of which contains about 140 yards of muslin, is very heavy, and sways about as its wearer walks.³⁸⁰

Angrakhas continued to be in fashion until the end of this period and beyond, although some changes can be observed. Buttons and pockets began to be added. An example of buttons on the angrakha can be seen in the photograph in Figure 4-13, a photograph of an angrakha in the collection of the Salarjung Museum, Hyderabad. This garment is made of rich brocade and is lined with an orange fabric; it dates roughly to the late 19th or early 20th century. It belonged to the Muslim ruler of Hyderabad (the Nizam), so it was tied towards the left. The angrakha worn by the prince of Udaipur (a Hindu ruler) was tied to the right as can be seen in Figure 4-12.



Figure 4-13 Angrakha of Nizam of Hyderabad, late 19th or early 20th century. Courtesy of Salarjung Museum Hyderabad.

³⁸⁰ Lady Dufferin. 224.

After Queen Victoria's coronation in 1877, the second durbar was held for King Edward VIII in 1903. In this durbar too, the princes can be seen in angrakhas, with another over garment like the choga or the farzi. Figure 4-14 is a photograph of Raja of Ulwar (now written as Alwar), taken on the occasion of the Delhi Durbar of 1903; the raja sits on a chair wearing an angrakha with a farzi, as do the other Indian officials. The Raja also wears European shoes with socks and a belt on top of his kamarbandh. He and all the other noblemen are dressed in all oriental finery for the durbar. The British officer can be seen in his fitted dress, with a stand up collar and buttons on the front placket. His official uniform has embroidery on the cuffs and on the collar. The trousers have a band of colour (probably gold) on the side-seams.



Figure 4-14 The Maharaja of Ulwar at the coronation durbar of 1903. Bourne Shepherd Album of 1903 Durbar, Courtesy of Columbia University.

The height of flamboyance can be seen in this photograph taken in 1903. This kind of clothing would have been very impractical for a raja. These were unlike the earlier jamas of the Mughal period, which were calf length and were very practical garments. This could also be due to the changing role of the Indian raja. Under British rule, the rajas were not required to fight wars and protect their territories. They were symbolic rulers and had the money to flaunt. The British loved this image of the raja and flaunted it.³⁸¹ The heavy brocades and velvets cut in long flowy robes, worn with multiple necklaces and jewelled turbans made the fairy tale image of a raja come true. Obviously the rajas would not have been so heavily decked up every day, they wore the more practical angrakha.

The variety of angrakhas prevalent during this time period, made of different fabrics, show the popularity of this garment for daily wear and for special occasions. The angrakhas could be made with brocades, silks, fine net, muslin and other imported fabrics. They could also be quilted for winter. The fabrics in use were locally sourced as well as imported. Brocade angrakhas were the choice of royalty, and the addition of pockets became a regular feature in the early 20th century (Figure 4-15). A brocade angrakha (4-15) was displayed at the Albert Hall Museum in Jaipur. It has a red lining and a pocket. Another angrakha, displayed in the City Palace Museum, Jaipur, was made of green net; this choice may have been made considering the fine muslins that Indians were used to and the fact that the new machine that made fine fabric may have seemed like a marvel to Indians because it was something they had never seen before. This angrakha belonged to the Maharaja of Jaipur and dates from the late 19th century. It was not possible to make images of the object in the museum, but it was similar in cut and construction to the angrakha in Figure 4-16, which was in possession of an antiques dealer.

³⁸¹ This photograph is the cover page of the revised version of the book, 'Plain Tales of the Raj' by Charles Allen. Allen.



Figure 4-15 A brocade angrakha with a pocket, early 20th century. Courtesy of Albert Hall Museum, Jaipur.

Figure 4-16 A net angrakha, early 20th century. Courtesy of Santoshji, Rajasthan Arts and Crafts, Jaipur.

Weeden gives a detailed account of the life of the Maharaja of Baroda, Sayajirao Gaekwad - III, in 1909. He writes of the various dresses the Maharaja wore, for court, for shooting, for casual wear in the morning and for dinner.³⁸² He always refers fondly to Indian dress. He vividly describes the Maharaja's fine clothes, furniture, Belgian crystals and billiard room, just like in London; he also writes of their four motorcars and two Italian

³⁸² Weeden. 31, 49, 62, 82, 116.

Chauffeurs.³⁸³ On meeting the Maharaja for the first time in 1909, he finds him dressed in an angrakha, Jodhpuri breeches or Jodhpurs, a turban, socks and slippers:

Except for his turban he was all dressed in white, the undergarments being very soft and fine and covered with an agniakara [he probably meant angrakha], a long tunic, double breasted and fastened at the sides with strings, with a curious pattern upon it, which is made by pressing it with shells. The trousers, or Jodhpore breeches, as they are called, fit tightly around the calf and are very baggy above the knee. His turban or puggari, to give it its proper name, is made of thin cords, twisted tightly together by a cunning workman, and ending in a strip of cloth of gold which is brought over at the end to form a crown. It is of dull brick-red which is the royal colour, and has a curious little peak behind which is peculiar to the Gaekwar family. He was wearing socks and red Oriental slippers.³⁸⁴



Figure 4-17 The Maharaja of Baroda, Sayajirao Gaekwad – III, in Angrakha, 1919. Courtesy of the V&A archives.

Figure 4-18 The Maharaja of Baroda, Sayajirao Gaekwad – III, in a western suit in London, 1911. Courtesy of the V&A archives.

Figure 4-17 shows the Maharaja of Baroda, Sayaji Rao Gawekwar-III, in his

³⁸³ Weeden, *A Year with the Gaekwar*, 34, 45, 63, and various others.

³⁸⁴ Weeden, *A Year with the Gaekwar*, 14.

anrakha; Figure 4-18 shows him in his western suit. The second photograph (4-18), was taken in Layfette Studio, London in 1911. He is comfortable in both kinds of attire. Photographs of the same Maharaja in two of the three coronation durbars (in 1877 as a child, in 1903 as an adult), and the written records of the durbar of 1911, show his clothing style. In 1877, as a young boy, he is seen wearing a hybrid garment (Figure 4-19), a velvet coat with Indian embroidery and a stand-up collar, with a front opening like that of the achkan, but with a European silhouette. It looks like a coat with heavy embroidery. He became a ruler at an early age, and so did the Maharaja of Mysore, His Highness Sri Chamarajendra Wadiyar X (Fig 4-20).



Figure 4-19 Sayaji Rao Gaekwad, the Maharaja of Baroda, at the 1877 durbar. He wears a kind of coat which cannot be called a sherwani. The Wheeler Album, courtesy of the Special Collections Library, University of Glasgow.

Figure 4-20 H.H. Maharaja of Mysore during the imperial assembly at the Delhi Durbar in 1877. He wears a kind of coat that is like an achkan, which is not as form-fitting as the sherwani. The Wheeler Album, courtesy of the Special Collections Library, University of Glasgow.

The young Maharaja of Mysore (Figure 4-20), was recognised as the king by the British. He also wears a fancy tailored garment. His garment is more like

an achkan. These garments cannot be called sherwanis, but they could, with their stand-up collars, be precursors of the sherwani. Both images are taken in similar studio settings. The young Maharaja of Baroda wears Indian pyjamas and Persian slippers, whereas the young Maharaja of Mysore, Chamarajendra Wadiayer X, wears European-style trousers with heavy Indian-style embroidery, paired with European shoes. Both the boys wear belts on top of their hybrid garments. Thus the angrakha and achkan were both worn by Indian princes in 1877. In the 1903 durbar the angrakha was still worn, although achkans like the ones worn in the 1850s and 1860s (see Figure 3-14) were not. The word achkan is still used today as a synonym of sherwani. Thus we can conclude that the original style of achkan was not common after the 1900s, although there is one image of such achkans from the 1903 durbar album. They are worn by two Kashmiri giants, who were probably wearing them as a deliberately old-fashioned garment (Figure 4-21). The achkans of the two giant Kashmiri men have upper bodices in the shape of a semi-circular angrakha, but just as an adornment - the actual fastening is done by buttons attached in a line on the centre-front, from the neck to the waist.³⁸⁵ I viewed such an achkan in the Chhatrapati Shivaji Museum in Mumbai in January 2016. It was a rare sample. It matched the look of the achkans in figure 4-21 below.

³⁸⁵ Sharar, *Purana Lucknow*. 210.



Figure 4-21 two Kashmiris wearing the achkan, Delhi durbar 1903.

In the photographs of the durbar of 1903, the achkans of the elite are different, they begin to get more ornate and fancy in terms of their embroidery and fabrics, and they began to lose their semi-circular front. To begin with, the achkan had a semi-circular bodice. Later on, the semi-circular appearance of the bodice gave way to simple front panels, like in Figure 4-20. The neckline could be collarless and plain or raised (stand-up collar), like that of a frock coat. The sleeves of the achkan were similar to those of the chapkan or angrakha - they were long and allowed for free movement either with or without a gusset.

Figure 4-22 is a photograph of a young prince of Dungarpur (in Rajasthan) who attended the coronation ceremony in 1903. He wears a beautifully embroidered achkan. The stitching details of the achkan is hidden under the embroidery, but a faint line suggests that it is attached to the frock at the waist and that it has side slits. The prince wears his achkan with

embroidered trousers and European shoes. It has excessive gold embroidery, the buttons too seem to be made of brocaded fabric, although they could be made of gold. The sleeves have embroidery on the cuffs and arm. The achkan gave a more fitted and trim look to the wearer than the angrakha.



Figure 4-22 Prince of Dungarpur at the coronation durbar, 1903. Source: Bourne and Shepherd Album of 1903.

The achkan, like the angrakha, also evolved. It began to be made in

different fabrics ranging from fine to heavy, they varied from fine muslins to brocades and embroidered silks or velvets. The buttons were made of plastic, metal or gems. Two side pockets in the skirt and a small pocket at the waistline were added by the second decade of the 20th century. These were definitely elements, like the buttons, that were borrowed from European fashion. A 100-year-old achkan, which belonged to a rich merchant family from Rajasthan, was found in an antique shop in Jaipur (Figure 4-23). It used to be worn in summer, as the owner explained. It is made of fine mulmul or muslin, with a fine weave. The owner had other achkans that were approximately 100-125 years old (which dates them to late 19th and early 20th century) made of mill-made fabric imported from Europe.



Figure 4-23 An achkan that is almost 100 years old, from an antique shop in Jaipur. The detail picture shows a typical Indian fabric extension. Courtesy of Rajasthan Arts and Crafts, Jaipur.

This achkan has plastic buttons, side pockets and waist pockets, which are all borrowed from British garments. The typical Indian tailoring feature which is still in use is the fabric extension. Like the jama and angrakha, the balabar (fabric panel, which goes underneath the other side panel) has been used to secure the right side of the skirt to the left side-seam. By the 1920s,

fine achkans were probably replaced by fine kurtas and more ornate brocade achkans were not worn. Indeed, Sharar writes that the achkan had become obsolete by the 1920s and was replaced by the sherwani.³⁸⁶

The original achkan became obsolete by the early 20th century, as can be seen from the evidence above, but the term continued to be in use. In error the new garment, the sherwani, was referred to as an achkan by many people, and the confusion continues: achkan and sherwani are today considered synonymous. The sherwani may have been developed in response to the preference of the British for the princes in traditional attire at formal events. Durbar in the Indian meaning was a meeting of the king or prince with fellow nobles and common men; it was an opportunity for the grievances of the public to be heard and for justice to be given. But the British changed the meaning: the durbar became a very formal meeting between British officers and Indian princes, often as a means of demonstrating the achievements of the British. During the three coronation durbars, the princes were asked to come in their traditional attire, but during coronation durbar of 1911, the Maharajah of Baroda, who was very modern in his ways, wore western attire. He was frowned upon by the British press and officers, turning his back on the steps after bowing to the King and the Queen was considered impertinent. He was not present for the rehearsals a day earlier and had sent his brother.³⁸⁷ Lilah Wingfield, who witnessed the Durbar in 1911, left her records with her granddaughter, Jessica Douglas-Home, and they were reported on by the BBC:³⁸⁸

He [the Maharaja of Baroda] arrived at the amphitheatre in full dress and covered in the historic Baroda jewels, but removed them all just before the moment came for him to approach the king.

On reaching the shamiana (dais) he made a cursory bow from the waist, stepped backwards and then, wheeling around, turned his

³⁸⁶ Sharar, *Purana Lucknow*, 210.

³⁸⁷ Cohn.

³⁸⁸ Alastair Lawson, "Indian Maharajah's Daring Act of Anti-Colonial Dissent," *BBC News*, 10 December 2011.

back on the royal couple and walked from their presence nonchalantly twirling a gold-topped walking stick.

Mrs Douglas-Home said the maharajah's gesture caused shock among British officials attending the event.³⁸⁹

The British were offended by his gesture, which was considered very impolite, and also by his dress. All the native princes were asked to appear in their finest dress of the princes, but the maharaja of Baroda, an old man by now, did not really care. Cohn points to this and calls it a clear indication that British did not want the princes to dress in western attire.³⁹⁰ Lady Dufferin's journals also reflect this sentiment, and she clearly does not support Indians wearing English-style dress.³⁹¹ She seems to love Indian 'national costumes', meaning colourful or white petticoats, because she could see nothing of their sort in Europe:

The young man of the period in India surely never looks in a pier-glass, or he could not possibly show himself in his black square cut alpaca coat and trousers by the side of his gorgeous elders.³⁹²

But her writing points clearly to the changing styles in India in the late 19th century. She notes an interesting incident involving a young boy, the heir apparent to the Maharaja of Jaipur (Jeypore), whom she noticed wearing these "petticoats", which later she calls a frock, at the state function. Once the event was over, a servant came to the little boy and helped him out of those voluminous clothes and into a simple shirt and trousers:

...took off his jewels and his gown, and left him in a little shirt and trousers. When I lifted the frock I was astonished at its weight; it must really have been about a stone, there was so much material and so much gold on it. Everyone was, I am sure, delighted to get out of these clothes.³⁹³

³⁸⁹ Lawson, "Indian Maharajah."

³⁹⁰ Cohn.ch-5

³⁹¹ Lady Dufferin. 81.

³⁹² Ibid. 122.

³⁹³ Ibid. 239.

These traditional garments were not practical anymore; they functioned only as a display of wealth and as a link to Indian culture. Indian rulers obliged the British by wearing such heavy garments since the British were more powerful.

4.6.1 The Birth of the Sherwani

The first photograph of the sherwani that I have found shows the sixth Nizam of the princely state of Hyderabad. The photograph is from the 1880s (Figure 4-24). The sixth Nizam succeeded to his father's throne at an early age, after his father's death. He was educated at home by European tutors and was in contact with European dignitaries, which probably influenced his fashion choices. As a young boy at the Queen's coronation durbar, he wore a full-length choga.³⁹⁴ But in 1883-4, when the Archduke of Austria visited the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Nizam can be seen wearing a sherwani. His sherwani is like a coat with western trousers and shoes. A noteworthy fact is that it is not made of silks or brocades and has no embroidery. He wears it with an Indian turban and the Star of India medal and sash. It has a collar, western-style sleeves and European sleeve attachment. It is knee-length and stitched like a coat, not like Mughal-Indian dress. There is no waist seam that separates the torso and the skirt. The front is a single panel and not made of multiple panels. The Nizam is seated on a chair.

³⁹⁴ Wheeler.. Photo entitled "The Nizam of Hyderabad."



Figure 4-24 The Archduke of Austria and the Nizam of Hyderabad in 1883-84. Courtesy of Old India Photos.

This is a very different image of an Indian prince. Before this, princes were pictured in brocaded clothes with jewellery. The 1880s seem to have been a turning point in terms of fashion and dress in the history of Indian dress. It is around the same time that the portraits of Indian rajas of princely states undergo a change. Not only do the clothes of the subjects change, but there is also a major change in the style of painting by Indian artists. These changing styles of paintings began to evolve in the last decades of the 19th century. Indian paintings of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries were produced in the Mughal and Rajput miniature painting style, but a new three-dimensional style began to emerge that was known as the 'Company style' and based on contemporaneous western painters. It was popularised in India

by Raja Ravi Verma. Verma's paintings of some of the famous Indian rulers towards the end of the 19th century show changes in their garments: he captures the latest lifestyles and garments in his paintings.³⁹⁵ Verma's paintings in Figure 4-25, a portrait of Sayaji Rao Gaekwar, and Figure 4-26, a portrait of the Raja of Mysore, Chamarajendra Wadiyar X in 1885, reflect his style. Both these rulers featured as children in an 1877 album (Figures 4-19 and 4-20). In 1885, their clothes are very similar: both wear a kind of coat, which looks like an adaptation of the army jacket. Both have similar gold embroidery. This coat is belted, is mid-thigh in length and thus cannot be called a sherwani. But the neckline features a high stand-up collar, and the coat is front-open and has buttons. The garment appears to be made of velvet and embroidered with gold thread. Both the rulers hold their swords and wear their headdresses. The trousers of both the rulers also feature gold embroidery, and both the rulers wear belts. This is again a sort of hybrid suit. The coat has a tailored look, and reflects the changing dress preferences of the rulers.

³⁹⁵ Erwin Neumayer and Christine Schelberger, *Raja Ravi Varma Portrait of an Artist, 'the Diary of C. Raja Raja Varma'* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005).



Figure 4-25 The Maharaja of Baroda, painted by Raja Ravi Verma in 1885. Courtesy of Rajasthan Arts and Crafts, Jaipur.

Figure 4-26 The Raja of Mysore, Chamarajendra Wadiyar X, painting by Raja Ravi Verma in 1885. Courtesy of Rajasthan Arts and Crafts, Jaipur.

These images show the preference for a stand-up collar, British tailoring, a set-in sleeve and a front-open placket. These elements are the key features of the sherwani. This preference shows that the loose style of angrakha was being replaced by the slim fit of these coats. Yet, the princes do not wear sherwanis. It is only the Nizam of Hyderabad who is shown wearing a sherwani, and he can again be seen in his sherwani at the Delhi durbar of 1903. Figure 4-27 shows the native princes present at this event, and the Nizam of Hyderabad can be seen in the centre front, wearing a black sherwani without any embroidery. The maharaja of Baroda, Sayaji Rao Gaekwad - III, now a grown man, stands to the left of the Nizam in a golden angrakha, and the new Maharaja of Mysore, the son of Chamaraja Wadiyar X, Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV, stands to the right of the Nizam, in a golden sherwani with a stand-up collar and belt, as in Figure 4-25. The other rulers

can also be seen in fancy headgear but 'tailored to fit' outer garments. Their clothes look golden and royal, but are not voluminous. The silhouette of the Indian royal clothes was undergoing a change in the early 20th century.



Figure 4-27 The ruling princes of India dressed for 1903 Durbar in Delhi: Courtesy of Old Photos India.

The sherwani was stitched in the western style, but according to Sharar, it resulted from an alteration to the achkan in the court of Hyderabad. Although he does not give a date, he makes this claim in 1920, so the development must have happened before then. He writes:

The achkan was extremely popular and the style started to find its way from the towns to the villages. In a very short time it was worn throughout India. In Hyderabad, it developed with a few alterations into the shervani. Its sleeves were made like those of the English coat, the adornments over the chest were discarded and for the lower part the shape of the English overcoat was adopted. It became so popular everywhere including Lucknow, that it is now the national dress of all Hindus and Muslims in India.³⁹⁶

A closer inspection of the details of the Sherwani shows that it may have originated as a separate garment, most likely created in the court of Hyderabad in 1884. It is as long as a knee-length coat but it has no waist seam (unlike the achkan); like the achkan, it has an extension of the front panel on the right, which is tied to the left side-seam and the left front panel, which conceals it while a person is standing and reveals it only while walking or sitting. It had buttons, usually six or seven, from the collar to the waist. It has two breast pockets, one on either side, and two side pockets.

The Online Oxford Learner's Dictionary describes the sherwani as a knee-length coat with buttons up to the neck, sometimes worn by men from South Asia.³⁹⁷ The dictionary gives the same definition for the achkan, making differentiating the two even more complicated. Books on Indian costume also define the sherwani or achkan as a "long male dress with full sleeves and straight opening in front or as a long tunic worn by men".³⁹⁸ The *Hindi Shabdkosh* defines the sherwani (and I translate) thus:

Sherwani - (noun) A type of 'anga' [upper garment] cut in English style. Its speciality - Its length is till the knees. Fabric extensions, panels and gussets are not cut and stitched or attached in this garment [basically meaning that they are missing from the garment]. Where the buttons are attached in the centre front, the lower part [below the waist] has an extension, which is actually a fabric cut broader than the part where the

³⁹⁶ Sharar, *Lucknow : The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture*. 170.

³⁹⁷ Oxford, "Oxford Learners Dictionaries," (Online). 7 November 2015.

³⁹⁸ Singh. 105.

buttons are attached, so as to tie this inside with the other side seam, with ties or buttons. Muslims wear it more than others.³⁹⁹

This definition is useful because it returns to a basic understanding of the structure of the sherwani. The very first statement in the definition clarifies that the garment is cut in the “English” style; its length is also specified (that it is till the knees) and is not ambiguous, unlike the achkan, chapkan and angrakha, which all reach anywhere between the knees and ankle. It is clear that separate panels of fabric are not attached. Unlike the angrakha, chapkan and achkan, it does not have a separate skirt with panels; the only similarity is in the extended panel, which is tied inside, like that of the achkan, although this panel is not a seamed panel, but rather is a fabric extension of the front panel. The definition does not say anything about the collar. Inspection of sherwanis reveals more features. The most important is that there is no waist seam in this garment. Another characteristic of the sherwani is that it has a lining inside and is made of heavier material, more like an English coat. The collars of the sherwani could be either stand-up collars or like those of a shirt. Examples of both types of collars exist, as can be seen in the Figure 4-24 and 4-28.

³⁹⁹ "Hindi Shabdkosh (Hindi Dictionary)."



Figure 4-28 A Sherwani from the wardrobe of the Nizam, Hyderabad, India, dated early 20th century.

Both the 1884 version and 1903 version of the sherwanis of the Nizam do not have stand-up collars; both are made of black wool fabric and have been worn over a white shirt (or kurta). A surviving sherwani from his wardrobe in Hyderabad (Figure 4-28) also has a shirt collar. His sherwani and many earlier sherwanis do not have a stand-up collar and instead have a coat or shirt collar. Apart from the collar and buttons, this sherwani has a western style of sleeve attachment, and it does not have a gusset at the sleeve, unlike the choga and the angrakha, nor a flat rectangular pattern like the kimono sleeve pattern of the jama. There is a sleeve cap which is fitted into the armhole, and the shoulder has shoulder pads to enhance the masculinity of the wearer by suggesting broad shoulders. All these features again come from western style of tailoring in the 19th century. Indian tailoring never included the use of shoulder pads and cap sleeve attachments. The sleeves were either attached in kimono style for looser garments (like chogas) or with a gusset for garments like kurtas. The sleeves of the sherwani are full and have three buttons in a line at the cuff, these are copied from the

military style of coats, as described above.

The sherwani also has two small pockets on the chest, which is another European feature, and was not common to Mughal garments. This pocket was used to hold a watch chain. The sherwani is as long as a frockcoat, reaching to the knees. Usually angrakhas and jamas were longer garments, reaching to the midcalf or the ankle, while army tunics reached just below the hips. This length was neither very conservative nor offensive to the Indian mind. The frockcoat had a skirt attached to the waist, whereas the sherwani borrowed its straight cut from the style of an overcoat or tunic.

The sherwani of the Maharaja of Mysore has a stand-up collar, probably he liked this type of collar - he wears it in most of his photos, and the other sherwanis in his wardrobe in Hyderabad also have similar collars. The sixth Nizam, who appears to have started wearing the sherwani, died in 1911. His son, the seventh Nizam, always wore a sherwani with a stand-up collar and a belt. It has a lining and its sleeve attachment is of the European style - a sleeve attachment with shoulder padding. It is also a full-sleeved garment. It is an over garment like the coat and is worn over a kamiz or kurta. Its overall appearance is not flouncy or effeminate, but very structured, and it can be paired with trousers, pyjamas or dhoti. There are references to the sherwani being like a western coat, but with an Indian touch of the balabar, the extension of the right front, which is tied at the waist level inside. There are no references to the sherwani in the books published before the 1880s in India or London, and the earliest printed reference to sherwani is probably in Abdul Halim Sharar's book, which was written in 1920.⁴⁰⁰

Figure 4-29 is a photograph of a sherwani from the early 20th century which can help to clarify the differences between the sherwani and the achkan. Comparing it with the achkan in figure 4-23, it is clear that the achkan usually has a round neck, the sherwani has a collar that is either stand-up or turned back. The sherwani is always made with a lining and with a fabric

⁴⁰⁰ Sharar, *Lucknow : The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture*.

that is suitable for a coat, whereas the achkan can be made of fine muslin or even heavy brocade with embroidery, and usually does not have a lining. The achkan usually has a seam on the waistline and the skirt below is an adaptation of the angrakha, whereas the sherwani does not have a waist seam and is knee-length. Both have both side pockets and front pockets. The front pockets of the achkan are attached to the waist seam, whereas the front pockets of the sherwani are coat-like pockets at the chest level. A shirt or kurta is worn under the sherwani, whereas the achkan is worn in winter beneath a choga.



Figure 4-29 An almost 100-year-old sherwani. Courtesy of Subhashji, Rajasthan Arts and Crafts, Jaipur



Figure 4-30 Lala Chandulal and family. Lala Chandulal sits on extreme right in the middle row. Courtesy of Private collection, posted on a blog – Damini.

The sherwani began to spread as the ideal choice of outdoor garment in different sections of society. Figure 4-30 is a photograph of the family of an elite businessman from Delhi, Lala Chandulal (1834-1903). He was an educated man who converted to Christianity, but respected his Hindu beginnings. This picture was taken at the time of his eldest daughter's wedding in Delhi in the last decade of the 19th century.⁴⁰¹ The men and boys in the picture can be seen in the latest sherwani trends. All their sherwanis resemble British coats (and the Nizam's sherwani) in their cut and construction, their collars match the collar of the sherwani in the antique shop (fig 4-29), which has a turned-back, not stand-up, collar.

Even the way the sherwani was made differed from traditional Indian garment construction. The interviewed tailors stated that the measurements for the stitching of earlier Indian style garments were taken either using yarn or using hand spans, whereas for the stitching of the sherwani, exact

⁴⁰¹ Damini Shah to Damini's Blog, 25 Dec, 2012, http://daminishah.blogspot.in/2012_09_01_archive.html.

measurements using tape measures were taken.⁴⁰² The very fact that the measurements are “taken by a cord and recorded on a parchment” begins to show the western influence on this garment. In India the earlier examples of stitching demonstrate that the fabric itself, not paper, was used for measurement and marking.⁴⁰³ The tailors who are proficient in stitching sherwanis are well aware of its very British origin and they take pride in its fine stitching.⁴⁰⁴

Sherwani usually has 7 buttons, but can have 5 if the wearer is short. It can either be cut with 2 back pieces (with a seam at Centre back like the coat), or with a single back. In case it has a single back, shaping is given on the fabric by sprinkling water and ironing, and pushing it inward. It is almost like sculpting the fabric to human shape. Our fathers and grand-fathers mentioned that it had to be a wonderfully tailored garment. They took pride in stitching such garments.⁴⁰⁵

Figure 4-31 is a sketch showing the paper pattern and two options for constructing the back of the sherwani by Mr Akhil Tamta, the head of Raymond Tailoring in India. He explained that there are two different ways (that have been in practice for a long time, as his father taught them to him) in which the back can be constructed, either with a centre back seam, or without, to give a proper fit to the sherwani. In front, a dart is necessary to give fullness where required and for the proper shaping of the garment. The garment signalled the arrival of a new India, and after the second decade of the 20th century the use of the sherwani was more widespread, as is

⁴⁰² Interview with Mr Asif Sheikh of Raymond tailors, Mumbai, India, in June 2014. He and other tailors interviewed were all of the opinion that the “Measurements for creating a pattern for the sherwani are taken by a cord and then recorded on a parchment. The measurements required are – Chest, waist, and hip. Based on the measurements, a scale has been developed to work out how to make a pattern. A paper pattern or parchment was not required for the garments made in India earlier.”

⁴⁰³ See Lotika Varadarajan paper on ancient tailoring techniques.

⁴⁰⁴ Discussion with technicians and tailors in India resulted in a more concrete analysis. Interviews with Mr Akhil Tamta, the Head of Custom Tailoring at Raymond Ltd., Mumbai, Mr Asif Sheikh, a technician and tailor and a master at making paper patterns, Dr Vandana Narang and Mr. K.D. Sharma.

⁴⁰⁵ Interview with the tailors at Raymond Workshop in NIFT Delhi, July 2014.

discussed in the next chapter.



Figure 4-31 A sketch showing two options for constructing the back of the sherwani, and a rough paper pattern. Sketch by Mr. Akhil Tamta, Raymond Ltd. The pattern was constructed by Mr. Asif Sheikh, Raymond Ltd.

Many Indians mistakenly confuse the sherwani and the achkan, and most people treat the two words as synonyms. In my interviews with academics, textile history experts, museum curators and tailors, it was only the tailors and one antique shop dealer who were aware of the difference between the two. The achkan's sleeve attachment is like the angrakha's, allowing for easy arm rotation, whereas the sherwani's sleeve attachment is like a coat's, and it has shoulder pads to give it a structured look. Another difference is in the cut: the achkan has a waist seam: kalis or panels are attached below the waist, and it is stitched with an extended balabar (extra fabric, which gets overlapped) inside, which is tied with fabric strings to the inside of the side-seam. The sherwani, on the other hand, is cut in the western style like a coat, has a very short extension at the waist (which is

not an extra panel), which can be buttoned or tied on the inside to create a short overlap.⁴⁰⁶ The three most common answers that came up while interviewing people on the difference between the two garments were:

Sherwani and achkan are same the only difference is that Hindus call it achkan and Muslims call it sherwani.

Sherwani and achkan are same, or probably there is a difference in the pattern.

Sherwani is a Mughal garment and achkan is probably from Rajasthan.

It is possible that features of sherwani were later adopted to the achkan and the original achkan was discontinued. This could be the reason for the confusion between the terminologies of the two garments. A comparative analysis of the sherwani and achkan has been done in table - 1

Table 1 A comparison of the sherwani and achkan in late 19th century (1890s).

	Sherwani Pattern	Achkan
Cutting	Uses paper pattern	Does not use paper pattern
Length	Just above the knee	Could range from knee-length to mid-calf length
Collar	Small fall collar to begin with and later a stand-up collar or Chinese collar (later referred to as Nehru collar)	Without collar, just a u-neckline or Chinese or mandarin collar, also referred to as stand-up collar
Chest fitting	Tailored to fit, front-open with buttons	Fitted to the chest, front-open, with a big u-like pattern on the front, which vanished over time
Waist	No seam at waist	Seam at waist

⁴⁰⁶ "Hindi Shabdkosh (Hindi Dictionary)."

Buttons	7 buttons (sometimes 5, depending on the height of the wearer)	7-9 buttons
Shoulder padding	Shoulder padding, arm movement restricted	No shoulder padding, no restriction in arm movement.
Armhole and sleeve attachment	European style of tailoring, small armhole and sleeve cap is set in to the armhole (this is self-explanatory from the table)	Small armhole fitted to the body and tight sleeves, with a small gusset attached below the sleeve attachment for free arm movement
Sleeves	Full length, fitted, three buttons in a line from near the seam of cuff upwards	Full length, fitted, buttons not necessary.
Fabric	Plain black wool or single colours. Brocades or silks could also be used	Usually brocaded, and fancy fabrics were used. Fine cotton could be used for summer.
Pockets	2 pockets at chest level 2 side pockets, concealed in the lining.	One or two pockets at the level of waist seam; there could also be no waist pockets and 2 side pockets instead
Accompaniments	1. Pyjama or trousers 2. Persian or European shoes 3. Turbans or caps	1. Pyjama or trousers 2. European shoes or Persian slippers 3. Turbans

The etymology of the word sherwani is still a puzzle. One theory is that the sherwani acquired its name because it was worn by migrants to India from Sherwan. Sherwan was a place in Persia and there is also a place called Sherwan in present day Pakistan, which was earlier part of India. India has had a long history of immigrants from Persia and the Ottoman Empire; the immigrants from Sherwan are called sherwanis, to honour the place from

which they come or to show the place to which they belong. On my visit to Aligarh in 2014, I saw many bungalows with the surname 'sherwani' written on their name plates. Aligarh is the place where the famous Mehdi Hassan sherwani tailor was based, but he started his business in 1947; by then sherwani was a very well established garment and the name was already in use. It is quite possible that one of these sherwanis would have worn this garment, thus giving it its name. Equally, it is possible that someone whose surname was Sherwani stitched the first sherwani for the Nizam of Hyderabad. Another probable theory is that the word originates from 'sher', which means lion in Urdu and Hindi. Sherman means 'warlike or brave', and since the garment was made for the Nizam of Hyderabad, it is possible that it was called the shermani, which then became sherwani. 'Sherwali' meaning something like 'for the lion' is another possible etymology, as is the Persian word 'shahrabani', meaning governor. But since no documentation was found, none of these derivations are conclusive.

4.7 Conclusion

The dress of elite Indian men, both upper and lower garments, underwent many changes during the course of the British Raj. During the Company Raj, the angrakha, chapkan and achkan evolved, and these developments continued under the British Raj, as these garments were expected to reflect more pomp and grandeur. Under the Company Raj, jamas and angrakhas were worn daily and were practical wear; under the British Raj such garments became more decorated and were embellished with golden embroidery. These fancy garments were worn for public functions; for daily wear, the princes began to either adopt British fashions or wear simple angrakhas. The dress of the judiciary, administration, educational establishment and the army were all eventually changing from the Mughal to the British style.⁴⁰⁷ The courage that is associated with a soldier is reflected in his uniform, and this image was carried forward by society, which adopted elements of military uniform for daily wear. Thus the new stand-up collar

⁴⁰⁷ Smith.

and front-opening of the tunic and the kurta began to anticipate the style of the achkan and sherwani. The British directly and indirectly influenced the clothing choices of their subjects. By introducing smart uniforms for the army, and levee dress, like frock coats, for the ICS, they began to dictate the kind of fashion that India would eventually adopt. Other than the Indians recruited into British service, no one was forced to adopt British dress, but the Indians looked up to them because of their power and technological prowess. This power gave the British a superiority that they were careful to reflect in their clothing. As discussed in Chapter 3, the British were careful to retain a separate image and thus sumptuary laws were passed which did not allow the British to dress as natives.

Since the sherwani came into existence around 1884 and the Mughal rule ended in 1858, it can safely be said that sherwani is definitely not a Mughal garment. Curators, art dealers, art collectors, historians and academics in India sometimes find it difficult to believe that the sherwani is a result of British influence. It is thought of as a garment that has either Persian or Turkish origins. The fact that sherwani has a high standing collar, which could only have come from British army tunics or frock coats, is strong evidence of the sherwani's western influence, because neither the choga nor the jama nor the angrakha has such a neckline. Both the army tunic and the sherwani have seven buttons, while Indian clothes did not have the type of metal buttons in use (with or without fabric) on the sherwani.

The sherwani was born as a result of British influence on elite Indians, it is evident from the case studies of the maharajas of Baroda, Mysore and the Nizam of Hyderabad. In its entirety it is more like a western garment; its only Indian aspect is the interior extension, which was either buttoned or tied to the opposite side-seam. This allowed the extra fabric to be in view while walking or sitting, as Indians were used to wearing longer garments. The sherwani was born as a hybrid eastern and western so that, while incorporating all features of a modern man, the elite Indian could still reflect his Indian identity.

The common myth that the sherwani was a traditional Mughal or Rajput garment stems from the fact that it is a stitched garment and that only the elite, who were mostly Muslims and high class Hindus, wore such garments - the rest of the country wore the dhoti.⁴⁰⁸ 'Traditional dress', despite the implication of cultural stability, changes with the passage of time, as Hansen asserts in her discussion of the various influences of globalisation on different cultures' fashion choices.⁴⁰⁹ Parallels can be drawn with my research. Describing any garment as traditional makes it deliberately appear to have continued unaltered for a very long time. This myth also holds true in case of the sherwani, which is thought of as Mughal but is in fact far more modern.

⁴⁰⁸ Sharar, *Purana Lucknow*. 207-8.

⁴⁰⁹ Hansen. 372-374.

Chapter 5 Sherwanis for Bridegrooms and Nationalists: Establishing Traditions, 1915-2015

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is an account of the development and use of the sherwani from 1915 to 2015, and its role in the wardrobe of the Indian elite. By 1915 the sherwani was popular among nationalists, independent rulers and other men of high social standing. The chapter also tries to understand the creation of traditions and discusses why a late 19th century garment is now considered traditional and how it seamlessly merged with the identity of a country that claims to be more than 5000 years old. Even in 2015, classic or contemporary sherwanis fill the shelves of retail stores in India and abroad. This chapter argues that just as khadi was adopted as the national fabric, the sherwani was adopted as a national garment. It describes how jewellery and ornamentation gave way to simplicity and elegance in menswear in India. It also discusses Indian menswear options for different situations and the development of two distinct types of sherwani for different situations. It argues that men's fashion is adaptable according to the needs - especially the political needs - of the time.

The chapter is divided into sections. Section 5.2 deals with the historical and political background of India from 1915 to 2015. Section 5.3 discusses the Indian elite who began to copy British clothing habits either willingly or forcibly. Section 5.4 discusses the construction of traditions. It is further subdivided into 5.4.1 which discusses the etymology of the sherwani, 5.4.2 which discusses the sherwani as worn by the elite class of independent Indian rulers, section 5.4.3 which discusses the sherwani in the context of the educated Indian elite and the educated nationalists of the country and section 5.4.4 discusses the tailoring of the sherwani and the changes that it has undergone in the last 100 years. Section 5.5 is a conclusion that discusses how the sherwani became a symbol of both royalty and nationality in independent India.

5.2 Historical Background

This section is an overview of the last 100 years of India's social and political history, during which India was a British colony until 1947, and fought in both the world wars on behalf of the British. After 1947 the country was divided into India and Pakistan; the new India was a young nation that established rules for its function as a sovereign and democratic republic. Post-independence, India was still divided into independent India and the small princely states that existed during British India. Some areas in India were still occupied by the French and the Portuguese, like Goa and Pondicherry, which were Portuguese and French colonies respectively, later the princely states and all the other colonies within the Indian peninsular were eventually incorporated into India.

The century began with India under colonial rule and a large number of independent constituencies that acknowledged British sovereignty. As a result, the elite in British India constituted the British politicians - the Viceroy and his assistants - the cream of the Indian Civil Service, the judiciary, businessmen and the high ranks of the army, which was largely British but did begin to allow Indians to make higher ranks. On the other hand, the independent constituencies meant that there were many princely leaders all over the Indian subcontinent who proved their alliance with the British by providing armies and funding for the world wars.⁴¹⁰ The Rajah of Jaipur, the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Maharaja of Baroda and many other princes were a part of this system. As discussed in the previous chapter, they had personal relationships with the royal family and travelled to London for special occasions.⁴¹¹ Apart from these aristocrats, these constituencies also had an elite comprised of rich businessmen and the sons of the trusted nobles of the princes. The aristocracy and the bureaucracy formed the elite layer of the Indian society. From among them and the educated middle-class, another set of educated Indians was beginning to take shape: the

⁴¹⁰ Devi., 134, 135.

⁴¹¹ F. Gaekwad, *Sayajirao of Baroda, the Prince and the Man* (Popular Prakashan, 1989). 376.

leaders whose aim was to see an independent India. Colonial rule, growing unrest and the unjust actions of the ruling class such as the Amritsar Massacre of 1919, created feelings of hatred and enmity towards the British and elite Indians.⁴¹² More and more Indians began to feel the need for self-rule. The movement for self-rule had some successes, evidenced by the creation of Indian National Congress in 1885, but it was slow and characterised by a feeling of power-sharing.⁴¹³ The Indian National Congress (INC) had some foreigner members, but consisted largely of upper-middle class educated Indians. It was principally responsible for creating awareness among educated Indians about their rights to be included in the governance of the country and the beginning of nationalist movements. Nationalist leaders, generally from the educated middle class, started to call for home-rule, feeling that it was their responsibility to free the country from foreign rule. From 1915 to 1947, many Indians, from every layer of society, started to struggle to free India. They were educated in British ways but dreamt of a free India. These nationalists wanting self-rule began to get together in groups.

Enlightened gentlemen like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Rabindranath Tagore, Lala Lajpat Rai and Keshab Chandra Sen, to name a few, were the backbone of the nationalist movements. They worked for the welfare of their fellow countrymen. They pushed for the abolition of child-marriages, the opening of schools, and the printing of vernacular newspapers and the promotion of human rights. These men and women, who had often lived or studied in Britain, found many followers among their countrymen.⁴¹⁴ The Indian National Congress promoted the cause of work for Indian by the Indians. It promoted their right to leadership. The influence of education that had begun a hundred years ago was now being felt. These educated Indians began to challenge rules which created difference on the basis of race, caste

⁴¹² Allen., 236.

⁴¹³ Ibid., 237.

⁴¹⁴ Mukherjee.

or creed.

Finally, after the division of India into India and Pakistan, Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of India, handed control of the country to Jawaharlal Nehru on the 15th of August 1947. Jawaharlal Nehru wore a sherwani for the occasion. This chapter argues that the sherwani came to symbolise India and nationalism and outlines the importance of the sherwani in comparison to the western suit.

5.3 Western Menswear Adopted by the Indian Elite

This section discusses in detail the kind of clothes that became prevalent among the elite Indians since the early 20th century as a result of British influence. Delhi was the capital of British India from 1911 and the city's fashionable elite were the British and Indian civil servants, traders and merchants, along with the more anglicised of the "England-returned" Indians.⁴¹⁵ The focus in menswear had shifted from Lucknow (Nawabs of Oudh) during Company rule to Hyderabad in the later part of the 19th century; from there it shifted to New Delhi to the educated Indian elite. The Indian educated elite class, which was educated in the western style schools set up by the British, was very British in manners. These schools of the early 20th century India, which were set up and run by the British (such as Mayo College in Ajmer and the Sherwood School in Nainital,) produced fine young Indians whose clothing was a reflection of Edwardian fashions, as discussed in Chapter 4. The students at these schools were usually the sons of big businessmen or professionals, and as a result of their education they obtained upper class jobs in the judiciary, the Indian Civil Service and the Indian Army. These services were still run by the British government, so the offices were very culturally British. It was understood, for example, that when working in such offices, British clothing should be worn.

From the mid-19th century, upper-class and upper-middle class educated

⁴¹⁵ "Delhi 100 Defining Moments," *Hindustan Times*, 14 Decemeber 2011.

Indians (which was a new rising class of Indian society), had already begun to wear a mix of Indian and western styles: a coat with a dhoti, a shirt with a dhoti or even a coat with pyjamas, as well as many other combinations.⁴¹⁶ The coat with or without trousers was the most commonly adopted formal European garment in Indian cities.⁴¹⁷ The educated Indian, the Indian civil servant, the barrister and the rest of the cream of society believed in British rule and felt that they belonged in an Anglo-Indian elite. Gentlemen of this category began to wear British clothes even on special occasions, like marriages and parties, and it became a norm, almost as if it were their own clothing, it came naturally to them.⁴¹⁸ Figure 5-1 is a photograph of a well-dressed Indian in Delhi in the 1930s, shot by the famous photographers Mahatta of Connaught Place in New Delhi. It shows the complete adoption of western dress, including the hat and tie.



Figure 5-1 The Delhi elite in the 1930s. Source: *Hindustan Times*, Mahatta Archives.

⁴¹⁶ Nirad Chaudhuri, *Culture in the Vanity Bag: Being an Essay on Clothing and Adornment in Passing and Abiding India* (Mumbai: Jaico Publishing House, 1976).

⁴¹⁷ Chaudhuri, *Culture in the Vanity Bag* (1976).

⁴¹⁸ Chaudhuri. 77.

The people serving in various offices of repute, political, civil or military, had clear instructions regarding the uniforms they had to wear in the early 20th century. There were published rules and regulations regarding clothes and shoes. The regulations for the dress of ICS officers (called the civilian dress) of the Government of India Home Department, published in Simla on the 31st May 1923 lists in detail the “Rules regarding the use of uniform for officers in civil employ”, declaring what all men (both British and Indian) in various positions in various services should wear in India.⁴¹⁹ These rules were common to everyone who held a post. Indian officers were required to wear the same uniform, but there was an exception for Indian officers, probably in order to show tolerance for Indian contemporary clothing.⁴²⁰ It goes on to detail the minutest elements like embroidery and the number of buttons that an officer should have depending on his class and rank. It is also exact regarding the colour and pattern on socks and the type of shoes and buckles to be worn.

Coat - Blue Cloth buttoned from Neck to Below waist and then falling loose to knees. Nine buttons up the front to button. Black silk lining

Buttons - Gilt, Mounted. The Royal Arms (without supporters), surmounted by the imperial crown

The collar and cuffs - of black velvet, Gentlemen entitled to wear 2nd class uniform have an edging of purl embroidery on velvet collar and cuffs. Gentlemen entitled to wear 3rd class uniform have no embroidery on collar and cuffs.

Trousers - White or white pyjamas

Head Dress - Distinctive national headdress worn on ceremonial occasions.

⁴¹⁹ In 1911, the capital of British India shifted from Calcutta to Delhi. During the two months of intense heat in May and June every year, the capital would shift to Shimla in the Himalayan foothills, in order to avoid the high temperatures.

⁴²⁰ Government of India, "Uniform - Civil Uniform - Rules and Regulations ", ed. Home Department (Simla, India: Government of India, 1923).

Socks - Black Silk

Shoes - Black patent leather with gilt buckle, Rose, Shamrock and Thistle pattern.⁴²¹

It is interesting to note the similarity between the coat prescribed in the document and the sherwani. Both are buttoned from the neck to below the waist and fall loose to knees, and both have silk linings, although this coat has nine buttons, while the sherwani usually only had seven. The same document permits Indians to wear a black chapkan with white or black trousers. It also mentions that, for evening functions, Indians can wear a choga or jubba if it is customarily worn.⁴²² Dhanvanthi Rama Rau, the wife of an Indian ICS officer Sir Benegal Rama Rau, notes the rigid attitude of the British towards dress in the 1920s. Regarding her husband's clothes in Madras in 1921-22, she writes:

Perhaps the thing that most struck me for its utter absurdity was the matter of clothes. My husband had to order a new wardrobe, for he now had to wear a heavy flannel morning coat and striped trousers to all formal and official daytime occasions. He needed a close imitation of the British tweed suit, with padded shoulders for everyday wear, a dinner jacket and black tie for informal parties, and tails and white tie with pumps for invitation to government house, formal dinner parties, and other evening functions. All this in the climate of Madras - hot and hotter.⁴²³

Irrespective of the climate and of the background of the official, he was expected to dress up in British formality. She further adds that, if the Indians did not wear British dress, they were looked down upon with contempt and addressed as "natives" or "baboo".⁴²⁴ To avoid such humiliation and to feel a part of the high society, Indians in British service continued to copy the British. To make matters worse, Indian dress like the chapkan was made into uniforms for the bearers. To distinguish themselves

⁴²¹ Ibid. 4.

⁴²² Ibid. 6.

⁴²³ Dhanvanthi Rama Rau, *An Inheritance: The Memoirs of Dhanvanthi Rama Rau* (London: Heinemann, 1978). 116.

⁴²⁴ Rau, *An Inheritance*, 117.

from the lower layers of the society, the elite had no choice but to adopt British dress even when it was not prescribed.

Describing the fashion of the 1930s, Nirad C. Chaudhuri, a member of the educated elite of Calcutta, draws a wonderful caricature of people of Calcutta in his book *Culture in a Vanity Bag*.⁴²⁵ Chaudhuri describes the dressing habits of the wealthy Bengali men of Calcutta as a “motely of Indian clothing” because they wore European and Indian clothes on different occasions and kept their European wardrobe separate from their Indian one. He caricatures the flexible Indian man, who could change his dressing style according to either political or social demands. The conflict in clothing during the Mughal empire and then under British Rule, according to him, was that the British did not want the Indians to dress up like them, whereas when the Mughals were rulers they insisted on everybody adopting similar costume.

So when the wealthy and conservatives Hindus of Calcutta put on European clothing either for business or fashion, they were scrupulous in putting them off before going into inner apartments, in fact even the inner courtyards, all of which were under the jurisdiction of the family deities and the women. Down to the thirties of this century, in the old families of Calcutta, I saw these clothes kept in a dressing-room, furnished in the Western Style and with even wardrobes made in England, and this dressing-room was usually adjacent to the master's living room in the outer house. Those who were not rich enough to provide segregation of such high quality for their European clothes kept them in a small alcove in the men's apartments.⁴²⁶

The baboos formed the educated upper-middle class of Indians and began to

⁴²⁵ Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Nirad C Chaudhuri," <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/108063/Nirad-C-Chaudhuri>. Chaudhuri was a Bengali by birth and was educated in India in the western style. He was well versed in Sanskrit literature as well as the western classics. He idolised the British in India and did not like the policies of the newly formed Indian government of independent India, so he left for England in 1970. Once in England, he felt that the English had changed and declined since the end of their empire. The Encyclopaedia Britannica describes him as a “Bengali author and scholar who was opposed to the withdrawal of British colonial rule from the Indian subcontinent and the subsequent rejection of Western culture in independent India.”

⁴²⁶ Chaudhuri. 72.

adopt the latest British clothing as well. The satirical cartoons of Gaganendranath Tagore show the plight of the Bengali babus, who were ridiculed for imitating the British.⁴²⁷ Gaganendranath Tagore's cartoons target those Indian men who were well educated and considered themselves at par with the ruling British. In one of his cartoons, where a babu is dressed in complete western attire titled, 'By the sweat of my brow I tried to be mistaken for a *sahib*, but still that man called me *Babu*', he mocks the babu's mentality of being accepted as a 'sahib'. He targeted all those Indian men and women who were not very happy about their Indian roots and whose English education made them feel as if they belonged to an upper class which could ridicule the lower uneducated Indians. Their sole aim was to look for government jobs, and to keep up with the manners and customs of the British, which definitely included dressing up like the British.

The shirt became an article of daily wear. The Indians in alliance with the British, especially the Parsis and the Bengalis, began to open factories, spinning mills and iron foundries, and became involved in ship building.⁴²⁸ These factories needed educated employees, and these employees were expected to dress in shirts and trousers. My own grandfather, an engineer at Banaras Hindu University (BHU), often recounted his experience of the very first day he went to his job in Calcutta in 1944. He had worn a rich kurta with gold buttons to impress his employer, and his employer showed him a white shirt with plastic buttons and asked him to get six of them stitched so that he could wear one to the factory every day. There was a total conversion to Western clothing which was considered proper and modern as far as the educated elite and the middle-class were concerned.

Indian cinema and songs reflect India's popular culture. The high class or high society Indian characters in Indian cinema have always mostly aped Western mannerisms. A classic example is the Hindi song 'Sala Main to Sahib

⁴²⁷ Gaganendranath Tagore, *The Humorous Art of G. T. (Gaganendranath Tagore)* (Birla Academy of Art and Culture, 1970).

⁴²⁸ Bombay Dyeing was opened the Wadia Group in the late 19th century, and other mills and businesses were set up by the Parsis with the help of the British.

Ban Gaya', meaning 'Hey, I have become a Sahib', from the film *Sagina* (1974).⁴²⁹ This song shows the importance of the "suit" and "boot" in making an Indian stand out from the crowd of fellow Indians. It is a period film set in the time of the labour movement in India and is based on the true story of a union leader from the early 1940s. The protagonist works on a tea-estate set up by the British and is courageous in his fight against their tyrannical attitudes towards the labouring class. He sings a song in the movie (which was written for the movie and has become famous), the first verse of which goes:

Hey, I have become a sahib

How smart I look after becoming a sahib

Look at my boot [the English word 'boot']

Look at my suit [the English word 'suit']

Just like a fair man from London.⁴³⁰

The willingness to adopt western manners and dress is primarily because the man feels more powerful when he copies someone who is more powerful than him. This song reinforces the view that Indian man could assert his own superiority by copying western fashion. Jane Workman, in her research on American clothing, says that men have a need-based approach to fashion, whereas women have a want-based approach.⁴³¹ The need to be accepted in modern society, which was based on British systems, and the need to be accepted as an educated man forced the Indian educated elite to abandon past clothing styles and adopt new western ones. Through the above song, the protagonist conveys the idea that a change in clothing from Indian to western makes him as respectable as a sahib from London.

⁴²⁹ Tapan Sinha, "Sagina," (Bombay 1974).

⁴³⁰ Sinha, *Sagina*.

⁴³¹ Workman and Studak.

Jawaharlal Nehru studied law in London and was the son of a wealthy lawyer. His photographs at the Nehru Museum in New Delhi, India, show him in a sherwani on his wedding day in 1916 and in a western suit on many other occasions. Since he did not belong to the ruling class, he was not obliged to wear oriental garments for special occasions. People like him - barristers, other high officials and the sons of wealthy men - always wore the latest European fashions before they became a part of the nationalist movement. Like many young foreign-returned Indians, he always wore the immaculate British suit. It was alleged that some of these men would not even speak politely to a fellow Indian if he did not speak in English or wear western garments.⁴³² Before Nehru joined the freedom movement, he and many like him always wore the western suit.

The rich businessmen of India, such as the owners of famous Tata and Birla groups, dressed in business suits for practical purposes and in their traditional garments for special occasions. The Tata family were Parsis and wore immaculate western suits⁴³³ and the Birlas were from a traditional Hindu background. They wore dhotis with coats or similar upper garments. Pictures in the Tata archives of these business men again show them dressing for their business needs, and hardly ever show them wearing the sherwani casually or for conferences or meetings. Thus the sherwani was used sparingly in this upwardly mobile community, who primarily wore it for weddings.

5.4 The Sherwani: A Tradition, a National Identity

This section deals with the creation of the sherwani as part of a traditional national identity for Indian men and its adoption as Indian's national dress. It discusses why, when the modern educated man had adopted western formal attire, there was still a need for an Indian garment. It also discusses how a garment that was a very new creation at the end of the 19th century came to

⁴³² Chaudhuri. 131.

⁴³³ See Chapter 4 for a discussion of the Parsis adopting British fashions - they could often be seen in Parsi coats or chogas.

be regarded as India's traditional menswear.

Kate A. Lingley in her article "Naturalizing the Exotic: On the changing meanings of Ethnic Dress in Medieval China", explains a similar situation in China, where a recently introduced garment became associated with Chinese national identity in the medieval ages. The dress she discusses was introduced into China by travelling Turks, but after a century had become normal menswear dress, despite its exotic origins. It lost its ethnic associations and became the traditional dress of Chinese men.⁴³⁴ Parallels to this study can be drawn in the case of the sherwani becoming the traditional dress for Indian men.

The sherwani began to be worn only in the 1880s, but was rapidly labelled a traditional Indian garment. The sherwani borrowed elements from western fashions, as is discussed in Chapter 4, but the elements that it borrowed, like the stand-up collar and the front placket with buttons that ran from the neck to the waist, were starting to disappear from the western coat by the second decade of the 20th century. Men in England now wore crisp shirts with turn-down collars, neckties, waistcoats and coats with lapels which were not as fitted on the torso as the frock coat.⁴³⁵ The image of a British gentleman had changed.⁴³⁶ The Indians either aped these fashions or wore the sherwani. The new generation saw these two types of clothing as distinctly different from each other. They had not seen the frock coat, so the link between western styles and the sherwani was missing. With the passage of time, especially after India had gained independence, the sherwani stood out as an Indian dress because it had become very different from British dress. The sherwani was worn by both, by the nationalists on a daily basis, or for the weddings of wealthy men. The sherwani may have been worn for weddings in order to show an Indian background and observe unwritten cultural rules, but since these were progressive modern men who believed in western ways,

⁴³⁴ Lingley. 56-58.

⁴³⁵ Ugolini.

⁴³⁶ Amies.

they dressed accordingly and did not pay much heed to Indian dress. To move and work with the British, they had to dress up like them. Therefore the sherwani did not find much favour with this section of the society.

5.4.1 The Sherwani of the Princes

In the previous chapter, it was described how the rulers, who were now educated in western ways, began to change their clothing preferences during the heyday of the Raj. This section discusses how these rulers adopted the sherwani as a garment for festive occasions and public dealings. It also argues how clothing traditions were constructed by this generation of Indian rulers, who consciously decided to blend the best aspects of two different clothing cultures and increase their wardrobe to include Indian, western, Indo-western outfits, and to wear what the occasion demanded. The argument is based on the influence of politics, technology and society on the fashion preferences of the fashion leaders of a cultural community.

The new princes or the younger generation of rulers of the independent Indian states were now mostly educated in India in boarding schools set up by the British, which were also attended by other elite Indians from British-ruled areas, and would later go to Britain for further study. These foreign-educated, England-returned princes were present in all the princely states.⁴³⁷ These rajas grew up in an environment which was replete with British manners and tastes, but with an Indian twist. It was natural for them to speak two languages fluently and to have English nannies and tutors and Indian servants. Their early years were very much like the early years of the British ICS children.⁴³⁸ They sat, slept and dined on British furniture, drove British cars, shot game using British guns, played cricket, polo, tennis and billiards with their friends in school and in no way felt inferior to the British. They were rich, intelligent and knowledgeable. They had acquired British

⁴³⁷ foreign- educated princes who had returned from England

⁴³⁸ Allen.

tastes, shopped at Harrods and spent their summers in England.⁴³⁹ They were comfortable in western clothes and would also change to lighter Indian ones depending on time and occasion.

The times were changing, and even the middle-class educated men, the baboos, working in offices and industry had by then begun to wear shirts and trousers. Foreign educated princes also wanted to keep up with the times and, as discussed in the previous chapter, this resulted in the birth of the sherwani. The sherwani, along with the angrakha, became synonymous with the identity of Indian royalty, as is shown by photographs of the rajas of the early 20th century. The sherwani was Indian in spirit and British in construction. It could be made with fancy fabrics like brocades or with simple black wool. It was a well-tailored garment, intended for the smart look of a 20th century man, and was not flowing or effeminate.

For formal occasions the rajas continued to wear the sherwani with jewellery, which they did not wear in their daily lives, and on such occasions they could be seen decked in jewels; in clubs and other meeting places, in contrast, they would be seen mostly in light shirts.⁴⁴⁰ The tradition of dressing formally for the British in jewels and 'Indian' clothes continued. Mahatma Gandhi, the great non-violent nationalist of India, writes in his autobiography about the dress of the rulers during the ceremony for the laying of the foundation stone of Banaras Hindu University in 1916. It was a big occasion and all the important elite men in India, both Indian and British, were invited. Though the educated elite may have worn western clothes, the educated rulers had to dress in royal robes. He informs us that the age-old image of a maharaja was still the fancy of the west, so a maharaja in modern dress was unacceptable, however educated he might have been.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁹ Devi., various pages.

⁴⁴⁰ Gonsalves. 48.

⁴⁴¹ Cohn.

At the time when Lord Hardinge⁴⁴² laid the foundation stone of the Hindu University, there was a durbar. There were Rajas and Maharajas of course but Pandit Malviyaji⁴⁴³ specially invited me also to attend it, and I did so. I was distressed to see Maharajas bedecked like women-silk pyjamas and silk achkans, pearl necklaces round their necks, bracelets on their wrists, pearl and diamond tassels on their turbans and besides all this swords with golden hilts hanging from their waistbands.

I discovered that these were insignia not of their royalty but of their slavery. I had thought that they must be wearing these badges of impotence of their own free will, but I was told that it was obligatory for these rajas to wear all their costly jewels at these functions. I also gathered that some of them had a positive dislike for wearing these jewels, and that they never wore them except on occasions like the durbar.⁴⁴⁴

This passage reflects how the aristocracy were forced to wear oriental garments and accessories. Gandhi uses the word “achkan”, and also mentions waistbands or kamarbandhs/cummerbunds. The image he creates is very similar to the photograph of the seventh Nizam of Hyderabad in the Salarjung Museum (see Figure 5-2). Hyderabad was a very rich state during the early 20th century. The seventh Nizam, Osman Ali Khan, ascended the throne in 1911. He was featured on the cover of *Time* as the richest man in the world in 1940. He helped the British with huge loans and military support during World War I. He can be seen in this photograph wearing a fancy sherwani with a belt and a jewelled turban. He can also be seen wearing necklaces. Osman Ali Khan’s father, the sixth Nizam of Hyderabad, was the first person to be photographed in the sherwani in 1884, but his sherwani was plain and very different from his son’s. Khan’s sherwani resembles the sherwani of the Raja of Mysore in 1903 (See Figure 4-25). Both have stand-up collars and cummerbunds. He also wears armbands, Indian pyjamas and Persian slippers (jutis) and holds a sword. This was the preferred image of

⁴⁴² Lord Hardinge was the Viceroy of India from 1910-1916. He laid the foundation stone of Banaras Hindu University on 4th February 1916.

⁴⁴³ Pandit Malviyaji or Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya (1861-1946) was a great reformer and Indian nationalist, and was elected the president of the Indian National Congress more than once.

⁴⁴⁴ Mohandas K. K. Gandhi and M. Desai, *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Floating Press, 2009). 368-369.

princes in the early 20th century.

From the early 20th century photographic evidence of the sherwani worn by elite men abounds, and rajas can be seen wearing sherwanis during public functions and meetings in this period. Between the 1880s and 1915, the rajas are seen in many garments like the angrakha, achkan with chogas, or ornate achkans, but after 1915, most of the princes adopted the sherwani.

Photographs from the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s show that the sherwani had become the most common garment and the preferred choice of the Indian elite.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴⁵ Bhandari, *Costume, Textiles and Jewellery of India: Traditions in Rajasthan*.



Figure 5-2 The seventh Nizam of Hyderabad, Osman Ali Khan (1911-1948) in his sherwani with jewels and a sword. Courtesy of Salarjung Museum, Hyderabad.

Osman Ali Khan, the seventh Nizam and the son of the sixth Nizam (the creator of the sherwani), after he became the Nizam, is mostly seen in photographs and paintings wearing a sherwani. His sherwanis are also on display in his two-storey wardrobe in Hyderabad, which is considered to be Asia's longest wardrobe. One of the sherwanis from his wardrobe is shown in the image below (Figure 5-3). This sherwani, which is not in a very good

condition, is made of patterned silk, most likely brocaded silk, and has a lining of an off-white colour (the fabric could not be determined because I was not allowed to touch it and there was no expert available for comment). It has seven buttons and a raised collar. There is a slight overlap below the last button and shoulder pads attached inside. It also has two pockets at the level of the chest, mainly for keeping a chain watch in the British fashion. The chain was usually tied to one of the buttons. Figure 5-3a shows how it would have been worn. In this photograph, the Nizam wears western shoes, a pyjama and the sherwani and accessorises with a cane, spectacles and a pocket watch. His hat is the trademark style of Nizam of Hyderabad and, other than his watch, he does not wear any jewels. There are no rich necklaces or aigrettes.

Thus the Nizam began to wear the sherwani in two styles (figure 5-2 and fig 5-4), one which was worn for festive occasions made of brocades or silks, and the other more comfortable for daily wear or meetings, made of plain black wool. The collar in both cases was stand-up. The construction of both the sherwanis is the same, but in the first case, it is paired with Indian pyjamas and (Persian) Indian shoes and jewels, whereas in the second the Nizam wears a similar pyjama with western shoes. Both the styles gained importance. One became associated with riches and the other with education. Educated men preferred to wear simpler garments by the second decade of 20th century.



Figure 5-3 A sherwani from the seventh Nizam's wardrobe, which dates roughly to the 1940s. Photo by the author. Courtesy of The Nizam's wardrobe, Hyderabad.

Figure 5-4 Mir Osman Ali Khan the seventh Nizam of Hyderabad. Photo by Monika Gupta, Courtesy of Salarjung Museum, Hyderabad.

Dr Veerendra Singh, curator of the Salarjung museum at Hyderabad, stated that the last Nizam was a fashionable man, who loved to get his clothes stitched by British tailors. He confirmed that there were many British shops

in and around Hyderabad and that there were big shops owned by British tailors.

The seventh Nizam was a fashionable man. He wore the latest fashions, his son got his clothes stitched from John Burton Tailors, very famous Scottish tailors in Secunderabad (twin city of Hyderabad, created by the British). He got his coats and his sherwanis made from him. Another famous London tailor was Yak's tailors in Narain Guda area of Hyderabad.⁴⁴⁶

Narendra Luther, a former civil servant and an authority on the history of Hyderabad, has written many books on Hyderabad's culture. He presented a paper in 2008 on the merger of British culture with the Hyderabadi culture. Alexandra Road and Oxford Street in Secunderabad⁴⁴⁷ had the most fashionable European shops, including confectioners, crockery stores, chemists, goldsmiths, general stores etc., all modelled on Western lines, and mostly run by British business men. The nobility of the old city went there for fashionable shopping. Among these shops was that of John Burton, who was the most fashionable draper and tailor. The second son of Nizam VII had his sherwanis stitched at Burton's. He would buy the whole roll of cloth so that no one else would have a similar sherwani.⁴⁴⁸

The sherwanis worn by the rajas in the second decade of the 20th century are less ostentatious and have little or no embroidery, but could be made with the most expensive brocades. Examples of these sherwanis can be found in museums all over India. Most of the sherwanis preserved in the National Museum, New Delhi, date to 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. The fabrics for these could have been woven in Banaras or Hyderabad, but the ones in National Museum, New Delhi and Salarjung Museum, Hyderabad and Chowmahalla, Hyderabad were stitched in Hyderabad according to the curators of the museums. The sherwani in Figure 1-1, in Chapter - 1, is probably from the

⁴⁴⁶ Interview with Dr Veerender Singh, curator, Salarjung Museum, Hyderabad, on 5th February 2014.

⁴⁴⁷ Secunderabad is the twin city of Hyderabad built by British missionaries; it had latest shops and schools.

⁴⁴⁸ Narendra Luther, "Bridging Two Cultures," in *City of Hope: A symposium on Hyderabad and its syncretic Culture* (Hyderabad: India-Seminar.com, 2008).

1940s or 1950s. This sherwani has cloth buttons, a few of which are missing. It has western-style sleeves and sleeve attachments with shoulder padding and three buttons in a line on both the cuffs, like the military jacket cuffs. It is fully lined and has side pockets beautifully concealed inside. This was procured by the museum from a dealer from Hyderabad.

Another case study is that of the Maharaja of Jaipur, Sawai Man Singh II. His photographs show his approach to clothing and attitudes towards dress. Figures 5-5 and 5-6 are both from the memoirs of Maharani Gayatri Devi, the third wife of Maharaja of Jaipur Sawai Man Singh II, who also features in these images.⁴⁴⁹ Sawai Man Singh II was the raja of Jaipur from 1922 until 1949, when the state merged with India. The new generation raja and rani (king and queen), both educated in western style, are at home in both traditional and modern clothing. On his wedding day, he wears a silk brocade sherwani, silk pyjamas and a turban, although his shoes are western in keeping with the times. He also holds a decorated sword as an emblem of royalty. In the other image, he stands in front of his car with a double-breasted coat worn over a modern shirt with a tie; there is no headgear of any sort. He wears western-style trousers and shoes.⁴⁵⁰

These two photographs show the contrasting styles that the Indian royalty had begun to adopt. This is how the elite men of India included the latest European fashions in their day-to-day lives; the sherwani was worn to create a traditional image on special occasions. The rajas and Nizams wore the brocaded and heavy sherwanis before independence to appear oriental, and after independence they only wore them for ritual occasions such as weddings. The images in Kumar's book are photographs from the 1980s and 1990s of men of royal lineage, and most show them in their sherwanis, which

⁴⁴⁹ Devi.

⁴⁵⁰ Another influence that can be traced here is the photograph of a couple together. Normally in many images of past two centuries Indian men and women, especially a husband and wife (even if they were the raja and the rani), would never be painted together or photographed in such proximity. This is a further effect of westernisation.

are either plain black or brocaded.⁴⁵¹ Plain black sherwanis would be worn for political discussions or solemn occasions, while brocaded sherwanis would be worn for weddings and rituals. Similarly, many of the royal sherwanis of the 1930s shown in Bhandari's book are made of either plain or brocaded fabric.⁴⁵²

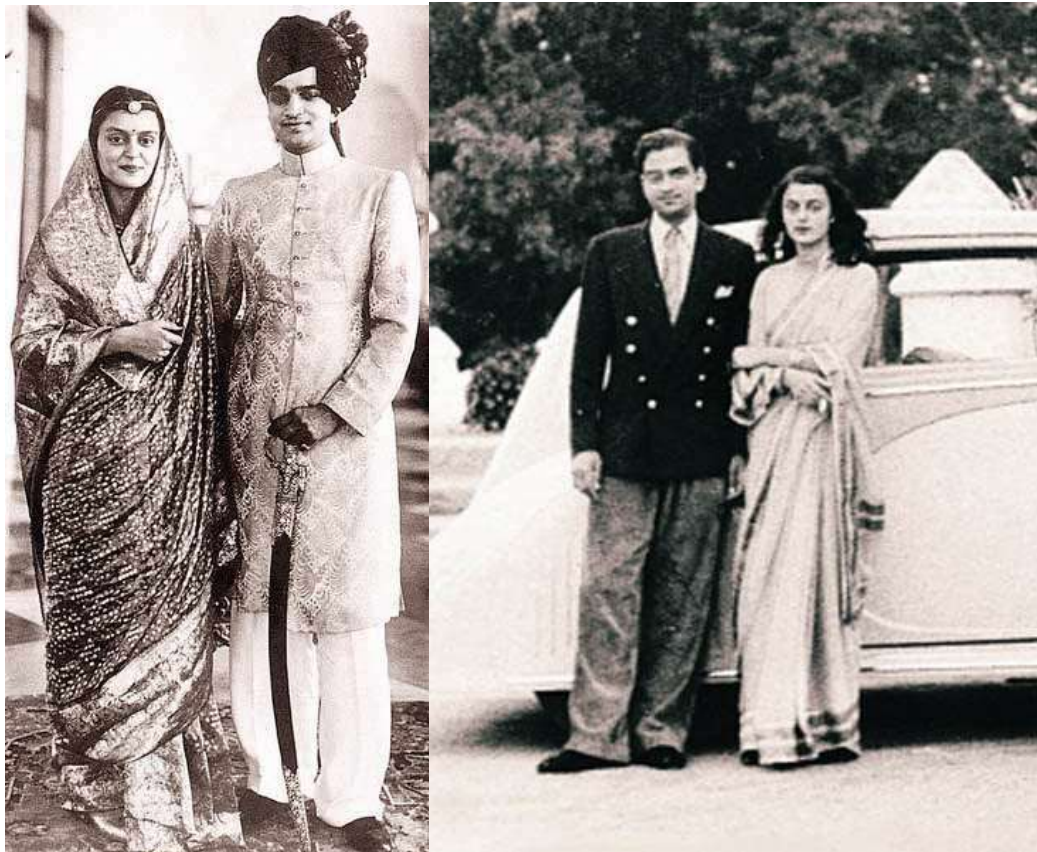


Figure 5-5 Maharani Gayatri Devi with her husband and the raja of Jaipur Sawai Man Singh II in the 1940s. The raja and rani are dressed for a festive occasion. Source: 'A Princess remembers: The memoirs of the Maharani'.

Figure 5-6 Maharani Gayatri Devi with her husband and the raja of Jaipur Sawai Man Singh II in the 1940s. The raja and rani are dressed casually. Source: 'A Princess remembers: The memoirs of the Maharani'.

As can be seen in fig 5-6, the elite Indians began wearing complete western suit for formal occasions like parties and banquets, which were organised in western style. For daily clothing needs, even the princes began to adopt the

⁴⁵¹ Kumar.

⁴⁵² Bhandari, *Costume, Textiles and Jewellery of India: Traditions in Rajasthan*.

western attire. As discussed earlier, the educated men preferred to wear the suit instead of the sherwani. Most of the Indian rajas after 1915 can be seen in western suits as well as Indian garments, depending on the situation.

The Princes began to wear sherwanis for public occasions, and this remains in the memory of Indians, as the glamour of the past. One such example is the photograph that hangs in the reception area of National Archives New Delhi entitled “The Chamber of Princes, Delhi 1941” (see Figure 5-7). It shows princes from all parts of India, along with a few British officers. The difference between them can be clearly seen in their clothing. The British officers have moved out of the frock coat into the new fashions of Europe, whereas the Indians are all (with the exception of one on the extreme left in the first standing row from the bottom) in sherwanis, some of them proudly displaying their alliance with the British by wearing their Star of India medals on their chests. Each prince has different headgear and may have different trousers or pyjamas too, but they all have European shoes, probably with socks. None wears the old-fashioned choga with lots of gold work. This universal adoption of the sherwani by Hindus and Muslims alike gave it a very nationalistic character.⁴⁵³ The black and white photograph does not show the colour of the sherwanis, but it shows that there was no uniformity in colour or texture of the sherwanis, and that there was a vast variety. The use of jewels had also visibly reduced by this time period, as the photography evidences.

⁴⁵³ Sharar, *Purana Lucknow*. 210.



Figure 5-7 “The Chamber of Princes, Delhi, 1941”. Courtesy of National Archives, New Delhi, India. Photo by the author.

5.4.2 The Sherwani of the Nationalists

This section discusses the type of sherwani worn by the nationalists. The British had since the 19th century created differences between the Indians and the British. They felt that they were superior to the Indians and thus that the Indians should not try to be like the British, even if they had been educated in the British style. The feeling that the Indians are inferior is illustrated by the etiquette guide for Indian gentlemen published in 1919 by a British gentlemen call H.R. Hardless:

The Indian gentlemen, with all self-respect to himself, should not enter into a compartment reserved for Europeans, any-more than he should enter a carriage set apart for ladies. Although you may have acquired the habits and manners of the European, have the courage to show that you are not ashamed of being an

Indian, and in all such cases, identify yourself with the race to which you belong.⁴⁵⁴

Apart from such guide books, there were clubs in India exclusively for the British with slogans like “Indians and dogs not allowed”, which was very humiliating for well-read Indians. It was exactly the insult of being pushed out of a carriage reserved for white men in South Africa that aroused a desire for independence and equality in the young Gandhi, who returned to India from South Africa in 1915. After his basic education in India, he had gone to England to study law and then to South Africa to practice law. While in England and South Africa, he always wore immaculate three-piece suits (fig 5-8); once in India, he changed his clothing patterns (second part of Figure 5-8). He came to be known as the father of the nation and initiated a peaceful but firm movement against the British. He was regarded as a messiah by the poor.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵⁴ H.R. HARDLESS, *The Indian Gentleman's Guide to English Etiquette, Conversation and Correspondence ... Second Edition* (Chunar, 1920). Allen. 231.

⁴⁵⁵ Dominique Lapierre and Larry Collins, *Freedom at Midnight*, Tenth ed. (NOIDA, India: Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd, 2010). 24- 32.

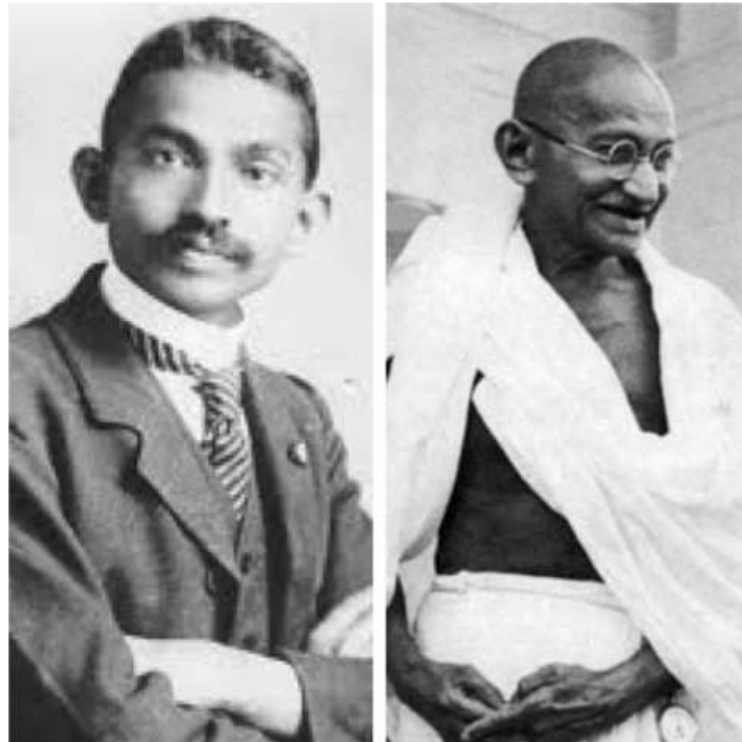


Figure 5-8 Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi as a Barrister in London in 1909. The second part shows Gandhi as a Mahatma in India in the 1940s. Courtesy of Gandhi Museum, New Delhi.

After coming to India in 1915, he stopped wearing the western suit completely and adopted the simple angarakhi and dhoti, although some time later he took to wearing only a loincloth. His courage in shedding his three-piece suit and wearing only a loincloth symbolised the poverty of his nation. Gonzalves analyses the symbolism of Gandhi's clothing.⁴⁵⁶ The photographs in Figures 5-7 and 5-8 show the stark difference in Gandhi's clothing in England and India. He realised that educated and well to do were a minority in India and that the majority of people were poor farmers, and he wanted to belong with them and to be a part of the rural India. His was an extreme case of shunning the western suit. He gave up the fashionable clothing of the educated class and adopted the clothing of the Indian masses, which no other elite or educated man had dared to do.

⁴⁵⁶ Gonzalves.

Gandhi initiated the Swadeshi movement and boycotts of foreign goods. To make people self-reliant, he urged them to stop wearing fine imported fabric and instead to spin and weave their own cotton fabric, khadi.⁴⁵⁷

‘Swadeshi’ means ‘made in my country’, and the Swadeshi movement was spurred on by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920s because Indians had begun to wear the cheaper fabric from the mills of Lancashire and Manchester. This mill-made European fabric was of a better colour and finer texture than handwoven Indian cloth and Indians considered dressing in imported cloth a mark of being well-off.⁴⁵⁸

Gandhi vehemently opposed this westernisation. India was the biggest importer of British cloth and the Indians were losing out as a result. Gandhi’s politics centred on making people self-reliant, so he insisted on spinning and wearing of khadi domestically. Khadi was a coarse cotton cloth, the yarn for which was hand-spun on a spinning wheel. With a lot of people backing the swadeshi movement, Gandhi’s followers began to burn western fabrics in bonfires in the 1930s and the nationalistic leaders took to wearing khadi. Wearing fine fabric meant that a person did not love his nation, and people wearing fine fabric were looked down upon. By 1921 all the congressmen had adopted khadi.⁴⁵⁹ To show their solidarity and unity women followed suit. After meeting with Gandhi, Nehru gave up his lavish lifestyle and wore simple khadi clothes and black or white sherwanis. His father Motilal Nehru also gave up his British lifestyle and adopted khadi, and his daughter Indira Gandhi got married in a khadi saree instead of rich brocades.⁴⁶⁰

Not everyone was comfortable wearing only a loincloth. Thus Indian-style garments gained in popularity. The achkans and angrakhas were no longer worn because they had become too cumbersome for modern men. These

⁴⁵⁷ Gonsalves, *Clothing for Liberation*, 64-65.

⁴⁵⁸ Christopher Alan Bayly, "The Origins of Swadeshi (Home Industry); Cloth and Indian Society, 1700-1930," in *The Social Life of Things, Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. A. Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). 308-309.

⁴⁵⁹ Gonsalves. 65.

⁴⁶⁰ Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2004).

garments were too voluminous and, under the influence of modern British clothing, Indian clothing had reformed itself. The nationalists took to wearing kurtas, long tunics that were loose and could be made to look like the collarless achkan or with a stand-up collar. They could be made of fine or coarse fabrics and were usually knee-length. They were full sleeved, but the sleeves were loose and could be folded back; the sleeve attachment was the old gusset-style sleeve attachment. The kurtas had a front placket which was cut in the centre-front and was usually not more than 10 inches long. The front and back were made with the help of straight fabric panels. The kurta usually had side pockets like achkans and sherwanis. The nationalists wore kurtas made from khadi and, in winter under sherwanis. They adopted the kurta, sherwani and pyjama as a nationalist uniform.

The sherwani thus became associated with the educated elite who did not want to wear the western suit. Before and after independence this group of nationalists and educated men consciously adopted the sherwani to convey a message, creating an image of a dedicated Indian, who was educated, simple and worked for the welfare of the society, and who was a nationalist and did not favour the British. The sherwani worn by the nationalists was not made of fancy brocade or embroidered fabrics, but of black or off-white wool, Indian Tussah silk or raw silk or fine cotton, normally without any embellishment. This wave of nationalism, also led to the sherwani being declared the uniform of various educational institutions like the Aligarh Muslim University since 1920 and of the monitors of Mayo College, Ajmer (the exact year could not be determined). These universities became hubs of young nationalists, people who followed the British system of education, followed British ideology and philosophy and wanted to apply their learning practically to liberate India. In the 1940s and 1950s, when the Indian elite of the civil service and business class had taken to habitually wearing western garb, the nationalists made a conscious decision, to wear a sherwani for formal occasions, to revive a sense of a country in which the British were foreigners.

After independence, the heads of the states were no longer from royal backgrounds, but rather were elected Chief Ministers and appointed Governors, under the heads of the country, the President and the Prime Minister. They were men of modern times and were not obliged to wear brocaded garments and turbans jewels as the rajas and Nizams were. Figure 5-9 is a picture of a framed newspaper cutting from the private collection of Mehdi Hassan Tailors in Aligarh.⁴⁶¹ It is from an Urdu paper of August 1947; the owners were not sure of the name of the newspaper, and said that the cutting belonged to their father, who started tailoring sherwanis in the 1940s. The newspaper cutting is divided into two frames; the top frame shows Lord Mountbatten standing next to Nehru. This is a crucial moment in Indian history: the declaration of Indian independence. Nehru wears a white sherwani for the occasion. He lays the foundation of a new country and of a new tradition, and the sherwani is appropriate for this because it is without any religion, regional or ethnic prejudices since it had only been worn for 50 years, but it still seems Indian. It is not loose and flowing so as to seem old-fashioned; it is crisp, new and modern. The lower frame shows the newly formed cabinet of the ministers of free India. Other than Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel, who wears a dhoti kurta, the men wear either sherwanis or coats as their upper garments. The menswear of the nationalists of new India consisted of the kurta, the sherwani and the dhoti, pyjamas or trousers. This is reflected in Figure 5-10, which is a clearer photograph of the first cabinet of ministers of India. It shows that the adoption of sherwani as a national garment was a conscious decision that had national approval.

⁴⁶¹ Mehdi Hassan set up his tailoring shop at Aligarh in 1947 and it has been stitching sherwanis for the presidents and other dignitaries of India ever since. The legacy is continued by his sons, Anwar and Akhtar Mehdi. They showed this picture proudly to me when I interviewed them on 1st February 2014.



Figure 5-9 A cutting from an Urdu newspaper of August 1947. Courtesy of Private collection of Mehdi Hassan Tailors, Aligarh, India.

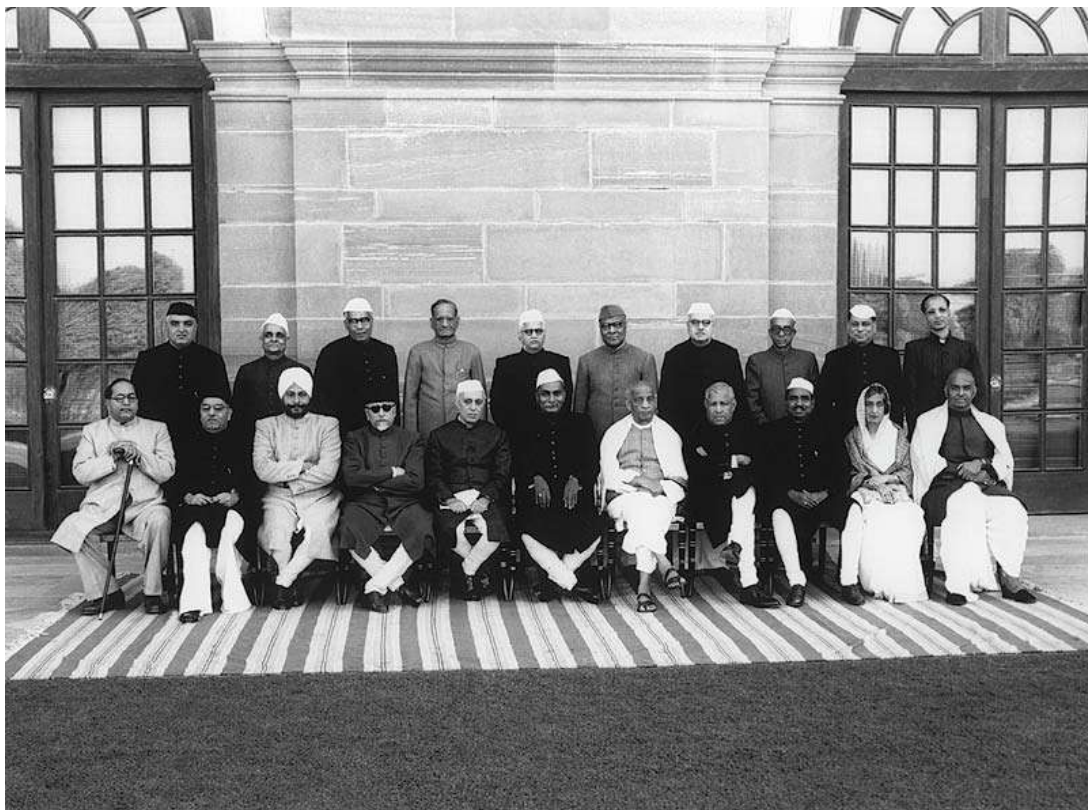


Figure 5-10 The first Cabinet of independent India, Government House, 31st January 1950, Picture Courtesy: Teen murti Bhawan, New Delhi. From Left to Right sitting Dr B R Ambedkar, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, Sardar Baldev Singh, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr Rajendra Prasad, Sardar Patel, Dr John Mathai, Sir Jagjivan Ram, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, and Dr S.P.Mukherjee. Left to Right Standing – Khurshid Lal, R Diwakar, Mohanlal Saxena, Gopalswamy Ayyangar, N V Gadgil, K.C Neogi, Jairamdas Daulatram, K Santhanam, Satya Narayan Sinha and Dr B V Keskar

This first cabinet of ministers includes people from every part of the country and of every major religion in India. It also includes people of different castes. Dr B.R. Ambedkar, the man sitting on the far left, was from the untouchable caste. He is normally seen in a three-piece British suit, but here he wears a sherwani with a pair of trousers. Sardar Patel and S.P. Mukherjee, who are from a traditional Hindu background, wear fine dhotis and wrap a rectangular fabric on their shoulder like traditional Hindus; S.P. Mukherjee wears a sherwani with his dhoti and Sardar Patel wears a waistcoat that imitates the front of a sherwani. Mr Kidwai wears his sherwani with a khada (or seedha) pyjama with a wide hem; the others wear it with a chooridar pyjama. Everyone except Mukherjee, who wears open Persian-style shoes of black leather, without embroidery or decoration, wears Western shoes. Everyone standing is wearing a sherwani. The cabinet made a conscious decision to wear the sherwani that was akin to inventing a tradition. It could be seen that the educated class had begun to get modernised and to wear western clothing. There was no going back from there, and a return to Mughal times would have been a sign of backwardness, so the sherwani was an ideal solution. Since the rulers of the Indian states had begun to wear various versions of the sherwani, it already had a certain symbolism, and once it was worn by the leaders of free India, it almost became a tradition immediately.

That the adaptation of the sherwani was deliberate is shown by the framed copy of a letter written by the first President of India, Dr Rajendra Prasad, to the first Prime Minister, Nehru, dated 23rd January 1950 (Figure 5-11). It hangs on the wall at the National Archives in New Delhi. This letter addresses the issue of the clothing that the President should wear for this public appearance. In her book on Dress and identity, Emma Tarlo discusses this dilemma of what to wear. She writes about the educated men who totally adopt western clothing and the dilemma of the nationalists on whether it is the right clothing or not.⁴⁶² In the letter, this is clearly shown by the concern Dr Prasad has for the right type of clothing to be worn by the

⁴⁶² Tarlo. 24

president of a newly independent India. He writes that the dress of the President should be distinctive:

...it would be very much appreciated if there was something distinctive in the dress of the President. The idea was that I should wear a black or grey achkan and churidar pyjama.....personally you know I am the last person to have any opinion in such matters, and I would like to be guided by you.⁴⁶³

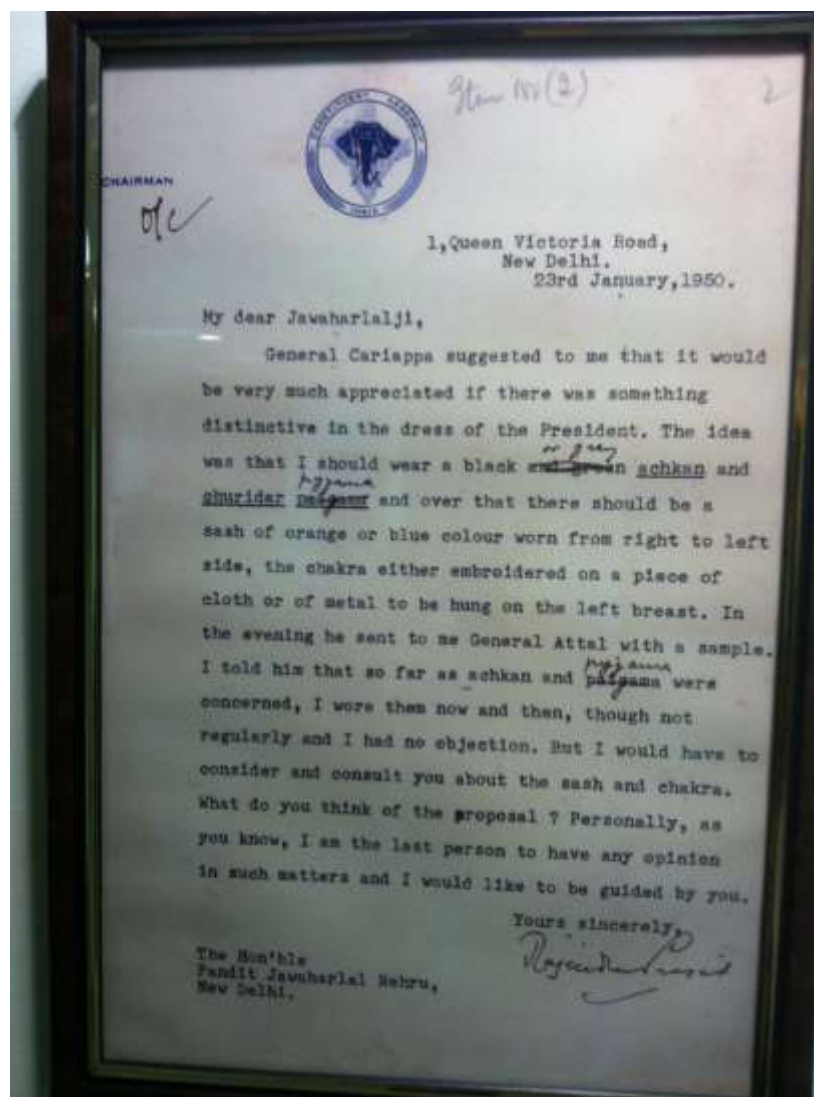


Figure 5-11 A letter by India's first President to India's First Prime Minister, dated 23rd January 1950. Photo by the author on 23rd August 2013.

⁴⁶³ Dr Rajendra Prasad, 23 Jan 1950 1950.

India had moved from a governor-general model to a presidential model of government, so the first President had to set the trend. Although he refers here to the achkan, in all probability it was the sherwani that he was describing.⁴⁶⁴ His dilemma was due to the varied population of India in terms of race and religion, region and caste. The new president could not reflect just his own religious or regional identity but had to reflect a sense of national belonging. Here one can see the necessity of creating an identity that transcended region and religion. This identity should also reflect neither the past nor British rule. The idea was to create an inclusive national identity.

A decision was taken to blur caste, creed, region and religion in India's national identity, and the sherwani was perfectly positioned to reflect this blurring. Eric Hobsbawm categorises this as an "invented tradition". He asserts that such invented traditions are an attempt to establish a continuity with a suitable historic past, and they are governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules of a symbolic nature. Some of these traditions may be formally instituted and others may be less traceable.⁴⁶⁵ In the 19th century the British had felt a need to create an exotic 'other' and to categorise their various colonies based on dress, food and other local customs. Therefore what was seen in 19th century in India became its traditional costume. Clothing was deliberately selected and labelled traditional. Scottish kilts are a classic example of the same process.⁴⁶⁶ The concept of the traditional kilts of various Scottish clans was also developed during the 19th century. It cannot be said, however, that it was only the British who gave the sherwani its traditional status: it was the decision of Indians themselves to create this

⁴⁶⁴ It is possible that since the achkan developed in north India, the nomenclature of the sherwani was not adopted to describe the President's dress, and so it was called achkan. This could be the reason why the general public in India, except for tailors and antique shop dealers, think that the achkan and the sherwani are the same garment.

⁴⁶⁵ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013). 1.

⁴⁶⁶ Chapman.

identity.

India's new national identity included the willingness of any community to create an identity, different from that imposed on it by the colonisers, for itself, and this process was helped by creating and reviving traditions. Educated Indians were westernised in their approach to dress, so it became even more imperative to create an Indian identity. The importance of creating a traditional dress and identity can also be seen in Howard's study of Indonesia's Irian Jaya.⁴⁶⁷ Howard states that the revival of traditional costumes is a deliberate phenomenon in many societies, especially those where a western style of clothing has been adopted by most of the population. Indonesia's Irian Jaya was a Dutch colony; its people are now westernised and wear western dress, but they take pride in their traditional costume.⁴⁶⁸

Not only did the sherwani become the national dress of India, but it also became the national dress of Pakistan. As both the countries had the same historical heritage - they were united before partition in 1947 - this was quite natural.⁴⁶⁹ This shared national dress reflects the British influence on both countries, although the peoples of both countries are similar in their background, lifestyle and thought processes. They belong to the same land, but the religious sentiment of Islam and a fear of being ruled by Hindus, propagated by Jinnah, led to the formation of Pakistan. After separation, Jinnah adopted sherwani as the national dress of Pakistan too, and it was also portrayed as a traditional dress there, because it was the dress of the nationalists and the Indian elite of undivided India, who had worn it since the beginning of the century. The sherwani thus became the garment of the national or regional identity of south Asian men. It is possible that, because the Pakistanis (largely a Muslim group) called it the sherwani, the Indians

⁴⁶⁷ Howard.

⁴⁶⁸ Howard, "Dress and Ethnic Identity in Irian Jaya," 14-15.

⁴⁶⁹ Bayly.

decided to use both the terms 'sherwani and 'achkan'.⁴⁷⁰

The sherwani in Figure 5-12, belonged to India's first Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. After becoming the Prime Minister of India, he always wore a sherwani like this, usually in black, white, or off-white.⁴⁷¹ This garment is referred to as both an achkan and a sherwani. Different people call it by different names, but the tailoring techniques and pattern confirm that this is actually a sherwani. The sherwani and the achkan, two different garments, have thus become synonymous.



Figure 5-12 Jawaharlal Nehru's sherwani, preserved at the Nehru Museum, New Delhi, India. Photo by the author, courtesy of the Nehru Museum, Teen Murti Bhawan, New Delhi.

⁴⁷⁰ Similarly, the Hindustani language was divided into Hindi for India and Urdu for Pakistan; Hindi was given a more Sanskrit flavour and Urdu a more Persian one.

⁴⁷¹ This made it popular in the 1950s, when it was also known as a Nehru jacket. The Nehru jacket became a symbol of Indian fashion, and it is from here that the famous group Beatles adopted their iconic Nehru jacket look

5.4.3 The Tailoring of the Sherwani

This section deals with the stitching and tailoring of sherwanis. The sherwani is a well-fitted garment that needs precise cutting and tailoring, as discussed in Chapter 4. Indeed, by the early 20th century precise tailoring was required for elite Indian menswear, whether western garments or the sherwani. This encouraged many tailoring stores, such as Paris Tailors and Phelps and Co. in Calcutta, to open in India's metropolitan cities in the late 19th and early 20th century in order to cater to the demand for western menswear. Bespoke tailoring became an enviable profession; it was believed that a tailor could retire rich after working for about 10 years.⁴⁷² Famous stores in Delhi like Ranken and Co., Md Omar and Sons and Vaish Tailors were run by both British and Indians alike. Vaish Tailors, in Connaught Place, New Delhi, is still one of the famous tailors for bespoke menswear. Connaught Place (today renamed Rajiv Chowk) was considered as India's Saville Row in the 1940s and the maharajas, rajas and Indian elite got their coats and trousers, as well as their sherwanis, made to measure there. The Indian tailors prided themselves for the fact that they had learnt their tailoring skills in London and had been apprenticed on Saville Row.⁴⁷³ Delhi became the fashion capital of British India with Indian men wearing the latest British fashions.⁴⁷⁴

The sherwanis worn by the nationalists were stitched in the same manner as those of the princes or rajas, but the choice of fabric differed. The most favoured material was black wool. Mehdi Hassan Tailors of Aligarh prides itself on having stitched sherwanis for presidents, vice-presidents and other esteemed people since India's independence from 1947 till today. Initially started by Mehdi Hassan, the business is now run by his two sons. India's current President is usually seen in public in a sherwani (see Figure 1-4). Sherwanis like his are still custom-made. Strict tailoring rules have been laid down for the sherwani, which follows the paper pattern that was published

⁴⁷² Clay Johnson, "Clothes Make the Empire : British Dress in India."

⁴⁷³ Manoj Sharma, "Measured to Perfection," *Hindustan Times*, April 5 2010.

⁴⁷⁴ "Delhi 100 Defining Moments," *ibid.*, 14 Decemeber 2011.

in India in the 1940s. The idea of standard draft patterns, as described in Chapter 4, was new to India and was imported from Britain. Figure 5-13 is from a pattern book published in India in the 1940s in Bombay (now Mumbai).⁴⁷⁵ This pattern for the sherwani is similar to the one in Vincent's book that is discussed in Chapter 4. The pattern shows details of measurements and ratios of different measurements to create exactly the pattern that needs to be made for a sherwani.⁴⁷⁶

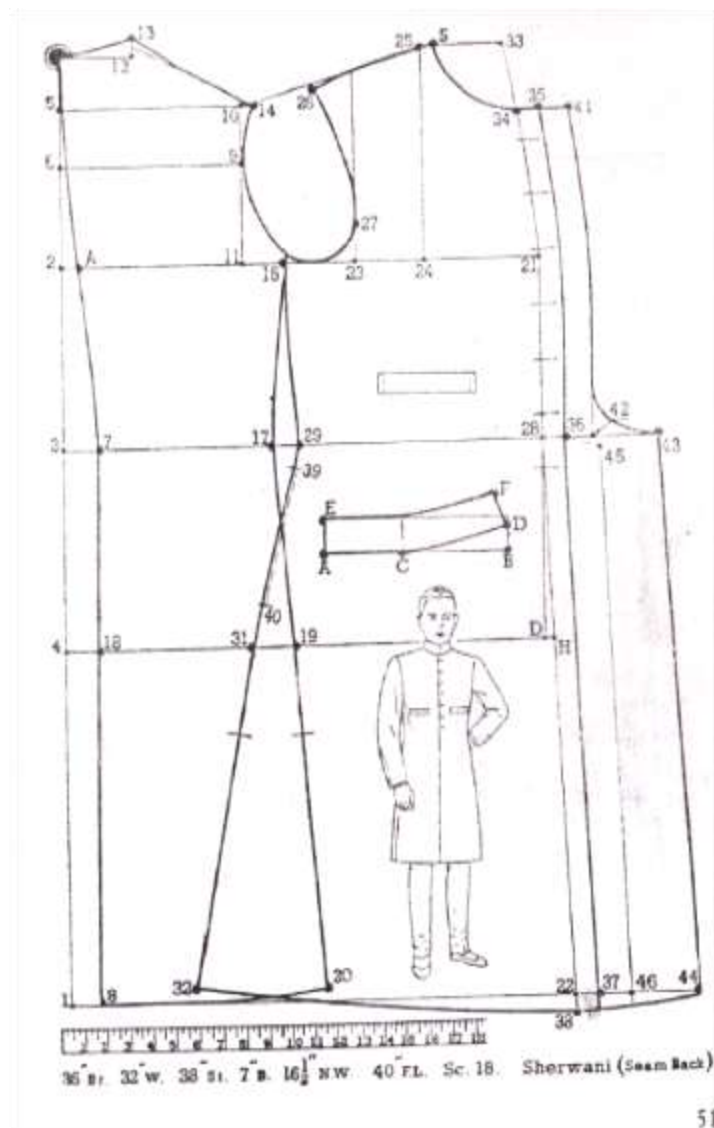


Figure 5-13 A sherwani pattern from *The Pocket book of Cutting* printed in Bombay, India in 1940s. Courtesy of Dr Vandana Narang, NIFT.

⁴⁷⁵ V.B.Juvekar, *Pocket Book of Cutting*, Third ed. (Bombay: Ball Printing Press, 1947).

⁴⁷⁶ Juvekar, *Pocket Book*.

Menswear tailors like Mehdi Hasan continue the tradition of stitching sherwanis in their original cut and style. Even today, they create made-to-order sherwanis for politicians and others based on this pattern. Figure 5-14 shows a sherwani in Mehdi Hassan Tailors' shop in Aligarh, which was being made for a politician during my visit.⁴⁷⁷ This sherwani is made of black poly-wool fabric. It has a black satin lining and black plastic buttons.



Figure 5-14 A black sherwani at Mehdi Hassan Tailors' in Aligarh, India. Photo by the author

Hassan has made sherwanis for all the Indian presidents, and he told me about the cost of these simple elegant sherwanis:

A black wool sherwani in our shop could cost you Rs. 2500 upwards (£25), I could make it in any size that you want. The cost of Pyjama is not included in it. We use black plastic buttons, we could use fancy ones if you like. The most expensive ones

⁴⁷⁷ The owner of the shop, the late Mehdi Hassan's son, did not want to divulge the client's details.

which have fancy embroidery could also cost up to Rs 15000/- (£150).⁴⁷⁸

5.5 The Sherwani after Independence

It has been shown that after India's independence and the abolition of princely power, the sherwani became a traditional garment. Two distinct styles began to appear, one for the nationalists and one for royal weddings. With the rise of the middle class in India, middle-class educated Indians also began to wear it for their weddings. Cinema in the 1960s and 1970s showed grooms in sherwanis and the trend continues to this day. It appears that the use of sherwanis as occasional wear for rituals, festivals and weddings led to the idea that the brocaded and fancy sherwani was a traditional garment for the Indian men, probably from the rich Mughal past, to be worn on special occasions such as marriage, Diwali, Eid and other festivals.

The pride in India's rich heritage and the glorification of the past before British rule led to the adoption of the sherwani. Brocaded and embroidered sherwanis, which laid the foundations for traditional wedding sherwanis for men, were made to order by British tailors or their Indian counterparts. These tailors had learnt the art of pattern making so could continue to recreate these sherwanis.⁴⁷⁹ But in recent years, the demand for ready-to-wear sherwanis has decreased the culture of made-to-order, which is now practiced solely by the rich business-class families of India.

In an interview published in July 2014 in India's leading national daily newspaper, the *Times of India*, the owner of Mehdi Hassan tailors, Mr Anwar, talks about the modern style of sherwani and the fabrics that are prevalent today, which he says are mostly silk, wool, poly-wool and terry wool.⁴⁸⁰ He

⁴⁷⁸ Interview with Mehdi Hassan Tailors, Aligarh on 1st February 2014.

⁴⁷⁹ Luther.

⁴⁸⁰ Eram Agha, "The Mehedis of Aligarh - Sherwani Makers for Presidents," *The Times of India*, July 29 2014; *ibid*.

told me in interview that the readymade sherwanis made in Delhi today do not strictly follow the traditional pattern and are of inferior quality: they are mostly free-size sherwanis, which look like sherwanis, but in effect are made with loose kurta patterns and expensive fabrics (see Figure 5-15). The buyers are not very conscious of construction, and only want a lot of embellishment, gold embroidery and brocade fabric. The customers then have these ready-mades altered to fit. They usually need these sherwanis only for one day or for rare occasions. Hassan pointed to his own sherwanis and said that they are custom-made, like the ones his father made many years ago.

Apart from Mehdi Hassan, in the streets of Old Delhi area near Chandni Chowk, in Connaught Place and in the old markets, there are many menswear tailors that offer bespoke western suits, and most of them also stitch sherwanis. But in most of the new menswear shops, the retailers tend to pass off every garment which is tailored to fit, and looks at all like a brocade coat, as a sherwani. When they are asked why this garment is called a sherwani, they have no clue.

The middle and upper-middle classes prefer to buy online or from retail outlets all over India and other countries in the world. Figure 5-15 is an image from an online shopping site for contemporary wedding sherwanis. These sherwanis have many of the same features as traditional sherwanis like a high neck and a brocaded or embroidered fabric, usually silks or satins. The length, however, keeps changing, and designers take inspirations from other periods and merge different concepts to create modern sherwanis.

It also highlights the fact that ergonomics plays a very important role in the design of garments. Now that chairs had become an integral part of Indian furniture and the elite did not have to normally sit on the floor, they could wear tighter garments. But the side slits and the extra panel of fabric which is tied inside mean that the wearer can sit comfortably on the floor if he

needs to. This garment was not adopted by the lower class of the society, however, because it is not convenient to wear for physical labour.



Figure 5-15 A sherwani for a groom from an online shopping site - Bharatplaza.com

These highly ornamented sherwanis range in price from Rs. 10,000/- to 50,000/- (£100-£500), and designer ones can cost up to £1000. They are worn with a kurta inside and a chooridar pyjama below. They are now not worn with western shoes but with Persian slippers known as the jootis, as well as with a piece of rectangular fabric like a sash, to give a traditional Indian look. People from different South Asian communities in Pakistan and Bangladesh have also begun to follow this trend. With the growing economy, India has reverted to these kinds of sherwanis, which may or may not be actually cut based on the sherwani pattern, and in fact could be based on loose kurta patterns, but are still called sherwanis. Their designers take inspiration from jamas, angrakhas, chogas chapkans and achkans in the creation of these latest fashions; all kinds of colours and embellishments are

used, and some really go overboard with jewels and embroidery in an attempt to demonstrate Indian heritage.

5.6 Conclusion

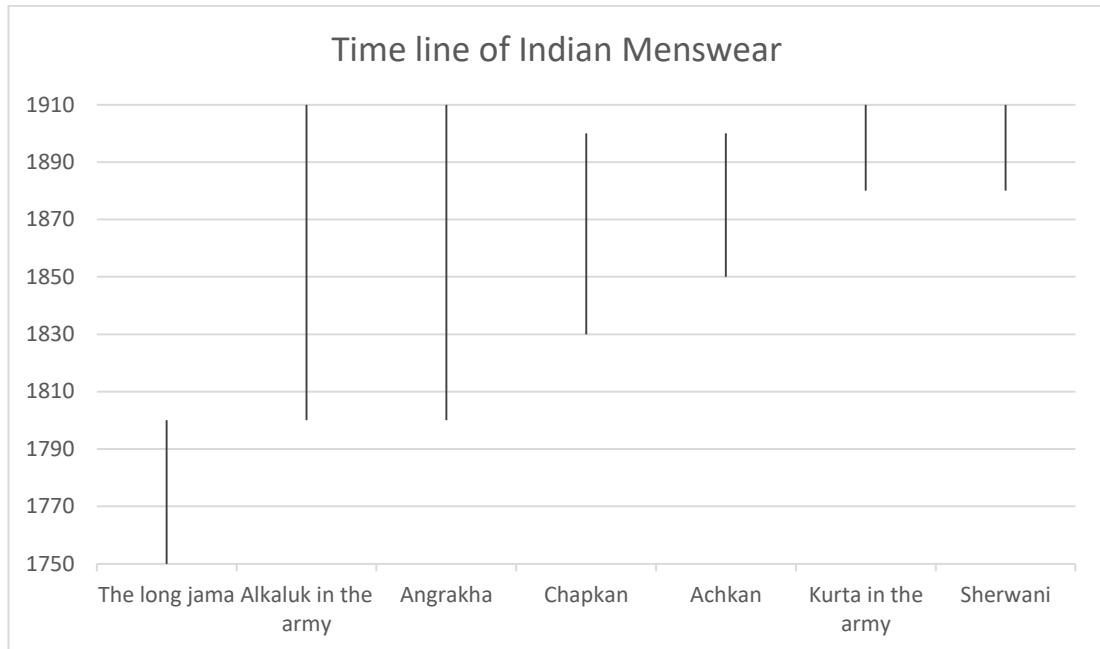


Figure 5-16 Time line of Indian menswear

The sherwani, the symbol of a South Asian gentleman, evolved from the ideologies of the upwardly mobile Indian elite. It was born as a result of the confluence of Indian and British clothing cultures of the late 19th century. It was a unique garment because it looked neither completely western nor very Mughal-Indian. Furthermore, the sherwani was not associated with any particular regional culture, so was adopted as a pan-Indian garment. It was worn by different rulers and the use of brocades and embroidery helped to cultivate an image of luxury and wealth that blended seamlessly with the traditional image of rich Indian princes. The adoption of this garment throughout the subcontinent gave it a nationalistic significance. The use of fine British tailoring gave it an impeccable fit, which gave it a more modern look. In the first few decades of the 20th century, other Asian regions (Turkey, China and Thailand) adopted similar-looking garments. Thus the

sherwani was very global in its approach. Perhaps this helps to explain why so many Indians believe that the sherwani originated in Turkey or Persia. A website called *Indian Mirror* writes that the sherwani was the dress of the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal Empire.⁴⁸¹ It falsely claims that in late 18th century almost every man wore the sherwani, whereas my research proves that it did not even exist then.

This sherwani became a symbol of nationalistic feeling, and became instantly divided into two types, one ornate, worn by princes and rich men of standing for their weddings and special occasions, the other simple, single-coloured and worn by nationalists. The uniqueness of the garment and the ability to construct it out of various fabrics made it the ideal for princes and other elite men of India in the early 20th century. The appreciation that this garment received made it a classic garment by the middle of the century. Thus when the newly independent India was forming its policies, it took a conscious decision to make this garment a symbol of the new national identity. The adoption of the sherwani by princes and other leaders immediately after independence lent it dignity and value. It was not worn by the British and thus it was not considered foreign, in spite of its foreign techniques of construction; indeed, these methods of construction were adopted with pride by Indian tailors. The sherwani eventually became symbolic of the national identity and was considered traditional dress by the middle of the century. It was a ubiquitous garment in the new Indian government. The most common colours for such sherwanis were black, grey and white, reflecting simplicity and a business-like attitude. The same cut of the sherwani made in Indian textiles like brocades and heavy silks with gold zari embroidery was associated with rich princes, and was ideal occasional wear for Indian weddings and festivals.

The adoption of the sherwani, as a traditional Indian menswear garment, across the social spectrum, throws light on the fact that clothing is a very

⁴⁸¹ Indian Mirror, "Indian Sherwani,"
<http://www.indianmirror.com/culture/clothing/Sherwani.html>.

fertile field for cross-cultural influences. In the modern world, where there is nostalgia of the rich and glorified Indian past, any Indian looking garment with golden surface decoration or heavy embroidery is being called a sherwani. The continuous usage of the term shows the importance of the idea of a princely sherwani, that it should be the 'traditional dress' of an Indian bridegroom.

The nationalists on the other hand wear the original sherwani. Those who do not wear the sherwani, wear the waistcoat version of Nehru's jacket - the summer waistcoat. This has been adopted by India's present Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi. Interestingly, politics continues its influence and this jacket now sells as the Modi Jacket. Figure 5.16, is an email for advertising the Modi jacket, received in my inbox on 24th April 2016.

COMBO OF **3** MODI JACKET

Men's CASUAL

₹1,499 ~~3,299~~ [SHOP NOW](#)

COD AVAILABLE

FREE SHIPPING

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SELL WITH US

Figure 5-17 Advertisement for modi jacket by email

Chapter 6 Conclusion

6.1 The Study

‘The Influence of British Rule on Elite Indian Menswear: The Birth of the Sherwani’ is a study of political influences on the sartorial choices of elite Indians. This research is designed to demonstrate the evolution of elite Indian menswear during the two centuries of British rule in India. It is an effort to understand how and why the flowing garments worn by elite Indian men in the 18th century gradually became more tailored and fitted. It highlights the factors responsible for the birth of the sherwani and dispels the myth that it was a garment worn by the Mughals. Simultaneously, this study examines the concept of ‘tradition’ in cultures. It scrutinises the reasons for the sherwani being thought of as a traditional Indian garment of the Mughal era, when in fact it was born towards the end of the 19th century, during the golden age of British rule in India. The study also analyses the role of the sherwani as a garment of distinction before and after India’s independence.

This study began with the assumption that the sherwani was a result of British rule and that politics is a major influence on menswear. Since a section of the society - ‘elite Indian men’ - was the focus group, elite Indian men from different geographical and political regions of India were studied. The dress of the British in India, and the uniforms prescribed to them for the Indian military and other organisations, helped to generate ideas about new dress that culminated in the birth of the sherwani.

This study also focused on understanding and analysing the creation of tradition and the extent to which the cultural assimilation of a foreign fashion in indigenous fashion is permitted in societies with a long history as a means of creating a visibly different dress, in turn resulting in a different identity that has cultural approval.

6.2 Methodology

The study was conducted successfully with the help of archival data in Indian and British archives, including the University of Glasgow archives; museums in the two countries had very helpful collections of objects (paintings, photographs and garments), and the people whom I interviewed were very happy to help. Although assistance was available from all quarters, there were still a few challenges faced in the process.

This section deals with the challenges faced while conducting this research. The political and economic history of British India has been studied by many historians across the world. The influence that the Raj had on society in terms of the economy and technological developments like the introduction of railways and water systems have also been topics of research. In the arts, the influence of these facets of British rule on painting and architecture have formed the basis of research, whereas the influence on Indian fashion has largely gone unstudied. Unfortunately there are hardly any studies that discuss British influence on Indian dress, so hardly any views are available on the subject, and the books that do deal with it could not throw much light on the evolution of garments. This serious lack of academic intervention in the history of Indian fashion or dress history was a major challenge.

This research was a study of influences. The item of clothing in focus here was the sherwani, but it was not any particular object that was the focus of this study; rather, it was a study of the influences that resulted in the birth of that garment. This was a study that sought to understand how fashions evolve and how traditions are born through the lens of one traditional garment. Thus another challenge faced was that of the study's methodological model. The lack of a tried and tested methodological model for studying the influences on fashion posed a challenge to this study. Therefore, in order to understand the evolution of the garment and to see the changes in this particular section of the society, a methodological model with the acronym CLOVE was created. This model was based on ideas of

Prof. Lou Taylor, a tested model adopted from business studies (PEST analysis) and inputs from various other qualitative study models. PEST analysis is usually done in the hope of understanding factors that may influence the growth of a company in future; I have used it to see the evolution of a garment in the past. Therefore in my study PEST analysis is a part of consumption history. I have tested the CLOVE model in my study and have found it to be very useful for answering my research questions. The model helped me to crosscheck the visual, textual and object-based references with the consumption history and with each other.

Etymology was also definitely a challenge. The etymology of the word 'sherwani' could not be determined, although its provenance in the kingdom of a Muslim ruler is certain. According to the CLOVE model, etymology is an important factor that helps to fill in the gaps in the research of an object. My efforts to trace the etymology of the word 'sherwani' brought more information to light, but the exact reason for the name could not be ascertained. I wish I could have conducted more interviews in different parts of the country to help me to understand the word 'sherwani'. The occurrence of the word 'Shirwani' in *Ain-I Akbari*, is a clear indicator of a fabric coming from Sherwan, and it also clearly indicates that it was brocaded with gold, but a plain silk fabric was also called 'Shirwani'.

My visits to Aligarh and Hyderabad were very useful for studying objects and conducting interviews regarding them. Unfortunately, when it came to finding exact bills, the Nizam's collections and even the archives and museums could not help. Such documents would have helped a great deal in understanding the details of fabric procurement, the time and cost taken to make a particular sherwani and the tailors who stitched it. It is possible that with this information I would have met someone who could have helped me to trace the etymology or exact origin of the sherwani.

Apart from bills and bill books, personal diaries maintained by the tailors would have been a useful source, and, if I were to find such a resource, it would add a lot to the study. Dictionaries or terminology lists from different

time-periods and areas of the country would also have been very useful if they existed. In fact, the documentation and cataloguing undertaken by the British regarding Indian dress and fabrics was more useful than any other resource.

Various primary texts - like the *Ain-I-Akbari*, *Jahangirnama*, and *Padshahnama* written in the Mughal courts, diaries and letters written by travellers, such as Sir Thomas Roe, John Fryer, Lady Dufferin, and Emily Eden - were invaluable resources. Government of India records in the National Archives in New Delhi were very beneficial. The digitisation of historical material, for example, at archive.org, were also extremely useful in providing immense information in the form of diaries and books printed during the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. The Government of India records regarding the Indian army at the British Library were very valuable for understanding the kind of uniforms prescribed to the Indian and British-Indian Army. These textual sources gave a clear picture of the type of clothes being worn, or being thrust upon, the army and navy.

The paintings and photographs available in the online archives of the V&A Museum and the British Library were extremely worthwhile, as was the 1877 *darbar* album at the special collections of the University of Glasgow. The *Padshahnama* served as a valuable resource to understand the garments of 17th century India. The Alkazi collection and the exhibitions at the IGNCA (Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts), in New Delhi, were also a valuable source of pictures. The National Museum in India and the Nehru Museum had objects that could be studied. The special collections at the NIFT, New Delhi were most useful in terms of providing objects that could be studied and analysed for this research. Academics, historians and tailors were very willing to give interviews, discuss dress at length and help to re-create the sherwani pattern.

Such rich resources formed the backbone of this study. The willingness of the tailors to share the sherwani pattern and to help me to understand the technical difference between the sherwani and the *achkan* was invaluable.

6.3 Conclusion

This study of the sherwani helped to shed light on the confused picture of Indian menswear history during the last 300 years. It not only helped to find the origins of the sherwani, but traced the origins of many other Indian menswear garments. The sherwani is a blend of Indian and British fashions of the 19th century, so it is surprising that not a single interviewee in India realised that it was a result of British rule. There is a general assumption that Indians lived under colonial rule under duress and thus would not wish to emulate the British. However, it is evident through the education, the legal system and bureaucracy of India that the modern Indian state has been heavily influenced by British rule. However, as the sherwani has come to symbolise ‘traditional’ Indian dress, everyone attributed it to an earlier Mughal culture, and some went as far as believing that it came from Iran or Turkey, or that the Mughal kings used to wear it. Historians, tailors and ordinary people in India were left wondering when asked why, if the sherwani was Mughal, it is not shown in any Mughal miniature paintings.

This study has brought to light many important facts about fashion and specifically about the sherwani. I can confidently say now that the sherwani was born in late 19th century India, sometime around the 1880s. This was the time when the stand-up collar of the sherwani was worn on army uniforms and the dress and undress such as the frock coat of colonial rulers. Through global connections by trade, fashions travelled. The three-piece suit became the most popular mode of dress and was also adopted by the well-educated elite Indian men in the early 20th century. The freedom movement gained impetus in India in the second decade of the same century, and many of these elite men changed their dress to represent the one nation of India. Indians came together and adopted the sherwani that was worn by the nawabs at that time. The sherwani could be worn with any kind of lower garment. Although mostly it was worn with the chooridar pyjama, the sada pyjama, straight trousers and even the dhoti could accompany it. Western shoes were adopted by most men, but they continued to wear their regional turbans as a mark of regional identity, as is shown in images of 1930s and

early 1940s.

This research on elite Indian menswear opened my eyes to the field of Indian dress history of the late 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. This research began with the assumption that Indian fashion preferences changed due to the influence of British Raj, and this hypothesis was confirmed. The superior technology and political power of the British made them role models who the Indian elite sought to emulate. The British, however, expected elite Indian princes to look like fancy, oriental maharajas, which prevented them from completely adopting the western suit. This was not the case with the Indians living in British-ruled areas. Well-educated Indians, particularly the Parsis in the east and rich Bengali traders in the west, who lived and worked with the British began to emulate their style of dress. After concluding this research, it can be said that British Raj caused immense changes in Indian menswear preferences. It can also safely be said that the British Raj was a catalyst in bringing about fashion movements among the Indian princes and helping them to create a modern image of themselves that blended in with the rest of the world and yet keep an element of their nationality.

This study has helped to answer the research questions that it began with. The first research question was: 'did Indian fashion change as a result of the Raj?' The answer to this question is in the affirmative. After conducting this study, it can safely be said that Indian menswear evolved as a result of the Raj. Both evolutionary and revolutionary impacts can be seen in Indian menswear. The evolutionary impact of the British rule on Indian menswear was the hybridisation of different cultures' dress and the invention of new garments such as the angrakha and achkan. The adoption of foreign articles of wear became very prestigious. The coat is one such garment which was adopted by the Indians. But Indian clothes like the dhoti also became very visible. This shows the adaptability and innovation of fashion: foreign garment can be absorbed and rendered indigenous by the people. The inclusion of pockets and buttons and the wearing of shoes and socks were all evolutionary changes. On the other hand, elite Indian men revolutionised Indian menswear by completely adopting the latest European fashions,

totally shunning Indian clothing in favour of western clothing.

The second question sought to understand the effect of the British Raj on Indian identity. How did this identity change and how was this reflected in the clothing and textile preferences of the Indians? The Indian identity can be divided into modern and traditional. In order to preserve their traditional image, the Indian princes could not completely adopt western fashion in public. They had to retain the traditional Indian identity that was associated with them. Neither the Indians nor the British were happy to see the rajas in western clothes, and as a result they created new 'traditions', looking for modernity with an Indian twist. The sherwani helped them to satisfy the needs of modernity and preserve tradition. This discovery answers the third and fourth questions as well. The kind of garments that emerged, like the achkan, the chapkan and the sherwani, were a blend of both cultures. These garments cannot be said to be purely Indian because they had elements like buttons and pockets as well as tailoring techniques that were borrowed from the west. None of the Mughal garments had buttons and buttonholes, which was a completely European way of tailoring. It has been proven that the sherwani was a result of the British Raj.

The most intriguing question of all was the fifth one: 'if the sherwani originated during the British Raj, why is it considered a traditional Indian garment?' The answer to this question lies in the psychology of the colonial period. The sherwani was deliberately worn by India's first cabinet after independence. This helped to create the image of sherwani as a traditional garment. It has also been discussed that there are two types of sherwanis: one related to rajas and bridegrooms, the other related to nationalists and educated people. Both the types of sherwanis have carved a place for themselves in the Indian psyche and worldwide. Indian leaders and bridegrooms wear the sherwani, thinking that it belongs to an era before the British rule. The legacy of the sherwani continues in 21st century India as a traditional garment, and lots of tailors and menswear designers still work producing elegant sherwanis for India's men, claiming to make India's traditional garment, without realising that its beginnings were in the late-

19th century during the British raj and not in the Mughal Empire. It is this image which is in the minds of the Indians, of a glorious and flamboyant past, which as discussed in chapter-4, led to the belief that the Indian rulers were always so rich and flamboyant, giving rise to false beliefs and an imagined Mughal lineage of all things rich and elegant. A time line of the garments is given in Appendix -3.

India, which was ruled by the British for nearly 200 years, has adopted British administrative, military and judicial structures. English is the preferred language and a common link. Education systems remain unchanged almost 70 years after independence. The British have left their mark in all spheres of Indian life. Even today students wear western clothes and the bearers still wear the chapkans and kamarbandhs as prescribed by the British. The Indian Administrative Service (IAS) was created out of the British ICS, and it still wears the latest British-style suits. The Indian army takes pride in its heritage and the judges still wear the black cassock or coat in even the remotest courts in India. There is nostalgia for the British Raj in the minds of the Indians and it reflects in all walks of life and especially clothing, as I have proved in my thesis.

6.4 Scope for Future Study

Having found answers to the research questions, it can safely be said that the research has been successful, but there is nonetheless immense scope for future study. While studying the influence of British Rule on elite Indian menswear, many more things were discovered. This study of elite Indian menswear discusses various articles like the angrakha, the jama, the chapkan, the achkan and the sherwani, along with various forms of legwear. Each of these items of dress merits an in-depth study itself in order to reveal more details and variations across the country.

Another major study that could be undertaken along similar lines would be into the influence of British rule on elite Indian womenswear. This would help to understand India's changing fashions, in particular how a typical

style of tying the saree, along with two foreign items, the blouse and the petticoat, combined to become a national identity for Indian women. Most women tie the saree with the excess fabric draped over the left shoulder today, although there are still some regional variations. A study on elite Indian womenswear and the introduction of blouses and petticoats for the Indian saree during the British Raj would be a worthwhile subject of future study. Indian women's sartorial sensibilities have depended heavily on white women's preference for the sleeves and necklines of the European gowns. The blouse-petticoat-saree trio in India is considered 'traditional' Indian womenswear and there is a the scope to investigate whether this too was a result of British Rule. But just like the sherwani, the British influence on the saree has not been studied.

Apart from costume, there is scope to study the influence of the British on fabric choices and the new fabrics that were being imported to India during British rule from the west, Japan and China. Thus there is a lot of scope for future study and further research.

Appendix - Excerpts from Interviews

Interviews were conducted to find out about the influence of British rule on Indian menswear. Historians, academics in fashion studies, tailors, museum professionals and members from the general public were interviewed to find out the level of awareness regarding the origin, pattern and any other information that they had regarding the sherwani. They were also asked if they were aware that sherwani was a result of British rule. In all 16 people were interviewed, the fashion designers who were contacted for interview were not available for comment.

I had framed a set of questions to begin the interview, but mostly I kept it open ended so that the expertise of the person would guide me in framing more questions while the interview was taking place. The first set of questions as finalised on 12th Sept 2013, were -

1. What changes do you think came into the dressing sensibilities of Indians (menswear and womenswear) as a result of British Influence?
2. Why do you think that there was an inclination towards western clothes in spite of the climate not favouring it?
3. Where do you think the words Sherwani and Achkan come from?
What is the real difference between the two?
4. Today we think that Sherwani or Achkan is Indian traditional menswear. Where do you think this notion came from? Why does this tradition seem frozen in time?
5. India has been a land of rich textiles, and a lot of textiles have been catalogued. A lot of tribal costumes have also been catalogued. But do you think enough work has been done in the area of Indian Fashion / dress history?
6. According to you how did the 'Traditional Jodhpuri' evolve?

7. Why do we not see as much change in the villages as we do in cities in terms of fashion being influenced by the Raj?
8. How do you think the British Indian Army uniforms were created? (keeping what factors in mind?)
9. Have you come across records of Mughal Army's dress? Did they wear uniforms? Or do you think they dressed up bearing in mind certain rules or a dress code, but without uniforms.
10. Do you think that the British Army Uniforms have contributed to the change in Indian fashion?
11. How would you differentiate between women's cholis and saree blouses?
12. A saree worn with a petticoat and blouse is considered traditional. How traditional do you think it is? The words petticoat and blouse have entered Indian languages, but actually they are English words, so when do you think this form of saree would have come in and why is it that we consider it traditional?

The list of interviews conducted and those that could not be conducted is as follows-

S.No.	Date	Name	Profession	Place
1	9th Sept 2013	Dr Lotika Varadarajan	Historian, Author	New Delhi
2	19th Sept 2013	Dr Anamika Pathak	Museum Curator	New Delhi
3	21st Sept 2013	Dr Anirudh Deshpande	Academic (prof. in History)	New Delhi
4	3rd Jan 2014	Rahul Jain	Historian, Author	New Delhi
5	1st Feb 2014	Dr AMU	Academic, former professor of AMU	Aligarh
6	1st Feb 2014	Mehdi Hassan Tailors - Anwar and Akhtar	Tailors	Aligarh

7	5th Feb 2014	Dr Veerender Singh	Museum Curator	Hyderabad
8	5th Feb 2014	Zahir Bhai	Museum Curator	Hyderabad
9	5th Feb 2014	Taqdees	From the Archive	Hyderabad
10	6th Feb 2014	Jagdish Mittal	Art Collector, Historian, Author	Hyderabad
11	20th June 2014	Asif Sheikh	Senior Tailor, Raymond	New Delhi/ Mumbai
12	20th June 2014	Akhil Tamta	Head of Custom Tailoring, Raymond	New Delhi
13	20th June 2014	Mr K D Sharma	Garment Construction Faculty, NIFT	New Delhi
14	20th June 2014	Dr Vandana Narang	Pattern Making Faculty (Director), NIFT	New Delhi
15	11th Oct 2014	Meenakshi Singh	Academic - Fashion Illustrator	New Delhi
16	2nd Oct 2014	Chandramani Singh	Museum Curator	Jaipur
17	12 th Oct 2014	Dr Sudha Dhingra	Textile Faculty	New Delhi
Interviews that could not be conducted				
1		Ritu Kumar	Designer	New Delhi
2		Raghavendra Rathore	Designer	New Delhi
3		Dr B N Goswamy	Historian and Author	Chandigarh
4		Bhanu Athaiya	Costume designer - Bollywood	Mumbai
5		J J Valaya	Designer	New Delhi

Following are some of the excerpts from the interview, which have been useful for my study-

Interview with Ms Anamika Pathak, Head Curator, Decorative Arts Department, National Museum, New Delhi
Date – 19th Sept 2013
Venue- National Museum

Q: What changes do you think came into the dressing sensibilities of Indians (menswear and womenswear) as a result of British Influence?

A: The most important new outfit that we see at this time period is the sherwani or achkan. This was started by the courts. The courts at Oudh and Hyderabad. Achkan I believe started in Awadh whereas Sherwani started in Hyderabad. These new rulers - the Nizams wanted to show power, so they asked their tailors to stitch garments in the British style, so that it can be given the shape of a coat. This coat had begun to symbolise power.

Men want to show their power. Even today in India, men wear trousers (called pants) and shirts, whereas women still wear saree or salwar kameez. When the French and English were here, people thought they were in power, and thus men wanted to adopt the style. So the elite group of India started wearing clothes like those of foreigners. I have recently done work on Angrakhas, when my paper is published you can access that information.

Q: What do you think is the etymology of Sherwani and Achkan?

A: I have not thought about it, but I think 'Sher' - is lion, for example, the throne is called - 'Singhasan', which means the seat of the lion. So I think it could have something to do with it. Other than that I think achkan has come from angrakhas and chapkan, so may be achkan, something like that. But it was mainly worn for power.

Q: So you think it was power that made them choose the Western outfits in spite of the climate not favouring it?

A: Yes, yes, I am sure of that. Even today you see these young boys who are into marketing wear ties, although it is hot and they keep sweating, but it has now become work culture and uniform so they have to wear it. Today people copy film and TV stars a lot, but yes, power plays a very important role.

Q: Do you think that the change was only in cities or even in villages?

A: No, no, not much in villages, I think mostly it was the elite class and then the middle class, basically people living in cities.

Q: Do you think that there was no change at all? Or do you think they took to wearing foreign mill-made fabrics?

A: No, No, their clothing style remained the same, only bought imported fabric because it was very cheap, poor man will buy cheap fabric, so they

bought imported fabric.

Q: What about the army? Do you think that British Army had any impact on the fashion sense of people?

A: Yes, yes. It had.

Q: Have you come across records of Mughal Army's dress? Did they wear uniforms? Or do you think they dressed up bearing in mind certain rules or a dress code, but without uniforms.

A: I am not very sure about this, they wore the angrakhas and had a dress code. A student has recently worked on Mughal war costumes, once his thesis is submitted and accepted, you can see more about that. He has done his MA from National Museum Institute.

**Interview with Dr Anirudh Deshpande, Professor of History,
Delhi University, New Delhi
Date – 21st Sept 2013
Venue- Dr Deshpande's Office, North Campus, Delhi
University**

Q: What changes do you think came into the dressing sensibilities of Indians (menswear and womenswear) as a result of British Influence?

A: Oh, I believe the changes are immense and very difficult to say in a short span of time. If we talk about Maharashtra I remember my grandfather wearing dhoti, kurta. The kurta was a shirt kind of kurta. You can say like Kameez with buttons and collar, jacket... but with traditional headgear. This I am talking of late 19th century. Actually if you see marriage albums, you will find lots of information there. You must study etymology that will help you a lot. Apart from etymology, like I mentioned you must see photographs. You can see complete evolution of fashion through photographs of late 19th

and early 20th century.

Q: Why do you think that there was an inclination towards western clothes in spite of the climate not favouring it?

Ans. - It was basically power and politics. You see politics always has influence, like the Jawaharlal jacket. What Jawaharlal Nehru use to wear. Today all rich and poor are wearing it. But there was a time, when only intellectuals or leaders use to wear. Similarly during British time, there was cheap mill cloth manufactured in Manchester being sent to India. So fabric changed and this changed a lot of things. You must remember that British brought their own tailors. So basically an entirely new culture was imported specially in presidency towns, there was maximum influence. And Bombay became the centre of fashion. You see fashion has a class statement. There is a snob value attached to it. Aping, upward mobility that is why fashion changes. You could see Victorian prudence, especially in covering upper part of the body. Actually this is related to Christianity. Because the entire concept of Adam and Eve begins with carnal sin, so they thought that covering the body will prevent gaze. Thus help in avoiding sin. But you see in our country, especially in the South a lot of women, were not allowed to cover the upper part of the body... incidentally when they started covering, as the influence of the Raj. Male became more curious.

Q: Do you think that the change was only in cities or even in villages?

A: I think change was everywhere.

Q: Sir I have heard that you have worked on army history on India. Do you think that the Mughals had particular army uniforms?

A: Mughals did not have uniforms as such, but they had some clan-based armies. Their armour was very good, but no uniform as such. First time uniforms for the army were introduced by the British. In 18th century the British created sepoy battalions and gave them uniforms like tunics and

boots. They integrated a lot of Indian elements in army uniforms, to keep the Indians happy. They tried to keep the sentiments of Hindus and Muslims and different regions. They in fact allowed whiskers and beards, but they have to be trimmed and kept neat.

You see Indian armies had no discipline, in terms of morning drills or style of attacking. The soldiers were very good and they attack together in utter confusion. It was not planned like the British and thus we lost.

Talking about uniforms around 1870s and 1880s, regional turbans were allowed as headgear and the sepoy were called jawans. Later around 1895, there presidency armies were united and khaki uniforms came. And in 20th century, use see coming in of helmets.

Interview with Mr Jagdish Mittal, Private Art Collector and Author, Hyderabad

Date – 6th February 2014

Venue- By telephone in Hyderabad

Q: Sir, I am here in Hyderabad to do a research on sherwanis, I am trying to find out the origin of this garment.

A: Sherwani I believe came as a result of mixing of two types of dress cultures - Ottoman and British. The Ottoman Turks wore loose clothing, but The British wore much fitted tailored clothes, and this Indian fashion of the sherwani is midway between the two. You see, in Hyderabad alone you will find a belt on the sherwani, it continued as a result of cummerbund from the Mughal period. Around 1865, you will see these sherwanis with the cummerbund. I think Sherwani came only in the early 19th Century and was not there before that.

Q: Sir, I have been studying sherwanis and most of them have seven buttons. I have also looked at achkans and I feel that they are similar, what according to you would be the difference. Nehru wore the achkan as well as the Nehru jacket on his kurtas in summer.

A: I think both [the sherwani and achkan] are primarily the same there might be some difference in the length probably. As far as Nehru jacket is concerned I think it has come from Neem-asteen, which Jahangir used to wear, which is also called a farji. If you look at the Mughal miniatures you will see a similar sleeveless jacket. I will also tell you the story behind using belt with Sherwani, the story goes that the 6th Nizam was not very fond of studies, and used to drink a lot, one day his prime minister advised him to tighten the loose clothes around his neck and waist so as to appear properly in front of the tutor, and probably this could be the reason for belt on sherwani.

Q: What is a chapkan exactly, and do you think it was a precursor to the achkan?

A: Chapkan is a Persian garment, it is made of fine white fabric, for poor it could be coarse white fabric, it is longer, was also made of jamdani in summer.

Q: Sir, there is a place called Sherwan in Iran, do you think it has any bearing on the name sherwani?

A: It is possible, but one cannot say for sure. It is quite possible that sherwani is a British as well as Iranian influence.

Q: What do you think sir, has been the major impact on Indian fashion as a result of British rule?

A: Shoes!! I think the major impact has been shoes, the amount of them, the designs and the concept of wearing them everywhere. These shoes, in which you have laces to tie them are completely British, they probably came with the army - boots. That in my opinion is the major change.

Interview with Mr Rahul Jain, Art Critic and Author

Date – 3rd January 2014

Venue- Interviewee's house, New Delhi

Q: Sir, do you think Sherwani emerged as a result of the British Rule?

A: Sherwani is a traditional Indian Garment. In fact I have recently worked on women's sherwanis in Hyderabad.

Q: Yes, Sir it is considered to be a traditional Indian garment, but I think I have reason to believe that it is a result of the British influence.

A: Really, what made you think so?

Q: Sir, the way of construction specifically, it is a tailored garment, has shoulder pads, it is fitted to the body.

A: I see, yes, I agree, yes, I think it is the first 3D garment that we see in Indian attire, otherwise most of them had 2D patterns. I think tailoring is not limited to stitching but to how the fabric / garment falls, or how it gets draped on the body. What sits on the shoulder, what on the head, how it drapes and how it falls, it looks more elegant than anything else. You must note that the dupattas in early 19th century, were more like sarees they are not as we saw them in the 20th Century or as we see them now in the 21st. They were longer and were complete wraps. You see Indian garments that come off the loom and are used as such have a better texture, there is a weight of borders and he felt that they are more sophisticated than any stitched garment. Dupatta for example is a more tailored garment he feels than any other.

Q: Sir, what do you think is the difference between the sherwani and the achkan?

A: Probably sherwani and achkan could be the same thing the difference

being in who called it what. But sherwani is worn more in the Muslim population... the typical seven-button black wool sherwani. Probably achkans were slit and sherwanis were not. The slit helped them to sit on the floor or on horses. You must visit the archives of Chou Mohalla for more information.

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