



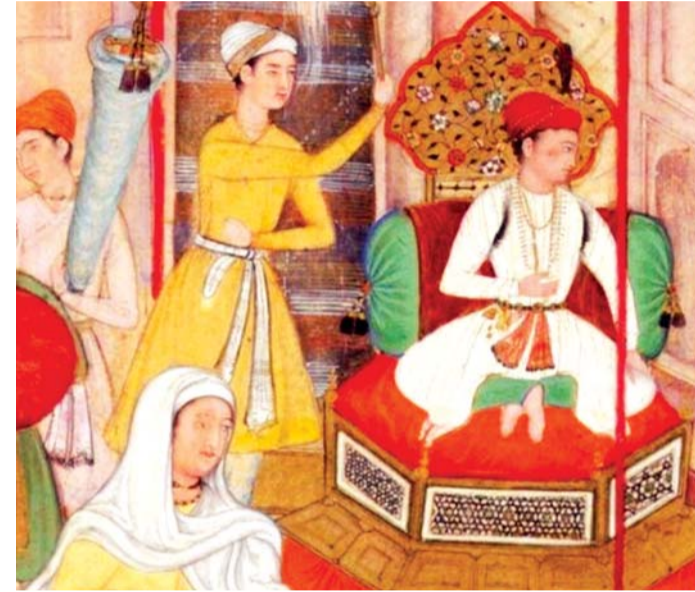
## Celebrating Disney's Iconic Temperamental Duck

ational Donald Duck Day is observed every year on June 9 to honour one of Disney's most beloved animated characters, Donald Duck. Created by Walt Disney and first appearing in the 1934 animated film *The Wise Little Hen*, Donald Duck became famous for his sailor outfit, distinctive voice and humorous short temper. Over the decades, the character evolved into a global pop culture icon through cartoons, comics and films. Fans celebrate the day by revisiting classic Disney animations, sharing memorabilia and appreciating Donald Duck's lasting impact on entertainment history.

## #INTEGRATION

# Indianisation Of Mughal Durbar

Another item of clothing that came to symbolize Akbar's eclectic aesthetic was Sheeshshobha, referring to head wear



The Mughal Emperor Akbar (reigned 1556-1605) is often celebrated not only for his military conquests and administrative reforms but also for his unparalleled efforts in fostering cultural exchange and diversity. One of the fascinating aspects of Akbar's reign was his approach to language, art, architecture, and even clothing, particularly through his efforts to blend Indian, Persian, and Arabic influences into a more inclusive and eclectic royal court. This blending of cultures is reflected in numerous aspects of his empire, including the names given to various elements of royal attire, art, and architecture, as well as the use of language in these contexts.

**Akbar's Art and Architecture: A Fusion of Cultures**  
Akbar's approach to art and architecture further exemplifies his eclecticism. His reign is often considered the golden age of Mughal architecture, where Persian, Central Asian, and Indian elements were fused into a distinctive new style. This can be seen in the city of Fatehpur Sikri, Akbar's capital, which stands as a monumental example of this cultural fusion.

**Representation of Diversity in Akbar's Rule**  
Akbar's policies were guided by the idea of religious tolerance and inclusivity. He is famous for establishing a policy known as Sulh-e-Kul, or "peace with all," which allowed people of different faiths, Hindus, Muslims, Jains, and others, to coexist peacefully under his rule. This was reflected not only in his political and social policies but also in his approach to art, language, and culture.

Akbar's reign was one of the most significant periods in the history of South Asia, where the fusion of Persian, Indian, and Central Asian cultures created a unique and rich cultural tapestry. His innovative approach to naming clothing, his use of Sanskrit alongside Persian, and his emphasis on inclusive art and architecture reveal an emperor who sought to represent the diversity of his empire through both symbolism and practice. His patronage of art and architecture, as exemplified in the eclectic structures of Fatehpur Sikri, continues to be a testament to his cosmopolitan and inclusive vision of empire.

**3. Sheeshshobha**  
Another item of clothing that came to symbolize Akbar's eclectic aesthetic was Sheeshshobha, referring to head wear



A photograph of a painting of Akbar on ivory, on display at Hyderabad's Salar Jung Museum.

### ● Bulbul Joshi

When Babur, the great conqueror and founder of the Mughal Empire, first entered India with his armies in the 16th century, he was not impressed by how people dressed. The climate and landscape of the Indian subcontinent were very different to that of Samarqand (in present-day Uzbekistan), from which he hailed. "I had never seen a hot climate or any of 'Hindustan before,'" he recorded in his memoirs. "A new world came into view, different plants, different trees, different animals and birds, different tribes and people, different manners and customs. It was astonishing, truly astonishing."

Describing the clothing he saw on this campaign, he wrote derisively, "Peasants and people of low standing go about naked. They tie on a thing called lungta, a decency-clout which hangs two spans below the navel."

Babur was the product of a Mongol-descended Islamic dynasty in Central Asia. He grew more familiar with the Indian subcontinent's climates and cultures (and their perceived fashion faux pas) as his forces subjugated increasingly large portions of these lands. His descendants, Mughal emperors such as Akbar and Jahangir, would have to reckon with what it meant, both politically and culturally, to rule this foreign population: what cultural practices would they adopt from their new subjects? How would they fashion themselves?

Central Asian dress in this period consisted of a heavy leather coat (the postin) and a long coat made from wool, silk, and leather (the chapan), clothes that lent themselves favorably to the colder climates of the Mughal's original homeland. When Emperor Akbar (Babur's grandson) adopted a white cotton jama, a translucent garment with a tight bodice, arm-hugging sleeves, and a skirt that fell a little beyond the knees, into his wardrobe, it signalled a significant cultural shift.

Akbar's change of attire was more than a way of dressing for warmer weather. This adoption of local garments was part of a greater effort to marry the Mughals

Islamic traditions with the Indic culture that they now found themselves immersed in. Such changes were witnessed in other arenas of Mughal public life, such as architecture. (One only has to think of the beautifully carved serpentine brackets at Fatehpur Sikri, a remarkable Gujarati architectural idiom that gets imported to the Mughal capital under Akbar; or the stone inlay in the interior tomb chamber of Jahangir, which owes its brilliant intricacy to the great pre-Mughal heritage of stonework in India.)

But the king's clothing represents a far more personal example of Mughal assimilation. The royal adoption of Indic garb was more than a deliberate campaign to cement control over Indic people and culture; it was a sign of a deeper form of change.

### Clothing the body to bare the soul

Appearances had an enormous role to play within the theater of court. The emphasis on dress, which was an inescapable reality of public life, posed a quandary for the Mughals, who found themselves in contact with two distinct sartorial cultures, which were characterised by what cultural historian Phillip Wagoner calls their "sharply opposing attitudes to the body."

In the Indic system of dress, the body was seen as a defining feature of the person, something that reflected "the inner states and qualities of the individual." The classical Sanskrit poet Kalidasa, for instance, describes a heroic prince by saying "his intellect matched (sawed) his appearance."

Clothing functioned to frame, accentuate, and reveal the body's contours. This is precisely why traditional depictions of Indian kings show the ruler bare-chested or dressed in sheer, untailored cloth hanging loosely over his shoulders. In sharp contrast, the Mughal attitude to dress considered the unclothed body to be shameful and held that God provided clothing to cover the nakedness of man, a purpose well fulfilled by the varied robes and tunics that characterised royal dress codes.

The taboo against displaying the body was so great that these garments were worn loosely, to avoid revealing the shape of the figure

# The Clothes That Make An Emperor

underneath. Amid such contrasting cultural worlds, cotton, as scholar Sylvia Houghteling puts it, "provided a fabric of compromise." The thin, loose cotton jama allowed the body of the king to be covered, while its translucence revealed his "inner state," a quality that served the Mughal rulers in many ways.

For one, it allowed them to inherit and carry forward an ancient Indic tradition which held that inner virtue manifests itself on the exterior of the body. Buddhist monks, for example, listed beautiful and auspicious "marks" or characteristics that appeared on the body of the mahapurus (great being) who was "destined to become a Buddha or world-ruling king."

The translucent jama allowed the skin of its wearer to shine through, visibly revealing the king's perfumed sweat as it permeated the fabric. By doing so, the dress adhered to the prescriptions of medieval courtly texts that underlined the significance of the king's smooth skin and bodily regimens of perfuming.

The donning of plain cotton clothes also had an ethical valence in Islamicate cultures. Sufi texts, much respected at the Mughal court, treated cotton as one of the best fabrics for clothes of piety. Emperor Akbar chose to wear the cotton jama in order to advance a very specific kind of royal propaganda: the mythology of divine light, which radiated from his body, in wearing the jama, Akbar not only tied himself to the divinity of his Mongol forebears but also ensured that this divinity could be seen and perceived by all. The cotton jama



From left, a miniature of Akbar around 1557; a detail from "Akbar With Lion and Calf," 1630; a Portrait of Akbar the Great.

were so great that his body glowed with the power of kingship. His radiance also harked back to the story of Alan Gua, the mythical ancestor of Genghis Khan and the Mongol people, who were impregnated by a beam of sacred light. In wearing the jama, Akbar not only tied himself to the divinity of his Mongol forebears but also ensured that this divinity could be seen and perceived by all. The cotton jama

served many purposes at once, as can be seen in a painting by Bichitr known as *Jahangir Preferring a Sufi Shaikh to Kings*. The emperor Jahangir sits on an hourglass throne with an Ottoman sultan, a Sufi shaikh, and the English king, James I, arrayed below him. Clad in his jama, Jahangir appears "cool" and "marble-like" while his "warm," "smooth skin" shines through the fabric of his shirt.

The depiction furthers Jahangir's polemical declaration in the painting: that he preferred the company of Sufi shaikhs to kings. In the South Asian cultural milieu, Jahangir's translucent jama would have allowed his subjects to see the smooth, contoured form of the emperor, considered to be the reflection of his inner disposition and virtues. And for the wider Islamicate world, his garment, rendered in white paint, would have implied that the robes were made from humble cotton, and not sumptuous silks, aligning him with the piety of spiritual beings and not the materiality of earthly kings.

### Worldly embodiment of a cosmic overlord

We tend to think of historical fashion like ripples in a pond, spreading outward from the imperial center towards the provinces and rural folk. In Mughal India, we see a departure from this norm with the court's incorporation of regional garments and textiles that had characterized the sartorial culture of South Asia long before Mughal rule. One of the garments that the court adopted was the gold-threaded, lavishly woven patka sash from Gujarati looms. These patkas, which typically measured about 11 feet in length and about a half yard in width, were cinched around the waist to hold together the crossways panels of the jama, or to serve as a convenient belt to hang little bags and daggers. The patka was usually plain in the middle section, which went around the waist of the

Akbar's hagiographers and court historians wrote that the emperor's wisdom and beneficence were so great that his body glowed with the power of kingship. His radiance also harked back to the story of Alan Gua, the mythical ancestor of Genghis Khan and the Mongol people, who were impregnated by a beam of sacred light. In wearing the jama, Akbar not only tied himself to the divinity of his Mongol forebears but also ensured that this divinity could be seen and perceived by all.

## #ICONOGRAPHY

In the Mughal Empire, notes historian CA Bayly, economic transactions related to cloth amounted to a "political discourse upholding the legitimacy of the ruler and pledging the attachment of subjects." In addition to donning the fabrics of annexed regions, the Mughal emperors were also stitching together the vast peripheries of their empire with the intimate center of the imperial household. The picture that emerged was one of the realm, as embodied by the king, which was, at once, radiantly charming and perfectly ordered.

wearing a red-and-black bandhanpatka over a gold-brocaded silk sash. Scholars such as Steven Cohen have previously argued that Akbar and his son Jahangir made prominent displays of bandhani, a tie-dyed cotton fabric, in their dress and portrait paintings in order to symbolically allude to the marriage alliances that they had entered into with several Rajput lineages, signalling, in this instance, Akbar's connection to the royal family of Kachhwa.

At Gogunda, the battle was fought between the armies of the Rajput kingdom of Mewar and Akbar's imperial forces led by Raja Man Singh I, the ruler of the Kachhwa principality of Amber. Here, the inclusion of bandhani reflects both Akbar's familial ties as well as his military conquest.

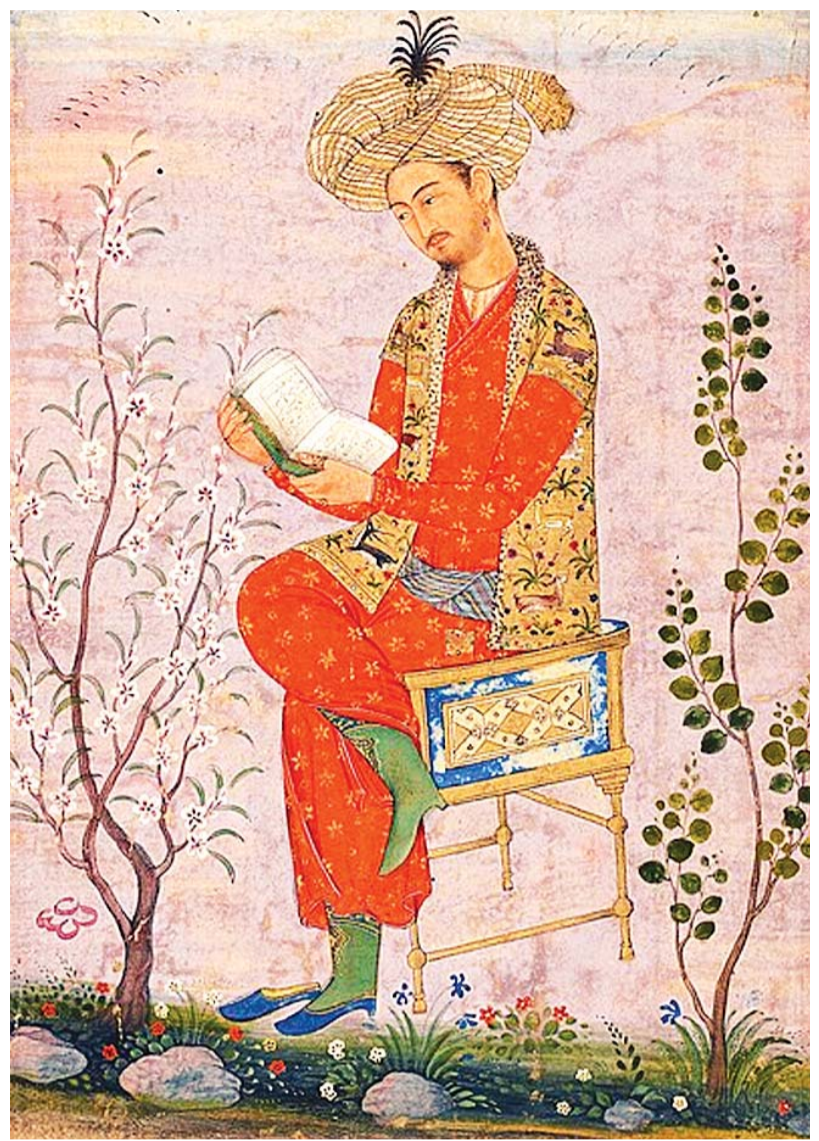
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We can compare the fashion of the Mughal court to the clothing of the rulers of Vijayanagara, a kingdom that occupied the southern part of the Indian subcontinent. The Vijayanagara empire, which lasted from the 14th to 17th century, also stood at the crossroads of Islamicate and Indic culture: while traditionally Hindu, the empire maintained close ties to the Arab lands to its west. Philip Wagoner's study of the sartorial culture of Vijayanagara in its first two centuries emphasises the growing Islamisation of the region's elite culture as part of an effort to "expand the rhetoric of South

Indian kingship" and "participate in the political discourse of Islamicate civilization."

Referring to a well-known 17th-century dyed pictorial textile in the collection of the Association for the Study and Documentation of Asian Textiles in Paris, he identifies a clear distinction between the public and private dress of Vijayanagara kings. The monarch's dress is split between two cultural idioms: when in the public sphere, he wears a lavish Islamicate robe, while in the private, domestic domain, he remains bare-chested, wearing only a lungi (the "decency-clout" described by Babur above) around his waist. Wagoner suggests that the far-reaching process of Islamisation did indeed replace select Indic cultural practices at the Vijayanagara court but only in "key public contexts." Though some have argued that the Mughals also observed this distinction (between the public and private dress/personas of the king), the situation is more complex. Two paintings from Jahangir's period imply that the Mughal emperor's relationship to dressing in public was far more complicated than the one we encounter in Vijayanagara. In the first painting, Jahangir appears bare-chested and seated in the padmasana, or lotus position, in the company of, perhaps, one of the female "kin" members of his royal household.

Even though the clouds in the upper register of the painting suggest an "exterior" locale, such leisurely portrayals, Jahangir is seen drinking wine and may be enjoying an amorous encounter here, could be associated with the



An idealised painting of Babur.

domestic domain of the emperor's courtly life. The second painting depicts Jahangir (again topless) in what is one of the most performative of Mughal public domains: the jharokha. Every morning, the Mughal emperor would appear in the jharokha, a large window that allowed those outside the palace to see their ruler, to take in the rising sun and address his subjects.

In doing so, the Emperor was offering himself up as an object of worship, giving the people a darsan or "auspicious sight" of their sovereign, who is clad in three layers of pearl necklaces, earrings, turban, and a lungi: the apparel of a Hindu deity.

### Becoming another

How do we understand the differences in the courtly cultures of

Vijayanagara and Mughal South Asia? An explanation resides in the material realities of the two kingdoms. Islamisation at Vijayanagara operated very much in the public sphere, where a symbolic reference to the norms of its Islamic neighbours was both expedient and natural, while the Indigenous (Indic) culture continued to operate in private.

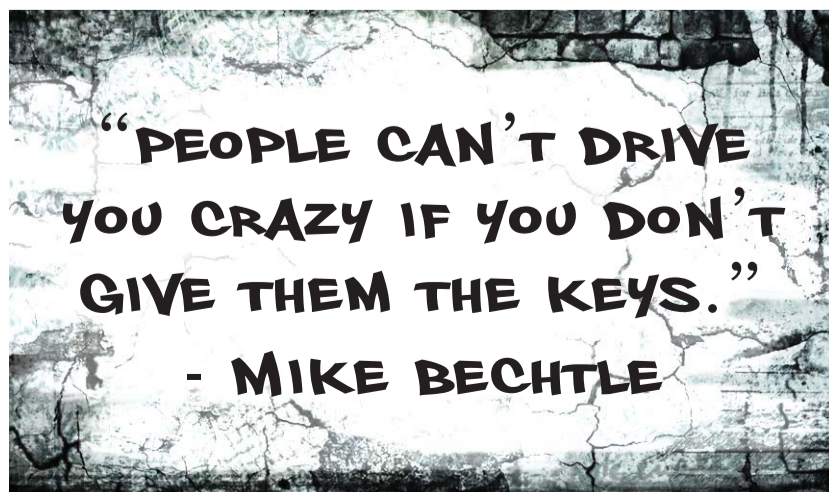
The Mughals, on the other hand, went through a complete shift in their material circumstances: Babur's conquest of the Indo-Gangetic plain signalled a sharp break from the cultural world of semi-pastoral Central Asia. Though Babur kept alive his native cultural practices, continuing to wear the chapan and the postin, for example, his successors situated the Mughal state ever more deeply in the socio-religious culture, agrarian economy, and political life of India. This is reflected in their choices of clothing, from their adoption of the translucent jama all the way up to Jahangir's magnificent bare-chested appearance at the jharokha window. Such progressive fusion of two extremely disparate worlds led to thorough changes at the very level of Mughal identity: by the 16th and 17th centuries, they had shed most of the trappings of their former semi-nomadic and pastoral identity to become an essentially Indic agrarian polity.

By assimilating the various materials, meanings, and metaphors that cloth represented in South Asia, the Mughals were not only trying to gain legitimacy but were actually becoming Indic at a deeper level of identity. It is a telling example that Akbar had incorporated muga and tasar silks from Assam and the northeastern peripheries of India into his wardrobe long before Assam came under Mughal control in the 17th century.

The emperor's dress was guided by something beyond outward strategising, politicking, or symbolic actions, it was about a sense of place and connection to the landscape that he had come to inhabit. As the Mughal emperor shed his chapan and postin to don the cotton jama and tied it securely with his new bandhani patka, he shed the trappings of a past identity and embraced a new world, becoming another in the process.

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## THE WALL

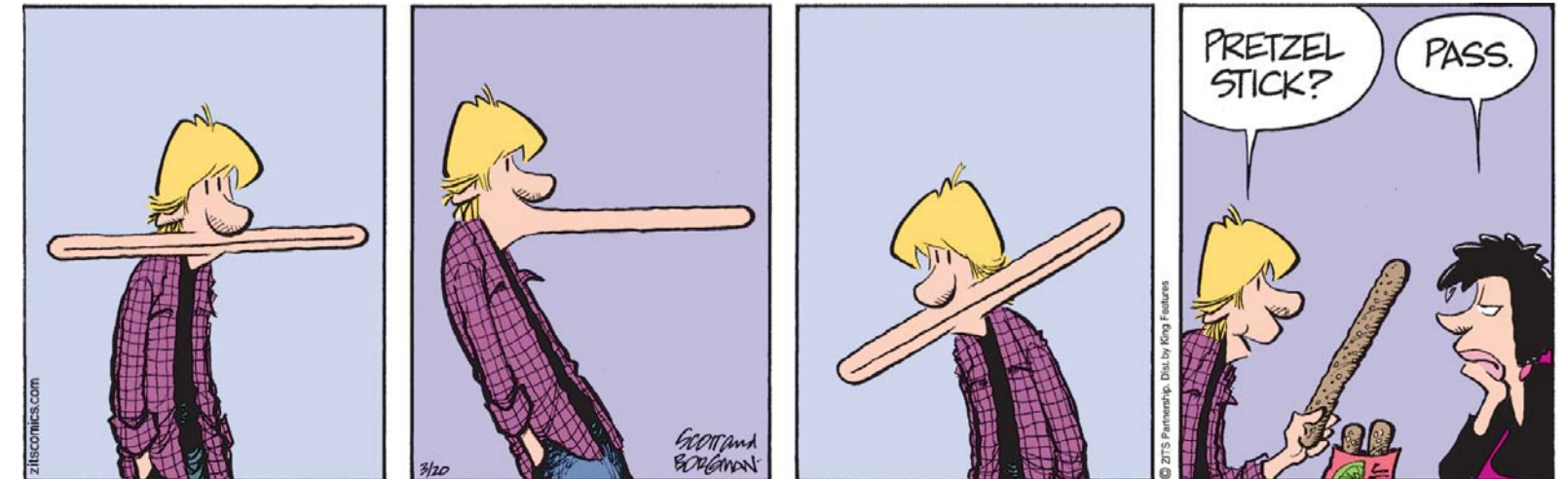


## BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

## ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman