

## Art, a Crevice into the Bygone a study of Persian Attire and Adornments

Mamoona Khan

Fine Arts. Govt. Postgraduate College for Women, Satellite town, Rawalpindi

Persia has rich culture, moulded by many races, who subjugated the land from time to time. Among the ethnicities central Asians too, played their role, when, apart from pre-dynastic rule, first Mongols and then Timurids conquered, ruled and left their marks on each bit of its culture. The current study focuses on costumes and accessories used by the people of Persia, especially of Timurid and Safavid periods, with a few exceptions of earlier times. The research will scrutinise miniature paintings of Persia to take them as visual documents of the time, and an authentic source to peep into the area focused. It will be based on observations and analysis of miniature paintings of the eras, viewed through their photographs. Conclusions will be drawn after analysis of the miniature paintings, which are best source of authentic and first-hand knowledge of the past when painting was also serving the role of the modern gadget of camera.

*Key words:* Ruiy Kaba, Zirin kaba, adornment, headgear, footwear

Man by nature is inquisitive to know about past, whether his ancestral past, or of other regions and nationalities. It led him to record his own times, to be preserved for the coming generations. Thus, certain tools were evolved to preserve the events happening around. The most common tool was history. At the earliest, it was verbal history that was passed on from generations to generations by the word of mouth. Knowing the fallibility of human memory, the tool of writing was developed based on the symbols of alphabets. It was considered as the most reliable source of information, with no capacity to err. But here the subjective side of a historian or of his patron weakened, at places, the tool of written history. Modern era has formulated certain other gadgets too that can keep records in a more authentic way. But another tool, mutely active in the field, though not developed for the purpose to record history, proved far more genuine for having roots in the innate of man.

Art is considered as a window into history because it provides firsthand knowledge of its times. Artists being sensitive creatures of a society are directly influenced by the milieu they live in. They delineate whatever they see or feel, and their expressions are embodiments of their surroundings. Their beliefs, activities, in other words, they reflect their culture; even one can see the pace of their time also, such as, art of the modern era reflect quickened pace of the machine age.



Fig.1: *Firdausi and three court poets of Ghazna*, 1532 *Shāhnāma*. Opaque water colours, ink and gold on paper. 47×31.8cm. (*Bihzad, Master of Persian Painting, Bahari*), 211.

The current study will focus on the costumes, headgears, foot wears, and ornamentations of jewelry, belts, etc. viewed through the Persian miniatures of Timurid and Safavid eras. It will cover the attire of men as well as women, of the upper-class along with proletarians. Since, the Muslim painters have keen eye to observe and then delineate minute details of each reality, which caused them to focus clearly, even the apparel of characters rendered in the miniature paintings. Though, the paintings to be brought into consideration are illustrations of romantic, poetic, literary subjects, along with chronicles, not directly aimed at recording the costumes or accouterments of the people represented. But in the course of illustrations, probing eye of the artists documented their time with all its nuances. Thus, one can have a clear glimpse of the costumes they wore, or the devices they use to adorn themselves. The artists are very particular about each and every detail, providing a candid picture, not only to those interested in history but even to those, interested in fashion designing.

---

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Mamoona Khan, Associate Professor, Fine Arts. Govt. Postgraduate College for Women, Satellite town, Rawalpindi. Email: mamoonaakhan@gmail.com



Fig.2: *Rū'iy qaba* with a slit at half sleeves level from fig.1.

Costumes of males and females are not much distinct; they usually wear three or four tiered ankle length *qabās* or gowns, despite a few exceptions. The outer most gown or *qaba* is called *rū'iy qaba*<sup>1</sup> and the inner ones are called *zīrīn qabās*<sup>2</sup>. The outer ones are full length till ankles, open from front while inner usually have buttoned openings till waist. *Rū'iy qaba* either has half sleeves or full sleeves, the latter very long, so much so that they form too many gathers at wrists.



Fig.3: *Rū'iy qaba* with a slit at half sleeves level, from fig.1.



Fig.4: *Rū'iy qaba* with full sleeves and a slit at half sleeves level from fig.1.

Another interesting design of full sleeves of *rū'iy qaba* is a horizontal slit of almost half circle, at half-sleeves level, through which people used to bring their arms out, turning it into half-sleeved *qaba*, leaving the long sleeves

<sup>1</sup> *Rū'iy qabā* is the upper most gown worn by Iranians.

<sup>2</sup> *Zīrīn qabās* are the inner gowns worn underneath *rū'iy qaba*, used by Iranians.

hanging loosely below the arms, e.g. *Firdausi and three poets of Ghazna*, figs.1.

Two-fold function is thus performed by the horizontal slit of sleeves; it can serve as a full sleeved coat and even converted to a half-sleeved garment, whenever required. Ladies busy in domestic toils, bring their arms out of the slit, and used to tie the hanging sleeve upwards, so that it can facilitate and not create a hindrance in their work. But when want to get warmer; arms were brought into the sleeves, through the slit. It was closed with the help of buttons placed very skilfully at edges of the slit, so perfectly tied that even minute crevice at the slit was not visible. Since the full sleeves were far longer than their arms and tight at ends, so beautiful gathers were always formed near wrists.

Sleeves whether full or half usually have scalloped edges, most obvious in half-sleeved. Full sleeves too have scalloped edges though, not much obvious due to gathers created at ends.



Fig.5: *A man in a landscape*, Safavid Tabriz, 1530. London, British Museum, 1930.11.12.02. Opaque water colours, ink and gold on paper. 33x.22 cm. (*Persian Painting*, Canby), 85.



Fig.6: Double page miniature: *Timūr holds an audience in Balkh*, from *Z. afarnāma*, 1480-85.



Fig.7: Details from fig.6.

If *rū'iy qaba* has half sleeves, the upper ones of the two *zīrīn qabās* have full sleeves, fit and larger than arms length, so, twisted into horizontal coils or gathers at their ends. Scalloped edges of these sleeves are clearly apparent in the, *figs.5, 11, A man in a landscape, Tabriz, 1530-40.*

*Rū'iy qabās* always have different coloured linings, made apparent in the miniatures with slight twist or turn of the lower edges of *qabās*, for instance in the *fig.5*, grey *qaba* has red lining, while blue in *fig.3*, has white. Moreover, a variety of *qabās* can be viewed in the double page miniature *Timūr holds an audience in Bulkh*, from *Zafarnāma*, 1480-85, *figs.6-8*. Purple *qaba* has white lining while grey and green have black lining. *Qabās* of working class are plain, without patterns, whereas, for the highbrow these are patterned with golden, silver or any other coloured weaving.



Fig.8: Details from fig.6

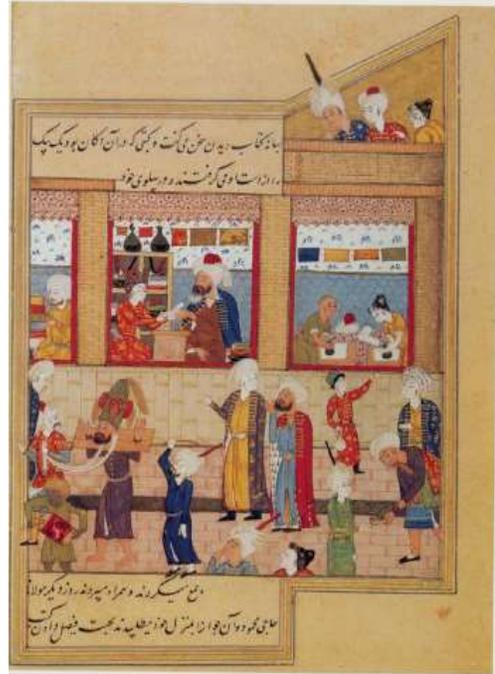


Fig.9: *Khawāja 'Abd Allāh Anṣārī at the booksellers*, from *Majālis al-'Ushshāq*, Shīrāz, 1560. Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale Suppl. Persan 775, fol.152v. Opaque water colours, ink and gold on paper. 13.7×16.7cm. (*Peerless Images*, Sims et.al), 253.

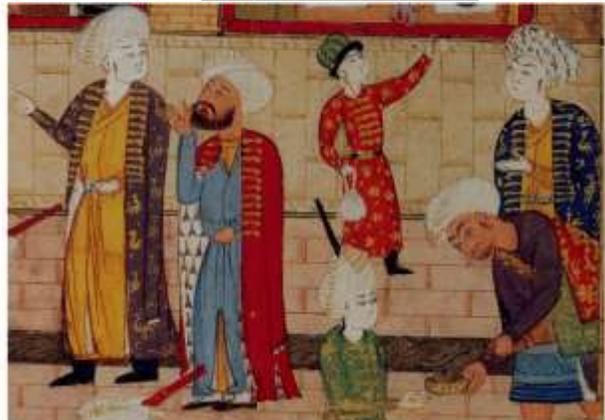


Fig.10: Details from fig.9.

Buttons of *rū'iy qabās* are differently designed, the most common as well as interesting are formed through clothe strips, horizontally placed on both sides openings of *qabās*. It is tied into a thick knot from one side forming a button, fastened into the loop of strip, fixed at other side of the opening, as apparent in *Khawāja 'Abd Allāh Anṣārī at the booksellers*, Shīrāz, 1560,

*figs.9-10*. The type of buttons are frequently used, a fashion for sophisticated dresses. Similar types of buttons are attached at the horizontal slits of sleeves, in order to facilitate joining of the slit when it is used as a full-sleeved gown, *figs.3,10*. Arrangement of buttons too varies; at places

arranged at regular spacing or used in pairs as in the purple *qaba* in fig.7.



Fig.11: Scalloped sleeves of qabās.

Ankle length long sleeved *rū'iy qaba* with a slit at its upper quarter, making it look like half-sleeved, seems to be much in vogue. It is perfectly delineated in the miniature paintings, such as figures, in *Firdausi proves his literary talent*, figs.12-13. Another type of *qaba* is *angrakha* style, also represented in many miniatures, where central opening of a *rū'iy qaba* is shifted to the extreme left, so that it fully covers the front and opens at extreme right of the figure wearing it, fig.14, from *Donkey for sale*, from *Haft Aurang of Jāmi*, 1556-65, fig.20. *Rū'iy qaba*, is though an upper gown but its rendering is so realistic that minor variations in designs are most perfectly eligible, which seems to be the main concern of the Muslim artists.



Fig.12: *Firdausi proves his talent* 16thcent *Shāhnāma*. Houghton's lib.  
Size of folios: 47.3×17.0 cm.  
(*Persian Painting: Five Royal Safavid Manuscripts of the sixteenth Century*, Welch), 34.



Fig.13: Details from fig.12

Belts tied around waists are commonly represented, either on *rū'iy* or on *zīrīn qabās*. If *rū'iy qaba* is tightly buttoned, it is provided with a belt and if buttons are open, then *zīrīn qaba* is tied with a belt. Belts have great variety, from simple to highly ornamental, having variegated colouring. Ornamental belts have medallions, single, two or three each, mostly golden in colour. Almost all the figures wear belts, for ordinary ones it is of cloth-sash type, while ornamental for the reverential people. In *Tīmūr holds an audience in Balkh*, the monarch is wearing a belt with golden medallions, fig.6, similar is the belt of the youngster in landscape, fig.5. A small sash-like handkerchief is also attached with belts, loosely hanging down from the tied belt. The sash-like handkerchiefs are simple as well as provided with decorative borders along with hanging tassels, figs.5-7, otherwise a dagger's sheath, a sword or an elongated handkerchief are attached with belts.



Fig.14:Anrakha style qabq from fig.15

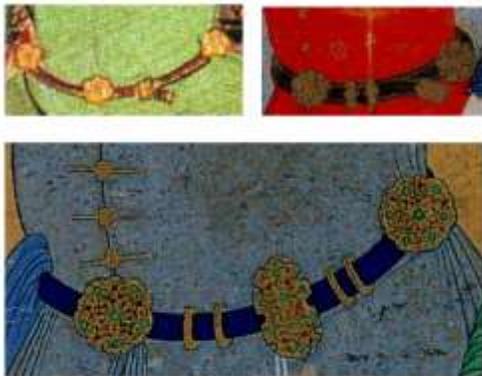


Fig.15: Belts in Vogue.



Fig.16: Falconer, 16th cent. Qazvin. London, British Museum, Opaque water colours, ink and gold on coloured paper. 15x8 cm. (*Golden Age of Persian Art*, Canby), 90.



Fig. 17: Details form fig. 16.

Another variation in belts is ornamental sash tied around waist, such as the 16<sup>th</sup> century Qazvin style Falconer, *figs.16-17*. He is having a double sash: one ornamental, in orange colour and the other purplish with exquisite striped edging. A little different type of belt appears on a figure in *Life in town, Khamsa-i Nizami, 1539-43*. It is tied at front with hanging tassels, and instead of dagger or handkerchief; a pouch is attached with the belt, *figs.18-19*. The man perhaps incharge of kitchen is holding a basket of fruits, the very reason pouch is attached with his belt. Hence, nothing is aimlessly rendered in the minute details of miniatures, for belts are simple for the ordinary people. *Rū'iy qaba* of the same boy is of knee-length, not ankle length, a requirement of the working class. But stuff of the *rū'iy qaba* is not ordinary because the boy is attached with the court.

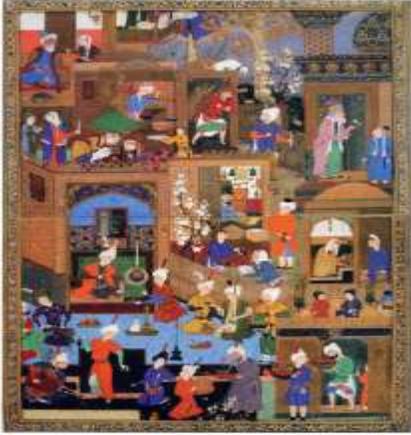


Fig.18: : *Life in the town*, *Khamsa-i Nizami* 1539-43. Harvard University Art Museum. Water colour, ink and gold on paper. 28.3×20 cm. (*Peerless Images*, Sims),197



Fig.19: Details from fig.18.



Fig.20: *The donkey for sale*, from *Haft Aurang* of Jami, 1556-65. Washington DC, Freer Gallery of Art, 46.12. 34.2×23.2 cm. (*Persian Painting Five Royal Persian manuscripts of the Sixteenth Century*, Welch), 99.



Fig.21: : *Death of Zahhak*, from *Houghton's Shahnāma*, Tabriz, 1527. New York: *Metropolitan museum of Arts*. 47.3×17.0 cm (*Persian Painting, Five Royal Manuscripts of the sixteenth century*), 44.



Fig. 22: Details from fig.20



Fig. 23: Details from fig.21



Fig. 24: Detail from fig.18

Dresses of rulers, princes or highbrow consist of sophisticated *qabās* with gold-woven motifs, delineating the expensive stuff of brocade or *shinghā'i*<sup>3</sup>. Their *qabās* are brightly coloured with golden motifs or complimentary-coloured woven motifs, e.g. *Donkey for sale* from *Haft Aurang* from Jāmi, and *Death of Zahak* from Houghton's *Shāhnāma* (Welch 44), *figs 20-23*. At places *qabās* have intricate embroideries around neck lines and at the edges of sleeves, for instance, a courtier in *Life in the town*: one in chrome yellow short *qaba*, *figs.24*. A few other varieties of embroidered *qabās* can be seen in *The Games of Backgammon and Chess*, from *Anthology of Prose and Poetry*, Herāt, 1427. *figs. 25-26*. Details of their patterns are so clearly rendered that even their designs can be reproduced. Upper-fronts of *qabās* are embroidered with organic motifs, having deer, dragons, cranes, etc. Designs are extended till shoulders and even covering half-sleeves.

Highly ornamental *qabās* reserved for the upper classes are defined with intricate details, especially apparent in court scenes or used by people around princess or princesses. These are rich in colour, brilliant in design and even high quality of their fabric is made obvious. A selected few, among the uncountable examples can be seen in *Bihrām Gur discovers seven portraits of his future brides*<sup>4</sup>, and *Death of Zahhak*, from Houghton's *Shāhnāma*, Tabrīz, 1527, *figs.23, 28*. The reverential figure in the former is wearing magenta *rū'iy qaba* and orange *zīrīn qaba*, while the latter has blue and orange *qabās*, both decked with golden flowers and leaves. Although the men rendered in *fig.23* are placed in the middle ground of the miniature and the distance can conceal much of its details but complete character of the costume is prescribed by factual devices. Both the *qabās* are

<sup>3</sup> *Shinghā'i* is silk cloth with patterns woven with silk thread of another colour

<sup>4</sup> The verse romance of *The Brides of the Seven Climes* is written in 1197 by the Persian poet Niẓāmi (Barry 42)

slightly twisted from their edges to define that they are heavy and provided with a lining inside, which is of different colour, although the figure is standing still and *qaba* can be rendered without twist. It is only that the artists were interested to define reality with utmost clarity and perfection, making all its aspects visible. One feels the quality of cloth which is of woven silk with golden patterns.



Fig.25: Figure from the games of backgammon and ches



Fig.26: Figure from the games of backgammon and ches



Fig.27: *Bihrām Gur in the hall of seven images*, Anthology of Iskander Shīrāz, 1410. Libson, Gulbenkian foundation. 24.13×14.98 cm.

Another *qaba* equally beautiful but different in design is in *Another independent gift* from *Haft Aurang* of Jāmi; the prince sitting in front of an ascetic has green *rū'iy qaba* with a broad blue collar and a similar blue strip at the edges of half-sleeves, and rust-orange *zīrīn qaba* is also patterned with gold, *figs.29-30*. But a simple sophisticated dress is of *Reclining prince reading*, from an album page, Tabrīz, 1530, *fig.31*. It is in light pink with delicate golden motifs and light yellow lining.



Fig.28: details from fig.27

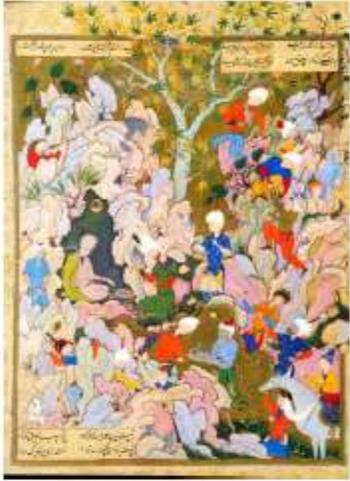


Fig.29: *Another independent gift from Haft Aurang* of Jāmi, 1556-1565. 34.2×23.2 cm. (*Persian Painting*, Welch), 115.



Fig.31: *Reclining prince reading*, Tabriz 1530. Washington. Arthur Shackler Gallery, 15.6×12.6 cm. (*Peerless Images*, Simsl), 228.



Fig.30: Details from fig.29

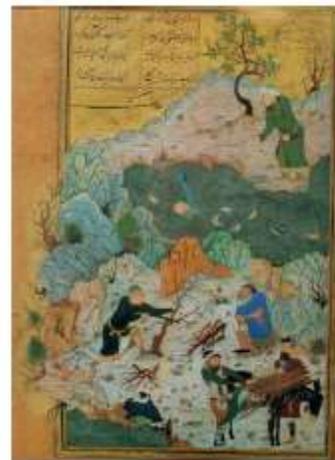


Fig.32: *The man drowned by mistaking the length of his beard for the depth of his wisdom*, from *Manṭiq al-Tā'ir* of 'Attār, Herāt, 1487. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 18.7×13 cm. (*Peerless Images*, Sims), 252.



Fig.33: Details from fig.32

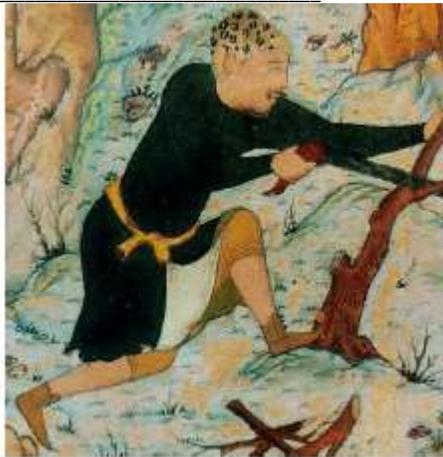


Fig. 34: Details from fig.32

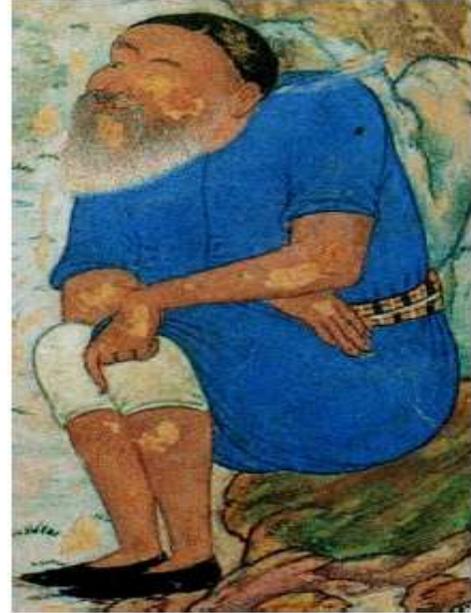


Fig.35: Zīrīn qaba from fig.32

Ordinary people too, wear similar *qabās* but not of ankle length, rather little shorter. If wearing long *qabās*, either they put-off *ru'iy qaba* while working or tug its lower-front edges in their waist-belts to quicken the pace of their work. Their *qabās* lack lavish ornamentation. It is even simpler for the working class. Belts tied at waists are just strips of cloths, and trousers too are of knee-length. Woodcutters in *The man drowned by mistaking the length of his beard for the depth of his wisdom*, from *Mantiq al-Tā'ir* of 'Atṭār, are in their scanty garments. Best representation of it, is the figure tying up woods at his donkey. Head covered with a simple woollen cap, knee-length *qaba*, and instead of *ru'iy qaba* his torso is covered from front and back with a broad woollen strip of white colour with beige lines, held with the waist band like vest. Trousers too, are of short-length, little below his knees, while rest of the legs are covered by tying a woollen-strip around the bare parts, *fig.33*. The other three labourers in this miniature are also having scanty garments, scarcely covering their bodies, *figs.34-35*, with half-naked legs (Sims 252). It is a proof that nothing in these miniatures has resulted from fantasy and the artists concerned were super-realists. Similar are the dresses of grave-diggers in *The son who mourned his father*, *fig.36*, as well as labourers in *Construction of the palace of Khāwarnāq*, from *Khamsa-i Nizāmi*, 1494-95 *figs.39-41*. Their upper parts are either bare or covered with short *qabās* of very ordinary stuff, and legs covered with knee-length trousers.

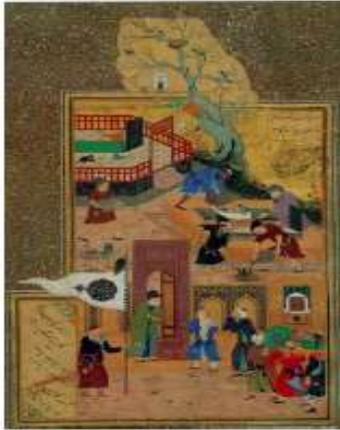


Fig.36: *The son who mourned death of his father* from Attār's *Mantiq' al-Ta'ir*, Herāt, 1487. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 23.5×13.7 cm. (*Peerless Images* by Sims et.al), 145.



Fig.38: An ascetic from fig.36

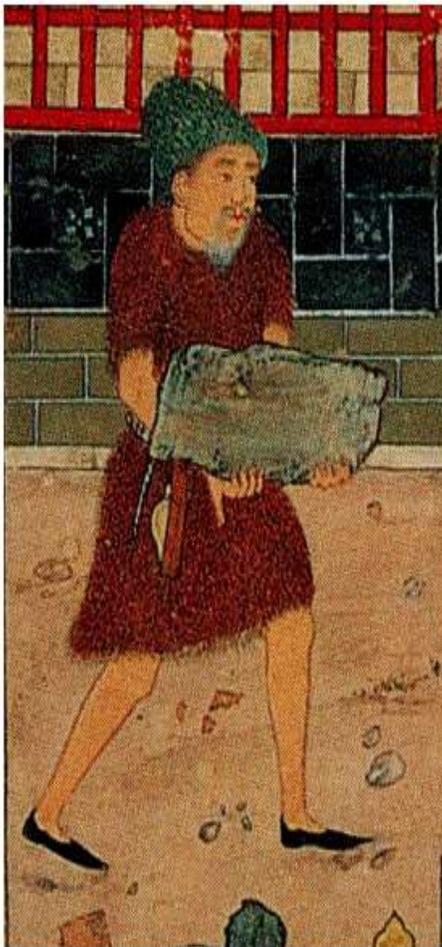


Fig.37: Details from fig.36



Fig.39: *Construction of the palace of Khawārnāq* from Niz āmi's *Khamsa*, Herāt, 1494-95. British Library, London. 17×12.4 cm. (*Islamic Art Rice.*), 181.



Fig.40: labourer' costumes s from fig.39

Another unique example of a labourer, from the *son who mourned his father*, fig.37, the artist is sensitive even to the texture of his *qaba*. It appears to be of some fluffy woollen material. Also noteworthy is the dress of the beggar or ascetic in this miniature figs.38. Another type, distinct from the rest, is striped *qaba* of a shepherd and of a street lad in *Majnūn brought before Laila's camp in chains* from *Khamsa-i Nizāmi*, 1539-43, fig.42. Delineation of dresses, either of

upper or working class are subjected to such deep cognisance that deciphers their details to the extent of superb-realism. Costumes of women in the Muslim miniature painting too, receive similar attention.



Fig.41: Labourer's costumes from fig.39



Fig.42: Stripped Qaba from *Majnūn* brought before *Laila's* Camp



Fig.43: *Lady of the court*, 1425-50. Istanbul, Topkapi Sarayi Library. 41.6×12cm. (*Timur and the Princely Vision*, Lentz and Lowry), 172.



Fig.44: *A Princely couple with attendants*, Iran or Central Asia, 1425-50. 21.6×30.2 cm. (*Timur and Princely Vision*, Lentz and Lowry), 186.



Fig.45: *Four figures beneath a tree*, Herāt or Samarqand, 1425-50. Kuwait National Museum, the al-Sabah collection, Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyya. 19×28 cm. (*Timur and Princely Vision* by Lentz and Lowry), 186.

They also wear three layered long *qabās*, sometimes even four layered, deciphered through their representation in miniature paintings. The outer most *qabās* have short or very long sleeves, sometimes with a similar slit at half-sleeve level, through which they let their arms out, leaving long sleeve hang loosely by the sides. Sleeves also have scalloped edges, highly ornamental as well as simple. An ink drawing of a *Court lady*, 1425-50, simply defines feminine outer *qabās*, fig.43. *Zīrīn qaba* is similar to the outer gown but either little shorter, or ends at mid-calf level. It is either of a single colour or has inner lining of another colour. The inner most gown that is third layer, is a shift or slip which might have been like a short vest worn by men, for it is rarely visible at necklines, besides a few exceptions. Elaborate rendering of *qaba* is apparent in *A princely couple with attendants*, fig.44, and *Four figures beneath a tree*, fig.45 (Lentz 186) Extra long sleeves with a slit in each, especially evident in the grey *qaba* of female attendant, bedecked with embroidered collars, fig.46. Three layered *qabās* are most conspicuous in the rendering of duenna in red *rū'iy qaba*, while her *zīrīn qaba* in light green and the inner most is blue, apparent from her neckline. Collars, necklines, embroideries, placing of buttons,

as well as linings of *qabās* of the maiden, and her duenna are extremely clearly visible in *fig.47*.



Fig.46: A figure from *the princely couple*, *fig 43*

To give an elaborate account of feminine costumes was a bit difficult task because women were mostly veiled and most rarely discussed creatures in the cultural history of Persia. So, we do not get much information about them from written sources. Super-realistic approach of Muslim miniature painters is a major supplier of information about them, which unveils perfectly their costumes and fashions. Though underneath the outer most gowns, not much is perceptible but closer scrutiny has revealed hidden treasures.



Fig.47: Duenna from *Four figures beneath a tree*, *fig.44*



Fig.48: *Lady with a fan*, Isfahān, 1590. Freer Gallery Washington DC. of Art, (*Peerless Images*, Sims), 72.

Ornamentation of attires with embroideries and other accessories are also clearly delineated in the miniature paintings. A fantastic rendering of feminine costumes is in the *Lady with a fan*, Isfahān, 1590, *fig.48*. The green *rū'iy qaba* with blue lining is adorned with beautiful buttons, provided with a small collar, scalloped half-sleeves and red cloth-belt, decked with gold motifs. *Zīrīn qaba* is pinkish-maroon with gold foliated motifs. Beneath it is a transparent white garment, visible through extended sleeves of *zīrīn qaba*. Most exquisite of all representations is the *qaba* of the *Seated Princess with a fantastic headdress*; her red *rū'iy qaba* has an elegant double collar; one short and the another extended around shoulders. It is black in colour and embroidered with gold threads on the pattern of arabesques. *Rū'iy qaba* has black lining and a small additional slit at its back, *fig.49*.



Fig.49: *Seated Princess with a fantastic headdress*, Tabriz, 1540-50. Art Museum Harvard University, 18.1×10.8 cm. (*Peerless Images*, Sims et.al), 237



Fig.50: *A few among the variety of necklines*



Fig.51: *A Variety of collars used by women in the Miniature Paintings.*

*Zīrīn qaba* has mostly two types of necklines; round neck with a single vertical oval opening in the centre, with two buttons, one at its top and the other at bottom, forming a single vertical oval slit at front of the neck. The other has double vertical oval slits formed by three buttons. *Lady with a fan* has double slit, *fig.48*, while *the Seated Princess* has a single, *fig.49*. Single or double slit is sometimes provided with series of buttons as well, *fig.50*.



Fig.52: *A variety of collars used by men and women in the miniature paintings.*

*Zīrīn qaba* is either similar to the upper gown or gathers at waist, like a skirt. It usually has a V-shaped, round or oval neckline, mostly open to the waist, while lower part is like pleated skirt, see *qaba* of *duenna* in *fig.47*. While, *rū'īy qabās* usually have close-round necklines but in the 16<sup>th</sup> century these were provided with small collars. Short sleeved *rū'īy qabās* often have opening till naval, not full open fronts. Besides, there are a few exceptions, as in *The lady with a fan*, having transparent sleeves coming out of her *rū'īy qaba*. Very long sleeved *qabās* have full open fronts, and their sleeves are either left hanging loosely or pushed up and coiled around wrists.

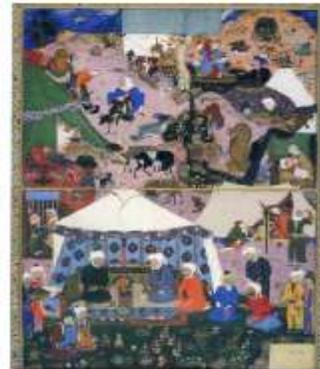


Fig.53: *Life in the Country* from *Khamsa-i Nizami*, 1539-43. Harvard University Art Museum 27.8×19.3 cm. (*Peerless Images*, Sims), 25.

A variety of collars too, appear in these miniatures; round, squarish collars on V-shaped neckline, short, and black colours that stands up around neck, and embroidered collars that are large and laid flat across shoulders, *figs.50-52*.



Fig.54: Costumes of working woman from fig.51

Women of working class are also cloaked with similar costumes; difference is only of quality or ornamentation. Ordinary sort of stuff is used for their *qabās* which are devoid of embroidered or decorative designs. Women busy in their daily toils like cooking, sewing, stitching, fetching water or milking goats, wear analogous *qabās*'s, see the dresses of working women in *Life in the country*, from the same *Khamsa*. They are washing clothes, milking cow, giving fodder to donkey, etc., clad in typical dress of the time but not decked lavishly as costumes of the upper class ladies, *figs.53-54*. These types of dresses are typical to the figures of Timurid and Safavid paintings, although certain variations can be observed from the works of earlier periods.



Fig.55: *The two dancing girls*, from Harem of Jausaq Palace, Fresco on wall (*Islam. Art and Architecture*, Ed. Hattstein and Deliu),107.



Fig. 56: Frontispiece of the *Book of Antidotes* by Pseudo Galen, 1199. Paris, the Bibliotheque Nationale Museum, 21×14.cm. *Islam and Muslim Art*, (Papadopoulos), 129



Fig.57: Details from fig.56

*The two dancing girls* from Jausāq palace at Samara 833-41, (Hattstein 107) are in completely different attire; long skirt like garment to cover lower parts, small shirts to cloak torsos, and shawls hanging loosely over shoulders, *fig.55*. Another variant from the usual tradition is the females depicted on the frontispiece of *The Book of Antidotes*, Baghdad, 1199, (Rice 2); all the four figures along with the central one are clad in loose pants with frilled edges and a long upward slit near ankles. Pants are fastened at buttocks with ornamental cloth, tied at the centre with a decorative knot, hanging like tassels. Torso covered with short shirt has half sleeves. Each garment has an ornamental design with a different pattern, *figs. 56-57*. Deviation in the earlier miniatures from the usual mode of Persian dresses is due to the fact that a variety of influences shaped the very model of Persian life, because it is a land which was attacked by a variety of races, leaving their marks on its culture.



Fig.58: *Drowsy lady Reclining*, Is fahān, 1640-45. London, the British Museum, 11.7×15.9. (*The Golden Age of Persian Painting*, Canby), 137

People of Persia from the times immemorial loved to adore themselves with headgears, footwear, jewellery, and even henna to decorate their hands with patterns. Persian miniatures record a variety of head dresses. Women represented used to have braids of their hair, from two to four in number, sometimes plaited with long lengths of silk, ending in tassels. *The two dancing girls* from Jausāq palace have their hair arranged in four braids, while in some other miniatures women have their hair loosely falling on their shoulders in wavy locks, such as in *Drowsy lady reclining*, Isfahān 1640-45 *fig.58*.



Fig.59: A variety of *Chārqaqs* used by Persian women

Another interesting thing visible through the pose of the lady is upper-part of her trousers which was impossible to be viewed otherwise. One can know even the type of tying band of the trousers. This too is ornamental.

Women are further adorned in a variety of headgears; simplest and most popular is a square sort of veil known as *Chārqaq*<sup>5</sup>. It is a white scarf, folded into a half diamond shape, worn over head and tied under chin. *Chārqaq* is either made of cotton, linen or of silk and is worn both indoors and outdoors. It is also decked with a small crown on its top, also added with a fillet or string tied around forehead, almost an inch broad, having several colours, either simple, embroidered or purely of jewels. Sometimes a string of pearls is also attached to the fillet, falling down to continue under the chin. Another transparent veil falls from head till shoulders covering neck, but leaving face bare. With minor variations, there are many other types of headgears as well.

Costumes of Safavid and Timurid eras are not much distinct from one another, though head gears of Safavid men are quite different from rest of the periods because of their twelve coiled turbans with a red stick inside. Women here, use a small cap, white or coloured, at times embroidered. It is placed in-between two layers; the bottom layer consists of a scarf that covers head, extending at back or tied under chin, while the top most layer, is a longer veil of almost shoulder length, is pinned at the top. It is embroidered too. At places, *Chārqaq* is provided with crowns of many different shapes, women even use little protruding caps as well, in a variety of colours, fig.59. Sometimes headgears are also surmounted by feather like ornament.

<sup>5</sup> A piece of cloth with four corners used here as head-covering

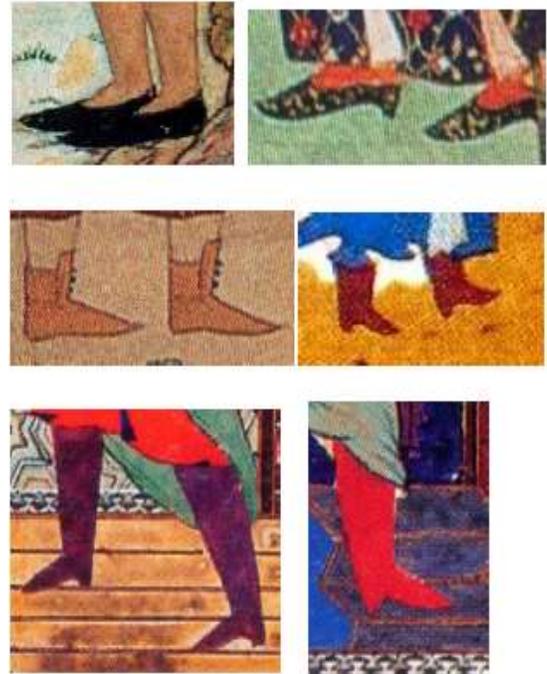


Fig.60: A variety of foot wares

Apart from headgears, foot wears of men and women are not much distinct. Most common are flat shoes with pointed toes, mostly in black, with very few exceptions of white or brown, e.g., *A man in landscape*, fig.5. Similar slippers with pointed toes and heels are also in vogue. Long shoes above anklets, with or without heels are also worn by courtiers. This kind is in black, brown and skin tones, *Timūr holds an audience*. A similar type but flat and red coloured is used in many miniatures, for instance a labourer in *The building of the castle of Khāwarnāq*, fig.39. Long shoes with buttoned openings are also used by people of the working class, figs.60. Flat shoes with round toes are used by the *young musketeer*, Isfahān, 1610-20.



Fig.61: *Turbaned youth leaning against a bolster*, mounted, Isfahān, 1600. Washington, The Art and History Trust, 14x7.5cm. (*Peerless Images*, Sims et.al), 232.

Women adopted a variety of means to adorn themselves, Persian women further embellished themselves with jewellery, which is sophisticated and elegant, consists of earrings, bracelets, rings and delicate necklaces. Even hands were patterned with henna, *fig.54*. All rendered with candid details, how minute that might be, though, miniature paintings have very small space, of just a page. Even then minute details are rendered with candid truth. Patterns of *henna* on hands are so perfectly visible that one can reproduce them. The device of super-realism gives perfect delineation of trinkets too.

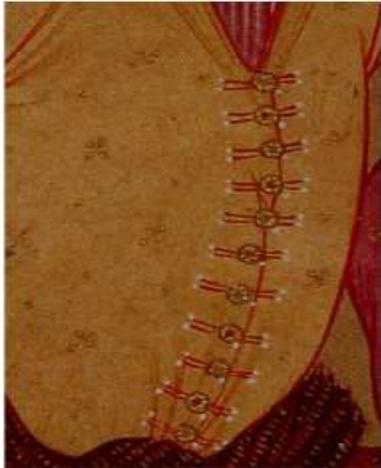


Fig.62: Buttons of *zīrīn qaba* from fig.61

Muslim art is concerned with portraying everything minutely and intelligently to make every segment of reality visible. In the quest to decipher maximum aspects of the subject or objects represented, things are captured from such angles that can expose their maximum characters. For instance, posture of *The turbaned youth leaning against a bolster*, from an album, Işfahān, 1600, is so devised that each part of his costume gets visible, *fig.61*. He is wearing *zīrīn qaba* not *rū'iy qaba* and the underneath vest with red strips is visible from his neckline. The *zīrīn qaba* has bright red lining. His turban is so perfectly drawn and painted that one can feel its stuff, ornamentation, and even delicate decorative border. Rendering of sash is equally impressive; its texture is captured with sensitivity. Softness of hair lock, turban and sash is the marvel of super-realism, while posture of the youth exhibits each bit of his costume, a device used by the Muslim artists to configure every element with all possible nuances. His *qaba* is tied up with golden buttons and red loops, eleven in number. Each loop emerges out of two white pearls, and each alternative button has a red dot in the centre, *fig.62*. Such are the microscopic details in Muslim miniature paintings, the cause to capture diminutive aspects.

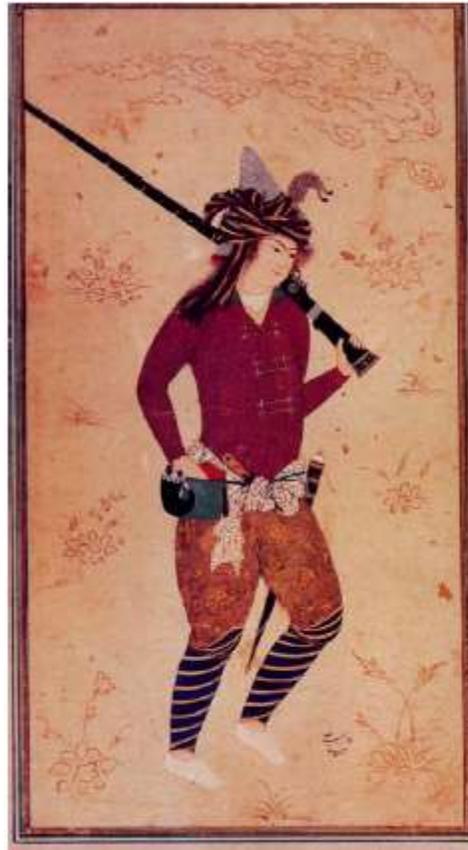


Fig.63: *Young Man with a musket on his shoulder*, Işfahān, 1600. Berlin, Staatliche Museen Museum 18.1×9.5 cm. (*Peerless Images* Sims et.al), 23

Similar is the rendering of the *Young man with a musket*, *fig.63*, Işfahān, 1610-20. His turban, though different from the previous one, equally comes under the sway of super-realism. The sash and trousers covering thighs is provided with rich texture, making even its mild patterns visible. Dagger's sheath, sword covering and musket have inlaid gold and silver in wood. All the accessories have photographic perfection, analogous to photo-realism of the twentieth century western art.

### Conclusion

Though perfection of details in the Muslim miniature painting can be linked with photo-realism but cannot be labelled as mimetic, hence delineation of everything is perfect to its core. For, comprehension of the Muslim artists is not based on illusive perception that keeps limited capacity to view reality. Through illusive perception, that is corporeal vision too, the distant objects lose clarity and viewed just as impressions. This type of vision is not required to draw extremely detailed representations, an essential characteristic of the Islamic Art. Thus, here, configuration of corporeal elements too, is subjected to intellectual perception that reveals not an aspect of reality but deciphers its very whole. As a result, miniatures of a few

centimetres can define vast subjects with utmost accuracy, without missing any of their aspects. Even, without leaving a glimpse of confusion, for the space is only of a small page. If encampment of a tribe is represented, one can view the soul of the tribe within the diminutive scale of a miniature. Thus, details of no single element are ignored for being trivial, even foliated patterns of brocade on silk of their costumes, or embroidered motifs, all are fully delineated under the spectrum of miniature painting. Rendering everything with such precision requires a synthesis of observation and intellectual cerebration that was provided by the sensitive souls of the Muslim artists. They provided facts like chronicles, the very reason that art is called a window into history.

### Reference

- Bahari, Ebadollah. (1997). *Bihzad. Master of Persian*. London. New York, I.B.Tauris.
- Canby, Shiela R. (1999) *The Golden Age of Persian Art*. London, Harry N. Abrams,.
- Canby, Shiela R. (1993). *Persian Painting*. London, British Museum.
- Hattstein, Markus. Peter Delius. Eds. (2004). *Islam Art and Architecture*. Konigswinter, Konemann.
- Lentz, Thomas., W. Glenn D. Lowry. (1989). *Timur and the Princely Vision, Persian Art and Culture in the Fifteenth Century*. Washington, Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Papodopoulo, Alexandre. (1979). *Islam and Muslim Art*. New York, Harry, N. Abrams, Inc.
- Rice, David Talbot. (1975). *Islamic Art*. New York: Oxford university Press.
- Sims, Eleanor. Boris I. Marshak.( 2002). *Peerless Images*. London: Yale University Press.
- Welch, Stuart Cary. ( 1976). *Persian Painting: five Royal Safavid Manuscripts of the Sixteenth Century*. New York, George Braziller, Inc.

Received: Oct, 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014  
Revisions Received: May, 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015