

A FUSION OF MUGHAL ELEGANCE AND CONTEMPORARY CONVERTIBILITY IN FASHION INSPIRED BY THE NAULAKHA PAVILION

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Article Info



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Abstract

This research explores the intersection of Mughal heritage and contemporary transformation fashion, focusing on the reinterpretation of traditional aesthetics into versatile, multifunctional garments. Drawing inspiration from the architectural splendour and detailed ornamentation of the Naulakha Pavilion in Lahore Fort, the study integrates historical motifs with modern silhouettes and modular construction techniques to create adaptable fashion pieces. The aim is to honour cultural heritage while addressing the evolving needs of modern consumers, particularly those within Pakistan's upper middle class. Through a single experimental garment titled Shifting Silhouettes, four distinct looks were crafted, showcasing the transformative potential embedded in Mughal design elements. The methodology combines applied design processes and descriptive analysis to evaluate the garment's aesthetic, functional, and sustainable value. Research findings highlight how modularity, reversible elements, and silhouette conversions contribute to fashion adaptability, reduce consumption, and offer greater expression of identity. Consumer-oriented design considerations and sustainability are emphasized throughout, aligning historical beauty with ecological consciousness. The study concludes with recommendations for designers to deepen historical research, employ sustainable materials, and engage consumers in the co-creation of transformative designs. This research not only contributes to contemporary fashion innovation but also strengthens the preservation and relevance of Mughal artistic legacy in modern couture.

Keywords:

Mughal fashion, transformation fashion, multifunctional garments, Naulakha Pavilion, sustainable design, modular clothing, historical aesthetics, contemporary couture, adaptive fashion, heritage-inspired fashion.

1. Introduction

The interplay between architectural heritage and contemporary fashion has emerged as a compelling territory for innovation in design research. Nowhere is this fusion more resonant than in the Mughal architectural marvel of the Naulakha Pavilion—a serene, opulent summer retreat inside Lahore Fort, constructed around 1633 under Emperor Shah Jahan’s patronage (Sheikh, 2015; Archnet, 2008). This pavilion, rendered in Makrana marble with highly refined pietra dura, a signature of Mughal craftsmanship, alongside its sweeping bangla-style curved roof and elegant arched openings, offers rich potential for reimagining into modern convertible fashion (Sheikh, 2015; Archnet, 2008). The name “Naulakha,” literally meaning “nine lakhs,” reflects the staggering cost of its construction, positioning the pavilion as a symbol of imperial luxury and artistic precision (Sheikh, 2015). It served as a private enclave within the Lahore Fort, combining serene repose with architectural grandeur qualities that can be translated into transformative design features in garments. Through detachable panels echoing pietra dura motifs or curved structural elements mimicking the skillet-like roof, the pavilion’s aesthetic can be reinterpreted into wearable art that shifts between formality and functionality.

Crucially, research in fashion-architecture crossovers confirms that Mughal architecture and textiles share aesthetic foundations, including symmetry, rich ornamentation, and textural depth (Kumari, 2019; Menon, 2018). A qualitative study comparing Mughal architectural elements to period costumes demonstrated positive correlations across silhouette, ornamentation, and motif design—indicating that architectural motifs readily adapt to garment structuring (Menon, 2018). In the Indian context, scholars have highlighted how Mughal-era attire itself was richly informed by architectural aesthetics—metalwork, lattice motifs, and structured draping borrowed from palace designs (Kumari, 2019). Thus, the theoretical ground is set: by overlaying the architectural identity of Naulakha Pavilion with Transformation Fashion—garments engineered for modularity, adjustability, and multifunctional use—the potential exists to create a collection that is at once regal, adaptable, and expressive.

Transformation Fashion emphasizes changeability—through detachable elements, reversible designs, and variable silhouettes—responding to evolving consumer needs for versatility, sustainability, and personal expression (Kumari, 2019). When fused with architectural motifs like Naulakha’s pietra dura panels, arched structures, and curved roofs, these garments achieve architectural resonance in form and function. Imagine a high-waisted skirt whose side panels echo the pavilion’s floral inlays and can be removed or reconfigured to create a different silhouette—this is where heritage merges meaningfully with mechanism.

Moreover, heritage conservation studies of the Naulakha Pavilion emphasize its intricate marble jalis (latticed screens), crafted using Makrana marble—the same as used in the Taj Mahal—whose design balances light, shadow, and ornamentation (Sadiq, 2018). Translating these jali patterns into embroidered overlays or laser-cut modular panels can yield garments with sculptural texture as well as functional layering—invoking the delicate interplay of opacity and transparency found in Mughal design. Understanding the public’s response to such transformative garments is important, too. Research shows that adaptive or modular fashion resonates with modern consumers, particularly when combined with culturally rooted aesthetics. Not only does it support sustainable use through prolonging garment lifespan, but it also nurtures a personal connection with design narrative and identity. While direct consumer studies

on Mughal-inspired convertible wear remain nascent, the supportive foundation in broader modular fashion literature suggests strong potential for positive reception.

Accordingly, this study proposes to explore:

- **Visual and functional translation:** How can the Pavilion's curved roof, arches, and pietra dura motifs be translated into garment components—detachable skirts, reversible linings, modular collars—that embody both aesthetic symbolism and structural utility?
- **Material and technique selection:** What combination of textiles, embroidery, laser-cutting, and hardware (fastenings, snaps, magnets) best evoke marble solidity, floral inlay, and lattice patterning, while supporting transformability?
- **User perception:** How do wearers—especially upper-middle-class Pakistani adults—respond to the fusion of Mughal elegance with professional, convertible wear? How do notions of heritage, adaptability, and style influence acceptance?
- **Sustainability implications:** Can such transformative design reduce garment consumption and extend utility, aligning with eco-conscious values while preserving luxury?

By engaging with these questions, the study aims to advance cultural sustainability not merely material and environmental, but narrative-based and heritage-aware through thoughtful design. It aligns historical depth with 21st-century practicality, encouraging fashion that is at once timeless and transformative.

2. Research Problem

The research problem in developing contemporary fashion designs inspired by Mughal aesthetics—particularly drawn from architectural marvels like the Naulakha Pavilion—within the framework of Transformation Fashion lies in understanding the design feasibility, aesthetic integration, and consumer response to this culturally rooted, multifunctional fashion. The core challenge is to merge historical richness with modern practicality without compromising on elegance, utility, or authenticity. This study seeks to address the following key questions:

- a) How can the opulent and intricate aesthetics of Mughal architecture such as pietra dura, arched forms, and floral motifs be effectively integrated into contemporary fashion designs using the Transformation Fashion model?
- b) What key design elements, techniques, and materials can be employed to achieve a seamless fusion between traditional Mughal artistic expressions and modern, modular garment structures?
- c) What are the design challenges and limitations in translating the visual grandeur, symbolic motifs, and structural elegance of Mughal heritage into wearable, adaptable clothing while retaining their cultural and aesthetic integrity?

- d) How do consumers perceive and respond to contemporary fashion that combines Mughal-inspired elements with transformative features? What are their preferences, attitudes, and motivations regarding such culturally enriched yet versatile apparel?
- e) In what ways can the transformative characteristics of Mughal-inspired fashion designs contribute to greater versatility, personalized expression, and adaptability in today's fashion landscape?
- f) What are the sustainability and ethical implications of integrating historical Mughal influences with contemporary transformation fashion principles in garment creation?

3. Aim of the Research

The aim of this research is to explore and investigate the possibilities, challenges, and impact of creating contemporary fashion designs inspired by the artistic and architectural aesthetics of the Mughal era—specifically drawing from structures like the Naulakha Pavilion—by utilizing the principles of Transformation Fashion. This research seeks to examine how historical grandeur can be merged with modern functionality to develop garments that are both culturally expressive and adaptable. The specific objectives include:

- a) To examine the feasibility of integrating the intricate and luxurious design elements of Mughal architecture such as pietra dura inlays, arched forms, and floral motifs—into contemporary fashion through transformative design approaches.
- b) To explore the key design elements, construction techniques, and materials that can be used to effectively fuse Mughal heritage with Transformation Fashion, ensuring both visual appeal and practical functionality.
- c) To assess the sustainability and ethical implications of combining historical Mughal influences with modular and adaptive fashion frameworks.
- d) To explore and understand the potential benefits of applying transformative features such as detachable, adjustable, and multi-wear elements into fashion inspired by Mughal aesthetics.
- e) To identify and analyse the design considerations, technical challenges, and overall feasibility of implementing Transformation Fashion concepts in garments influenced by Mughal architecture and art.
- f) To investigate the environmental impact of using transformation-based garment structures and to explore sustainable strategies that can be incorporated into design and production processes.
- g) To explore how innovations in materials, digital technology, and manufacturing processes can enhance the adaptability and cultural storytelling of Mughal-inspired transformative fashion.

4. Research Importance

This study is pivotal in several interdisciplinary dimensions—preserving historical artistry, fostering design innovation, enhancing self-expression, engaging bespoke audiences, promoting sustainable practices, and integrating contemporary technology:

- a) Research on contemporary Mughal-inspired fashion helps preserve cultural heritage by reinterpreting the craftsmanship and artistry exemplified by the Naulakha Pavilion and broader Mughal architectural motifs (Ijert, 2025).
- b) Integrating Mughal aesthetics with Transformation Fashion fosters creativity by merging traditional motifs like pietra dura and curved arches with modular, adaptive garment structures (IJCRT, 2025).
- c) The fusion expands aesthetic diversity and individual expression, enabling wearers to experience culturally rich designs that are both functional and expressive.
- d) Understanding consumer perceptions toward heritage-infused modular fashion guides designers in creating collections that stand out in the market by balancing history with versatility (Homescience Journal, 2025).
- e) The sustainability dimension is advanced through versatile garments that support longer wearable lifespans and reduce fashion waste (Homescience Journal, 2025).
- f) Investigating technological integration—such as laser-cut motifs, magnetic hardware, and smart textiles—can drive innovation in Mughal-inspired transformative fashion design (Homescience Journal, 2025).

5. Research Methodology

- a) Descriptive Analysis: Conduct in-depth analysis of Mughal architectural motifs—such as pietra dura inlays, curved roofs, and latticework—from scholarly conservation and art history studies (Sadiq, 2015; Alam, 2022).
- b) Applied Design Experimentation: Develop and prototype women's garments—inspired by Mughal forms and ornamentation—that incorporate modular or transformable features. Evaluate their aesthetic and functional impacts with wearer feedback aligned with sustainability objectives (Homescience Journal, 2025).

6. Research Limitations

- a) The study centres on women's fall/winter 2025 garment influenced by Mughal aesthetic vocabulary, particularly the Naulakha Pavilion's design elements.
- b) Target demographic is upper-middle-class Pakistani women aged 25–35 years, assessing how they respond to the fusion of traditional Mughal aesthetics and transformative design.
- c) The practical application and garment creation component were conducted with final-year fashion students at the School of Arts & Design, under academic supervision.

7. Background

7.1. Multifunctional Fashion Products

Multifunctional garments represent an evolving category in contemporary fashion, where individual modules or components within a garment are designed to serve two or more purposes. This goes beyond the basic idea of detachable clothing; multifunctionality often involves conversion techniques that enable transformation between various forms or styles within a single garment (Li, Chen, & Wang, 2018). Over the past decade, there has been a marked increase in consumer demand for garments that combine aesthetic value with practical functionality. Modern consumers increasingly seek products that not only provide visual appeal but also prioritize ease of use, comfort, adaptability across settings, and fashionable design. This demand has catalyzed the growth of multifunctional fashion—clothing systems engineered to perform multiple roles in varying environmental or social scenarios (Cunha & Broega, 2009).

Such garments may include features like thermal adaptability, moisture control, or structural flexibility tailored to different regions of the body. For instance, a single item might incorporate areas with varying permeability or mechanical flexibility to support both climate responsiveness and user mobility. These integrated functional differences elevate the garment's utility while maintaining its stylistic integrity (Cunha & Broega, 2009). Ultimately, multifunctional design not only enhances user experience but also aligns with broader trends in sustainability and personalized fashion. It supports reduced wardrobe volumes and promotes a conscious shift toward garments that serve longer, more adaptive roles in a consumer's life cycle (Li et al., 2018).

7.2. Transformation Fashion

Transformation fashion is a design innovation that allows garments to morph into multiple styles, functions, or silhouettes, addressing a range of aesthetic, functional, and psychological needs. This approach serves not only as a creative solution for personalization and self-expression but also as a strategic response to sustainability challenges in the fashion industry (Rashad, 2023). As defined by Rahman (2016), transformable garments offer a sustainable alternative to conventional fashion by enabling users to reorganize, replace, or reconfigure individual garment components. Through such adaptability, these garments contribute to reduced overall clothing consumption. By extending wearability and engaging consumers in the process of (re)design—whether through modular changes, reattachment of parts, or restyling—transformation fashion supports environmental consciousness and mindful consumption practices.

Transformable clothing often includes design features that allow garments to shift between styles through physical manipulations such as wrapping, folding, binding, twisting, and gathering. In some instances, transformation may not alter the form but instead involve surface changes such as embellishments, overlays, or integration of smart elements like light-emitting diodes (Rahman, 2016). This versatility enhances garment longevity, postpones psychological obsolescence, and reduces fashion waste, making it a key innovation in sustainable fashion design. As Rashad (2023) points out, the rising popularity of transformation fashion lies in its potential to align aesthetic diversity with functional utility. By allowing

garments to respond to varied social, climatic, or stylistic needs, transformation fashion empowers consumers while reducing the environmental footprint of clothing production and disposal.

7.3. Conversion Methods in Fashion Design

In transformation fashion, two primary conversion methodologies are employed to enable garments to change form or function: the openings conversion method and the role conversion method. These methods provide the structural foundation for multi-functional fashion design by expanding the utility and adaptability of individual garment components (Li, Chen, & Wang, 2018).

The openings conversion method focuses on the interchangeability of conventional garment openings. For example, designers may standardize the dimensions of different openings—such as collars, cuffs, hems, and leg openings—allowing for elements like a cuff decoration to be repurposed as a collar module. This level of interchangeability introduces dynamic styling potential without compromising garment integrity. Other practical applications include converting sleeve cuffs into trouser cuffs, or collar areas into skirt hems, thereby maximizing the garment's functionality with minimal structural modifications (Li et al., 2018).

The role conversion method, on the other hand, transforms entire sections of a garment from one use to another. It includes innovations such as converting pants into skirts, sleeves into pant legs, or reversing garments for multiple wear options. This method introduces an element of transformative utility that allows a single garment to serve dual or even multiple purposes depending on the need. A notable example is provided by Liu Guirong's design, where the armhole of a jacket was enlarged and aligned with the thigh opening dimensions, allowing the same module to function as both a sleeve and a pant leg. The garment thus transitions seamlessly from a jacket into a pair of pants, demonstrating the flexibility of role-based transformation (Li et al., 2018).

While these methods offer expansive creative space for designers, they also present technical challenges. Achieving both aesthetic harmony and functional feasibility in multi-role garments requires precision in pattern engineering and a deep understanding of garment construction. Compared to single-function modular systems, multi-functional modular designs demand more complex structural solutions, making them a challenging yet rewarding avenue for innovation in the fashion industry.

7.4. Transformation Fashion and Sustainability

Transformation fashion, also referred to as transformable design, presents a forward-thinking approach to sustainability within the fashion industry. This design strategy involves constructing garments from individual components that are connected by fastening systems such as zippers, hook-and-eye closures, Velcro, or buttons. These fastening mechanisms allow for easy removal, replacement, or reconfiguration of each component, empowering consumers to modify their garments to suit different occasions or personal styles (Rahman, 2015). A critical advantage of this model lies in its ability to extend the garment's life cycle. Rather than discarding an entire item of clothing when one part becomes worn or outdated, users can simply swap out or update the affected module. This modular approach to garment

maintenance not only reduces textile waste but also encourages long-term consumer engagement with each piece.

Understanding transformation fashion also requires an awareness of the traditional garment life cycle, which typically comprises five stages: (1) sourcing raw materials such as fabric, zippers, and thread; (2) manufacturing garments; (3) distributing them via various marketing and retail channels; (4) consumer use; and finally, (5) disposal. By enabling repairs and style updates without full garment replacement, transformable fashion intervenes in the final stage, effectively delaying or minimizing disposal and its associated environmental impact (Rahman, 2015).

This innovation aligns with global efforts to reduce fashion's environmental footprint by emphasizing reuse, waste reduction, and mindful consumption. By integrating sustainable principles into the design and function of garments, transformable fashion fosters not only aesthetic versatility but also environmental stewardship.

7.5. Fashion Designers and Transformation Fashion

Several contemporary designers have actively explored the innovative concept of transformation fashion by integrating multifunctionality into their garments. For instance, the Italian fashion brand Mandarin Duck introduced the “Jackpack”, a cutting-edge design that transitions between a jacket and a backpack. This invention emphasizes versatility, especially for users prioritizing space-saving solutions in urban settings (Shawki, 2019).

In a similar vein, a collaboration between Puma and the Los Angeles-based streetwear label Stampd resulted in a collection tailored for dynamic city life. The collection features garments influenced by wetsuit structures and camo aesthetics. Most notably, it includes a version of the Jackpack, which seamlessly converts from a functional jacket into a compact backpack—ideal for individuals constantly on the go (Gulf News, 2017).



Figure 1: Jackpack design by Puma LA street-style label Stampd

Further east, Japanese designer Masaaki Sato gained recognition for his “Henshin” collection. This range includes garments like tank tops that convert into totes, sailor shirts transforming into shoulder bags, and raincoats that double as garment carriers, reflecting an emphasis on practicality and modularity (Shawki, 2019).

7.6. Hussein Chalayan and Transformative Fashion

Avant-garde designer Hussein Chalayan, along with other innovators such as Kosuke Tsumura, Vexed Generation, and C.P. Company, has also contributed significantly to the field. Their designs include urban garments like parkas that can be converted into tents or sleeping bags, combining fashion with functionality for modern, environmentally-aware consumers (Shawki, 2019). Hussein Chalayan is globally recognized for his avant-garde approach to fashion design, particularly for integrating transformative elements that allow garments to shift in silhouette, function, or form. His work consistently pushes the boundaries between fashion, technology, and conceptual art.



Figure 2: Transformed dresses by Hussein Chalayan

In his Spring/Summer 2000 “Airborne” collection, Chalayan introduced the “Remote Control Dress,” a remarkable innovation that began as a wooden coffee table and transformed into a full-length skirt using robotics. This piece exemplified his ability to merge engineering and fashion. Similarly, in his Fall/Winter 2000 “Afterwords” collection, Chalayan showcased the “Table Skirt,” which housed a wooden structure capable of unfolding into a functional table, reflecting his continued interest in convertible designs and spatial awareness.



Figure 3: Transformed smart dresses by Hussein Chalayan

Chalayan's Spring/Summer 2009 "Inertia" collection further explored kinetic transformation with the "Transformer Dress," which changed its shape through built-in hydraulic systems. More recently, his Spring/Summer 2018 "Readings" collection emphasized modularity through the "Transformer Coat," a piece with a detachable lower section that could be worn as a separate skirt. This design not only highlighted adaptability but also illustrated Chalayan's masterful use of fabric manipulation and structural experimentation (Shawki, 2019). Through these pioneering works, Chalayan has established a legacy of innovation in fashion, marrying technology with textile craftsmanship to create garments that respond to the evolving dynamics of body, space, and purpose.



Figure 4: Transformed dresses by Hussein Chalayan

8. Designing Multifunctional Fashion Concepts

The traditional fashion design model has evolved into a more dynamic and user-centered approach that prioritizes individual preferences and demands for personalized, multifunctional garments. This evolution aligns with the rising interest in garments that offer both aesthetic and functional flexibility to suit varying lifestyles and personal expressions (Cunha, 2009).

At the heart of this innovative design philosophy are several critical elements: the integration of emerging textile technologies, emphasis on total comfort, rigorous concept evaluation, and a commitment to inclusive design. The notion of total comfort is multidimensional, encompassing physiological, psychological, and physical well-being. Tactile sensations, breathability, and thermal responsiveness contribute significantly to how comfort is experienced by the wearer. On the psychological front, psycho-aesthetic comfort relates to the garment's visual appeal, trend alignment, and the wearer's emotional response. Meanwhile, ergonomic comfort ensures ease of movement and supports the body's form, enhancing the practical wearability of the design. Moreover, the inclusive design framework strives to ensure that fashion is accessible and functional for a wide range of individuals. By incorporating diverse user needs at every stage of the design process—from research to prototyping—designers can create

garments that serve broader demographic and physical requirements without compromising on innovation or style (Cunha, 2009).

8.1. Practical Work: Mughal-Inspired Transformation Fashion

The practical implementation of transformation fashion takes inspiration from the rich aesthetics and refined craftsmanship of the Mughal era. By drawing on the architectural elegance and detailed ornamentation of historical structures such as the Naulakha Pavilion, contemporary designers reinterpret traditional silhouettes into versatile, multifunctional garments suited for modern lifestyles.

These garments blend Mughal-influenced elements—such as floral motifs, structured layering, and rich textiles—with transformative features like detachable sleeves, reversible panels, and modular construction. This fusion enables the wearer to adapt a single garment for various formal and casual settings. Through the strategic use of luxurious yet flexible materials and architectural forms, designers bridge the historical opulence of the Mughal court with the practical demands of contemporary fashion.

In this design exploration, the elegance of Mughal heritage is not merely replicated but is reimagined through the lens of adaptability, sustainability, and personal expression. This approach highlights how the opulence and symbolism of the past can inform innovative fashion that aligns with the values and aesthetics of today's style-conscious individuals.

9. Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative, practice-based design methodology to explore the intersection of historical Mughal aesthetics and contemporary transformation fashion. The garment collection, titled *Shifting Silhouettes: Mughal Grace Through Reform*, draws its core inspiration from the architectural richness of the Naulakha Pavilion in Lahore, Pakistan—a symbol of Mughal luxury and refined artistic mastery (Khan, 2020). The primary objective was to reinterpret this heritage through multifunctional, modular fashion that merges traditional motifs with modern silhouette engineering and sustainability principles.

9.1. Design and Development Process

The design process for this project began with an exploration into the majestic world of Mughal architecture particularly the Naulakha Pavilion which served as the primary muse. This historical landmark, known for its intricate marble inlay work, arched domes, and ornamental detailing, inspired a journey that blended heritage with modern versatility. The goal was not merely to replicate the beauty of the past, but to reinterpret it through a contemporary lens—creating garments that are modular, sustainable, and culturally rich.

The entire process was rooted in transformation fashion, a methodology that emphasizes adaptability and multifunctionality. With the evolving needs of the modern woman in mind, the garments were designed to transition effortlessly between multiple looks—ranging from minimal and professional to elaborate and ceremonial. This required an intensive study of Mughal motifs, color theory, silhouette mapping, fabric

behavior, and construction techniques that could support modular design. From concept boards to draping, every step was meticulously planned to reflect both aesthetic appeal and structural logic. The final result is not just a fashion collection—it's a wearable narrative of cultural revival, sustainability, and innovation, allowing the wearer to shift styles while carrying a piece of history forward into the future.

Research Board

The foundation of this design project was established through an extensive research board, deeply rooted in the architectural grandeur of the Naulakha Pavilion—a Mughal marvel within Lahore Fort. This historical structure, built in 1633, became the heart of inspiration for the entire transformation fashion collection. The research board explores the architectural ornamentation, floral pietra dura inlays, marble jalis, and curved roofing structures. Each of these elements provided direction for surface embellishments, panel construction, and motif placement.

The symmetrical precision of the Pavilion's arches, the translucent beauty of its latticed screens, and the dynamic geometry of its floor layouts were carefully translated into garment structures. For instance, the intricacy of inlaid stone patterns inspired hand-embroidery and laser-cut overlays. The research board also explored traditional Mughal costumes, such as angarkhas, jamas, and courtly choghas, to find silhouettes that could be reinterpreted in a contemporary, modular way. This archival investigation helped create a design language that celebrates Mughal legacy while adapting it for modern utility.

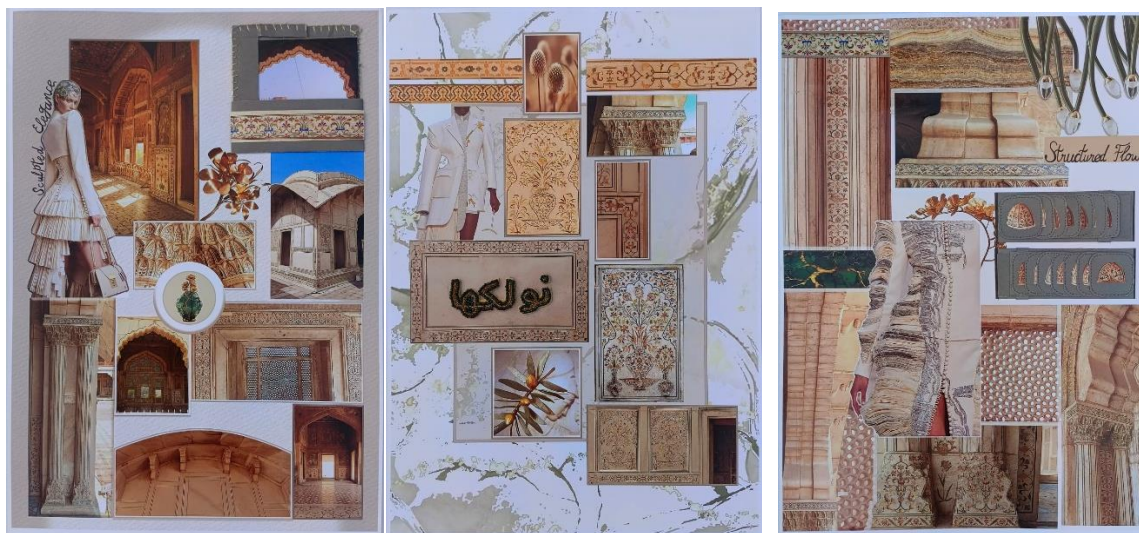


Figure 5: Research Board

Color Board & Mood Board

The color palette drew directly from the natural and architectural hues of the Naulakha Pavilion—including ivory whites from the Makrana marble, earthy beige and taupe tones, and jewel-like accents of emerald green, sapphire blue, ruby red, and gold. These hues were chosen not just for their aesthetic relevance but also for their emotional and cultural symbolism. White and gold speak to purity and royalty; emerald and red suggest regality and richness. The color board helps maintain a harmonious balance

between elegance and boldness across the garments. Even though the garments are transformable and modular, the consistent use of these colors across base pieces, panels, jackets, and accessories ensured aesthetic continuity across all four looks. The mood board encapsulated the essence of “Elegant Tranquillity”—a fusion of serenity and opulence. It used visuals of Mughal gardens, serene water channels, intricate floral inlays, and symmetrical domes to capture the quiet power of the Mughal design philosophy. The mood board not only served to maintain emotional consistency across the garment development but also helped define the psychological tone of the designs: garments that are regal yet accessible, historic yet wearable. Through overlapping imagery of marble textures, soft fabrics, and symmetrical architecture, the board guided the emotional arc of the collection. The mood board served as a visual compass, reinforcing the themes of calm, sophistication, and transformation.



Figure 6: Color Board



Figure 7: Mood Board

Visual Boards

The storyboard narrates the journey of a woman transitioning between multiple roles in modern society, with each outfit transformation reflecting a different facet of her identity. From a casual professional look to formal ceremonial wear, the modular garment adapts like a chameleon—echoing the architectural metamorphosis of the Naulakha Pavilion, which shifts between structural grandeur and intimate elegance. Each of the four transformations represents a chapter in her day or week—formal office attire (Look 1), post-work cultural engagement (Look 2), evening celebration (Look 3), and festive/formal occasion (Look 4). This narrative provides a purpose to each transformation, ensuring the garments are not just aesthetic but functionally connected to a lived experience.

The concept board bridges architecture and clothing. It maps how specific elements of the Naulakha Pavilion were converted into garment details. For example:

- The dome-shaped roof inspired the voluminous cloche skirt.
- Jali screens were reimagined as laser-cut panels and sheer embroidered overlays.
- Pietra dura floral inlays became beaded embroidery on bodices and jackets.

- Marble columns inspired the vertical seam detailing in the corset and jacket.

The central concept guided the design logic. The idea was to design a singular base garment that could morph into various versions using detachable or reversible modules. The concept board included annotated sketches of modular systems, fabric swatches, fastening mechanisms (buttons, ties, zippers), and mood descriptors such as “fluid,” “architectural,” “historical,” and “adaptable.”



Figure 8: Story Board



Figure 9: Concept Board



Figure 10: Silhouette Board

The silhouette board focuses on form and structure. Inspired by the Pavilion’s geometry and ornamental balance, the silhouettes range from structured corsetry to voluminous skirts and puff sleeves. Emphasis was placed on asymmetry, layering, and movement—creating garments that shift from form-fitted to flared, depending on their transformation.

- The base silhouette: Corset with short skirt—modern, minimal, youthful.
- Layered silhouette: Adds puff-sleeved jacket—more opulent, semi-formal.
- Regal silhouette: Full cloche skirt + jacket—grand, ceremonial.
- Flowing silhouette: Mermaid skirt + cape—elegant, feminine, and soft.

The silhouettes explore visual contrast—sharpness vs. fluidity, simplicity vs. ornamentation—and their interchangeability is key to transformation fashion.

Pencil Sketches

A series of hand-drawn pencil sketches were developed and finalized as the blueprint for garment construction. These sketches showcase front and back views of each transformation stage, illustrating where seams would open, how panels would attach or fold, and where embellishment would be placed. Key sketch details include:

- Seam allowances marked for modular fastening.
- Annotations on embroidery placement.
- Material indications: silk blends for structure, net for overlays.
- Transformational cues like zippers, button plackets, and concealed ties.

These sketches were approved before garment construction began, serving as the technical map for cutting, stitching, and finishing.



Figure 11: Pencil Sketches

Draping of Four Garments

Draping played a vital role in visualizing how the flat sketches would come alive on the body. Muslin and prototype fabrics were used first to test volume, movement, and transformation capabilities. Draping sessions focused on:

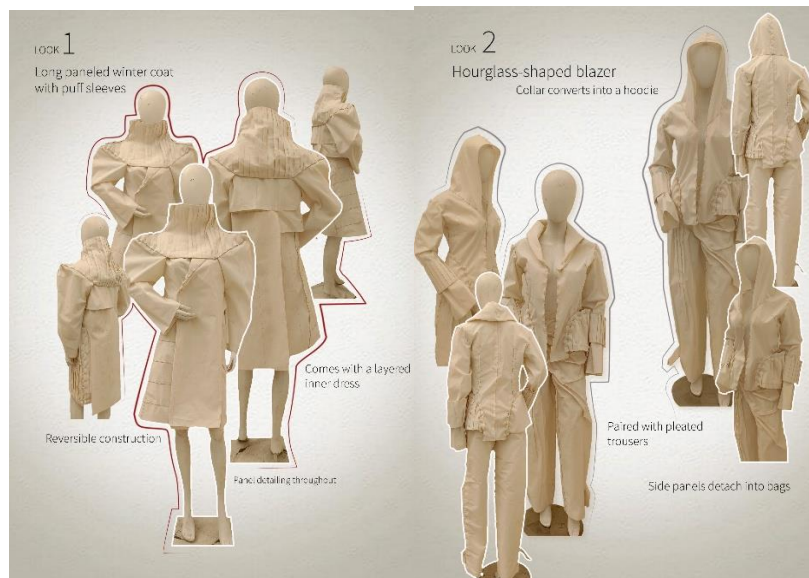
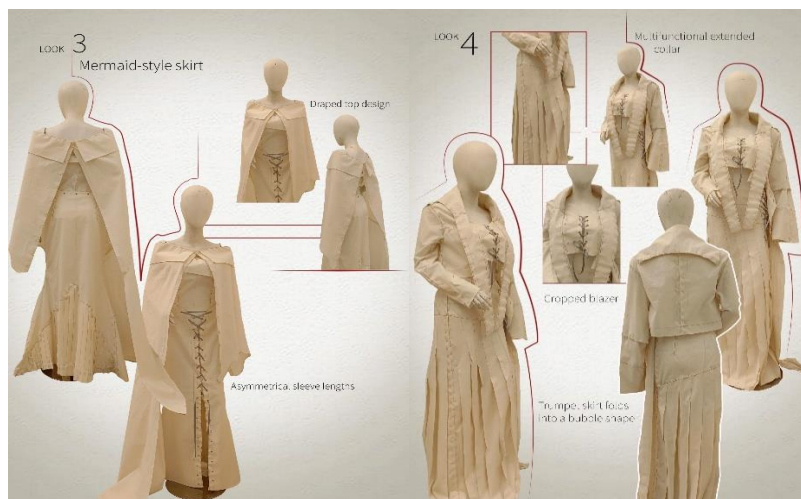


Figure 12: Look 1 -

Figure 13: Look 2

**Figure 14: Look 3****Figure 15: Look 4**

Each drape was assessed for comfort, silhouette integrity, transformation fluidity, and how well it embodied Mughal elegance. Photos and documentation from these draping sessions supported final garment refinement.

9.1. Garment Construction

The process began with a conceptual analysis of the Naulakha Pavilion, focusing on its ornamental elements, geometric symmetry, floral inlay, and light-diffusing architecture. These features were translated into surface ornamentation, fabric selection, and structural garment components using a transformation-based fashion approach (Rahman & Gong, 2016). This design concept aligns with the transformation fashion framework, which encourages garments to be adapted, restructured, or reassembled to meet various aesthetic and functional needs, thus promoting sustainability and consumer participation (Rahman, 2015)

Only one garment was constructed in this research, yet it was engineered to produce four unique looks through detachable and modular elements. This garment functions as a case study in multifunctionality. The four looks include:

1. Base Look: A cup-cropped corset paired with a short knee-length skirt.
2. Layered Look: The addition of a shorthand-embroidered jacket with puffed half-sleeves to the base.
3. Full Ensemble: The base layered with both the jacket and an embroidered double cloche beam skirt.
4. Transformed Elegance: The base with only the cloche beam skirt, omitting the jacket.

This modular design strategy leverages the openings conversion method and role conversion method, enabling sleeves to double as structural embellishments or modular layering (Li, Chen, & Wang, 2018). Each design component is joined using concealed zippers, ties, and buttons—allowing the wearer to

transform the garment according to setting, mood, or need, enhancing its life cycle and reducing overconsumption (Shawki, 2019).

9.2. Materials and Techniques

The materials were selected to reflect Mughal elegance while ensuring adaptability: structured silk blends, net overlays for transparency and layering, and metallic embroidery inspired by pietra dura inlays. Surface embellishments incorporated pearl beading and faux emeralds, inspired by the jewel-toned richness of Mughal regalia. All embroidery was done by hand to emphasize craftsmanship. The bubble and trumpet skirt elements were cut on the bias for fluidity, while the paneled mermaid silhouette emphasized asymmetric flow—a nod to Mughal arches. A detachable cape added a ceremonial Mughal flourish, representing royal cloaks and wraps.

9.4. Target Audience and Market

The garment targets upper-middle-class Pakistani women aged 25–35, especially those seeking versatile and formal attire with cultural depth. The market demands high functionality with aesthetic value, and this design caters to that through wearable heritage (Cunha & Broega, 2009). This hands-on approach allowed for a critical examination of how heritage can coexist with transformation fashion. The methodology embodies an artistic response to social and environmental concerns through the lens of cultural fashion design.

10. Final Looks

This first look presents the foundational form of the transformation garment, offering a clean and structured silhouette with Mughal-inspired elegance. The cropped corset, featuring lace-up detailing, recalls the intricacy of traditional bodices worn in ceremonial Mughal attire, reimagined here in a contemporary minimalist format. The short skirt provides a youthful and bold counterbalance to the ornate embroidery and historically inspired structure, making the outfit versatile for semi-formal and transitional settings.

Surface embellishments such as gold cord embroidery, faux pearls, and emerald accents are drawn directly from the decorative motifs of the Naulakha Pavilion's pietra dura inlays, capturing the grandeur of Mughal interiors. These hand-crafted elements elevate the base look, giving it visual richness despite its modular simplicity.

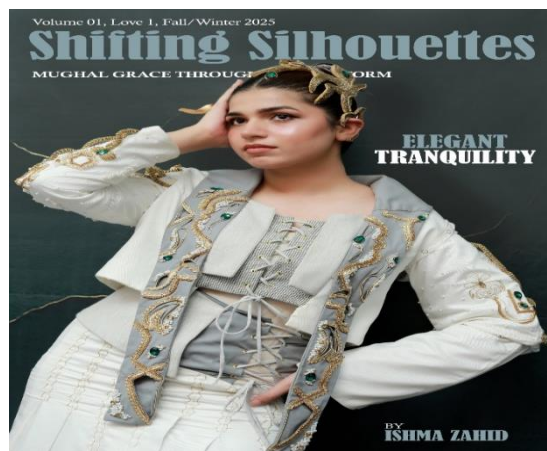


Figure 16: Look 1, Cup Cropped Corset & Short Knee-Length Skirt

This ensemble highlights the first step of transformation fashion—it sets the base garment upon which additional elements can be layered or removed. Its light structure allows maximum comfort and ease of movement, suitable for Fall/Winter layering. This look caters to the young urban woman who values heritage but seeks flexibility and individual styling. It's designed to be styled independently or built upon for more opulent versions, embodying the philosophy of sustainability through reusability and reconfiguration.



Figure 17: Look 2, Cup Cropped Corset, Knee-Length Skirt & Embroidered Short Jacket with Puff Sleeves

The second look deepens the narrative of Mughal elegance by introducing a short, hand-embroidered jacket with dramatic puffed sleeves. This transformation adds opulence and ceremonial richness to the base silhouette, transitioning the ensemble from minimal chic to regal sophistication. The jacket, adorned with Mughal-inspired motifs such as arches, vine scrolls, and jewel accents, evokes the architecture of the Naulakha Pavilion and mimics the detailing found in royal court attire. The puff sleeves not only reflect the grandeur of historical garments but also align with modern fashion trends, creating a powerful fusion of eras. The asymmetrical hem and collar reinforce the conceptual theme of “shifting silhouettes,” suggesting movement, evolution, and transformation—core ideas of the project.

Practically, this look demonstrates how a modular garment can elevate itself into formal wear through minimal additions. The use of fasteners ensures that this transformation can be executed by the wearer without assistance, enhancing autonomy and personal expression. It reflects how transformation fashion empowers individuals to participate in the styling process, blending historic narratives with contemporary functionality. As a transitional evening piece, this look embodies Mughal grace, but with an urban edge, ideal for formal dinners, art events, or cultural gatherings.



Figure 18: Look 3, Full Transformation with Cloche Beam Skirt, Corset, and Embroidered Jacket

In its most elaborate form, this third look showcases the garment's full transformation capacity—combining the cropped corset, jacket, and an intricately embroidered double cloche beam skirt. This ensemble represents a couture interpretation of the Mughal aesthetic, merging surface ornamentation, silhouette grandeur, and layered structure in a unified, regal statement. The cloche beam skirt cascades in volume and flow, echoing Mughal royal robes and ceremonial lehengas. Gold grid embroidery and jewel motifs mimic the lattice windows (jali) and floral arabesques found in the Naulakha Pavilion's marble panels. The modular construction allows the skirt to be attached seamlessly, maintaining garment balance and flow.

This look is particularly suitable for high-formality events, fashion presentations, or luxury cultural affairs. It also highlights how transformation fashion can compete with traditional couture in complexity and elegance while providing greater adaptability. Each element remains wearable individually, preserving sustainability and versatility. The wearer, therefore, can adapt to different settings without multiple garments. The visual impact, symbolic richness, and conscious design make this look not only a display of aesthetic opulence but also a manifesto of responsible, heritage-driven fashion innovation.



Figure 19: Look 4 Mermaid Skirt with Cape & Cropped Corset (No Jacket)

The final look offers a poetic and soft interpretation of Mughal royalty, focusing on movement and drapery. By removing the jacket and retaining the mermaid-style skirt and detachable cape, this configuration highlights feminine elegance and Mughal modesty. The sweeping cape is the central narrative device, inspired by the Mughal ceremonial shawl or chadar, traditionally worn during imperial gatherings. Its geometric gold embroidery references the quatrefoil and lattice elements prominent in Islamic architecture.

This look is refined and commanding, designed for formal evening occasions, fashion editorials, or cultural festivals. The structured skirt silhouette elongates the figure, while the cape adds drama and grace. When in motion, the cape mimics the flowing water channels of Mughal gardens a metaphor for serenity, which ties back to the collection’s mood of “Elegant Tranquillity.”

Functionally, the cape can be detached and styled as a wrap or reattached in alternative placements, showcasing the garment’s transformation versatility. The emphasis on soft volume and silhouette layering provides a compelling counterpoint to the architectural elements, balancing structure with softness. This look embodies transformation fashion’s mission: not just changing style but shifting narrative and meaning through adaptable design rooted in history.

11. Research Results

a) Aesthetic Fusion

The integration of Mughal aesthetics—characterized by opulent embroidery, regal fabrics, and symmetrical artistry—with transformation fashion techniques has resulted in contemporary designs that

are both culturally rooted and visually dynamic. This fusion enhances the garment's appeal by blending tradition with innovation.

b) Experimental Silhouettes

Drawing from the grandeur and architectural symmetry of Mughal attire, designers were able to experiment with exaggerated, layered silhouettes that echo royal robes, angarkhas, and capes. These forms support the visual drama and transformation aspect of the garments, offering dynamic ways to engage with fashion.

c) Sustainability and Waste Reduction

Transformation fashion contributes to sustainability by minimizing the need for multiple garments. The adaptability of Mughal-inspired designs encourages repeated use in different configurations, reducing waste and fostering eco-conscious consumption (Rahman & Gong, 2016).

d) Modular Construction

Inspired by the multi-piece Mughal wardrobe system, modular construction in the garments enabled components such as jackets, capes, and skirts to be added or removed. This customization allows the wearer to tailor the outfit to different occasions, increasing functionality and personalization.

e) Reversible Fashion

Reversible elements, such as jackets with inner lining embellishments and skirts with dual-use drapes, provided multiple visual expressions from a single garment. This concept honors the Mughal value of duality—beauty and practicality—while promoting sustainable fashion practices.

11. Research Recommendations

a) Historical Exploration

Future research should include a comprehensive analysis of Mughal fashion history—exploring court attire, fabrics, construction methods, and the symbolism behind motifs—to enable informed reinterpretations in contemporary designs.

b) Transformation Technique Development

Designers should continue to explore transformation techniques such as detachable panels, modular layering, and reversible cuts to reimagine Mughal aesthetics through a modern, adaptive lens.

c) Use of Sustainable and Innovative Textiles

Incorporating sustainable textiles such as organic silks, biodegradable threads, and plant-based dyes that align with Mughal-era textile practices can reinforce the collection's ecological and historical integrity (Rahman, 2015).

d) Consumer Insight and Acceptance

Designers must conduct targeted consumer research to understand preferences regarding transformative fashion, cultural identity in clothing, and the reception of Mughal-inspired luxury wear among upper-middle-class South Asian markets (Cunha & Broega, 2009).

e) Collaboration and Evaluation

Encourage interdisciplinary collaborations between fashion historians, textile scientists, and sustainability experts to enhance product innovation. Regular assessments should be made regarding the environmental impact, ethical considerations, and user experience of transformative Mughal-inspired garments.

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