

**ARIES**
(MAR. 21- APRIL 20)

Don't count on correspondence to clear up major problems. Personal changes will be to your benefit. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

**TAURUS**
(APR. 21- MAY 21)

Be careful not to confuse issues when discussing the matters at hand. Visit relatives you don't get to see often. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

**GEMINI**
(MAY 22-JUNE 21)

You can expect the fur to fly on the home front. Now is a good time to ask for favours. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

**CANCER**
(JUNE 22-JULY 22)

You may be up for some changes in your home. Get involved in groups that can offer intellectual stimulation. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

**LEO**
(JULY 23-AUG 22)

Deception is probable if you don't use discrimination. You should put a little extra effort in at work. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

**VRGO**
(AUG. 23 -SEPT. 23)

Spending too much time talking to friends or relatives could easily turn into a debate that could lead to estrangement. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

**LIBRA**
(SEPT. 24 -OCT. 23)

Promotions will be yours if you have acted professionally in times of crisis. Romance could be exciting if you are spontaneous. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

**SCORPIO**
(OCT. 24 -NOV. 21)

You must deal with an emotional problem. You have been avoiding your parents for some time now. Pay attention to office work. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

**SAGITTARIUS**
(NOV. 22 -DEC. 21)

Don't let children or elders put demands on your time. Don't let others take advantage of your good nature. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

**CAPRICORN**
(DEC. 22 -JAN. 20)

Changes could be overwhelming. It's doubtful anyone will try to stand in your way or cut you off at the pass today. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

**AQUARIUS**
(JAN. 21 -FEB. 19)

Don't let others take advantage of your good nature. If they're too demanding, reconsider this union. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

**PISCES**
(FEB. 20 -MARCH. 20)

Lovers will be less than accommodating. You won't impress anyone by being overly generous. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



The Muslin Story

Derived from the name of the Indian port town Machilipatnam which was more commonly known as Maisolos in the ancient times, muslin is a cotton fabric of plain weave. Hand-woven from an uncommon and delicate yarn, it was found in Bangladesh and the Indian State of West Bengal and was exported to Europe for much of the 17th and 18th century.

A favourite of the Romans, muslin was sought by merchants of the Roman empire and subsequently reached other parts of Europe. During the 17th and 18th century, Mughal Bengal emerged as the foremost exporter of muslin in the world, with Mughal Dhaka as the capital of the worldwide muslin trade.

During the Roman period, Khadi muslin was introduced to Europe and vast amounts of fabrics were traded. It became highly popular in France and eventually spread across to much of the Western world.

The Portuguese traveller Duarte Barbosa described the muslin of Bangladesh in the early 16th century. He mentioned a few types of fabrics, such as 'estrabante' (sarband), 'mamona', 'fugoza', 'choutara', and 'sinabaka'.

Bengali muslin was traded throughout the Muslim world, from the Middle East to Southeast Asia. In many Islamic regions, such as in Central Asia, the cloth was named Daka, after the city of Dhaka.

During British colonial rule in the 18th century, the Bengali muslin industry was ruthlessly suppressed by various colonial policies, which favoured imports of industrially manufactured textiles from Britain.

William Bolts, a legendary merchant noted in 1772 that there were instances where "thumbs were cut off" in order to stop the production of muslin. As a result, the quality of muslin suffered greatly and its finesse was nearly lost for two centuries.

The use of muslin is transparent

throughout history. Muslin was frequently used by the Nawabs of Bengal. The first Nawab of Bengal, Murshid Quli Khan used to send muslin to the Mughal emperor. The Emperors used to dress in a type of muslin called the Malma Khash and Nawab's Badshas and Amirs wore it during summer. The growth of muslin was mostly during the Mughal period because of empress Nurjahan. She selected muslin for the Mughal harem.

Muslin was also heavily imported by Europeans to make fine shirts, dresses,

at the time - wrote of a family visit, "Never did three little creatures look so pretty; the two youngest in fine sprigged muslins."

When Edward VII, the Prince of Wales in 1875, came to Bengal, Sir Abdul Gani – the first Nawab of Dhaka – ordered 30 yards of the most superior muslin as a gift for the Prince. It is said that one yard of that fabric weighted only 10 grams!

Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, is credited with introducing gowns to the British. She sent a gift to Caroline Lamb, her niece, for her wedding with William Lamb. The gift was the finest muslin with lace sleeves. Soon after, British women were using a kind of muslin called Shor-bondo as scarves and handkerchiefs.

By the late 17 century, merchants had brought muslin to America. It quickly became popular and was used frequently from weddings and party dresses to everyday items such as children's clothes and curtains. These fine striped, sprigged muslins were imported from India.

Once upon a time the muslin of Dhaka was world famous for its delicacy and thinness. They had a monopoly business during that time in Asia, Europe, North American and the African region.

Dhaka became the capital of Mughal in 1608 but even before that the people of Bengal were known for the fine art of crafting. The Roman authors recorded that 'Generic Muslin' was the most coveted of luxury goods in the ancient civilised world. It is sad that what was once the pride of Bengal is now lost in the pages of history. It is up to us to revive it and bring back the luxury that was muslin.

By Naveed Naushad

Photo: Drik

Sources: Abdul Karim – Dhakai Muslin (Bangla Academy)

Sonia Ashmore – Muslin (V&A Publishing)

Mohammad Saidur – Jamdani (Bangla Academy)

During the 17th and 18th century, Mughal Bengal emerged as the foremost exporter of muslin in the world, with Mughal

undergarments, and children's clothing. Josephine Bonaparte was famously painted wearing a semi-sheer muslin gown. Noble ladies often dampened their muslin dresses to make their legs and other parts of their anatomy more visible.

Leading the luxury league tables of Europe were the fashion tastes of the French. It principally revolved around silk, until muslin replaced it, especially under the patronage of Queen Mary Antoinette and Empress Josephine Bonaparte.

In 1771, Caroline Powys - a friend of Jane Austen's mother and a famous chef