

# Fashion with a social obligation

Muslin, a heritage textile with thousands of years of history, made an important mark in the Mughal chronicles. It is no secret that the Mughals were patrons of art and crafts and they showed a keen interest in this legendary fabric.

It is also depicted in history that the Roman ladies were avid enthusiasts of the special material, spending a great deal of their husbands' fortune towards accruing the luxurious fabric from across the seas. It was certainly a golden era for the weavers; the artisans earned their due recognition for mastery.

And then came the era of imperialism, loot and theft by the British Raj; with their colonial manipulation, not only did they plunder the subcontinent for almost 200 years but also destroyed the business of handcrafted looms permanently.

This they did by introducing an advanced fixed-pay system 'dadon' which was much lower than the deserving rate. When the weavers refused to continue production at the unworkable rate, the power loom was introduced to completely replace their efforts.

History also speaks of the many atrocities that were inflicted on the weavers to stop the production of Muslin, once and for all. The most horrendous of the crimes included chopping thumbs of weavers and throwing them into the river Meghna so that they could never again produce the 'much sought after' fabric.

With time, the famed heritage textiles, especially – 'the Malmal of the subcontinent' and the famed 'Jamdani' became a part of folklore and regional lyrics sung by bards.

Khadi is a different story altogether. Khadi existed at the very same time as Muslin.

**Model: Mashiat**

**Wardrobe and Jewellery: Aarong**

