

## Fashion Began in the Paleolithic Era!

- It was in the Paleolithic Era that people came to recognise the need to be clothed and that clothing emerged. The garments they chose to wear reflected the particular attributes and skills of people who were engaged in a struggle to survive in the wilderness.
- Living as hunter-gatherers, they needed something to protect their body heat from decreasing. This is why they modified **the pelts of the animals they had caught** to make them more suitable for their bodies, and it was these pelts that they used. At some point, they decided that, to wrap these pelts around their bodies they could use **thick strips of material**, which performed the same function **as belts**.
- Since it would have been impossible for the pelts that were used as clothing or the materials used in producing them to have survived down to the present day, we cannot say for sure when the first garment was actually created.
- All the same, we do have evidence of archaeological finds such as **needles made from bone or hard wood**, which were used in making clothes. It is also clear that plant fibres, horse hair and the intestines of animals were used to create yarn.
- Although we do not know when clothing first started to be used in the Paleolithic Era, it is generally believed that the first sewn garment was **the tunic, which is regarded as the precursor of the shirt**.

## The Fashion of the Neolithic Age

- In the **Neolithic Age**, people transitioned to a settled lifestyle and began to produce things. This allowed weaving to develop too. As a result of the improvement in the tools used and changes in people's needs, clothing diversified. In this period, people started to wear **clothes that contained piping as well as skirts whose edges were decorated with tassels**.
- By processing plant fibres and different kinds of tree bark, Neolithic cultures who had transitioned to a settled lifestyle also developed diverse weaving techniques.
- They dyed clothes and used stamps to decorate them with **patterns such as spirals and clovers**.
- The tradition of decorating clothes, which had begun in the Paleolithic Era, continued into the Neolithic Age. **Garments were decorated using seashells, precious stones and different metals**.
- We can get some idea about the clothes worn in the Neolithic Age from the sculptures dated to that period that have survived to the present. On these sculptures, we see garments such as **sashes, shawls, aprons and skirts with tassels**.

## Fashions of Different Civilisations during the Bronze Age

- While the clothes that people wore in the Paleolithic, Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods were designed to meet their basic needs or to conform with their belief systems, things changed in the Bronze Age. At this point, the design of clothes started to be shaped by **culture**.
- As humanity moved from the Chalcolithic Era to the Bronze Age, people became richer and the differences between the classes that made up society became more noticeable. These differences were also reflected in clothing.
- During the time of the Sumerian, Babylonian and Assyrian civilisations in Mesopotamia, the clothes worn by the members of the ruling class were made from **valuable, bright and colourful fabrics**. In Egypt, only people of status could wear clothes made from green, yellow, red or blue fabrics.
- In the Sumerian civilisation, prostitutes who served at the temple had to keep their heads covered.
- In the case of the Assyrians, on the other hand, a bride-to-be would have been gifted a head-covering prior to the wedding, a ritual which signified that the bride had been accepted by her new family.
- Given the climate of the area covered by Mesopotamia, it is not difficult to see why the Sumerians, Babylonians and Assyrians wore **long garments made from thin linen fabric**. We do, though, have information about an item of clothing that the Assyrians are likely to have chosen to wear on cold winter days. In the winter, Assyrians wore a sleeveless coat made of animal skin, which they called a **guffas**.
- Putting cultural similarities and differences to one side, as a result of the cultural interaction that occurred during the Bronze Age, it was quite possible for a garment that belonged to one civilisation to be adopted, and subsequently manufactured, by another civilisation. For example, the civilisations of Mesopotamia borrowed **the loincloth** from the Egyptians.
- Unlike the case with the civilisations of Mesopotamia, in Egypt men and women wore remarkably similar clothes. For example, in Egypt both men and women wore a unique style of tunic called a **kalasiris**, which was made from the same kind of linen as was used to make clothes in Mesopotamia. In this period, features such as draping were also employed in fashion and pleats were added to clothes.

## Greek and Roman Fashion

- In the long period stretching from the Paleolithic Era to the Bronze Age, the clothes worn by men and women came to reflect the distinctions between the various classes that made up society. In antiquity, the Greeks and then the Romans made a conscious effort to design clothes that were appropriate for specific classes.
- As a result of developments in agriculture, animal husbandry and weaving, silk started to be used in the manufacture of clothes, joining wool and linen. However, as silk was expensive, silk clothes could only be worn by nobles, rulers and other members of the upper class.
- Whereas during the Bronze Age only members of the upper class wore quality clothes, from the beginning of antiquity and into the Roman period, the clothes worn by slaves, artisans, soldiers, leaders and nobles indicated who they were. As such, clothes could be said to have set the parameters for what an individual could do in their everyday life.
- While the clothes of Grecian and Roman noble women were generally designed in such a way as to cover the entire body, the left shoulders of men were usually left exposed.
- The Greeks tended to use red for the uniforms of their soldiers and yellow for the clothes they wore at celebrations. Their servants were attired in striped fabrics and bright colours.

## Greek Clothing

**Chiton:** The chiton was a long garment used by both women and men. It was created by folding a rectangular piece of fabric in half and fastening it to the shoulder with the aid of brooches.

**Himation:** This was the name given to a rectangular cloak or dress that was usually worn over a chiton. Women wore himations – of which both woollen and linen samples have been found – on top of chitons, whereas men wore them on their own.

**Peplos:** A peplos was a long and sleeveless woman's garment that was fastened over the shoulders using a pin like a chiton. But unlike chiton, the upper part of the garment was folded before fastened so it looked like it was made of two pieces. Peploi made of silk or linen were mostly tailor-made for specific individuals. Peploi worn by women belonging to the upper class tended to make use of bright colours and were decorated with a variety of patterns.

**Strophion:** The strophion, which can be compared to today's bra, covered women's breasts and was wrapped over the chiton beneath the breast.

**Chylamis:** This was the name given to a sleeveless cloak that was worn usually by high-ranking soldiers and young men. The chylamis, made from wool, would have been worn on top of a short chiton and fastened over the right shoulder using a pin.

**Exomis:** The exomis was a short garment with the right shoulder exposed. It was worn by men, particularly by soldiers, artisans and slaves.

## Roman Clothing

**Stola:** The stola was an outfit worn by upper-class women. Fastened with brooches above the shoulders, a stola extended down the arm up to the elbow. In the Roman era, women from the lower class were not allowed to wear stolas.

**Tunic:** Underneath her stola, a woman would wear a tunic, which could be made from wool or linen.

**Palla:** Made out of a rectangular piece of fabric, a palla resembled a himation. However, it was used as an outer garment as well as a head covering.

**Toga:** A long, generally white item of men's clothing. Only Roman citizens were permitted to wear togas, which were unique to Roman culture. The fact that a person was wearing a toga indicated that they were entitled to the rights of citizenship enjoyed by a Roman.

**Pallum:** This garment, resembling himation, was worn by a man over his toga.

**Loincloth:** Loincloths were worn largely by artisans, farmers and slaves.

**Toga praetexta:** The toga praetexta was worn by judges and administrators and was distinguished from a normal toga by its purple stripes. The toga praetexta could also be worn by free-born children. It was also a status symbol.

**Tunica recta:** This was a white woollen outfit that brides would weave themselves and then wear.

**Ricinium:** A long garment that also covered the head, worn by widowed women.