

The Importance of Kashmiri art and craft

Dr. Mahjabeen Akhter

Working as Music lecturer in Govt. Degree College for women Nawakadal Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, India

Abstract

Kashmir is the homeland of various decorative renowned arts and crafts which have been for centuries renowned for their art and beauty. Indeed, Kashmiri craft products are legendary. Craft work is the main source of income of the Kashmiries. Craft work or simply craft is a type of work which made the useful and decorative devices by hand or using only simple tools. Items made by mass production or machines are not handicraft products. The Kashmiri craftsmen are always alive to the picturesque surrounding about him. He expresses his response to the beauty around him in the creation of a large variety of chasing or embossing floral motifs interwoven into intricate patterns. The craft products are popularized not only in India but also in the European countries. The paper is to describe the importance of Kashmiri art and crafts from early centuries. It also describes how Kashmiries are creatively and traditionally connected with their traditional craft work. The paper is reconstructed after the field survey and other Original source.

Keywords: condition, exquisite, tradition, monopoly, custom, embroidery, substitute, manufacture, magnificence, carving

Introduction

In Kashmir with its severe winter when climate conditions are semi-arctic, craftsmen utilize their leisure as well as creative intelligence in creating artifacts of exquisite beauty. Princely patronage encouraged these handicrafts from early times till these products, light in weight and rich in art found a big market in India and abroad. The state Government has set up many training centers for coaching young boys and girls in traditional arts and crafts. As a result there has been a wide dispersal of handicrafts throughout the state. Many intellectuals call Kashmir a heaven on earth. It is called so not only for its scenic beauty but for delicate arts and crafts too. The industries of the valley were owned both by the state and private individuals. Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin 1420-1470 turned Kashmir into a smiling garden of industry including in the hearts of the people sane conceptions of labour and life and also implanting in their minds the germs of real progress. Sultan has been made of his study of these arts in Samarkand. With his accession to the throne he invited competent teachers and craftsmen from there to train his subjects in these arts. Kashmir with their natural aptitude for things artistic, soon acquire a great mastery in these crafts and began to produce articles in such beautiful designs and varieties that they acquired an unrivalled fame in Asia and Europe.

Discussion

The state of Kashmir has a rich heritage with respect to art and craft. The state Government gives a chance to the artists to explore their artistic tradition their home are living in different parts of the state of Kashmir. Each of these tribes have their own tradition and culture and it is still reflected in the day-to-day items like clothes and utensils etc. The designs and naqqashi work done on the various handcrafted items have a strong imprint of ancient tradition

According to Nilamata Purana, "the industries in which these craftsmen were engaged, have to be inferred only from the stray to finished products. Thus, the articles of dress point to

the art of spinning, weaving, dyeing, and washing. The ornaments made of gold and silver, weapons of war, probably made of iron. Similarly woodwork, leather-work are pointed to by earthen-pitchers, wooden-pitchers, wooden seats and leather shoes." During the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin the art of paper making, papermache, shawl weaving etc were introduced and patronized in Kashmir.

Paper making

The art of paper making is said to have originated in China in the first or second century A.D. From there it was brought to Samarkand about 1300 years and then to Kashmir in the middle of the 15th century. Since then Kashmir has been famous for this art of good quality paper.

Paper mache

Among the best known traditional craft of Kashmir, paper-mache was introduced in Kashmir by Zain-ul-Abidin who imported experts from Samarkand to train the local people. The art is almost a family monopoly amongst their descendants. But much more important than these historic facts are the details and designs painted on the paper-mache articles. The usual designs on paper-mache goods are birds, boats, trees, king-fishers, the bulbuls and the mynas, the little patches of blossoming flowers like the rose, the tulip, the lily, the iris, the daisy and other choice items from the world of nature.

Kashmiri Shawl

It was Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin who established it as a flourishing industry. Since then shawl began to be exported to India and abroad. During the Mughal period Kashmiri shawl had become so renowned the fame of Kashmiri shawl reached Europe. Later on demand increased and the London custom House imposed an important duty of 80% on Kashmiri shawls. A shawl is a simple item of clothing, loosely worn over the shoulders, upper body, arms and sometimes over the head.

The shawl made in Kashmir occupy a pre-eminent place among textile products and is characterized by the elaboration of its design. There are three fibers from which Kashmiri shawls are made wool, pashmina and shahtoosh. Many kinds of embroidery are worked on shawls 'Sozni' or needlework is generally done, paper- mache, needle work, ari work are another types of needle embroidery.

Kashmiri Silk

In regard to the origin of the silk industry an authoritative date remains untraced. Some hold that it had an independent birth here and was carried in Vedic time. Others say that the art of sericulture was imported from Central Asia where it was imported from China. The mention of this stuff was made for the first time during the reign of Zain-ul-Abidin. Among the wonders of Kashmir are the number of mulberry trees, cultivated for their leaves for the production of silk. The silk piece goods manufactured in Kashmir are rendered particularly attractive by the fine embroidery work. A large variety of designs, flowers and leaves, entwined roses and narcissuses, poppies and tulips, lilies and Chinar leaves, adorn the border or the entire piece of these silken fineries.

Kashmiri Gabbas and Namdas

The Gabbas and Namdas are mostly used as floor-rugs and coverings, being cheaper substitute for carpets and rugs. The origin of the Gabba art is concerned nothing is known. According to a legend there lived at Anantnag a poor tailor, known as Lasya Tota, who is said to have been the first man to think of stitching together some old man and worn out differently dyed pieces of puttoo in such a way as to form a floor cloth. He was successful. It is said the foundation of this industry was thus laid in Kashmir.

It was in 1918 when the manufacture of Namdah was taken up for the first time at Nawab Bazar by a well known firm named Khawaja Garib Shah. Namdah was a woolen felt, a kind of hand made rug with woolen embroidery on it or a drugget-like interesting carpet rug which served as a floor covering or mattress.

Kashmiri Carpet

The main credit of introducing the art of making carpets in the valley go as far back as 1425 A.D. goes to Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, who brought experts and specialists from Persia, Central Asia and Arabia to train local inhabitants. Although the work was done by hand, the industry was highly organized and had all the essentials of a large scale modern concern. The raw materials required for the manufacture of carpets were woolen, silk, cotton, and jute yarns and dyes. With the introduction of the design patterns of shawls, traditional paisley, leaves and flowers the Kashmiri carpet attained a high degree of perfection. Kashmiri carpet are world renowned for two things they are hand -made never machine made, and with the tinge of local artistic magnificence the Kashmiri carpet also attained a high degree of perfection and carved out a unique place in the international market.

Kashmiri Basketry

The origin of basket making is lost in the mist of antiquity. It is one of the oldest crafts in the world, which still holds the imagination of the primitive as well as the advanced man. In Kashmir too the art of basketry had existed since the time of

immemorial. The basic function of a basket is that of a respectable for holding, strong and carrying various commodities. Basket-makers have invented several other uses for their products. In Kashmir this craft is being utilized for making hand-fans, soft prayer-mats for the mosques and chick for doors, Kashmiri basketry also presents a complex of diverse shapes and sizes and comprises circular, spherical or cylindrical artifacts of caskets and containers etc.

Art of Metal

It has been recorded and references are found in Kalhan's Rajatarangini, where mention is made of the use of gold bangles, armlets, ring made of gold and many other ornaments. During the Sultanate period this industry was patronized by Zain-ul-Abidin as we have evidence of the existence gold smiths, gold washers, gold beaters, blacksmiths and many other who dealt with the metal works.

Art of Silver

Kashmiri Silver- ware is one of the ancient arts in Kashmir. The silver-ware of Kashmir is extremely beautiful and some of the indigenous patterns, the lotus and the Chinar leaf are of exquisite designs. Craftman can often be seen in old city engraving objects of house hold utility-bowls, frames, plates, samovars, flower vases, tea sets, the ornamental picture frames are in great demand between the peoples of United States, European Countries and Australia.

Art of Copper

Kashmiri copper-work is chiefly an imitation of the Tibetan Buddhist art, but the introduction of conventional figures and carving of Islamic inscriptions has made the copperware very attractive. Copper-work came next to silver-work articles of this kind are usually archaic Samover, tea-cups, plates, jugs and urns bowls, trays, ash-trays, jugs, glasses. The other variety of copper-work, which is local and uninfluenced, shows a distinctive impress of indigenous surroundings in designs of the lilac, the poppy, the lotus, or the rose. Many of the Coppersmith are men who used once to work in silver. They also worked in brass, their designs were very quaint and bold and they were ready to adopt any new pattern offered to them. The detailed designs in traditional Kashmiri style reflect the craftsmanship of the skilled traditional coppersmiths of Kashmir.

Art of Woodwork

Wood-carving is an ancient craft of the land. Kashmir is a land of forests and magnificent trees. Walnut trees grow in plenty in the valley and partly because of the durability of the wood and partly owing to its rich natural-veined surface beautiful articles of varied designs can be made therefrom. Its texture lends itself excellently to fine carving and polish. Although Woodwork in some form was known to the people in the time of old Hindu rulers, It received due attention during the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin. The walnut industry suffered a decline during the Afghan and Sikh period before staging a revival during Dogra rule, when articles of furniture especially chairs and tables were manufactured especially for European markets. Walnut wood carving is limited within the Muslim community of Kashmir and is largely practiced in Srinagar city. Today woodwork is mainly found in almost every house of Kashmir. (1) Lattice or Pinjra work (2)Panelling or

Khatum-band (3) Carving of wood and (4) Furniture-making are the main purposes of the woodwork in Kashmir.

Kashmiri Leather work

Leather work was prosperous as there existed a large scale trade in leather in the valley. It was chiefly the occupation of a particular sect of Kashmir known as "Watalas" who prepared the hides in the villages and brought these to Srinagar for refining purpose. A large variety of leather goods in fairly large quantities were manufactured in Kashmir viz., bags, shoes, jackets, gloves, sandals, cushions for chairs, leather-apron etc. These products were also in a great demand in the European countries. Maharaja Pratap Singh prohibited the sale of skin and horns. Recently I found a survey at Chhatabal Srinagar. The leather workmen who crafted the leather products though involvement of their skill and great sense did not even get sufficient money for sustenance not to talk of getting optimum benefit from the job.

Conclusion

After studying "the importance of Kashmiri art and craft." Following few points come as conclusion. There is a legend that Kashmir is a heaven on earth. Kashmir is rich not only in its beauty but it is also the homeland of various decorative renowned art and craft products. The handicraft products of Kashmir are known throughout the world for its exquisite designs and unique craftsmanship. The art and crafts of Kashmir are the major contributions to the economy of the state. There is the dearth of professional workers who are always alive to produce the handmade products. He expresses his response to the beauty around him in the creation of a large variety of chasing or embossing floral motifs interwoven and intricate patterns, Although there are heavy winter now falls in Kashmir but the climatic conditions never discourage these craft men till these products found a big market in India and abroad. Handicraft industries were initially owned by the Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin who himself was a great lover of art and craft. He invited masters from Iran, Turan and also from the other parts of India and gave them special privilege to settle down in Kashmir. Kashmiris with their natural aptitude for things artistic, soon acquire a great mastery in these crafts. Kashmiri art and craft is not new the Kashmiri craftsmen were engaged in the industries of spinning, weaving, dyeing and washing. The ornaments made of gold, silver metal weapons of war etc were the main production of these industries as it is mentioned in Nilmata Purana written by Dr. Ved Kumari. The art of paper making work was brought to Kashmir in the middle of the 15th century. The designs of Papermache work was done on the various handcrafted items have a strong imprint of ancient tradition. The art of papermache work was introduced in Kashmir by Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin who imported experts from Samarkand to train the local people. The art is almost a family monopoly among their descendants but much more important than these historic facts are the designs painted on the papermache articles. Similarly, Kashmiri Shawl had become so renowned. This craft was established by Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin the great Sultan of Kashmir. The shawl made in Kashmir occupy a pre-eminent place among textile products. In regard to the origin of the silk industry an authoritative date remains untraced but it is mentioned that the first stuff was made for the first time during the reign of Zain-

ul-Abidin. The silk piece goods manufactured in Kashmir are rendered particularly attractive by the fine embroidery work. Kashmiri Gabba and Namdas are used as floor-rugs and coverings. However, no clear evidence is found about the origin of the Kashmiri Gabba manufacture. There is the legend it was firstly originated by Iasya Tota at Anantnag Kashmir. Similarly Namda manufacture was taken up for the first time at Nawab Bazar Srinagar in 1918. It is a handmade rug with woolen embroidery on it served as a floor covering or mattress. Introducing the art of making carpets in the valley goes for back as 1425 A.D. goes to Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin who brought experts from Persia, Central Asia to train local inhabitants. Kashmiri Carpet attained a high degree of perfection and a unique place in the international market. In Kashmir too the art of basketry had existed. It is one of the oldest crafts in the world, which still holds the imagination of the primitive as well as the advanced man. The metal, Silver and Copper of Kashmir are in a great demand in Kashmir as well as in the United States, European Countries also. Similarly the wood-carving is an ancient craft of the land but today it is in great demand and special furniture pieces are found in every house of Kashmir. Leather work was chiefly the occupation of a particular sect of Kashmir. Although the craftman did not even get sufficient money for sustenance but till the leather goods are in a great demand in Kashmir.

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