



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

“Preserving the Legacy: Documenting Kashmiri Traditional Crafts for Cultural Continuity and Innovation”

Dr. Shruti Tiwari, Professor in Design, Parul University

Mrs. Palak Patel, Vice Principal, Parul Institute of Design, Parul University

Ms. Jui Lakhani, Student B. Design (Fashion), Parul University

Abstract –

This research paper aims to preserve the intricate traditions and unique skills of Kashmiri traditional crafts by creating a comprehensive knowledge bank. The project aims to ensure continuity, appreciation, and innovation in these crafts, as the essence of craftsmanship is at risk of being lost due to globalization and modernization. The documentation will provide craftspeople, researchers, and enthusiasts with a resource to explore the subtleties of conventional techniques, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of the craft. The transfer of skills through this documentation will enable new students to carry forward the legacy.

Traditional crafts extend beyond artistic endeavors and are vital components of a community's cultural heritage. The documented knowledge and techniques serve as inspiration for modern artists, designers, and artisans, stimulating innovative and environmentally friendly adaptations. The project aims to celebrate the works of artisans, pay tribute to their craft, and ensure the legacy of traditional crafts in Kashmir is preserved for future generations. By sharing this comprehensive documentation, the project aims to encourage renewed interest, inspire innovation, and contribute to the sustainable development of traditional crafts worldwide.

Key Words –

Craft, Tradition, legacy, preservation, carpet weaving, pashmina, kani shawls, motifs.

Aims & Objectives –

By undertaking this research paper, we aim to promote the preservation, resurgence, and ongoing appreciation of Kashmiri traditional crafts. The documentation project will serve as a knowledge bank, ensuring the continuity of craftsmanship for future generations. It will deepen the understanding and appreciation of traditional techniques, support cultural identity, and inspire innovation. Ultimately, this research paper aims to celebrate the artisans' works, pay tribute to their craft, and secure the legacy of traditional crafts for generations to come.

Hypothesis –

Documenting the traditional crafts and techniques of Kashmiri artisans will contribute to the preservation, resurgence, and ongoing appreciation of these crafts by providing a comprehensive resource that captures the intricate procedures, tools, materials, artistic expressions, myths, rites, and symbolism associated with the craft. This documentation will serve as a knowledge bank, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of the craft for craftspeople, researchers, and enthusiasts. Moreover, it will inspire and enable new students to continue the legacy and provide a source of inspiration for modern artists, designers, and artisans to stimulate innovative and environmentally friendly adaptations of these traditional techniques.

Introduction –

The Kashmiri cluster is a group of traditional crafts and artisans from the region of Kashmir, India, known for their exquisite craftsmanship. These crafts include Pashmina Shawls, carpets, Papier-Mâché, wood carving, copperware, and embroidery. Pashmina shawls are crafted from the soft wool of Pashmina goats and are meticulously woven and embroidered by skilled artisans using methods like Sozni embroidery and Kani weaving. Carpets are hand-knotted using premium wool or silk, featuring intricate patterns from nature, Persian patterns, and conventional motifs. Papier-Mâché

is a centuries-old art form in Kashmir, where paper pulp is layered over a mould to create decorative items with vivid colors and elaborate designs.

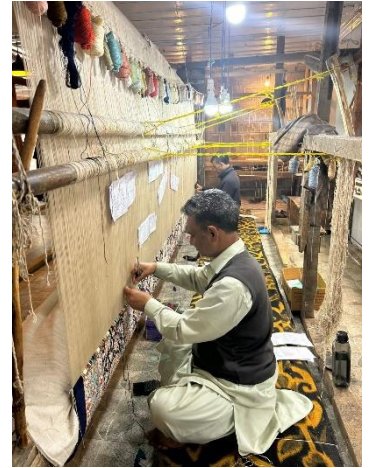
Wood carving is another well-known craft in Kashmir, where craftsmen expertly carve intricate patterns and designs into walnut wood for furniture, home decor, and architectural panels. Copperware is renowned for its intricate designs and intricate details, with copperware items like trays, bowls, utensils, and samovars being engraved. Embroidery is also a significant aspect of Kashmiri culture, with Aari embroidery and Sozni embroidery being two types of embroidery practiced in the region. The Indian government and organizations actively support and promote the work of the Kashmiri cluster of artisans by providing training, marketing opportunities, and venues to showcase their skills.

Methodology -

Kal Baffi, also known as Kalim or Kalin, is a renowned Kashmiri hand-knotted carpet with exquisite craftsmanship, intricate designs, and luxurious quality. It is highly prized for its elegance, toughness, and classic appeal, and is decorated in residences, palaces, and museums worldwide. The production process is meticulous and time-consuming, taking months or even years depending on size and complexity. Kal Baffi carpets are displayed by renowned dealers and galleries, attracting collectors and enthusiasts worldwide. They also boost the local economy by employing skilled craftspeople and upholding traditional weaving methods. The Indian government supports organizations in promoting and preserving this traditional craft by providing market access, financial assistance, and market training.

Pashmina shawls, made from the soft undercoat of the Pashmina goat, are opulent accessories with a long history in Kashmir, India. Originating from the Persian word "pashm," meaning soft gold, these shawls are prized heirlooms passed down through generations and are worn on special occasions, weddings, and other formal occasions.

Sozni embroidery, a traditional Kashmiri technique, is renowned for its intricate needlework and fine craftsmanship, showcasing Kashmir's rich cultural heritage and traditional craftsmanship.



Kani shawls, originating from the Kanihama village in Kashmir, are luxurious handwoven textiles with intricate designs and fine craftsmanship. Made using a special weaving method called "Kani," these shawls are valued as family heirlooms and are sought after globally by collectors and fashionistas.

Crewel embroidery, originating in the Kashmir region of India, is a traditional art form with intricate designs and woollen threads. It uses a unique stitching method called a crewel, a hooked needle, and features a rich color palette with motifs inspired by nature.

History –

Kal Baffi, hand-knotted carpets in Kashmir, has a rich history, drawing inspiration from Central Asian and Persian carpet traditions. Introduced by Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin in the 15th century, the industry was influenced by Persian weavers' intricate designs and weaving techniques. Kashmiri artisans developed their unique style, blending Persian techniques with indigenous motifs and designs. The Mughal emperors patronized the art form, and it continued to thrive through subsequent dynasties. British administrators helped establish centers for carpet weaving in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, promoting the art form's renaissance.

The Indian government has significantly aided the promotion and preservation of the Kal Baffi art form, providing training facilities, financial support, and marketing initiatives. These carpets are globally known for their exceptional beauty, intricate patterns, and fine craftsmanship, making them highly sought after by collectors and interior designers.

Pashmina shawls, made from pashmina wool, have a deep cultural heritage in Kashmir. The art of spinning and weaving pashmina wool into shawls flourished in Kashmir, with the Mughal Empire's rule in the 15th century influencing its popularity. Pashmina shawls gained popularity in European markets, particularly Britain, due to their exquisite craftsmanship and superior quality.

Sozni embroidery, a traditional Kashmiri handicraft, emerged under the patronage of Mughal rulers in the 16th and 17th centuries. Influenced by Persia and Central Asia, the Mughal emperors supported the growth of textile techniques, including embroidery. Initially, male craftsmen dominated the industry, but over time, it evolved to include both male and female artisans.

Kani shawls, introduced by Mughal emperor Akbar, have a rich cultural history, with Persian craftsmen immigrating to Kashmir during the Mughal era. Kashmiri artisans perfected the art by combining Persian influences

with regional designs and motifs. Kani shawls gained prominence in European markets during the 19th century, particularly in France, due to their exquisite craftsmanship and pricey fabrics.

Crewel embroidery, a cherished art form, represents the rich cultural heritage of Kashmir and the skill and artistry of its artisans.

Raw Materials and Tools –

Kal Baffi, hand-knotted carpets in Kashmir, are made using high-quality wool, silk, and natural and synthetic dyes. Wool is the primary raw material, sourced from local sheep breeds, and its quality directly affects the durability, texture, and appearance of the carpet. Silk is used for its lustrous appearance and smooth texture, adding a luxurious touch. Natural and synthetic dyes are used to add color to the yarn, providing a rich and earthy color palette. Tools used in carpet weaving include the loom, shuttles, beaters, punja, khood, graph paper, and design templates.

Pashmina shawls are made from the fine undercoat of the pashmina goat, prized for its superior quality and dyes. The weaving process involves a spinning wheel, traditional handloom, and shuttles for accurate weft yarn insertion. Sozni embroidery is made using fine silk threads, valued for their smoothness, strength, and intricate stitching. Tools used in Sozni embroidery include sharp needles, steel or brass needles, and wooden blocks printed onto the fabric using ink. A thimble, a protective shield worn on the artisan's finger, helps guide the embroidery process and prevent needle pricking or injury.

Kani shawls are made using Pashmina or silk threads, small wooden sticks called "kanis," and traditional handlooms called looms. The skill and command of these tools enable skilled artisans to turn raw materials into exquisite wearable art.

Crewel embroidery relies on heavy, tightly woven fabrics like linen or wool for a sturdy base and secure stitching of woollen threads. The primary thread used is wool, available in various colors and silk. An embroidery stretcher or frame may be necessary for larger projects.



Process-

Kal Baffi, hand-knotted carpets of Kashmir, are made through a series of steps, including designing and graphing patterns, preparing yarn, dyeing, and weaving. Pashmina shawls, on the other hand, involve collecting wool from a pashmina goat's undercoat, cleaning and combing it, spinning it into yarn, dyeing it, designing and weaving it, and finishing it with trimming, washing, steaming, and ironing. The process requires skill, patience, and attention to detail.

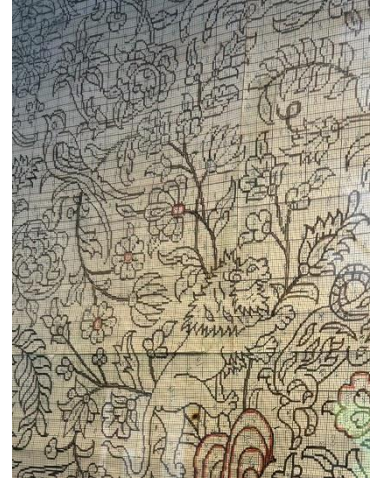
Sozni embroidery involves design selection, fabric preparation, thread selection, stitching, knotting, finishing, and washing and pressing. The artisans' expertise lies in creating precise stitches, maintaining consistency in tension and spacing, and bringing the chosen design to life with intricate beauty.

Kani shawls are a complex and intricate process involving design creation, warp preparation, and weaving techniques. The process begins with designing intricate patterns and motifs on graph paper, often inspired by nature, floral elements, or Kashmiri motifs. Warp threads are carefully measured, wound onto frames, and stretched vertically on the Kani loom. Weft threads are woven horizontally across the warp, moving kanis to create intricate patterns and motifs. The shawl is then finished by washing, stretching, blocking, and trimming edges.

Designs, Motifs and Applications–



Kal Baffi carpets in Kashmir are renowned for their intricate designs and motifs, crafted by skilled artisans. These carpets feature floral patterns, paisley or buta motifs, geometric designs, medallion designs, and prayer rug designs. The paisley motif is a signature element, while geometric designs showcase intricate interlocking shapes and celestial elements. Some Kal Baffi carpets are designed as prayer rugs, denoting Qibla direction.



Pashmina shawls are renowned for their intricate designs, motifs, and embellishments, using various techniques and motifs. The paisley motif, a Persian-inspired design, is popular, while floral patterns like roses, lotus, tulips, and iris are also popular. Chinar leaves, native to Kashmir, are a recurring motif, symbolizing the region's natural beauty.

Jaali work, Sozni embroidery, Aari work, and Kani weaving are other traditional Kashmiri embroidery techniques used to embellish pashmina shawls.

Sozni embroidery is a unique and intricate art form inspired by the natural beauty of Kashmir and the region's rich cultural heritage. It features delicate and symmetrical patterns created with meticulous stitchwork, with common floral motifs like roses, tulips, lotuses, and iris. The choice of design and motifs depends on the artisan's creativity, cultural influences, and intended use of the textile.

Kani shawls are characterized by their diverse motifs and vivid color scheme, creating stunning visual compositions and an opulent feeling. Common motifs include paisleys, floral patterns, Chinar leaf motifs, and animal patterns. The color palette includes jewel tones, earthy shades, and pastel colors, reflecting the natural beauty of Kashmiri landscapes. These exquisite pieces showcase the artistry, skill, and aesthetic sensibilities of Kashmiri artisans, showcasing their skill and aesthetic sensibilities.

Challenges and Future –

Kal Baffi, the hand-knotted carpets of Kashmir, faces challenges such as competition from machine-made carpets, skilled labor shortage, and high production costs. Machine-made carpets are cheaper and faster, making them more accessible to a wider market. However, skilled artisanship is limited, and hand-knotted carpets are labor-intensive and time-consuming, making it difficult to compete with mass-produced, lower-priced alternatives.

To meet contemporary market demands, artisans should explore innovative approaches while maintaining Kal Baffi's essence. Government support and promotion through financial assistance, infrastructure development, and marketing can boost the industry's growth. Collaborations between artisans, designers, and entrepreneurs can revitalize the industry by combining traditional craftsmanship with contemporary design sensibilities.

Pashmina shawls face challenges such as limited goat populations, labor-intensive sourcing of high-quality wool, preservation of traditional craftsmanship, and competition from machine-made products. To ensure sustainability and growth, ethical sourcing, maintaining the quality and quantity of raw materials, and raising awareness about cultural significance are essential for the future of the pashmina industry.

Sozni embroidery faces several challenges in its preservation and development. Access to skilled artisans is a major obstacle, and educating the next generation is crucial. Machine-made alternatives threaten the handmade textile market, but promoting Sozni embroidery's unique beauty and cultural significance can set it apart. Collaboration between artisans, designers, entrepreneurs, and organizations can create opportunities for innovation, skill-sharing, and market access.

Kani shawl weaving faces challenges such as skill preservation, time-intensive process, and competition from machine-made replicas. The skill-intensive nature of weaving can lead to a decrease in skilled artisans, making it difficult to transfer sophisticated methods to future generations. Initiatives by businesses, groups, and the government are being taken to preserve and promote the craft through skill development programs, awareness campaigns, and partnerships with designers and the fashion industry.

Crewel embroidery faces challenges in modern times, impacting preservation, market demand, and artisans' livelihood. However, sustainability and expansion can be facilitated through increased appreciation, partnerships with designers, and cultural heritage promotion.

Conclusion –

In conclusion, the preservation of traditional crafts and their techniques is of utmost importance in a rapidly changing world. These crafts are not merely artistic endeavors but a reflection of cultural heritage, skills, and creative talent that have been passed down through generations. However, due to globalization and modernization, these crafts face the

risk of being lost or forgotten. The craft documentation project discussed in this research paper aims to address this issue by meticulously recording the intricate procedures, tools, materials, and artistic expressions involved in Kashmiri traditional crafts.

By creating a comprehensive knowledge bank, this documentation project ensures the continuity, appreciation, and potential for innovation of these time-honored crafts. It will serve as a valuable resource for craftspeople, researchers, and enthusiasts, allowing them to explore the subtleties of traditional techniques and deepen their understanding and appreciation of the craft. Furthermore, by transferring skills, this documentation will enable new students to embrace and advance the legacy of traditional crafts.

The preservation of traditional crafts also plays a crucial role in upholding cultural identity and diversity. By documenting the myths, rites, and symbolism related to these crafts, this project not only preserves the tradition but also enriches cultural diversity. Moreover, it serves as an inspiration for modern artists, designers, and artisans, who can draw upon this rich heritage to stimulate innovative and environmentally friendly adaptations.

In conclusion, through the celebration of artisans' works and paying tribute to their craft, this research paper emphasizes the need to preserve, revive, and appreciate traditional crafts. By ensuring the legacy of these beloved traditions is preserved for future generations, we can foster a deep respect for cultural heritage, support artisans, and contribute to the continued vibrancy and sustainability of traditional crafts in a rapidly changing world.

Importance of Continued Support for Traditional Crafts -

By delving into the preservation, resurgence, and ongoing appreciation of Kashmiri traditional crafts, this research paper aims to contribute to the broader discourse on cultural heritage, craftsmanship, and the importance of documentation. Through a comprehensive examination of the craft documentation project's objectives and outcomes, the paper provides insights into how traditional crafts can be safeguarded and celebrated for future generations.

Acknowledgement –

I would like to acknowledge all the people directly and indirectly connected in the conduction of this research. Special thanks to my mentor Ms. Palak Patel (Associate Professor, Vice Principal PID, Parul University) and our jury Dr. Shruti Tiwari (Professor in Design, Parul Institute of Design, Parul University) for research guidance.

Reference –

- Team Kashmir Gen Z, Kal Baffi- The Remarkable Art of Kashmir's Handmade Carpet Industry,
Kal Baffi- The Remarkable Art Of Kashmir's Handmade Carpet Industry (kashmers.com)
2. Saurabh Sharma, Kashmiri Rugs: Expressions of Esteem, December 19, 2022 <https://authindia.com/kashmiri-rugs-expressions-of-esteem/>
 3. <https://kashmers.com/the-art-of-making-pashmina/>
 4. <https://www.pashmina.com/what-is-pashmina>
 5. <https://www.pashmina.com/editorial/kani-shawl/>
 6. <http://alishah.in/>
 7. <https://artisane.in>