The Persian influence on the traditional arts of Kashmir with special reference to textile industry

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Abstract: In Kashmir, textile design forms a very important part of various traditional crafts such as wood carvings, paper mashie and carpet industry. Over the last few centuries, these crafts not only absorbed local tradition, but also are infused by the Persian cultural interaction with a clear visibility of its patterns and motifs of natural beauty. This impact was a result of constant political, cultural, and artistic exchange between the two regions. This research aims at tracing the origin of these motifs and patterns and examining the influences through an in-depth analysis. The study also highlights the impact of the rule of Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani and Sultan Zain ul Abidin in promoting the arts and crafts of Kashmir. Moreover, it focuses on the first Shawl industry established during the Sultanate period as the Shawls were decorated with Paisley patterns. Kashmir was well disposed to Persian arts and crafts that it was known as Iran-e-Sagheer. The designers, artists and craftsmen used a range of similar patterns which imply similitude to Persia. Through the comparative analysis, results show the ascendency of Persian design patterns and motifs in Kashmiri textile art. Different cultures have an impact on Kashmiri culture, but it is highly influenced by Persian culture especially in the field of art and crafts and linguistic. The beautiful design patterns of Kashmir are results of immigrants and the craftsmen of Persia. One can tell the origin and the story of Kashmir by the cursory glance on the textiles of Kashmir.

Key words: Cultural heritage; Interpretation; Historic motifs; Comparative analysis; Textiles

1. Introduction

Kashmir has superabundant glorious Art and Craft, with cultural and architectural heritage which has a deep influence of Persia on it. The interaction of ancient Kashmir with Persia is clearly visible in its arts and crafts, and the traditional clothing. The cultural imprint ofPersia, which sustained a great impact on Kashmir, emerged in 14th century with the establishment of Sultanate rule. Henceforth, the skilled men, in the subject of arts and crafts, from Persia embarked on the route to Kashmir from their native areas of Khurasan, Fars and Mawra-ul-Nahar.

The history of Kashmir exists before thousands of years. Probably the “Aryans” were the first civilized people who went Kashmir from West Pakistan, that is, 21 Hindu rajas (4000 B.C. - 1324 A.D.) ruled over the Kashmir and 18 of these ruling dynasties were Kashmiri. During the reign of the most famous ruler Raja Liltadat (762-715 A.D.), Kashmir was bordered with Indian Ocean in south and towards north it was bordered with Bokhara, Samarkand and Dakkan plateau whereas Afghanistan in the west.

Culture is referred as the combination of human developed strategies and the aesthetic sense of surviving effectively. Kashmir remained rich and important trade route so it is influenced by different cultures especially the Persian and Central Asian culture. The handicrafts of a culture or region is developed by aesthetic sense of its art and craft. These expressions can be seen in the folk works of craftsmen of textile and wood. The cultural history of Kashmir can also be explained with its geographical location. It will not be fallacious to say that the climate and the natural beauty of Kashmir are one of reasons of its robust traditions of arts and literature. Further, the long winter season may explain the Kashmiri tradition in textile art.

The textile of Kashmir is influenced by different cultures but Persian culture has much influenced this art of Kashmir but the literature does not provide much information relating to this impact on this geographical region. Some of the studies conducted in past only shows the invasion of different rulers in Kashmir but no one studied the textile designing and textile patterns of Kashmir. This study will contribute in the literature by focusing only the textile designs and patterns of Kashmir which will be the future guidance for the textile designers and artisans who purely wants to study the textile of Kashmir.

Research objectives

The key objectives of this research paper were to examine the influence of Persia on the textile designs of Kashmir and the formation of their design.
Further, the research will aim to understand the revolution that was brought by Syed Mir Ali Hamadani when he entered in Kashmir. The research also focuses on the investigation of motifs, patterns and designs like Lotus, Paisley, Graphs, Pomegranates etc., that were added in textile art and craft of Kashmir after the entrance of different authorities in this area, to analyze the importance of patterns in religious perspective. Moreover, a brief study of miniature paintings of Mughal Period will be analyzed to understand the importance of Persian motifs in Mughal era. This will enhance the value of Kashmiri art and craft in literature as well as in foreign market.

![Map of Kashmir in 14th century](image)

**Fig. 1:** Map of Kashmir in 14th century

### 2. Methodology

The study is conducted using the Descriptive Qualitative research method. The design related information is collected using semi-structured interviews, observations and visual data. The participants of research are art and craft instructors, authors and skilled persons in the field of textile art in the region of Kashmir.

### 3. Literature Review

**Persian Influence on Culture and Language**

During early days of Islam, Iranians entered Kashmir and left with traces and marks of their culture and language. In the 8th Hijri, the first saint who came Kashmir was Hazrat Mir Syed Ali Hamadani along with Iranian Sadat families. He brought in Kashmir the revolutionary and epoch-making changes in the civilization, culture and religious aspects. Mir Syed Ali Hamadani came with highly skilled Irani men and introduced the art of carving, mosaic work, Samawar making, carpet designing and cloth making. He also brought with him different seeds of fruits and trees from Iran and Afghanistan including Lilly Hyacinth, Saffron etc. Moreover, he introduced some changes in dresses of Kashmiri including Iranian shirt.

The Iranians brought new customs with them and mixed with locals of valley and got influenced by the social order of Kashmir. Consequently, the Sultans and the nobles of Kashmir engaged in matrimonial relationship with each other. They also married at the places of Jammu, Kashtriwar, Sindh, etc to disperse their social activities. (Bamzai, 1994) The Kashmiri claim the existence of their national dress in Kashtriwar which resembles the Kashmiri dress and this affirms their journey to this place (Lawrence, 1895)

Muslim rulers and nobles also married with Hindu women (Hashmatullah Khan, 1992) permitting them to retain their faith and names. They used to take part in each of their festivals making a composite society. The women of elite families used to cover themselves with veil to avoid public gaze (Lawrence, 1895)

Many ulemas (Islamic scholars) from outside of Kashmir came their while Islam was spreading in Kashmir. The local ulemas learned from pious men residing in Srinagar and then proceeded Herat and Samarkand to undergo training. (Hasan, 1959) In Kashmir many castes like Dars, Magres, Rainas etc were residing there. Therefore, Sufis tried to bridge the gap between different castes and classes (Hasan, 1959). The towns and cities became the hub of socio-cultural activities because besides Jagirdars, the provincial officials lived in these centers. These actions resulted the assimilation of social and cultural diversity. (Mattoo, 1988)
During the reign of Sultan Sikandar, Persian language flourished and Kashmir was considered as the center of Persian language and literature. Ghani Kashmiri, Kamal and Sheikh Yaqoob Surfi were some of the famous Persian poets. Moreover, few great Persian poets also travelled to Kashmir from Iran. Thus, making an addition of Persian words in the language of Kashmiris.

**Persian Influence in Ghaznavid Period**

Amir Nasiruddin Sabuktakin and then Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi entered in India accompanied by thousands of Iranian scholars, writers, poets and physicians who brought with them Persian language, customs and usages this led to serious and all-out impact of the Iranian cultural traditions on the Indian culture. So, Iranian culture was effectively grafted on the Indian soil which was enhanced more and more with the passage of time (Javādī, 1991).

**Persian Influence of Art and Craft in Textile design**

Perhaps the craft technology of Kashmir was the most important field which was influenced by Persia. Mostly the famous Kashmiri arts and crafts were introduced by Persian and Central Asian craftsmen to the Kashmiris. This transition in Kashmir's technological position was the status of hubs of medieval civilization as Samarqand and Bukhara (Javādī, 1991).

When Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani came to Kashmir after Bulbul Shah, he came with seven hundred persons including artisans. These artisans taught and trained Kashmiris about the Iranian arts. Therefore, the people of Kashmir learned the Iranian arts from Iranian artisans which can be seen in the various fields of art, like architecture, painting, calligraphy, carpet industry, fabrics, textile designing etc. He also introduced many industries of Hamadan (Iran) in Kashmir and the Shawl industry was one of the important industries. Beside this, Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani boosted the Kashmiri and Iranian crafts (Javādī, 1991). Hereafter, the art and craft of Kashmir kept flourished such that during Mughal period, the designs and motifs used in textiles of Kashmir were employed by the miniaturist to enhance as well as depict the beauty of Kashmiri designs in miniature paintings.

**Administrative History of Kashmir**

Kashmir remained under the rule of many rulers in different periods and the textile designs of Kashmir were developed with time under the influence of different rulers. The period which changed the economic, cultural and religious conditions of Kashmir was under the rule of Muslim Sultans when Sultans of Kashmir started ruling from 1320 to 1560 A.C. This is because, the Muslim scholars entered in Kashmir Valley by influencing the people though their personalities and the strategies they used for preaching.

In this period the most prominent change in Kashmir was brought by Bulbul Shah, Mir Syed Ali Hamadani and Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin.

**Bilal Shah or Bulbul Shah**

The real name of Bulbul Shah was Sharaf-ud-Din Sayyid Abdur Rahman Turkistani. He was a spiritual disciple of a Khalifa of Suhrawardi tariq, Nimatullah Wali Farsi. Bulbul Shah was the first Muslim who visited Kashmir in the reign of Raja Suhadeva, the predecessor of Rinchan. He was one of the Muslim scholars and preachers who inspired many people specifically Sultans (Bamzai, 1962). As a result of his efforts, he was succeeded in converting King Rinchina to a Muslim and acquired state patronage for the faith of Islam. The simplicity and the faith of Bulbul Shah led him to embrace Islam at his hands. After accepting Islam, he named him Sultan Sadr-ud-Din and happened to be the first Muslim ruler of the Valley of Kashmir. After that many people embraced Islam and the place of congressional for the new converts was built on Vitasta’ bank and named as Bulbul Lankan, which was the first Masjid in Kashmir. It was three storied wooden building on the bank of river Jhelum, in Muhalla Bulbul Lankan, Srinagar. Bulbul Shah did great efforts in spreading and introducing Islam in Kashmir and he died in 1327 A.C. (727 A.H.)

**Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani**

Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani or Amir-i-Kabir also known as Shah-i-Hamadan or Ali-i-Sani was born on 1314 A.C. (714 A.H.) at Hamadan, Iran. His father name was Sayyid Shihab-ud-Din bin Mir Sayyid Muhammad Husaini. Shah-i-Hamadan visited my countries and even travelled around the world and met many saints. When he returned back to his native place after traveling the world, Taimur forced him to visit Kashmir.

**Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin (1420-70)**

Zain-ul-Abidin was one of the greatest sultans who took the in charge of the Kashmir. He ruled almost a half century and ushered as a ruler of peace, prosperity and benevolence for the people of Kashmir. Many arts and crafts of Kashmir for which this region is famous are introduced by him. He promoted learning of painting and music, and nurture Kashmir as the center of great cultural land. His subjects showed affection and loyalty towards him and gave the name of “Bud-Shah” or the Great King which is still remember and recognized by the Kashmiri people. The halo of popularity still surrounding his name even the lapse of more than five hundred years has passed.

**Persian Influence in the past**

The history of cultural relationship of Kashmir and Persia dated back to the ancient times. This has the evidence from the tiles of Harvan Monastery near Srinagar and also by seeing the ancient sculptures of Kashmir which bear Sasanian characteristics (Kak, 1923). Similarly, Sasanian influence can be seen in the use of official designations such as dibir or divira (after the Persian word dabir) and ganjavara (after the Persian word ganjwar) (Stein, 1900).
Although the culture of Kashmir had the major impact of Indian culture until the fourteenth century. However, with the establishment of Sultanate, deep and profound links with center of Persian culture (Hasan, 1959) and as a result, Indian influence was slowly replaced by Perso-Islamic element, but it never vanished completely.

There were several reasons of endured and closer cultural contacts between Kashmir and Persia during the Sultanate period. Firstly, Islam progressed in the Kashmir Valley because of the religious activities of the Sufi saints of Persia and Central Asia such as Bulbul Shah, Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani, Mir Shamsud-Din and some others. These Sufis played a vital role in bringing about Iranian influence in the culture of Kashmir, as they were not only the missionaries and scholars of Islam but also the zealous promoters of Persian language and culture. Secondly, as the Islam proliferated in Kashmir, the Muslims looked for the spiritual and intellectual inspirations which were the centers of Islamic culture. So, scholars started visiting Herat, Samarqand, Merv and Bukhara, which were the areas under the Persian Empire, to learn from the eminent Sufis and also gained and adopted Persian culture. Thirdly, many Persian were attracted due to the friendliness of the Sultans (especially Shahbud-Din and the Sultans after him) and they started vising Kashmir in large numbers. The people of the Valley were socially and culturally influenced by their lifestyle (Kalhana et. al., 1898). The Valley also had close cultural relations with Hindustan, but it did not influence much than that of Persia.

The benchmark of culture in Kashmir during the period of Sultanate was of high reputation. According to Srivara (Kalhana et. al., 1898), all the people liked poetry and they used to compose verses (which is obviously an over-statement by him), but there is an enough proof in the chronicles which suggests that there was sufficient appreciation of arts, music and letters by the local community in the Valley of Kashmir. The people were very amusing, humorous and intelligent, and always had some good saying in their minds. (Bernier, 1916). They had the great sense of art and were over-fond of music (Razi, et al., 1939). They loved learning, and, as in old days, they went to distant places in Persia, India and Turkistan to gain knowledge (Hasan, 1959). The Sultans of Kashmir were not only the patronage of art and culture, but a few of them were also poets and musicians, themselves. Their courts were filled with scholars, painters and musicians, while the capital Srinagar was filled with adorned and magnificent mosques, palaces, monasteries and gardens.

**Influence of Persian Language**

The cultural relationship of Persia and Central Asia with Kashmir resulted in the spread of Persian culture in the Valley. Sanskrit used to the language in court during the Hindu rule (before 1320 A.C.), but from the rule of Sultan Shihabud-Din Farsi replaced Hindu language and became the language of educated class, and also spread in the villages. Hafiz Shirazi’s verse not only indulged with the poetic feeling but also stated the fact by saying (Browne, 1953):

*The black-eyed beauties of the Kashmir and the Turks of Samarqand Sing and danced to the chords of Hafiz of Shiraz’s verse.*

Zain-ul-Abidin did valuable contribution for the progression of Persian Language in Kashmir. He was also a poet and author of two prose works which he wrote in Persian Language. He also declared Persian as the state language, persuaded poets and scholars and encouraged them to translate scientific and historical books from Sanskrit to Persian. (Hasan, 1959). A considerable amount of literature was produced during his reign but very little amount of it still exists. However, stray verses of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin and the court poets can be found in chronicles and if made them the criteria of judgement then Persian poetry achieved remarkable development under the Sultan in Kashmir.

Haidar Shah, son and successor of Zain-ul-Abidin, was also a poet and composer of a book of songs. After Haider Shah, Hassan Shah was not himself a poet, but he was a man of cultural taste, patronized poets and learned men. The example set by Sultans was followed by the nobles of the Valley and got knowledge from the scholars by setting up institutions by their own financial means. Moreover, the queens and the ladies of upper class were also zealous of learning.

This process of learning declined in the reign of later Sultans due to the civil wars and invasions but under the rule of Mirza-Haider and Chaks, it gained revival. Mirza Haider was the man of letters also promoted learning. Unfortunately, the works done under his patronage and the scholar’s name are
unknown. During the Chak rule, Hussain Shah was the most cultured man; very fond of having society of scholars and poets. Ali Mir came from Persia in his ruling period. Ali Mir was the poet as well as calligraphist. He also wrote a long poem praising Kashmir (Diddamari, 1957). Mulla Baqi, Mulla Nami I and Mulla Nami II were the great poets of Hussain Shah’s court (Hasan,1959). Muhammad Amin Mustaghni was a Kashmiri poet and the member of Yusuf Shah’s court. Other poets were Mirza Ali Khan, who was killed in the war of Yusuf Shah and Raja Bhagwan Das (Blockman, & Phillott, 1927). In the period of Gazi Shah, Baba Talib Isfahani came in Kashmir. He was an extraordinary poet and all Chak rulers gave him respect. When Kashmir was conquered by Akbar, Baba Talib went to Agra and joined emperor’s service (Blockman, & Phillott, 1927).

But the two outstanding poets and scholars of the Chak period were Baba Daud Khaki and Shaikh Ya’qub Sarfi. Baba Daud, son of Shaikh Hassan Ganai, was born in 1521. After completing his education, he served for a small period as tutor of Nazuk Shah’s son. He then became disciple of Shaikh Makhdum Hamza. During Ya’qub Shah’s reign he proceeded with Ya’qub Sarfi to the court of Akbar to seek his help against the Kashmir ruler. On his return he fell ill and died at Anantnag in 1585. He was a learned Sufi, and his poetry is permeated with religious and mystical ideas. He was the author of a number of books like Dastur-5-Salikin, Virdu’l-Muridin, Qasida-1-Jalaliyya and others (Diddamari, 1957).

Shaikh Ya’qub Sarfi, the son of Shaikh Hasan Ganai, was born in 1521 and died on July 25, 1594 (Sufi, 2016). He memorized the Qur’an when he was only seven and began to compose verses in Persian language at the same age. He studied in Lahore, Sialkot, Samargand, Makkah, and Madina under well-known teachers (Blockman, & Phillott, 1927). He was one of the most learned men of his time, and, according to Abu’l-Fazl, “the greatest authority in religious matters” (Blockman, & Phillott, 1927). He was the author in Arabic of an introduction to Faizi’s Tafseer entitled Sawati ul Ilham. He also wrote a commentary of al-Suhih of Bukhari and, just before his death, he had nearly completed a commentary of the Quran (Badauni, 1864). Badauni regarded this work as “one of the most wonderful productions of his perfect genius (Badauni, 1864).

Besides being an excellent prose writer, Ya’qub Sarfi was also a very good poet. He wrote many ghazals qasidas and also completed a khamsa, a series of five masnavis in emulation of the khamsa of Nizami (Badauni, 1864) “His genius” as Badauni observed, “was highly adapted to the composition of eloquent poetry” (Badauni, 1864).

Development of Minor Arts

One of the major achievements of the Sultanate period was in the field of the minor arts. But unfortunately, it is not possible to track the history of their development, as very little works of art of this period are available. A prospering textile art had lived in Kashmir since ancient times. The Kashmiri woolen cloth was renowned for its warmth and the durability and is said to have been used by the Sasanian army (Modi, 1905). Kashmir is believed to have learned a culture from the Chinese during the reign of the Rajas, but Zain-ul-Abidin improved the manufacturing of silk by introducing better methods of weaving, and by importing the ornamental designs from Persia. As a result, Kashmir became famous for its silks (Kalhana et. al., 1898).

In regard to the shawl industry, no conclusive evidence can be found of its origin. According to the local tradition, recorded during the nineteenth century, the first Kashmiri shawls were produced by Turkistan weavers, who were invited by Zain-ul-Abidin to live in the Valley (Hugel, 1845). It is also written that the shawl industry was developed by Sayyid Ali Hamadani in 1378 (Hasan, 1959). However, that may be, one thing is certain: that the shawl industry did not exist before thirteenth century, as there is no reference to in any other source; and that it was developed under the sponsorship of the Sultans with the help of weavers, who came from Persia and Turkistan. These immigrants introduced new patterns which were unknown to the local designers along with new technique - the twill-tapestry technique, which has parallel in Persia and Central Asia, but not anywhere in India and Pakistan (Irwin, 1973). It is, because no shawl of a date earlier than the latter half of the seventeenth century now survives. Farm Srivara we only learned that under Zain-ul-Abidin Kashmir had become world famous for its shawls (Kalhana et. al., 1898). When the Mughals came and conquered the Valley, the shawl industry was in a well-developed state. From this period onwards, its development can be found without much difficulty.

Improvement in Painting

It is impossible to enter into a detailed discussion of Kashmir painting since not a single work of the Sultanate period has survived the devastating cataclysms of civil strife and foreign invasion (Sufi, 1948). However, there is evidence to show that Kashmir had maintained a high artistic tradition for centuries and had its own style. Mulla Jamil was a famous painter in the service of Zain-ul-Abidin (Ahmad, 1942). Akbar had a group of five painters from Kashmir, but we cannot assess the influence, if any, which the Kashmir style of painting exerted on the Mughal school (Brown, 1924). However, as Brown says: “Very delicate effect is said to have been obtained by the Kashmiri painters. They allowed water to stand until it had completely evaporated, leaving a slight sediment, which they used as a background tint to the profile of a portrait, as it left a faint but charming contrast of tone between the flesh colour and the ground” (Brown, 1924, p. 189)

Kashmiri Apparels

The climatic conditions have significant influence on the dressing sense of people. The cotton
cultivation was not productive due to its poor yield whereas extensive greeny regions provided an adequate grazing ground to sheep. As a result, wool was produced in much larger ratio (Dughlat, 1895). Beside this, there were abundant mulberry trees in the areas of Kashtawar and valley (Fazl, 1897). Silk worms were raised upon the mulberry tree's leaves. So, wool was used to prepare the dresses of ladies and gents, while only upper class were privileged enough to afford silk clothes (Mattoo, 1988).

Women used to wear an ornamented crown called qasaba while the old Hindu women used to wrap a white cloth about their head (Lawrence, 1895). Women of Nousha, Bahramgalla and Rajouri used to wear nose rings.

Shoes made up of fur were not utilized by the common people. It was an extravagance for them. A common footwear named as pulhore, made up of rice straw was used by common people. Woolen footwears were usually used (Forster, 1970). A woolen cloth called as petawa was wrapped about the calf of the legs in order to shield them from tweaking cold winds (Didamari, 1995).

Kanger was a bowl-shaped pot contained in wicker work was an exceptional thing used to make body warm. Hot coal produced from burning willow and poplar twigs, and leaves of chinar were added in the bowl. The consumed waste of grain was also added into it, which created a head of moderate temperature. Charari Sharif was the well-known place for Kanger’s production.

Painting

According to Abul Fazal, there was a group comprising of five painters from Kashmir at the Court of Akbar (Brown, 1924). However, any piece or work of their creative artistic display does not exit. By the end of 17th century, Basohali art was discovered which was a branch of Pahari School of Painting. It exhibits distinct characteristics and qualities of the Mughal art (Brown, 1924; Archer, 1973). The Hindu mythology produced various artistic paintings like the Pahari Art in late 18th and 19th century. But their finishing, neatness and color selection was not that much perfect as compared to the art work of Pahari School. It gives the idea that the art of painting started to make progress in the Subah region after the break down of the empire. But it didn’t bloom there due to the lack of funding and support from the Sikhs and afghans, whereas the hill rajas continued their support and help to the artists which brought about the improvement of Pahari School of Art (Archer, 1973).

Arts & Handicrafts

The handicrafts of Kashmir region are popular worldwide and are made with care and love. They are reflective of interpretation of an aesthetic and artistic idiom.

Kashmiri shawls have been famous since many centuries and were previously the pride of the French ruler, Marie Antoinette. The European women of court supported these uncommon shawls. The most renowned of these is the Jameawar shawl, prepared from delicate pashmina wool and it is covered with fine and frilly embroidery. The Shahtush shawl was so delicate that it was passable through a ring. And a woolen cloak, embroidered phiran worn by ladies, also has some neat embroidery on it.

The art of carpet making is equally famous with its elegant Persian motifs knotted by hand in warm colors on silk and wool. Floor coverings additionally include gabbas, namdas and rugs of chain-stitch made of wool and felted in form of the rug.

Jewelry, silk fabrics, silverware and woolen fabrics mainly Patti (milled blankets) and patto (tweed) are other Kahmiri handicrafts.

One can have floor coverings weaved in chain-stitch patterns or get wicker-work products in Jammu which is a typical sight in market. The later one is mainly available as boxes, hampers and baskets. The chintzes of Samba are also very famous.

Namdas

Far more affordable are these vibrant floor coverings produced using cotton and woolen fiber which has been pressed into some shape. Costs change with percentage of wool, a namda made up of 80 percent wool is more costly than the one made up of 20 percent wool. Chain stitch in cotton and woolen thread is done on these rugs.
Pherans

Pheran is the type of apparel which is somewhere close to a cloak and a coat, is prominently suited to the Kashmiri lifestyle, being sufficiently loose to concede the unavoidable brazier of live coals that is conveyed similarly as a high temp water bottle. Coarse wool or Tweed is used for making men's pherans whereas the ladies pherans are somehow more stylized and usually made up of raffle with some hook embroidery or ari at the edges, cuffs and throat. The thickness of raffle and quality of embroidery determines its price.

Kani shawl

An artistic magnificence woven into the shawl, the Kani shawls are quite famous and exquisite shawls from Kashmir. Craftsman weaves this shawl by the help of wooden needles known as Kanis in Kashmiri. Kani shawl is prepared with specialized technique and takes about a year or two in its preparation depending upon its design. These shawls have been Mughal’s favorite and adding to their beauty.

Tilla work

An embroidery style involving the use of silver or gold zari (tilla) thread, the tilla work is a customary Kashmiri specialty used to decorate shawls and pherans whereas now a days it can be seen on various garments, shalwar kameez and saris. Artisans carefully decorate the fabric with various designs made from gold or silver thread secured by the cotton thread. These designs can vary from traditional complex patterns requiring plenty of time to complete to less difficult ones that require less labour and thread. The frequently used motifs are Badam, Chinar and Pamposh. The trousseau of bride is viewed as incomplete without tillapheran.

Kanger

No one in the Kashmir can survive the winter without Kanger. The craftperson makes a little convenient earthenware lined wicker bucket known
as Kanger, which turns into warming pot when loaded with the burning coal. It is accepted to being used since the Mughal’s era and regardless of the warming devices is in market these days, its utility and fame stays in place. Kanger is an art work and depicts the place where it’s made like Islambaed Kanger, Bandepoor Kanger and Tchaar Kanger. There are the Kangeris which are neatly woven with the fine willow whereas some are also made from thick and coarse material.

![Papier Machie Kanger](image1)

Fig. 10: Papier Machie Kanger

Kashmiri Shawls

The word shawl is derived from Persian word *shal*, originally signifying a category of woven fabric instead of a specific dress’s article. The Indo-Persian traditional usage slid can similarly apply to a coverlet, a mantle, a turban or even a scarf, the distinguishing attribute being that the stuff was kind of animal fleece or some fine wool. The delicate brocaded woolen shawls of present time are closely associated with those of Kashmir. In Kashmir, the beginning of brocade-weaving was obscure. As indicated by the local legend recorded in early period of nineteenth century (Hogel, 1845), Zain-ul-Abidin was the founder of the industry, who was called the Akbar of Kashmir by the historians, in acknowledgment of his intellectual rule and advancement of arts. Zain-ul-Abidin was supposed to have launched the Turkistan weavers for the cause.

Woolen shawls are famous for embroidery work on them which is unique to Kashmir. The type of wool used and embroidery cause the variation in price of Kashmiri shawls. In Kashmir, the wool woven is called as *raffel* and is 100 percent pure. Occasionally blends from various parts of country are utilized and then Kashmiri embroidery is done on them. These blends either contain cotton or cashmilon or mixture of both. Numerous sorts of embroidery are done on the shawls needlework or ‘sozni’ is usually done in panel along the edges of shawl.

![Phul-Kari](image2)

Fig. 12: Phul-Kari

**Phul-Kari**

Phul-kari is famous since 15th century. It’s an embroidery style using vivid floral designs. Phul means flower and Kari means craft and is a traditional craft of Jammu. Phulkari is practiced mostly by women in their houses for their personal use. This art has made daily lives and garments of ladies colorful. The trousseau of bride is viewed as incomplete without phulkari. In early times the embroidery was done on the dupattas and shalwar kameez but now a day phulkari is worked on footwear, jackets, wall hangings, table covers, kids garment and handkerchients depicting their popularity. The designs too are no longer restricted to floral patterns.

![Sozni Shawl](image3)

Fig. 13: Sozni Shawl

The material conventionally used for shawl weaving in Kashmir was fleece obtained from Central Asian breed of mountain goat, the *Capra hircus*. In the West, this was prominently referred to either as cashmere, from the old spelling of Kashmir
or pashmina (from Persian *pashm*, which means any sort of wool). The first term is especially misleading, due to the reason that in Kashmir all shawl wool was imported from Central Asia or Tibet in any case and was never produced locally.

There are signs that shawls mostly desired during early Mughal’s era were decorated with silver and gold thread. Manrique in 1603 depicted the finest cases as having ‘outskirts ornamented with gold’s fringes, silk and silver thread. They (the Nobles and the Princes) wear them like shrouds, either carrying them under their arms or wrapping themselves in them. These choice materials are white in color leaving the loom, but then dyed any desired hue and are decorated with different colorful flowers and some other sorts of decoration making them very showy (Manrique, 1927).

![Kashmiri Shawls](image1)

**Fig. 14:** Kashmiri Shawls

![Kashmiri Kalamkar Shawl](image2)

**Fig. 15:** Kashmiri Kalamkar Shawl

3. Conclusion

Archaeology, history and ethnography articulate that the region of Kashmir was culturally and industrially formed a part of cultural complex of Persia. The sources reveal that the mass conversions of Kashmiris to Islam were due to the Persian missionaries and the Persio-Islamic culture got its root in whole Kashmir. Due to the penetration of new culture in Kashmir, we can see its amalgamation with the elements of Persian culture. As a result, the new formed culture is not much closer to either exogenous or endogenous influences. However, the environment undergone in order to fulfill the demand of pragmatic and congruence requirements which imbibe the elements of Persian civilization as well as appropriated the intuition and knowledge of locals.

The Persio-Islamic culture transmitted in area of Kashmir in form of Persian Language, Literature, Sufism, Arts and architecture and the advancement of technology of that time. The available evidence shows that Kashmir faced the significant influence of Persian culture especially after the entrance Mir Sayid Ali Hamadani. He himself and the seven hundred Sadaats who came with him changed the living style, socio-economic and the culture of local people. After the occupation of Gaznavids on the north and west of Kashmir, the culture wedded with Persian culture which became pronounced. The Hindu rajas encouraged the Muslims missionaries to came in Kashmir which started the influx of Persian culture in Kashmir.

The establishment of Muslim Sultanate in Kashmir considerably increased the immigration of Sufi missionaries due to religious zeal resulting the mass conversion of locals to Islam as well as contacts with other countries. The Iranian scholars, poets, writers and craftsmen brought with them Persian language, crafts, arts, designs and even vegetation. The influx of Persians in the region caused more cultural exposure in Kashmir. For example, the technology of Kashmiri textile, the industry produced the fine and famous woolen shawl and carpet which was incomparable with other areas. They made Kashmir capable of handicrafts which got famed all over the world. The Shawl industry established during the Sultanate period produced fine quality products. This impressive work of Sultans in art and crafts and the international trade made Kashmir the mini Bukhara and Samarqand. Therefore, within few centuries the culture of Kashmir remolded in the crucible of Persian culture and it is not unfair to conclude that the people of Kashmir did inexorable efforts to be equal in this regard with Persia. The superior quality paper was also manufactured in Kashmir that was used for miniature painting. The plough and spinning wheel used in Kashmir resembles the Persian typology.

Persian language also flourished in Kashmir during Sultanate period which assimilated with the Kashmiri language such that some words still used in textile designing are either Persian or originated in Persia. Interestingly, Sultans did not ignore the Kashmiri language along patronizing the Persian. Zain ul-Abidin, Haidar Shah, Hassan Shah and Yusuf Shah were great lover of poetry. They patronized Kashmiri language and the Sultans who poets also composed their poetry in Kashmiri and Persian.

The people of Kashmir accepted the innovation in their traditions such as learning of new language, customs, art, architecture, designs and technology.
They have the innovative personalities to modify or improve the intrusive culture and technologies. The craftsmen skills and artisans were so ingenuous that they attracted the foreigners to visit Kashmir. Although they adopted and learned the skills of beautiful designs from Persia but the deep imprints of their ingenuity on the influenced culture was so intense that every design and item has its own distinct hallmarks from the original one.

The sceneries of miniature paintings done in the Mughal period also reflects the presence of the tree and motifs that were brought by Shah Hamadan and his 700 Saddats. The depiction of Lotus flower, Chinar tree, Paisley, Pomegranate and grapes can be found in most of the miniature paintings done by the contemporary miniaturists. The patterns and motifs used in the miniature paintings of Babur, Humayun, Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb’s epoch are still being used by Kashmiri artisans in textile designing which substantiate the presence of these patterns in Kashmir and India. Moreover, if compare the Persian miniature paintings, we can find these patterns and tree in the paintings which also corroborate the influence of Persian on Kashmir.

The culture of Kashmir is the amalgamation of different cultures and among all cultures, it is highly influenced by Persian culture. The brilliant designs that are part of Kashmiri textile are result of immigrants and the craftsmen from Persia. A cursory glance on the textile designs of Kashmir tells their origin and beautiful story.

References


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