Science Arena Publications
Specialty Journal of Humanities and Cultural Science
ISSN: 2520-3274
Available online at www.sciarena.com
2019, Vol, 4 (3): 1-7

The Persian Influence on the Textile Design of Kashmir

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Abstract: *Textile design is a part of diverse design field consisting of different traditional patterns and motifs. The main aim of this research is to understand the influence that is brought by Persia in the textile designing of Kashmir. The culture of Kashmir is influenced by different cultures but it is highly influenced by Persian culture especially in the field of art, 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 a cursorily glance on the textiles of Kashmir.*

Keywords: *Design, Patterns, Motifs, Lotus, Paisley, Textile designing.*

INTRODUCTION

Azad Jammu and Kashmir has superabundant glorious Art and Craft, with cultural and architectural heritage. Its beauty and cultural heritage has originated from its living expression hence, the fine arts are the best way of this expression. The etymology of word "Kashmir" is unclear; some believe that it was the inhabitant of "Kush" nation while some consider it as the combination of two words "Kush" and "Mir" of "Para Karat" language, meaning "canal" and "mountain" respectively.

The history of Kashmir predates thousands of years. Probably the "Aryans" were the first civilized people who went Kashmir from West Pakistan. In another word we can say 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.

According to Puranic geography, Kashmir lies exactly at the center. The Puranic concept considers the continents of the Earth in a shape of lotus flower. The world's center is at Mt. Meru, representing pericarp or seed vessel of lotus, having mountain ranges in circular form. Mt. Meru is surrounded by four islands, depicting four petals, Uttarakuru aligned to north, Bharata (Jambudvipia) to south, Bhardrashva to east and Ketumala to west. All these continents meet at MeruMountain, the high Himalayan region around Kashmir. The continent Uttarakuru is Central Asia, in which Bhadrashva represents China and Ketumala represents Iran. The centralized existence of Kashmir, according to this scheme of Lotus flower, recognizes it as the

meeting ground of ideas and trade for the main four parts of the Old World. Therefore, Kashmir has become not only the meeting ground but also a land of reconciling the opposites by bold conception and deep analysis (Kak, n.d.).

Historical Background

Darius, Achaemenian ruler of Iran, in 516 B.C., annexed Sindh, North-West Frontier and some parts of Punjab and extended his empire up to India. This remained under the rule of Iranian empire till 326 when Alexander invaded this territory. Greek sources showed that the Kashmir was the part of Gandhara when Iranian invaded there. (Ray, 1970) Perhaps the Kashmir also remained under the rule of Achaemenians during the time that they ruled Gandhara which paved the way for Iranian influence in Kashmir. This gained more impetus because of Mauryan occupation of Kashmir as political, architectural and construction methods uphold the impact of Iranian influences (Dar, 1984)

In 75 B.C., Kashmir came under the rule of Sakas. Saka was the name of a tribe which was belonged to Andronovo culture, related to ancient Iranian civilization (Brentjes, 1996). They occupied Bactria in 315 B.C. and then south-western Afghanistan which was named as Sakistan, and presently known as Sistan. Therefore, Sakas brought amalgamated culture which then flourished in Iran and Central Asia.

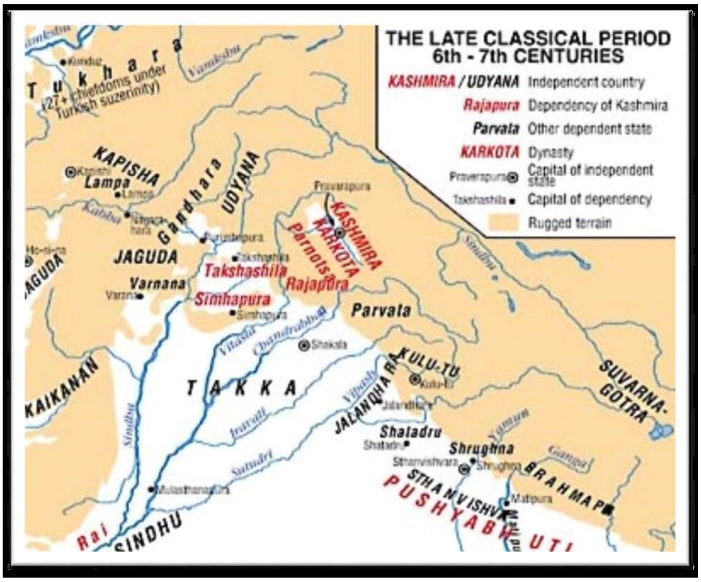
During 20 A.D., ethnic group belonged to Parthians of Iran had founded an empire Indo-Parthian on Kashmir borders over the areas of Kandhar, Seistan, Gandhara, Sindh and Kabul valley. Thereafter Kashmir was under Parthian empire and persuaded the Kashmir with their civilization. Some places where also named based on Parthian such as Ash Muqam, Ash Much, Ash Pur (Asi was the name of goddess) etc. Moreover, Harwan that was influenced by Parthians as the ruins of Harwan, showed the motifs known as 'Parthian shot' on the tiles.This was more tangible in Parthians dress like diaphanous garments, long skirts, trousers (leggings) and ear-rings (Wani, 2004). The Parthian motifs like intertwined serpents and two winged loins locked in a fierce were also found in Liddar and Hoinar tiles. Zoroastrianism owing to contacts with Iran gradually spread in Kashmir .This issue could be substantiated by the rituals, beliefs and the names of place which continue down to the present times. The names of places might have the words Mitargom (residence of Mitar), Hari Parbat, Harwan (after Hara), Mir (Mihr) Aur and Akhur (Ahura) etc. (Majeed, 1996).

Around 65 A.D., Kushanempire integrated Kashmir with extending the empire from Central Asia to Mathura. The remains from different places of Kashmir Kushan intimated the presence of Kushan impact on art, costumes, architecture, pottery, flora and fauna etc. (Kak and Qadri, 1933).

In the beginning of 11th century massive influx of people from Kabul's Shahi Kingdom was experienced by Kashmir. The Shahis married with Kashmiri Hindus therefore, at the time of MahmoodGhaznavi's subjugation of Kabul, the Shahi family sought asylum in Kashmir. After that they were appointed at higher positions by Kashmiri rajas (Stein, 1989).

Although the Islamic influence that had started in Kashmir since the beginning of the 8th century, (Polo, 1958) it could make no headway till the first quarter of 14th century (Hasan, 1959). The mountain bounded valley of Kashmir did not deter the Muslim scholars, saints and missionaries of Persia and the Central Asia from penetrating the "paradise of east" and acquainted the locals of Kashmir with new culture and ideas. The Muslim missionaries who infiltrate in this valley during 14th and 15th century belonged to Persia, Bukhara and some other parts of central Asia (Hasan, 1959). The Muslim saints like Bulbul Shah and Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani gained sympathetic response from the locals of Kashmir and their teachings were permeated among the people.

The great preaching services of religious scholars in Kashmir assisted to form Kashmir as an Islamic society. In the beginning of the 14th century, "Ichen", a Ladakhi prince, captured Kashmir by over taking Hindu Raja Saadeijo and embraced Islam in the hands of Sharef-ud-din AbdurRehmanTurkistani. He also renowned with the names of Bulbul Shah Suhrawardi and Sultan Sudder-ud-din.



Kashmir in 16th-17th Century

Shah Mian and Chak (Shia family), two Muslim dynasties, were ruling Kashmir, but during the last year of this dynasty some sectarian clashes between Sunni and Shia took place and then Mughal emperor Akbar invaded in 1585 A.D. and ruled Kashmir. After this, in 1752 A.D. Kashmir was occupied by Afghans.

Thereafter, Sikhs occupied Kashmir in 1819 and then Gulab Singh of Jammu sold Kashmir to British people under the "Amritsar Treaty". At the time of partition, Dogra Dynasty was ruling Kashmir and the majority of the Kashmir's population was Muslim. This we so while, Dogra's ruler stated the annexation of Kashmir with India. Thus, Kashmir was occupied by Indian forces known as "Maqbooza Kashmir"

Cultural Influence

Kashmir remained rich and was known as an important trade pole. This was influenced by different cultures especially the Persian and Central Asian culture. The handicrafts of a culture or region were developed by aesthetic sense of its art and craft. These expressions could be seen in the folk works of craftsmen of textile and wood. The cultural history of Kashmir could 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 the reasons that can robust traditions of arts and literature. Further, the long winter season may explain the Kashmiri tradition in textile art.

Persian Influence on Culture and Language

During the first 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 Seyed Ali Hamadani along with Iranian Sadat families. He brought Kashmir the revolutionary and epoch-making changes of civilization, culture and religious aspects. Mir Seyed Ali Hamadani came with highly skilled Iranian men and introduced the art of carving, mosaic work, Samawar making, carpet designing and cloth making. He also brought with him some 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.

Iranians, brought new customs with them and mixed with locals of valley .This could be because of the influence gained 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, Kashtiwar, and Sindhetc. In order to disperse their social activities. (Bamzai, 1994) The Kashmiri claim the existence of

their national dress in Kashtiwar 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 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 of outside Kashmir came there while Islam was spreading in Kashmir. The local Ulemas learned from pious men residing in Srinagar and then preceded Herat and Samarkand to undergo training. (Hasan, 1959) Many castes like Dars, Magres and Rainasetc were residing in Kashmir. 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 were living in the center. These actions resulted from 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 YaqoobSurfi were some of the famous Persian poets. Moreover, few great Persian poets also travelled to Kashmir from Iran.

Persian Influence in Ghaznavid Period

Amir NasiruddinSabuktakin and then Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi entered in India accompanied by thousands of Iranian scholars, writers, poets and physicians. These people were bringing Persian language, customs and usages with them. This event led to a serious and all-out influence of Iranian cultural traditions on the Indian culture. Therefore, Iranian culture was effectively grafted on the Indian soil which was enhanced more and more with the passage of time.

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 iran 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.

When Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani wanted to come to Kashmir after Bulbul Shah, he came with seven hundred people 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 could 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.

Kashmiri Textile Motifs

The clothing and textiles of an area depicts its cultural and historical background. The main sources for the collection of history of clothing and textiles are via archaeology and design representation in art and textile. The rich diversity in craft and designs of Kashmir is the outcome of its cultural and ethnic diversity. After the invasion of Persian missionaries, Kashmiri artisans started to make shawls, carpets, papier-mâché and metal and wood wares. The designs and motifs are mostly inspired from nature and they were modified according to the fashion and external influence. The floral patterns varying in color and size can be seen in the embroidery of Kashmiri textile products. If we glance at the ancient finished garments and textiles of Kashmir, it can easily be found that the designs and patterns were similar to Persian textile products and mostly Lilly, Lotus, Tulip, Saffron, Iris, Grapes branches; Pomegranate, Maple and Almond motifs were the prominent symbols in textile designing of Kashmir especially in embroidery and craft products.

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 was living 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).

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 Zainu'l-'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 in any other sources; 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 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 now survives earlier than the latter half of the seventeenth century. Now we know that Farm Srivara had become very famous for its shawls under Zainu'l-'abidin Kashmir (Kalhana et. al, 1898). The shawl industry was in a well-developed state when the Mughals came and conquered the Valley. From this period onwards, its development can be found without much difficulty.

The art of tinned metals used in northern India and Kashmir was introduced by Persians (Hasan, 1959). Muslims used copper cooking as well as eating vessels; and hence these have to be tinned before they can be employed safety. The ewers of Kashmir are mostly found in red copper, embossed, enameled, and tinned. Their handles are made of brass, and represent the head and the tail of some Chinese dragon, while the floral decorations and shapes are mainly Persian. These decorations are spread with such profusion that the influence of the Hindu art has been regained. Thus, from a study of the metal-works in Kashmir, it appears that the three ancient civilizations-Persian, Chinese, and Hindu-met in this Valley, but the impact of the first overshadowed the other two, although it was improved by the native mode of expression (Hasan, 1959).

Painting

It is impossible to enter into a detailed discussion of Kashmir painting since not a single work of the Sultanate period which is the devastating cataclysms of civil strife and foreign invasion has survived (Sufi, 1948). However, there is evidence to show that Kashmir had maintained a high artistic tradition for centuries and had its own style. MullaJamil was a famous painter in the service of Zainu'l-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 exercised 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 color and the ground" (Brown, 1924, p. 189)

Dress

The dressing sense of privileged classes of society was alike to the dressing sense of the elites in Persia, Turkistan and Arabia. It appears to have been presented by Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani in the rule of Sultan Qutbu'd-Din (Hasan, 1959), and even Brahmans had started to adopt it before the reign of Sultan Sikandar (Kalhana et. al., 1898). People used to cover their body's lower portion by wearing wide trousers (sariwil) of the Persian style whereas the upper portion of the body was covered by a chemise (gumis) along with full sleeves (Nasib, n.d.). Over this there was a short-styled vest (Sadri). The outer cloak was known as chogha, and plunged to ankles (Hasan, 1959). It had loose long sleeves and there was a girdle about the waist (Kalhana et. al., 1898). A small tight cap coated with a fabric is used as a head dress. This formed turban (Kalhana et. al., 1898). The turban that Ulama and Qazis used to wear was black in color (Hasan, 1959). On festive events silk clothes were worn whereas sultans used to present silk robes as khil'ats to their followers. The nobles and Sultans used to wear ornaments (Kalhana et. al., 1898).

Despite the foreign interference, the dressing sense of destitute has not changed much since the ancient times. Men used to wear tight fitting skull shaped cap on their shaved heads. They didn't use to wear drawers, however a loose, large-sleeved, long woolen tunic known as *phairam*named after Persian *pirahan* was used to cover the bodies. The *pirahan* was opened form neck to waist, descending to the ankles including a belt around the waist (Jahangir, 1989). Their shoes were made up of grass (Nasib, n.d.). The clothes of

females were similar except that they used to put a fillet on forehead, and over it there was black mantilla that fell down the head to the shoulders leading to legs. The head cover of Muslim ladies is known as *kasaba*, whereas the head dress of Hindu ladies is called as *Taranga,* that is knotted to hanging bonnet leading to heels from the back (Pelsaert, 1925). Due to the cold weather of Kashmir valley, the kashmiris used to take bath at large intervals; they were poor enough to buy more than one gown, and they used it until it got damaged and then they used to buy a new one (Jahangir,1989)

Trade

In ancient times, trade played a vital role in Kashmiri's financial life as it does these days. Trade was the means of significant income to state; it boosted the manufactures and provided various employment opportunities to many people. In addition, it proved to be a source of wealth to Kashmiri traders whose trade was not restricted to the Kashmir valley alone, but was extended to the areas of Lhasa, Persia, Central Asia, the Coromandel Coast and Bengal.

Conclusion

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.

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 come in Kashmir which started the influx of Persian culture in Kashmir.

The Iranian scholars, poets, writers and craftsmen brought Persian language, crafts, arts, designs and even vegetation with them. The influx of Persians in the region caused more cultural exposure in Kashmir.

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.

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.

The craftsmen skills and artisans were so in genuine that they attracted the foreigners to visit Kashmir.

The sceneries of miniature paintings done in the Mughal period also reflect 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 executed by the contemporary miniaturists.

The culture of Kashmir is the amalgamation of different cultures. 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.

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