

ROLE OF KASHMIRI WOMEN IN PRESERVING CULTURE

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Abstract

Here we are going to throw the light on the rich and diverse culture of the Valley of Saints – Kashmir. The Kashmir valley is renowned for its mesmerizing and charismatic beauty, unique climate and suitable topography. Kashmir is also known for its rich cultural essence since decades. Its geographical location, cuisine, art and everything is unsurpassable. People of Kashmir when don their traditional dresses seem the most preeminent people. The incomparable magnificence of the culture of Kashmir valley has left everyone flabbergasted. The traditional dresses of Kashmir are popular because of the captivating and bewitching embroidery work and intricate and delicate design. The clothing is usually made of silk, wool and cotton. The scent of this culture has spread to the every nook and corner of this world and its exquisiteness has always been as alluring to the one who is familiar as it is to the outsider.

Key Words: Kashmiri Women, Culture

INTRODUCTION

The cultural heritage of Kashmir is multi dimensional. The women of Kashmir are celebrated for their contribution to the culture of this valley. My purpose and the main aim to procure about this topic is that by our study we will be able to determine the genuine aspirations for day to day life in a rich diversity of Indian rule. The poetesses and seers in Kashmir have in particular provided their thoughts which have helped the unified image of the culture of Kashmir to grow through immemorial time. We will also examine the synthesis in the Kashmiri tradition that will also help us to combine and synthesis cultures, spiritual beliefs and scientific discipline. The Kashmiri poetesses and seers have described the harmony of nature and man. The women of Kashmir still wear traditional costumes which is an indication that they want to keep the culture alive, zestful and ebullient for the posterity which incontrovertibly is their moral responsibility. The ladies dress themselves in Kashmiri attire like Pheran with *Tilla Work* or *Ari Work* which indeed is fascinating. The youth of Kashmir wear Kashmiri jewellery which is made of silver. They also wear an appealing head scarf, traditionally known as Qasab, and is commonly used by old women.

TYPES OF CULTURE OF WOMEN IN KASHMIR

LALESHWARI (LALA DED)

Laleshwari also known as (Lala Ded) was a great famous poetess who lived around 1317 & 1391 AD in Kahmir was a legendary seer and was the founder of the culture and ethos of the people in Kashmir in the middle ages She practice saiva philosophy. The highest type of bhaleti is identify with highest state of knowledge of Laleshwari, the great poet saint Sheikh Nur-ud-Din® said with reference:

That Lalla of Padmanpus-Shedranr her till of divine hector. She was indeed on avtara of God grant me the self sane boon.

SOZNI WORK

Sozni work embroidery is a style of embroidery from the Jammu and Kashmir region in the northwest of the Indian subcontinent **Sozni** embroidery is, among others, used especially to decorate shawls, especially for the panels along the side of the cloth. **Sozni** is a form of extremely fine and delicate needlework done primarily on **shawls**. Only a single strand is used and if skillfully executed, the motif appears on both sides of the **shawl**. Rezkar embroidery has longer stitches and uses three or four strands of yarn. It is done on **shawls**, garments, cloths and other households.

AARI WORK

The embroidery is known as **aari** or crewel work. It is a speciality of **Kashmiri** artisans who create it in fine, concentric rings of chain stitch using a long hooked needle known as a crewel. **Aari work** is a type of **embroidery** which is done on a stretched fabric and stitching the design with a long needle which has a hook at the end The needle is named as **Aari**, from which the **embroidery work** derives its name as **Aari work**

KASABA

Along with pehran, it is Kasaba which is a red headgear that is accompanied by pehran. Other than Taranga, this type of turban is quite designed with a turban and has the ornaments that are pinned down along with the silver brooches. There is also a pink scarf with it from the Kasaba that is suspended at the shoulder. Mostly this is worn by Muslim Kashmir woman as a part of their routine attire

ROUF

It is the traditional dance form of Kashmir which is performed by women in groups mostly at the time of religious festivals and weddings. The women entertain themselves by standing in two rows opposite to each other with slight body movements and the arms around each other's waist with the forward and backward movement of the legs singing rhythmic songs in different seasons of the year, Eid and the last days of Ramzan as a farewell to the holy month.. Kashmiri weddings are incomplete without this folk dance and even today all the cultural school festivals and government organized festivals have Rouf as a main source of entertainment to promote the culture of Kashmir. It has been an inseparable part of the Kashmiri weddings and still continues to be so.

HIKKAT

Hikkat is a dance mostly performed by young girls in a playful way on the occasion of marriages and festivals. The hands are cross locked; the body and the heads are leaned backwards. The girls in a group of two go round and round without any music, giggling and singing in an informal way.

KASHMIRI PHERAN

A pheran is a traditional **Kashmiri attire** worn by men and women. It resembles a long loose coat or cloak. Traditionally made from wool or tweed and worn as protection from the winter, Silver and gold **embroidery**: Locally called “tilla”, this type of **embroidery work** is found on ladies cloaks “Pherans”.

NAMDA.

Namda stand for Indian tradition in the present day. **Namda** is a local term used for felted wool floor coverings. It is a wool traditional floor covering, made out of coarse variety of wool. Rich hues and exquisite designing are the hallmarks of the handcrafted **Namda** Namdas are a kind of mattress, originally from the state of Jammu and **Kashmir**. These are made by felting the wool rather than weaving it. **Namda** is the craft of making carpets by felting

KASHMIRI KAHWAH

Kashmiri Kahwah tea is **made** by boiling green **tea** leaves with saffron grown in **Kashmir**, cinnamon bark, cardamom pods, and occasionally **Kashmiri** roses to add a great aroma. Generally, it is served with sugar or honey and crushed nuts, usually almonds or walnuts Brews made from **Kashmiri Kahwa** helps reduce cholesterol levels and regulates blood pressure, keeping your heart

happy and **healthy** Kehwa also works on the lining of **blood** vessels, keeps them relaxed and is able to regulate changes in **blood pressure**. It may also protect against the creation of clots, which are the main cause of heart attacks.

YENDER

Yender is a symbol of our glorious heritage. This old artifact is still socially, culturally and emotionally dear to us. It was regarded as an important possession of every family and was used for spinning of wool or pashmina. The art of spinning was so important that it was regarded as a qualification for a girl to be married. It is also known as "Charkha" at some places which is derived from the word "Charakh" meaning a circle, in Baghdad and Iran, from where it is believed to have reached Kashmir. It is also said that the art of spinning was introduced in Kashmir by Hazrat Mir Syed Ali Hamdani (RA), popularly known as "Shah Hamdaan", for the economic uplift of Kashmiris. He is believed to have brought artisans from Iran to teach this art here. Yender spinning was once the sole means of women's economic empowerment in Kashmir. It is now almost extinct and has been replaced by modern machines. The boom in the textile industry and industrialization have contributed to the decline of this craft. Moreover, it is not financially viable. This art requires patience and perseverance which today's spinners lack. The spinners are often exploited by middlemen also, resulting in meager income and less returns for them. Heavy woolen quilts, blankets, pherans, large coats, trousers and caps were previously made of wool and were used by people during winters to keep warm in winter. This has now been replaced by modern textiles and synthetic clothing. The ban on Shahtoos worldwide also hit the trade and dealt a death knell to it.

CONCLUSION

Through this chapter we could deduce that the women of Kashmir have relentlessly worked to preserve the essence and intrinsic nature of Kashmiri culture. It illustrates and manifests that how the women of Kashmir choose to operate within exertion of self - determination in Kashmir in order to establish their cultural image and fight for their rights. Despite women being guardians and creators of the society, they still have to struggle to play an equal role in the cultural sphere. Despite changes which took place during passage of time, Kashmiri cultural women have played a tremendous role to safe guard the old and rich culture of Kashmir. It is also pertinent to mention here that Kashmiri

women (especially old women) are still connected with their culture despite changes which took place around the globe.

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