

DEVELOPMENT OF HANDICRAFT TRADE IN KASHMIR DURING THE MUGHAL PERIOD

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Abstract

The Mughal takeover of Kashmir in 1586 brought new changes. Immediately upon its annexation, it was incorporated into Mughal Subah Kabul. With the end of political isolation, the valley was opened up to the rest of the world, which helped to strengthen the people's economy. Road communication have resulted lot of changes. Skilled employees were given complete independence and extensive patronage by monarchs for the growth of industry. Kashmir became a well-known center of handicraft production after the Mughal dynasty came to power. In the Mughal sub-region of Kashmir, the Mughal ruler's-maintained trade routes, built bridges and series, and thus largely promoted the export of handicrafts. Handicrafts have been exported throughout India as well as to neighboring countries. South India has also become a major Centre for the marketing of Kashmiri handicrafts, resulting in huge profits for Kashmir. This document discusses the export of Kashmiri handicrafts. What are the routes by which these handicrafts are exported, for example, and why do people from all over India and its neighboring countries have a craze for them?

Keywords: Kashmir, Mughal, Trade, Handicrafts, routes, market

1. INTRODUCTION

Kashmir is an ancient land known for its people's high level of civilization, natural beauty, and intelligence and artistic excellence. Nature has provided him with an abundant supply of raw materials, which he has transformed into luxury items using his genius, demonstrating a delicate artistic taste. Since ancient times, Kashmir has had a strong artistic tradition. Kashmiris are known for their intelligence and are thought to be among India's most intelligent people [1].

With the establishment of Mughal rule, Kashmir became a center for handicraft production. The Mughals' annexation of Kashmir made the Kashmiri famous all over the world. Mughal rulers-maintained trade routes, built bridges, and built sheds to shelter travellers, making it much easier to export handicrafts to Kashmir's Mughal subculture. Kashmiri crafts spread throughout India and beyond via these trade routes. According to Abul Fazl, Kashmir had 26 trade routes that connected it to the outside world. Abul Fazl in *Ain-i-Akbari* mentions that there was twenty-six road or routes linking Kashmir with the outside world of which Bhimber and Pakli were the best. But only six routes were of great importance. These routes remained open for the most part of the year [2]. Merchants traversed the routes, even during the winter months, though with great difficulties. The important among these routes were:

Mughal Route: This route connects Kashmir with Punjab, leads via Hastivanj through the Pir Panjal pass, this route remains closed during the winter months as it crosses a very high [3].

Kashtawar route: There are two routes that lead from Kashmir to Kashtawar: one goes through Islamabad (now Anantnag) through Singapore and the other through Dasu, which connects Kashtawar with Bhadarwah and Jammu via Ramban [4].

Punch Route: - This route connects Kashmir to Punch via the Haji Pir Pass and Punch was connected to Jammu via Rajouri, Thana, Dharamsala and Akhnoor.

Muzaffarabad Pakhli Route: - This road linked Kashmir to Rawalpindi then to Peshawar. This route was located at low altitude and therefore remained viable throughout the year [5].

Central Asian Trade Route: This route crosses most of Ladakh from east to west. This route was only accessible during the summer months, but due to its commercial importance, merchants often used it during the summer months as well. It linked Kashmir to central Tibet, Kashgarh, Yarkand and China. Kashmir's trade with Bhutan, Nepal and Bengal has also taken place on this route and are traversable on horseback [7].

Handicrafts from Kashmir were exported via these routes to Central Asia, Russia, Bhutan, Nepal, Bengal and Patna. Commercial relations were eventually extended to Bijapur and Golconda [8].

Kashmiri shawls, carpets, silk, paper and paper-machine, and carved wooden items are some of the important handicrafts manufactured for commercialization.

The most important of these was the shawl which has been exported to all parts of India and its nearby countries. The industry had been booming for a long time, but it reached its peak under Mughals due to the inclusion of new techniques, and Kashmir has become world famous for its soft, warm and finely structured shawls [9]. During the Mughal period, Srinagar had over 24,000 looms in operation for the production of Shawls. The shawls were given to a wafarosh (a person who had hired them money) and a mokhim after they were finished (a broker). These two are in charge of determining prices and finalizing the sale to the merchant. According to Bernier, the shawl industry in Kashmir [10] is one-of-a-kind. It generates a significant amount of wealth for Kashmir. Kashmiri shawls were popular among India's nobility and aristocracy. Kashmiri shawls were thought to be the most valuable item. It had become fashionable for every noble to wear a shawl, which was regarded as formal attire.

The nobility and aristocracy in India and beyond were huge fans of Kashmiri shawls. Kashmiri shawls were considered the most valuable item. Every nobleman was expected to wear a shawl, which was seen as a sign of dignity. It was also a practice of the Mughal Emperors to bestow prestige robes to their allies. It was given as a gift to the ladies of the imperial harem [11]. Emperor Akbar, according to Abul Fazl, wore the Shawl as a sign of auspiciousness. In his Tuzuk, Emperor Jahangir lists the material as one of his favorite items of dress. As a result of the Mughals' fascination with Kashmiri fabrics, the shawl industry experienced a boom. Emperor Akbar initiated shawl cloth production in imperial workshops at Lahore, Patna, and Agra in order to encourage the Shawl industry, directing changes in how these were to be woven and dyed, but notwithstanding every possible care, they never had the delicate texture and softness of the Kashmir shawls. As a result, Shahjahan also used large number of shawls and sent lot of them to the rulers of Bijapur, Golconda, Rome, Egypt and Iran. Under Aurangzeb, Kashmir shawl manufacturing peaked and was exported to every corner of the globe. The East India Company's economic interest in Kashmir shawls rose at the same time. Increased in value beginning in 1665 and soon swept the European market [12].

In addition to it, Lahore, Agra, Ahmedabad and Gujarat, South India has also become one of the biggest shawl trading centers in Kashmir. Nepal and Kathmandu have also imported huge quantities of Kashmir shawls. Similar to shawls, Kashmir rugs were also an important exportable item during the Mughal period. Kashmir rugs were thought to be better than those brought from Persia. Throughout the Mughal period, Kashmir manufactured carpets, namda rugs, and pile rugs and sold them to South India, where the kings of the Deccan provided excellent marketplaces. These rugs are most likely among those kept at Bijapur's Gol Gumbaz Museum. Based on technical investigations, it is extremely probable that these are goods manufactured in Kashmiri Handicrafts Karkhanas [13].

Kashmir is additionally known for its silk industry. Mirza Haider Daughlat, Abul Fazl, and Jahangir have gigantically commended the silk business of Kashmir. Mirza Haider Daughlat viewed it as one of the miracles of

Kashmir. Bernier in his Movements illuminates us that a portion of its stuffs were sent out to Lahore.

Paper made in Kashmir was additionally in incredible interest in India for composing. It was luxurious in surface and had a sparkling appearance. It was ready so that if it would be washed, no hints of ink would stay on the paper and the paper could be reused for composing. The paper was in incredible interest in India for compositions and was utilized by all who wished to offer pride to the correspondence. From Ahmedabad, enormous amounts of paper were traded to Persia, which was apparently brought from Kashmir.

Furthermore, Kashmir created magnificent wood products that were transported across India. In his Travels, Bernier stated that "Kashmiri people are vivacious and industrious [14]."

Merchants were crucial to the artisanal trade because they were the wealthiest, most influential, and most powerful stratum in Kashmiri society. They had formed political links with faraway lands through commerce and had played an important part in Kashmir's socioeconomic and political life. These traders established new marketplaces in faraway locations, therefore strengthening commercial links between India and other nations like as Rome, Persia, Egypt, Central Asia, and Nepal. Merchants, due to the huge profits, traveled year-round from mountain to mountain to buy pashm and other raw materials and to sell artifacts manufactured [15].

2. CONCLUSION

During the Mughal rule in Kashmir, the craftsmanship business was excessively lavishly coordinated to the point that handiworks used to be produced for a huge scope, for nearby utilization as well as for fare to each clime in India and its adjoining nations The workmanship traders had their showcasing focuses all over India, Focal Tibet, Nepal, and Bhutan. The clients regularly proposed their preferred cloak examples and plans. Thinking about the quantity of nearby and unfamiliar dignitaries, who got Kashmiri painstaking work as presents and the utilization from the incredible promoting focuses, the requests seem to have been huge.

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