A PROFILE OF CARPET INDUSTRY IN KASHMIR

3.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF CARPET INDUSTRY:

Carpet is of Iranian origin. The carpet weaving in the history of world has been recorded in Iran in 637 A.D. The carpet weaving in Iran does not give us the clue when and how it started in this country. In 637 A.D. the Arabs have taken with them the carpet from the palaces of Persian kings. This piece of carpet, which later on was taken by Arabs, was oriented in Iran, representing the design of Iranian culture, Persian gardens, flower beds and wide border around it. This piece of carpet was further said to be made of very fine quality silk.

Thus the origin of carpet weaving owns its history to Iran, but the very word ‘carpet’ is derived from Latin term “Carpere”, means, sheering of wool from sheep. Thus there is a clear evidence to pin point that the origin of carpet may have been in ancient Greek, because their culture, knowledge and experience in all human activities make it to understand and to accept that carpet is of ancient Greek. This compels us to confine ourselves to accept the origin of carpet from Iran, because the Iranian culture, like that of Greek culture, is very old and that of long back history.

The carpet weaving was not only confined within the territory of Iran, but spread to other parts of the world because of socio-economic, political and mobility of factors of production without
constraint to the countries like Turkey, where it flourished at a cottage industry, but the design and complicity of the carpet weaving differed, as they gave geometrical designs, rather than ancient premium designs of orienting flower beds, garden and their culture glimpse. The trade of carpet, in Turkey, became a part time job or hobby for women. During this period it touched the borders of other countries like Hamdan, Shiraz, Bukkara. Even today the carpets of peculiar design, reflects the names of countries. These are the carpets which are all woolen in sense, that the warp are of wool besides, the weft and further more there design is also of peculiar quality, which is still today called by Hamdan and Shiraz script designs. The carpet weaving in Turkey and in those countries, as cottage level trade, are designed in geometrical shape and are further more differently named i.e. Burial carpets, pillow carpets and prayer carpets.

Origin In Kashmir:

The art of carpet weaving dates back to very ancient history. The carpet weaving, itself reveals the history because it is a trade, which is initiated by Kashmiri from Iran, is full of perception and taste. The date of its orientation is not authentically known, but historians claim that it first started in Kashmir in the reign of Zain-ul-Abdin⁴ (1423 to 1474 AD) who was very interested in the art of carpet. Sultan invited the artisans from Samarkand, Iran and provided them all facilities and thus introduced for the first time in his regime, a new type of economic activity to flourish.

The carpet trade along with other crafts received setback in the reign of Zain-ul-Abdin’s successors mainly because of internal crises, cold war and strife for power among his sons and the flourishing trade started to come towards recession. Furthermore, during the great
famine of 17th century, the art of carpet weaving along with other crafts, became absolutely non-existing.

But there is a diversified opinion, some say that the art of carpet, absolutely collapsed as a matter of fact that no artisan was left alive to start trade. After then in the Mughal regime, particularly of Jahangir, Governor of Kashmir Ahmad Beg (1615-1618 AD), who was deputed by Jahangir to restart the art and gave new blood and life to the carpet trade to flourish during 1620 onwards. It is said that during this period, because of no weaver left, a person from Kashmir Mulla Akhun Rehnuma, went to Mecca to perform Haj. On his way back he visited Persia where he got interested in carpet weaving. He picked up the art and started the industry at Kashmir. During Mughal period Kashmiri art was well developed and reached a high level of workmanship. All this was possible because Mughals took keen interest in Kashmiri products and encouraged the carpet industry in every possible way. With the deterioration of Mughal period, the industry received a setback, as the patronage of princely houses was no more available.

It was during the period of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the creative urge and instinct of Kashmir craftsmen manifested itself in designing of new patterns of carpets. The beautiful natural sceneries of Kashmir particularly fauna and flora soon found an expression involving and developing new designs of carpets. It is said that when a carpet, a master piece of art, which depicted the natural beauty of Kashmir was presented to Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who had never visited Kashmir, produced such a magical effect on his mind that he rolled himself into the carpet with joy.

Thus the carpet fascinated many rich people and a regular demand for carpets was created. The carpets then were sent to
exhibition abroad, which aroused great interests. One of the finest carpets produced (having 700 knots per square inch and a silk warp) for Maharaja Gulab Singh was also exhibited in Great London Exhibition in 1851. This was a turning point in creating market for Kashmir carpets in the west. The exhibition held at various places in the world attracted the attention of foreign commercial houses towards the Kashmir carpets and created possibilities of producing Kashmir carpets for overseas market. Chapman was the first person who attempted the organisation of carpet production in Kashmir in 1876.

In 19th century when shawl industry lost its grounds, the shawl bafs (kani shawl weavers) who were jobless at that time switched over to carpet weaving. These weavers introduced the ‘Taleem’ method of design writing, previously used in ‘kani’ shawl industry. At that time many foreign firms established their branches in Kashmir to harness the full potentialities of the export trade of carpets.

However, the industry received fresh impetus when Europeans entered the field of manufacture. In 1876 Mons H. Danvegne established a factory in Srinagar, other Europeans who contributed to the growth of carpet trade in Kashmir were Messers Mitchell & Co. and Mr. C.M. Hadow. The contribution of C.M. Hadow to the carpet trade was great. He sent Kashmir carpets for being exhibited in the big Chicago world fair of 1890.

Sir Walter Lawrence, the then settlement Commissioner of the states writes: “Many of the survivors of the famine of 1877-79 have now found occupations in the manufacturing of carpets. Three Europeans carry on business in Srinagar, as the manufacturers of carpets. Their work is of good quality and apparently they can without difficulty keep pace with the orders which they receive from India and Europe. There is no attempt to manufacture the costly
though superb rugs in which the shorten wool was used and in Srinagar looms consume wool imported from India or wool locally produced. Srinagar has a formidable rival in Amritsar where a large colony of Kashmiri weavers is selected and considerable capital is employed in the manufacture of carpets.”

The period from 1919-1929 was the boom period. Kashmir used to produce high class carpets meant for the American markets. It was adversely hit by great depression of 1939. Because of financial crises America raised high tariffs walls against the Indian carpets and this produced a crises in the carpet industry of Kashmir. The demand came to a stand still and the labour was thrown out of employment. But with the help of Britain and other European countries and timely action of the state Government which granted subsidy on export of carpets from 1932, the industry got further boost.

It again received a setback in 1947, due to the partition of the sub-continent. A few skilled weavers from Srinagar went to Pakistan and established their units there. The British manufacturers were forced by circumstances to leave Kashmir. These foreigners sold their factories, but their successors could not run the factories on sound basis resulting in the reduction in production and export.

After 1947, a large number of local manufacturer got involved in carpet industry and tried to revive the industry. Among these are M/s Indo-Kashmir Co., M/s Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din & Sons and M/s Modern Carpets etc. These manufacturers tried to give a new direction to the carpet industry and original Persian designs and local designs were introduced and industry started showing the signal of revival. From 1970 onwards, due to a number of reasons, the production, exports and employment share of industry increased
gradually.\textsuperscript{15} It was due to the fact that Shah of Iran set in motion the petroleum financed era which brought about the distinct shift in Iran. The state discouraged carpet weaving due to the employment of children. Subsequently, child labour was banned and as a result the production of carpets decreased. To fill up this vacuum Kashmir carpets were found suitable as Kashmir was the only place which could produce finest quality oriental carpets comparable to Iranian carpets, in terms of design, colour, combinations, weaving texture and silk. Thus to cope with the demand for carpets, a massive carpet weaving programme was launched by the State and Centre Government Organisations. As a result the industry expanded tremendously and was geographically dispersed into the rural area of the state. The production and export of silk carpets first time, increased significantly, during this period which continued till 1980.\textsuperscript{16} From 1980 onwards the industry started facing the market depression. The value of carpet export declined from 26.80 crores in 1980-81 to Rs. 22.20 crores in 1983-84\textsuperscript{17}. The reasons for this dispersion are much more as economic resession in Europe and America. The deterioration of quality due to inadequate training to weavers, competition from other leading carpet producing countries, within the country itself Kashmir carpet facing growing competition from Mirzapur, Bhadoi carpet belt.

In addition to all these factors, the present situation of the valley is not conducive for promoting the quality of the carpets. This industry has got a tremendous setback after 1989. It is not possible either for the weavers or for the manufacturers to look after the quality of the work in this period of uncertainty.
3.2 **STRUCTURE OF THE CARPET INDUSTRY**:  

The carpet industry is mainly a household industry, requiring little investment from the family, except for a loom costing between Rs. 3000-5000. Contractors usually supply the raw material. In case of families who do not own a loom, the contractors either supports the loom or help the family to purchase it in installments. The contractor collects the finished product from the household itself, hence involving little transport cost.

Big organised factories, which were having between 25-50 looms, can hardly be seen today. Because of stringent factory and labour laws, entrepreneurs prefer to sub-contract the work into small units. The small production units have between 3 to 10 looms employing at least 3 to 6 workers per loom. A large number of looms have been dispersed into weavers' homes in the neighbouring villages and there is no attempt to conceal child labour.

Nowadays, it is mainly a cottage industry, the skill of carpet knotting being handed down from one generation to another. The small manufacturers do not have facilities for all the ancillary processes like dying, washing, finishing, packing, etc. The carpets are woven in the small sheds or in weavers' homes and then taken to main exporter/entrepreneur who has a centralised worksite for the finishing process.

The presence of industrial units within the households and in the localities and the nature of the handicraft and handloom industry (which is largely household in character - whether in family and non-family units) tends to reduce the travel distance considerably as the units may only be established just next door, thereby facilitating the employment of local children.
Most of the children work close to their residential areas. The nature of the industry being essentially household and less capital intensive, enables entrepreneurs to establish looms near the place of labour supply.

3.3 **VARIOUS PROCESSES OF THE CARPET WEAVING INDUSTRY**

Carpet weaving is a complicated activity which has to pass through different processes in the sequence as described below:

**First Stage: Raw Material**

Raw material for the carpet weaving industry consists of yarn, which may be silk, cotton, wool or rayon. The raw material stage comprises of the procurement of the yarn for manufacturing the carpets, dyeing of yarn into various assigned colours required for the carpet, making thread balls of different plys (thickness) for weaving and making of thread balls.

**Second Stage: Design Making**

Design making consists of four steps. The first is the procurement of a design. The customer, the middleman or the manufacturer may provide the design. The next step is to choose a colour-scheme for the design. The third step involves the conversion of the design into graphics or maps – what is locally known as Naksha. This is a miniature map of the carpet, which shows the pattern and the colour-combination for each woven line in the carpet. The final step is script writing or the coding of the map or naksha into carpet language known as kalbaf taleem in the local language of Kashmiri.
Third Stage: Setting up of the Loom

Fixing of the loom is followed by the fitting of a wooden frame with a thread base, locally termed as preparation of yen. A yen is a frame of strings of staple yarn of the actual size of the carpet to be woven, fixed on a wooden loom, through which a weaving is done in different patterns and colours.

Fourth Stage: Carpet Weaving

Preparation and binding of yen is followed by carpet weaving, which is a long process, taking months, sometimes years to complete and engaging three to 8 persons at a time at the loom. Weaving is a process of transferring the graphic naksha on the yen as per the kalbaf taleem format. The first process involved in weaving is that of script reading, which is the job of an expert in kalbaf taleem. The next process is that of knot making in different colours according to the instructions of language reader who is also simultaneously engaged in knot making. In the process of weaving, four types of implements (ouzars) are used, locally known as Paunja, Khoor, Kainchi (scissors) and foota (scale). Paunjas are used to pick up the vertical lines of the staple yarn in the yen and weaving through them the design with threads. Khoor is used to tie the knots. Kainchi is used for trimming the threads and smoothening the carpet surface as it is woven. Scale and Paunja are used for straightening the lines and binding them with each other to ensure compactness in weaving.

Fifth Stage: Delooming the Carpet

After the weaving is done, the carpet is taken off the loom. The staple binding the yen to the loom is cut, the wooden and thread supports are removed, the corner threads are cut and smoothened, the
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Carpet (Kalba) Taleem Format
Sixth Stage: Final Finish and Marketing

This process involves the washing and cleaning of the carpet in the factory. Washing is done with soap and detergents. The process of washing and drying takes two to three days in normal weather. This is followed by the final smoothening of the carpet, a process by which out-jutting threads and knots are removed and the carpet is given its final shape before it is packed to be marketed.

Since most of the carpets are made to order, marketing of carpets becomes an easy job. The orders may be from local customers, other states or foreign countries. Normally, these orders are placed through middlemen, who supply both the raw materials and the design.

3.4 Role of Handicraft Sector in Economic Development of J&K State:

Handicraft of Jammu and Kashmir present a fascinating spectrum of creative imagination - a romance in form of colour and design that is intimately woven into the very life pattern of people. The urge for creativeness in the Kashmiri craftsmen has something to do with the lushness of the landscape. Their creations of artwares are not merely objects of sensory delight but are an answer to the real needs of daily life. The unique representation of art wedded to utility and function delightfully blended with beauty is where our craftsmen excel and earn fame worldwide.

The range of J&K handicraft is so vast that it amazes as much as it allures, indicating the horizons to which aesthetic imagination of our craftsmen could soar. Some of these likes the shawl - that
charming piece of garment that lends immense grace to feminine form—has been admired right from the days of Mahabharata, equally well known is the art of exquisite carpet making on wool and silk. Floor coverings also includes Namdahs, Gabbas and chain stitchings made of thick wool and felled in the form of a rug. Papier mache from Kashmir make excellent souvenirs. Other handicrafts include intricate wood work, wicker work, silver ware and jewelry as well as silk fabrics and woolen fabrics, chiefly patto (tweed) and patti (milled blankets).

The glorious craft tradition of Kashmir date back to centuries before the dawn of recorded history. Its glimpses can be glimpsed in the relics of pottery and reed mats excavated at Burzaham, 14 miles south of Srinagar. From then on it has been an unabated flow of kinetic creativeness that has come down the centuries without losing its vigour and vitality.

The history of the state handicrafts has been long and interesting. One of the most glorious periods, always nostalgically referred to, has been that of king Zian-ul-Abdin (1423-1473 AD). It was he who invited talented craftsmen from central Asia and got them settled to disseminate their skills.18

This history which was also patronised by subsequent rulers, both local and imperialists, Pathans and Mughals was nourished by a continuous stream of tourists both from India and abroad has had its ups and downs.19 Under the foreign rule handicrafts of our states as well as of other states received a severe blow. The taste of the rich people in India became diverted when cheap and fragile imitation goods began to be dumped on the Indian shores. As a result of lack of patronage, the prosperous craftsmen of old Kashmir had to abandon their hereditary trade and become ordinary labourers where their
artistic skills could no longer be utilized. Thus came about a decline and fall of ancient craftsmanship – especially of shawls of Kashmir.

With the dawn of independence free India faced the formidable task of transforming a semi-starved feudalistic society into a modern democratic order. The economy that had suffered exceptional strains during the British rule further aggravated by war and partition was in shambles. Economic regeneration via revival of its traditional allies - like the handicrafts was the agonizing need of the hour. With the achievement of independence a new hope dawned on the handicraft horizon of the state. People began to display their interests in its development. Public authorities also started to patronize the industry. The central as well as the state government paid special attention for the development of this sector throughout the length and breadth of this country.

A developing country like India realizes that the growth and expansion of the small sector in India is one of the major ways to take the benefit of development to more than three-fourths of its population which lives in villages. Through this sector we can provide employment to our widely dispersed population and stop the exodus to urban areas. The policy for supporting these industries into the country's resource endowment characterised by cheap and abundant labour, and scarce capital. Next to agriculture this sector provides a major avenue to employment both in rural and urban areas on a decentralised basis. Its development helps in the wider distribution of economic activity and equitable distribution of wealth. The short gestation period and low cost of establishment are two basic factors in its favour. Another factor is the capacity of this sector to attract small savings and divert them to productive channels. During the sixth plan the development programmes were design to pay greater attention to:
a) supply of raw materials
b) design improvement
c) skill upgradation
d) production oriented marketing

The industrial sector of J&K is dominated by small scale and handicraft industries. According to the techno-economic survey (1960-61) conducted by the national council of applied economic research, New Delhi, the contribution of household sector to (consisting mainly of handicrafts) the net industrial output of the state was 53.3% against the contribution of 16.9% of similar industries in all states.

During the last two decades efforts have been made to diversify the industrial structure by encouraging investment in large scale and medium scale industries both in public and private sectors. However, such efforts have not been successful in altering the industrial structure to any significant extent and the handicraft sector continues to dominate the industrial sector of the state. The significance of the handicraft sector to the state economy could not be judged only by their income generation capacity. The other criteria to be used to judge the importance of handicraft industry should be its employment potential, contribution to exports, importance for promotion of tourism and its importance in maintaining ecological balance in the state.

In a state like J&K there is an acute problem of unemployment and underemployment. The number of job seekers as stood registered on the live register of the exchange has shown a three fold increase from 23 thousand in 1974 to 68 thousand ending in 1984 indicating annual growth rate of 20%. The department of small and handicraft
industries on an extensive scale can certainly contribute a lot in providing viable opportunities to self employment. However, one finds that in Kashmir, capital for investment in small scale industries has been shy for various techno-economic reasons – mainly because of inadequate funds, lack of entrepreneurial skills, inadequate infrastructure, power shortage and inadequate credit facilities etc. In the recent years a state Government has taken few steps to motivate industrialists from outside the state to setup large and medium size industries in the state. The setting of large scale industries in few selected areas may be well conceived. But keeping in view surplus labour, both in rural and urban areas, it would be better if labour intensive industrial activities are encouraged on a bigger scale.

At present, the handicraft industry of J&K provides employment to more than 2.70 lakhs of workmen who are engaged in different types of activities. According to 1979-80 census report of the state, 1.34 lakhs persons were employed in the handicraft sector. In 1987-88 the total level of employment recorded was 1.95 lakhs and in 1994-95 level of employment was recorded 2.70 lakhs. The capital coefficient or ratio of value of output to capital for cottage industry is quite favourable. A handicraft unit is capable of producing more output by the employment of a unit of capital.

On production front the handicraft industry has done a tremendous job. Handicraft production which was Rs. 20 crores in 1974-75 has gone upto Rs. 245 crores by the end of 1994-95. Thus the industry has witnessed more than twelfth time increase in the production within a period of 20 years.

The handicrafts of J&K are also very important from export point of view. They are playing an increasing role, in the foreign exchange earnings of the country. The export in 1974-75 which were
just Rs. 7.50 crores increased to Rs. 111.68 crores in 1994-95\textsuperscript{24}. Thus export has increased not in terms of value but also in terms of percentage of total production. The rate of increase in export was steady up to the end of 1980-81 (Rs. 39.92 crores) but it decline Rs. 33.91 in 1984-85, after that it once again start rising up to 1989-90, but in 1990-91 export was recorded 34.60 crores, but afterwards, it increased considerably in subsequent years. Main reason for this downfall was the declining of carpet export which was experiencing tough competition from Pakistan and China. The handicraft board ably supported by the Government of J&K state took vigorous steps to boost the handicraft sector of the economy.

There is practically no scope for large-scale pollution oriented industrialization in the valley due to the dangerous threat that this type of industrialisation poses to the prized scenic beauty of the valley. The tourism and tourist based industries particularly the Handicraft have enough potential in the valley and it is advisable to consolidate here and not go for economically no-viable pollution creating industries.

The handicraft sector can thus play a significant role in enriching the industrial structure of the state provided it is accorded sufficient attention to scientific line. Some of the major problems confronted by this sector are non-availability of adequate supply of raw materials, problems of evolving new designs to suit the varied tastes of the consumers, high cost of production lack of skilled manpower and lack of dependable marketing outlets.
3.5 SHARE OF CARPET INDUSTRY IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF J&K:

In Kashmir valley five types of carpets are manufactured viz.

1) Woolen carpet with 90% wool and 10% cotton
2) Woolen carpet with silk touch are produced with 10% to 15% of silk, 75-80% wool and 10% cotton
3) Woolen carpets with silk base comprising of 30-40% Silk, 50-60% wool and 10% cotton
4) Silk carpets with cotton warp are produced with 90% Silk and 10% cotton and
5) Silk carpets with 100% silk.

It is observed that all types of carpets excluding silk carpets are produced from a mixture of raw materials. Whereas woolen carpet has pile thickness of 1/2 inch, a silk carpet has a pile thickness of only 1/6-inch. Inspite of these silk carpets are of greater demand in the foreign markets because of their durability. Unfortunately the supply of silk carpets is falling short of demand due to inadequate supply of yarn.

The carpet industry in the valley started flourishing from 1960 onwards, but the real boost to this industry was provided in 1970s mainly due to increased demand in the international carpet market and lack of stiff competition from the traditional carpet producing nations like Iran and Pakistan.

During the 1973 when first systematic survey was conducted the production of carpets in the valley was recorded at Rs. 208.45 lakhs. This figure was estimated by the industrial development services to increase to Rs. 1000 lakhs in 1978-79 and the actual production this year nearly touched the estimated figure, production was of order of Rs. 952.81 lakhs. Thus the production of carpets increased by Rs.
744.36 lakhs in a time span of six years. It was seen that by the end of the year 1979, 90% of the total production was diverted towards foreign markets. In 1980-81, 29 massive training centres mushroomed to train another fresh group of 270 persons. As a result of this the production of carpets rose to 19.04 crores in the same year whereas in 1993-94 number of training centres rose to 524 which trained 7875 persons thereby increasing the production of carpets to 213.36 crores. Since then there has been a steady increase in the production of carpets.

Thus we see that Kashmir has been gifted with artisans capable of producing carpets of high quality with Iran withdrawing from world carpet market. India has a chance to be leading supplier with major contribution coming from the valley.

The main markets of Kashmir carpets are West Germany, Switzerland, France, UK and Australia, which together account for 75% of our total export. Another 20% of total export goes to Denmark, Belgium, Japan, USA, Italy, Sweden, the remaining 5% are exported to the rest of the world. The production of carpets has witnessed an enormous growth from mid-seventies. The performance of carpet industry on export front also witnessed a similar trend, since more than 90% of the total produce of carpets is diverted towards the foreign markets, the export of carpets increased from Rs. 1.06 crore in 1974-75 to 26.96 crores in 1979-80 and further 138.47 crores in 1992-93 (clearly highest among all crafts). However, it starts falling in subsequent years due to turmoil in valley. As a result in 1994-95 export of carpet was recorded 42.26 crores.

The fact that in the reference period carpets alone amounted to Rs. 138.47 out of the total exports of Rs. 213.36 crores in 1992-93 of
the Handicraft sector, speaks volume of its contribution to the state in terms of exports.²⁹

West Germany has been the most significant buyer of Kashmir carpets. Since there is decline trend in the export of Iranian carpets (due to massive industrialization of Iran) the supply constraints from Iran to the global markets provided a chance to Kashmiri carpet exporters to increase their exports. The carpet industry has a long history in providing employment to number of artisans. During the period of 30 years (1974-75 to 1994-95) it has been observed that there has been a tremendous growth in the production as well as employment generation in the carpet industry. So much so that carpet industry alone employed more than 86% out of the total work force in all the handicraft units/crafts during the reference period of 30 years. In 1974-75, the total number of workers engaged in the carpet industry were 0.64 lakhs. This increased to 0.76 lakhs in 1993-94 and 0.79 lakhs in 1994-95.³⁰

Although Kashmiri craftsmen are producing high quality carpets of Persian designs they are facing stiff competition mainly from Pakistan. The Government of Pakistan has launched number of schemes to increase the carpet production and thereby exports of both woollen as well as silk carpets.

The state Government is discouraging the production of stapple carpets, which have brought a bad name in the foreign markets and has issued notices to carpet manufacturers for stopping production of stapple carpets in Kashmir. To encourage the manufacturer and exporters of handicrafts, especially carpets, it is proposed to give interest subsidy on each credit/term loan availed by such manufacturers and exporters from financial institutions to the extent of 50% for a period of 5 years. However, this facility will be
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*P* Production * Number in lakhs

*Emp Employment * (Rs. in Crores)
\[ TABLE - 3.2 \]

CRAFT-WISE DIRECT EXPORT OF HANDICRAFT ITEMS  
Value of Export (Rs. in Crores)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Carpet</th>
<th>Namda</th>
<th>Crewel embroidery</th>
<th>Wood carving</th>
<th>Papier Mache</th>
<th>Fur &amp; Leather</th>
<th>Chain Stitch</th>
<th>Woolen Shawls</th>
<th>Other Handicrafts goods</th>
<th>Total</th>
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Source: Digest of Statistics 1994-95, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Planning & Development Department, (Government of J&K
restricted to small and medium handicraft manufacturers whose outstanding limits does not exceed Rs. 3 lakhs. An amount of Rs. 20 lakhs is proposed to be earmarked annually for this product.

**Problems Faced By Carpet Industry:**

The Carpet trade, which used to fetch livelihood to millions of Kashmiri, is in shambles and the people associated with it are on the brink of starvation. In every business ups and downs are part of the game. But for the carpet industry its upswing became the cause of its destruction and the apathy is such that no one from the Government side is paying any heed to save this industry from going haywire. It seems that this old age trade will soon become a dream.

Ironically while the state Government is trying hard to investors of other states to invest in Jammu and Kashmir in order to build up economy and to give new impetus to industrial sector, in its back drop Kashmir’s old age industry is going from bad to worse day after day. The Government’s ‘insensible’ attitude is adding to woes of the artisans and their future seems bleak in this scenario. ‘For the last 50 years Government has not paid any attention to preserve and expand this old age industry and due to its insensible attitude the fate of this trade looks bleak’.

According to statistics available the export of Kashmir carpets to foreign countries is estimated at Rs. 250 crores per annum, out of which the share of staple and woolen carpets is Rs. 18 crores. The Rs. 232 crores is the share of carpets made from silk.

The carpet industry is dogged by many problems and each problem gets multiplied when the people at the helm of affairs are reluctant to help the industry to come out from this lean patch. The artisans who are engaged with this trade for three decades are shifting
to their ventures in order to earn their livelihood. These people who were once living decently are now either working as labourers, auto drivers or bus conductors.

The major problem faced by the carpet manufacturers is of raw materials like silk yarn which has become so costly that it is hard for them to buy it on exorbitant rates. The silk yarn till May 1997 used to cost Rs. 750 kg per kg, but now it is Rs. 1400 per kg and the tragedy is that the finished carpet rate is the same as it was prior to May 1997. Now, those who have stock of the carpets want to sell them below cost price in order to get money because they want to wind up this business once for all.

According to ‘President J&K carpet manufacturers association’, that down swing of the carpet industry started during the time of UF Government led by H.D. Deve Gowda. The silk yarn, which comes from Karnataka, was opened up to export market. Silk manufacturers of Karnataka in turn export all the good quality silk yarn to foreign countries at whooping rates. The inferior quality silk yarn is being transported to Kashmir and sold at a very high rate.

The ‘carpets’ of Kashmir which is famous throughout the world for its craftsmanship and marvelous design enjoys peak periods from 1947-60, during these periods the carpets were made up of the wool popularly known as Newzealand woolen tops. This type of carpet became very popular because of beautiful finish and cost effectiveness. Kashmiri were very enjoying monopoly of this craft. But it was Government who was wholly solely responsible for breaking this monopoly while turning some artisans and asked them to train other artisans of other states. In this way monopoly enjoyed by Kashmiri was diluted. This is the main factor responsible for shifting of artisans to staples and silk yarn. This shift also helped Government
to earn foreign exchange in abundance as the export graph went up day after day.

Though the carpet industry started facing problems and resultant down swing in late sixties and darkness phase of this trade started since 1989. The dealers and exporters who used to operate from Kashmir valley shifted to Delhi. These handfuls of dealers in Delhi exploit the artisan in such a way that they are compelled to sell their finished products below the cost price. No one from Government side dares to raise voice against such exploitation. Now in order to save this old age industry, it is the need of the hour to solve the problems of artisans. It is only Government who, if comes forward, can get around to these problems and thus bring artisans/manufacturers out from the cubby holes, who are engulfed in the depth of desperation.

Namdah:

A cozy and colorful hand-made felt rug that makes excellent and rather inexpensive flooring for winter is the Kashmir Namdah. Introduced into Kashmir from Yarkand and only a century or so ago, this Rug is made of pressed wool, or wool and cotton felted in definite proportion – 33:67, 40:60, 50:50 and 100% wool. Namdah is available generally in the sizes of 3’ x 5’, 6’ x 4’ while rugs to desire specifications are also made to order. The Government has clamped a perfect quality check on production of such rugs and nothing unlabelled as such by the Directorate of Handicrafts can be exported out of J&K. Namdah worth Rs. 282 have been exported during 1993-94. The rug has found the domestic market as well as and is hoped to do good in the years to come. Production is estimated to have touched 3.8 crores during the 1994-95.
Employment level has also reached to 0.062 lakhs during the same period. Traders have been drawing inferences for good future of the felt export.

**Crewel Embroidery:**

The crewel embroidery done in Thick woolen yarn or hand woven cloth by a pointed hook or crochet, provide us very dazzling and durable material for drapes and upholstries. This craft is said to have been introduced into Kashmir in the 23rd country by the Syrian traders. Crewel embroidery material is quite popular in exports markets as is revealed by the trend from 1974-75 to 1981-82. During which period export went upto Rs. 1.26 crores to Rs. 253 crores and production picked up from Rs. 1.3 crores to Rs. 4.92 crores. The Mercury in exports went down in 1994-95 to just Rs. 1.04 lakhs, but the production increased to Rs. 13.67 crores. Thereby pointing to have picked up domestic market. Estimates show that 0.31 lakh artisans engaged with this crochet done embroidery.

**Wood Carving:**

Rooted deep in the folk tradition, woodwork is a craft in which creativity of the Kashmir craftsman has found an unrestricted expression. A variety of Articles, of an immense appeal and functional efficiency like bowls, trays, tables, chairs, wine cabinets, bed steeds and other bigger items of furniture and crafted to walnut wood in tune with the consumer preferences. Our wood carving units, which are certainly capable of a better marketing performance, however suffer, for want of a wood seasoning plant as a common facility. Up coming trend in exports from Rs. 1.69 crores in 1984-85 to Rs. 9.25 crores in 1994-95 in a welcome sign for still better future,
in the years ahead. There are 0.72 lakh wood carvers doing their best for keeping tradition vibrant with vitality.

**Papier Mache:**

A highly popular craft practiced and purchased in Kashmir today is the Papier Mache, representing a rich tradition of workmanship dating back to the reign of Zainul Abidin Budshah (1420-1470 AD). The Genesis of the growth is reflected in Kari-qalam dani, for it was initially confined to ornamentation of Pen cases and book jackets. Over the Centuries, the craft has recorded a great perfection and today an alluring range of poignant products that Suits almost every purse and preference is available from the artisan. This includes flower-vases, wall plaques, bowls, trays and boxes of different shapes and sizes, bangles, mirror cases, caskets, lamp bases and Screens. In the dexterous making of Papier mache objects, the important process involved those of preparation of moulds, use of pulp, application of colours and designing among the ubiquitous designs are gulanergul (flower in flower), hazara (the thousand flowers) and gull vilayat (the dear flower). More proficient artisans even render miniature Mughal printings in Papier mache, creating art objects of rather an unsurpassed value. In costlier products, gold powder is used to emblish elegance of the painted object. Till recently Papier Mache was an exclusive preserve of the male artisan, and Govt.'s promotional efforts, the craft is today practiced today by talented young girls in their large numbers.

Papier Mache objects have attracted buyers in France in particular and other western countries in general. During 1980-81 the exports were to the tune of Rs. 1.85 crores only whereas in 1994-95 these have gone up to Rs. 13.76 crores, and the same time production
and employment have also increased considerably during these periods. Papier-Mache employs about 0.07 lakh craftsman.

**Chain Stitch:**

The chain Stitch is rather an innovation introduced in the realm of Kashmir floorings. At the same time it is to-in-one being used as wall hanging besides to cover the floor. The technique as the name indicates is that of a continued stitch (by a hook). Hessain or hand woven cloth from the base on which embroidery is done in floral and figurative (both human and animal) patterns. The design are traced by a Naqash (Designer) while the Jalakduz (Seamster) embroiders in two ply and three ply yarn; silk yarn being used for a better quality. Chain has comparatively done better on export front and gone up to Rs. 280 lakhs in 1993-94. During 1994-95 some unforeseen problems have impeded the pace it was going with and slashed it down to Rs. 245 lakhs only. The estimated production during 1994-95 was 2.60 crores. The craft is presently providing livelihood to over 0.05 lakh artisans.

**Shawls:**

Like most of other crafts, the shawl is believed to be indigenous to Kashmir. Some writers opine that the textile industry in Kashmir, including that of weaving dates back to the early neolithic age, that is more than 3,000 years B.C. whatever the actual truth, the fact remains that Kashmir shawl has of ages been a cherished acquisition. It adorned the Caeser’s court and was looked upon by Mughals and the later Nawabs as a mark of nobility. The Kashmir shawl, by way of techniques is of two main types – the loom woven and the kanishawl and the needle embroidered or sozni shawl. Kani is the Kashmir name for a spool and Kashmiri shawl is woven on the
loom with wefts of the patterned section inserted through wooden spools. A weaving is meticulously regulated by a coded pattern, known as taleem drawn by the Naqash – the pattern drawer for guidance of the weaver. The needle wrought design and the shawl, called Aml Kari or the Sozen Kari was introduced during Afghan rule by an accomplished Kashmiri craftsman Hameed Ali Baba. The embroidery, however, is exquisite and is done in a variety of designs, mainly floral. Badam, or the almond with subtle stylisation often forms the dominant motif which sprang of local flowers and the chinar leaf etc. also recur in embroidery patterns. Other types of the Kashmiri shawl are hook embroidered and generally cater to a relatively lower purse. The finest shawls are those of Pashmina and the Shahtoosh, a super soft variety called “The king of wool”. The under fleece of a mountain goat (with habitat in Laddakh and Central Asia) shed by it on high altitudes during wintry months is used in making of such shawls.

Kashmir shawl which has once taken the whole of Europe by storm are now mostly sold in domestic markets. Of the Rs. 10.07 crore worth woolen shawls produced during 1981-82, the value of exports was Rs. 1.75 crores. Though shawl exports have again started to pick up, exports in 1994-95 have reached to the level of Rs. 26.12 crores and the employment has touched the figure of 0.7 lakh. The estimated production has come up to Rs. 27.61 crores during 1994-95 whereas it was 6.53 crores in 1974-75.

Handicraft sector has great employment potential, provided it is harnessed in the right direction. Most of the handicrafts are labour intensive and can be developed as subsidiary occupations. However, few systematic attempts have been made to explore the employment potentials of Kashmir handicrafts. As per the official estimates
handicraft sector provides employment to more than 2 lakh workers.\(^3\)
Till recently the handicrafts sector was concentrated in Srinagar municipality and its suburbs, but of late, craft has been spread to various rural and urban areas too. This has resulted in employment generation in rural and urban areas for both literate and illiterate persons. By the end of December, 1978 there were 2856 handicraft centres and 10853 handloom units existing in the valley. These employed 91941 lakhs and 17569 workers respectively.\(^3\)

These estimates include child labour, which comprised 24.3% of the total handicraft workforce. According to the 1978-79 handicraft census conducted by Directorate of handicrafts 72.22% of workers are in the age group of 15 and above.\(^4\)
Kashmir Carpets – One of the most coveted floorings in the world

Tree of life/gamladar design

Modified version of Khurasan design
Kashan design with Isfahan touch

A sales outlet
Kashmir Wood Carving: For immense aesthetic appeal and functional efficiency

Office screen

A writing desk – accommodating books as well
Dexterously carved walnut box

Fruit bowl

Bowl

Dexterously carved walnut box
Kashmir Shawls – The most cherished acquisition in the world

Shawls of different motifs – flower design, almong design and leaf design
Kashmiri women combing and spinning shah-Toosh

Shahtoosh shawls, the warmest fabric in the world, yet so resilient that it can pass through a ring

Antelope – the source of shah-Toosh
Kashmir Papier Mache

One of the most precious ornaments in the world
Shawl Tarah motif on flower vase

A Papier Mache fruit bowl
Tray-called majma in local parlance

Powder boxes of different shapes
Kashmiri Namdah – An excellent and inexpensive flooring for winter

Namdhas – a cosy and colourful flooring
Namdhals hanged in open for drying after washing
Chain Stitch: For exquisite wall hangings and floorings
Artisans stitching almond design on canvas

A chain stitch rug, growing export commodity
Crewel Embroidery: Wonderful items for drapes and upholsteries

Two most ubiquitous designs in crewel embroidery: the almond and flower.
REFERENCES


2. Ibid.

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5. Ibid. P. 5.


15. Ibid, P. 14.


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30. Ibid.


33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
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