

CULTURAL HERITAGE OF KASHMIR: A MYSTICAL BLEND OF DIVERSITY

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Abstract:

Kashmir's culture is a mash-up of customs from India's northern states, Pakistan's northwestern provinces, and China's Aksai Chin region. The former state has a diverse religious community, which is why Kashmir is known for its cultural legacy, which includes Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, and Buddhist people who contribute to the beauty of Kashmir and have brought about numerous changes in living styles. There are several cultures in Kashmir, and each one is admired by both Kashmiris and non-Kashmirians. The dining culture of Kashmir, known as 'Wazwan,' is a hot issue that everyone wants to discuss. Wazwan is a Central Asian and Persian culture that arrived in Kashmir. The Valley of Kashmir, also known as the Paradise on Earth, is predominantly surrounded by sky-kissed and snow-capped mountains, lush green forests, and exquisite waterfalls, all of which attract people from different walks of life. This research is a small attempt to divulge several key myths about Kashmiri culture, as well as to examine the issues and preservation of the cultural heritage.

Key words: Kashmir, culture, wazwan, handicraft, pheran, etc

Research Objectives:

- To study the early history of culture of kasmir
- To study the mystical blend of culture of kashmir.
- To study the Arduousness of artisans to promote and preserve the cultural heritage of Kashmir.
- To Study the problems of cultural art in Kashmir.

- To study some prime majors to preserve the cultural heritage of Kashmir.

Methodology:

The present study is based on the qualitative data collection method. Both primary and secondary sources of data are been used. A Direct personal investigation and extensive literature survey has been done. Primary data include interviews, questionnaires, observations, and case studies, etc. Secondary data including books, Reports, research papers, newspapers, magazines, and websites has been used for the purpose of study.

Introduction:

Jammu and Kashmir is an Indian state located in the northern Himalayas. Kashmiri apple, Kashmiri saffron, and Kashmiri wazwan are famous all over the world for their ethnic/heritage and region-specific delicacies. Jammu and Kashmir's ethnic and region-specific delicacies have made a name for themselves in both international and domestic markets. The Kashmir valley is known around the world for its natural beauty as well as its cultural diversity. Kashmir is characterised as an old territory with its own ethnicity, character, language, dress, customs, rituals, and cultural history. The culture of India's Kashmir valley is broad, colourful, and multifaceted. The Kashmir valley is a spectacular mixture of many ethnic groups and social units, an amalgamation of countless civilizations that have inhabited the Kashmir valley at various times and left their mark on Kashmir's culture. Kashmir has been at the crossroads of numerous civilizations and religions for the past 5,000 years of its history. Chinese, Indian, Central Asian, and Persian civilizations and cultures have all had an impact on Kashmir. Kashmir is considered to have strong cultural linkages with China, Tibet, Central Asian cities, Afghanistan, and Iran . All of these causes have played a significant role in the formation and development of modern-day Kashmiri culture.

The Kashmir valley, nestled in the foothills of the majestic Himalayan mountains, is known for its rich culture as well as its scenic splendour. Despite the religious divisions between Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and Christians, the population is largely homogeneous. Their coexistence reflects Kashmir as a melting pot of diverse communities who bring colour and fragrance to each other's lives via humanism, secularism, tolerance, peace, and harmony.

The prepossessing people of Kashmir represent the vivid culture and tradition of the region. They are known for being hospitable, God-fearing, and humble.

Kashmiri, their native tongue, is essential to their cultural identity. The sole Indian language that belongs to the Dardic group of Central Asian languages, this vernacular holds a unique position among the Modern Indo-Aryan languages. Kashmiri is a lovely and multi-layered system of expression, with terms adopted and absorbed from a variety of other languages, resulting in a vast vocabulary. Kashmiri literature holds a special place in Indian literature because it preserves the political, economic, and linguistic characteristics of Kashmir.

Handicrafts are the inhabitants of Kashmir's traditional occupation, and there are many buildings with considerable architectural heritage. Carpets, shawls, and other delicate and exquisite tapestries have brought international acclaim to the region's artisans. Wood carvings and ceilings are prized for their beauty, while needlework and papier mâché are well-known worldwide. The cultural whirlwind of influences of Central Asian styles and themes is best reflected in papier mâché. On the world-famous Dal Lake, exquisitely decorated traditional small wooden boats known as Shikaras and house boats are equally acclaimed cultural icons. Many local craftspeople get inspiration from Kashmir's stunning scenery. However, the impact of intermediaries between artists and art lovers, who take a cut of the commissions, leaving the artist with a little portion of the true value of their work, is jeopardising this dynamic cultural heritage. This process has had a significant impact on the thinking of craftsmen and women who have been compelled to relinquish traditional and generational skills in order to acquire better paid jobs. Because it was difficult to bring in things from outside in the past, the area's seclusion aided local craftsmen. As access has improved, new designs are now accessible at lower prices. The creative industries have been gradually declining as a result of this, as well as apathy among the younger generation, who are mostly disinterested in spending lengthy, boring hours studying a talent. Furthermore, the fighting in Kashmir has wreaked havoc on the commercial sector. Communities have grown tired of business and have gravitated toward the safety of government work. However, with the assistance of the local administration, efforts are being undertaken to restore Kashmiri art. Kashmiris are cuisine connoisseurs. Their ultimate formal dinner is a royal cuisine consisting of 36 courses, 15 to 30 of which are meat dishes prepared overnight by expert chefs. Kashmiri cuisine has been inspired by the numerous meals of successive kings and tourists who arrived from Persia, Afghanistan, and other parts of the world over the centuries. Guests are seated in groups of four and share their

meal from a single huge metal dish at these feasts. Tea is consumed in large quantities. Nun Chai (salty tea) and Kehwa (saffron tea with almonds) are two of the most popular beverages. Saffron, apple, and other dry fruits such as walnut and almond are also popular in Kashmir. Kashmiris enjoy music in its different forms, such as sufi music and 'chakar.' The men execute the 'Dumhal' dance, while the women do a unique folk dance known as 'Rouff.' Other entertainments peculiar to Kashmir in terms of form and structure include 'Band Pather' (Folk Theatre) and 'Ladi Shah' (the national chronicler). Local attire lends extra uniqueness to Kashmiri culture while the lovely green woodlands radiate the feeling of peace. Men wear a 'Khan dress' or Pathani suit with a skull cap, while women wear a 'Pheran' (a knee-length, loose cloak style) and a 'Shalwar' with traditional 'Kasaba' (headgear). The term 'Pheran' refers to a type of clothing worn by everyone (men, women and children). During the bitterly cold winters, a 'Kangri' (fire kettle) with heated embers keeps them warm.

Early history of kashmiri culture:

The spoken language, written literature, cuisine, architecture, traditions, and history of the Kashmiri people, who live in the northern section of the Indian subcontinent, are all part of Kashmiri culture. After the Islamic takeover of Kashmir, the Persian and Central Asian cultures affected Kashmir's culture. Hinduism, Buddhism, and subsequently Islam have all had a strong influence on Kashmiri culture.

Kashmir fostered Vedic art and culture, and some of the first Vedic hymns were written there. The Bharata Natya Shastra is an ancient encyclopaedic treatise on the arts that began in Kashmir and has inspired dance, music, and literary traditions in Indian culture. Around Kashmir, Patanjali produced his Yoga compendium in the second century BC. Kashmir is also where the Panchatantra is claimed to have originated. All Buddhist literature created in Kashmir was in Sanskrit at a time when Pali was the primary language for Buddhist literature in the rest of India. Kashmiri women have a high social rank; according to Bilhana, Kashmiri women were fluent in both Sanskrit and Pali. Kosh Shastra, the second most important text on sex science after Kamasutra, was developed in Kashmir. Vigyan Bharai Tantra, Yoga Sutras, Sapndi Karkika, Tantra Loka, Para-Trisika-Vivarana, and many other key books originated in Kashmir.

Rice has been the primary food of Kashmiris since ancient times. Meat is the most popular food in Kashmir, along with rice. Kashmiris are ardent meat eaters. Despite being Brahmins, the majority of Kashmiri Hindus consume meat. Noon Chai or Sheer Chai, as well as Kahwah or Kehew, are popular Kashmiri beverages.

The Kashmir Valley is well-known for its bread culture. Bakers sell a variety of golden brown crusted loaves sprinkled with sesame and poppy seeds. Tsot and tsochvor are little circular breads covered with poppy and sesame seeds that are crisp and laky. Other popular foods include sheermal, baqerkhayn (puff pastry), lavas (unleavened bread), and kulcha. Butter is served with girdas and lavas. In Kashmiri cuisine, bakerkhani holds a particular significance. It looks like a spherical naan, but it's crispier, more layered, and topped with sesame seeds. It's often served hot for breakfast.

Kashmiri, also known as Koshur, is a Dardic Indo-Aryan language spoken by around 7 million Kashmiris, mostly in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. Speakers can also be found in areas of the Pakistani territory of Kashmir. Koshur, Dogri, Hindi-Urdu, and English are the official languages of Jammu and Kashmir. Kashmiri is a state-recognized regional language, as well as one of India's 22 scheduled languages. Ergativity and the uncommon order have been split in Kashmiri. Although Kashmiri was previously written in the Sharda script, it is no longer widely used outside of Kashmiri Pandit religious rites. It is now written in Devanagari and Perso-Arabic scripts (with some modifications). The Jammu and Kashmir government, as well as the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture, and Languages, acknowledge the Perso-Arabic script as the official script of Kashmiri.

The Perso-Arabic script has come to be linked with Kashmiri Muslims, whilst the Devanagari script has become associated with Kashmiri Hindus.

Some Major cultures that we observe in the valley are:

Valley Of Saints

Kashmir is renowned as the Valley of Saints and Sufis because there are so many of them, and their teachings are espoused by many, including Kashmir's youth. By bringing the people of Kashmir to Islam, these Saints have led them down the path to peace and prosperity. They have faced enormous difficulties along the way, but their patience and sacrifice have enabled them to overcome them.

Kashmiri cuisine.

Our Valley is known for its delectable cuisine, which includes both vegetarian and non-vegetarian options. Kashmiri cuisine is a distinct and inextricably linked part of Kashmiri culture. It includes seven to 36 mutton or beef, chicken, fruit, and vegetable dishes. Wazwan's significant ethnic meat products include kabab, tabak maaz, aab gosh, rogan josh, nate-yakhni, rista, and goshtaba; all of these meals are made with fresh Kashmiri veggies. Desserts include Sevian, Phirni, Gajar ka Halwa, and others. The enticing flavour, texture, and palatability attributes of Kashmiri wazwan ethnic meat items have made them popular. Traditional knowledge of these ethnic meat products in other dimensions, on the other hand, is not well documented. Due to the ever-increasing demand for ethnic/heritage meat products as a result of rapid urbanisation and industrialisation, significant efforts are required to accommodate such rising demands. Furthermore, due of their popularity, there is a huge possibility for them to be introduced at the national level and promoted for export.

Costumes:

The Kashmiri people's attire is vibrant and appealing. The majority of people dress in traditional garb, and ladies accessorise with beautiful jewellery such as nose rings, bangles, earrings, necklaces, and loose salwar kamiz, which keep them cool throughout the summer. Men, on the other hand, wear kurta pyjamas, shalwars, gurabi, and skullcaps. Pheran is a winter overcoat worn by Kashmiris that is embellished with bright patches and embroidery work.

The majority of Kashmiri people's outfits are flowy gowns that vary in quality of fabric depending on the weather. The majority of the men wear headgear, and the majority of the ladies wear a skullcap. In order to show respect to strangers and elders, the majority of the women cover their heads and shoulders. The Kashmiri outfit reflects their culture and way of life. It also demonstrates that India retains its cultural values.

Handicrafts:

Kashmiri handicrafts are products that are made, crafted, and decorated by hand by Kashmiri people and artisans. Srinagar, Ganderbal, and Budgam are the three main districts in central Kashmir that have long produced handicrafts. The rest of the district's districts, such as Srinagar, Ganderbal, and Budgam, are well renowned for their cultural history, which extends to the handicraft sector in India's union territory

of Jammu and Kashmir. Kashmiri artistry with Palkis, bedsheets, trunks, inkstands, boxes, and spoons was well-known throughout India.

In addition, the shawl-making was amazing. Kashmiris typically manufacture a variety of handcraft products using simple things and materials. Textiles, carpets and rugs, crewel needlework, phool kari, silverware, woodwork, and papier-mâché are only a few examples.

Dance And Music:

Kashmir has a unique form of music and dancing that is truly fantastic. Every festival includes dance and music, which is a huge draw not just for visitors but also for locals. The dancers dress up in colourful costumes, facemasks, and robes and perform a ceremonial dance known as "Roaf" in the area. Meanwhile, Rabaab, Wanwun, and Ghazals are popular among Kashmiris.

Festivals in Kashmir: Kashmiris celebrate festivals with excitement and zeal. J&K has a diverse cultural background. Baisakhi, Lohri, Diwali, Eid ul fitr, Zuha, Hemis, Sindhu darshan, domoche, and other notable holidays include Baisakhi, Lohri, Diwali, Eid ul fitr, and Zuha, Hemis, Sindhu darshan, domoche, and others. When a big number of people congregate to participate in various events, communal harmony is usually maintained. Most festivals are celebrated with fervour and zest among the people here, regardless of religious differences.

Problem :

The famous heritage sites are not properly maintained and people are also not in thought of preserving these heritages at all. With the thought of government property they damage the same. so, government should take action for that act.

The handicraft artisans are not paid according to their work. They are paid less to feed their family as a result the handicraft system is on the death bed.

Kashmiri language is dying day by day due to western influence in the society. No attention is paid towards our mother tongue. Students are advised to speak in English or Urdu only, no mother tongue is allowed in the schools which led to its death because due to this the new generations will be unknown about their mother language. so effort is needed to make a strong focus on the kashmiri language.

Preservation:

The Governor has signed the Jammu and Kashmir Heritage Conservation and Preservation Act, which was enacted by the state legislature. The new act, which was enacted under Section 7, intends to ensure the conservation and preservation of tangible and intangible heritage.

The security situation has had a significant impact on the culture of the people who live in this beautiful area. The armed war has resulted in societal instability, disorganization, deterioration of physical and mental health, mass psychological distress, and cultural aggressiveness since 1989. Kashmiris, on the other hand, attempt to carry on with their lives while maintaining their traditions and personalities. Despite the difficulties of living in a war zone, as well as the impact of globalization, which has resulted in the abandonment of traditional values, particularly in urban areas, numerous efforts are being made to conserve Kashmiri practices, be they language or any other art form. Kashmiri is currently a required subject in the school curriculum, thanks to efforts to preserve the language. Parents who are pleased of their children's ability to communicate in English or Urdu are now eager to instill in them an interest in their mother tongue as well. Kashmir may rise anew as a result of this new ray of optimism.

Conclusion:

Kashmiri culture is also being researched through mythology, and it is gradually taking shape in Young Adult Literature. These modern authors employ the legendary framework in its entirety, including historical settings, mythical figures, and themes. It has a vast epic storey framework built into it. We may conserve our cultural history by employing various modern tools such as digital libraries. Parents must play a critical role in the preservation of the language. If the government does not take significant efforts to protect heritage sites, the day will come when Kashmiri culture would only be heard via literature. The cultural legacy of Kashmir is steadily vanishing due to the neglect of both the people and the administration. The usage of a digital library to market willow wicker goods is a great way to get the word out about these items. Online shopping has become a multibillion-dollar industry. Customers shop on websites such as Homeshop18 (www.homeshop18.com), Snapdeal (www.snapdeal.com), and others from all over the world. Lane Venture (www.laneventure.com) is a superb example of a company that sells furniture, including wicker goods, all over the world and displays its products nicely by distributing catalogues online. Such activities can be

useful to our heritage if they are carried out locally. All participants in this art form, as well as people who appreciate their culture, must make similar sacrifices. This will provide them access to a worldwide market, helping them to keep their culture alive for a long time. With the advent of the internet as a new medium, there is a pressing need to educate the minds of a conscious race in order to demonstrate our rich history, heritage, and crafts to the rest of the world.

As Emperor Jahangir rightly said about my homeland:

"If there's a paradise on Earth

It is this, it is this, it is this."

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