Crafts of Cholistan (Bahawalpur Punjab Pakistan)

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Abstract- Cholistan is locally known as Rohi. This famous desert is 30 km from Bahawalpur. East of Bahawalpur is the Cholistan Desert which covers an area of about 15,000 km² and extends into the Thar Desert of India. The region was once watered by the Hakra River, known as the Saravati in vedic times. At one time there were 400 forts in the area and archaeological finds around the Derawar Fort, the only place with a perennial waterhole, indicate that it was contemporaneous with the Indus Valley Civilization. The average annual rainfall is only 12 cm, and the area's scant cultivation is made possible by underground wells, drawn up by camels. The water is stored in troughs, built by the tribes, between sandhills and dune waterholes called tobias. The people are racially similar to those in the Punjab, and are mostly Punjabi and Urdu speaking. Most local people speak Seraiki, but Punjabi and Urdu are also widely spoken. Bahawalpur is a cotton growing region hence a large number cotton based products are being manufactured here. One of the main features of Cholistani Crafts is that bright and attractive colours are used irrespective of the area in which these are produced. The 'Khais' woven cloth, "Rilly" patchwork, "Zari" thread embroidery are some good examples of Cholistani Craft. It may be mentioned that cotton textiles have always been a hallmark of craft of Indus valley civilization. Various kinds of khaddar-cloth are made for local consumption, and fine khaddar bedclothes and coarse lungies are woven here. A beautiful cloth called Sufi is also woven of silk and cotton, or with cotton wrap and silk wool.

Now I come to the crafts of Cholistan an art which comes into being due to necessity, the residents of the outskirts area of Cholistan work day and night to fulfill their needs, but even in these necessities the element of creativity is found their choice of colours and design is not less than a veteran artist. The most of the requisite items are crafts and a variety of crafts are being manufactured by them at home. The known Crafts of Bahawalpur region are Elaborately embroidered shoes locally known as "Khussa", "Cholistani Hand Fans", "Carpets", "Lady suits (block prints with vegetable dyes)", "Bed Sheets (block prints with vegetable dyes)","Crinkles (cross stich and bnasi stich)", "Towels", table mats ladies and gents kurty, cushions table sheets, ladies suits (Zardozi, tarkashi and thread embroidery). Scarves, cotton men's wear, hand made shoes, women's wear (block print and sussi). Crelished (with Gita work) pillow covers (with wool thread embroidery having traditional motifs), bed sheets (traditional Ralli pattern in traditional colours and styles), a wide range of choli and ghagra (tic and die). Bahawalpur is also famous for pottery made of clay found in these areas. These wrought by the inherent skill of artisans into paper-thin pottery noted for its elegance, delicacy of design and decorative pattern painted there on. Dried date tree leaves, Basket work include stripped date leaves woven by skilled craftsmen to produce article of utility such as basket, handbags, ladies bags, mats etc., in elegant design decorated with traditional pattern which make these article coveted owing of their exquisite craftsmanship. The handicrafts made of dried date tree leaves are very famous among the tourists and local residents. The golden hands of craftsman use different sticks of plant materials to twist and turn them in such a way to shape it like baskets and seaters which look beautiful as well as have utilization process. The design and bright colours of these crafts reflect the art taking birth and associated with this soil to great extent, displaying the growing plants and trees, wild bushes, flowers, birds, hand fans rug, khais etc. This factor can be observed. These Cholistani bright colours sometimes refer to the scorching sunshine to Cholistan desert sometimes of the cool sand and at other times.

I. INTRODUCTION

Now let's review the crafts of Cholistan.

Khussa:

Khussa is the Hall-mark of the craft of Bahawalpur Cholistan, the Khussa which is famous all over the World. The glistening thread used in it is locally called "Tilla" and the soul of this shoe is made by skin of cows and other animals. Visually, these shoes are very beautiful attractive and are the status symbol over here.
Chahbian:
Another craft of date tree leave is chahbian. A decorative plate used for meals and is must at the dining place. Dyes are used to decorate it and golden/silver foils are used for embellishment of these chahbian. Like big plaques, these are also made of palm leaves in different bright colours with beautiful patterns and geometric designs. These are used for keeping the 'chapatis' (bread) and also as wall decoration.

Pottery Making:
The finest clay pottery is not remarkable in its charming appearance but also have great use. Specially pitcher (Ghara) which keep the water cool in scorching summers of the sand. The people who make pottery called Kumhar. They are skilled people in this art. Colourful and simple pottery are made in this region.

Hand Fans:
Dried date tree/palm leaves are used by these magnificent craftsman to weavethem into round our square shapes with sticks. Colourful frills (gola kinari, sitary moti etc) and dyes are also used to adorn these hand fans.
Chahj:
The golden hands of the craftsmen use different sticks of plants materials (kanay) to twist and turn them in such a way to shape it like a tray to clean rice and other purposes. They also used leather threads and colourful simple threads.

Morhey:
Sticks of (kanas) and date tree leaves are tired in such a way to make it a comfortable seater and then embellishments of embroidered and valvet clothes are used to cover the seats. Cholistani bright colours are used in its. Colourful morhey are also used for decorative piece.

Ralli (Gindi):
The fascinating fabric called Ralli or Rilli is a remarkable textile artwork converted into quilts, table runners and cushion covers. Thousands of women are involved mostly in Sindh, partly in some parts of Cholistan in Bahawalpur distt. Ralli (Seraiki mean jurna, rallana, millana) means mixing of pieces or anything. Gindi/Ralli is a very beautiful and colourful craft of cholistani region and is the salient features of the craft of Cholistan.
The wonderful Cholistani bright colours and patches of clothes are overlap in tidy pattern which depict the livelihood of the people of the Desert. It is made of small pieces of different colours of cotton cloth and needle work. It can be used as wall hanging, bed cover, carpets and blankets etc. This craft is mostly made in rural areas of Cholistan.

**Khais:**
Chadars and Gindian are the products of hand looms which are not apparently beautiful but have utilization purposes. Specially desi cotton threads are used for weaving. Traditional local Cholistani motifs are used lively colours.

**Khara:**
Khara is a big basket made by turning and twisting hard sticks of falsa into round deep bowl shape utilization level of this craft is very high over here.
Spining Wheel:
Spindle yarming is another oldest craft of this region. Cotton is turned into thread with the help of spining wheel. This thread have used in khais and suit. Cholistani people are mostly used this cotton thread made suit.

![Thread making on spining wheel](fig 19)

![Thread made suit final product](fig 20)

Pranda Making:
Pranda making is another salient craft of Bahawalpur region. Black threads are tied in such a way to grip the hairs. Women of this region wears pranda for its beauty and look elegant. Pranda are available in wide variety with colourful threads. Beautiful pearl wearing and cut mirror work.

![Pranda making](fig 21)

![Pranda final product](fig 22)

Block Printing:
With simple technique of block printing interesting. Block printed fabrics are produced. Vegetable and fruit dyes are

![Block Print making](fig 23)

![Block Print final product](fig 24)
used in it. The finest example of block printing is Ajrak. Carved blocks of wood with incredible Cholistani traditional motifs are used in this technique.

**Embroidery:**

Embroidery is one of the most sought out handicrafts of Bahawalpur Cholistan. It is full of gifted men and women who produce one of the most adorable across stich, using moti sitary etc. It is an attractive kind of embroidery work done on Dupata, Kurta and Chadar etc.

**Parchy:**

The skillful craftsmen of this region has maximum utilize the date tree leaves and palm leaves into crafts. The neatly weaved mats of dried date tree leaves in another remarkable craft of this area. Geometrical shapes and pattern are used in it.

**Pillow Covers:**

Pillow Covers with decorative patchwork and embroidery with woollen thread is another craft of
Cholistan. Geometrical shape and cholistani bright colours are used in it.

**Carpet Weaving:**
Carpet Weaving is one of the most important crafts of Bahawalpur state. Sheep wool thread is used in the carpet made here with traditional motifs which appears sight capturing and are finest examples of carpet making. Hand made carpet of this region is famous all over the Pakistan.

(figure 31 - Carpet Weaving making)  
(figure 32 - Carpet final product)

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