

# Handicrafts of Bahawalpur (South Punjab) Pakistan

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**Abstract-** Saraiki region possesses an ancient history, primeval civilization and cultural heritage. This soil has connections with at primordial era when even the human civilization had not awakened. When the man was inhabiting his dwellings on the banks of the river and watercourses, then the man of earlier period made inconsistent advancement towards the civilized life. Then the human civilization development started dreaming about civilization and culture the initial stages of awareness in the nomadic life after getting out of the dark and narrow caves, then as a step of development not only the process of agriculture forced the man to abandon nomadic life but also gave them a sense of protection and security from the unfavorable conditions of hunting, the feeling of insecurity and the struggle for his survival. Afterwards he implemented the milk of cattle, honey, fruits, and vegetables as alternative food for the meat of hunted animal: And adopted it as a source of economy on addition to alternative food. The necessity of human indigence, instinct and collaboration brought the human beings, victim of the scattered man in search of food, close to each other to lay foundations of a human society with the vision of an earlier collective and integrated human congregation. Hence the man advances towards the destiny of evolution and civilization by crossing over the various stages cultural development through wisdom of wakefulness. The entry into the era of agriculture and later on through the discovery of fire, access to the age of copper and bronze, the formulation of the rules and regulations after coming out the earlier traditions and customs, earlier domain of economic, political, trade and social factors presented the human civilization and culture in a universal and interconnected form. As a consequence of this factor the great civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Indus valley got birth. It was the miracle of this human evolution that the art and craft also commenced along with the human civilization.

The cave art and the motifs engraved on the rocks started to be transferred on walls and canvas of animal skin. The Indus valley where the rocks and stones didn't exist, the numerous master pieces of art were lost in sand dunes. The ancient era buried these antiques under the ruined settlements and some where these were vanished at the hands of wear and tear of the passing time. These tragedies occurred in the Indus valley in the case of art on a large scale, where there were no rocks, mountains or stony soil, and if there was something then that had been created on muddy walls and structures made up of clay. Then in case of the reminiscent of ancient times and past traditions search of the heritage of the arts and great treasures of craft of the past would have been laudable if not abandoned.

Well now let's make a little attempt to peep into the creative world of contemporary art to search for the heritage of existing arts on the Saraiki soil.

On our soil neither there are the cave of Ajanta nor the miracles of architecture, pyramids Egypt, or the antiques created

by the sculptors of Gandhara and Taxila civilization are buried in this region. We can only explore the initial traditions in the background of the existing arts of this region, which blessed our soil with the heritage of amazing creative miracles.

The main reason of the unavailability of the heritage of arts is that this soil remained under the constant threat of the foreign invaders, who attacked this prosperous and fertile region frequently and demolished and destroyed the libraries, pieces of art and high quality significant models of architecture. Moreover if any antique pieces of art existed there then these could not remain protected from these foreign conquerors. But still the ancient families boasting of the possession of numerous antiques are witness to the fact that in the past this region had been the inheritor of the artistic and creative exploits of the experts of fine arts.

However this tragedy is a fact that at present we are empty-handed and a begging with reference to the art. However we put a sight in some significant aspects of artistic elegance of this region.

Now we come to the handicrafts of Bahawalpur, an art which comes into being due to necessity, the residents of the outskirts area of Bahawalpur work day and night to fulfill their needs, but even in these necessities the element of creativity is found their choice of colours and designs is not less than a veteran artiste. The most of the requisite items are crafts and a variety of crafts are being manufactured by them at home. The role of the women in this regards is very vital. The males of the family supply the material to the maximum or do the marketing of finished goods. The artisans of this region mostly accomplish their work at home instead of the factories and whole of the family is involved in a particular task. The women of the family are executing more work in their homes. These handicrafts include Chunri, handmade fans, the trays made up of date palm leaves Chhabbi, peerhay ( stools for sitting), Gindi,(made with patches of clothes) the embroidery on clothes, mukesh (silver fabric ) work on clothes and dupattas(scarf) top the list of such items. Where as in the manufacturing of Khussa (traditional footwear), silver jewelry. The male members of the family are involved. While with clay, pitcher, Surahs and patti(ready flour for making bread) are made along with the active participation of their females.

These items not only are initial requirement but also are used for decoration purpose and also for the fulfillment of artistic desire. If we review the crafts with concentration, then it is revealed that their use of colour scheme and designs are not inferior to any expert if art. The main reason of this factor is that successive generations are involved in this activity for the preservation of this particular art.

For example the designs and colours of these items reflect the art taking birth and associated with this soil to some or great extent, displaying the growing plants and trees, wild bushes,

flowers, birds, animals on the clothes, handmade fans rug, Khais (a piece of rugged clothes ) clay pottery or handmade silver jewellery of Cholistan, this factor can be observed.

The thing which attracts me the most are the colours of Cholistan. These colours sometimes refer to the scorching sunshine to Cholistan desert sometimes of the cool sand and at other times. To the chilly winter. These hues sometimes give the feelings of delight and at other times bring the state of grief.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Now let's review the handicrafts of Cholistan:

### CHUNRI

Chunri is the most popular handicraft of Bahawalpur. It is not only liked in other cities of Pakistan but is also exported. Chunri is liked by the women of ever age group and is used as a dress wear in all seasons. The local population sends Chunri as a gift to cities outside Bahawalpur and foreign countries. It is a centuries old handicraft and with the passage of time the designs and colours if Chunri have attained modernism. Earlier it used to be manufactured in dark colours but now it is also available in light colours. The dresses of Chunri are made in cotton, lawn. Linen, crepe, crinkle, china silk and china chiffon.(fig1-2-3)



.(figs- 1-2-3)

## COLOURS

The dresses are made in green, maroon, red, orange, yellow, blue, skin, brown and black colours.(fig-4)



(fig-4 different colours of chunry)

## DESIGNING

- White plane cloth is used to make a Chunri. If the cloth is of cotton then it is wrapped in four folds and if it is silky then it is given two folds.
- The sketch of the free hand designing is drawn on the cloth by lead or coloured pencil by the women.
- After designing the cloth is marked with stitching of needle and cotton thread and almost 10 to 12 folds are given to the thread for its strengthening.(fig-5)
- After that this cloth is given the shape of a small ball, and its wings are dipped in different colours which are restricted to two or three colours. The marks of 1 to 2 inches long are called "Chaun"
- The cloth is again tied with the thread after the completion of Chaun.
- The points where, either on the side or sheet of the cloth, the borders are required, is warped in a polythene bag and is tied strongly with thread.
- Now the cloth is ready for base colour.



(fig-5, cloth is ready for base colour)

### CLOTH DYEING(for base colour)

- The water is boiled on the burner and then the Caustic Soda along with Bleaching powder is mixed in it than the colours in powder form are also mixed. The mixture is stired with the stick continuously. After mixing of colours is complete then the cloth is laid for drying for which 15 to 20 minutes are required.
- Now the clothes are rinsed in fresh water and are dyed in shade. The clothes are scattered in sand in the winter to get dried quickly.



(fig- clothing dying for base colour)

### RED COLOUR

- The dyeing of red coloured cloth is quite different and is given below:
- Maroon and black colours are put in caustic soda and boiled water and after getting them cooked are put off from the burner and are kept to get cool.
- The cloth is well dipped in hot water and when it gets dried then the manufactured colour the cloth is dipped. Which has cooled now it is kept in the same position for 15 to 20 minutes and afterwards the maroon (salt GP) is added to the fresh water.
- The cloth must be dipped in it after putting in fresh air for sometime. The red cloth is redy. Now it is dipped and kept to get dried.
- If the Chunri is desired to be coloured green and red, then first it must be dyed in green followed by red colour.
- After the cloth is dried then the thread is untied



(figs-dyeing of red colour cloth)

### KHUSSA

Khussa (traditional footwear) is the specific identity of Bahawalpur. A number of families are associated with this industry Khussa. Khussa is used extensively in marriage ceremonies and special function. The other foot wears other than khussa are, kolhapuri, sleeper with golden embroidery and plain sandals are very popular. Khussa is very popular among men, women and children of all ages.

In the earlier times there used be just plain Khussas, but with the passage of time not only the designs and colours of Khaussas displayed modernism, but the Khussa with golden embroidery (Tilay dar Khussa), dubkay wala Khussa and other varieties of Khussas also started to be stitched.

The tanneries are in Multan; hence the leather is brought from Multan.



(fig- different style of khussa's)

### METHOD TO MANUFACTURE KHUSSA

In ancient time the leather of buffalo and goat was used in manufacturing Khussa, but now only the leather of cow is used.

- First of all the leather is cut in small pieces. And the upper (in local dialect) is cut with a underlying marked piece of hard board, which is called as “Andaza” locally.
- After cutting the upper a piece of channel cloth is stuck with gum. This gum is made up of flour or Maida (meal).



(figs- method to manufacture khussa)

### STICHIND

At very first stage bottom most larger (base) of khussa is prepared from cultured leather. Two to Three layers of khussa base are placed one on the other and stitching of khussa with the help of tools Ar. Needle is started

### THAPPAI (with wooden hamer)

The khussa is then pressed with the help of wooden hammer to align it as per mold (sancha) temporarily placed inside khussa. (sancha is made of wooden material according to the shape of khussa)

### TOOLS

The following tools are used for khussa.

- Stone Brick
- Rambli
- Chedna
- Ar
- Needle
- Mangli

### SIZE

Ladies & Gents :- 7 to 12 inch

Children :- 7 to 11 inch

### GINDI

Gindi is a very beautiful and colourful handicraft, which is a specification of this region. Gindi is made only the region of Bahawalpur, Multan and Sindh. Where it is commonly known as Rilli. In the accomplishment of this handicraft, the women folk are greatly involved. Gindi is a handicraft used extensively in the rural areas, while as a bed sheet and cushion it is also used in the urban areas. It is greatly used as decoration piece in the cities. The Gindi style bed sheets, quilts, pillows, the prayers mat and cover of the cushions are made due to their popularity as a traditional handicraft.



(figs- gindi)

### METHODS TO PREPARE A GINDI

There are different colours used in the making of a Gindi and these areas, red, blue, green, orange, black and white colours.

- It is made up of a plain cloth of various colours and sometimes the designed cloth is also used.
- The cloth is cut in to different designs which are square, rectangular and triangular in shape.
- These pieces are joined with the needle and thread work.
- When all each pieces are stitched together then after achieving the required size, a sheet of only in colour is sewn as underlining.

### **HANDY FANS AND CHABIAN**

The handy fans and chhabian are handicrafts of common use and are among the necessities of every house hold in the villages, while these are also in the urban areas as traditional items. The fans and chhabian are made up of the leaves of date palm tree. Some other items like morha (chair), Chatai (mat); Musallah (prayer Mat), thulla and rope of the cot are also made from these leaves. The branches of date palm tree are plucked along with the fruit in the months of July / August. From the leaves of the outer branches of the date palm, the rope of the cot, mats, prayer mat etc, are made. While fans, chhabian, morha, pachhi(vasket) are manufactured from the leace of inner branches, commonly known as Gachhey.



(figs- handy fan and chabian)

### **DYING OF DATE-PALM LEAVES**

The leaves sought from the inner branches are kept in the outer for drying. And later on are dyed. The white leaves are also used. The colours mostly used are yellow, pink, green, blue and purple

### **CLAY POTTERY**

The pottery made with clay include pitcher. Long necked pitcher, tumbler, bowl, cooking vessel, and pattri are very popular. This type of pottery is used commonly in the villages, while only pitchers are used to some extent in the cities.



(fig- clay pottery)

The person who makes clay pottery is called a Kamhar (potter) and the generations of potters continue to prepare pottery to become skilled in this art. Whole of the family is involved in the creation of clay pottery. The role of women in this regard is very significant and they perform their responsibilities from the making of clay to the baking of the molded items. Moreover they also render their service in the shifting and baking in addition to the heating the furnace. This is confined to only women.

### **PREPARE THE CLAY**

Clay is used in preparing the pottery. The clay is thrashed very finely. After that it is stained in a stainer and is kneaded with feet by pouring in the water. Two to three persons knead the clay at a time. Expertise is required to prepare the clay and three to four days are spent in preparing proper clay for the making of pottery. The finalized clay turns for use in a week's time. After wards hundreds of pottery items can be prepared.



(fig- preparing the clay)



(figs- making a flower pot)

### **POTTER WHEEL**

The role of Chak in the process of making clay pottery is very important. The pots are given a particular shape by putting them on a wheel. The roll of clay is pasted on the wheel like a roll of flour and the wheel is driven with the help of feet, while the hands of the artisan are continuously running on the pot and a particular shape is given to it. The pot is manufactured within two to three minutes.

### **MAKING OF FLOWER POT**

Two kilo clay is required for making a flower pot. After keeping it on the wheel for giving it a shape, it is kept in the sun for two days to dry. The prepares 300ro 400 flower pots in a day the flower pot if refined with the help of a eraser. Then the pot is again put in the wheel and is rotated with the hands. Again it is rubbed and the flower pot becomes neat.



### **MAKING A PITCHER**

At least one week is required for the making of a pitcher. The clay is put on wheel for the manufacturing if a pitcher. Then it is given the shape of a vase and is put in the sides. Afterwards on the very next day the vase is changed in to the shape of a pitcher. The following method is adopted for the shape of a pitcher.

The pitcher is put on the pitcher stand. With one hand the pitcher is rotated and with the other hand the pitcher is pressed with the help of a wooden tool. With the other hand it is ser with the help of a cemented stone. Then kanver is applied inside the pitcher. And until the thickening if the pitcher this process is continued. It takes about four to five minutes.



(fig- making pitcher)



(figs- filming of clay )

### SOURCES OF COLOURING PITCHER

**BLACK:** it is also called Gairvi. This colour is retained from the Kala Poka Stone, which is brought from Sakhi Sarwar

**RED:** This colour is obtained from the friction of Lal pola, stone which also comes from Sakhi Sarwar

**WHITE:** This colour is obtained from the burning of animal bones. It is also rubbed in the stone and then water is added. These colours are applied on pitchers, bowls, long necked pitcher and Khumray.

### FILMING OF CLAY

After designing the pitcher with three colours the film of red clay petchhi is put in it. This clay is the specification of Rohi CHolistan. After putting the film the shining sand of the river is sprayed on the pitcher.

### BAKING OF POTTERY

The manufacturing of the pottery in the furnace and baking is a very long and painful process. About four hundred to five hundred pots at a time. First of all dry leave branches are gathered and this heap of waste is put in the furnace. After that the prepared pottery is set and the dried cow dung is spread over the pottery so that the fire may not scatter here and there. So after setting the furnace is burnt with the help of wood and it is left for continuous 48 hour burning. The duty of various persons is changed to monitor the fire burning through day and night. After two to three days of baking of pots the waste is cleaned. Then the pots are pulled out from the garbage.





(figs- baking of pottery)

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