

# CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS IN NORTH INDIAN VILLAGES (SPECIALLY J&K)

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## ABSTRACT

*Customs and traditions represent a type of informal control. These are the established habits and usages of people. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the system of these habits and usages in North Indian villages with major focus on Jammu & Kashmir. This study is an attempt to look into the traditions and customs among people with special reference to villages of Jammu and Kashmir division. For this study, the sampling technique is stratified random sampling, as sample was chosen on the basis of experience of the people of Jammu and Kashmir division. Secondary data was collected from various sources, journals, magazines, websites and online articles.*

**Keywords:** *language, festivals, music, art, cuisines, etc.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Customs are often pre-repeated practices of the people. Though these are universal in nature, but they usually differ from society to society and from community to community. These evolve gradually and hence are obeyed mostly in a spontaneous manner. Both customs and traditions are interchangeably used and are very closely related. Tradition is the transmission of customs or beliefs from one generation to generation. So, both can be used interchangeably.

## LANGUAGE

The people of Northern India mostly speak Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Dogri, English, Gojri, Kashmiri, Gahrwali, Awadhi, Bihari, etc. In Jammu and Kashmir, people mostly speak Dogri, Kashmiri, Pahadi, Gojri, Pogli, Kishtwari, Bhaderwahi, Sarazi, etc. It is largely recognized that dialectic differences exist in every speech community. The most important differences of speech within a community are due to differences in the density of communication.

## FESTIVALS

North India is known for having a different a different set of traditions and customs for every occasion. If you ever want to experience the authenticity of Indian festivals, definitely try to witness the festivals of North India. Some festivals are widespread over the entire regions of our country like Diwali, Holi, Dussehra, etc, while some are specific to a particular region or area like Kumbh Mela takes place every 12 years in four cities- Prayagraj, Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nasik. Pushkar Mela is celebrated in Rajasthan. During this fair, pilgrims come to Pushkar from all over the country and worship Pushkar Lake.

The main festivals of Jammu and Kashmir are the festivals conducted by the local people as a part of their culture and heritage. Like Shikara Festival, Wooden boats found in the lakes of Jammu and Kashmir referred to as Shikaras. These Shikaras line up once a year in Dal Lake during the Shikara festival. Tulip Festival is celebrated to mark the onset of spring season when the tulips are ready to bloom. Baisakhi Festival is celebrated as the harvesting festival and the new year for Sikhs. Gurez Festival – a two day festival that celebrates the culture of Gurez valley. Jhiri Mela which is held in Jammu, is also known as farmer's fair. It is celebrated to worship the honest farmer who took his life, called Baba Jittu. Bahu Mela is one of the most famous festivals held at Bawey Wali Mata Temple, which is

inside Bahu Fort in Jammu. It is praised twice per year amid March-April and September-October. Tihar festival – It is celebrated at Bhaderwah, Kishtwar and Doda Distt. This festival is held during the Hindu month of Chaitra and is dedicated to the serpent gods. Water tanks and springs are cleaned on this occasion. Nagas (serpent gods) are worshipped and offerings of rice and flowers are made to them. Another important festivals of Doda, Kishtwar Distt. Of Jammu division is Gouritritiya or KANCHOUTH, which is celebrated by the married women for their husbands. On this occasion, they get ready like a bride and worship their kuldevi or Goddess.

## MUSIC

North Indian classical music is one of the most highly developed art music's in the world. Partaking strongly of improvisational elements, the structural framework of the music is provided by a system of modal melodic frameworks called ragas and of rhythmic patterns called talas. Within the framework, the performers must create the musical fabric at the moment of performance. Ragas are not to be confused with the Western notion of "scales", for while each raga has a characteristic pitch structure, much more is implied. The order in which the notes of the raga are introduced, and the manner in which the raga itself is revealed and unfolded are all extremely important. So, also, are matters of ornamentation, pitch alteration, and melodic structure. Although notational systems exist, the tradition is largely an oral one, passed on by each master to students. Performances are appreciated by the audiences in many of the same ways as jazz improvisations: that is, performers are expected to demonstrate extensive knowledge of the traditions of the individual raga. Nonetheless, in both traditions, the performer is admired when able to cast some new light on the familiar. It is the ability to honor the integrity of the raga while doing so in an intensely personal way that wins the greatest esteem.

The basic form for the interpretation of a raga is made up of four parts, ALAP, JOD, JHALA and GAT.

### Alap

This is a slow introduction where the performer contemplates the raga note by note, composing phrases, at first quite simply, with the two or three notes nearest the tonic, but gradually becoming more and more complex as he extends through the first octave and then later, over the whole range of the instrument.

### Jod/Jor

When the artist feels that he has completed his exposition of the raga through the alap he introduces a rhythmic pulse in to the music, starting again by playing short phrases against his regular striking of the drone strings. As the rhythmic dimension enters the music, the improvisations become more and more extended, eventually with very fast staccato passages called "tans", full of rhythmic subtlety and requiring considerable technical virtuosity. After several stages of increasing the tempo, the performer can either finish this section or go on to one final movement.

### Jhala

Jhala is a section where the artist performs a variety of virtuosic patterns utilizing the "chikari" strings. Depending on the performance, the jhala can either be the culmination of the first part, and the climax of the "gat" portion.

### Gat

This movement is really in "Rondo" form with the main subject being a previously composed motif, which is set to a recurring rhythmic cycle called a "Tal". The table player, whose main function is to mark this "Tal", accompanies the melody instrument to the end of the performance. As with the western Rondo where the main theme returns after each variation, the Indian performer, having improvised for a few cycles will return either to the beginning of the theme, or to the first beat of the new cycle. The theme, or "gat", also serves as a time keeping pattern and the main performer may repeat the gat for several cycles while the table player improvises. Actually, it is usual for this whole movement to consist of two gats, one slow and one fast. Near the end of the performance the melody instrument makes a transition into jhala again to bring the performance to a climax.

## Tala

Talas are the rhythmic frameworks around which Indian music is composed and improvised. Each tala has a constant number of beats, organized into phrases. Sometimes, the phrases are equally divided, and sometimes they are of unequal lengths. Both soloist and accompanist are required to always be aware of the returning of the first beat of the tala.

Music adds to the attraction of the Kashmir valley for the tourists. The history and tradition of music and dance in Kashmir valley goes back to thousands years back. Some of the most important traditional music of Kashmir are :

**Sufians musiqui or Sufi Music** owes its introduction in Kashmir to Iran. Introduced in the 15<sup>th</sup> century in the Kashmir valley, Sufiana music continues to enthrall its audience till date. With the passage of time, a number of Indian ragas were added to this music form. This classical music form of Kashmir makes the use of Santoor, Sitar, Kashmiri Saz, Wasool or Tabla.

**Hafiza Nagma :** A part of the classical Music, Hafiza Nagma makes use of Santoor- a hundred stringed instrument played with sticks. In Hafiza Nagma, there is a female dancer, accompanied by a number of males with instruments. The dancer, known as Hafiza, moves her feet to the musical notes.

Songs of Habba Khatoon reflects her feelings at the time when she was separated from Yusuf King.

**Surma:** It is a song in Dogri that reflects the agony of a newly married girl whose husband is away in the Army.

## CUISINES

India stands as one of the most flavourful countries in the world when it comes to cuisine. With so many states and cultures to offer, the country's cuisine is a treat to your stomach. The country has four major cuisines, and North Indian cuisine is one of the most finest and richest out of these.

The ingredients used in North Indian gravies are rich in flavor, and the blend of different herbs is just perfect. Right from the cooking elements to the seasonings used in this soulful cuisine will leave your taste buds enriched. The cuisine of North India is colorful, vibrant, and spicy. The wholesome combination of natural, aromatic spices fills the food with everlasting, delicious taste. The most common spices used in this cuisine include cumin seeds, coriander seeds, bay leaves, turmeric, mustard seeds. Delhi's Chole Bhature, Aloo Chaat, Dahi Papdi Chaat, Aloo Tikki, Cheela, GolGuppa/ Pani Puri of Uttar Pradesh, Amritsari Kulcha famous dish from Punjab region, etc.

Jammu and Kashmir boasts being favoursome and diverse. The UT with its variety of dishes makes an excellent destination for culinary tourism and attracts food lovers from around the world. The food of Jammu and Kashmir can be divided into two- Jammu Cuisine and Kashmiri Cuisine; each of which is unique in their own way.

The Kashmiri food is further categorized into two- Kashmiri Pandits/ Brahmins Cuisine and Kashmiri Muslim Cuisines. While the Pandits use generous quantities of curd along with asafoetida and ginger in their food., Muslims use all these ingredients in liberal amounts for food preparations along with ginger and garlic. However, one can find some commonality between the cuisines of Jammu and Kashmir regions.

In Jammu, the dishes of Dogra cuisine are quite popular. This region is famous for rajma chawal, with rajma (kidney beans) being a local crop. Dishes like Ambal, Khatta Meat, Kulthein Dal, Dal Patt, Maa da Madra, and Auriya mark the prominence of Dogra cuisine in Jammu.

The other traditional dishes that are a must-try in Jammu region are Morel (Gushi) Palov, Madra (lintel cooked in curd), Oriya (Potato/Pumpkin in mustard sauce), Kasrod and Timru-di-Chatni, Shiri Pulav, and Mitha Bhat (Sweet Rice).

As desserts, Jammu offers dishes like Chocolate Barfi, Sund Panjeeri, Patisa for food lovers.

The beautiful valley of Kashmir reflects a rich influence of Persian, Central Asian and Afghan food in its cuisine. In Kashmiri cuisine, spices like cardamom, cinnamon, fennel, and cloves are used, making the food delectable and aromatic.

Some of the important dishes in Kashmir are Tabakhmaaz, Shab Deg, Dum Olav/Dum Aloo, Aab Gosh, Goshtaba, Lyader Tschaman, Runwagan Tschaman, Rishte, Nader ti Gaad, Herath, Novroze, Yakhni, and widely acclaimed Rogan Josh.

The valley is also famous for its bakery tradition, and thus you can find here various kinds of bread. Tsot and Tsochvor, sheermal, baqerkhayn (puff pastry), lavas (unleavened bread) and kulcha are some popular bakery items in Kashmir. The locals of Kashmiri are also fond of tea; hence, Kahwa and Noon Chai/ Sheer Chai comes into picture.

## ART

North Indian culture reflects the customs and traditions of the vast region it encompasses.

Among the art forms of Himachal Pradesh, Kangra Paintings are the most prominent ones. It is a pictorial art centred mostly in the regions of Kangra region. The themes of these paintings mainly hovered around the eternal love between Radha and Lord Krishna. Scenes from Bhagavata Purana are also illustrated through delicate brush strokes. Other themes include tales of Keshavdas's Baramasa and Nala and Damayanti. Like other traditional paintings, these also utilized colors extracted from natural sources like vegetables, minerals, etc. During the rule of Maharaja Sansar Chand Katoch this painting gained immense prominence. A unique characteristic feature of this painting is the lush greenery depicted in these paintings. Attention is paid to the detail and the feminine charm is very gracefully depicted.

Another prevalent painting in this state is Basohli paintings which are characterized by vibrant hues, geometrical motifs and glossy enamels. Bilaspur Paintings are mainly centred in Bilaspur region. It has magnificent depictions of Ramayana, Bhagvata Purana and other rituals of festivals and ceremonies. Chamba paintings closely resemble the Mughal style of paintings. During 17<sup>th</sup> century, this painting emerged as a prominent art form. Another painting that originated in Himachal Pradesh is Garhwal Paintings which reflected blends of Mughal and Kangra style of paintings.

Paintings have developed as an exquisite form of art in Haryana since ancient times. During the reign of King Harsha, this form of art flourished owing to the fact that the King himself was a painter and a great admirer of arts. Later Rajputs and Mughals also patronized the art of painting and several new styles of paintings emerged. Ancient palaces and temples still hold the evidences of this flourishing art as their prime adornment. Famous historical monuments of Haryana that exhibit beautiful paints are Venumadhava temple in Kaul, the Kapil temple in Kilayat, the Rang Mahal in Pinjore, Kurukshetra's Bhadra Kali temple etc. These monuments are embellished with varied style of paintings which evolved during different periods of time and had unique features. Other paintings of this state include Nurpur paintings and Mandi paintings which are also ancient forms of art and exhibited vivid colors and delicate patterns portraying diverse themes.

Rajput paintings, emerged in the state of Rajasthan, are the one of the most renowned paintings of the country. Origin of this painting can be traced to the royal courts of Rajput kingdoms. Although different Rajput kingdoms developed their own style of painting, yet they shared some common features. A number of varied themes were depicted in Rajput paintings including Mahabharata, Ramayana, landscapes and human figures. Natural colors were preferred in these paintings which were extracted from plants, minerals, precious stones, conch shells. The process of preparation of colors was however tedious and lengthy. Gold and silver foils were also used to adorn these paintings.

The splendid handicrafts of Jammu and Kashmir make it famous all over the world. Some kind of elegant art work is present almost in everything in Jammu and Kashmir, be it embroidery on the Shawls, papier-mache and steelware and woodwork. When it comes to Jammu and Kashmir handicrafts the villages of Anantnag and Srinagar have been

quite famous for enhancing its creative beauty. They are world famous for carpets and wooden furniture. Along with it the antique items include Shahtoosh shawls and Pashmina shawls. Crewelware, brass and silverware are other interesting articles.

**Carpets:** Definitely one of the most expensive and world renowned arts of Kashmir. Originally the art of making carpets started from Samarkand in Central Asia. Later the process itself witnessed a tremendous growth with artisans from Iran experimenting with the motifs and textures. Carpets from Kashmir are made of wool and even silk, are available in a large number of variety.

**Basket Weaving:** These are made of willow rushes and this form of weaving can be used to make baskets or even lamp-shades. A little expensive, they can also be used as glass holders or picnic baskets. Hazratbal in Srinagar is known for basket weaving throughout India.

**Embroidery:** The typical Kashmiri embroidery is known as Kasida and is famous all over the world. It is very exquisite in its execution and is very rich and elaborate in color. Quite interestingly, this embroidery, which is often done on sarees and shawls, does not have a wrong side to it.

**Pashmina Shawls:** Shawls of Kashmir are known worldwide for their design, color and embroidery. The fleecy wool obtained from Kel Goat is used for making Pashmina Shawls. They are very famous as ringshawls: even at the international levels. This is because they are so delicate and elegant, that they can easily pass from a ring itself. A high value and elegant shawl has designs and motifs, equally embellished on both the sides.

**Papier-mache:** No matter how similar the papier-mache articles look at the first glance, they have their own differences and originality. Three grades of paper are used for its designing. In the process of making it, paper is soaked in water till the time it disintegrates. Then an adhesive solution is used to mix it over, eventually molding it into different shapes which are later colored and varnished.

**Tweed:** It is a pure wool product that goes through 8 steps of wool sharing to take various shapes. Products of tweed are available as long winter coats, jackets, blazers, waist coats, suits, trousers, caps: also wedding suits. Apart from providing good insulation during winters it is also a flourishing form of art and craft in Kashmir.

**Walnut wood products:** Kashmir is home to the best of walnut trees in the world. The wood of these trees are used to create various furniture and show piece items. Kashmir has talented artists whose woodworks have taken the products to international levels. The state is known of semicarvings, lattice works, lotus flowers and chinar motifs. While on a shopping spree, products to pick up are furniture, cigar and cigarette boxes, jewelry boxes, photo frames and countless other articles.

Paintings of Northern India are collectively known as Pahari paintings, owing to their origin and development in hilly regions. These paintings are not only famous in the country but have also gained huge fame all over the world. Several tourists collect these paintings as souvenirs of the rich cultural heritage of India.

## FUTURE STUDY

The study comprises of several people and various secondary material from J&K UT. The study should have been more extensive. The aspects left could be worth exploring in the future researches.

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