

Wooden Architecture of Kashmir under Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin

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Abstract: It is a brief account of various buildings especially of wood erected mainly during the time of Sultan Zain ul Abidin, who ruled Kashmir. During his reign, Kashmir became a centre of Islamic culture, architecture, arts and crafts. He provided patronage to artist and artisan class for the promotion of local style (Kashmiri) of Islam art. The wooden buildings stand supreme and speak the glory of the age, which are being highlighted here.

Keywords: Kashmir, Srinagar, Artist, wood work, buildings, Zain ul Abidin, Khanqah.

The valley of Kashmir has earned its name as "Paradise on earth". The natural location of the valley of Kashmir makes it a baby fondled in the bosom of mighty Himalayas. The beautiful Valley can also be called a cradle in which a race of healthy, intellectual and men of natural artists had risen and flourish. Abul Fazal in his book *Akbar-Nama* said that, "praise of Kashmir cannot be contained within the narrow of language" (Fazl, 1989-93: 828). The valley of Kashmir has been a land of artistic skill from ancient times. Mirza Haider in his book *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* says that, "First and foremost among the wonders of Kashmir stand her idol temples. In and around Kashmir, there are more than one hundred and fifty temples which are built of blocks of hewn stone, fitted so accurately one upon the other, that there is absolutely no cement used. These stones have been so carefully placed in position, without plaster or mortar that a sheet of paper could not be passed between the joints" (Dughlat, 1973: 426). He goes on saying, that, "inside and outside of the halls have the appearance of two porticos, and these are covered with one or two stones. The capitals, the ornamentation in relief, the cornices, the "dogtooth" work, the inside covering and the outside, are all crowded with pictures and paintings, which I am incapable of describing. Some represent laughing and weeping figures,

which astound the beholder. In the middle is a lofty throne of hewn stone, and over that, a dome made entirely of stone, which I cannot describe. In the rest of the world there is not to be seen, or heard of, one building like this. How wonderful that there should [here] be a hundred and fifty of them" (Dughlat, 1973: 426). Every artisan, artist and craftsmen is a product of environment and geographical setting. Its inhabitants have received inspiration from natural scenery, rivers, springs, snow and mountains. The melodies of waterfalls and the springs have given them the taste of music. The colourful flowers and meadows have given them an instinct for ornamentation and decoration. (Fida, 2002: 87) The arts and crafts of Kashmir manifest the artistic expression of the imagination and the soul of the people of Valley and are a mirror of the culture and sentiments (Sufi, 2007: 210). It has enjoyed a well-earned fame for centuries. Allama Iqbal while praising about the skill of the Kashmiri people says the following verses;

زیرک و دراک و خوش گل ملتے است
در جہاں تردستی او آیتے است
کشمیری قوم ایک باریک بین بہت سوجھ بوجھ والی
دانشمند اور خوش شکل ہے۔
دنیا میں اس کی ہنرمندی ایک دلیل [مثال] ہے۔

In other place he says that,

“Once known among the wise as Little Iran”
“So skilful of hand, so rich in mind, these
people, alas, a pure breed”

The people of the valley have developed their technical and artistic traditions over centuries. It involves beauty, creativity and a profound sense to make something new, something eye catching (Bhat, 2008: 1). Kashmir have a continuous tradition of arts and crafts which included Papier-mache, Shawl and Silk weaving, embroidery, needle work, rug making wool making and stone work (Sufi, 2007: 211). Dughlat records “In Kashmir one meets with all those arts and crafts which are, in most cities, uncommon, such as stone-polishing, stone-cutting, bottle-making, window-cutting [tabddan-turash], gold-beating, etc. In the whole of Mavara-un-Nahr, except in Samarkand and Bokhara, these are nowhere to be met with, while in Kashmir they are even abundant” (Dughlat, 1973: 432). Besides these the most important art was wood work that commands our admiration to this day, which has been claimed by Sufi as originated with Muhammadan, but Abul Fazal in *Ain-i-Akbari* says that, “In the village of Kotihar in Srinagar is a deep spring, surrounded by stone temples. When its water decreases, an image of Maha-Deva in sandal-wood appears” (Fazal, 1978: 358). It seems from this that wooden art was existing from ancient times in Kashmir but it was under the Sultans that wood has been used extensively with new techniques. G. T. Vigne says that the first thing which he had been pointed out in Kashmir was a, “small and decayed wooden building ...as the first mosque that was erected in Kashmir; it was old and crazy, that I contented myself with a glance at it from the river. I think it is called the Bulbul Lankur, after the fakir who first introduced the doctrines of Islam into Kashmir, vid Tibet, according to the Kashmirian tradition. The great mosque is a very

large, square, and Saracenic building, with an open square, or Pateo, in the centre, and a wooden steeple at each angle. The foundations are of stone, but the roof of the surrounding cloister, or interior, is supported by two rows of pillars, three hundred and ninety-two in all, on plain stone bases, each pillar being formed of a single deodar-tree, about thirty feet in height and the bases, it is said, were once part of a flight of steps leading to the top of the Tukt-i-Suliman and” (Vigne, 1842: 81).

The pre-eminence of the art can be attributed to historical conditions that shaped the cultural development of the Kashmiri people. Art of a place is the heritage of many generations. It represents a series of consecutive layers, which reflect people’s culture through the ages. The life pattern of the Kashmiri people over the years has been exposed to various movements of different civilizations to reflect the diversity in many of its facets of social fabric. The skills and knowledge imparted by different groups (from Central Asia) created a diversity of artistic traditions and is the distinguishing feature in the works of art of all genres. Wood has long been used in Kashmir for making houses, but it was not preferred for the construction of monumental worship. It was during the Sultanate period that large worship buildings were made, wherein wood was used extensively. Thereafter, not only wooden structures were constructed either exclusively or in association of stone and brick masonry to raise huge monumental buildings that exist till date, but also these were decorated with wooden ceilings, walls, doors, cornices and facades on balconies. In the medieval Kashmir, most of the buildings were made of wood and they were so decorated that Dughlat says “In the town there are many lofty buildings constructed of fresh cut pine. Most of these are at least five stories high and each story contains apartments, halls, galleries and towers. The beauty of their exterior

defies description, and all who behold them for the first time, bite the finger of astonishment with the teeth of admiration. But the interiors are not equal to the exteriors” (Dughlat, 1973: 425).

Wood being available in abundance in the valley, the Kashmiri carpenters had been master carpenters, but with the coming of Mir Sayyid Ali Hamdani and his disciples into the Kashmir of all arts got an impetus. Besides being Sufi, these people were master craftsmen, masons, calligraphers, weavers and artisans. In the Sufi brotherhood, it was incumbent upon each member to earn his living by work (Fida, 2002: 88). Allama Iqbal Lahuri lauds the achievements of the Mir Sayyid Ali Hamdani in the following words, “this great master from Iran, who was a direct descendent of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), worked like a mason to build the fate of Kashmiri nation. Great and magnanimous as he was, he gave them education, wisdom, culture and religion. He was a dignified mentor of this beautiful valley –a dervish for the poor and advisor to the Sultan (Sikander). The people of this, “Little Iran” learnt arts and crafts through his guidance, thus obtaining fame in the world” (Fida, 2002: 4).

This tradition of wooden architecture and craft seems to have developed and flourished under the Sultans of Kashmir in general and under the fostering care of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin in particular. He devoted himself in embellishing Kashmir with buildings, and in order to humour all the nations of the world, he paid attention neither to Infidelity nor Islam. It was in his reign that Kashmir became a city which it has remained to this day. (Meaning, here, the town of Srinagar, usually called "Kashmir.), (Dughlat, 1973: 433-34) In Kashmir a lake called Ulnr (walur), the circumference of which is seven *farsakhs* (one *farakhs* =4 mile). In the middle of this lake Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, erected a palace and planted pleasant groves of trees, so that there can

be but few more agreeable places in the world. Sultan also built himself a palace in the town, which in the dialect of Kashmir is called Rajdan. It has twelve stories, some of which contain fifty rooms, halls, and corridors. The whole of this lofty structure is built of wood. There appears to be no trace left of a palace bearing the name of Rajdan. The building should have disappeared is not surprising, since it is reported to have been constructed of wood (Dughlat, 1973: 429). Mirza Haider says “[Among] the vast *kiosks* of the world are in Tabriz, the *Hasht Bihisht* Kiosk of Sultan Yakub; in Herat the *Bagh-i-Khan*, the *Bagh-i-Safid*, and the *Bagh-i-Shahr*; and in Samarkand the *Kuk Sarai*, the *Ak Sarai*, the *Bagh-i-Dilkushai*, and the *Bagh-i-Buldi*. Though [the Rajdan] is loftier and contains more rooms than ball these, yet it has not their elegance and style, it is, nevertheless, a more wonderful structure” (Dughlat, 1973: 429-30).

During the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin talent of high quality was properly honoured. Those artists who have demonstrated their excellence before the Sultan was appreciated and dully honoured, and later on they devote their whole life in the service of Sultan (Srivara, n.d.: 15). The artisans and artists were regularly consulted by the Sultan and their advice was regularly taken into consideration whether it was in the matter of founding cities, regulating canal system or it was matter of promotion of arts. Sultan also wanted that the people of high merit in various fields should remain in Kashmir, so that their talent could be fully used, and through them other minor arts would get some benefit and proper teaching would be arranged for them through these artists of high merit (Srivara, n.d.: 15). Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin also wanted to arrest the brain or attract talent from outside. Later on these extra-ordinary talented artists became fans of Sultan for his service and patronage to the artists. F.R. Martin explains “all art produced in the East is the direct

result of an impulse given by the monarch. All art, in the orient is court art, or it dependent on Maecenas. It was so, in the Abbasid court at Baghdad in the ninth century, it was so in Egypt and Spain, and it was so in elsewhere". This explains so much and by using the term "orient", one should not be in any doubt that in Kashmir too it was the court art, means art was highly patronised by the court under Sultans (Martin, 1912: 36).

Consistent with the policy to make Kashmir the second Samarqand and Bukhara, the Sultans and the Persian and Central Asian missionaries encouraged the immigration of architects, masons, carpenters and calligraphists to supplant the existing stone architecture by new types of architecture, cultivated by the Persian and Central Asian Muslim rulers by borrowing the ideas and attracting the architects and artisans from different parts of the world (Barett, n.d.: 138-39). During the Sultanate, a large number of palaces, *khanqahs*, *mosques* and *tombs* were constructed, only few specimens of the architecture of the period have survived to us which still exist as models of the carpenter's craft such as, Madin Sahib, Khanqahi Mualla, Makhdum Sahibs shrine, Jamia Masjid in Srinagar, Khanqahi Naqashband, Srinagar etc. Their facades even though partly built of brick masonry have yet eloquent use of wood in the form of structural material as well as decorative element. The wood has been utilized to build the pyramidal roofs, balconies, verandahs, arcades, porticoes, panelled walls and painted ceilings. Although Kashmir has a been very impressive style of wooden architecture, but it was known to the out-side world with a brief description of some of the principal buildings by some foreign travellers like Bernier, Vigne, Hugel, Moorcraft, Fergusson and Lowenthal. However, important is Fergusson who gives some introduction about the Shah Hamdan Mosque and Jamia Masjids' wooden

architecture in Kashmir (Fergusson, 1891: 223). But he never visited Kashmir and he made his enquires from the photographs which he was able to obtain and it was later Nicholas who paid much attention towards the wooden architecture of Kashmir.

Near But Kadal in Zadibal, Srinagar, is a 15th century monument known as 'Madin Sahib' named after the tomb and mosque of Sayyid Muhammad Madani. Both the buildings are in memory of the same person and it is likely that they were built at the same time, and a well-preserved inscription over the doorway of the mosque records that it was built in the year A.H.848 (A.D.1444) the period which falls under Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin. He left his home and entered the service of Timur, when the latter invaded India, he took Madani Sahib with himself in 1398 and from Sind Timur deputed Madani Sahib to Kashmir during the reign of Sultan Sikandar Butshikan (1389–1413 CE). In Kashmir, he became the disciple of Mir Muhammad but he did not give much interest in teaching and preaching like his preceptor (Hassan, 1994: 29). He did not get any special favour from Sultan Sikander, however when Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin came to throne, he became his disciple and built a Khanqah for him near his palace in Naushahr (Didamari, 1846: 31). The monument comprises of a Mosque and a Tomb, with the mosque dating back to around AD 1444 which first came up during the reign of Zain-ul-Abidin, incorporating elements, pillar and base, from an older Hindu monument. The mosque of Madani in Srinagar, a small building but the earliest example surviving, has its roof in the pyramidal wooden style supported on long wooden columns with a panelled ceiling in khatamband as is the case in the Khanqah-i-Mu'alla in Srinagar and above the first roof of mosque there are windows having beautifully embellished lattice work, but unfortunately it is

presently closed and no one is allowed to enter inside the mosque.¹

The mosque of Shah Hamadan in Srinagar is known as *Khanaqah-i Mu'alla*, built by Sultan Sikandar, is a typical example of the wooden architecture of the Valley. It is a two-storey building with pyramidal roof built in three tiers and is surmounted by an open pavilion for the mu'azzin. The *Khanaqah* is a living example of the fine wood work which reached to its zenith during the period of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin. Around the building are high structures such as arcades, verandahs and porticos, their openings being filled with lattice work (Hasan & Rafiabadi, 2003: 433).

This form of architecture is very similar to the wooden buildings of neighbouring areas Swat, Baltistan, Dir, Chitral and adjoining areas are heavily influenced by the local architecture of Kashmir (Dani, 1989: 64).

Ambassador of Switzerland in India, Dr. *Linus Von Castelmur* and his wife visited the historic city of Srinagar and took a cruise ride in river Jhelum remarks 'It gave us great pleasure to discover Jhelum River during the short cruise, Beautiful old houses, temples and mosques – We wish that they can be restored and brought back to their earlier splendours'.

Jami 'Masjid, built by Sultan Sikandar in 1398 A.D, presents a remarkable religious zeal with which Islamic institutions came to be established in Kashmir, contains all the features of Kashmiri wooden style of architecture. It has been

destroyed many times by fire and was rebuilt by Sultan Hassan Shah, Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, Jahangir, Aurangzeb and many others (Sufi, 2007: 512). Similar visitations have befallen the mosque of Shah Hamadan and others. It is therefore impossible to say to what extent the original form and details were copied in the various restorations. Nicholas says, "according to the inscription over the south doorway of the Jami 'Masjid, the mosque was last built by Aurangzeb. There is no reason to suspect that he copied what was there before fairly closely, because the building is totally different from anything that Aurangzeb can have seen in plains of India; and it is quite certain that the present Jamia' Masjid did not a first experiment in a new direction. The lofty pillars in the propylons, the details of the spires and the uniformity of the whole design, prove that the builders knew what were about from plinth to final that they were reproducing forms of which they were masters, and were not evolving a fresh style as they went along".

There are many monumental buildings in and outside Srinagar which are largely made on the pattern of existing buildings of Sultanate period that have elaborate carving on the base and capital of the pillars as well as wooden ceiling in *Khatamband* design. Their super structures in the form of arcades and porticoes, their opening filled with lattice work, pinjari, and enriched carved wooden insertions enhance charm and accentuate the stylishness of this architecture. Vigne while travelling to Kashmir says the "first object on

¹ *Greater Kashmir*, Mar 20 2008, Pervaiz, (Godfrey Thomas Vigne who visited Kashmir in 1835, mentioned in his book 'Travels in Kashmir, Ladak, Iskardo, the Countries Adjoining the Mountain Course of the Indus, and the Himalaya, north of the Panjab with Map' (1844), that Zadibal witnessed rioting in the year 1830 when the place was inhabited by Persian traders. The place again witnessed rioting in 1872. More than hundred

years later, in 1983, the violence started around June 14th, and after raging for around three days, left around 700 injured and many shops and houses, and a mosque burnt and later it has been closed. Monday, December 8, 2014, Why is Madin Sahib locked? Written by Vinayak Razdan).

hearing about the Shupeyon town is a wooden masjid, or mosque, by the path -side, and standing on a bank, whence there is a view in the direction of the city of Kashmir; seen, however, to far greater advantage from the Shupeyon hill. The mosque is of the same pattern as that which I afterwards found to be common throughout the valley. It partakes of the aspect and architecture of the pagoda of China, but the slope of the roof is straight instead of being concave. Its basement, ten to twenty yards square, is of stone or wood, raised a few feet from the ground, and on which are ranged eight or ten pillars deeply grooved, and having their bases and capitals enveloped in fantastically shaped leaves. The Saracenic arches and cornices are elaborately carved and bearing pendulous ornaments in the Chinese fashion. The interior building is also four-sided, and is generally a beautiful specimen of wood-work. The windows and doors are Saracenic, with rich lattice worked panels instead of glass. The roofs, there are two or three, rising one above the other, each being less than the one below it and the top is surmounted by a much smaller cluster of little pillars, over which is another little roof, and a conical spire, and a brazen ornament, like an inverted basin, on the shaft of a weathercock” (Vigne, 1842: 268-70).

Other important monumental building which is outside the Srinagar is Khanqah-e-Pampore and is believed to have been built in 16th century by Baba Mohammad Sadiq, locally known as Said Baab Sahab, who was a disciple of Khawaja Masood Wali. As there is no forest nearby, there are many stories attached with the procurement of

wood for construction of the Khanqah. The most commonly believed story is that the long logs of wood used in the construction of Khanqah were brought down by flooding Jhelum River that still flows half a mile away. The main structure which is mostly made of wood and filled with bricks and mud, have three vertical rows of windows on both northern and southern sides of the structure. The original lattice windows were replaced with glass windows. However, the windows on the second floor were permanently shut using bricks and cement, therefore there is no spirituality left in this place.

Pinjari, a lattice work on wood has remained a novelty of decorations in Kashmir and is done on the fences, doors, railings, ventilators, room partitions, screens and windows. All the existing buildings in wood have such work in different geometric designs. There is but one example on stone at Srinagar’s 15th century Madin Sahib Tomb which has carved lattice scrolls instead of the geometric designs. This work on the tomb built during the reign of Zain-ul-Abidin indicates that the lattice craft was known at that time which served as a forerunner to the wooden craft.

Later we see in the Mosque of Shah Hamdan their openings were being filled with lattice work. It may have been introduced during the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, for him being the founder and architect of many such works in Kashmir and for which he introduced many craftsmen from Central Asia. In Central Asia, the craft was possibly introduced after the Arabs had mastered the mathematical patterns and created various designs of “Mashrabiya” or lattice² in a number

²The mashrabiya (sometimes shanshool or rushan) is an element of traditional Arabic architecture used since the middle Ages up to the mid-20th century. It is mostly used on the street side of the building; however, it may also be used internally on the sahn (courtyard) side. Mashrabiya were mostly used in houses and palaces although

sometimes in public buildings such as hospitals, inns, schools and government buildings. They are found mostly in the Mashriq – i.e. the eastern part of the Arab world, but some types of similar windows are also found in the Maghreb (the western part of the Arab world). They are very prevalent in Iraq, the Levant, Hejaz and Egypt.

of simple and complicated designs that were used for the window screens, fences doors, railings, ventilators, and room partitions (Bhat, 2008: 4-5). Mashrabiya or Shanasheel is an Arabic term given to a type of projecting oriel window enclosed with carved wood latticework located on the second storey of a building or higher, often lined with stained glass. In Kashmir one finds that the tradition of oriel windows on the street side is still common in most of the old buildings, which is almost same as that of Arab traditional houses.

Many designs of the *pinjarakari* were made in Kashmir. The most popular being those of the rising sun and cobwebs. The best kind of *pinjara* work was known by the Kashmiri names of *posh kandur*, *chaharkhanna*, *sadaekandur*, *shassitira*, *shah pahl*, *dwazedh-sar*, *shekhsar*, *juggari*, *shirinand totasheshtemez*. All these designs however do not differ from the mathematical designs of the Arabs or that used by the Central Asians in limited form. What Kashmiri craftsmen added was mastery of the craft in fine form and its survival till date speaks about its popularity in the past and as such figures frequently in the folklore of Kashmir, "*Zailepinjaratile nazartrav, Bali asimitamblav.*" (Bestow upon me one glance from behind the Pinjara. Oh Young beauty, pray do not tantalize me) (Bhat, 2008: 5).

Beautiful lattice work is also done on the Khanqah of Zain-ul-Din on the windows of top floor. *Aishmuqam* is a beautiful village located about 75 km south of Srinagar. This village is associated with *Sheikh Zain-ud-din*, the principal disciple of a famous saint of Kashmir called Sheikh Nor-ud-din. Sheikh Zain-ud-din believed to have lived here in a cave in 15th century. His native place was Bandedkot, in Kishtiwari, he accepted Islam under the guidance of Sheikh Nur-

ud-Din (popularly known as Nud Rishi) and his name was Ziya Singh (Azmi, 2001: 64). One day Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin paid a visit to Baba Zain-ud-Din, who at that time had gone to perform ablutions. The Sultan sat down on his prayer mat. When the Baba came, he was displeased to the behaviour of the Sultan and when he left, Baba cleaned himself and performs the ablutions afresh. Baba remarked that, "it has been defiled by the impurity of the worldly authority, therefore it should be cleaned". When the Sultan came to know about it he felt heart and send him to Tibet (Ladakh). But when the people and the Sultan came to know about the miracles of Baba in Tibet, Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin sent his son, Haider Shah, to Tibet to invite Baba back to Kashmir (Ali, 2008: 153-54).

Like *Lattice work*, *Khatamband* has survived in Kashmir for centuries but remains secluded among a small group of craftsmen in Srinagar. *Khatamband* is an art of making ceiling, by fitting small pieces of wood (preferably walnut or deodar wood) into each other in geometrical patterns. All this is done entirely with hands without use of nails. The wood is processed, cut into batons and panels and fixed in the ceiling in various floral and geometrical designs. Indeed, a painstaking work, which once used to take month to finish a 10 feet ceiling. The uniqueness of this art is that when the ceiling is complete, it acquires a unique geometrical pattern. With fewer or no nails used at all, the *Khatamband* ceiling can be easily disassembled and re-assembled at another place (Sangaru, 2008: 4). There are different theories and stories regarding the *Khatamband* and its origin in Kashmir. Some says that it was brought to Kashmir in AD 1541 by Mirza Haider Dughlat in Mughal times and some believe that *Khatamband* was brought to Kashmir during 14th

They are mostly found in urban settings and rarely in rural areas. Basra is often called "the city of Shanashe.

century by famous Sufi saint Shah Hamdan who visited the Himalayan valley along 700 followers that also include *Khatamband* artists from Iran. These artists passed this art to the local artists. But what I understand is that it was Shah Hamdan and his followers who actually brought this art along with other arts into Kashmir by finding one of the oldest *Khatamband* windows in the *Khanqah* of Shiekh Zain-ud-din in *Ashmuqam*, which is 25 km from Anantnag, and 75 km south of Srinagar. Sheikh Zain-ud-din believed to have lived here from 15th century, so there is no place for the theory that *Khatamband* was brought to Kashmir in AD 1541 by Mirza Haider Dughlat in Mughal times. During the Mughal times, stone architecture was reintroduced into Kashmir for monumental architecture and in their buildings stone screens instead of wood have been used on the Mughal patterns as in the Madrassa and mosque of Mulla Akhun (Pather Masjid).

Besides this, architecture was so much popular that most of the buildings of the Sultanate remain in existence for longer period of time even after the end of Sultanate; this is known from the writings of Abul Fazl, Jahangir and F. Bernier. Abul Fazl says, "The houses are all of wood and are of four stories and some of more, but it is not the custom to enclose them. Tulips are grown on the roofs which present a lovely sight in the spring time" (Fazl, 2011: 352). Jahangir in his *Tuzuk* says that, "The buildings of Kashmir are all wood; they make them two, three or four storied. And covering the roofs with earth, they plant bulbs of the *chaughashit-tulip*, which blooms year after year in the spring season, and is exceedingly beautiful" (Jahangir, 2006: 144-5).

F. Bernier who visited Kashmir during the reign of Aurangzeb makes a special mention of the latticed doors of the houses of kings and nobles, which screened from view the beautiful ladies of the harem. The *Jamia Masjid* in Srinagar rebuilt on the earlier pattern during his time has retained

the lattice designs that existed earlier. F. Bernier says, "In the town of Srinagar there are two wooden bridges thrown over the river and the houses although for the most part of wood, are well built and consist of two or three stories. There is, however, plenty of very fine freestone in the country; some old buildings, and a great number of ancient idol-temples in ruins, are of stone; but wood is preferred on account of its cheapness, and the facility with which it is brought from the mountains by means of so many small rivers" (Bernier, 1916: 398).

To conclude one can say that the wood art had enjoyed large period of patronage under Sultans in general and Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin in particular. Artisans remained busy in creating such wooden structures across the land that before the coming of Mughals in Kashmir there were hardly any mason left in the land to work on stone structures. Lawrence says, "the Kashmiris have won a great reputation as artisans, and were celebrated in the old days for their skill in art manufactures. The chief centre of Kashmiri industries is of course Srinagar, but other localities are famous for their special manufactures. Thus, Islamabad turns out excellent manufactures embroideries. Kulgam is famous for its lacquered woodwork. Bijbehara has a reputation for its excellence in wood-carving..... Some of the lattice-work and carving of the shrines is very beautiful, and argues a strong artistic instinct. The skill of the carpenter is the more to be admired when one considers the rude and primitive tools which he carries in his leathern apron. With a kind of half hammer, half adze [tur), and a chisel {turats), the rural carpenter will execute any work which his clients may require" (Lawrence, 1893: 369-70). Besides, Bernier says, "the Kachemirys are celebrated for wit, and considered much more intelligent and ingenious than the Indians. They are also very active and industrious. The

workmanship and beauty of their bedsteads, trunks, inkstands, boxes, spoons, and various other things are quite remarkable, and articles of their manufacture are in use in every part of the Indies. They perfectly understand the art of varnishing, and are eminently skilful in closely imitating the beautiful veins of a certain wood, by

inlaying with gold threads so delicately wrought that I never saw anything more elegant or perfect” (Bernier, 1916: 402). Such and other articles of wood carvings are still exported and one finds very little difference in their workmanship from those carved in Central Asia except in their traditional patterns and articles in use.

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Plate.1



Plate.2



Plate. 3



Plate.4



Plate. 5



Plate.6



Plate. 7



Plate.8



Plate.9



Plate.10



Plate .11



Plate.12



Plate. 13



Plate. 14



Plate. 15



Plate.16



Plate. 17



Plate. 18