

The Role of Ghiyas-uddin in Textile Industry during Safavid Era

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Abstract

During the Safavid period, Iranian weavers in cities such as Yazd, Isfahan, Kashan, Rasht, Mashhad, Qom and Tabriz could create the most important and largest centers for silk weaving. In this era, Yazd was known for a special fabric weaving called Dibaj which was woven at times with golden yarns. As there was a high level of competition among countries, Ghiyas-uddin and his family had a great opportunity to achieve beautiful designs during the Safavid period. The aim of this research is to investigate the textile art in the Safavid period and the role of Ghiyas in flourishing this art. This study is based on a descriptive-analytical method, and the data collection has been done through library studies.

Keywords: Ghiyas-uddin; Safavid Period; Textile Industry

1. Introduction

The history of textile industry in Iran has been for awareness and to know the emergence of spinning and knitting industry. To achieve the information the archeologist and researchers have seen the caves and the remains of the olden days. The national legend of Iran has transferred information with all their ambiguity. The existing evidence suggests that the textile industry began about 3000 BC in Iran, and its footprints have been discovered in Shush through the archeologist examination. Until the Moguls came to power textile was the thriving industry in Iran. Because of high consumption of textile industries in this period an attempt was made to be self-sufficient in the field of production. There are documents that prove in history the Iranian textile was exported and powerful people used every means to boost the textile industry. After the Mogul invasion in Iran along with lot of changes that took place in the lives of Iranian people and because of the fact that

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Moguls were the tributary of North Chinese government and insisting on the spread of Chinese textile entered Iran. The variety of color and cheap price of Chinese fabric was welcomed by the consumers. The domestic manufacturer instead of improving their product quality they reduced the price of the product so as to compete in terms of price with the Chinese market. Therefore, some of them willing or unwilling left the production and competition circle. After the Safavid came to power made great affords to revive the textile industry. Because of the consumption of expensive fabric like Zari, velvet and silk fabrics and continuous efforts during Safavid period for expanding foreign trade, hence the cheap price of fabric by the foreign merchants was imported from other countries (Beheshtipour, 1964: 56).

2. Khawaje Ghiyas-uddin Naghshbandi

Khawaje Ghiyas-uddin was a painter, fabric designer; weaver and owner of style of Safavid period and contemporary style of Shah Abbas as well the head of the royal workshop in Isfahan. Ghiyas-uddin was also a poet and eloquent speaker whose poems have been published by Hussein Masarat. He was born in the early 11th century in the city of Yazd. At youth age, due to his renowned art in knitting got into the Shah Abbas dynasty and took the responsibility to administer the royal workshop. His fabric design method has been adapted from the designs of the first Safavid period and style of Reza Abbasi. After a while he returned from Isfahan to Yazd. When he and his family in Yazd became the center of knitting of Iran and the textile products was exported to India (Shul, 2016: 3).

Ghiyas-uddin in his later years became isolated and came up with poetries and rhetoric. The art of knitting in Safavid era and flourishing of textile during Ghiyas-uddin time was in Yazd. Type of fabric of that time was plain silk, gold weaves and velvet – description of decoration and design on the fabric, features of fabric during Shah Abbas period – the biography of Ghiyas-uddin from source; Sovereignty by Sadighi Beik Afshar, ‘History of Yazd’ by Ahmad Taheri, ‘Taskareh Nasrabadi’, Taskareh atashkadeh Azar, and ‘comprehensive benefits’ compilation 1082-1090.

The beautiful designs of woven garments are the result of the taste, suffering and hard work of tens of well-known and unknown Iranian artists. The most prominent and famous of which is the Ghiyas-uddin design layout (or Naghshband). Ghiyas was a worthy artist and because of his skills in drawing on cardboard he was called Ghiyas Naghshband (Barbaro, 1970: 74).

In the following lines you will be acquainted to an artist who has great contribution in making Iran famous in Zari weaving and his family too has served the Iranian art community for years. The Safavid period is the golden age for art in knitting in Iran. Fabric weaving of this time such as carpet and rug weaving are examples of patience and mastery of the weavers. The fabric that was woven in the workshops of Yazd, Kerman, Kashan and Isfahan during this period was of three types: plain silk fabric, gold weave silk fabrics and silk velvet. These types of fabrics were usually used for the garments of prince and curtains and because of its beauty and value they were often sent as gifts for high aristocrats of the countries by the kings of Safavid. The decorations and motifs of these fabrics included human forms and images of animals, birds, flowers and plants, and landscape of martial art and battle stories of Iran or images of princes while hunting. Weaving of these landscapes because of the complex design and various colors required changes in spindle and comb on the weaving machine and this required special skills. At the time of great Shah Abbas, due to the support to knitting art, the knitting gold fabric was developed and people for the sake of peace and fortune achieved great interest in weaving golden weaved fabrics. Shah Abbas in addition to knitting workshops in Yazd and Kashan also established workshop for Zari and velvet weaving in Isfahan and invited skilled master to buy precious fabric to Isfahan. The fabrics samples

of Shah Abbas era still exist which shows the features of knitting of his era. These features are dark colors, design of faces, shapes of individuals and plants as natural form. Shah Abbas encouragement and support for weaving art caused the emergence of great artists in this field and promoted the texture of Zari and velvet fabric to the level of art of painting and other art (Amini, 2004: 79).

Therefore velvet and gold weave of Shah Abbas period are the finest and most beautiful fabrics ever woven in Iran. One of the most prominent masters of this profession was Ghiyas-uddin of Yazd who is one of the distinguishing features of knitting art in Iran. Ghiyas-uddin was during Shah Abbas and grandson of Moalana Kamal the calligrapher. Ghiyas-uddin other than having weaving skills in velvet and painting and designing was also famous in eloquence of speech, unity to percept, delicacy, study of perfection and completion bliss from great happiness and well-being (Shul, 2016: 4).

The author of comprehensive benefits states that Ghiyas-uddin was unique in design layout and constantly wrote about strange and curious forms and was famous in this work. With all the great works kings of India, Turkey and Rome handed over many gifts for him. And when the accommodation in their factory was over it was ask for again (Ruhfar, 2001: 92). Ghiyas-uddin operated the Zari and velvet weaving industry in Isfahan and also participated in weaving of the fabric (Zaki, 1987: 112).

Ghiyas-uddin design style and decoration has been taken from the designs of the 10th century that is the first period of Safavid dynasty. He has drawn two technical innovations in weaving of multi-twist and velvet fabric. Multi-twisted clothes is the one where two or more plain fabrics are weaved together in a way that each are independent but are matched together in a manner to make the floral design projecting and clear. This style of fabric weaving is used for most sophisticated and durable designs and images. Ghiyas-uddin with the combination of three fabrics and green, white and red colors created the frames in which not only delicate flowers, birds and natural animals are displayed but also the role of young prince resting. According to the works remained Ghiyas was well skilled in creating various designs and bringing it on the fabric which was unique in Iran. The love story of Leila and Majnoon had fascinated the master who was a poet, weaver and designer. On the Satin cloth he has designed Leila on the palanquin of the camel walking through the desert and designed Majnoon who is thin and sitting aside with animals. The box covers with Zari of Golabatun which is the weave of Yazd with figure of Ghiyas 1000 AH, measuring 235 centimeter is preserved in the ancient Iranian museum. Though the abundance of flowers and shrubs surrounding the design has prevented the appearance of human face and this was the main contradiction to the weaver was ornamentation of the fabric. But, the same design and small pattern has natural beauty which was of ten times the subject of the design. The velvet which has human pattern is in same style, and only two pieces of the velvet has the figure of Ghiyas. Today there are not more than eight pieces of woven cloth with his figure seen between two silk and velvet fabrics (Ramazankhani, 2008: 89).

After many years living in Isfahan and operating the Zari and velvet weaving industry returned to Yazd. According to the author of comprehensive benefit for the sake of Darol fanah in the garden of Darolshafa Sahebi completed his excellence and the poem which was the result of his nature was written in gold in a book. Ghiyas after passing his young age, repented at his last stages and isolated himself and recited Sufi poems. Around the age 60-70's he wrote a quatrain poem which is about sadness quoted as 'the youth life has gone with the wind and hey old man remember that you are now at the age of 60-70's'. there is another poem from Ghiyas-uddin that points out about he been a Yazdi and spontaneity of art, quotes that 'the poor is the one who's home is the city of Yazd, the

poorest is the one who's art is the design layout, the worse of these two is the one who speaks'. Ghiyas-uddin married twice and has six children and has mentioned their names in a passage of the poem. Some children of Ghiyas were artist like him and worked as design layout and weaver of precious fabrics, but among them only one name Muzeuddin as Moaz and son of Ghiyas remains on the fabric (Ackarman, 1984: 174).

Yazd during Safavid period due to Ghiyas-uddin, children and grandchildren became the important center of textile in Iran. The collaboration of painter and textile workers caused the creation of fabrics that was the masterpiece in knitting techniques. The reputation of the weaver and design layout of Yazd reached a level that they were invited to work in the Indian textile machinery and use their art and skills to advance the industry of India (Azar Bidgoli, 1958:142).

Ghiyas-uddin lived during the Shah Abbas I era (996-1038 AH) owner of 'Majmoal Khavas' book known him as Saadi's child. He lived in Yazd and then migrated to Isfahan. He was famous celebrity of his time in velvet weaving and fabric weaving and designed silk fabric. He was master in archery. From his work, the Zari of Satin fabric is the work of the picture on the palanquin and camel and the cameleer guiding. Another work is the box covering that its edges are written in beautiful Sols inscription and in the middle there are flowers. With the figure of Ghiyas, Yazd weaving, silk Zari quarter and two with white, green and floral and the text woven in bergamot design style (Azar Bidgoli, 1958: 150).

3. History of Traditional Textile in Iran

The textile industry during Seljuk era achieved high excellence in terms of manner of knitting, innovation in design types, and aesthetic of color. Although there are not many fabrics of that era but enough exists which shows the great design and weavers skills.

Their aesthetic was related to features that differ from the pre-Seljuk era. The weavers of Seljuk period were not interested in illustrious colors; they could recognize the color contrast and only preferred two colors such as light blue and navy blue or black or green on a white or red background.

In Seljuk period, the city of Rey, Yazd, Kashan and Tabriz were among the main center of weaving of Iran. Rey especially in the field of type of double silk cloth called Al-Monayer. In the 7th and 8th century because of increased import of Chinese commodity, expansion of Iran's trade with China, the Mogul attack and the entry of large number of Chinese weavers to Iran, this increased the influence of styles and Chinese decoration methods in the textile industry of Iran. Accordingly, the Iranian textile weavers imitated the Chinese design such as dragons, phoenix and legendary animals, lotus flowers, chalipa wood and Chinese clouds. During the Mogul period the fabric edges was colored and variety and beauty of landscape are implemented, and some of them were ornamented with direct geometric lines or broken lines or cross shaped lines (Pope, 1959: 284).

The Iranian industry during Timurid period, despite of details taken from the Chinese industry, did not completely lose its Iranian base. Although in most design the Chinese influence has been seen but in design, coloring and technical principles, the ancient rules and regulations has been sustained. The Iran's textile in Timurid period was associated with the decoration of plants and this was the style observed in Iraq and Egypt textiles.

The textile industry during the Timurid period got prosperity and thriving in the cities of Yazd, Isfahan, Kashan and Tabriz and factories of these cities exported the textile products to the nearby countries. It can be stated in a sentence that in Iran fabrics woven during Safavid era was unique in the history of world textile art. Based on the effect of miniature and fabric pieces that remained and

preserved in the museums is believed that in Safavid era the fine textile fabrics was used for all occasions and ceremonies.

Precious and heavy fabrics were used for clothes, tent, curtains, gowns, gifts to the aristocrats and foreign representatives and envelopes for political correspondence. There is diversity in the design of these fabrics. The elegant designs of these fabrics are embodied with flowers and plants, animals design and bright and interesting colors. The Iranian were more interested in weaving flowers such as roses, tulip, jonquil, lilies on fabrics and many of these luxurious fabrics includes scenes from Shahnameh and event stories of other poets, landscapes, garden and hunting (Bayat, 2003: 163).

One of the finest fabrics was the cloth that Zari was sewn on the silver and gold background as small map. This type of fabric was appreciated for the formal clothes of the court. The most common work of this period was the production of silk fabric known as Tafteh which was the works of Isfahan and Abyaneh. In Safavid period, multi-layered fabrics were the most important parts of Yazd weaving industry.

In late 16th century, the double layer fabrics had many weaves and in the samples of these type of fabric was evident with the name of Ghiyas. From the variety of multi-layered and multi-weaved fabric interesting sample exists from Isfahan which was double layered fabric of which one is simple weave and the other oblique weaves.

In Safavid period, the Kashan fabric with multi-weft and multi-warp are seen with smooth and uniform finish. Some of these fabrics are embroidered by silver yarn and their weaves are oblique. The products of fabric weaving during Safavid period was velvet that still in the history of fabric weaving no one could find error on these beautiful and technical perfect products. The Iranian did not weave embossed flowers on velvet but, they used velvet cloth with tiny weave, lowering and increasing the weft of the cloth and length of the knots gave hollow and raised forms to velvet carpets, curtains and tents. During the Safavid era, the weaving of silk fabric had reached its golden age and Iranian factories wove the best type of velvet and Diba fabrics with coloring silk yarn and sometime with silver yarn (Beik Turkman, 2003: 311).

The weaving of precious and cashmere fabrics are customary to Yazd and Kerman were the most important centers for production of these fabric till date. Between the 11th and 12th centuries which is the time when Isfahan was the capital during Safavid dynasty, the production of cloth Qalamkar printing reached its peak and Isfahan even during previous period was the center of production of the fabric became famous. The printing product of Qalamkar has great variety and desirable quality and production level increased dramatically.

The most important center in Safavid period were Herat, Yazd, Isfahan, Kashan, Rasht, Mashhad, Qom, Saveh, Soltanieh, Ardestan and Shirvan. Their factories were well-known for fine and perfection in texture, color proportion and aesthetic. In 12th and 14th century and in contemporary era, hand weaving of Iran lost its growth and decline in the production of precious fabrics such as velvet, Zari, cashmere, and silk fabric and also number of weaving fabric reduced. Today, handmade in rural and nomadic area is somewhat customary and the production of exquisite fabric is limited to some workshops and some centers.

Now, production centers for Iran's handmade fabric are in Yazd, Khorasan, Mazandaran, Golestan, Gilan and Khuzestan provinces. The Zari and velvet fabrics are produced only in the centers of cultural heritage of country in Tehran, Kashan and fine art college of Isfahan. The production of cashmere weaving was by few industrialists in cities of Yazd and Kerman (Sanson, 1998: 185).

4. Textile of the Safavid and Ghiyas-uddin

Shah Abbas had interest in the textile industry and worked hard to revive this industry. When he heard the news that Indians competed with the Iranian fabrics and they made cashmere by the using alfalfa goat wool residing in the Himalayan Mountains and offered the world with the finest cloth than the Iranian cashmere and replaced the Iran cashmere with Kashmiri cashmere. Therefore he quickly worked to revive the textile industry in Iran and repaired the facilities of Silk Road and utilized his capital to set up 28000 textile factories in Isfahan, Kashan, Yazd and Shushtar. He then called upon Ghiyas-uddin, Alireza Abbasi and their workers and asked them to replace the old design with new and exquisite designs (Alvand, 1976: 78).

The Iranian textile designer and fabric weaver of the 10th century whose works and their names are memorable. These individuals are Ghiyas-uddin, Abdullah, Hossein, Yahya, Mouzaldin son of Ghiyas and Aban Mohammad are the names featured on fabrics which are preserved in the European and American museums.

During Shah Abbas period two technical initiatives emerged that resulted in the progress of textile. One was multiple fabrics and the other velvet. Ghiyas-uddin was the greatest master of multi-layer fabric. This type of fabric was used for weaving the most difficult images. Ghiyas-uddin was the first person to change the fabric design from the hereditary state and worked scientifically to prevent it from destruction of design and patterns. He wrote each design or texture step individually on specific boards from the first weft to the final weft, illustrated with numbers and as a poet brought in some of them as poems (Tavernia, 2017: 96).

5. Conclusion

The Safavid period was the golden age for the textile industry of Iran, as it witnessed a move towards creating artists as weavers and designers. This includes artist such as Ghiyas-uddin along with Reza Abbasi had invented the artistic style in designing. The extensive support of sultans and Safavid court from artist along with economic prosperity and political and security stability of the country had influenced on the flourishing of the textile industry of Iran. In fact, during this period, the merchant activities in the production of raw silk from Astarabad and Khorasan with the government supervision on textile workshops and customers in Iran and other countries can be among the most important factors in the tendency of people of Iran and textile and part of agriculture was directed to the production of required raw materials. The textile industry developed under these infrastructures. Achieving patterns by designers of Yazd from Tabriz artists along with the spread of stagnancy of textile in this region caused, that by the end of 10th century the design of Yazd were repeated. In this situation the most prominent designer of Iranian textile history Ghiyas-uddin came to existence in Iran. Although, Ghiyas like Behzad was not the founder of a particular style in art and was conservative related to the patterns of Tabriz, but by developing his innovations such as velvet and multiple layers and later head of the royal textile workshops of Isfahan had a fundamental effect in the flourishing of the textile industry of Iran during Safavid dynasty.

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