



# Cultural Links Between Kashmir and Central Asia

## Why in News?

Recently, **Kashmiri artisans reunited with Central Asian master craftspeople** after 500 years at Srinagar's Sher-i-Kashmir International Convention Centre, celebrating the city's '[World Craft City](#)' recognition.

## Key Points

- **Historical Background:**
  - **In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Zain-ul-Abidin**, the Sultan of Kashmir, **introduced Central Asian wood-carving techniques, fostering significant craft exchanges** with Samarkand, Bukhara, and Persia.
    - However, these interactions diminished after his death, nearly ceasing by 1947 due to political border changes.
- **Reviving Lost Crafts:**
  - 17 artisans from **Iran, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Russia** visited Srinagar to revive lost crafts and cultural links. The exchange concluded on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2024.
  - Srinagar was awarded the '**World Craft City**' title by the [World Crafts Council \(WCC\)](#) in June 2024, highlighting the **city's deep-rooted craft heritage**.
- **Cultural Exchange Between Kashmir and Central Asia:**
  - Kashmiri artisans and their Central Asian counterparts explored shared roots in **handicrafts**. Central Asian artisans admired the **traditional processes preserved by Kashmiri craftspeople**.
  - Iranian woodcarvers noted the differences in wood carving techniques. Kashmir uses a **chisel and hammer**, while **Iran employs just one chisel for detailed patterns**.
    - It is emphasized that art, not craft, is central to Iranian art forms, highlighting cultural exchanges between the regions.
  - Uzbekistani delegate Aziz Murtazaev acknowledged the craft similarities between Uzbekistan and Kashmir, emphasizing the preservation of traditional techniques.
  - Kashmiri and Central Asian artisans found **common ground in their intricate designs and techniques**, particularly in **suzani and sozni work**, which share similar aesthetics.
  - The **rich history of Kashmiri carpets**, named after Iranian cities, highlights the region's historical ties to **Iran's carpet-making tradition**.

## Srinagar's Craft

- According to an [Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage-Kashmir \(INTACH-Kashmir\)](#) report of 2024, Srinagar is one of the **ancient cities of South Asia with a continuously recorded history of about 1,500 years**.
  - The INTACH was founded in 1984 in New Delhi with the vision to spearhead heritage awareness and conservation in India. Today, INTACH is recognized as one of the world's largest heritage organisations.
- The city is known globally for the '[Cashmere](#)' brand and **paisley motif**.
- Crafts such as **Zanjan** and **Filigree** were introduced by **Iranian artisans** five centuries ago.
- Srinagar's **carpet tradition** began in the late **14<sup>th</sup> century** with **Sufi Saint Sayyid Ali**

**Hamdani.**

- In **2021**, it was recognized as a [UNESCO Creative City](https://www.unesco.org/en/creative-cities) for crafts and folk arts.

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