

## #KASHMIRI SHAWLS

### Pashmina, Kani, Jamawar And Now Shahtoosh

Kashmiri shawls represent far more than warmth or adornment, they embody centuries of artistry, cultural exchange, and history



Kashmiri shawls are among the most celebrated textile traditions in the world, admired for their refinement, warmth, and intricate artistry. Originating in the Kashmir Valley, these shawls have been prized for centuries by royalty, nobility, and collectors. Among the most notable types are Pashmina, Kani, Jamawar, and the now-banned Shahtoosh shawl, each representing a distinct chapter in Kashmir's rich textile heritage.

**Origins of Kashmiri Shawls and Pashmina**  
The tradition of shawl weaving in Kashmir dates back over 600 years. Pashmina shawls are made from the fine undercoat wool of the Changthangi goat, found in the high-altitude regions of Ladakh. The word "pashm" comes from Persian, meaning "soft gold," reflecting the fiber's extreme fineness and warmth. The wool is hand-combed from the goat during molting season, then spun, woven, and embroidered entirely by hand.

**Kani Shawls: Mathematics Woven in Thread**  
Among the most labour-intensive Kashmiri shawls are Kani shawls. Instead of a shuttle, artisans use small wooden sticks called kanis to weave intricate patterns directly into the fabric. Progress is extremely slow; a skilled weaver may complete only 1 to 2 centimeters per day, depending on design complexity. A single Kani shawl can take several months to years to finish. This painstaking process results in a reversible shawl where the design is integral to the weave rather than embroidered afterward.

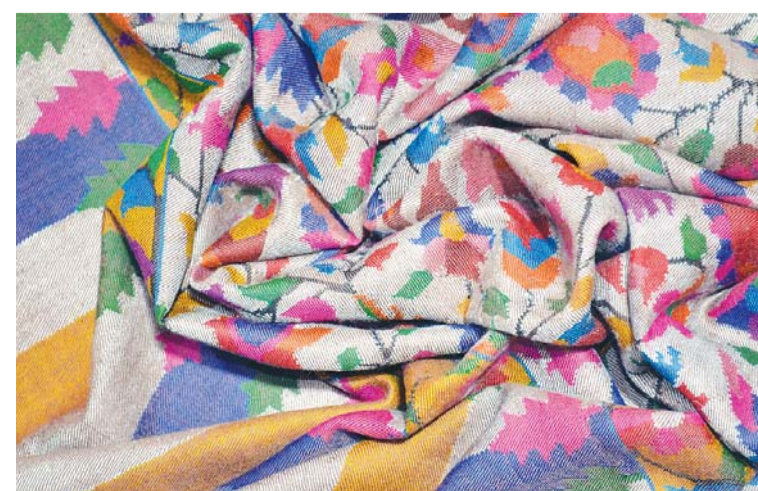
**Jamawar Shawls: Woven Grandeur**  
Jamawar shawls are known for their dense, all-over patterns featuring floral and paisley motifs. The name "Jamawar" comes from Persian, meaning "robe fabric," as these shawls were often worn as garments by royalty. Traditionally woven using Pashmina wool or silk blends, Jamawar shawls became highly popular during



the Mughal era and later influenced European textile design, including the famous Paisley patterns of Scotland. **Shahtoosh Shawls: The Finest and Most Controversial**  
The Shahtoosh shawl is considered the finest and lightest shawl ever made. It is woven from the hair of the Tibetan antelope (Chiru). The fiber is so fine that a Shahtoosh shawl can pass through a ring. Historically, these shawls were reserved exclusively for royalty, including Mughal emperors and Persian kings.

However, obtaining Shahtoosh requires killing the Chiru, which led to a drastic decline in its population. As a result, the production, sale, and possession of Shahtoosh shawls have been banned in India and internationally under wildlife protection laws, including CITES. Despite the ban, Shahtoosh shawls have historically fueled black markets, making them symbols of both luxury and ethical controversy.

Kashmiri shawls represent far more than warmth or adornment, they embody centuries of artistry, cultural exchange, and history. From the ethical luxury of Pashmina to the mathematical precision of Kani weaving, the opulence of Jamawar, and the forbidden legacy of Shahtoosh, these shawls tell stories of empire, craftsmanship, and responsibility. Preserving traditional weaving while respecting ethical and environmental boundaries remains essential to protecting this extraordinary heritage.



# Defamed over centuries Cacti finds gardens of favour



Cactus garden, Chandigarh.



Anjali Sharma  
Senior Journalist & Wildlife Enthusiast

Arriving back home was rather uneventful after this revelation of a 'yatra.' Every single mound of unbuilt Jaipur hosted a nettled cacti or two to keep invoking my curiosity. Cacti have been part of modern Indian and more closely of Rajasthani life, we all know. That these were plants full of use must have been discovered long ago because there are long references to them in 'Ayurveda.' Land and many friends I know, regularly use aloe vera to try and look younger than we are. Definitely, they deserved to be known better.



Aloe vera.

There is still a controversy as to the precise date when humans first entered those areas of the New World where cacti are more commonly found. An archaeological site in Chile has been dated to around 15,000 years ago, suggesting cacti would have been encountered by humans there, before then. There are evidences of the use of cacti in the ancient new world, cave paintings in the Serra da Capivara in Brazil, and seeds found in ancient middens (waste dumps) in Mexico and Peru, with dates estimated at 12,000-9,000 years ago, and suggest that cacti may have been in abundant use. Hunter-gatherers likely collected cactus fruits in the wild and brought them back to their camps.

around 15,000 years ago, suggesting cacti would have been encountered by humans there, before then. There are evidences of the use of cacti in the ancient new world, cave paintings in the Serra da Capivara in Brazil, and seeds found in ancient middens (waste dumps) in Mexico and Peru, with dates estimated at 12,000-9,000 years ago, and suggest that cacti may have been in abundant use. Hunter-gatherers likely collected cactus fruits in the wild and brought them back to their camps. We don't know when cacti were



Cactus garden, Jaipur.

first cultivated. Opuntias (prickly pears) were used for a variety of purposes by the Aztecs, whose empire, lasting from the 14th to the 16th century, had a complex system of horticulture. Their capital from the 15th century was Tenochtitlan (now Mexico City), one explanation for the origin of the name is that it includes the Nahuatl word nochtli, referring to the fruit of an opuntia. The coat of arms of Mexico shows an eagle perched on a cactus while holding a snake, an image at the center of the myth of the founding of Tenochtitlan. The Aztecs symbolically linked the ripe red fruits of an opuntia to human hearts; just as the fruit quenches thirst, so, offering human hearts to the sun god ensured the sun would keep moving.

Jaipur proudly owns one of the rarities called a cactus garden, personally owned by K.K. Agarwal. He saucily says, "There are only three worth mentioning cactus gardens in

## #FLOWER POWER



India, one in Panchkula in Chandigarh, Haryana, one in Sailana near Ratlam in MP, and the third one in Jaipur, belonging to Mr. K.K. Agarwal." He goes on to inform that the Cactus Garden is one of the most popular sightseeing attractions of Ratlam, situated in the premises of the Sailana Palace of the town. It is situated 21 km away from the district of Ratlam, on the Ratlam-Banswara Highway. This garden is at least 50 years old, while the Sailana Palace, where it is situated, is 200 years old. This garden houses about 800 species and their multiplication of cactus and succulent plants. Many are very mature tall ones.

The Maharaja Digvijay Singh of the Sailana Palace fame was a good cook besides being a cactus lover. His daily routine in the morning at 9:00 AM was to enter the big kitchen and cook one dish for the day. The renowned publishers from

Mumbai, Vakils, published a book on his non-veg culinary. The cactus garden in Panchkula is named after its founder Dr. J. S. Sarkaria. This gentleman worked with exceptional love and extraordinary diligence for the much despised plant species. He created a landmark that makes this city unique. Chandigarh Cactus Garden was set up in the year 1987. This is supposed to be the largest succulent botanical garden of Asia. It is located at a distance of about 8 kms from the city of gardens. Situated in the heart of the city of Panchkula, it covers a total area of 7 acres. You can spot nearly 2000 different kinds of species over there.

He goes on to say, "My collection of cactus and succulents consists largely of rare succulents of South African origin from the Mesembryanthemum family. Very few have been able to grow these plants in India while I have about 2500 different named varieties in my



## Loomis Day: Honouring A Pioneer Of Early Wireless Communication

Observed on May 30, Loomis Day honours American dentist and inventor Mahlon Loomis, a pioneer of wireless communication. In 1866, Loomis successfully transmitted signals between two mountaintops in Virginia using kites and electrical currents, decades before the invention of radio. Although his work did not receive widespread recognition during his lifetime, his experiments laid early foundations for modern wireless technology. Loomis Day celebrates innovation, curiosity and the spirit of experimentation that drives scientific progress. It serves as a reminder that groundbreaking ideas often begin as bold experiments and can shape the future of communication and connectivity worldwide.

"I have about 2500 different named varieties in my collection, so much so that my name is named in the Limca Book of Records. I have many more succulents and cactus plants in my collection."

## PART:2

some of the horror of this really tried and unknowingly feared species.

1. The first skyscraper was designed by an architect after he saw and studied the carcass of a fallen tall growing cereus cactus. These plants have several steel like rods arranged in a circle submerged in pulp, which support the weight of the plant.

2. Oil has been extracted from cactus which is included in a well-known brand of face cream.

3. Different varieties of cactus were used for food and medicinal purposes by Native Americans for thousands of years. The buckhorn Cholla was used medicinally by the Cahuilla. The stems were burned and the ashes were applied to cuts and burns to aid in the healing process.

4. Cactus was not native of the old world, it belongs to American continent. The first few things brought back from America by the Spaniards included cactus plant, now known as Ariocarpus, which was sold for equal weight of the plant to that of gold, this is history.

Concluded.



Prickly pear.

He goes on to tell us some more reasons to demystify and take away

rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com

## #INCULTURATION

# The Inculturation of Christianity in India

Robert de Nobili recognizing the deep cultural and religious differences between European Christianity and Hinduism

In 1609, an Italian Jesuit missionary named Robert de Nobili arrived in the southern Indian city of Madurai, in the Tamil heartland, to spread Christianity. However, despite his deep commitment and extensive missionary zeal, de Nobili quickly faced a significant challenge: he was unable to convert the local Hindu population. His initial efforts, based on traditional European missionary tactics, were ineffective in this deeply entrenched Hindu society. This led him to rethink his approach and eventually adopt a radical and culturally sensitive strategy that would come to define his mission: inculturation.



Recognizing the deep cultural and religious differences between European Christianity and Hinduism, de Nobili began to see that the traditional methods of preaching would not work in India. European missionaries, who had tried to convert Indians using European customs, were facing resistance from the local population. The existing methods were seen as being at odds with the local religious practices and values.

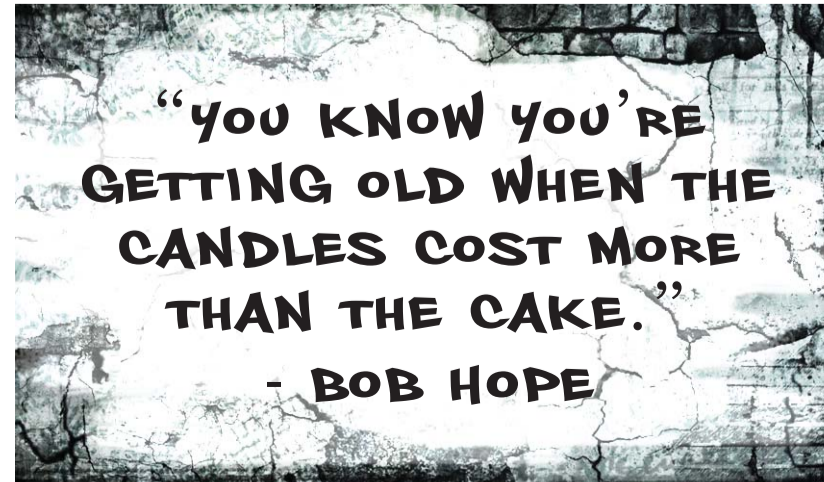
But his cultural adaptation went beyond mere appearances. De Nobili reframed Christian theology in a way that would resonate with Hindus. He introduced the concept of Christianity as the "Fifth Veda," drawing a parallel with the four canonical Vedas of Hinduism, which are the sacred scriptures of the Hindu faith. De Nobili argued that Christianity, particularly its theological teachings, was not fundamentally incompatible with Hindu philosophy. Instead, he sought to present it as a natural extension of the religious ideas already present in India. He described Jesus Christ as an incarnation of God, much like the Hindu

understanding of divine avatars like Krishna and Rama. This radical approach, which later came to be known as inculturation, the blending of Christianity with local culture, was not without controversy. Many of de Nobili's fellow missionaries in India opposed his methods, criticizing him for compromising the purity of Christian teachings. The Catholic Church in Rome was also cautious about his approach, as it was seen as an experiment rather than a well-established strategy. Some argued that adopting Hindu customs and presenting Christianity as part of Hindu philosophy could lead to confusion and the dilution of the Christian message.

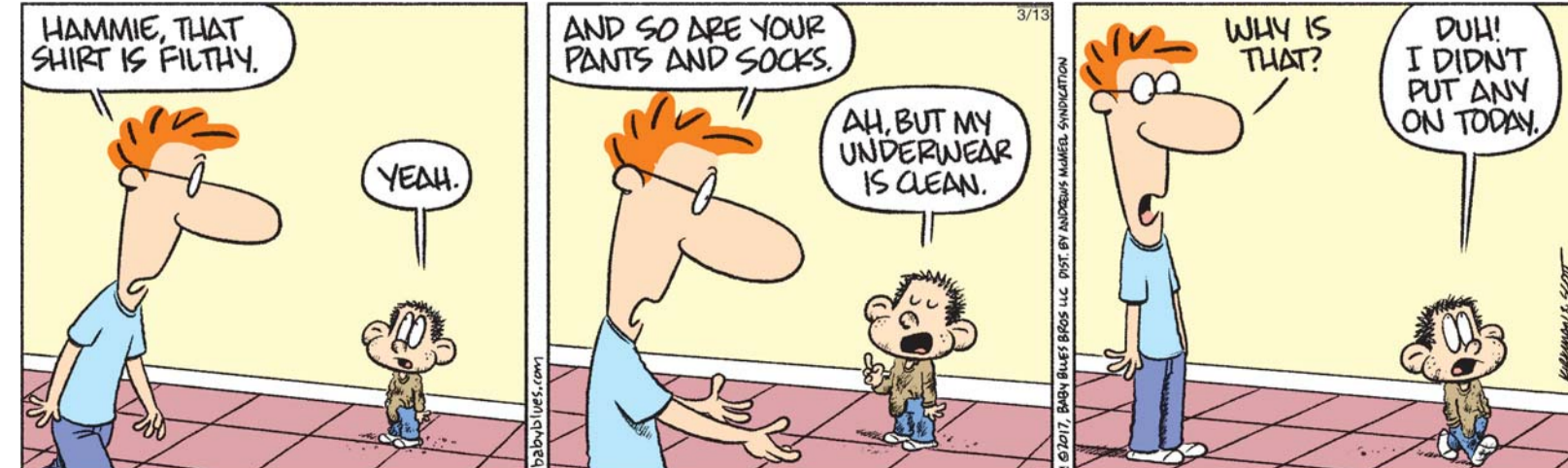
Despite this opposition, de Nobili's mission proved successful in attracting high-caste Hindus, including some Brahmins, to Christianity. His inculturative approach was revolutionary because it acknowledged that for Christianity to spread in India, it needed to respect the country's rich cultural and religious heritage. His method allowed for meaningful engagement between Christianity and Hinduism, which paved the way for future Christian missions in the region.

By the time de Nobili died in 1656, his efforts had significantly impacted the way Christianity was presented in India. Although his methods were not universally accepted, his work laid the foundation for further cultural adaptation by future missionaries. His legacy also influenced the ongoing dialogue between Eastern and Western religions and demonstrated the importance of understanding and respecting local traditions in the process of religious exchange.

## THE WALL



## BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

## ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman