

## PATIALA CRAFTS AND CRAFTSMANSHIP: SUBALTERN PERSPECTIVE THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY

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### **Abstract**

*Gurbaksh Singh Kaleka, a cousin of Fateh Kaur, Greatly Helped Baba Ala Singh to Founding Patiala. There was a small village called Pattan Wala (Theh), three miles from Sanur, Ala Singh encouraged Gurbaksh Singh Kalka to build a fort there in 1753 AD. He built a Mud fort at the site which is known as Garhi Sodhiian in Patiala. "The present Fort is called "Quila Mubarak", which was built in 1762, where Baba Ala Singh used to come and stay. It gradually acquired the States of Heritage and Royal City, as many of the Rajas and Maharajas after the death of Baba Ala Singh, 'Maharaja Amar Singh, Maharaja Sahib Singh, Maharaja Karam Singh, Maharaja Narinder Singh, Maharaja Mahendra Singh, Maharaja Rajinder Singh, Maharaja Bhupinder Singh and Captain Amrinder Singh have been not alone officially involved in shaping the city but economically socially and gutturally enriching by their courtiers. The paper would look into the Crafts and Craftsmanship of the settlers adjustment the Quila Mubarak who had been unified by Maharaja Bhupinder Singh to Settle down. Sublterns perspective through photography and analysis of their trade with is done to highlight the importance and significance of the lesser-known Crafts.*

### **Keywords**

*Baba Ala Singh, Maharaja, Quila-Mubarak, Sublterns, Photography.*

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## Introduction

One of the most famous trade routes in India was the Silk Route. The Silk Route connected India with China as well as the Roman Empire. Also the Spice Route was a method of sea trade. Salt Route, Incense Route, Tin Route, and Amber Road are some other examples of trade in ancient India. Artisans and crafts entered India through these routes. Education or Temple towns were centers of education and religion. Nalanda is an example of an educational town. The *Maharajas* patronized the artisans and contributed to the development of their craftsmanship. Among the Princely States of India, the Princely Estate of Patiala is known for such patronage, where art flourished. Art completes an artistic and aesthetic journey moving from period to period, in a continuum that matures and grows over a specific period. During the journey, the artist crosses the stage and brings them to the present. Such a process is associated with photography as with every art medium, photography too follows the technical and aesthetic journey of cameras through different Eras to reach the digital camera.<sup>1</sup> The history of photography from written and Visual sources and the Cultural Heritage of Patiala state as well as today's images reveal the changing forms of contemporary photography and the unique perspectives of artists. "The founder of the Patiala princely state was Baba Ala Singh, who founded Patiala in 1762.<sup>2</sup> After the death of Baba Ala Singh, 'Maharaja Amar Singh, Maharaja Sahib Singh, Maharaja Karam Singh, Maharaja Narinder Singh, Maharaja Mahendra Singh, Maharaja Rajinder Singh, Maharaja Bhupinder Singh and Maharaja Yadwinder Singh'<sup>3</sup> assumed the throne by taking over the reins of the Patiala Princely Estate. These kings patronized the royal buildings, sculptures, paintings, etc. During the reign of *Maharaja Mahendra Singh*, the Department of Photography was opened in the Princely Estates. Along with the arts, the art of photography was also wrapped like a pearl. The photographs of the *Maharajas* became part of a collection and became a center of attraction for the People, Tourists, Historians and Philosophers.

Although the technology of photography is taking new steps with scientific progress, it is difficult to relive History. Through photography, *Maharaja* continued to portray the grandeur. The charm of the colorful stories of the Royalty of Patiala was captured in photographs over time.<sup>4</sup> Today, photography is reaching new heights due to the artistic thinking and aesthetic appeal of the artists. Earlier black-and-white pictures were taken due to the non-availability of color technology. The reason why the artist prefers black-and-white photography, it has more of an element of imagination, and aesthetics while color is more visual and Distracts the main Subject. But did the artists change themselves by taking guidance from History or have changes in subject matter, thinking and developed over time?<sup>5</sup>

Photography, which enjoyed the Era of the *Maharajas* until India's Independence, entered a new Phase. The State Power passed from the hands of the *Maharajas* to the leaders. Artistic lighting influenced ordinary people.<sup>6</sup> Photography dating back to the period of the Princely Estate of Patiala played an important role in establishing India as a republic during the Partition. Like Court Painting, photography began to expand beyond court subjects. Due to the rapid creation of images, painters calculated photography as an exclusive medium, a new subject, an artistic aesthetic, focusing on State leaders, ordinary people and subtle subjects.

Pictures played a unique role in conveying the image of the leaders who became the rulers of the country to the people and instilling confidence. Image creators managed to occupy a unique position during the changing times of India in the 20th century. The artists of the 19th century served as milestones for future artists and presented their underlying and four-dimensional artistic form through technological development, broadening the scope of the artist's technical thinking and expertise. Today's artists are free to portray subjects of their choice. Earlier artists could not express themselves according to political pressure and social recognition. In it, the life of the common people is particularly descriptive, who play a role in the legacy of the society and the State.

The photographers evolved during the time of Maharajas or people of high families who could easily adopt this art trend professionally. Photographers mostly portrayed rich people i.e. *Maharajas* and families. Under the contemporary view of photography, the common people and artisans of Patiala were excluded from the photographs by the upper class. Contemporary photographers portrayed life and society's attitudes in an artistic form that satirized the upper class. Common people participated in politics due to social awareness. The best example of which Ambedkarism drew the line of political power in the hands of the marginalized people.<sup>7</sup> When these working people get the right to get an education, they can raise the standard of living socially and mentally. Some photographers are getting attention for presenting the lives of common people through art. Patriarchy encourages only men to be photographed in Court scenes and royal Families. The author attempted is to highlight the Subalterns in the society who are on the periphery.

The post-colonial theory term, subaltern, is often broadly equated with not only those from colonized cultures without a voice in their larger society, but also with all groups that face discrimination - such as women, workers, minority groups in a developed country, etc. A subaltern is someone with a low ranking in a social, political, or other hierarchy. It can also mean someone who has been marginalized or oppressed. Antonio Gramsci coined the term subaltern to identify the cultural

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hegemony that excludes and displaces specific people and social groups from the socio-economic institutions of society, to deny their agency and voices in colonial politics.<sup>8</sup> The ancient education system teaches us inclusiveness more than teaching and learning in private. Secondly, the distribution of wealth according to the needs of each individual. The entire caste system has led to disproportionate wealth in the society. There needs to be a system in place to redistribute natural resources and wealth that has been taken away unlawfully from them.

According to the researcher, markets came into existence at the beginning with the purpose of settling the people who came from outside at Patiala and providing basic facilities of bread, clothes and housing, where all kinds of comfort facilities are available even today. Under this, *Aryan Samaj Bazar*, *Achar Bazar*, *Shoe Bazar*, *Cloth Bazar*, *Shah Nashin Bazar*, *Sadr Bazar*, *Kasserian Bazar* (*Utensils Bazar*), *Thatherian Bazar* (*Utensil makers*), *Luhar Bazar* etc<sup>9</sup>. came into existence. Which are the center of attraction for the people of Patiala and outer cities. Cobblers, weavers, blacksmiths, potters, carpenters, stone masons, courtesans, *kinnars*, peasant pilgrims, peddlers etc. some of the prominent characters involved in common life in Patiala and contemporary princely states are absent from the pictures. A whirlwind of mind asks if these characters are not a part of the society during the political regime. These characters have become the mainstream of the society and are still active in the service of the common people. Because of the common people, first the *Maharaja* and now the politicians are living a comfortable life. Industrialists are encroaching on the wealth of these people's rights. Common people are forced to live in miserable conditions. The famous and highly respected artists made efficient families as their subject matter. Artists like Jyoti Bhatt and Raghubir Singh, Kuldeep Soni, Devinder Singh, Amarjit Singh Sukhi, Ranjodh Singh, Vijay Ozo and Dr. Pawan Kumar feel the roots of life among the rural people. According to Raghu Rai 50% of the Indian Population is on the Streets whether by selling goods or living below the poverty line. Keeping in mind the importance of the subject, the researcher himself has made an effort to present the characters through pictures. We have tried to present a glimpse of the special craftsmanship and efficiency seen in their craftsmanship through research.

“The painters portrayed the Maharajas, through paintings with royal looks. Along with the Maharajas, the painters also painted images of common people and artisans.<sup>10</sup> Why can't photographers create them as the main subject of art? According to the researcher, the reason for this could be the high cost of photography. Secondly, common people were aware of every aspect of Indian society born from these artisans. Photography is a gift of a foreign land and it was also introduced in India by foreigners

for profit. Indians took time to adopt photography and those who adopted this art form, belonged to the upper class. As soon as the common people started presenting the life and surroundings associated with this art through Photographs, that became the basis of the research. The artist's way of seeing, thinking and presenting the image makes the scope of the image wider and exclusive. In a male-dominated society, art was also influenced by men. With time, there was a change in traditions and women contributed significantly to the arts. During the duration, it was difficult for women to be recognized as artists. Photography gave women freedom in the field of Art. Indian Women continued to appear as subjects but could not come forward as artists. According to the researcher, if a woman had taken photography during that time, History would have been different. Glimpses of women who became a source of pleasure for the *Maharajas* were seen in the pictures. In today's Era, along with men, women are also making an important contribution to creative photography by adopting this art method. Socially, women's lives were revolutionized by photography.

During the study, it was found that some characters associated with the daily life of Royal families in Patiala Princely Estate, without which life journey seems to be rare, were missing or neglected from the pictures. Where the curtains, rugs, chandeliers, lamps and other items of the royal rooms can take the room into a subtle ambiance. There, many such prominent characters of the society who served the royal family, living in dusty rooms, dirty floors, and sun-drenched environments are still working in the streets of Patiala. Their Photographs are not available because no one paid attention to them. It is indeed Significant to record the lives of the common people vis-a-vis the Royalty.

The researcher took the initiative to depict the life and art of these Artisans, Women and *Mahants (Kinner)* through photographs by establishing a personal connection. How could such artisans, who have witnessed the complete processes of Man from birth to death, be left out of words and pictures. Understanding the importance of artisans and common people, the researcher personally participates in the investigation of the lives of workers, and artists to identify the pictures and life, and by sharing with their families, some such pictures will give Historical and Artistic guidance to the future generations. The innocent faces of these workers, their bodies basking in the sun inspired the researcher to take up photography. Inspired by these facts, the researcher is not limiting this subject only to the research level but has also organized many workshops, lectures-demonstrations and exhibitions by adopting the invaluable genre. It was a strange feeling to see the villagers in the freezing cold of winter, which showed their ability to create the world. It was a very

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heart-warming experience to see an old man sitting on a rickshaw waiting not only for customers but also for domestic support. The buildings of Patiala, and the pictures show the royal colors hidden behind, but the worn lines of the craftsman's hand in the construction are hidden somewhere. Among my personal experiences, the private tour of Kashmir left such an impression on my mind that the entire Kashmir and its valleys were exhibited through photographs at the Museum and Art Gallery, Punjabi University, Patiala.

Artisans are gracing the various markets in the vicinity of Fort *Mubarak*, Patiala but they have not been able to get the place they deserve in History. 75 years have passed since the Special Status of dissolved of Princely Estates. Democracy was created for the welfare of the common people, these people were endowed with special rights in the constitution framed by *Babasaheb* Bhimrao Ambedkar. *Babasaheb* fought a long struggle to end caste and caste discrimination, in which he succeeded.<sup>11</sup> Today's leaders have crushed the rights of common people and these people are struggling for basic needs. The common people fought a long struggle from the Princely States to the country's Independence, which is still going on. Their children are also deprived of education, due to which their physical and mental development is not taking place. An attempt was made to describe these artists, artisans and people in artistic form through pictures so that their lives can be improved. The image of the *Maharajas* can be estimated from the appearance of the subjects and their well-being to. The pictures seem to describe them truthfully. Although this class remained devoid of the Historical aspect of pictures, but without their existence, the glory of the *Maharajas* is nothing. It is the common class that honors the *Maharaja* as the *Maharaja* and the leader as the leader. Therefore, even though these people were forgotten at the time of the kings and emperors, but in view of the current political rights, it is necessary to make the common people a part of art, today's art will guide the future. The lives of these people become part of the art of storytellers, Historians, Philosophers, Thinkers, Researchers and Artists to regain the lost dignity in history.

The labourers of Punjab whose role has been very important in the daily lifestyle of the common man to the *Maharajas* have been neglected. Even though they were related to small tasks, but without their significant role one cannot even think about life. The role of the cobbler is hidden but the shoes produced by it give a comfortable feel to the wearer. The tailor, who even today creates the most basic unit of beauty, dress and status for the common man to the *Maharajah* in such a way that it has an impact not only on the wearer but also on the beholder. It is said that the first shoes as a child wore on the feet are important parts of the body, through

which humans have traveled thousands of miles on foot for Centuries. The best unit of foot protection and service is the cobbler. Only the shoes on the feet of a person pave the way. The more comfortable, simple, and clear the footwear shoes are, the easier the run of life will be. It is amazing how the thread played with the fingers gives shape to the leather. How can such an important unit of society be overlooked! Clothes and a certain type of dress make a person's, true identity. No importance was given to the *Lalaris*, who have the natural color of white, who dye the clothes keeping in mind the personality, nature, and position of the person.

Physicians are the second life savers after God. Even in the epic *Ramayana Ramachandra's* brother Lakshman's life was known to be saved by physician Sushen. Even today, their work is not a function but a service in terms of service, but their existence remains completely hidden in the pictures. The Brahmin lineage holds an important place, from kings to maharajas to the coming events of the life of a common man, important tasks like health, safety and education, etc. Are incomplete without the consent of the Divine. In Hinduism, all the rites from birth to death are performed by the Priest.

During earlier times, a special person was appointed for such a task. Who was called *Munyadi wala*, used to convey the complete orders, instructions and messages of the kings to the people. Major characters performing similar functions have been hidden in the images. The king must have taken some interest in the importance of these people. On the other hand, if we talk about today's time, such artists are running small businesses from generation to generation with the help of skilled workers. The main purpose of the research is to give them a deserving identity in the society. The artistic works of such artisans must be given a high place in the society. This can only be possible if their works are presented to the general public through pictures. Apart from the research work, the researcher is trying to give recognition to such artists in the society. Therefore, the artistic and aesthetic pictures of these artisans have been made part of the research work. It is only because of the artwork of such traditional artists that Patiala City has been able to create its identity not only in Punjab but also in the entire world.

In the picture, the blacksmith is seen working for a living. The tools scattered around seem to encapsulate a scattered life. A thousand questions can be read in the eyes. He is looking expectantly at the camera and the eyes seem to speak for themselves. How many artisans belonging to the blacksmith fraternity are living such a life in which no other kind of joy is seen other than work. But still somewhere the courage motivates them to keep going. In the picture, the researcher has visualized the life of artisans of Patiala, which interacts with the viewer. A blacksmith sitting

on the ground against a mud brick wall is trying to shape hard metal iron with tools. The green cloth spread on the ground can bring the artist closer to Nature. The facial expressions, and the hopeful eyes, do not let down labor and occupation. Its function reflects purity and simplicity. The picture is an effort and initiative to take important steps to protect their rights and craftsmanship. (Picture-1)

A cobbler, an 'artisan who makes and knits leather shoes'<sup>12</sup>, can often be seen in the bazaars of a village or town. The *Sheran Wala Gate* and *Qila Chowk* of Patiala city are important places for cobblers and nowadays they can be seen setting up shops at bus stands and railway stations, repairing the shoes of passers-by. This occupation has been going on for thousands of years in Punjab. Where large showrooms are established in today's modern times. Cobblers are still shining as a ray of hope for the common people with their fine craftsmanship. The researcher is keen to give due respect by presenting life's struggles, gestures, art and craftsmanship through photographs. Modern shoes lying in front of the cobbler are symbols of changing times. The wooden box next to it feels like it contains so many dreams. The way of sitting of *Mochi* (Cobbler) is very unique, which gives balance to the whole body and also helps in technical work. Cobbler's work is done with a combination of hands and feet. The cobbler sitting on the throne solves the troubles of many passers-by. The eyes in the picture appear to be asking many questions about life as well as understanding and solving a passerby's problem. Through the photographs, the researcher feels the hardships and spirituality of the life of these artisans, who are constantly engaged in work. Any passerby who sits near them for a few moments becomes a bond with them, which is a bond of humanity. As the cobbler grinds, their craftsmanship, passion and dedication become stronger. (Picture-2)

A tailor who is an expert craftsman in sewing clothes. From the royal attire of the *Maharajas* to the various hobbies of the common people, the craftsman who molded the culture in an emotional form can be seen in the markets of Patiala even today. God sends man to the earth in the form of flesh. Tailoring is the key to shaping this flesh. A tailor-made outfit has the ability to carry a person's status, mood and emotions from the floor to the throne. (Picture-3)

Artist who dyes cloth called *Lalari*. *Lalari* expresses the inner feelings of every person with colors. In the cloth market of Fort Mubarak in Patiala city, *Lalari*s are seen dyeing cloth outside the shops. Be it clothes or life, it never smells completely blank i.e. colorless. *Lalari* can infuse the soul into the clothed body by imparting beautiful colors to the blank cloth with the sensations of the mind. (Picture-4)



Just as the carpenter has technical knowledge about the woodwork of the house, hinges, etc., all this is done keeping the safety aspect in mind. Carpentry caters to the furniture and thrones of the palaces of the kings and the private needs of the people. The dazzle of their craftsmanship and living palaces is dimly visible. Their mention seems to be missing from the pictures of history. At Patiala's wood market, also known as Nabha Gate, many carpenters are seen engaged in their work. The association with wood goes hand in hand from the beginning to the end of human life. In the picture, the carpenter is seen standing inside the shop waiting for the customer. A glimmer of hope is visible in its eyes. A glimpse of human connection is felt with the wood lying around. (Photo-5)

If we talk about an important unit of the society, then the *Mahants* cannot be hidden. The *Mahant* himself is deprived of the happiness of marriage, and parent-child, but at the time of any marriage and birth in the society, their importance is revealed in front of the society. Even today, it is recognized that if a *Mahant* blesses someone from the heart, then God must fulfill the wish. The physical rhythm and flexibility of the gestures of the *Mahants* make it impossible to compete with the common man. During the time of kings, they had special powers and were trusted to protect queens and princesses. Today they have been rejected by the society. Perhaps they got the name Kinnar because of the *Dar-Kinar* (Ignored). Today, they are living their lives giving blessings in the streets, corners and houses. The picture is an effort to make the society aware of their respect and human rights. (Picture-6)

Life goes on, and new experiences arise. Old experiences cannot be forgotten, new experiences are created based on them. Based on experience, contemporary photographers have succeeded in portraying Indian art through photography in foreign countries as well. While Indian painting and sculpture gave the art of India a distinct identity, Indian civilization and art are also reflected in photography. Today, the need is to recognize this art and present the pictures with a new perspective so that the pictures can get a proper place historically and artistically.

Conclusion: Inspired by these facts, the researcher is not limiting this subject only to the research level, but has also organized many workshops, lectures-demonstrations and exhibitions by adopting the invaluable genre. The buildings of Patiala, and the pictures show the royal colors hidden behind, but the worn lines of the craftsman's hand in the construction are hidden somewhere. In the bustle of the bazaars, many streets seem to be looking in amazement at the people with open arms of hope. The sweat of the laborer can bring dew to the mind and not to the picture. The Researcher aims to satisfy the soul by presenting the life's day-to-day struggle to the society through pictures, which express the true meaning of life with

emotions. Photographs will continue to travel in this direction and artists will continue to be active in the technical and aesthetic development and research of photography in the future. The researcher lived the lives of ordinary people and conveyed the life, experiences and feelings of these characters through pictures. The effort to bring such topics to the general public will probably serve as a guide for future students, researchers, intellectuals, historians and artists interested in historically and culturally significant images. The experience during the creation of the pictures is an attempt to encourage the lives of the artisans and the common people. Technology will be a boon for the Crafts and Craftsmen of Patiala and not be a part of Subaltern's existence but will be seen as main streams. It is hoped that the life of these artisans can be read visually through the pictures and they will be able to find their rightful place in the society.

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