



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

## TRENDS EVOLUTION IN WOODEN WARDROBE DESIGN OF SAHARANPUR

**Author: Humera Firdous Ansari**

Student, MFA

Department of Fine Arts,

Graphic Era Hill University, Dehradun, Uttarakhand

**Co-Author: Dr. Anirban Dhar**

Assistant Professor

Department of Fine Arts,

Graphic Era Hill University, Dehradun Campus, Uttarakhand

### ABSTRACT

The wooden wardrobe (*almirah*) designs of Saharanpur are well known for their traditional craftsmanship and detailed wood carving. In the past, these wardrobes were heavy, decorative and made mainly from solid wood. However, with changing lifestyles and modern needs, their designs have gradually changed. This study focuses on how the trends in wooden wardrobe design have evolved over time. Today, people prefer simple, space-saving and functional furniture. As a result, Saharanpur wardrobes are now being made in lighter designs with less carving and more useful features like extra storage, shelves and modular parts. New materials such as glass and metal are also sometimes combined with wood to give a modern look. The study shows that modernization has helped improve both design and usability while still keeping some traditional elements. Overall, the change in design trends reflects a balance between old craftsmanship and new ideas, helping Saharanpur furniture stay popular in today's market. Saharanpur is a renowned traditional craft that represents a rich blend of artistic heritage, cultural influences and skilled craftsmanship. Known as the "Wood Carving City," Saharanpur has been a major center for wooden handicrafts since at least the 14th century, with strong influences from Mughal, Persian and Indian design traditions. The craft primarily involves carving intricate patterns such as floral motifs, geometric designs and lattice (*jaali*) work on woods like sheesham and teak. Artisans use traditional hand tools to create a wide range of products, including furniture, decorative panels and utility items. The production process is highly skilled and often collaborative, involving stages like carving, inlay work, polishing, and finishing. Saharanpur's wood carving industry is not only an artistic tradition but also an important economic activity, supporting thousands of artisans and contributing to both domestic and international markets. Over time, the craft has evolved by incorporating modern designs while preserving its traditional identity. Wood carving in Saharanpur stands as a significant example of India's handicraft heritage, combining creativity, tradition and livelihood and continuing to thrive as a globally recognized art form.

**Keywords:** Saharanpur, wooden wardrobe, practice status, new design possibilities, modern creativity.

## INTRODUCTION

Saharanpur is famous for its wooden furniture, especially beautifully designed wardrobes (*almirahs*). For many years, these wardrobes have been made by skilled artisans using traditional carving techniques and strong wood like *Sheesham*. The designs were usually heavy, decorative and full of detailed patterns, showing the rich culture and craftsmanship of the region. However, with time, people's lifestyles and needs have changed. Today, most people live in smaller homes and prefer furniture that is simple, space-saving, and easy to use. Because of this, the design of wooden wardrobes in Saharanpur is also changing. Modern wardrobes are now lighter, less decorative and more focused on storage and functionality. This study aims to understand how the design of wooden wardrobes in Saharanpur has evolved over time. It looks at the changes in style, material and features, and how traditional designs are being combined with modern ideas to meet current needs. Saharanpur is a famous traditional craft known for its intricate designs and fine craftsmanship. The city has earned a strong reputation as one of India's leading centers for wooden handicrafts, with a history that dates back several centuries. Influenced by Mughal art and architecture, the craft reflects a blend of Persian and Indian design styles, especially in its detailed floral patterns and geometric carvings. Artisans in Saharanpur primarily use high-quality woods such as *sheesham* (Indian rosewood) and teak to create a wide range of products, including furniture, decorative items, screens and panels. The process of wood carving involves skilled handwork, patience and creativity, often passed down through generations of craftsmen.

### What means Saharanpur wood carving Special?

- Handi crafted detailing: Very fine and artistic carving done manually.
- Traditional design: inspired by Mughal and Persian art.
- Durable wood: mainly sheesham, teak and mango wood.
- Wide range of products: furniture, décor items, boxes, trays, etc.

## METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for studying wood carving in Saharanpur is based on a combination of descriptive and exploratory research approaches. Data is collected from secondary sources to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the craft. Secondary data is obtained from books, research papers, government reports and online resources to study the historical background and development of the industry. A purposive sampling method is generally adopted to include different stakeholders involved in the wood carving sector.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Handa S. (1999, February 12) presented Saharanpur wood-carving units look to govt. for succor. The Financial Express. Retrieved from <http://expressindia.indianexpress.com/fe/daily/19990212/fec12062.html>

Sharma (2008) stated that wine may be the fluid of life and symbol of the death and is typically connected with the source of intoxication. In the context of WFS of Saharanpur, wine vessels and wine cups were the source of decoration which came directly in Saharanpur woodcraft by the Mughal art and in Mughal art it

came from Persian art. Therefore, Mughal style of architecture is clearly visible in this part. It can be seen in architectural treatment and structural embellishment of old havelis of Saharanpur where Persian decorative art (floral and faunal) and Indian figurative element got blended to embellish the exterior and interior. It may be the reason behind the adoption of Persian motifs that the artisans of Saharanpur were inspired by the design elements of Mughal monument as well as old havelis of Saharanpur where these motifs were implemented.

Kaul N. (2012) described natural resource shifts and crafts: Study of wood carving industry in Saharanpur (Master dissertation, Indian Institute of Bombay, Mumbai, Maharashtra).

Verma and Gupta (2019) examined the current status of the woodcraft cluster and explore new design possibilities. Their research emphasizes the need for innovation and product diversification to meet modern market demands while preserving the unique identity of Saharanpur woodcraft. This journal article explores the heritage, current status and future design possibilities of Saharanpur's woodcraft. It discusses new prototyping to improve user-friendliness of products.

### **MODERNIZATION: A GROWING NECESSITY**

In the present scenario, the craft industry has drawn attention in the current modernization discourse and has a wealth of innovative opportunities. Changing wants, preferences and lifestyles are the main factors that push us to learn more about developing information. Innovative in terms of materials, designs and technology to advance and enhance market culture. In this sense, prior to the 1960s, craftspeople were using their age-old methods of creation and creating the customary designs for their items. Saharanpur woodcraft had an improvement process as a result of the fall of imperial rulers and India's freedom. Because the goal of artists was to gratify clients in accordance with their evolving tastes. As a result, artisans and clients have embraced new ideas and opportunities, which are still being used in Saharanpur's wooden *almirah* with a new body and an old soul.

### **EVOLUTION OF MODERNIZATION THROUGH DESIGN ELEMENTS**

The evolution of modernization in wooden wardrobe design in Saharanpur is reflected through gradual changes in key design elements such as form, material, ornamentation and functionality. Wardrobe (*Almirahs*), which emphasized decorative richness and skill, were traditionally large, intricately carved and constructed from solid hardwoods like *Sheesham*. These characteristics have evolved throughout time to satisfy modern demands, producing increasingly compact, space-efficient shapes that are appropriate for urban living. In keeping with contemporary tastes for simplicity and tidy aesthetics, ornamentation has changed from rich, complex carvings to sparse or selective detailing. The use of materials has also changed, utilizing metal, glass and engineered wood to increase adaptability while lowering weight and cost. With features like built-in mirrors, sliding doors, modular compartments and ergonomic storage options, functionality has taken center stage. Furthermore, improvements in construction methods have brought about a fusion of traditional handcrafting with machine accuracy, increasing productivity without totally diminishing artisanal value. Dark, glossy finishes have given way to lighter, matte and natural colour schemes that go well with contemporary interior design. All things considered, this evolution shows a change from solely beautiful furniture to user-

centric, practical and flexible designs, emphasizing modernization as an essential step that strikes a compromise between tradition and modern expectations.

Figure 1: Wooden wardrobe/almirah with peacock motif

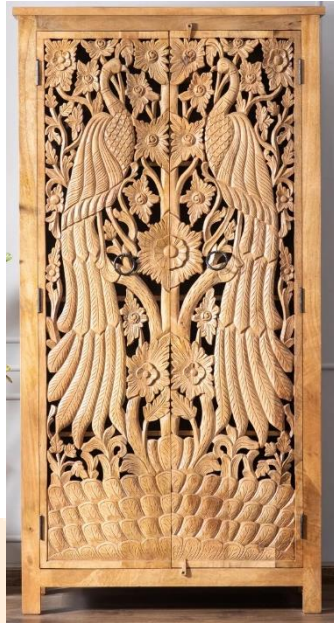


figure 2: Wooden wardrobe/almirah with teak wood





Figure 3: Wooden wardrobe/almirah with geometric motifs

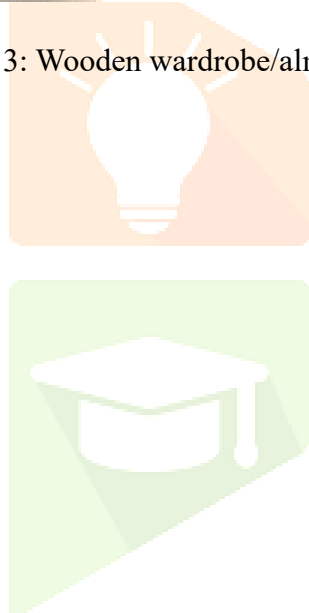




figure 4, 5, 6, 7: Wooden wardrobe/almirah with geometric motifs

## EVOLUTION OF MODERNIZATION THROUGH MATERIAL ELEMENTS

Changes are the necessity of nature which introduce us new technologies, materials and new ideas through various sources. Humans have updated everything in every industry with quality care due to the increasing requirement for progress. Regarding this matter, Saharanpur, often referred to as a *Seesham gadh*, the craftspeople use craft traditions to generate creative concepts while still attempting to maintain quality. The pinnacle of modernization has gradually emerged. Because of this, Saharanpur woodworking has been refined and experimented with since its inception. The several crucial episodes have merged into the vast history of Saharanpur woodcraft. Based on market research, manufacturer interviews and varying perspectives on woodworking, the study concludes that Saharanpur's wooden wardrobe (*almirah*) has not just evolved to meet the demands of the times, but all woodworking has become more contemporary. As a result, writers' discussions on modernization explore how all forms of woodcraft have changed. Traditional Furniture brings a sense of royalty at home. The designs, the shades and the make are durable enough to have the units lasting for years to come. Of all the features, the one particular feature of Aarsun furniture that sets the units apart is that the units are Handmade. Aarsun brings to you Handcrafted Traditional Wooden Wardrobe (Almirah) made in premium quality Teak Wood with classic traditional style carvings all over the surface. The wardrobe (Armoire) consists of 3 evenly spaced-out Panel Doors with fine designs carved out in front. Even the sides, the frame and the top have been carved out in floral and trendy designs that set the unit apart from the regular wardrobes. The top has a beautiful Arch carved out in traditional floral carvings that gives the unit a vintage touch.

**Types of wood carving:** Different types of wood carving techniques are as follows:

- 1. Chip Carving:** Chip carving is also known as Kerbschnitt to the German people. This refers to the type of wood carving where the use of chisels are encouraged. The aim of the chisels is to remove or detach small chips of the materials that are to be carved. The material that is usually worked on is a surface and usually is in a single piece.

**2. Relief Carving:** This type of wood carving is usually done by carving figures into a panel of wood which is usually flat. The figures which are carved into it would then take up a slightly projected shape from the background which it has been carved into. There are two major categories of relief carving. They include the high relief carving and the medium relief carving.

**3. Chainsaw Carving:** This type of wood carving is the fastest growing art in the world. This is due to the fact that it combines beautiful art with the use of modern technology. This combination usually the key to amazing carvings.

**4. Treen Carving:** This type of carving refers to the carving of household items with wood. However, it is important carving would not include the likes of household furniture like chairs and cabinets.

**5. Whittling:** The act of whittling most times simply refers to using a tool to carve out figures or shapes from wood. The tool which is normally used is a knife or a chisel. It is however normally done with a small knife rather a long knife as this is much more effective. These knives would usually be made with big handles which would allow the users to have a firm grip.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the wooden wardrobe (*almirah*) designs of Saharanpur represent a perfect blend of tradition, craftsmanship and functionality. Known as India's "wood carving city," Saharanpur has developed a rich legacy of handcrafted furniture shaped by centuries of Mughal, Persian and Indian artistic influences. These almirahs are more than just storage spaces; they are works of art with elaborate jaali work, geometric patterns and floral carvings. They provide both long-lasting strength and visual appeal because they are mostly made of sturdy woods like *sheesham* and teak. Additionally, Saharanpur designs effectively strike a balance between tradition and contemporary requirements. In order to fit today's interiors, artists combine customization, creative layouts and modern finishes with ancient hand-carving skills that have been passed down through the years. Overall, Saharanpur wooden *almirahs* stand as a symbol of cultural heritage, skilled artistry and practical design. They continue to hold value not only as functional furniture but also as timeless pieces of craftsmanship that enhance the beauty and elegance of any living space. Saharanpur represents a unique blend of art, tradition and livelihood, making it one of India's most important handicraft industries. The craft, with

its roots in Mughal and Persian influences, is renowned for intricate floral patterns, geometric designs and skillful three-dimensional sculptures. Saharanpur designs show a mix of old traditions and modern needs. They are durable, stylish and long-lasting. These wardrobes are not only useful for storage but also add beauty to a home. Overall, Saharanpur wooden *almirahs* are a great example of fine craftsmanship and are valued for both their use and their artistic look.

## REFERENCES

- Bose S., Lal P., Pareek P. S., Verma M., & Saigal S. (2006). Forest-based associations in India: An overview. IIED Small and Medium Forest Enterprise Series No. 18. International Institute for Environment and Development, Edinburgh, UK. Retrieved from <https://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/13529IIED.pdf?>
- Chandrashekhar, M. (2023). Saharanpur Wood Craft: A Timeless Artistry. Culture and Heritage of India.
- Dak, T. M. (1989). Rural Industrialisation: Challenges and Perspectives. Northern Book Centre. pp. 157.
- Dua S. (2014). Study of the tradition and evolution of ornamentation styles and motif vocabulary of the printed textiles from Gujarat (Doctoral dissertation, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara, Gujarat). Retrieved from <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/58563>
- Handa S. (1999, February 12). Saharanpur wood-carving units look to govt. for succour. *The Financial Express*. Retrieved from <http://expressindia.indianexpress.com/fe/daily/19990212/fec12062.html>
- Haziyah H., Zawiyah B., Aminuddin H., & Aishah H. M. (2012). The philosophy in the creation of traditional Malay carving motifs in Peninsula Malaysia. *Malaysia Journal of Society and Space*, 8(7), 88–95.
- Jain, M. (2000). Wood Handicraft: A Study of Its Origin and Development in Saharanpur. Indus Publishing.
- Jaitly, J. (1989). Craft Designs and Development: A Search for Values. *Journal of Design History*, 2(2/3), 169–174. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1315806>
- Kaul N. (2012). Natural resource shifts and crafts: Study of wood carving industry in Saharanpur (Master dissertation, Indian Institute of Bombay, Mumbai, Maharashtra).
- Kramrisch, S. (1958). Traditions of the Indian craftsman. *The Journal of American Folklore*, 71(281), 224–230.
- Maureen Liebl, & Roy, T. (2003). Handmade in India: Preliminary Analysis of Crafts Producers and Crafts Production. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 38(51/52), 5366–5376. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4414435>
- Narasaiah, M. L., & Naidu, P. S. (2006). Artisan Industry and Rural Development. Discovery Publishing House.
- Roy, T. (2007). Out of Tradition: Master Artisans and Economic Change in Colonial India. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 66(4), 963–991. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20203238>

Scrase, T. J. (2003). Precarious Production: Globalisation and Artisan Labour in the Third World. *Third World Quarterly*, 24(3), 449–461. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3993379>

Solanki, S. S. (2008). Sustainability of Rural Artisans. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 43(19), 24– 27. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40277437>

Sethi C. M. (2013). Mapping craft in contemporary India: Dilli Haat and Dastkari Haat Samiti's crafts maps. *The Journal of Modern Craft*, 6(1), 49–77.

Shaffee N., & Said I. (2013). Types of floral motifs and patterns of Malay woodcarving in Kelantan and Terengganu. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 105, 466–475.

Verma A., & Gupta I. (2016). Trends evaluation in wooden folding screen of Saharanpur. *Chitrolekha International Magazine on Art & Design*, 6(1), 43–51.

