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CARPET-MAKING IN THE  
BOMBAY PRESIDENCY.

## FRONTISPIECE.



### **One of the Famous Pile Carpets of Bijapur.**

See pages 2, 62, and 70 of the text. From a pattern in the Yeraoda Central Prison Carpet Factory. The original with about fifteen others are at Bijapur. Copies from all the old Bijapur carpets are at Yeraoda; and since the compilation of this work a second set of copies carried out afresh from the originals as faithfully as possible has been made.

À MONOGRAPH

ON THE

ART & PRACTICE OF CARPET-MAKING

IN THE

BOMBAY PRESIDENCY

BY

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## INTRODUCTION.

SCOPE OF MONOGRAPH.—This Monograph aims at giving an account of Carpet-making in this part of India in the past; the conditions under which the craft now exists; the current methods of manufacture; the probable future of the industry; the possibility of improving future prospects.

DEFINITIONS.—Most people have an idea of the meaning of the term 'carpet'; but the conundrum 'When is a carpet not a carpet?' opens up unexpected difficulties. To restrict the term to the article usually thought of would cut down this Monograph to the narrowest limits, especially if the purely industrial side alone were discussed, for in this Presidency, outside jails, woollen pile carpets, that is to say, carpets as usually understood, are practically not made at all.

(a) The ordinary carpet has what is termed 'pile' on one surface. This pile consists of the upstanding ends of very numerous pieces of wool woven in by hand to an understructure generally of cotton. Such is the ordinary *galicha* or pile carpet. The pile may be of hair or cotton, and the understructure need not be of cotton, yet the article would still be a *galicha*. Its pile is its distinguishing feature.

(b) The other common form of carpet is the *dari*. This presents a flat surface on each side; the design is identical on both sides; the entire article is generally of cotton. It may be of hair or wool and still be a *dari*. Its similar and flat surfaces distinguish it.

(c) There are certain *dari*-like articles which should really fall under totally different headings. No definition will be quite clear till the chapter on Construction has been read. It will suffice to state here that the pattern in a *dari* is obtained by passing under and over certain cotton threads variously coloured pieces of yarn the ends of which are broken off and the tags tucked in neatly. In Baluch carpets such a piece of dyed yarn would not be thus divided but would merely be passed on the undersurface of the fabric to the spot above which that particular colour should re-appear on the surface. Hence the two surfaces do not exactly agree in design. The work is in fact a sort of rough tapestry, in which however, owing to its comparative coarseness, needles are not used.

(d) Again, there are certain articles (of which the ordinary striped *dari* without a border and not more than six feet in width is typical) which might equally well be regarded as carpets or as merely thick cloth. In Mr. Brendon's 'Woollen Fabrics,' Plate IV is an excellent illustration of a loom on which could be equally well made cloth, blanketting, or a *dari* of simple design. In such a loom a shuttle is used, and, strictly speaking, no article should be regarded as a carpet, be it called *dari* or not, in which all the weaving required in its making can be provided by shuttle work.

Apart from pure definitions, there are certain terms which are used very vaguely, *e. g.*, there is no exact distinction between a *dari* and a *satranji*. The difference seems to be chiefly a matter of size, the *dari* being the smaller. The same confusion exists between mats, rugs, and carpets. A mat, it is true, is generally laid in a doorway or at a window to receive the wear and tear of passing feet; a rug too is generally small enough to be easily spread and removed. In America carpets are often called rugs. In England the custom of covering the entire floor is less common than formerly, partly on artistic and partly on hygienic grounds, as well as on account of expense. To the smaller fabrics now replacing the old carpet, the terms 'carpet' and 'rug' are indiscriminately applied.

Still the conundrum 'When is a carpet not a carpet?' is not yet fully answered. Many of the old Persian carpets were so delicate and light in texture that not even stockinged feet were allowed on them. Many of these articles were used as *portières* or wall or ceiling decorations or were spread over cushions. In Sind, the *farasi* is rarely spread on the floor but rather on the bed. Again, among the free population of the Presidency proper, the very few articles still made by home-workers and entitled to be called carpets by reason of the method of making are used for anything but ordinary carpet purposes. The *jhorya* of the Deccan protects cotton or fruit; the *gudhar* is used in the same manner. In Gujarat, an article similarly made covers the loaded carts in rainy weather. The lesson to be learned from these facts is painfully clear. Only the very coarsest articles, too rough for personal wear and too coarse for domestic use, can be made by the peasant. It does not pay the smaller man to make fine articles.

So far as can be ascertained, no carpets are made by machinery in this Presidency.

DIVISIONS OF THE SUBJECT.—A considerable divergence from the method adopted in Mr. Samman's 'Cotton Fabrics of Assam' has been unavoidable. Carpet-making differs from nearly all other industries in being conducted almost entirely within jail walls. Especially is this true of Western India. In seeking information as to numbers employed and similar matters, the replies would have been humourously absurd had they not also connoted declining prosperity, at least among certain communities. For example, such phrases as 'there were two men engaged three years ago in the work, but one is now dead and the other blind.' Or the news that 'a few old women alone are employed, and when they die the industry will drop out.' All this denotes an industry on its last legs and never of a profitable character, at which most of the workers give only a part of their time or are too old for other work. From such as these, correct statistics are impossible and certainly of little value. Hence such matters as numbers employed, sex, caste, capital invested, and similar topics do not enter to any great extent into this work.

More attention has been paid to the following: Has the industry ever flourished? Is it going down-hill? Can any improvement be brought about— involving inquiry into raw materials, dyeing, mode of manufacture, outside competition, and the influence of jail labour? These and other topics are discussed in their proper places.



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