

# Art of Giveh-making is fading in Mahallat

## Iranica Desk

The production of handicrafts is a high-return small business. With the addition of new ideas, it has the potential to attract a large number of customers and generate a suitable income. Because these art forms intertwine with history and originate from past generations, they are deeply rooted in the identity of the people of each region. Therefore, it is crucial to pay attention to preserving and reviving these traditional crafts.

The city of Mahallat in Markazi Province is renowned for its flowers, stones, and recreational attractions, making it a popular destination for travelers and tourists. While visitors often purchase sweets and yogurt as souvenirs of their journey, in the past, the range of souvenirs available in Mahallat was much more diverse. According to numerous sources and books dedicated to the region, the craft of *Giveh*-making, a type of traditional Iranian footwear, was once a common occupation in the city. Many tourists would buy *giveh* as a memento of their trip or as a valuable souvenir.

Although currently the production of *giveh* in Mahallat is not as extensive as it used to be, many families depend on this craft for their livelihood. *Giveh* was once commonly worn by a significant portion of the population, including villagers, tribespeople, farmers, and even urban communities.

Unfortunately, with changing fashion trends and the introduction of modern shoe designs, the demand for *giveh* has gradually declined. As a result, many *giveh* artisans have abandoned this art form in favor of other occupations.

However, the cultural significance and historical value of *giveh* should not be overlooked. Efforts should be made to preserve and revive this unique craft. By doing so, we can ensure that the heritage and traditions of Mahallat are preserved for future generations to admire and appreciate.

In the winding alleys of the city's old bazaar, surrounding the main square, where the old-world charm still lingers, one can find small, traditional workshops dedicated to knife-making, samovar craftsmanship, and lamp artistry. However, amidst this nostalgic backdrop, there is a noticeable absence of *giveh*-making shops.

Ismael Qorbani, an esteemed veteran shopkeeper in the city, reminisced about the past when many of the artisans along a particular neighborhood street were *giveh*-makers. He recalled how, with the streets less altered and the water streams more abundant, these skilled craftsmen would sit outside their shops, immersing their feet in the water as they skillfully sewed the intricate *givehs*. Sadly, with the passing of that generation the art has dwindled.

Qorbani explained that in earlier times, due to the absence of modern footwear, people predominantly chose felt *givehs*, which were meticulously hand-sewn, leading to a high demand for the craft. Jaber, a veteran artisan with a long history of *giveh*-making and shoe repair, reflected on his 50 years of dedication to crafting shoes. However, he lamented that the diminishing availability of essential raw materials such as leather, coupled with declining consumer interest, has rendered *giveh*-making unviable in today's market.

Another craftsman, Reza Ebrahimi, sat amidst his modest shop filled with an assortment of bags, shoes, shoe straps, and repair supplies. Recounting the golden age of *giveh*-making, he fondly remembered the days when eager customers would queue up to acquire *givehs*, often placing orders in advance. Ebrahimi attributed the decline of this traditional craft to the scarcity of raw materials and diminishing investments.

"I have dedicated over 50 years to *giveh*-making but, regrettably, I had to relinquish the craft eight years ago. My father was also part of the hat-making profession, which, like *giveh*-making, has faded into obscurity," he rued.

Highlighting the durability of *givehs* as an advantage, Ebrahimi emphasized how these shoes, crafted from high-quality materials, proved resilient even when worn all day by farmers and nomads immersed in difficult labor. Recalling the thriving era of *giveh*-making, he noted that in the past there were over a hundred skilled artisans scattered across the neighborhoods, each bustling with activity.

"During the prime of *giveh*-making, numerous people improved their craft in every neighborhood. Multiple workshops dotted this street, to the extent that when *giveh*-makers journeyed to Isfahan in pursuit of raw materials, this street lay deserted," he concluded wistfully. Speaking about the tremendous effort required to make *givehs*, Ebrahimi explained: "It was a laborious process to sew and prepare just one pair of *giveh* in a day. Typically, *giveh*-making was a winter activity, with customers coming to purchase them in the spring and summer.

This ancient art is at risk of disappearing, and if current trends continue, not only will *giveh* production decline, but the traditional knowledge and skills associated with it will also be lost. It's important to recognize that traditional *giveh*, lacking innovation, may struggle to compete with modern shoes. Therefore, it's crucial to reconsider the color and design of *givehs*, and providing good support, while maintaining their traditional structure to appeal to a wider audience, particularly the younger generation.

Revitalizing and modernizing *giveh* production could provide opportunities for small businesses in this sector. Additionally, highlighting the health benefits of *giveh*, particularly for foot health, could further drive demand for them. While *giveh*, as a handmade product, may not be suited for mass production in the shoe industry, it can still thrive as a practical and valuable item within the realm of handicrafts."



## Visit harmony and history in Isfahan Music Museum



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Music speaks for souls. No matter where you come from, you will understand the joy, fear, bravery, happiness, and sadness of music as it's an international language for all.

The Isfahan Music Museum is a perfect place to get to know how Persians have spoken in this unique way by their very own musical instruments throughout history. It is an absolute must-visit destination for music enthusiasts and individuals captivated by Persian culture.

Nestled in the city of Isfahan, which is renowned for its artistic and cultural richness, this museum boasts an extensive collection of traditional Iranian instruments, many of which are over 150 years old. Founded by two prominent musicians, Mehrdad Jeihooni and Shahriar Shokrani, the museum's collection comprises more than 300 instruments from various regions of Iran and other countries. The museum is divided into five sec-

tions, commencing with the Hall of National Instruments, which showcases a diverse array of traditional instruments commonly used throughout Iran. Visitors can learn about the characteristics and history of these instruments, some of which are the predecessors of modern musical instruments, such as the violin and guitar, surfiran.com wrote. The second section, Hall of Reginal Instruments, showcases instruments which are less well-known but specific

to particular regions of Iran. Another section, the Home of Iranian Traditional Music, highlights famous Iranian musicians, with a particular focus on masters from Isfahan.

The fourth unique part of the museum is called the Instruments Factory, where visitors can observe how traditional instruments are crafted, from materials to assembly techniques. The final section is Home of Music, in which experienced musicians perform live,

and visitors can try playing some of these instruments themselves. After exploring the museum, visitors can unwind in the courtyard cafés or browse through the gift shop for souvenirs. They can also take photographs with traditional Persian clothes and instruments. The Isfahan Music Museum is a testament to Iran's rich musical heritage and an outstanding opportunity for both novices and experts to immerse themselves in this captivating culture.