

# Revitalizing Isfahan's handicrafts for a new generation

## Iranica Desk

Changes in lifestyle and technology have led to a decline in the relevance of many handicrafts in today's society, raising concerns among artists and art lovers about the uncertain future of these crafts. Handicrafts are symbols of the country's history and culture; however, many traditional crafts face serious threats to their survival due to the rise of machine-made products and social changes.

Isfahan, recognized as the first Iranian city in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network and designated as a World Craft City, boasts around 200 handicraft branches, but some of these are at risk of being forgotten and disappearing, IRNA wrote.

The deputy head of Isfahan Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization believes that the primary reason for the decline of certain handicraft branches is the lack of use and the disinterest of the younger generation in learning these arts. He noted that many of these crafts no longer have significant applications in the modern world. In times when agriculture and traditional lifestyles prevailed, handicrafts such as saddle-making and saddle-bag-making thrived due to demand; however, today, these arts are gradually becoming obsolete. Noorullah Abdollahi noted that some handicraft arts, such as lock-making, have lost much of their practicality today due to the replacement of manual locks with digital and automatic ones. However, the traditional craft of lock-making has evolved into decorative arts through dedicated effort and training.

He highlighted the revival of crafts like *zari-bafi* (gold lace work) and *makhmal-bafi* (velvet weaving), explaining that these arts flourished during the Safavid era, producing luxurious royal garments made from exquisite textiles. However, with the rise of spinning factories, these crafts fell into obscurity and were on the verge of extinction until revived through the efforts of relevant organizations.

Abdollahi emphasized that the revival of *zari-bafi* has been a key concern for the provincial Cultural Heritage Organization.



Lock-making  
kelidsazitehran.com



Zari-bafi  
yjc.ir



Makhmal-bafi  
destinationiran.com

With its resurgence, this valuable art form has gained a luxurious and decorative quality and has even reached the export stage.

He added that many traditional embroidery arts had also faced extinction but are now being revived, although some have been marginalized due to the introduction of new fabrics.

Abdollahi stated that the most important strategy for preserving handicrafts is to make them practical and economically viable. He noted that the field of

*firoozeh-koobi* (turquoise-inlaying) has flourished again after several years of effort by the Cultural Heritage Organization, contributing to job creation and attracting individuals interested in learning this craft.

He pointed out that the disinterest of teenagers and young people in learning these arts significantly impacts the survival of handicrafts. He added that, in today's modern world, the new generation has distanced itself from working with and learning handicrafts, even though these

arts can still find a place in contemporary life.

He emphasized that the summer season used to be the best time for learning handicrafts, as students would seek to acquire these skills during their school holidays. However, cultural changes and current lifestyles have led to a decline in such activities and training.

Abdollahi concluded by stating that families play a crucial role in encouraging their children to learn these traditional arts. If these teachings are conducted

under the guidance of experienced masters, a bright future awaits them.

Majeddin Taj, the head of Isfahan's Handicrafts Union, emphasized the need to enhance the status of handicrafts in people's lives. He stated that Isfahan is recognized as one of the key hubs for handicrafts in Iran and the world. Given the employment opportunities and value-added benefits this sector provides for the country, neglect and a lack of proper analysis could lead to some handicrafts

Firoozeh-koobi  
chikadoo.ir

being forgotten due to economic challenges and inadequate markets.

Taj added that nearly 20 branches of handicrafts in Isfahan are on the verge of being forgotten, and their revival can only be achieved through education. He pointed out that the Handicrafts Union of Isfahan currently has only one educational center, which is insufficient for such an important center for handicrafts in Iran and the city known for its creative handicrafts.

He noted that their request to the Handicrafts Department of Isfahan Province's Cultural Heritage Organization and the Isfahan Municipality is to provide space for the Handicrafts Union so they can collaborate with prominent masters to revive the arts that are fading away.

Ali Danesh Pazhooh is a skilled artisan in the handicraft industry who has been actively reviving the traditional art of locksmithing for over 10 years in the city of Aran and Bidgol. He believes that with innovation, enthusiasm, and a willingness to learn, it is possible to breathe new life into defunct artistic disciplines.

He considers the key to the longevity of traditional art in today's modern world to be the hard work of artists and the creation of works that resonate with contemporary tastes.

Danesh Pazhooh asserts that if a student lacks interest, they cannot produce pieces that will be well-received by the public. He emphasizes that by creating unique and innovative works, artists can help revive the craft, as these pieces can endure when showcased in exhibitions for collectors. However, he stresses that training artists and selecting interested and creative apprentices is crucial, and this can be achieved by envisioning a promising economic future for the artistic field.

Danesh Pazhooh is particularly concerned with finding and training creative and passionate apprentices in this art form — individuals who can create works infused with the same love and dedication he possesses, even if those pieces are unique yet enduring.

## Majestic Shevi Waterfall in Dezful

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The Shevi Waterfall is one of the most beautiful waterfalls in Iran and the Middle East, located in a village of the same name in Dezful, Khuzestan Province, not far from Lorestan Province. The waterfall springs from a cave and cascades down a high mountain, creating a unique natural landscape. The area surrounding the waterfall is rich with oak trees, almonds, and various types of plants.

The Shevi Waterfall, also known as Tal-e-Zang Waterfall and Dezful Waterfall, is approximately 90 meters high and about 85 meters wide. It ultimately drains into the Dez River, which



leads to the Dez Dam. Accessing the waterfall is not easy, which is considered an advantage as it helps preserve the natural envi-

ronment around the waterfall. Often referred to as the 'Niagara of Iran', the waterfall is situated about 450 meters above sea



level. Its volume varies with the seasons, reaching its peak flow in spring. The significance of the Shevi

Waterfall is underscored by its registration on January 19, 2015, as the first natural Heritage of Khuzestan Province on

Iran's National Heritage List. Reaching the waterfall is possible via two routes: rail and road. The first route is quite difficult and challenging, while the second route is relatively easier. It is important to note that accessing the waterfall from both routes requires several hours of walking and hiking. This difficulty in access is one of the reasons why the area around the Shevi Waterfall has remained pristine and untouched.

Additionally, this area serves as a habitat for endangered species of salamanders. Nature lovers from all over the country visit this region for recreation in the spring. In the local dialect, the waterfall is known as 'Taf Shevi'.

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