



Chashm e Bulbul

A baby step to revive mountain heritages

Reema

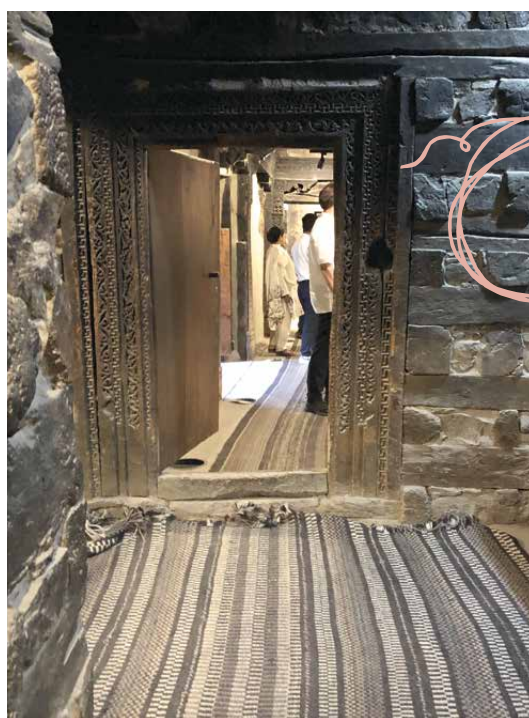
I come from Hunza, a remote, mountainous region in northern Pakistan, known for its rich heritage and culture. This background has deeply shaped my life and strengthened my bond with tradition from an early age. Sharma is an ancient handwoven rug made with love from wool, and in my work, I create patterns inspired by traditional elements that carry this cultural essence forward.

Hunza is a mountainous valley in northern Pakistan known for its rich heritage and cultural history (Figure 1). Growing up in Hunza has had a deep impression on who I am today. When I was young, I did not understand the importance of connecting with our heritage. It was a realisation when I went away to a big city for higher education. Over time, my connection to my heritage grew, and I always

wondered why I never had the chance to explore my crafts, traditional textile techniques, and engage in those slow-paced, peaceful activities. Thus, this is the moment in my life when I slowly started building this connection deeper through small efforts as part of my studies.

This project is one step towards the journey to craft heritage. I have built a pattern through knitting with undyed woollen yarn. This pattern is a reflection of a very special traditional rug called *Sharma* in the Burushaski language (Figure 2). This rug has been part of our culture for over a thousand years, so it has many stories woven into it of resilience, hardship, cold, hunger, joy, peace, and unity.

The concept of innovation is often seen as almost the opposite of tradition. According to Huhmaniemi and Jokela (2020) and Jokela et al. (2020), the idea of tradition, however, is often associated with customs, conventions and habits – even ritual and ceremony. The authors further note that there may be



◀◀◀ **FIGURE 1.** An elderly couple working in the fields of Hunza. Photograph: Reema, 2025.

◀◀ **FIGURE 2.** New traditional rug of Hunza in a KADO centre, Hyderabad Hunza. Photograph: Reema, 2025.

◀ **FIGURE 3.** Old traditional rug in Shigar Fort of Skardu. Photograph: Reema, 2025.

fruitful ground to explore in the intellectual and pragmatic space between the two notions. Today, I am witnessing that our traditional practices and crafts are fading away and that the time is not far when we will not have any traces of these crafts, due to modern development and over-consumerism throughout the globe.

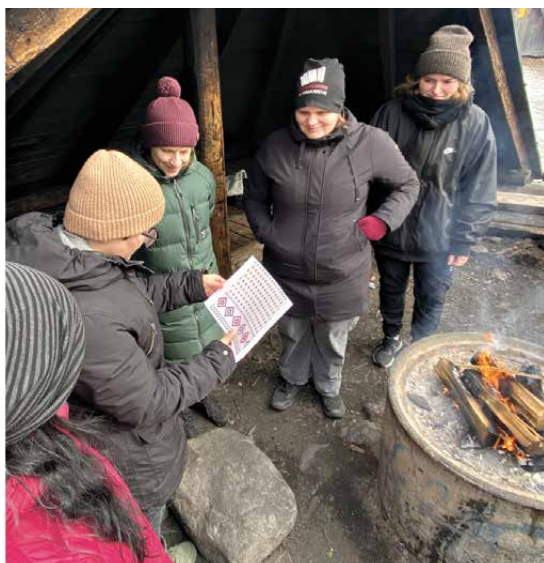
The *sharma*, made from goat and buffalo wool, was strong and lasted for a hundred years, passing through generations. When I was a child, every household had these rugs woven by our grandmothers, especially in winter, because they were most effective at keeping the house warm. Eventually, we preferred rugs from the market, and we stopped using the *sharma*. They started vanishing, and I cannot remember when our last *sharma* was kept in some store for years without usage and later thrown away. This is the story of almost every house. When I asked around the neighbourhood, only one of them had still kept one preserved.

“Revitalisation is described as a practice that renews and remakes cultural traditions that are part of the social construction. It is an approach to achieving cultural sustainability. Its power is in the

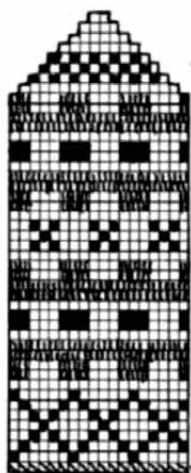
creation of cultural continuation, the reconstruction of ancestors’ skills and support of local cultural identities” (Huhmaniemi & Jokela, 2020, p. 11). My approach in this project is also a cultural continuation. Sharma is a traditional rug woven from thick woollen yarns in natural colours. That’s why they were always in shades of browns, greys and whites. We still have those at various heritage sites, such as Baltit Fort and Skardu Shigar Fort (Figure 3).

The patterns are so simple yet fascinating, and every pattern had a name like Shimshali (a further remote valley), *Girkis emae*y (Mouse’s Teeth) and *Chasm e bulbul* (eye of a nightingale). My pattern is inspired by the *Sharma Chashm-e-Bulbul*, which means ‘eye of the nightingale’. I took this image of *Sharma*, which is placed in a local innovation centre and heritage organisation (KADO).

The remaking of a pattern into another craft is an effort to revive this pattern with the essence of simplicity and natural colours. Interestingly, when I looked into traditional knitting patterns from Lapland (Lind, 2014), I found many similarities in motifs (Figure 5). It was fascinating, and I realised that two traditions are so far away and different,



▲ **FIGURE 4.** Design process, meeting with the knitting group. Photograph: Elina Luiro, 2025.



► **FIGURE 5.** Pattern of Nordic tradition (Lind, 2014, p. 281).



► **FIGURE 6.** Design process. Photographs: Reema, 2025.



yet there are so many similarities in traces. I took this opportunity to combine multiple elements into a repetitive pattern and create it on a beanie. I am attaching Nordic knitting inspirations from the book *Knitting in the Nordic Traditions* (Lind, 2014).

Symbols and crafting methods, such as those in knits, carry cultural heritage. Crafts can be studied, and new meanings can be created for them (Huhmarniemi, 2021). The design development process was adaptive and very personal to me, as this was the first time I was learning the technique. To me, this whole journey was a way to connect with my own culture and the traditions of the Arctic.

Working in with other knitting group members and sharing personal experiences along the journey was very special. Despite our different cultures, it felt like our attachment to the craft was similar (Figure 4). Along the way, I was experimenting with and learning knitting at the same time. Interacting with wool, yarn, and other tools was very special, as I felt connected to the traditions.

As a first step, I started learning the basics of knitting and getting used to the process. For the patterns, at first I was looking into more complex motifs from our embroidered traditional caps, which are more colourful and have more intricate patterns. I also created sketches and digitals, but during the process (Figure 6), I realised I want to stick to natural colours and simple patterns. That is why I decided to use diamond shapes with whites and browns. The purpose of using natural colours is to reflect human connection to earth, sand, and mountains. The original colours also create an instant connection with the animal that has blessed us with the wool.

When I decided to use one motif and repeat it around the beanie, I experimented first with a small beanie, and it turned out well, but I also realised that the pattern was much larger than the beanie itself. That is why I reduced the pattern's size for the final design and added a border to enhance it. I also changed the colours here from one motif to



▲ **FIGURE 7.** Final pattern design, me wearing the beanie, and final products displayed in the VillalInno-exhibition. Photographs: Reema, 2025.



FIGURE 8. Local yarn. Photograph: Reema, 2025.

another – similar to reversing the colours of a diamond from inside to outside.

For the final beanie, I used 100% woollen yarn, an undyed organic yarn made from Finnsheep by Vanhala Sheep Farm (Figure 8). The natural textures give my beanie a unique character. It is not neat, but it speaks for itself. I used a simple knitting technique using circular needles. I created a folding beanie. I also created a rib pattern in one colour for the upper body of the beanie, combining knit and purl stitches (Figure 7). The final design turned out really amazing for me as a beginner in knitting. I was also happy with the calculations. I will definitely wear it soon.

This project has been a great opportunity for me to learn a new skill and has also helped me connect with my heritage. It made me realise that there is so much we can do to revive our traditions. If we do not find ways to reconnect with our traditions through small techniques and community efforts, they may vanish very quickly. There is still so much

to be done through cultural innovation, and this marks the beginning of my own journey.

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