



A Review on journey of Sujani : handicraft

Ragini Tripathi, Dr. Ekta Sharma, Dr. Nargis Fatima

Research Scholar, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor

Department of Textile and Apparel Designing, SHUATAS, Prayagraj, UP 211007

Abstract

The study was undertaken to review the traditional art of Bihar, termed as Sujani. Traditional designs have endless possibilities of inspiring countless innovations through re-interpretations, re-translations and adaptations. With this in mind, an attempt has been made to study the designs with contemporary style inspired from the an age old craft of Bihar region commonly known as Sujani of Bihar province of Union of India. Sujani mainly depicts stories and in the past has been used extensively to spread awareness about social issues and empowerment of downtrodden women. The crafts with Motifs, textile ornamentation presented on the traditional samples are considered heritage to the communities that adopted them. The samples were then embroidered using the designs that had thus been made. A detailed study on the potential consumers, acceptability of the designs in market and popularity of techniques was carried out and presented in the paper.

Keywords: Sujani Handicrafts, , Growth of Sujani embroidery

Introduction

Indian handicrafts

Indian handicrafts is an art of making crafts by hand in India and commonly called Indian handicrafts. In ancient India, people lived in colonies and termed as tribals and were used to make utility items for their daily need. The art of making the crafts was called handicrafts, and the items called handicrafts goods. The people started selling these products in the local markets "Haat". With passage of time, people become more developed and civilised, and thus demand for handicraft products have started to increase and so the trading of handicrafts.

India's Bihar province has a long and illustrious history. It was always the focus of historians' attention, from ancient times to the present. In the rich land of Bihar, mighty dynasties like the Magadha Majanapadas, Mauryan Empire, and Gupta Empire had flourished. Some great names of Indian history like Ashok, Chandragupta Maurya and the symbol of peace and non-violence Gautam Buddha had their root in Bihar. Some of the great religions of the world like Buddhism and Jainism had sprouted from here. Thus naturally Bihar has rich and varied arts and

crafts. Throughout the generation, the rich heritage of art and crafts of Bihar has been preserved, though there are slight variations due to introduction of modern technologies.

Kashida work of Bihar In contrast to Kashida of Kashmir, needlework from Bihar is known as Kashida of Bihar and is more commonly done on everyday clothing such as saris, blouses, hats, sashes, wraps, and odhanis as well as household textiles like pillow cases and quilts. However, males and women work as Kashida in Bihar and Kashmir, respectively.

Bihar's embroidery is produced in a variety of forms, with appliqué art being particularly popular. On their own clothing for personal use and occasionally for commercial purposes, they create this appliqué art. Since the former is intended for oneself, it contains imaginative themes that are either abstract or extremely stylized.

Khatwa, or appliqué work The appliqué and patchwork of Bihar is known locally as Khatwa and is frequently seen on wall hangings, shamianas, or festively decorated tents and canopies, as well as saris, dupattas, cushion covers, tablecloths, and curtains.

The craft is typically done with white cloth on vivid backdrops like red or orange and employs leftover bits of cloth as its raw material. The craftsmanship was so excellent that in the past, aristocracy, kings, and emperors used the items made. Human people, trees, flowers, animals, and birds are among the motifs.

Kantha embroidery Pre-Vedic needlework gave rise to kantha. Kantha embroidery was done specifically using the quilt. Quilts were created using two different types of embroidery. Old and unwanted cotton saree quilts from the first category are heaped on top of one another. In the second form, the top and bottom were covered in cotton or cloth, or a shell was created, and needlework was then applied. Silk thread can be used in embroidery to increase durability. Between the sarees in this, sometimes old clothing was also worn.

This art was the art of Bengali women. In which Bengali women irrespective of caste, whatever class, whatever social economic background features in. Embroidery refers not only to the stitch employed rather it is the individual's creative, also reflects her imagination and craftsmanship. Kantha size and thickness its types according to or as required.

Kasuti work 'Kasuti' is a world famous embroidery of Karnataka state earlier was known as Mysore state, the motifs and art is a part of women's world. Kasuti embroidery speaks about the people of Karnataka their traditions, customs and profession. This is an outcome of the honest, zealous and innate desire of 'mankind' to practice the beautiful stitches on the articles of every day use. The urge of learning Kasuti was common to both royals, aristocrats and peasant women.

Kashida work The word Kashmir can be splitted as 'Kas' means 'water channel' and 'mir' refers to 'mountain', however literally Kashmir means 'rock through' in the regional language. The best Known of India, Jammu and Kashmir is known for its beauty. The locality is embedded with enchanting beautiful and inexhaustible flora and fauna, tranquil lakes, garden of perpetual spring, abundance of natural colour all around, which has inspired many writers, poets, artists and creative craftsmen.

Kashida, embroidery is quite popular due to its colour, texture, design, and technique. The very embroidery is in turn revealed in shawls as well as in cottage industry performed by every member of families of Srinagar. Kashmir embroidery is particularly practiced by men of the families and is a total commercial craft.

Sujani Embroidery is a heritage of India. Sujani embroidery is done in Bhusara village of Bihar district. In ancient times, it was considered a form of quilt, the old cloth used as a creative canvas.

The cloth was folded three to four times. And then fine stitches are applied to add newness to these used clothes in which running stitch was used. The Sujani of Bihar is remarkably similar to the Kanthas of Bengal. Initially Sujani was made for traditional purposes. At the time of child birth, patches of different coloured cloth from old saris were sewn together with a simple running stitch to make a quilt called Sujani.

The Geographical Indications of Products (Registration & Protection) Act (GI Act) of 1999 of the Government of India protects the Sujani embroidered work of Bihar. It was listed as Sujani Embroidered Work of Bihar under GI Application number 74, Class 26 as a textile article, and registered by the Controller General of Patents, Designs, and Trademarks. GI tags were authorised on September 21, 2006.

Historical Background

The 18th century marks the beginning of the embroidery Sujani quilt's traditional production. Its main objective was to provide newborn babies with a cosy blanket as soon as possible after birth. A basic running thread was used to weave pieces of cloth in various colours from old saris and dhotis together to create the final product. With this method, three or four old sari or dhoti patches were used, put one over the other, and then quilted together using thread also taken from the abandoned clothing.

Sujani is a centuries-old tradition among Biharian women, and what sets it apart is the distinctive story components embroidered on it. On the Sujani, women sew their experience, their grief, and their truths, turning a plain quilt into a testament to their life. Old Sujanis contained symbols from daily life, nature, and religion. Hindu epics are depicted in detail in the artwork, as with social issues such female infanticide, election violence, girls' education, and domestic abuse situations. Lectures about health care, environmental parables, and pictures of women fighting for their rights all have a tremendously empowering effect. This is both incredibly intriguing and enlightening because it originates from Bihar, a state with a high prevalence of female infanticide and dowry cases.

Theme of motif

- Women sew their experiences, grief, and realities onto a Sujani depicting their lives.
- Each Sujani offers a story on a related topic, such as domestic abuse, female infanticide, the effects of drunkenness and gambling on a family, etc.
- Societal issues like dowry's negative effects, girls' education, health care's problems, and AIDS are also shown.

Product information of Sujani Embroidery

The patchwork created with this embroidered work symbolises the agonising aspirations of women in a world dominated by men. She creates the craft work by embroidering particular designs on both sides of the finished item. The designs on one side of the fabric depict the women's distress at the violent behaviour of inebriated men against their wives and the act of paying dowry.

Origin and background

India is a diverse nation, and women, both working and stay-at-home mothers, have traditionally specialised in embroidery. Stitching still holds promise for every significant event in a woman's life, including weddings, births, and religious celebrations. Sujani embroidery was created in the state of Bihar in this way.

Sujani is a combination of the terms "su," which means to facilitate, and "jani," which signifies birth. Sujani embroidery was used to create motifs and designs on the quilts for newborn babies after colourful patches of used clothing were sewn together.

Method & Technique used of Sujani embroidery

The most crucial requirement is to utilise a foundation cloth made of readily available basic materials. Using a tracing wheel and tracing sheet, the pattern is first traced into the foundation fabric. The background is then started to be drawn by fine running stitches. And finally, the designs are outlined with black or brown threads and coloured threads are utilised to provide colour. A needle, frame, scissor, various coloured threads, inch tape, tracing paper, tracing wheel, pencil, rubber, blue chalk, and kerosene are needed to complete the Sujani stitch.

Different Applications of Sujani embroidery

The artisans created stunning embroidered motifs of gods, flowers, and peacock designs for wall decoration using delicate running stitch. When fashion changed, artisans began adding Sujani embroidery to sarees, kurtas, dupattas, and other items of apparel that were traditionally worn in India. Among of the common things with Sujani needlework includes wall hangings, bedspreads, and pillow covers for the home. The Tussar silk fabric is used to make jackets and stoles for winter wear that feature Sujani embroidery.

Inspirational Sources

The Sujani embroidery technique, which entails sewing together layered scraps of old fabric, has its roots in traditional ways of doing things. For instance, these discarded cloth scraps that had been put together were thought to be the best choice for covering or quilting neonates. Moreover, another rite was meant to conjure a deity named "Chitirya Maa, who was honoured as the 'Lady of the Tatters'". From designs of holy animals and fertility symbols, which were meant to invoke the benefits of the gods, to sun and cloud motifs, which represented the powers of life. Even the colours had symbolic meanings, with red denoting vigour and yellow denoting the sun.

Weakness of Sujani embroidery

- Sujani embroidery is a highly taxing task.
- Over time, artisans who practise Sujani lose or weaken their visual sight.
- Craftspeople frequently complain of headaches and backaches due to the complexity of the craft form.
- The work is time-consuming.

Situations and issues faced by artists

- A lack of literacy and basic infrastructure.
- A lack of funding for talent promotion and marketing.
- Electrical problems and a lack of a consistent source of income.
- Due to inconsistent employment and money, the majority of women give up. Employment only occurs every two to three months, and the monthly income is usually only 200 to 500 rupees.

Sujani's SWOT analysis

Sujani embroidery is a type of handcraft that involves a lot of time and expertise to craft the needlework that is made on many varieties of objects, letting the craftsmen make a living. Sujani embroidery is GI registered and is considered a cultural heritage of India. Running stitch and chain stitches make up the two basic stitches.

Rebirth of Sujani

Sujani production is back. Sujani production had all but vanished until ADITHI brought it back in 1988. It operates through the Mahila Vikas Sahyog Samiti (MVSS), a tiny independent organisation with headquarters in the Bihar district of Bhusura. Sujani needlework, formerly a tool for domestic recycling, is today a form of expressive art.

Now, this enterprise employs 600 women from 22 villages near Bhusura. The non-profit organisation MVSS was founded in 1988. Its current name is Bhusra Mahila Vikas Samiti.

Sujani's expansion

- **FINANCIAL MARKETING ASSISTANCE:** Sky Morisan was the pioneer in promoting Sujani embroidery in the export market. Also, the government and Charities support sujani embroidery on the national market.
- **LABOUR COST:** Sujani's labour costs are extremely high due to the complexity of the work. The price per square inch is 10 paisa. The labour cost for a bed sheet (60*90) is around Rs. 1500 (as of October 2004).
- Only a select few people may now purchase this craft in India, and it is primarily manufactured for the export market.

Conclusion

Due to its complexity, laboriousness, and time-consuming nature, sujani is costly in marketplaces. But, if we look more closely at the various needlework techniques to make them more widely used commercially, we may assist preserve the long-standing Bihar culture. As a result, the attempt to combine hand and machine embroidery in this study can be examined since it produces a good blend of the traditional hand labour and expands the market by using some automation.

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