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Exploration of Danke-Ka-Kaam (Metal Embroidery of Rajasthan)

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Abstract

The study was undertaken to know about danke ka kaam, the metal embroidery of Rajasthan, a colourful state which has a rich heritage of vivid types of embroideries and different communities are practicing it in their own style. The women folks of remote villages are unexposed to the modern civilization and are experts in preparing articles of such great aesthetic value. Hence there is need for traditional embroideries to be popularized. An effort has been made to develop it in to an industrial craft in order to save the everlasting art and reminiscent beauty of the past. The present study aims in documenting the motifs of Danke-Ka-Kaam embroidery of Udaipur region of Rajasthan and to explore the tools and techniques used in executing this embroidery. This heritage is presently under extinction henceforth, an attempt is made to preserve this cultural heritage of art and craft.

Keywords: Danke Ka Kaam, Embroidery, heritage, Extinction.

Introduction

Embroidery is a beautiful thread work done on a variety of fabrics which makes them more attractive and gorgeous. In India, hand embroidery has been practiced since several centuries and the motifs were inspired and sourced from wall paintings, statues found in ancient civilizations, sculptures, nature, temples, carvings or monuments. Embroidery is a means of creativity and expression for the people of the soil. Their love and expression of nature, patience and perseverance in making beautiful articles are expressed through the art of embroidery (Joshi, 1986).

Literature reveals that metal embroidery is of the following types- zardozi, gota work, danke-ka-kaam and mukke-ka-kaam. Gold and silver metallic threads are drawn through a series of dies to obtain a fine thread. This can either be hammered flat or used as it is. It can be wound around a silken or cotton filament core

to make it into a thread (Rai, 2008). Gold work is always surface embroidery and the vast majority is done in the form of laid work or couching, that is, the gold threads are held onto the surface of the fabric by a second thread, usually of fine silk. The ends of the thread, depending on the type, are simply cut off, or are pulled through to the back of the embroidery and carefully secured with the couching thread (Crill, 1999)

Danke-ka-kaam earlier known as korpatti-ka-kaam is a speciality of Udaipur, a small city of Rajasthan. The danka is a small square plate, which is variable in size but it's not bigger than 1.5cm. Earlier Danka was made from pure gold but nowadays it is made using silver plated with gold. This technique is usually worked on fabrics like satin, chiffon or silk fabric. The most popular motifs used in Danke-Ka-Kaam are inspired by nature like the Sun, the Moon, peacocks, flowers, borders and paisleys etc. (abhipedia.abhimanu.com)

The cost of the Danke ka kaam is calculated according to its weight. This decorative technique is usually worked on fabrics like satin, chiffon or silk fabric. The fabric is stretched tightly on a wooden frame before it is embroidered and the craftsman sits on the floor. Danka pieces are spread on the fabric as required by the design. The danka is pierced with a sharp needle, bringing out the thread through the fabric. About three to five strands of kasab (gold or silver wire) are kept over each danka and couched down along its edges. It is secured with eight stitches in the shape of a knot. Two stitches go into the back and the other two at each corner and two on the front. About three to five strands of 'kasab' (gold or silver wire) are placed over each danka along its edges. It is secured with eight stitches in the shape of a knot - two at the back, one in each corner and two in the front. The most popular motifs used in danka work are inspired by nature - the sun, the moon as well as the paisley design in a stylised form. Round and flat metal braids about one quarter of a centimetre in width that are used to highlight the design. Additional stitches used include the chain stitch, satin stitch for the design filling, while stem and running stitches are for lighter work (rajasthantextiles.com).

The development in traditional textiles is as essential as in any other field. The Indian folk and traditional embroideries play an important role in the fashion world, as now a day's fashion trends are fragile and consumers constantly demand innovative changes over existing fashion fields. From time immemorial, it is a well-recognized fact that we have a rich cultural heritage. This heritage is nowadays under extinction, henceforth, efforts are made to preserve this cultural heritage of art and craft.

Objectives

Hence keeping the above points in mind the main objectives of the study were:

1. To explore the motifs of Danke-ka-kaam
2. To explore the tools and techniques used for Danke-ka-kaam.

Significance:-

- The present study will help people to understand more about Danke-ka-kaam and metal embroidery of Rajasthan
- This will help to save not only the work of artisans but also the cultural heritage which is almost extinct.

Methodology

Locale of the study: The present study was conducted in the Udaipur district of Rajasthan.

Selection of Method: For the collection of data a structured interview schedule was prepared and information was collected from the artisans. The tool consisted of close ended questions to collect the desired information on various aspects i.e. sources of procuring raw material and embellishment, most preferred motifs, fabric used, embroidery frame, materials used in making of embroidery, needles and stitches used and problems faced by the artisans

Selection of sample: The information was collected from a purposively selected sample of artisans involved in doing Danke-ka-kaam in Udaipur. The sample consisted of 20 artisans in the age group of 20- 45 years who had work experience of 15-20 years so that they would have an in-depth knowledge about the metal embroidery. Approximately 10 units for Danke-ka-kaam work were approached to explore the tools & techniques used, working condition of artisans and problems faced by the artisans. Museum, books, catalogues, magazines, websites and local artisans were also used as a source of information for documentation of motifs.

Results and Discussion

The results of the study taken have been interpreted, discussed and presented are hereby elaborated as follows:-

Documenting a cultural heritage linked with a craft or a group of crafts is directly related to the preservation of tradition and traditional wisdom. Documentation serves as a baseline for more proactive interaction and movement into the realm of regeneration/ revitalization. The danka lies at the heart of the opulent embroidered ceremonial poshaks worn by Mewari Rajput women at weddings and festive rituals. This traditional garment comprises of a kanchali (blouse) ghagara (full length) gathered skirt and odhna (head) mantle. In the last few decades danka has also been embroidered onto saris and other garments. Danke-ka-kaam remains relatively unknown outside its own geography. The Danka kaakhanas are mainly located in the colloquially named Boharwadi or colony of the Bohras where the making of the danka pieces and its embroidery are practiced by the small Bohra Muslim community who migrated to this area in the 16th century and continue their traditional practice today.

Various motifs of Danke-ka-kaam were collected from different sources for documentation. The motifs of the sun, the moon, flowers, paisleys, peacocks, vines, borders and scrolls are used in Danke-Ka-Kaam.



1. Peacock



2. Paisley



3. Moon



4. Floral



5. Border

Tools and techniques used in Danke-Ka-Kaam

Fabric : Danke-ka-kaam was usually done on bright colored fabrics. Dark colours like, red, green, blue, mehroon, pink, yellow, orange etc. are used on danke ka kaam. This decorative technique was usually worked on fabrics like saten, chiffon, silk etc.

NEEDLE/SUI: A strong not a thin but pointed needle is used primarily to puncture holes in the danka and also to sew it into the fabric.

ARI: A long instrument with a hook shaped needle that is plied vertically through the fabric to create a chain like stitch on the fabric. The Ari tanka or the chain stitch is used as an outline stitch or to stitch dapka. This can be used to apply a satin stitch with longer floats in Kasab.

ADA: Ada is an expandable wooden frame. An adda is a frame of rectangular wooden beams that can be expanded or reduced to stretch the desired area of the fabric that needs to be embroidered. The craftsperson sits on the floor, the height of the adda being chest high it makes it ergonomically comfortable for him to use.

Stitches: Various stitches like the chain stitch and satin stitch are used for the design filling, Stem stitch and running stitches are used for lighter work.

Tracing: The design was traced on butter paper by a pencil and small holes were punched on it closely.

Application of Danka work: The fabric is stretched tightly on a wooden frame before it is embroidered and the craftsman sits on the floor. Dankka pieces spread on the fabric as required by the design. The danka is pierced with the sharp needle, bringing out the thread through the fabric. About 3-5 strands of kasab (Gold or Silver wire) are kept over each danka and couched down along it's edges. It is secured with 8 stitches in the shape of a knot. Additional stitches used include the chain stitch, satin stitch for the design filling, while stem and running stitches are for lighter work.



Duppata

Kanchali

Saari

Kurta

Cushion Cover

Conclusion: Danke-ka-kaam is primarily being practiced in Udaipur District of Rajasthan. Danke-ka-kaam remains relatively unknown outside its own geography. The Danka kaakhana are mainly located in the colloquially named Boharwadi or colony of the Bohras where the making of the danka pieces and its embroidery are practiced by the small Bohra Muslim community who migrated to this area in the 16th century and continue their traditional practice today. This is the unique art of Udaipur but it takes hard work of artisans hence becomes costly. This work is declining day by day as the artisans get low wages due to middlemen's cost. The younger generation is not interested in learning this art as their profession because the income is very less as compared to any other craft work and profession. There is a need to make innovation in the present situation. With the help and co-operation of the government, local administration and other agencies, the owners of the working units should help get proper infrastructure. The Banks and other agencies should make facilities for loans through simple process on low interest rates to promote the danke-ka-kaam

The present study will serve as a guideline of experimentation for upcoming designers, students, boutique owners, entrepreneurs and for fashion innovators to know about the motifs and tools & technique used in doing Danke-ka-kaam. Government should also establish stores and give the unit owners an opportunity to sell their products whether the order of work is available or not and sell at good margins. Efforts should be made to contact the buyers in domestic and foreign market so that they may export their

product directly to the buyer, and it will help in revival of the craft. Promotional activities should be undertaken such as trade fairs, exhibitions etc

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