



A Review on Journey of Chikanikari Embroidery in Present Scenario

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ABSTRACT

Embroidery is considered as a passion of women's to express their creativity and spend their leisure time. Chikankari embroidery originated way back in the mughal period of Lucknow specially initiated by residents of Lucknow and was patronized by Jahangir's wife.

The art of Chikankari had flourished under the reign of Awadh later the knowledge shifted to Lucknow but lost its patronage during the British rule. The artisans were illiterate and facing problems. Indian embroidery owes distinctive identity of their own. They are classified on the basis of technique and region of its origin. Chikanwork is pristine art of Central India, widely explored in apparels as well as home products ranging from pastels to bright colors. Following the legacy Muslim community is still dominating the Chikan industry.

Key words: chikankari, innovative, traditional, embroideries.

I. INTRODUCTION

India is a treasure house of handicrafts, handloom weaves and textiles that could add new dimensions to the growing industry. Handicrafts speak a lot about history, rich culture and heritage, traditional skills of native people. Chikankari is one of India's popular and centuries old hand embroidery practiced by a large urban craft community in Lucknow. Lucknow, the city of Nawabs is famous for art, culture, and cuisines, situated on the banks of river Gomati. The cultural life of the city is majorly dominated by music and dance. The exquisite architecture, poetry and delicious food is well known from every nook and corner of the city. The craft is considered as a symbol of Lucknow's tradition. It is believed that a visit to the city is incomplete without buying Chikan work. The embroidery had been used to adorn from the smallest possession to the most sumptuous attire. A delicate and rich craft that had nurtured through its characteristics and fine details. It was used as an embellishment for garments as needle and thread work. The legendary stitches of chikankari is practiced in all parts of India having a distinctive feature. Over the years it has flourished, evolved, survived loss of patronage, declined, suffered commercialization. But now globally appreciated for its uniqueness. This art is hereditary that gives a classy and subtle look to the person carrying it. It is more than 200 years old craft that belongs to local Muslim community, executed by women supplementing their family income. They get inspiration from art, tribal people, folk culture that forms a vital part in day-to-day life of people Chikankari was known in the 7th century A.D. when white embroidered muslin garments were worn by kings and high officials at royal courts. It was a part of Persian culture at the Mughal attendings. Ancient Mughal paintings also

depicted the courtiers wearing embroidered garments. Queen Nur Jahan's personal creation generated the idea of using mulmul for weaving. The origin of craft is considered to be very mysterious as found on the Ajanta rock paintings. It was said that the craft was taught by a mysterious traveler in 3rd century B.C. named Megasthenes, in return of hospitality offered to him by the villagers. It also had its origin from Chakeen, a village in district of Persia that means to create delicate patterns. It is a Turkish inspired embroidery meant as a craft of luxury and extravaganza. 'Chikankari' also emerged from Jamdani weaving in Bengal which means very fine. It became popular at the times of Nazir-ud-din Haider in 19th century. Kamorladevi Chattopadhyay was key figure behind this craft development. Lakhnavi Chikankari is mentioned in the book 'Indian Art of Delhi' as pure indigenous needlework of India. Faiyaz Khan and Hasan Mirza Saheb are some well-known people who explored chikankari embroidery at its best. After the downfall of Mughal empire, the art migrated to Lucknow under the rule of Awadh. The famous indispensable master craft was exported to Britain during the colonial period as covers, napkins, floor mats and table runners. The decline began from 20th century, during the 1960s with the increase in shop dealers. Price component variedly dominated the craft market. Embroidery was a great art for local Muslim community people that was the only source of income generation that could make them creatively independent and bring their right potential. The artisans were illiterate and poverty ridden, the women's were following purdah system and staying in insanitary conditions. The SEWA organization revitalized the craft and began upgrading the skills of artisans on larger level to bring it to original level of refinement. Although private productions have been set up by independent craft people.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chikankari is a very graceful and elegant embroidery that came into existence when Queen Nur Jahan, wife of Emperor Jahangir embroidered a beautiful Chikanwork cap for her husband that popularized as craft of white-on-white embroidery. Lucknow is heart of Chikankari, the famous Lakhnavi Chikankari is known for its glory and perfection. Later it became popular in number of cities of Indo-gangetic plains of Delhi, Agra, Kanpur, Banaras, Patna, Gaya. Although it has taken deep roots in Lucknow as its base and manufacturing hub but also spread in New Delhi, Jaipur, West Bengal, Hyderabad and even in Calcutta. Now it has established as a commercial commodity of north, west and central India, whose supremacy remained undisputed as local woven muslin- tanzeb. Technique – Chikankari motifs are traced prior to embroidery on cloth with the help of design engraved wooden blocks and washable color. Stamping is done for printing the patterns through neel or dye then fabric is set on smaller frames. Needlework is applied to traced patterns with different types of common stitches like flat, herringbone, satin, back, stem, buttonhole, chain and raised stitches like burion and french knots. White and bright colored untwisted cotton and polyester threads are used create the designs. Pattern depends on the type of thread used, that creates a mesh-like section. When the Chikan work gets completed, the cloth is washed to remove the traced pattern, further bleached, acid treatment is applied to add stiffness. At last, the finished work is ironed properly to enhance the overall look.

According to watt ,(1904)traditional chikankari was embroidered on muslin fabric with a white thread gradually the work was begun on other fabrics like organdie , mulmul and cotton at present all types of fabrics including terry voile, chiffon, cotton , georgette, rubia , cambric , etc. are used in chikankari embroidery.

Hjortshoj,(1979)explained Lucknow, the capital city of uttar Pradesh is an important cultural, historical and industrialized center. Its population was recorded in the 2018 census as 3.4704 million. The larger part of the city forms a semi-circle on the south bank of the gomti River. The north bank is punctuated with mohullas

where craft manufacture-including chikankari embroidery clusters are located, some of these areas, for example, around khadra, bhram nagar and sarojani nagar are extremely old, dating back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Weber and Clare, (1999) states women now make the most expensive as well as the coarsest and the cheapest chikankari products they are both; the industry's cheap labour and its master crafts- persons , and make up an increasing, if still small, proportion of agents who subcontract work.

Gulati,(1999)described the fact that women do give up chikankari in rare circumstances when the men in the family are ' earning well',implies that women do not see their identities as primarily constituted in wage labour and production but this situation is not universally applicable to all kinds of workers. There are some highly skilled workers, markers of fine embroidery, who may never express a desire to give up chikankari. Wages for chikankari work are low. Even the highest piece wages are low relative to the earning of many others in the chikankari production process or those involved in other craft activities such as zardori.

Kaplinsky et al. (2001)state the pattern is block printed on de- starched fabric using temporary (not fast) dyes. Chikankari is something like unity in diversity, it include some simple and complex stitches giving it an effect which is simple , gentle ,delicate and yet elegant .These days chikankari work being done on variety of items such as sarees, suits, kurtas , table covers , bed sheets and cushion cover etc.

Sinha , (2005)explained the working pattern adopted by the chikankari workers. Highest ranking for use of cotton fabric was found for all types of chikankari articles. The second highest ranking was found for the use of georgette fabric. The highest mean score (2.0) was found and preferred for the naturalistic designs in all types of articles. Lowest preference had been given to stylized designs in ladies wear , gents wear and household articles whereas geometrical designs with the mean score(1.00) were least preferred for the children garments. The preferences for the type of stitches were also seen in all the articles. Bakhiya was most prevalent for all the articles, whereas, khatwa was the least preferred stitch for all types of chikankari articles. Only 3.33 percent workers were developing their own designs. Majority of the workers under investigation had no specific room for their activity.

Naik, (2007) stats the art of chikankari embroidery in india is about 400 years old. It is believed that chikankari was introduced by Noorjahan, the queen of Mughal Emperor Jahangeer. Chikankari boomed under the backing of the rulers of Awadh. Later when the capital of Awadh shifted to lucknow from Faizabad, the craft came to Lucknow. The mughals found that block printing skillfulness made it easy for them to carry out this embroidery, as earlier the tracing of design was very difficult. This availability of easy procedure of portrayal of base design encouraged them to teach this fine embroidery- work to their kaniz (servants), who in turn trained it to their family members and slowly this embroidery become a part- time earning source for many women of rural areas.

Das and Hati,(2011) described that chikankari industry is facing a tough competition from foreign market and has swamped the foreign market due to low prices and intricate designs. Though chikankari craft has secured registration under the geographical indication (GI) Act, the fabric has been unsuccessful to magnetize the youth due to poor branding. Reliable sources from coorganisers and chikankari manufacturers inform that the chikankari suffered from lopsided branding and marketing.

Jafri ,(2011)surveyed the population dynamics of chikankari craft industry, survey was conducted randomly on 6 cutting masters, 14 printers, 6 tailors, 63 chikankari workers, 6 washer men and 9 agents. Thus a total of 104 workers were extensively surveyed. Out of total 26.67 percent were Hindu workers and 73.33 percent were

muslim workers, if the entire family members of the 104 respondents chikankari workers are added, it comes altogether 579 persons out of which males and females are 276 and 303, respectively.

Stitches of Embroidery

There are more than 35 stitches in chikankari, out of which murri and phanda are most difficult and valued stitches as they constitute the shape of rice and millet grain respectively. Some of famous stitches are: taipachi, hool, zanzeera, khatau, pechavi, makra, keel kangan, rahet, turpai, bijli, kauri, kangan, bulbul, banarasi, darzdari, ghaspatti, hathkadi, dhaniyapatti, banjkali, kapkapi, bulbul chasm, rozan, sazi, madrazi, taj mahal, meharki, shidhaul, karan, chanapatti, badla and jora. These are some local names for stitches that holds uniformity and consistency in them. They are made by using different number of strands.



<https://vrittidesigns.com/handcrafted-chikankari-embroidery>

Style of Embroidery

The style used for Chikanwork is commonly known as shadow work that gives light and shade effect through herringbone stitch. The most beautiful part of embroidery is open work that is achieved by pulling the threads. The finest of work is done by mens through the Persian aesthetics. Every stitch needs to be perfect and neat. The embroidery is created on the wrong side of the fabric that creates shadow of light color on the right side of the fabric. It gives a beautiful outline on the right side developing a motif. Various embellishments are adapted

like beads, mukaish, mirror work, badla and sequins to give a rich look. Flat and knotted stitches (embossed), both produces shadow appearance or a transparent effect.

Motifs

The motifs are generally inspired from nature, flora (flowers, creepers used as lace patterns, jaals and butis), fruits (mango and almonds for paisley motif) and birds like parrots, peacock that creates a sense of unity in diversity. The vintage patterns signified the artistic skills of replicating an architecture. The Taj, Fatehpur Sikri and Imambara mosque jaalis and walls influenced the artisans for developing motifs. It was started as a white on white embroidery that slowly evolved with colors. Introduction of colors is a recent innovation in Chikan embroidery. Earlier whites and pastels were often used, now created on a wider color palette. Chikan work is found on blouse, sari borders, caps, cuffs, cushions, curtains, mats and table runners for decorative purpose. Seen on male attires like kurta, bandi, chogas worn as summer wear.



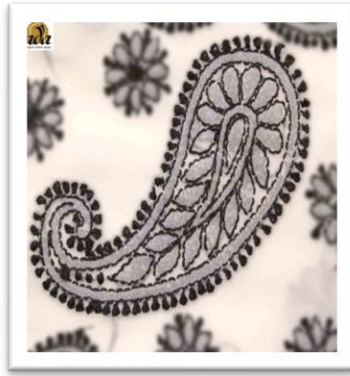
Flower motif



Leaf motif



Grass stalks motif



Paisley motif



Palm motif



stylized motif



Buti motif



Bird motif

<https://www.adachikan.com/blog/the-motifs-of-chikankari/>

Ten years of mijwan welfare society, a collaborative effort of SHABANA AZMI, NAMRATA GOYAL AND MANISH MALHOTRA

Mijwan welfare society is celebrating its 10-year anniversary of their work towards empowering women artisans' community. In commemoration of this milestone, manish malhotra is curating a special couture collection inspired by the exquisite craft of chikankari. (29th July 2022) <https://www.jioworldcentre.com/jio-world-convention-centre/events/mijwan2022>



Bollywood power couple Ranveer Singh and Deepika Padukone recently became the royal show-stoppers for ace designer Manish Malhotra's latest collection at the Mijwan Fashion Show 2022 in Mumbai (All photos/Yogen Shah)

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