Research Paper

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An Insight Into of Traditional Textile Legacy of Rajasthan

Textiles

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Dr. Madhu Sharan — Department of Clothing and Textiles, Faculty of Family and Community Sciences, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara

Ms. Vandana Chauhan — Department of Clothing and Textiles, Faculty of Family and Community Sciences, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara

Ms. Hinal Kaystha — Department of Clothing and Textiles, Faculty of Family and Community Sciences, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara

ABSTRACT

Rajasthan is among the culturally richest states in the country creating the most brilliant art works in Traditional Textiles. Rajasthan has many richest traditional textiles to its credit in form of printed and resist textiles. This work was an endeavor to expand in-depth knowledge of some of these traditional textiles by analyzing the artifacts in terms of origin, articles, fabric, colour, motifs and style of printing and literature support. The artifacts kept in the "Textile Art Museum", Department of Clothing and Textiles, Faculty of Family and Community Sciences, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda were used for the study. This meticulous depiction will be of help to historians, textile designers, fashion designers, students and researchers.

Introduction

This fascinating land of Rajasthan is a colourful mélange of massive forts, stunning palaces, diverse cultures, delectable cuisines and warm people, set amidst a rugged yet inviting landscape. It is a land that encourages countless people to come tread on the sands of time. In Rajasthan you will find every hue in Nature's grand palette - the red sands, the blue of royalty, the pink cities or the amber sunsets, sights and sounds that will transport you into a folk lore. Rajasthan is an amazing potpourri of the old and new attracting many with its art and craft as a glittering jewel of India.

The exquisite of crafts of Rajasthan mirror affluent convention, splendid craftsmanship and exceptional cultural philosophy. So it is crucial for cultural heritage information, in all its forms, to be preserved, valued and transmitted for the reference of the future generations. Knowledge dissemination of craft not only encourages the crafts, but also helps in preserving its specimens. Analytical data related to historical, technological and aesthetic aspects of crafts will be helpful in understanding the past, appreciating the present and utilizing it for future.

When it comes to the printed and resist textiles, Rajasthan has profound heritage. Besides collection, display and preservation of notable artifacts documentation is essential. By documenting the artifacts in detail the knowledge of traditional textile can be disseminated to the future generation which may not have the privilege to see the artifacts physically and meet the artisan and appreciate it.

Commonly the references about traditional artifacts are found either through literature such as books in form of illustration or on display in museums or library. It is very difficult to come across actual artifact supported with the detailed theoretical information. With this view to amplify the knowledge, specimens of traditional textiles from the Department of the Clothing and Textiles, Faculty of Family and Community Sciences, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda were selected. In this study each selected artifact was analyzed with respect to its characteristics details, regional names, identifying features such as its origin, shape, form, and significance and supported with data from the literature to give detailed information of the specific traditional textile.

Materials and Methods

The type of research was combination of descriptive as well as analytical. Method used for data procurement was observation method. The analysis of each artifact was supported by relevant literature.

Results

Printed Textiles

Printing is the process of applying colour to the fabric in definite pattern or design. Traditionally many printing methods were used in Rajasthan some of which are practiced and appreciated till date. (1)

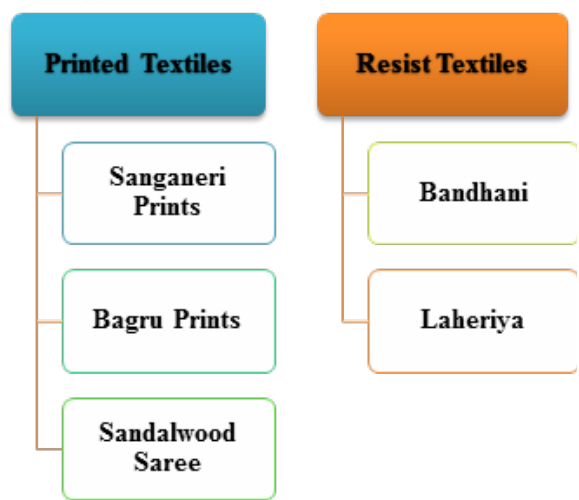


Figure 1: Traditional Printed and Resist Textiles of Rajasthan

Sanganeri Prints

Sanganeri printing is practiced by people of Sanganer village 14 km away from Jaipur. It's a hand block printing technique founded as early as 16th century by Rana Sanga, a Kachhawaha prince. It was believed that a dream had come to a man Namdeo, in which god taught him the process of dyeing, which he further taught to his fellow mates. People accepted it as a gift of god and started practicing this art.

The characteristics of early Sanganer print is the finish called "thwacking" (with wooden hand rollers), but now calendaring is done. Another characteristic is that it only done with vegetable colours.

Different blocks were used for the different colours used in designs. Mainly three kinds of block were used i.e. for the printing of outlines of the design 'Rekh'; for printing the ground colour 'Gad'; for printing the third and fourth colours, 'Datta'.

A bunch of eight flowers called 'Sundari ka Attha' designed by Sundari, a women designer during the period of Maharaja Madho Singh is still widely used. Other popular designs include Sakhi ka bunta, parrot, deer with a girl, racing elephants, fairies, dancing peacock, Dhola Maru, snake charmer etc. The creeper designs make use of dots (Chhadani), squares, checks, chain and network etc. (2)

Article:
Saree

Origin:
Sanganer, Rajasthan



Figure 2: Sanganeri Saree

Description: The characteristics motifs of Sanganeri printing in traditional style are flowers and plants and their network. The field of the Sanganeri saree as well as the border was printed with the plant and flowers respectively. The plant motif in the field was placed with half brick repeat. Creepers and a band of brown colour were printed alternately to create border design.

Dabu Prints
Akola village in Rajasthan is well known for its traditional dyeing and printing. It is one of the prominent and prosperous centres of dyeing and printing in Rajasthan. Akola prints also known as 'Dabu Prints'. Mostly Natural and mineral colours were used for dabu printing. The process is cumbersome; it was months to get the desire shine and fastness.

The wooden blocks were used for hand printing. They were also called 'Bat Kade' (Bat = Design; Kade = Printer). Block printing is specialty of Akola and for this it is called the second Sanganer of Rajasthan. Akola prints, colours and designs were subjected to the class, community and religion. Motifs used in printing were flowers, plants, animals, birds, crops and other natural objects and human figures. (3)

Article: Dabu Printed Textile

Origin: Rajasthan

Description: Akola prints also known as 'Dabu Prints'. The Dabu printing was done on the yellow background with floral motifs. The fabric was first dyed in yellow colour. Then flower motif was printed with orange colour along with stem and leaves. Then flower motifs were filled with black colour. The motifs were block printed all over in half drop repeat with orange and black colour.

Resist Textiles
Resist-dyeing is a widely used method of applying colours or patterns to fabric. Tie and dye is one of the oldest forms of fabric resist and pattern making on cloth. It is known in all the parts of the world due to the basic simplicity of its techniques and equipments which allow it to be practiced almost anywhere under primitive conditions. It is undoubtedly a popular technique because of the unusual results of the dyeing and textural appearances left on the fabric after untying. Tie-dyeing involves pinching areas of cloth and tying them tightly with thread before dyeing. Removal of the thread reveals small circular marks in the original fabric colour. Complex patterns can be built up by repeating the process using another dye colour. (4)



Figure 3: Dabu Printed Textile

Bandhej of Rajasthan
Tie and dye is known as Bandhej in Rajasthan. Multi coloured chunries, sarees, safa were very popular in Rajasthan. The characteristic feature of these kinds of chunaries was that, after the material was folded in several layers, the entire area was equally divided by a diagonal line, according to the number of colours to be used. The various coloured backgrounds were took up in the form of alphabet V on untying the chunri.

'Fhaganyo' was a white and red coloured bandhej saree and odhani worn in Rajasthan on the festival of Holi in the month of Fhagun. The most common motifs used in bandhej were phool butta, pan butta, machi butta, keri butta, hathi butta, phool ki bel, pan ki bel, hathi kinar, tote ki bel, ek bundi, do bundi, jad. 'Pilia' a yellow and red coloured tie and dyed odhani in Rajasthan. This odhani was given to a girl by her parents when her first child is born. (5)



Figure 4: Pilia Dupatta of Rajasthan

Article: Dupatta

Origin: Rajasthan

Description: Pilia literally means 'yellow colour'. 'Pilia' a yellow and red coloured tie and dyed odhani in Rajasthan. The field of the odhani was dyed with light yellow colour. The circular motifs were created through folding fabric in triangular form then tying

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in small knots followed by dyeing in red colour. Fabric was first dyed in light colour followed by darker shades. Circular motif consisted of scroll design on edge followed by wavy lines, buttis, flowers, pan and wavy lines in centre making another circle. Total four circular flowers were created, two above the main motif and two below, through tie and dye.

Article: Fhaganyo Saree

Origin: Rajasthan



Figure 5: Fhaganyo Saree of Saree

Description: Fhaganyo was a white and red coloured bandhej saree and odhani worn in Rajasthan on the festival of Holi in the month of Fhagun, that is why it named as fhaganyo. The saree was tied in small knots according to the motifs and dyed in red colour, the field of the saree had white colour, as the characteristic feature of the fhaganyo saree. The pallav and border of the saree had floral motifs encased in rhombus shapes, tied and dyed in yellow green and magenta colour.

Article: Safo

Origin: Rajasthan

Description: The safo was tied in small knots according to the motifs and then dyed in five different colours started with light shade cream followed by darker ones such as light blue, magenta, red and violet. The safo was divided in equal zigzag broad thick bands. The safo was knotted first and then pleated in several layers and tied thus giving a zigzag pattern. The motifs included basant i.e. flower encased in square, chou – ras, bundi and scroll designed border at the either side of each zigzag band.





Figure 6: Panchrangi Safo from Rajasthan

Laheriya of Rajasthan

Laheriya was another style of tie and dye of Rajasthan. The term laheriya originated Hindi word 'Laher', meaning water waves. The laheriya had diagonal stripes and available from two to nine colours. Laheriya striped designs were created through damp material rolled diagonally from one end to another end till it looked alike a rope. Then tying and dyeing of the cloth was done proceeded with lighter shade followed by darker ones. According to the number of colours used in laheriya, it was named as do ranga laheriya, teen ranga laheriya or panch ranga laheriya.

It was also observed that if a laheriya had interrupted patterns on the stripes were known as pasavalli designs. The broad bands in laheriya were known as 'patta', narrow bands known as 'shike' and interrupted laheriya were known as 'pasavalli'.

Mothara was also a one type of laheriya only. The main characteristic feature of this laheriya was plaid striped pattern. It was tied and dyed to form plaids.

Bhopal shahi was a type of laheriya with distinctive feature of zigzag striped pattern.

The Samunder Laher saree was one type of laheriya. The Samunder Laher word literally means 'Ocean Waves'. The characteristic feature of this saree was that it always dyed in pastel colours in shades of water of the ocean such as blue, sky blue, green, light green, light yellow, pink etc.(5)

Article: Mothara Saree

Origin: Rajasthan



Figure 7: Mothara Saree from Rajasthan

Description: The field of the saree had diagonal broad bands i.e. patta in light green, yellow, violet and sky blue. Over these multi coloured bands dyeing with magenta colour was done to create magenta thin bands i.e. shike in opposite direction.

Article: Saree

Origin: Rajasthan



Figure 8: Laheriya of Rajasthan

Description: Laheriya was another style of tie and dye of Rajasthan. The term laheriya originated Hindi word 'Laher', meaning water waves. The laheriya had diagonal stripes and available from two to nine colours. To create laheriya, fabric was rolled diagonally, tied at regular intervals with untwisted cotton threads and then dyed in dark pink colour to create laheriya on it. The laheriya saree had thin and narrow bands i.e. shike in white and pink. The saree was further embellished with tikki work on pallav as well as on the field to make it more decorative and to enhance the aesthetic appeal of the saree.

Article: Saree

Origin: Rajasthan



Figure 9: Pasavalli Saree from Rajasthan

Description: Laheriya with interrupted patterns on the stripes were known as pasavalli designs. The fabric rolled and tied at intervals and then first dyed in light colour. Then fabric is again rolled and tied at intervals from the opposite direction and dyed followed by darker shades. The field of this pasavalli saree had thin diagonal stripes i.e. 'shike' in blue and pink colour in opposite direction intersecting and forming interrupted laheriya pattern called pasavalli

Article: Saree

Origin: Rajasthan



Figure 10: Samundar Laher Saree of Rajasthan

The Samunder Laher word literally means 'Waves of the Ocean'. The field of the saree had laheriya bands of equal thickness called patta. The characteristic feature of the saree was the samunder laher saree is that it always had pastel shades. This saree also had selected numbers of colour which resembles the colour of the ocean and creates shades of it that's why it was classified as samunder laher saree. The field of the saree had diagonal patta of equal thickness dyed first in light green followed by darker shades i.e. sky blue, yellow and magenta.

Article: Saree

Origin: Rajasthan



Figure 11: Bhopalshahi Saree of Rajashtan

Description: Bhopal shahi was a type of laheriya with distinctive feature of zigzag striped pattern. The saree was first pleated in several layers and then rolled diagonally, thus giving a zigzag pattern. The saree had white colour as a background. The saree was dyed first in light colour i.e. orange colour followed by darker shade such as violet and black. The field of the saree had thin bands 'shike' of white followed by thick bands 'patta' of black, orange, white and violet colour.

Ajrakh Printing

Ajrakh is one of the oldest living textiles in the world still practised in parts of Gujarat and Rajasthan in India, and in Sindh in Pakistan. Sindh is the actual birthplace of Ajrakh cloth. Ajrakh has been in Sindh since the era of Mohenjo-Daro, one of the oldest civilizations in the world, or even before that. The history of the Ajrakh can be traced from the times of the ancient civilizations of the Indus Valley, around 2500 B.C. to 1500 B.C.

In Arabic, Ajrakh indicates the blue or indigo colour also means making beautiful. In fact, Ajrakh denotes the blue colour – a primary and essential colour of these fabrics.

It is patterned in intense jewel like colours. The dominant colours are rich crimson and a deep indigo. A little bit of white and black is also used to give definition to the geometric patterns. The geometrical designs in the fabric seem to echo principles of Sufism or Islamic spiritualism that has several great proponents in the ancient land of Sindh. The symbolism of geometric patterns is generated from the concept of symmetry — these repeated patterns representing cosmic processes that extend in all directions. Ajrakh colours come out the best on cotton fabric.

In olden days only natural vegetable dyes were used for Ajrakh. Now they have been substituted by chemical dyes. Blue – Indigo Red colour: Alum, molasses, wheat flour, and fennel.

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Figure 13: Ajrakh of Rajasthan

The Ajrakh is clearly distinguished from other block printed textile only due to its deep red and blue hues but also in its structuring of motif. The motifs used in ajrakh are ambi mohar, champakali, sitar, mijudi, pencho, keri mijudi, mohammad shahi, athaans, kharek etc. Each of the motif's quarter is produced by an identical impression of the block, the four parts coming together forms the whole motif.

The ajrakh print is employed with grid, the repetitive pattern creating a web like design or central jaal. Apart from jaal, border designs are also incorporated in the fabric. These borders are aligned both vertically and horizontally and frame the central field, distinguishing one ajrakh from another. The lateral ends are printed using a wider, double margin in order to differentiate the layouts of the borders. (6)

Article: Sirakh (Bed Sheet)

Origin: Barmer, Rajasthan



Figure 14: Configuration of Pencho Motif in Ajarakh

Description: The Ajrakh was divided into three rectangular registers. The fabric was first treated with myrobalan which gave yellow colour to the fabric. The motifs were printed with rekh i.e. outline block. Motifs were filled with colour using datlo i.e. foreground filling block. The background of the artifact was done with gadh i.e. Background filling block. Then fabric was dyed in indigo colour. The central field of the artifact was printed with pencho design all over with one drop brick repeat in indigo colour with tavith motifs on either side in maroon and beige colour. The middle and outer register also had tavith motif in maroon and indigo colour and maroon and beige respectively. The either ends of the Ajrakh were printed with chheda motif. The lowest border of the chheda was termed as madagulo (mada means girl and gulo means flower), three lines above mada gulo were known as tinnaro and above it was butto motif. All the motif sections were separated by a running border bopai.



Figure15: Chhedo in Ajrakh

Conclusion

Rajasthan is a land of affluent traditional crafts. There are crafts which are contemporized and commercialized to gain more market coverage. Now – a –days it is difficult to find an artifact made with Traditional techniques. Today contemporary market is booming, easier & inexpensive to produce an artifact. This paper will assist reader in identifying the traditional textiles taken up for study. This data will be helpful to the researchers, designers and historians in the field of textiles to maintain, spread and retrieve the reliable data on traditional textiles.

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