Research Paper

Volume : 5 | Issue : 4 | April 2016 • ISSN No 2277 - 8179 | IF : 3.508 | IC Value : 69.48

Traditional Knowledge of Namda Craft From Gujarat

Textiles

KEYWORDS :

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

Ms. Swati Arya — Teaching Assistant, Department of Textiles & Apparel Design, Institute of Fashion Technology, Faculty of Family and Community Sciences, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara, Gujarat, India.

ABSTRACT

Gujarat state is well known for its rich tradition and culture. It has been famous for its arts and craftwork. The craftsmen are still following their traditional method in designing the art work, and this is what makes their work quite unique. Many researchers, some government and non-government organizations have been working for the development and revival of these crafts in the state. Yet, some arts and crafts are on extinction threat which needs to be looked into preserved 'Namda' is one of such craft. Filed survey was undertaken along with observation and case study method for collecting data. The findings revealed that, in the present context, it is found that the value for the Namda craft of Gujarat has been drastically fallen, due to the less awareness in the customers they do not keen to buy the product due to which the remaining few craftsmen in Gujarat associated which Namda craft are lacking increase in doing practicing the craft. The present work is focused on the socio-economical profile of the craftsmen engaged with the craft, the process, materials and products. Concern towards the present scenario of the marketing linkages for this craft is also given.

Introduction

Most of the craft traditions that remain alive today are traced to the ancient Indus Valley civilization, of which present-day Gujarat was once a part. Gujarat situated in western part is a beautiful state of India, and is well known for its rich tradition and culture. It is made of four distinct culture zones- North Gujarat, Kachchh, Saurashra (including Kathiawad) and south Gujarat each displaying the uniqueness in terrain, people and practices that exist there. (Mirza, V & Mallya, V. (2012))

The history and cultural practices of this State have sustained all odds. People here, still cherish their immemorial practices and happily pass on the talent from one generation to the other. The exclusive handworks exhibit the craftsmanship of the people. These works are quite famous all over the world.

There are many craft with same origin being practiced with different names in different parts of the country. Some of which are well known and being practiced in large scale with high demand, whereas, the same is not that much popular in some other region of the country. One of such craft is "Namda". Namda making is practiced as a craft in several cultures, especially the countries throughout Asia, viz. Iran, Afghanistan and several places in Laddakh, Kutch, Kashmir and Rajasthan in India. It is well known in Kashmir since so many years and still have a good marketing potential. It is known in some parts of Rajasthan also the craft of Namda is well flourished, whereas, in Gujarat it is a lesser known craft.

Namda is a local term used for felted wool floor coverings. It is a traditional handcrafted floor covering, made out of coarse variety of wool. Rich hues and exquisite designing are the hallmarks of the handcrafted Namda. Namda comes from the root word 'Namata', which is a Sanskrit word and it means woolen stuff. Another source states that the artisans of Kutch eventually adopted Namda craft form their Kashmiri counterparts, and hence the word Namda evidently has an Urdu origin.

Namda is the most efficient of insulating fabrics against both heat and cold. Although it has low tensile strength, secured over a self-supporting structure it will withstand the fiercest gale and give excellent protection against the climate. A lot many products can be designed for the above purpose i.e., shield against cold using this craft. This characteristic features of Namda if explored with new range of products will help the craftsperson economically and popularity of craft. This lesser known craft and craftsmen need to be brought in the mainstream market and need link between the craftsmen and consumer.

Methodology

Secondary data have been collected in various secondary forms like previous research studies, research reports, Government agencies reports and census reports etc. Both print and electronic sources are used for collecting secondary data. The investigator also visited a number of place to collect the secondary sources for data, as to gain the information which was difficult to get from the respondent.

For collecting primary data multiple field visit was carried out by the investigator. Personal interview as well as observation method. The data was collected from the Namda craftsmen as the respondents with the help of structured questionnaires. Appropriate amount and the convenience sequence of the questions were considered while making the interview schedule. Keeping in mind the objectives of the research study, both quantitative and qualitative questions were included in the schedule.

The collected data was analyzed in a systematic manner to acquire a detailed information about the origin of the craft, its present status and demographics of the craftsperson associated with Namda craft in Gujarat. The research was done thematically and the gathered and recorded data was analyzed in qualitative formats. The analysis was supported with photographs and a detail description is given in the chapter of Results and Discussion.

Results and Discussion

History of Namda

In India, evidences go back to late 4th century B.C. from Sindh which is part of Pakistan now. It is said that in India a person named Nubi created the first felted the woolen fabric to protect horse of Emperor Akbar's from cold. Emperor Akbar was known for his kindness towards animal also. A legend goes that the Mughal Emperor Akbar once, during winter season felt that his horse was suffering by biting cold. He ordered his exchequer to arrange for the protection of his horse who went and spread the word of Emperor all over his reign. A wise man Nubi who was travelling from East (Iran and Turkey) offered his suggestion

for felt covering. He manufactured the felt himself using the locally available wool and embroidered the same in multi coloured beautiful design. The felted piece very intricately decorated with craftsmanship of Nubi impressed the emperor. The above work was given the title of Namda after the name of its creator Nubi. Thus the craft is said to have traveled from Iran and Turkey to India. They can be termed as woolen drugget which is a coarser fabric.

The craft of Namda making is followed in four states of Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, some parts of Rajasthan and Gujarat in India. It is mentioned that Namdas were also imported into the subcontinent by way of Leh in Kashmir during the 19th century. In Gujarat, Namda craft was practiced mainly in the eastern areas of Kutch near Rapar. The craftsmen slowly moved to Mundra for better opportunities as the ports and big towns are nearby. But it has not flourished much as other crafts of the state. There were six or seven Namda makers in Mundra alone a decade ago but by today only a few people make these products.

Present Status of Namda in Gujarat

It is still practiced in Gujarat but is on verge of extinction. Only 2-3 craftsmen in the Kutch region are involved. It is done at Mundra village and Gagodar village at Rapar. In India, crafts has been taken by particular communities who are skilled in that craft. In Gujarat, the craftsmen practicing Namda belongs to Sama caste of Mansuri community and follows Islamic religion. At present in Mundra a single person Karim Umar Mansuri is engaged in the Namda craft. He follows the traditional method of Namda making but had contemporized some of his products. he basically makes rugs and carpets at present. The colour use by Karim Umar Mansuri are more of neutral and natural ones. He usually uses wool in its natural colour i.e., beige, black, brown, gray, cream, etc. which is also appreciated & liked by the clients He also ses sparingly other colour by dyeing the wool. He is also practicing Carpentry work as he is not getting sufficient orders for Namda products. For lively hood he hat to depend on carpentry work. So he some time think to discontinue Namda craft work while the family at Gagodar are still practicing Namda craft. There were two brother form a single family who practices Namda. This family is getting sufficient orders on Namda craft to manage lively hood of their family. They basically uses geometrical motifs. They use different colours but popular ones are: yellow, red, brown, orange. More of tints and shades of red and orange can be seem in his styles. The products they makes are only those which does not requires any structural construction and are rather flats are curvy structure which they can make directly like in the carpets, rugs and horse saddles. The size and shape of the carpets is prepared as per the customer demand. They works on order basis and more of the orders they gets for the horse saddle.

Namda Making Process

The art of Namda making by the craftsmen in Kutch region of Gujarat has come from Sindh. The whole process of Namda making is done by hand and no tools or any equipment are used in the process. The entire process of making Namda comprises followed steps;

Kachha Maal **(Procuring raw wool)**- The basic element used for making Namda is the locally available wool. The local sheep wool is used which craftsperson procure from the local shepherds.

Shafaii **(Cleaning of wool)**- Raw wool is cleaned by hand to remove all the dry dirt and are washed with water. Then separated in different categories according to the quality and colour of wool fibers. The best quality wool is kept aside for creating patterns. The quality is determined by its feel and fineness. The separation is based on the different natural colour occurred in the wool (such as black, cream, beige, grey). The white wool is dyed as per the equired colour. The cleaning process is usually done by women.

Rangai **(Dyeing)**- After the cleaning process the wool is dyed with the required colour. Dyeing is done on the white or off white wool. The dyeing process is carried out by the male members of the family and they have a separate area for it. Aluminium containers are used for dyeing process. The complete dyeing process takes 1 to 2 hours till the dye solution reaches to boil. Acid dye from local market is used for dyeing.

Vele **(Strand) making**- Woollen strand is made by rubbing a certain amount of dyed wool over the bottom of earthen pot. It is very important to keep a constant pressure on the hand while rubbing the wool so that the strand will have an equal thickness.



Fig. 1 Strand Making



Fig. 2 Measuring for making design



Outline formation

Outline formation- First of all the outline of required pattern is created with the prepared *vele* over a wet cotton cloth.The colour strands are wetted in water and then the design outline is formed. The craftsman do not use any blueprint of design and design whatever comes in the mind.

Oun Bichhayi **(Wool Filling process)**- After the outline of required pattern is formed, blank areas are filled with wool as per the requirement the coloured wool is filled. Then again the cream or white wool layer is evenly spread over it as much as thickness is needed.



Volume : 5 | Issue : 4 | April 2016 • ISSN No 2277 - 8179 | IF : 3.508 | IC Value : 69.48

Fig. 4 Wet wool is filled in blank space



Fig. 5 Layering Wool

Rolling & pressing-Water is sprinkled over the layers and it is then wrapped with the cotton cloth. The wrapped woollen layer is rolled on a cylindrical piece of object with could of wooden or iron and tied with thread so that it remains in its position. Then it rolled with constant pressure, time and duration of rolling is depend on the individual experience. Continuous rolling and rubbing makes the fibre to form a web and set permanently.



Fig. 6 Wrapping woolen layer with fabric and sprinkling water



Fig.7 Roll(Loth) Formation

Soaping process- After the rolling process is done the woolen sheet is kept for a day. Then the woolen sheet is wetted and soap is rubbed on it, again rolling is done. The soap solution help the wool to get stick to each other and permanently set.



Fig.8 Rolling with constant pressure



Fig. 9 Final product

Conclusion-

From the research conducted, it can be concluded that origin of Namda craft has lost in antiquity. It has spread with the people moving to different places but within the Central Asia. It is not native of Gujarat. But the technique use in this state for pattern making is different from other places. The characteristic feature of Gujarat Namda is inlay geometric pattern. This craft remained restricted basically to the articles for decorative purposes like horse saddle and rugs needed for any auspicious occasion to decorate home may be attributed to the coarse nature of the fibre used and the thickness of the product.

In Gujarat, it could not flourish as much as its counterparts from other parts of the country because of the craftsmen's non-desire to be continuously on the learning curve, to experiment and innovate. In the present scenario the market demand has changes and new technology has developed with all that the craft has to complete with the mainstream products. Self-survival of this craft is very difficult. Intervention from Government and Non-Government organization is needed to preserve this craft. Some policies should be made for inculcating this in economic activity for the prosperity of the craftsperson.

At both places, they no longer know the rich repertoire of past and relied increasingly on orders. The craftpersons have given up to try any measure to uplift them or craft. They want their next generation to look for some other occupation rather than practicing this craft.

To sustain this craft, these craftpersons can be made master craftsmen and group of people should be trained under them. Government should give some relaxation for exporting the products as the incentive for encouraging the craft. These craftsmen had inadequate information on credit and insurance and also lack of information on new technology.

Reference

1. J. Gallow, B. Sentence,*World Textiles: A visual guide to traditional techniques*, Boston, New York, London: A Bulfinch press book, Little, Brown and Company, (1999).
2. J.Harvey, *Traditional Textiles of Central Asia*, London: Thames & Hudson,(2009).
3. Sardiwal, S. (2010). *A study of traditional Namda Craft of Rajasthan and Developmental initiatives for its revival* (Unpublished Master's Dissertation). Department of Clothing and Textiles, Faculty of Family and Community Sciences, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara.
4. V. Mirza, V. Mallya,*Handloom and Handicrafts of Gujarat.* Ahemdabad: Government of Gujarat, Gujarat State Handloom & Handicrafts Development Corporation Limited in association with Mapin Publishing,(2012).
5. http://www.craftgujarat.com/showpage.aspx?contentid=1240
6. http://www.indianscriputure.com/vedic-society/arts/arts-and-traditions-of-gujarat
7. http://www.khamir.org/crafts/namd