

11. Traditional Embroidery in India

Dr. Deepika Sharma (Ex-Lecturer)

Dept of Home Science,
SPN Doshi Women's College Ghatkopar,
Mumbai.

Dr. Neeta Singh

(Assistant Professor),
Dept of Home Science,
DDU, Gorakhpur.

Abstract:

Embroidery is an old cultural heritage in India. Embroidery is an art of enhancing fabric using different motifs emerging from natural surroundings, religious inscriptions, economic state, etc. which reflect the culture, tradition and the way of life of people. It is made by using different stitches with different cotton, woollen, silk threads for enhancing fabric. It also includes different materials like beads, sequins, pearls, mirrors etc. Some of the stitches which are used in embroideries are satin stitch, button hole stitch, chain stitch, running stitch etc. Many embroidery styles are being popularised. Every state and region has their own distinct style and technique of embroideries in India. Kashida, Phulkari, Kantha, Chikankari etc are some of the traditional embroideries which are very famous. Now days, embroidery is often seen in coats, blankets, caps, bed sheets, pillow covers, table mats, curtains etc.

Keywords: Traditional Embroidery, Kashida, Phulkari, Kantha, Chikankari.

11.1 Introduction:

Embroidery is an art for creating a fabric beautiful using different threads to form designs. It is an art of using stitches by needle with colourful threads for creating fabric attractive. Different types of materials are also used like pearls, beads, sequins, etc in motifs, abstract design, patterns for enhancing fabric. Embroidery is done on fabrics like cotton, linen, silk, wool and leather etc with sharp needles. Different types of thread like cotton, wool, silk, gold, silver and synthetic threads have been used in embroidery for making products. Indian embroidery has a variety of embroidery styles and it varies from region to region. Mostly the designs in fabrics indicating the stories of the community, motifs emerging from natural surroundings, religious inscriptions etc. Different types of embroideries in India are discussed below:

11.2 Kashida:

It is a Kashmiri embroidery used to in different items like bed covers, cushion covers, lampshades, bags and other accessories.

- **Material Used:** Cotton, Wool, Silk
- **Threads Used:** Wool, silk or cotton threads
- **Colours Used:** Red, Blue, White, yellow, green and black
- **Designs Used:** Motifs of Flowers, birds, fruits, maple leaves etc.
- **Stitches Used:** Chain stitch, satin stitch, darn stitch, stem, herringbone and doori or knot stitches.

Style of Embroideries:

- a. **Sozni or Rezkari:** It is also called as Dorukha and done on Shawls. Dorukha means double sided. In this motif appears on both sides of the shawl and each side having a different colour. There is no wrong side in this. Chain, stem, couching, fly, buttonhole, and herringbone stitch are commonly used for making shawl.
- b. **Aari work:** It is Zalakdozi (chain stitch) used for making motifs of flower design. It is done on bed sheets, cushion covers, leather items, Phirans and poncho.
- c. **Kashmiri Couching:** Zari thread is used to make a pattern in fabric. It is done by twisting 4-6 strands of thread. It produces Gabha and Namda. Gabha is a floor covering and Namda is done on carpets.

11.3 Phulkari:

It is a type of odhni in Punjab. It means flower craft and is used in Amritsar (East Punjab). In Phulkari embroidery is done only one the sides or corners of the fabric and is used in daily life. Other type of odhni used in Punjab is Bagh and in this embroidery is on the whole of the fabric and is used for special occasions like marriage. One of the essential part of Bagh is Nazarbutti means to protect from an eye evil.

- **Material Used:** Home spun, Locally woven and dyed Khaddar.
- **Thread Used:** Soft untwisted floss silk yarn (Pat).
- **Colours Used:** Golden yellow, Red, Crimson, Orange, Blue, Violet, Green, Black, dark brown and White.
- **Designs Used:** Geometrical and floral pattern, Petalled lotus, birds and animals like elephants, deer, Peacock, items of jewellery, different baghs like Shalimar bagh, Nishad bagh, Tota Bagh, human figure etc.
- **Stitches Used:** Darning stitch is the main stitch, other stitches are double running stitch or chain stitch (for outlining), satin stitch (space filling or side border), herring bone stitch (defining the limits of pattern), blanket stitch or button hole stitch (edge finishing).

Kinds of Phulkaris:

- a. **Chope:** It is embroidered on red cloth and is used on occasions like marriage. It is largest in size. Embroidery is done in two sided line stitch and is done with golden yellow silken thread but green or other odd colour is also used to ward off the evil eye.
- b. **Suber:** It is worn when the pheras are performed. It is also embroidered on red cloth and darning stitch is used with golden yellow colour.
- c. **Saloo:** It is used for daily wear and is a plain chaddar. It has floral booties.

- d. **Til Patra:** It is light embroidered phulkari and is done on inferior quality khaddar. It means sprinkling of sesame seeds.
- e. **Nilak:** It is famous in Hisar and Hansi It is done on blue cloth using yellow or crimson silk flaws. Motives used in this are usually florals and household use like comb, fan, umbrella.
- f. **Shishadar:** It is done on red or chocolate background using mirror pieces.
- g. **Thirma:** It is done on white fabric and red, purple, indigo and green silk flaws are used for embroidery. Floral as well as geometrical designs are used. It is popular in Peshawar, Rawalpindi and Hazaara.

Sainchi: It is a folk embroidery of Punjab which depicts the true rural life. It is done on plain red or black pallu which is used for daily wear.

Types of Bagh:

- a. **Ghoongat:** It is famous in Rawalpindi and has large triangle patch of embroidery. It is worked in four panels. The outer panel is heavily embroidered showing triangles and logenzes.
- b. **Vari Da Bagh:** It is famous in West Punjab which is now in Pakistan. It is done on golden yellow colour cloth and red field of bagh is covered with small logenzes. Geometrical forms are used in this.
- c. **Baavan Da Bagh:** It is famous in east Punjab and has 52 different geometrical patterns in the field. Bright and striking colours are used in this.
- d. **Darshan Dwar:** It is embroidered on red cloth. As the name signifies it is embroidered with large size gate and motives of human figure, animals, birds, flower etc. are used. Geometrical forms are used and sometimes 14 gates are embroidered on one piece. Multiple colours are used for the top of the gate and yellow coloured cotton thread is used for side panel of gate.
- e. **Suraj mukhi:** It is also famous in east Punjab and has geometrical designs with multi coloured logenzes.
- f. **Reshmi Shesha:** It is done with white silk flaws in a dark coloured cloth. Geometrical forms are used in this.
- g. **Belan Da Bagh:** It has a rolling pin motif and geometrical forms are used.

11.4 Kantha (Bengal):

It means patch work which are made of old material. Earlier it was used for making quilts, dhotis and sarees but over a period of time it is found on shawls, duppatas, pillow cover etc.

- a. **Material Used:** Traditionally cotton was used but now muslin cloth is also used.
 - **Thread Used:** Cotton coloured thread
 - **Colours Used:** Black, deep blue, red, green, yellow.
 - **Designs Used:** Lotus flowers, trees, creepers, foliage, floral, animal and human figures, spirals, birds, fish, ships, pitcher, mermaids, mirror, umbrella etc.
 - **Stitches Used:** Running, Chain, Stem and Herring Bone stitch.

Types of Kantha:

- a. **Rajshahi Kantha:** Red coloured fabric was used for making this kantha. Cross stitch and running stitch was used. Applique work was also done. Patterns like lion or lotus were also made.
- b. **Lape Kantha:** It is used as a shawl and is thick quilted wrap. Running stitch is used for making Geometrical designs.
- c. **Surphani:** It is used for ceremonies and a quilted wrap.
- d. **Bayton:** It is used as a wrap for tying books etc. Human and animal figures are used for making border and called as satdal padma. Corners are sometimes covered with flowers, leaves, fruits, birds, deities with their vahan. Oldest design in this is Mandalam design in which swan represent Saraswati. Red, Indigo, Blue, Yellow and Olive green colours are used.
- e. **Doar Kantha:** It is a pillow cover in which deities like Durga or Krishna with his flute are shown. Designs of trees and birds are also used.
- f. **Arshi Lata:** It is a mirror cover with a wide border and designs of lotus and trees are used.
- g. **Durgjani:** It is a purse called as thaile, square in shape. Motifs of lotus, leaves etc are used.
- h. **Rumal kantha:** It is a smallest Kantha with a design of lotus in center.
- i. **Sujani:** It is very large Kantha and popular in Bihar namely Muzaffarpur, Bhusra, Madhubani and Patna. It is used in ceremonies like on the arrival of new born and a bed spread. Lotus designs, folk tales, animal running, birds pecking etc are used. For corners ambi design or kadam tree design are used. It is made by layers of old white cotton saris that are stitched together with simple running stitch using white thread. The motifs are filled-in with rows of running stitch in coloured threads and outlines are defined with chain stitch.

11.5 Chamba Rumal:

It is an embroidery of Himachal Pradesh. Rumal means handkerchief and also called as Pahari rumal. It is done on a square piece of cloth and now it is also used in making blouses, caps, slippers, cushion covers, wall hangings etc. Popular themes like Rasamandala, Rukmini haran and Kaliya daman borders are done on all four sides of the rumal. Traditionally it was used as a cover for prasad offered to gods and a custom to gift at the time of weddings.

- **Material Used:** unbleached cotton cloth: lightweight, delicate muslin or handspun, hand-woven, coarser khaddar
- **Thread used:** Untwisted, dyed silk threads 'Pat'
- **Colour used:** Bright colours like Persian blue, carmine, parrot green, deep red, pink, brown, black, white, lemon, deep yellow, brilliant pink, and purple
- **Design used:** Dieties like vidhnu, parvati, lord Krishna and his playful antics, flora and fauna of the Himalayan region, birds, animals, musical instruments like sitar, tabla, veena, etc.
- **Stitch used:** Double satin stitch called Dorukha, darning, herringbone.

Kinds of Chamba Rumal

- Pahari Paintings style Rumal
- Folk Style

11.6 Embroidery of Gujarat- Kutch and Kathiawar:

The most popular embroidery styles begins from Kutch and Kathiawar region of Gujarat. In this mirrors are fixed with an embroidery stitch.

- **Material Used:** Cotton and silk cloth
- **Thread Used:** Multi coloured cotton and silk threads
- **Colour Used:** Green, Ivory, Indigo, Black, Deep red, Yellow and off White
- **Design Used:** Flora and fauna, peacocks, parrots and elephants, human figures in different poses like dancing women and men.
- **Stitch Used:** Chain stitch, herringbone stitch, satin stitch, interlace stitch, buttonhole stitch and darning stitch

Kutch Embroidery:

- a. Ahir Bharat: Ahir means milkman. Aari needles are used. Geometrical and floral motifs are used along with mirrors. It is done on Choli, Pyjamas, Jackets, Bonnets, Caps etc.
- b. Kanbi Bharat: It is done on household articles like covers of wooden boxes, pataras, blankets and quilts. Famous articles are Toran (Shape of Gateway called Bari), Sankhiya (L shaped door hanging), Jhul (Festival bullock cover), Bukhani (Wedding shawl), Ganesh Thapna (Pentagonal wall hanging with yellow background), Chakla (Square wall hanging), Chandra work (Rectangle wall hanging).
- c. Mochi Bharat: It is associated with Bujh. Persian motifs like peacock and flowers dotted with bootis (motifs), flowering bushes, Dancing doll, peacock, Human Figures are used.
- d. Rabari Work: It is associated with tribe of Giri region. In this work, the bootis are inserted with mirrors using chain and buttonhole stitch.

Kathiawar Embroidery:

- a. Heer Bharat: It is thread filling embroidery. Geometrical highly stylized birds, animals, human figures are used. Daily use articles like Ghagra choli, neckline, odhni etc are made.
- b. Abhla Bharat: It is mirror work embroidery and created by using button hole stitch.
- c. Sindhi Toropa: It is built by using long threads in the herring bone pattern.

11.7 Kasuti:

It is an art of Karnataka. 'Kai' means hand and "suti" means cotton thread. Traditionally Chandrakali sari was worn by bride with Kasuti embroidery done on it. The five garments on which the kasuti is done are kunchi (bonnet and cape combined), lenga (skirt), seragu (palu of a sari), kusuba (bodice), and kulai (bonnet).

- **Material Used:** Matty cloth, Canvas and cotton
- **Thread Used:** Multi coloured cotton threads
- **Colour Used:** Red, Orange, Purple, Green, Yellow and Blue.
- **Design Used:** Regional temple, floral, animal and bird, common objects etc.

Stitch Used:

- Gavanti (double running stitch appears same on both sides): Means knot.
- Murgi (zig-zag running stitch equally neat on right and wrong side)
- Neygi (simple running stitch that produces a weave-like effect)
- Menthi (cross stitch that gives a heavier appearance).

11.8 Chikankari:

It is famous as shadow work and is famous in Lucknow. Presently Chikankari is being explored on different fabrics like crepe silks, chiffons, georgettes and cotton polyester blends

- **Material Used:** fine white cotton fabric
- **Thread Used:** untwisted white cotton or silk thread
- **Colour Used:** Red, Orange, Purple, Green, Yellow and Blue.
- **Design Used:** flowers, creepers and lace-like patterns.
- **Stitch Used:** Flat stitches like stem stitch and herringbone stitch, Raised stitches like bullion and French knots and Pulled thread work or jali.

Types of Style:

- a. Bukhia and Katao styles: Bukhia is satin stitch which is done on wrong side of fabric and outlining of design is done from right side of fabric using running stitch. It gives an opaque effect. Katao is a minute appliqué work. It is flat style of chikankari.
- b. Murri and Phanda: Murri is knotted style and gives an embossed effect. It is French knot. Phanda resembles millet and gives a raised effect. It is used to fill the petals, leaves etc.
- c. Taipachi: It is a simple running stitch which is used to fill the straight and curved lines.
- d. Jali: It gives an net like appearance or look like lace.

Phool Patti ka kaam:

It is traditional appliqué style embroidery and famous in Uttar Pradesh, mainly in Aligarh and Rampur. It was traditionally done on dupattas and saris but now a days it is also done on home furnishings like curtains, table linen, cushion covers etc. It was earlier done in two ways:

- **Badi Patti ka Kaam:** It uses bigger floral forms. In this pieces of white fabric cut into floral forms and are stitched onto the white fabric.

- Choti patti ka kaam: It uses very small pieces of diamond shapes cloth for making flowers and leaves.
- **Material Used:** Fine white cotton fabric or organdy
- **Design Used:** flowers and leaves
- **Stitch Used:** Stem stitch

11.9 Zardozi:

It is gold and silver embroidery famous in lucknow, agra, Varanasi, Bareilly, Bhopal, Delhi and Chennai. Fabric is stretched on rectangular wooden frame supported on Karchob a hook to execute embroidery. Popular motifs used for this embroidery are creepers, flowering bush, floral scrolls and intricate jali patterns.

Articles like ornament wall hangings, bedcovers, cushion covers, curtains, palanquin covers, trappings for elephants, bullocks and horses, canopies, shoes, jackets, purses, boxes etc was made by this embroidery. Now days it is also done in jute to develop products like bag etc.

- **Material Used:** Velvet, satin and silk
- **Thread Used:** Zari threads and materials like Badla (the untwisted wire), Salma (stiff finely twisted circular wire) Gijai (twisted metallic wire), Dabka (zig-zag coiled wire), Sitara (small circular disc), pearls and coloured beads
- **Design Used:** Floral and geometrical
- **Stitch Used:** Chain stitch, stem stitch and satin stitch

Embroidery Styles:

- Karchobi: In this the fabric is clamped on wooden frame and embroidered to create different articles.
- Kamdani: It doesnot require clamping and is lighter embroidery done on apparel like dupattas and scarves.

11.10 Lambadi Embroidery:

It is famous in Karnataka, Hyderabad and in Andhra Pradesh. Traditionally, Phetia or skirt and kanchali or blouse were costumes which were decorated by women using this embroidery but nowadays it is done on a variety of products like cushion covers, bedcovers, wall hangings, garments and accessories like bags, headbands, waist belts etc.

- **Material Used:** Hand-woven cloth embellished with mirrors, cowrie shells, beads, coins and silver trinkets
- **Thread Used:** Colourful Thread
- **Colour Used:** dark blue or red colour
- **Designs Used:** Geometrical with grid like patterns and mirror work
- **Stitch Used:** Basic stitches like herringbone stitch, chevron stitch, cross stitch and running stitch

11.11 Pipli Applique:

It is a traditional craft of Orissa and is done by artisans called Darjis. Traditionally idols of Lord Jagannath temple in Puri were made to decorate the fabric. It is done using bright colour pieces of fabric that are cut into specific shapes and stitched on a contrasting base fabric. Fabric strips are either folded or gathered and applied to the base fabric for three dimensional appearances. Now days these are done on umbrellas, wall hangings, lampshades, home furnishings like cushion covers, bed covers and fashion accessories like bags and pouches

- **Material Used:** rickrack laces and mirror work
- **Colour Used:** Vibrant Colours
- **Design Used:** Geometric, abstract, flora, fauna and motifs of deities of the Lord Jagannath temple
- **Stitch Used:** Chain stitch, stem stitch and blanket stitch

11.12 References:

1. Brijbhushan, J. 2006. Indian Embroidery. Publications Division Government of India.
2. Dhingra, S and Sood, RK. 2014. Traditional Indian Textiles. The Secretary, Central Board of Secondary Education, Shiksha Kendra, 2, Community Centre, Preet Vihar, Delhi.
3. Traditional Embroidery. 2020.
[shttps://textilevaluechain.in/in-depth-analysis/articles/traditional-textiles/traditional-indian-embroidery](https://textilevaluechain.in/in-depth-analysis/articles/traditional-textiles/traditional-indian-embroidery). Retrieved on 28-06-22.