Transformation of Kantha Traditional Embroidery: As fabric painting

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Rising concern in traditional Indian embroideries for their time consuming techniques and out dated look and reaching the art of painting at its highest degree of excellence, demands for revival of traditional Indian embroideries. These require bringing them into contemporary look and developed through faster techniques. Fabric painting is an innovative, economical and time saving technique as compare to the embroidery. Present study was conducted for transforming Kantha traditional embroidery designs for fabric painting on jacket for its revival at Hisar, India. Fifteen motifs were explored from market survey, 3 designs were developed and selected from them and finally three placement-design combinations were selected for developing final products. Six jackets were developed, i.e., three with embroidery and three with painting. On the basis of experts’ preferences for developed jackets on various parameters, fabric painting technique was most preferred technique on the basis of overall appearance was considered best. The study will serve guidelines for a new designer to develop articles of same look from traditional embroidery technique with less time consuming techniques. It will open a new vista for women entrepreneur to make low cost articles with great demand. It will also enhance aesthetic beauty of traditional Kantha embroidery.

Keywords: Kantha embroidery, Transformation, Fabric painting

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India has a rich heritage of embroideries and peoples are well versed with traditional embroidery designs. Folk embroidery has always been a form of self-expression for the women. It reflects their lives, as it is a mirror of their hidden desires and aspirations and expression of the culture, traditions and religious beliefs of the society to which they belong. Each region and country has its own distinctive style of embroidery, which incorporates the culture, their history and tradition. Kantha embroidery involves a simple running stitch. It is the way the embroidery has been used that makes it extra ordinary. It is a typical example of how a simple stitch can create elaborate motifs. Usually the motifs are gods and goddesses, animals like duck, fish, peacock; floral & geometric patterns¹.

Kantha embroidery has classified into Lepkantha and Sujni Kantha depending on the use of the finished products in the art. The embroidery basically involves outlining decorative motifs with running stitch, using colourful threads. There are several patterns that can be used to cover the entire cloth. Hand embroidery is used by traditional artists who are skilled in their craftsmanship and have inherited the art of embroidery from their ancestors. In contemporary use, machine embroidery has replaced hand embroidery with other materials such as metal strips, precious and semi-precious stones, Sequins are used to add to this decorative stitching technique. Machine embroidery is used for creative work on individual pieces and for mass-produced clothing products. A study on costumes of Bishnoi community of Hisar in Haryana conducted which reported that majority of old generation respondents wore hand embroidered odhani, embroidered with metallic and silken thread and decorated with gota and sitaras, and middle and young generation females wore machine embroidered odhani². Embroidery done by hand or machine is a time consuming and pain staking process. New study emphasized that in the present context of globalization and rapid technology transformation handloom sector is beset with many challenges and, the handloom products are being replicated on power looms at much lower cost. Hence, to strengthening

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this sector product diversification and creating market demand is utmost essential.

Fabric painting can create embroidery like effect on just about any fabric with the right fabric paint and applicators. Fabric painting gives fabulous surface decoration in lesser time as compare to embroidery. This is also an age-old tradition in India. Today, the usage of the fabric painting has revolutionized to such an extent that it is a popular homemade handicraft. It is the lively expression of fabrics. Fabric painting can be carved at a very affordable price with simple techniques and procedures. Fabric painting is all about mixing alluring colors and applying these in proportions. It's very important for the painters to use the right amount of color and heat in order to create a particular form of fabric painting. Painting in ancient India was a favorite mode of expression in art. There are innumerable references to painting in the contemporary literature which shows that the art of painting had reached the highest degree of excellence both from the technical and aesthetic point of view. Painting was also considered as an accomplishment of princess, nobles and highly placed citizens which formed a part of the regular curriculum of studies. In an era of time stress, there is a need to explore the possibility of transformation of embroidery designs for fabric paintings. The people engaged in the activity of fabric embellishments, will find it convenient & less time consuming resulting in more earning. Historical overview of traditional Kutch embroideries found that all embroideries have affected the traditional embroidery sector due to various progressive factor like commercialization and industrialization that have influence the life of artisans. It was essential to record the history of omnipotent needle craft of Kutch in order to maintain the root intact which can serve as a guide line for future generation.

Use of traditional embroidery designs for transformation into fabric painting will help in the revival of traditional embroidery and give it a new look as per trends. Jacket has become a part of winter dress for adolescent girls these days and is in vogue. Only need to select one women jacket that completely shows your classy look and also your personality. The women jacket you wear for any occasion shows your class and status. The more casual designs would represent your inner charm while the more official ones would add up to your professionalism. It is always good to look out for the best designs and fashionable jackets for work or different occasions. Keeping these facts in mind a study was conducted to transform Kantha traditional embroidery for fabric painting with following objectives:

1. To explore the adaptation of motifs of Indian embroideries for fabric painting,
2. To create design using selected motifs for fabric painting on jacket,
3. To develop products with selected design.

Methodology
An exploratory work was undertaken to gather information regarding motifs of Indian embroideries transformed into other techniques for contemporary use. Clothing and household articles were scanned for collection of motifs. Twenty five shops dealing in clothing items, household linens including bed linen, bed covers, table covers and other household articles, four boutiques and a mall of Hisar market were explored through personal interview method. A method for exploratory work adopted in the present research work is based on review of many research papers which adopted similar methodology. A research work adopted unstructured interview and personal observations to find status of traditional knowledge on weaving and to find out the intrinsic relationships between biological objects and cultural artifacts during 2002-2008 among the Karbis. An another research work collected information by administering the formulated interview schedule, informal discussion cum observation to selected samples of 50 Namda workers including the 5 case study samples.

Five motifs, i.e., one from each embroider, able to be transformed into fabric painting were selected. Selected motifs were analyzed through comparative study for selecting one of those traditional embroideries, which was giving best effect for fabric painting, for further study. Kantha embroidery was selected for collection of motifs and design development. Fifty motifs of Kantha embroidery were collected from primary source keeping in mind their suitability for fabric painting and jacket for woman. Out of fifty motifs, fifteen suitable motifs were selected and fifteen stylized designs were developed from them using coral draw. Five placements of each design were made on Jacket with the help of coral draw. Designs and their placements on the Jacket were selected on the basis of most preference using
Weighted Mean Scores rank method. A preferential choice index for selection of design and their placements was developed. The experts were asked to give their preferences on three point scales for developed design and their placements. The faculty members & PhD student of Department of Textile and Apparel Designing of Home Science were taken as experts. Ranks were given on the basis of Weighted Mean Scores. Three top ranked designs and one placement of each of top ranked design were selected for preparation of jackets.

These placements were used for product development. For product development most frequently occurred bust jacket size, 34 inch, was selected. Selected bust size jackets were drafted and cut using standardized measurements as similar methods was adopted by a previous researcher. Selected designs were traced on the cut piece of jackets as per their selected placements. Three jackets were developed using embroidery technique and another three jackets were developed using painting technique. A total of six jackets were developed. Developed design and jackets were assessed on the basis of acceptability using mental readiness of the experts. A modified preferential index was developed and suitable design and jackets were selected using Weighted Mean Scores ranking methods.

Results and Discussion

The information regarding motifs of traditional Indian embroideries in contemporary use and their transformation into other techniques was gathered from Hisar market. Extensive visit to rural areas were taken to collect the information regarding the traditional textiles. Such information collection was adopted after review of research work who adopted similar approach. Seven traditional embroideries, viz. Chikankari, Kantha, Kashida, Kasuti, Phulkari, Kathiawar and Kutch were found in the market. Kantha embroidery was found most frequently. Further finding was prevalence use of broadly three categories of Indian embroidery motifs, viz. floral, human/ethnic and animal and birds. Floral motifs were found most prevalence. Such use of motifs was found among Karbis who use their own traditional motifs which bear their tribal socio-physiological significance. Generally, the tribe focuses on motif inspired by phenomena of nature like flower, leaves, trees and animals. The motifs of traditional Indian embroideries found in contemporary use were also categorized on the basis of techniques used for their making. Mainly four type techniques, viz. hand embroidery, machine embroidery, printing and painting techniques were observed where machine embroidery were most frequently being used. Painting was rarely observed in the market for use of embroidery motifs.

Since Kantha traditional hand embroidery was most frequently found among artisan of the region which is time consuming and pain staking technique. Hence, it is selected for comparative study. Further, fifteen most frequently occurred flower motifs of Kantha embroidery were selected for final design development. The selection of these motifs was on the basis of expert preference using weighted mean square ranking methods. Adoption of the above selection methodology was validated with the previous research works. In a research work Karbi motifs were selected using the expert preference for making designs of hand woven textiles of Meghalaya state which was aimed for reviving traditional textile and costumes through product diversification. From selected fifteen motifs, fifteen designs were developed and finally three designs were selected for placement on jackets. Design number 9 (WMS 2.81) was most preferred by experts followed by design no.5 (WMS 2.72) and design no.13 (WMS 2.71). These three traditional embroidery designs were selected for adaptation into fabric painting (Fig. 1). The other

Fig. 1 — Selected traditional embroidery designs for adaptation into fabric painting according to preference
Designs in descending order were design no.6, 1, 2, 4, 3, 10, 14, 12, 15, 11 & 8. The least preferred design was 7 (WMS 1.79).

For developing products, total fifteen placements of each selected three designs were created virtually using Corel Draw software. Further, three placements were selected for development of final physical products on the basis of expert preferences using modified preferential index method. In the adopted preferential index, overall, placements of design no.13 were ranked first followed by design no.5 and no. 9 ranked second and third, respectively. Placement no.2 of design no. 13 (WMS 2.97) was most preferred, followed by placement no. 4 of design no. 5 (WMS 2.91) and placement no.1 of design no 9 (WMS 2.9). These three placement-design combinations were the most preferred which were used for preparation of jackets (Fig. 2). The least preferred placement was placement no. 1 of design no. 7 (WMS1.90).

Physical products, jackets were developed through transferring selected three placement-design combinations into it. These developed jackets were assessed as per preferences of experts for the jackets. Jackets of design no. 9 with painting (P-9) was found most preferred scoring WMS 2.96 followed by jacket of design no. 9 with embroidery (E-9) scoring WMS 2.87. **Jacket of design no.13 with painting (P-13) scoring WMS 2.74, jacket of design no.13 with embroidery (E-13) scoring WMS 2.62, Jacket of design no.5 with painting (P-5) scoring WMS 2.33 and jacket of design no.5 with embroidery (E-5) scoring WMS 2.13 was least preferred.** Painted jacket with design no. 9 (P-9) was the most preferred by experts & it’s followed by embroidered jacket with same designs (E-9). Jacket no. 5 with embroidery (E-5) was least preferred by the experts (Table 1).

Developed jackets were further assessed as per appeal and developed designs. In terms of developed designs, for both embroidery and painting, jacket of design no. 9 scored first rank (WMS 2.67) followed by jacket of design no. 13 and no. 5 scored 2nd and 3rd rank, respectively. There was no difference in

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<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Jackets with design Nos.</th>
<th>WMS</th>
<th>Ranks</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>E-9</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>II</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>E-13</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>V</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>E-5</td>
<td>2.13</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>2.74</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>P-5</td>
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Fig. 2 — Preferred placements of selected designs
developed designs for jackets of both embroidery and painting techniques.

In terms of overall appearance, again for both embroidery and painting, jacket of design no. 9 scored first rank followed by jacket of design no. 13 and no. 5 scored second and third rank, respectively. Main differences in overall appearance for both the techniques were observed in their WMS value. Jacket developed with design no. 9 in both techniques was considered as most appealing jacket in terms of developed design and overall appearance (Fig. 3). This was followed by design no. 13 and 5 respectively. Further when weighted mean scores of both techniques were compared for overall appearance, it was found that it was higher in case of painted jackets for all three designs in comparison to embroidered jackets. It shows that overall appearance in painting techniques were more appealing (Table 2).

Cost of developing final product Jacket was calculated as sum of the costs of raw material used, i.e., fabric and paint used for painting or anchor thread for hand embroidery, stitching cost, labour cost of skilled labour. Labour cost was calculated on the basis of preparation hour spent on a jacket through painting or hand embroideries at the rate of ₹ 300/- per day, i.e., labour charges of skilled worker. The total cost of embroidered jacket with design no. 9, jacket with design no.5, jacket with design no. 13 was ₹ 1680/-, 1530/-, 1380/-, respectively. The total cost of painted jacket with design no. 9, jacket with design no. 5, jacket with design no. 13 was ₹ 1280/-, 1230/-, 1180/-, respectively. So the embroidered jacket cost was more but its traditional significance and customer attractiveness is more as compare to painted jacket.

In an era of westernization, globalization, fast-changing world of fashion and time stress working traditional embroidery on garments has limitations. Therefore, it is important to revive traditional Indian embroideries by implementing the less time consuming techniques and also to give these a contemporary look. Fabric painting is an innovative, economical and time saving technique as compare to the embroidery. The results of study would be beneficial for women entrepreneurship and in

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<th>Table 2 — Assessment of the developed articles as per appeal level of the developed design and overall appearance (n=20)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Jacket (Embroidery)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>WMS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Design no.9</td>
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<td>Design no.13</td>
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<td><strong>Jacket (Painting)</strong></td>
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WMS-Weighted Mean Score
maintaining the beauty of traditional embroideries. This adaptation of traditional skills on to the Jacket – a component of the dress of the young women in I.T. and private sector will not only exhibit the Indian culture but also augment the production and income of the entrepreneurs.

Conclusion

Tremendous talents in embroidery skills are there throughout country. Embroidery has enriched the day-to-day lives of the crafts-persons while being a source of livelihood. However, the revival of traditional embroideries needs to be twinned with ways to find new and contemporary expression in harmony with the needs and aspirations of future citizens of the country, while valuing the traditional. Therefore, the present study was conducted to transform traditional Kantha embroidery designs through fabric painting on jacket. Adaptation of motifs of Indian embroideries for fabric painting was explored. Related information was gathered from Hisar markets to decide the most people preferring traditional embroidery and their motifs. Kantha embroidery along with its motifs was selected. Fifteen stylized designs were developed incorporating selected motif and five possible placements of each design were prepared with help of coral draw. In order to know the preferences of experts regarding developed designs and their placements made on jacket, preferential index was developed. Three designs were selected by experts. The nine, five and thirteen were the top ranked designs. The top ranked placement of each selected design was worked in Kantha embroidery and replicated in fabric painting for making the jacket. Finally six jackets were developed, i.e., three with embroidery and three with painting. On the basis of experts’ preferences for developed jackets on various parameters, fabric painting technique was most preferred technique on the basis of overall appearance was considered best. The present study will serve guidelines for a new designer, to develop articles of traditional embroidery technique adapted into other less time consuming techniques. It will also be helpful in improving the marketability of painted products because it is less time consuming technique.

Recommendations

Kantha traditional embroidery has market value not only in India but also in other countries too. Concentrated efforts from the Government organizations as well as Non-Government organizations are missing which can help these artisans to secure a promising future. Hence, they need to be centralized to enhance consistency, regularity and uniformity of production. Kantha sector needs immediate attention by the Government by arranging various social welfare schemes and incentives for the artisans, thereby ensuring social security and socio economic empowerment of the artisans’ community. The entire artisans’ community should be brought under the umbrella of various consortia or cooperative societies, the main object of which would be capacity building and marketing development as well intervention of new technologies. For the survival and sustenance of this most prominent traditional method of hand work, various Governments as well as Non-Government organization have to play proactive roles in the form of integrated cluster development approach.

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