Contemporized traditional textile made-ups—A mode for rural and urban linkage

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Traditional hand woven khana material is the choli or blouse material with extra warp doby figures, which is from rural parts of northern Karnataka. There was a great need for diversification of its utility to suit the contemporary urban consumers. Therefore, the researcher has put forth the efforts in designing variety of elegant diwan sets, viz. block, crazy, log cabin, mosaic and tucked patch worked bed linens and has selected this mode for linking submerged rural art to the cosmopolitan urban customers. These newly designed diwan sets made of traditional hand woven khana material embellished with tribal hand embroideries will become the latest fashions to suit the trendy market and will further open a new vista for khana material to be used in home textiles.

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For centuries, India has been famous for its beautiful textiles. The diversity in Indian textiles is enormous; the country is home to many different racial and religious groups, all have contributed remarkably on Indian design and folklore. The textile tradition in India has been conditioned by a number of factors, like geography, climatic conditions, local culture, social customs, availability of raw material, etc. A variety of raw material like silk, cotton, wool, jute, etc are used in India for creating fabric. The geo-climatic and biodiversity of India has given birth to a myriad of textiles and weaving throughout India. Local and foreign markets as well as export potential dictate the traditional textile scenario of today. The hilly and alpine region of the country has a rich array of woolen textiles and shawls from these regions are also popular abroad. The textiles from the arid and semi arid regions are bright and have rich embroidery on them. The people in the coastal areas of the South and eastern regions prefer garments made of white fabrics. Cotton and silk textiles are popular in these areas. Utilitarian items such as cushions, bed sheets, covers, table mats, napkins, curtains, etc are produced throughout the country. Each state has its own unique contribution in making these utilitarian items.

Major traditions & styles

Woven traditions

The hand woven fabric is symbolic of man’s endeavour to bring beauty and grace into a life, which is otherwise severely constrained by standardization and the consequent monotony. Ethnic designs woven in bright coloured fabric bear a distinct seal of traditional artistry of Indian weavers. With increasing fad for ‘ethnic’ clothes and its popularity among the textile designers to give an exclusive range, hand woven fabrics have made a new channel to meet the demands inland and abroad. The industry has a long tradition of excellent craftsmanship, forming a part of the country’s cultural heritage, a pulse beat of Indian cultural life. The weavers are the link in an unbroken tradition, which embraces both producers and consumers within a socio-religious community. In a climate, where the preservation of ancient heritage is considered vital, the fine textile craftsmen of the country are the national treasures and should be so recognized.

Karnataka, one of the southern states in India is renowned for its exquisitely produced traditional cotton and silk sarees. A large number of villages in Karnataka even today produce sarees and blouse pieces on handloom- light weight printed silks of
Bangalore, mulberry silk sarees of Mysore, patti pallav of Hubli and Betageri, polycotton sarees of Lakkundi and Shigli and silk sarees with contrast borders of Molakalmuru. Prominently notable among them are Ilkal sarees with tope teni pallav and khana the choli material of Ilkal, Gajendragad and Guledgudda.2

Khana are the choli or blouse materials with extra warp doby figures, which are the traditional products of northern Karnataka (Fig. 1). It is woven on pit loom having no warp beam. The woven material has border on both the sides ranging from 15 to 23 cm in width, with two strips of extra warp figuring all along its length. The body is fully covered with extra warp figuring with doby shedding mechanism. The khana fabric is woven on handloom using silk warp and cotton weft. Each khana piece will be of about 80 cm widths and 50 cm lengths.3

Embroidered traditions

The tradition of embroidery is well known to Indians since ancient times, which comprises of hand embroidery, machine embroidery, patchwork, appliqués work and quilting. Embroidery, either hand or machine is a single set or sets of continuous elements worked in or out of a ground fabric with a needle or other tool, to form decorative stitches. Embroidery in India is not merely the work of needle and thread, but an artistic ornamentation of strips of old materials, mirrors, sequins, metals, silk, wool or cotton threads, buttons, bells, shells, seeds, pearls, coins, beads and many more accessories.

Patchwork is sewing together pieces of clothes of different colours, prints, textures, shapes and sizes to make a yardage of known dimension which may be used as a part of a garment or a furnishing or as a made up, as such. Appliqués work is cutting and patching up of different materials at a particular place or in a pre-determined pattern or solid motif. In appliqués work, greater opportunity is provided to use additional material or accessories to create exquisite textures along with embroidery both hand or machine. This applique work is popularly applied on to umbrellas, bags, ladies handbags, wall hangings, lampshades, bed covers, pillow covers, bolsters, bedspreads, letter holders, etc.

Embroideries differ widely from region to region across the length and breadth of our country is unique state-wise. There are also many court embroideries, temple embroideries, trade embroideries and tribal embroideries that differ significantly in its craftsmanship.

Tribal embroidery on hand woven textiles

Hand woven textile, the khana material was used by almost every woman in the village as choli along with Ilkal sarees. But with passage of time and westernization, village women have gradually ignored the bygone traditions. This on one side has affected the promotion of khana material that in turn adversely influenced the social and economical life of weavers. Thereby, limited utility of khana fabric as choli / blouse material was explored and widened by creating contemporary designs of bed linen with the tribal embroidery, i.e. patchwork work to suit the latest changing world. Khana material primarily used as blouse/choli material was used as a source for surface embellishment applied with varieties of accessories to give a contemporary look for diwan sets. The unbleached kora cotton sheeting material was the base cloth for all 5 diwan sets over which patchwork with khana material was done with five basic patterns, viz. block, crazy, log cabin, mosaic and tucked patchwork. Further, these patchwork patterns focused to the contemporizing effect as well as harmonized the surface design. The constructional details of these patchwork patterns are portrayed below:

Block patchwork

Block patchwork patterns are the grid patterns but not necessarily grouped into grids of even size. The block design was planned on graph paper before actual stitching. Innumerable block patterns created according using grid base are base - variable star, grandfather’s fan, basket, maple leaf, card trick, Dutchman’s puzzle and so on. Among these, the style selected for the present study was card trick block patchwork (Fig. 2).

Crazy patchwork

Crazy patchwork is simple and speedy, which needs no templates but in stead sewn directly onto a base fabric. It is like a scrap patchwork. Embroidery stitches, hand or machine sewing on one hand seam the patches and also form an integral part of surface decoration on the other. The crazy units may be of any shape, size and edges but need to be kept to a manageable size. Fabrics are chosen at random and shapes are cut as required. The crazy patchwork is represented (Fig. 3).
Log cabin patchwork
Log cabin patchwork involves sewing strips of two contrasting fabric groups around a geometric shape. Contrast can be usually achieved by dividing fabrics into light and dark colours, but it is also possible to use fabric prints and ‘solids’, or two strongly contrasting colours. There are different types of log cabin patchwork as standard log cabin, courthouse steps variation, corner standard variation and off centered diamond variation. Among them, Standard Log cabin patchwork was selected (Fig. 4).

Mosaic patchwork
Intricate patchwork of shapes like hexagons and diamonds is called mosaic patchwork, which gives mosaic tiled effect. Many mosaic patchworks are one geometrical shape, but some include more than one shape - octagons with squares and hexagons with diamonds. Planning the designs on graph paper using isometric paper for hexagons, tumbling blocks, octagons, diamonds and squares is necessary. Tumbling blocks mosaic patchwork is illustrated (Fig. 5).

Tucked patchwork
Tucks and pleats are the techniques used to produce tucked patchwork. Tucks can be stitched into fabric before shapes are cut. Wide tucks should be pressed or twisted by pressing in alternate directions, otherwise in the direction of the pleats itself. Pin tucks can be pressed or left un-pressed according to the textural effect required. The tucked patchwork is shown in the (Fig. 6).

Each diwan set comprised of one spread, two bolster covers and three cushion covers. Each set was designed with selected embellishments, viz. tribal embroidery, glasswork, appliquéd quilting, ties and bows and quilting. The Five different types of patch worked diwan sets, viz. block, crazy, log cabin, mosaic and tucked patchwork with khana material have been illustrated (Figs 7-10). These diwan sets patch worked with ethnic khana material is the product of the essence of traditionality and ambient modernity. It fuses exceptionally well with traditional as well as modern settings. The perfectly designed diwan sets do enhance the appearance of the room set up.

Rural – Urban linkage
It's time to explore the traditional textiles from the cottage industry and shape into a more sophisticated image. India is the inspiration for the West - the country's handlooms and embellishment techniques are increasingly being drawn upon in Western shores. Traditional fabrics, contemporary colours and styling are in—scarves, stoles, skirts, short tops, kurtas, designer’s bed linen in a variety of hand-made products.

Khana being a traditional handloom textile woven in the interiors of rural areas, viz. Gulelgudda, Gajendragad and Ilkal of Dharwad and Bijapur districts in Karnataka could be linked to the cosmopolitan urban areas by diversifying its utility and extending to designer’s multifaceted bed linen. The newly designed diwan sets made of traditional hand woven khana material beautified with variegated patch work along with a essence of tribal embroideries not only suit the trendy market and attracts the elite generation but has also further opened a new vista for khana material to be used in home textiles. Modern lifestyles and changing needs do demand a practical and ingenious approach to home furnishings and textiles. This artistry has opened a novel pipe line for all the consumers to decorate the home by using this contemporary bed linen and enrich the interiors.

Khana material
The handloom sector seems to be infused with certain buoyancy - with the domestic market looking bright coupled with exports. Anything made by hand in these days is a vogue. The sense of awareness among the consumers is certainly remarkable and the ability of the producers (the weaver-dyer) to translate, innovate and create in a way has helped in their stability and survival of traditional textiles. The utility factor of khana material can be much more varied into other home furnishings and can give an opportunity for the rural artisans to stretch their hands into the urban fast changing markets reaching the ultimate consumers. Thus, this designer’s bed linen can pave a way to urban consumers to enjoy the fragrance of rural proficiency and uplift them to come forward in their cherished ancestral art.

References