

THE HERITAGE OF INDIA: INDIAN TRADITIONAL

TEXTILE

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ABSTRACT

Indian traditional textile had a wide range of variety of fabrics. The objective behind this paper is to know about different variety of traditional fabrics and get help from some of the oldest textiles to reform that art.

Keywords : Block Print, Handloom Weaving, Ancient Time, Ikat, Resist Printing

I. INTRODUCTION

India has been very famous for its handicrafts and textile since very long, which is proved by many archaeological evidence. Very first evidence found were traces of purple dye at Mohenjo-Daro, which proves that cotton was spun and woven in India as early as 3000 B.C.

In 300 B.C. Chanakya mentions that, textile was very important in internal and external trade. Even he mentioned in “Arthashastra” important centres for weaving cotton, silk and woollen cloth. The material used in spinning process were wool (urna), cotton (karpasa), hemp (tula) and flax (kusum). In that period mainly weaving was done by women and their wages depended upon the thickness of yarn.

During 100 A.D. Indian textiles became very popular because of its bright colours, among the Persians. Even Indian muslin was very famous in Rome with the name “nebula”, “gangetika”, and “venti”. Silk was also an exported product to Rome but raw material was imported from china.

Even traditional Indian techniques were so advance in 600 A.D. that Ajanta paintings attributed from this era were having embroidery, bandhna (tie and dye) and patolu (ikat weaving), brocading and muslin weaving fabrics. Between 1200 and 1500 A.D. north western India came under the influence of Turks and Afghan.

Persian craftsmen came to India during 1300 A.D. Even in 1300 A.D. Gujrat and Bengal trade passed into hands of Muslim traders. In 16th and 17th century Portuguese were interested in establishment of economic relation with Mughals and different states of south Asia. Even the British also approached King Akbar for getting trading privileges.

During 1600 to 1800 A.D. Mughals provided economic prosperity, political stability and administrative efficiency. They develop very high standard of craft workmanship. Mughal carpets were very famous during Jahangir period. There were workshops for embroiderers which were observed by masters. Workshop for goldsmiths, painters, tailors, shoe makers, silk weavers etc. were also there in Mughal period, Indian painted and embroidered textiles like bedspreads and wall hangings were exported to Europe in large quantity by Portuguese, Dutch, British and French. In the middle of 1800 A.D. painted designs were converted into block printing methods. Kalamkari is the best example of it. It was produced by both the methods. Kimkhab was also a demanded fabric in 1700 A.D.

In the middle of nineteenth century India lost its handicraft industry in colonial rule, due to industrial revolution in England.

In 1920 and 1930 due to Mahatma Gandhi's swadeshi movement, Indian industry got boost. [1] After all this information we can conclude that, in ancient time India was famous from Mediterranean region to China for its dye, silk dyeing with resist process, painted cotton to muslin. [2]

II. VARIETY OF INDIAN TRADITIONAL TEXTILE

- 1) Pigment painted textiles
- 2) Dye painted textiles
- 3) Resist dyed textiles
- 4) Printed textiles
- 5) Woven textiles. [2]

III. PIGMENT PAINTED TEXTILES

We found first pigment painted textile in late 14th or early 15th century. Those cloths were known as "patas", and it was painted in Gujarat and Rajasthan. In the art form of miniature painting, pigment dyed paintings were found during fifteen century in early Mughal period.

Other evidence of using cloth painting with pigment dye is "Pichhvais", which were hung behind the image of Krishna in the temples.

One more art form was related to pigment dye; "Patachitra" was from Orissa. Those painting were mainly associated with Jagannath temple at Puri. [3]

IV. DYE PAINTED TEXTILES

Among all other variety of Indian traditional textiles, dyed painted textiles are also known complex technology in sub-continent for more than 2500 years. Indian furnishing textiles and other home décor like embroidered quilts were famous among European clientele but in second half of seventeenth century high quality painted Indian cottons had created their value in Europe market. The main properties which made this fabric in high demand were

- Brilliant colours after repeated wash.
- Strength and durability.
- Good drape.

By the end of seventeenth century this fabric became era in Europe. The process of dyeing with natural dyes were needed mordants which binded the dye to the cotton fabrics.

In the eighteenth century dyers in south India soaked or washed the cloth in myrobalan solution before the dyeing and washed the bamboo stick (kalam) in mordants. This process was known as Kalamkari. In this Kalamkari process bamboo stick were dipped in an iron mordant to do the outlines which were desired to be black. For red colour they used alum as a mordant. In preparation for indigo dyeing first they removed myrobalan (harde) and other mordants from the fabric by bleaching it in the cow dung and applied wax on the other colour of the fabric to save details.[3]

V. RESIST DYED TEXTILE

In resist dyed technique yarn or fabric had to be covered with mud, gum, wax or tying with threads and then penetrated it into dye bath, so pattern developed on the covered portion against a colour ground. Among all techniques these three are still famous

- 1) Ikat
- 2) Bandhani
- 3) Leheria

VI. IKAT

In Ikat pattern, yarns are first tied according to design and then dyed and pattern can be shown after yarn woven to fabric with weaving process.

One of the most popular fabrics in double Ikat is Patola from Patan, Gujarat. This was the most significant exported item of India to south East Asia, during seventeenth century. Patola is always associated with prestige in India. It was exported to Philippines, Malaysia, and Borneo, Thailand and in Indonesia. In Java they used to wear Patola for wedding ceremonies. In Bali Patola was used in temple for hangings.

VII. BANDHNI

Another resist dying textile is Bandhni pattern. During 6th century Bandhni is found, in Ajanta caves in their mural paintings. Even in thirteenth century we got some evidence of Bandhni provided by the painted ceilings of three stored temple at Alchi.

The bright colour Bandhni technique of Gujarat is still popular. Jamnagar is main dyeing and marketing centre and Kutch has monopoly in Bandhni cloths. In Gujarat Hindu and Muslim khatri families both are equally involved in this traditional art. Women tie the design and men dye the fabric. For Bandhni preferable fabrics are cotton, mul, georgette, gajji silk, satin, crape silk etc.

For tying and dyeing method after the washing process, cloth has to be folded in 2 or 3 layers and printed with geru. Women follow the lines of marking and tie at very small interval as design. Light colour like yellow is dyed first. Bandhni cloth is mainly use in saree, odhanis, shawls and pagris.

Bandhni made by muslin and khatri artisan, have significant value in market because of its finely tied floral and geometric designs.

IKAT OF ORISSA

Orissa Ikat production process is totally different from Patola Ikat. Orissa Ikat designs are more dependent on weaving. Main raw material used is cotton.

IKAT OF ANDHRA PRADESH

Ikat of Andhra Pradesh is known as "Teliaruma". The term "Telia" has derived from the process in which yarn has to wet and dip into oil for dye preparation, and so it gets the oily texture. This variety is weaved by double Ikat technique. [3]

VIII. PRINTED TEXTILE

There is some evidence which indicate that block printed technique belongs to 1500 B.C. We do not have any material survival from this period. We got the earliest evidence found from the site near Egypt, which was printed Indian fabric.

The Fustat fabrics were of best quality and very famous for trading between India and Egypt.

It had two categories

- 1) The block printed fabric with resist method, may be with wax or mud and dyed in single colour.
- 2) The block printed fabric with mordants

The political and economic sudden change declined the Mughal Empire and established colonial rule. This leads to declination of many textile techniques like dyeing, printing and cotton weaving. In twentieth century, many traditional art forms were in poor condition. Still few like sanganerremainedactive and contributed in domestic and international market.

Traditionally colour matter was obtained in form of thick residue which was called “Roghan”. Roghan was obtained from hot safflower and castor oil casted in cold water. Roghan was then block printed on cloth. Variation of this process was known as “Khadi”.

IX. MACH ILIPATNAM

During seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Machilipatnam was very famous for dye painted cloths produced innearby centres like Polavaram along theCoromandel Coast.Machilipatnam prints designed for the Iranian markets included prayer mats, hangings and covers in baroque and Islamic style.

In the twentieth century Machilipatnam art had similar popularity,thetechnical aspect of its art has changed. Natural madder has been replaced by alizarin and dyeing of indigo has been entirely given up. Even the bamboo or iron kalam used for painting pattern details with wax resist has stopped. But the change in this traditional method has adversely affected the quality of prints.

X. SANGANER

Sanganer is the place near Jaipur which is very famous since last two hundred and fifty year, because of its blackprinted textile. During colonial period Sanganer became famous for its distinguishedblock prints which consisted of delicate floral prints like iris, lily, rose, cannation etc.

In olden timesSanganer printer worked on the floor with low wooden patthas, measuring 24 inches long 18 inches wide, with padding on the top. Cotton fabric used for printing was around 36 inches width. In today'stime, the tables used are of 20 inches long and 45 inches wide.

XI.BAGRU

Bagru is the place which is about thirty kilometres from Sanganer. Bagru prints are associated with local folk milieu, and colour range and designs were inspired by traditional cast and custom.

XII. BAGH

Bagh is the village located in Madhya Pradesh. Bagh prints are known for its tone-to-tone patterns. Red, blue or black cotton ground with lighter shade of same colour design on it. The printing process of Bagh is started with bleaching and softening process. After washing of the cloth, it is soaked into castor oil, goat dung and alkali. Again it needs to be washed properly and treated with myrobalan. Now the fabric becomes more dye absorbent. Now, the next process is printing which is done with mordant like alum, tamarind seed flour and natural gum. Second step for printing is done, where requires black pattern. Black colour is prepared from iron, jaggery and natural gum, which is fermented for 20 days, then mixed it with tamarind seed flour. Now fabric is treated in hot dye bath with alizarin.

XIII. WOVEN TEXTILES

The earliest evidence of woven textiles was from Mohenjo-Daro in Indus valley, around 1750 B.C.

Varanasi

Varanasi was famous for its fine cotton weaving and its better known skill is silk weaving. It is derived from the migration of weavers from Gujrat since the middle of the eighteenth century. Some famous silk quality used for furnishing was kimbhabs, heavy satin or twill. Varanasi also produced variety of light weights of satin, twill and plain woven brocade.

Chanderi

During seventeenth century Chanderi was woven in Mughal Karkhana. These karkhanas supplied high quality Chanderi fabrics to the Mughal court. Since eighteenth century the centre produced very fine, plain and gold-bordered cotton muslins.[4]

Kanchipuram

Since ancient time Kanchipuram is known as political and religious centre of South India. Even from ancient and medieval period kanchipuram textiles were famous for its weaving skill. Traditional Kanchipuram saree was worn by women in Tamil Nadu for their religious purpose.[4]

Venkatagiri

Venkatagiri is the town in Andhra Pradesh which is very famous for cotton weaving centres. Venkatagiri has been known for its very fine textured Dhotis and turbans since nineteenth century. Venkatagiri fabrics woven with the counts up to 120s were the finest among the plain cotton texture from handloom. [3]

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