
CHIKANKARI ; ‘AN OLD LEGEND OF LUCKNOW

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ABSTRACT

The embroidery is form of ornamentation. The white embroidery done on white cotton especially on Muslin is known as CHIKAN WORK.

The present study was done to know about the specialties related to this superior work of chikankari embroidery.

. This study deals with the origin, history, basic stitches, fabric and threads used and also some beautiful motifs which enhance the beauty of the embroidery. This study was conducted just to highlight this beautiful art of chikankari which is simple as well as beautiful and easy enough to be maintained in the present day life.

Various types of stitches and different in traditional motives used in this embroidery have been discussed in this paper. Various traditional samples were also prepared using basic stitches of the embroidery on white cotton background with white cotton thread.

INTRODUCTION

Embroidery is a beautiful thread work on a variety of fabrics which makes the fabric more attractive. Women are pioneers in creating excellent delicate embroidery articles since ancient times in India. The craftsmanship of different states of India has its own excellency and beauty attracting people from different parts of the world.

The creative embroideries are done on the articles of personal wear and household articles also carry delicate embroidery motifs and borders to enhance the pleasant look of room with their delicacy. Above all the embroidered articles done by the devoted hands are an excellent gift to reveal the real sentiments of love and devotion. Some traditional embroideries one out of which is Chikankari of Lucknow which needs to be popularised and develop into an industrial craft in order to save reminiscent beauty of past and everlasting art. .

Lucknow in particular is the cradle and unrevealed centre of . Chikankari . The pattern of predominantly floral designs is stitched using untwisted white cotton or silk on surface of fabrics. Chikankari is famous as shadow work. .

Lucknow – The city of Nawabs and cultured city of beautiful buildings lies at centre of Uttar Pradesh and is famous in India as HOME OF CHIKANKARI. The benevolent rulers of Oudh patronised the artisans and encouraged their craftsmanship and Lucknow became a centre of attraction for them.

The embroidery is simplest form of ornamentation and in case of Chikankari its importance lies in the simplicity and dignity seen in simple stitches done usually with white on white base..

Chikankari though done on white Muslin background now is done on fine cotton material like voil 2X2, cambric, malmal, organdie, chiffon, georgette, net and other similar sheer fabrics..

ORIGIN AND HISTORY

According to some earlier records we come to know that the word chikan perhaps originated from the word chekeen or sequein that meant a coin valued at rupees four which was current in several parts of India during that period. It may be that embroidery was said for price in terms of chekeen.

History reveals that the best Chikankari embroidery comes from Lucknow where it is produced as a work of great beauty and remarkable distinction. The Nawabs had a highly developed taste for richly embroidered garments which might have been due to influence of Persian Culture.

A story which tells the fact related to the origin of this embroidery is that a princess of Murshidabad, who was professionally a seamstress and highly skilled in hand work, married to Nawab of Oudh. As a token of love and affection the princess embroidered a beautiful head covering and presented it to her Nawab. The Nawab was extremely pleased with the embroidered cap worked with fine cotton thread on muslin cloth. The women of muslim household staying near by were jealous of princess work. The inmates of Harem began to produce finer and much delicate work than that of the princess and that's how the great art of Chikankari took birth.

According to another story a craftsman named Faiz Khan who practised chikankari narrated that a farmer Ustaad Mohammad Shahid Khan staying near Lucknow offered water to a traveller to quench his thirst and permitted him to rest at his residence. The traveller was very much impressed with hospitality of Mohammad Shahid Khan and in turn taught him the art of Chikankari. Chikankari believes that the traveller was sent by almighty the god.

Noor Jahan, wife of Mughal emperor introduced this art and it was an inspiration of Turkish embroidery. However, the motifs were evolved by herself only. The original Chikan designs were her own personal creations.

The records of travellers in the sixteenth century describe excellent white work from Bengal and certainly work was influenced by Portuguese traders who founded the port of Hughli at that time to just north of Calcutta. The white counted threads embroidery produced in eighteenth century in Dacca and Bengal was taken probably to Lucknow where it became famous as white Chikan Work.

Chikankari has also been mentioned in old records as having been practised in Dacca and Murshidabad. The Chikankari is akin to Chikan work practised in Lucknow. Today, the use of golden coloured muga silk in old Chikankari also supports the fact that Chikankari was originally done in Dacca, Murshidabad and Bengal as Muga silk was produced in those regions. From Murshidabad the art reached to the city of Nawabs that is Lucknow where this gained popularity and finally the Industry flourished.

TECHNIQUES OF EMBROIDERY

1. Base Fabric Used

Earliest only fine hand woven cotton fabrics like Tanjeb, Mulmul and Muslins were used. Now a days, variety of fabrics are used like viol 2x2, cambric, organdie, georgette, net and other similar sheer fabrics.

2- Colours of Fabric

The basic tradition of doing chikankari embroidery reviews that only white coloured fabric was used as a base fabric. The base fabric used is never treated chemically but used directly for embroidering. Different articles prepared are dominantly white in colour for example gents kurtas, household linens other than the pastel colours which are opted for female wardrobe. Only the printing of design is done and that the embroidery is done, articles are chemically washed to give them the proper finish.

3. Threads Used

Mostly cotton thread called lachhikadhaga or kucchadhaga is used for Chikankari which is white, untwisted thread. Sometimes silken thread that is reshm ka dhaga is also used. Commonly used other threads include anchor thread or synthetic threads used mostly for coloured embroideries.

4. Colour of thread

Mainly white coloured thread is used but still in embroidering a variety for females various new shades have been introduced in the embroidery. In single colour embroidery white coloured thread or a colour contrasting to colour of base fabric can be used. Only white coloured thread used is considered to be a symbol of purity and sincerity. The ply of the thread used for embroidery also varies with the quality of work

and fineness of the stitches. For jali work, usually single ply is used. Further different ply are used according to fineness of stitches and intricacy of designs.

5. Stitches Used

Chikankari embroidery includes simple stitches like satin stitch, chain stitch, stem stitch, back stitch, herringbone stitch, French knot stitch, and bullion stitch and so on. Some of the main basic stitches of chikankari are murri, phanda, jali, taipchi, bukhia and khatawa. Murri is nothing but French knot stitch which resembles the rice grain in shape. . Phanda resembles millet and gives a raised effect as it falls under knotted style. This stitch is used to fill petals, leaves, calyx and other such parts. The jali work means giving an effect of open mesh or net like appearance to the fabric. Jalties are of different kinds as for example Madras Jali, Calcutta Jali and so on. Sometimes they are very elaborate and intricate. The taipchi is a simple running stitches or darning stitch this is mostly used to fill by the straight or curved lines in floral designs. The common name for bukhia is shadow work. It is done on wrong side of material and design is delicately outlined with tiny running stitches from right side. The effect on fine muslin background produces the shadow appearance. The simplified bukhia is Herringbone stitch. Bukhia is most remarkable of chikandesigns and is supposed to be true chikan. A similar effect like bukhia is produced by minute applique work called katao and khatawa. It is a flat style of chikankari where same fabric as that of background is used for intricate kind of applique work. Some of the other stitches used in chikankari embroidery are Satin Stitch and button hole. The vernacular name for Button hole is katbalda. It is used for making flowers, eyelids and so on. Satin stitch is mainly used in filling petals, leaves, calyx etc.

6. Tools and Accessories used

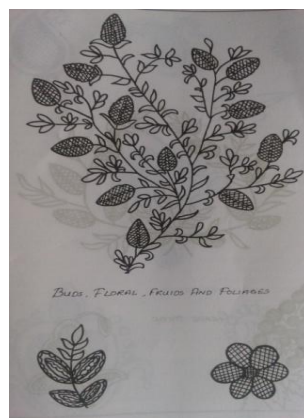
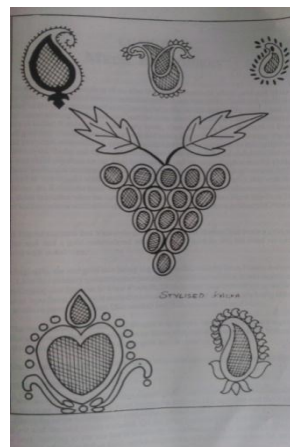
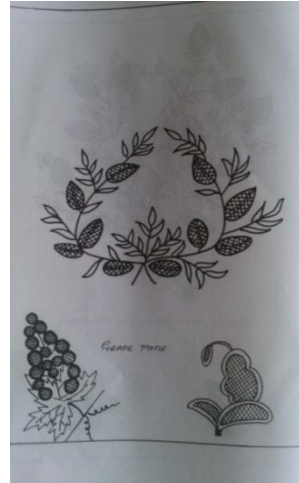
Chikankari embroidery is done with an ordinary needle now- a-days. In earlier times also no other tool was used other than the needle. No accessories like beads, sequins or mirrors are used in this embroidery.

7. Motifs and Designs used

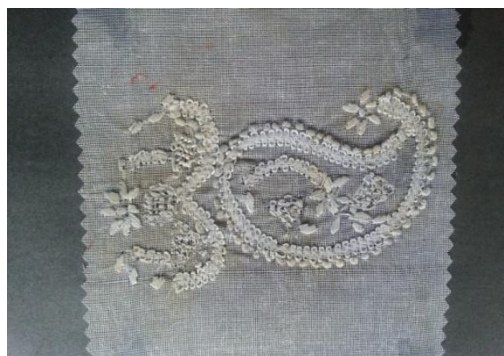
The motifs used in chikankari are mostly stylised or free flowing. . The motifs represent familiar objects connected with the environment and daily life. . In birds too, peacock motif is used the most and elephant as an animal motif. The jasmine, rose, flowing stems, fine petalled flower, almond, turanj and akheri , betel leaf and mango

motif respectively are traditional motifs. . One or more motifs are arranged together to produce variety of designs.

FEW SELECTED CHIKANKARI MOTIFS



SOME SAMPLES PREPARED USING CHIKANKARI EMBROIDERY



CONCLUSION

This study on Chikankari An old legend of Lucknow concludes that this white work is quite famous, basically when done on white with white. . The commonly used motifs and designs include mango, turanj, animal and bird motifs. This embroidery is no doubt simple but its appeal lies in its simplicity only. Also further study can be done to find out various changes as well as developments made in this field of ornamentation of textiles ,being done with new methods.

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