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STUDIES ON CHIKANKARI OF UTTARPRADESH

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Abstract:

Chikankari primarily refers to an embroidery variety done originally with pristine white cotton thread on fine mulls and muslins. The word chikan derives its name from the Persian word, Chakeen, meaning rendering of delicate patterns on fabric. This paper deals the Chikankari of Uttarpradesh. It is a unique grace and elegance that has don in fine cotton. The seven types of stitches are studied along with twenty two legendary Chinkankari stitches. It is very famous shadow work which is very delicate. Lucknow is centre point for Chikankari, where silver and golden work is also carried out which is called Badla and Tilla work. Now it has becomes commercialized and has a great demand in Indian and foreign market.

KEY WORDS:

Chikankari, Embroidery variety, Uttar Pradesh.

INTRODUCTION

The chikankari embroidery garment is believed to be introduced in seventeenth century by Noorjehan (wife of Mughal emperor Jehangir) who was inspired by Turkish embroidery. Some designs and patterns still exist that are believed to be queen's personal creations. Sources also attribute that chikankari originated in East Bengal where the word chikan meant 'fine'. 'Chikan' was first referred to in the records Megasthenes, a Greek traveller who mentioned the use of flowered muslins by Indians in the 3rd century B.C.

Indian craftsmen believe that the origin of 'chikankari' goes back to ancient times when a traveller while passing through a village near Lucknow, in Uttar Pradesh, asked for some water from a poor peasant who offered him the desired help. Pleased with his hospitality, the traveller taught him the art of chikankari that would never allow him to go hungry. As per the belief, the traveller was the prophet. Chikan Embroidery has a unique grace and elegance and this constant presence is maintained throughout the fine cotton or the fabric used. It carefully highlights uniformity and consistency in stitches with fine thread-knots. The patterns and motifs are generally floral and geometric embroidery with exquisite delicacy of detail with even stitches or raised with designs in a mesh pattern.

MATERIALAND METHODS

India is the home to variety of embroidery since ages and Indian embroidery has always been a tradition and a name to conjure with. The various methods are used during Chikankari work. The basic stitches are six in number and all except one are common to other forms of embroidery.

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Fig.1. Chickankari on colored fabric

Chikankari is an ancient form of white floral embroidery, intricately worked with needle and raw thread on a variety of fabrics like cotton, muslin, silk, organza etc. There are 36 types of stitches used in chikan work. The word 'chikan' is probably a derivative from the Persian word 'chikin' or 'chikeen' which means a kind of embroidered fabric. It is said to have been originally introduced by Noor Jehan, the beautiful wife of the Mughal emperor Jahangir. Since then it has evolved and attained its glory and perfection in Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh. Today it is a practiced tradition and an important commercial activity in the city and around.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Drifting apart from the original pristine setting, the tone-on-tone embroidery is in vogue these days. The significant use of beads, sequin and mokaish (white flat silver strip embroidery) have gained wide acceptance. Chikankari is famous as 'shadow work'. It is a very delicate work of Lucknow. There are number of tales narrate about the birth and development of this subtle art. Jasleen Dhamija explains two stories. A princess of Murshidabad, who was professionally a seamstress and highly skilled in hand work, married to the Nawab of Outh. 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 nearby were jealous of prince's 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.

Chikankari though done on the white muslin background now is done on fine cotton material like, voile, two x two, cambray, mulmul, organdie, chiffon, jeorgettes, nets and other similar sheer fabrics. Chikankari is something like unity in diversity i.e. includes some simple stitches like satin, back, stem, button hole and herringbone stitch, giving a clusterous effect which is simple, gentle and subtle. Chikan work was done on sari borders, pallow with tiny buttas in the body of the sari, blouses, kurtas, cuffs, collars, jubbas, handkerchiefs, caps, table cloth, table mats, cushions, curtains and other household linen.

Lucknow is also been known for another type of embroidery, much different from chikankari. It is done by gold and silver called 'Badla work'. The flat metal thread is used for badla embroidery, serves as needle itself. The metal thread is passed in and out the material and pressed in the material according to the motifs, gives a gorgeous effect, fairy like appearance. The other kind of gold and silver embroidery is called 'Tilla work', where the twisted threads are stitched according to the shape of motifs, in patterns of great intricacy. The whole surface is covered with gold and silver thread like brocade. The Kinkhab work is done on heavy velvets are used as elephants back cloth, couch covers and bolsters.

CONCLUSION

Now a day's chikankari is almost commercialised where the both men and women have their contribution. The chikan work has gained the foreign market and therefore the articles are produced on commercial scale according to the demand.

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