



What Got Us Here, Won't Get Us There

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Craft of Temple Services: Pipli

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Abstract: "Pipli" is a town in Puri district in the Indian state of Orissa that is filled with artisans and colourful traditional and contemporary items. The roots of "Pipli" are intertwined with the rituals and traditions of Lord Jagannath, the presiding deity of the Puri temple. The "Pipli" items were mainly used during the procession of the deities in their various ritual outings, especially Rathayatra (known as the chariot festival—a procession of Lord Jagannath). The traditional item of Pipli craft, "made of appliqué and patchwork patterns, is associated with religious functions.

The present study is an attempt to document the traditional art of Pipli, which has extended its pure form and recorded the current status of the craft. Data regarding the craft was purposely collected from the artisans of Pipli town, Puri district of Orissa, who were practising the "Pipli" craft in traditional methods.

Keywords: Traditional Textile, Pipli, Traditional Craft, Orissa

1. Introduction

Eastern India has a strong embroidery tradition.¹ Throughout history the major arts of Odisha, ancient Kalinga, were influenced by the various Hindu beliefs. Hindus regard the Jagannath temple, Puri district of Odisha state of India as one of the four most sacred places of pilgrimage. The three decorated chariots that carry Lord Jagannath, Balaram and Subhadra during the "Rathayatra" festival are covered with brightly appliquéd and embroidered canopies made from a red base cloth combined with stripes of yellow, blue and black for the three deities Jagannath, Balaram and Subhadra respectively.⁴ This craft tradition adopted from Shringar (accoutrements) for the Ratha festival is still alive today in the town of Pipli, located halfway between Puri district and Bhubaneswar district.⁴ This art of patchwork from Pipli village of Orissa has a distinct style and imagination.² Pipli has a strong connection with the Jagannath temple at Puri. Temple records state that in 1054 BC Maharajah Birakshore of Puri appointed tailors of the "Darji" caste as Sebaks (temple attendants), to provide a regular supply of appliquéd articles for the daily Sebas (rites performed in the temple).³ The technique entails the use of bold stylized forms of animal birds and elements of nature such as the sun and moon which are appliquéd onto a base cloth and outlined with hand-embroidered stitches.² Though the art form was restricted to the Darji caste earlier, today other cast members also practice it.

Traditional craft has always been and will continue to be a reflection of the culture, socioeconomic status, climatic conditions, and historical condition of the people. Therefore, it refers to protecting the craft from exploitation, and second, it refers to protecting it from the changes the craft is undergoing as a result of market influences. The nature of a craft entails the assimilation and manifestation of external influences, with only a limited capacity to selectively process these

influences. This inherent limitation serves as a compelling reason to engage in contemplation, observation, and proactive measures. Pipli is an esteemed form of appliqué and embroidered textile that warrants preservation. To ensure the preservation of the craft, it was necessary to undertake comprehensive documentation including various aspects such as the craft itself, its procedural intricacies, resulting items, techniques employed, raw materials utilised, as well as the themes and colours employed.

2. Methodology

The objective of the study is to document the craft, to fulfil the objective, a descriptive study was planned, for which an open-ended questionnaire was formed. A purposive sampling method was opted to collect the data. Pipli village of Puri district was selected for the study, as it is the main production cluster of producing the craft. A field study was conducted and artisans were selected on a random basis. The objective of the questionnaire was to collect information with demographic details, background of the craft, making process, motifs, techniques, and raw material. Multiple visits were conducted to collect the data along with interviews and photographs.

3. Results and Discussion

It is observed that craft has been spread to Puri from Pipli village by adapting traditional practices on contemporary products to fulfil the requirements of the modern market. All the respondents are from the "Darji" community and their mother tongue was the Odia language. They all live in a semi-nuclear family setup and all of them own Pakka houses. The majority of artisans are between the ages of 21 to 30 and mostly female artisans are involved in the craft. The male artisans are involved in the distribution and selling of craft products. It is also observed that male members of the artisan family are moving to other jobs like preparation and decoration of canopies and tents for the ceremonies, working in small industries etc. All the respondents have passed high school. Few of the artisans are pursuing their post-higher education like diplomas, certificate courses and graduation. The appliqué work of Pipli is one of the most well-known handicrafts in Puri, Bhubaneswar and its surroundings. The base fabric of Pipli craft is medium-weight polyester-cotton fabric and velvet. Zippers, buttons, fancy laces and other trims are used in making utility items like pouches, letter cases, bags etc. A local organisation "Utkalika" set up by the Development Commissioner, Handicrafts, Government of India, also provides raw material to the artisans at a subsidised rate. Today, artisans are involved in the craft and are expected to have essential knowledge of stitching machines as machine work is involved in a variety of products. This topic has been discussed in detail under the following subtopics:

3.1 Materials

Materials like newspapers, fabrics, needles, scissors, threads, and laces are locally purchased. Sometimes artisans also purchased raw materials from Kolkata. Earlier coarser hand-woven fabric was used as the strong base on which appliqué cut-outs were pasted with the beautiful needle & thread work which includes embroidery, mirror work, bead work and other similar embellishments. Nowadays synthetic velvety fabric is used. Cotton and floss silk thread is used for embroidery along with the fancy laces for frills.

3.2 Process

Both machine and hand techniques are used in the development of articles. According to the pattern of design, cut-outs are pasted on the base fabric. According to the motifs, stencils are prepared. These stencils are regularly used in different layouts to create various patterns. Then fabric cut-outs are made with the help of these stencils (Figure 1). The edges of the motifs are hemmed and then skillfully stitched on the base cloth. Sometimes embroidery is used to embellish the edges (Figure 2). Technically, embroidery stitches and patchwork are the main techniques to make Pipli articles by using fabric stripes of motifs. The stitches vary from article to article. The main stitches are:

- Kaccha or Running Stitch is used for keeping patches in the right position or attaching separately developed motifs with base. (Figure 3)
- Taropa or Hemming Stitch is used as a concealed stitch in which the edges of the motifs become invisible on the front side. (Figure 4)
- Bakhia or Back Stitch- is a simple running stitch that is used either for keeping patches in the right position temporarily or attaching the motifs which are developed separately.
- *Ganthi* or buttonhole stitch- is used for attractive embroidered motifs. (Figure 5)
- Chikana or chain stitch- is used to create a chain-like pattern on the surface. Traditionally four-ply cotton thread was used to decorate the panel. (Figure 6)
- Ruching - is a type of running stitch which is an essential stitch to create gathers by using a stripe of cloth to make a motif.

3.3 Colours

Traditionally, only primary and secondary colours were used in the Pipli craft. Artisans have introduced other colours like turquoise, pink, orange, lemon green, and maroon preferably. Artisans develop various combinations of motifs by mixing these limited colours of fabrics.

3.4 Motifs

Fabric stripes are used to make a variety of cloth motifs to use as appliqué cut pieces or as decorative cloth laces, mainly Sadhi patti (Plain red stripe), Chauka Patti (Square stripes), Chaina Patti (chain stitch on coloured stripe), Khandiyali Patti (Diamond shape stripe), Phula Patti (Flower Motif), Kalso Patti (Pitcher stripe), Gula Patti (wavy stripe), Hansa Patti (Swan stripe), Nahara Patti (cone stripe) used to make decorative product of Pipli craft. Motifs used in appliqué include Tohi or Dali (Creeper), Patra (Leaves), Hati (elephant), Singh (lion), Matsya (fish), Surjo (Sun), Chandra (moon), Sya (parrot), Bataka (Hansa), Mayur (peacock), Kangula (triangle shaped motif), Mallil or Mogra (Jasmine flower), Padma (lotus) etc. are most commonly used in Pipli craft. Traditionally, the motifs used, are stylized representations of flora and fauna like Tohi or creepers, trees, flowers, birds, animals etc. with mythical figures. Among flowers Padma or Lotus, Malli or Jasmine, Suryamukshi (sunflower shape motif), Guccha or a bunch of flowers, Chandrarhar or border design, Pan patta or betel leaf, Gach (tree), Patra (leaf), Siju patra, Gol patra etc are most commonly used in Pipli. In birds and animals like Sua or Parrot, Mayura or Peacock, Ganda Mayura (double-headed peacock), Hansa or swan, Batka or duck, Matsya or fish, Hiran or deer, Singha or Lion, Hathi or elephant, Ghoda or horse etc are used, in mythical figures, Lord Jagannath figure is mostly used in wall hangings, Rahu (the demon that devours the sun during a solar eclipse), Surjo or sun, Chandra or moon, Lord Ganesha, Radha-Krishna etc. are also most common motifs of Pipli craft. Today in Pipli craft, motifs are used in modern style in different products, especially handbags, purses, pouches, wall hangings etc.

3.5 Products

There are two categories of products one is traditional, where products are developed one month before the Rath yatra or chariot festival of Puri, and another one is contemporary products, where all the products are developed to fulfil the household requirements of customers. Here are the details of traditional and contemporary products-

3.5.1 Traditional Products

- Chandua or Canopies (Figure 7) is a traditional item made of appliqué pattern to cover deities' heads during the chariot festival of Puri. Nowadays people are using it to decorate their houses, hotels, resorts etc. The Chandua or canopies is the square size and varies from 4 square feet to 1600 square feet depending upon the customer's needs.
- Chatti or Ritual umbrella (Figure 8) is a sort of big umbrella, with a long wooden handle used for ritual journeys and royal outings.
- Alloto or fan (Figure 9) is a big fan with a long wooden handle, carried in the procession of Rath yatra, to protect deities from heat.
- Tarasa or heart-shaped banner (Figure 10) is a wooden piece covered by appliqué cloth and supported by a long wooden pole, used for religious purposes.
- Apart from the above, traditional products like Math (monastic houses) (Figure 12), and Jhalar (to cover holy chariots during the Rath Yatra festival) (Figure 11) were also important products, used during the holy Rath Yatra festival.

3.5.2 Contemporary Products

In contemporary products, Batua or Purse (Figure 13) is a cloth pouch usually in a semicircular shape with the top being straight, Toran, Jhalar or frill is a decorative border to canopies or used as a decorative piece outside of the doors, Tilaka Kothali or letter holders, Adheni or wall hangings (Figure 14), Sujini or quilt, Chatta or umbrella (Figure 15), lamp shades (Figure 16), cushion covers, bedspread (Figure 17) etc also created mainly for tourist.

 Figure 1	 Figure 2	 Figure 3
 Figure 4	 Figure 5	 Figure 6



Figure 1: Stencils, Figure 2:Stitching, Figure 3:Kaccha or Running Figure 4:Taropa or Hemming Stitch, Figure 5:Ganthi or Buttonhole Stitch, Figure 6:Chikana or chain stitch, Figure 7:Chandua or Canopies, Figure 8:: Chatti or Ritual Umbrella, Figure 9:Alloto or fan, Figure 10: Tarasa or heart shaped banner, Figure 11: Jhalar, Figure 12: Math- monastic houses, Figure 13: Batua or Purse, Figure 14: Adheni or wall hangings, Figure 15: Chatta or umbrella

3. Conclusion

The craftsmen were well aware of the history of craft. The creativity of artisans is expressed by the endless variations in motifs and colours. Though, motifs have not changed the material used has been changed largely. The product category of appliqué craft has been introduced based on modern appliqué designs, produced only for the household market. The artisans were welcoming to include the new product category and agreed to enhance their skills. Although the craft was primarily associated with the ritualistic purpose of Lord Jagannath Temple services, it was observed that artisans have not left their roots to offer the ritualistic textiles to the divine services and amalgamated their skills with the modern demand to

generate wholesome livelihood. The influences of consumer demand & and trends have changed the traditional craft in terms of product, fabric used, and manufacturing process.

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