

Intervention of Newer Design for Handloom Brocade Sari of Varanasi

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ABSTRACT

Floor art and craft reflects the vitality of living, the patterns of memory and philosophy of life besides an extensive visual and geometric vocabulary. Handloom industry of Varanasi seeks innovative designs these days for capturing the youths interest towards the traditional textiles therefore the paper is an attempt to incorporate newer Chowkpurana design into brocade weaving. Various Diwali motifs seen in Chowkpurana floor art were adapted as a sari design and three different layouts were sketched. Opinions of the experts (master weavers) were taken for selection the layout, raw materials and weaving technique of sari. Diwali motifs with all over field, border and pallav in sateen variety was selected for weaving of Chowkpurana brocade sari.

Keywords: Chowkpurana, Phekwa technique, Karua technique, Brocade.

INTRODUCTION

Indian culture is layers and layers of what has been contributed by mankind over a period of time and this particular pyramid does not end in a small peak but continues to grow like a pillar. Handmade textiles are an important source of traditional knowledge, infused with symbolic and ritualistic meaning, they served as a conduit of cultural information. That is what gives a country a unique identity and sustainability in this mayhem of cut throat competition. Handicraft serves as a means of livelihood to majority of the rural household which constitutes capital share of our human resources thus; it should be our persistent endeavour to exploit the handicraft to its fullest in the interest of improving our national economy. Banaras 'Kashi' the literature compares it with the oldest cities of human civilisation like Jerusalem, Rome, Peking, and Athens so on. Perhaps this city is the only example of continuous culture over the last three thousand years. The ancient, glorious and vibrant Banaras silk handloom saris are closely woven and designed with gold and silver, passed down from generation to generation. It was one of the sector important for its high value addition, both in terms of economic and aesthetics. These days the weavers of handloom brocade are facing stiff competition from the power loom substitute. Despite the government subsidies available, handloom brocade weaving is declining, therefore, there is a need for strategic designing and marketing interventions. Chowkpurana floor art of Uttar Pradesh is a traditional drawing done by the rural women on various rituals occasions (*Diwali, Karwachauth, Ahoi Astmi and Holi*) on the wall and floor of mud houses. The design/motifs of floor art have not been explored till date; an effort is made in this study to design a handloom sari by incorporating Chowkpurana motifs with brocade technique. The investigator observed and documented few preliminary steps needed to be taken for execution of the newer design for Varanasi handloom brocade.

METHODOLOGY

Collection of Chowkpurana Floor Art Motifs

The researcher visited interior villages like *Chawli* and *Gharijassa* of Western Uttar Pradesh for the collection of Chowkpurana floor art motifs. Villages were selected on the basis of frequently drawing of floor art. For present study various kinds of Diwali motif were gathered with the help of a canon camera of 10 mega pixel. Multi field visit, observation method along with interview schedule was implemented for acquiring the first hand data.

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Designing of Handloom Sari with the Placement of *Chowkpurana* Motifs

Varanasi is known for handloom brocade saris in various varieties all over India with typical floral, animal, bird and geometrical motifs. In this study, the collected *Chowkpurana* motifs were incorporated into the design vocabulary of the handloom Banarasi brocade saris. Indian sari is basically divided into three parts: Field, Pallav and Border where design is integrated. Four different motifs were collected during diwali occasion from both villages (*Chawli* and *Gharijassa*) out of which one motif was purposively selected for designing of sari. Motifs were transferred from photograph to paper in to their original shape as motifs were resized according to the saris layout. The three placements of *Chowkpurana* motifs over sari which were selected are as follows:

- (A) Motifs with border and pallav
- (B) Motif with ornamented field, pallav and border
- (C) Motifs with border, pallav and pleats

Preparation of Graph, Punch Card, Loom and Technique

Madanpura area of Varanasi was selected for weaving of brocade sari. The craftsmen of this area first looked at the size of design/motifs on paper for choosing the graph dimension and jacquard capacity of pit loom. Once the graph was prepared, it was taken for punch card cutting. Raw materials for manufacturing brocade sari were procured from the local market of Varanasi.

Development of a Handloom Brocade Sari

Few preparatory processes were done for instance threading of yarns, setting up of punch card over jacquard machine according to the variety of brocade. *Phekwa* and *Karua* techniques were adopted for transferring of *Chowkpurana* design for brocade saris. The length and width of selected sari was kept 5.30 meter 46”.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

- Analysis of collected *Chowkpurana* floor art motifs
- Layout of handloom brocade sari with the placement of *Chowkpurana* motifs
- Raw material, technique and cost of producing handloom brocade sari from a newer design

Analysis of Collected *Chowkpurana* Floor Art Motifs

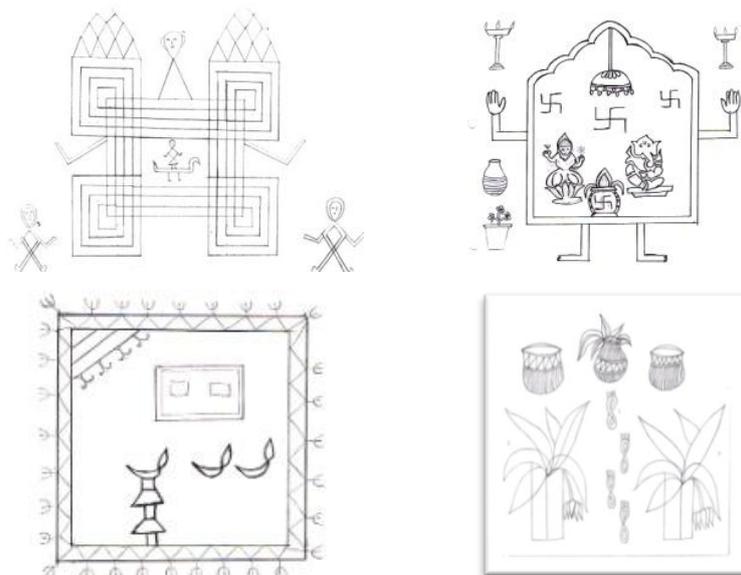


Figure1. Motifs of *Chowkpurana* floor art on Diwali

Findings unveiled that *Chowkpurana* floor art was done on various occasions for instance *Holi* (playing with vibrant colour), *Ahoi Aathe* (women keep fast for their son), *Nag Panchami* (worship of snake) and *Karva Chauth* (women keep fast for their husband). Diwali (celebration of lights) is celebrated in almost every region of India. It was found that drawing of chowk was mandatory for them, moreover was considered as part of their worship. The configuration of design/motifs was also

being changed according to festivals. The analysed *Chowkpurana* designs were symbolic geometrical patterns which included lines, dots, squares, circles, triangles. The motifs used were swastika, lotus, fish, conch shell, footprints (goddess Lakshmi), creepers, leaves, trees, flowers, animals and anthropomorphic figures. These motifs often were modified to fit in with the local images and rhythms. One important point was that the entire pattern was an unbroken line. Geometrical patterns took the shape of stylized flowers of all kinds, fruits, animals, fish and birds. Traditionally, Muslim craftsmen who were from handloom industry of Varanasi avoided weaving of human figure as it was considered forbidden in the community however, the master weavers were very well aware of requirement of newer designs for the handloom industry to keep going. Eventually they got convinced to adopt innovative design for acquiring the markets trends (Figure 1).

Layout of Handloom Brocade Sari with the Placement of *Chowkpurana* Motifs

The researcher solicitously placed *Chowkpurana* floor art motifs over the sari layout after considering the draping style of the region (Figure 2).

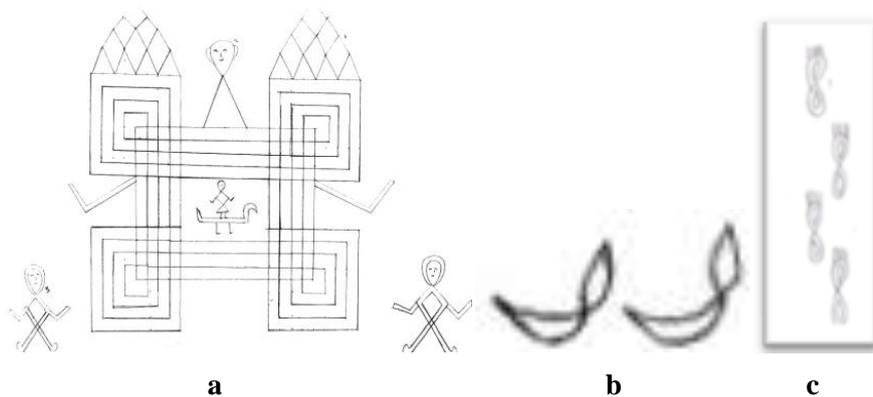


Figure 2. Selected motif for weaving

A total of three placements of motif were sketched on paper:

1. Diwali motifs on border, pallav and field
2. Diwali motifs on border and pallav
3. Diwali motifs on border, pleats and pallav

All three layouts were shown to experts and one layout of sari was chosen out of three for weaving. Varanasi handloom weavers have few prior specific steps for weaving:

Step1: Illustration of design on paper, (Figure 3, 4 and 5)

Step2: Transferring of design from paper to graph paper, (Figure 6, 7 and 8)

Step3: Preparations of punch card and pit loom, (Plate 1, 2 and 3)

Step4: Weaving of sari (Plate 4 and 5)

Step1: Illustration of Design on Paper

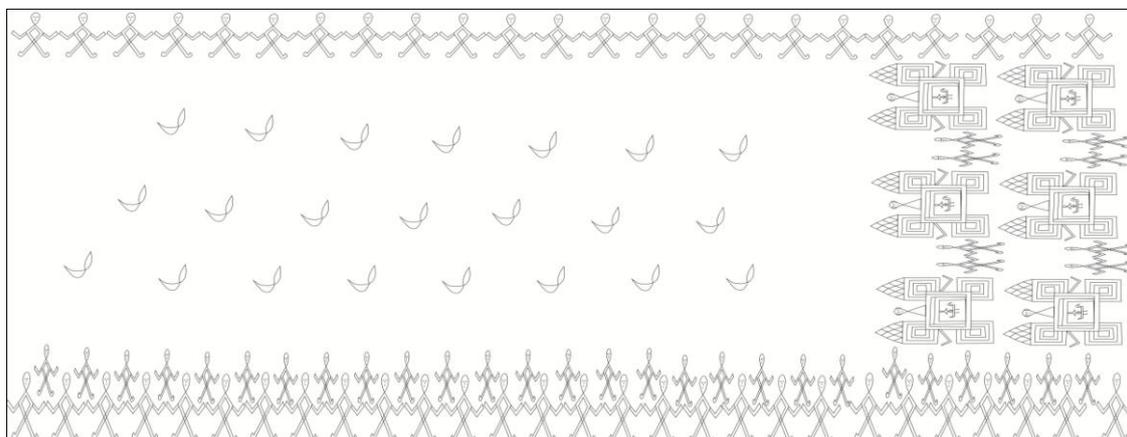


Figure 3. Diwali motifs on border, pallav and field

*Selected layout for weaving

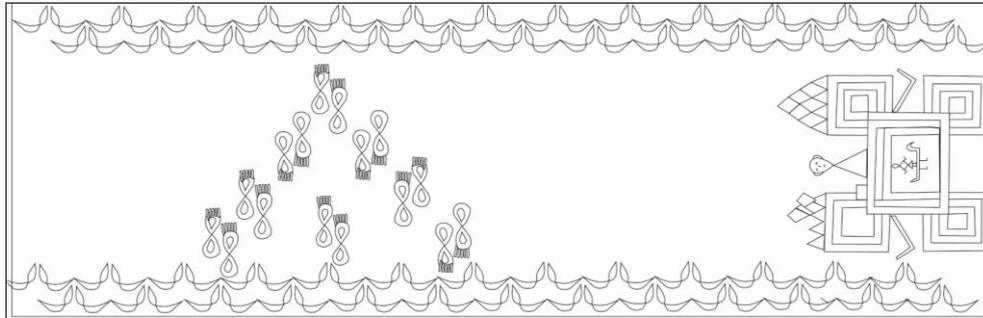


Figure4. Diwali motifs on border, pallav and pleats



Figure5. Diwali motifs on border and pallav

Step2: Transferring of Design from Paper to Graph Paper



Figure6. Prepared graph for pallav,

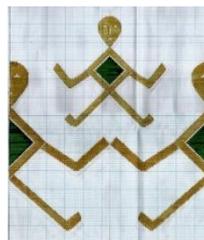


Figure7. Prepared graph for Border,

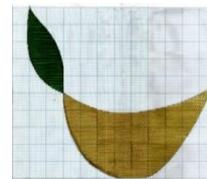


Figure8. Prepared graph for field

Step3. Preparations of Punch Card



Plate1. Plain card board



Plate2. Hammer for cutting the punch card



Plate3. Punch card cutter giving sequential number



Step4: Weaving of Sari



Plate4. Weaving of handloom brocade sari from Chowkpurana floor art motifs



Plate5. Chowkpurana handloom brocade sari inspired from Diwali festival

Raw Materials for Chowkpurana Handloom Brocade Sari

Raw materials were selected on the basis of their availability. *Chowkpurana* is a theme based floor art, each colour used in chowk has its own significant value. Generally *Chowkpurana* were drawn over a white surface of wall/floor therefore the base of the sari was kept white (Table 1).

Table1. Selected handloom specification for *Chowkpurana* brocade sari

1.	Warp & weft yarn	Katan (mulberry) silk
2.	Extra weft	Spun and Tussar silk
3.	Weave	Twill and sateen
4.	Colour	Base off white, extra weft cream, red, yellow
5.	Pit loom	60 Chowk for Pallu and body, 40 Chowk for border
6.	Reed	120s
7.	Ends/Inch Picks/Inch	120 80
8.	Yarn count	Warp- 18/20, Weft – 20/22
9.	Manufacturing Place	Madanpura, Varanasi, India
10.	Time taken	20 days
11.	Mechanism used baranasi handloom jacquard	
12.	Prototype costing of one handloom sari	Rs.
a.	Pre-preparatory process	2000
b.	Punch card	4000
c.	Graph manufacturing	6000
d.	Weaving charges 200 Rs/day for 20 days	4000
e.	Total Raw materials (warp, weft and extra weft)	2000
	Total	18,000

Plate: Woven diwali motif of Chowkpurana over brocade sari in sateen variety

Production Cost of Handloom

The master weaver stated that the manufacturing cost of first sari was expensive as compared to other saris to be woven, as weavers took more time to weave the initial one owing to complexity of design pattern. Once the weaver understood the design pattern he took less time in weaving. The master weaver calculated the total cost of manufacturing of first sari on the basis of its wages, punch card cost, graph manufacturing cost, raw material cost, loom set up cost on the other hand at the time of production of the saris, he eliminated the loom set up charge, punch card and graph manufacturing cost along with reduced weaving wages as compared to prior one.

Step4: Development of Sari

Master weavers and weavers worked together and successfully incorporated Chowkpurana motifs on border, pallav and field of sari through *Phekwa* and *Karua* technique in sateen variety. The colour and width of both lengthwise border of sari were manufactured in different colour. The length of sari was 5.30 meter, below lengthwise border was 9" above lengthwise border was 5", and *pallav* was 18 to 20" (Plate 4 and 5).

CONCLUSION

Indian heritage (folk art and textile craft) are intangible and significant hence it is essential to preserve them for next generation. Simultaneously innovation is needed to capture the taste of younger generation. The study was concluded that execution of newer design for Varanasi handloom was a combined effort of master weavers, weaver and designers as without their inherited skill it is impossible to innovate anything on handloom. It was a good sign and opportunity as those designs and motifs were refused earlier for weaving by handloom weaver. Apparently they came out from their avoiding attitude for weaving of figurative motifs. Fusion of art and craft *Chowkpurana* brocade saree in sateen variety was successfully manufactured through *Phekwa* and *Karua* technique.

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