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GRT ANIMALS AND BIRDS AS DESIGN ORNAMENTATION IN TRADITIONAL INDIAN EMBROIDERIES

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Abstract:- The present research was an attempt to study the animals and birds motifs as design adornment on traditional Indian embroideries. Form analysis, a variation of content analysis was used as research design. The data was gathered through personal observation of specimens in various museums, emporiums, handloom fairs. The research approach was qualitative and to derive information various motifs were collected from books, articles, magazines and online articles on traditional embroideries of India. The study reveals that varied animals and birds motifs were used in almost all traditional Indian embroideries. In designing, men have taken their inspiration from nature- understanding, perceiving the beauty in these along with that of the birds and animal world.

Keywords: Traditional embroideries, animals, birds' motifs, design, adornment.

INTRODUCTION:-

Nobody fails to get spellbound at witnessing the wide and lively occurrence of animals and birds of different species in varied works of arts in India. The range covered reveals animals and birds with very extensive diversities of forms and character and provides a deep sense of wonder and mystery. In Indian textiles like all other forms of arts, animals and birds are seen as constant design ornamentation. They are built-in as decorative motifs not only for their aesthetic appeal but also because of the significance attached to them.

Textiles are a way of life and a non verbal language of a people. Fabrics speak to us at multiple levels. Its raw material speaks of the geo- climatic conditions and trade links. The motifs tell us of its legends, its myths, its beliefs, the way of life and also the trade links.

Embroidery generally is viewed by people as a form of decoration or embellishment but its origins may lie in the decorative stitching together of leather or woven cloth as well as in the strengthening of cloth ((Dhamija,2004). In India embroidery has a hoary past for there is mention of needles in very ancient books (Chattopadhyay, 1995).

Traditional embroideries include a wide range of embroidery done by women in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal and Karnataka. This group of work was not meant for commercial purposes but was done more as personal adornment or as a gift to their families and friends. For generations the skill for this type of work was passed from mother to the daughter (Mittal, 2004).

The present study is undertaken to obtain an inclusive approach into the design ornamentation of animals and birds in various traditional Indian embroideries.

METHODOLOGY

The research approach was qualitative. Form analysis, a variation of content analysis was used to systematically document the birds and animal motifs used in the decoration of the embroideries of India. Form analysis is used in studies evaluating the appearance and use of nonverbal elements, while content analysis is used in studies that examine verbal communication (Paoletti, 1982). Information related to birds and animal motifs were collected from primary and secondary sources. Primary source comprised of specimen of embroidered traditional Indian textiles. Actual samples were seen in various museums, emporiums, exhibition, fairs, malls; hatt etc. Few of the places visited were: The National Crafts museum, Delhi, The National Museum, Delhi, Dilli Haat, New Delhi, Surajkund Mela, Faridabad, different state Emporiums,

Exhibitions and fairs related to textiles of India like Trade Fairs, Handloom Expo etc. Secondary sources of data collection were books, articles, magazines, online visual collections, and online articles, the various research works both published and unpublished on traditional embroideries of India.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION I) Kantha Embroidery

The traditions folk art of Bengal is famous as Kantha which means 'Patched Cloth', and the special significance of Kantha is quilting (Naik, 1992).

Designs & Motifs:

Designed by the women themselves, the Kanthas are infused with the vitality and spontaneity of folk art; the designs and the stitches enliven them. Some Kanthas illustrate Hindu myth and ritual; some show scenes of contemporary everyday life; a third group depicts archaic figures of human beings, animals and birds, surrounded by stylized plants and symbolic objects; and in some kanthas the figures of birds and animals only (Mittal, 2004). The design of kantha are taken from day to day life depicting folk stories, mythological background, ritualistic motifs, luxurious vegetation with roaming animals, deer running, dancing peacock, temples, hukkas, jewellerys, various types of costumes and so on. Some kanthas even represent the steeds of Gods like bull, swan, lion, elephant, peacock, mouse, cat, owl, eagle and swan (Naik, 1996).



Fig 1: Kantha embroidered with animals and birds, late 19th century



Fig 2: Kantha with dominant elephant and horse motifs, 20th century

II) Chamba Rumals/ Pahari Rumals of Himachal Pradesh-

Chamba has the most picturesque needle work tradition which truly reflected paintings with needle (Das, 1992).

Design & Motifs-

Some of the mythological themes depict animals and birds like in Rukmini Harana where elaborate theme are embroidered on rumal depicting the various ceremonial activities like the procession of marriage, involving royal animals like saddled horse, elephants. Also Raas mandal showing Krishna with gopis and deer, peacocks and other birds on empty spaces.

Motifs, in Himachal embroidery also consists of symbolic animals like, leaping tigers, running goats, cantering horses, fleeting rams, wild boar, jumping deer, along with cows, calves, horses, elephants snakes. Birds' motifs comprised of peacock, parrot, cranes, partridges and sparrows used may be as symbolic or purely as decorative. Sometimes these motifs are used in single to fill up empty places. Single bird signified a sad solitary one waiting for the male, a couple symbolized unions of two souls (Naik, 1992).

Animal works is seen mostly in the subjects depicting hunting expeditions in which horses and elephant riders are shown hunting the wild boars, deer, leopards, tigers and lions; cows with their calves are also skillfully rendered in the rumals showing Krishna legend (www.niftcdpress.com).

Sometimes the complete rumal has the motifs of animals, birds, trees, creeper and foliage giving an impression of Bagh.



Fig3: Chamba rumal, 18th century, depicting hunting scenes with animals and birds like elephant, tiger, wild boar, horses, deer peacock, crane etc.



Fig 4: Cows with their calves are skillfully rendered in the Rumals showing Krishna legend.

(III) Phulkari of Punjab-

Phulkari (literally 'flowers work') and bagh (garden) are densely embroidered wedding shawls which enjoyed enormous popularity throughout Punjab (Mittal,2002)

Designs & Motifs-

Motifs of flowers, birds and human figures are embroidered in soft untwisted floss silk (called pat in Punjabi) (Gillow, Barnard, 2008).

The name given to a particular kind of embroidered composition was derived usually from the predominant motif in the composition. The mor bagh was a phulkari on which were embroidered peacocks in various compositions and colours. Some of the most common designs and patterns are also embroidered with animals, birds, leaves, rivers, sun and moon (Hitkari, 1980).

The phulkari most prized are called sainchi phulkari. In these phulkari and baghs a central lotus medallion is embroidered. These are filled in with scenes from daily life in a village, depictions of human beings and objects of everyday life. To this are added peacocks and parrots which are symbols of beauty and good fortune. Also horses, elephants, tigers and various other birds and animals are embroidered.

Bawan Bagh (or Bawan Phulkari) - 'Bawan' means 'fifty- two' in Punjabi and refers to the mosaic of fifty two different patterns which decorate this piece. This is rarest of all the baghs and phulkari patterns are animals and birds (Naik, 1992).



Fig 5: Mor Bagh



Fig 6: Abawan phulkar East Punjab with peacock



Fig7: Sanchi Phulkari

IV) Kasuti of Karnataka-

The word Kasuti can be broken up to mean Kai-hand, Suti- cotton- hand work done in cotton. The most remarkable feature about Kasuti is that there is no right or wrong side (Naik, 1996).

Designs and Motifs:

The motifs used in kasuti embroidery ranged from mythological and architectural to the beautiful flora and fauna i.e. gopuras, palanquines, chariot, shiva-linga, bull (nandi), tiger, lampstand, swastika, sun, surya mukhi, conchshell, Rama's cradle, snake (naga devta), elephant, squirrel, parrot, sparrow, peacock, cock, duck, pigeon, swan, deer, tulsi vrundavan, hanuman etc. (Naik, Shejwadkar, 2004). The larger designs feature the temple, the tulsi plant platform, the elephant with howdah, Nandi, the scared bull etc. all near the pallu (Chaatopadhyay, 1995).

In some examples horses, tigers and lions are also found and floral motifs are plentiful. Sometimes along the border, horse with rider, or two love birds right in the middle of nowhere (Shahaney, 2004).



Fig 8: Saree with Peacock motif



Fig9: Kasuti design on Salwar with peacocks

V) Gujarat Embroidery-

Gujarat has produced a greater wealth and variety of embroideries than any other Indian state. The embroidery of Gujarat is characterized mainly by the use of mirrors that substituted precious stones, which once adorned as royal garments (Joshi,1986).

It is divided into two major parts:

1)Kutch embroidery-

Kutch embroidery has the foundation of various clans viz., Ahirs, Mochis and Rabaris (Naik, 1996).

Ahir Embroidery-



Fig 10: A ganesh Chakla embroidered with elephants, cattle, parrots, Gujarat

Mochi Bharat-

The motifs usually embroidered were buttis, flowers derived from Persian and Mughal sources, often with parakeets perched on them. These were interspersed with figures of peacocks or putali (women), sometimes both or more rarely with caparisoned elephants and saddled horses (Gillow and Barnard, 2008).



Fig 11: Silk bodice sleeve embroidered in silk with peacock motifs

Rabari work-

The motifs comprised of beautiful birds, beasts, flora and fauna, human figures and so on.(Naik, 1996). Peacock and parrots celebrate the joyful flashes of colour these birds bring to the pastel desert and camel motifs laud the camel, once the Kutchis Rabari source of livelihood (Frater, 2003).



Fig 12: Sadi, woman's festival veil detail , motifs used are camels , elephants with riders and parrots

Kathiawar Embroidery-

The main feature of Kathiawar embroidery is the lavish application of mirrors. However, the base stitches used are chain stitch, Heer Bharat, Abla Bharat and interlacing stitch or Sindhi taropa (Naik, 1996).

Applique Katab work-

More elaborate appliqué work included animal, human, bird. Their motifs expressed life, cheerfulness, action movement like horse galloping, lion roaring or springing, dog bleeping, deer hopping etc. Some composite animals like Gajasimha (half elephant and half lion), Kinnara (half human being and half horse), Mina vaji (half fish and half elephant), a

golden swan with two heads, one each looking forward and backward, Kesari Simha, the king of thirty two kinds of Simhas has long hair, hump at the back, body like horse with long hair.



Fig 13: Wedding canopy depicting appliqué worked elephant's motifs, Paliad district, Saurashtra

Beadwork-

Gujarat is also famous for Moti Bharat, the bead work. The motifs composed of elephant, camel, parrot, peacock, calf drinking mother's milk and so on. The Kathi bead work motifs portrayed divine and human figure combined with flowers, cradles, racing camels, other animals and birds. Colours used in early example were orange, yellow, green, purple and red (Gillow, Barnard, 2008).



Fig 14: Chakla with beads showing cattle, horse and peacock motifs, kathi land owning caste, Saurashtra

VI) Kashmir Embroidery-

The best known of Indian embroidery is the Kashida of Kashmir and its carpet industry of course world famous (Naik, 1996).

A large variety of flowers of tremendous colours, shapes, size like lili, lotus, tulip etc.; birds like kingfisher, parrot, wood pecker, magpie, canary all appear in Kashida. Animal and human figures are not found commonly. But few old pieces depicted hunting scene popularly known as 'shikargarh', available only in Museum of Srinagar. The borders of such motifs had

bands of marching soldiers and horse riders embroidered on separate panels.



Fig 15: Kashmiri embroidery depicting bird

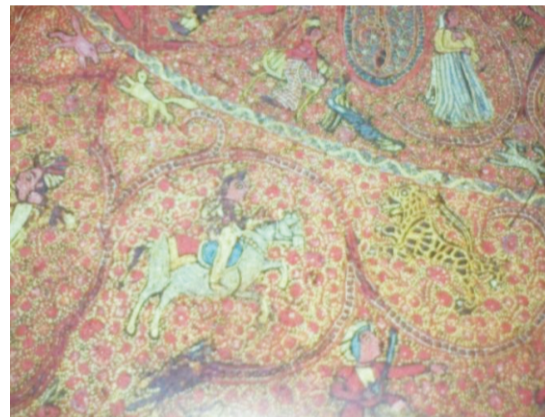


Fig 16: Embroidered Kashmiri shawl with princess on horseback and birds and animals of the chase

VII) Orissa-Appiqué work

The most popular art form of Oriya crafts is the colourful appliqué work of Pipli a village 40 kms from Puri (Bhasin, 2009). The craft in Orissa being connected with religious festivals and processions, geometric, actual life and stylized motifs from natural and astral field like creeper, tree, flower, birds and animals etc. as well as a few mythical figures. Of the more common of these motifs are the elephant, parrot, peacock, ducks, creepers, trees, flowers like lotus and jasmine, half moon, the Sun, and Rahu, animals at play and vignettes from every day life (Bhasin, 2009). Ganda Mayura/ Gands Bhairav is a mythological bird which has two mouths in which two elephants are held. It has two feet in which another two elephants are held. The bird can fly carrying four elephants symbolizing strength (Chawla, 1992)



Fig 17: Wall hanging depicting elephant motif



Fig 18: Part of canopy with parrot motifs

(VIII) Manipur Embroidery-

The textile motifs are serpent god, snake scales, serpent in coiled form, cock, butterfly. A rare design depicting is of animals and fishes (Bhandari, Dhingra, 1998).

'Sami lami phee', the wild animal warrior cloth is a black shawls with thick bold embroidered animal motifs, loosely called Angami naga shawls. It carries a whole array of wild animals against a black ground divided into horizontal panels by woven bands of colour. Embroidered on it are elephants, camels, sheep, cock, butterflies etc and conventional motifs in bright green, yellow, red and white. (Chattopadhyay, 1995).



Fig19: Shawl with cock motifs



Fig 20: shawl with animal motifs

IX) Embroideries of Bihar-

Embroidery of Bihar is made in different styles; of these appliqué art is very common. The motifs included are trees, flowers, foliage, birds and animals, depicting the traditional designs from Mughal Empire (Naik, 1996). The work when done on women's apparel was very delicate and used very stylized motifs and birds. It was done on cotton fabric with cotton thread (Dhamija, 2004).

The most commonly found motifs are a green parrot flying with its wings wide open, a tree full blossom exhibiting its wealth, fish swimming in a pond, a rider riding the elephant etc. Some motifs of mythology included Durgamata on her steed, tiger, Sathi goddess and so on.



Fig 21: God Indra and Goddess Indrani on an Elephant

CONCLUSION:

Decoration and ornamentation appear in all forms and on all media, throughout the history of visual art. Textiles, universally, have also provided a medium for expression, the essence of textiles coming through both as fabric and as an expressive medium of art. Thus, production over ages, comprising of all fiber groups, expressed in all forms- woven, embroidered, dyed or printed are virtually the treasure-troves of design forms. From the study it was seen that animals and birds are used in all the traditional embroideries of India. Man's efforts at designing, the use of symbols, motifs and patterns have all taken their inspiration from nature- understanding its elements and its cosmology and perceiving the beauty in these along with that of the birds and animal world.

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