

## Unit-3

### Traditional Hand Embroidery



Embroidery is an art of decorating cloth with needlework using different types of threads to create fascinating designs. Embroidery can also be defined as an art of using stitches as an adorning feature by embellishing fabric or other material with designs, stitches in strands of threads on yarn using a needle. Embroidery may also include other materials like pearls, beads, sequins, etc. Embroidery is a craft of enhancing fabric with motifs, abstract design, patterns. Embroidery varies according to its underlying foundation fabric and whether the design is stitched on the top or through the base fabric.

Indian embroidery includes a wide variety of regional embroidery styles varying by different regions and materials used. Embroidery is India's persistent eloquent tradition. Every state and region in India enjoys its own style. Needlework is not the only means of decorating the fabric but the fabrics are also embellished by stories of the community, with motifs emerging from natural surroundings, religious inscriptions, economic state, etc.

### **Hand Embroidery**

Handmade items are recaptured as new personification and the manifestation of luxury. Many ancient embroidery styles are being reclaimed and popularised. These embroidery styles are not only gaining its acceptance among the Indian designers but are also very popular with the International labels. Mumbai is a trade hub for many luxury brands chasing Indian



embroidery. A brand like Gucci, Valentino, Maison Margiela, Christian Dior have collaborated with Chanakya, a Mumbai-based embroidery firm. Brands like Roberto Cavalli, Salvatore Ferragamo, Versace, Michael Kors are in partnership with Aditya Designs, another Mumbai-based embroidery firm.

### **TYPES OF INDIAN EMBROIDERY**

Some acclaimed and renowned Indian embroideries



### **Kashida (Kashmir)**

Kashida is a popular Kashmiri embroidery encouraged by the beautiful surroundings of the valley. This type of embroidery style is practiced by men in the region. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Sultan- Zain-ul-Abidin

introduced the art of Kashidakari. Weavers were brought from Turkistan and Persia to introduce new styles of weaving techniques. This type of embroidery is very popular because of its color texture design and techniques. The motifs in Kashida are inspired by nature including both flora and fauna of Kashmir. The most common themes of Kashida embroidery



are birds like Kingfisher, butterflies; fruits and vegetables like mango, almonds, cherry, grapes; and flowers like lotus, blossoms, creepers, maple leaves. The best material for the embroidery is wool, Cotswold, or silk

wool and Cotton. Embroidery is often evident on shades of white and light shades and sometimes they are also on pastel colors but nowadays they are using a variety of colors like blue, yellow, purple, red, green, black. Kashida embroidery is particularly practiced by men and is a commercial craft revealed on shawls as well as in cottage industries of Srinagar. The stitches used in Kashida embroidery includes Satin Stitch, Chain Stitch, Stem Stitch, Talibar, Vatachik, Darning Stitch. Embroidery is performed using cotton, silk, wool, and artificial silk threads of white, green, yellow, purple, blue, black, crimson, and scarlet colors. The fascinating feature of the embroidery is that it is made of single thread offering a flat appearance to the design. This embroidery enhances the grace of Kashmiri shawl, saris, and other dress materials.



### **Chikankari (Uttar Pradesh)**

The word chikankari is coined from Persian word Chakeen that means elegant patterns on the fabric. This type of embroidery is famous in the state of Uttar Pradesh especially the city of Lucknow known as a hub of chikankari embroidery. Chikankari embroidery is also known as a Shadow Work by using herringbone stitch from the wrong side of the fabric to create



the shadow on the right side, imparting an outline for Motif. Chikankari embroidery is also popularized as White embroidery. Traditionally the chikankari embroidery was exclusively done on white muslin fabric using white thread. Nowadays it has been done on various types of fabrics like linen, nylon, georgette, cotton, chiffon, and also synthetic fabrics. This type of embroidery is also done on various household things like curtains, bedsheets, pillow covers, cushion covers, table cloths. Contradicting to ancient times chikankari embroidery is done on various pastel color fabrics but using white color thread. The motifs are stimulated from natural flora including jasmine, rose, peacock, parrot, and lace patterns.



The patterns of printed from the woodblocks in washable colors. The designs are stamped on the cloth and passed on to the embroiderers.

Chikankari uses stitches like Satin Stitch, Stem Stitch, Back-Stich, Herring Bone Stitch, Button-Hole Stitch.

The chikankari work is of two types- flat style and knotted embossed. Chikankari work is done on a sari, blouse, kurta, sari borders, and above-mentioned household linens.

### **Kantha (Bengal)**

Kantha in Sanskrit means rags. It is a traditional artist Bengal which means *Patched Cloth*.



There are several mythologies associated with the origin of this art form. It was said that in ancient times, the women used to pile up the layers of torn clothes and stitch them. Lord Buddha is also associated with the origin of this art because Lord Buddha and his disciples used thrown away rags to cover themselves.

Kantha is a Sanskrit word meaning throat and Lord Shiva has been named Nilakanth meaning blue throat and it is also known as *Throat Chakra*.

This type of embroidery is done on discarded comments like layers of dhoti, sari stitched together with simple running stitch in the white thread that provides protection from the cold. The Muslin sari of Grey, black or white colors are the elegant and beautiful illustration of Handloom Textiles are considered valuable by the women folk of Bengal.



There are two categories of Kantha embroidery – in the first type, cotton saris or dhotis are piled up on top of each other, quilted, and embroidered. The other type used discarded cotton bedspreads and pictorial embroidery was done with the Tussar Silk threads.

Motifs used for this embroidery include Lotus, Solar, Moon, Wheel, Swastik, Kalka, Tree Of Life. Kantha embroidery is done on the old fabrics and the threads used for embroidery are drawn from the colorful borders

of the discarded saris main the white, red, green, yellow, blue, and black in color. The stitches used in Kantha embroidery are satin, loop, running, and darning stitch.

### **Phulkari (Punjab)**

Phulkari embroidery started in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and continues till today.

Phulkari is a Punjabi rural tradition of handmade work derived from two Sanskrit word phul means flower and Kari mean work. Phulkari means the flower craft, floral



work in which the entire surface of the shawl is decorated with floral designs. Phulkari and Bagh were the traditional embroidery shawls from rural Punjab. The word Phulkari is common in East Punjab and Bagh is a popular word for shawls in west Punjab. Phulkari is a shawl that is designed as embroidery to cover women's heads to be displayed in a Gurdwara. Phulkari is an integral part of the life of Punjabi girl and is considered to be opportune, symbolizing happiness prosperity, and Suhaag of a married woman.

Originally Phulkari embroidery was done on back covers but nowadays it is also done on cushion covers, bolster covers and saris. The Phulkari embroidery is done on The Wrong side with the threads of floss silk called Pat. Pat is red, white, golden, green, blue, purple, and orange in color. Nowadays cotton blended threads and rayon floss are also used. The motifs are made of horizontal, vertical, and diagonal stitching producing geometrical patterns like square, rectangle, vertical, and horizontal lines.



### **Zari Work**

Zari is also known as Zardosi embroidery. This type of embroidery exists in India from the time of Rigveda. Zardozi is a combination of two Persian terms zari means gold and dozi means embroidery. Zari embroidery is done using gold and silver thread for embroidery work. Surat and Varanasi are the Paramount centers for making the metal thread known as Kalabathi. This



embroidery prosper during the Mughal period and was done on silk. It involves preparing complex designs using gold and silver threads and studded pearls and precious stones and magnificence to the work.

There are two main types of embroidery Zardosi is the heavy embroidery and Kamdani is the lighter one. Nowadays it is done on Satin with buckram lining. The stitches used in embroidery are satin, running, couching, and lain stem.



The Zari embroidery has 5 major designs with further variations. They are

- Jali which comprises of geometrical pattern
- Bharat designs are the filling work
- Floral designs with motifs of flowers and creepers.
- Birds with panchi motif
- Animal motifs

The popular styles practice all over India in Zari embroidery are

- Salma Sitara which uses small round pieces of gold and silver in between the Zari work
- Kamdani in which thousands of thoughts produce a glittering effect and the design is known as Hazari Butti
- Minakari using a gold coating
- Mokaish did with silver thread
- Gota in which the borders are made up of gold and silver threads.

### **Kasuti (Karnataka)**

Kasuti is a traditional folk embroidery of Karnataka state and is an art form of women. Kasuti embroidery symbolizes the traditions, customs, and profession of Karnataka people. The word Kasuti is derived from word Kai means hand and Suti means cotton thread. Thus Kasuti is the handwork of cotton thread. It was a custom in ancient times start the bride has to own a black silk saree called *Chandrakali Saree* with Kasuti work. Kasuti work is done on five garments- Kunchi (bonnet and cape combined), lehanga (skirt), seragu (pallav of a sari), kusuba (bodice), and kulai (bonnet).



The motifs used in kasuti embroidery varied between mycological and architectural to flora and fauna. The motifs used in kasuti are inspired from-

- Temple architecture: gopurams of South India, raths and palanquins
- Bird motifs like peacock, swan, squirrel, parrot,
- Animal motifs include sacred Bull Nandi, elephant, and deer.
- Kasuti embroidery inspired from articles of daily use like rudraksha, flower pot, anklets, bells, chess square, cradle.



The fabric used for kasuti embroidery is Khans (used as blouse pieces) and Ircal saris. Nowadays, Kasuti embroidery is done on any type of fabric. The kasuti embroidery is done by orange, green, purple, red colors and white is prominent on the black and dark background.

### **Chamba Rumal ( Himachal Pradesh)**

Chamba rumals are the exceptional and wonderful work of embroidery depicting a delicate fine and flawless work called needle miniatures of Himachal or Pahari Rumal. The primeval Chamba has undergone a progression with respect to motifs, stitches, workmanship, appearance, and colors. Colors employed in this type of embroidery are very vibrant bright and bold. The Chamba Rumal had unique importance as embroidery women are used for covering gifts, deities, household accessories such as caps, hand fans, pillow covers, wall hanging, ceiling covers, and blouse piece.



There are two different kinds of Chamba rumals one in the style of Pahari paintings and the other one is a folk style used by women to embroidery their choli and rumals using their own designs. The thread used for embroidery is a Silk thread that gives a unique effect against a dull cotton background. The Chamba Rumal is a combination of infinite vibrant and contrasting colors like red, yellow, green, blue, crimson, and purple. The folk style uses



bright colors including pink, lemon while the sophisticated color palette includes pale shades like dark green, blue, ochre.



Embroidery is done using a double Satin stitch called Dorukha. Stem stitch is used to draw the outlines and Gujjar women used darning, herringbone, and sometimes satin stitch. Chamba embroidery is inspired by immortal classics like Mahabharat, Ramayan, themes from Indian mythology, a game of chaupad, hunting and marriage scenes, and even the episodes from Raasleela of Radha and Krishna. Sometimes the embroidery also consists of

floral and geometrical designs and the border designs are generally floral.

The motive used are

- Animals like leaping tiger, prancing horses, running boars
- Birds like swans, ducks, peacocks
- Trees include willow tree, plantain tree, cypress tree
- Musical instruments like flute, veena, sitar
- Muslim Gujjar women use geometrical designs like triangles, diamond, hexagonal, and circle.



## 1. Chikan / Chikankari

- **Origin:** Rumored to having been introduced by Noor Jahan, wife of Jahangir, *Chikankari* originated from Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. It began with white embroidery on a white cloth, but today, it is available in all colours imaginable.
- **Creation:** Requiring patience and skill, this embroidery is done by stitching on patterns traced on a variety of cloth materials like muslin, silk, chiffon, net, cotton, etc. Initially, white thread was used to depict motifs of nature (flora and fauna), but now coloured threads are used as well.
- **Style:** From sarees to suits, lehengas to palazzos, chikan embroidery is chosen by women to showcase elegance which comes guaranteed with the intricacies of the stitches and patterns. Suitable for both daily wear and special occasions, you can make a distinguished style statement whenever you wear chikankari.



## • 2. Zari / Zardosi

- **Origin:** Introduced by the Mughals in the 16th century, Zari is the very form of opulence. The word Zardosi comes from Persian words for gold (zari) and embroidery (dosi).
- **Creation:** Metallic threads were used on silk and velvet. Originally, Zardosi embroidered clothes used gold or silver threads with precious stones and pearls making them luxury items, exclusively worn by the rich.
- **Style:** While previously this embroidery was a mark of the rich, nowadays gold-coloured plastic threads are used, making this form of art more affordable. Available on sarees, suits, blouses, and lehengas, Zardosi gives you the rich look which brings with it confidence and glamour.



### 3. Aari

- **Origin:** The name of this embroidery comes from the hooked, sharp needle, which is used for this technique. Aari owes its origin to the Mughals and is practised in Rajasthan, Lucknow, and Kashmir.
- **Creation:** The very image of finery, the Aari embroidery is created by using a hooked needle to make chain stitch loops, often using beads and sequins for embellishments.
- **Style:** With highly detailed designs inspired by nature, Aari stands apart in its richness. Oftentimes focussing on the body of the saree, the blouse is left plain, which adds to an unparalleled style statement. Easy to maintain and style, any material with Aari embroidery provides comfort with fashion.



### 4. Banjara

- **Origin:** The nomadic tribes of Banjara did not limit themselves to a single geographical location which allowed this style of embroidery to disperse across various regions, facilitating variations in the technique and designs.
- **Creation:** Using a brightly colored base cloth, motifs for this embroidery are highlighted by cross-stitch in geometric patterns. Chain stitch and overlaid quilting stitch is also used for unique designs, sometimes embellished with mirrors and beads.
- **Style:** With a combination of patchwork and Mirrorwork, the Banjara embroidery gives vibrance to the everyday ethnic look. It is included in both modern garments as



well as the traditional ones. You can find Banjara embroidery on dresses, suits, lehengas, blouses, and bags. For a casual and bright look, Banjara embroidered clothes or accessories are the best options. A fusion look can also be effortlessly created by mixing a Banjara embroidered bag with a western outfit along with the signature ethnic look with traditional accessories.

## 5. Gota

- **Origin:** Born in Rajasthan, this embroidery technique uses zari from Lucknow to trace elaborate patterns, creating different surface textures.
- **Creation:** Used with kinari work, Gota embroidery was originally done with gold and silver wires of varying lengths woven in a satin or twill weave. Fabrics such as georgette or bandhini are chiefly chosen upon which the Gota is appliquéd by hemming or backstitching.
- **Style:** With the motifs of nature, Gota embroidery gives a graceful and royal impression. Often chosen for auspicious occasions, clothes decorated with Gota are highly embroidered, looking heavy to carry, but surprisingly light. It is chosen by brides for its unique patterns and lightweight design, variety in colors, and choice of fabrics. Available in suits, dupattas, sarees, ghagras, and lehengas, for an ethnic look meant for celebration, Gota embroidered clothes are the way to go.



## 6. Kantha

- **Origin:** From East Indian states like West Bengal, Odisha and Tripura and Bangladesh, comes Kantha embroidery, chiefly practiced by rural women.
- **Creation:** With varying motifs of flowers, animals, celestial objects, and geometric patterns, Kantha embroidery is done by stitching on the cloth, which gives the cloth a wrinkled and wavy effect. Originally done to create cushions, blankets, sarees, and bedspreads, now Kantha is used in dupattas and shirts for both men and women.
- **Style:** With Kantha embroidery now available on kurtas and suits, fashion with comfort has reached new heights. Giving the appeal of leisure, Kantha embroidery can be chosen for its richness that completes any look on its own without much need for accessories. The fabric is easy to maintain and style, adaptable to numerous occasions, and effortlessly trendy.



## 7. Phulkari

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- **Origin:** Mentioned in the folklore of Heer Ranjha, Phulkari comes from a rural embroidery tradition in Punjab. Its present form can be traced back to Maharaja Ranjit Singh's reign in the 15th century.
- **Creation:** The base cloth is dull, often handspun khadi, which is then completely covered with bright coloured embroidered design leaving no gaps.



Each motif follows a geometric pattern with motifs of nature (chiefly flowers) using darn stitch for easy vertical, horizontal, and diagonal threadwork.

- **Style:** Previously chosen khaddar is being rapidly replaced by fabrics such as georgette, chiffon, and cotton and along with hand-embroidered clothes, machine-made clothes have made this style more accessible. With a phulkari suit, mixing and matching is a bet you can't lose. With oxidized silver jewelry, you can easily achieve the right ethnic look. Phulkari Kurtis can be paired with jeans for a contemporary look while lightly embroidered suits can be used for daily wear. Traditionally a bridal outfit, Phulkari can also be chosen for a cheerful festive look in a wide range of colours.

## 8. Shisha / Mirrorwork

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- **Origin:** Brought into India by Iranian travellers during the 17th century, Mirrorwork was originally done with Mica. Patronized by Rajasthan, Haryana, and Gujarat, Mirrorwork varies in use and style according to region and taste.
- **Creation:** Using a special cross stitch, mirrors (of various sizes and shapes) are affixed to apparel, and the fabric is then decorated with similar stitches to enrich the overall appeal of the cloth.



- **Style:** From apparel to accessories, mirrorwork is largely used and widely loved. With plenty of options available, clothes with Mirrorwork can be worn as daily wear or on special occasions. Despite the constantly changing fashion trends, Mirrorwork stays in vogue because of its incomparable approach to embroidery.

- 9. Toda

- **Origin:** Called ‘pohor’ (flower) in the Toda language, Toda embroidery comes from the Toda tribe which belongs to the Nilgiri Hills of Tamil Nadu. It is practiced exclusively by Toda women.



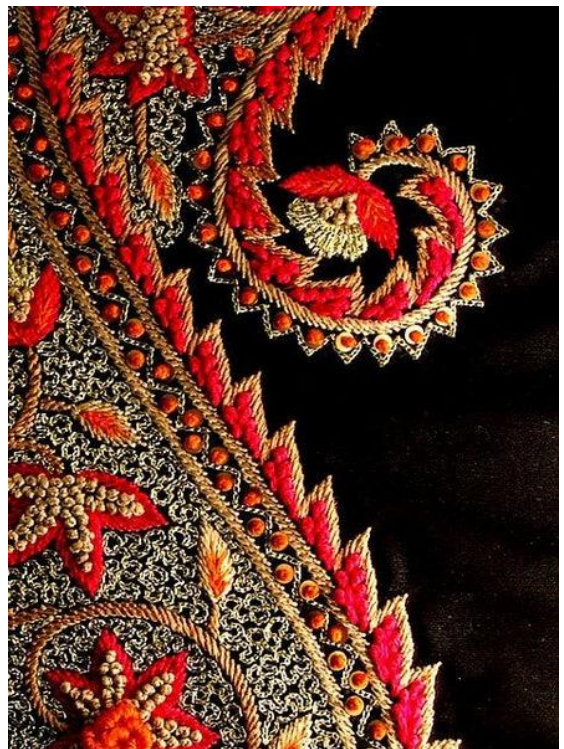
- **Creation:** Traditionally using black and red woolen threads on a coarse white cloth, Toda embroidery depicts motifs of nature and/or celestial bodies in a geometrical pattern.

A single stitch darning needle is used for a reverse stitch method which then makes a pattern that seems to come out of the cloth, giving the piece a rich look.

- **Style:** The Toda men and women wear cloaks and shawls of this embroidery on celebratory occasions or funerals. Today, this embroidery isn't restricted to bedsheets or cushion covers. Apart from cloaks and shawls, Toda embroidery has made its way to sarees that are perfect for an ethnic look with an edge that is unique to the Toda embroidered clothes.

- 10. Kashmiri

- **Origin:** This embroidery borrows its name from its place of birth, Kashmir. Also known as Kashida embroidery, the cloth for this embroidery was woven and embroidered by the members of the same, often extended, family.



- **Creation:** Dark-colored woollen clothes for winter, light (and bright) coloured cotton clothes for summer are chosen upon which base patterns are created. A single stitch is used for a single design and the entire pattern is completed in a few stitches. The often chosen motif is everything related to flora, from flowers to intertwining vines, from leaves on branches to blossoming flowers.

- **Style:** Kashmiri embroidery is a popular choice among women, especially in winter. No one needs any introduction to Pashmina shawls and the Kashmiri suits are widely picked for their vibrance and warmth, providing a distinctive look. Styled with likewise embroidered juttis and oxidized silver jewelry, you cannot go wrong with Kashmiri embroidery.

- As you probably know by now, Embroidery is *Art That You Can Wear*. You have numerous choices that come from the range of the fabric chosen, the kind of stitch made to that fabric, motifs used, and colors of threads used in those motifs. From the texture to the design, the color to the fabric, each element in every embroidery tells a story. Whether you choose Zardosi or Phulkari, Kashmiri, or Gota, Shisha, or Chikankari, you should know that when it comes to making a fashion statement, Embroidery never goes out of style.

## Embroidery of Manipur

This area has a unique type of embroidery that uses one stitch, in deference to the weavers in the area. This is done in dark matching shade with untwisted silk thread on the border of the phanek (a lungi or lower body wrap worn by women). Colours in dark red, plum or chocolate are usually used. The embroidery is so artistically done that it does not clash with the weave and is often mistaken for it.

Akoybi embroidery is done in an elegant snake-like pattern or design, derived from the legendary snake, pakhamba (killed by the husband of a goddess, who later tried to atone for this act by imitating the pattern). Akoybi means circular and the design involves one circle joining the other, each broken further with a significant motif in shades of shades of red along with black and white. Hijay is another pattern where black and white, along with shades of pink thread are used in a continuous pattern.

Angami Naga shawls have animal motifs in black. This was previously called sami lami phee (which means warrior cloth of wild animals) and was given to brave distinguished warriors by the royalty, in recognition of their prowess and ability. The colours are bright green, red, yellow, and white. Abhala or mirror-embroidery work is done only on ras dance costume.

The indigenous inhabitants of Manipur are the meithei community. Their designs, called tindogbi, are inspired from a silk caterpillar sitting on a castor leaf and eating it. Possession of Shamilami fabric, which is a combination of weaving and embroidery, is considered a status symbol. Maibung is a natural design inspired from the natural finish of the wood.

The people of Manipur are skilled in many arts, especially in dance, music and in creating beautiful things. They are people with a highly evolved way of life. The women shoulder the main burden of the society, look after the house, practice a craft and find a market for their goods.

The Meities, the indigenous inhabitants of Manipur, have traditional designs, several of whose origin is traced back to intriguing legends. The most common and perhaps the finest is the work done on the border of a *Phaneyk* – a lungi (sarong) worn by women.



The piece is woven either in a single dark shade or with stripes in three different colours on a light background. The border on the side is however left a plain black band, on which a pattern is first drawn, then worked with untwisted silken thread. It is in a dark but matching shade usually red, chocolate or plum. The stitching is so finely chiselled and even, that it seems part of the weave itself. In fact as this is the only ornamentation on the phaneyk, to a stranger unaware that it is a later addition, it would seem like a delicate woven decoration.



#### Manipuri Shawl with Loom Embroidery

A very simple pattern is *tindogbi* done in satin stitch. It is said to have been inspired by the sight of a caterpillar sitting on a castor leaf and eating it.





## MOTIFS:



An elaborate design called *Akoybi*, circular, as the overall pattern is circular, one circle joining the other, with each circle being further broken into patterns, each with a significant motif with a special name. There is a romantic tale tracing it back to the legendary snake Pakhamba, who was killed by the husband of the goddess and who later remorse tried to atone for it by copying its scaly patterns to perpetuate them in the form of a textile design.

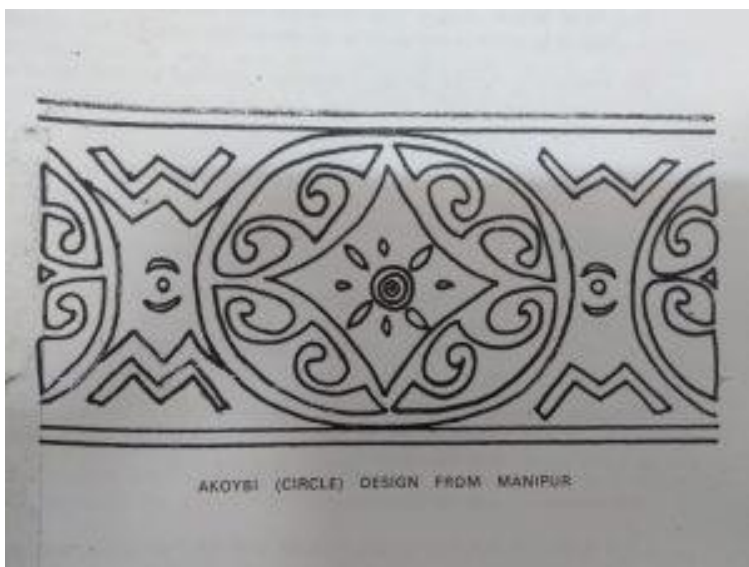
There is another interpretation, less romantic but more imaginative, to make it out as inspired

by the circular swirls of the water.

The central motif is a dot for a bee hovering over lotus buds. Four petals are seen on the side of the dot.

Some half open circular designs make a pattern indicating the fishing hook design.

This brief description however barely gives an idea of the real complexity of the *Akoybi*.



Another design is the boat design known as *Hijay Mayek*.

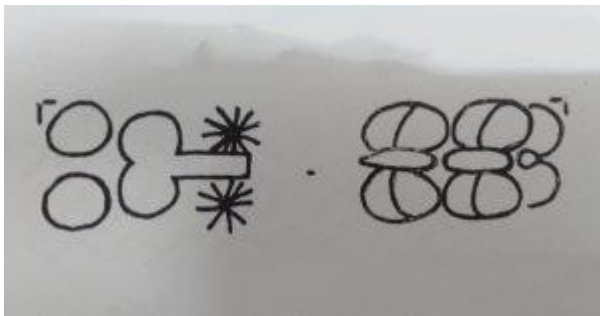
According to Jasleen Dhamija, about 950 A.D. a famous carpenter was craving a boat out of a single trunk of a tree. While chipping the wood, a long piece fell out and lay on the grass. The carpenter presented it to the king saying what a beautiful design nature has created. The king was impressed by the flowing lines on

the wood and asked the embroiderer to copy the flowing design into embroidery for the Phaneyk.

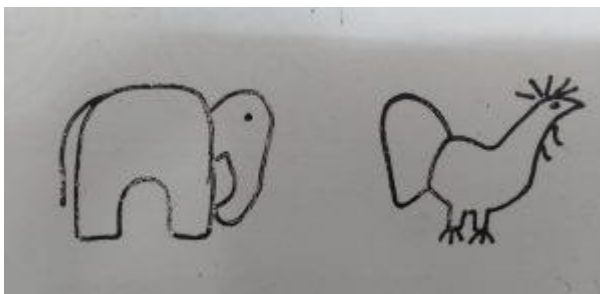
The Hijay Mayek design was associated with the older people and later with widows. Now it is mostly used by some elderly women only.



Other Motifs:



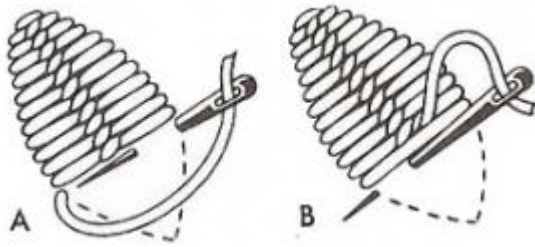
Butterfly Motifs



Elephant and Bird Motifs

### **STITCHES:**

Mostly Romanian Stitches are used along with couching stitches. Satin stitches are also used sometimes.



### **COLOURS:**

The colours mostly used in embroidery are white, black, red, green and yellow.

### **TYPES OF EMBROIDERY:**

1. ZAMPHIE – Known as war cloth worn as a special shawl by warriors at the time of war. This shawl could be worn only by a few people who have been honoured by the king.
2. NINGTHOUPEE – It was the king's cloth.
3. SAIJOMBA – It was a long cloth worn by only the trusted courtiers of the king, which had special embroidery.
4. PHIRANANBA – These are the small flags delicately embroidered and used by the warriors as plumes on their turbans, each designated the rank.

Applique work was also popular in Manipur. It was prepared of white on white. During the marriage the mother prepared special curtains for presentation to the daughter and they were prepared in applique work.

Since Manipur is famous for dances, the Ras costume worn for the dance is of importance. The Ras skirt known as Kumil (ghagra) is embroidered with abhala or mirror work. In Manipur, Abhla work is done only on the Ras costume worn by Radha and Gopis. This embroidery is not found on any other costume except the Ras dress.

The Kumil or the Ras skirt has a border with *Akoybi* design appliqued with red material on a yellow background. The mirror work and sequins are worked out into a pattern above the *Akoybi* design.



## Ras Skirt

The well-known gorgeous black shawl, popularly called the *Angami Naga shawl* but whose real name is *sami lami phee*, the literal meaning being the wild animals warrior cloth depicts mainly animals. One time it used to be bestowed on distinguished warriors by the rulers for their success in hunt and warfare and was therefore highly coveted. The background is always black, divided into horizontal panels by woven bands of colours. Embroidered within these panels are a whole array of animals like elephants, butterflies, sheep, etc.

