

Contemporary apparel designing with traditional craft

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ABSTRACT

Madhubani Painting is an age old art of fabric painting in India. Traditionally, done on freshly mud plastered walls and floors of huts, these paintings over the time graduated to paper, cloth and many other substrates. However, embellishing new addition of a young girls' wardrobe with Madhubani Painting is attempted in this study, while retaining its central theme of Hindu God and Goddess, supported by traditional geometric pattern. The study initiated with collection of motifs from various sources and proceeded with designing of jackets, adaptation of Madhubani motifs into suitable designs for jackets, selection of fabrics for the jackets and lastly, painting of Madhubani designs on jackets. Final shape was given to jackets by the expert. Evaluation of Jackets was done by fifty respondents chosen randomly on the basis of various criteria like, fabric colour, Jacket design, Madhubani motifs, colour combination and placement of motifs. All the jackets were much appreciated by the respondents.

Key Words : Madhubani, Painting, Jackets, Contemporary, Apparel, Designing

INTRODUCTION

'Mithila Painting' popularly known as Madhubani Painting is one of the many traditional art forms of fabric paintings, known in India. It originated in the present day town of Madhubani, the literal meaning of which is "forest of honey".

The art was originally practiced by women only, serving as a creative tool for expressing everyday lives and happiness. Following the belief that God visits each home in morning, the art primarily adorned the walls and floors, intending to please the God.

Traditionally done on freshly plastered mud walls of huts, these paintings over the time, graduated to cloth, handmade paper and canvas and many more substrate.

In order to give a new impetus to the fading traditional craft, the craftsmen have brought it up in everyday utility articles (like cushion, curtains and wall painting), as also on a variety of apparel (like dupattas, sarees, kurtas). Jackets, in a variety of shapes and sizes, are now a popular wear among the adolescent and young urban girls.

Thorough search revealed that Madhubani Painting had not yet been adapted to embellish the relatively this new addition to the wardrobe of young urban girls i.e. the jackets. Researcher thought of mixing tradition with contemporary.

Hence, the present study was conceived with the objective to design jackets, embellished with

Madhubani painting, for young urban girls.

However, time and financial constraints put following limitations on the study:

- Jackets were designed for young urban girls of 18-25 years only.
- Only 15 jackets were designed for this age group, of which only five jackets were made with Madhubani designs, using fabric colours.

Review of literature :

The art of painting started with human beings painting their bodies, the technique they later applied to fabrics which dates back to around 3000 B.C. in Asia. Some of the popular forms of fabric painting that have existed in India are: Kalamkari, Patachitra, Phad painting, Pichhwais and Rajasthan painting.

History of madhubani painting :

Madhubani Paintings are also popular as Maithili, Chitra and Godhna figure painting. It is known to have originated during the Ramayana age when King Janak, ruler of Mithila made people paint the floors and walls of their houses on the occasion of his daughter Sita's wedding to Lord Ram. From Mithila (Madhubani) district of Bihar, the original home of Madhubani painting, this art form spread to all the adjacent districts of Madhubani like Rasidpur, Bacchi, Jehvarpur, Ranti, Rajang as well.

Forms of madhubani painting :

I. According to style of painting, Madhubani has four forms: Kachni style, Bharni style, Godhana Style and Gobhar style.

II. Madhubani painting varies according to caste too:

- 1) The Brahmins used vibrant colours to depict sacred text with stories of various God.
- 2) The Kayastha were allowed to use only black and red colours to depict the themes similar to those done by Brahmins.
- 3) The Dusadhs being low caste groups were not allowed to represent divinities. Their painting themes included the flora and fauna, and of Lord Sulhesh-A Dusadh Cultural hero.

Material used :

Tools:

Originally painting was done with fingers, twigs, brushes, nib pen, and matchstick. The painter now uses hand-made brushes - bamboo twigs with slightly frayed end for small details and small piece of cloth attached to a twig for filling- in spaces.

Colours:

Original Madhubani painting when executed on floors or walls require cow dung and mud applied to the walls and the floors to give a perfect black background on which pictures are drawn with rice paste and vegetable colours.

These natural colours were obtained from various plant sources: Black by blending soot or cow dung and burnt jowar; Yellow from Turmeric, pollen, lime, milk of banyan tree; Blue from Indigo; Red from Kusuma flower juice or red sandal wood; Green from Wood of apple tree or leaves of bel trees; Orange from Plash flower and White from Rice powder. The vibrant colours created with natural dyes emanate positive energy and give warmth.

Synthetic colours :

Alternative to natural dyes, synthetic colours in powder or semi liquid form, are easily available in the market in recent times.

Base used:

Traditionally, cow dung paste and mud was used on floor and walls as base for Madhubani painting. Today, paper, canvas and cloth and a variety of other materials are also used.

Motifs and their symbolism:

The central theme of the Madhubani Painting remained the Hindu God and Goddess, supported by traditional geometric pattern. Double line border, ornate, floral pattern, abstract line figures of deities, bold use of colours and bulging eyes and a jolting nose of the faces of the figures are particular feature of Madhubani paintings. The composition was set in natural setting, scenes of village, everyday life, flora and fauna, forest animal and birds were well integrated into the painting.

Most of the figures depicted in Madhubani paintings, carry a symbolic meaning which makes these painting all the more interesting. In Madhubani paintings, Fishes depict good luck, fertility and procreation; peacocks symbolize romantic love while serpents are identified as divine protectors; Hindu gods, deities like Lord Krishna, Lord Rama, Shiva, Goddess Durga, Goddess Laxmi and the Goddess of Knowledge, Sarasvati. The symbol of fertility and prosperity include sun, moon, parrot, elephant, fish, Turtle, bamboo tree, lotus etc. Floral patterns are used as fillers and creepers as borders.

METHODOLOGY

In the attempt to extend the scope of Madhubani paintings further, to contemporary styles in fashion, the following procedure was adopted:

Step 1 : Collection of motifs: A large variety of sources of Madhubani designs were explored and more than 20 motifs were collected and categorized into:

- Motifs of God and Human figures.
- Birds and Animals Motifs.
- Floral Motifs and others.

Step 2 : Designing of jackets: Fifteen jackets were designed in variety of styles. The designs were displayed before a sample of 50 girls, selected randomly from different colleges of Agra urban. On the basis of the ranks given to each design by the sample, 5 most liked designs were selected.

Step 3 : Adaptation of Madhubani motifs for jackets: From the 20 collected motifs, ten were carefully selected, from all categories. These were then aesthetically placed on different jackets as per the suitability to jacket style.

Step 4 : Selection of fabric for the jackets: Cotton being a natural and eco-friendly fabric, suitable for all seasons, it was purposively selected for making jackets. Various criteria like fabric thickness, colour and age of wearer etc. were kept in mind during selection of fabric.

Step 5 : Painting of Madhubani designs on jackets: Selected Jacket designs were drafted on standard measurements for the target age group and traced on the selected fabric. The Madhubani designs created were then transferred on the respective fabrics and worked intricately using fabric colours. Each was then painted skillfully with fine skill and patience.

Step 6: Cutting and finishing: After the painting was completed, jackets were cut and stitching of jackets was done by the expert.

Step 7: Evaluation of Jackets: A self - framed Performa was used to find the most preferred design. 50 respondents were asked to give scores from 1 to 5, on each of different criteria for all jackets. Criteria for evaluation of jackets were: Fabric colour, Jacket design, Madhuabni motifs, Colour combination and Placement of motifs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ten motifs were selected including all categories:

God and Human Motifs :



Fishes

Birds and Animals Motifs :

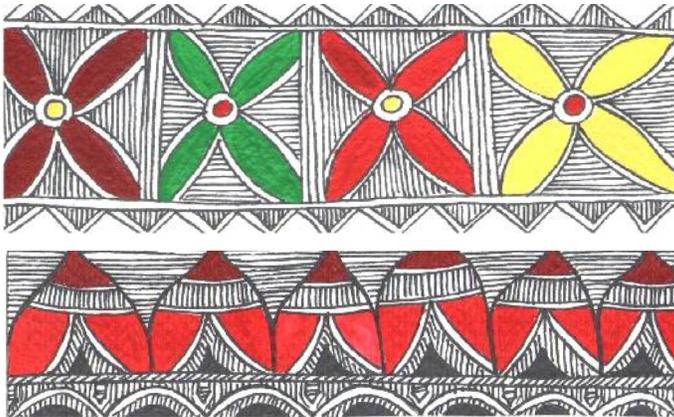


Parrot



Elephant

Floral Motifs and others :

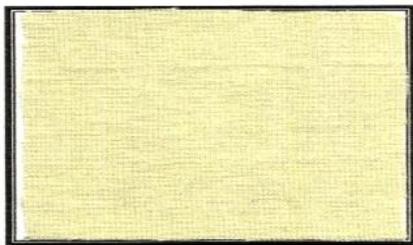


Borders

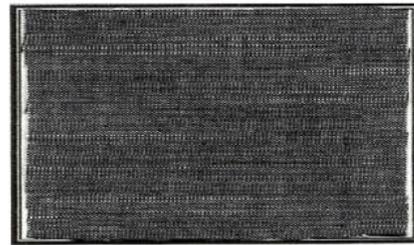


Sun

Five cotton materials suitable for jackets were selected and purchased :



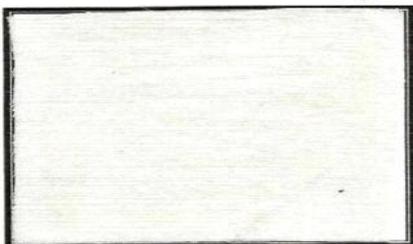
Jacket-1 : Khaddar Casement



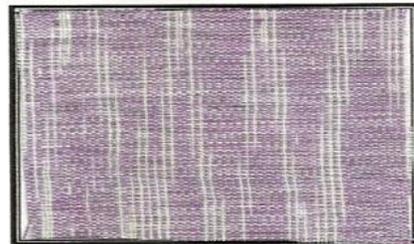
Jacket-4 : Mix Cotton



Jacket-6 : Denim



Jacket-8 : Poplin



Jacket-12 : Khadi

Selected motifs were aesthetically arranged to suit the jacket designs.

Five selected jacket designs were embellished with Madhubani painting :



Jacket Design No. 1 with Radha Krishna Motif



Jacket Design No. 6 with Elephant Motif



Jacket Design No. 4 with Fish Motif



Jacket Design No. 12 with Sun Motif



Jacket Design No. 8 with Peacock Motif

These five jackets were displayed in front of 50 girls to judge the most preferred design. A self- framed Performa was used for the purpose. The following result were arrived at:

Sr. No.	Design No.	Total marks scored	Maximum mark	Ranks
1.	1	642	1500	V
2.	4	925	1500	III
3.	6	1275	1500	I
4.	8	1087	1500	II
5.	12	777	1500	IV

Design no. 6 scored the highest rank and it was the most liked jacket by the respondents.

Conclusion :

Originated as a folk art, Madhubani paintings, today, not only add to the family income of the artist, but also contribute toward empowering the women folk pursuing this craft. In addition, they bring name of their area on the world map by taking this art to various countries and earning foreign

exchange for our country.

Its production and marketing is regulated by Regional Craft Guides run by the state Government of Bihar and the Government of India. Continuing market demand of articles adorned with this art, throughout the world is a tribute to the resourcefulness of the women of Mithila, who have successfully transferred their technique of 'Bitti Chitra or 'wall paintings' to the medium of paper and fabric.

Continuously adapting this traditional craft to contemporary styles will give this art greater heights in the modern world.

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