

Lappa Work of Rajasthan

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Abstract:

Lappa work (often referred to as Lappe ka Kaam or categorized under Gota Patti work) is a traditional metal embroidery technique native to Rajasthan, India. It involves weaving and stitching metallic ribbons onto fabrics to create glittering, opulent designs. [1, 2]

The Core Difference: Lappa vs. Lappi

The craft utilizes metallic ribbons (called Gota) that are traditionally woven with a warp of flattened gold or silver wire and a weft of silk or cotton thread. These ribbons are classified by their width: [1, 2]

□ Lappa: Refers specifically to the broad, wide metallic ribbons used for heavy borders and striking visual panels. [1, 2]

□ Lappi: Refers to the thin, narrow metallic ribbons used for subtle outlines and intricate detailing.

Keywords: Lappa, Rajasthan, Gota patti, metallic ribbons, designs

Introduction

Key Features of Lappa Work

- **Applique Technique:** The broad lappa ribbon is cut, folded, and stitched onto the base fabric using the applique method. The borders are often finished with fine zari (metallic thread) or kinari (edging) to secure it beautifully. [1, 2, 3, 4]
- **Evolution of Materials:** Historically, this craft was reserved for the royalty and temple idols, using pure gold and silver wires. Today, to make it affordable and lightweight, pure metals are largely replaced by electroplated copper, lurex, or metallic polyester films. [1, 2, 3]
- **Common Base Fabrics:** Because the metal ribbons add structural weight, it is traditionally done on rich Indian fabrics like georgette, chiffon, silk, crepe, and Bandhani (tie-dye). [1, 2]

Cultural Significance & Usage

Lappa work is highly prestigious and central to festive Rajasthani attire. You will most notably see it heavily featured on: [1]

- **Rajputi Poshaks:** The traditional, regal four-piece attire worn by Rajasthani women. [1, 2]
- **Bridal Wear:** Heavy festival lehengas, sarees, and dupattas (scarves). [1, 2]
- **Epicenters of Production:** The main hubs for authentic Lappa and Gota craft are Jaipur (especially Nayla village), Khandela, Ajmer, and Bikaner.

The metal embroidery of Rajasthan is known as Gota work. The embroiderers of Jaipur, Bikaner, Ajmer, Udaipur and Kota are world famous for their uniquely styled Gota work. Gota is a band of gold or silver ribbon of that varies with width, woven in a satin weave. The gold embroidery of Jaipur, known as gota-work, is intricate. In Real Gota, Silver & Gold metals are used. But in routine, the base metal is copper, coated by Silver etc. Now the copper has been replaced by Polyester film which is metalized & coated as

per requirements. This has resulted in better quality at lower cost. This Plastic Gota (as it is popularly known) has good resistance to moisture & does not tarnish as compared to metal-based Gota.[3,4,5]

The raw material comprised of a yarn of silver polished with gold and passed under 10 Calendars to make into fine strand called "Kasab" and further drawn under a calendar to give it a flattened effect known as "Badla". In recent years pure yarns are replaced by synthetic yarns. Various types of gotta are Sikhiya gotta, Chaumasa, Panchmasa, Athmasa, Lappa, Thappa, Gokhru, Leheru Gotta, Nakshi, Bijbel, Bijiya, Chiru, Kiran, Chatai and Chip gotta.

The work was previously done on pure Georgette, Chiffon, Velvet & Silk whereas as in recent years synthetic fabrics are used for the production. The colors commonly used were Red, Orange, Pink, magenta, Maroon & Yellow which are nowadays available in all possible shades as per the customer demand.

Production Process

The Base fabric is tied on four sides with thick cords and is attached to a wooden frame known as Khaat. For tracing design the tracing paper is placed on the Fabric. White paste made of safeda or chalk powder is spread over it. The Design will appear on the fabric. According to the outlines of the design Gotta is cut and folded into different shapes or it may be stitched in a simple line. To create different designs Gotta is cut and folded and is attached in various geometrical or in figured form with Hemming and Back stitch on the fabric.

Gota is woven on looms. It consists of cotton in warp and a metal in weft. Attractive designs consisting of flowers, leaves and decorative motifs could also be made on gota by pressing it under blocks. Each pattern and motif had its own distinguishing name. Small pieces of gota were cut and patched over the textile with the help of thread and needle to create designs in applique. In Jaipuri dialect, this is known as chatapati work. Gota has maintained its popularity even today among the women, the only difference being that the hand-operated loom on which it was formerly made is now power-driven.

Gota is available in different width. With it different types of items are made like Champa, Beejia, Phool, Patti, Gohkroo etc. (Defined in Glossary). Now- a-days different shapes in different sizes are cut out of the Gota-Strip, manually or by dies. And using these and other materials like Dori, Sitara, Kundan etc., artistic works are created by Rajasthani artisans. There is no better choice than 'Gota Work' when rich & heavy look is desired in light weight. It is also low cost & durable. Small pieces of zari ribbon are applied onto the fabric with the edges sewn down to create elaborate patterns. Lengths of wide, golden ribbons are similarly stitched on the edges of the fabric to create an effect of gold zari work.[6,7,8]

The Gota method is commonly used for women's formal costumes. Khandela in Shekhawati is best known for its manufacture. Kinari or edging refers to the art of fringed border decoration. It is usually practised by the Muslim craftsman, Gota work is a form of fabric ornamentation that was probably originated in Rajasthan. It is also known as gota-kinari work and lappe-ka-kaam. These 'Gota' and 'Kinari' are golden and silver coloured pieces and laces those are sewn on the cloth. The Muslim craftsman generally prepares these.

On the bases on its width, Gota work or Lappe ka kaam can be found under different names like chaumasiya and athmasiya. The work is done on the fabric with the appliqué technique. With hemming or simple running stitch the Gotta is attached in stylish design flow from the artisan's fingers on to the garment. The popular design elements like flowers, leaves, stylized mango motifs and heart shapes are usually worked on various kinds of odhna and ghaghra. Checkerboard patterns are also quite a favorite. Animal figures, like

the parrot, peacock and elephant are some of the folk motifs. To get a variation, floral designs are cut from Gota is embroidered on to the cloth with the help of a string.

Gota can be cut into small pieces and folded in the shape of leaves. They are also twisted and stitched on the cloth in the form of continuous triangles on the border. This work is mostly done in Jaipur in remote villages by local people called khandani karigars as inherited art.

In Gota work however contrasting colors like pink and green or pink and red are mostly in the background with patch work to highlight the work.[9,10,11]

Some sections of the pattern are filled with colored satin, thus resulting in a rich design that resembles the enameled jewellery of the region. Men and women of all communities wear garments of Gota work or Lappe ka kaam, as it is auspicious and indispensable during ceremonial occasions. The work is mainly done on the costumes for women. Khandela in Shekhawati mainly prepares these items.

Married women wear the Gota ornamented attire in religious, social and festive occasions. Men, and children also dress sometimes in their finest clothes that are often ornamented with Gota work. Gota lacing is generally done on odhni and turban edges. Printed or embroidered ghaghras are also trimmed with gota. Traditional articles like Kurti, kaanchli, Sari, Lehanga, Poshak, Dress for idols are adorned with Gota work. Contemporary articles included Kurtis, Salwar suits and saris, decorative panels and cushion covers are also in fashion.

Discussion

This past year allowed us to work with many embroidery techniques from India, which are traditionally practised as embroideries of gold. A few days ago, when we wrote about one such Embroidery of Gold-Zardozi Embroidery, we received a great response. Therefore we feel encouraged to share more on Indian embroidery techniques from the genre of 'gold.' One such technique is Gota Work or Lappe Ka Kaam.

It is fascinating to see that humankind has used rare metals like gold and silver to adorn their textiles for centuries. And it is not just for the shine, glitter, and beauty that these metals offer but also for the wealth and stature of the individual they communicate.



Gota Work or Lappe Ka Kaam is unique because its raw material is made and used uniquely. The state of Rajasthan in India is famed for keeping this craft in practice. “On religious and social occasions and festivals, it is de rigueur for the people in the state to dress in their finest clothes, ornamented with gota work,” says Vandana Bhandari, the writer of the book, ‘The Textile of Rajasthan at the Jaipur Court.’[12,13,14]

Results

The Making Of the Gota or Lappi or Lappa for Gota Work or Lappe ka Kaam

Traditionally Gota is handwoven as strips of gold or silver ribbon with pure gold or silver wires on the warp and cotton or silk on the weft. Nowadays, pure gold or silver wires are replaced by electroplated copper yarns or, for that matter, by synthetic yarns. However, some connoisseurs of the craft still use authentic raw materials as we at Marasim tried to do with our recent gota work developments in Rajasthan. The beauty of gota work lies in how creatively this raw material can be made. It can be woven in a variety of widths. While thin ribbons are called lappi, broad ribbons are known as lappa. It can be woven in a variety of weaves like plain, twill, or satin weave. Some great weavers can introduce shapes and designs like chevron, zig zag, diamonds, etc., while weaving the ribbon. [15,16,17]

Embossing is another gorgeous technique used to add stylistic motifs on the surface of the gold or silver ribbon. A plain woven ribbon (gota) is taken, and the designs are imprinted on it when the tape is passed between two metallic rollers, a plain and embossed one, and the pressure indents the design on the gota surface.

TYPES OF GOTA USED



Use of Gota as Embroidery for Gota Work or Lappe Ka Kaam

The beautiful Gota can be stitched to the edges of the fabric as a beautiful gold lace. Or thin gota could be twisted, spiraled, and crimped to make beautiful motifs like florals, or it is most uniquely used for Gota Patti embroidery.[17,18,19]

Gota Patti Embroidery

Gota and Patti are Hindi for Gold or Silver ribbons and leaves. Therefore, Gota Patti essentially means Gold Ribbon leaves. In Gota Patti embroidery, the gota is cut, and the edges of the gota are folded in the shape of

diamond-shaped leaves, which are then pressed using the rolling pin. These leaves are then arranged and applied on the surface of the fabric using various stitches to form the flowers, birds, animals, etc.

The cutting of the leaves for applique is done in various shapes like big or small circles or leaves or diamonds. The cutting is done either by hand or by machines.

The applique work is done using the couching technique, meaning the pressed leaves are laid in a pattern across the surface of the ground fabric and fastened in place with tiny stitches of the same color yarn. The edge finishing can be done in many creative ways, such as a chain stitch using the aari needle or raw materials used for zardozi embroideries like spirals or coils.

The most beautiful part of the gota technique is that the raw material and the designs can be removed from the surface of old textiles to be upcycled or recycled and reused.

With machine-made synthetic or rather plastic ribbons readily available, it is now undoubtedly less expensive to use this technique nowadays. However, the beauty of gota work lies in the authentic lappa or Lappi woven tastefully by hand using pure materials. The sky is the limit for innovative ideas in design.

Conclusion

Gota Patti work, also known as 'Aari tari' or 'zardozi' or 'Lappe ka Kaam' has traditionally been used for a variety of garments and textiles used by the royalty, members of the court, temple idols and priests, as well as for altar cloths at shrines and prayer offerings. These Gota ribbons were woven with a wrap of flattened gold and silver wire and a weft of silk/cotton thread and used as functional and decorative trims. With the subsequent substitution of pure gold and silver with gilt or lurex and the mass production of gota on power looms at Surat and Ajmer, gota came to be used by all communities and castes of Rajasthan.

These motifs are structured into buta, butties and cut into various shapes like flower pot (Gamla), Keri (Mango) and champak flower and stitched with the base fabric by chain stitch or by hemming. A very unique part of the history of this craft is the use of blue-green metallic coloured shells of a particular variety of beetle for the ornamentation, amongst the gold and silver of the embroidery. This was exclusively done for the royalty.[20]

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