

Pattu: Decorative Textile of Western Rajasthan

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Introduction

Pattus have been an important part of the traditional dressing of the people in Thar Desert that lies in western part of Rajasthan. *Pattus* are woollen blankets woven by Meghwal community of weavers in Barmer, Jaisalmer, Jodhpur and Bikaner districts of Rajasthan. The craft came to be known as *Pattu* weaving because the fabrics woven were narrow in width and usually called '*patti*' (band) in local language. Once off loom, these fabric strips were placed side by side and stitched to make it into bigger width (Bhandari, 2004). These were woven in narrow width usually two feet, and then two panels of nine feet each were joined together length-wise using interlocking stitch called '*Khilan*'. These were made long so that they may be wrapped around the body easily (Bhandari, 2004). These shawls found utility in day-to-day activities of the people who mainly belonged to the lower caste and lacked basic amenities. *Pattu*, being thick and sturdy cloth helped peasant and tribal communities to withstand dust and harsh mode of existence in the desert, and at the same time symbolized their colourful clothing traditions.

Types of Pattu from the western Rajasthan region

There are a variety of *pattus* such as *hiravali*, *kashida*, *bhojsari*, *malani pattu*, plain *pattu*, *do-paat pattu*, *lunkar*, *bardi*, *khes*, *chatri-kangsia pattu*. Some blankets are plain with coloured borders; some have motifs and weft rib patterns woven either on width-wise borders or over the entire field of black and white.' (Nath & Wacziarg, 1987). The motifs have a combination of triangles, diamonds, rectangles and other geometric forms in striking colours that create contrast on a plain background. The base cloth of *pattu* is either plain or twill woven, and motifs are made by inserting extra weft yarn of contrasting colour with the help of small sticks after every two ground picks whereas bands of pure contrasting colours are woven using interlocking technique (Ranjan et al. 2007). These motifs seem to be inspired from things in vicinity, such as household articles, birds, animals; these also have strong resemblance to motifs in *soof* embroidery and *mandana* wall art done in this region. Sometimes plain *pattus* are embroidered to make them ornamental.

- **Simple Pattu:** *Pattus* are usually plain with coloured borders that run along the length to meet wider ones at both ends; there is no motif ornamentation in the body. It is one of the earliest *pattu* designs prevalent in western Rajasthan. These are usually adorning the older men. (Figure 1)

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- **Hiravali pattu:** *Hiravali pattu* has characteristic sets of triple lines running warp-wise. It has its design evolved from plain *pattu*; it has borders similar to that of the plain *pattu* and does not have any motifs woven in its body. (Figure 2)



Figure 1. Simple *Pattu* (Photo credit: Author)



Figure 2: *Hiravali Pattu* (Photo credit: Author)

- **Chatri-Kangsia pattus:** *Chatri-Kangsia pattus* are ornamental *pattus* with motifs in its body. These are also known as *kashida pattu* for the motifs are like embroidery in weaving. *Chatri* refers to motif with two pillars with a dome, representative of a temple, and *kangsia* refers to *damru* (pellet-drum). (Figure 3)
- **Malani Pattu:** *Malani pattu* has total surface ornamentation -the *pallus* include fish motif and the *pallu* is followed by strips incorporated with motifs, which form the body of the *pattu*. These are from Barmer region, formerly called 'malani'. It predominantly has *chattri-kangsia* motifs. (Figure 4)



Figure 3: *Chatri-Kangsia pattus*, Photo Courtesy: Author



Figure 4: *Malani Pattu*, Photo Courtesy: Author

Bhojsari Pattu: the body has formation of motifs in triangle form and its borders has weft patterning bars running horizontally. These are popularly made in Jaisalmer region. (Figure 5)



Figure 5: *Bhojsari Pattu* (photo source: Handmade in India), Photo Courtesy: Author

- **Lunkar Pattu:** Lunkar is a red-coloured (locally called *raata colour*) *pattu*. It is used by women and is smaller in size compared to other traditional *pattus*. It has traditional weft patterning bars in its borders. (Figure 6)
- **Bardi Pattu:** Bardi has chequered pattern. Traditionally it was in black and white; these days it is available in different colour combinations. It's warp-wise borders are plain whereas weft-wise borders are decorated with rib stripes in bright colours. (Figure 7)



Figure 6: Lunkar Pattu , Photo Courtesy: Author



Figure 7: Bardi Pattu, Photo Courtesy : Author

Usage of Pattu

Pattu were traditionally used by Meghwals and the other pastoral communities who would barter wool and other agricultural and dairy products with the former for *pattu*; for these served well in cold weathers as well as in cold nights and were used as woollen wraps, shawls, head cloths and blankets (Jaitly, 1990, p. 57). Apart from having the functional value, these have been an important part of their traditional rituals and ceremonies. *Pattus* form an essential part of gifts given to the groom and close relatives during a marriage ceremony. There was no caste-wise differentiation in making of *pattus* by the Meghwals, however the economic well being of the buyer had a bearing on the design, and this indirectly connected to the social ranking of that caste. The Jats and Bishnois used fine and ornamental *pattus* and quality became coarser and less ornamental with communities of lower ranking. These still are used as token of gifts that symbolize respect and bonding in relationships with quality and intricacy of work being symbolic of the importance given to the relationship and the person. The act of gifting *pattu* is commonly called as 'udhawani' wherein it is spread over the shoulders of the guest.

Concluding remarks

Like all other traditional crafts and costumes, there has been major transformation in design, material, product and end-market owing to changing lifestyle and market dynamics; local wool has been replaced by cotton or processed wool, natural dyes with synthetic, local market by global market. The younger generation of weavers are linking up with NGO's and business organizations in their quest to find newer markets. They are working with much finer yarn counts and are making saris, stoles, dress materials in colours and designs as per the requirement of the buyer. In spite of all the changes, *pattu* still holds a very important position in the lives of people residing in western Rajasthan.

References:

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