

National Crafts Museum and Hastkala Academy: An Inspiration for Textile Lovers

Rakhi Gupta

Abstract

Museum textile collection is the vision to procure Heritage textile art and culture for future of incredible India. Inspired with handicraft and textile museum's huge Heritage collection displayed with brief history and knowledge on each one of them. The article is carried to define the approach, to each and every fashion wardrobe with Heritage touch of Swadeshi textiles. The national handicraft and textile museum give us an opportunity to contribute and preserve our heritage art of weaving handloom textile culture into our hearts. A memorable courage to gel with sustainable textile culture into our present fashion wardrobes, leaving behind the toxic chemical treated textiles by making our weavers *atamnirbharas* well as our society to preserve the diminishing memories of textile art and knowledgeable techniques of Heritage textiles. It took years and years to conserve, with time to time care of Heritage textiles such as sarees, embroideries, royal costumes, *angarkha*, prints, weaves, headgears and jackets from centuries. Highlighting to give us a clear view of Heritage handloom textile art and culture.

The 'National Crafts Museum and Hastkala Academy' of New Delhi, a prime institute dedicated to India's rich handicraft and handloom stands opposite to 'PuranaQila' and at the corner of PragatiMaidan. (near to gate no-1) This museum was earlier known as 'Handicraft and Handloom Museum', which comes under the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India. Beautifully designed by the renowned Indian architect Charles Mark Correa (1930-2015) this is one of the largest crafts museums in India spread over 5 acres of land for outdoor area, indoor galleries and exhibiting areas. Away from the city crowd, it holds unique space for the craftsmen to demonstrate their skills. It's a resource for researchers, scholars and students for study and take inspiration from the rich, diverse collection of the museum. The museum is more popular among the foreign and domestic handloom and handicraft lovers. Recent initiatives taken by the authorities had made it a more happening place to visit.

Arts and crafts galleries of the museum are broadly divided in three areas handicraft, pottery and textiles. There are wooden Bhuta Sculptures from Karnataka, metal ware objects of Folk and Tribal Craft, objects of different mediums are displayed in Cultic craft, and Court craft galleries¹, besides the Textiles galleries. All these objects of vivid art represent the vast tradition of handcraft made in wood, metal, silver, potter, painting, textile etc across the country. The museum also opens up the door to understand the importance of sustainable eco-friendly textiles. Using such textiles and keeping away harmful toxic chemical treated fast fashion textiles is the need of an hour. And equally important is to preserve the Heritage textile crafts through this museum for the future generation. Museum also provides the documentation facilities, host's artisans from across the country and provides them space to sell their products. The dedicated textile gallery of the Museum was inaugurated by honourable Union Textile Minister SmritiZubinIrani on 13th of august 2019.²Hearing her motivating words, 'saving our art and culture for the future of textile and taking it globally drawn my interest more as it is an important aspect to take heritage of textile future further, to see incredible India forever! (Figure.1)



Figure 1: National handcraft and handloom museum textile gallery inauguration by, respected Smt. SmritiZubinIrani Minister of Textiles, in the Union Cabinet of India. Photo Courtesy: National Handicraft and Handloom Museum, New Delhi.



Figure 2: Heritage collection art piece with fine craftsmanship. Photo Courtesy: National Handicraft and Handloom Museum, New Delhi.



Figure 3: Painting of Heritage textile thread making technique on display of textile gallery museum. Photo Courtesy: National Handicraft and Handloom Museum, New Delhi.

This textile gallery has been arranged as per its manufacturing process- 'pre-loom', 'loom' and 'post loom'.

- Starting the gallery with 'Khadi', which has close association with India's freedom movement. The word 'Khādī' or 'Khaddar' refers to hand-spun and hand-woven cloth made from cotton, silk or wool, which are spun into threads on a spinning wheel known as charkha.³ Next is the 'ikat' weaving⁴ which is a complicated weaving technique. Cotton, silk ikat examples on display are from Odisha, Gujarat, and Telangana. The warp and weft based on the intricacies of the handloom textile designs from Sambalpuriikat from western region of Odisha in yards of four primary colours white, black, yellow and red with additional greens. (Figure.2)
- Next is the 'loom or weaving' technique, where the design is woven on the loom. There are different sections in the gallery consisting of more than two hundred thirty different types of textiles collection divided into more than thirty traditions categories. Some of the prominent examples are grand brocade, fine muslin, beautiful jamdanisareewoven with cotton, silk and zarithreads and woollen shawls. As well brocade weave is done by left loose weft threads floating on the back with featured designs of jacquard on satin and twill floral motifs are weaved. Himroo cotton and silk weaved shawls, unique styles and designs of local craftsmen with Persian influence and much more. The silk/cotton/zaribrocade, jamdani, mashru, himru etc., all are arranged according to regional production centres. (Figure.3)



Figure 4: Floral motif textiles Collection. Photo Courtesy: National Handicraft and Handloom Museum, New Delhi.



Figure 5: Madhubani art figure displayed in museum collection. Photo Courtesy: National Handicraft and Handloom Museum, New Delhi.

- In the 'post loom' technique, first plain cloth is woven on the loom and later on, gets adornment through various techniques like: 'hand painting', 'printing', 'embroidery', 'applique', and 'bandhejor tie-dye' etc. For the painting and printing, the most important aspect is the natural pigment. These are obtained from vegetable and plants and after a lengthy process natural dyes were extensively practised by the dyers and weavers of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Central and South India. Inspired by the nature and surroundings printers and *bandhanj* (tie-dye)⁵ workers use to execute the intricate design on sari, odhani, furnishings etc. The rich hand painting tradition examples of Kalamkari⁶ (Andhra Pradesh), Gujarat are also on display. Ajrak block printing on shawls from Gujarat and *dabuo daboo* of Bagru and Sangneri block printing objects are from Rajasthan. Batik printing by soaking selective cloth in colour after wax applied on design. Designs for producing cotton and silk sari, odhani, fabric. (Figure 4 and 5)
- The rich embroidery tradition is well reflected in the beautiful examples displayed in the gallery. Various male, female and children costumes and accessories enhance the value to the gallery. The few highlights of the gallery are fine hand embroidered Phulkari collection from Punjab, different type of embroideries in mochi, banjara, lambadi, kutcha work from Gujarat region, intricate chikankari⁷ work of Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh), kantha of Bengal, regalia zardozi work of Uttar Pradesh, Toda embroidery from Tamil Nadu etc. The examples of applique and patchwork, mirror work and precious metal embroidery done on cotton and silk textiles.
- Costume: The colourful costumes used for male and female such as; *angarkha*, *lengha*, *choli*, *patka*, *potlee*, caps, turbans are on display. Angarkha⁸, the male upper garment, is the outfit that could be wrapped around, giving flexible ease to tie a knot at right or left side. This ancient attire further developed in various other upper garments is now redesigned in fashion as variations of sherwani and achkan.

Female intricate blouse patterns and intricate (*ghani*)embroideries of various forms such as running stitch, satin stitch, cross stitch contemporary designs and fine patterns of flowers and creepers, embellished in colourful silk thread, gold and silver *dabka* , pearl, precious and semi-precious gemstone work. All can be seen on the shawl display of goat fleece, loom woven shawl in narrow pattern border along the side of floral creeper on a white background embellished with flowering cones shaping out into an *ambior* mango motif. Attention drawing man's robe in zari embroidery of tiny flowers on wool displayed well.

In the huge collection of the textile gallery there are many beautiful objects, but one which attracts me most is the male costume *angrakha*. This long knee length colourful cotton angrakha is wrapped and tied on any side (left or right) according to the comfort. Works in the intricate *bandhejart* show a tiny bandhani pattern. Vibrant red dye is used to colour this rare art costume piece of national handicraft museum. The art of Bandhani (tie-dye) is a very intricate and skilled procedure of textile decoration. Plucking pinch by pinch cloth and keeping a mustard seed, gram or any other tiny thing in between and tying tightly with thread as per the design is the most time taking method mainly done by women. Next step is dyeing the tied fabric, after drying a variety of design patterns can be achieved. This intricate work is practiced in the khatri community of Gujarat in India, besides many communities of Rajasthan. (Figure.6)



Figure 6: Heritage traditional intricate Bandhini work (tie and dye) with detailed yoke design) and border.
Photo Courtesy: National Handicraft and Handloom Museum, New Delhi.

Conclusion

Museum is preserving and conserving the old Heritage⁹ textile, which reminds diminishing memories of hard-earned and learned textile making techniques. They are giving us a lifetime opportunity to visit the highlights of centuries of art and culture preserved and protected from years and years to save fashion history. We as individuals can contribute and preserve, heritage art of handloom weaving textile culture into our hearts and wardrobes. Being "vocal for local" will create the awareness on sustainable heritage handloom textile. Fine handloomed sarees, textile and dress materials can be added in today's fashion. The collection with trendy colours and prints embroideries and weaves all are ready to be the part of our swadeshi wardrobes. To get up in the roots of art and culture within our hearts. By generating the living for hardworking creative weavers and artists to keep binding Heritage Indian culture of Incredible India forever. Indian textile in our hearts and wardrobes we have to understand our wealth is our heritage culture tradition and textile arts and conserve featuring most of them temperature management humidity labelling method display art and culture technique used to procure textiles and articles. Being a fashion designer, the incredible textile collection of craft museum gives us an opportunity to contribute and personally I have been inspired to forecast future fashion. Just by restoring fashion in our wardrobes, with their all-time availability of handloom products and festive exhibition, discounts with tasty cultural food items. By following it the Handloom weavers will become *atmanirbhar* and we will obtain sustainable healthy textile.

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About the Author

Rakhi Gupta is a fashion designer, national record holder (six times within four years) published in record books for unique creative design ideas, received a VashishtNagrik and NariSashakti award and presented royal collection in grand finale for the awareness of covid-19 in Bangalore fashion week 2020.