

RESEARCH NOTE

New Prospects for Women Empowerment through Value Addition of Remnant Fabrics with Aipan Applique

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ABSTRACT

Women empowerment defines and determines the direction of diverse discourses on women. Economic empowerment of women is the main emphasis of the government. By taking inspiration of empowering women, to support in developing leadership and entrepreneurial qualities, we aim our study to generate new prospects for economic empowerment of women by manufacturing value added products from the remnant fabrics with 'Aipan' appliqué. Aipan of Uttarakhand is a Kumauni folk painting having motif inspired from nature and mythology. Increasing concern for reducing the load of waste material on earth, has led to the adoption of approaches like waste reduction, reuse and recycling. Hence, the folk art needs to be adapted sensitively to revitalize and reinvent folk skills with proper quality, suitable pricing and improved designs to meet customer demand and satisfaction. Appliqué is one of the needle craft used extensively in India for textile decoration. The present study was hence planned to develop fashion accessories products using discarded textile materials and their surface enrichment with aipan. Green fashion products (bags of different sizes and designs) were made on the principles of reuse of waste material, using discarded textile material. Surface enrichment of products was done using aipan motif through appliqué technique. The designs were developed keeping in mind their suitability for different designs and sizes of bags. Selected arrangements were used to prepare four bags namely, mobile holder, sling bag, back pack and pencil pouch. The consumer acceptability of the prepared bags was assessed finally to find out marketability of the products. These products can be symbolized as souvenir of Uttarakhand that can be a point of attraction for the tourist and hence a good source of income generation too.

Key words: *Empowerment; Aipan; Textile designs; Waste reduction; Green fashion; Appliqué;*

Women are a powerful force in our global society. In traditional Indian societies, they were confined to the four walls but in modern society, they participate in all types of activities including entrepreneurship (*Radhika and Siddappa, 2014*). Women remain under-represented as entrepreneurs in poor and uneducated communities, but they possess the capability to financially and socially uplift themselves, their families and neighbours too. Women are the backbone of society, and if empowered to be financially independent, can prove to be a change maker of society, capable of sustaining their families, ensure education for their children, improve standards of living, and access better

healthcare. In India, empowering women through entrepreneurship has become an integral part of our development efforts because of the following three important reasons, women development, economic growth and social stability (*Dwivedi and Mishra, 2013*).

Each traditional art and craft is the product of some particular and identifiable region or community and is dependent upon the traditions and materials in that region. Folk art tends to involve things like pottery, woodworking, and fabric work (like weaving) and many more or products that are needed by the people in a community for survival and financial security (*Folk art of India, 2011*).

Through our study we aim to revitalize and explore the folk art of “*Aipan*” as a source of design development for textile surface enrichment and an activity of income generation for village women of Uttarakhand.

Aipan constitute a characteristic form of folk art prevalent in Kumaon region of Uttarakhand. Each and every *Aipan* design has a particular meaning attached to it and is drawn with a specific purpose. The raw material used is ochre (*Geru*) colour and rice paste. This pristine white on deep red gives out a beautiful contrast emphasizing the designs. It is mostly women who paint the designs on the floors and walls of their homes using the last three fingers of the right hand. Once the ochre base is ready the artist draws the pattern free hand (*Arts & Craft, 2010* and *Shah, 2006*).

Aipan is known by different names and is popular in many part of India with larger variation. It is called *alpana* or *alpona* in West Bengal and Assam, *satiya* in Gujarat, *rangoli* in Maharastra, *chowk pooran* in Uttar Pradesh, *kolam* in south India, *mandane* in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, *arichanor aripainain* Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and *bhuggalor mugguin* Andhravhile *alpana*, *chita*, *jhoti*, and *muruja* in Odhisha (*Harmon, 2014* and *Baral, 2016*).

Appliqué basically refers to a type of needlework technique in which, various pieces of embroidery, fabric, or other materials are sewn onto another piece of fabric to create different designs, abstract patterns or pictures. Applique work employs a number of stitches to attach the applied pieces on to the base material. Some of the most common stitches are satin, running, chain and back stitch. Appliqué is also a famous form of embroidery used to adorn sarees with elaborate and vibrant looking borders (*Appliqué Embroidery, 2016*). *Aipan* designs are good source of folk motifs to be used on textile products. Recently, these designs are being used on many textile items through different surface enrichment technique such as screen printing, block printing, batik, embroidery etc. So, one of the ways to transfer these folk motifs on to the fabric is appliqué work.

Therefore, the present work was taken with an idea to fuse the folk art of Kumaon, the floor painting, with appliqué technique. The existing traditional designs of *Aipan* were adapted for appliqué work so as to use them in different arrangements on articles like bags, mobile holders and pencil pouch.

METHODOLOGY

Traditional motifs of *Aipan* were collected from various secondary sources like books, cards, photographs and personal visit to houses of people living in Kumaon region. The original motif or designs from different secondary sources were used to develop designs for appliqué work without distorting the originality of the basic design. The traditional motifs of *aipan* were chosen for appliqué work as these consists of shapes like triangle, circle, square, rectangular, dots and lines which are easy adaptable for appliqué work.

A total of thirty motifs were adapted, 10 motifs in each category i.e., center design, border design, and buti design, to make them suitable for appliqué work. During design development, care was taken to collect motifs from various designs and synthesized them into one design in order to give a new form. The designs were developed keeping in mind their suitability for different types of bags like back pack, sling bags, pencil purse and mobile holder.

The prepared adapted designs were evaluated by judges, to find out the suitability of the developed designs for appliqué work.

Thus six designs i.e., two centre designs, two border designs and two buti designs which scored the highest marks in each category were selected for preparation of the arrangements for selected articles. Different arrangements were prepared by using the six selected designs for different bags viz., bag, pencil pouch, mobile holder. For each article, five arrangements were made by the combination of selected designs using Coral Draw software.

Corel Draw is a comprehensive vector based, also called object-oriented or draw images programme. The software is a robust graphics suite, providing many features for users to edit graphics. These features include contrast adjustment, color balancing, adding special effects like borders to images, and it is capable of working with multiple layers and multiple pages. All the selected motifs were digitized. The process of digitizing involves three basic steps: initial one is the input of designs/ motifs, followed by processing of designs and the final step is the printing of designs (*Sharma et al., 2014* and *Jyoti et al., 2009*).

Thus a total of twenty arrangements were made, which were evaluated again by a panel of judges on the

basis of the overall appearance of the arranged designs. Thus, the two top scored arrangements in each category of article were selected to prepare the final product.

Four different stitches of embroidery (slip hemming, couching, buttonhole, herring bone and chain stitch) were selected for appliqué work. Embroidery stitches served both functional as well decorative purposes. Plain red poplin and left over and discarded fabric piece were used to prepare final products. At last, the products were evaluated for their commercial acceptability by the possible consumers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Evaluation of the adapted designs : Adaptation of traditional designs was done under the three categories, border design, center design and buti design. Total thirty designs (10 in each category i.e centre, border and buti designs) were evaluated visually to select two designs in each category. Total scores obtained by different designs in three categories are given in Table 1. The design no. 2 and 10 of buti, design no.2 and 5 of border and the design no. 10 and 1 of centre designs were selected owing to highest total score. The selected six designs along with original designs are given Fig. 1.

Table 1: Total scores of evaluation for the adapted designs

Designs no.	Design type		
	Buti	Border	Centre
1	181	118	97*
2	213*	176*	50
3	151	125	55
4	158	133	52
5	131	151*	54
6	111	127	83
7	119	131	58
8	87	147	68
9	128	66	59
10	211*	81	106*

Note: * Scores of selected designs

Table 2: Total scores of arrangements for different articles

Article No.	Mobile holder	Pencil purse	Sling bag	Back bags
1	54*	50*	47	47
2	60*	41	39	66*
3	50	52*	39	54*
4	38	45	62*	50
5	32	49	54*	34

Note - *Selected arrangements in each categories

Evaluation of the arrangements of selected designs: Five arrangements in each category (sling bag, back pack, pencil pouch and mobile holder) were made using selected adapted motifs. Total twenty arrangements were made for the four different articles. Total score obtained by different arrangement are shown in Table 2.

Arrangement no. 2 for mobile holder, arrangement no.3 for pencil pouch, arrangement no.4 for side bag and arrangement no. 2 for back was selected for final article. The selected arrangement from each article is given in Figure 2.



Fig. 1. Selected original and adapted motif

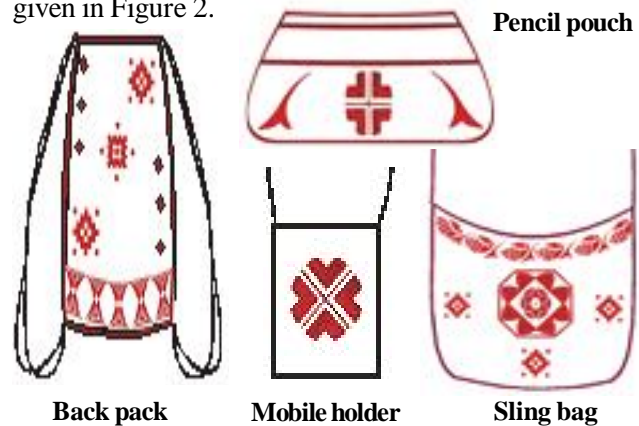


Figure 2. Selected arrangement of different product



Figure 3. Final prepared products

Evaluation of final prepared product: Final four selected arrangements i.e., arrangement no. 2 for mobile holder, arrangement no.3 for pencil pouch, arrangement no.4 for sling bag and arrangement no. 2 for back pack were prepared using appliqué embroidery. The final appreciated products are given in Fig. 3. The prepared bags were appreciated by the consumers in terms of suitability of embroidery stitch for appliqué work, neatness of embroidery, design arrangement, overall appearance and material used as base fabric. It can be seen from Fig. 4 that, back pack obtained the highest weighted mean score (4.852) in all the assessment parameters followed by pencil purse and mobile holder with average weighted mean score of 4.244 and 4.028 respectively. The highest weighted mean scored parameter in all the bags was the suitability of embroidery stitch for appliqué work by the consumers.

It can be seen from Table 3 that there was variation in the views of consumers over the cost of the bags.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents on cost of different bags

Parameter	Mobile holder	Pencil purse	Sling bag	Back bags
Low	60%	33.33%	23.3%	86.66%
Appropriate	36.6%	63.33%	76.6%	13.33%
High	3.3%	3.33%	-	-

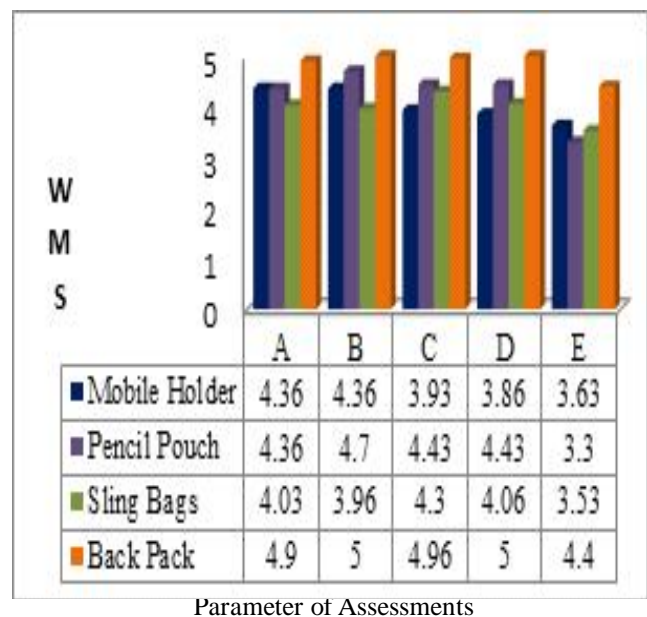


Figure 4. Weighted mean scores obtained by different bags for assessment parameters evaluated by consumers

Note: A: Suitability of embroidery stitch for appliqué work; B: Neatness of embroidery; C: Design arrangement; D: Overall appearance; E: Material used as base fabric

Sixty per cent of the total respondents reported that the cost of the mobile holder was low. However, 63.33 per cent and 76.66 per cent of total consumer found that the suggested cost was appropriate for pencil purse and sling bag respectively whereas, the suggested cost for back pack was found to be low according to 86.66 per cent of the total respondents as they previously experienced that handmade and embroidered products were very expensive in different trade fair and exhibitions.

CONCLUSION

Aipan of Uttarakhand is an example of Kumauni folk art having motif inspired from nature and mythology. *Aipan* designs show a blend of ethnic and natural yet stylized designs. Each and every *Aipan* design has a particular meaning attached to it and is drawn with a specific purpose. The designs are intricate though simple to create and adapt. In fashion world, there is always a demand of something novel and artistic. The blend of *Aipan* design with appliqué is providing an imaginative and fresh collection to the people who want to retain their tradition with minute modernization. Adapting and improving the designs refers to modify it such that it will be easier to produce,

use, fix, or to maintain and so on. The changing world of fashion gives us the opportunity to use the adapted traditional motifs for making diversified, aesthetic and competitive products.

All the designs and the product prepared by us were preferred by the immediate consumers. Thus, in the textile sector the adapted design can be used through the surface enrichment for product diversification and

value addition. This will not only help in the preservation of *Aipan* but also broaden the design base for the textiles products. Women of Uttarakhand can also utilize their skills in experimenting with folk motifs and design to make them suitable for textile in innovative ways. This type of work also motivates people to come up with an ingenious work, which indirectly help in upgrading the art and craft of Uttarakhand and thus India's.

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