

ABSTRACT

Folk arts and crafts are like the head and tail of a coin. They are closely inter-related in our everyday life in terms of objects which we use at home, in our festivals and in rituals. The rural folk arts of India bear distinctive colourful designs which are interwoven with religious and mystical motifs. Handicraft serves as a means of livelihood to majority of the rural household which constitutes capital share of our human resources, thus, it should be our persistent endeavour to exploit the handicraft to its fullest in the interest of improving our national economy.

Chowkpurana floor art of Uttar Pradesh is a traditional drawing done by the rural women on various rituals and occasions on the wall and floor of mud houses. Today people have moved to modern houses and the mode of decoration has also changed thus, chowk is almost at the verge of extinction. Handloom industry of Varanasi is one of the sector important for its high value addition both in terms of economic and aesthetics. Weavers of handloom brocade are facing stiff competition from the power loom substitute. Despite of government subsidies for handloom brocade there is a need for strategic designing and marketing interventions. *Chowkpurana* folk art is a religious drawing which is done to decorate the floors and walls of mud house on various occasions in the interior villages of western Uttar Pradesh. *Chowkpurana* art of Uttar Pradesh have not been explored till date and adverse weather conditions could be the possible constraints; hence, efforts have been made in this study to take inspiration from this traditional folk art to incorporate them in the ever expanding field of textile designing. Efforts were made in the study to provide a strong platform to *Chowkpurana* floor art, which was at the verge of extinction due to modernization.

Researcher purposively selected interior villages of western Uttar Pradesh for gathering the *Chowkpurana* floor art motifs. Interview schedule, observation method and multi field visit was adopted for the data collection. Different motifs were collected on various ritual and social ceremonies. Collected motifs/designs were classified into two categories: I. Ritual category, II. Social category. The list of

weaving areas of Varanasi was procured from Weavers Service Centre for citing the existing status of Varanasi. Traditional weaving areas Rewari Talab, Madanpura, Aliapura and Pilikothi were selected for weaving of saris. Promotional material like website, brand and logo, was developed to create awareness regarding newly designed *Chowkpurana* brocade saris. Exhibitions were organised in various cities Agra, Vadodara, Varanasi and Ghaziabad to assess the opinion of the consumers regarding the placement, colour combination and technique used. Opinion was received from both the genders towards *Chowkpurana* brocade saris. Analysis of data was done through statistical tools such as Chi square and Weighted Average Ranking.

The results revealed that the *Brahmin* communities were mainly involved in practising *Chowkpurana*. Now-a-days only women of the older age group continue to draw *Chowkpurana* art occasionally, being culturally bound. The present generations has no clue pertaining to the symbolic significance of the motifs. The design of *Chowkpurana* floor art were basically geometrical human figures and these were considered as God and Goddess by women floor artist. Today no other centre in India can compete with Varanasi. It has perfected the art of weaving and there is no style of weaving which it cannot reproduce. Muslim Craftsmanship earlier denied weaving figurative *Chawkpurana* motifs as it considered it as forbidden in their society however they know that the requirement for newer design will eventually they convince them to incorporate *Chowkpurana* motifs into handloom woven saris. The handloom brocade sari has been woven from *Chowkpurana* floor art motifs in two categories as: 1. Ritual ceremony and 2. Social functions. Three saris of each category in three variety (organza, tissue and sateen) was developed through *Phekwa* and *Karua* techniques at Alaipura, Madanpura and Rewari Talab area of Varanasi by the eminent artisans of Varanasi. A total of six *Chowkpurana* handloom brocade saris were manufactured. *Chowkpurana* Floor Art designs were successfully introduced in to handloom brocade saris. Promotional material was developed and *Chowkpurana* brocade saris were displayed at various exhibitions. Opinion was received from both the genders. Formulated hypothesis was analyzed and significant difference was found between the opinion of male and female. The placement of motifs, colour combination and aesthetic appeal of *Chowkpurana* brocade saris and fabric was admired and appreciated by the respondents.