

***LAMBANI* TEXTILES: EVOLUTION AND REVIVAL THROUGH INNOVATIVE PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT**

Executive Summary

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By

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Product Development**

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Introduction

The Indian embroidered fabric is vast and an amalgam of multicultural dynamism of innumerable stitches and embellishments. The repertoire of stitches that embroidery of each state in the Indian subcontinent holds unique community markers. Every regional embroidery has its unique quotient and identity. But one community that is spread pan India and carries with them a sense of mystery is that of the *Lambanis* or the Banjaras. Conspicuous with their presence everywhere they go they are very intriguing with their colorful clothes, inimitable hairdo and exquisite jewelry.

The *Lambani*, who originated centuries ago in the arid desert region of Rajasthan and are estimated to number between 3 and 20 million people, now live in and migrate through 22 Indian states. They've spread from Northern Kashmir in the north to Tamil Nadu in the south, and from Orissa in the east to Gujarat in the west. To the north and west, they spread into Sindh, Pakistan, and Iran. They are famous for their colorful dresses and spectacular jewelry because they wear all of their wealth. Though many have investigated their customs and practices and some field research has been focused on them, little has been published about these people and little information regarding their embroidery has been transmitted. The *Lambani* culture is concerned with upholding boundaries; typically, the peripatetic have established limits so that they can interact with others while maintaining their cultural identity. The separate villages or *Thandas* that they upkeep, their adaptable systems that enable harmonious connections with outsiders, their language, religion, origin myths, traditional taboos and social structure, and finally their unique colourful clothing, jewellery, and embroidery are all visible manifestations of these boundaries. (Fisher, 2006)

The *Lambanis*, who are peripatetic nomads, have picked up regional languages from all over India while conserving their own. This language, which is associated with Hindi, Rajasthani, Punjabi, and European Roma, is known as *Ghormati* or *Banjaraboli*. Most outsiders find it difficult to understand, particularly in South India, where Dravidian dialects are spoken. (Fisher, 2006)

The present study intends to introduce the aesthetic values of the cultural heritage belonging to *Lambani* community by establishing the original identity through their traditional embroidery. Furthermore, it aims to discover the extent to which modernity and migration has influenced the embroidery of the *Lambanis* within the core of tradition and the challenge of the sustenance of the traditional stitches as it is coined as a languishing craft.

The study also focusses on product development and skill upgradation of the artisans to understand the concept of smart designing. It also intends to expose and train the artisan to have confidence in utilizing the traditional embroidery to create a range of innovative products which while adding a contemporary and commercial value can still retain the visual identity of the traditional embroidery. Furthermore, the study also intends on designing garments and products from the perspective of substantiality. Moreover, there is very little documentation of the stitches used in the *Lambani* embroidery in their colloquial dialect.

Marketing and promotion of the artisan products aids in creating awareness regarding the products. With the advent of virtual platforms, it has further accelerated the process of marketing these products to a larger segment of consumer. Hence various mediums such as a digital platform and social media will help awareness regarding the craft, help in building a brand and also help in developing a sustainable strategy for the artisans to get perennial benefits from the craft.

Objectives of the study

The specific objectives of the study were structured as follows:

- a. To understand and interpret the *Lambani* textiles focusing on the embroidery.
- b. To study the repertoire of stitches used in *Lambani* embroidery and the regional variations in them.
- c. To develop an innovative range of products for commercial purpose.
- d. To train and empower the artisans towards design and skill up-gradation.
- e. To evaluate the developed products in terms of product preferences, attributes of uniqueness, acceptability and market viability.
- f. To suggest tenable strategies for promoting and propagating the embroidery.

Hypotheses of the study

Hypothesis I

H0: There is no association between placement of design and age, gender, and occupation.

H1: There is association between placement of design and age, gender, and occupation.

Hypothesis II

H0: Overall look of product (tunics)with respect to ideal product parameters is notappealing.

H1: Overall look of product (tunics)with respect to ideal product parameters is appealing.

Hypothesis III

H0: Idea of designing contemporary lifestyle products with traditional Lambani embroidery is not appealing.

H1: Idea of designing contemporary lifestyle products with traditional Lambani embroidery is appealing.

Methodology adopted for the study

Research design is the specific method followed by the researcher for conducting the study. In order to fulfil the objectives of the study, the research design was formulated keeping time and resources in mind. The study was carried out in six phases:

Phase I, included understanding the textiles of the *Lambanis* with respect to the embroidery. The *Lambani* textiles have had a rich stitch repository but is lost in ambiguity as much is known about them and the literature pertaining to these textiles have been very meagre. Hence, an attempt was made by the researcher to collect, interpret and collate the data pertaining to the embroidered textiles of the *Lambanis* from the secondary and primary sources.

Phase II, was carried out for interpreting the stitch repertoire and decoding the regional variations. Secondary data pertaining to the origin and history, migrations, traditional textiles and their significance, embroidery process - raw materials, stitches, threads and techniques were gathered from a variety of published and unpublished sources for it to be correlated with the primary research.

Locales selected for investigation

State			
Maharashtra	Karnataka	Telangana	Tamil Nadu
Harappani Gorbanjara Mahila Kala Vikas Mandal, Wadani Block, (Beed), Aurangabad: NGO	Sandur Kushala Kala Kendra, Bellary District : NGO	Yellamma Tanda, Manchal Mandal, Rangareddy district. (Unorganized Cluster)	Buriya,, Yeri Tanda, Dharma puri: Unorga nized Cluster
Pawar Vasti Thanda, Beed, Aurangabad	Sabala Handicrafts, Bijapur: NGO	Banjara Embroidery Works, Deverakonda: NGO	E.P Tanda, Dharma puri
Laman Thanda Ambajogai Taluka in Beed District	Mariamana lli Thanda, Hospet huvinahadali		

After the initial visit to the various regions incorporated in the study, the researcher contacted all the artisans visited for a sampler incorporating all the stitches specific to their region, Understanding the technical details and aesthetic language of the fabric required analysis of the sample. It was done by visual analysis of the samplers obtained from the 3 states and the book titled '*Paramparik Gor-Banjara Stree Kashikari, Bharatkaam Evam Hasthkala*' from Maharashtra. Understanding and decoding the distinguishing feature of stitches, the regional similarities and variations was made easier with the use of visual analysis. The samplers and photographs collected from the states of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana and Tamil Nadu were studied in depth and the stitches which were similar to all the regions and the ones which were specific to a certain region were analyzed. The samplers were also analyzed to understand their colloquial appellations.

Phase III focused on designing of products. The design development process addressed the idea of understanding the categories of products that could be developed keeping in mind the urban consumer and contemporary market blended with the essence of the ethnic embroidery. After understanding and researching on the kind of products available in the market the researcher identified two categories of products which could be designed and developed. The first category was of Apparels and the second category was that of lifestyle products.

The questionnaire was developed for the apparel category with the help of two google forms (Appendix 1: short tunics and Appendix II: long tunics) to be administered to the respondents for their preferences for the design placement of the embroidery on the tunics. 110 respondents gave their valuable opinion for the short tunics, followed by 101 for long tunics. In total the researcher designed 32 designs in each of short and long tunics with design details of yokes, pleats, panels and tucks. Finally, 16 tunics with the best frequency were selected. Kala cotton fabric dyed in natural dyes with *manjistha*, *ratanjot*, indigo and *anar* was procured for executing the designs of the tunics and anchor threads were purchased for the embroidery from Hyderabad.

Phase IV, aimed at artisan training towards design and skill upgradation. A group of 10 artisan Including a master artisan were selected through purposive sampling for training by the master artisan herself. A twenty-four-day skill upgradation programme was held from July 1, 2022 to July 24, 2022. The artisans were retrained to understand the nuances of developing a commercially acceptable contemporary product.

This was followed by the visit to the locale for training the artisan in smart designing and exposing them to colour palette and selection. Post that the embroidery was carried out on the pattern pieces of the tunics which were with an anti-fit concept to save the fabric and train the

artisan to understand the concept of conscious designing. Once the embroidery was done the tunics were got tailored. The patches for the lifestyle products were further embroidered and sent to the artisan in Kutch where the artisan used vegetable tanned leather as a substrate for developing the products. In total 16 tunics and 15 lifestyle products (5 in each category of personal accessories, home décor and office essentials).

Phase V, evaluation of the designed products. Finally, to evaluate the products two google forms were prepared as the products were presented in physical mode (Appendix III) and virtual mode (Appendix IV). The products were displayed through fashion presentation and exhibition.

In Phase VI, The researcher suggested and executed tenable strategies for promoting the *Lambani* embroidery, which included branding, packaging and labelling, developing and E-commerce webpage www.taankaaindia.in, Facebook and Instagram pages by the name taankaaindia, participation in exhibitions and conducting workshops.

Results and Discussion

Interpreting and understanding of the *Lambani* textiles with focus on the embroidery.

The researcher traced the history and migrations of the *Lambani* Community and tried to understand their textiles from the point of view of the embroidery. The interpretation of relevant literature pertaining to *Lambani* textiles and embroidery was done to understand what used to exist earlier and the current scenario. The researcher also traced the existing textiles from different sources. It was found that many of the textiles used in the earlier times have become obsolete, even if they are used in the current times the embroidery is less dense compared to the earlier times. Also, the embroidery is becoming less known as many of the artisans are working as seasonal laborer, which fetches them a better remuneration compared to what embroidery does. The researcher also found that the *Lambani* women have now discarded their traditional garb and have resorted to more functional and modern clothing such as sarees and churidar kameez due to convenience as well as to make them look less conspicuous.

Documenting the repertoire of stitches and interpreting the regional variations

The researcher attempted to study the embroidery of all the four regions incorporated in the study and hence, collected the samplers of stitches with their colloquial names to identify if the stitches are similar and so are their names. It was found that many of the stitches and their colloquial names are similar in all the four states with a few differences which also helps to identify the embroidery of a particular region for example the use of brick stitch in Maharashtra which is not used elsewhere. Combination of many stitches to form a pattern in Telangana. The embroidery is denser in Maharashtra compared to the other regions. In spite, few regional differences there is a common thread that binds the embroidery of the *Lambanis* from various regions. As per the documentation done by the researcher there are approximately 24 common stitches and many different permutations and combinations used region wise. There are few stitches like *maki*, *nakra*, *javliya* which are very different in the technique.

Artisan training, skill upgradation and developing the product range

The researcher did an informal interactive training session with the artisan before developing the prototypes to make them understand the use of right colored threads for an urban consumer as the *Lambani* embroidery is very bright and contrasting which may not suit the taste of an urban client.

The prototypes of all the products were prepared to be tested among the consumers for the acceptability and innovativeness.

Evaluating the developed products in terms of product preferences, attributes of uniqueness, acceptability and market viability.

The designed and developed products were exhibited to respondents in physical as well as virtual mode. 154 responses were recorded for the same.

The results of the evaluation are discussed below:

- The respondents were heterogeneous and constituted majorly of the age group of 18-25 and 26-35. They majorly were students and academicians.
- The respondents were asked to rate the products on a Likert scale and their scores were calculated.
- The summary of the scores of the tunics is as follows

Average scores of the Short Tunics with respect to the various attributes

Category		Silhouette	Score							Total score	Average score
			Design No.	Color of the fabric	Texture	Placement of the embroidery	Design No.	Color of the fabric	Texture		
I	Yokes	Symmetric	1	718	711	723	716	706	710	4284	714
	Pink	Asymmetric	2	696	707	682	691	676	684	4136	689
II	Grey	Symmetric	3	701	703	708	697	707	705	4221	705
	Pleats	Asymmetric	4	702	694	697	689	693	696	4172	695
III	Panels	Symmetric	5	728	720	727	733	718	722	4348	725
	Blue	Asymmetric	6	730	718	703	728	700	704	4283	714
IV	Tucks	Symmetric	7	704	699	703	706	671	674	4157	693
	Yellow	Asymmetric	8	704	703	675	685	667	667	4101	683

Average scores of the Long Tunics with respect to the various attributes

Category		Silhouette	Score						Overall aesthetic appeal	Total score	Average Score
			Design No.	Color of the fabric	Texture	Placement of the embroidery	Color combination of the embroidery	Design of the tunic			
I	Yokes Pink	Symmetric	9	701	702	686	685	665	667	4101	683
		Asymmetric	10	696	700	695	698	683	693	4172	695
II	Grey Pleats	Symmetric	11	701	700	707	703	690	693	4196	699
		Asymmetric	12	702	695	696	684	678	673	4125	687
III	Panels Blue	Symmetric	13	728	707	715	720	705	706	4276	713
		Asymmetric	14	730	705	699	704	700	690	4209	701
IV	Tucks Yellow	Symmetric	15	704	704	682	688	667	670	4115	686
		Asymmetric	16	704	703	675	684	662	671	4101	683

- It is evident from the above table that the category of panels had the highest score in both long and short tunics. Also, the colour blue was preferred the most in choice of colour of fabric and colour combination of the embroidery. Therefore, overall the category of panels received the highest scores.
- The yellow coloured asymmetric tunics were least preferred by the respondents.
- Symmetric silhouettes were more preferred more compared to asymmetric and short silhouettes received higher scores compared to long tunics.

- The overall score of all the 16 tunics were high and the respondents extremely liked the tunics .



Plate (A,B,C,D) : Tunics with highest scores Category III-paneled (blue)

Table : Average scores of the Lifestyle products with respect to the various attributes

Category	Product No	Product	Score					
			Design	Color Combination	Embroidery with leather	Overall aesthetic appeal	Total Score	Average score
Personal accessories	1	Tote Bag	724	705	726	728	2883	721
	2	Wallet	724	700	721	725	2870	717
	3	Glass case	719	699	716	725	2859	715
	4	Footwear	706	698	716	706	2826	706
	5	Neck piece	690	691	695	685	2761	690
Home decor	1	Lamp shade	720	714	705	715	2854	713
	2	Coaster set	719	712	700	712	2843	711
	3	Wall art	712	711	699	712	2834	708
	4	Serviette Holder	709	703	698	711	2821	705
	5	Vase	708	699	691	703	2801	700
Office Essentials	1	Multi-purpose bag	729	726	727	728	2910	727
	2	Lap top bag	726	725	723	726	2900	725
	3	Diary Cover	713	720	714	715	2862	715
	4	Pen holder with stationery tray	707	716	709	709	2841	710
	5	Card organizer	700	709	706	702	2817	704

- The above scores reflect that the products were extremely liked by the respondents with very high scores
- The tote bag, the lamp shade and multipurpose bag, were extremely liked in the 3 categories respectively



Plate : Best preferred designs lifestyle products

- A. Personal accessories: Tote bag
- B. Home décor: Lamp shade
- C. Office essentials: Multipurpose bag

Hence, it can be concluded from results obtained that the products designed and developed by the researched were highly appreciated by the respondents.

Suggesting tenable strategies for promoting the embroidery

The researcher also suggested as executed strategies to promote the craft for the artisans of *Yellamma Thanda* with branding, simple packaging solution, exposure to the craft from the region through exhibitions and workshops, developing a e-commerce platform www.taankaaindia.com and presence in social media through Facebook and Instagram pages.

Conclusion

Based on the objectives of the study the following conclusions can be drawn.

- Textiles of the *Lambanis* has been an integral part of their identity and culture. From their costumes to the textiles for household purpose. Their migrations over a period of time to various regions pan India and the need for a source of income has diluted the use of these textiles which were once a fundamental need for them.
- One can see tides of change that has somehow been influenced by external factors such as seasonal migrations and exposure to technology. The *Lambani* women have shed their traditional costumes for which they are known and have

replaced them with modern clothes due to the ease of wearing them and also the pressure of being accepted by the outside world.

- Once a peripatetic nomadic community, the transitions from the north western region right from Afghanistan and Baluchistan to India has made this community to imbibe various stitches in their embroidery which have close resemblance to the stitches of these regions.
- The elements such as coins, shells, beads etc. are used by the *Lambanis* are visible in the embroideries of the above-mentioned regions as well as the northwestern region of India which is inhabited by the pastoral nomadic communities.
- It was found that the regions visited by the researcher and the samplers collected by her gave a further impetus to understanding the stitch repository and it was found that most of the stitches used in the *Lambani* embroidery such as chain, running, *maki*, *nakra*, *javliya*, herringbone, *cretan*, feather and their variations are used by *Lambanis* commonly. It was further observed that the embroidery became more dispersed as one travelled southward. The embroidery of Maharashtra was denser and more intricate compared to the rest of the regions with an extensive use of brick stitch, cross stitch and counted thread work where the base cloth is hardly visible.
- Coined as a languishing craft, until the recent times, this embroidery craft was almost on the verge of extinction till some efforts were focused towards its revival by few NGOS. But these are very few in number and concentrated in certain regions only. Hence, looking into the dispersed population of the *Lambanis*, there is a need for building communities and clusters which can further promote the craft and create awareness towards it.
- Earlier times all the textiles were assembled by hand stitching but now the use of machines have forayed into their textiles where the local tailors have begun to produce their blouses and skirts with the addition of separate pre-made strips of embroidery, mirror and beads. Hence, the quality of the dress has been compromised with.
- Most of the places that the researcher visited are trying their best to keep the embroidery alive but somewhere the products were quite cliché and there was a lacuna when the designing aspect of these products were pondered upon. As the

embroidery uses many stitches which are commonly used in embroidery there is a scope for designing and developing products which can cater to an urban consumer market while retaining the essence and identity of the embroidery.

- Once the designing aspect is in place with an array of innovative products there is a great potential in this embroidery to capture the urban market and the demand amongst the consumers for handcrafted products.
- Apart from designing there is a pressing need for training the artisans to understand that when an urban consumer is to be catered they need to be offered with more choices of products for selection. Furthermore, the choice of colours for the embroidery also needs great consideration as it finally accounts for the surface styling of the fabric and contributes to the aesthetics. Hence, inputs for smart designing can accelerate the growth of this embroidery.
- Branding of the craft can also boost its potential for visibility among the similar kinds and can aid in giving an identity to the artisans.
- The world of emerging technologies with virtual platforms and social media platforms can further boost the growth of the embroidery as it has a wider reach. Moreover, the virtual and social media platforms have now become a major influence in the purchasing behavior of an urban consumer with the time constraints.
- The embroidery of the *Lambanis* is oscillating between accepting and rejecting outside influence. Though they have strived to maintain their identity and kept secrecy towards their culture and traditions, they cannot be isolated as the influence of the outside world is definitely going to seep into their lives and the need for belongingness to the outside world cannot hold them back from putting efforts to be a part of it.
- As there is a market for glocal (global + local) handcrafted products the design intervention will help in developing products which can cater to an international clientele.
- Fair wages and conscious designing keeping the Sustainable Development Goals 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) in mind by the researcher and was given utmost value.

Recommendations

Indian crafts have always been a constant source of inspiration to the outside world with its vast textile culture. The designers have forever taken inspirations from these crafts and integrated them into their creative endeavors. Hence these crafts hold a great potential for being explored.

Apart from the known crafts there is a dearth of information on the crafts which are now on the verge of extinct and the artisans rendered jobless. Hence concentrated efforts towards their revival can help to bring them back to life and give them a new lease of life.

Furthermore, there is a great scope for designing products other than clothing to cater to the growing demands of an urban consumer for handcrafted products. Hence, researchers can also look into product designing integrating the various crafts which will provide the consumer with a wide array of choices which were earlier restricted to few products only.

Conscious designing and design intervention with integration of traditional crafts along with exploring creative marketing strategies can boost the development of the craft.

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