

## **ABSTRACT**

Textiles of a community are its identity markers. Whether woven, printed or embroidered they carry a language and narrative of their own which makes them stand apart. The Indian textiles which have a vast repository of textiles are a subject of constant research and investigation. There are number of textile crafts in India which are feared to be either extinct or are on the verge of extinction. One such craft is that of *Lambani* embroidery which is categorized under the languishing crafts.

The present study is an exploratory and experimental study where the researcher has tried to extrapolate on the *Lambani* community from the point of view of their migrations, the effect of these migrations on their textiles; majorly the embroidery, the repertoire of the stitches, the semiotics of the embroidery, product development and promotion.

The *Lambani* community is distinguished by their exquisite traditional dress and one-of-a-kind embroidery. Embroidery is a complete language that uses a semiotic system to communicate and interpret different colours, patterns, stitches, and surface embellishments. The *Lambanis* have inherited a rich folk embroidery tradition with exquisite patterns and a large stitch vocabulary. Surface embellishments added to their embroidery include a variety of elements such as mirrors (shisha), shells (cowries), beads, applique work, rustic coins, and metal buttons. The exceptional and meticulous use of these result in a story that is second to none. The surface additives used in the *Lambani* embroidery represent various aspects of their culture, and while they are used as an additional element alongside the embroidery, their function goes beyond ornamentation and has multiple meanings.

The current study has tried to understand the lacuna between the existing embroidered products using *Lambani* embroidery and made an attempt to work towards it by training the artisan in understanding smart designing which will further add to their understanding of design. Observing a major gap between the product and the consumer the researcher has made attempts to suggest strategies for promotion and awareness of the craft.

Change is the only constant. Hence, understanding the potential for innovative products through product development and design intervention plays an important role in understanding what, when and how the aforesaid can be merged into the existing craft so that the craft does not lose its identity and credentials. A conscious effort was advocated by the researcher towards the designing of products which were made with sustainability quotient in mind and incorporating craft while retaining its essence. The researcher designed and developed apparel and lifestyle products integrating the *Lambani* embroidery into them. Tunics were designed with placement of the embroidery strategically planned. The raw materials that were sourced were eco friendly with kala cotton as a substrate for the tunics and vegetable tanned goat leather (a by-product of butchery industry) for the lifestyle products. The fabrics used were naturally dyed in *manjishtha*, *ratanjot*, *indigo* and *anar*. The tunics that were developed were minimalistic with an anti-fit styling where the wearer need not worry too much about the fit and the fabric wastage is also minimal. A total of 16 anti-fit tunics with in long and short categories with symmetric and asymmetric silhouettes were developed. 15 lifestyle products were designed in three categories of personal accessories, home décor and office essentials with 5 user centric products in each category.

Once the products in both the categories were created, they were displayed through a physical presentation and virtual display. The responses were recorded in both the methods of presentation. The results revealed that the designed products very highly innovative with great market potential and acceptability.

Thus, it can be concluded that a traditional textile craft can be revived through development of innovative products which are user centric and commercially acceptable. In this process emphasis should be laid on the maintaining the ethnicity and uniqueness of the craft. Developing successful business strategies for the artisans would help them in earning a better income from the craft rather than drifting away to other potential lucrative jobs. *Lambani* embroidery has struggled for its existence from times immemorial. The research study has helped in creating awareness regarding the craft of their embroidery which has a rich vocabulary of stitches and which is a beautiful amalgamation of rich and vivid colors. The interplay of colors and the linear embroidery is mesmerizing but has not yet received the much-deserved

recognition and does not stand close to the other rich embroideries of India. Hence, now the need of the hour is to reach the urban consumer and try to engage them in visual storytelling regarding the *Lambani* embroidery and its techniques. The study has provided the urban consumer with more options and an array of products which could be a part of their daily lives yet carry the fragrance and essence of the ingenious craft. Thus in a nutshell the ethnicity of the craft should not be compromised with in an attempt of commercializing it.