Lesson 11  Patola

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11. PATOLA

In the previous lesson we had learnt that resist dyeing or tie-dye gave rise to two famous traditions - Bandhani and Ikat. There are many variations of tie-dye. Some processes use tie-dyed yarn, where the pattern emerges in the weave of the fabric itself. The best example of this is the double ikat silk patola from Patan in Gujarat. Till today it remains amongst the most expensive and valued of all Indian textiles.

Today we learn about the famous Patola work.

11.0 Objectives

After going through this lesson you will:

- Gain an understanding about the complex process of Patola weaving.
- Become acquainted with different designs of Patola Saris.

11.1 Introduction

Patola (singular, Patolu) are the famous Silk Saris from Gujarat, produced by the Resist Dyeing process. These are rich and ornamental Saris of double Ikat type, worn on ritualistic occasions. Patola Saris are produced by the wonderful art of ‘Bandhana.’ They are the most beautiful fabrics among the Indian resist-dyed textiles. These are outstanding examples of creative craftsmanship based on the experiences of countless generations and typical of a family craft in which the children begin to take part in the work and learn it from early childhood.
Two other regions of India, viz., Orissa and Andhra Pradesh also produce (Fig. 11.1) patola silk fabric but with relatively simple designs and are usually a combination of warp and weft-Ikat. The extremely complicated technique of double-Ikat is found fully developed only on Patola silk Saris from Gujarat (Fig. 11.2).

According to the preconceived designs, the identical colours come together where the warp and the weft threads join. Patola is, therefore, very laborious and extremely complicated. And used for ceremonial garments.

11.2 Historical Background

The technique of Patola dyeing and Weaving is said to have originated in 5th century A.D. during the golden age of Gupta period and gradually grew into a highly sophisticated industry by the 11th Century.

The origin of patola remains uncertain. According to one school, it was introduced by Arab weavers who settled in India. Others are of the opinion that it was found in Thailand and Cambodia, from where it spread to Indonesia and India. The name Ikat was given by the Indonesians which means act of Bandhana. It is also known in Indo-china as Sampathad. In India this art of weaving is known as Patola in Gujarat, Tellia Rumal and Pochampalli in Andhra Pradesh and Ikat in Orissa (Fig. 11.5). According to Chandra (1961) the cloth “Patilika”, mentioned in the “Brahmjal Sutra (4th Century B.C.), is actually “Patolu” (Patola).

Some of the dresses in the Ajanta frescoes, (Fig. 11.6) dating back to 6th and 7th centuries, also look woven in Ikat process with fish, stripes, and check motifs. The Tie and dye done on warp and weft before weaving to create patterns with unlimited richness is known as a double Ikat.

Orissa weavers also adapted the patola technique for weaving, their special fabrics like curtains, bed spreads, odhanis, scarfs, lungis, turbans, yardage and Saris.

Pochampalli and chirala in Andhra Pradesh (Fig. 11.7) also made “Tillia Rumals” square shaped fabric
woven by the fisher men community as their head gear and lungis which later became famous for their saris.

Self-check Questions

1. Which is the main centre of Patola production?

11.3 Process

The complicated Patola weaving is laborious and tedious and it is only possible to complete about 25 centimetres of cloth a day. The work of patola is mostly done by the Salvi women. The process involves:

1. The Salvi women open and wind the silk skeins individually.
2. The silk skeins are then bleached (safed karvu).
3. After drying, the silk is filled into bobbins and wound into a charkha to prepare the warp and weft.
4. The pattern is first traced on to graph paper with detailed indications of colours to be used and precise sizes of the various motifs.
5. Once this is done, groups of twelve threads are warped simultaneously.
6. The quantity of yarn woven at one time is usually enough for weaving of three saris.
7. Three warp lengths, meant for one sari, are each folded in such a way that they lie on top of each other.
8. The warp is spread on a rectangular wooden frame and sectioned by grouping the thread according to the pattern.
9. Once the warp and weft are ready on the frames the tying begins always from the right, with the use of thread or old cloth.
10. Different portions of the yarn are tied and dyed.
11. Dying was traditionally achieved with vegetable colours but is now increasingly done with chemical dyes. Dyeing is carried out by both men and women.
12. The yarn is yet once more returned to the frame. Now, the entire pattern becomes clearly visible.
13. Loose threads are removed or tightened and the warp is carefully transferred on to the loom.
14. The weft is separated and taken back on to bobbins for the weaving.
15. The Patola loom is very simple and is hand-made from bamboo.
16. It is placed at a slight angle to the floor and two people are required for weaving. The process is painstakingly slow.

Self - Check Questions

2. How can safed Karvu be achieved?

3. Fill in the blanks:

   The complicated Patola weaving is _________ and _________ and it is only possible to complete about ____ centimetres of cloth a day.

11.4 Designs

The Patola designs are distinctive, repetitive and often geometric. The designs fall into three types:

1. Purely geometric forms, such as Navratana bhat (Jewelled, square design).

2. Floral and vegetable patterns, such as the Vohra bhat (Vohra community design), Paan bhat (Paan leaf or Peepal tree leaf design), Chhabdi bhat (floral basket design) and Phulvadi (floral design).

3. Designs depicting forms such as the nari (dancing woman), kunjar (elephant) and poppat (parrot).

The main character of patola is that on both the sides the material has the same design with Zig-Zag outline. The boarders of the patola saris are always plain with zari bands at times (Fig. 11.8). Unlike the Orissa Ikat and Andhra Pradesh Tellia Rumals, which have woven Boarders, the pochampalli saris have single resist dyed boarders with gold.

In almost all Patola textiles, the entire body of the sari is patterned and combinations of the designs are used in borders and pallu. A few however, have double-Ikat borders and pallu with a single coloured plain body.

The basic patterns found in Patola textiles are (Fig. 11.9):

i) Chhabdi bhat, the basket pattern.

ii) Fulvali bhat, flowering pattern.
iii) *Rattanchowk bhat*, jewel like pattern, so called because of its geometrical form.
iv) *Paan bhat*, peepal leaf pattern.
v) *Walnut motif*, This is similar to *Dada bhat* or the ball motif.
vi) *Nari Kunjar bhat*: women and elephant, in which both figures are stylized.
vi) *Popat Kunjar*, When only the parrot and elephant are used in the design.
vi) *Wagh bar hathi bhat*, a design consisting of tigers and 12 elephants.
ix) *Vohar cheer bhat*, a geometrical pattern usually worn by Vohra Muslims at wedding and on auspicious days.

In Gujarat, Patolas are traditionally worn by Hindus, Jains and Vohra Muslims.

**Self-check Questions**

4. In Gujrat Patola saris are worn by which communities?
5. Fill in the blanks:

The main ________ of patola is that on both the ________ of the material has the same design with Zig-Zag outline.

11.5 Assignments

11.5.1 Class assignments

i) Make a replica on a drawing sheet of Patola sari border.

ii) Draw sketches of various motifs used in Patola.

11.5.2 Home Assignments

i) Find samples of Patola fabrics in your house, a sari shop, books, magazines and Internet which represent different styles and techniques of Patola you have studies so far. Paste them neatly on clear pages with labels under each photo or picture.

11.6 Summing Up

Patola is a double Ikat, woven silk sari. The main weaving centre of Patola is in Patan, Gujarat. Salvi communities are the main weavers of this fabric. The patola designs are distinctive, repetitive and often geometrical. These designs fall under three main categories: (i) Purely geometric, (ii) Floral and vegetable patterns, and (iii) the designs depicting animals, birds and human figures. The process to produce patola textile being laborious and extremely complicated, it is used for ceremonial garments.

Now a new Patolu sari costs up from 4,500 rupee and because they are silk, and their patterns and their colours is supposed to be auspicious. Ladies taking part in marriage functions and other festive occasions wear them.

The gradual breaking of traditional dress codes and the opening up of urban consumer markets have given rise to new Ikat Mashru, a glazed satin texture with vibrant multi-coloured stripes, to simulate this silken effect, they are woven in satin weave, whereby the silk warp covers most of the surface area, while the cotton weft lies on the under side.

Today, in some villages in the Rajkot district of Gujarat, single-Ikat replicas of Patola are woven. However, the designs, though similar, are simpler than the intricate products of Patan. To meet the market demand printed Patolas extremely cheap, imitating the designs of original Patolas are also being sold in the market today.
11.7 Possible Answers to Self-Check Questions.

1. Gujarat is the main centre of Patola production.
2. Map work.
3. ‘Safed Karvu’ is achieved by bleaching the silk skeins.
4. The complicated Patola weaving is laborious and tedious and it is only possible to complete about 25 centimeters of cloth a day.
5. Patola saris are traditionally worn by Hindus, Jains and Vohra Muslims in Gujarat.
6. The main character of patola is that on both the sides of the material has the same design with Zig-Zag outline.

11.8 Terminal Questions

1. What are the designs made on a Patola sari?
2. What is meant by restrict-dyeing?
3. Traditionally which fabric has been used for patola saris?
4. Which community of Gujarat is associated with patola textile production?
5. Which states other than Gujarat are known for patola production?
6. Why Patola weaving of Patan is famous?
7. What are the unique features of Patola?
8. Write a short note on Looms.
9. How much time is required to make a five meter of patola sari?
10. Is there any special design used for the pallu and the border of a Patola sari?
11. Name the designs (bhat) commonly found in Patola and name the patterns.
12. Explain *Popat Kunjar bhat*?

13. Name the places where the single Ikat replicas of Patola are woven.

14. Why do people think that Patola saris are pure? On what occasions do the ladies wear them?

15. What are the main features of a Patola sari?

16. What is the next process after the warp and weft are ready on the frames?

17. What are main three types of patola designs?

18. State whether the following statements are True or False:
   
   i) The Patola weaving process is laborious and tedious and it is possible to complete only 50 centimetres of cloth in a day.   True / False

   ii) The Patola patterns are distinctive, repetitive and often geometric.   True / False

   iii) In the Patan Patola the elephant motif was side by side with the dancing female.   True / False

   iv) When only the parrot and elephant are used in the design, it is called *Nari Kunjar bhat*.   True / False

   v) The Rajkot Patolas are costlier than those of Patan.   True / False

21. Match the following:

   i) Chhabdi bhat          a. Papal leaf pattern
   ii) Nari Kunjar bhat     b. Basket pattern
   iii) Paan bhat            c. Women and elephant figures
   iv) Rattanchowk bhat      d. Ball motif
   v) Walnut motifs          e. Jewel mosaic
11.9 References and Suggested Further Reading


11.10 Glossary

1. Preconceived Formed before having full knowledge or evidence
2. Tedium Very long or boring
3. Painstakingly Very careful and thorough
4. Intricate Very complicated