

# SUSTENANCE IN DESIGN OF PASSAPALLI OF ODISHA, A CASE STUDY

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## Abstract

*In handloom industry, there is no dearth of skills and technical expertise. There is visible scarcity of creative leadership, courage and commitment. An approach to develop new strategies based on design must clearly guide the weavers to a path that will ensure security and stability.*

*Although textiles were the second basic need in its origin today it has become indispensable ingredient of many of the secondary needs of human. In its purest form initially, the textile was used to cover the human body to protect from environmental change and also to become social. Gradually inquisitive nature of human diversified many things within and with the textiles. Within the Textiles, creation of new designs with different color combinations and different textures came into existence. One of the interesting techniques in textile, "IKAT (yarn tie-dye)" created a classic form of fine crafts within the textiles. Since many centuries the IKAT designs has occupied a prominent place in the fashion world. The ikat technique in India is commonly known as patola in Gujarat, bandha in Orissa, pagdubandhu, buddavasi and chitki in Andhra Pradesh. In the ikat tie and dye process, the designs in various colors are formed on the fabric either by the warp threads or the weft threads or by both. The threads forming the design are tied and dyed separately to bring in the desired color and the simple interlacement of the threads produces, the most intricate designs, that appear only in the finished weaving.*

*Among the outstanding visual attributes of Odisha ikat are fine, feathery delineation of pattern motifs, sophisticated curvilinear treatment of form and use of tonal gradation to enhance the depth. For a process that relies on the laborious tie-dyeing of yarn prior to weaving, the ability to achieve subtly outlined, curved and shaded motifs without the assistance of squared paper design can only be described as masterful and unique.*

*The present article focuses on Passapalli design (Sakta Design) developed with Ikat technique and diversification in various handloom product. Passapalli designs is a double ikkat product, developed by the Meher community of western Odisha specially weavers of Bargarh and Subarnapur district. The study reached at the conclusion that diversification in motifs and colour of same design can help in sustenance of particular design which further preserve culture heritage.*

**Keywords:** *Ikat, Passapalli, Sustenance, Motifs, Design, Colour.*

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## 1. Introduction

'IKATS' are often symbols of status, wealth, power and prestige. Perhaps because of the difficulty and time required to make 'IKATS', some cultures believe the cloth is imbued with magical powers. If it is not impossible but it is too difficult to confirm where the IKKAT technique first originated. But there is certain footprint that the technique of IKKAT was still before 12th century in Orissa.

'IKAT' or Ikat is a weaving technique and originated in Asia, in which a pattern is created from tie-dyed thread. 'Ikat', is a style of weaving that uses a resist dyeing process similar to tie-dye on either the warp or weft before the threads are woven to create a pattern or design. A double Ikkat is when both the warp and the weft are tie-

dyed before weaving. If the textile industry has reached to a considerable advanced arena till today no attempt has been made to mechanize the tie-dye process as it has some specialty inside it which needs high human skill.

'IKAT' means "to tie" or "to bind" in the Malay language and has the same root as the words dekat ("close"), lekat ("to stick"), pikkat ("to catch") etc. The word Ikkat has the same meaning in all of the south Indian languages but there may be no relation. Through common usage, the word has come to describe both the process and the cloth itself. Ikkats have been woven in different countries all over the world. In Central and South America, Ikkat is still common in Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala and Mexico. In the 19th century, the Silk Road desert oasis of Bukhara and Samarkand (what is now Uzbekistan in Central Asia) were famous for their fine silk Uzbek Ikat. India, Japan and several South-East Asian countries have cultures with long histories of Ikat production. Double Ikats can still be found in India, Guatemala, Japan and Indonesian islands of Bali and Kalimantan. Like any craft or art form, ikkats vary widely from country to country and region to region.

Generally in Odisha sumptuous Ikat fabrics are seen having floral pattern which involves excellent skilled hand and these fabrics are of single ikat i.e tie and dye designs developed either in warp or in weft. Most of the Meher weavers of western part of Odisha are famous for weaving of cotton ikat products and some tassar fabrics. Most probably simple spot and line designs (Deuli and Ghagara) were formed on yarn by tying and dyeing a bunch of course weft yarn initially and later floral pattern have been developed.

## 2. Design

Designs may have symbolic or ritual meaning or have been developed for export trade. The present article focuses on Passapalli design (Sakta Design)(Fig:1) developed with Ikkat technique and its diversification in various handloom product. Saktapar is Orrisan name for This refer to check board design that is place through out the field. The decorative end panel has weft ikat designs of duck, fish, lotus, wave patterns and Mythical beasts derived from local temple architecture. Passapalli design is a double ikkat product, developed by the Meher community of western Odisha specially weavers of Bargarh and Subarnapur district. The checker boards are separated with the row of Shankh , Waves , Ghagra & Deuli and duck motif line.



Fig A\*: Passapalli Saktapar Design the panindian board game also called chaupar.

Origin of the designs in Odisha ikkat is not cleared . It is observed that Sakta design has been developed with in 100 years. Nobody knows the name of village and designer who had developed this design. So it is presumed that it was an combined effort of skilled weavers of undivided Sambalpur district/Balangir district.

### 3. Technique of making Bandha

During the process of yarn tie-dye the required design is transferred to a bunch of yarn by tying at the places where the color is not required i.e. for white lines etc. There are some chances which may lead to reduction in strength of tie-dyed yarn have been studied. When a tied bunch of yarn is undergone the process of dyeing the dye solution penetrates into the untying zone and the fibers are easily dyed at that place where as in the tying zone the dye solution cannot penetrate at all so the fibers at that place remain un-dye. Just after dyeing, the bunch of tie-dyed yarn is taken for drying. During drying the untied or dyed portion of the yarn quickly dried up and the fibers come to the normal environmental condition. Proper penetration of dye liquor through the gaps between tied knots on the gaps of yarn groups as per design is to be looked into, otherwise haziness in design formation will be observed.

There are three types of tying method adopted. In the first case the bunch of yarn is tied with the help of only thick cotton threads to prepare the basic outlines of the design. In second case the yarn is tied with the help of special knot and cotton thick threads. In third case the tying is by polythene and cotton thick threads. The second and third types of tying covers more space for resisting than the first case of tying knots which fulfill the purpose of outline preparation.

### 4. General procedure/sequences adopted for preparation of Tie & Dye yarn are :

- Scouring and bleaching in case of cotton/degumming in case of silk
- Yarn grouping which needs specific calculation
- Tying accordingly to the design
- Dying
- Washing and Drying
- Resisting
- Dying
- Washing and dyeing
- Resisting, dyeing, washing and tying for several times as per the shade required.
- Untying (including resisting materials)
- Separation of individual yarn from group.
- Now the Tie & Dye yarn is ready for weaving operations.

### 5. Description:

Saktapar or Passapalli sarees are traditional double ikkat sarees in which border is invariable warp tie and dye, pallu is weft tie and dye and body is in dice pattern both warp and weft tie and dye. The name Pasapalli derived from Passa or gambling game using chess board. Thus these sarees have solid and contrast colour check pattern resembling the chess board.



Fig B\*: Different colour and Motif variation in Passapalli Designs.

But Passapalli designs are double ikkat products as stated earlier from high skilled weavers. Weaving of single ikkat is easier than double ikkat although double ikkat sakta designs are very simple geometric pattern unlike intricate patterns in single Ikkat. The warp and weft patterned yarn are properly set which needs skill and it is time consuming also otherwise the motto of double ikkat i.e. solid colour design will be distorted.

At present many variation and pattern have been introduced in Passapalli (dice based design)



Fig:C\* Passapalli design placed in border, all over body Diagonal crossing and Diamond shape with floral design placed in the center. popularly known as Sambalpuri Ikat fabrics also. Apart from sarees products like Bed sheet/Bed cover, Dress materials, Handkerchiefs, Home furnishings etc. are being woven by the weavers of western parts of Odisha specially from Bargarh district based on Passapalli motifs. Among the weavers village of Bargarh district perhaps Barpali village became more popular in ikkat weaving where many master weavers are seen. Shashidhar Meher is famous weaver and designer of Bargarh awarded with Sant Kabir Award in handloom field.



Fig. D\* Red Orange Black Colours with different placement of Passapalli motif combined with Geomatic and wavy patterns.

## 6. Master artisans' contribution:

Master artisans contributed largely in bring diversification in the design and products for its sustenance. Gangadhar Meher, the great Odia poet (1866-1924) who has engaged himself in weaving profession during his early carrier has mentioned many designs and products of his time or before his poems refer to Sambalpuri Chandua, Hansabali Kapta of Binika village but no reference has been found about Bichitrapuri or Saktapar or Passapalli in his literature or any other literature of that period. Reference available from "Odisha Boyana Kala" by Shri Keshab Chandra Meher (published in 1986 in Odia language) about Saktapar saree from Subarnasambhu WCS Ltd. of Subarnapur district.



Fig: E\* Traditional colour combinations Red and Black & composition in Cotton Sarees with sakta Motifs.

Contribution of Padmashree Krutartha Acharya founder of Sambalpuri Bastralaya and famous cooperative activist of Bargarh for popularization of these designs and along with other Sambalpuri pattern is enormous. Originally Passapalli saree were in cotton but at present Passapalli sarees are both in cotton and silk. Red, black and white colours are seen in traditional Passapalli saree, but now a days Passapalli sarees are of green, black and white, brown, black & white, olive green, black & white are seen with big dice pattern to very small dice pattern.



Fig: F\*. Sakta motif used as central panel and combined with Chakra.

## 7. Conclusion:

Bargarh and Subarnapur have a rich tradition of hand weaving the artistic Passapalli design in silk and cotton. Traditional Passapalli design fabrics are specially woven for festive occasions. These ritualistic fabrics are designed with Dice motif. In spite of the centuries old craft, it is timeconsuming for weavers to create traditional design. As per the qualitative research the simplification in design with various colour combinations can bring revolutionary change in sustainability of the art work ,thus sustaining the livelihood of weavers of western Odisha and preserve cultural heritage.

Thus, the study reaches at the conclusion that that sustenance of any art work is important for the reason of preservation of cultural heritage along with livelihood of weavers. This creates a major challenge to the sustainability of the craft and the livelihood options of the weavers in the long run and the export potential of the state. Design variations, regular supply of quality raw material, adequate marketing support, technological and design intervention with plans for product development are some of the areas along with strengthening of the cooperative sector which need urgent attention for sustaining the craft and to preserve the culture and tradition of the hand weaving craft of the area.

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\*Source of Photographs of Sakta Designs and its various patterns: Sri Sashidhar Meher, Sri Ramakrishna Meher of Bargarh, Boyanika