

SUJNI EMBROIDERY

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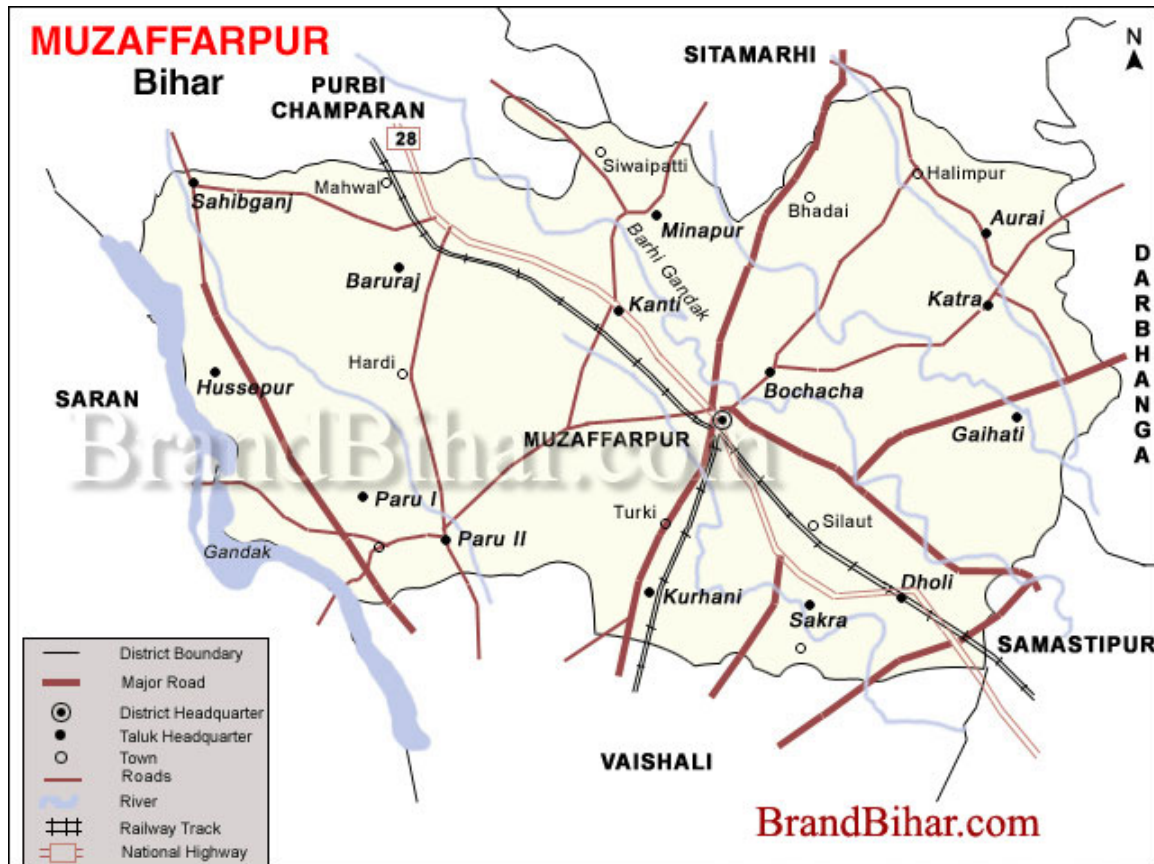
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1. Map of the craft cluster



Location of the Craft Cluster

Mahila Vikas Sahyog Samiti
 South of Chakkar Maidan
 P.O.- Hasna
 Via- Bhocha
 Pin-843104
 Distt.-Muzaffarpur
 Bihar

Location of Adithi/ Plan Projects Office

West of Prabhat tara School
 South of Chakkar Maidan
 Muzaffarpur
 Pin-842001
 Bihar

2. Introduction

The *Sujni* of Bihar is very similar to the *Kanths* of Bengal. Initially *Sujni* was made for traditional purposes. At the time of child birth, patches of different coloured

cloth from old saris were sewn together with a simple running stitch to make a quilt called *Sujni*.

But *Sujni* production had virtually disappeared until it was revived in 1988 by ADITHI and its products adapted to urban market. ADITHI works through the Mahila Vikas Sahyog Samiti (MVSS), a small autonomous society, based in Bhusura Dist. of Mujaffarpur, Bihar.

The difference between *Sujni* and *Kantha*

Sujni is very similar to *Kantha* because both are made of old materials and embroidered with the thread unpicked from borders of saris. But they differ in techniques:

- In *Sujni*, running stitch worked in straight line but in *Kantha* they use spiral, circular and conical forms.
- In *Sujni* the outline of the motifs are done by chain stitch in dark colour but in *Kantha* out lines are done by running stitch.
- In *Sujni* the motifs are filled with running stitch and rest of the area is also embroidered by the running stitch with the same base colour thread but in *Kantha* only motifs are filled.

3. History

The history of this craft dates back to 18th century. People at that time utilized old materials like saris or dhotis to make quilts and other utilitarian products for new born babies. The design of these products interprets a mother's emotion and imagination regarding her baby. In these quilt the design depicts the mother's dream for her new born.



[Photograph: *Sujni* embroidery on the quilt]

It is made by old materials like saris or *dhotis*. Saris or *dhotis* in this area are predominantly white and borders are in black or red or blue and sometimes yellow or blue. Three or four section of saris or *dhotis* are laid on top of each other and than quilted with the thread unpicked from borders of saris or *dhotis*. The filling of the motifs is done by simple running stitch and the out line of the motif is usually done in chain stitch in dark colours filled with running stitch.

3. Sujni production in India

Sujni is practiced in different part of Bihar like Patna, Madhubani, Muzaffarpur

4. Producer communities

Initially expecting mothers of all the communities use to make *Sujni* for their child. But now women of all community, mainly below the poverty line are engaged in this craft.

Nirmala davi was the first women to take the initiative in the *Sujni* project under the Mahila Vikas Sahyog Samiti. Today about 600 women from 22 villages around Bhusura are working under this project.

5. Raw material

Cotton

- **SALITA:** It is used as base of the embroidery. Salita is a very good quality cotton and mainly used for export. Salita is 75 Rs per meter.
- **WHITE OR COLOURED MARKEEN:** This is not of very good quality and mainly used for the exports market. Markseen is 30 Rs per meter.
- **CASEMENT:** It is used for wall hanging and cushion cover.

Tussar silk

It is used for saris, dupattas, or dress materials.

Embroidery Thread

- **MOON THREAD:** Moon thread is used for back ground filling. The color of the thread is similar to the base colour.
- **RANGOLI OR ANCHOR THREAD:** It is used for filling of the motif and the out line of the motif. Per reel price is 1.80 Rs and the box price is 25 Rs.

6. Tools used

- **NEEDLE:** 9 number needle is used for embroidery.
- **FRAME:** Frame is used for tightening the cloth. It helps in avoiding the wrinkles.
- **SCISSORS:** is used for giving finishing touch and cutting the extra knots and threads.
- **INCHTAPE:** Inch tape issued for measuring the cloth and marking when design is drawn.

7. Process of *sujni* embroidery:

Following steps are followed during the making of *Sujni*:

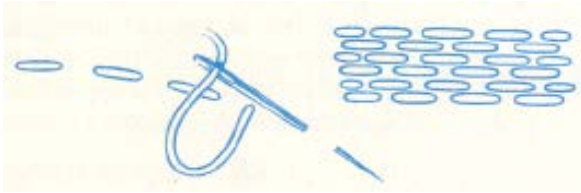
- **DRAWING AND TRACING:** The out line of design is traced or drawn directly on to the cloth by the women. Stories, compositions and colour combination are worked out by the women on their own.



craftmark
Hand made in india

[Photograph: Women doing *sujni* embroidery]

- **EMBROIDERY:** The back ground is filled with the fine running stitch with thread whose colour is similar to the back ground. It gives a wavy effect. Chain stitch usually in black, brown and red thread is done for the main out line of the motif and the design is then filled with running stitch in coloured threads. *Sujni* embroidery is very simple but requires a lot of patience and time. The smaller items can be made individually and to make large bed sheets or quilts, three or four women work together, starting from different ends approaching towards the centre.



[Photograph: Technique of Sujni Embroidery]

- **FINISHING:** In this process all the extra threads or knots are cut from the edges to give it better finishing.
- **WASHING AND CALANDRING:** When the embroidery work is finished then the article is properly washed and then calandered.
- **PACKAGING AND LABELLING:** Finished products are properly labelled with the brand name 'Sujni' and price tags. They don't have special packaging for the product, if they give special packaging, the cost would increase.

8. Range and uses of the product

In *Sujni* embroidery artisans make bed sheet, cushion cover, wall hanging, sari, dupatta, suit, top, kurta pajama, shirt and bag. *Sujni* products are used for decorative as well as utilitarian purposes.

9. Marketing

With the improvement in marketing facilities and assistance from ADITHI, the market of *Sujni* has grown from national level to international level. Now *Sujni* can be seen in local haats, as well as in exhibitions, design stores, export stores. They are earning a lot from the exposures they received from craft fairs, exhibition overseas, and at national level also with the brand name '**Sujni**'.

- **FINANCIAL MARKETING ASSISTANCE:** In marketing, Sky Morisan was first lady who supported *Sujni* embroidery in export market. And also in National market *Sujni* embroidery is supported by Government and NGOs.
- **LABOUR COST:** Because of the intricacy in the work, labor cost of *Sujni* is very high. It is 10 paise per square inch. A bed sheet's (60*90) labor cost is Rs. 1500 (for October 2004) approximately.

Now *Sujni* has become a product for Niche market. In India only some people are able to buy this craft and mainly it is made for export market.

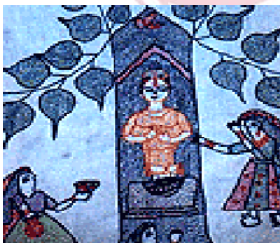
Differentiation in price in national and international market

- One bed sheet (60*90) which in India cost 1700 Rs. (for October 2004) in export market it is about 5400 Rs. (for October 2004).
- One bed sheet (100*100) which in India cost 3000 Rs.(for October 2004) in export market it is about one lakh.

10. Changes in recent years

- **TECHNOLOGY:** Initially in *Sujni* they used old materials like sari or *dhoti* .Different layers were sewn together to make the whole but today only one sheet of new materials like salita, markeen, casement and tusser silk is used.
- **DESIGN:** Initially the design used to depict daily life, flowers, trees, flying birds, fishes, elephants with rider, deities whose attributes are reflected in various ways- the energy emanating from Durga manifesting it self through quality of the hair of the tiger on which she rides.

But today design depict details of village life and Hindu epics, social issues like female infanticide, election violence, education of girl, scenes of domestic abuses dominate the designs. Lessons of health care, parables about environment and images of women struggling for their right are very empowering. This is very interesting and encouraging because it comes from Bihar, where dowry cases and instances of female infanticide are widely prevalent.



[Photographs: Different motives]

- **MARKET:** Initially *Sujni* was made only for personal use but today *Sujni* has created a national and international market. However, *Sujni* is facing lot of competition from *Kantha* and other embroidery crafts.



[Photograph: Old Design]



[Photograph: New Design]

WOMEN STATUS: Today *Sujni* craft is seen as an important source of income for women. It has also played a major role in rural society.

Initially, women rarely left their homes, men and women did not interact at all and physical violence against women was common. Now because women are working and are becoming independent they move around, interact with men and protest against abuse and ill-treatment.

11. Problems faced by the craftsmen

- In Bihar flood is a major problem and poor people suffer a lot due to lack of basic infrastructural facilities.
- Bhusara and surrounding villages are only practicing *Sujni* as they are getting financial and marketing assistance from ADITHI. But in the remaining areas the craft is dying due to lack of money and other basic necessities.
- Lack of education is also a main problem for this craft, the artisans don't know how to market their products.

12. Reference

We have collected main information related to *Sujani* embroidery from Adithi/Plan project, Muzaffarpur with the help of Ms. Poornima Devi.

- Adithi/Plan Project
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South of Chakkar Maidan
Muzaffarpur - 842001
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13. Interview of the contact person:



[Photograph: Ms. Poornima Devi]

Poornima Devi a 34 years old social worker, works for women empowerment in Muzaffarpur under an NGO ADITHI. ADITHI a voluntary agency based in Patna, the capital of Bihar, has done path-breaking work in the revival of *Sujni*, and in providing a market for the products. ADITHI works in Muzaffarpur through the Mahila Vikas Sahyog Samiti (MVSS), a small, autonomous society, based in Bhusura. Ms. Poornima Devi is working for Mahila Vikas Sahyog Samiti's *Sujni* project. She has organized many training programs through ADITHI.