

CHAPTER-1

INTRODUCTION

Indian sub-continent has been bestowed with the reserves of the rich tradition of textile crafts. Over a millennium, these luxurious textiles shower vibrant colours and intricate patterns, making a remarkable and exclusive fashion statement. These are repositories of the extensive narratives of demographic cultural imprints, the people, their creative aspirations, societal customs, beliefs, lifestyles, and art. The traditional crafts are often innate expressions of the artists involved in their making. India having a rich ancient and cultural history, has several such craft treasures and artisans. These ancient Indian artisans, who practiced crafts were not only masters of their art, but also skilled and meticulous in techniques, combined with artistic expressions reflected in the craft, were blessed with creativity. They often engaged in these crafts with long years of practicing a particular craft, through their life spans and most of the times passing it from one generation to another. This artisanal life span engaged in craft practices often bestowed to master the craft skills and techniques, which resulted in beautiful design outcomes in form of artifacts with valued possessions. These beautiful artifacts often caught the attention of foreign travelers, who came as traders and disguised rulers. The variety in Indian craft traditions, was also supported by Indian land, being rich in its flora and fauna and bestowed with an environment that supported varied and substantive natural resources. These availabilities of rich resources also marked the generation of craft engagements as livelihoods. This enabled the emergence of varied kinds of artisanal professions which encouraged people to engage in a variety of creative professions. Since ancient times people have been occupied with a variety of professions, related to textiles namely spinning, weaving, textile surface decorations by embroidery, painting, printing, and dyeing. Their meticulous engagement and well-perfected skills enabled them to create the most magnificent masterpieces, which were reminiscent of the glorious past, narrating the story of their exuberance. These artifacts were instrumental in preserving untold stories and served as an effective means of communication and reflection of the social and cultural life of the past. The abundant availability of resources and unusual artistic skills of the artisans then, enabled them to create the most magnificent masterpieces, which are bespoke and reminiscent of the glorious past, narrating the story of their exuberance.

Amongst the popular textile traditions of woven, printed, painted, and embroidered textiles, the most popular tradition of India was the knowledge of resist and mordant painting. This technique of painting with natural dyes originates from about 5000 years BC. (Vadarajan. L 1982)

The earliest mordant and resist-dyed textile remains, recovered from the archaeological excavations was the fustat textile fragment, dating back to the 15th century BC, India, which was discovered in Egypt, which illustrates the resist designs, depicting *geese (hamsa) around the lotus petal*, much evidence to the well-perfected painting technique and popularity of these textiles across the globe. There were various excavated samples of mordant and resist painted and dyed textile remains, which were excavated at Fustat, Egypt, whose carbon dates to the early 13th and 14th centuries. These remains were evidences of the origin of the mordant and resist painting techniques to ancient times and their demand across the globe. (Barnes R,1990.)

Indian ancient civilizations had a rich tradition of using natural dyes derived from various sources such as plants, minerals, and even insects. Numerous examples from ancient Indian literature attest to the dyeing methods using natural dyes and their colour chemistry used in traditional textile. These dyes were not only used for coloring fabrics but also for painting, cosmetics, and other decorative purposes. Various dyes used in Indian mainlands were from various plant and animal sources namely Madder, indigo, turmeric, henna etc all from natural sources. The techniques for extracting and using these dyes were passed down through generations and were often closely guarded secrets within artisan communities. The knowledge and expertise of dyeing techniques and colorishen technology were passed down orally and through practical experience, resulting in a diverse and sophisticated tradition of textile arts and crafts. These colour application on textiles resulted in growth of various craft communities involved namely Printers, a community of Block Printers, Painters, Dyers and Resist applicators. There were specialized guilds of craftsperson specializing each skill and practicing them specifically.

The popularity of Indian culture in the past was due to an amalgamation of rich heritage in forms of arts, crafts, and highly skilled artisans. The Indian Chintz, also known as Coromandel Chintz, made history, due to its popularity and craze

worldwide. These textiles were hand painted by application of mordant using, a bamboo pen referred to as 'kalam', along with resist dyeing (natural dyes) technique on cottons. This form of painting was very popular around the late seventeenth and eighteenth century and was mainly made for foreign export only. In a few pieces of late eighteenth century, block printing was combined with hand-painted ones (Crill R, 2008). These even in their design marvel were often referred to as inferior or less superior qualities as the best were very intricately patterned and perfectly painted and dyed. "Send only the finest of the painted chintz" (John I,1978). The motif and designs achieved by mordant painting differed greatly and there were many qualities, the best ones had many details in a single motif, while the inferior ones were either combined with block printing or only block printed ones. Here the finest pieces which were sought and in demand for global trade. The chintz textiles which had intricate details painted in the motif using mordant and resist techniques and required very fine painting skills using multi-stage dyeing processes with repeated mordant-resist application. This made the entire process very elaborate with endless effort and time-consuming. But these were extremely sought pieces. The ones that were very intricate and fine and few were almost extinct and hence aroused the curiosity to study it in depth and revive it.

Chintz textiles in the realm of designs, possess the enduring charm and cultural significance originating from the Indian subcontinent. These have traversed through centuries, captivating connoisseurs with their vibrant hues, intricate patterns, and rich history. At the heart of its allure, lies a meticulous design configuration that intertwines traditions with innovation, making it a timeless emblem of artistic excellence. One of the elements that strengthens the ability to interpret them is the symbolism and variations of the designs. This endures the availability of a rich collection resulting design repositories, which can be subjected to the usage in present and future times.

These textiles were renowned for its vivid color palette, characterized by bold hues created using indigo, madder red, and saffron yellow. The rich hues were derived from natural sources, including plant dyes and mineral extracts, lending an organic richness to the fabric. The interplay of colors added depth and dynamism to Chintz designs, evoking a sense of joy and vitality.

However, there exists a major connotation around the usage of the word “chintz” due to the vast period of its existence from the late seventeenth to the early eighteenth century and regional references and its evolution. This resulted in arrays of development in the design on these textile pieces, due to various factors and cultural influences which is addressed in this thesis.

Chintz textiles originated in India, around Southeast Asia –Coromandel Coast, during the seventeenth and eighteenth century and these caught the attention of foreign traders and were mainly made for exports to Europe and South Asian countries like Indonesia, Japan and Thailand for the exchanges of peppers and spices. (Irwin. J,1970). This cloth was mainly used as currency by Europeans in many South Asian countries. (Guy, J.1998). Indian chintz, were also known as calico, has a long and rich history that dates back to ancient times. It was highly prized by European traders during the age of exploration and became a symbol of wealth and luxury in the West.

The main appeal of Indian Chintz textiles to European buyers in the 18th and 19th centuries was the brilliance and fastness of colour (Irwin. J and Brett. K, 1970), the technology they lacked in their country. Their knowledge of cotton cultivation, spinning and weaving was not as advanced as India.(Clive, E,2019). Hence the Chintz technique using mordant and resist hand painting, with natural dyes on cotton, creating fine and detailed design, evoked immense curiosity and interest of many foreign traders and travellers. Indian chintz played a crucial role in the global trade network, particularly during the 17th and 18th centuries when it was exported to Europe and other parts of the world. It contributed to the flourishing trade between India and European powers, such as the Dutch, English, and Portuguese. These people often recorded the detailed process and technique and created rich documentation for their reference which today serves as an important reference for the study of these. The technique practiced then, was an interesting amalgamation of knowledge, skill and ingenuity in understanding the properties of materials and their behaviour with reference to the natural environment by the master craftsman involved.

However, Chintz became very popular globally making India known on the world map, but the industrial revolution in Europe forced their officers to lay a ban over their exports. “*Send No more Chintz*”.(Guy, J.,2013) This led to a decrease in demand for Indian chintz and leading to gradual extinction. As the chintz export from India

was banned, it led to the downfall in chintz demand and the gradual extinction of these textiles along with the meticulously perfected techniques involved in making them. In 1958, Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay tried to revive this technique and termed it as the “Kalamkari”. This led to the evolution of two different styles related to this ancient craft based on the place it was revived, namely Kalamkari from Sri-Kalahasti and Machilipatnam. The researcher observed that there is a difference between the traditional chintz and revived styles of kalamkari. So, the researcher also attempted to retrieve the rich history of the Indian Chintz, with its main characteristic features, and technique. It was also felt that here was a deep need to study the different design configurations and their symbolism and how the entire craft has developed. Hence the design, layout as well motif development, formation and symbolism of motifs forms an important part of this study. While studying and analysing the existing form of kalamkari there were significant differences observed between the present styles with the ancient traditional forms that were made for exports, which called for an earnest effort in establishing and retrieving the lost identity of the Indian Chintz textile in its original form. In an ever-changing world, Indian Chintz stands as a testament to the enduring power of artistry and craftsmanship. Its intricate design configuration, characterized by floral motifs, vibrant colors, and repeat patterns, continues to captivate audiences worldwide, transcending cultural boundaries and generations. As we celebrate the legacy of Chintz, we recognize its profound impact on the world of design, inspiring admiration and awe for centuries to come. While rooted in tradition, Indian Chintz continues to evolve, embracing modern sensibilities while preserving its timeless elegance of Indian origin. There is a scope where Contemporary designers can reinterpret Indian Chintz motifs in innovative ways, experimenting with scales and proportions, color, and composition to suit diverse aesthetic preferences. From haute couture runways to interior décor, Chintz designs have scope to remain a versatile medium for creative expression, bridging the past with the present. Today, with its powerful designs Indian chintz has a potential to be continued and be valued for its beauty and craftsmanship. It has a prospective application in various fields from fashion and home furnishings, souvenirs, and utility products to art and craft projects. Overall, the history of Indian chintz reflects its journey from a local craft to a globally cherished art form, with its vibrant colors and intricate designs leaving an indelible mark on the world of textiles and design. Indian chintz as a textile embodies

centuries of craftsmanship, cultural exchange, and economic activity. Its significance lies in its historical legacy, cultural influence, role in global trade, impact on fashion, and contribution to the preservation of traditional crafts.

Rationale of the Study

Chintz, though popularly known as textiles, is a fine technique of mordant painting and resist dyeing, using varied natural dyes with kalam. The main feature of this technique is attributed to the development of awestruck and elaborate designs and the technology of painting with natural dyes on cotton. The technique that was once very popular and was the source of economic resources is extinct now. This was due to a very lengthy and time-consuming process in practicing the art, (Fee, S.,2020). These chintz artifacts are now only surviving in museums. These offer a rich narrative of its glorious past and survival till date. It is indeed an imprint, of the rarest and the most perfected technology that is employed in its production. These masterpieces offer an insight of the rarest and finely perfect technology by the master craftsmen during that time. These art and technology were of great asset value to India, which the entire globe looked upon. This offered an opportunity for the export of those fine pieces in exchange for various foreign goods. It gave India a global cross-connect and a significant identity during that time. The magnificent technique has inspired the researcher to study available textile pieces for its designs, the pattern, and the impact chintz trade created in cross-cultural exchanges. Hence identifying the cultural significance of Indian chintz, efforts have been made to preserve and promote this traditional art form. Various strategies were devised to safeguard and develop the identity of Chintz textiles and promote awareness of their historical and artistic value. An attempt is made to explore the revival of the age-old art to that precision. The main objective of this work is in-depth study of Chintz, by documentation of Chintz designs. Exploring the techniques for its revival and studying the revolutions, it establishes in socio-cultural context, which marks Chintz textiles and technique that resulted in global phenomena of connect, transformation and revolution, hence often referred to as the cloth that changed the world. Over time, European textile manufacturers sought to replicate the appeal of Indian chintz. This led to the development of textile industries in countries such as England and France, which

produced their own versions of chintz fabrics using techniques such as block printing and roller printing.

Purpose of the Study

The main feature of the Chintz textile and technique is attributed to the development of awe-struck and elaborate designs and the technology of painting with natural dyes on cotton. These textiles were an important source to procure economic revenue and resources. Hence was referred to popularly as “trade cloth”. This cloth was exported to all over the world and mainly the European countries. It was very popular due to its awe-struck and beautiful design and people were crazy for this fabric. After the Industrial Revolution in Europe their export was banned. This resulted in a decrease in demand for this cloth since it was mainly made for export, and it resulted in the gradual extinction of this textile and the technique. The chintz textile masterpieces that are achieved in museums offer an insight into the rarest and finely perfect technology by the Indian master craftsmen during that time. This craft and technology was of great asset and value to India, which the entire globe looked upon. This allowed exporting these fine pieces in exchange for foreign goods which gave India a global cross-connect and a significant identity during that time. The beautiful textile and its technique have inspired, the researcher to study and attempt to explore the revival of the age-old art and its making to that precision. The researcher planned to study Indian chintz design and establish its distinct identity, revive the technique. The main purpose of this work was the documentation of Chintz, study its history, designs and explore the techniques, for its revival, and create a suitable marketing model for its sustenance.

Objectives

1. To study the origin, evolution and establish identity of Indian chintz textiles
2. To study the role of chintz textiles in the development of the Indian global trade and socio-cultural connect
3. To document and study chintz textiles, with reference to their design
4. To create a craft repository of Indian chintz textile and its techniques
5. To develop and implement craft sustenance model for chintz textiles.

Delimitation

1. Documentation of chintz textiles is limited to chintz textiles which were hand-made in India with the tree of life as the main theme only.
2. The re-creation of samples, design analysis, and product development was limited to the selected pieces from the documentation in the study.

Operational Definitions

- 1) **Chintz:** The term in the study is referred to as textile article as well as technique.
- 2) **Co-Design:** The term applies to equal participation and collaboration where the researcher contributes to the design process and interpretation while the master craft person uses his craft execution skills and knowledge.
- 3) **Focused Group:** A prospective group with artistic skill and interest who can help carrying the art tradition in future design field.
- 4) **Design Anatomy** is a design approach that focuses on the various components of the entire design system. It involves analyzing and understanding the relationships between different components and elements that combine to create a total composition.