

Art that is useful

Nakshi Kantha, quite literally a designed quilt, is and has been a part of our tradition for thousands of years. It is a type of embroidered coverlet made by stitching together cotton cloth layered inside two layers of worn saris, using the print or the border of the sari as a border element as well. It is and has been one of the oldest Bengali art traditions.

There are a variety of designs, many of them traditional, that are stitched onto Nakshi Kanthas. Sometimes the designs are in the form of flowers blooming in a garden, while other times they are the boast more classic motifs such as an array of kalshi (water pitcher) or haat pakha (hand fan). Traditionally, Nakshi Kanthas were used to tell stories, by intricately stitching on entire scenes onto the quilt, much like the tales of raja-rani that our grandmothers used to tell us every night before bedtime.

We pride ourselves on our culture and heritage and the Nakshi Kantha has been an integral part of that for a long time, cherished by generations. The craftsmanship behind this art form takes years to master but the feeling of contentment it brings is absolutely worth it. This Bangladeshi handicraft is exported all over the world and is also very popular with the tourists who take the usable art back home as a souvenir.

Another similarly ageless piece of Bengali culture is the Nakshi Pitha. Made from the regular ingredients used to make most pithas, the specialty of Nakshi Pitha is its intricate design coupled with a pleasant, sweet crispiness. Hours are spent behind getting the naksha (design) of the pitha just right. Starting from the basic floral themes to animals such as birds, elephants and horses, all of these are popular designs for the pitha.

The nature of the work concerning the making of the Nakshi Kantha and Nakshi Pitha is different from most other work that we usually do, for one primary reason. The focus and patience required here are paramount, coupled with the love and passion needed to create something beautiful. Considering them a chore will not bring the same results compared to if you treated these as a craft or hobby. To live uninterrupted working on a piece of passion, wouldn't that be a dream?

Art is but a representation of who we are. We spend our lives speaking our mind, penning our thoughts, portraying our desires in one way or another because creative expression knows no boundaries.

Nakshi Kantha and Nakshi Pitha are thus two such elements that have helped thousands of Bengali women express their inner artists, while also making things of beauty that could be used, eaten, and enjoyed for long!

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