

CHANGES THAT MAKE US #NOWINLIFESTYLE



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The motive behind motifs

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collection was conceptualised from the patterns of shitolpati.

SHOKH-ER-HARI

The brightly painted pot —shokh-er-hari is not only in high-in-demand when the Bengali New Year knocks on the door but also holds religious significance as 'mangal ghats' to Hindus. At present, they are quite rare in the market and perhaps, only a handful of artisans in Rajshahi are still making them.

"The making process has a set of specific techniques and patterns and seldom go beyond those," Khan admitted. Bird, fish

stant innovation, redesigning a traditional motif can be quite a tedious task.

"As a revivalist, I firmly believe that certain aspects of heritage should not be distorted," Khan said. "You can simplify it but not distort."

Craftsmen tend to break down the original design of Jamdani and Tangail saris which absolutely distorts the formation. "In fact, today more and more saris are being woven with jacquard machines instead of by hand, and many motifs and designs are blatant imitations of the patterns found in Indian saris," informs Khan, disappointedly.

forms, and along with it, the source of livelihood for many families.

"There is little innovation in sweetmeat or pitha in stores and the urban crowd usually avoids serving traditional foodstuff unless there's a special occasion," said Khan. While our lifestyles have evidently changed with fast-changing society and advanced technology, there are still many effective ways to hold onto to our traditions.

"Well, firstly, I think the quality of the products that use traditional motifs should be improved to make it more durable and exportable," Khan began. Burning terracotta items for a longer period of time, for instance, can ensure greater durability, and higher investment in such goods could ensure better quality. Khan also believes that every item should have some utility besides its decorative appeal.

Moreover, congestion and environmental pollution are other 21st century nuisances to keep in mind. Motkas (earthen pots) that were previously used to store food or for decorative purposes could now be revamped to be used as planters for some potted greenery.

Furthermore, fast changing lifestyle and higher disposable incomes has led consumers to avoid buying niche goods such as the shitolpati. In Khan's point of view, all rounded support in this sector is crucial to help the dying culture.

"The best way to promote is through exhibitions, awareness and communication with people," Khan elaborates. In her opinion, to revive the living arts of Bangladesh, we ought to take it to the next level and find efficient ways to market the product through creating awareness.

Apart from these, proper archiving and documentation of designs is equally essential to preserve them well so that current and upcoming designers should be able to access them and work on them and be inspired by them en masse.

Photo: Studio Lorenzo, Farhan Ahmed
Photo of motifs provided by Maheen Khan



In the past, nakshi kantha was a storytelling form of embroidery that recorded people's lives and special moments.

and floral motifs are common elements painted on traditional shokh-er-hari.

TERRACOTTA ART

From simple everyday motifs on pots at homes to intricate ornamental patterns in temple interiors, terracotta art was widely used in the past. At this, Khan pointed to a marvellous wooden bench adorned with glazed terracotta tiles that was set by her office window. "While glazed tiles are still not available in Bangladesh, there are some exquisite works done on plain burnt terracotta," Khan remarked.

MONOTONY IN MOTIFS

While sometimes designing requires con-

However, she added that the National Crafts Council of Bangladesh is working to develop a book of 'Shuddha' (pure/genuine) motifs. In Khan's opinion, the best way to add a refreshing touch to a traditional motif is to simplify it without altering its aesthetic form. In this sense, less is actually more.

ARE TRADITIONAL MOTIFS DISAPPEARING?

Although a variety of traditional motifs still hold invaluable significance to our heritage and culture, a handful of factors, primarily lack of sufficient patronage, are leading to the silent demise of many motifs and art



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