

CHAMBA RUMAL (Himachal Embroidery)



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INTRODUCTION

- Himachal, the term derived from Sanskrit where '*Him*' means snow and '*Achal*' means lap, which depicts that the state has abundant snowfall during winters.
- Ruled by Ranas and Thakurs.
- Embroidery was practiced in Pathankot, Chamba and other neighbouring villages like Basohi, Kangra, Kullu and Mandi.
- The embroidery depicted a fine, delicate, perfect manual work called needle miniatures of Himachal or '*Pahari Rumal*'.



- A legend says that a 'rumal' (handkerchief) was embroidered by Bebe Nanki, sister of Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539), and presented to him during his wedding in late 15th century.
- This Rumal had a cream colour base with beautiful human figures, animals like goats and deers, evergreen trees with colorful blossoms.
- This Rumal is still preserved in the Gurudwara of Gurdaspur.
- Romans describe the Embroidery of Chamba as 'needle painting'.
- The facial expressions of the figures are vivid and lively and the bodies are full of movement.
- Pahari craft flourished in 1750s Umeed Singh who was a great lover of art encouraged this art, and this patronity continued with Raja Jit Singh, during 1800s.
- Since then Himachal embroidery is famous as Chamba.

FABRIC

- Traditionally the ground fabric used was of two types:
 - **Unbleached cotton cloth:** light in weight, fine, delicate, semitransparent, manufactured at Sialkot, Amritsar and Ludhiana.
 - Hand spun, hand-woven coarser, relatively heavier **Khaddar**.

Later, unbleached cotton material was replaced by mill made cotton cloth. However, cream or white coloured tassar silk material was also commonly used for making Rumals.

THREADS USED:

- The threads used for embroidery were untwisted pat, which gives:
 - rich effect against dull rustic cotton ground.
 - produced an impression of smooth, glossy gorgeous surface enrichment.

At present the embroidery is done with twisted silk or chiffon threads because of low strength and handling problems of pat thread

COLORS USED:

Infinite shades and tints of bright, brilliant and contrasting

colours are used. Most commonly used colours are:

- Red, Yellow, Green, Blue, Crimson, & Purple
- Blue colour is always used for Krishna whenever he is bare chested and crimson for feet.
- Red, blue and white : for Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh.
- Yellow, green, dark pink or crimson: for Gopis.
- Outline of the motif is always worked with black.

STITCHES USED:

- Embroidery is done with double satin stitch done in both right and wrong side, where the effect is reversible.
- It is done so finely that not only the background is hardly visible but very difficult to identify the right side.
- The work is never started with knot but with a back stitch.

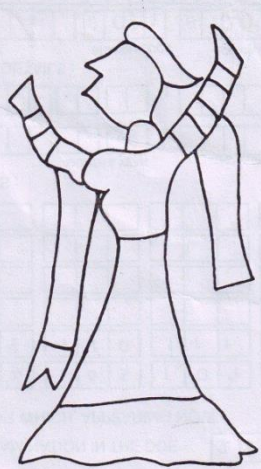


MOTIFS USED

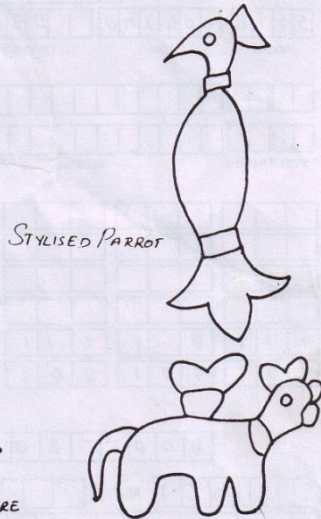
Motifs in Himachal Embroidery consists of the following:

- ***Animals:*** like leaping tigers, running goats, cantering horses, jumping deer along with cows, calves, horses, elephants, snakes.
- ***Birds:*** parrot, peacocks, ducks, and swan
- Sometimes these motifs are used in single to fill up the empty places.
- Single bird signified a sad, solitary or waiting for the male, a couple symbolized union of two souls.

CHAMBA MOTIFS

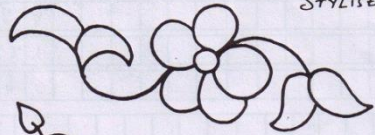


STYLISED HUMAN FIGURE

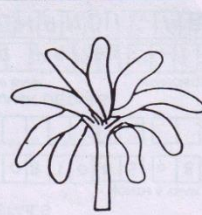


STYLISED PARROT

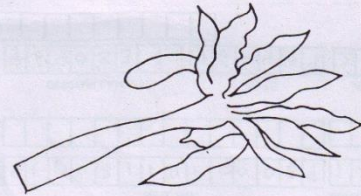
STYLISED BULLOCK



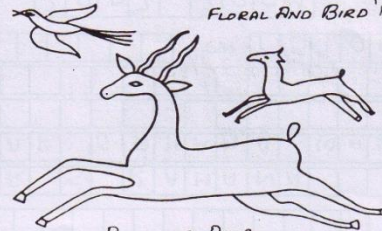
STYLISED PEACOCK



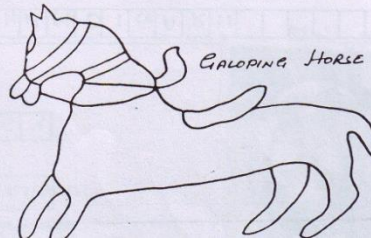
VARIOUS TREES



FLORAL AND BIRD 'BAAN'



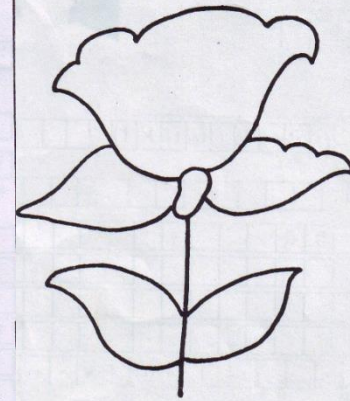
PRANCING DEER



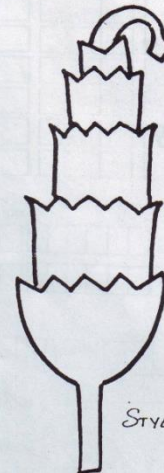
GALOPING HORSE



LOTUS MOTIF



FLORAL MOTIFS USED ON CHOLIS, FANS, CAPS ETC.



STYLISED CONE AND TREE MOTIFS

TRANSFER OF DESIGN ON FABRIC

- Hand drawing or free style mode was used for outlining the motif.
- Women drew figures of their own creations.
- Earlier charcoal was used to trace the outlines, but now tracing with paper and oil method is used.
- Oil method consists of rubbing cotton wool dipped in blue (neel) and Kerosene oil on design sheets which are perforated. The Kerosene seeps on to the fabric and thus transfers the design.

MAIN THEMES IN THE EMBROIDERY

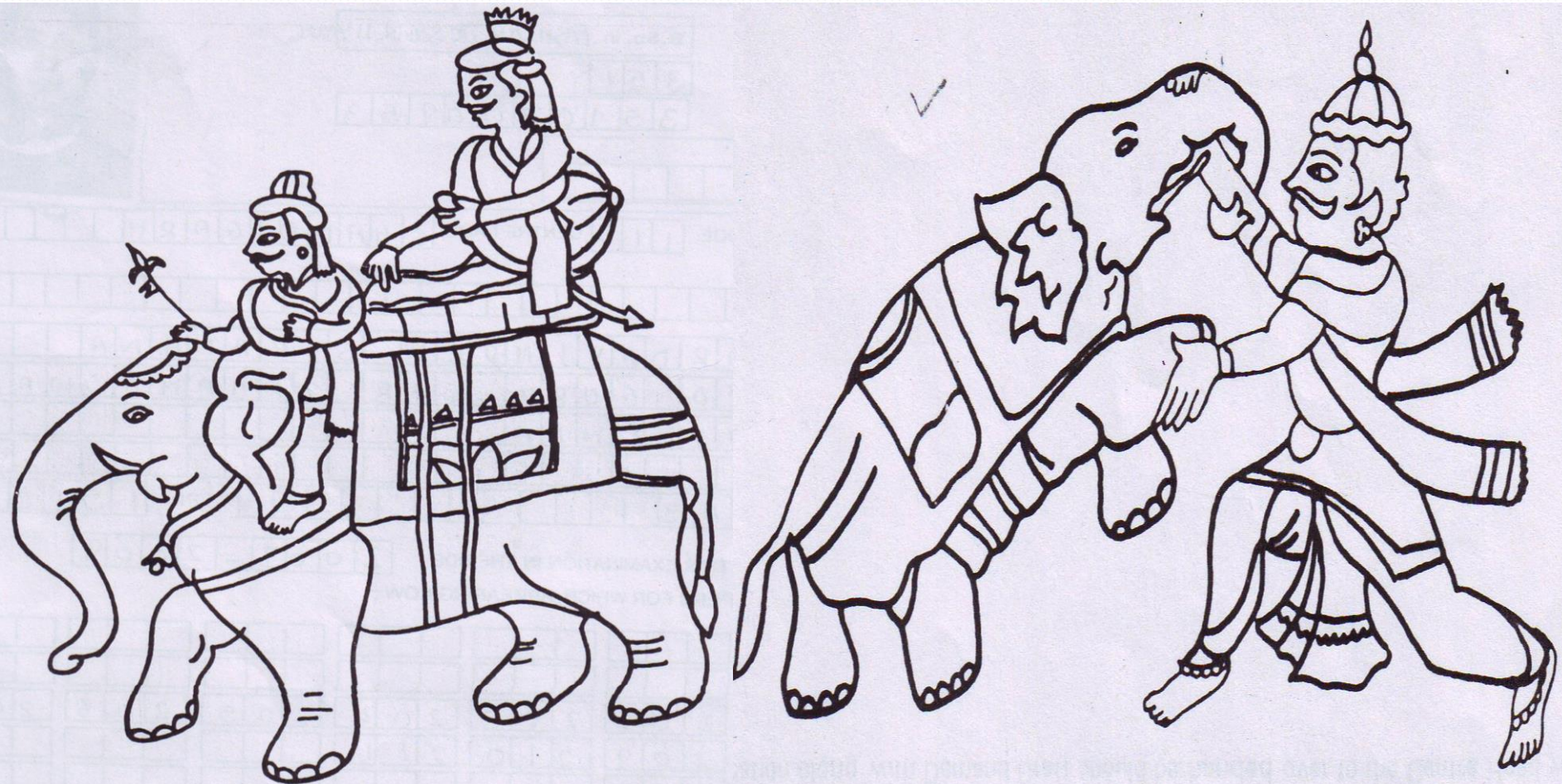
- Great influence of mythology is seen on the themes of paintings and embroidery. Along with the themes of mythology, it is observed that Raga Ragini and Baramasa are also used abundantly.
- The Rumals display other folk styles like marriage of Krishna and Rukmimi, Vishnu in a lotus, Ganesha, Vishnu- Laxmi, Pahari women playing music instruments, men smoking hukka.

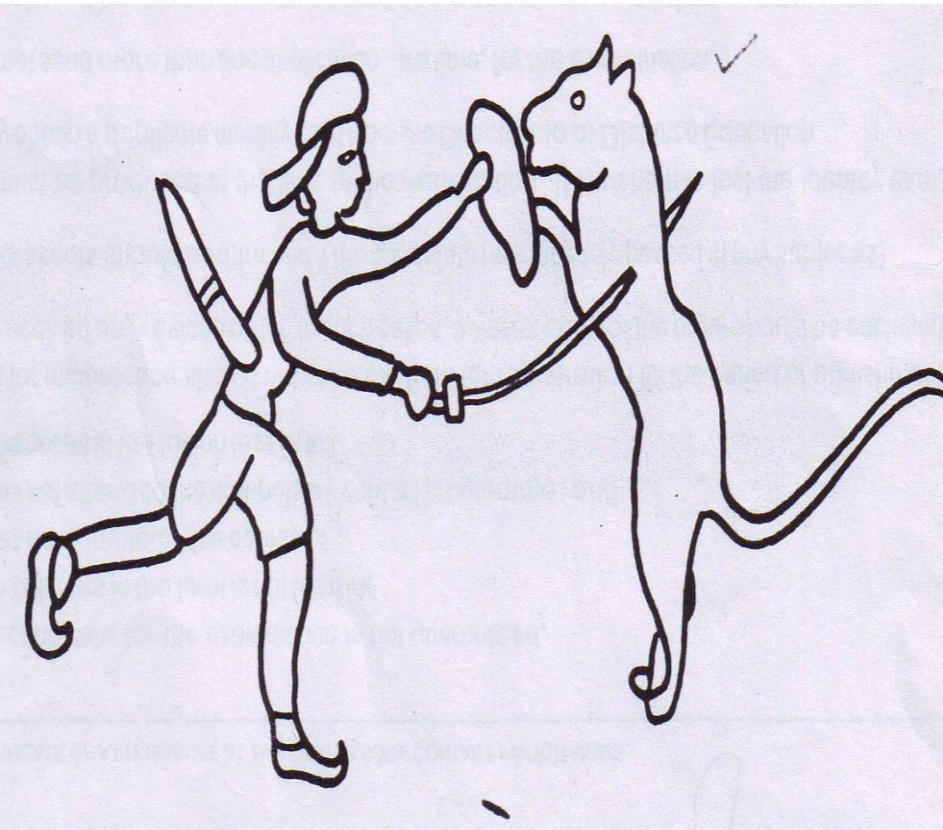
SOME OF THE THEMES ARE:

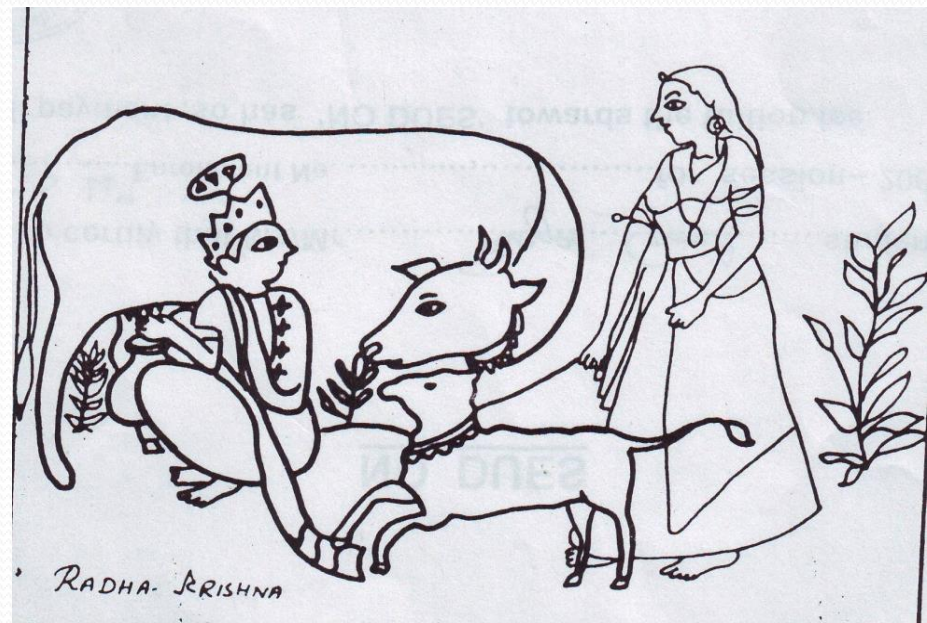
- **RASMANDALA:** Centre of the theme depicts Lord Vishnu sitting in the padma, the lotus has four arms, each holding a padma (lotus bud), a gadaa, shankh (conchshell) and his weapon, the sudarshan chakra.
- **KALIYA DAMANA:** Krishna killing the horrified kaliya kalinga sarpa (serpent), who lived in Jamuna river
- **SAMUNDRA MANTHANA:** the ocean was churned by Devas (gods) and Asuras (demons) using a serpent, vasuki as rope and mountain Meru as the churning rod. Both nectar and poison were the products of Samundra Manthana.

- **RUKMANI HARANA:** The elopement of Rukmini and her marriage is the zest of the theme. It is an elaborate theme, embroidered on Rumal depicting the various ceremonial activities performed on one part and preparation of Rukmani wedding on the other.
- **BATTLE OF KURUKSHETRA:** Mahabharat is one of the great epics of India and many themes of this epic is chosen for Embroidery. However the most commonly found one's are the Battle of Kurukshetra and exile of pandavas.
- **RAGA RAGINI:** The popular raga ragini themes that expresses the mode, mood, time, day, season, month during which the particular raga is being sung.


CHAMBA THEMES









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- **MINJAR MELA JALUS:** ‘Minjar’ the tassels, ‘mela’ the fair and ‘jalus’ the procession, depicts the procession during the mela. Minjar mela is very famous festival of Chamba.
 - **THE GUJJAR THEME:** The muslim gujjar women usually carried out embroidery locally, taking all the motifs from nature except human and bird figures. However it has resemblance with phulkari of Punjab.

PRESENT STATUS

Chamba Rumals are versatile in their utility, used as covers while offering gifts in the mandir, either to diety or priest. Rumals were also used to cover the gifts that were exchanged during weddings. Today according to demand fashion trends and availability, the ground fabric employed being terrycot, organdy, linen, poplin and muslin of either white or light colour. The embroidery is done with twisted silk or cotton threads. Pat has been replaced because of its low strength and difficulty in handling. Variety of household articles are also produced now a days.

REFERENCES:

- Traditional Embroideries of India : Shailza.V. Naik
- Indian Embroideries: Savitri Pandit
- [www.google.c.om/ chamba_rumals](http://www.google.c.om/chamba_rumals)



THANK YOU