

KANTHA- EMBROIDERY OF BENGAL



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Kantha is a type of embroidery popular in Bangladesh and in West Bengal, India.

- Kantha or Kantha is a sanskrit word meaning 'rags'.
- It can rightly be called the recycling art.
- Kantha evolved out of necessity to drape or protect against cold.



ORIGIN & HISTORY

- A legend tells the story that the Kantha owes its origin to Lord Buddha and his disciples. They used to cover themselves with rags thrown away by people, which were patched and stitched together.
- Pictorial style of quilts also known as Bengalla quilts were made at Satgaon which is about 23 miles from Calcutta and these quilts existed because of Portuguese patronage.
- According to Dr. Stella Kramrisch, Kantha is of ancient origin as only one dated Kantha is known and the year of its manufacture is 1875.



Image courtesy Rachel Brocalo

Process
of
Kantha
making



PROCESS OF KANTHA MAKING

- The fabric used for kantha are old discarded sarees or dhoti pieces. The base material was always white thin cotton for kanthas.
- The discarded old sarees are placed on top of each other and are held neatly together in layers in running stitches.
- The edges are folded and tacked together.
- The field is filled in with fine quilted work with white thread.
- The stitch used is simple Running stitch but it is the way it has been used that makes it extraordinary.

- The kantha embroidery combines the technique of quilting and embroidery.
- The artist depicts beautiful designs from legends and stories by means of embroidery.



- The work is very neat and done without tracing or drawing.
- It is said that it takes six months to one year to prepare a kantha.



HOME OF KANTHAS

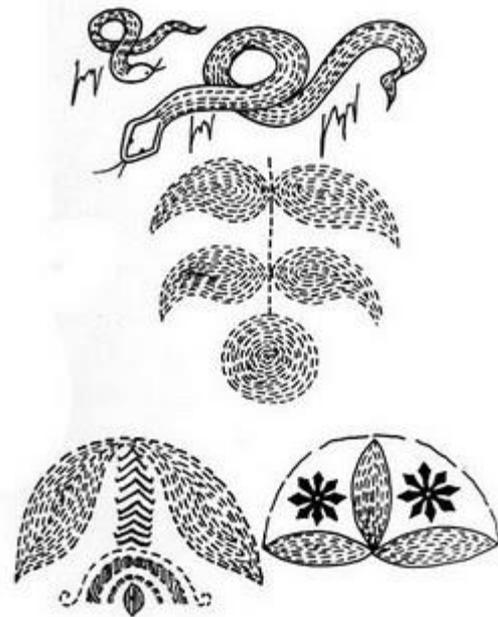
- Kanthas were prepared both in East and West Bengal.
- They were mostly done in Jessore, Faridpur, Khulna and Mymensing all in East Bengal, now in Bangladesh.

WEST BENGAL

- In rural Bengal, Kanthas are made even today by women for their personal use. But designs are not so elaborate as those of earlier days.



Motifs used:



The motifs used are human and animal figure, floral and foliage symbols. The central design is usually a lotus with a variable number of petals. Tree of life, birds and fishes, boats, chariots, palanquins, kalkas, creepers, floral scrolls and spirals are also some of the popular motifs. The design of kantha are also taken from day today life, from folk stories and mythology.

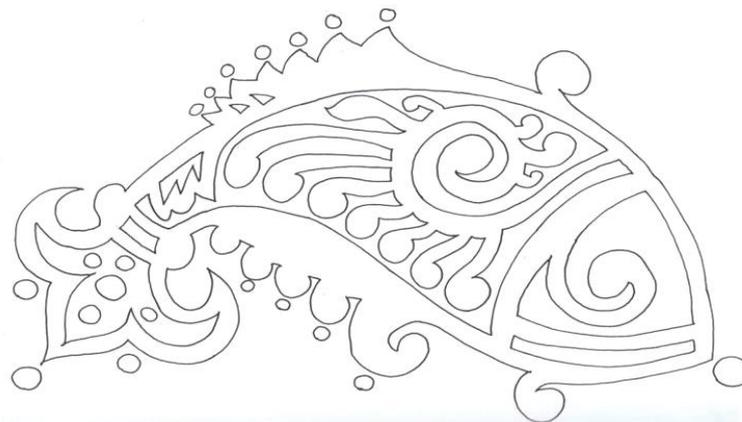


KANTHA MOTIFS

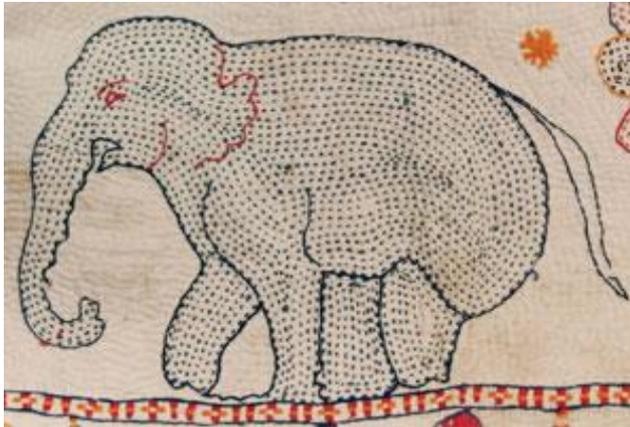
- Lotus flower



Fishes

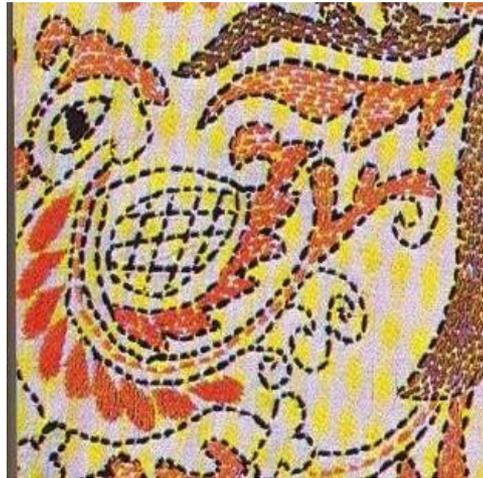


Animal figures (Tiger, Elephant, deer etc.)





- Birds like Parrot, Peacock, swan etc.



Human Figures and Mythological stories

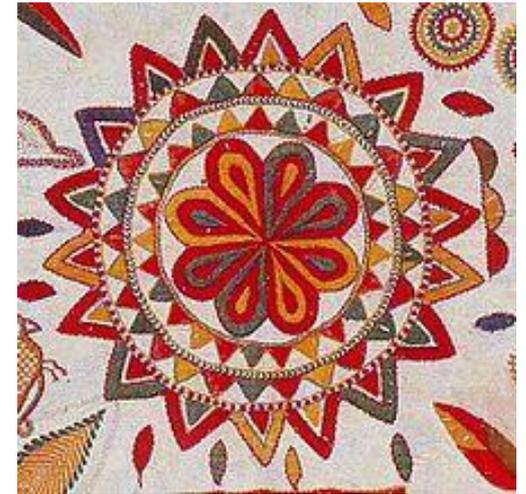




▪ Trees, Floral and Foliage symbols , Boats, Chariots, palanquin etc.



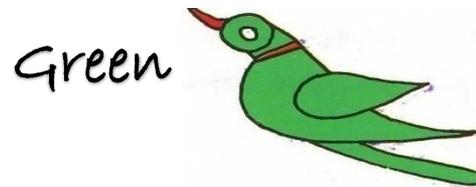
- The borders of Creepers, Floral Scrolls, Spirals and several linear devices
- Kalkas and Geometrical patterns



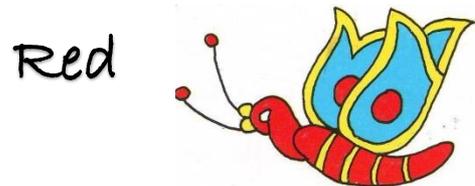
THREADS FOR KANTHA

Threads to be used are taken out from the borders of the discarded sarees which are used for the base.

The colours of the threads used are



Yellow



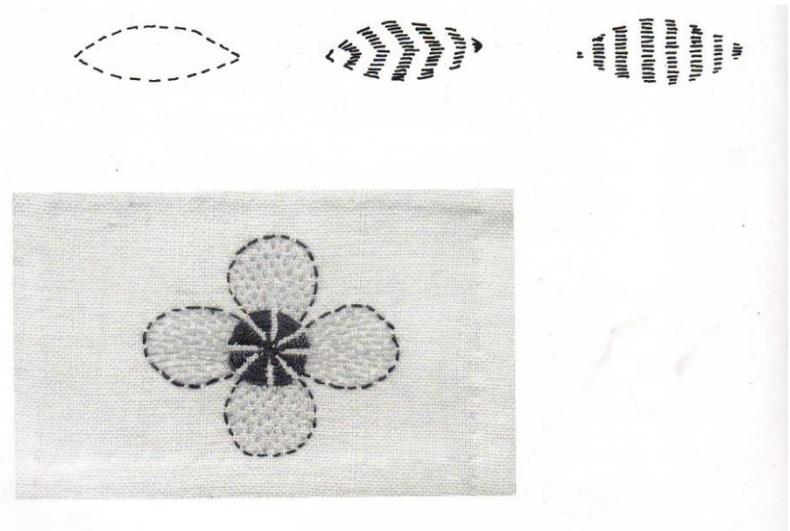
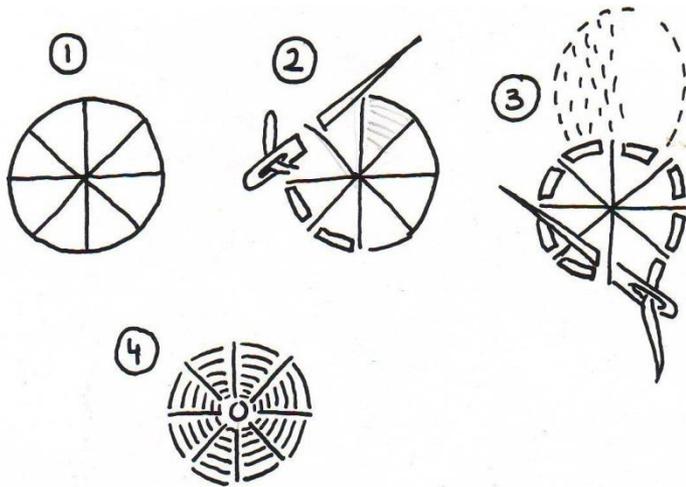
Black



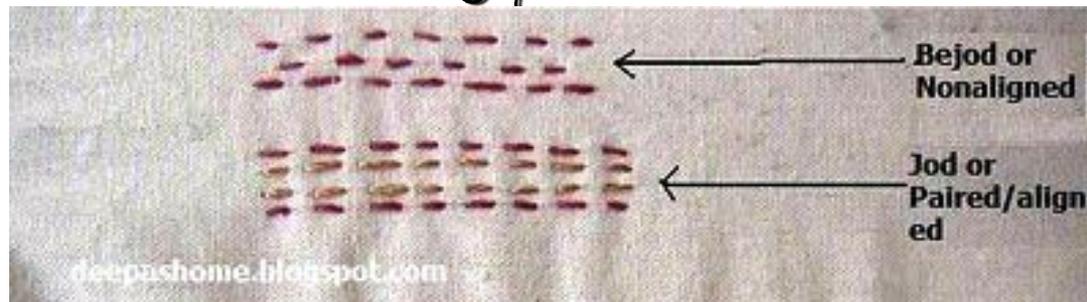
- The outer layers of the fabric are mostly light or white colour to enable embroidery to stand out.
- Today instead of threads drawn from borders, bright coloured silk or bright embroidery strands are used.

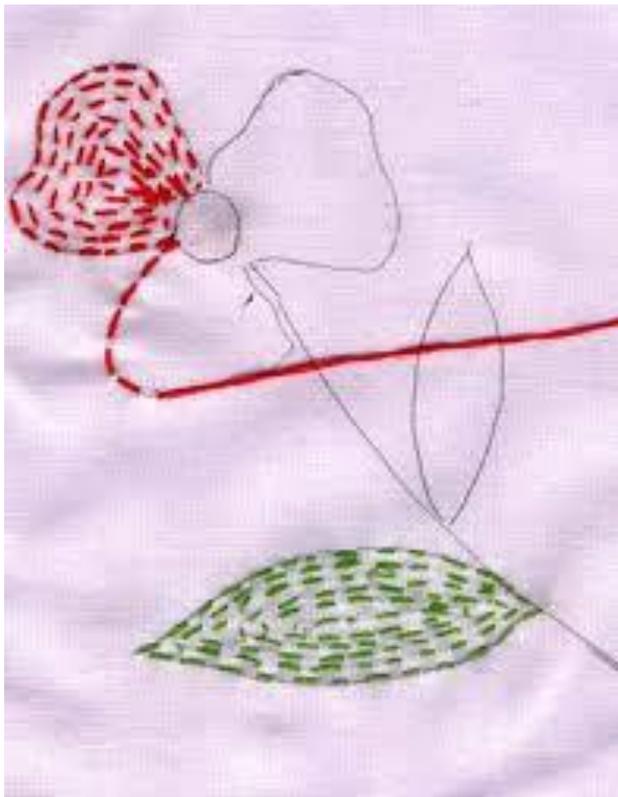
STITCHES FOR KANTHA

- The most common stitch used is very small darning stitch giving dotted lines.

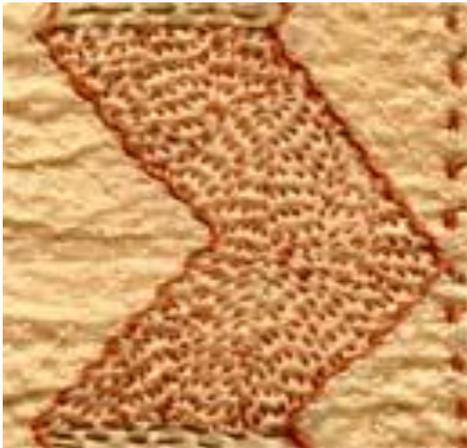


- For the border, stem stitches are used.
- Back stitches are used for continuous lines.
- The details in Kantha are often filled with running stitch, though herringbone chain, satin and blanket stitches may also be used.
- The outlines of the design in generally in dark blue, filled with stitches of same colour or contrasting colours.
- After the design has been embroidered, any areas left are filled with stitches in white running parallel to the outlines of the motifs.

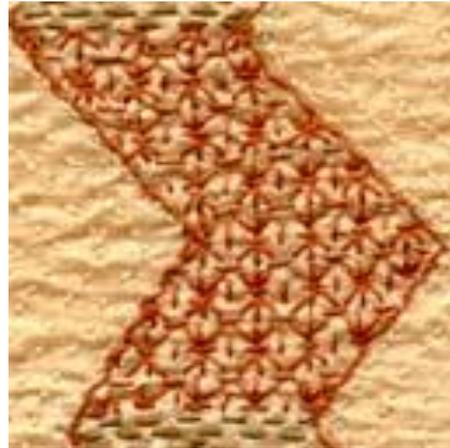




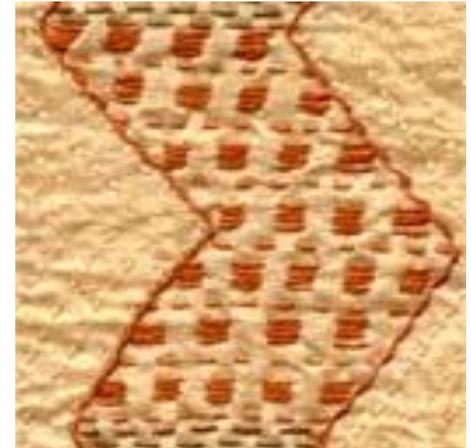
THE QUILTING STITCHES OF KANTHA



The basic run stitch
done in a random



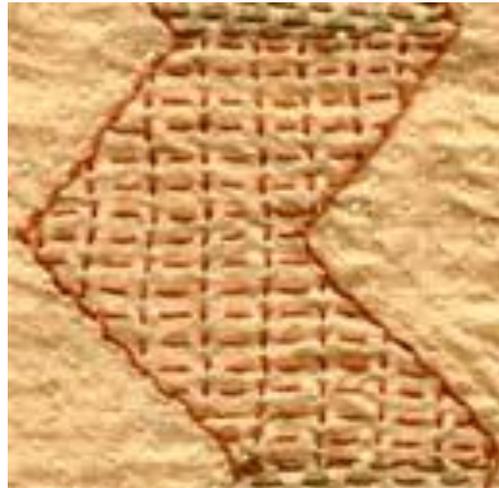
A jaal or tessellation



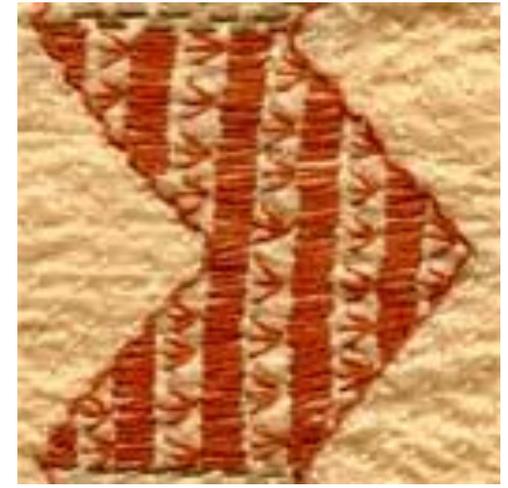
The dorma or mat



The simple run arranged evenly



The Golak Dhaga or maze



Simple jhod or pairs

TYPES OF KANTHAS

- ❖ There are seven types of Kanthas based on how they are made and their end use.
- Lep
- Thalia
- Durjani
- Arshilata
- Sujani
- Rumal
- Oar

LEP: Thick quilted wrap used in winter as a cover.
Designs on lep are usually geometrical.



Lep Kantha or
Kantha quilt
is a winter
covering.

- OAR: Rectangular kantha used as pillow cases/covers and is two ft by one and half ft in size.



The 'Oor' Kantha is a 2' x 1 1/2' size pillow case with simple border all around.

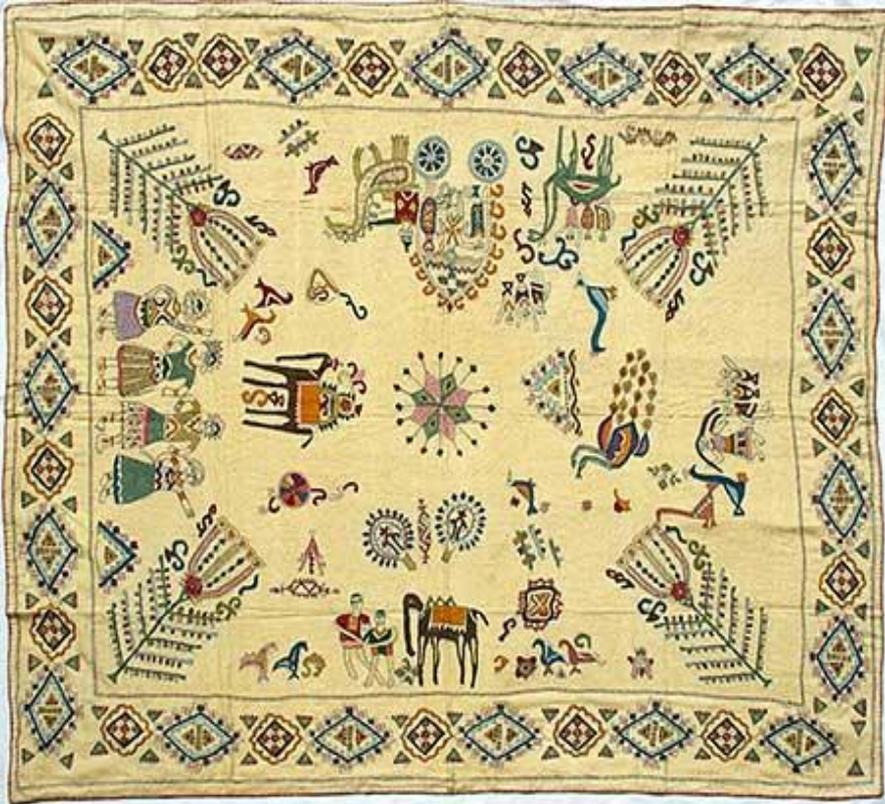
- **DURJANI OR THALIA:** Square shape and supposed to be wallet covers, as the three corners meet in centre and stitched together like an envelope.



- **ARSILATA:** Wrap for mirrors and combs. Rectangular in shape generally eight inches wide and twelve inches in length.



BAYTON: Square wrap about three feet for covering books, valuables, and can be carried during journeys.



- **SUJANI:** Rectangular bed spread of three feet by six feet size used during ceremonial occasions.



RUMAL: Twelve inches square handkerchief.



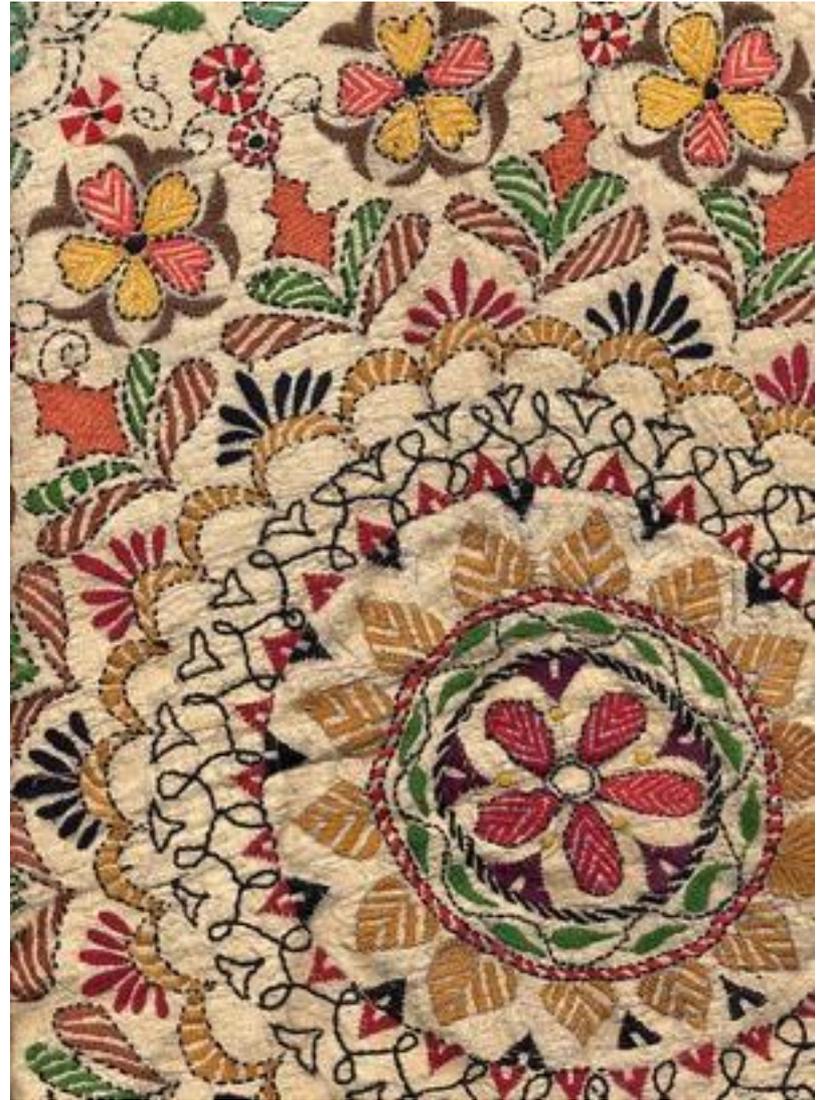
• REVIVAL AND CONTEMPORARY USE OF KANTHA EMBROIDERY

- The revival of "Kantha" in Bengal is the brainchild of Shamlu Dudeja who brought Kantha out of rural households in 1980s.
- She started with four women in the beginning and now providing gainful employment to a large number of women in five districts of Bengal.



Kantha embroidery is now done on dupattas, sarees, salwar suits and western wear, shirts for men and women with modern geometric designs and patchwork.

The art is also used for making bedcovers, pillowcases, table-linen, wall hangings, lamp shades, upholstery and curtains.







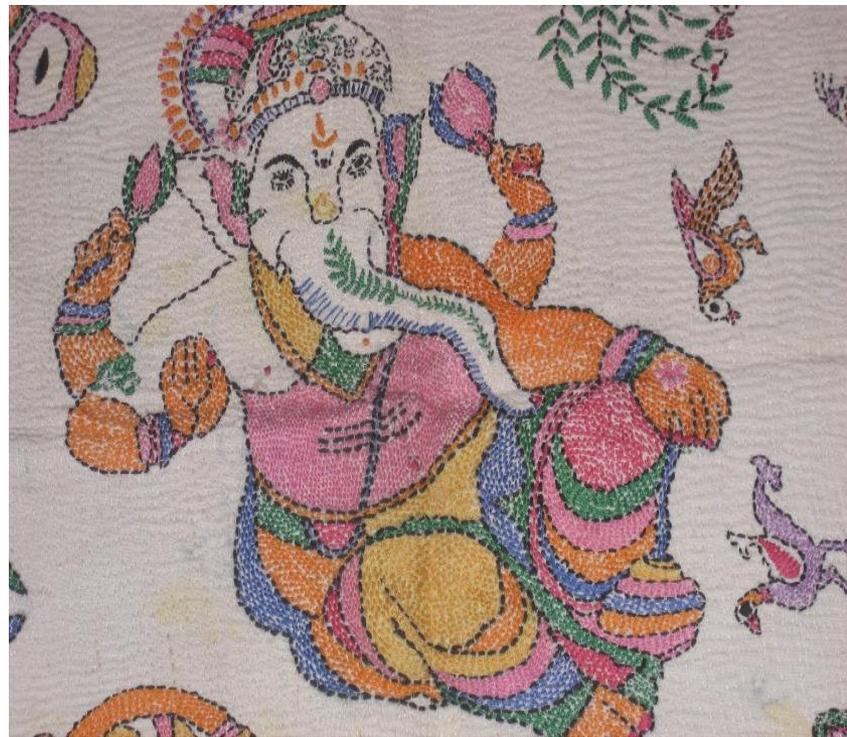
ARTICLES PRODUCED



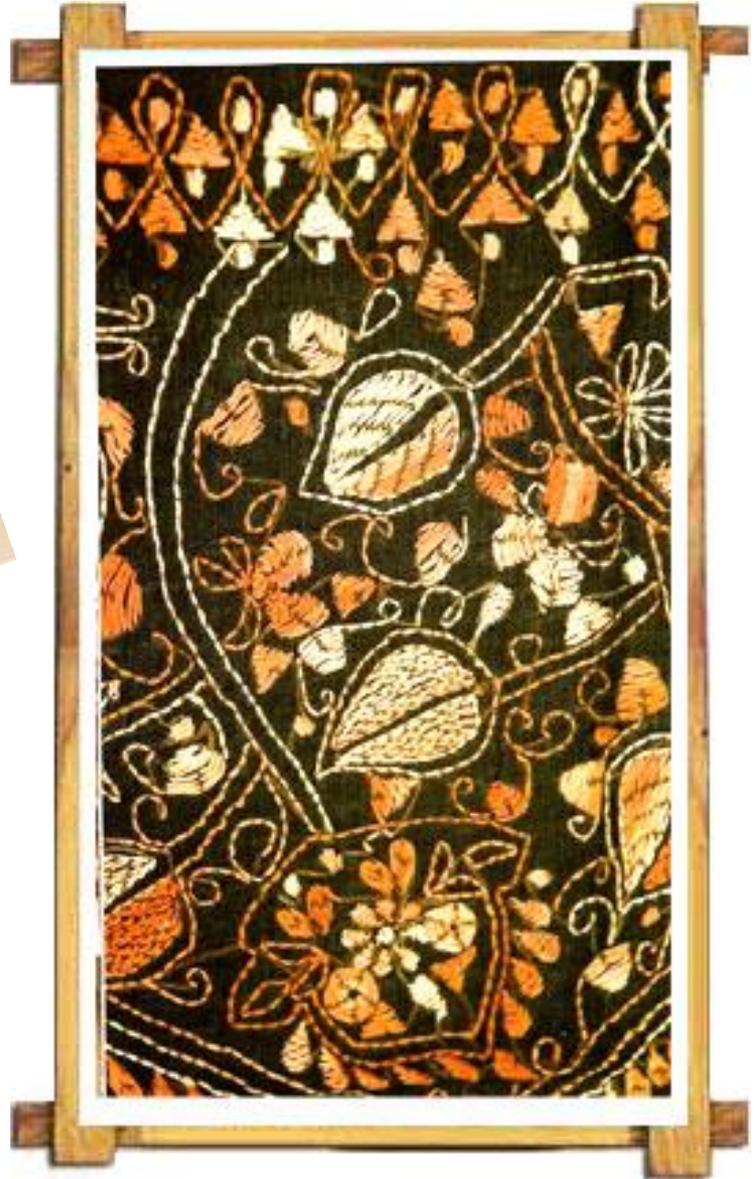












THANK YOU