

Weaving, techniques for artistic punja durries of Haryana

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Received: 26.04.2011; Accepted: 28.03.2012

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■ **ABSTRACT** : In Haryana, *durrie* making is undertaken in almost all the districts. The tradition of weaving *durries* is the exclusive preserve of women. A girl is taught to weave by older women of the household – her mother, grandmother, paternal aunt or sister, at a very young age. They continue practicing *durrie* weaving at home during their leisure time. It helps to generate income to some of them.

■ **KEY WORDS** : Durrie, Punja, Haryana, *Adda*, *Buttie*

■ **HOW TO CITE THIS PAPER** : Yadav, Nirmal and Arya, Nisha (2012). Weaving, techniques for artistic punja durries of Haryana. *Asian J. Home Sci.*, 7 (1) : 216-219.

Weaving has been traditionally linked with the lives and colours of people and their environment. It is an age old practice and hand weaving is probably the oldest and certainly one of the most universally practiced crafts. Textile creation may almost be called an inherent urge in the human race. A *durrie* (also spelled *dari*, *dhurry* and *dhurrie*) is an indigenous Indian flat woven. It is a huge, coarse, thick, striped object and it is this inelegant image which most people (both in India and abroad) generally associate with the name. In Haryana, *durrie* making is undertaken in almost all the districts. The tradition of weaving *durries* is the exclusive preserve of women. A girl is taught to weave by older women of the household – her mother, grandmother, paternal aunt or sister, at a very young age. They continue practicing *durrie* weaving at home during their leisure time. It helps to generate income to some of them.

The study was undertaken in the northern and southern region of the western zone of Haryana state. The research was designed and conducted phase wise to achieve the formulated objectives. One hundred respondents *i.e.* rural women weavers practicing *durrie* weaving were selected randomly from different villages of Sirsa, Fatahabad, Hisar districts of Northern region and Bhiwani, Rewari, Mohindergarh districts of Southern region to study the existing *durrie* weaving techniques and designs. A well structured

schedule was prepared to collect the information. Along with the observations, discussion method was also used to collect the information.

More than fifty per cent of the respondents were in the age group of 25-50 years in both the regions. They were illiterate in the northern region and were primary pass and illiterate (equal percentage) in the southern region. Majority of these in the northern region belonged to schedule caste and backward class whereas, to high class in the southern region. Most of the respondents (85.3%) were married. Only 14.7 per cent were unmarried, living in both the family set up (nuclear and joint) having medium number of family members. Labor plus own work and small business was the family occupation of majority of the weavers in the northern region whereas in the southern region farming was the main family occupation. The majority of the respondents in the southern region had monthly income less than Rs. 2500/month (88%) whereas only 52 per cent of the respondents in the northern region fall in this category. Higher income group *i.e.* (above Rs. 2500 and Rs. 5000) were more in the northern region as compared to very few in the southern region.

All the respondents in both the regions used simple type of loom locally known as '*adda*' as it was found to be 'easily available', 'easy to make' *durrie* on it, was 'cheaper' and the weavers were generally 'ignorant about the other

types of looms'. The 'adda' had variation in terms of material of which it was made (wood, iron), size and placement.

Yarn preparation depended mainly on its availability, price, reusability of scraps and hosiery yarn etc.

Majority of the respondents (80%) always used hand spun cotton yarn (4ply and 6ply) for warp and (6ply and 8ply) for weft in the northern region. Whereas in the southern region 100 per cent weavers always used machine spun cotton yarn (4/6_s and 5/10_s) for warp, and hand spun ply yarn made from 'used cotton' (*loggar*) was sometimes used by 38 per cent respondents in the southern region. This could be because of the reason that northern region has traditionally been a cotton growing region where as no cotton is grown in the southern region.

Amongst the other materials used were the *sneel* scraps and hosiery yarn obtained from T-shirt waste was sometimes used by some of the respondents in northern region as it was 'easily available' to them through weaver leaders. In the southern region all the respondents always used scraps of old apparel as it was 'economical' and made the product 'durable'.

Majority of the respondents always procured warp yarn locally in both the regions. Whereas (yarn, material) for weft was always available with respondents 'at home' in the northern region, in the southern region it was always available in the 'village itself' and sometimes available 'at home'. However, some of the respondents procured it 'from the centre'. *Sneel* scraps and hosiery yarn has been procured from Delhi and Ludhiana by the weaver leaders in the northern region.

All the respondents always used direct dye as it was 'easily available' and gave 'good appearance' to the yarn after dyeing. The dye was procured sometimes from the 'village itself' and sometimes from the 'nearby town'; the dyeing was always done 'at home'. They used simple dyeing procedure but unfortunately used the cheaper and the non fast dyes available in the local market at cheaper price. Fast colour of the dye, interestingly, had the poorest score.

Plain weave was used for weaving the *durrie* as it was 'easy to make'. The respondents had 'lack of knowledge about the other weaves'. The weaving process was found to be similar with all the respondents, so were the weaving techniques.

Although the designs were common throughout the regions, the nomenclature of the designs varied from place to place. The studies revealed that although the basic motifs and designs were similar, the nomenclature differed over regions. This could be due to the difference in dialect of the two regions. The studies revealed the uniformity in use of geometrical designs as all the respondents always used these designs in both the regions. Floral, stylized and abstract designs were used comparatively more in the northern region.

The motifs used were *gudda/phul* (serrated and stepped

lozenges and lattice) *adha gudda/adha phul* (half lozenges), *phul ballian* (serrated rectangles and rhomboids), *lehria* (serrated bands), *punkhe* (intersecting circles), *aath kalian* (eight petals), cross and triangles, *jahaz* (aeroplane), *murba bandi* (lozenges in a lattice), *dabbe* (boxes)' human figures in stylized form. Amongst the bird motifs *mor*, *tota*, *chujja*, *battakan*, *chirian* etc were generally used. The popularly used animal motifs included *sher*, *ghode*, *hiran*, *khargosh*, *machhli* etc.

Crenellated borders were found to be very common on the *durries* vernacularly called *qila* (fort) and *burj* (tower). The *durrie* border was also designed with simple stripes of different main colours used in the *durries* field at either side. The length wise and widthwise borders were also designed using various motifs; geometric, floral, stylized and abstract forms.

The reasons for using particular designs were found to be 'own liking' and 'most common for *durries*' (geometric design), and 'beautiful and different look', 'own liking' and 'good appearance' (floral, stylized, abstract designs).

The designs were mostly placed as 'overall placement'; 'butties and figure scattered' in the northern region where as 'diagonal' and 'series arrangement' was popular in the southern region. Use of apparel scraps in the southern region could be the reason for such arrangements which made it difficult in weaving more complicated designs.

'Copy from other *durrie*' has always been the source of design by 100 per cent respondents as it was 'easy to copy and follow the design'. Other sources included 'copy from other articles', 'self creation', 'training' and 'copy from cross stitch book'.

The weavers used wide range of bright colours. Different colour combinations were found to be used in the northern region to make *durrie* attractive and beautiful. The selection of colours were as per the 'own liking' of the weavers whereas in the southern region multicoloured and coloured stripes were used as per the 'availability of the material' in particular colours. Some of the respondents also used different colour combinations but it was on the basis of the design requirement of the order received.

Designing techniques used were different on the basis of colour combinations, difference in designs and difference in placements. Different types of yarn were used by some of the respondents.

The yarn count varied depending upon the type of yarns used and the method of beating of weft as it was done mechanically.

After completion of *durrie*, the loose warp ends were given a decorative finish in the form of variety of patterns usually known as *jali* (lattice) and named as *jalebi* pattern, *makri ki jali*, *jorlu*, *harad* etc through wrapped techniques in the northern region. Whereas in the southern region the loose ends were simply twisted or knotted. This could be due to the



Fig. 1 : Durries of Northern region of Haryana



Fig. 2 : Durries of Southern region of Haryana

fact that in the southern region, normally *katran durries* are woven. Also, culturally in the northern region girls/women respondents did not participate in the farm operations and therefore, could devote more time in weaving activities which is a prerequisite for fine finishing. Regional variations have been observed in the present study which could be attributed to the cultural differences and the dowry level of a family. It certainly increased the cost of the finished product.

The articles woven other than *durrie* were *aasan*, foot mat, bags and *niwar* in the northern region whereas in the southern region only *aasan* have been found to be woven as these were 'commonly used' at home.

Although in existing practices the sizes of *durries* varied according to the size of *charpai* (cot), the variation has been found due to variation in weaving process which was

manual and not standardized. Even the *charpai* sizes vary according to the place and persons, who use it e.g. *khatola* for children and *palang* for *baihaks*. However *punja durries* could be woven in any size based on requirement and use.

Durrie weaving was not practiced as main income generating activity by majority of the respondents and therefore there was a variation in the monthly income of the respondents over districts/regions. The seasonal income also varied which could be attributed to the time devoted by the women weavers in both the regions.

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