

Adaptation of Toda Embroidery on Women's Kurtis

Carolyn Baby¹, Dr. Susan Paul²

¹Faculty, Institute of Fashion Technology Kerala (IFTK), Government of Kerala

²Head Of the Department, Textiles and Apparel Designing, Sam Higginbottom Institute of Agriculture, Technology and Science, Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh

Abstract: India had always been known as the land that portrayed cultural and traditional vibrancy through its conventional art and craft. India is world famous for its rich heritage and traditional textiles, magnificent workmanship. It also symbolizes the identity of the ethnic group. Textiles are considered as a part of the complex rituals of life. Tribal people of India have always had a great flair for decoration and ornamentation. However their traditional crafts are less known to the outside world. In India, Todas are found only in the Nilgiri District of Tamilnadu State. Toda Tribes are very seclusion in nature and very few people know about this tribe and their unique embroidery. Few efforts are being taken by the government and other NGO's to preserve Toda embroidery art.

The present study was undertaken with the aim to study traditional Toda embroidery and to develop designs based on the existing designs and adaptation of these developed designs on women's kurtis. Four Toda munds (settlements) namely Manjakalmund, Tarnadmund, Muthinadmund and Bettumund were selected for the study. Data was collected through a survey using observation and interview method. The experiment on adapting Toda embroidery on kurtis had given a direction how this can be brought to the light of the world without changing the unique features. The study would be a step forward to preserve this art and showcase the skills of Todas to the outside world and to impart a new design dimensions to the fashion world.

Keywords: conventional art and craft, Todas, Toda Embroidery, cultural and traditional vibrancy.

1. INTRODUCTION

India has the largest variety of tribal communities, which are at various stages of socio-economic development. At one extreme there are groups who lead a relatively selected and archaic mode of life, keeping their core culture intact, while at the other extreme there are communities which are indistinguishable from general agricultural communities. The tribal people express their cultural identity and distinctiveness through, language, rituals festivals and their dress, ornaments art and craft. Tribal people of the world over have always had a great flair for decoration and ornamentation. India has the rich culture and tradition of tribal embroidery. Banjara tribes of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Rabari Tribes of Giri region, Ahri pastoral tribes, Lambadis (Gipsy Tribes), tribal people of Assam and Todas of Nilgiri are doing embroidery on their various garments.

In India, Todas are found in the Nilgiri district of Tamilnadu state. Todas are small community who live on the isolated Nilgiri plateau. The name "Toda" is said to have come from the Kannada "tudi" or "top". "Tudavar" or "Todavar" means "Those who are on the top". The Toda traditionally live in settlements, consisting of several small thatched houses, constructed in the shape of half barrels and spread across the Nilgiris areas. They are primarily cattle herders and trade dairy products with in Nilgiri district. The language of Todas is also referred to as "Toda" which is defined as a Dravidian language. Toda tribes are also famous for their unique embroidery called 'Toda embroidery' which is a less known craft to the outside world.

The Toda women during their leisure time, engage themselves in an indigenous embroidery where a coarse, unbleached hand woven white cotton cloth is embroidered with 'Pukaor' (motif) basically in geometrical forms of flower, animal and natural objects. The embroidered shawl is called "Puthkuli" and they use steel needles and woolen threads, chiefly of black and red colours. The unbleached nature of hand woven white cloth helps in identifying the yarn gauge (count of threads) quite easily. The design of 'puthkuli' is laid out in between the stripes of black and red. The patterns of 'puthkuli' are embroidered by the combined methods of darning and embroidery. As the Toda embroidery is woven out in intricate manner by means of darning, counting of threads and or yarn gaps, the resultant design emerges as geometric forms at a casual glance which makes it distinct from other embroideries. It is very important to note that the artisans do the embroidery without transferring the design on to the fabric surface and also not referring any book. For them it is the co-ordination of mind and hand. Thus the Toda embroidery appears striking with its bold colour scheme and complex combination of weaving and embroidery. Young Toda girls inherit the craft by observing the works done by the elders of the community.

The motifs are inspired by nature and daily life. The main motif is the buffalo horn as the Todas worship buffalos. Other designs include wild flowers, mountains, and valleys. To suit modern taste and needs a variety of items like cell phone pouches, table clothes, scarf, shawl, drawstring purse, bag, waist coat etc are also made.

Toda tribes are very seclusion in nature and very few people know about this tribe and their unique embroidery. Few efforts are being taken by government and NGO's to preserve Toda embroidery art. However much needs to be done to showcase their skills to the outside world. Since Toda tribes are reducing rapidly their embroidery also is in danger of becoming extinct.

Thus the present study focuses mainly on preserving Toda embroidery. Today, as everyone leads a busy life, comfortable clothing is the most important aspect. Kurtis are preferred by youngsters these days because it can be worn with salwar, jeans and even with skirt. Therefore an effort has been taken to adapt Toda embroidery designs on kurtis. It also aimed at making the indigenous art known to the outside world. The study would be a step forward to impart new design dimensions to the fashion world.

2. METHODOLOGY

Development of designs:

Since the Toda embroidery has the GI (Geographical identification), they do not prefer changing the motifs. The existing Toda designs and products are shown in plate 2.1-2.5.



Plate 2.1 Toda embroidered cell phone pouch



Plate 2.2 Toda embroidered kerchief



Plate 2.3 Toda embroidered wall hanging pouch



Plate 2.4 Toda embroidered draw string pouch



Plate 2.5 Toda embroidered shoulder bag

On the basis of information collected from the survey and by taking inspiration from existing Toda embroidery designs, twenty embroidery designs suitable for kurtis were developed. The embroidery designs were drawn on the point paper to count the yarn gauge. The length and width of the design was measured by counting the yarn gauge both lengthwise and width wise. In point paper each box denoted each yarn gauge. One complete repeat was done for each embroidery design. After obtaining the proper repeat of the design, it was filled with red and black colour. The coloured portion denoted the 'up' position of the embroidery thread and black position denoted the down position. Thus twenty designs were prepared. These designs were placed on twenty women's kurtis. The prepared designs were shown in plates 2.6- 2.25.

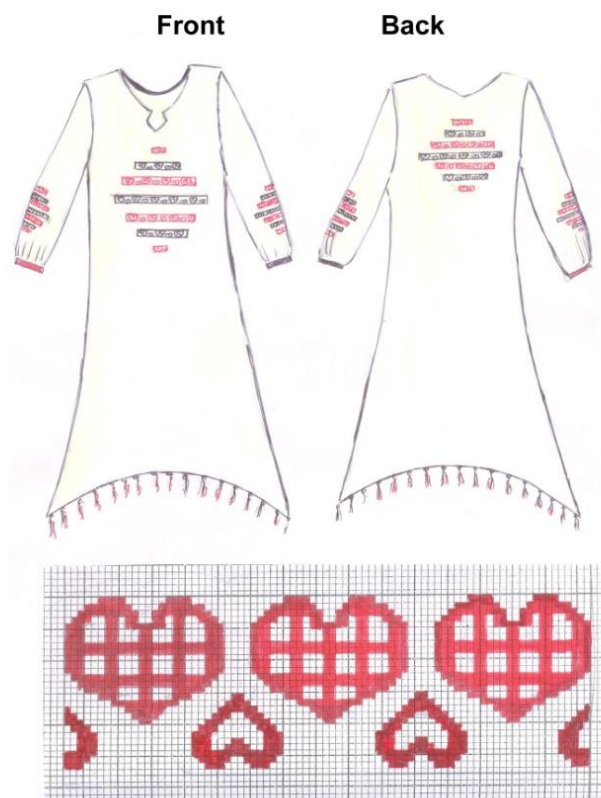


Plate 2.6 Design No.1



Plate 2.7 Design No.2

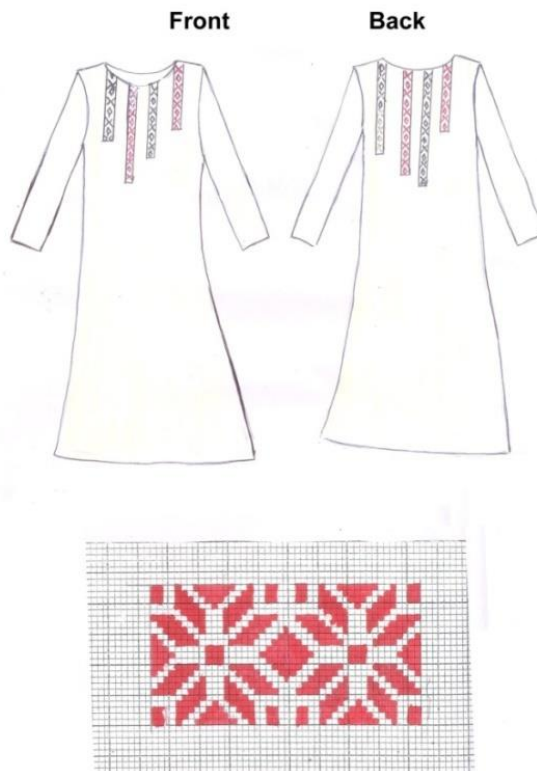


Plate 2.8 Design No.3



Plate 2.9 Design No.4

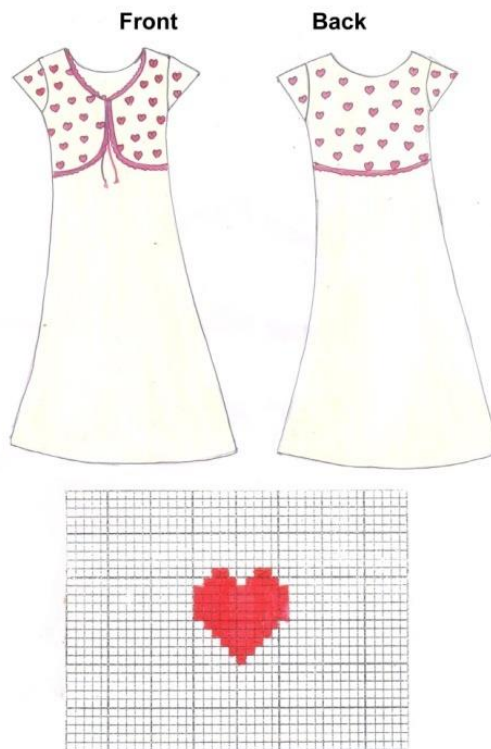


Plate 2.10 Design No.5

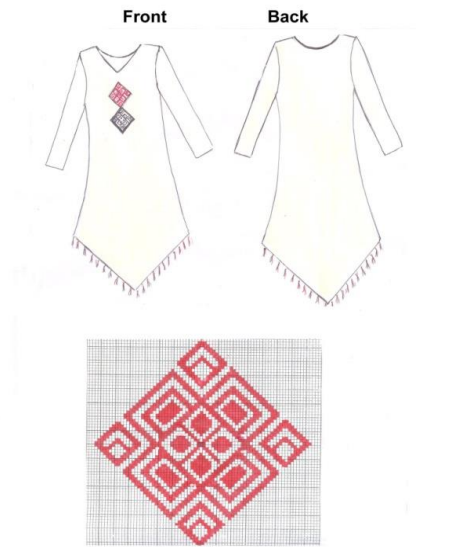


Plate 2.11 Design No.6

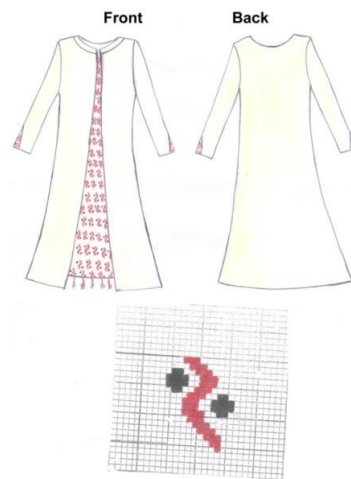


Plate 2.12 Design No.7



Plate 2.13 Design No.8

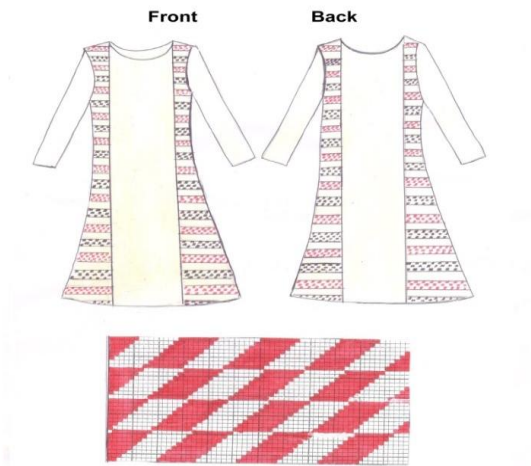


Plate 2.14 Design No.9

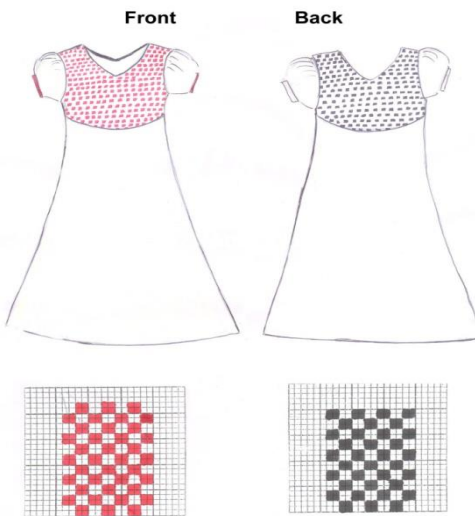


Plate 2.15 Design No.10



Plate 2.16 Design No.11



Plate 2.17 Design No.12

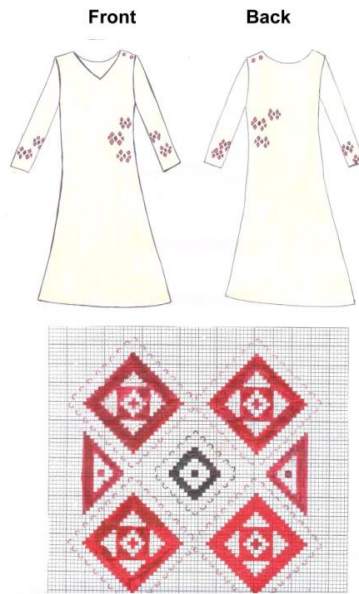


Plate 2.18 Design No.13



Plate 2.19 Design No.14

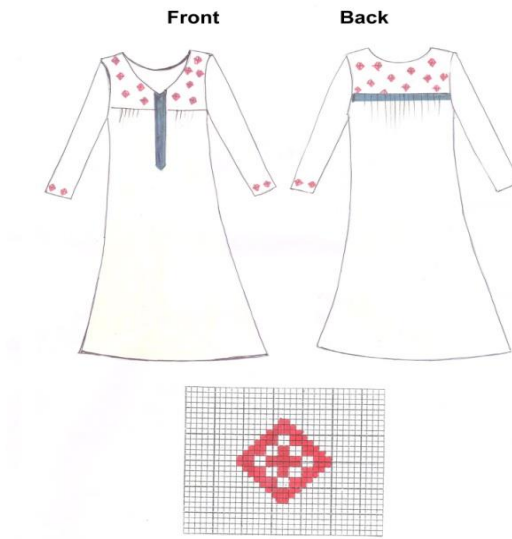


Plate 2.20 Design No.15



Plate 2.21 Design No.16



Plate 2.22 Design No.17

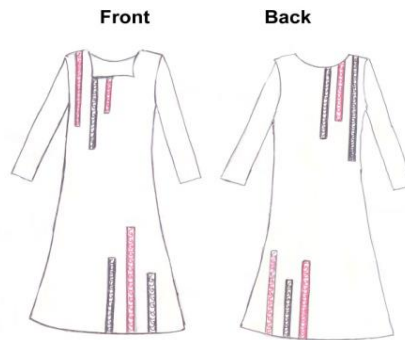


Plate 2.23 Design No.18

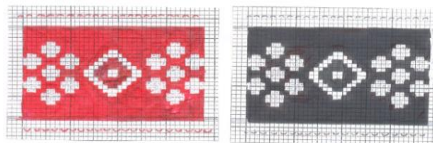
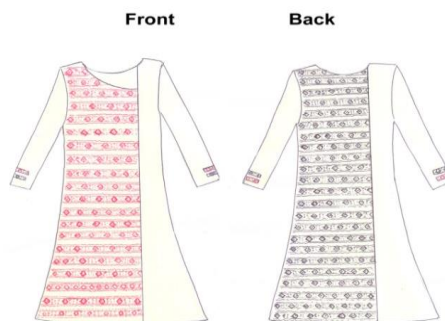


Plate 2.24 Design No.19

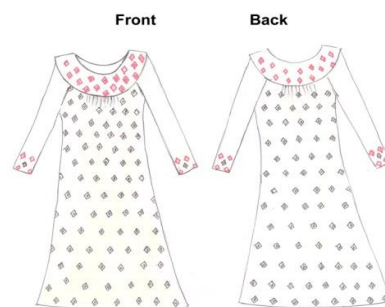


Plate 2.25 Design No.20

2.1 Acceptability of developed designs through visual evaluation:

From the developed designs 5 designs were selected. The evaluation was done by the panel of twenty judges. All designs were evaluated according to their preferences. The attributes assigned for evaluation of designs were colour combination, arrangement of design, and extent of relation to the existing Toda embroidery designs, appropriateness of design and overall appearance of the design. Mark 1,2,3,4 and 5 were given to these designs which obtained poor, fair, good, very good and excellent respectively. Five designs that scored the highest were selected as the best designs.

Prepared articles were evaluated. The attributes were design placement, utility, relation to original Toda embroidery designs, overall impact and suitability of cost range of the product.

2.2 Preparation of products:

The selected designs were adopted in women's kurtis to enhance the value of the product and aesthetic quality.

2.2.1 Sourcing of fabric:

The particular fabric called 'puthkuli fabric' for the Toda embroidery were purchased from the 'Todas Handicraft Sale Emporium Udhagamandalam'.

2.2.2 Collection of trims:

It includes 2 ply woolen embroidery threads of red and black colour and an embroidery needle. These were purchased from the Ooty market.

2.2.3 Construction of kurtis:

Five different patterns for kurtis were prepared. Before constructing the kurtis, the embroidery was done on the fabric as per the placement given in the design. After completing the embroidery, the kurtis were constructed.

Design No.1

In design No.1, there were two panels in the front of the garment and two panels in the back of the garment. The right panel was decorated with red colour embroidery in horizontal way. In the backside the right panel was decorated with black colour embroidery. The length of the sleeve was three by fourth embellished with embroidery. The neck was a simple half round neck. The back neck was simple round neck.

Design No.2

It was a simple embellished with single motifs. In front portion 3 motifs were placed in the left side and in the back side also. The hem area was embellished with traditional Toda embroidery 'huts' design. The neck design was a simple 'v' neck decorated with black colour border. The length of the sleeve was three by fourth and embellished with embroidery.

Design No.3

The main attraction of this design was front and back yoke. Yokes were decorated with embroidery. Its neck was a simple round neck embellished with red border. In front portions buttons were placed in vertical way. The length of the sleeve was three by fourth decorated with embroidery.

Design No.4

Embroidered collar was the main attraction of this design. The cap sleeves were fully embroidered. The lower area was decorated red and black colour borders of traditional 'puthkuli' shawl.

Design No.5

The main emphasis of this design was the asymmetrical front portion embellished with horizontal arrangement of embroidery. Its sleeve was simple three fourth sleeve decorated with embroidery. There was an opening in the back portion decorated with black colour buttons.

2.3 Acceptability of the developed products

The prepared articles were evaluated based by 20 judges. The attributes were design placement, utility, and relation to original Toda embroidery designs, overall impact and suitability of cost range of the product.

3. RESULT

Visual evaluation as per the score design no 2, 8, 12, 16 and 19 were selected. The results are given in table3. 1.

Table 3.1. Visual evaluation scores of developed designs for assessment of acceptability

Design No.	Colour combination	Appropriateness of the design	Extent of relation to original embroidery design	Arrangement of design	Overall appearance	Total Mark
Design No. 1	75	70	83	85	86	399
Design No. 2	80	83	80	82	82	*407
Design No. 3	72	73	68	70	71	354
Design No. 4	82	79	80	75	83	399
Design No. 5	75	76	79	72	74	376
Design No. 6	70	65	75	77	73	360
Design No. 7	77	79	70	75	75	386
Design No. 8	82	78	84	80	8	*406
Design No. 9	77	79	82	80	72	390
Design No. 10	72	70	68	73	72	355
Design No. 11	75	72	77	79	82	376
Design No. 12	80	79	82	79	83	*403
Design No. 13	71	72	71	70	73	357
Design No. 14	65	68	66	69	70	338
Design No. 15	74	70	72	73	75	364
Design No. 16	82	80	83	82	81	*408
Design No. 17	68	62	66	69	66	331
Design No. 18	66	70	69	64	72	341
Design No. 19	79	82	78	79	82	*400
Design No. 20	71	74	74	72	68	359

* selected designs

Acceptability of the developed products:

Rank 1, 2 and 3 was given to those products which stood very good, good, and fair respectively.

Table 3.2 Acceptability Index for developed products.

Article	Total marks (Max 60)	Acceptance
Article 1	54	90%
Article 2	56	93%
Article 3	56	93%
Article 4	58	97%
Article 5	57	95%

As far as the products were concerned, almost all articles were accepted by the judges and the differences in scores were negligible. The highest score, 58 was given to article 4 by 97% of the acceptance. Second acceptance was given to Article 5 by 95% of the acceptance which scored 57 points. Article 2 and 3 scored 56 points each. The lowest score (54) was given to Article 1. The developed articles were shown in Plate 3.1 to 3.5.



Plate 3.1 Article 1 (Design No.19)



Plate 3.2 Article 2 (Design No.2)



Plate 3.3 Article 3 (Design No.12)



Plate 3.4 Article 4 (Design No.8)



Plate 3.5 Article 5 (Design No.16)

4. CONCLUSION

India is world famous for its rich heritage and traditional textiles, magnificent workmanship. Textiles are considered as a part of the complex rituals of life. The tribal people of India have always had a great flair for decoration and ornamentation.

In India, Todas are found only in the Nilgiri District of Tamilnadu State. Toda Tribes are very seclusion in nature and very few people know about this tribe and their unique embroidery. Few efforts are being taken by the government and other NGO's to preserve Toda embroidery art. The present study was planned to help Todas to showcase their skills to the outside world.

Toda tribes are reducing rapidly, for there is a danger that the embroidery also may become extinct. Thus the present study focuses mainly on preserving this art. The experiment on adapting Toda embroidery on kurtis had given a direction how this can be brought to the light of the world without changing the unique features. The products can easily be integrated in youngsters fashion, thus the Toda embroidery can be promoted. The study would be a step forward to impact a new design dimensions to the fashion world.

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