



NAKSHI KANTHA OF KHULNA: EMERGING REALITY AND SOCIO ECONOMIC OBSERVATIONS

Md. Tarikat Islam*

Drawing and Painting Discipline, Khulna University, Khulna-9208, Bangladesh

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Abstract

Nakshi Kantha is the most traditional needle-craft and important domestic art of women in Bangladesh that displays the multiracial and multi-religious expressions of motifs which indicate the aspiration for fluency as well as display the objectives of craftswomen. It is not only an ornate coverlet but also the work of art for beliefs, values and clarity of rural women of Bangladesh. Women fabricate the art in reusing depleted resources like sharees, dhutis and lungis, which are sewing to form needlework coverlets for their essential function in a fastidious exploit. Though it is a very old traditional artistic element of material art but for its unique design and elegance, it is a fascination to the people of Bangladesh and West Bengal of India till contemporary period. Various type of Nakshi Kantha in style, form, fabric or technique has been found in different places of Bangladesh. It is also been seen own style of art work in different regions. Nakshi Kantha of Khulna developed glory in the scale of its motifs, using magnum size floral and foliate borders, the Kalka, and alien mythological symbols as well as unique for the colored threads of vibrant and contrasting. This article is an attempt to study and understanding of the emerging reality and socio economic observations of Nakshi Kantha featuring new challenges and scope in greater Khulna of Bangladesh.

Keywords: Nakshi Kantha, motifs, socio economic, impact, challenge, scope

Introduction

Almost half of the people of Bangladesh are women. They are working in various kinds of socio economic and cultural activities in both public and private sectors. Nakshi Kantha is one of the most traditional indigenous products that highlighted the folk art of rural women. Nakshi Kantha snatched the tradition of rural Bengal. The story is explained by the story of miseries. Nakshi Kantha is an eyewitness to the story. The rural women used to stitch Kantha at leisure time, but now women are also the means of earning. Nakshi Kantha has the biggest demand in both home and abroad. It has a demand for ages. The most famous Nakshi stitch folk art have found in greater Mymensingh, Rajshahi, Faridpur, Jessore and Khulna of Bangladesh.

In the rural Bangladesh it is a common ritual in woman, from generation to generation, they have gained knowledge of art of Nakshi Kantha and mainly ordinary are coverlets. Thickness of Nakshi Kantha is depended on whether a winter or summer wrap is essential. Old useless sharees, dhutis and lungis are encrusted consequently. Various forms of a successively stitch to decorate the borders and to enrichment the coverlet with special designs. Women recycle the yarn hauled from the sharees and are capable to generate colorful and vivacious coverlets.

Nakshi Kantha of Khulna in style, form, fabric or technique is more unique than that of other regions of Bangladesh. The women of Khulna developed glory in the scale of its motifs, using magnum size floral and foliate borders, the Kalka, and the alien mythological symbols. They are unique for their colored threads of vibrant and distinct. A large portion of rural women in Bangladesh are occupied in the Nakshi Kantha stitching work.

Nakshi Kantha can play a vital role in providing employment opportunity to rural women. But women who worked on Nakshi Kantha have been facing numerous difficulties since the partition of India. Even income of the Kantha stitching women has dropped down significantly since the recent Corona pandemic began. Most of them could not get contract for producing Nakshi Kantha during the Corona pandemic period. More than half of them

*Corresponding author: <tarikat1974@dp.ku.ac.bd>
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could not pay back the loan they have taken from NGOs or other sectors. They even did not get any government support or fair prices for their Nakshi products. They affirmed that the shortage of buyers; lack of exhibition system, they are suffering more but earn less. Due to this they changed their profession from Nakshi stitching to agriculture, fishing or switching jobs to other sectors. All these problems made their life and livelihood difficult to survive.

Although Bengal is politically divided into maps but the style and design of Kantha sewing are mostly similar in both Bengalis, because this art was introduced long before the partition of Bengal. That is why Nakshi Kantha has become immortal in Bengali proverbs, stories, songs or poems.

For praising such amazing artifact and the dedication of the artisans, a dramatized Bengali narrative named 'Nakshi Kantha Math' (The Field of Embroidered Quilt) was written by Jasimuddin¹ in 1929. After the publication of this narrative the word Nakshi Kantha became famous among the country people. It is with this narrative that the story of love and pain can come to the fore in Bengali literature. This poem is an immortal tale of love between the couple Rupai and Saju.

After the marriage, the love story of Rupai and Saju could not go far. Rupai became disguised. While waiting for day after day, month after month for her husband, Saju started weaving Nakshi Kantha for the rest of her life. How many stories are written on the Kantha by the needle of Saju but Rupai does not come back. On the day Saju finished weaving the Nakshi Kantha, she requested her mother to spread it on her grave after her death. After a long time, the body of a foreign flutist was found near Saju's grave lying under the Nakshi Kantha. In this way, the women of Bengal have woven Nakshi Kantha even in the absence of their husband or lovers. Someone may have been able to give a new Kantha to their relative, but not like the Saju-Rupai of Jasimuddin.

Nakshi Kantha is one of the most eminent and highly privileged folk arts of Bengal. These embroidered quilts have become an identity maker of the rural women, as they can find an opportunity to express desires, aspirations and sentiments through creative embroidered platform with the help of needles and threads.

According to Prof. Abdul Hafiz at the foreword of 'The Aesthetics & Vocabulary of Nakshi Kantha' by Perveen Ahmed², "The story of Kantha is rooted in the history, culture and civilization of Bangladesh. Three great religions of Indian Subcontinent i.e. Hinduism which came earliest, Buddhism second and Islam which follows last, each influenced Kanthas so greatly that it changed designs, and motifs into a unique decorative art form which are highlighted in this study. There is no denying the fact, the oldest inhabitants of Bangladesh known as Australoid, then the Dravidians, Aryans and the Muslims made a chequered history of this region and the Kanthas found a unique character as a multi-religious product and also a multiracial expression.

Kantha is a product of a non-literate society with the psychological and cultural traditions of Bangladesh. The difference between folk art and folk craft in many instances is not always clear and transparent. A simple Kantha used as wrapper or bedspread a Kantha became folk art when it absorbs old age symbols, designs, motifs, decorations and therefore bears a deeper content. A simple chair without folk motif is not folk art but as soon as a traditional motif or design is placed on its surface people call it a folk art object.

The sense of beauty displayed in folk art lies in its decorations and the interpretive mind of the artisan. One Kantha is different from the other only when an individual does something especially with its form. The love of traditional knowledge finds a lovelier expression in the Kantha." Nakshi Kantha of Khulna that has a uniqueness of undivided Bengal belongs to the fore as the specialty of Nakshi Kantha. Thus, the objectives of this study were to (i) observe the emerging reality and the socio-economic impact on Nakshi Kantha in greater Khulna region and (ii) analyze the issues relevant to the challenges of Nakshi Kantha as well as to provide suitable recommendations for elevator of socio-economic condition

Methodology

Here qualitative method is used to gather data from several sources. Data has been collected from both the primary and secondary sources. The primary data from the needle-art women conducting in-depth interview and 6 case studies and the secondary data from different departments of Government, books, journals, museums and private preservers concerned with this study. The questionnaire is formulated to collect the information regarding their family size, business engagement of family members, economic status, problems of their business, income from their occupations, social impact of Nakshi Kantha stitch in their livelihood, financial support from the government

¹ Jasimuddin, Nakshi Kantha Math, 1929

² Perveen Ahmad, Aesthetics and Vocabulary of Nakshi Kantha

and non-government levels. The questionnaire consists of 10 questions. Questions were asked sequentially to the respondents to seek their views.

Background

Bangladesh is a land of old heritage. Nakshi Kantha is one of the old heritages of Indian subcontinent. The village women talent of indication in existence, desire, and traditions explain their substantial visibility of imaginative shape in needle-craft art work like Nakshi Kantha which is basically a kind of folk art. Colorful prototypes and drawings are overstated into a coverlet with a consecutively stitch up called 'Kantha Stitch'. The custom of making a new Kantha for a child at home has been around for a long time. The traditional custom of welcoming guests with new Kantha at social functions like weddings or festivals at home is found in more or less every village of Bangladesh. Nakshi Kantha is one of the best traditions as gift list when the girl is sent to the in-laws after marriage.

In the rainy season in Bangladesh, it is a traditional practice of Bengali women to sew Kantha with needle and thread in their leisure time. With the rapid change in rural society, such kind of socialization is also changing. But still the rural women are most fascinated to go from noon to evening to work on Nakshi Kantha. They decorate motifs of trees, birds or herbs emerge on the ground of Kantha with their unparalleled skills. Sometimes the story of sorrows and happiness has come up in the Kantha as well as the story of the book heard in the dim light of the lantern has been told by the women with the needle.

Alpana patterns combined with figures from folk tales and ancient legends, gods and deities has found in Jessore and Faridpur. In Mymensingh and Jamalpur it is developed a lyrical style using motifs of spatial art, rather than relating a theme. Floral roam, foliate patterns and the traditional rose has found in Bougra. Rajshahi is famous for a diverse texture, heavy and stiff, and set format of design. But in Khulna we found the unique style of Nakshi Kantha because of the majority of Hindu people of Bangladesh is living there. They followed the religious form and motifs as well as using magnum size floral and foliate borders, the Kalka, and extraordinary mythological symbols. They are unique for their colored threads of vibrant and contrasting.

According to "Aesthetics and Vocabulary of Nakshi Kantha" by Perveen Ahmad³, There are 994 objects which is the largest in the country at Bangladesh National Museum Collection. It has been attained from the regions of Rajshahi, Bogura, Rangpur, Pabna, Jamalpur, Mymensingh, Kishoreganj, Tangail, Faridpur, Jessore, Kushtia, Dhaka, and Khulna including 83 of them from Khulna region. The artistic value of Nakshi Kanthas is of high talent, and reflects enormous value both in the skill of needle art as well as in the socio-cultural content of design.

The oldest Kantha is a Hindu ceremonial Nakshi Kantha No. 84.2009 belonging to approximately 1850 A.D. from Gopalganj of greater Faridpur. The largest piece is a beautiful Muslim household Kantha No. 68.17 from Khulna approximately 80 years old shown in the Islamic Motif vocabulary chapter. Both these objects are of remarkable artistic, historical and socio-cultural value.

We found there the following information of the Museum objects: year-wise accession numbers, name of object, measurement, material, color, stitches, description of motifs and design and cultural specialty as well as 994 forms along with colored photographs of each Kantha and placed in 23 albums that are the biggest resource material for a better understanding of the folk treatment of traditional images and forms whereas in eight categories like Linear patterns, Kalka, Elephants, Horses, Birds, Symbols, Figural objects and Tree of Life are mentioned by Perveen Ahmad.

The border of the Kanthas form is possibly the only constraint to the needle-women; everything is her liberty, to use the idiom and metaphors from the store house of reminiscence and belief.

According to Zaman and Stevlak, Nakshi Kantha symbolizes the lifestyle of Bangladeshi people through the various colorful sewing which sustains the cultural diversity, geological features, climatic conditions as well as the socio-economic features of the people who interlace them. (Zaman and Stevlak, 2014)⁴. The learning on customary darts and its completion on contemporary textile will notably supply to the enlargement of socio-economic standard of millions of people in Bangladesh.

The Kantha represents the love of the needle women for the addressee and, being complete of rags, is also supposed to grant shield from the sin eye. It is also the form part of the dowry of brides in certain parts of Bangladesh. But due to commercialization of this creation, now days the touching additions is gone and eye

³ Perveen Ahmad, Aesthetics and Vocabulary of Nakshi Kantha

⁴ Perveen Ahmad, Aesthetics and Vocabulary of Nakshi Kantha

transmittable colorful design are being introduced (Afroj, 2012). The design of Nakshi Kantha also being shifted to regular clothing in commercial clothing industries like pant, panjabi, dhuti, sharee and shal etc. (Zaman and Stevulak, 2014).

In the Nakshi Kantha, two crafts- quilting and embroidering-are involved. Even then both Gurusaday Dutt and Stella Kramrisch, the two pioneers, were content with the term Kantha in their study of the Nakshi Kantha. "The art of the Kantha furnishes an illustration of the wonderful patience, craftsmanship and resourcefulness of the village women," says Dutt. Kramrisch wrote on the Nakshi Kantha under the title of "Kantha" in the Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art in 1939, and she adhered to this term in 'Unknown India: Ritual Art in the Tribe and Village', which was published in 1968.

Niaz Zaman also used the term Kantha when she produced her excellent work titled "The Art of Kantha Embroidery⁵" in 1981 and revised it in 1993. Because of the popularity of Jasimuddin's famous poem Nakshi Kantha Math⁶ (The Field of Embroidered Quilt) the term Nakshi Kantha has come into use increasingly in Bangladesh and has now become synonymous with the embroidered quilt.

Etymology of Nakshi Kantha

The Kanthas collected by ICS Gurusaday Dutt from Bangladesh in the 19th century and the names of the Nakshi Kantha artists that have been recovered are mostly from the Hindu community. Churamani Hati⁷, Nakshi Kantha in Various Forms: Paschim Bango, Kolkata, August-September, 2018, p. 128.

The word Kantha is thought to have originated from the Sanskrit word Kontha, the Prakrit word Kattha. According to Quilt (Kantha) Art of Bengal⁸ by Manjary Mohanty, the first mentioned of Bengali Nakshi Kantha is found in Sri Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita by Krishnadas Kabiraj, which is written about 500 years ago, where it is mentioned that Sri Chaitanya's mother sent him a Kantha. Exactly when the commonly used Nakshi Kantha passes the Kantha level is not recorded. Due to the nature of the materials used and the climate of Bengal, the Kantha is quickly destroyed under normal conditions. The earliest examples of Bengali Nakshi Kantha are therefore not local, that were from sixteenth century's Bangala Kantha or Satganj Kanthas which were made at the order of the Portuguese. The earliest mention of Bengali Nakshi Kantha is found in English commercial documents in the court proceedings of the East India Company dated 25th February, 1818. (Niaz Zaman⁹, Arts and Crafts, Bangladesh Asiatic Society, 2007, p.547)

According to the article of Tanvir Ahamed Fahad¹⁰, titled 'A Traditional Embroidery Art of Bengal-Nakshi Kantha' we found the following etymology of Nakshi Kantha.

Kantha is originated from the Sanskrit word 'Kontha' meaning teases. It makes sense, as Kantha is generally prepared out of teases. The definition of Kantha is that it is a piece of cloth that is worn out for warmth during winter. Different variations of the word Kantha are used in different regional dialects in Bangladesh. And when the Kantha, or quilt or coverlet, has sewing woven onto it, then it becomes the Nakshi Kantha, or overstated coverlet in English.

According to Vedic literature, the needle has been used in India since the ancient times and it is evident in many Vedic hymns. A part from the literary references, archeological findings have also given sufficient evidences of needles and their uses. Needles have been found in the excavation sites of Harappa & Mohenjo-daro in the 3rd millennium B.C.

In India and Bangladesh there is a tradition of sixty four 'Kalas (arts) in which Suchi-karma i.e. needle work is an essential part of the Kala for the women folk. Therefore, we can say that the needle work must have been existed in the Indian subcontinent from a very early historic period.

The prevalence of Kantha art in ancient India is supported by several old texts viz. Rig-Veda, Upanishads, Budhha-Jatakas, Jain-text-Kalpa-Sutra, Panini-text, Ashtadhyae, Maharshi Harit's Samhita Sansatak, Kasika-Vritti etc.

⁵ Niaz Zaman, The Art of Kantha Embroidery

⁶ Jasimuddin, Nakshi Kantha Math, 1929

⁷ Churamani Hati, Nakshi Kantha in various forms: Paschim Bango, Kolkata, August-September, 2018, p. 128.

⁸ Manjary Mohanty, Quilt (Kantha) Art of Bengal

⁹ Niaz Zaman⁹, Arts and Crafts, Bangladesh Asiatic Society, 2007, p.547

¹⁰ Tanvir Ahamed Fahad, A Traditional Embroidery Art of Bengal-Nakshi Kantha

Different types of Nakshi Kantha in Bangladesh

It is found that the interest in Kantha dates back to the early decades of the 20th century when Stella Kramrish, Gurusaday Dutt, Dinesh Chandra Sen and Jasimuddin revived this Nakshi art. Stella Kramrish wrote about Nakshi Kantha and collected many of them which are currently housed in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Gurusaday Dutt also wrote on Nakshi Kantha and his collection is preserved in the Gurusaday Museum at Thakurpukur, Kolkata. Bengali poet Jasimuddin also collects Kantha for researcher Dinesh Chandra Sen, who has not only stopped writing on the Kantha but has also been able to create designs in multiple Kantha combinations. Jasimuddin was already inspired to write poetry on Nakshi Kantha. At the same time poet Rabindranath Tagore at Santiniketan, encouraged the search for indigenous roots of Bengali culture. In this environment local folk art including Kantha was observed. (Niaz Zaman¹¹, Arts and Crafts, Bangladesh Asiatic Society, 2007, p.554).

Although the Kantha of Jessore is the best, the Kantha of Rajshahi is also exceptional. The thickest Kantha comes from Chapainawabganj in Rajshahi, in which the ripple Kantha is entirely designed with plain yarn instead of sharee fringe. Besides, Sujani Kantha made with Lalsalu is also notable. Jessore's Kantha is very dull in color. Although the Kantha of Faridpur is similar to that of Jessore, the phore is not so sharp, the color is also a little more. The Kantha of Khulna is as colorful as Faridpur. Although the Kantha of Dhaka, Mymensingh and Tangail is like Jessore, it does not have any thorns. Although the Kantha of Kushtia is similar to that of Jessore, some influence of Rajshahi can be noticed. Rangpur, Jamalpur and Pabna have less motivation. And the Kantha of Chittagong is not soothed, but the geometric table is depicted in flower herbs.

Patterns

Various types of Nakshi Kantha patterns can be seen in Bangladesh. Such as Sujani- Kantha, Lep-Kantha, Chadar-Kantha, Ashan (Ason)- Kantha, Dastarkhan, Palki-Kantha, Baby-Kantha, Handkerchief-Kantha, Arshilata, Gilaf, Boska etc. There are two main streams of Nakshi Kantha stitching in Bangladesh, one is from Jessore and the other is from Rajshahi. Jessore style Kantha can be divided into three categories according to the variation of decoration i.e. Painted Kantha, Motif Kantha and Pier Kantha. Pictures of weddings, dances and songs are decorated by needle stitch. Motif Kantha depicts motifs or coins of life tree, lotus, moon, star, fish, elephant, mirror, comb etc. The Pier Kantha is made of needle thread and the pier is made as long as the Sharees pier. ... There are so many pier-Kantha is found in Bangladesh like paddy sheaf, bats-chara (bats nails), pair of crabs, manure of ants, scissors edge, tabich-par, nine-chire, shyamalata, moipar, kajal-lata, mohanmala, madarkanta, tersilada, haritaki, khenjurchhari, karalabichi etc. (Tofael Ahmad, Folk Art¹², Bangla Academy, Dhaka, 1985, p. 59-60).

Motifs

There are so many motifs is found in Bangladesh. The number of motifs is less in small size Kanthas like Batua, Arshilata, Bastani etc. but there is excess and diversity in motifs are found at Lep-Kantha and Ashan (Ason) Kantha. Notable among the Kantha motifs are lotus, sun, chakra, Kalka, flowers, herbs, life of trees, animals, and geometric lines as well as various objects used in worldly life. Some motifs have a fixed location, such as the lotus and the sun are usually in the middle of the Kantha, the Kalka and green-trees are at the four corners, and the wavy flowering vine is at the border and the rest of motifs are scattered. (Wakil Ahmed¹³, Folklore, Bangladesh Asiatic Society, 2007. p.179-180). Kantha is usually woven with pictures of fish, leaves, rice sticks, moon, stars, horses, elephants, gods and goddesses or any rural event. (Jasimuddin, Monthly Mohammadi, Baisakh 1358, 'The East Bengal Nakshi Kantha & Sharees'¹⁴p.380).

Dinesh Chandra Sen mentioned his book that Nakshi stitch arts are the familiar objects like lotus, Padma, rice husk, leaves, flowers etc. in addition to the image of Kantha are the king, tenant, chariots, elephants, horses, mythological legends etc. (Dinesh Chandra Sen¹⁵, Greater Bengal, p. 43).

Most of the writers on Kantha point out the link between Kantha and Alpana for motifs and spiritual similarity. For example, in Senjuti Brata, Alpana is drawn with a lotus in the middle of a circle or mall. The sun,

¹¹ Niaz Zaman, Arts and Crafts, Bangladesh Asiatic Society, 2007, p.554

¹² Tofael Ahmad, Folk Art, Bangla Academy, Dhaka, 1985, p. 59-60.

¹³ Wakil Ahmed, Folklore, Bangladesh Asiatic Society, 2007. p.179-180

¹⁴ Jasimuddin, Monthly Mohammadi, Baisakh 1358, 'The East Bengal Nakshi Kantha & Sharees'p.380

¹⁵ Dinesh Chandra Sen, Greater Bengal, 1935.p. 43

moon, ornaments, a boat, a palanquin are added as motifs. Other Alpana depicts animals, trees, footprints and objects of the devotee's own or the aspirations of the person for whom the vows are being observed. (Niaz Zaman, Arts and Crafts¹⁶, Bangladesh Asiatic Society, 2007, p.500).

Other widely used motifs represent the heart of a woman. Although the peacock is not a native bird of Bengal, it is a popular motif in the Kantha industry. The peacock is usually a symbol of the god Kartika. (Jasimuddin¹⁷, Nakshi Kantha Math). But Indian peacocks are often associated with the missing lover. Therefore, it can be said that the popularity of peacock may be related to the desire of women. In a nineteenth-century, a Nakshi Kantha of Faridpur is found where there are two female statues, both of which are hugging peacocks. The most ever-present motif is used in the middle at the traditional Nakshi Kantha is always the lotus. The lotus is eight-petals or hundred petals and is surrounded by a wavy vine or a Sharees fringe design. Occasionally the outermost border of the lotus is not round but square, with flower or Kalka designs at the corners. Perveen Ahmed, The Aesthetics and Vocabulary of Nakshi Kantha¹⁸: Bangladesh National Museum Collection (Dhaka 1997).

The motif Kantha depicts lotus, tree of life, chakra, swastika, betel leaf, household items, elephant, fish etc. Some identical motifs of world-class folk art can be seen. To unravel the mystery of these motifs, folklorists, archaeologists and artisans need to work together. (Tofael Ahmad, Folk Art¹⁹, Bangla Academy, Dhaka, 1985, p. 61).

Kalka is thought to have come to India via Persia where it is usually a leaf symbol. It is variously associated with a flame, a mango, a tree, half of the symbol of In Young. The lower part of Kalka symbolizes a woman's body. Some of the motifs show the other Kalka is very similar to a fertility symbol of Alpana. If the Kalka is the symbol of the tree, then it refers to the tree of life which is closely associated with women. (Niaz Zaman, Arts and Crafts²⁰, Bangladesh Asiatic Society, 2007, p.550).

In the center of the Muslim artist's Kantha, it is found the round flower picture and the sun. Both Hindu and Muslim artists emphasize a circular idea at the center. Chakra (Wheel) is a symbol of worldly order, the sun is a symbol of strength and the lotus is the symbol of sanctity, peace and good luck. (Churamani Hati²¹, Nakshi Kantha in Various Forms, Paschim Banga, Kolkata, India, August-September, 2017, p.130).

In Bangladesh, different types of Nakshi Kantha having trees, plants, fruits, flowers, and geometric shapes. Most of them have an inner design including bordered by minor designs. And most of these designs have been woven for thousands of years which taking influences from the multiple religions including Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism.

In the track of my study I find various types of Kantha based on size, shape and utility of the object as well as relevant ritualistic or iconoclastic symbols. I also discover different types of motifs, designs and forms such as the tree of life, the Kalka, birds, horses, elephants, abstract and tantric symbols, linear patterns and figural objects.

The lotus motif symbolizes the power of life – the union of earth, water, and sky; its open and closed petals indicate the ups and downs of life and the multiplicity of the universe. It is one of the most common designs found in Nakshi Kanthas, and is associated with Hinduism. It symbolizes a heavenly throne, while also being a symbol for harmony and womanhood. It also signifies the unity of earth, water, and sky. The designs feature many variations of the lotus, from the eight-petaled satadal to the hundred-petaled satadal. Solar is a lotus motif that is often found together as the central design of a Kantha. It is a symbol of the power of life within the sun.

The moon is associated with Islam. And in most designs like this, the crescent and the star, symbols of Islam, can be seen in many Kanthas. The wheel is a common sight in India and Bangladesh, with influences from both Hinduism and Buddhism. It is also a representation of the world. This design is popular in rural Bengal.

The varying treatment of the Kalka in four corners expresses the designer's whim, shortening, broadening, enlarging and reducing each one to convey a changing harmony. This design gained popularity during the Mughal period. Originally from Persia and Kashmir, it has become an integral part of Nakshi Kantha embroidery in the Indian subcontinent.

Swastika is a symbol of good fortune, and dates back to the Indus Valley civilization. With time the design became more curvilinear. It is a popular symbol in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism.

¹⁶ Niaz Zaman, Arts and Crafts, Bangladesh Asiatic Society, 2007, p.500

¹⁷ Jasimuddin, Nakshi Kantha Math, 1929.

¹⁸ Perveen Ahmed, The Aesthetics and Vocabulary of Nakshi Kantha, Dhaka 1997

¹⁹ Tofael Ahmad, Folk Art, Bangla Academy, Dhaka, 1985, p61

²⁰ Niaz Zaman, Arts and Crafts, Bangladesh Asiatic Society, 2007, p.550

²¹ Churamani Hati, Nakshi Kantha in Various Forms, Paschim Banga, India, August-September, 2017, p.130

The Tree of Life design is another design that originates from the Indus Valley civilization. The Bangladeshi interpretation of this design features leaves and vines. Rath is a significant Hindu symbol which is the mult-tiered chariot or car of Jagannath (Lord of the universe).

The Ashon (Asan) being a cloth spread for sitting at the place of worship, or family altar within the home, often indicates the God most honored in the household. Since the Hindu calendar, especially in Bengali tradition, worships different Gods during different seasons, one may come upon Ashons bearing symbols representative of the family's various Gods.

The Nakshi Kantha is very versatile, with different types of Kantha serving different purposes. And even while being extremely practical, the design of the Kantha always stands out, along with the stories behind every weave and thread.

According to the article of Tanvir Ahamed Fahad²², titled 'A Traditional Embroidery Art of Bengal-Nakshi Kantha' we found the following Nakshi Kantha:

Lep-Kantha is a thick winter coverlet used as a replacement for the coverlets during the winter, Dastarkhan is used as a place to sit and eat for visitors and is laid on the floor, Sujni-Kantha is used for bed sheet and it is also laid down for visitors to sit on. Bochka-Kantha is used for bundle wrapper cloths and treasure, Balish-Kantha is used for the cover of pillow, Arshilota is used for wrapping mirrors and combs, Borton-Dhakna is used for covering up food during events and the Ashan (Ason) Kantha is laid down in religious ceremonies in places where visitors will sit.

Some case studies

Case Study 1

Respondent: Chandana Rani Bairagi, Husband: Swapan Bairagi, Village, PO & PS: Ashasuni, District: Satkhira. (Photo 1).

From a young age, she interested and has learned needle stitching art by watching her mother, relatives and other women of the family used to do it. Although it used to be made more but now it is less, because of readymade things are more available like carpet which were not before there. Kantha was the main element for winter.

As because it takes a long time to stitch and prices are not profitable, so she doesn't sell. Most of it is used as lep-Kantha in winter as well as souvenir and welcome ceremonies.

Using the bright color yarn on the white texture like red, green and blue are used in old dhutis in the ground whereas old white thaan are used in inside. She collects the yarn from petty yarn shop. She stitched the motif of eight petals inside the rectangle and repetition. This type of motif is commonly used for taking advantage of stitching.

Case Study 2

Respondent: Priya Bairagi, Village: Kachari Bari, Thana: Batiaghata, District: Khulna.

From a young age, she interested and has learned needle stitching by watching her mother, relatives and other women of the family used to do it. Although it used to be made more but now it is less, because of readymade things are more available like blanket and quilt which were not before there. This Kantha is the main element for winter. (Photo 2). As because it takes a long time to stitch and prices are not profitable, so she doesn't sell. Most of it is used to sit on the ground during religious worship and ceremonies.

Using the bright color yarn on the white texture like red, green and blue are used in old dhutis in the ground whereas old white thaan are used in inside. She collects the yarn from petty yarn shop. She stitched the motif of four leaf flower, eight leaf flower and vine-leaf. This type of motif is commonly used for taking advantage of stitching.

²² Tanvir Ahamed Fahad, A Traditional Embroidery Art of Bengal-Nakshi Kantha



Photo 1. Chandana Rani Bairagi was sewing Pair-Kantha



Photo 2. Priya Bairagi was sewing Ful-kata (Local Name) Kantha

Case Study 3

Respondent: Shyamali Sana, Village: West Patibunia, Thana: Dumuria, District: Khulna.

From a young age, she interested and has learned needle stitching by watching her mother, relatives and other women of the family used to do it. However, her children are not interested in this work. Although it used to be made more but now it is less, because of readymade things are more available like blanket which were not before there. This Kantha is used in winter as the main element.

Bright red, green, yellow, blue type yarns have been used on the white texture on old dhutis fabric and old white thaan used in the inside. She collects the yarn from petty yarn shop. She stitched the motif of four leaf flower, Jaba flower, Kalka, lotus curry, six leaf flowers. This type of motif is usually familiar (Photo 3).



Photo 3. A Part of Nakshi Kantha Motif of Shyamali Sana

Case Study 4

Respondent: Namita Bairagi, Husband: Monimohan Bairagi, Village: North Shailmari, Thana: Harintana, District: Khulna (Photo No. 4). From a young age, she interested and has learned needle stitching by watching housewives, her mother, aunt, relatives and other women of the family used to do it. However, her children are not interested in this work. Although it used to be made more but now it is less, because of readymade things are more available like plastic mats & small rugs.

As because it takes a long time to stitch and prices are not profitable, so she doesn't sell. Most of it is used to sit on the ground during religious worship and ceremonies.

Using bright color on white texture like red and blue on old dhutis fabric in the ground and old white thana in the inside and she collects the yarn from petty yarn shop. This Kantha is made in 2000. The design is made with filled phores and in border it has been given a simple Kantha phore for avoiding stress. She stitched the motif of four leaf flowers, eight leaf flowers and vine-leaf.

This type of motif is commonly used for taking advantage of stitching. The red cloth on the side is called 'kuchi jhuri' which was made with old thin georgette sharis. This Ashan Kanthas are mainly made by old cloths.

Case Study 5

MRDI (Management and Resources Development Initiative) and Green World jointly conducted a six month training program on Nakshi Kantha titled 'Bon Laudob Project' in three spots in two unions of Dacope Thana of Khulna i.e. Bon Laudob and Kailashgonj of Kailashgonj union and Dhangmari of Banishanta union. More than two hundred women of Sundarbans region (mostly married) joined these training programs (Photo 5). Training was conducted several times from 2010 to 2012. Mr. Md. Shamim Reza (Assistant Professor of Fine Arts at Jahangirnagar University) from Dhaka was the trainer of this project.



Photo 4. Ashan (Ason) Kantha of Namita Bairagi



Photo 5. Halima Begum, Bon Laudob Project

In the training session women used the local motifs as well as followed motifs of Jessore and other regions. Before stitching, many of them used to stitch with their freehand even though it was painted in stencil method. Sometimes Tiger and Golpata of Sundarbans were used as motifs.

There is a registered women's association there and it conducted fairs in several times and earned money by selling Nakshi Kantha. They also sold it to Dhaka Mini-marts and enchanting foreign buyers occasionally. Even

after the completion of this 'Bon Laudob Project', there is still stitching, but it is for one's own needs and of course, some women still have sell.

Research Findings

Specialty of Nakshi Kantha of Khulna

In the ancient kingdom of Vanga and Samatata, Khulna was part of it and became a part of the Sena dynasty during the 12th century under Ballala Sena, and formed part of the Bagri division of Bengal. Khulna was the very first sub-division of United Bengal Province which was established in 1842 under Jessore district. On 1 June 1882 by notification of the official gazette published from Kolkata, Khulna and Bagerhat sub-division of Jessore district and Satkhira sub-division of 24 Pargana district formed the new district 'Khulna'. In 1984 Satkhira became a district.

In this study, greater Khulna means not only Khulna division but also its old area with Satkhira which is very relevant to our study topics like Nakshi Kantha. Therefore there is no confusion to study the chronological history of Nakshi Kantha in this greater Khulna or to specify the research area.

Limitations of this study is the biggest problems which I have explained in the limitation of study section. These obstacles also impacted in to my field works. But the socio economic impact of Nakshi Kantha is very important for this study and I am attempting to understand the emerging reality and socio economic observations of Nakshi Kantha featuring new challenges and scope in greater Khulna of Bangladesh.

A look at the Kanthas preserved in several Aristocratic Family in Calcutta and museums in West Bengal of India gives me an idea of the form of Nakshi Kantha which was once published. Kantha crowds can also been seen in several museums of Bangladesh. Several notable Kanthas are being preserved in both Bangladesh and West Bengal of India.

This study discovered Manadasundori Dasya Kantha of Khulna at Gurusaday Museum, Thakurpukur in Kolkata, Sonamoni Dasya Kantha collected by Abanindranath Tagore at the residence of Amitendranath Tagore, Bamasundari Dasya Kantha of Magura at Victoria Memorial Hall of Calcutta, Gift of Shilaiah Kantha to Rabindranath Tagore at Rabindra Bhaban of Visva-Bharati. Nakshi Kantha of Bangladesh also preserved in the Museum of North Bengal University of Siliguri including Ashutosh Museum of Calcutta University.

None of the Nakshi Kanthas preserved in the archives date back to before 1600 AD. In the 19th century, Stella Kramrisch identified a Nakshi Kantha as dated 1875 AD. Some specimens of handicrafts, including Nakshi Kantha, collected by Gurusaday Dutt, were displayed on 20 March 1932 at The Indian Society of Oriental Art²³, Calcutta. (Churamani Hati, Naksha Gatha Kantha Pith, Shiladitya, Kolkata, February, 2019, p. 13).

A total of 210 Nakshi Kanthas of 19th and 20th centuries are preserved in Gurusaday Museum. Of these, 201 were collected by Gurusaday Dutt. Nakshi Kantha, popularly known as Manadasundori Kantha in folk culture, researcher and artist community, is preserved in Gurusaday Archive and collected by Gurusaday Dutt. This 19th century Nakshi Kantha was collected from Mulghar, Fakirhat of Khulna, then undivided Bengal and present day Bangladesh. It is hard to understand and realize how consonant the colored threads of some previously used sharis, dhotis and cloth spread from the fringe of this Nakshi Kantha.

Manadasundori Dasya Kantha

Firstly, the Kantha of Manadasundori which is clearly mentioned in the dedication script of the Zamindarbari, and secondly, it is the embroidered Sujni Kantha.

²³ The Indian Society of Oriental Art, Calcutta. Churamani Hati, Naksha Gatha Kantha Pith, Shiladitya, Kolkata, February, 2019, p. 13



Photo 7. Nakshi Kantha of Manadasundori Dasya

In the classification of Nakshi Kantha by Gurusaday Dutt, Sujni Kantha is mainly used as a bed sheet to welcome guests or loved ones or at festive occasions. This Kantha, which is made with difficulty as well as skilled hands, is one of the two characteristics; hence the word 'dorokha' has been used.

The dedicational script has only been reversed there inversely. In the dedication part written in Bengali as 'I Manadasundori Dasya, the daughter of Mr. Bardakanta Basu resident of Bandhal prepared with wax dedicated this Sajni to my beloved father with great respect. Dear gentlemen, please pardon me as much as you can' (Photo 7). Child widow Manadasundori has been decorating this Kantha for a long time.

The printed picture of company as well as the Kalighat pot suggested that she might have been influenced by the fragmentary nature of the social scene of the time. Or as the daughter of a Zamindar, she had the opportunity to meet the other Zamindars of Calcutta.

This Kantha is a combination of social imagery and the spiritual world. The lotus blossoms used in the middle of this Kantha which is 5 feet 9 inches long and 4 feet 5 inches in size. The dazzling chained Kalka around the lotus and the geometric design-hyacinth chakti. Either the Gora-platoon lined up in the two opposite sides of

the Kantha or the Portuguese army on the opposite side of the British Indian army. Foreigners in camouflage hats and oil coats also have swords in their hands and Indian soldiers in pokri hats also carry guns.

This gun reminds me of Bengal Sepahi rebellion. The Indian Army is not only distinguished by the quality of its clothing, but also by its appearance. Andaramahal is one side and just opposite the Barmahal. It shows the impressions of a close-knit family in the inner courtyard of a Zamindar's house. Middle-aged women are engaged in good deeds by touching each other. And young women are busy dressing up.

It is seen that a girl is busy with the veil. External men are not allowed in the inner courtyard. It is clear in their costumes those only clansmen, saints, monks, astrologers could enter, so they are seen as men in the inner court.

On the other hand, there are oarsmen in the Barmahal, dancers dancing, dancers' dressing room, intoxicated Zamindars are sitting in chairs, women traveling with wine, there are seen dressing as colored Hanuman.

The rectangular Kantha is surrounded by lotus and bunches of kadam flowers with stalks. There is also the desire to be freed from captivity by staring at the doors and windows of the Zamindar's house and the windows of the girls. As well as being allowed to go out with the male character with any one woman. Earlier, the scene of gentleman (Babu) walking around with a chain around the dog's neck or gentlewoman (Begum) inside the chariot and Nawab is outside; A kind of touring scene, an Indian mahout riding on an elephant and two gentlemen.

The bed sheet on the back of the elephant is also patterned. There is the yoga power of the saint and the ability to carry the mass of incense and smoke and Elephant (Irabat) can be called divine power. There are chariots with flags at the top. Scattered are insects and birds, butterflies, bees, wasps, lizards, gossips, crocodiles, several fishes and birds, animals, chicken, duck, fox, pig, , woodpecker, spider, earthworm, snake etc.

There are two-dimensional coins with the front and back facing aside. Needless to say, except for the pictorial parts, there are small phore in all over the Kantha. There is no way to make the characters look better than to wonder about the sewing skills.

The body of the Kantha is flat, there is no difference in the pull of the line on the opposite side but the difference in the filling is noticeable. The filling on the reverse side is relatively light but when viewed from a distance, small dots accumulate and solidify. There was the use of black, yellow, green, blue yarn. There was also the use of red thread.

In Hindu reform Manadasundori painted the sign of victory on the foreheads of the Indian men, but not a single woman she painted the vermillion on their sindhi. Maybe she didn't want to push a character of her love towards evil by calling herself a widow. The artist seems to have caught everything herself. It is possible to create such Kantha from the love of the devotee's mind.

Other Specialty of Nakshi Kantha of Khulna

Accession No: 90.1321²⁴; **Object:** Nakshi Kantha (lep); **Provenance:** Khulna; **Measurement :**190 cm x 130 cm; **Material:** white cotton handloom sharee, three layers, threads from old woven sharee borders, and an original red woven border sewn on as outer edge; **Colors :** Pinkish red, orange, jade green, dark blue, purple, black, light orange, pink, white ; **Approximate date:** 1920 A.D. **Plate No.** 45

The Jeevan vriksha (Jibon brikho) trees as flowering shrubs appearing in the four corners of this charmingly decorated Kantha spread, is recent enough in time to overrule ancient totemism into its-every motif. Indeed one does not have to draw conclusive or even indicative meanings out of the composition. The centre circle contains the sun's rays, also the rice stalks and the petal-like projections of a lotus flower on its parameter, but by no code of ritualistic design is it either a cultist sun or a ritualistic lotus. The drooping branches with exotic flowers are gracefully held on the erect inner leaf-trees as seen in traditional forms. The four mid-points of the centre field have building shapes which are mausoleums, temples, or mosque images. The bottle-like forms could be ceremonial water vessels or incense holders, the curved handled bowl also looks like a ritual or domestic object and the combs and sleek stylized fish seem to be patterns of visual pleasure. This may be an example of beauty for beauty's sake, but with undeniable expressions of traditional folk art-craft (Photo 8).

²⁴ Perveen Ahmad, Aesthetics and Vocabulary of Nakshi Kantha

Accession No: 77.1899²⁵; Object: Bostani; Provenance: Khulna, Material: White cotton handloom sharees two layers, threads from old sharees borders; Color red, black, ochre, pink, dark blue, grey-green, white; Approximate date; 1890 A.D. (Plate Nos: 63 & 63A) (Photo 9). The two striking features of this bostani Kantha are its brilliance of color and the extraordinary textural quality which stand out in luminous shades.

The ground is worked in the artful stitch called pipre-sharee (Antline stitch) which has a magical effect of creating visual movement. Thus the entire piece gives a sensation of liquidity, as if all the images are floating on moving waters, the closely worked stitches forming triangles, rectangles, pentagons, hexagons, and shapeless forms, circumscribe the motifs in light or dark colors giving density or lightness to the field. This style is similar, yet different from the 'modeling' stitch seen in other Kanthas.



Photo 8. Nakshi Kantha (Lep)

²⁵ Perveen Ahmad, Aesthetics and Vocabulary of Nakshi Kantha



Photo 9. Bostani

Once again the satadal padma, hundred petal lotus containing an eleven petalled flower with bindu centre, is surrounded by outward pointing petals. Then come the corner point, the four directions of the earth, with meanings understood by mankind in all civilizations, from Mesopotamia to the Indo-Gangetic civilizations and beyond. It is noteworthy that the tree of life motifs seen in the previous two Kanthas are all put together in this piece in its three manifestations: geometric, linier and floral. In the forth corner a Rath (chariot) completes the visual symphony. Whether this happened by actually seeing the two older Kanthas, or merely that the artist, familiar with a wide repertoire of design, used all image to suit her layout, is speculative. It certainly goes to the credit of the embroiderer that she arranged the two figurative and two abstract motifs at diagonal points, with tremendous pictorial grace.

A very rare Nakshi Kantha of Khulna

Lady Amir Un-Nagar of Alipur, Sathkhira produced this Nakshi Kantha on 1379 (Bengali Year) just after the Liberation war of Bangladesh. This Kantha is archived in the Bangladesh Folk Art & Crafts Foundation, Sonargaon, Narayangonj (Photo No. 10).

This Kantha represent the Bangladesh map in the foreground mixing with different color threads, expressing the Sonar Bangla filled up the wealth and resources of Bangladesh mentioning place name and artist name. In this Kantha we found the Bay of Bengal under the map stitching the water wave. This Kantha represent the patriotic love of a needle craft artist of Bangladesh.



Photo 10. Nakshi Kantha of Amir Un-Nagar

Bayton Khantha

This Kantha is made in the nineteenth centuries. In this Kantha we found the motifs as Round Padma in the center surrounded by jiban brikha (life of tree) and the border is sew the edges stitched. Kalka, fish elephant, horse, peacock and Rath motifs also stitched that represent the religious beliefs as well as Khulna region. Writer and researcher Shila Basak²⁶ of India mentioned her book titled 'Banglar Nakshi Kantha' published by Ananda Publishers, Kolkata, First published in 2002, page 255, Photo No. 244 (Photo 11).

Socio economic impacts of Nakshi Kantha

Nakshi Kantha is a medium to promote the local communities through commercial opportunities, employment opportunities, income generation, conservation and development of rural arts, crafts and cultures. The majority of the rural people in Bangladesh live in below poverty level but there have a unique traditional way of life, heritage culture, handicrafts, art etc. that has a great vista for crane the socio-economic conditions. It acts as enhance in employment opportunities in rural areas and the products of rural needlewomen get a ready market. Bangladesh government has been organizing various types of exhibitions, fairs, festivals etc. for encouragement the rural arts, cultures and handicrafts and Nakshi Kantha is one of prominent.

²⁶ Shila Basak, Banglar Nakshi Kantha, 2002. p.255

There are so many constructive crashes of Nakshi Kantha stitch on socio-economical perception are stated below:

- Create employment opportunity for rural women.
- Rise income level of the Kantha artisans.
- Generate foreign exchange.
- Improve culture, health and education of the rural communities.
- Cultural understanding through fairs and festivals of Kantha artisans.
- Reduce migration of rural people to urban areas.
- Development of market of the agro products and handicrafts.
- Rural artisans get direct contact with the customers.



Photo 11. Bayton Kantha

New challenges of Nakshi Kantha

There are some many new challenges and struggles concerned in Nakshi Kantha of Bangladesh. The women who engaged in Nakshi stitching work are facing numerous difficulties which are mentioned below:

- Lack of managing time for Naksha stitching work.
- Due to natural disaster like the cyclone Amphan, Aila, Sidor and devastating floods, women of these areas couldn't give time to Nakshi stitching work than that of other income generating works.
- Due to Covid Pandemic women switching their profession from needle craft to agriculture, fishing, wood collector etc.

- Poverty is the main reason to involve women in other income generating works like agriculture, fishing, private business as well as private job.
- Lack of labors in agricultural sectors, women are bound to involve in agro-farm in spite of needle craft work.
- Lack of leisure time and involvement in social media like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and watching television serial and drama, women couldn't feel interest in needle work.
- Nakshi Kantha of other areas in Bangladesh and commercially produced Nakshi Kantha by NGOs fulfilled the demands and supply chain of Khulna region, so that the women who worked in needle craft just quit themselves for lack of demands.
- Migration is one of the major reasons to decrease Nakshi Kantha production in Khulna region. Two types of migration are found in Khulna. Migration to Dhaka or other districts for works and migration to India for living.
- NGOs provided jute-cotton and other raw-materials for making carpet and other handicrafts, for that reason woman is switching their profession from needle craft to jute-craft.

The scope of Nakshi Kantha

Government initiative

Bangladesh government has taken steps to create a vast indicator to represent the traditional sources on artistic work to enlarge the embroidery textile market of our country. Recently Bangladesh Handloom Board finalized Tk. 21.13 billion projects in this connection. The construction of the hub is expected to be finished by 2023 and will be located across two upazilas of Jamalpur. Once completed, the 300-acre hub to be known as 'Sheikh Hasina Nakshi Palli²⁷', would accommodate almost 1,200 entrepreneurs while tripling the production of embroidery items in the country. This would be one of the biggest government projects for the whole textile sector in the country and it will help create a bigger market for embroidered textiles while generating more than three hundred thousand additional jobs. Government can play an important role to create similar kind of project for sustaining needle craft women in Khulna.

There are alternative scopes for Nakshi stitching women of Khulna are the following:

- Developing tourism system for foreign and local tourists based on Sundarbans to attracting Nakshi Kantha. Nakshi Kantha can play significant role in familiarizing the country's tourism resources, attracting tourists, stated the inhabitant of a country engaged in needle-craft work. It's a tendency of the tourist that they like to collect a small piece of memory with them while they return from a place and the best thing to be collect from Bangladesh is Nakshi Kantha. Nakshi Kantha thus plays a pivotal role in the field of tourism sector and it helps not only attracts the tourist groups but also it helps the country's economy to increase its GDP by earning foreign currencies.
- Ministry of Cultural Affairs can open a window in Khulna for exhibit and sale of Nakshi Kantha. At the same time they can create a government website where Nakshi Kantha and other handicrafts information are available.
- Local government can open a Nakshi Kantha Hat like Shanibarer Hat of Santiniketan, Bolpur, West Bengal, India in regular basis for sale so that local needle crafts women can sale their Nakshi products there.

Suggestions and recommendations

A set of broad recommendations are proposed that will allow the state to attain the preferred growth and development in infrastructures and in the rural tourist numbers to attract Nakshi Kantha.

- For creating awareness government should give training to the technical and non-technical persons associated with rural tourism.
- By providing attractive financial scheme government should generate attractive schemes for entrepreneurship development related with Kantha stitch among the rural community.

²⁷ Sheikh Hasina Nakshi Palli, Jamalpur

- Implementation- Rural Tourism covering the Kantha stitching areas to facilitate direct experience of these products by tourists
- For entrepreneurship development and existing business development, loans and others financial support like subsidy, tax concession and others incentives should be given to the local needlecraft-women.

Limitations of study

Before the partition of India greater Khulna is well-known for the biggest community of Hindu people. The biggest number of Nakshi stitching women was from the Hindu community. Bangladesh is a Muslim majority country in where the Hindus are the minority people. After the partition of India in 1947, Hindu-Muslim riot in 1947 and 1964-65, India-Pakistan conflicts of 1947, 1965, 1971, and 1999, Liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971, Babri Mosque incident of 1990s and geopolitical conflicts of India-Bangladesh and subcontinent made a significant impact to migrate the minority Hindu community of Bangladesh to India.

In greater Khulna was once the majority of Hindu community than that of the Muslims, but the results of several incidents of communal conflicts that it has been turns to minority due to the largest people of Hindu community migration to India. Even this tendency of migration of Hindu community to India is still going on. That's why it has been created a biggest negative impact on Nakshi Kantha production in greater Khulna region.

At the same time women have been switched their professions from needle stitch work to agriculture, fishing, readymade garments, and other jobs. On the other hands, television talk-show, drama, drama serial and attractive programs of satellite television, social media like Facebook and the rapid changes of villages to urban made an incredible impact to reduce leisure time of women's life style which made a negative impact on Nakshi Kantha.

In addition, with poor sales during the Corona pandemic period, about 50-60% of workers in needle-craft have lost their jobs in Bangladesh and it made a negative impact to the women of needle stitch for switching their jobs to another sector in greater Khulna region. Even there are so many alternative hubs of Nakshi Kantha that existing needle crafts women switch their jobs to other handicrafts works for better earning.

Moreover, the rapid development of infrastructure and communications of rural Bangladesh as well as the development of women education that has been creating more job hubs in urban markets, which made a negative impact in Nakshi stitching sector due to lack of needle crafts workers. Generation gap has also made a break in Nakshi stitching sector. Where the grandmothers or mothers were Nakshi crafts women of a family, their granddaughters or daughters have no interest in needle crafts stitch.

Therefore there are so many limitations and obstacles have taken place in the area of Nakshi Kantha stitching. Limitations of women empowerment, lack of interest in needle crafts, limitations of leisure periods, and lack of opportunities in Nakshi Kantha, needle crafts women switching them to agro farm, fishing, and other job sectors.

There are also some limitations to this study paper effectively due to the availability of authentic data of this traditional folk stitch.

- The insufficiency of previous records about the traditional stitches in Bangladesh.
- Different districts have different patterns of Nakshi Kantha motifs.
- Discontinued chain of skilled artisans in the current century.
- Modern fashion designers sometimes also tried to replica the Nakshi Kantha design in other dress. Although this attitude of the fashion designers have enlarged their business but on the other hand it is downfallen the traditional value of the product itself.
- Nakshi Kantha once existed among the basic household items that have now become a piece of art, exhibited during special occasions. Many use the handicrafts as decorative element than that of understanding the cultural and traditional value.

That's why this article is an attempt to study the emerging reality and the socio economic impact of Nakshi Kantha as well as to seek the new challenges and scope in greater Khulna region of Bangladesh.

Conclusion

This art has given an economic freedom to the female folk and they have gladly accepted this work as a parallel economy to earn money, without hampering their family responsibilities. Women are also aware of their self-respect and their position in the society and community. Apart from their traditional role of a homemaker, many of them have taken this art as a profession and the Nakshi Kantha craft acts as a tool for women empowerment.

Now a day the concept and trend of tourism are changing gradually. Tourism means not only to visit prominent destinations and stay overnight in star categories hotel but also to visit remote lesser known places and enjoy the real flavor of rural areas in close proximity of local community. They prefer to purchase handmade indigenous products like Nakshi Kantha stitch from local shops rather than branded products from showroom. This type of tourism suggests real experience of unique culture of Bangladesh. Hence the development should guarantee the social and cultural sustainable tourism development compatible with the culture and values of the local people. The plan for action should focus around community participation in tourism development and planning, training of the personnel associated with art and craft work so that they can provide quality services without devaluing the same.

In conclusion, we may say that the Nakshi Kantha market in Khulna requires a judicious mix of creativity and institutionalization. On one hand the creativity of the craftswomen need to be encouraged and on the other hand the linkages in the production processes need to be formerly structured so that there is productive efficiency and rewarding returns to labor. Craftswomen of Khulna have the traditional skill and a latent entrepreneurial spirit to their advantage for their socio-economic development.

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Conflict of interest

None declared.

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