

## Chapter 11

# Sustaining Kheta: Bihar's Embroidery Heritage

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### Introduction

Kheta embroidery, an exquisite craft with roots in Bihar's cultural history, exemplifies a long legacy of artistic expression and communal identification. This embroidery, which is mostly practiced by the Shershabadi group, is extremely important, not only as a form of artistic expression, but also as a means of sustainable livelihood and cultural preservation (Jain, 2022). Kheta embroidery is a traditional technique that has been handed down through the years, showcasing Bihar's artistic talent and rich cultural legacy. This craft entails fine embroidery, frequently with colourful threads and motifs drawn from nature, folklore, and traditional designs (Thakur, 2022).

Throughout history, Kheta embroidery has played an important role in preserving Bihar's cultural heritage by adding unique designs and motifs to textiles and clothing (Jain, 2022). More than just being attractive, Kheta embroidery has a deeper meaning. It emphasizes the value of traditional crafts in the preservation of cultural heritage and is a testament to the ingenuity and talent of the artists who carry it out (Das, 2022). Moreover, this embroidery plays an important role in the economic empowerment of artisans, providing them with a source of income and livelihood.

The main objective of this study is to create awareness by showcasing the beauty and intricacy of Kheta embroidery. This study aims to increase awareness of the craftsmanship, local identity, and lifestyle of Shershabadi artisans. Through this, we aim to highlight the richness and diversity of Bihar's cultural heritage. This study intends to address the issues that the Kheta embroidery craft and the Shershabadi community face, in line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 8 and 11, which are concerned with economic growth and decent work, and sustainable cities and communities, respectively (UNESCO, 2015).

Kheta embroidery stands as a beacon of resilience and cultural pride in Bihar, embodying the rich heritage and artistic heritage of the region (Das, 2022). This study also highlights the importance of preserving and promoting this craft, not only in terms of its aesthetic value, but also in terms of its contribution to sustainable development and community well-being.

### Bihar and its Rich Handicraft Tradition

Bihar, located in eastern India, is a state rich in history, culture, and natural beauty. Bihar has a rich and diverse history dating back to ancient times. Founded in the 6th century BC, it is home to several important empires and kingdoms, including the Magadha Empire, which played an important role in the spread of Buddhism throughout India and abroad (Haan, 2010). Bihar was also a centre of learning and scholarship, with institutions such as Nalanda University attracting students and scholars from all over the world.

When it comes to handicrafts, Bihar has a long tradition of producing high quality textiles, pottery, and metalwork. Some of Bihar's most famous handicrafts include Madhubani painting, known for its intricate designs and bright colours, and Sujani embroidery, a type of quilting used to create intricate and colourful textiles. Bihar is also known for its brass and copper wares decorated with intricate designs and patterns (Patel, 2016).

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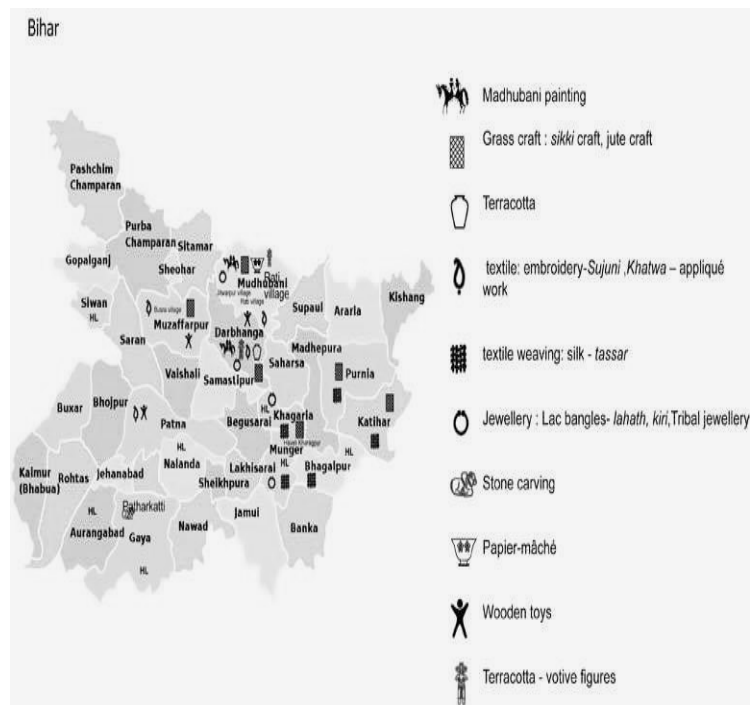
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#### How to Cite This Chapter:

Saraswat, S., & Thakur, S. (2024). Sustaining Kheta: Bihar's Embroidery Heritage. In Baghel, A., & Parikh, S. (Eds.), *Advancing Heritage Innovations in India*, (pp. 108-120) Cinius Yayınları.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.38027/N11ICCAUA2024IN0420>

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One of the important handicraft traditions of Bihar is weaving silk and cotton fabrics. Bihar has several important textile centres such as Bhagalpur, famous for its silk sarees, and Patna, known for its cotton textiles (Jha, 2019). These textiles are often decorated with intricate embroidery and hand-painted designs and are highly prized by collectors and fashion designers. Among these crafts, Keta embroidery, practiced by the Shershabadi community of Kishanganj village, stands out as a testament to the resilience and creativity of Bihar's artisans.



**Figure 1** Craft Map of Bihar. Source- Craft council of India.

The Bihar Crafts Map features only a handful of the crafts that are practiced in Bihar like, madhubani painting, textile weaving tassar silk, sujuni embroidery, stone carving, wooden toys, etc (India C. c., n.d.). Many small communities that depend on various handicrafts for survival are not recognized at the state level and therefore fail to make a mark at the global and national level. It is important to promote and showcase these lesser-known crafts on a national and international scale to give these communities more opportunities and recognition (Das, 2022). Efforts to promote and showcase lesser-known crafts like Kheta embroidery on a national and international scale are essential to providing stable livelihoods to artisans and ensuring the preservation of traditional art forms.

Bihar's handicraft industry has faced many challenges in recent years, including competition from cheap, mass-produced products and a lack of infrastructure and marketing support. However, efforts are underway to revive and promote traditional crafts, with organizations such as the Bihar Khadi and Village Industries Board working to support and train local artisans. Additionally, many NGOs and social enterprises are working to connect artisans to new markets and promote sustainable and ethical production practices (India G. o., 2016). Overall, Bihar's handicraft industry is an important part of its cultural heritage and economy and continues to thrive to this day. Organizations such as Bihar state Khadi and Village Industries Boards, along with NGOs and social enterprises, play an important role in supporting and promoting these handicrafts, thereby ensuring the overall sustainability of the handicraft industry in Bihar (India G. o., 2016).

### **Kishanganj and Shershabadi Community**

Kishanganj Formerly known as Krishnakunj, this place is located 425 kilometres northeast of Bihar's capital Patna. Purnia district once included Kishanganj, close to the borders of Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bengal. On January 14, 1990, the Bihar government officially declared it a district (Bihar, 2024).

Kishanganj is home to two Muslim ethnic groups: the original inhabitants, the Surjapuris, and the Shershabadis, who migrated from West Bengal and seamlessly intermingled with the area (Pande, 2022). Shershabadi carried people from one state to another, but they were also known for their knowledge of themselves and their surroundings, their dexterity with their hands, their rich visual language, or their ability to sew old saris one on top of another (Jain, 2022).

The Shershabadi community, also known as Sher Shahis, is an important social group in the Indian state of Bihar with a distinct history and cultural identity. The community is believed to have originated in the Middle Ages, with its roots dating back to the reign of Sher Shah Suri (1486-1545), a prominent ruler of the Suri dynasty who founded the Sur Empire in northern India (Pande, 2022). Sher Shah Suri, known for his administrative reforms and military conquests, is said to have conscripted soldiers from various regions, including present-day Bihar, into his army (Hoque, 2015). Over time, the descendants of these soldiers formed Shershabadi communities and eventually settled in different parts of Bihar, especially in areas around Patna, Bihar Sharif, and Gaya. The community's name 'Shershabadi' is believed to be derived from 'Sher Shah', indicating its historical connection with the Suri dynasty. The Shershabadi community has traditionally engaged in a variety of occupations, including agriculture, trade, and crafts such as embroidery and weaving (Hoque, 2015).

The community's rural lifestyle includes catching fish using traditional tools and methods, building mud houses, granaries, making cots called khatyas and charpoys, and preparing spices by hand. Grinding, making sun-dried pickles, pressing oil, basket (Hossain, 2024). To survive and maintain their livelihood, they turned to "tobacco leaf rolling" (local smoke known as bidi) as a side job. Migration not only brought people from one state to another, but also their abilities and habits. It could be knowledge about oneself or the environment, a skilled hand, a visual vocabulary, or the skill of sewing old saris in layers to distinguish them from others (Hoque, 2015).

Shershabadi artisans, especially women, have preserved the craft of Kheta embroidery for generations, making it an integral part of their cultural identity and livelihood. Despite being practiced for centuries, Kheta embroidery is not well known outside the local community (IIAD, 2022). This lack of awareness prevents artisans from accessing broader markets and opportunities for growth and sustainability. Furthermore, the craft's obscurity contributes to the challenges faced by Shershabadi communities in preserving and passing on their cultural heritage to future generations (Das, 2022). Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 8 and 11, which focus on decent work and economic growth and sustainable cities and communities respectively (UNESCO, 2015), make it important to recognize and support crafts like Kheta embroidery. These crafts not only contribute to the economic development of artisans and their communities, but also play an important role in preserving cultural traditions and promoting sustainable practices (Humtsoe, 2022).

The Kheta embroidery craft practiced by the Shershabadi community is a shining example of Bihar's rich handicraft tradition. Recognizing and supporting such crafts not only helps artisans like the Shershabadi community achieve economic growth, but also preserves and promotes Bihar's cultural heritage for future generations.

## Significance of Kheta Embroidery in Bihar's Cultural Heritage

Kheta embroidery is a traditional craft deeply rooted in the cultural heritage of Bihar, India. Its history goes back centuries, and its origins can be traced back to the Shershabadi community. The Shershabadi community has meticulously preserved this art form and passed it down from generation to generation. The craft's name comes from the word 'Kheta', meaning 'field', symbolizing intricate designs inspired by nature and rural life (Sariya, 2022).

The importance of Kheta embroidery lies not only in its beauty but also in its cultural and economic importance. Historically, this craft has served as a form of women's self-expression and has been used to decorate clothing and household items. Each stitch and pattern tell a story and reflects the artisan's traditions, beliefs and daily life (Jain, 2022). This has provided women in particular with a source of income and economic independence and has empowered them to contribute to the economic well-being of their families (Pande, 2022). Additionally, this craft plays an important role in preserving the community's cultural identity, serving as a means of connecting with the community's past and transmitting its heritage to future generations.

Kheta embroidery, a traditional craft practiced by the Shershabadi community in Bihar, India, embodies a sustainable practice that is increasingly relevant in today's world. This intricate form of sewing is traditionally done on hand-woven fabrics and utilizes locally sourced materials such as cotton and silk threads and natural dyes, demonstrating an environmentally friendly approach to textile production (Das, 2022). In the modern market, Kheta embroidery products range from traditional clothing such as shawls, dupattas, and scarves to modern takes that include home furnishings such as cushion covers, table runners, and bed sheets.

The process of Kheta craft includes:

The first step is to select an acceptable embroidered base material and thread. The base cloth is typically one or more separated antique cotton sarees, each 5.5 metres long, as well as lungis (lower drapes for men). Kishanganj's women craftsmen use a variety of coloured cotton strands woven into a single thick thread. The quilt's thickness is determined by its intended function, and the base cloth is folded and layered. Traditionally, artisans prefer to quilt on 6 to 8 layers and can easily use a full-length sari (5.5 meters) to achieve a finished size of 24" X 24". When the cloth is ready for quilting, the craftsperson binds the layers by sewing a guiding line through the middle of the piece in the direction of the desired motif. The initial line is crucial because all

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subsequent ones are stitched calculatedly with precise planning and accuracy based on the concept in mind. The yarn is counted intuitively, the needle is inserted, and the thread is fastened, leaving just enough float of yarn. Nearly 4 inches of twisted yarn are left as fringes along both edges, while each line is stitched on the fabric. The extra yarn length left at the edges protects the fabric without the need for further finishing. Raw materials used for the craft include coloured cotton fabric, threads, and needles.

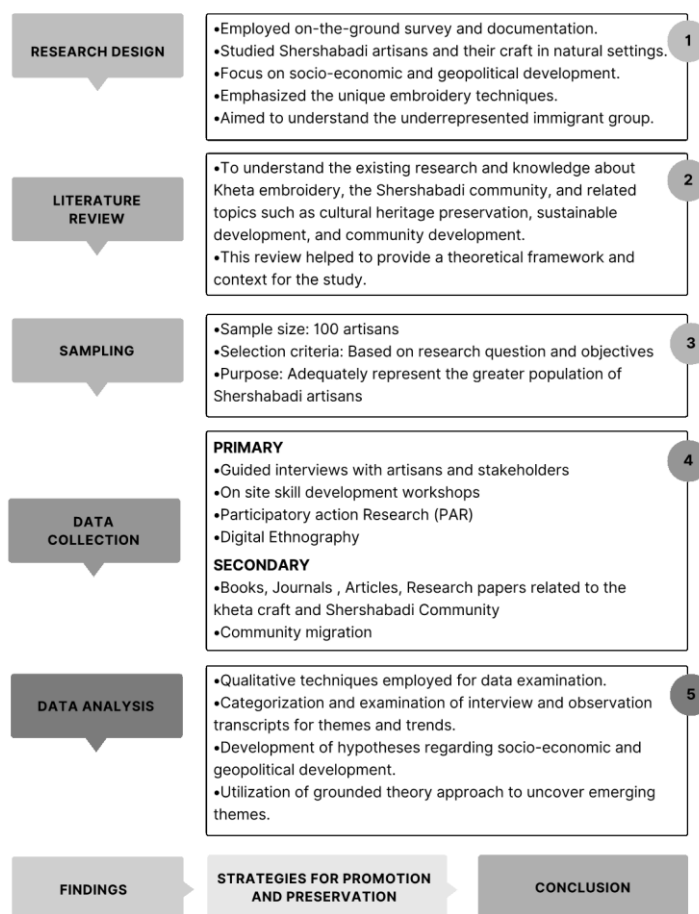


**Figure 2** Showing coloured cotton thread (raw material) and Kheta craft making process. Source: Author

Despite its rich history and cultural importance, kheta embroidery faces several challenges that threaten its sustainability. Modernization, changing consumer tastes, lack of recognition and support are among the factors contributing to the decline of this craft. Kheta embroidery is a testament to Bihar's rich cultural heritage and the resilience of its people (Jain, 2022). Preserving and promoting this craft not only protects tradition, but also supports sustainable development and community empowerment.

### Methodology

The following research methodology was conducted for the study:



**Figure 3** Methodology. Source: Author

Field survey and documentation techniques were used to develop the research design for this study. This strategy provided information about Shershabadi artisans and their skilled craftsmanship in their natural environment. This design is suitable for learning more about the socio-economic and geopolitical development of this underrepresented immigrant group and its unique embroidery techniques. The literature review examined existing information on cultural heritage, sustainable development, and traditional crafts, highlighting the economic, social, and cultural importance of preserving traditional crafts like Kheta embroidery.

A sample size of 100 artisans was chosen to adequately represent the larger population of Shershabadi artisans. Data collection included a combination of on-site skills development workshops that facilitated interviews with stakeholders, and secondary research on community migration was used for data collection. Skills development workshops were held on site, where we observed artisans work and gain information about their methods and procedures. The workshops were also used to build relationships with artists and gain the trust of the community. To better understand the socio-economic and geopolitical context in which the artisans operate, the guided interviews were conducted with stakeholders, including local leaders and community members.

Qualitative methods were used to examine the data collected. Transcripts of interviews and observations were categorized, and themes and trends were considered. Findings of the study shed light on the socio-economic and geopolitical development of Shershabadi artists and their unique embroidery techniques. This study highlights the value of social networks and other forms of support for the expansion and improvement of artisanal enterprises.

Strategies for promotion and conservation include capacity building programs, market linkages, and policy interventions to ensure the sustainability of Kheta embroidery, as well as community-based initiatives for the development of marginalized immigrant minorities. This study recognizes that cultural heritage preservation is a valuable resource for the long-term growth and cultural continuity of Bihar, India, and highlights the need to incorporate cultural heritage preservation into the sustainable development agenda. It also emphasized the need to recognize and support these artisans in the context of sustainable development goals and suggested strategies for their promotion and preservation.

## Literature Review

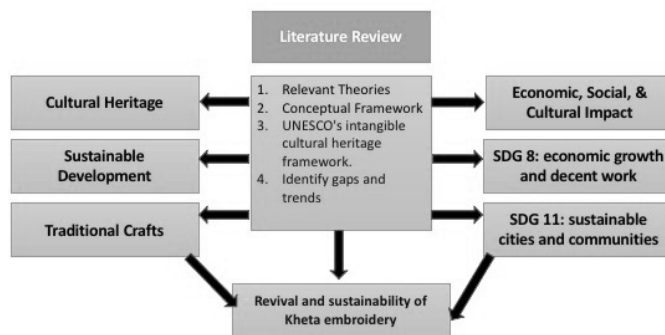


Figure 4 Literature review flow chart. Source: Author

Cultural heritage, sustainable development, and the preservation of traditional crafts are interconnected and have received significant attention in academic discussions. This section reviews the existing literature on these subjects along with its economic, social, and cultural implications in line with SDG 8 and SDG 11 to understand the revival and sustainability of Heta embroidery in Bihar's cultural heritage. Figure shows the literature review process.

## Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Development

Cultural heritage refers to the behaviours, representations, expressions, knowledge, and abilities that communities, groups, and, in some circumstances, individuals identify as part of their cultural history. It encompasses both tangible heritage (monuments and locations) and intangible legacy like traditions, language, and craftsmanship (UNESCO, 2009). The United Nations defines sustainable development as development that meets current demands without compromising future generation's ability to meet their own needs. In terms of cultural heritage, sustainable development entails acknowledging the importance of heritage in supporting

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economic progress, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability (UNESCO, 2015). UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage framework offers a comprehensive approach to preserving and promoting traditional crafts. It highlights the value of community involvement and empowerment in protecting and fostering intangible cultural assets, as well as the social and cultural significance of traditional crafts (Teresa & Gagliardi, 2014).

Heritage crafts, especially in rural regions, support economic growth by generating income and employment opportunities. Kheta embroidery, a traditional skill practiced by the Shershabadi community in Bihar, India, has a substantial economic impact. First, it serves as a major source of employment, particularly for women, who are often the primary practitioners, thereby promoting SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth (UNESCO, 2015). According to studies, the income created by Kheta embroidery considerably benefits these artists and their family's economic well-being. Second, promoting and marketing Kheta embroidery products can open new market potential both locally and globally, resulting in increased sales and higher standard of life (Thakur, 2022). Recognizing and supporting cultural heritage crafts, such as Kheta embroidery, is critical for sustaining traditional livelihoods, promoting economic growth, and preserving cultural heritage for future generations. These crafts have a multifaceted economic impact, significantly contributing to community livelihoods and economic development.

Cultural heritage is essential for preserving social cohesiveness and cultural identity (Thomas, 2023). Crafts such as Kheta embroidery serve as both artistic expressions and stores of cultural knowledge, history, and identity for communities. This craft acts as a cultural identifier, reflecting the community's identity, history, and traditions (Giliberto & Labadi, 2022). The motifs, designs, and techniques employed in Kheta embroidery are passed down through generations, helping to reinforce the community's cultural identity. Furthermore, Kheta embroidery frequently involves collaborate among community members, particularly women, which fosters a sense of connection. Women artisans, who are primarily involved in the craft, gather to work on projects, developing social ties and support networks. This craft empowers women in the society by allowing them to be economically independent and express themselves freely (Das, 2022).

Preserving cultural heritage crafts contributes to environmental sustainability by encouraging the use of traditional, eco-friendly materials and techniques (Vileniske, 2006). Kheta embroidery exemplifies environmental sustainability as it is based on the use of natural materials and traditional processes that have a low environmental impact. Artisans primarily employ natural materials like cotton fabric and threads, as well as natural dyes produced from plants, flowers, and minerals, which reduces the need for synthetic fibers and chemical dyes (Humtsoe, 2022). Furthermore, the production process of Kheta embroidery is noted for producing minimum waste, with artists cleverly reusing surplus fabric and threads. By promoting Kheta embroidery and its values of sustainability, craftsmen promote sustainable lifestyles in their communities, such as recycling, upcycling, and using natural materials in everyday life.

Policy and advocacy are critical in supporting and promoting Kheta embroidery, a traditional skill of the Shershabadi community in Bihar, India. International agreements and frameworks, such as the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2009), recognize the value of protecting and promoting cultural heritage crafts such as Kheta embroidery.

### Case Examples

Due to the paucity of prior documentation regarding Kheta embroidery, an analysis of similar handicrafts from Bihar is being undertaken. The analysis focuses on uncovering how raw materials, manufacturing processes and evolution influence the artisan's way of life. This further provides a framework for understanding the situation of the Shershabadi community, the artisans of Kheta embroidery, and addressing the gaps in the community in order to bring their craft to a wider audience and consumers.

#### (i) Kantha Embroidery

Kantha embroidery, a traditional craft originating from the Bengal region of India and Bangladesh, serves as a pertinent case study in understanding the resilience and sustainability of heritage crafts. Like Kheta embroidery, Kantha embodies a rich cultural history and artistic tradition that has been passed down through generations. Kantha, which translates to 'patched cloth' in Sanskrit, is a technique for producing intricate patterns by stitching together layers of old saris and dhotis using a basic running thread (Agrawal & Sharan, 2018). This craft has historically been used to repurpose old fabric into new, practical goods such as quilts, blankets, and garments, demonstrating a sustainable approach to textiles even before the concept became popular (Karim & Nizam, 2021).



**Figure 5** Kantha Craft. Source: The Design cart.

Kantha needlework is a recognized art form, valued for its aesthetic appeal and storytelling ability. Artisans often include folklore, mythology, and everyday life into their creations, resulting in items that are not only artistically appealing but also culturally significant (Devi et al., 2017). The thicker Rajshahi Kantha from Bangladesh, which varies from other figurative Kantha techniques from that region, is specifically discussed by Niaz Zaman in her book, *The Art of Kantha Embroidery* (Zaman, 1995). The hard Rajshahi Kantha, which resembles the North Indian "khes" more than the soft Bengal Kantha, is made with thick stitches in repeating patterns, like the Kheta found in the Kishanganj district. Kheta craft like Rajshahi Kantha, uses patterned saris, checkered lungis, and coloured solids in a variety of brilliant colours like red, green, yellow, blue, and purple. (Agrawal & Sharan, 2018).

Kantha embroidery's revival in recent years demonstrates its resilience. Organizations and designers have recognized its artistic worth and market potential, resulting in collaborations that have elevated Kantha to the world stage (Devi et al., 2017). This revival has not only created economic opportunities for artisans but has also helped to preserve a traditional craft that was at risk of fading into obscurity.

The case of Kantha embroidery demonstrates the necessity of recognizing and fostering traditional crafts for their cultural, economic, and social value. Kantha, like Kheta embroidery, symbolizes the idea of sustainable development, demonstrating how cultural heritage can fuel economic progress and community development while also conserving a region's identity and practices.

#### (ii) Sujini Embroidery

Sujini embroidery is another moving illustration of Bihar's rich cultural history in textile handicraft. It is a traditional style of quilting and embroidery practiced primarily by women in rural Bihar, has strong cultural and historical ties to the region (Gupta & Adhikari, 2017). This craft, like Kheta embroidery, represents resilience and sustainability through complicated techniques and artistic interpretations. This craft is distinguished by the use of basic running stitches to create intricate designs and patterns on fabrics (Tripathi & Sharma, 2023). Sujini originated in Bihar's Banni district and was traditionally used to make quilts known as 'Sujni' or 'Sujani' for domestic purposes. However, throughout time, this craft went beyond plain usefulness to become a treasured form of artistic expression that reflected the region's cultural ethos and identities (Vatsyayan, 2021).



**Figure 6** Sujini Craft. Source: Author

According to Charu Smita Gupta's explanation in the chapter on Sujini of the book *Embroideries in Asia: Sui Dhaga*, the quilted items from Bihar were inspired by Madhubani wall hangings and use five different stitches; both characteristics are completely different from those of Kheta, emphasizing the development of their distinctive and individual design. Their creations reflect a combination of their keen observational skills and a profound sense of connection with the rhythms of nature's teeming life. They also have a strong sense of beauty and a firm rejection of wealth, sophistication, and excessive refinement (Gupta & Adhikari, 2017).

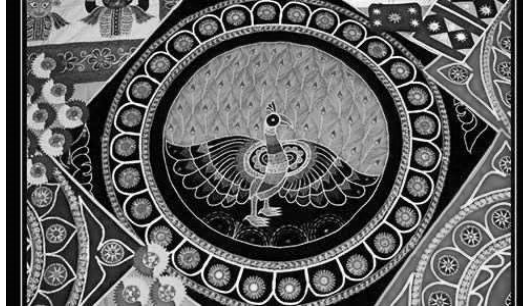
The Sujini tradition has stood the test of time, passing down through generations as a means of conserving cultural heritage and strengthening local communities. Despite facing comparable issues of obscurity and

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limited market access as Kheta embroidery, Sujini craftsmen have persevered in keeping this skill alive by steadfast dedication and inventive adaptations (Tripathi & Sharma, 2023). As we progress through the story of Sujini embroidery, it becomes clear that the survival of such traditional crafts is more than just a matter of cultural preservation; it is also a catalyst for inclusive growth, economic empowerment, and social harmony.

### (iii) Khatwa Art

Khatwa, which means "appliqué" in Hindi, is the complicated cutting and sewing of textile pieces onto a foundation fabric to form elaborate designs. Khatwa art, which derives from the region's rich history and cultural tapestry, is distinguished by its intricate patterns and brilliant hues, frequently illustrating mythological themes, flora, and fauna (Manuja & Singh, 2023).



**Figure 7** Khatwa Craft. Source: Patna Diaries

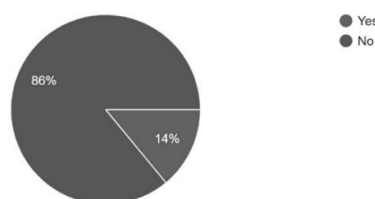
Previously, it was used to make canopies and tents known as kanats, which were sold; other Khatwa work was manufactured for personal use. For more commercial things, enormous pieces of cloth were cut into smaller patches and stitched together to produce new designs; for example, a bird could be made up of three or four distinct pieces (Balasubramaniam, 2020). Khatwa craft involves layering many pieces of cloth and embellishing with running stitches, which is comparable to the technique used in Kheta embroidery. Khatwa art not only allows for creative expression, but it also helps artisans sustain their livelihoods. The art form provides economic prospects for women, who are frequently the principal practitioners of the skill (Madhok, 2023). These artisans benefit the local economy and Bihar's cultural landscape through their skilful handwork.

Despite its rich history and cultural significance, Khatwa art confronts various obstacles in the contemporary period. The craft has declined in popularity and practice, owing to the advent of cheaper, mass-produced equivalents (Manuja & Singh, 2023). Economic concerns also play a role, as craftsmen struggle to generate a consistent income from their skill. Furthermore, the lack of institutional backing and formal training programs has hampered the transmission of Khatwa art to future generations, resulting in the loss of traditional knowledge and abilities.

## Data collection & analysis

In order to better comprehend the issues at hand, we conducted a comprehensive study involving 100 artisans, delving into key aspects such as income generated by the craft, the state of infrastructure supporting its practice, consumer market dynamics, the craft's relevance and perseverance in modern-day needs, future planning considerations for artisans who rely on it as a source of income, and the male-female ratio among artisans. These insights not only shed light on the current situation of Kheta embroidery, but also provide significant perspectives on the expectations and obstacles that artisans confront, emphasizing the critical need for acknowledgment and assistance to preserve the craft's survival and perpetuation. To analyse the data collected from the 100 artisans Here is the breakdown of the analysis:

Satisfaction with Current Income:



Analysis: The data shows that 86% of artisans are not satisfied with their current income, while only 14% are satisfied.



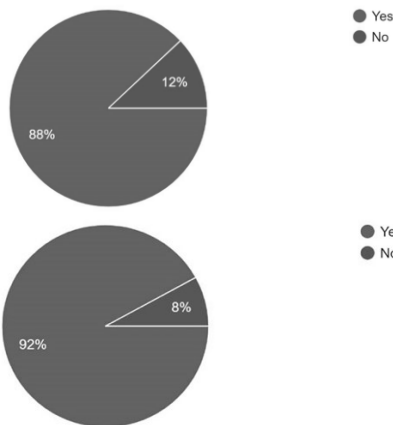
**Implication:** This indicates a significant dissatisfaction among artisans regarding their earnings from Kheta embroidery, highlighting the need for strategies to enhance their income.

**Lack of Infrastructure and Furniture:**

**Analysis:** 92% of artisans feel that their current location lacks the infrastructure and furniture required for the craft process, while only 8% disagree.

**Implication:** The overwhelming majority's perception of inadequate infrastructure suggests a critical need for improvement in the working conditions and facilities provided to artisans.

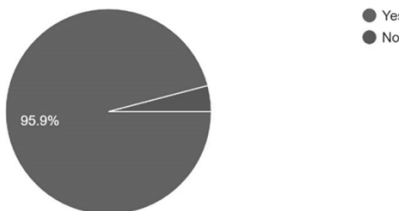
**Trouble Reaching a Broader Audience:**



**Analysis:** 88% of artisans face trouble reaching a broader audience, while only 12% do not.

**Implication:** This finding indicates a significant barrier to market access for artisans, highlighting the need for initiatives to help them connect with potential clients.

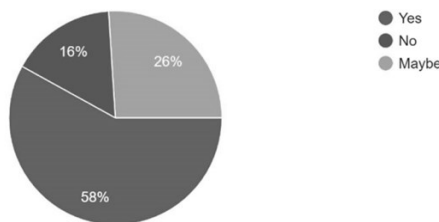
**Fit of Craft into Modern-Day Needs:**



**Analysis:** 95% of artisans believe that the craft can fit into modern-day needs, while only 5% think otherwise.

**Implication:** The overwhelmingly positive perception of the craft's relevance to modern needs suggests its potential for adaptation and sustainability in contemporary markets.

**Plans to Change Profession:**



**Analysis:** 58% of artisans are considering changing their profession to sustain themselves, 26% are unsure, and only 16% are not considering a change.

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Implication: The high percentage of artisans considering a change indicates a significant concern about the sustainability of Kheta embroidery as a livelihood, highlighting the urgent need for interventions to support and promote the craft.

Gender Distribution among Artisans:



Analysis: 97% of artisans are female, while only 3% are male.

Implication: The overwhelmingly female-dominated participation in Kheta embroidery aligns with broader gender patterns seen in traditional artisanal crafts. Understanding the gender dynamics within this craft community is crucial for implementing targeted interventions and support mechanisms to empower female artisans and promote gender equity in the sector.

Overall, the data analysis highlights the difficulties encountered by Kheta embroidery workers in terms of revenue, infrastructure, market access, and sustainability. It also demonstrates the craftsmen conviction in the craft's relevance and ability to adapt to current needs.

## Findings

The findings provide valuable insights into the practice of Kheta embroidery by the Shershabadi community in Bihar. The data provides a comprehensive overview of the economic aspects of crafts, such as consumption of raw materials, costing, and the variety of products created, demonstrating the economic importance and creative potential of crafts. Study reveals that Kheta embroidery is practiced primarily by women within the Shershabadi community, underscoring the cultural importance of this craft and the important role that women play in its preservation. This finding also raises important questions about the roles and empowerment of men and women within communities.

Data also shows that many artisans have limited education, often only up to the elementary level. This suggests that educational barriers may impede the ability to seek alternative sources of income, highlighting the important role of craft as the primary livelihood for these artisans. Finally, the study highlights the desire of artisans to access wider markets and highlights the lack of exposure and connection between their local and urban areas. This points to the need for infrastructure development and market access initiatives to help artisans access broader economic opportunities. These findings revealed that despite being deeply rooted in tradition, this craft faces challenges that threaten its sustainability. They highlight the importance of interventions to support and promote Kheta embroidery, including improving infrastructure, facilitating market access, and increasing education for artisans.

## Causes for Obscurity and Challenges

As global markets increasingly focus on sustainability, Kheta embroidery faces the unique challenge of being ignored despite its potential for sustainable product development. Unlike industries that have successfully incorporated sustainable practices and materials into their products, such as the use of organic cotton and recycled polyester in the fashion industry, Kheta embroidery has struggled to gain recognition for its sustainable aspects. This neglect is compounded by the lack of efforts to promote the products as an environmentally friendly alternative, even though Kheta products inherently embody the principles of sustainability by using natural fibres and dyes. It is clear from the fact that while other industries are capitalizing on market demand for sustainable products, Kheta embroidery remains largely ignored in this regard.

The challenges are multifaceted and impact many aspects of the craft are:

**Economic Sustainability:** Keta embroidery artisans often struggle to earn a sustainable income, this challenge is caused by several factors, including low market demand for traditional crafts, inappropriate pricing of products, and limited access to marketing channels. As a result, the artisans find it difficult to make a living economically from Kheta embroidery alone.

**Infrastructure and Resources:** Lack of proper infrastructure and resources is also a major challenge. Many artisans do not have access to adequate workspace, tools, and materials and work in substandard conditions. This not only affects the quality of the embroidery produced, but also hinders the ability of artisans to scale up production and meet market demand.

**Market Accessibility:** Limited access to markets and customers is a significant challenge for Kheta embroidery. Artisans often face difficulties in reaching a wider audience and developing new markets. This limits the growth potential of the embroidery and limits the economic opportunities available to artisans.

**Recognition and Appreciation:** Kheta embroidery suffers from lack of recognition and appreciation both domestically and internationally. This lack of awareness makes it difficult for artisans to promote their craft and attract new customers. Moreover, the declining interest of the younger generation in traditional crafts such as kheta embroidery poses a major threat to the preservation of this cultural heritage.

## Strategies for Promotion and Preservation

Promoting and preserving Kheta embroidery requires a multifaceted approach that addresses a variety of challenges while leveraging the unique cultural and artistic value of this craft. The following strategies are suggested:

**Capacity Building and Skill Development:** In line with SDG 8's objective of fostering inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment, and decent work for all, Kheta embroidery craftsmen can better the quality of their work and become more competitive in the market by putting training programs and workshops into place. To meet the varied tastes of customers, skill development programs should emphasize both contemporary design trends and classic embroidery techniques. Develop training programs that will improve the abilities of Kheta embroidery artisans in partnership with educational institutions.

**Market Access and Marketing Support:** Expanding the market reach of Kheta embroidery products in accordance with SDG 8's goal of supporting full and productive employment, sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, and decent work for all requires facilitating market access and offering marketing help. Participating in craft fairs, exhibitions, and internet marketplaces are ways to accomplish this. Furthermore, a larger consumer base can be drawn in by developing branding and promotional materials that showcase the distinctive cultural tradition and skill of Kheta embroidery. Collaboration with non-governmental organizations and regional administrations to enable market entry and offer promotional assistance for Kheta embroidery products.

**Infrastructure Development:** Improving the working conditions of Kheta embroidery craftsmen requires a significant investment in the development of infrastructure, including workshops, manufacturing facilities, and storage spaces. Having access to contemporary tools and equipment can increase output and efficiency, allowing craftspeople to successfully satisfy consumer needs. Encourage local government bodies and NGOs to invest in the development of infrastructure for Kheta embroidery, including workshops, production facilities, and storage spaces.

**Product Diversification and Innovation:** Encouragement of product innovation and diversity may help Kheta embroidery artists in adjusting to shifting consumer tastes and industry trends. The marketability of the embroidery products can be increased by introducing fresh patterns, designs, and product lines that reflect traditional workmanship while appealing to modern tastes.

**Community Engagement and Cultural Promotion:** To promote pride and ownership among artists and community members, it is imperative to include local communities and highlight the cultural value of Kheta embroidery. This helps achieve SDG 11's goal of fostering cultural diversity and protecting cultural heritage to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. Raising awareness and appreciation for Kheta embroidery can be achieved through planning cultural events, exhibitions, and history tours that highlight the skill as a unique cultural heritage.

## Conclusion

The exquisite thread interlacing and eye-catching motifs of Kheta embroidery bear witness to the rich cultural legacy of the Shershabadi minority in Bihar, India. However, this traditional skill faces various obstacles that endanger its continued existence and the livelihoods of the artisans involved.

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To overcome these issues and assure the survival of the Kheta embroidery craft, many critical initiatives are required. First, training programs that improve artisans designing abilities are in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8, which is all about encouraging equitable and sustainable economic growth, employment opportunities, and decent work for everyone. Artisans can enhance their product development abilities and effectively compete in the market by receiving training in new technologies and marketing techniques. This will increase their economic opportunities and improve their standard of living.

In addition, the survival of the craft depends on meeting the community's infrastructure demands. This comprises workshops, production facilities, and storage areas, all of which are critical to guaranteeing the quality of the handicrafts produced and the overall well-being of the artisans. In line with SDG 8's objective of fostering sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, moving the craft to a community with a bigger market can also help the artisans. Relocation has the potential to increase economic opportunities and contribute to a more sustainable future for the community by broadening its reach and introducing new ideas and skills.

In conclusion, maintaining the Kheta embroidery tradition necessitates an all-encompassing strategy involving cooperation between local government agencies, educational institutions, NGOs, and artisans. The preservation of this priceless cultural legacy and the accomplishment of Sustainable Development Goals 8 and 11—which support sustainable economic growth and the creation of sustainable cities and communities—can be ensured by acknowledging the cultural significance of this craft and providing support to its artisans.

### Recommendation for future research and action

Future research and action should include an in-depth economic impact assessment to analyse the influence of Kheta embroidery on livelihoods and the local economy. Kheta embroidery can also be made more marketable by investigating creative marketing techniques, supporting legislation that helps the industry, and launching cooperative projects that bring together designers, academics, and artisans. Traditional craftsmanship may be preserved, and craftsmen can be empowered through collaboration with educational institutions, skill development programs, and community empowerment projects. Promoting and maintaining Kheta embroidery also requires developing an international collaborative network, establishing a documentation system, and regularly assessing the results of initiatives.

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