Design Resource

Parandi

The Craft of Braid

by
Sonal Gupta
IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:
http://www.dsource.in/resource/parandi

1. Introduction
2. History
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Introduction

"Kali teri gutt te paranda tera lal ni" a very famous Punjabi song is the first thing that comes to one's mind the moment one hears the word Parandi.

Almost everyone wears a Parandi in Punjab. A Punjabi sikh wedding is considered to be incomplete unless the bride wears a Parandi.

Parandi is a three- threaded braid for the hair, typically worn by women of the sikh community. Reflecting amazing expression of Punjabi folk art, the Parandi has its roots in Punjab especially Patiala, the oldest centre of Parandi making.

Patiala, a city of crafts, is a fine blend of modernity and tradition with a brilliant spectrum of Rajput, Mughal and Punjabi culture. Located in south-eastern Punjab, in northern India, Patiala has a fine number of craftsmen, involved in artistic crafts like "Phulkari" "Parandi" and "Punjabi jutti".

Colorful tassels with beads and mirrors.

The decorative part of the Parandi.

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Parandi with beads.

Green fancy tassel at the end of the parandi.

Parandi.

Moti parandi.

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Parandi with mirror work.

Parandi with beads.

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History

There are various myths with regards to the origin of Parandi. Women in Punjab have always been fond of adorning themselves. According to Mr Neelam Kumar Khanna (Parandi manufacturer in Patiala), historically women wore Phulkari dupatta "odhini" to cover their heads, which was a societal requirement. In the process it would hide any hair accessory like a decorative clip or a pin. Therefore women came up with the idea of decorating the ends of their plait with beads, mirrors and ribbons. Soon this style became popular amongst masses leading to the design of long thread extensions that could be easily braided in hair and be seen even with the head covered.

Another story regarding the origin of the Parandi is to do with elderly women who were prone to lose hair at that stage in their life. They wanted to make their hair look longer and so they came up with the idea of a Parandi as an extension for their hair.

Not only the commoners but also the royalty, especially the maharani of Patiala got fond of the Parandi. To maintain their royal status, they added rich gold and multicolor threads to their Parandis. Mirrors, pearls, fancy ribbons were used further to enhance their royal look. Thus, Parandi became an important part of their dressing.

Young girls also got fond of Parandi who later added fancy tassels at the end. Soon Parandi was available in various patterns, designs and all possible colors to match their clothes.

Parandis with fancy designs.

Colored, multicolored threads at the end of a parandi.

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Red color parandi.

Golden threads used to make a parandi look more royal.

Jalebi Parandi.

Fancy tassels.

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Peacock feather, mirrors used to decorated parandi.

Various colored tassels.

Golden thread tassels.

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Beads, threads used to make fancy designs.

Jali parandi.

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Patterns

Just like other objects Parandis too have evolved from the time of their invention.

To make a Parandi more desirable, new and decorative tassels have been introduced. Fancy materials, threads, decorative elements are being continuously used. Inspired from things, animals, motifs, even food the tassels have emerged in various attractive designs.

Very famous are the "Jalebi Parandi" and "ladoo Parandi", both inspired by the famous Punjabi sweets (jalebi and ladoo). Inspired by the form of jalebi, jalebi Parandi is designed very carefully by braiding and knotting the yarns in different ways to create intricate interwoven forms.

Mostly single color, ladoo Parandi's are small in length and are meant for young girls. Inspired by the form of a ladoo (sweet), the Parandi has round woolen tassels like the pom-pon at the end.

"jali Parandi" is the oldest design. A twelve inch very heavy Parandi gets its form from the architecture of Quila Mubarak, the fort of Patiala. This intricate deign is created by weaving and braiding the threads in a mesh/net "jali" like form.

Other famous Parandi's are ghungroo Parandi, moti Parandi and mirror Parandi. Here the braiding is done along with the use of beads/moti and guhungaroo (metal beads which makes sound when moved). Moti, pearls, beads give the impression of jewellery these Parandi became quite famous amongst the royal families.

But the craftsmen have no end to their creativity. They are constantly evolving and improvising with new materials, forms and colors thereby taking them to new level of creativity. Recently new types like the "peacock Parandi" using peacock feather have been introduced. Mirror Parandi also one of the famous Parandi, where mirror have been used in various ways and types to make the Parandi look more fancy and rich in its type.

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Jalebi Parandi with beads.

Jalebi Parandi with beads.

Ladoo Parandi.

Jail parandi.

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Jail parandi.

Jail Parandi with beads.

Jali and moti work Parandi.

Moti parandi.

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Jali parandi with moti.

Fancy Tassel.

Fancy Tassel.

Fancy Tassel.

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Fancy tassel with golden gotta.

Fancy tassel.

Ghungroo (metal beads) Parandi.

Ghungroo (metal beads) Parandi.

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The Ghungroo on the Parandi.

Different types of beads used.

Mor (peacock) Parandi.

Lal Parandi.

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Moti Parandi.

Normal Parandi with moti.

Various designs tassels.

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Mirror Parandi.

Mirror Parandi.

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Makers

Most of the handicrafts in India have followed a legacy and has been passed on from generation to generation. Mr. Neelam Kumar Khanna, handicrafts "Parandi". The know-how, the skills and perhaps the artistic clan are a part of his legacy, which he received from his ancestors. He is the proud 4th generation and is the largest manufacturer of Parandi in Patiala. His love for creating new designs, mixing and experimenting with different patterns started at the age of 12 and continues. Proud owner of "Khanne Di Hatti" Mr. Khanna has been awarded "Master Craft Award" by Punjab government in 1992, followed by "Kalanidhi Award" by Central Government in 1993. His son, Mukesh Khanna, although an M.B.A by profession, has a strong bend of mind towards designing and introducing new types of patterns and styles. Together with craftsman Raghveer Singh, this team of 3 they are continuously trying hard enough to revive Parandi for the present generation.

Mr Neelam Kumar Khanna.

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Mr Neelam Kumar Khanna with son Mukesh Khanna.

Mr Raghveer Singh making a parandi.

A Parandi maker.

Artist at work.

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Tools and Process

A Parandi is attached to the hair while braiding. First the natural hair is either braided till the desired position/ made in a pigtail when the three sections of the Parandi are merged with the natural hair. With Parandi mixed with natural hair, braiding is continued until the end of the hair. At the end of the braid a rubber band is tied up to prevent the braid from opening.

"While some elaborate designs were discontinued and material replaced with inexpensive synthetic replacements, certain basic elements remain unchanged".

Making a Parandi, does not require heavy tools or machinery. All it need is a pair of scissors, comb, a small pillar like object called "thullu" with lots of creativity and patience.

"Thullu" a wooden /iron pillar with a hook attached on the top is used to hold the threads of Parandi, while it is made. Sometimes the craftsmen use their toe to hold the threads.

The Parandi is divided into two parts. The upper part and the lower part.

The Upper Part:
First big bunch of woolen threads are cleaned and sorted into 3 strands. These three strands of threads are combed thoroughly to remove any knots and then tied together with a knot to form the upper part of the Parandi. The upper part of the Parandi is available in black, golden and red color where black being the most commonly used. The brides and the married women generally wear red and golden Parandis. But with everything being customized, Parandi too is finding its way in all possible colors.

The Lower part/Flower:
The lower part of the Parandi also known as the flower is meant for decorative purpose. This decorative flower or tassel is woven, knit and stitched in various forms, sizes and colors.

After the knot (the one that holds the three strands) is done the craftsmen ties up all the other three ends of the Parandi separately. Then at the end of each strand, a colored silk thread is tied up holding from the center with a golden thread. The colored threads are again tied up using golden thread to give it a fine gracious look. This pattern is repeated in different ways to create different design.

Thus, the process is repeated with the other two strands. This type of Parandi is the most basic type and is known as a "fixed Parandi".

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A fixed Parandi has the decorative part attached to it, which makes it little difficult to wash the Parandi without spoiling the decorative part. Nowadays fixed Parandi is being replaced by "detachable Parandi" where the upper part is separated from the lower part.

One end of the upper part of detachable Parandi has the knot (which holds the three strands together) while the other end is formed into tiny balls known as "dodi". There are 6 dodi in all, 2 on each end of a strand. These dodi's holds the tassel.

"The tassel or the lower part is made up of three parts, Angoori, which is a loop for attaching with the upper part of the Parandi i.e. "dodi", the Surahi, which is a conical structure that holds the elements together and the Flower, which makes the final, open ends of the Parandi".

This type of Parandi is very easy to maintain. As the tassel can be easily separated from the upper part, it becomes very easy to open the Parandi. It also aids in washing the Parandi very comfortably without spoiling the tassel. And with wide range of tassels, women keep changing the tassels matching them according to their clothes.

Pair of scissor and a comb.

Thullu used to hold Parandi.

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Craftman using his toe to hold the threads.

Colored threads used in Parandi.

Colored threads.

Golden thread used to make fancy tassels.

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Bunch of woolen threads.

Sorting the wool.

Combing the threads to remove unnecessary knots.

Joining the three strands to make a knot.

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Forming the knot.

The knot that holds the three strands.

The Knot.

The other end of Parandi.

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The other three strands tied up individually.

Silk threads cut to be wrapped on the end of each strand.

Tying the silk thread.

Tying the silk thread.

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Tying the silk thread.

Re tying of the silk thread.

Re tying of the silk thread.

Re tying of the silk thread.

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Re tying of the silk thread.

Re tying of the silk thread.

The process is repeated on the other two.

The process is repeated on the other two.

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The process is repeated on the other two.

The end product (fixed Parandi).

Fixed parandi.

Tassel attached to the dodi.

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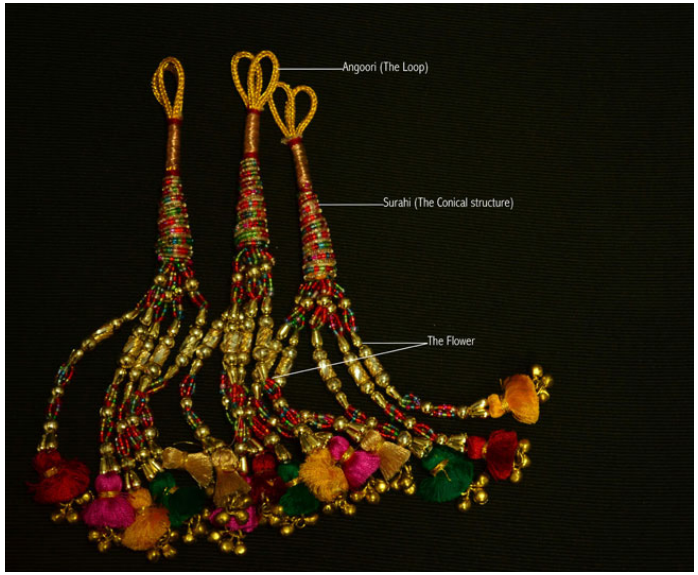
Dodi holding the tassel.

The tassel attached to the upper part of the parandi.

Tassels.



Angoori (the loop), Surahi (conical structure), Flower.

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How to wear a Parandi

• Braid the natural hair till the desired position/ made in a pigtail.
• The three sections of the Parandi are merged with the natural hair.
• With Parandi mixed with natural hair, continue braiding until the end of the hair.
• At the end of the braid tie a rubber band to prevent the braid from opening/ tie a loop knot with the end of the Parandi.
• Attach the tassels with the upper part of the Parandi i.e. "dodi"

Braiding the hair.

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Braiding till the desired length.

Putting the Parandi with the natural hair.

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Braiding until the end of the hair.

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Parandi braided with natural hair.

Attaching the tassels.

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