CHAPTER- 5

The idea behind the decoration of a material originated from the desire of the individual to put his or her signature on the creation of that particular piece of clothing or even to mark it for purposes of proprietorial ownership. This probably may have been the origin of the concept of designer clothing where each had an original style of wearing a particular piece of clothing. In the earlier times as clothes were few and some of the more embellished ones were passed down in a particular family there became a cluster of embellishments of motifs that came to mean something specific which have continued to this day in the form of a coat-of-arms, a trademark, a logo or even a uniform. Various geographical locations have contributed their own motifs. This chapter is an attempt to study the motifs, their particular locales of origin as well as the specific modes in which they differ from other motifs in the sense that they are used in unique manner or are confined to replication on a particular material in a particular color formation or similar such modes of creation.

Though the ideas, themes, scenes and symbols are almost common as they come from similar ecological backgrounds, there is often wide variation in the structural and decorative arrangement of the designs, composition of motifs combination of figures and color schemes. The techniques and presentation are seen to vary from individual to individual. Nevertheless, there are some basic traditional designs1 which are commonly seen in each piece of the work originating in a particular area e.g. from Kashmir in the North to Kerela in the South and from Gujarat in the West to the Hill States of the East. Following are embroideries famous in India :

1. Kantha of Bengal.
2. Embroidery of Bihar.

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Besides techniques of embellishment in embroidery and fabric work there have been other means of decorating or enhancing the decorative effect of fabrics among the rural and urban Indians. Prominent among these methods is the dyeing of materials through bandhej or bandhini, Kalamkari and all forms of painting like madhubani, pattu and others.

The Symbology of Motifs in Embroidery

Lotus is one of the most common and important motifs widely used in the embroideries of the country and most significantly in the Kantha traditions originating in Bengal. These lotus blossoms may be depicted in their fully opened form or in the bud form in an all over pattern of lotus. Even the colour combinations may differ from motif to motif to signify certain moods, connotations and symbolic references. The flower may be formed by filling in stitches or in mere outline form but they are easily recognizable.

Motifs generally take their origin from nature and sometimes from the immediate environment itself. But this in no way limits their creation. Many a motif has been created as a symbol of religion and power. In ancient India
there have been designs and motifs that have come to be ascribed with a deeper meaning with reference to who wears them and for the performance of which kind of rituals. Some examples are the tantric motifs like Vajra, the thunder bolt, the swastik, the trident or the trishul were used along with the spiral whirl, representing the eternal life cycle. Kalka is another important motif, a cone or mango shaped, embroidered in association with spiral whirls, broad bank of circles, lotus or heart shaped foliages.

Some of the motifs used in Indian embroidery have been greatly influenced by the hordes of foreign invaders and waves of travelers who have frequented the rich lands of India and have merged their cultural mores with the traditions of India. The religions that emerged from the bowels of Indian culture like Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism all contributed their symbols of power and piety, devotion and invocation to the plethora of motifs already available in the realm of Indian theology. The motifs are composed of heterogeneous objects like various types of lotus flowers, Mandala, Satadala padma, trees, creepers, foliages, floral scrolls, kalkas, animal figures, human figures, spirals, whirls, chakra, sun, stars, constellations, rivers, mountains, birds, fish, boats, submarine sceneries, ships, pitcher, mermaids, various sea monsters, comb, mirror, nut cracker, umbrella, chariot, palanquin etc. The designs of the motifs are taken from day to day life, depicting folk stories, epics, mythological background, as well as elements of the creativity of the artists or designer. Many of the motifs take their roots from the figments of the creator’s imagination. Thus there are the ritualistic motifs, luxurious vegetation with roaming animals, deer frisking about in the wilderness, dancing peacock, other wild animals like the tiger and the leopard, temples, hukkas, items of jewelry, various types of weapons and tools and so on, Some embroideries have gone so far as to represent the steeds of Gods like the bull, swan, lion, elephant, peacock, mouse, cat, eagle, and the owl.

Gujarat, the state situated in the western part of India, is famous for the embroidery of Kutch and Kathiawar. The peasant, tribal and ladies of other community residing in the villages have maintained their tradition, culture and
rich heritage through various styles of embroideries, i.e., it can be said here that greatest contribution to the Indian embroidery is from Gujarat State.

The motifs have been used in various forms of embellishment to decorate the traditional costumes of the women of the royal houses, nobles and the commoners of ancient and present times all over India. Some of the most elaborate examples of such embroideries have been found in the dresses used for the marriages of daughters for which parents begin planning at virtually the very birth of the child. These embellishments are arrayed on the large surfaces provided by the lehengas, the lachas, the Ghagra Choli and the sari. Indian embroidery has been influenced and has had a great influence on the neighbouring states especially contiguent to its famous houses of embroidery like Sindh, Punjab, Bengal, Orissa, Kashmir and Kutch.

Plate: 27

Portrait of Abdulla Qutb Shah
Bijapur, Deccan, Circa A.D – 1640
Paper, 18 X 13 cms
Acc no. 61.1004

The above is a depiction of a royal personage sitting in durbar. He is shown wearing a yellow brightly patterned angrakha which has floral motif of red daisies with green leaves. It is edged in red at the sleeves ends and at the neck. The angrakha overlap is left over right and is tied at the chest on the right. The skirt has many gathers and down the front is hanging a yellow, red and green geometrically patterned material that is pleated and falls from the belt. His turban is deep maroon with a chevron self print.

It is tied with a yellow band having a repeat pattern of red and green stripes. The end of the turban band extends as a turla and ends in a peacock feather kalgi.

He is wearing a golden belt at the waist which is made up of squares that have been worked in meenakari in red and are encrusted with precious stones probably diamonds set at equal distances in a geometric concentric pattern. In his right hand he is holding a sword in a sky blue scabbard having a golden carved ring near the hilt. The hilt in itself is in red and gold with a golden, well worked tip. In the other hand he is holding a white handkerchief [probably].

Kathiawari Bharat or embroidery of Gujarat

The main feature of Kathiawar\(^3\) embroidery is the lavish application of mirrors. However, the base stitches used are chain stitch, Heer Bharat, Abla Bharat and interlacing stitch or Sindhi taropa. Chain stitch is similar to that of Kutch, but most of the times done with white colour and occasionally supplemented with other colours to give a bold impression. Chain stitch is accompanied by mirrors and used to emphasize face, eyes, hand, flower, sun, moon etc.

Heer Bharat is the embroidery done with silk floss, or pat, highly lustrous and gorgeous that brings rich effect to the base. The most dominant colour is crimson red with little of cream and black, indigo, ivory, yellow and green in small places to touch up. At times to emphasize a pattern, design or motif, a small mirror is affixed in the center by buttonhole stitch. An interesting design was created by dividing a square into four equal triangles and a mirror in the centre. Two each corresponding triangle are filled in by long stitches in vertical and horizontal direction. Guđari is a popular quilting where swirls and spirals are worked out with long stitches especially in black colour, building a

background for the actual design. Over this background of black colour the motifs are embroidered in contrasting colours, however the emphasis is made by use of mirrors randomly.

*Abha Bharat* is nothing but use of mirrors or a mirror inset embroidery. Though it is the traditional embroidery of *kathiawar*, is now universally appreciated and thus used by all folk ways of India. The floral motifs with various shapes, types and colours of foliages, creepers, climbers, tendrils are the most common ones. *Abha Bharat* is carried out on both family clothing and household textiles.

Gujarat is also famous for *Moti Bharat*, the bead work. The main feature of this Bharat or embroidery form is, the beads are not stitched on a background but the beautiful rich coloured beads are stitched together with the help of needle and thread. The back ground is usually white beads, against which various motifs and patterns are stitched (woven) creating a solid surface with coloured beads. However, there exists no special set of motifs but are the same as that of other embroideries like elephant, camel, parrot, peacock, lady churning curds or pondering grain, calf drinking mother milk and so on. The articles made of *Moti Bharat* were stiff non-pliable, hence used as *torans* for doors, bags, purses, wall hangings, play-toys, perch for the lady to balance the water pots on her head and other decorative, ornamental, show pieces to be exhibited in the house.

Even though this form of embroidery and embellishment of material was used traditionally in the houses of the peasants and rich alike but the fashion world of today uses these embellishments as a statement of ethnic ornamentation in the many lines of dresses both formal and informal in the global village.
Kantha embroidery of Bengal

The traditional folk art of Bengal is famous as Kantha which means 'Patched Cloth', and the special significance of Kantha is quilting. The Daccais muslin saris of gray, black or white colored, are one of the most artistic and beautiful specimens of Handloom textiles, were considered as very valuable by the women folk of Bengal. There are two types of embroideries. In the first type, the old and discarded cotton saris or dhotis were piled up on the top of each other, quilted and embroidered. And the other type was quilted by using the discarded cotton bed spreads and the pictorial embroidery was done with Tussar silk thread.

The size and thickness of Kantha varied according to its type. The layers of pieces are sewn together by simple darning stitch in white thread, drawn from the old sari borders. The design if first traced and the filling is done by colored thread, taken from the colored borders of saris. Kanthas were produced in Hugli, Patna, Satagon, Jesore, Faridpur, Khulna and other parts of East and West Bengal.

The needle work is done in darning stitch alongwith satin and loop stitches. There are two modes of working. In the first style, the embroidery starts from the centre and ends by outlining the motif or vice versa. However, the embroidery gives rich textural effects by adding traditional colours like black, deep blue and red, which symbolize nature, earth, sky and space respectively.

The original kantha is double-faced where the design appeared identical on either sides of the quilt. The length of the stitch is broken into tiny tackings which give almost a dotted appearance on either sides of the quilt like 'Do rukha'. Sometimes the embroidery is so finely done that it is very difficult to identify the wrong side.
The main colours used are white, red, deep blue and black. There are different kinds of kanthas named according to its utility. There are several types of kanthas of which the main ones are detailed below. These kanthas are used contemporaneously as wrappers in winter, for books, valuables, mirrors, combs, wallets, pillows and bed spreads.

1. **Arshilata** is used as cover for mirrors, combs and other such toilet articles. It is a narrow rectangular piece, eight inches in width and has twelve inches in length. It has a wide border and the central motif is taken from the scenes of *Krishna leela* or **Radha-Krishna raas**. The lotus, trees, creepers, spirals, inverted triangles, zig-zag lines, scrolls are also some of the commonly used motifs.

2. **Bayton** is a three feet square piece which serves as a wrap for books and other similar valuables. It has a central motif, usually the lotus with hundred a hundred petals and is called the ‘*Sahastradala Padma*’. The core has the *Sahastradala Padma* with two or three borders on the sides. The other motifs commonly seen are water pots, conch shells, *kalkas*, trees, foliages, flowers, birds, elephants, chariot, human figures etc. sometimes the figure of lord Ganesha and Goddess Saraswati with their steeds are also observed. Special motifs on **Bayton** are worked with swam, as a book wrapper. In other words the designs often are elaborate and this colourful embroidery is made with yellow, green blue and red threads.

3. **Durjani** (**durfani**) is also known as **Thalia**. It is a *kantha* worked upon a square piece, covers, the wallet, has a central lotus motif with an elaborated border. The three corners of this piece are drawn together inward to make the tips to touch at the centre and are sewn together like an envelop. The other motifs used are various types of foliages, snakes and other objects taken from the natural surroundings.

4. **Lep kantha** is relatively a thicker quilted used to provide warmth during the winter season. *Lep* is also popular as ‘desired covering’. Simple geometrical designs are worked with running stitch using coloured threads. The entire *Lep* piece is given a wavy, rippled effect by working in simple embroideries the main motifs being worked in lines and waves.

5. **Oar** (**ooar**), this type of *katha* serves as a pillow cover. It is a rectangular piece with a size of about two feet by one and a half feet. Usually simple designs like trees, foliage, creepers, birds or a linear design with longitudinal borders constitutes the ground base and the decorative border is stitched around its four sides.
6. Sujani or Sujjani, it is the most popular and striking kantha is the Sujani (Sujni), generally large rectangular piece of three feet by six feet, used as a spread during ceremonial occasion. The rectangular piece is divided into nine equal parts and the motifs are distributed in these equal sized rectangular blocks. The lotus motif with a whirl in the centre is one of the commonly used motifs in Sujani. The other motifs observed are scenes from the great epics like the Ramayana and the Mahabharat, folk tales historical events, hunts, animals, birds pecking the fruits, prancing horses bees sucking nectar, processions in motion, marriage scenes, depiction of scenes of leisure and pleasure, etc.

7. *Rumal* is the hand kerchief and is the smallest among *kanthas*. It is often a square piece having the size of about one square foot. The lotus motif is often at the core with other motifs embroidered around it. Sometimes plant and animal motifs are also embroidered around but the most remarkable part of the *rumal* is its intricate and well decorated border.

*Kanthas* today are found on elaborately worked The bed cover and wall hanging of kanthas were famous world wide. The women picked up the motifs from the epics and mythological scenes and the nature. It represents their traditional beliefs, individual skills, art and passions, towards religion. It does depict the folk art. The ritual designs are worked only on festive occasion to fulfil their vows. The special characteristic of kanthas was, it never became a replica of other folk art but remained unique by itself. Kantha work is a model with inspired romance, philosophy, sentiment and spirituality.

The simple running stitch was earlier used to join all the layers of cotton materials together. Later other stitches were used to enhance the surface enrichment. During the sixteenth and seventeenth century chain stitch was worked along with running stitch. Later few more stitches like, back stitch, satin and herring bone were introduced.

*Kasuti of Karnataka*

*Kasuti* is another distinctive and famous embroidery originating in Karnataka which was earlier known as Mysore. The motifs and the particular art form is a significant contribution of women in this part of the world. Kasuti
embroidery is symbolic of the people of Karnataka, their traditions, customs and professions. This is an outcome of the honest, zealous and innate desire of ‘mankind’ to practice the beautiful stitches on the articles of every day use. The urge of learning Kasuti was common to both the ruling class and the peasantry.

Karnataka Kasuti has a historic background and has been patronised since the times of the Satvahanas, Chalukya, Rastryakutas, Pallavas, Pandyas, Cholas and others. Of all these the Chalukyas who ruled Badami played an important role in the revival of art, culture and learning. To some extent Kasuti resembles the embroidery forms of Austria, Hungary and Spain. However, the origin of Kasuti is not known as, there are no evidences in the form of historical legends, exhibits, records, literature or any other sources of information. The word Kasuti is derived from the words ‘Ka” meaning hand, and ‘Suti’ meaning cotton thread⁴, thus Kasuti is cotton thread worked by the hand.

The motifs used in Kasuti embroidery range from the mythological and architectural to the beautiful flora and fauna easily found in nature and the surrounding environment. The motif most commonly represented was the gopuram, palanquin, chariot, Shiva-linga, bull (Nandi), tiger, lamp, crown of Shiva (Shivana Basinga), swastika, sun, surya mukhi, sankha or the conchshell, asanas, Rama’s cradle, snake (Naga devta), elephant, horse, tulsi vrundavan, Hanuman etc. Apart from the vahanas or steeds of Shiva and Laxmi, other animals like the squirrel, parrot, peacock, cock, duck, pigeon, swan, deer, are also seen. Various types of foliage, creepers, flowers and buds are also seen in this embroidery. The main ones are lotus, chrysanthemum, jasmine, rui-phool (cotton flower), cashew nut (kalka), grapes, kevada, kalawar, diamond, badam or almond, ber seed, black bead, marigold, coconut flower, sparrows eye, rudraksha, tulsi leaf, brinjal seed, cardamom, chess square, flower pot, etc.

Stitches in Kasuti are always vertical, horizontal and diagonal. The stitches are simple, minute and intricate. Kasuti is done always by counting the

⁴ Vernalucar dialect of the Kannad language of Karnataka
threads. The four types of stitches are, Gavanti, Murgi, Negi and Menthi. Different patterns and motifs are worked in different stitches but some are completed with a mixed stitches.

‘Gavanti’ is the most simple and common stitch, derived from the Kannada word ‘Gantu’ which denotes a knot. It is a double running stitch, in which the first running stitch is filled in by the second running stitch on the same line. Murgi is a zigzag running stitch which appears like steps of a ladder or staircase. Negi is nothing but ordinary running or darning stitch. It is worked in long and short straight lines or floats and therefore the design does not appear identical on either sides of the cloth. Menthi is akin to the common cross stitch. In Kannada Menthi denotes the fenugreek seed and is nevertheless identified with the cross stitch. This stitch requires more length of thread than the other three stitches. Similar to Negi, even this stitch does not give the same appearance on either sides of the cloth.

The colours most frequently used are red, orange, purple, green yellow, and blue. White is predominant on the black background. The commonly used combinations are red-blue, red-yellow, red-white, orange-purple, blue-orange, green-yellow and yellow-white. Besides this form of handicraft, northern Karnataka, is famous for the weaving of special kinds of saris which are woven on fly shuttle pit looms in pure cotton, silk and rayon.

Ikat - is a type of weaving where the warp, weft or both are tie-dyed before weaving to create designs on the finished fabric. Great care must be taken in tying resist areas with water repellent material like rubber, plastic or simply winding several layers of a thread. The precision of the wrapping determines the clarity of the design. After wrapping, the warp threads are dyed. When finished and unwrapped, the areas under the ties have stayed the original colour. Numerous colours can be added after additional successive wrappings. Designs generally are worked out on graph paper. Great care must be taken in putting the warp on the loom, keeping all the threads in position is necessary for the design to work. The natural movement during weaving gives
ikat designs a feathered edge which is a distinctive character of this technique. Depending upon the workmanship, motifs and place of origin the ikats have been classified into different types. Some are described below.

_Patan Patola_ of Gujarat, in northern India is home of one of the most famous ikat traditions called the _Patan Patola_. These silk fabrics are double ikats. Traditionally they were coloured with vegetable dyes, but these days chemical dyes are used. The complexity of having both the warp and weft resist dyed makes the actual weaving process much more demanding of precision. The intersection of these threads must be precise or the design is lost.

An average sari length takes fourteen man months to be completed. Thus the entire process becomes cost prohibitive as a popular art form. This is one of the main reasons that the Patola weaving is dying out, with only two families remaining at the craft. These saris are prized pieces, but have been so throughout history. The _ikat_ originating in Orissa has a long tradition dating back at least to the 12th century. Weavers migrated from the Patan area bringing the basic techniques which then developed over time to a unique style of flowing designs.

_Paithani_ saris- weaving a Golden Legacy: Among the most gorgeous of Indian saris is the _Paithani_, woven in the western state of Maharashtra. Exemplifying the merger of the aesthetic with the symbolic, these saris today are a prized possession. The Nizam of Hyderabad was also attracted to the paithanis and made several trips to the small town of Paithan. His daughter-in-law, Niloufer, is believed to have introduced new motifs to the border and pallav.

**Motifs that Define the Material**

The traditional _paithani_ used to be a plain sari with a heavy _zari_ border having motifs like circles, peacocks, flowers and paisleys. The _paithani_ borders and _pallavs_ are heavily adorned with these motifs and the sari is given the name after the design e.g. _Tota-maina_ (parrot), _bangdi-mor_ (peacock with
round design), asavali (flower and vine), narli (coconut), are all descriptive of paithanis. In the olden days, the zari used in making paithanis was drawn from pure gold but today silver is substituted for gold thus making the paithanis more affordable. Besides Paithan, the saris are woven in Yeola, are known for their mango motif pallavs and are also found in Pune, Nasik, and Malegaon in Maharashtra. The paithani sari has played a significant role in weaving together the cultural fabric of Maharashtra

**Applique work of Orissa**

The traditional craft of Orissa the applique work. The word applique is a French term denoting the technology of applying patches of colorful fabric pieces on a base. The raw edges of these patches are finely finished with a definite mode of stitching work in contrasting thread or with the application of a zigzagged white lace whereby the overall effect is neat and beautiful. Orissa is the main centre of this embroidery and flourishes in Paralakimidi and Khallikote areas of Ganjam and Baudh districts respectively.

The Orissa applique is a community craft. It is a home based family craft where all the family members are involved in preparing the bold and brightly coloured surface enrichments. It is different from other tradition crafts of embroidery, block or screen printing and other mirror work, bead work and painting effects.

The colour scheme basically consists of bold hues like black, red, yellow, and green, though in contemporary pieces bright shades of blue and turquoise-blue were being used. The general rule for selection of the base material (cotton) is that, it should have enough strength to hold the applique pieces. In olden days, before the inception of cloth mills, the coarse variety of hand-spun, hand-woven Khaddar was used as the ground fabric, on which thick felt and velvet clothes were appliqued. In present times the khaddar has been replaced by mill made, strong and refined quality long cloths like Markin and Salu are used.
Selection of the design is the first step. Then the motifs are cut from the selected applique material. However, specially prepared motifs are made separately. These motifs are then placed on the base cloth in predetermined layouts and sequences. The raw edges of the cut motifs are neatly and evenly turned in and sewn onto the base or sometimes embroidered without turning the raw edges.

The layout of the motifs varied according to the size and articles to be prepared since the shape varies for each article. The motifs are encircles with number of borders, inside and outside, many times it even reaches the edge of the ground fabric. For example the square canopy may have either square or circular central motif, which later is bound by several borders of different widths.

The size of the applique piece varies from one meter to even very small one centimeter pieces. The small pieces are for finer decorations and borders whereas the larger geometrical pieces are used as central motifs for canopies, ornate umbrellas etc. Sometimes the figured motifs are padded to give an embossed or even quilted effect to make them more naturalistic.

This craft of Orissa is mainly connected with religious festivals and processions, the motifs picked up are from actual life, modified stylized forms, natural, animal and plant kingdom, and of course geometrical. The commonly used motifs are, lotus, peacock, gander, duck, elephant, swan, parrot, fish, lion, betel leaf, bel leaf, creeper, tree, the sun (surya) and the moon (chandra). The main stitches adopted for applique craft are, the simple running stitch, the Bakhia, Taropa, Ganthi, Button hole [used to attach small mirrors to the garment], ruching stitch is used for gathering up the cloth to make an applique motif.

With the passage of time, few modifications have been brought about in applique art. These include the use of refined mill made cotton cloth, bleached
or unbleached instead of the coarse khaddar. The applique work is broken at places with the use of embroidered motifs while it is enhanced at places and the padded and embossed effect is obtained. Some of the older practices have been shed e.g. velvet cloth as a material for applique work is not used anymore. This colourful craft has been extended to produce household articles such as bed spreads, cushion covers and even dresses for children and women.

**The Ikat Warp and Weft**

Named originally for the silk double-woven saris the *ikat* was commissioned to be woven for ceremonial occasions especially marriage in Gujarat. The motifs of the *ikat* are the leaf, birds, elephant, dolls or women - all considered auspicious symbols are used singly or in combination. The motifs adorn the elaborate pallav of the saree as it is most in evidence when draped around the bride. Practiced in most parts of South-eastern India, Orissa, in eastern India, is the most important site of the creation of the *ikat*. *Ikat* silks and cottons were among the most favoured textiles exported from India to South Asia. The characteristic of the *ikat* are the blurred edges and images of the motifs as they are bereft of a clear outline which somehow seems thinned out. The double *ikat* is also called the *Patola* and comes in a wide variety of colours. The *burfi* or diamond motif are most common for these *ikats* and they are woven in a range of vibrant and glossy colours.

The warp threads are often measured and laid out in the order in which they are to be used on the warp beam. The warp threads are wrapped before dyeing. The design is sketched on the stretched warp yarns and the weaver ties the groups of warp together to prevent dye penetration to areas other than the ones where it is required. The design becomes visible as the yarns are gathered together before dyeing.

Kanchipuram has been weaving silk sarees for the past 150 years and specializes in a heavy silk sari woven with tightly twisted three-ply, high-denier
threads using thick zari threads for supplementary - wrap and weft patterning. Interlocked-weft borders are common. Along with silk sarees, Kanchipuram also specialises in cotton and silk-polyster blended sarees due to the demand in market.

Many of today's established Kanchipuram silk weavers trained in the cultural centre of "Kalakshetra" during the 1970's producing sari with designs that are somewhat 'heavy' in both style and fabric weight, with very wide borders. Traditional motifs such as, mango, elephant, peacock, diamond, lotus, pot, creeper, flower, parrot, hen, and depiction of stories from mythology are very common in Kanchipuram sarees. Cotton sarees are ornamented with threads and some silk sarees are also woven with thread instead of pure zari.

Silk and cotton is sourced from Bangalore and Surat is the only place where zari is brought. The recent development in the designing field shows the introduction of computerized jacquard borders in Kanchipuram silk sarees. Though the techniques and the materials are changing with the market demand; the motifs are still conventional and traditional.

Phulkari of Punjab

Punjab, the term, which has been made up of two words 'Punj' meaning five and 'Aab' meaning water, designates the region as the 'Land of the five rivers'. Punjabis have a boisterous lifestyle which is expressed, to a great measure, in their folk traditions. Their traditional dances, the Bangra and Gidha are expressive of their rhythmic life style which is also reflected in their arts and crafts such as phulkari and chope.

Phulkari is derived from 'Phul' or flowers, and 'kari' or work and can be taken to mean floral work or a flowering of colours on cloth. It is a special, traditional handwork originating in the areas of the erstwhile united Punjab that had included Gurgaon, Hissar, Rohtak, Karnal and even Delhi besides the

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western parts now in Pakistan. Another popular form of this embroidery is famous as ‘Bagh’, which means garden, which encapsulates the vibrant colours of the environment with which the entire surface of the shawl is decorated.

The exact history and origin of this traditional art is not known because of a lack of evidence and documentation. However, the earliest mention of Phulkari was made in the famous love story of Heer – Ranjha, written by Waris Shah (1725-1790), Heer is said to have had many costumes including a number of phulkari pieces. The phulkari is customarily presented to the daughter on her wedding. Some scholars opine that this form of embroidery evolved from Persian art, where an embroidery form called ‘Gulkari’ [having similar literal meaning i.e, ‘Guf’ meaning flowers and ‘kari’ meaning the workmanship], which resembles Phulkari. Phulkari was done with coloured cotton threads in early times but with the passage of time silk floss was introduced and the present day phulkaris and baghs are worked in the same material in vivid, luxurious and vibrant colour combinations.

The earliest available articles of embroidery were the rumal, or the kerchief, embroidered in the 15th century by the sister of the first Sikh Guru, Guru Nanak. This was similar to the Chamba rumal, and was worn as a shamla, a ceremonial costume, by the fifth Sikh Guru. This reference indicates that phulkari probably must have originated during the 15th or 16th centuries.

Phulkari is an integral part of the life of the Punjabi lass. This form of embroidery is an integral part of the many simple or elaborate functions, festivals, get-togethers and ceremonial functions, one or the other type of phulkari or bagh is invariably used. It is said to be an auspicious gift, a symbol of happiness, prosperity and an emblem of the ‘suhag’ or married status of a woman. The phulkari and the bagh represent the material wealth of a woman and is her greatest treasure. The rough and coarse base material of the phulkari symbolizes the hard and tough yet colourful life of the Punjabi women while the rich and glossy work with patt [thread] portrays her dreams and

aspirations. As the girls work on these from an early age, the phulkari depicts her skill, art and hardwork and to her eligibility as bride. It takes years to complete such shawls which are a must for wedding ceremonies. They are also a symbol of love, affection and faith of the people of Punjab.

Chaddar, Bagh and Chopé are the three types of embroidery which are grouped according to the craftsmanship. The embroidery is comprised of wide spectrum of colours of light and dark shades, such as crimson red, scarlet red, blue, yellow, green, purple, black and brown. Earlier, the yarns were locally dyed with indigenous natural colours. The dyers were skilled in producing as many as sixty four tints and shades in a single colour which also exhibited good colour fastness. But now-a-days all the threads used in the industry are invariably mill dyed with synthetic dye stuffs.

The average dimensions of a phulkari were 2.30 metres, by 1.40 metres, those of the bagh were 3 metres by 1.75 metres while the chopé had larger dimensions, about 3.0 metres, by 1.75 metres. Since the khaddar was of a narrow width ranging from 45 cm of 60 cm, two or three widths are joined together longitudinally. Such widths are called pattis.

The base fabric was usually dyed at home using dyes obtained from the roots, bark and flowers of various plants like the Majith (madder) roots, Kikar (acasia) bark and Palash (flame of the forest) flowers were all used to obtain red colour. The blue colour was obtained from indigo and the black colour from iron scrap and madder. It was only by the end of the nineteenth century people started using chemical dyes. Besides the red colour, brown, blue and black were also used for the base fabrics. The white fabric was used by Hindu women, who usually embroidered it with red coloured silk floss.

The Patt used for this embroidery was brought from Kashmir, Afghanistan and Bengal, but the best floss came from China. The dyeing of the threads was done by professional dyers called Lahari or Nilari in the cities of
Amritsar, Jammu and Dera Ghazi Khan (Pakistan). The village ladies obtained the thread from hawkers and peddlars called ‘Golelian’ who went hawking their wares from village to village. The vast shade variation seen in older phulkaris was because the women never bought all the yarn in one go but in installments, as and when they needed and could afford.

For embroidering a Phulkari an average of 50 to 100 grams of Pat was needed, whereas 150 to 200 grams are required for embroidering a Bagh. The amount of thread consumed largely depends on the design used and the skill and experience of the karigar or craftsperson. A three inch long needle, called ‘chirne nakke di lambi sui’ is commonly used for this form of embroidery.

**Types of Phulkari**

The phulkari has been given different names according to the design embroidered, colour of the base fabric and threads used, besides the area in which it is embroidered and its use.

1. **Chope and Subhar:** Both are red coloured wedding Phulkaris. The maternal grandmother of the bride to be presents the Chope - a special Phulkari, larger than an ordinary Phulkari, and has a typical triangular design, the work being done with double running stitch so as to give a reversible effect. The embroidery is golden yellow, but Nazar-Battu a special motif in any other colour is embroidered in one corner to ward off the evil eye from striking at the beautiful piece of workmanship. The embellishment is done on the edges of the fabric while the field is usually left plain. Sometimes smaller triangles are worked out in the field. Pallus or width ends of the Chope are left unembroidered symbolic of a blessing of unlimited happiness for the bride. Chope has been traditionally worn by the bride during her Chura wearing ceremony when the red-ivory bangles are presented to her by her maternal uncle.
The Subhar is also worn by the bride when the marriage rites, the Lavan-Pheras, are performed. The centre has five motifs, which are embroidered in each corner too.

2. Til Patra: Til Patra, is a sparsely embroidered phulkari having small dots embroidered all over the field. It was given as a ceremonial gift to domestic servants at marriages and other social occasions and ceremonies.

3. Nilak: Nilak is the phulkari with a blue background. The embroidery was done in yellow and crimson silk floss in glaring contrast to the base colour. The motifs are usually floral or articles of household use like the fan, comb, handkerchief and umbrella.

4. Shishedar Phulkari: As the name suggests there are mirror-pieces stitched onto the fabric on a red or chocolate brown background. These, now rare, phulkaris are a specialty of the South-eastern part of Punjab, now in Haryana.

5. Thirma: Another form which is becoming obsolete was done on white fabric and was a specialty of the Hindu women. It formed an essential part of the 51 phulkaris given in the trousseau. Such work was popular in Peshawar, Hazara, Bannu and Rawalpindi districts of Punjab, now in Pakistan.

6. Darshan Dwar or Darwaza: The Darshan Dwar Phulkari has an architectural design and was used as a ‘Bhaent’ or presentation for religious institutions. Such phulkaris were a specialty of East Punjab before partition.

7. Sainchi Phulkari: Literally meaning a band his form of phulkari depicts the life of Punjab and is a specialty of the Malwa region [Bhatinda and Faridkot districts]. The motifs were traced in black ink before starting the embroidery. Since women did the tracing themselves, the motifs were representative of their interpretations. These outlines were filled in with darn stitch.

7 literally a ‘sprinkling of sesame’
8. *Salu*: Salu was the plain red veil used daily. Various types of these phulkaris have been given different names according to the motifs embroidered. A few were: ‘butiyanwalī’ (floral buds), ‘gulkheriandī’ (hollyhock flowers), ‘Phutan di’ (muskmelon), ‘amban di’ (mango slices), ‘Chhuaran di’ (dried dates), ‘nakhan di’ (pears), ‘sitiyan di’ (wheat or barely ears), ‘pallianwalī’ (having pallus), ‘pankhan di’ (feathers), ‘pakhiyan di’ (fans), ‘kanghiyan di’ (combs) ‘chhattariyan di’ (umbrellas), and ‘moran di’ peacocks). Some of the current centres of the Phulkari are Patiala, Tripdi, Sanaur, Dablan, Rajpura, Darukutta, Channo, Bhatinda and Daon.

**Plate: 28**

**Prince enjoying Music**

Golkunda, Deccan, Late 17th century

Paper, 45 X 30 cms

Acc no. 55.24/66

The royal personage depicted above is shown paying audience to an artisan. He is wearing a bright fuschia pink, full-sleeved angrakha that has a beautiful floral motif block printed all over in golden and green. The angrakha is left over right and tied at the chest on the right with a mehendi green block printed tukma. Down the front of the gathered skirt of the angrakha is hung a many pleated material in mehendi green having a floral, block printed pattern on it which ends in a border. This material is also tied around the waist like a patka. In this patka is tucked in a dagger [probably] of which only the two
handles are visible. He is wearing a turban in brown and ivory block printed material and it is tied with a band made of block printed repeat bel pattern in red, green and gold.

The lady musician is wearing a red churidar with block printed leaves patterned all over it in green. Her full-sleeved angrakha which goes to her ankles is sheer with gores having gold edging in tissue material probably. She has her upper body and head draped in a dupatta that is red with gold edging. It has multiple pinstripes in gold giving it a crushed tissue effect. Around her neck she is wearing multiple strings in pearls and also probably a garland in red and white flower buds. At the base of the neck is a necklace in gold which gives strips effect and has a large green emerald drop that ends in a pearl at the bottom. Around her wrists are gold bands with probably meenakari work on them in a jali pattern. These are teemed with pearl bangles. She is also wearing an arm band in the similar jali pattern. She is wearing earrings in pearls and emeralds which are worn with a nathni and teeka in pearls and rubies. Above the ear at the tip of the earlobe is inserted a large pearl stud. She is wearing two gold rings in her right hand probably an arsi in her left thumb. She is playing on an ornate string instrument.

Kashmiri Embroidery

The development of the Kashmir shawl design from the simple floral motifs of the Mughal court in the 17th century to their overblown, European-influenced descendants of the 19th century is well documented. Changes in the methods of production are also evident, especially during the nineteenth century. Originally a fine shawl would be woven in one piece, and could easily take eighteen months or more to complete. In the early nineteenth century the practice of having parts of a shawl woven on different looms was introduced in order to cut down production time: the pieces of the shawl would then be sewn together by rafugars, professional darners and embroiders. Eventually this led to shawls being made up of hundreds of separate pieces.

Susan Stronge [ed]. Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms. V&A Publication. 1999
Related to this was the introduction of the shawl in which the design itself was embroidered rather than woven. These were known as *amlikar* shawls (as opposed to *kanikar* or woven ones), and were introduced as a means not only of making a shawl more quickly but also of avoiding the high taxes on woven goods. Embroidered designs at first imitated woven ones, but a new genre arose in about 1830 that incorporated new motifs with human figures and animals. This pictorial style was used mostly for *patkas* (sashes) and the edging of *chogas* (robes). Even more so the most elaborate examples of this type of shawl were those which had been embroidered with maps of Srinagar and the Kashmir valley. There is also the example of the densely embroidered shawl dating to AD 1852 which had belonged to Gulab Singh, and showed episodes from the *Sikandar Nama*, or the book of Alexander the Great.

The ‘reversible’ or *dorukha* shawl made its debut in around 1860. Although no new weaving technique was involved but this was a finely woven shawl in which all the loose threads on the reverse had been trimmed and secured by embroidery so that both sides appeared equally well finished. The design of the *dorukha* was often left incomplete at the weaving stage and was completed with embroidery.

Some of the exotic Kashmir shawls have been copied in Paris, Norwich and Paisley, Scotland since centuries. Empress Josephine used a Kashmir shawl with paisley motifs to create a gown for herself.

*Kashida Embroidery of Kashmir:* Kashidakari or the embroidery on Kashmir shawls is distinctive for its beauty, colour, motifs, artistic appearance and texture. Dr. Abdual Ahad⁹, “a historian from Srinagar, expressed that weaving in Kashmir was known as early as the third century B.C. Twill tapestry weaving was popularly known during this period and shawls were sold as ‘Kanikars’. According to Dr. Moti Chandra, an art historian, weaving brocade

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tapestry had commenced as early as the 11th century A.D. The industry however, reached its zenith under the Mughal patronage.

The shawl industry flourished under the patronage of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, during the 15th century. He took pains to identify, select and relocate craftsmen and weavers from Persia. They brought with them their repertoire of motifs and stitches with various colour combinations bringing about a close relationship and resemblance between Persian and Kashmir embroidery. The demand for Kashmir shawls increased during Mughal rule.

There are various typically Kashmiri shawls, viz., the ‘Pashmina shawl’, a superior pure wool shawl made from the fleece of the Capra hercus, a species of the wild Asian Goat. The ‘Do-shala’ was the double shawl, sold in pairs as two identical shawls were stitched together, and were reversible. On the other hand the ‘Do-Rookha’ was a double-sided shawl, which was reversible. Consequently there was the technique of working in a single design reproduced in two different colours, giving a double sided effect. This was termed the ‘Dhoop-Chav’. Much later the ‘Jamewar Shawl’ which was a pure wool or cotton and wool blended shawl having a floral design made its appearance. It could be made with brocade and silk or fine quality Pashima. Then there were the square shaped shawls called ‘Kasaba’ which were especially produced on European demand.

Basically Kashida was a cottage industry involving almost the entire family. Practised in Srinagar this commercial art was done by menfolk and became a hereditary skill passed on by the father to his sons. The boys aged 7-8 years old began work with the simple stem stitch on inexpensive shawls and gained skill by repeating the motifs on small samples, beginning first by outlining them. By the time they were 16 years old they would have attained the skill, delicacy and proficiency in the craft.

The method and the technique: The selected designs were traced onto the required fabric for a particular garment or even for a shawl. This tracing was
done by professional tracers called Naquashband (Nakshaband) who continue to follow the traditional techniques to this day. For tracing, the fabric was spread on a flat surface and the perforated design sheet was placed over the fabric. Then the charcoal or chalk powder was rubbed over it delicately to leave the impressions over the fabric. Sometimes gum arabic was added to the powder, to make the tracings durable. The design was then outlined with the ‘Kalam’ or pen. Most of the motifs were picked up from nature.

Several motifs in typical mango and paisley shapes called the ‘Kalka’ or ‘Badami Buta’ or ‘Buta’ are known to have originated from Persian art and brought to Kashmir during the 17th and 18th centuries. The base used for the kashida may be Pashmina and Shahtoosh besides a variety of silk, cotton, chinnon and linen. Earlier the embroidery was done in fine woollen yarn but later it was replaced by richly lustrous silk threads. The bright, in-expensive art silk (rayon) thread gradually replaced the expensive silk threads. Cotton threads of bright colours were also used.

Tapestry work is another kind of Kashmiri embroidery. It is done on the Dasuta, a type of canvas cloth. The material is stretched on a wooden frame while the tracing is kept alongside so that the craftsperson can work on the design gradually. Woolen thread is used to embroider the design with whip stitch. It is a laborious work and nearly a month and a half is required to complete a carpet of 3’ X 5’. This form of tapestry work is popularly done in Srinagar and Anantnag.

Zalakdozi is the hook that was probably introduced in Kashmir by craftsmen from Damascus during the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin’s. Various articles are prepared by hook embroidery and one of them is the Namda, a felt carpet and is one of the important textiles of Kashmir which has great export value and demand. Namda is either in white or various colours that is richly embroidered in wool using the chain stitch. It is another form of crewel work popular in Europe. The motifs used for creating these carpet are drawn from
Persian to French origin. The most common motifs used are the *Chinar* leaf, *Shikargah*, *Theridar*, *Bulbuldar*, *Guldar*, *Badamadar*, *Kalka* and so on.

Kashmiri embroidery is one of the most popular commercial embroideries of the country probably because of its greater finesse and aesthetic appeal. It has been a versatile medium as it has retained its rich heritage but has also adapted the likes and dislikes, choices and demands of the market. Along with old designs new articles with new designs are constantly being introduced. A variety of articles are being made in this medium e.g. bags, footwear, curtains, cushion covers, bedspreads, table mats, dress materials etc. besides the traditional shawls, *namdas* and carpets. Kashmiri embroidery not only provides employment and livelihood to thousands of people but it depicts the rich century old traditions of the Valley of Flowers.

**Chikankari or Shadow Work of Lucknow**

*Chikankari* is a fine and intricate shadow-work type of embroidery done by white yarn on colourless *muslins* called *tanzeb* (*tan* meaning body and *zeb* meaning decoration). The word ‘*chikan*’ according to one school of thought appears to have had its origin in Persia, being derivative of *chakin* or *chakeen*. It may also be a distorted form of the work *chikeen* or *siquin*, a coin valued at Rs. 4/- for which the embroidery was sold. Another explanation ascribes its origin to East Bengal where the word *chikan* meant ‘fine’. The earliest reference in literature to *chikan* dates back to the 3rd century B.C. In his records Megasthenes, a Greek traveler, had mentioned flowered *muslins* of the Indians.

Folklore attributes the origin of *chikankari* to various sources. It is believed by many craftsmen that a traveler while passing through a village near Lucknow asked for water from a poor peasant. Pleased with his hospitality, the traveler taught him the art of *chikankari* that would never allow him to go hungry. The craftsmen believe that the traveler was a prophet. Another story imputes its origin to Queen Noor Jehan, who inspired by Turkish embroidery, introduced this needlework into the Mughal courts. The origin of this craft is
also ascribed to the harem’s of Avadh’s Nawab where a seamstress from Murshidabad embroidered a cap for the Nawab to please him. Jealous of the attention she received from the king, other inmates of the harem followed her and thus the art of chikankari was evolved.

Stitches employed in chikankari are unique and can be divided into three categories:

[1] Flat stitches, which are delicate and subtle and lie close to the surface of the fabric giving it a distinctive textural appearance;

[2] Embossed stitches which are highlighted from the fabric surface lending it a characteristic grainy texture and

[3] Jali work which is the most striking feature of chikan embroidery and which creates a delicate net effect. The fabric is broken into holes by ‘teasing’ the warp and weft yarns and holding them in position by small stitches.

Chikankari or Shadow Work is a very subtle and interesting form of embroidery. Introduced by Noor Jehan, the Mughal empress, this delicate embroidery has a lacy effect on diaphanous material. More than by any single stitch or color combination, this form of embroidery is defined by the use of opaque threads worked on a translucent fabric. The “shadow” is accomplished by working the primary stitch on the wrong side of the sheer fabric so that only the basic outline of the pattern appears on the surface and the crisscrossed threads underneath show through. It is a very versatile technique. The common stitches in this kind of work are the tepchi, ghas-ki-patti and bijli. There are, however, 32 stitches that are worked into the chikan kari. These are Sidhaul, Makra, Mandrazi, Bulbulchashm, Tajmahal, Phooljali, Phanda, Dhoom, Golmuri, Janjeera, Keel, Kangan, Bakhia, Dhania, Patti, Murri-lambi, Karan Phool, Karan, Kapkapi, Bijli, Ghas Pati, Rozan, Meharki, Kaj, Phool Chameli, Chane Ki Patti, Balda, Jora, Penchni, Tepchi, Kauri, Hathkati and Bank Jali.

Even though the stitch is not as important as the technique, Shadow Work is most often done using the herringbone stitch on the reverse side of the
fabric, leaving a clean back stitch outline on the top side. This is referred to as the "Reverse Herringbone" or "Closed Herringbone" stitch. The small stitches, usually less than one eighth of an inch long, are worked evenly along parallel design lines most of the time, with back stitches filling in lines and oddly shaped places. There are several variations, the most common of which is working a backstitch on the topside of the fabric from one side of the design element to the other, which also creates a herringbone on the reverse, even though you are actually working the correct side of the design. This is sometimes referred to as the "Double Back Stitch" or "Inverse Herringbone." Shadows can also be achieved by working the whole element in back stitch, then weaving the thread across the back side of the fabric to create the shadow. This method is sometimes referred to as "Indian Darning". If your design looks weak once you have finished stitching, you can always use this weaving technique to give the thread greater opacity. It all comes down to a matter of personal preference. As long as the shadow effect is the central design element, it does not matter which technique is used to achieve it. There are a wide variety of threads and fabric combinations available. The most common combination is cotton thread on cotton material though the work of silk threads on silk organza or synthetic organdy or georgette is quite divine.

**The Process of Chikankari:** The chikan industry has five main processes namely cutting, stitching, printing, embroidery, washing, and finishing. Cutting is carried out in lots of 20-50 garments. The layouts are done to minimize wastage of materials. Stitching, often done by the same person, may be 'civil', done exclusively for higher priced export orders or 'commercial', which is done for cheaper goods. Printing is carried out by the use of wooden blocks dipped in dyes like neel and safeda. After this, the fabric is embroidered by women. The last process, which is washing and finishing, takes about 10-12 days. This includes bleaching, acid treatment, stiffening, and ironing.

The most common motif used is that of a creeper. Individual floral motifs may embellish the entire garment or just one corner. Among the floral motifs embroidered, the jasmine, rose, flowering stems, lotus and the paisley motif are
popular. In recent years, the beautiful and wide variety of stitches and designs that were on the decline, have been revived. Concerted efforts by government and various private organisations have paid off and today the art of chikankari is flourishing, enriching both the domestic and export market.

Plate: 29

Portrait of Shahjahan

Mughal, Circa AD 1675-80, Paper 26.5X19 cm, Acc. No. 60.978

The emperor has probably been depicted in his winter raiment which is evident from the dark colours he is supporting in the dress and also from the fur stole or muffler that is seen falling on his chest. It is probably a mink or fox fur. Here he has been shown wearing a dark pink angrakha that is probably in a heavy material. An overcoat in printed ochre with daisies printed all over it is worn over the angrakha. The daisies are beautifully made and it is this finesse of detail that singles out the Mughal workmanship in clothes. The overcoat is characterized by elbow length loose sleeves and a classic slit on the side to aid seating. The patka complements the jacket in colour with the addition of a lupin motif at the pallav and golden tassles at the lower edge. The
headgear of the monarch comprises woven silk turban in red and deep green which is tied around with a braided zari material. The turban is ornamented with a golden kalgi crowned by black feathers and has two tassels with beads on it suspended from the edge. Around the turban is a string of precious stones and pearls that ends in a forehead ornament in a gold encased ruby having a pearl drop.

Around his neck he is wearing a unique pearl necklace that has a pendant in large rubies at the chest while the rest of the string continues down to the waist. The pendant has a large pearl drop suspended from it. Around his wrists are beautiful golden bracelets with a large ruby centre piece around which is a fantailed arrangement of pearls. He is wearing large ruby rings on his fingers. His feet are tucked into a golden open-ended mojadi which has a green and gold inner or tongue.

The other accessories comprise a highly ornamented sword that is in a red silk scabbard having a golden tip encrusted in precious stones, the hilt of the sword complements the tip. Tucked into the waistband is a dagger the handle of which is golden and covered in precious stones. in his right hand he is holding a rose. The most remarkable feature of the depiction of materials is the fur muffler that the royal personage is supporting around his neck. It is probably a mink or fox fur according to the colour and texture of the fur. both ends are hanging down to the waist of the emperor.

In the present day the utilization of shadow work is evident in the suit, sari and kurtis that inundate the market in a wide rang of pastel shades in cotton and other materials. They are favoured from the very onset of summer and continue well into autumn in most northern India cities. As a fashion statement the work is unparalleled as both men and women find ease and comfort in the Chikankari garments of Lucknow.
Embroidery forms popularized in particular Communities

Cross Stitch

In India, where it is unusual to find an even weave fabric, cross stitch embroidery is worked on plain weave fabric, with the designs spaced out by eye rather than by counting threads. Cross stitch is found on many types of Indian embroidery, often in combination with beads, sequins and tiny metal embellishments. It decorates colourful garments, bags, animal trappings and furnishings, both large and small. One of the most highly decorated items is the toran, a colourful embroidered frieze with a row of pointed pendants along the lower edge, which hangs over a doorway or window for a festive occasion.

Gara

Gara embroidery saris, originally considered Parsi family heirlooms, became rare collector’s items because of their intricate work and exorbitant prices. But today, this ancient Chinese art form has been revived to make exquisite saris, which have become prized possessions of women all over India. Gara’s history is as colorful as the garment itself. The gara was probably introduced in India by Parsi traders in the 19th century who used to travel to China to trade. The Parsis considered it as a prized possession and wore it for the weddings and Navjote (a ceremony for young Parsi boys and girls in the Zoroastrian faith). Today it is considered a rare fashion item worth possessing.

Garas with Quaint Names: There also are several types of garas with quaint names like kanda and papeta gaga which literally means onions and potatoes that resembled large pink and yellow polka dots, where the pink denotes onions and yellow the potatoes. The karolia or spider design is actually a flower. The chakla \ chakli motif (male / female sparrow) and the mor or peacock are some of the other variations. The use of silk threads and synthetic fast colors has made the maintenance of today’s garas somewhat easy. Garas

can now be hand washed at home in normal detergent and ironed unlike the originals. The modifications brought in the design and manufacturing of this ancient Chinese art form has not only prevented it from becoming extinct but also made it affordable for more women to buy. The original Chinese garas were considered quite bulky to wear as saris since they had embroidered borders on all four sides.

The most favored color was purple or violet. Several years after the introduction of the gara in India, craftsmen in Surat in Gujarat managed to duplicate the embroidery. But the Surat gara is identified by its net and French knots which the Chinese ones did not have. Besides violet, the colors popular were wine red, navy blue, white or off white with white embroidery in twisted cotton thread while gold threads were also used. The making of a gara starts with drawing of a design of paper. After that, a small sample in the actual colors is prepared. This is then given to craftsmen to study. The design is then traced onto the sari. A single design is repeated several times on a sari but is adjusted perfectly to blend into each other. Each sari is put on a loom at which 4-6 artisans work. Making a hand embroidered gara takes 2 to 8 months on an average, depending on the complexity and density of the design. The workmanship is most vital as the embroidery is so closely done, that the background color surfaces only remained as an outline.

**History of Printing in India**

Printing\(^{11}\) was a primitive method of textile decoration until the second half of the 17\(^{th}\) century due to the problem of fixing colors. Some direct block printing on to linen was practiced in medieval Europe after being introduced from Asia during the Roman period. Each color required a separate block and the first color on the fabric must be dry before a subsequent color could be applied. A pigment was mixed with a binding agent such as linseed oil; most paint stayed on the surface but it was not colour fast at washing. The Dutch, English and French East India Companies carried the technically superior

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painted and dyed Indian cloths to Europe. European copies of Indian painted and dyed cottons were called Indiennes. The basic dyestuff was madder which produced a whole range of colors. Pencilling was the process of adding extra colors by hand such as blue and yellow.

Most block prints were a cheap alternative to woven silks and velvets. Patterns were often derived from those of Byzantine, Italian, and Sicilian silk textiles. Chinese motifs, typical Indian motifs and some English prints were common. The initial engraving of the plates was time consuming and expensive. Typical colors were purple, red and sepia – all of which were derived from madder.

Print Medium and European influence on Motifs

Vasco da Gama landed in Calicut in A.D. 1499. He found an already established trade between India and Persia as well as India and the Spice Islands. He saw the Kalamkaris which were delicately painted and dyed cotton cloth material. Kalamkari literally means “Pen-work” or “brush-work”. Few examples of this art form predate the 18th century. There is nevertheless a record of them in a 1630 example from the Amber Palace storehouse. It has an Indo-Persian design of flowering trees bordering center floral fields having courtiers hunting and at play. These themes changed to include European ideas in the 17th century. The most common motif of these kalamkaris is the ‘Tree of Life’. The depiction of these motifs is a complex process involving the painting of mordant and then dyeing in an alazarin-based dye to obtain a range of reds, violets, browns and black.

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The present picture is a beautiful representation of the motif and ornamentation styles of the Mughal period. It is a depiction of a soldier at arms but not at war. The fact that he is holding a rose shows that even though he is in preparedness for war but is inclined towards peaceful times.

The prince is shown standing in the open. He is wearing a repeat patterned, vegetable dye block print that looks like an orchid in full bloom and is in deep maroon with green leaves and ochre stem on a broken white base. The skirt of the angrakha has many gathers which give it a very full appearance. The bodice is tied with a left over right flap at the lower end of the chest. It is tied at the waist with red and orange stripes at the waist and a floral motif in red and green at the two loose ends. He is depicted wearing a red churidar the edge of which is visible at the level of the foot. On his feet are red, conical open mojadis which are embroidered in gold. At his waist is tucked in a double handled dagger, a sword in a red scabbard but which has a golden tip in consonance with the golden hilt. Across his shoulder he is wearing what seems
to be a small pouch in deep red, embroidered and probably in velvet. A black shield hangs at his left side.

He is wearing a turban in red with white stripes which is tied at the centre with a golden band that is heavily embroidered. Except for an arsi that he is wearing on his thumb there is no trace of any other form of ornamentation on his person.

Kalamkari

*Kalamkaris* are used as floor coverings, bedspreads, wall hangings, as temple cloths with gods and legends depicted on them. They have been painted on the Coromandel Coast, Golconda. The characteristics of this form of work are the special qualities of beautiful color and fastness of dyes.

Beginning of the 17th century B.C saw Indian textiles being imported in large quantities to Europe through the Dutch East India Company (founded in 1597) and the English East India Company (founded in 1600). Such was their beauty and exquisite workmanship that they were exchanged for gold. These textiles were also traded for spices in the Malay / Indonesian archipelago. They were the mainstay of the four-cornered trade of the 17th and 18th centuries. The European traders bought the Indian textiles like calicoes and traded them for slaves in Africa, the slaves would be sent to the Caribbean colonies for sugar, cotton and tobacco. These agricultural products would then to taken back to England.

Common motifs in the Indian *kalamkaris* were the ‘Tree of Life’ design in the Indian context while the with European commissioned designs which had flowers mixed with Indo-Persian borders. The typical designs were the floral garland tied with ribbons. The colorfastness of these *kalamkaris* was dependent upon type of dye used. The common ones being the *chay alizarin* which bore the tap root mordants as they affected the colors produced. *Alum* was the source for the glowing reds and iron/ rust or ores gave the soft
brownish-black. Whereas a mixture of alum and iron gave a range of violets and browns. The tones of greens and yellows were obtained from less fast local vegetable dyes.

The kalamkari, handpainted cloths of Sri Kalahasti, Andhra Pradesh, were veritable works of art drawn entirely by hand. They were originally created predominantly for the temples as narrative murals. These murals tell the stories of the great Hindu epics in pictorial form. Christian missionaries commissioned artists to create murals telling the story of Christ. In addition to the epic murals, the Tree of Life theme was and still is very popular and comes in many forms. These days artists are also branching out and using the medium for their purpose. Mr. M. Kailasam drew a series called ‘Fantastic Birds’ to commemorate the centenary of Salim Ali, the Father of Indian ornithology. Another work attributed to him depicts fanciful fish using only madder and indigo as a strong design element. Mr Gurawapa Chetty, another skilled Sri Kalahasti artist has travelled overseas demonstrating these techniques for the Indian Government.

Block Printing

Dhamadka a village in Gujarat has many printers using predominantly madder root for red, rusty iron solution for black and indigo for blue. These fabrics are known as Ajrakh. The designs are geometric. Many states have block printing workshops using chemical dyes. However, there are only small pockets of areas that are still continuing using natural dyeing with the age old recipes using local plant material. The earthquake in 2001 was devastating for wide areas of Gujarat. Many artisans were killed or had their homes and workshops destroyed. However, those who survived are being given aid to help them rebuild their former way of life and continue creating these unique textiles.

Masuliputnam in Andhra Pradesh is the main centre of block printing where the fabric is known as Kalamkari. The cloth used generally is mill made cotton first bleached with cow dung and placed in the sun. The next step is to
soak the cloth in a mixture of Myrobalan and milk. The Myrobalan contains tannic acid and acts as a mordant helping the dye stuffs to bond with the fibre. The buffalo milk, having high fat content, helps prevent the dye from running. Next the black outline is printed using a solution made with rusty iron soaked in sugar water and bran for several weeks. When the solution comes in contact with the myrobalan it turns black. The next step is printing on another mordant, alum. This bonds the red dye, Madder Root, after boiling, to the areas that receive the alum. These steps continue until all colours have been printed or brushed on. It is necessary to have a good water supply for washing after printing. It takes weeks to complete all the steps.

Some of the other materials that gained popularity among the Europeans are delineated below. These materials were coveted for their lovely prints while others for their exquisite workmanship in weaving and embroidery. But to all these the Europeans gave a distinctive European stamp in the style, composition and projection of motifs which were by no means Indian. These motifs in their varied modifications exist till today and are most often referred to by the older generations as ‘English prints’.

*Chintz* is derived from the word “chint” in Hindi and is used for the common spotted or fine-patterned cotton used widely in rural India. In the 17th century such printed cottons were given a glazed surface which was finished by the addition of starch and subsequent beating. The name given to this material was also calico which is derived from the name Calicut or Calcutta the headquarters of the East India Company.

*Muslin* which was a common product of Bengal and especially Dhaka [presently in Bangladesh] gained much popularity among the Europeans. There were pure white hand woven Muslins, fine as gossamer threads which have been called the *jamdani*. It was decorated with floral sprigs and butis and it became a popular trade item in Europe. The European traders gave it esoteric names like “woven air” and “evening dew”.
Plate: 31

Maharaja Ram Singh with a Companion at Divali.

Jodhpur, C 1750. 23.5 x 33.0 cm.
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, Jodhpur. No.20.25 (12).
By the Bikaner Artist Shihab ud-din, son of ‘Abdollah vsta’.

The Maharaja is wearing a long crew neck, yellow ochre colored choga. The motif printed all over the gathered skirt choga comprises a five petal flower on a stem with a leaf on either side. The flower is maroon in colour with the leaves in jade green. The turban of the Maharaja comprises a large yardage of fabric twisted and wound around his head making a formation almost 12 to 14 inches in height. The motif printed on the turban comprises a rose pink flower with a jade green leaf attached to it. A separate head band in orange and mustard is plaited around the turban on the forehead with its loose ends hanging at the back of the head. The ends culminate in a mustard embellished border.

The companion is also wearing a crew neck choga long enough to cover his feet. The motif printed on the choga is a green leaf like design. The turban is similarly wound but is more inclined towards the back of the head. On the forehead is a saffron mustard band loosely twisted and tied tightly around the forehead. He is also wearing a cummerband of the similar saffron orange.
The Maharaja is seated on a large, comfortable sofa like chair upholstered in a grey and mustard horizontal striped material that has been superimposed by a red chequered pyramidal pattern. The border of the sofa has an arrow like motif in the same hues of grey and mustard printing. The bolster behind the Maharaja’s back is patterned similarly. The entire fabric usage seems to be of thick coarse, cotton material. The pipe of the hookah held by the Maharaja is in a similar triangular pattern of green and red. The motif on the base of the hookah seems to be the portraiture of some lady. The mat below the hookah is circular and has the similar pattern as the cloth used for the sofa.

The canopy above their heads is printed in floral prints with orchid like flowers some in bunches while some are depicted singly. They are shown entwined in a creeper pattern. The edge of the canopy has a geometric pattern in green and red rectangles. Golden tassels tightly set along the edge of the canopy are seen hanging all around the canopy.

In the foreground are depicted six mats all having similar printed patterns comprising a pink rose flower motif supplemented with golden fern like leaves around it.

The Tie and Dye Prints and Motifs

One of the most special coloring techniques for which India is renowned all over the world is the Tie and Dye method originating in Rajasthan. Its earthy yet vibrant colours and the intricate designs achieved are a feast of splendour and skill in the world of raiments. Special names are associated with particular fabrics produced by using this technique. Some of them are detailed below:

**Bandhani**: Finished white cloth is tie dyed. The motifs and patterns are an array of tiny white dots on variantly colored ground. In Rajasthan the population uses large spans of cloth for turbans, odhnis, chundari and even lehengas or ghagaras. These materials are good media for the display of the
skills of the rangrez or the man who does the tie and dye work. In many cases the tie and dye used to be done at the local level but later its intricate designs and motifs like the leharia, the ghumaer, the buti etc all became the forte of skilled men and women who could work their patterns according to their imagination. The vividly stripped turban cloths of the Rajputs, the bright odhanis and chundari – the elaborate, dazzling spotted veils that mark the Rajasthani woman even today.

This form of tie and dye when adopted and adapted by the Gujarat area was given the name of Bandhej.

Garhchola: the elaborate bandhini having woven brocade or gold threads interspersed with the tie and dye work was one of India’s finest crafts in the upto the early 18th century when it ultimately declined in the palaces of the reigning monarchs. However, there was a revival in this craft when the fashion plate featured the royal garments of India and the new generation of weavers spread brocade weaving to central India and Bengal, which produced the finest silk kimkhab- silk brocaded with silver thread – a technique originating in Benares. Since the 17th century13 brocades motifs brocaded in colored silks on a field of gold began to be spun in Rajasthan. In 1870 European machine woven brocades caused a change in design and motif to course through the fashion scenario of country. It became more complex with a profusion of motifs like birds, animals, flowers and geometric designs began to be used. The use of brocade for men’s royal garments like the chola and the jama declined markedly in the 19th century but is making a marked revival in recent times. Women’s brocade saris which were much coveted in the centuries past have somewhat declined in the form of the sari itself but the traditional craft has seen a revival in a number of popular garments like the Punjabi suit, jackets, kurtis etc. It is also used for the rumalas that are spread over the holy Guru Granth Sahib in Gurdwaras in India and abroad.

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Some forms of *bandhini* and *garhchola* are done in cotton and silk and are embellished with mirrors and other forms of ornamentation like small *ghungroos* or bells. The *Rabari* tribe is famous for its work with cowrie shells which they attach to almost all garments like the *chunari* and *choli-ghagara* edges of the women-folk and the jackets or *vasket* [waistcoats] of the men.

**Plate: 32**

*Maharaja Abhay Singh Watching a Dance Performance.*

Jodhpur, C 1725. 43.5 X 34.5 cm. Mehrangarh Museum Trust, Jodhpur. No.24 [28]. By Dalchand.

Maharaja Abhay Singh is shown wearing a red and saffron striped jama, the bodice of which is an angarkha. He is shown wearing the usual ornaments of a Maharaja namely the kamarbandh, *bajubandh*, three to four necklaces made up of pearl and probably jade/emerald with rubies. He is also wearing loops of gold in his ears with big pearls and rubies interspersed in the loop. His head gear is very ornamental indeed. It speaks true of a Maharaja who lives in style. A big disc of gold at the back of the block printed turban which has a two color (mustard & carmine red) tie and dye see-through cloth hanging at the back. A dark-colored almost black feather sticks out towards the back of the head. A head band comprising a string pearls and rubies is tied around the head with a round formation of pearls which hangs just over the temple. Maharaja Abhay Singh is seated against a very ornate backrest and side bolsters probably made up of a fabric which is
velveteen in nature. Deep red is the color of the background and saffron is the color with which the floral motifs are probably printed.

Nine maids-in-waiting are depicted standing behind his back and are shown wearing a three piece garment comprising of a lower skirt in floral prints, stripes, buties and plains, all in very earthy colors & tones. A panel of pleats is tucked into the front of the waist which forms a fan-like effect when they walk. These are in contrast with the skirts the girls are wearing to bring out a colorful ambience. Their cholis or the upper garment hardly covers their bust over which are carefully draped very transparent odhnies in combinations of contrasting colors like red and mustard, black and saffron. The transparent base of the odhnies is scattered with buties spaced out evenly with golden edging.

Four women at the right of the foreground are shown probably waiting for their turn to perform are wearing the usual three piece which is very typical of the Rajasthani women comprising the full bodied skirt with a tucked in fan-like frontal piece of contrasting colors. A half choli, hardly covering the bust of these women, is shown. And over this are the very carefully draped chunaries or odhnies. The motifs of these skirts deserve special mention as they are very carefully put together. The one on the extreme right is shown wearing a combination of fuchsia pink and saffron. The fuchsia pink is the piece in front which has white geometric motifs of flowers equally spaced out. The skirt is of mustard color with saffron motifs all over. The odhani is transparent with golden motifs and a golden edging. The women on her left are wearing skirts rich brown, red and black in colour. These have saffron, olive green and yellow ochre fan-like frontal pleats respectively. All have floral booties spread on the background of the skirt. Their cholis are reddish saffron in colour that is visible through their transparent odhnies which cover half their head.

There are two women standing on either side of the fountain. They seem to be holding chowries which have been depicted as being lit at the end [?]. These women are wearing gathered skirts which are striped and have some
printed motifs on them. The one on the right is wearing off-white and olive green stripes skirts with a carmine red frontal piece. She is also wearing a saffron see-through choli and a similar sheer odhani. In her left hand she is shown holding a wine flask [probably].

The one on the left of the fountain is wearing a saffron and a red striped skirt having a cerullian blue [with motifs in gold] frontal fan like piece. The choli is backless and is held together with two strings tied at the back. A transparent odhani with white booties and a golden edging form a part of her upper attire.

On the extreme left of the painting – in the foreground – are five women who are probably musicians waiting their turn to go and perform. Their attire is completely different from those standing behind the Maharaja. They are wearing churidar pyjamas with transparent, gored, full skirts. The gores have golden panels. The odhani and the choli, however, are similar to the other women. The difference between these women and the others is the very Muslim nature of their headgear that comprises hat like features that are tight at the forehead and feather out in conical peaks. They are depicted as carrying musical instruments like the tambura, ravanatha, tumbi, veena, cymbals and the sitar.

The three performers in the centre of the painting are wearing transparent gored skirts that show the churidars or tight-fitting pyjamas underneath. The one in the front who has her hands in the air has her odhani draped over one shoulder. She is wearing a one piece angrakha in saffron having red motifs all over it. Her headgear is again Mughal in style. The ornaments she is wearing comprise wristbands, bajubands, long necklace and earrings and a kardhani.

The second and the third women are more Rajasthani in style as far as the headgear goes but the Mughal influence is apparent in their transparent skirts and the churidars.
Directly opposite to the Maharaja do nine performers comprise three musicians who are holding mandolins and sitar. Four of them are dancing with active hand movements. One, who is probably clapping her hands is shown wearing a headgear almost Mughal in nature. All these women are shown wearing gored skirts with golden panels. These skirts are transparent and show the women wearing tight pyjamis underneath as leggings. These pyjamas are printed with typical floral motifs.

It is worth mentioning that the floor covering of the performance hall also has remarkable motifs. The main performance area is covered with marble having geometric, starry patterns and a border that repeats a floral design all around. In the foreground the women are standing on coarse, stripped durries that may be akin to the ones being used even today.

The two doorways on the left and the right are covered with mustard torans that have elaborately worked in red and green floral designs. The canopy above the right door is bright red with yellow ochre motifs printed all over. It has tassels suspended at the edge. The entire range of motifs has been worked probably in vegetable dyes.

**Batik**

Batik, the art originated in India, and has come a long way from being a mere handicraft. The word batik actually means ‘wax writing’. It is a way of embellishing cloth by covering a part of it with a coat of wax and then dyeing the cloth. The waxed areas keep their original color and the contrast between the dyed and non-dyed areas marks the motif and the overall pattern.

In the past, batik was considered as a fitting occupation for aristocratic ladies whose delicately painted designs based on bird and flower motifs were a sign of cultivation and refinement just as fine needlework was for European ladies of similar position. There are several countries known for their batik creations, starting with India where it originated and Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri
Lanka and Thailand. Indian batik can be traced as far back as 2000 years ago. Indians were conversant with the resist method of printing designs on cotton fabrics long before any other nation had even tried it. Rice starch, and wax were initially used for printing on fabrics. India has always been noted for its cotton and dyes. Indigo blue, which is the basic color for batik, is one of the earliest dyes. It is believed that after its initial popularity in the past, the tedious process of dyeing and waxing caused the decline of batik in India till recent times.

The revival of batik in India began in the 20th century when it was introduced as a subject at Shantiniketan in Calcutta. In the South near Chennai, the well-known artist's village of Chola-Mandal is where batik gets an artistic touch. Batik that is produced in Madras is known for its original and vibrant designs.

Plate: 33

Portrait of a Warrior

Ascribed to the Master at the court of Mankot c.1690, Acc no 1236. Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh.

A crew neck brick red tunic with multiple gores at the waist level, ballooned sleeves at the arm hole gathered at the wrist form the upper part of the attire of the warrior. Slim fit trousers also known as churidaar
pajamas with vertical stripes in florescent colors on a black background are seen supported by this individual. His feet are snug in red, white and green embroidered open mojadis. Around the waist is a tightly bound white sash or patka which has gold and beige woven pallavs that have tassels at the edges. On his head is a white turban that is tied in a manner to protrude backwards. It had a kalgi protruding from the back which ends in three white feathers which have been embellished with ornamentation.

The remarkable part of the entire ensemble are the vivid motifs on display on the angrakha, pyjami, turban, sash and scabbar as well as mojadis of the warrior. The scarlet angrakha has a beautiful weeping willow motif in green and gold all over the foreground. It is teamed with a wavy striped motif on the pyjami while the sash has a subtle, intricate motif woven into the pallav. At the base of the neck and all down the front is the motif of a zigzag pattern in green and yellow that accentuates the yolk. The motif on the turban is an elaborate many-petalled flower that has a red centre and gold petals. The mojadis have a bold motif on the face which is marked in a circular white crest like motif which is bordered with a green hexagon on a red base.

The theme of the elaborate motifs of these times can be seen in the jewellary as well. In this picture it is displayed in the beautifully worked turban ornament which is in sheer gold but very delicately done in filigree work. The metal work on the tip of the scabbard and the hilt of the sword also reflect the taste and desire for ornamentation. This tastefully done motif and ornamentation is amply visible in the gold and black beads janaeyu that the warrior is supporting slung over the left shoulder and under the right arm.

Motif Creation and Usage as a Specialist Art Form

A craftsman specializes in a particular motif like flower, tree, house, etc. so that there is uniformity in the workmanship. It is believed that if a Chinese craftsman embroidered birds, he would do so all his life. This concept is carried on in India as well. Although the motifs are hand embroidered, the finish is
superb on both sides of the garment. Each piece of handiwork has its own story. The selection of the motif, its colour scheme, the occasion for which the garment is being made – all have a marked bearing on the creation, formation and development of the motif. The popular motifs are trees, flowers, leaves, birds, figures, houses, bridges, each coming alive with the help of vivid colours and stitches. There are even distinct scenes of the local life -shrines, riverbanks, birds, animals and religious symbols depicted in intricate designs.

The motif thus is a vital component of any garment and has undergone much development at the hands of the creators of these piece de resistance of le art fabrique' or the beautiful artwork being done by these experts. From having different meanings ascribed to them to being taken for their simple beauty and form the motif, ornamentation and texture of garments remain attractive inducements for the connoisseur to pick up the best in a particular fabric and colour.

Plate: 34
Mian Gopal Singh playing chess with Pandit Dinamani Raina,
Ascribed to Pandit Seu of Guler, c. 1720-25, 18 x 25.8 cm,
Acc no 214, Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh.
The rich play of motifs is displayed in the clothes and surroundings of the two protagonists shown above. The one on the left of the painting is wearing a yellow ochre and grakha tied at the centre with a white sash or patka. He is wearing a white turban which is tied with a blue grey tie-up at the forehead level. The man on the right is wearing a dark olive green angrakha with a similarly coloured sash and turban.

The motifs have been beautifully worked into the foreground of the attire of both men. The yellow angrakha has a light blue, five petalled upright flower having a leafy base all over the foreground of the angrakha. The sash has beige and dark blue thread work in a pattern of closely and distantly placed lines. The green angrakha has bright, attractive saffron flowers having five petals with distinctively red innards. There are three buds and well-worked leaves that form the total motif. The green sash has the fascinating detail of having motifs in the darker tone of the base colour. The motifs are three-leaved clovers placed diagonally. The placement of the motif is heightened with the drawing of two white lines at the edges. The same combination and placement of the motifs is followed in the turban but there is no white line here to distinguish an outline.

It is worthwhile to mention that the carpet on which the two are sitting is another example of the beautiful ornamentation work. An attractive sprinkling of or scarlet flowers strung together on a creeper make for an intricate, subtle yet breathtaking jaal on the black background of the carpet.
Colour and Essence