

Motifs used in Banaras sarees

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ABSTRACT

Motifs are made one at a time and joined together to create larger work such as sarees of Banaras. During Akbar's period, zari work and brocades from the Mughal and Rajasthani paintings were adopted on Banarasi sarees. Mughals brought this fine craftsmanship in India. Mughals also tried their best to glorify the art of weaving and designing. There was an influx of Persian motifs due to the influence and importance of Persian masters in the court of Emperor Akbar. Persian motifs were being mixed up with the designs of Indian silk for creating this distinctive flowery pattern of Banarasi saris, which are so typical in present days. The present study shows the history of different types of motifs. A survey was conducted in Banaras district of Uttar Pradesh to find out types of motifs, how to make designs with them and the use of different motifs in various sarees. The study revealed that the weavers use their ideas for weaving traditional Banarasi Sarees. Traditional motifs such as Paisley, floral, animal, bel and of people hunting are widely used in these sarees.

Key Words : Motifs, Mughal and Rajasthani paintings, Traditional motifs, Banarasi sarees

INTRODUCTION

A Motif is the smallest unit which is repeated in different ways to create patterns and these patterns are repeated to create a design. In textile arts, a motif is a smaller element in a much larger work. Motifs are made one at a time and joined together to create larger work such as sarees of Banaras. The historical evidences depict that the Banaras weaving industry reached its peak during the mughal period due to the patronage of Mughal emperor Akbar. From the Akbar period onwards came an uninterrupted account of the zari work and brocade through the Mughal and Rajasthani painting. It is significant to note that in the sixteenth century the old designs abruptly came to end. There was an influx of Persian motifs due to the influence and importance of Persian masters in the court of Emperor Akbar, Ghias Naqshaband being the greatest Persian masters among them to the royal atelier of Akbar.

During the Mughal period, when virtually all of the brocade fabrics produced were for court use, there was much closer communication between the designer and the consumer and often design ideas were carefully worked out between them. The special characteristics of these sarees are their designs, which are Mughal inspired.

Objectives :

1. To study the types of motifs?

2. To study the use of motifs in different type of sarees

Review of Literature :

Monisha Ahmed presented a paper “From Benaras to Leh – The trade and use of silk- brocade” She elaborated the journey of the trade of silk brocade from Benaras to Leh and how this trade first started. She stated that the fabric is patterned with Buddhist symbols such as the eight lucky signs along with this; she said that in the absence of written information, paintings on monastery walls and ceilings became a source of information regarding the historical development of textiles in Ladakh. After India’s independence, most of the international trade routes into Ladakh closed but the demand for brocade in Ladakh did not cease. Today almost all the brocade in the market in Ladakh comes from Benaras.

Kumar (1999) elaborated that initially the naksha draw loom was used for weaving, its complex mechanisms enabled weavers to create sinuous floral patterns in brocade. First the pattern was sketched on to mica and then transferred by a nakshaband (pattern maker) onto a thread module (the naksha) the naksha was hung above the loom and attached to the warp threads. By lifting the attached threads, the corresponding pattern was created by weaving the patterning weft threads into the warp.

METHODOLOGY

To conduct the study the following steps were followed :

1. Locale of the study was the Banaras, Uttar Pradesh.
2. Sample and its selection: Different types of motifs being presently used by the weavers in the Banaras region were collected.
3. The weaving procedure of these motifs was documented

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Traditionally, and throughout the 19th century, the pallu or anchal of saris usually had, within a compartment or enclosure, a number of butas or the designs of plants, arranged side by side, or a group of butas-shrubs or florets. But under the western influence these motifs were replaced by springs or flowers all over the compartment.

Since the 1940’s the design of the pallu has become much simpler; the borders to top and bottom which enclose it are often missing and the motifs are less intricate. Until about 25 years ago, it was quite common to see a special type of mango design which was on the ground of a sari within the inside border of the pallu and which was placed in the corners pointing inward on a diagonal. This type of motif has been almost completely discontinued.

Traditionally, drawing of woven textile patterns were translated onto special forms of graph paper called point papers, which are being used by the weavers in setting up their looms.

Popular Motifs:

Peacock Motif:

The peacock was found in the arts of most post-Indus cultures, indicating that it remained a potent symbol. The peacock is India’s national bird. It symbolizes immortality, courtship, and fertility. In all type of Indian textiles peacock is either printed or embroidered on light background with dark color combinations.

Parrot Motif:

It is symbol of courtship and passion seen in Indian art mostly in company of Krishna and Radha.

Goose or Hansa Motif:

It was also common in Indian art prior to Mughal times, but afterwards, it disappeared. Its use in textiles is characterized by its highly stylized forms as depicted in woven and embroidered textiles of India.

Lotus Motif:

The lotus is among the most popular motifs in Indian art. Lotus is the symbol of eternal order of the union earth, water and sky. It represents the life-giving power of water but is also associated with the sun for the opening and closing of the petals. It is also the symbol of recreating power of life. The colours used are always bright to depict the richness of the lotus.

Jasmine Motif:

Jasmine flower has been a popular floral motif from long; known to have embellished textiles given to the seventh-century North Indian king Harsha. The jasmine motif symbolized fertility and called champa in Hindi. The Mughals adored gardens hence it is seen in the textiles and architects.

Mango Motif:

It is an important motif found in a wide range of Indian textiles. In Sanskrit, the design is known as mankolam and has long been used in India and associated with Hinduism. In 17th century the elaborated mango motif woven on Kashmiri shawls were called as Paisley, which are famous till today.

Table 1 : Type of motif and its form of design

Sr. No.	Name of motif	Form of motif
1.	Doriya pattern	Longitudinal stripes
2.	Salaidar pattern	Transverse stripes
3.	Ada doriya	Diagonal stripes
4.	Khanjari or lahria	Wavy or angular lines
5.	Charkhana	In check
7.	Ilayecha	Small lozenge- shaped figure
8.	Bulbul chashm	Small lozenge-shaped figure with dots at the centres.
9.	Mothra	Double lines
10.	Phulwar running	Leaves and flowers all over the ground-work
11.	Jhardar	Sprays
12.	Patridar	Leaves
13.	Chanda	A circular figure with floral or geometrical design inside it, placed in the center of fabric
14.	Turanj	A decorated mango-shaped buti .
15.	Kalghi	Buti with the pointed end turned around the further decorated .

Elephant Motif:

It is widely used motif in Indian textiles. Elephant is regarded as the mount of kings in India. In, India, it is used in richly decorated form in their printed, painted and embroidered textiles to depict war scenes and royal extravaganza.

Techniques used in creating design by use of motif :

This is the most important and complicated part of the whole process. The design is plotted on graph paper by plotters according to the dimensions desired. The plotted *nakshas* are taken to a technician who punches them on cardboards in the required sequence. These cards, linked in a chain as per the design, are then used by the jacquard machine to provide the exact sequence of the different colors of the threads that are required for the design. The jacquard machine (which runs by a weaver moving a pedal) has a rectangular block on which the chain of punch cards runs. These cards have different patterns of holes. When the block is struck against a set of needles, it pushes the requisite hooks backwards. The needles where the card is punched remain unaffected, while the other needles are pressed and the hooks associated are withdrawn, leaving the threads in the background. Thus, the threads in the hooks whose needle are not pressed by the cylinder due to the hole in the punch card come forward to be a part of the weft and the rest remain as they are, allowing for the complicated designs on the fabric.

Table 2 : Motifs used in different sarees

Sr. No.	Name of saree	Motif
1.	Banaras silk saree	Intricate design, jhallar, bel
2.	Jangla saree	Vegetation motif
3.	Tanchoi saree	Floral sprays and pair of small kalghas
4.	Tissue saree	Lotuses floating in glimmering pond, paisley motifs
5.	Cutwork saree	Floral, geometrical motif`
6.	Butidar saree	Different types of butti, gujar bail

Conclusion :

In the present days, Banaras silk sarees are still considered to be one of finest traditional saris. They are well known for their designing and gold as well as silver brocade or the 'Zari'. The special characteristics of these sarees are their designs and motifs, which are Mughal inspired. Very often they are decorated with intricate floral as well as foliate designs.

In 2009, the weaver association of Uttar Pradesh secured a copyright of sorts for the Banaras brocades as well as sarees. It stated that sari or brocade coming from outside the six identified districts (Azamgarh, Jaunpur, Bhadohi, Mirzapur, Chandauli and Vanarasi) will not be eligible for selling under names of Banarasi sari and silks.

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