

## MOTIFS: LANGUAGE OF CULTURAL TRADITION

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### ABSTRACT

*In the field of textile coming up with, a weaver, embroider, skilled worker or printer creates dreams of beauty on textile material with the assistance of motifs and hues. In today's world Textile coming up with is that the most rigorous and rising field due to its full scope of ability and new concepts. Adaptation of style on to textiles is often done through either structural type or in ornamental type. Inspiration Sources of motifs are often found in everywhere, like nature, monuments, social beliefs, traditions and culture, design, temples, historical proof, spiritual signs, figure of god and divinity, mythological stories etc. Development in any field is crucial and continued method, thus within the field of ancient textiles, for the event of motifs creators are continuously searches new concepts from completely different sources. India could be a country of culture and tradition. It is continuously well-known for reverberation through its illustrious arts and crafts. Each region in India has its own vogue and pattern of art and craft. The made motifs, styles and colours of the varied arts and crafts are often pronto custom-made into up to date forms. Understanding of the developed motifs is the results of trust, culture, natural environment and social customs. However, motifs can be used in decoration of textiles, according to required changes. It is possible that, the meaning of motifs may be changed according place, custom and social beliefs*

**KEYWORDS:** Culture, Motif, Symbol, Design, Tradition & Textile

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

India has been standard for textiles since terribly earlier period. It may be assumed that textiles making had started before Indus civilization. Much evidence had found in history that, Indian textiles construction had started before Indus civilization. Spinning, weaving and dyeing all work was done through hand. Many sources show that, people was wears cotton fabric. They used draping style. These record are may be seen in early Indian literature and sculptures, which clearly indicates that Indians adopted weaving, printing and embroidery techniques since very early times. Indian textiles always famed for their textures and motifs from ancient time. Motif means, basic unit of a style or the tiniest unit of a pattern. These motifs can be discovered from different sources, however the event of motif is beyond any doubt is that the results of faith, culture, nature, and social belief of human. Symbolic motifs, which are used in decoration of textiles, can be modified with cultural reference. The symbols represent ideas and beliefs. That means of the many symbols could also be modified with time, culture, philosophy, region, or any cluster of individuals.

#### 1.2 Methodology

The present paper is based on symbolic motifs used in Indian textiles which show value of motifs and its inspiration sources. Qualitative research approach was used for this study. For collection of data and documentation work, researcher had visited various places of India such as Calico textile museum Ahmadabad, National Crafts museum,

Delhi, Mankind tribal museum Bhopal, textile museum Jaipur city palace, Bharat Kala Bhawan, Bhopal, craft emporiums of different states, craft clusters, Exhibitions, fairs and libraries related to textiles of India. Apart from different craft places of India, data also collected from various articles, magazines, books and internet.

### 1.3 Review Literature

Many researcher of the textile back ground has worked on traditional motifs. Some researcher's views are present here. Sharma A. (2016) says that, Motifs plays an important role in designing. Designing is a continue process, so in this series she worked on digital traditional motifs. She concluded that, the floral, geometrical, animal and traditional motifs can be used in contemporary form. Seth M. and Bhatnagar P. (2016) say in her article "Application of Mughal Jaali designs of Agra on textiles" - Historical designs have constantly been a basis of inspiration for the modern designers. A good example of historical inspiration source is the jaali of mughal period. They concluded in their paper that, products fashioned with such inspiration have an imperative role in conserving cultural and historical values. Beeram S. (2019) studied on her research title "Development of Designs from Sculptures of Amaravathi". She concluded that, Adaptation of design on to textiles can be done either through structural or decorative design. For adaptation of any design, designers take inspiration from various sources like nature and man-made objects, which are part of the near environment and that of past traditions. Creative inspiration process can be came from anywhere our surrounding. In a study conducted by Gupta and Gangwar (2016), to make an effort of adding another dimension in the application of Madhubani designs on textiles using hand painting. Sharma and Paul (2015) developed fusion designs using CAD from folk paintings of Warli art of Maharashtra and Madhubani art of Mithila for adaptation on apparel using digital printing techniques. Veenu & Katare C. (2016): concluded in their paper that, interpretation of motifs may be discovered from sources that have nothing to do directly with textiles but the development of a particular motif is undoubtedly is the result of religion, customs, nature and social beliefs. According to Paine, & Harvey (2002) Symbolic and traditional motifs are used on textile for adornment purpose. Kishore N. & Paul S. (2013) concluded in their study that, monument design depicts traditional culture of India. These beautiful buildings are having intricate structural designs that can be used to extract motifs for designing textiles for weaving as well as for printing.

## 2. INTRODUCTION OF TRADITIONAL MOTIFS

From the old centuries, artisans are creating beautiful textiles such as weaving, dyeing, printing and embroidery. Motifs are an essential part of designing of textile. Graceful motifs on textiles reflect tradition, belief, and hereditary skills. The language of motifs is very sensitive, which communicates traditions, local ethos, landscape, social customs, stories, mythological etc. Traditional motifs can be creates and inspired from various sources. India has always known as the land of culture and traditional. Every region in India has its own style and pattern of art and craft. The wealthy motifs, styles and colours of the assorted arts and crafts are often used into modern forms. Understanding of the developed motifs is the results of trust, culture, natural environment and social customs. However, motifs can be used in decoration of textiles, according to required changes. It is possible that, the meaning of motifs may be changed according place, custom and social beliefs

For example Kashmiri motifs always inspired to natural beauty and landscape, we can easily seen beauty of landscape, tree (Chinaar, Devdaar) leaves, flowers, shikara, garden, mountain, snow, Kashmiri custom in Kashmiri motifs and patterns. But, sometime we can also see, that same motif is rendered differently in different parts of the country, which

reflect local culture apart from textile techniques practiced. Indian traditional Motifs can be classified into following category: Plant and vegetable motifs, Animal and bird motifs, Human figure motifs, Geometrical motifs, Architectural motifs, Natural seen and landscape, Traditional motifs and miscellaneous motifs. This paper discussed on some popular motifs, which are frequently used in traditional textiles of India. Following table is showing various types of motifs according to category:

Sl. No.	Category of Motifs	Popular Motifs
1	Plant and Vegetable motifs	Tree of life, Belbuta, Mango (Paisley or ambi), creeper
2	Animal motifs	Horse, elephant, camel, fish
3	Birds motifs	Peacock, parrot, goose,
4	Geometrical motifs	Geometrical shapes and lines
5	Stylized human figure	Tribal figures, dancing figure,
6	Religious motifs	Krishna Radha, rasleela, Ganesha,
7	Architectural motifs	Temple and monuments designs
8	Symbolic motifs	Sun, Moon, Star, Shankh, Rudraksh, Charan, Swastik, kalsa
9	Miscellaneous motifs	Calligraphy design, Persian design, bani-thani etc.

## 2.2 Description of some popular Motifs and its uses in Traditional Indian Textile

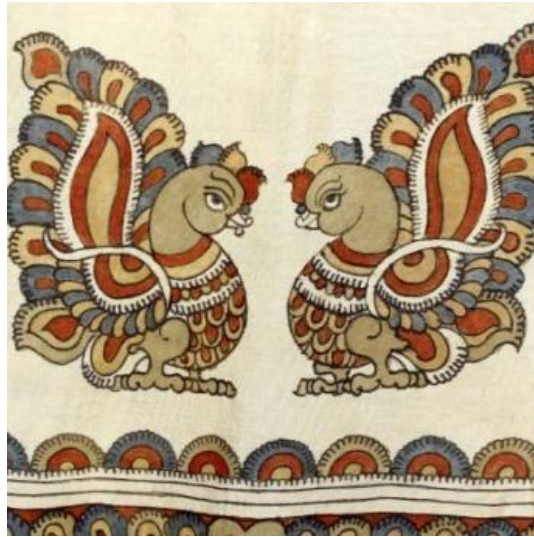
### 2.2.1 Mango (Paisley)

Paisley is one of famous motif in the world. It is known as different terms in different countries such as Palme in France, Bootar in European nation and Peizuli in Japan. Basically paisley term originate from Scotland, because of large scale production of scarf production. In many various cultures, fabric motif thought of as a logo, that represents several objects like cashew fruit, mango or growth Phoenix dactylifera. In India, fabric motif originated in geographical region. Paisley motifs are largely used in Kashmiri shawls which is called Mango motif. In south India it is known as “Ambi” or Mankolam motif. It is also referred as Carrey motif or kalga or kalanga motif in different places of India. In some places of the world, it is referred as “tear drop” or tadpole form pattern. It is believe that, paisley motifs are highly influence by Persian style. Therefore, it came in mughal period between 15th-16th centuries. In Persian language it is referred as Boteh Jegheh, which means bush, group of leaves or cluster of plant. In Indian textiles, paisley motifs are used in different patterns or designs on fabric such as single motif (buti or buta), corner pattern (konia), creepers pattern (bel). There are so many styles of bels are used in design like Pat bel (horizontal), Ek ahari bel (single bel), Du hari bel (double), Lahariyabel (zigzag), Gujer bel etc. Border pattern designs are known as Jhallar. Dhurdar khurd (broad border) Char Badam (four corner motifs) Meemdhor (slightly slim border) Kingri (extremely slim border) Beldar etc are another style of paisley pattern. Paisley motifs are significance as growth, richness, socio-economic significance, non secular and royalty in India. Apart from Kashmiri shawls, paisley motifs are also widely used in Kanchipuram saree, Baluchari saree, Daccai Jamdanis , Banarasi brocade, Tanchoi silk dress, Ikat print, chickankari embroidery, aari-zardosi work, kantha embroidery work, bandhani work, block print and kalamkari work.

### 2.2.2 Peacock, Parrot and Goose Motifs



From ancient periods, the holy paradise bird peacock has known as beauty, royalty, wisdom, wholeness, dignity and love. Bird peacock has special place in Indian tradition, which indicates sense of energy. For centuries, it has always gracefully depicted in different art forms. Much evidence has found in Indian history, which shows importance of paradise bird peacock. It is accepted as a sacred bird in different historical periods such as the great Mauryan dynasty, founded by Chandra Gupta Maurya in 323 BCE is named after the peacock. In medieval times the Tughlaq rulers (1320 – 1414 CE) had adopted the peacock's feather as their state symbol. When we comes into architecture, it may be seen in many places such as Harappan age (2500-1500 BCE), Buddhist stupas and in mughal architecture. Peacock is closely connected with Lord Krishna. Peacock is also Vahana of Lord Kartikeya named Parvati. It is also associated with Goddess Saraswati, which represents wisdom, benevolence, patience, kindness, compassion and luck. The shape of peacock can also see in musical instrument Veena. The importance of peacock motif also may be seen in Indian textiles. Peacock is also known as national bird of our country of India, which shows symbol of decency, culture, tradition, elegance, courtship, fertility and immortality since the Indus Valley Civilization. It also gained prominence in Indian textile industry during the Gupta and Mughal Empires. In present time, peacock motifs are important part of Indian Textile, whether printed, embroidered or weaved. In Indian textiles, Peacock motifs are used in different forms, such as in Phulkari embroidery two triangle body with arrow, stylized form in chikankari embroidery, gujarati embroidery and kantha work. Peacock motif also widely used in Indian sarees such as Patola saree, banarasi saree, baluchary, kanchivaram saree, bandhani saree and Paithani saree. Bangadi Mor is popular motif of Paithani saree. The traditional term “bangadi” refers to word bangle and “mor” means peacock, so the meaning of bangadi mor is "peacock with bangle, which represents sign of good luck. Generally motifs are woven into the pallu and border. Sometimes single dancing peacock are used in design.



The Muniya or Tota-Maina motifs are symbol of bird parrot, which is sign of love, courtship and passion. It is assumed that, red beak and green feathers represents, green earth and happiness after rains that form indispensable part of human life. It is commonly used in traditional textiles of Rajasthan, Gujarat, West Bengal and Maharashtra. It is also popular motif of aari and Zardozi work. Parrot motifs are widely used in traditional Indian sarees like Chanderi sarees, Paithani saree of Maharashtra, Kanchipuram silk sarees, Ikat sarees, bandhani sarees and the art sarees called Kalamkari. Parrots motifs are also used in Indian block Printing, Traditional embroideries, folk art and appliqué work.

Goose motif represents symbol of spirituality. It is known as vehicle of Brahma and Maa Saraswathi. This stylized symbol is highly used in Indian textiles. We can see this motif in design of Kasuti embroidery, Kalamkari prints, brocade fabric etc.

### 2.2.3 Elephant, Horse, Camel and Fish motif:



Elephant motif: From ancient times, in Indian history, elephant has known as royal animal. In the Mauryan times, only kings were allowed to own elephants, which represent sign of power and wealth. The elephant figure also can see easily in Mughal and Rajputana miniature paintings, In Indian culture, Lord Ganesha bears an elephant head, which shows symbol of intelligence. The Elephant is also known as vehicle of god Indra. The elephant also associated with Vedic deity, rain and fertility, because it is symbol of good luck, happiness and longevity. In Indian textile industry, Elephants motifs are richly used. Elephant considered as auspicious animal, also known as varies names such as Yanai, Hathi, ane etc.

Elephant motifs are widely used in Patola sarees, Kanchipuram sarees, Pochampally sarees Gharchola saree, kalamkari work, Rajasthani and Gujarati embroidery and in madhubani folk art. Sometimes it is also seen in printed textiles.

Horse and camel animals are also inspiration source of Indian textile. Horse is known as symbol of power, mobility, loyalty and strength, widely used in Rajasthani and Gujarati embroidery Patola sarees, Kanchipuram sarees, baluchery sarees Gharchola saree, kalamkari work, bagru and sanganeri block print and in Pithora folk art of Gujarat. Bankura *horse* has become an iconic symbol of Bengal art. So bankura horse motifs are used in kantha work. Camel is main iconic symbol of Rajasthan known as “Ret ka Jahaj” (ship of sand). Camel motifs are widely used in Rajasthani textile like in Bandhni, embroidery and block printing.

Fish are the symbol of fertility, abundance, good luck, success, harmony and community. There are so many mythologies about fish such as it is considered as one of the many avatars of Lord Vishnu. The artisans of Mithila paintings have believed that, fish is gift of God. Fish is highly auspicious symbol of ceremonial occasion such as marriage in West Bengal. It is one of the main gifts taken to the bride’s house at the lagan ceremony. Fish motifs are also widely used in alpana design (floor art) and in traditional kantha embroidery work. It is also sign of beauty, flow, purity, prosperity and life force.

#### **2.2.4 Tree of Life Motif:**

The image of Tree of Life means, a picture of mature tree, which has strong roots and many branches. The motif of Tree of life represents connection with universe. It represents personal and group activity both. The growth of branches shows of a tree strength, knowledge and new experiences and dependency. Tree of Life image, also connected with family term. The roots of tree represent positive energy and new beginnings. The Tree of Life is an ancient mythological image showing in varied cultures such as Mayans Celts, Buddhism and Nordic. In Buddhism, the Tree of Life is understood because the Bhodi-tree and is believed to be the Tree of Enlightenment. In Celtic Beliefs, Tree of Life is image of roots that represents the opposite world. In Islam, Tree of Life is understood as Immortality within the religious writing. In Judaism, The Tree of Life means image of sustains and nourishes. Multiple cultures have completely different mythologies involving the Tree of Life. In Indian textiles, the motif of tree of life, mainly used in bed sheets, carpets and decorative wall hangings pieces. The motif of tree of life highly used in various folk art forms such as Mata Ni Pachedi art, Gond Paintings, Kalamkari art, Madhubani art etc. In present time, it is also used in home ornamentation that highlights continuity and connections of life.

#### **2.2.5 Lotus and Belbuta Motif**

The Lotus flower is known as image of freshness, naturalness and spiritual Beauty. It blossom as a pure uncontaminated flower in unclean water. In Hindi literature, lotus is known in different names such as Padm, Kamal, Kumud, Pundarika, Pushkar etc. According to Hindu philosophy, many Hindu deities are shown with a lotus flower, such as Lord Vishnu Maa Parvati, Maa Ganga Yamuna, Surya dev etc. All schools of miniature painting especially in Rajasthan and pahari art used lotus pond.

The motifs of Lotus are used in Indian textiles from many decades. this motif is widely used in traditional embroideries, sarees and prints, which has full of meaning and importance. In Kantha embroidery of Bengal, lotus flower shows essence of the universe. In Ikat design, it represents panch-Tatva. The motif of lotus has also seen in kasuti embroidery, Gujarati handicraft, chambarumal embroidery, Phulkari embroidery and carpets. These motifs are also found in Ajanta cave's painting. Nature has played an important role in feelings of artists. Since, ancient time, for improvement of



beauty and attractiveness of fabric, floral motifs are extensively used in Indian textiles. Mughals had loved gardening and flowering. It was a great source of inspiration for floral motifs. The common motifs were bel-butis, originally derived from the Persian motifs. These motifs have presented grace and delicacy of the Persian beauty. Mughals emperor was always loved flower and nature. When we are analyzed mughal costumes, fragrance of Persian motifs always found in different ways such as bel buta. Infact Mughals always loved decoration and nature. Bel-butia motif was developed in the Mughal period. According to the shape and style, Butis were known in different names such as pan buta, jal buta, konia buta, ashrfi buta, phul bta, fardi buta etc. Bel buti designs always inspired to creepers, leaves, flowers, buds, stem etc. Floral buta – buti designs can be seen in kalamkari print, chikankari embroidery, brocade fabric, kashmiri shawls, block printing work, Indian carpets etc. sometime bel-butia motifs are creates with birds, animal and human figures. Later on, these Indian floral designs had greatly impressed to European chintz designs.

### 2.2.6 Sacred Symbols: (Sun, Shankh, Rudraksh, Charan, Swastik, kalsha)

The holy symbols and signs always represent, deep meaning full relations with social beliefs, especially in Indian culture. These symbols are gives an identity of Indian culture, which originated from ancient treatises philosophy, Vedas and epics. From thousands years, these shapes and designs are an important part of festivals, ceremonies and worship. Apart from auspicious occasion, these symbols such as Shells, Shankh, Rudraksh, Swastik, Foot prints, Kalsha, Sun, Moon etc. are also used in various designing forms including Indian textile industry.



In Hindu mythology, the conch shell (Shankh) is considered as part of the rituals of worship. Its sound gives divine energy to the universe. The Shankha is one among the four holy objects that Hindu deity holds in his hands. The Shankha is counted in fourteen gems of Samudra manthan. It is counted as sign of fame, longevity and prosperity. The sun means - source of energy and life. According to Hinduism, represents the seven colours of light. In mythology, the sun god is sign of good health and life. Kalasha is taken as auspicious sign in Hindu and Jain religion. Kalasha symbolizes as wisdom, immortality, prosperity and treasure, also seen in the hands of Hindu deities. From earlier period, has been in utilized in ornamental motif in Indian art and design. Kalash is an essential part of worship, marriages and ceremonies. The Rudraksha is symbol of concentration of mind. It is sign of prosperity, confidence and energy. it is spreads thinking power, which represents good luck and auspicious feelings. These all auspicious signs also are a part of Indian textiles within the type of motifs. We can easily see these symbols in Kanjivaram sarees, Gadwal sarees, Ghatchola sarees, kantha work etc.

### 2.2.7 Architectural motifs (Monuments and Temple motif)



Architectural designs are also an important part of Indian textile. Especially historical monuments and temples motifs are found in Indian textiles. For example Jaali pattern are often simply familiarized with Indian ancient textiles, primarily in geometrical forms totally different exemplification. The elementary feature of geometrics undoubtedly is witnessed in numerous ancient embroideries, just like the Mughal Jaali patterns. In Indian textiles, The best Jaali work can be seen on Chikankari embroidery. Jaali patterns also may be seen on aari work, Toda embroidery, Phulkari Embroidery etc. Kanjivarm sarees are famous for temple motifs in all over India. Kanchipuram city is known as city of temples. Kanjipuram city was established by the Pallavas dynasty. The Pallavas was devotee of God Shiva. The main feature of Kanjeevaram Silk sarees is motifs of lotus, parrot, peacock and triangular temple shapes. The motifs are worked with heavy gold or zari threads. The motifs and designs of kanjivaram sarees, has closely related to the temples of Kanchipuram. Popular motif yaali (composite animal of lion, elephant and horse) is a popular motif, found in entrance gate and corridors area of the temples. In general, lion or simha, elephant or yanai, and swan or hamsa motifs are used in kanjivarm sarees. Temple motifs mean rows of large triangles, also found in tribal and deccan sarees. Some time temple motifs are also called Gopuram motifs, used in Kasuti Embroidery, Toda Embroidery and Kanjivaram sarees. Gopuram means a tall architectural tower situated at entrances of temple.

### 2.2.8 Figurative Motifs related to Lord Krishna

Many stories from Lord Krishna's life and his Lilas became the source of inspiration for the artists. Interestingly, weavers and embroiders also followed. Krishna in textiles is usually represented in his famous posture of Venugopal through weaving. Episode of Krishna's life were illustrated in Kalamkari design, chamba-rumal, Gujarati embroidery and pichvai art. The most popular motif often found in textiles is the Rasamandal or Raas.

## 3. CONCLUSIONS

Motif is an idea, pattern, image, or theme that is repeated. Motifs introduce theme of work, they are emphasize on images and symbols. Every type and style has a larger significance according to their autochthonous thoughts. Development of traditional motifs is the result of religion, culture, customs, nature, customs and traditions. India is a country of cultural diversities, so that, the meaning of the motifs, may be change accordingly to different cultural activities. It can be concluded that, sign and symbol of motifs represents traditional and cultural language of society and forwarded mythical beliefs with beauty.



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