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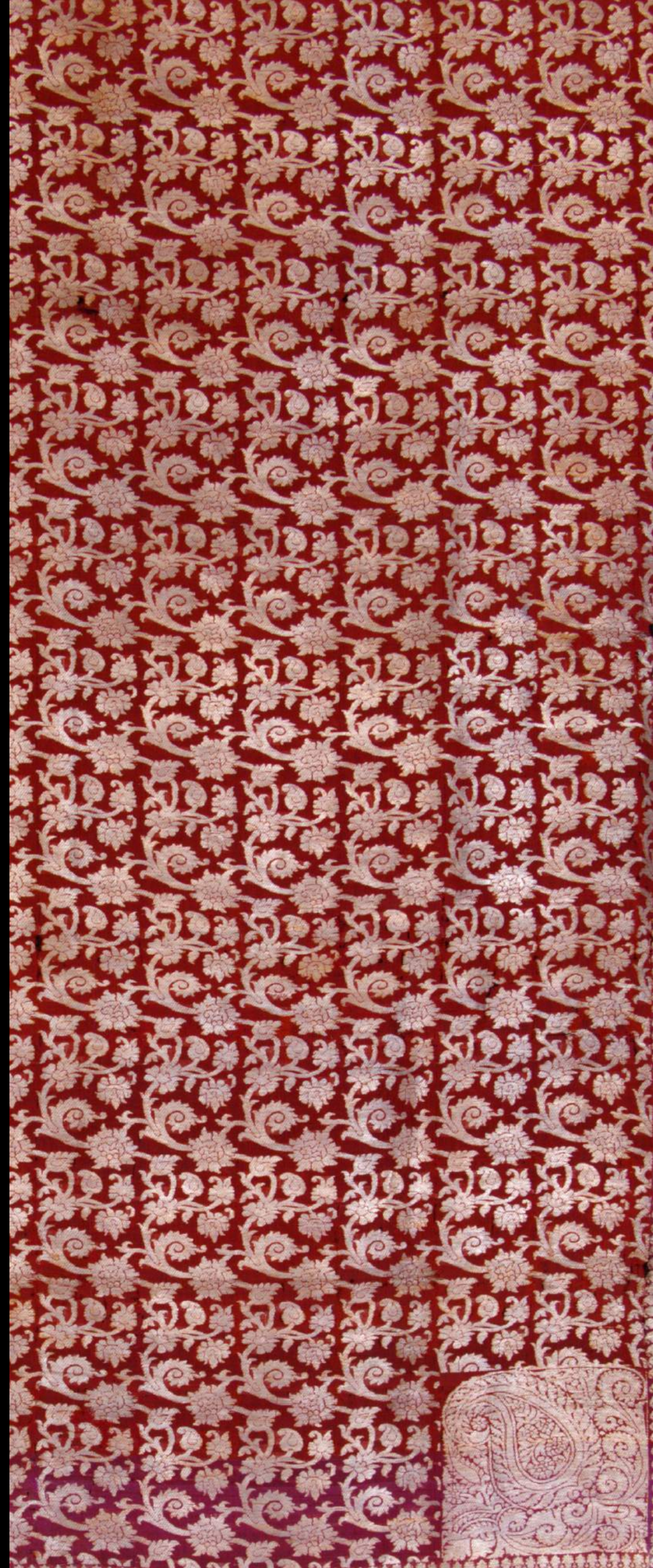
Textile Narratives



Head-shawl, Banaras
early - 20th century
silk brocaded with metallic yarn
Jnana Pravaha, Acc. no. 2013-1

Ceremonial sash, Coromandel coast
19th century, cotton patterned with
hand-drawn mordants and resist
Jnana Pravaha, Acc. no. 2013-47

JÑĀNA - PRAVĀHA

प्रसादाद्विश्वनाथस्य काश्यां भागीरथीतटे।
वृद्धिर्ज्ञानप्रवाहे स्यात् संस्कृतेश्चानुशीलने।।

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Anjan Chakraverty
Guest Editor

Dr. Chandra Neel Sharma
Editorial Assistance

Sumit Chakravorty
Design

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Ph. 91-542-2366326, Fax: 91-542-2366971
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Front Cover:
Ashavali sari, Gujarat, mid - 19th century
silk brocaded with metallic yarn
Jnana Pravaha, Acc. no. 2013.31

Invocation page:
Loom-patterned woollen shawl
Kirman (?) 19th century
Jnana Pravaha, Acc. no. 2013.79

Page facing editorial:
Canopy, resist and dye-painted/printed cotton
Petaboli, 19th century
Jnana Pravaha, Acc. no. 2012.4

Editorial:
Panel of a flared-skirt, Banaras
silk brocaded with metallic yarn
mid-20th century, Private Collection

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Ceremonial Head-Shawl, Banaras
early 20th century, silk brocaded with
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Contents

Editorial

The narratives compiled in this volume focus on several eras of history, interpret diverse cultural zones *vis a vis* conceptualizing dynamics shaping textile forms. However, while celebrating regional histories of the workmanship and design symbolism, these textile fables do not conform to any axiomatic chronological order. Instead, authors discussed the making and usage of an array of textiles in a given context, be it courtly or trade-oriented, sacred or overtly secular. Intimate chronicles about museum holdings are, undoubtedly, full of valuable information.

My heartfelt thanks go to all the 18 contributors who readily responded to my request and shared their expertise and research. The views expressed by them and the conclusions arrived at are entirely their own.

Anjan Chakraverty

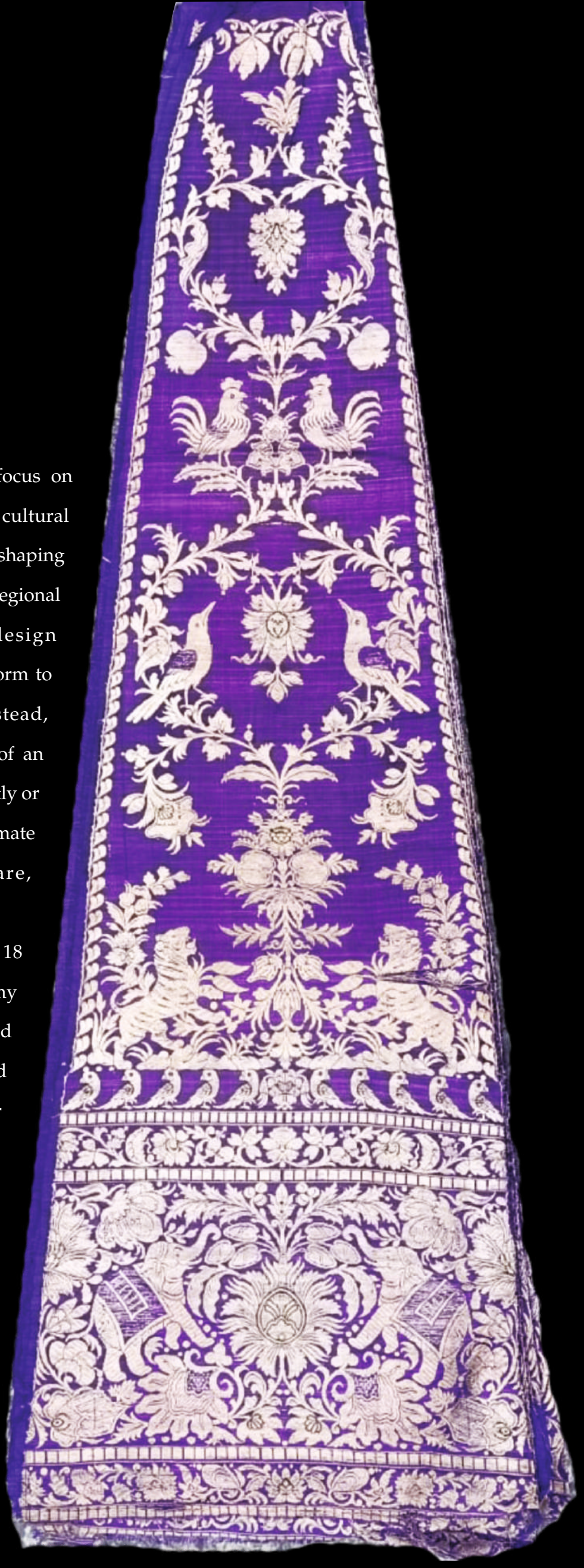

Fig.1.2 : Buddha on a Lion Throne wearing *sanghati* having multiple panels with seams, Kushana, Mathura, 2nd century
mottled red sandstone
State Museum, Mathura
Acc. No. 15.514
Photo credit: Mathura Museum

Fig.1.3 : Reverse: Fig.1.2

1 *Civara, Sanghati, Kathina*-Cloth and Textile references in Buddhist Literature and Art

Anamika Pathak

Introduction

The Sanskrit and Pali word *civara* or *chivara* refers to the robe worn by the Buddhist monks. The *civara* or *tri-chivara* or *ticivaram* has three components: *antara-vasaka,* the inner or lower garment; *uttara-sanga,* the upper or principal garment and *sanghati* or *samghati,* the long outer cloak. The journey of a "mendicant robe" is long, which starts from "robe weaver" to "*civara*", Fig.1.1, to a "*kathina*-cloth Ceremony". This development is narrated in the *Vinaya Pitaka*. The two *Nikayas* of the *Vinaya Pitaka,* the *Mahavagga* and the *Chullavagga,* help us to understand the monastery set-up, its rules and the clothing prescribed for monks and nuns. The texts also inform that different kinds of clothing were prevalent at that time, out of which some were allowed to monks and nuns, while some were not. There are references to the rag robe or *civara*, the components of *civara*, the raw material for making *civara*, the procedure of making *civara*, and an ecclesiastical ceremony related to it known as the *Kathina*. The rules of clothing include process of dyeing and numerous techniques of needlework used in the making of robes.

The anthropomorphic images of Buddha started appearing under the Kushana rule, during the first three centuries of the Common Era. The two art schools, Mathura and Gandhara developed their characteristic styles besides sharing some common iconic features. The Buddha appeared in *sanghati,* Figs.1.2 & 1.4, covering either one or both the shoulders. In addition to such common features of *sanghati*, several images of Buddha and his followers display a kind of *sanghati* with "seams at regular intervals", and this is relatable to the textual descriptions of *sanghati*. These images belong to Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh, Figs.1.6, 1.7 & 1.8. Such stylistic elements are also evident in the paintings of Central Asia, Nepal and Tibet, Fig.1.9.

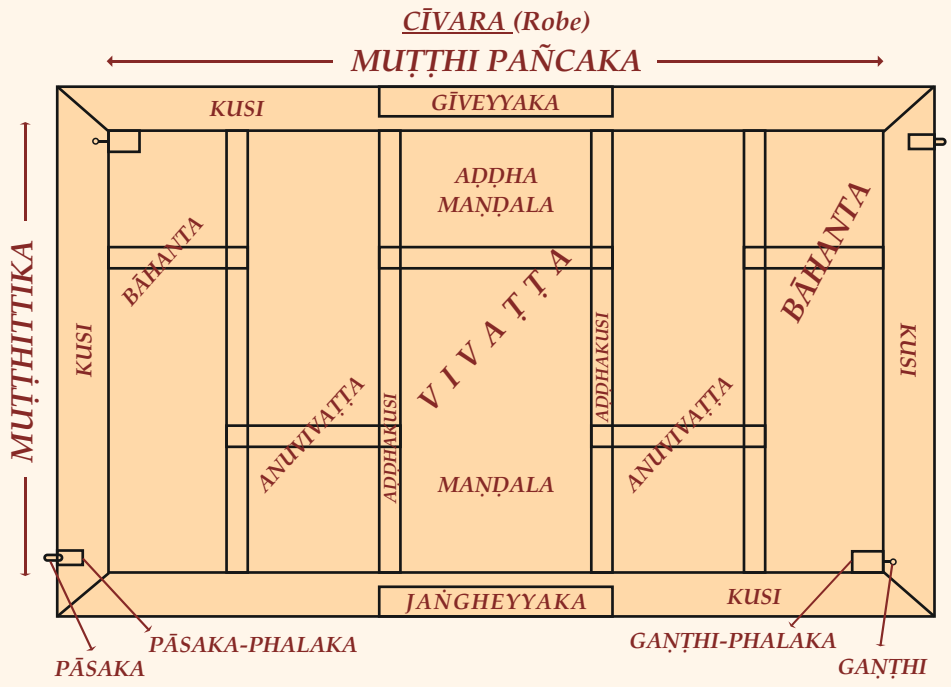

Fig.1.1
Layout of the *civara* from Upasak, C.S. *Dictionary of Early Buddhist Monastic Terms* Nalanda, 2001, p.89

Monastic Robes for the Forest-dwellers and Almsmen

As is evident from Buddhist literature, the ascetics have always remained an integral part of the society. The detailed account of "monk robes" comes from the *Mahavagga Nikaya* of the *Vinaya Pitaka*.[1] The text narrates that once a group of thirty monks of Pava, just after *vassavasa,* the rainy season resort, went to meet Lord Buddha at Anathapindika monastery in Savatthi/Sravasti.[2] When these monks reached the monastery and met Buddha, they were addressed as: "all forest-dwellers, all almsmen, all wearers of rag-wearers, all wearers of the three robes".[3] The first word, "forest dwellers" perhaps refers to the days when monks were dependent on the forest. Before Enlightenment, Lord Buddha spent a wanderer's life in the woods and in different cities to pursue the spiritual path. One may infer that he might have possibly used "a *kusa* grass garment" or "a bark garment", besides other forms, popular among the ancient forest-dwellers.[4] While various other ascetic groups were using a similar range of garments, however, Buddha did not allow all these garments for monks. In the *Vinaya* texts, only *titthiyadhaja,* the garments made of *kusa-grass,* had been given approval in the monastic circle. The second classification for monks is "almsmen", which refers to those monks who go to families for alms. Perhaps, this was the phase when the monks depended on alms while visiting village to village to preach Buddha's teachings. This had been also the phase of monkhood before accepting the householder's robe for the *sangha* and follow prescribed norms of *civara.* The references to "rag-robes" in practice were also mentioned referring to this particular phase.

"Rag-Robe" to "Gift of the Robe" from a layman

The *pamsukula robes* or rag *(pilotika)* robes taken out from the dust-heap or a cemetery, were the next important and lasting phase of the garment for the Buddhist monks, as has been mentioned in the *Mahavagga* and the *Cullavagga*.[6] According to the Commentary on the *Vinaya,* the Lord and monks remained the "rag-robe wearer" till twenty years, prior to the attainment of Enlightenment[7] and before the ceremonial event of gifting special cloth to the Lord by the Jivaka Komarabhacca.[8] The *Mahavagga* records that once Jivaka received a pair of *Siveyyaka dussayuga* as a gift from King Pajjota or Pradyota of Avanti.[9] Since the *Siveyyaka dussayuga* was a valuable clothing of that period, he thought of gifting it to Buddha. Jivaka requested the Lord: "accept my pair of Siveyyaka cloth" and "allow householder's robes to the Order of monks". His request was accepted by Buddha, so the Lord allowed: "Whoever wishes may be a rag-robe wearer; whoever wishes may consent to (accept) householder's robes". This was the beginning of the practice of receiving the cloth for the robe from the householders. This news was welcomed by the people of Rajagraha (Rajgir), the capital of the Kingdom of Magadha, and the laity happily collected many thousand robes for monks' robes in a day.[10]

***Kathina:* the *Civara*, the Ecclesiastical Ceremony, the Wooden-frame**

The *Mahavagga* and the *Cullavagga* mention the term *kathina* in several contexts. According to the *Mahavagga,* when the monks of Pava came to meet Buddha after completing the *vassa* or rainy period, Lord Buddha permitted them to make *kathina* cloth. The text also mentions the *kathina* ceremony or *Kathinam attharitum* (privileges), which is the formal or ceremonial making of the *kathina*-cloth into robes and this cloth was given by the laity.[11] The *Cullavagga* mentions that while sewing the robes for themselves the monks found the robe mis-shapen at the corner. When this problem was brought to the notice of Lord, he said: "I allow you, monks, a *kathina*-frame (and) strings for the *kathina*-frame (and) to sew robe material having tied it down here and there." According to the Commentary on the *Vinaya* the word, *kathinarajja* refers to those who are sewing robe-material double, tied to the *kathina* frame.[12] The

literal meaning of *kathina* is hard and one of the explanations is "firmness, stability and durability" *Kathina*-robe has the power of providing the five privileges *(anisamsa),* firm and stable for a relatively long time for the eligible monks.[13]

The Process of making *Kathina* Cloth

The *Civaravagga* and *Kathina-khandhaka* chapters of the *Mahavagga* mentions a set of steps for making the *kathina* cloth. Regarding the raw material for the robe text mentions that the Lord allowed monks: "six (kinds of) robe materials; linen *(sana),* cotton, silk, wool *(khoma),* coarse hempen cloth, and canvas". The *kathina dussa* seems to be cotton cloth.[14] As prescribed, the laity had to gift the robe material to the *sangha,* not to the individual. Once the *sangha* received the robe material, it was given to monks for making *kathina* cloth. The foremost step was *kandusaka,* "marking" or "measuring", done "lengthwise and across". The monk had to mark it with his nails showing the measurement of each strip. After the "washing" of clothing, the strips were calculated and cut into odd numbers like; five, seven, nine or eleven. The next stage was the "tacking of the robe material", which refers to "putting false threads" in the robe material. Sewing is done on a long strip by following the false threads to make the length and then the *kathina*-cloth is strengthened by making the seams strong. This is done with the basic darn or running stitches, which became part of an ascetic's robe.[15]

To spread the *kathina*-frame, the Lord allowed "grass mat", to keep safe *kathina*-frame. The text also records that "the frame was made according to the height of a tall monk." Monks were allowed to fix a stick in the *kathina*-frame to measure the *kathina*-cloth.[16] The false threads of different colours enabled the equal spacing between the stitches.[17]

As narrated in the *Mahavagga*, once while walking for alms in Magadha, Buddha saw in the fields, perhaps rice fields, an arrangement of lines, stripes, and formation of squares. He posed a question to Ananda: "Are you able to provide robes like this for the monks?" Accordingly, Anand by using "the cross seam, short cross seam, circular seam and short circular seam" prepared "the large *mandala* (seam) for each piece of a robe of five pieces". The text further explains that monks used to make a central piece, side piece, neckpiece, knee piece and elbow piece, sewn together with the circular seam and short-circular seam, Fig.1.1. The two or four pieces at each side of the *vivattan*, the central and middle pieces were sewn together with the circular seam and the short-circular seam. Both the texts mention equipments required for the making of monastic robes, such as *satthalukha*, small knife for cutting the fabric, *suchi*, needle for stitching the monks' robes and *patiggaha,* thimble or thumb guard made of bone or conch shell. For the handles of the knife, Lord allowed it to be made of bone, ivory or horn, reeds, bamboo or even of copper besides several other material.

Buddha allowed monks to make a "rough darn", which is explained in the commentary of the *Vinaya* as a patch-work done only with thread, something like *rafugiri*.[18] Several related terms, for example *anuvatakaranamattena* for braiding, *paribhandakaranamattena* for binding, and an *ovaddheyyakaranamattena* for patchwork had also been mentioned in the context of garment making. The commentary of the *Vinaya* mentions *kasaya,* yellow colour, as the commonly used colour for the monk's robe while old ivory, russets and deep yellows, browns and reds have also been recorded.[19]

Permission and Limitations regarding the Monastic Robes

The *Mahavagga* narrates rules about the eligibility of getting *kathina* cloth from *sangha*. Once monks decide to accept the robe from the *sangha,* they have to follow certain rules.[20] Interestingly, the monks were also allowed by the Lord to have mantles made of silk and fleecy coverlets and woollen stuff of

Fig.1.4 : The Subjugation of the elephant, Nalagiri, Kushana, Mathura, 2nd century
mottled red sandstone, Indian Museum, Kolkata, Acc. No. M.15 a/A-24945, Photo credit: Indian Museum

Fig.1.5 : Reverse: Fig.1.4

Fig.1.6 :
Conversion and Ordination of Nanda
Ikshvaku period
Goli
Andhra Pradesh
3rd century CE
Limestone
Metropolitan Museum of Art
New York
Acc. No. 30.29
Photo credit:
Metropolitan Museum of Art

Fig.1.7 :
Buddha with disciples, Goli
3rd century CE
limestone
Part of the frieze same as Figs.1.6 & 1.8
Photo credit:
Metropolitan Museum of Art
New York

Fig.1.8 : Adoration of Buddha, Goli
3rd century CE, limestone
Part of the frieze same as Figs.1.6 & 1.7
Photo credit:
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Fig.1.9 : Chinese *lohans,* Nevar Artist Jivarama's Sketchbook
folio 36, dated 1435 CE, ink and water-based pigment
on paper, 2412.5 cm
Jnana-Pravaha Museum, Varanasi, Acc. No. 99.139

Kashi.[21] He set a limit of three robes; a double outer cloak, a single upper and inner robe.[22] When the inner robe became thin by use, monks were allowed to make out of this the fourfold outer cloak, a double upper and an inner robe. Permission was also given to put a patch of fabric to strengthen the robe, as monks were allowed to keep needles with them.[23] Nuns were allowed to keep bathing clothes. Monks were allowed a piece of cloth to sit upon, a sheet, a cloth for wiping the face, a cloth to be used as water strainer and a bag to keep all their belongings.[24] For the monks, the use of *kayabandhana,* a girdle to fasten the robes, was made compulsory, especially at the time of going out from *vihara*. However, its use for fashion was prohibited. The *Cullavagga* mentioned that monks were allowed to use two (kinds of) waistbands: *pattika,* a strip of cotton cloth, and one with a well-made end.[25]

The Outer Robe or *Sanghati* in art

The *Cullavagga* and the *Mahavagga* mention the word *sanghatiyo* for the outer cloak.[26] The word *sanghati* or *samghatiyo* or *samghatika* is commonly found in Sanskrit, Pali, Hindi, Kannada and Marathi languages and inscriptions.[27] In early sculptures, *sanghati* was shown covering single or both the shoulders, the outer robes remain longer yet allowing the inner robe visible. The drape of *sanghati* shows through subtle or heavy lines depending upon the artistic styles. In addition to these, another style of *sanghati* is depicted with "multiple panels with seams". Such a visual depiction reminds the literary references of the *Mahavagga* and the *Cullavagga* texts, describing the monks' participation in the *kathina* ceremony held in the *sangha*. Monks have to do the cutting of the robe material and stitching together to obtain the robes, in this process the seams stood out prominently. There are nine images, known so far, from Mathura and Goli, dating back to 2nd-3rd century CE, displaying the portrayal of such robes in stone. An image of Buddha in *abhaya mudra* on a lion's throne from Mathura, Figs.1.2 & 1.3, has the representation of *sanghati* covering both the shoulders. The robe is made of multiple panels with seams carved in depth. The narrative panels from a railing pillar, again from Mathura, Figs.1.4 & 1.5, depict the Subjugation of the elephant, Nalagiri. In both the panels, Buddha's *sanghati* was depicted covering both of his shoulders. The length of the *sanghati* is little lower to knee length with a roundish hemline that reveals the inner robe. The treatment of *sanghati* having multiple panels with deep-cut seams is characteristically Kushana.

Another elaborate version of the Nalagiri episode from Goli, Figs.1.6, 1.7 & 1.8, depicts the Ordination of Nanda in one segment where a similar "special *sanghati*" is worn by the Buddhist mendicants resembling Kushana prototypes. In all the three panels, the mendicants are wearing long *sanghatis,* almost touching the feet, it has a round neck and is close to the falls on hands. Perhaps, the carved depiction of *sanghati* is open from the front. In the case of standing mendicants, the *sanghati* had been portrayed with seams

The mural paintings, datable to the 9th century CE, in the Likri and Alchi monasteries in Leh, also show Boddhisattva in special *sanghati*.[28] In particular, the wall paintings on Alchi Monastery, Sumtsek, 11th century, depict the Akshobhya in *sanghati* having stripes of panels with seam.[29] A silk painting from Dunhuang, China, datable to 7th-10th centuries, shows a Bodhisattva standing in an *anjali-mudra* wearing a white colour inner robe, while his red *sanghati* has multiple panels tucked with black seams and borders.[30] The illustrated sketchbook of Nevar Artist Jivarama, dated Nevar Samvat 555 (CE 1435) and made in Tibet, has iconographic portrayals of *arhats* and *Lohans* in mixed Tibetan-Chinese style.[31] One such coloured drawing of two *arhats,* folio 36, Fig.1.9, has similar depiction of *sanghati* having multiple panels and seams, worn over plain stitched robes. All these visual evidences show the continuity of a special form of *sanghati*, reminding the codification of the *Kathina* ceremony in the *Vinaya Pitaka*.

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ANAMIKA PATHAK, Ph.D., ex-Curator, Decorative Arts and Textiles Department, National Museum, New Delhi, renovated several galleries and curated important exhibitions: *The Art of Calligraphy and Beyond, Arabic and Persian Inscriptions on Decorative Art Objects, Nizam's Jewels* and *Alamkara.* She contributed artefact entries in catalogues: *Sultans of the South: Art of India's Deccan Courts, 1323–1687,* USA (2015) and *The Fabric of India,* London (2015). She has two books, viz. *Pashmina* (2003) and *Indian Costumes* (2006) to her credit. Her *Cosmetic in Indian Art and Literature* and *Ramayana: The Poetic Expression on Temple Hanging* are in press. *apathak.nm@gmail.com*

1

2 The Sari-making Skills of Banaras

Rta Kapur Chishti

Banaras has absorbed the brocading techniques of highly accomplished weavers from all parts of Uttar Pradesh, at least since the late 19th century, when the import of British fabrics began affecting the livelihood of skilled weavers, especially of the sari. Prior to this, the city was known as a centre of the finest cotton and silk saris for visiting pilgrims from all over the country, and had perfected a range of sari-weaving skills especially for each region such as Banaras for Bengal, Banaras for Gujarat and Banaras for South India, specifically for Tamilnadu. In the Mughal period, probably there were state-sponsored *karkhanas* in the city that brought in skilled weavers from as far away as Iran and Turkey. Banaras catered to markets not only in the immediate region of South Asia and Tibet but also West Asia, Europe and North America over at least four hundred years or more.

Sari-weaving has provided a widespread base of support to the finest hand-skills both in cotton and silk. The sari is conceived in the two dimensions of warp and weft but its structure required the weaving of a three-dimensional garment with variations of density in the body, its two borders and the two end-pieces. Therefore, it is the patterning on different parts of the sari that creates the three-dimensional structure and drape. This variation is created with the classic use of either multi-heddle *gethua* weaving or the pattern harness *jala* which have now become almost extant, but localized brocading, *kadhava* (lit. "loom embroidery") and throw shuttle weaving, *phekwan,* are still prevalent. In the mid-50s, *katarva* technique or "cutting all through shuttle back threads" was introduced by the artist-designer K.G. Subramanyan (1924-2016) at the Weavers Service Centre, Varanasi. This was a significant endeavour to create, by adopting a simpler and faster method, opaque and transparency in the sari or yardage. If these weaving techniques are well-supported financially and aesthetically, they could well pave the way to higher levels of skill and virtuosity unparalleled. Such a sustaining infrastructure could create its own pyramid of high-hand skills, medium and base-level skills so that weavers could aspire and compete for a better livelihood with higher skills. They ought not to compete with mechanized weaving as it is a losing race that they are being pushed into. Sadly, volume production is being given precedence over quality by hand which Banaras is uniquely gifted with.

In fact, one has just to recount the range of its silks and cottons that have created the wide spectrum of Banarasi saris, such as *buti-dar* or small motif patterned, *aripatti-dar* or diagonal patterned, *khadipatti-dar* or weft-oriented pattern, *bedepatti-dar* or winding pattern, *jal hunar* or all over net pattern, *jangla hunar* or all over trellis, sari with *konia* or diagonal corner-motif, *thakka* or syncopated discontinuous pattern, *patti-palloo* or end-piece in bands, *bada-palloo* or enlarged end-piece, *buta-palloo* or end-piece with large motifs, to mention the major designing styles. All these could be woven in twisted *katan* or chiffon, georgette or untwisted *patbana* or *sappe,* low twisted silk. These could be woven in mixed cotton and silks or sheer organza, with a weft of gold tissue in basket, twill, satin or plain-weave, with multiple wefts constituting a variety of vine, floral or grain-inspired borders.

The permutations of fabric and pattern structure is immense and wide-ranging and there is no reason that market support cannot be found for not only saris but the sari-range can even inspire the widest gamut of fabrics for multiple contemporary use, stitched or unstitched, apparel or home-products.

RTA KAPUR CHISHTI is the co-author and editor of *Saris of India* volumes as well as *Handcrafted Indian Textiles - Tradition and Beyond* (2000). As a writer and translator, she has documented the life and work of craftpersons and scripted for films and exhibition catalogues. She has been consistently involved with research and development of handspun-handloom textiles. *Saris-Tradition and Beyond* (2010) is an exhaustive overview and a cutting edge documentation of designs, social and cultural background of sari, the most fascinating unstitched garment of India. Her "Sari School" produced saris and organizes workshops for those who wish to make sari intrinsically relevant to their lives today. *rtakapurchishti@gmail.com*

3

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Fig.2.1 : Sari: *buti-dar* with *konia*, *kairi*/hooked-paisleys on the *pallu/anchal*, Banaras early-20th century, silk and metallic yarn *(zari)*, Coll. Ajay Bhoj, New Delhi

Fig.2.2 : Sari: *buti-dar*, *thakka pallu*, Banaras, contemporary, silk and metallic yarn Coll. Ajay Bhoj, New Delhi

Fig.2.3 : Sari: *chaudani* on *pallu*, *daud ki pat bel*, Banaras, contemporary, Coll. Mohd. Shahid Zubair, Varanasi

Fig.2.4 : Sari: *jal hunar* on the field, twin *konias* and *thakka* on *pallu*, Banaras, early-20th century silk and metallic yarn, Coll. Ajay Bhoj, New Delhi

Fig.2.5 : Sari: *jangla hunar* on the field, twin *konias, kairi-dar anchal*, Banaras, mid-20th century silk and metallic yarn, Coll. Ajay Bhoj, New Delhi

Fig.2.6 : Sari: *bedepatti-dar*, *shikargah bel* and *pat bel*, Banaras, contemporary, silk and metallic yarn Coll. Mohd. Yasin, Varanasi

Fig.3.6 : Sari with motif showing
European passengers riding a steam locomotive
Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalay
No. 2008.370, Photo courtesy - author

3 Figured Silks from Baluchar

Syamali Das

Luxury Textiles from Bengal

From early times, India produced a great variety of luxury textiles for local courts and affluent classes, as also for the lucrative foreign markets in Tibet, South-east Asia, Far East, East and North Africa, and Europe. Bengal is ranked just after Gujarat in the production of different types of luxury textiles. The fabled muslins and *jamdanis* from Dhaka, the exclusive silk-on-silk embroidered quilts from Satgaon, and the figured silks from Baluchar in Murshidabad are amongst the exclusive textiles manufactured in Bengal.

Several rare and interesting types of textiles have recently come to notice which should be mentioned here. These are samite-weave silk fragments that came out of Tibet and Bhutan towards the close of the last century showing stylized birds and felines, lotus roundels and stars, lotus roundels and scrolling plumes, and lampas-weave silks showing archers and swordsmen, mythical beasts of complicated designs, and an entire group of textiles with Vaishnavite figures and symbols, earlier known as *Vrindavani Vastra*. All these have also been given an Eastern Indian provenance, from the Sultanate court of Gaur to the temples and *mathas* of Assam and northern Bengal (Cooch Bihar).[1] Rahul Jain published similar lampas-weave silk panels that reached the Amber court in Rajasthan. Both Raja Man Singh and Mirza Raja Jai Singh of Amber had close connection with Bengal where they spent long stints as governors of Mughal emperors.[2]

The exceptionally fine work, ability to incorporate unfamiliar subjects, the great variety of design and the high volume of products noticed in the silk-on-silk and silk-on-cotton coverlets, spreads and other types of textiles created by the unknown embroiderers and textile-makers of Bengal from the first half of 16th century to the second half of the 17th century is simply overwhelming. Our knowledge on this tradition was limited; however, through the painstaking work of Barbara Karl a great deal of information has emerged. A mere glance of the examples, as she noticed, in Portuguese, European and American museums, castles, churches and private collections, make us conscious about the great variety and diversity of these products.[3]

Beginning of the Tradition

The story of *Baluchari,* or *Baluchari butidar* or Figured Silks from Baluchar is often traced from its dying days. Very little is known of its origin: who was the first to commission the weave of this special textiles, who were the weavers, who specified and created the special motifs that give it its uniqueness, and where the first looms were set, all remain shrouded in mystery. It is obvious, however, that such exclusive textiles could not have been produced without the patronage of affluent and appreciative users. No art form or craft tradition can survive in the absence of a discriminating clientele, proper appreciation, and liberal patronage, and thrive without a steady demand and ready market. This must have happened with the *Baluchari* tradition at the time of its inception.

Baluchar : the locale

The name Baluchar evokes the picture of a wide river with sandbanks sparkling in sunlight as commonly met with in riverine Bengal. The rustling saris of lustrous mulberry silk woven with great

expertise, perseverance, and meticulous care at Baluchar and other nearby villages and towns in the district of Murshidabad in West Bengal bear distant echoes of that image. Now, the river Bhagirathi due to rampant diversion of its flow of water throughout its upper reaches is unrecognisable with its meagre flow most months of the year, its disappearing sandbanks, and its withering glory. The cluster of villages where the master weavers worked with their intricately-set looms to produce the most amazingly designed silks that inspired wonder and awe have long disappeared. Also, the pristine tradition of that wonderful class of silk textile known as *Baluchar* or *Baluchari* had been lost forever.

Nitya Gopal Mookerji

The first systematic study of *Baluchar* silks was undertaken by Nitya Gopal Mukerjee/Mookerji, a government officer knowledgeable in the production of silk from extraction of yarn from the cocoons to the weaving of exclusive silks and their marketing. In November 1885, Thomas Wardle, a progressive English businessman from Leek, Staffordshire, England with vast knowledge of Indian silk yarns, was invited to India by the Government of India to study the poor state of silk industry in India, and to suggest measures for its improvement. After travelling widely and making an in-depth study of the silk industries in Bengal and Kashmir Valley, Wardle made a series of recommendations for the improvement of silk production from the rearing of silkworms to reeling of yarns and weaving. He also recommended that some capable person from India should be sent to Europe to study and understand the latest sericulture methods then being practiced in France and Italy. Baboo Nitya Gopal Mookerji was selected for the job. He studied first in Padua and then at Montpelier and, lastly, at Paris under the celebrated scientist Louis Pasteur who succeeded in eradicating the pebrine disease of the silkworms and revived the sericulture of France and Italy.[4] On his return from Europe, Mookerji was appointed Scientific Instructor and Deputy Collector of Murshidabad District. He made extensive field work and published his first detailed note on the reasons of the decline of sericulture in the district.[5] He was concerned with the gradual decline of the once-rich silk industry of Maldah and Murshidabad and wrote a comprehensive account of the Bengal silk industry. *A Monograph on Silk Fabrics of Bengal* by Mookerji was published in 1903 by the Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta. He also wrote two books in Bengali: *Saral Krishi Bigyan* (1904) and *Resham Bigyan* (1908). He resigned from his government job due to disagreements with his superiors for some unspecified reasons.[6]

In fact, the decline in silk weaving started long ago. T.N. Mukharji, Curator of the Indian Museum in Calcutta from 1886 to 1896, and the Officer-in-charge of the Indian Central Office for the Glasgow International Exhibition 1888, noted: "Saris, made at Baluchar near Murshidabad, with flowers and figures, were a short time ago highly appreciated by Bengali ladies, but these have now very nearly been ousted from the market by cheap 'pine-apple' cloths imported from England."[7]

At the time of N.G. Mookerji's field studies in the 1890s the *Baluchari* figured silks were already on the verge of extinction. The master weaver, Dubraj Das, the only person left who could set the extremely complicated *naksha* looms, had nearly stopped weaving due to old age, lack of skilled assistants and falling demand. For quite some time he was producing silks of simpler design with only *kalka koniyas*, corner paisleys, and an *anchal* of nine or eleven *kalkas*, tree-of-life motifs or flowering vases, and rows of simple *butas* filling the ground. These are in many instances inscribed with his name, *Sri Dubraj Das, Mirpur*. He had by that time moved from Mirpur to Bahadurpur but retained his identity as "Dubraj Das who belonged to Mirpur". The last remaining six *naksha* looms at Bahadurpur belonged to him only.

Baluchar textile in Historical Perspective

To trace the origin and steady development of this unique textile tradition we must look at the historical

perspective and the geographical locations where the weavers worked and created their distinctive designs.

The reputation of Bengal's luxury fabrics was widely known from early times. Maldah in the days of the Gaur Sultanate (established in 1938) had a thriving production of silk yarn and weaves. Sir George Birdwood provides a long list of the principal patterns of silk produced there, and further notes: "there is on record that in 1577 Shaikh Bhik, of Maldah, sent three ships of Maldahi cloth to Russia by Persian Gulf."[8] The area around Murshidabad was an important centre of silk production from early times as fine quality of mulberry silk yarn was produced in the nearby villages, and also brought from Maldah area, for long a key centre of silk production. It is known from East India Company records dating 1621 that this was the area "where silk could be provided in infinite quantities at least 20 percent cheaper than in any other place in India and is of the choicest stuff."[9] The first British factory was established at Kasimbazar (Cossimbazar) in 1658. It helped the local producers and weavers to produce high quality silk textiles, which were soon "competing favourably with the high-quality silk goods made in France and Italy."[10]

There is a reference to Baluchar in a biography of Maharaj Krishna Chandra by Rajiblochan Mukhopadhyay: "When Akbar and Jahangir's leading courtier Raja Man Singh was on his way to subjugate Raja Pratapaditya of Jessore in 1612 he stopped at Baluchar on the bank of Bhagirathi and was impressed by its beauty."[11]Baluchar is mentioned by Ghulam Husain Salim in his *Riyaz us-Salatin* when Nawab Alivardi Khan of Murshidabad came upon the Maratha raiders busy looting Baluchar and drove them out in 1742.[12]There is no further information on what was there in Baluchar that the Marathas were looting. Later writers have stated that Baluchar was a prosperous place being the centre of silk textile trade with wealthy merchants residing there.

A more specific reference to Baluchar and its special product was noticed from Dutch records by the historian Sushil Chaudhury. In a list of Bengal textiles the Director of the Dutch factories in Bengal Louis Taillefert in 1755, and again from 1760 to 1763, includes textiles named "*armosijnen* with flowers, on both sides equally beautiful, made in Balouchar" in the category of *"dostanjis"*.[13]The exact meaning of the term *dostanjis* is not clear, but *armosijn/armozjin* is the Dutch name for a costly silk fabric. As Shilpa Shah has pointed out, the association of *Baluchar* with floral patterned silks is apparent from Taillefert's description though the *Baucharis* do not have a double-faced patterns.[14] The Marathas invaded and looted Baluchar as it must have attained preeminence and prosperity by the 1740s. There is no further reference to Baluchar or its special product *Baluchari* till the middle of the 19th century.

The name *Baluchar* or *Baluchari* got currency with the association of the village Baluchar on the river Bhagirathi near the town of Jiaganj, about 23 km north of the city of Murshidabad.[16] Baluchar was not the only village manufacturing this special type of silk, several nearby villages like Bahadurpur, Amaipara, Ramnapara, Ramdahar, Baligram, Bagdahar, Beliapukur, Amdahar, Ransagar amongst others were producing fine silk products like saris, scarves, square *rumals*, etc. Today there is no place called Baluchar there. With the changing course of the river Bhagirathi Baluchar has disappeared. When Eva-Maria Rakob visited the area in 1992 to make a field survey of places associated with *Baluchari* she was told that Baluchar, comprising of the *maujas* of Durgapur and Panishali in Jiaganj Municipality had since been absorbed into them.[16]

The Patrons

The social and economic order of the Murshidabad court with its affluent and connoisseur ruling family, rich and cultured nobility, prosperous trading community, and the presence of English, Dutch, French

and Armenian and upcountry traders must have provided the impetus to introduce novel motifs in the fine silks produced by the expert weavers of Murshidabad. The weavers used the same raw material - pure, sensuously soft, lustrous, thin, and delicately textured local mulberry silk - without ever using any gold and silver *zari*. The technique was not very different from that of the draw-looms in use in centres like Patan and Ahmedabad in Gujarat, Benaras and other silk-producing centres of central, western, and southern India. Silk textiles from Gujarat, *Ikat,* brocaded, embroidered, or tie-dyed, had a flourishing market within the country and abroad. Silks produced in Benaras, tastefully designed, woven with bright colours and gold or silver *zari* had a pan-India market and beyond. The market of *Baluchari* silks, however, was mostly confined to Bengal and adjacent regions. The brocades and *Patola* from Gujarat, *Kalamkaris* of Andhra Pradesh or *Himrus* of Aurangabad commanded a far wider market. Looking at the motifs showing Europeans – officials and their spouse, soldiers, and cannoneers – some authors have speculated that these were specifically produced for them on order.

The earliest documents on *Baluchari* are related to the records providing details on objects shown in the L'Exposition Universelle de Paris organized in a grand scale at Grand Palais in Paris in 1855. Choicest and finest silk objects were procured from the best weavers from all over India for exhibiting in the British pavilion that included four *Baluchari* saris. Veronica Murphy seleced three of these in the Arts of Bengal exhibition held more than a century later in 1979 at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London.[17] Anita Nathwani published further details on these three, and a fourth one in two recent essays with additional information on the Paris show and their transfer to the India Museum and finally to the Indian Section of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.[18] The names of the exhibitors were not mentioned in the documents.

When these were later included in the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, London in 1886, the exhibition catalogue provided additional details where the names of two lenders were mentioned: Nawab Nazim of Murshidabad and Maharani Swarnamoyi of Kasimbazar. The full entry reads: '2970. Baluchar Sari is lent by the Nawab Nazim of Murshidabad. Maharani Swarnamoyi of Kasimbazar has also lent two Baluchar saris (no.2961, 2962) with figures of gods and goddesses woven at the end.'[19] It may be pointed out here that the *Baluchari* motifs never show figures of gods and goddesses but figures of nawabs and begums, and European sailors, soldiers and cannoneers. The cataloguer may have misidentified the human figures as gods and goddesses.

The only image, Fig.3.5, of a lady wearing a Baluchari sari from the middle or third quarter of the 19th century that has come to notice is that of Sarada Devi, mother of Rabindranath Tagore, who died in 1875. Abanindranath Tagore, Rabindranath's nephew, provides us with a verbal image of the sitter: '*Pankherkaj kara mejhe, mejhete carpet pata, ek pase ekti pidim jwalchhe, baluchar sari pare sadachule lal-sindur taktak karche, katta-didima base achen taktaposhe*'.[20]

Recently, another gorgeous *Baluchari* sari has surfaced from the Tagore family with a strong pedigree. It belonged to Jnanadanandini Devi (1850-1941), who was married in 1859 to Satyendranath Tagore (1842-1923), the elder brother of Rabindranath. She gifted the sari to her daughter-in-law Sangya Devi, wife of Surendranath Tagore (1872-1940). It passed on to their daughter Jayasri Sen on her wedding in 1927. She gifted it to her daughter Haimanty Dasgupta at the time of her marriage in 1963. It finally entered the CSMVS in 2008, Fig.3.6.[21] We are not sure if this sari was received by Jnanadanandini at the time of her wedding in 1859, or was acquired by her later.

The above notices help us to find the patrons of *Baluchari* figured silks. One interesting point to note here is that all four *Balucharis* exhibited in the 1855 Paris exhibition show figural motifs in the *pallu*.

Fig.3.1 : Sari with European riders
in a horse-driven carriage
V & A Museum, Acc. No. 6102 (IS)
Photo courtesy - author

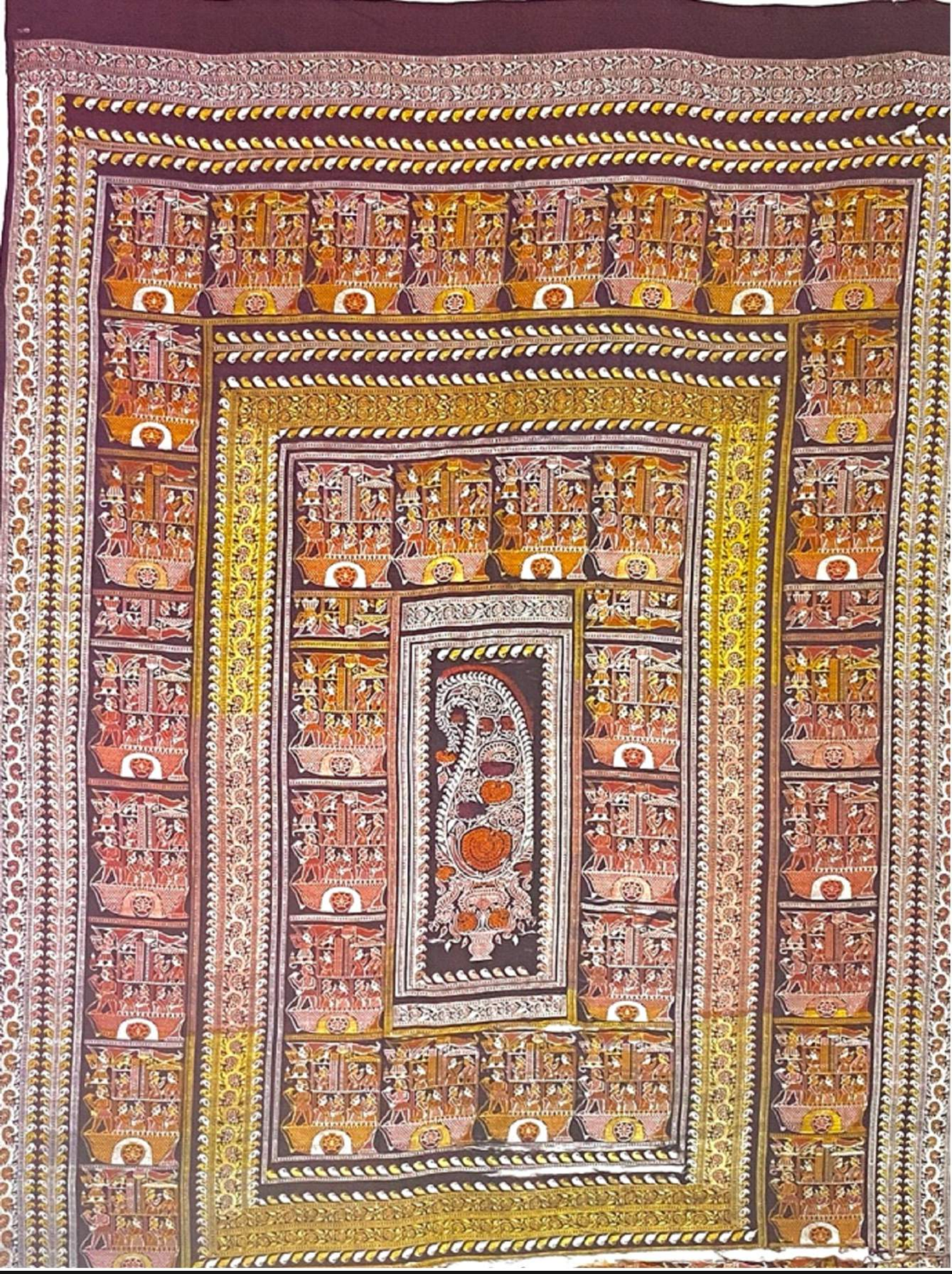

Fig.3.2 : Sari showing European passengers
on a paddle steamer, V & A Museum, Acc. No. IS 660-1883
Photo courtesy - author

Fig.3.3 : Sari with motif horse rider
with two attendants, V & A Museum
Acc. No. 0786 (IS), Photo courtesy - author

Fig.3.4 : Sari with motif showing
woman on horseback
V & A Museum, Acc. No. 6110 (IS)
Photo courtesy - author

Fig.3.5 : Sarada Devi, Photo courtesy - author

Two of these, V&A no. 6102 IS, Fig.3.1, shows the motif of a European couple riding a horse-driven cart, and V&A no.0196 IS, shows the motif of a pedal steamer with European passengers and crew. The other two show an Indian lady riding horse: in V&A no.6110 IS, Fig.3.4, she is alone, and in V&A no.0786 IS, Fig.3.3, she is accompanied by female attendants. In the Sarada Devi photograph, Fig.3.5, however, the *pallu* does not have any figural motif but only a row of large *kalkas.* May be, by the 1870s *Balucharis* with figural motifs were already getting scarce. The Jnanadanandini's *Baluchari* shows steam locomotives that was introduced after steam locomotives were regularly plying in Bengal from 1854. The weaver used many elements not integral to the rail engine like oversize steam chutes, festoons, hanging lamps and a flag, an oversize peacock or a composite figure of lion-bodied female or *kamdhenu* sitting on the top.

Decline of Murshidabad

Murshidabad was undergoing a process of rapid political, economic, and social disintegration in the latter half of the 18th century. The English had no intention of settling down there, they preferred to strengthen their bases on the far downstream town of Calcutta for strategic reasons. The Nawabs were increasingly denuded of their position and power, social esteem, and prosperity. The East India Company took over the *diwani* of Bengal in 1765 and agreed to pay the Nawab of Murshidabad Rs.53 lakhs per year, reduced to Rs.41 lakhs a year within a short time, and brought down to Rs.31 lakhs in 1770 that was further curtailed in 1772. In the same year the *diwani* and *khalisa* offices were shifted to Calcutta, followed by the mint and the civil courts. By the beginning of the 19th century, the Nawab's writ was valid only within the fort of Murshidabad.

The process of disintegration of Murshidabad continued throughout the 19th century though the

production of *Baluchari* silk declined only from the third quarter of the 19th century. The first stretch of the East Indian Railway, one of the three original railway companies, opened between Calcutta (Howrah) and Pandua in district Hooghly in 1854. Instead of the large seafaring *mayurpankhi* and other river crafts the pedal steamers, Fig.3.2, had started to ply on the Bhagirathi. A few decades later the locomotive and pedal steamer became objects of great popular interest. Yet, by the time T.N. Mukharji (1887-1888) and N.G. Mookerji (1891) made their field surveys the *naksha* looms of Murshidabad were producing only shawls with corner decorations and *butas* in the field. Even the best-known weaver-designer Dubraj Das was in dire straits and N.G. Mookerji makes this fervent appeal in his survey: "Dubraj Das was not ambitious and was quite willing to teach his fellow weavers the art of setting the loom to a desired pattern if he could get a monthly pay of Rs.30 or Rs.40. It would thus seem necessary to offer this patronage to Dubraj if the art industry of Murshidabad was to be kept alive and revived."[22]

The reasons for this decline are many, as N.G. Mookerji has clearly enumerated in his survey. The lack of patronage and its consequent effect on the quality of the product are apparent in many extant examples. Eva Maria Rakob[23] found as many as twenty-one pieces of *Baluchar* silk bearing Dubraj's signature, but none of these has any pictorial design in their *pallav*. He was by then settled for *butas* in the field and floral and *kalka* designs in the *pallavs*. In some examples even the field is plain. The affluent business class of Gujarati, Rajasthani and upcountry origin having their palatial mansions and garden houses in Azimganj, Jiaganj and Baharampur had started to desert these places and moved to Calcutta in the later years of the 19th century. A new class of neo-rich landed gentries and *gomastas* (demi-officials or commission agents in the service of British business houses), were rising fast on the social ladder of this time. To them a *zari*-brocaded *butidar* sari was more desirable than a figured *Baluchari* lacking the dazzle of *zari* embellishment. The days of *Baluchari* figured silk of Murshidabad thus reached its abrupt and sad end with the lack of an appreciative patron and, eventually, faded into oblivion.

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SYAMALI DAS obtained a Ph.D. on Mughal Carpets and worked as Keeper, Textiles, at the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, Jaipur. Presently she is working on Baluchar Textiles with special reference to temple terracottas and other Courtly arts and crafts in Bengal. She has published extensively on Mughal carpets, textiles and other subjects in Marg, The India Magazine, Taj Magazine, Desh and so on. She has examined the collections of the world's leading museums like the V & A, Musee Guimet, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Textile Museum, Calico Museum and Bharat Kala Bhavan. She has recently completed a year-long residency at the Jnana-Pravaha, Varanasi. She lives in Shantiniketan. *asokkdas@gmail.com*

Fig.4.1 : Nana Phadnis wearing *mulmul jama*
Tempera painting, Deccani, Satara
Copy made in Satara in 1854, CSMVS Acc. No. 27.15

4 Bengal Textiles of Historical Importance from the Collection of CSMVS (Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya), Mumbai

Manisha Nene

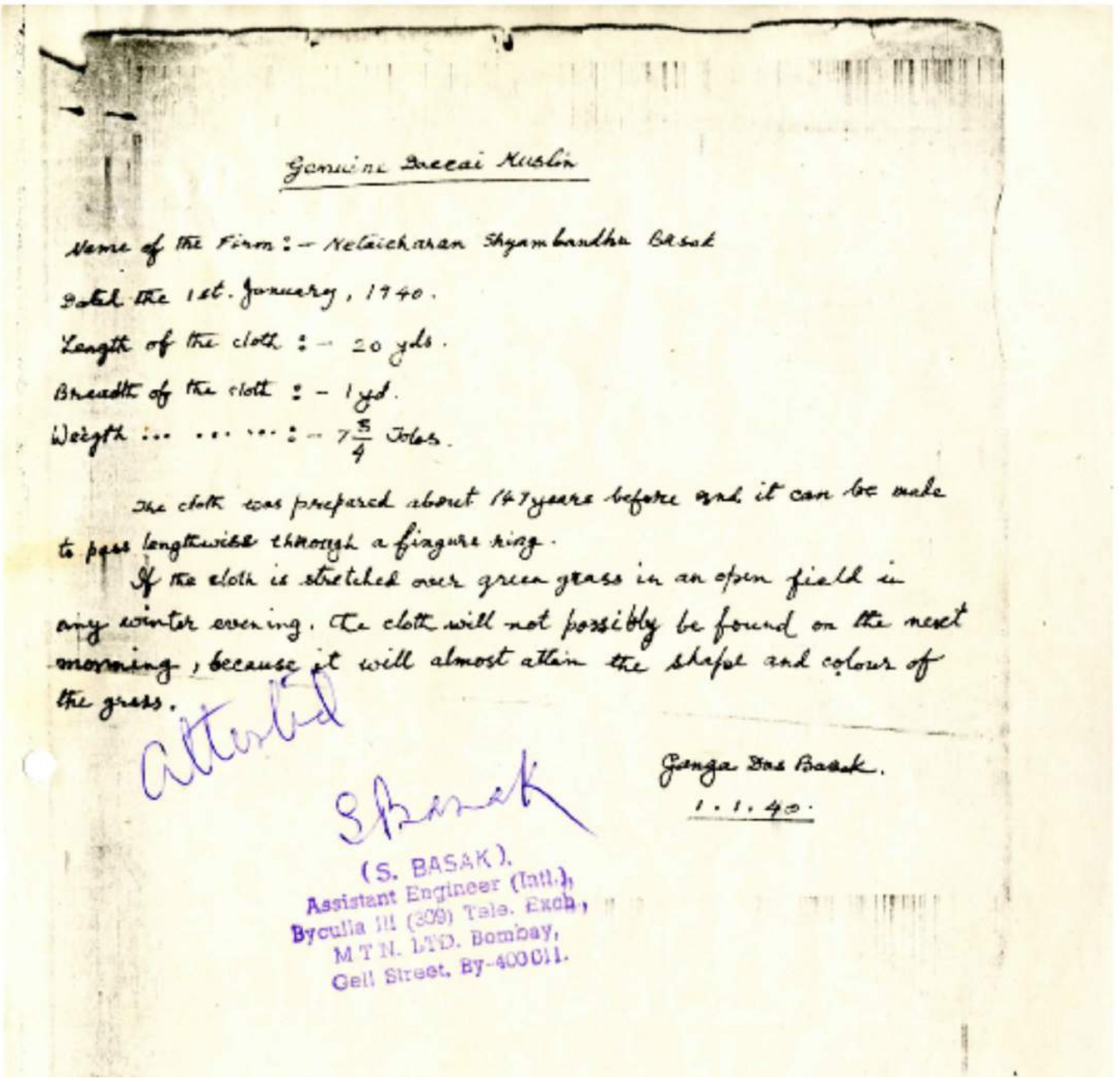
The CSMVS Museum boasts a considerable volume of historically important textiles, predominantly from India. The collection also includes several textile samples produced in contemporary times, specially acquired for research and study. The collecting began simultaneously with the Museum's inception in 1905, and one important textile lot was acquired in 1915 from one of the earliest collectors of Bombay, Seth Purshottam Mavji (1879-1929). This includes a number of significant textile specimens from the treasures of Nana Phadnis (1741-1800), the most important and influential minister of the Peshwas, Fig.4.1. It is believed that Nana collected textiles and other antiquities from the distress sales of the disintegrating Mughal empire. The encyclopedic collection also consists of treasures from Satara *Darbar* as well as some personal belongings of Nana.[1]

Later on, the collection was further augmented through the bequests of Sir Ratan Tata in 1922 and Sir Dorab Tata in 1933. This was followed by the School of Art Collection which contains several textiles from West Bengal, particularly the *Balucharis*. Over the years the collection has been enriched through purchases made by the Trustees of the Museum as well as in the form of gifts from several individual donors.

Although the textile collection of CSMVS is particularly rich in textiles from Western India, it also has some key historical pieces from Bengal that need a special mention.[2] These are *mulmul* yardages, Figs.4.4 & 4.5, embroidered cotton pieces, Fig.4.3, *kantha* bedspread, Fig.4.6, *nilambari* sari, Fig.4.7, *jamdani* sari, Fig.4.8, *batik* saris, Figs.4.9, 4.10 & 4.11, and, most importantly, the *Baluchari* and *Bishnupuri* saris, Figs.4.12, 4.13, 4.14 & 4.20. The collection also includes design layouts on paper for *batik* executed around 1940s, Figs.4.15 & 4.16, and some photographs, Fig.4.17, all from Santiniketan.

The Dhaka *mulmul* is considered as the jewel of Bengal textiles. The collection includes three *mulmul jamas* belonging to Nana Phadnis, Fig.4.1. These *jamas* have a large circumference ranging from 37 to 50 feet but each *jama* weighs just between 350 grams to 500 grams. This indicates the fineness of the thread and weaving. Unfortunately, the utterly fragile state of these costumes does not allow straightening and hence poses a challenge for photo-documentation. One Dhaka *mulmul* yardage, Figs.4.4 & 4.5, which is 20 yards in length and 1 yard in height was acquired by the Museum in 1996 from Shri Pradip Kumar Basak. Along with this yardage, a paper document dated 01.01.1940, signed by Ganga Das Basak, Fig.4.2, was handed over mentioning that this original Dhaka *mulmul* was made in the firm Netaicharan Shaymbandhu Basak. According to this document, the yardage is 147 years old and can be passed lengthwise through a finger ring and weighs just 7.75 *tolas,* i.e. less than 80 grams approximately.

A silk *batik* sari produced around 1940 at Kala Bhavan, Santiniketan, Fig.4.12, is a prized collection of the Museum. The sari was designed by Nandalal Bose (1882-1966), a renowned artist of the Bengal school, for a performance to be staged in front of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore. It was executed by Gauri Bhanja (1907-1998), the daughter of Nandalal Bose. The *batik* textiles have their own historical importance as the genre was introduced in Santiniketan by Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore after his visit


Genuine Baccai Muslin

Name of the Firm :- Nelaicharan Shyambandhu Basak

Dated the 1st. January, 1940.

Length of the cloth :- 20 yds.

Breadth of the cloth :- 1 yd.

Weight ... ... :- $7\frac{3}{4}$ Tolas.

The cloth was prepared about 147 years before and it can be make to pass lengthwise through a fingure ring.

If the cloth is stretched over green grass in an open field in any winter evening. The cloth will not possibly be found on the next morning, because it will almost attain the shape and colour of the grass.

Attested

S Basak

(S. BASAK).
Assistant Engineer (Intl.),
Byculla III (309) Tele. Exch.,
M T N. LTD. Bombay,
Gell Street, By-400011.

Ganga Das Basak.
1.1.40.

Fig.4.2 : Paper document dated 01.01.1940, signed by Ganga Das Basak, CSMVS

to Java in 1927. He was accompanied by Surendranath Kar, an artist and architect of Santiniketan who learned there the *batik* technique of wax-resist negative dyeing process. Tagore was fascinated by the use of *batik* textiles in Javanese dance-dramas and household decorations. While returning from Java, he also brought several *batik* textiles. Pratima Devi, the daughter-in-law of Gurudev, played an important role in the development of *batik* technique at Santiniketan.[3] The Javanese *batik* is done with a spouted tool called *tjanting*.[4] Pratima Devi and Surendranath used instead brush, *tuli*, for the execution of designs and therefore, the Santiniketan *batik* is called *Tuli Batik*. Gradually, *batik* became a part of the academic curriculum at Kala Bhavan and Gauri Bhanja, who has executed the design of the present sari, was one of the pioneers to develop the unique idiom of Santiniketan *alpana* (floor decoration with liquefied rice-paste) and designs for *batik*. The elaborate composition of *alpana* patterns frequently used in *batik* includes lotus, hibiscus flowers, elaborate floral creepers, peacocks, fish and geometric tassels, Figs.4.10 & 4.11. An excellent example of Gauri Bhanja's design innovation, the sari has an elaborate *pallu* and

Fig.4.3 :
Embroidered piece
Cotton, Dhaka, Bangladesh
Late 19th century CE
CSMVS, Acc. No. 96.1/3

Fig.4.6 : Infant's bedspread
Shishura Bichana
Kantha embroidery
on Cotton
West Bengal
20th century CE
Gift of Kalpana Desai
CSMVS Acc. No. 2005.1/13

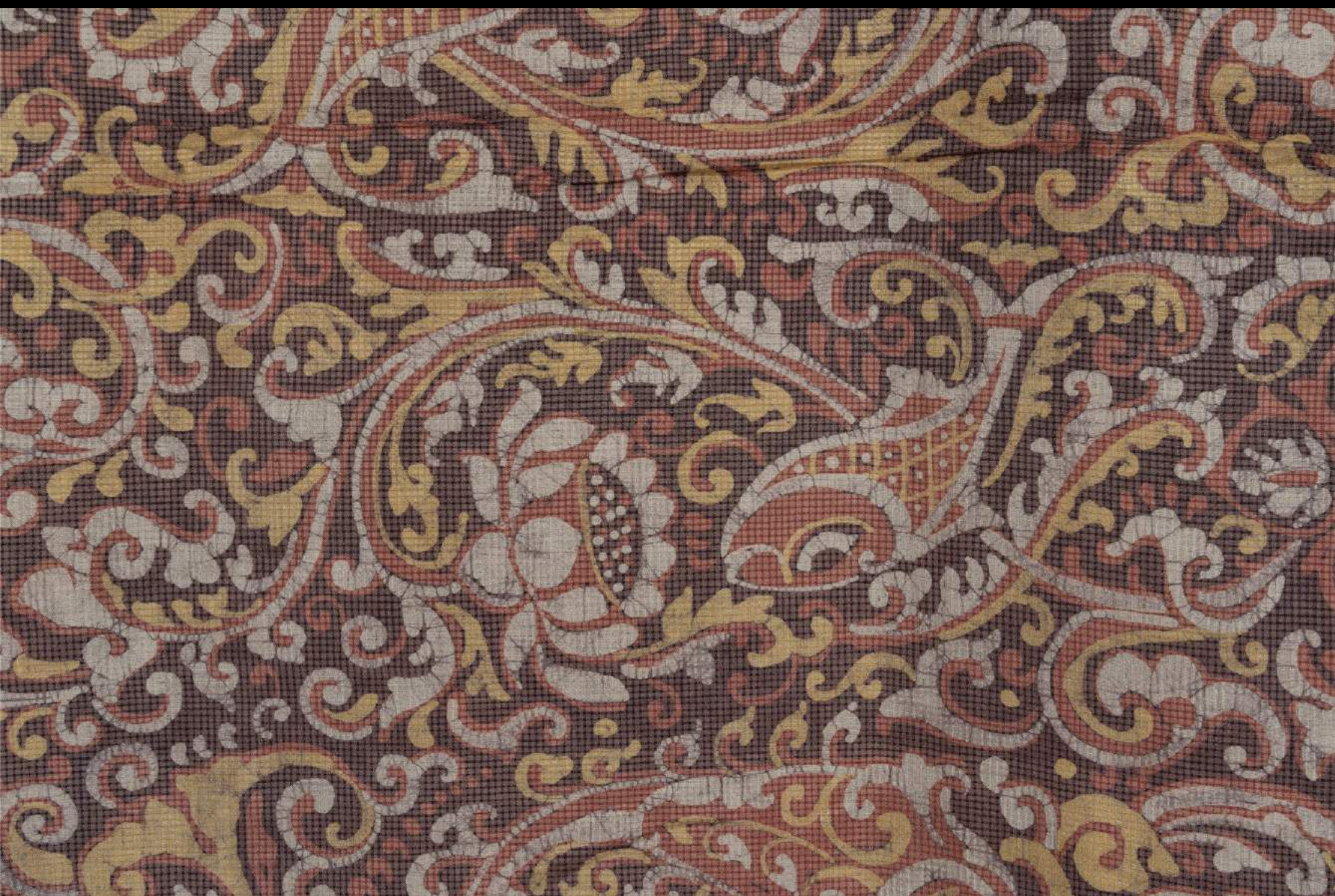
Fig.4.7 : Nilambari Sari, Cotton, West Bengal, 20th century CE, CSMVS Acc. No. 2016.70

Fig.4.8 : Jamdani Sari
Cotton, Dhaka, Bangladesh
Early 20th century CE
Gift of Bansi Mehta
from his wife
Sushila Asher's Collection
Acc. No. 97.12/1

Fig.4.9 : Batik Saree, Silk
Shantiniketan, West Bengal
20th century CE
Gift of Kalpana Desai
CSMVS Acc. No. 2017.18

◀

▼ Fig.4.10 : Detail of Fig.4.9



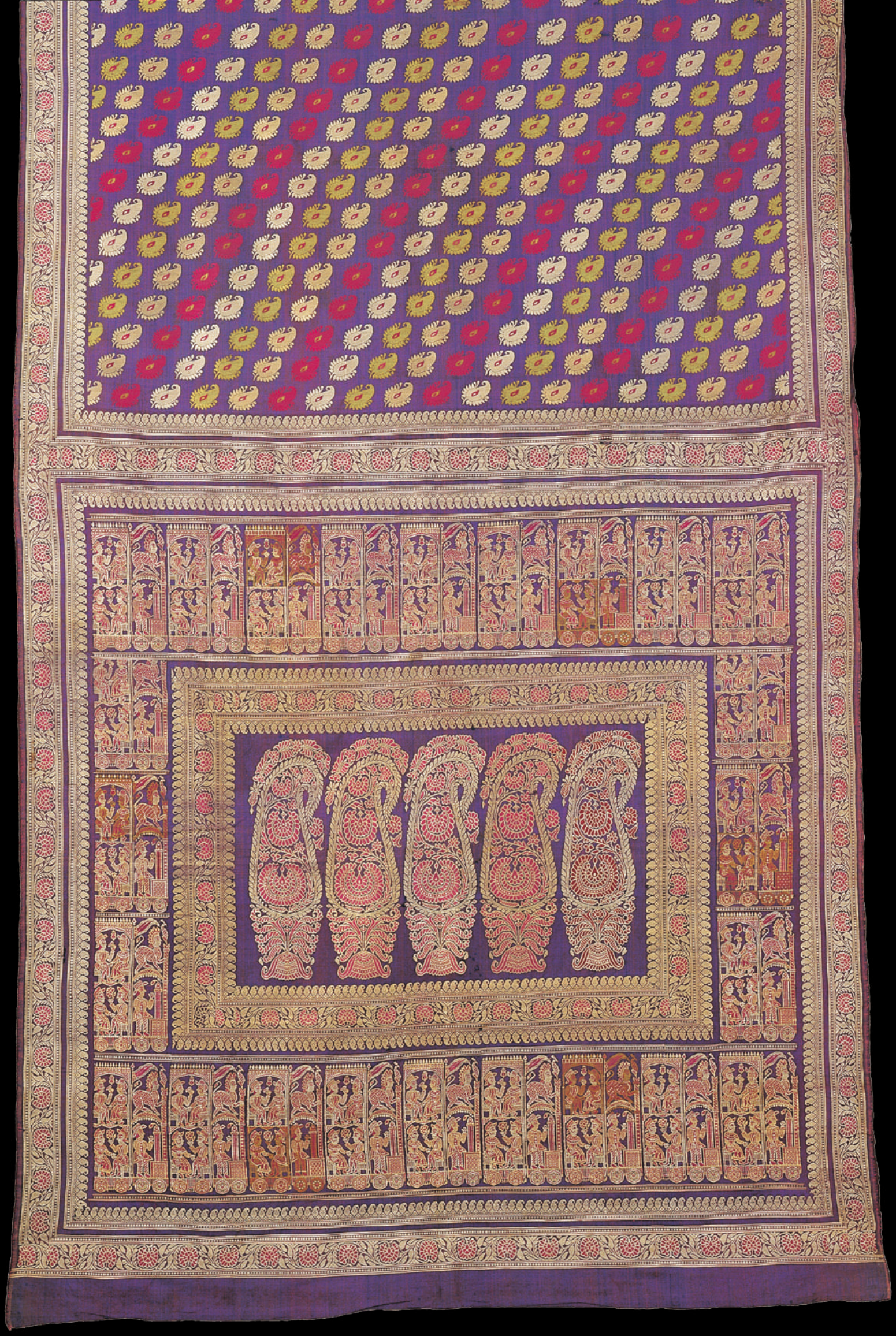


Fig.4.12 : Baluchari sari, Silk
Baluchar, Murshidabad District, West Bengal
Early 20th century CE, CSMVS Acc. No. 79.93/1

Fig.4.13 : Bishnupuri Sari, Silk
Bishnupur, Bankura District, West Bengal
20th century CE
Gift of Anita Garware
CSMVS Acc. No. 2016.75

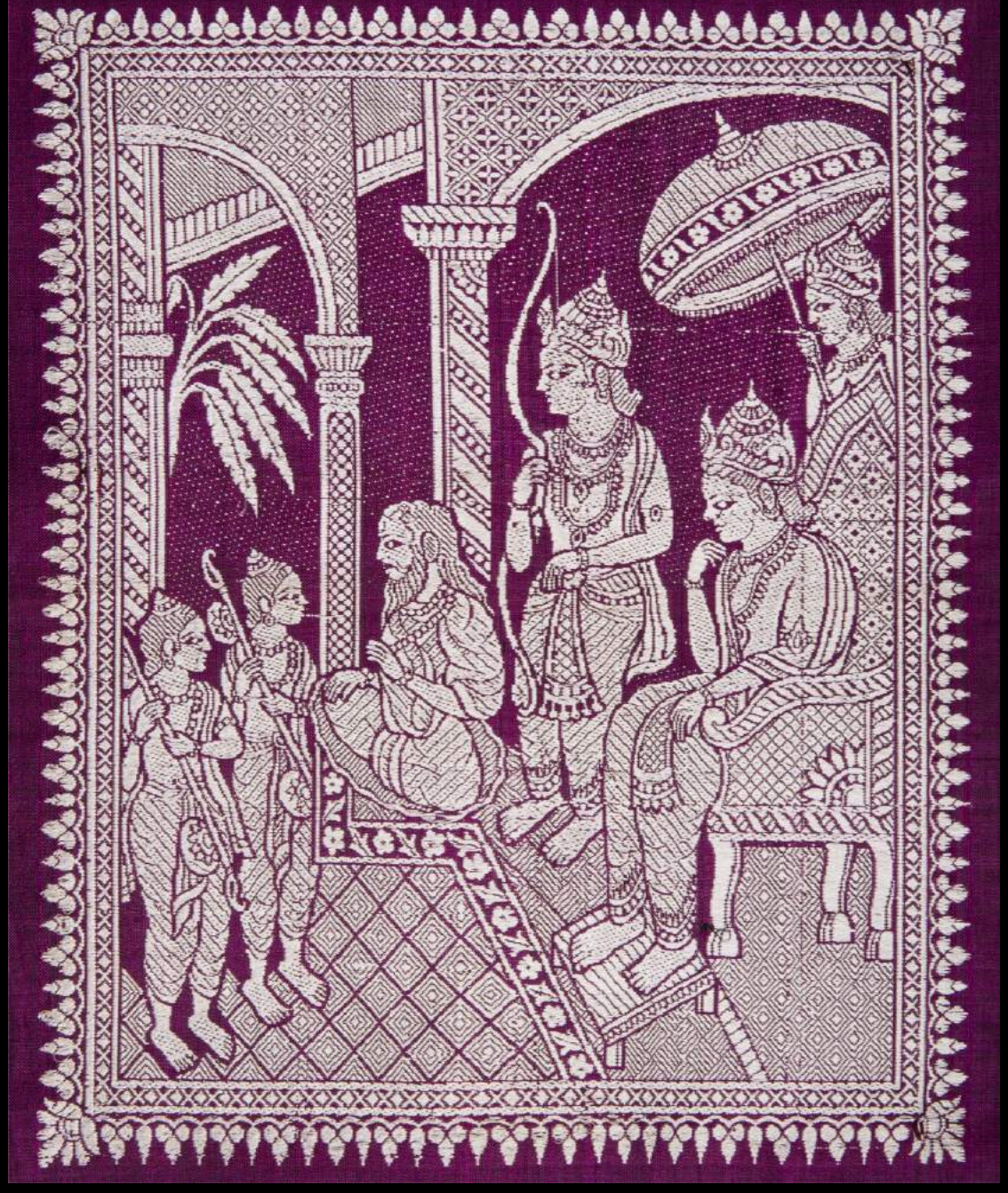


Fig.4.14 : Detail of Fig.4.13

Figs.4.15-4.16 : Designs for batik
Water colour on paper
Shantiniketan, West Bengal
Early 20th century CE
Gift of Kalpana Desai
CSMVS Acc. No. 2019.28

Fig.4.4 : *Mulmul* yardage, Cotton
Dhaka, Bangladesh
Early 19th century CE
CSMVS Acc No. 96.1/1

Fig.4.5 : Detail of Fig.4.4

Fig.4.11 : Batik sari, Silk
Shantiniketan, West Bengal
Designed by Nandalal Bose
1935-1939 CE
Gift of Bansi Mehta
from his wife
Sushila Asher's collection
CSMVS Acc. No. 97.12/2

Fig.4.17 : Photograph of Sushila Asher wearing batik sari designed by Nandalal Bose

borders and matching ornamentation in the area of pleats.

The *batik* sari designed by Nandalal Bose belonged to Sushila Asher, a student of Santiniketan. She wore it while performing the famous dance-drama *Shyama* and *Natir Puja* in 1940, in the presence of Gurudev Tagore[5&6], Fig.4.17. The Museum has received additionally, several photographs and relatable drawings from Santiniketan, Figs.4.15 & 4.16, as gift through Dr. Kalpana Desai.

Out of seventeen *Baluchari* saris in CSMVS, three saris carry the weaver's signature. There is one inscribed with the name of the master weaver Dubraj Das (died in 1903), and two others have the name of Yajneshwar Kar,[7] who perhaps worked closely with Dubraj Das. An exquisite off-white *Baluchari* sari, Figs.4.18 & 4.19, has the name of Yajneshwar Kar of Ramtanugram woven with the design weft of the same hue at the concluding end of the *pallu*. A sari, Fig.4.20, belonging to Jnanadanandini Devi (1850-1941), wife of Satyendranath Tagore (1842-1923), elder brother of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, is a classic example of mid-19th century figural *Baluchari*. She contributed uniquely towards conceptualizing the costume of Indian women keeping in mind a progressive and modern India. A sari-draping style with a blouse and petticoat against the traditional Bengali style of wearing the sari without a blouse and petticoat was, certainly, her remarkable innovation. Jnanadanandini Devi improvised with the Parsi style of draping *pallu* over the right shoulder and created her own style of draping the *pallu* over the left shoulder, setting free the right hand. She developed this draping style while staying in Bombay with her husband Satyendranath Tagore, the first Indian to join the Indian Civil Service. She had to invent this particular style as she had to attend several social gatherings with her husband, and, eventually, this style of draping was called "Bombay style" in Tagore family and others called it "the sari-wearing style of the Tagore family". It was also called *brahmika* sari as it was the style widely followed by ladies belonging to the Brahmo Samaj.[8] Later on, Jnanadanandini Devi introduced frontal pleats in draping the sari which is largely followed by Indian women today.

The sari, Fig.4.20, with imposing paisleys and depiction of steam-engine train seems to be a prized possession of Jnanadanandini Devi and was passed on in the family as heirloom. It reveals a high level of craftsmanship and is a typical example of a *Baluchari* sari with depictions of Europeans. She gifted this sari to her daughter-in-law Sangya Devi, wife of Surendranath Tagore (1872-1940). Later in

Fig.4.18 : *Baluchari* sari, Silk
Woven by Sri Yajneshwar Kar Gra
Ramtenugram (Ramtanugram), Baluchar
Murshidabad District, West Bengal
Early 20th century CE
School of Art collection
CSMVS Acc. No. 28.6112

Fig.4.19 : Weaver's signature
(detail of Fig.18)

Fig.4.20 : Baluchari sari
belonging to Jnanadanandini Devi
Silk, Baluchar
Murshidabad District, West Bengal
Mid-19th century CE
CSMVS Acc. No. 2008.370

1927, Sangya Devi gifted it to her daughter Jayashree Sen (nee Tagore) during her wedding. Jayashree was married to Kulaprasad Sen. Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore was the *acharya* for this wedding. The Museum acquired this sari from Haimantee Dattagupta, the daughter of Jayashree Sen, who was presented this sari at her wedding in 1963.[9]

The varied range of Indian textiles have journeyed a long way-from their status as articles of clothing, as furnishing for the court and temple, and as canvas of art, and, also, a medium of expression and livelihood for artisans and weavers. As the time passed by, these fascinating textiles became a veritable source of information, unravelling lesser known aspects of cultural history.

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Image Courtesy

Trustees, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai

MANISHA NENE is the Director (Galleries & General Administration) at the CSMVS, Mumbai. Working since 1989, she is responsible for the management of the entire collection at the CSMVS. She has curated several exhibitions and co-curated several galleries in the Museum, The Indian Textile and Costume Gallery and Himalayan Art Gallery being the most recent. She curated, From Temple to Home – Celebrating Ganesha, at the British Museum. She contributed entries on textiles, Indian decorative arts, Indian arms in *Jewels on the Crescent – Masterpieces of CSMVS, East Meets West – A selection of Asian and European Art from the Tata Collection in CSMVS*. Recently, she has contributed an article on *Balucharis* from CSMVS in *Baluchars – The Woven Narrative Silks of Bengal*, ed. Jasleen Dhamija. She is also the creative advisor for the 13 Educational DVDs produced by CSMVS based on the collection of the museum. *csmvsmumbai@gmail.com*

5 Salvation through Art: Jaina Paintings on Cloth

Sujata Parsai

Pigment-painted scrolls and hangings, known as *pata, chitrapata*, and *pata-chitra*, have a pan-Indian origin, traceable since ancient times. Jaina *patas/vastra-patas* were made primarily in Gujarat and Rajasthan. We have literary references to the use of these ceremonial artefacts from as early as 2nd century CE, although the earliest surviving examples are datable to the 14th-15th centuries. When studied side by side with Jaina manuscript paintings, one would notice that the *patas* share a close resemblance to the regional pictorial style, best exemplified in the protruding second eye added to a face in profile, bold outlines in black and a generous use of red, yellow and indigo for the colour schemes. The *patas* have an important social and religious significance for Jainas, amongst both, the monks and laity. As Jainism teaches to control and perfect one's destiny through asceticism and ritual practice, metaphysical knowledge, and ethical conduct, these *patas* served as external aids to facilitate the spiritual wisdom.

Jaina *patas* can be divided into two major categories, *Tantric* and Non-*Tantric*. *Tantric patas* have sacred words or mantras inscribed on them to meditate on, while others with complex diagrams known as *yantras,* are used for the physical emancipation of the self. Each *pata* is identified by the symbol or syllable, like *om, hrhim, krim,* etc. Monks are ceremoniously presented with specific *patas* when they graduate into the role of *acharya* or high-ranking preceptor of a Jaina order.

The Non-Tantric category is more like *chitrapatas,* and has no use in *tantric* rituals. Examples of these are: *Tirtha Pata:* large pilgrimage maps used in temples for community viewing, *Lok-purusha pata* and *Adhidvipa pata*: figurative representations of Jaina cosmology, narrative banners, *Vijnyapti-patras* or letters of invitation, and game boards for the *Gyan-bajis* that teach spiritual values.

Tantric *Patas*: The *mantra-patas* come in great variety. All Indian religious practices involve the chanting of sacred words in the form of a *mantra,* a formula of words and sounds possessing divine power. The visual representation of the *mantra* as a mystical diagram full of occult power is called *yantra*. The *mantra-patas* are highly complex diagrams used for performing rites and rituals and serve as aids in meditation. They represent various deities and have specific purposes for their

Fig.5.5 : *Lokapurusha,* Bikaner, Rajasthan
dated VS 1795 = 1852 CE
opaque watercolour on cotton
182.3 x 121.1 cm, LD Museum
Ahmedabad, Acc.No. LDM.2014.1

worship. Mostly used and carried around by monks, occasionally some *mantra-patas* are also used in domestic shrines.

The *Hrhim-Mantra-Pata,* Fig.5.1, an early 15th century example, represents the *tantric* genre. It's worn-out condition is due to it being folded and carried around. At the centre of the *pata* we see three and a half circles, with the letter *hrhim* on top and *krim* at the bottom. Inside the circle is a geometrically drawn six-pointed star. The three syllables, *OM HRHIM KRIM* are overlaid one above the other. *Hrhim* is believed to be the most powerful *mantra* for reaching higher states of consciousness and illuminating higher wisdom. It can be recited on its own, or in conjunction with other *mantras*.

The *Vardhamana-Vidya-Mantra-Pata,* Fig.5.2, symbolizes the *mantra Vardhaman-vidya*. It begins with the syllables of *Om* and *Hrhim*. According to one 14th-century Jaina ritual text, the *Vardhamana-vidya-pata* was traditionally bestowed to a monk at the end of the ceremony by which he was elevated to the position of *acharya*. The *mantra* and *pata* together served as instruments to stimulate the mind and soul of the practitioner during meditation. A prayer using this *mantra* invokes powerful energy. This *mantra* can be used for different purposes: for general welfare, conquest of death, and to grant all wishes. Most striking about this *pata* is the profusion of calligraphy which includes *mantras* and instructions regarding ritualistic usage. It is also dated, by an inscription on the uppermost band to the right, to 1475 CE. The *pata* was consecrated by Shri Vijayaraja, the disciple of Shri Rajatilaka Suri. Symmetry and order are strong visual features of this *mandala*. All the common geometrical shapes of *yantras* are found here, the triangles, circles and squares. The focal point here is the figure of Mahavira enthroned in the syllable *Hrhim*, enclosed by the intersecting triangles that form a six-pointed star. In the language of *yantras,* the triangles signify the male and female energies.

Monks who worship the *Suri-mantra-pata,* Fig.5.3, seek to emulate Indrabhuti Gautama, the foremost disciple of Mahavira, who is an emblematic figure both as a disciple and teacher. Gautama is usually shown seated at the centre on a fully bloomed lotus. The *pata* is used for recitation of *mantras* and for meditation or worship when monks are initiated into the higher grades of religious hierarchy.

The *Siddha-chakra Yantra,* Fig.5.4, is considered the most auspicious and versatile mystical diagram in the Jaina religion, and therefore most revered. *Siddha* means "perfected ones" and *chakra* means "the cycle of *karmic* bondage". *Yantra* stands for a mystical diagram. When one worships the *Siddha-chakra Yantra,* one's soul becomes liberated from *karmic* bondage. Monks and laity both use this *yantra* for daily worship. The remarkable beneficial results occurring when rituals are performed with full devotion to the *Siddha-chakra Yantra* worship were first described in the text, *Sripala-katha* complied in 1362, written in *Ardha-Magadhi* language. Later, this account was repeated in the Gujarati ballard of *Sripala Rasa* composed in 1738 CE, popular amongst the Svetambara Jainas of modern Gujarat. As the points of focus in this *yantra* are the nine *padas* or virtues of a person, it symbolizes the very essence of the Jaina faith, and thus acquired great sanctity and popularity amongst believers.

Knowledge on the usage of the *mantra-patas* was paramount. The diagrammatic *yantras* centred on a single point upon which meditative concentration was gradually made, an absolute necessity for meditative progress. The aim of this meditation was to achieve eternal bliss, be it individual or for the mass.

Fig.5.1 : *Hrhim-Mantra-Pata,* Western India, c.15th century, opaque watercolour on cotton, 28 x 28 cm, LD Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad, Acc.No. LDII.Ga-2

***Lokapurusha Pata* :** The image of the cosmos in the shape of a human being forms a favourite subject in Jaina cloth painting. Although using the human body as analogy of the cosmos is not unique to Jainism, here the theme is developed to an advanced level of complexity. Ancient commentaries regarding the cosmos are found in various Jaina scriptures, most particularly in the *Sangrahani Sutra* (1136) by Sri Chandrasuri.

In the diagram, Fig.5.5, the cosmological scheme is superimposed on the human body, to merge the universal macrocosm and human microcosm. The human figure is divided hierarchically into the three cosmological realms, the upper world *Urdhva-loka*, middle world *Madhya-loka*, and lower world

Adho-loka. The upper realms, chest and head, are occupied by gods and enlightened beings, where blissful escape can be achieved. The navel and below, are the seven levels of *naraka* or hell where eternal punishment of graded degrees is inflicted. The middle world, shaped as a disc on the abdomen, represents Jambudvipa with human and animal populations. Jambudvipa has the mythical mount Meru at the centre, from which radiate the continents, oceans and rivers. This small section is the only place where humans live and may achieve liberation. Being born as a human being has a great significance in the Jaina path of spirituality, for it affords the best opportunity to follow the teachings and achieve liberation. It is believed that good deeds lighten the soul and allow it to ascend into the higher worlds, while bad deeds accumulate negative karma which weighs down the soul making it sink into the lower lands of hell. Jaina texts of all periods include vast detail regarding the cosmos. Names of the places, mountains and oceans, rivers and cities are mentioned, along with numbers giving their

Fig.5.2 : Vardhamana *Vidya-Mantra-Pata,* Western India, dated VS 1532 = 1475 CE
opaque watercolour on cotton, 50 x 52 cm, LD Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad, Acc. No. LDII.Ga-10

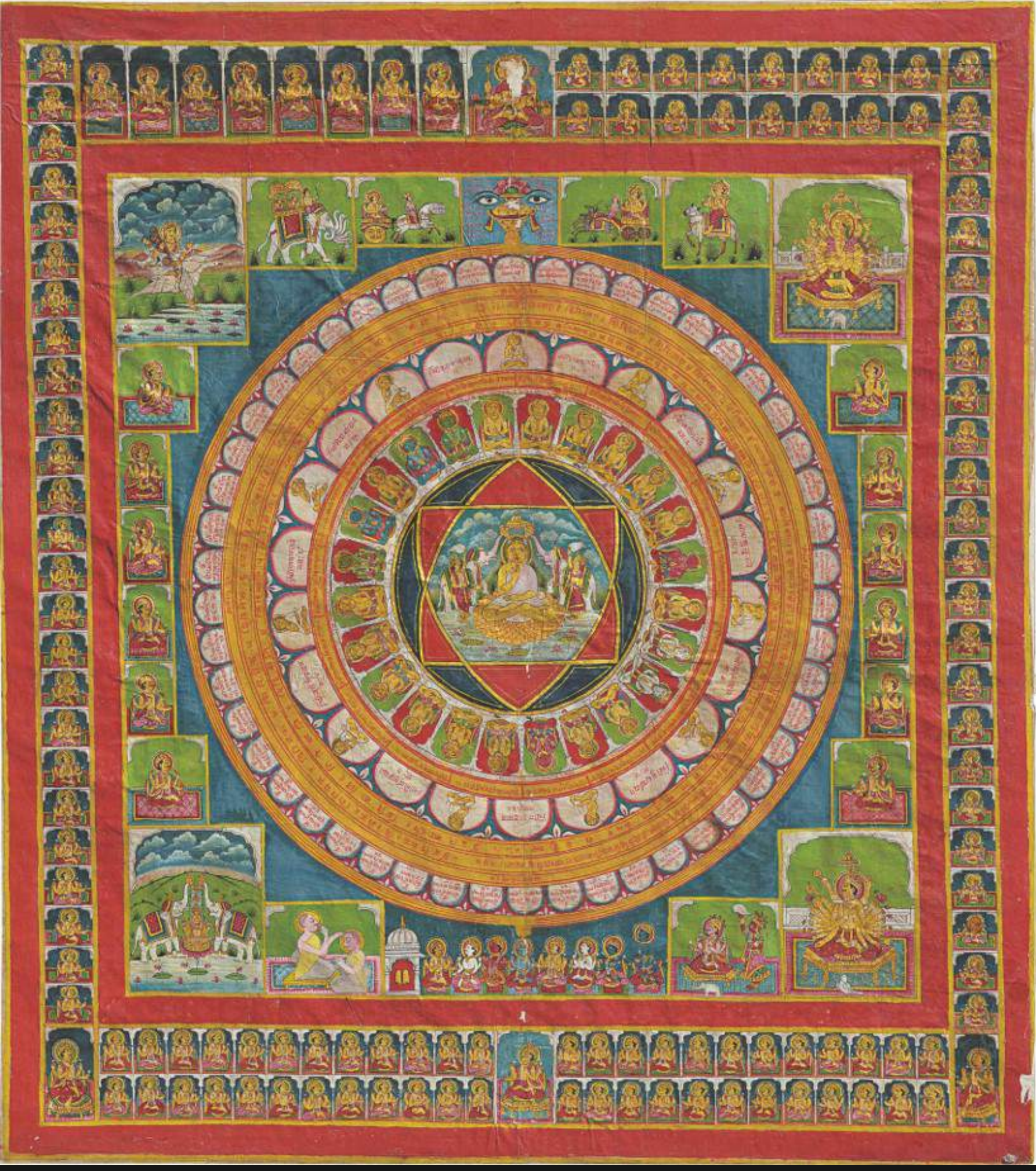

Fig.5.3 : *Suri-Mantra-Pata*, Rajasthan
perhaps Jaipur, c.1850 CE
opaque watercolour and emulsified gold
on cotton, 108 x 96 cm
LD Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad
Acc. No. LDII.Go-1

Fig.5.4 : *Siddha-chakra Yantra*
Western India or Rajasthan(?)
early 19th century, opaque watercolour and gold on cotton
78 x 72 cm, LD Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad
Acc. No. LDII.Go-6

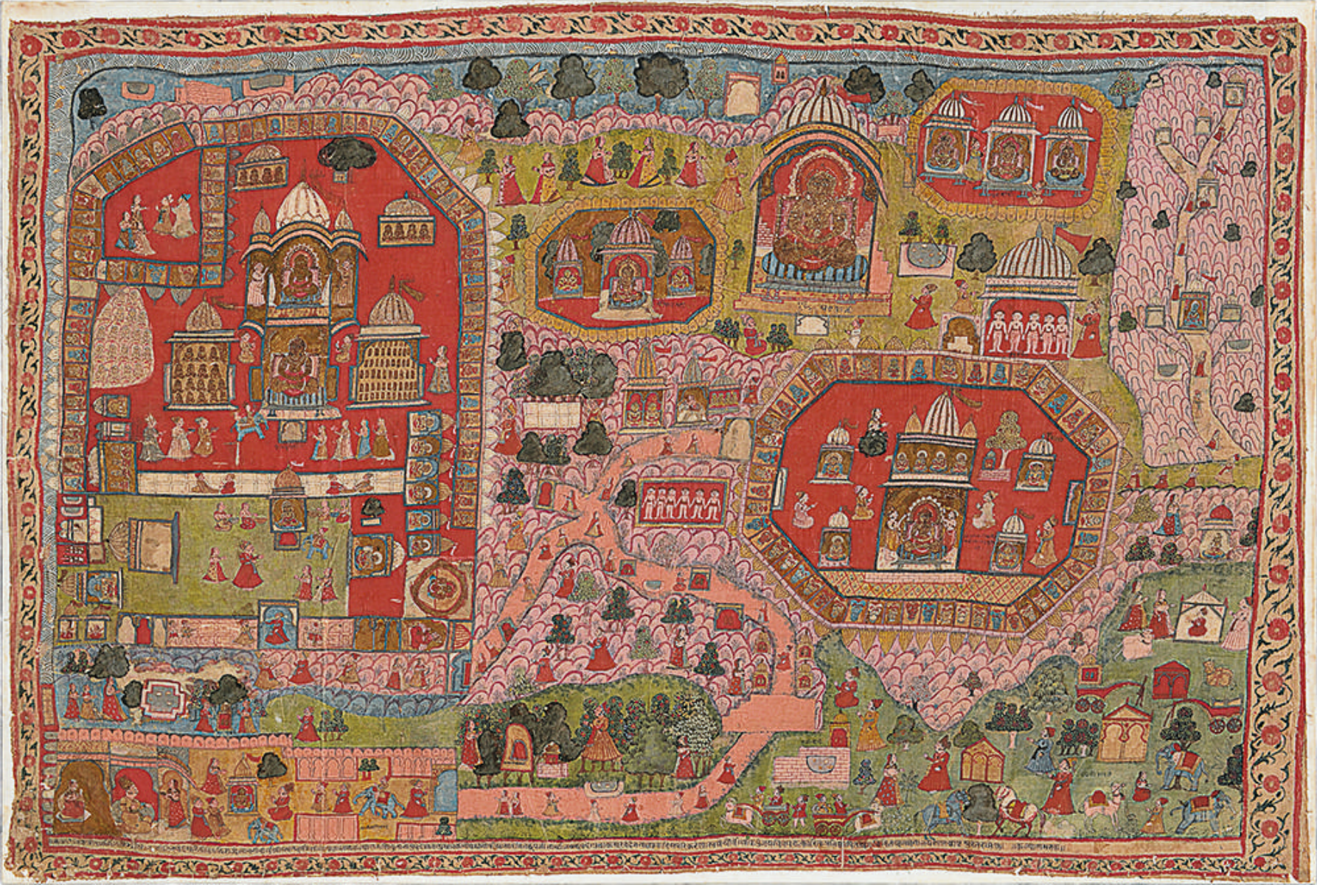

Fig.5.6 : Shatrunjaya *Pata*, Bikaner, Rajasthan, dated VS 1849 = 1792 CE
opaque watercolour on cotton, 113 x 169.5 cm, LD Museum, Ahmedabad, Acc. No. LDM.1984.1

dimensions. The mathematics of Jaina sacred geography is vast and intricate. The *Lokapurusha* diagrams allowed the meditator to grasp the vast scale of the universe, and possible passage of the human soul depending upon *karmic* deeds.

***Tirtha Patas* or Pilgrimage Maps:** Alike the Buddhists and Hindus, the Jainas attach great importance to pilgimages offering immense opportunity for the Jaina laity to gain spiritual merit. Most Jaina holy sites are linked to an important event in the life of *Tirthankaras,* or even that of a Jaina ascetic. Great significance was placed on the five auspicious moments in the life of a *Tirthankara/Jina,* known as the *Pancha-kalyanaka*. These are his conception *(garbha),* birth *(janma),* renunciation *(diksha)* and his attainment of omniscience *(kevala jnana)* being the most significant, and, finally, his full spiritual deliverance at death *(nirvana, moksha)*. The place of final liberation of a *Jina* is referred to as *siddha-kshetra* and is of highest religious importance. It became customary for the pious donors to build temples at those sites to define and shape the sacred landscape. Jaina pilgrimage centres are stationed throughout India. Nonetheless, Mount Shatrunjaya and Girnar Hill in Gujarat, Mount Abu in Rajasthan, Samved Shikar in Bihar are of great importance.

Shatrunjaya *Pata*: Shatrunjaya is a hill located in the town of Palitana, Gujarat, Fig.5.6. It is the most important of all Jaina pilgrimage sites, and is associated with Adinatha, the first Jaina *Tirthankara*. For the devout Jainas, a visit to Palitana, Shatrunjaya is an aspiration of the lifetime. But Jainas have an alternative for the less fortunate laypeople, who are unable to make the pilgrimage, a surrogate in the form of a topographical painting of the sanctified site. This serves the same purpose. Every year, on

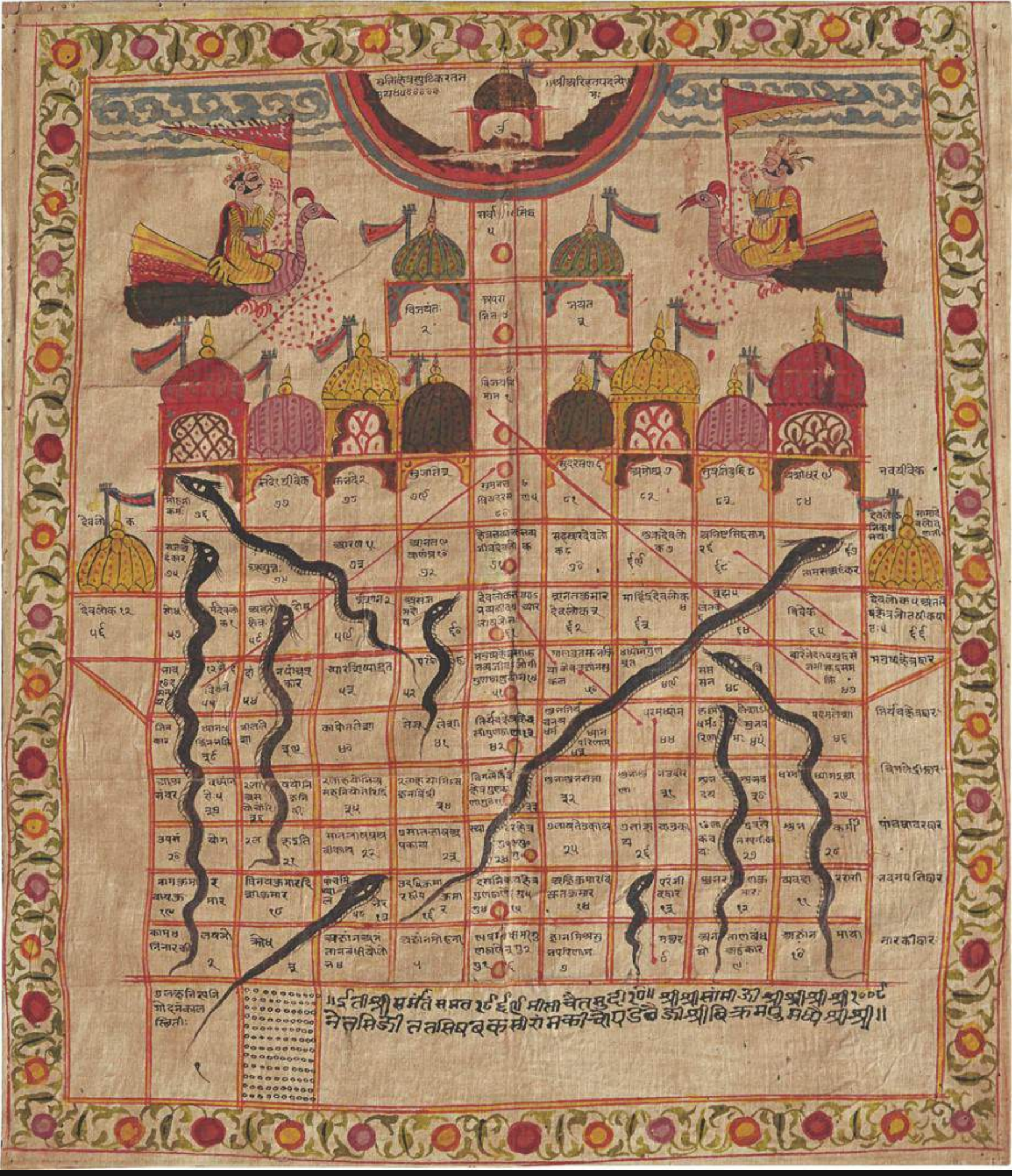

Fig.5.7 : *Gyan Chaupad*
Western India or Rajasthan(?)
dated VS 1869 = 1832 CE
opaque watercolour on cotton, 57 x 48.7 cm
LD Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad, Acc. No. LDII.GOL.20

auspicious days, such pilgrimage *patas* or *tirtha-avatara*, "shrine incarnations", are hung in the vicinity of a temple, for devotees to worship. *Tirtha patas* are some of the largest Indian paintings to have survived. One such elaborately rendered Shatrunjaya *pata*, Fig.5.6, is a visual map of the pilgrimage site, showing the important temples and landmarks. On the upper right top, Mount Girnar is shown, an unusual depiction to see both the sacred mountains in one single depiction.

***Gyan-chaupad*:** Although later turned into the popular game of snakes and ladders, *gyan-chaupad* or *gyanbaji* is a reminder of the ultimate goal of human beings, and also shows the steps to its attainment. This has Hindu, Muslim, and Jaina versions, and played universally in India since ancient times. The *pata*, Fig.5.7, is a fine example of the Jaina version. The checkered board of 84 numbered squares represents the progress of one's life. Each square has notings pointing out rules of conduct and their good and bad results. Ladders or arrows denote the good behaviours that elevate the player to a higher level, while the snakes drag to the downfall. The pavilion on the top represents the heaven. On its summit is the crescent shaped *siddha-shila* flanked by peacocks, where liberated ones reside.

The Technique

In executing a *pata* the most important aspect is the correctness of the rendering, that influenced the potency of the *mantra*. Thus, *patas* were made either by the Jaina ascetics, *yati*, or by the professional painters, *Mathen*. The *mantra-patas* housed at the LD Museum have been attributed to Patan, the ancient capital of Gujarat and a centre of Jaina patronage. Finely woven cotton is primed, dried, following which the surface is burnished with agate, to make it smooth and suitable for drawing and colour application. The red used is vermilion, and the blue is lapis lazuli. At the same time, gold and silver have been lavishly used. Finally, the writing of the symbols, *mantraksharas*, is done, using lamp black or red. *Patas* have *nandyavarta* or *svastika* symbol drawn on the reverse, to mark them as sacred artefacts of the sect.

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SUJATA PARSAI, a museum professional, art historian and educator, has a varied experience with museum collections, exhibition planning and coordination, conducting workshops and educational programmes, and research in textile history. She has been visiting faculty to numerous institutions, like NIFT, Irwin College, IGNCA, NMI, etc. She has served as the Museum and Exhibition Consultant at TAPI Collection, Surat; Programme Officer, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, and Head, Cultural Programmes, Flow India. She is currently the Director of the Lalbhai Dalpatbhai Museum, Ahmedabad. *sujataparsai@gmail.com*

Fig.6.5 : Episodes from the
legend of Lord Shiva
M. Kailasam, Srikalahasti, Andhra Pradesh
Kalamkari, contemporary, 208 x 273 cm

Fig.6.6 : The *Ramayana* Canopy
Srikalahasti, Andhra Pradesh
Kalamkari, 2002, 175 x 115 cm

6 *Ganga Duppatlu /Kalamkari* Temple-textiles Painted Pictorial Narratives on Cloth

Ritu Sethi

The extraordinary diversity of styles of the hand-painted, printed, wax-resist, mordant-dyed cotton textiles crafted in India, variously known as *Kalamkari*, chintz, *pintados, sitz* and *indiennes*, held sway over global textile trade from the 17th to the early 19th century.[1] Alongside their trading and production centres, dotted across the Coromandal coast and the hinterlands of the southern peninsular of India, there coexisted a tradition of hand-painted pictorial narratives on cotton cloth, the *Ganga Duppatlu*, depicting sacred Hindu epics and scriptures. These temple-textiles, though lesser known, and generically also termed as *Kalamkari*, were rendered on hand-woven cotton in much the same manner as their cosmopolitan cousins; though their content and imagery, the purpose they served and their clientele were very different.

This essay reflects on these temple-textiles, their decline and near extinction in the late 19th century, and revitalisation in the 1950s to their contemporary rendering, Figs.6.2, 6.3, 6.4 & 6.5.

Background

In ages of limited literacy, the portrayal of the intersections of religious canons through art had a long and enduring antiquity in India as is evident from the surviving stone reliefs on the gateways-railings of the stupas and Buddhist paintings in the rock-cut caves, datable between c. 3rd century BCE and 6th-7th century CE. The *Ganga Duppatlu* temple-textiles from India's southern peninsular were part of this continuum of didactic reinforcement of religious principles and dogmas through narrative pictorial aids.[2] Serving a largely ecclesiastical purpose, these unfolded narratives from the epic literature of Hinduism: the *Ramayana, Mahabharata* and *Bhagvata-Purana*, from regional ballads, and depicted sacred pilgrimage sites, among other narratives.

Invoking and enhancing the experience of sacred spaces, these temple-textiles were commissioned for religious and ceremonial purposes by Hindu temple chiefs and heads of the monastic centres, by rajas and wealthy *zamindars* (landlords).[3] Principally, these had been used as hangings in temples, as back-drops, as screens to create a sacred space, as canopies, door and window framings. The cylinder-shaped hangings, banners and flags were displayed on the processional chariots of the gods. Furthermore, they found commercial favour in the late 19th century Colonial Exhibitions in Britain ensuring "a ready sale when brought into notice at exhibitions".[4]

The narrations on these often-huge temple-textiles could extend to sizes up to 13x11 feet, though customarily episodic some covered events from across the entire chronicle.[5] Their depictions were usually formatted with a focus on a central square, rectangular or circular field, surrounded by registers or concentric bands containing the pictured narrative, Fig.6.6. Often vernacular commentaries and stanzas threaded the bands.[6] The visualisations followed canonical interpretations that dictated the manner of picturing the distinct attributes of major and minor divinities. The ritual grammar of portraiture is reflected in the stance, anatomical proportion and relative juxtapositions of figures in terms of commensurability. Their symbolic hand gestures, vehicle and other divine attributes, all followed the prescribed iconographic conventions. Even today, there is an immediate recognition of the divinities portrayed in these temple-textiles and a clear reading of the theme, as the tales remain as fresh

Fig.6.1 : Master artist J. Gurappa Chetty (1937-2021)
finalizing the outlines with *kalam* soaked
in iron mordant dye solution processed in fermented molasses

and relevant in the region, require no need for a mediator.

While their themes were quotidian, their place of purchase, markings on the textile and stylistic renderings offered up distinguishing evidence of their place of origin even though their place of acquisition varied. In 1880, George Birdwood, a key figure in the setting up of the Government Art Museum in Mumbai, typified the distinctiveness of Madurai temple-textiles as being rendered in only two colours, red and black, that were sometimes touched up in yellow.[7] Decades later, in 1902 George Watt, head of the Calcutta Industrial Museum, characterized the temple-textile from Salem as using paler colours: "more especially the lemon green, that takes the place of brilliant blue".[8] It is also interesting that the style and hand of the artist is recognizable as was the case of a *Ramayana* temple-cloth hanging acquired from the 1886 Indian and Colonial Exhibition in London, and now at the Victoria & Albert Museum. Its provenance listed as Kalahasti, with its artist/maker labelled as "unknown". On studying the hanging, J. Gurappa Chetty (1937-2021), Fig.6.1, himself one of the most distinguished masters of temple-textile cloth painting, identified the style and use of color as having been executed by the distinctive hand of his grandfather Neeli Gurappa.

The commonalty of content and style of the temple-textiles was in consonant with the rendering of mural-paintings in the region. Testaments to shared traditions can be traced in remnants of the painted ceilings and walls of temples, reflective of the narrative mode, stylistic nuances and schematic layout.[9] It can be conjectured that there was a shared ecclesiastical connection between the artists. As has been underlined by a brief mention in 1915, two artist brothers resided in the village of Gollapalaiyam, one of whom "executes frescoes on walls at Rajahmundry, and one of them paints on cloth".[10]

The location of these maker-artists was often in the vicinity of significant Hindu temples whose calendars regulated the rhythm of the ritual and social life of devotees, besides providing employment to a diverse range of artisans who settled in the nearby precincts.[11] Imperial gazetteers and other records reveal that production centres located in the Madras Presidency included the temple city of Madurai, centred around the Meenakshi Temple; Ponneri; Schikanaikanpet in Kumbakonam district with 188 Hindu temples in the region; Tiruchirappalli (formerly Trichinopoly also called Trichy); the major pilgrimage centres at Salem and Palakollu also known as Trilinga Desam defined by the Shiva lingas;

Nagapattinam, (present day Tamil Nadu); Kalahasti (now Srikalahasti) one of the five most sacred Shaivite places of worship, and Masulipatnam (now Machilipatnam); Gollapalem in the East Godavari ; Jammalamadugu, the site of the ancient Hindu-Vaishnavite temple - Sri Narapura Venkateswara Temple (now in present-day Andhra Pradesh) to the Manakula Vinayagar Temple in Pondicherry (now Puducherry).

Though the earliest surviving pieces date from the 17th century, it is more than probable that these temple-cloths were of an earlier antiquity and their complex production process were the precursors of the internationally traded *Kalamkaris*.[12] Quite like their cosmopolitan cousins, these ritual cloths exemplified a vibrant creativity, great mastery of free-hand drawing and dye-painting and the scientific knowledge of natural dye processes. In addition, the maker-artists were steeped in the Hindu scriptures, the vast assembly of characters and the iconographic conventions of image-making laid down in the *shilpa shastras*.

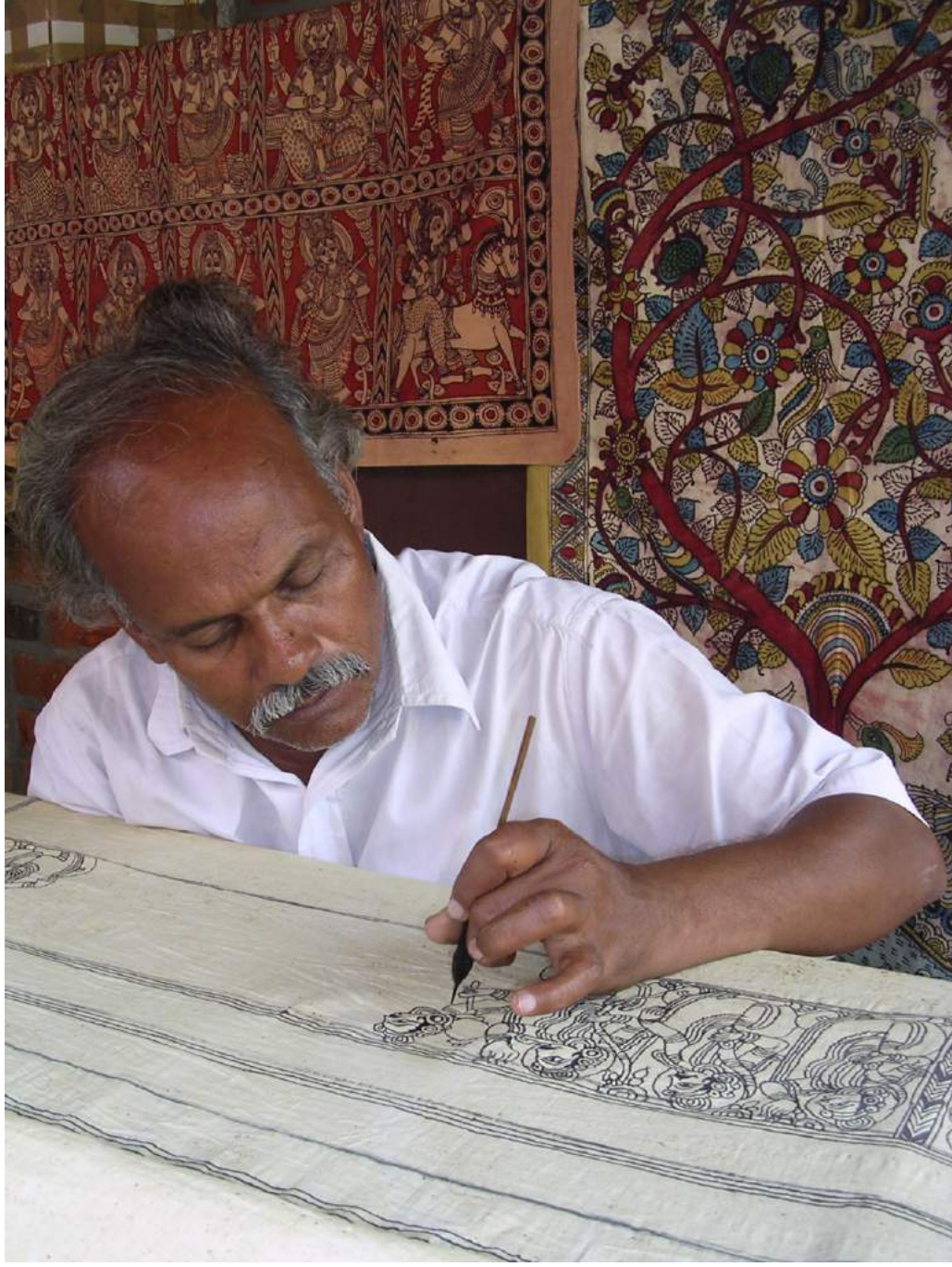

Fig.6.2 : Vijayakumar from Srikalahasti, *Kalamkari* craftsmen at Dakshinachitra adding the ink-drawn figural details, Image courtesy: Rekha Vijayashankar

Decline

Travelogues, colonial record keeping, exhibition catalogues and other writings offered only epigrammatic notings on temple-textiles. This could perhaps be ascribed to several reasons, one being the exigencies of trade that would have dictated a focussed documentation on goods that found a large market overseas. The other reason for this could have been the very rarity of readily-available pieces as it was probable that the temple-textiles were especially commissioned given the purpose they served and the time and effort involved in their production.[13] In 1884 Birdwood noted: "large quantities of the stained cloth . . . with mythological subjects taken from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata,* are made chiefly for the service of the temples". Elaborating further, he added that these pieces were "very rare to get, except by favour of the priests".[14]

It could also be conjectured that the scarcity of old pieces were due to the established Hindu custom of disposing worn-out or damaged sacred manuscripts, idols and other consecrated offerings including ceremonial textiles. Left under sacred trees, immersed in flowing waters or consigned to fire, or as in the case of some worn-out temple-cloths, converted into lamp-wicks that were lit during worship in the shrine.[15] And, as always, with the ravages of the climate only a few historical textile

Fig.6.3 : Tilak Reddy working at Dakshinachitra
during Tribal Art camp held from 14th to 20th Nov. 2019
Image courtesy: Rekha Vijayashankar

specimens survived the humidity and heat of India.

Barely had notice of the temple-textile emerged when its timing coincided with the deleterious decline in both the numbers of maker-artists and in the quality of work. The "conspicuous" decline was noted in 1908 when production was compared to earlier temple-textiles produced in 1886 and 1903, just a few years before.[16]Several reasons could be ascribed for this decline, some of which could be laid at the door of colonial intent as policies dictated in favour of the commercial interests of the rulers that advantaged imports from Britain. A rare account on an individual level of the impact of this policy on the maker-artists community of the temple-cloth was noted in 1897 by Edgar Thurston, Superintendent of the Madras Government Museum.[17] Presenting a gloomy picture, he wrote:

> The Kalahasti cotton fabric painters, whom I recently interviewed, were at first afraid of me, suspecting that I was a commercial traveller on behalf of some firm, and had come among them with the base object of annexing their patterns for reproduction by machinery in Europe. They complained bitterly that British manufacturers are now copying patterns, which they . . . had turned out for many generations . . . a piece with similar devices made at Kalahasti with vegetable dyes used to cost Rs.4 whereas the British imitation being machine-made with mineral dyes can be sold at Rs.2 . . . The demand for them has greatly declined in recent year owing to the importation of British printed cloths, which are used as a cheap substitute for them . . . and the workmen, who are very skilful artisans, cannot even earn four *annas* a day.[18]

This precipitous decline in earnings, and in custom, resulted in the falling numbers of master-artisans.

This was noted by E.B. Havell, Superintendent, Madras School of Art (1884-1894) who referred to the village of Pallakollu on his tour of inspection where "only one man and his family occasionally make this to order" while in Masaulipatnam and Salem the sacred hangings were made only "to a limited extent . . . the out-turn by the two families who make them is so limited that it is not easy to procure good specimens". By 1913 the tradition in Salem had died out and, by 1915, centres where formerly many families practiced only one or two and, in some cases, none continued their work. The few remaining maker-artists were in Jammalamadugu, Masulipatam, Sikkinayakanpet, Kumbakonam and Kalahasti.[19]

The Significance of Kalahasti

By the late 1940s, the practice had died out in all the centres except in Kalahasti where the knowledge remained alive though the temple-cloth was no longer produced.[20]Kalhasti, now renamed Srikalahasti, was renowned as a holy town that had grown organically around the ancient Sri Kalahastheeswara Swami Temple dedicated to Lord Shiva, the Hindu god of creation and destruction. This positioned it on the pilgrimage map as a standalone site, and on the ritualised pilgrimage circuit.[21] Its significance also lay in it being an important 19th-century centre for the production of temple-cloth with the mineral-rich river waters of Svarnamukhi rendering brightness and depth to the dyes. The flowing waters had been used in many stages of crafting the temple-cloth. The maker-artist community that resided here had received their patronage from the temples, from the Raja of Kalahasti, one of the powerful landlords of the erstwhile Madras Presidency, and from others who commissioned their work especially at the time of religious festivals for use as canopies, as draping on the chariot of the deities during their annual sacred processional circumambulation, and other uses.[22] The Raja himself being known to posses

Fig.6.4 : M. Viswanath Reddy working at Dakshinachitra during Tribal Art camp held from 14th to 20th Nov. 2019
image courtesy: Rekha Vijayashankar

magnificent temple-cloths costing "many hundreds of rupees" that were displayed on state occasions as well as being loaned to Colonial Exhibitions.[23] In addition, reports from 1888 and 1903 noted that the best temple-cloths were produced in Kalahasti and some of the pieces were commissioned or sourced for Colonial Exhibitions and sales.[24]

The dismal downturn that had decimated production in other places affected Kalahasti as well, and by the early 1940s, the few surviving maker-artists had taken up other professions.[25] Fortuitously in the late 1950s, soon after India's independence from Colonial rule, the All India Handicrafts Board, a government body charged with regenerating the sector, took pivotal steps to revive several endangered practices including that of temple-cloth making.

In 1958, a pilot production-cum-training centre was set up on the outskirts of Kalahasti. The oldest surviving maker-artists in Kalahasti, J. Lakshmaiah, then in his mid-50s, was persuaded to return to his hereditary profession, even though he had not practised it for more than a decade. Appointed as the Chief Artist, he taught all aspects of the making of temple-cloth to his son and initial six students, some of whom were from families with a tradition of temple-cloth making. Besides teaching, he re-started working on special commissioned pieces.[26] This was the beginning of the process of revitalising the practice and a continuation of the tradition.

About technique

In historic accounts of the technique, about 26 major and minor steps had been listed from start to finish with the cloth passing through several specialised artisanal processes. Each step in the technique is as fundamental to its processing as the other.[27] The contemporary process of creating the temple-cloth remains time consuming and complex, it varies from workshop to workshop as maker-artists have experimented and fine-tuned the technique to suit their needs.

The broad framework of the process followed starts with the first step of the choice of narrative to be depicted and its conceptualization, the layout details dependent on its eventual usage determine the size of the piece to be executed. Once determined, the cotton cloth, usually finely woven for the brush-pen to move smoothly and freely over its surface, is bleached and processed. The process involves the cleansing and softening of the cotton fibres to make it ready to absorb and accept the dyes and also ensure that the fine ink-drawn details do not blot or smudge the textile. This takes place over several days, with the cloth soaked and treated in a solution of buffalo milk, cow dung and powdered myrobalan *(Terminalia chebula),* a tropical fruit that contains tannins. The processing remains interspersed with repeated washing and sun drying.

When the cloth is prepared for the next stage, the maker-artists draws the subject free hand, using a charcoal 'pencil' of burnt tamarind tree sticks, to allow for easy edits. Once the design is perfected the outlines are inked in black made from an iron mordant dye solution that has been processed in fermented molasses. The areas earmarked for red are painted in with an alum mordant that helps fix the dye to the cloth. As alum itself is colourless, it tinted with a fugitive colour that renders the drawing visible but washes off easily.

The inking and line-work is painted in with specially made brush-pens, *kalam,* constructed with a variety of tips. Ingeniously crafted out of bamboo shoots; their flow of ink being regulated by a cotton cloth or coil of goat's hair or a strip of woollen blanket that is wound and fastened just above the tip. The squeezing of the cotton ball helps regulate the even-release of ink and prevents smudging, Figs.6.1 & 6.2.

After resting and allowing for the absorption of the alum mordant and black dye the cloth is then ready for immersion in the boiling alizarin dye vat. The iron mordant reacts to the tannin in the

myrobalam to deepen the black, while shades of red, maroon, browns are developed in areas treated with the alum mordant. Through closely held family dye recipes the depth of colour, and its range is achieved with repeated dips in the dye pot.

As the entire fabric has taken on a dull reddish hue after dying it is processed to remove the unwanted colour by immersing it overnight in a dunging solution, and then allowing for a natural bleaching in the sun, ensuring the cloth remains damp with frequent water-sprinkling. This process continues, sometimes for over a week, till the unwanted portions are bleached to white.

Dye recipes for yellow, shades of green and orange use a mix of powdered myrobalan, alum, dried pomegranate rind and other plant and mineral matters. Between each step the fabric is rested, washed in running water, sun-dried, to strengthen and deepen the colours. For blue, indigo is used. After this, the cloth is washed again in water, with special starches applied before it is finally ready for the finishing.

Breaks from the past

The practice of temple-cloth making has moved from being an almost extinct tradition to a resurgent robust practice. However, the "new avatar" had some striking changes from its traditional past. The first being the loss of the technique of wax-resist dyeing with indigo that provided a palette of shades and deep rich tones from pale to dark bluish-blacks. The process followed was described in detail in historic records wherein the melted wax was hand-painted on to the cloth with wire brushes. The waxed areas resisted the indigo dye and retained their colour. These wires were sized from the very fine and thin made-up of only one or two wires to create fine lines to the very large forming “something like a mop” to cover larger areas that resisted the indigo dye. Depending on detailing or broad coverage, the applied hot wax was allowed to soak through the cotton and the surface was ready for the multiple dips into cold indigo vat dye.[28] The loss of the waxing technique was noted in Kalahasti in 1915, more than a century ago, when the master-artisans faced with low-cost competition from machine-made temple-cloth abridged the process and substituted natural indigo with imported chemical blue dyes to reduce their prices. These dyes, then as now, were painted directly on to the cloth resulting in “the ruin of the colour of these once beautiful cloths”.[29] Despite the fact that natural dyes are now in use again, the master-artisans have not yet been able to make a breakthrough in reviving the wax-resist technique though experiments are being conducted. Similarly, it is more common to find the use of the synthetic compound Alizarin instead of the harder to source and more expensive Indian Madder *(Rubia cordifolia)* for shades of red.

One welcome change is that unlike in the past, as in many Indian textile traditions, where a veil was cast over the makers, and only a few names emerged either through signed pieces or mentions in exhibition catalogues, today they are no longer anonymous.[30] In fact, quite to the contrary: they have been recognised and lauded and presently over 18 maker-artisans have received the President's National Award. Women too are increasingly taking on the role of maker-artists shifting the gender balance considerably.

However, the major break has been the severed custom of making the cloth for the temples. While scenes from the epics continue to be painted, Fig.6.6, they are largely prized for their artistic rather than didactic values. The commissions received are now rarely, if ever, from the temples as the hieratic connection has been severed and the temple-cloths that were once "purchased more especially at the time of religious festivals" are now no longer commissioned.[31] In Srikalahasti while the sacred Rathotsavam, ceremonial chariot procession, celebrated for twelve days in February-March continues

its annual perambulation and is witnessed by many thousands of devotees the canopy cloth that covers the chariot of the *utsava-murtis,* processional idols, is no longer hand-painted. Only time will tell what the impact of this disconnect from the mother lode of inspiration and the *raison d'ętre* of the form that lay at the very heart of the Indian tradition.

References

1. One of the reasons for the many terms used to describe them was the trade in these textiles in global commerce, and their impact on fashion and design from the 17th c. onwards. *Kalamkari*: Hindi/Persian - The genesis of the term is literally pen-work; chintz: British; *pintado*: Portugese; *sitz* : Dutch; palampore: British, and *indiennes*: French.
2. Some of the other didactic pictorial religious traditions rendered on cotton textile in India include the following: The *Mata-ni-Pachedi* temple cloths of Gujarat that are painted in veneration of the mother-goddess who is worshipped by the Vaghari community. The technique used includes hand-painting, block-printing and mordant dying on cotton cloth. The *Phad* scroll paintings illustrate the deeds and events in the life of the folk hero-gods of Rajasthan. Unrolled to the accompaniment of music and story-recitation in all-night performances, these horizontal large format pictorials are pigment-painted on cotton cloth. The Nathdwara *Pichhvais,* pigment-painted cotton hangings, venerate and depict episodes from the life of Lord Krishna celebrated in the avatar of Shri Nathji. Further reading: Sethi, Ritu. *Painters, Poets, Performers – The Patuas of Bengal*, India Foundation of the Arts. 2018. Chapters 1-3.
3. Royalty and *Zamindars* from as further afield as Puri in Odisha in Eastern India commissioned the temple *Kalamkari's*. Two pieces from the Raja of Puri's collection, depicting scenes from the *Ramayan*, are inscribed with Oriya and Telugu scripts. They are on display at the Odisha State Museum. http://odishamuseum.nic.in/?q=node/100. Loan pieces of temple-textiles were also sent from personal collections to Colonial Exhibitions. These included two pieces from the Raja of Kalahasti that were loaned to the 1883 Calcutta Exhibition. *Official Report of the Calcutta Exhibition 1883-84* Vol. 2, p.204. The Raja of Pithapur, East Godavari, also loaned a piece to the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, London. While the Raja of Gollapalaiyam (now renamed Gollapalem), East Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh, loaned a piece to the Delhi Durbar Exhibition of 1911. *Madras District Gazetteer,* 1915.
4. Temple-textiles exhibited for sale included those at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition 1886, London, and the 1902-1903 Delhi Durbar Exhibition 1902-1903, amongst other exhibitions. *Imperial Gazetteer of India 1908: Kotchandpur to Mahavinayaka*, Vol.XVI, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, p.64. Wardle, Thomas. *Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886. Empire of India. Special Catalogue of Exhibits by the Government of India and Private Exhibitors*, Royal Commission and Government of India, Descriptive Catalogue, W. Clowis: London, pp.285-286. Thurston, Edgar. *Monograph on the Cotton Fabric Industry of the Madras Presidency*, *Journal of Indian Art and Industry*, 1897. Reprint. *Art in Industry through the Ages*, Vol.III, Monograph series on Madras Presidency, Navrang, New Delhi, 1982, p.39.
5. This 13 x 11 ft. temple-textile canopy painted with episodes from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* was exhibited at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition 1886, London. Wardle, Thomas, ibid., pp.285-286.
6. Tamil and Telegu were the quotidian scripts. However as noted above an Oriya language text in the Raja of Puri's collection with Oriya scripts is on display in the Odisha State Museum. http://odishamuseum.nic.in/?q=node/100.
7. Birdwood, George. *Industrial Arts of India*, Vol.II, 1884, p.342.
8. Watt, George, *Indian Art at Delhi, 1903. Being the official catalogue of the Delhi Exhibition, 1902-1903*, p.265.
9. This consonance of themes and pictorial depictions extended to other folk narrative visual traditions of the Deccan region. It includes the scrolls painted by the Nakashi artist caste that were commissioned by itinerant priest-performers who travelled from village to village reciting tales to the ritual showings of these scroll. The quotidian choice of themes was based on regional versions of the epics, creation myths and heroic deeds of local communities. Similarly, the leather shadow-puppeteers, *tholpava bommatala*, of Andhra also formed part of this ancient continuum. For further reading on mural arts of the period and region: C. Sivaramamurti, *South Indian Paintings*, Publication Division, Government of India, New Delhi, 1994; and Anna Lise Seastrand, *Praise, Politics, and Language: South Indian Murals, 1500-1800*, Doctoral Thesis. Columbia University 2013. https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/161444309.pdf.
10. Hemingway, F.R., *Madras District Gazetteers Godavari 1915,* SSDN Publishers & Distributors. New Delhi : 2014, p.106. It maybe of interest to recall here that the Raja of Gollapalaiyam was known to posses very fine temple-textiles that he had loaned to the Delhi Durbar Exhibition of 1911.
11. Sources of information for these production centres include: The Imperial Gazetteer 1908-09; Watt, George, *Indian Art in Delhi 1903. Being the official catalogue; Official Report of the Calcutta International Exhibition 1883-84* Vol 2; F.R. Hemingway *Madras District Gazetteer. Godavari1915*. Vol 1.; George Birdwood, *loc.cit., et al.* Similarly, the makers of the trade *Kalamkaris* were largely induced to reside and work in and around the port towns of the Coromandal coast and in areas that were easily accessible to traders. Further reading: Ramaswamy, Vijaya, *Textiles and Weavers in Medieval South India* Oxford University press. Delhi. 1985.
12. For a 17th c. - temple-textile see Guy, John and Karun Thaker, *Indian Cotton Textiles - Seven centuries of Chintz from the Karun Thaker Collection.* A *Ramayana* temple-cloth dated 1566, is in the Krishna Riboud collection at the Musee Guimet, Paris.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Collection_Krishna_Riboud#/media/File:%C3%89pisodes_Ramayana_1566.jpg in Paris.

13. Thurston, Edgar (1897), *op.cit.,* "on account of the tedious process of repeated boiling, two months are required for the preparation of each cloth", p.37.
14. Birdwood, George. *Industrial Arts of India,* Vol.II, p.342.
15. Vardarajan, Lotika, *South Indian Traditions of Kalamkari*, Ahmedabad, National Institute of Design, 1982, p.93. Footnote on the use of old temple painted-cloths at Airavatesvara Temple in Darasuram, Thanjavur.
16. *Imperial Gazetteer of India 1908: Kotchandpur to Mahavinayaka*. Vol.XVI, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, p.64.
17. From 1885 to 1908.
18. Thurston, Edgar, *op.cit.,* p.39.
19. Thurston, Edgar, *ibid.,* p.27, 39.
20. A single family continues the tradition of painted cloth in Sickkalnayakenpet in Kumbakonam, Tamil Nadu, though the style and subject is very different.
21. Located in the Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh, at a distance of 140 km from Chennai. Srikalahasti is regarded as one of the locations of one of the five most important and ancient temples of Southern India dedicated to the Lord Shiva. The temple here is a part of the five *Pancha Bhoota Stalam* temples. Each temple representing one of the five elements of nature: earth, water, wind, sky, and fire. The Sri Kalahastheeswara Swami Temple at Srikalahasti represents the wind element. Built during the reign of the Pallava Kings (3rd to 9thc.) and rebuilt in the 11th c. by the Chola King Kulothungava Chola (1070-1120 CE). In the 16thc. a huge hundred-pillared *mandapam* (hall) was added on by Sri Krishnadevaraya of the Vijayanagara dynasty.
22. Thurston, Edgar. *Provincial Geographies of India: The Madras Presidency, with Mysore, Coorg and the associated states.* Vol.I. *London*: 1913, Cambridge: University Press, p.255. The population of Kalahasti at this point was 11,992. A temple-cloth loaned by the Raja of Kalahasti was believed to be more than 100 years old. The piece was described as having a white ground with a patterning "entirely in soft but bright madder red, the spaces for the various scenes being richly canopied in foliage." Displayed over the door in the Loan Collection Gallery. Watt, George, *op.cit., 1902-1903*, p.265.
23. Thurston, Edgar, *op.cit.,* p.39.
24. Havell, E.B., *The Printed Cotton Industry of India. Journal of Indian Art,* Vol.II, No.19, London, 1888. Havell noted: "The best are produced at Kalahasti in North Arcot". This was reiterated in George Watt, 1903, p.262: "The most important centres for the production of Hindu canopies may be said to be Kalahastri (sic) in North Arcot." Temple-cloths provenanced from Kalahasti included those displayed at the 1883-84 Calcutta International Exhibition where the piece had been "procured in the local market", the Delhi Durbar exhibition of 1902-1903 where a temple-cloth from Kalhasti won a bronze medal, one illustrating scenes from the *Ramayana* was chosen for showing at the Indian and Colonial Exhibition in London in amongst other instances. *Official Report Of The Calcutta International Exhibition, 1883-84,* Vol.2. Bengal Secretariat Press, Calcutta: 1885, p.204. Watt, George, *op.cit., 1902-1903,* p.265. Displayed as ceiling cloths in the main transept of the Exhibition the piece was described as having "large bold patterns, the human forms being in brilliant blue and bright yellow with the background in dark claret colour." Watt, George, *op.cit.,* Awards for Division 32 - Painting and Waxing. Third Prize with bronze medal to Changalrayadu of Kalahastri (sic) for painted cloths, p.267.
25. *Census of India*, 1961, Volume II, *Andhra Pradesh,* Part VII-A (I) *Selected Crafts of Andhra Pradesh*. Census publication, p.40.
26. One of his *Ramayana* cloth paintings is in the collection of the Calico Museum of Textiles, Ahmadabad. Dated 1958 it is inscribed in English with the legend "Drawn by J. Lakshmaiah, Chief Artist, Pilot centre training school of Kalahasti". Length 256.7cm x 366 cm. Irwin, John and Margret Hall, *Indian Painted and Printed Fabrics*. Ahmedabad, 1971, pp.70-74.
27. For further readings: Baker. p.11. The 1742 process written by Father Gaston Couerdoux, a Jesuit missionary in Pondicherry p.18. Others who have described the process include Antoine de Beaulieu (1743), William Roxburgh (1795), Havell (1889), W.S. Hadaway (1917), Lotika Varadrajan (1982), Nelli Sethna (1985) amongst others.
28. Watt, George, *op.cit., 1902-1903*, p.230.
29. Hadaway, p.20.
30. George Watt, *op.cit.*
31. Thurston (1898) p.39. While memories of temple priests declaiming stories from the epics pointing to episodes on the painted temple-cloth that they held up for viewing are still talked about among the older generations. J. Lakshmaiah's son, J. Gurappa Chetty, remembers that till he was 13 years of age the temple priests continued to declaim stories from the epics pointing to episodes on the painted temple-cloth that they held up for viewing.

RITU SETHI Ph.D., is the editor of *Global InCH* International Journal of Living Heritage – www.globalinch.org in addition to overseeing *Asia InCH Encyclopaedia* on the heritage arts, textiles, and crafts of India and the wider South Asian region – www.asiainch.org. Ritu's research interests lie in examining the cultural history of textiles, arts and crafts, and their contemporary continuities and interpretations in design, fashion, and the everyday. *Embroidering Futures - Repurposing the Kantha; Designers Meet Artisans - A Practical Guide* (trans: Spanish and French); *Painters, Poets, Performers – The Patuas of Bengal; Handmade for the 21st Century – Safeguarding Traditional Indian Textiles* are some of her major publications. She is founder-trustee of the Craft Revival Trust, India,and Director, League of Artisans, UK, besides serving on advisory boards in India and overseas. r.sethi@craftrevival.org

7 Seventeenth-Eighteenth Century Painted-Printed Tent and Furnishing Fragments from Bharat Kala Bhavan

Priyanka Chandra

Patterned with hand-applied mordant-and-resist-dyed cotton fragments of tent and furnishings, belonging to the 17th-18th centuries, form an important group in the Textile Section of the Bharat Kala Bhavan (BKB) Museum, Varanasi. These fragments surfaced in the art market during mid-20th century and dealers often cut these into pieces and sold. Acquired by the museums in India and abroad, this entire lot, Figs.7.1-7.21, got dispersed. The twenty-one fragments in BKB and similar examples in National Museum, Calico Museum of Textiles, Baroda Museum and Victoria & Albert Museum, London, have been studied extensively by Rahul Jain.[1] His research has revealed all the details about these painted-cotton tentage, the elements of design and centre of production and Jaipur connection on the basis of palace inventory details.

Apart from these tentage fragments, there is a fairly big part of the canopy/floor cover with the so-called "Golconda Poppy", Fig.7.22, in BKB.

The present study aims at giving an account of the BKB fragments. On the basis of design motifs used, these textiles can be divided into five categories:

A. The twelve fragments with the Accession Numbers 3/6036, Fig.7.1; 3/6038, Fig.7.2; 3/6041, Fig.7.3; 3/6042, Fig.7.4; 3/6044, Fig.7.5;

B. 3/6045, Fig.7.6; 3/6048, Fig.7.7; 3/6049, Fig.7.8; 3/6051, Fig.7.9; 3/6052, Fig.7.10; 3/6053 Fig.7.11 and 3/6054, Fig.7.12 represent imaginary trees and flowers within niches. Each niche remains isolated while the area in between the arches had been filled with floral patterns in red-maroon on white ground. These niches are followed by a pattern of pillars indicating gateways or wall made of cloth. When such *qanats* were installed, they would give the impression of a palace interior far away from the palace.

C. Seven other fragments having the Accession Numbers 3/6037, Fig.7.13; 3/6039, Fig.7.14; 3/6040, Fig.7.15; 3/6043, Fig.7.16; 3/6046, Fig.7.17; 3/6047, Fig.7.18 and 3/6050, Fig.7.19, are thematically same but the flowering pattern depicted is totally different. The cotton panels were patterned using the *kalamkari* technique, whereby an artist drew designs on cotton with a *kalam* pen soaked with mordant. The lengthy process of dyeing-mordanting was repeated for each colour. Small details are then painted by hand on the cloth after the dyeing process was completed. The patterns on these fragments are very complex and elaborate, depicting a wide variety of flowers. One of the fragments with Accession Number 3/6044, Fig.7.5, belongs to a special category because this shows the floral pattern in rectangular frame. The central image is a big flower vase filled with a bouquet of flowers. The flowers in full bloom, buds and leafs are beautifully painted in various shades. A vase with handles is also added in the lower portion of the panel, filled with blossoms.

D. One example with the Accession Number 3/9934, Fig.7.20 is identified as the ceiling of the tent. This may have been also a floor-spread. It shows various flowers arranged in vase covering the field framed with a broad floral border.

E. One of the fragments, Accession Numbers 3/9933, Fig.7.21, depicts a scene showing birds in hunting moments. This fragment of tentage shows beautiful flora and fauna painted with red, maroon and yellow on dusty ground. The fragment shows a pair of three arched-structure, highly decorated with flowers and leafs. In the first arch two pairs of swan/flamingo(?) are seen on either side of a imaginary pattern. In the second arched-structure, two hunting scenes had been included within floral pattern. The blackbucks being attacked by giant birds is a rare motif used in the tentage.

◀ 7.3

This furnishing, Accession Number 10/302, Fig.7.22, is highly famous and identified as the so called "Golconda Poppy". The fragment of this furnishing can be seen in various museum collations like V&A Museum,[2] London; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Nasli & Alice Heeramaneck Collection; Brooklyn Museum & MET, New York; Indische Museum, Berlin; National Museum,[3] New Delhi and Calico Museum,[4] Ahmadabad. The BKB fragment had never been published earlier nor mentioned by any scholar. It is an archetypal Mughal design of a stylized poppy plant in staggered row.[5] In Mughal palace, fine "summer carpets" were used widely. The flower design of this immense floor-covering created an indoor garden for people sitting on the floor. The poppies are typical of the reign of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan (r.1628-1658), when naturalistic flower patterns were used widely, from manuscript borders to architecture. This piece was printed and dyed possibly at Burhanpur, Madhya Pradesh, around 1650. The series of alternate poppy plants appear upside down in the row in repetitive manner. Most of the scholars identified that the motifs had been block-printed but examined closely, it shows details of hand-painting with fine brush. The strokes can be clearly noticed above the flower, leaf and stem, pollen grains and filament. The brush strokes on the stem and leafs are also visible. The red color of flower petals and border on green (olive) are also shaded with comparatively darker tones with brush. Such shading is not possible in block printing.

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PRIYANKA CHANDRA, Ph.D., is working as Assistant Curator in Bharat Kala Bhavan, BHU since 2016. She has digitally documented entire Textile and Decorative Art Collection. She is specialized in Archaeology & Architecture and Collection Management in Museums. She has written books, research papers on concerned subject and the modules for Women Studies and Fine Arts under e-PG Pathshala Project of UGC. *priyankachandra@bhu.ac.in*

Figure Captions

Fig.7.1 : A flower vase within a cusped arch, tent panel *(qanat)*, Coromandel coast, South India, mid-17th century, cotton patterned with hand-drawn mordants and resist, 25696 cm, Acquired from A.K. Essajee, Mumbai, BKB, Acc. No. 3/6036

Fig.7.2 : Flower within arch, tent panel, Coromandel coast, mid-17th century, cotton patterned with hand-drawn resist and mordant, 33594 cm, Acquired from A.K. Essajee, Mumbai, BKB, Acc. No. 3/6038

Fig.7.3 : Flowers in vase under arches, tent panel, Coromandel coast, mid-17th century, cotton patterned with hand-drawn resist and mordant, 320191 cm, Acquired from A.K. Essajee, Mumbai, BKB, Acc. No. 3/6041

Fig.7.4 : Flower in vase within a cusped arch, tent panel, Coromandel coast, mid-17th century, cotton patterned with hand-drawn resist and mordant, 34297 cm, Acquired from A.K. Essajee, Mumbai, BKB, Acc. No. 3/6042

Fig.7.5 : Flower in vase, tent panel, Coromandel coast, mid-17th century, cotton patterned with hand-drawn resist and mordant, 290110 cm, Acquired from A.K. Essajee, Mumbai, BKB, Acc. No. 3/6044

Fig.7.6 : Flower vase within arches, tent panel, Coromandel coast, 17th century, cotton patterned with hand-drawn resist and mordant, 290110 cm, Acquired from A.K. Essajee, Mumbai, BKB, Acc. No. 3/6045

Fig.7.7 : Flowers in vase within arches, fragment of a *qanat*, Coromandel coast, 17th century, cotton patterned with hand-drawn resist and mordant, 321190 cm, Acquired from A.K. Essajee, Mumbai, BKB, Acc. No. 3/6048

Fig.7.8 : Imaginary trees under arches, fragment: circular ceiling of the tent, Coromandel coast, 17th century, cotton patterned with hand-drawn resist and mordant, 316315200 cm, Acquired from A.K. Essajee, Mumbai, BKB, Acc. No.3/6049

Fig.7.9 : Flowers set in vase, fragment: circular ceiling of the tent, Coromandel coast, 17th century, cotton patterned with hand-drawn resist and mordant, 31030622 cm, Acquired from A.K. Essajee, Mumbai, BKB, Acc. No. 3/6051

Fig.7.10 : Flowers in vase, fragment: circular ceiling of the tent, Coromandel coast, 17th century, cotton patterned with hand-drawn resist and mordant, 31619512.5 cm, Acquired from A.K. Essajee, Mumbai, BKB, Acc. No. 3/6052

Fig.7.11 : Vases of flower under arches, fragment of a tent, Coromandel coast, 17th century, cotton patterned with hand-drawn resist and mordant, 336180 cm, Acquired from A.K. Essajee, Mumbai, BKB, Acc. No. 3/6053

Fig.7.12 : Flowers in vase under arches, Fragment of a Tent, Coromandel coast, 17th century, cotton patterned with hand-drawn resist and mordant, 330180 cm, Acquired from A.K. Essajee, Mumbai, BKB, Acc. No. 3/6054

Fig.7.13 : Floral arabesque, fragment of a tent, Coromandel coast, 17th century, cotton patterned with hand-drawn resist and mordant, 285216193 cm, Acquired from A.K. Essajee, Mumbai, BKB, Acc. No. 3/6037

Fig.7.14 : Floral pattern within arches, fragment of a Tent, Coromandel coast, 17th century, cotton patterned with hand-drawn resist and mordant, 268206 cm, Acquired from A.K. Essajee, Mumbai, BKB, Acc. No. 3/6039

Fig.7.15 : Floral pattern within arches, fragment of a Tent, Coromandel coast, 17th century, cotton patterned with hand-drawn resist and mordant, 203153 cm, Acquired from A.K. Essajee, Mumbai, BKB, Acc. No. 3/6040

Fig.7.16 : Floral patterns within arched panels, fragment of a tent, Coromandel coast, c.17th century, cotton patterned with hand-drawn resist and mordant, 205152 cm, Acquired from A.K. Essajee, Mumbai, BKB, Acc. No. 3/6043

Fig.7.17 : Floral patterns, fragment of a tent, Coromandel coast, c.17th century, cotton patterned with hand-drawn resist and mordant, 225225300 cm, Acquired from A.K. Essajee, Mumbai, BKB, Acc. No. 3/6046

Fig.7.18 : Floral arabesque within arches, fragment of a tent, Coromandel coast, c.17th century, cotton patterned with hand-drawn resist and mordant, 206148 cm, Acquired from A.K. Essajee, Mumbai, BKB, Acc. No. 3/6047

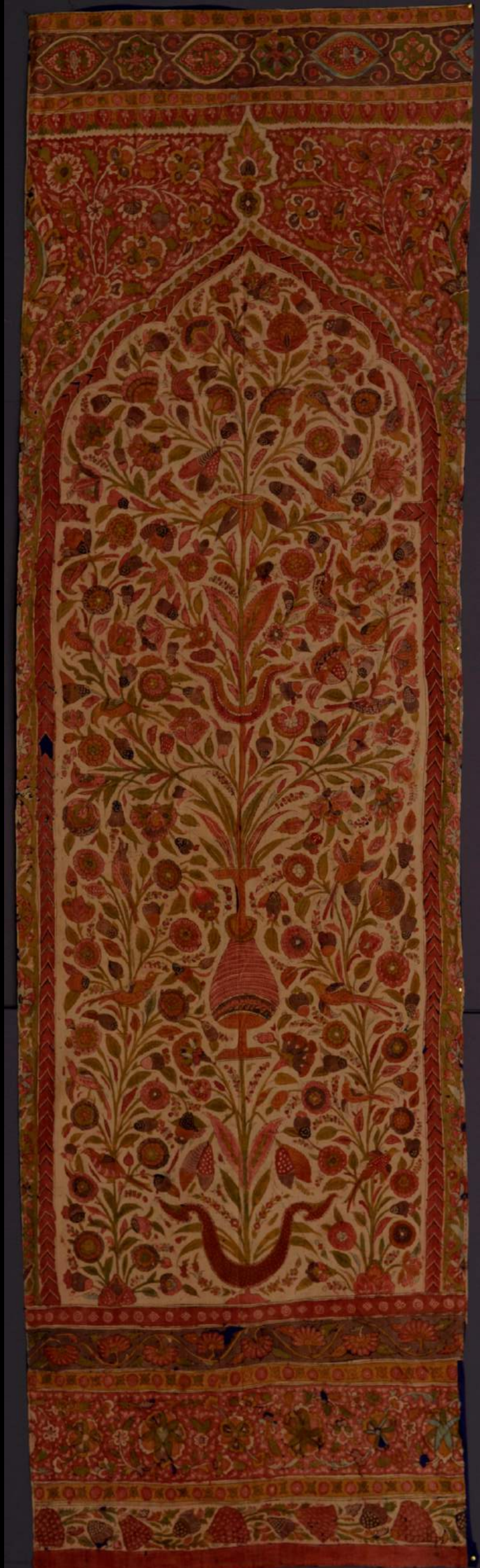
Fig.7.19 : Floral patterns in arched panels, fragment of a tent, Coromandel coast, c.17th century, cotton patterned with hand-drawn resist and mordant, 202177 cm, Acquired from A.K. Essajee, Mumbai, BKB, Acc. No. 3/6050

Fig.7.20 : Floral arabesque, canopy or floor cover, Coromandel coast, c.17th century, cotton patterned with hand-drawn resist and mordant, Acquired from Rusi & Dinshaw Gazdar, Mumbai, date of acquisition: 15.12.1959, BKB, Acc. No. 3/9934

Fig.7.21 : Imaginary animals and birds under arches, fragment of a wall panel, Coromandel coast, c.17th century, cotton patterned with hand-drawn resist and mordant, 234198 cm, Acquired from Rusi & Dinshaw Gazdar, Mumbai, date of acquisition: 15.12.1959, BKB, Acc. No. 3/9933

Fig.7.22 : A field of poppies, fragment of a floor spread, Burhanpur(?), mid/late-17th century, cotton patterned with painted and printed resist and mordants, 322151 cm, date of acquisition: 11.11.1967, BKB, Acc. No. 10/302

7.2



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Detail of Fig.7.5

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▼ Detail of Fig.7.10

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▼ Detail of Fig.7.13

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▼ Detail of Fig.7.17

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▼ Detail of Fig.7.20

7.21

7.22

Detail of Fig.7.22

Fig.8.1 : Altar cover, late-19th century, velvet, satin-cotton, *zari* wire, *kalabatoon*
85 x 83 cm. This cover has a purple velvet centre embroidered
with a lotus motif in the centre and sprawling creepers
all around with jasmine *buti.*
The border all around in yellow satin has repeats of
same creeper designs. The corner units are again embroidered
purple velvet. *Kinari* is attached all round on the edge
and four corners have multicoloured pompoms in silk
Jnana Pravaha Museum, Acc. no. 2013.24

8 *Zardozi* : Embroidered Traditions and Trends

Charu Smita Gupta

As one walks through the main street of Chandni Chowk today in 2024, one notices an array of shops displaying dresses adorned with *zardozi* work, dresses for both men and women. This was not so about 50 to 60 years back. *Zardozi* work on costumes, saris and accessories was on decline. This downfall was mainly because of the decline in quality of the raw material used in the *zardozi* embroidery. Today *zardozi* wear is a fashion statement not only for the rich and elite but also for the commoners. I am briefly presenting here the treading of *zardozi* embroidery on an arduous path to reach this glory of cutting through the boundaries of elite and poor. A transient flow of fashion, how did it happen and where did it start is what I intend to relate in this paper.

Zardozi : Persian, *zar* (gold) + *dozi* (embroidery) : The Indian Context

There are several words, *hiranyan-atkan, hiranyanvyutarn, atka* and *drapi* in Vedic literature that reflect the use of gold in embroidering garments. *Swarntantu-nirmita,* the word appearing in Valmiki *Ramayana,* means "adorned with fibre made of gold". Another word in same reference, *maharajat-vasas,* clearly means clothes embroidered with gold and silver. These and many more textual references to the opulent tradition of gold and silver embroidery testify to its prevalence in the Ancient and Classical period. There is, however, a lull period, as far as the literary references are concerned, pertaining to gold-silver embroidery. Several contextual evidences of the later periods may be viewed against contemporary sculptures and paintings. *Zardozi* craft flourished under the substantial patronage of the Turkic and Afghan sultans, and, eventually, of the Mughal emperors. Gradually, this opulent embroidery style established firm roots in India. Nonetheless, the expansion of trade in the craft remained confined to the nobility. Fall of the Mughal Empire resulted in a total dislocation of the craft-production units. Hereafter, the manufacturing network which was mainly confined to the Mughal workshops shifted to the provincial courts, namely Rampur, Bhopal, Jaipur, Hyderabad, Faizabad-Lucknow and Banaras (Varanasi).

On January 1, 1877, when queen Victoria got the title of *Kaisar-i-Hind,* the Empress of India, *zardozi* artisans in Delhi were involved in a major way as Delhi Durbar was being organized by Lord Lytton. Twenty-six years later, on 1st January 1903, Viceroy Lord Curzon organized an equally grandiose ceremony to celebrate the Proclamation Ceremony of Edward VII as the King Emperor. Third Durbar was held at the time of the transfer of power from Kolkata to Delhi in 1911. Delhi became a seat for the preparation of these three grand events; the streets witnessed the impressive spectacle of royal procession in the Mughal-rule galore. Numerous *zardozi* accessories including elephant and horse trappings were fancifully embroidered and displayed in the series of procession. British, though impressed by the extraordinary workmanship of the *zardoz* artisans, had done away with the concept of having *karkhana* or the production units in the court set up. This was the end of noble court *karkhanas*. At this juncture, patronization for the craft from Portuguese and other European countries, several eastern countries, European nations, America and Japan opened new markets for the craft. Seeing tremendous scope of work many artisans of Delhi and Agra chose to remain in these Mughal cities establishing their *karkhanas* to commercial and household set up. Several other regions in Uttar Pradesh, Hyderabad,

Fig.8.2 : Altar spread, late-19th century, velvet, *zari* wire 96 x 92 cm. The *thali* cover has green velvet centre with central hexagonal motif extending towards outward body and corners. The inside corners have *pan buti. The* red border has *zardozi* embroidery with floral *buti* intercepted by green embroidered corners. Jnana Pravaha Museum, Acc. no. 2013.23

Karnataka, Rajasthan, Panjab and Gujarat witnessed the spread of *zardozi* embroidery in the local courts and market set ups. The art of *zardozi* was patronized by the *Nawabs* of the Awadh and other royal families around Lucknow. Varanasi, the seat of many important Hindu shrines including Kashi Vishwanatha temple, continues to have several clusters of *zardoz* artisans embroidering numerous accessories for the temples. These, primarily, include dresses for the principal icons and *chhatris*. Several satellite cities around the main seat of power in Uttar Pradesh also emerged as centres for the *zardozi* craft. This was the time when women started to learn the craft within the domestic quarters. Menfolk would bring the orders and deliver the finished items back to the market and women would do the embroidery. As the *karchob,* the frame for making the *zardozi* items, entered the household units, there was equal participation in making and marketing of the *zardozi* articles. Post-Independence gender equality emerged conspicuous even in the practice of this traditional craft. This was the phase when the work was started to be practiced in smaller towns of Bareilly and Farrukhabad. Several families in Allahabad and Varanasi, Agra, Lucknow and Rampur, Bareilly and Farrukhabad and nearby villages supply exquisite *zari* embroidery works. The technique of *zardozi* was mingled with the *ari* work which is faster and easier to learn. Blends of *zardozi* and *ari* work made a great combination in terms of

Fig.8.3 : Woman's *kurti*, satin, *zari* wire, early-20th century, L. 51.5 x Sleeve (end to end) 112 cm
The intricate *zardozi* work on this red *kurti* is dense on the
central border, sleeves border, shoulders, neck-line.
Lot ka phul and creeper motifs are the major design motifs embellishing these parts.
Scantily placed *butis* cover the body. Jnana Pravaha Museum, Acc. no. 2002.252

Fig.8.4 : Child's *achkan*, satin, *zari* wire plain *gota* tape, early-20th century
L. 62.5 x W. 39 cm., This purple *achkan* is profusely embroidered all over with large floral *butas* highlighting the borders with denser stitches. Technically, this embroidery is referred to as *gota-patti* work or *lappe-ka kam*, much popular in Rajasthan. Jnana Pravaha Museum Acc. no. 2002.261.

attractive bargain price. The pieces for embroidery such as sari, *salwar-kameez* suits and *lehenga* are now sent to the satellite centres of surrounding villages from traditional centres like Varanasi and Lucknow. Today, most of the work done in Farrukhabad is sold in Chandni Chowk market of Delhi. There are evidences in the *zardoz* families in Farrukhabad of the work orders being received from Mumbai as early as 1926. Several *zardoz* families in the ancient city of Varanasi (Banaras) have been credited for reviving this rich craft and, currently, supply exquisite *zari*-embroidered wedding outfits, sarees, salwar-kameez and *sherwanis* to boutiques and swanky showrooms all across the country.

Along with the historical vicissitudes, the cost-related change in the quality, both of the material to be embroidered and materials for embroidery, greatly influenced the production and marketing range of *zardozi* craft during mid-20th century.

Technique and Material

Zardozi as a technique is different from other techniques of Indian embroidery like *sujani, kantha, phulkari, Kashmiri kasida, kasuti,* etc. where the movement of the threaded needle is guided by the type of stitch employed. Silk, cotton or wool yarn are pliable enough to pass through the needle and then through the cloth. However, in *zardozi* embroidery thread is used only to stitch the variety of metallic wires, which are not pliable to pass through the needle and then through the fabric. The technique and material for *zardozi* embroidery is thus different from other embroideries.

After the change of power from Mughal to British, several new aspects had been introduced to the making of *zardozi* articles. During the Mughal period, metallic embroidery was done on massive ceremonial furnishings and trappings as well as apparels and furnishings. *Mashru,* silk, muslin, velvet and brocade, *bafta, amru, ghatta* or satinette like velvet were embellished with pure *zari-badla*. British introduced several cloth materials made with man-made fibre. *Zardozi* craftsmen adapted to work on these materials like net and tissue, satin and georgette, etc. Simultaneously, because of the high cost-raise it was becoming difficult to work in pure *zari* wire.

Zardozi is primarily known for the shimmering golden brilliance. Silver has better ductility and lower cost compared to gold. Therefore, since the ancient times, a bar of silver was drawn into long wires by passing through decreasing perforations in a steel plate called *jantri.* These silver wires, generally flat, were wrapped with pure gold leaf. These gold-plated wires were called *sone ka tar*. The pure silver wire was called *chandi ka tar*. In local parlance, *zardozi* embroidery was thus called *sone-chandi ke tar ki kadhai*. As the time passed, the quality of metallic wire underwent tremendous changes. When the price of gold rose, gold-plating was done instead of gold leaf wrapping. The wire drawn through *jantri* was called *badla*. The wire was given various shapes called *kora, dabka, gizai-chikna, zik, chalak, tikora, kangni* and *khichcha*. The physical properties of these wires decide the specific placement of different wires in the designs. For instance, the stems of the flowers or the outlines of the blossoms or foliage are generously done with *gijai* wire, as *gijai* is thin and stiff wire. *Khichcha,* another variety of coiled wire, is transparent and when coloured threads are passed through it produces a polychromatic effect. *Kora* and *chikna* are flexible coiled wire. *Kora* is dull and *chikna* is lustrous. *Nakshi* is a thicker wire. The silver base wires with gold wrapping or plating were also called *asli tar* or *sachcha tar*. Accordingly, *zardozi* with such material was popularly referred to as *sone chandi ke tar ka kam,* keeping it fairly apart from other embroideries. Gradually, after increased cost of gold and silver, it became difficult to afford *sachcha tar* or *asli tar*. The wire manufacturers introduced copper wire into the market as a replacement of the silver wire and gold-plated the same. For a certain period of time, the gold/silver-plated copper wire retained the shiny brilliance but because of the tarnishing property of the copper, the embroidery eventually lost

Fig.8.5 : *Topi,* velvet, satin, *zari* wire
late-19th century, 22.5 x 19 cm
This *topi* with black body
and pale green border is profusely embroidered
with variety of *zari* wires
making floral and creeper patterns.
Jnana Pravaha Museum, Acc. no. 2002.264.

Fig.8.6 : *Topi,* velvet, *zari* wire, late-19th century,
15 x 12 cm. This stylistically stitched *topi* has
circular pink top and green rectangular base.
Whole body has floral creeper motifs
in variety of *zari* wire. Jnana Pravaha Museum,
Acc. no. 2002.263

Fig.8.7 : *Topi*, cotton, silk thread, *zari* wire, mid-19th century, 51.6 x 17 cm. This stylistically stitched conical cap has bold *kairi* and other floral *buti* filled with *zardozi* wire.
The *zari* and red silk yarn have been used simultaneously.
Jnana Pravaha Museum, Acc. no. 2010.2

Fig.8.8 : Hand-held fan, velvet, satin, *zari* wire, silver
mid-20th century, diam. 26 cm, handle 41 cm.
The fan has two parts - body and the handle.
Circular body in velvet
with satin border has a jasmine *buti* at the centre.
the creeper pattern is embroidered in
circular manner on the border.
The outer border has satin and *gota-patti* work.
The silver handle has *repousse* work.
Jnana Pravaha Museum, Acc. no. 2002.256

the sheen. At this juncture, aluminum wire was used instead of silver wire. These were the most unfortunate experiments which greatly impacted the *zardozi* embroidery. People started to refrain from getting the *zardozi* embroidery on the dresses as this would tarnish after some time. The poor wire quality led to severe deterioration in the craft manufacture. The copper wire was called *nakli tar.* With an aim to resurrect the declining business of *zardoz* artisans which was directly linked to the poor quality raw material, new interventions were made and soon polyester wire was introduced in the market. The polypropylene wire was known as *plastic tar*. Further, the quality of electroplating with gold-polish on copper was also improved and new varieties of golden wire were manufactured. This wire had the shine and did not tarnish. This new variety of metallic wire has given a new lease of life to the *zardozi* embroidery and, also, the range of affordability expanded beyond the upper elite. The glitter and opulence of the vintage style is revived but the quality is in several layers. The rich and affluent go for the *asli tar ka kam* while major market is sustained through what is known as "tested *zari*".

Embroiderers

Zardoz, the traditional practitioners of *zardozi* craft, were Ansari from the Sunni Muslims sect. Most of the Ansari *zardoz* work in their domestic *karkhana.* The owners of the commercial *karkhanas* are, mainly, Sheikh, Saiyyad and Pathan. Marriages are preferred within the community. However, since all Ansari are not *zardoz,* marital interaction among non-*zardoz* artisans, mostly, weavers, are very common. Presently, the number of embroiderers, particularly women *zardoz,* is expanding beyond these community segments. After initiatives of several governmental and non-governmental bodies, concerted efforts are being made to train women in the villages around the major towns where *zardozi* is practised. The work is distributed to the women in the rural areas who complete and give it back on the piece rate basis. The work is given and collected by the city *karkhana* owners so that women can earn a decent wage while working at their home. This system has empowered women who keenly participate in training female artisans in the workshop to strengthen their economic holding through *zardozi* craft. Another appreciation has come in the form of the award of GI tag to *zardozi* work of Lucknow which is class apart. The work here is done, essentially, on fine muslin mainly in *badla*.

To sum up with a positive note, the art of *zardozi* with a strong historical presence in the Mughal and Provincial courts in the yesteryears has today penetrated in all sections of the Indian society. The *zardoz* are also now expanding their workmanship by training a large number of women in the villages.

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CHARU SMITA GUPTA, Ph.D., worked as the founder Director of MGCATT Museum, Siem Reap Cambodia, after she retired in 2012 as Deputy Director, National Crafts Museum, New Delhi. She also taught various courses in Indian crafts, textiles and museology and was an academic visitor in V&A Museum, UK. She authored internationally acclaimed books on *Zardozi, Folk and Tribal Paintings, Crafts of India,* besides publishing chapters in books, articles in reputed journals, newspapers and magazines. charujee1952@gmail.com

9 From Brush to the Needle: Tracing the Painting Origins of Chamba *Rumal* and its Self-Referential Depiction in the Painting Tradition

Sarang Sharma

While no consensus is established regarding the precise origin of Chamba *rumal,* it is widely acknowledged that the tradition emerged during the latter-half of the 18th century, due to close association of motifs present in the earliest known specimens of Chamba *rumal* with near contemporary paintings. In all likelihood, the tradition originated as a favoured pastime for the women of royal and elite background and miniature painters were commissioned for designing the *rumals,* a luxury only they could have afforded. As a result, the subject-matter in Chamba *rumal* was heavily inspired by the painting tradition, with episodes from the *Ramayana* and *Bhagavata Purana,* and *Nayika-bheda* and *Ragamala,* Fig.9.1.

The association of painters with the production of embroidered *rumals* in the royal households commences at an early stage, with the miniaturists playing a crucial role in designing embroideries and sharing their technical expertise to the process, Fig.9.2. Miniaturists conceptualized the original designs, leveraging their understanding of composition, colour balance, and iconographies to develop intricate patterns suitable for embroidery. While Chamba *rumal* tradition was a direct off-shoot of painting, as mentioned previously, in the contemporary scenario the painters often adapt existing artworks into embroidery designs, simplifying or modifying complex images to fit the medium while retaining their essence. Applying their knowledge of colour composition, the painters ensure the selection of appropriate threads and fabrics by leaving colour-marked clues for the embroiderer, Fig.9.3. By providing detailed sketches and patterns, painters offer blueprints that guide embroiderers in achieving precision and consistency.

The transition of Chamba *rumal* from an elite pastime to a reflection of Chamba's social and cultural character deserves attention. Embroidered articles became an integral part of various ceremonies, festivals and rituals, often given as a token or goodwill or as decorative pieces in homes and temples. The tradition particularly became a staple during wedding ceremonies, and the *rumals* would be exchanged between the families of the bride and groom, symbolising goodwill and strengthening of familial bonds.[1] Embroidered *rumals* would also be included in the bridal trousseau, and the bride's family prepared embroidered clothes and decor as gifts to the groom's family, later to become generational heirlooms. Chamba *rumals* also served as sacred offerings in temples, donated by the devotees as a gesture of reverence.[2] The *rumals* would then be placed on altars or used as backdrop to adorn the shrine during religious ceremonies.[3]

The transition of Chamba *rumal* from a pastime to social significance also seems to have been observed by painters, making references to embroidery in miniature paintings as well. Pahari painters drew inspiration from the world around them, captured the essence of their surroundings and transformed these into art. The process involved keen observation of mundane occurrences and commonplace objects, invariably sources of their artistic innovation. A fairly big number of paintings became reflections of societal norms, cultural practices, turning the otherwise generic composition into

Fig.9.1 : *Ashta-Nayika Bheda,* Chamba *rumal*, 19th century CE, cotton embroidered with floss silk and gilt thread, 64 x 60 cm
Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba, Himachal Pradesh, Acc. No. 69.70, Image courtesy: Vijay Sharma

visages that are profoundly evocative. In this context, a portrait of Raja Bhupendra Pal of Basohli merits particular attention, Fig.9.4. The depiction captures the youthful Raja seated by a *jharokha* window, delighting in the admiration of the dark monsoon clouds assembling in the sky. The Raja is in the zenana quarters of the palace, surrounded by courtly women engaged in various activities of leisure and merriment. Behind him, two female attendants stand bashfully, exchanging playful murmurs. In the outer veranda by the river, two women engage in a spirited game of *pachisi*, with their laughter mingling

with the gentle rustling of the monsoon breeze. A beautiful damsel draped in a resplendent red *peshwaz*, casts flirtatious glances towards the Raja, who reciprocates from the opposite quarter of the inner palace. The scene is rich with the vibrancy of courtly life, yet what particularly captures attention is the depiction of the lower terrace. Here, a young woman meticulously embroiders a *rumal*, while an infant boy, presumably her son, tugs stubbornly at her lap, yearning for her attention. An elderly woman, likely a maid as suggested by her modest garments, endeavours to keep the child away from disturbing his mother. Nearby, a box brimming with colourful threads lies open. The depiction of a woman engaged in embroidering a *rumal* is significant, indicating the painters' awareness of its importance as an activity esteemed by women of noble background. This detail not only embellishes the composition but also provides a deeper glimpse into the daily lives and refined tastes of the aristocracy.[4]

A comparative illustration is found in a *Nala-Damayanti* folio, presently housed at the Amar Palace Museum in Jammu, Fig.9.5. The painting depicts a young woman, seated inside a veranda of the palace, deeply engrossed in embroidering a *rumal*. Besides her stands a young attendant holding a box of threads. While the *Naishadhiya Charita*, the Sanskrit text narrating the story of Nala and Damayanti, does not explicitly mention embroidery, however, the painter likely drew inspiration from the daily activities within royal surroundings to incorporate such a noteworthy detail into the painting.

A *Bhagavata Purana* painting depicting wives of Brahmins offering food to Krishna, Fig.9.6 is also worthy of attention. The designs found on the white cloth covers draped over the utensils containing food evoke a striking resemblance to Chamba *rumal*. The inclusion of these embroidered cloth covers in the painting suggests that such articles were not only valued for their decorative and devotional functions but also served practical, utilitarian purposes. This dual functionality reflects the integration of artistic expression into everyday life within noble and religious settings. Furthermore, the presence of Chamba *rumal* in a religious narrative underscores the cultural importance of embroidery, elevating their status beyond mere decorative objects to essential elements of devotional practice.

Fig.9.2 : Chamba-based miniaturist Parikshit Sharma designing a *Rumal*, Image courtesy: Sarang Sharma

Fig.9.3 : Embroiderer follow guidelines received from the miniaturist, Image courtesy: Sarang Sharma

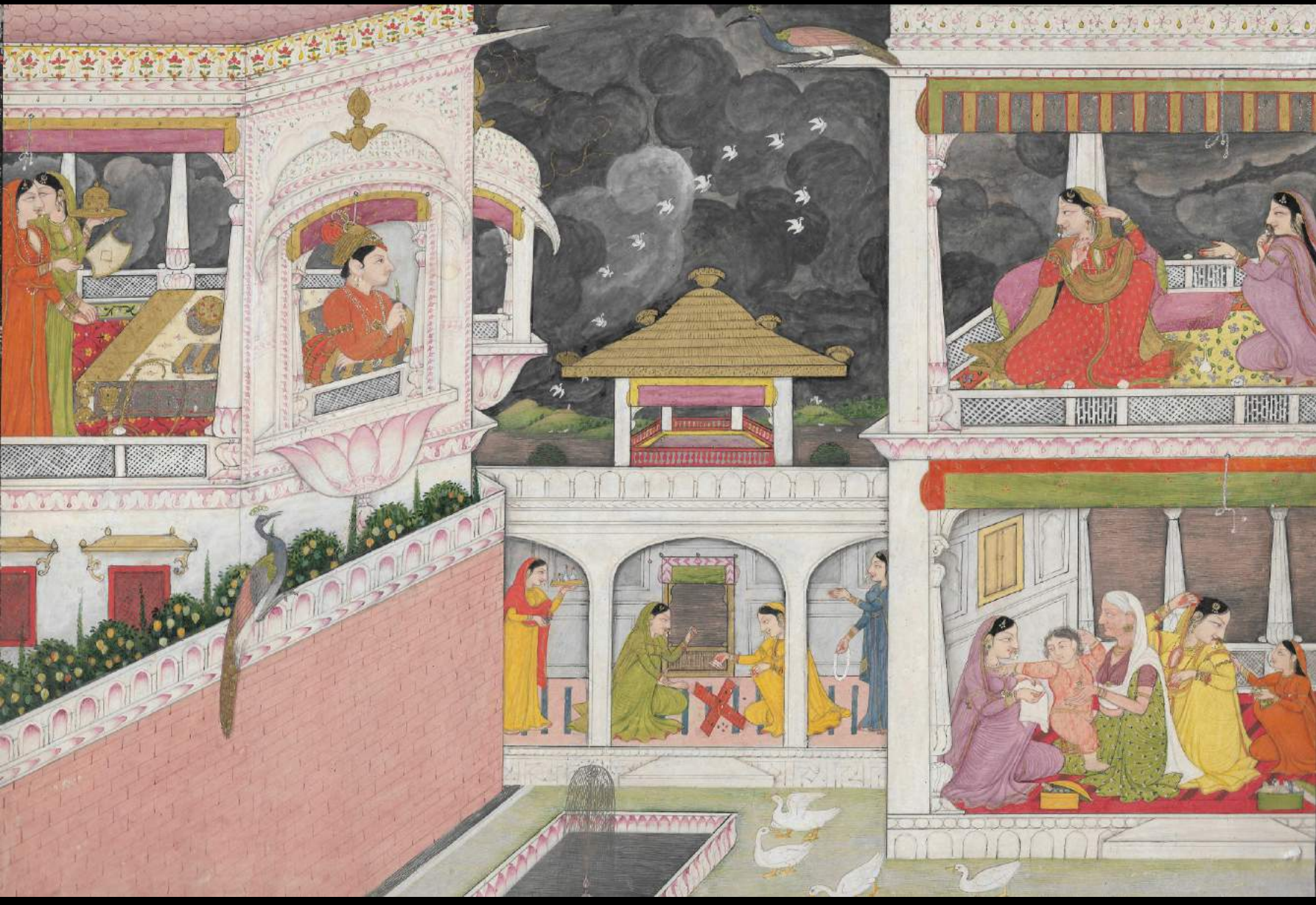


Fig.9.4 : Raja Bhupendra Pal of Basohli (r.1813-1834) seated by the *Jharokha*, c.1815 CE, opaque watercolour on paper 16.8 x 25.4 cm, Dogra Art Museum, Jammu, Acc. No. 395, Image courtesy: Vijay Sharma

▲ Fig.9.5 : Detail from a *Nala-Damayanti* folio
c.1790-1800, opaque watercolour on paper, Amar Palace Museum, Jammu
Image courtesy: Vijay Sharma

Fig.9.6
Wives of the Brahmins offer
Food to Krishna
from a *Bhagavata Purana*
Kangra, c.1775-80
opaque watercolour on paper
State Museum, Lucknow
Image courtesy: Vijay Sharma ▼

Fig.9.7 : *Raga Hindola*, c.1790-1800, Kangra, 35.5 x 25.4 cm
The Cleveland Museum of Art, Edward L. Whittemore Fund 1975.9

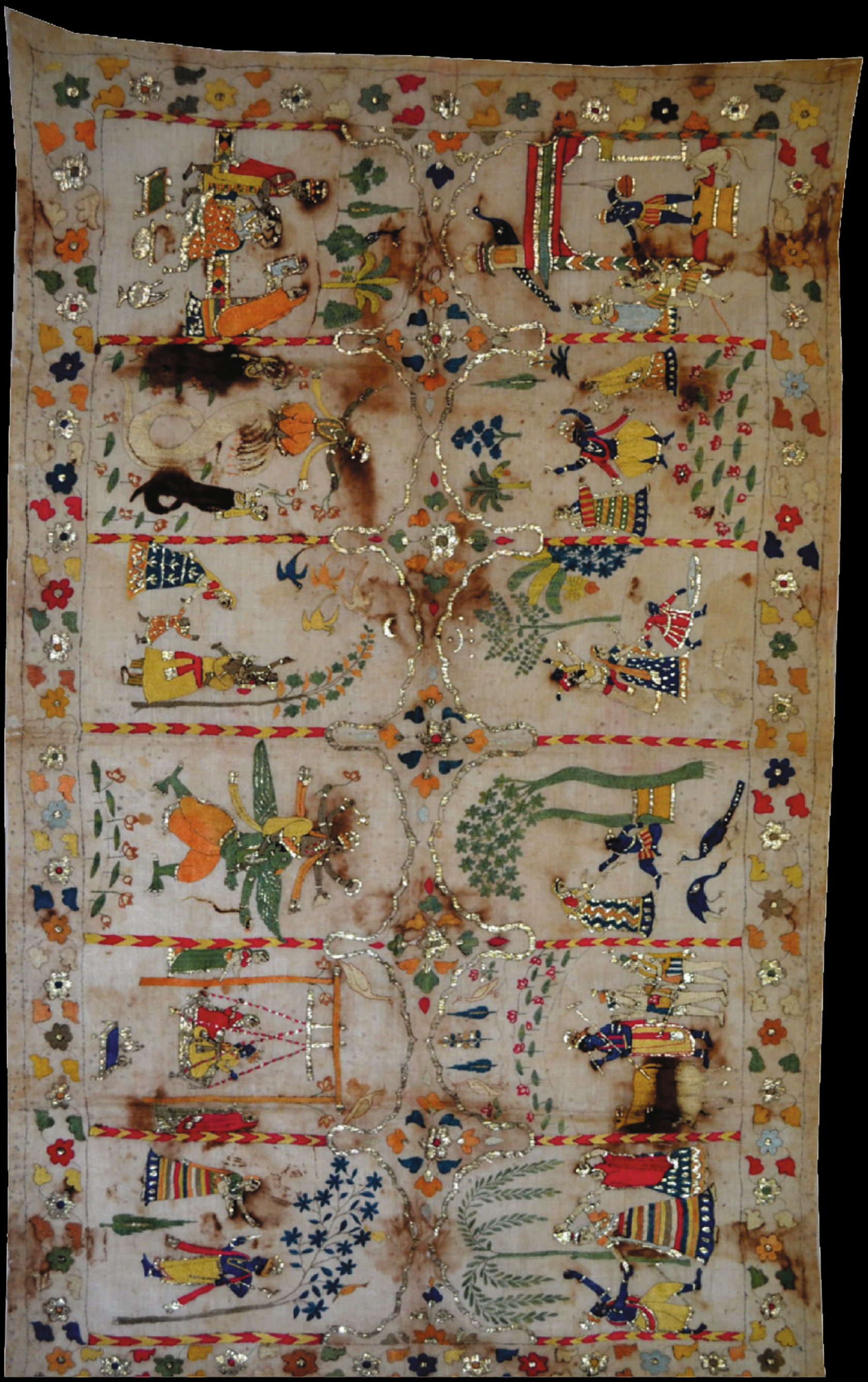
In a painting depicting *Raga Hindola,* Fig.9.7, a significant parallel can be drawn with the aforementioned *Bhagavata Purana* scene regarding the use and significance of embroidered coverlets. As Krishna and Radha sway on a swing, surrounded by joyous *gopas* and *gopis* of Braj engaged in spirited dance, the inclusion of a damsel carrying offerings in a container draped with a Chamba *rumal* is noteworthy. This portrayal suggests a continuation of the theme observed in the *Bhagavata Purana* painting.

The phenomenon termed as "meta-art" or "self-referential art" is a concept that involves art reflections on its own creation process, creating a layered and introspective dialogue between different artistic practices. In this case, the initial phase involves painters designing intricate embroidery patterns, blending their skills in composition, colour, and aesthetics to transform painted imagery into textile. As the tradition evolves, painters begin to depict embroiderers engaged in embroidery, thus creating paintings that capture the essence of artistic labour and craftsmanship. This "self-referential" cycle not only underscores the interconnectedness of painting and embroidery but also elevates the act of embroidery to a subject worthy of fine art. Such "meta-art" highlights the mutual influence and respect between the two mediums, celebrating the importance of handicraft and the sustaining creative inputs.

References

1. Personal communication with Dr. Vijay Sharma, Chamba.
2. An index is maintained in the reserve of the Lakshmi Narayana Temple at Chamba containing information about several articles donated by devotees over centuries including jewels, utensils, paintings and *rumals*. A large number of *rumals* present in the reserve signifies their importance as sacred offerings.
3. Personal communication with Mr. Bhuvaneshwar Sharma, Chamba. He mentions having observed the practice being in vogue until a few decades ago.
4. As the painting was rendered by a Guler artist working at Basohli during the reign of Raja Bhupendra Pal, it is a testament to the fact that while Chamba *rumal* embroidery had originated at Chamba, it had started becoming popular in other hill-states by the early 19th century.

SARANG SHARMA, Ph.D., did his doctoral research on the Painting at Chamba. He has lectured at major institutions in India and overseas in addition to authoring research articles on Pahari Painting and Mughal Architecture. He is a 2018 UNESCO-Sahapedia Fellow and had been a Visiting Curator at the Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio. *sarang.sharma93@gmail.com*



10 The Chamba Rumal with Krishna Theme

Jasminder Kaur

The art of Chamba got a specific dimension in the 18th century when Umed Singh (r.1748-1764 CE) became the ruler.[1] A definite impetus was given to the promotion of art and culture in his regime. He gave patronage to the Mughal artists who fled from the troubled capital and this continued even in the regime of his successor Raj Singh (1764-1794 CE).[2] This was the period when the local style of folk art of embroidery took a sophisticated turn and emerged as a courtly art form.[3] The successive rulers of the Chamba dynasty, Raja Jit Singh (r.1794-1808 CE), Raja Charat Singh (r.1808-1844 CE) and Raja Sri Singh (r.1844-1870 CE) also patronized this art and during this era the tradition of embroidery got more refined.[4] Most of the specimens available today belong to their regimes.

The Chamba *rumals* have depiction of the Krishna myth as a constant theme. These embroideries have the *Rasamandala,* in both folk and classical styles. Other popular themes included the birth of Krishna, his playful interactions with the *gopis,* his subjugation of demons and his youthful mischief's. The embroiderers also drew inspiration from the Krishna-Rukmini saga and the story of *Rukmini-harana* particularly interested the artists. The handkerchiefs often feature symbols of Lord Vishnu, which may be due to the strong influence of the Vaishnava sect in the Chamba region during the 17th-18th centuries.

It is uncertain when *Vaishnavism* came to the Hill States but there is much evidence that along with the pre-existing *Shaivism,* Chamba emerged as a centre of the Vaishnava sect in the medieval period.[5] It has six stone temples arranged in a row from north to south. Out of these, three are dedicated to Lord Vishnu and three to Lord Shiva,[6] showing the dominance of *Vaishnavism* in Chamba. An important temple in the north of Chamba is that of Lord Lakshmi-Narayana or Lakshminatha, said to be built by King Sahillavarman in the 10th century.[7] According to an inscription found in Chamba, a Vishnu temple popularly known as Hari Rai temple near the Chaugan gate was built in the second-half of the 11th century by King Lakshmana Varman, a ruler from the Varman dynasty. Many other inscriptions reveal the devotion towards Lord Krishna by the rulers of Chamba.[8] Indubitably, the credit for the expansion of the Krishna theme on the Chamba *rumal* goes to the women of the royal and elite families of Chamba,[9] who played a vital role in the extensive depiction of the Krishna theme on these *rumal.* The painters working in the royal studio drew the subjects related to Krishna theme with

Fig.10.1 : Incidents of Krishna's Life
Chamba, Himachal Pradesh
19th century, double satin stitch embroidery on fine muslin cloth
floss silk and silver-gilt strip *(badla)*
77x140cm, acquired from
Radhakrishna Bharany
Bhart Kala Bhavan
Varanasi, Acc. No. 10/239

great skill, in a classical style visible in the contemporary Chamba painting.[10]

Bharat Kala Bhavan (BKB) Museum of Varanasi has an excellent collection of Chamba *rumals* executed in both, folk and classical styles. There are beautiful *thapad* and *rumals* related to *Rasamandala*, Shri Krishna with *gopis,* Radha-Krishna, Rukmini-marriage, Vishnu-worship, etc. Among all these, an extraordinary *rumal,* Fig.10.1, with the depiction of Krishna *lila* is especially noteworthy. It depicts an amazing compilation of themes related to Lord Krishna arranged in twelve panels. A broad border of floral motifs encircle these panels which are arranged in two opposite lines of six on one side, giving an impression of a mirror repeat. The *mehrab*-shaped panels have the gaps filled with floral motifs, creating symmetry between the panels. Each panel has a particular scene from Lord Krishna's life and a representation of Vishnu on Garuda.

i. Krishna Stealing Butter (*Makhan Chori*)

This panel depicts *Makhan-chori*, the most famous exploit of Krishna's childhood. It narrates a story from *Shrimadbhagavata Purana*. According to this story, child Krishna used to steal butter and curd from the houses in Gokula with his brother Balarama and friends Shridama and Subala. One milkmaid named Prabhavati complained about this to his mother. Mother Yashoda reprimanded Krishna for this act and assured her that this wouldn't happen again. But Krishna secretly enters Prabhavati's house again with his friends. This butter theft scene has been beautifully depicted in the panel. It shows a butter-pot hanging at a great height in a basket made with ropes. But the clever Krishna climbed a mortar to steal the butter. He is depicted with one hand in the pot and giving butter to his friends from the other. A monkey holding the mortar is also in the scene. The milkmaid Prabhavati is standing stunned at all this. Shri Krishna and the *gopas* are wearing conical caps and striped patterned rustic costumes with scarves tied around their waists while Krishna is adorned with jewellery. The jumping posture of child Krishna and his friends adds liveliness to the scene. The pot of butter is hanging in an arched building with a peacock sitting behind a domed tower on one side.

ii. The Divine Dance of Krishna

The scene depicted in this panel is a commonly used illustration in the religious scriptures *Bhagavata Purana* and *Gita-Govinda*. Śhri Krishna is shown dancing blissfully with raised hands. He is holding his flute in his right hand. Radha has been depicted playing a striped patterned *mridanga* on his right whereas her companion is shown with *manjira* on his left side. The artist has successfully tried to bring the scene to life by showing the *patka* (sash) fluttering in the air with the rhythm of the dance. Krishna is adorned with jewellery including a *kirita-mukuta* (crown) on his head, bangles on his wrists, armlets on his arms, anklets on his feet and an attractive necklace around his neck. Notably, a similar composition can be seen in the depiction of *Raga Vasanta* in the *Ragamala* series of paintings belonging to Guler-Kangra tradition.

iii. Yashoda Shows Krishna the Moon in the Water

This panel has an incident based on the stories of Krishna's childhood. Though the incident is not mentioned in the *Bhagavata Purana* or *Harivamsha Purana*, it has a mention in certain medieval works, prominent among which is *Surasagara* by Suradasa (16th century).[11] According to the narrative, one night while watching the moon in the sky, Krishna asked his father about it, to which Nanda told him that it is the moon, the toy of Gods. As soon as Krishna heard the word toy, he insisted on getting it. He became very agitated and was not ready to listen to anything. Mother Yashoda tried to pacify child Krishna with other toys, but all her efforts were unsuccessful. Then Yashoda used a plate filled with water to reflect the moon.

The panel with this story has two consequential incidents in one scene. In the first scene, child Krishna is sitting on the shoulder of his father and demanding to give him the toy while pointing at the moon. Nanda is trying to amuse him by showing a replica of the moon. The second scene is a consequence of this demand where Mother Yashoda is trying to cool him down by showing the reflection of the moon in the water filled in a big round platter. The most interesting part is that Yashoda is holding him with her hand, as Krishna, wearing a red tunic, is trying to touch the moon. In the background of the scene, a group of trees has been made on the right side in which the stars along with the moon are visible in the sky. A pair of stork birds has been depicted on the left side in its foreground.

iv. Redemption of *Yamalarjuna*, Fig.10.3

The panel, Fig.10.3, illustrates an event from *Bhagavata Purana* preceding the salvation of Kuvera's cursed sons by child Krishna. One day, while Yashoda was busy churning curd, Krishna came to her and started demanding butter from the pot. He broke the pot by pelting a stone when she refused to meet his demand. Yashoda got irritated and decided to punish him. She found him after much effort and decided to tie him to a mortar to punish him and prevent him from doing any mischief again. However, Yashoda became very upset, as the rope she had to tie him was shorter than needed. Seeing his mother's distress, Krishna stopped resisting and quietly allowed her to tie him to the mortar, but as his mother left, he dragged the mortar to the bank of Yamuna. There were two huge *arjuna* trees at the bank of river. The mortar got stuck between two big trees. Although Krishna had his way through the gap between the trees, he could not drag the mortar with him as it got stuck horizontally between them. Krishna kept trying, and as soon as he pulled with all his strength, the trees uprooted and fell with a deafening sound. The trees transformed into two *gandharva*, who were the sons of Kuvera but turned into trees due to the curse of Sage Narada. Kuvera's sons, Nalakuvara and Manigriva flew to heaven after paying obeisance to Krishna. In the embroidered panel, Krishna is shown with one hand tied to the mortar hanging between the two trees, and with the other hand, he is trying to save himself from the blow of the stick of Mother Yashoda. Here, the *arjuna* trees are depicted densely covered with leaves and pair of peacocks and peahens at the foreground. A Kangra painting of the same theme, Fig.10.2, would present a comparative visual.

v. Cowherd Krishna

In this panel, blue Krishna is portrayed as a cowherd, taking a herd of cows for grazing with his two friends. He holds a stick in one hand to control the herd while playing the flute in the other. Both his friends are wearing rustic clothes and conical caps on their heads and hold sticks in their hands. A crescent-shaped pond filled with lyre flowers and leaves create a forest effect. A crane and flowering sprigs are arranged symmetrically on both sides.

vi. Krishna demanding Butter and Curd from the Milkmaids

The activity of the grown-up Krishna was nowhere less than the mischief's of the child Krishna. Whereas in his childhood, he used to steal curd and butter from the houses of milkmaids, one of his feats in his youth was to block the way of the milkmaids and demand butter and curd from them. This panel depicts Krishna holding the hand of a milkmaid carrying an earthen pot on her head. He is harassing her to give him some of the curd or the butter and simultaneously trying to reach the pot with his other hand. Other milkmaids are trying to save their friend by pulling her using one hand while holding the pots on their heads with the other hand. The scene has a huge tree filled with leaves in the background. Krishna in *dhoti* and *uttariya* is adorned with ornaments including a bejewelled crown.

vii. Radha offering Betel Leaf to Krishna

Radha's attempt to calm the anger of Krishna by offering him betel leaves is the subject of this panel. Krishna is standing opposite to Radha in an angry posture. An irked Krishna has placed his stick-wielding right hand on the waist and is holding the flute in his left hand. It seems that he is annoyed by something and saying it to her. Radha is standing in a surrendering posture and is trying to appease Krishna by offering *paan* from the saucer held in her hand. Krishna and Radha are standing under a tree full of flowers, with two birds sitting on the branches. A simple drawing of another woman without embroidery over it is visible behind Radha.

viii. Radha-Krishna swinging

This panel shows Radha and Krishna on a swing made of a hexagonal throne, looking lovingly at each other. Krishna is seated cross-legged while Radha is sitting on one side of the swing with folded legs. Two maids are standing on either side of the swing, holding the two pillars that support the swing. There are two lotuses carved on either side of the pillars, on which two off-white herons facing each other are carved. A similar depiction may be noticed in the *Hindola-Raga* from *Raga-Ragini* paintings from Pahari school.

ix. Vishnu

This scene is very different from other narrative panels. Here, Lord Vishnu is sitting on his ride Garuda. Interestingly, Shri Krishna is considered the eighth incarnation of Lord Vishnu. In his four arms Vishnu holds *chakra* (discus), *shankha* (conch), *gada* (mace) and a *padma* (lotus).

Garuda is depicted in a dynamic posture with his wings extended and one leg outstretched; he is holding a snake in his hand. The foreground has a pond with lotus flowers and leaves.

x. Persisting Child

This panel illustrates Krishna's irresistible desire to get the moon. It has two such scenes in one frame. In the first scene, he insists his parents bring the moon to him. He thinks the moon is a toy and desperately tries to grab it by lifting himself on his father's shoulder. His father Nanda holds him tightly to avoid falling. In the second scene, Krishna is pointing towards the moon, with his right hand and asking Yashoda to bring it down for him. Yashoda is holding his left hand to stop him from running out and trying to calm him down. This scene has a shining crescent moon in the middle of the sky. Four birds are depicted on the left flying to the right, indicating the onset of night when the birds return to their homes. These birds have been made in different colours. It is noteworthy that Krishna is depicted in brown in both the scenes, unlike the traditional blue.

xi. Subjugation of the Serpent Kaliya (*Kaliyamardana*)

This panel has the story of *Kaliyamardana*, another courageous act of conquering the evil serpent Kaliya by Lord Krishna, one of the most popular acts of his childhood. The five-headed Serpent Kaliya had made river Kalindi his abode, and his poison was killing the animals and human beings of the village. Krishna gave relief to the villagers by conquering him and spared his life on the condition that Kaliya leaves the river and goes far away from the place.

According to the myth, Naga Kaliya, who had fled from his place fearing the bird king Garuda, made his home in a pond near the Kalindi River. The venom emanating from his many mouths had poisoned the river, resulting in the lifeless of many animals and villagers. His presence had become a life threat to the inhabitants of *Vrajavasis*. Understanding the situation, Lord Krishna made a plan to punish

Fig.10.2 : Infant Krishna tied to the mortar"
Kangra, c.1790
opaque watercolour and gold on paper
105x160 mm without border
BKB, Varanasi, Acc. No. 372

Fig.10.3 : Krishna tied to the mortar
detail of Fig.10.1

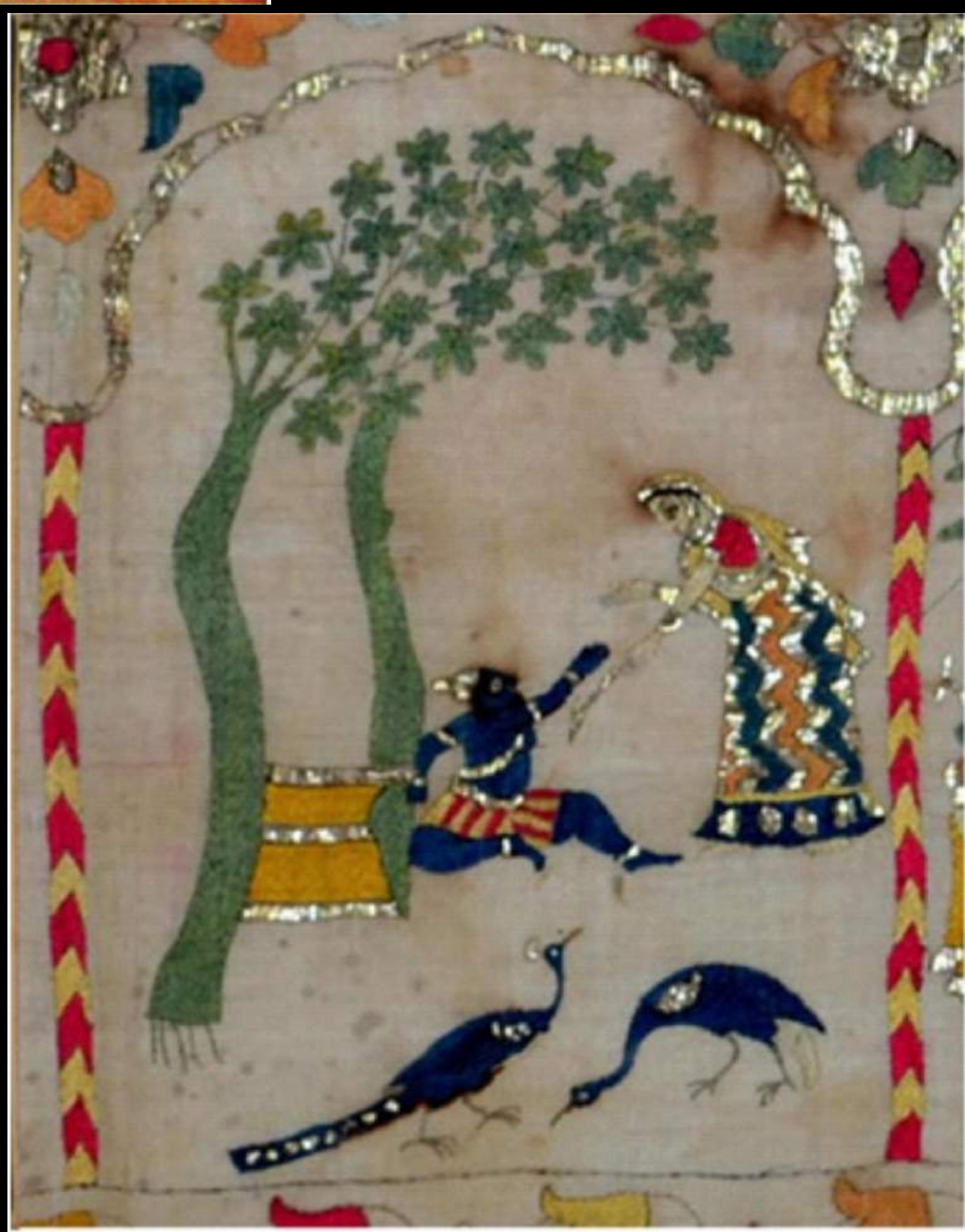


Fig.10.4 : Krishna combing Radha's hair
Rangmahal, Chamba, late 18th/early-19th century
wall panel painted in fresco secco technique

Fig.10.5 : Krishna combing Radha's hair
detail of Fig.10.1

Kaliya. He jumped down from a *kadamba* tree into the river and began to play in the water striking it with his arms. The noise created by Krishna, enraged Kaliya and the latter encircled Krishna with his coils. The people of Vraja got scared seeing this and started screaming with fear. Seeing the fearful state of the people, Lord Krishna freed himself from the hold of Kaliya and started fighting with him. The prolonged fight resulted in the weakening of the powers of Kaliya and taking this opportunity, Krishna stood on the head of the serpent and began dancing on it. This panel has this dancing scene, where Krishna is dancing on the head of Kaliya while holding a lotus bud in his right hand and a flute in his left. A fully dressed Krishna is in his conventional robe and crown with a scarf on his neck. The scarf is flurrying to give the effect of rhythmic dancing. Krishna is surrounded by two serpent-damsels, having the composite body of humans and snakes. They are pleading with Krishna to forgive Kaliya and presenting lotus flowers to please him.

xii. Krishna combing Radha's hair, Fig.10.5

The scene, Fig.10.5, is not related to any mythical story and only showcases the strong love bond between Radha and Krishna. While Radha is seated on the *diwan* with folded legs, leaning on a pillow to make the task easy, Krishna is standing behind to comb the hair. A female attendant is showing a mirror to Radha to help her see the combing process. Krishna adorns a peacock feathered crown and has a large garland of different colours of marigold flowers around his neck. Radha is wearing an orange *lehnga* (skirt), and her upper garment is of sky blue colour. She adorns armlets, wristlets, earrings, and a necklace. A landscape in the background and utensils surrounding the figures create an interesting royal setup. There is a clear imprint of one wall painting panel of *Rangmahal*, Fig.10.4, displaying a similar composition.

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6. *Ibid.*, p.170.
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8. *Ibid.*, p.170.
9. Handa, O.C., 1998, p.127, Rani Shardha was a devout devotee of Krishna. It was under her patronage that a number of *rumals,* depicting various episode of the *Krishnalila,* were embroidered in Chamba.
10. *Ibid.*, p.127, The queen of Charat Singh is known to have brought some *heram*-women as a dowry-gift with her. Some of them were proficient in the art embroidery. Thus, the herm of Chamba remained hummed with the artistic activities of the ladies, who could turn out exquisite works of embroidery. Handa, O.C., 1998, p.127.
11. Banerjee, P., 1978, p.15.

JASMINDER KAUR, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Textile Designing, BHU, was honoured for reviving handloom by the Government of India at the Lakme Fashion Week 2015. She held many exhibitions in India and abroad and has numerous workshops and educational programmes to her credit. As Guest Speaker, she regularly visits NIFT, Banasthali Vidhyapith, Silk Board, etc. She is also the Deputy Director of Bharat Kala Bhawan Museum, Varanasi. *jasminderkaur@bhu.ac.in*

Fig.11.11 : Krishna and Balrama at bath, fine embroidery like Chamba *rumals* in broad hem of *ghaghras*, Kangra c.1820, opaque watercolour, gold and silver on paper, 27.4 x 20.3 cm, Harvard Art Museum, Acc. No. 1971.134, Photo courtesy - author

11 Embroidered and *Khadi*-printed Pahari Costume: Regional Identity

Rohini Arora

One of the exquisite and spectacular forms of Indian embroidery, popularly known as Pahari embroidery, is carried out in the western Himalayan region. However, the tradition is particularly famous for Chamba *rumals*. These are coverings for *thals,* bronze platters carrying religious offerings, and their elegance and grandeur witnessed the patronage of royalty since historical times. Apart from these coverlets, embroidery has been carried out on courtly costumes and furnishings for the royal household. Before partition, this embroidery was practised in a much wider region known as Pahari states of Punjab comprising of today's Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, some parts of Jammu, and Haryana. The major centres, Fig.11.1, were Chamba, Kangra, Basohli, Nurpur, Jammu, Haripur, Guler, Bilaspur, Salyali, Mandi and Kullu, Hoshiarpur, etc. These centres had numerous working styles and produced a range of articles embellished with embroidery.

Out of this big umbrella of craft, only Chamba *rumals* are being made today in the Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh. The single-sided embroidery is neither known nor practised anymore in Chamba. As the focus of revival activities concentrated only on Chamba *rumals,* the broad spectrum of Pahari embroidery was reduced to double-sided form of craft. This paper would focus on the complete ensemble of costumes, notably, Pahari embroidered *choli,* blouse, worn along with *ghaghra,* skirt, and *dupatta,* head-shawl. An extended reference to *khadi*-printed textiles of the region widens the context.

Embroidered Costume

The Pahari costumes are deeply rooted in the folk culture of the region as reflected in the traditions and practices. These have been illustrated in wall reliefs and sculptures, murals and miniature paintings and there also survived specimens of embroidered costumes. The two earliest evidences of patterned *ghaghra* with *choli* come from wall relief of the Kangra Fort and from the fountain stone-slabs of Chamba in Himachal Pradesh. The Kangra Fort was constructed around 3500 years ago by Raja Susharma Chandra, a descendant of Katoch family. The skirt of Goddess Mahishasura-mardini in one of the stone reliefs from Kangra fort, Fig.11.2, shows scalloped patterns and broad hem with chevron designs.

As stated by V.C. Ohri, "the embroidery was not an exceptional art form as one would find embroidered dress on figures carved on fountain slabs belonging to 10^{th}-12^{th} centuries".[1] Fountain stone-slabs, Fig.11.3, were placed near water sources in various towns and villages in Chamba and display patterned costume. These early stone reliefs would indicate the existence of a tradition of embroidery on costumes other than spectacular *pahari rumals* from later era.

Embroidered *Cholis*

Amongst all utility articles, Pahari *cholis* are the most familiar form of single-sided embroidery. To quote B.N. Goswamy, "*cholis* are widely adopted by the people of North India, especially in Punjab and Rajasthan. With its great popularity among the Rajputs, the short bodice became a prominent presence in medieval times."[2]This is evident in two 19^{th}-century paintings by Kehar Singh. In one of the paintings,

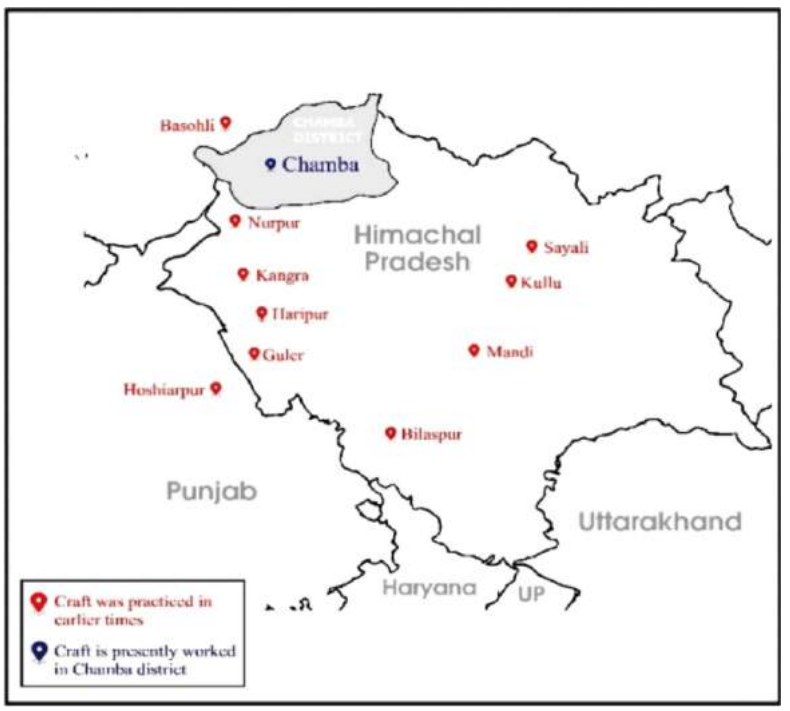


Fig.11.1 : Centres of Pahari embroidery, Photo courtesy - author

datable to 1875, a tracker, *khoji*, was depicted with his companion wearing a coarse *ghaghra* skirt and a short low *choli* with *petia*, Fig.11.4. The *khojis* belong to Bawaria tribe, found in Rajasthan, south of Punjab, Ferozpur and neighbouring territories.[3] The second painting, Fig.11.5, showing the daily life at Harmandir Sahib or Golden Temple at Amritsar, illustrates devotees and their religious practices.[4] Assigned roughly to 1850-1872, this painting shows a woman wearing short red *choli* with green *petia* worn with *dhoti* and *dupatta*. *Petia* is a waist flap used for covering the waist below the breast area. These two examples indicate that short *cholis* with *petia* were extensively worn by women in undivided Punjab. Interestingly, in Pahari states *cholis* were embellished with characteristic embroidery. These are hand-sewn, hand-embroidered blouses made of dark red or indigo *khaddar* fabrics and can be worn with or without *petia*.

Pahari embroidered *cholis* show two distinct designs, bold curved motifs and minute geometrical patterns. Both the styles of design are executed in a different set of stitches which lend the motifs a very distinct form. Bold curved motifs depict stylistic flora and fauna, Fig.11.6a. Geometrical patterns show a variety of designs divided in smaller spaces, Fig.11.6b. The embroidery was done with untwisted silk yarns. Major portions of the design had been worked in off-white and yellow silk. Green, red and blue embroidery threads were used marginally to balance the dark cotton background. Such characteristic colour scheme added a distinctive appearance to these Pahari embroidered *cholis*. Mostly these *cholis* are worked in single-sided stitches; the stitches most

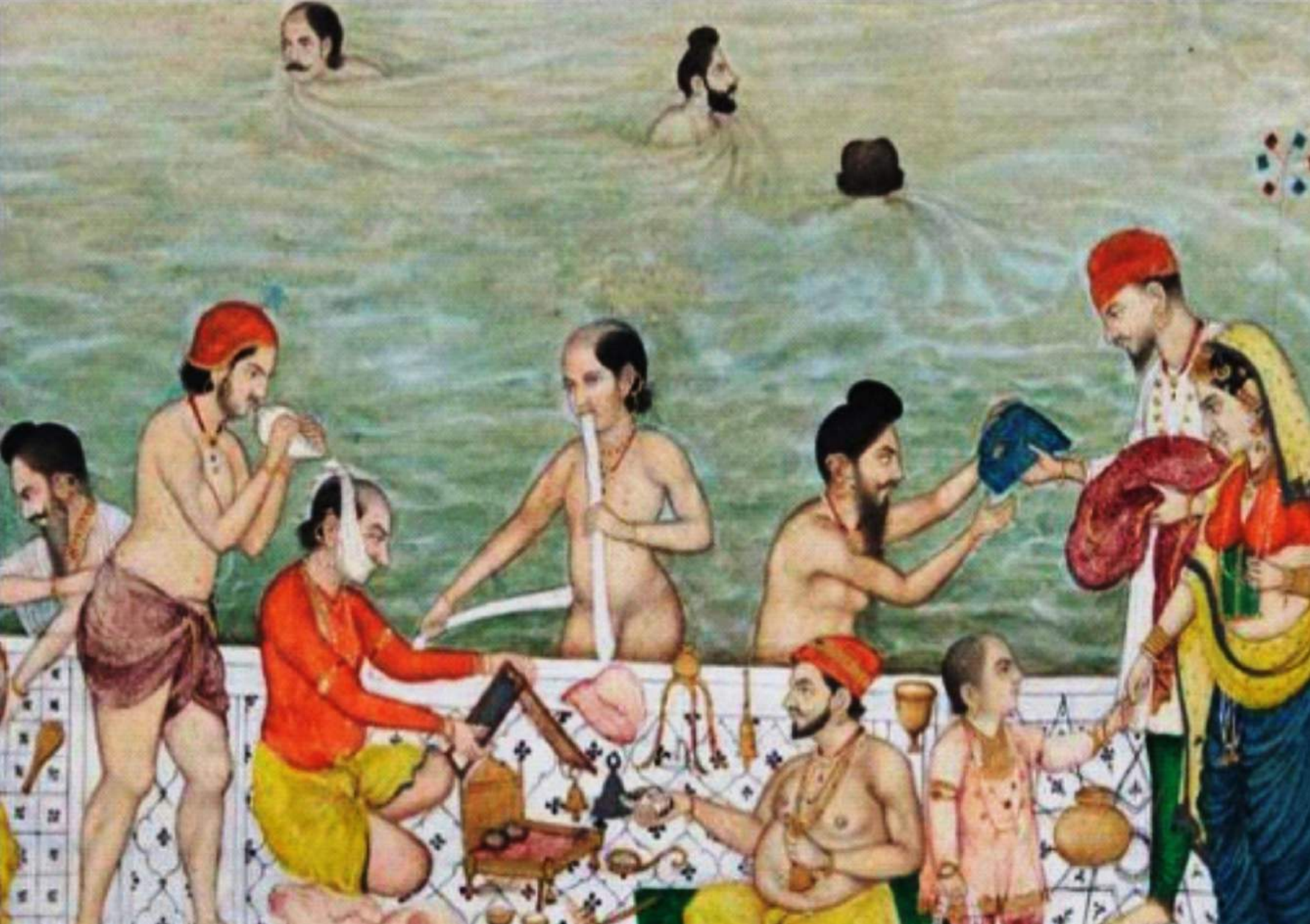

Fig.11.2 : Mahishasur-mardini, Kangra Fort, Himachal Pradesh c.3rd century, stone, Photo courtesy - author

Fig.11.3 : Fountain slab showing patterned costumes worn by the figures, Chamba
c.12th century, stone, Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba, Photo courtesy - author

frequently used were darning stitch in straight, brick and zigzag arrangement. In addition, pattern-darning and stem-stitch, square chain-stitch and double cross-stitch and herring-bone stitch were also introduced suitably. The characteristic feature that adds charm to the entire composition is the outline-stitch, i.e. square chain-stitch in yellow colour.

The depiction of these *cholis* in Pahari miniature paintings opens an interesting world. Datable to c.1735, The Ballad of the Princess and Drummer Boy from Guler workshop, Fig.11.7,[5] shows indigo dyed *choli* with floral design in white. The same design can be also seen on the hem of the *ghaghra*. The red and indigo-dyed embroidered fabrics tied at the drum have floral patterns in white. Prikshit Sharma, a miniature painter from Chamba, mentioned that the folk musician couple depicted in the painting belongs to an ethnic group called *doumaney*, who travel around 60-70 kms in areas neighbouring to

Fig.11.4 : Couple belonging to Bawaria tribe
the female is wearing a short *choli* with *petia*
Kehar Singh, c.1875, opaque watercolour on paper
Government Museum and Art Gallery
Chandigarh, Photo courtesy - author



Chamba town during the festival time of Sui Mata. They go door to door and sing traditional folk musical compositions to gather food and discarded clothes. Often these discarded clothes are tied on the drum as a regular practice, signifying good omen. In a review of ethnographic series and *District Handbook* I Chamba, in *Census of India* 1961, information on this nomadic ethnic group is referred by different names in Punjab and Himachal Pradesh as *Doom* or *Dumna (Mahashay)* or *Dumne (banjare)*. They work with bamboo to make sieves, winnowing pans, fans, matting grass rope and strings, vessels, baskets, screens, furniture, etc. They are also engaged in cultivation, agricultural labour, or dancing singing, or playing upon musical instruments in marriage processions.[6]

The other painting, Fig.11.8, Raja Shamsher Sen with Companions in Female Garb from Mandi of c.1730, shows indigo *choli* with impressions in white and *ghagra* in dull silver horizontal rows with black hem. In both the paintings, Figs.11.7 & 11.8, the indigo-dyed *cholis* can be seen with designs in white, which gives the impression of embroidered Pahari *cholis* as seen in Fig.11.6. Usually, the painted depictions of these embroidered *cholis* are in dark indigo colour with some impressions in white colour, resembling closely the actual surviving specimens. However, the skirts in both the paintings are different. In the first painting, Fig.11.7, may be seen a skirt with a hem in indigo with floral design. In the second painting, Fig.11.8, dull silver print in horizontal rows was enhanced with a black hem. These are being discussed in the following section on the embroidered *ghaghras*.

In my field survey, I studied specimens of embroidered costumes in Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba. The museum has on display embroidered *choli* and wide *ghaghra* with surface prints in silver *khadi* printing, Fig.11.9. Again, this particular example of *ghaghra* is comparable to the costume shown in the miniature painting from Mandi, Fig.11.8.

Embroidered *Ghaghras*

The *ghaghras* were elaborately decorated with patterns, either embroidered or *khadi*-printed. Numerous such *ghagras* depicted in paintings have been studied in addition to virtual museum collections. It had been also observed that miniature painters rather deliberately tried to represent both, the embroidered and printed decoration distinctly. Embroidery is usually shown in a brighter white tone on a darker background while the metallic prints are sometimes shown in dull silver or golden metallic hues.

In paintings, the embroidery is seen on broad hem of *ghaghras*, Figs.10a & b. The colour scheme also remains fixed for *ghaghras* which is either red with hem in indigo or vice versa. Noticeable in the paintings of Vishnu and Lakshmi, Fig.11.10a, and Radha and Krishna, Fig.11.10b, is the embroidered

Fig.11.5 : View of Harmandir Sahib
detail: woman wearing a short *choli* with *petia*
Bishan Singh, c.1850-1872
gouache and gold on paper
48.2 x 64.7 cm
Present Collection unknown

Fig.11.6a : Pahari *cholis* with *petia*
khaddar fabric with silk embroider
in free hand curved designs
Mandi/Chamba, early-20th century
Philadelphia Museum of Art
Acc. No. 2010-18-1, Photo courtesy - author

Fig.11.6b : Pahari *cholis* with *petia*, *khaddar* fabric with silk embroidery in geometrical patterns
Kangra, early-20th century
Museum of Folk and Tribal Art
Gugaon, Haryana, Photo courtesy - author

Fig.11.7 : The Ballad of the Princess and Drummer Boy, painting showing embroidery in *choli*, hem of *ghaghra* and fabrics tied on the drum, Guler c.1735-40, opaque watercolour on paper 29.2 x 46.8 cm, Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh Acc. No. 173, Photo courtesy - author

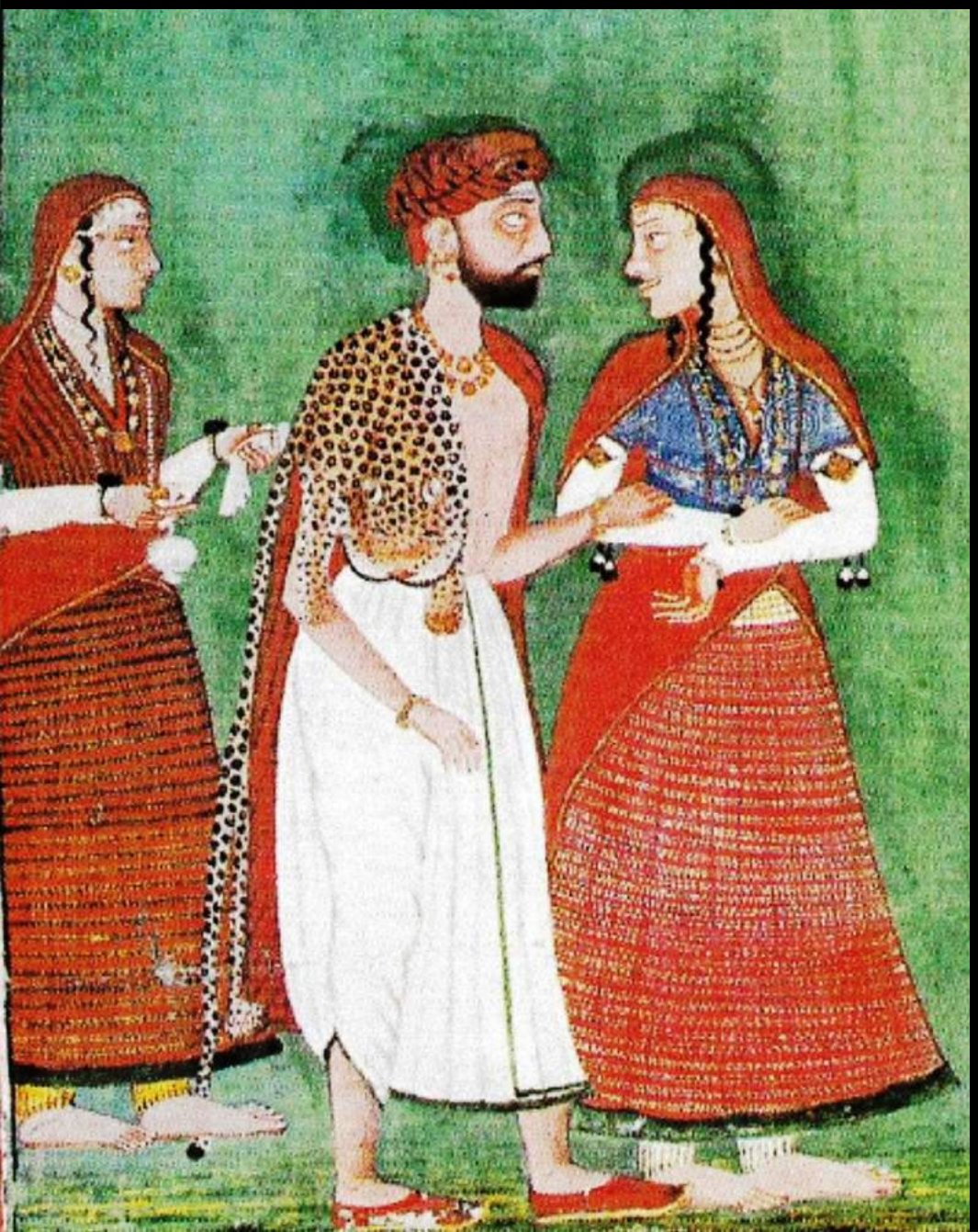


Fig.11.8 : Pahari *choli* with *ghaghra* in silver print, worn by one of the male attendants, Mandi c.1730, 30 x 19.6 cm Museum Rietberg Zurich, Switzerland Acc. No. RVI 1295, Photo courtesy - author

Fig.11.9 : Pahari *choli* and *ghaghra*
cotton *choli* with *petia* has silk embroidery
and *ghaghra* has surface ornamentation with
metallic printing, Chamba, c.19th century
Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba, Photo courtesy - author

Fig.11.10a : Vishnu Laksmi on a lotus, *Swapna Darshana* series
Guler, c.1780, opaque watercolour on paper, 11 x 9.5 cm
San Diego Museum of Art, Acc. No. 1990.1275, Photo courtesy - author

Fig.11.10b : Krishna Distracts a Herder Girl
embroidery in broad hem of *ghaghra*, Guler
c.1790, opaque watercolour and gold on paper
18.4 x 11.4 cm, Edwin Binney, 3rd
Collection, Photo courtesy - author

broad hem of *ghaghras* in indigo-dyed fabric. The bold curved designs and geometrical designs beautify the hem while the main body of *ghaghras* is left plain. The designs are same as seen in *cholis* in Figs.11.6a & 11.b. The white impressions on them point towards embroidery similar to *cholis*.

Embroidery similar to Chamba *Rumals* on *Ghaghras*: Other than these simpler designs on a skirt with darker background in white, fine colourful embroidery on a white background resembling Chamba *rumal* has also been noticed, Fig.11.11. This miniature painting from Kangra court atelier beautifully illustrates the bathing scene of child Krishna and Balarama.[8] Yashoda and one of the attending women carrying the crown wear *ghaghra* having a broad white hem embellished with coloured threads. An embroidered *patka* or sash in similar style of embroidery can be seen in the portrait of Raja Prakash Chand (r.1773-1790) of Guler.[9]

***Khadi*-printed *Ghaghras*:** In a painting of c.1820 from Guler School, Krishna reaching for the moon[10], Fig.11.12, one would notice a variety of skirts popular in the contemporary era. One example with horizontal coloured stripes with a broad hem in red has golden impressions. In the same painting, an indigo skirt shows circular golden impressions in the upper portion and a red hem in dull gold imprints. Similarly, the red skirt of Yashoda has a plain upper body and indigo hem with impressions in dull gold, suggesting metallic printing. It is noted that embroidery imprints are sharper and shown in white colour as seen in Fig.11.10 while metallic prints are shown in duller tones of gold or silver as noticeable in this painting.

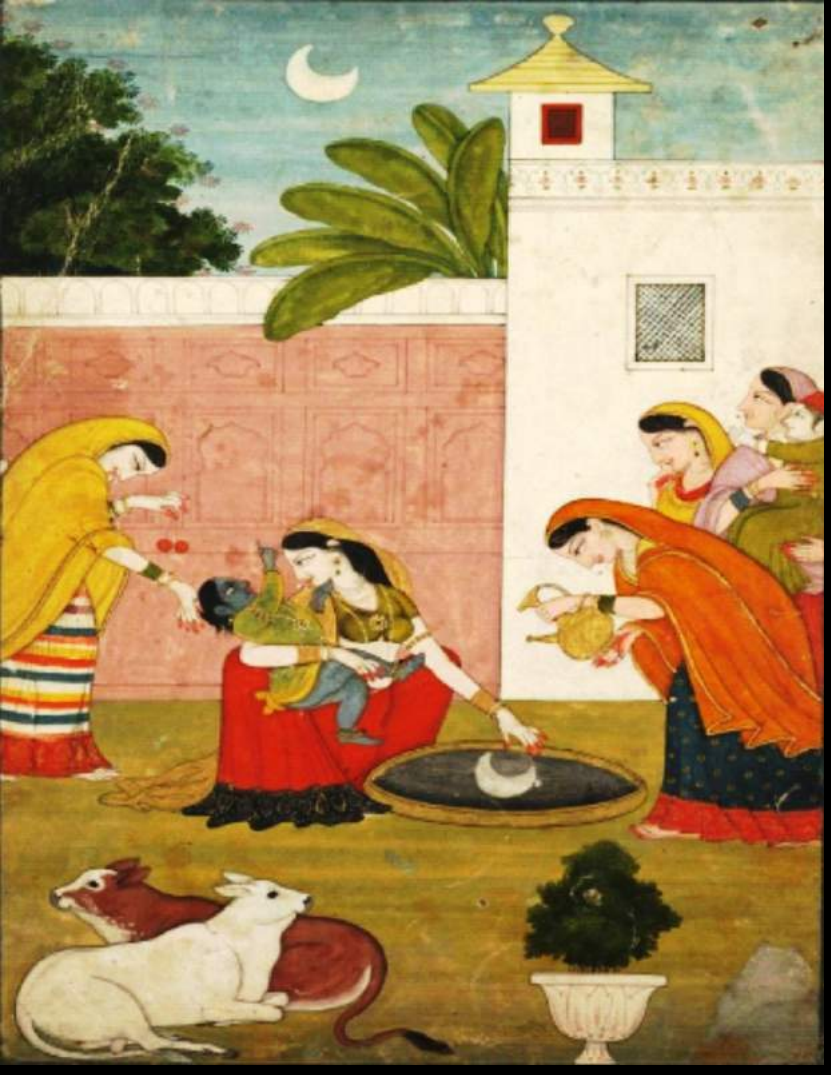


Fig.11.12 : Krishna reaching for the moon, metallic printing in broad hem of *ghaghras* in dull gold, Guler, c.1820
opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 24 x 16 cm
Cleveland Museum of Art, Acc. No. 1971.80
Photo courtesy - author

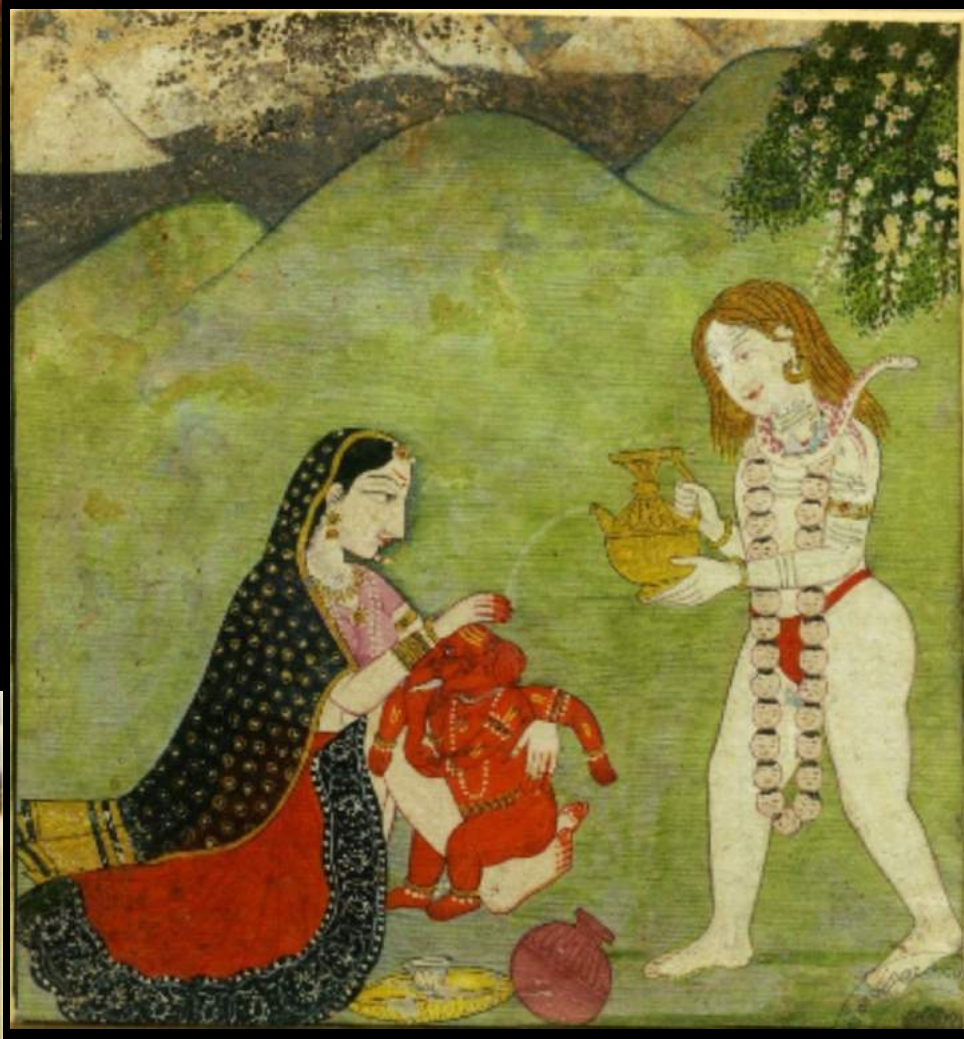


Fig.11.13 : Parvati Shiva bathe Ganesha, *dupatta* with metallic impressions in dull gold along with white embroidery in broad hem of *ghaghra*, Kangra c.18th century, opaque watercolour and gold on paper
Allahabad Museum, Photo courtesy - author

Fig.11.15 : *Proshita-patika Nayika,* red and indigo screen with white impressions similar to embroidery hung over the door in the background, Bilaspur, c.1740
opaque watercolour on paper, 24.3 x 15.2 cm
Victoria and Albert Museum, London
Acc. No. IS.174-1951, Photo courtesy - author

Fig.11.14 : A folio from *Usha-charita,* screen in dull gold hinting metallic printing, Guler c.1780, Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba, Photo courtesy - author

Eminent artist Vijay Sharma mentioned that *chappiayre,* calico printers, were residing in the town in Chamba since long. Perhaps, along with embroidery there continued calico printing as an equally popular medium of adorning fabrics for *ghaghras* which are teamed up with embroidered *cholis*. A significant piece of information about the family of metallic printers residing in Chamba had been published by V.C. Ohri. According to him, during the 1911 Coronation Darbar at Delhi, many Chamba *rumals* were produced and taken for display and distribution in Delhi. These *rumals* were worked by many ladies residing in the town, out of these there were two sisters Nanno and Hatoo belonging to a Sikh family. It has also been mentioned that this family migrated from Punjab to Chamba in the 19th century and continued the family craft of block-printing on cloth with liquefied silver and gold.[11]

Dupattas

Patterning was done on the *dupattas,* dyed either in red or indigo, with embroidery or *khadi*-printing

with metallic pigment. Parvati and Shiva bathing Ganesha, Fig.11.13, has depiction of *ghaghra* and *dupatta* worn with plain *choli*. The red *ghaghra* with broad indigo hem is decorated with patterns in white and designs on the *dupatta* were imprinted in gold.

Interestingly, in quest of these traditional costumes in Pahari miniature painting, similar embroidery with white thread had been traced in furnishings, particularly, on screens and hangings. A Guler painting, Fig.11.14, depicting Usha's Dream[12], has depiction of red and indigo screens covering the doorway with impressions in dull gold, hinting at metallic printing. In a Bilaspur painting of *Proshita-patika Nayika,* Fig.11.15, one notices two rolled-up screens over the door.[13] The outer edges of the screen are in indigo with white impressions. The inner layer is of red fabric. The ornamentation in white on the outer edges of the screen resembles very closely the embroidery seen in Pahari *cholis* and *ghaghras.*

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ROHINI ARORA, Ph.D., curated many exhibitions displaying the artworks in Pahari embroidery. Besides, writing more than 20 research papers she has authored a book on *Pahari Embroidery*. She has recently documented Chamba *rumals* in the collection of Gawthorpe Museum. She is a founder of an organization 'Rumals of Chamba', a market place for *Pahari* embroidery, with a team of 25 artisans in centres in Chamba and Kullu. She is also a guest faculty at NIFT, Panchkula. *drrohini80@gmail.com*

Fig.12.1 : An embroidered Animal face covering mid 20th century. It was made of two or rather three geometric shapes roughly – one a rectangle measuring 12 inches by 9 inches, which was to come on the neck of the horse, and the other was a band – 8 inches by 3 inches, and then a triangular piece which was made of three strips of approximately 3 inches by 1 inch and then joined to a rhombus – 3 inch square. The three separate strips, that join the diamond/rhombus, leave two openings for eyes
IICD, Jaipur, Acc. No. Tex/Emb-Horse/815
Image courtesy: IICD, Jaipur

12

An Embroidered Adornment for the Oxen : A Masterpiece of Banjara Embroidery

Toolika Gupta

A textile object, Fig.12.1, belonging to the Archives of the Indian Institute of Crafts and Design (IICD), Jaipur, caught my attention. The object had a lot of cowrie shells and mirrors tucked on it, like in the Kutch/Rabari or Ahir embroidery. It was a strange object with amazingly intricate embroidery, which would fall into the categories of applique, reverse applique, Banjara embroidery, mirror work, metal work, and cowrie shells too. The style of embroidery was the Lambadi/Lambani style of work, close to Kutch style, but the cowries made it look more Rajasthani or Decani in style. Therefore, identification of the object remained a puzzle.

The object brought to mind these various questions. How old would it be? Where did it come from? What was its use and who made it? were some of the questions that plagued me. I began picking up the books to read about this particular style of work. This object came in to IICD in 2002, it was donated by a vendor from New Delhi. The accession number read: Tex/Emb-Horse/815, thus it had to be associated with a horse. But then who were the tribes who would have embroidered it and would they have domesticated horses or oxen? Some felt that the textile belonged to Gujarat, for the generous use of mirrors *(aarci/aarsi)*. As Anne Morrell points out that the wandering tribes, Banjaras, during their travel through Gujarat, Rajasthan and the Deccan, spread the use of cowrie shells and beads in embroidery.[1] In fact, the mirrors were also used for talismanic purposes, to ward off the evil, as Sheila Paine points out: "A talismanic role is also played by cowrie shells, red seeds, old zips, white buttons, silver trinkets, sequins, bits of watch chain and dangling triangular amulets, as well as by tassels and pompoms, especially in the embroideries of Indus Kohistan."[2]

Though the embroidery resembled that of the Kutch tribes, but the *ahirs* of Gujarat do not use cowries. These are mainly used by the Rajasthani and Deccani nomadic tribes. This particular object was a marvellous piece of embroidery. It had a rather colorful composition. And, when you hold it, as it is supposed to be held, one can at once see that it is an embroidered face cover for a horse or an ox. It has a band for the head, the fabric is cut out where eyes are, like any mask, for the wearer to see. The rest of it has big mirrors embroidered on it. It has clusters of cowrie shells in the center, as well as along metallic tubes on the sides falling on the ears of the animal, Fig.12.3.

The textile was made with a lot of thought and care, to cover the head of the animal, and quite a part of its neck. The base fabric was *khaddar*, coarse cotton from an old fabric that had been upcycled. It was made of two or rather three geometric shapes: a rectangle measuring 12 inches by 9 inches, which was to come on the neck of the horse, and the other was a band measuring 8 inches by 3 inches, and then a triangular piece which was made of three strips of approximately 3 inches by 1 inch and then joined to a

rhombus of 3 inch square. The three separate strips, that join the diamond/rhombus, leave two openings for eyes. Each strip has three mirrors fixed on it.

If we only refer to the front part of the fabric, with three strips being joined to the diamond/rhombus, we can immediately see that it is for an animal, and that it is not a *toran* or a *chakla*. Such an image has been published by Kwon and McLaughin, and they call it a face cover for the oxen.[3] The three images in the book have similar embroidery and edging with cowries. Metal tubes have also been used.

Almost eight mirrors on either side on blue base, with white appliqued sides, look as if like a fabric is pulled for a tent and casting a shadow. That is the typical style of applique done in Sind and Barmer. The mirror work was done with such intricacy and finesse that not a single thread went astray. The herringbone stitch with multiple colours, on two coloured strips of fabric, creates added charm. The chain stitches to create outlines and the small ties that were looped at the edge were all finished with great intricacy. The neat buttonhole stitch, the use of white metal trinkets and the embroidery of cowrie shells, was a feat in itself. The consistency of neatness is amazing. Attaching almost sixty - sixty-one mirrors with the neatness and a colour combination to make it so vibrant made the animal almost come alive in front of me. I was wondering what a lucky horse or ox it must have been to be so beautifully decked. Nearly hundred cowries were added to beautify the piece. Today when we talk about sustainability and upcycling, don't we see what we have lost there? These were skills our tribes possessed. A few pieces of worn-out old fabric, with some yards of yarn, ingenuity, glass, trinkets, cowries and the craft of nimble fingers, could turn this old rag into an article of great beauty, used for their animal companions. As Usha Srikant points out, there is no particular motif in this but they are centered around geometric shapes, lines or organically designed patterns.[4] The back of this piece is an old fabric, reinforced by layers of blue and maroon fabric, appliqued with white fabric.

In her book *Threads of Identity, Embroidery and Adornment of the Nomadic Rabaris*, Judy Frater discusses in detail the lineage and the embroidery of Raikas and Rabaris, but she does not mention the use of cowries. A lot of similarities exist in terms of the stitches mentioned by her and those used in this animal face-cover but evidently this did not come from Gujarat. After speaking to a few people from Gujarat, it was brought to light that the use of cowries is more in Rajasthan-Sind area or in the Deccan, where the Banjaras moved as traders, and then settled once the British created the railway system.[5] Shiela Paine mentions that the Banjaras embroider bags for marriages and animal regalia too, and that these are edged with cowrie shells.[6] Kwon and McLaughin talk about the wandering tribes who moved as traders and had lots of bulls/oxen that carried wheat/salt, etc. The cattle were the main stay of these traders and they owned them, though sometimes, kings would also grant these tribes with horses. So most likely, this textile looks like a face-cover for an oxen, inspite of the details existing against the IIDC accession number. Nevertheless, this masterpiece of Banjara embroidery, most likely comes from the Lambadi/Lambani tribes, who have now settled in the Deccan plateau.

Fig.12.2 : Showing a portion of the object that contains, intricate mirror attachments, applique work, chain stitch crisscross stitch, darning stitch, button hole stitch and cowrie shells attachment, detail of Fig.12.1

Fig.12.3 : Trinkets in white metal they look like a part of jewellery used by the embroiderer. This part will go on the ear of the animal, detail of Fig.12.1

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TOOLIKA GUPTA, Ph.D., a researcher in the field of dress and textile, design and craft, started her career as a designer, more than 25 years ago. At present she is the Director of the Indian Institute of Crafts and Design, Jaipur, India; Chairperson of the Textiles and Clothing Research Centre, Delhi, and the President of Alliance Francaise of Jaipur. She is on the board of CII's National Design Committee since 2018. *director@iicd.ac.in*

13 Textiles from the Courtly Circle of Awadh

Sushama Swarup

"The period of 1722-1856 is an important period in the history of textiles in Awadh, as the nawabs (governors appointed by the Delhi court) gave birth to a specific costume style. This was achieved by assimilating the syncretic Indo-Persian culture, the renowned *ganga-jamuni tehzeeb*, a blend of Persian aesthetics and Indian artistic tradition. Nawab Shuja-ud-Daula (r.1754-1775) took the initiative for the development of arts and crafts in Awadh. The cultural heritage of Awadh continues to be highly valued in the world of contemporary fashion and design.

The textile industry was the dominant sector in Awadh, with a significant portion of the workforce involved in activities such as weaving, dyeing and printing and embroidery. During this period, the courtly textiles achieved their beauty from the variety of materials used, whether it was the delicate muslin from Bengal or Tanda *jamdani*, fine *chikankari* or the opulent *zardozi* embroidery. The use of vibrant colours and intricate embellishments of *kamdani* and *chatta-patti* are very distinctive ornamentation techniques popular in Awadh. Some of the motifs used in the textiles of Awadh not only added beauty and intricacy to the fabrics but also contained deep meaning and spiritual significance.

Mulmul was the preferred textile of the nawabs, as it was well-suited to the climate. The delicate diaphanous *mulmul* (mull, muslin) was used for *choga* and *jama, angarkha, chapkan* and *achkan*. Muslin, a plain-woven cotton fabric was known for its high thread density which contributes to its fine texture. During the *Nawabi* era in Faizabad-Lucknow, as the demand for muslin increased, production spread to nearby villages around. Mau in Azamgarh district gained recognition for striped muslins, known as *doria* while Mahmudnagar specialized in producing plain muslins called *addhi* and *tarandam*. A

Fig.13.1 : *Lehenga*, Varanasi
early-20th century
silk brocaded with silk
length 104 cm, girth at waist 38 cm
girth at hem 360 cm
Private Collection, Milan, Italy

variety called *sharbati* was produced in Lucknow and was valued for its extreme fineness and light texture. This type of weaving declined towards mid-19th century.

Awadh *jamdani* is a flowered muslin with extra wefts of thicker white cotton used to create patterns on loom. The motifs were woven with such precision that they appeared as if they were part of the fabric's inbuilt design. It is believed that the *jamdani* industry was established under Nawab Shuja-ud-Daula who patronized immigrant artisans from Dacca/Dhaka, making them settle down in the neighbouring towns of Jalalpur and Akbarpur. Another kind of flowered muslin was *tanzeb,* chiefly produced in the town of Jais. It originated in the reign of Asaf-ud-Daula (1775-1797). "The credit for its origin goes to a weaver named Bhika, who, in an attempt to excel, prepared a *kurta* and a turban from a piece into which he wove the name and praise of the nawab. The latter appreciated the new device, and henceforth, this craft began to flourish in Jais."[1] Under the patronage of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah (1847–1856), a special variety of Tanda *jamdani* was woven at Tanda near Faizabad, which attained great excellence. The motifs were woven using thicker yarn, giving them a dimensional effect. The yarns of varying densities created the effect of light and shadow. "The body of the cloth is a fine *tanzeb* (muslin). The pattern is interwoven while on the loom, being made up by a series of weft threads of suitable length. Between each pair of weft threads a pair of threads of the figure to be woven is put in, the heddles being raised or depressed after one has been inserted, the figures are made from memory or from a pattern drawn on paper."[2] The floral motifs were of Persian origin and a charming range of flowers and flowering shrubs were predominantly featured in this type of muslin.

The nawabs of Awadh also showed a preference for the brocades of Banaras for *choga* and *angarkha* and patronized these artisans. The artisans of Banaras wove special varieties of *kimkhab* according to the designs of the *choga*. Awadh was also renowned for its indigenous silk products. The variations of *sangi*, *ghalta*, and *gauze* were modest imitations of the Banaras brocades crafted in Khairabad and Basti, Barabanki, and Lucknow. *Sangi*, originating from Barabanki, featured a design called *khanjari* or *leheriya,* with undulating lines running horizontally across the width. *Sangi* derived its name from the technique of treating two warp threads as one, with the warp typically coarse and the weft fine. *Ghalta*, primarily produced in Khairabad, acquired its name from the Persian term *ghaltidan*, meaning "to roll", referring to the process of achieving a smooth, glazed surface by passing the fabric through hot cylinders.[3] *Mainaphal* is a type of cotton brocade from Awadh with multi-coloured *butis* woven on a coloured base.

In the textile industry of Awadh, embroidery played a crucial role; no garment was considered finished unless adorned with embroidery. Embroidery thrived as a skill among the women of the upper class, who were known for their expertise in the craft.

Chikankari (white-on-white embroidery), a remarkable innovation of the master embroiderers of Awadh, was generally used to embellish the neckline, borders, sleeves of *chogas, angarkhas, kurtas, chapkans,* and caps for the royalty during the early-19th century. It is known for its ethereal and elegant aesthetic beauty. There are 36 stitches, each with an individual name, a specific number of threads, and a specific use. *Anokhi chikan* was invented in Lucknow in which the stitches were almost invisible at the back.

Fig.13.2 : A velvet border, embroidered in *zardozi* technique with motifs depicting everyday life, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh 19th century, warp pile/weft pile velvet, made from silk, dyed in dark red, 820 x 3 cm, Private Collection, Milan

Fig.13.3 : *Angarkha*, made of *doria jamdani* yardage, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, 19th century
plain weave cotton patterned foundation with cotton weft, length 114 cm, shoulder 36 cm, sleeve 65 cm
Private Collection, Milan

Fig.13.4 : *Chapkan,* made of muslin, intricately embroidered with *chikankari*, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, early-20th century plain weave foundation, foundation warps: cotton, foundation wefts: cotton, white in colour, full length 114 cm shoulder 36 cm, sleeve length 65 cm, Private Collection, Milan

Fig.13.5 : *Chapkan*, made of *mashru* adorned with the wallpaper pattern of blue and cream stripes, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh late-19th century; satin weave foundation, foundation warps: silk, foundation wefts: cotton, dyed in turquoise and cream full length 78 cm, shoulder 36 cm, sleeve length 54 cm, Private Collection, Milan

Fig.13.6 : *Bar ka pyjama*, with *paat* (upper part) made of Banaras *kimkhab* and *gote* (skirt) is embellished with *chatta-patti* work in zigzag pattern, a *chasak* of *zardozi* and embossed *gota* separates the upper section from the lower, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, 19th century, twill weave foundation, foundation warps: silk foundation wefts: silk, dyed in fuchsia, pattern weft of gold *zari*, full length 130 cm, width of each section 320 cm Private Collection, Milan

Fig.13.7 : *Angarkha*, made of Tanda *jamdani* yardage with floral motifs, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, 19th century plain weave foundation, foundation warps: cotton, foundation wefts: cotton, supplementary weft: cotton all in white, full length 115 cm, shoulder 36 cm, sleeve length 60 cm, Private Collection, Milan

Fig.13.8 : *Choga*, made of *kimkhab* yardage with floral motifs, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh
late-19th century, twill weave foundation
foundation warps: silk, foundation wefts: silk
dyed in orange, pattern weft of silver *zari*
length 120 cm, girth at hem 180 cm, sleeves 59 cm
Private Collection, Milan

Fig.13.9 : A *mainaphal* brocade *odhni* fragment with floral *butis,* Barabanki, Uttar Pradesh
early-20th century, plain weave foundation
foundation warps: cotton, foundation wefts: cotton
dyed in mango-hued yellow *(amrasi)*
multi-coloured pattern wefts of cotton
length 200 cm, width 110 cm
Private Collection, Milan

Zardozi reached its highest level of sophistication during the *Nawabi* period. It is an embroidered extravaganza using gold and silver threads, *tilla*, gird, and *chapta* (flat), *kasab* (sequins), *tiki* (flat sequins), *katori* (cup-shaped sequins), *pot* (small beads), and pearls. In *zardozi* embroidery, the fabric is tightly secured onto a wooden frame (*adda* or *karchob)*, and a *muthia* (crochet-type hook) is used for the embroidery on *makhmal* (velvet). *Zardozi* was profusely used for decorating *lehengas, odhanis, farshi paijamas, gharara*, *batuas,* and *chapkans, achkans,* waistcoats, caps, and shoes. A particular design, *shikargah,* became very popular in the brocade weaving of Banaras. During the *Nawabi* period, professional storytellers gained the patronage of the nawabs and the textile artisans, inspired by these accounts, started depicting the stories and everyday lives of people in *zardozi* embroidery, creating an aura of magnificence and opulence.

Chatta-patti is the most unique technique employed in the ornamentation of costumes in Awadh. According to Attia Zaidi, an award-winning *chatta-patti* artisan of Lucknow, "*chatta-patti* involved stitching together diverse pieces of cloth of varying colors according to a pattern traced onto cardboard, known as *farma*."[4] This craft boasted a wide array of patterns, with the most valued being the *mahapusht*, resembling fish scales, possibly inspired by the emblem of the *Nawabs* of Awadh.

Daraz-ka-kaam is another distinctive method of joining, usually two pieces of muslin lengths using concealed stitches hidden within the *daraz* (fissure), creating a decorative see-through effect like an applique work. Various motifs, such as *phool daraz* (flower), *macchli daraz* (fish), and *patti daraz* (leaves), are used for embellishing the seams.

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SUSHAMA SWARUP, Ph.D., is an avid collector and scholar of costumes of Awadh. Besides authoring a book on Costumes and Textiles of Awadh, and numerous articles on costumes, she has exhibited her collection in over 10 prestigious venues, including EXPO Milan 2015, Palazzo Isimbardi (Milan), Casa dei Carraresi (Treviso), Castello Visconteo di Abbiategrasso and various others with combined visitors of 150,000. Presently, she is a regular speaker in Italy. She is based in Milan, Italy. *sushama.swarup@gmail.com*

14 *Ashavali* Brocades: An Overview

Vishu Arora

Ashavali brocades unveil layers of time and history, lineage of legendary weavers and power of patronage. In the 8th century, Asawal or Ashaval or Ashapalli, after the name of King Asha Bhil, was an important township. This old settlement or *pura* had boundaries extending from Sarangpur in the East, Ramnath in the West, Kamnath in the South to Maneknath in the North.[1] The city was situated on the raised left bank of 371 kilometer long river Sabarmati, about 173 feet above sea level. The traditional houses in Ashaval were built in blocks or *pols*, varying in size from small courts of five to ten houses to large quarters of the city containing as many as 10,000 inhabitants. Such larger blocks were generally crossed by one main street with a gate at each end and were subdivided into smaller courts and blocks, each with its separate gate branching off either side.[2] In 1074, the Solanki ruler Karnadeva-I of Anahilvada-Pattan defeated the king Asha Bhil and thereafter, the city was named Karnavati. The Solanki rule lasted until the 13th century, when Gujarat came under the control of the Vaghela Dynasty of Dwarka. It was in 1403, at Ashaval, Tatar Khan proclaimed the independence of the Gujarat Sultanate. Later, it was renamed as Ahmedabad when Ahmed Shah, son of Tatar Khan, ruled over the territory in 1411. After Patan, Ahmedabad was declared as the capital city of Gujarat.[3] *Ashaval-nu-tekro*, Fig.14.2, near Astodia *darwaja*, Fig.14.3, is considered connected to the old Ashaval.[4]

It is pertinent to mention that during the fieldwork and on reviewing literature, maps indicating geographical boundaries of Ashaval were nowhere found. Dr. Manek Patel 'Setu' has mentioned the area of Ashaval in his documentary on Ahmedabad and in the book *Ahmadabad* (1988). Both these references indicated a few landmarks towards the possible geographical area of Ashaval. Following the same landmarks, a map has been drafted that indicates the areas where these brocades might have been woven and sold to the traders, Fig.14.1.

Fig.14.17 : Fragment of traditional woven Picchwai
Satin weave foundation
foundation warp
and weft: mulberry silk
in dark blue
extra weft: twill weave Krishna floral *buta* and cows
in gold and silver *zari*
with ocher hands on cows
Photo courtsey: Amit Ambalal

Ashavali Brocades

Origin of brocade weaving in Ashaval is not known because of the dearth of evidence. It is believed that the locally-manufactured brocades were named after Ashaval, the old city, Fig.14.4. in the early Christian era, Gujarat emerged as an important silk-weaving centre in

the western region. Pattan produced, as noted by Abul Fazl in the *Ain-i-Akbari*, "imitations of stuffs from Turkey, Europe and Persia" in addition to "velvets and brocades". Also, locally-produced cotton fabrics were "taken to distant parts as gifts of value". The list of "Gold Stuffs" in *Ain* also mentions *Tas*, *Darai-baf*, *Muqayyash* and *Shirwani* from Gujarat. Silk cloth was manufactured in the greatest volume in Bengal but the varieties made in Gujarat were superior to all regions in terms of fineness.

As mentioned in the *Imperial Gazette* (1908), white and yellow varieties of China silk were imported at the rate of Rs. 18 or Rs. 20 per pound. The silk brocades of Ahmedabad were sold in Bombay, Kathiawar, Central India, Rajputana, Nagpur and in the Nizam's Dominions. The brocades were woven using real gold and silver *zari*. Tin and electroplated *zari* were used, at a later date, in some brocades.[5]

Poet Premanand, the 17th-century poet of Gujarat, has described several varieties of textiles and costumes in his poetical composition, *Kunvarbai-nu-mameru*. As per the text, mother-in-law of Kunvarbai, the daughter of Narsingh Mehta, a devotee of Lord Krishna and renowned poet, demands the following textiles as part of the trousseau : *5 sher kunku, 7 shrifal, pacchedi 15 kodi, 50 patola, 20 mann vankadiya, 30 kodi fofad, 5 vastrana 25 vagha, 4 choka ditras, 60 mugta, 100 chaniya, chir 40, dhotiya 30, 2 kodi jarkash-ni-sari, 12 kodi reshmi sari, simple sari 3 sher, jhal 4 sher, ghar sari 10-20 kodi, 16 kodi bhat, chhit mor vitukadi, 9 kodi than, 50 soneki chain, 1000 sona mohar.* The term *jarkash-ni*-sari literally refers to the sari made of *zari*, which perhaps is indicative of the early form of *Ashavali* sari.

Traditionally, the *Ashavali* sari was woven on a 105 cm wide pit loom with the count of upto 112/120 ends and 112/96 picks per square inch. The field woven in 4x1 satin weave added to the heaviness and sheen. The *pallu* and cross borders were woven in a taquete structure; 1/3 twill weave front was combined with a separable plain weave back. These surfaces were further calendared to lay emphasis on the smoothness and thinness. With the passage of time, the weavers kept on changing the value and intensity of the colours. The colours became brighter and flamboyant relating to the *Paithani* sari from Aurangabad and Burhanpur, woven much later during the mid-19th century. Further, the process of weaving was simplified and the saris woven in plain weave were patterned with the supplementary weft in 1/3 twill or 1/7 twill. Some *Ashavali* saris were woven with metallic ground and patterns in multiple colours of silk, some in twill woven metallic weft while some in the combination of the two. The saris woven in the 19th and 20th century have been simplified in style and process as compared to the complex technique used in the patterns of the 17th and 18th century.

Historians have mentioned that during the period between 11th to 17th centuries, there were 500-600 looms in Ahmedabad and 900-1000 looms in Surat, which employed a large number of master brocade weavers. Shahpur, one of the suburbs of Ahmedabad, was the main centre. The brocades were woven in the forms of canopies, floor spreads and hangings, yardages, saddle-cloths, bags and fans. The rich colour scheme and *minakari,* inlay work, continued as predominant aspects of such brocades.

Moravej pointed out in his comparative study that several characteristic features of the Safavid brocades re-appeared in the *Ashavali kimkhabs*.[6]

Design vocabulary of *Ashavali* brocades

The *varnaka-samucchaya* of circa 16th century, a compilation of technical and popular terms, mentions the names of various brocaded garments such as *kasbi kanchli.* It also refers to certain common motifs such as

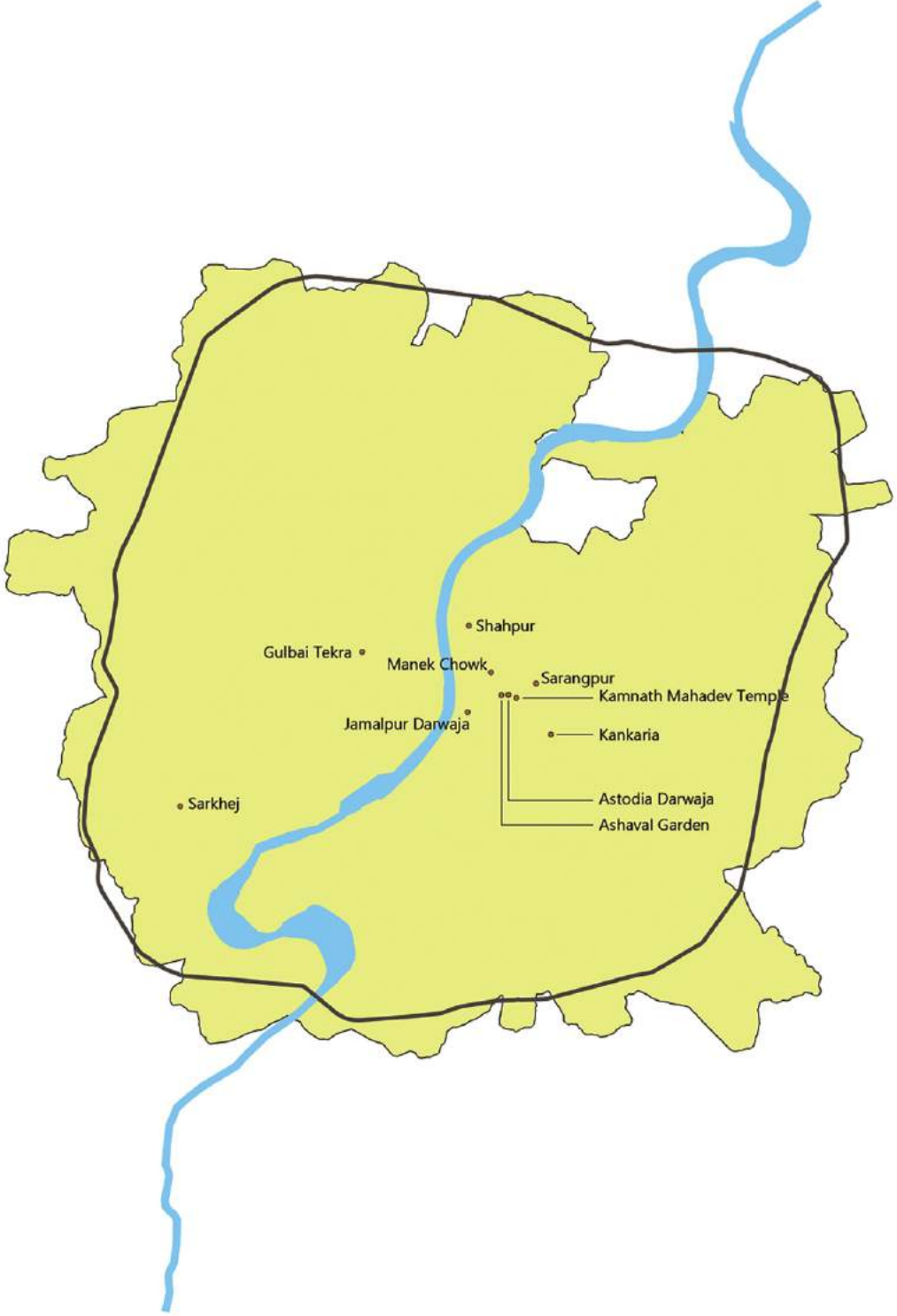

Fig.14.1 : Map indicating the location of Ashaval and areas where brocades were woven and sold
Disclaimer: This map (not to scale) is used for representational purpose only and does not claim accuracy for coordinates distances or bearings

Fig.14.2 : *Ashaval-nu-tekro*

Fig.14.3 : Ashaval Garden near Astodia *Darwaja*

Fig.14.4 : Remains of the Fortified City Outer Wall

Fig.14.5 : Layout of Ashavali Sari, early 20th century
Plain weave foundation; foundation warp and weft: mulberry silk, extra warp: gold *zari*. Photo courtesy: Mitra Patel

Figs.14.6 & 14.7 : Fragments with Swan motif; Plain weave foundation; foundation warp and weft: mulberry silk in ochre and pista green (respectively); extra weft: twill weave patterns in gold and silver *zari*. Photo courtesy: Amit Ambalal

Fig.14.8 : *Toran* with Swan border with Krishna in the center on blue background
Plain weave foundation; foundation warp and weft: silk in ochre and *pista* green; extra weft: twill weave patterns in gold and silver *zari,* length 16.5cm , width 251cm
Photo courtsey: Amit Ambalal

Figs.14.9 & 14.10 : Lion and Paisley *Kunia* (corner motifs in sari)
Plain weave foundation; foundation warp and weft: silk in royal blue and off white (respectively)
extra weft: twill weave patterns in gold and silver *zari*

Fig.14.11 : Fragment with Parrot motif; Plain weave foundation; foundation warp and weft: silk in fuchsia
extra weft: twill weave patterns in gold *zari*

Fig.14.12 : Body of sari with *Chand-tara buta;* Plain weave foundation; foundation warp and weft: silk in cyan blue
extra weft: twill weave pattern in gold and silver *zari*

Fig.14.13 : *Pallu* (end-piece) of sari with stylized Paisley *buta;* Plain weave foundation
foundation warp and weft: mulberry silk; supplementary weft in *pallu*: gold *zari*
extra weft: natural dyed mulberry silk in twill weave stylized paisley in *minakari*

Fig.14.14 : Fragment of traditional *Bakhubhai nu kinkhab;* Plain weave foundation
foundation warp and weft: mulberry silk in sky blue; extra weft: twill weave leaves pattern in silver *zari*

Fig.14.15 : Body of sari with circular lion pattern and a floral *buta* in the centre
Plain weave foundation; foundation warp and weft: mulberry silk in indigo
extra weft: twill weave pattern in gold *zari*

Fig.14.16 : Body of sari with a grid of parrots forms and peacock *buta* in each block
Plain weave foundation
foundation warp and weft: mulberry silk in red; extra weft: twill weave pattern in gold *zari*

Fig.14.18 : Body of sari
with *Asharfi* motif and
phul-vela; Plain weave foundation
foundation warp and weft: mulberry
silk in red; extra weft: twill weave
pattern in gold and silver *zari*
Photo courtsey: Gujarat State Handloom
and Handicraft Corporation Ltd.

Fig.14.19 : Fragment of *hathi-vela*
Plain weave foundation
foundation warp and weft: mulberry silk in brown
extra weft: twill weave elephant
and floral *buta* in green and silver *zari*

Fig.14.20 : Fragment of calligraphy woven in fabric; foundation warp and weft: silk in red
extra weft: twill weave patterns in gold *zari*, Photo courtsey: Gujarat State Handloom and Handicraft Corporation Ltd.

Fig.14.21 : Vishnubhai, the master weaver, begins his day by offering prayers to his father Somabhai and the almighty

gaja-vadi or *hathi-vela* (elephant border), *hansa-vadi* (swan border), *mandala* (ornate circle) and *putalium* (multiple doll figures). The borders of the *Ashavali* saris got their names after the motifs that were woven, like *popat kinar* (parrot border).[7]

The *Ashavali* design vocabulary includes stylized motifs of paisley, Fig.14.5; parrots, Fig.14.11; peacocks, Fig.14.16; and lions woven with floral motifs in the field, Fig.14.15. While human and animal representations were not woven in most parts of India because of Islamic influence, Gujarat was an exception. One of the traditional designs for the *kinkhab*, produced primarily for royal consumption, was ornate cypress or paisley pattern, Fig.14.13. Figurative designs include depiction of lord Krishna, Figs.14.8 & 14.17, *putli,* bird and animal motifs. The *kinkhabs* were priced according to the design and intricacy of the weave. Popular traditional *kinkhabs* were: *ganshiyo*, *kashini katarani*, *kotha katarani*, *kalash bhaat*, *phool bhaat*, *mohor*, *lalbadami, garebandi*, *mor-putli*, *katarano lilo*, *khapaidi*, *taramandali, lerio* and *badami-kantha lila*, *lapano kashini*, *mor-vela, phul-vela* and *popat-vela*. The floral border with *minakari* on gold ground is also named as *Ashavali* border when woven along the sari or attached to the *Paithani* saris of Maharashtra. Traditional colours of the brocades are red, purple, dark blue, sky blue, magenta, *mehandi* green, parrot green, black and white. The motifs are, invariably, outlined with the black or indigo silk to make these stand out against the base fabric colour. *Ashavali* borders are woven with silver and gold *zari*[8] with motifs in coloured silk.

Ashavali brocades produced in the 21st century are beautiful examples of sustainable textile. These brocades have survived at Ridrol because of consistent efforts, prayers and hard work of the weavers. Though initiatives at different levels in terms of adding variety in the products have been taken, a lot more is still required to be done so that the glory of this textile and heritage can pass on further to the next generation. Buying local handloom products empowers the weaver. Hand-crafted brocades are priced possession for the elite and symbolize high end fashion.

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VISHU ARORA, Ph.D., is a design educator in the Department of Design Space at National Institute of Fashion Technology, Panchkula, Haryana. She has authored several books including the one on *Ashavali Brocades*. She co-authored *Wall Paintings - The Vanishing Treasure*. Beside textiles, her areas of research include aspects of visual art, sustainability, folk and cultural studies. She has recently curated an art show "Creative Journey of Needle" at The Nehru Centre, London. *vishu.arora@nift.ac.in*

Fig.15.6
Detail: Fig.15.1

15

Purnamidam : An Ode to the Land of Spiritual Wisdom and Material Abundance

Smriti Morarka

Cradled in the luxury of silk, framed by the warmth of wool, strength of jute and comfort of cotton, dotted by the exuberance of gold and silver and accentuated by the eternal peacock feather, lies this representation of Bharata, Fig.15.1, celebrating its wealth, freedom and completeness.

In this wall panel the chosen land of six seasons is depicted in a palette of six hues, each standing for those qualities that I identify Bharata with. The purity and *shakti* that "Red" denotes, melts its way with the wisdom and leadership qualities of "Purple" along with the knowledge and serenity that the colour "Blue" lends it. The warmth and joy of the "Saffron", the happiness and sheer life that is signified by "Green" and the *Samriddhi* (abundance) and optimism reflected in "Yellow", all play their part in this melange.

This display textile is named *Purnamidam* (complete) as is every soul that resides in this land of free thinkers. Each of us complete in ourselves, as well as complete as part of the larger entity, our motherland. Nonetheless, the woven panel celebrates the vastness and versatility of our land.

The *Mriga* (deer) on the mountain tops, Fig.15.3, known for its swiftness and speed join in the dance of celebration, along with *Airavata* (elephant) from the deep south, Fig.15.4, the symbol of fortune and wisdom. They together tread a step with the *Vyagrha* (tiger), Fig.15.3, the magnificent and fearless guardian of the marshy Sundarbans and *Ushtra* (camel), Fig.15.5, the resilient and self-dependent custodian of desert expanse. The quick-witted and loyal *Kapi* (monkey), Fig.15.4, accompany our eternal mother the nurturing, selfless provider, our *Kamadhenu* (cow), Fig.15.5, as they don't miss a beat and come together on this piece of art. The *Ambuja* (lotus) is the symbol of an intrinsic identity of our land, a land of people who are taught to perform our duties without attachment and without being affected by the conduct of those around us. The lotus in stages of bloom hence dots the brocaded landscape as a constant reminder of the people we are, Fig.15.6.

We are believers in the cycle of creation and destruction, on the never-ending movement of the *Kal Chakra* (Cycle of Time), on the truth that no two moments are alike, all of which are reflected in this piece. The patterning of the base fabric, if observed carefully, too, is changing dramatically in its direction throughout the warp length.

This piece is woven on the banks of the Uttaravahini Ganga, in Kashi's impeccable weaving traditions and represents a mixed technique of brocading, *minakari, jamdani* and *rangkaat* being used simultaneously. The *rangkaat* technique enhance a melange of colours that please rather than divide, signifying how each of us are distinct and different, but together, we belong.

Literature: Lavina Baldota (Curator) & Mayank Mansing Kaul (editor), *Sutr Santati* Baldota Foundation, Hospet, 2023, Cat. No. 31.

SMRITI MORARKA, Trustee, Jnana-Pravaha, initiated *Tantuvi* (1997) as an attempt to revive weaving traditions of Banaras. She embarked upon a well thought out correction process by altering the maladies that had crept into this sector. Her journey, over time, has been one that has moved from revival to innovation. Innovation in both weaving technique and fabric constructions, so as to bring the fabled intricacy in the weaves while keeping a keen eye on the changing preferences of the contemporary connoisseurship. *smriti@tantuvi.com*

Fig.15.1 : *Purnamidam,* woven wall panel, produced in Varanasi, 2022, silk brocaded with jute, cotton and wool peacock-feather yarn and metallic yarn, plain weave foundation, 414.3 x 117.7 cm

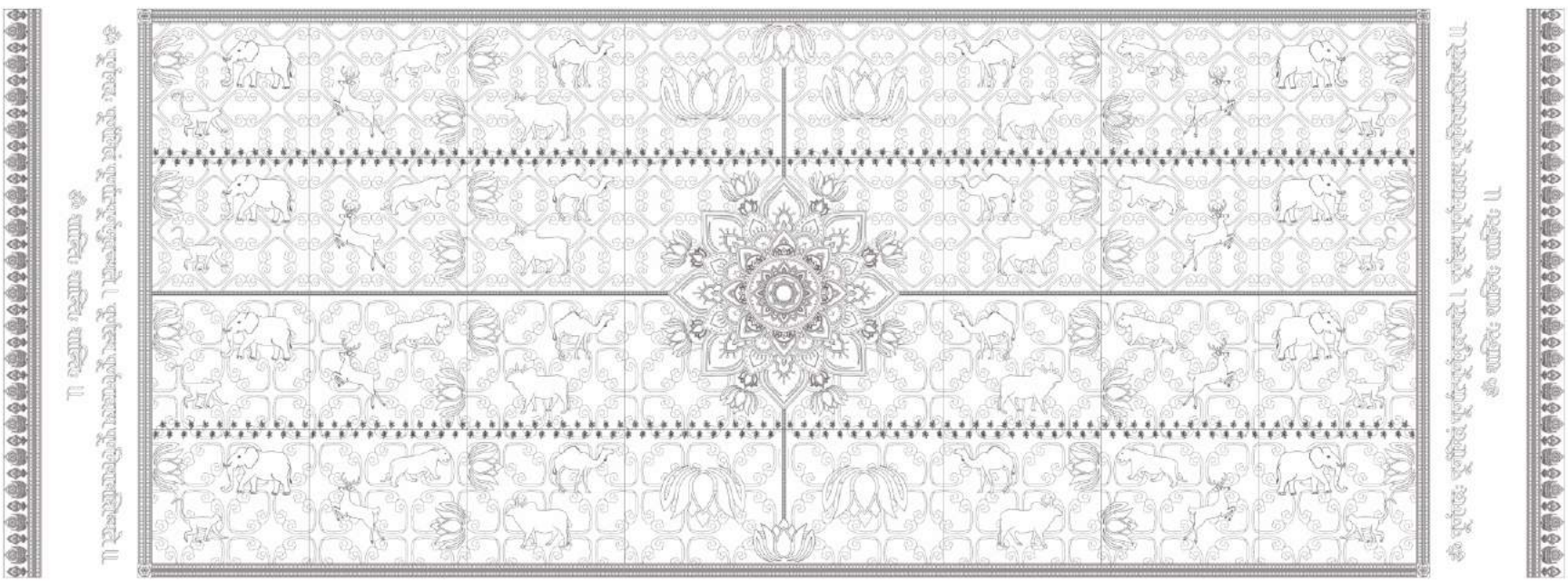

Fig.15.2 : *Purnamidam*: the parent design, ink on paper, 251.46 x 91.44 cm

Fig.15.3 : detail: Fig.15.1

Fig.15.4 : detail: Fig.15.1

Fig.15.5 : detail: Fig.15.1

Fig.16.4 : *Gharchola* sari, Holyweaves, Varanasi, contemporary, Image courtesy: Umang Agrawal

Hemang Agrawal

झीनी झीनी बीनी चदरिया
काहे कै ताना काहे कै भरनी, कौन तार से बीनी चदरिया।
इंगला पिंगला ताना भरनी, सुखमन तार से बीनी चदरिया।
आठ कंवल दल चरखा डोले, पाँच तत्त गुन बीनी चदरिया।
साई को सियत मास दस लागे, ठोक ठोक कै बीनी चदरिया।
सो चादर सुर नर मुनि ओढे, ओढ के मैली कीनी चदरिया।
दास कबीरा जतन से ओढे, ज्यों की त्यों धर दीनी चदरिया।

Five centuries ago, the weaver-poet Kabir, working on a loom near the banks of the Ganga in Banaras, wrote '*jhini-jhini bini chadariya.*' More cryptic than Kabir's other well-known poems, *'jhini-jhini'* compares the mortal body with a fine, translucent cloth woven by God, the supreme weaver, himself. Kabir's words could be used for describing Banaras as a textile centre in the present.

jhini-jhini bini chadariya
(How delicate and pure, is this fabric the Lord has woven)

For a city with almost 3000-year old tradition of weaving, current silk technology and design language of Banaras dates back just a few centuries. As India's best-known centre for the patterned silk textiles, the city traces its sophisticated drawlooms (*naqsha-jala*) to the Mughal *karkhanas* of western or northern India, which in turn are believed to have owed their drawloom-weaving expertise to medieval Central Asia or Iran. The modern jacquard technology now adopted across the local silk-weaving industry came, of course, from Europe where the jacquard machine was invented and modernized during the Industrial Revolution. Besides a dominant imprint of Late Mughal pattern vocabulary of Banarasi silk also has Iranian, European as well as mythological Indian references. Despite its shorter history compared to that of the other great silk-weaving centres of the Old World, Banaras retains some of its finest skills to this day. It is also the only major centre where patterned silk textiles are still woven on handlooms on an industrial scale. There are now several Indian and international fashion designers who use Banarasi textiles for their richness and refinement in their collections, as well as for the adaptability of Banarasi silk to highly individual, even idiosyncratic, design sensibilities.

kahe ka tana, kahe ki bharni, kaun tar se bini chadariya
(What is this warp? What weft is this? Of which fibre is made this fabric?)

Early historical references found in Buddhist and Hindu scriptures point to Banaras as a cotton-weaving centre. At present, however, the warp in almost any hand-woven Banarasi fabric is of silk. Cotton warps

rarely appear. Typically, for modern handloomed Indian fabrics, it is simpler to introduce different types of yarn in the weft to vary fabric quality and weight. In Banaras, therefore, we find several types of mulberry and non-mulberry silk and silk-waste yarn used in the weft, as well as cotton, *pashmina* and merino wool, linen, art silk (rayon), other synthetic yarns, along with what is, arguably, the defining element of classical Banarasi silks: *zari* or metal-wrapped thread. The metal thread itself is of several different types, with varying alloys of precious and base metals.

Until a decade or two ago, brocaded cotton saris were quite common but, in recent years, their production seems to have fallen. One possible reason for this is the extremely fine reed used in routine Banarasi weaving, which calls for the use of very fine cotton yarn and require sizing skills that mostly died out in the previous century. Ironically, weavers working with fine reeds as well as laboriously hand-brocading their fabrics are generally considered to be highly skilled, but the wholesale shift to silk warps also implies that Banarasi weavers have too easily given up on fine cotton that is more difficult to handle. Equally, the reluctance to weave cotton fabrics also means that Banaras offers few fabrics that are suitable for the harsh Indian summer. Today, the traditional Banarasi silks, patterned ornately with gold and silver *zari,* are still valued but tend to work best for what in contemporary fashion parlance is termed "occasion-wear". The heavily brocaded, high-end wedding sari (and its innumerable cheaper versions) remains a staple of Banarasi looms but these inherent skills and strengths also constrain the weavers from tapping into a larger urban market for pręt garments.

ingla-pingla tana-bharni, susman tar se bini chadariya

(The breath taken, the breath released, the breath is this warp and weft; the veins that stretch, the nerves that bind, there flows this very fabric)

Banaras textiles reflect not only the interlacing of many yarns and artisanal skills, but also the intermingling and assimilation of diverse communities, religions and cultures. The textile industry is neither back nor forward-integrated, which means that each function at the product end as well as the business end is fulfilled by many different facilitators. A master-weaver, or *grihastha*, usually controls the product end, working with an identified set of freelancers such as a *naqshband* for artwork and point-paper patterns; a *patta-ustaad* for the punching of jacquard cards; the *tanara, rangrez and muquadam* for all the yarn and loom preparation that precedes weaving; the *bunkar/karigar* or *julaha* for weaving; and a *rafugar* or other artisans for post-loom processing. The master-weaver generally co-ordinates with a trader or *gaddi-dar* for patterns, production parameters and also, occasionally, for yarns and *zari*. The *gaddi-dar* in turn wholesales or retails the textiles to his customers. Taking feedback from his clients, the *gaddi-dar* guides the *grihasth* about the design, colour and quality of a fabric. Contrary to popular stereotyping, in the present day, no function is entirely controlled by a specific religion or even community.

While this complex production chain worked flawlessly in the heyday of the Banarasi textile industry, the situation is now quite different. The decline in the industry in recent decades reflects not only line-loss and price-escalation without an accompanying increase in value addition through the chain, but also an overall degradation in quality and design. It is important to note that the few *gaddi-dars* who maintained their investment in design and in the quality of their craftsmanship have seen their businesses grow even during the downturn.

atha-kamala dal charkha dole, panch tatva, gun bini chadariya

(An eight-petalled lotus is the Lord's spinning wheel; it spun the five elements, and all three virtues, from which this fabric was woven)

With its lengthy patterning processes and its wide design repertoire, the Banaras silk industry offers a depth of fabric character and quality that is, quite simply, awe-inspiring. A *kadhava* Banarasi sari, a Tibetan *gyasar* brocade, a *tanchoi* apparel fabric or a *kora-katarvan* (organza cutwork) or white-on-white furnishing, each can sustain an entire weaving ecosystem on its own. Yet, in Banaras, these production systems are all interchangeable. In many instances, several different fabrics can be woven on the same loom with the same set of hands. The skills that the master-weavers of Banaras have inherited for patterned weaving, moreover, remain unparalleled. The one constant during the changing patterning techniques over time (from the draw-loom to the punched-card jacquard and on to the newly-introduced electronic jacquard) has been the mastery of the Banaras weavers over the entire weaving process.

Even the powerlooms that dominate the Banarasi textile industry today have absorbed the local weavers' age-old skills and strengths. In some ways, the local powerlooms, which were introduced in the city about sixty years back but gained traction only during the eighties, are an extension of the Banarasi handloom. For this reason, some fabrics woven on Banarasi powerlooms may appear indistinguishable to the untrained eye, from those produced on handlooms. This has resulted in a growing overlap between the two technologies. Given the fabric qualities that the powerloom can now replicate, the handloom process invariably appears slower and more expensive by comparison. Unlike the products of many other Indian weaving centres, however, there remain a number of traditional, handloom fabric types in Banaras that a powerloom cannot replicate.

From the perspective of contemporary fashion and textile designers, the handlooms are ideal not only for their adaptability but also for the fact that premium qualities can be produced in small runs. From the perspective of trade, on the other hand, the powerlooms offer advantages of scalability. They also cater to a larger market. It is imperative therefore, that instead of considering Banarasi powerlooms and handlooms as competing technologies for the same market, we see them as specialist and diversified producers with more or less independent markets, and which can co-exist to mutual advantage.

sai ko bunat mas das lage, thok thok ke bini chadariya

(It took the Lord ten months; it took the finest skill, and infinite patience; it took endless labour to beat in this weft)

Patterning on complicated looms is often viewed as a refined textile art. It can be seen, equally, as a sophisticated binary technology that reveals itself during the design-drafting, graph-making, card-punching, loom set-up and weaving stages. Creating a woven surface, and a patterned one at that, is more complex than ornamenting it with a mere surface technique such as embroidering or printing. This also means that for any garment designer to work with patterned textiles, needs to have a sound understanding of loom-technology and weaving technique. Together with the exceedingly slow pace of

Fig.16.1 : *Rangkaat* sari with *konia,* silk, Holyweaves, Varanasi, contemporary, Image courtesy: Umang Agrawal

Fig.16.2 : *Bhagwad Gita shlokas* woven in supplementary weft, Holyweaves, Varanasi, contemporary
Image courtesy: Umang Agrawal

Fig.16.3 : Silk and wool shawl woven in *tanchoi* technique, Holyweaves, Varanasi, contemporary
Image courtesy: Umang Agrawal

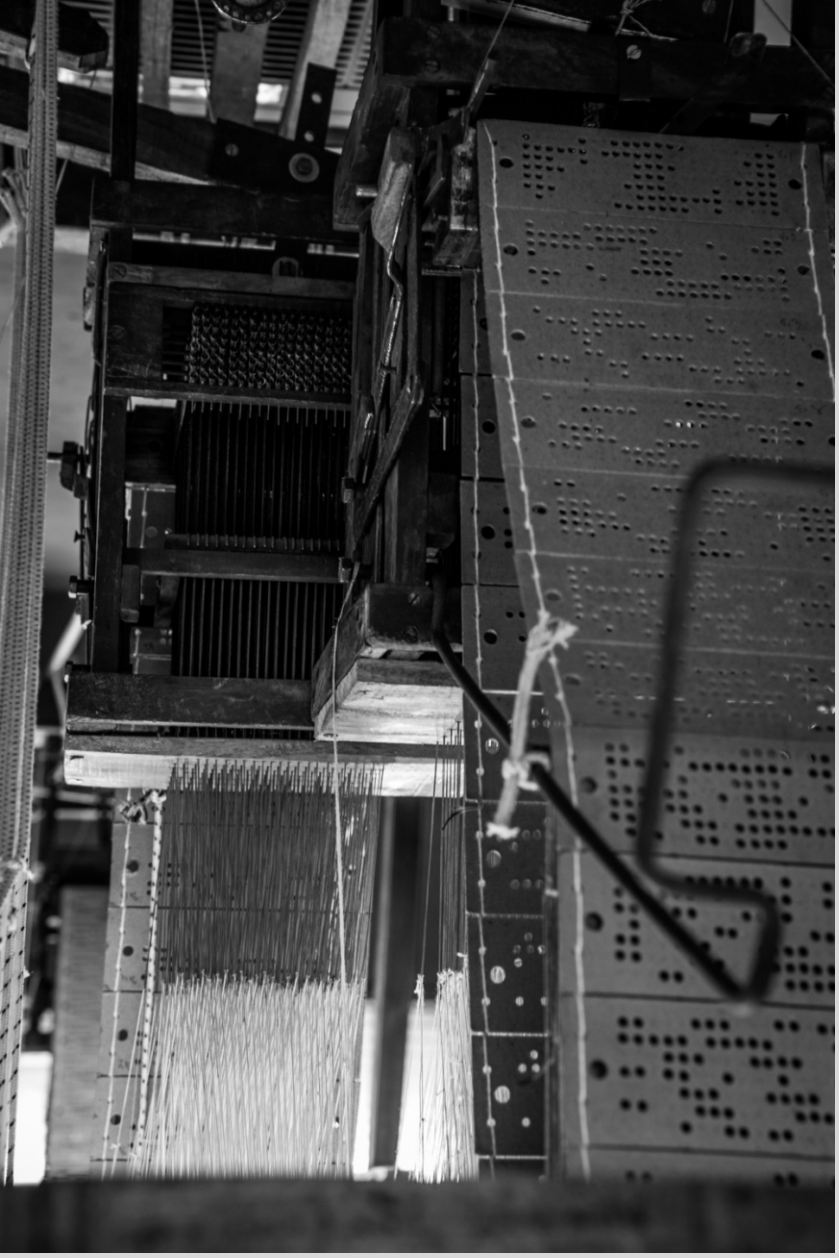

Fig.16.5 : Jacquard attachment with
punched cards on handloom, Holyweaves, Varanasi
Image courtesy: Umang Agrawal

Fig.16.6 : A loom shed with frame looms
Holyweaves, Varanasi, Image courtesy: Umang Agrawal

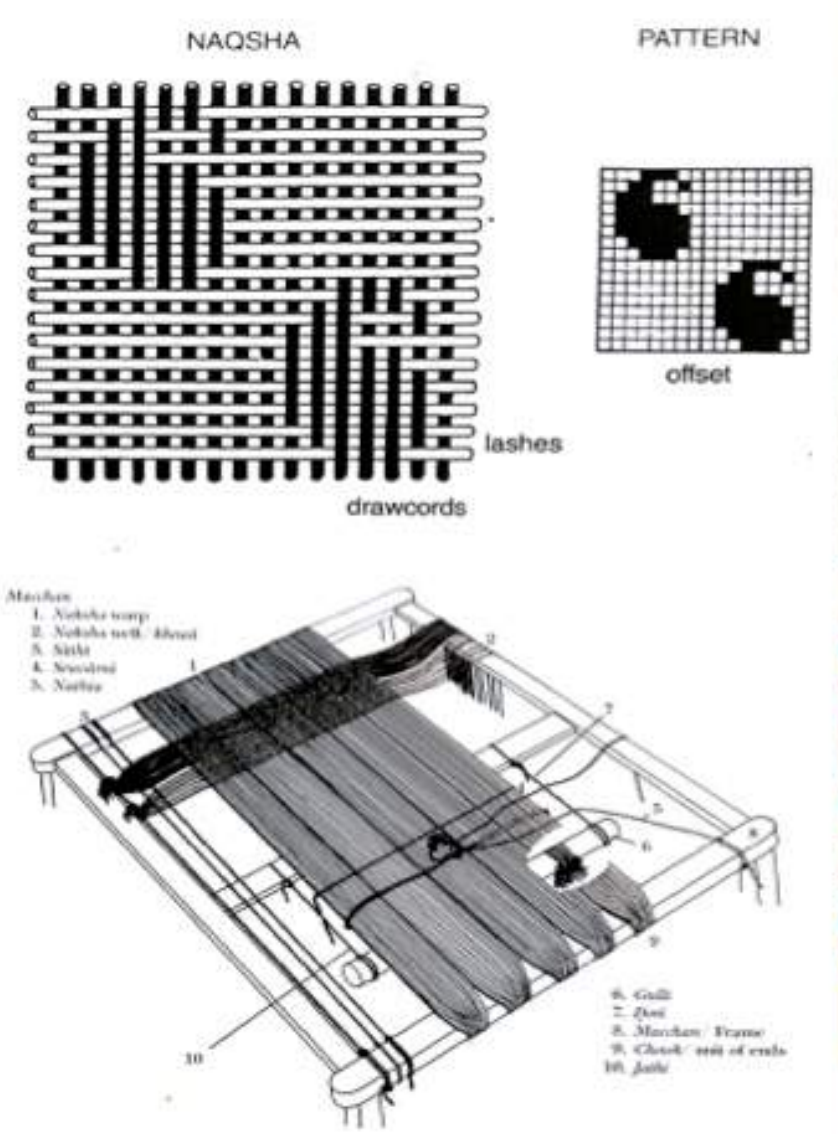

Fig.16.7 : A collage of *Naqsha*-making various sources: *The Indian Drawloom & it's Products* by Rahul Jain & internet archives

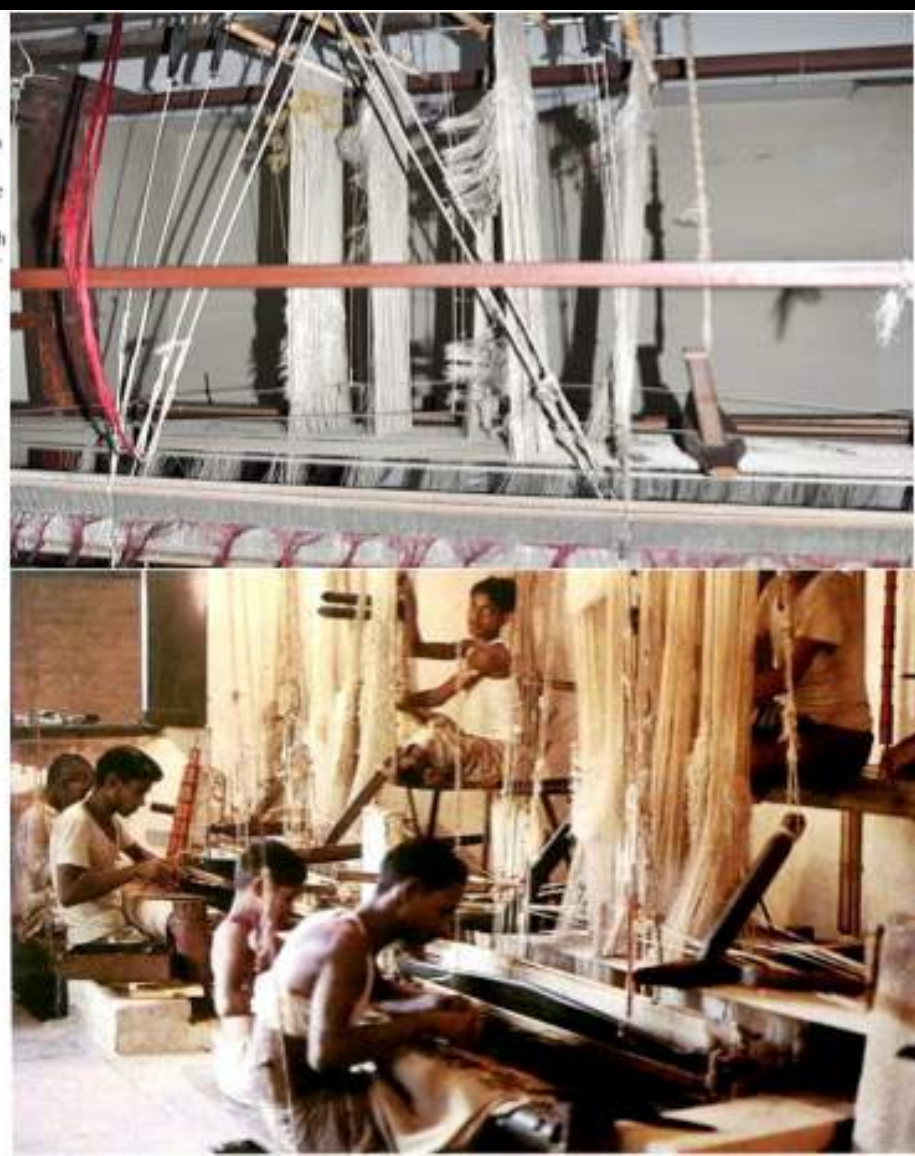

Fig.16.8 : A collage of *Jala*-weaving various sources: *The Indian Drawloom & it's Products* by Rahul Jain & internet archives

weaving on a drawloom or a jacquard handloom, this can easily become a barrier to the entry of contemporary designers who wish to work with the Banaras textile industry to produce seasonal fashion collections. However, with some basic understanding of the technique, a plethora of options open-up before a designer to tweak every stage of handloom weaving and thus add new dimensions to their textiles even with age-old tools and know-how. The camaraderie between a designer and a master-weaver also brings-in the concept of "co-design" wherein the designer's vision and the master-weaver's fine-tuned execution are manifested in the final product.

There are several Indian and international designers who have seriously researched and developed Banarasi textiles and continue to use them season after season. Of late, the interventions of several stakeholders, represented by the Banarasi Vastra Udyog Association and aided by the Government of India through Ministry of Textiles have resulted in a growing interest and resurgence in the Banaras textile industry and a new popularity for Banarasi fabrics in the contemporary fashion scene. More and more textile and garment designers are showing interest in working with Banarasi silk. Of all the virtues penned by Kabir, it is perhaps patience, that any designer wishing to work with Banaras producers and weavers will need in abundance.

ye chadar sur, nar, muni odhi, odh ke maili kini chadariya
das Kabir jatan se odhi, jyon ki tyon dhar dini chadariya
(Worn by the celestials, worn by the seers and mortals alike, this fabric was defiled by one and all; your devotee Kabir wore it scrupulously and discards it just as it was: forever unsoiled, forever pure)

Over the past decade, the demand for the higher-skill textiles of Banaras has been falling. The factors that can be attributed to this are stagnation in design, quality-control issues, reduction in demand owing to cyclical fashion trends, as well as competition from powerlooms as also other weaving centres. As a result of this decline, many skilled weavers have migrated to other professions, even younger weavers are no longer entering the industry in any appreciable number. Very recently, however, the efforts of the Central Government and Banarasi Vastra Udyog Association have resulted in a resurgence of the Banarasi handloom textiles. The industry, therefore, appears to be turning a corner. While the *grihasths* as well as the fashion-designers working with them, have focused on traditional skills and vocabularies for developing design, the Government has emphasized weaver wage-optimization, skill-upgradation and establishment of facilitative centres for product quality and process improvement. This two-pronged approach has been successful, to an extent, in bringing back the Banaras textiles to the forefront of the Indian fashion scene in recent seasons. Such efforts, if sustained over time, should go a long way in restoring the position of Banaras as India's premier centre for high-quality silk textiles.

HEMANG AGRAWAL is a fashion and textile designer trained at NIFT, Mumbai. As creative director of The Surekha Group, Varanasi, he is engaged in the revival of several age-old techniques of hand-loom weaving since 2001, and specializes in fabrics made purely out of golden and silver metallic yarns. While his products take forms of garments, saris, scarves and yardages, he largely remains a process-driven designer wherein the traditional weaving-skills and designs always take precedence. Involved in restoration of vintage textiles for several royal families of India, his work has been featured & awarded at several platforms including the NetFlix series, "The Creative Indians." *info@hemangagrawal.com*

Fig.17.1 : Embroidered Lucknow, Lucknow
early 19th century, gilt thread and strip, spangles
twisted metal-thread cord, purls, sequins
glass beads and polychrome silk yarns
on deep red velvet, 158 x 52 cm
Jnana-Pravaha Museum, Varanasi, Acc. No. 2013.43

17 Embroidered Lucknow on Velvet

Pramod Kumar KG

'*Lucknow, City of Illusion* is the title of a book of 19th-century photographs that allows a rare glimpse of the city's ephemeral architecture and its illusory ambience. Illusion, because photographs of the city taken during the 19th century help us recall an almost magical fairy tale like city. Its topography dotted with domed mosques, extensive palace complexes with baffle like gateways and walls, elaborate gardens with follies, vast Shia religious shrines, tombs, homes of the aristocracy, the British Residency, dwellings of assorted Europeans besides innumerable structures of bewildering shape and size. The city was a unique pastiche of European architecture planted in the east under the stylistic diktat of Nawabi patronage that was as much occidental in the orient as it was oriental in the occident. A former capital to the region of Awadh and presently of the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, the topography of the city was to forever change at the hands of the British after they quelled the Uprising of 1857. Wanton deliberate destructions have left no trace had it not been for photographs and other images that survive. To this corpus of memorabilia, we can add two unusual topographic embroideries that depict the city, its fabled structures and its rich riverine culture along the Gomti that meanders around the city articulating its name.

These embroideries sit across two continents, both fairly similar in the scenes they portray though of different size and shape. One at Jnana-Pravaha (JP) Museum, Varanasi and the subject of this note while the other is at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), London. The former embroidery is rectangular in shape and measures 158 x 52 cm, Fig.17.1. The London piece measures 182 x 173.5 cm with its gold fringes. The only evidentiary information available comes to us from the London specimen, Acc. No. 0762(IS), and the museum dates the textile to c.1855. The museum's catalogue entry for the piece states: *Karchob/Takt Kosh/Kishtinuma by Sherendazka (embroidered in metal wrapped thread in Latin script and repeated in ink in Persian script on label on reverse of textile).*[1] The label in effect summarising that the textile was made of *karchob* embroidery, for use as a *takt kosh/takht posh* (seat/throne cover) with designs of *kishti* (boats) made by Sherendazka. I assume the improbable name of the *zardoz* is a Latin corruption of the Persian original. The museum's records further specify that the object was transferred to the V&A from the Indian Museum in 1879. An 1880 register entry reads: Room 9, Inside Case 66)'0762. Carpet. Crimson Velvet ground, embroidered with gold; Benares. 8473.

The mention of Benares/Varanasi is what links us to the second specimen at JP. This fragment is faded with losses to its crimson/maroon velvet pile. The central velvet panel with its embroidered city scape is surrounded by four borders in an off white satin silk embroidered with metallic yarn, *dabka*, glass beads, and polychrome silk threads. The border design with a band of alternating big and small eight petalled flowers has a pink (faded) silk core and other foliage motifs. The textile has a further end panel which holds within it a distinct embroidered circle split into four quadrants with flowers and sprigs on the same velvet ground (3 circle on either side with 8 spokes in the V&A example); its borders a continuation from the main field. The differences between the two embroideries besides their size and

shape as previously recounted are the presence of two identical end-pieces in the V&A sample while the JP fragment has one end piece, the other possibly lost. The two textiles while outwardly similar have variations in the scenes they depict; both focus on the Gomti and the multitude of boats floating on it and are crisscrossed by a depiction of Lucknow's fabled stone bridge, well documented in 19th century photographs. The JP fragment clearly shows the bridge's 13 pointed arches.[2] While called a stone bridge, it was made of bricks on brick piers over stone coping.[3] Believed to have been built c. 1780 during the reign of Nawab Asaf-ud-Daula (r.1775-1797), it was replaced in 1912 by the Hardinge bridge popularly called the Lalwala-pul (red bridge). The precise depiction of the bridge to some extent informs us that the textile must in all probability predate the newer construction. The V&A example depicts the bridge too, but here the number of arches is curiously much higher at 18.

Mapping the several sites and structures seen across this embroidery has currently not been conclusive but attempting to plot the structures depicted alongside an actual map of Lucknow from the mid 19th century offers us some clues. While photographs give us a good sense of the layout of the city with its massive structures, they however don't inform us of the distance between sites as observed in panoramas and from elevated views. This also complicates the precise identification of depicted structures. Scenes on the central panel of the JP fragment display a curious mix of people, animals, architecture and busy life on the river. If we view the fragment with the additional end panel to our right, the activity on the river includes the presence of large metal thread embroidered sail boats. Near the left end of the scene, spanning the river is the afore-mentioned stone bridge. The elaborate structures on the bridge's lower bank resemble the remains of the now lost Panch Mahalla gateway leading towards the Machhi Bhawan with the distinct form of the Rumi Darwaza visible at the end. If this layout logic holds true then the elaborate structure to the right of the bridge at the lower end has to be the British Residency with its swagged walls and gate with guard standing beside a cannon on wheels. The opposite side, i.e the upper end of the fragment shows cantonment lands alongside gardens and European style structures or hunting pavilions. The scenes here include riders on horseback spearing wild boar and other depictions of a seated figure on a European style chair petting a peacock and a deer(?) with another figure under the same tree. Thick shrubs along the river banks, slender palm trees and other foliage, avian life and fauna animate the main field of our textile.

The extensive riverine traffic depicted is a reminder that even in the 19th century the river was an important means of transport both of people and goods. Unusually shaped steamships like the fish-shaped boat and the Nawab's pinnace were more elegantly shaped contraptions for pleasure sailing. But it was the robust *budgerow* (keeless large boats) that was used to transport both goods and people, albeit in much slower mode. Many of these boats were accompanied by other smaller boats often called *pulwah/pulwar* that held provisions and staff. The JP textile fragment depicts 5 large embroidered boats with one damaged and almost rendered invisible and several smaller canoes and rafts interspersed with ducks.

The V&A example is in much better condition with its almost intact and untarnished metal thread embroidery, velvet pile depicts similar structures.[4] The residency depiction is better expressed with two clear gateways at the extremities with one leading up to the river which is a more accurate depiction. A fuller examination of this piece is however beyond the scope of this paper. What is however

intriguing is the marked difference in condition of the two embroideries? Is the visibly older looking JP fragment an earlier piece that was recreated afresh subsequently and hence in better condition at the V&A? More technical analysis will lead us to a better understanding of the two pieces. But their description as seat / throne covers is befuddling as they seem more topographic and almost like a piece of art perhaps commissioned by a European living at Lucknow. The depiction of the intact residency structures in both examples allude to a pre-1857 date. Additionally, these would also have been very uncomfortable to sit on, if indeed were meant to be seat covers.

Metal thread embroidery was a craft that was practiced across Awadh, both Lucknow and Benares could well be places where these two pieces were created. Embroidery with the use of gold/silver wire or *zari* is known as *zardozi*. The technique involves the use of simple handle needle and includes the use of metal wires of varying thicknesses besides many other materials. Other related materials used include *gota* and *kinari,* gold threads, beads, spangles, seed pearls, semi-precious stones, etc. When applied to heavier fabrics for use as furnishings as here for the so called seat covers the technique if referred to as *karchobi*, usually on velvet or silk with a sturdier lining cloth underneath. In both the pieces, the outlines and infilled details of the buildings, bridge, boats, human figures, flora and fauna, etc are brought alive by the use of slightly raised metal threads that give the textile a three-dimensional quality. This suits the purpose if indeed the textile was created to represent the city and to be viewed it as a topographic entity from a particular stand point. Perhaps the structures depicted were connected to our elusive patron's life? More work and careful examination of the two textiles is definitely needed and like all maps many a viewpoint from many a standpoint might yet yield further results.

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PRAMOD KUMAR KG is the co-founder of Eka Archiving Services, (www.ekaresources.com) India's first museum advisory firm. He has curated shows and lectured extensively worldwide while working with a vast range of artefacts that vary greatly in their materiality. He is a published author and has made contributions to several edited volumes, journals, magazines and other publications across India and internationally. *pramod@ekaresources.com*

Fig.17.2 : detail: Fig.17.1

Fig.17.3 : detail: Fig.17.1

Detail of Fig.18.7

18 *Phulkari* Styles of the Undivided Punjab

Rohini Arora

'*Phulkari* is an exquisite hand-embroidered craft that constitutes several styles and stitches. To understand the widespread use of this embroidery in different parts of Punjab it is important to review the geographical location of the region. The present Punjab region has been divided twice in the past: first in 1947, at the time of India's Independence when the country was divided between India and Pakistan. Second time, in 1966 from the then-Punjab, the new states of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh were created. Punjab was further subdivided geographically into three major regions: Majha, Malwa, and Doaba, Fig.18.1. This division of Punjab was basically due to the rivers Sutlej and Beas flowing through the land of Punjab. The interaction between the people living in these geographically-separated areas was limited. Due to this, there was a difference between the language and culture of the people living in these regions.

According to a review of literature, after the partition of India the original house of Punjab *Phulkari* was said to be the Malwa region, which was South and Eastern Punjab. However, the craft of embroidery was also practised in Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, as well as in Pakistan. The districts in India were namely Amritsar and Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Faridkot, Kapurthala, Nabha, Ambala, Jind, Rohtak, Hissar, Gurgaon, Karnal, Delhi, Chamba and Kangra. The districts in Pakistan were Chakwal, Hazara, Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Sialkot, Faisalabad, Lahore, Sindh, and Baluchistan. The map is charted out by locating various centers where the craft was practiced, Fig.18.2. Embroidery carried in Hazara, Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Faislabad, Sindh and Baluchistan in Pakistan was different from that of the Malwa region in India. Also, along the frontier from Peshawar to Baluchistan a very different style was seen executed with different techniques. In totality, the embroidery showcases immense potential for the takers of this embroidery tradition who used to re-interpret the impeccable geometric designs with great precision. Appropriate selection of raw materials, colours, and techniques made the contemporary versions achieve a distinctive character.

Classification of Styles of *Phulkari* According to Stitches Employed

Indian needlework by the tribes and artisans belonging to the nomadic communities display remarkable degree of perfection and innovation. The stitches employed and the design conceptions used by these tribal artisans display hereditary knowledge possessed by the people of India. This is evident in *Phulkari*. The creative utilization of a set of stitches has surprisingly created a wide range of styles in this embroidery tradition such as *Phulkari, Bagh* and *Chope*. Within each style there are certain prominent features in terms of layout of design and stitches, differentiating these from each other.

Interestingly, darning stitches have been seen in the form of simple darning, brick darning and pattern darning to create wide variety of patterns seen in *Phulkari* and *Bagh*. *Chope* is altogether worked differently in double running stitches. It is noted that all these stitches are variants of running stitches, which are specifically selected in each style by the artisans. Some of these stitches appear very much similar on the face of the fabric

while differences could only be identified by seeing the stitches from the back of the fabric. Thus, every cataloguing of stitches in *Phulkari* generalized variants of stitches with darning stitches only.

PLATE 1 STYLES OF EMBROIDERY

Style		***Phulkari***	***Bagh***	***Chope***
Stitch		Darning Stitch	Pattern Darning	Double running stitch
		Brick Darning	Brick Darning	
		Surface satin stitch		
Common themes	-	*Sainchiphulkari*	- *Bhawanbagh*	
	-	*Phulkari* from hazara *(thirma)*	- *Chand Bagh*	
	-	*Darshandwar*	- *Vari da bagh*	
	-	*Morpankhi*	- *Shishabagh*	
	-	*Chawalbutiphulkari*	- *Panchrangabagh*	
Finishing Stitches		Cross stitch, cretan stitch, herringbone stitch, double running stitch		
Stitch for Joining strips of fabric		Running stitch or lacing stitch		

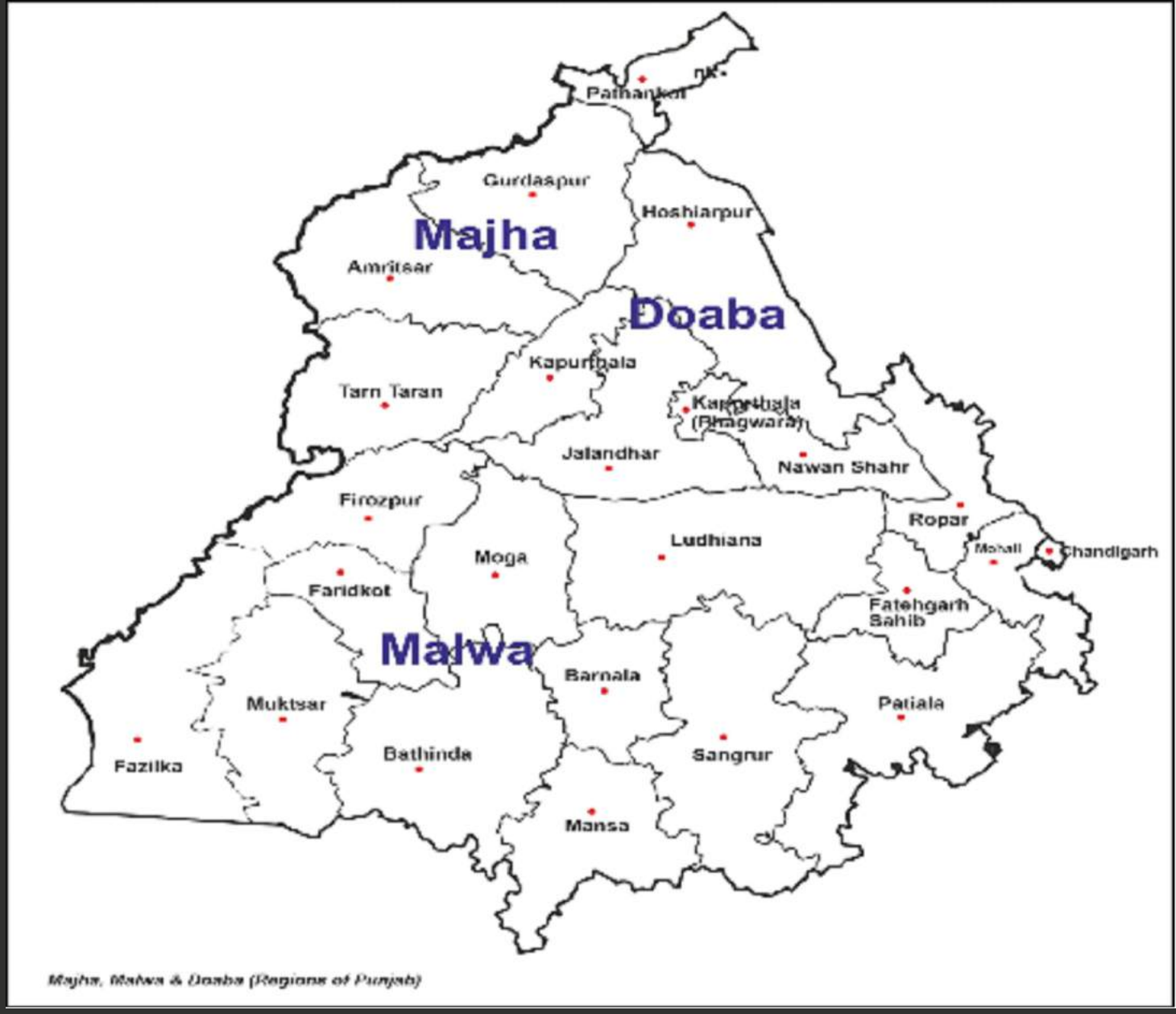
Phulkari

In general layout of *Phulkaris,* the field remains covered with repeats of motifs with a gap in between their spacing, i.e., the patterns are dispersed at intervals over the fabric. There are broad borders in widthwise direction called *pallu*; which are elaborate and have diverse designs created by using different set of stitches. The lengthwise borders are usually narrow.

In *Phulkari,* four main stitches are identified for creating field designs such as darning stitch, brick darning, surface satin stitch, and straight stitches. Any of these stitches could be used chiefly as the main stitch for creating designs in the central field while additional stitches are used alongside in borders namely running-stitch, cretan-stitch, cross-stitch, and herringbone-stitch.

Darning Stitch: It is several rows of running stitches of equal length spread over subsequent rows. Each row of running stitches consists of a long float on top with few or single fabric-thread picked up by the needle in succeeding rows. A close observation reveals, Fig.18.3, floral repeats worked throughout in the field; on the backside the vertical stitches are observed. In top layers and at the extreme ends few horizontal stitches are also seen. It would be clear from the line drawing that after completing one line of stitches and to move to the new line the embroiderer takes horizontal stitches, which are formed at the base. At the ends, few satin stitches are taken to complete the length of rows in line with succeeding rows, Fig.18.4. This is commonly seen in most of the *Phulkaris* as the main filling stitch along with a combination of few satin stitches in smaller areas.

Brick Darning Stitch: Brick darning stitches are laid in brick arrangement in which continuous rows of



Majha, Malwa & Doaba (Regions of Punjab)

Fig.18.1 : Subdivisions of Punjab

Fig.18.2 : States (marked in red) where *Phulkari* was practiced in undivided Punjab

States marked in red were phulkari practicing states

stitches are not formed, Fig.18.5. This kind of stitch has a very structured appearance and is prominently seen in the embroideries from the Swat valley in North West province of Pakistan, *Phulkaris* from Hazara as well as in *cholies* from *pahari* region.

Surface Satin Stitch: This is another prevalent stitch like darning stitches. In surface satin stitch, straight stitches are worked in horizontal rows and the next row is commenced after the completion of the previous row. The horizontal stitches are seen at the backside of the fabric, Figs.18.6 & 18.7. This stitch is significantly worked in *Sainchi Phulkari,* particularly in free-hand curved motifs.

Straight Stitch: Straight stitches are single satin stitch that can be of any length and worked in any direction, Fig.18.8. It is used to give freedom for creating a wide variety of designs other than regular geometrical designs. The embroiderer used this stitch to create circular or semicircular floral motifs, petals, inverted triangles or any other motifs. This kind of stitch can be executed in the desired way on the surface of the fabric. The motifs made with straight stitches usually cover the entire surface in embroidery or smaller areas or while forming design in borders in *Phulkari,* Fig.18.9.

Bagh

The *Bagh* are made for ceremonial occasions. In this style the entire surface of the fabric is ornamented with embroidery. The *Bagh* literally means a garden or *bagicha*. The central field is extended; with narrow *pallu* ends and front side borders. The embroidered pieces usually display pattern darning for covering field area. However, to stand out certain narrow areas like front side borders and *pallu*; darning stitch and surface satin stitch are also seen. This kind of creating pattern with stitches is observed in the analysis of *bawan bagh, chand bagh* and other famous themes. Also, stitches are taken in different directions, which produced illusion of tints and shades of colour being used. In *thirma,* brick darning is also used to create completely filled designs usually seen in *Bagh* style of embroidery.

Pattern Darning Stitch: In pattern darning, the darning stitches are taken in varying lengths in each row

Fig.18.3 : *Phulkari* fragment showing darning stitches, Eastern Punjab, early 19th century hand-spun *khaddar* and untwisted silk yarns for embroidery, Private Collection

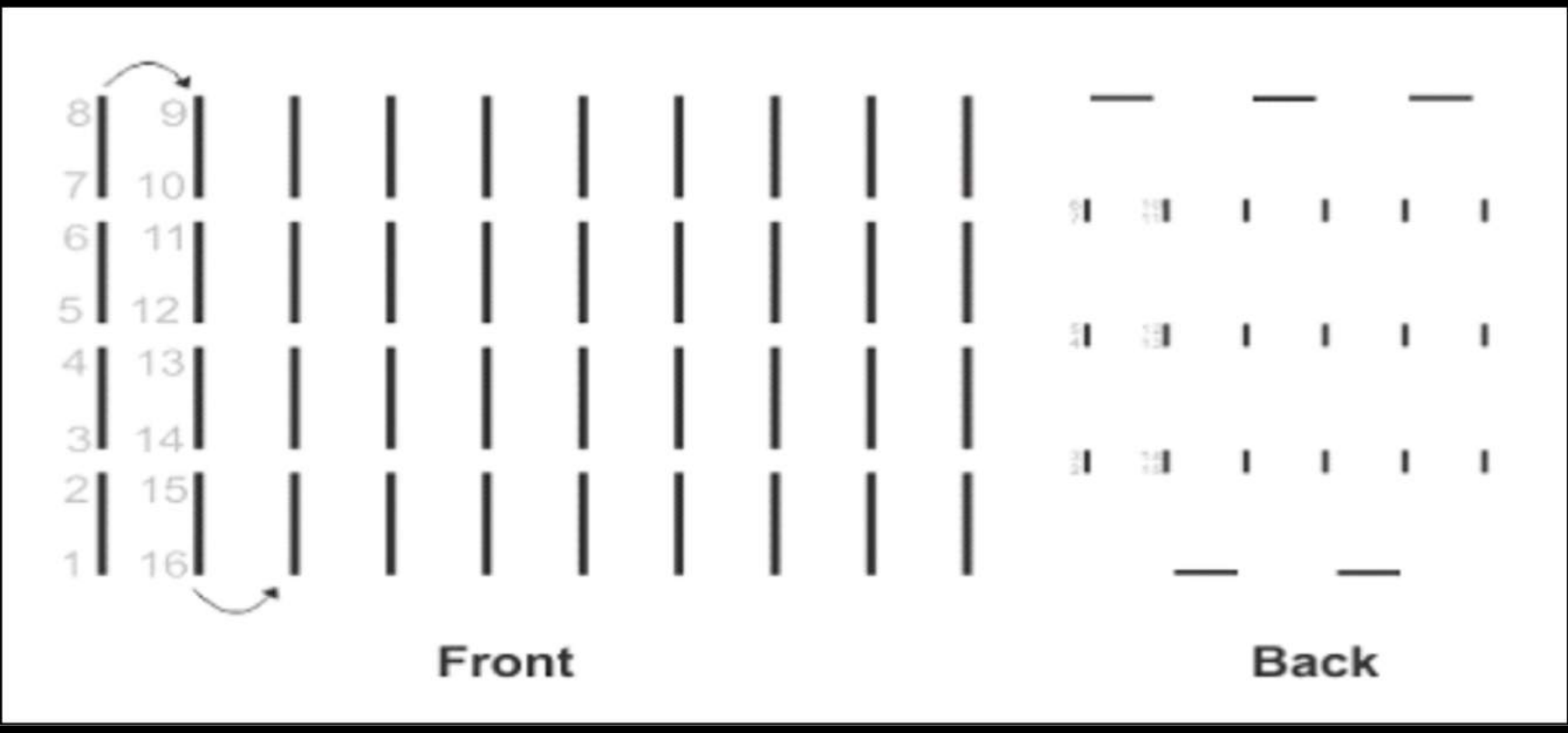
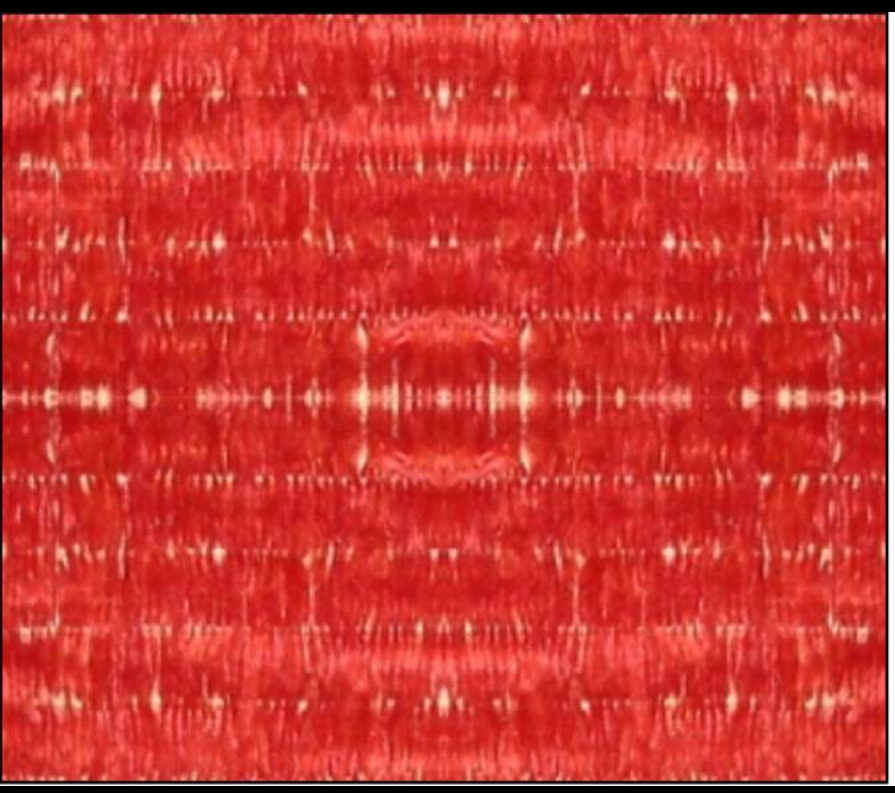


Fig.18.4 : Line drawing of darning stitches in front and back side of the fabric



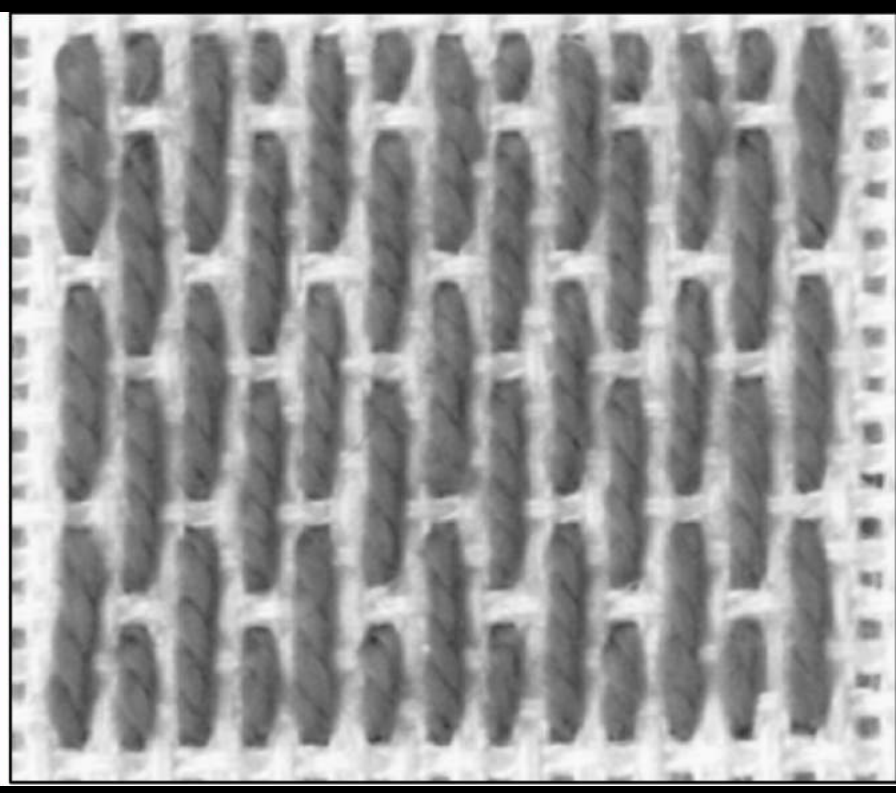


Fig.18.5 : *Phulkari* from Hazara fragment showing brick darning stitches and its line drawing, hand-woven *khaddar* darn stitched with silk floss Hazara, 19th century, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Acc. No. IS 1-2014

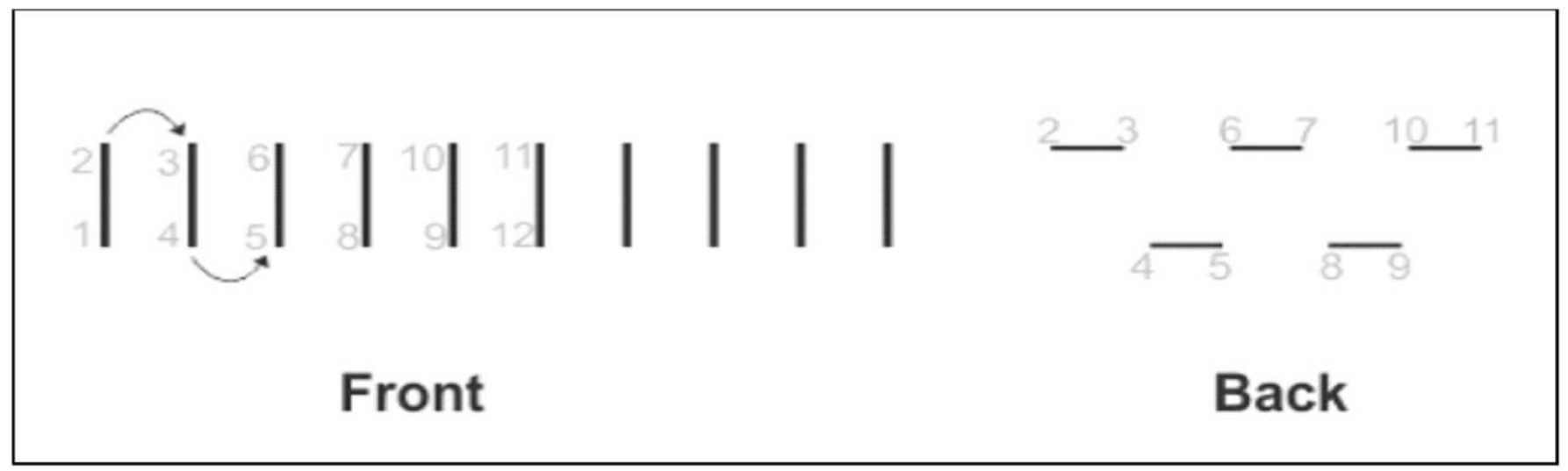


Fig.18.6 : Line drawing of satin stitches showing horizontal stitches on the reverse

according to the pattern to be created. In the first, Fig.18.10a, the darning stitches are placed in fixed order and length to create two different patterns, Fig.18.10b.

The darning pattern required expertise and trained execution of stitches on the part of embroiderer to achieve the desired effect. The stitches are closely spaced and completely cover the ground of the fabric with minute patterns alongside. Two different styles of working pattern darning are observed in the embroidery such as the structured arrangement of stitches in *vari da bagh* and the other variation is seen in *darshandwar,* Figs.18.11 & 18.12. In *vari da bagh* symmetrical design is created using small size pattern darning stitches apparent on reverse side of the fabric, Fig.18.11. In *darshandwar* negative space is created in the form of small lozenges in the field, which appear as floats on the reverse side, Fig.18.12.

Chope

In *Chope* very distinct designs are created using double running stitch. The base cloth is invariably red and embroidery is done in yellow. According to Jasleen Dhamija, it is a bridal shawl made by the maternal grandmother for ceremonial use. The intricate double-sided architectonic pattern is composed of motifs of the temple and the peacock, which has long been associated with marital love, longing and desire.

Double Running Stitch: The double running stitch is worked with two journeys of running stitches, Figs.18.13 & 18.14. On the first journey, evenly spaced running stitches are worked and in return journey, the stitches are laid over spaces left by the first journey. The embroidery starts and ends at the same point. Other than *Chope* these motifs are seen in *Sainchi Phulkari* such as in a peacock's tail, Fig.18.15, as well as in the triangular motifs and ornaments in *darshandwar,* Fig.18.24. This stitch is often used to stand apart certain areas from the rest of the field design as it had a very characteristic appearance.

Finishing Stitches

Other stitches frequently used in *Phulkari* style of embroidery are as cross-stitch, cretan stitch, herringbone stitch and double running stitch used for making narrow borders, enclosing design areas and finishing borders. Buttonhole stitch is used for finishing edges. In Fig.18.16, central field is divided with narrow borders of herringbone stitch. There is a separates running ornamentation over the border worked in cretan stitch along with petals made in straight stitches. In the elaborate border darning stitch, straight stitch and rows of herringbone are used.

Stitch Used for Joining Strips of Fabric

In past, according to Jasleen Dhamija, the "fabric *(khaddar)* was woven on a pit loom and therefore lengths were stitched along the selvedge." There are numerous examples that show perfect matching of embroidery by joining strips of fabric prior to embroidery. Often strips of the *khaddar* had been embroidered first and joined later after finishing the embroidery work. In general, the strips are joined using running stitch or lacing stitch, Fig.18.17.

Conclusion

The popular styles of *Phulkari* illustrate specific characteristics where stitches played significant role. This is apparent even in the present scenario. *Phulkari* and *Bagh* explicitly illustrate creative manipulation of running stitches in form of simple darning, brick darning and pattern darning along

with satin stitches. The combination of these stitches particularly surface satin stitch and straight stitches had given freedom to artisans to create a variety of patterns. On the contrary, *Chope* shows very distinct arrangement of running stitches. Another equally important aspect is to identify subtle details of theme within each style, which is specific to certain community and region. For instance, there are many themes that are only embroidered in *Phulkari* style of embroidery, i.e., in darning stitches or surface satin stitch or straight stitches. The main example of this category is *Sainchi Phulkari*. In other category, several themes are only embroidered in *Bagh* style of embroidery using pattern darning stitches significantly. The popular themes are *vari da bagh, panchrangabagh, lehriyabagh, chandbagh,* etc. Interestingly, it is also seen that many times a theme like *darshandwar* is worked in both *Phulkari* and *Bagh* style of embroidery, depending on the choice, ability or skill of a person embroidering the piece. The basic stitches and colours are followed keeping the essence of the theme intact. For example in *Bagh* style of *darshandwar,* the entire surface is filled in pattern-daring creating mesh like appearance and diamond shape motifs. On the other hand, in *Phulkari* style of *darshandwar,* the pattern stitch creating characteristic mesh like appearance and diamond motifs is marginally used in front side borders with field design filled in darning stitches. The main motifs like geometrical shapes, jewellry motifs, colours used in *darshandwar* are similar in both styles of embroidery. Nonetheless, *Phulkari* from Hazara or *thirma* are also worked in both *Phulkari* and *Bagh* style of embroidery displaying brick-darning stitches mote than regular simple darning.

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ROHINI ARORA, Ph.D., curated many exhibitions displaying the artworks in Pahari embroidery. Besides, writing more than 20 research papers she has authored a book on *Pahari Embroidery*. She has recently documented Chamba *rumals* in the collection of Gawthorpe Museum. She is a founder of an organization 'Rumals of Chamba', a market place for *Pahari* embroidery, with a team of 25 artisans in centres in Chamba and Kullu. She is also a guest faculty at NIFT, Panchkula. *drrohini80@gmail.com*

Fig.18.7 : *Sainchi Phulkari* fragment showing motifs worked in surface satin stitch filled in rows
eastern Punjab, early 20th century
hand-spun plain weave *khaddar* fabric embroidered with silk yarns
Philadelphia Museum of Art
Acc. No. 2017-9-18

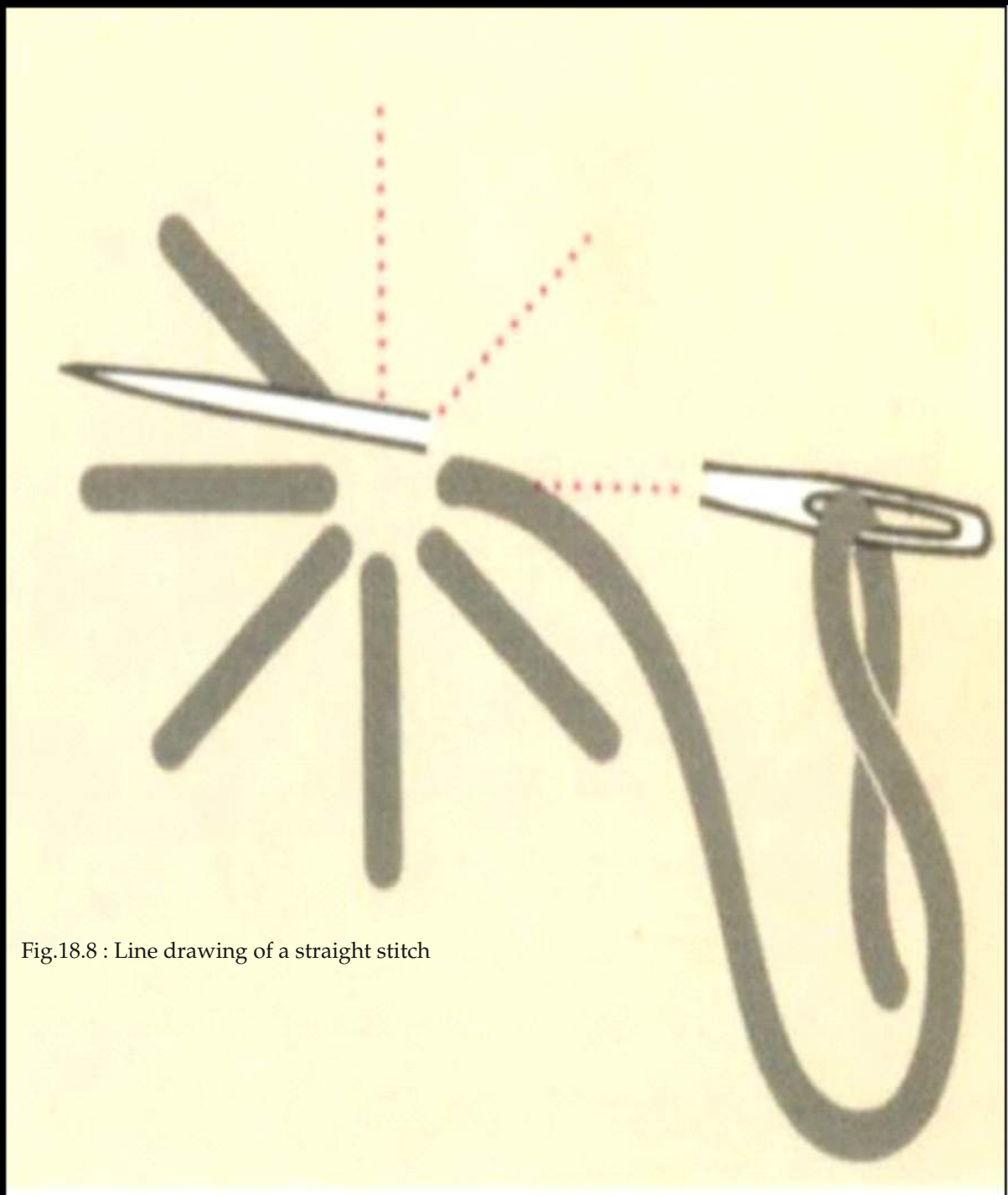
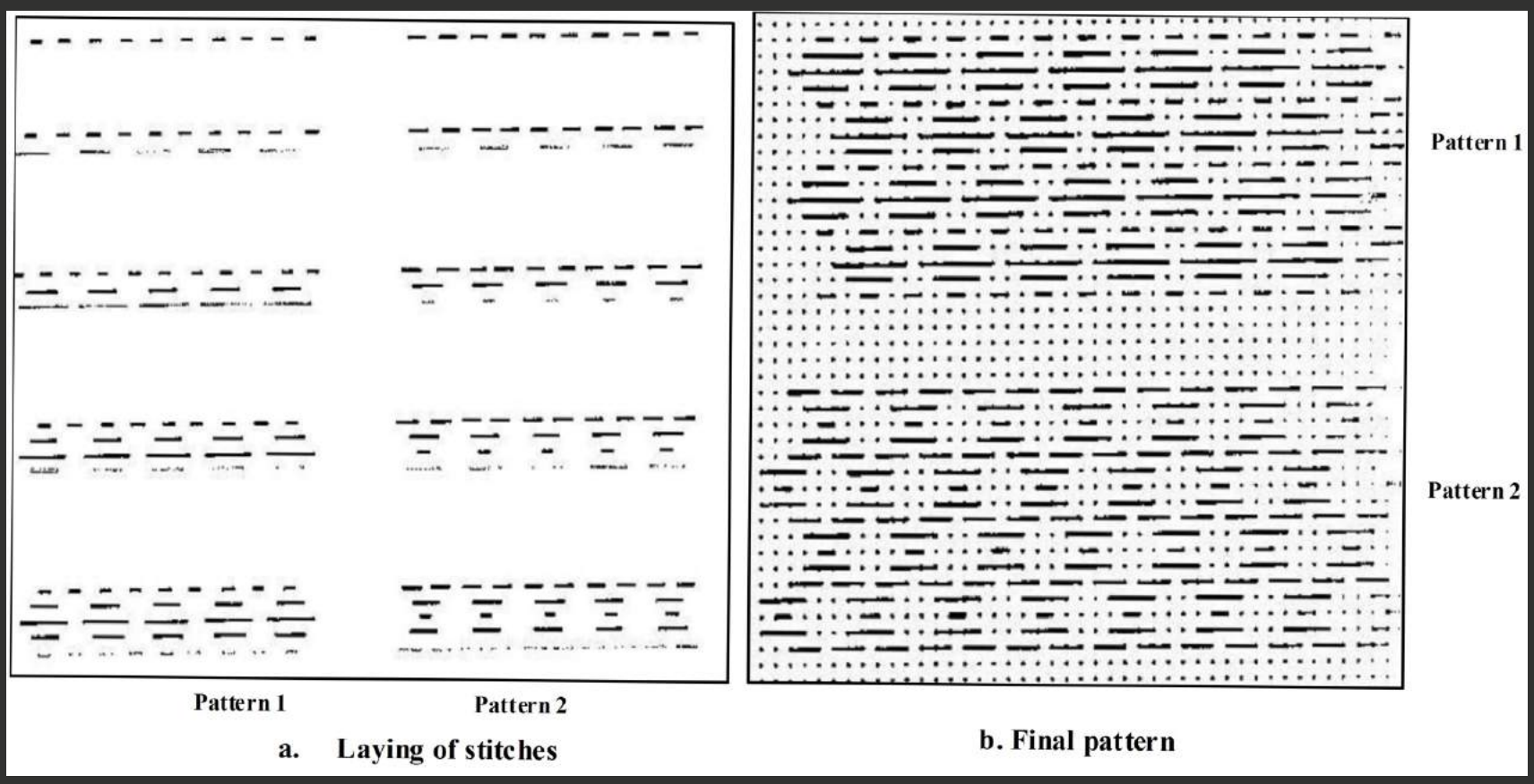


Fig.18.8 : Line drawing of a straight stitch

Fig.18.9 : *Phulkari* fragment showing straight stitch floral motifs in the field, eastern Punjab early 20th century, hand-spun plain weave *khaddar* embroidered with silk yarns
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Acc. No. 2017-9-6

Fig.18.10 : Line drawing of stitches in Pattern Darning



Front

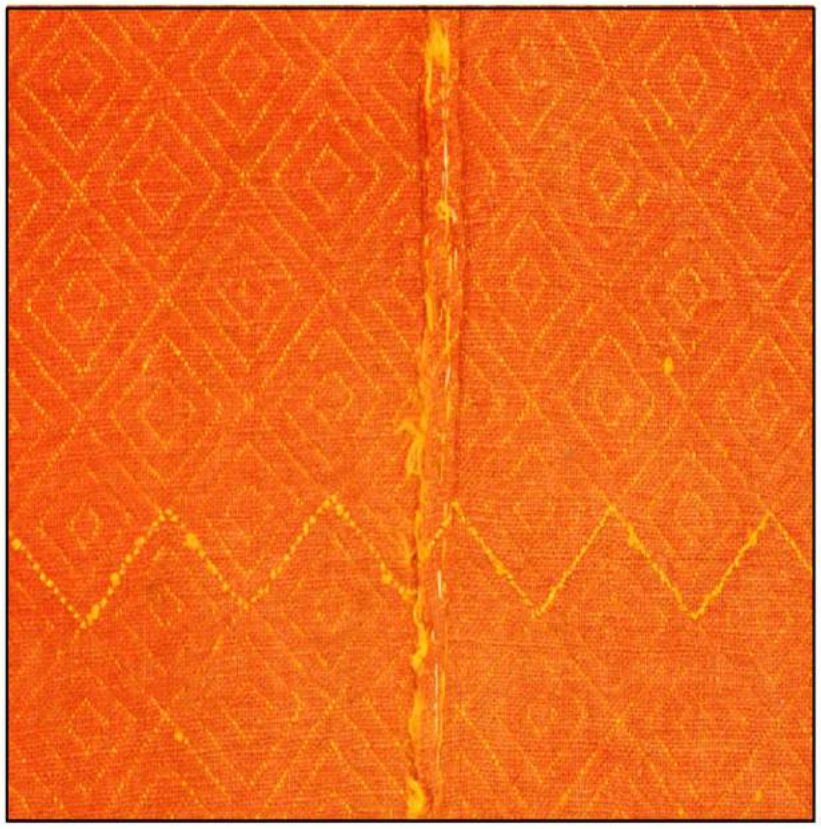


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Fig.18.11 : *Vari da bagh* fragment in pattern darning stitches, Punjab early 20th century, *khaddar*, floss silk, Private Collection of Sarajo, TX4645

Front

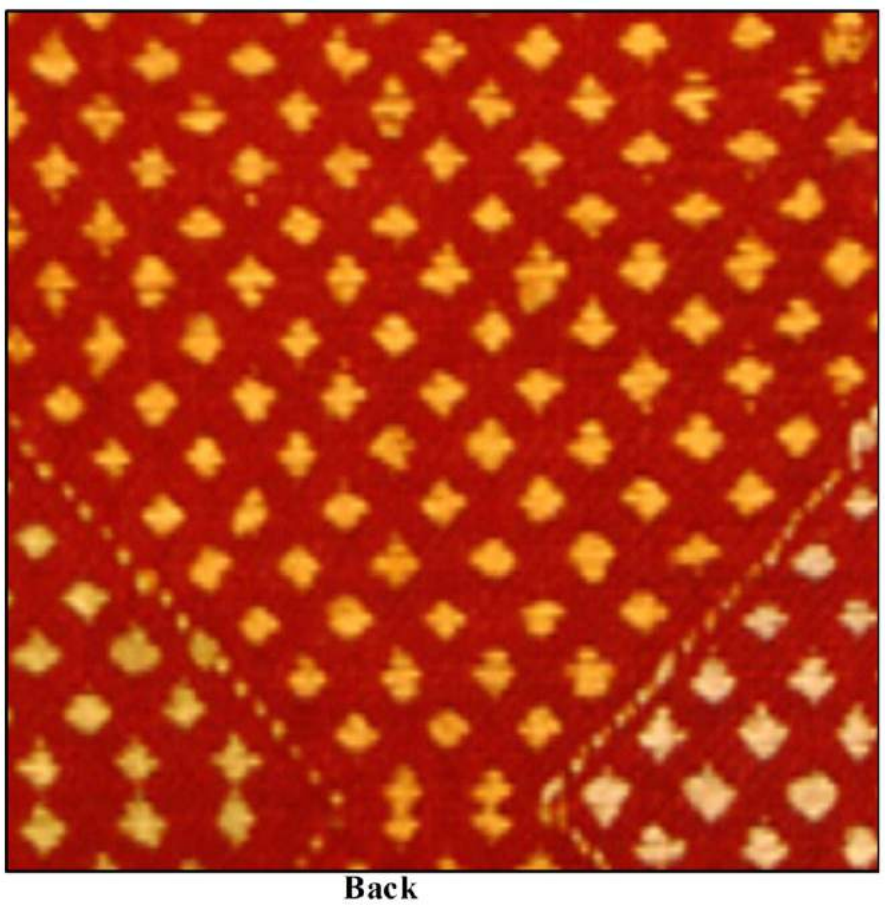

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Fig.18.12 : *Darshandwar* fragment in pattern darning, Punjab, early 20th century
khaddar, floss silk
Private Collection of Sarajo, TX 4344

Fig.18.13 : Line drawing: double running stitch

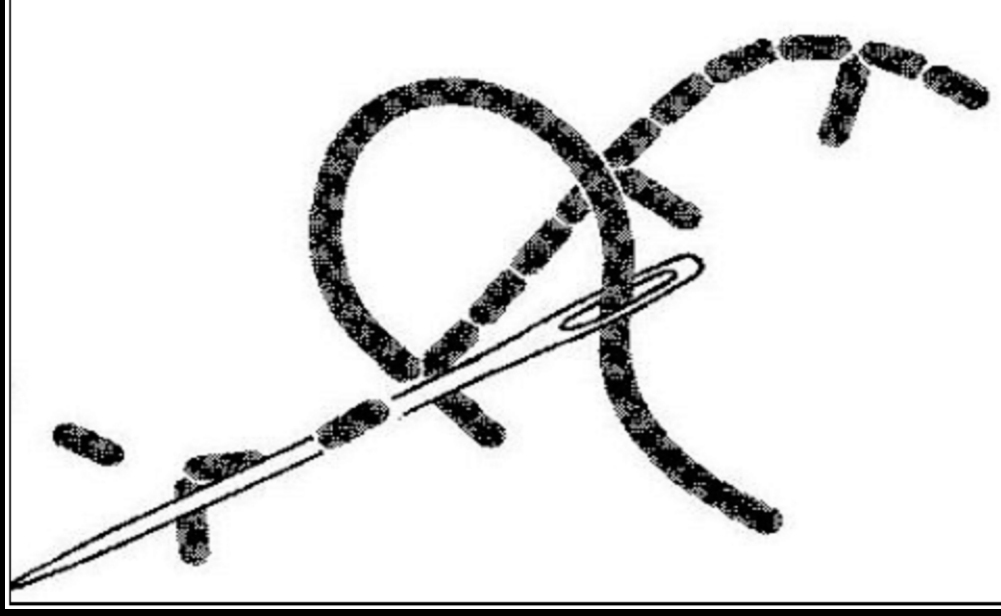

Fig.18.14 : *Chope Phulkari* fragment showings motifs made in double running stitch in *chope*, Eastern Punjab, late 19th to mid-20th century *khaddar* embroidered with silk floss Philadelphia Museum of Art, Acc. No. 2011-21-1

Fig.18.15 : *Sainchi Phulkari* fragment detail of a border showing peacock tail in double running stitch, Punjab early 20th century, *khaddar* embroidered with silk floss, Private Collection

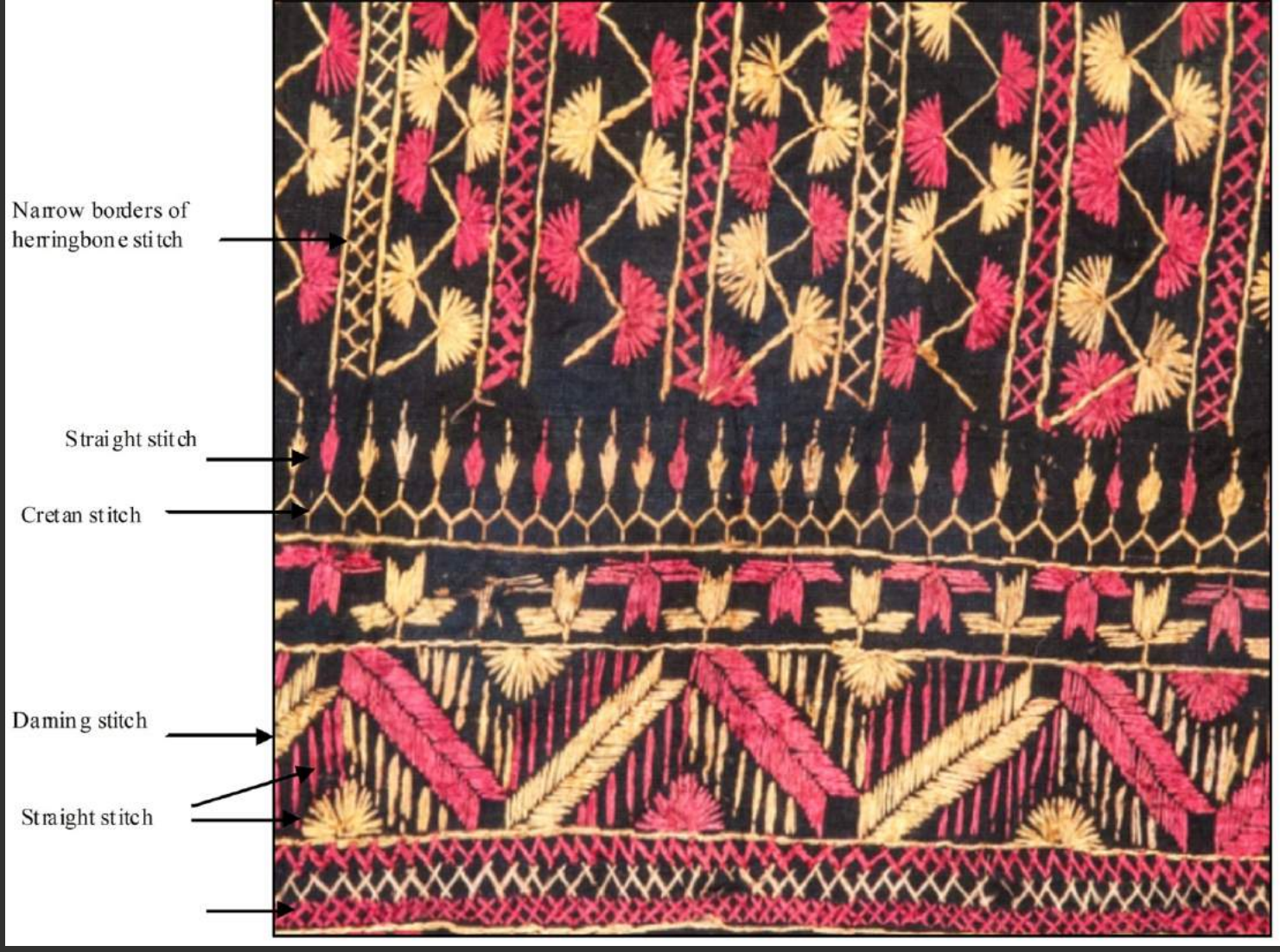

Fig.18.16 : *Phulkari* fragment showing use of additional stitches like herringbone, straight cretan, darning stitches, Eastern Punjab early 20th century, *khaddar* embroidered with silk floss, in Private Collection of Rugrabbit

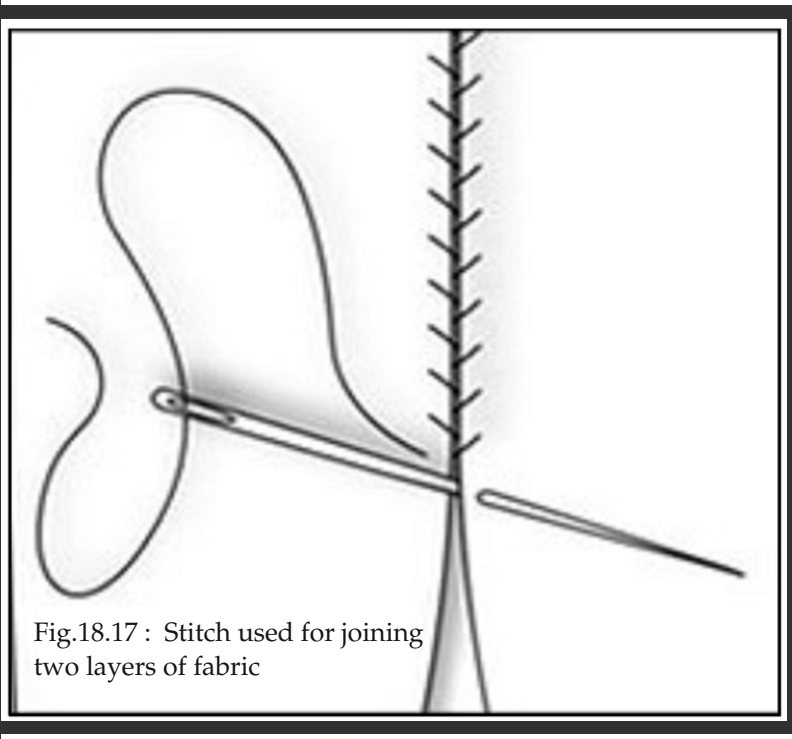

Fig.18.17 : Stitch used for joining two layers of fabric

Fig.18.18 : *Phulkari* of Hazara displayed in Indian Art At Delhi, Exhibition Catalogue, 1903 by Sir George Watt

Phulkari of Hazara

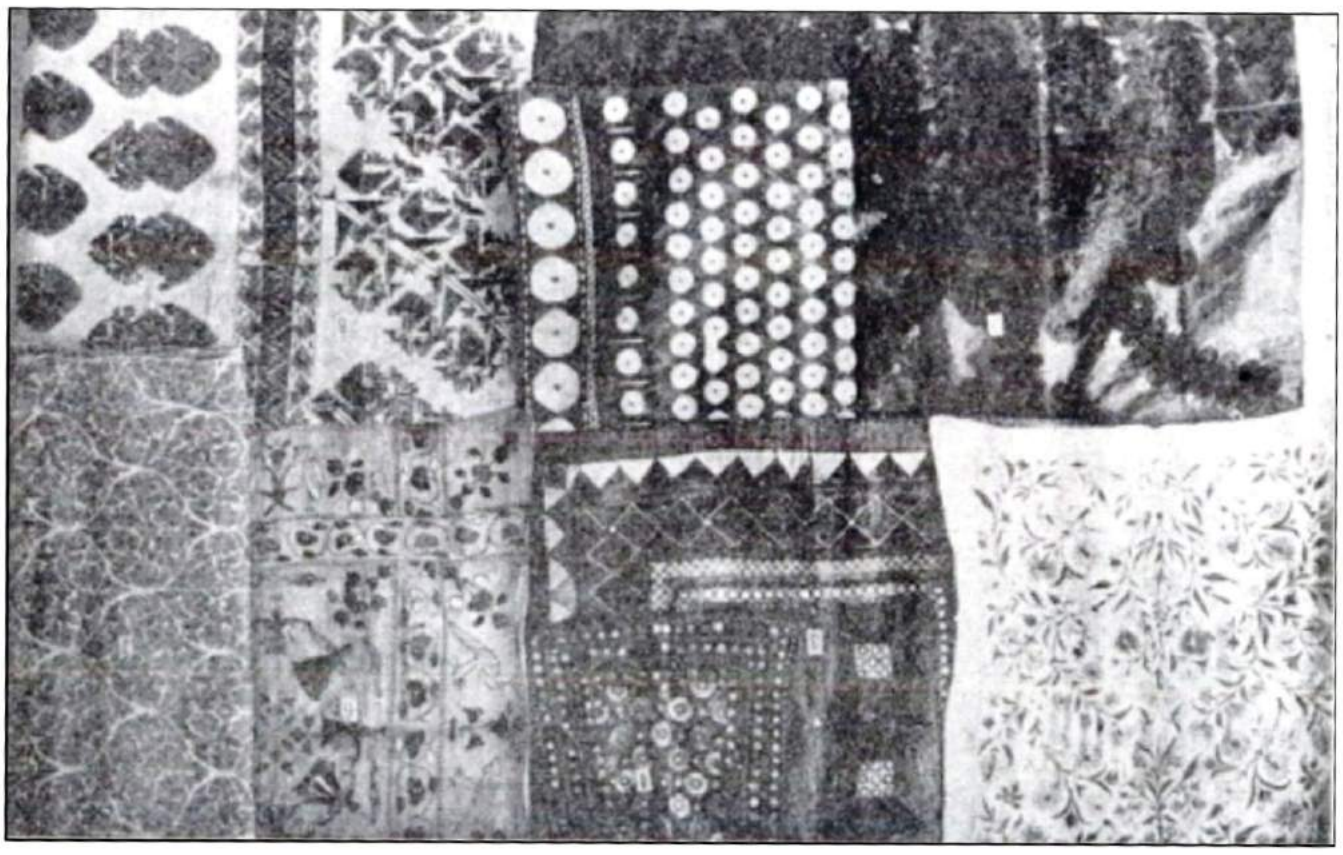

Fig.18.19 : *Thirma Bagh*
Sialkot, 1868 CE
khaddar embroidered with silk floss
Personal Collection: Author

Fig.18.19a : Front border details in *Thirma Bagh*, Sialkot, 1868, *khaddar* embroidered with silk floss, Personal Collection: Author

Fig.18.20 : *Phulkari* from Hazara
early 19th century
khaddar embroidered with silk floss
Government Museum and Art Gallery
Chandigarh

Fig.18.21 : *Phulkari* from Hazara fragment showing two different borders and central field motif early 19th century, *khaddar* embroidered floss silk, Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh

Fig.18.22 : Fragment of *Darshandwar* showing characteristic features, Eastern Punjab late 19th to mid-20th century, *khaddar* embroidered with floss silk, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Acc. No. 2017-9-15

Fig.18.23 : Samples by the students in Punjab University during Zonal Youth and Heritage Festival, Chandigarh,2018, *khaddar* embroidered with rayon untwisted yarns, Image: Author

Fig.18.24 : Fragment showing surface satin stitch used in contemporary *phulkari*, Punjab 21st century, georgette worked with rayon untwisted yarns, after Gupta, 2014

Fig.18.25 : Method of administering surface satin stitches in contemporary *phulkari*, Punjab 21st century, *khaddar* with rayon untwisted yarns, Image: Author