



Indian Rasa Manifestation in the Motifs of Saharanpur Woodcraft

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Abstract: Throughout the world, art and craft are known as the best achievement of human being which reveals a vast vocabulary of inspirational and powerful motifs. These motifs are associated with ancestor's tradition, beliefs, emotions and religion that influence human existence. In this context, the woodcraft has always remained an enchanting phenomenon from the first evident of the civilization in Indian sub-continent which is the best way to indicate the folk tradition, culture and self expression of artisans. Hence, Saharanpur city represents the ancestor's tradition of woodcraft as the world famous center of wood carving. Saharanpur woodcraft display various motifs of decoration such as zoomorphic (Peacock, lion, elephant, deer, bull and so on), auspicious (Swastika, Sun, Chakra, Kalasha and so on), figurative, vegetative (Flora and fauna and fruits) and intricate geometrical forms. These motifs signify the glimpse of Gujjar- Pratihara art as well as Mughal art. The inspiration of depiction of these motifs is not only the ornamentation and decoration but also the adoption of it in human life with essential aspects. These motifs have been filled with ornamentation representation and aesthetic pleasure of Indian rasa application to stir the heart of its viewers and seek to evaluate the adoption and implication of all flora and fauna with its meaning and essence. The highly aesthetic fascination and enrichment of the motifs of Saharanpur woodcraft reveal the inner delight through rasa theory. The present paper is an attempt to study the rasa manifestation of the exceptional and unique motifs in Saharanpur woodcraft. Thus the paper will be based on the discussion of aesthetic delight of rasa which reflects the prominent mood of human behavior and its symbolic image of Saharanpur woodcraft in contemporary world.

Keywords: Saharanpur woodcraft, motifs, aesthetical delight, rasa application, Contemporary world.

I. Introduction

Extant of literature on craft domain accentuates art and craft as a crucial activity of human being representing the schematic view of traditional and cultural heritage of nation. In this vein, India is a land of traditional art and craft that presents the personality of each state of India with diverse variety of inspirational and powerful motifs. The very motifs broadly refer to the ideology, which is deeply rooted in ancestral tradition, beliefs, myth and symbolism. These motifs cannot be presented in the absence of aesthetic application because art has a visual approach. The very approach can not be entirely applicable without the beautification and ornamentation of the art. This artistic pleasure comes through the aesthetic diversions, in which the symbols and semiotics have the power to attract its viewers. The aesthetic encounters can be caught from the ancient monuments till today. In this context, the previous works of art have become a vivid source of the inspiration for contemporary artists and craftsmen. These paintings, sculpture, architectural monuments, craft and other decorative arts are filled with the unique persona of aesthetic delight. In this way, the woodcraft of Saharanpur can be read or interpreted from the perspectives of aesthetic philosophy of designs as well as the concept of *rasa*. So the woodcraft of Saharanpur has the variation of numerous motifs with its aesthetical pleasure in unique forms. The present paper sheds some light on Indian *Rasa* manifestation in the motif of Saharanpur woodcraft. The purpose of this paper is not to discuss the Indian *rasa* theory of Bharata Muni which has been given in the reference of drama, but to point out the *rasa* concept in the context of motifs of Saharanpur woodcraft.

A. Study Site

Saharanpur city is situated at the Ganga Yamuna doab region of Western Uttar Pradesh, one of the famous Indian states for craft. This region demonstrates the Indo Islamic culture. All Saharanpur represents the amalgamation of Indian as well as Islamic culture and art. Due to lack of ample evidences, it may be a bit dangerous to say anything definite about the Saharanpur woodcraft that whether it is purely allied to Mughal art or Gujjar pratihar art. However, in the existence of some earliest evidences it can be said that Saharanpur woodcraft displays the fusion of Indo-Islamic art. Indian art can be seen in earliest building of Saharanpur that was completely associated with Gujjar partihar art. Emperors of Gujjar partihar were devotee of Hinduism. Therefore, some of the finest surviving example of Gujjar pratihar art can be caught through the stone/wood carving work of earliest *havelis* and *chhattas* of Saharanpur City. Some of the earliest *havelis* of Saharanpur are preserved in *Chhatta Jambudas*, *Chhatta Barumal*, *Chhatta Hulasrai* which reveal the classical art tradition. In Mughal Period, Akbar was the main ruler of the Mughal dynasty, which made Saharanpur an administrative unit

under the province of Delhi. From the sixteen century and throughout the Mughal period, Saharanpur began to take the shape of a town. It is also at that point, some craftsmen came from Kashmir and settled in Saharanpur for sustenance. It is said that wood carving was introduced in Kashmir by the Persian craftsmen who had to leave their home in Persia and settle in Kashmir due to lack of *shisham* wood [1]. As a result, in 1817, Mughal rule was finished in Kashmir and some craftsmen's families had shifted to Multan, Saharanpur and different places, wherever they could earn livelihood from woodcraft business. This was the major reason for its application or adoption. Thus Persian, Islamic and Hinduism impression may be caught in the motif of Saharanpur woodcraft.

II. Motifs of Saharanpur woodcraft

Signs and symbols are very essential element of an object for representing the identity of the object and make them attractive too. Art is prosaic without the delightful presence of sign and symbol. As well as, the spirit of attraction has also been generated through the symbolic significance of artifacts. These motifs present aesthetic pleasure of Indian *rasa* through its visual forms and lay emphasis on psychological effect on mind and heart of viewer. The motifs of Saharanpur woodcraft are mainly the amalgamation of different signs of Islamic (geometrical and calligraphy), Persian (floral, fruits, tree, vases and vessels), Hindu art (swastika, sun, lotus, *purnakalasa* and figurative image), because these motifs present the taste of emperor's choice, luxurious life of emperors and the tradition of that time. For example, Akbar was extremely influenced by Hinduism and Islamic traditions. His wedding with Hindustani princess Jodhabhai, was a very momentous and significant development of Mughal history and added several changes in culture, literature, art and socio- economic conditions [2]. He was a Muslim ruler yet he brought some changes in the Islamic traditions in art. He invited Hindu craftsmen in his workshop and provided them full liberty for creating distinctive artifacts [3]. It is considered that the depiction of living beings is prohibited in Islam. But Akbar was the first ruler of the Mughal dynasty who amalgamated some elements of Indian and Islamic art which is called Indo-Islamic art. Another Mughal emperor Jahangir was fond of every essence of nature and therefore in his time the Persian impact has also appeared in different forms of art and craft. Throughout the reign of Akbar, Jahangir and Sahajahan some Hindu auspicious motifs like *Satkona*, *Swastika*, *Padma*, *Hansa*, and *Chakra* were adopted from Indian art and created by the craftsmen. Therefore, the Saharanpur woodcraft can be signified with the Indo-Islamic culture and tradition through the performance of art and design as a result of the motifs of Saharanpur woodcraft have the philosophical theory of ancient Hindu and Islamic tradition. So, the designs have a lot of similitude with Indo-Islamic motifs of erst while time. The fusion of two cultural arts is quiet appreciative, which represent the individuality, freshness, novelty and enjoyment of art. These motifs can be seen on the several monuments of Mughal emperors such as tomb of Itmad-ud-Daulah, Birbal's palace, Jodhabai's palace, and Taj mahal and so on. There are five categories of motifs in Saharanpur woodcraft viz. A) Vegetative motifs B) Auspicious motifs C) Zoomorphic motifs D) Geometrical motifs E) Human figure motifs.

A. Vegetative Motifs

Saharanpur woodcraft has a vast approach for its vegetative motifs such as creepers, floral (sunflower, lotus, lily and rose etc), fruits (particularly grape, pineapple, leechi, coconut). During the regin of Jehangir, exclusive depiction of vegetative motifs with realistic manner may be clearly seen in the preserved artifacts. It is said that Jehangir was very fond of fruits and imported those fruits that were not available in India [4]. He was the great lover of nature as well as indulged in drinking liquor [5]. The grapevine motif is the most prominent motif of Saharanpur woodcraft and it is the symbol of intoxication because grapes are used in making wine. It can be said that the grapevine motif in Saharanpur woodcraft might have been used due to King Jahangir, who was fond of drinking liquor that he would feel intoxicated just by looking at this fruit. The powerful approach of ornamentation and decoration can be caught through the attractive persona of these motifs. Motifs have a power to mesmerize to the spectator with different forms and colors.

Figure1: Flora and Vegetative Motifs



B. Auspicious Motifs

Hindu culture contains its richest treasure in the application of auspicious motifs which belong to the Indian ancient mythological terms. The motifs of *Sawastika*, *Lotus*, *Chakra*, *kalasha*, and *Sun* have come into this category after creating a beautiful sense of good omen and blessing of Gods with its sacred aura for human-

being. The *Swastika* is an auspicious Hindu symbol which represents fourfold aspect of creation. *Swastika*, the graphic symbol, is found in almost every ancient and primitive cult all over the world [6]. The sacred religious blessings have an essential role for the happy and prosperous life and personification for all the mankind in all deeds. Sun is considered solar deity in Hinduism which gives energy to universe. Historically the Gurjars were Sun-worshippers and this symbol has been depicted on their seals. The classical style of auspicious motifs in the stone/wood carving work may be seen in earliest *havelis* of Saharanpur. These Hindu auspicious motifs have also been adopted by craftsmen in Saharanpur's woodcraft to decorate the wooden products. Most of the craftsmen were highly inspired from auspicious motifs. With the change of rulers, Saharanpur came under the Mughal influence. The Mughal openly accepted different culture and customs of Hinduism and created a fusion of Hindu and Islamic auspicious motifs in Mughal art. For instance, Akbar himself used to offer water to the Sun in early morning [7]. As well as he started worshipping the Sun and hearing the Sanskrit names of sun regularly.

Figure 2: Auspicious Motifs



C. Zoomorphic Motifs

These kinds of motifs are drawn from the prominent attributes of Hindu mythology. The deities' vehicle or *vahana* has been conceptualized for the symbolic significance of the deities for the religious offering of their sublime submission. For instance, the vehicle of an Indian God Kartikaye has been depicted in the form of peacock in many temples of south India and the vehicle of Goddess Sarsavati (The goddess of Wit and intelligence) has with her vehicle swan or *hansa* for the ritualistic purposes. In this category, the elephant for Lord Indra and the lion for Hindu Goddess Durga can be caught in numerous temple sites. Despite knowing the existence of zoomorphic motif in Hindu mythology, these were adopted in the Mughal art with highly impressive manner. The depiction of fabulous animals has been found on seals in the Indus valley art period in India [8]. So, in Saharanpur, many animal motifs of religious based antiquity have been used for promoting the value of traditional rituals.

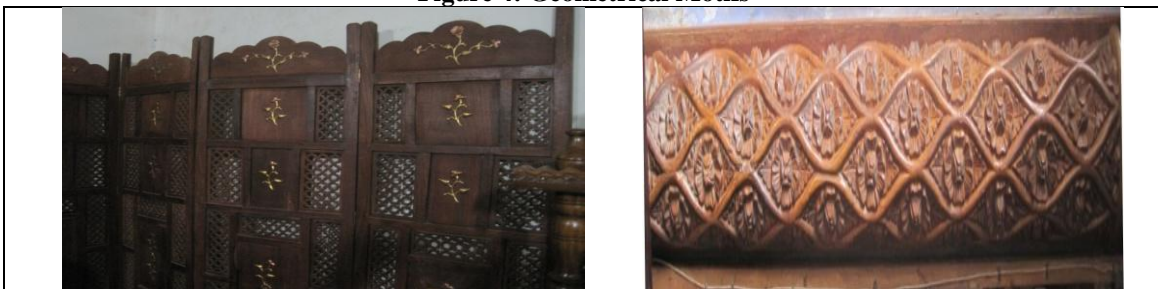
Figure 3: Zoomorphic Motifs



D. Geometrical Motifs

The lines of geometrical shape are also a part of Indian monuments and ancient temples but they are highly promoted in the reign of Muslim emperors because these emperors belonged to the Islamic belief system, which reflects in their artistic ornamentation. The *pinjara* or lattice work was entirely based on geometrical shapes such as circles, lines and it can only be caught in ancient Islamic architecture. Thus, its presence in Indian architecture and woodcraft can be signified after the establishment of the Mughal School of art only. The Saharanpur woodcraft has also made use of this kind of lattice detail in a broad manner.

Figure 4: Geometrical Motifs



E. Human Figure Motifs

Saharanpur woodcraft also contains the representation of Hindu deities with full forms and 3D figure of female dancer with welcome sign. The elephant-headed Ganesha is considered one of the famous auspicious symbol of Hindu occasion and embodiment of intellectual and spiritual wisdom [9]. The Hindu rituals have promoted the image worship so the woodcraft of Saharanpur has also made use of these divine and holy images for the worship and ritualistic satisfaction. Miniature paintings are still being made in wooden panels on the demand of buyers. These images are also a part of the woodcraft and produced on large scales for commercial purposes too.

Figure 5: Human Figure Motifs



III. Aesthetic Philosophy

Indian aesthetic philosophy is based on three major elements- *Satayam* (truth), *Shivam* (purity) and *Sundaram* (beauty). Beauty is the major character of Indian aesthetic philosophy however the question “what is the criteria of beauty”? Beauty is often seen in each object of nature and may be divided into two categories like physical beauty and spiritual beauty. Physical beauty is often seen within the physical appearance of object. However, spiritual beauty is a discovery of feeling and it is an inner expression which comes naturally to the heart of the observer. The motifs of Saharanpur woodcraft present physical and spiritual both beauties. However the question arises that woodcraft, which has been created for purpose, can be made in ordinary forms and simple manner without ornamentation. The reason behind the application of beautification not entirely belongs to the filling of space only because beauty and ornamentations are requirement of each artistic production. According to aesthetic vision a person wants to feel beauty in every essence of world along with the surroundings of every sphere. Therefore woodcraft has been created with auspicious decorative motifs that show the artistic facet and aesthetic pleasure of woodcraft. Sign and symbol increase the significance of aesthetic ideas like *dhavani*, *rasa*, *alankara*, *bandha*, *guna*, and *reti* [10]. Indian aesthetic philosophy has been filled with *rasas* idea that enhances the feeling, expression and ornamentation. Motifs and semiotics have a symbolic language which conveys the message to the spectators. For example, in ancient time pictorial script was used as language and speech communication by the orators. It was based on sign and symbols. Thus sign and symbols have gained vital place in the society from the ancient period and it continues in current times, too. Each motif and symbol indicates the predominate mood of human nature. It is a representational process of abstract visual conception that creates an aesthetic delight in the heart of the spectators. Each motif has a specific form, shape, color and meaning. The basic conception of art enhances the rhythm, balance, unity and harmony. Indian art is significant not only in the outer form but also in the inner meaning. Without meaning art is jejune [11]. According to Indian aesthetic theory, decorative and ornamental motifs lay emphasis on not only the fundamental and psychological concept but also on the inner delight. *Natyashastra* was written by Bharata Muni between 200 and 300 B. C, which gives us a basic theory of drama and *rasas*. He also explained as to how emotions can be evoked through the medium of drama. He defined *rasa* theory with *rasasutra* in the X chapter of *Natyashastra*.

vibhava anubhava vyabhicahribhava samyogat rasa nispatihi

The word *rasa* is made from two letters Ra and Sa, in which Ra means “to give” and Sa means “motion”. The term *rasa* has been derived from the root ‘*rasah*’ that means juice, taste, flavor, relish and essence which used to denote the essence of art, drama and literature. The word *rasa* has been mentioned in various contexts of Hindu mythological manuscripts such as *Rigveda*, *Satapatha Brahamna*, *Natyashastra*, *Vishnudharmottara Purana*, and *Samrangana Sutradhara* and so on which are very authentic manuscripts of Hinduism [12]. *Rasa* theory lay emphasis on secret meaning of art and craft. It is an invisible action of perceptible objects which may be felt by the connoisseur. As a result, everything can be seen in the universe, however, the emotions and sentiments are internal feelings which may solely be felt. Therefore, *rasa* is only an inner sensation that reveals mood and feelings of human beings. It is considered about *rasa* that in human beings, emotions exist with the birth of human as a sacrament and these emotions are transformed into *rasa* by visual perception. The combination called *rasa* is a mixture of *sthayi bhava* (permanent), *vibhava* (stimulus), *anubhava* (involuntary reaction), and *viyabhicahribhava* (voluntary reaction). Bharata has discussed eight *rasa* with *sthayi bhava*, color and presiding deities in *Natyashatra*. The ninth *rasa* was introduced later by Abhinavagupta and it is called *santa rasa* which stands for calmness.

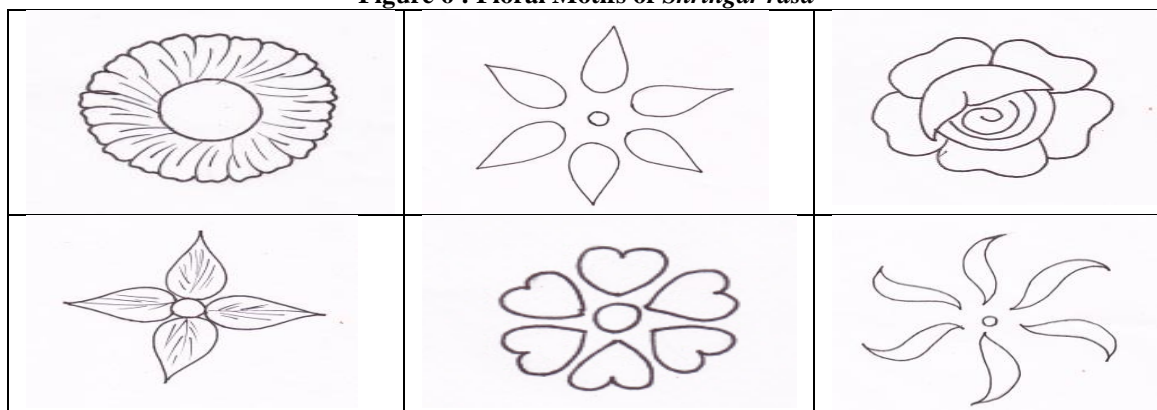
Table 1. The Classification of Rasa

S. No	Moods and Emotion (Rasa)	Attitudes and sentiments (Sthayi bhava)
1.	Shringar Rasa	Attraction (Rati), love, beauty
2.	Hasya Rasa	Humour, Merriment (Lasya)
3.	Karuna Rasa	Sorrow, pathos (Soka)
4.	Rudra Rasa	Furious, violence, anger (Krodha)
5.	Vira Rasa	Courage, resolution (Utsaha)
6.	Bhayanka Rasa	Terror, fear (Bhaya)
7.	Bibhatsa Rasa	Disgust (Jugupsa)
8.	Adbhuta Rasa	Wonder, bewilderment (Bismaya)
9.	Shanta Rasa	Calmness, silence (Sama)

IV. Discussions

Indian art and craft is accomplished with aesthetic pleasure, which is the highest cause of *rasanubhuti* through the sensuous approach of abstract feelings in the heart of all human-beings. *Rasa* is the cause of ananda which leads to creation and sustenance [13]. Through the observation of woodcraft motifs, an aesthetical perception has been conquered in the form of *shringara rasa*, *veer rasas*, *karuna rasa* and *santa rarsa*. The *rasa* can be derived to evoke the sentiments and sensual approach in its various aspects. Each *rasa* has its own meaning and impact on the eyes and mind of the beholder. *Shringara* *rasa* is usually indicated by love, beauty, erotic and passion. It can be seen in the Indian context of *Raasleela*, a kind of dance of lord Krishna which express a kind of bliss to the spectator. For instance the feeling of love and affection has been derived from *shringara rasa*, in which the love and beautification of sensual pleasure has been raised through the lovely representation of symbolic motifs. It is known as the king of all *rasas* and enhances the decoration in art and crafts. In the category of *shringara rasa*, the *rasa* can be configured by flowers, creepers, chinar leafs, grape-wine motifs, zoomorphic motifs and Hindu deities are included. The *shringara rasa* has beautification and representation for attracting the buyers, because these kinds of motifs are considered a better option to decorate the home and buildings. The flowers and leaves closely belong to naturalistic representation so after being placed in architectural concepts, these motifs are proved to be a better medium for balancing the naturalistic environment. The flower is also in the category of love-symbol and a nice and tender structure, so it is highly appreciated for decoration. The creepers are signified with life-giving resemblance due to its growth and raising structure. So, it represents the harmony and rhythm of life. It is also very applicable to fill the corners and arches with its beautiful shapes and structures. The grape-wine motifs have always remained the frequent motifs of Saharanpur woodcraft either for its attractive shape or its symbolic significance of liquor. As the grapes have always used for making wine in ancient India in which the luxurious life has also been promoted which evoke the erotic and the exotic mood of the individuals. The zoomorphic motifs can be signified by the animal motifs, which include animal and birds in their proper ornamented depiction. The animals and birds stand for nature and living-beings. These animal motifs have been derived from the very ancient age of India and have been modified in natural forms. In recent age, the forms are ordinary but the beautification has reached its highest peak in Saharanpur woodcraft. These beautiful motifs awaken the delight of *shringar* or attractiveness. The deities are also being considered a powerful resource for the artistic enhancement in Indian art and also have been dominant in the woodcraft of Saharanpur. The art and architecture cannot be entirely manipulated without the religious icons. The very deities which are involved in their love depiction or in the blessing postures, has been used to evoke the element of *shringara rasa*. The charm and beauty of their facial expressions and gestures and their state of various attractive positions have been symbolized in the Saharanpur woodcraft.

Figure 6 : Floral Motifs of Shringar rasa



Santa rasa or calmness is also a unique phenomenon to stir the heart of the viewers. The *santa rasa* has been representative of mental calmness and stillness and the medium of spiritual concentration and highly applicable in Indian arts and craft. In this way, *Shanta rasa* has also indicated peace and relaxation. The term *santa rasa* is a condition of relaxation which can be physical, mental and, spiritual. Some motifs are eye-pleasing in nature such as when a person sees moon at night, he feels calmness and peace. *Rasa* is a reflection of still mood so the application of auspicious and sacred motifs in woodcraft conveys the message of calmness and softness. These motifs create spiritual atmosphere in nature. Auspicious motifs and geometrical structures also increase a calm and peaceful environment for the spectators such as *Kalasha*, *Swastika* and *jali* work with different geometrical shapes and forms.

Figure 7: Motifs of *santa rasa*



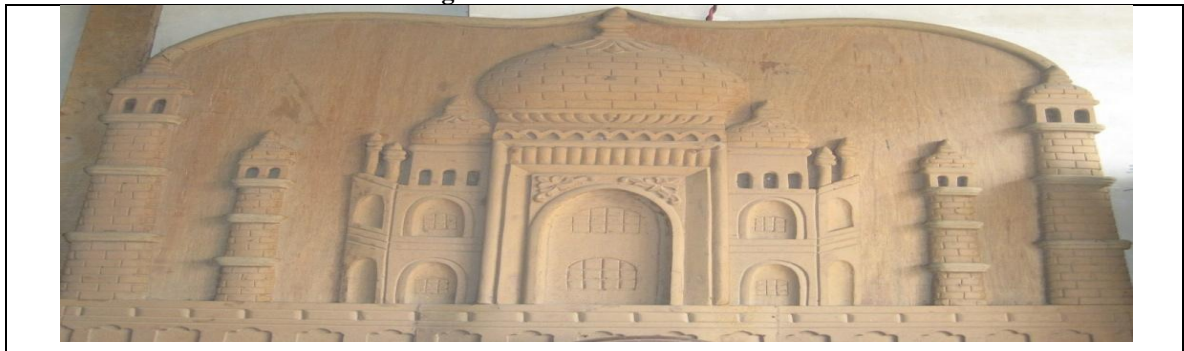
Veera Rasa indicates a kind of heroism and courage with fearlessness. It is a feeling of freedom and independence and the motifs like Sun, Lotus and *Chakra* are the representatives of *veera rasa*. Lotus represents the principal of growth and sun represents the power of universe and great courage. It can be said, the motifs of Saharanpur woodcraft filled with courage and power enhance the aesthetic sense of fearlessness.

Figure 8: Motifs of *Veera rasa*



Karuna rasa means compassion and sadness and indicates the negative vibes. When we lose something or separate from our beloved, we become sad and negative energy comes into the heart. Tajmahal is the finest example of *Karuna rasa*, because Tajmahal is a symbol of sadness and aloneness of Sahajahna, which creates a negative impact on mind. It is said that Tajmahal is symbol of separation of Sahajahan to his spouse. The motif of Tajmahal can also be found in Saharanpur woodcraft which is available in the markets.

Figure 9: Motif of *Karuna Rasa*



V. Conclusions

It is concluded that the aesthetic application has been caught in the woodcraft of Saharanpur with its symbolic significance. The significance of each *rasa* or delight is based on the visual perceptions of the individuals. In this context, the feeling of each *rasa* has various sentiments accordingly but as per the *Rasas* theory of Bharta Muni, the woodcraft contained the four *Rasas* including *Shringara*, *Veera*, *Shanta*, and *Karuna*. If the motifs are

analyzed deeply, the appropriate sensation has been derived with its respective significance. Thus, the motifs of woodcraft are rich cultural heritage and filled with the aesthetical approach in their unique forms. The reason behind the application may be only the symbolic aspects, but the beauty and ornamentation are strongly connected with the term of visual delight in which, all the viewers can be delighted after the experiencing the aesthetic pleasure.

A. Classification of motifs according to the Rasa

Table 2: Classification of motifs according to the Rasa

S. No.	Rasas	Attitude and sentiments (Sthayi-bhava)	Design Elements	Mood and Emotion
1.	<i>Shringar</i>	Attraction (<i>rati</i>)	Flowers, flower plants, creepers, fruits, zoomorphic motifs	Beauty, Love, elegance, grace and devotion
2.	<i>Shanta</i>	Equanimity (<i>Sama</i>)	Sacred idols, auspicious symbols, geometrical pattern	Peace, silence, or tranquility
3.	<i>Veera</i>	Resolution (<i>Utsaha</i>)	Sun, chakra	Courageous or valor
4.	<i>Karuna</i>	Sorrow (<i>Soka</i>)	Tajmahal Image	Compassion or pathos

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