



## A Study on Design ornamentation of BANARAS BROCADES with motifs inspired from nature (Animals & Birds)

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**Abstract:** *The present research was conducted to study the animals and birds motifs as design enhancement on Banaras Brocades of India. A variation of content analysis i.e. Form analysis, was used as research design. The data was congregated through personal observation of specimens in diverse museums, emporiums, handloom fairs. The research approach was qualitative and to obtain information various motifs were collected from books, articles, magazines and online articles on Banaras Brocades of India. The study highlighted that varied animals and birds motifs were used in Banaras brocades in order to beautify the fabric from past till present day. It can be convinced that the true aim of an artist was not to extract beauty from nature but to reveal it in the form of designs and motifs. In other words, all artistic taken their insight from nature, perceiving the beauty in these along with that of the birds and animal world.*

**Keywords:** *Banaras brocades, animals, birds' motifs, design, adornment*

### I. Introduction

Indians are world famous for their wonderful workmanship and produced the most stunning handspun and hand-woven textiles. Kings and queens of Europe were very fond of Indian fabrics, famous for their exquisite art of interlacement. Creating designs on loom was perhaps the earliest method of decorating the fabric followed by dyeing, printing, embroidery and appliqué work [10].

Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, one of the richest weaving centers in India, is renowned the world over for its numerous styles in silk weaving. The Varanasi silk sari, also famously known as the Banarasi sari, has several interesting varieties that have been developed by weavers over the centuries [6] Varanasi is a class by itself not only for its excellent weaving in gold and silver, but also for the very wide variety of techniques and styles its weavers can adopt. The brocades are woven in workshops known as karkhanabs.

Reference [8] in a review article on 'Banaras textiles' reported that, Banaras brocade is India's fabric of dream; a cloth of gold. The saree ultimately glittered with a metallic sheen. However, the silk yarns used in weaving were purchased from Bangalore, Kashmir and Malda and tested zari from Surat. The varieties of Banaras silk sarees are Brocades, Jangla, Tanchoi, Satin border, Organza, Resham butidar and Cutwork woven with a harmonious combination of plain, satin and twill weaves to create interesting floral, fruit, animal, bird, geometric patterns and human figures.

### II. Methodology

The research approach was qualitative. Form analysis, a variation of content analysis was used to systematically document the birds and animal motifs used in the decoration of the Banaras brocades of India. Information related to birds and animal motifs were collected from primary and secondary sources. Primary source comprised of specimen of embroidered traditional Indian textiles. Actual samples were seen in various museums, emporiums, exhibition, fairs, malls; hatt etc. Few of the places visited were: The National Crafts museum, Delhi, The National Museum, Delhi, Dilli Haat, New Delhi, Surajkund Mela, different state Emporiums, Exhibitions and fairs related to textiles of India like Trade Fairs, Handloom Expo etc. Secondary sources of data collection were books, articles, magazines, online visual collections, and online articles, the various research works both published and unpublished on traditional embroideries of India.

### III. Findings and Interpretation

Every social and religious group has definite norms towards colour and design of the saree produced region wise, and Banaras silk saree is no exception to it. Variegated patterns displayed in the Ajanta murals of the Gupta period are believed to represent some brocade specimens and the floral and vegetal designs, animals and bird motifs and geometrical patterns have close affinity with the early brocade motifs. A close examination indicates that western India and the Deccan retained the archaic decorative forms with emphasis on animals and birds, the most popular being goose, peacock and parrot, which are pregnant with symbolism in Indian art and culture tradition [4].

The study of designs on Banaras brocades reveals that like other decorative arts of India, the textile industry too was influenced by the Mughals. The eclectic patterns produced with an amalgamation of Persian, Arabic, European, and Indian designs served as a prototype in every form of art including textiles. The floral forms and the hunting scene pattern, shikargah, adapted from Persian prototypes, are the best examples. These were so well adapted to weaving that one could hardly make out the repeat. Shikargah which was a popular Mughal motif, of which examples can be seen in miniature paintings of the Jahangir period, became the specialty of Banaras woven designs. These elaborate designs interweave the flora and fauna of a forest with scattered animal and bird forms. Commonly seen forms are deer, elephants, tigers, lions, horses, peacocks and parrots [3]. The Banaras designer also did not like the monotonous quality of the Persian pattern. Innumerable variations were made from a single pattern. The celebrated Bisesar Kumhar, known for designing the shikargah, made as many as twenty four variations of this pattern just for one client [5].



**Figure 1: Shikargah brocade, originally part of the wedding trousseau of Shakuntala Singh, who was married in 1914 [7]**

#### **IV. Animal and Birds motifs in Banaras Brocade**

The motifs used in Banaras silk sarees are galaxy of designs of various sizes and shapes, which are exotic, exquisite, splendid and sturdy. Traditional weavers frequently derive inspiration from nature and their immediate environment. Animals and birds, creepers and leaves, flowers and foliage, fruits and seeds and even insects have been source of inspiration for them. Developing the motifs and patterns that are feasible to the weaving process requires much expertise [6].

Nature also served as the primary source of design making with the floral forms called butis or butas. Butis are smaller in size and often made of a single flower, bird, animal or leaf. They take their names from the forms from which they are adapted such as tara buti or star, ashrafi buti, taj buti or crown, tota buti or parrot, hathi or elephant, mor or peacock, hamsa or swan, gulab or rose, kamal or lotus etc. innovations were made with these butis too. Thus, a flowering plant may give the impression of some bird or animal [1]. Decorative floral pattern, vegetal designs, geometrical motifs, stylized dots, *asharfi* motifs, small flower *buttas* (*buti*), *jal* patterns, *kalgha* motif (mango motif), human figures, animal and bird depictions and so on drawn from the nature, the tree of life. Geese, Peacocks and Parrots were very popular motifs. Birds like parrots, peacocks and animals made these sarees appear more conventional and closer to nature [9].

The introduction of zoomorphic art forms, that is animal or birds blending flowers or leaves, became the new style like hathi zal (elephant), mor zal (peacock), popat zal (parrot), dhanush zal (bow), badrum (ogival) so on and so forth.



**Figure 2: Brocade, western India, floral scrolls and lion at the corner, Courtesy: Academy of fine arts, Calcutta [4].**

To enhance the beauty of a garment, decorative borders or bel are woven corresponding to the ground or to the pallu. The local name used for the border is duar or run. In this daur a single motif is repeated continuously or in

row. The hathi daur, elephant border, and tota daur, parrot border, are some of the motifs which have attracted weavers all the times (Agarwal, 2003).

Some weaves are all gold without the use of silk, with floral, mango or creeper design or on larger pieces scenes of human and animal figures sometimes in bands and lozenges. The ornamental end has gold weft and is brocaded with green parrots. These brocades are distinguished but apt poetic names like chand tara (moon and stars), morgala (peacock's neck), bulbul chasm (nightingale's eyes) [2].

The weaving of brocades was inspired by kinkhabs meaning, 'beyond a dream', which was originally woven by the weavers of Gujarat. The characteristic designs juxtapose the famous mango motif with floral details. The jamewar designs in Varanasi silk saris are inspired by the patterns of Kashmir's kani shawls. And the kalka designs have been inspired by the balucahris saris from west Bengal. Varanasi weavers were also commissioned by royal patrons from many distant provinces. An old sari depicts a double headed eagle called gandabherunda, the insignia of Kadambas of Banavasi, Ikkeri Nayakas and the royalty of the state formerly known as Mysore in south India. Many designers and entrepreneurs, working with these weavers, are giving new contemporary definitions to age old traditional silks [6].

Religion, too, provided a variety of decorative motifs. Varanasi, being a religious centre, had a large demand for cloths, woven specially for temples and devotees. The pichhwai or wall hanging, asan or throne cover, chandova or canopy and pankha or fan was popular pieces made for the temples of *Shrinathji*.

Banaras craftsmen favoured many shades of red, pink, maroon, yellow, orange, green, blue and black and they constantly experimented with newer shades. In the colour scheme surkh (red), sultani surkh (scarlet), gulabi (pink), piyazi (light pink) were common and could be easily produced [4].

## V. Results and Discussion

Researcher analyzed that:

Animals are found in Banaras brocades: Shikargah or hunting scene with animals and birds, Hathi or Elephant, Lion, Deer, Buck, Camel, Horse, Cow

Birds are found in Banaras brocades: Parrot or Tota, Tota buti or parrot Buti, Mor or Peacock, Hamsa or swan, Tota daur (parrot border), Geese, Peacock morgala (peacock's neck), Bulbul chasm (nightingale's eyes).

Animals and birds motifs in association with other motifs: Elephants With Rider, Floral Forms called Butis or Butas- Gulab or Rose, Kamal or Lotus etc., Vegetal Designs Like Trees, Creepers, Buds, Leaves, Foliage, Geometrical Patterns, Architectural Forms, Human Beings, Fruits and Seeds & Insects, Tara Buti or Star, Ashrafi Buti, Taj Buti or Crown, *Jal* Patterns, *Kalgha* Motif (Mango Motif)

## VI. Present Status

Today, Indian craftsman are exporting Banarasi sarees, the specialty of Banaras/Varanasi, to the remotest corners of the world. Numerous weavers, in and around the city of Banaras, are engaged in this ever-expanding industry. With the change in time and consumer preference, the weavers of the cluster are also undertaking changes in the design and pattern of the product along with product diversification. With the change in the Consumer Preferences for diversified products like dress materials, furnishings and household utility goods, the weavers are now producing new products like stole, scarf, mat, dress materials, furnishing materials, wall hangings, made ups like, cushion covers, table covers, napkins, runners etc.

Sanjay Garg, textile designer showcase Birjoo, a collection of Banaras brocades inspired by the Pichhwai paintings of Nathdwara, at Good Earth, the New Delhi. Instead of the typical Banaras motifs, he used the cow. Over the period of time, Banarasi sarees have also undergone various mutations and permutations. Many of the celebrities are also seen in Banarasi fabrics in various movies and at various public appearance functions. There are lots of Banarasi weaves made for men also. Also brocade fabric are used in fashion shows like Gaurav Gupta', fashion designer uses these fabrics in his collection in 2013 couture show Lightfall.

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