



# EXPLORING THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE AND ARTISTIC EXPRESSION OF PEACOCK MOTIF IN THEWA JEWELLERY

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**Abstract:** The peacock has always been a captivating bird that people all over the world admire. In India, it is especially valued, representing beauty, grace, and even something divine. Its presence in various art forms and craft traditions reflects the deep-rooted cultural significance and artistic appeal related to the peacock. The peacock motif occupies a significant place in traditional Indian jewellery. Thewa jewellery is a traditional form of Indian jewellery renowned for its exquisite craftsmanship and intricate designs. Designs in traditional Thewa jewellery are inspired by various themes that are culturally rooted and display the regal grandeur of Rajasthan. Among the traditional motifs in Thewa jewellery, peacock motifs stand out as one of the most preferred motifs even today due to their cultural significance and artistic appeal. The study explores the cultural significance and artistic expression of the peacock motif in Thewa jewellery. Data collected for the study using primary sources mainly includes interviews with Thewa craft practitioners and secondary sources includes images of peacock motifs in Thewa jewellery and existing literature on cultural significance of peacock. The artistic expression of the peacock motif has been studied through forms, sizes and placements in different Thewa jewellery products.

**Keywords** - Motif, Peacock, Design, Thewa Jewellery

## I. INTRODUCTION

The peacock motif has a special place in Indian art and craft, symbolizing beauty, elegance, and divine significance. Over centuries, this iconic symbol has been intricately integrated into Indian culture, appearing in diverse art forms and craft traditions. From paintings and textiles to sculptures and jewellery, the peacock motif embellishes numerous masterpieces, representing cultural identity and artistic expression. Thewa jewellery is a traditional form of Indian jewellery renowned for its exquisite craftsmanship and intricate designs created by fusing 23K gold foil onto glass. Originating in the Pratapgarh district of Rajasthan, India, about 350 years ago, Thewa craft was invented by Nathu Lal Soni. Maharaja Samant Singh of Pratapgarh was highly impressed with his craftsmanship and he bestowed him the title of "Rajsoni". The craft skills were passed from one generation to the other secretly among the members of Rajsoni and even today the members of Rajsoni are keeping the tradition alive by making innovative jewellery designs and other products. Designs in Thewa jewellery are intricate and rich in symbolism, drawing inspiration from nature, mythology, and scenes from the life of royals. Thewa craftsman meticulously handcrafts the motifs onto gold foil and fuse it with glass using a special process that is heavily guarded. Initially Thewa craft was used for making objects and during the colonial era Thewa pieces were gifted to British visitors by the royals. The craft diminished after independence but was revived by jewellery firms and designers by 1995. There are only a few names to

be associated with the revival of Thewa and most of the work done during the revival includes Thewa Jewellery that stands out for its vibrant colours and detailed designs. The peacock motif is one of the most admired and widely used motifs in Thewa jewellery designs and always in demand whether it is traditional elaborate or contemporary minimalistic Thewa jewellery.

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The peacock motif holds a profound symbolic importance in traditional Indian jewellery. Very limited research has been done on the motifs used in Thewa jewellery designs. Despite the rich cultural significance of design inspirations in Thewa craft, there remains a gap in study of the motifs. The motifs have been modified with changing buying preferences of consumers but the deep cultural roots of Thewa jewellery keep some of the traditional motifs intact in contemporary jewellery. One of the motifs that has existed in Thewa jewellery since its origin is the “Peacock” motif but the research on cultural significance and artistic expression of the peacock motif in Thewa jewellery is scarce. The study will focus on the cultural significance and aesthetic appeal of the peacock motif by studying its various forms, sizes and placements in Thewa jewellery.

## III. OBJECTIVES

- To study the cultural significance and aesthetic appeal of the peacock motif in Thewa jewellery
- To analyze the artistic representation of the peacock motif in Thewa jewellery

## IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is qualitative. Both primary and secondary data are used in the study. Photography is used as a method to collect primary data from Thewa Craft Practitioners. Photography is often used in qualitative research to gather visual information, which can then be analyzed to discover new patterns and themes (FasterCapital, 2024). Purposive sampling is used for the study. Secondary data is collected from magazines, websites, journals, and online Thewa stores. Using secondary resources, cultural significance of peacock motif is examined and visual content analyses has been done to study the artistic expression of peacock motifs in Thewa jewellery designs.

## V. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Very limited research has been done on Thewa Jewellery designs and motifs therefore peacock motif studies from other traditional crafts has been referred.

1. Naveen Kumar (2020) in a study “From forms to formless” discusses that the peacock symbolizes integrity, truth, honour, beauty, and strength, while also embodying qualities such as self-esteem, humour, vision, spiritual awakening, long life, confidence, and awareness. Its majestic presence encompasses a spectrum of virtues and attributes, from the profound to the playful.
2. Shefali Vaidya (2021) in the article “A unique motif in Indian Art – Part V: Divyamayura – The Celestial Peacock – 2” opines that since ancient times, from cave drawings in Bhimbetka to contemporary truck decorations, the peacock has been a common theme in Indian art, reflecting the deep roots of Indian culture. While becoming known worldwide, the peacock continues to symbolize Indian civilization, captivating people across borders with its enduring charm.
3. Rajinder Kaur and Prof. Ila Gupta, PhD (2016) in a study titled “Peacock Motif in Phulkari: A Comprehensive Analysis” investigated that in Punjab, women have skillfully embroidered peacocks in Phulkari, portraying them holding lotuses, appearing in pairs, fighting snakes, dancing, and displaying feathers, among other perspectives. Within Phulkari embroidery, the peacock is depicted in various linear styles, ranging from realistic to geometric, stylized, and abstract forms.

4. Aditi Shah (2016) in an article “Peacock: A Constant in Indian Culture” viewed that for ages, the peacock has been important in Indian tradition, enchanting visitors with its beautiful feathers and captivating dance since ancient days. It came to represent royalty for numerous Indian leaders and eventually became the national bird of India.
5. Fatima Zahra and Dr. Sarena Abdullah (2018) in a research paper on “Aesthetic, Patriotic and Religious Peacock Motifs: Framing the Meanings of Pakistani Truck Art through Foss’ and Aristotle’s Rhetorical Approach” examined that peacock motifs often incorporate supporting elements such as flowers, leaves, spirals, and branches, which contribute to enhancing the overall composition. These additions draw attention to the peacock as the central focus of the design.

**VI. PEACOCK MOTIF IN TRADITIONAL INDIAN JEWELLERY**

The peacock motif is one of the most significant motifs in traditional Indian jewellery. It represents the rich cultural history and artistic customs of the country. Motifs inspired by the stunning beauty of peacocks are carefully incorporated into Indian jewellery designs, decorating everything from necklaces and earrings to bangles and rings. In traditional Indian jewellery, the peacock motif is often shown in detailed decorative designs. It represents beauty, elegance, and wealth. The colourful feathers of the peacock are crafted using various jewellery materials like coloured gemstones, diamonds, noble precious metals and some organic materials like pearls. The intricate details of the peacock motifs are crafted using different jewellery techniques like enamelling, filigree, engraving and embossing. These techniques add depth and dimensions to the motif and make it look even more beautiful. By employing these traditional techniques with precise craftsmanship and attention to detail, artisans bring the timeless beauty of the peacock motif to life in exquisite Indian jewellery, honouring centuries-old traditions and cultural heritage. Crafting the peacock motif in traditional Indian jewellery involves various intricate techniques passed down through generations of skilled artisans. Among the traditional techniques, Thewa craft includes intricate craftsmanship on gold foil and enhancing the beauty of peacock motif by combining it with coloured glass and making it a preferred motif choice even today by the consumers.

PEACOCK MOTIF IN TRADITIONAL INDIAN JEWELERY			
			
Image Source:			
<a href="https://kalajee.wordpress.com/tag/jewellery/page/3/">https://kalajee.wordpress.com/tag/jewellery/page/3/</a>	<a href="https://mapacademy.io/article/meenakari/">https://mapacademy.io/article/meenakari/</a>	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/sunita_shekhawat_jaipur/">https://www.instagram.com/sunita_shekhawat_jaipur/</a>	<a href="https://silverlinings.in/products/silver-filigree-odissi-veni-hair-pin-od058">https://silverlinings.in/products/silver-filigree-odissi-veni-hair-pin-od058</a>

**VII. CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PEACOCK MOTIF IN THEWA JEWELLERY**

Over the years, the peacock has been a constant source of inspiration for Indian artists and this timeless influence still holds even today. The peacock, with its beautiful feathers and regal allure, holds an important place in Thewa jewellery. Embedded in mythology, religion, and daily life, the peacock motif is not only a decorative element in Thewa jewellery but holds profound symbolism and the peacock motif occurs as an enchanting symbol, reflecting deep-rooted cultural values, divine beliefs, and infinite creative expressions. By referring the existing literature on cultural significance of peacock motif, the significance of peacock motif identified is presented below:

**6.1 Mythological Significance** - The Rig-Veda period evidences its auspicious value and cultural representation as it is closely associated with Indian deities. The peacock feather on Lord Krishan's crown represents purity and strength against our inner struggles. It is not mere ornamentation and has a deeper significance in that it protects against the "evil eye" and helps in eliminating rage and jealousy. Lord Kartikeya who rides on peacock embodies strength, courage, and success, respect for defeating evil forces and serving as a divine protector against adversity. As the God of war and victory, his association with the peacock symbolizes victory over enemies, reflecting his confident and superior nature as he overcomes challenges. In Indian mythology, peacocks are seen as messengers of rain, their majestic feathers likened to unfurling clouds. This association is reflected in art, literature, and religious imagery, where peacocks symbolize abundance and prosperity brought by the monsoon. Across India, folklore and traditions celebrate peacocks as icons of the rainy season.

**6.2 Religious Significance** – Beyond Hinduism, the peacock bears importance in Jainism, Buddhism and Christianity. In Jain beliefs, the peacock embodies ideas of purity and elegance and considered a symbol of non-violence, while in Buddhism, it stands for openness and embracing all things and symbolizes wisdom. The peacock feather is not a central symbol in Christianity but it has been used symbolically in Christian art and literature to represent various thoughts. One interpretation is that the peacock symbolizes purity, reflecting the belief that upon death, the soul ascends to heaven.

**6.3 Artistic Expression and Cultural Identity:** In traditional Indian arts like painting, sculpture, and textiles, the peacock motif is depicted with rich artistry. From detailed Mughal miniatures to intricate temple carvings, the peacock appears in diverse forms and contexts, symbolizing grace and beauty. Peacock's vibrant displays during mating season make them symbols of fertility and renewal. Its splendid feathers and graceful shape inspire artists to portray its charm with intricate details and vibrant hues, evoking a sense of wonder and appreciation. The peacock motif plays a significant role in defining cultural identities across India. In various regions and communities, different versions of the peacock motif emerge, showcasing unique artistic styles and preferences. Whether adorning the palace interiors in Mughal architecture or embellishing textiles with Rajasthan's Gotta patti work, the peacock motif serves as a cultural emblem, nurturing a sense of unity and cultural pride.

## VIII. PEACOCK MOTIF IN THEWA JEWELLERY

Thewa jewellery is famous for its exquisite craftsmanship and intricate designs with themes varying from courtly inspirations to those depicting religious stories and the rich flora and fauna. As per responses from the Thewa practitioners, in the realm of traditional Thewa jewellery, the peacock motif occupies a prominent place, adorning ornaments with grace and elegance. From intricately crafted necklaces to ornate earrings, the peacock motif enhances the beauty of jewellery pieces while carrying layers of cultural significance. Thewa craftsmen precisely craft and embellish peacock-themed designs, infusing them with symbolism and craftsmanship passed down through generations. The peacock motif in Thewa jewellery not only serves as a decorative element but also conveys religious beliefs and auspicious symbolism. Wearing jewellery adorned with the peacock motif is considered auspicious, signifying blessings of prosperity, fertility, and protection. Moreover, it connects the wearer to tradition and heritage and contributes in preserving cultural narratives.

By incorporating the peacock motif into the designs of Thewa jewellery, craft practitioners not only pay homage to tradition but also infuse pieces with spiritual and cultural significance. Each Thewa jewellery piece adorned with the peacock motif becomes more than just a piece of adornment or an accessory; it becomes a symbol of cultural pride, unity, and timeless elegance. Thus, it can be said that the peacock motif in Thewa jewellery is a powerful representation of cultural significance and artistic expression. It not only reflects the rich heritage of Indian art and the exceptional skill of Thewa artisans but also serves as a bridge between the past and the present and continuing the legacy of Thewa craft for generations to come.

Analysis of different artistic expressions of Peacock motif in Thewa jewellery /objects		
Thewa Jewellery and objects	Enlarged view of Peacock Motif	Analysis of Peacock motif with respect to form, size and proportion
		The ashtray features a centrally positioned single peacock motif, on each panel depicted with elaborate detailing and its feathers spread open. This motif repeats throughout the product, though with slight variations in form. Notably, one example on blue glass showcases the peacock with a straight neck, while another instance on green glass depicts the peacock with its neck turned down, touching its body.
		Within a royal hunting scene, a single peacock motif is integrated as one of the elements, harmonizing with the overall composition. In this depiction, the peacock's feathers are depicted as closed, oriented upwards, contributing to thematic coherence.
		In the jewelry design, each glass plate features a single peacock motif placed centrally, adorned with surrounding floral patterns. This repetition of the peacock motif serves to make the piece larger while ensuring that the theme remains consistent throughout. Additionally, red and green beads are added to the design to complement its traditional aesthetic, enhancing its overall visual appeal.
		A single peacock motif is adorned with ornate feather outlines to complement surrounding floral motifs. Notably, the body of the peacock is proportionally downscaled in relation to its feathers, achieving aesthetic balance.
		Two peacock motifs are positioned in opposing directions, resulting in a symmetrical design. The feather outlines are deliberately left plain to distinguish them from adjacent floral motifs, enhancing visual clarity.
		Different peacock motifs are incorporated within this earring, with their forms carefully adjusted and modified to accommodate variations in jewelry size. This resizing and modification process ensures seamless integration of the motifs into the overall design while preserving their distinctive visual appeal.
Image sources: Image 1: <a href="http://www.saffronart.com">www.saffronart.com</a> Image 2: <a href="http://www.collectorsweekly.com">www.collectorsweekly.com</a>		Image 3: <a href="http://www.jewelace.com">www.jewelace.com</a> Image 4-6 Art of Thewa by Raghav Rajsoni

The table above explores diverse artistic uses of the peacock motif, from decorative pieces like ashtrays to intricate jewellery designs. Each example demonstrates meticulous craftsmanship and attention to detail, highlighting variations in form and positioning to add depth and interest. The overall form of the peacock is still the same as in traditional but reduced in size due to minimalistic preferences by modern consumers. Whether featured centrally with elaborate detailing or integrated harmoniously within a royal scene, the peacock motif captivates with its symbolic richness and aesthetic appeal. From traditional representations to contemporary adaptations, each rendition of the peacock motif carries its charm and

significance. Whether scaled down to complement floral motifs or positioned symmetrically for visual balance, the peacock motif remains a timeless symbol of beauty, grace, and cultural resonance. The evolution of the peacock motif in contemporary design reflects a nuanced blend of tradition and modernity.

In contemporary adaptations of the peacock motif in Thewa jewellery, while the core form and essence of the peacock motif remain faithful to traditional designs, certain modifications have been made to cater to minimalistic contemporary preferences. Here's an elaborate look at how these modifications manifest:

### **Scaling Down:**

Traditional Thewa jewellery often features large, elaborate pieces where peacock motifs are expansive and highly detailed. In contemporary designs, these motifs are scaled down to create more delicate and subtle pieces. This makes the jewellery more versatile and lightweight aligning with the modern preference for light and minimalistic jewellery.

### **Simplification of Detailing:**

The intricate details that characterize traditional peacock motifs are often simplified in contemporary designs. While the overall form of the peacock—its body, feathers, and distinct posture—remains unchanged, the level of detail is reduced. This simplification involves fewer lines and less elaborate feather patterns, creating a cleaner and more modern look.

### **Integration with Modern Elements:**

The contemporary adaptation of the peacock motif in Thewa jewellery often sees it integrated with other minimalist elements. For example, the motif may be combined with simple geometric shapes or placed within minimalist settings that emphasize clean lines and open spaces. This integration helps the motif to blend seamlessly with modern fashion trends.

### **Versatility and Functionality:**

Contemporary Thewa jewellery designs aim for versatility and functionality. The scaled-down peacock motifs are incorporated into various types of jewellery, such as rings, pendants, bracelets and earrings, which are practical and lightweight to wear. This shift from larger, statement pieces to smaller, versatile ones reflects contemporary lifestyle preferences.

The modern adaptations of the peacock motif in Thewa jewellery beautifully combine tradition with contemporary style. While keeping the traditional look and deep meaning, these adaptations make the jewellery suitable for today's tastes by making it smaller, simpler, and adding modern touches. These updates ensure that Thewa jewellery stays attractive and relevant in today's fashion, offering pieces that are not only beautiful and meaningful but also practical and versatile. This evolution shows the lasting charm of the peacock motif and how traditional crafts can adapt and flourish in the modern world.

## **IX. CONCLUSIONS**

In conclusion, the peacock motif holds a special place in Indian culture and craftsmanship and Thewa jewellery, known for its intricate craftsmanship finds resonance with the peacock motif. This research deepens the understanding of how the peacock motif is expressed artistically in Thewa jewellery, showcasing its cultural significance, visual appeal, and lasting impact on Indian craftsmanship. The study has explored the cultural and aesthetic significance of the peacock motif in Thewa jewellery, exploring its symbolic meanings and artistic expressions. The peacock motif in Thewa jewellery goes beyond mere decoration, carrying deep cultural narratives and beliefs. From its mythological connections with deities like Lord Krishna and Lord Kartikeya to its representation as a symbol of fertility and abundance in Indian folklore, the peacock motif holds layers of meaning. The way it's depicted in Thewa jewellery reflects the careful craftsmanship and artistic talent of the creators, who infuse each piece with cultural significance. Despite periods of decline, Thewa jewellery has experienced a revival, with the dedication of artisans and designers committed to preserving this traditional art form. The peacock motif remains a timeless favourite in Thewa jewellery, valued for its symbolic importance and aesthetic appeal. The traditional peacock motif remains recognizable, its transformation for contemporary minimalistic preferences involves a thoughtful reduction and refinement of

its elements. This ensures that the motif remains relevant and appealing in modern contexts, celebrating cultural heritage while embracing current aesthetic trends. As Thewa jewellery continues to evolve, the peacock motif serves as a reminder of the enduring charm of India's cultural heritage.

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