



# Textiles And Motifs

*Woven Narratives: Crafting Connections in Delhi's Textile Tradition and Motifs,*

*Symbolic Language and its Influence*

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**Abstract:** Textiles and motifs play a significant role in reflecting cultural Heritage, folk culture, and symbolism. This study contextualizes the textiles and motifs within the broader framework of folklore in context. It examines the symbolic meaning and folkloric elements embedded within selected motifs from Delhi's textile tradition. Further, it outlines the role of textiles and motifs in soft power with certain examples from the G20 summit. Examined within the theoretical frameworks from cultural studies, the research aims to unwrap the cultural, social, and economic dynamics underpinning motif symbolism, production, and circulation. By synthesizing data collected from artisan field visits, literature surveys, and secondary sources, the study presents the cultural, mythological, and economic dynamics of selected motifs such as the Paisley, Lotus, Tree of Life, Elephant, Peacock, and Parrot. The findings reveal intricate meanings and cultural significance embedded within textiles and motifs, reflecting themes such as love, fertility, wisdom, resilience, etc.

The research addresses the gap in understanding the intersection of textiles and motifs not only from the perspective of aesthetics and symbolism but with deep-rooted meanings, folk cultures, identity, heritage preservation (along with innovation), and soft power dynamics; overall, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of the cultural significance of textile and motifs, shedding light on their role as symbols of culture, identity, Heritage, craftsmanship, and diplomacy.

**Keywords:** Textiles, Motifs, Folk-Culture, Symbolism, Craftsmanship, Soft Power, Heritage

## 1. Introduction

Indian textiles are a testament to centuries of artistic ingenuity, cultural Heritage, and craftsmanship. Delhi emerges as a dynamic hub in this vibrant textile tradition, pulsating with a rhythm of tradition and innovation. Motifs within these textiles carry meaning, encapsulating folklore, historical legacies, human experiences, and symbolic languages that define the city's cultural landscape. This study outlines the multifaceted nature of textiles, focusing on their intersection with cultural, social, and diplomatic dimensions. By delving into the selected motifs, the study presents the symbolic depth, embedded folkloric elements, and their role as cultural ambassadors. Further, by outlining the diplomatic potential of these textiles, the study contributes to the broader narrative of culture and folklore in context.

## 2. Objective(s)

- i. This study explores the historical and cultural dynamics that shape Delhi's textile tradition, focusing on the motifs that adorn these textiles.
- ii. The study seeks to identify, outline, and analyze the symbolic meaning of these motifs, tracing their association with folklore and mythology. By examining the discourses and factors that informed and inspired the creation of these motifs, the study aims to discern the role of textiles as custodians of cultural identity and Heritage.
- iii. The study aims to outline how the motifs rooted in folklore and Heritage have evolved into contemporary designs, highlighting the interplay between folk and modernity.
- iv. Further, by considering example(s) of how textiles and motifs have been utilized in events of national and global significance, the study endeavors to elucidate the role of textiles and motifs in cross-cultural communication, soft power prompting towards considering the role of textiles as instruments in communication and cultural diplomacy.

## 3. Research Questions

- i. What historical, social, and cultural factors have shaped the motifs in Delhi's textile tradition?
- ii. What symbolic meanings do they carry? In what ways are these traditional motifs rooted in folklore (symbolic meaning and narratives), and how have they evolved, contributing to an intersection between traditional (folk) and contemporary?
- iii. How can or how have these motifs been strategically utilized as a tool to enhance cross-cultural understanding in soft power and cultural diplomacy on the global stage?

## 4. Method and Methodology

This research on Delhi's textile motifs is qualitative in nature. The research predominantly relies on primary data to capture authentic insights from practitioners creating and designing textiles and motifs. Although limited, it is based on in-person interviews with two distinct groups, artisans and designers, and multiple settings, including workshops, markets, shops, and studios. While primary data takes precedence, secondary sources, including scholarly articles and historical records, significantly supplement the study to add information on symbolic meanings and take examples of textiles and motifs used in events of national and international significance. Observatory visits to the identified marketplace interviews with ten subjects- nine artisans and one designer whose family has been associated with textiles and motifs for generations- have been completed so far. Analysis is conducted based on conceptual and theoretical frameworks from cultural studies, examining the cultural, historical, and socio-economic dimensions of Delhi's textiles and motifs. Furthermore, emphasis is placed on the meanings and interpretations attributed to these motifs by people. Overall, the research compiles a comprehensive understanding of the symbolism and cultural significance embedded in Delhi's textiles and motifs, leading to a nuanced and conclusive exploration.

## 5. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study follows a multifaceted approach, drawing upon various approaches to analyze Delhi's textiles and motifs comprehensively. A historical approach has been applied to outline the cultural and historical factors that have shaped them. An ethnographic perspective has been integral to understanding the space and context in which these motifs came into shape and how people carry them. The functional approach investigates the practical roles and functions of textiles and motifs in various contexts (beyond aesthetics), especially at events of national importance. A structuralist lens examines underlying structures and patterns within motifs to highlight the inherent meanings. Concepts from iconography and iconology have been applied to unwrap the symbolic meaning or decode the symbolic language embedded in motifs. Folkloristic and Cultural studies concepts have been applied to contextualize motifs within the context of folklore, emphasizing their narrative aspects. Other concepts, such as globalization, cosmopolitanism, etc., have been considered to understand the space and its impact on design philosophy and techniques. In this sense, cultural materialism highlights socio-economic factors influencing the production and consumption of cultural history, symbolism, and personal stories.

## 6. Background

India, the land of culture and crafts, has been known for its magnificent textile arts for ages. It would not be wrong to say that the world history of textiles is incomplete without mentioning Indian textiles. There is a great need to revive traditional textile records by giving captivating grandeur to Indian textiles and motifs. Moreover, it can be a better way to preserve the Indian cultural Heritage and maintain the value of Indian textiles. (Kishore. 726-730).

Delhi's textile tradition is a complex blend of Mughal opulence, British transformation, and indigenous customs. The Mughal era, marked by opulence and refinement, significantly shaped Delhi's textile craftsmanship. Imperial patronage and the fusion of Persian and Indian artistic sensibilities during this period contributed to distinctive motifs that continue to define Delhi's textile tradition—the British colonial period introduced new elements to Delhi's textile landscape, while indigenous elements formed the resilient underpinning of its textile heritage. In this sense, the textile and motif ecosystem is influenced by the past, with traditional craftsmanship shaping contemporary design. From the field visit, it was observed that, at present, the textiles and motifs in Delhi reflect the city's dynamic identity, blending different cultural threads and creating a cosmopolitan mosaic. With their diverse cultural affiliations and customer choices, artisans such as Shahpur Jat and Chandini Chawk embody the microcosm's cosmopolitan spirit. This cosmopolitanism is a stylistic choice and a reflection of the city's openness to diverse influences, celebration of cultural pluralism, and global interconnectedness. Therefore, Delhi's textiles and motifs mirror aesthetic preferences and serve as cultural markers reflecting societal currents.

## 7. Motifs and Folklore

The relationship between motifs and folklore is intriguing. In both folklore and textiles, motifs serve as elementary units that assemble to form the larger narrative (in folklore) and pattern (in textiles). In other words, motifs in folklore, characterized by recurring themes or symbols, converge to construct stories. Likewise, motifs in textiles, characterized by shapes or by different designs, converge to craft intricate patterns adorning fabrics and textiles. These motifs, inspired by nature, human experiences, religious philosophies, and societal beliefs, embody the essence of cultural Heritage and carry meaning. They are deeply embedded in the city's historical, social, and cultural experiences and dynamics. In this sense, motifs serve as storytellers, weaving tales of Heritage, identity, and creativity. They transcend aesthetic appeal and geographical boundaries, evolving influenced by local context and craftsmanship. Despite the dynamic interplay of tradition and innovation, motifs continue to serve as timeless symbols of India's rich cultural legacy, perpetuating stories of human experience and craftsmanship. Understanding the deeper layers of meaning and folkloric significance embedded in textiles and motif designs can help us better understand social formation and folk culture. Overall, this parallel underscores the inherent narrative essence in folklore and textile craftsmanship, highlighting the enduring significance of motifs across diverse cultural contexts.

## 8. Literature Survey

Textiles are crafted fabrics encompassing various materials, techniques, and designs, serving utilitarian and aesthetic purposes. Beyond garments or decorative items, textiles are cultural artifacts that carry the imprints of tradition, history, and craftsmanship. Its thriving textile traditions are carried on by handloom weavers, block printers, painters, dyers, and embroiderers from the Rann of Kutch to the Coromandel coast, from city to village. In their work "Traditional Indonesian Textiles," John Gillow and Nicholas Barnard provide a thorough explanation of traditional textile production, including printing, painting, and tie-and-dye processes, alongside their cultural contexts. (Thames and Hudson, 1992)

### 8.1. Symbolic and Cultural Significance of Motifs

From peacocks to intricate floral patterns, motifs transcend embellishments and become conduits for cultural symbolism, stories, and folklore. Pallavi Prajapati's research paper on 'Indian Traditional Motifs: Symbolism of Indian Culture and Heritage concerning Flora/fauna and Ancient Architectures' presents the symbolism embedded with multiple traditional motifs (not restricted to textiles) and therefore serves as a significant source of information. Following a continuum from there while introducing new aspects, this research aims not just

to study the symbolic meaning but contextualize it within the broader framework of culture and folklore as well as outline its role in soft power; therefore, it's pertinent to discuss symbolism and cultural significance. Of motifs before we analyze them within the mentioned framework.

From its representation as a visual element in calendar art to the logo design for a brand, animals are the most viewed objects in literature and artworks. They play a significant role in understating the ecological efficacies to create an organized equilibrium in nature. Adopting animals as visual images is an old tradition in Indian mythology, which enriches the sacred texts of Hindu beliefs with narratives of greater wisdom and values through characters like Hanuman-Monkey God, one such portrayal. The projections of animal motifs in our art and culture infuse a sense of respect for animals, which crowns the Indian art tradition from ancient times to the present. The Peacock motif, intricately woven into fabrics, symbolizes regality, artistic expression, and a profound connection to mythological tales. This motif draws inspiration from mythology, mainly associating itself with Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom, and embodying cosmic beauty. With its iridescent plumage, the Peacock motif dances across fabrics, conveying narratives of grace, immortality, and a celestial connection that adds layers to the cultural identity of Delhi. However, peacock is one such motif seen not only on fabrics and textiles but elsewhere as well. This can be supported by the paper "Aesthetic, Patriotic and Religious Peacock Motifs: Framing the Meanings of Pakistani Truck Art through Foss' and Aristotle's Rhetorical Approach," which investigates selected peacock motifs painted on trucks from different regions in Pakistan to analyze the different shapes and styles of peacock motifs based on their aesthetic forms and themes, particularly of religious and patriotic elements. By employing the visual rhetoric theory of artifact proposed by Sonja K. Foss and Aristotle's rhetorical triangular spectrum, this paper explores the characteristics, features, and persuasions of these peacock motifs as well as their variety of stylized forms with intrinsic appearances, patterns, placements, and influences of the region's cultures in truck arts. Such readings of motifs lay another dimension in understanding, reading, and listening motifs. Apart from peacocks, textiles such as elephants and lions incorporate animal symbols.

Floral motifs adorning various fabrics serve as a visual chronicle of the seasons in textile tradition. Each bloom unfolds narratives rooted in nature's cycles, symbolizing growth, change, and the eternal cycle of life. Inspired by folklore tales, these motifs connect wearers to the rhythmic dance of nature, weaving a narrative that transcends mere fabric decoration. The Paisley motif represents a teardrop or a mango, symbolizing fertility, abundance, and eternity. In Delhi's textile narrative, the Paisley motif becomes a storyteller of prosperity and everlasting beauty, intertwining cultural symbolism with the craft of weaving. The Lotus motif carries deep symbolic meanings. Inspired by spiritual (flower associated with Goddess Saraswati) and cultural significance, the Lotus symbolizes purity, enlightenment, and resilience. In Delhi's textile tradition, the Lotus motif unfolds narratives that echo the city's spiritual and cultural identity, adding layers of meaning to the fabrics that feature this timeless symbol.

Further, the Tree of Life motif symbolizes interconnectedness and continuity. Rooted in cultural traditions and folklore, this motif represents the unity of diverse elements and the interconnectedness of all life forms. It becomes a powerful symbol of cultural Heritage, serving as a reminder of the enduring threads that bind generations together, creating a fabric of stories that resonate through time. These motifs, each with unique symbolic meanings, serve as carriers of cultural stories, connecting wearers to the city's history, mythology, and the enduring threads that weave through generations.

While the men worked in the fields in the wine-like [winter] air, the women sat in the afternoon sun spinning and embroidering while they sang together before cooking for their men. They embroidered phulkaris....” (Tandon 1968, 65). These stereotypes of feminine and masculine work in Prakash Tandon's memory book *Punjabi Century* illustrate dominant literary representations of economic production in Punjab, a province of the British Raj from the mid-nineteenth century until it was partitioned between independent India and Pakistan in 1947. In the nineteenth century, many Punjabi women used phulkari (literally, "flower-work") embroidery to decorate their daily garments and handmade gifts. In "Embroidering the Past: Phulkari Textiles and Gendered Work as "Tradition" and "Heritage" in Colonial and Contemporary Punjab," Michelle explores the patterns of the embroidered textile craft of Punjab. Being embroidered by women in their leisure time is an integral part of Punjabi culture. Learned through the teachings and experience of the elders, a girl embroiders her world, dreams, and aspirations onto a canvas of khaddar. The embroidery ranges from striking geometric medallions in reds, shocking pinks, and maroons through almost monochromatic golden tapestry-like, fabric-covering designs to narrative embroideries depicting people and objects of rural Punjab. (Frater 1993, 71–74; Yacopino 1977, 42–45; Askari and Crill 1997, 95–101).

In this article, I weave together the relevance of narrative textile work in therapeutic and human rights contexts; showcase Common Threads, an international nonprofit that uses story cloths with survivors of gender-based violence; outline a master's level art therapy course in story cloths; and relate how textiles helped

build a sibling relationship". Although seemingly unrelated, these elements are tied together within the context of culture, time, and purpose, shown in the article through stories, mythology, current practices, and personal experience. Art therapists and other mental health practitioners are increasingly using sewing as a medium, particularly in places where it is culturally relevant, to help people tell their stories graphically. Though art therapists may use textiles and fabric in practice, little is found in the art therapy literature that addresses textile work with trauma survivors. Like traditional art therapy groups and open studios, making story clothes in the community provides a connection with others and an opportunity to create, process, and cope with traumatic events. (Garlock, Lisa Raye. 58 – 66)

## 8.2. Motifs as storytellers

Various motifs may have distinct stories to tell. For example, motifs inspired by Mughal art could carry narratives of imperial grandeur and courtly life. Floral patterns may be laden with natural beauty and abundance narratives, reflecting a cultural appreciation for the environment. Animal motifs could symbolize mythological tales or have deeper spiritual connotations. Motifs inspired by Rajasthani art may carry tales of desert life and vibrant festivals. At the same time, those influenced by South Indian design could embody narratives of temple architecture and classical dance forms.

## 8.3. Semiotic Analysis

In a culturally diverse city like Delhi, motifs from different regions and communities converge, creating a mosaic of narratives within the textile tradition. Semiotic analysis, decoding the language of traditional textile motifs, offers a nuanced perspective on the cultural significance embedded in these intricate designs. The juxtaposition of Roy's semiotic analysis with Sharma's emphasis on narratives allows for a comprehensive exploration of the symbolic language woven into Delhi's textiles. This dual perspective decodes the visual elements and unravels the cultural stories, beliefs, and histories encapsulated in the motifs.

## 8.4. The juxtaposition of Tradition and Contemporary

The paper "Fashion and the Modern" by Michel Butor, Richard George Elliott, and Ulrich Lehmann explores the relationship between fashion and modernity, delving into the language of clothing, the role of the couturier, the avant-garde, and the classics in shaping fashion culture, and the structuralist theories applied to fashion. It discusses how fashion is a form of communication and expression, reflecting societal values, trends, and individual identities. Here, the parallel between the language of fashion discussed in Butor's article and the language of traditional textiles in Delhi can be drawn. Just as clothing communicates information about the wearer in the context of fashion, traditional textile motifs in Delhi convey cultural narratives, historical symbolism, and community identities through their motifs, colors, and designs. It suggests how motifs could serve as repositories of cultural memory, storytelling, and identity formation. Researchers can unwrap the deep-rooted meanings, histories, and beliefs embedded in these textiles by analyzing how folk narratives are woven into textile designs and patterns in Delhi. (Butor, Elliott. 5-10)

The essence of Delhi's textiles transforms as technology infiltrates looms and design processes, expressing cultural nuances, aesthetic preferences, and symbolic meanings. Fabric decorating patterns are constantly developing and responding to influences in the domestic and export sectors of the textile business, demanding the display of professional creative abilities and inventiveness. The textile industry has advanced due to the dynamic interdependence between production and consumption, innovation and creativity, and the sector's unmatched commercial expansion to increase market share and higher economic values. The goal is to inspire innovation and turn the textile and fashion sector into a financially sustainable and successful enterprise. However, when we talk of the market (both domestic and global), it is important to note who becomes a legitimate artisan and what products enter these domains. Mira Mohsini's work, "Engagement and Disengagement from the Margins: perceptions of the State by Urban Muslim Artisans in India." It has reflected how state-issued documents, such as the certificate conferred to winners of the national awards for highly skilled artisans and the artisan identification card, are perceived as legitimate or illegitimate based on ideals of what it means to be an authentic artisan.

"Development of folk motif using CAD" discusses the development of Rajasthani folk motifs and their variations using computer-aided designing (CAD) software. The study focuses on creating modified forms of traditional motifs from Rajasthan using software tools like CorelDrawX3 and Adobe Photoshop. The research explores the adaptation of 15 different traditional motifs into abstract, stylized, and geometrical forms, highlighting the process of motif creation and modification through digital tools.

### 8.5. Politics in Fashion and Clothing, Question of Identity

Tarlo, Emma, in "Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India," reflects on the problem of what to wear rather than describing what is worn, demonstrating how different individuals and groups have used clothes to assert power, challenge authority, define or conceal identity, and instigate or prevent social change at various levels of Indian society from the village to the nation. Three main issues addressed are questions of national identity as seen through the clothing controversies of the Indian elite in the late colonial period, questions of local identity as experienced by women in rural Gujarat, and the recent development of urban fashion trends that reappropriate regional styles. Emma Tarlo demonstrates the complexity of interaction between these different levels of sartorial change. Nicholas Barnard's publications "Living with Kilims" (with Alastair Hull, 1988), "Living with Decorative Textiles" (1989), and "Living with Folk Art" (1991) can be considered to further delve into this theme. Further, acclaimed designer Ritu Kumar, after years of searching through dusty museum collections and royal stores across India, has uncovered and presented many of the last surviving examples of traditional royal clothing. Her book is a celebration of this rich legacy of textiles and craftsmanship. This in-depth study of the evolution of Indian royal costume spans the centuries from the first representations of clothing in ancient India, through the reign of the Mughal emperors and the days of the British Raj, to Indian independence and royalty in the present day. The author covers both men's and women's garments, as well as Hindu and Muslim styles, and documents the evolution of European-Indian fashions. This sumptuous volume is illustrated with various materials, much of which has never been published. A separate section explains in detail the techniques behind the traditional crafts of weaving, dyeing, printing, and embroidery, with sketches and patterns- and many such works can be considered as an example and backdrop to understanding the politics in fashion, clothing, and crafts.

McGowan (2009) and Mohanty (2022) provide a broader context, discussing the politics of crafts in colonial India and the impact of globalization on traditional weaving practices in Chanderi, respectively. Fraser-Lu's (1988) study of Southeast Asian textiles underscores weaving traditions' cultural and social significance. These works collectively highlight a complex interplay of cultural, economic, and political factors. Globalization presents opportunities and challenges for traditional artisans, who must adapt to the demands of a globalized market. Delhi's textiles contribute to local prosperity and global economic interconnectedness, while their motifs become cultural symbols that transcend borders. Further, it is noted that countries strategically leverage their textile traditions to showcase their cultural richness and shape international perceptions. In this sense, the global stage becomes a canvas for diplomacy, weaving threads of soft power into the fabric, fostering cross-cultural connections, and influencing global narratives, which has been outlined in the analysis section of this paper with example(s) from the G20 summit.

## 9. Research Gap

While existing studies considered and decoded the symbolism of motifs in various regions and within the broader context of India, there is a lack of research specifically focused on uncovering the nuanced narratives encoded in Delhi's textile tradition and motifs, owing to the cosmopolitan nature of the place. This highlights the significance of the current research in addressing this gap. Further, the literature review reveals that many studies have been done on motifs. However, that is mainly in the context of design and symbolism henceforth, leaving a notable research gap in understanding the embedded cultural and folkloric significance in the cosmopolitan center and the capital city of Delhi. The relevance of this study becomes evident as it aims to extend beyond the conventional examination of craftsmanship. Instead, it seeks to delve into the dynamic role of Delhi's textiles, acknowledging them as carriers of intricate narratives. By exploring the evolving nature of these motifs and investigating their impact on diplomatic settings, this research contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of Delhi's textile tradition and motifs.

## 10. Key Findings: An Overview

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1\\_8QIL4GSG4xoLYKBFRude0nuQcLv8W8NOt9OBskgvpM/edit?usp=drivesdk](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_8QIL4GSG4xoLYKBFRude0nuQcLv8W8NOt9OBskgvpM/edit?usp=drivesdk)

## 11. Discussion and Analysis

The examination of motifs within textile design, as elucidated through findings, discussion, and motifs within the mentioned theoretical framework, reveals a complex web of cultural, historical, mythological, and symbolic significance. Additionally, it must be noted that while the analysis is based on the information gathered and analyzed within the mentioned framework, the symbolism and other aspects presented in Pallavi Prajapati's research on traditional Indian motifs significantly shape the first part of the analysis.

Each motif carries layers of meaning, reflecting fertility, divinity, love, and interconnectedness deeply rooted in Indian folk and mythological culture. Like mango or paisley fruit, the droplet shape of the Paisley motif symbolizes fertility, abundance, and prosperity—a motif deeply rooted in agricultural symbolism in folk narratives. The motif's evolution from Central Asia to its prominence in Mughal textiles and its later association with rebellion during the counterculture movement of the 1960s (The Counterculture Power of Paisley, the Ponytail Journal. 2021) reflects a narrative of cultural exchange, adaptation, and resistance. Through its association with rebellion and nonconformity, the Paisley motif becomes a visual expression of individuality and dissent, echoing themes often found in folklore narratives of resistance against societal norms. Postcolonial Theory deconstructs colonial legacies, and examining motifs within this framework reveals them as sites of resistance and cultural reclamation. Motifs such as the Paisley motif embody complex histories of colonial encounters, reflecting power struggles and cultural exchanges between colonizers and colonized. In some cultures, for example, in Persian folklore, the paisley motif is sometimes associated with the concept of "evil eye" or malevolent spirits that bring misfortune or harm to those who gaze upon them, prompting diversity in interpretation and perceptions. (<https://www.nataniabarron.com/2021/04/05/coming-up-paisley/>, the page presents an extensive examination of the motif beginning from its origins, different designs to its symbolism)

The Lotus motif, analysed within the framework of folklore and mythology, embodies spiritual significance, symbolizing themes of purity, rebirth, and enlightenment. Associated with Hindu deities such as Brahma, Vishnu, and Saraswati, the Lotus motif symbolizes the divine presence and creative forces in the universe. Its depiction on textiles evokes a sense of reverence and awe, invoking the blessings of revered gods and conveying narratives of creation and divinity. Furthermore, the Lotus motif symbolizes the cyclical nature of life, representing fluctuation in life, reflecting narratives' transient nature of existence when added on textiles, and inviting one to contemplate deeper spiritual truths for inner growth. Further, the Tree of Life motif reveals deep-rooted folkloric narratives symbolizing resilience, unity, and spiritual enlightenment. Depicted as a flourishing tree with leaves, the motif signifies abundance and a parallel co-existence with nature. It is often associated with spirituality, reflecting the soul's journey toward enlightenment and liberation (especially in Buddhist culture, drawing an association with the Bodhi tree). The motif's representation in various artistic mediums, including textile traditions like Kalamkari designs and Kantha embroidery, highlights its cultural resonance and artistic expression, celebrating vitality and abundance in life.

The Peacock motif, when examined, emerges as a symbol of divine grace, beauty, and immortality deeply ingrained in Indian mythology and tradition. Considered an auspicious bird symbolizing courtship and divine love, the Peacock motif embodies cultural and artistic significance across diverse regions of India. Its presence in folk art, rituals, and ceremonies underscores its universal appeal and enduring relevance as a symbol of grace and elegance. Furthermore, the motif's representation in textile designs like Patola, Phulkari, and Kantha embroidery with vibrant colors and intricate designs evokes a sense of royalty with versatility. Furthermore, the parrot motif is a potent symbol of love, passion, and cultural significance deeply rooted in Indian folklore and tradition. As the vahana of Kamadeva, the god of love and desire, the Parrot motif symbolizes courtship, affection, and auspicious beginnings. Its presence in various art forms and textiles reflects its versatility and adaptability in traditional craftsmanship. While considered a representation of love, Parrots can also carry negative associations. In some folk tales, the Parrot is depicted as a symbol of gossip, deceit, or manipulation. For example, in traditional Indian folklore, the Parrot is sometimes portrayed as a mischievous character who spreads rumors and creates discord among lovers or within families. By studying these narratives, folklorists elucidate how motifs serve as repositories of cultural memory and are essential for transmitting cultural knowledge across generations. In synthesizing these theoretical perspectives, a critical analysis reveals the intricate intersections between motifs, cultural narratives, and socio-economic dynamics. Motifs emerge as decorative and potent symbols that encode and perpetuate cultural meanings, reflecting historical legacies, power dynamics, and societal resistance strategies.

The critical examination of the parallel between motifs within textile design and cultural narratives prompts a complex web of dynamics. Based on interviews with artisans, field observations, and theoretical insights, the analysis revealed multiple dimensions. To begin with, the ongoing practice of traditional craftsmanship was underscored by techniques such as *dabka* embroidery and block printing, which serve as tangible manifestations of cultural and professional continuity in many communities. Further, delving deeper

into the findings from an interview with the designer, the analysis reveals cultural and aesthetic significance. The designs exhibit a harmonious fusion of traditional Indian motifs, such as floral patterns and abstract geometric shapes, with contemporary artistic sensibilities- while the inspiration is based on traditional motifs, they are done in contemporary pastel shades and forms like abstract at times. These motifs serve as visual narratives, weaving together cultural exchange, amalgamation, and personal expression strands, resonating with diverse audiences. The incorporation of Jaipur's architectural elements, such as the iconic Tripolia Gate, and bringing that to the national capital and international scale pays homage to the city's rich Heritage and infuses her designs with a sense of place and belonging. While this is one of the examples, her catalog reflected an excellent reverence for Rajasthani architecture and floral designs.

Moreover, the fabric choice reflects a conscientious commitment to quality and sustainability, emphasizing natural fibers like cotton. This strategic selection of fabric enhances the tactile appeal of her products and aligns with evolving consumer preferences for sustainable and ethically sourced materials. The design philosophy exemplifies a delicate balance between tradition and innovation, craftsmanship and sustainability. It offers a compelling narrative that resonates with contemporary consumers seeking authenticity and meaning in their purchases. Here, it was noted that while some designers and consumers stick to natural fibers, one because of the comfort and versatility in using them and the others keeping in mind sustainability, there are consumers who prefer synthetic ones because of the variety and fashion, and at times, they are cheaper. Further, market dynamics, including shifting towards customization, underscore the importance of adapting to changing market demands. The capacity of artisans to innovate and adapt, integrating modern elements such as digital printing alongside traditional techniques to meet evolving consumer preferences, was noteworthy in this regard. However, this is restricted to a few, while others struggle to position themselves and their crafts. The findings and implications emerge for promoting traditional crafts, encouraging innovation, market education, and policy support for artisanal communities.

Moving beyond cultural and folkloric symbolism, the motifs were also looked to outline their role in soft power. It was noted that motifs serve practical purposes beyond aesthetics, communicating social, cultural, and economic information and symbolizing national identity and Heritage. By strategically selecting motifs that align with diplomatic objectives, Delhi communicates messages of goodwill, friendship, and cultural affinity, forming perceptions with participating nations. As conceptualized by Joseph Nye, soft power refers to a nation's ability to influence others through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion. In the context of textile motifs, India leverages its rich cultural Heritage and artistic traditions to project soft power on the global stage. (Nye, 1990).

On the other hand, cultural diplomacy emphasizes the role of cultural exchange and cooperation in fostering mutual understanding and goodwill between nations. By incorporating this into international events and engagements, Delhi facilitates meaningful cultural exchange, promotes intercultural dialogue, and fosters a sense of global community. One of the examples taken to outline this is the setting of the G20 summit. The craft bazaar held at the G20 Summit featured textiles adorned with motifs celebrating India's rich handicraft traditions. Motifs such as flowers, jungle motifs, chinar leaves, and almond shapes were prominently showcased, representing diversity in craftsmanship. Through initiatives such as craft bazaars at Bharat Mandapam, Delhi promotes exchanging ideas, values, and artistic expressions, strengthening diplomatic ties, and building bridges between diverse cultures. It reinforces its image as a vibrant cultural hub and promotes narratives of inclusivity and unity. The bespoke silverware adorned with intricate motifs, including flowers and peacocks, crafted by Iris Jaipur, showcases the country's craftsmanship and symbolizes India's rich cultural Heritage. By incorporating these motifs into the summit meals, foreign delegates are offered a taste of India's Heritage, fostering a deeper appreciation and understanding of the nation's diverse cultural tapestry. Overall, by showcasing intricate motifs and traditional craftsmanship at international events like the G20 summit, India captures the attention and admiration of foreign delegates, thereby enhancing its cultural influence and visibility. Motifs such as flowers, peacocks, and chinar leaves carry deep cultural significance and historical narratives, representing themes of beauty, abundance, and resilience. These motifs serve as visual symbols of India's cultural Heritage and identity, transcending language barriers and conveying messages of cultural pride and mutual respect.

(<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1955066#:~:text=On%20the%20side%2Dlines%20of,G20%20Summit%20in%20New%20Delhi>)

From a functional perspective, textile motifs serve practical purposes beyond their aesthetic appeal. They communicate social, cultural, and economic information, reflecting the values and identity of a community or nation. For example, motifs like chanderi sarees and kanjeevaram sarees showcase India's textile craftsmanship and signify social status, cultural Heritage, and regional identity. By wearing these textiles at international events like the G20 summit, leaders and their spouses signal respect for Indian culture and



tradition while also promoting India's textile industry and economic interests on the global stage. Semiotically, textile motifs function as signifiers that convey meaning through visual representation. Each motif carries symbolic significance and cultural connotations that resonate with specific audiences. For instance, floral motifs symbolize beauty, growth, and renewal, while paisley motifs evoke a sense of resilience. By strategically selecting motifs that align with diplomatic objectives and audience preferences, Delhi communicates subtle messages of goodwill, friendship, and cultural affinity, fostering positive perceptions and strengthening diplomatic relations with participating nations.

Furthermore, textile motifs possess iconographic qualities that reflect shared cultural Heritage and collective memory. Iconography is studying visual symbols and their cultural significance within a specific context. In the case of Indian textiles, motifs like peacocks, lotus flowers, and geometric patterns carry deep-rooted symbolism derived from religious, mythological, and historical narratives. These motifs serve as visual markers of identity and tradition, connecting individuals and communities to broader cultural narratives and collective experiences. By incorporating iconic motifs into diplomatic attire and cultural exhibitions, Delhi reinforces its cultural legacy and promotes cross-cultural dialogue, enriching global discourse with the narrative of unity in diversity. Additionally, governmental councils and events like the Delhi Crafts Council's Dastkari Haat and the Delhi International Art Festival celebrate India's textile diversity, further enhancing the nation's soft power through cultural exchange and appreciation.

In summation, the analysis underscores the importance of textile motifs as potent symbols of cultural identity and pride, significantly influencing soft power and cultural diplomacy. Through strategic initiatives and international engagements, Textile motifs' functional, semiotic, and iconographic dimensions offer valuable insights into their role in shaping international perceptions and fostering cultural exchange. By understanding these motifs' multifaceted meanings and implications, Delhi can strategically leverage them to advance its diplomatic objectives, promote cultural diplomacy, and strengthen its soft power on the world stage. Through initiatives celebrating India's rich textile heritage and showcasing its artistic traditions, Delhi can engage with global audiences, build bridges between cultures, and promote mutual understanding and cooperation in an increasingly interconnected world. Delhi showcases its rich cultural Heritage, fosters global connections, and reinforces its position as a global cultural powerhouse.

## 12. Conclusion

This study offers a comprehensive exploration of selected textile motifs, situating them within the broader context of folklore, culture, and tradition. The investigation into the iconic motifs has revealed their symbolic depth, reflecting deep-rooted cultural mythological and folkloric symbolism embedded in these motifs. The study highlights how these motifs serve as potent symbols, embodying the collective wisdom and Heritage of Indian civilization, resonating across generations and geographical boundaries. The investigation further prompts towards the multifaceted role of textiles as tools of soft power, showcasing India's culture and artistic prowess on national and international platforms, influencing global perceptions with the G20 summit (with textiles and motifs) as one of the examples. Notably, textiles like sarees and motifs like floral, chinar leaves, etc., have been utilized, suggesting diversity in culture. Motifs, such as the regal peacock or the ancient Tree of Life, transcend their textile confines, becoming guardians of stories that transcend generations. These motifs serve as artifacts and cultural ambassadors, bridging the realms of folklore and contemporary understanding. Understanding these motifs becomes pivotal in identifying and interpreting them as research projects advance. They serve as static patterns on fabric and transform textiles into living manuscripts, preserving and recounting the essence of a culture. This study exemplifies that Delhi's textile tradition is a complex and intricate dance of tradition and innovation, with each motif representing a chapter in the epic poem of cultural identity. This project highlights the enduring significance of motifs as they continue to be storytellers, custodians of Heritage, and vibrant threads connecting Delhi's past to its dynamic present.

This study underscores the imperative of safeguarding and promoting India's textile heritage, not solely for its artistic value but also for its profound contribution to preserving folklore, tradition, and national identity. By elucidating the narratives and folkloric elements embedded within textile motifs (of Delhi), we deepen our understanding of Indian folk culture and Heritage, ensuring its continuity of passage from generation to come.

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