

*Printed Silk Scarves of  
Farukkhabad – A Journey  
From Past to Present*



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# Printed Silk Scarves of Farrukhabad—A Journey From Past to Present

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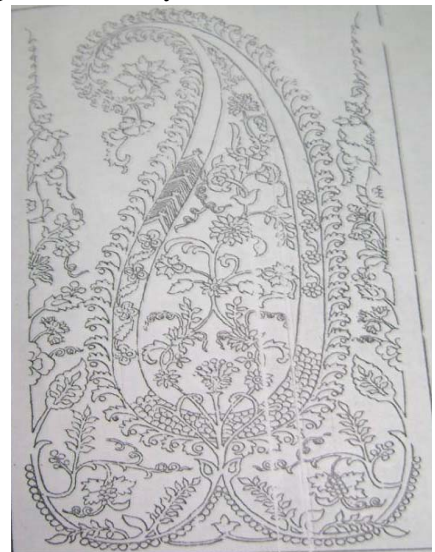
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## ABSTRACT

India is rich in her tradition and craft particularly in textiles which has reached a certain amount of sophistication and professionalism over a period of years. The textile designs and motifs have symbolic significance, and they indicate heritage of people and their beliefs. These knowledge systems have significant and relevance not only to its holder but to the rest of the humanity. This needs to be passed on to the coming generations.

The present study was an attempt to document the printed silk scarves of Farrukhabad, which are famous for its Indian traditional delicate designs. The major objective of the research was to document the motifs, color and its placement in the scarves selected from different decades for documentation.

**INTRODUCTION** The handicrafts of Uttar Pradesh occupy a significant position in its economy, especially in areas of employment and export. Of over 20 lakhs artisans engaged in handicrafts throughout the country, about 5 lakhs work here, producing over 30 per cent of the total value of handicrafts in the country, and accounting for the majority of exports in handicrafts. Farrukhabad in Uttar Pradesh is probably the biggest printing unit. Founded around 1714 by a provincial Mughal governor, Farrukhabad was once an important river port and trading center. Today it is well connected by road and railways with Delhi which is approximately 350 kms. It was the largest centre exporting Indian prints to Europe and America. Farrukhabad's hand printing was famous all over the world. But a shift can be seen from hand printing (which was once upon a time a pride for the district) to screen printing. The silk screen printed fabrics of Farrukhabad are still popular but printing is restricted to scarves only. These scarves are available in a wide range of colors and various elegant fascinating designs. One may call this a veritable treasure- house of traditional designs ranging from the classical *bootis*, known as dots of Kanauj, the universal mango to the famous Tree of Life. The *bootis* or dots are restful though sparkling when lit by soft colours. Mango, Paisley as it is known in the West, is made in the vast variety of shapes, and used in bold, medium and fine designs. Its appeal can only be matched by the Tree of Life. This tree concept is evidently of Indo-Persian origin evolved under the impact of Muslim architecture. The real Tree of Life in its original form is printed with blushing floral



designs and bouquets in panels, resist-dyed in glowing tones of crimson, rose, mat brown, soft yellow, blue and green set against arches, and shapes of *mihrab*, with symmetrical trees or *jali* designs, bordered with picturesque calligraphy and inlay work. The piece is so complex that a complete block is said to consist of anything from 1000 to 2000 pieces. They first printed in harmonizing colors later elaborated with delicate details painted in with a brush, which shows how zealous those craftsman are to perfect their handiwork. The Tree of Life in this context is one of those innovative adaptations of an ancient symbol for current use. Taking an old muslim motif as a base the Indian craftsmen created a new tree using his age old skills to cater to the new tastes of the European consumer, combining some



oriental and some western motifs, traced in some Chinese flowers, and turned out a beautifully balanced composition. Bamboo, palm berries, pomegranates and a variety of blossoms merge in this luxuriant Tree. It is primarily a decorative piece unrelated to any symbol, yet it does convey some flavor of spirit of a magical emblem of growth, prosperity and immortality. The entire surface is filled with so many ingenious details that one may go over it as on a endless voyage of discovery. The ground covering is composed of varied clusters of



**Plate 2- Printed scarf**

patterns, with spaces for little figures rather reminiscent of miniatures. The spirited heraldic lions that guard the Tree speak the Hindu tradition. Leaf bedecked hunters with an apron of leaves, seem to hail from some primitive forest tribe. Originally the big pieces were used as wall hangings, later as mostly in small sizes.

This art is on the verge of extinction as the artisans are not being paid properly and demand is also decreasing day by day. Though it is an age old art, but very less documented material is available. Documentation of this art has not been done properly and has not been taken up yet by any Government or Non-Government Organization. There is a need for the documentation of the craft before its extinction. The present study aims at getting in depth study of silk scarves printed in Farrukhabad and document it.

**METHODOLOGY**

Questionnaire was framed and purposive sampling method was followed for data collection with the help of observation and interview method for the documentation of the art. Selection of scarf for documentation was done keeping in mind the same interval of years of manufacturing, From that following four scarves were selected –

- Scarf I- 30 years old scarf
- Scarf II- 20 years old scarf
- Scarf III- 10 year old scarf
- Scarf IV- Present (less than ten years old)

For documenting the scarves following were the parameters:

-Age of the scarf

Motifs used in scarf

-Colors used in scarf

-Placement of the motifs to form a design

The data was collected by giving the questionnaire to the entrepreneurs and the workers and also by observation and conversation with them.

### **SCARF I- (Plate 3)**

Age- 30 years old.

Size- 42"x42".

Motifs- mango and floral motif.

Colors- magenta, pink, skin brown, green, white and black.



**Plate 3 – (30 years old)**

In terms of its designing it was very well designed basically with the mango motif. It had variation of the of mango motifs in stylized form. They enhanced the beauty of the scarf along with mango motif and floral motifs. All the motifs were outlined which gave a good aesthetic appeal. The designing of the scarf was attractive as it was intricately designed with good repeat system. Total five motifs were used. In this scarf six screens were used for the variation of the colors. The colors used in this scarf were magenta, pink, skin brown, green, white and black. This scarf had the border of two and half inches to three inches.

#### **Description of motifs-**

**Motif 1-2-** They both were the stylized mango motif with creepers, flora and fauna. They were very intricately designed. They were the motifs which were commonly used for the printed silk scarves of Farrukhabad. The motifs 1-2 were used in the field of the scarf. They were used with the mirror repeat system. With the repeat system it was used four times in the scarf to cover up the entire field.

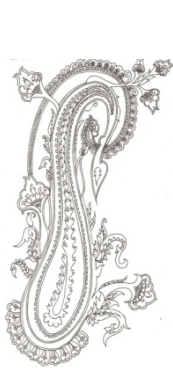
**Motif 3-4-** They were the different shapes of the mango motifs but different from 1-2. They were designed differently and used in the same scarf, the motif 3 was used as corner motif and motif 4 was used with the motif 1 and 2 for creating good design effect.

**Motif 5-** It was used for border design. It has the chain repeat arrangement. The whole border majored up to two and half inches. In this the thin border measured half inches and the broad border was two inches. The thin border has the floral *bel* and the broader border had the alternate groups of trefoil which also had creepers and floral motifs. This border was the combination of the flora and fauna.

**Motif 6-** It was the combination of creepers and the floral motif. This motif was used with mirror repeat on the two borders. It was used with the motif 1 and 2 for joining them with the border. It was used four times in this scarf.

**Motif 7-** This motif was also used with mirror repeat system. It was used on the two borders and in the center of the scarf. When it was use on the center of scarf it created the diamond shape, which gave a different look to the whole motif.

This scarf had the stylized mango motifs with different shapes and designs on the entire field. In the centre had the diamond shaped motif combination of stylized mango motifs, creepers, scallops and the floral bells were seen all over the scarf.



**Motif 1-2**

**Motif 3-4**

**Motif 5**

**Motif 6**

**Motif 7**

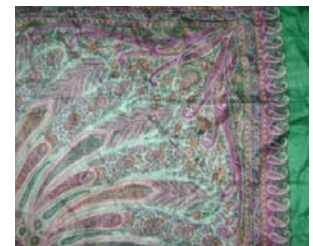
#### **SCARF II- (Plate 4)**

Age- 20 years old

Size- 42"x42"

Motifs- paisley motif and its stylized forms, flora and fauna and small dots

Colours- green, light green, sap green, purple, black, white, light blue and grey.



**Plate 4- (20 years old)**

In terms of the designing and placement of the motifs, it was very beautifully designed. It had the plain border which was one and half inches in width. In this scarf eight screens were used according to the colours and its designing. The colours used were green, light green, sap green, purple, black, white, light blue and grey. In this scarf the very intricate motifs were used. All the motifs were stylized. The placement of the motifs was very beautifully done to increase the aesthetic appeal of the scarf. The motifs used were mango i.e. known as paisley motif and its stylized forms. The other motifs were flora and fauna, small dots and some geometrical forms were also used to enhance the beauty of the scarf.

#### **Description of motifs-**

**Motif 1-** It was the corner motif, which was used after the border on all the four corners. It was the combination of flora and fauna and mango with the different sizes and forms.

**Motif 2-** This motif was used after the central motif to cover the entire field by creating the circle. For creating the circle it was used sixteen times. This was the main motif on the entire field of this scarf; it

covered the major area of the scarf. This motif was the stylized form of the mango which was combined with different flora and fauna and was decorated by the small dots.

**Motif 3-** It was the border of the scarf. For broader border the mango motif was used which was made by rick- rack style and for the thinner border the diamond shape was made in the geometrical form. The width of the broader border was one and half inches and the thinner border was half inch only.

**Motif 4-** It was the center motif which has the diameter of two and half inches. It was the floral motif with the sixteen petals and filled with very intricate designs.

It appeared that all the motifs were inspired from the nature. They have the repeat pattern; one fourth part was repeated for creating the designing on the surface of the scarf. All the motifs were very stylized and decorated with the small dots.



**SCARFIII (Plate 5)** Age- 10 years old

Size- 42"x42"

Motifs- mango motif with the combination of rose flower motif

Colours- blue, white, black, sap green, grey and purple



**Plate 5- (10 years old)**

This design of scarf was made by taking inspiration from the flowers. It had the overall print covered with the floral and the mango motif. In the floral motif the rose flower was used in the field. The center motif of the scarf was also the rose motif and its repetition. In this scarf the colours used were blue, white, black, sap green, grey and purple. In this scarf total six screens were used, because of the different shades of colours. This scarf also had the plain border which measured two inches

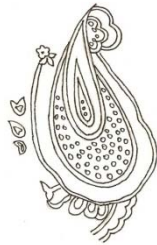
#### **Description of motifs-**

**Motif 1-** It was the border design of the scarf. The width of this border was one inch. In this border mostly leaf and the floral motifs were used. The designs were decorated by the use of the small dots. This highly enhanced the beauty of the motif.

**Motif 2-** This motif was used in the small areas of the scarf for covering the area and connecting the other motif. It was leaf shaped motif with the small dots on the subdued background colour. This creates beautiful effect and made motif more appealing.

**Motif 3-** This motif was placed near the border of the scarf. It was the combination of the rose and the mango motif with leafs, creepers and the small dots. In this motif the outline was done by the rick- rack method. For giving it more attractive and good look the diagonal lines and the zigzag were also used.

**Motif 4-** This was mainly the leaf motif with the big rose and with the creeper and the scallops. This motif was used in the field of the scarf. In this motif the dots were also used.



It seemed that all the motifs were highly inspired from the nature. More of the rose motif was used with the combination of the mango motif. All the motifs were filled with the dots and small floral motif. The dots were more prominent in this scarf and they were the more attracting feature of this scarf. The mango motif which was influencing the design in scarf I was now replaced by rose motif at some places.

#### **SCARF IV- (Plate 6)**

Age- present (less than ten years old)

Size- 42"x42"

Motifs- mango motif with flora and fauna and creepers

Colours- occur, yellow, green, pink, white, black, brown and light orange



**Plate 6- less than 10years**

The scarf had design which had floral and mango motif with leafs and creepers. This scarf also had the plain border which measured two inches. In this scarf the colours used were occur, yellow, green, pink, white, black, brown and light orange. For making this scarf total eight screens were used. The designs were intricate.

#### **Description of motifs-**

**Motif 1-** In this motif three mango motifs of different size were joined together with different designs for giving it an attractive look. This motif was placed in the center of the border. This was used on the

two borders. For placing this motif the mirror arrangement was used. This motif was on the field of the scarf. It had the floral and the leaf motif inside it.

**Motif 2-** This was the motif which joined the motif 1 for the repeat arrangement of it. It was on the middle of the repeating unit with its mirror image also. It was the combination of the floral, leaf and the creeper motifs.

**Motif 3-** It was the floral motif with the geometrical style; it was placed in the center of the scarf. It had the diameter of four inches. It was the very good combination of the floral and geometrical shape. This motif was also decorated with the small floral motifs and the zigzag forms inside the leaves.

**Motif 4-** It was the border of the scarf. It was a broad border. Most of the area of the scarf was covered by the border only. The width of this border was approx eight and half inches. Inside it, it also had the broad and the thin border. The thin border's width was half inches and the broad one was two inches. The thin border was decorated with the small floral *bels* and the broader border had the different designs. They were decorated with the creepers, mango motif, leaf motifs and by bunches of the small floral motifs with leaves. In this scarf the pointed leaves were used which added to the appeal of the scarf.



The design of the scarf and the placement of the motifs were very interesting. It was different from the other scarf in terms of the designing i.e. the addition of broader border. It had the very broader border compared to the border in all the categories of the scarf. The small and intricate designs were also highlighting the beauty of the scarf.

From the above it could be seen there is a shift in the type of the design as well as the placement. Earlier mango motif dominated the design but with the change in time other details were added. Though mango motif is used at present also but it is used as one of the motifs along with other floral motifs and creepers not as the basic unit in the scarf. For the placement, earlier it was overall pattern but it has shifted the borders from narrow border to broad border found in the latest design. Number of the screens used were between six- eight.

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