

Power in Cloth: The Semiotic Shift From Spiritual Iconography to Human Authority in Global Textiles

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Abstract

Indian historic textile traditions have long served as visual repositories of sacred narrative. Textiles such as Srikalahasti Kalamkari, Pattachitra scrolls, Baluchari woven epics, Mata ni Pachedi shrine textiles, Chamba Rumal embroideries, and temple-inspired Kanchipuram weavings depict gods, goddesses, and episodes from epic and Puranic literature. Through surface design, pattern composition, scale, and narrative structure, these textiles affirm spiritual authority and function as material extensions of ritual and devotional practice, reflecting a cosmological worldview embedded in textile surfaces. This semiotic visual system embedded in textile pattern-work began to transform as Indian textiles entered long-distance trade networks from the early modern period onward. Contact with Persianate, Southeast Asian, and European markets introduced new aesthetic expectations that favored decorative symmetry, floral repetition, and increasingly secular subject matter. During the colonial period, export-oriented textile production increasingly centered human subjects, including European families and officials, in visual positions once reserved for divine figures. This shift reflects a reorganization of visual authority that parallels broader social, economic, and political changes in India. This study examines these transformations by comparing sacred narrative textiles with export-oriented production between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Sacred narrative textiles are defined here as indigenous Indian textiles produced for temple and domestic use in spiritual or ritual contexts. Using comparative visual and semiotic analysis supported by historical evidence of trade and patronage, the study identifies key mechanisms of iconographic change and argues that Indian textiles function as material archives of cultural transformation, recording shifting negotiations of authority through surface design.

Keywords: iconography, textiles, colonial period, surface design, cultural continuity

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Introduction

Across India, textile traditions have long functioned as powerful visual media for expressing religious and spiritual narratives (Gopal, 1961). Painted, printed, and woven textiles from the early modern period depicted gods, goddesses, and episodes from the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, and *Bhagavata Purana* (Pattanaik, 2003). Traditions such as Srikalahasti Kalamkari in Andhra Pradesh, Pattachitra scrolls in Odisha, Baluchari weaving in Bengal, Kanchipuram temple-inspired silks in Tamil Nadu, Mata ni Pachedi shrine cloths in Gujarat, and Chamba Rumal embroideries in the Himalayan region demonstrate how textile surfaces operated as visual scripture within temple and domestic contexts (Divakala & Vasantha, 2014; Gopal, 1961; Modi, 2024). Through compositional hierarchy, scale, and iconographic emphasis, these textiles structured ritual life and affirmed spiritual authority.

In these traditions, divine figures occupied central and dominant positions within pattern layouts, while human figures appeared in secondary or devotional roles (Pinney, 2004). Motifs, borders, and color hierarchies reinforced cosmological meaning, making textiles carriers of religious knowledge and active participants in ritual practice (Rajguru, 2010). Beginning in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Indian textile production became increasingly integrated into long-distance trade networks. Contact with Central Asian, Persianate, Southeast Asian, and European markets reshaped patronage and aesthetic priorities (Gupta, 2009; Pattanaik, 2003). Foreign consumers favored decorative symmetry, floral repetition, and secular imagery, diverging from earlier narrative-centered and spiritually grounded surface traditions (Arasaratnam, 1967; Latif et al., 2019; Riello, 2008). As artisans adapted to commercial demands, spiritual iconography diminished or became fragmented in many regional production centers.

This transformation became particularly visible during the colonial period, when export-oriented textiles featured European families, officials, and scenes of social life (Miller & Hamell, 1986). Human subjects increasingly occupied visual positions once reserved for deities, marking a reorganization of visual hierarchy. Textile surfaces that once affirmed spiritual authority came to reflect social and political power (Cohn, 2017).

This study examines this transformation by comparing sacred narrative textiles with textiles produced for global and colonial markets. Through comparative visual analysis supported by historical evidence of trade and patronage, it identifies mechanisms through which spiritual iconography was reduced, and human-centered imagery became prominent. The study argues that Indian textiles function as material archives of shifting authority and that the displacement of divine figures records broader cultural negotiations within the history of Indian textile production.

Socio-Political Context and Systems of Patronage

Indian textiles evolved within shifting systems of patronage and political authority. Prior to the expansion of long-distance trade, textile production was closely tied to temples, royal courts, and local communities (Pinney, 2004). Religious institutions and regional rulers shaped visual priorities, reinforcing spiritual cosmologies through narrative composition, scale, and iconographic hierarchy. Textile imagery functioned as an extension of ritual life, embedding divine authority into material culture (Pattanaik, 2003).

From the fifteenth century onward, India became increasingly integrated into transregional trade networks linking South Asia with Southeast Asia, the Persianate world, and Europe (Arasaratnam, 1967a; Riello, 2008; Seshan, 2012). Textiles emerged as major commodities within these exchanges, transforming cloth from a ritual object into a globally circulating product. Artisans adapted to external markets that favored decorative symmetry, portability, and visual familiarity over sacred narrative specificity (Miller & Hamell, 1986). “*Export textiles*” refers to Indian textiles produced primarily as commodities for long-distance trade between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, shaped by foreign patronage and commercial demand (Seshan, 2012).

Colonial expansion intensified commercialization and standardization. Political authority shifted from religious institutions and indigenous courts toward colonial administrations and foreign consumers. As patronage structures changed, textile surfaces increasingly reflected new hierarchies of social and political power (Deepshikha et al., 2018). The gradual displacement of divine iconography by human and colonial subjects therefore represents not merely an aesthetic shift, but a material record of broader transformation in India’s economic and political systems.

Literature Review

Indian textile traditions have long been intertwined with sacred narrative and ritual practice. Before the expansion of global trade, cloth served as a primary visual medium through which divine stories circulated across the subcontinent (Pattanaik, 2003). Traditions such as Srikalahasti Kalamkari, Pattachitra textiles, Baluchari weaving, Mata ni Pachedi shrine cloths, Phad scrolls, and Chamba Rumal embroideries demonstrate the widespread use of textiles as narrative and devotional objects (Divakala & Muthian, 2017; Kaur, 2017; Shekhawat, 2018). Across these traditions, divine figures occupied central and dominant positions within the composition, structured through scale, color, and spatial hierarchy (Berti, 2004). Motifs such as lotus forms, temple architecture, and celestial symbols reinforced cosmological meaning, positioning cloth as a material extension of sacred space (Deepshikha et al., 2018).

From the fifteenth century onward, India’s integration into transregional trade networks reshaped textile production (Cohn, 2017). As textiles became major export commodities, foreign patronage influenced aesthetic priorities. Persian and Islamic markets encouraged floral and geometric designs, while European consumers favored symmetrical repeats and secular imagery suited to furnishing and fashion (Mathur, 2007). Under Portuguese, Dutch, and British commercial expansion, production became increasingly standardized and export oriented (Arasaratnam, 1967; Gupta, 2009).

This shift is evident in the transformation of Kalamkari and chintz (Silpa et al., 2025). Earlier narrative-centered textiles gradually incorporated floral patterns and secular scenes, including European domestic and military subjects (Silpa et al., 2025). European figures began occupying compositional prominence once reserved for deities, signaling a reordering of visual hierarchy. Simultaneously, sacred motifs persisted but were abstracted from narrative context and reduced to decorative elements (Appadurai, 1988). These developments mirror broader political and economic restructuring during the early modern and colonial periods.

Existing scholarship often treats sacred textile traditions and export textiles as separate domains. Studies of Kalamkari, Pattachitra, and Baluchari emphasize devotional contexts, while research on chintz focuses on global trade and European consumption (Guy & Haidar,

2024). Less attention has been given to how iconographic displacement reflects shifts in authority across these domains.

This study addresses that gap by examining sacred narrative textiles and export textiles within a shared analytical framework. Through comparative visual analysis, it traces the displacement of divine figures, the rise of human-centered imagery, and the fragmentation of sacred motifs, positioning Indian textiles as material archives of shifting cultural power.

Methodology

This study distinguishes between material construction and visual meaning. Although the term “cloth” appears in historical discourse, this research does not analyze fiber content or weave structure. Instead, it focuses on textile surface design, including imagery, iconography, compositional hierarchy, and narrative structure across techniques such as painting, weaving, embroidery, dyeing, and printing. The term “textile” is therefore used to emphasize visual and symbolic dimensions. Likewise, “sacred” refers to ritual and temple-based usage, while “spiritual” denotes the cosmological meanings embedded in imagery.

The study employs a qualitative framework grounded in comparative visual analysis supported by surface design observation (Silpa et al., 2025). Because many sacred and export textiles survive without explanatory texts, the textile surface itself becomes the primary source for interpreting cultural meaning (Welch, 1985). Visual analysis enables the tracing of iconographic shifts across changing systems of patronage.

The methodology is informed by semiotic theory, which understands visual forms as systems of culturally constructed signs (Travere, 2023). Textile imagery is treated as a signifying system in which figure scale, spatial hierarchy, and compositional centrality operate as signifiers of authority and belief. In sacred traditions, divine figures function as dominant signifiers that naturalize spiritual authority through scale and placement. As textiles enter global trade and colonial markets, these sign systems are reorganized. Human rulers and European subjects assume positions once reserved for deities, signaling a transformation in how authority is visually encoded.

Through this semiotic framework, Indian textiles are interpreted as cultural texts that record shifts in meaning and power rather than as static decorative objects.

Analytical Framework

The first phase of the methodology uses surface design observation to analyze a broad set of sacred Indian textiles that explicitly depict gods, goddesses, and mythological episodes. These include Srikalahasti Kalamkari temple hangings, Baluchari sarees featuring woven epics, Pattachitra cloths depicting Jagannath and Krishna narratives, Mata ni Pachedi shrine textiles centered on goddess iconography, Chamba Rumal embroideries illustrating Krishna Leela, and temple-inspired Kanchipuram weavings that incorporate divine motifs (Table 3). Each textile is examined through key visual parameters, including motif construction, iconographic clarity, compositional arrangement, figure hierarchy, color relationships, and border logic. This phase establishes a baseline for how divine imagery historically structured the visual field around the authority of gods and mythological narrative.

The second phase applies the same observational criteria to export-oriented textiles, particularly painted and printed chintz produced for Dutch, Portuguese, and British markets between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries (Table 4). These textiles frequently feature floral repeats, balanced decorative fields, and scenes of European families, officers, and domestic activity (Figure 2). Analysis focuses on the introduction of human-centered imagery, the reduction or removal of sacred symbols, and the increasing use of secular themes shaped by foreign patronage. Together, these phases clarify how long-distance trade and colonial market demands reorganized textile design and transformed the cultural function of cloth.

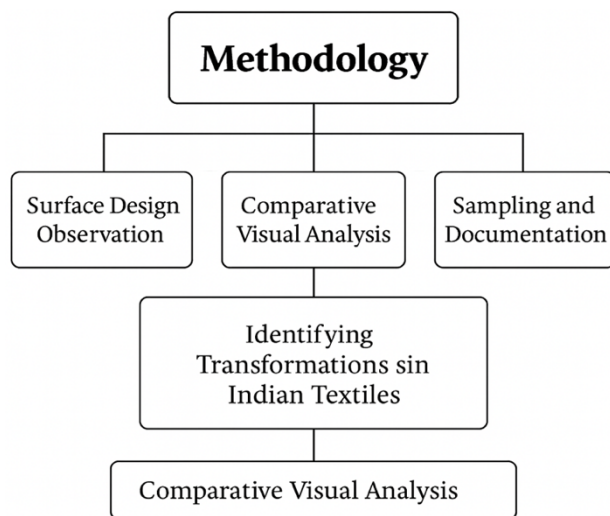
Comparative Visual Analysis

The third phase of the methodology consists of a systematic comparison between sacred and export textiles. The textiles are placed in dialogue across three analytical dimensions. First, subject matter is compared by tracing the shift from divine centered to human-centered imagery. Second, compositional structure is examined by comparing narrative sequencing, spatial hierarchy, focal placement, and the thematic role of borders and fields. Third, symbolic function is analyzed to identify how textiles transition from serving ritual, pedagogical, or cosmological purposes to representing social identity, status, leisure, or colonial authority. This comparative process exposes visual mechanisms of transformation, such as the diminishing scale of divine figures, the fragmentation of narrative structures, and the standardization of motifs shaped by commercial demand.

Sampling and Documentation

Sampling follows a purposive strategy designed to capture both regional diversity and chronological depth. The dataset includes high quality archival images, museum holdings across the globe and digital archives. The above-mentioned religious textiles were selected based on their clear representation of divine figures, their ritual or narrative function, and their historical provenance within regional traditions. A total of 55 traditional textile samples were studied (Table 3). Export textiles were selected for their relevance to colonial production networks, the presence of human and European subjects, and their departure from sacred narrative conventions. A total of 36 colonial textile samples were studied (Table 4). Each sample is catalogued with descriptive notes on iconographic details, textile style, description and estimated date.

Figure 1
Methodology Flowchart



Methodological Significance

By centering its investigation on visual evidence, the methodology reconstructs the shift in authority from sacred to secular and from divine to human representation through semiotic inference. Visual elements such as scale, spatial hierarchy, compositional focus, and iconographic placement are treated as signifiers of authority, allowing shifts in power to be read through changes in textile imagery. Comparative visual analysis offers a replicable framework for future studies of Indian textile history by aligning aesthetic transformation with historical context. This approach recognizes the textile as an artistic object, a cultural document, and an archive of shifting power relations. It allows the study to identify how artisans navigated the pressures of global trade, how sacred iconography was altered or displaced, and how colonial presence became materially inscribed onto cloth.

Comparative visual analysis reveals a transformation in the symbolic authority of Indian textile imagery from the pre-colonial sacred period to the era of long-distance trade and colonial expansion. Sacred narrative textiles consistently center divine figures through scale, compositional prominence, and narrative control. In Srikalahasti Kalamkari, Pattachitra, Baluchari weaving, Mata ni Pachedi shrine cloths, and Chamba Rumal embroideries, deities occupy focal positions that structure the visual field and guide narrative interpretation (Chamarty, 2024; Kaur, 2017; Pareek & Pant, 2015). Across traditions, divine presence organizes composition through spatial hierarchy, saturated color fields, symbolic borders, and subordinate human figures. Cloth functions as visual scripture and as a material extension of ritual authority.

With the expansion of long-distance trade, this visual logic shifts. Export-oriented chintz produced for Portuguese, Dutch, and British markets emphasizes floral repetition, decorative symmetry, and secular scenes. Human subjects, particularly European families and officers, assume central positions once reserved for deities (Guy & Haidar, 2024; Welch, 1985). Narrative sequencing gives way to ornamental balance, and sacred iconography diminishes in prominence.

Analysis of the colonial-era dataset of thirty-six textiles reveals consistent patterns of iconographic displacement. The transition from divine-centered imagery to human-centered representation follows five recurring categories, summarized in Table 5. Together, these findings demonstrate a reorganization of visual hierarchy that parallels broader economic and political transformation under colonial trade networks.

Table 5*Iconographic Transformation Chart*

Transformation Category	Description	Number of Samples	Representative Examples
Divine imagery replaced by human rulers	Mughal, Nawabi, Rajput, or Maratha elites occupy visual positions originally held by gods	14	Nawabs on thrones, Mughal durbar Kalamkari, Rajput durbar cloths
Divine narratives replaced by court or military scenes	Mythological storytelling replaced by human political narratives	10	Battle hangings, Mughal hunting cloths, colonial conflict scenes
Europeans inserted into sacred-format layouts	Human colonial figures appear inside narrative structures originally designed for gods	9	Europeans dining or riding in Kalamkari compositions
Secular domestic European life replaces ritual imagery	Sacred storytelling becomes European social life	6	Sahibs and memsahibs, European families under canopies
Sacred motifs reduced to decorative fragments	Lotus, conch, halos, and temple architecture become neutral ornamentation	5	Stylized borders, Palampores, simplified motifs

This shift represents a reordering of visual authority within the textile surface. Sacred textiles place the regional deity at the center of the composition and relegate human figures to devotional or narrative roles. Export textiles elevate human subjects and position them as the focal point. These figures do not carry spiritual authority. Their prominence reflects social status, economic power, or colonial identity. The textile surface becomes a stage for representing human and especially European presence. This change corresponds with historical shifts in patronage in which artisans responded to commercial markets rather than religious or community-based contexts.

The findings also show that spiritual motifs did not simply vanish. Instead, many sacred symbols were transformed into decorative units. As seen in Table 5, lotus flowers, temple arches, conch shells, and mythic animals appear in some export textiles but without narrative context. They operate as ornamental fragments rather than as elements of a coherent sacred story. This fragmentation demonstrates how sacred visual languages were adapted to meet foreign expectations while losing their original cosmological significance. The replacement of spiritual figures with human subjects becomes especially apparent in textiles produced during the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As colonial influence grew, the textile surface recorded the increasing visibility of European bodies. The compositional prominence of these figures signals a shift in power. Cloth that once affirmed divine authority now affirms social

and political hierarchy connected to global trade and colonial rule. The transformation is not simply a change in motif but a change in the cultural purpose of the textile.

Across all examples studied, the findings show a movement from sacred to secular textile imagery. The visual strategies that once centered divine authority are replaced by strategies that highlight human identity, domestic life, and aesthetic preferences shaped by global circulation. Textiles serve as material archives of these changes. Their surfaces reveal how artisans navigated shifting economic demands and how power became visible in new ways. The disappearance of gods and the rise of human and colonial subjects reflect broader transformations in cultural authority and the evolving role of cloth in Indian society.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that the transformation of Indian textile imagery reflects a broader cultural shift in how authority is represented. Interpreted through semiotic analysis, visual elements such as figure scale, spatial hierarchy, compositional centrality, and narrative emphasis function as signifiers of power and belief. In sacred textile traditions, divine figures occupied dominant positions within the visual field, articulating a cosmological order in which human life was situated within a spiritual hierarchy. Through scale, placement, and narrative structure, these textiles made spiritual authority visible and materially present.

With the expansion of long-distance trade and colonial influence, this visual logic shifted. Human subjects, particularly European figures, began occupying positions once reserved for deities. Spiritual authority gave way to social and political authority, and textile surfaces increasingly reflected systems of governance, commerce, and colonial power. Cloth became a medium through which authority was redefined, signaling changes in patronage and audience.

This transition also altered the relationship between artisans and viewers. Sacred textiles were embedded in local ritual frameworks, while export textiles were produced for foreign markets. Artisans adapted by simplifying narratives, altering motifs, and centering human subjects to meet commercial expectations. These adaptations reflect negotiations between tradition and economic pressure. The fragmentation of sacred motifs further illustrates this transformation. Symbols such as lotus forms and temple structures persisted but were detached from narrative context and reduced to ornamental design. Sacred imagery remained visually present while its cosmological meaning shifted.

Together, these changes position Indian textiles as material records of early modern and colonial restructuring. The displacement of divine figures by human and colonial subjects reveals how visual culture registered shifts in belief, identity, and power. Textiles therefore function not only as aesthetic objects but as cultural documents that make visible the reorganization of authority during this period.

Limitations

This study faces several limitations. The uneven survival of historic textiles affects regional representation, as many sacred cloths created for ritual use were not preserved. Traditions relying on fragile materials are therefore underrepresented in surviving collections. Colonial and museum archives also introduce bias. Many export textiles and some sacred cloths are housed in European and North American institutions, where collecting practices favored commercially acquired objects. As a result, surviving materials reflect colonial priorities rather

than the full diversity of Indian textile production. The study relies primarily on visual analysis, which cannot fully reconstruct the ritual, economic, and social contexts in which textiles were produced and used. Many sacred traditions were transmitted through oral and localized practices that remain only partially documented. Finally, the research focuses on major recognized traditions. Smaller or less documented regional practices fall outside the present scope and warrant further study.

Conclusion

This study examined the transformation of Indian textile imagery from sacred narrative traditions to export oriented and colonial era forms that centered human and secular subjects. Through comparative visual analysis of textiles from multiple regions, including Kalamkari, Pattachitra, Baluchari, Kanchipuram weaving, Mata ni Pachedi, and Chamba Rumal, the research identified core visual principles that once affirmed divine authority on cloth. These textiles positioned gods and goddesses as the central figures in narrative and ritual compositions, and they used color, scale, and spatial hierarchy to structure sacred meaning. Cloth functioned as a medium of spiritual communication and as a material extension of temple practice and communal devotion.

The findings demonstrate that this semiotic visual system shifted as Indian textiles became increasingly integrated into long-distance trade networks. Foreign patrons encouraged new design priorities, which led to the reduction, fragmentation, or removal of spiritual imagery in many production centers. During the colonial period, human subjects, particularly European figures, began to occupy the central spaces once reserved for deities. Their presence on cloth marked a change in the symbolic function of the textile surface. Instead of situating human life within a divine cosmological order, export textiles reflected social identity, domestic life, and colonial authority. This transition reveals how power became visually redefined on cloth and how artisans navigated shifting economic and cultural pressures.

By treating textiles as material archives, the study shows that cloth provides important evidence of cultural transformation. The movement from God centered to human centered representation reflects changes in patronage, belief, identity, and social hierarchy. It also illustrates how global commerce and colonial influence reshaped artistic traditions that had long been linked to sacred practice. Understanding this shift offers insight into the complex relationship between visual culture and systems of authority in India's past. The conclusions of this research highlight the importance of studying textiles not only as aesthetic objects but also as documents that record the ways communities negotiate continuity and change over time.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

The authors declare that Grammarly, an AI-assisted writing software, rephrasing applications were used solely for proofreading and refining the language of this manuscript. Additionally, Gemini was used to rephrase tabular headings and organize the structure of visual elements for clarified reading. Their use was limited to correcting grammatical and spelling errors and rephrasing statements for clarity and accuracy. Apart from the above-mentioned tools, no other generative AI or AI-assisted technologies were used to generate or alter the manuscript's content. All ideas, research design, methodologies, findings, analyses, and discussions presented in this paper are the original work of the authors, derived from the careful and systematic conduct of the research.

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Appendix

Table 1. Sacred and Narrative Indian Textiles <i>(Pre-Colonial and Early Historic Traditions)</i>					
Textile Tradition	Origin Region	Approximate Time Period of Emergence	Primary Symbolism	Type of Divine or Narrative Imagery	Cultural / Ritual Function
Srikalahasti Kalamkari	Andhra Pradesh	14th century onward (Vijayanagara period)	Divine authority, dharma, cosmic order	Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavata Purana narratives, Shiva and Shakti depictions	Temple hangings, festival backdrops, narrative scrolls, ritual education
Machilipatnam Kalamkari (early devotional form)	Andhra Pradesh	16th century onward	Sacred motifs before trade influence	Stylized deities and sacred plants (pre-floral export phase)	Temple donations, domestic altar cloths
Pattachitra	Odisha	12th century onward (linked to Jagannath Temple)	Devotion to Jagannath, Vaishnava cosmology	Jagannath trinity, Krishna, Vishnu avatars, Durga	Ritual use, pilgrimage souvenirs, temple substitutes
Pattachitra (Bengal School)	West Bengal	17th century onward	Bhakti narratives	Krishna Leela, Vishnu, Durga forms	Domestic and folk devotional painting on cloth
Baluchari Saree Weaving	West Bengal (Murshidabad, Bishnupur)	18th century onward	Moral narratives, epic instruction	Woven scenes from Ramayana, Mahabharata, Krishna Leela	Ceremonial sarees, narrative display in pallu
Mata ni Pachedi	Gujarat	17th century onward	Power of the Goddess, protection, justice	Depictions of Devi in many forms, mythic battle scenes	Portable shrines for communities barred from temples
Phad Scrolls	Rajasthan	14th century	Local divine heroes, guardianship	Devnarayan, Pabuji and their mythic cycles	Ritual storytelling with Bhopa singers
Chamba Rumal	Himachal Pradesh	17th century (Kangra court)	Bhakti, Krishna devotion, royal patronage	Krishna Leela, Ras Lila, Puranic stories	Wedding gifts, temple offerings, ritual textiles
Kanchipuram Silk Weaving	Tamil Nadu	Sangam era origins, major development from 16th century	Prosperity, temple symbolism	Nataraja, Lakshmi, Krishna motifs, temple gopurams	Wedding and ritual sarees, temple inspired weaving
Temple Cloths (Thanjavur and South Indian Shaiva/Vaishnava temples)	Tamil Nadu	Ancient tradition, solid evidence since Chola period	Ritual purity, divine presence	Shiva, Vishnu, Murugan, divine processions	Temple rituals, processions, wall hangings
Kerala Temple Banners	Kerala	Medieval period	Divine protection, goddess worship	Bhagavati, Vishnu, Krishna inspired imagery	Procession textiles, ritual cloths

Textile Tradition	Region of Production	Time Period	Primary Iconographic Shift	Symbolism Under Colonial Influence	Purpose and Market
Export Chintz (Hand-painted and block-printed cotton)	Coromandel Coast	17th–19th century	Shift from divine motifs to floral repeats and secular scenes	Beauty, domesticity, European sociability	Export to Dutch, British, Portuguese markets for garments and furnishings
Chintz Panels with European Figures	Coromandel Coast	Late 17th–18th century	Human subjects replace gods as central figures	Social hierarchy, colonial authority, European fashion	Decorative wall panels for European homes
Palampores	Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat	17th–18th century	Tree of life becomes stylized rather than sacred	Fertility and exotic exoticism for foreign buyers	Bed covers and furnishings for export
Trade Painted Textiles for Southeast Asia	Coromandel and Gujarat	16th–18th century	Reduced Indian divine motifs, increased geometric and Islamic floral patterns	Cross-cultural ornamentation driven by demand	Export to Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Malaysia
Portuguese Market Textiles	Gujarat, Goa	16th–17th century	Incorporation of Political iconography	Cross-religious symbolism	Exported by Portuguese merchants
British Factory Printed Cottons	Manchester and Lancashire (UK)	19th century	Industrial repetition of Indian floral designs	Imitation of Indian aesthetics for global markets	Mass export back to India and Africa
Hybrid Indo-European Textiles	Bengal, Madras, Gujarat	Late 18th–19th century	European coats of arms, crests, and domestic scenes	Assertion of colonial identity and power	Elite European patronage and home decoration

ITEM	NAME	LOCATION	STYLE
1	Visnu lying on the serpent Ananta	The British Museum	Srikalahasti
2	Rama and Sita	University of Manchester	Srikalahasti
3	Lord Vishnu and Goddess Lakshmi c.1820	The Textile Museum, GWU	Srikalahasti
4	Katamaraju Katha Scroll, c.1850s	Salar Jung Museum, India	Srikalahasti
5	Temple Hanging Depicting Scenes from the Indian Epic Poem Rāmāyana, c.1800s	Saint Louis Art Museum	Srikalahasti
6	Ceremonial cloth (kalamkari) 1875	Asian Art Museum	Machilipatnam Kalamkari
7	The Kalamkari Rupal	The Met Museum	Machilipatnam Kalamkari
8	Wall Hanging, prayer Mat, AD.1789	MFA Boston	Machilipatnam Kalamkari

9	A Timeless Tapestry: The Sacred Union of Rama and Sita	Curated from Exotic India	Machilipatnam Kalamkari
10	Detail of Temple Cloth, c.75-1886	Victoria & Albert Museum	Srikalahasti Kalamkari
11	Jagganath along with his brother Balabhadra and sister Subhadra	Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery The University of Western Australia	Pattachitra
12	Vishnu in Ananta Sayanam posture	National Craft Museum and Hastkala Academy, India	Pattachitra
13	Rama in his exile fighting a demon C.19th	British museum, UK	Pattachitra
14	The Sacred Siblings, textile	Manjusha museum	Pattachitra
15	Many Armed, Dancing Ganesha	Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery The University of Western Australia	Pattachitra - Odisha
16	Narasimha fighting Hiranyakashipu	Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery The University of Western Australia	Pattachitra- Odisha
17	Nataraja - Shiva as the dancing lord	Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery The University of Western Australia	Pattachitra - Odisha
18	Rama and Lakshmana Battle Ravana - Ramayan	Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery The University of Western Australia	Pattachitra - Odisha
19	Goddess Kali	State Museum of Bhubaneshwar, India	Pattachitra
20	Shabari & Lord Ram	State Museum of Bhubaneshwar, India	Pattachitra
21	Decorative End Panel (anchla) of a Baluchari Sari	The Met Museum (19 th century)	Baluchari
22	Baluchari Sari, Saree	Spurlock Museum of World Cultures	Baluchari
23	Baluchari Saree c.1855	Victoria and Albert Museum	Baluchari
24	Baluchari Saree, c.1881	Victoria and Albert Museum	Baluchari
25	Shrine cloth for the mother Goddess	Philadelphia Art Museum	Mata ni Pachedi
26	Meladi Mata on her black goat mount	Royal Ontario Museum	Mata ni Pachedi
27	Goddess Durga surrounded by scenes from her legend	The British Museum	Mata ni Pachedi
28	Durga as Meladi, mother goddess	National Gallery of Australia	Mata ni Pachedi
29	Mata-ni-pachedi, Cloth and Goddess	National Museum in New Delhi	Mata ni Pachedi
30	Pabooji/Deona-Rain	Royal Ontario Museum	Phad Scrolls
31	Epic of Pabuji	National museum, New Delhi	Phad Scrolls
32	Devnarayan Ki Par	National museum, New Delhi	Phad Scrolls
33	Phad Scroll	Indira Gandhi National Art Museum	Phad Scrolls
34	Devnarayan and Pabuji	Sarmaya Museum, India	Phad Scrolls
35	Chamba Rumal Gallery	Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba	Chamba Rumal
36	Rumal with scenes from Ramayana, c.1800	The Met Museum	Chamba Rumal
37	Rumal, c.1800	Victoria and Albert Museum	Chamba Rumal
38	Chamba Rumal, c.1910	Brooklyn Museum	Chamba Rumal
39	Scenes of Sita and Hanuman, c.1800	Santa Barbara Museum of Art	Chamba Rumal
40	Kanchi, c.1900	The British Museum	Kanchipuram

41	Kanchipuram Sari, c.1950	Victoria and Albert Museum	Kanchipuram
42	Kanchi Scrolls, c.1920	Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad	Kanchipuram
43	The sarees of the Gods	Madras Museum, India	Kanchipuram
44	Kanchi Exhibit	National Palace Museum in Taiwan	Kanchipuram
45	Shiva (Nataraja, Tripurantaka)	Tanjore Art Gallery and Museum	Thanjavur Temple Art
46	Thanjavur Paintings, c.1800	National museum, New Delhi	Thanjavur Temple Art
47	Lord Krishna as an infant, c.1860	Asian Art Museum	Thanjavur Temple Art
48	Vijayanagara Mural, c.1600	Victoria and Albert Museum	Thanjavur Temple Art
49	Tirupati painting of Lord Venkateshwara	Victoria and Albert Museum	Thanjavur Temple Art
50	Lord Vishnu and the Epic	Krishnapuram Palace, India	Kerala Murals
51	Goddess Parvathy and her Avatars	Author's family heirloom	Kerala Murals
52	Puranas, Ramayan	Indian museum of Art	Kerala Murals
53	Kathakali Exhibit murals	Victoria and Albert Museum	Kerala Murals
54	Lord Krishna and his Epic	Travancore Museum	Kerala Murals
55	Coronation of Rama, Rupal	Museum of Art, Bangalore	Srikalahasti

Table 4. Colonial Period Textiles Samples

ITEM	NAME	LOCATION
1	Hookah smoking nawabs and courtesans playing musical instruments to Europeans with canons or on horseback	Museum of Art and Photography
2	Portraits of English Officers	National museum, New Delhi
3	"sahibs" and "memsahibs", c.1970	Government of India - Textiles
4	Design of Europeans in a Horse-drawn carriage, c.1900	Victoria and Albert Museum
5	Kalighat Style depictions	British Museum
6	Endless scroll	Asian Art Museum
7	An Anglo-Indian Wall Hanging	The Met Museum
8	Kalamkari Hanging with Figures in an Architectural Setting, 1640	The Met Museum
9	Export Textiles, c.1850	The Calico Museum of Textiles and the Sarabhai Foundation Collections
10	Textile Panel, ca, 1640-1650	Victoria & Albert Museum
11	Milk & blood chintz on a kassekijntje, or cassaquin from Hindeloopen c.1780	Fries Museum, Netherlands
12	The Pride of Jewel in the crown	Victoria and Albert Museum, London
13	Chintz: Cotton in Bloom, 18 th century	Fashion textile museum
14	Fragment of Kalamkari, c.1855	Victoria & Albert Museum
15	Textile Panel of Chintz, 18 th century	The Met Museum
16	Mughal Hunting Scene Textiles	The Met Museum
17	Kalamkari Hangings with Europeans Dining, Riding, or Conversing (Coromandel Coast)	Victoria & Albert Museum
18	Jagannath Pattachitra with Added European Figures (Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford
19	Golconda Painted Court Cloths	Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad
20	Cloth Murals of Travancore with British Residents	Napier Museum, Thiruvananthapuram
21	Kerala Processional Cloths Commissioned for Colonial Patrons	British Museum
22	Cloth Panels Depicting Maratha Rulers in Divine Roles	Government Museum, Chennai
23	Processional Cloths Where Royal Figures Replace Sacred Deities	Government Museum, Chennai
24	Silk Sarees with Portrait Medallions of Zamindars or Colonial Elites	Victoria and Albert Museum

25	South Indian Brocade Shawls with Royal or Colonial Crests	British Museum
26	Shrine Cloths Incorporating British Survey Officials or Colonial Markings	Royal Ontario Museum
27	Rajasthan Courtly Durbar Cloths	City Palace Museum, Jaipur
28	Kalamkari Hangings Commissioned by East India Company Officers	Royal Ontario Museum
29	Kalamkari Panels with Europeans Dining or Riding (early colonial)	Victoria and Albert Museum
30	Hanging depicting a European conflict in South India, 1763	The Met Museum
31	Gujarat trade textile for the Portuguese market with battle and European hunters, c.1700	Victoria and Albert Museum
32	Tranquebar Palampore (Danish royal commission), c.1800	Victoria and Albert Museum
33	Baluchari sari with two European gentlemen holding flowers, c.1900	Indian Museum
34	Water-flow patterned Baluchari sari with Europeans on a steamboat, c.1980	National Museum, New Delhi
35	Chintz palampore for the European market (secular tree-of-life), 18 th century	Royal Ontario Museum
36	Indian trade textile with European battle and hunting scenes for Portuguese patrons	Victoria and Albert Museum