

Analyzing And Evolving Flower Style Carpets Of The Mughal Era Through The Lens Of Nature And Its Significance

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ABSTRACT

The Mughal era, spanning from the early 16th till the middle of the 18th century, is renowned for its rich artistic and cultural heritage, with floral carpets standing out as a significant aspect of its artistic achievements. These carpets are not merely luxurious decorative items; they are intricate artworks deeply infused with symbolic meanings and reflective of the Mughals' profound connection to nature. This study examines the intricate and richly symbolic flower-style carpets of the Mughal era, exploring their evolution and the profound influence of nature on their design. These carpets, characterized by their elaborate floral patterns, served not only as luxurious furnishings but also as manifestations of the Mughal rulers' connection to the natural world and their desire to create paradisaical spaces. By examining historical records, existing carpet specimens, and contemporary Mughal art, this research elucidates how the depiction of flowers and gardens in carpets reflects the Mughals' aesthetic sensibilities, religious and beliefs. The study investigates the symbolic meanings attributed to various floral motifs, such as the lotus, tulip, and chrysanthemum, and their alignment with themes of beauty, divinity, and power. Ultimately, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the symbiotic relationship between art and nature in Mughal culture and accentuates the historical significance of floral motifs in the broader context of art and design.

Keywords: Carpet, Mughal Era, Flower style, Motifs, Nature

1. Introduction

Carpets, especially handmade, are works of art that bear beauty and sophistication to any space. They are fashioned employing a variety of methods and materials, and each type of handmade carpet narrates its own story, making it very exclusive in features and style (Aalum, 2014, January). The assortment of materials and techniques used in producing these carpets is enthralling.

The history of woven carpets spans over a thousand years, marked by cycles of prosperity and decline in the craft. Since ancient times, people have adorned their homes with carpets. These simple, hand-woven, and dense pieces of fabric not only served decorative purposes, but also signified the wealth of their owners. Most importantly, they provided reliable protection against the cold.

In history, carpet and rugs are considered principal representations of position and a meaningful possession for enduring and blooming. Well-being in many rural households today is defined in terms of the ownership of carpets and kilims (Jain). For many rural households recovering from years of asset depletion, the first asset they may acquire is often a carpet, even if it is just a machine-made Iranian one.

The origin of Carpets is still considered furtive but assuredly, ruddling arrangements of floor covering clothes are present since 7000BC. There are various narrations regarding the progression of carpets. One of the most

ancient and best-mentioned documentaries is “The Little Brown Guide to Carpets” by Enza Milanese. This book has two theories. The first theory recounts carpets as being invented by the nomadic people for physical protection from adverse climatic conditions.

Persian style of carpet weaving started in Iran and then Persia. The foremost and the first-born recognized evidence of Persian carpets is in Chinese text, during the ruling period of the Sassanid dynasty (224-641AD). (Ladan & Kaner, 2023) Throughout the Islamic era, Persia remained the center of carpet producers and continued to be world-famous throughout the 8th century A.D. Some historical texts mention 600 carpets being sent to the courts of caliphs in Baghdad every year along with taxes by Azerbaijan, Tabaristan, Khorassan, Sistan, and Bukhara of Iran.

Mughal carpets represent a significant aspect of art and culture in South Asia, particularly during the Mughal Empire's reign from the early 16th to the mid-18th centuries. These carpets are renowned for their intricate designs, vibrant colors, and exquisite craftsmanship (Kane, 2012). Mughal miniature paintings, floral motifs, geometric patterns, and calligraphic elements, use of specific motifs, such as the tree of life, hunting scenes, and floral arabesques, in Mughal carpet iconography, as well as the religious and dynastic symbolism associated with certain designs are popularly seen.

1.1 History of Carpets in India

The Indian carpets and rugs have been deemed to be in existence since 985 CE and some confirmations establish that Mahabalipuram was one of the oldest Indian production centers. Mughal emperor Babar (1526-30) imported carpet from Turkey and Persia to India in the 16th century and the art of carpet weaving established by Mughal continued to spread and survive in India. Mughal emperors often appointed artisans to manufacture grand carpets for Mughal palaces and courts. The Mughal carpets were unique and innovative with the interplay of bright colors and lavish gold and silk yarns with obscure designs. Throughout Humayun's rule in 1532, the use of Ornamental carpets has been popular. Akbar is extensively ascribed with pioneering the intertwining of yarns for creating carpets and organizing novel momentum in the carpet trade. He has been remembered for establishing farash-khaanas at numerous locations like Lahore, Agra, Fatehpur etc. Later many other centers in UP emerged as valuable centres for carpet manufacture all through this time. In Akbar's benefaction, an assortment of carpets like *kilims*, *jajams*, *baluchis*, and *shatranjis* were created in the farrashkhanas, owing principally to the incursion of accomplished carpet makers from Iran and Central Asia, who unified new designs and skills in the prevailing practice (Seyf, 1993). The inspiration of these carpets were original Irani carpets and presented flower-patterned themes, linking lianas and creatures.

The origins of flower-style carpets in the Mughal period can be traced back to the early 16th century when the Mughal dynasty was established in India. Babur, the founder of the Mughal Empire, brought Persian influences with him from Central Asia. However, it was under the reign of Akbar (1556-1605) that carpet weaving truly flourished (Cammann & Beattie, 2020). Akbar established royal workshops (karkhanas) in cities such as Agra, Lahore, and Fatehpur Sikri, inviting Persian weavers to train local artisans and help develop a distinctive Mughal style.

The golden age of Mughal art, particularly during the reigns of Akbar, Jahangir (1605-1627), and Shah Jahan (1628-1658), saw the Flower Style carpets reach their zenith. These rulers were great patrons of the arts, and their courts became centers of cultural synthesis and innovation.

Through the times, as more crafts workers got skilled in the art of carpet weaving, the craft began to grow and develop. The unprecedented Persian designs were modified to suit the magnificent preferences and Indian responsiveness. These adaptations instituted Indian motifs, showcasing occurrences from court life, representations of animals, flowers, and plants, picturesque landscapes, etc (Santos, 2019). Imperial patronage and workshops persisted under Akbar's successor, Jehangir. By the seventeenth century, Agra had become a commercial hub for carpets. The carpets produced during this era showcased Central Asian influences, featuring motifs such as trees, hills, lakes, fish, and wild animals.

Studies on Mughal carpets often begin by examining the historical context in which these masterpieces were created. Researchers delve into the Mughal Empire's patronage of the arts, including carpet weaving, as a means of expressing power, prestige, and cultural identity. They explore the influences of Persian, Central Asian, and Indian artistic traditions on Mughal carpet design and production, tracing the evolution of styles and motifs over time (Rudner, 2012). Furthermore, scholars analyze the role of royal workshops and skilled artisans in producing carpets for the Mughal court and elite patrons.

In 1851, for the first time in Indian history, handmade carpets attained appreciation for their quality, designs, weave, and colour palette at the great London exhibition. Also in the post-British era, carpet industries came back in its booming period in different regions of India with some variations in carpets like designs, colour, quality, weaving method, clothes, etc (Nasim, 2019). Eventually, carpet weaving spread throughout the Indian mainland, with different territories progressing their distinctive styles and techniques.

The royal sustenance, demand, and admiration throughout this period renovated the carpet industry from a simple and casual to a small-scale industry creating newer styles and designs. One of the most relevant examples is the insertion of naturalistic designs portrayed through outlines or propels beside a bare setting.

A slight indication of carpet making from the 17th century onwards signifies that regal patronage of weaving centers may have been obsolete because of socio-political conflicts (Chopra, 1963). A few regal workshops were still operative as the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb appointed an official to oversee carpet weaving for the royal family. Deccan, Bharatpur, Jaunpur, and Zafraabad developed as principal carpet production centers during this period. However, the designs and patterns of the carpets continued unaffected.

Regal benefaction and workshops were sustained under the reign of Akbar's successor Jehangir, and by the seventeenth century, Agra developed as a commercial center of carpets (Goswami, 2018). Under Jehangir's investment, artisans like Akhund Rahmuna, who temporarily served as the governor of Kashmir during the reign of Jehangir, trekked to Central Asia. There, they acquired carpet-making skills in Andijan, Uzbekistan, and passed these techniques to Kashmiri weavers, transforming Kashmir into a carpet-making center. The carpets produced during this time also reflected Central Asian influences, incorporating motifs like trees, hills, lakes, fish, and wild animals.

2. Objectives of the study

- To study and provide an understanding, relevance, and reasons for the popularity of the Carpet industry in India.
- To analyze the designs of traditionally used floral motifs in the Mughal carpets
- To study the types of floral styles, carpet designs in Mughal carpets

3. Methodology

This is an extensive study done to find out the history of Mughal carpets, the reasons for their popularity and a detailed study of their motifs, especially the floral motifs. Data has been collected from various sources including books, journals, research papers websites for the reason of the study.

4. Literature review

In Kashmir, silk is commonly used not only for the pile but also for the warp and weft, particularly in the case of a high-quality piece (Gans-Ruedin, 1984) "Cotton is grown and hand spun in India and Persia, and most of the countries which make hand knotted carpets" (Bamborough 1979).

"Colours are all important to the production of a good carpet, for its effects both the colour and condition. A bad colour can make the pile dry and brittle" (Bamborough 1979). *Rubia tinctorium*, commonly known as Madder is seen developing ubiquitously and has been historically considered extremely significant providing a complete selection of pinks and reds.

On the other hand, the studies also say that the carpet industry is facing a huge depreciation in skilled weavers and finds it very difficult to finish the export order on time, emphasizes that the handmade carpet industry is a labor-intensive one engaging billions of artisans & crafts persons (Sandeep Srivastava & K.K. Goswami 2007). The handmade carpet industry in India dominates the global handmade carpet industry and the global floorcovering trade in general.

5. Types of flower-style carpets during the Mughal era

Carpets were particularly significant in the colorful tapestry of Mughal Art. Often inspired by Persian designs yet infused with a uniquely Mughal style. Mughal carpets included elaborate flower motifs, geometric patterns, and animal representations (Sharma, (1986, January). Among all the patterns, Flower Style is one of the most beautifully made carpets. The Mughal Empire's profound respect for nature is reflected in its carpets, distinguished by their elaborate designs and beautiful floral themes.

5.1 Single flower style

The Single Flower Design Carpets are captivating examples of artistic brilliance and symbolize purity, beauty, and perfection through their simplicity, elegance, and meticulous craftsmanship. These carpets were not only functional floor covering but also intricate works of art, showcasing the Mughal artisan's mastery of design, color, and weaving techniques. One of the remarkable aspects of Mughal carpet design is the intricate depiction of a single flower, which holds deeper symbolic and aesthetic meanings (Houghteling). Let's study a design analysis of the single flower carpet design from the Mughal era:

5.1.1 Design Layout

Single-flower style carpets typically feature a central medallion. The central medallion often contains a single large flower, and the medallion functions as the cornerstone upon which the rest of the design unfolds, drawing the viewer's attention and imbuing the carpet with a sense of symmetry and balance. The central feature of single-flower carpets is a large, intricately designed flower motif (Ibrahimov). These flowers were

usually depicted in full bloom, showcasing intricate details of petals, stems, and sometimes even leaves, symbolizing themes of beauty, vitality, and the eternal cycle of life, reflecting the Mughal reverence for the natural world. These full-bloom flower motifs are surrounded by smaller floral elements, leaves, vines, or geometric patterns, creating a harmonious and balanced composition. Single flower carpets typically followed a symmetrical layout. Roses, tulips, carnations, lotuses, jasmine Chrysanthemum, and irises are commonly used flower motifs. The choice of flowers depicted in these carpets reflected the natural beauty of the region as well as its symbolic and cultural significance.

5.1.2 Surrounding Field:

Surrounding the central medallion is the field, which forms the background of the carpet. The field may be adorned with smaller floral motifs, arabesques, or geometric patterns, creating a rich tapestry of design elements. The arrangement of motifs in the field is often symmetrical or semi-symmetrical, enhancing the visual harmony of the carpet.

5.1.3 Borders:

Borders play a crucial role in framing and delineating the design of the carpet. Mughal carpets typically feature multiple borders, each adorned with intricate patterns and motifs. The primary border, known as the main border, is often the widest and most elaborately decorated. It may contain repeating floral motifs, arabesques, or calligraphic inscriptions, showcasing the skill and artistry of the weaver.

5.1.4 Corner pieces:

Mughal carpets frequently have corner pieces that draw attention to the carpet's four corners in addition to borders. These corner pieces add to the overall symmetry and clarity of the design by mirroring the motifs present in the borders and central medallion. Stylized flowers, foliage, or geometric patterns can be seen in cornerpieces, which give the carpet more visual depth and complexity.



Fig. 1: Pashmina carpet with a flower and niche pattern. 1630–1640 in Northern India, Kashmir, or Lahore
Belgium's private collection



Fig 2 Detailed design of carpet border

Carpets with a single floral design are the most attractive since they are pictorial. Instead of being a part of a recurring pattern, the plant tends to be displayed almost as a portrait in this niche-and-flower carpet. This

carpet (Fig.1) possesses the finest weaving of any traditional Indian carpet that has survived intact. It is made of pashmina with 2,000 knots per square inch on a silk foundation (Walker, 1997). The large poppy plant has leafy stems and a base. It bears five spherical flowers with many little pointed petals. On a gentle, light brown backdrop, it stands tall, surrounded by two tiny tulips featuring pink and red petals. With an obvious tilt in the stem and a rotation in the leaves, these plants give the impression that they are moving. Tiny plants proliferate and abnormalities in the ground area of the landscape are defined by colour variations. The field pattern is not precisely symmetrical with vines, leaves, and poppy blooms; the field precinct is topped by a highly delineated arch demarcated by a profuse creeper that rotates on itself and has leafy projections above this ivory spandrel pattern symmetrically. The primary border (Fig.2) in crimson has a delicately flowing vine whose branches end in ivory flower heads that are reversible on alternating occasions. A delicate impression of movement is created by the long, twisted leaves that protrude from the main stem. The Metropolitan has a Complete Piece made of ordinary materials that is less carefully woven, but it has a roughly similar pattern.



Figure 3: A Pashmina carpet with a flower and niche design, from Lahore or Kashmir in Northern India, about 1630–1640. The Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza collection is lent by Fundación Coleccion ThyssenBornemisza, Madrid.



Fig 4: Detailed view of main flower



Fig 5: Detailed view of border

Aynard carpet,(Fig.3) named for a previous owner but currently in the Carmen Thyssen Bornemisza collection, is another example of a Pashmina design with flowers and niche patterns. Compared to the other varieties, it has a somewhat more dynamic field pattern, with a lot more amazing flowers emerging from the main plants (Cammann,1975). As little clouds shaped as Chinese lanterns float across Vacante space, leaves

twist and turn. Poppies, tulips, and cockscomb sprout from the graded ground, and an ivory brook with black ripples is shown at the base. The head-shaped columns are supported by cypress trees that grow along the field's edges. This carpet may have been shrunk from its original dimensions because it has tiny borders (Fig.5) at the top and bottom and no borders at all along the sides. It appears that the remaining border was too large to have served as a guard stripe and too thin to have served as the main border. Due to this and the patches that are present (especially the tiny flower on the middle stem), it has been suggested that the award carpet may have been a part of a multiple-niche piece that had numerous field portions connected by a huge, now-missing border.

5.2 Rows of Flowers and Trees

Mughal carpets usually include rows of finely woven flower or tree designs. The representation of foliage and trees in the carpet's pattern is known as an arboreal theme seen in Mughal carpets. Mughal carpets often depicted a variety of trees in their designs. These trees included rich fruit-bearing orchards and graceful cypresses. In Mughal carpets, floral and arboreal patterns were often grouped in rows to form a repeating pattern that stretched symmetrically across the carpet's surface (Azizi Yusefkand & Barari, 2020). This arrangement gave the design more rhythm and aesthetic harmony. The flowers depicted on these carpets include a diverse array of species, from delicate roses and lilies to exotic blooms like tulips and carnations. Similarly, the trees portrayed range from slender cypresses to majestic fruit-bearing orchards, creating a mesmerizing tapestry of natural splendour. Mughal carpets had incredibly detailed depictions of arboreal patterns. Every tree was expertly woven into the cloth, with leaves, branches, and occasionally fruit or flowers accurately and precisely portrayed (Ashfaq, 2009, January). This degree of detail gave the design more depth and authenticity, giving the impression that the user was immersed in a natural environment. Arboreal and floral patterns were skillfully combined to create a beautiful combination of nature-inspired images in numerous Mughal carpets. Moreover, the arrangement of flowers and trees in rows during the Mughal era was driven by a combination of spiritual symbolism, Persian influence, practical considerations, and a desire to display imperial power and aesthetic beauty. These elements combined to create gardens and designs that were not only visually stunning but also deeply meaningful, reflecting the Mughals' sophisticated understanding of art, nature, and their cultural heritage. Frequently, flowers bloomed under the shadow of trees or embellished their branches, adding to the composition's overall beauty. Below are some interpretations of why flowers were arranged in rows on carpets during this period:

5.2.1 Symbolism in Nature:

The Mughals had a great respect for the natural world, and one way they brought outside beauty into their interiors was by designing floral designs in rows for carpets. Flowers are a representation of vibrancy, beauty, and the fleeting essence of life. The Mughals aimed to create an atmosphere that was both visually beautiful and spiritually nourishing by incorporating them into the designs of carpets (Schuster, 2008).

5.2.2 Cultural Significances:

Flowers were significant in Mughal culture in several symbolic situations. For instance, in Persian and Islamic cultures, the rose was connected to love and beauty, whereas in Hinduism, the lotus flower stood for purity and enlightenment. It is possible that the Mughals were honoring nature and expressing their cultural and religious values by placing floral designs in rows on their carpets.

5.2.3 Aesthetic Appeal:

The meticulous arrangement of flower patterns in rows on carpets served to enhance their visual appeal. The symmetrical composition created a sense of order and balance, while the vibrant colors and intricate designs added to the overall beauty of the carpets. As objects of luxury and prestige, Mughal carpets were often displayed prominently in palaces and royal courts, where their aesthetic qualities would have been admired and appreciated by all who beheld them.

5.2.4 Spiritual Significance

In Mughal civilization, flowers were not only beautiful and culturally significant, but they also had spiritual meaning. They were frequently utilized as symbols of reverence and affection in religious rites, sacrifices, and celebrations. The Mughals may have established holy areas in their houses where they might commune with the divine and pursue spiritual enlightenment by placing floral designs in rows on carpets.

5.2.5 Symbolism of Abundance and Prosperity:

Carpets with rows of flowers may have represented fertility, wealth, and abundance. Flowers are linked to rebirth, development, and the circle of life in many civilizations. The Mughals may have shown their wish for wealth and plenty in their houses and societies by including floral patterns in their carpet designs.



Figure 6: Flower-patterned carpet. Lahore or Kashmir in northern India. About 1650. The Florence Waterbury Bequest and the Rogers Fund acquired the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1970.



Figure:7 Detailed View of Border Design

The collection of carpets in (fig. no. 6) has field designs of flowering plants organized in rows, and there are more than fifty pieces in all. The rectangular format is the norm, however, there are several variants within this style. With each row facing the same end of the carpet, the plants are placed in seven rows. It has a traditional field design with rows of profiled flowers created with a feeling of realistic individuality and detail, some of which are recognizable (tulips, irises), while others are not. Rather than the more typical profiled flowers, the border (Figure:7) is interesting in that it depicts a naturalistically drawn, slightly Indianized execution of a traditional Persian design. The border is a complex design of flowing vines and flowers, with pairs of curled leaves or little flowers in the shape of leaves on either side. Standard quality materials and weaves are used. The base is made of cotton, while the pile is made of sheep's wool. Approximately 150 knots per square inch are knotted.



Figure 8: Floral-patterned carpet. Around 1650, Lahore or Kashmir in northern India. European private collection

Another illustration of flower or tree rows is shown in Fig. 8, where two rows of plants are placed with each row facing the field's long centre axis. The border design is a single row that is directed towards the field and repeats the patterns that are visible there at a reduced size.



Figure:9



Figure:10 Fragmentary Carpet with tree pattern. Northern India, Kashmir, or Lahore. Ca 1650, Pashmina pile on silk foundation. The Frick Collection New York.

One of the rare carpets that remained from the Mughal emperors' court are the two exquisite ones that will be on display in the Oval Room beginning July 25. (Figure 9) These carpets were created in the middle of the seventeenth century in northern India, and their intricately designed designs and expensive materials (cashmere and silk) made them desirable possessions. Probably manufactured at the royal factory in Lahore, one of India's major carpet-producing cities, the Frick carpets date from the era of Shah Jahan (1628-1658). The objective of a carpet which includes rows of trees and a variety of flowers is to depict a garden in a style closely related to Mughal miniatures and relief design (Taghizade Borujeni & Neamat Shahr Babaki, 2021). This period's Indian carpets are usually recognized for their deep crimson color, which creates a luxurious and vivid backdrop for the plants.

The floral plant in the other piece (Fig.10), the trees in the Frick rug's decorations are both placed in rows. There was speculation that the field was first divided into seven or eight rows, with four trees in each row. There is a demarcation of the rows emphasized by the undulating rocks and tiny shrubs. The border design has a variety of small flowers with scrolling vein patterns. The colour of the carpet is deep saffron and ranges from greens to ivory. The shading details are given to the trees and flowers to give original looks like the gardens.

5.3 Lattice Designs:

The Lattice design, also known as jaali or latticework, represents a remarkable fusion of geometric precision and artistic creativity. The lattice, often formed by diagonal or crisscrossing lines, creates a sense of symmetry and order, while the blossoms/flowers add a touch of natural beauty and symbolism (Verma, 1999). In addition to their aesthetic appeal, the artistic dimension of the lattice-and-blossom pattern lies in its symbolism and aesthetics. The lattice-and-blossom pattern is a captivating element of Mughal-era design, showcasing the intricate artistry and mathematical precision of the period.

The lattice, often representing the intertwining of life's complexities, is meticulously crafted with geometric precision. This geometric approach is influenced by Islamic art principles, where patterns are created using geometric shapes to symbolize the underlying order of the universe. On the other hand, the blossom/flower element adds a touch of nature's beauty to the design. Blossoms, whether depicted as intricate floral motifs or stylized representations, symbolize growth, renewal, and the ephemeral nature of life. These elements are often depicted in vibrant colors, further enhancing the visual appeal of the pattern. There are two types of lattice patterns:

5.3.1 Lattice and Flower Design:

The lattice and flower pattern are a distinctive design motif found in Mughal carpets from the Mughal era. Flowering plants were placed in compartments within different lattice systems to create elaborate field patterns. This design theme is distinguished by its complicated interaction of geometric forms and floral components, which creates a visually appealing composition. The intricate lattice and flower carpet designs of the Mughal era have left a lasting impact on Indian art and architecture, inspiring subsequent styles in the subcontinent. Contemporary designers and architects continue to draw inspiration from Mughal jaalis and floral motifs, incorporating these timeless patterns into modern spaces to evoke elegance and historical continuity. These are some best examples of lattice and flower carpets described below:



Fig:11 Piece of carpet featuring a repeating design of flowers and lattice that includes flower containers. (Ca. 1650, Kashmir or Lahore, in northern India.

One of the more appealing variations on the lattice-and-flower carpet motif is to place bouquets of various species in vases that indicate the junction places of the lattice scrolls. In 1930, the Victoria & Albert Museum purchased an exquisite and extraordinary carpet fragment. (Figure 11) According to museum records, the carpet is a superb Mughal carpet believed to have originated from the Amber Palace near Jaipur. The carpet was manufactured in Lahore for Raja Jai Singh I's Amber apartments, which were built between 1628 and 1658. The carpet is among the greatest Lahore carpets created during the golden age of Mughal art, during Emperor Shah Jahan's reign.

In Figure 11, floral containers with various plant species are positioned symmetrically within a single compartment, and this pattern of compartment repetition is maintained throughout the carpet. Although this is also the pattern in this instance, the vase method indicates a structural design rather than a figurative one. To organize these compartments attractively, artisans used geometry and computation. To make the carpet appealing, shades of deep red, yellow, white, green, and blue are employed. (Shakyawar, Gupta, & Patni, 2006)



Figure 12 Pashmina carpet featuring a floral and lattice design. Lahore or Kashmir in northern India, about 1650



Figure:13 detail view of a single Lattice and flower

A European private collection acquired (Fig no. 12,13) which is practically a square work with lobed field sections delineated by a twisting and coiling green vine. This carpet's square shape is not original, as it is much longer. The plants radiate from center points highlighted by yellow blossoms, so they cannot be viewed from any one vantage point. The border design is made up of a broad scrolling line with connected cloud wisps. Clusters of blooms grow within the curve of the reciprocal vine. The use of colour shading, especially in the field's flower and leaf vines, enhances the organic impression of the floral themes

5.3.2 Lattice-and-Blossom

From a technical perspective, the lattice-and-blossom pattern involves a deep understanding of mathematical concepts such as symmetry, repetition, and scaling. Mughal artisans were adept at using a compass and ruler to create precise geometric shapes, ensuring pattern-maintained symmetry and coherence across various scales. Lattice-and-blossom patterns are more ornamental effect was achieved through various lattice patterns that involved blossoms and vines rather than whole flowering plants (Zadeh & Noori, 2017). Although delicate details and colour shading are used to depict blossoms realistically, the ultimate artistic objective was to create a decorative pattern rather than a realistic impact.



Fig: 14 This is a fragment of a pashmina carpet from Kashmir or Lahore, Northern India, around 1650, featuring a lattice and bloom design. Michael Friedsam bequeathed the Friedsam Collection in 1931.



Fig:15 Specifics of a fragment of a pashmina carpet featuring a design depicting lattice and blossoms. Northern India, potentially in the regions of Kashmir or Lahore, circa. In 1650, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York received a donation from Benjamin Altman in 1913.

This Lattice-and-Blossom pattern carpet (Fig -14) warp and weft are of silk and pile made up of pashmina wool. It has an asymmetrically knotted pile. This carpet represents, classic work with a splash of modernity. Large flowers are centered within diamond-shaped compartments on this exquisite carpet, not at the lattice framework's crossing points. The border designs have scrolls and veins. A scrolled border similarly surrounds the carpet to the design of the carpet, which consists of different colored flowers that have different sizes and shapes of flowers to give a three-dimensional impression due to the shading of colors.

There are lattice and flower designs in carpets of all categories, but the Metropolitan Museum has the most spectacular pashmina pile. (Fig-15). The carpet's original measurements were 23 feet 7 inches by 8 feet 2 inches. This is a very large carpet with an incredibly fine weave (900 knots per square inch). All silk makes up the foundation, colored stripes make up the warps, and red silk is used in the weft in the form of shoots. The grassy little hill on the border and the imaginary blossoms in the field both exhibit coloristic effects and shadowing. (Thabet, 2017) The field design features a lattice structure created by serrated veins that weave in a back-and-forth pattern. The unique layout of the border, characterized by a line of cypress trees and blooming plants emerging from small mounds, is replicated in a broad sense.

Findings

6.1 Techniques of carpet making and designs

There are many techniques for making carpets . The main ones being knotting, tufting, and weaving. Traditionally and also currently, all these are developed by hand. The hand knotting technique was introduced in India by the Mughals. The rugs and artwork of Mughal palaces are quite varied in their visual methods. Besides this, several symbols of natural occurrences like hunting and writings, a lot of floral patterns are noticed, including naturalistic, abstract, and stylized. Nevertheless, there are abundant illustrations of monarchs holding the law court, or being seated subtly on area rugs and carpeting the entire Mughal court floor.

The design themes also include complicated flower motifs and lattice outlines. The popularity of botanically precise flower-patterned carpets peaked throughout Shah Jahan's rule. Even in his patronage of the Taj Mahal, similar floral designs have been used, thereby making a statement of botanically realistic floral designs. Sometimes motifs from the Safavid were also incorporated into these carpets. But the Mughals embodied these very distinctively from Persian rugs. Even Mughal prayer rugs showcased creative floral designs that flourish beneath the mihrabs. Similarly, Mughal hunting scenes were made vibrant and energetic, showing intense beasts, huntsmen, local Indian tropical wildlife, and other realistic scenes. The pattern is considered as an inherent part of the hand-made knotted carpet. It has been noted that patterns like fauna, flowers, arabesques, rhomboids, etc. were generally created and engaged as patterns with required stylization. Every design has a very distinctive meaning. The loops connoted infinity, the zigzag indicated illumination and the tree represented joy. Eventually, Indian and Persian design elements combined to create the wildly popular Indo-Islamic carpet. The popular Tree of Life symbolizes Eternal Life, the Cypress design suggests survival in the afterlife, and Anar represents the wealth of pomegranate treasures.

The dove motif symbolizes Peace and is a good Omen. The peacock is the scared bird and the Camel: motifs symbolize wealth and happiness. The Cloud Bands indicate good fortune. The Comb is the symbol of cleanness and, at times, the pillar of faith. The hourglass is also a popular motif which is the reminder of the fact that time runs out for all and that there is no break. Cross: It is only decorative and has no religious meaning. A weeping willow represents loss, grief, and death. The Lion motifs in carpets describe Victory and Glory whereas the cock is the devil, created into the carpet to safeguard the owner or user from the malevolent eye.

6.2 Resources

The general materials for creating carpets are natural fibers like wool, cotton, and silk. Wool is considered the most basic raw material in the making of knotted carpets. The selection of raw material is conditional on the center of fabrication of the carpets. Silk has been utilized for constructing some of the best and lightest carpets.

6.3 Symbolism and Iconography:

Floral motifs in Mughal carpets carry symbolic significance, conveying deeper meanings beyond their aesthetic appeal. Scholars have identified a diverse array of floral symbols in Mughal carpets, such as the blooming rose symbolizing love and passion, the lotus representing purity and enlightenment, and the cypress tree symbolizing eternal life and spirituality. These motifs often intersect with religious, poetic, and courtly themes, enriching the visual language of Mughal carpet design and imbuing each carpet with layers of meaning and symbolism.

6.4 Symbolic and Cultural Significance of the Motifs

6.4.1 Lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*):

In Indian culture, the lotus symbolizes spiritual enlightenment, purity, and beauty. It has a deep symbolic meaning. The lotus blossom frequently occupies the center medallion on Mughal carpets. Its elegant petals and distinctive shape are meticulously rendered, conveying a sense of grace and serenity.

6.4.2 Rose (*Rosa*):

Roses have long been revered for their beauty and fragrance, and they feature prominently in Mughal art and literature. In single-flower style carpets, roses are depicted with delicately curved petals and vibrant hues, symbolizing love, passion, and romance. They add a touch of elegance and sophistication to the carpet's design.

6.4.3 Tulip (*Tulipa*):

Roses are highly valued for their beauty and scent, and they are frequently depicted in Mughal literature and art. Roses are shown in single-flower design carpets with vibrant colors and delicately curled petals, signifying passion, love, and romance. They give the carpet's design a sense of sophistication and elegance.

6.4.4 Pomegranate (*Punica granatum*):

Pomegranates are associated with fertility, plenty, and success throughout a wide range of civilizations. Pomegranates, with their characteristic crown-like calyx and clusters of seeds, are shown on Mughal carpets as symbols of fertility and abundance. They frequently appear with other floral themes, giving the design more visual depth and fascination.

6.4.5 Chrysanthemums (*Chrysanthemum* Spp.)

Chrysanthemums are known for their intricate, layered petals and vibrant colors, making them popular subjects in Mughal art. Chrysanthemums are depicted with great care and precision in single-flower style rugs,

capturing the complex beauty of the flower. They give the carpet's pattern an air of auspiciousness as they stand for longevity, happiness, and success.

6.4.6 Jasmine (*Jasminum* Spp.):

Jasmine blossoms, with their delicate petals and trailing tendrils, are portrayed on Mughal carpets as symbols of elegance and beauty. They frequently decorate the carpet's corners or borders, lending the pattern a hint of freshness and aroma.

6.5 Color Palette and its significance:

The color palette of single flower-style carpets is vibrant and achieved by natural dyes and pigments available during the Mughal era. Earthy tones such as deep red, blue, green, and yellow are commonly used, often contrasted against ivory or beige backgrounds. The choice of color is not only aesthetic but also symbolic, with different hues representing specific emotions, virtues, or cultural meanings.

6.5.1 Red: Red symbolized power, vitality, and prosperity in Mughal art and culture. It was often associated with royalty and divine authority, reflecting the opulence of the Mughal court. In single flower style carpets, red hues were used for the central medallion, borders, and floral motifs, adding richness and warmth to the design.

6.5.2 Blue: was a color of spiritual significance, representing divinity, eternity, and transcendence. It was often associated with the heavens and the divine realm. In Mughal carpets, blue hues were used for background fields, borders, and decorative elements, evoking a sense of serenity and transcendence amidst the intricate floral motifs.

6.5.3 Green: symbolized fertility, renewal, and nature's bounty in Mughal culture. It was associated with springtime, growth, and abundance. In single-flower style carpets, green hues were used for foliage, leaves, and stems, infusing the design with a sense of vitality and rejuvenation. Green also represented paradise and the promise of eternal bliss in Islamic tradition.

6.5.4 Yellow: Yellow and gold symbolize wealth, prosperity, and the sun's radiant energy. They were associated with royalty, luxury, and divine illumination. In Mughal carpets, yellow and gold hues were used sparingly but strategically to highlight central motifs, borders, and decorative elements, imparting a sense of grandeur and opulence to the design.

6.5.5 White: Symbolized purity, innocence, and spiritual enlightenment in Mughal art and culture. It represented the absence of impurities and the clarity of the divine light. In single-flower style carpets, white hues were often used for background fields, enhancing the contrast and luminosity of the floral motifs. White also symbolized the transcendence of earthly desires and the pursuit of spiritual perfection.

In addition to these primary colors, Mughal carpets often incorporated a range of secondary colors such as pink, purple, orange, and brown, each carrying its own symbolic associations. Pink symbolized love, compassion, and tenderness, while purple represented royalty, power, and mystery. Orange symbolized vitality, creativity, and enthusiasm, while brown represented stability, earthiness, and grounding.

6.6 Influence and Legacy

The influence of Mughal floral motifs extends beyond the realm of carpet weaving, shaping artistic practices across diverse media and cultural contexts. Mughal carpets served as sources of inspiration for painters, architects, and designers, influencing the development of floral ornamentation in Mughal architecture, manuscript illumination, and textile arts. The legacy of Mughal floral motifs continues to resonate in contemporary design, providing a timeless source of inspiration for artists and artisans around the world. Jahangir, the emperor (1605–27), was mesmerized by the splendour of the blossoming flowers on his first springtime visit to Kashmir in 1620. A thoughtful and knowledgeable man, However, Jahangir wanted to capture the event, so he gave his best natural history painter, a talented artist called Mansur, a hundred "portraits" of flowers to paint. The flower style had taken over as the new trend at the court by 1630 when it was adopted by ShahJahan (1627–1588), the son of Jahangir. It was seen in all facets of the ornamental arts, including textiles, architectural ornamentation, manuscript binding and illumination, and items made of diverse media. The flower style became dominant in carpets a little later. Carpets were particularly significant in the colourful tapestry of Mughal Art. Often inspired by Persian designs yet infused with a uniquely Mughal style. Mughal carpets included elaborate flower motifs, geometric patterns, and animal representations. Among all the patterns, Flower Style is one of the most beautifully made carpets. The Mughal Carpet is a masterpiece of creative creativity highly valued for its rich cultural importance, exquisite patterns, and alluring

beauty. The Mughal Empire's profound respect for nature is reflected in its carpets, distinguished by their elaborate designs and beautiful floral themes.

Conclusion

The intricate floral motifs of Mughal-era carpets represent a profound intersection between art, nature, and cultural significance. This analysis of their evolution reveals a deep appreciation for the natural world, which served not only as an aesthetic inspiration but also as a symbol of the empire's grandeur and the sophistication of its artisans. The meticulous craftsmanship and botanical accuracy of these designs underscore the Mughals' reverence for nature, which was infused with symbolic meaning, such as paradise and eternal beauty. Initially, Mughal carpets were heavily influenced by Persian designs, featuring elaborate and symmetrical floral patterns. As the Mughal Empire matured, these designs evolved, incorporating more naturalistic and detailed depictions of flowers, plants, and fauna. This shift not only showcased the exceptional skill of Mughal artisans but also highlighted the empire's unique identity and its rulers' fascination with the natural world. The use of vibrant colors, intricate weaves, and detailed botanical accuracy in these carpets demonstrated the high level of craftsmanship and artistic innovation during the Mughal period. Each carpet became a canvas that told stories of paradise, symbolized power, and represented the empire's connection to the divine.

The flower-style carpets of the Mughal era are more than just decorative items; they are cultural artifacts that provide insight into the empire's artistic evolution, its interactions with other cultures, and its enduring legacy. In conclusion, the enduring legacy of Mughal floral carpets lies in their ability to encapsulate the essence of nature within the confines of human creativity, transforming just decorative items; they are cultural artifacts that provide insight into the empire's artistic evolution, its interactions with other cultures, and its enduring legacy. These carpets not only highlight the lasting impact of Mughal artistry on textile traditions. Ultimately, studying these carpets through the lens of nature emphasizes their significance as cultural artifacts that encapsulate the historical, artistic, and natural heritage of the Mughal era.

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