

# Flora and Fauna Motifs in Sanganeri Print

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**Abstract:**-Mother Nature has blessed India with in numerous varieties of flora and fauna. This treasure has given wings to the imagination of artists and they extensively use this natural treasure trove to translate their imaginations on different mediums, through various techniques. Textile has long been the passion of Indian artists and Indian textile art is very rich and innovative. Sanganer of Rajasthan is the traditional Centre of block printing, where motifs are produced with vegetable dyes. The motifs are drawn from nature as lotus, water lily, narcissus, rose, poppy flower etc. along with animal and birds are widely used as motifs. The designs are named after the motifs, i.e. Genda buty (sunflower motif), Bichchoo buty (Scorpio motif) etc.; this way they are easy to identify and remember. Usually motifs of flowers, buds and leaves are composed to form a mango carry, pan patta (betel leaf) etc. Sanganeri Chipas use nearly 400 varieties of buti and buta motifs, overall, flora and fauna, animal and birds etc. along with distinct composition of vegetable colours to create this magnificent textile art. Sober colours and fine lines give splendid look to the designs.

**Key Words:** Sanganer, Block Printing, Motifs, Vegetable dyes, Flora and Fauna, Buti and Buta

## I. INTRODUCTION

Mankind have always appreciated and cherished the beauty and vividness of the nature. Humans & Nature share a strong bond, as the desire to do something new gets its artistic nourishment from the Mother Nature. Artists have abundantly used different variety of flora and fauna to give shape to their imagination.

Since ages, India is famous for its beautiful, innovative and attractive fabric arts. Sanganer is the jewel in the crown of Indian Art with its mesmerizing hand block printing. Here, a variety of beautiful motifs are produced using pure vegetable dyes. The work of dyeing & printing is done by using natural resources.

Sanganeri block print has a distinct style and is can be easily identified at first glance. The botanical motifs are so nicely translated on the cloths, that they create an altogether different language of Indian culture.

The distinct motifs and amazing colours have won this small town in the south-east of Jaipur a very special status in International art & craft. It has centuries old tradition of hand printing cloths and is a major contributor to the Indian textile industry.

## II. HISTORY OF SANGANERI BLOCKS PRINTING

Sanganeri vegetable print has more than five hundred years old history. These artisans draw their lineage from the artisans of Kathiawar in Gujarat and historical records also support their Gujarat connection. They are said to be the followers of famous saint Namdev and are known as 'Chhippa' or 'Namdev Chhippa'<sup>1</sup>. Various invasions forced their ancestors to migrate to Jaipur region, where this art & technique developed with Royal courts support.

The social upheavals that occurred during the wars in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century followed by incursions of ideas between Gujarat and Rajasthan fostered aesthetic similarities. This is marked

by the clear, bold lines which were the prominent feature of the printing styles of both state's<sup>2</sup>.

Prior to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, historical accounts only mention the town of Sanganer as a source of finely dyed or bleached cottons. The clean mineral rich water of Doondh River was perfect for processing of fabric as it gave a different shine & richness to the cloths. While its wide sandy riverbanks offered space to spread out cloth in the bright sunshine without getting dirty<sup>3</sup>. Sanganer seems only to have developed its printing trade in the 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>4</sup>. Before being distinguished as Sanganeri Block Print, this art was practiced in Jaipur region under the Royal patronage. This is why Jaipuri & Sanganeri print are very much similar and alike. It is possible that Sawai Jai Singh (1700-44), who founded the city of Jaipur in 1727 A.D. and promoted various crafts in his kingdom, contributed to the growth of textile printing in Sanganer during the early 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>5</sup>.

For ages the main printing centre of this art was in Jaipur, while the dying and bleaching of the fabric was done in Sanganer. But as Jaipur's population grew and the available land became increasingly congested. *Chhippa* shifted to Sanganer, which had the added benefit of specialist dyers and bleachers residing in the town. These artisans formed large, supportive community with block printing at the core of their culture. Sanganer prospered with the growth of hand block printing community who transformed the town in a prominent centre of textile printing<sup>6</sup>. Today many of the *chhippas* families living in Sanganer are descendants of those who relocated from Jaipur over four or five generations ago.

## III. DESIGN PRESENTATION

Sanganer is renowned for its small decorative and delicate floral patterns, known as *Buta & Buti*, *Bel* (creepers) & *Jal* (floral net) printed on fine cotton. These patterns consist of the motifs of different types of flowers & leaves, trees & plants along with animals & birds. Known as "*Design*" in English, "*Tarah*" in Persian, these motifs are conventionally called

“*Bhant*” in Hindi. *Bhants* are fine composition of flowers & leaves, tree & plant.

**Buta & Buti:** Fine composition of Flowers & leaves, Trees & Plants, Animals or birds got known as *Buta & Buti*. But there is a specific distinction between them. Small shapes of motifs are known as *Buti*, while the larger one is called *Buta*. The word *Buti* seems to be a derivative of the Latin word *Butia* denoting a composition of a shrub or flower into a pattern<sup>7</sup>. This specific term for shape came in trend during 16<sup>th</sup> century when it got its identification through the popular Persian word ‘*boot*’ with the meaning ‘*Small Tree*’.

Sanganeri *Chhippas* compose *Butā* and *Buti* in two ways, Natural and Decorative.

**(a) Natural style:**

The Natural style *bhant* consists of flora & fauna which are produced in their natural form. *Kamal Buti* (composition of lotus flowers & buds) “Fig.1, 2, 3”, *Genda Buti* (composition of marigold flower), *More Buti* (composition of peacock) are few examples of this style.

**(b) Decorative style:**

The Decorative style is a classic example of artistic imagination. Here *Chhippas* compose *bhants* in such a manner that the composition gives an impression of altogether different shape. *Bichoo Buti* (flower and leaves arranged in *Scorpio* shape) “Fig.4, 5”, *Singh-Bal Buti* (composition to give impression of the *hairs on the lion's face*) are few examples. Several other forms such as *Keri Buti* (Mango Shape), *Pan Buti* (Beetle Leaf Shape), *Katar Buti* (Dagger Shape), *Badam Buti* (Almond Shape) etc. are also composed using these floral *bhants*.

Composition of Rose, Rosette, Lotus, Lotus bud, Sunflower, Lily, Champa, Cannas, Canner, Narcissus, and Marigold etc. are used in Sanganeri print.

Interestingly we find motifs of some of those flowers which are not found in Rajasthan or which the craftsmen were supposedly never have seen. Some believe that these are age old designs passed from one generation to other, while some credit it to foreign Rulers.

Historian Sir George Watt opines

‘Obviously many of the Sanganeri designs portray flowers that are not likely to have been seen neither by the calico printers nor by the block engravers of Rajputana. In spite of this circumstance, however there seems very reason to believe that the craft has been handed down for centuries and has come to us in all the purity of original inspiration. The nature, feeling and colour reciprocity, as also the perfect, while the absence of machine regularity gives a charm that places these good above and beyond anything as yet accomplished in Europe<sup>8</sup>.’ Apart from flowers, trees of fruits such as banana, dates, grapes and pomegranate etc. were also used to form *Bel*, *Buta & Buti*. *Dakh Buti* (grapes) “Fig.6”, *Kharbuja Buti* (Mesh melon) “Fig.7” is few among them.

We find that parrots and fishes were also made in some old *Bhants*. Other than this, elephant, horses, camel, peacock, and human shapes were also made in Sanganeri *Bhants*, which came in trend at later stage. These *Bhants* are generally used

to decorate *Bichhaunas* (bed Spreads), *Jajams* (floor covers), table clothes, curtain, cushion cover etc. used by local community.

**Bel:** Running patterns of leaves and flowers work was known as *Bel*<sup>9</sup>. It is made of flowers, leaves and flower buds, composed and set between two parallel running strips in an *Interlace* manner. They are composed as a unit and the border is made by repeating this unit. Along with Botanical motifs, *Bhants* (motif) of Peacock, Parrot and different birds were also used to create a *Bel*. The rhythmic character of these borders is very beautiful and attractive. Some of the traditionally made *Bels* are known as: *Kangura bel*, *Sugga bel*, *Dakh bel*, *Keri bel*, *Belpatra bel*, *Machali bel*, *Morani bel* etc.

**Jal (floral net):** *Jal* is made of composition of natural motifs in a pattern that creates a floral all over. The *Bhants* are so meticulously arranged that they are not only spread all over the surface of the fabric, but also make an impression of a net. Earlier these were made by the composition of flowers and leaves, but later on birds and animals were also used as *Bhant*. Some of the traditional sangneri *Jal* are: *Keri Jal* (mango), *Gulab Jal* (rose), *Patti Jal* (leave), *Hiran Jal* (Deer), *Sher Jal* (lion) etc. .

Interestingly, due to domestic orientation Sanganeri Motifs, compositions, as well as colours were named after flowers, vegetables, birds or animals”Fig.8,9” and other objects of nature. Such names were chosen that even the housewife and illiterates may easily remember and understand them.

Different *Buta*, *Buti*, and *Bel* have been named according to their shapes. For example, *Sosan Buti* “Fig.10,11”, *Genda Buti*, *Gulmehendi*, *Javakusum*, *Jatadari lily*, *Guldaudi*, *Kachnar*, *Kaner*, *Gullalla* etc.. These are the locally grown flowers.

Names of the colours used for dying also reflect nature and life. The colours names were usually *Kasumal* (red), *Toru phooli* (yellow), *Moongiya* (dark green) etc.

While most handicrafts have limited aspects and dimensions due to the domestic orientation, Sanganeri print seems to have an advantage of this. Probably the competition of doing something different and the eagerness to create something new & fine among artisan families added many motifs to this print. Far ahead from other arts, Sanganeri print has fabulous collection of more than 400 (four hundred) types of *bhants* in its treasure. It is really hard to believe, but Sanganeri craftsmen have translated every available flower and leaves, trees and plants of their surroundings in *bhants*. The meticulous use of these nature based gifts by molding them in a beautiful shape of other natural products reflects their artistic genius. Ultimate use of artistic imagination is clearly visible here.

#### IV. DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The development and growth of any art is directly proportional to its demand and use. Despite adversities Sanganeri survived as it was the favorite of every section of the society. Although in practice it has distinction for various social segments. Different colours and motifs were used to make clothes for different section of the society. The Sanganeri artisans worked

for three types of Patrons: General clients, Temple devotees, Royals and courtiers.

*Syahi-beggar*<sup>10</sup> or black and red design on gossamer white cloth were made for general cliental. This was worn as *safa*, (turbans) or *Angochha* (shawls) by local community. *Dupattas*, a kind of shawl bearing auspicious red designs on a white or yellow background adorned the pious devotees at Hindu temple.

*Butis*, sprigged floral motifs stamped with soft colours on white background used to grace the Royals & Courtiers of Jaipur.

As the royals were the main patrons, we see the best quality of *Bhants* and print on Royals cloths. One could see the fineness and curves of lines with delicacy and softness here, which is the best feature of Sanganeri *chhappa*(print). There was a remarkable depiction of flowers across the courtly cloths. Whereas local textiles featured indigenous flora, Fabrics designated for royalty often portrayed flowers from foreign lands<sup>11</sup>. Flowing Persian inspired *Buta* of tall tulip, irises or poppies frequently flanked the *pallu* end cloth speckled with rosebuds or blossoms.<sup>12</sup>

The Royals of Jaipur developed relations with the Mughals who were very fond of art & craft. These relations gave entry to the Mughals in the inner pavilions of art & culture rich Royals of Jaipur. Not only administration started working in accordance to Mughals, but the artisans also adopted Mughal pattern<sup>13</sup>.

Mughals took keen interest and got the artisans worked to produce art effects of their choice. Persian impact of multiple flower style and fineness of line is clearly visible on sanganeri print of this era. Mughals took inspiration mostly from the flora and numerous variations of floral motifs were created in their patron ship.

The impact of Mughals was not limited to royal workshops only, but it also got spread to the *karkhanas* patronized by the royals. Slowly these *karkhanas* started producing motifs with Persian impact as per the interest of Mughals. The impression is visible with the use of *iris, tulip and narcissus* flowers in Sanganeri *bhant* which were not found in that area<sup>14</sup>.

The effect of Mughal style *Buta* and were also seen in the composition of Sanganeri. We find these *Buta* and *Buti* slight tilted in a direction like the Mughal style. Mughal flowering plants were executed in minute accuracy of details Plant, foliage, leaves, stalks and flowering in their natural bends and curves added new dimension to the study of nature<sup>15</sup>. On the other hand the places which were not influence of royal court and in the villages the printing was done at in the traditionally manner<sup>16</sup>.

In 17<sup>th</sup> century we find the effect of English and Dutch East Indian Companies style on the making of Sanganeri print. This is probably to fulfill demand of textile importers of these countries. New trade routes were explored which exposed the artisans to new art forms and new ideas. The Indo-European cultural exchange gave craftsman new style and designs to suit their new clientele. This was the time when the artisans got some new style of universal motif of beautiful rose and the

popular European motifs of *Cabbage Rose* "Fig.12" made its way to the Indian Textiles<sup>17</sup>. By the late 18<sup>th</sup> century *Rose* appeared in Sanganeri textiles as loose, asymmetrical flower with a sculptural shape more reminiscent of European floral than linear, regimented roses of an earlier period.

Sri Narayan *chhippa*, born around 1920, clearly recollects his first memories of a particular *rose Buta* as he holds up a miniscule and fragile set of wooden printing blocks, worn with age.

He says, 'It was a six colour design commissioned by the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh. My father used to print for the Royal courts. This one was for the elephant covers and tents for Royal parade through the streets of Jaipur. Such a big affair that parade was then and the Raja liked to show something new. My father was asked to make this special design, in six colours, so complicated it was, something different<sup>18</sup>.'

The *bhant* of Sanganeri block print suffered many changes with the passage of time. Whether it was the small local *Buti* or the big *Jal* of western culture, each was developed in different phases. Still the sharp & Intelligent Sanganeri *chhippas* successfully maintained the traditional ornamentation touch. The struggle of identity and survival was meticulously fought by the successors of "Chhippa Namdev ji".

Sanganeri craftspeople entered the realm of International trade by the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Foreign influences stemming from far flung commissions gradually inspired the designs offered to local customers. Ultimately this new repertoire of popular prints perpetuated the fame of the Sanganeri artisans, exemplifying the beauty and skill of work.

Rajasthan has a heritage of art and craft and Sanganeri is its priceless possession. Mere words cannot explain the beauty of *Sanganeri* print. To know about it one has to go in depth, feel it, explore it and probably then only heart and eye can really explain their beauty.

## V. CONCLUSION:

In this fast moving & mechanized world, Sanganeri art of hand block printing was struggling for its survival. But its peculiar procedure which includes a lot of the local natural resources finally helped this art to win *Geographical Identification mark*. GI mark status is a boost for Sanganeri print, as only those prints which are made in this region will be recognized as *Sanganeri Print*. This will improve the financial condition of Sanganeri Chippas. I believe that with lesser worries, these innovative *chhippas* will gift the world with more of their beautiful creations.

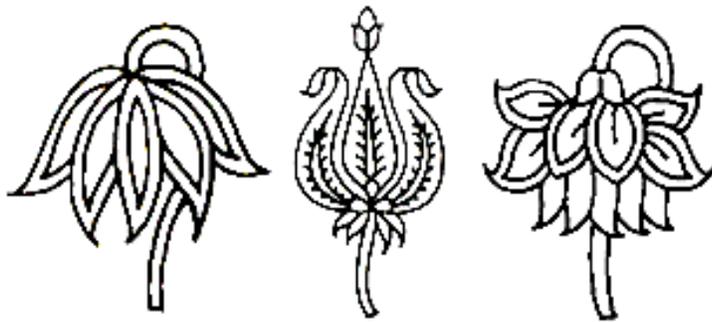
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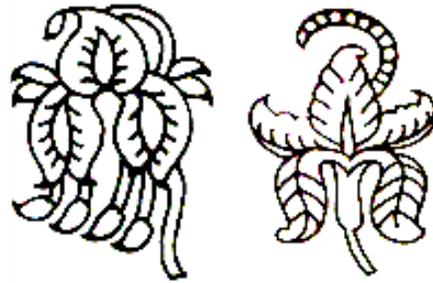
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Figure-1, 2,3



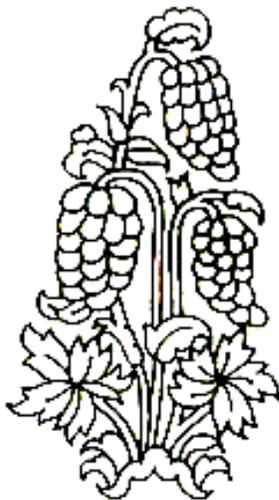
Kamal Buti

Figure-4,5



Bichoo Buti

Figure-6



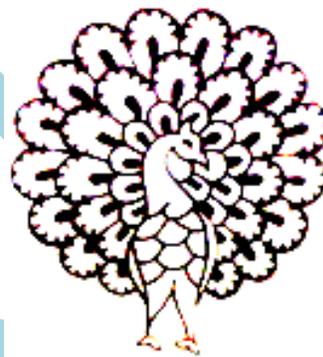
Dakh Buti

Figure-7



Kharbuja Buti

Figure-8, 9



More Buti

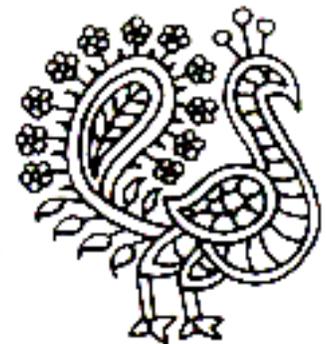
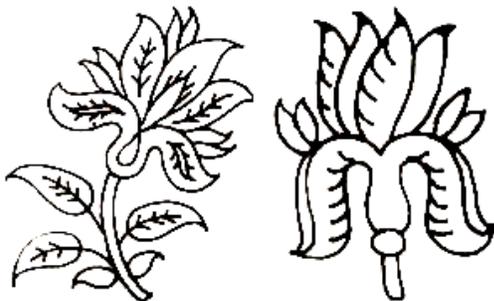
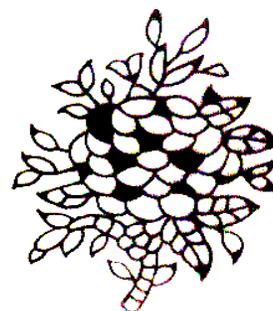


Figure-10,11



SosanButi

Figure-12



Cabbage Rose Buti