



HIMROO WEAVING AURANGABAD

Craft Documentation
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this document titled "Himroo Fabric" is based on original research carried out by Nupur Aggarwal under the guidance of Prof. Nina Sabnani towards the partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Design Research Seminar in Semester IV at IDC, IIT Bombay.

Date :

Guide : Prof. Nina Sabnani

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I would also like to thank my dear friend Dhawal, for helping me with the documentation and photography.

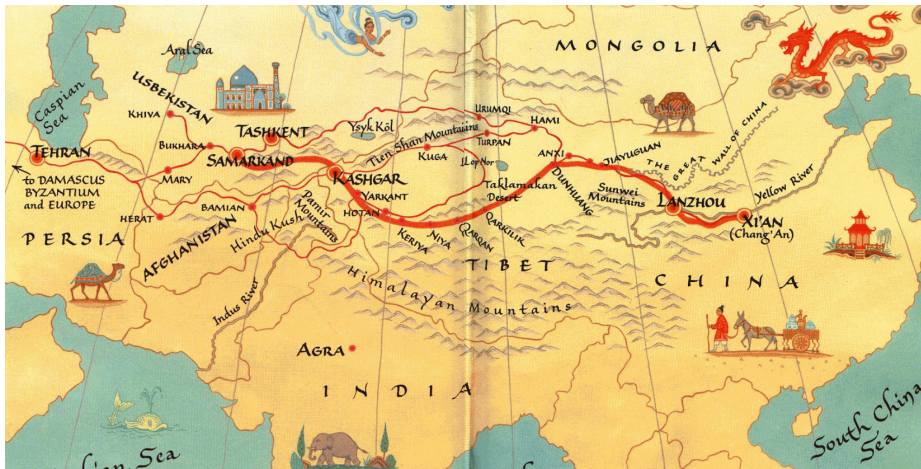
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1. WEAVING

A Historical Background



The strategic location of India on the route helped in exchange of silk and other goods

Farmers in the Indus valley were the first to spin and weave cotton. In 1929 archaeologists recovered fragments of cotton textiles at Mohenjo-Daro, in what is now Pakistan, dating to between 3250 and 2750 BCE. Cottonseeds found at nearby Mehrgarh have been dated to 5000 BCE. A terracotta fragment with fabric impression from that era provides clues on the types of weaving carried out by the ancient Harappans. Literary references further point to the ancient nature of the subcontinent's cotton industry. The Vedic scriptures, composed between 1500 and 1200 BCE allude to cotton spinning and weaving.

In ancient times, Paithan was a prosperous trade center called 'Pratisthan' (city of progress) and exported rich fabrics and precious stones to far-off lands as it fell on the silk route. It was a good medium for exchange of goods such as the richly woven textiles. Historians have noted fine paithani sarees with delicate gold and silver thread-work being sold in Greece in exchange for gold between 200 and 400 BC.

During the 15th century in Kashmir, Zain-ul-Abidin encouraged the exchange of weavers with Iran, Turkey, and other lands. The weavers who came to India immigrated to Delhi, Agra, Benares and other parts of the country. During the 17th–19th centuries, brocades continued to be in extensive use for regal costumes as well as for making temple canopies as evidenced by the contemporary Mughal paintings.

2. AURANGABAD

The “City Of Gates”



Detail at the Bibi ka maqbara, a monument similar to Taj mahal built in Aurangabad

Aurangabad is named after the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. The administrative headquarters of the Aurangabad Division or Marathwada region, Aurangabad is titled “The City of Gates” and the strong presence of these can be felt as one drives through the city. The City was founded in 1610 by Malik Amber which in the year 2010 completed 400 years. Aurangabad is the Tourism Capital of Maharashtra.

In 1653 when Mughal prince Aurangzeb was appointed the viceroy of the Deccan for the second time, he made Fatehnagar his capital and renamed it Aurangabad. Aurangabad is sometimes referred to as Khujista Bunyad by the Chroniclers of Aurangzeb’s reign. Aurangabad was a part of the Princely State of Hyderabad during the British Raj, until its annexation into the Indian Union after the Indian Independence in 1947, and thereafter a part of Hyderabad state of India until 1956. In 1956 it became a part of newly formed bilingual Bombay state and in 1960 it became a part of Maharashtra state.

The old city still retains the cultural flavour and charms of Muslim culture of Hyderabad. Its influence is reflected in the language and cuisine of the locals. Although Marathi and Urdu are the principal

languages of the city, they are spoken in Dakhni – Hyderabad Urdu dialect. The literary firmament of Aurangabad is illuminated by the most prolific classical Urdu poet Wali Dakhni; also reckoned by the name Wali Aurangabadi. He was the cardinal poet who had established his name in the world of Urdu Poetry.

The ethnic Aurangabadi culture is significantly influenced by the essence and charm of the characteristic Muslim culture enrooted in Hyderabad which is deeply reflected in the language, cuisine and lifestyle of the locals of Aurangabad. The city was a major silk and cotton textile production centre. A fine blend of silk with locally grown cotton was developed as Himroo textile. Paithani silk saris are also made in Aurangabad.

AURANGABAD

Earlier known as 'Pratishthan', It is a city in the Aurangabad district of Maharashtra and is 335 km away from Mumbai

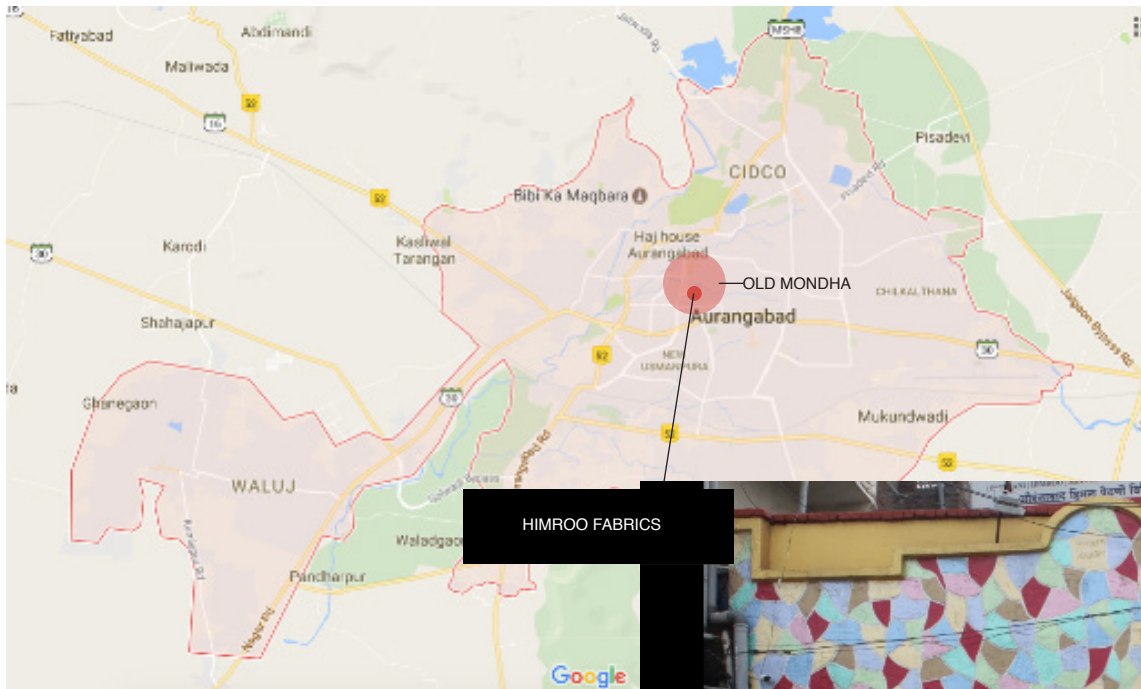


The red marked area denotes the state of Maharashtra

3. HIMROO CENTRE IN AURANGABAD

“Himroo Fabrics” is located at 113, Mondha Road, Jaffer Gate, Old Mondha, Mondha, Aurangabad, Maharashtra 431001, India

It is a centre for weavers to learn Himroo weaving, promote the craft of Himroo and also an outlet for retail of Himroo products.



The red marked area denotes the district of Aurangabad



Entrance to the weaving centre at Jaffer Gate

4. HIMROO WEAVING

126 Years Of History



Himroo is known for its timelessness and the intricate royal designs

Himroo was brought to Aurangabad in the reign of Mohammad Tughlaq, when he shifted his capital from Delhi to Daulatabad near Aurangabad. Himroo uses Persian designs, and is very characteristic and distinctive in appearance. According to historians this art originated in Persia . When Mohammad Tughlaq shifted his capital from Delhi to Daulatabad many weavers came and settled here.

During the migration back, several weavers chose to stay back here. During the reign of Malik Ambar many people were attracted to the city and came and settled here during Aurangzeb's Governorship and the times of Mughal, Aurangabad became the capital and the handicraft industry attracted hundreds of craftsman and artisans. Members of the royal family and the elite used the himroo . Himroo weaving is very characteristic and different .

The base of the fabric is usually woven with cotton or wool, and designs on the base are of silk. Earlier, himroo fabric used to be woven by hand, but now it is mass-produced with the help of machines.

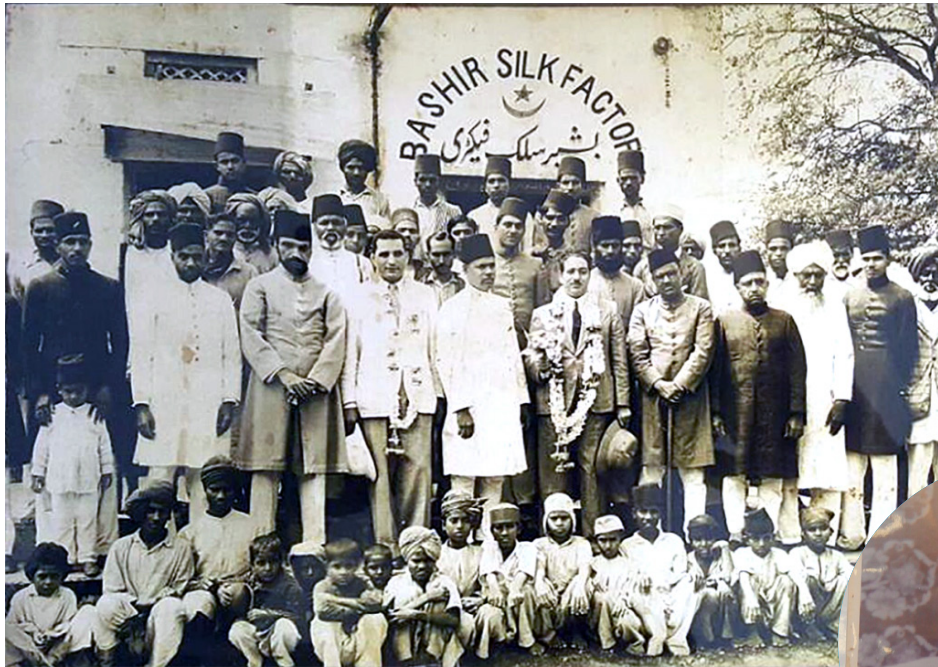
Besides shawls and saris, the other products woven out of himroo include coats, jackets, skirts, bed sheets, pillow cases, curtains and other furnishing. Himroo sherwanis (long coats) were once very popular among the menfolk. During the Nizam's period sherwanis made of himroo became so popular during the period of Nizam's rule in India, that they became intrinsic part of the wedding attire of the groom. it was during the Nizam's rule that Himroo flourished the most as their rule was more stable and they could invest their time on development of the crafts.

Amir Khusrau, the great Persian poet, in his brilliant work Nihayat-ul-Kamal has dedicated one full chapter, Jama-e-Devagiri to the fabric of Daulatabad. He writes:

"How can I describe adequately the fine quality of the cloths... Had it not been so, the hard-hearted planet (Mars) would have skinned the moon and brought it to the end of the month". What the poet meant was that the Devagiri cloths were so fine and thin that if the moon were skinned its remains would have not been finer."

QURESHIS

A Family dedicated to Himroo for 126 years



The founder with his team when the Royal Prince of Qajar dynasty from Persia visited the factory in 1911



*The founder,
Hazrat Bashir Ahmed Qureshi*

The art of weaving the himroo had almost died down but for the efforts of Qureshi family from Aurangabad which undertook rejuvenating drive 100 years ago during the time of the Nizam of Hyderabad. The Bashir Silk Factory was established by Hazrat Bashir Ahmed Qureshi in 1911. The Qureshis preserved and promoted the art and the scion of the 13th generation of that famous family, Faisal Qureshi, today runs the Aurangabad Himroo Industry and the Paithani Weaving and Training Centre at Jaffer Gate, Mondha Road, in Aurangabad.

FAISAL QURESHI

A chat with the 6th generation owner of Himroo Fabrics



In conversation with Mr. Faisal Qureshi at Himroo Fabrics

The 6th generation entrepreneur spearheads today's operations of Himroo Fabrics.

Qualified as an engineer, he is incessantly working to safeguard the dying art of Himroo. He has grown up watching his father carry on the business and art of Himroo weaving, and he intends to revive it as much as possible. He encourages marketing it through the right channels and also getting more weavers onboard. He also took us through the weaving centre and introduced me to Ambore Ji, the weaver at the centre.

Current customer profiles for the audience that purchases Himroo fabric are as follows:

- Customers looking for authentic Himroo material & online enquiries
- Wholesale supplies in Hyderabad, Mumbai, Pune and Chennai (on a limited scale)
- International exhibitions (frequent enquiries)
- Small scale exports to US, Dubai, Switzerland, UK etc

Mediums of sale:

- Online listings on Amazon and WishVilla
- Some online mediums in association with the GOI (Government of India)
- Enquiries through Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/HimrooFabrics>)
- Enquiries through TripAdvisor (#1 Thing to do for Aurangabad)
- Google SEO friendly, always returns the first result

Family heritage that trickles down 6 generations helps build a credibility of originality around the Himroo fabric. The business is also affected due to the demise of long-time master crafts-people who had been weaving for a long time. At present, there are 13 weavers fluent in the art in and around Aurangabad, who are extremely passionate about this craft. These crafts-people have a treasure of knowledge that they pass over the years to junior members and they have a definite know-how of the latest changes in the field. Currently, there are too many offerings by the business, but need to have more channels to reach out to customers. A push from Government schemes and NGOs is the need of the hour to protect and revive the art of Himroo. Another important measure that needs to be taken is the immediate need for more crafts-people to learn this skill to prevent it from extinction. The owners of the shop have a trademark on the keyword "Himroo Fabrics" but their claim for a trademark on standalone "Himroo" was rejected.

MEET THE HIMROO WEAVERS

Current weavers at the weaving centre



AMBORE AJEET

Weaver for the last 15 years, she is incessantly working on the warp and weft, to customize some of the most beautiful designs



HAROON RAHSHID

With an experience of more than two decades, he specializes in innovating some of the finest designs of the organization. Besides being a weaver himself, he is at the verge of being a master-craftsman for the Himroo and Paithani weaving.



VIJAY SHANKAR RAO

Master Weaver. Been the face behind the designing and weaving of Himroo Shawls and Sarees.



YOUSUF KHAN

Associated with Himroo Fabrics for the past three decades, he is an ace at weaving Silk and Zari. With his immense experience in the two threads, he has minted some of the most beautiful weaves of Himroo Fabrics.



In conversation with the weaver at Himroo Fabrics

AMBORE AJEET - WEAVER

In conversation with only femae weaver at the centre

Ambore ji, or known as Sindhu, is a buddhist by religion and has been weaving with the centre for more than 20 years. She sits with poise at the Jaquard loom in her decorative purple saree and recites how she began weaving, learning from the master craftsman, Abdullah ji. She learnt the technique of Himroo in 3 months and has trained several other women under her guidance since then. She wanted to learn as the techniqe interested her a lot, and the likes of herself, Ratna and Padma, have trained under her. Earlier the workshop had more than 25 weavers working, now reduced to 4, and a few houses nearby which have a loom.

She takes about 5-10 days for completing 1 shawl, where she expertises in making all himroo designs and often experiments with different color schemes. Her favourite designs are bel and kairi, which she often repeats in a lot of shawls.

She has a daughter in 10th standard and she has no intent of learning to weave as she would like to focus on her studies. She says that her profession, although fulfilling, is not the right career choice for her children. She works on the loom for 8 hours everyday, 6 days a week. She is also adept at the warping process, which takes around 5 days by an experienced weaver like her.

RE-ORGANISING THE WEAVERS

Preserving The Craft



The artisan is not only a repository of a knowledge system that was sustainable but is also an active participant in its re-creation today. Competition from the power looms in the late 1950s further hastened the end to their already precarious livelihood.

Till the mid-twentieth century, a steady demand from the Nizam's court in Hyderabad kept the himroo weavers busy. But with the exigencies arising from the Second World War and later as the Nizam's court faded away from political power, there was a drastic decline in the demand for himroo. The number of looms and families involved in himroo weaving decreased significantly. Today, few families in Aurangabad weave himroo, and the steady flow of tourists to the city — on account of its proximity to the Ajanta and Ellora caves -has greatly helped the himroo weavers.

The softness of the material, its varied texture, and versatility makes it a popular buy with the tourists. In response to the demand, the craftsmen weave beautiful stoles, shawls, wall hangings, bedspreads, saris, yardage and decorative pieces. They take great pride in preserving an age-old tradition of the city, and it is heartening that himroo continues to be the pride of Aurangabad even today, six centuries after its birth in the region.

The Himroo Industrial Co-operative is the only organizing agency formed essentially for resuscitating the age-old craft. The long, unbroken tradition of weavers — handing down the magical weaving techniques from father to son was dying out and it was essential that the few remaining families be infused with fresh vigour and given assistance to put the craft back on its feet. The task was not very difficult. The skill had gone into disuse but had not become senescent. It only needed to be sharpened to restore it to its original rhythm.

5. WEAVING HIMROO

Inspiration and Designs



A fine shawl woven in silk-cotton with the raw mango pattern

Handwoven himroo material is a traditional Aurangabad speciality. Himroo maybe woven with silk, wool, cotton and Zari (silver Golden thread). Traditionally it was only woven in cotton which is the warp and Silk which is the weft. It was a cheaper alternative for kim-khab the more lavish brocade of silk and gold thread woven for royalty in the 14th century. The weaves incorporate plain lines woven in different patterns like geometrical designs, designs inspired by nature, floral motifs, motifs from the paintings of Ajanta Caves, carvings from Ellora caves, Bibi Ka Maqbara and Taj Mahal. The creation of wall paintings and frescoes provided an inspiration to the weaver and the printer for exhibiting their talent for ornamentation. The frescoes at Ajantha and Ellora dating from the 2nd century BCE to the sixth century reveal garments of various kinds and assert the refined talent of the early printer.

The word himroo originated from the Persian word Hum ruh which means similar. Made from cotton and Silk, it has its origin in an ancient style of weaving known as Jamevar in Kashmir and was introduced to the Deccan by Muhammad Bin Tughlaq when he shifted his capital from Delhi to Daulatabad in 14th century for the regions warmer climate.

A luxurious extra weft figured fabric with a cotton base and a silk or art silk weave, himroo is ideal for rich stoles and furnishing material. The design are geometrical like circles, octagons, ovals, diamonds, hexagons and of fruits like pomegranate, almonds, pineapple; and of flowers like rose, lotus, jasmine, birds and animals; designs of flowering creepers, running designs formed with leaves and stems which interlock sometimes to form intricate patterns. This material is used for coats, cloaks, and shawls, as also for furnishings. The process involves two workers, a weaver and an assistant sitting across the loom, who work at interlacing the weft yard with the warp yarns at right angles.

THE ORIGINAL LOOM

Paga Loom



Himroo is made on a throw shuttle loom using cotton in the warp and silk in the weft. Before weaving commences, the designs are people to weave the fabric. The weaver is the one who weaves different colored threads to make the fabric, while the other person is required to pull the strings of the loom. The design has to be decided at the outset since two kinds of threads are mixed.

The loom has four vertical poles, one at each corner, and a first passed through a network of threads, called jala , suspended from the framework of the loom and then through four heddles, held in position by strings which are tied to four bamboos above. The bamboos holding the heddles in position are, at the other end, connected to four bamboo pedals at the feet of the weaver by means of separate strings. The pedals are in a slanting position. Thus, when the weaver presses a particular pedal with his foot, the heddle connected to the pedal is lifted up, which creates the required shed. Between the weaver and the nearest heddle is the reed through which the warp threads are passed, after which they are wound round the weaver's beam which is fixed on a wooden frame near the weaver, about six inches from the ground.

JACQUARD HAND LOOM

Process Of Weaving



Himroo weaving is a complex and time consuming process, and depending upon the threads used and the intricacy of the motifs it could take up to 20 days to weave one shawl.

Weaving commences with the weaver lifting warp threads using the pedals, the threads that are suspended from the frame of the loom with a V-shaped hook to create a shed for the design to be worked on the fabric. The weaver presses a pedal at his feet, which lifts the particular heddle and the warp threads passing through it; while threads attached to the other heddles remain stationary. The shed is maintained by inserting a pair of wooden ploughs at the two ends and shuttles are thrown across these sheds. After the requisite number of shuttles is thrown across by the weaver, the wooden ploughs and V-shaped hook are removed and the weaver beats the woven weft threads into position with the reed, a comb-like tool. The process is repeated in the same sequence according to the design that is to be woven. During this process the weaver has to be alert for his hands and feet, working on two different movements.

JACQUARD HAND LOOM

Parts Of The Loom



Foot Pedals (Pavdi)



Vertical threads (Jala)



Warp (Zameen)



Weights (Lingus)



Mesh for the Vertical threads



Vertical design change thread (Fruit ke taar)

JACQUARD HAND LOOM

Parts Of The Loom



Beam (Toor)



Jacquard punch cards



Shuttle (Katle)



Heddles (Racch)



Comb (Kangha)



Beater (Gadde)

YARNS & COLOURS

Sourcing yarns and colors used



The cotton and kela silk yarns are sourced from Malegaon. The pure silk is sourced from Bangalore sometimes. The cones need to be converted into spools using the charkha or the spinning wheel.

The motifs are brought alive by using different colour combinations from soft and subtle to bright and contrasting. Though they use lots of soft colours for weaving himroo fabrics, black and gold are always in fashion. As a result of the craze for black, stoles are being woven with black in the warp and different coloured threads in the weft. Gold thread weft prefer buying cotton weaves and in the winter they prefer wool or silk weaves. On the other hand, foreigners prefer pure silk scarves.

MOTIFS & PATTERNS



Himroo motifs include lines woven in different patterns, geometrical designs, motifs inspired by nature, religious verses from the holy Koran, motifs derived from the sublime paintings at the Ajanta Caves, as well as the occasional design of monuments such as the exalted Taj Mahal. Simple lines include plain, parallel, diagonal and intersecting lines; while geometrical patterns include a range of designs working with circles, diamonds, hexagons, octagons and ovals.

Motifs from nature include designs of fruits such as the evergreen ambi (mango) motif, pomegranates, and almond; flowers such as the lily, lotus, jasmine, rose, as well as sinuous flowering creepers with leaves and stems that form a continuous flow of pattern; and designs of birds and animals.

For any motif, a graph is created like the one shown on the left, for counting the number or warps & wefts to be used in the process.

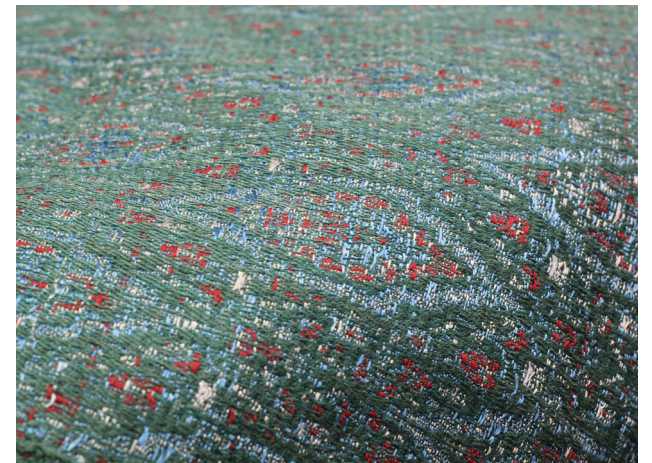
MOTIFS & PATTERNS



Batash ki bel



Guldasta



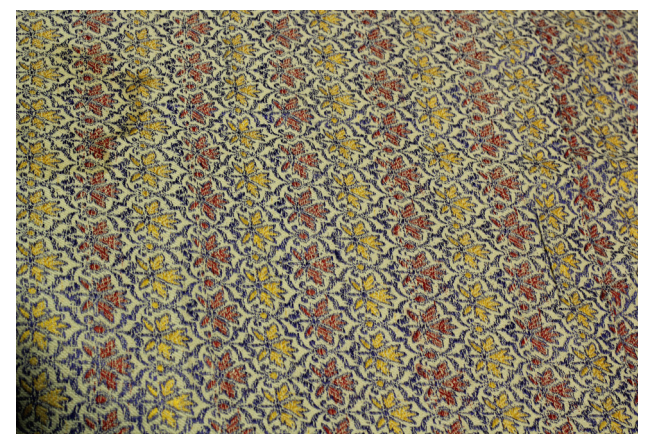
Kashti



White Lotus



Amdavadi Bel



Maple leaf

INSPIRATION FROM AJANTA CAVES

A visit to the caves to identify patterns



Peacock, pineapple and lotus painting in Ajanta Cave number 17



THE OTHER SIDE

Backside Of The Fabric



One peculiarity of himroo is that the silk threads used to form a pattern on the surface of the cloth are collected in long loops. This forms a rather loose but soft warm layer. Further, the accumulation of the loose threads on the reverse side of the textile necessitates a lining or protective net for all garments made of himroo .

6. MACHINE MADE HIMROO

The Road Ahead



There was a period when more than 800 looms flourished in Aurangabad; today hardly few remain, with the number continuously decreasing with time. The situation would have been worse had not the renowned Qureshi family made vigorous efforts to keep the art alive. Himroo silk, which is generally showcased in elegant shawls, has a folkloric and iconic status. The shawls are glamorous additions to a wardrobe, for when the shawl is draped across the shoulders it lends the wearer an aura of feminine style. Subtle and never overdone, the himroo comes in vibrant colours. It has a comfortable contemporariness about it and yet has a distinct Maharashtrian accent. It is in the back streets of Aurangabad that families of with the Paithani Silk Weaving Centre at Aurangabad, which also has the support of the Weavers Service Centre, Mumbai (Ministry of Textiles, Government of India). Here young aspirants learn the intricacies of paithani and himroo under the tutelage of a master weaver. The government provides raw material for training and gives other incentives plus marketing support.

The younger trainees prefer the quicker modern way of weaving the shawl rather than the old method, which is more time-consuming. There is a sequence of pulling the threads and weaving the coloured thread in the weft, which is very intricate. One slip and the colour scheme can go awry. This is where punch cards and jacquard machines have stepped in and resulted in the creation of cheaper varieties of himroo shawls.

One weaver working painstakingly on a shawl told us during our recent visit that her efforts would yield results four months later by way of a gorgeous shawl while a machine-made one would take three weeks or less. But the difference in quality is stark. The traditional weave imparts an aesthetic finesse to the fabric.

End.