

## Exploring Royal Textiles from India

**Image no: 1**

**Caption:** Payag, *Jahangir Presents Prince Khurram with a Turban Ornament (12 October 1617)* (from the *Padshahnama* manuscript), 1656-57, 30.6 x 21.3 cm, RCIN 1005025.an, Royal Collection Trust, London.

**Link:**

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The\\_Padshahnama,\\_Jahangir\\_presents\\_Prince\\_Khuraam\\_with\\_a\\_turban\\_ornament.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Padshahnama,_Jahangir_presents_Prince_Khuraam_with_a_turban_ornament.jpg)

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**Image no: 2**

**Caption:** Detail, *Akbar Shah II and His Sons*, 1790-1810, Oil on Canvas, 60.9 x 80.8 cm, RCIN 406533, Royal Collection Trust, London. Wikimedia Commons.

**Link:**

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Indian,\\_Mughal\\_-\\_Akbar\\_Shah\\_II\\_and\\_his\\_sons\\_-\\_RCIN\\_406533\\_-\\_Royal\\_Collection.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Indian,_Mughal_-_Akbar_Shah_II_and_his_sons_-_RCIN_406533_-_Royal_Collection.jpg)

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**Image no: 3**

**Caption:** Bichitr, Detail, *Aurangzeb Enthroned in a Darbar Scene*, 17th-18th century, Opaque pigments heightened with gold on paper, 33.3 x 25.8cm, Wikimedia Commons.

**Link:** [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aurangzeb\\_enthroned\\_in\\_a\\_darbar\\_scene.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aurangzeb_enthroned_in_a_darbar_scene.jpg)

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**Image no: 4**

**Caption:** Detail, *Floral Tent Panel*, c.1635, Silk, gold, cut velvet, painted, 268.6 x 562 cm, 1981.321, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Purchase, Bequest of Helen W. D. Mileham, by exchange, Wendy Findlay Gift, and funds from various donors, 1981.

**Link:** <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/453054>

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**Image no: 5**

**Caption:** *Panchama Ragini (Page from a Ragamala Series)*, 1640, Ink, opaque watercolour, and gold on paper, 19.7 x 12.4 cm, 1996.378, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Purchase, Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Gift, in honour of Mahrukh Tarapor, 1996.

**Link:** <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/38056?pos=6>

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**Image no: 6**

**Caption:** Gerd Eichmann, *Fatehpur Sikri*, 2018, Photograph, Wikimedia Commons, [CC BY-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

**Link:** [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fatehpur\\_Sikri-30-2018-gje.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fatehpur_Sikri-30-2018-gje.jpg)

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**Image no: 7**

**Caption:** Detail, *A Page of the Dastan-i Amir Hamza (from the Hamzanama manuscript)*, 1567-1582, Opaque watercolour and gold paint on cotton, 66.0 x 49.3 cm, AS12-1978, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Wikimedia Commons.

**Link:**

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mughal\\_-\\_A\\_page\\_of\\_the\\_Dastan-i\\_Amir\\_Hamza\\_\(Hamza\\_nama\)\\_-\\_Google\\_Art\\_Project.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mughal_-_A_page_of_the_Dastan-i_Amir_Hamza_(Hamza_nama)_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg)

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**Image no: 8**

**Caption:** Detail, *King Bhojaraja Tries in Vain to Ascertain the Whereabouts of the Pearl from the Four Travelling Companions (Tuti-nama: Twelfth Night)*, c.1560, Gum tempera, ink, and gold on paper; 7.5 x 10.1 cm, 1962.279.97.b, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio. Gift of Mrs. A. Dean Perry.

**Link:** <https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1962.279.97.b>

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**Image no: 9**

**Caption:** Basavana, Shravana, Tara, *Assad Ibn Kariba Launches a Night Attack on the Camp of Malik Iraj*, (Folio from a *Hamzanama*), 1564–69, Ink, opaque watercolour, and gold on cloth, Mounted on paper, 68.6 x 54 cm, 18.44.1, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Rogers Fund, 1918.

**Link:** <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/447050>

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**Image no: 10**

**Caption:** Sur Das, *A Royal Entertainment*, 1600, Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 17 x 11.4 cm, F1960.27, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

**Link:**

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Prince\\_Salim\\_with\\_a\\_courtier\\_and\\_attendants\\_in\\_a\\_tent.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Prince_Salim_with_a_courtier_and_attendants_in_a_tent.jpg)

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**Image no: 11**

**Caption:** *Bashir Confides his Love for Habbaza to an Arab Friend, and Sends Him to Her with a Message (Tuti-nama: Twenty-fourth Night)*, 1560, Gum tempera, ink, and gold on paper, 16 x 10.1 cm, 1962.279.167.b, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio. Gift of Mrs. A. Dean Perry.

**Link:** <https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1962.279.167.b>

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**Image no: 12**

**Caption:** Detail, *Pleasures of the Hunt*, 1800, Ink, opaque watercolour, gold and silver on paper, 25.1 x 35.8 cm, 2002.37, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Cynthia Hazen Polsky and Leon B. Polsky Fund, 2002.

**Link:**

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/64535?searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&what=Watercolors&ft=india+court&offset=40&rpp=20&pos=57>

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**Image no: 13**

**Caption:** Detail, *King Bikramaditya Summons Madhava (from a Madhavanala Kamakandala)*, 1700, Gum tempera and gold on paper, 18.7 x 28.6 cm, 2018.92, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio. Purchase and partial gift from the Catherine and Ralph Benkaim Collection, Severance and Greta Millikin Purchase Fund.

**Link:** <https://www.clevelandart.org/art/2018.92>

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**Image no: 14**

**Caption:** Tara, *Maharana Sarup Singh Inspects a Prize Stallion*, 1845-46, Opaque watercolour, ink, and gold on paper, 42.5 x 57.8 cm, 2001.344, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Cynthia Hazen Polsky and Leon B. Polsky Fund, 2001.

**Link:** <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/61429>

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**Image no: 15**

**Caption:** Valentine Cameron Prinsep, *The Imperial Assemblage Held at Delhi*, 1 January 1877, 1877-80, Oil on canvas, 304.8 x 723 cm, RCIN 407181, Royal Collection Trust, London.

**Link:** <https://www.rct.uk/collection/407181/the-imperial-assemblage-held-at-delhi-1-january-1877>

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**Image no: 16**

**Caption:** Louis Haghe, Joseph Nash, David Roberts, *Dickinson's Comprehensive Pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851 (Image 26)*, 1854, Illustration, Cup.652.c.33., volume 2, The British Library, London.

**Link:** <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/dickinsons-comprehensive-pictures-of-the-great-exhibition-of-1851>

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**Image no: 17**

**Caption:** Roderick Dempster MacKenzie, *The State Entry into Delhi*, 1907, Oil on canvas, 289.8 x 366 cm, Wikimedia Commons, [CC BY 2.0](#).

**Link:**

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1903\\_DELHI\\_DURBAR\\_PARADE\\_\(22317678808\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1903_DELHI_DURBAR_PARADE_(22317678808).jpg)

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**Image no: 18**

**Caption:** Louis Haghe, Joseph Nash, David Roberts, *Dickinson's Comprehensive Pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851 (Image 8)*, 1854, Illustration, Cup.652.c.33., volume 2, The British Library, London.

**Link:**

<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/dickinsons-comprehensive-pictures-of-the-great-exhibition-of-1851>

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**Image no: 19**

**Caption:** Robert Taylor Pritchett, *Colonial and Indian Exhibition: Foreign Visitors Offering Gifts to the Queen*, 1886, Watercolour on paper, 17.7 x 31.8 cm, RCIN 920803, Royal Collection Trust, London.

**Link:**

<https://www.rct.uk/collection/920803/colonial-and-indian-exhibition-foreign-visitors-offering-gifts-to-the-queen-8-july>

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**Image no: 20**

**Caption:** Louis Haghe, Joseph Nash, David Roberts, *Dickinson's Comprehensive Pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851, (Image 15)*, 1854, Illustration, Cup.652.c.33., volume 2, The British Library, London.

**Link:**

<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/dickinsons-comprehensive-pictures-of-the-great-exhibition-of-1851>

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**Image no: 21**

**Caption:** Louis Haghe, Joseph Nash, David Roberts, *Dickinson's Comprehensive Pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851, (Image 16)*, 1854, Illustration, Cup.652.c.33., volume 2, The British Library, London.

**Link:**

<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/dickinsons-comprehensive-pictures-of-the-great-exhibition-of-1851>

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**Image no: 22**

**Caption:** Louis Haghe, Joseph Nash, David Roberts, *Dickinson's Comprehensive Pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851, (Image 19)*, 1854, Illustration, Cup.652.c.33., volume 2, The British Library, London.

**Link:**

<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/dickinsons-comprehensive-pictures-of-the-great-exhibition-of-1851>

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**Image no: 23**

**Caption:** Detail, *Delhi Durbar of 1903*, 1903, Photograph, Wikimedia Commons.

**Link:** [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Delhi\\_Durbar\\_of\\_1903\\_-\\_LIFE\\_%289%29.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Delhi_Durbar_of_1903_-_LIFE_%289%29.jpg)

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**Image no: 24**

**Caption:** Detail, *Willoughby Wallace Hooper, Famine in India: Emaciated Young Men Wearing Loin Cloths and a Woman Wearing a Sari*, 1876, Photoprint, Albumen, 15.1 x 20.6 cm, 35229i, Wellcome Collection, London.

**Link:** <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/w9m36ru3/images?id=aymzq9k4>

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**Image no:** 25

**Caption:** George Percy Jacomb-Hood, *Investiture of the Star of India*, Delhi, 14 December 1911, 1914, Oil on canvas, 78.0 x 130.1 cm, RCIN 407144, Royal Collection Trust, London.

**Link:**

<https://www.rct.uk/collection/search#/1/collection/407144/investiture-of-the-star-of-india-delhi-14-december-1911>

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**Image no:** 26

**Caption:** *Distribution of Famine Relief in the Madras Presidency (from the Illustrated London News)*, 1877, Engraving, Wikimedia Commons.

**Link:** [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Madras\\_famine\\_1877.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Madras_famine_1877.jpg)

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**Image no:** 27

**Caption:** Detail, *Embroidered Cover*, 1700-1800, Embroidery, silk and metallic thread, 157.5 x 88.3 cm, 1916.1363, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Wade.

**Link:** <https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1916.1363>

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**Image no:** 28

**Caption:** Detail, *Zardozi Textile*, late 19th century – early 20th century, Cotton, silk, gilt metal, 184 x 100 cm, TXT.00649, Museum of Art and Photography, Bengaluru.

**Link:** N/A

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**Image no:** 29

**Caption:** Detail, *Zardozi Textile*, late 19th century or early 20th century, Silk, gilt metal, cotton, 86 x 61 cm, TXT.00775, Museum of Art and Photography, Bengaluru.

**Link:** N/A

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**Image no:** 30

**Caption:** Detail, *Brocade Odhani*, 20th century, Silk, gilt metal, cotton, 244 cm x 172 cm, TXT.00945, Museum of Art and Photography, Bengaluru.

**Link:** N/A

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**Image no:** 31

**Caption:** Ashdeen Lilaowala, Detail, *Zardozi Sari*, 2018, Chiffon silk, organza silk, gilt metal, 544 x 106cm, TXT.01998, Museum of Art and Photography, Bengaluru.

**Link:** N/A

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**Image no:** 32

**Caption:** Detail, *Children's Zardozi Pajama*, late 20th century-present, 1951-2000; 2001-present, Silk, gilt metal, sequins, L 94 cm x Circ. 154 cm, TXT.01356, Museum of Art and Photography, Bengaluru.

**Link:** N/A

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**Image no:** 33

**Caption:** *The Kevorkian Hyderabad Carpet*, 17th century, Wool, cotton; pile weave, 325 x 1596 cm, CA.17.1997, The Museum of Islamic Art, Doha. Wikimedia Commons.

**Link:**

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Unknown,\\_India,\\_17th\\_Century\\_-\\_The\\_Kevorkian\\_Hydrabad\\_Carpet\\_-\\_Google\\_Art\\_Project.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Unknown,_India,_17th_Century_-_The_Kevorkian_Hydrabad_Carpet_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg)

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This painting of a Mughal court scene from the 17th century features Emperor Jahangir presenting Prince Khurram with a turban ornament, a momentous occasion where the prince was given the title, Shah Jahan, which means “King of the World.” Regal figures and ministers are depicted in ornate jamas, turbans and patkas. The courtroom is set under a grand canopy and furnished with exquisite carpets, fans, bolsters and wall hangings. These fabrics served as symbols of the Empire’s wealth – imparting luxury and grandeur across various aspects of imperial life.

Historically, the production of Indian textiles relied greatly on the patronage of royal families. These textiles went beyond lavish attire and were used to enliven indoor and outdoor spaces, projecting a sense of prestige and power.

### **Embellishing Interior Spaces**

Intricate textiles were used to accentuate the living spaces of noble families. For example, in this 17th century Rajput painting, we see the use of wall hangings, glittering screens and carpets decorated with floral designs. These textiles conjure multi-sensorial experiences, imbuing the building with a greater sense of comfort and splendour. The next time you walk through old forts or palaces, try to imagine how their bare structures were transformed through the use of fabrics.

### **Conjuring Palatial life Outdoors**

The use of textile furnishings also extended beyond the walls of the palace. Constructed using expensive and elaborate fabrics, tents and shamianas fulfilled various functions, from serving as administrative centres, to places of respite, entertainment and privacy. Indian royals routinely travelled long distances with their entourage, setting up expansive camps over the course of their journeys. This 19th century painting by the artist Tara captures how such camps imitated the grandeur of palatial life. Nestled under an embellished tent, Maharana Swarup Singh, his courtiers, musicians and dancers are seated on ornate carpets. Upon closer inspection, we can see that the stallion and hunting dog are also clothed in patterned, pink blankets. Set in the midst of the forest, the tent symbolises power over the elements, while also showcasing the prestige of the Emperor.

## Projecting a Sense of Extravagance

The use of textiles as a form of display served as a common political tool across Indian kingdoms and empires, including the British Raj. During the height of the British Empire's hold in India in the 19th and 20th century, the crown hosted several large-scale events in India and abroad. These included the three Delhi Durbars, the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the Colonial and Indian Exhibition amongst others.

During these events, the British administration organised spectacular displays showcasing the riches of the Empire such as velvets, carpets, tapestries and furnishings. The sumptuous nature of these fabrics were intentionally leveraged to create an atmosphere of extravagance. However, the splendour of these displays painted a very different image from the realities in India at the time. While they flaunted the Empire's riches to the world, millions of Indians were dying due to widespread famines towards the end of the 19th century. The glamorous use of textiles also embodied such contradictions as they concealed the exploitation of Indian resources that went into their making.

To this day, textiles continue to contribute towards an image of opulence across Indian cultures. Used as decorative elements in homes, worn on special occasions and exchanged as gifts, they remain associated with projections of status and soft power.

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