



9 A CORNISH SARI

"I have created a sari design to reflect Cornwall, where I am studying. I took photos of Cornish life, mainly beaches, and used imagery that is typical of the area. Inspiration included Cornish ice cream and buckets and spades used on the beach. Many Indian motifs use birds, so I adapted that idea to fit Cornwall, using seagulls in one of mine.

"I also had photos of embroidery that I had seen on a visit to India, so I drew a pattern from them as well as henna designs.

"I have been able to incorporate these two elements to create new Cornish Asian motifs and borders, drawing a colour palette from the landscape and using typical sari layouts to link them together."

Miranda Hicks, from Northamptonshire, is studying textile design at University College, Falmouth

10 A SARI FOR HARROW

"Thinking of symbols that represented my town of Harrow, I came up with the idea of its coat of arms. Whenever I mention that I'm from Harrow, I'm always asked if I live near the school. I wish that I did! The public school is undoubtedly what Harrow is famous for, and the hill where it is situated still has the air of a bygone age, untouched by the modern world. This contrast between the old and new was something that I wanted to bring out in my design.

"At the top is the school and church surrounded by trees. In the middle is the Harrow coat of arms, flanked by two schoolboys, one wearing a boater and blazer, the other dressed for cricket, that great British Asian favourite!

"The flowers represent the wild roses that grow in the hedgerows around the school playing fields. Finally, at the bottom of the hill, in the 'real' Harrow of today, are its new citizens, including a Somali woman in a burka, a hoodie with a mobile phone, a Gujarati housewife, a Polish builder, an Afro-Caribbean woman and a mullah."

Nilesh Mistry is an illustrator based in Harrow. He was born in Mumbai, India, in 1966 and moved to London with his parents and brother in 1975. WINNER OF THE BRITISH SARI STORY NATIONAL COMPETITION

THE BRITISH SARI STORY

The British Sari Story celebrates the sari, the wonderful garment worn by South Asian women everywhere. It presents traditional saris from around South Asia and new saris with 21st century designs.

TRADITIONAL SARIS

The pattern, design and fabric of traditional saris speak volumes about the women who wear them. These saris from south Asia reflect the experience of the women at different stages of their lives. There are elaborate saris for special occasions, marking rites of passage and family occasions such as weddings or engagement ceremonies. Others are for everyday use. Some are worn when working outside the home, some when mopping the kitchen floor or gardening.

1 A SARI FOR A WEDDING TROUSSEAU 2 A SARI FOR MOURNING

Benares, a city at the edge of the Ganges in the north, has been regarded for the past 2,000 years as the spiritual capital of India and is famous for its expensive and prized saris.

This sari is a glorious example of a Benares heavy silk brocade. It might be given to a daughter, or daughter-in-law, as part of a wedding trousseau – clothes for before and after the wedding. These saris are valued, because of their rich gold embroidery, and also because of the weight and quality of the silk. Their price depends on the weight of gold used in their making. They never go out of fashion.

Traditionally, the bride's family made a dowry – payment of gifts or money – to the groom. In 21st century Britain, though, it is believed that marrying a well-educated working woman is a 'dowry for life' and traditional dowry demands are frowned upon. But the custom of exchanging gifts between the two families still persists.

This is an everyday sari, of a style often worn by older women. Its white body might be an indication of mourning. In funerals in India, the colour white marks respect and a sacred space for the departed. It is worn at home and at the cremation grounds, though often close female relatives do not attend the cremation.

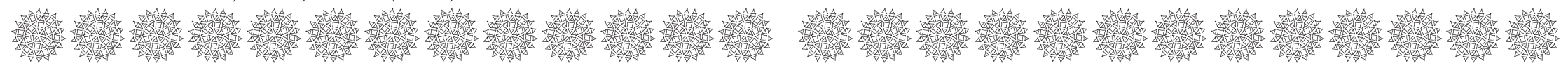
Before the cremation, the body is covered in white cloth and lies with the head towards the north. It is taken to the cremation grounds in a procession, with male relatives bearing the four corners, with someone blowing a conch shell at intervals. The oldest male relative, usually the son of the deceased, lights the funeral pyre. Traditionally, relatives later take the ashes in an urn and immerse them in holy water. The ashes might be scattered into a tributary of the Ganges, or less traditionally, on mountains or other rivers.

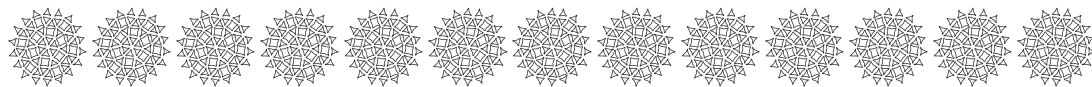
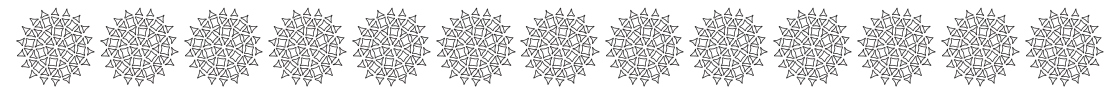
Bridging Arts

Loaned by Sona Rupa Ltd



Illustrations by Helen Scalway and Rahiet Ashfaq. Printed by Official Stationers 020 8459 7202





3 A YELLOW CHIFFON SARI

In the best 1960s tradition of clinging chiffon, the sari is embroidered with big red flowers, green stems and leaves in a satin stitch. The pattern recalls the swinging sixties, days of dancing, youth and frivolity. It has a light, flirtatious look. During this time, blouses became smaller and the cloth of the sari more filmy, hugging the hips tightly.

In the West, mini skirts and bell-bottoms were in fashion. Indian fashion trends simulated the 60s feel by becoming tighter and shorter. Instead of traditional silk that can be bulky with heavy folds hiding the curves of the body, or cotton that is starched and stiff, nylon, chiffon, and light polyester hug the body and accentuate the hips, the bare waist and the blouse and show off the arms and shoulders. While the salwar kameez became shorter (mimicking the mini skirt) and tighter, the short sari did not take the market by storm and trendy saris remained ankle-length.

Loaned by Sari UK Ltd

4 A SARI FROM SRI LANKA

Sumi Perera was born in Sri Lanka but came to Britain in the early 1960s and received her primary education in England and Scotland. She returned to Sri Lanka in her early teens as a Westernised tomboy whose preferred mode of dress was shorts.

She then had to re-learn her native language and dress conservatively at medical school. Strict dress codes were imposed, and only dresses and skirts were allowed to be worn for lectures. She soon learnt to adapt, and compromised by tailoring her own culottes. However, saris were compulsory for clinical work and, though she found this difficult and constricting at first, she eventually managed with a mixture of safety pins and ingenious draping methods.

The soft, non-iron opaque brown sari is an example of something she would wear to work.

Loaned by Sumi Perera

7 A YORKSHIRE SARI

"The culture and people of Britain are still new to me since I have lived here for only a short time. The cold and damp British climate gave me the idea for my sari.

"The colours and patterns are inspired by the weather in Yorkshire, where I live. They are basically grey, white, silver, beige, gold, dark grey and black, which represent different types of weather – such as ice, frost, snow and rain clouds.

"I am getting used to the cold. I think the attitude of people in Britain is good. No matter what their backgrounds are, everyone is treated equally. That is the most important thing for me."

Ramim Nasim was born in Hong Kong and lived there for 17 years before moving to Bradford, Yorkshire in 2005. Her parents are originally from Pakistan

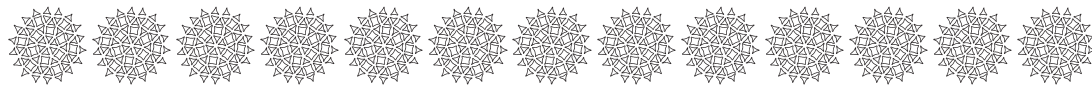
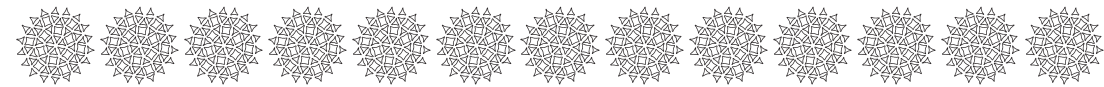
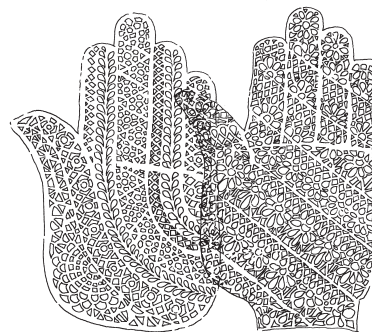
8 A SARI FOR LONDON

"I have used the London Underground map for inspiration, not only as a symbol of the city itself, but as a metaphor for migration to it from near and far.

"I had originally planned the pallau (wide end border) to end in a tangle of lines to represent a chaotic city, but the more I looked at this network of dots and lines, the more I was reminded of *rangoli* designs which are made up of similar grids.

"*Rangoli* are drawn at the entrances to homes as a sign of welcome to guests. For all its faults, London still welcomes people from all over the world, eager to make their fortune and prosper."

Nilesh Mistry is an illustrator based in Harrow. He was born in Mumbai, India, in 1966 and moved to London with his parents and brother in 1975.



5 A SARI FOR THE IPOD GENERATION

"I see a 21st century sari as different: simple yet glamorous, big and daring, with bright colours – a reflection of our materialistic societies.

"I decided to tell a story using what we see today: the iPod generation.

"Music is one of the biggest influences in today's society. It inspires words that indoctrinate individuals – bad and good words. Love or hate. Live or die. You and I.

"The headphones and wires are like a plant with a flower. The words around it are its pollen. The pollen plants itself in the mind. The mind reflects those words in emotions.

"The background is pink because it represents some of the following: sexuality, love, physical tranquillity, emotional claustrophobia, weakness. The yellow green of the border reflects peace, rest, universal love, boredom and stagnation.

"The wires are blue, reflecting communication, logic, coldness, lack of emotion and unfriendliness.

"The rest of the designs are in two colours, black and white. In one way, that is what music tells us. It's as simple as that. Women, sex, items, products, drugs and money are all just commodities."

Samar Abbas has a degree in product design from the University of Hertfordshire. He was born in Kenya in 1980 and moved to London 17 years ago

6 A BRITISH SARI LANDSCAPE

"I wanted to create something that looked quite traditional and was heavily embellished and patterned, but with a contemporary twist. When you first look at it, this seems to be a heavily detailed, traditional sari. But look again and you see new patterns.

"The colours are the blue/grey of the British landscape. There are dots of colour – greens, oranges and white – which are the colours of the Indian flag and reflect Indian identity.

"The images on the sari reflect the era in which I grew up – the 1970s and 1980s: suitcases, old television sets, planes, people coming from one country and leaving another.

"The border around the outer edge is of a fictional landscape of terraces and temples, mosques and tower blocks, representing our ever changing cultural landscape.

"But there are also images of CCTV cameras depicting today's hostile relationship between East and West."

Pamela Rana studied Ceramics and Glass at the Royal College of Art, graduating in 2003. Her parents came to Britain from the Punjab in the 1970s and she was born and brought up in Kent

5 AN EVERYDAY SARI

This cheerful, everyday pretty pink nylon sari was purchased in 1997 for Ansuya Tailor, of Redbridge, Essex, by her aunt, as a gift. Ansuya has worn it constantly since, first as a smartish garment for going out and more recently when doing housework or gardening.

When it was new, she wore it to temple to say her prayers. This relatively simple sari could be worn during Holi (usually in April), a festival when revellers scatter coloured powder over each other. Women tend not to wear expensive saris to this festival for fear of damaging them.

Ansuya, an administrative assistant at Redbridge Central Library, was born in Kenya but came here with her family in 1971.

She always wears a sari at home, but not to work. Before she was married, she wore her 'English clothes' – trousers and skirts – at home. But since her marriage she has always worn a sari, particularly out of respect for her father-in-law when he was living with the family. They define her style and personality, she says.

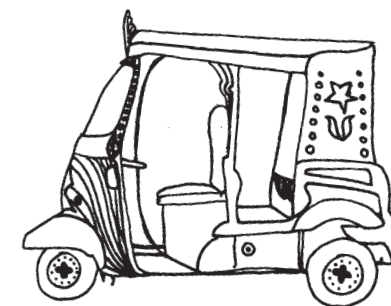
Loaned by Ansuya Tailor

6 A SARI FOR LADIES WHO LUNCH

Lucknow, the capital city of Uttar Pradesh, is famous for its Chikan work. Artisans use graded threads on a cotton base to produce thick and fine embroidery, usually of the same colour as the base fabric, but sometimes white or multi-coloured. Creepers and flowers thread through the cloth with delicate fingers creating an intricate lattice or *jali*. The result is elegant and restrained.

These starched cotton saris which crumple easily are ideal for looking smart on a brief outing in a hot climate. They might be worn to 'kitty parties', informal social gatherings when women get together at each others' homes to chat and play cards for the kitty – an equal amount of money contributed by each woman in the group and held by the hostess.

Sourced by Amita Nijhawan for Bridging Arts



7 A GHARCHOLU SARI

The Gharcholu is a traditional Hindu and Jain bridal sari, usually in red or green, and divided into many squares bound by gold strips. It is given to the bride at the wedding by the parents of the groom and she wears it during the ceremony over the sari given to her by her mother, draping it carefully so both are visible. This symbolises the meeting of two families, a highly significant part of a Gujarati Hindu wedding.

This sari is resplendent with dancing, sequined elephants – a traditional symbol of good luck and prosperity.

After marriage, the bride might wear this sari on occasions particularly relevant to her status as a married woman. If a woman dies before her husband, often the Gharcholu is placed on the corpse.

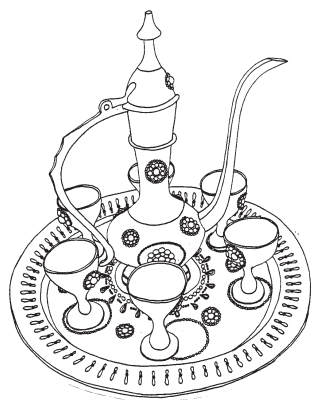
In the body of this sari are bandhani, a traditional decorating technique used on many Gujarati saris. This involves tying tiny sections of cloth with wax thread and then dipping the whole cloth in a vat of colour. When the wax knots are removed, little parts of the sari remain uncoloured.

Loaned by Sari UK Ltd

8 A SARI FOR A BRIDE

This bridal sari makes you stop and look twice at its sheer weight and magnificence. Intricate swirls, vines, creepers and flowers of thread and beads cover every inch of the body. This is a heavy garment. If this were all the bride had to wear, it would be quite a task. But add to it the traditional bridal *solhan singar* or 16 adornments, including trinkets worn on the forehead, neck, wrists, fingers, waist, ankles, toes and the bride has quite a job dressing and holding herself upright through the wedding. She wears heavy jewellery as a sign of the status of the family, and as a representation of the goddess of wealth and prosperity, Lakshmi. She is taking this prosperity and luck to her new family and household.

Loaned by Sona Rupa Ltd, Leicester



3 A BRITISH AND SRI LANKAN SARI

"All human cultures dress their bodies in some way to create a personal 'habitus'. My sari explores the interface between self and other, the boundary between the private individual and public and social face.

"This design reflects my own background, of territorial transposition imposed by studying and working in Sri Lanka and the UK, as a doctor, scientist and artist. Most of my scientific life was spent examining ways humans 'dress' their bodies, in terms of the transplanted organs and ubiquitous viral agents that inhabit our interior. This study of the exterior of our living corpus is an extension of my earlier work.

"The mixed cultures, religions and hybrid dress forms that arose in colonial Ceylon (Sri Lanka) left a rich legacy of multicultural and multiethnic influences in a population already diverse in class and caste. The written word empowered or oppressed the selection of dress in every walk of life, which is why I have chosen the book as a primary source of design for my sari.

"I focused on an ancient ola (palm) leaf manuscript from Sri Lanka, held at the V&A Museum. I examined the textures, motifs and embellishments to create repeat patterns. I also selected some works from my own library to blur the boundaries between the occident and the orient and incorporate elements of book design and structure – stitched spines, shredded strips of paper and irregularly torn motifs."

Sumi Perera first came to the UK in the 60s went back to Sri Lanka and revisited the UK in the 70s and has been living here permanently since the 80s

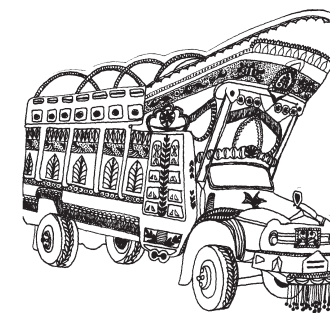
4 A NOTTING HILL CARNIVAL SARI

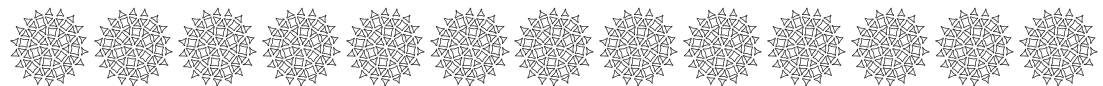
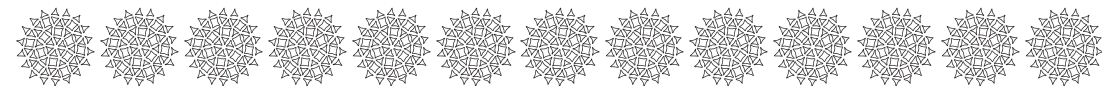
"My sari is about issues central to my work. For a long time, I have been looking at my local community, Southall, for inspiration as well as at the Notting Hill carnival and homelessness. My aim is to portray all these communities in a positive light.

"For this design, I took several images from the carnival which I attend every year and, with the help of an overhead projector, manipulated them to create the effect I wanted.

"The aim of my work is to transform 'the man on the street' into high art."

Shema Ladva was born in London in 1970. She studied Illustration at the University of Westminster, London





BRAND NEW BRITISH ASIAN SARIS

Sari patterns traditionally come from India and the subcontinent. Motifs in the past have reflected life there, such as peacocks, elephants and unfurling palm fronds. But the British Sari Story national competition sought out something new: patterns that reflected the vibrancy of British Asian life today. People across the UK entered designs ranging from seaside scenes to cup cakes and the Yorkshire weather.

Ten winners were short listed and their patterns printed on to new saris by the Knowledge Dock Fabric, Print & Design Bureau at the University of East London. For descriptions of their saris, see below. The overall winner of the competition was Nilesh Mistry, with his 'Sari for Harrow.'

1 A SCOTTISH SARI

"As a Pakistani Asian born and raised in Dunfermline, I have always believed that I have a fine balance of both cultures and I aimed to recreate this in my sari design. I feel in touch with my Pakistani roots and proud to be British at the same time.

"I used drawings from my last trip to Pakistan of an highly decorated lorry and a rickshaw which are considered to be 'TP' which means "typical Pakistani". And the tea set? Well, what family visit is complete without a cup of chai! For the pallau (wide end border) pattern I looked at damask linens, as Dunfermline once produced fine, hand woven linens.

"I didn't want to create something with an obviously Scottish influence such as tartan, Dunfermline Abbey or the Forth Railway Bridge. Instead, I mixed the traditional with the modern, which I believe is a true reflection of myself and of many Asians in Dunfermline who have Pakistani roots but, like me, were raised in Bonnie Scotland!"

Rahiet Ashfaq was born in Scotland in 1985. She is a textile design student at Edinburgh College of Art

2 MY INDIAN SUMMER SARI

"The inspiration for an 'Indian summer' sari came to me after a walk along Ealing Road in Wembley. We know that summer has arrived once we see the mango sellers' pitches on the pavement with their big, brightly coloured umbrellas and stacks of mango boxes. Summer is here, and out come the mangoes. Every Asian household will have a box of 'keri' (mango) at some point during the summer.

"As a designer, I'm immensely inspired by different cultures. My designs are built around this, taking bits and pieces from everyone."

Shilpa Rajan works as a freelance clothing designer. Born in Canada to Indian parents, she and her family moved to the UK in 1998

9 A SARI FROM BANGLADESH

The bold geometric patterns, with triangles, lamps, diagonals and gentle curves, are typical of jamdanis from Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. When draped, it has a striking, regal appearance but remains modern and youthful. Jamdanis are usually party wear and can be hard to find as they are relatively expensive and the weaving is very specialised.

This region has been famous for centuries for its fabric and textiles, including its gorgeous saris. Weavers traditionally used flowers and plants to dye their yarn before putting it on the loom, although contemporary weavers prefer chemical dyes. Jamdani designs often feature traditional flowers, creepers, animals, peacocks and other birds, usually alongside a quirky geometric pattern in subtly matched colours.

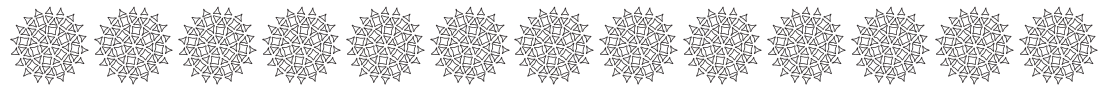
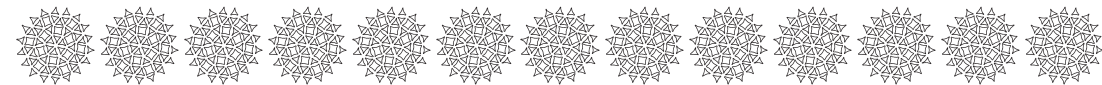
Sourced by Amita Nijhawan for Bridging Arts

10 A SARI FROM ORISSA

Orissa is a state on the east coast of India, dotted with fishing communities. This sari's rich brocade gold end border (pallau) has a tapestry of small turtle and fish pairs woven symmetrically in two thick lines. The bulbous gold twirls woven around intricate flowers and geometric shapes are reminiscent of the traditional art of *rangoli*, known as *osa* in Orissa, when women use coloured powder to create intricate patterns on the floor of the house or patio. These patterns are designed to welcome guests, ward off bad luck and create a sense of home.

This sari is an example of Ikat weaving, which involves tie dying bundles of threads before weaving. Ikat weaving is highly skilled and produces unique, feather-edged patterns like the green motifs on the white body of this sari.

Loaned by Sona Rupa Ltd, Leicester





11 A SARI FROM PAKISTAN

This sari was bought in Lahore, Pakistan, by Fozia Parveen-Sheikh. Fozia, originally from the West Midlands, had travelled to Pakistan to visit family before her wedding in May, 2002. At the age of 29, she had been introduced to a London-born Pakistani the previous September, a meeting that sparked a whirlwind courtship. She had never imagined that she would be involved in an arranged marriage. But her mother and neighbours had introduced her to her future husband at her home.

“He came round with his mum. It was all quite formal, but within the first week I knew that I wanted to marry him. It was the best thing that ever happened to me and love grew after we married.”

She travelled to Lahore to buy her wedding trousseau. She chose this sari for the parties and family festivals she thought she would attend after her marriage. Usually, Fozia wears the salwar kameez, more traditionally worn by Pakistani women. “It was part of thinking of myself as a wife, attending more functions. I thought it would be nice to wear something like this.”

Loaned by Fozia Parveen-Sheikh

12 A SARI FOR A SPECIAL OCCASION OR FESTIVAL

This sari takes its name from Kanchipuram, a small town in Tamil Nadu, which is famous for its luxurious saris, ornate temples and historical importance in Sanskrit education. Kanchipuram is known as ‘Silk City’, with thousands of families involved for generations in weaving saris from pure mulberry silk.

The peacocks on this sari are national emblems. Traditionally in India, when a peacock spreads its feathers, it is taken to be a sign of imminent rain. In an agricultural country, for many people this means relief from drought as well as fertility and abundance for farmers desperately waiting for the clouds to burst. This motif can symbolise that a joyful hour is near. Friends and relatives of the bride and groom might wear this sari to weddings. It might also be worn to temple on a religious festival such as Diwali.

Loaned by Sari UK Ltd

13 A PARSI SARI

This is a Parsi sari, known as a Gara.

The Parsis, followers of Prophet Zarathushtra, left Iran twelve hundred years ago and settled on the west coast of India at a place they named Sanjan. In the 18th and 19th centuries, many Parsi families became highly successful merchants and businessmen, particularly those involved in trade with China. They commissioned Chinese and Indian craftspeople to create opulent and dazzling garments for their wives and women in their families.

Gara patterns traditionally portray birds, flowers and fauna, street scenes of the Orient or popular geometric patterns. This Gara may represent a young Indian girl’s efforts for her own wedding trousseau, as she painstakingly recreates the patterns brought back from China. The embroidery is hand done with such care that it is almost impossible to distinguish between the front and the reverse of the work.

It is carefully embroidered on original Chinese silk of bamboo weave shot through with delicate ridges. The peacocks and cranes symbolise a long and prosperous life.

Loaned by Shernaz Engineer, Verity Recruitment Group Ltd

