

Sound Walk Script — Yukti V. Agarwal — April 4, 2024

Object 1: Patan Patola Sari

This patola is a highly pixelated grid of a digital image.

Its stylized graphic quality resembles the continuous pattern of striations seen on a cross-section of red granite or the subtle rays of sunlight that sharply pass through a clear body of water.

The field of undulating deep reds and cool blues, punctuated by a texture akin to the granular interior of an ivory tusk—exposed only by the gentle carvings along its length.

The symphony of colors on this fabric resembles a distant view of a mathematically precise mosaiced surface or a smudged and scratched aquarelle painting.

And the fabric wraps softly in a forgiving embrace when draped on the body. With each pleat of the sari, there is a distortion that creates an undistinguishable mass of vibrance activated by movement.

A movement that sounds like a threaded symphony with a four-piece orchestra.

It resembles the resonating sound of the ghatam played in alternating succession—or the whispering rustle of the subterranean.

It is water trickling down step wells, the reverberating hum of the temple bell, and the chants of the pandit within the open architecture of India's stone temples.

It is the distant call of a street vendor masked by chatter in a bustling town.

Its touch appears as if it is ridged like the surface of intricately carved wood—but rather, it is the smooth, polished surface of matte ceramics.

It is watery to the touch, and it slips between the fingers.

It feels like a hazy fog—with only a mere illusion of its existence, with lingering floral and earthy aromas.

It is the smell of morning dew that carpets, each blade of grass in fresh soil, and wet brick and damp stone walls.

It is the musty whiff of the white bark of kala kikar after the first rain and the golden shower of amaltas after a storm.

It is the punchy fragrance of hand-squeezed ber sherbet in the arid north and the thorny gum sap of babul.

It is raw turmeric and dried pomegranate peels.

It has the rich and spicy taste of Biryani, with its aromatic rice, tender vegetables, and blended spices.

It is vibrant and sweet like Aamras and Puri, the sweet mango pulp and soft and greasy bread

It is the textured and earthy taste of Dhokla with Chutney with its spongy feel and tangy tamarind aftertaste.

Object 2: Bandhani Odhani

Invisible drawstring run through this bandhani—a mere whisper of the thread that once synched every inch of this fabric. This bandhani embodies a paradox—of appearing dangerous and thorny as a mere facade to conceal its inherent delicacy—almost like a bougainvillea bush.

It is soft in its mountainous terrain. It is pointy and pokey but in its gentleness. It is almost speckled in texture. It is the splatter of paint or a collection of ink blots on an undulating surface—as if the technique of *chintz* were to be applied to the fleeting rumbles of a summer breeze.

This bandhani is the deep gurgle of a dye bath—the striking smack of drenched fabric on a stone surface, and the sound of a silver wind chime shifted by the faintest breeze at dawn.

It is the echo of a distant sound reverberating in an enclosed cave.

It is the faraway music of the bansuriwala (flute seller) on a winter Sunday morning, the staccato harmonium played by a novice, and the high-pitched sa-re-ga-ma of a trained classical singer in a backway alley.

It has a sense of non-existence in its being. It is like a breeze when you run your fingers through the fabric. It doesn't really exist beyond a ghost touch that disappears quickly. Yet, it is the topographical map of ant hills under calloused hands. Or terraneous medallions on old, saggy skin. It feels like lychee skin on a powdery matte satin that dissolves when rubbed between the fingers.

The echo of synched yarn is synesthetic—both visual and tactile. It leaves the remnant of a refreshing, cooling chill—a lingering kiss from a long-lost lover.

This bandhani smells like wet earth but in a crisp way. It smells like the first day of summer that is inaugurated by rain. There are hints of jasmine and rose, peppered with a whiff of cardamom. There is a clean earthiness to the scent, mixed with rich, smoky incense that momentarily inundates spaces of ritual and warm community gatherings.

It is silky and yet crunchy like jalebi. It is a slice of watermelon on a sultry summer day. Or light, airy cotton candy and softie ice-creams at a mela.

It is like surti undhiyu, with its mix of fresh vegetables, fenugreek dumplings, and subtle spices.

It has the refined sweetness of Mohanthal, with its fluffy mix of flour and ghee leaving a velvet aftertaste as it melts in your mouth.

The taste unfolds like a combination of honeyed nectar and the essence of blooming flowers that leave you yearned for just a bit more.

Object 3: Bagh Phulkari

This phulkari shawl is an embroidered kaleidoscope with its patchworked surface, where each thread is a brushstroke on a raw canvas.

The colors are fireworks against a night sky; the flames of a bonfire that illuminate an eclipsed darkness.

It is an unruly, overgrown garden with swirling vines and blooming flowers—that somehow remain within the confines of the architectural quadrants of the Mughal charbagh.

This phulkari pulsates with the reverberating beats of the dhol—a traditional Punjabi drum—at a winter wedding.

It echoes the laughter of women gathered around a communal loom, their voices intertwining like the threads they weave.

It is the harmonious melody of folk songs sung under the starlit sky.

It whispers tales of love and longing that are carried by the gentle breeze rustling through mustard flower fields.

Its surface is like a soft summer breeze, over the freshly plowed earth—rich and fertile, promising abundance and prosperity.

The embroidery, intricate and delicate, is akin to tracing the lines of a beloved's face in the darkness.

It caresses the skin and leaves a velvety residue.

To be wrapped in this shawl's cocoon is to be held by the warmth of a mother's embrace at dusk.

This phulkari shawl carries the scent of Punjab's fertile soil after the first monsoon rains, earthy and rejuvenating.

It is the blooming jasmine flowers—their sweet fragrance mingling with the spicy notes of freshly ground masalas in the kitchen.

It is the smokey air filled with traces of homemade butter that emanate from the steaming hot parathas that sizzle on the tava.

It tastes like the sweetness of ripe mangoes, dripping down the chin on a scorching summer day—a burst of sunshine in each bite.

It's the warmth of freshly brewed chai, swirling with spices and served in clay cups along the side of the road.

It's the savory richness of butter chicken—the tender meat bathed in a creamy tomato gravy, served with fragrant basmati rice.

It's the comfort of dal makhani, simmered for hours with buttery, creamy lentils and aromatic spices.

Object 4: Gara Sari

The rich red silk of this gara sari resembles the dancing embers of the eternal flame that has burned for centuries in the sacred fire temple in Udvada.

And the cream satin-silk thread—the hallowed halls of the agiary.

From the perched songbirds amidst gnarled trees, to lotus flowers blooming in vibrant hues, the intricate patterns are a tapestry of community heritage.

The drape—evoking images of the oceans the Zoroastrians crossed to escape their Persian persecutors.

This gara is the melodic, rhythmed chants of priests echoing through the halls of the agiary.

It is the soft murmur of prayers and the distant clang of metal vessels and the lively chatter of bustling Irani cafes.

It is both—Mumbai's Bhendi Bazaar, filled with the calls of street vendors and the melodic strains of traditional Gujarati folk songs.

It is scattered with traces of chirping songbirds and the gentle rustling of leaves in the breeze.

The silk satin is a feeling of the comforting embrace of a Parsi grandmother's hug.

The embroidery is the delicate pattern of a Parsi rangoli at the threshold of a home.

All together, it is the feeling of a gentle breeze grazing your face as you make your way through the crowded, narrow lanes of old Bombay in early winter.

Yet—it is the scent of jasmine and rose, mingled with the earthy fragrance of natural woods in a lush garden with many groves, where the air is heavy with a natural floral perfume.

It is the sweet fragrance of rosewater and cardamom punctuates the heaviness.

There are notes of cumin, coriander, and saffron that mingle with the subtle scent of sandalwood incense arising from nearby kitchens.

It is the lingering scent of Parsi chai and freshly baked bun maska, buttered bread, wafts on lazy afternoons.

It has hints of tangy vinegar and sweet jaggery.

And it is hearty like dhansak, a stew made with lentils, vegetables, and meat.

And warm and steamy like patra ni machi, fish filets marinated in a flavorful coconut and herb paste, wrapped in banana leaves.

It has flavors that linger on the tongue like the spice from the scrambled eggs in freshly prepared akuri, or the tang of the tomatoes in the tender lamb of sali boti.