

# Sri Lankan Traditional Motifs in Contemporary Interior Surface Design: Adaptation and Perception

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**Abstract**— This research explores the integration of Sri Lankan traditional motifs in contemporary interior surface design, investigating their adaptation, perception, and transformative potential. These motifs, derived from divine, animal, vegetable, and inorganic themes, are deeply rooted in Sri Lanka's cultural heritage, reflecting the country's artistic legacy and historical identity. With the growing interest in preserving cultural traditions amidst modernity, this study examines how these motifs are utilized to balance heritage preservation with contemporary design innovation. The research focuses on three distinct contexts: Number 11 (Geoffrey Bawa's residence), Cinnamon Bentota Beach Hotel, and Spa Ceylon boutiques. Each represents unique approaches to incorporating traditional motifs within residential, industrial, and commercial interior settings, respectively.

Using a qualitative methodology, the study draws on interviews, observations, and archival research to explore the interplay between traditional motifs and contemporary design principles. The selected motifs, such as the sunburst, lotus flower, peacock, and other symbolic patterns, are analyzed for their cultural relevance, aesthetic appeal, and functional adaptability. Designers' perceptions and adaptation techniques are central to understanding how these motifs are transformed to meet the demands of modern interiors while maintaining their historical essence.

The findings highlight that these motifs serve as more than decorative elements; they embody cultural identity, historical continuity, and artistic expression. In Number 11, the motifs seamlessly blend with the modern architectural elements of Geoffrey Bawa's residence, showcasing an elegant integration of heritage and innovation. These motifs are tailored to the context of the space, such as carvings, fabrics, and wall art, ensuring their relevance and visual harmony. Similarly, Cinnamon Bentota Beach Hotel adapts traditional motifs through artistic reinterpretations in sculptures, murals, and textured artworks. The incorporation of these designs fosters a sense of cultural identity while catering to the aesthetic preferences of a global audience.

In contrast, Spa Ceylon boutiques use traditional motifs to reinforce their brand identity, showcasing Sri Lankan cultural heritage within a global market. By employing digital design techniques and advanced production methods, Spa Ceylon transforms traditional motifs into modern decorative elements. Their use of vibrant colors and stylized patterns, often inspired by ancient temple paintings,

*aligns with their commercial objectives while preserving cultural authenticity. These adaptations emphasize the versatility and resilience of traditional motifs in addressing diverse design requirements.*

*The study also identifies critical themes shaping the adaptation of traditional motifs, including cultural storytelling, preservation of heritage, and marketability. Designers perceive these motifs as carriers of historical significance, embedding them with narratives that resonate with contemporary audiences. This interplay between tradition and modernity highlights the potential of motifs to create spaces that are culturally meaningful and aesthetically captivating. The use of these motifs extends beyond interior design, fostering a deeper connection between Sri Lankan cultural identity and the global design landscape.*

*However, the research acknowledges challenges in adapting traditional motifs, such as limited access to resources, maintaining cultural authenticity, and balancing heritage with modern functionality. These challenges underscore the need for innovative approaches that preserve the intrinsic value of motifs while adapting them to contemporary demands. The study emphasizes the importance of technological advancements, creative interpretations, and cross-disciplinary collaborations in enhancing the adaptability and relevance of traditional motifs in modern design contexts.*

*In conclusion, the integration of Sri Lankan traditional motifs in contemporary interior surface design represents a dynamic narrative of heritage preservation, artistic evolution, and cultural storytelling. Through the meticulous adaptation of these motifs, designers contribute to a unique blend of tradition and modernity that shapes the cultural identity of Sri Lanka. The findings highlight the enduring relevance of traditional motifs in creating spaces that are not only visually appealing but also deeply rooted in cultural essence. By bridging the past and present, this research underscores the transformative potential of traditional motifs in shaping the future of interior design while preserving the beauty and significance of Sri Lanka's cultural heritage.*

**Keywords:** *Sri Lankan traditional motifs, modern adaptation, perception, contemporary interior design*



Fig.1 - Traditional motifs adapted in Number 11, Geoffrey Bawa's residence

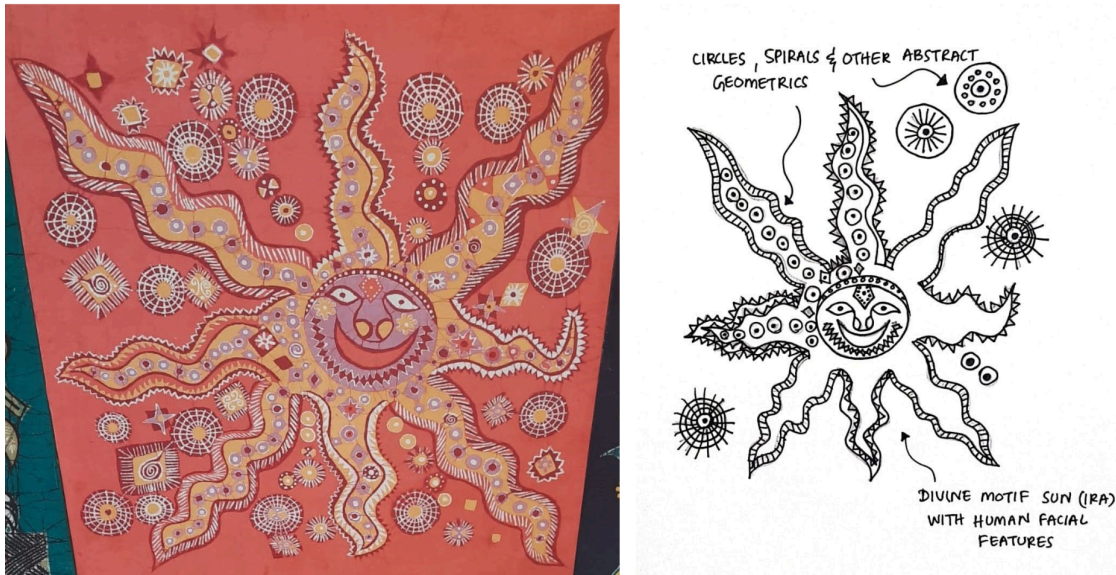


Fig.2 - Traditional motifs adapted in Artworks and interior elements at Cinnamon Bentota Beach Hotel

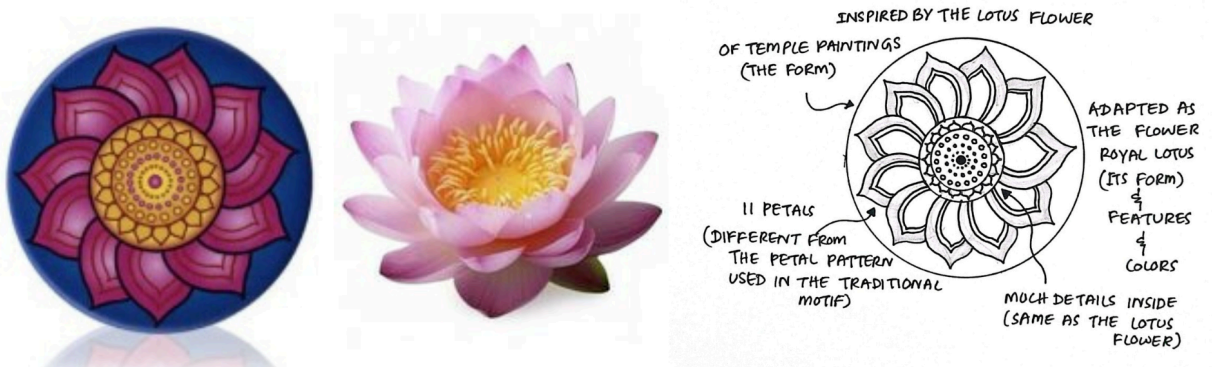


Fig.3 - Traditional motifs Floral (lotus) motifs adapted in Artworks and interior elements at in Spa Ceylon boutiques

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