

How Do Indian Motifs Translate into Luxury Interiors?

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Abstract

What actually makes an interior feel luxurious, the cost of its materials, the intricacy of its detailing, or the story it tells? This research leans toward the third, and uses Indian motifs to test the idea. Drawn from textiles, architecture, craft, nature, and folk art, Indian motifs carry centuries of accumulated meaning and it is that inherited depth, more than surface ornament, that can give a luxury interior a sense of weight. But using them well is trickier than it looks. Handled carelessly, a motif can tip a space into feeling overly traditional, merely decorative, or strangely unmoored from what the space is actually for. This study explores how Indian motifs can be worked into luxury interiors across pattern, textile, furniture, wall surfaces, flooring, screens, accessories, and craftsmanship without falling into that trap. It takes a qualitative approach, combining a literature review, visual analysis, case study and close study of selected luxury interiors alongside Indian craft traditions, to understand how scale, repetition, colour, material, detailing, and craftsmanship shape whether a motif reads as considered or simply excessive. The picture that emerges is that luxury rarely comes from adding more. It tends to come from doing less, but doing it precisely: a motif enlarged instead of crowded, simplified instead of over-ornamented, translated into material rather than copied outright. Used this way, Indian motifs do not compete with luxury but deepen it, letting a space carry heritage, craftsmanship, symbolism, and elegance at once, without losing its own sense of purpose.

Keywords: Craftsmanship, Heritage, Luxury Interiors, Motifs, Traditional

1. Introduction

Indian motifs contribute to the perception of luxury not simply through ornament, but through the combination of cultural meaning, craftsmanship, material richness, controlled scale, spatial placement and contemporary reinterpretation. Each carries its own story, sometimes tied to a region, sometimes to religion or spirituality, sometimes simply to a craft tradition passed down through generations. A motif is the most basic unit or the smallest unit of pattern. Luxury interiors are built on exclusivity, fine craftsmanship, expensive materials, and a strong sense of who the space belongs to. So, what happens when you put Indian motifs into that kind of space? Old symbols end up getting reworked, given better materials, more thoughtful placement, a kind of elevation, without losing what made them culturally significant in the first place. That combination is what gives certain luxury interiors their distinct identity. The richness isn't just about spending more; it comes

from the heritage and craftsmanship woven into the design itself. That's what this paper sets out to explore: how this blending actually happens, the design choices behind it, and what it means both for Indian design traditions and for the global luxury market.

1.1.Aim

To investigate how Indian motifs can be reinterpreted and integrated into contemporary luxury interiors through scale, materiality, craftsmanship, colour and spatial application while retaining their cultural identity.

1.2.Objective

This study aims to identify and examine Indian motifs derived from textiles, architecture, craft, nature, and folk art, along with their underlying cultural significance. It further seeks to study selected luxury interiors and Indian craft traditions in order to identify successful approaches to motif translation.

The study also analyses the influence of scale, repetition, colour, material, detailing, and craftsmanship on the perception of luxury within these interior spaces. As shown in Figure 1 Source: Author, ChatGPT (OpenAI).

1.3. Research Methodology



Figure 1 Source: Author, ChatGPT (OpenAI)

1.4. Need of Study

Nowadays, the interior industry is developing in many types and styles. Creatives of our country, especially interior designers, are looking for ways to preserve national culture in the interior and exterior of buildings. Currently, in all forms of art, the artistic heritage is developing in harmony with the modern trend. Therefore, it is important to study how Indian motifs can be interpreted and incorporated into luxury interiors in harmony with modern design trends[1 – 10].

1.5. Scope and Limitations

Scope: Develops a comparative framework to examine how the same or similar motif can produce different spatial effects when applied to walls, furniture, textiles, screens, windows and architectural surfaces.

Limitations: The study is focused on selected motifs and their application within contemporary luxury interiors. It does not attempt to represent the full diversity of Indian craft and cultural traditions. The qualitative nature of the research also means that perceptions of luxury and aesthetics may vary. Despite these limitations, the study provides a focused understanding of how heritage can be translated into contemporary interior design through thoughtful restraint and craftsmanship.

2. Research Gap

Existing literature extensively documents Indian motifs, crafts, textiles, and architectural elements, but largely treats these as isolated domains rather than as an integrated design language within contemporary luxury interiors. Limited attention has been paid to how cultural meaning interacts with contemporary parameters such as scale, materiality, restraint, and spatial placement. This study addresses that gap by examining not only which motifs are used, but how they are transformed and applied in shaping perceived luxury.

2.1. Research Question

How can Indian motifs be translated into contemporary luxury interiors without losing their cultural identity, while maintaining visual restraint, material richness and spatial sophistication?

3. The New Language of Heritage: Translating Indian Motifs

3.1. From Heritage Element to Spatial Expression

Traditional Indian elements such as jali and Pichwai demonstrate how heritage can move beyond its original architectural or religious context to become an important part of spatial expression. While jali transforms from a functional perforated screen into partitions, ceilings, furniture and light-filtering surfaces, Pichwai moves from a sacred temple backdrop to large-scale wall art that establishes the visual identity of a space. In both cases, the original cultural vocabulary is retained while its scale, placement and function are adapted to create a stronger spatial experience. The motif therefore shifts from being an individual decorative element to becoming a medium through which the character and atmosphere of the interior are defined[11]. As shown

in Figure 2 Transformation from traditional jali pattern to contemporary jali geometry Source: Author, ChatGPT (OpenAI).

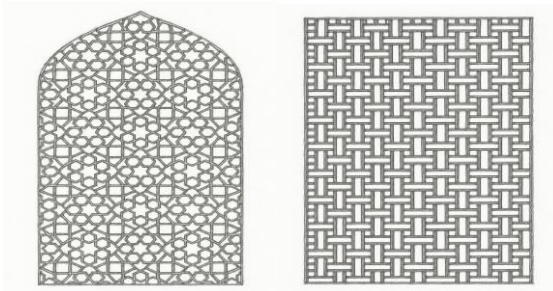


Figure 2 Transformation from traditional jali pattern to contemporary jali geometry
Source: Author, ChatGPT (OpenAI)

3.2.From Traditional Craft to Material & Surface Expression

Indian craft traditions such as inlay and textile weaving demonstrate how motifs can be translated through material and craftsmanship. Inlay motifs that were traditionally part of elaborate decorative surfaces can become the defining feature of a contemporary furniture piece, while textile patterns can move from garments and domestic fabrics to upholstery, headboards, wall panels and other spatial surfaces. In both applications, the motif is not reproduced merely as decoration; its scale, repetition, material and placement are reconsidered to suit the object or space. This transformation allows traditional craftsmanship to remain visible while giving the motif a new material and functional role. As shown in Figure 3 Translation of Indian motifs to furniture Source: Author, ChatGPT (OpenAI).

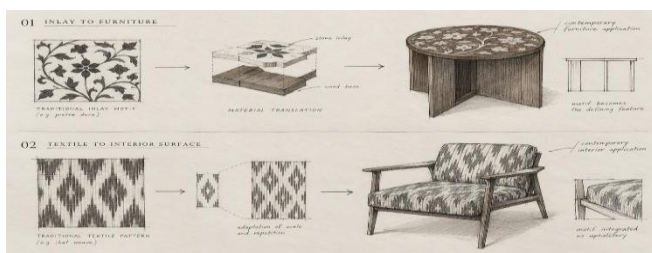


Figure 3 Translation of Indian motifs to furniture Source: Author, ChatGPT (OpenAI)

4. The Memory Behind the Motif

Traditional Indian motifs still show up in modern interiors because they mean more than just how they look. Retaining traditional motifs can also represent a psychological desire to connect progress with heritage. People often tend to retain traditional or old motifs in contemporary homes because of the sense of duty to preserve old traditions or heritage and the stories that these motifs hold from centuries of being passed down. During a field visit to Ranthambore, same floral motif was observed on local houses and shops, which residents associated with motifs carved in the Ranthambore Fort and traditionally believed to protect against the evil eye. The observation illustrates how a motif can move from historic architecture into everyday spaces while retaining the cultural meaning associated with it. Thus, the motif becomes more than decoration—it acts as a carrier of cultural memory, connecting contemporary living with heritage and traditions[12] As shown in Figure 4 Motif observed on local shops and houses in Ranthambore Source: Author, ChatGPT (OpenAI).

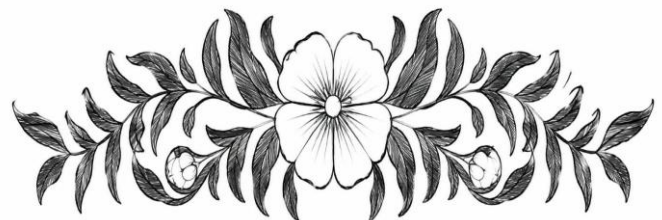


Figure 4 Motif observed on local shops and houses in Ranthambore Source: Author, ChatGPT (OpenAI)

5. Motif, Material and The Perception Of Luxury

5.1.Scale, Repetition and the Quiet Authority of a Motif

Pooley (2025) argues that luxury often comes from proportions that are exaggerated in a calm, controlled way, such as oversized artwork or tall drapery, and from the repetition of shapes and textures that lets the eye move without effort. Indian motifs work on a space in much the same way. A single oversized lotus

carved across a wall panel stop being a pattern and becomes a statement, while a small lotus repeated across a block-printed textile creates calm through rhythm rather than size. This makes me wonder whether luxury lies in how big a motif is or in how deliberately it is placed. I believe it is the placement: a floor-to-ceiling jaali screen in a hotel lobby gives drama and height, while the same geometry on a side table feels intimate and considered. Either way, the motif makes the space feel intentional. As shown in Figure 5 Floral motifs applied through scale and spatial placement Source: Author, ChatGPT (OpenAI).

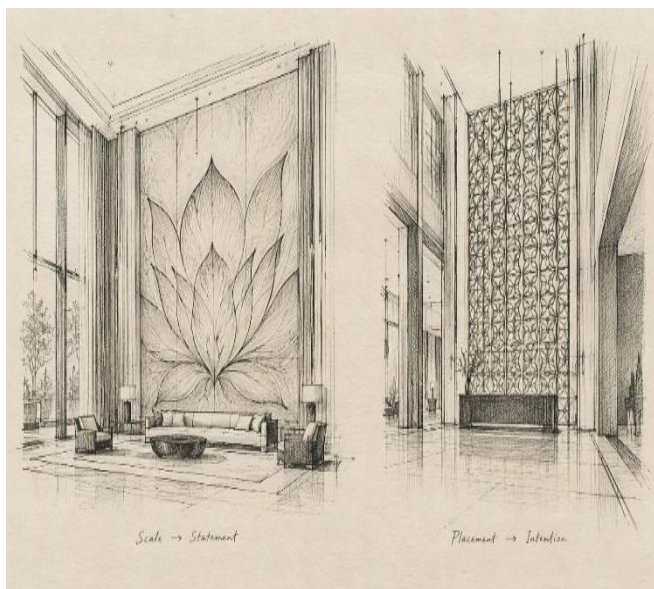


Figure 5 Floral motifs applied through scale and spatial placement Source: Author, ChatGPT (OpenAI)

5.2. Material as the Language Motifs Speak In

A motif is only as persuasive as the material that carries it. Pooley (2025) stresses that touch matters as much as sight, and that textures like velvet, marble, and polished metal shape our sense of quality even from a distance. Indian craft traditions show this well: zardozi in metallic thread on silk, brass inlay in dark wood, or a floral pattern cut into Makrana marble. In each, motif and material are inseparable, and that pairing turns cultural imagery into perceived luxury. But what happens when the same lotus is printed

cheaply on synthetic fabric? The shape survives, yet the sense of care disappears, which suggests luxury depends less on the motif itself than on how faithfully it is translated into material and on the visible presence of the maker's hand. Perhaps the real test for contemporary designers is not whether they use Indian motifs, but whether they honor the craft behind them. As shown in Figure 6 Motif translated through material — textile, marble inlay, inlaid furniture. Source: Khenshu, Anthropologie

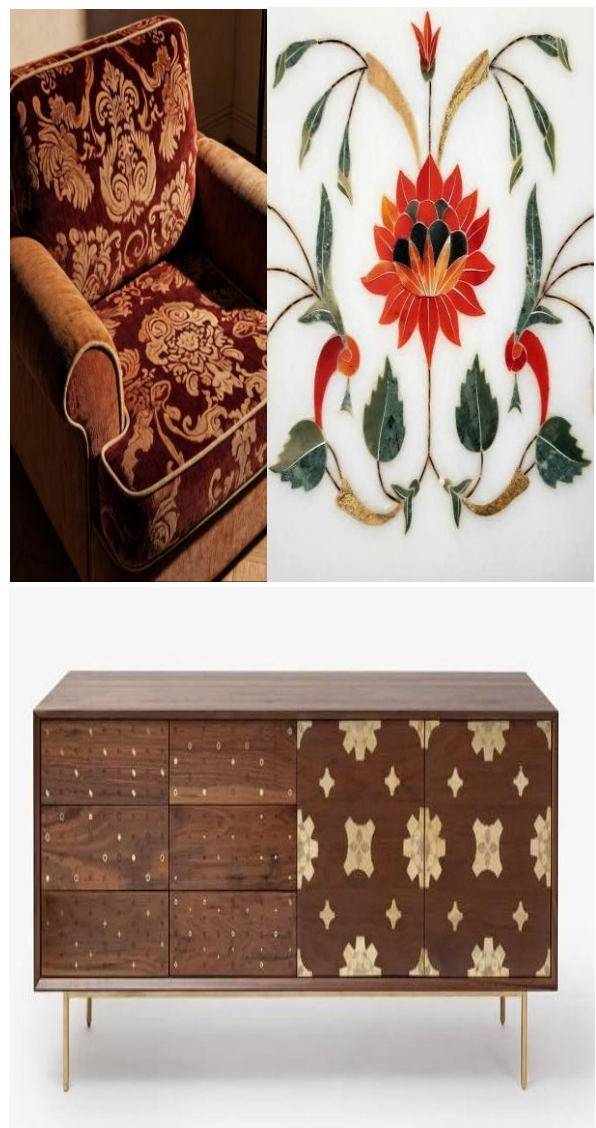


Figure 6 Motif translated through material — textile, marble inlay, inlaid furniture.

Source: Khenshu, Anthropologie

Table 1 Framework for Translating Indian Motifs into Contemporary Luxury Interiors

Parameter	Traditional → Contemporary	Effect on Luxury
Scale	Small / repeated → Enlarged / isolated	Creates visual confidence
Repetition	Dense → Controlled	Creates restraint
Colour	Multiple / saturated → Tonal / restricted	Creates sophistication
Material	Traditional craft material → Stone / brass / timber / metal / glass	Increases material depth
Form	Literal motif → Abstracted geometry	Creates contemporary identity
Placement	Multiple surfaces → One focal element	Creates hierarchy
Craftsmanship	Handcrafted → Visible precision / bespoke detailing	Communicates exclusivity
Lighting	Natural interaction → Integrated architectural lighting	Creates atmosphere
Context	Traditional setting → Contemporary architecture	Creates contrast
Meaning	Cultural / symbolic → Heritage + identity	Adds narrative value

6. Case Studies

6.1. Sterling Bagh

Sterling Bagh is a heritage-style resort in Ranthambore, Rajasthan, set in the shadow of Ranthambore Fort, one of India's oldest hill forts and notably one that was never conquered in battle. The property blends Rajput stone-carving traditions, folk Mandana wall art, and Mughal-miniature textile motifs into a cohesive luxury interior. Deep red feature walls carry freehand white Mandana work dense medallion roundels bordered by radiating petals, paired with sparse floral sprigs and stylized knot forms traditionally reserved for courtyard thresholds. Carved sandstone brackets and pillars echo temple corbel work, their acanthus scrolls terminating in closed-fist forms flanked by rosette medallions. This same rosette-and-lattice pattern reappears structurally on the staircase balustrade, tying architecture to ornament. At furniture level, cane-and-teak daybeds pair carved floral rosette blocks with indigo watercolour-floral upholstery, while wing chairs are dressed in toile-style panels of garden pavilions, peacocks, and deer a domesticated echo of Mughal bagh-e-hind miniature painting. Locally, several homes near the fort carry this identical rosette motif on their own facades; residents

hold that since the fort was never defeated, its motif carries protective power, and households replicated it hoping the same protection would extend to their homes. Sterling Bagh's repetition of the motif across its staircase and furnishings can be read as absorbing this protective lineage into the guest experience luxury borrowing not only beauty from vernacular design, but belief. Figure 7 shows Author and property motifs. As shown in Table 1 Framework for Translating Indian Motifs into Contemporary Luxury Interiors.

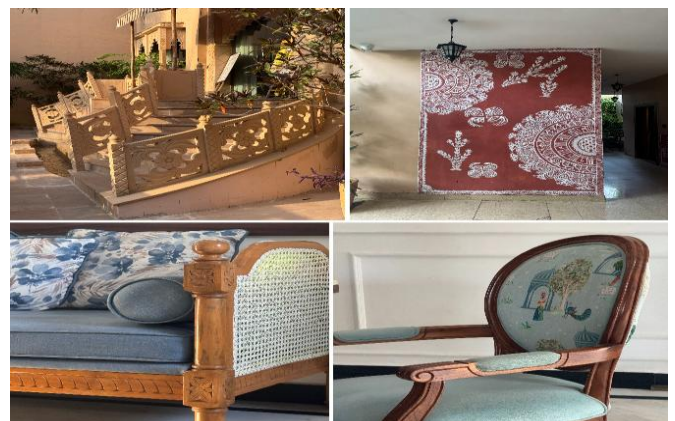


Figure 7 Sterling Bagh - Mandana art, carved brackets, rosette motifs. Source Author

6.2. Château Garli, Himachal Pradesh

Background: Château Garli is a 1921 mansion in Garli, Kangra district, historically a merchant settlement whose traders absorbed different regional aesthetics through their travels, which accounts for the house's mixed motifs. Built by timber merchant Lala Mela Ram Sud, it was restored by his descendants around 2012–13. A dedicated site visit was conducted to systematically observe the property's interiors. **Observations:** Close examination of the interior reveals that the Indian motifs function almost like a physical record of trade contact rather than a single decorative theme. Cream wall hangings and curtains carry black-and-multicoloured floral, vine, and tree-of-life embroidery consistent with Kashmiri crewel (sozni/ari) work. This is the single most repeated motif in the house, likely absorbed through trade with Kashmiri shawl and textile merchants. The bedspreads feature a distinctly different motif altogether: grid-patterned medallion florals close to Kutch or Rajasthani patchwork traditions, pointing toward contact further south. One vanity mirror's inlaid floral crest resembles Hoshiarpur-style Punjab woodwork, introducing a separate regional signature layered into the same house. Cusped Mughal-Rajput arches recur in doorways, wall niches, and window tracery, used to frame openings rather than form grand structural arcades. Concurrently, the timber-frame Pahari construction outside roots the house in its own Himalayan region. None of these motifs functions as isolated decoration. Walls stay plain throughout; ornament is selectively concentrated onto frames and edges—such as bed heads, mirror crests, cabinet pediments, window surrounds, and ceiling borders—while colour and pattern are carried almost entirely by textiles. Each room pairs its motifs with a matching stencil border and chandelier colour: blue in the dining hall, red in the parlour, and gold in the office. This is not accumulation for its own sake; it is a repeated design logic that organises several regional motifs into one coherent spatial system. As shown in Figure 8 crewel embroidery, medallion bedspreads, inlaid mirror Source: Author. Figure 9 Patwon Ki Haveli - carved jharokhas, floral ornamentation, mirror inlay Source: Author



Figure 8 crewel embroidery, medallion bedspreads, inlaid mirror
Source: Author

Discussion: This diversity is not accidental. Garli was built by merchant families whose trade connections ran across regions, and each community appears to have carried its own decorative vocabulary home rather than settling into one local style. Luxury here is constructed through that specificity: the value lies in several precise, identifiable regional crafts coexisting inside one house, not in a generalised "Indian" aesthetic. The motifs function as evidence of reach and taste, a merchant-class luxury built on breadth of contact, translated into lasting material form. **Conclusion:** Château Garli suggests Indian motifs become luxurious less through ornament than through specificity and provenance—each motif a trace of trade, held together by one shared design logic of plain walls and ornamented frames, rather than by a single dominant style.

6.3. Patwon Ki Haveli

Architectural Heritage: Patwon Ki Haveli in Jaisalmer stands as one of Rajasthan's most significant residential complexes, comprising five interconnected havelis commissioned by the merchant Guman Chand Patwa. Constructed primarily from Jaisalmer's distinctive golden sandstone, the complex embodies the depth and refinement of traditional Rajasthani craftsmanship. Its interiors bring together carved stonework, painted surfaces, mirror inlay, geometric ornamentation and elaborately worked arches into a single, cohesive

visual language. Core Motifs and Design Patterns: Floral and botanical ornamentation recurs throughout the haveli, with flowers, vines and foliage carved and painted across ceilings, walls, arches and borders. This repetition establishes a visual rhythm that unifies the disparate surfaces of the interior. In a contemporary luxury context, this vocabulary translates readily into carved wood panelling, embossed wall treatments, CNC-cut screens and decorative mouldings. Ornamental arches and jharokhas form the architectural backbone of the complex. Cusped and scalloped arches, together with intricately carved jharokhas (projecting balconies), serve a dual function: they divide space while simultaneously framing it decoratively. This principle finds contemporary expression in feature doorways, niches, headboards and display frames that borrow the arch's dual spatial-and-decorative role. Frescoes and narrative art are integrated directly into the architectural fabric rather than applied as separate ornamentation. Painted panels depict traditional figures, courtly scenes and floral compositions, embedding storytelling into the building itself. This approach informs contemporary practices such as bespoke murals, miniature-inspired artwork and decorative wall panels designed as integral, rather than additive, elements of a space. Mirror work is woven into the haveli's geometric and floral compositions at a small, intricate scale. The resulting play of reflection introduces light and depth, lending the interiors a layered richness that shifts with the viewer's movement through the space. This translates into mirror mosaics, accent walls, and mirrored detailing on furniture and ceilings in contemporary luxury design. Geometric and jali patterns complement the haveli's organic floral motifs, introducing a repetitive, lattice-based counterpoint. These patterns find modern application in partitions, decorative screens, cabinet shutters and headboards, where controlled repetition creates visual structure. Colour and material work together to anchor the overall palette: golden sandstone provides the architectural base, set against accents of deep blue, red, ochre, cream and gold. This interplay of natural material and saturated colour is central to the haveli's visual richness.

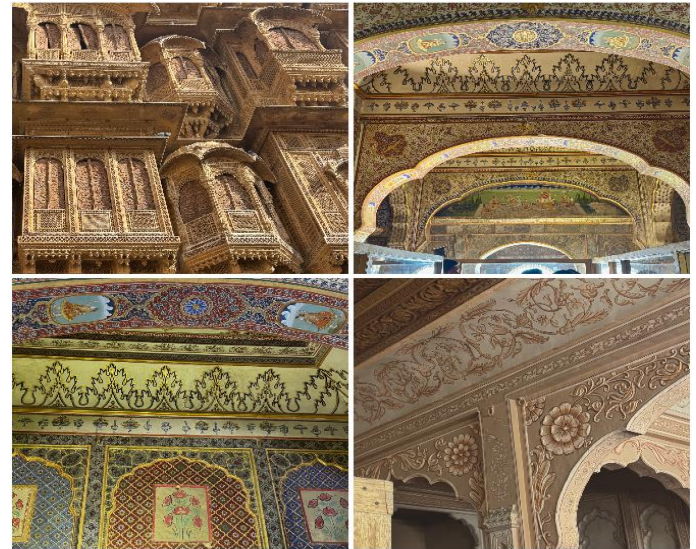


Figure 9 Patwon Ki Haveli - carved jharokhas, floral ornamentation, mirror inlay

Source: Author

Key Findings: The case of Patwon Ki Haveli demonstrates that Indian architectural motifs generate a sense of luxury not through ornament alone, but through craftsmanship, repetition, layering, material richness and cultural storytelling working in concert. Crucially, these motifs are not applied as decoration after the fact — they are structurally and spatially integrated into the architecture itself, producing an interior experience that is immersive, detailed and inseparable from the building's form.

Conclusion

Indian motifs feel luxurious through careful scale, placement, and craftsmanship, not excessive ornamentation, as seen in Sterling Bagh, Château Garli, and Patwon Ki Haveli. Understanding their origins and using them selectively helps create authentic, contemporary spaces where heritage and modern needs coexist.

Recommendation

- [1]. Scale & Repetition — Enlarge or isolate motifs rather than repeating them densely; restraint reads as luxury, density reads as decoration.
- [2]. Material & Craftsmanship — Translate motifs through material and technique, not literal reproduction, keeping craftsmanship visible.

- [3]. Colour & Detailing — Keep the palette restrained so colour supports the motif rather than competing with it.
- [4]. Spatial Integration — Apply motifs structurally (screens, arches, headboards) so they function within the space, not sit on top of it.

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