

Design Resource

Zari Zardozi - Varanasi

Golden Embroidery

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Rakshitha

NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/zari-zardozi-varanasi>

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Introduction

Zari Zardozi is the most luxurious form of embroidery in India. Zardozi is a word that is derived from two Persian words which means 'Zar' is gold and 'Dozi' stands for embroidery. From ancient times country is known for the use of golden embroidery on a various objects like sunshades, equestrian decorations and furnishings but specially the court costumes and the accessories like shoes were immensely aesthetically evolved with Zardozi embroideries. The craftspeople who worked on this elaborate version of gold and silver wire work setting them along with seed pearls and precious stones on silk, brocade and velvet fabric were called as zardoz workers. Nowadays Zardozi embroidery is done with coiled metal wire or a wire of plastic core that is colored golden outside that are more pocket friendly and lighter to wear.

History states that the magnificent craft of zardozi embroidery is brought to India in 12th century by Delhi's first sultanate of Turko-Afghan. In later days it became equally popular among wealthy Hindus, Muslims and European elite. But due to its high cost and lack of precious metals the art declined by the end of Mughal era. Then in later days by twentieth century the art was again revived. Today like every other stuff zarizardozi work is also limited to be made out of copper and brass wires that lasts longer and are sold much cheaper cost in the market. So now there are several families in Varanasi that have revived this old craft and are supplying the exquisite zari embroidery bridal outfits, salwar kameezes to boutiques and Sherwanis to famous shops all around the country. Zardozi embroidery is also collectively combined with Dabka work which is a spring type of thread that is originally said to be from Lucknow. Zari works also uses katori, tikena and sequins to create most fascinating designs.

There are two types of embroideries. One is the lighter work and the other is the heavier work. Zardozi is the heavier type whereas the Kamdani is the lighter type. In zardozi embroidery the stitches are very close to each other and are very elaborately made and they are prepared with the use of budla which are the thin strips of metal. And Kamdani is the lighter type of embroidery which is used on the finer fabrics and which is less elaborate and simple kind. There are also many types of zari threads. The thicker one is called Kalabatune that is braided with gold thread and used to stitch in the borders whereas the thinner variety is used at the thinner edges for batwas, tassels, necklace strings.

As a tradition initially it was only men who did the zardozi work but in later days women were nearly 10-15 percent out of thousands of the zarizardozi workers in the country. When the Persian invaders introduced this craft to India, the motifs and colors were completely of Persian flair. This kind of zardozi work were of three types.

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1. The fabric stitched to produce novel patterns and colors, such as Baloch's Souzan-douzi, Rasht's Qollab-douzi and Kerman's Pate-douzi.
2. Basic fabric stitched with less dense work in which the craftsmen crossed the strings throughout the yarns that are crosswise woven for the fabric and stitched them to one another to form a patterned frame/lattice like sekke-douzi or gollabdouzi.
3. Various patterns were stitched on the basic fabric with gold and silver strings to make it an intricate zardozi patterns.
4. The main preliminary designs that were used for zardozi works are influenced by nature motifs consisting of leaf designs and elaborate floral patterns. Peacock motifs were immensely used and considered as auspicious. But over the years the local craftspeople filled in their own receptivity and prepared new designs which were the fusion of Persian, Mughal and Indian styles. Since then the patterns have evolved from traditional Persian motifs to geometrical forms/motifs which are the primary focus of zardozi work today, along with the flower, petals, leaf designs are also still appreciated for its traditional appeal.

These days before tracing the design on fabric, the motifs are selected considering the level of intricacy desired and weight of the final garment required as the zari along with the sequins and beads makes the fabric extremely heavy. The other way of keeping the zardozi work in garments is to keep the attire simple but with heavy embroidered border in floral motifs. As zardozi work is majorly used on the wedding attire the colors used are bright red, maroon, turquoise, mauve, royal blue, pink and bottle green for more magnificent look for marriage ceremony.

Some of the places in which zarizardozi embroidery is the main work in India are Lucknow, Bhopal, Hyderabad, Delhi, Agra, Kashmir, Mumbai, Ajmer, Varanasi, Farrukhabad and Chennai. But on the whole the opulent Mughal influence differs instantly from all the present day influences of the region on the zarizardozi work. Lucknow zardozi work are more ornate and has a three dimensional motifs which is similar to Delhi motifs. Whereas Agra and Hyderabad are limited to their minimalistic simple patterns with large motifs and Chennai is the influence of regional Tamil zardozi motifs.

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Artisan displaying the zari work done on handbag.



Beautiful Zari Zardozi embroidery.

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The overview of the shop in which zari words are made and sold.



Artisan decorating the saree with Zari work.



A badge that is neatly made of zari embroidery on the fabric.

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Tools and Raw Materials

Following are the tools and raw materials required for zardozi embroidery:

- **Reel of Thread:** It is the basic material to make zari zardozi embroidery.
- **Needle:** The tool that helps in attaching the beads, precious stones to the fabric and supports the artisan to create intricate zardozi embroidery.
- **Bobbin:** It is a spindle to which the thread is wound and used in the sewing machine for the stitching or embroidery process.
- **Pirn:** The big wooden pirn used in spinning the thread.
- **Scissor:** It is used for cutting the extra fabric and thread.
- **Beads:** It is used for decorating the material in zari zardozi embroidery.
- **Tracing Sheet:** It is used for tracing the design on the fabric/material.
- **Metal Holder:** It is used for pulling out the thread that passes above and below the fabric while making embroidery.



Thread reel that is used for zari zardozi embroidery.



Tiny beads are used for decorating the zari work.

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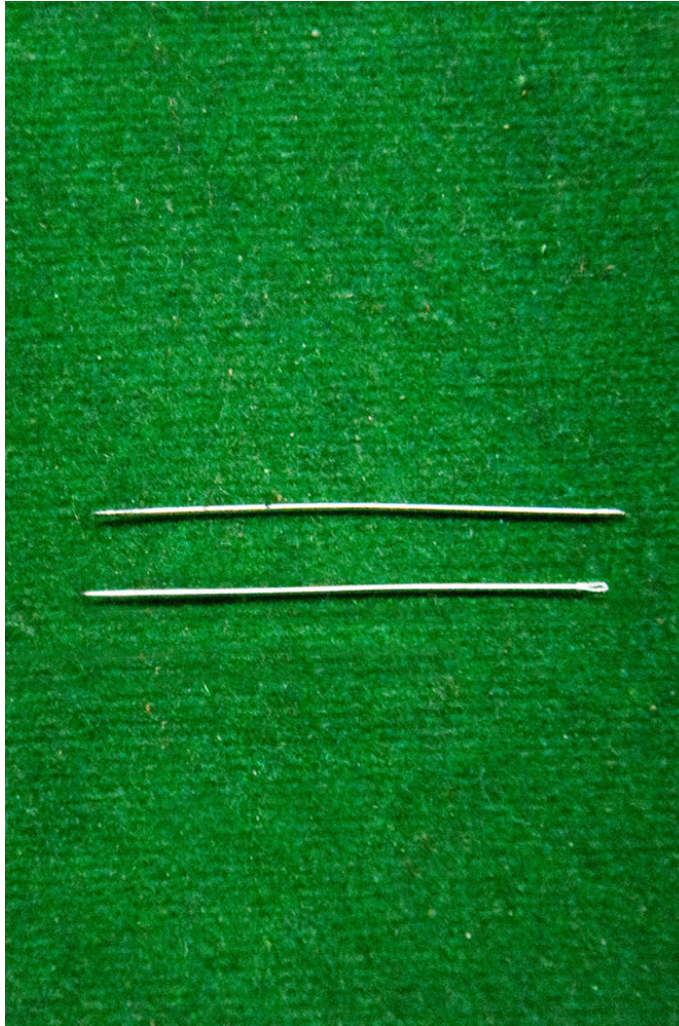
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Needle is used for embroidery.



Scissor is used for cutting the extras of the thread.

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Unique style of needle that is used for attaching the beads to the zari work.



Reel of thread.



Bobbin spun with the cotton thread.



Pirn that is spun with the thread.

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Beads that are used for decorating the zari zardozi embroidery.



Tracing sheet is used for drawing the design.



Cleaning powder is used to wash the beads.



Forceps are used to hold beads which are small.

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Making Process

Making of zari zardozi embroidery goes through four levels. They are: Designing, Setting the frame or “Adda”, Tracing and Embroidery.

- The very initial level of zardozi embroidery is designing. The entire design is drawn on a tracing sheet. Along with the design minute holes are made using needle. These designs are likely influenced by the contemporary patterns that are more of geometrical forms.
- In the second level, the fabric is spread over a wooden frame. The frame is usually of adjustable to the size of the fabric. Then the fabric is stretched out tightly by bamboo sticks or wooden spars to give the cloth a uniform tension.
- Once the frame is set and the fabric is fixed to it tightly, design drawn on the tracing sheet is placed on that flat wooden frame with the fabric underneath. A solution of kerosene and robin blue is prepared, wads of cloth is dipped in it and then it is rubbed on the tracing sheet so that it enables the ink from the tracing sheet to seep on the fabric.
- After the design is imprinted on the fabric, artisans begin the embroidery work. A crochet-like needle that is fixed to a wooden stick known as ‘Ari’ is used for embroidery. By using this Ari artisan speeds up the work as it can pass the threads both above and below the fabric. The completion of the work varies from a day to ten days depending on the complexity of the design and the number of artisans working on the same fabric.

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1

The design for the embroidery is drawn on the tracing sheet.

2

By using needle minute holes are made along with the design.

3

Fabric is attached to the wooden frame.

4

Then the cloth is given a uniform tension at its margin.

5

By using tracing sheet the design is seeped on the fabric.

6

The fabric on which the design is imprinted zari zardozi embroidery is made.

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A sketch is initially prepared for zari zardozi work on a tracing sheet.



Fabric is neatly spread and attached to the wooden beam frame.



Tracing sheet used as design template transfer the designs on fabric.



The outline of the design is neatly hemmed.

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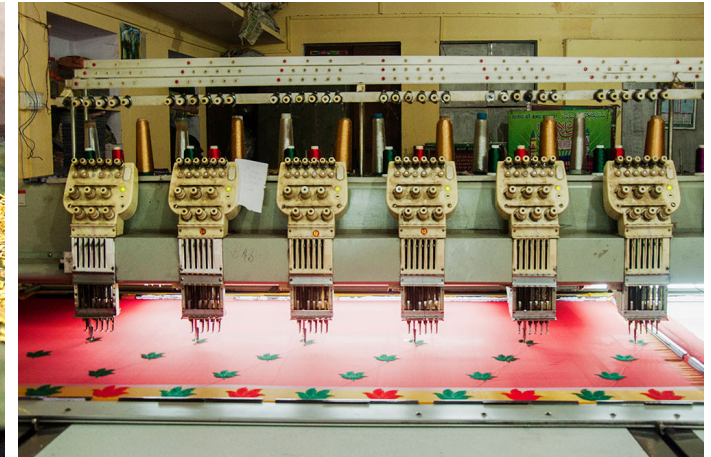
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The borders are neatly hand sewn with thread and needle.



When need on the sarees the embroidery is made using sewing machine.



Close up of beautiful embroidery made on the fabric.



When needed using the needle the beads are picked.

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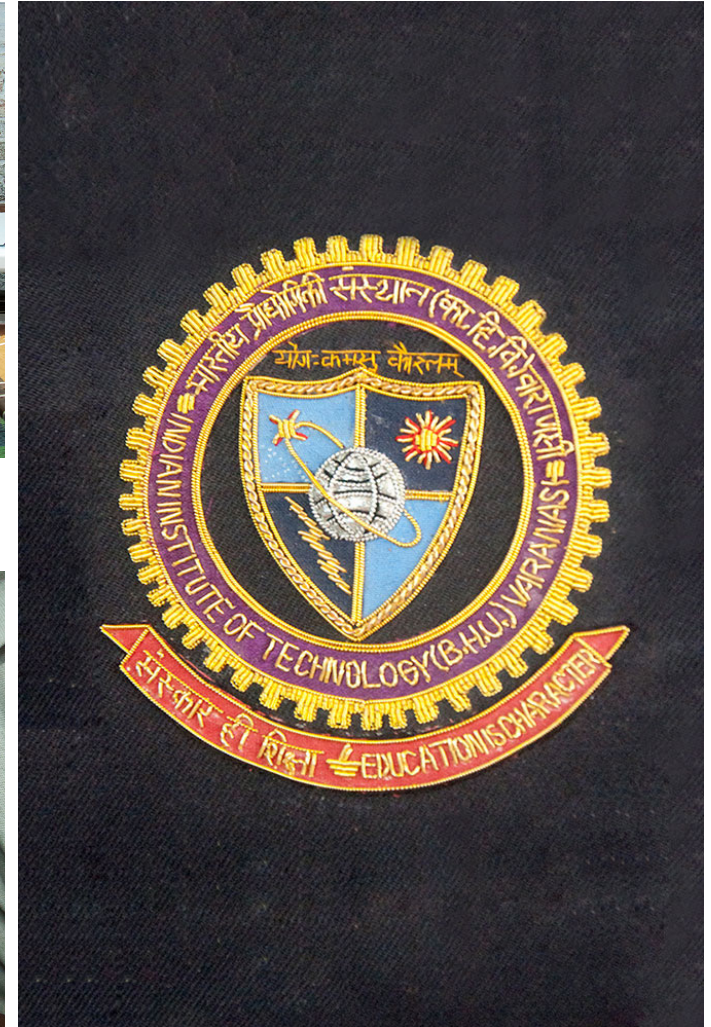
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And those beads are stitched to the saree as per the design.



Artisan giving the final finishing for the zari zardozi embroidery.



Beautifully embroidered zari work is displayed.

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Products

Zari Zardozi is one of the finest traditional embroideries which is glitteringly ornate and heavily encrusted gold thread work of the world. Though the original work of Zari Zardozi embroidery was done with gold or silver wires coated with gold known as Kalabatun is now has been replaced with synthetic threads but yet the art of embroidery retains its aesthetics as same as olden days. It is one of the crafts of India seems to have flourished in early centuries and still have survived till the date like few others. Along with the bridal collection, these days the Zari zardozi works are also made for exquisite evening dresses, coats, sherwanis, fashionable handbags, belts, shoes to decorate royally, cushion covers for furnishing accessories, official adornments like badges, emblems, house decors like wall hangings, boxes and etc.

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Beautifully designed zari zardozi embroidery on a hand-bag.



A logo displayed that is made of zari embroidery.

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A couple with a neat background is made through zari embroidery.

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