

Design Resource

## Bead weaving - Ahmedabad, Gujarat

Technique of Beadwork

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Rakshitha  
NID, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/bead-weaving-ahmedabad-gujarat>



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## Introduction

Bead weaving is a technique of beadwork for which seed beads are the chief material that is used. The technique of bead weaving is to weave seed beads together onto a plane fabric or to make a three-dimensional object like ball, box, clasp etc. They are also used for making flower, stringing and to fill-up the space between other beads in jewelry and also to make a whole new jewelry from beads. They are generally used in embroidery and also expended for loom and off loom bead weaving techniques like brick stitch and peyote stitch. These beads are very small yet uniformly shaped that are available in innumerable shapes, colors, sizes and textures. Most commonly seed beads are prepared using glass.

The history of beads dates back to Late Old Stone Age (the Upper Paleolithic). But during those days beads were large in size probably made of ivory or shells. The seed beads which are presently used for beads weaving is also an ancient art that can be traced back in the Egyptian items dating back to 4000 years. One of the best examples of those days for beadwork was King Tut of ancient Egypt had beadwork in his tomb and other examples tent to be rare. But there were several beaded items found in Shosoin temple in Nara, Japan dating to 8th century A.D.

Beadwork in India is also noted around 9th century B.C that refers to the braiding beads into horsetails and hairs. The very first reference that speaks evidently about bead weaving is about 1300 A.D. And the earliest mass-produced seed beads were noted to be the Indo-Pacific beads of India and associated regions. They led the bead trade for about 2000 years. Around 1490 the Modern era of beadwork began when Venice learnt to turn round tubes into round seed beads. Thus the creation, development and the production of seed bead were traditionally pioneered by European glass making centre of Murano in Italy. Later the technique reached Bohemia, France and Germany. In France faceted metal seed beads was renowned.

It is always considered that the ability to manufacture seed beads in bulk is one of the major developments in history of beads. It was appreciated to produce seed beads in mass from tube of glass rather than the earlier laborious practice of generating individual beads. Further in 1860s bead-making industry saw the development in making of beads as several new process and machines were introduced in which machines enabled the glass works to add uniformity of color and sizing. Then in early 20th century mass production of beads arrived when the machines could draw glass tubes automatically and generate even greater consistency in size of beads. Moving on to the present day, the process of manufacturing beads still possesses many historic procedure involved in the production of seed beads. It is also very interesting to witness the 24-hour operation of making seed beads.

Today bead weaving is a strong living tradition practiced by both men and women of India. Seetha Ben Sawda from Gujarat is one such experienced artisan in beads weaving industry. She has an experience of 35 years in this trade. After pursuing eleventh standard instead of continuing her further education she involved herself in the work of embroidery making. Later as she was interested in making decorative items and dolls made of plastic

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beads, after a while for working on these products she was further inspired to make small-small bead items out of which she created key chains and other house decorative items. Initially she sold these beads items through Majur Mahajan Khadi Sewa Board in which her father was in contact with. This helped the artisan to get the contact of Gurjari handicraft of Gujarat, for which she worked on beads weaving for about 15 years continuously.

The articles/jewelries made of seed beads are famous among Saurashtrian community of Gujarat. These beads articles were majorly used for decorating Saurashtra's durbar halls and Rajput houses. As the artisan belongs to Saurashtrian society, she is much aware of the value for beads weaving in their community. As per the information given by the artisan these seed bead jewelries are famous among Rajput's and worn by Varjara people of Gujarat and tribal people located near Nal sarovar.

Artisan was trained for beads weaving under the guidance of Mr.Mirza and Mr.Carvin Fernandez. After becoming a professional beads weaver she held numerous workshops on beads weaving. She also conducted the workshop in National Institute of Design through which her art was recognized by NRIs and localities as well. She also got an opportunity to sell her beads articles in Kuldeep Nagar. One of the other major workshops that was held by the artisan was in Uttarakhand for fifteen days and a camp in Delhi. Artisan happily says that students from National Institute of Design, National Institute of Fashion Technology and NRI's are more fascinated and are interested to learn beads weaving among all her students in workshops. Last but not the least the artisan conveys the credits of this beads weaving business success to her father, as it was his dream to attract Non Resident Indians (NRIs) towards their art.



Various articles prepared using seed beads.



Traditional bead ornament.

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Senior artisan engrossed in the art of beads weaving.



A glimpse of intricately woven seed beads article.

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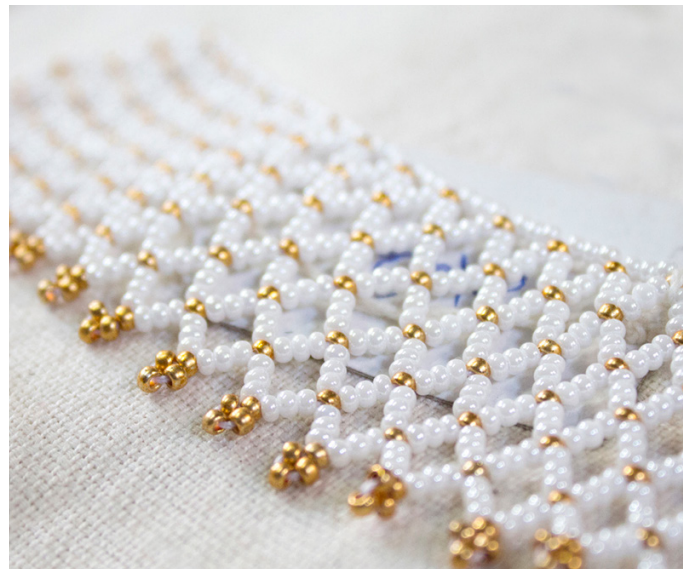
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Marvelously woven beaded adornment.



Multicolored beads necklace.

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## Tools and Raw Materials

The tools and raw materials that are needed for beads weaving are listed below:

- **Seed Beads:** Seed beads are the main material that is used for bead weaving. They are available in numerous colors and shapes. As per the weaver's choice seed beads can be selected and bought for the work.
- **Beading Thread:** Beading thread is used while working with seed beads. The thread that is used for bead weaving has to be strong and supple and also thin enough to pass through a small bead. Beading threads are often made of nylon. Nymo and KO are some of the good beading threads.
- **Beading Needle:** The needle used for bead weaving should be usually shorter and firmer. It is preferred to use the same size of needle as the bead size. In case of making lot of passes through some beads then it is preferred to choose a smaller needle to weave the beads.
- **Cutter:** Cutter is used for cutting the excess thread and to cut off the thread once completing the process of bead weaving.



Seed beads are the basic material used for beads weaving articles.

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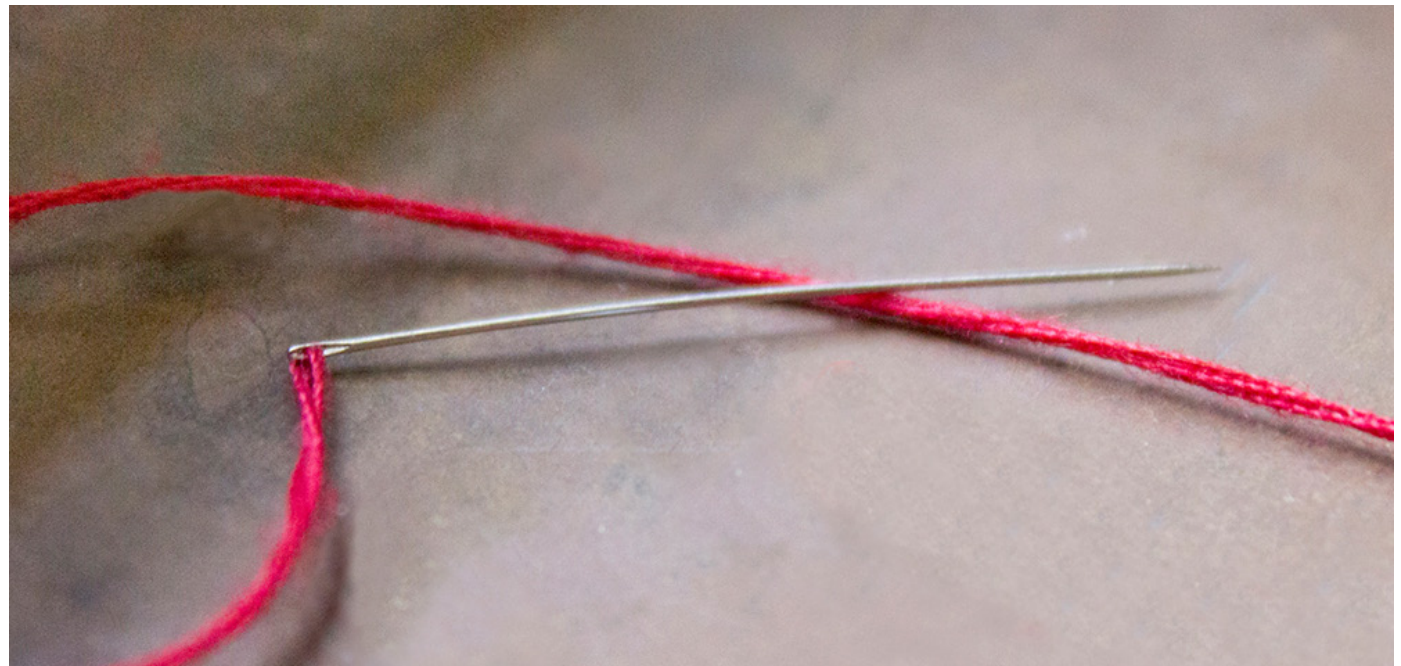
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Thread is used for weaving the beads.



Cutter is used for cutting the excess of thread.



Needle is used for weaving the beads.

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## Making Process

Bead weaving is a traditional art. To prepare any sort of bead article like jewelries, wall hangings or piece of bead art, selection of beads plays a vital role. Preferably Italian seed beads are best suited for any variety of bead weaving creations, as they are even in size with bright colored and constant finishing of beads. There are Indian beads as well that are available in market along with Italian beads. But the major difference between them is Indian beads are comparably sober in color and the unevenness of sizes in beads. Hence the artisan Seetha Ben Sawda of Gujarat suggests Italian beads for the bead art creations.

To make any sort of bead jewelry initially it is very much mandatory to prepare a sketch of the jewelry that has to be made. There are huge varieties of beads weaving patterns. So once the pattern of weaving and the design of the jewelry are well composed in a sketch, weavers get a clear idea of the color combination too. Then as per the requirement the colored beads are bought from market either by the hank or by weight in grams. Once the beads are bought it is spread on an even surface and a beading needle is taken along with the thread inserted in its (needle's) eye. The number of thread strands taken for beads weaving depends on the pattern that is selected. Usually it's either 1,3,5 or 7 strands that are made. The bigger the strands are, it is more suitable for making torans (door hangings). It takes an experienced artisan to create any sort of bead artifact for about 1 to 1.5 hours.

The required length of thread is taken and it is cut off from the thread reel. At the initial stage of weaving a knot is put at the end of thread as a limit. And then the even number of beads is picked up from the needle and is weaved one by one. As per the design of pattern, beads are weaved one after the other rows with the beautiful color combination of beads. Thus the beads are weaved in an aesthetically appealing manner with a beautiful pattern. Hence the jewelry is made and the final knot is put after the completion of beads weaving and sold in market.

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Flow Chart:



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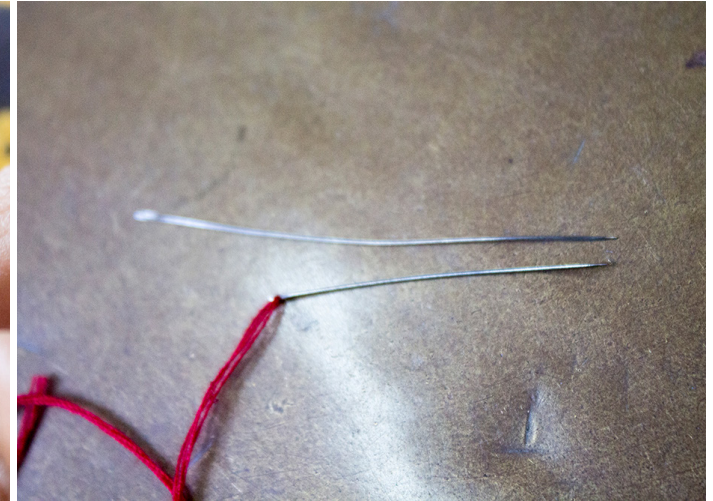
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The process begins with the selection of thread and by inserting the selected thread into the needle's eye.



Required length of thread is inserted through the needle's eye.



Artisan begins the work with spreading the beads evenly on an even surface.



Then the artisan carefully picks up the seed beads one by one through the needle.

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Glimpse of a single thread weaved with multicolored beads.



Intricately the pattern of the bead article is being weaved.



The final knot is put for the stiffness at the corner.



Further a loop is made using beads on one side of the bracelet.

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Once the loop is complete it tightly knotted with the weaving thread.



On the other end of the bracelet the locking element of the bracelet is attached.



And the excess of thread is cut.



Intricately weaved beads jewelry is then displayed.

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## Products

Bead weaving is a traditional art made in the combination of colorful beads and colorful threads that gel along aesthetically.

Using seed beads the artisan elaborately embellish garments. Some of the other products made by seed beads weaving are listed below:

- Belts
- Key chains
- Door garlands (toran)
- Jewelleries like:
  - Necklaces
  - Earrings
  - Bracelets
  - Long Chains
  - Anklets
  - Headbands
  - Armlets etc.



Beautiful tricolored bracelet prepared using seed beads.

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Multicolored most fascinating necklace made of beads.



A long chain made to suit the traditional attire of the wearer.

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An attractive necklace.



Beads chain of multi strands.

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A decorative wall hanging made using beads.



An article made using seed beads.

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Unique pattern of beads chain.



Various artifacts made of beads weaving.

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Numerous ornaments set for the adornment.



A glimpse of beads items made at Ahmedabad.

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## Video



Beads Weaving - Kutch



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## Contact Details

This documentation was done by **Professor Bibhudutta Baral** and Rakshitha at **NID, Bengaluru**.

You can get in touch with Professor Bibhudutta Baral at [bibhudutta\[at\]nid.edu](mailto:bibhudutta[at]nid.edu).

You could write to the following address regarding suggestions and clarifications:

### Key Contacts:

Ms. Seetha Ben Chavda, senior craftswoman  
Ahmedabad  
Gujarat  
Cellphone: - 09909259555

### Helpdesk Details:

Co-ordinator  
Project e-kalpa  
R & D Campus  
National Institute of Design  
#12 HMT Link Road, Off Tumkur Road  
Bengaluru 560 022  
India.

Phone: +91 80 2357 9054

Fax: +91 80 23373086

Email: [dsource.in\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:dsource.in[at]gmail.com)