

Design Resource

Embroidery Work - Kalady, Kerala

Art of Decorating Fabric

by

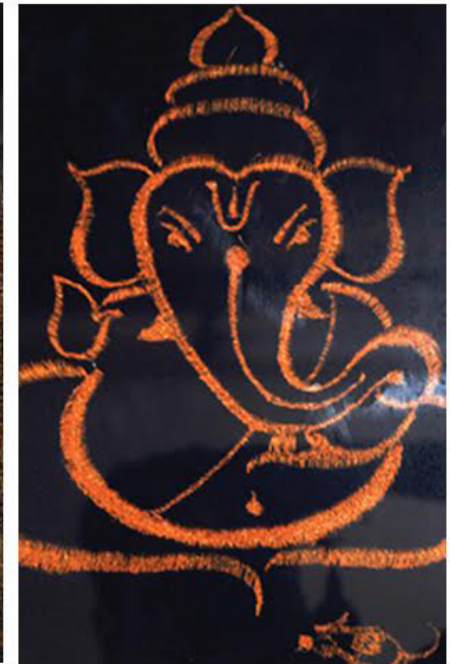
Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Divyadarshan C. S. and

Rakshitha

NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/embroidery-work-kalady-kerala>



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Introduction

Embroidery is the handicraft of decorating fabric with needle and thread. It is most often used on dresses, caps, coats, blankets and etc. There are various techniques of embroidery, which are the basic characteristics for stitching today. The derivation of the word 'Embroidery' comes from the Anglo-Saxon word for "edge" but the technique of embroidery was being used long before the word discovery. The origin of embroidery dates back to the ancient China during the 5th – 3rd BC. 'Suzhou embroidery' is one among the famous ancient Chinese embroideries. The artists of Suzhou embroidery took the opportunity and started to seek the innovation in the field of embroidery under the influence of western civilization during the early 20th century. A profound Suzhou embroidery artist by name 'Shen Yunzhi' of those days incorporated the properties of portraits in oil-painting into her embroidery work and crafted a new style called "realistic embroidery". Later her works on portrait embroideries like "Portrait of Italian Queen" that was sent to Italy and the "Portrait of Jesus" exhibited at US received great acclaim and invoked the sensation everywhere. Thus the embroidery of portraits came into actuality.

Realistic figure embroidery is a very much fascinating topic that captivates everyone's attention. The important point that has to be considered about figure embroidery is that the embroidery of portrait requires a lot of contrast when viewed from a distance. Though it's very hard to imagine how many stitches and colors used for making a face in embroidery, the stitches and the colors blend together smoothly to create an effect that looks much like a painting when viewed from a distance. But only when viewed from the close distance then the sketchiness of the irregular messy odd line stitches and the presence of all types of color from yellow to red is seen.

The threads used for the portrait embroidery has to be pretty fine to get the much detailed work done, in a small space that blends the stitches and colors nicely into a composed expression of a discernible face when viewed from a distance. In the early days the embroidery was the handwork done on woven threads of clothing. But in the later days the fashionable embroidery is stitched through a computerized embroidery machine that uses digitalized patterns with the embroidery software.

An artisan by name Udayan P.S, born in Kalady in the year 1967, is a well-versed portrait embroiderer who was a drummer by profession for three decades initially. Later due to his personal interest, he started experimenting on the embroidery works. He was also inspired by the portrait embroideries that was displayed at a museum in Guruvayoor. Since then over the few years he experimented on different styles of embroidery stitches on small pieces of cloths. Due to his immense interest in embroidery and the huge support from his family he dwelled more into the experimentation of portrait embroidery. After many trails on portraits through embroidery now he is recognized as a renowned portrait embroiderer in Kalady at Ernakulam district of Kerala. He makes effective use of thread, needle and a motorized embroidery machine to stitch the fine bits of fine art on cloth. He also takes the orders for the commissioned portrait embroideries.

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His embroidery of portraits are created with a unique weaving technique where the threads run across and up and down and resemble watercolor or pastel paintings that look so beautiful from a distance. It takes at least three months for the artist to complete a single portrait. He delicately uses the threads to match the natural skin tones and shades to replicate the organic human appearance. He grabs the attention of the viewer to his detailed works by using stunning bold color.



Framed embroidery work depicting the meditative Lord Buddha.



Lord Krishna elaborately embroidered on a synthetic fabric with vibrant color threads.

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Magnificent depiction of a wonderful folk art of Kerala called Theyyam art.



Picture of Mother Mary and baby Jesus embroidered on a raw silk fabric.



Embroidery work of a deer and grasslands made on the pallu (throw) side of a saree.



Image of the peacock intricately embroidered on the fabric.

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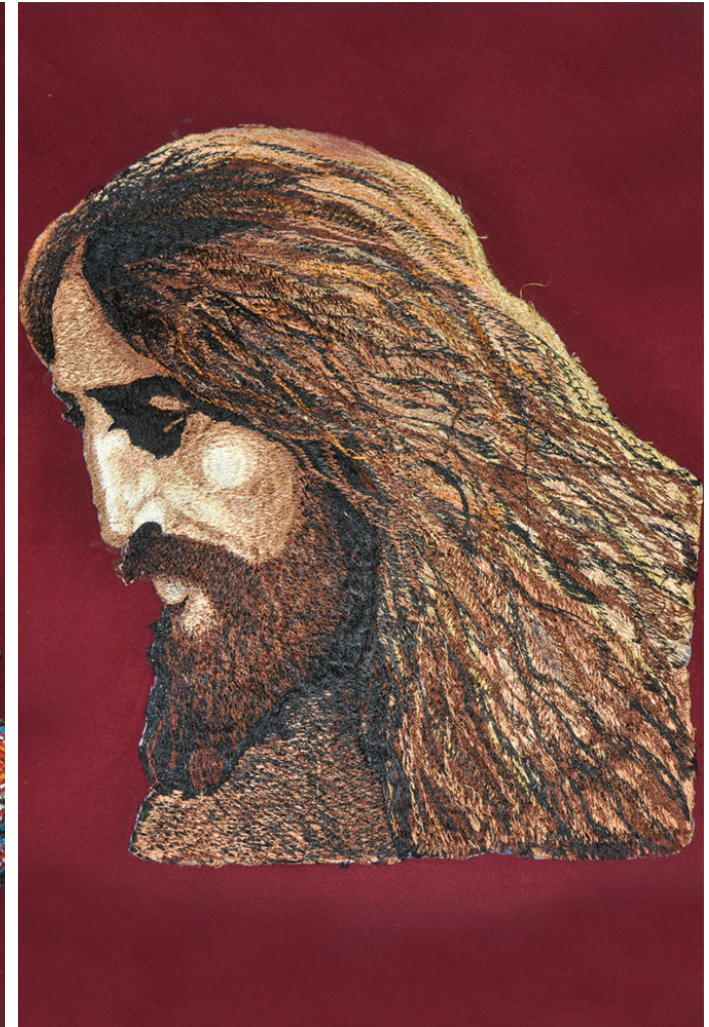
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Embroidery work of a Kerala Mural painting depicting Lord Ganesha and young Krishna.



Embroidery work of Lord Jesus done with brown shaded color threads.

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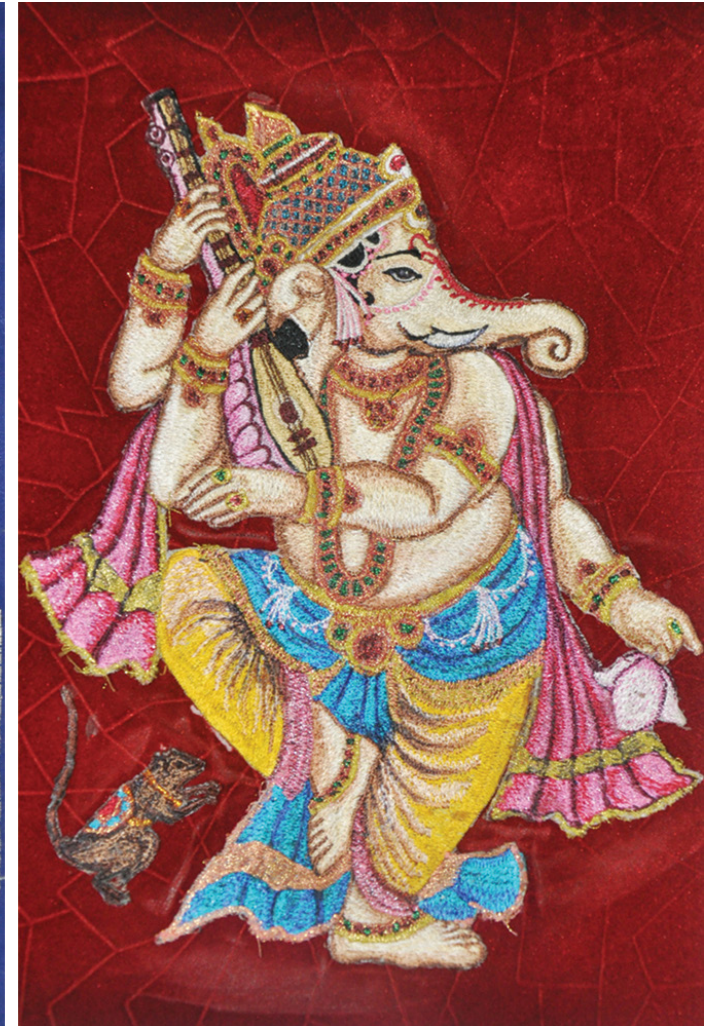
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Famous south singer Mr. Yesudas's portrait done with embroidery on fabric.



Lord Ganesha in dancing posture embroidered on textured velvet background.

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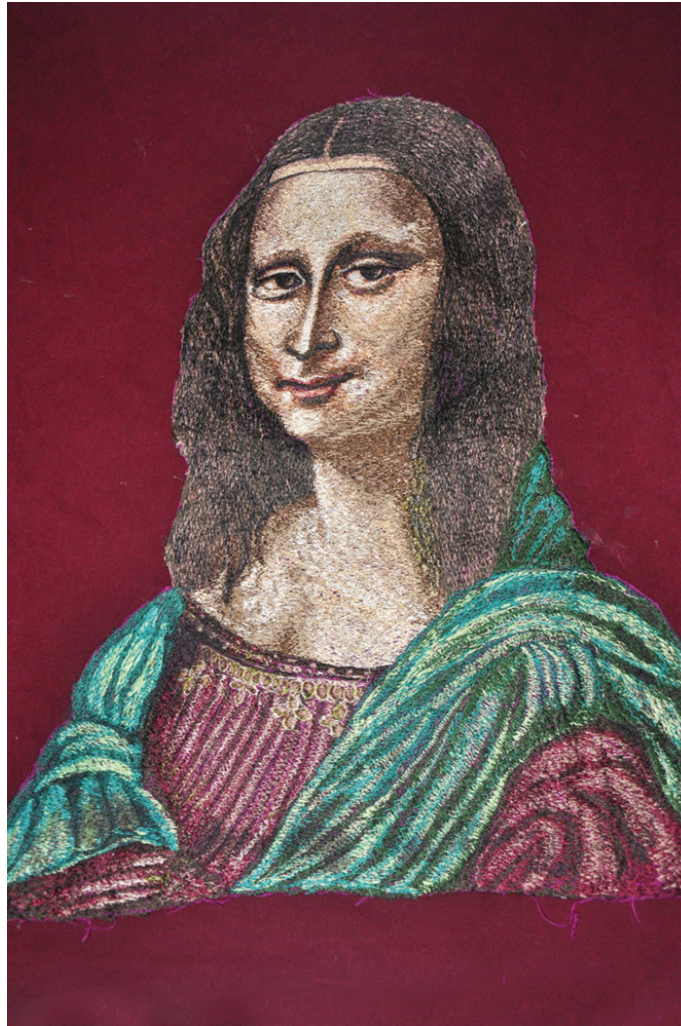
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Replica of very famous painting of Leonardo da Vince "Mona Lisa" in embroidery work.



Portrait of mother Mary embroidered with white and brown shades of color thread.

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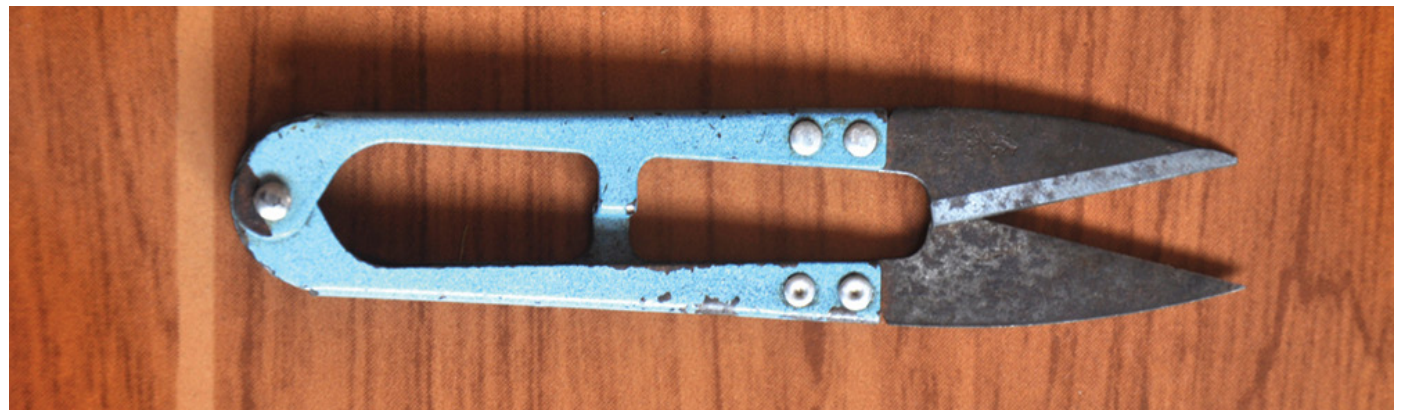
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Tools and Raw Materials

The tools and raw materials that are used for portrait embroideries are:

- **Silk Threads:** Silk threads are used for embroidery purpose that gives a beautiful lustre look of the silk.
- **Embroidery Needle:** Needle is the essential tool that is used for embroidery work on the cloth. Needle is chosen in such a way that suits both the fabric and the thread, and the type of embroidery that is undertaken. The needle that passes easily through the fibers of the fabric and the thread through the eyes of the needle.
- **Motorized Sewing Machine:** The electrical machine that is used for sewing or stitching with a suitable spool of thread and a needle for embroidery.
- **Cotton Cloth:** The cotton cloth is used for tracing the design on it, which will be embroidered later.
- **Ring or Hoop Wooden Frame:** Ring wooden frame is suitable for small embroidery projects that the whole of the design on the fabric/cloth fits within the bound of the frames, making sure that the fabric is straight and the area to be worked on is in the center of the ring.
- **Scissors:** Scissors are used for cutting the fabric and for trimming the threads and cutting the intricate pieces or holes.
- **Graphite Transfer Paper / Carbon Paper:** Graphite transfer paper or the carbon paper is a type of a paper that has a dark film of carbon on one side. This sheet of paper is used for transferring the sketch onto the cloth.



Thread cutting nippers are used to cut excess strands of the thread while or after embroidery.

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Wooden embroidery hoop rings are used to hold the cloth stiffly for embroidery.



Silk and cotton embroidery threads are used for embroidery work.



Scissors are used to cut fabric and threads.

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Embroidery sewing machine is used to make the embroidery work.

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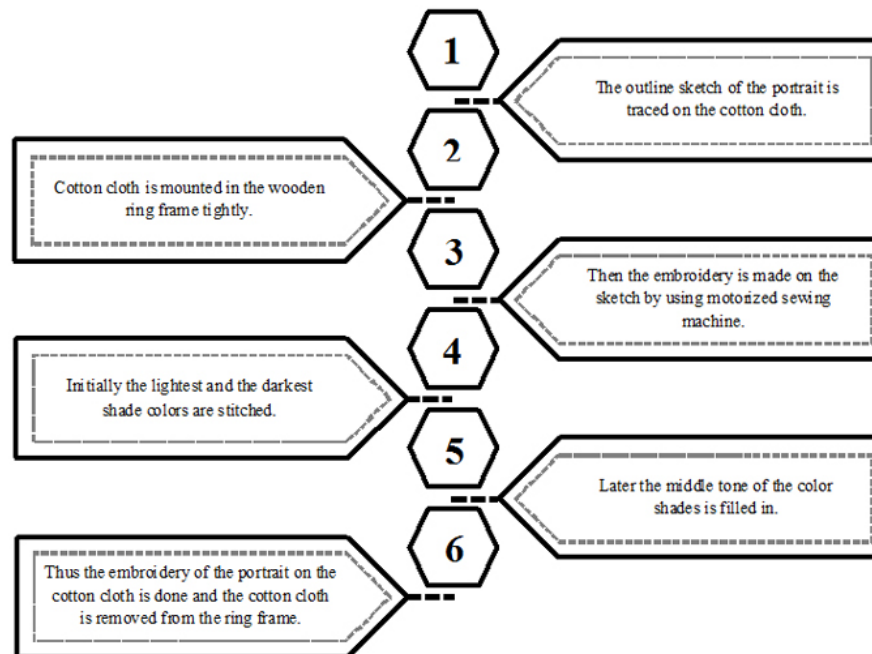
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Making Process

The embroidery of the portrait begins with the tracing of the photo/poster whose portrait has to be embroidered. To transfer the outline sketch of the face on the cotton cloth, the sheet of graphite transfer paper / carbon paper is kept underneath the photo but on top of the fabric, ink side of the carbon paper faces down and the outline is drawn through the pen on the photo so that the sketch is transferred to the cotton cloth that is kept below. Then the cotton cloth is mounted in the ring / hoop wooden frame so that it remains clean and uncrumpled and the tension of the stitches will be even. Before mounting the cotton cloth, the fabric has to be neatly ironed and the care should be taken that the fabric is not distorted in any way. By mounting the cotton cloth in the ring frame, the design on the cotton cloth will get fit within the bounds of the frame. By binding the fabric to the ring frame it also provides a better grip for the machine embroidery. The screw of the ring wooden frame is then adjusted according to the requirements and the fabric is placed over the inner ring making sure that the area to be worked on is placed in the center of the ring. Then the embroidery is made on the sketch by stitching it in motorized sewing machine with the help of the needle and silk threads. Initially the lightest and the darkest shade of colors are stitched and then the middle tones of the color shades are filled in. The stitch size varies from a dot to a straight stitch according to the necessity. Thus once the embroidery of the portrait is completed then the cotton cloth is removed from the ring frame and kept for sales.



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The middle part of the peacock's feather that is eye is embroidered in the initial process, using the sewing machine with dark and light blue color threads.

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Further the embroidery work is done around the eye with shining gold color thread.



Close knit barbs and loose barbs are embroidered to the center of the eye with shining gold color thread.



The barbs of the feather are embroidered in a curvy pattern.

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Different color threads are replaced in the spool pin of the sewing machine to give the required shades and tints of the feather.

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Green color thread is sewed along the golden color sewed thread to acquire different shades.



Golden and green color threads embroidered together brings a two dimensional sight of the work.



Artisan adds more shades of respective colors of the peacock feather to make the work more genuinely effective.



Extra strands of threads are cut from the backside of the embroidered cloth.

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Artisan attesting the completed embroidery work of the peacock feather.

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Embroidery is an art of decorating fabric. Embroidery has evolved through many years with various techniques and methods that has become an artistic expression for textile artists. Today there are no restrictions on the embroiderer. Several methods of embroidering can be clubbed in one piece. The artist uses the wide range of color combinations of silk threads in the portrait embroidery presenting a look of powerful skill involved in it. The passion for the human face embroidery along with the expressions depicted conveys the dedication and the interest of the artist. Here the paints have been replaced with a less toxic material called 'thread' in the making of portraiture.



Sailing yacht depicted on fabric with embroidery work.

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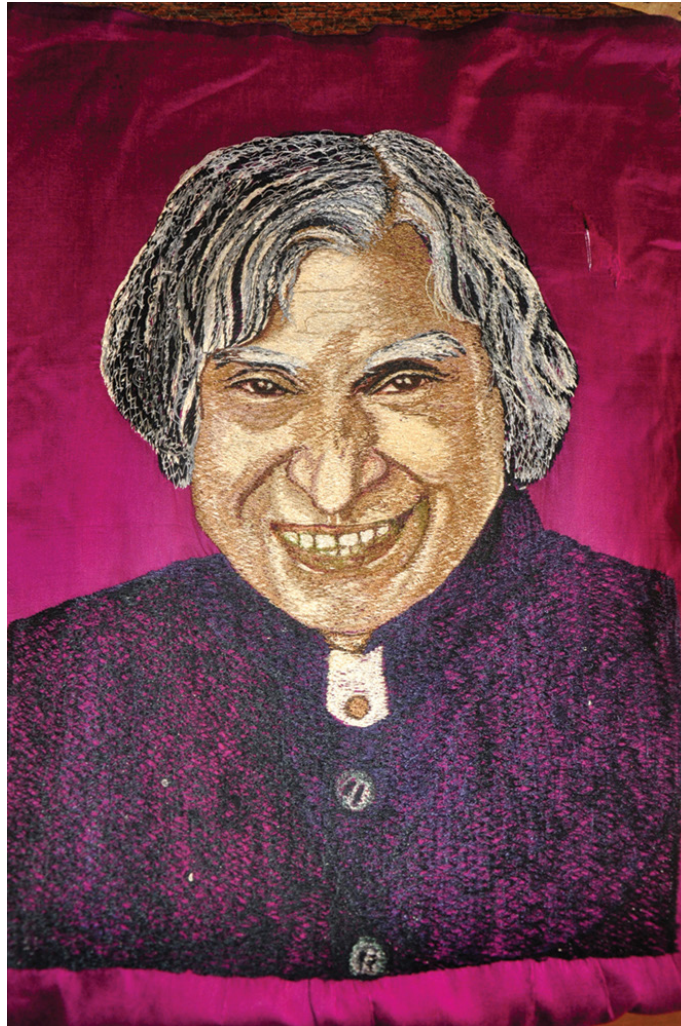
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Embroidery depicting the portrait of Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam.



Beautiful embroidery of a brown horse.

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Embroidery of former president K R Narayanan.



Intricate embroidery of an eagle with the features and details.

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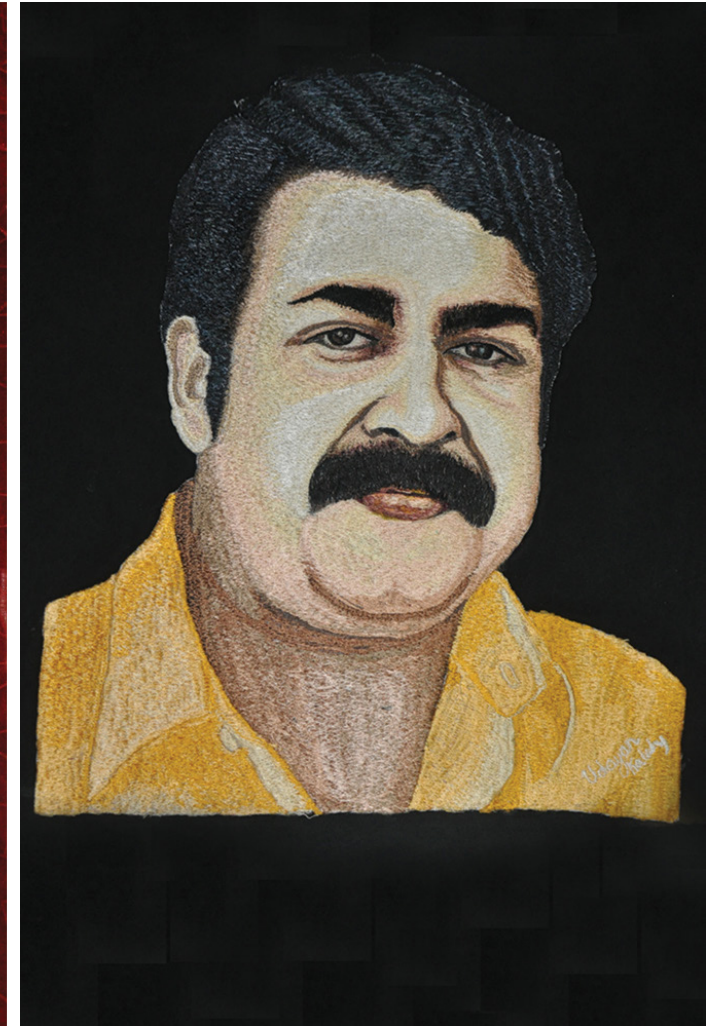
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Embroidery depicting Goddess Bhagavathi.



Portrait in embroidery, of a well-known film artist in the southern India Mr. Mohanlal.

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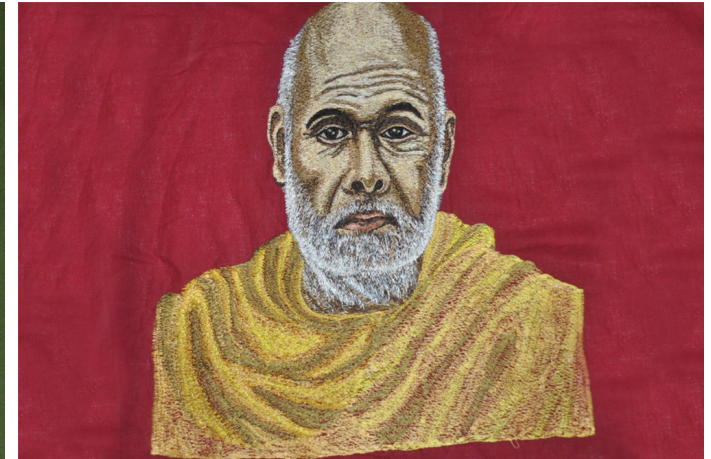
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Embroidery portrait work, depicting Matha Amrithanandamayi Devi, a Hindu spiritual Guru.



An embroidery portrait work of Sri Narayana Guru a Hindu saint and a social reformer of India.



Image of an embroidery work portraying a parrot.

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Embroidery portrait work depicting Indian singer K S Chithra.



Portrait of Lord Jesus Christ.

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Depiction of a squirrel eating corn embroidery on fabric.



Black and white portrait in embroidery work of the singer Mr. Yesudas.

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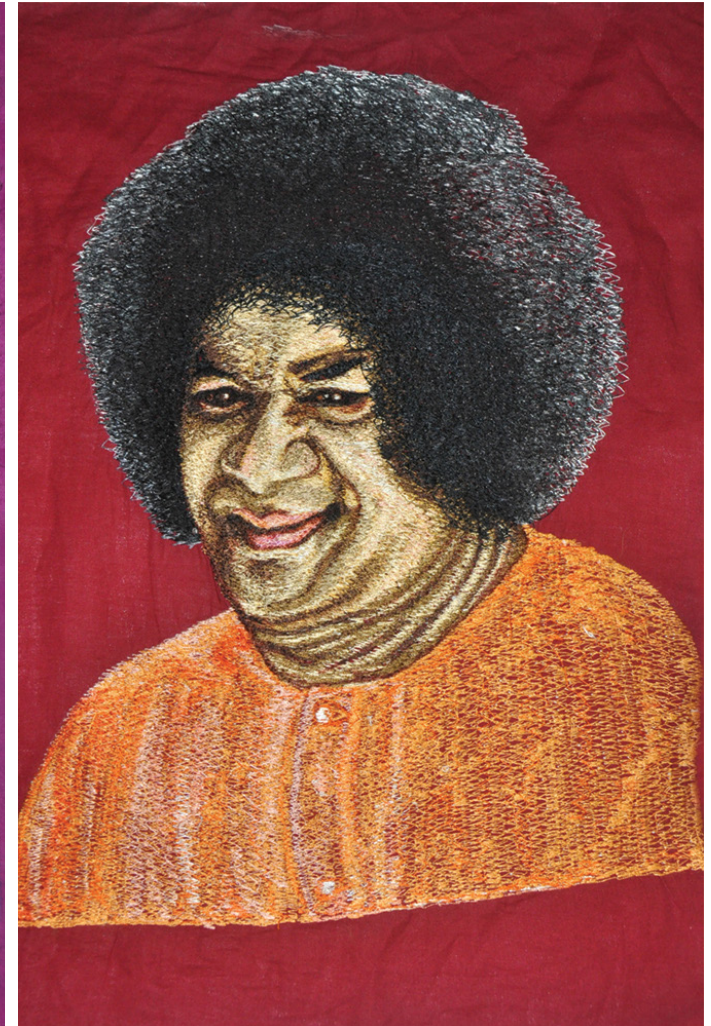
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Embroidery work depicting the expression of an old women.



Portrait embroidery work of the spiritual guru Sai Ram.

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An illusion of face embroidery which displays half face and a side face together.

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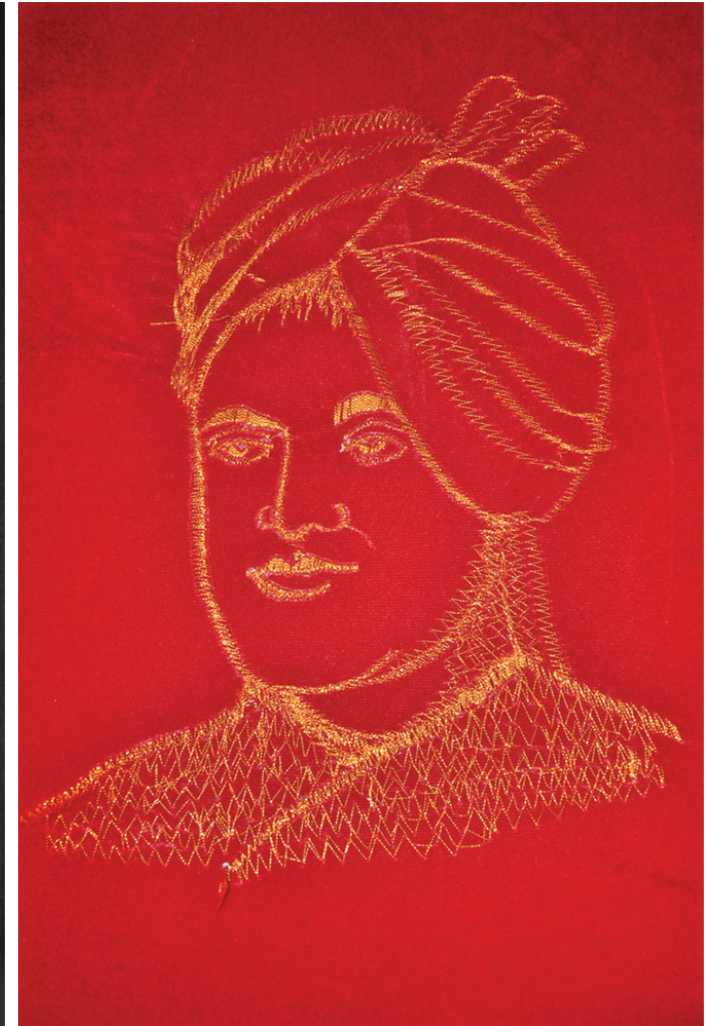
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A portrait embroidery depicting Lord Krishna playing the flute.



Simple line embroidery work depicting Swami Vivekananda.

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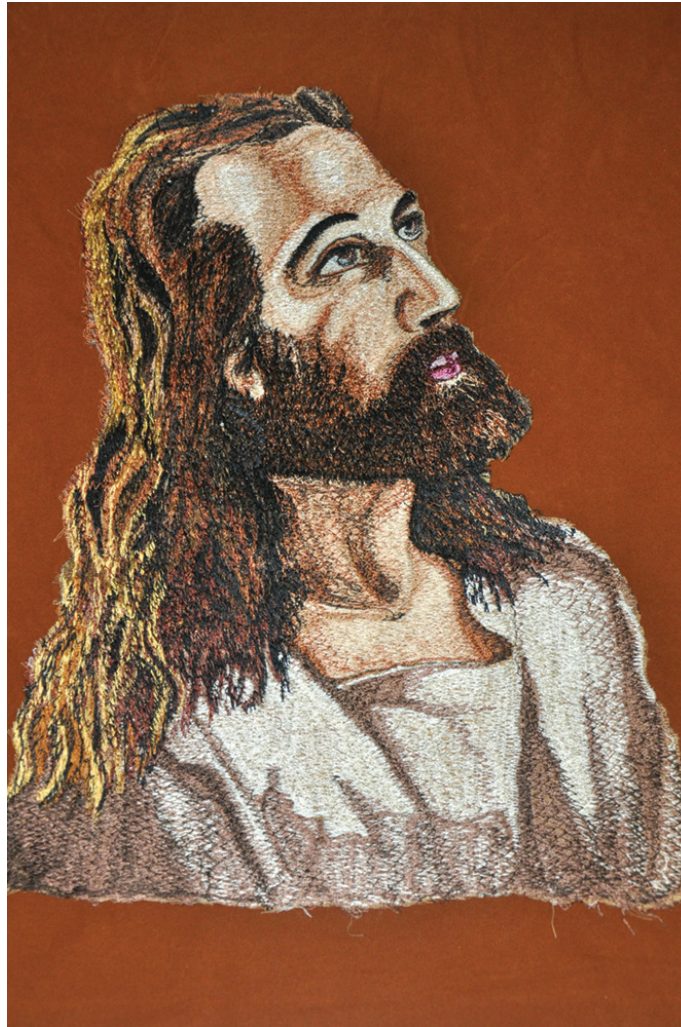
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Embroidery work portraying lord Jesus Christ.



Embroidery work depicting the former Kerala Minister Mr.E K Nayanar.

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Peacock bird depicted on a saree with many colors and shades of threads used in embroidery.



Framed photo of an embroidery work depicting Goddess Saraswathi.

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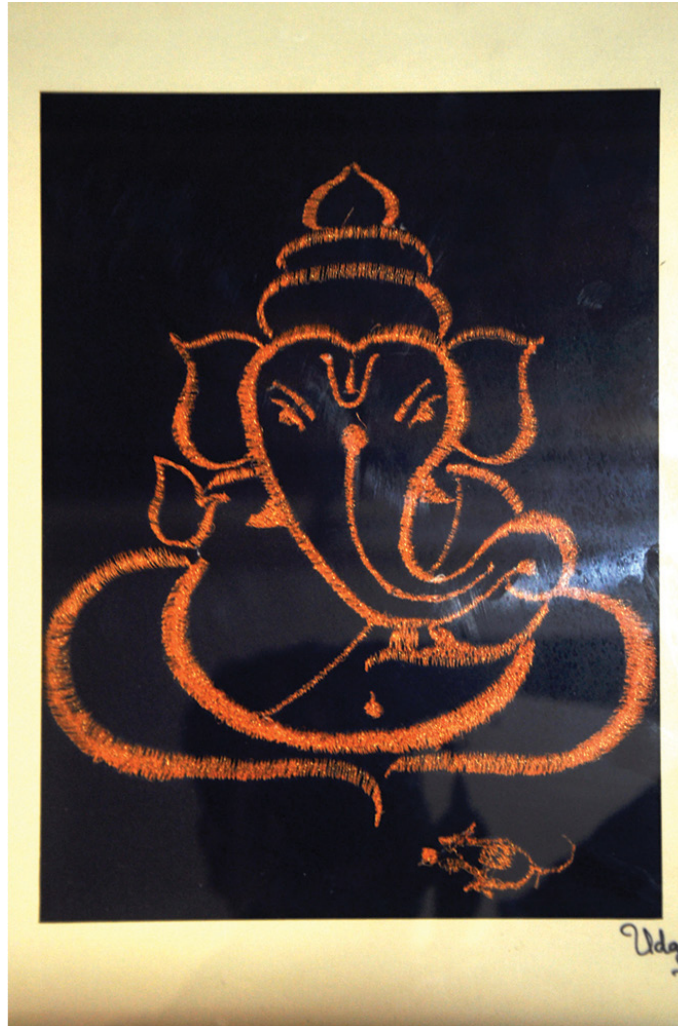
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Simple line embroidery work of Lord Ganesh and Mooshika Vahana (Mouse as his Vehicle).



Embroidery work of Lord Ganesh's face and iconography of Om together on contemporary style.

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Self-portrait of the craftsmen in embroidery work.

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