

Design Resource

## Parchin Kari - Agra

The Art of Marble Decoration

by

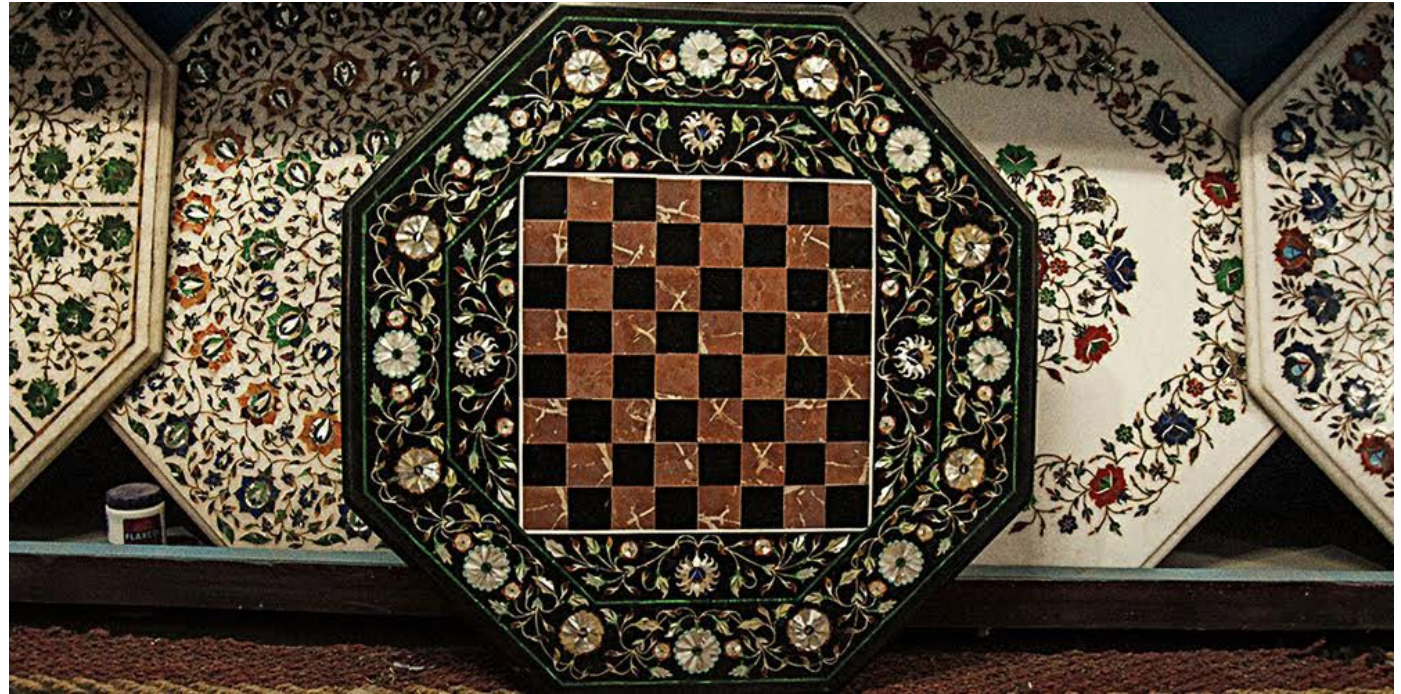
Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Divyadarshan C. S.,

Lija M. G., Tejesh J. and Sourav Nandy

NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/parchin-kari-agra>



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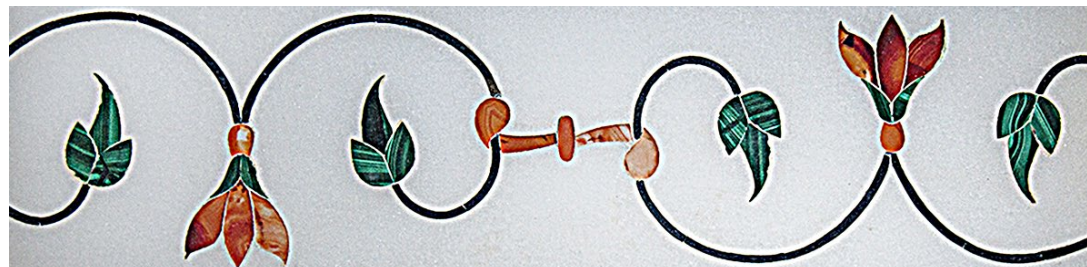
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## Introduction

Parchin Kari also known as Pacchikari in recent times, is a method of inlaying colored marbles or semi-precious stones into a stone base, often in geometric or flower patterns. The inspiration for the craft is the beautiful Pietra dura work done in the Taj Mahal and the tomb of Itimad-ud- Daulah. The art of marble inlay or “Parchin kari” was introduced in India in the 17th century by the great Mughal Emperor “Shah Jahan” who envisioned the decoration of the Taj Mahal using this unique decorative art. The inlay is so fine that the inlaid patterns seem to have grown out of the marble, hence it is hardly possible to detect the incisions.

Pietre dure is an Italian plural meaning of “hardstones” the term embraces all gem engraving and hardstone carving, the inlay of semi- precious stones- agate, turquoise, cornelian, jasper, bloodstone, and mother -of- pearl, malachite and lapis lazuli- in marble is unique in Agra. The Pachhikari craftsmen of Agra who are predominantly Muslims are said to be descendants of those same master craftsmen who built the “Taj Mahal”.

In the process of marble –inlay, stone slivers are carefully shaped into minute petals, leaves, and stems on a manually operated emery wheel. Often, a single flower is composed of as many as 40 pieces that may take a whole week of painstaking shape and inlay. The craftsman matches the shape and inlay and also matches the shapes to a brass template. The designs mainly include floral patterns which are based on Italian and geometrical designs, among which some are extremely delicate. The marble surface is shallow carved, enough to embed the stones. The chisels are worked without a hammer or mallet. The carving has to be extremely crisp, so prior to chiseling, the surface is coated with red earth that makes the engraved lines of the pattern stand out, making it easier for the craftsmen to carve and inlay. The depressions are filled in with white cement that melts on heating. The marble surface is heated and the stones laid flush in it. Any tiny gaps in the inlay are filled in with white cement. The surface is buffed and polished. Inlay is also done on alabaster, gorara stone and black marble. There are specialized craftsmen for different steps of inlay. The master craftsmen designs the inlays. Other craftsmen cut the stone, glue and finish the pieces. The commercial usage of marble inlays include dining tables, coffee tables and garden tables. They can also be placed outdoors, as marble is stain free, offers great resistance to the forces of nature, and can withstand high temperatures.



Floral patterns decorated on marble.

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Marble plate studded with color stones.

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Various types of floral decorative designs on marble.



Marble tile inlaid with floral pattern.

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Decorative plates made of marble and embellished with color stones.

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Simple designed marble plate.



Knife cover made of marble and decorated with color stones shape in flowers and leaves.



Different type of decorative article made of marble.

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A marble slab inlaid with floral motif.

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## Tools and Raw Materials

Marble is the basic raw material which is used for the Inlay work are brought from Rajasthan. There are different types of marble available but white marble (Makrana) is the most preferred for Inlay work because of its softness, which in turn makes it easier to carve and its resistance to shattering.

- **Compass:** Instrument used to inscribe circles or arc on the surface of the marble.
- **Pencil:** An art medium used for drawing and sketching.
- **Saw:** To cut marble as per the required length and width.
- **Abrasive:** Stone used to grind the surface of marble.
- **Tankiya and Narzi:** Chiseling tools used to engrave and inlay on the surface of marbles.
- **File:** To fine cut the amount of material from work piece.
- **Drilling Machine:** Used to make holes with the help of drill bits.
- **Buffer Machine:** It used for polishing the surface of the marble after inlay.
- **Poster Colors:** These colors are applied on the surface to highlight the patterns drawn.
- **Saan and Kamaani:** Hand driven tool used to shape the gem stones in delicate floral motifs with the emery wheel.
- **Hand Held Chisels:** These are used to engrave, groove the marbles.
- **Specially Prepared Glue:** To inlay the gem stones in the precise grooves of pattern.
- **Cotton:** Small fluffy staple fiber to spread the poster colors on the surface of marble.

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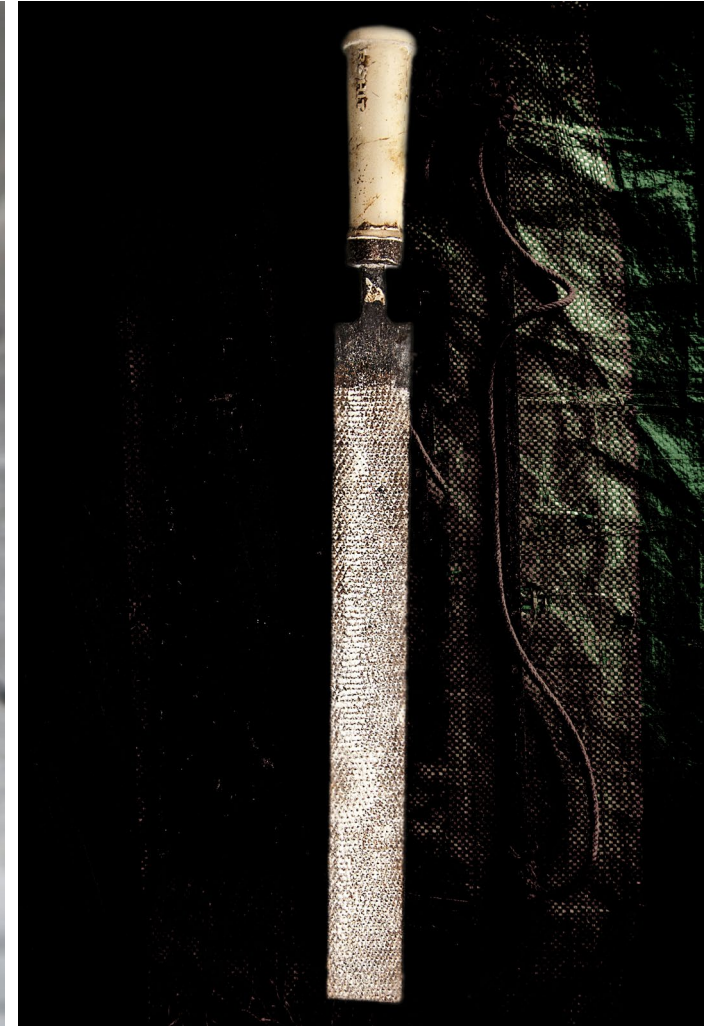
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The main material used for this craft is marble.



File is used to scrap out the rough edges of the marble.

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Compass is used for measurement while drawing the design.



Long length saw is used to cut the marble in required shape and size.

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Natural color stones are used to do the inlay work.

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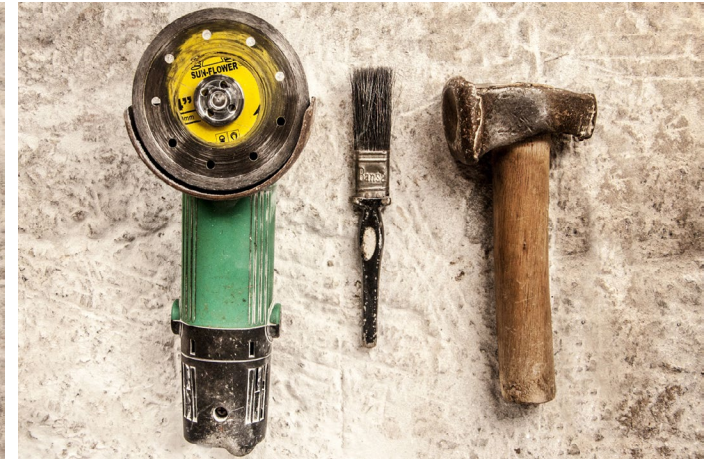
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Tools used to cut the color stones into required pattern and size.



Diamond blade cutter, brush and a hammer used in shaping the marble.

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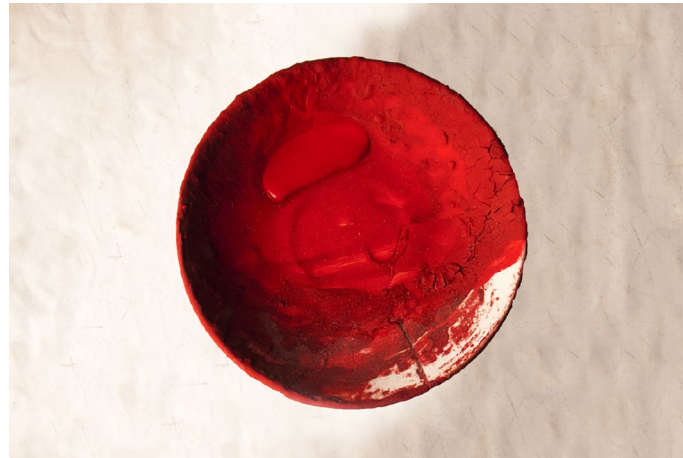
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Poster color is used to decorate the marble.



Carving Tool is used to carve the stones in required designs and shapes.

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Drilling Machine is used to make holes and design patterns on the marble.

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## Making Process

The raw material used are marble, which are marked with compass to the required width and length, then they are cut in circular or hexagonal shapes with the help of a saw. Extra parts of the marble are filed to the required shape, then depending on the shape and size of the floral designs, the marble is cut and further drilled to bring out the various contours on the surface. Once the shapes are made the marble slab is then handed over to the next artisan. In the next process the master artisan evenly applies a layer of poster color on the surface of the marble using a cotton. Then the mid-point on the object is located using two diagonal lines, once the center is determined, a Circular shape is drawn using a compass, further the preferred patterns are sketched using a pencil. Then the Master artisan starts engraving these hand drawn designs using small chisels or raffles on the surface of the marble.

The Lapidary Artist then indulges himself in the process where he delicately cuts the Colored stone pieces to the required shapes and sizes depending upon the length and width of shapes like leaf, petals, flowers, stars etc with the help of a specialized tool, these precious stones are carefully handed from one Artisan to the other. Different shades of semi-precious Stones are minutely selected to give the precise gradation and shading of Flowers and Motifs. Initially an Outline of these colored stones are marked on the surface of the marble which are to be engraved, then these shaped Gem stones are arranged in the marble panel at the specific position marked by the master Artisans with the help of carving tool along the pattern. About 2mm cavity is engraved to inlay the colored stones, and at some places wires are also inlayed along the carved cavity. The Marble is then chipped out to set the colored stones firmly on its surface. Subsequently the Gem is glued to the marble using a special mixture called Elalite. The surface is scrubbed with stone and water to remove the colored layer and finally the surface of marble is buffed to obtain a smooth surface. Prior to the delivery the product is carefully examined by the trained eyes and hands of the Ustad (master craftsmen).



Initially required measurements are drawn on the marble.



Marble is cut into shape according to the measurements.

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Measurement for the width of the article is drawn and cut accordingly.



Edges of the article is shaped perfectly by filing.



Sides of the article is drilled to create design patterns.

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Drilling work is done only on required articles.



Little amount of color is spread on the cut marble.



This process is done to highlight the design to be carved.



With the help of scale the surface of the marble is divided to draw the design.

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With help of divider the distance and radius of the design is measured and marked.



Required design motif is drawn on the marble.



Article is rubbed with a stone to reduce the shade of the color.

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With the help of a sharp metal tool the designs are engraved on the marble.



Engraving is made till the required depth.



Natural color stones are inlayed in the groves.



Color stones are cut and shaped according to the drawn design pattern.

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Color stones are inlayed in the engraved grooves.



Engraving and inlaying work is done one after another simultaneously.



Different color of stones are used to make the inlay work look colorful.



Finished article is buffed to give a smooth finishing and shine.

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Finished product.

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## Products

Parchin Kari in India was introduced during the 17th Century and was later perfected by the Mughal Artisans. The traditional art of Marble Inlay is quite exquisite because of the long and detailed process which requires great artistry, patience and precision. The prices varies depending upon the size and detail of the product. Marble Inlay can be used for various Indoor and outdoor purposes, because marble is strong, durable, elegant and can withstand high temperatures.

The Different types of Products are:

1. Tables
2. Black tables
3. Elephants
4. Photo frames
5. Trays
6. Plates
7. Pen Holder
8. Coasters
9. Vases
10. Table tops
11. Dining Table
12. Marble inlay floors
13. Marble inlay tile
14. Tiles and borders
15. Chess Board
16. Jewellery Boxes



Marble slap embellished with inlay work.

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Detailed marble glass with natural stone inlays.



Simple floral motif engraved marble plate.



Marble drinking glass decorated with color stones on outer surface.

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Marble plate designed with floral motif inlay work.



Marble plates with different floral patterns.



Inlaid marble slabs are also assembled into walls as interior work.

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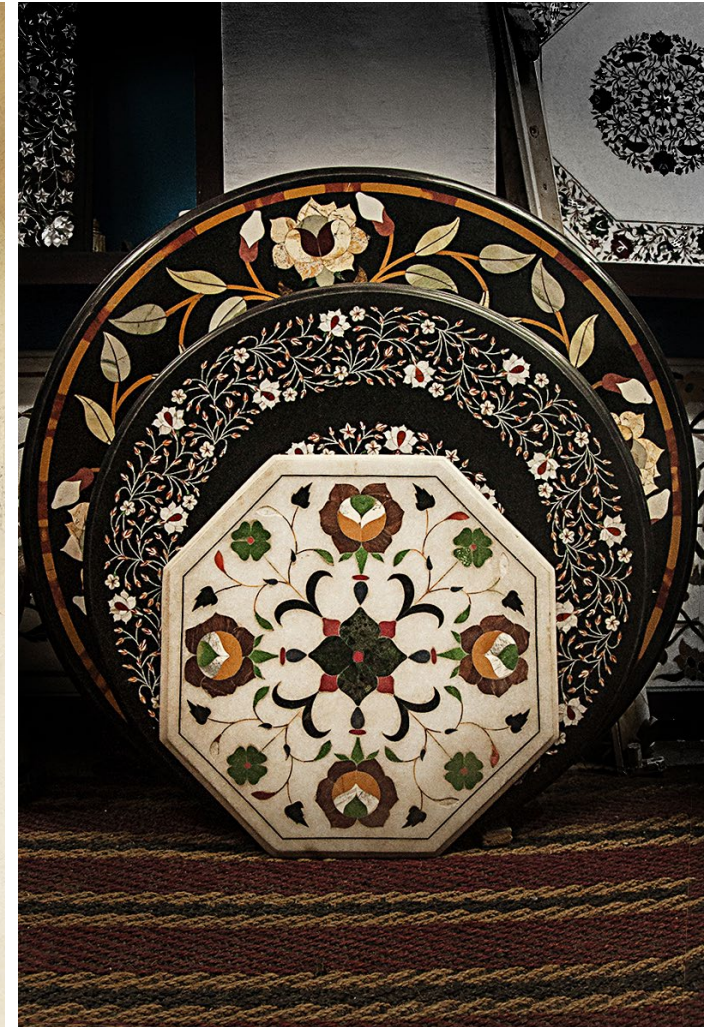
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Covers for antique knives are made of marble and decorated with color stone works.



Some plate articles are made as decorative pieces and some are used as luxurious grocery.



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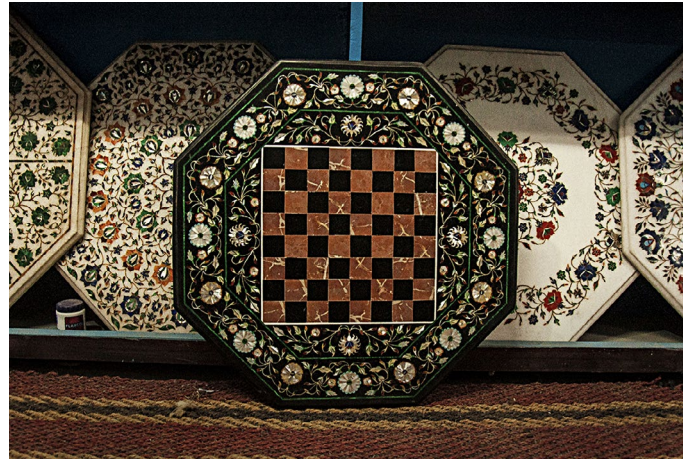
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Designed tiles are also made of marble and inlaid with stones used for decorations.



Parchin Kari is also made on different color marbles.

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Marble slabs are mostly used as decorative pieces.



A decorative marble table carved out from marble.

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## Panorama



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