

Design Resource

Taarkashi-Jaipur

The Art of Inlay Craft

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Mr. Antony William
NID, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/taarkashi-jaipur>



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Introduction

Jaipur is considered to be the storehouse of various arts and crafts, especially the metal crafts. Metal was used to embellish the products used by the royals. A number of crafts got patronized by the royals due to artistic uniqueness and magnificent work demonstrated by the craftsmen.

Inlay work on wood can be categorized under two heads:

- Wire inlay
- Sheet inlay

As the name suggests, wire inlay, also called as Taarkashi; is the technique where thin strips of wire are engraved on the surface of wood. Whereas, in sheet inlay, also called as Pacchikaari; patterns are cut in sheet and then pasted on wood with the help of small and thin nails.

Taarkashi is believed to have come from Mainpuri, Uttar Pradesh. The craft was patronized by the royals of Jaipur and Amber. Sawai Jai Singh, during his regime invited Sri Sarwan Lal Misra a master craftsman from Mainpuri who started practicing and teaching this craft in Jaipur. Few people learnt the craft and carried the tradition forward. The craftsman traditionally made products for the royal families.

Vishwakarma Industrial area is around 20 km from Jaipur toward Sikar. The place is highly dominated by huge industries dealing in steel, wood etc. In this place a small family unit has been working in the Taarkashi craft from past 30-35 years. The unit is headed by Shri Hari Shankar Sharmaji, along with his four sons (field research conducted in the year of 2012).

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The thin brass wires that embellishes the wooden surface.

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Floral and geometrical motifs made on a sculpture of an Elephant.



Skilled artisan involved in inlay work.

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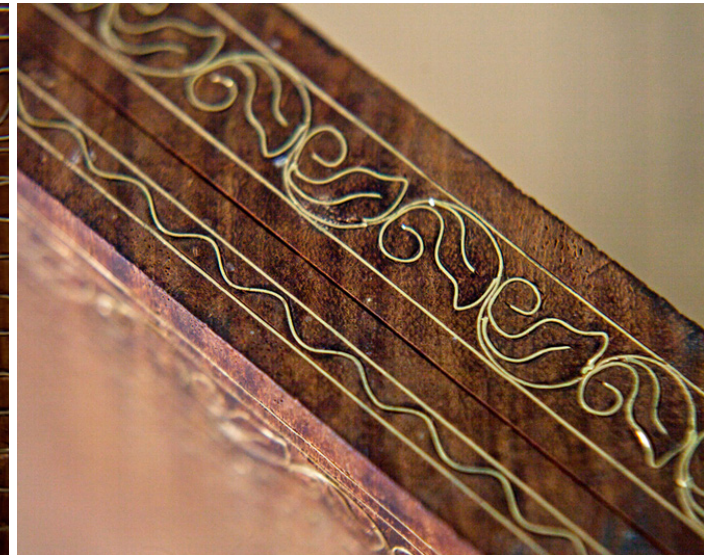
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Traditional Jaali motif on the jewellery box.



Leaf motif created on the side walls of jewellery box.

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People and Place

The craft is not a native of Rajasthan but brought from Uttar Pradesh therefore there are not many families practicing the craft. In Jaipur initially only four persons learnt this craft and then started practicing it in their vicinity. At present there are about four families and fifteen individuals practicing this craft in Jaipur. These families are well regarded and belong to Jangid community, who are supposed to deal with wood. The skills are transferred to the younger generation by the elders.

Having migrated from Uttar Pradesh the craft has no specific region of practicing. It was learned by four people who settled in different parts of Jaipur and started practicing the craft in their house. Today the craft is practiced in Vishwakarma Industrial Area, Gopalpura Bypass, Bani Park and Murlipura in Jaipur, Rajasthan.



Artisans arranging the tools and product in his workshop

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View of the workplace.



Father of Shri Hari Shanker ji, who made products in Taarkashi for the royal family of Jaipur



Shri. Hari Shanker ji making wires to be inlayed in the wood



Mr. Mukesh Sharma ji making Taarkashi products.

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Tools and Raw Materials

• Tools:

The tools used are both hand drawn/ used and electric driven. The main tools used are:

Cutting Machine:

The wooden planks brought from the market are cut in desired size using a cutting machine.

Gunia (Right Angle):

This is used to mark the corners and edges at a right angle. The marking is used in cutting of wood as well and also in the inlay of wire.

Prakaar (Compass):

It is used to draw circles and semi-circles as required by the design. It is also used to mark the distance between lines to make a grid.

Chimti (Forceps):

It is used to straighten and handle the thin strips of coiled wires

Kainchi (Scissors):

This is used for cutting metal sheets into wires.

Pakad (G-Clamp/ Vice):

This tool is used to clamp the wooden block to the working table while inlaying so that it does not move from its place.

Silli (Sanding Stone):

Sanding stone is used to sand the wood after the wire is inlaid to bring the surface of the wire and wood to the same plane. It is also used in the sharpening of other tools.

Hataudi (Hammer):

Hammer is used to carve out the design on the wood by gently beating on the chisel. It is used for inlaying the metal wire into the wood. Different kinds of hammers are used for different purposes. These hammers are mostly square and circular headed.

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Cheni(Chisel):

Chisels of different shape are used to engrave the wooden block. The size of the chisel is small which make them easy to be handled.

Drills:

Used in drilling purpose to make holes.

Patri (Scale):

It is used to mark straight and parallel lines on the wood and metal.

Randa (Planer):

It is used to plain/smoothen the surface of the wood in manufacturing and finishing.

Bharmikamani (Hand Drill):

It is used to drill holes for joineries.

Buffing Machine:

It is an electric operated motor for final finishing of the surface.

• Raw Materials:

Raw materials used are

Wood:

Shesham wood is used mostly due to its properties like closed pack grains, has natural oil, is heavy, moderately coarse and has uniform texture. These characteristics make the engraving and placing of wire easier. It has low rate of getting chipped off while cutting and engraving. The wood, due to the presence of oil has dark color which gives sharp contrast with the brass or copper wire. The wood is brought from Uniyaro ka Raasta in Transport Nagar.

Metals Sheets:

The inlay is done with metals mainly brass, copper, silver and occasionally gold. The sheets of metals are brought from Tripolia Bazaar.

Polishing wax:

The final product is polished using polishing wax.

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Hammers with small heads make it easy to beat on thin wires.



Compass is used for marking while cutting or drawing on the wood or metal

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Different types of chisels and other tools used in Taarkashi



Tools are stored in a wooden box with sections in it, which segregates different tools from each other.

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Raw material and partially completed products are kept in racks to avoid damage



Various tools used in Taarkahi are kept properly after use



Big chisels for cutting and shaping the wood



Brass sheet and thin strips cut from it.

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Blocks of Sheesham wood to be used in making products



Machine used for cutting and planing the wood.

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Various small chisels, forceps, awl etc. are used in Taarkashi works



A huge lathe machine used to turn woods

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Various machine are used to cut, drill and make joints in wood Saw for cutting wood wood

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Wood marker, sandpaper and saw dust are used for different purposes during the process



After rubbing the surface with stone, Fevicol, and saw dust is mixed together to make putty. This putty is applied using the metal strip.



Small blocks used to print designs on the wood



Fevi quick used to join scraped wood

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Making Process

The process of wire inlay involves a lot of steps. Following are the major heads under which the product can be classified:

- Seasoning of the wood
- Cutting of the wood
- Preparation of the metal strips
- Marking
- Engraving
- Inlaying
- Leveling
- Filling
- Scraping
- Buffing

Seasoning of the Wood:

The wood cut from a log contains high percentage of moisture which has to be removed for better results. Drying or seasoning is the process of removing the moisture from the wood. For this purpose the planks of wood are stacked in a covered place, keeping enough space in between two planks and the ground for the air to pass. The planks are exposed to natural air and protected from direct sunlight and rain. Seasoning takes around 6-7 months, but more the time given, better is the seasoning. Seasoning prevents the wood from developing cracks in it.

Cutting of the Wood:

The seasoned wood is cut to the required shape and dimension according to the product to be made. Depending on the design to be inlaid/ incorporated, the product is either completed before inlaying or first the inlay is done on separate parts and then the parts are joined together to form the product.

Preparation of the Metal Strips:

For the strips to be inlaid first marking is done on the sheet of metal. Approximately 1 inch wide strips are marked on the sheet of brass, copper or silver. According to the marking strips are cut out with the help of scissors. This cutting is done free hand without any marking. With the help of hammer, one side of the edge is beaten to make it sharp. This side is cut with the help of scissor having a width of approx. 2 mm. These thin strips of wire are called as taar and used for inlay. The wires are further straightened with the help of a Chimti.

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Marking:

The design and pattern to be made on the product are either drawn directly or printed on a paper and pasted on the surface of the wood. The method changes according to the number of pieces or the shape of the product. Mainly the artisans draw the design by hand using scale, compass and right angle. The designs and patterns made are mainly in grids which are marked on wood with the help of marking tool. Parallel lines are drawn with the help of a marker and right angle. With the help of compass equal distances are marked and a grid is drawn. Once the grid is made the patterns are set in accordingly.

Engraving:

Once the layout and pattern making is done on the wood the craftsman starts engraving the design with the help of a half-round chisel and hammer. The depth of engraving is around 1 mm which is less than the width of the prepared wire so that the wire fits in tightly. In case of intricate designs the entire pattern is not chiseled at one go as the wood starts chipping off. To prevent this, a small part of the design is chiseled and the wire is inlaid and the process is repeated to complete the design pattern.

Inlaying:

The wire is held and moved with one hand along the contour of the design and constantly hammered with another hand. The prepared wire is used continuously till it gets over. The sharp edge of the wire is inlaid in the wood while the thick edge remains on the top. When the wire inlay is complete the excess wire is cut either with hammer or broken by twisting the wire in hand.

Leveling:

After the design is complete by inlaying the wire, the product is sanded with Silli to make the surface even.

Filling:

Burada is the saw dust of the same wood is mixed with fevicol and water. This mixture is applied all over the product with the help of a metal blade. The product is then kept in the sun for drying. This helps in filling the cracks, grooves and spaces left while engraving or chipping of wood.

Scraping:

After filling and drying the product is scraped with the blade to remove all the excess Putti from the surfaces. Once the product is scraped 100 number sand paper is used to rub the surface. This process is done to give the surface a smooth finish.

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Buffing:

The product is thus given the final finishing by buffing. Buffing includes the use of two kinds of buff pads:

- Cutting pad (used to give a good finish)
- Shining pad (to give a lustrous look)

Once the product is buffed it is rubbed with a cotton cloth containing wax polish. This not only saves the surface of wood but also enhances the shine.



The design pattern is marked on the wooden plank either by blocks, or by drawing it by hands.



Thin grooves are made using different shapes of chisels

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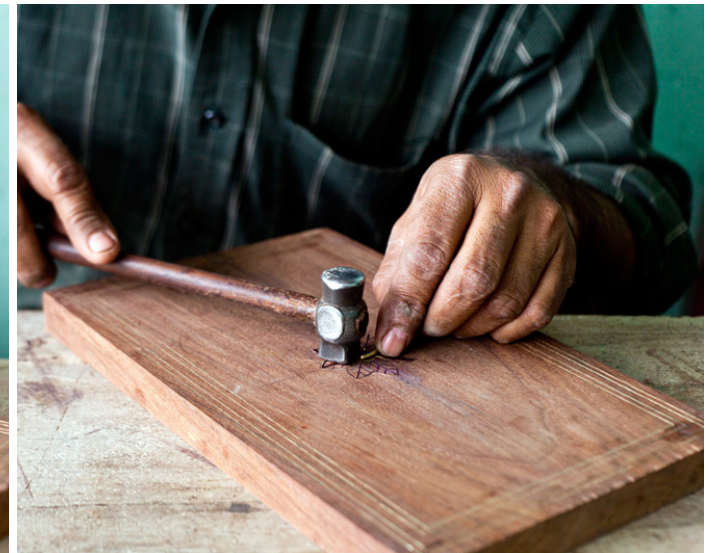
Sharpening the edge of metal wire.



The metal wire is inlayed into the grooves with the help of gentle hammering.



The circular grooves are made using half round chisel.



After inlaying, overall hammering on the design is done in order to properly insert the wire.

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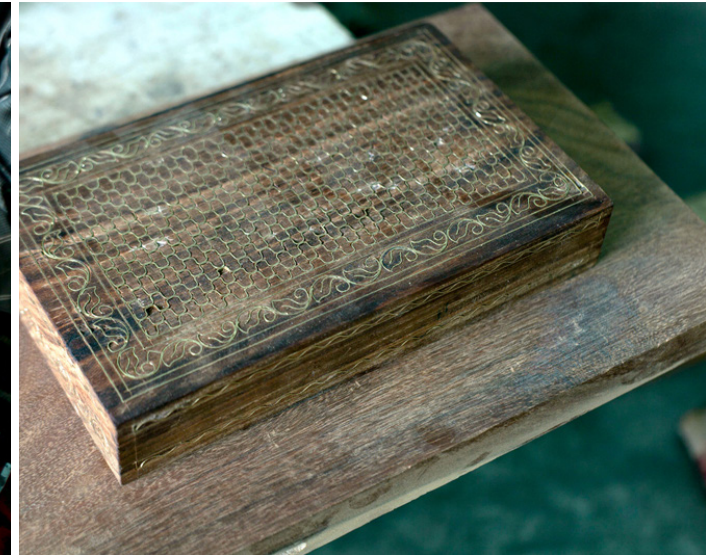
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Once the inlaying is done, wooden block is rubbed with sand stone to make the surface even.



The product inlayed with wire has gaps and grooves left on the surface.



A paste of saw dust mixed with Fevicol is applied on the surface to fill the cracks and gaps.



Finally, the product is smoothed with sand paper.

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The product is then applied with wax to give shine



The final product in Taarkashi

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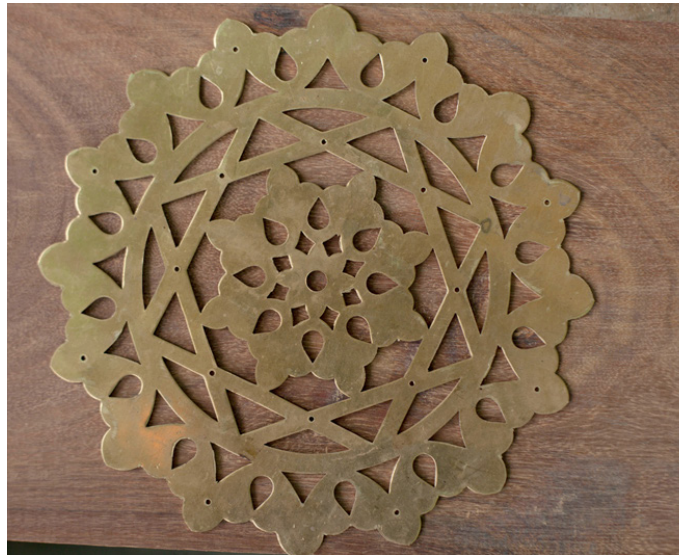
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Products

The products made in Taarkashi are Ash trays, key chains, mirror frames, bangles, earrings, cufflinks, buttons, jewellery box, pen stands, curtain rings, card holder, serving trays etc.

Traditionally the craft was used to decorate the chariots, wooden footwear (khadaons), doors, windows of temples, palaces etc.



Floral pattern cut on a metal sheet which is used to decorate the wooden surface. This is called as Sheet inlay



Menu Card holder for hotels, with border inlaid in floral motif.

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Intricately carved comb.



Beautifully embellished decorative item depicting elephant ride.

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Traditional Jewellery box.



A photo frame inlayed with silver wire and the wood gives an antique look.

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Design

Traditional designs are still practiced in the Taarkashi Craft. The patterns used in the craft are either floral or geometrical. These motifs are inspired from nature and architectural monuments.

The designs are made by the artisans themselves and engraved on the wood. Mainly tessellated jaals are made to cover the surface of the product accompanied by borders with small motifs of flower, fishes, horses, elephants, etc.

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