

Design Resource

## Zardozi Embroidery of Allahabad

The Art of Decorating Cloth

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Mr. Sushanth C. S., Mr. J. Antony William and Ms. Anushree Kumar  
NID, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/zardozi-embroidery-allahabad>



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## Introduction

**Zardozi:**

The traditional art of decorating the cloth by using various precious and semi-precious materials was called as Zardozi. The craft which was done painstakingly by the artisans was patronized by the Nawabs of the Awadh and other royal people. This distinguished style of traditional Indian embroidery have been learned and practiced from generation in various parts of Uttar Pradesh.

Zardozi embroidery is impressively ornamental and profoundly crusted gold thread work has been practiced in various parts of the country. It became popular among the affluent Hindu, Muslim and foreign people. Zardozi is believed to be one of the oldest and most lavish embroidery styles in India. The delicately hand created work is treasured since time immemorial. Today, several families in Varanasi, Agra, Lucknow, Rampur, Bareilly and Farukabad have revived this old craft to supply exquisite zari embroidery works.

**Place:**

Allahabad is a major district of Uttar Pradesh. It is one of the most holy cities of India and a major center for the Kumbha Mela. Located towards the south of the state the district is a hub for tradition, culture and art. Dariyabad is a small place situated 15 km from the main city on the bank on river Yamuna. The place is dominated by Muslims who are involved in the traditional craft of Zardozi. Allahabad is one of the main centers for Zardozi work apart from Lucknow, Varanasi etc.

Zardozi embroidery is hand-stitched embroidery done mainly by the Muslim men. Needle, the main tool used in the process has a hook at the tip which runs up and down through a tightly pulled cloth over a large wooden frame. This form of embroidery involves the use of both the hands, one above the cloth which holds the needle and picks the material and the other from below which ties the stitches. The final exquisite product is an outcome of tremendous skill and lots of patience.

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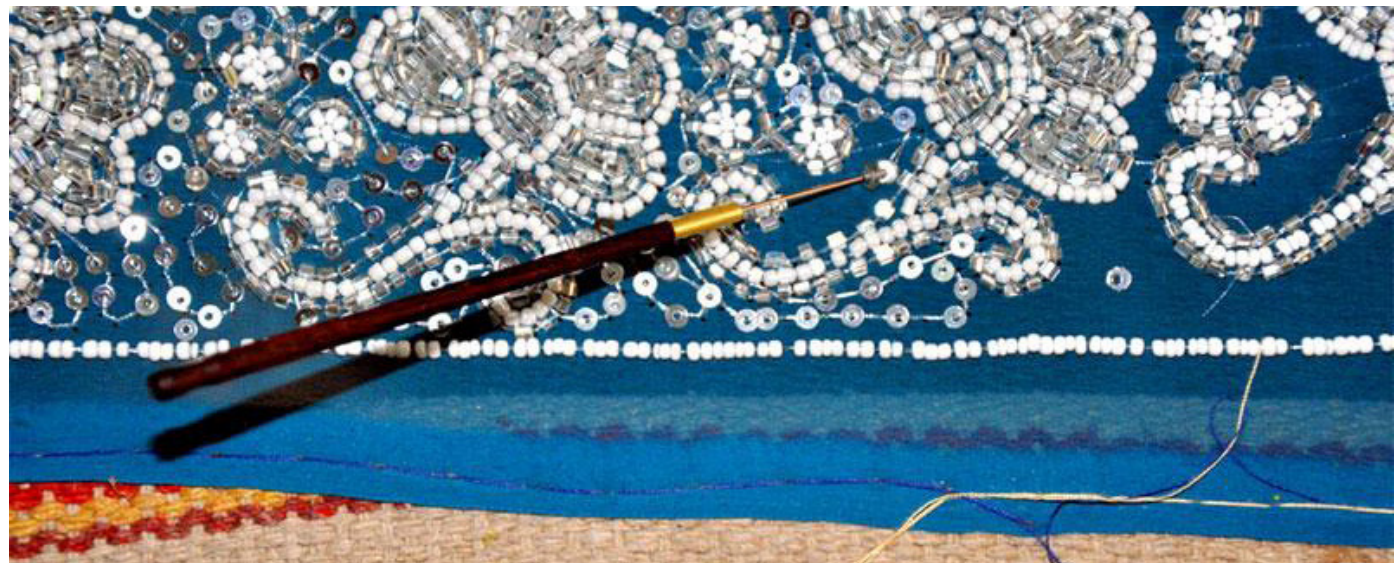
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Cloth beautifully decorated with precious and semi-precious stones.



Skilled artisans involved in embroidery.



Elaborate work created using simple tools.

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Heavy work done on Ghaghra choli- ethnic dress ideal for special occasions.



Master craftsman displaying his work.



Aesthetically appealing design created over red background.



Closer view of intricate design.

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Craftsman with his artisans.

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## Tools and Materials

**Tools:**

Different tools used are as below:

**Adda (Wooden Frame):**

It is a wooden adjustable frame consisting of four wooden bars. The cloth on which the embroidery is supposed to be done is stitched on the two horizontal bars and stretched. It is then fixed tightly and locked on the other two vertically parallel bars. This prevents the cloth to move while working and also enables clear vision and faster movement of the tools.

**Aari (Needle):**

Needle is the main tool in the Zardozi embroidery. It has a hook at the tip and wooden handle at the back. For Zardozi work 10 no. needle is required. The cost of needles range from Rs. 5 - Rs. 10/-, depending on the quality of handle. The needles are also available with plastic and iron handle.

• **Raw Material:**

The raw materials required for making Zardozi embroidery are procured from the local market in bulk and stored for later use. The materials used are as following:

**Gold and Silver Threads:**

Originally the embroidery of Zardozi was done by using real gold and silver threads. These threads were made by the craftsmen themselves in the small workshops at their homes. The blocks of metals (gold and silver) were melted and pressed through iron sheets having perforations to make thin wires.

The size of the perforations varied according to the requirement of the threads. Simple plain wire is called as Badla. These Badlas are sometimes wrapped around a thread and is called Kasav. The twisted wire is called as Nakshi.

**Metal Wires:**

In recent times the original gold and silver has been replaced by metal wire made out of copper and resham threads. Anchor threads are also commonly used these days.

**Dabka and Sitara :**

Dabka and Sitara are used as embellishments in the Zardozi embroidery. These are spring kind of threads. They are cut into small size and used as per the requirement. Sitara are small spangles, golden or silver color.

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### Kardana and Poot ki Mooti (Beads):

Artisans also use beads as and when required. These beads come in different shapes and sizes and are named accordingly. The glass beads with cylindrical structure are called Kardana and very small spherical beads are called Poot ki Mooti.

### Shiny stones:

These stone which resembles like diamonds are used to embellish the product. These are available in different shapes, sizes and colors. Fevicol is used to paste the shiny stone on the cloth. Tracing paper is used for tracing the motifs.

### Kadiya (Chalk Powder):

It is used in the solution for tracing the motifs. Mitti ka tel (Kerosene Oil) is used to mix with chalk powder.



Poot ki Mooti beads are used to embellish borders and all over sari.



Kasav is the gold colored thread used to wrap around the plain thread locally called Badla.

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Aari (Needle) plays a major role in embroidery work.



Types of precious and semi-precious stones.

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Dabka- A spring kind of thread.



Kasav in different shining colors.



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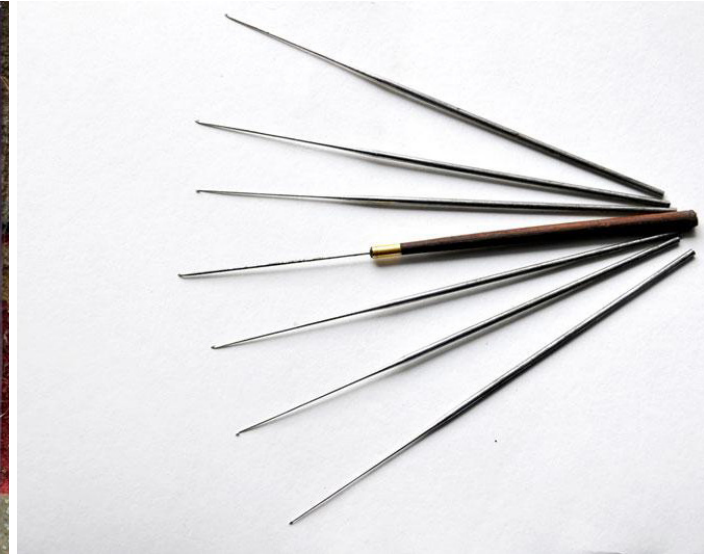
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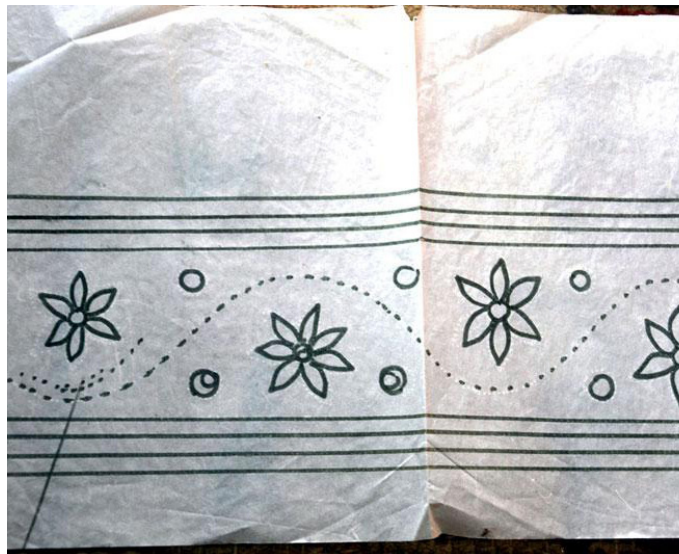


Silk threads in various colors.



Different types of needles used as per the requirement.

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Tracing paper used as reference to create motif.



Tracing paper with another motif.

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Kardana- dark colored shining beads.

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## Process

Zardozi is the work of a skilled hand of the artisans and their creative designs. The process of Zardozi is divided into following steps:

- Tracing
- Setting of Adda
- Embroidery
- Finishing

### Tracing:

The process of embroidery starts with tracing the motifs on the plain cloth. The motifs are first sketched on a tracing paper or butter paper and small holes are made on the outlines of the designs using a needle. Thereafter the cloth is placed on a flat surface and the tracing sheet is placed on the position the motif is required. Artisans either use a mixture of neel and kerosene or chalk power and kerosene. A cloth dipped in either of the two solutions is rubbed on the khaakha (tracing sheet) so that the solution seeps through the holes and reaches the cloth. Thus the designs get traced on the cloth. This process is called as Chapaai and is done by either men or women who are referred as Chapai wale/ wali.

### Setting the Adda:

It is wooden frame on which the cloth to be embroidered is stretched tightly making it suitable for working. This frame has adjustable knockdown bars resting on four stools or post at four corners. The frames can be adjusted according to the width of the cloth. These frames are large and mainly made up of sheesham as it is strong, but sometimes bamboo is also used as a substitute. One frame can accommodate 4-6 artisans sitting on both the sides. The height of the frame is 1.5-2 feet above the ground. The artisans sit either on floor or cushions. If the design is small, then a smaller metal frame can also be used instead of the wooden planks.

### Embroidery:

The cloth to be embroidered is first stitched to the Patti (thick cloth) attached to the adda. Thereafter with the help of aari (needle) the embroidery is initiated. The hook at the tip of the aari enables the artisan to pass the threads both above and below the fabric. The needle works same as a sewing machine. This method of embroidery is highly time consuming and therefore expensive too. Depending on the intricacy it may take a day or a month to complete a design.

### Finishing:

Once the embroidery is done extra threads are cut and the cloth is taken out from the adda. It then goes for washing and finally gets ironed and packed and then sold in the market.

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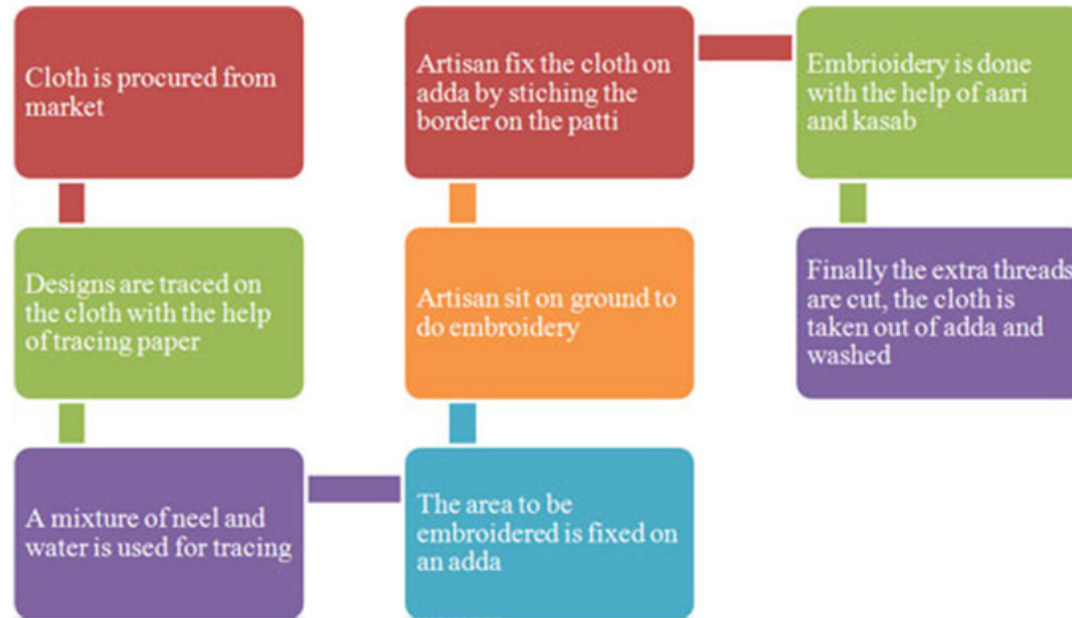
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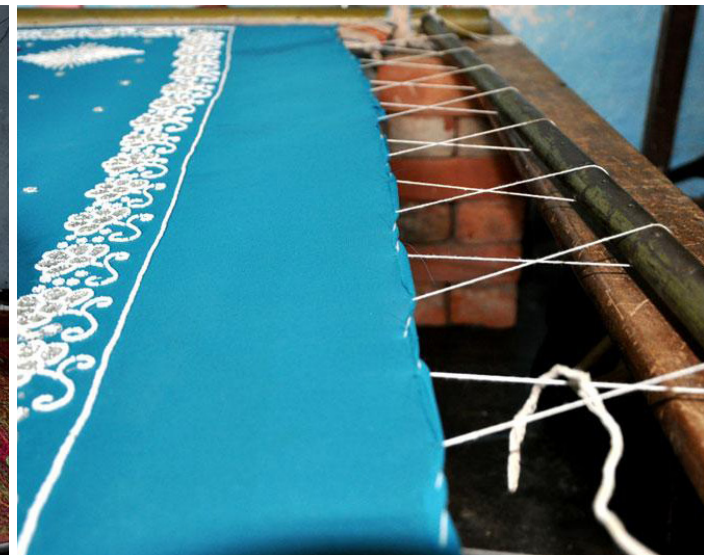
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Artisan stretching the cloth on a wooden frame.



The stretched cloth is then knotted to the frame with cotton threads.

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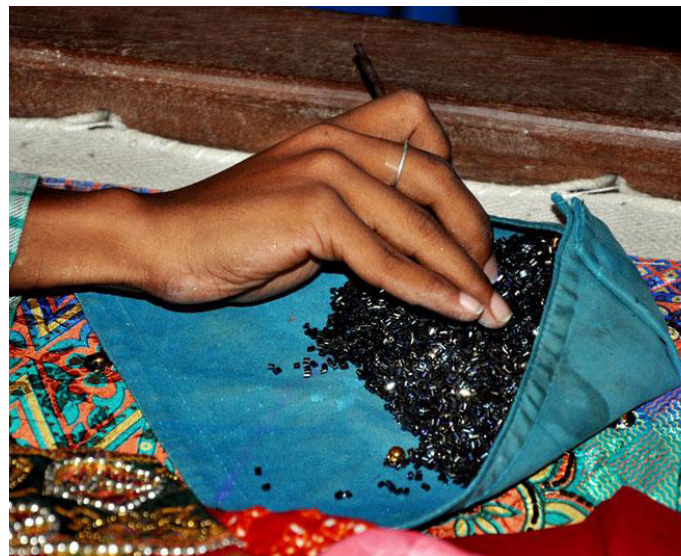
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Adjusting the wooden frame as per cloth length.



Artisans involved in Zardozi work on a plain sari.



Loading beads into the needle.



The threads and beads are embroidered as per the motifs.

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Embroidery is done with high concentration.



Stitching the loaded beads.



Needle works the same way as a sewing machine.



Highly adorned product ready for the market.

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## Products

Zardozi has always been a possession for elite. It was used to decorate the garments, furnishing and accessories of the royals. These days Zardozi has found way into various bridal dresses, men coats and other fashion accessories. It is also used to embellish products i.e. purses, belts, handbags, brooches, cushion covers, curtains, wall hangings table covers, boxes etc. Now-a-days Zardozi is even done on printed fabrics as to enhance the outlines and certain areas.

Since the craft has Mughal origin; the motifs are also inspired from the same culture. The designs comprised of floral patterns, paisley, geometrical patterns, jaalis etc. With the change in time many new designs have been added according to need and demands of the customers/ market. But still traditional motifs are preferred largely on expensive products. Other major product made is banners with religious saying embroidered on it. These are done on velvet or shaneel cloth. The ayate are embroidered, framed and placed in mosque or homes.



Printed motifs add value with precious stones and gems.



Heavily embroidered matching blouse.

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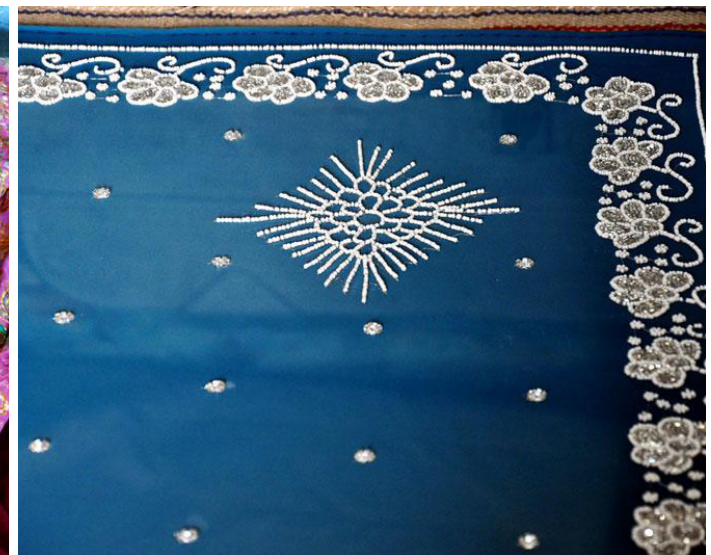
Plain sari decorated with Poot ki Mooti.



Floral motif with circular and cylindrical stones.



Embroidery enhances the outlines.



Floral motif filled with glittering beads.



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Magnificent work done on Lahenga ideal for wedding-wear.



Beads are used according to the background color.



Sparkling beads in attractive border.

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## Contact Details

This documentation was done by Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Mr. Sushanth C.S., Mr. J. Antony William and Ms. Anushree Kumar at **NID, Bengaluru**.

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

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