

Design Resource

Silver Filigree - Cuttack, Orissa

Silver Wirework

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Hariharasudan T.
NID, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://dsource.in/resource/silver-filigree-cuttack-orissa>



1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
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Introduction

Filigree (filigree or filigrann or filigrene) is a delicate kind of jewellery metalwork made with twisted threads usually of gold and silver. The English word filigree derives from Latin “filum” meaning thread and “granum” grain, in the sense of small bead.

Filigree is an ancient art form with a rich history from the Greeks and Phoenicians to contemporary designs. This exquisite, lacy metal technique can be traced back 5000 years. It is one of the oldest and most beautiful art forms developed by man. Archaeological finds in ancient Mesopotamia indicate that filigree was incorporated into jewellery since 3,000 BC.

The filigree craft was advanced to its highest perfection by the Greeks and Etruscans from the 6th to 3rd centuries BC, both in design and form and at some point in time, cross-cultural influence led to the craft reaching the shores of the Indian Sub-Continent. The earliest evidence of filigree ornaments in India are in Andhra Pradesh are the round filigree ear pendants in gold datable to the early Kakatiyan / Chalukyan period i.e. 10th to 11th Century AD and small round flat gold discs, with gold filigree work on the rim datable to the 17th Century, Vijaynagara period in the Andhra Pradesh State Museum. Some of the famous centers of the silver filigree work in India are Cuttack in Orissa, Karimnagar in Andhra Pradesh, Srinagar in Kashmir, Tiruchirappalli in Tamil Nadu, Agartala in Tripura, Kotah in Rajasthan and Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala.

Silver filigree is a style, which may be of two types, ornamental and decorative. Fine pliable threads of metal are curled, twisted and plaited, then united at their points of contact with each other, by means of gold or silver soldering with the help of a blowpipe to make the desired object. Techniques such as nipping, plaiting, jointing, piling, filling, and knitting are used in making filigree jewellery.

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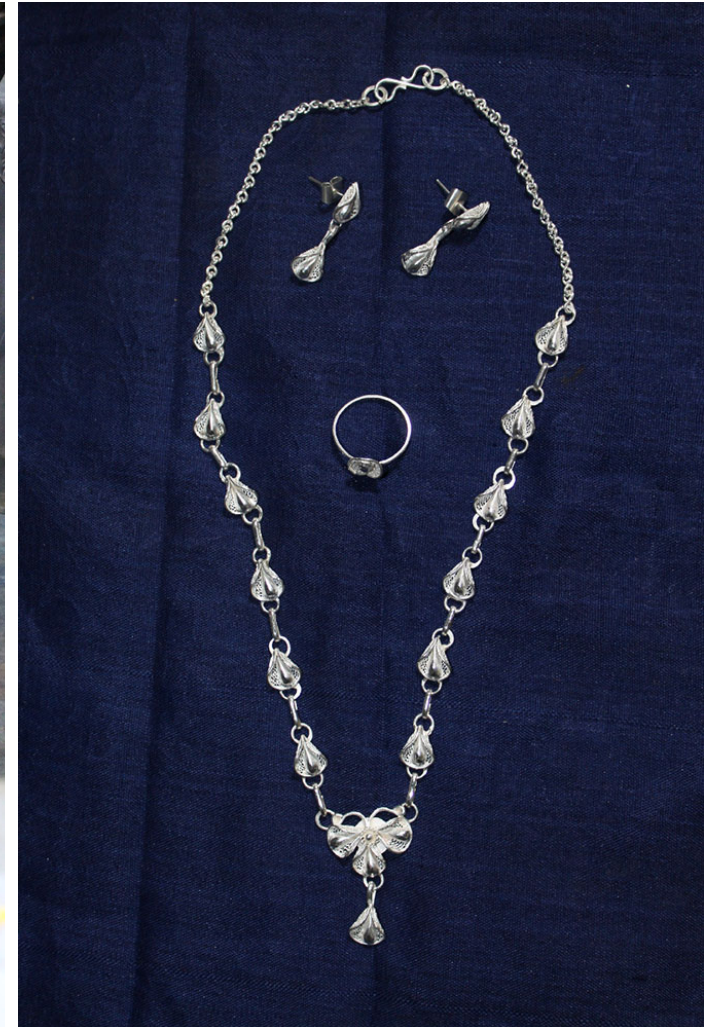
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The leaf shape designs are created to fill the gaps while working.



A beautiful silver Jewelry set is intended with modern designs.

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Artisan involved in silver heating process.



Silver is beautifully transformed into intricate flower design.



Traditionally made silver earring.

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Tools and Raw Materials

Tools and raw materials used for Silver Filigree are as follows:

- **Silver:** Silver biscuits are the main raw material used in the process.
- **Iron Tongs:** These are holders used to hold crucibles while casting process and also for safer and easier handling.
- **Chisel:** It is used to cut the silver wires or biscuits to the required size.
- **Hammer:** It is used to straighten the silver wires or strips.
- **Tweezers:** It is used in making intricate shapes using thin silver wires.
- **Files:** It is used to smoothen the rough surface.
- **Brush:** It is used to clean the products from dust.
- **Flame Torch:** It is used in soldering the silver pieces.
- **Pipe Blower:** It is used to direct the flame towards the point to be soldered.
- **Cutter:** It is used to cut the silver strips.
- **Various Punches:** It is used to make semi sphere-shaped objects for design.
- **Dies:** It is used to make a flat shape into a curved shape.
- **Rolling Machine:** It is used to produce thin wires of various sizes circular or flat shaped.
- **Silver Dust:** It is used during soldering so that the bonding between the joints is firm.
- **Anvil:** It is used as a platform to shape the objects.

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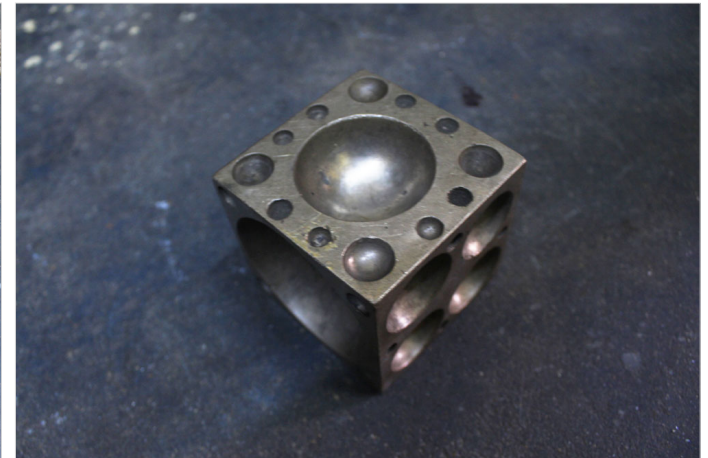
Silver wire is the basic raw material used in the process.



Torch burner is used to heat the silver for shaping.



Iron holders are used for safer and easier handling.



Kansula box is used for making the sheets into curved shapes.

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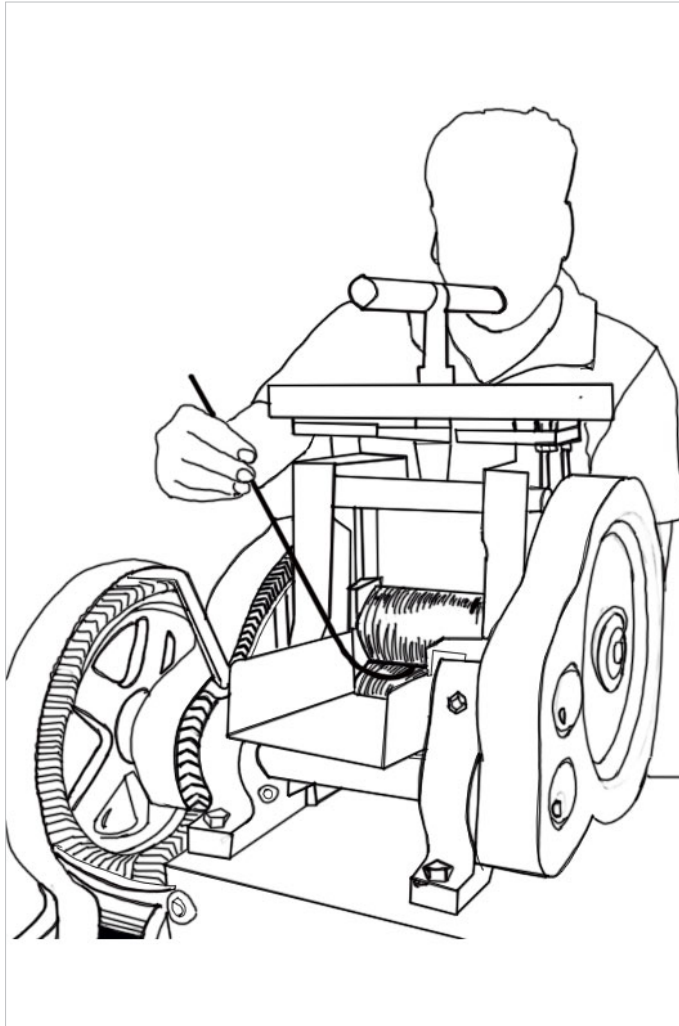
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Boring machine used to resize the silver rods as per the requirement.

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Making Process

First, hand-drawn sketches of the designs are made. The process starts with the heating of raw silver and converting them into a silver rod. The rod is then passed through a wire-drawing machine, and a cross-section of silver rods is pulled to extend the length and reduce the cross-section. In Cuttack, silver wire is used to get the flat section of pulled wire is widely used. The size of the wire is based on the product being made. Thin wires are then pressed using manual tools to make them straight.

Thick wires are used to make the outer frame or rib of the product.

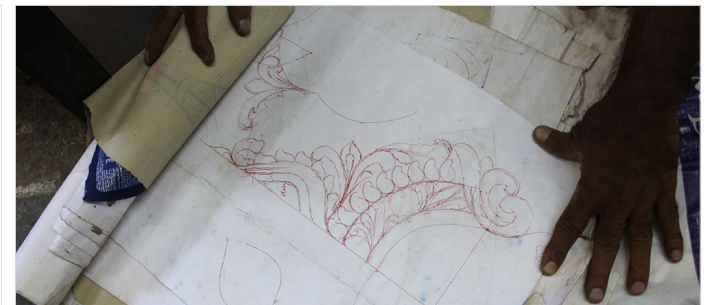
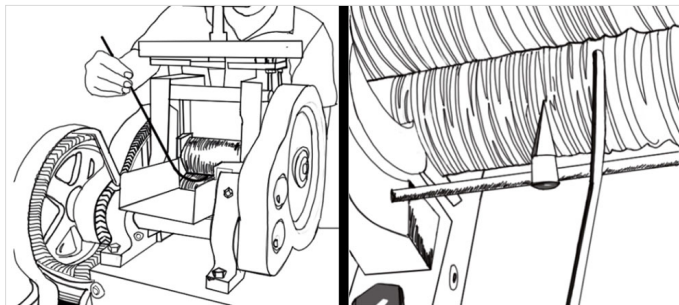
After making, the frame is matched on the reference sketch to check its correctness of size and shape. The frame is then soldered and cooled in plain water.

The smaller articles are directly moulded into various designs. For larger ones, smaller components are made and pieced together. Once the frame is ready, the real filigree work starts within the frame.

Thin wires are rolled or folded or twisted using a pair of tweezers, depending on the design and fitted inside the interspaces within the frame to complete the design. The distinction comes from the contrast of the thick ribs, against the fine granular surfaces, bringing out the exquisite artistry of the design.

The design is then hammered to make it flat and uniform. Silver dust and borax powder is sprinkled on the piece before soldering.

The finished piece is heated and cooled. The final touches of filing, polishing and finishing are done to attain luster.



With the help of Wire-drawing machine, cross section of silver rods are pulled to extend length and reduce cross section.

Design motifs drawn on the sheets.

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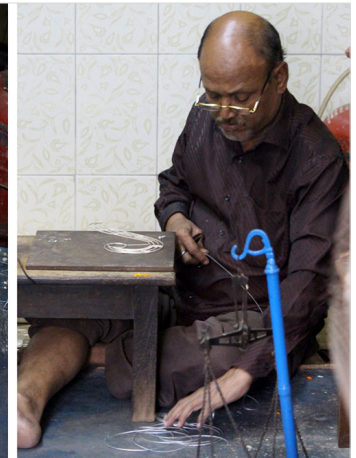
Artisan making the basic structure for designing process.



The process of designing is continue until proper shape is formed.



The frame is annealed using heat to add strength to the structure.



Silver wire is twisted to make a design and inserts in the frame.

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The prepared design is inserted and pressed in to leaf form shape.



Maskala tools used to fix the wires inside the frame.



Small beads, made of silver are set in the projected frame.



After the wire is fixed, it is beaten in to the structure to fit compactly.

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Products

The silver is designed to create a range of products with intricate and magnificent motif patterns. Earrings, necklaces, bangles, rings and pendants are included in traditional products. Pooja items and decorative art pieces are created. Containers, lamp stands, flower baskets, boats and other fancy items are included in the distinct products.



Tribal design neckless set.



Silver filigree work used to decorate the God.

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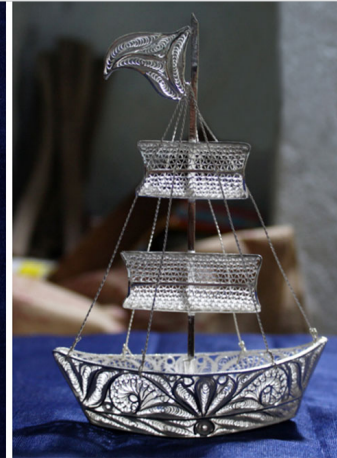
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Beautifully designed home decor.



Intricately designed neckless.



Flower shape earring made out of silver.

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Video



Silver Filigree - Cuttack, Orissa - Part 1



Silver Filigree - Cuttack, Orissa - Part 2

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This documentation was done by Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Hariharasudan T. at **NID, Bengaluru**.

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

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