

Zardozi Art

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The COVID pandemic has affected the various handicrafts India is known for. The recent India-China standoff has also affected Zardozi embroidery which made use of beads and gems imported from China. With reduced demand and increased production cost, the artists are fighting for survival.

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The word 'Zardozi' is made up of two Persian terms, Zar meaning **gold** and Dozi meaning **embroidery**. A Persian embroidery form, Zardosi attained its summit in the 17th century, under the **patronage of Mughal Emperor Akbar**. Zardosi embroidery work is mainly a specialty of Lucknow, Bhopal, Hyderabad, Delhi, Agra, Kashmir, Mumbai, Ajmer and Chennai.

Zardozi embroidery is beautiful **metal embroidery**, which once used to embellish the attire of the kings and the royals in India. It was also used to adorn walls of the royal tents, scabbards, wall hangings and the paraphernalia of regal elephants and horses. Zardozi embroidery work involves making elaborate designs, using gold and silver threads. Further adding to the magnificence of the work are the **studded pearls and precious stones**.

[Today craftsmen make use of a combination of copper wire, with a golden or silver polish, and a silk thread]

The process of doing Zardozi embroidery starts with the craftsmen sitting cross-legged around the Addaa, the wooden framework, with their tools. The tools include curved hooks, needles, salmaa pieces (gold wires), sitaras (metal stars), round-sequins, glass & plastic beads, dabkaa (thread) and kasab (thread). The second step in the process is to trace out the design on the cloth, made of fabrics like silk, satin, velvet, etc. The fabric is then stretched over the wooden

frame and the embroidery work begins. Needle is used to pull out each zardozi element and then, it is integrated into the basic design by pushing the needle into the fabric.