
Summary and Conclusions

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Embroidery is the embellishment of an existing fabric with threads, accessories and sometimes with other decorative elements as fishbone, feathers, horn, shells, beetle-wings, tassels, beads, coins, buttons, metal and mirror. A separate technique exists for metal or other precious threads, for non-pliable materials such as quills and for narrow decorative trims, usually cords and braids. These are laid on the fabric and couched down by stitching with another thread. (44)

Gold and Silver embroidery commonly known as Zardosi was an ancient Persian art. Zar in Persian meant gold and Dozi was embroidery. Today, the word 'Zardozi' carries a different connotation. Zardosi was also known as Karchobi, since it was done on karchob - a Persian word meaning a wooden frame. Zardosi work was done by hand using a regular needle, while Zari work was done with the use of a hooked needle, known as Aari.

Zardosi has evolved from the court tradition and taken its form in utilitarian and socio-religious paraphernalia. It is thriving in India with rapid growth in both domestic and export markets.

Zardosi embroidery as a handicraft is an enviable possession of our national heritage that contributes substantially to Indian economy. Jayakar Pupul, the doyenne of Indian crafts, once said, 'Craft' is an economic activity before it is a cultural activity. Zardosi as a craft is omnipresent in India, in urban as well as their rural hinterland in homogenous clusters. The traditional craft of Zardosi today, assumes variegated approaches and forms. The inquisitiveness in this craft, led the investigator to undertake the present study to document the methods, materials, designs and

techniques existing today. An attempt has also been made to understand the cultural and socio-economic background of the community of producers, their terms of trade and their felt needs.

Specific objectives of the study were.

1. To trace the origin and history of Zardosi craft.
2. To comprehend the socio-economic and cultural background of the Zardosi craftsmen
3. To delineate and register the materials, tools, equipments, methods and designs used in Zardosi embroidery.
4. To examine the trends in Zardosi for domestic and export market, highlighting its use in contemporary wear.
5. To examine the role of Government, Non-Government Organizations and Individuals in uplifting, preserving and reviving the Zardosi craft and craftsmen.
6. To identify the cause and effect of change in Zardosi embroidery craft.

Delimitation

The study was limited to the city of Lucknow, Bareilly, Surat and Howrah district of Kolkata

Methodology

The research was framed with the main aim to take up an intensive study on the present status of Zardosi embroidery craft, craftsmen and its market trends. The research design was formulated keeping in mind the considerations of resources and the specific objectives of the study. Descriptive research design with a multi-methodological integrated

approach was felt appropriate for the study. The survey design coupled with observations of the researcher, discussion with the opinion leaders of clusters and case studies was chosen to elicit apposite data.

Purposive sampling design was followed to select the respondents and the locale of study. Fifteen clusters were selected from the four districts of the selected states, and 237 persons including karigars, traders and exporters were interviewed personally. Ten case studies and four focus group discussions were held to collect authentic first hand information.

To collect relevant information on various aspects of the Zardosi embroidery and its production, semi-structured interview schedules were prepared for karigars and entrepreneurs. Pertinent questions were structured to facilitate discussion among the chosen group leaders. A talk-book with a micro-cassette recorder, a digital camera of resolution 3.2 mega pixels and drawing tools were employed for collection of data from field. Samples of raw materials, tools, stitch types and forms of Zardosi as presently existing were collected from producers, craftsmen and exporters.

To expatiate on the existence of Zardosi embroidery craft, the generated and collected data from the field and desk research through qualitative and quantitative methods in forms of observation notes, verbal responses, conversation, documents, photographs and specimens were synthesized and analysed. A holistic view of the existing methods, materials and designs of the Zardosi embroidery was achieved through a descriptive and pictorial documentation.

Major findings of the study

The results have been discussed based on the objectives of the study. Major findings of the study have been highlighted

Origin and history of the craft

The literature suggested the presence of gold embroidered garments during the Vedic age and references indicated this continuity in the epic period as well i.e. in Ramayana and Mahabharata. Several references of the presence of gold embroidered patterns in the cave temples, paintings, sculptures, and in traveller's account suggested its use in the ancient and medieval period too. Ain-i-Akbari has described an elaborate use of Zardosi work on various objects during Akbar's reign. The imperial workshops had skillful masters and workmen who had settled in this country from Persia to teach the people an improved system of manufacture. The Zardosi craft was patronized by the Mughals and later by the regional courts of Awadh and Bengal, Rajputana and Punjab, and the Marathas of Central India, all of whom experienced a short-lived, but often-brilliant cultural renaissance. The Zardosi craft suffered a set back during the reign of Firozshah Tughlak.

With the gradual inceptions of British rule, the Zardosi craft underwent changes at two levels. Firstly, as there was no longer royal patronage, both the *karkhana* and *riyasati kharkhana* systems completely crumbled down. Secondly, the craftsman felt the need of finding a market to sell the finished products. The expensive nature of the craft restricted its use.

The field investigations brought to light that very few *karigars* had a story to narrate about the beginnings of the Zardosi craft in their cluster, probably the craft was accepted more as a commercial activity than a

tradition and hence the culture did not penetrate deep. Moreover, ancestral lineage was almost absent amongst the native respondents of the selected places of study

In Lucknow, this delicate art was said to have started under the regime of Hazrat Yousuf, one of the messengers of God on earth, who was renowned for his beauty. Few crafts men claimed its presence during the time of early prophets. As narrated by the craftsmen in Bareilly and Lucknow the Zardosi work began in Iran where men made Gilaf - a cover for the Ka'bah Sharif in Mecca. Mohammed Yusuf Khan, 66 years old master craftsman from Bareilly narrated that this craft, which he learnt at the age of five from Shamshuddin Zariwala now in Mumbai had its beginnings in Egypt and France. The Zardosi craftsmen in Surat gave accounts of a traveller from Bukhara who taught this art to the villagers which would never let them go hungry Sheikh Abullah of Nalpur, Howrah district believed that this craft had originated in Persia and was imported to India during the Mughals, for their costumes

The citations of types of Zardosi prevalent in the earlier records lacked clarity. Some of the distinctive types as deciphered from the documented pictures and the review of literature suggested the existence of Karchobi work, Marori work, Badla, Kasab-tikki work, Bharat-karachi and Mina work prior to independence.

There existed diverse range of objects decorated mainly with metal thread and silk thread to supplement with the base fabrics as velvet, silk, net and wool. The Zardosi embroidered articles were many and were categorized as furnishing items, religious items, costumes, accessories and others. The motif organisation was highly stylized which included flora and

fauna, deities, mythological stories and paisley motifs in different shapes and sizes. The variety of embroidery materials used were kasab, kora, chikna, tikora, salma, sitara, katori, beetle-wings and precious stones

Profile of the entrepreneurs and karigars

The unorganized craft sector of Zardosi embroidery functioned broadly with four groups i.e. (i) Entrepreneur - Business owner (ii) Middleman - Thekedar (iii) Contracted Karigar - Workshop based worker and (iii) Sub-Contracted Karigar - Home based worker. The craftsman i.e. the karigar at the lowest end of the supply chain was the strength and spirit of the Zardosi craft. The craftsmen lived in a cluster of approximately 500 in a given place. It was important to study these subjects, who form the backbone of the industry.

The entrepreneurial activity was male dominated; nevertheless the female entrepreneurs did exist. The average age of the entrepreneurs ranged between 35 - 54 years of age. All the entrepreneurs were married; Indian nationals and natives of their land. They were conversant with the language of their state. National language Hindi was used by all of the entrepreneurs. Bareilly and Kolkata had higher percentage of Hindu entrepreneurs and the others followed Islam. Majority of the entrepreneurs lived in a nuclear family with an average family size of at least 3-4 members. The literacy level of the entrepreneurs varied; from no education to post-graduates. Majority of the entrepreneurs managed their business as proprietors. One fourth of the entrepreneurs had inherited the business. Majority of the entrepreneurs ventured into the Zardosi craft business at the age of 31-36 years. Few entrepreneurs had practiced this craft as karigars before they became entrepreneurs.

Slack season for export orders was from September to December while October - March was busy time for the domestic market. The variety, quality and quantity of work depended on various articles produced. It was revealed that the time prearranged for fulfilling an order would vary depending on the amount and type of work.

The designs for the production were sourced from trend magazines, artifacts, samplers, historic textiles and costumes or a ready design sheet available in the market. It was difficult to dispose off the rejected goods of export order even at lower prices or with possible changes made as the products made was culturally different.

Calendering machines were used by some of the entrepreneurs. The manual process of beetling, i.e. beating the embroidered kasab thread was prevalent. Computers were used by the exporters to handle accounts, designing, for invoice and packing list and as a means of quick communication with the buyer. Image transfer software for sample or product approvals was also used by the exporters.

The fabric for the product was provided by the buyer or the wholesaler as the case maybe and the work had to be completed in a given time period which ranged between ten days to a month for the export dealing and a week to ten days for the local dealing. Fabrics like Crepe, Net, Organza, Silk, Satin, Cotton, Tissue, Georgette and Brocade were used as base fabric, the exporters called these fabrics as gunjan, zubeida, dupion silk etc. The percentage of profit earned by the entrepreneurs in the export business was stated to range between 25-35 per cent of the total consignment, whereas for the domestic market the percentage of profit ranged between 20-25 percent.

The structure of the Zardosi craft industry though unorganized had a defined demand and supply perspective, which was found to be linked through a supply chain, involving several intermediaries for an export market as compared to the domestic market. The key determinants of the supply-side which has helped in sustaining the craft in the market were innovations in designs, supply of variety of raw materials which were locally available. However, availability of quality raw material at reasonable price was the need of the hour. The small entrepreneurs or self employed karigars needed to get together and make a joint purchase of raw materials in bulk to help in reducing the cost of production. The other supply-side potentialities identified during the field survey, was the skill up gradation of the karigars, the provision of institutional credit for capital investment and access to working capital through formation of co-operatives and a clean and hygienic work place with proper facilities need to be strengthened to achieve higher production and better products. The demand and supply side perspective were found to be related by mediating factors such as quality of entrepreneurship, workers productivity, domestic and export market, quality product and terms of trade.

The problems faced by the entrepreneurs were lack of finance, sourcing of matching threads and accessories, finding a good karigar. Some of the entrepreneurs felt the need to employ a person who could handle the designing and sampling for orders.

The Zardosi work was done both by contracted karigars and sub-contracted karigars. The data revealed that the karigars were all Muslims of Indian nationality and were natives of their respective land. Majority of the karigars were in the age group of 25-35 years. Only male karigars were

employed in the workshop while the females worked at home more often as a leisure activity, since they were not educated and moreover, had to strictly adhere to the purdah system. The contracted karigars had lower level of education, possibly because they could not afford to pursue higher education. Most of the contracted karigars had craft education from their ustads and only few inherited it from their father and relatives. The sub-contracted karigars learnt the craft from their family members and friends. The workshop where the karigars worked was a room with sufficient lighting, hardly any ventilation and just enough space for the karigars, to be seated on the floor around a 6-16 feet long Adda.

Zardosi craft served as the main and only occupation for almost all the karigars, and the other members of the family were also engaged in this craft. A karigar spent at least eight hours a day working on the Adda. The average monthly income of contracted karigar ranged between Rs.1501 - 3500, depending on skill levels, whereas the sub-contracted karigar on an average had an earning of Rs 500 - 2500. Besides this job they had to handle other household activities also.

Health problems commonly faced were weak eye-sight, backache, joint pain, and gastric trouble. The other problems were congested work space, no medical facilities or bonus.

Documentation of materials and methods of Zardosi craft

The principal product used for Zardosi was 'Zari' or 'Jari'. The types of Zari thread i.e. 'kasab', 'kalabattun' or 'tilla' manufactured in Surat were real Zari, imitation Zari and plastic Zari. There were a variety of other allied metal products used in Zardosi embroidery, which were produced as real and imitation materials. The various metal embroidery materials like

kora, kangri, nakshi, salma were produced following the same process of manufacture which has been documented. The winding step gave the material its characteristic appearance

The embroidery materials used today were metal threads, artificial silk and other threads. Accessories such as beads, sequins, pipes, crystals, stones, mirror, gota etc. were used to create a variety of textural effects. Due to localization of Zardosi craft the embroidery material utilized acquired an indigenous nomenclature.

Both Zari and Zardosi were done using the wooden frame, commonly known as Karchob and Adda in Lucknow and Bareilly, Dhadha and Khatia in Kolkatta and Khatla in Surat. The word Adda in fact meant the place of work where karigars sit together and embroider. It is now loosely used for the frame on which they do the embroidery. The single, double, triple or four legged support for embroidery frame was termed as Ghodi, tipai or paya. In kolkatta it would be a single legged bamboo unit which would often be permanently fixed on the floor. The other important tool was an Aari and needle in different sizes, each serving a specific purpose. Badla, embroidery done using flattened wire was accomplished without the use of Adda. Fatila, kauri, a wooden hammer with a dabber, scissors, clips, gaddi, inch tape, carbon paper, etc were some tools used. The Aari, a hooked needle was carved out of a darning needle or an umbrella or cycle spoke with the help of a stone and 'reti' a sharpener. This hooked needle was placed in a wooden holder called 'muthiya' with the help of 'pinvas' a hook installer, made of mild steel.

The cloth to be embroidered was held onto the Adda following an elaborate process, which required great precision. The tightening of cloth was known as 'tangarna' and involved more than one person to do. Tracing of design was done using a perforated butter paper known as chikna Tau in Lucknow and Bareilly, employing a mixture of kerosene with 'kharīa' (laphī) or 'safeda' (zinc oxide) 'khaka' was the term commonly used for a design sheet, which had designs of border patti(s), all-over pattern, buttis, buttas or corner designs. The products for export market were not always motif oriented, the emphasis was more on texture rather than design. The popular motifs for the domestic market were flora and fauna. Occasionally, geometric and human figures were used.

There were a number of variations seen in the stitches and it was very difficult for an individual to learn all and hence this was described by a karigar; like an ocean which is vast and deep. The stitches used were basic, e.g. satin, stem, running, couching or herringbone. Based on the embroidery materials used works created were known as Kashmiri kaam / Fancy kaam, Kundan ka kaam, Antique kaam, Poth Ka Kaam, Kat dana / Nalki ka kaam, Tikkī / Katorī ka kaam, Kasab Tikkī Ka kaam, Tille ka kaam, Calcutti kaam, Badla / Makaish, Chaalu kaam etc. It was noticed that the Calcutti kaam in Kolkata was known as maal ka-kaam or chumki work. Fevicol, gum or boiled rice water was applied on the wrong side of the fabric to fix the loose threads and furnish a neat appearance. Only finer fabrics were applied 'Charak' i.e. starch by stretching it on nailed wooden frame. A solution of fevicol and water was sprayed with the help of a sprinkler to render the fabric crispness and also retain its dimensions. Tilla kaam was given a beetling finish either manually or mechanically to set the threads in their place creating a neat, flat look and rendering it lustrous.

Trends in domestic and export market

Zardosi craft existed in various forms across the selected places. A utility product was always demand based. A difference in the market trends was observed in all the selected regions. The product categories and requirements in the export market differed with respect to the season and cultural differences. The Indian market for Zardosi was dictated mainly by occasion and festivals. Use of poth, tikki and katdana was more prevalent for the exports to Middle East, whereas resham-tikki ka kaam and maal ka kaam on saris and dress materials ruled the domestic markets. Caps, bags, emblems, badges, jackets, gowns, camisoles, purses, sandal uppers were few items in constant demand from the European countries, while the requirement of the Middle East was for purses, gowns, belts and curtains (yardages).

Upliftment, preservation and resuscitation of Zardosi craft

Visits to the respective Offices of Handicrafts in the selected places of study revealed that little efforts were directed towards upliftment, preservation and resuscitation of the craft. The investigator could not find any historic sample or documentation of the craft in terms of methods and materials in the government organizations. There were some co-operative and government bodies which existed physically but did not function.

The existence of voluntary bodies working towards the development of Zardosi craft was deficient in the selected places of study.

The private collections of individuals contained a large variety of Zardosi embroidered articles, however the technical details were not exhaustively documented. Individuals had made efforts towards resuscitation of the craft in their own way like holding exhibitions, using intricate designs

reflecting the royal elegance and using it in another art form. In addition, fashion designers today have elevated the craft of Zardosi to the status of a fashion statement.

Transformation in Zardosi craft

The causes and effect of change were identified. The existence of Zardosi in its variegated forms reflected the journey of this craft catering to the tastes of people. Zardosi craft was utility based and economically viable, and hence was not static. It has responded to the changes of the market, consumer needs, fashion and usage.

Earlier Zardosi craft survived due to patronage of the affluent and it was an exclusive preserve of the rich and the fashionable. today commercialization of the craft and its resurgence on the fashion scene has brought a boom in the export and domestic businesses. The work which was exclusive to the royal clientele has now evolved as a major item of trade. It has reached the masses irrespective of age, gender and stratum.

The hand technologies have evolved through time. Previously only needle was used but now-a-days use of aari has dominated the craft, since it was a faster method of production and cost effective also. The availability of a variety of raw material has played a key role in producing exquisite work. Mukeish a 'dead' craft in the 70's has regained its lost market in Lucknow but lost market in Surat due to automated application of 'chamki', which gives a similar look as badla and was cost effective too.

Progressing technologies have contributed to the change in production and marketing of Zardosi craft. The development of chemical compounds has assisted in production of non-tarnishing Zari threads, and its wide acceptance thus. Computers were used to handle designing and other jobs. It was a means of quick communication with the buyer.

Zardosi embroidery had a lesser spread earlier than today. The demand for Zardosi products has increased, but the quality of work has suffered, since cheap materials and quick techniques of embroidery were employed. Dogh / Vasli work prevalent then did not exist today. Moreover, in this age of cross commercialism and changes taking place at a fast pace in fashion world, nothing is consistent and hence the type of Zardosi work kept on changing. Yet, the growth of this craft was enduring.

Thus, to conclude, the Zardosi craft was patronized by the kings, queens, nobles and then by the rich and the opulent during the British period. It was a patron's creative pursuit. Its use suggested prosperity, supremacy and royal lavishness. The documented historic collections reflected the grandeur and workmanship of the bygone era.

The craft has regenerated itself over the years even in absence of patronage; today commercialization of the craft and increased sales has helped, to retain the karigars and the craft. The tradition of Zardosi craft has continued and expanded in demand for both domestic and export markets.

The Zardosi craft was dominated by the Muslim karigars, however the entrepreneurial activity was managed more by the Hindus. The entrepreneurs ventured into the Zardosi craft business in the early thirties. Karigars too had become entrepreneurs.

Zardosi craft now survives as profession and has become a means of livelihood for karigars and their families. The craft has seen a two way movement. On one hand families have left their traditional work and on the other hand there were new entrants practicing this extravagant craft.

A Zardosi karigar today has become more of a worker than a craftsperson. His role and sense of identity has been devalued from what it was earlier. Yet, the karigars have adapted themselves to the changing markets, fashion and consumer needs.

The sub-contracted karigars were working under exploitative conditions. They worked long hours, especially in the peak season, for low piece rates and with delay in payment in several cases. There existed a shift between status of karigar i.e. the same karigar was self employed at one point of time and contracted at another.

The workshop had poor ventilation and space. To add to the woes of working in unhygienic conditions were frequent power cuts which resulted in low performance and hence low wages. The karigars sat for long hours to accomplish their daily work and music served as a relaxing factor for karigars. The productivity of the male karigars was higher than the female karigars since frequent attention of the female was required by the family, which resulted in reorientation, reduced speed and inferior quality.

A majority of the children got their job through relatives or friends and they were hired on verbal agreements, as adults. The economic conditions, problem of growing unemployment and the social environment of these families forced them to engage their children in this profession, as they needed their income to supplement their family income.

Contemporary fashions have kept alive the Zardosi traditions leading it to a stage of unlimited popularity. Through commercialization of the craft, the age old Court and Temple embroidery has reached the common man. The contribution of fashion designers has elevated the status of craft to a fashion statement. They have added innovations in various products and that is why a lighter and flashier offshoot of traditional Indian

Zardosi now finds its way to fashion houses round the world. Consumer preferences for such products in India, Europe, U.S.A, Middle East and other countries has made this sector more competitive which has provided sustainable livelihood for the karigars.

The historically prestigious craft had a limited use of embroidery materials in pure gold and silver done on an unlimited variety of articles. Today, Zardosi was widely used on apparels, more often for marriage costumes and occasional wear. A lighter variety of Zardosi known as Zari work was common for semi-formals. Introduction of hooked needle – aari in Zardosi work has helped to increase the speed of work and generate additional styles. Zari embroidery work produced with an aari was cheaper than work done with the use of needle.

Innovations in accessories have helped in producing a variety in Zardosi. Synthetic, or tested Zari, had brought gold embroidery more easily to the masses, while losing out on finery and authenticity. However, it has become popular equally with the affluent and the underprivileged class of every community.

Localization in Zardosi embroidery craft that has brought some change in the terminologies for materials, methods, stitches and products made. The presence of technology was limited in the craft.

The market trends differed in terms of product categories and type of work with respect to occasion and festivals for the Indian market. The survival in a market totally depends on producing new and exclusive work. The dissolution of Quota regime is not seen as a threat for the business. The Zardosi embroidery craft had enormous business potential to stay in the market since Zardosi craft has been successfully sculpted into a marketable form.

Some suggestions given can be beneficial for the growth of the craft and craftsmen.

The craftsman needs to understand how a product looks, performs, its durability and its maintenance since the above factors contribute to the success of the product. There is a need to educate the craftsmen in this regard.

The efforts need to be directed towards the promotion and preservation of the craft. There is a need to develop a research and design centre to strengthen and revitalise the Zardosi craft.

The craftsmen should be motivated to form co-operative societies so that they have the benefits and say in the business.

5.1 HYPOTHESES GENERATED

The findings of the study have raised few questions which generate hypotheses that can be tested further. These are –

- There is no significant relationship between commercialization of Zardosi embroidery craft and improved standard of living of the karigars.
- There exists relationship between the skill of the karigars and design innovation.
- There exists no difference between the workmanship of karigars having formal training and the traditional karigars
- There is no significant contribution from the policies planned and the upliftment, preservation and promotion of the craft and craftsman.

- There exists relationship between the increase in demand of Zardosi embroidered products and quality of work
- Listening to music while working help to increase the productivity
- There is no significant relationship between the wages earned by the karigars and their age, sex.

5.2 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

- 1 The documentation of the Zardosi embroidery craft shall help to preserve and popularize it.
2. A historical and cultural study of the Zardosi embroidery craft would be useful to art lovers and academicians interested in the study of this textile craft
3. A study on the Zardosi Craft as it exists would provide an understanding of its production pattern which shall help in augmenting improved and alternative procedures for profitability.
4. The study can serve as a data-base to the Government for information on the subject and to lay policies for the benefit of the craftsmen.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A study can be conducted on the use of Zardosi in Indian cinema through generations
2. An in depth study on the manufacture of Zardosi embroidery materials and its testing can be conducted.