



**A STUDY ON THE PRESENT STATUS OF
ZARDOSI CRAFT OF SELECTED PLACES
IN INDIA AND ITS MARKET TRENDS**

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Summary

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 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.

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.

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

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. In all 237 persons including karigars, traders and exporters were interviewed personally following purposive sampling design.

Major findings of the study

The literature suggested the presence of gold embroidered garments since the Vedic age. 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, medieval and colonial period too. 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.

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. The literacy level of the entrepreneurs varied; from no education to post-graduates. Few entrepreneurs had inherited the business; few had practiced this craft as karigars before they became entrepreneurs.

The variety, quality and quantity of work depended on various articles produced. October - March was busy time for the domestic market while for export orders the slack season was from September to December. The use of technology in the post production process was prevalent. The structure of the Zardosi craft industry though unorganized had a defined

demand and supply perspective, was 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.

The Zardosi work was done both by contracted karigars (workshop based) and sub-contracted karigars (home-based). 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. The karigars received craft education from their ustads, friends, relatives and only few inherited it. 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.

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 sub-contracted karigar was less than the contracted karigar.

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.

The principal product used for Zardosi was 'Zari'. There were a variety of allied metal products used in Zardosi embroidery; other threads used today were artificial silk, acrylic and cotton. 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, Adda, Dhadha, Khatia and Khatla. 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.

There were a number of variations seen in the stitches used. A variety of embroidery materials were used to create innumerable work.

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.

Zardosi craft existed in various forms across the selected places. 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.

Little efforts were directed towards upliftment, preservation and resuscitation of the craft by the government organizations. 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.

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.

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. The availability of a variety of raw material has played a key role in producing exquisite work. Progressing technologies have contributed to the change in production and marketing of Zardosi craft.

Thus, to conclude, through commercialization of the craft, the age old Court and Temple embroidery has reached the common man. The contribution of fashion designers (Contemporary fashions) has elevated the status of craft to a fashion statement finding its way to fashion houses round the world making this sector more competitive, which has provided sustainable livelihood for the karigars.