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In the world of traditional Indian handicrafts, Aari work stands out as a true gem. This ancient form of embroidery has been passed down through generations, preserving its intricacy and beauty. Aari work, also known as "zardozi," is renowned for its meticulous detailing, fine threadwork, and the use of metallic threads to create stunning patterns and designs. In this blog post, we delve into the captivating world of Aari work, exploring its history, techniques, and the timeless appeal it brings to garments and accessories.

1. A Rich Historical Legacy: Aari work has a rich history that dates back centuries. Originating in the royal courts of Mughal India, this art form was highly valued and patronized by emperors and nobles. Over time, Aari work spread across the country, becoming an integral part of traditional Indian craftsmanship.

2. The Art of Aari Embroidery: At the heart of Aari work lies the technique of using a specialized hook-shaped needle, known as the "Aari needle," to create intricate patterns on fabric. Skilled artisans meticulously stitch threads onto the fabric, giving rise to beautiful motifs, floral patterns, and geometric designs. The use of metallic threads adds a touch of opulence and grandeur to the embroidery.

3. Versatility and Application: Aari work finds its expression in a wide range of garments and accessories. It adorns the elegance of bridal wear, embellishes the beauty of sarees, enhances the charm of dupattas, and enriches the intricate details of traditional attire. Additionally, Aari work is also used to create exquisite home decor items like cushion covers, wall hangings, and table runners.

a) Zardozi: Zardozi is a prominent type of Aari work that utilizes metallic threads, such as gold or silver, to create intricate designs on fabric. It is often associated with opulent and luxurious embellishments on bridal wear, sherwanis, and formal attire.

b) Resham Work: Resham, meaning silk, is another popular variant of Aari work. In this style, silk threads are intricately stitched onto the fabric, creating vibrant and colorful patterns. Resham work is commonly seen on sarees, salwar suits, and dupattas.

c) Gota Patti: Gota Patti is a form of Aari work that incorporates the use of gota, which are narrow strips of metallic ribbon. These ribbons are stitched onto the fabric, forming elaborate motifs and borders. Gota Patti work is commonly found on traditional Rajasthani attire, lehengas, and festive wear.

d) Cut Dana: Cut Dana refers to the technique of using small round beads or sequins to create sparkling patterns on fabric. These beads are carefully stitched using Aari needles, enhancing the overall texture and shine of the design. Cut Dana work is often seen on evening gowns, saree borders, and festive garments.

e) Pitta work: Pitta work is an ancient kind of embroidery in which the filling is completed with the aid of metal wires before being pounded or beaten to a uniform texture.

f) Shisha embroidery: Shisha embroidery also known as mirror work, is a traditional form of embellishment that originated in the Indian subcontinent. It is characterized by the use of small pieces of reflective mirrors, known as "shisha," embedded within the fabric to create eye-catching designs. Shisha embroidery has a long history and is known for its vibrant and sparkling aesthetic, making it a popular choice for adding a touch of glamour to various textiles.

Equipment and Few Raw Materials for Aari Work:

Aari Needle: The primary tool used in Aari work is the Aari needle, also known as the tambour needle. It is a specialized hook-shaped needle with a small hook at one end and a wooden or plastic handle for a comfortable grip.

b. Embroidery Frame: A wooden or metal embroidery frame is used to stretch the fabric taut, providing stability and support during the Aari embroidery process. It helps to maintain the tension of the fabric, allowing for precise stitching. Commonly used term is "khatla" for bigger frames to fit bigger pieces of fabrics.

c. Threads: Aari work typically involves the use of fine threads, such as silk or metallic threads, to achieve intricate detailing. These threads come in various colors and are selected based on the desired design and effect.

d. Beads: Metallic Threads and Sequins: For embellishments like Cut Dana work, a variety of beads and sequins are utilized. These come in different shapes, sizes, and finishes, adding a touch of sparkle and dimension to the embroidery. Metallic threads in silver, gold, antique etc. are used as well. The plain wires are called "badla" while the round ones are called "kasab" e. Fabric: Aari work can be done on various types of fabrics, including silk, satin, velvet, georgette, and cotton. The choice of fabric depends on the desired drapage, texture, and overall look of the finished garment.

f. Embroidery Stand: An embroidery stand or a table clamp can be used to secure the embroidery frame, allowing the artisan to work with both hands freely. This helps maintain a consistent stitching rhythm and prevents strain on the hands.

g. Tracing Paper and Design Transfer Tools: Tracing paper and design transfer tools, such as carbon paper or washable fabric markers, are used to transfer the design onto the fabric before starting the Aari work.

h. Scissors and Needles: Basic sewing tools like scissors and needles are necessary for cutting threads, trimming excess fabric, and finishing off the embroidery.

3. Time-Intensive Craftsmanship: Aari work is a labor-intensive art form that demands patience, precision, and dedication. The intricate needlework requires hours of meticulous effort, transforming plain fabrics into masterpieces. The artistry lies in the delicate balance between the density of the stitches, the choice of threads, and the interplay of colors.

4. Revival and Contemporary Adaptations: In recent years, Aari work has experienced a resurgence in popularity, as designers and fashion enthusiasts recognize its timeless appeal. Contemporary adaptations have introduced innovative elements, blending traditional techniques with modern aesthetics. This fusion has given rise to unique designs that cater to the preferences of today's fashion-conscious individuals.

5. Celebrating Handmade and Sustainable Fashion: Aari work represents more than just beautiful embroidery; it symbolizes the essence of handmade craftsmanship and sustainable fashion. By supporting artisans skilled in Aari work, we contribute to the preservation of a traditional art form and promote ethical fashion practices.

Aari work is a testament to the skill, artistry, and cultural heritage of Indian craftsmanship. Its delicate stitches and intricate patterns have captivated hearts for centuries, transcending time and trends. Whether adorning a bridal ensemble or gracing a home decor piece, Aari work adds a touch of elegance and craftsmanship that is unparalleled. Let us cherish and celebrate this magnificent art form, ensuring its legacy continues to shine brightly in the world of fashion and design.

To learn Fashion Designing and set up your boutique with zero investment register for my free webinar by clicking on the button below:Do comment below if you found this article helpful. Aari work embroidery, also known as hooked needle work, is a beautiful form of traditional Indian embroidery that originated in Barabanki, Uttar Pradesh, and later found its way to Kutch, Gujarat. This exquisite craft owes its origins to the shoemaker or cobbler community, who introduced the chain stitch and applied intricate designs to fabric using the aari needle. Aari work embroidery is renowned for its intricate detailing and the use of the aari needle. The aari needle, also known as the hooked needle, is the primary tool used in this technique. It is a long, slender needle with a hook at one end, resembling a crochet hook. The hook allows the artisan to easily catch and manipulate the thread, creating intricate and precise stitches. The aari needle is used to create various types of stitches, including the chain stitch, the satin stitch, and the bead stitch. Each stitch adds a unique texture and dimension to the embroidery, enhancing the overall beauty of the design. The aari needle allows for precise control over the thread, making it possible to create intricate patterns and motifs with ease. One of the distinguishing features of aari work embroidery is the use of beads. Bead work is an integral part of this craft, adding shimmer and sparkle to the designs. The beads are carefully stitched onto the fabric using the aari needle, creating a stunning embellishment that catches the light and adds a touch of glamour to the embroidery. The process of creating aari work embroidery involves several steps. First, the design is drawn onto the fabric using a pencil or a washable marker. Then, the fabric is stretched tightly on a wooden frame called a "khaka." The artisan then uses the aari needle to carefully stitch the design onto the fabric, following the marked lines. Each stitch is meticulously executed, ensuring that the thread is pulled tightly to create neat and even stitches. The artisan may use different colors of thread to bring the design to life, adding depth and dimension to the embroidery. Once the stitching is complete, the beads are added, meticulously sewn onto the fabric to enhance the design further. Aari work embroidery is a labor-intensive craft that requires skill, patience, and attention to detail. It is often practiced by skilled artisans who have honed their craft over generations. The intricate designs and meticulous stitching make aari work embroidery a highly sought-after art form, valued for its beauty and craftsmanship. The popularity of aari work embroidery has spread beyond India, with many designers and fashion houses incorporating this technique into their collections. From bridal wear to home decor, aari work embroidery adds a touch of elegance and sophistication to any piece. In conclusion, aari work embroidery is a traditional Indian craft that showcases the artistry and skill of the artisans. The use of the aari needle and bead work adds a unique dimension to the embroidery, making it a truly captivating art form. Whether it's adorning a bridal outfit or enhancing the beauty of home decor, aari work embroidery continues to captivate and inspire with its intricate designs and meticulous craftsmanship. Kashmir's embroidery is as pretty as its culture and scenery, with a unique history. The embroideries of Kashmir are as awe-inspiring as the lush green landscapes. The wonderful skill of Kashmiri embroidery is as much adored as the modern Muslim lifestyle and traditions of Kashmir. Kashmiri Aari is one of the old-fashioned forms of embroidery in India. Aari embroidery is done with a pen-like needle that matches the shape of crochet hooks. It is giving enormous growth to an inherent form of artwork. Generally, this work is valued for its refined and delicate thread work, which intensifies the essence of hand embroidery. In case you don't know, Kashmir has a strong and old-fashioned tradition in hand-embroidery. In this blog, we have tried to bring light to the Kashmir Aari embroidery. Here are some of the Surprising facts about Kashmiri Aari

Origin and History The Aari embroidery is one of the oldest forms of embroidery in India. You will be astonished to know that the Aari embroidery traces out its inception way back in the 12th century. Surprised? Well, you heard that right! It is marked as one of the most magnificent embroideries, which are also discovered when Mughal emperors were fascinated by floral motifs, traditional designs. Eventually, this made Aari work popularized all over the well-known cities and brought it into the limelight. After some time, places like Lucknow, Kutch, UP, Rajasthan, and Delhi began to acknowledge the uniqueness and speciality of Aari work that marked the progressive popularity of Aari work. The Aari or Crewel embroidery Locally, Aari work is also known as Zalakdozi. A wide range of fabrics including, velvet, cotton, linen, wool, silk, rayon, and many more, can be decorated with Aari work. Apart from this, Aari work can be generally noticed on furnishing products like sofa fabrics, curtains, drapes, bed sheets and covers, and other upholstery items. Kashmiri Aari in 21st Century Kashmiri Aari has always been recognized as one of the most monotonous modes of needlework. However, in the 21st century, the discovery of high-level manual stitching machines transformed how artisans used to work and reduced the workload on them. Now, it takes lesser time to complete the embroidery work on an outfit. Rising Popularity With the growing demand for Aari work clothing and fabrics, global markets are getting more sales. It is also increasing the businesses in Indian markets. Not only the major cities but also the interiors and remote places of India and abroad have realized the unfathomable worth of this fabric.

Varieties Aari work includes the variations of a plentiful of beads and needles. Angad Creations also do a fusion of Gota, Nakshi, and Dabka with this artwork that plays an equivalent role in intensifying the beauty of the fabrics in a modern way. Aari work is generally blended with floral motifs. Even sequence work (Katori and Sitara) is another type of work that is fused with this embroidery form. All of them aid in building more intricate, unique and creative designs. Occasion Dressing As Aari work can now be recognized in various categories of garments, events like parties, spiritual functions, marriages, and other formal occasions are ideal for clothing dresses adorned with fine Aari embroidery.

Due to Aari embroidery's flexibility of being able to be done on a huge range of fabrics, Aari embroidered fabrics can be worn throughout the year, regardless of any season. Here are some interesting facts on Kashmiri Embroidery All embroiderers use 'Nyath' that serves as security to their fingers. Kashmiri Men are known to do one of the most intricate embroidery work globally, and they are very much appreciated for their work. After the embroidery is complete, every piece has to go washing and finishing process. View our collection of Aari Embroidered Fabrics, Sarees, Salwar Kameez, Jackets and Coats. A pen like needle which resembles the shape of a crochet needle, gives rise to an intrinsic form of artwork called the 'Aari work'. In this artwork beads and 'muthia', a sharp edged needle is put to work, which creatively gives rise to chain stitch kind of imprints. This work is popular for its delicate and finest threadwork which enhances the essence of hand embroidery. Aari Embroidery Origin and History Aari work traces out its emergence way back in the 12th century, which marked the rule of the Mughal emperors. Floral motifs, traditional designs and fascinated the Mughal royals during that period. This popularized and brought Aari work into the limelight. With time, places like Kutch, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Delhi started recognizing the speciality of Aari embroidery, which marked the gradual popularity of Aari embroidery. Present Day Scenario Aari work has always been considered one of the most tedious forms of needle work. Today, with the help of advanced stitching procedures, and the role of more artisans, it takes lesser time to complete the embroidery work on an outfit. Sources of Inspiration Aari work began with a simple procedure of using a lead pencil to sketch the design on the fabric, after which a needle was put to use which pierced holes along the lines of the design. Then the threaded needle was inserted into the fabric, and when it came up, it emerged with a loop. Through this procedure, the fine stitched pattens led to the evolution of Aari work as an individual art form. Making The fabric is first stretched over a frame to remove uneven, loose folds in the fabric texture. The frame comprises four wooden spars resting on wooden posts. Next, using thick cotton thread, the fabric is sewn on to the wooden frame. More often than not, Zari, Cotton or Silk threads are used in embroidery. One of the main features of Aari work is the fine embroidered patterns on the fabric. At times, artisans embellish the outfit or cloth with sequins, stone etc in between the embroidered patterns. Faces behind the Fabric Aari work was initially executed by the Muslim communities residing in India. They mainly used a hooked needle, done by stretching the fabric on a frame and stitching with a long needle ending with a hook. The other hand feeds the thread underside, and the hook brings it up, making a chain stitch, but it is much quicker than chain stitch done in the usual way. It looks like machine-made and can also be embellished with cut pieces of Zardozi strings, sequins and beads – which are kept on the right side, and the needle goes inside their holes before plunging aari. This work is popular for its delicate and fine thread work which enhances the essence of hand embroidery.

Origin and History: This embroidery work is said to have originated in China and then travelled throughout Asia via India, Persia and Turkey and eventually reaching Europe in the eighteenth century. The technique in Europe was referred to as 'tambouring' from the French word 'tambour' named after the drum shaped frame which originally came from the East.

Aari work in India traces out its emergence way back to the 12th century, which marked the rule of the Mughal emperors. Floral motifs and traditional designs fascinated the Mughal royals during that period. They popularized it and brought Aari work into the limelight. With time, places like Kutch, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Delhi started recognizing the speciality of Aari embroidery, which marked its gradual popularity.

Other Names of Aari – Worldwide:Aari Embroidery is also known as Khatla Work. This is because the embroidery is done on a frame that is constructed on the principles of the local khatla or cot.

Aari work is also known as Aari Barath, Zardozi, Kashida, Zalakdozi and Mochi Barath.

In Europe it is known as Tambour work, tamber, broderie en chainette, double Kensington stitch, point de Luneville, Beauvais stitch, Broderie de Lunéville or Crochet de Lunéville and Limerick Lace.

Coggeshall and Lierse Kant are English and Belgium Tambour hook Lace.

Faces behind the fabric: Aari work initially was said to have been executed by the Muslim communities residing in India. Mochi embroiderers from Kutch also formed the original faces behind this fabric, as they used the 'Aari' needle to redefine the essence of traditional beauty.

Varieties: Aari work involves the implementation of Zari, Zardozi, Sequins, a galore of Beads, sometimes Stone work, Salma, Gota, Nakshi, Dabka, Aara Katori, Sitara and Tikena are some of the other elements that are used in this embroidery form. All of them help in creating more intricate and innovative designs.

Traditional Styles of Aari: Aari is practiced throughout India with regional influence. In Kashmir, Kashida kari essentially involves naturalistic and intricate motifs executed using colourful woollen yarns without any other embellishments. Aari Bharath of Rajasthan and Gujarat uses colourful cotton/silk pat threads combined with a wide variety of embellishments in geometric, floral or sometimes in religious pattern. Mochi Barath from the same region is worked on leather footwear. The stylised Aari of Uttar pradesh and Haryana are very rich work, executed using Zari threads, zardozi, stone works and many elaborate embellishments.

The aari of south is very fine and delicate work, usually worked on fine silk fabrics using silk yarns or zari yarns in combination with kundan works or sequins and beads.

Zardozi Work: Zardozi (also spelled as Zardosi and Zardouzi) is a form of fabric embroidery which uses silver coated thread or silver wire, whereas the outfit may or may not be embellished with assorted elements like sequins & beads. Zardozi is often mistaken with Zari however the two are different. There are various types of Zardozi threads that help to create intricate designs: thicker and thinner varieties; spirally twisted; dull or lustrous. Since Zardozi has different hubs in India, the motifs and nature of designs also varies from place to place. For example, designs from Lucknow have Mughal influences, while Zardozi work done by artisans in Chennai have Tamil influences.

Origin & History of Zardozi: With origins going as far back as the Rig Vedic times, Zardozi flourished as an art form under the patronage of Mughals in the 16th century. Zardozi has its roots in the Irani, Ottoman, Mongolian and Persian culture. The Mughal era brought leaf and floral patterns into prominence. Banned by Aurangzeb, Zardozi declined in popularity and was finally brought into the limelight again post independence.

Earlier, pure silver was used along with the threads to create Zardozi embroidery. Nowadays, copper wires plated with gold and silver are used instead. In some cases, even colored plastic wires coated in gold or silver color are used. Today, Zardozi work has spread out to major centers like Lucknow, Delhi, Agra, Jammu & Kashmir, Kolkata, Bhopal, Hyderabad, Farrukabad and other states.

Materials & Tools:

1. Zari/Treads: Zari or metallic threads are commonly used for Aari work. Threads of various colours are also used. Amongst the coloured threads available in the market.

2. Embellishments: Aari work involves the use of Zardozi, Sequin, beads and other adornments like Kallavattu, Moti, or Salma, Dabka, Nakshi, Aara, and Gota.

3. Aar/Karchop (Needle): A hooked needle called aari is used, hence the name to the craft. It is similar to the one used in crochet.

4. Frame/Adda/ Karga: This is a wooden or metal frame over which the cloth is pulled tightly to prevent it from moving while artisans work on it. The frame enables faster work and clear vision at constant tension.

The Aari Process:

a) 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.

b) Tracing the Design: 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 Chapaaai and is done by either men or women who are referred as Chapaiwale/wali.

c) Embroidery: Now the actual embroidery starts. A needle with a hooked end and Zari (gold or silver) or cotton or silk thread are used. Aari looks like a fine chain stitch. The needle is pushed through the fabric. From behind, thread is pushed into the hook. When the needle is pulled up again, it comes up with a loop. The next time, the needle goes through the loop and comes up with another loop through the previous loop. The same process is repeated. The stitches are very fine and small. This method of embroidery is highly time consuming and therefore expensive too. Several men may work on a single piece together. This relieves the tedium of a big piece of work. Depending on the intricacy it may take a day or a month to complete a design.

d) Flatenning Zari: After the embroidery, the thread is beaten (flattened) down using a wooden mallet from the top on a handheld wooden anvil placed under the fabric. This settles the thread and gives the work a fuller and finished look. This process is only for zari work.

e) 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.

Present Day Scenario of Aari and Zardozi Work: Aari work has always been considered one of the most tedious forms of needle work. Today, with the help of advanced stitching procedures, and the role of more artisans, it takes lesser time to complete the embroidery work on an outfit. Zardozi work would earlier be done on Sarees, Salwar Kameez, Lehengas, and home decor items. In the recent decades, fashion accessories like Clutches, Bags, Footwear and even handmade jewelry have been embroidered.

Occasion Dressing: As Aari work can now be seen in many types of garments, occasions like parties, religious ceremonies, weddings, and other formal occasions. Apart from these occasions, this fabric can even be worn in all seasons, irrespective of any time of the year. Zardozi clothing in all their regal glory has historically been preferred for formal occasions and weddings.

Global Appeal: Crediting its 'all seasonal' convenience, these fabrics have increased the demand meter across the globe. Even western countries are attracted to this fabric which has made it a global outfit suiting every occasion. Aari and Zardozi have been a prominent presence in international fashion events, both in creations by Indian as well as international designers. Over the years, at the Cannes festival, Aari work has been showcased in the attires worn by leading Indian film luminaries.

Maintenance of Aari and Zardozi Fabrics: Dry cleaning washes and soft ironing are recommended for these fabrics. Also, to ensure the zari work does not lose its metallic sheen with time, it is advisable to keep the outfits or items wrapped in paper or plastic to reduce exposure to air.

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