

# Embroidery Traditions of Rajasthan: A Vibrant Tapestry of Cultural Heritage

Neeta\*, Saroj Yadav, Neelam M. Rose and Renu Godara

Department of Apparel and Textile Science, I C College of Community Science, CCSHAU, Hisar

Corresponding Author

Neeta

Email: neetapoonia17@gmail.com



OPEN ACCESS

Keywords

Embroidery, Stitches, Culture, Traditions.

*How to cite this article:*

Neeta, Yadav, S., Rose, N. M. and Godara, R. 2024. Embroidery Traditions of Rajasthan: A Vibrant Tapestry of Cultural Heritage. *Vigyan Varta* 5(6): 162-165.

## ABSTRACT

Rajasthan's rich cultural heritage shines through its intricate embroidery traditions, embodying the region's history and culture. Metal embroidery, including *zardozi*, *gota* work and *danke-ka-kam* symbolizes opulence and royalty. *Suf Bharat* and *Mukke-ka-Kaam* showcase geometric and metallic thread designs, while *Pakko Bharat* and *Kharak* feature dense patterns and satin stitch bands. *Moti Bharat*'s vibrant beadwork and patchwork quilting highlight resourcefulness, and *Mochi Bharat*'s chain stitches, originally on leather, now adorn textiles. Each style preserves Rajasthan's cultural legacy, demonstrating resilience and creativity through generations.

## INTRODUCTION

Nestled in the heart of India, Rajasthan is not only renowned for its majestic forts, vibrant culture, and colourful festivals but also for its exquisite traditional embroidery. The elaborate embroidery of Rajasthan showcases the region's rich cultural diversity and exquisite craftsmanship, ranging from stunning decorations to delicate mirror work. Rajasthan's embroidery is a vivid

representation of the area's creative and cultural legacy (Rajpurohit, 2022). At the heart of this tradition are the women of Rajasthan, who have safeguarded and nurtured this art form through centuries. Their daily attire, from the graceful *kanchli* and *ghaghra* to the elegant *odhna*, bears witness to the mastery of embroidery that adorns their lives. Embroidery in Rajasthan is not limited to women's attire; it

also enriches men's garments like the *angarkha*, *achkan*, and *jama* (Bhandari, 2004).

For many Rajasthani women, embroidery isn't just a skill learned; it's a heritage passed down through generations. From a tender age, girls start their journey into this world of stitches, guided by their mothers, grandmothers and female relatives<sup>1</sup>. Rajasthani embroidery encompasses a diverse range of techniques, each reflecting the region's artistic richness. In essence, Rajasthani embroidery is a living expression of resilience and creativity, weaving together threads of tradition, history, and culture (Naik, 1997).

### METAL EMBROIDERY

Metal embroidery, a hallmark of royalty and affluence in Rajasthan, epitomizes opulence, power, and importance. Patronized mainly by the elite classes, garments embellished with gold and silver thread were considered auspicious and symbolized wealth and status. This extravagant style of ornamentation extended beyond attire to encompass various articles like footwear, belts, caps, cushions and even elephant caparisons. The three predominant forms of metal embroidery—*zardozi*, *gota* work, and *danke-ka-kam* showcased exquisite craftsmanship, with gold and silver drawn through dies to create fine threads (Naik, 1997).

### TYPES OF METAL EMBROIDERY:

Metal embroidery can be classified in three kinds i.e. *zardozi*, *gota* work and *danke-ka-kam*.

- **ZARDOZI:** *Zardozi*, an opulent form of embroidery utilizing pure gold and silver wire known as *zari*, traces its origins to Mughal influence on Rajasthan's courts. Divided into two styles i.e. *kanchobi* and *kamelart*. *Zardozi* adorns heavy fabrics like velvet as well as delicate silks and muslin. The intricate process involves

tracing designs onto fabric and meticulously arranging metallic wires and shapes. Various types of wires, such as *beadlo*, *dabka* and *asitara* along with sequins and beetle wings, are utilized to create exquisite motifs. Geometric shapes intertwine with floral designs, framing the intricate patterns (Naik, 1997).

- **GOTA WORK OR LAPPE-KA-KAAM:**

*Gota* Work, also known as *Lappe-ka-kaam*, is a cherished tradition practiced by skilled embroiderers in Jaipur, Ajmer, Bikaner, Udaipur and Kota renowned for their unique styles. Originating possibly in Rajasthan, this form of fabric ornamentation adorns garments worn during religious, social and festive occasions. Men, women and children done their finest attire embellished with delicate *gota* lace. This intricate work, often seen on *odhni* and turban edges, adds a touch of elegance to printed or embroidered *ghaghra*s. *Gota*, available in various widths such as *chaumasiya* and *athmasiya* is essentially a ribbon of gold or silver woven in a satin weave (Bhandari, 2004; Rajpurohit, 2022).

**DANKE-KA-KAM:** *Danke-ka-Kam*, a revered craft originating from Udaipur and its neighboring regions, showcases exquisite artistry through the use of small metallic squares adorned with *zardozi* embroidery. These small square plates, known as *danka*, typically measure no more than 1.5 cm and were historically crafted from pure gold, though silver plated with gold is more common today. Originally, the *danka* was made by warming fine silver sheets and applying gold foil, but modern techniques involve electroplating polished thin silver sheets with gold. Artisans meticulously lay out *danka* pieces on the fabric before piercing them with a needle and couching them down

with gold or silver wire (Bhandari, 2004; Naik, 1997; Rajpurohit, 2021).



ZARDOZI DANKE – KA – GOTA WORK  
KAM

**Fig. 2. Metal Embroidery**

**SUF BHARAT:** *Suf Bharat* embroidery, reminiscent of the Phulkari of Punjab and Baluchi embroidery of Iran, is a cherished tradition in Rajasthan, particularly among Rabari women. This style, also embraced by communities like Jat, Meghval, Bishnoi, Rajput and Sindhi Musalman women, is characterized by its fine geometrical motifs worked from the reverse side of the fabric in surface satin stitch. Plied cotton or silk floss threads are used, often accompanied by mirrors and other accessories to create dramatic effects. Radiating lines and herringbone stitches add distinct accents to the embroidery. The triangle motif, from which all others emanate, holds significant symbolism, while motifs like camels, human and peacocks (Bhandari, 2004).

**MUKKE-KA-KAAM:** *Mukke-ka-Kaam*, a captivating form of embroidery prevalent in the *Thar* belt of Rajasthan, particularly among the Sindhi Musalman and Meghval communities, showcases stunning designs crafted with gold and silver metallic threads. *Mukka*, the local term for these threads wound around a cotton core, is skilfully couched onto the fabric to reveal their maximum surface area. In addition to couching, various stitches like buttonhole and outline stitches are employed to fill in the intricate designs, often featuring geometric patterns like zigzags, stars, and triangles (Rajpurohit, 2021).



**Fig. 3. Suf Bharat**



**Fig. 4. Mukke – Ka – Kam.**

**PAKKO BHARAT:** *Pakko Bharat*, named for its durability and permanence, is a distinctive style of embroidery characterized by tight square chain and double buttonhole stitches, complemented by satin and fly stitches, creating dense patterns on the fabric. *Pakko Bharat* typically utilizes shades of red, dark green and gold or yellow accentuated with a characteristic black outline. Mirrors, known as *tika*, are often incorporated as centers for flowers and border designs, enhancing the ornate nature of items like *odhnas*, *chadars* and *kanchlis*. With motifs boasting expressive names like *dak mutarna* and *rana-ro-band* for border designs respectively, *Pakko Bharat* embroidery embodies the cultural richness and meticulous craftsmanship of Rajasthan (Bhandari, 2004; Naik, 1997).



**Fig. 5. Pakko Bharat**



**Fig. 6. Kharak**

**KHARAK:** *Kharak*, a renowned embroidery style in the region, draws inspiration from the desert's date fruit, locally known as *kharak*. Characterized by clusters of narrow satin stitch bands, which arranged in geometric patterns, this embroidery showcases intricate designs that are executed by skilled artisans. Using a combination of black double running stitches and multicoloured threads, the embroiderer outlines and fills in the motifs, often incorporating small rectangular designs with satin stitch (Bhandari, 2004).

**MOTI BHARAT:** *Moti* embroidery, a cherished tradition in India, showcases remarkable craftsmanship through its unique tri-bead technique. Vibrant beads are intricately woven together to form intricate designs against a backdrop of pure white, resulting in striking contrasts. Ranging from serene whites to rich blacks, these translucent beads give rise to breathtaking patterns such as parrots, elephants and floral motifs. From threshold hangings to ornate bags, *Moti* embroidery adds elegance to everyday items, enriching daily life and preserving India's rich cultural heritage for generations to come (Naik, 1997).



Fig. 7. Moti Bharat



Fig. 8. Patchwork and Quilting



Fig. 9. Mochi Bharat

#### PATCHWORK AND QUILTING:

Rajasthan's textile heritage shines through its renowned patchwork and quilting crafts, notably showcased in the creation of rallis or quilts. These rallis, constructed with a thrifty ethos, feature a top layer of new fabric adorned with appliquéd coloured sections and cutout patterns, while old garment material forms the hidden folds. Delicate tassels of cotton, silk and sequins embellish the corners, adding a touch of elegance. Employing two primary techniques, patchwork involves geometric pieces joined with running stitches and quilted with simple lines, while appliquéd shapes adorn brightly coloured fabrics in designs like the chandani or canopy, showcasing the region's rich artistic tradition (Bhandari, 2004; Rajpurohit, 2021).

**MOCHI BHARAT:** *Mochi Bharat*, a prevalent art form across various regions, originally adorned leather objects such as shoes, saddles,

and trappings with intricate embroidery. Soft leather serves as the primary canvas for this craft, now extending to textiles like cotton, silk, and velvet, often adorning the attire of Rajasthani women. Executed with fine chain stitches, motifs of leaves, flowers and bold patterns come to life in vibrant zari threads, guided by paper templates or block-printed designs (Bhandari, 2004; Naik, 1997).

#### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Rajasthan's rich tradition of embroidery encapsulates the essence of the region's cultural heritage, reflecting centuries of artistic evolution and resilience. The diverse range of embroidery styles, from metalwork to *suf bharat* and *mukke-ka-kaam*, showcases the depth of Rajasthan's artistic legacy, while techniques like patchwork and quilting embody the region's values of thrift and resourcefulness. As custodians of this invaluable heritage, it is imperative to recognize and support their efforts in preserving these ancient traditions, ensuring that Rajasthan's vibrant tapestry of embroidery remains a cherished aspect of India's cultural mosaic for generations to come.

#### REFERENCES:

- Bhandari, V. (2004). *Costumes, Textiles and Jewellery of India: Traditions in Rajasthan*, Prakash Publications; New Delhi.
- Naik S. D. 1997. *Folk Embroideries and Traditional handloom Weaving* APH, New Delhi.
- Rajpurohit P. 2022. Treasure of Thread Work of Rajasthan. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention (IJHSSI)*, 11(8):70-77.
- Rajpurohit P. 2021. Traditional Embroidery of Western Rajasthan and Emotions of women. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention (IJHSSI)*, 10(11):60-68.