

# Indian Sequins: A Jeweled Textile of India

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## ABSTRACT

Looking back from the time of civilization, India always has rich competencies in the field of fascinating arts, crafts, and cultures along with its high-end heritage. From that time competent craftsmen not only used their skills to fulfill the needs and wants of society but also trade overseas. This used to be a reason for their earning and livelihood. Little by little these skills started demolishing, mukeish or badla or kamdani work is one of them.

Mukeish (also known as Badla work or Kamdani in the local language) is a type of old-age metal wire embroidery with its legacy in the capital of Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow, the city of Nawabs.

Mukeish work involves twisting metallic thread to create patterns over the surface of the fabrics. Earlier original gold and silver wires were used to make these patterns, depicting royalty. With the passage of time, mukeish work lost its shine and royalty. Though it is not vaporized completely, only a handful of skilled craftsmen are available in Uttar Pradesh. The core reason for the decreasing demand for Mukeish work is not crystal clear but a small number of craftsmen are available who work on mukeish embroidery. It is said that mukeish or badla work is the original sequence of India that paves out the track of sequence work around the fashion globe. It is an expensive and indeed time-consuming craft. This meticulous work has lost its shine and glamour due to the lack of skilled artisans. The availability of substitute sequences in embroidery is also the reason for its blurry image in the world of Embroidery.

The purpose of shedding light on mukeish or badla work is to review this meticulous craft of India and promote this precious craft around the globe.

**KEYWORDS:** Hand Craft, Indian Sequence, Jeweled Textile, Mukeish work, Badla work, Kamdaani.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Meticulous crafts work, intricate embroidery, and fine weaves serve as the main ingredients in the platter of alluring Indian textiles, which have apprehended global attention for ages. These organic and sustainable Indian textile techniques grabbed eyeballs from every mock and corner of the world and paved out trading overseas. Mukeish work is one such mesmerizing craft, known for its intricacy and regal charm. Although the work didn't have an iconic image like zardozi or other hand work but the craft left a sparkling impact in the world of jeweled textiles of India.

It is a craft that ornaments Indian textiles and was quite popular in the Mughal era. Lately cherished and preserved by the Nawabs of Hindustan. The work is said to be an original sequin of India that adorned the beauty of fabric during the 17th and 18th centuries. The artistry of the work lies in the meticulous technique of twisting gold and silver wire (called Saccha kaam) making tiny dots, leaving a star-like sparkling effect on the surface of delicate fabrics. The work has been named differently and practiced in different parts of the country. It is known as mukeish or badla work or fardi ka kaam or kaamdani in vari-

ous regional places of North India whereas in South India it is referred to as Nakku work. Earlier mukeish work was adorned from Kashmir to Hyderabad but now the work has been shrunk to the alleys of Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. The sparkling eco-friendly work has started losing its sheen over the years even though it hasn't vaporized completely. Instead of gold and silver wires artisans of mukeish work are now using metal wires. The craft endeavored to keep up with the demands of fast-moving fashion and slowly emerged with chikankari to garner its regality. The paper attempts to shed light on the journey of royal Indian sequins and their transition in the world of chikankari. It also highlights conventional competencies as a sturdy platform for the territory of sustainable fashion. Many kinds of research, surveys, and initiatives have been conducted to save the dying handicrafts of India.

## 2. ACCORDING TO THE REPORT OF INDIA-CRAFT

The handicraft industry, a decentralized sector is the second-largest source of income in India after agriculture. It plays a vital role in the economy but requires a lot of attention to blossom properly. Below are some key facts mentioned about the Indian craft [1, 2]:

- The Indian Handicraft Industry is showing a continuous growth rate of 20% every year
- Major parts of the industry operate in rural and semi-urban areas throughout the country and have a potential Indian and International market with around 67000 exporters to tap the market.
- This Industry provides huge employment opportunities to artisans including women and people belonging to backward and weaker societies. This is one of the major sources of income there.
- The Indian Handicraft Industry is a \$100 billion industry worldwide.
- India's contribution to the world market is 1.2%
- The total exports of crafts items: - Rs. 13412.92 Crore.
- Industry's share in India's exports: - 1.51 %
- Despite having diversified products, some parts of the Indian market are still untapped and the market is price sensitive.
- Products are high priced in big and metro cities, which are beyond, the reach of people belonging middle and lower middle classes.
- Craft producers have to compete on price, quality, and delivery for different segments.
- There is a poor promotion of craft products in the national market.
- There is a lack of awareness about new traditions among craftsmen and there is a need for technological support and training.

Mr. Chatterjee Ashoke, former executive director of the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad raises his voice in a journal viz "The future is handmade" He explains the importance of focusing on the artistic competencies of India and the requirement of building entrepreneurial capacities in prospective artisans and designers to make a bridge between the past and future of our country.

Kak, Dr. Krishen K states in 'Some Thoughts on the Future of Tradition', "The relationship between the maker and the user is through the product"

PARAMPARA, Documenting Efforts to Conserve India's Living Traditions "Project Parampara" formed by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India; shed light on the need to identify, preserve, and promote the untouched handicraft of India. The need for time is to build a bridge between demolishing handicrafts and handmade products [7].

### 3. ORIGIN AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

India has rich competencies in the field of fascinating arts, crafts, and cultures along with a high-end heritage. Mughals patronized artisans to come up with new techniques and encouraged and endorsed their skills in the 17th century. Mukeish work is one such technique that took birth during the Mughal era, known as Indian sequins even before Swarovski. Earlier in the 18th century, the Nawabs of Awadh embraced the art. This unique blingy craft was used to adorn the beauty of delicate fabrics with real gold and silver wires, as the Mughals and Nawabs were fond of gold and silver.

### 4. SIGNIFICANCE OF MUKEISH WORK

Mukeish work is an important part of Indian traditional art and culture, and it is often used for special occasions such as weddings and festivals. It is considered a symbol of luxury and status. It is often used on garments worn by brides and grooms. The intricate designs and metallic thread give the garment a regal and opulent look. In addition to its aesthetic value, mukeish work is also valued for its cultural significance. It is part of Indian heritage and is often passed down from generation to generation. Many artisans who practice mukeish work today learned the technique from their parents or grandparents.

### 5. TECHNIQUE AND STEPS

The artistry of work lies in the technique of creating it. Mukeish work is created by folding metal wire. A thin sheet of metal is passed through heat and then cut into fine strips to make paper-thin wires of mukeish work. The wire is beaten up with a compact hammer to provide flexibility to the wire so that the wire can be used as a thread to achieve the desired pattern on the surface of delicate fabrics.



**METAL WIRE FOR MUKEISH WORK**

### 6. STEP I

**CHHAPAAI:** Chhapaai or printing is the first step of mukeish work. The desired design is to be transferred to the fabric using indigo powder or Neel with kerosene oil.



**CHHAPAAI**

## 7. STEP II

**TAKAAI:** It is the process of creating dots on the printed designs with the help of metal wire or with needle and thread. The term "Takai" itself means "stitching" in Urdu and Hindi, indicating the method of embedding the metallic threads directly into the material following the technique.



**TAKAAI**

## 8. STEP III

**GHUTAAI:** Ghutai refers to the final finishing process that involves polishing the fabric to enhance the shine and smoothness of the metallic embellishments. After the metallic threads (silver or gold) are twisted and embedded into the fabric, the Ghutai process is performed to flatten and smooth out the raised Mukaish dots or motifs, giving them a highly polished, mirror-like finish. The embroidery or takaai is done, and the fabric is spread on a flat surface to flatten out with the help of cowrie shells or glass bottles. The process burns metal wire and enhances its sheen.



**GHUTAAI**

## 9. TYPES AND VARIATIONS

Based upon the size and various techniques of application mukeish work has different types such as:

- **HAZAR BATTI:** Hazar Batti is a highly intricate and elaborate pattern that translates to "a thousand dots." It involves covering the fabric with numerous small metallic dots, often arranged closely together to create a dense, shimmering effect. This pattern gives the appearance of the fabric being

covered in a field of tiny, sparkling lights as if adorned with a thousand glittering points. Artisans create the Hazar Batti effect by twisting fine metallic threads (usually silver or gold) into very small, dot-like shapes, which are then embedded throughout the fabric.



**HAZAR BATTI**

- **TIKKI:** Tikki refers to small, flat, circular motifs made from metallic threads, usually silver or gold, which are intricately embedded into the fabric. The Tikki pattern consists of tiny, shiny discs or dots spread evenly across the material, creating a simple yet striking effect. Artisans pinch and twist the metallic threads into small, coin-like shapes, which are then carefully sewn into the fabric. This technique adds a subtle sparkle and texture to the garment.



**TIKKI**

- **CHHALLA:** Chhalla refers to a circular or ring-like pattern made using metallic threads. The artisans create small, hollow round motifs, often resembling rings or loops, using the traditional twisting technique of Mukaish. These circular motifs are usually scattered across the fabric, creating a shimmering, elegant effect.



**CHHALLA**

- **JALI:** Jali refers to a specific pattern or design where the metallic threads are arranged in a grid resembling the traditional jali patterns found in architecture. Artisans create a mesh-like effect by pinching and twisting the metallic threads into small dots, which are then arranged in a lattice structure.



This style of Mukaish work is often seen in dupattas, sarees, and other formal wear, adding a rich, shimmering texture that enhances the fabric's beauty.



**JALI**

- **KAMDAANI:** It is a combination of tiny dots that create motifs and patterns to make the overall design on fabric. The technique of making these tiny dots is the same as used in hazar batti. The only difference is that hazar batti is scattered all over the fabric surface whereas kamdaani often incorporates motifs like flowers, leaves, and other natural elements, creating a shimmering, luxurious effect on the fabric.



**KAAMDANI**

- **SOME OTHER NAMES:** Same metal wire is used to do 'Dhok ka kaam' and 'Vasli ka kaam' these are similar to mukeish work leaving a comparatively puffy effect on the fabric. Ornia, salami patti, and patta, etc are a few names of different patterns used in this work.
- Work done by women at home is known as 'fardi ka kaam.'
- Work done by men is called 'kaamdani'.



**DHOK KA KAAM**

## 10. TRANSITION TO THE WORLD OF EMBROIDERY

In the era of the Mughals and Nawabs, mukeish work was an individual form of art that was used to embellish soft fabrics (usually on a plain surface). Whereas in the early 19th century the work started bling with other embroideries like zardozi, chikankari, bandhani, kasheedakari, etc., and lost its individuality. Little by little the work has shrunk to merely accentuate the beauty of chikankari and loosen up its individuality.

## 11. PRESENT AND FUTURE OF THE SEQUINS

Crafts like mukeish work is a skill that passes from one generation to the other to make their livelihood.

It is a time-consuming craft but artisans are not getting paid fairly as a result they have started switching their occupations. The availability of Swarovski and other substitutes is also the reason that blurred the image of mukeish work. Although a few revivalists and designers in India are extensively working on this craft.

Sustainable and ethical fashion practices have become increasingly important in recent years, and the future of jeweled work on textiles will likely reflect this shift. With a focus on reducing waste, using eco-friendly materials, and supporting local artisans, the future of this traditional embroidery technique will likely involve a greater emphasis on sustainable and ethical practices.

One way that mukeish or badla work can become more sustainable is by using recycled or upcycled materials. This can include using vintage or second-hand textiles as a base for the embroidery or incorporating recycled materials such as plastic bottles or reclaimed metals into the design. By using recycled materials, designers can reduce waste and minimize the environmental impact of the production process.

Another way that badla work can become more sustainable is by using natural, eco-friendly materials. This can include using organic fabrics, which are grown without harmful pesticides or chemicals. It can also involve using plant-based dyes, which are less harmful to the environment than synthetic dyes. By using natural materials and dyes, designers can create a more sustainable product that is better for both the environment and the people involved in the production process.

Finally, supporting local artisans and promoting fair trade practices can also contribute to the sustainability of jeweled work. By working with skilled artisans in India who have been practicing this technique for generations, designers can help preserve traditional techniques and support local economies. Fairtrade practices can also ensure that the artisans are paid fairly for their work and that they are working in safe and healthy conditions.

In conclusion, the future of Mukeish work or badla work on textiles will likely involve a greater focus on reducing waste, using eco-friendly materials, and supporting local artisans. By adopting these practices, designers can create beautiful, high-quality products that are also sustainable and ethical. The craft is needed to be revived, a better platform should be provided to the craft and craftsmen. As consumers continue to demand more sustainable and ethical fashion options, jeweled work can play an important role in the future of the jeweled textile industry.



**MUKEISH WORK WITH CHIKANKARI**



**CELEBRITIES AND MODEL FLAUNTING BADLA WORK**

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