

Jyoti Welfare Association

History of the Lucknawi Chikan Embroidery

Project Karchob

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2/15/2014

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Origin

Meaning of 'Chikan'

'Chikan' word is derived from the Persian word 'Chakin' or 'Chikeen' which means a cloth wrought with embroidery.

Also, 'Chikankari' is referred to as the technique of making the 'chikan' embroidery.

In olden times, chikankari was majorly composed on embroidery with white thread on a white cloth, but in present times we have a lot of mix and match of colors of cloth and thread to meet current fashion trends.



The Story of Noor Jahan

The empress of the Mughal Empire from 1611 to 1627 was not only a great political power, but also the most powerful and influential Mughal women of her time.

Noor Jahan is also very well known for her contribution to Indian culture, charity work and commercial trade. It is widely believed that she also introduced the beautiful 'chikan' work in India. The embroidery was inspired from the Persia, which is also Noor Jahan's native.



Development of Chikan

The chikankari work was invented and developed in Lucknow, which was very close to Agra, capital of Jahangir's Empire.

Today, over the centuries the skill has been passed to some of other Indian states as well, but Lucknow still dominates as the major market for chikan work and skilled chikankari artisans.

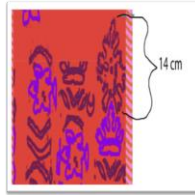
According to the [Geographical Indication Registry \(GIR\)](#), Lucknow was given the [Geographical Indication \(GI\)](#) status in 2008 for chikankari work.

Developing the Technique of Chikankari

Getting the beautiful chikan embroidery on cloth, a process has to be followed, especially if bulk embroidery is being done.

Chikankari itself has many sub-forms depending upon the way the stitch is made on the cloth, the thickness of the embroidery and thread.

The Chikankari Process



Design Concept

This step is purely conceptualization of a design that will be embroidered on the cloth, it's specifications such as length, breadth, thickness, spacing between threads.

Block Engraving

The design finalized is engraved on a wooden block.

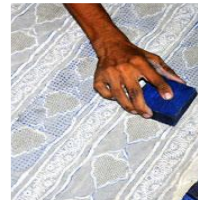


Block Printing - 1

The wooden blocks are dipped in indigo for some time

Block Printing - 2

Blue design patches are made on the cloth according to the already finalized design specifications.



Embroidery - 1

Small section of the printed cloth is hooked in a circular frame. This is done to make the cloth section tight and straight

Embroidery - 2

Now the embroidery is done section by section using thread and needle.



Washing

After the embroidery is completed, the cloth is washed to remove the indigo marks.

References

1. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chikan_\(embroidery\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chikan_(embroidery))
2. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nur_Jehan
3. All the images have a link to their source.