Zardozi embroidery

- Zardozi embroidery is beautiful metal embroidery, which once used to embellish the attire of the Kings and the royals in India.
- It was also used to adorn walls of the royal tents, scabbards, wall hangings and the paraphernalia of regal elephants and horses.
- Zardozi embroidery work involves making elaborate designs, using gold and silver threads. Further adding to the magnificence of the work are the studded pearls and precious stones.
- Zardosi embroidery has been in existence in India from the time of the Rig Veda. There are numerous instances mentioning the use of zari embroidery as ornamentation on the attire of gods.
- Initially, the embroidery was done with pure silver wires and real gold leaves. However, today, craftsmen make use of a combination of copper wire, with a golden or silver polish, and a silk thread.

Main Center of Zardozi Embroidery in India

- Zardosi embroidery work is mainly a specialty of Lucknow, Bhopal, Hyderabad, Delhi, Agra, Kashmir, Mumbai, Ajmer and Chennai.

History of Zardozi Embroidery in India

- The word 'Zardozi' is made up of two Persian terms, Zar meaning gold and Dozi meaning embroidery.
- A Persian embroidery form, Zardosi attained its summit in the 17th century, under the patronage of Mughal Emperor Akbar.
- Under the rule of Aurangzeb, the royal patronage stopped and this led to the decline of the craft. Since the cost was high and raw materials quite rare, craftsmen could not carry on with the embroidery on their own.
- Many craftsmen left Delhi and went to the courts of Rajasthan and Punjab in search of work. With the 18th and 19th century bringing industrialization, the craft suffered another setback. It was only after receiving independence in the year 1947 that the Indian government undertook steps to promote Zari embroidery.

Method of Zardozi Embroidery

- The process of doing Zardozi embroidery starts with the craftsmen sitting cross-legged around the Addaa, the wooden framework, with their tools.
- The tools include curved hooks, needles, salmaa pieces (gold wires), sitaaras
(metal stars), round-sequins, glass & plastic beads, dabkaa (thread) and kasab (thread).

- The second step in the process is to trace out the design on the cloth, if possible fabrics like silk, satin, velvet, etc.
- The fabric is then stretched over the wooden frame and the embroidery work begins. Needle is used to pull out each zardozi element and then, it is integrated into the basic design by pushing the needle into the fabric.