

EARLIEST PAHARI *RUMAL* EMBROIDERED BY BEBI NANKI JI

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The *rumal* embroidery is distinguished pictorial handicraft practiced in the region of Hill states of Punjab from very ancient times and flourished from 17th to 19th centuries. The earliest extant specimen of embroidery is a *rumal* dating back to 16th century. It is believed to be embroidered by Bebe Nanki, sister of Guru Nanak Dev ji, the founder of Sikh religion. This piece is now kept in Gurudwara Dera Baba Nanak, district Gurdaspur, Punjab, (approximately 96 kilometers from Jalandhar by road). This *rumal* is in the possession of Baba Kuldip Singh Bedi, 15th Generation of Guru Nanak Dev ji, in Dera Baba Nanak Gurudwara. It is placed in a slanting flat showcase, placed close to Guru Granth Sahib (figure 1). Although only the lower portion of coverlet is visible, because Chola Sahib is placed on it, but it retains the attraction and charm. The Chola Sahib of Guru Nanak Dev ji is kept folded on the upper portion of *rumal* and inscribed in Persian language. A miniature painting of Guru Nanak Dev ji wearing such inscribed robe is in Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh.

Bebe Nanki's embroidered rectangular *rumal* illustrates the village life of Pahari region in interesting way (figure 2&3). The *rumal* depicts varied motifs such as *nayak* and *nayaikas* in traditional costumes, peacocks, deer, banana tree, willow tree and small shrubs. The similar kind of motifs is seen in miniature paintings and mural paintings of the region. It is made on hand spun and hand woven unbleached muslin cloth. The embroidery is worked using untwisted silk yarns in limited range of natural colours including pink, red, blue, off white, light and dark shades of green and yellow. The embroidery is worked using long and short darning stitch in vertical and horizontal direction (figure 4).

The outline in black color in running stitch is seen for highlighting, separating and defining certain areas in embroidery. The remarkable textures are achieved in animal skin

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of deer and peacock showing varying patterns in stripes and dots by filling the background space and leaving them unembroidered or filled using different colours.



Figure 1: Bebi Nanki embroidered *rumal* covered with Chola Sahib in Dera Baba Nanak Gurdwara, Gurdaspur, Punjab



Figure 2: Details of embroidered *rumal* showing pastime activities of village folk



Figure 3: Full image of Bebi Nanki embroidered *rumal*

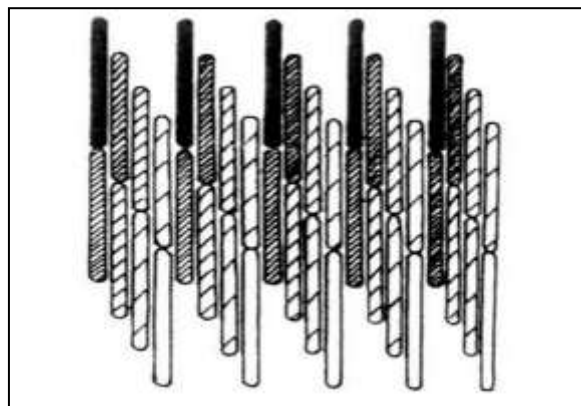


Figure 4: Long and short darning stitch used
in embroidered *rumal*