

Garba in Ahir

For the Ahir community, the commemoration of Lord Krishna's birth-Janmashtami- is a major occasion for celebration. Women Perform the Traditional *garba* dance, dressed in all their embroidered finery.

Ghodiya

A newborn is placed for the first time in the *ghodiya* or cradle cloth after the naming ceremony that takes place on the sixth day after birth. This makes the *ghodiya* the very first embroidered item that an Ahir uses.

Bullock

Being an agrarian community, cattle are very precious to the Ahirs. Embroidery features prominently on decoration for cattle, including the cloth used on the back, horns, forehead and above the mouth of oxen.

Life cycle

The garments and colours that an Ahir woman wears are clear indicators of her position in the life cycle. The shape and the decoration of her *kaanchdi* (blouse) change as a woman grows older and her situation in life changes.

The *kaanchdi* worn by young girls is made from a single fabric and does not have a *sald* or bust panel. It is brightly coloured and has a lot of embroidery.

Young married women wear the *saldvaadikaanchdi*, that has a bust panel but continues to be colourful and highly decorated.

As a woman grows older, the decorations on the *kaanchdi* decrease and the blouse may not have any embroidery at all.

But colour continues to be present throughout.

Camel Caravan

The camel plays a very important role in the life of the nomadic Rabaari community. It is unusual to see four-five families' travel together with all their belongings in a camel caravan, often led by the woman. Embroidered decorations adorn the cloth used to cover the camel, the reins and the saddle.

Paaghdi

The *paadhdi*-turban- is worn by married men of all the kutchi communities. It is more than just a covering or protection for the head, or an adornment; it is a marker of respect and status. It is fashioned out of a single piece of cloth, varying from three to eight meters in length.

Every community has a different way of wearing the paaghdi; the colours and craft techniques on it also vary from community to community. Ajrakh (vegetable block printing), weaving, screen printing, and occasionally *baandhani* (tie-dye) feature on the paaghdi.

The use of the paaghdi as part of daily attire has now declined; but even today most men wear the paaghdi on ceremonial occasions.

Lippankaam

Lippankaam refers to the traditional kutchi craft of wall decoration that usually features mirrors and three dimensional designs. The designs are created using a mixture of clay, horse or donkey manure, and cow dung, along with a little hay and plant gum. Lippankaam is mostly done by women with a flair for design. These designers are often invited to decorate people's homes with their work. A lippan artist usually learns her craft from her mother, grandmother or mother-in-law.

Furniture and household items-including cupboards and large containers to store grain-are also decorated with lippankaam.



Tribute wall

One day I will see my panels in the Museum, and my heart will fill up with pride. I will show my daughters- Look, this is my embroidery! My daughters will bring their children and say - Look this is Naani's embroidery will make my name live forever.

My mother died when I was a little girl. So she was not there to teach me embroidery. God taught me. I was very fond of drawing. So wherever I could find a little sand or gravel, I would draw. That is how I learnt *aarekhani*. Women would come to my house asking me to do aarekhani for them. I would say - Yes I will do the aarekhani, if you go to the stream and fill water for me. This way, I would make them do some of my household chores while I did the drawings on fabric for them.

I sill dont know what exactly a Museum is. All I know is that we have to do our best.

The earthquake left our village in ruins. After 10-12 days we started to embroider. We craftswomen sat together on the rubble. We wanted to get back on our feet by ourselves. So we needed to earn. Doing embroidery also kept sadness away from our minds. If we had stayed alone at home, we might have been tempted to ask for things when volunteers and visitors came. Instead we sat together and worked on our embroidery, and this way we kept our dignity and our self-respect.