

Exploring the Artistry of Ahir Community: Traditional Costumes, Jewelry and Exquisite Embroidery

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Abstract : The Ahirs were pastoralists who went to Gujarat and settled in the Saurashtra and Kutch regions, according to experts. This form of needlework is only done by women and is used to decorate common objects such as cushion covers, torans, blankets, odhnis, and ghagras, as well as items given to young brides-to-be as part of their dowries. For millennia, the Ahirs of Kutch have developed Ahir needlework, which mainly features the usage of tiny round or almond-shaped shisha. Elephants, scorpions, parrots, and peacocks, as well as Lord Krishna, also known as Kaanudo, and the milkmaid, or maahiyari, are all stitched with silk or cotton threads onto colorful fabric.

The purpose of this research is to investigate the Ahir community's attire, needlework style, and Jewelry. This study focuses mostly on the Ahir community's attire and needlework, which includes Identifying the needlework style and costume by name and form. The study will look on the status of craft, skill, and artisan in the Ahir community. The acknowledgment of the clothing and embroidery, as well as its social significance, will be discussed. This will be followed by the origins of the community and its traditions, culture, historical background, and community subgroups.

Keywords: Ahir community, costume, cultural heritage, embroidery, textile traditions, Yadavs.

Introduction : The Ahirs are a non-nomadic Gujarati people with extensive traditional knowledge. The Ahir, also known as the Yadav in other parts of India, claim themselves to be the descendants of Lord Krishna, who belonged to the Yadav tribe. It is said that their forefathers lived in Mathura with Lord Krishna. During their journey, they split into multiple groups and settled in different sections of Gujarat, which is where the various subgroups of the Ahirs arose i.e. Pranthadiya Ahir, Machhoya Ahir & Boricha Ahir. Aside from traditional pursuits such as agriculture and animal husbandry, the women of this community are also recognized for their exceptional needlework work, which uses highly brilliant colors with varied designs, most notably floral, and the usage of little mirrors, which is common in Kutch. The most ornate garments are worn by young women. Odhanis of red and black striped mashru with an embroidered border are worn by young and middle-aged women. Their gathered skirts are lavishly embroidered in red, green, blue, orange, or brown knotted and cultured cotton. Plain black cotton tube shirts and basic embellished cotton or plain mashru blouses in subdued colors must suffice for older married women.

The Ahir community's women's clothing is just as captivating. They wear an energetic and decorated pullover called a "choli," alongside a streaming skirt known as a "ghagra." The ghagra is frequently embellished with wonderful weaving, reflect work, and dynamic interwoven, mirroring the talented craftsmanship of the Ahir ladies. They wrap a colorful and elaborate dupatta (scarf) around their shoulders to complete their ensemble, elevating it even further.

The Ahir community's embroidery is well-known for its intricateness and attention to detail. The ladies of the local area are the driving forces behind these dazzling manifestations, spending innumerable hours carefully making each plan. They utilize an assortment of weaving methods, for example, "aari," "gota," and "reflect work," which are gone down through the ages. Using colorful threads, beads, sequins, mirrors, and other materials, these methods produce vibrant and striking patterns. The Ahir embroidery frequently incorporates geometric patterns and nature-inspired motifs like birds, flowers, and animals. Various facets of their culture, beliefs, and day-to-day life are represented by each motif, each of which has symbolic significance. The weaving isn't restricted to clothing alone; It is also used to adorn bags, bedspreads, and cushion covers as accessories, bringing a touch of Ahir artistry into every aspect of their lives.

The costumes and embroidery of the Ahir community have become well-known not only in India but also around the world. They are showcased in fashion shows, exhibitions, and cultural events, where they are honored for their exquisite craftsmanship and extensive cultural heritage. The Ahir people are proud of their costumes and embroidery because they represent their identity and keep their traditions alive in a world that is changing quickly.

The Ahir community's costumes, taken as a whole, demonstrate the community's rich cultural heritage, skill, and sense of identity. They represent the unity and pride of a community that is deeply rooted in its traditions and customs, in addition to the beauty of their attire.

Methodology

- **Study Design:** The present study was a Field study. In order to fulfill the objectives of the study, the research was carried out as discussed below.
- **Collection of primary data**
- **Locale of study:** The study on costume & jewelry in the areas of the Kutch district of Gujarat state were identified. They were found in Pranthadiya Ahir, Machhoya Ahir, & Boricha Ahir was selected for studying of Ahir's costume & jewelry.
- **Selection of Samples-** Purposive Sampling technique was used for sampling.
- **Sample Size:** The sample size selected included 3 categories among women from Ahir community of Kutch. The sample selected included the following:

Pranthadiya Ahir- 10 Families

Machhoya Ahir-10 Families

Boricha Ahir-10 Families

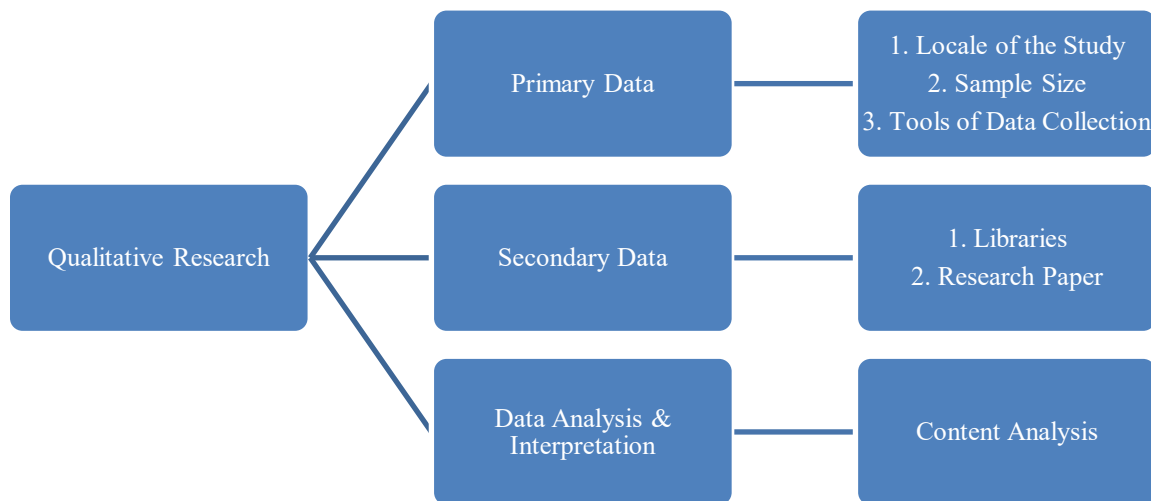


Fig1: Research Design

Tools for Data Collection

The necessary data related to costume, embroidery & jewelry were collected through survey method with the use of structured interview schedule. In order to get in depth information, a combination of close-ended, open-ended interview schedule contained different questions covering various aspects of the Ahir's community.

Result

The Ahir culture's embroidery patterns contained a number of crucial elements, according to the data analysis. First and foremost, the organic shapes in nature frequently influence the motifs in these patterns. Second, solid colors like red, black, green, and violet are frequently used as backdrop hues for fabric.

Women Costumes

Married ladies used to sew their own kachali and ghaghara by using back stitch, buttonhole, or any other type of hand stitch. The young lady was married by the time she was 15 years old. She wore lower leg-length ghaghara in maroon, yellow, and green tones with weaving underneath the wrinkled kanchari, which was constructed of one variety forward section, mashroo, and smooth texture. When she was 16 years old, she went to the in-laws' home with the anna. In the beginning, she wore a crimson or green chunari, a fully woven ghaghra, and a weaved kachari. After the birth of one or two children, she began donning a khilvat (chundadi) in red, green, and yellow as a head covering and a cotton black peynu with red spots as a lower garment.

The Pranthadiya, Machhoya, and Boricha Ahir women wear in traditional garb most of the time.

Traditional costume (Ahir's women) the middle-aged and elderly Women After the marriage of a kid or girl, the elder Pranthadiya Ahir woman wore a black cotton khilvat (odhani) with crimson dabs.

Table 1: Traditional costume of women of Ahir subgroup-Pranthadiya Ahir, Machhoya Ahir and Boricha Ahir.

Categories	Pranthadiya Ahir	Machhoya Ahir	Boricha Ahir
Upper garments	Kanchaliyo	Kamkho	Kamkho
Lower garments	Payanu (black with red dots)	Payanu (red)	Payanu (red)
Head Dress	Chindadi	Chundadi	Chundadi

She wore a colorful mashroo kachariyo that had 9 panels embroidered in 3 distinct colors on the border, both sides, and top. Her bottom garment was a black ghaghara made of cotton or silk with red tie-dye dots. In the modern day, women produce identical garments with synthetic textures.



Fig 2: Ahir Women's Clothing 1



Fig 3: Ahir Women's Clothing 2

The widow used to wear a simple black cotton katvo to cover her head, red sayalis kanchari or cotton and peynu with black color & red dots. In the case that she becomes a young widow, she wore a double-colored kapda, such as blue, maroon, coffee, sky blue, and so on. The present generation also dons garments made of different fabrics but with the same design. They use stitched texture rather than cotton or sadla mashroo, and artificial texture like polyester..

Perfume for the Wedding Ceremony

The previous generation in the Ahir culture would execute a kid's ghodiya engagement when the child was very young and the marriage ceremony when the child was 15 to 16 years old. Nowadays, people make commitments by the time they are 7 to 10 years old and get married when they are 20. However, they currently conduct it in their favored month in accordance with their wishes. Traditionally, they used to get married on Fagan Sud Bij-Trij. They would only get married in their own village and would not accept outside marriages. They still follow this tradition today, however if a widow,

or a widower or a handicapped person, could not locate a compatible spouse inside the community, they would travel outside to do so. Both the preceding and the present generations were devoid of the veil system. As a representation of her marriage, the woman wears a bindi on her forehead.

The bride, in the past, the bride wore a gown known as a nurmal sacho ghagharo, which had an embroidered bottom band. The sachu kanchari (upper garment) and the odhani (vail or head covering). The "karmala," sometimes referred to as the wedding odhani, is composed of red and black striped mashroo cloth. It is a two-piece odhani that is khilvat, or button opening fastened, lengthwise. The lady still wears a similar outfit now, but the texture and weaving work have altered, and a shining, grandiose, magnificent trim made of mashroo silk has been added.

Jewelry

The elderly woman wore the jewelry shown below.

Silver beads for the kandiya, silver dodi for the neck, and silver kandiya for the hands. Silver rings for the legs, a nose ring, and a silver tagal for the ears. Silver zanzar and kadla (holo) for the legs.

On the day of the wedding, the bride wore an ivory chud on her left hand and a silver chud on her right. Six long, box-like solid vedlas serve as the ears. Ivory chuds serve as the wrists. Zurmur, Ramnavmi, and Madadiyu serve as the necks. Observation: During auspicious occasions like Janmastami and Diwali, married ladies paint their ivory chud red.

The senior ladies The elder women wore the jewelry shown below in the preceding generation.

Pandada, valo, and ramrami on the neck. Ivory stud on the left wrist. Silver rings on the fingers. Long vedlas on top of the ears.



Fig 4: Ahir Women's Jewelry: 1- Ramrani, 2- Vitto, 3- Kadla, 4- Kambi, 5- Zanzar, 6- Vedla

Table 2: Traditional ornaments of women of Ahir subgroup-Pranthadiya Ahir, Machhoya Ahir and Boricha Ahir.

Categories	Pranthadiya Ahir	Machhoya Ahir	Boricha Ahir
Nose	Vitti	Vitti	Vitti
Ear	Vedla,kanku	Vedla(long),kanku, sonaiya	Vedla(small),kanku, sonaiya
Neck	Ramnavmi,Zarmar, and Pandada	Hularu,zumanu, zarmar,madaliyu, pandada	Hularu,zumanu, zarmar,madaliyu, pandada
Wrist	Ivory chud in left hand And aradhiya,silver	Aradhiya,ivoru chud, Aradhiya	Red ras chudali in both hand,aradhiya

	Chud in right hand		
Elbow	Lokit,kadu	Lokit,kadu	Lokit,kadu
Fingers	Attassiya	Batti,karachi	Batti,Karachi
Toes	Vichhiya	Vichhiya	Vichhiya

Embroidery

This section investigates the supplies and equipment used in Ahir embroidery to comprehend the workmanship involved. It goes into detail on the many threads, needles, materials, and embellishments that Ahir artisan's use, demonstrating their meticulousness and attention to detail in their work.

The motifs' positions are carefully planned to complement one another and follow a geometric rhythm. The use of contrasting colors for the embroidered threads is another distinctive feature of Ahir embroidery. Each variety mix used to weave the themes is special and ordinarily utilizes simply four to five different shaded strings. In addition, embellished borders are used to frame the motifs and enhance their effect. It is evident that nature has a significant influence on Ahir embroidery, as evidenced by the themes and design choices.

A visual language of color, threads, and stitches that conveys marital status, age, and clan is what embroidery says so much about. The use of mirrors, floral designs, parrots, and peacocks in Ahir embroidery is common. These incorporate splash-color bandhani textures in reds and additionally anges, and glossy silk weave mashru that has velvety feel.

The sankdi, or chain join, is then worked over the diagram, trailed by the vaano, or herringbone line, as filler, and the bakhiyo, or back fasten, or the daano, or single unit of the chain fasten, as a highlighter. The work is given the appearance that is frequently associated with embroidery from this region of the world by using aablas, or mirrors.



Fig 5: Embroidered Cloth-1



Fig 6: Embroidered Cloth-2

First, the outline is made. Traditionally, a thin stick dipped in natural pigments was used for this. Ballpoint pens, pencils, and charcoal are now just as common. By combining herringbone and buttonhole stitches to create borders or fill in spaces around mirrors, design variations can be created. Ahir believed that mirrors reflected the evil spirit, so they used them a lot. In their embroidery, they mostly used bright, flashy colors like red, blue, yellow, and green to give the barren desert a little life and make people forget about their problems.

The thick filler stitch known as the sedhphool, or oriental stitch, is used to make rings around mirrors. At the point when utilized in a checked board design, its name changes to hameervallo. The baavadiyo stitch, which is done without an outline and is extremely complicated, is done directly on the cloth.

Ladies' clothing highlights the most perplexing weaving and the most splendid tones. There is no end of possible combinations. The Ahirs place a high value on individuality, which may account for the skill's widespread popularity.

Conclusion

The conclusion highlights the significance of preserving and promoting the clothing and embroidery traditions of the Ahir community and summarizes the main findings of the study. It emphasizes the cultural importance of these artistic disciplines and how they have enriched India's textile history.

The clothing and embroidery of the Ahir community are examples of their talented artisans and rich cultural heritage. The community's strong ties to their rural backgrounds and dedication to maintaining its traditions are reflected in the

Colorful clothing and complex embellishments. The Ahir community continues to enthrall the world with their creativity, talent, and distinctive cultural expression via their beautiful embroidery.

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