



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Ahir embroidery of Kutch

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Abstract

Ahir embroidery of Kutch is a continuous row of embroidered patterns. Circular mirrors encircled with stitches enrich the material. The vibrant colors of the threads and sparkling pieces of mirrors embellish the surface and give a sense of royal appeal to each soul and remain in the heart. In this paper, we will learn about the specialty of Ahir embroidery in kutch, its value and its richness. To develop and promote Ahir embroidery in the fashion industry.

Keywords: Ahir embroidery, Kutch, traditional, stitch.

Introduction

The Ahir tribe is renowned for its handmade embroidery. All the motifs are usually free-flowing and contain smooth curves. Designs are created using freehand drawings, traced on the fabric using a stencil. The outlines are made of a chain stitch, locally referred as 'sankali'. The filling is finished employing a herring bone style stitch called Vana. Mirrors are often used. The Common foremost motifs include flowers, peacocks, scorpions, elephants, milkmaids and parrots. Ahir is the name of the community and has its own stitches and techniques. Hence the embroidery possesses its name Ahir embroidery. Basically, it's a cow herding and farming community and are called as agricultural tribe. They do have a historical background of being warriors, considered fearless, they were also named martial race moreover.

Literature Review

Historical Information About the Craft

Kutch district consist of various communities like Yadavas and Ahirs. Ahirs migrated from Mathura and settled in

Kutch (Pandya & Dholakia, 2013). They are mostly engaged in agriculture. They have a historical background of being warriors, considered fearless. They were also named martial race as well (Mazumder, 2003, p. 105). The Ahir community of the Kutch region has a distinctive craft style that is deeply rooted in the community style. Women of the Ahir community do needle work when they get time from work and household. The stitched product marks the tangible aspects of dowries. Dhungo is a motif created by mirrors. It was highly popular among Paratharia-Ahir (Das, 2021). The bright colors of the threads and glittering pieces of mirrors embellish the fabric, and a feeling of grandeur appeals to every soul and remains in heart. Ahir embroidery stitch consists of outline, filling and pattern stitch (AHIR WORK).

Evolution of the Craft

Initially, materials used were hand spun and hand-woven coarse Khaddar which was decorated with mirrors and series loop of chain stitch. Nowadays, the embroidery is done on silk or a locally done satin fabric. Dark-colored cotton thread was preferred on the olden days but now the twisted silken thread or the untwisted silk floss (heer) are used on choli, pajamas, jackets, bonnets, caps and other children's garments. The designs had various color schemes to differentiate each specification of the look. Flowers, Birds, creepers, and foliage were a number of the motifs, of which parrots, peacocks, bulbul, human figure, dancing doll, karan phool were the main ones (Dholakia, 2012).

Importance of the Craft

The women in the community adorn the products of embroidery. The embroidery created by the women symbolizes to which community they belong. Additionally, the style or color of the garment and its patterning indicate their marital status⁽³⁾. The product created by the women acts as a dowry, so the embroidery done by the women

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is saved and given as a dowry gift which gives a group identity, marital status, etc. Ahir embroidery is known for its prolific use of mirrors, floral designs, parrots and peacocks. The stitches and the motifs of the Ahir embroidery has its unique name, namely - Zad (tree), Sachuphool (realflower), Suda(parakeet), Mor(peacock); human figures, insects from domestic activities, Maiyari, Paniari is also depicted. Deities like lord Ganesha and lord Krishna formed spiritual motifs. The embroidery speaks a language of its own. The craft forms act as an integral part of the culture as the Ahir women adorn torans, quilts chaklas, cushions and belts etc (Ahir embroidery of Gujarat). The roundness of the motif by using repetitive circular mirrors is distinct to Ahir tribe. Ahir embroidery is identified as superior in design and aesthetics. The embroidery is outlined with the open chain stitch executed in yellow or white yarn.

Domestic and Export Scenario of Craft

Chakla, Toran, Ghaghra, Kanjari, Godadi(quilt), Bags, Cushion cover, Pillow cover, Sarees, Saree borders, and Wall hangings were among the embroidered products for the market. Suits from Punjab. Chania cholis, waist belts, and bed coverings were sold and exported among other items. These items had a good export potential as well. Despite having a variety of marketing outlets, there was a disconnect between production and marketing. Sometimes the marketing agencies tell the artisan which product has high demand in the market. Then the orders are placed with the artisans for those products (Dholakia, 2014).

Existing Schemes Which Facilitate Promotion of Indian Craft

Craftsmen Training Scheme (CTS)

The Craftsmen Training Scheme (CTS) was established by the Indian government in 1950 to ensure a steady flow of trained employees in various skills for the domestic industry, provide them with job training, and eliminate unemployment and industrial attitudes among the younger population.

Mega Cluster Scheme

This scheme is based on mega-cluster which gives an idea to the craftsman how they organize their handicrafts center in modernized way. The main objective of this scheme is to rise the living standards of the artisan by employing. The Handicraft Mega Cluster Mission (HMCM) takes the mega cluster. A maximum of 3% shall be fixed for producing the bottom line data or reports. Thus the project performance is frequently checked. The funds will be allocated in accordance with the report, and the project will last for four years. The Project Approval and Monitoring Committee will approve the project (PAMC). Only after the great reports are in place will the PAMC provide additional approvals. The PAMC should examine the progress of the various projects on a regular basis.



Figure 1: Value chain of the craft

Methodology

A value chain, often known as the 'creative chain,' is defined as "a series of activities that add value to a new product or service as it moves from conception through ultimate distribution."

The value chain consists of an innovative idea, combined with other sources to produce a traditional goods or service, through a series of activities being interlinked for the production refer Figure 1. According to the values chain, an embroidery product is created, produced, manufactured or duplicated, and then distributed before it reaches, or is utilised by, a consumer.

Development of Value-Added Products

Product 1

Select a place in the shirt to place the design. Trace out the pattern with a carbon sheet from the tracing sheet. Mark the placement of mirror and embroider the mirror stitch using chainstitch. Then stitch the outline with open chain stitch refer Figure 2.

Product 2

Trace the design using a white pencil on the top and select the area for placement of the mirror. Stitch the mirror using the mirror stitch with chainstitch refer Figure 3.

Product 3

Trace the design using carbon sheet on the top. Start to stitch the outline with open chain stitch and filling stitch is a type of her ring bone stitch. The outline of hair design is chain stitch refer Figure 4.

Results and Discussion

By Ahir embroidery extra value is added to the product and pricing is done.

Product Utility

The garment used here is a casual wear which is worn many times. The embroidery stitch given didn't rip-off even after multiple washes.



Figure 2: Product 1

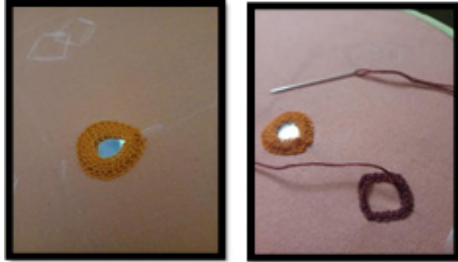


Figure 3: Product 2



Figure 4: Product 3



Figure 5: Style 1

Table 1: Pricing of product 1

S.No	Cost	Price	Total
1	Material	300 Rs	
2	Thread	20 Rs	
3	Needle	5 Rs	
4	Mirror	10 Rs	
5	Working cost	100 Rs	
6	Expenses	50 Rs	
	Total		485 Rs
	Profit 5%	24.25	
	Total cost		510 Rs



Figure 6: Style 2

Table 2: Pricing of product 2

S.No	Cost	Price	Total
1	Material	450 Rs	
2	Thread	10 Rs	
3	Needle	5 Rs	
4	Mirror	20 Rs	
5	Working cost	100 Rs	
6	Expenses	50 Rs	
	Total		635 Rs
	Profit 5%	31.75	
	Total cost		670 Rs

Table 3: Pricing of product 3

S.No	Cost	Price	Total
1	Material	600 Rs	
2	Thread	15 Rs	
3	Needle	5 Rs	
4	Working cost	100 Rs	
5	Expenses	50 Rs	
	Total		770 Rs
	Profit 5%	38.50	
	Total cost		810 Rs

Time Consumption

For style 1 it took 1 day to finish refer Figure 5, the style 2 took 2-3 days to finish refer Figure 6 and the style 3 took 1 day to finish refer Figure 7. Mostly the mirror work took time to finish.

Pricing

Style 1

For style 1 took 1 day to finish and the cost of production is Rs. 485/- refer Table 1

Style 2

The style 2 took 2-3 days to finish. The cost of production is Rs. 635/- refer Table 2

Style 3

For style 3 took 1 day to finish and the cost of production is Rs. 770/- refer Table 3



Figure 7: Style 3

Conclusion

According to the literature review and search undertaken during the craft training, we learned the importance of hand-crafted products and its value. Ahir embroidery are extensively used for decorative purposes such as in apparel, accessories, home décor, and stationaries.

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