

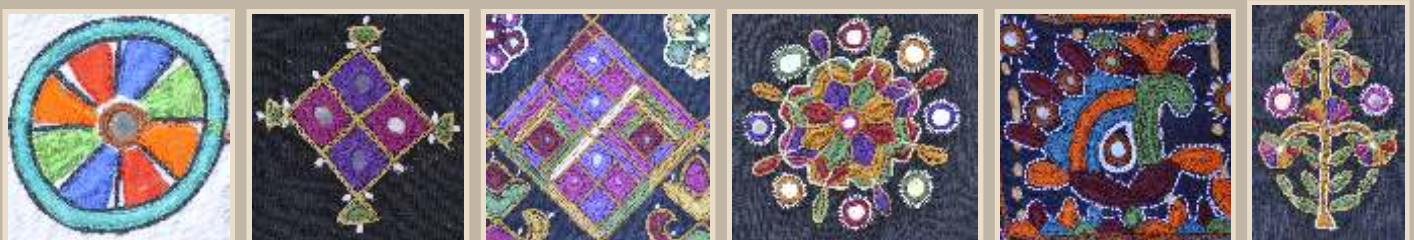
COMMUNITIES: SODHA, JADEJA
EMBROIDERIES: PAKKO, NERAN

Pakko and **Neran** are the two embroidery styles practised by the Sodha and Jadeja communities.

Pakko embroidery is characterized by a sturdy denseness. That is why it is called *Pakko*, meaning strong, durable in Kutchi. Pakko has curvilinear, geometric, floral, bird, animal and figurative motifs.

Craftswomen render the wide *pakka ni aank* stitch (also known as *cheereli aank*) in a dense manner to create the motifs. They use colours that have the same tonal values. And they highlight the motifs with the *khann* stitch or with a few mirrors. The highlighting helps to lighten the denseness.

Shrujan's understanding of Pakko was that its motif repertoire was limited. A concerted effort was therefore made during the *Design Centre on Wheels* project to create new motifs and designs. The expanded repertoire brought a newness and freshness to Pakko embroidery. But it still remained primarily a single-stitch embroidery.



All this changed in 2013 when field research began with the Sodha and Jadeja communities. The researchers' interaction with the grandmother generation of craftswomen unearthed long forgotten and 'lost' elements - including 54 stitches, 56 ornamented mirrors and over 100 motifs.

These are exciting times for the craftswomen. Only they can decide how they wish to use this newly discovered abundance to reinvent Pakko.



Embroidery is an integral part of the lives of the craftswomen. And the pursuit of excellence is a strong motivator. Craftswomen acknowledge that the criteria for evaluating creative excellence vary from one embroidered piece to another. They have, however, identified a set of indicators by which the technical excellence can be assessed.

The indicators of technical excellence in Pakko embroidery are:

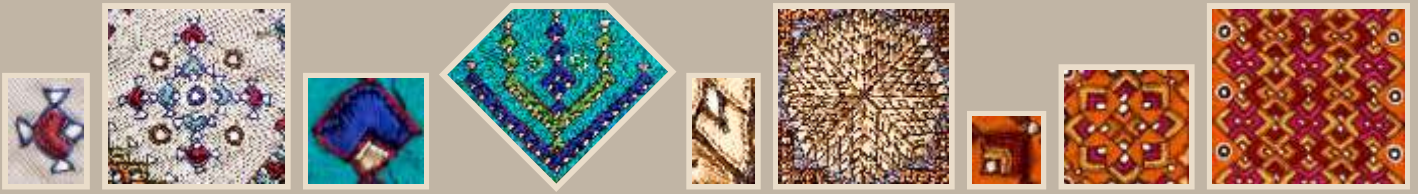
- the wide pakka ni aank stitch is rendered densely
- pakka ni aank maintains the curvilinear shapes of the motifs
- pakka ni aank does not pucker the base fabric
- the base fabric underneath the embroidery does not show through.

The building block of **Neran** embroidery is a tiny unit that is either square or diamond-shaped. This unit resembles the shape of the human eye which is called *neran* in Sindhi. The size of the tiny neran remains uniform throughout the composition. Colour adds drama: the unit is outlined in a dark colour, filled in with a bright colour and highlighted in white.



Small-sized mirrors are an integral part of Neran. Craftswomen use them in creative ways to enhance the appeal of this embroidery.

Traditionally, neran was a small component of Pakko embroidery; it did not have a distinct identity. Craftswomen used it to create only a few motifs. During the *Design Centre on Wheels* project, however, the tiny neran caught the eye of a designer, who wondered if it could be played with in altogether different ways. The craftswomen showed designer how her ideas about elongating and widening the tiny neran could be worked out in embroidery. This collaboration gave rise to a huge collection of new geometric patterns and designs. This in turn helped Shrujan provide work to more craftswomen of the Sodha and Jadeja communities.



The indicators of technical excellence in Neran embroidery are:

- size of the tiny basic unit is uniform throughout the composition
- no details other than mirrors are used
- mirrors are used sparingly.