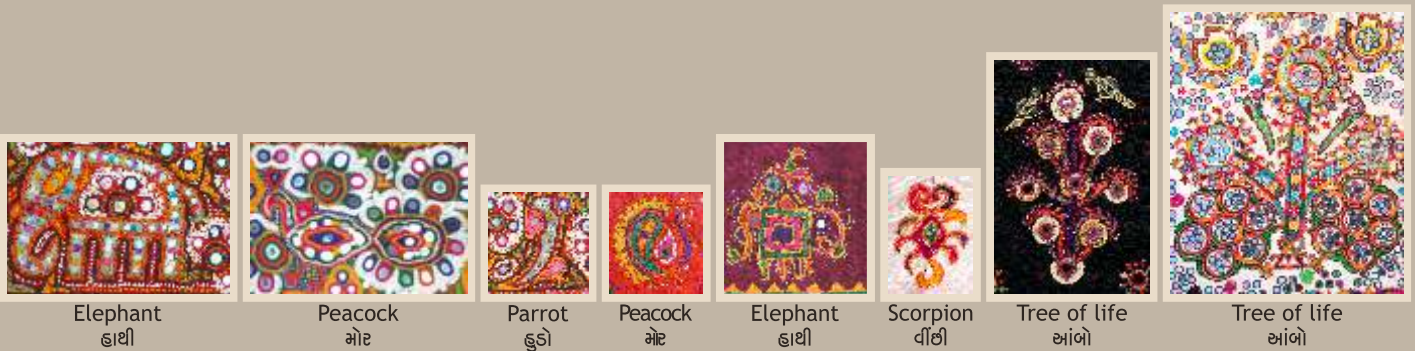


COMMUNITIES: AHIR, MEGHWAAD GURJAR  
EMBROIDERY: AHIR

The Ahir community is divided into several subgroups, including the Praanthadiya, Macchoya and Boricha. The Meghwaad Gurjars live alongside the Praanthadiya Ahirs in almost all the regions of Kutch.

The pieces on display here are predominantly those done by Praanthadiya Ahir and Meghwaad Gurjar craftswomen, who share a common embroidery tradition.

Ahir embroidery celebrates abundance and opulence. It is bright, colourful, dense and chock-a-block with mirrors. It has a confidence and a boldness that Ahir craftswomen refer to as thassa.



There are only five main floral motifs - dhungo, tunaaro phool, chaatudiyo phool, sedh phool and mochiya nu phool. However, craftswomen make such ingenious use of these five motifs that it seems as if the Ahir embroidery universe has a huge repertoire of floral motifs.





Bird and animal motifs include parrots, peacocks, sparrows, elephants and scorpions. The Ahir tradition encourages craftswomen to personalize these motifs by playing with stitch and colour.

There are two figurative motifs: the *kaanudo* is a representation of Lord Krishna and the *mahiyaari* depicts the milkmaid.



Variations of the peacock  
વિવિધ પ્રકારનાં મોરનાં બુટાઓ



Lord Krishna  
કાગુડો



Milkmaid  
મહિયારી

Ahir craftswomen embroider their own garments and accessories as well as those of their children. They also embroider home decorations such as the *toran*, a door hanging strung at the entrance of the house and the *ochhaad*, a long quilt cover. A variety of bags of different shapes and sizes are also embroidered.

The embroidered products range from very small to very large; from the small *topi*, the cap worn by young boys, to the *ochhaad* that is 1.5 X 1 metre in length.



Door hanging  
તોરણ



Cap  
ટોપી



Bag  
થેલી



Ahir embroidery is open to innovation. Shrujan has introduced many non-traditional elements such as abstract motifs and muted colours. But always, the core Ahir values are respected by adhering to the use of specific stitches for specific functions. As per the Ahir tradition, the small, round *saankdi* is used to outline the motifs, the *vaano*, to fill in, and the *daano*, *bakhiyo* and *kaanti* to highlight and provide the final flourish.



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 Ahir embroidery are:

- *saankdi* used to outline the motifs is round, small and uniform in size
- *vaano* radiates uniformly along the curves as it fills in the motifs
- *vaano* is so densely rendered that the base fabric does not show through
- use of stitches such as *daano*, *bakhiyo* and *kaanti* to highlight the embroidery
- mirrors are fixed to the base fabric using the six-point star method
- stitches used for embroidering the mirrors are rendered tightly so that maximum area of the mirrors is exposed.