**Bandhani - Tie 'N' Dye**

**Introduction**

Bandhani-Tie and Dye is the most important traditional handiwork of Kutchi people. Bandhanis are very closely associated with deep rooted social customs. It is treated as a symbol of married life. It is a must in the marriages of Hindus and Muslims. Discovery of dyed cotton fabric dating back to the Indus valley civilization shows that the art of dyeing using penetrating was well known to the dyers about 5000 years ago. Tie-dye still continues to have an important position in Gujarat.

Bandhani tie and dye is found in some forms in almost all parts of the world. ‘Bandhani’ is also called as ‘Bandhej’ came originally from the word ‘Bandhana’ (to tie). Today, most of the Bandhani produced in India is made in Kutch, Saurastra and in other neighbouring districts.

**Production Process**

The process of tie-dye is relatively simple, but it is very difficult and time consuming. The material to be used is folded more than a few times until reduced to a square or rectangular piece. It is spread on wooden table and desired designs are marked on it with a wooden block (An even nail block) using ‘Gheru’ (Red oxide) mixed with water. Then, it is taken off the table given to a Bandhani craftsperson, who purposely allows the thumb and the finger nail to grow long so as to use them as a pair of tongs for trying the marked portions into tiny knots. The decorative designs indicated by the block are sized and skillfully tied with thread thus retaining the original colour of the material in that portion. Then, it is dyed in a light colour generally yellow. The area requiring yellow is once again tied and later dyed in red or another required dark colour. Thus, the different colours required are introduced into the materials. After the process of tying and dyeing, the cloth is washed with soft water to remove the colour impurities. Then, to remove the colour knots, the process of hitching is done. Two ends of the cloth material are caught by two persons. It is a little hitched in the open air or in the sunlight so that the knots are automatically removed and the tied parts are free. The traditional motifs used are like Sikar, Kori, Badam, Champakali, Kharek etc. Bandhani is used in main
products like sarees, Punjabi dresses, cloth, skirts and shawls etc. Tie-dye Odhanis are produced in cotton, silk and georgette. Mandvi, Bhuj, Khavda, Dhamanka, Tera, Bara and Anjar are main centres of tie-dye. According to the survey of tie-dyeing held in 1961, the completion of a piece of the ‘Bandhani’ takes almost eight hours. Red knots can also be removed or lightened or even eliminated by submerging the cloth in a solution of caustic soda and sodium hydrosulphite.

The finished piece is then washed and decent. Bandhani textiles are regularly sold still tied up so that the customer can be sure that it is not a printed artificial and perhaps also so that the customer can have pleasure of seeing the pattern exposed when the cloth which appears to be all in one colour after its final dyeing is pulled separately from its folds and the binding cotton falls away from the plane. While Chunari with a design made up of small dots is possibly the most attribute type of Indian tie dye material, the banded or zig zag ‘Laharia’ is also extensively seen in Kutch today. The method is equally one of enfold oppose but in this case the whole cloth is rotated up and tied at intervals to shape stripes. Only tremendous cloth, usually thin cotton of ‘malmal’ (Kutchi word) can be used for this process as the dye must go through the whole tightly rolled material. The cloth is rolled crossways from one corner to form a striped pattern or folded like a fan, usually in four to create a zigzag as in ‘Chunari’ dyeing, consecutive tied and engagement in dye baths produce a succession of colours. If the cloth is untied and re-rolled from the opposite diagonal, a checked effect results called ‘Mothara’.

The dyes of all types of Bandhani work used today are always artificial. The widespread dyes were originally thought from the ancestry of Morinda Cordifolia, in combination with an double sulphate of Aluminium and Potassium caustic for the fast (Pakka) red, Kasum from the petals of sunflowers, Carthamus Tintorius for Kutch red, Haldi from the tuber of Curcuma Domestica with Chhach for yellow and Gali, Indigo from the leaves of Indigofera Tintria for blue. Their financial records of sloping sharply with the cloths of difference of several days and strong with the simple summary are required for chemical dyes to create the result. The difficult work of collecting the dye plants and obtaining their dyes are not referenced by either of 19th Century writers but it is hardly surprising that current dyers enthusiastically took up the opportunely tinned colours that took their place.

Bandhani is done with cotton, gajji silk, fur, muslin etc. in Gujarat. The smooth weave known as gajji which was used for more costly Bandhani textiles up to the early 20th Century gives richness to the delicately worked designs which are distinctive of Gujarati tie and dye skills.

Although the impressive silk sarees and odhanis decorated with peacocks, flowers, dances or a ‘Rasamandala, designs used as cheerful dress. The high-quality kind of bandhani in Gujarat is most recurrently made not of silk but of cotton. It is popular as ‘Gharcholu’, the traditional wedding ‘Odhani’ of the Hindus bride now also legally taken by Jain women and even worn as sarees by guests at weddings. The fine cotton is divided into separated by the partitions by natural fiber stripes of gold brocade, the gold checkered fabric being made in Porbandar, although it was formerly imported from
Varanasi. The most important ‘gharcholu’ design are called ‘Bar Bhag’ (12 sections) of ‘Bavan Bhag’ (52 sections) controlling on the number of decorative designs and squares. To save cost, the designs may be tie-dyed into a plain red cotton cloth without the gold rich fabric woven. The buyers having enough money for the zari chowk Saree is more attractive. Another negotiation can be achieved by stitching gold ribbon in strips on the tie dyed Sari, yet another step down the steps of traditional methods is taken when the design itself is roller printed.

The ‘Gharcholu’ designs are given to a girl by her husband at the time of their wedding. She usually arranges it over her head. It is exclusively covered during the ceremony, while she wears under the traditional white silk saree called ‘Panetar’ with a red border.

According to the survey, more complicated designs in Bandhanis are finished in villages of Kutch. Many of them are sent to Jamnagar for dyeing and advertising. As stated in the survey of 1961, there were about 4000 people functioning in the tie-dye industry in Kutch mostly in Bhuj and Anjar. The leading persons in Kutch are ‘Khatris’ who have expended a effective monopoly on textile production since middle aged times. It is said that the Khatris have been came from Sind.

The tie-dyed silk fabrics worn by the Khatri Muslims are completely different from the Hindus. The Hindus and the Muslims country communities normally make extensive use of Bandhani textiles, both as ‘Chunaris’ and ‘skirts’. Their fairly basic linear designs are originally from Sind. The waterless areas of Northern Kutch and Banni are just like deserts and many communities describe their origins to Sind. Complex embroidered patterns are often added over the basic tie dye fabric and a practice is also seen in more difficult level both in designs and techniques among the Khatri Muslims.

**Patchwork**

Appliqué work in Kutch was developed out of piecing cloth together as coverlets or working out patterns by applying pieces of clothes of different colours and textures. The women of different communities have their separate styles, the most individual being that of the Rabari and Harijan communities of Kutch. The finest work is seen on the
decorative hanging which covers the quilted materials. Every bride had to have at least there appliqué pieces for her collection of clothes. Articles for daily use which were in constant use were strengthened by the decorative patch work. The colours are principally brown or black with slight use of pieces of Mashru, tie and dye and single colours of bright green, yellow, orange, red and white.

The finest and slightest work known as patch work is done by the Danetah Jats of the village Thal, who makes stripes of changeable colours and designs to decorate stretched out pillows. The stripes are unbelievably tiny and pointed pieces rather than triangular and embroidered with buttonhole stitches and colourful criss-cross edgings. Wall hangings and a variety of other objects for daily use find a steady market.

![Ajrakh Printing](image)

**Ajrakh Printing**

One of the most specialised and finest kinds of block printing, AJRAKH is a popular traditional art form of Kutch with its main centres in Dhamadka, Khavda and Bhuj in Gujarat.

Ajrakh printing is one of the famous traditional special skills of Kutch. The word ‘Ajrakh’ means ‘keep it to day’ and perhaps served as resources of advertising. It also means making beautiful and in Arabia, Ajrakh indicates the blue colour which is an important technique. Khatri community has been occupied in this craft for many centuries and the technique is controlled down from father to son. In recent times, Harijan craftsmen qualified under Khatri craftsmen are also capturing this craft. Dhamanka and Khavda are the two most important centres.

**Process:**

The entire process of printing Ajrakh thus involves 13 stages that are inevitably more expensive to produce, but the result is a wonderful depth of colour not achievable with surface printing.
First, the material is preoccupied and progressed by washing. Washed cloth is dipped in a solution of microbalances and dried. Then, it is spread on printing table topped with sack made stuffing. The fabric section required to maintain the original white colour is first printed with defend against prepared by using lime, gum and water. Wherever red colour is required that segment is printed with Alum solution. The Alum sees through the cloth while lime acts as refuse to accept. Sometimes, sawdust or camel dung powder is spotted to strengthen the resist. The same process is repeated on the other side for both sides printing. Afterwards, the cloth is absorbed in mixture containing Alizarine and Padvas in which the processed cloth gets a bright red colour on the portion provided with Alum. Again, resist print is repeated to maintain white and red colours. Then, the cloth is dipped in indigo solution prepared by mixing indigo cake, chajikar, lime and water by the exciting method. Even a type of yellow soil nearby identified as ‘Kaiya’ is used for black colour. The cloth is washed in flowing water, dried, ironed and packed.

In the ‘Minakari’ process of painting, lime or terracotta resists is avoided and the white portions of Ajrakh twist into light blue. Minakari process makes possible the printers to get different shades from dark blue and red to deep maroon. To avoid the lengthy and time overwhelming method the craftsmen also make use of artificial colors. Nepthols for red and for blue color indigo green no. 60 is also utilized.

Champakali, Raiya, Kharek, Nipad, Grinari etc. are the main and famous traditional designs used in painting and they are used on cradle spreads, lungis, sarees, dress materials, pillow covers and table cloths. Main centres of printing are Dhamanka, Khavda and Bhuj.

Textiles

Mutwa's Embroidery

Under very tough conditions, Mutwas produce the wonderful embroidery with tiny mirrors and microscopic stitches that differentiates them from the other communities. The complicated and time-consuming nature of this work has often been underestimated. Their work without delay received appreciations and obtained higher prices.

Mutwas' embroidery arises from its name from Mutwa (Maldhari) which is a sub caste of Muslims living in Banni area. Mutwas' embroidery is the finest embroidery in Banni area. Mutwas are expert in workmanship of all styles of embroidery. The work is carried out using silk threads. This work is extremely difficult.
**Rabari’s Embroidery**

Embroidery is a fundamental part of Rabaris’ life. They consider the ‘Choli’ or blouse their most important arts forms because of their heavily embroidered embellishment. Their embroidery combines of commercial interests, square, triangular, rectangular, diamond, conical and circular mirrors. This extraordinary cooperate with shaped mirrors is very exclusive to Rabaris’ embroidery. Rabaris are essentially settled in countrified Kutch. Rabari women are known for their beautiful, attractive and impressive embroidery that is symbolic of their wandering lives.

Decoration in Kutch is done by using microscopic close chain stitches while in Mehsana district; cross stitches using ‘Abhla’ are used widely. Their embroidery is comparable to Saurashtra style. The Rabaris broadmindedly use the mirrors of various shapes triangular, round, square and almond shaped for example. The embroideries when completed are given to the clean up as dowry.

Regularly contacts with the tourists of different kinds and from different places make the Rabaris’ embroidery more commercial. They discovered that by doing excellent work, they could find more steady markets and better returns for the time spent embroidering.

**Danetah Jat**

Five hundred years ago, the Jats lived permanently in Halab region which is known as Baluchistan today. Later, they become famous as the ‘Danetah Jats’ which means herders. Under defensive pressure from reactionary owners of land and in search of new grazing lands, they began a mass departure that would take them to Sindh, Gujarat and finally to Kutch. Those who took up undeveloped started being known as ‘Gharacia Jats’. Some, known as Fakirani Jats, became holy men dedicated to studying the Quran, the main holy book of Islam religion. The largest group remained herders and retained the name ‘Danetah Jats’. All Jats are Sunni Muslims and they never marry outside of their community.

Jat women design and produce wonderful and manual embroidery. The power of Jats’ embroidery comes largely from the closely stitched patterns that completely cover the cloth. They take pride in the fact that their “Stitches outlive the cloth on which they are sewn.” The most intensively embroidered article of a Jat woman’s gift is the ‘Churi’ or blouse. Its colour and decorative designs visually communicate the age, marital status and geographical origin of the wearer.

The Jats were pressured by the government to settle and initiate themselves on the slightest fertile land. They started selling their embroidery only fifteen years ago in order to survive droughts. Thirteen years ago, two Jat villages joined KMVS and found a co-operative association in which they cultured the value of their marvelous work and how to advertise it.
Dhadki Work

Dhadki work (form of coverlets) is a different and important part of traditional household techniques in Kutch. It is an important technique inside the embroidery tradition and the different model of quilting are the common part of the local communities.

The categories and textures of clothes combined with narrow stripes of basic or appliqué borders of contrasting colours give the coverlets a complicated and bold framework. Patterns are created with a number of stitches like a running stitch of having a common rectangles, series of squares or triangles lay edge to edge or circles within squares. The design is stressed by changing the direction of the stitch and a rippling pattern created. The stitches are microscopic and the thread used for quilting is red, black or white coloured.

A highly sophisticated and individualistic quilting stitch is accomplished by the Harijans. Progressing in a step like geometric arrangement of squares and diamond shapes the colour of the thread is often changed. This creates an misapprehension of a graded coloured base cloth.

On entering a household, one at once notices in the corner of the household, a load of quilts neatly piled up and laid out whenever guests are welcomed into their house.

Beadwork

Bead work is a form of embroidery that has the difference of being both two and three dimensional. It is used to create wall hangings as well as enclosures for hard objects like pot rests and water vessels.

This craft was developed in the ending of 19th century with the use of imported Venetian beads (rounded pieces of glasses) for decorative purposes and the designed were based on an inventory of flower-patterned and geometric decorative designs. The
decorative designs are stated authoritatively by the technique of putting two and three
beads together. The art of sloping the beads is important as their size, texture and
colours give the luxury and regularity of the pattern. Pillow cases, ropes of swings and
cradle-frames for fans etc. are covered in bead work inspiring the simplest article of
daily use.

Almost all old pieces are difficult beads while later pieces include semi-transparent and
semi precious coloured with red and green. A simple mathematical calculation to create
patterns is working. However, the high degrees of superiority, the number of people
involved in its production, the brightness and correctness of its style and technique all
make it a major craft of Kutch.

With thread and a small needle, stylized patterns are created from beads of different
colours. In bead work, decorative items such as torans-horizontal doorway hangings,
ceremonial square hangings-chaklas, as well as pillow covers and indoni, a circular
object for balancing water pots on the heads etc. are created by women. The Dhebaria
Rabaris of eastern Kutch are well-known for fantastic bead work. Working in a three
bead technique, which secures heads; women make netting for ornaments and various
articles. Articles made from beads are also created and offered in temples for wishes to
be granted.

**Aari Bharat**

The needle work of this important instruct in Kutch is generally known as Mochi
embroidery. Mochi or the members of the shoe-maker community work in silk with a
captivated needle like a broad and on silk cloth, Mashru, broad cloth, net and canvas.
With a silk thread in one hand, the artists work with the other without any design
sketched in the clothes or even placed before him and with wonderful speed forms
letters, leaves, fruits, flowers, animals and human figures. Therefore, highly their skills
valued that Kutch, Kathiawar and other chief centres employ them and their work is in
great demand all over India and their work is sent to Zanzibar.

This embroidery is worked with the help of an ‘Aar’ holded needle where the thread is
introduced. This is also known as ‘Mochi Bharat’ (Cobbler’s stitch). In the earlier days,
silk thread was used on smooth. Although the technique is simple in principle, it requires
extensive skills and long practice. This art grew and prospered under the sponsorship of
royal families in Kutch and Saurashtra. ‘Butti’ of Persian origin peacocks in beautiful
forms, stylized flowering scrubs and ‘Patli’ were some of the decorative designs
commonly used.

Nowadays, this embroidery has become destroyed. It is possible to see the samples of
Mochi embroidery only in Aina Mahal, Kutch museum and Bharatiya Sanskriti Darshan
in Bhuj.
**Kutchi Bharat**

‘Kutchi Bharat’ with its complicated microscopic designs in attractive colours is considered to be the most outstanding and superb among the different types of Kutchi embroideries. This instructs derive its name from that vast extend of semi-desert land called Banni. It is represented by the Lohanas of Khavda, Jats, Mutvas, Harijans etc. of Banni. The Lohanas of Khavda dedicate themselves into skirt work and coverlets. The embroidery of Jats is extremely advanced.

![Image of Kutchi Bharat embroidery]

The different types of Kutchi embroideries called as Kacho Bharat, Pako Bharat, Niran, Bharat, Kharek Bharat, Kambari Bharat, Chopad Bharat, Gufuo Bharat and Tanka Bharat.

When the men set out with their cattle and group, the women sit in the shades of their homes with needles and threads and they embroider and embroider and embroider. The young ones start to embroider articles which are kept till they come of age and carry of to there son-in-laws. They even have an offering sack (kothalo) in which they take all they have embroidered.

The festival blouses known as ‘Kanchali’, the grant sack (Kothalo), the groom’s marriage bags, the ‘Pothu’, the doorways long curtains, the torans and a host of many other articles that are daily or for certain cheerful and special events and yet sold in the markets of many cities today.

The Sodhas are known for their soof embroidey and the Ahirs are well known for their chain sews up and the Jats’ subgroups have their own styles of embroidery. The Rabaris and the jats have their own individual embroideries.

The most characteristic embroidery is the clothes of men, women and children of Kutch. Though, the styles are different from community to community and based on them alone can communities be well-known from each other.

The finest needle work today comes from many communities living in the Banni zone, a clean semi-desert region situated in the north direction of Bhuj and bordering Pakistan. The area is unreachable during the monsoon. The Harijans’ village Hodko and the
Muslim groups of Dhordo and Gorevali have been able to produce a large variety of decorative pieces for use in the profit-making municipal market.

Rabarlis' decorative designs are made of flowers, decorative panels, a geometrical stylized horse and rider, peacocks and scorpions, worked in the chain stitch with round petal shaped and triangular mirrors scattered between them.

The Ahirs' chain stitch embroidery is advanced and more elaborate than the Rabaris' style. Young Ahir women wear ornately embroidered skirts in thick handspun cotton, generally green, red, blue or black while their backless bodices are in natural fiber Mashru fabric and heavily embroidered in chain stitch, buttonholes and herringbones stitch with mirrors. The most common decorative designs for their embroidered pieces are parakeets, flowers, women producing buttermilk, fan shaped half flowers or attractively decorated panels worked in rows, separated by bands of narrow geometric borders.

Traditional to Kutch is another style of embroidery known as ‘Hurmitch’ and inspired from the Bavaliya tree—generally known as ‘thorny acacia’. It is an embroidery style worked almost completely with disconnected interweaving stitches arranged into various geometric patterns. In Hurmitch, stitch fabrics, the reverse surface of the cloth contrasts powerfully with the front. Separated interlacing decorative designs are attached to the base fabric only at the outer edges of the motifs. To create these insignificant separate fabrics, scaffolding twist spun threads are set up on the surface and the woven things are woven into the scaffolding with a needle. This results in small detached and separate designs of interlaced woven fabrics that lie above the surface of the base fabric.

The Mutva Jats of Banni embroider in an extremely fine style that is exclusive in Sindh and Kutch. This style of embroidery is characterized by geometrically decorative designs and sometimes white three or five petal flowers, worked in tiny square chain stitching often outlined with white consecutively stitches.

**Leather Work**

Mochis and Harijans dedicate themselves in leatherwork. This work is at first done on pure leather of cows, buffaloes, goats, sheep etc. but today, it is also done on regsin. Many different varieties of items like shoes, sandals, purses, bags, mirror frames, fans, belts, saddle bags for camels and horses etc are made by leatherwork. These accessories are embroidered with brilliant colours like red, orange, blue, green etc.
Before this community was engaged to embroiden the shoes of majestic family members. Today this craft is also seen in some places like Bhirandiyaro, Dumado, Dhobrana, Khavda, Hodko, Dhordo, Gorewali, Ratadiya, Sumarasar, Bibber, Dinona, Kuran, Ratnal, Sattapar, Galpadar and Bhuj etc.

**Wood Carving**

Wood carving is one of the best imaginative skills of Kutch. The people of Harijan community live in Dumaro and Ludia and they are master craftsmen of wood carving. They make various tools like pastel roller, chapatti disc, bottles, small table and glasses etc. of wood doing attractive figure. Normally, they use the hard durable timber wood and available in ‘Babul’ wood to prepare the excellent artifacts.

**Pen Knives**

Pen Knives, seed crackers, scissors and swords of Kutch are famous in India as well as in all over the world. The accurate derivation of this craft is not visible. The current Muslim blacksmiths are famous as ‘Luhars’ and they follow this technique. They were previously educating property. As agriculture did not offer them continuous employment, they remained without work for about 6 to 7 months in a year. To make them working all the time, their religious preceptor advised them to slot themselves in a side industry which could provide them income. According to another description, the industry seems to have been started long time ago by one of the associates of the present craftsmen who exclusively dedicated himself to the job of manufacturing state weapons. Today,
there are nearby 100 craftsmen busy in this craft and spread over different places like Bhuj, Mandvi, Anjar, Reha etc.

**Terra Cotta**

The terra cotta collected from the ponds is hardened, beaten, powdered, filtered and wrapped up in water. When the terracotta gains smoothness, it is kneaded on a small effective potter’s wheel. Different sizes and shapes of pots are shaped. These pots are sun dried. On the dried pots painting is done by using earth colours of white red and black with the help of brushes made out of bamboo sticks or cotton.

The painting work is done by women. The common uses of the decorative designs are waves, straight lines and zigzag lines, peacocks in different postures, leaves, fishes and flowers. After being painted, the pots are made dried in traditional process. Items include pots, kunja, Batak, Gharba, Deeva, plates etc. and Jambudi, Lodai, Bhuj; Khavda etc. are the main centres.

**Lacquerware**

Lacquer Ware is an antique craft of India and Kutch also. The Slices/ ‘Lac’ or ‘Lakh’ is originally come from the Sanskrit Slices/ which means hundred thousand. The material Lac is arisen from a little insect which discharges a sticky substance to shape itself a protecting cover. It takes about one lakh and fifty thousands insects to make just half a kilogram of shellac. The insect lives in particular types of trees including Babul which is common in Kutch.

**Process:**

Wood of the tree Babul is given a irregular shape by using an axe. Afterwards, it is twisted on a simple short lathe (Machine for shaping woods), called as Sanghedas using a shape. A coloured lac stick is useful on the rotating wood to give the wood a tough solid level, while it is still on lathe. Then, by pressing another piece of wood against it, resistance causes the lac to warm and liquefy and therefore, spreading it into a still covering the wood with a tough solid coat. An application of groundnut oil is used to make the final process without any difficulty.

By operating different colours in layers, a variety of effects are accomplished. Often, a top layer of the colour is chiseled off in a geometric or flower-patterned to expose the colours below.

Lacquer Ware is a twisted wood covered with coloured and often patterned lacquer. The main lacquer Ware products of Kutch are chakla – velan (Chapatti roller and board), charpai (bedsteads) toys, bajoth (stool), khandani (grinder and mortars) pots for storing spices and dandia (sticks to play folk dance).