

Design Resource

## Lambani Embroidery - Bijapur, Karnataka

Traditional Attire of Banjara

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Divyadarshan C. S. and  
Shruthi K.

NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/lambani-embroidery-bijapur-karnataka>

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## Introduction

Lambani also known as Banjara or Banjara Lambanis are a class of nomadic people migrated from the Indian states Rajasthan and North Gujarat and spread all over India before the arrival of Mughal. They used to travel from places to place in carts with all the things they owned. They are called as Gypsies of India. In the 17th century, Banjaras assisted the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb to export the goods to South. That was the first time they moved to south where the roads and railways made transportation of goods easier for them. In the 18th century the British authorities framed the community under the Criminal Tribe Act of 1871 and stopped their movements. This continued until 1952 and the act was eradicated by the Independent India. Later some of the families decided to settle down in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh with other states of India such as Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra. In Karnataka they have settled in the Northern part of Karnataka and hold the second largest population in India. These Banjaras are generally categorized as Hindus as they worship Hindu Gods like Krishna, Hanuman, Vishnu and Durga. They also worship some great people who are specific to the community amongst which Mithu Bhukhiya was known as dacoit of the tribe. Lambani people speak Banjari Language, also known as Goar-boali which originates from the Indo Aryan languages and has no script or recorded history. The community is learning the local languages in school and adopting the languages spoken in their surroundings. They are classified as Schedule Cast (SC) or other backward Classes (OBC) in the society. Bijapur a district of Karnataka is a city of historic monuments which was established in the 10th- 11th century by the Kalyani Chalukyas that was known as Vijayapura (city of Victory). This city has most population of Lambanis in Karnataka. Most of the families are into agriculture and others are into labor work in the cities of town. With the change in time Lambanis have tried to adjust with society. They don't own their own farms so they work in other farms and earn their wages. Young generations feel uncomfortable to work in the heavy traditional dress thus they have adapted to casual dress, which is slowly detaching them from their traditions and culture.

The place they live in is called as Tanda which will be usually located outside of a village. Their house usually consists of a small room with no opening except the door. The doors are painted with vibrant colors with floral or diamond shapes creating eye catching patterns. The most outstanding feature of Lambanis is their traditional attire. Women wear vibrant color cotton frilled long skirt or ghagra and a short sleeved top that are embroidered with colorful threads and decorated with mirror pieces. The skirt is called as "Phetia" that is a width of 1ft and length of 12ft. two pieces of red and black fabric of ½ft are embroidered together and stitched on the border of the skirt. Middle part of the skirt is embroidered with mirror or glass pieces and shells. The blouse is called as Kanchalli which is made of three parts. The first piece is the top portion attached to the low sleeves with cords attached on both sides which is used to tie at the back. The second piece is stitched below the top piece that covers the chest with cords attached on either side to be tied at the back. Third piece of the blouse is attached below the chest piece. All the three pieces are embroidered with mirrors and coins. Head cloth called as Chantia/Pambadi/Tukari is used to cover the head and the main attraction by which the Lambanis are identified. The cloth is 2mt wide and 1.32mt long embroidered with mirrors, coin and shells.

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The part of the veil which covers the head is embroidered with thick border called ghoom to embellish them with beads and coins hung on the forehead to frame the face.

Ornaments the women wear are made of different metals.

- Ghugri a silver ornament which looks like a pendant made of tube with silver beads hanging from it worn on the head. This indicated the marital status of Lambani women.

- Two types of jewelry is used to wear to nose which are generally worn after marriage, they are Bhuria a gold ornament and Phule a silver pin.

- The silver or brass necklace is made of silver coins called as “Wankiya” made of twenty five paisa coins and small bells attached to a silver chain with a big pendant shaped as horse attached to it. Haasla is a silver necklace made of rod bent to the size of the women’s neck who is wearing it. A triangle shape silver pendant with exquisite carving known as thetry is attached on both side of the rod which is presented to the brides by their parents at the time of their marriage. Cheed a necklace made of black beads woven in a string is worn by the women, which is made by them self.

- Bajubhand is a silver ornament tied on the arms of a married women. Balia is ivory bangles that are worn on hands and arms which were later replaced with plastic bangles. It is also worn by married women.

- For the fingers they wear two kind of rings namely Winte (a silver ring) and Phula made of four old coins of the Nizam arranged in floral pattern.

- Khans is the ornament worn in the leg (a round open bangle made of bronze), a silver anklet and toe silver rings called as Foolia shaped like a fish figure.

Men wear Dhoti and Short Kurta with many folds like a frock which was traditionally designed to protect them from harsh climate in the desert. They wear a big turban on their head dyed with striking colors. A waist jacket embroidered with mirror and colorful threads are worn on the Kurta. Men also wear ornaments, a bangle shaped ornament in their neck made of silver, and thick silver bangle is worn on both the hands and Khans in the leg. The traditional food the Lambanis eat is Bati (roti) and a dish made of many serials and spices. Bati is usually made of wheat or Jawar. Apart from veg they prefer eating Saloi (made from blood and other parts of goat). Dance and folk song is the life blood of Lambanis. After returning back from the tedious work all the Tanda people join together around a fire and sing and dance together. Another unique art of Lambanis is Rangoli. Different designs of rangoli is drawn by men in front of the altar of God or Goddess using Jawar powder, turmeric powder, Gulal (pink color powder) and Kumkum. Rangolis of Saint and Sadhus are made of Jawar powder and a one rupee coin is placed in the center of the rangoli in the honor of their ancestors.



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Despite their culture and rich heritage they are educationally and economically backward. With the change in the generation some of the Lambanis are making progress in literary and cultural field.

Present day Lambanis/Banjaras are known for their artwork. Lambani women show their embroidery skills on different types of article and presents them in Crafts Mela for selling them through NGOs. Most of the designers or NGOs hire the Lambani women for employment and spread their dieng art through their brand names. Lambani embroidery consists of the intricate thread work making geometrical patterns with countless of stitching skills.



Banjara embroidery is known for its colorful thread and mirror work.

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Lambani's also called as Banjara's are a class of nomadic people who migrated from Rajasthan to other states of India.



Mirror work embroidered with colorful thread which is worn by the female Lambani's.



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Hand bag embroidered with mirrors.



Patch work is also another specialty of Banjara embroidery.



Many of the Lambani people don't wear their traditional dress.

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## Tools and Raw Materials

Materials used to make the embroidery are available for the Lambani's in the nearby city market. The fabric used is usually loosely handloom woven. The fabric is dyed with chemical or natural colors. But mostly natural dyes are gaining popularity. The threads used for embroidery are cotton embroidery threads which are available ready-made in the markets in wide range of shades. Other tools and materials used are:

- Pair of scissors used to cut the thread and fabric.
- Needle used to stitch the threads in different patterns.
- Mirror pieces of different shapes used to embroider on the fabric.
- Shells and beads to embellish to embroidered designs.
- Cardboard stencil used to mark the design pattern on the fabric.
- Marking white pencil used to mark the design on fabric.
- Sewing machine used to sew the embroidered applique on the garment/dress.



Ruler and marker is used to mark measurements on the fabric.

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Various colours of cotton and woolen thread used for the embroidery.



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Cardboard with cut out measurements for required type of wear.



Needle is used in sewing different patterns of embroidery.

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Cotton sewing threads of different colors are used to stitch the dress.



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## Making Process

Lambani embroidery is a combination of colorful threads, design patterns, mirror work, stitching patterns applique or patch work. Embroidery is done on thirteen different colors of base fabric among which dark blue or red are commonly used. Base fabric used is basically hand loomed but now they also use readymade available fabric. The cloth is made of cotton khadi dyed with chemical or vegetable dyes made from Rathanjot, Kattha, Chawal Kudi, Pomegranate peel, etc. There are 14 types of stitches used in Lambani embroidery. They are Kilan, Vele, Bakky, Maki, Suryakanti Maki, Kans, Tera Dora, Kaudi, Relo, Gadri, Bhuriya, Pote, Jollya, Nakra. It also includes running stitches which appear like small dashes that creates a variety of patterns on the cloth. It is stitched with parallel lines and a thread of different color is interwoven between the stitches to create a horizontal pattern. Other than that criss cross pattern, chain stitch and overlaid quilting stitch are also made.

### Design Patterns:

- Lambani embroidery consists of random designs stitched with bright color thread.
- The patterns are usually created all over to cover the base fabric. Geometrical patterns like square, circles, rectangular and diamond shapes are embroidered with contrasting color threads and decorated with shells, coins, mirror and beads, etc.
- Applique or patchwork is other type of design patterns created on base fabric. Fabric is cut into desired shapes such as triangle and stitched on the base cloth with edges being nearly turned. Applique works are generally made on borders to create a pleasant pattern.
- The quilting stitching is done on the edges of the garment which is known as “Katta”. This embroidery is generally done with mirror work to produce shimmer and color.

Initially patterns for the design are drawn on cardboard and cut respectively. These stencils are used to mark patterns on the fabric. A rough design is marked on the areas where the designs are required to be embroidered on the fabric. With a marking pencil the complete design to be embroidered is drawn. With different color of embroidery threads the patterns are embroidered. Different types stitch patterns are used while embroidering to give the design a unique look. Combination of vibrant color threads makes the design more striking. The center of the designs is embellished with mirror works. The mirror is placed on the fabric and the thread is embroidered over it to capture the mirror in the thread which prevents it from falling off. Traditionally Lambani embroidery was made of wool, cotton, silk, gold or silver threads which added richness to the work. Some of the embroideries are made separately on strip of fabric which is later cut and stitched to desired wear. Earlier the Lambani women use to make only skirts and blouses for the neighbors who admired their work and asked to make one for them and give.

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Later the Government and other NGOs took interest in their work and gave them chance to work with them on other products designed with their art. These projects also gave employment to many Lambani women to earn wages to run their house. The pricing range of the articles starts from Rs. 150 to Rs. 600 for small work whereas and embroidered saree costs around Rs. 4000. The price depends on the intricacy of the design and size of the embroidered work. Products made of such embroidery have wonderful textures and a unconventional style, making them popular for tourists.



Different colours of cotton thread are used for embroidery.



Some embroidery designs are directly embroidered on the readymade dress.



Required design is made on the dress with essential coloured threads.



Few embroideries are made separately on a piece of cloth.



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Various types of designs are made with vibrant colours of threads.



A piece of finished patch embroidery.



Measurements of dress are drawn on a cardboard sheet.

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The measurements are then cut out using scissors.



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Using the cardboard cut outs measurements the size is marked on the fabric.



Fabric is cut according to the marked measurements.



Cutout fabric pieces are stitched together and embroidered piece is stitched into the fabric.



Most of the designs are made near to the neck design or border of the dresses.

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## Products

Embroidery is an appearance of artistic described as painting done with needle. It adds grace and elegance to any type of wear. Indian embroidery is one of the ancient arts inspired from nature and culture of other regions that reflects the beauty of flora and fauna of that area. Designs of embroidery in India vary from state to state and all are famous in their own way. Among them Lambani embroidery is a well-known embroidery design known all over India as well outside the country. This tribal embroidery is an art in itself with a wide range and work. It represents bright colors with simple motifs. All the embroideries are handmade and stitched with bright color threads representing their tribes. Their famous embroidery is Shisha (mirror) embroidery which is embroidered with combinations of color threads stitched to their traditional attire. Present generation of Lambanis don't prefer to wear their heavy traditional dress thus reducing the manufacturing of the dress. Earlier the art was taught to the daughters of the family who take forward the tradition to the next generations and even gift them or given it as a dowry to the daughters. But today's young generation hardly take interest in learning that because they get into other fields of work according to economic and cultural changes. This tradition of Lambani embroidery is just left as an art which new artisans combine it with modern articles or wears. Articles such as Kurtis, Bags, Pouch, Dupatas, Cushion covers, Table spread, Wall hangings and many other articles are embroidered with Lambani embroidery designs and embellished with mirrors and shells. Even the Lambani style of ornaments is given a touch of colorful threads to make them look eye-catching. Lambani embroidery has reached all over the world in the way of wide range of articles among which the flamboyant colors of bags embellished with mirrors is favorite among tourists.



A set of glass bottles painted with warli art.

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Mirror embroidery work made on a Kurta.



Mirror embroidery work pieces which will be stitched to the Dupatta's border.



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A small sling bag embellished with mirror embroidery.



Pillow cover embroidered with colorful threads and mirrors.



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