

Design Resource

## Leather Footwear - Kutch, Gujarat

Leather Craft

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Manasa K. H.

NID, Bengaluru

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/leather-footwear-kutch-gujarat>



1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
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## Introduction

Kutch is a district of Gujarat state in western India. It has a rich and diverse creative tradition and is known for its handicrafts such as Ajrakh block print, bandhini, embroidery, shawl weaving, metal bells, mashru weaving, Rogan art and leather crafts.

Bhujodi is one of the known villages in Kutch known for its handicrafts and a wide range of craft is practice in this village. Embroidery work can be seen in entire village and these embroidery works are done by the rabri women. Leather work is practiced in several villages across Kutch that includes Hodka, Bhujodi and Sumrasar. The crafts of bhujodi include shawl weaving, leather articles, embroidery works. Leather shoe making is one among the famous crafts of bhujodi.

Protecting the foot was probably one of the main reasons people started wearing shoes. Leather is a durable and flexible material created by tanning animal rawhide and skin. From prehistoric times the skins of animal to satisfy the basic needs and make various items footwear's, belts, clothing's etc., The skin of large (dead) animals such as cattle and horses are referred to as hides. Those of smaller animals such as sheep, goats and calves are called skins.

The three types of hides and skins most often used in leather manufacture are from goat, buffalo, and camel. Before these leathers are used for making any leather articles these undergo a process called tanning. Tanning is the process of converting raw hides or skins into leather. Hides and skins have the ability to absorb tannic acid and other chemical substances that prevent them from decaying, make them resistant to wetting, and keep them supple and durable.

The leather was introduced during the Neolithic times. The oldest very well-known piece of leather footwear is the Areni-1 shoe that was made in Armenia by a team of archaeologist around 3500 BCE. The shoe is around 5, 5000 years old.

Narsi bhai bijlani is a master craftsman, he says that they are basically from Pakistan and they are moved to India during the war between India and Pakistan. Working with leather is their family business, which is been practiced by their family since many years. Leathers are bought from the leather dealers and the leathers are purchased in bulk costs INR 700/- to 800/- per kg. Embroideries on slippers are usually made by the woman's and the price of the products ranges on the design and the patterns. It starts from INR 200/- to 300/-.

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Craftsman's shop and the leather products working place.



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Skilled craftsman involved in stitching the leather sandals.



Full view of the leather products work station.



Camel, Goat and Buffalo leather are mostly used to make sandals.

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Senior craftsman cutting the leather in required shape and design.



Stitching are made in proper proportion to hold both the sole stronger.



Beautifully made sandals with traditional embroidery designs.

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## Tools and Raw Materials

Tools and raw materials that are used to leather footwear making:

- Tanned Leather: Goat, Buffalo, and camel skins are the basic raw material used for making leather shoes.
- Scissors: These are used to cut threads.
- Cutters: Using cutter leathers are cut into required shape and size.
- Customized Chisels: It is used to create various patterns on shoes and slipper straps.
- Big Sized Needles: Its used to sew the slipper.
- Thick Threads: Its used to in sewing the sole of the slippers.
- Pencils: Its used for marking over the leather.
- Hammer: It is used for beating the leather.
- Chemical Color: It is used to color slippers to make it look attractive.
- Sponge: It is used to apply chemical color on leather.

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Goat or camel leather is mostly used to make the insole of the sandals.



Buffalo leather is generally used to make the outsole of the sandals.



Different sizes of chisels are used to cut the leather and to shape the sandals.

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Hammer is used to punch the design on the leather.



Metal rod is used to press any two parts of sandals during sticking process.



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Sewing Awl is used to pull the thread while stitching the sandal. Thread is stitched to lock the two layers of the sandals.

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## Making Process

Making of leather shoes begins with tanning the skins and hides of animals to produce leather. The tanned leathers are then purchased by the shoemakers, which will be used to by the craftsman to make shoes and slippers. The soles and heels of the shoes are usually made from a thick hide, which are obtained by compressing the layers of leather together.

The traditional shoemaker initially begins with the work by cutting out leather required for the sole and upper part of the slippers. Then the upper parts are colored using a chemical colour liquid which are bought from a local market. In early times natural dyes were used to color the slippers. Colored leather are then kept to dry for few minutes. While its drying craftsman begins to make the straps of slipper using camel leather and making of straps begins with cutting of leather into a required size and shape using a sharp cutter. Over the straps patters are created by cutting of the leather into triangle shape using a sharp small chisel. And color ribbons are then pasted to the back of the straps to create attractive color combination using glue and over the ribbons another layer of leather strap is pasted.

Once the upper part of the slipper are completely dry after coloring, straps are then fixed to the slippers by making holes on two sides to the edges and holes are made by piercing the small sharp chisel. These straps are then inserted in the holes and fixed using glue.

Once working on a strap is completed, artisan begins to work on the toe thong which is a divider that fits between the first and second toes. Round shaped toe thong made of leather which is decorated with embroidery work are then fixed to the foot bed of the slippers using glue. Once the straps and toe thongs are fixed to the base part of the slippers, one more layer of leather sole is pasted to the base of the slipper.

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Initially the process starts from making the strap.

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The marking is done on the leather strap by using reference.



The leather is cut out according to the required size.



The designs are made by punching the leather using chisel and hammer.



A line is marked as design using screw driver.

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Fevicol is applied on back side of the leather strap.



Different color cloth is pasted on the design pattern.



The fevicol is applied on a plain leather to lock the color cloth.



Designed and plain leather is pasted together to give smooth finishing on the bottom of the strap.



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The exceeded part of leather is cut out using chisel.



Polish is applied on the insole of the sandal.



Holes are made on the insole to place the straps in it.



Straps are placed inside the hole.

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The straps are locked on the back of the sandal using fevicol.



Sandal outline is marked on the thick leather to make outsole.



The outsole is cut out into required shape.



Fevicol is applied on both insole and outsole of the sandal.



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Both the parts are placed together and pressed with iron rod to stick tightly.



The exceeded parts of the outsole is cut out using chisel.



The sandal is stitched to hold both parts tightly.



Final shapening of the sandals is done using chisel.



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Beautifully made sandal out of leather.

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## Products

These leather shoes of bhujodi are famous for its elegant styled and embroidery work on it. The Slippers are available in different sizes, colors and designs and last for a long period of time, as they are tough. The leather slippers made at bhujodi are completely hand stitched. Price of the slippers made of colorful thread work starts from INR 200/- and varies depending upon the quality of leather used and the embroidery designs.



Different types women's footwear made out of leather and plastic.

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Men's shoes and sandals with unique designs.



Embroidery designs are made by female artisans.



Beautiful embroidery design made on leather footwear.

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Sandals with beautifully designed toe strap.



Different design and sizes hand bags made out of leather.



Beautifully made punching pattern design on hand bag.

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## Contact Details

This documentation was done by Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Manasa K. H. at [NID, Bengaluru](#).

You can get in touch with him at [bibhudutta\[at\]nid.edu](mailto:bibhudutta[at]nid.edu)

You can write to the following address regarding suggestions and clarifications:

### Key Contacts:

Shri. Bijlani Narsinh R, Master Craftsman

Kutch, Gujarat

Mobile: 09566286898

### Helpdesk Details:

Co-ordinator

Project e-kalpa

R & D Campus

National Institute of Design

#12 HMT Link Road, Off Tumkur Road

Bengaluru 560 022

India

Phone: +91 80 2357 9054

Fax: +91 80 23373086

Email: [dsource.in\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:dsource.in[at]gmail.com)

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