

Embroidery of Gujarat "Marvellously Beautiful"



Mutwa embroidery

Gujarat's contemporary dress style is a cultural manifestation that has evolved over centuries and has remained a principal mark of identity and social cohesion. Though dress is indicative of one's position in social hierarchy, it is also one of the first indicators of identity that disappears in the process of cultural assimilation and racial mingling.

The ethnic embroidery in Gujarat is almost synonymous with Kutch, which was once a part of the trade route between Central Asia and the Far East. Given Gujarat's coastline and numerous harbours, it exposed the land to the outside influences. Some of the best and oldest textiles were created in Gujarat and they were in great demand in other parts of Asia. Old residents of Kutch still recount romantic tales of caravans laden with silk, pearls, carpets etc. traversing the Rann to reach the port cities. Exposure to the outside world had its effect on embroidery as well. The women of Kutch weave a magical world of colour and celebrate everyday life. Elements and traces of Baluch or Sindhi embroidery merging with those of the Kutch is well established. Marco Polo, writing about Gujarat said, "They also work here beautiful mats in red and blue leather, exquisitely inlaid with figures of birds and beasts and skillfully embroidered with gold and silver wire. They are marvellously beautiful things; they are used by the Saracens to sleep upon."



Toran

Embroidery in Gujarat is akin to ritual decoration and can be found everywhere. *Toran* is the most common embroidered doorway decoration with hanging flaps supposed to bring good luck. *Pachitattis* are hunged from the corners as a welcome symbol to the visitors. *Chaklas* are embroidered square pieces of cloth used as furniture cover, while *Bhitiya* is the impressive wall hanging. Mirror inset embroidery or *Abhala* has now become a part of the ethnic chic fashion world, where small mirror discs are fixed with closely worked silken thread. Usually the mirror work is done on a dark background with motifs like flowers, creepers, petals etc. Though the motifs are inspired by daily life happenings, ancient beliefs and rituals, they vary from place to place and are passed down the generations - from mother to daughter. It is not unusual in Kutch to find young girls, their mother and even grandmother sitting together to create the best of *cholis*, *ghagras*, *odhinis* (blouse, skirt and head-cover), bed spreads, bags, wall hanging and a variety of ornamental pieces for home decor. Until recently long hours were spent to create the best in embroidery for personal use but today things are somewhat organized and speedier in order to cater to the needs of the tourists as well. At a very early age the girls acquire embroidery skills, honed by generations, and with pride and patience they prepare their own trousseau.

Each community in Kutch has its own distinctive style of needlework. Geometric patterns of *Sauf* embroidery by the *Sodha* community appear to be the earliest extension of Iranian-Baluchistan influence. The time consuming needlework involves stitches on the base by counting every single thread that imparts a uniform, balanced look as if the design was woven on cloth. *Sodha* Rajputs migrated to Gujarat from Pakistan in recent times.

Ari embroidery is equally old and famous for its heavy work. Prepared with the help of an awl, it represents a cobbler's stitch which requires considerable skill and practice. The sharper and finer the

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Cultural Calendar for September 2007

September 2 – 5

Photographic Exhibition on Mahatma Gandhi to commemorate 100 years of Satyagraha
Venue & Time: National Art Gallery, Ananda Coomaraswamy Mw., Colombo 07
Inauguration : 2nd September at 4.30 p.m.
(Admission by invitation)
Exhibition dates: 3rd – 5th from 10.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m.

September 11

Launch of "Bridging Connections" A collection of short stories edited by Prof. Rajiva Wijesinha
Venue & Time: ICC at 6.00p.m.

September 18

Film: Mitr (with English subtitles)
 Language: Hindi
Venue & Time: ICC 5.30 p.m. Duration:3 hrs

September 21

Bharatha Natyam performance by the students of the Indian Cultural Centre trained by Ms. Subashini Pathmanathan
Venue & Time: ICC 6.00p.m.

September 25

Film: Bhumika
 Language: Hindi (with English subtitles)
Venue & Time: ICC 5.30 p.m. Duration:3 hrs

September 28

Bharatha Natyam Recital by Ms.Sakitha Kugamoorthy
 Diploma holder of Rukmini Devi College of Fine arts, India
Venue & Time: ICC 6.00 p.m.

(Admission to all programmes is free and on first come first served basis except to the 2nd September 2007 programme, which is by invitation)



Rabari embroidery

hook of the awl, the more refined the quality of the embroidery. This is done in silk, or locally made satin called *Gajji* or on a silky satin fabric *Atlash*. Ari embroidery was patronized by the royal ladies of Kutch who were fascinated by the Persian motifs like peacock and flowers. The garments with Ari embroidery are usually dotted with *bootis* (leaves) which round off with big ones known as *Nadir Shahi booti*.

Rabari embroidery is the most prominent work and widely available. The women of Rabari community wear black skirts with creative edges embroidered, and so are their profusely decorated veils with tie and dye patterns. A Rabari bridegroom's embroidered logcoat is worth a look. Even children wear heavily embroidered salwars and shirts. The Kutch Rabaris make use of mirrors of various shapes and sizes and therefore their works have a variety though they stick to minute chain stitches.

The finest embroidery with most intricate patterns created by the needle comes from *Mutwa* and *Jat* communities. The *Mutwas*, living in Banni, excel in all styles of embroidery and they work out the tiny mirrors with ease. Fine handspun



Banni embroidery

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SANDESH

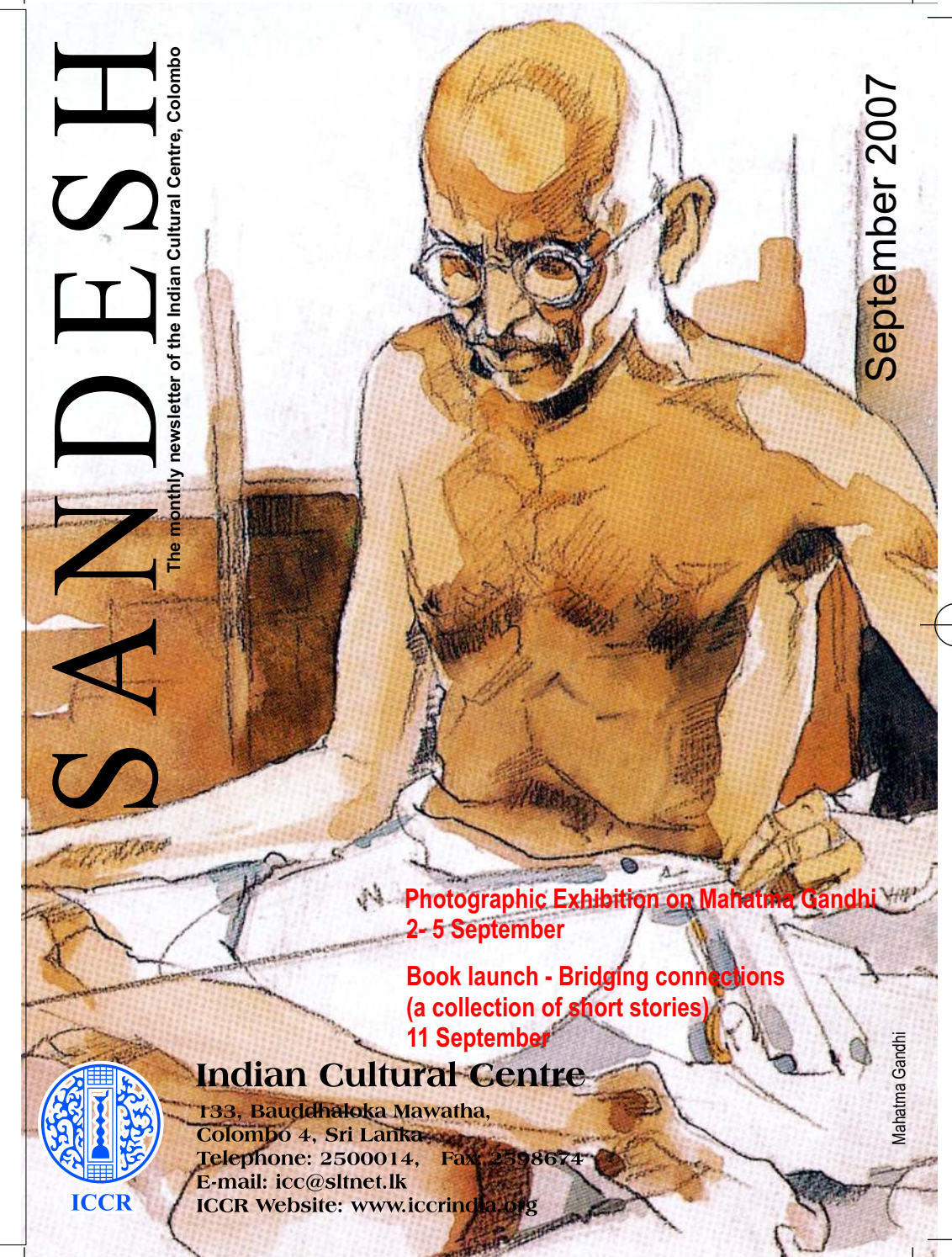
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ICCR

Indian Cultural Centre

133, Baudhaloka Mawatha,
 Colombo 4, Sri Lanka
 Telephone: 2500014, Fax: 2598674
 E-mail: icc@sltnet.lk
 ICCR Website: www.iccrindia.org



September 2007

Mahatma Gandhi

Photographic Exhibition on Mahatma Gandhi
 2- 5 September

Book launch - Bridging connections
 (a collection of short stories)
 11 September

Past Events

July 18

Lecture – The Indian connection in Kandyan dancing by Mr. Srilal Perera



Mr. Srilal Perera, a past pupil of Chitrasena Kalayathanaya, gave a talk on the origins of the Kandyan dance as seen in the mythology of the “Kohomba Kankariya” dance ritual and the Indian connection in this ritual. The lecture was followed by an interactive session.

July 20

Tabla recital by Mr. Peshala Manoj



Mr. Peshala Manoj, a final year student of Master of performing Arts in Tabla at the Bhathkhande Music University, gave a scintillating tabla performance on 20th July at the Centre and captivated the audience.

July 23

Violin recital by Mr. Ruwin Rangeeth Dias



Mr. Ruwin Rangeeth Dias, Assistant lecturer at the University of Kelaniya gave a violin recital on July 23rd. The performance was greatly appreciated by the audience gathered at the Centre, comprising students, musicians and music lovers.

July 25-28

“Kolkata – A city of vintage tune” an exhibition of water colour paintings by Mr. S. Nuwan Nalaka



Mr. Nuwan Nalaka, an ICCR scholarship holder, held an exhibition of water colour paintings entitled Kolkata – A city of vintage tune” at the Centre from 25th to 28th July. The exhibition was inaugurated by the Deputy High Commissioner, Shri. A. Manickam. Nalaka displayed around 30 paintings.

LIBRARY

Recent Library Accessions

Indian States at a Glance 2006-07 Performance, Facts and Figures

Presents information on the six union Territories and 29 states of India in 22 Volumes. Each state has its own set of unique socio-economic characteristics, which can be best appreciated through these volumes.

Titles available in the series:

- Andhra Pradesh
- Assam
- Bihar
- Chhattisgarh
- Gujarat
- Haryana
- Himachal Pradesh
- Jammu & Kashmir
- Jharkhand
- Karnataka
- Kerala
- Madhya Pradesh
- Maharashtra
- Orrissa
- Punjab
- Rajasthan
- Tamil Nadu
- Uttar Pradesh
- Uttarakhand
- West Bengal
- The North-East and Sikkim (excluding Assam)
- UTs and Small States

THE PHOTOTGRAPHIC EXHIBITION ON MAHATMA GANDHI

The Mahatma Gandhi Photographic Exhibition is organised by the Indian High Commission to commemorate 100 years of Satyagraha

The exhibition will display nearly 350 photographs as well as documentaries featuring Mahatma Gandhi courtesy of the Gandhi National Museum, New Delhi.

The exhibition is particularly targeted at the youth, for knowledge of the Mahatma's teachings will help them in creating a peaceful society. It will educate the future generation and help them overcome religious and cultural barriers and understand their own as well as other cultures. This event's main objective is to inspire the study of Gandhiji's life and thoughts and to reflect upon its relevance today. Mahatma Gandhi showed the world that, by practicing nonviolence and keeping a high moral conduct, one could not only move the masses but also create respect in an opponent's mind.

The Exhibition Consists of:

Visual Aspects

These will perpetuate the memory of Mahatma Gandhi and the noble ideals he represented and believed in.

Educative Aspects

To focus concentrated attention on certain values of life that made Gandhiji a Mahatma

Embroidery of Gujarat..... contd

cotton and quality silk is used in red, white, golden yellow, blue and black to develop patterns and booties interspread with birds and animals motifs. The Jats, who migrated from Baluchistan, are experts in inserting the smallest of the mirrors with utmost perfection, amidst pleasing colours and design that are usually geometric patterns. The ladies from *Lohana* community in Banni create fantasy with silk thread thickly piled in deep orange, golden yellow, dark red and bright blue. The booties are inset with mirrors, making use of chain stitch, buttonhole stitch, etc.

Applique or *Katab* is another form of decorative needlework, more pronounced in Saurashtra where women from the *darzi* (tailor) community prepare it for commercial use. Its origin relates to a tailor's wife who saved the cloth remnants in the shop, which finally created quilt covers, and other decorations. After all, nothing should go waste. Unlike the Pipli work of Orissa, here it is done in patchwork based on pieces of coloured and patterned fabric, which is finely cut to serve the motif and then stitched on to a plain background to produce quilts, curtains and wall hangings. Patchwork quilts from Kutch are worked upon by neat running stitches and are quite popular with tourists. The higher the pile of quilts, the higher the owner's status, for, it establishes his ability to accommodate a number of guests simultaneously.

Next to garments and home decors, a variety of decorations are created for the bullock, horses, camels and palanquins. Horn covers or *Shinghadiwas*, forehead covers, saddles, body hangings and neck ornaments for bullocks and camels are most popular. Leather embroidery is a later addition in the long list of marketable craft. Now embroidered *jootis* (shoes) of Banaskantha are quite popular along with a variety of leather products including bed spreads!!

Source: Shaheen Perveen, India Perspectives

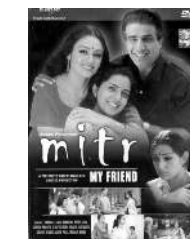
Films in September



Bhumika (With English subtitles)

Usha (Smita Patil), born and brought up in a poor Brahmin family that had seen better days is trained in classical music by her grandmother. After her father's death, poverty drives her into the world of Hindi cinema where she rises to be a famous singer-actress, courted by men and revered by her fans. All along she is assisted in her career by her possessive husband Keshav Dalvi (Amol Palekar), her neighbor from her village and a failed businessman who depends on her income for survival. Her marriage is a failure from the word go and she leads a tempestuous personal life and enters into a series of relationships that take their toll on her.

Language: Hindi **Starring:** Smita Patil, Amol Palekar, Naseeruddin Shah, Anant Nag, Amrisha Puri, Sulabha Deshpande & Kulbhushan Kharbanda
Directed by: Shyam Benegal



Mitr (With English subtitles)

Shot primarily by an all women crew, 'Mitr – My friend' is the directorial debut of the actress Revathy Menon. The story is about an Indian family settled in California for the past 18 years and brings out the dearth of emotional satisfaction they face in a materialistic world. The essence of the movie lies in the identity of a strange Mitr (Friend).

Language: Hindi **Starring:** Shobana, Nasir Abdullah, Preeti Vissa, Mathew Phillips, Blake Ormsby, Brian G. Linebaugh, Shirley Bennet, Janine Pibal & Michael Bailey **Directed by:** Revathy Menon