

Design Resource

## Lambani Embroidery - Yadgiri, Karnataka

Gypsy Art

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Srikanth B.  
NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/lambani-embroidery-yadgiri-karnataka>



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## Introduction

Lambanis are also known as Banjaras. They belong to a tribal group with nomadic heritage who migrated from Marwar and resided in southern and middle India. Lambanis/Banjaras are usually found in Odisha, West Bengal, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka. The women of this community hold loyalty to their traditional form of costume, which is the most colourful and elaborate of any tribal group in India. Lambani embroidery and Kutch embroidery looks similar because of its mirror work, but shells and coins used for Lambani work are different in style. Even the stitching pattern is also different from Kutch embroidery. This practice of hand embroidery and mirror work is mostly used on the traditional dresses that are given to their daughters for their weddings. These conventional clothes reflect their love of life that has been evolved across the centuries to suit the social conditions and local climate. Lambanis are believed to be the descendants of Roman gypsies of Europe who migrated from Afghanistan and settled in the deserts of Rajasthan and many other states of India many years ago. They are very famous for their adventurous style of living and colourful costumes.

Lots of accessories with bright coloured costumes are the first things that strike the mind when thought about the people of Lambanis in India. Lambani women dressing is the most colourful and elaborate attire compared to other tribal communities of India. They are habituated to wear clothes like Ghaghra, Kanchidi, and odhani. Ghaghra is a skirt embellished with round-shaped mirrored glass with the borders embroidered in green and mustard colour threads, which is done on coarse red, black and white cotton cloth. These skirts are usually of ankle-length, which enables them to expose the ornaments of legs. Lambani skirts are embellished with appliques as well. These skirts are worn from the waist that covers half the body below the waist. The traditional Lambani Ghaghra/skirt forms a perfectly circular piece when spread over the floor. Kanchidi is an upper garment of the body known as 'blouse'. It is a tight-fitting garment that covers the front part of the body and leaves the back bare, which can be tied with the cords. These cords are also ornamented with cowries and beads. Odhani/chatiya is a covering that measures two and a half meters in length and one and a half meters in width. This garment is designed to cover the upper part of the body. One end of odhani is tucked on the left side of the skirt and goes over the head and droops loosely on the right shoulder. Even this garment is elaborately embroidered in traditional Lambani style. The part of the chatiya that covers the head is bordered with beads and disc that hangs on the forehead to frame the face. Along with this traditional attire, Lambanis also wear the prettiest anklets made of silver, brass, cowries, animal bones, ivory, and nowadays plastic.

Lambani embroidery stands unique in its own way. It consists of random designs with a bright colour combination that is so traditional to their tribe. The motifs are done all over the base fabric. Geometrical patterns like circles, squares, rectangles, and triangles are made with heavy embroideries with colourful threads and embellished with beads, mirrors, shells, etc. Triangular shaped appliques are also used as borders in it. Lambani embroidery, to a large extent, comprises the quilting technique that is done on the edge of the garment known as

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“Katta”. Lambani embroideries are made using various types of stitches. Nearly 14 types of stitches are used in this embroidery. Namely: Bakhya, bhuriya, gadri, jollya, kans, kaudi, kilan, maki, nakra, pote, relo, suryakanti maki, tera dora and vele. These include running stitch that often seems like small dashes. These are done using contrast coloured threads. Other than that chain stitch, satin stitch, herringbone stitch, and buttonhole stitches are also used. Horizontal patterns, criss-cross patterns, and zigzag patterns are created by using these stitches. Lambanis mostly use red and blue colours. The basic fabric used for making embroidery is either cotton or power loom fabric. It is dyed using chemical colours or vegetable dyes made from natural elements such as kattha, pomegranate peel, and rathanjot, etc. In Karnataka, some of the villages around Hampi like Keri tanda, Khadirampur, etc. and Yadagiri practice Lambani embroidery. The products embellished with this art like bed sheets, cushion covers with subtle colour combinations have now reached all over the world. In contrast, the bags with heavy Lambani embroidery in flashy colours are the most favorite among the tourists.

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Lambani family members who are experts in embroidery work.



Head of a Lambani family displaying beautifully embroidered costume with Lambani work.



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Clothing adorned with Lambani embroidery.



An artisan gladly displaying her upper arm cuff.



Lambani embroidery with mirror works.

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## Tools and Raw Materials

The tools and raw materials that are used for Lambani Embroidery are as follows:

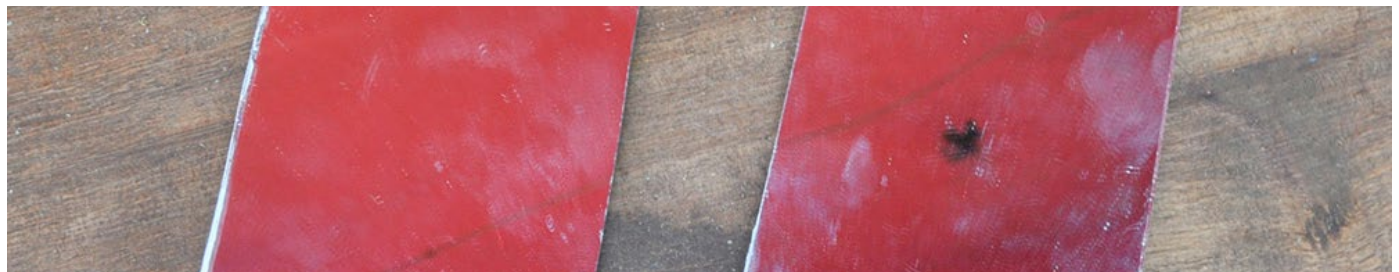
- **Fabric:** It is the base cloth on which the Lambani embroidery is carried out. Usually it is the dark bright coloured fabric loosely woven.
- **Thread:** Threads of various colours like white, orange, blue, maroon, green and blue are used upon the base fabric that enables the embroidery work to stand out. Usually woolen, linen threads are used for Lambani embroidery.
- **Appliques:** Multicoloured pieces of appliques are used along with the Lambani embroidery. Various coloured beads, shells, coins, mirrored glass, jingles and other embellishments are added to the embroidery to enhance the vibrant appearance.



Thread is the basic material used for Lambani embroidery.



The cloth is the base material on which the Lambani embroidery is done, using beads in-between the embroidery to enhance the beauty of the embroidery, whereas the needle is used for embroidery.



Mirrors are used in-between the Lambani embroidery to enhance the beauty of the final product.



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## Making Process

Lambani embroidery is a combination of mirror work, cross-stitch, overlaid, and quilting stitches with the borders of applique patchwork. Initially, a base cloth of the desired colour is chosen. Usually, the dark blue or red-coloured fabric is used as a base fabric. Mirror or coins are stitched to the base cloth by using the regular needle and thread, and the decorative patterns of embroidery are made. The applique works are attached afterward as the embellishments. These are done in typical applique technique. Small pieces of fabric are cut into triangles and squares, which are later stitched to the base cloth. The borders of the fabric are turned in neatly and stitched. These applique triangles are usually stitched as borders to create a charming pattern on the clothing. As the final procedure, the extras of the thread are cut off and set ready to be worn or gifted.



A mirror is selected and placed on the fabric to check the design and spacing purpose.



Using thread and needle, the artisan initiates to stitch the mirror on fabric.



A firm stitch on the mirror is made.

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Back view of the fabric on which the mirror is stitched.



A glimpse of the mirror work that is stitched to the fabric using coloured threads.



Around the mirror, the desired pattern of embroidery is made.



The artisan involved embroidery work.



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Preview of the small mirrors that are stitched to the small size fabric.



This fabric is further stitched to the clothing material.



Whenever required, beads are also included for Lambani embroidery.



The final product is set ready that could be worn.



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## Products

Lambani embroidery is done on lehenga, odhani and choli with bright rainbow coloured fabrics that are entwined with the patchwork mirrors. Generally this traditional embroidery is done on the personal items of the girls to be married. Some of them are listed below:

- Ornaments for headwear
- Ornaments for ear
- Ornaments for nose
- Ornaments for neck
- Ornaments for arms
- Ornaments for hand
- Ornaments for feet

Lambani embroidery is combined with mirror work that enhances the colour and glitter at the integral parts of the Lambani costume. The embroidery is also done on various household accessories.

These days Lambani embroidery is also done on:

- Wall hangings
- Dowry bags
- Pouch
- File covers
- Cushion covers
- Bed covers
- Purses
- Kurta

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Multicoloured skirt adorned with mirror work and Lambani embroidery.



A Lambani embroidered article.



Uniquely designed decorative fabric patch.



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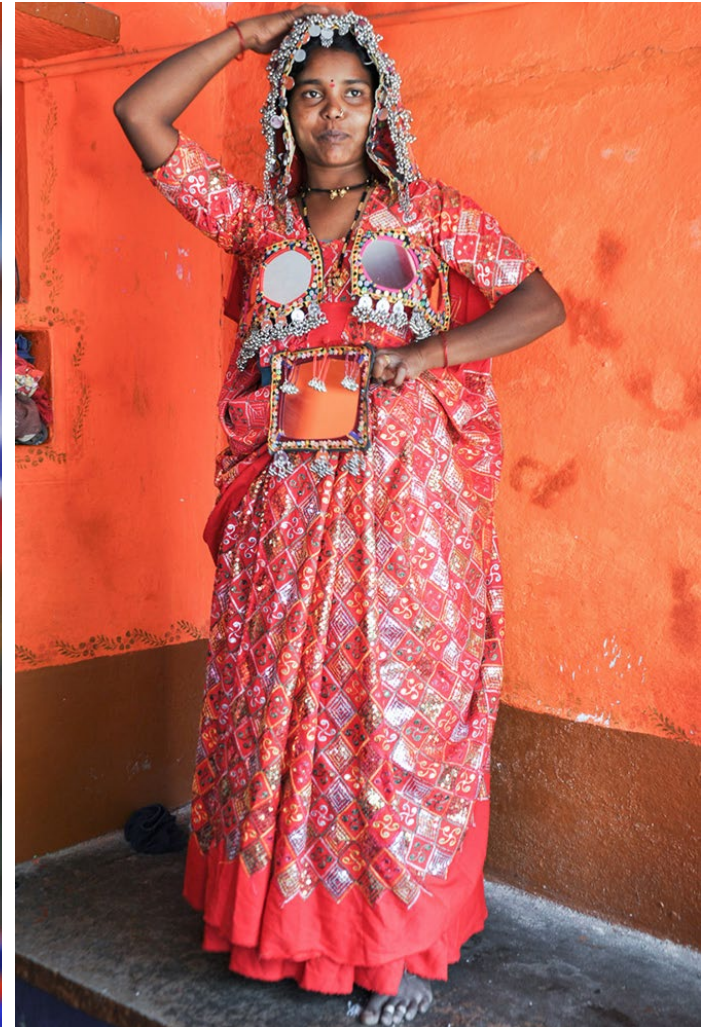
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A product made with multicoloured beads and jingles.



Artisan displays the traditional attire of Lambanis.

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A border is decked up with jingles is used as embellishments.



A fabric arm cuff is decorated with colourful beads.



Artisan displays the upper arm cuff by wearing it.



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## Video



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## Contact Details

This documentation was done by Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Srikanth Bellamkonda at **NID, Bengaluru**.

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

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

### Key Contacts:

Mr. Kasibhai and Mr. Ramesh

Mobile - 09663157894 / 09663545987

Borabanda, Gurumitkal Taluka,

Yadgiri, Karnataka.

### 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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