



Contemporary Revitalization of Kalbelia Quilting Traditions: Documenting and Preserving the Craft of Gudri

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Abstract: This study explores the rich quilting traditions of the Kalbelia community, one of the largest nomadic groups of Rajasthan, renowned for their music and dance. The gudri, a multilayered quilt made by Kalbelia women, is adorned with intricate embroidery and mirror work, yet the craft is now practised by only a handful of artisans. This chapter documents the age-old craft and examines how design intervention and co-creation can support its revival. Employing an ethnographic research design, the study combines in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation of Kalbelia settlements and their gudris in two clusters of Rajasthan. The findings show that while the gudri remains a marker of identity and tradition for the community, modernisation and the weakening of intergenerational skill transmission make the craft difficult to sustain. A practice-based design intervention was undertaken to test how collaborative design and product diversification can revitalise the craft by aligning it with contemporary markets while preserving authenticity and strengthening artisan livelihoods.

Keywords: Nomadic craft communities, textile heritage, co-creation, craft revival, product diversification, artisan livelihoods.

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