

My clothes are my blanket!

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In winter, women gather together in the courtyard of their houses to sew together old and faded bits of cloth creating amazingly colourful and comfortable quilts.



GODADI: Colourfully made.

It's that time of the year — the time to cuddle under a warm woollen blanket or a cloth *razai* with cotton stuffing. These are easily available in the market. But in the rural areas of Gujarat and Rajasthan there is a unique way of making this. It's called the *godadi* — a quilt that uses old, torn, faded pieces of cloth from garments like the *dhoti*, *saree*, *odhani* or *dupatta*, *ghagra*, or skirt. Such quilts are also common in the drier parts of Maharashtra and Karnataka.

It's a common leisure activity among the women of the household during winter. They gather in the courtyard or the *aangan* to make the *godadi*. The old clothes kept aside over the months are brought out. Work on the *godadi* begins by carefully removing the buttons or hooks, and even the folds so as to get that extra length! Then they are spread to a required quilt length and breadth by overlapping and interlocking every piece by hand. The layers of fabric depend on how thick or heavy the quilt needs to be.

Stitched together

Once all the pieces of cloth are joined together, the entire quilt is stitched up in a running stitch, so that the entire *godadi* is tightly bound in place. This final hand stitching is done so neatly that the surface of the quilt looks as if it was embroidered! Sometimes, a long single piece of garment like a *saree* or two *dupattas* joined together is used as the final covering. Depending on how special the quilt is, a separate patchwork sheet is prepared with smaller pieces of brightly coloured fabrics and *saree* or skirt borders of silk and *zari*.

The warmth of layers of fabric, made extra soft with use, cannot be compared with expensive woollen or synthetic blankets or even cotton *razai*. Smaller and thinner *godadis* are very commonly used for newborn babies. Soft and easy to wash, these are popular with the urban families also; mostly made by the grandmothers.

In our villages where nothing is wasted, including kitchen waste, animal dung, dry twigs and leaves from the backyard, broken pottery and many such things, it's wonderful to note that even pieces of fabric are reused. And a *godadi* stays with you for years together!

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What can I do?

Get creative with old clothes. Bits of colourful and printed cloth can be hand-stitched to form a patch-work sheet, which can then be made into bags or cushion covers or table cloths. Making a patchwork sheet can be a fun group activity. Thick, faded fabrics can be used as lining to strengthen the patchwork bags. If old clothes are still in good condition, donate it.

In collaboration with Kalpavriksh Environment Action Group