

Name of the Element: Garba of Gujarat

Community/ies: The festivities surrounding the Garba that takes place across Gujarat for a period of nine days were once performed only by women in their homes and temple courtyards. Over the last few decades it has expanded to include participation from local communities who are actively involved in conceptualization, planning, organizing, and partaking in the event. Celebrated across India and the world where the diasporas reside, the festivities, and participation is open to all.

In rural areas farmers, pastoralists, tribal communities, and others organise and participate. Similarly in urban areas young adults, men, women are involved in organizing and celebrating the event.

Though a Hindu festival the Garba is marked by the participation of non-Hindu communities, and believers and non-believers. From children to senior citizens, members of the transgender community, those with special needs, across communities and religions, visitors from across India and overseas all participate in the festivities.

Region: In Gujarat the Garba festivities are celebrated across the state for the nine nights of the Navaratri. From villages and small towns in the desert area of Kutch and North Gujarat, to the villages and towns that lie along its long coastline; from the larger cities of Surat, Vadodara, Ahmedabad, Rajkot, Bhavnagar to Jamnagar Garbas take centre stage. The performative and visual celebration of Garba is effected within homes and temple courtyards, to public spaces in village and urban squares, streets to large open grounds. The Garba thus becomes an all-encompassing participatory community event. Beyond the nine nights of the Navratri festival the Garba is also performed at social and cultural events like weddings, child birth, welcoming processions, and other such joyous occasions. The wider diaspora of Gujarati's residing in other parts of India and overseas continue this celebration and practice on Navaratri and on other celebratory occasions.

Brief Description: The Hindu festival of Navratri celebrated for nine nights in the autumn month of Ashwin - calculated by the lunar calendar - across the state of Gujarat through the Garba worship the feminine energy or *Shakti*. The cultural, performative and visual expression of this feminine energy is expressed through the Garba dance.

A perforated earthenware pot lit with an oil lamp/ *Garbha Deep* or the image of the Mother goddess/*Ambais* placed in the centre around which the dance of the Garba takes place. Singing, clapping hands in unison the dancers with simple feet movements move around the pot, in an anti-clockwise circle. Accompanied by song, the traditional *dhol*/drum and other musical accompaniments the movements start and end with the dancers facing the inside of the circle. While dancing, each dancer circles around their own axis without any physical contact with other dancers, whilst continuing to maintain the larger circle. Starting with slow circular movements, and gentle unison clapping, the tempo slowly builds up to a frenzied whirling

In the past only the women performed the Garba, now others also join the circle. From men to the young and old, believers and non-believers, other religious communities all join the festivities dressed in their traditional attire.

From the simplest village celebration to celebrations in large public spaces with orchestral support, singers, sound and light systems and site decorations the Garba, a celebration of female energy/*Shakti*, is a festival of the people, by the people and for the people.