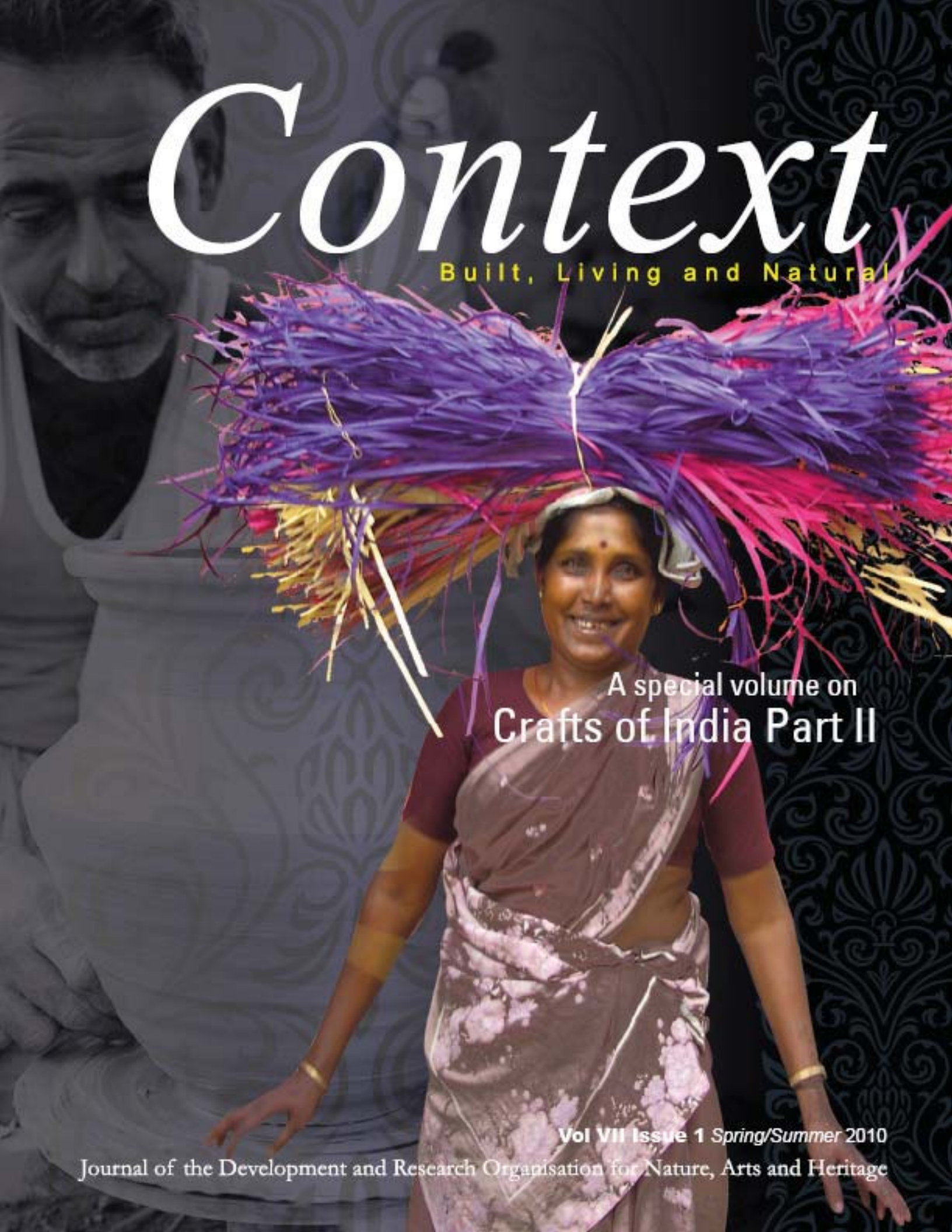
Context

Built, Living and Natural



A special volume on

Crafts of India Part II

Vol VII Issue 1 *Spring/Summer* 2010

Journal of the Development and Research Organisation for Nature, Arts and Heritage

.....Sustainable, environmentally sensitive

.....Draws on the contemporary

It is our aim to actively promote sustainable development through conservation, utilisation of traditional practices and modern technologies, knowledge sharing and mutual interaction. The organisation is presently working towards the documentation, conservation and development of the built heritage, ecology and environment, communities, arts, crafts and education.

Share a vision for a better quality of life without foregoing strengths of the traditional

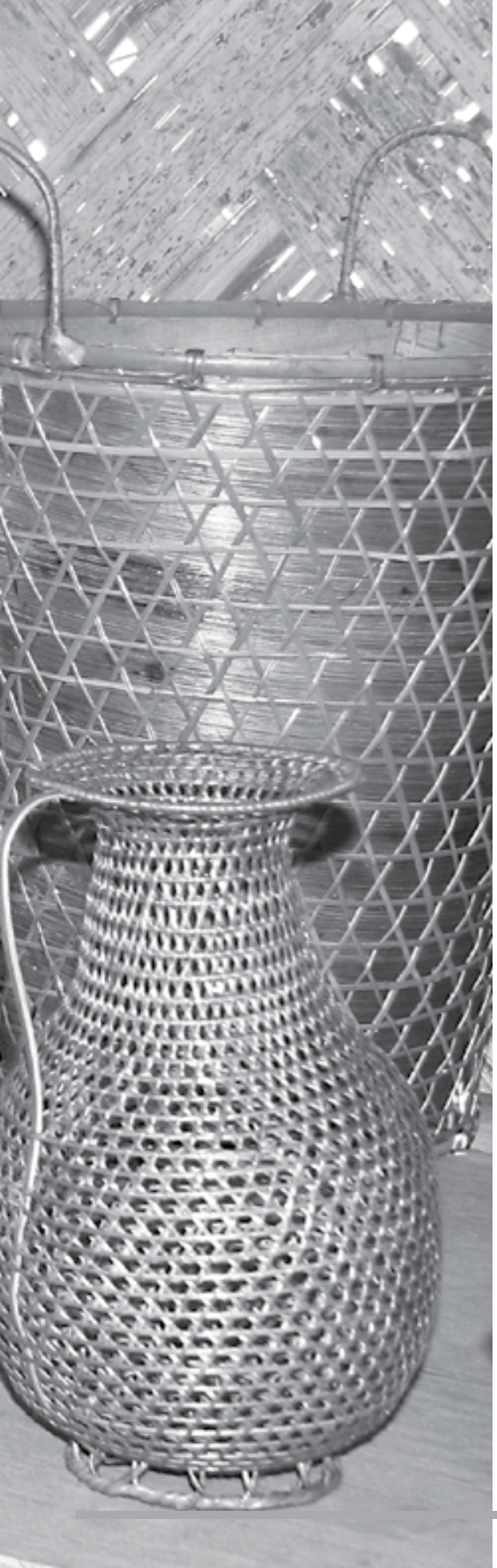
.....Highly motivated professionals

Dronah publishes a bi-annual refereed journal titled "Context: Built, Living and Natural", which records and evaluates the documentation and conservation methods for built and natural heritage, and simultaneously highlights people's role in the process by recording community activities. Interested subscribers, kindly download the subscription form from our website.

.....An Interdisciplinary organisation

DRONAH

Registered Office:
A-258, South City-1, Gurgaon 122001, Haryana, Tel: (0124) 2381067 / 4082081,
Fax: (0124) 4269081, Email:dronah@dronah.org / dronah@gmail.com,
Website: www.dronah.org



Contents

A special volume on Crafts of India: Part II

Printed and published by DRONAH
A-258, South City - I, Gurgaon-122 001
Tel: 0124-4082081,2381067, Fax: 0124-4269081
Email: context8@gmail.com
Website: http://www.dronah.org

ISSN No : 0973-502X

Vol VII Issue 1 Spring/Summer 2010
A special volume on Crafts of India: Part II

About the Volume

Though the crafts of India are an integral part of the country's cultural heritage and identity, we have yet to identify its economic potential as a national industry and as a tool for development. The recent government initiative of setting up a National Mission for the cultural and creative industries is a much needed and long-delayed step in this direction. However, much work remains to be done whether it be in undertaking a mapping exercise to understand the extent of this sector and the issues that it is ridden with, conserving cultural skills and knowledge, creating sustainable employment for crafts persons and artisans, disseminating craft skills or providing financial and legal support for this highly skilled but vulnerable section of society.

As part of our commitment to the revival of crafts, DRONAH presents two special volumes on 'Crafts of India.' The first volume contains a series of essays by various sectoral experts on a wide range of issues pertaining to the development and conservation of Indian crafts skills. Thus, the section titled 'Crafting Futures' discusses potential directions for policy development and the role of craft education and knowledge dissemination in creating an appropriate framework for development initiatives. 'Access, Livelihood and Development', showcases particular examples of successful design and market interventions in the crafts sector as well as highlights various issues that impede artisans' access to sustainable income as well as working conditions. The 'Redefining Craft' section deals specifically with popular notions of what constitutes 'craft' and the manner in which such notions impact the economic value as well as aesthetic and intellectual appreciation of crafts objects and skills. Finally, the 'Crafts and Environment' section deals with the environmental impact of the crafts industry and contemporary experiments in environmentally sustainable models for the same.

The second volume specifically focuses on regional perspectives through the sections 'Documenting Crafts', 'Crafts in Transition', 'Lessons from Creative Collaborations' and 'About Few Crafts'. It covers collaborations of crafts communities with designers, educationists and organisations with the aim of understanding the spectrum that is the Indian crafts sector in varied ways, as reflected in the experiences of organisations and institutions such as Dastkar, Dastkari Haat Samiti, Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya and Dakshinachitra.

The articles in these special volumes address some of the ironies and inconsistencies that plague the crafts sector of India. For instance, while 'Dilli Haat' is a benchmark initiative that acted as a catalyst for setting up similar regional and urban crafts centres across the country, traditional crafts clusters across the country (such as the Kumartuli settlement in West Bengal) which have become part of urban areas are now being included in the 'slum improvement sector' under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) scheme. It is apparent that all such urban developmental initiatives for the sector require a multi-disciplinary participation, with artisans, designers, entrepreneurs, NGOs, architects, urban planners and other stakeholders working together towards creating a practical framework and action plan. We hope these two volumes shall serve as a catalyst for just such a joining of forces!

- Shikha Jain

Documenting Crafts

An architect, Vanicka Arora graduated from the Sushant School of Art and Architecture, Gurgaon. She has an MSc in 'Conservation of Historic Buildings' at the University of Bath, Bath, UK.

Jeypore Portfolio

Revival of traditional building crafts[1]

VANICKA ARORA

ABSTRACT

The preservation and revival of traditional building crafts, central to the philosophy and practice of architectural conservation in India today, originated in the mid 19th century and is inextricably linked to the Indic version of the Arts and Crafts Movement. The crafts revival has been analysed through a critical examination of Sir Samuel Swinton Jacob's work who was one of its chief proponents. The focus is on the 'Jeypore Portfolio of Architectural Details', an encyclopaedic compendium of architectural drawings, documenting the details of historic buildings in and around Jaipur, compiled by Jacob in an attempt to promote the building crafts of the region.

INTRODUCTION

The building crafts of India represent an enduring cultural tradition and have come to be regarded as a unique resource of 'living' heritage. Thus, the preservation and revival of this tradition is presently a fundamental principle underpinning architectural conservation philosophy in the country.[2] The idea of 'reviving' indigenous crafts has persisted since the mid 19th century, when it originated in the Indic version of the Arts and Crafts Movement[3] and was subsequently

An arch detail from the Jeypore Portfolio with no explanation of construction technique or context

An arch clad over a modern steel and glass facade in Gurgaon

popularised in colonial India by several prominent British architects, art historians and scholars. The context within which the Indian 'crafts revival' was first introduced; the principles and assumptions on which it was based and the means by which it was initiated, are being examined.

The subject under scrutiny is the 'Jeypore Portfolio of Architectural Details', an encyclopaedic collection of details, compiled by Sir Samuel Swinton Jacob at the turn of the 19th century. Widely regarded as one of the chief proponents of the revival of building crafts in the region, as well as a leading exponent of the 'Indo-Saracenic' style, Jacob strove to adapt the building tradition to suit 'modern'[4] requirements. The solution that he proposed through the Portfolio was to incorporate a new method, architectural drafting, into a pre-existing craft tradition. It is anticipated that a critical evaluation of Jacob's work, as representative of the colonial approach to the revival of building crafts will help illustrate the complexity involved in applying new techniques to old traditions. This is especially significant in the light of current conservation practice in India which often follows a similar approach.

TRADITION OF BUILDING IN JAIPUR, ITS REVIVAL

Jacob was deeply influenced by the Rajput and Mughal architectural styles.[5] Mostly, his fascination centred on the ornamental details of the historic buildings of these styles. His view was that though the buildings themselves had been 'designed to meet the requirements of an age that (had) passed,' (Jacob 1890, Preface) the elements could be incorporated successfully in modern buildings. The Portfolio was thus intended as a 'practical' reference to the architect and artisan in the form of 'working drawings' of these elements (*ibid.*).

In distinguishing the building from the detail, Jacob echoed the commonly held view of his Indo-Saracenic colleagues. The Indo-Saracenic style was based on the concept of 'European science' in unison with

'native art' (Metcalf 1989, p. 58) to arrive at a new architectural vocabulary, which would be sensitive to the Indian context, while responding to the requirements of modernisation. Jacob was focused singularly on the architectural element or detail as a crafted product. He generally overlooked or dismissed the significance of the principles that formed the basis of architectural design. The segregation of architectural design and decorative craft as two separate disciplines was widespread amongst the craft enthusiasts. Therefore, their attempts to revive the craft tradition precluded any attempt to preserve the architectural planning traditions and concentrated solely on the ornamental aspects of Indian architecture. The Portfolio, compiled entirely on this basis, reflects Jacob's concept of Indian architecture and the building crafts not as a singular cohesive practice, but as two separate traditions.

The Portfolio makes no reference to the historical texts which were central to architectural design and practice in Rajasthan and indeed most of India. It comprised of an assortment of details from buildings of different regions, scales and uses, but there was no attempt by Jacob to explore the buildings' individual contexts or to address their historic and symbolic significance. As an architect, he understood the physical demands of the local climate and terrain that he attempted to address in his buildings with varying levels of success. However, his approach to the plan of the building in terms of its layout and functioning was based entirely on Western principles of design.

THE PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN AND ORDER OF ELEMENTS

To the early British art historians and scholars, the architecture of India posed the immediate challenge of being incomprehensible when described within the framework of European principles. The vast body of theoretical knowledge, the Vastu Shastra that formed the basis of most Indian architecture, was virtually unknown to the British and hence the clear and precise logic of Indian buildings evaded them. The occasional reference that was made by historians or scholars, discounted the validity of the historical texts and the theory which formed the fundamental basis for principles of Indian architecture.[6]

The principles dictating the design and composition of pre-colonial buildings centred on Vastu Shastra, a fact widely acknowledged in the analysis of Jaipur's planning and architecture (Sachdev & Tillotson 2002, pp. 11-16). This base was elucidated in seminal architectural texts such as the Shilpa Shastras[7], the Manasara[8] and the Mayamata[9], as well as in later texts such as the Samrangana Sutradhara and the Rajavallabha.[10] These texts were extensive in their scope and content, providing detailed guidelines to the proportioning and design of buildings, right from the site planning and location to the architectural elements such as doors, windows, columns and beams. Additionally, they outlined principles of urban planning and described appropriate architectural expression for various building usages, owners and locations. Furthermore, they described the duties and approaches of the builder and the craftsperson.

Left to right: A column detail from the Jeypore Portfolio, a column detail (identical to the drawing) used in the Old Vidhan Sabha

The principles delineated in the various texts were the grammar of architectural design of the pre-colonial period. A building was one of the infinite solutions that could be derived from these principles. The various elements of a building which made up its structure had the same unifying principle as the overall building. The building elements that Jacob describes as 'full of vigour' and 'true in outline' were not ornaments applied to the building, but rather, the building arose as a result of the specific order of those elements. The order was based upon several considerations and thus each building was 'derived from - not determined by - the principles' (Sachdev & Tillotson 2002, p. 54). A building was hence, a composition formed by the systematic repetition, variation and modulation of smaller elements which were coherent in themselves as well as served as units of a larger whole. Each element also had a symbolic significance and many elements were specific to the nature of the building within which they were used. As a result, the elements which made up the physical structure of the building also made up the symbolic structure of that building. An element was specific to its composition and could not be interchanged with an element on a whim. It is interesting to note that though the principles of the Shilpa Shastra date back to the 10th and 11th centuries, these principles were adapted even during the Mughal period. Hence, the principles introduced to the region centuries ago were still in place in the 19th century.

The Portfolio failed to address the building element as a unit with a specific symbolism and purpose. The details were organised in the manner of a catalogue or a pattern book, such that they could be used interchangeably and combined with other elements irrespective of their context. The organisation of the Portfolio, comprising of minor sections of architectural elements in the fashion of a pattern which could be multiplied and replicated was a result of Jacob's approach to the element as a decorative pattern. The concept of applying a detail to a building as an ornament was essentially a reversal of the traditional approach to the ordering of elements.

THE CRAFTSPERSON AS A DESIGNER

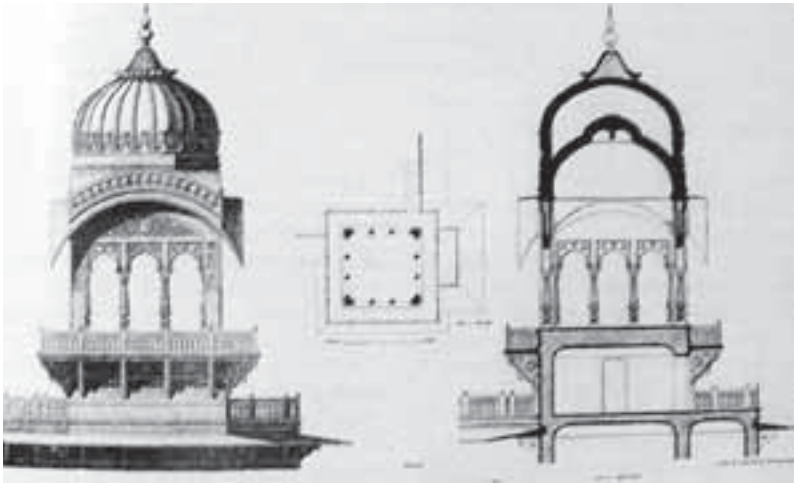
The Shilpa Shastra was a description not only of the principles of design of buildings, but also of the attributes of the *sthapati* or the architect-builder. The definition of the craftsperson was not separate from the definition of the architect. According to Coomaraswamy (1909, p. 73),

Front elevation of the Old Vidhan Sabha designed by Samuel Swinton Jacob

> ...the Indian craftsman conceives of his art, not as the accumulated skill of ages, but as originating in the divine skill of Visvakarma and revealed by him. Beauty, rhythm, proportion, idea have an absolute existence on an ideal plane, where all who seek may find. The reality of things exists in the mind, not in the detail of their appearance to the eye.

Such a distinct characterisation of the craftsperson's conceptual process, based on the traditional texts on the subject of craft indicates that the artisan was not merely a skilled worker copying patterns and designs from an existing architectural vocabulary, but was also capable of creating new designs. This attribute of the Indian craftsperson was acknowledged by several British scholars, including Fergusson (Fergusson & Burgess 1910, p. 5) who compared the Indian and the European approaches to building, stating, 'The Indian builders think only of what they are doing and how they can best produce the effect they desire. In the European system it is considered more essential that a building, especially in its details, should be a correct copy of something else, than good in itself or appropriate to its purpose: hence the difference in result.'

Jacob acknowledged the creative aspect of the artisan, but his approach to this aspect presents a curious paradox. He acknowledged the artisans as collaborators in his buildings and gave them the creative freedom to work out the details in his buildings, most famously in the Albert Hall. On the other hand, he prepared the Portfolio as a selection of 'working drawings' for reference and replication to the same artisans. His approach to the actual process of building was



A chatri detail from the Jeypore Portfolio designed for the Albert Hall

Chatri detail, Albert Hall

much closer to the traditional method of the region. References to the Albert Hall indicate that the building itself was to serve as an exhibit, showcasing the leading craft of Jaipur through its details. Jacob stated that his attempt had been to 'take advantage of many of the old beautiful buildings near Delhi and Agra and elsewhere' and that several of the designs had been followed, but more importantly these designs had inspired the workers, clearly crediting the crafts persons as the creators of the details. This attempt at collaboration distinguished him from his Indo-Saracenic contemporaries.

ACQUIRING NEW SKILLS

Traditionally, crafts were hereditary professions in India, often contained within a community or caste. In Jaipur, two communities were historically associated with the building trades and architectural crafts. The first of these were the Kumawats; a sub-caste of the Rajputs, who lived in various regions of Rajasthan and were the established builder cum crafts community. The second were the Silawats, a Sunni Muslim community consisting of Muslim immigrants and converted Rajputs, involved in the cutting of stone and allied processes. The construction of a building would usually be a collaborative effort with the master builder overseeing the work of various artisans. Since the artisans worked as a community, the education of a young craftsperson would also be a social process akin to that of a mentor and apprentice. A student of the craft would learn by working alongside his seniors, working his way up from smaller, menial tasks to positions of greater responsibility. This learning process would take place in the actual workshop or site, so the apprentice would be involved with the actual practice from the very beginning, acquiring his skills through practice and experience. The craft enthusiasts, enamoured as they were by what they perceived as the 'living tradition', invariably compared the familial tradition to the guild system of crafts persons in medieval England. In their skewed attempt to further encourage this system, students from the hereditary artisan castes in Jaipur were given lessons in the craft, as well as in architectural drafting, free of charge at the Jaipur School of Art (Sen 1877, p. 24).

However, as Coomaraswamy (1909, p. 84) points out, 'the important facts are these: the young craftsman is brought up and educated in the actual workshop and is the disciple of his father. No technical education in the world can ever hope to compensate the craftsperson for the loss of these conditions.'

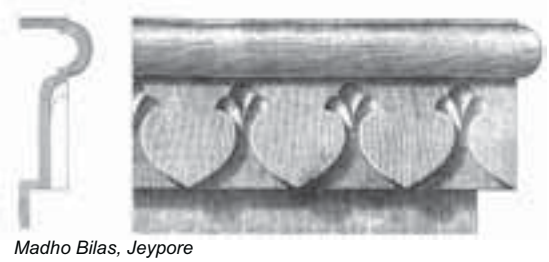
In a manner similar to the various schools of art in the rest of the country, the Jaipur School was a step towards the institutionalisation of crafts education from the informal master-apprentice relationship to that of an instructor and his students. The students would spend a prescribed amount of time learning and practicing skills and would eventually receive official recognition in the form of a diploma. Similarly, the introduction of architectural drafting in the School may be seen as the use of an institutional instrument to incorporate new skills in an existing tradition. This attempt was further consolidated by the fact that after receiving their qualification, the students of the school would become eminently eligible to serve as employees of the government.

Front view of Albert Hall, Jaipur

Invariably, the students who graduated from the School of Art would be employed by the PWD or by the Archaeological Survey of India. This systematised approach which began on the premise of educating the craftsperson soon expanded to include students from diverse backgrounds (Singh 1899, p. 250). Therefore, the skill of architectural drafting eventually came to be taught as a separate skill. For a student with no previous background in crafts, the instruction in architectural drafting would comprise his entire education. As a result, an approach that was based on the premise of a revival of crafts through 'educating' the craftsperson and providing him with new skills evolved into a separate specialised skill centred solely on drawing.

The actual mode of instruction consisted of the drawing of details, patterns and elements from existing historical structures, a process similar to the compilation of the Portfolio. In fact, the draftsmen who were employed by Jacob to compile the details of the Portfolio had all been trained at the School of Art under Lala Ram Baksh who was serving as the Head of Drafting at the School (Jacob 1890, Preface). These draftsmen also received instruction from the Archaeological Department of Western India, under H Cousens (JSPWD 1889, p. 7).

The students who traditionally would have undergone training to become artisans were now trained as draftsmen. As a consequence, the school became instrumental in changing several aspects of the tradition of the hereditary craftsperson of Jaipur, through introducing a new skill set in the form of architectural drafting and a new method of instruction. Architectural drafting and the use of Rajput and Mughal details in new buildings were the two approaches championed by Jacob as a means to revive the traditional crafts. Why was architectural drafting given such significance in the revivalist's approach? Firstly, as Prakash points out, drafting as a skill was central to establishing the legitimacy of the efforts of the arts and crafts proponents in India. By providing 'sympathetic guidance,' the craft enthusiasts could, in effect, bring in the aspect of 'art' to the Indian craftsperson (Prakash 2007, pp. 122-123). But that alone does not account for Jacob's veneration of architectural drafting. In Jacob's view, the act of drafting was important not just in preparing a drawing that could be used as reference or a template, but could also be used to effectively record the details in a manner more permanent than the historic buildings that formed the subject of his study. This record could then be used to 'inspire' the crafts persons even though the physical evidence of the buildings themselves, may be lost due to the ravages of time. The belief that the crafts persons required a permanent record was based on Jacob's assumption that the architectural craft tradition was directly dependent on the physical existence of the buildings and their details. Jacob's approach to crafts



Madho Bilas, Jeypore

Madho Bilas, Jeypore

Madho Bilas, Jeypore

Cenotoph of Maharajah Sewaie Jey Singh, Jeypore

Various coping details from the Jeypore Portfolio of Architectural Details Vol III

was based on the view that the tradition in Jaipur was static, when in fact it was a fluid process, capable of adapting and evolving over time.

CONCLUSION

Over the past few decades, the gap between the crafts persons and the building industry has increased substantially. The demarcation between a 'certified' architect or engineer and the crafts persons has served to severely limit the use of traditional building practices, not only in Jaipur but in several parts of the country. There have been several post colonial initiatives to revive the traditional crafts but one needs to question whether these attempts at a revival reveal a process of developing into something which may endure the test of time or whether they merely reflect a temporary phase, such as Jacob's architectural work and the Portfolio. Jacob's fixation with the historic buildings of the Mughal and Rajput styles was restricted to their ornamental aspects. He lacked a comprehensive understanding of the principles which formed the basis of the architecture and based his efforts on a singular facet of a complex tradition. This perception, which romanticises historic styles and focuses purely on the aesthetic nature of the building continues to persist amongst conservationists in India.

The ornament is still the primary focus of many an advocate of building crafts and just as in Jacob's case, a broader understanding of the principles behind the craft process or the science behind the artistic endeavour is generally absent or fragmented. This reductive approach necessarily ends up stereotyping the very thing it tries to protect. The Portfolio's use as a reference in the Jaipur School of Art has done precisely that. The Portfolio, by providing a stereotype in the form of a design template to the artisan, effectively dilutes the 'idea' behind the crafted object and reduces the artisan to the status of a skilled labourer. The concept of the 'thinking craftsperson' is lost to the very system the craft advocates of the 19th century were trying to protect against the 'European' system wherein which the craftsperson is more concerned with producing an accurate copy of an existing object rather than its purpose or intent. This trend is encouraged by most contemporary patrons of the building crafts as well. Increasingly, crafts persons are employed to reproduce existing details on so called 'traditional buildings' which are nothing more than a post modern pastiche, an intermingling of incompatible styles and function. This trend is not restricted to Jaipur and one can see startling examples of poorly executed elements literally pasted on to new structures in various parts of the country. These elements are diluted versions of India's rich architectural heritage and reflect the deterioration of building crafts that has taken place over the past few decades.

On the other side of the spectrum, in the case of historic buildings, the crafts persons that are employed are put in an untenable position if the conservation approach is aligned with international charters. If, as is suggested by the Venice Charter, the restoration layer should be 'distinct from the architectural composition and must bear a contemporary stamp,' the Indian craftsperson is left with limited options. He can either produce a diluted version of his own craft by restricting ornamentation or changing the proportions and so on, or he can employ a contemporary method of detailing. This raises the question of what is being conserved, the building as a manifestation of the craft or the craft itself? Which has greater value to the community? Might not the historic buildings of India serve as a canvas for the craftsperson to exercise his own vision of what is 'right'?

In India, the intangible aspects of heritage have been equally, if not more important as the tangible. For instance, within Rajasthan, there are hundreds of skilled crafts persons, who are dedicated to the legacy of their predecessors. Their understanding of the craft is undiluted and they remain fiercely protective of the traditional knowledge systems. However, the lack of dialogue between the crafts persons and the conservationists, as well as the dichotomy between international conservation standards and local traditional practice, poses an immediate challenge to the conservation of this inherently complex living heritage. The tradition of building in the country has been fluid, assimilating changes and growing through them. To perceive this tradition selectively is to reduce and stereotype it. It is this perception, or the lack thereof, that is the primary reason why the Portfolio as well as Jacob's other revivalist attempts were unsuccessful in revitalising the craft tradition of the region. The same perceptions continue to restrict conservation attempts today. Unless this persisting parallax is addressed, the preservation and revival of traditional crafts will remain academic and eventually end up, like the Portfolio did, 'as a museum record and nothing more.' (JSPWD 1929, p. 12).

Bibliographic References

Books and Journals

- Acharya, PK 1980 *Architecture of Manasara*, Manasara series, vol. IV, Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, Delhi (first published in 1934 by Oxford University Press, London).
- Coomaraswamy, A 1909, *The Indian Craftsman,* Probsthain and Co., London.
- Fergusson, J and Burgess, J 1910, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture VI , vol. 1,* John Murray, London.
- Hooja, R 2001. 'Of Buildings and Books: The Theory and Practice of the architect Mandan', in Giles Tillotson (ed.), *Stones in the Sand: The Architecture of Rajasthan*, pp. 12-27, Marg Publicaions, Bombay.
- Jacob, SS 1890, *Jeypore Portfolio of Architectural Details*, *Parts IV-VI*, Bernard Quatrich and Sons Co., London.
- Jacob, SS 1913, *Jeypore Portfolio of Architectural Details*, *Parts VII-XII*, Griggs and Sons Co., London.
- Jacob, SS 1977, *Jeypore Portfolio of Architectural Details, Parts I-VI*, Indological Book House, Varanasi; republished by Shri Rameshwar Singh for Bhartiya Publishing House, Delhi.
- Jaipur State Public Works Department (JSPWD), Reports for the years 1867-1914 (Accessed: Jaipur City Palace Archives).
- Metcalf TR 1989, *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj*, Faber and Faber, Boston.
- Prakash, V 2007, 'Between Copying and Creation: The Jeypore Portfolio of Architectural Details' in Prakash, V and Scriver, P (eds.) *Colonial Modernities: Building, Dwelling and Architecture in British India and Ceylon*, Routledge, Oxford, 2007.
- Sachdev, V and Tillotson, GHR 2002, *Building Jaipur: The Making of an Indian City*, Reaktion Books, London.
- Sachdev, V 2005, 'A Vastu Text in the Modern Age: Vishwakarma Darpan,1969', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol.15, issue 2, pp.165-178.
- Scriver, P 2007, 'Empire Building and Thinking: The Public Works Department of British India' in Prakash, V and Scriver, P (eds.) *Colonial Modernities: Building, Dwelling and Architecture in British India and Ceylon*, Routledge, Oxford.
- Sen, ON 1877, *Report of the Jeypore School of Art*, Jaipur City Palace Archives.
- Singh, FC 1899, *A Brief History of Jaipur,* Moon Press, Agra. (Accessed: British Library, London, India Office Records).
- Tillotson, GHR 1989, *The Tradition of Indian Architecture: Continuity, Controversy and Change since 1850*, Oxford University Press, Delhi.
- Tillotson, GHR (ed.) 1998, *Paradigms of Indian Architecture: Space and Time in Representation and Design*, Curzon Press, Surrey.

Charters and Conference Proceedings

- ICOMOS 1964, *International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites: Venice Charter*.
- ICOMOS 1996, 'Principles for the Recording of Monuments, Groups of Buildings and Sites', *11th ICOMOS General Assembly*, Sofia, Bulgaria.
- INTACH 2004, *Conservation of the Unprotected Architectural Heritage and Sites in India*, New Delhi.

Notes

1. This article forms part of the author's ongoing dissertation work and is being published here with the permission of the University of Bath.
2. The INTACH *Charter for the Conservation for the Unprotected Architectural Heritage and Sites in India* (2004) emphasises the need for conserving the 'living' heritage of India. In particular, it recognises the 'unique resource of the 'living' heritage of Master Builders / *Sthapatis* /*Sompuras* / *Raj Mistris* who continue to build and care for buildings following traditions of their ancestors' (INTACH 2004, p.1).
3. Scholars are divided over the issue of whether the 'Indian Crafts Revival' was directly linked to the Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain. According to Tillotson, the revivalists 'were responding to a crisis in India more than to a fashion at home' (Tillotson 1989, p.63). On the other hand Metcalf asserts a direct link between the Victorian crafts revival in Britain and the revival of crafts in India (Metcalf 1989, p.88).
4. Jacob's interpretation of 'modern' was directly related to the Western typologies of buildings. The term is not to be confused with the Modern Movement in architecture, but rather with the modernisation of India as part of the colonial campaign.
5. The Indo-Saracenic style was closely linked with the Mughal and Rajput styles, which were regarded as a successful convergence of the 'Hindu' and 'Islamic' styles. See Metcalf (1989, pp. 85-102).
6. For example, Fergusson (Fergusson & Burgess 1910, pp. x-xi) emphasised that his work was based entirely on the buildings, which were a far more reliable source of information than the historical texts, which he deemed as inaccurate.
7. The Shilpa Shastra is a canonical text which delineates the principles of religious iconography as well as Hindu architecture. The original text is fragmented and several translations exist presently, attempting to comprehensively present the entire text. The Shilpa Shastra describes the principles of town planning, the principles of architectural planning as well as the ordering of the building's elements. See Acharya (1980).
8. The Manasara is a part of the Shilpa Shastra and was ostensibly written by the sage Manasara. In addition to town planning and architectural design, it discusses the symbolism and significance of the various configurations of elements in a building.
9. he Mayamata is a treatise on Hindu dwelling and is considered a part of the Shilpa Shastra. It addresses similar principles as the Manasara, with minor variations.
10. The Samrangana Sutradhara was written in the 11th century for Raja Bhoj of Dhar. The Rajavallabha Mandan was written in the 15th century in Mewar. See Sachdev and Tillotson (2002, pp. 11-18). Also see Hooja (2001, pp. 12-27).

Thathera Craft of Jaipur

AYUSH KASLIWAL

ABSTRACT

The Thathera craft of Jaipur is practiced by a community residing in Thatheron ka Rasta in the old city. The material and processes involved in the craft of metal forging have been documented along with the study of the social set up of the Thatheras. A workshop providing an interface for designers and crafts persons, conducted by the Jaipur Virasat Foundation in 2005 illustrates an initiative towards the revitalisation of the craft.

INTRODUCTION

Thathera (beating metal or tinkering) is the art of raising or shaping sheet metal into a three dimensional form by using simple tools like hammers, steaks and anvils. The metal sheet is generally first beaten with a wooden hammer or mallet into depressions of wood and sand or punched into a hollow steel ring in order to create the basic shape of the object. The final shape is achieved using iron steaks and hammers to define the object.

The metal workers of Rajasthan are known as *kanseras,* the word *kansa* is derived from bronze. In olden times the pots were very ornamental and various techniques were used for surface decoration. The joinery of two metal sheets by riveting was also a decoration

Ayush Kasliwal studied furniture design from the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad. Currently working with crafts persons across the country, Ayush designs, produces and exports high quality products across the world. His shop, Anantay, in Jaipur is widely known for its interesting craft products that lend contemporary sensibilities and functionality to age old craft traditions.

Characteristics of metals used in Thathera craft

Material	Characteristics
Copper	Reddish in colour, (95-98) % copper and (2-4) % zinc, malleable and ductile, extremely good conductor of heat and electricity, can be polished to a bright finish. Joining techniques are soldering, brazing and arc welding.
Aluminium	Silvery white metal with a fibrous structure, giving the material a directional grain. Highly malleable, non magnetic and very soft in pure form. High corrosion resistance as its surface is covered with a thin layer of oxide that helps protect the metal from attack by air. Wrought aluminium uses manganese, magnesium or a combination of silicon and magnesium as major alloying elements. Some alloys have high fluidity in their molten state, which makes it possible to cast intricate shapes. Sand, permanent or die casting techniques can be used. Joining techniques are welding using forge-weld as well as MIG and TIG methods.
Brass	(55-90) % copper and (10-45) %; zinc ideally has composition 65% copper and 35% zinc, colour of alloy varying according to its zinc content. Wrought alloys (zinc content under 30%) have high malleability, can be worked cold. Alloys with higher zinc require careful hot-working. The alloy is prone to tarnishing, minimised by clear coat lacquering. With the addition of small amount of other elements, such as aluminium, lead, tin and nickel, the properties and the stock form of brass can change. Two types of brass commonly used are yellow brass (wrought brass with 65% copper and 35% zinc) and cast yellow brass (64% copper, 35% zinc and 1% lead).

in itself. The 'Thathera' community is a group of skilled artisans who work with the technique of metal forging. Thatheras all over Rajasthan essentially work with brass and copper. Most commonly produced articles are *paraat, chari, chara,* temple *shikhars*, *thalis,* cooking vessels and other kitchen utensils. The Thatheron ka Rasta, Chaura Rasta, Jaipur, is one such abode of Thatheras, where stacks of *paraats, thalis*, various sizes of *degchies* and huge temple *shikhars* are a common sight. Their work place usually consists of a small storeroom for raw materials, soldering materials, stacking the soldered but unfinished products and storing some small tools and a small courtyard or verandah housing the *bhatti* (kiln) and tools for metal forging and soldering, used as the main workplace.

THE MATERIALS

Copper, aluminium and brass are the material used in the Thathera craft. Metals like brass, copper and aluminium are available in the form of sheets, pipes, rods, wires and strips.

- The most commonly available rolled sheets of brass and copper are of a standard size that is 14"x 48". Larger sheets are double and also four times of the standard size. Thickness of the sheets is measured

Thaal

Glasses

Lota

Traditional objects made through various processes

Shehnai

Snake for the idol of Lord Shiva

Storage container

Grain storage

Samovar

Mosque spire

in terms of gauge. Sheets are available in gauges starting from 10 till 30 in intervals of two (thickness = 1/gauge inches). The gauge of sheets used by artisans widely, ranges between 14 and 22.

- Brass and copper pipes are bought either by weight or by running feet. The minimum diameter in which these pipes are available is 6 millimetres (2/8 inches) and the maximum being 50 millimetres (2 inches).
- Wires are available between 24 gauge to zero gauge, where zero gauge is the thickest. They are available in multiples of two, that is, 24, 22, 20.....4, 2, 0.
- Strips are available in sizes varying by 1/4th of an inch.
- Rods are of a diameter starting from 3 millimetres to 100 millimetres.

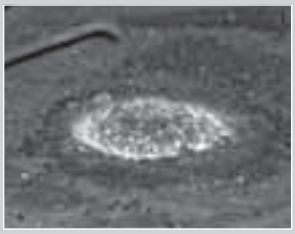
THE PROCESSES

Annealing

Annealing is a comprehensive term, a heating and cooling operation implying usually a relatively slow cooling. The process of such a heat treatment may be: to remove stresses, induce softness; alter ductility, toughness, electrical, magnetic or other physical properties, to refine the crystalline structure, remove gases or to produce a definite microstructure. In annealing, the temperature of the operation and the rate of cooling depend upon the material being heat treated and the purpose of the treatment. The object is held with a s*andasi* or tongs as it becomes hot. When red hot, the object is put down and then worked upon as it cools down. Annealed metal is easier to work upon as

Annealing

Furnace



Coal burning in the furnace

Vessel being annealed

Traditional furnace being arranged

it becomes soft and can take form easily. Traditionally, the process of annealing is carried out on burning cowdung cakes.

Cutting

Hand cutting, jigsaw cutting and shearing are three techniques used. For hand cutting, a metal sheet is placed on a heated *lac* (pitch), to prevent the sheet from moving and to achieve precision during cutting. Tools like chisels of various sizes and iron head hammers are used. The pattern to be cut is transferred onto the metal sheet. The pattern then is cut using chisel and hammers.

Products like lamp shades and panels are made from hand cut sheets. There can be many pieces cut and later joined together or one sheet can be folded after cutting to make any product.

Jigsaw cutting is carried out using the 'jigsaw', a fretsaw which is a very thin saw to cut the metal. The pattern which is to be cut is printed or drawn on paper and then stuck on the metal sheet. After that, the pattern on the metal sheet is cut with the jigsaw. Intricate work can be cut easily with a jigsaw, hence, it is used for cutting products like *jaalis* and panels.

Hand cutting

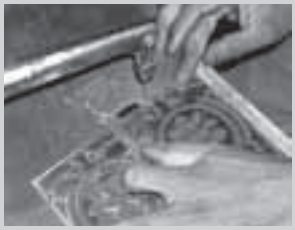
Chisels

Hammer

Jigsaw cutting

Jigsaw Machine

Jigsaw



Cutting in process

Cut pieces

Hand cutting on an iron sheet

Lamp made out of hand cut metal sheets

Brass sheet jaali

Shearing is type of cutting operation in which the metal object is cut by means of a moving blade and fixed edge or by a pair of moving blades that may be either flat or curved. The shearing process characteristics include its ability to make straight line cuts on flat sheet, metal placement between an upper and lower shear blade and its ability to cut relatively small lengths of material at any time since the shearing blades can be mounted at an angle to reduce the wastage. Tools used for shearing are *chhoti kaat* (small scissors) and clamp scissors or *badi kaat* for cutting thicker sheets where more pressure is needed to cut. Marker is used for marking the measurements on the sheet. *Lekhani* is an iron stylus used traditionally to mark the metal sheets.

Forming

For starting any kind of forming, whether it is inward curve outward curve, metal has to be annealed. This is done to make the metal softer and easier to work with than the original form. Inward curve can be seen in pots and bowls. The shape is formed by successively beating the sheet with the mallet and rotating it on the iron ring. Outward curves are found in neck of pots, outer rim of *thaalis*. The area for outward curve is heated and then beaten with hammers to get the final shape. After annealing, the metal sheet is generally beaten with a wooden mallet. This is done to get the initial shape of the product which is to be made. Wooden mallet is used in the initial stages as its strokes are softer than that of iron headed hammers. Iron head hammers are used to give beaten marks on the surface of the product. The size and finish on the head determine the finish and size of the impression. The final shape is achieved using iron stakes and hammers to define the object. The stakes and anvils vary tremendously in sizes. They can be as tall as five feet and more, while tools as small as 10 inches are also used. The metal sheet is formed into circular forms with the help of iron rings. These rings are partially dug into ground to prevent them from moving. These are usually discarded parts from trains.

Lead bending

Lead bending is the only method (without a forming

Forming

Wooden Mallets

Iron ring set in the ground

Iron rings

Stake as tall as man

Anvil little bigger than a pen

Anvil

Iron head hammers

Inward curve - Process of forming

Outward curve - Process of forming

Lead bending

Heating lead and annealing pipe

Pouring molten lead into the pipe

Pipe filled with lead after cooling down

Beating the pipe to form into swirls

Beating the pipe

Finished pipe

die) through which a pipe can be turned and twisted without splitting, collapsing or cracking. In this method lead is melted on a furnace, at the same time the pipe which has to be bent is also annealed. When lead becomes liquid, it is poured into the pipe. The pipe is then allowed to cool down, and is then beaten to form the desired shape.

Piercing, threading and riveting

Piercing is the general term for cutting (shearing or punching) openings, such as holes and slots, in sheet material, plate or parts. The hole or slot is drilled for screwing two pieces together and sometimes also used for surface decoration.

Another method of joining metal parts is by the use of screws, either those that are held in pressure on the metal with a nut or those that can be screwed into the metal itself and held there without the aid of a nut. The thread in the nut is made with taps.

Riveting is an old method for permanent joining. Rivets are a quick method of permanently joining metal sheets together. A metal pin called a rivet, which has a head at one end, is inserted into matching holes in two overlapping plates and then the other end is struck and formed into another head, holding the plates tight.

Welding

Welding is a process used to join metals by the application of heat (from gas). Welding joins metals by melting and fusing the base metals being joined and the filler metal applied. Welding employs pinpointed, localised heat input. Most welding involves ferrous-based metals such as steel and stainless steel. Welding covers a temperature range of 1500° F - 3000° F. Weld joints are usually stronger than or as strong as the base metals being joined.

Sand casting

In sand casting, molten metal is poured into a mould cavity formed out of sand (natural or synthetic). The

Riveting

Old method of riveting

Small brass and copper rivets

Flat head copper rivets

Iron rivets

cavity in the sand is formed by using a pattern, (an approximate duplicate of the real part), which is typically made out of wood, plaster of Paris or metal. The cavity is contained in a flask. Sand is mixed with jaggery to be used in casting. How the pattern is made up depends on how simple or how complex the casting is. Another way of making the pattern is by using foamed polystyrene that is vaporised by the molten metal.

Finishing

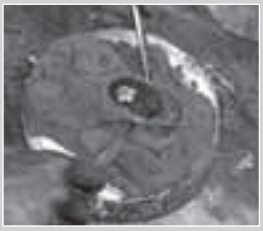
Finishing is the surface appearance of the various metals after final treatment such as rolling. Over the years galvanising, plating, electroplating, sand blasting and polishing have become recognised as various techniques of finishing. There are a number of decorative finishes that have evolved over time such as chasing, embossing, etching, enamelling and patination.

THATHERAS: THE SOCIAL SET UP

The Thatheras have been practicing this craft for centuries and passed on their knowledge from generation to generation. Instead of following their ancestral

Sand casting

Sand boxes filled with metal are allowed to cool down before opening



Removing casted pieces from the sand box

Tin plating

Heating the vessel for tin plating

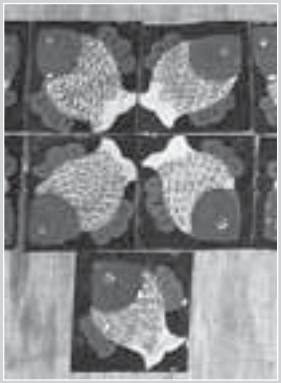
Lead-tin solder being spread in the vessel

Embossing

(Left) Iron head hammers for embossing, (right) Variety of chisels with round heads or flat heads

Embossed copper sheet

Enamelling



Enamel on copper sheet

Enamel on Silver ring

Etching

Etching on brass sheet; both designs are same, etching is done in an inversed manner

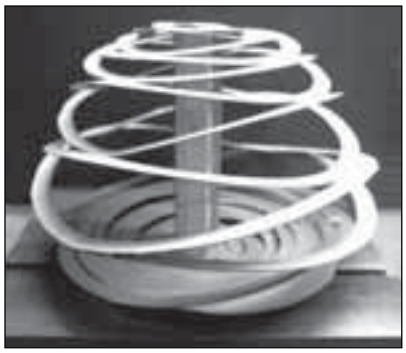
profession many of their children nowadays are training in better income generating professions and the ingenuity and skill set of this craft community is diminishing rapidly. Since there is not a single institution in India where this craft is taught, the general level of education in this community is on a primary level. It is an interesting fact that the Thatheras are not divided on the basis of caste and Hindu, Muslim and Sikh families are represented in this community.

One of the oldest craftsperson named 'Babulal Raj Kumar Kansera' has been working on brass and copper products like *chara, chari, kadai, paraat, jaldhara, dhwaja dhand, trishul* and various kinds of *kalash* (Indian ceremonial vessel) for the last 50 years. His son seems to be more interested in trading these goods than in learning the actual craft. On the other hand, there are also workshops where the whole family actively contributes to the income generation and has adapted a slightly more modernised way of production, incorporating the use of basic machinery.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

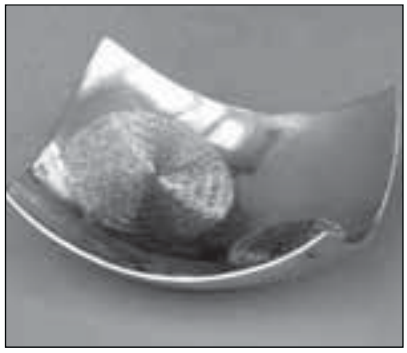
Earlier this craft earned a great deal of respect in the society as the crafts persons worked for the King. Only the rich could afford decorative items or utensils made out of precious metals like gold and silver. Non precious items made in copper and brass were relatively more expensive than today and owning these was a matter of pride. The variety of shapes and decoration was far richer at that time as compared to what can be seen in the bazaars today.

The lack of patronage through kings and other wealthy families today obviously reduces the demand for elaborate and sophisticated designs. The Thathera products are bought by all segments in the society but unfortunately the product category of 'hand made' seems to be inferior in the eyes of the average consumer and thus should be cheaper then a machine made and more 'precise' item. As a community they face the same problems like any other craft clusters in India: the increasing gap between rich and poor, low literacy and education levels, limited resources, insufficient investment into their workshops and procrastination in design and technique for decades. In recent years, the demand of brass and copper products has been decreasing due to the competition of stainless steel utensils. The stainless steel utensils have captured this huge market because they are cheaper and user-friendlier in terms of cleaning compared to the traditional brass and copper products.



Paper explorations

Metal explorations



Platters

Bowls

Bathroom sets

Cones

Products developed as a result of artisan and designer collaboration

Final Products	Description	Material used	Techniques used
BOWLS SET	Four bowls of different sizes joined together by rivets in manner to make them look scattered yet joined.	Two copper and two brass bowls	Annealing, forming by beating and riveting.
PLATTERS	Platters in three sizes 10 inches, 7 inches and 4 inches with surface ornamentation in the form of spirals and dandelions	Brass sheet	Annealing, forming and chasing (for surface ornamentation)
CONES	Candle stands and fruit bowl, with upper cone remaining same in size and base of the candle stands varying in height	Stone bases (Jaisalmer Yellow, Bhainslana Black and Gurera Green) and brass or copper upper cones	Annealing, forming and welding
BATHROOM SETS	Four different type of lids to cover four stone containers	Stone (Marble, Jaisalmer Yellow, Bhainslana Black and Gurera Green) for containers and brass and copper for lids of the containers	Annealing, forming and casting

Industrial centres like Moradabad in UP are competing with much lower prices; higher productivity, cheap labour and high export earnings. It is obvious that the objects which had been regarded in the past more like (useful) artefacts are now considered a pure commodity with fixed prices per kilogramme. The impact of even lower cost production centres like China will equally show its impact in the near future. The quality has deteriorated due to this unequal competition and stagnant technology. Appropriate designs and good marketing linkages are not available to this community and as a result it is observed that the once flourishing craft is languishing.

REVITALISING THE CRAFT

As an initiative towards the revitalisation of the traditional crafts of Jaipur, the Jaipur Virasat Foundation organised a crafts exhibition cum fair in Jawahar Kala Kendra, Jaipur in January 2005. Five crafts namely *gadia lohar*, *lac*, Thathera craft, *gota patti* and recycling were the focus. The main aim was to make new products using traditional techniques, in order to provide a market for these crafts. For Thathera craft, various products were developed using traditional techniques practised by the artisans. For this firstly, paper models of concepts were made. Workable models were converted to design sketches with measurements for product preparation and passed on to the crafts persons who made them in brass or copper. Finally, following alterations on metal explorations, products such as bowl sets, platters, cones and bathroom sets were developed.

The initiative is a step towards revitalising the craft by creating an interface amongst the designers and the artisans. For the craft to maintain its authenticity it is essential that the traditional processes be continued, while the design may be a result of designer input, with a complete understanding of the materials and the processes used in the craft.

Crafts in Transition

Crafts of Nagaland

Continuity and transformation

KEZOCHOLE RHETSO, KHATE KEZO, MEDOSENUO KESIEZIE

ABSTRACT

Nagaland, located in the North-East of India, is a land populated with diverse tribes, each of which has its own distinct identity and cultural traditions, amply manifested in the traditional crafts of Nagaland. Deeply rooted in a tribal society that has for many centuries been self sufficient and in harmony with the environment, the crafts of Nagaland underwent a radical change with the advent of British rule in 1832 and the subsequent decline in the effective independence of the Naga village-states and traditional socio-cultural systems. This article describes the unique tradition of the Nagas, the transformations brought about by the advent of modernity and the manner in which modern Naga society is trying to revive its indigenous crafts.

INTRODUCTION

Nagaland is a hill state located in the extreme north-eastern side of India, bound by Myanmar in the East, Assam in the West, Arunachal Pradesh and a part of Assam in the North and Manipur in the South. Nagaland is inhabited by 16 major tribes and numerous sub-tribes, each follows its own system of administration, ranging from the monarchies of the Konyaks, Semas and Changs to the republics of the

Kezochole Rhetso is working at the Urban Development Department, Kohima, Nagaland. She has a degree in Sociology from the North Eastern Hill University.

Khate Kezo is working at the Urban Development Department, Dimapur, Nagaland. She has Masters in Sociology at the North Eastern Hill University.

Medosenuo Kesiezie is working at the Urban Development Department, Kohima, Nagaland. She holds a Bachelors degree in Architecture from Mumbai University. Her research interests are cultural and eco-tourism, vernacular architecture and the environment.

Note: All authors have Masters in Urban Planning from the School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi.

Aos and Lothas and the most egalitarian democracy practiced by the Angamis. Across this varied pattern of administration, each village-state of the Nagas has a chief or a nominal head, considered not only a political leader but also a religious head. Each tribe also has its own distinct customs, language, dress and motifs; religious values and festivals revolving around agricultural activities such as the sowing of seeds or the harvesting of crops, thereby generating an immense diversity of craft traditions concentrated in a very small geographical area. Nagaland's rich craft tradition is deeply rooted in a lifestyle that has always been in harmony with the environment. In a tribal society that had, for many centuries, been self-sufficient, skilled artisans played a valuable role, lending their skills to the creation of items of utility along with those associated with rituals and warfare. An integral part and parcel of the Naga culture and its social, economic and religious life, Naga crafts and architecture serve as a reflection of a strong binding force within the prevailing social system.

CONTINUATIONS AND TRANSFORMATIONS

With the advent of the British in 1832 and the subsequent influx of Christianity and modern education in Nagaland, the indigenous socio-cultural milieu underwent radical and long lasting change. The exposure of this otherwise isolated region to the outside world has resulted in a process of acculturation and diffusion, leading in many instances to the decline of the independence of the Naga village-states and traditional systems of leadership as well as widespread changes in the dress, food habits, attitudes, religious beliefs, occupations and modes of living of the Nagas.

Textiles

In the past, the role of women in Naga society was that of a homemaker. A woman was expected to procreate and ensure the continuity of her tribe, to tend to the needs of her family and to provide all her household's non-food related needs through her own industry. Every Naga woman was therefore expected to weave all the textiles required for her family, whether for garments or blankets. Today, due to the accessibility of education facilities, most Naga women are now qualified professionals working in various sectors. This sociological change has transformed weaving into a specialised activity. Likewise, the Naga dress underwent slow but radical transformation as western garments gradually ousted indigenous costumes and

Modern handloom with traditional motifs and modern designs with traditional influence. Source: Directorate of Tourism, Nagaland Kohima

accessories which once served as social and cultural indicators, identifying the wearer's status in society and their affiliation to a specific tribe. The Nagas are renowned for their vibrant vegetable dyed textiles. Coarse, thick and durable, these textiles are usually of cotton or wool but may also be made of other natural fibres; for instance, fibre extracted from the stinging nettle was utilised for weaving shawls. While most fabrics have bold striped patterns or borders, occasionally the striped pattern is intermixed with geometric motifs and embroidered patterns or embellishments of cowrie shells, dyed goat hair, ivory, beads and dried orchid stems.

The boldly patterned garments were worn with an array of colourful, exquisitely crafted beaded necklaces, girdles, headbands and armlets made of stones, shells, glass beads, ivory, brass, wood or bamboo. Semi-precious stones, corals, lapis lazuli and conch shells were usually reserved for use in the beaded necklaces, girdles and headbands worn by wealthy women. Likewise, ivory armlets, wild boar tusk chokers, various headgears, caskets, decorated belts and scabbards were worn by Naga warriors as a sign of their brave and valorous deeds.

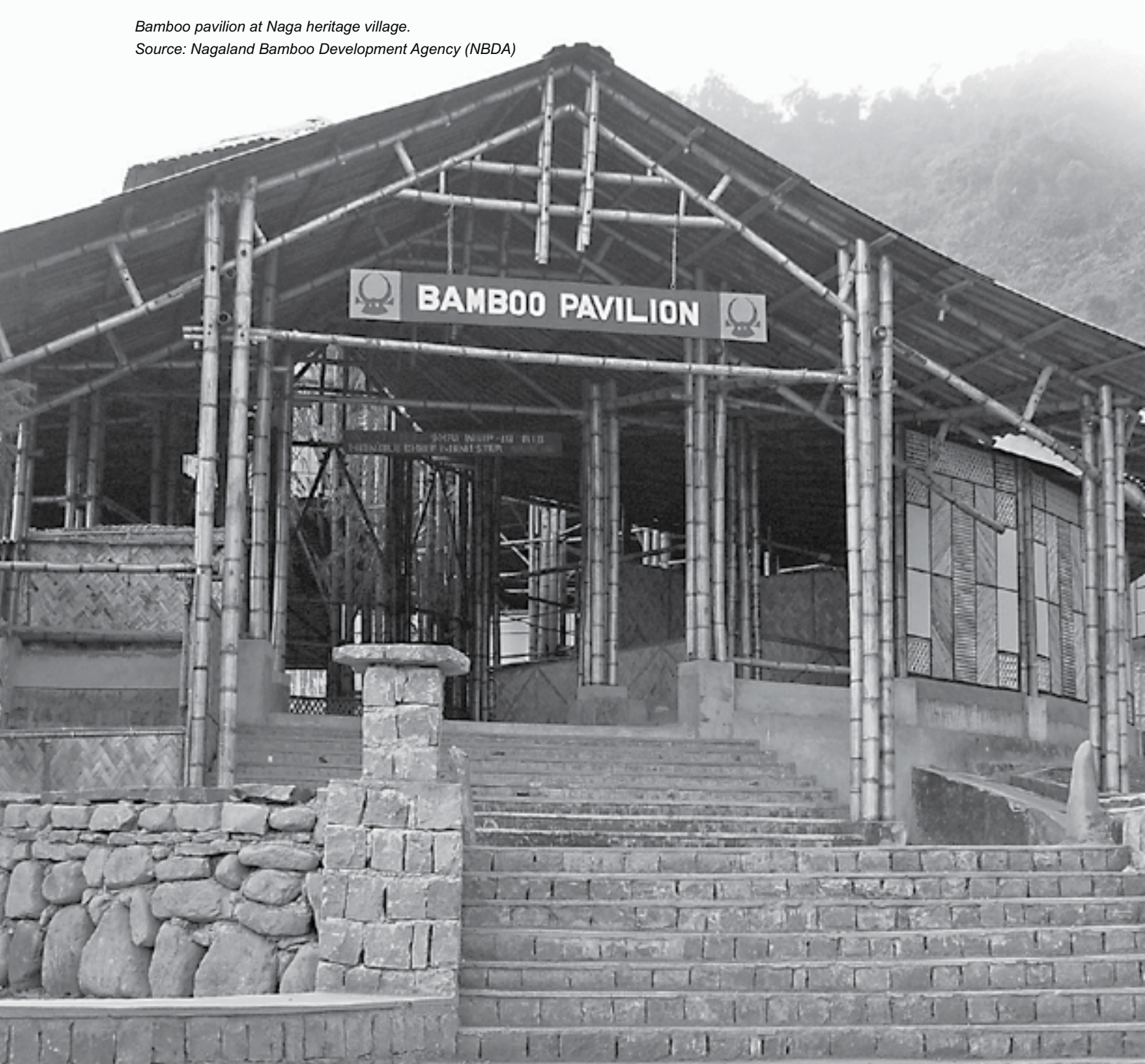
Today, irrespective of their status in the society, people can wear clothes and accessories as per the custom of their own tribe or that of any other tribe. Necklaces which were once made of beads and shells have been replaced with silver and gold chains, the armlets made of elephant tusks and cane strings have been

supplanted with bangles. Simultaneously, changing consumer tastes have also resulted in changes in the fabrics used, as well as in the symbolism and patterning of all textiles and garments. Many members of the Naga community have ventured into fashion design, producing fabrics that display continuity with the traditional textiles and ancestral motifs as well as a contemporary design sensibility, thus blending the past with the present.

Basketry

The hand crafted artefacts and indigenous crafts, once objects of utility, have gradually transformed into decorative objects intended for display. Naga culture is often termed as bamboo based because of the intrinsic connection of this material with the everyday life of this community, whether it be the ancient practices of using bamboo knives to cut the umbilical cord or the burying of the dead wrapped in bamboo mats. Bamboo

Bamboo pavilion at Naga heritage village.
Source: Nagaland Bamboo Development Agency (NBDA)



Bamboo structure at Agri Expo, Dimapur. Source: NBDA

Bamboo structure exploring innovative and alternative use of Bamboo. Source: NBDA

Bamboo toy bikes.
Source: NBDA

Handicrafts made of carved wood and bamboo.
Source: Directorate of Tourism, Nagaland
Kohima

Bamboo structure at Naga Heritage Village. Source: NBDA

provides all basic amenities, being used as food, to build shelter and in the form of agricultural tools and implements and also generates livelihoods. Easily available and cheap, bamboo and cane were used to create baskets of various shapes and sizes, used by each household for carrying water or the harvested crop and for storage. Although the introduction of new materials and machine-made products has drastically affected the demand for basketry and bamboo products, there still exist a number of highly skilled crafts persons practicing traditional basketry techniques.

Wood and stone carving

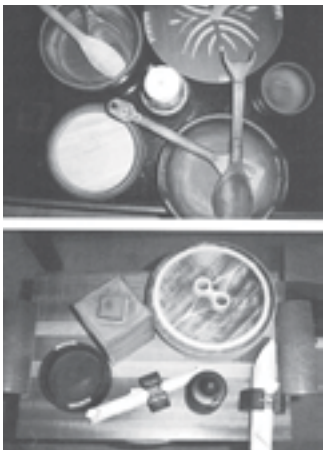
Most houses bear carved and painted motifs that have immense symbolic value

Decorative bamboo items. Source: NBDA

within the community and convey the owner's social status, earned through ceremonial rituals. For example, the *mithun* head prominently carved on village gates and house fronts signifies wealth and prosperity. A man may decorate his house with a *mithun* head only if he has offered a feast of merit for his village. Likewise, human heads signify power and success over enemies; the hornbill, bravery and success in warfare and other competitive activities; the tiger, great spirit and abilities; the lizard, gentleness and spiritual power. The non anthropomorphic motifs include the moon which is represented by circles of black and white and signifies time, season and security.

Traditionally, the wood carvings of Nagaland mostly revolve around two social institutions, the *morung* or youth dormitory and the memorials of the dead or monoliths. The *morung* strengthened the social fabric of the village by facilitating interactions and fellowship between the old and the young, as it served as a space where the older generation spent quality time with their youth, teaching them their respective cultural and traditional value system. The *morung* is also the centre of entertainment, education and training for the youth in the village. It is usually the largest building of the village decorated with splendid carvings of *mithun*, tigers, hornbills, human heads and projecting barge boards resembling horns. Monoliths are huge stones erected near the village gates and paths and are venerated as memorials to the dead or monuments to the giver of a feast.

The village gate is located on the main approach to the village and is erected after numerous rituals and ceremonies to protect the inhabitants of the village from evil spirits and enemy raiders. The gate is richly



Bamboo and wooden handicrafts. Source: Directorate of Tourism, Nagaland Kohima

Bamboo baskets and earthen pots

Bamboo bags and handicrafts. Source: NBDA

Wooden containers and animal horn mugs

Rice pounding wooden table and bamboo baskets

Left to right: Art motifs in woodcarvings in a replica of traditional village gate, art motifs on stone pillars. Source: Directorate of Art & Culture Nagaland.

Single tree carved wooden bed

carved and usually made of a single massive piece of solid wood or stone. The gate is engraved with various motifs symbolising various human and animal heads, sun, moon, stars, *dao*-case, hornbills, lizards and snakes. Pictographic figures such as lizards and hornbills symbolise achievements in arts and crafts. The depiction of human heads symbolises valour, chivalry, powerful warriors and the popularity of the village. It also depicts the fertility cult and is therefore featured on the village gate to increase the population of the village. The depiction of sun, moon and stars symbolises the favourable weather in the village.

The decline in traditional habitat patterns and social customs has led the stone and wood carvers of Nagaland to move away from their traditional products and lend their skills to the making of contemporary products such as platters, spoons, mugs and a few decorative objects hewn from wood.

Typical, heavy overhanging roof made of palm thatch

Architecture

The most radical changes in Naga culture have occurred in the realm of architecture. Due to the prevalence of tribal warfare, Naga villages were usually built on strategically inaccessible sites, selected after consultation with shamans. Situated on mountain ridges, Naga villages developed a linear patter of spatial growth with the large house of the village chief at the highest point of the settlement and the houses of the rich and the influential lying on either side of the chief's house, thus forming the main street of the village. Topography, however, plays a stronger role in the orientation of houses and the pattern of streets, ensuring a more organic spatial evolution.

Traditionally, Naga houses were built as a community project with entire villages participating in the complete process of construction, right from the sourcing of building materials to the actual construction of the house accompanied with numerous rituals and ceremonies. Most Naga houses are rectangular in shape but the size varies depending on the wealth and social status of the owners. However, the construction and design of the houses differs from tribe to tribe and also from village to village. In areas of extreme cold, high rainfall and wind, thick panels of timber are used as walls, while in others stone or bamboo may be used. Creepers and canes are used to bind the panels together. The heavy overhanging roofs, extending almost to the ground to prevent the wind blowing away the roof are made of palm thatch and in some instances, of wooden shingles. In areas like the Ao Naga region, where villages are constructed on steep slopes, piles and stilts of bamboo are used to build open sitting areas especially at the back of the house. Sitting platforms are large open spaces, usually at an elevated site of the village where public meetings, ceremonial functions are held. Wood and flat stone seating is elaborately arranged around the platform. The Angami villages have circular sitting platforms built over their ancestral graves. Tribes like Angamis and Semas have small sitting places in front of their houses while tribes like Aos and Lothas have private sitting platforms at the back of the houses.

Throughout Nagaland, the use of traditional materials, techniques and built forms are fast disappearing, as the Nagas embrace what they perceive as 'modern architecture'. Community spaces such as the village gate and the *morung* have also lost their significance in Naga society. However, there is a growing effort to translate the traditional forms and designs into modern materials and techniques. One example of this trend is the Cathedral Church at Kohima, the concept of which is derived from the *morung.* Another example is the Nagaland Civil Secretariat, the layout of which depicts the head of a *mithun*.

NEW INITIATIVES TO CONSERVE THE OLD

In addition to such ongoing processes of transformation and continuity, the Nagas are now making concerted efforts to revive their decaying culture and traditions. Increasingly, heritage conservation is becoming an important influencing factor in the Naga dialogue on eco-tourism. The Government has recently declared tourism as a core industry under the State Industrial Policy. It also adopted the Nagaland Tourism Policy in 2000. This policy has come in place as a response to growing tourist interest in Nagaland along with the desire of Naga communities to explore innovative livelihood opportunities.

The Hornbill Festival of Nagaland organised by the State Government is an annual tourism promotion event to showcase Nagaland's traditional and cultural heritage in all its ethnicity, diversity and grandeur. It gives the visitor an 'exotic' and rich experience of what constitutes Naga culture while also helping to revive, protect and preserve the uniqueness of Naga heritage. In addition, the government has established the Naga Heritage Village at Kisama, the Tourist Village at Tuophema and has adopted Khonoma as the first 'Green Village' in the country in order to give new impetus to traditional built-forms and crafts.

The establishment of decorative and dimensional stone manufacturing units producing marble, sandstone and other stone products has fed the ready market provided by the flourishing construction sector in the state. Nagaland's agro-produce, handlooms and handicrafts enjoy recognition in both national and international markets but have not been able to take full advantage of the potential and existing demand due to limited production capacity, poor marketing linkages and concerns regarding quality control and standardisation of products.

Bamboo continues to play a dominant role in the life of the people due to its great versatility. A planned, scientific and holistic approach to bamboo cultivation, production and management has been initiated under the aegis of the Nagaland Bamboo Development

Kuki tribe

Zaliang tribe

Rengma tribe

Konyak tribe

Khiamnungham tribe

Chang tribe

Chakhesang tribe

Angami tribe

Ao tribe

Lotha tribe

Sangtam tribe

Sumi tribe

Construction and design of houses varying from tribe to tribe

Hornbill Festival 2008 at Naga Heritage Village, Kisama, Kohima. Source: NBDA

A food court at Naga Heritage village, Kisama, Kohima Source: NBDA

Agency, which has been recently instituted with a mandate to make bamboo and its product more economically viable and sustainable.

CONCLUSION

The inherent 'social capital' that has stemmed from traditional institutions and practices has implanted strong social bonds, community spirit and cultural affinity amongst modern Naga society, a phenomenon reflected in their enthusiasm to protect and preserve their languages, dresses, customs, traditions as well as arts and crafts. It is hoped that this sense of identity will enable the Nagas to strike an effective balance between the preservation of their rich cultural heritage and their ambitions to modernise.

Acknowledgements

All images are from ZYNORIQUE Consultants, unless other source is mentioned.

The authors are thankful to Architects Chinithung, Temjenrenla and Richard (Head of ZYNORIQUE Consultants); Norman Putsure (IAS), Secretary to Urban Development Department and Team leader Nagaland Bamboo Development Agency (NBDA) for their help and kind co-operation.

Bibliographic References

- Alinger,Temjenrenla 1991, *Traditional Architecture of Nagaland*, unpublished Thesis, School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi.
- Directorate of Art & Culture 2008, *Visual Arts and Colours: Glimpses of Programs on Visual Art*, Directorate of Art & Culture: Nagaland, Kohima.
- Directorate of Tourism, Nagaland 2005, *Nagaland: The State with a Difference,* Directorate of Tourism, Nagaland, Kohima.
- Fürer-Haimendorf, Christoph Von 1976, *Return to the Naked Nagas,* John Murray, London.
- Ganguli, Milada 1984, *A Pilgrimage to the Nagas,* Oxford & IBH Publishing Co., New Delhi.
- Government of Nagaland 2004, *Heralding Hope: Kohima 125*, Bhabani Offset & Imaging System Pvt. Ltd, Guwahati.
- Government of Nagaland 2004, *Nagaland State Human Development Report*, Department of Planning & Coordination, Nagaland.
- Joshi, Hargobind 2001, *Nagaland: Past and Present,* Akansha Publishing House, New Delhi.
- Nshoga, A 2009, *Traditional Naga Village System and its Transformation,* Anshah Publishing House, Delhi.
- Thong, Joseph S 1997, *Head Hunters Culture (Historic Culture of Nagas)*, Nei-u Printing Press, Kohima, Nagaland.

Sanganer

Traditional printing, modern challenges

SUKI SKIDMORE

ABSTRACT

In an effort to document the current state of block printing, the staff of the Anokhi Museum of Hand Printing, Amber, India, listened to the tales of the Sanganeri crafts persons while studying their cloth. A fascinating story emerged. Sanganer poses an interesting paradigm for the current state of hand block printing; for here, traditional block printing collides with the modern world. Illuminated by the memories of Sanganeri artisans, this article explores the issues facing this hereditary craft and discusses how the artisans handle these challenges with vigour and creativity.

Suki Skidmore is the Visiting Consultant at the Anokhi Museum of Hand Printing in Amber, since 2006. She has worked in the education departments of the Metropolitan Museum, the Taft Museum and the Neuberger Museum in USA. Suki is the recipient of a fellowship in Museum Studies from the National Endowment for the Arts. In collaboration with Rachel Bracken-Singh, she has recently authored 'Sanganer: Traditional Textiles, Contemporary Cloth'.

Home to a large community of block printers whose families have lived and worked here for generations, Sanganer evokes, even in the 21st century, an almost mythical association with hand printed textiles. Although Sanganer still contributes to India's vibrant textile industry, time has wrought a number of changes in this small town. With the introduction of screen printing and chemical dyes, what was once a traditional printing town with a cohesive community of traditional *chhippa* printers and *rangrez* dyers working in harmony, using hand carved blocks, natural dyes and classic motifs has transformed during the last four decades into a frenetic commercial hub. In addition to

In dusty fields surrounding the old city, it is easy to find the printing trade hard at work

revolutionary modifications in the process used, shifts in the market demographic and consumer tastes have led Sanganer through a series of economic highs and lows, including the near demise of hand block printing in the late 1960s. Today, Sanganer delicately juggles the old along with the new.

Sanganer began as a sleepy village located on the edge of a broad riverbank in the Dhundhar region of Rajputana currently known as Rajasthan. Topographically, Sanganer was located on prime, fertile land at the bend of the Aman-i-shah River and flourished with a large community of gardeners. During the 11th century, Kachchwaha Rajputs migrated to the area around Jaipur where they defeated the aboriginal Minas and established Amber or Amer, as a military fortification and capital. The Kachchwaha Prince Sangaji founded Sanganer as a *tehsil* or sub district in the early 16th century. By the 17th century, the town was flourishing, a phenomenon that was at least partially due to its strategic location along major trade routes. A wide riverbank and mineral rich waters first lured the *rangrez* community and dhobis to this region and then the printers or *chhippa*s in the 18th century, thus firmly establishing Sanganer as a prominent textile centre.[1]

Reminders of Sanganer's architectural heritage are still visible in the older quarters. Remnants of crenellated walls with gateways surround 17th century public buildings and private *haveli*s (mansions) located within crumbling ramparts. The spires of Sri Digamber Mandir dominate Sanganer's skyline while intricate carvings embellish the Jain temple's interior. A date etched into the pylon suggests the temple was completed in the 10th century AD. The relocation of the Digamber sect's ancient monastic order, Mula Sangh, to this region in the 17th century further enhanced Sanganer's reputation and increased its population.

In 1727, Maharaja Jai Singh shifted the Kachchwaha capital from Amber in the Aravalli foothills to the

Remnants of Sanganer's architectural heritage

Antique photo of a fifth generation chhippa couple, parents of Radhra Prakash Anchera. Source: Anchera family

newly constructed city of Jaipur situated on the plains below. The ruler recognised the importance of relocating the political centre of his kingdom near established trade routes and the prosperous town of Sanganer (Tillotson 2006). As Jaipur's population grew, the commercial areas became increasingly congested and crafts persons spilled outside the confining city walls. Sanganer offered open space, freely available running water and supportive *rangrez* and dhobi communities. Initially the *chhippa*s of Jaipur brought their cloth bundles to the river on a daily basis. As production increased, the crafts persons began staying longer in Sanganer. While the printing process was still completed primarily by women inside their city homes, the strenuous dhobi work of washing and bleaching was executed along the riverside. Today many of the *chhippa* families living in Sanganer are descendants of those who relocated from Jaipur over four or five generations ago. Bhuri Devi[2], a traditional *chhippa*, born in 1935 enumenrates:

> When I moved here, to Sanganer, everything was different…the motifs, the colours…this whole area was filled with *chhippa* families. In this street was my husband's family; their houses here, here, there and over the street there...the street used to echo to the '*thap-a-te-thap*' of the blocks…always something happening and everyone busy…enough work for everyone.

Sanganer bustled with traditional printing activity. The wealth of secular and religious festivals in India created the need for a diverse range of attire for clients of every social stratum. In the 18th century the famed *chhippa* and *rangrez* communities expanded their trade by uniting to create delicately coloured and patterned muslin for three types of customers: nobility and courtiers, temple devotees and local customers. Royal patronage fuelled production and required sophisticated printing and dyeing skills that became world renowned. Besides courtiers, the *chhippa*s printed fabrics for temple devotees. Worn by brahmins, red *naamwalli dupatta*s were also offered as gifts to the temple. The artisans printed these shawls as an act of veneration, repetitively reciting *pancha namaskara* chants while stamping the fabric in a ritualistic act. Thirdly, local patrons wore simpler attire printed with *syahi begar*

Radhra Prakash Anchera, sixth generation Sanganeri chhippa, wearing a traditional angocchha with butahs decorating pallu end borders. As his son, Radesharan, a seventh generation notes: 'Sanganer prints are recognisable by their pure and true white background. White is the sign of true hard work!'

Block printed courtly textile fragment. Natural dye, late 19th century, Sanganer. Source: Rajasthan Fabric and Arts, Jaipur

Naamwali dupatta, sanctified text with Sri Sitaramji and Vishnupad border details. Source: AMHP Acc. No. TX-I03

designs of red and black patterns on gossamer white cloth. Traditional Sanganeri motifs of *butah*s and *buti*s graced all cloth, becoming emblematic of the local artisans' work. No matter the recipient, the process of creating the fabric was methodical, time-consuming and infused with deep spiritual beliefs that imbued every act of printing.

Yet these glorious textiles, resplendent for centuries, were under siege by the late 19th century. The Industrial Revolution in the West flooded the markets of the East with cheaper machine woven and printed textiles. Chemical dyes emerged by the 1880s thereby reducing production time and offering a brighter and more varied palette. The early part of the 20th century witnessed the Indian dyer adopting chemical substitutes to save time and labour. Quoting Abdul Hami Ansari[3], owner of a dye business in Sanganer:

> I am a *rangrez*, sure and I grew up with natural dyeing. But that was nearly 60 years ago and things have changed a lot in my lifetime. When I was fourteen, I went to Bombay to look for work… I learnt about direct dyes, indanthrene and synthetic vat colours. This was where I saw the opportunities and the future of dyeing.

Furthermore, the economic and political upheavals surrounding the advent of Independent India in 1947 took a toll on the block printing community which was already struggling to compete with mill made textiles. The loss of royal patronage was devastating. Local desire for inexpensive durable fabric exacerbated the problem. Block printing was stagnant until the late 1960s when Sanganeri *butah*s and *buti*s caught the eye of young western entrepreneurs versed in the hippie aesthetic and in search of the exotic. Unencumbered by 'rules of the trade', these self-trained designers foraged through markets with an eye for future potential. They reinvigorated colours and designs and suddenly the block prints of Sanganer were repackaged as the latest rage. The block printers' positive response exemplifies not only the resilience of Indian crafts persons but also the adaptability of the block as a creative tool. Unfortunately, in the wake of their success, the crafts persons were forced to respond to a natural disaster of epic proportion.

In 1980, Sanganer was a lively town bursting with textile activity until a devastating monsoon struck on July 17, 1981 and rain poured for five days. The Aman-i-shah River overflowed in a flash flood of vast proportions. Flood waters swept across the broad river banks wiping away crops along with topsoil, sand and bundle upon bundle of cloth lying along the riverside. As water rushed through the narrow streets of the old town, dyers' pots and printers' blocks were swept away. Over 25 years later, the crafts persons of Sanganer can still vividly recall the incalculable size of their losses during the downpour:

> It was unbelievable; we could only watch as all our work bundles were pulled away in the water! Hundreds of metres of cloth were lost on that day. In my opinion that was the end of traditional block printing in Sanganer. Nobody had the heart after that, even if they did still have the blocks.[4]

The flooding occurred at an unfortunate moment in the development of India's printed textile industry. Modern screen printing technologies now dominated the market. This speedy new method in combination

Hand block printed dress with 'hippie' aesthetic from early 1970s. Faith Singh, the Founder of Anokhi, remarks about the experience: 'In Jaipur my colleagues designed a small range of geometric forms, graphic, bold and totally new and contemporary in feel for the times and set about printing them. I found the printers courteous and willing; though we had little language in common…I loved to see the patterns!'

with modern pigment inks enabled large factories to produce enormous quantities of inexpensive patterned cloth. Word spread that the floods had irrevocably ruined the livelihoods of the Sanganer printers and customers were reluctant to place new orders and turned to other printing centres instead. According to Om Singh Naruka[5], owner of a successful block printing unit in Sanganer, 'After the flood I returned to my family village for some time. There was no work available here anymore. It took three years for the businesses to recover and re-establish themselves again and even longer still to build up the customer base.'

The flood is usually cited as the turning point of Sanganeri printing, the devastating moment when contemporary methods supplanted traditional techniques. Yet, this tight-knit community of hereditary *chhippa*s has faced other challenges and continues to survive and move forward with the changing times.

The Calico Printer's Co-operative Society, established by Maharaja Man Singh II of Jaipur in 1943 for the benefit of hand block printers, is re-establishing itself today under the leadership of Brij Ballabh Udaiwal, a fourth generation Sanganeri *chhippa.* Envisioned as an advocacy driven organisation to promote and protect the Sanganeri block printing tradition, the Co-operative is working to define community rights as well as assist in the marketing of block prints. Since the signature of Sanganeri textiles is a pure white background achieved by extended exposure to the bright Rajasthani sunshine, Brij Ballabh recently restored a six acre facility along the river for the communal washing, dyeing and sun bleaching of cloth. According to the owner of Shilpi, a textile firm in Sanganer: 'We want to preserve our heritage and produce old textiles again. There is still demand for this cloth but we do not have an infrastructure. Printers in their 50s are available and ready to go. People recognise the beauty of these older fabrics…they are softer and more elegant.'[6]

Brij Ballabh's tenacity offers hope for the future. This development, along with the recent re-opening of the old Co-operative showroom in Sanganer, is a major step towards the preservation of traditional methods of block printing. Funding is an essential component for any initiative. Brij Ballabh provided his own funds to the cause with the hope that it will generate market interest in traditional cloth. He remarks: '*chhippa*s know that at the end of the day the Calico Printers Co-operative will have a positive impact upon the industry.'[7] The determination of such leaders is inspirational and should go a long way to restoring techniques from the past.

Over the past 30 years, textile production in Sanganer has increased dramatically. The artisans have adapted their practices to incorporate new technologies that provide bright, easily obtainable colour. Not surprisingly, the environmental concerns which plague the modern industrialised world have accompanied this creative revolution.

Calico Printers Co-operative Society's logo and motto: 'One for all, all for one.'

Older *chhippa*s of Sanganer recall an earlier era when their fathers and grandfathers either journeyed to Jaipur to procure dyes or waited for travelling salesmen to pass through town. Yet times have changed. According to Ram Swaroop, owner of Mahesh chemicals:

> At first it was all natural here. I stocked a bit of everything, but the chemicals didn't sell well at first…Soon chemical sales picked up and in the early days sales were 50:50 chemical to natural. After the floods we had very poor sales and it took until 1984 for business to pick up again. When it did it was the chemical sales which overtook the natural. These days I keep a bit of the natural stuff in stock, but very few ask for it any more.[8]

Improved technology combined with the dense concentration of printing activities has triggered a high level of pollution in modern Sanganer. The screen printing industry is significantly larger and therefore has a more pronounced impact on the environment. Employees far outnumber the *chhippa*s who either work from home or share facilities. According to the 2008 census, there are 350 block printing units in contrast to 423 screen printing units. With an average of two to 20 block printers per unit versus 10 to 50 screen printers, the output of screen printing is nearly twenty times greater.[9]

The problem is compounded by the sister-craft of papermaking that has co-existed with block printing for centuries. Papermaking is largely a recycling activity which relies upon cloth remnants to form sheets of paper; however, it uses voluminous amounts of water and discharges fibrous waste, further complicating environmental issues for the town. Chandbhai, a block printer from Farrukhabad working in Sanganer since the late 1970's recounts his experience. 'When we first came here in the 1970s the river was broad and clear. We all used to wash our printing work in it…chemical was washed side-by-side with natural. The water was clean; there were even fish

Chhippa sprinkling water on printed cloth in Co-operatives field.

Calico Printers Co-operative Society bungalow on main street

Lalita Devi, sister-in-law of Brij Ballabh Udaiwal, printing traditional butahs using syahi-begar technique on sun-bleached cloth

in the river. These days the *nadi* (river) has become nothing but a *nallah* (drain).'[10]

Perhaps more threatening is the increasing danger of a diminishing water supply in the Thar Desert region. Hand block printing is dependent upon clean, mineral rich water to create colours from natural dyes. When pollution destroys a river the mineral content changes and subsequently, colours wither. Water filtration systems are effective and not necessarily expensive; however, it takes environmental concern and foresight to establish one. While the chemical balance in water does not affect screen printing, the actual death of a river affects this entire water dependent industry.

On the positive side, the residents of Sanganer have become aware of this growing ecological problem. Several block and screen printing units now have water filtration systems and leaders are advocating a return to the communal washing system with a group owned water treatment plant. Napthol dyes and bleaching powders have been banned. Most significantly, chemical dyestuffs are facing global regulation and export goods must meet increasingly stringent environmental standards. The issues of pollution remain; however, the shift in public thinking, driven by the purchasing power of the consumer, is creating a demand for eco-friendly practises. Vikram Joshi, owner of Rangotri textiles in Sanganer notes[11]: 'If we fail to address the water pollution issue in Sanganer, not only the court, but also the next generation is not going to forgive us!'

Sanganer recently faced another dilemma. Over a decade ago, in l994, a group initiated a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) detailing the problems of polluted water, poor drainage, electrical deficits and more, all issues concerning the printmaking industry. Crafts persons hoped that the government would assist the printing community with this toxic situation. Instead the officials advised an evacuation of the entire industry to a new location thus stripping the block printing community of its sense of community, traditions and pride.

The decision resulted in a 2003 survey documenting the state of the printmaking trade. A grassroots political movement opposed the government's decree. Under the auspices of the Calico Printer's Co-operative and with the leadership of Vikram Joshi, the group offered alternatives. Ninety percent of the water used in printing occurs during pre and post processing so the alliance requested the development of a central processing unit. This would entail closing all small sites and relocating to one central location, leaving the vacant land to the Calico Printer's Co-operative. The group also requested large, plastic tanks for water collection and filtration. Such pragmatic requests support the continued health of the industry as well as alleviate some environmental challenges along the way and will hopefully be implemented in the future.

Until recently the printmakers of Sanganer were in political limbo. The government granted a temporary reprieve from evacuation, yet the action remained valid. Then on April 30, 2009, the High court revoked the order to the delight of the crafts persons, assuring them that Sanganer will remain a historic block printing community and members will continue to work for improved standards and conditions:

> The high court decision has come as a relief to us, particularly those of us who are seriously involved in keeping this tradition alive. The court has been very kind to make this decision based upon issues like heritage, living craft and more than anything else, the issue of livelihood. We have to seriously now look at the pollution issue and find a way to have sustainable consumption and production (SCP), adopting more environmentally friendly and socially fair ways of designing, producing, using and recycling products and services.[12]

Sanganer's fate has frequently been entwined with the serendipitous swing of western fashion trends. Today the capricious nature of design has been responsible for the reinvigoration of block printed cloth and traditional Sanganeri patterns. Young Indian designers are travelling and acquiring a global perspective that enables them to merge eastern and western aesthetics without losing the flavour of India. Well-versed in Indian crafts, they are infusing their designs with fabulous interpretations in the local idiom. The fabrics of Sanganer have entered the realm of chic contemporary fashion. *Butah*s and *buti*s once again appear in regal splendour, albeit this time on the catwalks of Mumbai, London and New York. The latest twist in the story of Sanganer returns these historically influential textiles to their roots, popular in India and throughout the world.

In many ways the story of Sanganer is a cautionary tale. Here one can truly feel the impact of modernisation. While screen printing is on the rise, the number of block printers is on the decline. The

pressure to compete in the modern world is taking its toll. Screen printing is a speedier method of printing but spiritual complexities underpin block printing. The *chhippa* community shares an inherited wisdom stemming from the past.

The issue of water conservation looms large with north-western India being plagued by a lack of water and drought. Nowhere is this felt more urgently than within the printing trade. As water supplies dwindle in the arid desert environment so does the ability of the crafts persons to attain perfection in their work.

Many challenges face this hereditary craft. It is imperative that Indians and the world at large recognise the talent of these artisans. They need to receive the appreciation they deserve and be compensated accordingly so that the next generation is able to thrive and learn the intricate skills necessary for the survival of the craft. It is only then that these crafts persons will be able to teach their inherited knowledge to successive generations. As one looks at hand blocked textiles, it is important to remember the ancient roots of this age-old craft and never forget the many hands that contributed to the beauty of each and every piece.

> One could always find a *chhippa* near the river…a *chhippa* always lives near a river. Printing work needs a constant flow of water for washing the clothes, for soaking them in water and for sun bleaching. Due to the drying of the rivers, the work of the *chhippa* is less and less… the traditional work is almost finished.[13]

Acknowledgements

The 2009 Sanganer photographs are by Rachel Bracken Singh and the author.

Bibliographic References

Tillotson, G 2006, *Jaipur Nama*, Penguin Books, Delhi.

Notes

1 From discussion with Barbara Ramusack, historical consultant, who has written extensively on the region.

2 Interviewed by Emma Ronald in 2007.

3 Interviewed by Emma Ronald in 2007.

4 Quoting Bhuri Devi Anchera, interviewed by Emma Ronald in 2007.

5 As communicated through interview to Emma Ronald in 2007.

6 Interviewed by Rachel Bracken Singh and the author in 2009.

7 Interviewed by Rachel Bracken Singh and the author in 2009.

8 Interviewed by Emma Ronald in 2007.

9 As per Sanganer Census of Printing Community 2008, data collected by the Calico Printers Co-operative Society, awaiting publishing.

10 Interviewed by Emma Ronald in 2007.

11 Interviewed by the author in 2009.

12 Quoting Vikram Joshi; interviewed by the author in 2009.

13 Quoting Radha Prakash Anchera, a traditional Sanganeri *chhippa*; interviewed by the author in 2009.

The Brass Work and the Braziers of Hajo

BARNALI GOSWAMI

ABSTRACT

The state of Assam in the north-east India is renowned for its handloom based textile industry, but it also contains a number of lesser known craft traditions which are prevalent only in certain pockets of the state and are therefore unique. The brass work of Assam is one such craft, concentrated in the Hajo region and exclusively practiced by the Moriya community. This article is an attempt to highlight how the sustenance of the craft and the lives of the Moriya community have been impacted by various socio-economic changes that have occurred in Assam since Independence.

Barnali Goswami holds a post-graduate degree in Cultural Anthropology from Gauhati University. She is working on a project, researching the employment potential offered by the traditional crafts of Lower Assam in contemporary times. Barnali is an Employment Officer with the Government of Assam, posted at Guwahati.

THE HISTORY OF BRASS WORK IN ASSAM

Assam has a rich tradition of handicrafts including textile weaving, basketry, pottery, metalwork, jewellery and pith-work. Among the various indigenous traditions of crafting metal, the antiquity of the Assamese technique of brass work and its distinctive designs are amply illustrated by historical accounts and literature. However, compared to other handicrafts, brass work artisans have been concentrated in a small number of pockets in a few districts of Assam. Among these pockets, Hajo is the most prominent production centre of brass metal articles.

Gateway to the temple of Lord Haygrib Madhav

Hajo is a small town located around 25 kilometres north-west of Guwahati, the capital city of Assam and is known for the concentration of temples in its vicinity; most notably, the temples of Lord Hayagrib Madhav, Lord Kedareswar, Lord Ganesha, Lord Kamaleswar and Lord Kameswar. Due to the co-existence of all these temples, Hajo and its vicinity is known as *pancha tirtha,* meaning the confluence of five holy places. In addition, Hajo is also known for the *Poa Macca* (one fourth of Macca), a *durgah* (historical Islamic place) revered by Hindus and Muslims alike and renowned for the quarter measure of soil from Mecca that was brought here and kept, as early as the 17th century.

Various historical accounts suggest that the metal brass appeared in Assam with the spread of Buddhism from Nepal and Bhutan. It is interesting to note that there is a Buddhist connection with the Hayagrib Madhav temple; each year Buddhist pilgrims visit this temple on the occasion of Buddha Purnima (day of demise of Lord Buddha). There is historical description[1] about the use of brass items for religious purposes in ancient Kamrupa (the historic name of Assam).

Another theory regarding the evolution of brassware in Assam derives from the history of the practitioners of this craft. While all other handicrafts prevalent in Hajo area are predominantly practised by local Hindu communities, brass work is very much confined to a particular Muslim community called 'Moriya'. The settlements of this community are located at the base of the hillock on which the famous temple of Lord Hayagrib Madhav is built. Historical accounts substantiate that Moriyas are descendants of the Mughal army that accompanied the Mughal General Mirjumla, who attacked the Ahom Kingdom in the 14th century AD. After their defeat, some of these Mughal employees who were familiar with the knowledge of brass work are said to have settled in Assam to serve the temple by producing brassware required for rituals related to the temple.

In addition to its mandatory supply to the temple, the community of metalworkers also began producing various secular articles for the use of the household as well as vessels for ritual use by commoners. The products of the braziers of Hajo can be divided into two broad categories. The first includes products used for religious purposes and the second consists of products used in day-to-day life. The products used for religious purposes include various containers such as the s*araai, bataa, dunari, dhup daani and dhunaa daani* as well as musical instruments such as the *bhor taal* and *kar taal*. The list of items used in everyday life; the *kaahi, baati, baan baati, chariyaa, tou, kalah, lotaa, karach, hetaa, khanti,* consists almost entirely of kitchenware.

Initially, the required brass alloy was produced locally. As their trade grew, the Moriyas began importing sheets of brass with the facilitation of the Ahom kings. Meeting the demands of both the temple and the laity kept the Moriyas so busy that it ensured they did not develop any agricultural skills; instead, the Moriyas

Musical instrument made of brass

became specialist braziers. Even today, when a small percentage of the adjacent Hindu population has also acquired this skill (even if only as a secondary occupation), brass work remains the sole source of livelihood for the Moriya community.

THE 'BEATEN METAL WORK' TECHNIQUE

The technology used by the Moriyas to produce all these items still follows the age-old tradition with only minimal mechanised application. The brassware of the

Shop of metal wares selling products of brass and other metals

Moriyas is crafted by the following method:

- The brass plate is first sheared into sections of the desired size. Normally, a *kati* (pair of scissors) is used to cut the sheet into two or three sections corresponding to the bottom, middle and upper portions.
- The sheared brass sheets are heated on a *bhati* (furnace), fanned with a leather *aphar* (bellow). When the sheet is red hot, it is held with a *sara* (tong) and placed on the *nia* (anvil) and then beaten into the desired shapes and sizes with hammers of different sizes (*bar haturi, gol-mara and mathani*).
- The various sections of the product are then heated and joined by soldering. *Pine,* an alloy of brass and copper, is used for soldering.
- After the soldering is completed, the product is first rubbed with sand and washed. After that it is cleaned with tamarind or lime and polished with a special stick called *kunda.*
- Any rough edges or surfaces are filed off with the help of a *reti* (file).
- Finally, the product is scraped by fixing the item onto a fat stick and then rotating the stick clockwise and anticlockwise alternately. Two persons are usually required for this process. Occasionally, scraping may also be done single-handedly. In such instances, a *seni* (chisel) is used holding the product between the craftsperson's feet. Designs if any, are made at this stage on the surface.

The know-how of *dhalai* or the process of casting and moulding is limited to very few artisans, as these techniques are not indigenous to Hajo. Learnt from a craftsperson from Uttar Pradesh only during the 1970s, these techniques have not gained popularity locally.

CHANGING CONTEXTS AND THEIR IMPACT ON TH E BRASS WORK AND BRAZIERS

In the course of time, various changes in the socio-economic systems of Assam have cumulatively affected the brass work and livelihoods of the braziers. The earliest and perhaps, most significant of these, were the decline of the Ahom dynasty and the rise of British rule. In the absence of royal patronage, the raw material had to be imported by the braziers themselves, thus adding to the cost of the product. The decline of Ahom traditions

The workshop

Forging and shaping

The leather bellow

also led to a growing informality in the relationship between the temple and the Moriya community along with a subsequent dwindling of temple patronage. In order to maintain financial viability, the Moriyas had to resort to marketing their products all over Assam through door to door vending.

After the Independence of India, factors such as The Assam Fixation of Ceiling on Land Holding Act, 1956, brought the relationship of the Moriyas with the temple to a halt as the land on which the Moriyas had settled became ceiling surplus land. Changes in their access to housing and their security were further aggravated by the growing popularity of 'modern' kitchen products in stainless steel and porcelain.

Other macro-level changes were emerging all over India, as a result of mechanisation and the growing ascendancy of the machine-made over hand-crafted products. The rough edged products of the Moriyas, for instance, were easily supplanted by the industrially produced metal ware of Moradabad. The Moradabad entrepreneurs began manufacturing products that imitated the local designs. Mechanised technology allowed them to generate larger volumes of products, give their products finer finishing and price their products to compete with stainless steel products already invading the market.

Dwindling local markets and the changes in patronage have made the Moriyas dependent on traders or *mahajans* for retail of their products. Most of these middlemen or traders sell the Moriya products to Marwari wholesale traders in Guwahati. In the absence of any alternative market, the Moriyas are forced to receive whatever price the latter offer to them. The increasing population of the Moriya community, poverty, limited formal education and

Shaping by beating with hammer

Scraping in progress

inadequate landholding has further reduced the braziers' ability to withstand exploitation.

The one meagre silver lining is the recent increase in the appreciation of ethnic products and the subsequent impetus in the demand for brass products as decorative items and for use in rituals. Although the Moriyas of Hajo have benefitted from this trend only in the most limited, trickle-down manner, it has encouraged some crafts persons of Hajo to keep their traditional brass industry alive despite all odds.

Bibliographic References

- Baishya, Dinesh 2009, *Traditional Science and Material Culture of Early Assam*, EBH Publications, Guwahati.
- Datta, Birendranath 1980, *The Assamese Folk Mind in Assam and the Assamese Mind*, Asom Sahitya Sabha, Jorhat.
- GoI 1961, 'Handicraft Survey Report: Brass Metal Industry of Niz Hajo', *Census of India*, Part X D, Series 3, Assam.
- Madhab, Jayanta 2000, 'Culture and Development A Case Study of Assam', *Horizons of Culture – Perspective on the North East India*, Assam Academy for Cultural Relations, Guwahati.
- Medhi, Pamaod Chandra (ed.) 1999, *Hajor Itibritta,* Reception Committee of Asom Sahitya Sabha, Hajo.

Notes

[1] In 'Charyyapada' by Harsaprasad Shastry (1904), as cited in a Survey Report, part of 'Census of India' (Government of India 1961).

The Case of Bishnupur

Challenge of revitalising crafts

SOMI CHATTERJEE AND JAGAN SHAH

ABSTRACT

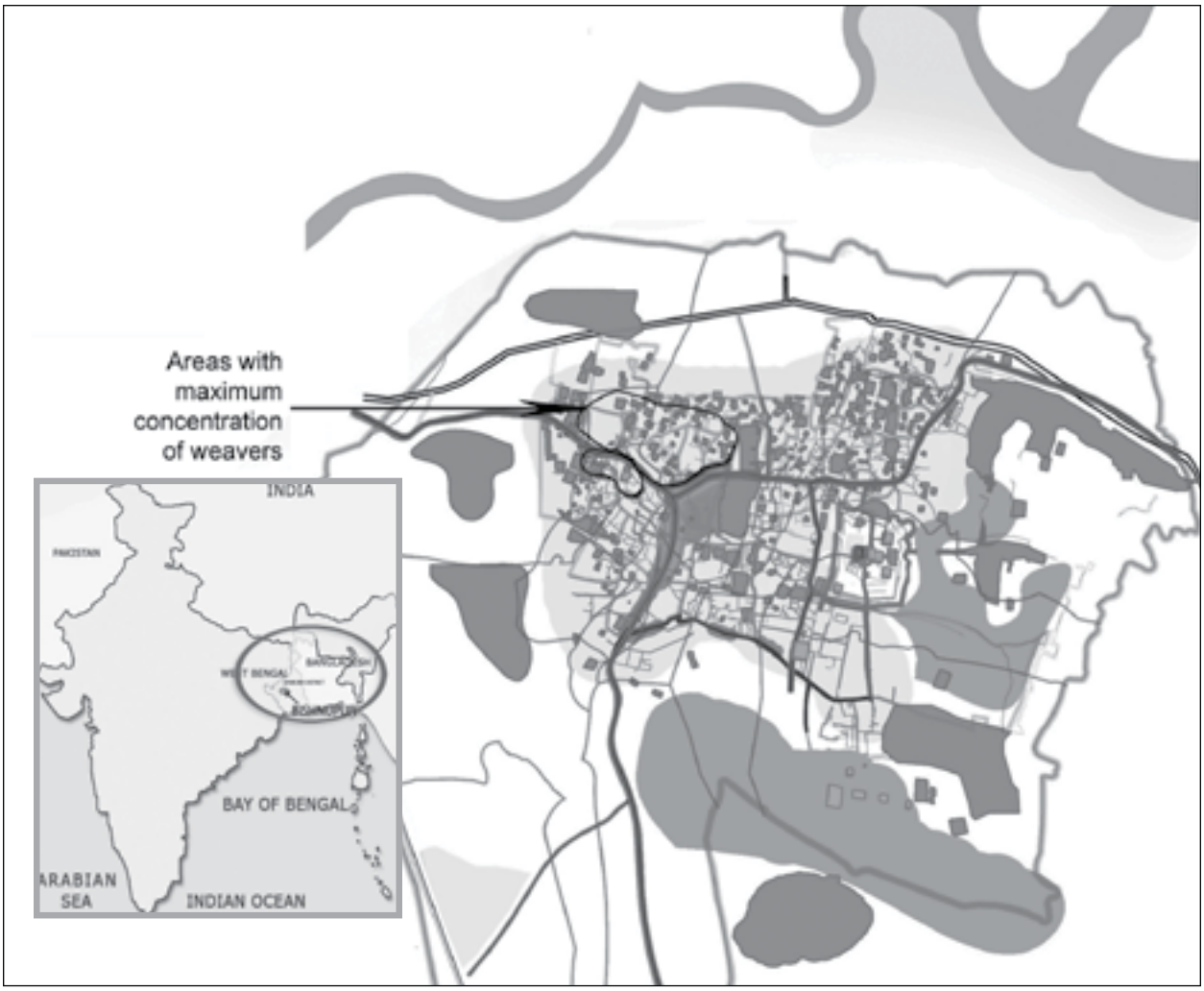
Traditional crafts embody local customs, values and knowledge systems, adding to the cultural diversity of the nation and serving as a source of identity. Changed context of production and consumption has left the traditional crafts of India with little choice but to compete in a market economy that favours mechanised goods. This factor, combined with the lack of organised support and management has adversely affected the craft. Also, increasing numbers of crafts persons are shifting away from their traditional skills, threatening the retention of the crafts for the future. Drawing from the experiences of Bishnupur, the evolution of traditional crafts and their context till the present day has been traced, concluding with directions for the conservation and management of crafts.

CRAFTS: CURRENT CRISIS

Sortsu Yanagi (1889-1961) coined the Japanese term '*mingei'* to denote craft, defining it as 'the art of the people, for the people... it had to be the work of an anonymous craftsperson, produced by hand in quantities, inexpensive, to be used by the masses, functional in daily life and representative of the region in which it was produced' (Donkins

Somi Chatterjee is currently working with Urban Space Consultants, New Delhi. She has received a gold medal in Masters Degree from the Department of Architectural Conservation, School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi.

Jagan Shah is the Dean of the Sushant School of Architecture, Gurgaon and the Head of Urban Space Consultants, a multi-disciplinary practice offering services in urban planning and architecture. He recently published 'Contemporary Indian Architecture' by Roli Books, 2008.



Schematic map of the Municipal Town and location of Bishnupur in India

2001). A craft object is a handmade article, drawn from natural resources, often recycling and conserving the local ecosystem. It is contextual in nature, embodying the values and aesthetics of the socio-cultural context, thereby becoming a source of identity for the crafts persons in their society. Its production involves a series of tasks often performed by a group of crafts persons, either together or in sequence.

In late 19th century in Vienna, Gottfried Semper described the craft based traditional community as the ethnographic source of architecture itself, arguing that the technology of making buildings and the social and cultural matrix that produces buildings, are both bound by the common thread of the crafts. The fate of the crafts is therefore intertwined with the fate of society itself and the decline of the crafts brings our attention to a decline in society.

Today, traditional crafts have become a collector's item appreciated in far away locations, exemplifying the owner's taste in 'real' India. Originally, crafts such as weaving, pottery, metalwork, stonework and woodwork, produced articles of daily use that were often ennobled by their ritualistic use. The continuum of man and nature was emphasised by the dual purposes and meanings encoded in these articles. For example, a pot is not merely a pot but is also symbolic of the womb and the ocean. The techniques of making, the way that material was transformed into form; by hand or mechanically, with implements, tools, palettes and forms, impart their indelible imprint and authentic character to the product. Today, authentic crafts have largely been displaced by kitsch items that pretend to be handmade but are mass-produced in factories all over India. A large segment of the consumers of such products are tourists and travellers who carry, as gifts

and memorabilia, the generic crafts of Indian states and regions to their global destinations.

The heartening fact in this otherwise dismal scenario is that the appreciation of traditional crafts; provided they are refined to suit wider, urban, tastes, is growing. The significant success of the handloom garments industry, represented by such brands as Anokhi and Fab India, is an indicator of an evolving market, where taste resides in the discernment of a certain quality that comes from the mark of labour. Through the formation of crafts co-operatives and the adoption of industrial human resource management, these objects are produced and consumed in sufficient numbers to sustain the crafts persons who produce these.

However, the success of a few enterprises ought not to divert our attention from the larger reality of the crafts in India, in which we find hundreds of communities of crafts persons unable to organise themselves and 'market' their works in the domestic or international market, where they could command the right price. They are forced by poverty to remain in poverty and the crafts that they have practiced over generations are now threatened by extinction.

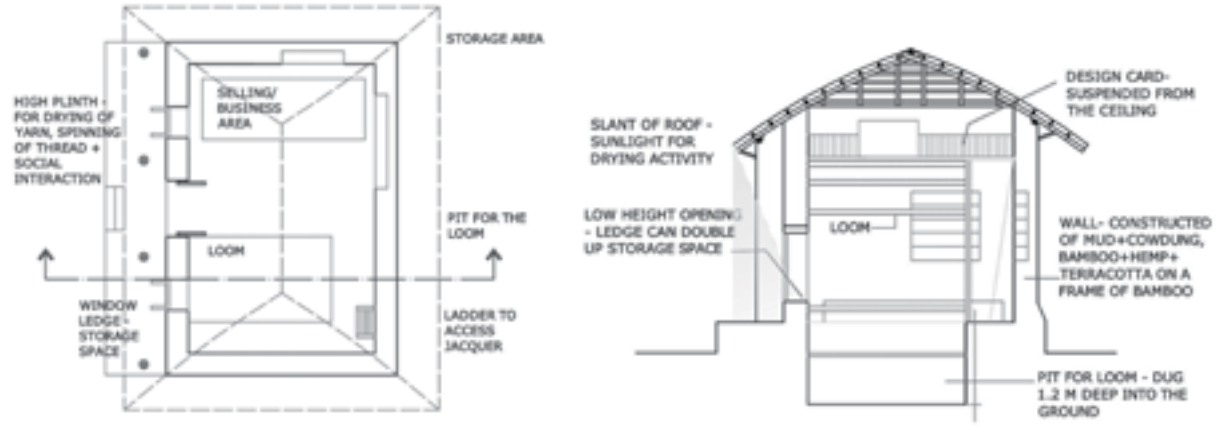
THE BISHNUPUR BALUCHARI IN CONTEXT

The case of Bishnupur, a village located in the Bankura district of West Bengal, reveals a continuum of the crisis that afflicts the crafts persons and their communities. On a daily basis, the crafts persons of Bishnupur are challenged to practice and preserve their skills and survive on meagre earnings at the same time. Some have abandoned their profession altogether, some have morphed their craft forms beyond recognition and most of them want to teach their children alternative skills that can help them survive. As per an 1872 survey of Bishnupur (Hunter 1973), the number of weavers was 6,685. Currently, less than 600 are remaining.

Named after its place of origin, Baluchar in south Murshidabad district, the Baluchari saree was initially made from muslin yarn woven my Muslim weavers under the patronage of the Nawabs. Following the conquest of various regions of Bengal by the armies of the Mughal emperor Akbar, this weaving tradition was dispersed throughout West Bengal. As a result, each region of this State has developed its own variation on the original craft, the Baluchari of Bishnupur is but one of them.

Prior to the 17th century, both Hindu and Muslim weavers wove cotton and silk. Following the Bhakti Movement, weaving came to be more specialised with Hindu weavers making cotton fabrics and Muslim weavers making silks. The *tanti*s or *tantubai*s (as the weaver community is referred to in Bengali) wove simple floral or geometric patterns in the early years, graduating later to intricate depictions of the Mahabharata, Ramayana, Shakuntala and the Raas Lila on *tussar* or cotton yarn. Still later, the themes featured on the sarees were borrowed from local events such as the construction of a temple or the arrival of the British in Bishnupur.

Skilled weavers were invited by the king and were granted all essential aids for sustenance in exchange for their dedicated weaving for the temple. Land and water was granted by the king to all crafts persons, who settled in homogenous clusters of houses built for



Layout of a workshop area of weavers in Bankura District

Use of a community open space in the act of weaving in Krishna Ganj

practitioners of the same craft. The high status attached to the weavers reflected in the Aral Dihi pattern of town planning where crafts persons along with the Brahmins occupied the central spine of the city. However, such nature of layout is not evident today.

The formation of the *para*s also reveal the degree of spatial planning, with community resources situated in critical locations that cater to occupational as well as recreational needs. Each cluster was identified by the composition of multiple skills that were essential for craft production. Thus, weavers shared space with crafts persons that produced fibre from cocoons, spun the fibre into yarn and dyed the yarn. Community based open spaces or *maath*s were utilised for extraction of threads, dyeing, segregating threads and spinning threads. With the emergence of the jacquard loom in the 20th century, the design card makers also began to reside in the same cluster.

The art of weaving was transferred through the generations through the traditional system of apprenticeship. The young apprentice would perform simple ancillary tasks, gradually acquiring greater skills and assume the role previously played by the parent-teacher, eventually. Gender played an important role in this tradition of learning. For example, the man of the family wove, whereas his son would begin as a thread spinner and would gradually be entrusted with the loom. On the other hand, the women of the household were habituated to the task of preparing the thread which included extraction of thread and spinning.

The socio-cultural and economic balance maintained by the administration also played an important role in supporting the craft. Strict social stratification that bound people was essentially occupation based and ensured the practise and specialisation of the crafts skills by a small community. Crafts guilds on the other hand protected the interest of the crafts persons, functioning as a co-operative administered by the king himself. The economic reforms formulated by the king buffered the 'crafts' from a competitive market economy. A set of these coordinated systems together maintained an amicable balance between the producers and the end users.

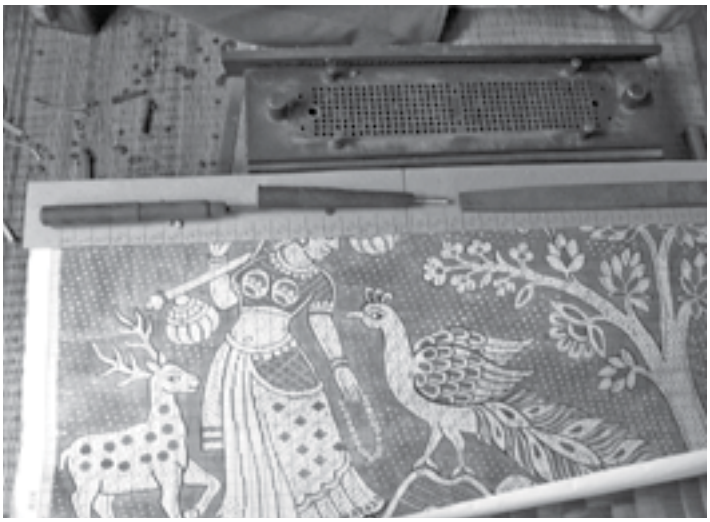
THE DECLINE OF THE BALUCHARI

In the 18th century, the Zamindari system created localised centres of power which paid obeisance to the landlords but paid taxes to the British. The *tanti*s, whose livelihoods as weavers depended on the Malla king's patronage, suffered a heavy loss under this system, as they lost both their assured buyer as well as the prestige that came from court service. In order to support their families as well as their craft, the *tanti*s borrowed money from *mahajan*s (moneylenders), who emerged as a brash new class and rapidly rose in prosperity. Already burdened with the exploitative system of the 18th century, the crafts persons were further threatened by the sweep of industrialisation in the 19th century, which saw the introduction of cheaper and more convenient articles that were generic in form, could be purchased in large numbers (and therefore

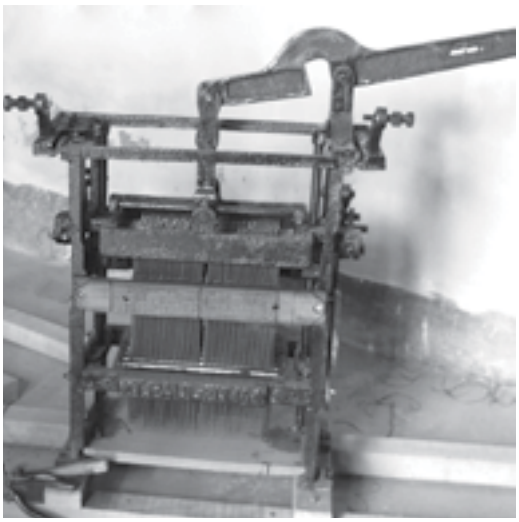
The Dasa Avatar Tash or Naksha Tash, playing cards depicting the 10 incarnations of Lord Vishnu, were not meant to have commercial value. These could only be made by the Faujdar family and its rules were a well guarded secret. The people who enjoyed the previledge to play it were priests and every round of the game was a prayer to Lord Vishnu, as if it is a part of a ritual (left). A member of the Faujdar family engaged in creating the Tash in his house with all tools (right).

Different designs of Bishnupur sarees by Akshay Kumar Das

Design cards for Jaquer looms



Contemporary designs for Bishnupur sarees



Card punching machine

traded) and used more chemicals and industrially manufactured materials that made them more durable. The Baluchari had always been a symbol of the rich and is an expensive product. The cost as well as its quaint regal appeal makes it unpopular. Decreasing demand, lack of patronage and stiff market competition sealed the fate of the Baluchari weavers.

Today, the weavers acknowledge that weaving is no longer a prized art but a livelihood like any other manual labour. The moneylenders force the *tanti*s to work for ever smaller amounts, not only making them dependent on the small loans they constantly need, but also monopolising the crafts persons' access to the market. The moneylenders appoint an ace weaver to prepare designs and supervise a team of weavers to execute his design. The master weaver is paid an attractive sum of money, but his contract would bind him to that moneylender, who would not let him produce sarees for anybody else. Although grossly underpaid for their skilled labour, the weavers succumb to the demands of these moneylenders because of the assurance of a regular daily wage.

Ironically a weaver cannot start off independently to escape the clutches of the nexus of moneylenders, unscrupulous suppliers of raw material or shop owners. The raw material supplier would refuse to supply material at affordable rates in smaller quantities, the local shopkeeper would refuse to sell the weaver's product become the biggest hindrance for a craftsperson to practice this art independently and sustain out of it. Further, the lack of education and language skills, the lack of capital to undertake communications and journeys required for tapping distant markets, the complete inability to bear risk

become a determinant in discouraging the weavers to take up an individual entrepreneurship. The combined effect of the aforementioned factors ensure that the status of the weaver remain compromised and vulnerable to as to submit to the nexus.

During the 1980's, the state government had created a number of organisations and brands such as Tantuja, Tanjushree, Khaadi and Manjushree, which would buy directly from the weavers and sell in towns and cities across the country. However, these patrons have also withdrawn their support and the weavers are left with no choice but to sell their products to the local shopkeepers (the Mahajans of today) in lieu of a paltry sum. The impoverishment of the craftsperson and as a result, of the craft itself, has been established in a forceful way by modes of production and distribution in which the craftsperson has little, if any, control.

The weavers of Bishnupur earn very little from their produce. It takes an entire family of four, six months of work from dawn to dusk to produce one of the exquisite Baluchari sarees. Each saree sells for a sum ranging from 2500 to 5000 rupees. This would be the weaver's selling price. The sum increases as it passes into the middleman's hands and increases further as the saree travels away from its homeland. The amount paid to the weaver and his family is based on a daily scale of 60 rupees for the weaver and about 15 to 30 rupees for the spinners, thread extractors and dyers. Despite this poor rate of return on their skill and time and in the absence of any other recourse, the weavers continue to accept these terms.

Interestingly, some of the weavers of Bishnupur have tried to find comfort in numbers. A group of 'original weavers' has formed a co-operative of sorts to try and protect their interests. This co-operative performs as a contemporary version of a guild and seeks to represent a common cause. They jointly funded a participant to the annual handicrafts fair, feeling proud about the achievement. There are on-going efforts from NGO's such as 'The Loom for the Loomless' and another project initiated by the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), to ameliorate the condition of the craft and the crafts persons. NIFT is encouraging the modernisation of the craft to meet the competitive market and the introduction of new looms empowers the crafts persons by allowing them to optimise their production through a degree of mechanisation. Upgrading existing skills and awarding of soft loans to individual weavers under these schemes, have contributed towards removing the factors that discourage innovation in the crafts.

Condition of weavers' houses and workshop areas

Advertisement and shops at prominent locations (along tourist trail) selling Baluchari sarees

The government in turn has contributed by formalising small scale industries, forming co-operatives, as well as providing schemes, grants and soft loans. In addition, efforts were made to remove the middleman through direct marketing. The scope of tourism as an external market has also been looked at as prospective source of support. There have also been NGO's that have tried to bridge the gap between the 'alternative world' of the Baluchari weavers and the mainstream world.

THE STONY PATH TO RECOVERY

What really makes traditional crafts 'valuable'? Firstly, like all crafts, they produce objects that have character because of the conditions of their making. In India this context is pre industrial, involving cottage industry levels of mechanisation and therefore, marked by the imperfections that make every work of craft unique. Because the sequence of events that lead to the making of each object involves the life-world (practices, customs, traditions and mores) of the craftsperson, traditional crafts are recognised by their ability to represent multiple narratives and levels of significance, along with the gamut of traditional human technology, which has evolved over time through experiment and practise and is guided by the needs of a tradition bound society.

However, the romance that the traditional crafts easily evoke should be tempered by the experiences of the last 20 years, which have shown that the life-worlds of the traditional craftsperson impose a surplus of significance that is difficult to harness in financial terms because it is an intangible value and evades commodification. In such a context, precisely those qualities that make a craft work unique are those for which the crafts persons are unable to claim a 'premium'. The surplus ends up burdening the craftsperson with not only producing the object but also seeking markets for those objects in a business environment hostile to the small and household industry.

The marketing efforts of the Government of India and the Commissioner of Handicrafts, as well as the State and Central Cottage Industries Commissions, have tended to provide markets for a select list of generic products that stand for and luridly represent, the traditional crafts of different regions and which require a degree of inventory that naturally transform the crafted object into kitsch. In order to price the product so that the premium for authenticity is actually recovered from sales, which grants the product a level

of sophistication and access to global and national markets, requires a marketing apparatus that the craftsperson cannot afford first hand. Furthermore, the entry of a traditional craft into the global market brings it into competition with traditional crafts from other countries, which may even employ the same 'traditional' materials and similar 'traditional' symbolism and iconography. In the global market, value gets defined in terms of 'quality' rather than 'character', as only the index of quality is used to compare the craft work. Only the nuanced and informed eye can discern value in what might not meet the standards of some assumed 'quality' but might, in its very imperfection, represent a value.

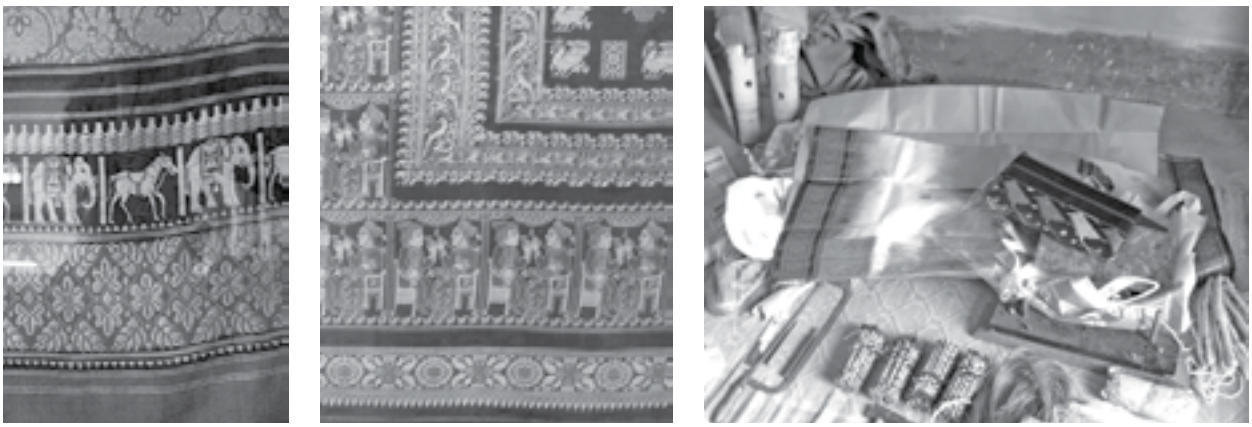
As a means of defining a survival strategy for conservation and management of traditional crafts, the claiming of value for authenticity and character, cannot be recommended as the sole marketing challenge. Instead, the conservation strategy should coalesce into a larger heritage management strategy that treats the craft object and its life-world as one and markets the combination of the two at local, regional, national and global levels. It is essential that the tourists coming to Bishnupur should be encouraged to explore the life-world of the weaver community, rather than simply consume the sarees that are sold in the big shops that now line the main axial streets, claiming to sell 'traditional' items that are not even produced locally.

A generic approach can inadvertently adversely affect the diversity present in the traditional world and its physical manifestations. A detailed and objective documentation of the skills and processes involved in the craft, its context and its practitioners is required so as to allow future generations to appreciate the craft in a holistic manner. Teaching the traditional skills to younger generations is yet another way of ensuring the appreciation and practise of the craft. Through intelligent conservation and management, a fine balance between the retention of the original craft form and the evolution of new variations drawing on the traditional can be achieved.

The traditional crafts are embedded in the life-world of the traditional crafts persons. The objects they create are imparted an authenticity because of the knowledge, skill and culture that the crafts persons bring to bear on raw material. This authenticity is not something that is fixed in time and allied to age value alone. Nor is it something that can be produced by creating 'crafts villages' in cities, where the crafts persons become as much an exhibit as the things they produce.

The value of authenticity is in the transformations of the crafts over time and the fact that they have survived thus far. As the communities that produce traditional crafts are under threat of annihilation, cultivating a market that has a taste for crafts is imperative. Corresponding to this creation of a market is a push to innovate, especially where the innovation does not interfere with the craft itself. For instance, block prints that are derived from contemporary, popular, forms. Whether the crafts community can afford innovation and to what degree that innovation involves a risk to the community's subsistence or the aesthetic integrity of their products, are factors that would determine the fate of the crafts.

The lover of traditional crafts is characterised by having a discerning eye that can distinguish between authentic creations of a craftsperson from those that are manufactured. The collector, the purist, will demand that the crafts product contain the flaws that naturally



Bishnupur sarees over the years

emerge from manual labour. The public, on the other hand, will consume the crafts if the object meets their functional needs and the aura of the crafts item is strong enough to determine their choices. Fashion has a compelling quality and as Emma Tarlo (1996) wrote memorably in 'Clothing Matters' can even have a political impact. The fashioning of the craft object into items of mass consumption, would only work if the appreciation of crafts becomes part of the cultivation of urbane tastes and includes an appreciation of what is authentic and true. It is the cultivation of that 'taste' which is a compelling source of recovery for the crafts. The increase in the global appreciation of the handmade articles can offer traditional crafts an economic alternative. There is a strong possibility of negotiation with market forces that do not encounter competition from non genuine or counterfeit objects and become victim of commercialisation.

Acknowledgements

- Somi Chatterjee's classmates who shared their notes and experiences of their site visit to Bishnupur as a part of an academic studio exercise, Department of Architectural Conservation, 2008, School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi.
- All crafts persons and other professionals of Bishnupur who took time away from their working schedule to share their experiences.

Bibliographic References

- Bannerjee, Amiya K 1968, *Bankura District Gazetteer,* West Bengal District Gazetteers.
- Donkins, Lucy 2001, *Crafts and Conservation : Synthesis report for ICCROM*, unpublished report, Rome.
- Dutt, Romesh Chunder 1950, *The Economic History of India under the Early British Rule: From the rise of the British power in 1757 to accession of the Queen Victoria 1837,* Routledge, Great Britain.
- Herskovits, MJ 1952, *Man and His work,* Columbia University Press, New York.
- Hunter, WW 1973, *A Statistical account of Bengal,* DK Publishing, Calcutta.
- Tarlo, Emma 1996, *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India,* C Hurst & Co., London.

M Saleem Beg has a permanent base in Jammu and Kashmir and is currently Honorary Convener, Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage, J & K. Earlier he was Director General, Tourism. Saleem has been associated with crafts having worked as Director and Managing Director, Handlooms and Handicrafts.

Hakeem Samir Hamdani is a senior Architect with INTACH. He graduated from the School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi and has been working on conservation projects in Jammu and Kashmir. He with his team has produced the five volume documentation on cultural resources of Srinagar that won recognition from the State Government.

Papier Mache

A craft of Kashmir

M SALEEM BEG AND HAKEEM SAMIR HAMDANI

ABSTRACT

Papier mache is thought to have been prevalent in Kashmir since the 15th century, introduced to the valley as 'kar-i-kalamdan' under Sultan Zain-ul-Abideen, the king of Kashmir. The craft of Kashmiri papier mache, named so due to French demand and influence in the 19th century, involves two processes in its production. The first is the preparation of the body from paper pulp, followed by surface decoration called naqashi and the term papier mache has come to represent the technique and process of surface decoration rather than the composition of the object which is to be decorated. The craft has undergone transition in production process and material over the centuries and faces the threat of loss of authenticity due to mass production.

INTRODUCTION

Kashmir has made a singular contribution to the world of arts through the richness, intricacy and sophistication of its crafts. The range of these crafts is vast and varied. There are references in the ancient history of Kashmir that in pre-Islamic period there had been a significant production of the textile and painted crafts. However it

was during the Muslim rule that this creative genius of Kashmir received a fresh impetus.

The year 1320 AD marks a significant intervention in the socio-cultural history of Kashmir with the transfer of power from Hindu to Muslim rule and the establishment of the Sultanate in the valley. As with most other Muslim dynasties of that time in the Indian subcontinent, the ruling elite of the Sultans of Kashmir comprised a large number of foreigners, especially Persians and Central Asians. These foreigners included missionaries, men of letters and merchants who bought with them an appreciation of art and crafts that had developed in the wider Islamic world. Hence the Sultanate rule laid the foundation of a unique cultural ethos showing synthesis between the ancient traditions of Kashmir and a host of new ideas originating from Persia, Arabia and Central Asia.

The two men who stand out for their contribution to the development of this new culture are Mir Syed Ali Hamdani and Sultan Zain-ul Abideen. Syed Ali or as he is popularly known as Shah-i-Hamdan was a famous Persian mystic who is said to have been responsible for the widespread conversion to Islam of people in Kashmir. The Syed who fled to Kashmir from Persia following Timur's invasion brought with him a host of artisans and crafts persons who found favour with local court. The 15th century king of Kashmir Sultan Zain-ul-Abideen supplemented this work of Syed Ali. Most traditional historical references maintain that Zain-ul-Abideen invited crafts persons from all part of Islamic world especially from Iran and Central Asia. According to popular legends, Zain-ul-Abideen is said to have spent some time at Samarkand before his accession to the throne. This journey to the then heart of the Islamic civilisation would indeed have imbibed the young prince with a refined taste for art and crafts that were yet lacking in his own kingdom. Once he ascended the throne, the Sultan made a sustained attempt (even coercion) to enrich his land. Amongst the various crafts

Box with drawers in authentic papier mache

Typical kalamdan

that got introduced in this period is the art of making lacquered pen cases known as *kar-i-kalamdan.*

THE ART OF *KAR-I-KALAMDAN*

According to Encyclopedia Kashmir, the art of making pen cases from mashed paper was known in the Seljuk Iran; from where it must have spread to other parts of Central Asia including Samarkand. The art of *kar-i-kalamdan* does not seem to have found much favour with the people of Central Asia and Iran where the metal and wooden pen cases commanded the market. It was from Samarkand, according to a leading contemporary papier mache artist Mohammed Saleh Beigh that Zain-ul Abideen obtained artisans well versed in the art of *kar-i-kalamdan* or as it was alternatively called *kar-i-munaqash.*

Most historical records maintain that the craft was to a large extent limited to the capital city of Srinagar and that too within the Shia community; a majority of whom were immigrants from Persia or surrounding areas. Unfortunately, no papier mache object from the Sultanate period (14th to 16th century) survives today.

The art must also have been practiced during the Mughal period but hardly any documentary evidences from that period survive to explain the nature and the extent of the craft. Mughal records, nevertheless make mention of the fact that the Kashmiris were renowned for their painting skills. Though the reference seems to be with regards to miniature painting, yet it does support the tradition of an established artisan community whose members might have diversified into the wider and more acclaimed field of miniature painting. Interestingly this is a tradition that finds place even in contemporary Kashmir. Many of the younger children associated with traditional papier mache artisan families, have switched over to painting after completing a course from the Srinagar School of Music and Fine Arts.

NAQASHI

In Kashmir papier mache originated in the form of making *kalamdans* (pen cases) from paper pulp. The *kalamdans* were in turn covered with floral or geometric patterns and finished with a coat of *rogan* (varnish). It was for this reason that the craft was referred to as *kar-i-kalamdan* (the art of pen cases) or *kar-i-munaqash* (the art of decorating). Over a period of time the craft has evolved into a distinct art form of *naqashi* (surface decoration) applied over an object made completely from paper pulp or employing at least one layer of paper. Thus the term papier mache is applied to a craft that has come to represent the technique and process of surface decoration rather than the composition of the object which is to be decorated. Nevertheless the actual painting or *naqashi* is always applied over a layer of paper.

The art of *naqashi* is the final stage of a highly evolved process, which starts with the making of the *saakhta* (object) and the preparation of the surface, along with the selection of the requisite *naqsh or tarah* (design pattern) and colours to be used. All the different stages of the process are streamlined, employing skilled crafts persons in each stage.

The skills involved in the various stages are passed on the basis of oral traditions from one generation to next. Indeed till the advent of 20th century the craft was a well kept secret maintained within the artisan community. As the craft was practiced within a small close knit community, therefore women along with men were involved in one or another stage of the process though never as *naqash*, a trend which is continuing even as of today. Similarly age was no barrier and children as young as three to four years would be enrolled in the *kharkhanas*.

The motifs and designs that were traditionally employed in the *naqashi* work follow a pattern, which though prevalent in some other parts of the Islamic world also, are in the end distinctly reflective of the local settings. The colour scheme that was used on the papier mache objects was mostly limited to four or five basic colours with numerous shade gradients. The overall effect of the object would normally tend towards blue, green or gold. The process of colour selection is influenced by a set of inherent sensibilities imbibed by the artisans through local customs. Thus

Tray with delicate Naqashi work

the traditional colour scheme comprising a rich though subdued colour palette seems to be reflective of the Kashmiri artisan's preference for pastel colours locally known as *sufiyana rang*s.

Similar is the case with the various designs and motifs used. Papier mache objects reflect a very subtle grammar of motifs and styles highly influenced by the rich flora and fauna of Kashmir valley. The typical motifs used comprise floral or vegetative patterns of rose, iris, *gul-i-wilayat*, carnation, *tsunth posh* (apple blossom), *gul-i-lala*, *gulal* (poppy), *pamposh* (lotus), *yambirzal* (narcissus), *nargis* (daffodil), grape and *chinar* leaves. Rose figures very prominently in many of the designs, reflective of its local standing as the 'king of flowers'. The rendering of the motifs is highly stylised and representative of Kashmiri craftsmanship.

The chinar leaf is a favourite motif with artisans who prefer *vathlavun* (raised-embossed work). Stylised versions of almond (which was replicated in Europe as paisley) also find wide usage and seem to have been incorporated from shawl designs because of which these patterns are known as *jamvar* or *kani tarh* (a clear indication of the fact that the motif was derived from the existing shawls designs). The various motifs are also intermingled amongst themselves to make new patterns. The designs may be spread all over the surface (without an apparent beginning or end) repeatable (mostly in form of medallions) or used as a *hashiya* (border). Figurative representation can be found in designs based on *durabar* (court scenes), *jungle tarah* (animal hunts), historic epics or scenes from Umar Khayam's 'Rubiyatt'.

KAR-I-KALAMDAN TO PAPIER MACHE

During the course of the 19th century, a number of French agents were operating within the valley. These agents, basically engaged in the trade of *pashmina* shawls also gave an impetus to the papier mache industry albeit in an indirect manner. The shawls that were sent from Kashmir to France used to be packed in papier mache boxes and once they had reached France were sold separately; fetching high price. Soon these papier mache objects carved a separate market for themselves in France and other parts of Europe. Gradually along with boxes, papier mache flower vases were also in demand in the French market.

The extent of the French influence on the local Kashmiri artisan can be gauged from the fact that the term 'papier mache' replaced the traditional name of the craft in its native place also. The French influence had its drawbacks, the most serious of which was the designs or colour schemes that were introduced on the demand of the French agents catering to the then prevalent European tastes.

Papier mache turban box

UNIQUENESS OF KASHMIRI PAPIER MACHE

The unique aspect of Kashmiri papier mache is the combination of the process that leads to surface preparation and the resulting *naqashi* (surface decoration), lending itself to an art form, which is unmistakably Kashmiri. The process lends itself to representation of Kashmir's natural and cultural landscape in a stylised manner, unique to the regions artisans. Hence, the overall appearance of the papier mache is marked by very intricate freehand drawn motifs and patterns rendered in a very subtle colour which display the range of the region's flora and fauna. Papier mache is a miniaturised art form involving minute detailing and rendering and a variation of different colours and shades. Thus, the craft involves mastering of the skillful handling of the brush. It involves dedication, patience and also an inbuilt artistic flair. It is also time consuming. All these factors add up to the market value of a papier mache object. Vivid 19th century European observers of Kashmir like William Moorcroft and Sir Walter Lawrence have also remarked upon the skill and expertise involved in this work.

A unique feature of Kashmiri papier mache is the effect of delicate shading that is obtained by very fine brush work almost in the manner of fine semi curvilinear line work known as *partaz*. The same technique is also employed to fill in small gaps in the background between various motifs. In fact, barring the base coat, which is done with broad vertical strokes, most of the rendering in Kashmiri papier mache is done with small circular or semi circular brush strokes. The motifs are delineated with fine, uniform lines.

TRANSITION

An interesting feature of the industry was the slow and steady replacement of paper as the basic material for the craft. In the latter part of the 19th century, wooden boxes made of *budloo* (silver fir) replaced the traditional paper pulp boxes. Thereafter in the 20th century, mashed paper and wood was increasingly replaced by *ghata* (paper board sheet). Today very few items sold in the Kashmiri market by the name of papier mache are made from mashed paper. Indeed, what is referred to as papier mache both locally and in the outside market is the art of *naqashi* or the

painting of various floral, geometrical and figurative designs and patterns on the various items, covered with lacquer. Traditionally most of the colours used in papier mache were mineral, organic or vegetable based. In contemporary practices poster colours and acrylic primers are used. Similarly synthetic varnish has replaced the traditional *rogan* (lacquer) which was derived from *sundaris* (copal). The brushwork on the base was traditionally done with locally made brushes with bristle of goat or ass's hair. These days brushes no. 12, 18 or 20 marketed under the name 'Camel' are used for this purpose. The paintwork in the motifs is done with locally made brushes derived from the tail of a cat. The gold outlining of motifs is also done with the same brushes though some people have also started using pen nibs.

CURRENT MARKET

Papier mache work is presently done on a variety of objects ranging from items of furniture, gift items and even objects of apparel ware like bracelets, though the overall composition of the market comprise gift items. Currently, there are different standards followed and practiced by the artisans. Same design and patterns can be rendered in different ways depending on the price that the client is willing to pay. In the present market, papier mache objects are sold as number one or number two. This categorisation is based on the quality of workmanship and also the product.

In the contemporary craft market of Kashmir, papier mache still retains its foothold. But over a period of time the craft has entered a stage of 'mass production' which has invariably affected the quality of the art work. Many of the older papier mache artisans and *kharkhanawalas* (middle men) see this as the end of an art that they and their forefathers had cherished for centuries. Yet not much is lost…the craft still retains a select though small clientele who are still on the lookout for that delicate stroke of the brush that is the essence of this craft.

Acknowledgements

The images are from INTACH Conservation Report for SPS Museum.

Bibliographic References

- Ali, Sayyed 1994, *Tarikh-i-Kashmir*, an Urdu translation of the 16th century Persian history of Kashmir, published by Centre of Central Asian Studies, Kashmir University, Srinagar.
- Bates, Charles Ellison 2005, *A Gazetteer of Kashmir-1873*, 2nd Edition, Gulshan Books, Srinagar, 2005.
- Haider, Mirza, *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, English translation, viewed November 2008, <www.packhum.org>.
- Hamdani, Hakim Ghulam Safdar: *Tarikh-i-Shiyan-i-Kashmir*, 2nd Edition, Imam Hussein Research & Publishing Centre, Srinagar, 2001.
- Lawrence, Walter R: *The Valley of Kashmir*, 3rd ed. 2005, Gulshan Books, Srinagar.
- Moorcroft, Willam, edited by Wilson HH 2000, *Travels in India, Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Punjab, in Ladakh and Kashmir, in Peshawar, Kabul, Kunduz and Bokhara from 1819 to 1825,* vol. I and II, Low Price Publications, Delhi.
- Shah, Pir Hassan 2002, *Tarikh-i-Hassan,* vol. I, II and III, Kashmiri translation published by Jammu & Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, Srinagar.
- Sufi, GMD 1996 (reprint), *Kashir, Being a History of Kashmir from the earliest times to our own*, vol. I and II, Capital publishing House, New Delhi
- J & K Academy of Art, Culture & Languages 1989, *Kashir Encylopedia,* vol. III, Delhi.

Lessons from Creative Collaborations

Learning from Crafts

Lessons in sustainable living

ARATRIK DEV VARMAN

ABSTRACT

Crafts today are subject to the vagaries of fashion and in many instances, are under threat from the increasingly homogenised tastes of consumers. Yet, these represent a way of life that is far more sustainable than what the path of 'modernisation' has led to. Crafts and the inherent knowledge systems these represent, if harnessed in a manner that is inclusive of its many thousands of practitioners, could suggest an alternative, viable, model of development.

The crafts persons and design thinkers from all over India are engaged in an ongoing debate, as all are concerned about a rich, diverse material culture that is fast being replaced by the Mc Donalds of the world. It is important to understand what this change really means. The country's craft tradition is very old; ranging from many hundred to in some cases, many thousands of years old.There must be a very good reason that it has survived.

If a potter does not knead his clay well, the air bubbles trapped in it will cause it to crack when fired. His is not a test sidestepped by juggling statistics or jargon. The results are self-evident and binding. No one wants a broken pot. People who make things know the meaning

Aratrik Dev Varman is a textile design graduate from National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad where he also teaches now. He is currently working in the crafts sector for an international clothing company based in LA, USA.

of integrity. Crafts persons do not waste resources because they cannot afford to!

Aditi Ranjan (faculty at National Institute of Design) says, 'Maybe we're not asking the right people.' Doors are being opened to Harvard and Oxford to create more white-collar jobs, but a polytechnic from Germany that could train millions of furniture crafts persons and create new jobs, is yet to be invited. Hence, a serious investment requires a serious re-alignment in the way of seeing at the outset.

Craft is a shared heritage, a common language that designers speak with rural India. It connects people and narrows widening gaps between the haves and the have-nots, economically and psychologically. On design projects, should artisans be treated as collaborators or labourers? What lessons can be learnt from them?

Over 30 years ago, Helena Perheentupa and Krishna Patel from National Institute of Design had undertaken a project of designing *durries* (woven mats) for the weavers of Jawaja in Rajasthan. They used classical design principles that lend the product value in terms of longevity and universal appeal. Their designs are still in use by the weavers in some form. The reason the project has endured so long is, that the crafts persons were introduced to a logic that allowed them to tackle colour, composition and texture, as against only being given specific designs to produce, thereby enabling them to reinvent themselves time and again and design for varied tastes.

The designer's role is not just to create products but a climate in which both patron and craftsperson can prosper. Traditional vocabularies looked at afresh can fulfill contemporary needs. Fashion dictates changes that are seasonal, but is this attitude sustainable? One has to strike a very fine balance between pleasing a customer and educating him or her. It is lamentably hard to buy a saree today, where the *buti*s (figures or pattern) are not too big in relation to the border or the *pallu* (an end of the saree) not too strange. The craft traditions are tacit, not explicit systems of knowledge and as a result, ever more vulnerable. It is critical to record and revive, skills, to bring an appreciation of traditions to the classroom and have the academic space to ponder them. The designer must weave intrepidly through all these facets of his profession.

It is not enough anymore to be a discerning, philanthropic patron or an activist with a social conscience. Craft stands for what human beings have neglected in the face of greed and a warped perception of progress. Yann Arthus-Bertrand's documentary 'Home' shows this from the sky. Millions still go hungry, while labour-intensive means of production are replaced by resource-intensive ones. A delicate ecological balance has been upset. Water and fossil fuels are being indiscriminately consumed to sustain this system that stems from 'I want' without stopping to examine 'At what cost?'

If one did pause to think about it, traditional craft practices give some important insights.

Slow down.
Use less.
Don't waste.
Use your own hands.
Make things.
Grow forests.
Stay local.
Follow the seasons.
Share.

This incredibly fragile net of relationships between nature, the material it provides, the maker and the market has survived till date. Slow food and slow fibre are only now beginning to be household ideas in the West, while in India the immense wealth of living traditions and the contribution of over 24 million crafts persons is taken for granted. Must India go full circle before realising that the western model of industrial development is life threatening? There may not be enough time! On the other hand, the key to the survival of craft traditions and eco-system and in turn, the survival of the planet, lies closer home.

Leather Craft of Kutch

The designer's role

ANITA CHANDRAMOHAN-KULKARNI

ABSTRACT

The parallel existence of traditional leather craft processes and skilled artisans in Kutch, presents opportunities to develop new products and applications for the architecture and design industries. For the development and support of this craft as part of architectural practice, it is critical to review the properties of leather related to its usage as a building element, educate the artisans on non-traditional uses of leather, improve the quality of the existing products and upgrade tools and techniques to cope with shifting market trends. An in-depth research and understanding of the properties and sources of raw materials, manufacturing processes and techniques and linkages with existing market segments is required in order to provide opportunities and new alternatives to the artisans.

Anita Chandramohan-Kulkarni is involved in crafts based interior design projects and has recently launched a retail outlet 'MAATI' in Mumbai featuring authentic handmade products acquired directly from the artisans. She has a Masters degree in architecture from University of Colorado, Denver, USA. Anita aims to devise ways to incorporate Indian handicrafts in built environment and to provide market linkages as a support for artisans through livelihood generation.

LEATHER AS A CRAFTS MEDIUM

Leather is an elastic material created through tanning of hides and skins of animals, particularly cattle hide. This tanning process converts the skin into a durable, long lasting and versatile raw material for various uses. In India, trade in tanned leather dates back to 3000 BC and has long been headed by the Mochi community who processed dead

animals to obtain their skin for tanning. The crafting, detailing, designing and manufacturing of leather goods were undertaken primarily by rural crafts persons.

The meat, leather and dairy industries are economically and tangibly intertwined. In India, the leather industry is virtually reliant on the beef industry. It is not economical for the slaughter industries to toss away profitable animal parts. Therefore, virtually every appendage, muscle and organ is baked, boiled, ground or otherwise processed into a saleable product. The blunt truth is that dairy cows survive only a fraction of their normal lifespan. On modern dairy farms, cows are considered 'spent', that is, drained, worn out and useless, between four and six years of age. After enduring physical abuse and stress, these relatively young cows are unable to continue to produce sufficient milk or off springs to remain lucrative for the farmers. Considered an economic liability, they are shipped off to slaughter houses.

The cow as a resource for multiple consumer products

The leather tanneries in India face various challenges with respect to environmental and ethical conformity. The toxic chemicals used for the treating and tanning of hides get dumped into rivers and local water sources which are used by locals for cooking and drinking, thereby posing major health hazards. Compliance with environmental regulations is dismal in most areas and the enforcement of such laws and regulations, which may have served as a deterrent to such heedless pollution, is often poor and fraudulent.

CURRENT PRODUCTS

Footwear is the main product of the leather craft sector. Rajasthan carries a prolonged history of leather art and craft. There is a large variety of footwear from this region such as the *mojadi*, *lutti* and *jootis* which are shoes decorated with intricate embroidery work. Kolhapur in Maharashtra is famous for its *chappals* (slippers) ornamented with delicate design and patterns using natural colour of leather. Leather crafts in India also encompass puppet making, for instance, the shadow puppets made in regions on the Karnataka coast, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. In some parts of the country, goat leather and camel hide are employed in the manufacturing of water and oil carriers respectively. In manufacturing interior décor items, lampshades made from leather have gained importance. Leather art is gaining popularity as is evidenced by the increase in demand for various products.

CHALLENGES WITHIN THE LEATHER INDUSTRY

Inconsistent supply of raw materials, design resources and training; insufficient access and awareness of modern technology, are some of the most challenging issues faced by leather artisans. Further, cultural biases have greatly limited the integration of various skill sets available within the leather community. Though they are one of India's traditional industries, prevalent in a number of states within the country, leather crafts are largely practiced as a cottage industry and are usually dispersed in rural areas. Decentralised and small in scale, the artisan leather sector follows traditional methods of manufacturing. The crafts persons involved are often technologically challenged as well as not conversant with new design, manufacturing and packaging processes or logistics. As production processes are traditional, product quality barely meets international standards and is inconsistent. Due to their varying product quality as well as limited range of products, many Indian leather units are unable to compete with their mass-produced commercial counterparts.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Input procurement
The artisans are to be exposed to various product options, new designs and quality control, in a manner that is in consonance with their skill sets and traditional techniques.

Capturing customer requirements
Customers are to be grouped as per the values that they connect to in the products made by artisans.

Design
Designers need to work within the parameters set by the design brief, keeping in mind the artisan's capacity, quality and specific skills. Designers would first need to identify artisans who have the required skill set and are open to experimenting with alternative product ideas. Regular and rigorous on-site interactions are necessary for the designer to obtain a good understanding of the material, its properties and applications.

Manufacturing
There should be a system in place to monitor manufacturing. Identifying each artisan's production capacity and quality is integral to this process. Artisans should be introduced to basic affordable technology to automate the production process without disturbing traditional methods and techniques.

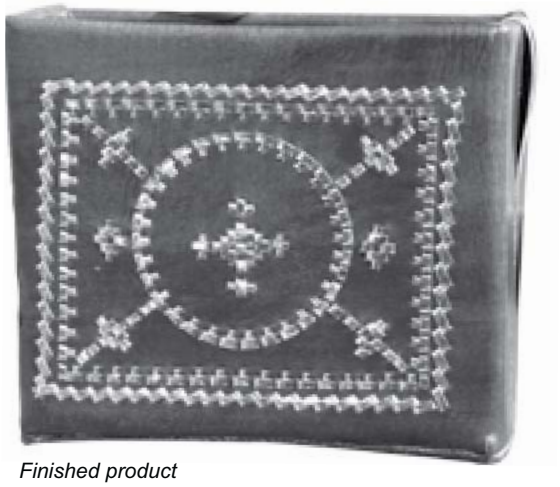
Outbound logistics
The movement of craft products begins immediately after the manufacturing process. Monitoring such movement ensures that the product is manufactured and delivered within the required time frame, thereby creating a transparent mechanism of quality control and time management on deliveries. Revenue generation would also increase due to methodical supply chain information provided to the artisans.

Marketing
Improvements in the marketing of leather products made by artisans ought to start with the study of the market environment and the different products and variations on offer, so as to enable artisans to select a specific market segment or audience for their wares. Market development initiatives ought to focus on the evolution of a brand identity (including labelling, packaging and pricing strategy) as well as advertising and promotion strategy to aid in the appropriate positioning of such products in a competitive market.

Retailing
Products can be available for direct consumption at retail outlets, departmental stores, boutiques and kiosks. Automation of the production process, building an understanding of customer needs, extending the reach of retail products through e-commerce and introduction of new technology are a few measures that may be employed.

Setting Research Goals
- Study and understanding of traditional leather craft and processes to arrive at innovative and alternative

Work in progress



Finished product

Artisan community of Kutch

Zari work on leather in progress

design solutions for the architecture and design industry.

- Provide traditional artisans with platforms that are different from the local craft being practised but are sensitive to traditional process and techniques.
- Help artisans position themselves in the architecture and interior design market to be able to respond quickly to customised design and its challenges.
- Expose artisans to basic technology which would allow them to efficiently meet larger production targets.
- Increase the level of confidence and monetary gain in the artisan community to inspire younger generations.

THE DESIGNER'S ROLE AND METHODOLOGY

Understanding the artisans' behaviour patterns, choices and needs guide designers towards identifying new opportunities for innovation. Connecting with the artisans and their craft is of prime importance to arrive at innovative applications of their specific crafts. This may include the identification of fundamental patterns within the producer group's socio-cultural behaviour and their daily routines, the identification of their specific skill sets and working rhythms, as well as looking for what is currently working well and areas that call for improvements. Direct conversations with artisans allow them an opportunity to describe their choices, processes and problems from their own perspective. Firsthand experience of the working atmosphere, tools and techniques used adds immense richness to the quality of the designer's learning process. Likewise, an understanding of the relationship between artisans and their creations provides an excellent platform for new design innovations. One of the distinguishing features of design research is the emphasis on inspiration. In the search for inspiration, an evaluation of existing traditional processes as well as modern techniques is necessary. This comparative study between the long established traditional processes versus modern production techniques provides insights that would greatly aid idea generation during the design process.

A designer ought to research a product and its processes while identifying elements critical to the handcrafting technique. Re-evaluation of the elements and processes automated for a larger production could lead to interesting insights into developing alternative products. Concurrently, a study of similar handcrafted products in the market and its applications would lead to idea incubation. Development of new designs in concert with the existing capacity, areas of improvement and intended quality would be the key to new design prototyping. Finally,

Leather pen holder

refining the concepts as per the results achieved through observation, product sampling and review and appropriate product pricing would ascertain its market positioning and saleability.

The artisans and their communities are clearly the beneficiaries of such design exercise, resulting in an upliftment of the crafts industry as a whole. The creation of alternative design ideas using traditional methods could help evolve alternative products and gear them towards modern consumer needs, thereby gaining new market shares.

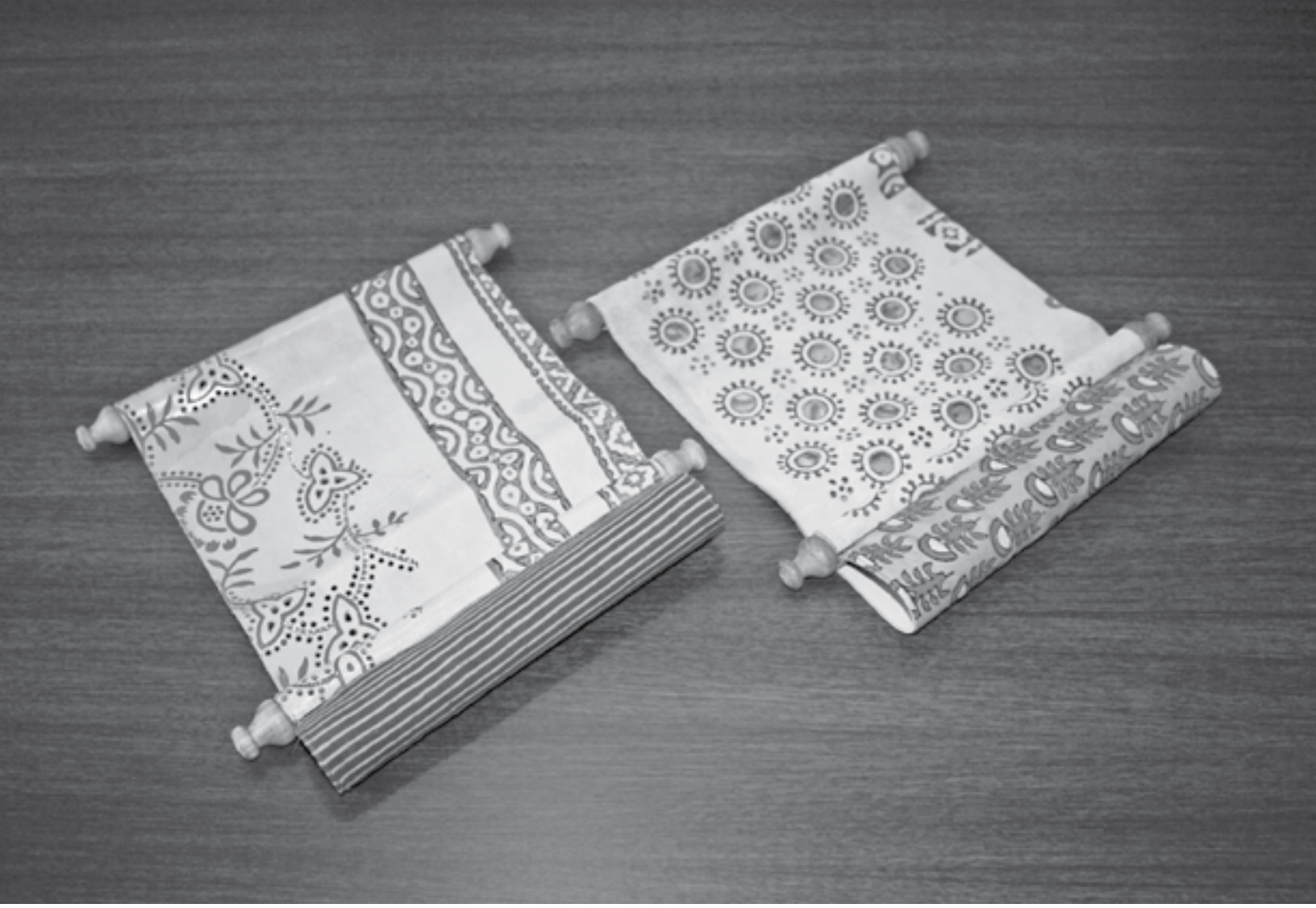
DESIGN INTERVENTION: A CASE STUDY

Through almost a month long interaction with the leather artisans of the villages of Khavda, Hodoka, Bhirendiyara and the nearby communities in Kutch, Gujarat it was established that each of these villages possessed a unique specialised skill set. For example, the artisans of Village Khavda are famous for their intricate *zari* and *torni* (embroidery) works whereas the artisans from the village of Hodoka possess leather punching and embossing skills. The unique skill sets were then experimented with through design intervention.[1]

A questionnaire geared towards ascertaining the sustainability of current craft techniques was handed to artisans to gain insight into the socio-economic impact of their particular skill set. In addition, a photographic log was created to understand the process, quality and finished product and its consistency. This also helped in comparative analysis and resulted in inspirations for new product designs.

In the traditional home based crafts industry, every member of the family is entrusted with some role within the overall product process. For example, with leather handicrafts, the men would clean and cut the leather whereas the women would help with the embroidery to complete the product and make it ready for sale. Hence, on-site interactions with artisans as well as their families were useful to understand the

Close up of zari block print work



Leather curtains showing zari block print work

crafts products that the community was engaged in making. The interactions with various rural artisans were beneficial to understand the processes used, compare products and led to alternative design ideas using the same methods.

The key design exercises undertaken while working with leather artisans of Kutch included sampling of the following products:

Leather curtains
Leather artisans from Village Hodoka were used to creating leather book-covers, wallets, purses and *mojari*s by using traditional methods. The idea for leather curtains was realised upon interaction with the artisan community and a subsequent analysis of their design process. Leather traditionally used for wallets, purses and similar items were combined with block-printed cloth obtained from artisans from the neighbouring village in Kutch to create unique leather curtains as home furnishing products.

Leather screen partitions
Bell straps, *chappal*s, hand fans and other similar traditional leather products requiring hardened cattle hide was combined, again, with block-printed cloth and leather lacing to create screen partitions. These partitions can replace the wooden screen or glass partitions typically used in Indian interiors to offer a unique traditional ambience.

NEW BEGINNINGS

Leather is a unique commodity that links villages to 'high society' and traditional practices with emerging technologies. The growth of the leather industry in India is of great importance due to its direct contribution to rural advancement and socio-economic development. Over the years, there has been tremendous increase in competition at various levels of leather production which is forcing the artisan sector to be competitive. Leather is a commodity that can be highly fashion dominated and has a premium high end value. Due to this nature, there is a continuous change in the product style. This requires constant monitoring

Leather partition showing zari block print work

of changes in specific customer needs. Currently, the craft is limited to the artisan's vision of the market. However, the artisan is not aware of the customer's specific needs. In addition, there are no systems in place to automate the manufacturing processes. Hence the timeline for production is dependent on the availability of the artisans. Finally, the income of artisans is compromised due to factors such as lack of direct customer interaction. The only available large retail opportunities for most leather crafts are through craft fairs and exhibitions. Slowly but surely, organisations like Khamir have started providing market linkages for artisans through retail outlets. Yet their impact is almost miniscule. The potential for this craft to grow and sustain generations of artisans is tremendous. Designers with an aptitude towards understanding of traditional processes and adapting them into alternative products would be a crucial impetus needed for the revival of the crafts industry in the country.

Challenges Faced by Crafts of Kutch

The region of Kutch is a rugged desert land shaped by an unforgiving climate and the resilient, creative spirit of its people, who for generations have made a living off the land and with their hands, through agriculture and crafts. Over time, the harsh climate and natural disasters have made agriculture increasingly difficult. Today, 40% of the Kutchi population is dependent, to varying extents, on crafts as their source of income. Since craft practice generates social capital over and above economic sustenance, it ensures creative, emotional and social stability for the artisans. In their cohesive craft communities, knowledge, skills, and heritage are shared to create the commonality of collective experience. Kutch is known for the colourful silken threads that decorate traditional *kanjiris, odhnis* and *batuas,* the most visible and recognised craft thanks to the pioneering work of organisations like Shrujan, Kalaraksha and Kutch Mahila Vikas Sanghathan. There are over twenty other traditional crafts in Kutch including Ajrakh block print, weaves, leather craft, pottery, lacquer, *rogan* art, *bandhani* and more. Each Kutchi craft has its own challenges in the modern context.

Leather craft: Decreasing in number, leather artisans are now dependent on outside raw materials and are facing a market challenge of product stagnation in utility and marketability.

Weaves: Local markets for woven cloth have decreased dramatically with the mass-production of synthetic fabrics in the 1960s. Since the 2001 earthquake that devastated the region and destroyed their asset base (such as work shed and equipment), the number of weavers have been steadily decreasing.

Silver: Over the last 50 years due to constant droughts, the purchasing ability of the local communities who have been loyal customers of the artisans has been affected. Silver artisans are struggling with inconsistent markets and the high costs of silver as a raw material.

Pottery: Kutch's Kumbhar potters struggle to earn sustainable incomes and lift their families from low standards of living. Also, the environmentally specific problem of increasing salinity in Kutch has affected the quality of the soil, making it difficult for the pottery production process. A technological solution that takes into account the furnace techniques of the Kutch potters is required by the potters if they are to continue their livelihood.

Embellished leather craft of Kutch
Source: Pallon Daruwala

The lengthy process of Ajrakh block printing. Source: Studio Firefly

Kutch weaver creating fine motifs
Source: Pallon Daruwala

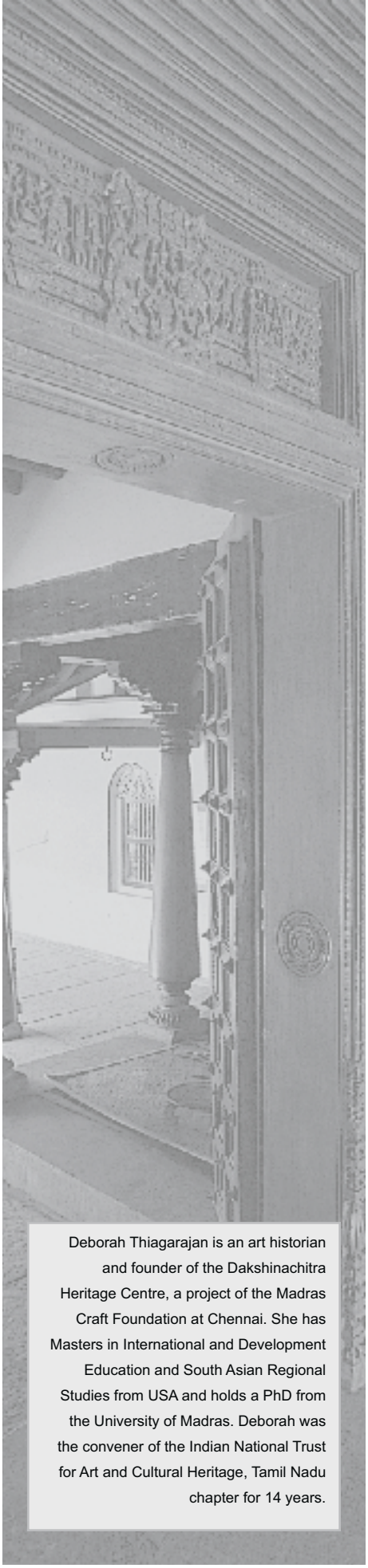
Block print: The gravest challenge the Kutch block printers face is the depleting level of ground water. Also, in some parts of the block print cluster, the ground water has a high level of iron content that is affecting the quality of the dyeing. The block printers have recently come together to tackle these problems as a group and to study ways of recharging the ground water as well as reusing the water after treating it for effluents.

The jewellery craft of Kutch, patronised by its local communities over centuries
Source: Pallon Daruwala

Kutchi potter on a wheel
Source: Studio Firefly

Set up after the 2001 earthquake, the KHAMIR Craft Resource Centre has been promoted by the Kutch Navnirman Abhiyan, the Nehru Foundation for Development, the Confederation of Indian Industries and the Government of Gujarat. KHAMIR has been working to address some of the challenges faced by the crafts sector of Kutch.

Text: Meera Goradia (Director) and Jamie Lippman (volunteer), KHAMIR Craft Resource Centre



Deborah Thiagarajan is an art historian and founder of the Dakshinachitra Heritage Centre, a project of the Madras Craft Foundation at Chennai. She has Masters in International and Development Education and South Asian Regional Studies from USA and holds a PhD from the University of Madras. Deborah was the convener of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage, Tamil Nadu chapter for 14 years.

History of Dakshinachitra

Preserving and Promoting Heritage

DEBORAH THIAGARAJAN

ABSTRACT

Dakshinachitra is a living museum projecting the arts and crafts of South India. The centre and programmes initiated through it have acted as catalysts for generating awareness for and promoting the cultural heritage of the area, along with triggering social and economic development of the local population.

INTRODUCTION

Located on the outskirts of Chennai, Dakshinachitra is a centre dedicated to the living heritage of South India. The idea for a museum to project the arts of the South grew over many years of work and interaction with crafts persons and rural communities. The Tamil Nadu Nutrition Project hired a young anthropologist[1] and a newcomer to India in 1970, for a three year study on infant nutrition and feeding practices in western Tamil Nadu. The work and travel through the study period involved visiting the homes of many weavers and crafts persons such as woodworkers, stone carvers, jewellers, bronze icon-makers and potters. The seeds of Dakshinachitra emerged as a result of experiences through this interaction.

Kerala wooden house at Dakshinachitra

MADRAS CRAFT FOUNDATION

The 1980s reflected a very transitional phase, when people were very ambivalent about the value of their work, their sense of aesthetics and way of life. Both craft and handloom markets were largely domestic, very regional and locally based during the period. Change was barely visible, but it was evident that many of the traditions would be lost in the not so distant future. In 1984, the Madras Craft Foundation (MCF) was founded as a non-profit organisation by a few individuals who were equally concerned about the loss of heritage, with the objective of preserving, promoting and creating an awareness of the richness and diversity of the crafts, textiles, architectural crafts and performing arts of South India.

The first 12 years of MCF, preceding the establishment of Dakshinachitra in 1996 as a centre for the activities, were devoted to research and conducting public outreach events and education programmes. With a single staff member, the talented VR Devika and several volunteers, schools were approached directly and work began first with teachers and then with school children, to create awareness and appreciation of art, craft, folk performing arts and music. At that time, levels of awareness in teachers and students, regarding their own local cultural heritage were abysmally low, but their openness and receptivity to learning was high. Till that point, Indian art forms were not introduced in educational curricula and most schools had no funding to bring in outside artists, perhaps as a legacy of the education systems built by the British Empire and by Christian missionaries.

Through increasing interaction with villagers, learning from historical texts and growing dismay at the continuing degradation and lack of respect for the environment, MCF's philosophy expanded to encompass the importance of ecological awareness and of the connection of culture with ecology. Therefore classes began to be held in schools on ecology, water and the connection of ecology to culture throughout India’s history and its expression in the arts.

With funding and an invitation from the Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation (TTDC), MCF, in conjunction with Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), built a beautiful eco-friendly theatre at the Island Grounds, Madras, designed by the architect Shariar. A daily programme of folk performing arts was created by Devika. The theatre also served as a rehearsal space for Koothupattirai, a Tamil theatre group based in Chennai.

An Environment Pavilion with multiple programmes for school children was opened adjacent to the theatre.

Before Dakshinachitra was opened to the public, interaction of the MCF team with crafts persons was limited to visiting their villages and bringing them for temporary exhibitions sponsored by the Development Commissioner, Handicrafts. During these visits, the MCF began a series of comprehensive documentation of several South Indian crafts and folk performing art forms, as and when there was access to funding. With funding from the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Government of India, a detailed documentation on the vernacular architecture and architecture related crafts of the four Southern states; the pottery traditions of the South, the weaving of Real Madras Hand Kerchiefs (RMHK) from Andhra Pradesh, the woodcarving of Tamil Nadu, along with local painting traditions and tribal art was completed. A parallel, if less intensive, documentation of other local crafts such as stone carving, bronze icon making, mat weaving, Nagercoil's temple jewellery and fibre weaving and folk performing art forms was also undertaken. Throughout the years, international seminars connected with the above topics were conducted, to increase awareness of and create a multidisciplinary knowledge resource on these lesser known art forms.

BUILDING DAKSHINACHITRA

Conceptualised by Laurie Baker and implemented in the early years by Laurie Baker and later by Benny Kuriakose, Dakshinachitra serves as a platform for crafts persons and folk performing artists to showcase and market their products or their troupe to a larger public in a friendly, supportive environment. 17 historical homes from the 18th and early 19th century, representing popular vernacular styles of architecture in different regions of the four South Indian states have been relocated to this 10 acre site near the Bay of Bengal. The houses exhibit the crafts and textiles that are representative of the region they come from. The Centre also has an archive and library, an amphitheatre, a restaurant, reception centre, guesthouses, a gallery for temporary exhibitions and a full set of programmes and craft activities for young visitors.

Gita Ram introduced a small craft shop at Dakshinachitra with the directive that at least 60% and preferably 80% of the shop's merchandise would be sourced from South India and that a minimum of 20% of the merchandise would be purchased directly from the crafts persons so as to ensure that the shop would promote fair trade and benefit craft producers. Over the years, the craft shop has grown substantially and now actively financially contributes to the support of Dakshinachitra.

Dakshinachitra also developed a craft bazaar with stalls for crafts persons. In the early stages, with only 10,000 visitors, the participating crafts persons got access to a meagre market. However, a handful of them chose to work there and try and sell their products to Dakshinachitra visitors. Today, the number of visitors has crossed 120,000 and is still expanding and the craft bazaar has simultaneously gained popularity and is growing in volume.

During the initial period there were grand ideas of hosting many workshops to increase the skills of crafts persons. Over the years workshops were organised at Dakshinachitra in design and techniques for soft stone carvers, granite carvers, woodcarvers, painting on wood for woodcarvers, new methods for firing for potters, glazing on terracotta and efficient business practices for all crafts persons. Designer Chelna Desai was hired to help ikat weavers in Nalgonda District, Andhra Pradesh, to innovate new methods and designs. Another design initiative was in coconut shell carving. In a follow-up and evaluation of these workshops it was found that only a handful of the crafts persons who attended continued to experiment with the designs or techniques which had been presented in the workshops. The lessons learned by MCF from these workshops

Folk dance practice at Dakshinachitra

Terracotta deities at Ayyanar shrine, Dakshinachitra

Carvings on a door of the Chettinad House at Dakshinachitra

was that training and design intervention in craft needs sustained efforts over long periods of time with clear marketing objectives integrated simultaneously with the training.

Through the experience it was observed that the crafts persons who are generally more open to learning and going beyond their comfort zones are those who have a love of their craft and its traditions as well a strong sense of aesthetics and skills. It is important that they be given opportunities to grow, through training, exposure and a stable marketing venue. Without a stable marketing programme they will leave their craft. As it is, few crafts persons want their children to follow in their footsteps. If the traditional arts and crafts are to survive, there has to be a concerted attempt to renew the inclination to learn these skills and to make them economically viable. If they see that their ancestral skills can support their families and allow them to send their children to school, a few may follow the footsteps of their fathers and mothers.

DAKSHINACHITRA TODAY

Dakshinachitra continues with its original mission and has become a catalyst, imitated in parts by many commercial ventures. A few heritage hotels have come up but a number of heritage neighbourhoods and homes have crumbled in the meantime. Many of the earlier volunteers have started heritage projects themselves, extending the reach of heritage engagement. The main objective of Dakshinachitra continues to be educating young people in arts and ecology using the resources of the Centre as well as the villages around; looking at the evolving nature of culture and including contemporary art and contemporary issues, to highlight the different ways of perceiving the world around. With the optimism that culture and cultural institutions will grow exponentially in the next few decades, the organisation has worked for five years in extending learning opportunities to young people to become leaders in the field through its Arts Management Programme.

Dakshinachitra was funded, both in capital expenditure and in operations, by donations and grants. Today, thanks to the general acceptance of the Centre as a critical element in the cultural landscape of Chennai, it has become a self-sustainable operation. This itself speaks well for the increased interest in heritage in the city and beyond.

Notes: [1] Refers to the author.

Judy Frater is currently the Project Director of Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya, the first design school for artisans that was launched in 2005. She has conducted 39 years of field work on embroideries of Kutch. Judy has authored the award winning book, 'Threads of Identity.' She was awarded the Sir Misha Black Medal in 2009, earlier had received Fulbright, Ford and Ashoka fellowships.

Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya

Designing a sustainable future

JUDY FRATER

ABSTRACT

Addressing the need for traditional crafts to reach contemporary markets successfully and the need for artisans to participate more fully, Kala Raksha took a process oriented approach and established Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya (KRV), the first design school for artisans in Kutch. The Vidhyalaya intends to enable artisans to significantly improve their standard of living, to increase confidence of artisans in their knowledge, to increase diversity and raise the value of crafts. The article chronicles the first four years of the KRV experience of developing sustainable design for crafts and recognising the greatest asset of artisans as their creative capacity. Comments from participants illuminate the impact of changing the perspective of artisan as maker to artisan as designer or creator.

INTRODUCTION

A group of designers visiting from abroad peeped into the busy classroom. Weavers, block printers and *bandhani* artisans were finalising the layouts for their portfolios. They shuttled from the computers to the low tables, pasting up dummies, gathering feedback from each other. When they noticed the visitors, though, they put their

The campus of Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya in April 2008

work aside for the chance to glean as much as they could from the designers' worlds. One woman said that she was involved in something very similar. The artisans listened eagerly for details. She explained that she was getting great designers to give designs to crafts persons in Africa. The artisan students were quiet and their faces became small. The teacher remarked 'Actually, we are doing something very different here; the artisans are making their own designs!' This encounter illuminates two different approaches to the problem everyone recognises: how craft can be made economically viable in the contemporary market?

In the last few decades, traditional crafts have undergone tremendous change. As villagers seek mass-produced functional wares, artisans are forced to leave the intimately known local market and seek sales in anonymous distant markets. They struggle to earn wages, often lower than those for manual labour and their social status remains sadly low. The first approach to this problem is product oriented; market driven professional design emerging as an essential entity, separate from the production of craft, due to shift in consumers. The conventionally recognised solution to the artisan's struggle is 'design intervention' in which a professionally trained designer gives artisans new concepts for new markets. This approach has proven success in creating high quality products for high end markets; however, it may not be a real solution. Introduced design does not generally raise the income or social status of the artisans. In fact, it often reduces them to labourers and aggravates the problem. Moreover, the top-down solution to design innovation may dilute or diffuse the essence and strength of traditions along with the unique qualities which can enable artisans to survive in an increasingly commoditised world.

The second approach is process oriented; educating artisans to reach markets they choose. This is time consuming and labour intensive and the results are perhaps yet unproved. Yet, in terms of sustainability, process orientation is essential. On this belief, four years ago in a small village of camel herding Rabaris on the southern coast of Kutch, Kala Raksha, a grassroots social enterprise, began to experiment with an institute of design education for traditional artisans. The initiative hoped to simultaneously address the need to revitalise traditions in terms of new markets and the need for relevant education in rural sectors.

The project and the approach emerged from a decade and a half of work with traditional embroiderers in income generation and basic education. Several important lessons had already been learnt, the first being importance of relevance, followed by motivation of authenticity and the direct relationship between good wages and good work. The greatest successes of the years were hands-on. When the artisans learned how to market, knowing that it would be tested in an actual exhibition or competed to become an author of their own book, they were fully engaged. When matching grants were provided for work after the earthquake of 2001, the artisans not only worked more productively but with better quality.

Recognising the creative capability of artisans, it appeared practical to educate traditional artisans in design. Further, in terms of the survival of craft traditions, it seemed a sustainable solution. With support from the Ashoka Foundation, the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), UNESCO and private donors, Kala Raksha embarked on establishing Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya (KRV), an institution of design for traditional artisans.

The vision of the Vidhyalaya is to develop a new approach to design education based on existing traditions. One important activity is to discover, articulate and utilise the existing systems of knowledge, skills, design and innovation. The focus of the institute is on acquiring knowledge and skills that will enable artisans to use design effectively in order to successfully reach appropriate new markets, while simultaneously strengthening traditional identity. KRV intends to enable artisans to significantly improve their standard of living, socio-culturally and economically, to enhance confidence of the artisans in their knowledge, to increase diversity and the value of crafts.

It is often hard to convey to the casual listener that KRV neither teaches craft nor provides designs to artisans. With the separation of design and craft, craft has come to be seen in terms of technical skills. Concentration on technique has led to loss of vibrant diversity and resulted in a focus on labour. The only way for an artisan to earn more is to work more.

Concept, however, is equally critical to defining regional and community styles of craft. Realising that artisans as well as consumers need to understand a more sophisticated equation, in which aesthetic rather than square inches of work is valued, KRV intends to educate artisans to strengthen the conceptual basis of their traditions in order to ultimately enable higher returns for the effort. The difference between vocational training and education, as one KRV faculty member put it, is: 'Conducting a workshop is dictating; teaching a class is getting the students to think!'

The choice of a remote location for the Vidhyalaya was deliberate. The new approach required a new environment. The idea was to let the artisans have protected time and space to find inspiration from nature and their own traditions, to explore and reflect. The campus was constructed on eight acres of idyllic land by the sea, shaded by date palms, *neem* and *liyar* trees. Architect Hemen Sanghvi created studios and dormitories using antique wood and stone elements, recycled *desi* tiles, stone and lime mortar. The completely green buildings seem as if they have been there for decades, creating a comfortable space for interaction. Most importantly, they embody the concept that tradition is the foundation of innovation. Besides, dhey also provide a context for appreciation of traditional aesthetics.

The course structure and content of KRV were developed, keeping the strengths and constraints of artisans in mind and with the guidance of an advisory board of master artisans. The curriculum is designed to be practically relevant, carried out using the craft studios on campus and in the vernacular language. The year long course is structured as six intensive two week sessions, scheduled around ritual and livelihood timings, taught by visiting faculty. The students return to their homes between sessions and carry out assignments that utilise existing skills, support and

Class being held as part of the Master's programme in 2008

Learning from tradition as part of the programme, 2007

contribute to, rather than compete with their ongoing work. Mentors and the permanent faculty members visit each student during these interims to insure that they have understood the content of the course and can successfully apply it in their work. The course ends with a professional jury and a public exhibition, fair and fashion show, envisioned as an authentic and direct marketing link. KRV opened its doors on its tranquil rural campus in Tunda Vandh in November 2005 and the fourth year of classes began in January 2009. During this period, 55 artisans graduated and the organisation, the students, the artisan advisors and faculty; all concerned, learnt much about design in traditional craft in the process.

THE JOURNEY OF DESIGN EDUCATION

The fourth year of KRV began with an important milestone, the first payment of fees by artisan students. Till then, free education was being provided. Requesting fees risks opposing the deeply ingrained and ultimately debilitating practice of subsidising craft, for the benefit of sustainability and establishing value for the education provided. Nine men and 17 women began classes with this new system in place. The students were selected by interview, with only two pre-requisites: being traditional artisans and knowing their craft. Consequently ages range from 11 to 80 and the classes happily resemble artisan families.

Classes for men and women are held separately. The artisan students bring with them a variety of experiences in professional work. Some men do job work for other businesses or NGOs; some have their own family businesses. Many have had limited direct contact with clients and some have never travelled outside Kutch. Most of the men can read and write in Gujarati. For women, unlike men, the understanding of their tradition is not primarily professional. Folk embroidery, unlike other textile arts, was originally for personal use. Though commercialisation and new production techniques have been introduced in the last 30 years, women continue to embroider traditional work for themselves, making unique creations. Thus, these students bring with them experience of design process but limited commercial exposure and almost no formal education.

Students at the Kala Raksha Museum, February 2008

The first course, 'Colour, Sourcing from Nature and Heritage', has always been an epiphany. As Khimjibhai recalls, 'I had no clue we'd actually learn designing. I thought a designer would tell me what to do and I'd do it. The first few days were hard… but I never imagined such a school!' Concentrating on the many ways to see and use colour, the artisans learn to open and challenge many 'givens' in their art. They study examples in the Kala Raksha Textile Museum and discuss traditions with the KRV Advisory Board. These Master Artisans generously encourage the artisan students. 'We must study our subject, however possible,' says Alimohammed Isha. 'Tradition is appropriate to a time. It is the value of art that has to be maintained. If we want to keep craft alive, we must produce good quality rather than quantity. Make things that people want to touch and that will last 30-50 years.' The course emphasises learning to use colours in the familiar media, that is, fabric and threads. When the women are asked to arrange coloured fabrics, they enthusiastically teach their own concepts of organisation. '*Apna vishay chhe!*' (This is our subject), they proclaim. Most of all, the artisans learn to observe and see. As Kuverben said, 'Where else would I get such information? I've always embroidered but never had a chance to learn.' Another craftsperson, Hariyaben exclaimed, 'I got colours from water; that's how much capacity a person can have!'

The second course, 'Basic Design, Sourcing from Nature and Heritage', explores further the ways in which artisans can vary their traditional work, while enabling them to become conscious of the elements and principles of design that they already know. This course is used to encourage artisans to step back from concentration on technical aspects to observation of the bigger picture: composition. The success is measured by the varied responses received. 'My family has been making *ajrakh* for over 300 years but in this class I learned to appreciate that all of the principles of design are in this work', said Ahmedbhai. Another participant, Shakeelbhai, felt 'Observation is different from seeing. Here, we learned to observe. I've printed yardage. I never thought of layout. I never realised the patterns have all of the principles!'

The third course, 'Market Orientation, Costing and Concept', introduces the students to discerning and targeting different clients, to analytical thinking and

Practical learning on the loom, 2009

to choice. The students carry their understanding of 'how' to vary their work to 'why' and 'for whom'. The design problem is honed to how to shape tradition for the design conscious. The centrepiece of the course is a field trip to Ahmedabad to visit shops and meet with proprietors of craft oriented businesses. To this were later added visits to the homes of potential clients. Meeting individuals extremely inspires the artisan designers. From brief interactions and keen observation, they create stories about the people and homes they experience. When asked to create products for these people as a homework assignment, they easily break out of the usual modes of expression; clearly illustrating that craft today remains personal, a process of interaction between creator and client.

The faculty also grows from teaching artisans. According to Aditi Prakash, a designer with the Dastkari Haat Samiti, over the years, crafts persons have become accustomed to be told by designers what to do; so their response is, 'you just tell us what has to be made and we will do it.' Being a teacher helped her look at the craftsperson as an individual, in order to help build the potential of each. She sees this experience as the beginning of a process that will be fully realised over time.

Jan Baker, Faculty Rhode Island School of Design, a KRV faculty member says of her experience:

> Following my teaching experience at KRV, I visited several craftsmen. I observed that those who had participated at KRV continued their vital traditions of their families, but implementing fresh new designs. On the other hand, craftsmen who had not had the KRV experience were maintaining good craft skills but just repeating their same designs as usual. It was visibly apparent that a well thought out curriculum brought outstanding results. It made me proud to be a part of an extraordinary process. This was one of my most rewarding teaching experiences within the 30 years of my career teaching design!

Although much of the course content is based on learning the largely western based design process, there is a continual endeavour to learn, incorporate and strengthen the artisans' own methods of design and understanding of their work. The curriculum is consciously articulated in terms of known cultural concepts and work has begun on a Design Dictionary in Gujarati and Kutchi languages.

The fourth course, 'Concept, Communication and Projects', in which artisans learn to develop concepts and transform them into concrete expressions, is pivotal in the year long programme. Learning the concept of concept is itself hard work. Over the years the importance of personalising a theme has been learnt. Artisans are introduced to trend forecasts with professional theme boards, but asked to interpret them in relation to their own lives, experiences and environment. In developing motif banks, artisans tend to work in a narrative vein. A breakthrough came in year three, when the teacher asked two women who were working on 'summer' to show why the people in their drawings were sleeping. The women suddenly understood. 'Oh, not people but design!' they said. Then everyone drew suns on the blackboard, until the whole board was full and each sun was unique. Throughout the year, the artisans return to the defining aspects of their traditions. Through the process, they are encouraged to extend their own vocabularies in developing new motifs and concepts.

The students take local field trips to examine their contexts, use digital imagery and find materials to make imaginative theme boards. Most artisans resist too much paper work, but plunge joyfully into sampling in their own media; the looms, printing tables and dye baths of the studios and for women, fabric,

needles and threads. Clearly, they think in their media and explore design principles, layout and proportion through their studio work. As Azizbhai said, 'Writing, seeing and doing are all different. These should be done in proportion… But this course was a *laddu* (an Indian sweet) for a hungry man; a well for the thirsty! We know everything else; this is what we need!'

The fifth course began as 'Finishing', learning to add value with minimal cost, to increase appeal and income. But after the first final jury, it was realised that product development is a critical issue and the course was expanded to 'Finishing and Collection Development.' The artisans who attend KRV are essentially surface or textile designers. Teaching these artisans adequate product design within the year long course is not practical. Nonetheless, they need to be able to create well designed products. The solution developed by Kala Raksha was collaboration with urban design students, to enable the students learn to conceive of products and work effectively with product designers and fabricators. In this collaboration, the dynamic was changed so that the KRV students engage the urban students and are ultimately responsible for the products developed. The result is a wonderfully eye opening and respect building experience, in which everyone learns to view each other in new ways.

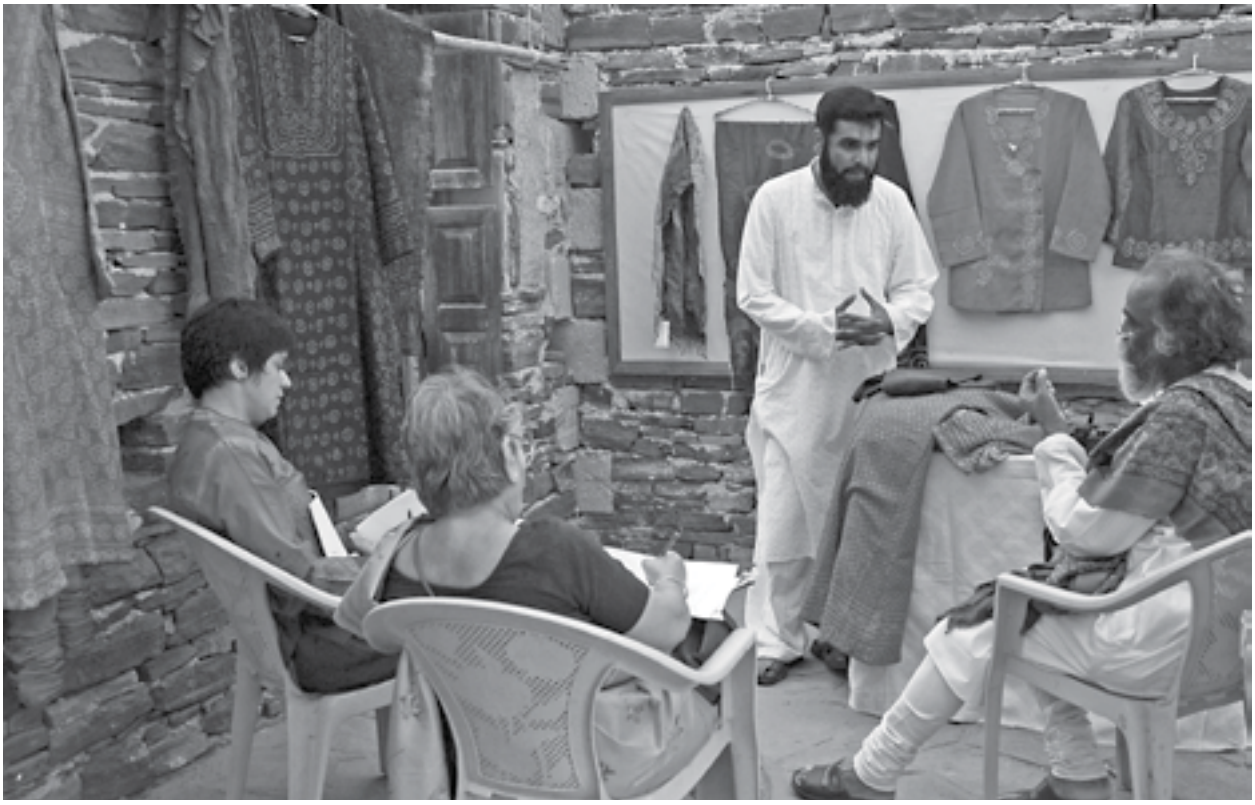
By the fifth course, both men and women learn to give constructive feedback, essential in bringing the balance of traditional aesthetics and new explorations. A sense of collegiality emerges. One special feature of KRV is the intensive on campus experience. People of different communities and religions live together and out of class interactions add to and reinforce the learning experience. Students and faculty see films at night and discuss philosophy over tea in the morning. On viewing a segment of Carl Sagan's series on Cosmos, Namoribhai reflected on the endlessness of the universe. The part on DNA memory made him aware in a new way that in nature no two individuals are ever the same. 'There is infinity of variation!' he exclaimed. In the sixth and final course, 'Merchandising and Presentation', the students learn to further enhance the value of their work through presentation. They examine brand identity and create symbols and tags for their identities. Choosing images gathered over the year, they each create a portfolio. This authentic, hands-on and useful form of review is accomplished with as much skill as enthusiasm. The project also clarifies the understanding of the importance of layout. The course includes display of final collections. After feedback on the first experience, the students rearrange their collections and to their delight the meaning of collection begins to emerge. Peer review is extended to the community, in the form of students presenting their work to revered community elders. Though nervous, they welcome the opportunity to share what they have learned in a more formal, professional way than would be possible at home. One by-product delightedly observed is the percolation of design terms and concepts to families and in turn on whole communities. Fathers and aunts of students confidently speak of themes and contrast. 'This has completely changed my concept of what an artisan is!' a guest from Srishti School of Design exclaimed. 'At Srishti we used to wonder how an artisan can be thought of as a designer. This is the answer!'

Reviewing the final presentation, the students reflected that they had now learnt the language to articulate their thoughts. 'We used to understand what we did,' they said, 'but could not express it. Now, with this tool we can also think more clearly about innovations.'

The Convocation is a magical event of celebration and transformation. As noted by one of the students, the professional feedback from a panel of craft and design experts with both academic and market experience is equal to one more important class. The public *mela* (fair) is an opportunity for students to test their work on buyers and professionals in the field. Along with educating artisans to become designers, the public must also be educated about their creativity and capacity. The fashion show has especially motivated students to work in this direction and has been an important instrument in encouraging the public to think about craft in other ways.

Demonstating concepts of colour on the computer, 2008

Final presentation, 2007



Jury being held in 2008

Fashion show, 2006

Fashion show, 2008

ACHIEVEMENTS

At the first Convocation, KRV was a little design school in a remote pristine rural land. Currently, it is much more than that. The school is an example of a way of altering the process of industrialisation of craft before it is too late.

On March 17, the author was awarded the 2009 Sir Misha Black Medal for Distinguished Services to Design Education by four bodies in the UK, including the Royal College of Art. This is the only international award for design education. Receiving the medal is a triumph for all of the artisans, advisors and staff that established Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya. The concept of the institute came from listening to artisans and believing in them. Its success comes from nurturing the creative capacity of the individual. Ashoke Chatterjee, Honorary Past President of the Crafts Council of India, has said of the project:

> Nothing like this has ever happened before. Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya offers a genuine context for re-vitalising craft tradition in a contemporary setting... it provides a process of learning that goes beyond literacy.

The work of graduates from KRV may not yet equal that of the designer working in Africa, but certainly they have the knowledge, skills and confidence to adapt and will strive toward reaching new markets and raising their income levels. When the year finished, Sohelbhai reflected on the experience with the aforementioned designer. He said, 'I realised that the importance of Kala Raksha is that it respects us as creative people. This will insure the perpetuation of our craft.' This sentiment is echoed by other students as well. Dayalalbhai, a 2008 graduate said 'After completing the course at KRV, the fears I had about the survival of our craft in the industrial market place are gone.' In the words of Damyantiben, another 2008 graduate: 'I had no dreams till I came here. At KRV we can learn to innovate and present ourselves. I can teach what I learned, that is development.' Deviben, a graduate from the 2006 Batch said: 'I only went to fourth grade, but now I feel educated. I learnt how to talk, how to write… I was able to correct what one mentor wrote on the blackboard! We can correct each other because we have reached a level of education.' The fundamental change in the way the students viewed and presented themselves is made apparent by a statement by Bhagvatiben, a KRV 2007 alumnus, while addressing a group of development professionals at UNDP, Delhi, 'My name is Bhagvati. I am from Sumrasar and I am a designer.'

In 2008, the male graduates of Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya formed, Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya Artisan Designers Association (KARVADA), the Alumni Association of Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya. Six of 24 male graduates have gone on to start their own businesses. Many have received substantial orders on their new work. Ten women have been employed on a salary basis by Kala Raksha as design interns. Nearly all graduates have served as mentors. This fundamental change in awareness, self respect and confidence is Kala Raksha's contribution to cultural sustainability.

(Above) Khurja pottery. (Middle) Mohenjodaro seal. (Left) Blue pottery, Jaipur

Pottery

Traditions and variations

AJIT D NAGPURKAR

The crafts of pottery, earthenware or terracotta are amongst the first examples of man's creation as he started shaping and designing objects out of earth. Realising the power of motion, the potters wheel, may perhaps be the first machine man invented. Similarly, as he found fire, the clay objects were fired and thus the craft of terracotta came up. There is evidence of use of mould for producing clay objects during the Harappan period in the later half of third millennium BC and moulded bricks find mention in ancient texts from the Vedic period. The degree of skills and aesthetic quality of the earthen wares found in excavations are parameters for dating or assessing civilisations as a tool in archaeology.

In India, pottery has been significant over the ages, due to associated rituals and religious value. The pot is called a *mangal ghat* (sacred vessel) and when filled with water, it is symbolic of a deity. Even today, there is a vast domestic use of earthen wares in the form of lamps, water pots, plant pots, flower vases and pots and bowls for cooking and serving food. The raw materials and processes (drying, firing, glazing and painting) used in various parts of the country show a lot of regional variation, which in turn results in special characteristics in the final products from a particular region.

In the techniques of making pottery, there are certain parameters, such as the proportion of water, time required for soaking clay, drying and firing, the temperature at which degree to fire, glazing, polishing, decorations, that are observed just by judgment based on practice. The experiences in every batch at every centre vary and accordingly the end product varies. For example, if a lump of clay is taken for giving a shape, the next lump from the same batch of clay may have different moisture content. Thus the variation and non standardisation is the mainstay for earthen wares as they are still produced in unbroken succession.

Ajit D Nagpurkar is a management consultant based in Mumbai and has been in the publishing industry for over 17 years. Coming from a family of artists, Ajit is a sculptor in clay, plaster and stone and has worked as a crafts expert on a US based website.

Gangajal pot, Gujarat, used for magic tricks due to its unique double base

Traditional lamp, Gujarat

Hand paint pottery, Maharashtra

Types of raw materials used and characteristics of products in certain locations in India

Location	Raw material	Characteristics
Delhi	Powdered quartz with gum	Glazed Blue pottery, glazed and toughened by firing, painted with Persian blue dye.
West Bengal	Red clay	Terracotta, lamp and idols of deities and many more items
Rampur (Uttar Pradesh)	Red clay glazed with uniform blue or green colour	*Surahis* (glazed water pots)
Meerut and Hapur (Uttar Pradesh)	Red clay	Pots capped with weirdly shaped spouts, typical in special floral patterns
Chinhat and Mausalia (Uttar Pradesh)	Red clay	Glazed wares, mostly table wares and other domestic articles
Nizamabad and Azamgarh (Uttar Pradesh)	Red clay	Vegetable colours used, dark lustrous background with silver designing
Kangra (Himachal Pradesh)	Black or dark red clay	Dark, rich looking; typical products are *gidya* (a jug for milk), *patri* (bowl for curd or butter) and *narele* (tobacco smoking pot)
Khanapur, Belgaum Dist. (Karnataka)	Very good quality local clay	Thin pottery and large sized containers, designs are etched or stamped on the body
Vellore, North Arcot (Tamil Nadu)	Black and Red Clay	Black and red glazed decorative pots
Usilampatti, Madurai Dist. (Tamil Nadu)	Black clay	Black pottery with yellow designs
Karigiri, South Arcot (Tamil Nadu)	Semi vitreous white low fusing china clay with high plasticity known as *namakatte*	Artistic pottery, variety of table wares
Pondicherry	White china clay	Moulded pottery, fired at high temperature
Karukurichi, Tirunelvelli (Tamil Nadu)	Red, grey and black clay	Technically superior, novel shapes, many items. Looks brighter after a coating of red ochre
Kutch and Saurashtra (Gujarat)	White clay	Soft white pottery, rich in designs with bead work, various motifs used spontaneously in painting (dots, strips, zigzags and diagonals also used)
Banaskantha (Gujarat)	White clay	Skilfully decorated, artistic water pots
Vidi (Gujarat)	White clay	Soft white pottery, noted for beautiful earthen wares in varieties such as lamps and pyramids of pots for marriage ceremony
Jaipur (Rajasthan)	Egyptian paste, composition of quartz, raw glaze, sodium sulphate and the local multani clay for making slip. Typical turquoise blue obtained by mixing crude copper oxide with salt or sugar	Blue pottery (originated in Persia). Only the neck and lip are shaped on the wheel. Well decorated with motifs of birds and animals, semi-transparent, with small sized mouths of water pots.
Srinagar (Kashmir)	Ordinary local clay	Glazed table wares, designs have cracks, typical product is *hukka* base made in large variety and shapes
Maharashtra	Red clay in Konkan area and river side black clay otherwise	Pots for storage of water, grains, lamps and other earthen wares for religious purposes such as idols, *sugdi* or *karve* (mud pots), bull and snake for worshipping on specific festivals such as Shravan Amavasya and Nagpanchami
Goa	Rich red and dark good quality clay	Rich red, velvety surface

Shapes in pottery, Uttar Pradesh

Jaipur blue pottery

Pot from Uttar Pradesh

Flower pot, Khurja, Uttar Pradesh

Old plate blue pottery, Jaipur

Pottery from Khurja, Uttar Pradesh

Decorative pottery, Gujarat

Tonk Calligraphy

KANIKA GUPTA

(Left) Keeping scripts alive, Mohammad Khursheed Alam's work. (Top) Illumination and calligraphy on parchment and animal hide, Mumtaz Ali's work

The land once called the Princely State of Tonk is at present a completely malformed location, forgotten to places better kept on part of historical evidences of crucial art or craft reminiscent. Tonk thrived through the craft of Islamic Calligraphy that found its way with Nawab Aamir Mohammad Khan, the founder of Tonk. Attracting calligraphers from all over the world, Tonk soon became a hub of Islamic Calligraphy. During the rule of the Nawab's, Tonk produced calligraphers are still revered for their contribution to Islamic Calligraphy with astonishingly beautiful calligraphic pieces, now in possession with various museums across India. With the decline of the Nawabi rule, the craft suffered neglect due to lack of patronage. Due to persistent efforts of some notable authorities and the government, the Arabic and Persian Research Institute (APRI) was established in Tonk in year 1978 in order to support the revival of the dying craft. With novel creative ideas, Tonk is now witnessing a recent upsurge in the amount of calligraphy work contributed all over India from this small region of Rajasthan.

Tonk has developed a very distinct style of calligraphy. The major reason for this is firstly the inheritance of the style of miniature paintings, especially Mughal School of miniatures and secondly a fusion of Rajasthani traditions of colour and decoration with styles of Islamic calligraphy. There is a lot of decoration in the calligraphy artworks from Tonk and a major use of colours, especially golden. The border works known as illumination works are a signature style of this place, without which the calligraphers do not consider their artwork complete. There is tremendous

Illumination and calligraphy on parchment and animal hide by Mumtaz Ali

Contemporising calligraphy, work of Quari Mutiullah

Quari Salimullah Wasifi's work

Mohammad Khursheed Alam's work

use of natural colours and also in the past were used colours made out of precious gems and stones. Though chemical colours are slowly taking over and no one has enough money to invest in precious stones, some natural colours are still in use. Another characteristic feature of Tonk calligraphy is experimentation with material. Handmade paper, animal skin (goat), *jhilli* (parchment), hide and even ageing of paper, are all extensively being used by calligraphers here. Both these features observed in calligraphy are specific to this place and are not observed anywhere else in India.

Tonk has kept alive Islamic Calligraphy and evolved it through experimentation by the calligraphers in new media and styles. Influences from Mughal and Iranian styles along with the inherent Rajasthani style have encouraged the calligraphers, as has recognition from within and beyond the country. Working with a number of challenges, the practitioners of the craft have continued to evolve calligraphy in various ways and pass on the knowledge system along with the reverence and dedication towards it to their future generations. Perceiving threats from the advent of the computer age and lack of awareness, they have attempted a number of possible solutions to save the dying craft.

Kanika Gupta is a graduate from the National Institute of Fashion Technology, New Delhi with a specialisation in photography and styling. She has made two documentary films, 'Alif' and 'Sunehri Syahi' on Islamic Calligraphy, the latter funded by Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage, New Delhi.

Illumination and calligraphy by Mumtaz Ali

Contemporising calligraphy, Quari Mutiullah Nawab's work. (Right) Ghulam Ahmad's work

Crafts of Karnataka

INDU RAMESH

(Above) Puppets made according to Kinhal tradition. (Left) 48" high mysore stone Ganesha, carved by Ganesh Bhat in Hoysala style.

Karnataka is a state rich in natural resources, blessed with a moderate climate, home of sandalwood, ivory, ancient temples carved in stone, more importantly, a benevolent royal family that encouraged the crafts of the state. Some crafts of Karnataka in the present day context have been discussed to get an overview of the craft scenario specific to the state.

Belur, Halebid and Shravanabelagola exemplify the craft of stone sculpture prevalent in the state for more than three thousand years. Patronised by the Chalukya and Hoysala kings, the abundance of granite and soapstone and the practice of building temples has kept this craft alive. A training centre in Bidadi near Bangalore, set up by the Canara Bank is an initiative promoting the traditional knowledge transfer system, for sustaining the craft.

Karnataka is known for its wood craft on sandalwood, rosewood and teak. The craft that was earlier used to sculpt images of gods and goddesses, intricate designs on doors and screens and even cots, is entirely dependent on customer demand today. Rosewood inlay is still very popular, especially in the Middle East. Persian and Arabic letterings can now be seen on the inlayed pieces. Unfortunately Ivory which was used predominantly in the olden days is banned and the crafts persons are resorting to bones, even coloured stones and plastic for inlay.

Kinhal, a tiny village in the northern district of Koppala in Karnataka has a craft tradition of making wooden articles, handed down through generations, whose history goes back to the Vijaynagara period. The craft practised by the closely knit community of Chitragaars is a commercially successful activity today.

Channapattana is a town, 60 kilometres from Bangalore that has been famous for its wooden toys for at least a century. The royal family of the old Mysore state encouraged this craft and many articles were produced for the various palaces. In the beginning of the 19th century, the craft emerged as a family oriented enterprise.

Chittara, an agrarian craft of decorating baskets and painting doors and windows with pictures using traditional material, is practiced in the village of Sullur. Individual crafts persons have diversified the craft by producing book marks, visiting cards, invitations, greeting cards and calendars embellished with the craft.

Baby Krishna sculpted by Ganesh Bhat. He teaches at a training centre established outside Bangalore, continuing the traditional Gurukul type of training

48" high Chalukya style Kubera shell in stone carved by Ganesh Bhat

Basket and clay pot with Chittara decoration

Winnow decorated with Chittara artwork

Banjara woman of Lambani community working on embroidery, dressed in her tribal attire

Narayanappa Chitragaar of Kinhal, Koppala working on wooden puppets. The craft is threatened as the youth is reluctant in following the craft tradition

Ganesh Bhat working on details in stone sculpture

Kamadhenu, sculpture in traditional style, carved by Ganesh Bhat on request of British citizens. This was in response to large scale extermination of cows due to the spread of Mad Cow Disease in England.

The womenfolk of Lambani community (earlier a nomadic tribe) concentrated in the arid Bellary district are adept at embroidery using coloured threads, mirrors and patch work. Organised in to self help groups, the women are now trained and produce articles of everyday life like bags, cushion covers, purses and wall hangings. The craft is doing well because the craftswomen are aware of the fashions and are able to cater to the younger generation.

Bidriware is a craft taken up mainly by the Muslim artisans of Bidar in North Karnataka. Called Damascening in Silver, the craft was introduced some 400 years ago by the then King Ahmad Shah Bahamani. The basic black materials used are zinc, copper, silver and a particular type of earth found only in the fort in Bidar. Today, about 175 types of articles are manufactured in Bidriware, including goblets, ash trays, boxes, cuff links, ear rings, necklaces, caskets, table lamps, cigarette cases and decorative figure plates.

The crafts of Karnataka have been supported by the Crafts Council of Karnataka that regularly organises workshops and training programmes for crafts persons. The Council, along with State Handicrafts Corporation and Cottage Industries Development Board also provides a channel for marketing of the craft items. Hence, the crafts of the state, guided by consumer demand and supported by government and non government initiatives, have been able to maintain continuity through innovation and partnerships.

Indu Ramesh graduated from the Maharaja's College, Mysore in 1958. She joined All India Radio in 1963, has been working for more than three decades in different places and capacities.

Chittara work used as a wall hanging. A market for the craft has been created through diversification

Dronah is an interdisciplinary organisation constituted by highly motivated professionals from various fields who share a vision for a better quality of life – one that is sustainable, environmentally sensitive and draws on the contemporary without foregoing the strengths of the traditional. It is our aim to actively promote sustainable development through conservation, utilisation of traditional practices and modern technologies, knowledge sharing and mutual interaction. The organisation is focussed on conservation and development of the built heritage, environment; and art and crafts with the involvement of local community, in addition to being engaged in documentation and educational activities.

Rs.250 / USD 20