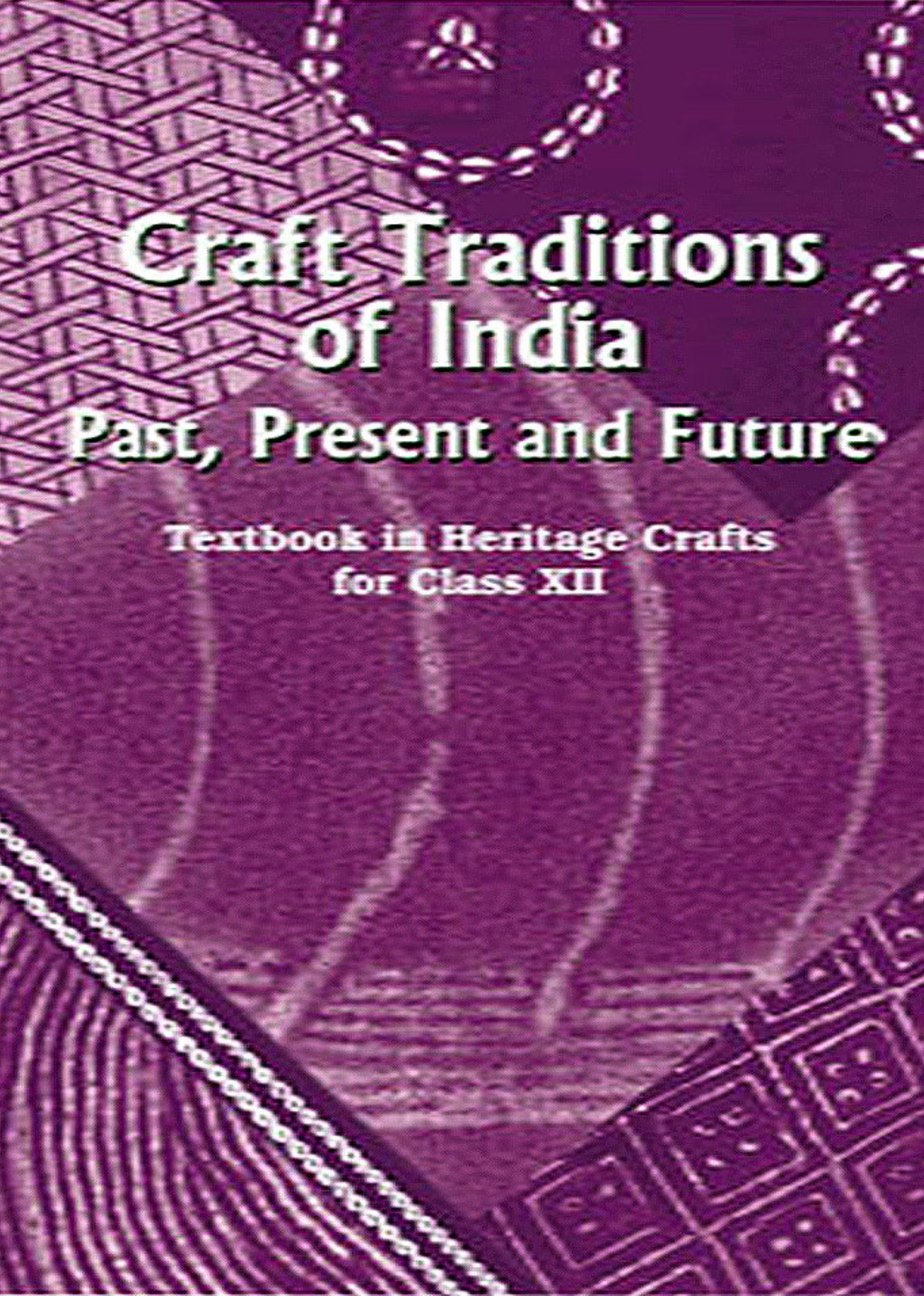
Craft Traditions
of India
Past, Present and Future
Textbook in Heritage Crafts
for Class XII

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for Class XII

राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING

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UNIT I
Overview of the Past


Kumbhakar
Kumbhakar is the ever-busy potter, who, like his forefathers, creates wondrous shapes, from simple water pots to entire temples, out of clay. He fulfills the needs of a largely traditional population...

1 CRAFTS IN THE PAST

Let us begin by understanding the myriad roles a craftsperson plays in the society as a designer, a problem-solver, a creator and as an innovator, leave alone the maker and seller of craft objects. The craftsperson therefore is not just the maker of an object, and a craft object is not just a beautiful thing—it has been created to serve a particular function to meet a specific need of a client.

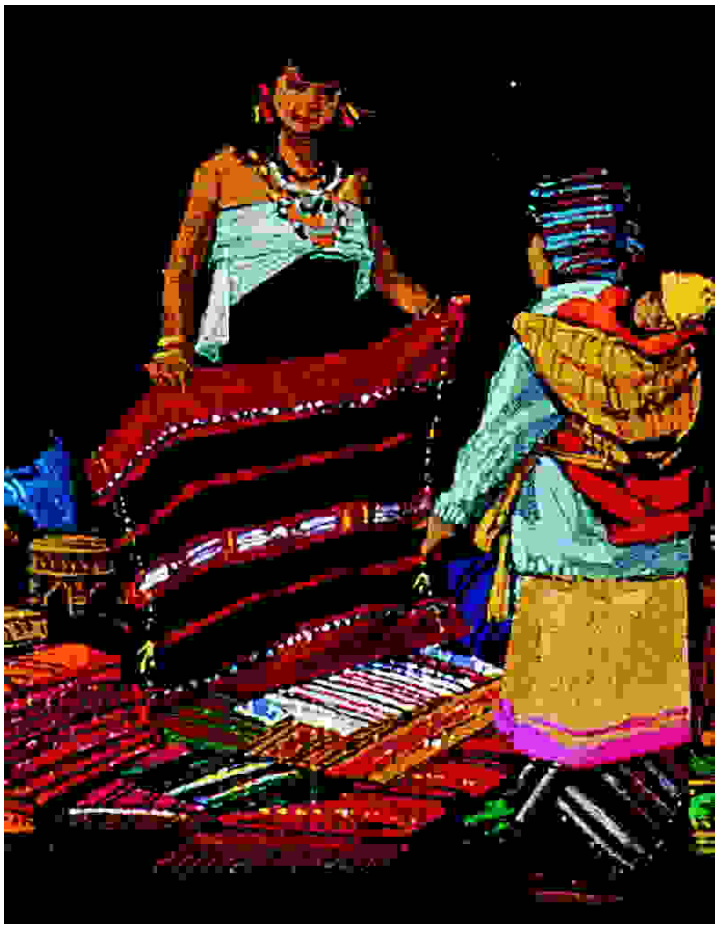
For instance, the client or the consumer may ask the craftsperson to make him/her a cup which he/she can comfortably hold and from which sip a hot drink. The craftsperson, in this case, a ceramicist, will design a cup with a handle comfortable to hold, and shape the cup in such a way that it is neither too heavy nor too big.

In this example you can see that the client has given the craftsperson a problem to solve—to make a cup for a hot drink. The craftsperson has found a good solution to the problem by designing a cup with a handle. The design elements in this case are the handle, the shape of the cup, its weight and a suitable size to make it comfortable to use. If the cup is pleasing to look at, that would be an additional benefit and we could say that the cup designed by the craftsperson is also aesthetically pleasing. The critical factor, however, is not the motifs and decoration on the cup, but rather the craftsperson's skill in finding appropriate and innovative solutions to the client's problem.



RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CLIENT AND CRAFTSPERSON

There are three important factors to be considered in this case: (i) the client and his/her needs, (ii) the nature of the problem to be solved, and (iii) the craftsperson who is skilled and innovative enough to find a solution to the problem. Close exchange between the client and the craftsperson is very important for the end product to be appropriate. The client has to inspire the craftsperson to produce, innovate and create new and exciting objects all the time. The craftsperson, in turn, needs to understand the demand of the client. If the client orders a hundred *diyas* for Diwali every year, the order is quite routine and boring. Should the client ask for one stand with a hundred *diyas* instead, the potter has to work out how to make a stand that will hold a hundred *diyas* and still be easy to transport, to be repeatedly filled with oil and so on. Therefore the relationship between the client and the craftsperson is vital.



A craftsperson therefore has a very important set of skills by which he/she can design, invent, solve problems, create, and sell. Every country in the world needs such people who are skilled in creating practical, efficient solutions to everyday problems. Craftspersons skilled in fabricating with different materials, and communities who can constantly innovate and design new products to meet changing needs are necessary in all societies, ancient or modern. For instance, the everyday problem of having to carry large quantities of water over long distances was uniquely solved in Kutch—the *matkas* (water pots) fit into one another and can be balanced on the head of a woman, leaving her hands free!

Similarly, today we appreciate the talent of a person who designs a new computer application, or makes a breakthrough in technology.

In this chapter you will see that India has always had a large community of innovative craftspeople from the earliest periods of recorded history. It was the crafts communities of different regions who designed homes for the poor and the rich that suited the climate, built places of worship for any god that the community wished to worship, who made cooking utensils that simplified food preparation, created items for the home, and for people to wear, like textiles for different occasions and varying climates, and jewellery of all kinds.

Crafts for Problem-solving

Whenever you look at a craft item try and discover what problem the craftsperson has solved and, what the client may have asked for. You will recall that in the textbook, *Exploring Indian Craft Traditions—Field Study and Application in Heritage Crafts*, the first chapter, 'Crafts at Home', was a detailed exposition of the design aspects of the *lota* by Charles Eames.

Living Bridges

Here is how a curious problem was solved in Meghalaya, where the climate is hot and humid most of the year, where Cherrapunji was once the wettest place on earth. They needed bridges over their little streams and rivers so that people could cross with their belongings and animals. As you know, bridges around the world are built of wood, steel and concrete. However, in Meghalaya they could not use wood because it would rot, nor could they use metal of any kind or metal nails as these would rust. The problem was how to make a strong bridge across fast-moving rivers without wood or metal?

The solution they found is ingenious, brilliant and so useful! They learnt how to train the aerial roots of the Ficus Elastica tree to form a living bridge across the river that would not decay or deteriorate in the humid rainy climate. Over several years they had to train, bind and care for their bridge as it linked across the stream, then they placed flat stones on the cradle-like bridge to create an even footpath. This living bridge of roots lasts years and uses no dead wood or metal!

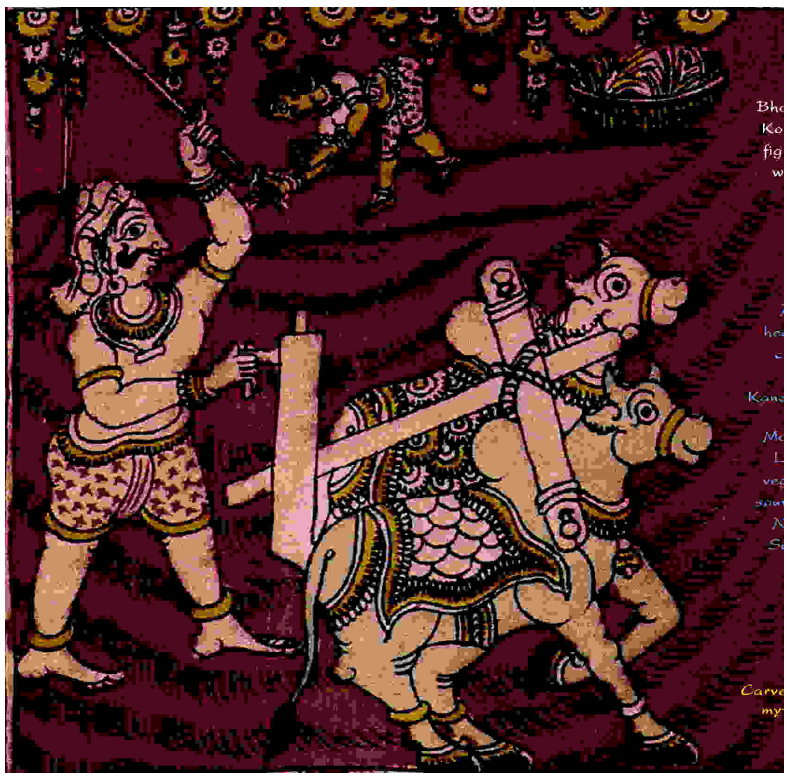


When we say that India has a long and ancient tradition of crafts we mean that we always had creative and innovative people who found interesting ways of solving problems.

> *The crafts and craftspeople of India are a deeply integrated part of folk and classical traditions and historical assimilations which together span many millennia. As articles made purely by hand for the daily use of both the common people in an agrarian economy and the urban elite, crafts reflect the cultural ethos of India. While the craftspeople have been cradled by the caste system, their skills were fostered by cultural and religious needs and the impetus provided by local, national and international trade.*
>
> –JAYA JAITLY
> *Visvakarma's Children*

CRAFTS SPECIALISATION

In India, as in most other parts of the world, the artisan as a specific social group emerged only when people began to settle and cultivate the land. While most people in these communities would busy themselves with



actually carrying out the various activities related to tilling the soil, a few began to specialise in different crafts. Some would make containers with straw, reed or clay to hold agricultural produce, another would make footwear, yet another would specialise in iron-mongering to create scythes and sickles, and yet another in the manufacture of cloth from flax and cotton.





Even today, in India, handicrafts form an alternative source of earning an income, providing the backbone of the economy for many communities. The rural craftsperson can easily plan his/her production schedule according to the local agricultural calendar and the seasons of the year. Craft production can be organised in those months when agricultural activity is low thus providing additional income to the family. Many women work at their crafts in their spare time, after completing their housework. In recent years there has also been a tremendous increase in the number of people turning once again to their traditional craft as their sole means of income. However, others only supplement their earnings with their handicraft products. This economic factor greatly contributes to the continuation and the alteration of the character and the production of the same craft, i.e., to make it market-friendly.

By the time of the Indus Valley Civilisation (3000–1500 BCE), a developed urban culture had emerged that stretched from Afghanistan to Gujarat. Here archaeologists have found votive figures of clay as well as clay seals, beads made of semi-precious stones, garments of cotton and earthenware of all shapes, sizes and design, all of which indicate a sophisticated artisan culture. The crafts community also worked out simple solutions to take waste water out of the houses by creating clay pipes. The waste water was carried by the drainage system under the city streets, and out of the city. To supply water to everyone in the city, builders and masons dug wells in the courtyard of every house. Five thousand years ago specialised crafts communities answered social needs and requirements with ingenuity and practical solutions that enhanced the lives of the people.



The Sangam classics written between 100 BCE–600 CE refer to the weaving of silk and cotton cloth. Weavers were already a recognised and established section of society with separate streets for them named *karugar vidi* or *aruval vidi*. In both the Chola and Vijayanagar empires (ninth to twelfth century) the weavers lived around the temple complex, weaving fabrics to dress the idols, drape as curtains, clothe the priests and the people of the locality, as well as to cater to trade from across the sea.

The manufacture of textiles was concentrated in three areas: Western India, with Gujarat, Sindh and Rajasthan as its focus; South India, in particular the Coromandel Coast; and Eastern India including Bengal, Orissa and the Gangetic plain. Each of these areas specialised in producing specific fabrics and specific motifs. There is evidence that various forms of economic organisation and methods of integrating craft production into the macro-system of the economy existed at different points in Indian history.

SHRENIS OR TRADE GUILDS

The *Ramayana* and many plays from the Gupta period and Tamil Sangam literature write in detail about the trade guilds or *shrenis*. These were professional bodies of jewellers, weavers, ivory carvers or even salt-makers who came together to control quality production, create a sound business ethic, maintain fair wages and prices, sometimes operated as a cooperative and controlled the entry of newcomers by laying down high standards of craftsmanship and enforcing rules regarding apprenticeship.

Each guild had its own chief, assisted by others. These functionaries were selected with great care. Guild members were even entitled to impeach and punish a chief found guilty of misconduct.

The *shrenis* were not necessarily restricted to a locality, and were known to move from one town to

another, over a period of time. Occasionally, *shrenis (*of merchants and artisans) came together in a joint organisation, called the *nigama,* or the equivalent of a chamber of commerce and industry. Some *nigamas* also included a class of exporters, who transported the specialities of a town over long distances, and sold them at higher margins of profit than those they could obtain locally. By all accounts, the *shrenis* were very sound and stable institutions, and enjoyed considerable moral and social prestige not only among their own members, but in society at large. This conclusion is borne out by their records, preserved in inscriptions all over North and South India.

The institution of guilds came under severe strain over the last five centuries. Writing in 1880, Sir George Birdwood observed, "Under British rule... the authority of the trade guilds in India has necessarily been relaxed, to the marked detriment of those handicrafts the perfection of which depends on hereditary processes and skill".

Artisans' guilds are almost unheard of in India today. The cooperatives promoted by the government, may be viewed as the modern avatar of artisans' guilds, but their success, so far, has been limited.

The Social Dimensions of Craft Production

The bulk of craft production in India, until the colonial period, was for the immediate rural market, and craft items were produced in small units using very little capital. Since heredity determined the artisan's choice of trade in most cases, the family naturally developed as the work unit, with the head of the family as the master-craftsman, providing the necessary training to other family members.



The *Arthashastra* of Kautilya (written in the third century BCE) makes a distinction between two types of artisans: the master craftsperson who employed a number of artisans on a wage to do the actual work for the customer and the artisans who financed themselves, and worked in their own

workshops. Artisans were remunerated either in kind or in cash. Nevertheless, in those areas where the use of money had not been introduced, service relationships and exchanges in kind may have existed. It is likely that the *jajmani* system evolved from these service relations.

THE *JAJMANI* SYSTEM

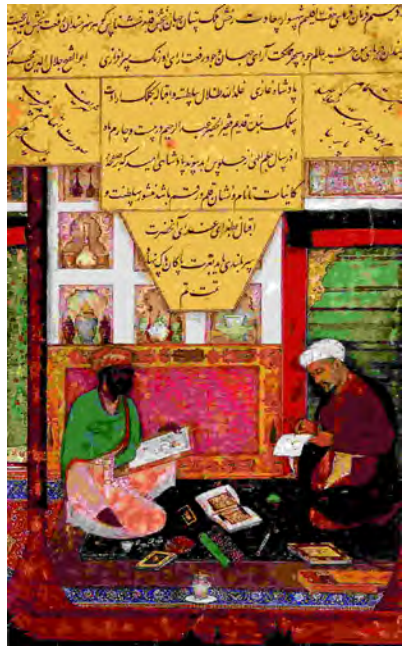
In many parts of India the *jajmani* system defined most of the transactions in the craft sector. The *jajmani* system is a reciprocal arrangement between craft-producing castes and the wider village community, for the supply of goods and services. The caste system did not permit the upper castes to practise certain occupations. As a result the patrons or *jajman* were dependent on *purjans* (cultivators, craftsmen, barbers, washermen, cobblers, sweepers, etc.) to provide essential goods and services for the village/urban economy. In return a fixed payment in kind was assured. This could be rent-free land, residence sites, credit facilities, food or even dung! Since most upper-caste people owned land, the *jajmani* system provided them with a stable supply of labour. Today



this system still holds sway over several parts of the country, though colonialism, competition, better communications and improved civil laws have all transformed it in their own ways.

In the Sultanate and Mughal empires of North India *karakhanas* (factories) were maintained by the State. This practice was followed by several other Indian rulers of the same period.

The slow decline of the Mughal empire meant a loss of patronage for the highly specialised crafts of shawl-making, stone-carving, jewellery, *meenakari*, luxury textiles, and miniature painting. In search of royal clients, craftsmen moved away from the Mughal court to find employment all over the kingdoms of Rajasthan (Jaipur, Udaipur and Jodhpur in particular), in the Deccan and in Bengal. But much of this was to change with the advent of colonialism.



The Mughals found on arrival in India that indigenous Indian art was as decorative as the arts of China, Iran and Central Asia. Since the number of foreign craftspeople coming to India was small, they depended largely on the skills of local people and the products that emerged from their work were neither imitations of foreign forms nor a mere continuation of Indian ideals. The Indian factor, however, became fairly strong in Mughal art and Emperor Akbar was a particularly keen patron. The *Ain-i-Akbari* tells us that the Emperor maintained skilled craftsmen from all over India. Akbar personally inspected the work of his men and honoured the best with bonuses and increased salaries. Special types of armour, gilded and decorated weapons, royal insignia, and a vast range of woven and embroidered textiles were commissioned for the royal household as well as for gifts. The shawls of Kashmir received a new lease of life, while the artisans of Rajasthan and Delhi made the finest court jewellery.

Fine handicrafts were the most sought after objects of high Mughal society. The emperor, his family and the nobility were its principal patrons and it was the indigenous artisan working in Mughal workshops who contributed substantially to the aesthetic character of the designs, bringing to his art a tradition of ideas and attitudes.

– Jaya Jaitly
Visvakarma's Children

TREASURE TROVES OF INDIAN CRAFTS

It would be interesting and instructive to compare and contrast craft products of different materials as they were produced in the past with those of today. To see wonderful examples of crafts of the past you could visit museums that have specialised crafts collections. There are fabled royal collections of art treasures, archives and memorabilia housed in palaces throughout India that will give you an idea of what a famous tradition of crafts existed in India through the millennia.

In the past 150 years over 700 museums have been established in India. Of these there are a few specialised crafts museums. Each of these has a different focus — concentrating on one craft, a single person's collection governed privately, or those established by the government. Information on some of these have been provided in the Annexure. Amongst the most famous of these museums are the National Handicrafts and Handlooms Museum (Crafts Museum), New Delhi; Ashutosh Museum, Kolkata; Calico Museum, Ahmedabad; Utensils Museum, Ahmedabad; Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad; Dinkar Kelkar Museum, Pune; and Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal.



EXERCISE

1. Investigate and find an example of an innovative design solution to an everyday problem devised by craftspersons in your vicinity. It could be adding a tap to a *matka*, creating a sequence of bangles aesthetically linked together so that they do not need to be individually worn, etc. Describe the 'problem' and the creative design innovation and purpose.
2. Through conversation with local artisans record a short 'oral history' of the development of a craft in your neighbourhood. Describe the evolution of craft products to meet contemporary needs.
3. Investigate the concept of crafts as a seasonal or part-time activity in the working pattern of craftspeople in your neighbourhood. How many are fulltime, part-time, seasonal? Make a table/pie chart of the same.
4. Make a list of crafts in your state that
   - are made by specialised crafts communities;
   - bring additional income to agricultural communities;
   - are made exclusively by women;
   - are made by men;
   - are made by a single artist;
   - are made by groups of craftspeople.
5. Describe how you would set up a museum corner for your school.
6. Explain why you think there should be a crafts museum in every state and whether it should have an all India perspective or focus on those local crafts that are disappearing.



d in June-July at Puri.
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artisans make golden grass mats, baskets, small boxes and sell at weekly markets called haats and at fairs organised by the government.

Baliapal in Balasore famous for mats woven on looms.

In Ganjam (now Gajapati) there are mat makers, and carvers of betel nut. They make small intricately carved containers, miniature statuettes. Large variety of baskets of all sizes for all purposes. Most shops and stalls in haats and melas use a variety of baskets as shelves for display. Local ice sellers sell their spices in baskets. Toys and weets for children come packed in baskets at shops and temples. Bird cages and conical fishing baskets are also popular.

There is a hardy grass abundant in drought prone areas called sabai used for baskets, mats and furniture. Sabai grass rope is woven intricately on bamboo Balangir & Baliapal in Balasore.

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Paddy, Leather, Paper & Beads

Craftspersons string fresh paddy together to make intricate paddy crafts including jewellery boxes, in the shape of auspicious coconut shells to celebrate the new harvest.

In Dasapalla craftspersons make leather belts, purser, bags and shoes.

Ornaments are made with terracotta, brass and bell metal, dhokra and lacquer beads. Also ornaments made from silver coins, copper, brass beads in Dhenkenal.

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Silver work &

The craftsmen of the Swarnakara a
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Silver filigree work is a famous tradition
lacy ornaments, boxes, toys made with
popular.

Silversmiths live in Cuttack where the
shops which sell intricate weblikene
frames, boxes, earrings, brooches an
Ganjam has silversmiths who mak
so skillfully assembled as to make it
Tribal jewellery include Kiapatri
screw-pine plant), Jhara Kathi (a
pendant chains), Bakra-Deunar
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Woodw

In Puri craftsm
These masks
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In Bhubaneshwar and
craftsmen make beautiful woode
used in Sahi Yarra, a form of pro
representing characters from the Ram
Headgear for these masks are intri
sholapith (bamboo pith) and zari, (tin
These head gear are made by s
carvers living near Puri. Danda Nata
folk theatre form used the hollo
wooden horse - called "Chait
Ghoda" with Painted head and
cloth body. It is said that once the Chhau dance was also
part of Danda Natak. This form also uses wooden masks

2 COLONIAL RULE AND CRAFTS

When you see the wonderful displays in the crafts museums of India you will not be surprised to learn that crafts formed a major part of our exports throughout history. In fact, India's crafts communities produced such fine and artistic objects that merchants travelled from far to acquire these goods. Seventeenth century courtly patronage, trade, the *jajmani* system and the demand for everyday utility crafts by the rural population (until the second half of the seventeenth century), resulted in a steady home market and a worldwide reputation for Indian crafts.

Tavernier, a French traveller in Mughal India, states that the Ambassador of the Shah of Persia (CE 1628–1641), on his return from India, presented his master with a coconut shell, set with jewels, containing a muslin turban thirty yards in length, so exquisitely fine that it could scarcely be felt by the touch.

Trade

India has had a long history of trade in craft with other countries beginning from the Harappan Civilisation 5000 years ago. Over the centuries, trade with Greece and Rome grew and historical evidence can be found in literature and archaeological excavations. Flourishing trade led to overland routes like the Silk Route and brought silk from China through Asia into Europe. There are accounts of caravans, and



traders speaking different languages, meeting at trading stations along the route. Ship-building centres and ports developed along India's long coastline. Sea routes to the Mediterranean countries, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, South-east Asia and China are mentioned both in Sangam literature and foreign accounts.

By the time of the Mauryan empire (300 BCE) traders and craftsmen groups, who had become wealthy and powerful through trade, were able to donate substantially for the building of Buddhist monasteries. There were carpenters and blacksmiths, jewellers and goldsmiths, weavers and dyers, perfumers and stone carvers among others. Constant trade with the Middle East and South-east Asia was already an important cornerstone of the economy.

In the area of textiles, to South-east Asia we exported sarongs, to the Middle East went the finest and most expensive muslins, to West Africa went Christian altar fronts, to Europe silk and woollen fabrics, dress



materials and bed-hangings. All these fabrics were considered 'luxury goods' in these countries.

The pattern of trade from the Coromandel Coast was triangular. Arabs carried gold and silver (bullion) to the Coromandel Coast, exchanged these for textiles, and then exchanged the latter in Malaysia for spices, with which they returned to the Middle East.

Throughout the ancient and medieval periods the fame of Indian cotton textiles, gems and jewels, and spices like pepper and cardamom, ivory and sandalwood continued to make trade a lucrative business. Gems like pearls, and precious stones like diamonds gave to India the reputation of a fabled land of riches and natural resources. This reputation of being a land of riches and extraordinary skills, tempted traders from Europe, who were willing to go to war, and to risk their lives in order to get a share of the profit from Indian trade.



Marco Polo's (1254–1324) account of his travels to the East makes a reference to Golconda, now in Andhra Pradesh.

> This kingdom produces diamonds. Let me tell you how they are got. You must know that in the kingdom there are many mountains in which diamonds are found, as you will hear. When it rains the water rushes down through these mountains, scouring its way through mighty gorges and caverns. When the rain has stopped and the water drained away, then men go in search of diamonds through these gorges from which the water has come, and they find plenty. In summer, when there is not a drop of water to be found then the diamonds are found among the mountains.

Then in a more fanciful mood he records

> Another means by which they get diamonds is this. When the eagles eat the flesh, they also eat—that is they swallow—the diamonds. Then at night when the eagle comes back, it deposits the diamonds it has swallowed with its droppings. So men come and collect these droppings, and there they find diamonds in plenty.... You must know that in the entire world diamonds are found nowhere else except this kingdom alone.

– Ronald Latham
Marco Polo: the Traveller

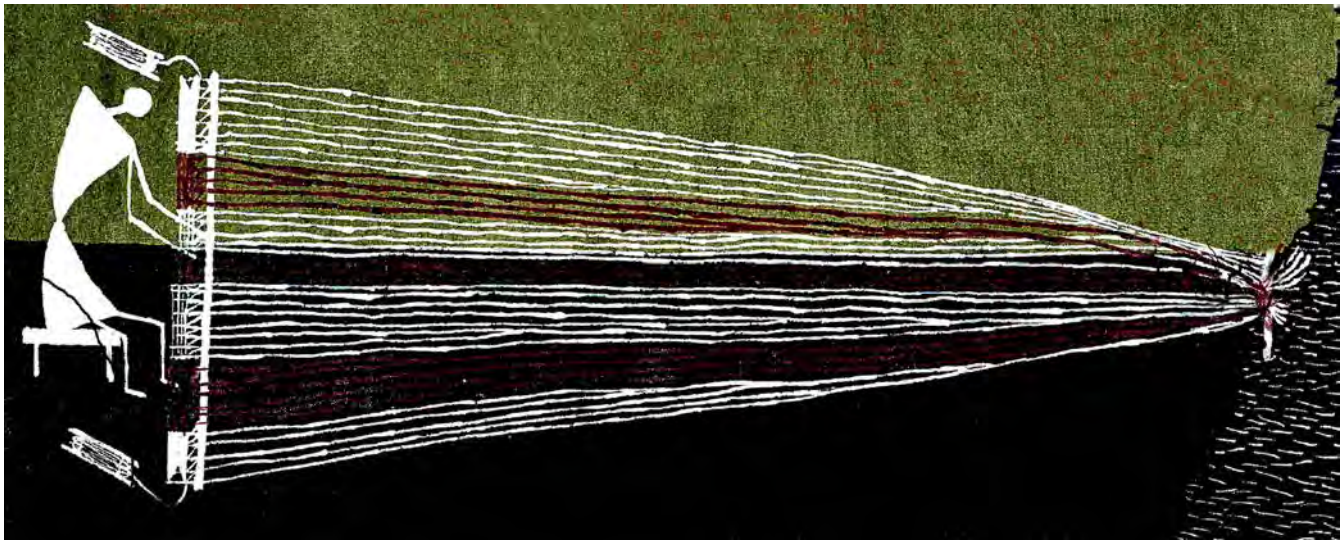
INDIA AS A TEXTILE PRODUCTION HUB

"Everyone from the Cape of Good Hope (in Africa) to China, man and woman is clothed from head to foot, in the products of Indian looms," is how a Portuguese traveller put it. India was, till the advent of colonialism, the largest exporter of textiles in the world.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it was trade in textiles and in spices, essential for preserving meat when refrigeration did not exist, that initially brought European traders to India. A triangular trade developed with Britain transporting slaves from Africa to the Americas, to make enough profit and to get the bullion necessary for the purchase of Indian manufacture.

> The adoption and rate of increase in the consumption of Indian textiles in the Western world during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was one of those astonishing processes of diffusion which is comparable to the discovery and spread of tobacco, potato, coffee or tea.
>
> – K.N. CHAUDHURI

With the founding of the British East India Company in 1599, the English, and later the Dutch and the French, started exporting Indian textiles to London, for



re-export to the eastern Mediterranean. Very quickly, they realised the huge market for these textiles whose colours were permanent (i.e., they did not run). In Europe at the time, the techniques of 'fixing' dyes were unknown to craftsmen who applied coloured pigments to the textile, which ran or flaked off when the fabric was washed.

By 1625 a revolution in taste began in England. Most imported Indian textiles were used to decorate beds, the most precious item of household furniture. People were attracted by the bright colours and new floral patterns, which did not exist in European fabrics. From the second half of the seventeenth century, the demand for Indian chintz increased in England, France and the Netherlands.

Astute merchants realised they could reach an even bigger market by commissioning special designs. The East India Company therefore selected and guided the making of the *palempore*—the branched tree which became the famous tree-of-life design. Imitation Kashmiri shawls even began to be woven in England.

Factories and Trade

Simultaneously in the seventeenth century the British East India Company and other trading companies from France and Holland established factories and new townships around the Indian coastline, where goods created specifically for the export market were stored. To produce these goods there was an increasing concentration and localisation, and a large-scale migration of crafts communities. Urban centres and coastal towns attracted craftsmen as a number of affluent consumers and a vast export market could be accessed from here.

By the nineteenth century several age-old crafts began to undergo change: the traditional *patua* artists of Orissa and Bengal picked up the skill of woodcut, block printing and created what we now called Kalighat Art, that the rich zamindars in rural Bengal patronised—while the markets of Varanasi specialised increasingly in brocades for the noveau riche of Awadh and Bengal.





Adjusting to Change: the Traditional Patua *Artist in Anglo-Indian Calcutta**

Within the rural folk tradition of the *pat* painting, the Kalighat paintings constituted a major departure. The inventiveness of this art lay in the way these migrant village *patuas* adapted to their changed urban environment, to its new facilities and pressures, from within the enclosed space of their traditional community and practice. The basic imperative of producing pictures cheaply, quickly and in vast numbers to cater to the growing market of the city, caused the main changes in the form and format of their work. It led, for instance, to the use of paper *vis-à-vis* cloth, to the adoption of watercolours in the place of gouache and tempera, and to the shift from the continuous narrative of scroll painting to single-frame images against blank backdrops. It also brought on a range of new themes and images in Kalighat pictures, some of which were drawn from subjects typical of British and Company paintings, while most emerged from the immediate social scenario of Calcutta's *babu* society in which these *patuas* struggled to orient themselves.

Pitted against the new society of Anglo-Indian Calcutta, the sharp sense of moral discomfort and disorder of the *patuas* expressed itself in a powerful repertoire of satirical images...

Their resilience against the wayward ways and demands of the city showed itself at the two important levels at which these painters stayed enclosed within their inherited community and conventions. Transferred to the city, these painters continued to stick rigidly to the village clans from which they had emerged, with the same hereditary and caste affiliations. Artistically, too, they continued to work within a markedly non-naturalistic, two-dimensional style, transforming on their own terms whatever new elements they drew on. Thus, the borrowed medium of watercolours was made to lend itself to the traditional format of flat, bright colouring; and shading was used along outlines mainly to highlight the rhythm of lines and the bloatedness of faces and figures—this lent itself brilliantly to the nature of their satire...

The main clientele of these cheap pictures was the common people of the city, who felt equally alienated from the changed values and westernised ways of Calcutta's high society.

–TAPATI GUHA-THAKURTA
The Making of New Indian Art

* now, Kolkata

The Kashmiri Shawl

The Kashmiri shawl was the mainstay of the valley's economy from approximately 1600 to 1860, over 250 years. It was a luxury textile, patronised by the Mughal, Afghan, Sikh and Dogra dynasties that ruled Kashmir successively. By the nineteenth century, it was popular in princely courts and commercial cities all over South Asia, leave alone Europe. As a result those in charge of the shawl manufacturing units strongly influenced the economy of this State, as the sale of shawls brought in more money than the entire land revenue of the State! At its peak in 1861 it generated an enormous revenue.

Aware that the shawl trade dominated the Kashmir economy, the Dogra rulers created a department, the Dagh-Shawl, that tried to control and extract taxes at every stage of the manufacture of every shawl. Duties were imposed on the import of *pashm*, on the dyeing, even on the completion of every single line of embroidery! These taxes became so oppressive that the ordinary shawl worker was paying five rupees out of every seven he earned to the State. Compounding their misery, the distribution of subsidised grain was also limited to shawl manufacture.

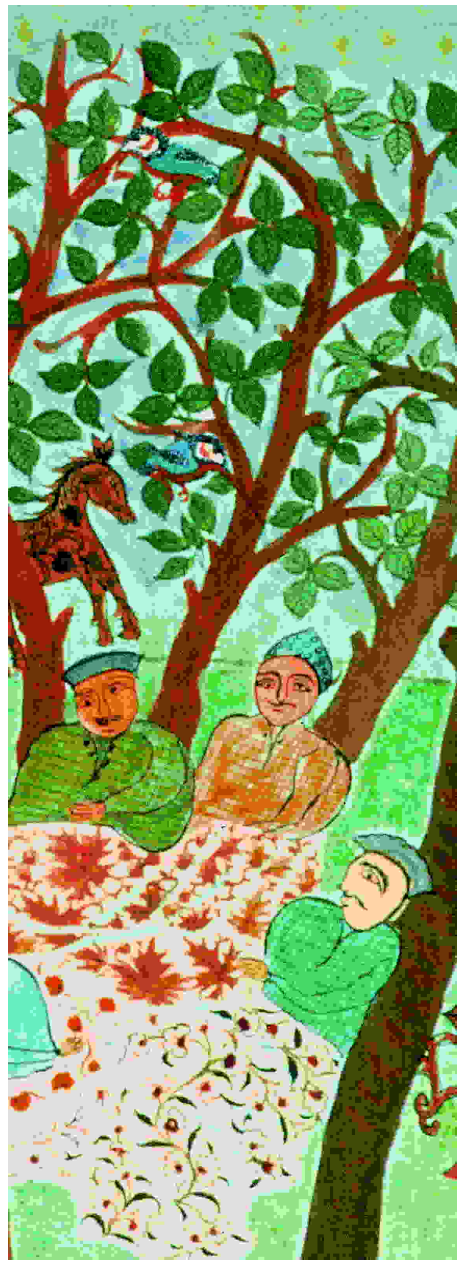
In spite of this tax, however, the Kashmiri shawl industry prospered towards the end of the nineteenth century with the increasing European demand for these prized articles of fashion.

But it was the imitation shawls manufactured in the Scottish town of Paisley that had a strong negative impact on the production of the Kashmiri shawl in the valley.

The shawl traders prospered and it was because of them and the tremendous demand for their luxury end product that the State stayed afloat. The percentage of their profit was typically 500 per cent. By 1871, shawls worth 28 lakh rupees were exported! By 1890, the State withdrew entirely, abolishing the department of the Dagh-Shawl.

In the Indian catalogue of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886, the serious consequences of abolishing the department has been described as follows:

> The manufacture, which formerly brought half a million a year into Kashmir, is now well nigh moribund. Unless means are taken by government to preserve it, the art of weaving the finest shawl will probably be extinct fifteen to twenty years hence. The warehouses of London and Paris are full of shawls which find no purchasers, and the value in Kashmir has consequently fallen to a third of what it was ten years ago.



FROM CRAFT PRODUCER TO SUPPLIER OF RAW MATERIALS

Between 1800 and 1860, the Industrial Revolution transformed the manufacturing process across England and Europe, adversely impacting the craft trade in India.

In 1813, under pressure from the local textile industry, the British Government began imposing high taxes on the import of Indian textiles. British goods, on the other hand, had virtually free entry into India. The shattering results are well known: between 1814 and 1835 British cotton goods exported to India rose from one million yards to thirty-one million yards; while the value of Indian cotton goods exported in the same seventeen years fell to one-thirteenth its original size. The thriving textile towns, Dacca, Murshidabad, Surat, Madurai, were laid waste. Britain's Industrial Revolution demolished India's textile trade, and from being exporters of handloom textiles we became exporters of raw cotton and a market for imported mill-made cloth, which even undercut domestic textiles.



The new taxes that were imposed by the British, and the shifts in textile production left the peasants, who were now solely dependent on agriculture, even more vulnerable. In Europe, handloom weavers who had been displaced found jobs in the new industries, which also employed many women. But in India even men had few such alternatives. They flooded into the already impoverished agriculture labour market, making wages even lower. Not only were many thousands of people affected by the collapse of the textile industry, but also of the iron, glass, paper, pottery and jewellery industries.

"The misery hardly finds a parallel in the history of commerce. The bones of its cotton weavers are bleaching the plains of India," William Bentick, the Governor General himself wrote in 1834.

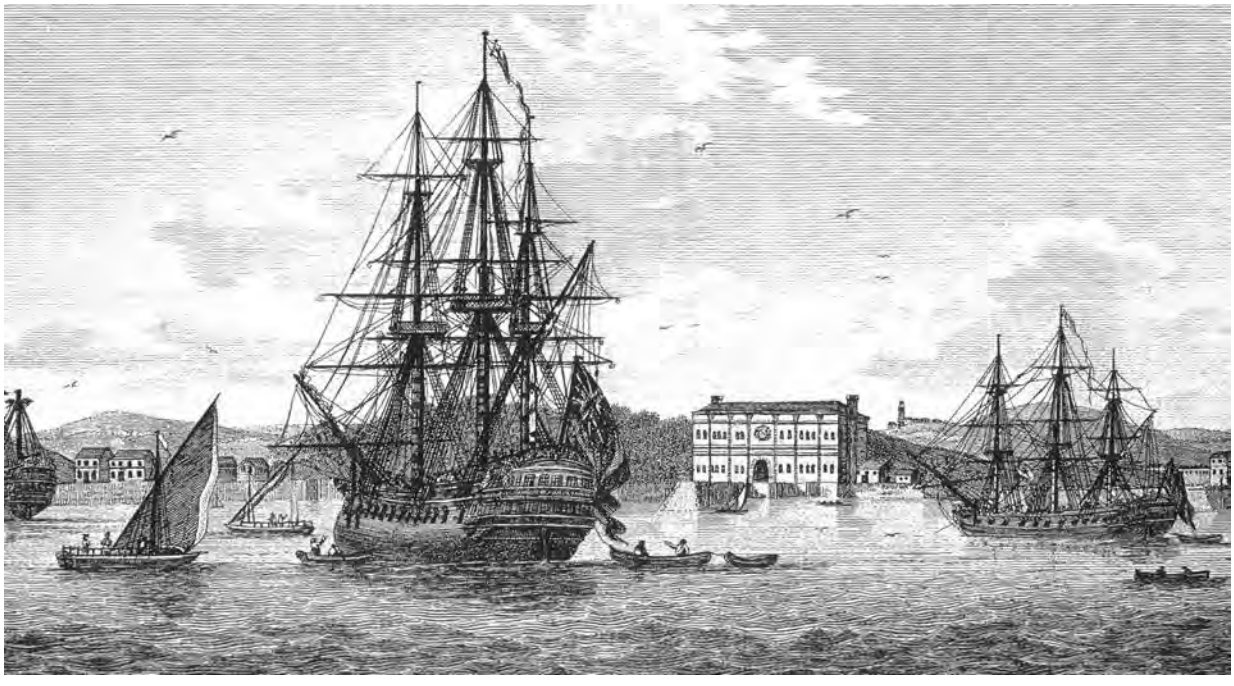
The Impact of Colonialism on the Textile Trade

Before 1860, three-fourths of raw cotton imports into Britain came from America. British cotton manufacturers had for long been worried about this dependence on American supplies.

In 1857, the Cotton Supply Association was founded in Britain and in 1859 the Manchester Cotton company was formed. Their objective was to encourage cotton production in every part of the world suited for its growth. India was seen as a country that could supply cotton to Lancashire if the American supply dried up. India possessed suitable soil, a climate favourable to cotton cultivation, and cheap labour.

When the American Civil War broke out in 1861, a wave of panic spread through cotton circles in Britain; raw cotton imports from America fell to less than three per cent. Frantic messages were sent to India and elsewhere to increase cotton exports to Britain. In Bombay*, cotton merchants visited the cotton districts to assess supplies and encourage cultivation. As cotton prices soared, exports increased to meet the British

Bombay harbour: a late-eighteenth-century drawing



* now, Mumbai



demand. So advances were given to urban *sahukars*, who in turn extended credit to those rural moneylenders who promised to secure the produce.

These developments had a profound impact on the Deccan countryside. The ryots in the Deccan suddenly found access to seemingly limitless credit. They were given ₹100 as advance for every acre they planted with cotton. *Sahukars* were more than willing to extend long term loans. By 1862 over 90 per cent of cotton imports into Britain came from India.

CREDIT DRIES UP

However, within a few years the American Civil War ended, cotton production in America revived and Indian cotton export to Britain steadily declined.

When the Civil War ended Britain resumed trade in cotton with America for two reasons: American cotton was a superior type (due to the longer, stronger fibres of its two domesticated native American species); secondly, cotton from plantations in the United States and the Caribbean was much cheaper as it was produced by unpaid slaves. By the mid-nineteenth century, in the United States, cultivating and harvesting cotton had become the leading occupation of slaves.

Export merchants and *sahukars* in the Deccan were no longer keen on extending long term credit. So they decided to close down their operations, restrict their advances to peasants, and demand repayment of outstanding debts, further impoverishing the farmers and the craftspeople.

Industrialisation in Britain

The advent of the Industrial Revolution in Britain transformed cotton manufacture, as textiles emerged as Britain's leading export. In 1738 Lewis Paul and John Wyatt of Birmingham, England, patented the Roller Spinning Machine, and the flyer-and-bobbin system for drawing cotton to a more even thickness using two sets of rollers. Later, the invention of the Spinning Jenny in 1764 enabled British weavers to produce cotton yarn and cloth at much faster rates. From the late eighteenth century onwards, the British city of Manchester acquired the nickname 'cottonopolis' due to the cotton industry's omnipresence within the city, and Manchester's role as the heart of the global cotton trade. Production capacity in Britain and the United States was further improved by the invention of the cotton gin by the American, Eli Whitney, in 1793.



A spininng factory in 1830

Improving technology and increasing control of world markets allowed British traders to develop a commercial chain in which raw cotton fibres were (at first) purchased from colonial plantations, processed into cotton cloth in the mills of Lancashire, and then re-exported on British ships to captive colonial markets in West Africa, India, and China (via Shanghai and Hong Kong).

The Industrial Revolution in England led to the reversal of trade in which cotton was exported from India to England and manufactured machine-made cotton cloth was brought back to India and sold. The colonial policy of supporting production of raw material in India for British industries and the consumption of British products in India greatly damaged the Indian economy. This along with devastating famines, over-taxation and diversion of revenues back to England were the primary factors for the deteriorating condition of the Indian crafts community. It was this devastating effect of industrialisation that influenced Gandhiji while his philosophy developed during the fight for independence from colonial rule.

RISE, FALL, RISE...

From the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, China and India controlled almost half of the global trade. This pattern continued till India became a part of the British Empire in the nineteenth century, and Chinese trade came to be increasingly controlled by those who controlled the sea routes—England, France and the U.S. India became independent and China turned to communism in the mid-twentieth century and both began to rebuild their economies. In the beginning of the twenty-first century, China and India have become the world's fastest growing economies and the centre of gravity of global trade appears to be shifting east again. The following pages give a glimpse of the growth trajectory of the Asian giants over 500 years.

Sixteenth Century	
INDIA	As Arab traders ship Indian goods to Europe through the Red Sea and Mediterranean ports, India's economy has a 24.5 per cent share of world income. It is the world's second largest after China. India enjoys a favourable balance of trade—it earns gold and silver from the textiles, sugar, spices, indigo, carpets, etc. it sells.
CHINA	Direct maritime trade between Europe and China begins with the Portuguese, who lease an outpost at Macau in 1557. Other Europeans follow. India and China trade with each other using overland routes.
Seventeenth Century	
INDIA	At the turn of the century, Mughal India's annual income is greater than the British budget. As the Mughal Empire reaches its zenith under Shah Jahan, Indian exports exceed its imports—it is selling many more things and lots more of each. Chinese ships dock at Quilon and Calicut, while in Khambat the volume of trade is so high that more than 3000 ships visit the port every year.
CHINA	China continues to control a quarter of world trade. The English establish a trading post at Canton in 1637. Trade grows further after the Qing emperor relaxes maritime trade restrictions in the 1680's. By now, Taiwan has come under Qing control. But, the sea trade makes the Chinese apprehensive of conquest.

	Eighteenth Century
Aurangzeb's India had a 24.4 per cent share of world income, the largest in the world. But as Mughal power declines, the East India Company disrupts trade relations between India's mercantile community.	INDIA
In 1760, as China's share of global trade begins to fall, the government sets out regulations for foreigners and foreign ships. Canton is the only port open to alien traders. After their War of Independence (1776), the Americans begin to trade with China; this is a setback for the British.	CHINA
	Nineteenth Century
In 1820, India's economy is completely controlled by the East India Company—16 per cent of the world income. The Indian agricultural pattern is changed by the Company. By 1870, India has a 12.2 per cent share of the world income.	INDIA
The Qing king refuses to open all ports to foreign traders and seeks to restrict the opium trade with India. War breaks out twice between Britain and China. A defeated China accepts the opium trade and gives Western merchants access. Tea exports increase 500 per cent in eight years, from 1843 to 1855.	CHINA
	Twentieth Century
In 1913, Indian economy had a mere 7.6 per cent share of world income. In 1952, five years after Independence, it had 3.8 per cent. Though by 1973 the economy had grown to $494.8 billion, its share of the world income fell to 3.1 per cent. In 1991, economic liberalisation introduced and by1998, Indian economy accounts for a five per cent share of the world income. By 2005, India's economy is $3,815.6 billion or a 6.3 per cent share of the world income.	INDIA
Before communist China comes into being in 1949, the country mainly produces yarn, coal, crude oil, cotton and foodgrain. Mao Zedong puts the country on a socialist path. In 1980, under Deng Xiaoping, China changes track and the first Special Economic Zones are established in Shenzhen. In 1986, Deng's 'Open-door' policy encourages foreign direct investment. In 1992, Deng accelerates market reforms to establish a 'socialist market economy'. For the first time, China figures in the world's top ten economies. In 2001, it joins the WTO.	CHINA

New Professions, Old Skills: from Silversmiths to the Printing Press

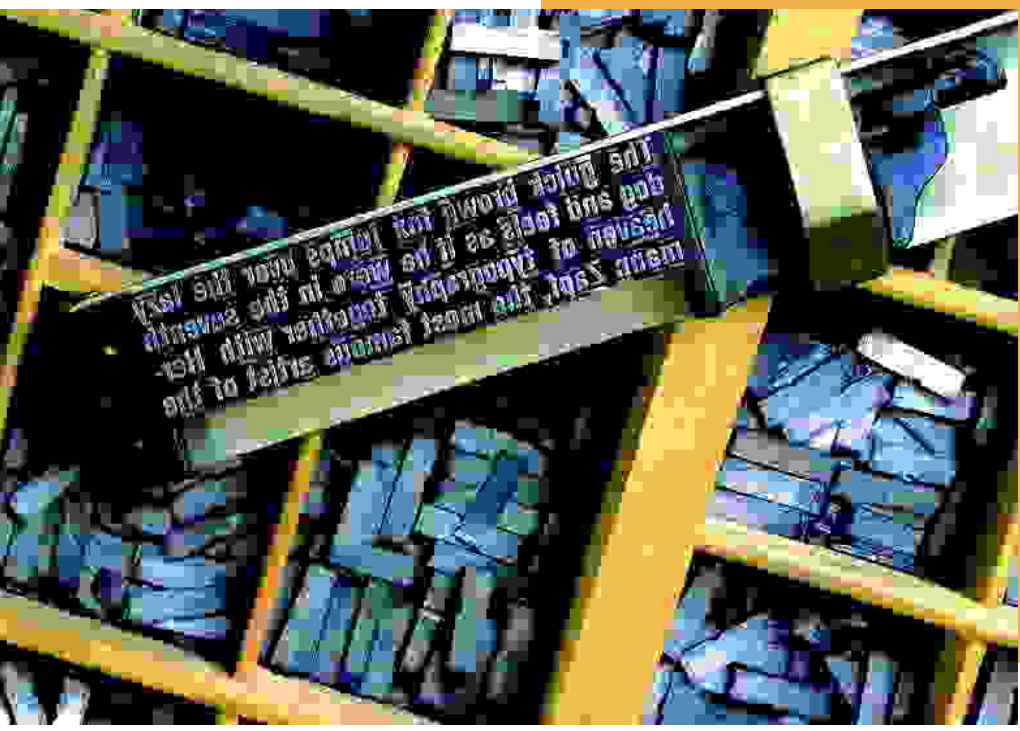
By the 1860s and 1870s, the wood and metal engravers of Bat-tala had emerged as the most prominent 'artisan' community in Calcutta's art market.

Initially, traditional artisan groups like ironsmiths, coppersmiths, gold and silversmiths (the *Kansaris, Shankharis, Swarnakars* and *Karmakars),* finding employment in the new British-owned printing presses at Serampore and Calcutta, had adapted their old skills of working in metal towards preparing type-faces and engraved blocks. By the 1820s and 1830s, these print-makers became a separate community, working primarily with the wood-engraved block to suit the requirements of small-sized pictures in the cheap illustrated Bengali books.

As a result some important changes occurred in the social position and commercial prospects of the artisans who produced them. The engravers at Bat-tala had emerged from traditional artisan communities, with the skills of cutting, carving, furrowing and chipping in various metals. Some of them may even have been descendants of the artisan castes of the *sutradhars* or *shankaris* to which most of the Kalighat *patuas* belonged. But, unlike the Kalighat *patuas*, the engravers came to throw off many of their hereditary and caste affiliations to become a new, flexible community of printers. The skills of engraving and printing became more and more open and competitive, drawing in persons from various other communities (occasionally even Brahmins) who wished to find a new vocation in this trade.

–TAPATI GUHA-THAKURTA
The Making of New Indian Art

Lead type in compositor trays; (inset) type arranged and fixed in a temporary frame



EXERCISE

1. Imagine you are an adventurous English traveller to India in the seventeenth century. Describe the crafts you see. What would you buy to take home and why?
2. Colonialism transformed India from craft producer to a supplier of raw materials—write a short description of this change and how it affected the crafts industry in India.
3. Make a chart or an illustrated story of the history of textiles in India.
4. Industrialisation transformed craft production in England in the nineteenth century. How did it transform Indian craft production in the twentieth century?
5. Compare and contrast trade in India and China over the last 500 years. Illustrate with graphs or tables.





3 MAHATMA GANDHI AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY

A cause is often greater than the man. Certainly the spinning wheel is greater than myself; with it, in my opinion, is mixed up the well-being of the whole mass of Indian humanity.

– M. K. GANDHI

THE first article of Gandhiji's faith, as he himself has said, was non-violence. Therefore he could not accept a society that produced violence. True civilisation, he said, was to be found where industries had not entered and cast their influence. India, before it felt the impact of industries through the British rule, represented this true civilisation.

Mahatma Gandhi's ideas about self-sufficiency and handicrafts were directly related to his views on industries and industrial society. Gandhiji believed that industrial societies were based on an endless production of commodities. This produced greed and resulted in competition. The end result of this was violence and war.

What I object to is the craze for machinery as such. The craze is for what they call labour-saving machinery. Men go on 'saving labour', till thousands are without work and thrown on the streets to die of starvation. I want to save time and labour, not for a fraction of mankind, but for all; I want the concentration of wealth, not in the hands of a few, but in the hands of all.

– M. K. GANDHI
Young India, 13 November 1924



Even in the twentieth century, Gandhiji argued, it was possible to find large areas in India that were untouched by industries. The future of India and of its civilisation lay in these villages which were governed by simple norms of reciprocity and self-sufficiency. Gandhiji wanted to revive these villages, their craft economy and their practices and make them represent a system that was completely different from Western societies based on industry. His ideas about handicrafts were part of this vision.

THE MEANING OF *SWARAJ*

Gandhiji described this vision in many of his writings, most notably in *Hind Swaraj*, a treatise written in 1909 while he was aboard a ship, coming back from Britain. He wrote about the idea of a self-contained village republic inhabited by individuals whose lives were self-regulated. In Gandhiji's philosophy, *swaraj* for the nation did not mean merely political independence from British rule. *Swaraj*, for him, was something more substantive, involving the freedom of individuals to regulate their own lives without harming one another. His *swaraj* was one where every individual was his or her own ruler, with the capacity to control and regulate his or her own life. This would remove inequalities of power and status in society and enable proper reciprocity.



Gandhiji certainly did not want British rule to be replaced by another form of rule where Western institutions of governance and civil society would be run by Indians instead of white men. That would be "English rule without the Englishman". He wrote that such a process "would make India English. And when it becomes English, it will be called not Hindustan, but

Englistan. This is not the *swaraj* I want". *Swaraj,* from Gandhiji's perspective, would have to be located not only outside the domain of British political control, but also beyond the influence of Western civilisation.

Spinning the Idea of Self-sufficiency

However, for all this to happen, Indians would have to take care to revive and preserve all the village arts and crafts. Among the crafts, the one on which Gandhiji put the greatest emphasis was spinning and weaving. He wrote, "What is the kind of service that the teeming millions of India most need at the present time, that can be easily understood and appreciated by all, that is easy to perform and will, at the same time enable the crores of our semi-starved countrymen to live? And the reply came—that it is the universalisation of khadi or the spinning-wheel that can fulfil these conditions." Spinning, an integral aspect of Indian handicrafts, had to be made an essential part of the lives of the common people. This would make the common people self-sufficient and thus enable them to survive. The poor of India, if they were to prosper, needed a subsidiary source of occupation and livelihood. They could not remain solely dependent on agriculture. Gandhiji suggested that hand-spinning and, to a lesser extent, hand-weaving could become the subsidiary source. He commented, "This industry flourished in India a hundred and fifty years ago and at that time we were not as miserably poor as we are today."

In this way, the villages in which they lived would be less dependent on mills and machinery. For Gandhiji this was very important since machines were an instrument of industrial societies. They produced in massive quantities. Thus the spread of khadi would challenge the influence of mills and machines and the import of cotton to India from England, and would enable the people of India to free themselves non-violently from the negative influences of industries and the violence they inevitably produced.



In 1921, during a tour of South India, Gandhiji shaved his head and began wearing a khadi *dhoti*, rather than mill-made cloth imported from abroad, in order to identify with the poor. His new appearance also came to symbolise asceticism and abstinence—qualities he celebrated in opposition to the consumerist culture of the modern world. Gandhiji encouraged other nationalist leaders who dressed in western clothes to adopt Indian attire. He requested them all also to spend some time each day working on the *charkha*. He told them that the act of spinning would help them to break the boundaries that prevailed within the traditional caste system, between mental labour and manual labour.

– *Young India,* 13 November 1924

Gandhiji was doing a number of things at the same time. He was reviving a handicraft which had been a vital component of village life. Through the revival of spinning and weaving, people would be able to live better since they would have another source of livelihood. Individuals and villages would become more self-sufficient. At the same time, the even bigger purpose of fighting the bad effects of industrialism would also be met.



A Vicious Circle

Through taxes, tariffs and other restrictions the British Government discouraged the production of cotton cloth in India; instead the raw fibre was sent to England for processing. Gandhiji described the process thus:

1. English people buy Indian cotton in the field, picked by Indian labour at seven cents a day, through an optional monopoly.
2. This cotton is shipped on British ships, a three-week journey across the Indian Ocean, down the Red Sea, across the Mediterranean, through Gibraltar, across the Bay of Biscay and the Atlantic Ocean to London. One hundred per cent profit on this freight is regarded as small.
3. The cotton is turned into cloth in Lancashire. You pay shilling wages instead of Indian pennies to your workers. The English worker not only has the advantage of better wages, but the steel companies of England get the profit of building the factories and machines. Wages, profits—all these are spent in England.
4. The finished product is sent back to India at European shipping rates, once again on British ships. The captains, officers, sailors of these ships, whose wages must be paid, are English. The only Indians who profit are a few Lascars who do the dirty work on the boats for a few cents a day.
5. The cloth is finally sold back to the kings and landlords of India who got the money to buy this expensive cloth out of the poor peasants of India who worked at seven cents a day.

– LOUIS FISHER
The Life of Mahatma Gandhi





A few months before India became independent, Gandhiji wrote:

The charkha is the centre of our flag. It is the symbol of unity and the non-violent strength of the millions. The yarn spun by the charkha I consider to be the cementing force which can bind those whom the three colours of the flag represent. That is why I have said that the whole fabric of swaraj hangs on a thread of the handspun yarn and have called the charkha our mightiest weapon.

THE SELF-SUFFICIENT VILLAGE

The idea of self-sufficiency was of crucial importance to Gandhiji. An individual, a village, a country could become independent if only it became self-sufficient. Gandhiji described his ideal Indian village in these terms:

Each village's first concern will be to grow its own food crops and cotton for its own cloth. It should have a reserve for its cattle, recreation and playground for adults and children. Then if there is more land available, it could grow useful money crops, thus excluding ganja, tobacco, opium and the like. The village will maintain a village theatre, school and public hall. It will have its own waterworks, ensuring clean water supply. This can be done through controlled wells or tanks. Education will be compulsory up to the final basic course. As far as possible every activity will be conducted on the cooperative basis.

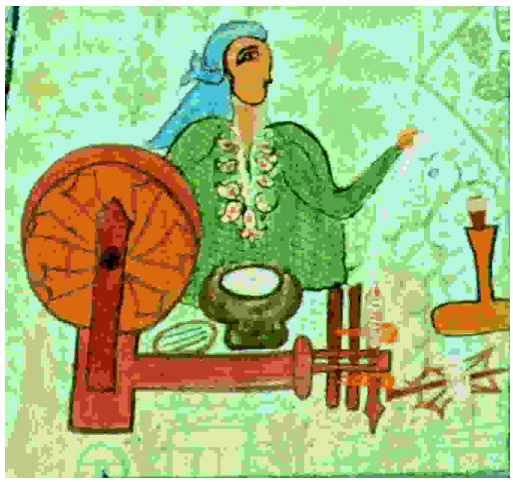


Gandhiji emphasised the importance of handicrafts, especially spinning and weaving. But he also spoke of other handicrafts which were part of the hereditary occupation of every villager. The development of handicrafts would add to the total resources of the individual and the village and thus enable both to be self-sufficient and self-regulating. For him a world based on non-violence could only be found in places that were untouched by industries. He found Indian villages to be such places since, in his time, he believed, they were still relatively untouched by industries. For him handicrafts were an integral and vital part of his



programme to revive villages, to make them self-sufficient and to give back to individuals the dignity to regulate their lives. This is the challenge of Gandhiji's vision that India is yet to meet.

Mahatma Gandhi, in the twentieth century, was the single individual who successfully prevented the total eclipse of Indian crafts by relating them to the village economy and the concept of political freedom. He turned the humble spinning wheel into a symbol of defiance by asking people to spin their own cotton at home to weave cloth that was not of British manufacture. It thus became a non-violent and creative weapon of self-reliance and independence.







EXERCISE

1. "The whole fabric of *swaraj* hangs on a thread of the handspun yarn and (that is why) I have called the *charkha* our mightiest weapon." Explain Gandhiji's concept of *swaraj*.
2. Explain the idea of Gandhiji's self-sufficient village. Do you think it is possible to realise this idea in India today? Support your arguments with examples.
3. Describe the meaning of khadi as an essential part of Gandhiji's philosophy, and its symbolism and meaning today.
4. Write an essay on 'The Indian Village of my Dreams'.
5. Develop your own strategy for the survival of a craft of your locality in an age of globalisation.





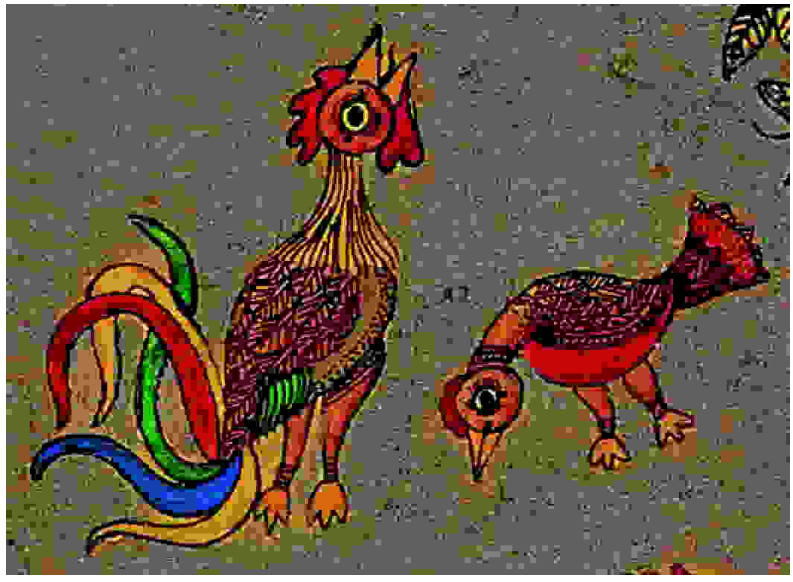
UNIT II
Crafts Revival



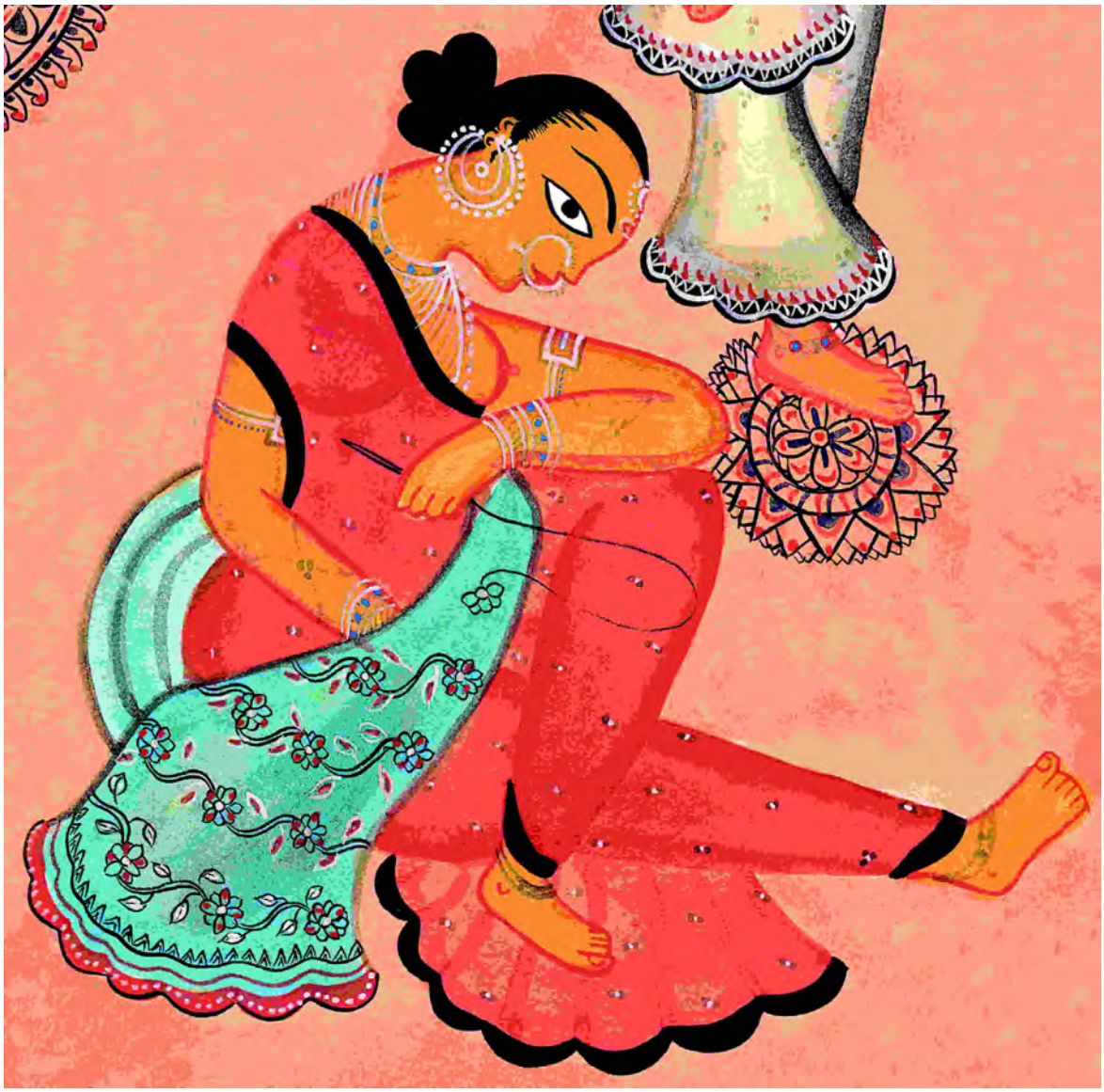
4 HANDLOOM AND HANDICRAFTS REVIVAL

After Independence the newly elected government chose the road to industrialisation. This emphasis on industry and development further aggravated the damage to the crafts community caused by 200 years of colonial rule. However, after Gandhiji's death, several of his followers initiated and nurtured government schemes and programmes to protect the welfare of the crafts community in India.

The Central and State Governments recognised that handicrafts, with its labour-intensive character and wide dispersal through the length and breadth of the country, constitutes a crucial economic activity. It would, if supported, bring wealth to the country through trade and exports. The objective of government schemes was to provide economic and social benefits to the craftsmen of the country and to promote their work in domestic and foreign markets. The four major goals of the handicrafts development programmes run by the government were



1. promotion of handicrafts;
2. research and design development;
3. technical development;
4. marketing.



1. PROMOTION OF HANDICRAFTS

In the 1950s and 60s, the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), Central Cottage Industries Emporium, Handlooms and Handicrafts Export Corporation, Regional State Handicraft and Handloom Development Corporations, All India Handicrafts Board, the Weavers' Service Centres and Design Centres, and the Weavers' Cooperative Apex Societies, were set up in every state to protect and promote Indian craft producers.

Today, there are 1,5431 sales outlets, out of which 7,050 are owned by the KVIC. These are spread all over India. The products are also sold internationally through exhibitions arranged by the Commission.

All India Handicrafts Board

The All India Handicrafts Board was set up in 1952 to advise the Government on problems of handicrafts and to suggest measures for improvement and development. According to the Indian Constitution the development of handicrafts is a State subject. Therefore, the primary initiative in the handicrafts sector was to emanate from the states and the Union Territories.

The Board took up a number of new schemes for imparting training in selected crafts and design development, dovetailing training and design efforts, for improvement of tools and techniques used by the craftsmen, expansion of facilities, and for extending the marketing network in both internal and external markets.



Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay

Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay (1903–1988) devoted her life to the preservation and development of handicrafts and the dignity and uplift of India's craftspeople. She was also a freedom fighter, theatre personality and human rights activist who worked closely with Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi. In the freedom movement she was one of the prominent personalities in the Congress Party and later in the Socialist Party.

She was Chairperson of the All India Handicrafts Board and President of the Indian Cooperative Union. She was the Vice-President of the World Crafts Council. She championed the cause of India's great crafts traditions from every platform and initiated the national awards for excellence in handicrafts. Travelling to every corner and village of India, she discovered crafts severely damaged by neglect and lack of patronage, and crafts that needed protection from extinction. She received the Magasaysay Award and the Watamull Award and was conferred the Deshikottama degree by Vishwabharati University, Shantiniketan. She wrote many books and articles and her book titled *The Handicrafts of India* was the first detailed documentation of the major and minor crafts of India.

But for her, many crafts threatened under British rule would have disappeared forever and India's craft heritage would have been lost. She is truly the mother of Independent India's craftspeople.



Central Corporations

The Handicrafts and Handlooms Export Corporation of India (HHEC) is a subsidiary of the State Trading Corporation of India, and came into existence in 1962. The Corporation's policy in the field of direct exports was designed to develop new markets and expand traditional ones and to introduce new products suitable to the consumers' demands abroad.

The Central Cottage Industries Corporation Private Limited, a registered society, runs the Central Cottage Industries Emporium (CCIE), New Delhi, the premier retail sales organisation in Indian handicrafts. The CCIE has branches in Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai and Jaipur.

Voluntary Social Organisations

The government supports a number of social organisations including non-profit-making registered societies and cooperatives operating in the field of handicrafts. Their principal object is to provide work to poor artisans. Many of them run training-cum-production

centres, while a few concern themselves principally with marketing. In addition, India has a large voluntary organisation called the Crafts Council with branches in many states and is affiliated to the World Crafts Council.

Pupul Jayakar

Pupul Jayakar (1916–97) began her life studying to become a journalist, but later turned to development work in handicrafts and handloom textiles. She served as Chairperson of the All India Handicrafts and Handloom Board and the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage. She travelled extensively and supported craftspersons and their traditions across the country through festivals, emporia and her erudite writings.



2. RESEARCH AND DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

For any scheme of design development, it is necessary to identify authentic resources and materials. In India there are a number of museums that have beautiful specimens of craft objects.

These museums provide a sound base for research and study of the history of crafts that have developed in different regions. The study of crafts provides an invaluable record of the innovative spirit of the crafts tradition in India, and how it changed and evolved and responded to new challenges placed by environmental conditions and historic constraints.



Promotion of Design

Soon after its establishment in 1952, the All India Handicrafts Board recognised that among other developmental measures that needed to be adopted, the problem of design development would be of key importance in rehabilitating the handicrafts industry. Craftsmen required assistance with new design ideas to suit the taste of consumers both in India and abroad. The All India Handicrafts Board established Regional Design Development Centres at Bangalore, Mumbai, Kolkata and Delhi. A technical wing for research in tools, techniques, and materials was also added to each of

these centres. The Weavers' Service Centres set up by the All India Handloom Board provided design and technical guidance to the handloom industry throughout the country.

3. TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT

The development of tools and processes in handicrafts is a very sensitive area since a great deal of wisdom and subtlety need to be invested in most traditional methods and equipment. Generally speaking, any new equipment for handicrafts should

- have a low capital outlay;
- be affordable and useful to small individual and cooperative units;
- improve overall efficiency;
- reduce costs;
- not cause labour displacement;
- not be hazardous to humans or the environment.

State governments have set up Design and Technical centres where craftsmen, artists and designers jointly work out new designs and items in selected crafts. It is important to appoint designers who combine taste with



technical mastery, a reverence for tradition with a sensitive awareness of the spirit of the times—qualities essential for the development of good designs.

Design Studies

The National Institute of Design (NID) at Ahmedabad was established as a result of the visionary advice of Charles Eames, who saw crafts as India's matchless resource of problem-solving experience. Eames recommended that the Indian designers draw on the attitude, skills and knowledge available in the Indian craft traditions, and give it new relevance in the industrial age that was emerging in post-Independence India. It was critical that hand production be helped to find its place beside mass manufacture. The documentation of craft traditions begun by British scholars more than a century ago was now needed on a national scale and the NID students were trained to record and interpret India's craft inheritance.

Research became the base for sensitive design, production and marketing, along with an understanding of the craft community, its traditional practices, markets and materials, its price and cost considerations, tools and workplaces.

Development and diversification efforts bring the craftsmen and the trained designer together in an intelligent search for new opportunities. NID's curriculum reflected this approach. Students and teachers study craft problems in order to understand traditional skills as well as the economic concerns of large communities whose age-old markets are undergoing enormous and permanent change. Thus problem-solving activities and design for new clients were linked to marketing.

– NID website: www.nid.edu





Packaging

Packaging, in the case of Indian handicrafts, is an important area that has not developed much. A package design is very important since it will often persuade a consumer to make the initial purchase.

The *Indian Institute of Packaging* in Mumbai with branches in Delhi, Chennai, Hyderbad and Kolkata offers a certificate programme in packaging and a package development service for a fee. There are Postgraduate Diploma Courses and Distance Learning Programmes that are accredited by the Asian Packaging Foundation (APF).

Some companies that manufacture packaging material and readymade packages also provide help in solving packaging problems. Today, environment-friendly packaging alternatives are being explored and this offers new avenues for business ventures.

Today almost everything we use needs packaging. In 2010 the GDP for India was 8.5 per cent; the packaging industry alone grew at 15 per cent. India has a ₹65,000 crore packaging industry that is expected to grow 18–20 per cent by 2015. Paper packaging alone constitutes 7.6 million tonne. In fact, 40 per cent of the total paper production goes for packaging. A packaging technologist chooses the right packaging material and the right shape from the preservation and production point of view based on knowledge of chemicals and mechanical engineering. Designers and artists innovate and design attractive eye-catching packaging that stands out on the shelf adding to its sale value.

– *The Times of India*, 26 July 2010

4. MARKETING

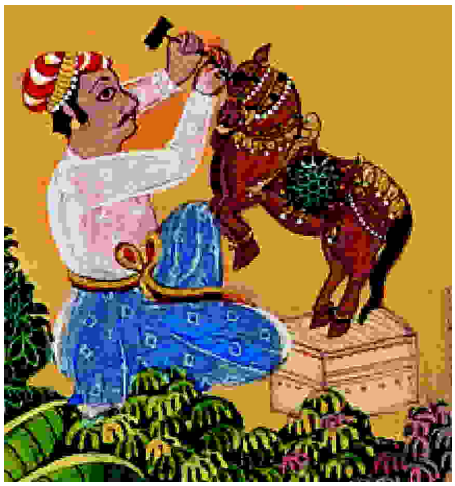
In India, handicrafts derived their richness and strength from socio-economic and cultural situations. These traditions and social networks are fast disappearing. Crafts are particularly vulnerable to the present tempo of economic change, the changing pattern of society,

marketing, and therefore, require specialised attitudes and measures. It calls not only for an adequate financial outlay, but for a good measure of imaginative skill as well. Handicraft marketing is a serious matter, for such skilled handmade products have to compete with mass-made products made by machine and sold by high pressure salesmanship. Again, handicraft units are often small and produce a very wide and diverse range of products. The problems of marketing handicrafts have to be considered separately for the domestic market and the export trade.

The All India Cottage Industries Board, established in 1948, recommended the setting up of Emporia at the Centre and in the States for the marketing of cottage industries products. In 1949, the Central Cottage Industries Emporium was established in Delhi and a large number of states have established emporia. Today, there are about 250 emporia in the country. Besides, there are a number of Khadi Bhandar outlets, and other showrooms for the sale of hand-spun, hand-woven cloth and handmade products.



The series of International Festivals of India in the U.S.A., U.K., Europe and Japan were conceptualised by Pupul Jayakar in the 1980's. These festivals highlighted India's historic heritage and its continuing spiritual and cultural strength. Several exhibitions like Vishvakarma, Aditi, Golden Eye, Pudu Pavu and Costumes of India introduced a host of new, young designers and they, in turn, became catalysts for the change and the revival of Indian handicrafts and handloom products.



These emporia purchase directly from artisans or their cooperatives. The emporia have tried to establish fair wages and prices to artisans and keep them abreast of modern techniques of marketing including publicity and promotion. Some important public emporia have set up their own production units to meet growing demands. It is noteworthy that most government-run emporia in state headquarters play an important role in inter-state trade in handicrafts.

PRIZES, AWARDS AND SCHEMES FOR CRAFTS

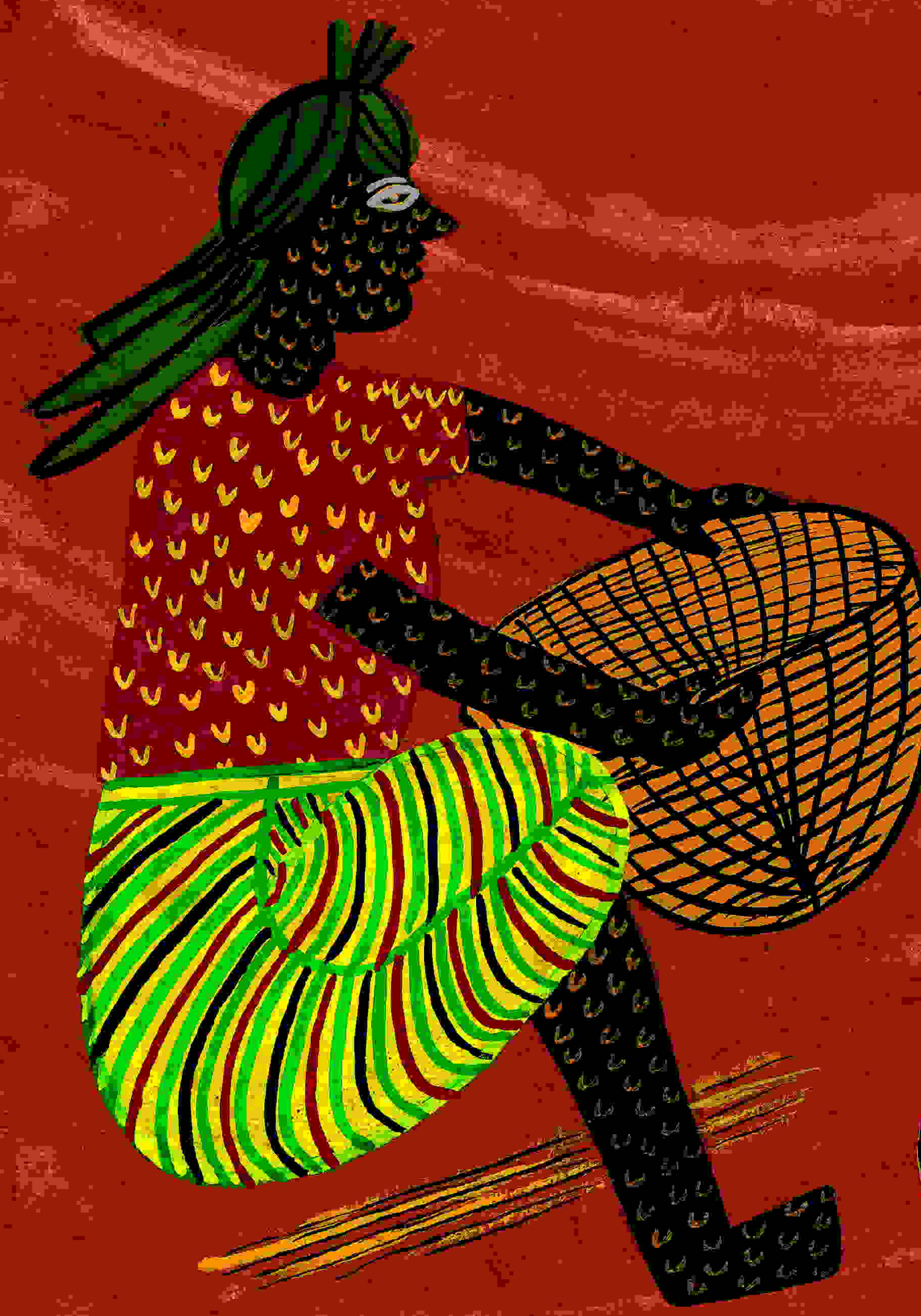
In the past, craftsmen would receive recognition from royal patrons and patronage would often be inherited by their families. Since 1965, in order to honour craftsmen, the All India Handicrafts Board presents an annual National Awards to Master Craftsmen of Exceptional Skill. Under this scheme, each recipient of the National Award is presented with a plaque, an *angavastram* (ceremonial shawl) and a cash award by the President of India. This is a rare and much awaited moment in the life of a craftsman and it is a moving experience indeed, to watch their response to this distinction.*

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of India's Independence (1972) the Handicrafts Board also presented Special Awards to selected craftspersons throughout the country for their outstanding craftsmanship and imagination. A scheme to provide pensions to craftspersons in indigent circumstances was also initiated. This is the first step towards providing some form of social security to the crafts community.

* The list and contact addresses of National Awardees are available at the All India Handicrafts Board website.

EXCERCISE

1. In your opinion what should be the priority areas for the development of crafts in Central and State government schemes?
2. Put the following in order of priority and explain what each area should do and why it is important for the development of crafts:
   - **Publicity** – including organisation of and participation in exhibitions
   - **Welfare activities** – providing old-age pension and other services to craftspeople
   - **Common facility centres for production** – supply of tools and equipment, raw material depots and procurement centres
   - **Marketing** – financial assistance to state handicraft development and for the marketing corporations, and setting up of emporia and sales depots
   - **Setting up research centres** – for strengthening design and for the preservation of traditional skills
   - **Training schemes** – covering training in crafts, design and marketing, both within the state or Union Territory and outside
   - **Awards** and incentives for craftspeople
   - **Cooperatives** – financial and technical assistance to cooperative societies
   - **Surveys** of export-oriented and rural or tribal crafts
   - **Setting up of artisan villages** – craft complexes
   - **Setting up institutions** for the promotion of Indian handicrafts.
3. Research and investigate the story of a local individual who has contributed to the promotion of crafts and other art forms.
4. Investigate a local government outlet for khadi/crafts and discuss its problems and success.



5 THE CRAFTS COMMUNITY TODAY

Despite all the government schemes and policies, and the efforts of non-government and government agencies, the condition of crafts in India is far from desirable. From the swift diminishing of raw materials or the natural resources that the craftsperson is dependent on to practise his/her craft to the limited capital available to him/her to invest in the expansion or even just the maintenance of his business; to the shrinking marketplace—increasingly flooded with inexpensive factory-made fabric, Chinese toys, plastic mats or stainless steel *ghadas*, the craftsman's economic situation has become increasingly precarious over the past 100 years.

This chapter analyses the reasons why the condition and the status of the crafts community today is so poor.



Attitudes That Colour Our Perception of the Craftsperson

The first reason for the poor status of the crafts community lies in our understanding of crafts and the role of crafts in our society. How do people view the craftsperson: Is he an artist or merely a labourer? Was the Taj Mahal built by an artist or by the crafts community? Is craft mainly manual work or is it a skill-based activity that brings together the hand, the head and the heart? The attitude today towards crafts and the crafts community is the first stumbling block hindering the progress of crafts in India.



Where women have chosen to embroider for a living, they make a clear bifurcation between commercial and traditional handwork. The two are different entities, and do not directly overlap. Rules and standards for each are distinct. Yet, working with the market does affect how a woman feels about herself as an artisan and as a member of her society.

The first and perhaps the biggest impact of commercial work is the separation of design, or art, and craft, or labour. Artisans are asked to make what someone else tells them to make, rather than work from their own sense of aesthetics. When presented with a set of four alien coloured threads, Rabari women baulked. If we use these, it won't be Rabari, they said. In traditional work, there is no distinct separation of colour, stitch, pattern and motif; these work together in units. Design intervention separates these elements and juxtaposes them in new ways.

When design is reserved for a professional designer and craft is relegated to the artisan, the artisan is reduced to a labourer.

– JUDY FRATER
Threads and Voices

For centuries Indian handicrafts have been distinguished for their great aesthetic and functional qualities. In ancient times designers in India were generally the *shilpis*. Groups of artisans or craftsmen worked under the guidance of such *shilpis*, and belonged to various guilds and regional schools throughout the country. It was their fine sensibility and extraordinary skill that invested our handicrafts with remarkable power, design and beauty.

Those categories of crafts that have their origins in the Mughal *durbar* or court also reveal a remarkable refinement of design. The work of these craftspeople was patronised by the court and the nobility. In these crafts the designs were very often influenced by the court paintings and miniature art derived from Persian or indigenous sources. Such motifs can be seen in Indian carpets, brocades, papier-mâché, stone-inlay and so on. It is a unique quality of Indian handicrafts that, very often, the separate abilities and skills of several craftsmen of varying degrees of specialisation and skill

are involved in the designing and making of an object. Thus the designer or master craftsman visualised the complete design—solving problems by developing innovative new ideas of form, proportion and colour.

There are, however, many crafts where the craftsman both designs and executes the product himself, particularly in the area of pottery, wall decoration, embroidery of certain types, toys, and basketry. There are many other crafts where the entire family or *karkhana* or artisans' workshop are involved. In each case the central idea is that the master craftsperson is designer, creator and producer in India.



The Indian words for handicrafts are *hastakala*, *hastashilpa*, *dastkari* or *karigari*, all of which mean handiwork, but they refer to objects made with craftsmanship, ie., specialised skills of the hands which are also artistic. The aesthetic content is an intrinsic part of such objects and means the object of utility has a value that goes beyond mere usage and is also pleasing to the eye. A handcrafted object is seldom merely decorative, and whether it has no embellishment or is highly decorative, its true purpose is served only when it is both useful and has a fine form.

– from *Living Craft Traditions of India,*
Textbook in Heritage Crafts for Class XI, NCERT

Craft and the Machine

The term for art and craft were synonymous in India before the colonial period. In India the crafts community was recognised as a crucial and important part of society on whom the development and enhancement of life depended. In Europe, with the introduction of machines, the role of the crafts community dwindled and crafts completely disappeared. Household utility items that had once been made by the crafts community are now mass produced by machines. Work done by the hand was considered inferior to intellectual work. Machines replaced handiwork that was seen to be both demeaning and backward.

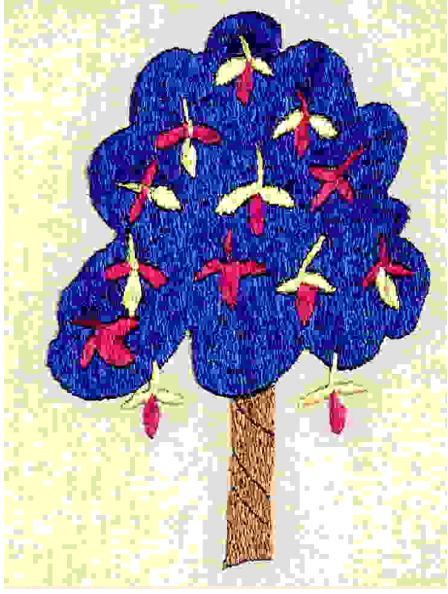


Two individuals who alerted the world to this tragic misconception were William Morris and John Ruskin. Their denunciation of the machine as "destroyer of the joy of hand-work" in the 1850s led to the commencement of the Arts and Crafts Movement in England. They wrote extensively to remind people that human begins are fundamentally creative and that machines were taking away the joy of life. Their writing greatly influenced many thinkers in India thus causing a new interest and study of craft traditions in India.

TIMELY DOCUMENTATION

Owen Jones's book, *The Grammar of Ornament*, 1856, documented the principles of good design in which there were examples of Persian, Indian, 'Hindoo' ornaments. Jones was also involved in arranging the great exhibitions in London in 1851 in which the best and most extravagant of Indian crafts were displayed to "help England to improve the poor quality of British craftsmanship that was suffering the damages of industrialisation."

The notion that India was an uncivilised country with a stagnant economy, with a traditional way of life that had not changed for centuries was sought to be dispelled by such exhibitions and exposure of the British public to great Indian crafts. In turn the exhibitions held in England led to greater interest in high quality Indian crafts.



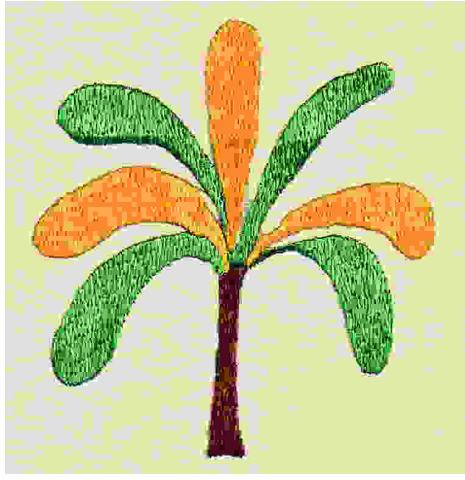
Fortunately, during this period some British officers undertook the documentation of traditional skills, tools, workplaces, objects; encyclopaedias were assembled; census, mapping and surveys were conducted. These records proved priceless resources for contemporary Indian designers and for craft revival programmes in post-industrial India. Despite the detrimental effect of the colonial economy on Indian crafts, the documentation of crafts by British officers during this time had important consequences.

In a book published in 1880, *Industrial Arts of India*, George C.M. Birdwood documented the state of the textile crafts of his time in Bengal. He mentions that cotton

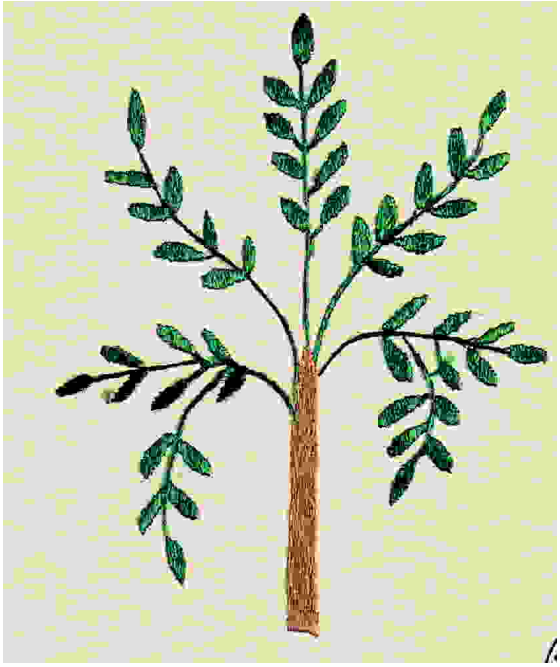
and silk cloth were manufactured in Bihar, Bengal, Orissa and Assam. Dacca (now in Bangladesh) was then a major textile centre.

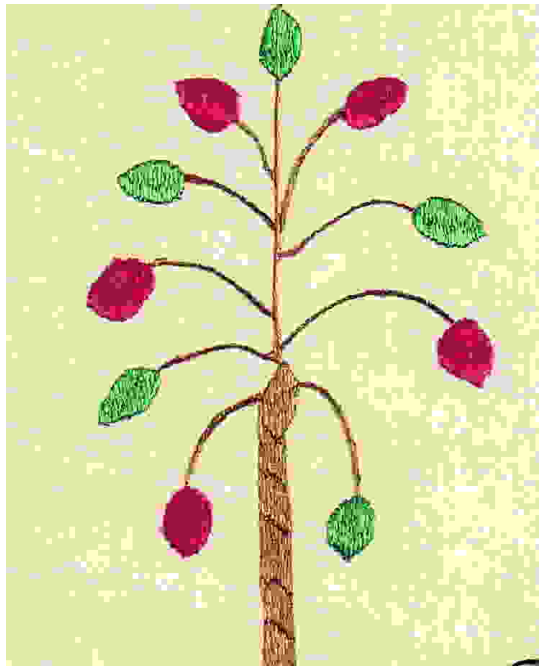
A rare muslin was formerly produced in Dacca, which when laid wet on the grass became invisible; and because it thus became indistinguishable from the evening dew it was named *shabnam*, i.e., 'the dew of evening'. Another kind was called *ab-rawan*, or 'running water', because it became invisible in water.

The Birdwood Journal of Industrial Arts of India, which was published following a decision in 1880 by the British Government to document Indian handicrafts, is also a valuable source of design and craft material even today.



Birdwood's opposition to industrialisation in India led him to believe that the greatness of Indian crafts was a result of the "happy religious organisation of the Hindu village" where every house of potters, weavers, coppersmiths and jewellers produced essential items of "unrivalled excellence".





Ananda Coomaraswamy



"The craftsman is not an individual expressing individual whims, but a part of the universe, giving expression to ideals of central beauty and unchanging laws, even as do the trees and flowers whose natural and less ordered beauty is no less God-given." Thus wrote Ananda Coomaraswamy of India's craftsmen, whose excellence has never been in dispute.

Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy (1877–1974), a Sri Lankan, is considered among the greatest historians of Indian arts and crafts. After graduating in Geology and becoming the Director of the Mineralogical Survey he formed the Ceylon Social Reformation Society and led a movement to highlight national education, teaching the vernacular language in all schools and reviving Indian culture of which he had deep knowledge and had a high regard for. In1938 he became the Chairman of the National Committee for India's Freedom. He contributed greatly towards people's understanding of Indian philosophy, religion, art and iconography, painting and literature, music, science and Islamic art. In his book, *The Indian Craftsman*, Coomaraswamy speaks about the corrupting influences of modernisation on the craftsman and the influences of European rule, and urges a return to the idealised pre-industrialised life in India.

In August 1947 he made a memorable statement: "India's culture is of value. Not so much because it is Indian but because it is culture".

It is interesting to note that Kamaladevi met Coomaraswamy at the Boston Museum in the U.S.A. where he headed the Oriental Section. She wrote of him: "Ananda Coomaraswamy had meant to us something special as a unique interpreter of our cultural tradition because of the totality of his vision that never blurred. So much like Gandhiji he treated culture as a significant index to the social organism".



THE DIVIDE BETWEEN ART AND CRAFT

The initial impact of the Industrial Revolution and the aftermath of the revolt of 1857 and British political control of India resulted in the setting up of a number of institutions. The Archaeological Survey of India and the Asiatic Society, Kolkata were established as interest in Indian art and culture grew. The first important museum to be established was the Indian Museum in Calcutta, in 1857. The earliest Indian museums had separate sections for art and archaeology, as well as galleries for geology, zoology and anthropology where craft items of antiquity were displayed. Museums provided safe storage and preservation of antiquities and their collection offer a unique opportunity to study and research craft traditions.

After 1857 the British established schools of art in Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai. The art schools followed the English syllabus that taught students the principles of western art of perspective, still-life drawing and landscape painting. Oil paintings soon replaced traditional forms of Indian painting. Students trained in the Western style of art entered the scene; Indian elite and royalty exposed to Western art patronised this westernised Indian art. Thus was born the division between art and craft in India. This led to a further fall in status of the Indian crafts community who had so loyally served Indian society for centuries.

The products of the textile mills, printing presses and India's first factories replaced handcrafted objects at home. Imported concepts taught in westernised art schools were totally divorced from the unifying philosophy of the Indian tradition which brought art, craft, architecture, design and manufacture together. A few brave efforts to turn learning towards indigenous inspiration were attacked as stratagems to deny Indians the rewards of western progress.

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, some political and social reformers recognised the importance of handicraft industries as a channel of economic regeneration and cultural confidence in the face of the colonial onslaught. Their vision inspired poet Rabindranath Tagore's craft experiments at his university in Santiniketan, and the emphasis on village industry with which Mahatma Gandhi provided a foundation for India's struggle towards independence.



As described in detail in Chapter 3, in the early years of the twentieth century, crafts became a catalyst for political thought and action. The *swadeshi* movement ('by Indians, for Indians') attempted to restore the dignity of labour and human creativity. A simple craft tool—the spinning wheel—became the symbol of national revolt, and hand-spun cloth, the livery of freedom.

The handloom revolution which followed was accompanied by the promotion of village industries and by a national awareness of the need to protect and



enhance traditional skills, products and markets within a new industrial environment.

BOUND BY CASTE

Gandhiji had hoped that with the attainment of Independence the notion of caste would gradually disappear, but this failed to happen and the status of the craftsperson as manual labourer fell further.

Today, even though social mobility is on the increase, heredity, caste and community affiliations continue to play an important role in the crafts sector. The association between particular castes/communities and artisanal activities still seems to be strongest in the case of pottery, metal work, leather work, cane and bamboo work. Where the number of first-generation workers is small, caste and community barriers are breaking down gradually, specifically in relatively dynamic manufacturing activities, such as tailoring and woodwork, which are attracting a large number of first-generation workers.

While many of the oppressive features of the colonial and pre-colonial periods are missing today, a large segment of the artisanal population lives in abject poverty. Not surprisingly, many artisans are giving up their traditional occupations, and taking up other forms of work, mostly unskilled, daily-wage labour, which assures them higher returns. The trend was confirmed by the survey conducted by the NGO, SRUTI, in 1987–88, which revealed that in more than half the traditional leather artisan households, several family members had given up leather-work, and were working as casual labourers.

Today weavers form the largest section of the rural poor. Ironically, our history books tell us that they were once among India's wealthiest professionals. Weaving guilds were once wealthy enough to sponsor the building of major temples in South India, and even maintained their own armies.

Economic Sustainability



The most neglected aspects in the past have been the poor income and working conditions of craftspeople. How many people in this country are aware that the craftsperson earns less than the average Indian factory worker? Indeed, in some cases, he/she cannot even find sustained work or employment through the year. Most handicraft artisans work in their own homes and many are dependent on a consistent supply of raw material. This may depend on the season or on their outlay. A bad agricultural season will naturally deplete the resource and production of crafts. Added to this a landless crafts community is market-dependent and hence extremely vulnerable to fluctuations in the market situation.

Torch-bearers of India's crafts traditions, inheritors of ancient technologies and cultural systems, artists and creators living within a binding community ethos, producers in an agro-based economy, and philosophers who accept the link between the spiritual and the material—these are the many roles which craftspeople play. Yet, despite their long history and the plethora of plans and schemes evolved for them by various governments since India's Independence, there may be no more than a few thousand craftspeople who are comfortably placed both socially and economically. The rest eke out their livelihoods at bare subsistence level.

A census does not reliably ensure coverage of seasonal artisans or those skilled artisans who have been marginalised in rural areas and forced to shift to city slums in search of alternative employment. Handloom weavers in Delhi share space with rag-pickers, some produce rag durries or embroider quilts with scraps of cloth obtained from tailoring establishments. Itinerant grass-mat weavers and basket-makers work in empty fields or on crowded city pavements and are seldom enumerated. As part-time or leisure-time craftspeople, they still form a part of a productive economy even if their status remains low and their incomes merely assure one full meal a day for each member of the family.

The average income derived from handwork, as found in our profiles, is ₹2,000 per month for an average family of five members. This amounts to ₹13.50 per day per head. It may be pertinent to note here that in a reply to a question in

Parliament in 1997, the Ministry of Home Affairs stated that it cost the exchequer ₹48.60 per day to provide the basic requirements, including food, for a prisoner lodged in Delhi's Tihar jail. When posed with this fact many a craftsman and woman fell into rueful thought and commented, not without a sense of humour, whether a spell in jail were not better than a life of craftwork.

– JAYA JAITLY
Visvakarma's Children

The artisans' incomes are exceedingly low. In 1987–88, the average annual income of artisans, interviewed by SRUTI, from their artisanal activities was ₹4,899. The group-wise average varied from a low of ₹2,219, in the case of cane and bamboo workers, to a high of ₹7,018 in that of wood-workers. The surveys also suggest that artisans own hardly any assets. The major asset owned is a house, more often



than not, *kuccha*, or made of mud. The incidence of landlessness is high: 61 per cent of the artisans in the SRUTI survey did not possess any land whatsoever. In no case did the holding exceed three acres. For most artisans, their inability to invest any surplus income in the purchase of agricultural inputs, makes for poor yields. The other assets most commonly owned by artisans are the tools and tackles of their respective trades. Some of them also own livestock or cattle. Forty-six per cent of the artisanal households surveyed did not have electricity connection.



Major Constraints for the Crafts Community

Apart from social stigma and caste bias, poverty and limited assets there are four major constraints afflicting the crafts community which have been briefly highlighted below.

Disappearing Raw Material

Crafts communities across the country are finding it more and more difficult to find adequate raw material of the right quality. With the depletion of natural resources, they now have to buy scrap and old articles. They are unable to buy sufficient quantities as they lack the requisite capital.

On the next page a story on the shrinking bamboo cultivation and its decimation in the North-east during colonial times, is only symptomatic of the huge crisis of raw materials that the craft industry faces in India today.

But beyond the non-availability of raw material or restriction on its use, the craftsman is completely aware of his symbiotic relationship with nature and his dependency on it for his very survival. For instance, to make colour, women in Bihar never pluck flowers but only use those that have already fallen on the ground, while in Kalamkari painting old, rusty horseshoes are even used to produce certain colours!



The Bamboo Story

Fishing traps, baskets, cradles, biers, bridges, rainproof hats and umbrellas, mats, musical instruments, water pipes—Indians have always used the bamboo in numerous ways. It is used for house construction, fencing and in the making of bullock carts. Low-cost domestic furniture and a vast range of domestic utility items made of bamboo can be easily seen in any of our bazaars. But we do not easily notice the countless little ways this modest material comes to be used by rural people. One can see it being used in the blacksmith's bellows, or as bamboo pins in carpentry joints or in the fabrication of toys in village markets.

But to the British foresters the multidimensional role that "the forest weed bamboo" played in the local Indian environment was of no account, as it did not figure in forest revenues. Bamboo also interfered with the growing of teak, an essential part of their colonial forest policy. It was only in the 1920s that the British realised that by mincing bamboo into millimetre shreds, cooking it in chemicals, pulping and flattening it, they could produce sheets of paper. This would bring the British increased forest revenue and 'development' (as defined by them) to the so-called backward regions of India. However, they chose to ignore the consequences this activity would have on the health of the forest. So while bamboo was sold at high prices to basket weavers, it was heavily subsidised for the paper industry.

Even after Independence, supplying bamboo at extremely low prices to Indian paper mills became a 'patriotic' duty of the government, and bamboo supplies were assured for decades at unchanged prices. The

For the Apatani of Arunachal Pradesh, and their tribal counterparts across the world, bamboo is everything—tools, weapon, shelter, food, vessel, pipe, music and idol.

– Max Martin
Down to Earth

disaster that this would cause to the forests, and to the craftsperson, still remained unforeseen.

You may recall that in your Class IX history textbook, *India and the Contemporary World–I*, a lot of emphasis was laid on how colonialism affected forests all across India and marginalised their inhabitants and the traditional occupations they practised. As late as the 1970s, the World Bank proposed that 4,600 hectares of natural sal forest should be replaced by tropical pine to provide pulp for the paper industry. It was only after protests by local environmentalists that the project was stopped. Colonialism was therefore not only about repression, it was also a story of displacement, impoverishment and ecological crisis.

The Indian craftsman is therefore conscious of the need to reduce, reuse and recycle, and stay in tune with the local environment that provides him with all the raw materials he needs.

How different this is from the contemporary textile mill or the stainless steel industry that pollutes the soil and local rivers!



A wood-carver from Kerala has this to say: "We go to the forests, and choose an appropriate tree that is not deformed in any way. Then, on the auspicious day and hour, we take offerings of sweets and rice and place them at the foot of the tree. In a prayer, we asks forgiveness from all the creatures, birds, and insects who live in the tree. We assure them that though we are depriving them of their house and food, we will use the wood for a good purpose, not wasting even a scrap of shaving."

– SHOBITA PUNJA
Museums of India

Loss of Patronage

Where traditionally the *jajmani* system of patronage or the local temple, affluent individual, *zamindar* or petty raja usually supported the craftsman through the year or in periods of crisis—the modern state machinery fails to do so. Dependent on a face-to-face relationship, developed over the generations, the rural potter, blacksmith or even musician knew that he played a key role in the social fabric. The story narrated below explains the relationship of traditional musicians of Rajasthan and their hereditary patrons.

Among the best known of all the clans of professional folk musicians in our country are those from Rajasthan—the Langas and Mangniyars of the Thar desert.

The most fascinating aspect of both these communities is the patronage they receive generation after generation from the same families. A Mangniyar who sings for a particular family is called a dhani. He must be paid a certain sum whenever a major event like a birth, a marriage or a death occurs in his patron's family, and he will have to perform. This dhani right is hereditary—so if he is attached to fifty families and has two sons, each one of his sons will become the dhani to twenty-five of these families and so on! Even family members who do not perform are entitled to a certain fixed payment.



But there are also some absolutely unique aspects to this relationship. Can you believe that if a performer is unhappy with his patron, he can 'divorce' him? In fact, in such a situation, the word 'talaq', ('divorce' in Urdu) is used!. As a first step of registering his protest, the performer stops singing the verses that are in honour of the patron's family. If this has no impact, the performers bury their turbans in the sand outside the patron's house. If even this has no impact, they proceed to bury the strings of their instruments outside the patron's house!

This is seen as being the last straw—an indication that the Langa or Mangniyar will never again contribute musically to any of the ceremonies in the patron's household. Often this results in serious consequences for the patron—who would now find it difficult to get his sons and daughters married, or would even find himself the laughing stock of the local society as he is parodied through abusive songs by the angry musicians!



Credit Facilities

By contrast, today's craftsman may find support in a small cooperative he belongs to, or from a distant buyer in some other part of the world who may buy his product over the Internet, but, by and large, he now has to fend for himself, attempting to find support occasionally in terms of bank loans, especially after a disaster (like an earthquake or tsunami) or the occasional craft bazaar in another part of the country—all supported by the State.

Crafts communities need working capital to develop their product, buy raw material, improve their tools and supply new markets. There are few credit facilities or insurance policies for the unorganised sector. Craftsmen need easy credit to free themselves from moneylenders. More liberalised credit schemes need to be offered by banks to get them out of debt and help them to invest in crafts revival.

Traditional and Local Markets

Crafts communities can no longer produce their traditional goods at prices that the poor rural consumer can afford. The poverty of the consumer and rural poor is such that traditional craftspersons are losing their largest clients and are thus divorced from the creative process of innovating for known clients and their needs.

Literacy and Education

The craftsperson in India clearly defines the difference between education and literacy. The craftsperson is skilled and is the repository of an unbroken but evolving tradition. Such a definition is used for one who is educated and talented. However the same person skilled in his craft is not able to read or write, rendering him



illiterate. Our craftspersons need both continuous education and literacy to face the challenges of the future.

For real progress it is imperative that the artisan becomes literate. This important aspect of his/her development should be part of a larger skill training scheme. We shall be failing in our duty to crafts and society if young people, while receiving training in crafts, in private or government centres, are not simultaneously provided facilities for adequate literacy. Literacy is critical in the process of increasing production and marketing, availing bank loans and understanding individual rights and preventing exploitation by other classes.

For the next generation of craftspeople, programmes and projects need to be developed to enhance leadership qualities within the crafts community, provide assistance in improving technology, increasing production, creating better working conditions and raising the economic standard of craftsmen. Craftspeople need to learn how to understand new clients and their requirements, how to maintain quality in their products. They need to learn what new raw material they could experiment with. Health, schooling, adequate shelter and work space is the right of every citizen in this country. For it is indisputable that craft activity cannot progress without our craftsmen receiving attention, care and recognition. It is only then that we may expect crafts to transmit their vitality and grace on to the future.

In ancient India, crafts and art were one—both synonymous, both an integral part of home, worship and everyday life, not segregated into gallery displays or marketplace commerce.

– LAILA TYABJI

Bringing back crafts into the daily life of the majority of Indians would be the first step to reinstate craftspersons in their rightful position in society. Nurturing skilled educated young craftspeople is the next step to ensuring a respectable position for crafts tradition in India in the future.

EXERCISE

1. How can craftspeople recover their status and esteemed place in the present economic situation?
2. Write a short article about harmful child labour keeping in mind the following:
   - economic exploitation
   - long working hours
   - loss of educational and recreational opportunities
   - health hazards—accidents, illness, violence, harmful effects of chemicals
   - abuse and exploitation—emotional and mental.
3. Write a speech on 'Disappearing Raw Material' for the local communiy. Describe the contributions of crafts to your state in the context of Indian culture. Describe the reasons for the loss of raw material and the consequences of the loss.
4. Ivory, shahtoosh and sandalwood are all banned items. Design a strategy for a 'sting operation' to expose this illegal trade.
5. Develop a lesson plan for the primary school for children of craftspersons that would help them to learn a literacy skill like writing or arithmetic. Link family craft in an interesting way.
6. The close connection between the craftspeople and the raw material they use is reflected in several local traditions. Research and describe one such tradition/ ritual/ceremony/festival in detail.



6 PRODUCTION AND MARKETING

CRAFTSPEOPLE'S most important prerogative is to create objects that clients need which can be sold so that they can earn a living and support their families. While aspects of design and development of the product are dealt with in another chapter, here we will look at the various traditional production, distribution and marketing strategies that are available to craft communities in India.

A craftsperson is a skilled producer working primarily with his/her hands and traditional, often simple, tools to make articles of daily use. There is great variety and diversity within the crafts community in every part of India. A craftsperson could be village or urban based, who procures his/her own material, uses manual skills learnt recently or from family traditions. He/she may produce utility items or specialised objects. The crafts community may supply local markets, sell through village *haats*, or transport goods to urban markets or for export. They may be self-employed or work as wage-earners or as members of a cooperative.



It is important to understand this diversity to appreciate the number of problems that may arise for the craftsperson at every step of the process of production and sale. It is important to remember how complex the system is and how many such systems of crafts production and marketing we have in our country.

The structure for production and marketing of crafts have the following framework:

PRODUCTION

Craft: This could be in metal, wood, clay, textile, gem-cutting, jewellery, leather, cane and bamboo, tailoring, etc. Each of these groups approaches its production work in a different way.

Location: Rural, urban, semi-urban. The location determines access to raw material, to different clients, and transport costs. Each of these will affect production, distribution and sale of crafts.

Raw Material: Does the craftsperson procure the raw material independently or is it supplied by a trader or the customer, as in the case of a tailor who is given the material by the client to make a garment? The raw material may be supplied by the government at subsidised rates or by a cooperative.

Skill and Technology: Is the craft produced manually or with semi-automated tools?





MARKETING

End Product: Is it a utility item that lasts a long time like a *belan* or *urli* or is it a daily consumable item like a flower garland? Does the craftsperson also provide services like repair and maintenance, as in the case of a blacksmith?

Markets: Can be termed village/urban, domestic, export. The craftsperson has to adapt to the needs of different types of markets and market demands. The client in each of these different markets has a varied set of demands.

Sales Channel: Does the craftsperson create objects for the village *haat, jajman*, traders or for the cooperative? Are the craftspersons attached to one client or many and how familiar are they with the client's needs, changing fashions and trends?

Employment Status: Is the craftsperson self-employed, a wage earner for a large or small organisation, a factory, an export enterprise or a member of a cooperative?

The combination and computation of these different scenarios is complicated and every situation requires a suitable response in terms of production, marketing and sales.

Raw Competition

The crisis faced by cane, bamboo and fibre artisans is due to the declining availability of raw material, Apart from the fact that the raw material they depend on is often diverted to other uses, especially to the paper industry, there has been little planning or investment in regenerating the country's bamboo, cane, grass and other such natural resources. As a result, raw-material prices have spiralled and the price of the artisan's products have remained inelastic. There has been a partial erosion of the traditional markets as cane, bamboo, and fibre products are being replaced by synthetic fibres and plastics.

RURAL ECONOMY

In the rural economy the sale of crafts products plays an important role. The crafts community is commissioned to prepare goods by a client e.g. *diyas* for Diwali. The weaver may be asked to weave a set of saris for a marriage and may be paid in kind (with foodgrain) or given a monetary advance. In these cases the crafts community knows the clients and is aware of their community, status and the kind of objects they might need. Often the client is an old customer and the craftsperson's family may have served the family for many generations.



Shawls are needed in every Kashmiri home for weddings and births. These occasions ensure the *shawlwala's* regular visits to every family. He visits the homes, interacts within a strict protocol and yet is an intimate member of the client family as he deals with the women of the house in the kitchens and chambers and listens to their 'talk'. He knows the taste of all his clients and takes personalised orders for new products. Centuries-old rate samples of embroidery designs are shared with the lady of the house and the *shawlwala* suggests the colour for each flower, leaf and creeper. He then instructs the artisans who execute the orders and returns to deliver them.

MARKET OR *HAAT*

In the rural area many villages, even today, organise a weekly market or *haat*. This market is organised by village artisans and each craftsperson is given a designated place in the market to sell his/her wares. The local potter produces pots for regular use and for festivals. Craftspersons from nearby villages are also invited to the weekly *haat* to sell their wares. The crafts family brings its wares, spreads them out on a *durrie*, or puts up a tent and displays its products for sale. The *haat* starts in the late morning and carries on till dusk when the unsold items are taken back home.

Wandering for Markets

"Only rain can stop my potter's wheel from turning," says Bhura Ram. He cannot afford to miss a day's work or to have blemishes on his pots. "My wares must sound as good as they look. You see customers tap them with a coin to test their quality."

Besides making pots for his *jajmans*—numbering ten in all—Bhura takes his wares to the weekly market in Pather and Chilkana. The leftover articles he loads on his mule and then roams from village to village, within a radius of 15 kms, in an effort to hawk them. Years of experience have taught Bhura to maintain the crucial balance between production and sales.



FESTIVALS AND *MELAS*

Whenever there is a festival in the village the duration of the *haat* is extended by several days. The Shivratri *mela* in the village of Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh, lasts several days so that the visitors and pilgrims to the festival could also spend the evening after the *pujas* and ceremonies in the *mela*. The *mela* sometimes has a merry-go-round, a giant wheel, magic shows and other amusements for children and families to enjoy together while they buy things for their daily use from the crafts shops.

In Gujarat at the procession of the goddess Vardayani, or Vaduchima, the palanquin which enthrones the mother, is without wheels. Woodcutters bring wood for the chariot, carpenters prepare the frame, barbers the canopy, gardeners bring the flowers, the potters mould the clay lamps that light the procession. Muslims provide the cotton, and the tailors the wicks for the oil lamps. The Brahmins cook khichri *which is distributed as* prasad*, and the Rajputs stand guard while the Patidars provide the garments for the goddess.*

– PUPUL JAYAKAR
The Earthen Drum



PILGRIMAGE CENTRES

Important temples, mosques, gurudwaras and even churches in India attract devotees from near and far. Throughout the country these pilgrimage centres draw large crowds to the market. These annual pilgrimages draw so many people that craft communities have settled near them and whole townships have developed that have become famous for the crafts they produce. Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu has many famous temples, attracting a large number of pilgrims so that, over the centuries, it has become a thriving cotton and silk weaving centre. Today the fame of the town and the craft is so closely linked that the saris produced here are called Kanchi cottons or Kanchipuram silks. The products here achieved a certain style and quality for which they are famous and large workshops and shops have mushroomed throughout the town.

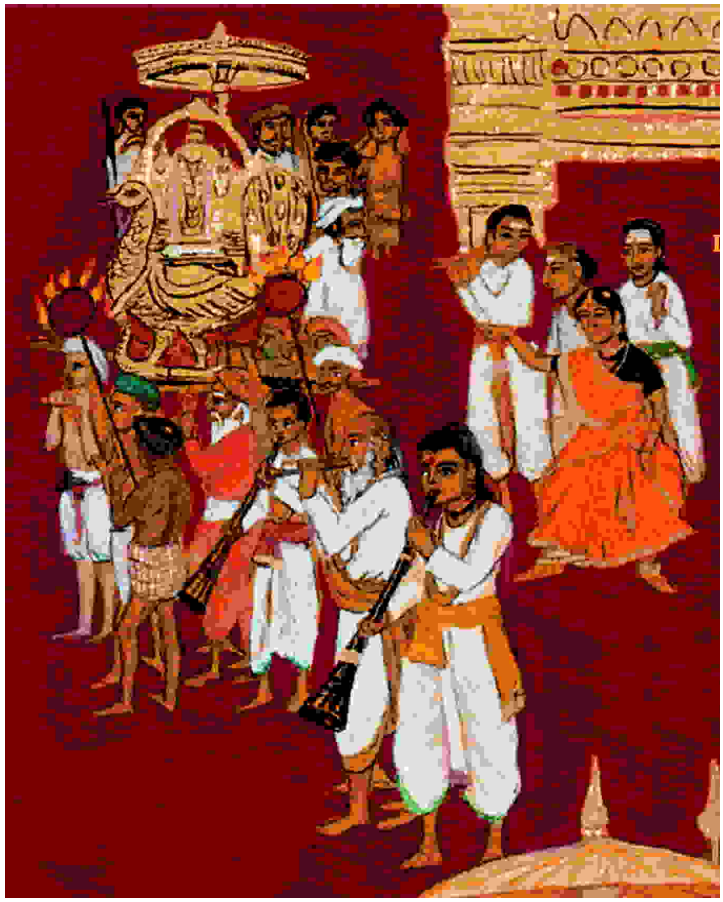
The traditional marketplaces for crafts, described above, have advantages and disadvantages for the crafts community. Consider the following:

Advantages

- Production units were close to the source of raw materials.
- Transport of goods were limited so prices could be contained.
- Producer and client were often known to each other and hence the artisan understood the client's needs and requirements.
- Middle men had little or no role to play in the sale transactions.

Disadvantages

- Stagnation of skills and tools
- Stagnation of designs
- Limitation on prices
- Limited needs of clients



RURAL TO URBAN

To supply the needs of the urban market the crafts community would either settle near urban markets or sell its wares at the local *haat or* bazaar, during festivals or at a pilgrimage centre. This meant transporting wares often over long distances. Whenever possible or necessary the crafts community would leave part of the family to continue production in the village where the raw materials were available. The other part of the family would reside in the urban city and set up shop for sale of goods to the urban community. The other option was for the crafts community to use the services of a middle man such as a trader. The trader would come to the village, buy goods from the crafts community and take the wares to the city for sale, keeping the profit for himself.

Advantages

- Opportunity to develop new sets of skills and tools
- Opportunity to develop new designs for new clients

Disadvantages

- Pricing needed to be restructured.
- Transport of goods to greater distances caused prices to be raised.
- Producer often did not know the client.
- Producer did not understand the client's needs.
- Middle men played a major role in the sale transactions, often taking most of the profit from the crafts producer.

PRIVATE MARKETING

The general pattern of marketing of handicrafts is that independent artisans work in their homes or for workshop owners *(karkhanadars,* master craftsmen, sub-contractors) and sell goods manufactured by them to big stockists both domestic and international, or to small shopkeepers directly or through brokers. The stockists and small dealers in turn sell them either to local consumers or outstation merchants or foreign importers, again either directly or through specific intermediate agencies. Large dealers have relatively high financial resources and some of them have goods made to order directly from artisans, advancing money to them for



the purchase of materials. Artisans working on this basis are often in debt to dealers on account of these advances. With a more liberalised credit policy being followed by banks in India and the current emphasis on easier credit facilities being extended to the weaker sections of society, the situation of indebtedness amongst handicraft artisans is improving slowly.

The role of private enterprise in the field of handicrafts marketing has been, and is today, overwhelmingly important. About 90 per cent of handicraft production is handled by private agencies and the rest by public marketing and cooperative agencies.



Home to Factory

The gem and jewellery sector is the largest foreign exchange earner for India. In 1992–93 exports soared to ₹9,404 crore. In the international market, Indian jewellery is competitively priced, and is cheaper than products from other countries, possibly because labour is cheaper in India.

Jewellery-making was until recently a dispersed, household industry. However, as a result of various government interventions and the opening of the export market, this industry is gradually moving out of the household sector. Rural jewellers are largely self-employed, whereas most of the urban artisans tend to work as wage labourers or on contract basis. Urban production units are mainly owned by traders and retailers. Most of the non-traditional artisans are located in urban areas and are engaged in processing rough diamonds and gem stones. There are now a large number of workers in the non-household sector. As a result, today the non-traditional artisan outnumbers the traditional artisan.

EXPORT PROMOTION

Planned development initiated in the country after Independence has resulted in the present growth of the Indian economy. Building infrastructure for economic development has been the major challenge of Indian planners. Over the years the country's economic base has been strengthened and diversified. Export of Indian handicrafts has gained importance, both in quantitative

and qualitative terms. Export items include clothing, gems and jewellery, handlooms, handicrafts and leather goods, among others. There are established markets for Indian handicrafts in U.S.A., U.K., West Europe, Russia and other East European countries, while new markets, namely, Japan, South Asia and the Middle East continue to expand. Today, Indian handicrafts are supplied to over 100 countries.

Questions for Craftspeople

Why have potters not become full-fledged ceramicists producing modern glazed tableware? Why did the weaver not find place in a textile mill? What happens to the chappal*-makers when plastic footwear floods the market? Can a shoemaker produce as fast as a machine? Where should the craftsperson go with his problems in order to improve his skill or widen his market?*

The most crucial part of a craft producer's life is the marketplace. It could be either at his doorstep or in far-off countries. Are these markets accessible without intermediaries who exploit them? Can they sell their goods or are they prisoners of greater market forces?

– JAYA JAITLY

Visvakarma's Children



The Government of India has several schemes for the marketing and promotion of export trade in handicrafts. Various forms of assistance are made available to export organisations, such as Export Promotion Councils and other organisations of industry and trade, as well as to individual exporters. The scheme also provides support for export publicity, participation in trade exhibitions, setting up of warehouses and in undertaking research and product development.



Craft Diplomacy

Yet another role has now emerged: crafts as a vehicle for diplomacy, demonstrated through the Festivals of India in foreign countries such as Britain, France, the United States, China and others. These great expositions of craft and design activity have highlighted the strength and potential of surviving traditions as well as the complexity of merchandising craft overseas.

The Trade Development Authority (TDA), and Trade Fair Authority of India (TFAI) were established by the Government of India. These organisations have given a new orientation to the country's trade promotion through fairs, exhibitions and other promotional activities.

NEW COMMERCE

In developed countries where crafts have died out and skilled crafts communities no longer exist, there is a sharp increase in demand for Indian crafts.

The Internet and e-commerce are new forums for promotion and sales, along with the development of the retail sector, thus creating new distribution channels for the craft industry.

The biggest challenge is to understand the customers' preference and to spot the next big trend in design or accessories. From working on product display, merchandise selection to pricing or just the logistics of running a retail outlet—all are huge challenges to independent sustenance and growth of a business.

The Indian crafts industry is growing rapidly as it is an important supplier of craft products in the world. The industry provides employment to over six million artisans. The export earnings alone from Indian handicrafts for 1998–99 amounted to ₹1,200 crore. According to data the export of handicrafts had increased to ₹10,746 crore in 2007–2008 with India's contribution in the world market being 1.2 per cent.

– *The Times of India*, July 2010

With the crafts industry growing at such a fast pace to meet the demands for export there is need for efficient, qualified professionals to run businesses and understand the demand and supply of the sector.

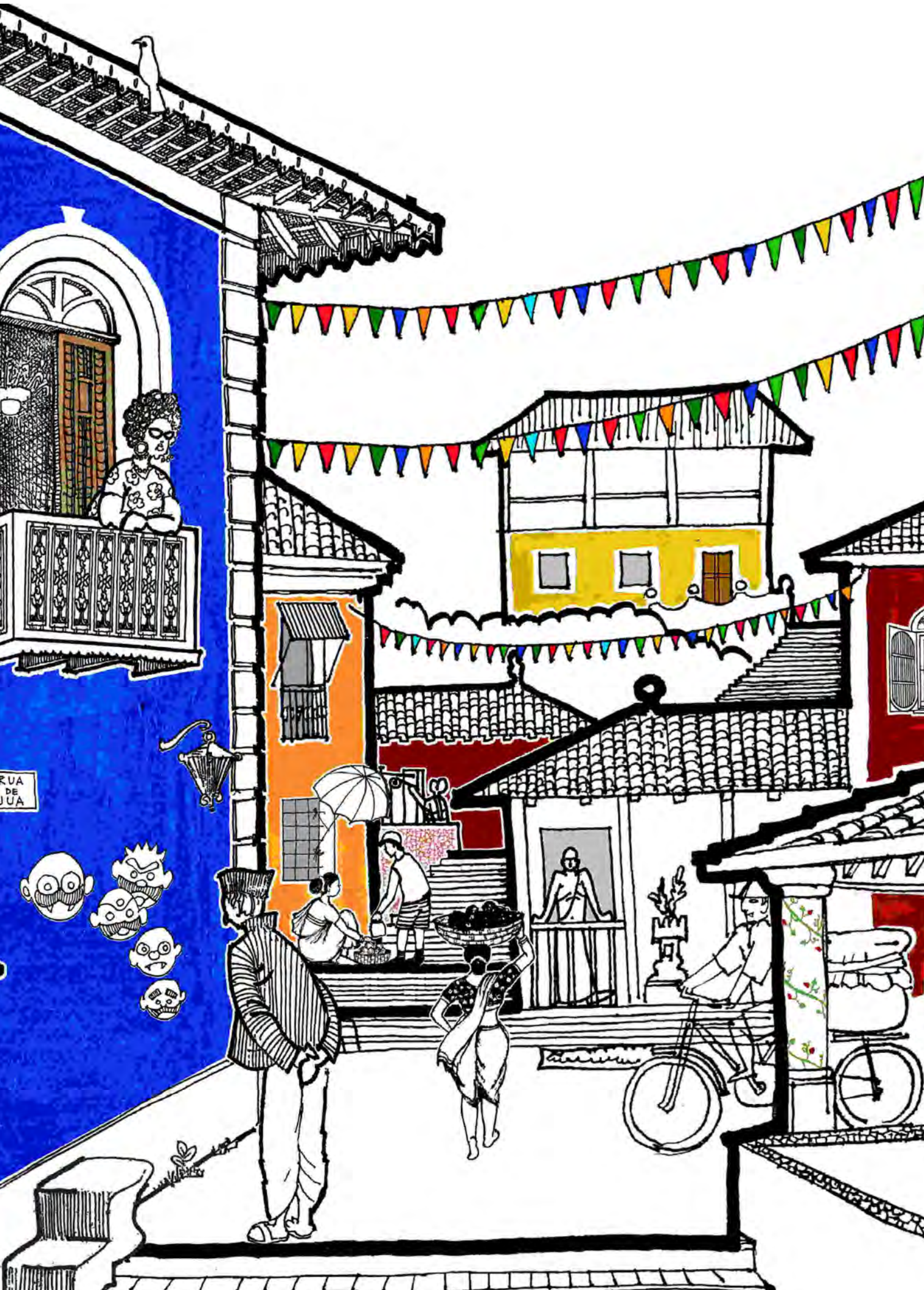
Handicrafts entrepreneurs can only succeed if they take the crafts community into their confidence, make them shareholders and continue to motivate, innovate and explore possibilities along with them.

Training in the use of technologies, the latest equipment and nature-friendly techniques will also help artisans to keep abreast of global trends.



EXERCISE

1. Research is essential for the production and marketing of any product. Problems would arise if a proper pre-production research market survey in not done in the following areas:
   - Availability of raw material
     Example: Setting up a carpet centre in a non-wool producing area thereby increasing the cost of transportation and production.
   - Identification of buyers and review of customer needs and demands
   - Untapped skills
   - Training and skill improvement facilities
   - Financial forecasting.
2. Amul is a rural development success story. It gives employment to 16 lakh people. But it would not be able to do so without an appropriate distribution system. What would be the appropriate distribution system for craft products in rural and urban areas?
3. Describe a local *haat* in your area. Focus on one craft and outline the main advantages and disadvantages for the local crafts community of sale in the local haat.
4. How could the pilgrimage centre in your area improve the marketing prospects for the crafts communities? Mention new products, pricing structure, packaging and display that could be improved.
5. The plight of the poor in the hands of a moneylender or a middle man, is a popular theme in Indian literary tradition be it prose, poetry or theatre. Find an example in the literature of your local language or mother tongue and explain.
6. Develop a format for a website to sell crafts on the Internet.



8 CRAFT IN THE AGE OF TOURISM

TOURISM, if it is managed sensitively, can be a miraculous catalyst for economic and cultural revitalisation; it not only enhances income but also establishes an identity of the country. Two Asian countries—Thailand and India—are among the top ten destinations in the world, and tourists to India increase by almost 15 per cent each year.

The nature of tourism itself has changed—with tourists travelling for leisure and pleasure, rather than culture and architecture. This new type of traveller is often looking to buy ethnic crafts or souvenirs as a memento of their travel experience. Which crafts do visitors to India buy? Where do they buy them from? These are some of the questions to explore.

India has over twenty million craftspeople, who create a very wide range of varied crafts. Is it possible to productively use the ever-growing tourism industry to explore approaches to craft merchandising that will benefit and sustain the crafts community throughout the country? Let us analyse present trends in crafts production and sale in the tourism sector.

Popular Souvenirs from India

- Carpets and *durries*
- Kundan, silver and semi-precious jewellery
- Block-printed fabric
- Embroideries
- Folk art—Madhubani paintings, Bastar metal work
- Silk—material, garments, scarves and stoles
- Embossed and embroidered leather
- Pashmina shawls from Kashmir which continue to be the most popular



The market for crafts in the tourism sector is based on certain factors which it is important to understand and analyse in order to develop the market potential for crafts. A similar approach can be used to analyse other marketing options for crafts.

TOURISTS' PREFERENCES

- Air travel implies limited bulk and weight of luggage for travellers. So they prefer to carry small, light objects. Since weight is a major problem, the things that tourists buy have to be either unusual, or something that they don't get in their own country or so competitive in price that they find them irresistible.
- Today popular destinations in India are Goa and Kerala where visitors flock for the beaches and ayurvedic spas. Tourists also come to see monuments searching for a unique cultural experience like visiting the magnificent forts and palaces of Rajasthan. It is important to realise that trends, fashions, tastes and lifestyles change. This, in turn, affects the tourism and crafts industry.





- With cameras being so sophisticated, easy-to-use and inexpensive, tourists no longer need souvenirs just to put into showcases at home as reminders of their travels.
- International travel today is quite commonplace rather than a once-in-a-lifetime adventure. Tourists today are exposed to the best the world can offer, and are therefore more selective. The Indian experience shows that the traveller today—even back-packers—do have money to spend, but since they travel the globe, they are quite selective about what they spend their money on.
- Tourists these days are younger; they are usually professionals on holiday, rather than just the retired and the elderly. Their homes are smaller; usually colour-coordinated and designed to a theme. Just because something is ethnic it is not always desired by them. However, sometimes, simply changing a colour or size can make a traditional item into a best-seller.

Some years ago, weavers from Varanasi converted the traditional *dupatta* into a stole, a length of cloth worn like a small shawl by women in Western countries. This new product became very popular and sold well at tourist centres as it was light, the right size and comfortable to wear with western clothes.

- Today's travellers do not want things that are difficult to maintain, which require frequent washing and polishing. Hence, there was a sharp decline in recent years in the demand for Indian metal crafts like *bidri*, silver and brassware.

An English lady wanted to buy a white *chikan* tablecloth—but the thought of hand laundering, starching and ironing its fragile, heavily embroidered muslin folds worried her. Finally, she had a brainwave. "I'll buy it for my mother-in-law," she said. "She will like the tablecloth and my good taste, but she will have the headache of looking after it for the rest of her life!"

- On the other hand tourists and travellers do buy clothes and accessories for holidays—casuals, sandals, cloth bags, jewellery. These items are usually cheaper in India than in Europe and America. Tourists today are much less conservative and enjoy experimenting

with local styles. Holiday clothes and accessories are, therefore, areas that could be developed.

- Visitors would prefer to invest in and to take home truly beautiful artistic objects. This area of artistic, high-quality products needs to be developed rather than trying to sell poorly designed, cheap, outdated souvenirs of the past.

POPULAR SALES OUTLETS FOR CRAFTS

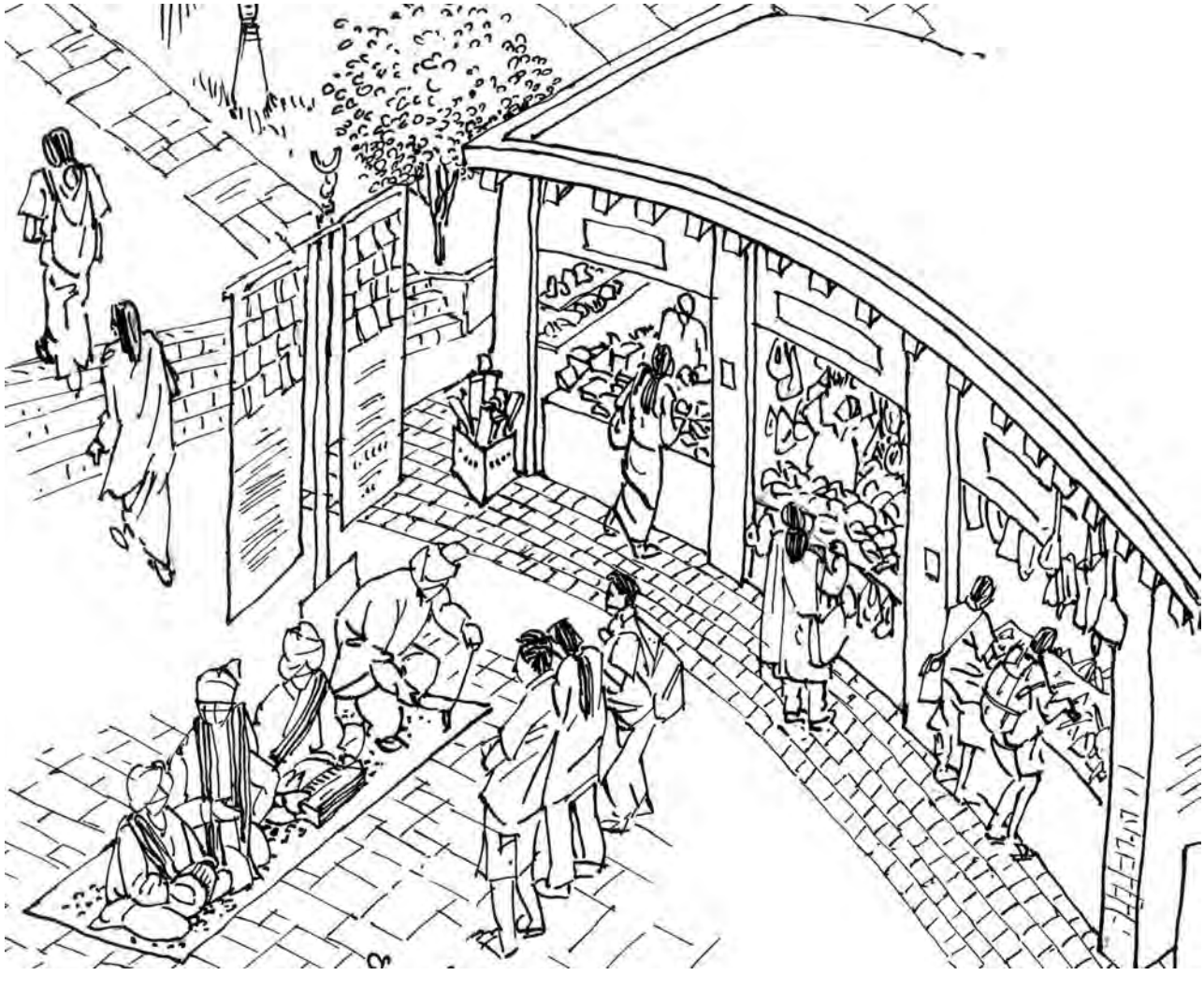
Most tourists visit the Taj Mahal, one of the most beautiful monuments in the world. However, this world famous heritage site is surrounded by hundreds of little shops and stalls full of cheap alabaster and ugly plastic replicas of the Taj, rows and rows of small soap-stone pill boxes with poor quality marble inlay and lids that don't fit. The shops are run by aggressive and persistent shopkeepers and there is not a craftsperson or genuine craft object in sight. The same is true of all our great tourist sites, museums and pilgrimage centres—the Red Fort, Khajuraho, Ajanta, Varanasi, Hampi, Mathura, Mahabalipuram and the beaches of Goa and Orissa.



There are government-run Cottage Industries and State Handicraft Emporia in all the cities. Baba Kharak Singh Marg in Delhi has a row of crafts emporia run by the State Handicrafts Corporations' shops. These emporia were an innovation as India was probably the first country with a policy and a Ministry for Handlooms and Handicrafts.

A comparatively new trend is privately run shops in cities, hotels and airports. Commercial tourist complexes market a mix of ethnic food, rural lifestyle, craft, music and dance such as Vishaala in Gujarat, Swabhumi in Kolkata, Chowki Dhani in Jaipur. The craftsperson is featured as both exhibit and entertainer.

In order to enter the field of handicraft marketing one has to know where and how the products are made, appreciate the craftsmen's lifestyle and method of working. Thereafter, reliable supply contacts or procurement arrangements should be established, as well as efficient distribution outlets, and the whole enterprise managed



in a business-like way. In the selection process, good taste and visual discrimination are valuable assets, besides a general understanding of crafts. Working out realistic cost prices with a reasonable mark-up for retail and wholesale prices are among the basic steps for proper marketing.

NEW AVENUES FOR CRAFTS DEVELOPMENT

Crafts, in tourism, does not just mean selling things to tourists. It could also mean crafting the spaces that tourists use such as the hotels, guest houses, restaurants and scenic spots. Crafts of all kinds—architectural, functional, decorative, can be used to enhance and accent these places. This way local craft skills can be promoted and sustained in the long term.

Devigarh, Neemrana, Samode and other listed Heritage Hotels in Rajasthan and elsewhere have no hotel arcades, no stereotyped craft souvenirs but every room, surface, and object in the hotel has been handcrafted in the best traditional techniques and with the best contemporary designs.





Museums are a wonderful venue for selling quality crafts to a discerning audience. The few museums that have shops only have a small set of badly produced postcards and some dusty plaster casts.

Airport shops are another significant venue to capture customers for local handicrafts. As this is the last impression visitors have of India before they return home it is important that airport shops help them to forge a lasting and endearing image of our country.

Dilli Haat, the government crafts bazaar in the centre of Delhi, is now being replicated all over India. It is a wonderful opportunity for craftspeople to become aware of consumer tastes and trends, and for urban middle-class consumers to learn about the huge range of regional craft skills, materials and techniques. This type of crafts bazaar brings craftspeople from all over India, allows them to sell their own products; the programme of crafts changes every fortnight so as to be interesting all the year round, bringing fresh products to new audiences in the city.

Natural and cultural heritage sites can become a catalyst and an inspiration for change. It is possible that such places can become craft production centres where wonderful new crafts by craftspeople and designers are developed, inspired by the historical site. There has been some work done in this direction in Mahabalipuram in Tamil Nadu and Konark in Orissa where skilled young craftspeople train, and produce wonderful new pieces inspired by the monuments. Organised craft fairs, and craft demonstrations in local hotels also link tourism to local traditions without exploitation. Tourists can contribute to craft development and social development initiatives at such tourist centres. Eco-tourism must be an enhancing experience for the community, not only for the tourist.

In Ranthambhore, Rajasthan, hundreds of villagers were displaced by the creation of the Tiger Reserve. Tourists, frustrated by the lack of entertainment in between visits to the Wild Life Park, used to go off in their jeeps to the villages with their cameras, disrupting the villagers' daily routines and often offending them with their holiday clothes. Traditional rural hospitality rapidly turned into reverse exploitation: children began begging for presents, villagers started asking tourists for money when they were photographed. A Craft Centre outside the Tiger Reserve was set up employing hundreds of local rural women. The Centre developed crafts for the tourist market around locally available traditional materials. The Centre attracted tourists who could come there, interact with craftspeople, see, understand and buy crafts in a natural yet regulated environment.

How Crafts Declined with Tourism

Kashmir is a State whose entire economy was based on tourism and craft. For well over a century it was the most important tourist destination—for Indian as well as foreign tourists. Almost every family in the Kashmir Valley was in the handicrafts business in some way, either making or selling crafts—carpets, shawls, crewel and *kani* embroidery, jewellery, papier-mâché, and carved walnut wood, silver and beaten copper items.

The tourist market was so large and constant that no attempt was made to sustain the local market or adapt the crafts to local consumer needs and budgets. Over the past two centuries, crafts originally designed for local consumption, like the ornamentally carved Kashmiri ceilings made of walunt wood, and the traditional *pherans* and shawls worn by Kashmiris with heavy embroidery were gradually reduced to souvenirs and gift items aimed at the tourist trade.

A classic example is papier mâché originally developed to make light, decorative furniture and home accessories for ordinary homes in Kashmir. The papier mâché art was used to make simple products for the tourist market such as pill and powder boxes, coasters and napkin rings, and Christmas tree decorations, embellished with western motifs of cats, bells and snowflakes.

Two decades of conflict have made Kashmir a dangerous area for tourists. Foreign tourists no longer travel in large numbers to Kashmir, and its craftspeople have been deeply affected and the whole economy, dependent on tourism, has suffered enormously.

So linked were these crafts with tourism and the beauty of the Valley that the same products marketed outside this troubled state, by displaced Kashmiri craftspeople in hotel arcades, footpaths and markets in other states, just did not sell as well.

A strategy to revitalise and find new consumers and usages for Kashmiri crafts is urgently required. It is a warning that no craft should become too dependent on any one market—particularly international tourism.





CRAFTS AND SURVIVAL

In contrast, Kutch in Gujarat is an example of how crafts have repeatedly been an instrument of dynamic economic survival and revival.

In Kutch as in Kashmir, almost everyone is a craftsperson. Products made here range from everyday terracotta objects to fabulous jewellery and embroideries. Formerly this craft was a way of life, made for household embellishment in poor rural communities. It was the terrible six-year drought in the 1980s that made people realise the potential of the skills they possessed. In an otherwise drought-prone desert environment with little to attract visitors, Kutch used its rich craft heritage to generate tourism. Today, every household is dependent in some way on the production and sale of craft. Apart from sale of products, specialised craft tours are organised to cater to visitors' interests in vegetable dye, block-printing or embroidery techniques.

When, in 2001, Kutch was struck by a devastating earthquake an estimated 80,000 people lost their lives, and over 2,28,000 artisans were severely affected by the quake, losing their families, their homes, and their livelihoods.

Once again crafts came to the rescue. Craftspeople, without insurance, pensions, provident funds, were, ironically, the first to recover from the trauma of the earthquake, thanks to their inherent skills. Their buyers, international tour operators and even students and back-packers, came loyally to their rescue, sending in not just orders, but funds for earthquake relief, reconstruction, craft development projects, and help in many ways. Today the crafts communities of Kutch have re-established their crafts and their markets.

One tourist, hearing of the earthquake and remembering the crafts and creativity of the community and the colours of her visits to Kutch, sent a crate full of scissors and needles for distribution!

New Trends in Craft Development

India is a fast-growing economy and needs to find a prominent place for its crafts in the global market. In this process of economic development the crafts communities need to be involved in finding new and innovative ways to help their craft to survive, as they are creative people with many ideas and have adapted to many changes over the years.

Catering for a Variety of Tastes: Tourism does not imply just European and American tourists. More and more Asians of all levels of society are travelling both within their own country and to neighbouring nations—generating new markets and new consumers.

Promoting Cultural Values: Craft development should be a means to promote cultural wisdom and family values. Showing respect to crafts communities should also be a part of our concerns. It is important to bring them and their needs into the consultative process when planning craft promotion.

Organic and Sustainable: Today the world is threatened by global warming, pollution, unhealthy living conditions and destruction of the environment. Conscientious tourists have now begun to ask if products have been grown organically, and whether the crafts process and production are sustainable in terms of the environment.

There are many crafts that are not based on sound environmental principles. Crafts production is in itself not always eco-friendly. Dyes and mordants pollute rivers; wood-based skills denude our forests. Leather tanning is accompanied by noxious smells and chemicals. Metal crafts and glass smelting are practised in appallingly hazardous and life-threatening surroundings.



There are items like ivory and sandalwood whose sale is restricted, protected animal skins and parts the sale of which is completely banned. Tourists, both foreign and domestic, must be informed why these products are not for sale and of the national effort to save India's wildlife and forests.

When encouraging and promoting crafts, attempt should be made to improve the working environment of craftspeople and to find new, innovative ways to protect natural resources, farm renewable resources like trees and bamboo, reduce pollution, and the exploitation of nature. Crafts that follow sustainable practice, that are organic and that do not exploit human beings should be clearly marked and labelled so that the growing conscientious market is well served by the Indian crafts industry.

Natural and Handmade: Today, 'handloom', 'handmade', 'natural dyed', 'natural fibres' are the Asian equivalents of designer labels. This is what India is especially famous for and for this we need to protect our reputation and never sell something as natural dyed or 100 per cent pure cotton if it is not.



Brand India: We Can Learn from Swiss Watches

Each nation has a unique brand identity, with its core values and essence diffusing through the population, who in turn reinforces and spreads these values and cultural nuances in a gigantic circle of brand building. No two nations are exactly the same, for a nation's identity comes from its languages, music, art, style, customs and religions.

Most successful watch brands derive their brand equity from being Swiss-made. Japanese products are associated with quality and innovation. Negative associations also transfer. Chinese branded products, top quality or not, are generally not perceived as such.

At present India's image is somewhat fragmented, ranging from cultural associations built by the 'Incredible India' tourism campaign, to a global fascination with the vibrancy of 'Bollywood', from the widespread poverty highlighted in the film *Slumdog Millionaire*, to the business perception of India as the world's back office. India needs to define its core values and national identities clearly, and purposefully build greater natural brand equity and value.

– Extracted from an article in *The Times of India*, 21 June 2009, by PAUL TEMPORAL, Visiting Fellow at Said Business School, University of Oxford

- ***Transport and Monetary Transactions:*** Traditional sandalwood carvings, miniature paintings and metalware are no longer as popular as before. Handcrafted furniture and furnishings, however, because they are so much cheaper than in the West, are a new growth area. When tourists see a long-term investment, they are ready to have their purchases shipped. It is important to be aware of the transport facilities available, licenses, duties, and import and export restrictions. The use of the credit card also means that tourists are no longer restricted by foreign exchange regulations or traveller's cheques or bank balance.
- ***Design*** is an aspect of craft that is often ignored and not invested in. Craft has always been changing and re-inventing itself, and it must respond to the shifts in society and lifestyles. If it remains static, it gradually withers away and dies. Sadly, however, though craftspeople in India still do the most incredible carving, embroidery, metal work, and inlay work in a host of different regional traditions and materials, product design has not kept pace with contemporary trends and styling.

Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines have been much more innovative and clever in adapting their traditional skills to crafts products that are both picturesquely Asian yet contemporary.

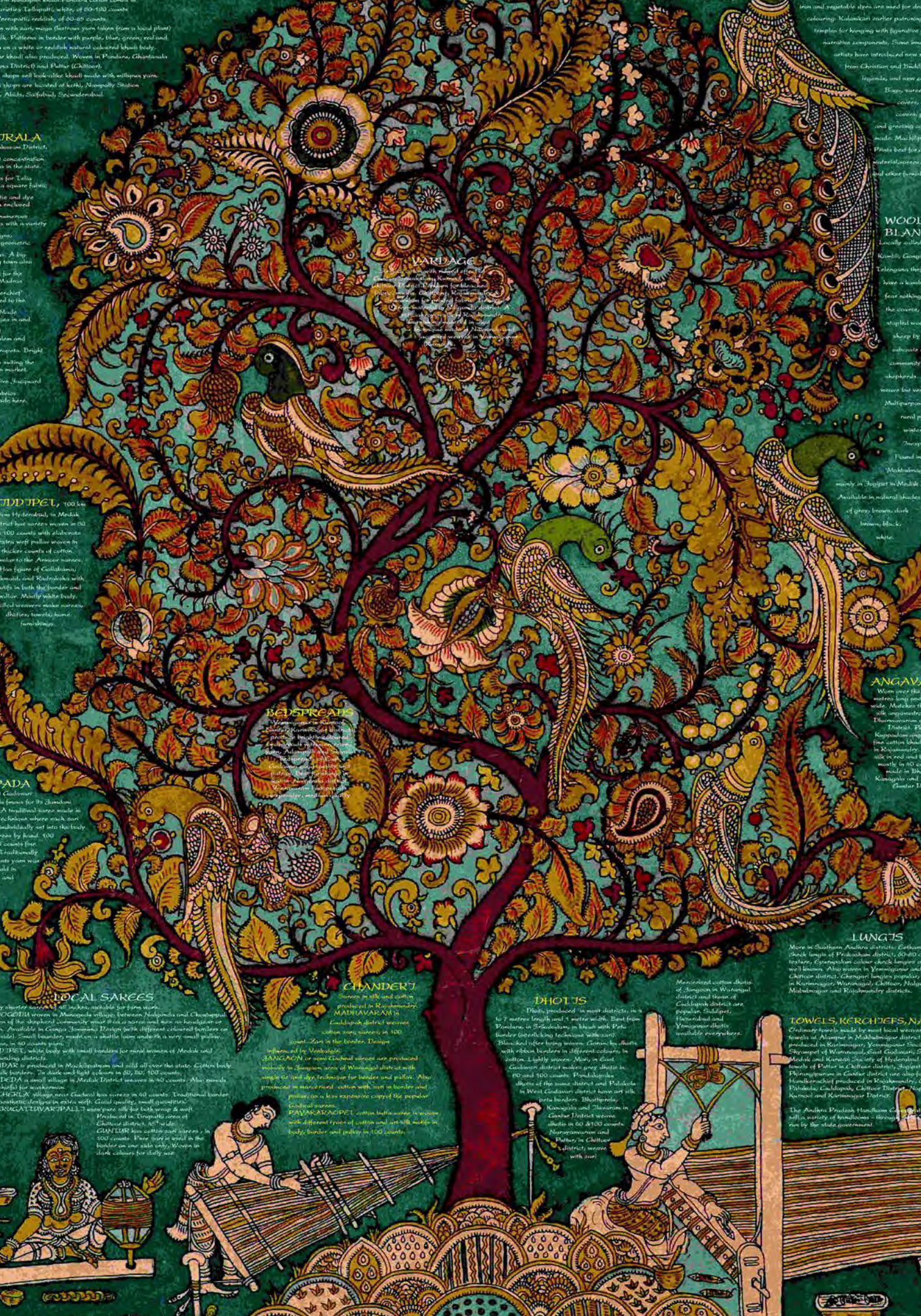
- ***Presentation and Packaging*** is one of the weakest areas in the Indian crafts chain. Even products aimed specifically at tourists do not have travel-proof carrier bags or packing material. This is particularly sad when there are so many natural materials which lend themselves so appropriately for packaging. Similarly, despite our Asian aesthetic sense and warmth, shop display and customer service in tourist centres are generally unattractive.

  Well-designed information posters and labelling also help to sell products. The buyer must know and be informed which products are hand-woven, made of natural fibres, part of a historic cultural tradition, or made by tribal women. This information is as valuable as the product for today's eco-minded traveller.



EXCERCISE

1. Choose a craft for which your state is famous and describe how you could develop this craft for the tourism sector. Why do you think it would be popular amongst tourists? Where would you market it? How would you package it?
2. Prepare the text and illustrations for a brochure on a craft—explaining its unique qualities, its sustainable properties and the community that made it, keeping in mind its value as a part of new trends and concerns of contemporary life.
3. Draw from the story of Kashmir that was over-dependent on foreign tourists and did not develop a domestic market, and relate it to how any craft in your area has been seriously affected and the reasons for this.
4. Find three new venues for the sale of crafts in your area. Identify places that you think would attract both domestic and foreign visitors and explain why.
5. "Tourists today do not travel to see ancient monuments. They travel seeking leisure and fun. Taking home mementos or curios is no longer high on their agenda." Do you agree? Elaborate.

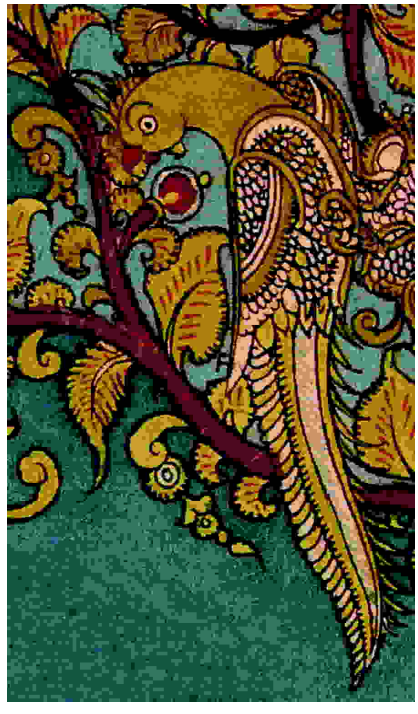

VARDAGE
BEDSPREADS
LOCAL SAREES
CHANDERI
DHOTIS
LUNGIS
TOWELS, KERCHIEFS, N
ANGAV

9 DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

The twenty-first century has brought with it accelerated change in every sphere of life, dependency on machines and excessive consumption of natural resources in a manner that is no longer sustainable. In the past the crafts sector had been rejected by many as an unviable economic activity for the twenty-first century.

Artisans still make up twenty million of India's working population. Therefore this sector has to be developed in such a way so as to offer sustainable employment to millions of skilled artisans. Crafts producers cannot be economically viable unless their product is marketable. The product can only be marketable if it is attractive to the consumer, i.e., if the traditional skill is adapted and designed to suit contemporary consumer tastes and needs. Design does not mean making pretty patterns—it lies in matching a technique with a function.

In the field of traditional craft these two aspects of design and development are not always synonymous; design can lead to development, and development should be designed. However in the field of design and development a conflict may arise between function and responsibility. Whose creativity will be expressed—the developer's, the designer's or the craftsperson's? Who is the client—the consumer, who wants an unusual and exciting product at the most competitive price; or the crafts community who needs a market for its products as similar to the traditional one as possible, so that it does not need constant alien design interventions, or is at conflict with the social, aesthetic and cultural roots from which it has grown?



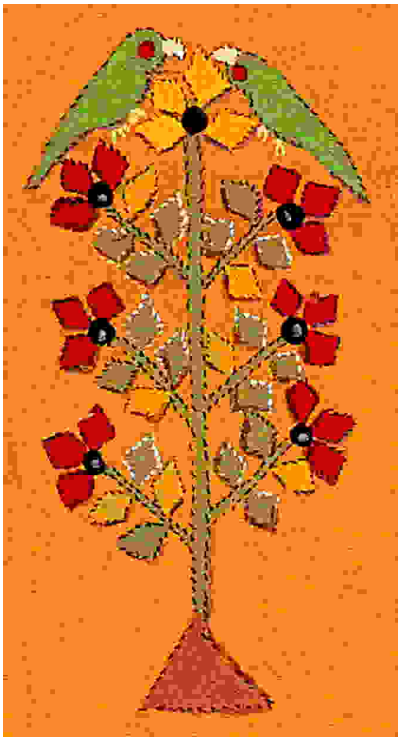


The crafts community has several priorities such as food, clothing, shelter, education, health and economic stability. The craft development sector needs to be sensitive to these very real concerns of the crafts community.

Therefore, craftspeople must be involved in every aspect of design and production and understand the usage of the product they are making. Voluntary agencies or designers must also understand and study the craft, the product and the market they are trying to enter.

CHANGING PROFILE OF THE CRAFTSPERSON

In Ancient India, every individual had an implicitly defined role in society, ordained by birth. Craftsmanship was a heritage that evolved over centuries of arduous apprenticeship in *chhandomaya* (the rules of rhythm, balance, proportion, harmony and skill), controlled and protected by the structure and laws of the guild. In the guild the master craftsman, the raw apprentice and the skilled but uninspired jobsman all had a place and purpose. Today's craftsperson has to be all things in one, including his/her own entrepreneur.



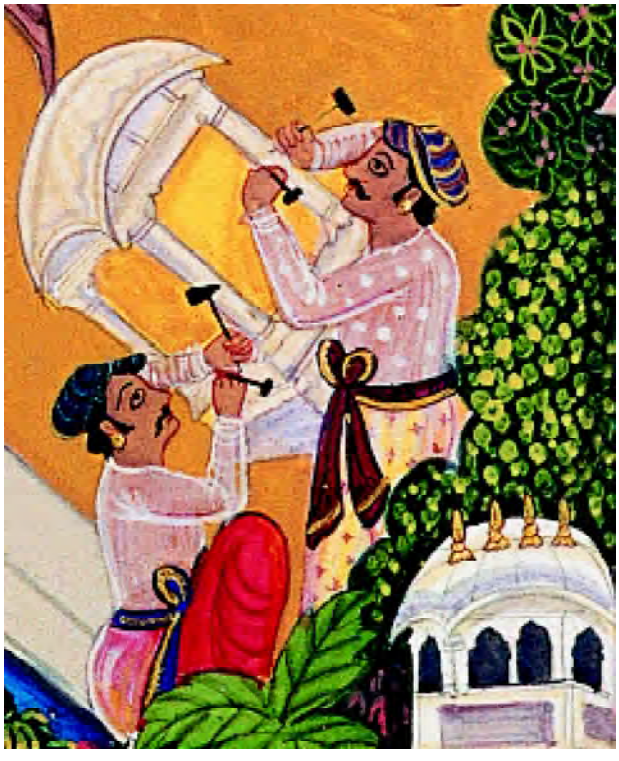
The craftsperson had the status of an artist. As a member of a society with strict rules and hierarchies, both within the guild and the outside world, the community and its products were protected, and the quality was controlled. Patrons were well known to the artists, customers were close at hand, their lifestyles not too markedly different from the artists'. Whether the craftsperson's skills provided simple village wares or jewelled artefacts for the temple or sultan, it was a supportive inter-dependency based on a mutual need, understanding and appreciation.

The craftsperson was his/her own designer and the embellishments came only after the shape was perfected to the function. The aesthetic and the practical blended in a natural rather than artificially imposed harmony.

Why Design Inputs Are Needed

Today most craftspeople practising traditional skills are vying with machines, competitive markets, mass-produced objects or consumers' craze for foreign fashions, and are no longer protected by guilds or the enlightened, hands-on patronage of courts or religious institutions. Crafts communities are increasingly faced with the problems of diminishing orders and the debasement of their craft.

Crafts communities are making products for lifestyles remote from their own, and selling them in alien and highly competitive markets. Their own lives and tastes have suffered major transformations alienating them further from their skills and products. A traditional *jooti*-maker may still embroider golden peacocks on a pair of shoes, but he himself will probably be wearing pink plastic sandals! Consequently, craft has degenerated today. For instance, the metal *diya*, a traditional ritual object of worship has been turned into an ash tray that sells on the pavement for just ten rupees.



DESIGN INPUTS: FROM INSIDE OR OUTSIDE?

Do craftspeople with centuries of a skilled tradition need outside interventions? In the past no deterioration of crafts has been caused by interventions, however well intentioned, from the outside, from agencies outside the crafts community.

However, tradition must be a springboard not a cage. Craft, if it is to be utility-based and economically viable, cannot be static. Crafts have always responded to market changes, consumer needs, fashion and usage. Today with the distance growing between the producer and the consumer, craft cannot respond to change with the same vitality that existed in the past. It then becomes the role of the designer and product developer to sensitively interpret these changes to craftspeople who are physically removed from their new marketplaces and new clients.



There are professionals with formal art, design and marketing education who have the technical expertise and tools to assist crafts communities in the process of design, innovation, understanding foreign or urban markets and contemporary marketing practices that can protect the interest of the artisans. Working with craftspeople, the design consultant has to dampen his/her own creative flame in order to light the craftsperson's fire. He/she can provide a sample design range to inspire craftspeople to do their own further innovation, not just force the artisan into passive replication. The crafts community must be at the centre of the crafts development process and at every step craftspersons must be taught to use their minds and imagination as well as their hands.

A Fridge That Uses No Electricity



Mansukbhai Prajapati, a potter living in Wankaner, Gujarat, has invented a refrigerator called 'Mitticool'. Here is how he made it: Mansukhbhai mixed several kinds of mud in a churner. Once the mud was mixed, the slush was filtered and then made to dry. Then the raw material i.e. chunks of dried clay were simply modelled in a vertical shape and baked in the furnace.

The upper part of the 'Mitticool' can store about 20 litres of water, while the bottom cabinet has a separate space for storing fruits, vegetables and milk. This brown fridge has an inlet for water, which is circulated through internal piping that keeps the temperature cool. This keeps vegetable and fruit fresh for around five days, while milk can be preserved for three days. His invention is unique, inexpensive and emits no Cholro Fluro Carbon (CFC)!

– *Young INTACH*, Vol. 6., No. 3, July–September 2009

There is a need to see product design and marketing as the catalyst and entry point for integrated development in the crafts sector. There is a growing demand for these services from craftspeople all over the country, who wish to learn more about their new clients and customers, of new trends so that they can play a significant role in contemporary life.

Many well-meaning, income-generating projects by by the government and NGOs suffer because they have not taken into account the need for design and development of crafts products and the well being of the community in a holistic and integrated manner.

Crafts and Income Generation Schemes

Many government and non-governmental agencies have discovered that traditional crafts can be a vehicle for income generation. Such schemes have not always been accompanied by sensitivity to the needs of the craftsman, consumer, or an analysis of the market.

As the tourist and export demand for Indian crafts have grown, middlemen and traders, many of them exploitative, have begun craft production and sale. This has resulted in the loss and disappearance of many of the more intricate and unusual art forms and skills. Traders and middlemen demand quick production

A Tussar Story

Good ideas and good intentions alone are not enough to ensure the desired results. Some years ago a funding agency commissioned a talented young designer to do a design project for an NGO working with tussar weavers. She developed a stunning range of high-fashion Western garments which were showcased at a high-profile exhibition in Delhi.

But the producer group—tribal women who were part of a Gandhian Ashram in rural Bihar—were unable to fulfil the orders as they didn't have the requisite tailoring skills and the whole investment of over four lakh rupees turned into a disaster.

The Ashram women continued to participate in *melas* and bazaars trying to discount-sale the stock piles of unsold samples, all now out-of-date, crumpled and shop-soiled, and finally the programme folded up altogether.

of cheap objects so that their margins of profit are large without regard for how this may affect the craft tradition and the community.

Techniques, skills, motifs and usages distinctive to particular communities or areas have been merged in the production of new items today. Each region of India once had its unique and authentic design whether in the textiles or the pottery it produced. In order to create products for an international market, traders often force crafts communities to amalgamate designs that are known to be popular in another state and region. Patchwork and Ikat have been introduced into places where the skill never existed.

India produced a wide range of utilitarian crafts for everyday use in the home. This sector has also suffered





as artisans are forced to produce more eye-catching, ornamental products for customers outside their own community.

The opposite is also true. Inexpensive skirts and dresses sold on the streets and at *melas* under the generic brand name of 'mirror-work' and 'Kutchi bharat' bear little relation to the extraordinary embroideries various Kutchi communities make for themselves, or their potential customers. This is not just aesthetic disaster, but bad economics as well. Thousands of women with high-level skills and earning power are reduced to breaking stones for a living, while the antique pieces their grandmothers made sell in city boutiques for a fortune.

At a Crafts Council of India seminar on crafts in 1991, Reema Nanavaty recalled the inception of SEWA's project in drought-ridden Banaskantha: "But even before water, the major problem of the women was work. Whenever you talk to the women, the first thing they ask about is work. Everything else is secondary." Today the old embroideries they were selling off their backs are the design inspiration for contemporary garments that earn the craftswomen incomes of ₹1000 to ₹1200 a month.

People often ask why Indian craftspeople don't make the same beautiful things they used to? The reason for this is craftspeople cannot afford to keep and preserve samples and so have never seen what their forefathers used to make. Study, documentation and research of the crafts, the creation of Design Centres, the development of a craft data bank are what are needed for craftspeople to delve into their past to draw inspiration for the future. The motifs and usage of a craft tradition cannot and should not remain static. But changing them requires knowledge, sensitivity and care.



The NID students' documentation of crafts programmes and the documentation exercises of this course can be an invaluable reference source. An essential requirement for craft development is that motifs, designs and techniques be documented and are accessible.

What the artisans have is only in their minds and fingertips. If an artisan gets a large order to paint Mickey Mouse on hundreds of papier-mâché boxes instead of a Mughal rose, eventually the memory of the rose will fade away. A craftsperson does not have the confidence to say 'no' to a trader or middleman. He desperately needs the order because the livelihood of his family depends on it.

Therefore, the role and responsibility of the NGO or craft developer should be to enable crafts communities to study their own heritage—to access museum collections and reference books and sensitively interpret to the craftsperson his own tradition. This is our responsibility.



Project in Madhubani

Mithila in North Bihar—one of the poorest, most backward parts of India—is an example of changing the function, changing the design, and finding an appropriate though radically different usage for a traditional craft through the process of documenting its motif tradition of Madhubani painting.

Discovered in the 1960s, the votive paintings of Mithila were transferred from village walls to handmade paper, and became an instant success. The paintings rapidly became popular in contemporary urban Indian homes. Village women of all levels of skill and artistry were persuaded by eager traders and exporters to abandon farming and to take up the painting brush and mass-produce Madhubani paintings on paper.

Inevitably there was a surfeit, and the market was flooded with Madhubani paintings of every size and colour. By the 1980s, twenty years later, Madhubani painting as a marketable commodity was dead. Women painters who had tasted economic independence through the sale of their paper paintings, did not know what to do. New ways of tapping this creative source needed to be found. The decorative motifs, the floral borders, the peacocks and parrots, the interlocking stars and circles that embellished their artwork provided a rich directory of design motifs and decorative elements that could be used on products of daily usage and wear. They painted on sarees, *dupattas*, soft furnishings, and tried to support their craft in imaginative ways.

– Pupul Jayakar
The Earthen Drum

Purpose of Crafts Development

The ultimate objective is the all-round development and self-sufficiency of the craftsperson.

- The development process must be matched with the existing skill levels of the target crafts group.
- The designer must work with one or more master craftspersons to ensure quality of production.
- Successive sampling workshops over the years must be organised to gradually upgrade skills and design sensibilities in the community.



In the Craft Centre project in Ranthambhore, Rajasthan (see page 112), the women who started working were almost unskilled—their hands more used to wielding the scythe than the needle. The first patchwork products were made up of vivid and unusual combinations of colours and prints that disguised the crudity of stitchery and simplicity of design. These simple products sold well and gradually the women have been trained to improve their skills, create finer work and develop new products.

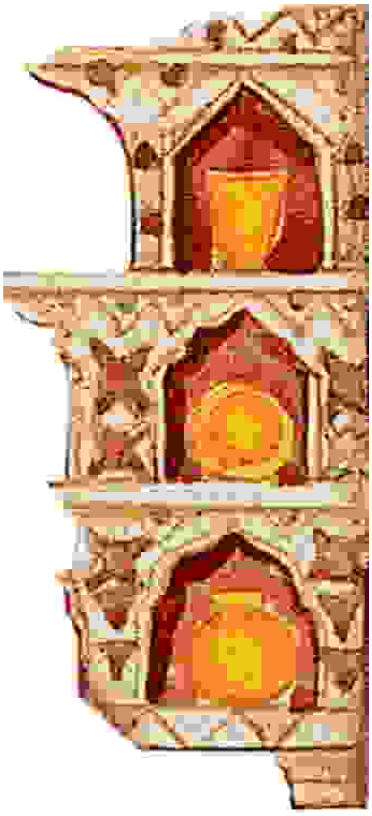
NID Problem-solving Method

A community of weavers in South India experienced great suffering when their traditional skills had to compete with mill-made mass-produced textiles. Additional problems arose because their equipment and technology was dependent on outdoor spaces. This meant that the weavers were idle during the long season of monsoon rain.

The design solutions identified for this community was one of product diversification to reach new markets, the revival of traditional design in new applications. Secondly, they had to redesign tools, implements, workplaces and production techniques so as to move the looms for weaving indoors and thus facilitate year-round activity.

EFFECTIVE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT INPUTS

Creating a simple but effective design, using a small budget and limited resources, is an exciting test of a designer's skill. Seeing the growth and confidence of a newly emerging crafts community successfully selling products they have made themselves for the first time, using skills they never knew they had, is even more exciting. These are the main principles for crafts development:

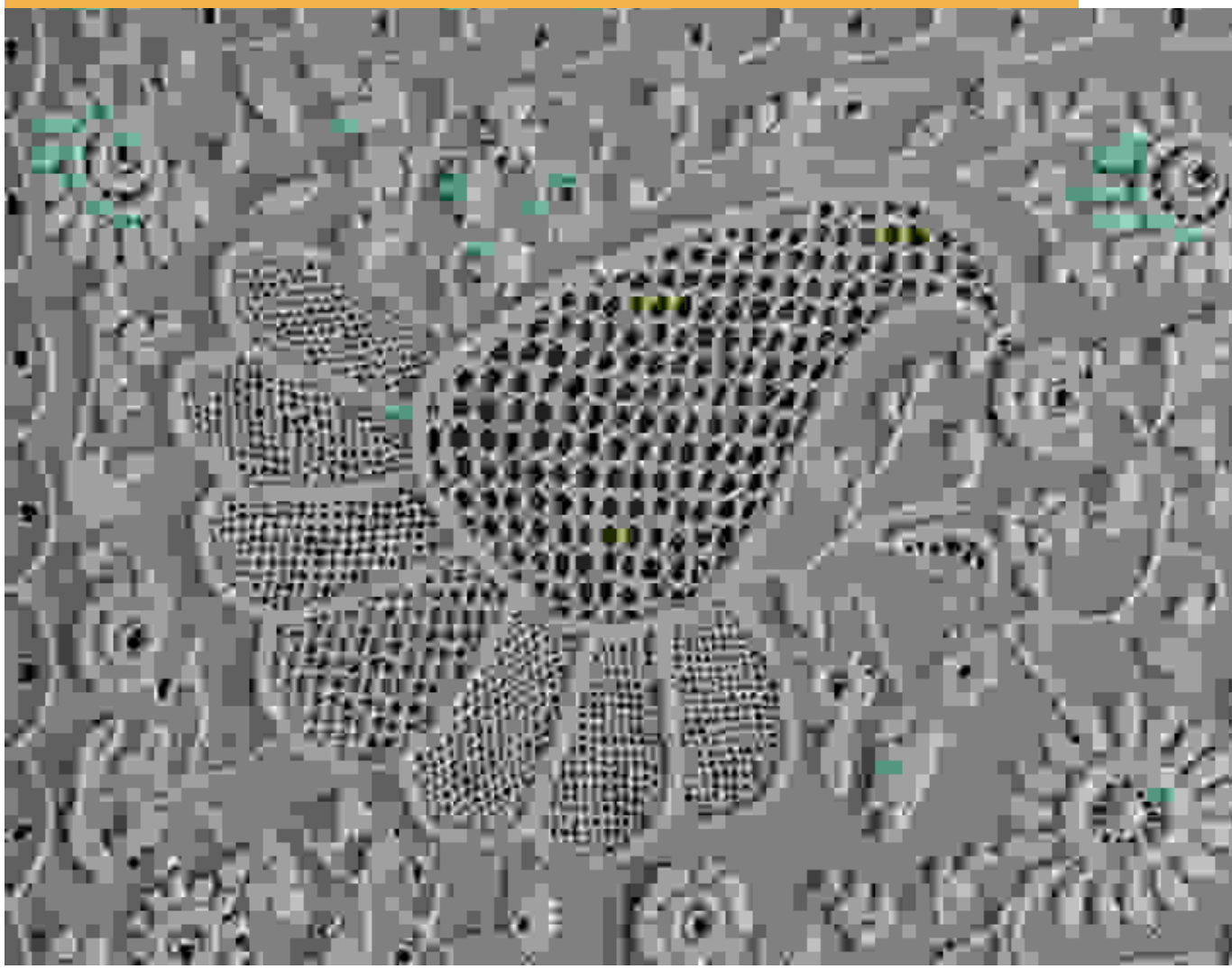


1. To make the product competitive in price, aesthetics, and function
2. To so empower and train the craftsperson that he/she becomes independent
3. To provide ideas and stimuli for creativity and innovative product design by the crafts community
4. To explain the rationale behind items developed and guidelines laid down by market forces
5. To develop a product range that incorporates the different skill levels of all members of the group
6. To keep the product usage and price applicable to the widest possible market and consumer
7. To harmoniously incorporate traditional motifs, techniques and shapes into the design of new products
8. To ensure the development of aesthetic sensibilities so that craft designs no longer mimic or remain static, but constantly evolve by mingling tradition with innovation.

SEWA, Lucknow

The design intervention from outside the community was by trained designers working with the community. Their inputs were as follows:

- Documentation and revival of traditional stitches, embroidery motifs and tailoring techniques, developing a contemporary cut of a *kurta*, and introduction of sizing and application of a new embroidery *buta*.
- Skill upgradation of craftpersons of this community.
- Introduction of new kinds of raw material (ranging from kota to tussar)
- Addressing aspects of marketing like costing, quality control and production planning—and an alternative marketing and promotional strategy that would enable a small NGO to gain complete self-sufficiency.



QUALITY CONTROL AND MARKET FORCES

Craftspeople are increasingly the marginalised and forgotten people—trapped between their past and their future. Investment in research and development, raw material, credit and infrastructural development that is automatically given to any other sector of the economy and industry, is not always available to them.

Crafts-making, especially by rural or tribal people, are often dismissed as outdated, with only ornamental and, hence, short-term use. Often, it is not really the look of the product that causes the customer to reject it in favour of the assembly-line, industrial alternative, but the quality of the materials used—a factor beyond the craftsperson's control. Colourfast threads, rust-proof hinges and buckles, seasoned leather, fabric that does not shrink, are not available in rural markets for the crafts community to use in production. There is an urgent need to address this problem and provide infrastructural facilities, basic raw materials and quality goods. Otherwise, one day, India may have no crafts left at all.

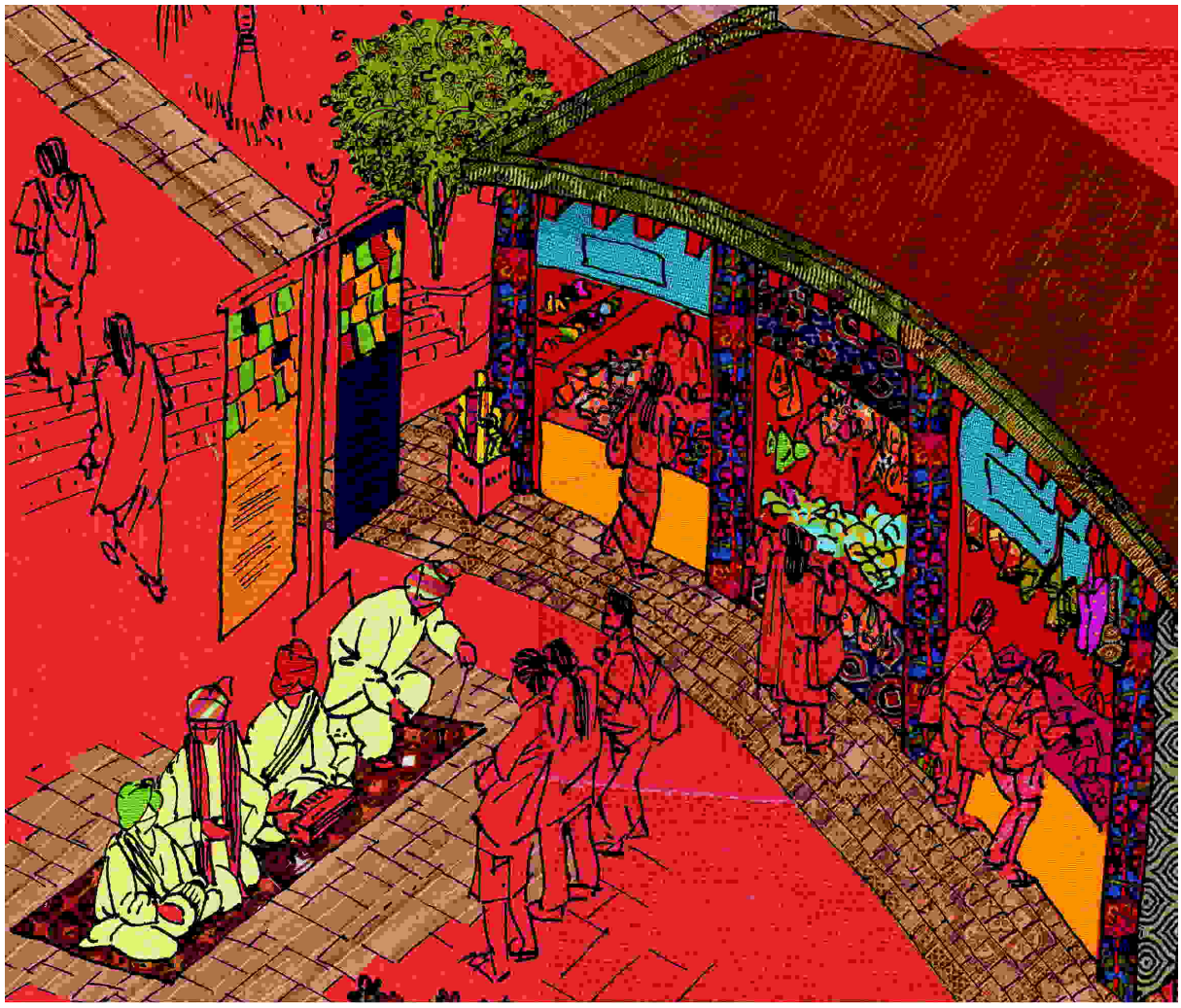


It is equally important for designers to keep in mind some salient features of change in the tastes and requirements of consumers, especially in the export market.

1. The generally high price of handcrafted goods is sometimes an obstacle to their sale. Items in various price-brackets should be designed to secure maximum sales. The effort should be to get the best unit prices for handmade products.
2. Excessively ornamented surface decoration without structural strength is unsatisfactory. Though there is always a small demand for fine decorative pieces, especially antique reproductions, a contemporary consumer would prefer less elaborate patterns and simpler forms.
3. The contemporary consumer is not often either sensitive or responsive to religious themes and symbols that usually dominate traditional craft

design. The consumer wants beauty as a supplement to utility; hence the increasing demand for good-looking, well-designed functional items.

4. There is today much less insistence on the use of expensive materials. Thus, well-styled imitation jewellery often replaces pure gold and silver ones. At the same time there is a growing interest in natural materials such as clay, grass, stone, wood, and leather, and handicrafts made from these should be in great demand.
5. Modern designs, in some cases, are preferred by discerning consumers; this would also provide encouragement to designers and crafts communities.





AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO CRAFT DEVELOPMENT

Design and product development are an essential input for the survival and economic empowerment of craftspeople. Craftsmanship is a form of communication—one person's way of interpreting the needs of another and transmuting creative impulse and skill into fulfilling that need. This communication cannot succeed if rural Indian craftspeople are not taught the language of today's contemporary urban consumer. Once learnt, however, the language of good design can help them to re-design the development, not just of their craft, but of their lives as well.

As Rabindranath Tagore has reminded us, "The mind is no less valuable than cotton thread".





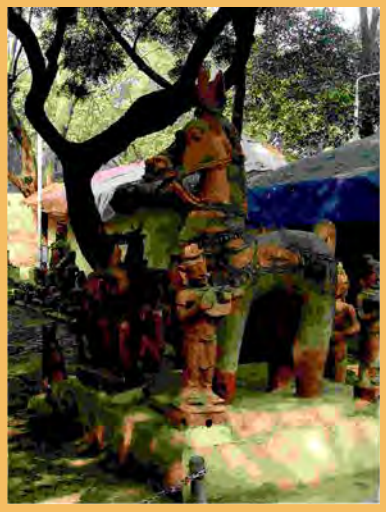
EXERCISE

1. Develop an integrated plan to raise the standard of living of a particular crafts community in your area.
2. Why are design and development so important for the survival of the crafts sector?
3. Develop a strategy to promote craft products for the growing 'Bollywood' industry.
4. Enterprising entrepreneurs are reaching out to global markets through innovations. For example, three shops in Chennai supply Bharatanatyam dance accessories to the growing number of dancers around the world. As an entrepreneur of a craft production and marketing unit, outline your dream project.
5. Research 'Needs and Requirements of Contemporary Life'. How can crafts products be designed and marketed to meet those requirements?



Annexure

TREASURE TROVES OF INDIAN CRAFTS



National Handicrafts and Handloom Museum

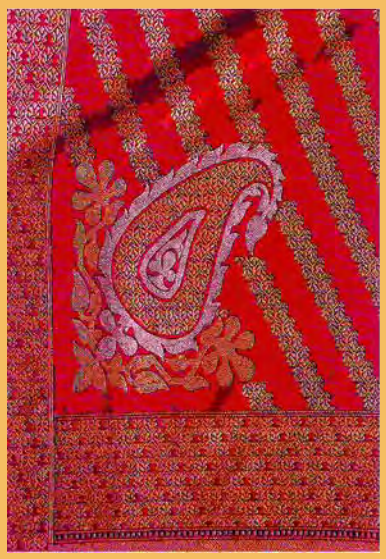
Established in 1972 in New Delhi's main exhibition ground, Pragati Maidan, the village compex in popularly known as Crafts Museum. The Museum is a homage to the artists and craftspersons who have kept alive the artistic traditions of India through the centuries. The small-scale replicas of village houses from different parts of the country, the display galleries of textiles, masks, etc. and the crafts demonstration area are some of the salient features of this muesum.



http://www.nationalcraftsmuseum.nic.in

Ashutosh Museum of Indian Art

This museum, named after a great educationist, Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee, was set up in 1937 within the university complex in Kolkata and its focus is on the crafts of the State of West Bengal through the ages. Apart from art objects from the past, the museum also holds an exemplary collection of craft items, some of which are still produced and used in Bengal. The collection of craft products displayed consists of toys and dolls made in West Bengal. Along the walls are painted scrolls, Patachitra, once used by story-tellers. There are some samples of textiles for which West Bengal and Bangladesh are famous.



http://www.asiarooms.com

Calico Museum of Textiles

This is one of India's finest specialised museums. It was founded in Ahmedabad in 1949 by Gira Sarabhai who initiated the collection of rare, historical and exquisite fabrics from different parts of India. The State of Gujarat, with Ahmedabad as the capital, has been a major area for textile production.

http://www.calicomuseum.com

Salar Jung Museum



In the mid-nineteenth century the Nizam of Hyderabad appointed a prime minister to whom was given the title of Salar Jung. Salar Jung's son, Salar Jung II, and grandson Salar Jung III, were also selected as prime ministers by later rulers. It was these three men who contributed to what is now called the Salar Jung Collection in this museum in Hyderabad. In 1958 the collection was donated to the Government of India and in 1968 the museum was transferred to its present building. The museum is famous for its European art collection and Indian art selection of great variety and quality. There are excellent collections of jade, weapons, textiles and metalware, which are significant as they provide a glimpse of post-Mughal court life and are suggestive of the grandeur and wealth of the rulers.

http://www.salarjungmuseum.in/home.asp

Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum

The museum in Pune contains the collection of a dedicated lover of Indian art, the late Dinkar Kelkar. He spent 60 untiring years travelling and purchasing objects from the remotest villages and towns of India. Kelkar's passion and sense of humour are reflected in every item of the collection, and his contribution to the study and preservation of art has already become a legend.

The Kelkar museum and its collection of about 21,000 objects focus on the art of everyday life in India—pots, lamps, containers, nutcrackers, pen-stands, and such objects that were found in the homes of the village landlord, farmer, merchant and shopkeeper.

There are a variety of things made out of wood, from carved doors to toys. There is a range of metalware—from locks, to ink pots, ritual bowls, *hookah* stands, nutcrackers and lamps.

There is an assortment of oil lamps in a variety of materials from clay to brass, each with its own form and shape. Lamps in India can be broadly divided into two categories—those used for ritual purposes–*arati* for 'worship with light' and those used purely functionally, to provide illumination in the home. The lamps are usually small open containers, to hold oil or *ghee* and the wick made from rolled cotton. Sacred emblems like the peacock, the goddess Lakshmi, elephants and birds are

most commonly used for decoration. There are hanging lamps suspended on heavy, ornate brass chains, and standing lamps used in the temple and the home on view at this museum.

http://www.rajakelkarmuseum.com

Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya





Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Madhya Pradesh, one of India's largest states, has many regions still inhabited by tribes and it is only recently that due honour and importance have been given to folk and tribal art forms with the establishment of this museum of anthropology in Bhopal. Here in a complex of many acres are tribal houses from every part of the country representing the different tribes which their members themselves have built. There is a covered museum with samples of tribal homes with everyday household objects. The hand-crafted objects range from bronzes, terracottas, toys to ritual objects. The art of everyday life in India, as it is even today, is especially interesting, for there is a freshness and spontaneity about it that anyone can enjoy.

http://www.igrms.com