



## " BURRA DIN " AT KAMALA'S CHRISTMAS BAZAAR

*Kasturi Gupta Menon*

Those of us who grew up in Calcutta in the mid-fifties and early sixties, have recollections of " Christmas " which was then still a major " festival " universally celebrated

The nip in the air heralded the onset of winter and the advent of a four week school - break appeared to stretch interminably into the horizon. Mornings dissolved into long, lazy afternoons, which in turn, gave way to evenings usually spent at the Victoria Memorial or the " Maidan " ( Kolkata did not have a Nicco Park then. )

The maidan or " gorer - math " as was it was called by the " locals ", had a number of mobile vendors, far fewer food stalls, and certainly no " Bikaner Bhujawala ", but innumerable persons selling toys. The most coveted of all in my estimation were the " kaleidoscopes ", or " durbins " which lungi - clad jhola -bearing craftsmen tempted us with. " Just four annas " they would entice, " see, take a look through the glass and buy whichever you feel has the best design ". Attractively packaged in silver paper, they unfolded a magical world before my seven year old eyes

Kaleidoscopes, kites, home - made stuffed toys, ( usually rabbits, but occasionally dolls as well ) and all manner of paper crafts were sold for a song by these itinerant salesmen

" Park Street " which then, and even now, flaunted the largest variety of restaurants, took on a different hue in the evenings. Rows of fairy lights were strung across its length and breadth, and gigantic red and green paper stars hung in front of the entrance of every shop and eating place. Oxford Book Store ( a darker and mustier version of its present swanky incarnation ) housed a lending library in the deep recesses of its rear, and it was here that many an afternoon was spent in reading and re - reading much thumbed favourite tomes of fiction

But New Market was the real magnet which drew all children there. The New Market had no competition then, no glass and granite malls as we see now, and the larger - than - life red Santa - Claus in the central plaza was a feast for the eyes. The market's interior was decorated with " jack - o - lanterns " and " paper chains ", and shops selling greeting cards jostled with buyers. The smell of freshly baked cakes and cheese - straws wafted out into the aisles, and drew us like flies into " Nahoums " or " D'Gamas ". " Burra Din ", in short, was our very own festival

In Kamala's " Christmas Bazaar " which will be inaugurated on December 4th, and will last upto the 11<sup>th</sup>, at 9A Ho Chi Minh Sarani, we have brought these toys of our childhood back. Kaleidoscopes, puppets, board - games, wooden toys, traditional lac and mirror globes and decorations.

Simultaneously, Kamala will introduce a new range of home - linen such as patchwork bedcovers and hand - embroidered guest towels, printed table cloths and napkins, stone trivets and coasters. There will also be containers to gift nuts and chocolates in hand - woven baskets, stone and meenakari metalware

From Bagru, Sanganer and Bhagalpur we have sourced an unbelievable selection of saris in tussar and mulmul, and scarves, stoles and shawls from Bhuj and Himachal Pradesh. From Chennai, the ever popular broad - bordered thick Chettinads will again adorn our shelves, and also " matka by tussar " shawls from Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh

But most importantly there will be exclusive tableware in pottery, stone and marble. We have also specially ordered the decorated terracotta curry bowl which won the " Award of Excellence " at the Folk

Art Mart in Santa Fe from Uttam Pal of Chaltaberi village in three sizes. Platters for serving snacks and ceramic cork - stoppered olive oil bottles have been designed by " Lipi " of Shantiniketan

The Christmas tree which we will set up, will remind you of your childhood. So do come with your family and children to Kamala to celebrate BURRA - DIN

## EPILOGUE

The above piece had been written before Kamala's " BURRA DIN " exhibition was mounted. I am writing this epilogue to share with all of you how most " Calcuttans " had responded

" Where are the kaleidoscopes? " every second buyer had questioned. They were not six or seven year olds, but white - haired, sixty - plus senior citizens! We sold out our entire stock of three dozen kaleidoscopes on the first day itself! Sukriti's Ludos and Snakes and Ladders were popular Christmas gifts, and the last piece was bought by two teen - aged brothers for gifting to their parents! The " kathputlis " or puppets ( from Jaipur ) were snapped up by the NRIs, and Chinnachari's wooden lacquered toys were Christmas stocking " stuffing " favourites

We had stocked hand - embroidered " pouches " or " batuas " from PARZOR which moved surprisingly well, so also another kind of brocade batua with novel draw - strings ends. Ochre's ceramic animal ornaments were another popular gift item and Narendra's intricately carved stone boxes attracted their own discerning clientele

But it was the sharp and chilly December wind that blew our customers a second time back inside Kamala again for the warmth of the Kullu shawls and mufflers which we had sorced in Delhi's annual Handloom mela towards November end. Suddenly stoles and shawls were flying off our shelves, and in typical " Calcutta " fashion most visitors asked whether we also stocked caps, ear - muffs and mittens!

The Christmas Bazaar, in short, was an enjoyable learning experience. We discovered the " child " in each of our customers, and if our assessment is correct, the BURRA DIN exhibition can be repeated successfully in the coming year again.

## *Know your Craft*

### PATUAS OF BENGAL AND THEIR UNIQUE ART FORM

*Ruby Palchoudhuri*

" Patuas " also known as " chitrakars " / picture makers are a group specializing in painting of narrative scrolls and performing with lyrics and tunes which they compose themselves. The origin of the term " patua " or makers of " pata " has not yet been established and the debate still goes on. They later embraced Islam en masse and the community continues to maintain a dual identity by also worshipping Hindu gods and painting stories from Hindu mythology in which they are well versed. They travel from village to village singing the stories mostly of Hindu mythology unfolding their " pats " frame by frame. At the same time they are practising Muslims

Earlier the chitrakars painted on cloth " pata " by treating it with cow dung and tamarind glue. This was later changed to paper with cloth backing. Presently Naya, a village in Midnapore district, is the main centre for " patuas ". This narrative art form which has been practised by the "patuas" is passed on from generation to generation, as much as the stories of Hindu mythology were once passed on orally. The scroll is unrolled frame by frame during the narration accompanied by singing. Their knowledge of the Hindu pantheon, stories of Ramayana, Mahabharata, folk stories, mangal kabya and history is quite amazing. A number of patuas, before starting to paint any god or goddess, meditate on the mantras. This is a wonderful example of secularism that is prevalent not only amongst the " patuas " but also amongst the village folk both Hindu and Muslim who observe " bratas ", rituals practised on specific

occasions, and other aspects of folk life. During the demolition of the Babri Masjid when hundreds of Hindus and Muslims lost their lives, the " patuas " painted " patas " about this ghastly incident and sang mournfully of peace and encouraged restraint

In the early eighties patuas lived in abject poverty with a lack of market. The art form degraded to a great degree in quality and cheap colours were used instead of the tradition of using natural materials such as stone, minerals and vegetable colours. The position has now improved due to the support extended by NGOs, individual scholars and the electronic media by bringing this art form into focus. CCWB's constant promotion by having workshops in various museums has improved quality and the reintroduction of mineral and vegetable dyes. The social and religious festivals which have increased due to sponsorship by business and industry has given them an opportunity to use this art form. International recognition has come in a big way and has expanded the market for them. It is also interesting to observe the influence of this art form in Jamini Roy's painting. Some of our famous contemporary paintings show clear evidence of styles adapted from that of Patuas.

" Patuas' " narration of contemporary issues has also resulted in a expanded domestic and international market. " Patuas " now produce " patas " for selling as decorative items. Using scrolls as a prop for performance while singing was organized during an exhibition by National Museum of Wales where the scrolls were exhibited along with taped songs. In the Storytelling Festival Gurupada Chitrakar used his scrolls as tools for narration in his own style

Today ' pats ' are once again a dynamic part of West Bengal's craft and performing arts scenario and the 'patuas' create and perform from a position of strength. May their tribe increase

## CHITRALEKHA WORKSHOP

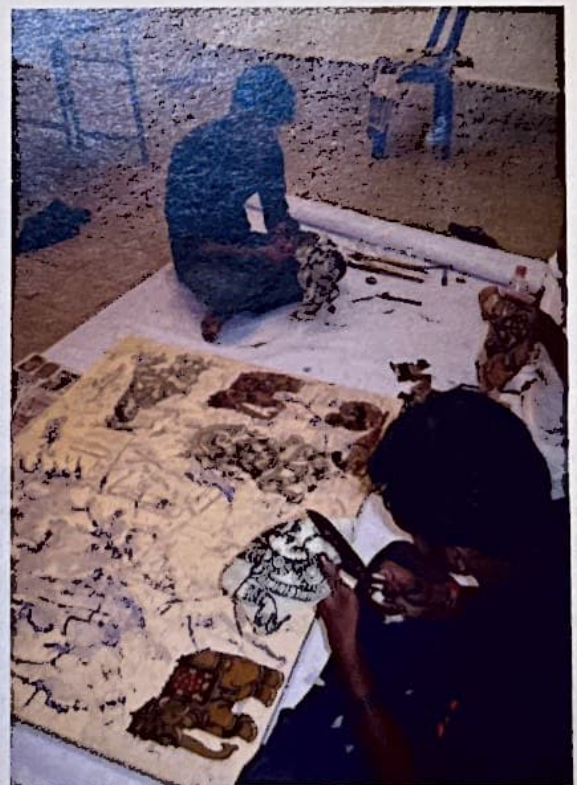
*Harsha Vinay*

The constant encounter of tradition and modernity in India is a continuous movement of convergence and divergence. " Like the *silt* accumulating during floods which is beneficial for the *crops* " tradition and modernity nourish each other through a process of fission and fusion. ( *ibid* )

An attempt toward allowing for this convergence between the traditional and the modern was ' Chित्रलेखा ' ; an interactive workshop of folk, indigenous and traditional artists with contemporary artists from India organized by The Crafts Council of India, Chennai and Lalit Kala Akademi, Chennai was held on December 22 - 26, 2010

The workshop attempted to bring into the forefront questions of balancing traditional and contemporary art practices, evolving new art processes and dispelling misconceptions that the Indian artistic tradition has become a repetitive expression without change since pre - colonial times. In short this week - long workshop was the beginning of a possible union of artistic journeys, that although claiming to be growing in different directions are actually two parts of one continuous process

The seven groups which included seven contemporary artists and Gond, Kalamkari, Kerala mural, Pattachitra, Cherial scroll, Bengal patua and Madhubani artists



approached each art work and style of painting in seven different ways. Each situation provided a strange brew of ideas, colours, and expressions

Folk and indigenous art was filled with colourful narratives, songs, a theme and intricately drawn patterns. Traditional art had its set rules, with pin - point precision for proportion, colour and expression. The approach to canvas / paper / or cloth was with a pattern and rhythm previously decided upon. The contemporary artist on the other hand was more unpredictable. Sometimes there was the spontaneous outpouring of ideas, at others very calculated placement of figures and shapes, constantly experimenting with different mediums

One common aspect in most groups was that the contemporary artists were keen on using the form and technique of the folk and traditional artists. V V Ramani used Gond forms to build on the ' tree of life ' idea, while Benitha used the Patua scroll painting to narrate her story. Although the initiations to produce an idea for the art work largely came from the contemporary artist, groups like Surekha's with the Kerala mural artists, and Sunil with the Patachitra artists saw traditional ideas dominating the canvas. " Skills and ideas go together, and without either one of them innovation cannot take place, " said Mr Muthukumaraswamy. " Recognising the presence of both these aspects in artists in creating one work of art is of importance " he continued

" What was exciting about this workshop was learning and sharing with other *artists* - whatever their background - and not from students or other participants. " - Chandra Bhushan - Madhubani artist.

The real success of this workshop was in this *learning*, not with the assumption that any of the art forms needed to evolve, or that contemporary art had lost its roots, but merely as an exercise to unlearn. With this beginning, the first steps toward enabling dialogue, exchange and convergence has been taken. This will be a dialogue wherein these two worlds - traditional and modern - running parallel, can now continue to encounter each other

## JALEBIS IN JAIPUR

*Bela Mistry Khaleeli*

Or how we went on a ' Sari Classic Revival Trail '

I love traveling, but I dislike planes

It is 7 am on June 29, 2010, we are at Chennai airport about to board a flight to Thiruvananthapuram when Gita announces, *I've ordered a packed lunch to meet us at the airport, so we don't waste any time and go straight to Balarampur to meet Kasilingam.* Why, Gita?. Its only a 45 minutes flight and our appointment is not until the afternoon. *No, this flight will take us five hours to get there. It goes first to Bangalore, then to Coimbatore and finally to Trivandrum. This was the only ' convenient ' flight available, so I took it !*

My enthusiasm for the trip is going into freefall. How am I going to last so many hours of flying. Three takeoffs. Three landings? My stomach is already churning as we drive on the bus to get on board. Oh, my God, it's a propeller aircraft! Every bump, every air pocket is going to cause a somersault inside. I am now in the grip of my old friend FOF\*. Oblivious to my predicament the unflappable Gita says her customary, *it's ok*, and thoughtfully hands me a guide book on Trivandrum

Many sandwiches later, on terra firma, I am upbeat and fearless again! We drive through the beautiful Kerala landscape and come to Balarampur, the centre for Kesavu, our first destination for Kamala - the special sari sale we are organizing for CCI

Gita is full of entertaining stories about her growing up years in Kerala, a region she knows well and loves to share. Did you know there's a Indian version of the Kew Garden outside Trivandrum. On the

same scale as the original, run in collaboration with the same authorities. The Padmanabha Swamy temple murals are world renowned. The best Ravi Varmas are at the Kowdiar palace

So the next morning, work over, we go off to the Kowdiar palace to meet Princess Aswathi Gouri Lakshmi Bayi. The gracious and most erudite princess entertained us with exciting stories of Kerala culture and let us feast our eyes on the many, many Ravi Varmas that hang on the walls there. Having just returned the previous day from Balarampur, we could not help but compare the new Kasuvus with the diaphanous beauties in the Ravi Varma paintings

Kasuvu over, our next stop is Jaipur - for Bagh, Dabhu, Block prints and Leheriya. Gita decided if Trivandrum took five hours, surely Jaipur should take much more ! So this time, we went on a plane that took us first to Hyderabad, then to Ahmedabad and finally to our destination - Jaipur. All in a record nine hours! We were three of us - Gita, Sita and I. Safety in numbers I told myself boldly. By now, FOF\* and I had somewhat parted ways. We chatted away the hours on board and looked forward to exciting days in Rajasthan. Time literally flew !

In Jaipur the workshops we visited were visually vibrant with colours - pomegranate, indigo, turmeric, cobalt blues and reds. Silent, but for the dull thump of the wooden blocks as the Chhipawala's hand travels back and forth on long wooden tables stretched with cloth. He selects another block and a different colour from the cart next to him laden with pigments, goes over the design, taking great care to line the motifs exactly, until he has printed the whole cloth in a range of colours. We turn designers - mix and match his patterns - to colours of our choice, hoping the final results will be a sell - out at our sale. We are amazed at the dazzling range of leheriyas in the markets and the shops. We stare at the beautiful costumes that are seen everywhere - combinations of colour, texture and fabric that women, young and old, wear with traditional jewellery and modern accessories !

From Jaipur we traveled long distances to Sanganer and Bagru, stopped at intersections patiently for minutes on end, and watched fascinated, lines and lines of rugged turbaned Rajasthani men and their camels pass us as they headed towards propitious rituals to far away Devi temples

The sandwiches, we replaced with aloo parathas ( the best ) and stopped for glasses of sweet thick lassi, served in terracotta tumblers, which as befitted CCI ladies, we gushed over and refused to throw away ! At breakfast we put up our noses up at the idlis and the dosas and went straight for kachoris and hot jalebis

And finally when it was time to leave we got back on to the same plane and slept nine hours to Chennai ! Ajrak, Benares, Chanderi, Venkatagiri and others would have to wait

(\*Fear of Flying)

## ECO - GANESHA

*Bharati Govindaraj*

The Crafts Council of Karnataka ( CCK ) in association with the NRCLPI, the Regional Design and Technical Development Centre and other organisations took the initiative of organising awareness programmes for the general public to worship Eco - Ganesha during the Ganesha Festival

The Eco - Ganesha concept was taken by Crafts Council of Karnataka and NRCLPI activists to Kolkata two years ago. The move has yielded results: like the Eco - Ganesha, West Bengal's Durga idols will now be eco - friendly and no lead based paints will be used in decorating them. In fact, the Government of West Bengal has started distributing lead - free paints to artisans for pollution - free Durga idols

## A MANY SPLENDOURED JEWELLERY SUMMIT

*Pushpa Chari*

' Abhushan: Design Dialogues in Jewellery, ' a landmark jewellery summit organized by World Crafts Council in New Delhi from February 4th - 6th, made history in more ways than one. It was arguably the biggest jewellery summit ever held with participants drawn from WCC's five regions of North America, Latin America, Africa, Europe and Asia Pacific region. It was first to put alternative forms of jewellery from every region of the world centre stage, to celebrate its symbolism, and artistry. It wove seamlessly, through some of the best international jewellery historians, scholars and practitioners, the philosophy, process and formats of contemporary jewellery. It brought together for the first time significant numbers of Indian craftspersons to interact with foreign resourcepersons in a fascinating, meaningful workshop. ' Abhushan ' was superbly organized. From the symbolic lighting of the lamp by Delhi Chief Minister, Smt. Sheila Dikshit on the first day to the Vajra dance performed in brilliant precision to mark the closure of the summit, Abhushan did its organizers proud

Abhushan : Design Dialogues in Jewellery was organized by the WCC under the able guidance of the President Smt Usha Krishna with her team headed by Chairperson Smt Nina Kothari. It was a joint programme with the Office of the Development Commissioner of Handicrafts, Ministry of Textiles, Government of India. CCI were the facilitators. Many strands wove themselves together to form the multisplendoured collage which was the jewellery summit. A 3 day Seminar with 20 eminent speakers, both national and international drawn from the 5 regions of WCC. ' Seed to Silver ' a unique curated exhibition of contemporary jewellery masterpieces from around the world. A 10 day craft exchange workshop attended by 60 Indian craftspersons. A Craft Bazaar comprising an exhibition and sale of traditional, contemporary and tribal jewellery crafted with fibre, metal, thread, terracotta, wood, etc. A Designer's Gallery showcasing the work of leading Indian designers working with natural materials. A ' Fine Jewellery Treasure ' exhibition and sale of iconic Mughal, Jadau and South Indian temple jewellery. And a beautifully brought out Abhushan journal which told the story of this unique jewellery summit which brought ancient traditions of jewellery from across the world into a contemporary ' natural ' focus



## GAME VIEWING IN AFRICA !

*Prema Paranthaman*

When I offered to organize the trip to Lusaka on behalf of CCI, I did not realize how different and interesting it was going to be. A tight programme was planned for 12 days, as we had to return before Diwali, with 7 days of " game viewing " as it is called over there, seven members from CCI, CCAP, CCKa and CCTN met up in Mumbai airport and proceeded to Zambia via Johannesburg

After many hours of flight and transit we reached Livingston, Zambia. In the morning we took a walking tour of the magnificent Victoria falls, named so in honour of his Queen by Dr. Livingston. Across the river we could see the island where Dr Livingston lived. A boat cruise in the evening with the sun setting slowly, viewing animals like hippos, crocs, birds and elephants was a curtain raiser for the things to come. The temperature was like 35°C and we were armed with caps and sunscreen lotions !

That night and subsequent meals had interesting items on the menu - croc tail curry, game curry ( deer meat ), pork curry and beef curry which we all steered clear of !!!

Next day we drove to the border to cross the Zambezi river into Botswana. There was a point in the river where Zambia, Botswana, and Zimbabwe met. On the other side we were met by the driver of the van, who took us to the hotel built of wood on the river bank. From the dining room on the first floor we could see an occasional hippo or a croc in the river. The boat ride that evening to view water based animals like groups of hippos and crocs and elephants on the banks was a sight seen to be believed. Sometimes the elephants walk across the shallow part to an island in the middle to graze. Once we saw a baby elephant on the shore alone and were told that the mother must have died and the baby does not know where to go. We realized that it was nature in its raw, unvarnished form

In the morning we went inside the game reserve and what we saw was a scene from the Discovery Channel ! Hundreds of elephants around the drying river and as far as the eye could see groups of 20 to 30 elephants walking towards the river was so unreal. Dozens of baboons, zebras, and bison were around each corner. Large groups of deer hid under every bush away from the hot sun. On the way back we still saw the baby elephant standing on the bank alone. The driver told us that the group to which the mother belongs will come and take the baby with them. That afternoon's ride showed us elephants returning back after drinking water and crossing the road in front of us. There were 7 types of deer with different types of horns. The next day we returned to Livingston to catch the flight to Lusaka, the capital

When we reached the hotel we were joined by Usha, Vijaya and Sangeet. The following day the WCC - African Assembly took place with limited attendance of 3 countries. The Indian contingency made up for it with 10 delegates in their colourful sarees !!! The following day we visited a private game reserve, had a sumptuous lunch and opted to cut the trip short as it was too hot

In the morning we returned to Johannesburg by flight and were met by the travel agent who took us around Pretoria and its monuments. Later we drove to the Pilanesburg Game reserve. The hotel was like an oasis in the middle of the reserve with a 15000 volt electric fence around. The rooms were well appointed with a shower cubicle outside made of transparent glass and open to the sky. On the first evening a barbeque dinner was organized for all the guests staying there out in the open with 2 men on either end holding guns. There were 4 or 5 big bonfires around and lanterns lit the place. The ambience was stupendous



Embroideries of India - Thematic Exhibition



Abhushan Fibre workshop



Abhushan Curated Exh



Craft Market - Zambia

CCK's Eco-Ganesha



'Chitralekha' - Kalamkari



Abhishek's Eco-Workshop



Award winning work of Sri. Gajam Govardhana



DCC's Malkha Design Collection

The 2 days were an unforgettable experience. Morning and evening game viewing started with sunrise and ended after it became dark with the use of powerful spot lights. There were giraffes galloping across the road, rhinos with babies walking on the sides. Once we were following a big lion across a valley for almost 20 minutes, and he decided to walk towards us and crossed the road in front within 6 feet of our van. There was pin drop silence. He lifted his eyes and looked at our van for a second and continued to walk across to the other side. That made our day, in fact it made our whole trip.

We did not see 4 out of the big 5"- lion, bison, elephant, rhino and leopard. But we did see a cheetah! Most of the animals were within 20 ft from us. Those sights will stay with us always.

## A MASTERPIECE IS CREATED

*By Meena Appender*



Gajam Goverdhana one of our most active members and a Master Weaver of Ikkat saris was awarded the Shilp Guru Award in 2007. One of the stipulations of the Award is that he train 5 other weavers to the mastercraftsman level.

Recently he displayed a bedspread which he had designed using the 5 weavers he had trained. The dimensions of the piece are 110" X 110". The design consists of 100 tiles, each with a totally different design. The three basic colours are black, maroon and white. The design is a grid of 10 tiles by 10 tiles. Normal looms are the width of a saree.

He had a loom made which could accommodate a width of 110". So he has conceived the idea and design for each tile and planned the tying and dyeing of the yarn in both warp and weft. This is unique because most designs, however intricate, are repetitive many times over a length of a sari or a bedspread, whereas this design is not repeated at all over the whole bedspread of the 110" X 110"

At a time 3 weavers sat at the loom and every time the shuttle whizzed past, they had to adjust the warp and weft so that the design of the tie dyed yarn sat well. This is a time consuming, procedure, because the slightest laxity, makes the whole design, fuzzy

This piece was displayed in Sarawak during the Asia Pacific Regional Meet in 2010. Being a region with a vibrant ikkat tradition, the Far East was truly appreciative of the enormous effort in conceptualising and creating this masterpiece

As we go to press comes the wonderful news of Gajam Govardhana being honoured with the Padmashri. Our heartfelt felicitations to the master artisan

## EDUCATE TO SUSTAIN – AN UPDATE

*Anjula Asokan*

CCI's programme 'Educate to Sustain' for the children of traditional artisans is now in its fourth year. This year 93 children are receiving scholarships in this program from Tamil Nadu, Andhra, Karnataka, Orissa, West Bengal and Rajasthan. Besides increasing the number from existing clusters we have 24 new children from Puttapaka in Andhra and Veeranavallur in Tamil Nadu

This programme is also looking into vocational programmes and apprenticeships for students who are about to finish their school education

CCI is presently raising funds for support in holding a camp for the children from Tamil Nadu in Karaikudi in April this year. Subsequently similar camps will be organised in other regions. The camp is meant as an interaction between the children themselves and CCI as well as the resourcepersons. The idea is to value - add to their learning, increase exposure to other children like them and help them to know the scope and potential of their craft as a livelihood

## THE CRAFTS COUNCIL OF INDIA

The pre-festive Textile Exhibition and sale held in September 2010 as well as ' Kamala - The Classic Revival ' exhibition and sale held in November brought the cognoscenti of Chennai in droves to the exhibition venue. The Classic Revival saris literally swept Chennai off its feet with their wonderful combination of revived weaves and motifs as well as the use of a vegetable dye colour palette. The Embroidery exhibition held in October was another show stopper showcasing the best of the country's classic embroidery traditions: Chikankari, Kashida, Kasuti, Kantha, Kutchi embroidery, Chamba Rumaal and Phulkari on a range of handwoven saris, dupattas, yardage and wall hangings

## CRAFTS COUNCIL OF ANDHRA PRADESH

Crafts Council of Andhra Pradesh took a collection of vegetable dyed 'Raw Mango' saris to Vishakhapatnam with great success in terms of sales and appreciation. CCAP's craft in school programme is poised to take off in the near future. For the five weeks leading upto Diwali, CCAP organized at the newly opened Park Hotel, a programme of leather puppeteers from Nimmalakuunta which was greatly appreciated by the expatriate clientele of the hotel

## DELHI CRAFTS COUNCIL

Delhi Crafts Council has evolved a design collection out of a synergy between a revolutionary fabric, Malkha and the many excellent hand skills of embroidery and patch - work practised by women across the country. In a minimalist colour palette of two natural dyes, indigo and harda, in combination with the unbleached kora, The designs have been made with appliqué from Jharkhand, Kantha from West Bengal, cutwork from Udaipur and running stitch work from Uttar Pradesh. In a test marketing exercise, DCC exhibited the range at Dastkar's Nature Bazaar in New Delhi in October 2010 and had excellent sales

" Varnam " an exhibition of South Indian cottons in July, Turquoise Collection an exhibition of tableware, table linen and accessories in September, and " Dye works on Elegant Indian Fabrics " held in December 2010, were prominent events in the ' craft happenings ' calendar of Delhi. ' Sarees 2010 ' presented innovative designs evolved by several creative minds in the established techniques of block printing, weaving, tie and dye, natural dyes and resist prints

This year's Sutrar Samman was given to Guda Srinu who comes from Puttapakka in Andhra Pradesh and practises the Ikat style of weaving also known as the " Telia Rumaal. "



## CRAFTS COUNCIL OF KARNATAKA

A publication entitled " Metal Craft of Karnataka " was released by Crafts Council of Karnataka. Vastrabharana - 2010 was held at Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath, Kumara Krupa Road, Bangalore from October 1st, 2010. Saris and textiles from various parts of the country were on display in a celebration of weaves, textures and textile embellishment



## CRAFTS COUNCIL OF TAMILNADU

CCTN has assisted a group of sheet metal workers who have been working with the Council for the past 2 years with loans to buy machine, tools, etc in order to finetune their work. A cheque for Rs. 96,000 was handed over to them. The second Crafts Bazar conducted by CCTN in July has been an overwhelming success. The 5 day exhibition had over 60 participants from all over the country. Shell Crafts classes were held in three local schools for three days for 95 children by shell artisan Abraham

## CRAFTS FOR THE 21st CENTURY :THE 'VM 2 ' EXPERIENCE

*Ashoke Chatterjee*

It was in February 2008 at Victoria Memorial in Kolkata that Gopalkrishna Gandhi ( then Governor of West Bengal ) helped CCI to initiate one of its most important efforts: the Craft Survey project, which has just completed a first phase. 'VM' was once again the venue for an important milestone event on November 23, organised by Ruby Palchoudhuri and the CCWB / Artisana team with Shikha Mukerjee facilitating the preparations as well as the seminar. ' VM 2 ' focused on a theme of " Reinventing Crafts for the 21st Century ". By the end of a long day, some 50 participants had drafted an action plan, re - positioning crafts toward current challenges and priorities. ' Reinvention ' seemed appropriate more to the need for a better public attitude than to the enduring vitality of India's craft culture revealed through the day's discussions. The seminar also saw the emergence of two partnerships important to the future: with industry and with Shilpa Sadan, thanks to the participation of Mr Anand Rao of Tanishq and Dr Vishal Bhand of Vishwabharati

## DATA FOR TOMORROW

Opening remarks by Dr Chitta Panda ( Director, Victoria Memorial ), Ruby Palchoudhuri and Ashoke Chatterjee reminded participants of the issues of culture, environment and economics that would guide

this effort as a road map for crafts moving into a new century. Raghav Rajagopalan's update on the Craft Survey helped open minds to the urgency of several dimensions revealed by the Survey in its efforts at providing a methodology that can lead to a reliable data base for the handcraft sector. Among these are the important role of women in the craft process, the ' front ' and ' back - end ' element in the process with their impact on organization and earnings, and the very limited opportunities for artisans to diversify their income - generating options. VM 2 helped needs, partnerships and linkages to emerge more clearly, leading to an action plan that emerged at the seminar's conclusion which is ambitious and exciting, with a potential for service well beyond the eastern region. It was clear that none of us can do everything that needs to be done in this ' sector of sectors ', but with partners we can begin to make a real difference to how India positions and respects its artisans in the coming years

Action planning began with a focus on the next phase of the Craft Survey. Raghav welcomed suggestions from West Bengal and the region about locations that could be considered for the next phases, as well as institutions that could be partners. There was little doubt that the future of India's artisans would now depend on a national ability to generate reliable data on the scale and contribution of handcrafts to the national economy. We live in a world where what can't be counted can be easily dismissed. A better data base is thus an essential foundation for all the things that the seminar indicated as needing doing

#### ' KARIGARS WHO SMILE '

Stronger links and partnerships with industry were highlighted as critical to the need to identify livelihood opportunities for artisans, taking their skills and culture into the so - called ' organised sector '. It was decided to seek from industrial associations and contacts a checklist of creative / innovative / technical skills that Indian industry needs to achieve a position of strength in today's competitive markets. From this, craft activists could begin to link artisans to current livelihood opportunities outside a narrow ' craft ' understanding. This could open opportunities beyond the dead-end variety represented by NREGA, or by migration to urban slums. A range of career options would be the strongest encouragement for the next generations to remain within the craft tradition. It would give them greater risk-management capacities and provide the key indicator to which Mr Anand Rao of Tanishq drew attention: karigars who smile, not suffer under appalling conditions.

#### PARTNERSHIPS AND MARKETING

Mr Anand Rao's presentation on Tanishq's interventions with traditional goldsmiths suggested a watershed opportunity for drawing on partners in industry in our efforts to serve artisans. The Titan / Tanishq proved a brilliant example, one that needs to be widely shared within craft circles. Mr Rao's observation that " if karigars don't exist, industry won't exist " is the message that needs to be taken to decision - makers in industry as well as in government - and indeed to ourselves. Craft activists have yet to fully understand and use this partnership potential. Its neglect is one reason why our sector suffers such monumental neglect. This is in stark contrast to, say, Scandinavia or Japan where the linkage between hand production and mass production is acknowledged, promoted and celebrated. Mr Rao's estimate was of 1M goldsmiths - none of whom may be included in current DC(H) estimates of artisans - contributing to a Rs 80, 000 crore market and largely surviving under dreadful conditions of work and occupational health. The Tanishq contribution helped move discussions toward a more intelligent application of marketing as a discipline. This point was developed by Dr Vishal Bhand in his presentation on important efforts at Shilpa Sadan to diversify and develop local craft traditions in tune with a rapidly changing market. Payal Nath presented a regional design development case featuring bamboo and natural fibres, the outcome of which was available in the small craft bazaar organized at the venue. Neelam Chibber spelled out the structural supports artisans need at several levels: at the point of manufacture, in terms of support systems ( of design, technology and finance ) and at the level of urban

retailing. MotherEarth and Industree chains are working to provide these systems through a model of for-profit companies in which artisans participate as shareholders while gaining access to professional services well beyond their current reach. Neelam underlined the critical need to develop such models which reflect the market reality that artisans live and work within, helping them to flourish and not just survive. Raj Gope demonstrated how a tradition like patachitra can be applied with sensitivity and taste to new opportunities in home products and in the garment and accessory markets. He stressed the importance of hand production in any genuine understanding of couture

### CRAFTS FOR BUILDING

Architect Snehanshu Mukherjee recommended dialogue with his profession as a key strategy to revitalize crafts and bring many neglected skills and artisans into the mainstream. Several suggestions were tabled. One was the need for dialogue with the Council of Architecture and others to help bring artisans back into the building industry: not only structures but furnishings, furniture décor and landscape. Again, this requires a listing of skills relevant to several aspects of architectural need, leading on to a directory of artisanal resources made available to architects, builders and conservationists. ( An effort along these lines was made some years ago by the CoA and CCKar in Bangalore, led by Mr Narayana Rao ). The hotel / hospitality industry could be an immediate focus, where craft is an important element in India's tourism brand. For applying crafts to the conservation of heritage buildings, the seminar identified the possibility of a structure ( in Calcutta and / or in historic Murshidabad, as suggested in a presentation by Sandip Nowlakha ) being selected as a laboratory for demonstration. The movement toward Green buildings and environments was another dimension identified for response from craft skills and knowledge

### EDUCATION DIMENSIONS

Discussions turned to the curriculum for architecture education. Some asked why the acknowledged importance of documenting traditional architectural knowledge by architecture students has not resulted in a profession more alive to contemporary applications of India's heritage and skills and idioms. This issue has been under discussion within these schools for years. It may need serious attention in its own right, perhaps through the Council of Architecture's own education wing which approves architectural curricula. The suggestion was made of a taskforce of craft and architecture activists working together for change

Education returned to the spotlight in a discussion on the need for greater emphasis on craft and design in schools. Under CCI consideration for years, this challenge continues to need greater clarity about which dimension of crafts advocates have in mind when addressing schools: culture, heritage, developing eye/hand skills, aesthetics, sensitization to classical crafts, opportunities to learn from master artisans, hobbies, or craft promoted through schools as a professional vocation? Art, craft and design are often lumped together and so confused that the dialogue can become one of the deaf. Serious attention may require contact with a few volunteer schools where programmes can actually be conducted and demonstrated. It is here that the hurdle of so-called ' qualifications ' ( since master artisans don't have degrees! ) needs to be countered. Minister Kapil Sibai's declaration was recalled, made at Rajeev Sethi's ' JIYO ! ' Seminar in New Delhi in May, that there is nothing to prevent artisans being given the status they deserve in Indian education - if there are institutions willing to stick their necks out. Contact was suggested with others who have worked in this area including CCI, Delhi Crafts Council, INTACH and the Centre for Cultural Resources & Training ( CCRT, New Delhi ). The Shri Ram School in Gurgaon was said to have solid experience on which others might draw

Expanded schemes for scholarship assistance to the children of artisans was yet another issue related to crafts in education. The need was presented to assist these children with general education as well as in craft-related opportunities. An additional challenge was of recognizing and distinguishing the difference between parent-to-child education and exploitative child labour. Partnership between

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the Councils and Shilpa Sadan at Vishwabharati was suggested to help demonstrate what can and should be done for those who represent the future of artisan communities, while a taskforce could draw on past experience and work with schools and other institutions linked to children's needs

### LIGHT ON TRADITIONS, OLD AND NEW

An unusual case presentation by Nandita Palchoudhuri on the work of 'electric' artisans of Chandernagore at home and overseas underlined the need for recognition that goes beyond a narrow understanding of craft tradition. The presentation revealed these 'electricians' as artisans of the highest caliber, working in materials that are 'traditional' to anyone born since the late 19th century. Their technical and aesthetic innovation deserved recognition as great masters. It was suggested that the Crafts Council should be the first to honor such talent. Participants urged recognition of others, such as those who provide festival crafts, and brilliantly recycle waste materials as a most important contribution to a greener world. Moving out of narrow understandings of craft and tradition could thus be part of the serious business of "reinventing crafts for the 21st century". Examples were shared of artisans now contributing to media, entertainment, publishing, event management in addition to a range of manufacturing industries, from machine tools to spacecraft and watches

At the end of the day, the action plan which culminated 'VM 2' demonstrated the scope of creativity and innovation that artisans can bring to 21st century India. A gentle reminder, if one was needed, of the silent millions still awaiting their due was at the entrance of the venue. There, a wonderful watercolour made almost a century ago showed nameless artisans creating the Victoria Memorial

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