



# THE CRAFTS COUNCIL OF INDIA

*“...ensuring sustainability of artisans and their craft...”*

JANUARY 2013

## REMEMBRANCE

LALITHA PRASAD : 21.2.1941 TO 14.12.2012

*Kasturi Gupta Menon*

(Reproduced below is Mrs. Menon's moving tribute to the memory of Lalitha Prasad at a memorial meeting held recently in Hyderabad)

We have gathered here today to mourn the passing away of Lalitha, who left us just a month ago today. While we are united in our collective grief over our loss, I would like to recount some of the unique qualities that characterised her and made her such an extraordinary person. Memories dwell on the richness of personal moments created by special experiences with special people. My reminiscences of Lalitha will be restricted to our mutual interaction.

“When did I first meet Lalitha?” I asked myself. “Was it at the National Meet in Ahmedabad 22 years ago in February 1990, to which I had been invited by the Crafts Council of India as the then DC (Handicrafts), or was it later when I became a member of the CCI family myself? The exact moment is shrouded in a haze. But what I do remember was seeing Lalitha and her team in action in November 2006 at the international UNESCO-sponsored Natural Dye Conference which the intrepid band of CCI volunteers from Chennai had organised in Hyderabad, in partnership with their sister Council – the CCA.P.

When I arrived in Hyderabad as a delegate to the seminar 6 years back, I was overwhelmed to see the scale and magnitude of the event. It was truly an international seminar in every sense, with delegates pouring in from all over – some from as far as South America and Africa, while others had come from Europe, Japan, Bangladesh and Indonesia. Some delegates represented NGOs, others their National Governments. Several had come as “scholars” in their own right, and still others as hands-on practitioners of their traditional knowledge and techniques in natural dyeing which they had inherited.

The Crafts Council of Andhra Pradesh had accommodation to reserve, events to sponsor, venues to book, and transport to arrange. Meticulous planning was needed to ensure that no slip up occurred at any stage. That the CCI (head-quarters) and the CC Andhra Pradesh members were able to work in tandem without a hitch, spoke volumes of their maturity and skills of leadership which Lalitha, as we all know, possessed in abundance.

“How did you manage to organize such a huge event without a professional event manager?” I had asked her several months later in Delhi where we had met. With a smile she had replied – “The secret lay Kasturi, in formulating small teams and delegating responsibility completely. Each team-leader was given full authority to take all decisions needed to execute their assigned task. They were to revert to me only if there was a road-block which needed my intervention.” “To tell you the truth”, she added confidently, “we did not anticipate such vast numbers to come but I must acknowledge that each member of my Council worked tirelessly and rose to the occasion.”

A smiling unruffled exterior, delegation of responsibility, and total faith in her colleagues were the qualities which defined her leadership, and which set her apart as an outstanding chapter head.

In October 2008 after Ashoke passed me his baton, I had the occasion to interact with Lalitha fairly often. We met twice a year during the CCI's National and Business meets as well as at meetings convened either by the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts) or the DC (Handlooms) or occasionally even by the Planning Commission.

### **Cluster**

Just before many of us present here left for our three week sojourn of China to attend the World Crafts Council Meet, she took me aside and said, "the CCA.P have decided to take on the responsibility of being the 'implementing agency' of a handloom 'cluster' under the D.C. (Handloom's) Cluster Development Programme." "Which cluster are you planning to adopt?", I had queried. "Putapaka" she had replied. "It has a number of 'Telia' weavers, who need to be supported and sustained. Moreover, Govardhan who is also a CCAP member will be by our side to help." I was delighted to hear of the decision, but inwardly somewhat apprehensive as well, as Government funded schemes tend to put up impediments when least expected.

And as I feared, Putapaka cluster encountered its share of problems. Money was not forthcoming when needed, and when finally funds were released by Government of India (GOI), they were held back by the State Government through whom it had been routed. Lalitha asked me to accompany her to Delhi to meet the Secretary (Textiles) for help in resolving the tangle. Together we trudged the corridors of Udyog Bhavan. Lalitha wrote, cajoled and met the Government officers at every level to ensure the scheme's successful fruition. Her commitment and zeal was total, and that is the way she was, I had observed, with whatever she handled.

### **Kamala \_ Hyderabad**

When it was decided in 2009 that the National Meet of 2010 would be held in Hyderabad, she came to meet me at the airport. "We will sit outside the arrival lounge for an hour or so" she said, "until Vijaya's plane arrives from Chennai. Then we can travel back to the hotel together, where all of you will be staying."

While waiting at the airport, she mentioned that "Kamala" Hyderabad would soon be closing down. "The rent is exorbitant, and locationally we are in a disadvantages position. However when we construct our own building in Banjara Hills, we will reopen our shop again. What I will miss however," she added with a rueful smile, "are the trips to the different artisan clusters to select merchandise for our outlet. But it would be foolish to carry on here, as our losses are mounting at a galloping rate."

I sensed her anguish over the decision they had perforce to make, but understood that given the circumstances, it would be the wisest step to take."

### **Temple**

Towards the middle of 2010 she called me up in Calcutta. "Can you buy some sitalpati mats for me?" she asked. "I cannot seem to get any in Hyderabad. I need about 20 metres for the ancestral temple I am renovating in our village, and which I have vowed to complete." And the story of the origin of the deity in the shrine that she thereafter recounted was a fascinating and gripping tale.

### **Conclusion**

Gobardhanbhai's anguished telephone call soon after, conveying the news of her illness, came as a rude shock. Although Lalitha was cheerful throughout, I am told it was a hardfought but downhill struggle. We last met each other in August of 2012 in Chennai, very unexpectedly. "How good to see you Lalitha" I had exclaimed. "And you too Kasturi", she had responded.

Looking back, so many fleeting images come flashing by. Lalitha trying on shoes from a road-side vendor in China. Lalitha accompanying me to Lakshman Aelay's flat in Hyderabad to help choose a painting for my son and daughter-in-law as a housewarming present. Lalitha smilingly leading the largest delegation to the World Crafts Council Meet in 2008. The list is endless.

Perhaps, she would have said to us before she left, in Tagore's words from Gitanjali, which I quote from the English translation.

I have got my leave,

Bid me farewell my friends.

Here I give back the keys of my door,

and I give up all claims to my house.

I only ask for last kind words from you.

We were neighbours for long, but I received more than I gave,

Now the lamp that lit my dark corner is out.

A summons has come,

I am ready for my journey, Farewell.

## KNOW YOUR CRAFT

### ***Ajrakh Printing***

#### *Pushpa Chari*

According to Dr. Ismail Mohammad Khatri, 'living legend' practitioner of Ajrakh craft, his roots can be traced back to a 16th century ancestor who came to India from Sindh, bringing with him the craft of Ajrakh printing.

Ajarkh takes its name from the Hindi phrase 'aaj ke din rakh' (keep it for the day. In Arabic it translates into 'star studded sky' which is how an indigo blue silver block printed Ajrakh cloth appears.

Dr.Khatri is a ninth generation Ajrakh printer. His two sons have also been trained in the same craft. The Khatri family is based in Ajrakhpur, Kutch, Gujarat.

He grew up watching the complex process of this style of block printing and would help with small jobs like drying the cloth, measuring and mixing the dyes. His actual hands-on training with the techniques began when he was 13 years old.

The fourteen stages in Ajrakh printing reflect the laborious and nuanced hand skills which go into the making of this extraordinary fabric. The cloth is washed in water to remove any finish applied in the mill or workshop, soaked overnight in a solution of castor oil, soda ash and camel dung. When it is semi-dry, after being exposed to sunlight, it is returned to the solution 'saaj' and the drying stage is repeated 7-9 times until the cloth foams when rubbed. It is then washed in plain water.

Thereafter the cloth is dyed in a cold solution of myrobalan (the powdered nut of the harde tree) and calendered, after which it is laid flat to dry in the hot sun.

A resist of lime and gum arabic is printed onto the cloth to define the outline of the design. This is known as *rekh* which is applied to both sides of the cloth.

A paste is made by fermenting scrap iron (from horseshoes, etc), jaggery (raw cane sugar) and besan (gram flour) and left to ferment, which takes about a week to 2 weeks. The liquid, or 'iron water' is drained off and added to tamarind seed powder. The iron and tamarind solution is thoroughly mixed, and then boiled for one hour. The resulting 'iron paste' colour is black.

Tamarind seed powder is mixed with alum (aluminium sulphate) and then boiled for one hour to produce a printing paste for the red areas of the design. The printing of the alum paste is known as '*kan*'.

A paste of alum, millet flour, red clay and gum arabic is printed on the cloth where there are large areas of red in the design. A resist of lime and gum arabic is also printed at this time; this combined stage is known as '*gach*'. Sawdust is sprinkled on to the printed areas to protect the design from smudging. After '*gach*' printing, the cloth is left to dry naturally for several days.

The cloth is dyed in indigo (*bodaw*). In order to make an indigo vat, natural indigo, sagikhar (salt), lime, casiatora (the seed from kuwada plant) and water are mixed in a clay vessel, plastic barrel or concrete vat. The dye bath is left to ferment for about one month; sometimes jaggery is added to this to aid fermentation. It is ready to use when the colour of the solution is yellowish (best quality) or greenish (medium quality).

The cloth is washed in running water and laid flat to dry in the sun. This stage is known as *vichharnu*.

Boiling of the cloth follows in a solution of tamarix (from the dhawri tree) and either madder root powder or al root powder and is then washed and sun-dried. For some *ajrakh*, alizarin (synthetic madder) may be used, in which case the cloth is boiled in a solution of alizarin and tamarix powder.

In all cases, the cloth is washed in plain water after dyeing and dried flat in the sun. At this stage (*rang*), the red and black areas of the design develop and the resist areas are revealed as white.

*Gach* or alum printing is repeated. The cloth is left for several days after this. This stage is known as *minakari*.

A second indigo dyeing (*bodaw*) takes place and the cloth is sun-dried.

The cloth is washed in running water and laid flat to dry in the sun (*vichharnu*).



Traditionally *Ajrakh* printing was done exclusively on both the sides of cotton fabric, but nowadays silk is also used. *Ajrakh* lungis (sarongs) and pagadis (turbans) were worn by Muslim cattle herders of the Kutch region. A shoulder throw is also worn made from of the same fabric.

Says Khatri "In the old days before plastic bags, when men went to the market to buy things like sugar and tea leaves which were sold loose, they would make small bundles of their purchases with their *Ajrakh* shoulder cloth and carry their provisions back home like that"

Today, Ajrakh printed fabric is used for everything from saris, stoles, and dupattas to dress material. When the clothing gets old, the fabric is often used for patch-work quilts.

When asked what he thinks the future holds for this craft, Dr. Khatri says “I consider what I do a sweet job. There have been bleak times for this craft, but now it has received a new lease of recognition both nationally and internationally. I am convinced children will want to take up this craft. I am very positive they will be the ones to take it forward.”

(Ismail Khatri was one of the ‘Living Legends’ who participated in WCC’s Kaivalam event)

## KAIVALAM – A WORLD CRAFTS SUMMIT

.....*a chapter in the story towards creating a “handcrafted” future!*

*Usha Krishna*

“Hands that create, hands that shape, hands that weave, hands that sculpt, hands that embrace, hands that protect.....”, was the focus of Kaivalam, the World Crafts Summit organized in Chennai in October 2012 to coincide with the 17th General Assembly of the World Crafts Council (WCC).

Kaivalam, which means prosperity through hands in Tamil, was our attempt to bring together like minded in our pursuit for the wellbeing and a better future for the craftpersons. It was, therefore, a tribute to the human hand, the epitome of creative ingenuity and an opportunity to highlight the case of crafts.



### **What did Kaivalam bring to Chennai ?**

A Conference on the theme “The Future is Handmade”.

Featuring varied talks and presentations from a range of eminent speakers like the Muji designer Kenya Hara, Christa Meindersma, Director Prince Clause Fund, Adelia Borges from Brazil, Rolf Von Bueren of Lotus Arts de Vivre, Thailand, Jean Francois Lesage, the French embroiderer from Chennai , the erudite Ashok Chatterjee and many others.

It was a forum for the mutual exchange of ideas and philosophies on craft and the sessions dealt with a wide range of topics from the contribution of crafts for our economic well being, the role of design, importance of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and Geographical Indicators (GI).

We learnt how crafts bring hope to people not only in countries working to alleviate poverty, but even in countries torn apart by war like the Peace Basket initiative of the Rwandan women affected by genocide.

We also heard some very impressive case studies for the support of traditional crafts through the luxury market.

A number of academic papers were presented on GI and we learnt the role that law could play in protecting

our craft knowledge. This is one area that requires intensive interactions with the different stake holders in the coming months.

The Living Legends - an exchange of ideas amongst world renowned master crafts persons. The wonderful space created by them was a source of joy to the crafts people, the participants and the public.

Jewelled Treasures II featuring an array of exquisitely designed handcrafted jewellery from the best known jewel houses of India gave us the footfalls and much needed publicity.

International Crafts Film *Contest* for students, a first of its kind, was one of the highlights of the summit.

The International Crafts Expo featuring crafts exposed the participants to crafts typical and unique to the five different regions of WCC.

The Crafts Council of India's annual Crafts Bazaar provided a vibrant and visual treat of Indian crafts.

Exhibitions and crafts events at Art Galleries in the City - The exhibitions at the Lalit Kala Akademi and the various art galleries throughout the city were all woven into a craft kaleidoscope that kept the city enthralled for nearly two weeks.

Cultural Extravaganza - The Fashion Show by Amrapalli, the visit to Dakshina Chitra, the traditional Elai Sappadu at MRC, The Sari, a contemporary dance and the Whirling Dervishes from Turkey kept the audience enthralled.

The response to Kaivalam was overwhelming and the buzz that we had hoped to create far exceeded our expectations. Nearly 500 delegates including students and members from 39 countries participated and shared their ideas, concerns and hope on the future of crafts.

The feedback from some of our participants.....

Hanne Lange Houlberg, Chairperson, Danish Crafts Association writes, "I must say that I cannot imagine having a better introduction to Incredible India than through Kaivalam. Now I understand so much more about India and the world since I met not only with people from India but people from many countries."

Rosy Greenlees, President WCC Europe, in her column in the Crafts Council of UK Crafts Magazine says, "There seems little doubt that at one level, the crafts sector has to seek out new opportunities, for example, the Rwandan basket makers securing a deal to supply Walmart. On the other hand, it should never forget its ability to bring people together as demonstrated by the organization that empowers women refugees through embroidery. After all, as one speaker pointed out, Gandhi saw spinning as a spiritual exercise for strengthening the Indian nation after the overthrow of the British."

Dr. Ghada Hijawi-Qaddumi, President WCCAPR, was delighted with the response in membership in her region due to Kaivalam. Also the significant participation from the African region has enthused her to remark, "This has prompted me to create a collective opportunity for the Africa Region to connect with Asia-Pacific during my ensuing Presidency".

Aizhan Bekkaulova, Chairperson of the Union of Artisans of Kazakhstan writes, "Our Kazakhstani delegation has received invaluable experience of networking, partnership and communication with other participants and guests of the forums as well as the living legends. We also tried to showcase our achievements and were deeply inspired by new ideas."

In summing up, I quote Dr.Kevin Murray, Adjunct Professor from Melbourne University and a senior member of the WCC APR, "Beyond the formal presentations, we have had the privilege of meeting people from many different countries, all brought together through a common interest in making beautiful objects that have a lasting place in our world. Part of living in the world involves accepting that not everyone is the same. Rather than diluting our identity, diversity makes it stronger. Like the shuttle that moves across the loom, the play of opposites builds a stronger understanding of where we are".

Let us remain committed and strong in our quest for ensuring a bright future for the handmade crafts.

## KAIVALAM'S IMPACT ON THE INDIAN ARTISAN

*Vijaya Rajan*

The impact of Kaivalam on the Indian craft scenario and the Indian artisan in particular can be measured on many fronts: exposure to foreign craft and craft processes, interaction with living legends from the other regions of the world, participation in Crafts Bazaar and Vastra with the resultant huge appreciation from foreign participants of Kaivalam and, not least, the great boost in the artisan's self esteem and self worth in sharing a glittering event along with artisans from across the world, and in showcasing his products. All these responses could be gauged not as immediate instant reflexes but in their long term entirety, in opening new windows for growth for our artisans.

The importance of Usha Krishna's vision in bringing the artisans of the world together in a conclave of discussion, creative display and dialogue cannot be lauded enough, both for its on-the-ground and within a large framework. At 'Abhushan' in Delhi in 2011 the workshops on jewellery in alternative mediums such as grass, reed, grass, paper, etc, exposed our jewellery artisans to innovative contemporary formats, concepts and methods of finishing, etc. The results could be seen in their post - Abhushan work displayed at the Gem & Jewellery Promotion exhibitions. Part of Kaivalam's impact on the versatile, eclectic and ever evolving traditional skills of Indian craftspersons would have been the effect on their work of the extraordinary international products on sale. In another dimension by placing the Indian artisan and his product centre stage, 'Kaivalam' made him aware of his own global image, reach and importance. The films which were specially produced for the Documentary Competition were a further boost in this direction, apart from making the Indian artisan aware of handcraft processes followed by his counterparts in distant regions of the world.

'Vastra' which showcased a wide range of both traditional and contemporary textiles handwoven and crafted by our artisans, NGOs and design entrepreneurs was held in response to the wish expressed by WCC's Kaivalam's delegates to experience the whole range of Indian textiles. It drew laudatory comments and enormous number of footfalls, opening new windows of opportunity, trade and growth for the country's textile artisans.

During Kaivalam all roads led to the colourful Crafts Bazaar with 200 artisans manning their stalls, more than 50 National and State Awardee participants and a wealth of quality crafts stretching from grass and reed mats to Chola bronzes, brass artifacts from UP, stone artifacts crafted by artisans across India, traditional folk art embroideries and much, much else. The buzz at the bazaar was incredible. Our artisans had a fantastic opportunity to see quality crafts from other regions. The foreign delegates too evinced keen interest in the diversity and quality of our crafts. Sales were brisk and foreigners poured accolades and praises on the products. As a South African entrepreneur put it "With such an incredible craft culture, why would you look elsewhere?" CCI's Kamala shop too did brisk trading.



**Chamba Rumaal  
exhibition at Chennai**



**Crafts Bazaar 2012**



**Khatri at work**



Arts and Crafts Show  
Kolkatta



Sutrakar Samman given  
to Hilal ansari



Sara painting

In a very deep sense ‘Kaivalam’ validated the traditional Indian artisan’s belief and faith in the power of his hands. And his indubitable place in a handcrafted future?

## EDUCATE TO SUSTAIN A HANDMADE FUTURE

*Pushpa Chari*

Under the aegis of its “Educate to Sustain” initiative, the Crafts Council of India gives modest annual scholarships to craftsperson’s children to help them pursue their formal schooling till class XII. Alongside, those selected for the scholarship scheme also learn their ‘paramparik’ craft from family elders imbibing a hereditary vocational education which might give them career choices for the future. CCI also provides inputs such as periodic workshops, training programmes and outdoor trips to the children to sensitise and expose them to craft processes, innovations --- and the excitement of visiting malls, zoos and cultural hubs in big metros.

What do these children, hopefully the future craft artisans of the country, think of the programme, the education and exposure it gives them? Here are a few responses from scholarship children of weaver families of Veeravanallur who recently visited Chennai for an outdoor trip. They were bright eyed and enthusiastic and full of wonder with that particular Indian sensitivity towards responsibility for their parents and hereditary vocations... We reproduce below excerpts from some of the many letters received by CCI after their Chennai trip.

‘The vegetable biriyani, idli, gulab jamun you gave us were very good. Thank you for the money you give for my studies... I think weaving has to be taken to a higher level. I shall raise the level of weaving so that people ask for Tirunelveli pattu and not just Kancheevaram pattu’. - K. Sankaranarayanan

‘I wish to be a doctor and give happiness to my mother. You took us to a place where they weave mats, cloth, etc. I wish to study weaving. If I do that I shall work hard and do well’. - K. Lakshmi Priya

‘My ambition was to study and get a B.E. degree but after coming to Chennai and seeing everything, I now feel like doing weaving. I will raise this art so that people ask for Veeravanallur pattu. I promise to take this art to the next generation’. - G. Udaya Prakash

‘After hearing Devika madam saying ‘jarak’ I went home and listened to my father when he was weaving. I heard the same sound. I request you to continue helping poor children like us. I will work hard to uplift the art of weaving and handicrafts. I know how to weave baskets and garlands’ - M. Venkatesh

‘After completing the 12th I wish to do nursing. I also like handicrafts and I hope the garlands and saris we weave come to the fore front’. K. Shanmugapriya

‘Dakshinachitra is unforgettable. I like the pots they made in the potter’s house. I thank you for providing us funds to study. I wish to learn more of weaving after I finish my 10th. I am very happy that our handwoven silks are sold at Nalli’. - M. Ajithkanna

‘The aid which you give us is useful for my education. I will also see to it that the art of weaving progresses and more people ask only for Veeravanallur pattu.’ - R. Bhumivenkatesh

‘I would like to be an engineer, though I come from a family of weavers. I humbly request you to help me in my education’. - P. Purnima

‘At present I am learning my family profession of weaving. My father has taught me to respect work done by

our ancestors. On weekends we handcraft craft items like baskets, garlands and dolls. I would like to become a doctor but I don't know if it is possible. Your giving us the monetary aid has been very helpful to my family.'

- S. Subbalakshmi

Voices of hope. Voices that come loud and clear. Without exception Mysore bondas, gulab jamuns and pongal were hot favourites with the children who were also smitten by the malls, craft centres, etc. But next time, please CCI, can you take them to Marina Beach too? Every child wanted to sight-sea and perhaps internalise the basic ingredient of hand work or Kaivalam, which is

"To see a world in a grain of sand

And heaven in a wild flower..."

## ODE TO CREATIVITY

### **Crafting WCC - Art Gallery Synergy**

*Pushpa Chari*



Come late September 2012, it was, with apologies to Keats "A season of mists and mellow fruitfulness" - of art and craft synergy. A season like none other as the WCC Gallery collaborative craft exhibitions took off in Chennai from 19th September to 10th October as part of Kaivalam.

The exhibitions had 13 leading art galleries hosting thematic exhibitions of a particular craft form which reflected the genius of the Indian artisan who through centuries and even millennia has honed and perfected his inherited skills. Often innovating, imbibing and adapting outside influences to his craft, he has made every utilitarian and decorative product a 'whole' experience in which arts and crafts, philosophy and every day life mingle.

The different exhibitions displayed crafts as varied as the earthy beauty of palmyra basketry, and the sophisticated stitchery of Chamba Rumaal and Chikankari, Kalamkari's sensuous beauty, the romance of Zardosi and Ajrakh, expressions in stone and metal, the wonder of traditional brass and metal craft, the folk charm of puppets, exciting sculpture and craft forms which spanned past, present and future and contemporary furniture forms often created out of handcraft which quite took one's breath away.

So many images of beauty gleaned from the exhibitions still remain in the mind's eye. Images contemporary and futuristic, traditional and very much today,

Palmyrah pouches and boxes which could make perfect fashion accessories and home décor. Antique Chikankari pieces whose ethereal images were surely made by celestial hands!. Kalamkari's haute couture tops, Zardosi's unfailing magic and unusual stone and metal forms. Contemporary brassware with a haunting touch of yesterday. The romance of Chamba Rumal stitching together art, craft and function. Children's books for gen next with craft as their background and centre point. And a retrospective of WCC's 50 golden years told in evocative photographs....



Many Chennaites hope that Kaivalam inspired WCC – Gallery collaborative craft exhibitions will evolve a dynamics of their own to become an annual cultural craft event every September.

## VIGNETTES OF INCREDIBLE INDIA

*E.Rajeshwari & Rajam Subramaniam*

Before the magic of the Kaivalam experience could quite wear off, we were off to experience more magic - a trip to Agra, Jaipur, Delhi, Puducherry, Kanchipuram and Kerala with foreign delegates who had come to attend Kaivalam. Organized by the Crafts Council of India, it was an unforgettable trip. Looking at our diverse, beautiful country through an outsider's eyes was special, making us even more proud of being Indian. The Taj Mahal, sights of Jaipur and Agra, the mix of ancient Tamil culture and the French ambience of Puducherry, Kanchivaram's great temples and Kerala's bewitching scenery, the craft, the textiles and the people of the country combined to give the foreign delegates an incredible view of India. We reproduce below some word pictures drawn by our foreign delegates whom we accompanied on the tour.

"I enjoyed my trip to Incredible India. Wish we had more time to enjoy Jaipur the magnificent city." - Dodi Halabi.

"The stunning Taj Mahal, Jaipur, the Pink City, visit to craft workshops which perpetuate crafts, the Amber Fort and the unforgettable Anokhi Museum all took our breath away." - Souad Amin

"Wandering down a 500 old site street in Agra at night and visiting artisan's workshops was really memorable. India exceeded my expectations on every level, the warm hospitable people, the food, ancient temples, contemporary designer hotels and fabulous shopping..." - Karin le Roux

"Jaipur the Pink City was the most dear to my heart. I enjoyed its culture, architecture and history, Agra was second to Jaipur and then Delhi. I hope to repeat this trip again at a more relaxed pace ..." - Maha. M

"Truly enjoyed my visit to India. A beautiful country with so much history, culture, and heritage. It made the trip so much more enriching to the eye and the mind meeting people like yourself. Now I am certain that with you and the large population of highly educated people of India, it is just a matter of time before India is up there with world leaders in art and culture and will bring new vision to the world.." - Adra Houda

And there were more messages sent to us, full of awe and admiration - and hope that they would visit India again. We hope so too! So au revoir, alvida, good bye till we meet again.

## ACTIVITIES

### ***The Crafts Council of India***

- Textile Show (7 & 8 September) : Once again, Chennai was swept off its feet by the hand woven and hand embellished saris on display at its bi-annual Textile show. Crafted and woven by master weavers and top designers, the Benarasis, Uppadas, tussars, Bengal cottons, kanthas and block printed saris and fabrics brought the best in the sari tradition to the city.
- Crafts Bazaar (5 - 14 October) : Held to coincide with 'Kaivalam' the Crafts Bazaar had 150 stalls showcasing the wealth of handcrafts culture that is India Fifty National and State awardees participated along with a few Shilp Gurus in an exhibition which drew rare reviews from everyone, including foreign participants at Kaivalam. The Bazaar had the buzz and colour of the quintessential Indian bazaar, and was beautifully presented with quality products. The artisans were delighted at the response.



### ***Delhi Crafts Council***

- Chamba Rumal Exhibition during Kaivalam in Chennai (October 2012) : Delhi Crafts Council was happy to be invited to showcase its Exhibition – "Chamba Rumal: Life to a Dying Art". The Exhibition had already travelled to all the major cities of India, but surprisingly never to Chennai. DCC felt that it was a wonderful opportunity as all the WCC members would get a chance to see the project that the council has been working on for over a decade. The exhibition was well appreciated resulting in excellent sales. The money received from exhibition sale will be put back into funding the Chamba Rumal Project.
- Sarees 2012: Sarees 2012 was a resounding success for DCC and we had record sales from this year's exhibition. The event included twenty participants many of whom were new to the Delhi market. We had numerous enquiries for new membership after this event! The Sutrakar Samman was awarded to Hilal Ansari, a weaver from Maheshwar for his excellence in the weaving of this region. The Sutrakar Samman is an annual award presented by DCC in recognition of excellent weaving skills across the country. This is the eighth year that this award has been presented.
- Paper Project: This projected was initiated a year ago and DCC has continued to work with various craftsmen to develop paper products for various uses. These designs are currently being sold at the Kamala shop. The project intends to increase the earnings of traditional paper kite and lantern makers living in the Old Delhi area.
- Economic Census Training Workshops: DCC members were involved in training workshops conducted as part of the Handicraft Sector in connection with the Government's 6th Economic Census. There were workshops held in Shimla, Bhopal and Chandigarh on behalf of CCI.

### ***Crafts Council of Tamil Nadu***

- Crafts Bazaar 2012 (22 - 27 June) : This year there were 115 stalls & the response was gratifying. There were a wide variety of products from all parts of India on display.
- A Sanjhi Art workshop was held along with the bazaar.

- During the bazaar two tribal ladies were trained in basket making by Thanga Jyothi from Nagercoil, one of our participants in the bazaar.
- Garland Workshop (29 & 30 July) This was organised at Appanaickenpatti village near Sulur for a group of economically backward women to help them to earn some additional income.

Another Garland making workshop was held at Mrs. Srivalli's residence for CCTN members and guests.



- Calligraphy workshop (22, 23 & 24 August) : Conducted by Mrs. Swapna.B for both members and non members, the workshop drew 10 participants.
- Olai (Palm craft) Classes( August 21 ) : The classes were conducted for the school children of GRD Matriculation School, GRN Hr.Sec.School, and PSGR Kanyakulam.
- "Sristhi - 2012"( 20 - 22 September) :This year too CCTN's fund raiser Sristhi was a 'runaway' success with all the participants doing phenomenally good business.
- World Craft Council meet (5 - 9 October) The World Crafts Council programme, was scintillating. Some of the seminars were very interesting and informative. It was a wonderful opportunity for both the delegates & the public to get to see excellent crafts from all over the world and to watch & interact with the grand masters. The hospitality was par excellence and the dances organised by WCC were wonderful. Almost 30 of our members participated either as delegates or as visitors.
- Shell Craft Classes (11 - 12 October) : These classes were held for the hearing & visually challenged Children.The Classes were also held for the inmates of Sam's orphanage.
- Collage workshop (October 16) : Dr.Madhavi G taught our members the fine art of making a collage. About 40 members participated in this.



### **Crafts Council of West Bengal**

- Crafts Council of West Bengal presented a show on arts and craft for the benefit of 700 school children from various schools and visitors. The show was inaugurated by Sri. M.K. Narayanan, Governor of West Bengal.

The Crafts demonstrated were potter's wheel, sholapith, wood, shell, Satgaon embroidery, kantha embroidery, basketry, dashabatar cards, grass mat weaving, loin loom weaving and scroll painting. Some elements of folk art such as Sara painting which Crafts Council of West Bengal is presently promoting were demonstrated. Alpona (floor painting of Bengal) was demonstrated on floor boards with Rabi, an expert on alpona explaining to the visitors the significance of this symbolic ritual art form. Shilpa Guru Sri Ananta Malakar demonstrated his famous Solapith Lotus. The performing artists who were spread out in different corners were brilliant and presented a spectacular show.

Sri Nepal Chandra Sutradhar, the Guru of the group, has just received the Shilpa Guru Award. Bauls sang and danced and mingled with the crowd. The Santhal dancers danced to the rhythmic beat of dhamsa, a large tribal drum.

## OBITUARY



Manju Bharatram



Lalitha Prasad

December has been a very sad month with the grim reaper taking away two stalwarts of CCI, Lalitha Prasad and Manju Bharatram. Both were known for their total commitment to the cause of India's crafts and artisans, organizing seminars, workshops and sales, looking into the nitty gritty of craft process, design and marketing, working with the artisan and being one with the larger philosophy of 'handmade'.

While all of CCI grieves at their loss, here are a few insights on the 2 'compleat' women from people who knew them well.

'I've known both Lalitha and Manju as warm and affectionate friends who were devoted to crafts and always in touch with the artisan. Both were great organizers. Lalitha helmed the Natural Dye Conference and the Embroidery Seminar with great success while Manju's organizational skills came to the fore at the 'Bowls' and other exhibitions and workshops. Their loss to the NGO craft community is irreparable. - Vijaya Rajan

"Lalitha was a person who one drew sustenance from. Her insatiable curiosity regarding craft processes, her questions and insights opened so many windows for me..

Her courage in the face of adversity and her commitment will be difficult to emulate".

"As for Manju, her enthusiasm and commitment to craft were unparalleled. Curious and full of questions on every aspect of craft, she was a good lateral thinker. And what a wonderfully warm and hospitable person she was !" - Gita Ram

CCI salutes these brave, spirited and joyous women who were true soldiers in their commitment to artisanal values.

## THE LAST WORD ..... WHOSE HERITAGE IS IT, ANYWAY?

*Ashoke Chatterjee*

Geographic Indicators (GI) --- the protective tool in international trade for preserving what is special to some locations from being pirated by others --- turned out to be one of the most challenging issues raised at the October World Crafts Council conference in Madras. Within the extraordinary range of experiences and

lessons shared at 'Kaivalam', the issue arose of defining heritage in terms of political boundaries. Bangladesh expressed its deep concerns at India's GI application for kantha and jamdhani traditions --- traditions that are also the hallmarks of what Bangladesh celebrates as its heritage. Other countries, including those in Central Asia that were once part of a united Soviet Union, exchanged similar issues that impact craft awareness and promotion across the world. A few days after WCC, shared heritage was the focus of a seminar in Islamabad organized by the Indus Heritage Trust. GI was less the issue there, as attention was focused on the need to preserve and protect knowledge and wisdom that is fast disappearing as the price of so-called globalisation. Yet there was discussion about the great range of craft traditions shared across the borders between Pakistan and India, including those of embroidery, weaving and stone. And GI as a possible means of protection, rather than competition.

How then does one address the concerns expressed at Kaivalam? The questions raised by colleagues from Bangladesh and elsewhere can be echoed throughout a subcontinent that shares so many craft traditions across borders that are meaningless in terms of the values inherent in cultures of mind, hand and eye. Clearly all of us need to understand GI as a protective force. India and Pakistan together challenged traders and manufacturers in the USA who were trying to patent haldi, neem and basmati rice. The European Union offers other examples of joint action. So how do we bring this experience and cooperation into the protection of South Asian artisans and their wisdom? If it is clear from experience that countries that share a threatened heritage can act together, then the need is for a space for dialogue on issues of craft protection and trade practices. We all need to better understand what is needed before the GI regime can be applied, and what it can and cannot do for what is an issue of culture, not merely of trade. For example, it was pointed out at Kaivalam that Bangladesh, if it seriously wishes to protect its craft heritage, must put in place through its parliament the framework of legislation that is required as a pre-condition for action under international regimes of trade and intellectual property rights (IPR). All countries in the region therefore need a legal umbrella under which the protective needs of particular crafts can be taken up and cooperation of neighbours enlisted in their cause. Meanwhile, there seems to be a need for craft activists to be better educated and better prepared on this dimension of marketing. Is there a role for the WCC, CCI and other activists as well as Government institutions to come together to raise awareness and capacities within our region?

Another dimension in all of this is to seriously consider what is happening within our own country on the reckless imitation of craft idioms that can be seen in every craft market: Worli, Madhubani and tribal traditions copied and applied wholesale, 'Naga' furniture manufactured in Rajasthan, Kerala bell metal transformed into cheap brass imitations from Moradabad, and weaving traditions of Banaras and Kanchipuram taken over by machine production. The list could go on. How do we challenge China for dumping imitation Banarasi brocade or Kutch embroidery when mass imitation takes place at home and Indian traders profit from this plundering of our heritage? What then is at issue is the need to demonstrate at home the respect for craft heritage that we expect from other players in the international market. GI, like charity, may need to begin at home. Just how we begin, and what the next steps should be, is the challenge Kaivalam has left with us.

THE CRAFTS COUNCIL OF INDIA  
GF ' Temple Trees '

37 Venkatanarayana Road Chennai 600 017 INDIA  
Phone : + 91 44 2434 1456 Email : [craft@satyam.net.in](mailto:craft@satyam.net.in)

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