



THE CRAFTS COUNCIL OF INDIA

"...ensuring sustainability of artisans and their craft..."

July 2015

MANAGING AN INDIAN HERITAGE: What should globalization finally mean?

Ashoke Chatterjee

Over recent years CCI has been plunged into a 'real world' of market forces, cutthroat competition, political lobbying, confusing structures of governance, difficult issues of human rights, as well as into conflicting notions of what should constitute globalization and modernity. Together, these now seem to require multiple new capacities of those who serve artisans and their crafts. All this started some four years ago when we first learned that at some of the highest seats of Indian authority, Indian craftsmanship was being dismissed as a 'sunset' activity. Not everyone agreed with us that the sector was a huge Indian advantage in urgent need of strengthening. Unreliable data was clouding its economic dimension and rectifying statistics seemed the first need toward changing attitudes of dismissal. The CEIS exercise followed, supported not by officialdom but rather by a small Tata grant. Through this experience we learnt how critical data could be in an area that for most of us had been dominated by cultural and aesthetic concerns. Months of advocacy by CCI and its partners followed and artisans were for the first time included in the Economic Census of 2012. When another generation looks back on India's craft history, they may find this a watershed event which helped change its course. Our biggest takeaway has surely been that you cannot serve a colossal industry without first understanding its economics. Other learning has followed.

Before we could pause to take a breath from CEIS advocacy efforts, the handloom crisis hit us in 2013. The crisis was in itself the outcome of ignorance and neglect surrounding the second largest source of Indian livelihood. But there was more to it. Ignorance and neglect can have recourse, but what does one make of deliberate efforts to destroy a heritage brought down through centuries, one with cutting-edge relevance in the 21st century? This was what the outcome would have been if 2013 Ministry / power-loom recommendations had succeeded by changing handloom definition and technology. The objective of a recommendation to attach a small motor to handlooms was set out as one of improving the weavers' productivity, earnings and occupational health. Such nobility would have been touching was it not for the alacrity with which weavers and activists saw through the game. The move, accompanied by a change of definition in the Handloom Reservation Act 1985, would have converted at one stroke handlooms into power-looms. It would have given the power-loom sector full legitimacy for expanding their in-roads into hand production with look-alikes. The HRA would have been reduced to even greater irrelevance after years of negligent enforcement. And India would have lost its USP in a huge and expanding market for Indian craftsmanship at home and overseas.

Why would India willfully destroy such an amazing advantage that represents not only a cherished heritage but political, economic and social relevance demonstrated first through the Freedom struggle and then through early decades of national planning? The core of the handloom crisis was unexpectedly revealed at one of those power-loom dominated meetings in New Delhi earlier this

year, which continued to push for changes in handloom definition and technology. A lone weaver representative was mocked with these words: “We have progressed from the firewood chulha to gas and electric stoves. If we hang on to technologies from our grandparent’s time, it is a mark of regression. Our children will laugh at us.”

Much earlier, when New Delhi mandarins spoke to CCI about crafts as a sunset activity, perhaps they too were concerned that “our children will laugh at us”. A priceless Indian advantage seemed to have become an embarrassing barrier on the way to achieving a Silicon Valley / Singapore-style modernity. India was thus a junior partner in a globalised world in which others represented the drive that must take humanity forward. Our distinct cultures now needed to dissolve into something that ‘advanced’ societies would accept as modern, and therefore allow us entry into their privileged world. In this scenario, Indian craft could at best be a quaint and fashionable accessory, trotted out for festivals and museum exhibitions. A far cry indeed from our positioning of India’s craft traditions as addressing the most urgent challenges of sustainable development and of offering a confident identity that defines globalization in its own terms.

The challenge does not end there. On the one hand we have modernity presented as mimicry of the West, as in every up-market shopping mall. On the other, we have a dangerous revivalism that presents India as a monoculture with all the answers, past and present. Craft activism is now doubly challenged. External pressures imitate cultures dominating the world through economic and media power, and internal majoritarianism denies our syncretic diversity. Both threaten India’s genius for those open windows which the Mahatma once celebrated for allowing us to draw from the world and enrich it with Indian experience. As CCI learns the critical importance of economics in any effort to sustain and strengthen the artisan, it may now also require the social, political and indeed even spiritual capacities that can resist both mimicry and fanaticism. Only then can the artisan and her craft remain symbolic of well-being: respect for human values and for the earth which shelters them. Can this be an Indian meaning of that celebrated EU slogan “The future is handmade”?

(Editor’s Note: From this issue onwards the CCI newsletter will carry separate headings under which articles are to be written The headings are:- (1) Innovation in craft processes and product, (2) Green crafts, (3) Education and opportunities for craft artisans, (4) Role of Civil Society and (5) General. Contributions are requested under the new format.)

KAMALA AWARDS 2015

Pushpa Chari

Saluting Kamala Awardees

Instituted by CCI in memory of Smt. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, the Kamala Awards honour and recognize craft activists and hereditary artisans for excellence in craft skills and for their contribution to the craft field

Kamala Award for Contribution to Crafts 2015

The Kamala Award for Contribution to Crafts 2015 goes to Shri. P.L. Bhanumurthi of Durgam, Gramam, Arni, Tamil Nadu.

Born into a traditional family of handloom weavers, Shri. P.L. Bhanumurthi has forty-four years of weaving experience during which he has mastered many complex weaving techniques. He weaves saris of exceptional quality in silk, silk cotton and cotton. Shri. Bhanumurthi has trained a large number of weavers in Arni and Salem in Tamil Nadu, Chirala, Rajahmundry and Kolapalli in Andhra Pradesh. His contribution towards popularising handloom weaving has extended to training women in Madurai, Usilampatti and Ramanathapuram.

In 2013, his unique innovation for the simplification of the complex and labour intensive 'korvai' technique in handloom weaving won him the prestigious National Award of the Govt. of India.

Kamala Award for Contribution to Crafts 2015

The Kamala Award for Contribution to Crafts 2015 goes to Shri. Chinthakindi Malleshham. Born in Sharjipet, Andhra Pradesh to a traditional family of Pochampally silk sari weavers, Chinthakindi Malleshham learnt the craft of handloom weaving at the tender age of 10 years. From childhood he watched his mother working at the long and laborious pre-weaving process of yarn winding for a Pochampally silk sari called 'asu making'. It involved nearly 9000 arm movements over 5 hours for a single sari. He was determined to find a solution to sort out this drudgery.

Through his dedication and perseverance the 'Asu Laxmi Machine' was born. It is in the process of being patented. Meanwhile, Malleshham has made it to the Forbes list of powerful Indian rural entrepreneurs. His machine can in a day prepare yarn for 6 saris and no labour is required except to place the thread on the machine and remove the material once the process is complete.

Shanta Prasad Award for Excellence in Handloom Weaving 2015

The recipient of the Shanta Prasad Award for Excellence in Handloom Weaving 2015 is Ms. Jamini Payeng, weaver from Majuli Island, Assam.

Jamini Payeng learnt to weave from her mother, Molimai. She soon became an excellent weaver and showed leadership qualities. After coming into contact with the Crafts Council of Assam in 2000,



Kamala Award for Contribution to Crafts 2015
Sri. Chinthakindi Malleshham



Kamala Award for Contribution to Crafts 2015
Sri. P.L. Bhanumurthi



Kamala Award for Excellence in Crafts 2015
Sri. Rajesh Acharya



Kamala Samman 2015 - Ms. Laila Tyabji



Shanta Prasad Award 2015 - Ms. Jamimi Payeng

she has become an integral part of the Council's efforts to improve the quality of weaves, revive old designs and ensure better returns to rural weavers in Upper Assam. Jamini is also proficient in the art of making natural dyes and dyeing and has held Natural Dye workshops with Crafts Council of Assam in areas like Titabor. She has recently started the Majuli Natural Dye Centre where she organises women weavers to produce Eri, Muga and Muni Mekhala chadors, saris and stoles.

Kamala Award for Excellence in Craftsmanship 2015

Coming from a traditional Vishwakarma family, Rajesh Acharya received his early training in metal craft from his father, Mastercraftsperson Shri. T. Raghavachari. He continued his training at the Regional Design and Technical Development Centre, Bangalore under the tutelage of Shri. K. Rangaswami, National Awardee and State Awardees Shri. Dambikeshwara and Shri. M. Selvaraj. An M.A in History from Mysore Open University, Rajesh Acharya decided early in life to follow his hereditary craft as his vocation.

Rajesh Acharya honed his expertise in Metal craft in Swamimalai under the eminent bronze sculptor. Thiru A. Govindasami Sthapathiyar. Shri. Appukuttan Achari guided him in creating museum quality metal work, bronze icons and 'bhuta' masks. His prolific range of Gods and Goddesses is imbued with a sense of movement, evocative facial expressions and nuanced detailing.

Kamala Samman 2015

The Kamala Samman for 2015 was awarded to Ms. Laila Tyabji for her path-breaking work in developing a market for Indian crafts, upgrading craft skills and providing a liaising link between artisan and buyer.

Laila Tyabji co-founded Dastkar in 1981, an organisation which provides skill training to artisans, helps with credit, design and product development and operates on the principle of leaving the ownership of goods to the artisan-producer. Dastkar has a base of over 250 producer groups which collectively employ more than 3600 artisans.

A skilled embroiderer herself, Laila has worked with Kashmiri, Banjara, Lambani, Rabari, Chikankari and Kasuti embroiderers in areas of revival, design / product development and marketing.

Among the many honours and accolades that have come her way are the Padmashri of the Govt. of India in 2013 and the Preservation of Craft Award 2003 given by the Aid to Artisans.

Activism and Civil Society

COLLECTIVE AND COORDINATED RESPONSE TO HANDLOOMS IN CRISIS

Shikha Mukherjee

The combination of incomprehension and ideological rigidity that propelled policy makers and the bureaucracy to propose changes to the Handloom (Reservation of Articles of Production) Act 1985 by constituting a sub-committee in May 2013 as “progress” that would be reached by the death of the less efficient and the growth of the more efficient, precipitated a crisis.

The purpose of the committee was clear – amend the Act, alter the processes that have defined the hundreds of varieties of handloom produced in India as unique, sustainable and a cultural heritage and so enable the “categorizing small powerloom units / weavers into a separate group so as to extend certain benefits on the lines of handloom weavers”.

The crisis of Handlooms pulled together weavers, organisations and individuals who had worked for decades to revive, protect, promote and popularise as well as market the uniqueness of India’s extraordinary textile production tradition and turned them into a collective and coordinated movement. Through the resistance to the irresponsible, if not destructive and thoughtless changes proposed by the Ministry of Textiles, there emerged a distinctive voice of Civil Society advocates that was inclusive of weavers, organisations and individuals. It also had the strength, passion and purpose to confront the Ministry of Textiles and the policy making establishment in New Delhi and in some of the states.

The evolution of collective action was through a series of dialogues that then established the dominant discourse of Civil Society as a counter and challenge to neo-classical liberal economic ideology that perceived development as a linear progress achieved through more and faster machines, that produced standardised goods of limited diversity, ruthlessly homogenising preferences and thereby turning the world into a flat, monotonous landscape. Policy makers began the onslaught after 2004 when the first United Progressive Alliance government came to power, by adopting the classic strategy of trashing handlooms and artisan production as “sunset” sectors.

In response to the description of Handloom and artisanal production as “sunset” sectors, the Crafts Council of India along with other Crafts and Handloom organisations decided to challenge official positions on the status and health of the sunset sectors. At a seminar organised by Crafts Council of West Bengal in conjunction with the Crafts Council of India in 2008, the issue was framed. Activists and long time advocates of the Crafts debated the “Contribution of Crafts to the Economy – Misconceptions and Undervalued Potential.” The value, contribution and necessity of perceiving Crafts, including Handlooms as a viable economic activity was made by former West Bengal governor, Gopal Krishna Gandhi, “Today, Craftsmanship is termed a sunset industry. We have to examine that argument. Craftsmanship is not about aesthetic judgment being on one side and commercial reason on the other. The real argument is not about ‘sentiment’ or ‘reason’ – but about common-sense. Common-sense tells us that despite economic planning in India, there will always be several hundred million people living through the work of their hands. Now, these millions have a talent in their hand, which the assembly liners and the free-marketers do not quite concede. That talent is an unexplored reservoir which needs to be used for their good – which is the greater good of the great number of the people of India”.

Crafts Council of India then commissioned the Craft Economics and Impact Study that was started in 2009 and completed in 2010. The findings were that there were more people earning a livelihood from the Crafts than the Government of India's estimates. The report stated that "Artisans show dynamic adaptability, varying the loom, raw material or techniques to suit market preferences and also entering or exiting the craft as markets wax and wane." And, "the craft sector has boomed since liberalisation but the profits accrue to traders and exporters; artisanal real wages have continued to be extremely low and have also fallen in real terms."

The CEIS report was a watershed. The results were important and CCI shared this with other Crafts organisations through 2011 and 2012. These interactions created the basis of a network of organisations that shared a common purpose and made a common cause - of resisting the thoughtless pressure exerted by policy makers on the Crafts and Handlooms to change and adopt technologies of production that would ruin them by fundamentally altering the essence of artisanal creativity.

The dialogue initiated before and after the CEIS report resulted in the emergence of a Civil Society voice that challenged the government's economic ideology that branded the Crafts, including Handlooms as "sunset" sectors. The compelling case for the Crafts prompted the Planning Commission, under the leadership of Dr Sayeda Hamid to ensure that the Crafts were included in the Sixth Economic Census. This was a breakthrough moment for the Crafts and those who had collectively established an informal group for the protection and promotion of the sector. For the first time in India, the Crafts, including Handlooms was included as a major economic activity for the purposes of enumeration. The results of the Census reflect the significance and size of the sector. Crafts contribute 4 per cent to GDP and provide livelihoods to approximately 2 crore people, of which it may be safely assumed, about 50 per cent are women.

Therefore when the Ministry of Textiles in 2013 attempted to subvert the uniqueness of Handloom production by suggesting changes to the way in which it was defined in the Handloom Reservation Act and open the flood gates to piracy of handloom design by allowing powerlooms to produce lookalikes, the resistance took very little time to formulate its adamant rejection of an outrageous idea.

These and other organisations, individuals and weavers - Crafts Council of India and its State Councils, Jasleen Dhamija, Rajiv Sethi, Ruchira Ghose then of the Crafts Museum, Jaya Jaitly of Dastkari Haat Samiti, Laila Tyabji of Dastkar, Ritu Sethi Craft Revival Trust, Uzamma of Dastkar Andhra, Prasanna, Shyama Sundari, Gulshan Nanda, Sally Holkar, William Bissell, Kritika Singh, Executive Director, All India Artisans & Craftworkers Welfare Association, Ritta Kapur Chisti, Shri Haripada Basak, Weaver, Phulia, West Bengal, Biren Basak, Master Weaver, Phulia, West Bengal, Amulya Basak, Master Weaver, Phulia, West Bengal, Rajan Basak, Master Weaver, Phulia, West Bengal, Anjaiah, Master Weaver from Tamil Nadu, Ansari, Master Weaver from Benares, Uttar Pradesh, R K Raman, Master Weaver, Karnataka, Gunjan of Vriksh, Women Weave, Maheshwar - came together as a resistance and a movement to advocate the strength, vitality and potential of Handlooms. The collective formed a defence against the "issue of change of definition of "Handloom"

The attempt in 2015 by the new government to rescind the Handloom Reservation Act produced a stronger and faster response, since there exists a Civil Society group that has the capacity to transform itself into an advocacy and resistance movement. It acquired unexpected support from Member of Parliament Kirron Kher, who demanded that the government declare its position.

The coming together of the diversity of organisations and individuals with their experiences, perceptions and positions to advocate in one voice for a particular cause, irrespective of how vast that cause is, is an extraordinary convergence that has power enough to make successive governments in New Delhi blink. As citizens and activists, as experts and advocates, and above all as doers, the Civil Society group on Crafts and Handlooms has acquired a credibility and a momentum of its own.

Education, Skill Building and Opportunities

ADVANCED CRAFT EDUCATION GETS A BIG BOOST

Suguna Swamy

We often bemoan the lack of good training, design interventions and exposure to better market opportunities for our craftspeople.

Now there is a stirring of hope. In pockets across the country, three different courses, interestingly unrelated to one another, have been structured to address these very needs.

The Handloom School, in Maheshwar, Madhya Pradesh offers a 6-month residential work-study programme in Design and Enterprise Management, which the excellent website describes as “a holistic, progressive and formalised curriculum that will support and cultivate the next generation of handloom weavers and weaver-entrepreneurs.”

Up to 20 students are accepted every year for the course which runs in four batches over 12 months. Anybody can sponsor a suitable candidate on the application form. The sponsor merely acts as a credible reference and is not expected to fund the student, whose cost during the term including travel to and from his home town is borne entirely (Rs.1.40 lakhs) by The Handloom School. No bonds are required to be signed either. However, it stands to reason that the student has to have some background in weaving to make the most of the rich and packed curriculum.

The first six weeks are allotted for educational training on the campus with looms allotted to the students. The remaining 4 ½ months are set aside for off-campus internships, which include design and execution of a collection against a client order. Practice in conversational English, individual smart phones with Whats App connections, training in the use of the internet and Instagram are some examples of the modern day and indeed, indispensable facilities offered.

A number of leisure activities are also planned after hours and on weekends.

A short note such as this cannot do justice to the excellent programme, described at length at www.womenweave.org/programs/TheHandloomSchool

The Kalakshetra Foundation in Chennai, in association with the Crafts Council of India, has just introduced a 6-month weaving programme, on broadly similar principles. As is well known, Kalakshetra is a cultural academy dedicated to the preservation of traditional values in Indian art. Among the many institutions set in its sprawling campus is The Craft Education and Research Centre, within which is the weaving centre is located.

The residential course, which for the present is free, offers advanced training in weaving, alongside classes in design, spoken English, computer literacy, presentation skills, crafts heritage and appreciation and the place of handmade textiles in it.

This course is designed for students who are 15 years or older, have passed the 12th standard and are familiar with basic weaving methods. The medium of instruction will be Tamil - or shall we say, Tamlish - and assessment will be continuous. All students will be assigned mentors, either from the CCI or from the textile industry, to guide them through the project and beyond. There is also a fulltime coordinator for the project, the go-to person for all matters related to the programme. For details phone +91 44 2452 4057 or +91 44 2452 0836

The first term begins on Vijaya Dasami 2015 - with a hope and a prayer!

It is one thing for private organisations to take initiatives on behalf of artisan communities but quite another for a government institute to offer a full three year graduate course. Which is what the Central University of South Bihar will soon do.

The Bachelor of Vocation (Arts and Crafts) degree course on the University's campus in Gaya, opening in the summer of 2017, will offer students who have passed 12th standard, a 6-semester residential programme that covers every aspect of education and training that is likely to be needed by them to become artisan-entrepreneurs.

The curriculum includes, in an exhaustive list of subjects, Fundamentals of Design, Environment and Ecology, Indian Social Systems, Business Management, Communication and Media, Accountancy and Marketing Management, with electives in painting, textiles, ceramics, wood, stone, metal, glass and applied craft. Added to these are extended field visits and practical work.

Students who are unable to commit themselves for the full three years can opt for a 2-semester Diploma course or a 4-semester Advanced Diploma.

As if the course was not attractive enough already, here's the best news. The fee for the full 6 semesters is under Rs. 8,500 inclusive of an annual medical insurance premium. For details, visit www.cub.ac.in

All of these three courses have been created only since 2010. This means that apart from CCI the wider world too is beginning also to realise the need to Educate to Sustain artisans. If more such educational programmes were initiated, year on year, in universities, colleges and arts and crafts centres, what a massive movement that will be for a widespread revival of handicrafts!

Green Technology

CRAFTS COUNCIL OF ANDHRA PRADESH & TELANGANA'S GREEN INITIATIVE

Meena Appnender

Once upon a time, when CCAP was a young fledgling organisation, a couple of enthusiastic members, decided to attend a dyeing and block printing workshop conducted by the renowned Shri K. Chandramouli.

The magical musteru of Natural Dyes captured their interest and fired their imagination.



They met others in the field and educated all and sundry of the power of ordinary organic matter around us to create a variety of colour.

Other people who were similarly passionate about Natural Dyes were Smt Jagada Rajappa and Shri C V Raju of Ettikopaka.

Then the thought arose, surely we did not use these naturally derived colours only on textiles?

Before the advent of chemical dyes, what did we use on our toys, on our walls, on our scroll paintings?

By this point there was a general awareness of the various kinds of traditional colours.

The inorganic colours that derived from minerals and animals was used not only on textiles but also on paintings of frescoes and scrolls.

The organic colours were derived from plants as mundane as onion skin and pomegranate peel to exotic saffron and the commercially exploited Indigo.

CCAP in the early years conducted a training workshop for Dalit women in Mat weaving. Natural Dyes were introduced to these women.

One of CCAP's early initiatives was to introduce natural dyes to the Ettikopaka Lacquerware. These are lathe turned toys that were a part of every little girl's toy basket a few generations back. They were now being painted with garish enamel paints. And probably most craftsmen had forgotten how to make the old colours.

A lot of research and experimentation later a workshop was held. The deep reds, the vibrant oranges and yellows, the subtle greens and the deep brown, a lighter brown that you are not sure whether its a yellow or maybe a muted orange have all come back to the Ettikopaka lacquerware.

The colours are prepared and mixed in with the 'lac' that gives the craft its name. These are stored in the shape of sticks and used extensively by the craftsmen of Ettikopaka.

This success story led CCAP to try the same experiment with the Kondapalli toy makers. There too the craftsmen accepted this new knowledge that was theirs to begin with. Minor glitches like the inconsistency of shades, spoilage because of its organic nature were all worked on and sorted out.

We took our mission onto the Nirmal Toys of Adilabad. The subtlety of their painting was enhanced manifold by the discreet colours of the catechu, myrobalan and pomegranate. We also discovered the existence of this wonderful technique where they make the colour gold, which remains untarnished for years. Crafts Council of Andhra Pradesh documented the whole process.

We then had a workshop with the Leather Puppeteers of Nimmalakunta. Here too midway through the workshop, forgotten and discarded memories would surface. The older craftsmen would then work with our technical resource person to develop the natural dyes in a form most suitable for their craft product. We received an order recently for a tableau of leather puppets in the old style with only the old colours.

An added impetus to our work with Natural dyes was to conduct International Natural dyes Symposium at Hyderabad in 2006. It was a massive effort to have a huge bazaar with products that used only natural dyes.

In the Puttapaka Cluster that we are the Implementing Agency of we conducted a workshop where we taught them the making and use of Natural Dyes.

Crafts Council of Andhra Pradesh & Telangana has worked hard on making crafts green, but we realise we still have a long way to go....



Innovation

THE SARI - PERSONAL REMINISCENCES

Purnima Rai

The sari is a simple, practical yet sophisticated garment, quintessentially Indian in concept. It is suitable for wearing not only as a hardy everyday garment but also cherished as an heirloom on which the Indian artisan has lavished the most exquisite and complex of techniques.

Yet, in the style commonly worn now, it is a comparatively recent construct echoing other regional styles worn around the country. In its present form, it is also believed to have been designed with the accompanying *blouse* and *petticoat* to enable Indian women present themselves in “*polite*” society in accordance with the Victorian sentiments prevalent during the British era in the early 1900s.

Throughout this entire metamorphosis it has retained its essential nature, that of being an unstitched garment, without problems of sizing and fitting and with an almost infinite potential for adaptation.

The other critical point we must bear in mind about the sari is that its production has for centuries given sustainable employment to a large section of our population. Even now, according to recent statistics, handloom weaving which includes saris, is the second largest source of employment after agriculture.

This millennia old chain of production and distribution was sought to be systematically destroyed by the British and soon after independence, it became apparent that the highly developed skills of weaving, printing and dyeing exemplified through the sari were seriously threatened. To address these issues, pioneers like Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay set up institutions which, within a few years inspired by the other notable personalities like Pupul Jaykar and Mart and Singh played a stellar role in discovering, holding together, and bringing forth some unusually creative programmes.



Vividly etched in my memory of the nineties are dazzling exhibitions like *Vishwakarma*, *Dhari*, and *Kalinga Vastra*.

Besides the support provided by the government, in the early years, there were many visionary individuals who worked on reviving and popularising different types of saris. These included the revival of Maheshwari saris by Sally Holkar and khadi and cotton saris in natural dyes from Andhra Pradesh by Uzamma.



Personally, a passionate love of Indian textiles was the background of my own involvement with the sari when, in the 1990s, I joined the Delhi Crafts Council which is a voluntary registered society founded by Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay with the mission of working towards the development of traditional Indian crafts. Textiles is such a large part of this legacy that inevitably our thoughts turned to the question of how to popularise the many lovely types of saris available in the country.

We started modestly by conceiving an annual exhibition and sale devoted exclusively to the sari. We held the first sari exhibition fifteen years ago, in 1999. It was before the advent of liberalisation and the threat to the saris at that time came mostly from stitched garments like the salwar kameez and this too was mostly noticeable in the north.

Despite our initial fears about the survival of the sari and its popularity with the younger generation; fifteen years on, we are still somewhat surprised to find that the sari seems to have held its own ! It has not only reinvented itself but has also been able to incorporate many innovations into its fold. This essentially is the inherent strength of this marvellous garment.

It is interesting to look at how innovations in the design of the sari have come about. I would split it broadly into two categories. One part of it happened gradually and organically through an intelligent interaction between the artisan, resource persons and the customers.

For example, I remember the time when we started getting the famous *ajrak* handblock printing from Sindh and Gujarat on saris. Earlier done on thick cotton for bedsheets and lungis, some of the first mulmul *ajrak* printed saris were brought for one of our exhibitions by the famous Khatri of Bhuj. Printing on saris has opened a whole new vista of possibilities for them and now you can find beautiful *ajrak* printed saris on all kinds of materials ranging from kota, gajji silk, tussar, Maheshwari, Mangalgi and south Indian cottons.

Similar is the case with the *shibori* technique of tie and dye which initially was done mostly on garments. The group was encouraged by us to design a simple range of saris for one of our exhibitions and I don't think they have looked back since! *Shibori* saris, in innovative colours and materials continue to be highly popular.

The elegant weaves from Phulia in West Bengal were introduced to the Delhi market quite late in one of the exhibitions. Ideal for summer, these light weight saris were woven with plain borders and pallus in natural muga silk.

An important initiative by Laila Tyabji of Dastkar which is regularly featured in our exhibitions is the pure tussar sari from Bhagalpur in Bihar. Woven in beautiful, vibrant colours these saris continue to be popular to this day.

The traditional technique of mud-resist printing in natural dyes called *Dabu* from Rajasthan has also been translated beautifully on to saris. Initially done only on cottons, this technique of overprinting is now being done on silks, tussars and several other materials.

In the last few years, *kalamkari* hand painting has again been successfully introduced on saris by groups working in Srikalahasti in Andhra Pradesh. Each sari is unique and special being handpainted individually.

The second kind of innovation in sari design has come about with the interventions of trained textile designers from institutions like NIFT and NID with an interest in traditional weaves and handskills. The more sensitive and creative among them have been able to sustain themselves and often a large number of weavers. Chanderi, Bengal , Benaras and Andhra Pradesh are weaving-intensive regions where such initiatives have been successful.

An interesting development introduced by the designers is that of using new raw materials and blends in weaving. Linen is one such material which has a special textured look which is very attractive on saris. Currently popular also are blends with linen, wool, tussar and jute which provide unusually subtle textures in saris.

The traditional *ikat* technique seems to have an appeal to modern sensibilities as well and quite a few designers have started using this technique. Other techniques currently being explored on saris are *zardozi* and *jamdani*.

A noteworthy design input has been the mixing not only of raw materials but also different techniques together in one sari- for example, *ajrak* printing mixed with tie and dye, *kalamkari* with *ikat*, weaves with embroideries, etc. This kind of juxtaposition produces a visually rich and unusual look to the sari.

Despite all these exciting developments, most of us working in the field are aware that the picture is confusing and chaotic.

Many of the finer techniques which are laborious have simply disappeared. The *Kancheevaram* silk sari was known for its contrasting borders which were woven using a special technique called *korvai*. Very few weavers are now willing to do this.

The thicker variety of cotton saris from Bastar or Chettinaad are no longer popular and are being woven in significantly fewer numbers.

It is unnerving to hear a common complaint from senior artisans that the next generation is unwilling to take up artisanal work. The reasons are not difficult to understand. The artisan is still not given the status in society commensurate with the highly skilled nature of his work. Many feel that the returns from this laborious handwork are not sufficient. The younger generation with a higher level of education, now also have a choice of jobs, and in the scale of importance, even a clerical job is perceived to be more desirable than weaving.

The customer profile and their choice of saris has also changed radically. Interesting new developments created by designers come at a huge price and are popular mostly with a niche urban clientele. The everyday sari which can be worn at home seems to be simply disappearing because it is no longer being worn or has been replaced by cheaper synthetic options.

Governmental institutions set up for monitoring and supporting the sector are mired in indifference and seem to be without any kind of vision or means of addressing these complex challenges. It is in such a context that many disturbing questions arise in our minds.

Will the sari go the Kimono way and only be worn for formal occasions, for parties, at festivals and marriages? Is this the future we would like to see for the garment that we are fortunate enough to have with us as a living heritage and which serves as a unique mark of our cultural identity?

In our frenetic race to embrace modernity, let us not forget what has been bestowed to us across centuries. Let each one of us cherish and feel proud of what ultimately is a beautiful expression of the human hand and spirit - the handwoven sari.

NATIONAL MEET 2015

As Kasturi Gupta Menon put it, National Meet is the time for all of us to meet up with old friends and colleagues and also make new friends. It is the one time where all the Councils and other NGO's get together to deliberate on significant issues, that is affecting the craft sector.

Ritu Sethi said that when we had gathered here 12 months ago, the move by the Ministry of Textiles to change the definition of Handlooms by allowing looms that used power for one of their

movements had been countered by a concerted effort from many organizations, individuals, weavers and sympathetic officials.

Yet, here we were back again, as the very ministry that is supposed to work for the weaver and the craftperson has again made a move to remove one of the pillars of handloom policy in India - the Handloom Reservation Act. Again, organizations and weavers were forced to come together to counter this move.

This very crisis set the topic for this year's National Meet - Crafts and Artisans: Issues of definition, understanding and data collection towards a more enabling policy environment for India's handicraft and handloom sector

Mr. Ashish Kumar, Director General, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, GOI, Ms. Laila Tyabji, founder member and Chairperson of Dastkar, Ms. Ritu Sethi, Chairperson Craft Revival Trust and Ms. Shikha Mukerjee, well known journalist were the guest speakers at the meet.

Mr. Ashish Kumar spoke on "Outcome Indications from the Economic Census 2013" and issues of designing a satellite account specific to handicraft / handloom sector. He spoke about the Economic Census 2013 and the issues faced by the enumerators. The criteria for inclusion in this sector were that the objects should be handmade and should be made by human labour. But it was not always very clear as some handmade products had a small machine made component. Also, what constitutes handicraft? What about food items made by hand? Next was the production of the craft. It was important to evaluate the number of persons employed in terms of time and effort in a particular activity, whether in a full time or a part time capacity.

He went on to talk about the Satellite Survey. Satellite accounting of a sector would include main and subsidiary activities. It would include both forward and backward linkages. He also spoke about the changes that had to be incorporated over time. The gross value addition would have to be captured, that is material plus labour input. The labour input would provide the value addition and capture the growth of the sector.

Secondly, employment numbers of both full and part time workers as well as employment of subsidiaries needed to be taken into account. This information is important as it provides an indication of the potential and hence investment requirements.



He said in the future the surveys should include value addition, levels of investment, type of activity, whether it is trading, employment generation and skill development and also as agricultural products and industrial products.

Ms. Shikha Mukherjee spoke about the background to the CCI Study, Economic Census 2013 and plans for the satellite account: implications for CCI and its partners.

The Economic Census, she said, has proved that the sector now has a voice and cannot be ignored. Once they are included in the NSS and CSO, the handicraft and handloom sectors will be given due respect, despite numbers and percentages.

She said for the Satellite survey Craft Councils family, other NGOs in the sector and civil societies need to participate in framing the questions to yield the data needed. It should capture the diversity of the sector as well as the decentralized nature of the sector. The fundamental issue is one of homogeneity. There is a need to group homogeneous activities together so that a sample can be drawn from them

Ritu Sethi spoke on The Handloom Crisis – what have we learned from it? And what may lie ahead? She felt that perhaps this is the time that we should sit down to chalk a strategy that changes our stance from being victims to taking a proactive approach.

Ms. Laila Tyabji gave the gathering an overview of the recent developments on the prospect of a Hastakala Academy and on the future of the Crafts Museum.

Laila Tyabji began by saying that strange things were happening in the cultural arena under the current as well as the previous governments. She said that the Crafts Museum was being taken over by the newly set up Hastakala Academy. While the idea of setting up the Hastakala Academy at the Crafts Museum site is not a bad idea by itself, the manner in which it has been done leaves much to be desired. There has been no detailed vision statement on the project. Moreover, what was frustrating was the lack of public debate on the issue.

Ritu Sethi and Ashoke Chatterjee spoke about the WCC developments, IPR and the subsequent trade Issues.

Ritu Sethi began her presentation with the current problem with Bangladesh over GI for Jamdani. She pointed out that these tensions are arising as GI impacts culture, community, oral traditions and knowledge systems and also delineates territory associated with this culture and tradition. Though flawed in its nature GI is the only protection accorded to crafts in the legal system operational in India today.

She said that though GI has been in place for over a decade, after registration, not one of the awardees has moved towards utilizing this in trade, marketing, branding and other related areas. To benefit from the Act she felt we needed to be aware and knowledgeable about the Act, its mechanism, practice and how practitioners and countries benefit by it

The outcome of the meet was the decision to set up a small team of NGOs in the sector and civil society to frame the questions to yield the data needed in the Satellite Survey. It should capture the diversity of the sector as well as the decentralized nature of the sector. It was emphasized that ultimately we should be interested not only in the numbers employed but the entire value system. Value addition would indicate the net income contribution and thus the per capita income of the sector would get its due notice and respect.

Kasturi Gupta Menon emphasized that stronger and reliable data base is the objective. Besides numbers, she said we are also interested in the number of women employed, number of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other marginal and excluded people.

It was also decided that different organizations should draft a similar kind of letter against the amendment of the HLRA and send it to the Government.

More Craft News

WCC CRAFT CITIES

Usha Krishna

It is with great pleasure and pride that I would like to mention here that Mamallapuram has bagged the distinction of being the first Indian city to be designated as a WCC Craft City. Close on its heels comes Jaipur, the second city to be honoured as a WCC Craft City.

The WCC Craft City programme was launched in 2014, during the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the World Crafts Council, modelled on the lines of the UNESCO Creative Cities programme. We in WCC thought this was a good programme that should have been continued, and being in the crafts field so long, WCC decided to launch the WCC Craft City programme. While the UNESCO Creative Cities programme covered all areas of cultural specialisation such as Literature, Film, Music, Crafts, Folk Art, Design, Media Arts and Food, the WCC Craft City programme was designed to focus on only the craft aspect of the city. Dongyang in China was designated the first WCC Craft City for wood carving.

After an elaborate list of criteria for deciding on the parameters necessary for qualification as a WCC Craft City was drawn up, discussed and approved by the Board, the WCC Craft City programme was announced during the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the World Crafts Council held in China. Some of the important criteria that a city should necessarily have, include a sufficiently long history of the practice of the craft as the main occupation in the city, continuation of the practice through generations either by direct practice or through technical education imparted by institutions, availability of raw material to support and sustain continuance of the craft well into the foreseeable future, availability of a market to patronise and consume the products, etc. They should also network with other similar craft cities and share their experiences, ideas and best practices for cultural, social and economic development and for nurturing their own creative economy.

Each country is eligible to submit up to five applications in a year. Another important criterion is that the application should emanate from an NGO, but should have the backing of the local government. A three member jury would have to be approved by the WCC headquarters, who would personally visit and evaluate the city to ascertain first-hand whether the city meets the requirements as outlined in the criteria approved for this purpose.

The Crafts Council of India submitted two applications, one for Mamallapuram and the other for Jaipur, for consideration to be declared WCC Craft Cities. Let me share the experience here.

Mamallapuram, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is popularly known for its extraordinary, world famous stone carvings done around 7th century. We can call Mamallapuram the world's largest and

ancient open air museum of sculpture, incorporating all four techniques of stone craft – monolithic, rock-cut, architectural and bas-relief sculptures all in one place, which is unique in the world.

This exquisite craftsmanship continues to thrive, practised by descendants of the ancient sculptors and craft students, absorbing modern technical skills and adapting to requirements of both regular and contemporary market demands.

The craft tradition is methodically taught in the Government College of Sculpture and Art here, where a number of students, both belonging to families of practising artisans and well as others interested in pursuing sculpture as a profession, are taught the skills and nuances of the craft. Poompuhar, as the window of the Handicrafts Department, is doing good work in promoting the works of artisans.

A team of three jurors was designated by WCC to evaluate Mamallapuram. They visited Mamallapuram in March 2015. We had to get various clearances from the different departments of both State and Central governments to make it happen. Dr. Santhosh Babu, IAS, Chairman & Managing Director of Poompuhar, the nodal organization for Tamilnadu Handicrafts Development Corporation, was instrumental in getting us the support of the State Government.

The team of jurors, along with members from Crafts Council of India met Dr. Santhosh Babu who made an interesting introductory presentation on Mamallapuram and its history of stone craft from 7th Century A.D. We were taken to the important archaeological sites of Mamallapuram, followed by a visit to the show rooms and workshops of practising craftsmen who have been in this profession for several generations. The team of jurors was happy to observe the continuation of the ancient tradition of crafts till date, religiously following rules stipulated in ancient sastras, and at the same time catering to contemporary markets by mastering their skills with the help of modern tools and latest techniques in stone carving. The group then visited the Government Museum and the College of Arts and Sculpture to witness the training being imparted to students. It was heartening to note that boys and girls were coming forward to learn the difficult art of stone carving and sculpture. Of particular interest was the new attraction, the 7-D theatre showing a good, short film on the history of Mamallapuram. Innovative ventures like this would surely attract people and help propagate the greatness of this city in a more interesting manner to people from all walks of life.

Dr. Santhosh Babu explained the initiatives and welfare measures taken by the State government to encourage the craftsmen sustain their interest in the traditional craft and carry it into the future. The jurors were impressed by the dedication and commitment of the practising craftsmen towards achieving excellence in their chosen field, and had no hesitation in recommending the candidature of the City. The WCC headquarters promptly processed the application among the Regional Presidents, and awarded the WCC Stone Carving City title to Mamallapuram on April 9, 2015.

Jaipur is a different story altogether. Much larger than Mamallapuram, it is a confluence of crafts, arts and culture with an eventful history of its own. Despite the complexities of political power play through centuries the region has always sustained an enormous range of crafts, motivated by its proximity to the power centres and influenced by cultures from neighbouring regions.

A team of three jurors was again designated by WCC to evaluate the city, and we made a visit to Jaipur in the third week of April 2015. It was a real eye-opener to witness the variety of crafts being practised in this city, and the number of craftsmen involved in all the crafts. We visited all conceivable places – workshops of artisans, showrooms, design centres, educational institutions, the city palace museum and the retail market. We also visited the public-private partnership initiative,

functioning with a unique concept of creating leaders from the craft sector.

It was very heartening to see the administration working shoulder to shoulder with the artisans in the development of crafts. The commitment and patronage shown by the government and the erstwhile Royalty towards the continuation of the craft traditions as well as the welfare of the craftsmen is something to be seen to be believed. An example to quote would be the Chief Minister's decision to convert five ITIs into craft centres for skills development of artisans! We reached the unanimous opinion that Jaipur is a perfect example of a "crafts city" which has continued with its centuries-old traditions to relate to the modern day consumers and markets.

¹It was therefore fitting that Jaipur too was honoured as WCC Craft City.

BOOK REVIEW

Unfolding Contemporary Indian Textiles by Maggie Baxter (Niyogi Books) Weaving Craft Synergies, Contemporary and Futuristic

Pushpa Chari

The past few decades have seen books on the diverse and evolving contemporary expressions of the country's 5000 year old handloom experience, involving innovations in both process and product. It's a movement driven by revivalists, lifestyle and fashion designers and artists and not least by the weavers themselves. Maggie Baxter's "Unfolding Contemporary Indian Textiles" features the work of a few prominent textile designers and artists in taking Indian textiles into the 21st century. In precise, poetic prose which often seems to match the flow of innovatively designed fabric as seen in the brilliant photographs featured in her book, Baxter analyses in detail the work of designers, Bappaditya and Rumi Biswas, Sanjay Garg, Mandip Nagi, Abraham and Thakore, Jason Cheriyan, Anshu Arora and others, artists Panda Jagannath, Manisha Parekh etc.. It is, in every case, a detailed analysis.

Speaking of an Abraham and Thakore creation she says "Their approach to colour is lucid luminescent and heightened, a flash of red at the end of a black and white sari..... Architecturally, severe triangles with their genesis in South Indian temple motifs intensify brown, creamy off white and forest green, with pure white adding a glowing contrast". Similar vivid word pictures capture the creativity of other designer artists and artisans as they play with exploding colours, diverse weaves, mix classicism with abstraction, humour with serious perspective to create their narratives. For many readers there might be a sense of delight and recognition as one comes upon an evocative photograph of a colour drenched Bailou, a Raw Mango sari with its serial 'holy cow' body or a Meera Mehta ikat that one might have picked up on occasion for their uniqueness.

In fact, the mesmerising photographs tell more than half the story. The frames bring every feature, embellishment, weave, and melding and merging of colours and every strand to life, be it a Chandra Shroff sari, a Shamlu Dudeja Naga shawl inspired sari or artisan Abdul Aziz Ali Mohammad Khatri's 'multi Bindi kanda' bandhini scarf where the unstretched but untied bandhini motifs create 3 dimensional magic of their own. The author salutes the numerous and often unknown skilled craftsmen and women of the country as "the real heroes and heroines of the hand woven textile industry"

And finally, “the survival of the (handloom) sector lies with deeply committed and talented artisans being proactive, effective contributions to the adaptation of their crafts while proper respect, acknowledgement and financial reward (is given) for their skills. Change creates opportunity”.

ACTIVITIES

The Crafts Council of India

- Textile Show (6 - 7 March): Saris mirroring the creative synergy of the country’s best weavers, artisans and textile designers were on display at CCI’s bi-annual Textile Show. Benarasi, Kota, Uppada, Patola, Gadhwai, Chanderi, Maheshwari and Khadi unfolded their unique weave and design language presenting a breathtaking array of saris, fabric and dupattas. As usual, Chennai’s discriminating craft loving public came in large numbers to shop for summer wardrobes.
- Natural Dye Bazaar (11 - 15 March): The country’s strength in the area of vegetable and natural dye textiles and products was celebrated at the hugely successful bazaar organised by CCI. Ajrakh, Bagh, Sanganer, Patola, Kalamkari, Matka, Dastkar Andhra’s Khadi and handlooms and other fabled names which only work with natural dyes unfolded a wealth of specially created saris, yardage, dupattas and more. It was a serene and soul fulfilling textile experience and proved hugely popular with Chennaites, many of them belonging to generation next.

Crafts Council of Andhra Pradesh & Telangana

- Aakruthi Vastra (January): This year vibrant textiles and earthy crafts, lured many a footfall to the exhibition.
- Kausalyam 2014: The crafts CCAPT had developed for Kausalyam 2014 received another platform vide the Indian Institute of Interior Decorators (IIID), who had a National level conference in Hyderabad. CCAP were invited to showcase the Kausalyam products at the exhibition. The crafts were appreciated and considering the interest shown, IIID has decided to include a directory of craftsmen in their magazine “Insider”.
- The Lakshmi ASU Machine: Designed by Chintakindi Mallesham: It is an invaluable labour saving device for Ikat weavers. Recognising its importance in removing the drudgery from the pre loom process, CCAPT was part of a programme which felicitated Chintakindi Mallesham. CCAPT are now enabling the purchase of this machine in the Puttapakka village.
- Cheriyal craftsman, Nakashi Vaikuntam, has added yet another feather to his cap by receiving the “Ugadi Puraskar” from the Government of Telangana.
- Warangal Dhurries, an integral part of the crafts of the Telangana state, have in recent years lost their share of the export market. CCAPT’s interaction with the very pro-active Collector of the District, is leading to the tackling of the technical problems which weavers face.
- Puttapakka Cluster: The cluster has received permission for the construction of its Common Facility Center. The building work will commence shortly. Shri. G. Ramanaiah’s wall hanging ‘Kamadhenu & Kalpavriksha’ was presented to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh (Ms. Sheikh Hasina) by Prime Minister Shri. Narendra Modi.

Delhi Crafts Council



- Kairi (March 2015): Kairi, DCC's annual summer textile exhibition did exceptionally well due to change in the venue to Aga Khan hall. DCC has planned this exhibition specially as a marketing platform for weavers and printers. This year twenty participants from across the country were represented. On the opening day DCC paid a special tribute to Rashid Bhai, the well-known block printer from Jaipur, who died suddenly last year.

- Sanjhi - Past Forward (March 2015) : Delhi Crafts Council's journey with the magical art of Sanjhi spans over 30 years. The exhibition - 'Sanjhi - Past Forward' was DCC's attempt to push the boundaries

of this ethereal craft. Experiments were done with the traditional techniques using innovative material and display methods to contemporize the art while maintaining the essence of this highly skilled, delicate and time consuming handicraft. New experiments of combining Sanjhi with miniature painting in Pichawai style were tried out successfully. DCC team had worked for over a year on this exhibition and it was the vibrant exchange of ideas with the craftsmen which resulted in their giving life to DCC's vision. DCC was privileged to work with the highly skilled Sanjhi craftsmen- Mohan Kumar Verma and Ram Soni, and Jaiprakash the miniature artist from Jaipur. The exhibition was a huge success and created a lot of awareness about this magical handicraft in Delhi.

- Chamba Rumal - Workshop (May 2015): To take the Chamba Rumal project forward, the Delhi Crafts Council decided to experiment with contemporary themes. Swati Kalsi, a designer experienced in working with other traditional embroideries, has been appointed to work on this new collection of rumals.

The first of the three workshops took place in May at DCC's office premises. Seven embroiderers and one artist came from Chamba to participate in this workshop. Working out the new contemporary themes and designs for the new rumals, to suit the Chamba embroidery was a challenge. The two artists working on this were able to complete the drawings for two rumals under Swati's direction. Three to four additional workshops will be required to bring out the new collection.



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