





UNIT II
CRAFTS REVIVAL



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HANDLOOM AND HANDICRAFTS REVIVAL

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

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

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





1. PROMOTION OF HANDICRAFTS

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

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

All India Handicrafts Board

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

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

Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay

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

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

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





Central Corporations

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

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

Voluntary Social Organisations

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

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

Pupul Jayakar

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



2. RESEARCH AND DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

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

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

Promotion of Design

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



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

3. TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT

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

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

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



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

Design Studies

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

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

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

– NID website: www.nid.edu





Packaging

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

The *Indian Institute of Packaging* in Mumbai with branches in Delhi, Chennai, Hyderabad and Kolkata offers a certificate programme in packaging and a package development service for a fee. There

are Postgraduate Diploma Courses and Distance Learning Programmes that are accredited by the Asian Packaging Foundation (APF).

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

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

– *The Times of India*, 26 July 2010

4. MARKETING

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

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

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



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



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

PRIZES, AWARDS AND SCHEMES FOR CRAFTS

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

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

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

EXERCISE

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