



## The Currency of Dil Bhavna

*Ashoke Chatterjee*

The national turmoil triggered by demonetization is acknowledged to have had its most serious impact on India's 'informal' sector that depends critically on cash for survival. While distress signals have come in across the hinterland, the impact of demonetization on the sector is still unknown. In addition to the long list of all that still needs to be done for India's artisans, there is now the additional need to cope with an increasingly digitized economy. Margins of error in the craft sector are already slender. What can activists do to turn disruption into opportunity, and to speed new skills within craft communities?

Developments indicate how casually the interests of millions can be disregarded by the powerful. The good news may be that today young 'artisan entrepreneurs' --- a term reflected in the Economic Census 2012 --- have a capacity to respond to change that is astonishing and deserving of response. Just days after demonetization was announced, Somaiya Kala Vidya (SKV) brought to Ahmedabad ten 'artisan-designer' students to present their collections at a gallery show. Mentored by Judy Frater, the team came prepared to speed billing by swiping cards. The purpose was to leave more time for customer interaction. Lessons learned in professionalism (e-commerce, merchandising and point-of-sale efficiency) were now applied to the cash crisis. Buyer-seller interaction focused on design, technology, market trends and about values and realities which drove choices. Sales reached record levels, and currency was never mentioned.

A few days later SKV 'Business and Management' students joined in a round-table organized at the India International Centre by the Craft Revival Trust and Somaiya Kala Vidya. The key issue was market understanding, and the challenge for craftsmanship to drive the market rather than be entirely driven by it. The key capacity identified was education that could strengthen hereditary knowledge with new opportunities of design, technology and communication. Artisan-designers (Aslam Abdul Karim Khatri, Purshottam Premji Vankar, Rajesh Vishramji Siju and Talha Gulam Khatri) spoke with one voice on what had empowered them through the pedagogies pioneered by Judy and her collaborators at Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya and SKV. Traditional artisanship had emerged as a contemporary capability. Negotiating more successfully with market forces and tradition was now the future, not just the past. Judy Frater and Amrita Somaiya (K J Somaiya Trust) spoke of a driving intent to transform the imbalance of artisans laboring for others within their own tradition, uplifting them instead as designers, innovators and market leaders in their own right. New confidence and capacities offered choices of design and entrepreneurship that go well beyond job work that fulfills only the requirements of external actors.

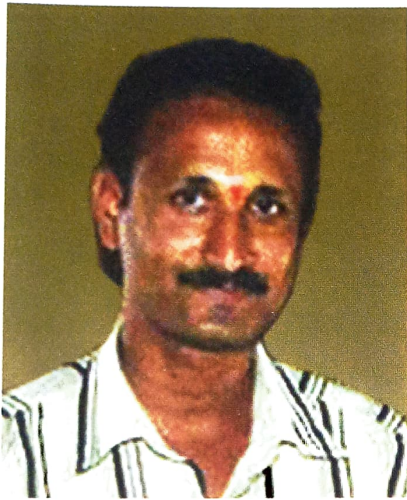
With tradition as their DNA, the commitment of these practitioners emerged as a culture of quality rather than as products or skills fixed in time. They had no illusions about what was at stake in this difficult negotiation over distances, trends, taste and cultures. Irfan Anwar Khatri (SKV) reminded that artisans still need greater recognition to set their own business terms. Laxmi Puwar (SKV) recalled how she had learnt to understand the USPs of her craft and how long-term implications were invariably more critical than short-term gains. Dr Ismail Mohmed Khatri, ajrakh doyen, spoke of his community's journey since pioneering interventions in the early 1970s made in cooperation with NID and Gurjari, and how these had defined a craft movement which was to have global implication. Master weaver Shyamjibhai Vishramji recognized that his craft decisions could have community-wide impact. This demanded a thoughtful responsibility to protect dil bhavna as the enduring USP that connects yesterday with tomorrow, and that takes pride in quality the ultimate bottom line. Weaver Dayalabhai Kudecha is today an educator, designer, business graduate and entrepreneur. He shared the impact of market forces within a small community of artisans, and how competition could be turned towards collaboration rather than cut-throat insecurity. Anuradha Kumar (Fabindia), Anjana Somani (Delhi Crafts Council) and Ritu Kumar spoke from the client side of the table, underlining transformed relationships between buyers and the Kutch artisans as they collaborated as equals in critical decisions. Among these were quality issues related to capacity constraints of artisans, avoiding over-exposure or quick-fix mass production that can destroy the very qualities of hand and eye that markets must be educated to value. Laila Tyabji (Dastkar) observed that a decade after the Kala Raksha experiment first emerged, the market was now asking for artisan-designers by name, each with his or her own USP identified as a brand in its own right. SKV artisan-designers recalled that in this journey, an older generation's despair about craft futures had also to be overcome. Once-skeptical families were now encouraging other young talent to enroll, aware that new knowledge offered the prospect of a better life through craft.

To sustain this hope, the most critical element may be that of respect --- respect for traditional wisdom, respect for the hands and minds that have carried tradition to the present day, respect translated into a quality of life through secure livelihoods, and respect that was in itself the outcome of education. Jaya Jaitley (Dastkari Haat Samiti) pointed out that in this achievement, education was of both maker and user, a process that redefined and enriched tradition continuously. The market was the space within which this mutual learning takes place and in which it must succeed through demonstrating both relevance as well as sustainability. Ritu Sethi (Craft Revival Trust) recalled that it was not so long ago when merchants assessed the value of embroidery by weight rather than by quality: "We have come a long way since then, only to be challenged by technologies which now claim an ability to dispense with the embroiderer altogether!" In times of such rapid change and threat, to what can one cling for security? Manjari Nirula cited CCI and World Crafts Council experience at the Santa Fe art and craft market. This three-day event is the largest of its kind, with a very special buyer-seller ethos. One hundred and sixty artisans from all over the world this year welcomed 26,000 visitors and achieved \$3M in sales in just 21 hours --- 90% of this value directly transferred to participating artisans. More important even than volume was what this sale actually represents: an educated audience, aware of craftsmanship and of the cultural, economic, ecological and functional value of hand production.

The Round Table was followed in Delhi by a sale of the SKV student collections. As in Ahmedabad, the currency crisis was parked at the door as quality products flew off the tables. The lesson perhaps is that despair can overtake those helpless to influence the times we live in or to move with them. Empowerment demands education for self-reliance, not just schemes. The artisans brought together by Judy and Ritu have reminded that the times are indeed changing, and that change may not be all bad news.

## Innovation in Craft

*CCI salutes Shri Chinthakindi Mallesham*



Ch. Mallesham winner of the Kamala Award for Contribution to Crafts, 2015 is now the proud recipient of the Padmashri, awarded to him by the President of India for the year 2017. He has been honoured by the Padma Award for his deep commitment to his craft. And for conceptualising and inventing the Lakshmi Asu machine which eliminates the pre-weaving process of yarn winding for a Pochampalli silk sari which involves 9000 arm movements for just one sari. His machine can in a day prepare yarn for 6 saris with no labour required but to place the thread on the machine and remove it once the process is complete. Today more than 60 per cent of Pochampalli silk weavers use this machine increasing the output of the coveted Pochampalli sari and eliminating the drudgery involved.

## Green Technology

### Initiatives on Eco Friendly Processes

*Raji Narayan*

Crafts Council of Karnataka is dedicated to the promotion of traditional and languishing crafts of Karnataka with a conscious emphasis on eco friendly products and processes. Our motto is to promote eco-friendly and bio-degradable crafts.

As far back as 2005, Crafts Council of Karnataka has conducted initiatives, projects and workshops, creating awareness programmes and marketing opportunities for craftspersons by reviving languishing techniques with new designs in eco-friendly products.

Bamboo Furniture was one such project conceived and coordinated by the Crafts Council of Karnataka with the help of mastercraftsman, Shri Muthgowda from the Soliga community of B.R Hills, a tribal community on whom the project was focused, with a view to strengthening its future potential as a source of livelihood. Bamboo being a fast growing species is ideal for conserving existing forests and for afforestation of waste lands.

Integrated design and technology development projects have been conducted in cane and bamboo craft.

A training workshop in Kinhal craft had been conducted in Koppal district for two months where participants were brought in from the Glasgow School of Arts, Scotland. This very successful workshop was a fruitful effort in reviving the craft, to breathe new life into it, both from the design and production points of view. The focus here was to increase quality production and create marketing awareness. The induction of overseas participants added a new dimension to the craft, introducing contemporary tastes into the existing designs without disturbing the traditional base of the craft.

The Eco Ganesha movement is an ongoing project of the CCK, started in the year 2003 and has been done in collaboration with the National Referral Centre for Lead projects, with the aim of creating awareness among the public about the ecological hazards of lead in chemical paints used. Through its outlet store, Kamalini, these non toxic eco friendly Ganeshas are marketed during the festival.

In the textile sector, CCK's intervention at the Ilkal cluster is well known. The workshop on natural dyes in silk yarn dyeing and weaving thereafter through the talented weavers of Ilkal, created a veritable riot of colours. More such workshops were conducted at Bengaluru and the Ilkal cluster. This team of master dyers from the Ilkal cluster in Karnataka created dyes from tree bark, flowers, wood, seeds, lac, etc. In the year 2007 a similar workshop was conducted at Molakalkuru cluster, Karnataka. The study included the art of using natural dyes without using mordants. The use of neem and amla powder instead of mordants was the highlight of the second workshop. We are proud of the fact that a few of these weavers have made this an ongoing project since then. Such interventions have created many more niche marketing platforms for the weavers of Ilkal. Our weavers have informed us that many reputed NGOs have come forward and are conducting several such workshops at these clusters.

Crafts Council of Karnataka had organised a design and technical development workshop for wood laquerware at Chennapatna with an NID designer and a mastercraftsperson. Chennapatna toys are made of close grained 'pale' wood, since the softness and pliability is ideal for turning. The range of toys include dolls, train sets, carts, board games, and decorative lacquered curtain rods with beautiful motifs of birds, all in very sophisticated hues and vibrant colors.

Educational / Learning Toys for Montessori schools were created and these have the potential of changing the outlook of India's younger generation. The designs have the ability to grasp any child's attention and serve as the best learning tool at the grassroot level. CCK's play and learn projects have been a step towards crafting a non chemical, non polluting and plastic free world.

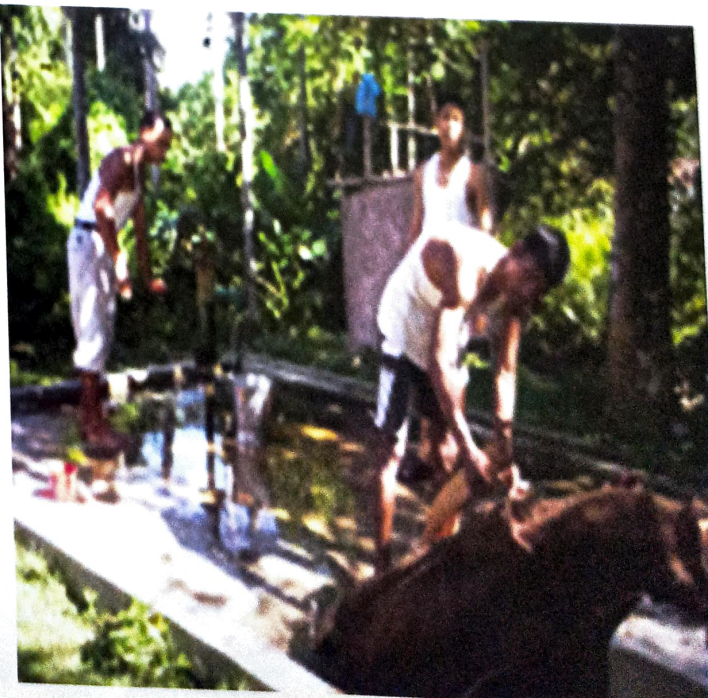
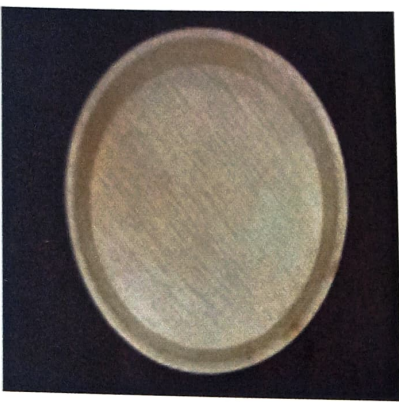
## The Story of a Young and Green Entrepreneur

*Pushpa Chari as told by Nandini Dutta*

Meet young Arindam Dasgupta, a 'green' entrepreneur whose success story underlines the fact that commercial success can come one's way without compromising on our ecological and environmental heritage. Following his dream of giving 'green' lifestyle options for people

living in every corner of India. he hit upon manufacturing arecanut sheath dinner plates which are economical, bio-degradable, compostable, natural and attractive in appearance as well as hygienic and chemical free. His company Tamul Plates Marketing Pvt. Ltd (TPMC) generates rural livelihoods through the manufacture of earthy, disposable dinnerware. His arecanut sheath plates can hold liquid for more than 2 – 3 hours. And TPMC's R and D wing has developed a neat press machine in collaboration with 'Sandhya Engineering Concern' of Howrah which can mould the sheaths into various shapes and sizes. To meet the challenge of drying a large number of sheaths, TPMC has also developed a low cost, non electrified dryer to try dry 500 pieces in 3 – 5 hours.

Arindam's success has been meteoric. He has promoted more than 100 arecanut plate units till now and has generated employment for more than 2500 people through his initiative, developed low cost technologies and created markets for the plates both across India and overseas. More than 50 lakhs in income has been generated for arecanut farmers through a material which was once considered a throw away waste.



## Education in Craft

Children of the Bishnupur Weavers on an exposure trip to Kolkata in November 2016

*Gita Ram*

Fourteen of CCI's E to S children came to the Birla Academy, Kolkata to see the special exhibition of a revival project for Baluchar weaves.

The Weaver's Studio Foundation had been working on the revival of Baluchar weaving with assistance from the Weavers Service Center, Kolkata.

This would be a unique opportunity for the children to see for themselves the uniqueness of Baluchar and perhaps realize what an extraordinary skill of weaving the family possessed.

November 18 was a Saturday and we had felt it would be perfect for a day visit to Kolkata. We later realized that it may not work as the children had started their annual exams. However, we were pleasantly surprised to learn that the head master of their school had insisted that they not miss the show. The R.K. School in Bishnupur where most of the children study has also been the venue for the weekend design classes that CCI had been running for six months. The headmaster was therefore quite tuned into what we were trying to do.

Weaver's Studio had arranged a special and exclusive viewing time when they were the only visitors. They were shown around by a special guide from the Tapi Collection. Each of the motifs and the evolution of these motives, the changes in composition over time, the colours used was explained in detail. Some of the children had questions. At the end, two of them were interviewed by the Tapi crew. They arrived at 1 pm after lunch enroute, their tour was over by 4 pm. They were given tea and taken to the station in time for their train back.

Biswajit, CCI's coordinator for Bengal had accompanied them both ways. A week before this, 25 children in the E to S Scheme Bhubaneshwar, Odisha, learning pattachitra art, visited Raghurajpur a heritage village known for pattachitra painting. We are very happy that both these opportunities worked well.

## Co-curricular course in Crafts for Ashoka University, Sonapat – August / November 2016



Delhi Crafts Council was asked to conduct 13 sessions to introduce crafts to the students of the liberal arts programme at the Ashoka University from August to November 2016. It was an exciting offer and DCC drew up the weekly programme taking different craftsmen for demonstration accompanied by experts to introduce the crafts. The crafts that were taught included Mithila and Gond paintings.



Sanjhi, block making, chikankari, natural dyes, calligraphy and Bagh printing. The students were very interested in working on their own on all the crafts. Short documentaries on crafts were also shown whenever possible. The last session on various traditional costumes saw the students taking to the ramp dressed up in the costumes.

## CRAFT REVIVAL

Revival of Sutra Durries of Warangal

*Kusum Viswanath*

"If we lose a craft, we lose a culture"

The craft of weaving Warangal cotton durries is languishing. Most people have forgotten that at one time weavers of Warangal produced beautiful, intricate designs which were valued highly in the market both in India and abroad.

A serious attempt to revive this dying craft is now being made by Crafts Council of Telangana. There are challenges. The weavers and the craft exist but the buyer is gone. There are hundreds of families dependent on this craft struggling to make both ends meet. Their children look elsewhere for a future.

Sixty percent of weavers have left their inherited trade. They encourage their children to study and take other jobs.

The history of Warangal durries goes a long way back. The flourishing trade of beautifully woven floor durries lost its domestic and foreign market in the late 80s and 90s. A major factor was also that the colours were not fast and there was no up-gradation of designs or skills. The plight of these weavers was addressed to some extent by APCO (Govt. of AP) by giving them orders to weave plain durries for the state welfare hostels all over. Another issue was exploitation of the weavers by the master weavers who were literally calling the shots in their cooperatives. Changing attitudes and the apathy of the state administration in not adding value to their inherited craft also contributed to the decline.

The strength of Warangal durries was the quality of their weaving, durability and designs. Sale of plain durries kept them in the trade but the skill of weaving intricate designs was lost over a period of several years. This was a great loss to the craft. Meanwhile other centres in northern India like Jodhpur, Agra etc picked up their production having big factories set up by individual entrepreneurs. Warangal durrie was forgotten! Availability of real Warangal durrie was minimal.

The first ten scrolls will be designed and painted in a fourteen-day residency hosted by the Murshidabad Heritage Development Society at Azimganj. Working with the Rural Crafts and Cultural Hubs and the Crafts Council of India we have selected twenty talented craftspeople including Patuas, scroll painters from Pingla, Kantha embroiderers, clay doll makers from Krishnanagar, Shora and Santiniketan batik artists to form the team alongside twenty local artists and students from the ten communities along the Hooghly to collaborate with a team of UK silk painters from Kinetika.

Using the stories on the scrolls as a starting point we will devise river walks with the 20 communities along both the Thames and the Hooghly.

Silk River will culminate between September and December 2017 when an international group of artists, writers and photographers will be invited to take part on foot and by boat to experience the stories of the two interconnected rivers.

The whole story will be captured through an online exchange curated by Mike Johnston, senior lecturer in Digital Media at Bath Spa University, working with his students and a team from ILEAD to enable participants and audiences to connect and share content. During the walks, Kevin Rushby, Guardian travel writer will write a daily blog for our dedicated Silk River website.

All ten of the Bengali silk scrolls will be revealed as a part of the Murshidabad Heritage Festival on 28th and 29th January, where each scroll will be rigged as a sail and attached to a boat for the famous boat race on Sunday afternoon.

From here the scrolls will travel to London and inspire the UK communities in the design of theirs. All twenty will return to Kolkata in December 2017 with an international audience who will start their ten day walk along the Hooghly from Murshidabad to Batanagar bringing the relationship between UK and India full circle.

Come walk with us".

## 'KAMALA' : The Lotus Blooms

*Pushpa Chari*

The Crafts Council of India's 'Kamala' Craft Shop, Chennai, had its elegant launch on 27th January, opening its doors to its unique one-of-its-kind brand of handcrafted expressions and products. 'Kamala' resonates with a specially designed lifestyle product line with an emphasis on quality which melds ancient craft skills and classicism with contemporary chic. To this end artisans across the country have worked to create products which bring back the unique beauty of handicrafts into our everyday lives. CCI believes this is the way to go to reclaim and celebrate our craft heritage, to tell its continuing story.....

'Kamala' is an enchanted space as Chennai is beginning to discover. Look for fabric boxes carrying the magic of Madhubani, Kalamkari and Gond art, sleek office organisers, pencil

boxes and pads with the mesmeric silhouettes of Gond art animals and trees and marble boxes cut in the round flaunting mother of pearl lids, Kalamkari chintz imagery on office pads and cushions, mother of pearl inset trays, circular papier mache wall art pieces celebrating Madhubanis ritual art, marble 'jaali' work tea lights and boxes, hand mirrors with Philakuwa jaali frames and much more. In the melange of exuberant creativity, experience papier mache





board games of ancient origin or the smiles of ultra-chic striped and spotted black and white dogs and donkeys, the cool charm of banana green Pattamadai 'pattu' mats. And saris galore, specially designed for 'Kamala' which put every other sari of its genre in the shade. So revel in Bandhini, Benaras, Begumpur, Shibori, Ghamcha and West Bengal Phulia saris, dupattas and stoles. Also Kantha and Assam borders and specially created blouses and blouse pieces.

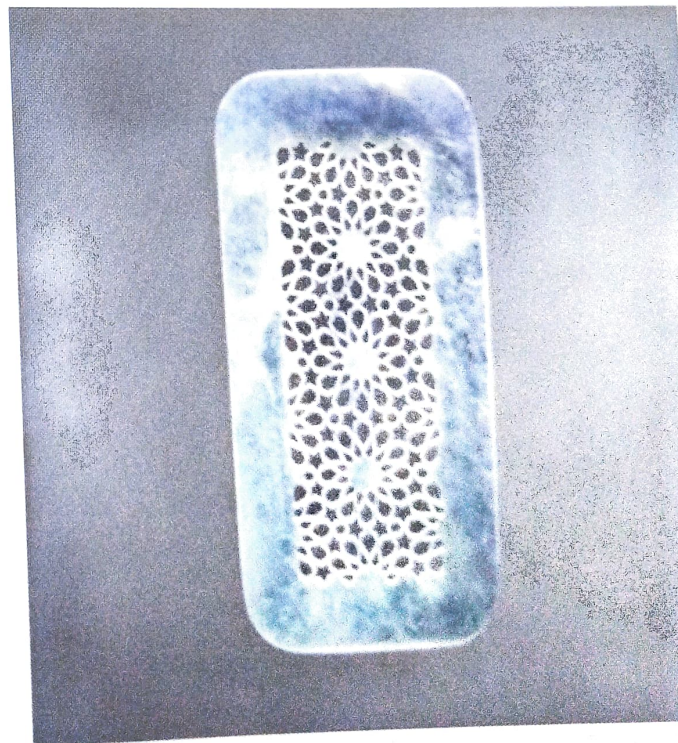


Kamala reaches out to Chennai with all this and more in its changing, evolving product line with every exhibit 'a thing of beauty (which) has no fear of time' as Kamaladeviji put it.

## ACTIVITIES

### The Crafts Council of India

- Textile and Accessories Show (2 & 3 September, 2016) : Rare silk and cotton sari expressions: antique, revisited and revived, carrying pristine or contemporary designs in block prints, embroideries and unique weaves caught the eye at CCI's bi-annual sari and accessories sale. The most celebrated of India's sari designers and famed saris and weaves lent colour and class to the biannual textiles sale. The saris flew off the shelves.
- WCC Award of Excellence (September 2016): The WCC Asia Pacific Region Award of Excellence for handicrafts



Awarded piece of alabaster small tray with jaali work



Awarded piece of wooden lacquer kalam table with miniature painting

was held in Kuwait which received 246 product entries from the 6 Asia Pacific sub-regions. The first part of the jury for South Asia Region took place in Chennai and the final selection was held in Kuwait where 118 entries were granted the Award of Excellence. This Award not only recognizes and applauds excellence in craft skills but also the part played by the community and local cultures in refining the various crafts. The award also gives great encouragement and boost to craft artisans in an area which is so rich in handicrafts.

## Delhi Crafts Council

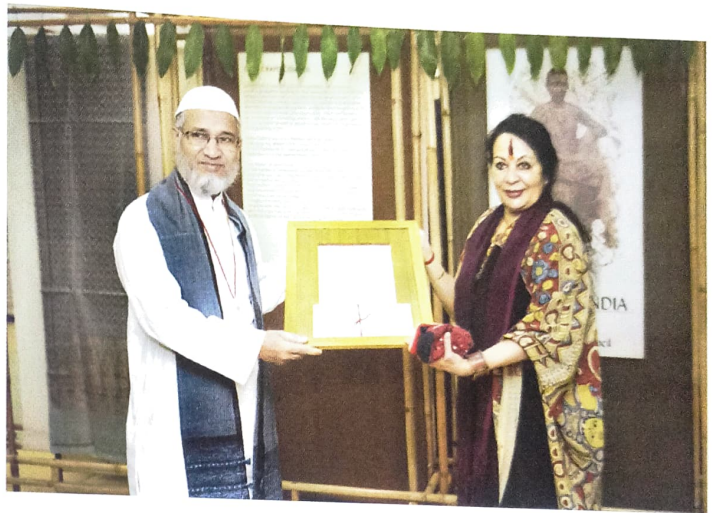
- Handloom Day (August 2016) : Handloom Day 2016 was celebrated with an invitation to Sanjay Garg of Raw Mango, to the Delhi Crafts Council to discuss his journey with textiles and handlooms. It was a privilege to hear Sanjay share his stories, inspiration, design concepts from beginning to end and listen to his personal journey in the world of handloom and fashion.
- Chamba Rumal Workshop IV & V (August and December 2016): The fourth and fifth series of Chamba Rumal workshops were held in the Delhi Craft Council office this year under the guidance of Swati Kalsi, a designer chosen by DCC for this new project. The highly skilled



embroiderers from Chamba continued working on the new rumal with contemporary themes that had been developed during the earlier workshop. Various innovations in the traditional stitches were

also introduced by Swati to improve the quality of embroidery. Drawings for the sixth rumal were completed by Parikshit. The fifth workshop that was conducted in December is the final workshop in the series. Swati and the embroideers worked hard to complete all the rumals.

- Saris of India 2016 (October 2016) : "Saris of India 2016 - Innovating Tradition", the annual sari exhibition was held at the Aga Khan Hall in Delhi. Dr. Sonal Mansingh, Padma Vibhushan, inaugurated the exhibition and presented the Sutrakar Samman 2016 to Shahid Junaid, a traditional weaver from Varanasi. Shahid belongs to an old and famous lineage of traditional weavers of Varanasi. He has a deep love and knowledge of the traditional Mughal buta designs that came to him as a family legacy and has tried to preserve them by using them in a modern context.
- DCC exhibited the saris of twenty one talented craftsmen, artists, clusters and designers all of whom are developing and innovating with traditional weaving, printing and embroidery techniques. Through this exhibition, the Delhi Crafts Council is committed to bringing back the focus on the sari and on those who create these stunning textiles using traditional techniques. DCC had record-breaking sales this year.



- Indira Gandhi Memorial (November 2016) : To celebrate the birthday of former Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi and to recognize her life achievements along with the creative arts of this country, the Delhi Crafts Council was asked to participate in a three-day event. DCC invited four craftsmen to display and sell their crafts - Avaz Mohammed (lac bangles), Uma Tewari (Gond products), Kailash Pradhan (Gond paintings), Harkishan Prjapati (pottery) and Riyaz Ahmad Khan (papier mache). The craftsmen had a chance to meet members of Indira Gandhi's family and discuss their work as part of the inauguration.
- Kamaladevi Puraskar (November 2016) : The annual Kamaladevi Scholarship event was



- Workshop for special children was held at Bharathi Rehabilitation Centre:

The children were very enthusiastic and excited over the workshop.

- Revival of Languishing Crafts: Panroti Gold Dolls: It is believed that the origin of these dolls goes back 300 years. CCTN have taken up a 'revival' of these dolls as a pilot project for the current year and have already started working on samples. CCTN is also working at the revival of wooden kolu bommai which is also a languishing craft.

Documentation: Pacha Kutharadhu: Pacha Kuthuradhu of Avinashi is a traditional art and is disappearing with only one old lady who is familiar with the old designs. CCTN is in the process of documenting the traditional age old designs.



## Crafts Council of Telangana

- It is taking us a while to get used to the fact that we are just Crafts Council of Telangana and that we have a sister council in Vijayawada, CCAP, whom we are mentoring. The new council in Andhra Pradesh has been named 'Crafts Council of Andhra Pradesh'.
- Kausalyam 2016 - 'A festive collection' comprised a fashion show where the participants exhibited their textiles to a very appreciative audience to the mesmerizing notes of Sufi musicians. In this exhibition we had consciously invited unique and disparate textiles from all over India. On this occasion our project in Warangal "Sutra Durries" was also on display for the first time. It met with a very good response and we look forward the marketing these durries through all our sister councils. We used the occasion of Aakruthi Vastra 2017 to launch these durries in the market. A lot of interest was generated by the novelty of the designs. considerable sales were generated.
- Aakruthi Vastra (January 2017): Despite fears of the effect of demonetization, we decided to go ahead with our Aakruthi Vastra 2017 in January as scheduled because most of the participants preferred not to postpone the exhibition. The exhibition was a great success. Footfalls were the same, the shoppers were as dedicated as before and the participants very happy.
- This year, after a lapse of a few years we have reinstated the Sanmaan Awards-2017. Smt Karuna Vakkati IAS, Commissioner of Health and Family Welfare inaugurated our exhibition and presided over the distribution of the Sanmaan awards.
- Shri PM Eeshwarudu Kalamkari Block Printer par excellence of Machilipatnam, Andhra Pradesh has been recognized with a life time achievement award by CCT. The award consisted of a Tamra Patra, a Citation, a Shawl and a cash award of Rs.1 lakh. He spoke about his long relationship with Crafts Council and of the importance of quality. He was of the opinion is that there will always be a market if the quality was good.
- Smt. Sepavat Angoori of Yellamma Thanda was recognized by CCT for her contribution to Banjara Needle Craft with a Tamra Patra, a Certificate, a Shawl and a cash award of Rs 10,000/-
- Jella Ramdas of Ghatuppal received a Tamra Patra, a Certificate, a Shawl and Rs 10,000 for his contribution to natural dyes in Ikkat weaving. We also recognized Gajam Jyotsana for being an outstanding member of our Lalitha Praveenyam Scholarship Fund - excellence in academics as well as craft.
- Our building is proceeding at a brisk pace. By the end of 2017, we hope to be in our new premises if all goes as per schedule. Our website [www.craftscounciloftelangana.com](http://www.craftscounciloftelangana.com) is online now. We would appreciate photographs, news snippets from all of you, so that we may post it on our website. We are active on Facebook and I request all of you to share our events and activities on the page Crafts Council of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

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