

# KALAI

கலை True Sprit Of Artisans

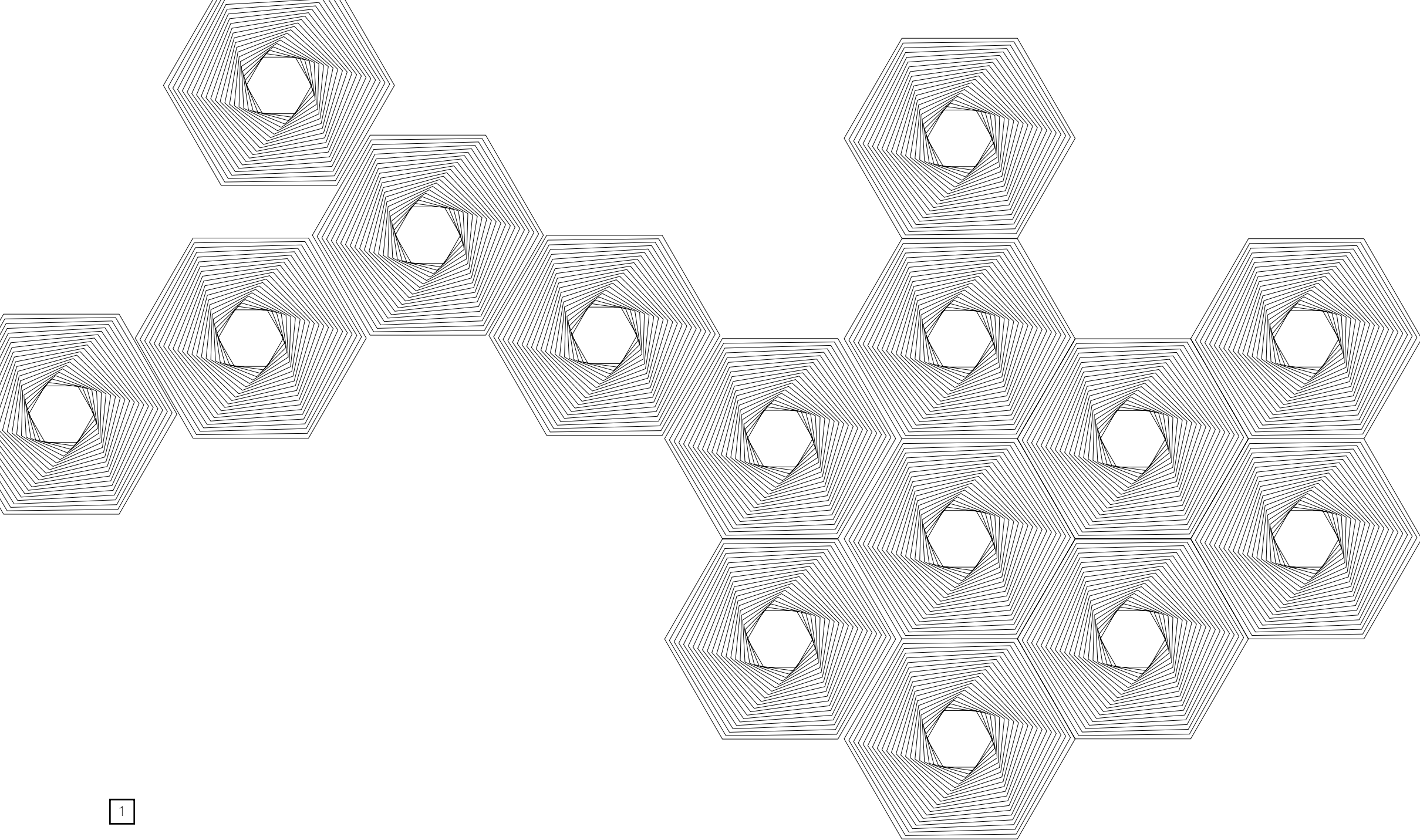
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POLITECNICO DI MILANO  
Msc.Product Service SYstem Design  
Year: 2008/2010



## **Acknowledgements**

I am heartily thankful to my mentor, Valentina Auricchio, whose encouragement, guidance and support from the initial to the final level enabled me in developing the thesis. I also extend my gratitude to Crafts Council of India (Chennai) for their assistance in locating artisans for my research and most importantly to the artisans for their co-operation.

Lastly, I offer my regards to my father for his accompany during my fieldtrips and for all of those who supported me in any respect during the completion of the project.

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Image : 001

## Abstract

The thesis project is an outcome based on qualitative research analysis of artisans and crafts in India. Crafts are deeply rooted in Indian soil, due to rapidly changing world the hand skills and handmade objects attention has been drawn away. Crafts are the lifeblood of the vibrant country and the craft industry is considered to be the second largest occupation next to agriculture, is on its slippery path.

The project was an attempt to torch light on untold traumas faced in reality by the artisans of India, although only two crafts were studied the same principles affect the rest. The largest groups of artisans in India are involved in a) weaving b) terracotta, based on which selection was made to study the group.

The project is a handbook full of images, arguments, findings and criticism of findings which helped me to solidify my statements. As the saying goes images speak louder than words, fine Weaving of images and texts facilitate in conveying message easier and stronger to leave impression even after viewing. The result of the project helps in spotting critical issues that affect them and their craft and some remedial factors.

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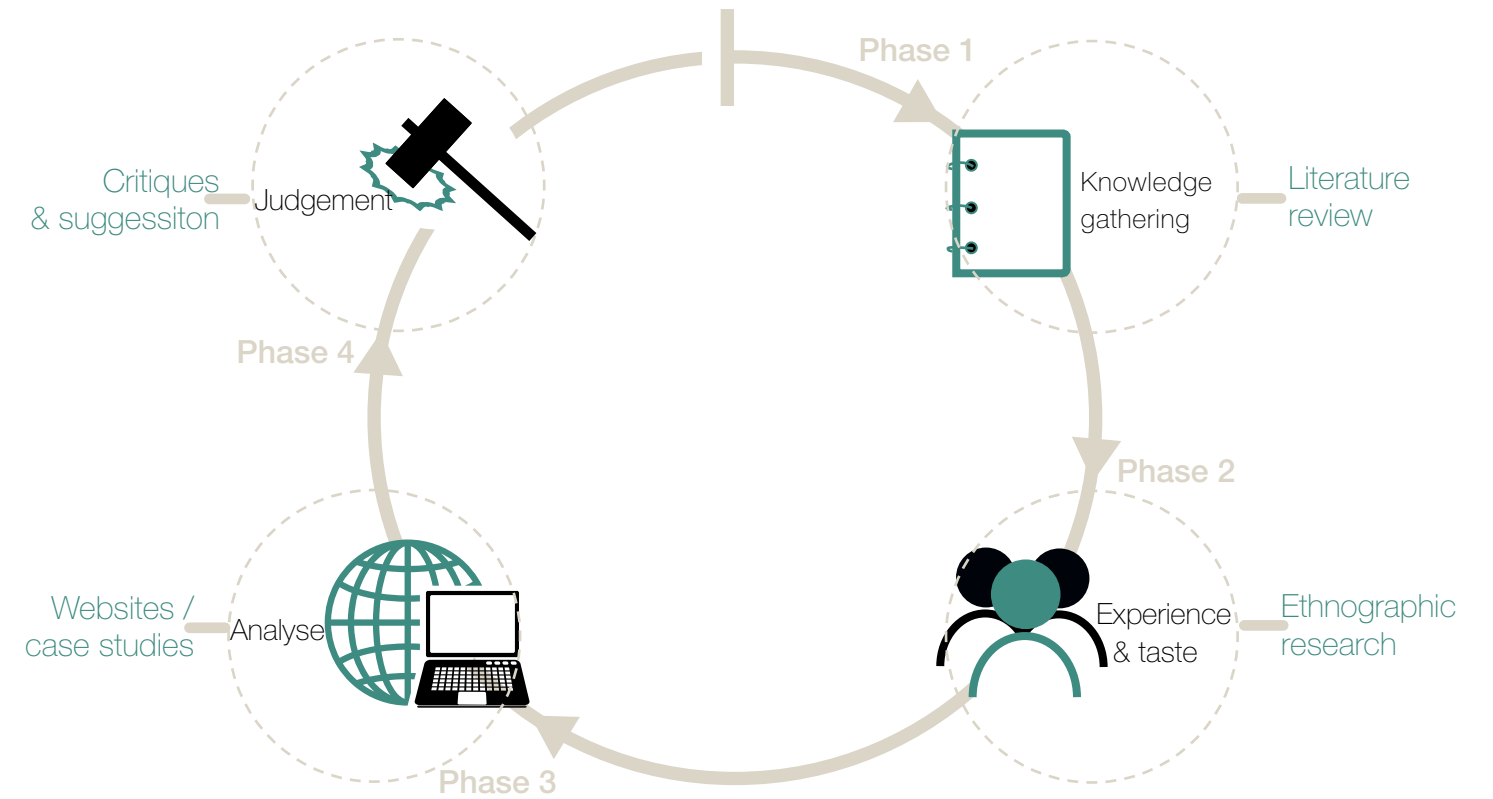
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MAP INDEX  
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## 1 Methodology of project

The thesis project is subdivided into four phases, on completion of each phase the perception changed leaving me conscious of the project. Initially books were read to gain historical background and current status of artisans. To be able to gain deep understanding on the subject it was vital to view the relationship between crafts and artisans which cannot be achieved by just secondary data therefore Ethnography – a qualitative research method was adapted. The observation gained is much valuable than the quantitative research. On the basis of ethnography research further case studies were studied, analyzed and compared enabling me to conclude with strong meaningful conclusions.

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Map 01: Methodology of project



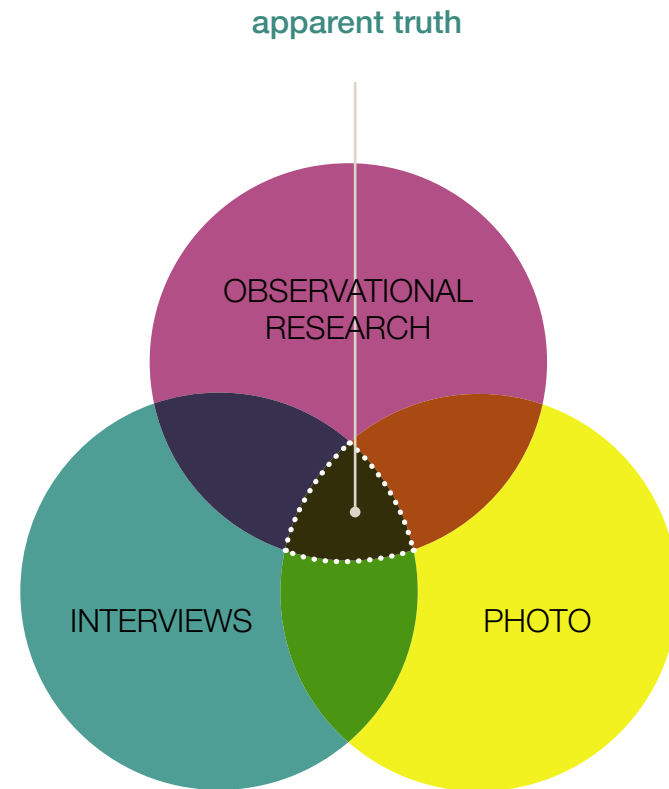
## 1.1 Research technique

### - Ethnography

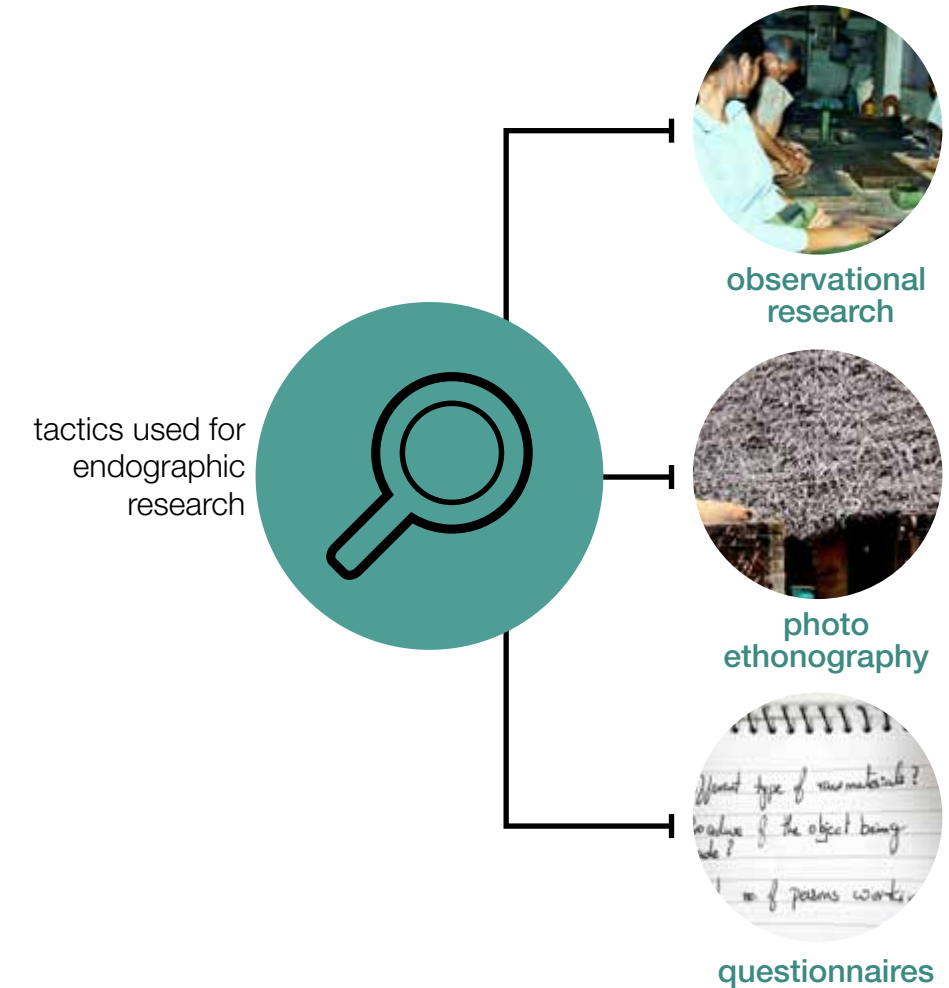
The objective to conduct ethnographic research was to obtain information from the artisans from their perspective. Field trip was carried out and tactics such as observation, interviews, questionnaires and photography and notes were taken. Communities of artisans were chosen and brief research was made on their activities and specific questions were framed to be put forth.

#### Real Scenario

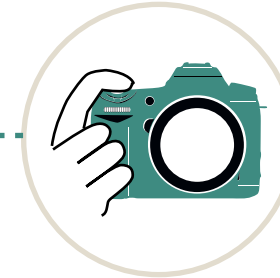
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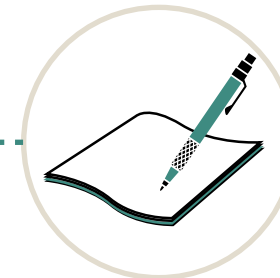
Map 02: Ethnographic research model



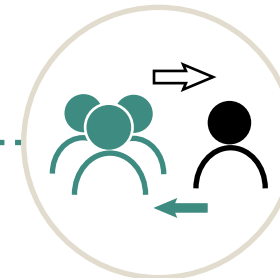
Map 03: List of Tactics used for research



Photography



Notes



Interview



Recording

### 1.1.1 Tools used during research

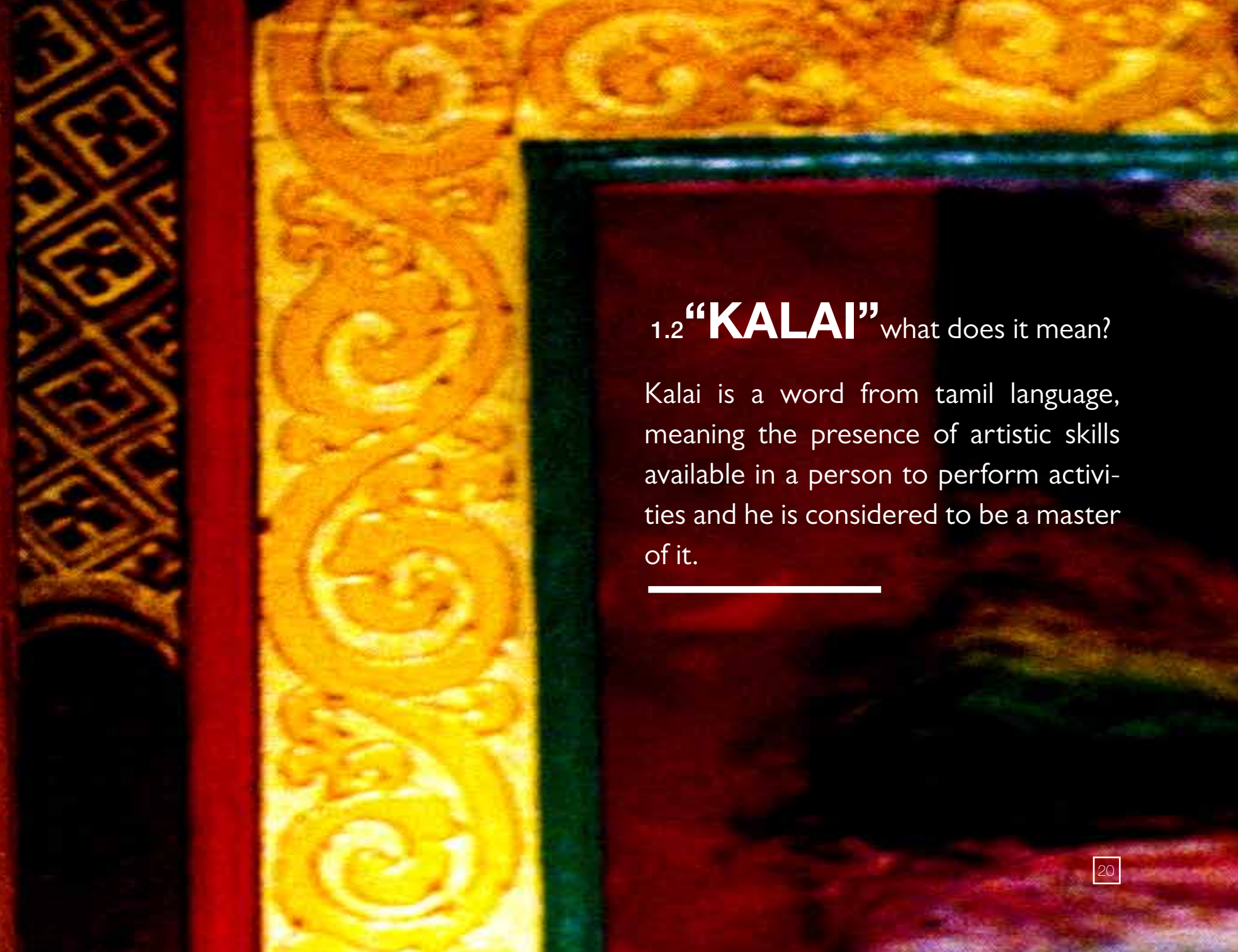
Scheduled Interviews and questionnaires were asked to the artisans, to elicit information associated with raw materials, finance, marketing, technology, employment patterns, consumption patterns, aspect of govt. interventions schemes and occupational hazards.

Cell phone was used to as a tool for record the interviews of artisans as future reference material. pictures were captured to document and understand various procedures involved in making crafted items.

Map 04: Tools used for research



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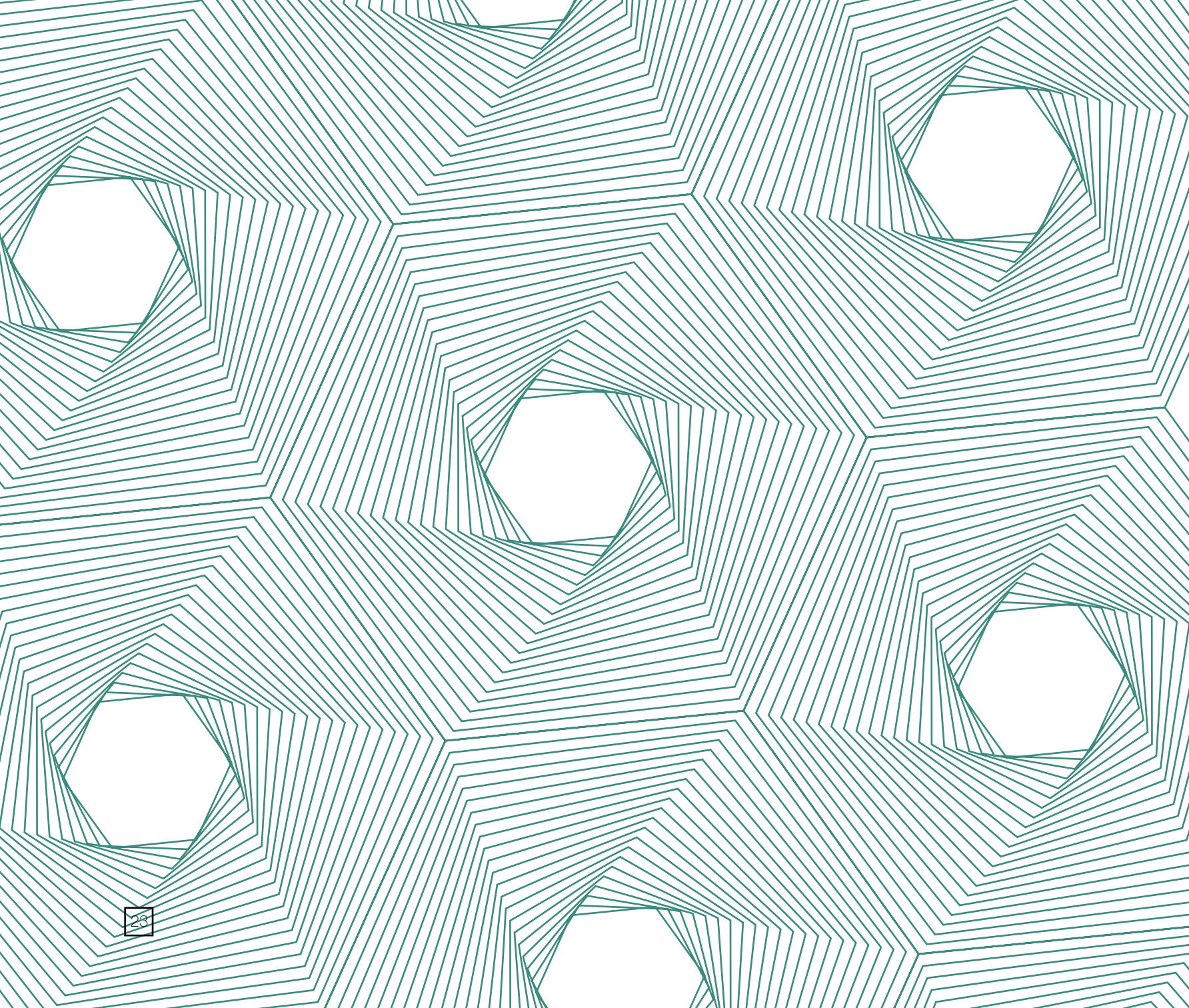


## 1.2 “KALAI” what does it mean?

Kalai is a word from tamil language, meaning the presence of artistic skills available in a person to perform activities and he is considered to be a master of it.

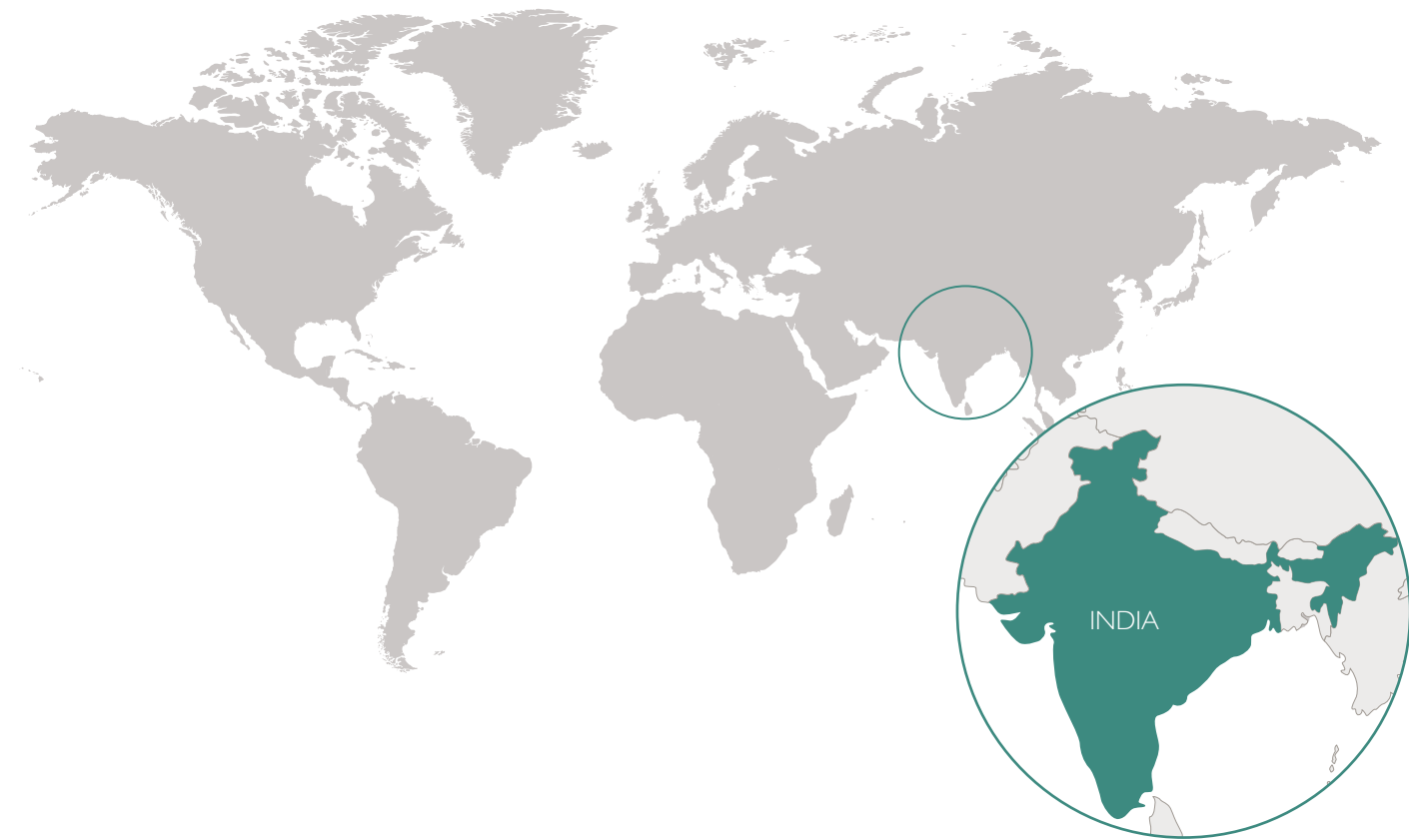
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# **PART I** An evolution of Indian crafts

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Map 05: Geographical identification – world map

## 2 Geographical Indication

India is a country in South Asia. It is the seventh-largest country by geographical area, the second-most populous country with and the most populous democracy in the world. India is a federal constitutional republic with a parliamentary democracy consisting of 28 states and seven union territories. A pluralistic, multilingual and multiethnic society. Since the introduction of market-based economic reforms in 1991, India has become one of the fastest growing major economies in the world; however, it still suffers from poverty, illiteracy, corruption, disease, and malnutrition. India is classified as a newly industrialized country and is one of the four BRIC nations. It is a nuclear weapons state and has the third-largest standing armed force in the world, while its military expenditure ranks tenth in the world.

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## 2.1 who is an **ARTISAN?**

An artisan is a producer of a product that is handmade and involves a skill that is not part of a mechanical chain of production, the products are made out of locally available natural resources.

Traditional industries are generally artisan - based , located mostly in rural or sub urban areas , involve lower level of investment in machinery and provide largely part time employment .

Such products created by artisans are said to be handicraft products. The individual artisanship of the items is a paramount criterion, such items often have cultural and/or religious significance.

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## 2.2 Segmentation

In order to provide some idea about nature of different parameters in craft

### 2.2.1 Markets

They cater to the following markets

- 1 Village
- 2 Urban
- 3 Export

### 2.2.2 Location of artisans

Artisans mostly belonged to the backward caste considered to be untouchables hence they live away from the mainland

- 1 Rural
- 2 Urban
- 3 Semi-urban

### 2.2.3 Employment status

- 1 Self - employed
- 2 Wage earner
- 3 Co-operative member (clusters formed by the govt.)

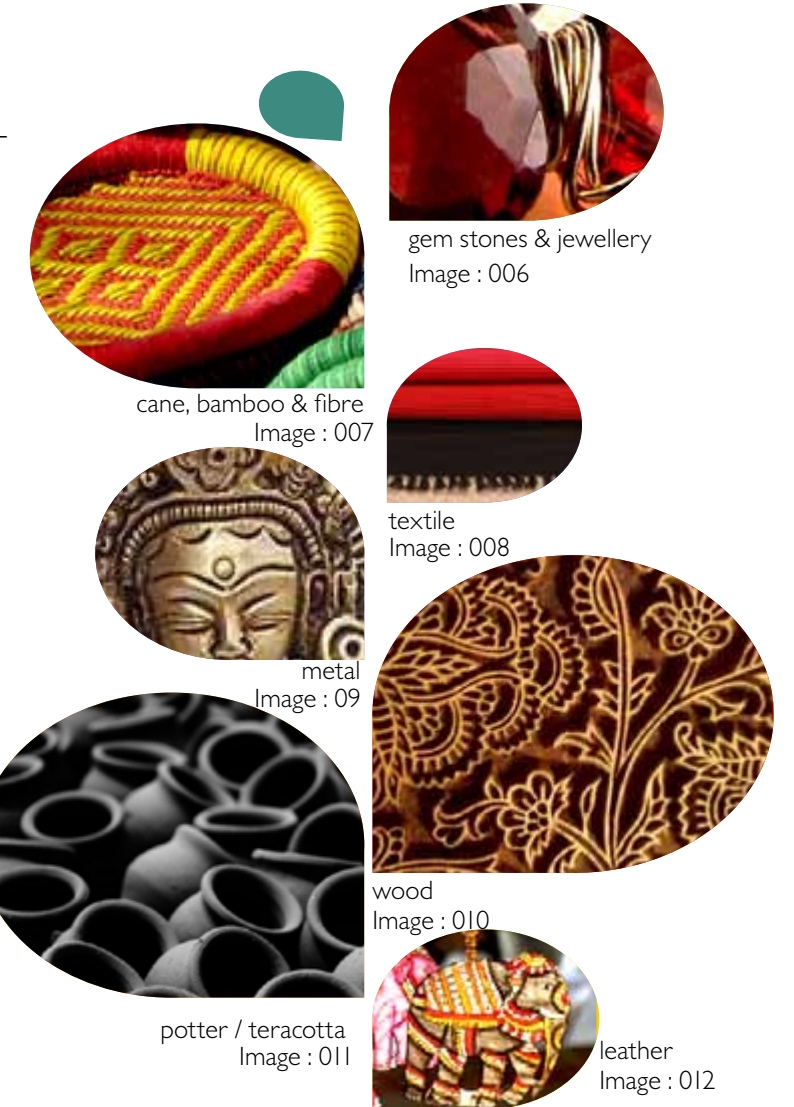
## 2.2.4 Classification of crafts

Majorly the crafts belong to the following vt-seven broad categories .

- 1 Metal
- 2 Wood
- 3 terracotta
- 4 textile
- 5 gem stone/jewelry
- 6 cane, bamboo and fiber
- 7 leather

## 2.2.5 Raw material

- 1 Procured independently
- 2 Supplied by customer
- 3 Supplied by co-operative





## 2.3 Historical background of Indian crafts

The history of Indian handicrafts is an old saga. There are a myriad of craft traditions in India. The crafts which flourished in India are basically subject to the social, economic and regional factors. The present status of craft in India owes much to the rich craft traditions of the past. Most of the crafts from the past continue to boom due to their utilitarian nature, their availability to the common people and popularity in domestic and foreign markets. The special needs of the patrons and royalty with vivid eye on foreign and domestic trade became the focal point of crafts of Indian subcontinent. Till date it is continuing to boom owing to the assimilating nature of Indian culture. Highly accommodative nature of the craftsmen to accept and use new ideas is also responsible for the boom

### RULLING ERA



I KUSHANA PERIOD

II GUPTA AGE

III MEDIEVAL PERIOD

IV VIJAYANAGAR EMPIRE

V MUGHAL PERIOD

### FLOURISHMENT OF CRAFT



Jewellery, Sculpture , Textile Making, Leather Products, Metal Working  
Murals (Ajanta & Ellora)  
Pottery, Weaving, Woodcarving, Metal Working, Jewellery  
Bronze Sculpture , Silk Weaving, Jewellery, Temple Carving  
Inlay Work, Glass Engraving Carpet Weaving, Brocades, Enameling

Map 06: Flourishment of crafts in ancient India



Image : 014

The primary references of Indian crafts were found in the remnants of Indus Valley Civilization (3000 B.C.-1700 B.C.). The Indus valley civilization had a rich craft tradition. It has also got a technical brilliance in the arena of pottery- making, jewelry, threading, various sculptures like metal, stone and terracotta etc. A lot of material information from excavations at Harappa, Mohen-jo-daro etc corroborates the craft tradition of the Indus valley civilization. The craftsmen supplied basic needs of the locales and also excess items were exported to ancient Arabian countries mainly through voyages.

The rich heritage of Indus Valley Civilization was perfectly incorporated in the Vedic era, starting from 1500 B.C

There is no dearth of references in the Vedic literature where instances of artisans involved in pottery making, weaving, wood crafting etc, are being duly mentioned. Especially the Rig Veda refers to a variety of pottery made from clay, wood and metal. It also mentions about lot many weavers and weaving of the then period.

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### Kushana period

During the Kushana period Jewelry, sculpture, textile making, leather products, metal working etc. were the main handicrafts that assimilated foreign influences and used them in accordance with the Indian setting.

### Gupta Age

The Gupta (AD 320-647) age is referred to as the classical period in Indian history. The points in the field of craft include the rock cut temples of Ellora and the Ajanta murals. These murals give us a realistic view of the lifestyle of that time. The craftsmen of this period, under royal patronage excelled in jewelry making, woodcarving, sculpture, stone carving and weaving.

### Medeval period

The handicraftsmen flourished in the field of pottery, weaving, wood carving, metal working, jewelry etc. The contribution of the Cholas and the Vijaynagar Empire in the field of bronze sculpture, silk weaving, jewelry, temple carving is simply unparalleled.

### Mauryan age

In the Mauryan age we find great development in the field of sculpture. In this period more than 84,000 stupas are said to be built in India, including the famous Sanchi Stupa, which has beautiful stone carving and relief work done on it. Numerous sculptures from Bharhut, Mathura, Amravati, Vaishali, Sanchi etc show female figures adorned with a display of jewelry, which continues to inspire contemporary jewelry making.

### The Mughal period

It was the golden period in the history of Indian art, craft and culture. The Mughals brought with them a rich heritage. The Mughals introduced methods like inlay work, glass engraving, carpet weaving, brocades, enameling etc.



## 2.4 Caste System in India

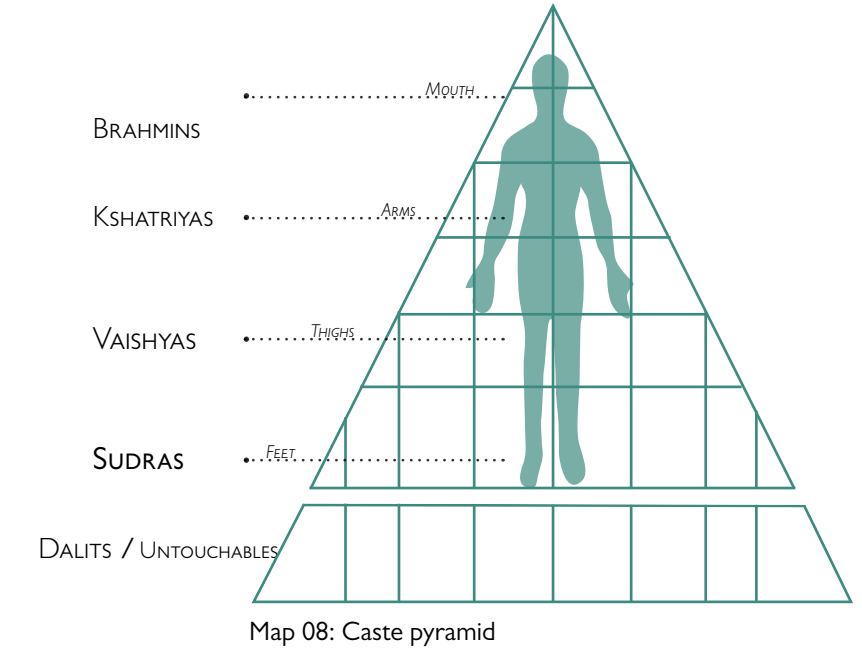
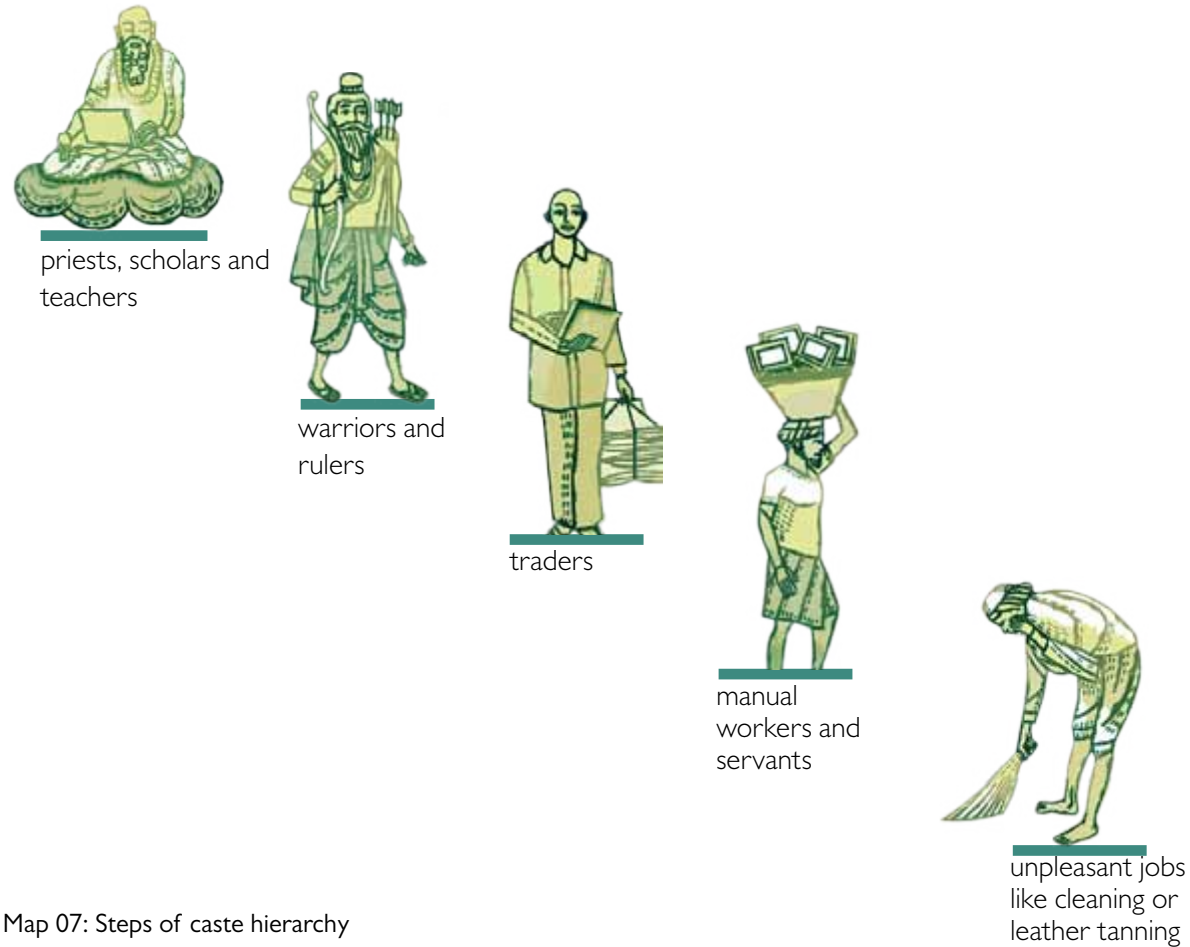
India has a hierarchical caste system in the society. Within Indian culture, whether in the north or the south, Hindu or Muslim, urban or village, virtually all things, people, and groups of people are ranked according to various essential qualities. Although India is a political democracy, in daily life there is little advocacy of or adherence to notions of equality.

Castes systems in India with which almost all Indians are associated are ranked. Within most villages or towns, everyone knows the relative rankings of each locally represented caste, and people's behavior toward one another is constantly shaped by this knowledge. Between the extremes of the very high and very low castes, however, there is sometimes disagreement on the exact relative ranking of castes clustered in the middle. Castes system in India are primarily associated with Hinduism but also exist among other Indian religious groups.

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### 2.4.1 Caste hierarchy

India's complex caste system includes 3,000 castes and 25,000 sub-castes, all traditionally related to occupation.



Castes were compared with different parts of human body and respected in the society accordingly

## 2.5 Handicraft industry & mill industry

Some people think that if the British had not come to India an indigenous mill industry would have developed in India, because the development of the handicraft industry leads to capital accumulation which is the prerequisite for industrialization, and India would have become an industrial state by the 19th century, as in the case of countries of North America and Europe. But it is not necessary to dwell on this: there is no use crying over spilt milk. In the feudal period there were no engineering colleges or technical institutes, and the only way to learn a craft was to sit with one's father from childhood and learn the craft by seeing how he worked, with some tips from him. Thus the father was not only doing the production work through his craft but also teaching his son the craft.

This was totally unlike modern times where the teacher in an engineering college or technical institute is not a producer engaged in some industry. In other words, in modern times the vocation of a teacher is separated from the vocation of a producer.

There was no such separation in the feudal age. In feudal times, one had no choice with respect to one's profession: you had to follow your father's profession. Thus, the son of a carpenter (badhai) became a carpenter, the son of a blacksmith (lohar) became a blacksmith, and so on. This way, carpenter, blacksmith, potter, all became castes.

### 2.5.1 Was it bad for India?

It was only when the British mill industry destroyed their handicraft and they became unemployed that they began to be treated with indignity. An unemployed man becomes a poor man, and a poor man is not given respect in society.

Many people think the caste system did a lot of damage to India. This is undoubtedly true of modern times. But in the feudal age the system did good to India because it corresponded to the feudal occupational division of labour in society, as pointed out above, which resulted in the development of productive forces at that time.

It is a myth that today's Scheduled Castes were always treated with indignity. In fact, up to the coming of British rule the members of these castes were usually in some handicraft vocation and were earning their livelihood from that vocation.

For instance, the chamars were at one time a respectable caste because they earned their livelihood by doing leather work. It was only when large companies destroyed their handicraft, and thereby their livelihood, that they sank in the social ladder, so much so that today to call a person a chamar is often regarded as an insult.

Similarly, other castes whose handicraft occupations were destroyed by the British mill industry became unemployed and thereby fell in the social order.

### 2.5.2 Modern industries of today

In the modern industrial age the demand for skilled technical personnel is much more than in the feudal age, because the demand for goods is much more owing to increase in population and other factors. Hence the traditional feudal method of teaching a craft, in which only a handful of persons (usually the sons of handicraftsman) were taught, would no longer suffice for modern society. Now technical institutes or engineering colleges, where a large number of students are taught technical skills, have become necessary. Obviously all these students could not be sons of the teacher. This destroyed the very basis of the caste system in which one had no option in choosing one's vocation and had to follow one's father's profession. The caste system, in which one's vocation is chosen by one's birth, is thus totally outmoded in the modern age.

Today a boy of the badhai (carpenter) caste comes from a rural area to a city where he becomes an electrician or a motor mechanic or takes up some other vocation. If he gets some education he becomes a clerk or even a doctor, lawyer, engineer or teacher. He does not usually follow his father's profession. This has largely destroyed the basis of the caste system economically.

The caste system is now being artificially propped up socially by some vested interests.

○ The caste system in India will not last for more than 10 or 20 years from now because its very basis has gone.

A modern industries no longer bothers about the caste of a worker it employs, and only sees his or her technical skills. The caste system was a social institution corresponding to the handicraft industry. Now that the handicraft industry has largely been replaced by mill industry, the caste system has become totally outmoded, and is hindering our progress ○

### 2.5.3 Transition of artisans

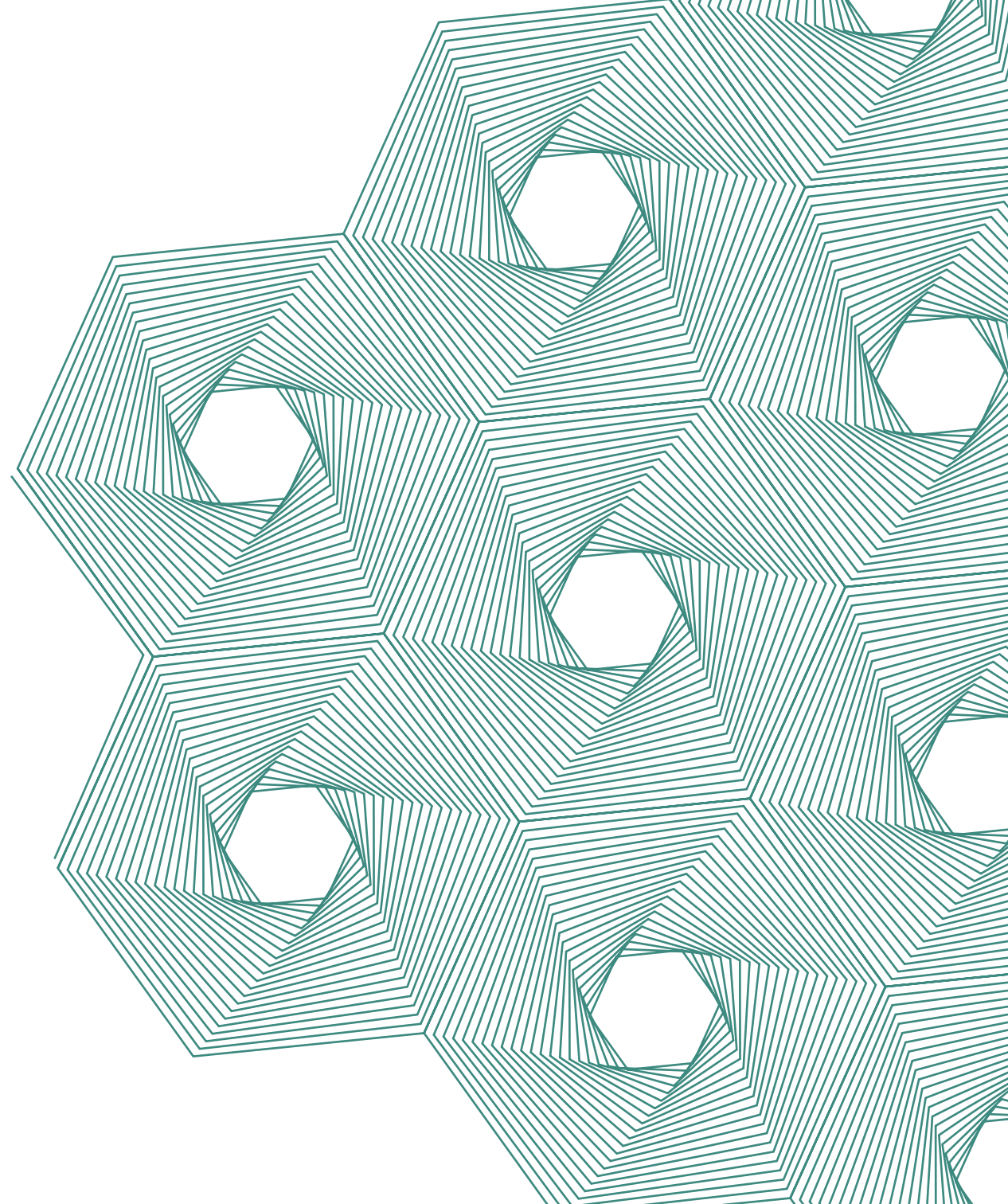
- Most of the artisans belonging to the schedule castes have given up their traditional caste occupations and have become agricultural labourers instead ○

In most part of the country Artisans ranked lower than land owners in the occupational hierarchy and settling in the centre of the village was highly forbidden for many of them. The impressive edifice of India's manufactures rested on the labour of men and women meekly pursued their hereditary occupations, with hardly any hope of a better life, exploited by rulers and merchants alike.

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## PART IIA Ethnographic research on crafts

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Sweat beats of Labour  
**TERRACOTTA**

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### 3 Defining **TERRACOTTA**



Sudu kalai sirpam or Terracotta is a clay-based unglazed ceramic, where the fired body is porous. The term is used to refer to items made out of this material and to its natural, brownish orange color, which varies considerably. In archaeology and art history, “terracotta” is often used for objects not made on a potter’s wheel, such as figurines, where objects made on the wheel from the same material, possibly even by the same person, are called pottery; the choice of term depending on the type of object rather



### 3.1 TERRACOTTA in India



Virtually untouched by time, terracotta was practiced throughout India, it is believed to be one of the most ancient craft traditions. Through the centuries Terracotta makers have provided essential goods and services to village communities. There has been a transition from traditional pottery and ritual objects to decorative objects for the tourist industry and urban households. Each region has its unique style in Terracotta making . Terracotta sculptures and the size ranges from 1/2 inch to 32feet.



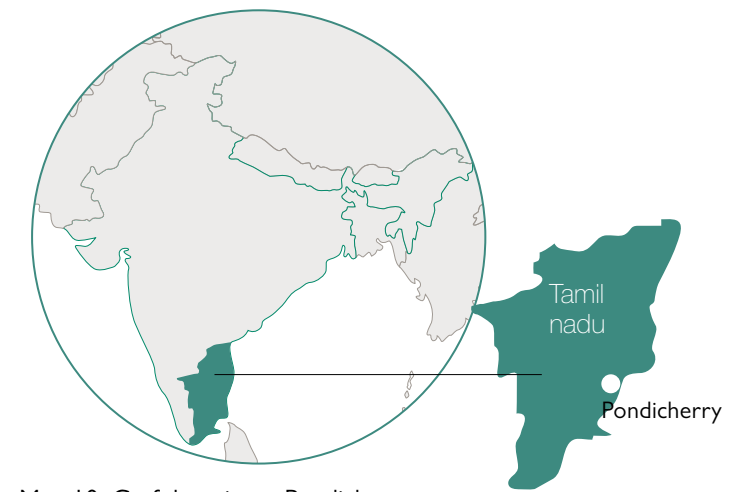
Map 09: Elements of nature

### 3.2 Elements of nature

Clay is regarded as sacred, holding within it the power to create and destroy. Our universe is made up of five basic elements, the Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Space. Our body is also made up of these five basic elements of nature also known as panch-mahabhootas. Terra-cotta art is the only craft where all the five elements are utilized in making the product.



### 3.3 Craft location



Map 10: Craft location – Pondicherry

Situated on the Coromandel coast, about 160 kms south of Chennai, lies the Union Territory of Pondicherry. The French ruled this territory for 300 years, Pondicherry still today has a few French families living here and French is an important language. The French spirit can be observed in the very layout of the township.

---



### 3.4 Workshop in Villianur



Terracotta is practiced as a hereditary craft in the village of Villianur. Villianur is located to the west of Pondicherry. The regional specialty lies with both the glazed and unglazed pottery, which is famous in the whole of the country. Since it's a hereditary crafts many artisans have own workshop in their houses.



Name - Munuswamy  
Yrs of work - 48yrs  
self employed

### 3.5 All in the family



V.K. Munusamy is a terracotta master craftsman and a UNESCO award winner; he has been practicing this craft since he was 7yrs, he learnt the craft from his father who also was involved in terracotta. He belongs to Kulala caste , the craft has been in his hereditary for 21 generations. His passion for clay modeling helped him to sustain through these years. He specializes in making decorative terracotta artifacts such as miniature models, he also makes miniature elephants within 30 seconds, his handicrafts are liked by everyone because of its innovative features and uniqueness.





NAME - PARIMALAM  
YRS OF WORK - 8.5 YRS

NAME - VIJAYA  
YRS OF WORK - 15 YRS

NAME - LAKSHMI  
YRS OF WORK - 7 YRS

### 3.6 Women and their contribution



Image : 023

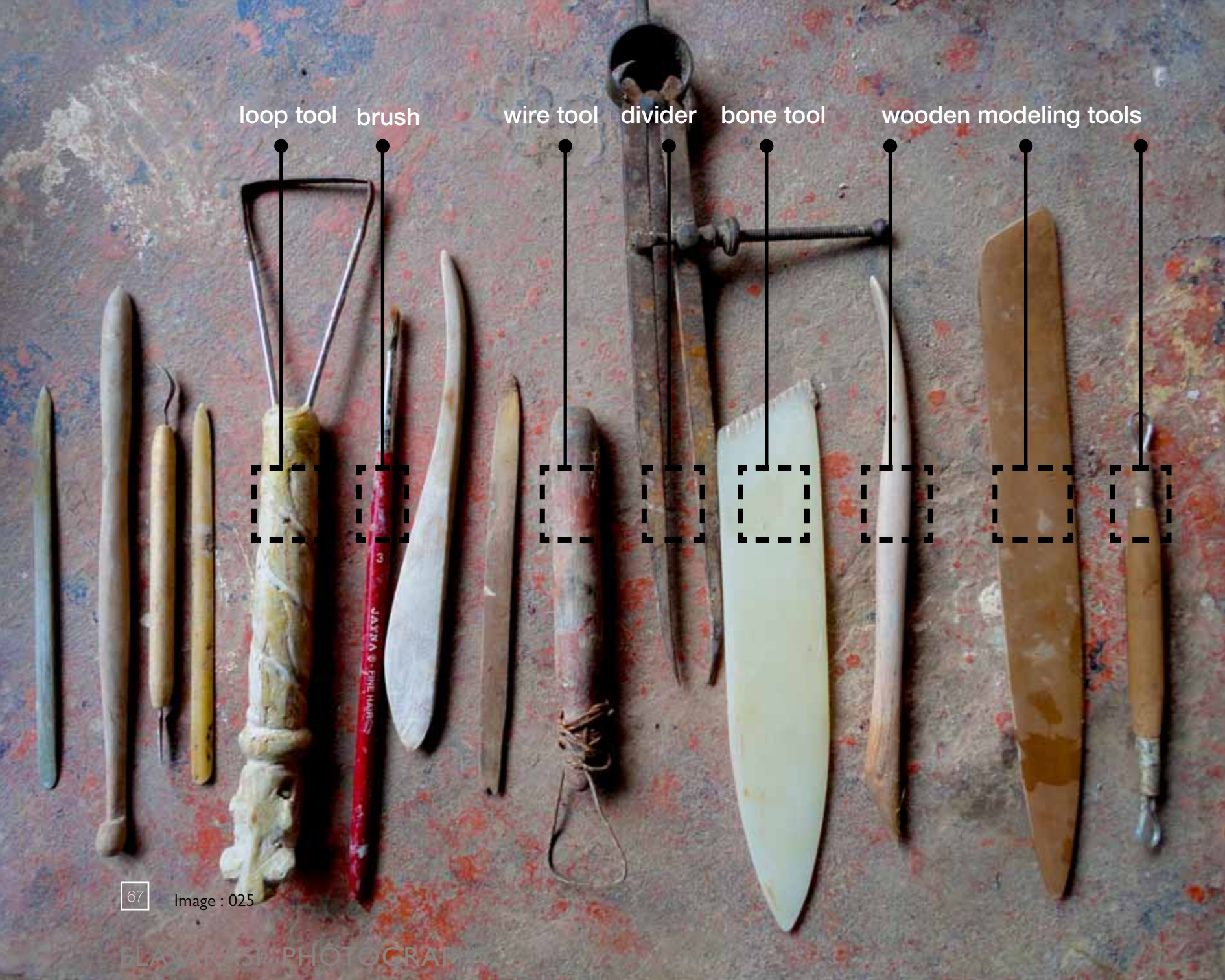
Women play an important part in terracotta work. The women of terracotta work families perform a variety of tasks, such as cleaning the clay and kneading it into smooth dough, drying the products, preparing the fuel, loading and unloading wares in the kiln, stacking the wares at times and packing them. These are very time consuming activities; by and large women do not sculpt the artifacts.



### 3.7 Raw material for model



The basic qualities that make clay suitable for terracotta art are stability when wet, retention of shape upon drying, and hardening without loss of shape, upon heating. The clay used for terracotta work in vilianur mostly is found from river beds of Sankarabarani. Three types of soil of varying consistencies are mixed together to get desired clay that is crafted into dolls. In order of quality, they are -Kalippu (soft clay), saavudu (mud) and manal (sand).



### 3.8 Tools used for modeling



Hand forming is considered to be the most primitive and laborious work. Molding, scooping and pressing are some hand techniques. Very basic shaping tools such as divider, brush, loop tool, wooden modeling tool (comes in different shapes), bone tool are used



Image : 026

Clay is kneaded with hand and basic shape is sculpted by the main artisan and passed on to the women artisan



Image : 027

Decorative techniques such as stamping, inlay work, cutwork, and engraving are done prior to drying and firing the objects.

### 3.9 Value added by women artisans



Image : 028

Method of smoothing, adding preservative coatings to surfaces of objects in a variety of materials when the final objects are fired and removed from the oven. Small products are shaved to pare of excess clay.



### 3.10 Drying on streets



Once the terracotta pieces are completed they are dried under hot sun on the streets to vaporize the moisture content, this minimizes the likelihood of cracking due to shrinkage during firing.



#### 4 Firing of terracotta

Firing is a method of baking clay models to achieve desirable properties. Terracotta models are fired to give them strength and hardness. Firing is done in a traditional way by building an enclosed oven, its one of the critical and time taking phase of the product life. The process is carried out on the open streets. Approximately 40-60 pieces of terracotta objects are fired depending on their size.

---



#### 4.1 Tempers for firing



Firstly ash is spread on the ground to avoid burn marks. Building enclosed oven consists of cow dung cakes arranged in a circular manner. The common tempers include cow dung, bricks, ash, straw, sand mixture and broken pots.



#### 4.2 Assemble the objects



Initially objects are placed on top of bricks, later the more products are added on top .The terracotta pieces are arranged exactly inside the cow dung boundary.





#### 4.3 Use your hands



While the terracotta models are being stacked mixture of sand with water is blended into semi-liquid consistency



#### 4.4 intensive Labor



Women helpers assist in performing activities that includes organising materials for firing, keeping aside things, transporting models to the firing place.



83

Image : 035

#### 4.5 **Hollow** extra caution



cow dung is burnt and is stuffed inside hollow models to avoid cracking from inside.

---

84



Image : 036

85

#### 4.6 Pile up for firing



The terracotta models are stacked on top of one another with cow dung cakes in-between for support and for better firing .Utmost care is taken while the models are stacked a slight slip might break the product into pieces or if the products are not well fired , the whole process has to be repeated. The Products turn black if not well fired

86



#### 4.7 **Make hay** while sun shines



The mound is then covered with a blanket of hay. Hay acts as good burning agent, spreads fire easily and also aids in retaining it. The terracotta sculptures are made mostly during the summer season, as it is the most favourable time for drying. Duration of Firing is four - five hours.



#### 4.8 Stay in place



Kerosine is sprinkled and fire is ignited from the bottom. Layer of loamy soil is poured on top of the hay to retain the position and to avoid from being blown elsewhere. In few seconds the whole place is filled with smoke making one's eyes blind. Burning and cooling takes a day during summer; the temperatures attained in the oven ranges between 700-800° c.



91

Image : 039

#### 4.9 RANGE of products

consists of miniature animals, figurines of Lord Ganesha and those of village deities



“Ayyanar”

Image : 040

Village god

primarily worshipped as a guardian deity who protects the rural villages



“Miniature”

Image : 041

elephant

best selling piece, importance is laid on its detailing and perfection

92



Image : 042

### “Nandi”

bull is the bull which Shiva rides and the gate keeper of Shiva and Parvati in Hindu mythology (Shiva and Parvati – Hindu gods)



Image : 043

### “Meditation Buddha”

an intricate piece of art with quality finishing and detailing



Image : 044

### “Kamadhenu”

wish-cow a divine cow who was believed to be the mother of all cows, she could grant any wish for the true seeker



Image : 045

### “Sangu Pillaiyar”

Hindu deity Pillaiyar’s elephant head makes him easy to identify , he is one of the best-known and most widely worshipped among deities

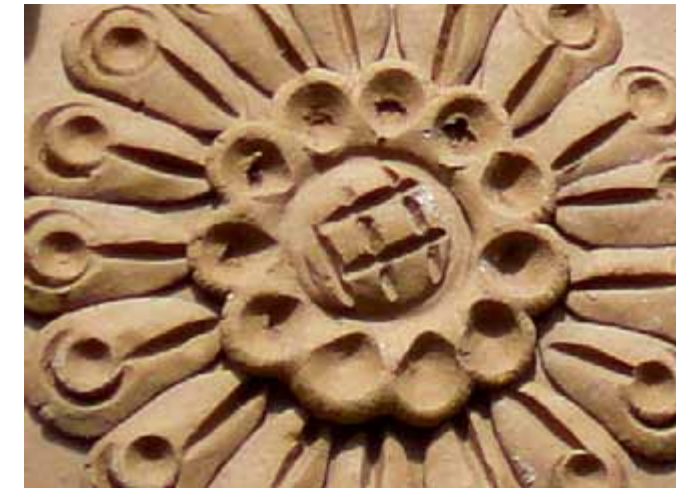




95

Image : 046

#### 4.10 Marketing channel



Sales are effected from their own premises and also sell through traders who buy the terracotta products and sell to other retailers or export it.

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#### 4.11 Demand & Season

The summer season is the most favourable time. At the time of festivals like Deepavali, Pongal and Vinayaka Chaturthi the demand of these terracotta pots and sculptures increases.

96

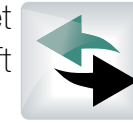
4.12 **current status** Analysis of terracotta craft



Map 11: Analysis of current status of terracotta

#### 4.13 Critical issues

Market  
shift



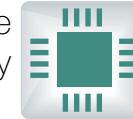
Most of the terracotta goods in India are ritual artifacts and utility goods, but the traditional market is under siege due to substitution of plastic, metal, china and glassware. Faced with loss of markets for their traditional products, terracotta artisans are finding it increasingly difficult to sustain their selves and their families. This substitution is aggravated by the increasing difficulty in procuring clay. Many of the river bed areas has been used for cultivation purpose and other uses shortage of clay.

Raw material  
availability &  
space concern



Very little attention has been paid to the problems of raw material. Artisans require assistance with a space plan keeping in view all aspects of their domestic and economic activity. Short term relief measures to mitigate space constrains in each locality are needed.

Upgrade  
technology



New technologies required in the following areas such as improved tools for finishing and mini equipments for clay processing .Interventions are necessary to improve potters access to markets by construction stalls for them in potential market site to reserve purchase of pottery goods needed by all government departments, railway station stalls and public sector units directly from producers.

Availabitty  
of credit

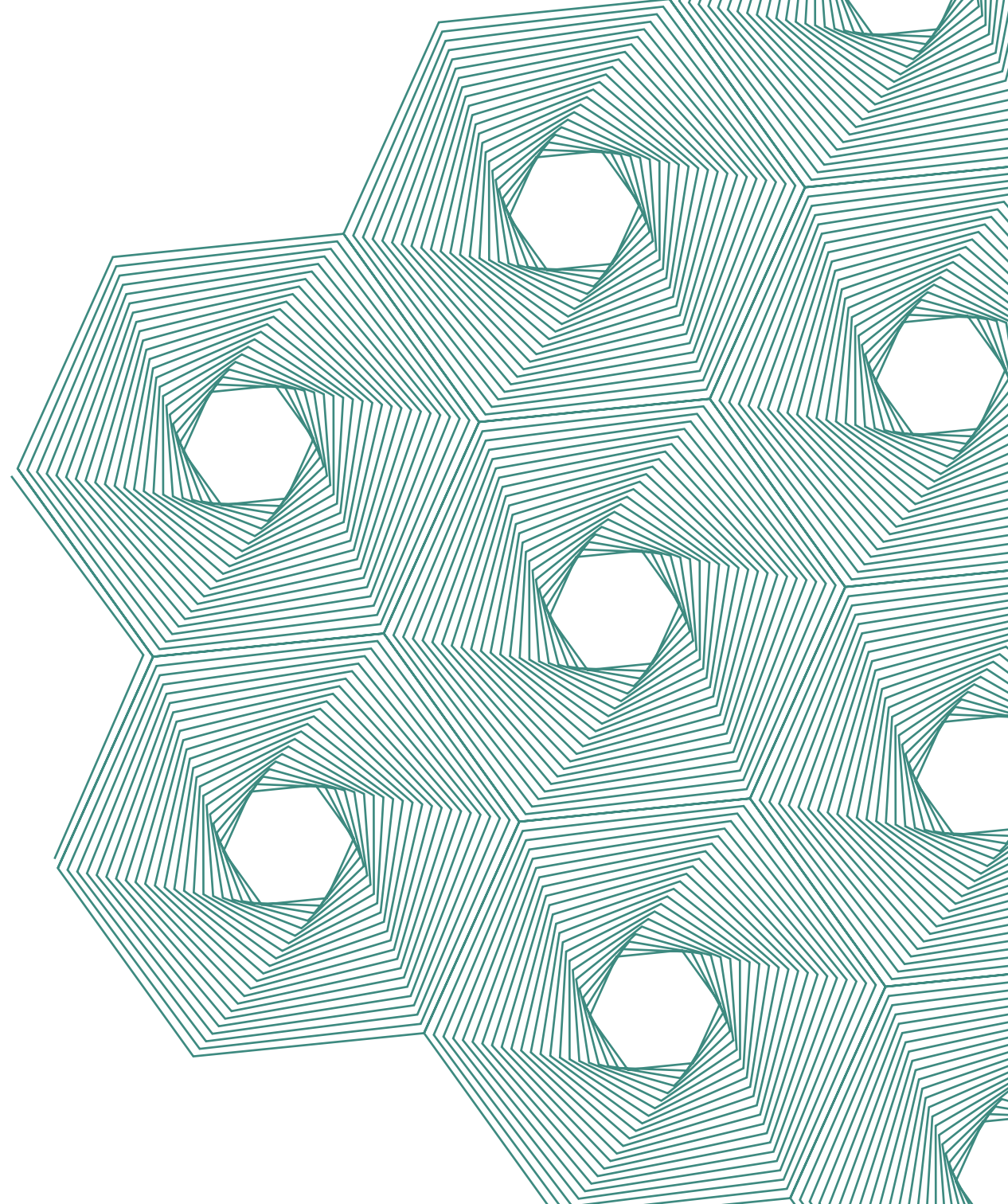


Procedural formalities involved in applying for and obtaining credit have to be streamlined, an effective credit delivery system needs to be developed and provisions made for extension education of potters regarding different aspects of credit.

Middle  
men



Shopkeepers from outside this community gain greater evidence when it comes to sale of higher value items particularly idols and toys.The recent ethnic revival of clay artifacts creates new unreliable market for the artisans



## **PART IIB** Ethnographic research on crafts

### Invisible hands – palm leaf weaving

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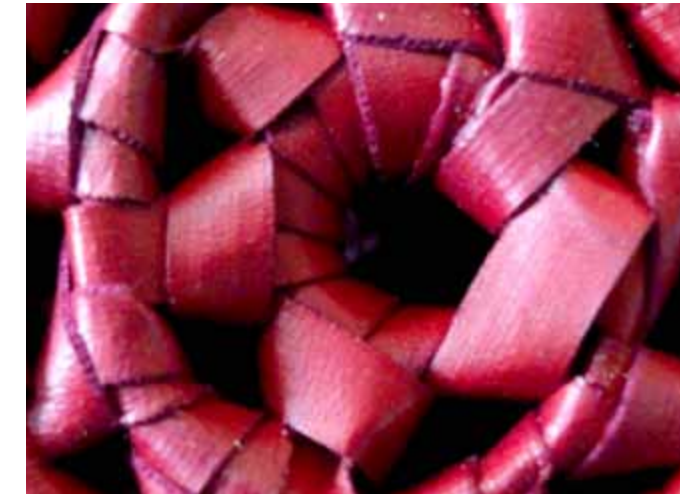


Invisible hands  
**PALM LEAF WEAVING**

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### 5.1 What is palm leaf weaving?

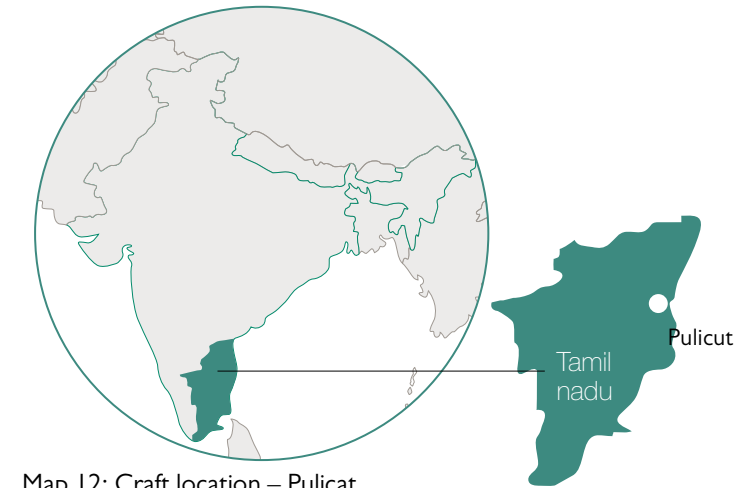


Palm leaf weaving is the folding and interlacing strips of palm leaves .Palmyra is an important and significant tree of Tamil Nadu from which the leaves are extracted and products are made out of it. Palm Leaf products are eco-friendly. The process of making items from palm leaf is essentially a manual one.

---



## 5.2 Craft location



Map 12: Craft location – Pulicat

Pulicat is a small village about 60kms away from Chennai, coastal area in Thiruvallur district. It is famous for boating and Fisheries. It was once ruled by Dutch. This village has a population of about 6400, mostly of Muslim community, most of the women of this community are engaged in producing palm leaf products.



109

Image : 050

### 5.3 Pulicat co.operative society



Ministry of textiles, govt.of India have extended support for the development and promotion of palm leaf weaving industrial co.op society ltd. The program was formulated with a long term view to grow and protect Palmyra trees and to develop products using skills that help sustain rural communities.

6 The society is for women  
of women by women 9

110





Name - Fathima  
Yrs of work - 11 YRS

Name - Kalaivani  
Yrs of work - 20 YRS

5.4 Artisanal group



The women of Pulicat produce palm leaf objects in most attractive shapes and designs with pleasing color combination which reveals their mastery of hand skill. This is done exclusively by women, in their own homes on piece rate basis and it's the only source of income for them. Although the women belong to co-operative society the craft can be termed as family enterprise, for most of the women work at home are assisted by other female members of the family.



113

Image : 052

### 5.5 Raw material



Image : 053

The unique feature of the palm leaf is that of its naturally pale color that can be easily dyed into any hue. If the leaves are left for prolonged period the natural color turns into yellowish which possibly could not be used for making products in natural color. The palm leaves are sourced by representatives of the cluster and supplied to the artisan.

---

114



115 Image : 054

## 5.6 Dyeing and drying



Image : 055



Image : 056

Image 055 - First the strips are taken and dipped in water to make them moist and supple. Then in another vessel water is boiled for 10 minutes. The natural dye is added and it is kept so for another 10-15 minutes. Now the moist palm strips are put into this vessel for 5-6 minutes being periodically swirled with a stick. Next, the colored strips are taken out and dipped in cool water for 5 minutes, to help set the color

Image 056 - Each side of the leaf is sun dried for 2-3 hours. later the strips are hung out to dry in the shade Work on them starts only the next day

---



### 5.7 Tools used for weaving



The use of tools are minimal normally all that is required is a knife, blade, sickle and measuring tape



### 5.8 Splitting leaves



The midrib is separated from the palm leaf and the leaf is cut into strips of varying widths. A section of midrib is folded over and used as a die to make uniform splits from the leaf.



121

Image : 059

## 5.9 Weaving technique



Image : 060

Baskets and products are shaped either by plaiting or by coiling method. In coiling, the raw material is coiled into required shape and sewn together. Plaiting on the other hand is like weaving, products are made interlacing split leaves. Various weaving patterns can be achieved with this technique. Once the initial stages of weaving are overcome the movements become rhythmic, repetitive almost monotonous until a change in weave or direction occurs. The weavers of the products devote great care to achieve high degree of refinement and finish.

122



123

Image : 061



Image : 062

“Set of 3 round basket”

#### 5.10 **Product** range

All items produced in Pulicat cluster are utility oriented

#### 5.11 **Marketing**

Weaved products are generally made against orders, though minor sales are effected when artisans are being visited by others.

124



Image : 063

“Laundry bins”



Image : 064

“Flower rattles”



Image : 065

“Tissue box”



Image : 066

“Square basket”



5.12 **current status** Analysis of Palm leaf weaving



Map 13: Current status Analysis of palm leaf weaving

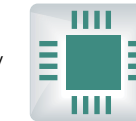
### 5.13 Critical issues

Middle men



Even though the cluster is formed by co-operative society, the artisans are directly dealt with the marketing of goods , which leaves them behind as they are not able to compete in the international market. Bulk orders to be channelized through co. operative institutions eliminating the need for middle men. Co-operative society should take steps in promotion and marketing of the products.

Technology



The lack of technological innovation is making it increasingly difficult for the artisan to compete in with non-traditional products, or to raise productivity to a level where process could remain competitive.

Seasonal constrains



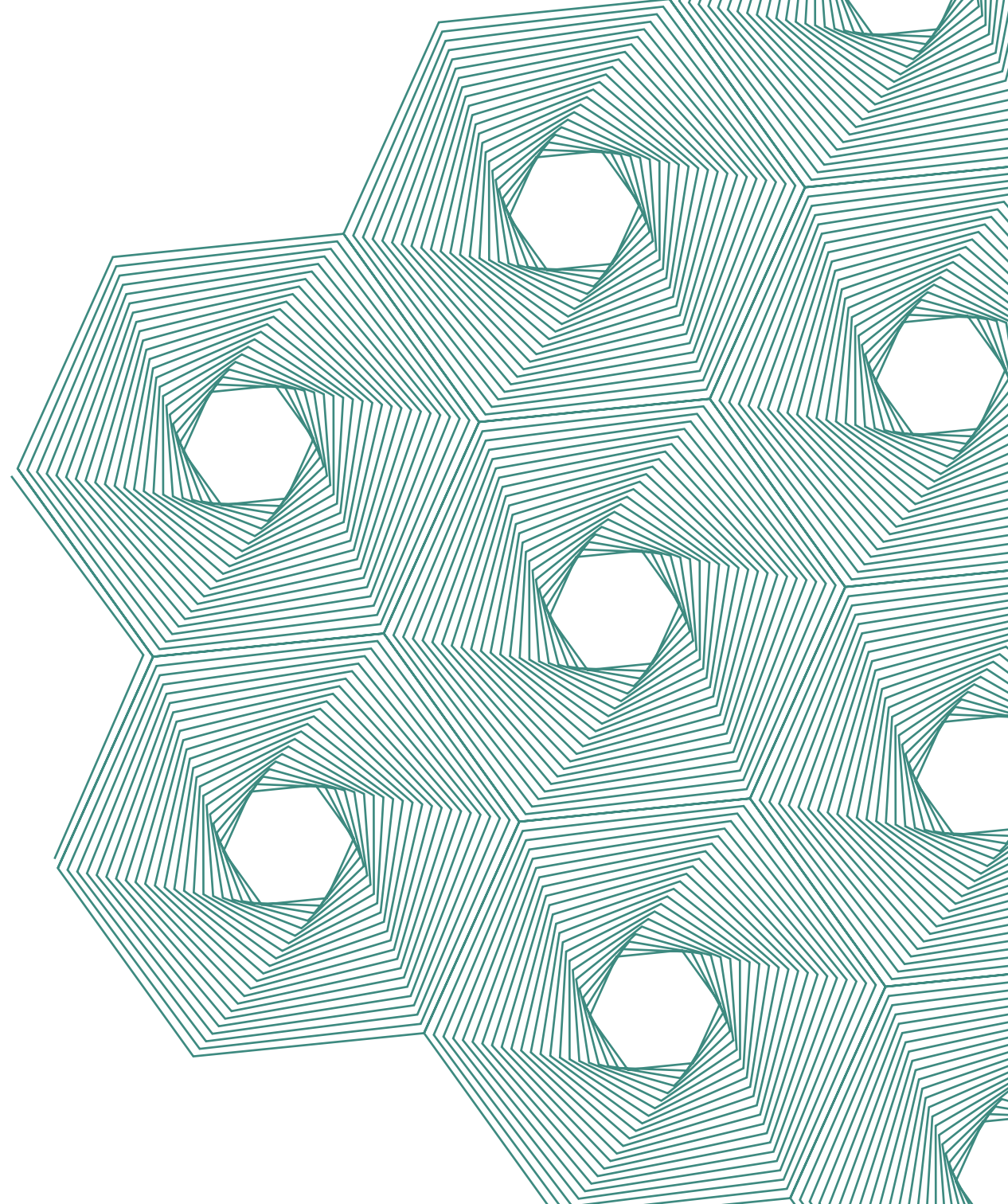
Producing palm leaf products during raining season is a constrain due to its procedural complications where the raw material has to be dried thoroughly , hence orders during this particular season cannot being executed.

Lack of demand



The basic crisis is due to lack of demand where there has been a shift in consumer choice from natural fibers to synthetic materials.





## **PART III** Analysis of Case study

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## Behind the Door

# CASE STUDIES

6 **Case studiea** - Another important research methodology used to find in-depth investigation. Most significant and meaningful case studies are chosen ,analysed and criticized in the following pages, findings of which helps us to conclude our result on solid base.

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### 6.1 Craftmark



The Craftmark is an initiative to help Indian craftworkers connect to mainstream markets. The Craft mark initiative is an effort by the All India Artisans and Craft workers Welfare Association (AIACA) to help denote genuine Indian handicrafts, develop sector-wide minimum standards and norms for labeling a product as a handicrafts product, and increase consumer awareness of distinct handicraft traditions. Under this initiative, AIACA will license the Craftmark logo for use by Craft-based businesses, cooperatives and NGOs for use on product tickets and labels. Similar to an industry association such as the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), AIACA seeks to represent a range of organizations in the handloom and handicrafts sector and to engage in policy advocacy activities aimed at increasing the domestic market for handloom and handicraft products and improving the standard of living of craft workers. The Craftmark logo is intended for organizations that are producers or retailers of Indian handicraft products. The logo will be licenced to applicants only after a verification of their craft products and the craft genres they belong to.

The Craftmark logo is intended for organizations that are producers or retailers of Indian handicraft products. The logo will be licenced to applicants only after a verification of their craft products and the craft genres they belong to.

### 6.2 Crafts Council of India

The Crafts Council of India is a voluntary organization, working in the craft sector, for the welfare of crafts persons and the development of handicrafts. CCI is the apex body with a network of 10 affiliated State Councils and is affiliated to the World Crafts Council which is the only non - governmental international organization working in the craft sector. It plans to mobilize the craft communities by training in tapping and securing business opportunities and efficient implementation, i.e. strengthening supply chain.

### 6.4 Altromercato

Fair Trade for a supportive economy, Altromercato is an organization in partnership with democratically organized groups of small producers. It does not give help for free, but builds an equal relationship offering the producers a chance of work and exchange. A chance to plan together their own future, independently and through confrontation. Acting between people, overcoming the logic neoliberal global market.

### 6.3 National Institute of Fashion Technology

National Institute of Fashion Technology was set up under the aegis of the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India. It has emerged as the premier Institute of Design, developing professionals for taking up leadership positions in fashion business in the emerging global scenario. The Craft Cluster Initiative of the Institute is a carefully developed formula for integrating the crafts sector of the country with the mainstream. NIFT, with active support from the Ministry of Rural Development, is developing and implementing a craft cluster initiative towards the overall progress of craft, the cottage industry and vocational activities. The craft sector by visiting the craft region to study the socio-economic and cultural context. The intention of the project is to involve NIFT's professional capabilities in the areas of design, technology, marketing and management along with external expertise, and synergize all developmental activities by various government and non-government agencies.

#### Dedicated Areas for artisans

- \* Nift - Research & Design orientation on crafts
- \* Craftmark - Branding artisans and craft
- \* Pachai – Fair trade organization
- \* Altromercato – International Fair trade Expo
- \* Crafts council of India – Facilitating artisans with marketing
- \* Industree – implant trainings for artisanal group

### 6.5 Industree

industree

Industree Crafts Foundation is backed by a team of designers, some from NID, others from the Indian Institute of Craft and Design. The very idea of incorporating the freshness of new ideas, colours and finishes with the wonderful talents of rural hands, electrifies the human spirit, be it that of the consumer, producer or all the facilitators in between. The crucial link in our effort for long term sustainability is to introduce well designed contemporary products, artisans and organizations to the domestic urban as well as export markets.

### 6.6 Pachchai

pachai-Industree Craft Foundation launched a new brand in craft marketing, focusing on eco friendly and sustainable methods of livelihood, which truly symbolize the green movement. Called PACHCHAI, which translates as green in Tamil, and aimed at being branded exhibitions. Bringing together some of the most vibrant craft communities across India, The products being showcased are not only green in nature, using natural dyes and natural materials, but the entire system of self sustainable production symbolizes the very spirit of the movement.

## 6.7 Khadi

The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) is a statutory body formed by the Government of India. It is an apex organization under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises with regard to khadi and village industries within India, which seeks to - "plan, promote, facilitate, organize and assist in the establishment and development of khadi and village industries in the rural areas in coordination with other agencies engaged in rural development wherever necessary."

Type of market - Domestic



Image : 068

Map 14: Table of brand parameters



Image : 069

## 6.8 FabIndia

Fabindia is India's largest private platform for products that are made from traditional techniques, skills and hand-based processes. Fabindia links over 40,000 craft-based rural producers to modern urban markets, thereby creating a base for skilled, sustainable rural employment, and preserving India's traditional handicrafts in the process. Fabindia promotes inclusive capitalism, through its unique COC (community-owned companies) model. The COC model consists of companies, which act as value-adding intermediaries between rural producers and Fabindia. These are owned, as the name suggests, by the communities they operate from; a minimum 26% shareholding of these companies is that of craft persons. Fabindia's products are natural, craft-based, contemporary, and affordable.

Type of market - Domestic

Map 15: Table of brand parameters



### 6.9 Auroville

Auroville was founded in 1968 as a place where people of goodwill from all over the world could come together to make a living experiment in human unity and serve a greater dream and greater purpose. It is a site of spiritual and physical research. located 160 kms south of Chennai, India, on the Coromandel Coast near Pondicherry. Mainly consists of French members. Auroville sells handmade natural products, designed by the designers of the ashram. Different articles ranging from ceramic pottery to leather-wear to food. The brand has its own outlets, all funds and profits from the sale of products go to furthering the development of the township. The products produced are Eco-friendly and organic. Type of market - Export & Domestic



Image : 070

Map 16: Table of brand parameters



### 6.10 Lulu & Nat

Driven by colour and inspired by India, Mumbai-based Lulu McEvoy and London-based Nat Robinson launched Lulu & Nat, a home and lifestyle range for adults and children. With experience in textile design and retail, Lulu and Nat have created a modern, vibrant collection with an exotic Indian edge. Handcrafted and made in India using traditional techniques, each piece is completely unique and nothing is mass-produced. The result is a beautiful selection of hand-printed bedlinen, embroidered wall hangings and embellished cushions - all in Lulu & Nat's signature Anglo-Indian style. Since it was set up in 2008, Lulu & Nat's client list has grown and now includes prestigious London stores such as Designers Guild, SCP, the Cross and Liberty, as well as designer childrenswear shop Bonton in Paris. Type of market - Export



Image : 071

Map 17: Table of brand parameters





### 6.11 Plumo

Plumo is a brand which sells products online, its products are original in design, beautifully crafted and carefully chosen from different countries around the world. It deals with interiors, fashion, children and gifts. Its specialty lies in the usage of prints, patterns with splashes of colour.

Type of market - online marketing



Image : 072

Map 18: Table of brand parameters



### 6.12 Bodyshop

The Body Shop is a cosmetic brand which has 2,400 stores in 61 countries, and is the second largest cosmetic franchise in the world. The Body Shop does not claim its products are 'all-natural', but "inspired by nature". The Body Shop philosophy is in fact in favour of international marketplaces. The chain uses its influence and profits for programmes such as Trade Not Aid, aimed at enacting fair labour practices, safe working environments and pay equality. In October 2009 The Body Shop invited employees, including a store manager from the UK to visit a supplier and see the benefits that the Community Trade programme has brought to a community in India. The Body Shop has always sourced many of its baskets and other non cosmetic supplies from China, occasionally from India too.







Image : 073

Type of market -Export

Map 19: Table of brand parameters



					
Ratings	Brand name	Profit margin	benefits for artisan	design & marketing	Affordability by the mass
★★★★★	<b>FabIndia</b>	■ ■ ■ □ □	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■ □	■ ■ ■ ■ □
★★★★☆	<b>Bodyshop</b>	■ ■ ■ □ □	■ ■ □ □ □	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ □ □ □ □
★★☆☆☆	<b>Plumo</b>	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ □ □ □ □	■ ■ ■ □ □	□ □ □ □ □
★★★★☆	<b>Khadi</b>	■ □ □ □ □	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ □ □ □	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
★★★★☆	<b>Auroville</b>	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ □ □ □	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	■ □ □ □ □
★★★★☆	<b>Lulu &amp; Nat</b>	■ ■ ■ ■ □	■ ■ □ □ □	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	□ □ □ □ □

Map 20: Comparison table with different brand parameters

### 6.13.1 General view

All the brand whose main criteria is export pay minor attention in the wellbeing of artisans, whereas brands created by the government & Ngo offers good amount of attention in the development of the crafts and crafts men.

### 6.13 Comparison view in detail

1 FabIndia - a perfect example for well organized brand in terms of visibility of crafts and welfare of artisans, however the brand concentrates mostly on crafts related with textiles.

2 Lulu & Nut / Plumo - export oriented brands source cheap labor from India and sell it to European countries at very high margin of profit. Very less attention paid to crafts sector.

3 Khadi – a term which is always been associated with purity , awards the crafts-men with good return in terms of profit, due to poor designs and marketing abilities orders for the craftsmen aren't standard . Its quality products are affordable by all segments of people.

4 Auroville – The brand caters to niche segment with very excellent standard of products. Design and marketing concepts are well conceived, however there is a lack of interest towards artisanal group. If interventions are aimed towards the artisanal group excellent outcomes will be achieved.

5 Bodyshop – Orders based on packaging are given to the artisans. The brand isn't reliable enough as the orders provided are seasonal, minimum attention paid the artisanal group.

## 6.14 Exclusive case studies

### 6.14.1 Paolo Navonae

Paolo Navonae - Graduated in 1973 in architecture from the Turin Politecnico. Between 1970 and 1980 worked alongside Alessandro Mendini, Ettore Sottsass Jr. and Andrea Branzi in the Alchimia group, the most progressive set on the Italian design scene, developing a highly productive and stimulating avant-garde stance which gained her, in 1983, the prestigious Osaka International Design Award, bestowed for the first time that year. Driven by her extreme interest in the most widely differing cultures – particularly oriental ones – she travels a great deal, bowing to a natural inclination to cross boundaries, and not only geographical ones. In her long and many-sided career she has switched easily between the roles of architect, designer, art director, interior designer, critic, teacher and organiser of exhibitions and events.

#### Cross cultural collaboration helps

When artisans team up with projects such as these case studies, a new dimension is exposed. Induction of new set of tools by the associate in creating new design and quality products helps the artisans to unleash their conventional practices. A symbiotic relationship can be established with a little notion of lending hand to the innocent artisans.



Image : 074



Image : 075

Image : 074 Rustic rattan furniture and Image : 075 Lapshade designed by Paola Navone for Gervasoni



Image : 076



Image : 077

### 6.14.2 Patricia Urquiola

Patricia Urquiola is a Spanish architect and designer, now lives and works in Milan. She attended the Faculty of Architecture of the Technical University of Madrid where she graduated in 1989 having done a thesis with Achille Castiglioni. From 1990 to 1992 she was assistant lecturer on the courses held by Achille Castiglioni and Eugenio Bettinelli both at the Politecnico di Milano university and at the E.N.S.C.I. in Paris. Her collection is made from abaca fibers and colored polyethylene string by artisans in the Philippines over a painted and powder-coated aluminum frame. The chairs are designed to withstand wind, rain and shine, or simply to add ambiance to an interior space.

**6.14.3 Whomade:** the products talk - Bastar Club collection is crossroads between different languages and traditions. "Who made collections" are works of design, craft and art of high ethical and aesthetic values. A cross-cultural brand of products, born from the experiences of Todomundo.org and enthusiasm of three young designers - Edward, Darius and Charlotte - set to promote a new meaning to subject and object. WHOMADE The first collections of pottery, wrought iron and jewelry investment casting have been conceived and designed by Italian designers in collaboration with communities of artisans Saathi - tribal crafts, in a design process of re-discovery and re-contextualization of the pattern and stylistic features of the tribal region of Bastar, present in the ancient heart of India.

## 7 Voices of artisans - give a ear to it

Random conversational quotes to reflect upon



Artisan - V.K.Munisamy  
Craft - Miniature Terracota

“My father advised me not to take this craft as my occupation since its labour intensive. I started playing with clay since when I was 7 yrs and I had the passion to master it and today I have trained many people who now have become artisans. My son is schooling and hope he brings better future to our craft in terms of marketing, as our hard work is tasted by the intermediaries”



Relation - Wife of V.K.Munisamy  
Craft - Miniature Terracota

“My husband has won numerous awards nationally and internationally, he has been acclaimed as the master in miniature terracotta crafts, yet we are struggling for a living. While the objects are being fired on the street, people complain about the smoke emitted, yet this is the only work we are aware of”



Artisan - Sekar  
Craft - Terracota

In the last three years we have not received any encouragement from the Government. The manufacturing costs have risen and we hardly earn a profit of Rs. 20-25 a set. Also there is shortage of manpower as youngsters are more inclined to higher studies and jobs that fetch a steady income”



Artisan - Shenbagam  
Craft - Terracota

“Customers who are placing the order want us to finish the goods in no time, which is definitely not possible because of the changes in weather and due to it extended process.”



Artisan - Fathima  
Craft - Palm leaf weaing

“Once I came across products in a retail shop bought from us and being sold at very high cost, we have less faith on middlemen and expect the government to light torch’



Artisan - Kokila  
Craft - Palm leaf weaing

“As soon as my husband died I started learning palm leaf weaving with passion, the craft has helped me to survive, earlier the order quantity was high but now it's less, ministry of handicrafts have helped us in many ways yet, we face major problem in marketing the products”

7.1 **Swot analysis** of the Indian craft industry

**Strengths**

- \* The industry has potential in domestic as well as international markets.
- \* It provides wide variety in each product and exhibit diversified culture of India.
- \* Industry caters to the different market sectors covering handicrafts, textiles and jewelries.
- \* Gives potential source of employment
- \* It requires low capital investment
- \* It is a great source of foreign revenue as it is a huge export industry.

**Weakness**

- \* Industry lacks communication and infrastructure
- \* Lack of co-ordination between Indian manufacturers exporters and Government
- \* Inadequate information available on new technology
- \* Industry is still confined to rural areas of the nation
- \* No promotional support is given to the sector
- \* Constrain in sourcing raw material

**Opportunities**

- \* Emerging demands of Indian crafts across overseas
- \* Development of retail sectors and changing life styles offer huge requirements of such products
- \* Rise in the industry is due to development in tourism
- \* Internet has emerged as a mean to develop its market network
- \* Retail brands like FabIndia to be opened in the cities for the visibility of craft and to eliminate the charge of middlemen.

**Threats**

- \* Step in of major international brands by Increasing competition in domestic markets
- \* Quality products manufacturing by countries like South Africa and China
- \* Better trade terms are offering by these countries
- \* Competing countries offer better technological support and R&D development facilities
- \* Challenge to establish balance between demand and supply of quality products



Image : 078

## 7.2 statement of concern - summary

The current status of India's artisans is a matter of grave concern, these proud and industrious artisans were once the backbone of the Indian economy, providing much of the goods and services that our people needed. Today the very same artisans are being marginalized by the modernization and industrialization of the society, though some have managed to adapt to changing times, and very few have even thrived, most of them live in abject poverty with prospects.

As a result, today most of India's artisans are struggling for survival. Many have given up, and moved away from their traditional occupations. Others clinging on desperately, not knowing what else to do or to whom to turn, their skills evolved over thousands of years. Their progeny are not willing or able to carry the family tradition, and a rich culture is on the verge of extinction.

The research and development effort in the new order are oriented towards developing capital – intensive processes and technologies which replace age-old, human-friendly processes, rather than adapt them. Government schemes and programmes are hijacked away from the poor artisan to the rich industrialist.

The major reason for their current state of poverty is **disappearing markets** – There had been a dramatic shift in consumer choice from artisanal goods to factory-made ones. 1.1 Firstly the aggressive marketing and advertising strategies used by the organized industrial sector have played a major role in influencing consumer choice. Media campaigns are an integral part of these strategies and are used not only to sustain loyalty to old products but also to create demand for the new ones. Another important factor is large investment in product and design development.

1.2 Secondly the economies of scale inherent to the factory sector result in mass production of goods of uniform quality, at prices with which artisan's products do not easily compete.

1.3 Thirdly various financial incentives, benefits, reliefs are extended to encourage the organized sector to set up industries, in comparison, very little is available to the artisan. Infrastructure is also extended to the organized sector. This is in stark contrast to the artisanal sector, where surveys have repeatedly revealed that the major handicaps faced by artisans are lack of capital to purchase good quality materials in bulk, scarcity of raw materials, and absence of infrastructure in the way of work.

## II Technology obsolescence

Modern technology has enabled machines to imitate even most intricate designs that were once the exclusive domain of the artisans, developed and perfected over centuries and passed down from generation to generation. The failure to develop technologies appropriate to the artisanal sector is a result of our dependence on western technologies which are essentially capital intensive. The lack of investment in indigenous technological research has only aggravated the problem.

## III Poor government planning

Given the force of the national and global economic trends, it is time to rethink the role of the artisanal sector in the Indian economy and put it on the national agenda. If as the trends indicate, this sector will survive only in pockets, to the extent this results in unemployment of large number of artisans outside this pocket, a national initiative is required to reorient their skills and rehabilitate them. For craft skills built up over centuries are an important national resource that cannot be depleted.

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## CONCLUSION

Two years of immense knowledge gained through my masters facilitated me in preparing thesis with precise tools and guidance. Being born and brought up in a city, I always used to wonder why India is referred to as a poor nation, when everything is at reach; my questions were answered on visit to these artisan's work places. I realized the true scenario and hardships they go through to earn a living, truly a touching sight indeed, one can never acquire such precious feeling by just reading books or by surfing net, however the real hindrance was commuting to the villages of artisans. The path in which I have travelled helped me in attaining enlightenment.

The Compiled project report will be functional for those who desires to know about the life of artisans, always finds the hands of socially responsible individual. It also would be an excellent reference material, serving purpose for those who wants to work in the field of terracotta or weaving.

Being socialist and not being capitalist was the main goal of taking up a project like this. Sustainability is the word echoed in all corners of the globe, crafts is a step for sustainable living, all raw material used are natural with less intervention in technology. Don't drive the market for producing new products that are sustainable instead let's make the sustainable product exist.

So is this the end? No it's a CONTINUATION .....to a new sustainable living!

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