

EFFECTIVE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT INPUTS

Creating a simple but effective design, using a small budget and limited resources, is an exciting test of a designer's skill. Seeing the growth and confidence of a newly emerging crafts community successfully selling products they have made themselves for the first time, using skills they never knew they had, is even more exciting. These are the main principles for crafts development:

1. To make the product competitive in price, aesthetics, and function
2. To so empower and train the craftsperson that he/she becomes independent

3. To provide ideas and stimuli for creativity and innovative product design by the crafts community
4. To explain the rationale behind items developed and guidelines laid down by market forces
5. To develop a product range that incorporates the different skill levels of all members of the group
6. To keep the product usage and price applicable to the widest possible market and consumer
7. To harmoniously incorporate traditional motifs, techniques and shapes into the design of new products
8. To ensure the development of aesthetic sensibilities so that craft designs no longer mimic or remain static, but constantly evolve by mingling tradition with innovation.



SEWA, Lucknow

The design intervention from outside the community was by trained designers working with the community. Their inputs were as follows:

- Documentation and revival of traditional stitches, embroidery motifs and tailoring techniques, developing a contemporary cut of a *kurta*, and introduction of sizing and application of a new embroidery *buta*.
- Skill upgradation of craftpersons of this community.
- Introduction of new kinds of raw material (ranging from kota to tussar)
- Addressing aspects of marketing like costing, quality control and production planning—and an alternative marketing and promotional strategy that would enable a small NGO to gain complete self-sufficiency.

QUALITY CONTROL AND MARKET FORCES

Craftspeople are increasingly the marginalised and forgotten people—trapped between their past and their future. Investment in research and development, raw material, credit and infrastructural development that is automatically given to any other sector of the economy and industry, is not always available to them.

Crafts-making, especially by rural or tribal people, are often dismissed as outdated, with only ornamental and, hence, short-term use. Often, it is not really the look of the product that causes the customer to reject it in favour of the assembly-line, industrial alternative, but the quality of the materials used—a factor beyond the craftsperson's control. Colourfast threads, rust-proof hinges and buckles, seasoned leather, fabric that does not shrink, are not available in rural markets for the crafts



and provide infrastructural facilities, basic raw materials and quality goods. Otherwise, one day, India may have no crafts left at all.

It is equally important for designers to keep in mind some salient features of change in the tastes and requirements of consumers, especially in the export market.

1. The generally high price of handcrafted goods is sometimes an obstacle to their sale. Items in various price-brackets should be designed to secure maximum sales. The effort should be to get the best unit prices for handmade products.
2. Excessively ornamented surface decoration without structural strength is unsatisfactory. Though there is always a small demand for fine decorative pieces, especially antique reproductions, a contemporary consumer would prefer less elaborate patterns and simpler forms.
3. The contemporary consumer is not often either sensitive or responsive to religious themes and symbols that usually dominate traditional craft design. The consumer wants beauty as a supplement to utility; hence the increasing demand for good-looking, well-designed functional items.
4. There is today much less insistence on the use of expensive materials. Thus, well-styled imitation jewellery often replaces pure gold and silver ones. At the same time there is a growing interest in natural materials such as clay, grass, stone, wood, and leather, and handicrafts made from these should be in great demand.
5. Modern designs, in some cases, are preferred by discerning consumers; this would also provide encouragement to designers and crafts communities.



AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO CRAFT DEVELOPMENT

Design and product development are an essential input for the survival and economic empowerment of craftspeople. Craftsmanship is a form of communication—one person's way of interpreting the needs of another and transmuting

creative impulse and skill into fulfilling that need. This communication cannot succeed if rural Indian craftspeople are not taught the language of today's contemporary urban consumer. Once learnt, however, the language of good design can help them to re-design the development, not just of their craft, but of their lives as well.

As Rabindranath Tagore has reminded us, "The mind is no less valuable than cotton thread".

EXERCISE

1. Develop an integrated plan to raise the standard of living of a particular crafts community in your area.
2. Why are design and development so important for the survival of the crafts sector?





‘Bollywood’ industry.

4. Enterprising entrepreneurs are reaching out to global markets through innovations. For example, three shops in Chennai supply Bharatanatyam dance accessories to the growing number of dancers around the world. As an entrepreneur of a craft production and marketing unit, outline your dream project.
5. Research ‘Needs and Requirements of Contemporary Life’. How can crafts products be designed and marketed to meet those requirements?



DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT



Annexure

TREASURE TROVES OF INDIAN CRAFTS

National Handicrafts and Handloom Museum



Established in 1972 in New Delhi's main exhibition ground, Pragati Maidan, the village complex is popularly known as Crafts Museum. The Museum is a homage to the artists and craftspersons who have kept alive the artistic traditions of India through the centuries. The small-scale replicas of village houses from different parts of the country, the display galleries of textiles, masks, etc. and the crafts demonstration area are some of the salient features of this museum.



<http://www.nationalcraftsmuseum.nic.in>

Ashutosh Museum of Indian Art

This museum, named after a great educationist, Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee, was set up in 1937 within the university complex in Kolkata and its focus is on the crafts of the State of West Bengal through the ages. Apart from art objects from the past, the museum also holds an exemplary collection of craft items, some of which are still produced and used in Bengal. The collection of craft products displayed consists of toys and dolls made in West Bengal. Along the walls are painted scrolls, Patachitra, once used by story-tellers. There are some samples of textiles for which West Bengal and Bangladesh are famous.



<http://www.asiarooms.com>

Calico Museum of Textiles

This is one of India's finest specialised museums. It was founded in Ahmedabad in 1949 by Gira Sarabhai who initiated the collection of rare, historical and exquisite fabrics from different parts of India. The State of Gujarat, with Ahmedabad as the capital, has been a major area for textile production.

<http://www.calicomuseum.com>

Salar Jung Museum

In the mid-nineteenth century the Nizam of Hyderabad appointed a prime minister to whom was given the title of Salar Jung. Salar Jung's son, Salar Jung II, and grandson Salar Jung III, were also selected as prime ministers by later rulers. It was these three men who contributed to what is now called the Salar Jung Collection in this museum in Hyderabad. In 1958 the collection was donated to the Government of India and in 1968 the museum was transferred to its present building. The museum is famous for its European art collection and Indian art selection of great variety and quality. There are excellent collections of jade, weapons, textiles and metalware, which are significant as they provide a glimpse of post-Mughal court life and are suggestive of the grandeur and wealth of the rulers.

<http://www.salarjungmuseum.in/home.asp>



Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum

The museum in Pune contains the collection of a dedicated lover of Indian art, the late Dinkar Kelkar. He spent 60 untiring years travelling and purchasing objects from the remotest villages and towns of India. Kelkar's passion and sense of humour are reflected in every item of the collection, and his contribution to the study and preservation of art has already become a legend.

The Kelkar museum and its collection of about 21,000 objects focus on the art of everyday life in India—pots, lamps, containers, nutcrackers, pen-stands, and such objects that were found in the homes of the village landlord, farmer, merchant and shopkeeper.

There are a variety of things made out of wood, from carved doors to toys. There is a range of metalware—from locks, to ink pots, ritual bowls, *hookah* stands, nutcrackers and lamps.

There is an assortment of oil lamps in a variety of materials from clay to brass, each with its own form and shape. Lamps in India can be broadly divided into two categories—those used for ritual purposes—*arati* for 'worship with light' and those used purely functionally, to provide illumination in the home. The lamps are usually small open containers, to hold oil or *ghee* and the wick made from rolled cotton. Sacred emblems like the peacock, the goddess Lakshmi, elephants and birds are

most commonly used for decoration. There are hanging lamps suspended on heavy, ornate brass chains, and standing lamps used in the temple and the home on view at this museum.

<http://www.rajakelkarmuseum.com>

Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya



Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Madhya Pradesh, one of India's largest states, has many regions still inhabited by tribes and it is only recently that due honour and importance have been given to folk and tribal art forms with the establishment of this museum of anthropology in Bhopal. Here in a complex of many acres are tribal houses from every part of the country representing the different tribes which their members themselves have built. There is a covered museum with samples of tribal homes with everyday household objects. The hand-crafted objects range from bronzes, terracottas, toys to ritual objects. The art of everyday life in India, as it is even today, is especially interesting, for there is a freshness and spontaneity about it that anyone can enjoy.