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Trademarks of Tradition: Artisan Labor, Development and Place making in Rural India



**Author**
Halbe, Aditi A

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# Trademarks of Tradition: Artisan Labor, Development and Place making in Rural India

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Anthropology

by

Aditi Halbe

2023

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Trademarks of Tradition: Artisan Labor, Development and Place making in Rural India

by

Aditi Halbe

Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2023

Professor Akhil Gupta, Chair

Artisanal crafted goods like beer, cheese or textiles signify sustainable, local, and handmade production in global markets. Constituting alternatives to mass culture and mass production, these goods allow producers and consumers to see themselves as engaging ethical and authentic ways of living in our contemporary world. Looking at how artisanal products are designed and made in Kachchh, India, my dissertation explores how traditional artisans use intellectual property certifications, design and entrepreneurship to expand markets for their traditional crafts. Looking at the implementation of trade-not-aid development strategies and the increased use of design training programs that are targeted toward traditional artisans in India, this dissertation research looks at design as a political category important for understanding the stakes of ethical and authentic living in our contemporary world. Kachchh is renowned for its craft traditions of weaving, block printing, embroidery, leatherwork and pottery that are still practiced as a primary means of livelihood by many Kachchhi artisan communities. Ranging from high design to tourist trinkets, Kachchhi artisanal production circulates in both high and low-end artisanal markets. In a country where 25% of the rural population is poor, traditional

artisanal production becomes an important site of rural economic revitalization. In India, artisanal production is the second largest contributor to the rural economy, after agriculture. The urgency for economic inclusion also stems from the historic social exclusion traditional artisan communities have faced, comprising as they do minorities, listed as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, in the Indian census. In global artisanal markets, traditional artisans are expected to be entrepreneurs and leverage their social and historical marginality to expand markets for a community craft. Looking at shifts in craft technologies, trade-not-aid marketing strategies and collaborations between artisans and designers, I look at how artisanal production relates to industrial production and how it is entangled with global capitalism.

The dissertation of Aditi Halbe is approved.

Hannah C. Appel

Jessica R. Cattelino

Saloni Mathur

Akhil Gupta, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2023

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To my parents, my sister, thank you for being there for me and for all your encouragement.

## VITA

### Education

| | |
|---|---|
| 2012 – present | PhD. Anthropology. University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)<br>Dissertation title: Weaving Innovation, Crafting Kachchh: Design, Entrepreneurship and the Artisan in Contemporary India<br>Degree expected June 2021 |
| 2007 | MA. Museum Anthropology. Columbia University, New York |
| 2004 | BA(Hons). Ancient Civilization and Built and Natural Environment. The University of Manchester, UK |

### Awards and Fellowships

| | |
|---|---|
| 2021 | Graduate Research Summer Funding. Department of Anthropology, UCLA |
| 2020 | Sambhi Emergency Funding. Center for India and South Asia, UCLA |
| 2020 | Graduate Research Summer Funding. Department of Anthropology, UCLA |
| 2018 | Graduate Research Summer Funding. Department of Anthropology, UCLA |
| 2017-2018 | National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Research. |
| 2016-2017 | Dissertation Fieldwork Fellowship for International Studies, August 2016-July 2017. International Institute, UCLA |
| 2016 | Graduate Research Summer Funding. Department of Anthropology, UCLA |
| 2015-2016 | Graduate Research Mentorship. Graduate Division, UCLA |
| 2015 | AIIS Summer Language Program in Gujarati. AIIS Ahmedabad<br>Graduate Research Summer Funding. Department of Anthropology, UCLA |
| 2014 | Graduate Research Summer Funding. Department of Anthropology, UCLA |
| 2013 | Graduate Summer Research Fellowship. Graduate Division, UCLA |
| 2012-2013 | University Fellowship. Graduate Division, UCLA |

### Papers and Presentations

| | |
|---|---|
| 2020 | "Spinning Yarn, weaving place: Craft technologies and authentication in shaping cloth" 5th Anuual South Asia Conference at UCLA Graduate Interdisciplinary Conference on South Asia at UCLA. UCLA. |
| 2019 | "Weaving Innovation in Infrastructure." 48th Annual Conference on South Asia, Full-day Symposium, Interrogating Infrastructure: Interdisciplinary |

| | |
|---|---|
| | Conversations across History, Anthropology and Media Studies. University of Wisconsin-Madison. 17th October 2019. |
| | "Negotiating Place and Labor in Global Artisan Textile Markets: Kala Cotton Cloth in Kachchh." 4th Annual Graduate Interdisciplinary Conference on South Asia at UCLA. UCLA. 3rd May 2019. |
| 2007 | "Cultural Presentation at Mumbai's Colonial Forts: The Negotiation of Cultural Identity seen through the Rhetoric of Heritage Conservation." MA Thesis. Columbia University in the City of New York. Submitted October 2007. |

## Academic Appointments

| | |
|---|---|
| | **Graduate Student Instructor** |
| 2020-2021 | Dept. of Anthropology Internship Coordinator. UCLA Centre for Community Engagement. |
| 2020 | Crafting Alternatives to Mass Production. UCLA Cluster Program |
| | **Teaching Assistant** |
| 2020 | TAC Anthropology Department. Dr. Erin Debenport. |
| 2019-2020 | Food: A Lens for Environment and Sustainability. UCLA Cluster Program |
| 2018-2019 | Medical Anthropology. Dr. S. Can Aciksoz |
| | The Anthropology of Food. Dr. Akhil Gupta |
| | Culture and Society. Dr. Jessica Cattelino |
| 2014-2015 | Human Biology and Genetics and Society. Dr. Christopher Kelty |
| | The Anthropology of Food, Dr. Akhil Gupta |
| | Anthropology of the Cultural: From Children's Perspective. Dr. Mariko Tamanoi |
| 2013-2014 | Introduction to Archaeology. Dr. Abigail, Levine |
| | Culture and Communication. Dr. Jena Brachas-Lichtenstein |
| | Introduction to Archaeology. Dr. Greg Schachner |

## Selected Research and Professional Experience

| | |
|---|---|
| 2019-2020 | Graduate Student Researcher. June 2019-present. LABYRINTH: Exploring the maze of Nature in urban LA. PI: Dr. Christopher Kelty, Institute of Society &Genetics. Funded by UCLA Sustainable LA Grand Challenge. |
| 2017-2018 | Exhibition Researcher. August 2017-January 2018. "Sakala to Kala: Re-emergence of Desi Cotton in Traditional Craft," on view 6th January-5th March 2018. Khamir, Kachchh, Gujarat. |
| 2011-2012 | Assistant Curator. May 2011-May 2012. Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum, India. |
| 2008-2011 | Associate Registrar. January 2008-January 2011. Museum of the City of New York. |
| 2006-2008 | Assistant Registrar. July 2006-January 2008. Paley Center for Media, New York. |

# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

In 2015, Hermès, the Paris-based luxury retailer, held an exhibition-cum-auction of traditional craft from rural Kachchh at its store in Mumbai. Kachchh is India's largest district, renowned for its craft traditions of weaving, block printing, embroidery, leatherwork and pottery that are still practiced as the primary means of livelihood by many Kachchhi artisan communities. Historically central to Indian economics, development and politics, traditional craft production is the second largest contributor to the contemporary rural economy, after agriculture. With increased Indian industrialization and urban development, NGOs in rural India use trade-not-aid marketing strategies to expand markets and provide sustainable livelihood solutions for rural artisan communities. The exhibition showcasing a single Kachchhi craft resulted from a collaboration with the Kachchh based craft conservation NGO that I call Karigarv. Usually held at Karigarv's headquarters, the annual exhibition weaves narratives of place and tradition to unfurl the multi-generational history, knowledge, and skill of locally rooted artisan labor. Emphasizing the sustainability of traditional production methods, the exhibition seeks to inform and expand markets for the craft on display by encouraging customers to bid on auctioned crafts because they are authentic, artisanal, and ethically made. My ethnographic research on market-led development strategies in Kachchh considers the ways in which NGO mediated narratives of place and tradition impact, shape and shift the everyday work and lives of Kachchhi artisans.

Traditional craft production has been commodified, politicized, and inextricably linked to development ideologies in various ways throughout Indian history. Artisan labor and artisanal practice were the central mobilizing force for anticolonial struggle and Gandhian ideologies of

traditionalism and swadeshi (self-sufficiency) that critiqued industrialization (Bean 1989; Chakrabarty 1989; Gandhi and British Library 1921; Sarkar 1983). Within an independent, industrialized Indian state, the legacy of the artisan further supported a nationalistic agenda through state-sponsored development initiatives that sought domestic markets for artisan production. Today however, traditional crafts represent links between global consumers and the authenticity of place and labor unmoored from nationalistic ideologies. Instead, Kachchhi artisans and artisanal products increasingly signify a form of ethical consumption on global markets, oriented toward addressing concerns surrounding sustainable production, fair labor practices and the market valuation of rural, traditional artisan communities.

Looking at the historical legacy of the artisan alongside the contemporary formulations of artisan labor, production, and marketization in Kachchh, my dissertation research sought to understand the evolving significance of the artisan and artisan production within India, and out in new global markets. Bringing together old claims of development with new regimes of regulation my work focused on traditional craft producers and asked: In what ways do NGOs shift, modify and frame processes of traditional craft production to meet the aspirations of global, ethical consumers, in an effort to provide sustainable employment to rural Indian artisans through trade-not-aid marketing strategies? How do artisans understand and conceive of sustainable employment through their response to these shifts and modifications to trade-not-aid development? In Kachchh, where artisans' cultural identity is closely bound to traditional processes of production, does the authentication of artisanal products through legal certifications of ownership, origin trademarks and geographic indication, change regional realities of community, work, and tradition for artisans? And if so, how? Since artisan labor was used to critique modernity and a singular idea of development in India's past and is today used to propel

global market-led development, how can an understanding of contemporary artisan labor and production in Kachchh shed light on the changing relationship between artisans and global development?

A hotbed of internationally and nationally renowned craft traditions, Kachchh is a microcosm of the anxieties surrounding Indian development in one of India's most industrialized states - Gujarat. Since economic liberalization, the production and circulation of traditional crafts has declined in domestic markets as artisans seek employment in the urban unskilled economy. However, the same period has seen an increase in international markets for traditional crafts. Developmental NGOs and not-for-profit companies have proliferated in Kachchh after the 2001 earthquake that reached a magnitude of 7.7 on the Richter scale. Not only did this event bring concerns surrounding rural employment and sustainable livelihoods to the fore; it also created an environment full of developmental organizations to address these concerns.

**Literature Review**

My project brings together literatures in Indian labor studies, development studies, cultural property, and craftsmanship on two topics: 1) Artisan labor in India and 2) Cultural property and trade-not-aid marketing strategies.

**(1) Artisan Labor in India:** Within scholarship on labor and development in India (Breman 2007; Chari 2004; Joshi 2003; Swallow 1982; Prakash 1990), the significance of the artisan is situated in two crucial and contradictory ways. First, artisan labor and narratives of craftsmanship have historically been central to critiquing modernity and singular experience of development (Chakrabarty 1989; Coomaraswamy 1909; Gandhi and British Library 1921; Guha 1992; Mathur 2007; Mitter 1994; Prakash 1990). For example, the swadeshi (self-sufficiency)

movement, defined by Gandhi's call to buy and wear *khadi*, handspun cloth by rural weavers in India, was predicated on the shift in production processes that accompanied the Industrial Revolution (Bean 1989; Chakrabarty 1989; Cohn 1989; Gandhi and Kumarappa 1959; Prasad 1999; Tarlo 1996). Replacing handmade cloth production in India, industrial textile manufacture in England, flooded Indian markets with lower quality machine-made cloth at cheaper prices. Concerned not only with the loss of employment for Indian weavers that this shift produced, the swadeshi movement was fundamentally a critique of production processes that posited a developed, modern and organized process against a backward, traditional and unorganized one (Bean 1989; Leadbeater 1993; Morris 1982; Roy 1994; 2007).

Second, within India's contemporary industrial and capitalist economic agenda, artisan labor is representative of informal labor practices that define the majority of contemporary Indian employment (Breman 1996; Kumar 2016; Mies, International Labour Office, and World Employment Programme 1982). Conceived and framed within economic dualism to refer to the self-employment of Third world urban laborers outside institutional frameworks (Hart 1985a), informality has since been shown to grow out of interlinkages between caste, class and rights discourses and employment that conceal various forms of wage labor in both Indian urban and rural contexts (Breman 1985a; Carswell 2013; Chakrabarty 1989; Guérin 2013). Scholarship on the interlinkages between technological innovation and market creation in Indian craft production, have further pointed to the ways in which craft production and artisan labor are enfolded into capitalist projects (Arnold 2013; Kumar 2016; Mies, International Labour Office, and World Employment Programme 1982; Roy 2007; Swallow 1982; Prasad 1999). My ethnographic research on the labor of traditional Kachchhi artisan and their processes of craft production primarily examines the ways in which the historic legacy of the artisan and the

contemporary condition of informality foreground the relationship between artisan labor and contemporary development.

Following Breman's (1996) analysis of formal employment as the social organization of capital that results from the imposition of a legal framework on regimes of labor, my dissertation research considers the ways in which informal employment, is today also subject to legal frameworks of regulation that organize labor, bringing it into capitalist modes of economic and political operation. For example, my research amongst traditional weavers and block printers in Kachchh showed that while these artisan communities engage in production processes that have been handed down within families from generation to generation; their production is increasingly organized around formalized contract with independent designer and companies which dictate ownership of product design through trademarks and copyrights.

As actors of development, artisans are placed in a unique position because their labor and production processes have been used to support (Kumar 2016) and critique (Bean 1989) industrial and capitalist agendas. Scholarship on craft and craftsmanship, for instance, posits craft as standing in opposition to capitalist modes of production which are defined by the alienation of labor (Adamson 2010a; Marx and Engels 1988; Sennett 2008; Pye 1968). Composed of ad hoc production processes defined by handwork, irregularity and tacit knowledge, the artisan is seen to reject a normative experience of modernity (Adamson 2010a; Dudley 2014a; Nash 1993; Weiner 1992). Placing scholarship on labor directly in conversation with scholarship on craftsmanship, I analyzed the everyday effects of technological innovations, market creation strategies and the formalization of the production process that are taking place amongst traditional Kachchhi artisan communities. In so doing, my research elucidated the relationship between artisan labor, craft production and capitalism.

**(2) Cultural property and trade-not-aid marketing strategies:** Legally conceptualized within frameworks of intellectual property law, the distinctions between cultural and intellectual property begin to blur as the stakes for cultural recognition are increasingly determined through the legal language of ownership and property (Anderson 2009; Barker 2003; Bhat 2009; Geismar 2005). Coombe (2009) argues that within legal scholarship on cultural property, the anchoring of capital accumulation to cultural empowerment through origin trademarks and geographic indication (GI), provide a means by which rural, marginal, and culturally defined producers transform their political relationship to the state. Articulating solutions for rural economic revitalization, social cohesion and political autonomy, legal cultural property designations like origin trademarks and GI regulate culturally distinctive products in markets thereby transforming relationships between rural labor and global markets (Coombe 2009; DeHart 2010; Hayden 2003). Often mobilized through NGO mediated trade-not-aid marketing strategies, such regulations authenticate place and labor by fusing together discussions of legality with considerations of morality, desire, sovereignty and governance, within 'ethical' markets (Aragon and Leach 2008; Besky 2014; Chan 2011; Farmer 2014; Myers 2002; Pearson 2013; Paxson 2013a; Winegar 2006).

Literature on cultural or ethnodevelopment focuses on the ways in rural, often marginal producers become subjects of development through income and livelihood opportunities predicated on the circulation of culturally defined commodities in global markets (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009; DeHart 2010; de Waroux and Lambin 2013; Laurie, Andolina, and Radcliffe 2005; West 2012). Founded upon logics of empowerment, NGOs mobilize neoliberal theories and policies that fetishize the market (DeHart 2010; de Waroux and Lambin 2013; Dolan 2012; Luetchford 2008); while also representing local, regional and transnational forms of collective

action for poor, indigenous and marginal culturally defined producers (Bernal and Grewal 2014; Fisher 1997; Sharma 2008; Witsoe 2013). These logics of empowerment are constructed and enacted within and outside the legal frameworks of cultural property such as origin trademarks and GI.

My research closely examined the linkages between capital accumulation and cultural empowerment that are mobilized through trade-not-aid development strategies and cultural property designations in Kachchh. In 2011 the Kachchh Weavers Association was awarded GI status. Ajrakh block printers applied for the same designation earlier this year. My research findings suggest however, that this legal protection of cultural property is rarely used to expand market access. Several artisans also remain unaware of the existence of such legal designation or their potential benefits.

Interrogating the effectiveness of legal cultural property certifications like GI in impacting the cultural rights of Kachchhi artisan communities through market expansion, my research examined narratives of empowerment forged through the everyday practices of craft production such as technological and design innovations and contract negotiations between artisans and designers. Placing legal scholarship on cultural property (Coombe 1998; Geismar 2005; Hirsch 2010) in conversation with critical development studies (Escobar 2011; Elyachar 2005; Mosse 2013), my research reengaged Coombe's argument about the effectiveness of legal cultural property designations like GI in bringing about political changes for Kachchhi artisans. Instead, I found that those everyday practices of craft production that are continuously negotiated on the ground, outside the purview of legal frameworks, require much closer consideration in understanding the relationship between place-based branding strategies and market-led

development. My research finding suggest that entrepreneurial training programs in design and innovation aimed at artisans have the most impact on this relationship.

**Methodology**

Between August 2016 and September 2018, I conducted dissertation research with weavers, block printers, development workers and scholars of craft and design in Kachchh. Kachchh proved to be an ideal location to conduct this research for two reasons. First, it is the largest district in the country and is a region renowned for traditional craft practices that provide a primary source of income to their practitioners. Second, it is located in one of India's most industrial states, Gujarat, and provides a microcosm of the anxieties surrounding Indian industrialization, rural employment, and sustainable livelihoods. A number of developmental NGOs headquartered in and around Bhuj city mediate these anxieties by facilitating the adoption of place-based market solutions that include origin trademarks and geographic indication to generate economic revitalization. Additionally, Gujarat was Gandhi's home state and has a long history of institutional support for crafts after Indian independence. Looking at contemporary practices of traditional craft production within this state therefore takes on an additional significance in contextualizing the historical and contemporary regional importance of craft by extending the geographical reach of this project to major art and design institutions in the state.

The development and design of my research was formulated through discussion of my work with development professionals and artisans in Kachchh and scholars working on traditional knowledge conservation and craft in Ahmedabad. In 2014 I volunteered at a conference on community archiving organized by Karigarv that addressed the impact of industrialization on traditional livelihoods. Here, I established connections with a number of development

professional, activists and scholars working on issues of traditional knowledge conservation and rural economic revitalization. Through their insights I focused my research on the ways in which contemporary artisan labor and production is reconceived through place-based market solutions. Discussions with artisans and master craftsmen allowed me to further understand how questions of design, innovation and ownership have been informed by place-based trade-not-aid solutions.

While conducting preliminary fieldwork three NGOs allowed me to be a participant observer within their organizations. In 2014 I accompanied staff working at the environmental NGO on field visits to weaver and leather working communities. I also assisted in preparations for a community archiving conference at Karigarv in September 2014. In 2015 I accompanied the architectural NGO staff on field visits to slum communities in Bhuj where they were conducting community archival research. Participant observation was essential to my research. Spending time with artisans at their workshops allowed me to gain an understanding of the processes of craft production. I also developed a better understanding of how business was conducted within an artisan community, between artisan communities, and with customers. Spending time with artisans at their homes on the other hand helped me understand kinship, community, and caste relationships. Meeting artisans across a variety of villages, in both Eastern and Western Kachchh was extremely useful in coming to understand how narratives of place were assimilated by artisans whom this impacted most directly. Additionally, because development initiatives initiated by NGOs in Bhuj were unequally distributed through Kachchh, being able to meet artisans in different parts of the district allowed me to see how NGO initiatives and specifically place-based marketing strategies impacted artisans' lived reality. I was able to connect how these realities of rural experience informed larger discourses on employment and livelihoods as well as

design and creativity. Following the grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967), I systematized my observations flexibly and creatively.

Through participant observation with artisans and development workers I was able to see the significance of artisan-designer collaborations in meting out NGO mediated interventions that linked traditional artisans to global markets. These collaborations often resulted in design interventions and innovations that would appeal to global, urban consumers. These collaborations thus pushed design further away from traditional motifs and sometimes even traditional practices of production. Though these interventions often succeed in providing employment for artisans they did call into question the role of creativity and multi-generational skill in the practice of a particular craft. Furthermore, they called into question the boundaries of traditional design and practice that place-based property designations such as geographic indication (GI) are implemented to safeguard.

I conducted in depth semi-structured interviews (Angrosino 2002) with approximately 72 interlocutors from: artisan communities, development organizations, for-profit organizations and design scholars. Two major for-profit organizations market Kachchhi embroidery and applique work done by women. These organizations have longstanding histories in Kachchh and are centrally implicated in narratives of development, employment, and women's empowerment. One is owned by a prominent industrial family from Kachchh, who also opened a museum dedicated to Kachchhi crafts in Ajrakhpur. These for-profit organizations have been key players in organizing women's labor in the production of embroidery and applique work in the district and the employment they provide to women has always been grounded within narratives of development.

There are many institutions in Gujarat, such as the National Institute of Design (NID) in Ahmedabad and MS University (MSU) in Vadodara, that are important sites for the institutional support of craft and design. These institutions are important historical repositories of Indian nation building and I met many design students from these institutions who had come to Kachchh to complete internships. The network of craft and design scholars was thus never very far from Kachchh and was particularly close to people employed in the craft sector whether they worked for development or for-profit organizations.

Employing flexible, structured and informal interview techniques (Lofland and Lofland 1995; Rubin and Rubin 1995; Spradley 1979) allowed me to dig into artisan understanding of craft as both a cultural and traditional form of livelihood. I was also able to get insights into how a Kachchhi identity was constructed through craft production and its marketing. Interviews with development workers and employees at for-profit organizations helped elucidate their engagement at the intersections between economics, development, and politics. Interviews with scholars helped contextualize the regional and national significance of craft traditions and trace institutional changes that have impacted artisans and their means to produce traditional crafts. In this way, a series of semi-structured qualitative interviews allowed me to build upon the informal interviews that are part and parcel of participant observation.

I used oral history to illustrate the specific, rich, and deeply engaging ways in which "people understand their changing selves in relation to broad historical processes" (Giles-Vernick 2006: 87). Since traditional artisans usually grow up and learn their trade within families of multi-generational artisans, the oral histories I conducted with different generations within a family were useful in understanding how each generation has made sense of the changes they have encountered in their lives, pertaining to their work and livelihood. Oral histories were also

extremely fruitful in understanding the ways in which traditional artisans evaluated, transmitted and understood their personal, and community engagement with traditional craft practices, giving me many insights into changing meanings of craft, creativity and what it means to be an artisan.

At Karigarv, I conducted a practice-oriented institutional ethnography (Bornstein 2003; Latour 1987) to study the ways in which place-based marketing strategies are conceived and implemented. Karigarv had assisted the Kutch Weavers Association in securing their GI designation. They had also worked with spinners and weavers and farmers from Kachchh to launch an indigenous cotton known as Sakala as a yarn and cloth that represented a truly Kachchhi identity. Sakala had been a success in global artisanal markets and Karigarv was in the process of working on launching an indigenous wool. I worked closely with Karigarv on an exhibition about Sakala, which went on display in early 2018. Planned and executed in a similar vein to their earlier exhibitions, the Sakala exhibition explored the history and contemporary use of the material, while delving into narratives of place and tradition.

Conducting an institutional ethnography allowed me to interrogate the intersections between property certification programs, contemporary development ideologies, and concerns about employment and livelihoods in Kachchh district. It also allowed me to understand the role of design in facilitating market interventions for crafts. I made the decision to focus primarily on extra-weft weaving because of the weaving community's involvement and active participation in NGO mediated development strategies at the time.

**Kachchhi Textile Crafts, Design, Bhujodi and Karigarv**

When I first arrived in Bhuj, I spent a lot of time with Ajrakh and bandhini (tie-dye) artisans in Bhuj and Ajrakhpur and weavers in Bhujodi. I lived in Bhuj during my first year of field work and was able to establish connections with individuals from these communities by using my social networks in Bhuj, my access through craft NGOs like Karigarv, and locally situated buyers. My sister had previously lived in Bhuj and worked with an environmental NGO on pastoralism in Kachchh. Though she had left Kachchh by the time I got there in 2016 to conduct my doctoral dissertation, I did inherit her friend circle and her roommates who all worked for several NGOs in Bhuj. My earliest acquaintances in Kachchh therefore consisted of 20 and 30 something year olds who had grown up in different parts of the country and had come to Kachchh for jobs or internships with NGOs working on environment, indigenous forms of architecture and women's health care. Amongst them was Santosh who introduced me to several artisans he worked with as an independent buyer. Through him, I met artisans who engaged in a wide assortment of craft practices. Santosh and I later also worked as part of a team at Karigarv to conceive and carry out research for an exhibition on Sakala, the indigenous cotton variety whose yarn and cloth had become very popular in national and global craft markets.

Within the three established textile crafts in Kachchh, the labor of design and production process are meted out differently. In bandhini for instance, the intellectual property[1] of the craft is held by the man who transfers the design onto fabric and later dyes that cloth. This used to be done free hand but is now increasingly done using a stencil. This stenciled cloth is then tied by women and sent back to the male artisan who dyes the fabric. Proficiency in dying along with the

[1] I use intellectual property to refer to those skills upon which an artisan's capability and expertise are determined.

placement of dots and the ability to get sometimes layers of color within a knot and on one piece of fabric seems to determine the intellectual property of that male artisan.

In Ajrakh printing similarly, the proficiency in the craft is determined by the proficiency of the printer and the dyer. The block maker, while essential to the craft, does not receive credit for this craft. While the ability to use synthetic azo free dyes has mostly been associated with the success of certain bandhini artisans, in Ajrakh, it is those artisans that have shown skill in producing a variety of natural dyes that have local, national, and international renown. Within larger Ajrakh operations, the person who prints is often employed by the dyer and there is a team of dyers present. While some Ajrakh artisans work for larger Ajrakh enterprises who frequently sell their products in international craft markets, others work within a local market, making their own blocks by hammering nails into wood and using synthetic dyes deemed unsafe in global artisan markets. Thus, it is the dyer that holds the intellectual property of design in Ajrakh printing.

In Kachchhi extra weft weaving, the person sitting at the loom determines the design as the cloth is made. In the past, when weavers were fully occupied in servicing local farming and herding communities, weavers followed pre-determined designs and patterns, depending on the garment being woven and the community for whom it was intended. Today however, the design and the process of production take place simultaneously. Thus, while the intellectual property is ultimately held by the person who comes up with the design of the cloth, that same person does not necessarily sit at the loom to produce that design anymore.

The villages of Ajrakhpur and Bhujodi are synonymous with Ajrakh block printing and traditional Kachchhi extra-weft weaving respectively. Not only are both villages located fairly close to Bhuj, they are also major stops of the Kachchh tourist trail. Initially, I focused on these

two villages because they were seen to be the quintessential villages pertaining to their respective crafts. Artisans within each community either earn their living solely through their craft practice or engage in multifaceted livelihoods of which craft is a part. Some artisans within these communities work independently while others rely on Kachchh based NGOs to access national and global markets. There are several master craftsmen family that live in each of these locations. They often employ weavers and block printers from other parts of Kachchh as job workers for which they get paid a piece rate. This system of labor has been in use in the craft sector in India since British colonization (Goody 1982; Mies, International Labour Office, and World Employment Programme 1982; Roy 2007). Bhujodi weavers have been granted GI for Kachchhi shawls and Ajrakh block printers are in the process of applying for the same designation. Women in both communities engage in several other craft practices such as embroidery, mud work and pottery.

It became clear during my first six months of fieldwork that focusing on all major textile crafts and their relationship to NGO mediated development and livelihood strategies would be too mammoth a task to take on. Each craft had its own set of issues to contend with and there was not too much overlap between these craft practices. Given the amount of time I was spending with the weaving community, both through the independent relationships that I had established with some weavers and the weavers I was able to meet by virtue of working on the Sakala exhibition, weaving and weavers became the primary focus of my research.

However, the Ajrakh artisans, bandhini artisans, leather artisans and artisans that had shifted from leather work to quilt making (many of whom I met through Santosh) were significant in helping me realize the diversity of craft that was being produced in Kachchh. Learning about the histories and complexities of multiple craft traditions showed me that there was a blurred line

between old-school traditional design vs. what was now considered non-traditional. This fluidity existed despite a more rigid narrative that has been otherwise presented in narratives artisans shared about themselves to clients and tourists that visited, or in the wider claims of place-based marketing. Thus, the entanglements between artisan, craft, community and design, could often times be quite complicated and nuanced.

The village of Bhujodi represents a tight web of community and craft interactions. The weavers maintain complex, layered relationships between local farming and herding communities, as well as other artisan groups. Today, tourism has created an additional layer of complexity, as the village has grown in renown and prosperity associated with its craft. Located about a half hours drive from Bhuj with an entry point off a major highway, Bhujodi is approached by a single tarmacked access road of about 1.5 kilometers. As you approach the village, shops of various sizes appear on either side of the road. Some simply bear the name of their owner, while others highlight the words “Heritage” or “Tradition” in their names. These shops sell a variety of handcrafted items, including woven textiles, bandhini, Ajrakh, leather footwear and copper bells. As you move further into the village, the shops give way to larger showrooms attached to weavers homes, where tourists are invited in to visit and shop at their leisure. Toward the opposite end of the village lies Ashapura Craft Park, a privately held amusement park and craft market that is not owned by residents of the village. Both the craft park and the small shops on the approach road have sprung up in the past ten years, as Bhujodi and its weaving community have gained recognition and prominence on tourist craft trails in Kachchh.

The current prosperity of the weavers represents a significant shift in fortunes over the past 50 years. Bhujodi was originally settled by Rabaris, a higher caste community who were sheep, goat and camel herders. In Kachchh, weavers have traditionally lived in close proximity to herders, who effectively employed them by both providing them with yarn and later purchasing their finished products. By the 1970s, with the establishment of the National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad in 1961, designers and design students began to visit Kachchh to research craft practices. Krishna (Ben) Amin-Patel, a scholar of traditional weaving practices, first visited Bhujodi in the 1970s as a student. Her recollections paint a starkly different picture to what we see today. At the time, the upper caste Rabaris held social, political and economic clout in the village, while the weavers were extremely poor, and often discriminated against because of their caste. Both communities were deeply sceptical of outsiders visiting their homes. Today, with the economic resurgence of weaving as a livelihood, the balance of power has shifted entirely. Many Rabari families have moved away, and those that remain are typically employed by the weavers. The weavers far outnumber any other community in the village, and have driven the representation of Bhujodi as a quintessential weaving village.

I mention Krishna Ben and her recollections in particular because when she was a student she worked closely with an artisan who is now a respected elder in the community and whose sons run the largest weaving enterprise in Kachchh. In mentioning this association, I do not mean to suggest that their specific interaction led to their respective success, but rather to point to the length of established connections between artisans and designers that have unfolded in Kachchh. Furthermore the relationship between artisan and designer has been renegotiated over the years. It is also a relationship, that from the first, was established on an unequal footing. Designers, if not originally from urban centers in India, are trained in urban locations. Furthermore, design

students tend to have completed a formal school education in English, and English tends to be the language of instruction within design schools. Artisans on the other hand, have a rural upbringing. While there is diversity in whether or not an artisan completes their primary and secondary school education, this education is rarely conducted in English. Thus, traditional artisans who are not versed in English are unable to attend design school on the basis of language alone. There have been artisans from Bhujodi that wanted to apply to design school and were rejected upon this basis.

Karigarv meanwhile, founded in the early 2000s after the earthquake was envisioned as a decentralized organization that could address the concerns of different craft clusters. Karigarv's founders decided not to create a craft association of any kind under the banner of the organization. This was because they wanted to ensure that any initiatives they implemented would be available with the widest reach possible and not having membership to the association would not preclude any artisan from participating in their initiatives. Thus the Sakala and desi wool revitalization projects that Karigarv has been responsible for initiating, have been implemented in this vein. Karigarv was responsible for identifying Sakala and desi wool yarn and cloth as products that could be marketed as being entirely Kachchhi. They did not work alone on this endeavor; it was a project borne out of a collaboration between NGOs working on craft and farming livelihoods. Designers were involved.

The Sakala revitalization project has been very successful in generating income and employment within the weaving community. Furthermore, it is a product and a project that have been popularized through artisan-designer collaborations. However, because plain handspun yarn or handloom cloth made from Sakala yarn can be marketed as a Kachchhi product, Sakala has become the Kachchhi hand-crafted product that does not announce its location explicitly. While

extra-weft weaving looks decorative and comprises of certain motifs that make it immediately identifiable as a Kachchhi craft, Sakala functions differently. This is not to say that Sakala cannot or is not used in extra-weft weaving. Rather, the production of Sakala cloth does not require the use of extra-weft weaving. The popularity of Sakala while profitable for the weavers, has thus caused concern that Sakala could negatively impact Kachchhi extra-weft weaving. Opinion amongst weavers is divided on this point, but the anxiety of this outcome is widely felt within Bhujodi.

Though Karigarv was my primary institutional base, I was constantly in the company of people who worked in the various NGOs around Bhuj. This access to development workers at other NGOs, working directly or indirectly on craft related issues in the region, became important interlocutors for my research. Within this district as elsewhere in rural India, it is seldom possible to untangle artisan work from other means of rural livelihood. It was therefore useful and important to engage with several organizations that focused their attention on both craft practices and livelihoods concerns. Such entanglements between the weaving community, development, and design institutions, is what my research interrogates.

A year into my fieldwork, it became clear that my field site was much larger than I had originally thought. Bhujodi, just like Ajrakhpur was not a self-contained village. Weavers here employed weavers from other villages as job workers (a person who is employed by another artisan for whom they produce work for which they receive a piece rate). My work on the Sakala exhibition allowed me to gain access to weavers and farmers in Eastern Kachchh whose situation was much different than their counterparts in the West. Eastern Kachchhi weavers even today remain quite removed from NGO mediate place-based development initiatives. Likewise, farmers in Eastern Kachchh struggle with access to water and have therefore been forced by their

location to practice sukhi kheti (literally, dry farming). As a result, farmers in this part of Kachchh do not grow long strand BT cotton like the farmers in the West do. Instead, they have maintained the cultivation of the indigenous short strand variety called Sakala. Contextualizing the impact of the Sakala project on Kachchhi weaving and farming families has thus made me cognizant of the scale of such a project and has allowed me to pose questions about artisan labor and creativity beside those of employment and livelihood in rural Kachchh.

Employing "thick description" (Geertz 1973) has been crucial to understanding the nuances of craft and craftsmanship in Kachchh today because capturing as much detail as possible of everyday experience been essential for inductive analysis. My field notes contain data associated with the everyday practices of artisans, NGO workers and for-profit workers, as well my own critical commentary on these practices. My analysis of photographs, maps historical documents and promotional materials alongside my ethnographic observations have allowed me to note points of congruence and tension amongst my interlocutors as they relate to: the use of origin trademarks and branding to address issues surrounding rural employment; their understanding of development and the role of rural economic revitalization in this process; the importance of place based identity in grounding rural experiences of artisans in Kachchh.

I have changed the names of all NGOs in Kachchh as well as given artisans pseudonyms. I have done this because as Kachchhi weavers negotiate the changes that come with increased economic prosperity and social power, many insecurities and misjudgments are in the process of being worked out between artisans and development NGOs. Dealing as I am with the fragility of aspirations and anxieties that living people are currently navigating, I prefer that they be able to do so anonymously.

**Overview of Chapters**

In Chapter 2 “Twisting Yarn, Weaving Cloth: How Skill and Technology Authenticate Cloth and Craftsmanship in Contemporary Kachchh” looks at how authenticity in craft is constructed through artisan skill and weaving technologies and conveyed through the aesthetics of cloth. The concept of authenticity is used pervasively to define handmade cloth production and artisan labor in global, ethical artisanal markets. Upon closer inspection however, this term conceals much about the entanglement between handcrafted and industrial modes of production.

In Chapter 3 “Designing Collaborations, Claiming Kachchh: The Role of Design and Intellectual Property in Enterprising Livelihood Solutions for Traditional Artisans” looks at the ways in which artisans use intellectual property certifications and design interventions to expand global markets for their craft production. I argue that while intellectual property certifications promise legal safeguarding of artisan products in global markets, artisans increasing turn to design and innovation to expand their markets instead. I argue that design and innovation allow artisans greater creativity and flexibility in marketing the authenticity of their labor and their craft production.

In Chapter 4 “Artisan/Designer: Anxieties and Aspirations in Contemporary Kachchhi Weaving” I look at the ways in which design training and entrepreneurship programs impact artisans’ personal negotiations of what it means to be a crafts person. I look at how the choices that artisans make in their work, nostalgic recollections of the past and contemporary narratives about the meaning of their work and lives become the ways in which artisans express their aspirations and anxieties of being a craftsperson in contemporary Kachchh

In Chapter 5 “Conclusion” I suggest that traditional craft production is very much embroiled in capitalism and dependent on industrial production practices for its survival. I also argue that design and entrepreneurship while providing opportunities for market expansion also create anxieties and unease about what it means to be an artisan in India today.

## CHAPTER 2

## Twisting Yarn, Weaving Cloth: How skill and technology authenticate cloth and craftsmanship in contemporary Kachchh

In my first few months of fieldwork, I visited a weaver who toyed with some thread as we talked. During a lull in our conversation, he snapped the thread apart, and took the frayed ends between his fingers, rolling and twisting them together. When he opened his fingers, the thread had been joined once again. Seeing my astonishment, he asked me to tug on it. It was firm. He snapped it again and gave me the frayed ends to join. He laughed as I rolled them between my fingers to no avail. I tried to ask him to show me what he was doing but having neither the words nor the practiced dexterity to understand the twisting action he had made with his fingers, I remained unsuccessful. Mending thread is perhaps one of the most unremarkable and routine actions a weaver performs, and yet the action is imbued with sensorial and embodied knowledge of the twist.

Twisting is foundational to spinning yarn and, by extension, weaving cloth. Twisting locks fibers of a raw material in place, making yarn[2]. A spinner's skill lies in their ability to twist strands of fiber enough to form and maintain a thread. David Pye, a professor of furniture design, used the example of slicing a perfect half inch slice of bread to explain skill in terms of constraint: "To achieve this result the knife must not only be moved with force enough to divide that bread but must also be constrained by the interplay of our muscles to move in a plane, and a plane which is exactly parallel with the cut surface of the bread. The achieving of that constraint is skill. Achieving the requisite force is not skill" (Pye 1978: 50). The sensorial and embodied

[2] This explanation of yarn comes from a discussion on what yarn consists of discussed during the split-ply braiding workshop at Karigarv on June 19th 2017.

knowledge of twisting that the weaver had—his skill, his constraint—was precisely what I was unable to articulate in both speech and the movement of my own fingers. I would learn however, that it was this skill, knowledge, and constraint, which inflected even the most mundane tasks performed in Kachchhi handloom weaving—like the task of mending thread.

The twist lies at the heart of both small-scale, hand-crafted spinning and large-scale mechanized yarn production. Hand spun yarn, often appearing uneven and lumpy, reflects the idiosyncrasies of the fiber. The resultant cloth made from such yarn thus binds together these idiosyncrasies, creating fabric that is textured in its own unique way. Approximating a number of twists needed to make a particular thickness of thread, handspun yarn often showcases the spinner's skill in working with the irregularities of the raw material. In large scale mechanized yarn production, however, thread does not approximate a thickness. A precise number of twists of raw fiber is able to produce thread of a specific thickness that is designated by a number. The higher the number, the greater the number of twists in a strand of thread. The more the twists, the finer the thread and the softer the cloth made using it.

Paying close attention to the twist, this chapter looks at the techniques and technologies of handloom weaving used in Kachchh today. Gleaned within the aesthetics and form of handloomed cloth, this chapter traces interactions between artisans' skill and the technologies of cloth production they engage, to seek insights into conceptualizations of craftsmanship in Kachchh today. This chapter thus considers what the aesthetics (look and feel) and materiality of handloom cloth can tell us about the specific legacy of technological shifts in cloth production, as well as formulations of craftsmanship through weavers' skills, in contemporary Kachchh. Using Donna Haraway (Haraway 1991) and Jane Bennett's (Bennett 2010) scholarship on

materiality and technology, this chapter examines the legacies of skill and technology that get located in handcrafted textile.

Within literature on craft (Adamson 2007; 2010b; Coomaraswamy 1909; Dormer 1997; Pye 1968; 1978; Risatti 2007; Sennett 2008), it is agreed that at its most basic, craft and craftsmanship signify a process of making and a recognition of skill within that process. Often presented as a process of making that stands in opposition to capitalist production, craft and craftsmanship are understood to favour an inalienation of labour and use pre-industrial technologies and techniques of production. Craft and craftsmanship are, thus, often presented as rooted in an authentic unindustrialized past, one that is imagined to be static and steeped in tradition (Adamson 2010b; Dormer 1997; Dudley 2014b; Paxson 2013b). Moreover, craft, as a practice and object is understood as something authentic, while a craftsperson is seen to possess authentic knowledge in the making of things.[3]

Craft, as a category came to be defined in the late eighteenth and ninteenth centuries in opposition to (fine) art and design, in response to concerns over technological change that the Industrial Revolution ushered in (Adamson 2010b; Dormer 1997). In an attempt to locate manifestations of human creativity versus the mechanical output of machines in a time of great change, a number of thinkers, scholars and practisioners, worried about the implications of such technological shifts for human kind.[4] Debates surrounding technology and the visual arts at the time, placed craft on the lowest rung of the ladder of technological progression (Adamson 2007;

[3] There is scholarship on craft that specifically looks at its entanglements with and within capitalist modes of production, which I will discuss in across the other chapters. Currently though, I am interested in exploring what the process of making, specifically looks like in craft to further explore the relationship between skill and technology in craft.

[4] I will look at the distinctions between craft, art and design in depth in Chapter 3: Designing Collaborations, Claiming Kachchh and explain why I find this categorization to undermine what craft comes to stand for in terms of creativity, skill and value.

Dormer 1997; Greenhalgh 1997). Thus craft was squarly associated with pre-industrial technologies and some kind of original or authentic knowledge in the making of things that was associated with ancient and primitive concepts of creativity. In Chapter 3, I will explore the ways in which this fairly recent seperation of craft, art and design impacted ideas about creativity. For now however, I consider how the pre-occupation with technology and machines both shaped and complicated the category of craft as well as the notion of skill in craft, by looking specifically at the case of Kachchhi handloom weavers.

Following in the vein of scholarship that looks specifically at how human relationships with material culture shape and shift the constitution of our social relations and our social realities (Benjamin 1999; Bennett 2010; Buck-Morss 1991; Haraway 1991; Marx and Engels 1988; Marx et al. 2001) I look closely at the relationship between artisan and their material that goes into the process of producing craft, because it is precisely this relationship and process that is often mythologized and romanticized, in literature about craft and craftsmen. Simultaneously, because craft as a category is seen as being the most basic both in terms of creativity and technology, artisans' labor and skill often get short shrift. Looking to account for the complications of skill and technology that occur within craft contemporarily, that have been put in motion by historical action, I center the materiality and aesthetics of handcrafted cloth. Using Jane Bennett's and Donna Haraway's scholarship allows me to attend to the contemporary material forms of cloth as constitutive of both assemblages and affect. This allows me to trace a much more textured experience of what it means to be a handloom weaver and produce handloom cloth in contemporary Kachchh.

In her ethnography about acoustic guitar-makers in the United States of America, Kathryn Dudley (2014), looks closely at the aesthetics of handcrafted guitars and interrogates the

process of making hand-crafted guitars to contextualize the socio-economic and political realities luthiers in contemporary America experience. Approaching wood as something animate and sonorific, luthiers work with the shape and grain of the wood they use to create handcrafted guitars that elude replication. Referring to this mutually configured relationship between luthiers and the wood they craft as animism, Dudley explains that it is not solely the hand of the craftsman but the labor of that luthier working in tandum with the qualities of a specific piece of wood that produce an irreplaceable guitar (Dudley 2014b).

This sentiment about the relationship between craftspeople and their raw material has been discussed by other scholars of craft in different ways. Heather Paxson's (2013) work on the life of small-batch, artisanal cheese and cheese-makers in Vermont for instance, pays close attention to the ways in which cheese makers interact and collaborate with their natural and pastoral environments, working alongside animals, microbacteria and other human collaborators to produce cheeses that contain in its taste, the particularities of the place (farm) in which it is made. The concept of terroir thus, brings together the labor of humans alongside that of animals and microbacteria in their shared environment to encapsulate a taste of place (Paxson 2013b).

In Kachchhi weaving too, a spinner's ability to work with a natural fiber's idiosyncrasies to make thread using a non-standardized twist, or a weaver's ability to mend broken thread, refer precisely to the animism that Dudley speaks of – an artisan's labor works in tandem with the qualities of the material they use to produce a unique handcrafted cloth product. As Dudley and Paxson's examples show, David Pye's rather concise explanation of skill contains within it a craftsperson's know-how in working with specific raw materials. Their ability to intuitively manipulate that material to mold a desired effect is reflected in the time they have spent honing certain kinds of sensorial and embodied knowledge. The term skill thus contains within it a large

and varied form of knowledge that can only be experienced through the act of making craft and constitutes the authentic knowledge traditional craftspeople have in making things.

In Kachchhi weaving unlike contemporary handcrafted guitar making, however, the relationship between craftsperson and their raw material have been complicated by technological advances in industrial yarn production as well as loom structure. It is impossible to clearly separate the use of pre-industrial technologies and techniques from industrial textile production technologies. Handloom cloth can be made from both handspun and industrially produced yarn after all. In handcrafted cloth production then, unlike in handcrafted guitar making, the limits of what constitute 'the authentic' have to constantly be readjusted in today's industrialized world, as technological advancements in mass production lead not only to the loss of certain kinds of skill but also make the use of certain kinds of pre-industrial technology prohibitively expensive. The aesthetics of hand crafted cloth thus tend to locate these complicated associations which simultaneously evoke ideas about an authentic, traditional product and practice presumed to be static, with a dynamic, ever negotiable idea of innovative, contemporary products in national and international craft markets.

Aesthetics of cloth are used to legitimate handmade cloth in global artisanal markets. Whether with intellectual property certifications and labels, collaborations between artisans and designers or through the physical and virtual introduction of artisan producers and consumers, marketing and sales of handmade cloth rely on authenticating handcrafted connections between artisan producers and artisanal products. Kachchhi handloom weaving thus provides a rich case study to consider how notions and understandings of authenticity, be they legally binding or not, preoccupy hand crafted production.

During my time in Kachchh, I saw the many ways in which ideas about authenticity were constantly negotiated in determining what handmade, artisanal cloth consisted of and who was worthy of bearing the artisan or master craftsman designation. Legitimating craft and craftsmanship in craft markets were reliant upon an interplay between skill, technology and notions of authenticity. In this chapter then, I look at how Kachchhi weavers and their collaborators determine and negotiate what authenticity means and looks like in handcrafted Kachchhi weaving through the textiles they make. In this chapter then, I consider how the aesthetics and materiality of handloomed cloth in contemporary Kachchh become important sites which anchor the relational labor between artisan and their material (hand-spun or mill-spun yarn) through the process of making (Bennett 2010).

I begin with a detailed account of twisting within practices of bodyloom weaving, cord making and split-ply braiding in order to establish how a craftsperson's authentic knowledge in making things is often ratified through people and institutions invested in preserving and sustaining the practice of craft in India today. The craft practices I descibe here magnify how fundamental twisting is to making cloth. By spotlighting these practices I also show that conditions of making are built on circumstances which explicitly value sensorial and embodied knowledge upon which an artisan's skill is determined. Then, using the living memory of my weaver interlocutors as a barometer of change, I consider how technological shifts in Kachchhi handloom weaving have impacted and shaped contemporary manifestations of handloom cloth over the past 70 odd years. In so doing, I trace how contemporary ideas of authentic craftsmanship are made and remade through artisans' labor and the materials their hands craft.

**Twisting and the Process of Making.**

Wearing a turban and sporting a large bushy mustache, Rabari Rana Maumoo, a man from Ukheda village in Nakhatrana *taluka* (subdistrict), made the 80-kilometer journey to Karigarv to have evidence of his craftsmanship visually documented. The NGO was helping Rana Kaka apply for national recognition of his craftsmanship and receive state sanctioned Master Craftsman status. Rana Kaka is a Rabari (caste) camel herder. The Rabaris are a traditional Kachchhi *maldhari* (herder) community. Like many other traditional *maldhari* communities that herd camel, goat, or sheep in Kachchh, the Rabaris used to spin yarn and used a technique called split-ply braiding to make camel girths (*tangs*), saddle bags and rugs[5]. While both spinning and split-ply braiding are skills that are fast disappearing, many older community members still possess this knowledge and expertise. Rana Kaka still spins yarn from camel hair and split-ply braids *tangs*. On the NGO campus that day however, he was giving a weaving demonstration to make a bag known as a *tabariya*, using his body as a loom.

A handwoven *tabariya* made by Rana Maumoo Rabari (Photo by the author)

[5] Source: Karigarv exhibition on split-ply braiding, *"Tang ke Sang"*

Having measured out 3 lengths of the goat hair yarn he required to fashion the frame of his loom, Rana Kaka enlisted the help of a leather artisan who had come to Karigarv to conduct business. They stretched the 3 lengths of yarn between them and twisted them to form a length of rope with tacit understanding. The men first twisted the rope in a ‘Z’ twist. Once the cord of rope had been adequately twisted, they then folded the length of rope and began twisting it again in the opposite direction, creating an ‘S’ twist. The ‘Z’ and ‘S’ twists, refer to the direction of the twist.

Rana Rabari prepares the ‘Z’ twist (Photo by the author)

The artisans work together to prepare the ‘S’ twist (Photo by the author)

Upon determining that the cord had been sufficiently twisted, they knotted each end. Then, Rana Kaka used his hand span as a measure to create two large loops at either end of the rope. Using the split ply braiding technique—a braiding technique using twisted cords of rope in which one cord is intertwined with another by passing it through a gap created by splitting the twist in that cord—he held the loops in place. Rana Kaka then used white cotton cord to fashion the warp, braiding it through the length of goat hair yarn that remained un-looped. Anchoring the four corners of his loom frame with his big toes and his knees, Rana Kaka adjusted his seat, ensuring there was enough tension across the warp, before passing a dark blue nylon cord—his weft—through his warp.

The twisted cord is used to create a frame using the split-ply technique (Photo by the author)

White cotton cord is used to set up the warp (Photo by the author)

Adjusting the warp (Photo by the author)

Rana Maumoo Rabari weaves the *tabariya* (Photo by the author)

Students participate in a split-ply workshop at Karigarv (Photo by the author)

It took him a day and a half to finish his *tabariya*. What started as a weaving demonstration morphed into some version of a hands-on teaching session for the benefit of the assorted group of design students visiting or interning at Karigarv. Rana Kaka's demonstration coincided with a split-ply braiding workshop that Karigarv was hosting. Taught by E.P., a retired professor and textile designer who has been engaged in the practice of split-ply braiding for over

30 years, this workshop, open to the public, was meant to provide novices and students the chance to learn about the technicalities of a craft practice.

A tall man in his 70s who always wears his shoulder-length white hair in a ponytail at the nape of his neck, E.P. has had a distinguished career as a professor of textile design at one of India's oldest and most prestigious design schools in Ahmedabad, where he himself was trained. He enrolled in that institution in 1970 and was part of its foundational batch of undergraduate students. E.P. had learned to split-ply braid from a traditional, Rajasthani artisan when he was himself a student. His continual engagement with the craft, has made him a master of this craft form.

Before teaching us to split-ply braid red and white cords that hung off popsicle sticks, E.P. taught us to make cords using a Bradshaw cordmaker. Following E.P.'s instructions we set up a makeshift cord-making workplace using upturned benches fitted with a block of wood on one end that had four hooks attached to it. Using rocks to make sure the benches were level, the Bradshaw cordmaker was mounted onto a drill. The Bradshaw cordmaker is effectively a drill attachment. Strands of yarn were measured to an appropriate length, one end of which was knotted to the hooks fastened to one end of the benches. The other end was knotted securely to the hooks on the Bradshaw cordmaker. Sitting on a wheelie chair, E.P. flipped the drill on to begin twisting the yarn. As the yarn twisted, it shrank. E.P. explained that the twist is not standardized in cord making. This means that the person making the cord approximates the twist and determines shrinkage in cord making. To make 2-ply cord, this process is carried out on two strands of thread simultaneously. Once the approximate level of shrinkage has been determined, the twisting action of the Bradshaw cordmaker is reversed which causes the two cords to intertwine, twisting together. Initially, there is a lengthening of the resultant 2-ply cord of rope.

However, as the machine works to over twist the cord, it shrinks once again. The ends of the finished cord are taped off and the cord is ready for use.

Setting up and using the Bradshaw cord maker (Photos by the author)

2, 4, 6 and 8 ply cords made using the Bradshaw cord maker (Photo by author)

Over the course of the split-ply braiding workshop, I made 2,4,6 and 8 ply cords of rope using a Bradshaw Cordmaker, mixing colors to easily identify where and how the rope twisted. I also learned how to create different patterns as my stiff, inexperienced fingers awkwardly split the ply in different sequences. It took using the Bradshaw cordmaker, while E.P. talked to us about 'shrinkage' and 'approximation' for me to understand that these technical terms, shrouded embodied and sensorial knowledge of non-standardized twisting. And it took watching and participating in body loom weaving and split-ply braiding off popsicle sticks for me to begin to grasp how foundational the act of twisting is to weaving.

Furthermore, the workshop and weaving demonstration introduced its participants to a variety of materials from which thread or rope were made such as camel hair yarn, cotton yarn and nylon rope. On a day where we were introduced to the significance of twisting and craft practices fundamental to understanding weaving, no one took the time to ensure that we used only handspun yarn. This is because maintaining the 'purity' of yarn was inconsequential to understanding the relationship between twisting and weaving. We used whatever yarn we had on hand. The types of yarn used on that day also pointed to the ways in which industrial technologies of textile manufacture have come to be ubiquitous components of craft practice where handcrafted weaving is concerned. In Kachchh today, there are a variety of yarns used to

weave cloth. Most of the yarns available are mill produced, though there are weavers who weave in handspun yarn as well. A weaver's choice in yarn, however, is often dependent not just on what yarn they are familiar and comfortable working with, but also speaks to the kinds of handloom markets they weave for. This decision is itself dependent on where a weaver can locate, sustain, and secure revenue for their craft practice. And finally, their choice also depends on which institutional and entrepreneurial networks have and continue to support their market access and business connections.

To understand how all these yarns come to occupy contemporary hand-crafted cloth production in Kachchh, and more significantly lay claim to meanings and formulations of authenticity within this craft practice, it becomes necessary to trace some large technological changes that have shaped Kachchhi handloom weaving over the last 70 years. Not only has Kachchhi weaving been touched by global and historical advancements in textile manufacture; it has also been impacted by social and political changes that occurred with the emergence of the Indian nation state in (Beckert 2014; Menon and Uzramma 2017). In the following section then, I show that ideas about craftsmanship in weaving are constantly (re)made and maintained by juxtaposing newly handcrafted textiles with their older, formulation. Further, authenticity weaving plays out in a few different ways, which may seem non-aligned or contradictory. However, if we take Bennett's suggestion that "there is not so much a doer (or agent) behind the deed," - in this case the shifting aesthetics of Kachchhi handloom cloth over the last 70 years - "as a doing and an effecting by human-nonhuman assemblages" (Bennett 2010: 28), then it is possible to see how these non-aligned ideas of authenticity can be held together at the same time.

**Technological Change and Cyborg in Kachchhi Weaving.**

Traditional craft production has been commodified, politicized, and inextricably linked to development ideologies in various ways throughout Indian history. Artisan labor and artisanal practice were the central mobilizing force for anticolonial struggle and Gandhian ideologies of traditionalism and swadeshi (self-sufficiency) that critiqued industrialization (Bean 1989; Chakrabarty 1989; Gandhi and British Library 1921; Sarkar 1983). Within an independent, industrialized Indian state, the legacy of the artisan further supported a nationalistic agenda through state-sponsored development initiatives that sought domestic markets for artisan production. Kachchhi handloom cloth's changing material and aesthetics over the last 70 years thus contain within them snapshots or formalizations (to use Haraway's term) of partial technological and scientific discourses about Indian development. Due to the centrality of the artisan, and especially the weaver, to critiques of industrialization and ideas of self-sufficiency – the swadeshi movement was a direct response to the industrialization of textiles in Britain that took away work from Indian weavers – the materials and technologies that were considered permissible in hand crafted cloth production has always been a preoccupation within the Indian craft sector. Thus, despite the presence of diverse yarns seen in contemporary handloom weaving, the tipping point or boundary of how-much-mechanization-is-too-much in handloom weaving is one that is a constant preoccupation[6].

In her chapter A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Techonology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century (1991) Haraway writes "A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction….The cyborg is

[6] My conversations with people long involved in the Indian craft center made it clear that in the early years of establishing the nation-state, those in decision making positions basically overlooked the significance and rapid technological changes in hand spinning, choosing instead to focus on the figure of the weaver and the cloth they wove.

a matter of fiction and lived experience" (Haraway 1991: 149). Haraway uses her cyborg to make sense of human lived experience in late capitalism by thinking through social relationships of science and technology through both fact and fiction or tool and myth. In analyzing how Kachchhi handloom weavers and their collaborators make sense of their craft and craftsmanship, I find Haraway's approach useful in thinking through these contemporary constructions. By recounting technological shifts in Kachchhi handloom weaving over the last 70 years with her cyborg in mind, it becomes possible to attend closely to the story and understanding of craft that its practitioners rely on to make meaning of their lives and livelihood. Furthermore, it allows me to tackle the entanglements and misalignments of authenticity and why that concept remains such a potent one for craftspeople.

Throughout Kachchh, weaving is practiced by intergenerational artisans of the Meghwal (caste) community. Over the course of fieldwork, I met weavers who always located true craftsmanship within living memory to a generation that had just passed. Going back to recollections from 50 to 70 years ago, people I met would often tell me of a time when weavers were able to weave garments on a loom and make a thick canvas like fabric called *madarpath* that was woven so tightly, it could hold water. All this was done using hand spun yarn, be it wool or cotton which had a non-standardized twist. This was 'true craftsmanship' that the generation of weavers I met located in the  generation that had past - their ability to work with the non-standardized twist of hand spinning[7]. It was this technologically prevalent practice that had changed when machine made yarns flooded the market and mass-produced clothes became readily available.

[7] It is impossible to verify whether such a fabric did exist. However, I heard about it from weavers who lived across the district.

Until the 1950s and 60s Kachchhi weavers worked primarily with handspun wool or cotton yarn sourced locally from indigenous varieties of sheep, goat, camel, and short-strand cotton. Older members of the weaving, farming, and pastoral communities I met recalled a time when village economies were built upon strong social relationships in Kachchh. Weavers depended upon pastoralists and farmers to provide wool or cotton from their herds or farms. They would weave garments like *dhabdas* (shawls) and *pagdis* (turbans) or make rope that could be used in herding or farming. Weavers would receive grain or oil in exchange for their weaving and would also regularly work as farm laborers. Yarn was spun by members of the farming, weaving and pastoral communities on spinning wheels (*charkhas*) or drop spindles. And cloth was woven on pit looms that accommodated a width of 22 inches – which was approximately a comfortable width for weavers to pass weft threads through the warp using a shuttle. Fabrics of larger widths would be produced by joining two lengths of 22in wide cloth which women would sew together using what was often referred to as a *macchi kaat* (fish bone) stitch.

Left: A man spins wool by hand using a traditional drop spindle (Photo by the author)
Right: A traditional *charkha*, or spinning wheel (Photo by the author)

Detail of the *macchi kaat* (fish bone) stitch joining two pieces of cloth (Photo by the author)

A weaver displays a traditional *dhabda* (Photo by the author)

The *dhabda*, a traditional garment worn by men of the Meghwal community, became a best selling product in craft markets around urban India in the 1980s due to its colorful, decorative motifs that were striking against its plain background. By the 1980s this garment came to be known as the Kachchhi shawl. These motifs, which look like they have been embroidered on plain cloth were woven into the shawl using the extra-weft technique. In extra-weft weaving these seemingly embroidered motifs are part of the weave, achieved by inserting an extra set of threads into the weft, between two regular weft threads to create a decorative pattern. The success of the hand-woven Kachchhi shawl woven almost almost exclusively in acrylic yarn, led to its replication in Ludhiana's textile mills. By the 1990s, milled versions of the Kachchhi shawl outcompeted handwoven Kachchhi shawls, having a tremendously affect on the Kachchhi weaving community.

Before the 1950s the weavers in Kachchh would weave wool or cotton yarn that was sourced from local herders and farmers. The weaving community, identified by its caste worked in service of higher caste pasoralist and farmers such as the Rabaris and the Ahirs. Social linkages that had existed between the farming, pastoral and weaving communities at the time essentially maintained labor relationships within and between villages. When village economies started to unravel, it was this labor relationship that changed irrevocably. Though the unravelling of village economies took place across a variety of fronts, changes in cloth production were a significant determining factor. Around the 1950s, the introduction of mill spun yarn and advancements in loom technology impacted the nature of weaving completely. Weavers moved away from using a traditional hand shuttle loom that could only weave cloth 22 inches wide to frame looms with throw shuttles that could accommodate wider widths. The other significant

change that occurred in the following decades was the crucial introduction of human-made yarns such as acrylic followed by accessibility to many finer (high-count) cotton and wool yarns.

As this synopsis of technological change in handloom weaving suggests, recollections of *madarpath* and garments being woven on looms felt like mythical tales older generations of weavers would single out to point to a level of skill and finesse that could no longer be replicated. Simultaneously, advancements in loom structure and the prevalence of acrylic yarn available in a wide range of bright colors due to the use of chemical dyes, suggest those formalizations in scientific discourse that Haraway points to. The historical narrative of technological change in Kachchhi handloom requires both elements of myth and formalized scientific discourse, to come alive and hold meaning for the weavers who told me these stories and for me as their captive audience. As technologies shifted and changed, artisan knowledge about weaving changed as well. With every technological shift, not only was some knowledge in cloth making lost, but there was also new knowledge gained.

Take for instance the case of working with hand-spun yarn. Because hand-spun yarn was made from non-standardized raw material with a non-standardized twist, weavers working with this yarn would regularly have to strengthen warp threads before they were stretched on a loom. Hand-spun cotton yarn used for the warp on a loom had to be starched using a paste of whole wheat flour and water called a *kanji* to strengthen the thread and prevent it from breaking on the loom. Additionally, weavers would have to temper the force with which they used the beater of their loom to ensure that weft threads passed through the warp were tightly compacted. Weaving handspun cloth thus required knowledge of pre-loom processing treatments as well as skill at using a loom's beater. Standardization in large-scale yarn manufacture resulted not only in a loss of skill but also the eclipsing the sensorial and embodied knowledge that went into making cloth.

Weavers were able to boost production however, because they were able to spend less time prepping their looms.

As part and parcel of state sponsored initiatives, in April 1957, the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) was founded in Bombay. An apex organization under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, with regard to khadi and village industries within India, KVIC sought 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 (Khadi and Village Industries Commission n.d.). In a move to secure markets for handloom weaving, the legacy of the swadeshi movement led to the proliferation of khadi organizations and independent Kachchhi traders who invested in the creation of markets for handwoven textiles in major Indian cities such as Bombay and Delhi. During the 1960s and 1970s, khadi organizations were very active in Kachchh. These organizations not only employed women to spin cotton and wool yarn, they also provided weavers with handspun yarns to make handloom products that they could sell to Indian urban consumers. State sanctioned recognition of Master Craftsmen was another such initiative. While these interventions were crucial to safeguarding and transforming traditional weaving practices, they were not able to reinforce those social linkages upon which village economies had first thrived.

The shift to human-made acrylic yarn occurred in Kachchh between the late 1970s and early 1980s. At the time, Garvi Gurjari, an initiative of the Gujarat State Handloom and Handicraft Development Corporation actively provided employment to weavers in Kachchh. Prior to this intervention, khadi organizations had been marketing the production of the Kachchhi shawl in handspun *desi* wool to maintain those connections upon which village economies had

once been built. Khadi organizations across the country also promoted hand spinning by introducing different kinds of charkhas for both cotton yarn production and education. The *peti retiya* (box charkha) for example, was a simplified version of the traditional charkha which could be used at home and at school. Despite their initiatives to safeguard hand spinning however, khadi organizations could not remain unaffected by the ever-increasing mechanized production of yarn.[8]

Weavers were encouraged to weave the Kachchhi shawl in acrylic yarn (Fig. 18), using bright, loud colors for Garvi Gurjari. Acrylic yarn had a tremendous impact on Kachchhi weaving by making extra-weft weaving easier and more efficient. Weavers were able to boost their production by switching to this yarn. Not only did its use firmly establish a market for the Kachchhi shawl, but acrylic yarn also came to associate this product with Kachchhi weavers, by cornering the domestic craft market and providing employment to handloom weavers at a time when the social and economic structures of traditional weaving in Kachchh were rapidly changing. In the 1970s some weavers also began winning National Awards for their work and by the 1980s, some were participating in government organized trade fairs. The recognition of Kachchhi weavers and Kachchhi weaving as artisan producers and artisanal products nationwide were thus due in large part to acrylic yarn.

The shift to acrylic yarn led to an irreversible loss of skill that was passed down through iterative, generational memory. The separation of spinning and weaving, which had long been housed within artisan families profoundly impacted the ground realities of weaving practice: the raw material, the skill, and the socio-economic conditions that went into making a cloth like

[8] The amber charkha, a multi spindle spinning wheel that can be operated via a hand crank and also via electricity, was an initiative supported by khadi organizations across the country as a means of increasing the capacity for hand spinning. However its use in producing hand-spun yarn remains controversial.

*madarpath* could not be replicated anymore. Using acrylic yarn did not require the weaver to pay close attention to the yarn's twist. The only time a weaver needed to think about the yarn was when a thread snaped and needed mending. All this attention away from a yarn increased efficiency in weaving and boosted production for weavers. While the sensorial act of mending thread was retained, not every weaver could work with hand-spun yarn that may be lumpy if spun by an inexperienced hand, made of low-quality raw material, or a combination of both.

Within these new domestic craft markets, however, handloom weavers were also increasingly having to compete with mill-made textiles that were able to churn out cloth at much higher rates and much cheaper prices. The success of the Kachchhi shawl in national craft markets, led to its replication in Ludhiana's textile mills. By the mid-1990s Kachchhi weavers were facing a crisis because they were unable to compete with the mills. Mill made shawls were produced at a higher rate and sold at lower prices. Many weavers in Kachchh moved away from weaving during this time. The 2001 earthquake in Kachchh further stressed Kachchhi weaving communities who had increasingly been leaving weaving to seek financial security in factory work or unskilled labor markets in larger cities.

In the aftermath of the earthquake of 2001, which devastated lives and livelihoods in Kachchh district, a number of developmental organizations focused on revitalizing herding, farming and artisan livelihoods were established in and around Bhuj. Enacting a variety of initiatives in various configurations, their activities provided yet another turning point for Kachchhi weaving. Looking to establish a presence for Kachchhi weavers outside domestic craft markets, in international, niche, hand-crafted textile markets, weavers were encouraged to use those yarns that would appeal to international consumers. Favoring natural fibers over man-made ones, international consumers of hand-crafted textiles desired soft, textiles in an extensive, muted

color pallet. To meet these standards, development workers encouraged weavers to weave in high-count cotton and Merino wool yarns, which were more expensive than acrylic yarn. Karigarv itself functioned as an intermediary platform between Kachchhi weavers and urban national and international consumers. The NGO ostensibly played the role of middleman, connecting buyers with weavers, facilitating communication between artisans and designers, and selling artisanal products at craft exhibitions across the country as well as at their retail store in Kachchh.

Separately and simultaneously, other development initiatives sought to set up design and entrepreneurial training programs for artisans, to teach them how to access and cater to the desires of international consumers. K.R.V. was a foundational initiative in this respect. Unlike the Karigarv initiative, this program did not claim the role of middleman, though it also fostered artisan access to international markets by facilitating collaborations between artisans and designers.

Karigarv partnered with NGOs working on Kachchhi farming livelihoods in the late 2000s to (re)introduce a yarn and cloth made from a local Kachchhi cotton variety called Sakala. Initially produced only through hand-spinning, Sakala yarn comes from an indigenous, Old-World short-staple cotton variety. These varieties, unlike New World long-staple cotton varieties have been favored in industrial textile manufacture since the invention of the spinning jenny. While short staple cotton is used prolifically in the production of surgical instruments and as a cheap filler in making mattresses, it is not generally spun into thread.[9] Built around dual concerns of environmental and livelihood sustainability since its introduction Sakala yarn and cloth have seen much success in national and international hand-crafted textile markets.

[9] Though short-staple cotton is not favored in mechanized yarn production, it used to be used to make jeans as the strength of its fibers added to the longevity of this material.

However, when the yarn was first reintroduced, there were barely any weavers willing to work with it. This was because weaving with this yarn required weavers to relearn how to handle and treat handspun yarn. Not only did they have to learn to starch the yarn used for the warp of a loom, but they also have to relearn how to use the beater of their loom, taking care not the break the threads of the warp and the weft. The time and attention required in working with Sakala was took much longer than working in acrylic, making weavers reluctant to work with it.

With the introduction and success of *Sakala*, attention was once again explicitly shifted to a weaver's ability to work sensorially with the twist; to get a feel for the force that this yarn could withstand. While Karigarv had to convince weavers to work with Sakala, the NGO faced an even greater challenge identifying spinners to hand-spin this yarn. This is a challenge they continue to face and has resulted in the increased mechanized production of Sakala yarn. There are now about 80 weavers working with *Sakala* yarn for Karigarv alone and more working independently or for master craftsmen. However, most of the yarn they weave with is mechanically produced. Karigarv has not been successful in identifying spinners to hand-spin this yarn precisely because of the loss of skill in how to deal with the non-standardized twist.

**Conclusion: Material, Market and the Authentic**

Kachchhi handloom cloth has taken on many manifestations of cyborg over the last 70 years as this brief history of technological changes in handloom weaving suggests. The aesthetics and materiality of *madarpath* only exist through people's recollections and it is no longer possible to produce this cloth once again because even if great care could be taken in harvesting and processing *Sakala*, the sensorial and embodied knowledge to produce a water-tight weave has long been lost.

There is no doubt that ideas of authenticity in craftsmanship in Kachchhi weaving today are located within a weaver's ability to work with the non-standardized twisting of handspun yarn. However, the access to global, niche, artisanal markets that factory produced high-count cotton and wool yarns (240-count, 260-count and 280-count) increasingly signify a form of ethical consumption, oriented toward addressing concerns surrounding sustainable production, fair labor practices and the market valuation of rural, traditional artisan communities, have also come to legitimate Kachchhi artisans and their artisanal products as bearers and examples of authentic knowledge in the making of things.

Today, craft tourism in Kachchh offers interested consumers visits to artisan workshops to see the process of making for themselves. Karigarv itself employs weavers (amongst other craftspeople) to weave on their premises and engage with any visitor that might stop by the NGO to learn more about the process of making a craft. Through glimpses of weavers at work, coupled with a brief narrative about the tradition of weaving in Kachchh, delivered by tour guide, NGO worker and/or artisan, tourists are encouraged to end their visit to Karigarv or artisan workshops by looking at examples of finished handwoven products which are for sale. Depending on whose workshop or shop they visit, tourists are likely to see products such as dupattas, saris, stoles, and shawls alongside bedsheets, blankets woven from acrylic yarn, high-count cotton and wool yarns to hand spun cotton and wool yarns. Both the diversity of products found and the materials from which they are made, reflect the variety of yarns available to contemporary Kachchhi weavers and their proficiency in working with these yarns on their looms. Visually linking the process of making to the final product crucially locates the traditional presence of weaving and its intergenerational history providing proof of authentic, artisan skill within the materiality of cloth itself.

The twist, standardized or not, and a weaver's ability to work with that twist thus lie at the heart of cloth making. While skill and technique in weaving are determined by the explicit valuation of sensorial and embodied knowledge in the process of making, it is also true that craftsmanship in Kachchhi handloom weaving is garnered within the aesthetics and materiality of cloth as well as an artisans' labor. Furthermore, authenticity in Kachchhi handloom weaving is located within a particular set of social, economic and political conditions that are encapsulated within the aesthetic specificities that can no longer be replicated. However, due to the parameters upon which contemporary artisanal markets are situated that rely upon linking a traditional producer with a handmade product, diversity in yarn and seepage of industrial production methods within a craft practice, make it so that the notion of authenticity always remains murky and simultaneously expansive.

# CHAPTER 3

## Designing Collaborations, Claiming Kachchh: The Role of Design and Intellectual Property in Enterprising Livelihood Solutions for Traditional Artisans

I first encountered the International Folk Art Market application process in 2016 when Santosh invited me along to help him fill out application forms for some bandhini and Ajrakh artisans in and around Bhuj. Santosh, a young man in his mid 30s from Telangana, left behind a corporate career in Mumbai to move to Bhuj and work with artisans, seeking meaning in his work and his life. Since moving to Bhuj over 5 years ago, he first worked for the craft conservation NGO, Karigarv and then went out on his own. He contracted himself out to designers interested in working with Kachchhi artisan communities. As their man on the ground, he was responsible for identifying artisans who could carry out the design work they needed done, translating the design concept for the artisans he identified and checking in on the progress of these projects. In addition to his work with Karigarv, Santosh had spent a lot of time in artisan homes and workshops, building trust within several artisan communities. He had helped streamline backend production processes for some of the more established artisans and answered their emails and other correspondence that required English. When he started working with designers, he had given smaller artisan enterprises work rather than the bigger, already established artisans. Santosh had built a reputation for himself amongst artisan communities as someone who would bring well-paying, good design projects – that sometimes-pushed artisans outside of their comfort-zone and delivering successful finished projects to artisans and designers alike. He also helped artisans apply to the International Folk Art Market (IFAM) in New Mexico, that many Kachchhi artisans aspire to attend and sell their products at.

The largest market of its kind, the International Folk Art Market (IFAM) held annually in Santa Fe "envisions a world that values the dignity and humanity of the handmade, honors timeless cultural traditions, and supports the work of folk artists serving as entrepreneurs and catalysts for positive social change" (International Folk Art Market n.d.). Subscribing to trade-not-aid development strategies, this market creates economic opportunities for marginalized artisans from around the world "who celebrate and preserve folk art traditions" (International Folk Art Market n.d.). Participation in this market is by invitation only based upon an application process that requires artisans to situate and legitimize their membership within a traditional folk-art community through both their genealogy and craft practice; and to explicitly point to ways in which they strive for preservation and furtherment of their craft by innovating design within a traditional art form.

In this chapter I look at the impact design has had on the entrepreneurial scope and reach of craft practices engaged by traditional artisan communities like those in Kachchh. Legitimating their position as traditional craftspeople, by linking their work as artisans to a particular place is crucial to being accepted to participate in this market. While the market does sponsor and support craftspeople who have been able to gain and maintain formalized intellectual property certifications for the traditional craft practices they engage in, they also support the many communities that do not have such certifications that legally situate a people in a place with a particular craft practice. In Kachchh the Kutch Weavers Association (KWA) was awarded Geographic Indication (GI) status for the Kachchh Shawl in 2011. Applying for the GI designation for the Kachchh Shawl was explained as safeguarding the interests of Kachchhi handloom weavers so that they would never again be forced to compete with textile mill produced Kachchhi shawls from Ludhiana, as had been the case in the 1990s. It is reasonable to

assume therefore that Kachchhi weavers would use this GI tag often and prodigiously. However, this has not been the case. The implementation of the GI tag has had limited success in expanding the market reach of Kachchhi handloom weavers. Instead, the logic and language of design training has had tremendous success in providing Kachchh's many artisans communities access to markets like IFAM.

When I moved to Kachchh in 2016 to conduct my dissertation research, the promise of the Kachchhi Shawl GI tag glimmered bright. However, as I started to meet artisans from several Kachchhi artisan communities, I learned very quickly that the existence of GI tags was virtually unknown to most people. Even within the weaving community, I met several artisans who have never heard of this designation or its implications for the markets it could secure. And when I did meet Kachchhi weavers who were aware of this intellectual property designation and the Kachchhi Shawl's GI tag, I was told that they rarely if ever used it. Around the same time I had also heard that Ajrakh artisans were interested in filing an application for GI on their own. However, when I questioned a master craftsman from Ajrakhpur who I knew to be involved in this initiative, about the impact such certification could have for Ajrakh, he laughed and told me that it would not be effective in safeguarding or expanding markets for Ajrakh printing. Why then go to the trouble of applying for the tag? Because he said, it was important that they play the game of accessing niche craft markets. On 31st January 2023, the Ajrakhpur Hastkala Vikas Sangathan (Ajrakhpur Handicraft Development Association) filed their application with the Geographic Indications registry in India and are currently under review (Geographic Indications Registry n.d.). In this chapter then, I also consider the role of intellectual property certification like GI in legitimizing craftsmanship within a community and place thereby expanding markets.

The relationship between craft, design, and intellectual property certifications, while an increasingly familiar one, is uneasy at best. The Kachchh Shawl is not the first craft practice to be designated GI status and nor will it be the last. In anthropological scholarship the circulation and consumption of culturally marked products on global markets and the social realities of their culturally marked producers have increasingly been studied through the promise and implications of intellectual property certification. Often mobilized through NGO mediated trade-not-aid marketing strategies, such regulations authenticate place and labor by fusing together discussions of legality with considerations of morality, desire, sovereignty and governance, within 'ethical' markets (Aragon and Leach 2008; Besky 2014; Chan 2011; Farmer 2014; Myers 2002; Pearson 2013; Paxson 2013; Winegar 2006). However, in Kachchh (a prime example of a place that can lay claim to many such culturally marked producers) artisans increasingly rely on artisan-designer collaborations as well as the language of innovative design to expand their market access. These collaborations also tether their products to specific communities and places. However, since these marketing methods are not legally binding, like the use of intellectual property certifications, both community and place can be constructed to be inclusive of the people and places these marketing methods would like to promote. For instance, a Scandinavian design firm that gets rugs handloomed in Kachchh to their specifications, brands the rugs as Scandinavian, handcrafted in India. In their marketing material, the firm indicates that by having these Scandinavian rugs made in India, they, the firm, contribute to providing employment and livelihood to traditional handloom weavers in India. Thus, an artisan-designer collaboration results in a handmade product that connects two countries while also gesturing towards the traditionally marked labor of the Indian weaver. In this chapter, I look at the different ways in which intellectual property certifications and design link traditional

craftspeople with their craft practice and place. I argue that collaborative projects that foreground design provide a lot more flexibility and creativity in connecting producer, product and place than intellectual property designations like GI. By looking at how the GI tag for the Kachchh Shawl operates in Kachchh and contextualize this process within scholarship on intellectual property, I show how artisan designer collaboration navigate safeguarding intellectual property outside legal protections.

This chapter is one of two chapters that looks at the ways in which ideas about entrepreneurship have impacted artisans' own understanding—as well as those of the development and design communities that support them—of what it means to be a contemporary craftsperson in Kachchh today. While the following chapter considers the changing historical labor relationships within the Kachchhi weaving community and looks at the impact that individual aspirations and anxieties have on negotiating who is considered an artisan within the community, this chapter looks at the language of marketing and sales as well as the language of ownership and design that is increasingly used to brand and market traditional crafts in global artisanal markets. In so doing, I explore how craft as a category is defined in relationship to design. And I also explore how intellectual property certifications built upon these categorizations operate in Kachchh.

**The Emergence of Craft and Design as Categories**

In his essay “The History of Craft” (1997), Paul Greenhalgh, a British historian and curator of art and design, says that the separation of craft from art and design is a phenomenon of the late 20th century that begins to take shape within the Arts and Crafts movement in 19th century Britain when the words craft and craftsman “both become powerful signifiers in advanced debates in the visual arts and relatively common in institutional circles” (Greenhalgh 1997: 23).

The debates he refers to are twofold. On one hand, as an emerging capitalist system was being established and industrial production brought with it an upscaling in commodity production, there was a public accounting of the status of visual arts which had till then been the most prestigious arena of commodity production. Divided into fine art and decorative art, concerns over status, affect and taste regarding these categories were being debated within institutions like museums, academies and universities which were ultimately the centers that were involved in classifying and consolidating intellectual life.

On the other hand, concerns over the alienation of labor and changes that the concept and reality of work were undergoing at the time, led some public figures like John Ruskin and his student William Morris, who were also prominent members of the Arts and Crafts movement, to demand that work should accompany with it a higher quality of life. For proponents of the movement, how people worked, the conditions they worked under and the way in which they made things were fundamental to a society's well-being. The movement thus sought the liberation of humanity through communal creativity: "Creative work would improve the environment, lead to an equitable system of the distribution of wealth and generate psychologically fulfilled peoples" (Greenhalgh 1997: 33, 34).

Thus, due to the cultural hegemony and ideological leanings of the time, the decorative arts came to be seen as the mechanical process of making things by hand while fine art came to represent a deliberate and coordinated outpouring of an artist's creativity. Later in the twentieth century the establishment of design as a discipline (which was understood to include creativity but differed in the logic of the process of making decorative arts) that specifically incorporated the use of modern technologies for solutions on an industrial scale, craft, formed as a category that came to stand in opposition to art and design due to what it lacked. The establishment of this

new system of visual arts was significant because it separated the process of having ideas and making things and suggested that “there exists some sort of mental attribute known as ‘creativity’ that precedes or can be divorced from a knowledge of how to make things” (Greenhalgh 1997: 18)leading to art without craft and conversely craft without art. Not only was this separation consequential for ideas about skill and what a process of making actually constituted, it also had significant repercussions on the framework of intellectual property classifications(Aragon and Leach 2008; Coombe 1998; Hirsch 2010; Pearson 2013).

Design, seen as both a preparatory study as well as a problem-solving activity, started to take shape at the end of the nineteenth century when a rift formed between practices in the decorative arts. Some practices held close to a craft ethic. Others placed the decorative arts squarely within large scale manufacture. In the twentieth century, design was firmly established as an entire process of manufacture “from drawing board to finished artefact” (Greenhalgh 1997: 40) and designers became a profession distinguishable from artist and craftspeople precisely due to their inextricable links to industry(Greenhalgh 1997; Rees 1997).

Greenhalgh argues that at the turn of the twentieth century, craft was a very productive location of theoretical, critical, and historical writing. Through the Arts and Crafts Movement, craft had emerged as a category unto itself comprising the decorative arts, the politics of work and the vernacular which Greenhalgh explains “refers to the cultural produce of a community, the things collectively made, spoken, and performed. It is as close to nature as a culture can get, the unselfconscious and collective products of a social group, unpolluted by outside influence. It carries the mystique of being the authentic voice of society. There has been a tendency to associate this authentic voice with pre-industrial, rural communities” (Greenhalgh 1997: 31 ) . However, craft came to be further defined as a category by what it lacked when debates

surrounding the decorative arts distinguished between practices located within the craft ethic and those central to industrial design in the twentieth century. This process resulted not only in a confused plurality of what craft is, it also relegated craft to a mechanical process of making.

Design meanwhile emerged as an industrial process of making. At an institutional level, debates on design surrounded questions of status, purpose and value. Design came to be understood as a modern multidisciplinary process of product development while craft contained within it those objects of the past that were made using pre-industrial methods. Designers as a profession are trained to understand the value of a product as a metaphor and abstract consumer desire by overseeing the implementation of a solution for the businesses and industries they work for. In design school curricula, good design represents "an efficient, well managed process" (Rees 1997: 122) rather than a beautiful or useful object. During my time in Kachchh, I spent a lot of time with designers who talked a lot about the process of design thinking, which I've come to understand to mean that process from initial design brief to implementation.

In providing this brief yet nuanced synopsis of craft and design which were very much shaped in Western Europe and indeed within Britain in the 19th and 20th century, I want to draw attention not only to the interlinkages and interdependencies of these categories, but also the minute and intricate ways in which these categories come to differ from one another. Design schools around the world teach their students the process of design thinking and in so doing, (re)infuse cognitive and mechanical activities which have been accepted as existing in separate realms. Craft meanwhile is imagined to be an inconsequential activity.

**Artisan Labor and Contemporary Indian Development**

In India traditional craft production comprises the second largest contribution to the rural Indian economy, after agriculture. Its practitioners occupy marginalized spaces in society,

belonging as they do to a multi-generational, inherited profession that is marked as much by its practice as by its practitioners' caste. Furthermore, traditional craft production, especially in the guise of handcrafted cloth, has played a central role in political and development ideologies through Indian history. For instance, it was central to the establishment and negotiation of social relations, governance, and authority in pre-colonial India, amongst Hindus and Muslims alike. In Mughal India, the process of gift giving, specifically of cloth (*khilat*), in exchange for coins (*nazr*) was crucial to establishing patronage between the ruler and the ruled (Bayly 1983; Cohn 1989). And under British colonialism, artisan labor and artisan production, particularly in the guise of handwoven cloth and weavers, were the central mobilizing force for anticolonial struggle and Gandhian ideologies of traditionalism and *swadeshi* (self-sufficiency) that critiqued industrialization (Bean 1989; Chakrabarty 1989; Gandhi and British Library 1921; Sarkar 1983). At the same time however, scholarship focused on proto-industrialization (Arnold 2013; Goody 1982; Haynes 2012; Prasad 1999; Roy 2007; Swallow 1982) in India has looked specifically at the ways in which craft production and handloom weaving in particular was very much part and parcel of the process of industrialization in India and whose production functioned within a capitalistic logic.

Thus, even though it is recognized that traditional craft production stands within capitalism(Arnold 2013; Mies, International Labour Office, and World Employment Programme 1982; Prasad 1999; Roy 2007; Swallow 1982) and does not remain untouched by industrial production, the evocative quality of cloth's association with the *swadeshi* movement, and the significance of the figure of the artisan through the freedom struggle and within an independent Indian state have held strong.

Furthermore, a neoclassical view of economic development, reflected through Indian governmental policies, operations of the World Bank, and scholarship on Indian industrialization (Breman 1996; Leadbeater 1993; Morris 1982) equated formal labor practices (where labor earns a regular wage) as the inevitable outcome of industrialization. However, within the contemporary industrial and capitalist economic agenda, the majority of contemporary Indian employment including artisan labor are defined by informal labor practices (Breman 1996; Mies, International Labour Office, and World Employment Programme 1982). Conceived and framed within economic dualism – which conceives a distinction between the rural and the urban economy while simultaneously situating this distinction as a difference between agriculture and industry – informal labor practices have been used to refer to the self-employment of Third World urban laborers outside institutional frameworks (Hart 1985b). However, scholarship on interlinkages between caste, class, rights discourses and employment have shown that informal labor practices conceal various forms of wage labor in both Indian urban and rural contexts (Breman 1985b; Carswell 2013; Chakrabarty 1989; Guérin 2013). Job workers within Kachchhi textile crafts are an example of this. However, scholarly interpretation of formal and informal labor as corresponding to advanced modern practices or less modern, backward practices, have impacted the assessment of an Indian workforce. This focus on the legacy of the artisan and informal labor practices have thus shaped the relationship between artisan labor, artisan production and contemporary development.

**Designing Artisan and Craftmanship in Handmade Markets**

I spent many hours with Santosh watching as he worked with artisans, filling out sections of the application titled “Technique/Process” or “Materials.” Santosh would ask the artisan for

whom he was filling the form to give him a detailed account of the kind of cloth they might use such as cotton, wool, silk, blended cloth. He'd ask about the kinds of dyes they used, whether they were natural or chemical, sometimes asking for a justification for the reason they used certain materials. In this way, he would construct a chain of artisan producers and artisanal suppliers that were brought together in the finished product. If the artisan was using Chanderi cloth for instance, a blend of cotton and silk cloth that is handloomed in Chanderi, Madhya Pradesh, he would be able claim an interaction between the Chanderi and ajrakh or bandhini artisan, pointing to the inherently collaborative nature of traditional craft production. Similarly, in asking the artisan for the provenance of the dye they used he would link reputable, international dye manufacturers to the artisan beside him. In this way, Santosh would ultimately build chains that joined various traditional artisan communities and industrial suppliers from around the world together in the making of a single product. Nudging artisans to contextualize the multi-generational use of technique within their communities, recording shifts in craft technology he would construct that community in Kachchh as a legitimate and original producer and place for their particular craft practice. In sections titled "Traditional Heritage" and "Artist Story" he further situated individual trials, triumphs of that artisan, showcasing the impact of their work upon the traditional livelihood of their community. The application asks that applicants explicitly elucidate innovation in their craft practice. Thus, by drawing attention to any methods, product design or collaborations, they have undertaken that have been unique to their own situation, Santosh fleshed out artisan commitment to design within their traditional craft practice.

Innovative design has been explicitly inculcated into the language and practice of craft through artisan-designer collaborations and the establishment of training programs geared

towards artisans in India. Today, institutions like Somaiya Kala Vidya in Adipur, Kachchh, Gujarat and The Hand Loom School in Maheshwar, Madhya Pradesh have become centers where artisans are trained in entrepreneurship, imparted through design thinking and the valuation of innovation in capturing and expanding global, niche markets. In Kachchh, the first such training program was established in the wake of the 2001 earthquake that devastated the district. Since then, ideas about design and entrepreneurship have become deeply entrenched within the logic and the language of artisan success. The International Folk Art Market represents the pinnacle of this logic as it situated market success within skill and innovation—authenticated on the basis of the artisan's geographical and cultural location and their ability to move product design from the realm of tradition to that of the contemporary.

In elucidating innovation, Santosh had to communicate the value of design that resided within a craft practice trajectory, while simultaneously pointing to an individual artisan's contribution to design that could be seen to move craft forward. Through the application, I saw that innovative design is used to single out those elements of a craft practice that can be seen as being new or cutting edge. More often than not however, I would find that Santosh's qualification of innovation involved showcasing the presence of traditional elements of more than one craft practice or an unusual sequencing of traditional motifs within a craft practice. Thus, within handcrafted textile traditions in Kachchh for example, the introduction of stoles as a product could be identified as being innovative. Similarly, a stole with both bandhini and ajrakh techniques on it could also be called innovative. In both these cases it is the design of the final product that signals something new, by referring to change in the dimension of a piece of cloth or to the collaboration between artisans and their craft practices in embellishing that product. However, reprising the use of a technique that has fallen out of use, such as hand spinning cotton

and wool or using a technique like clamp dyeing, are also identified as innovations. Each of these innovations have provided traction and profit in markets, resulting in the establishment of a trend. It is not surprising then to see Kachchhi embroidery and quilting techniques used to make small pouches sold as mobile phone cases for instance.

Left: A silk stole incorporating bandhini and Ajrakh in its design (Photo by the author)
Center: Clamp dyed silk stole (Photo by the author)
Right: A desi wool shawl with a bandhini pattern (Photo by the author)

In this way Santosh was able to show, first that the product and the producers are sustainability conscious, interested in various slow movements that places these products outside of general mass production and into the ethical space; and second, that the traditionality and authenticity of the producer and product were reaffirmed through personal narrative. All of these things worked together in marketing both product and producer. The application ended by asking artisans to provide pictures, dimensions, and material of the products they would bring with them to sell. The list had to be precise and would include examples of innovative design.

Through the language of design what was once old or forgotten like clamp dyeing was made new. Solutions to the furtherment of a craft practice lay in experimentation of traditional sequences or the revival of practices and materials that had fallen out of use. The emphasis on collaboration between artisan communities or between artisans and designers suggested further

proof of how design could bring communities together. In a meeting I once had with a designer who was also a member of an industrialist family that had spent several years working with women from various Kachchhi communities that embroider, our conversation came around to the ways in which design was an equalizer. I was told at length about workshops they had held with women from different communities and how over time, they had come to work together, creating sample pieces that brought together different embroidery techniques and motifs. Design I was told could create a secular space. And since good design is ultimately about process, bringing people together to exchange ideas and create something new was always fruitful. These were the ways in which design suffused craft practice in Kachchh. And with each new collaboration or product design, there was a story about collaboration and community unity that would be used in marketing traditional craft. The opportunities were endless.

Santosh is not a trained designer. He has learned to value design and through it innovation on the job - through his work at Karigarv, his interactions and conversations with designers and through his time spent in artisan workshops. He believes in social upliftment through entrepreneurship, and he sees the work he does as facilitating that process. Ideas about design influence the choice of people and projects he works on. His ideas about design also suffuse his understanding of entrepreneurship, market expansion and success. While ostensibly an outsider, Santosh's views on artisan livelihood solutions reflect the ways in which design has become intertwined with development in Kachchh today.

**Intellectual Property, Geographic Indication and the Kachchh Shawl**

GI is a World Trade Organization regulated international property rights regime that legally protects a selection of wide-ranging products from artisanal cheese to handicrafts. The

designation is based on the grounds that only certain groups of people in certain locations can make certain specialty products. In 2016 when I was visiting artisans with Santosh, filling in IMFA applications, the narrative of artisan and traditional craft practice being sketched sounded to me like a more descriptive, ethnographic way of substantiating what a tag like GI would legally be able to do. At that time, I saw design and intellectual property certification as an extension of one another. They did the same sort of work to secure and expand craft markets. Over time however, I came to realize that design and intellectual property regimes operated in seemingly complimentary but ultimately very different ways. I found that the use of design and intellectual property regimes created gray space within which these methods of market expansion operated and caused a lot of anxiety about what it meant to be a craftsperson in Kachchh today.

Writing from her position as both an anthropologist and a lawyer, Rosemary Coombe looks at the ways in which legal discourse provides a space for resistance and regulation and how IP can be considered an arena for contested culture. Her analysis of IP is thus situated within Western conceptions of cultural and intellectual property. Within legal discourse, this bifurcation categorizes concepts of culture, authenticity, and identity within proprietary terms. While cultural property allows social collectives to physically control material objects, which are seen to embody a singular traditional identity of a culture, intellectual property allows individual artists to prevent others from reproducing their works on the grounds that the work itself embodies their unique personality. Here it is possible to see how the classification system of art, craft and design has been incorporated into this legal framework. Having thus set up this argument as one where freedom of artistic expression is pitted against cultural experience and cultural voice all within the context of property ownership, she considers the ways in which the market has become a space where colonial imaginaries and histories continue to be constructed.

This framework thus provides an understanding of the stakes around which political claims are made and debated within the market (Coombe 1993; 1998).

The significance of the bifurcation between cultural and intellectual property is that it is constructed around two dominant discourses of orientalism and liberalism which provide explanations for some of the ways in which both discourses are deployed in neocolonial struggles for political recognition. Focusing her analysis on the controversy surrounding the official definition of the term 'cultural appropriation' by the Advisory Committee for Racial Equality in the Arts in Canada, she takes on the questions of aboriginal title and self-government. She points to the ways in which (1) cultural and political representations are related, but also (2) how these representations rely on a legal framework that is grounded in ideas of possessive individualism and ultimately steeped in colonial constructions of the self and the Other (Coombe 1993).

Through my time in Kachchh however, I found that political claims about identity and property ownership were being made, debated, and negotiated within both market and village. The language of design provided a wider berth within which these claims and negotiations could be made informally. And as a result, negotiating these claims also took place through attitudes, opinion, aspirations, and anxieties of what it means to be a craftsman today which I will consider in the following chapter.

Hirsch (2010) suggests that the "global acceleration and intensification of contests and conflicting claims regarding diverse property forms are mutually connected with contests about both the constitution and boundaries of persons and things"(Hirsch 2010: 348). In 2004 in Papua New Guinea, a company that makes traditional items and pots out of clay took legal action against Post PNG claiming that Post PNG had used images of their items on a couple of stamps

that had been in circulation for 2 years. The company said that its products were protected under copyright and as such were looking to receive payment for the use of the images of their items on the stamps. Hirsch says that the use of copyright as a means of protecting property while common in Europe is a relatively new form of protecting traditional property by village people in Papua New Guinea. Using property theory to examine the neoliberal emphasis on the expansion of property and contest over the division between persons and things, Hirsch considers the increasingly blurred distinctions between people and property (1) as a way of understanding how contests between new and old property forms generate new forms of persons and (2) considers the ways in which older forms of property like land ownership are deployed in new contexts (Hirsch, 2010).

Besky (2014) work on the production and marketing of Darjeeling tea, looks at the how 21st century consumers have reshaped these ideas and provided a sense of social solidarity in drinking a daily cup of tea through 'fair trade' and other agricultural certifications such as geographic indication (GI). In the process, she also considers how Darjeeling tea workers themselves reconcile their ideas about value and plantation life with the tea's colonial legacy, through social justice. Discourses of justice produced by different actors, she says, provide a critique of contemporary political, economic, and environmental circumstances and also enact visions of the future that provide necessary conditions for social change. Third party certification schemes like fair trade appeal for justice on the global market by claiming to unmask unjust conditions of commodity production thereby fundamentally questioning market capitalism. What she shows however is that fair trade does not in fact ensure the wellbeing of tea workers on Darjeeling's tea plantations. Instead, it "extends the neoliberal economic emphasis on nongovernmental regulation and individual empowerment" (Besky 2014: 25).

GI advertising emphasizes the role of regional ecology and artisanal process in locating the unique value of this product. Scholarship of the use of GI and terroir for instance locates an agricultural product that is linked to a specific place because it contains within its cultivation, a taste of place (Besky 2014; Farmer 2014; Paxson 2013b; West 2012). Not only does GI place upon Darjeeling tea the distinction of a unique taste that is legally sanctioned, but also fosters and nurtures the perception of tea producing labor's "unique and inimitable contribution to taste" (Besky 2014: 92). The significance of this point rests in the ways in which a distinct terroir is claimed within the production of the product through a set of 'traditional knowledge' practices (Besky, 2014).

In September 2017 in Ahmedabad, I met a GI specialist who told me that the GI for Thanjavur paintings which has been available since 2007 were based on the method and technique by which that painting is carried out. Just as is the case with the Kachchh Shawl, Thanjavur paintings were tethered to place, not because of any material that was used in the painting was tethered to Thanjavur, but rather because the producers of these paintings happen to live in Thanjavur. GI, I was told, was essentially a system of accounting that the government of India could use to take stock of processes and products that lay within their jurisdiction (Field Notes 14th Sept 2017). Later that day I discussed the implementation of GI for traditional crafts with retired professor of textile design Aditi Ranjan from the National Institute of Design (NID) who has worked on traditional Indian textile practices throughout her career. She was vehemently against its use. All communities that practice traditional crafts, she said, had migrated to their current location from somewhere else. How then was it possible to tie a craft practice to a specific place? And what criteria was being used to determine the original, authentic, place of that craft? People, she said, travel and move for all sorts of reasons and an

arbitrary boxing in of a craft to a place was in her mind, too simple. It didn't take into consideration the nuances and accumulated influences that were expressed in that traditional craft form (Field Notes 14th Sept 2017). Extra-weft weaving, for example, is not only practiced in Kachchh or even India alone. This form of weaving can be seen all over the world (Varadarajan and Amin-Patel 2008). Furthermore, there are a few different kinds of weaving practices that are carried out in Kachchh. However, it is extra-weft weaving done in the style of Western and not Eastern Kachchh which has come to be known as Kachchhi weaving.

The GI tag however does not speak to the process by which this craft practice is conducted and instead safeguards and locates one product – The Kachchhi Shawl - as belonging to the Kutch Weavers Association (KWA) in Bhujodi, a village that has for all intents and purposes become synonymous with Kachchhi weaving. Not all Kachchhi weavers could access and use the GI tag. To do so, an unaffiliated weaver would have to register with the KWA and pay towards their membership. Payment was often too expensive for most individual weavers in the district. Thus, only those weavers with more capital to invest, would be able to buy into using the GI tag. Additionally, and crucially, the tag could be used only to sell the Kachchh shawl. Since the heyday of the Kachchh Shawl in the 1990s however and in the aftermath of the earthquake of 2001, individual weavers' ability to access these global ethical artisan markets was increasingly based on their ability to forge working relationships with designers and to show that they could innovate within their craft practice. This meant that a much larger range of products was required to succeed in these global artisan markets. Additionally, it required Kachchhi weavers to really present themselves and their practice, (not just a product) as being tethered to a place and culturally marked.

**Protecting Intellectual Property**

Tom has a company that supplies artisan made textiles to places like the Metrapolitan Museum gift shop and other higher end boutiques that specialize in artisan made products in the United States. Santosh works with him and told me that Tom will typically have multiple textile crafts worked on the same piece of cloth. The plain cloth, mostly sourced from Africa or different part of India is then sent to one artisan community in India after another who layer it with their particular traditional craft technique. It might even end up with some *kaatha* work done on it. What results from this process is a product that is uniquely crafted. Santosh once explained that the reason he does this overlaying of technique with artisans in both west and east India, is to prevent his designs from being copied, protecting his intellectual property.

Tom's orders are never very large – typically around 100 pieces. He pays artisans well and places his products in exclusive stores. And while those stores may not be spaces that Kachchhi artisans are familiar with, they appreciated the price he was willing to pay. By working with him they were able to see how he used design and traditional craft techniques to move traditional crafted products into non-traditional design spaces. In this way not only did artisans learn to work with other designers, they were also able to navigate higher end buyer and client relationships and generate a greater income.

# CHAPTER 4

## Artisans/Designers: Anxieties and Aspirations in Contemporary Kachchhi Weaving

In the wake of the 2001 earthquake in Kachchh, there has been a shift toward artisan entrepreneurship in livelihood solutions that are sought through artisan-designer collaborations. NGOs that have proliferated in the district during this period, reflect global development trends that increasingly rely upon trade-not-aid development solutions (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009; DeHart 2010; de Waroux and Lambin 2013; Laurie, Andolina, and Radcliffe 2005; West 2012), built upon ideas of entrepreneurship, design, and innovation. The prevalence of entrepreneurial training for artisans supported this trend. Entrepreneurship training programs have been primarily set up to empower artisans to engage directly with markets, cutting out any middle men. This direct contact required that the artisans be able to own the entire process of production of their craft products, including the conception of their ideas. Design and innovation provided a robust means to do this.

Interrogating the entangled ways in which education in design and innovation shape contemporary understandings of craftsmanship in Kachchh, this chapter pays particular attention to how artisans make sense of what it means to be a traditional craftsperson today. Through this process, I also look at how ideas about entrepreneurship amongst contemporary Kachchhi artisans, contextualize anxieties and aspirations of contemporary craftsmanship against a historic legacy of artisan labor that is maintained through nostalgic story telling about the practice of craft and the role of community in maintaining traditional artisan livelihoods.

The Handloom School in Madhya Pradesh advertises a Certificate in Design, Entrepreneurship and Management (CDEM). “An initiative inspired by WomenWeave's belief

that young weavers can become empowered custodians of the resources and processes of handloom in the contemporary marketplace. Specifically designed to identify and nurture the talent of young weavers from across India. The Handloom School offers a signature program that provides both traditional and cutting edge training to young handloom artisans, giving them the tools to optimize market opportunities and earn a more equitable livelihood" (The Handloom School n.d.). Building artisan empowerment in keeping with the current logic of trade-not-aid development, entrepreneurship programs like this one were invested in training multigenerational artisans who practiced a traditional craft form, teaching them how to differentiate themselves as individuals in craft markets. Artisans were encouraged to control the entire process of their handmade production from conception to execution. Impressing the importance of identifying worldwide trends—social, cultural, or environmental—these training programs, along with other student artisan and designer collaborations that urban design schools in India have begun to foster, traditional artisans are increasingly taught to act like designers, laying claim to their creative and production process as their intellectual property. Design, innovation, and entrepreneurship they are taught, can capture and expand niche, artisanal markets.

The presence and success of such entrepreneurial training programs had also led to the emergence of a new figure, within Kachchhi artisan communities, the artisan-designer. There are diverse opinions on the use of this designation. A bandhini artisan I knew who had worked with big name fashion designers in the country told me that this term muddied the waters of what it meant to be an artisan. He said that instead of thinking about the ways in which they can better their work and their craft process, there are too many artisans thinking they are designers. The designation, "artisan-designer" was frequently collapsed with that of "master craftsman." The

artisan-designer title in any craft had resulted in people thinking that since they were the ones with the knowledge of practicing a craft, they should get the same kind of recognition that say fashion designers got.

A fashion designer I met in Ahmedabad, who had graduated from NID said that within a collaboration between artisan and designer, the artisan's skill was recognized. Why then did the finished product then need to bill both artisan and designer on an equal footing? He felt that people should get on with the work they have to do and that harping on about what kind of recognition they got or should get was unreasonable and unnecessary.

Mohan Bhai, an artisan who went through such a training program in Kachchh in the wake of the earthquake is however very secure in his identity as an artisan and very much driven by innovation and design in his craft practice. He had had the opportunity to attend a workshop in Scotland. There, he had learned to twill weave and had combined twill weaving with extra weft weaving to make these rather minimalist looking white shawls with black motifs that were quite Escher-esq in their look and composition. He had also come back had wool and eri silk stoles that had played with the color palette. They were plain and contained regularly repeating squares of a specific color that incrementally increased in their shading. Thus, one end of the stole was light and the other dark.

Mohan Bhai's shawl with an Escher inspired border (Photo by the author)

I had met older weavers who often talked of *shramta* (hard work) and *dhyan* (attention) being essential to being an artisan. These qualities were often accompanied by descriptions of a simple life in which an artisan paid heed to their craft practice and not to the market. Mohan Bhai also talked to me about the importance of *dhyan* and *shramta* in life. He weaves predominantly in wool and does some work in Sakala, sourcing handspun Sakala himself. He trained at Kala Raksha Vidyalay in the second year that program ran.

Praveen Bhai on the other hand subscribed to the idea of an artisan-designer. An independent weaver who runs one of the most successful weaving businesses in Bhujodi with his two brothers was also trained through the same program although in a different cohort. With six looms on which he and his brothers weave fine cotton and wool yarns, silk, and bamboo fiber, they supply shawls, stoles, dupattas and cloth to retailers like FabIndia, other Indian craft labels and independent designers who source hand-made textiles to high-end boutiques within and outside the country. He has actively pursued weaving since 2012. Even though Praveen Bhai's grandfather had been a weaver of some renown, the family had never been financially secure. He

grew up on the loom and enjoyed weaving but did not believe that he would be able to make a living as a weaver. The possibility of working as a weaver seemed even more distant in the wake of the earthquake in 2001. However, through his design training and having recently completed a course in business management to streamline his weaving enterprise, his business has been thriving.

Examples of innovative design in Kachchhi weaving (Photos by the author)

Within the weaving community the notion that a weaver should be someone who sits at the loom as well as someone who actively participates within the community singing devotional songs (*kori*) was a notion of being an artisan that was increasingly relegated to the past. Often when reminiscing about the past such nostalgic anecdotes, left out the hardships of everyday life and the financial precarity the weaving community had often faced. However, the notion that a weaver worked for what he needed and nothing more was one that had been valorized. Bharmal Bhai, a weaver I met through Mohan Bhai, took these tenets of being a weaver very seriously. He told me that people priced their products carelessly and were too fixated on making a profit. A young man with a family of 5 children and a wife and mother to support, Bhramal Bhai's conviction in his identity as a weaver seemed to leave him in quite a precarious situation. He refused to work as a job-worker for any large weaving enterprise because he believed that weavers who ran such an operation were weavers in name only and referred to them as vyaparis (businessmen) instead. He had a large family to feed however, and his strict moral code often meant that he had inconsistent work. I came to interpret the rigidity of that code as being the result of generations of caste oppression which was reflected in, not only the precarity of his situation but also in an insecurity over the kinds of knowledge that belong to the weaving community. By virtue of his precarious condition, Bharmal Bhai was a jack of all trades. He told me so himself. He could build looms, practice different weaving techniques and was well versed about what plants and trees you could use to produce natural dyes. He told me he knew all this because when you did not have enough money to buy dyes, you had to learn to make them yourself. However, our conversations invariably involved a pervading feeling on his part, that he was about to be undercut by a third party who would take his knowledge without crediting him.

This sense of anxiety of being undervalued or being undercut was one that I became very familiar with within the Kachchhi weaving community.

In this chapter, I explore how the anxieties about being a craftsperson in contemporary Kachchh are manifested through weaver's ideas about who an artisan is and what craftsmanship should look like. Often expressed through gossip and self-narratives, I found that Kachchhi weavers were very much in the process of negotiating who they were and what they did. Using affect theory, I consider how artisans' construction of their own identities, both in the past and present rely upon the identification of a moral economy(Ahmed 2004; 2010) that becomes located in social materialities of artisan lives and the objects of handcrafted production. If "affect arises in the midst of *inbetween-ness*: in the capacities to act and be acted upon" (Seigworth and Gregg 2010: 1), then the way in which a past is mythologized in the telling of family histories of craftsmanship becomes part of that construction. Thus nostalgic retellings and claims to contemporary practices become the locations where what it means to be an entrepreneur, artisan, designer or an artisan-designer are worked out.

**Nostalgia and Aspirations**

Today, while *shramta* and *dhyan* enter the vocabulary of what it means to be a true artisan, these terms are no longer used in isolation. Community membership and the ability to sit at a loom are no longer sufficient in claiming or being recognized as an artisan within the community. Instead, the size of an artisans' enterprise, their perceived ambition, their involvement in community affairs, and the markets they are able to reach, all influence community perceptions of a true artisan. However, opinions vary as social relationships, jealousies and individual aspirations color these perceptions.

The emphasis on design through commercial collaborations and educational programs has resulted in entrepreneurship becoming embedded as the logic that drives craft conservation and craft markets, locally and globally. For artisans, there has emerged a need for recognition and a validation of skill and craft intervention. By intervention I am pointing to an ownership over design that while not explicitly individual, no longer remains in the realm of the communal. This is a significant shift within the traditional craft sector that has long touted community ownership of technique and design in locating the uniqueness of both the craft and its producer. The coupling of design and development have thus had an enormous impact on the landscape within which craft is produced and by the way in which artisanship is recognized.

Ningal is one of the oldest villages in Anjar taluka. It was first settled by the pastoral Rabari community. Weaving families settled in this village in service to these Rabari families. Around 200 years ago, the farming Ahir community moved to this village because it had fertile soil, as the Rabaris moved out of Ningal to settle in other villages nearby. The weavers wove cloth for both the Rabari and Ahir communities who wore *desi* wool and *desi* cotton respectively. Hira Kaka, a weaver in his 70s who has lived in Ningal all his life, remembers a time when weavers would get both cotton and wool sliver (*puni*) and handspun yarn from each of these communities that they would weave and give back, receiving grain and oil in exchange.

Hira Kaka grew up in Ningal, when it was still an important and thriving weaving center in Kachchh. There was then an active *vankar mandali* (weavers' cooperative) that would take decisions to safeguard the economic, social and cultural interests of this community. They would ration out yarn, set up centralized collections for finished products and organize their sale in outside markets. They would also regularly hold community discussions (*reyans*) to address issues on a village level. Almost every household had a charkha and a loom.

Hira Kaka setting up a charkha at his home (Photos by the author)

Hira Kaka demonstrating spinning using the *peti retiya* (Photo by the author)

By the 1980s, however, the effects of global processes like industrialization could be felt in Kachchh as well. The introduction of new mill spun yarns like acrylic and merino wool, changed the (hand) weaving landscape. As farmers and pastoralists increasingly began to buy and wear mill made cloth from retail stores, weavers began to sell their hand-woven products in national, urban, hand-crafted textile markets.

To remain a thriving weaving center, it became important to be able to access markets outside Kachchh and maintain strong community organization. There were many thriving weaving centers in Kachchh that had to weather this transition. Villages like Ningal that were

located far from major highways or important administrative centers like Bhuj, were at a disadvantage. Villages like Bhujodi on the other hand prospered because of their proximity to trade routes and market access. The importance of strong, central leadership within the *vankar mandali* cannot however be understated. Villages like Sarli that could not claim the advantage of location continued to do well because of their community organization. Ningal did not have a strong *vankar mandali* and because of this breakdown in trade relations and social leadership, by 2003, weavers in Ningal increasingly left their traditional livelihood to pursue other forms of employment.

The role of *reyans* and *vankar mandalis* in particular were mentioned with much fondness. While weavers of that time may not have had very much in terms of material wealth, within the contemporary landscape of traditional craft production, there is no longer room for this kind of cohesiveness within community relations. While there continue to remain community leaders who take the reins during a crisis, global craft markets and the logic of design have made it so that artisans are always competing with one another. The stalwart understanding of the artisan of the past holds steady while artisans today are constantly looking to define themselves.

I heard from many weavers that community relationships within and between the weaving and other communities started to change with the introduction of acrylic yarn. One weaver described how an element of greed (though this was never the word that was actually used) that came into people's attitudes towards weaving. People were described as going out for themselves, a rupture in community relations was also indicated as well as an increase in competition. People no longer wanted to be dictated to in terms of the retail of their products, etc. Often a kind of brash individualism was described alongside a discontentment with what people

already had. Weavers like to describe themselves as being simple folk. The simplicity of life in a village was something that older weavers would talk about and get nostalgic for. This idea of simplicity was intertwined with ideas of purity and also knowing where the yarn they worked with and the *bajra* (pearl millet) they ate came from.

Many weavers would talk about taking business decisions to maintain relationships with their customers and not because they were motivated by money. In the course of my work there, this constantly came up. It was another way of signifying that the value of work lay in the process of doing; not in the money to be made. Of course, as the lines between artisan and vyapari blurred, this notion started to represent some element of truth. This narrative was another core way in which a weaver constructed their identity as artisans. The blurred line between vyapari and weaver included the following: A lot of  bigger weavers no longer sat at the loom, they looked after their family business. Other people just owned shops. Some of these people were weavers, some belonged to other Kachchhi artisan communities. Some even kept power loomed shawls and sold the product as handloom. This definitely happened in Bhujodi, though people would not admit it. They would always allude to this, never naming anyone they deemed to be culpable.

Ambition is not something that is easily contended with, or reconciled, in the weaver community. While the standard line that is fed to customers and researchers alike is about the ways in which the community comes together to look after their own, there is a tremendous amount of secrecy and mistrust that also circulates. In their reflections of a simple, glorious past, I never encountered people talk about caste or their treatment by members of the communities they worked for.

The material circumstances of Kachchhi weavers' lives have seen an upheaval over the last twenty years. The earthquake of 2001 brought with it the establishment of several development agencies and there were a lot of capital investments made in improving infrastructure in the region. As regards craft and tourism in Kachchh, the earthquake is often presented as the event after which everything changed. The Rann Utsav, a large state-sponsored tourist event that takes place in the Rann of Kachchhh each winter, brings around 8000 tourists from around the world. This event has also been a post-earthquake initiative. Kachchh is now recognized as a place for craft tourism, and a lot of artisans can make at least part of their income by participating in these initiatives. The financial precarity experienced by artisans just 20 years ago, while acknowledged, is not dwelt upon. And for those artisans who reside close to Bhuj, in villages that have come to be associated with a particular craft practice, the representation of being an artisan is constantly negotiated against the realities of life.

**Entrepreneurial Citizenship and the Anxieties it Raises**

In her book *Chasing Innovation: Making Entrepreneurial Citizens in Modern India* (2019) Lilly Irani considers the ways in which innovation and design have become the engines that propel forward entrepreneurship in India today. Drawing from her work with a large design firm in Delhi, she suggests that entrepreneurship and civic participation through entrepreneurship has become foundational to articulating citizenship which strives to become hegemonic. Entrepreneurial citizenship, she says, “promises that citizens can construct markets, produce value, and do nation building all at the same time”(Irani 2019: 2). Furthermore, she says that this form of citizenship is presented as common sense and casts the interests of the ruling classes as everybody’s interest. Looking at the ways in which entrepreneurship and development have

intertwined in India, she considers the meaning of entrepreneurship in India's Five Year Plans which employed this term to suggest employment provision and the expansion of production.

"Growth through planned industrial production and the village charkha, or spinning wheel, gave way to promises of India as a nation of a 'billion entrepreneurs.' Citizens, nationalists had once imagined, ought to produce while the state deliberated, calculated, and planned development for the masses. Now citizens answered the call to plan, to feel out opportunity, and to experiment in the nation's future. What was once the province of economists, urban planners, and sociologists expanded to include innovators more likely to be generalists than experts" (Irani 2019: 13).

Entrepreneurship today then seeks to generate value and create markets. And because it is so deeply entrenched with development, it has changed the way in which development is conceived and enacted. Design, Irani says, provides "a civic pedagogy of entrepreneurship" (Irani 2019: 54). During liberalization, in the struggle to harmonize understandings of knowledge, culture and technology with intellectual property regimes, innovation emerged as a source of value that every Indian could produce. For Irani, innovation refers to the potential to both modernize and generate economic growth.

As attitudes towards expanding traditional craft markets in Kachchh show, these interlinkages between culture, technology and intellectual property regimes are not uncommon. For instance, access to high count cotton and wool yarns was a result of advances in technology that have become part and parcel of traditional, handcrafted textile production. And the interest in securing GI by the weavers and ajrakh artisans' points to an interest in garnering intellectual property certification. I argue that the impetus on design in entrepreneurship that Irani talks about is very much taking place within the traditional craft sector in Kachchh, though it may not

be fully recognized just yet. I say this because while the idea of the artisan-designer is gaining popularity, it is not yet the majority form of identification. However, what it means to be an artisan and an entrepreneur keep getting blurred.

Manoj Kaka, a weaver who works as a dyer, talked about dyeing as a craft form that belonged to the Meghwal weavers of Kachchh. While it had been well documented that dyeing was traditionally a craft practiced by the Khatri community, Manoj Kaka's insistence on incorporating dyeing as not merely an activity but an expertise amongst the Meghwals points to his own, tumultuous relationship with dyeing and with Karigarv. Originally hired as a weaver at Karigarv, Manoj Kaka had enrolled in a development initiative that trained artisans in natural dyeing practices. After completing his training, Manoj Kaka would do a lot of yarn and cloth dyeing for Karigarv. He had a permanent dyeing workshop set up on the NGOs premises. I contend that it is through Manoj Kaka's attempts at incorporating dyeing as a practice that historically belongs to the Meghwal community that represents the ways in which artisans are experimenting in laying claim to the work that they do and the traditional communities that they belong to. The anxieties of what it means to be an artisan in Kachchh today is reflected in the ways in which artisan are looking to reinforce their artisan narratives and identities.

Indigo dyeing in process (Photos by the author)

Between local NGO interventions, application to global craft markets and the joining together of artisan and designer, artisans are constantly required to find ways to validate their livelihood and community membership. The largest weaver in Bhujodi for instance, is considered to be shrewd for the manner in which he leans into his identity as a village weaver. Living and working in Bhujodi, he has a showroom adjacent to his residence within the same compound. He is not the only weaver to have his showroom near his home. However, his compound stands out for providing a beautiful and romantic sense of village life for a first-time tourist to Kachchh. The compound is accessed through a beautiful carved wooden gate. The compound is pristine with a cow shed on one side and a beautiful romantic looking cow to boot. The walls are washed with this light blue color and there is *lipad* (mud and mirror plastering technique which is a Rabari craft) on and inside of the actual house. The shop is almost directly in front of the gate when you enter and inside are piles of fabric neatly stacked against the walls of the room. The left side of the room has acrylic rugs and shawls and runners and placemats. And as your eyes sweep to the right you'll see high thread count cottons and wools. The right side of the shop has all the most expensive yarns – hand spun wool and Sakala, all natural dyed and end with the products that reflect that latest innovations in design, for example Sakala and eri silk natural dye saris. The sweep from left to right also reflects a significant increase in price (and prestige in being able to buy and own a handcrafted, natural dyed product). There is also a sweep from traditional objects with color combinations that are made with local customers in mind, to those that appeal to urban, global consumers. Unadorned, grey sheep wool durries cover the floor. Tea or *chaas* (buttermilk) or water is always served in ceramic cups or brass glasses and come on a brass plate. The artisan attending to the customer is almost always dressed in

handloom, natural dyed shirts and pants or sometimes a plain cotton vest that is streaked with dye (natural of course) and very occasionally a dhoti.

**Social Design for Development**

Each year, as part of the larger design education curriculum, undergraduate students at India's oldest design school, National Institute of Design (NID) have to engage in a project where they learn to apply design to specific real-life situations. In 2018 the third-year textile design cohort was required to engage in a project that focused on the participatory approach of social design for development. The project was conceived and designed in collaboration with Karigarv. Karigarv supplied the students with yarn from a Kachchhi, short strand cotton variety called Sakala as well as handspun *desi* wool from local Kachchhi sheep. Over the last few years Karigarv has been in the process of developing these local yarns to create woven products that are branded as local, sustainable, organic and environmentally responsible. They have measured the success of the Sakala value chain revitalization project through the number of weavers working with Sakala today, the number of designers within and outside India for whom they have become a primary supplier of Sakala and the use of this cotton by bandhini and ajrakh artisans alike. *Desi* wool is a newer value chain revitalization project Karigarv has initiated. In 2018 Karigarv was still in the process of developing yarns and (re)training Rabari women in hand spinning it. Foregrounding sustainability, the textile design cohort was tasked with creating products that would locate Kachchh and its environment, within stylish, contemporary products that signified a form of ethical production for global, urban markets. Taking the participatory approach mandate seriously, this year, unlike previous years, the cohort of textile designers would work alongside 4 weavers from Kachchh, identified once again by Karigarv.

Rabari women engaged in hand spinning at a Karigarv workshop (Photos by the author)

This first foray into co-teaching was supposed to be a space in which the artisans could learn what it is that designers do, and design students in turn, could learn to collaborate with artisans while also learning from their technical expertise and life experiences. Together, this collaboration would result in design solutions that bridged the experience and expertise of both groups. Through this interaction, the importance of good design was to be imparted to both parties (artisans and designers). Good design was not market driven. It had the ability to create new markets and as such required serious attention. The aim was to create something specific, relevant, on trend and new. Entrepreneurship, and successful entrepreneurship at that, was woven throughout this collaboration and located within good design. The pedagogy of design was presented as a free-flowing process, something that manifested differently for different people and thus did not follow a formalized methodology. Design could be gleaned through sharing and through doing. It was sentient. In their 3 years at NID, the students had internalized this learning. They had loose schedules. Their day consisted of experimenting with various techniques, hanging around and chatting and working on projects late into the night.

The artisans chosen for this collaboration had all graduated from The Handloom School in Madhya Pradesh with a Certificate in Design, Entrepreneurship and Management (CDEM).

There they had received training in entrepreneurship, taken some English language classes, learned about color trends, and completed one-week internships at various business that specialized in handloom, like Fabindia and Jaypore in Delhi. These artisans were in their twenties. Unlike the 20-year-old design students, most were married and had children. These artisans were not master craftsmen. Except for one artisan, they were job-workers, employed by master craftsmen. They belonged to villages that had been thriving weaving centers in the past, but today were relatively unknown. Unlike Bhujodi, a village approximately 10 km from Bhuj, which has become synonymous with Kachchhi weaving through its proximity to Bhuj, NGO interventions and Archana Shah's design label Bandhej, these villages did not receive the same kind of attention and interest from tourism.

In prior weeks, the cohort of textile designers had visited Kachchh where they had been hosted by Karigarv. The NGO had helped to organize their trip, introduced them to textile artisans in Kachchh and oriented them to Kachchh's unique geography and environment through presentations and fieldtrips. Karigarv's value chain revitalization projects had been fueled by concerns over climate change and environmental degradation in the aftermath of the 2001 earthquake. In the process of setting up these projects, Karigarv had also been able to evoke social and economic connections between artisan, farming and herding communities that had once been essential in maintaining a local economy in years past. In relinking these communities, both value chain revitalization projects, re-envisioned a traditional past through products that subscribed to concerns of global ethical consumption, legitimating and reimagining Kachchh as a romantic place of craft production.

The four weavers identified by Karigarv to participate in this project had then traveled to Ahmedabad to join the textile students in the classroom. On the first day, the artisans and design

students made visits to various textile retailers in the city to gather examples of branding and display. I joined them on the second day when the design students were asked to share a trend study they had been working on over the past few days. Speaking in English, the language of instruction at the institution, students took turns talking about the ways in which the effects of larger social and environmental change had impacted market trends, giving examples of veganism, body positivity, homestays and compact living spaces. As these examples suggest, the students' trend studies were oriented toward global social and environmental concerns that resulted in the design of products that were familiar to global, ethical consumers.

The artisans, speaking little to no English at all, sat quietly during these presentations. Noticing that the language barrier would need to be addressed, the professor running the class asked students to speak in Hindi or Gujarati so as not to exclude the artisans. With some coaxing, some students took it upon themselves to translate what was being discussed for the artisans present. However, it wasn't just language that divided this group. The examples the students had chosen to illustrate the impact of social and environmental concerns on market trends were very far removed from the everyday lives of the artisans. Though the designers and artisans were supposed to be equal participants in this project, differences in language and worldview were already placing them on unequal footing.

After the presentation, the artisans and design students broke up into groups of five, consisting of four design students and an artisan. They were asked to brainstorm design ideas to create products using Sakala or *desi* wool that would feature social or environmental concerns currently being experienced in Kachchh. While the design students asked the professor a lot of clarifying questions about what the task involved, the artisans remained quiet, and conversation once again reverted to English. After some discussion, the groups were asked to present their

ideas to the class after which they spent the rest of the day working out how they would give those ideas material and aesthetic form. The rest of the day was unstructured except for a technical demonstration made by the artisans later that afternoon. The demonstration consisted of the artisans setting up a loom with Sakala threads. Envisioned as a chance to allow the artisans to show off their expertise and for the design students to learn how Sakala needed to be treated to be used on the loom, the demonstration was supposed to be an exercise in sharing knowledge and expertise. However, it turned out that none of the artisans present had ever worked with Sakala yarn before. They had to put the theoretical knowledge they had into practice for the first time in front of this audience.

Witnessing the day's events had been frustrating for me. Having spent enough time around designers, some of whom were trained at this institution, the minimal intervention approach to letting the artisans and designers explore and figure out how to communicate with one another and come up with product design ideas was familiar to me. I had heard a lot about design pedagogy and training during my time in Kachchh. These stories of life as a design student were often followed by fond memories of the knowledge and perspective they had gained in design school. Helen Rees (1997) provides a history of design within Britain in her essay "Patterns of Making: Thinking and Making in Industrial Design." She argues that "one of the defining characteristics of designers is their understanding of and ability to predict consumer desires, they work at one remove…The skill of the designer is first to abstract consumer needs and aspirations, and then to give them material form" (Rees 1997:118). The idea then that design comes out of being able to understand human values and sensitivities and can therefore create markets when done well, links the idea of creativity to value creation. However, while the textile

design cohort had been trained to internalize this connection, the artisans had not. Their certificate program had not asked them to think like designers.

**Anxieties about Sakala, Plain Yardage, Creativity and Powerlooms**

When the weavers got back to Kachchh, I went to visit them at their homes to find out what they had thought of the co-teaching experiment they had been a part of. All of them voiced some form of confusion and frustration which essentially came down to them not being able to understand what was expected of them in that situation. After their visit to NID, Karigarv's director invited the artisans over to find out how it went. While they had had no trouble venting their frustrations to me, they did not do the same during this meeting. The project would continue over the next month, after which the artisans would travel to NID again, with their finished products for an exhibition-cum-sale.

Several artisan-designers I encountered were often skeptical of Karigarv's value chain revitalization initiatives. They saw the branding and marketing of Sakala and desi wool as working against artisan interests. For example, Praveen Bhai adamantly told me that Sakala did not allow artisans to expand their market access. Instead, he believes that it is a tool used to keep weavers in their place. The production of Sakala yardage in global markets, which has been the way in which the Karigarv has been able to account for the visibility and success of Sakala, is the aspect of Sakala production that Praveen bhai dislikes the most. He contends that the production of plain cloth does not safeguard Kachchhi extra-weft weaving techniques and can very easily be produced on power looms thereby having the direst effect on handloom weaving in the district. He works in high count cottons, wool and was experimenting with the use of bamboo fiber to weave cloth when I met him, but he would not use Sakala.

In presenting Praveen Bhai's view, I aim to draw attention to the intensity of his feelings about Sakala rather than debate whether his views about that yarn hold true or not. His skepticism about the yarn was tied to his feelings about the strategy that Karigarv had used to present a product that was entirely Kachchhi in its identity, whether it was woven as plain yardage or with extra-weft weaving. Yes, Sakala had generated employment for Kachchhi weavers, but what did it mean if what was being woven was predominantly plain yardage?

He was not the only weaver I met to voice this view. Furthermore, I had heard this point of view from weavers who use Sakala and desi wool in extra-weft weaving. Each time, I have been struck by the intensity of feeling that has accompanied these comments and the palpable anxiety that even well-established weavers have in being outcompeted by textile manufacture. Karigarv had assisted the Kutch Weavers Association in filing the application for Geographic Indication. It was an NGO formed in the wake of the earthquake to link artisans to markets. They had actively brokered deals with a variety of artisans. They also had a shop which sold various Kachchhi crafted products. In a sense they had been set up to be the ultimate middle man and it was this understanding of the work they did that seemed to put the weavers in particular on edge. As the language of design, innovation and ownership of creativity got lodged within a sense of what it meant to be an artisan in Kachchh, however, Karigarv's role in brokering connections between artisans and markets was eyed with suspicion. When I asked the artisans I have met from The Handloom School whether or not they described themselves as artisan-designers, they told me categorically that they were artisans and not designers. However, beyond pointing to a possible arrogance in attitude, and voicing frustration at that designation, they did not really elaborate on what made artisan and designer distinct categories.

In looking at artisan-designer collaborations which have become crucial to development initiatives for artisan communities in Kachchh today, it is possible to see the pervasive impressions of design and innovation expressed through the entrepreneurial logic of craft engagement. And yet, the ability to design and innovate does not automatically democratize the contributions or the benefits of craft production for artisans, but merely muddies the waters. Within artisan-designer collaborations, there is a hierarchy of value that is at play. The designer is often urban, formally educated in design, familiar with, if not belonging to, a middle-class experience which imagines itself to be open, secular and 'experienced'. The artisan on the other hand, is often rural, without formal education in design and often (though not always) without formal education past school. The artisan holds a lower class and caste position than their urban collaborators and their experience is structured by the realities of their daily life. Additionally, their livelihood is founded upon their ability to harness and authenticate their traditional community membership and identity. Engagement with what is deemed to be traditional is crucial to the claim of being an artisan. Within these collaborations then, the artisan is rarely seen to be open and secular. It is through engagement and exposure to design that these qualities may be imbibed by them, and 'experience' gained. The figure of the artisan-designer then attempts to bridge these categories, unsteadily. Unsteadily, because their exposure to formal design training may build confidence in their craft and in experimentation, expand their production, and allow them to reach niche global craft markets but it does not internalize that urban, middle-class, upper-caste outlook that is also tied to design.

Outside of this specific collaboration, however, the impact of design and innovation also manifest on a community level. The weaving community in Kachchh provides a prime example of a community in the process of a shift. The weavers in western Kachchh are Meghwal, a

registered Scheduled Caste in Gujarat. Villages like Bhujodi which have become synonymous with Kachchhi weaving, have only been recognized as such in the last twenty-odd years. Historically, they were known to be Rabari villages. The Rabaris are a herding community registered as a Scheduled Tribe in Gujarat today. The Meghwals worked in service to the Rabaris for several generations. Today however, many Rabari families have moved away from Bhujodi, giving up herding altogether. The families that have remained have seen a shift in dynamics with the Meghwals, as the weavers have gained more recognition for their craft and seen more profits. This has resulted in shifting the power dynamics within these communities – the largest weaver in Kachchh, who lives in Bhujodi and employs at least 70 weavers throughout the district, now also employs Rabari women to spin *desi* wool yarn for him. Additionally, as weavers have diversified their skill set, some taking on the work of dyeing, which has traditionally been assigned to the purview of the Khatri community who engage in both *bandhini* and *ajrakh* printing, there has been an attempt to legitimize the skill of dyeing within the history of the Meghwal community. While it is definitely true that some weavers had knowledge of and practice with dyeing, expertise in the craft of dyeing has never lain with them. Furthermore, the assigning of expertise has been produced by those engaged in craft development and education.

Precisely this negotiation of what gets to be included or remains hidden, in the way in which artisans tell their stories about their past and their craft has interested me because of the diverse logics of craftsmanship that have come to be lodged within a contemporary Kachchhi craftsperson. Furthermore, the attachment of certain products and certain aesthetics as being representative of good design within traditional craftsmanship, pulls the physicality and materiality of craft and craftsmanship in close proximity to one another.

It was unsurprising then that the artisans were confused by the day's proceedings.

Within the Kachchhi weaving community, it is these slights – referring to someone as shrewd or the insistence on incorporating a craft practice that has not historically belonged to your community to maintain a historic link between the work that occupies you on a daily basis and your membership to a community – in which the murkiness of what it means to be a craftsperson in contemporary Kachchh get expressed. So is the negotiation of present circumstances, whether in the form of leaving out details about machine made products for local markets in being able to claim the identity of artisan, or in the incorporation of dyeing as a part of Meghwal history. Because within nostalgic retellings or claims to practices in the contemporary are the locations where what it means to be an entrepreneur, artisan, designer, or an artisan-designer get worked out.

**Dhamadka – a conclusion**

I wanted to introduce Santosh to Ali Bhai an Ajrakh artisan and screen printer in Dhamadka. I hoped that a productive business relationship could be established between them. I had spent quite some time with Santosh visiting artisans who were in the midst of producing various projects for him. On these visits, I got to watch how he and the artisan he was working with determined and negotiated the progress and design of a project underway. Having gotten to see the way in which he conducted business and who he conducted business with, I had let Santosh know that this family was not in the same caliber of ajrakh artisans he usually worked with. They would likely require more direction.

When we got there, Ali Bhai's father was sitting smoking *bidis* with a neighbor. Ali Bhai and his brother were folding screen-printed cloth into bundles. They had recently renovated their house, which looked beautiful with new tiles and pink walls. Ali bhai's mother, and his wife, were also chatting with the men. I introduced Santosh to them, and he started to explain to them

the kind of work he did, asking them if they might help him produce a sample. He pulled out a piece of paper that had on it, diagrammatic figures of a stole with a single natural dye saturated one end of the stole and gradually faded to white at the other side. He pulled out the cloth he had with him and explained to them what he needed done. They were interested in the work. However, being unfamiliar with this method of working, they looked at the cloth and the type of dye job it required and started to voice their concerns about whether such a dyeing job was possible and whether that cloth sample would be able to hold and retain the dye. These concerns stemmed from the experience they had and the kinds of work they were familiar with. Ali Bhai and his family worked as screen printers. They also block print for local textile markets using blocks that do not conform to Ajrakh motifs or are either made at home with the use of nails. At some point, someone in the room questioned whether the sample of cloth he was showing them was actually made of cotton. I saw Santosh get affronted at this question. As the conversation continued with everyone talking over one another, it became clear that rather than building trust, this conversation was creating more doubt and mistrust between parties. Santosh was starting to lose his patience and it became clear that even though Ali Bhai and his family were vying for the job, they would not be getting it.

Sample of block printing done for local markets (Photo by the author)

Sample of block printing done for local markets (Photo by the author)

Screen printed cloth in Dhamadka (Photo by the author)

Santosh's method of conducting business did not translate well and the misunderstanding between Ali Bhai and his family and Santosh grew as the conversation increasingly turned toward proving what each party knew about dyeing. It ended up being quite an intense and slightly unpleasant visit because on display was not only Ali Bhai's desperation to for work but also a complete mismatch in expectations about how business was conducted between the artisan family and Santosh.

On our way back home, Santosh and I stopped by a juice stall to rehash what had just happened with me advocating for giving this family a chance even though they clearly did not have the skill set that he required and was used to. Frustrated, he told me that the situation Ali Bhai and his family found themselves in was of their own making. Had they taken the time to invest in a design and entrepreneurship course, they would not find themselves in their current predicament because through exposure to design and collaborations with designers, they would have better work coming their way. When I pointed out that perhaps they did not have capital to invest like that, he responded by naming various people he worked with who had been in similar circumstances. He said that because they had taken the risk to invest in such a program and worked hard at it, they had been able to better both their social and economic status, stepping out of precarity. This conversation, or rather fight, stuck with me because I could not understand how someone like him who worked so closely with a variety of artisans could so fully have internalized this idea of self-reliance, risk and hard work as the makings of a successful, self-made entrepreneur. Surely, he understood that investment in design training did not magically make an artisan a successful entrepreneur. It was the first time I clearly understood how the rhetoric of design had become lodged so deeply within the logic of entrepreneurship in craft production. It was also the first time I was able to see how design was used to make invisible

certain structural constraints and precarity that placed the onus of risk entirely on the artisan. Additionally, I began to see the ways in which ideas about design, and good design, were so central to the value Santosh placed in his work of forging relationships between artisan and designer.

Santosh had left Karigarv to make a difference. To be in a position where he could clearly draw a line between his actions and their impact on the lives of artisans. Working for Tom had provided him that opportunity. By working alongside artisans who were not established names four years ago, he had played a central role in curating artisans who developed their skill and expertise around what was considered good design and small production. All this work that they did was consolidated around an idea of what design is and that the design that is worth engaging with will not only push you in what you are or think you are capable of doing, but also will be small batch with a lot of experimentation. Furthermore, this design thinking will be creatively satisfying even if it is slow to begin.

During a phone conversation we had, he complained about people getting too big for their boots and not recognizing what Tom had done for him. I found this intriguing because Santosh himself has many problems with Tom. I remember asking him why he thought the artisans owed Tom, or for that matter him, this loyalty. Santosh used to complain about how Karigarv would constantly remind artisans of the role that the organization had played in their success. He had told me, as other artisans had, that they did not appreciate the NGO implying that they owed the organization something in return. I had suggested to Santosh on the phone that maybe he was behaving similarly and that if the value of his work, as he understood it, was to create and provide opportunities for growth, then that also came along with understanding that people had the right to choose to work with someone else.

Anxieties about getting and maintaining work, as well as anxieties about what in means to be at craftsperson in Kachchh are rampant. While design has been used as a tool of entrepreneurship and is presented as being accessible to anyone who is willing to engage with it, it conceals within its operation a number of practices of behavior and attitudes towards work that need to be further interrogated.

# CHAPTER 5

## Conclusion

My dissertation research on the impact of trade-not-aid-development practices on Kachchhi artisan work and lives examined the ways in which artisan labor functions within capitalism. The figure of the artisan has been a politically potent one in Indian history, often used to critique a single understanding of development as well as process of industrialization. Through the research that I carried out in Kachchh with traditional artisan communities and the weaving community in particular, it becomes clear that artisan labor and the practice of traditional crafts are bolstered by industrial and capitalist processes. Traditional craft production lies well within the purview of capitalism. The use of design and entrepreneurship that Kachchhi artisans increasingly employ and rely on to expand their business practices are essential in anchoring traditional craft production within capitalism. Furthermore, in Kachchh it is possible to see how the historic legacy of what it means to be an artisan is in constant negotiation with a new idea of entrepreneurial citizenship (Irani 2019).

The tensions in determining what it means to be an artisan in contemporary Kachchh are often seen in the branding and marketing strategies that artisans employ along. However, mobilized through trade-not-aid development, these strategies increasingly rely on logic of empowerment and the commodification of artisan labor itself to remain successful in global, ethical artisanal markets. In my dissertation I argue that the use of design as a tool of entrepreneurship, coupled with the logic of empowerment inherent in trade-not-aid development strategies, lead to a lot of unease and anxiety for artisans in determining who they are and what they know. Negotiations of what an artisan is in relationship to a designer, and an entrepreneur

are often worked out and negotiated through nostalgic retellings of the past as well as contemporary narrative about the meaning of their work and lives.

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