

Challenging hierarchies, enhancing  
capabilities:  
Innovations in design and business  
education for handloom weavers in India

Ruth Clifford

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I, Ruth Clifford, declare that this submission is my own work, and has not been submitted for any other academic award. The use of all materials from sources other than my own work has been properly and fully acknowledged.

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# Abstract

This research critically analyses the recent development of design education for traditional artisans in rural India. It focuses specifically on handloom weaving, which, across rural India is the second largest source of employment after agriculture. Handloom, however, continues to be afflicted by low wages and viewed as skilled labour rather than as a creative profession. The 'informal' embodied knowledge of weavers is widely de-valued against 'formal' knowledge gained through school and university education as well as government skill development schemes.

A lively discourse currently exists around the problematic divides between urban-educated designers and the artisans who simply execute the work of designers and are excluded from, or unable to access urban design institutes. In this discourse, weavers continue to be perceived as 'artisans' and never as designers, leaving little room to bridge this gap.

In the last decade, two educational institutes have been established that challenge this dualism as well as the hierarchies that have formed between the 'artisan' and 'designer': Somaiya Kala Vidya (SKV) in Kachchh district, Gujarat, and the Handloom School (THS) in Maheshwar, Madhya Pradesh; each forms a focused case study for this research. Both institutes aim to nurture innovation and entrepreneurship, to enable artisans to connect directly with growing luxury markets for authentic, ethical and high-quality craft.

Using multi-sited, ethnographic case study methodology, I captured the lived experiences of student and graduate weavers, faculty, staff, founder-directors and other stakeholders of the institutes, to measure the successes and challenges of the two institutes against their stated aims, as well as those of the handloom community and the state. By specifically inter-referencing craft development and education, previously treated as distinct areas, I have aimed to understand the relevance, sustainability and value of handloom in India for the weavers and for contemporary markets.

Findings show that design and business education enhances the creative and aspirational capabilities of artisans, as well as their cultural, social and economic capital, as they mobilise within the now globalised spaces of the village and market network. Uncertainties

remain over the hierarchies that can develop within the weavers' communities, as well as a potential decline of embodied skills in younger generations. However, design and business education supports the activation of the artisans' agency to influence social change in their own craft, creative and village economy and even the education itself. Considering the findings, the thesis proposes an urgent need to change the broadly held perceptions of the handloom industry as skilled labour and realise its full creative potential with a view to the upliftment, desirability and sustainability of craft livelihoods.

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# Author's note

## **Names**

Throughout this thesis I refer to the names of weavers by their first names because many share the same surname. I refer to other informants such as teachers, institute staff members and stakeholders by their surname.

## **Figures**

All images are photographs taken by the author unless otherwise stated.

# List of Abbreviations

- ADC** Additional Development Commissioner
- AIACA** All India Artisan and Craftworkers Welfare Association
- AIFW** Amazon India Fashion Week
- AIVIA** All India Village Industries Association
- AIHB** All India Handicrafts and Handloom Board
- APCO** Andhra Pradesh Cooperative Organisation
- CDI** Craft Development Institute
- CII** Confederation of Indian Industry
- CRC (KHAMIR)** Craft Resource Centre
- DCH** Development Commissioner Handlooms
- GI** Geographical Indicator (intellectual property)
- GSHHDC** Gujarat State Handloom & Handicraft Development Corporation
- GST** Goods and Service Tax
- HSVN** Hathshilip Evam Hathkargha Vikas Nagam
- IFAM** International Folk Art Market (Santa Fe)
- ILO** International Labour Organisation
- INR** Indian Rupees
- ICU** Indian Cooperative Union
- ICSID** International Council of Societies of Industrial Design
- IICD** Indian Institute of Craft and Design
- IIHT** Indian Institute of Handloom Technology
- IIT** Indian Institute of Technology
- INTACH** Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage
- KMVS** Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan
- KRV** Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya
- KVIC** Khadi and Village Industries Corporation

**MOU** Memorandum of Understanding  
**MSU** Maharaja Sayajirao University  
**NGO** Non-Governmental Organisation  
**NFD** Nehru Foundation for Development  
**NID** National Institute of Design  
**NIFT** National Institute of Fashion Technology  
**NRI** Non-resident Indian  
**OBC** Other Backward Caste  
**SC** Scheduled Caste  
**ST** Scheduled Tribe  
**SKV** Somaiya Kala Vidya  
**THS** The Handloom School  
**UNESCO** United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation  
**UNIDO** United Nations Industrial Development Organisation  
**USP** Unique Selling Point  
**UW** University of Wisconsin  
**WDC** World Design Organisation  
**WSC** Weavers Service Centre

# India



Figure 1. Map of India showing locations of two case studies (Podcasting handbook, 2018)

# 1

## Introduction

*'We have it in our blood. You can't throw out what's in your blood. You have this feeling for the work which comes from your heart. If a family member leaves for a month, we feel something is missing. Our work is also like our family member.'*<sup>1</sup>

This study is about education for hereditary artisans in rural India with a specific focus on handloom weaving<sup>2</sup>. I present a critical analysis of two institutes that have emerged in the last two decades to provide a formal curriculum in design and business, with an aim to connect artisans directly with luxury Indian urban and global markets. The institutes aim to challenge hierarchies between 'artisans' and 'designers' that existing craft development initiatives have been criticised for perpetuating. This study draws upon the successes and challenges of the two focus case studies to understand how design education for artisans challenges or strengthens the critiques of craft development that have preceded it.

The two institutes are Somaiya Kala Vidya (SKV) (and its predecessor Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya) in Kachchh district, western India, and The Handloom School (THS) in Maheshwar, Madhya Pradesh, both regions of India with longstanding craft and textile weaving traditions. In Kachchh, crafts are a distinct part of the maker's identity and their culture and have attracted distant markets seeking meaningful alternatives to mass-produced goods, particularly considering an increased awareness of environmental and social damage done by large scale mass production. Kala Raksha, founded in the early 1990s, was one of many organisations that sought to tap into this market and simultaneously provide remunerative employment to artisans. However, it was largely dependent on

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<sup>1</sup> Siju, P., 2016. Weaver-Entrepreneur: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 1 August.

<sup>2</sup> 'Handloom' is a term widely used across India to describe both the weaving apparatus, a manually-operated loom for weaving cloth, and the industry as distinct to the 'powerloom' industry. I discuss the term in more detail in section 1.4.1.

visiting professional designers to adapt their crafts for markets that were unknown to the artisan. Beginning to see that in this situation the artisan's own creativity was limited, Kala Raksha's co-founder Judy Frater set up a design education institute with an aim for artisans to 'innovate within their traditions' and become artisan-designers.

In contrast to Kachchh, Maheshwar handloom has a longer history of commercialisation, and its royal patronage was simultaneously based on a love of luxury and maintaining a thriving economy. After a steady decline throughout the twentieth century, the handloom industry in Maheshwar was 'revived' in the 1970s by descendants of Maharani Ahilyabai Holkar, the ruler of Maheshwar from 1767 to 1795, who is revered for her patronage of the industry. The revival initiatives were the Rehwa Society and later WomenWeave, both of which focus specifically on employing and developing the skills of women for which weaving provides a more remunerative and dignified form of employment than the only other alternative in Maheshwar: low paid, physically strenuous agricultural labour. The educational initiative that developed out of WomenWeave, The Handloom School, has followed a similar trajectory to SKV but it focuses only on handloom and invites weavers from all over India, as well as from Maheshwar. While both SKV and THS focus on maximising the creative capabilities of artisans, THS has a stronger focus on employment generation and thus aims for its graduates to become entrepreneurs.

Handloom in India currently employs over four million people (G.o.I Ministry of Textiles, 2010) and craft is the second largest employment provider in rural areas after agriculture. Handloom accounts for ten to fifteen percent of the total fabric produced in the country but few figures are available on its value to the domestic economy. Figures on handloom's export value do exist though, and according to the Indian Brand Equity Foundation (2018) it stood at \$355.91 million in 2017 – 18. The reason for the scarce details on this value is largely because it is an unorganised activity (although attempts to formalise the industry have been made through skill development schemes and the introduction of the Goods and Service Tax (GST) in 2017). The regions of Maheshwar and Kachchh are both situated in

states with fewer numbers of weavers than other states in India, Madhya Pradesh positioned at twentieth, and Gujarat twenty-third out of twenty-nine states (GOI, 2010). The two institutes are premised on a view that today handloom can only be compatible with niche, luxury markets. Such an approach contrasts with development initiatives in states with higher numbers of weavers such as Dastkar Andhra in Andhra Pradesh, that aims to meet an 'everyday' market for handlooms. Furthermore, the majority of weavers in Kachchh and Maheshwar receive stable incomes from weaving (supported by a range of factors, one being the NGO presence and the institutes which are the focus of this thesis), in comparison to many weaving clusters in Andhra Pradesh and other regions with large numbers of weavers. Indeed, the context of handloom hugely varies from one region to the next and there will be no approach to development that suits all.

From the nineteenth century onwards the handloom industry experienced decline due to a variety of factors, including the imported and local mechanised imitations of handloom, the centralisation and mechanisation of ancillary industries such as spinning and cotton cleaning and the stagnation of agriculture which co-existed with handloom processes. As I show in chapter 2, the decline of the industry was nuanced. While colonisation and industrialisation did do damage to the industry, previous discourse, particularly by nationalist economic historians, tended to ignore weavers' agency to adapt and innovate, which in turn has influenced paradoxical views of the industry within mainstream discourse: On the one hand handloom symbolises a traditional local identity and self-sufficiency and on the other, weavers are viewed as 'outmoded' and 'objects of welfare' at odds with fast-moving technological advances (Mamidipudi and Gajjala, 2008; Venkatesan, 2009). Thus, artisans can be presented as, simultaneously or in different narratives, marginalised, objectified and romanticised. This polarisation is reminiscent of colonial attempts to preserve 'traditional' South Asian crafts and train artisans in new technologies (Dewan, 2001; McGowan, 2009) which continued into independent India, alongside economic dualisms between rural and urban India (Breman, 1996), and informal and formal knowledge (Pottier, 2003; Singh, 2013; Basole, 2014; Escobar, 2018).

The latter two dualisms have been supported by the proliferation of design education institutes after India's independence which have only been accessible to urban English-speaking middle classes. While one of the main aims of the first institute dedicated to design, the National Institute of Design (NID), was socially-oriented to meet the diverse needs of the whole Indian population, there has been wide-ranging criticism within both academic discourse (Ghose, 1995; DeNicola and DeNicola, 2012), as well as by former director Ashok Chatterjee (2005), on the divides created by the designer who has the creative skills and knowledge of the contemporary market, and the artisan who simply executes the design. In this scenario, the artisan's status is reduced to labourer, and his traditional and embodied knowledge devalued.

SKV and THS aim to challenge these divisions. Institutionalised, long-term design and business education for rural artisans is a relatively new phenomenon in India and therefore has received little empirical research. By considering the artisan as designer and/or entrepreneur, and inter-referencing studies of craft development with education (considering formal education and manual skill learning), this thesis will add a significant contribution to the existing studies of traditional crafts, which by and large analyse craft and design in parallel and rarely consider the notion of the artisan as designer. I use the term 'artisan-designer' or 'weaver-designer' to refer to an artisan who has been educated in design in the institutionalised setting. However, I also discuss the ways in which design or qualities associated with design such as innovation and problem solving, are widely considered an inherent part of the informal, embodied learning of craft skills (for example by Mamidipudi, 2016; Marchand, 2016; Bunn, 2016), and therefore explore what happens to this knowledge when a weaver undertakes formal learning in design. Such a discussion also requires the analysis of the key terms used in this thesis including craft and design, which I do in section 1.4 drawing upon the theoretical framework of this thesis.

## 1.1 Crossing disciplines

The textiles at the focus of this research, the Kachchhi 'shawl' (the label applied to modern interpretations of Kachchhi handloom products) and the Maheshwari sari, transcend and straddle the categories of handloom textile, artefact, clothing, craft object, gift, ceremonial object, museum exhibit, skilled work and commodity.<sup>3</sup>

These labels and categories carry complex histories and cultural and social baggage. Woven textiles have been at the centre of global trade, industrial revolution and exploitation, while craft has come to signify an ideology of a way of life before the destruction caused by the textile and other capitalist led industries. Craft, a loaded concept as I will show in section 1.4, has become used to describe a range of commodities from luxury coffee and beer, to kitsch souvenirs. These paradoxical associations of craft resemble attempts to simultaneously reject and feed mass-production and capitalism. I discuss the definitions and interpretations of craft below alongside other key terms, and how I use these terms throughout this thesis. Because this study focuses primarily on the producers and less so on the consumers, the textiles as clothing will form less of the research. Indeed, to delve into the complex associations of the sari and uncut Indian textile with notions such as identity, the body and political diplomacy would take this study beyond its limits. However, to help determine the relevance of handloom which has found increasing popularity and compatibility within the global and burgeoning domestic fashion markets, some examination of the fashion industry as an important market for the students and graduate weavers of each institute, will be required.

To acknowledge the categories that handloom textiles are positioned within, this study inter-references disciplines of craft development, education, design history, material culture studies and anthropology. Such an inter-disciplinary approach will help to weave together a narrative that incorporates the various active agents in handloom production and innovation. These include: 1) the handloom textile itself

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<sup>3</sup> Note that the terms 'fashion' or 'design' are not usually applied to the handloom textiles discussed in this thesis, and that indigenously or 'traditionally' produced textiles are often positioned in opposition or as a novel accompaniment to western fashion and design (Gaugele and Titton, 2019, p. 12, citing Rovine).

and the meanings and values the textile imbues as it moves from one category or context to another; 2) the makers of the textiles, who can be weavers, artisans, master weavers, labourers, entrepreneurs or designers, and indeed all, or several of these at different times in their life, and the ways in which the makers' relationship with the textiles, the community and the institute determine role choices and formation of their identity; 3) the technology and tools used to weave the textile; 4) institute as educational initiative with development, employment generation, innovation nurturing and craft preservation ideals and aims; 5) intermediaries such as fashion designers; and 6) the market.

My own background is in textile design. Both my MA by Research and subsequently the preparation for, and early stages of the PhD together worked as a form of apprenticeship in the other disciplines listed above. This 'apprenticeship' involved extensive auto-didactic learning through reading, attending seminars, conferences and talks across different universities and departments and making connections with fellow researchers in these disciplines. Despite harbouring some anxiety at not being specialised in a more 'academic' discipline than textile design, it was an understanding of, and interest in the handloom textiles themselves that initiated the research. Furthermore, I deemed my experience as a designer and my understanding of design important for a study of design education (although the category and label 'design' is challenged throughout this thesis) that would present a different insight into studies of traditional crafts and craftspeople than those preceding it, which have largely been undertaken by anthropologists. This interest and experience also facilitated conversations and helped grow rapport with weavers and weaver-designers. 'Apprenticing' in the disciplines listed above enabled me to analyse the broad socio-economic, cultural and historical factors that both influence and are influenced by the design and business education at the centre of this research. By inter-referencing all these fields, this study makes an important contribution to the existing lively discourse around craft development, offering new theoretical and empirical insights.

## **1.2 Aims and objectives**

This research aims to present an in-depth analysis of design education for artisans, to highlight its efficacy and its challenges in relation to the aims of each institute, specifically: in helping artisans make products attuned to contemporary markets, reducing the gap between the artisan and market, and positioning handloom as a sustainable and desirable employment option. Specific objectives include:

- To examine how design education reflects the cultural context in which it is situated
- To explore the value and importance of handloom weaving from the perspective of the artisans and that of the market
- To investigate and compare the transmission of design knowledge in the education institute alongside the transmission of weaving knowledge in the domestic sphere
- To investigate whether design education can lead to desirable and viable occupations in handloom

Fieldwork was conducted over a period of fifteen months from September 2015 to March 2017, using case study and ethnographic methodology. Being a snapshot in time, this study could not consider continuous changes and developments of the institutes and the dynamic influx of new batches of students year upon year. The data would have been too broad and not possible to collect, analyse and collate into an in-depth study in the space of three years. However, by applying the particularisation approach to the case studies (Simons, 2014, p. 465), the cases 'capture and report uniqueness in all its particularity' and it is hoped that the findings will be universally significant. Thus, it is hoped that the presentation of the findings from the two in-depth case studies will tell a story that readers may be able to recognise and apply to their own context.

As well as the limited research on design education for artisans in India, there are also few empirical studies on each weaving tradition of this study. Therefore, this research, which includes visual, physical (in the form of woven samples), and

written evidence of both weaving practices, will provide a multi-dimensional knowledge resource that incorporates the combined input of the research participants who include weavers, institute members and teachers. It is hoped this resource will be accessible to a wide audience including academics across the disciplines discussed above, actors working in craft development initiatives in India and perhaps other developing countries where craft provides an important source of livelihood, as well as those involved with the focus case studies of this research. It is hoped this analysis could set a benchmark for future expansion and further development with other struggling craft communities in India and even different parts of the world.

### **1.3 Personal background**

My introduction to craft in India was over ten years ago when I conducted a design placement at Kala Raksha, the charitable crafts organisation that the education institute of the same name formed from, situated in Sumrasar Sheikh village, 23km north of Bhuj. Over a period of two months I worked on re-designing a large selection of garments, accessories and homeware products that had not sold. With help from the design coordinator who spoke a little English and a National Institute of Design (NID) intern who was there as part of his diploma project,<sup>4</sup> I liaised with artisans and tailors to suggest adaptations in colour, placement and product. The project was experimental and challenging, and overall probably much more beneficial to me, by way of getting to know the various crafts, region, people and the culture, than it was for Kala Raksha.

During this placement, I also visited Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya, the 'first design school for artisans', located in Tunda Vandh village near Mandvi in south Kachchh, which, in 2008, was in its second year. I would not know it at the time but spending several days on the campus interacting with the female embroidery artisan students, the two American teachers, the NID interns as well as various visitors to

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<sup>4</sup> As part of the NID diploma course, students spend several months working either with a craft community, social enterprise or corporate company where they work to a design brief. See chapter 2.

the campus and Kala Raksha headquarters would later prove to be influential as I began to position such experiences within a wider context of craft and design in India for an MA.

During my stay I visited the first Rann Utsav, a desert festival in Kachchh which began two years earlier and has since escalated in tandem with a fast intensifying tourist industry in the region. A huge crafts exhibition is the festival's main attraction. In 2008 there were no sprawling luxury tent parks that are there today, nor the theme-park style construction at the edge of the White (salt) Desert, the other popular place to visit that lies at the border between Kachchh and Sindh in Pakistan. Instead an imitation village was built. Several groups of artisans of different communities were invited to build a *bungha* (round-shaped mud house with thatched roof) in the traditional style distinct to their community, to live in during the festival, around five days, where they also displayed their craft. This was a project organised by Kala Raksha. The combination of these craftspeople on display and the masses of stalls selling commodified, cheapened versions of crafts of the region, demonstrated an example of both the mass-manufacturing of tradition (Jaitly, 1989; Kasturi, 2005), and objectifying and romanticising of 'traditional' artisans (Greenough, 1995; McKnight Sethi, 2013; Wintle, 2017b). The replica village did not continue in the following years, with preference given to the expanding exhibition-cum-sale and luxury accommodation.

My second, more formally organised placement was at Anokhi, a commercial clothing brand founded by British-Indian couple Faith and John Singh at the height of the flower-power era of the 1970s. The floral, 'ethnic-chic' designs which fused western style florals with Rajasthani/Persian block printed designs flourished within this market and the lifestyle of the time. Like Fabindia, the other iconic craft-fashion brand founded at a similar time by American John Bissell (see chapter 8), Anokhi's main market was export but moved focus to the domestic market in the 1990s when the economy was liberalised. The two companies' reach has expanded to all corners of India to coincide with a burgeoning middle class and appreciation for the country's 'traditional' craft, while continuing to maintain important export markets (Edwards, 2016). Commentators put down such

popularity in part to the consumer's desire to define their identity within nationalist attempts to 'distinguish themselves from the Indian masses and the West' (Tarlo, 1996, p. 326).

The placement at Anokhi involved a more structured schedule of developing two collections of hand-painted designs for block prints, and two series of experimental workshops in block printing villages surrounding the city. The two placements provided me with insights into the diversity of crafts in India, the different approaches to craft development, as well as the interactions and tensions between both craft and design communities and the disciplines of 'craft' and 'design'.

Following these placements, I conducted an MA analysing the ways in which block printed textiles in Kachchh (initially intending to cover Rajasthan too, but narrowed its scope to allow for greater depth), were being adapted and developed for contemporary markets. I presented analyses of several case studies including Kala Raksha, alongside a foreign and local commercial brand and a local NGO. I also conducted interviews with artisans, out of which developed a discussion of key themes such as authenticity, designer and artisan collaboration, representation, ownership and recognition. Several artisans I interviewed had studied at Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya (KRV) and had developed names for themselves as independent artisan-designers. While such artisan-designers were innovating in interesting ways, demonstrating confidence in displaying and talking about their work and successfully selling to high-end clients, I also noticed the effects of individual creativity upon dynamics in a community who had traditionally held collective ownership of the craft. But this was just one theme of many more I began to explore during the PhD. I was keen to understand more about education for artisans, and spent several months seeking out similar approaches to KRV in other areas of India. I visited several handloom development organisations across India as well as government and non-government training schemes. The Handloom School in Maheshwar was the only other institute providing a formal curriculum to traditional artisans aside from some government-run institutes such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (IIHT), the Indian Institute of Craft and Design (IICD) in Jaipur and the Craft Development Institute (CDI) in Srinagar. All these government

-run institutes invite artisans alongside urban middle-class students. The reason for not including these was; (1) to avoid too broad a study that would not allow for in-depth study; and (2) these institutes are not located within easy access of most artisans who live in rural India and do not specifically cater to a particular craft or community. In this sense, SKV and THS could be considered as hybrids of education institutes and craft development organisations.

#### **1.4 Terminology and concepts**

The understanding and interpretations of the main terms used in the title of this research, or to describe handloom activity and its makers, are diverse and dependent on changing political and socio-economic contexts and ideals. This section discusses some of these interpretations within the context of Indian 'craft', its importance in modern-day India, and the ways it has been represented, drawing upon the theoretical context of this research. I also explain my justification for the terms used regularly throughout the thesis. Due to the ways in which the terms have been contested over time, there are overlaps between the definitions, particularly the terms craft and design, the distinctions between which have received lively debate across the theoretical framework upon which this thesis draws.

##### **1.4.1 Handloom**

Handloom weaving involves passing weft yarns horizontally through alternate sets of vertically stretched out warp yarns to create cloth. The term has been used to distinguish weaving on a hand-operated loom in pre-industrial Britain to weaving on a power-operated loom during the industrial revolution. The term 'handloom' is currently widely used in India to describe the same practice, while in other parts of the world 'hand weaving' is also used. However, the latter can get confused with other types of weaving such as basket weaving, which does not require a loom. The loom creates a sturdy frame over which to stretch the warp threads. Over the course of millennia, the loom has been adapted to increase the efficiency and ease of separating the warp yarns to create the shed, the space the weft yarn passes through, right up to the invention of the powerloom in the early nineteenth century following the inventions of power-driven spinning machines (Goody, 1982). The oldest evidence of basic looms such as the back-strap, ground loom and

vertical loom date to ancient civilisations of the Neolithic period (Broudy, 1979, p. 10). The discovery of loom weights at a gravesite in Mehgarh, Baluchistan dated to the seventh millennium BC (Askari and Crill, 1997; Edwards, 2011), gives evidence of the use of vertical looms which comprised of an upright frame, with warp threads hung from the top and weighted to the ground (Barber, 1991). The drawloom which allowed for complex patterned textiles by way of lifting multiple warp threads, came into use in the 12<sup>th</sup> century with the Muslims from Persia (Ramaswamy, 1985; Edwards, 2011, p. 88). Varadarajan and Amin-Patel (2008, pp. 17-26) position the Indian loom within a pan-Asian, Austronesian, Austroasiatic and African analysis of looms to demonstrate similarities and interchanges in technology and linguistic terms across these areas.

The earliest known treadle loom to be used in India is the pit-treadle loom (Broudy, 1979, p. 105), which continues to be widely used today including in Kachchh and Maheshwar, and more commonly referred to as the 'pit loom' (I will refer to it in this way throughout the thesis). The treadles are suspended from the shafts (which lift the warp threads) into a pit where the weaver operates them with his feet while sitting on the ground. The frame loom is a twentieth century adaptation of the pit loom built upwards from the ground. Chapters 5, 6 and 8 discuss the looms used in the two regions in more detail within a socio-economic context. The polarised narrative of weavers as romanticised symbols of tradition and outmoded in their use of traditional technology, ignore the subtle and nuanced adaptations of technology by weavers to meet the target markets and keep on top of orders. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 include discussions of the differing approaches to technology in the two regions and two institutes, as well as the agency of loom technology in the process of balancing innovation with maintaining traditions.

#### **1.4.2 Education**

This thesis is concerned with both institutionalised education – instruction in a classroom or campus that has been pre-planned in a curriculum – as well as informal education which is how weavers learn the techniques and skills in

weaving. Chapter 2 draws upon the history of design and art education and instruction in India to provide a critical context to the kinds of education that weavers might have received in the past and today. The development of formalised curriculums in what was then labelled 'fine art', 'decorative arts' and 'applied' or 'industrial' arts, occurred alongside the industrial revolution in Britain in the mid-eighteenth century (MacCarthy, 1972; Kriegel, 2007). British curriculums were exported to India from the late eighteenth century and throughout colonial rule (1857 – 1947). By separating out curriculums and categorisations, the colonial government was dividing society in accordance with economic and political needs (McGowan, 2003). Labour and class divisions along with the Cartesian mind-body dualism were strengthened in education just as they were in the growth of mass-production as I mention below.

Low numbers of traditional craftspeople entered colonial art or technical schools because many considered the skills learnt at home sufficient for pursuing a livelihood in their craft. Where craftspeople did attend these schools, they did so to learn literacy and escape their traditional occupation or to become technicians in mills and factories (ibid). Prior to the twentieth century, weavers would largely have been denied formal schooling. Since 1950, government elementary, further and higher education institutes have reserved places for 'scheduled castes' (the government's categorisation of historically oppressed castes), the category that weavers fall into, yet the education they provide bears no relation to their occupation as weavers. Indeed, many weavers view school education as quite distinct to learning weaving. Bhujodi weaver Dayalal Kudecha said:

'I used to think education happens only in schools. Now I understand this is also an education: to know one's craft and culture, one's history, society and social customs'.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Kudecha, D., 2016. Weaver-designer, SKV faculty: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 3 August

The level of formal schooling a weaver has largely correlates with his or her weaving skill. Thus, the earlier he or she leaves school, the higher level of skill he or she is likely to have.

Anthropological theories of apprenticeship and embodied learning in traditional trades and crafts informed my examination of the way weavers learn their craft. I draw upon Lave and Wengers' theory of situated learning (1991), which has been influential in the work of several anthropologists who have undertaken apprenticeship as field method to better understand how a craft is learnt (for example; Marchand, 2016, 2008; Venkatesan, 2010; Bunn, 1999; Dilley, 1999). Chapters 5 and 6 weave together theories of situated and embodied learning with my own fieldwork in Maheshwar and Kachchh, including my own weaving apprenticeship in Kachchh, to discuss the processes and techniques and the learning experiences of weavers in these two regions. Further, several of the influential theories by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu have supported analysis of the weavers' experience of learning weaving, learning design and setting up businesses. I draw upon Bourdieu's work on the *habitus* (which has been influential in the anthropological works listed above) in my analysis of learning the skills involved with weaving. The theories of taste, capital and fields of cultural production, have informed my analysis of weavers' experiences in the design education institute. Here, weavers expand their cultural capital and when socialising in new market spaces, they expand their social capital and increase their agency and ability to influence taste.

### **1.4.3 Design**

Before the founding of the National Institute of Design (NID) in India, design was a term rarely used and there is no direct translation of the term in any Indian language. Yet as a concept design was potentially in use at least as far back as when the first *naqshabandhs* (pattern-makers) came from Persia to handloom hubs such as Kashmir and Banaras.

In both British and Indian weaving industries, designing became synonymous with pattern-making (Puetz, 1999) (which the title *naqshaband* suggests), as a way of

communicating the 'intended design' to workers and staying competitive in increasing markets. Indeed, the designer is often considered as an intermediary between the client and producer (Aspelund, 2014, p. 7; Rees, 1997). This process is suited to larger scale production, and along with modern technologies facilitates standardisation. Such a process is particularly suited to weaving:

'There is a fluidity in the practice, design and art of woven textiles that enables textiles to fit easily with contemporary technology. A textile maker or designer who works at a small craft-shop level producing one-off pieces can, from the same conceptual base and using the same equipment, produce samples that industry can convert without fuss for factory production' (Dormer, 1997b, p. 168).

Dormer also considers that 'surely design enters everything one makes' (1997a, p. 11). Yet it is perhaps only through making this plan tangible through drawing or computer aided design (widely considered to be cognitive processes), to communicate the plan to the manufacturer and client, that design becomes a recognised process and profession. Therefore, while craftspeople learn their skills informally using observation and by actively participating in the craft, formal education is required to learn the process of design, a central aspect of which is developing an understanding of the market demand and client tastes. Thus, only those formally educated in design are considered bona fide designers with the ability to influence taste, which I discuss in relation to Bourdieurian theory throughout this thesis. Because the artisans who undertake design education at SKV or The Handloom School are encouraged to develop decorative textile products for luxury markets, this thesis is concerned less with dominant discourses in design studies that focus primarily on industrial product design. While functionality is considered in the design of their handloom textiles, the value lies primarily in the aesthetics, the connection with the maker and its cultural and social context (Rees, 1997, p. 120 and p. 128).

A designer must also have an understanding of how a product is made. In fact, making can also be a way of communicating an intended design (ibid, p. 129). However, for the educated, professional 'designer' the hands-on making usually stops at samples or prototypes. In chapters 7 and 8 I consider what happens when weavers graduate from full-time weaver to designer communicating designs to weavers. Here I draw upon Bourdieurian theory to consider changes of status and class and hierarchies, as well as the

anthropology of technology and embodied knowledge to consider links and disjunctions between the making and designing processes.

#### **1.4.4 Craft**

Handloom in India is considered a craft by its makers, promoters and markets, in the sense that it is 'an activity which involves skill in making things by hand' (Frayling, 2011, p. 9). According to Venkatesan (2009, p. 30), 'luxury weaves' came under the category of craft during the 'twin processes of industrialisation and colonial rule'. However, attempts at defining the term craft have been considered 'hopeless' by Dormer (1997a, p. 5). Other key thinkers on craft agree. Harrod (2018, p. 13) calls the term 'shape shifting'. Greenhalgh (1997, p.24) describes it as 'exuding a plurality which has more to do with confusion than perplexity' and that its meaning has continually changed and developed over the past three centuries. Marchand (2016, p. 8) describes craft as 'polysemous, ambiguous and often-contested.' Greenhalgh (cited in Dormer, 1997, p. 6) dates the divergence between craft, art and design to the 1920s, when 'craft' became intellectually isolated from both the pursuit of beauty (art) and purpose (design).

In the face of industrialisation, labour division and the alienation of the worker from his work, Marxist ideals chimed with the Arts and Crafts movement which sought to revive the crafts and liberate the craftspeople. Adamson (2013, p. xv) argues that the movement contributed to 'a modern invention' of craft, 'emerging as industry's opposite number or "other"'. He goes on to argue:

'What had been an undifferentiated world of making, in which artisans enjoyed relatively high status within a broader continuum of professional trades, was carved into two, with craftspeople usually relegated to a position of inferiority. This bifurcation divided the infinitely complex field of human production into a set of lined binaries: craft/industry, freedom/alienation, tacit/explicit, hand/machine, traditional/progressive (ibid).'

Adamson goes on to argue that John Ruskin and William Morris, the key pioneers behind the Arts and Crafts movement, failed to address the 'nuanced interdependencies' of the hand and machine' (Adamson, 2013, xvi). Positioning craft and machine as directly opposite supported such campaigns against industrialisation, and up until recently have helped manufacturers use the term to promote authentic alternatives to mass produced

generic goods. Frayling (2011, p. 9) argues such promotion was done ‘to reassure anxious customers in the face of global climate change and awareness of the damage of mass consumerism on people and the environment’. Similarly, in Indian craft development narratives, handloom textiles are presented as wholesome and ‘traditional’ (see discussion of the term ‘tradition’ below) and in direct opposition to powerloom, presented akin to the ‘satanic mills’ of Lancashire which ruined handloom weavers’ livelihoods. This discourse, as I will show in the following chapter, fails to address the large swathes of handloom weavers who have ‘progressed’ to powerloom out of economic necessity. The process of adapting from handloom to powerloom happens variably and irregularly. Tools introduced ‘extend the reach of hand skills, rather than replacing them’, and craftsmanship is also ‘necessary to make machines and other industrial tools’ (Adamson, 2013, p. xvi). These observations are missing from the discourse of the decline in handloom throughout the twentieth century which Roy (for example, 1993, 2002, 2008) has explored in depth. Influenced by Arts and Crafts campaigners, Indian craft revivalists such as Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay<sup>6</sup> was also against the term ‘industry’ even though many of the country’s crafts were described by the state as being produced in ‘cottage industries’ in relation to their commercial focus. Furthermore, the superimposition of British ideals onto India ignored the diversity of practices that ‘craft’ could cover. The nearest translation in Sanskrit is *kala* which according to Kumar Vyas (1991, p. 189) is a ‘unifying concept’ embracing all aspects of human ‘arts, crafts, skills and techniques’ ranging from dance to engineering (Balaram, 2005). When considering the range of skills and knowledge a handloom weaver possesses, the term *kala* seems more relevant to handloom weaving than simply craft, design or art (or even engineering) on their own. As Marchand (2016, p. 15), drawing on the work of Paulus Gerdes states, ‘the work of weavers embodies mathematical, geometrical and proportional understanding and experimentation.’ Marchand uses this alongside other craft examples to show how

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<sup>6</sup> Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay was the chief of The All Indian Handicrafts Board (AIHB) and the Indian Cooperative Union (ICU), and was a prominent figure in the rehabilitation, production and marketing of India’s crafts. Her writing reflected her devotions to handicrafts and celebrated them as ‘an important part of our rich cultural heritage’ (Chattopadhyaya, 1976).

craftspeople engage 'scientifically' in their work and thus challenges the notion that craft requires only bodily and not cognitive intelligence.

Fundamentally, the term craft has layers of meaning in different contexts. This thesis draws upon different strands of anthropological discourses around craft. When considering the process of learning weaving and design, I draw upon the discourse dealing with craft as embodied knowledge and situated learning and how such learning is inextricably linked with socialisation into a community. When considering the woven cloth as a designed or craft object, I draw upon discourses around craft as work and labour (DeNicola and Wilkinson-Weber, 2016; Herzfeld, 2004; Goody, 1982), economic and cultural commodity (Kopytoff, 1986; Clifford, 1998) and as a symbol or agent (Appadurai, 1986; Bayly, 1986; Gell, 1998) in both the market for traditional crafts and wider political, nationalist and development agendas.

For many of the artisan informants in this study, the impulse to weave involves both 'a desire to do a job well for its own sake' (Sennett, 2008, p. 9) and is also rooted in a sense of pride in their hereditary tradition and a sense of duty to ancestors and clients, as suggested by Purushottam Siju in the opening of this chapter. However, craft occupations are also associated with low social status, or even viewed as 'polluting' for their association with agricultural work, as well as being historically under-valued against art or design. In Kachchh in particular, the work of handloom weaving was often categorised as 'craft' by the weavers in conversations and interviews, hence the exploration of the term and category here and throughout this thesis. The adoption of particular terms and categories are likely to be influenced by craft development organisations, nationalist narratives around craft and the education institutes themselves. In Maheshwar, the weaving was more often categorised simply as 'handloom' by weavers. In both regions the term 'design' in English was used to discuss the combinations of patterns, motifs and colour on the cloth. As I discuss below however, most weavers would not call themselves craftspeople (or artisans) or designers, but simply, weavers.

#### 1.4.5 Artisan

The term 'artisan' is synonymous with 'craft' and so is also a contentious term. It is widely used to describe those who practice 'traditional' crafts in India (see below for a definition of tradition) including the handloom weavers participating in this research, although it can often be used interchangeably with 'craftsperson' in literature. The widely used local term *karigar* is probably the closest in meaning to the term 'artisan', often interpreted like 'artisan' as 'skilled worker who makes things by hand', although it literally means one who 'carries out work'. Weavers in India may be called weavers (*bunkars* -Hindi, *vankars* - Gujarati), *karigars*, master weavers or even *majdoor*, labourer, by different actors in the production and market network or at different times in their career. A similar interchanging of roles occurs in the *zardozi* (a style of embroidery) industry of Delhi discussed by Mohsini (2016), who critiques the contradictory representations of artisan as symbol of 'tradition' amidst the struggle for a national identity, and as victim of 'economic disturbance' (ibid, p. 147). I discuss in more detail in chapter 2 how such contradictions are rooted in the colonial efforts to preserve traditional arts while introducing modern machinery, which was continued by the post-independence government.

In the contemporary western world, the more popular title for one who makes luxury products with high levels of skill is 'designer-maker'. It is the social standing of the designer-maker and the value given to his or her work, that Frater, the founder-director of Somaiya Kala Vidya in Kachchh, hopes for the graduates of the design institute to become known as, by bringing together skills and creativity in craft and design.

Throughout this thesis, I strive to use the term 'weaver' rather than 'artisan' or 'craftsperson', based on the way the majority of the weavers who participated in this study introduce themselves. I also choose to use the term weaver to avoid the problematic interpretations of the latter two terms as discussed above, while considering the effects of the use of the terms 'artisan' and 'craftsperson' in marketing material and development discourse. The surname Vankar (weaver), of

most hereditary weavers in Kachchh, means their identity is literally determined by their occupation. Similarly, the community of Ansaris in Maheshwar (one of the largest alongside many others), are also known for, and directly associated with weaving, not only in Maheshwar where they are thought to have migrated to from Uttar Pradesh, but other thriving weaving communities too. I identify weavers who have gone through the SKV and THS courses as either weaver-designers, or weaver-entrepreneurs, depending on the trajectory their work takes them (which will be discussed in detail in chapters 8 and 9), and what they choose to call themselves. There may be exceptions depending on the different titles that graduates may choose, such as 'artist' in seeking a higher status.

#### **1.4.6 Tradition**

Tradition is yet another ideologically charged term that is used so broadly in craft development discourse in India its meaning gets lost. In the context of handloom weaving in India, on the one hand it is associated with caste occupation (which I discuss in detail in chapter 2), which weavers either strive to shed based on its subjugated status in the discriminatory caste system, or express pride in, based on ancestral ties and a sense of duty in providing *kapra* (cloth), one of the three basic needs alongside *roti* (food) and *makan* (shelter). When weavers discuss their occupation in this way, they regularly use the Hindi term for tradition, *parampara*. On the other hand, within the wider market network, nationalist and craft development discourses, 'tradition' used in tandem with craft, represents authenticity and cultural heritage and points to an idealised pre-industrial past. Such pairing of tradition, as well as the rural and vernacular, with craft was a key ideology of the Arts and Crafts movement (Greenhalgh, 1997, p. 31). The revival of craft however largely involves selecting traditions considered suitable based on romanticisation of the past (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992). Anderson (1991 [1983]) attributes the selection of suitable traditions and practises to the 'imagining' of communities based on idealised and bounded histories, occupations, geographies and nations. Such imagining and inventing of traditions risk removing objects, peoples and practises from real time (DeNicola and Wilkinson-Weber, 2016, p. 96 citing Guss), rather than as living, dynamic and evolving with time:

‘Real people, as the living organisms they are, continually create themselves and one another, forging their histories and traditions as they go along’ (Hallam and Ingold, 2007, p. 6).

The majority of weavers in this study have received the skills, designs and techniques of weaving from their parents or other family members, and this is a key reason for continuing the craft. I will however, also discuss newer entrants to the occupation who describe themselves as either first or second-generation weavers.

#### **1.4.7 Innovation**

If tradition is associated with historical practises, then innovation is commonly used to describe the new, novel or creative. The term ‘innovation’ was rarely uttered among the weavers themselves during interviews and conversations. Instead I often heard weavers talk of creating, or being asked of buyers to create, ‘something new.’ Kristeller argues that while creativity is often attached to novelty, it is impossible to create something completely original (Kristeller, 1983). Liep (2001) regards the term innovation as synonymous with ‘creativity’, which he describes as an ‘activity that produces something new through the recombination and transformation of existing cultural practices and forms’ (ibid, p. 2).

Hallam and Ingold (2007) avoid using the term innovation when discussing creativity, disagreeing with Liep’s argument that ‘true creativity’ (...) stands out here and there, marking unique moments and radical disjuncture’. They argue that the term innovation has become synonymous with modernity and breaking from convention, the celebration of the individual over the community and the focus on results rather than process. They seek to challenge the ‘polarity between novelty and convention, or between the innovative dynamic of the present and the traditionalism of the past’ (ibid, p. 2). They adopt the term ‘improvisation’ to refer to process and a world that is ‘always in the making’ (ibid, p. 3) and argue that creativity and improvisation are inherent in the transmission of skills from one generation to the next. The authors apply this argument to ‘creative’ practices such as dance, painting and calligraphy. While within some narratives, audiences

and markets, handloom weaving is presented as a skilled manual practice, I show throughout this thesis how handloom weaving can also be considered an art or creative practice, depending on the market or audience. Furthermore, it is the aim of design education to transform the handloom weavers into designers and thus their practice into creative professions while also ensuring weavers are accorded due recognition by the market, government and the wider public.

The term 'innovation' has been critiqued in a similar way to Ingold by Tunstall (2013), in the context of design intervention in non-western countries as part of development initiatives. Tunstall compares such intervention with colonial practices in making 'village life' modern. A design anthropologist, Tunstall refers mainly to interventions that involve attempts to improve or modernise village life, rather than attempts to improve livelihoods (such as crafts livelihoods). However, the discourses in design anthropology, craft anthropology and global design history around decolonising design and re-centering local knowledge, are particularly pertinent to the investigation of artisans becoming designers.

This thesis predominantly deals with innovation in terms of the aesthetics of the handloom textile. Indeed, SKV specifically encourages students to innovate within traditions (Frater, 2014), emphasising that 'tradition is more than technique' (ibid, p. 2) and therefore, students should reference the repertoire of patterns and motifs that make their products distinctly Kachchhi. However, I also consider the innovation of the technology used to weave the textile. In India, in line with modernist ideals, it was the loom technology that the post-independent government sought to innovate upon in efforts to increase manufacturing capacity and boost the country's economy. However, such ideals have also been contradicted by the efforts to preserve traditional craft practices. The two education institutes in this study encourage innovation within the parameters of 'traditional' loom technology, to maintain the label 'handloom', in materials, aesthetic layout and colour. Nevertheless, the dominance of the 'hand' in handloom can vary and adaptations in technology can impact the design and the level of certainty of the desired result (Pye, 1968), while avoiding complete automation. In chapter 7, I consider 'innovation' in terms of concept, use of colour,

placement, material and product, based on the classes taught at the two institutes, and how weaver-designers are striving to meet the needs of their target markets while honouring their community traditions. In chapter 8, I consider the impact of technology (and the innovation in use of), including the loom, graphing techniques, the computer and mobile phone upon roles, hierarchies and knowledge within the weavers' community. I draw upon anthropological studies of technology and skill (including; Ingold, 2000 and Lemonnier, 1992) to support this discussion.

These five definitions: design, craft, artisan, tradition and innovation have been widely debated across design history, anthropology and sociological discourse. In this thesis I do not intend to define these terms, rather to address their contested nature in my analysis of design education for 'traditional artisans' in India. The use of the terms 'craft' and 'design' and the role titles of 'artisan' and 'designer' in craft development narratives, as well as the coupling of design with 'intervention' in efforts to 'uplift' or 'revive' traditional crafts, have played a significant part in their polarisation as well as in creating hierarchies between the roles of artisan and designer. This thesis therefore, adds a new layer to the critical discourse around Indian craft development as well as craft learning, in considering how a formalised curriculum in design for traditional artisans might address or challenge these dualisms and hierarchies.

### **1.5 Chapter outline**

This thesis is structured to follow the biography of both the weaver and the handloom textile, from learning to weave, to learning design, business, navigating the market, and making employment, artistic or business choices. Before that, chapter 2 provides a broad context of handloom weaving and education in India, drawing upon key literature, and provides a critical framework and contextual background to this research and the development of design education for artisans. Chapter 3 discusses my methodological choices and the rationale behind my choices, and the importance of positioning and reflexivity in the research. A key aim of this research is to centralise the voices of the weavers and their accounts, actively seeking to avoid the 'othering' of artisan communities that has occurred in

previous craft development narratives. Chapter 4 sets out the case studies, by discussing the background and history of each education institute as well as providing a regional context to weaving in Kachchh and Maheshwar. Chapters 5 and 6 are about learning to weave in both regions, interconnected with a description of the process, drawing upon my own weaving apprenticeship, observation of others, film documentation and anthropological analyses of craft learning and embodied knowledge.

Chapter 7 explores the process of learning design through the different classes of the SKV and THS curriculums. Weavers are taught basic design principles and colour theory and are introduced to the aesthetics of the market they are targeting. Experiments and samples begin to express individual creativity and exploration of a theme, helped by close interaction with heritage and the environment. This practical learning alongside English classes, practising communication skills through regular presentations and interactions with visitors and buyers, and eventually at the jury and exhibition in an urban gallery helps students develop confidence and cultural and social capital.

Chapter 8 explores graduates' negotiation of the market and their role as either weaver-designer, weaver-entrepreneur or master weaver. Predominant themes include deciding on scale of production, the differences between, and agency of, technology and labour by ways of meeting market demands and determining value, and how value is negotiated and renegotiated in changing contexts and markets. Chapter 9 progresses from the specific decisions around design, production and marketing and discusses the ambitions and aspirations of student and graduate weavers of the two institutes from a broader view of the handloom industry, the weaving communities and the education system. Chapter 10 concludes.

## 2

# A historical and critical context of handloom development and education in India

### 2.1 Introduction

To provide a broad context of handloom weaving and education in India, this chapter inter-references several areas of scholarly research: 1) Economic and textile history, including studies of the organisation of handloom production; 2) The influences of colonial rule, caste and nationalism on handloom production, school education and technical education for weavers; 3) Craft development and modernisation in post-Independent India against both nationalist and global agendas. The latter discourse arose in response to economic historians' reports of the damage done to local industries by the imports of British machine-made imitations of local Indian textiles, as well as India's own industrialisation from a nationalist perspective. These studies were later criticised for ignoring nuances and localised examples of innovation and adaptation. According to recent lively debate on craft development since British colonial rule, it has been based on two conflicting premises within an overriding metanarrative of damage to craft industries by colonial rule: On the one hand, the artisan and the handloom product symbolise tradition, heritage and national identity, and therefore preservation of their craft can feed the 'national and global salience for the local' (Kawlra, 2014, p. 17). On the other hand, weavers are viewed as 'outmoded' against fast moving technological advances, and 'objects of welfare' or subject to exploitation (Mamidipudi, Sayamasundari and Biker, 2012). I demonstrate how such a dichotomy has been derived from a heavily Eurocentric historical discourse that positions western development at its centre and former colonies or developing countries at the margins.

This chapter therefore discusses efforts to 'revive' and 'develop' crafts based on ideals of technological 'modernisation', or encouraging the preservation of 'tradition', as a nostalgic

alternative to the degradation caused by such modernisation. Within this polarised narrative, education or 'training' for weavers in post-independent India has been mostly designed to keep weavers weaving and in their village, while teaching new skills and use of new technologies, a method championed by Gandhi and his *swadeshi* campaigns, to fight British imperialism and be self-sustaining. Furthermore, Dalit activist movements, specifically those led by anti-caste activist Bhim Rao Ambedkar resulted in increased access to formal education among Dalits (literally 'oppressed', the term Ambedkar applied to describe historically subjugated castes), as well as positions in government. The structure of this chapter will therefore follow these discourses to build a context within which design and business education has developed and responded to. Firstly, I give a brief outline of the origins of weaving in India, which helps to provide a deeper context into the historical position of weavers in society and how this continues to influence some of the above discourses today.

## **2.2 Weaving, religion and caste**

The earliest written evidence of weaving activity in India appears in religious and economic texts, which also give us an insight into the contested and changing status of weavers. In the Vedas and Upanishads, spinning and weaving were appointed a God-like status, and compared through numerous metaphors, to creation. As Puntambekar and Varadachari (1926, p. 5) note, 'the continuity of life itself and of the human race is compared to the continuity of a well-spun thread'. An alternative name for the Hindu God Vishnu is *tantuvardan* or 'weaver' because he is said to have 'woven the rays of the sun into a garment for himself' (ibid). The words *tantu* (warp) (which is also where the word *tantra* – literally 'to weave' derives from), and *ottu* (woof) appear in the Rig Veda (Ramaswamy, 1985, p. 1).

C. A Bayly (1986, p. 294) writes: 'the notion of creation is central to the caste foundation myths of weaving communities which themselves embody a claim for high status', but also that the status of weavers has been ambiguous. The occupation is paradoxically valued for providing a basic need (often termed as *seva*, occupational service or religious duty) and devalued for its impure associations with agricultural manual labour, which for most weavers in rural areas

has been an additional occupation to weaving. According to the laws of Manu, widely considered to be the origin of the caste system in India,<sup>7</sup> weavers were either considered members of the *shudras*, the lowest group in the four *varnas*, or outside of caste all together. They had been widely referred to as ‘untouchables,’ because of their perceived “polluting” status, before Gandhi renamed them Harijans (‘children of god’) and later Ambedkar, Dalits. The differences in status related to place of work, market and material specialism. In rural regions weavers relied on agricultural castes for grains in payment for work, while weavers in urban areas worked for money (ibid), for the urban bazaar or royalty.

Another reason for the ambiguity of weavers’ status is the confusion within different societies over whether weaving is considered an art or industry (labour), a confusion that continues today. *Shilpa* is the historical Sanskrit name which encompasses several crafts, including, according to Mishra, sculpture, painting, terracotta or any other art which represents a ‘reconstituted form’ (Mishra, 2009, p. 4). Mishra, referring to the writings of Panini, notes that weavers were mostly known as *grama silpin* which suggests weaving was considered a *vritti*, occupation (rather than a skill, craft or art per se). However, in contemporary times, the Shilp Guru award is the highest award given to master craftspersons by the government in recognition of innovations and creativity in traditional craft. It is often given to weavers as well as artisans of other non-textile arts. The *raga silpin* was associated more closely with the creators of temples or models of idols which gave them a God-like status in fashioning religious artefacts, whose creations were permanent. Cloth on the other hand, is impermanent. In the Rig Veda, the God creator of the Universe is a craftsmen, the ‘allmaker’ (Visvakarman) ‘imagined concretely as a sculptor, a smith, or as a woodcutter or carpenter’ (Doniger, 1981). Vishvakarma craftsmen in South India, whose ‘craft activities are intrinsically connected to acts of creation and the spiritual universe’, reject views of their low status as craftsmen

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<sup>7</sup> ‘The social logic of caste evolved in kingdoms in the first millennia AD among military men and local patriarchs. From the tenth century onwards, many representations of caste hierarchy appear in epigraphy of royal transactions and proclamations’ (Ludden, 1996, p. 111).

(Brouwer, 1995). The name Vishvakarma is often adopted by members of low castes to raise their status, and in Maheshwar there is a family of agricultural workers turned weavers who have (adopted) the name Vishvakarma.

Another large community of weavers living in Maheshwar is the Muslim Ansari community, thought to have migrated from Banaras in Uttar Pradesh, where there are large numbers of Ansaris still living and weaving today. The sixteenth century revered *Bhakti* poet Kabir, is believed to have been born into the Julaha (now more commonly known by the more respected name Ansari) Muslim community of weavers in Banaras, and his poetry often referred to the religious significance of weaving. The following is taken from the first stanza of *The Master Weaver* (Dharwadkar, 2003, p. 110):

‘You haven’t puzzled out  
any of the Weaver’s secrets:  
it took Him  
a mere moment  
to stretch out the whole universe  
on His loom’

The *bhakti* movement proliferated in the thirteenth to seventeenth centuries and aimed to spread religious teachings to lower caste communities who had previously been denied such knowledge under the *gurukul* system. It became particularly popular at the time as the subjugated castes needed strength and hope when weakened by their oppressive rulers (Singh, 2006). Furthermore, *bhaktism* was followed by Hindus, Jains and Muslims, and members of both religions have attempted to claim Kabir as their own because of his contested origins. This movement then found renewed importance in the emergence of nationalism and the campaigns for independence at a time when caste divisions were becoming emphasised according to political and imperial needs (Bayly, 1999; Dirks, 2001). The weaving communities in Maheshwar, Kachchh and across India continue to worship Kabir, and listening to, or singing devotional *bhajans* based on

Kabir's poetry is the most common form of worship. In Kachchh, weavers also worship Ramdev Pir, another Bhakti saint also worshipped by both Muslims and Hindus. Small shrines featuring the image of Ambedkar, who could be described as the twentieth century equivalent to Kabir in his rejection of caste, and emancipation of oppressed castes, can be found in Kachchh and Maheshwar.

Weavers' education primarily involved learning their craft, informally within the family or under an apprenticeship with a master weaver. While occupational castes, such as weavers, would have largely been denied education (Kumar Desai, 2010), weaving communities may have had an informal 'school' organised by the community itself teaching basic reading, writing and arithmetic (Singh, 2013). Furthermore, official schools specifically for oppressed castes were founded as early as 1852 when Jotirao Pule, anti-caste campaigner and social reformer founded the first school for Dalits in Maharashtra, the state where Ambedkar was most active, and which has seen most success in the progress of Dalit education (Zelliot, 2002).

### **2.3 Village production**

In Indian villages, crafts communities would settle together in an area which would often be named after their community, such as Vankar Vas ('weaver area' - Gujarati). The *nyat* (sub-caste) or *biradari* (community) determined their occupation (Sahai, 2005, p. 531). The Vankars (weavers) in Kachchh are a sub-caste of the Meghwals (Dalits). However, throughout this thesis, I use the term community to refer to the weavers in both Maheshwar and Kachchh which is the term the weavers themselves use.

Living closely together secured economic and social networks and gave members a sense of security and familiarity based on shared cultural identity. It was also beneficial to share tools, facilities and labour amongst the community to support each other's work demands. In weaving communities that have become 'industrialised' and reliant on labour division, a community and kin network ensures the availability and reliability of skilled work for master weavers (Haynes E., 2000; De Neve, 2005). Additionally, caste alliance is maintained by arranging

marriages within the same *nyat* or *jati*. For the Vankars in Kachchh, a woman from a family of active weavers is preferred as a wife so that she can contribute to the family business.<sup>8</sup> However, often if the new wife does not know weaving, her husband and in-laws will teach her.

Reliance and trust were also extended to neighbouring communities to which craftspeople had ceremonial, ritual and business ties with. This system is commonly called *jajmani* and has been at the centre of a wide range of anthropological studies of Indian villages. Wisner (1936, p. 6) defines the *jajmani* system as a village network of relations, within which the lower castes were servants to the higher castes or *jajmans*, providing their services and receiving either money, products or services in return. These relations continue from generation to generation. In Bhujodi village in Kachchh, the Vankars were reliant on their *jajmans*, the Rabaris for payment of grains, as well as access to land in exchange for their woollen cloths or working the land (see chapter 4). This collective grouping of occupations within a hierarchical system has been widely debated in sociological and anthropological discourses, with the work of Louis Dumont (1981) commonly situated at the centre. Dumont contentiously argued that hierarchy based on purity and pollution is the overarching basis of Hindu thought.<sup>9</sup> His theory has been criticised for 'legitimising the coercive side of caste relations, dismissing the individual agency of Hindus (most strongly by Mattison Mines), and presenting society as static "oriental" spirituality rather than action and agency' (Bayly, 1999, p. 20). Nicholas Dirks (2001) and Gloria Goodwin Raheja (1989) argue that preference of community over individualism has been strengthened by those in power, because it suited the state's agenda of dividing society into clean and unclean castes as well as collection of taxes. At the same time, the British government associated the conservatism of weavers and the caste system as being the main cause of resisting innovations in handloom technology by

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<sup>8</sup> Traditionally across India, brides will go to live in her in-laws' home.

<sup>9</sup> The terms 'purity' and 'pollution' have been widely used in anthropological discourse focusing on the Indian caste system. As Bean explains (1981): 'Some occupations such as barbering and sweeping, are characterised as polluting; important rites of passage, such as birth and death, are reported to be organised around the management of pollution; contact with a person of a much lower caste is said to be polluting.'

weavers (McGowan, 2009, p. 85), while it has been widely argued that weavers' subversion or acquiescence was dependent on what suited their ways of life and organisation of production (Bhattacharya, 1966; Roy, 2002).

#### **2.4 Urban production**

Many of the urban weaving centres mentioned in Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, an ancient political and economic treatise, written between c.350 and 275 BC, continue to thrive today albeit experiencing fluctuation and decline over the last few centuries.

Kanchipuram, Madurai and Tanjavur are centres in the south mentioned for their fine cotton and silk exports (Ramaswamy, 1985, p. 1), and historians have also speculated that Maheshwar was one of these because its presumed old name 'Maheshla' is mentioned (Dubey and Jain, 1965). A much wider range of literature exists on urban textile production because of its links with trade and state or royal patronage.

Organisation in production varied from one region to another, which makes it 'difficult to provide a generalised account of the artisanate in India' (Roy, 2007, p. 1). However, I draw upon studies of important weaving centres other than the regions at the focus of this study, for two reasons: First, there is a long history of migration of weavers, depending on the economic and geographical climate, which Roy and Haynes (1999) argue strengthened the South Asian handloom industry. For example, most of the weavers in Maheshwar have ancestors who have migrated from Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and possibly South India when invited by eighteenth century ruler Queen Ahilyabhai Holkar. More recently there has been an influx of weavers from Barabanki in Uttar Pradesh coming to Maheshwar for its better opportunities in handloom. Second, weavers come from all over India to The Handloom School, many from the important handloom clusters which are the focus of the research I draw upon.

In former princely states such as Maheshwar in early modern and medieval India, crafts were strongly patronised by the state rulers, and it was these patrons who had the ultimate say on the style and aesthetics of the craft product which would either be used by the patron him or herself or gifted to fellow rulers. There is a wealth of literature which examines the politics and economy – which crafts played an important role in – from the rule of the Delhi sultanate (1206 - 1526), the Vijayanagara empire (1336-1646) (flourishing

predominantly in northern India and southern India respectively), and the Mughal Empire (1525-1857), spreading across the majority of India.

This literature includes records of migration of weaving communities seeking better opportunities and higher status. The community of Sourashtras who were silk weavers, claimed Brahmin status upon arriving in Madurai from Gujarat in the early seventeenth century (Roy, 1997). According to Roy (2007 p. 71) silk weavers everywhere enjoyed a position of urban middle class, most likely because silk was of higher aesthetic and luxury value. Silk also imbibed ritual quality, being the preferred fabric for clothing worn for ritual and worship (Bayly, 1986, p. 289). Migration to the city and adoption of silk weaving therefore led to the Sourashtras' *sanskritisation* (Srinivas, 2000), social mobility by moving up the ranks of caste. Furthermore, according to Roy the Sourashtras (Roy, 1993, p. 105) are representative of the communities of specialist weavers whose craft survived competition with imports and the increase of powerlooms and mills, because of their high level of skill and the difficulty of imitating their designs on machine.

Along with wool weaving for local markets, Kachchh has a long history of the weaving of *mashru*, silk and cotton cloth. *Mashru*, meaning 'permitted' in Arabic, was woven for the Mughal royalty and also traded to Europe, China and Japan (Agrawal, 2006, p. 331). Silk was highly valued by Muslims, but sharia law dictated that silk could not be worn next to the skin, therefore *mashru*, which was woven in satin weave with silk predominating the surface and cotton the reverse, allowed the elite to dress in luxury silk without having it next to the skin. Interestingly while most *mashru* weavers in Kachchh have the name Vankar, or according to the 1881 Kachchh Gazetteer, 'Vanjars' they claimed different origin, that of be kshatriyas, descendants of 'Sahasrajun of Puranic fame' (Campbell, 1980). The same gazetteer mentions cotton spinners and weavers of cotton for export to Zanzibar, but there is no mention of wool weavers. It isn't until the 1971 gazetteer (Patel, 1971, p. 242) that we see mention of wool weavers. The scarce mentions of wool weavers in state or documentary literature is likely to be due to its production for local markets rather than for royalty or trade. To my knowledge, no literature currently exists to suggest weavers moved from wool to silk. During my own fieldwork, I met a weaver in a village near Mandvi (the home to most Kachchhi *mashru* weavers) who was from a wool weaving family and had learnt wool weaving early on, but later took up work with a *mashru* master

weaver where he quickly learnt the necessary skills. While *mashru* gained popularity within local communities for both every-day and ceremonial dress, today most of these customers choose imitations made with polyester on powerlooms. Additionally, while development initiatives have worked with *mashru* weavers, wool weaving has found more success in urban and global markets, and there is only a small number of *mashru* weavers in Kachchh today. This demonstrates a distinct turn around in the status and recognition of these two weaving traditions.

## **2.5 Muslim weavers**

While the caste system originated in Hindu beliefs, similar hierarchies existed in Muslim society too (Ahmad, 1973), reflecting the fact that many Hindus converted to Islam during Arab, Turk and Persian invasions. In the central and north eastern provinces, low-caste Hindus were often employed by higher status Ansari Muslims, considered to be more skilled (Rai, 2012). However, weavers were not necessarily highly regarded amongst Muslims (Bayly, 1986, p. 295). Like Hindus, Muslims could elevate their status by moving into finer cloth. The meaning of the name Momins (another name for Ansari weavers), who continue to dominate the industry in Banaras and in Maheshwar, is 'faithful'. They also took on the name *nur-baft* 'capture of light', light being a symbol of the divine in Islamic tradition. Yet another name given to Ansaris is Julahas which, widely considered to be a degrading name, was assigned to those weaving coarser cloths (ibid).

## **2.6 Guilds and *karkhanas***

In medieval and modern India, guilds were another form of organising the production and marketing of handloom cloth, and training of weavers in urban areas. While *panchayats* (village councils) dealt with a broad range of matters within the sub-caste or community, including both socio-cultural and economic, in guilds, a government official would deal only with economic matters (Sahai, 2005, p. 541). However, guilds seemed to be more commonly associated with traders than artisans. Urban guilds worked as an intermediary between the state and the market and crafts training was a significant part of the guilds along with collective regulation of product, labour, entrepreneurship and protection of property rights (Roy, 2008b). The most prominent guilds were the trade guilds of Ahmedabad which included separate guilds for cotton weavers and silk weavers, of which the highly skilled *ashavali* sari weavers and traders, thought to have been the origin of

Banaras styles, probably made up a large part. Referring to accounts of European travellers such as Francois Bernier and Francisco Pelsaert, as well as the 'court functionary Abul Fazl', Roy notes that guilds worked as 'adjuncts to another powerful institution, the *karkhana*' (2008, p. 99).<sup>10</sup> Not all *karkhanas* (workshops or factories) would require guilds as the market was already there (the royal court). The goods produced in the *karkhanas*, such as shoes, armoury, looms and textiles (Verma, 1994, p. 3), were predominantly for the royal courts to use themselves or give as gifts. I found no literature on economy and production in Maheshwar, and so no evidence of *karkhanas* existing there. However, the wealth of literature on Queen Ahilyabai Holkar as the patron of handloom saris which were given as gifts to other rulers, is mentioned in literature on the queen (for example in Burway, 1922; and Dubey and Jain, 1965), and so suggests that *karkhanas* are likely to have existed during Ahilyabai's rule. This same literature also suggests that Ahilyabai produced designs herself, which corroborates with additional previous reports of *karkhanas* portraying the particular ruler as arbiter of taste, especially when they had enthusiasm for crafts, one notable example being Emperor Akbar. The artisan on the other hand, would only be recognised for his craftsmanship. The employees of *karkhanas* were more skilled and financially better off than the bazaar artisan (Roy, 2008, p. 100).

During the height of Mughal arts and crafts patronage, *karkhana* workers enjoyed several privileges and security in the job, and children of artisans were guaranteed a job when they reached the appropriate age (Verma, 1994, p.3). Verma does not go into detail about how artisans were trained in the workshops but suggests they would have learned within the traditional family apprenticeship system (ibid, p. 130). Textiles were high in demand amongst the high society, and the Mughal Emperors held reverence and value in cloth and decorative arts. Wearing a luxury cloth such as the Kashmir shawl was considered a symbol of prestige (Verma, 1994 p. 64). A shawl or other luxury cloth would form part of the *khilat* ('robe of honour' in Arabic) which was presented by the Mughal *Padsha* (Emperor) (Cohn

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<sup>10</sup> According to Verma (1994, p. 7), *karkhanas* (workshops or factories) emerged in Persia in the twelfth century in a rudimentary form under the Ghaznavids, and expanded into an organised industry during the 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Verma goes on to say available evidence shows that the first *karkhanas* in India developed under the Delhi Sultanate and were probably based on those in Persia, although their earlier existence in India cannot be ruled out.

S., 1989, p. 313), to a subordinate subject by way of 'effecting the incorporation of the subject into the ruler's body' (Bayly, 1986, p. 288, citing Cohn).

The number of royal *karkhanas* decreased during Aurangzeb's reign and did not improve until his successors' reigns (Verma, 1994, p. 43). From the seventeenth century, as the Europeans began trading in India, they began to take control of *karkhanas*. Early attempts by the English in developing silk *karkhanas* at Patna (1681-21) were not very profitable. 'Around 1900, royal *karkhanas* affiliated to regional courts still existed, but they were not the principal employers of skilled artisans of the towns' (ibid, p. 104). The *karkhanadar's* role changed also. In North India, the *karkhanadar* became a master rather than the workshop owner and administrator, as in Mughal times. In the rest of India, the *karkhanadar* remained the owner and would hire a master.

As I demonstrate in chapter 4, the decline in royal patronage in Maheshwar led to a decline in the industry as a whole. The organisation in the town today involves several workshops in varying sizes that could be considered to resemble *karkhanas* in Ahilyabhai's period, following revival of the industry. However, they are likely to take on a different kind of organisation when working for different markets. Master-Artisan collectives have also existed in Maheshwar, another example of the organisation of craftspeople in nineteenth century India, along with the Ahmedabad guilds, artisan panchayats, and merchant communities (Roy, 2008, p. 103).



Figure 2. Hierarchy of relationships ('putting out' system), (adapted from Varadarajan and Amin-Patel, 2008, p. 113)

## 2.7 Weaver, master weaver and merchant relations

Up until the present day, definitions of the various roles in the handloom industry are complex and may vary from one region to another. An individual could also assume several roles in the industry during his or her career. These might involve *majdori* (labourer), *karigar* (artisan), master weaver or trader. Furthermore, the division of labour, and nature of relationships between the weaver and trader or merchant, and that of the master weaver and labourer or 'job weaver' are complex and vary across different handloom clusters in India. Caste, economy, trade and political rule, most notably the rise of British colonial power, have all been influencing factors on labour structures. Even today, as argued by Mohsini (2016), the role of the artisan and master artisan has been generalised in craft development literature, likely to be influenced by the discourse that generalises the decline of crafts in India in writings by economic historians and nationalists including Karl Marx, Romesh Chundur Dutt, Dadabhai Naoroji, Mahadev Govind Ranade and others (Roy, 2007, p. 67). Within this generalisation of decline lies the notion that the artisan was impoverished and always exploited by the master artisan or merchant, which did indeed exist, but does not constitute the complete story.

In the late medieval period, weavers were polarised into two main categories: master weavers, who owned many looms (in some cases up to 100) and 'coolies', the labourers who worked on those looms. Master weavers continued to operate in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and exerted more power and control over their coolie weavers. The majority of coolie weavers owned at least one loom, but no more than two (Parthasarathi, 2001, p. 15). This would be the case for village weavers too who were connected with trade via a chain of intermediaries (Riello, 2013, p. 63). The number of intermediaries increased with the expansion of the East India Company, at which point weavers' positions worsened as balances of power between merchants and weavers were reversed (Roy, 1993; Parthasarathi, 2001, p. 26). The rise of the 'putting-out system' has been largely attributed to the increase in European presence which involved the merchants supplying the weaver with yarn, specifying the designs and selling on to the trader (Roy, 1993, p. 206). It is unlikely that weavers in Kachchh were part of these chains as they produced mainly for neighbouring clients and in the home. Therefore, there would not necessarily have been 'master weavers' due to the capitalist-led economy not having

reached Kachchh yet, and thus Kachchh weavers were likely to have maintained levels of independence that weavers in urban areas and in clusters working under the clutches of merchants, had lost.

According to Dubey and Jain (1965), weavers in Maheshwar became subject to the putting-out system in the early twentieth century when the industry was suffering. Weavers purchased raw material from Bania or Bohara merchant castes who forced weavers to sell their products at fixed prices, thus resulting in weavers receiving low wages and merchants receiving high profits. Weavers became tied to these traders across India, largely due of the introduction of mill-spun yarn from Britain and synthetic dyes from the nineteenth century onwards (Harnetty, 1991, p. 466). The weavers' reliance on master weavers for designs which I discuss in chapter 7, continues today. Further, increasing specialisation in production led to the proliferation of castes: 'Social or caste traditions (and the ruling class) prevented diversity in organisation by tying the artisans to a lower social and economic status' (Verma, 1994, p. 112). This was particularly prevalent in the Banaras weaving industry as outlined by Kumar Rai (2012) and Basole (2014), who note the rigid structure of specialisation within the weaving process, and heavy reliance on the *naqshabands* (pattern makers) for the designs.

In attempts to set weavers free from the clutches of merchants, the government made efforts to reform collective craft production, paradoxically looking to the future, giving back weavers' independence, and the past attempting to restore ideals of past harmonious community production (McGowan, 2009, p. 139). This occurred in the form of cooperative societies which were set up in handloom clusters across India as early as 1906 (Roy, 1993, p. 176). The aim was for the individual weaver to work independently on the actual weaving, and that preparatory tasks like spinning, beaming and sizing warps, and calendaring, finishing and marketing could be done collectively (McGowan, 2009, p. 141). Cooperatives would further enable the 'pooling of information and funds to access markets and invest in more efficient technologies' (ibid, p. 139). However, the cooperatives achieved limited success. While they succeeded in freeing artisans from the 'ties of middlemen and moneylenders, they tied members into new forms of economic dependence to the society itself' (McGowan 2009, p. 145). Cooperatives reduced artisans' flexibility and limited their freedom to seek viable markets and adjust production.

According to Roy 'by the mid-1930s, the percentage of weavers in cooperatives was still small, and mortality of societies high' (Roy, 1993, p. 178). By 1940 in Bombay state, only one percent of weavers worked in cooperatives, while 54 worked in factories, 24 on contract and 21 were independent. These numbers varied across different regions, but overall the numbers working in cooperatives were the lowest (ibid, p 179). The cooperatives in Maheshwar provide an example of the fluctuations of success of cooperative societies in rural industries which is discussed in greater depth in chapter 4.

## **2.8 Colonial art and industrial schools**

Much of the fate of the handloom industry has been attributed to the contradicting ideals held by both the British and independent Indian governments. Efforts to develop and support the industry involved simultaneously attempting to modernise industries and preserve traditional South Asian arts, positioning Indian crafts as diametrically opposite to modern (European) technologies. These contradictory ideals are widely apparent in the trajectories of British colonial education, exhibition and display. The British schools which proliferated in India after 1793 when the East India Company's Charter was renewed, would sway in their favour of teaching in the vernacular or English and focusing on oriental or western style teaching (Dewan, 2001). Gradually, indigenous, traditional structures were abandoned in favour of western curriculums that would create new classes, and graduates that would serve the needs of the British (Singh, 2013; Balaram, 2005). This was initiated and formalised by Macaulay's Minute in 1853, a treatise that called for the study of English language across India as well as all educational instruction to be transmitted in English. At this point, despite opposition from Asiatic societies, education became one of several means by which colonial powers sought to maintain and strengthen their authority over the culture they were ruling. The development of art education ran along a similar vein.

The Great Exhibition of 1851, followed by a series of spin-offs in Europe and India, included displays of new textile and agricultural machinery alongside examples of craft pieces considered to epitomise traditional India. The exhibitions alongside the British government's rigorous censuses, official gazetteers and ethnographic surveys were examples of the British preoccupation with collection, documentation and display to know

and understand the people they were ruling (Breckenridge, 1989). Along with Breckenridge's work, there is a wealth of literature that discusses the exoticisation, romanticism and objectification of artisans, their labour and craft in colonial exhibitions, as well as simultaneously confining artisans to the peripheries of industrial modernity (for example, Kriegel, 2007; Mathur, 2007; McGowan, 2009). Both exhibitions and education also asserted the western 'artificial' separation of 'fine art', 'decorative art' and 'applied arts'.

Owen Jones' 'Grammar of Ornament' published in 1856 was influenced by the "gorgeous contributions" of decorative arts from India which Jones arranged at the Great Exhibition (Mathur, 2007). It served as a key manual in British and Indian art schools to show examples of 'good design' and provide forms from which students could copy. While art schools in Britain looked to India for examples of fine craftsmanship,<sup>11</sup> the Indian art schools aimed to teach students about European tastes while also maintaining and preserving traditional South Asian forms. The focus on drawing and training students to be of immediate use to industry, which had been the key aims of the School of Design founded by Henry Cole in 1837 (MacCarthy, 1972, p. 17; Kriegel, 2007, p.2), as well as teaching drawing as a means of social reform also became central to curriculums in the Indian art schools (Dewan, 2001, p. 124; McGowan, 2009, p. 164). Henry Cole later founded the South Kensington Museum in 1857 which became a repository for many of the objects from the Great Exhibition, and to inspire students in the recently formed design institutions.

The first 'western' school of Art was established in Pune by Sir Charles Malet in 1798 before the establishment of Art and Design schools in London, and was followed by a series of institutions in Calcutta, Madras, Bombay and Lahore (Tarapor, 1980, Mitter,

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<sup>11</sup> This was at the time of the burgeoning Arts and Crafts movement, which developed out of the writings of Ruskin and Pugin and of which William Morris was the central figure. The artists, writers, critics and social activists involved in the movement, argued that mechanical production was de-humanising and unsatisfying and campaigned to the government for education based on the medieval guild system. The movement rejected 'competitive capitalistic commerce' and 'mechanised banalities', in favour of 'individual workshops', 'skillfull craft and truth' (MacCarthy, p. 24). The movement also looked to the medieval period as inspiration for design, seeking a return to 'simplicity, sincerity, good materials and sound workmanship; to rich and suggestive surface decoration and simple constructive forms' (MacCarthy, p. 23).

1992). A combination of industrial training and fine art was common in the first schools such as the Madras School of Art under the leadership of Alexander Hunter (Dewan, 2001, p. 32). However, towards the end of the nineteenth century, an institutionalised distinction developed between the 'decorative arts' on the one hand, defined as the domain of the Indian craftsman, and the 'fine arts' on the other, defined as the product of western training in painting or sculpture. This was exemplified in the JJ School of Art removing the word 'industry' from its title (Mitter, 1994, p. 43). When E.B Havell became principal of the Madras School of Art, where he served from 1884 to 1892, he replaced examples of European imagery as teaching aids in the drawing classes, with indigenous styles. A similar move was made by Lockwood Kipling when he was principal at the Mayo School of Art in Lahore, from 1875 to 1893, both inspired by the ideals of the arts and crafts movement (Dewan, 2001, McGowan, 2009, p. 117).

Specialised industrial schools which first formed in the 1850s, aimed both to teach new technologies and to discipline 'illiterate, impoverished' artisans to become more productive, 'without encouraging them to aspire to non-industrial employment' (McGowan, 2009, p. 154). The Bombay School of Industry (later named the David Sassoon Industrial Reformatory Institution) (ibid), and Kala Bhavan in Baroda, the founder of which, T.K Gajjar had been inspired by the Baroda exhibition of 1881, trained students in modern technology to work in the mills that began emerging in the 1890s (Mehta, 1992).

McGowan and Habib argue that the institutes transformed traditional artisans into modern technicians. But the students of these institutes comprised only a small number of artisans,<sup>12</sup> which historians put down to the following: the high costs of the institute; the entry requirement of a certain level of literacy; artisans preferring traditional apprenticeship systems and to work in accordance with the 'religious and moral precepts of the community'; or a desire to escape their occupation completely, and its associated low status (McGowan, 2009; Mehta, 1992; Raina and Irfan Habib, 2009). The latter view was held by many of the artisans who did attend the institutes, because they believed that they could gain literacy skills and go on to get government or clerical jobs (McGowan,

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<sup>12</sup> McGowan (2009, p. 158) cites the Dawar School which opened in 1873 in the Bombay Presidency as an example. Out of 36 boys only five were officially of artisan or carpenter castes, and the rest were East Indians, Rajputs, chitragars (painters), Hindus of other castes and Muslims.

2009, p.162). While fine art schools failed to attract traditional craftspeople, due to high costs and separation from learning in the domestic sphere (Mitter, 1994; Dewan, 2001; McGowan, 2009; Kantawala, 2012), industrial schools in the late nineteenth century were more successful than art schools, despite widespread criticism and low success rates. Edward S Cook Jr (2014, p. 26), writes that artisans in Jaipur embraced the 'hybrid model' of British and locally run education and display in Jaipur, and may have 'simply considered the British another market, and one that provided steady demand and opportunity'. The Jaipur School of Art was founded in 1866 by the Maharajas Ram Singh II and Sawai Madho Singh II and local administrators, following Thomas Hendley's founding of the Museum of Industrial Arts. Artisans were also actively engaged in the policy, and even controlled the British market for blue pottery of Jaipur which combined local and Chinese styles adapted for European tastes. This example gives evidence of the agency of artisans, in adapting and adopting styles to stay competitive in the market.

After 1901 when a survey had been conducted of the industrial schools' progress across India, a common education system that could reshape all schools across India was called for by the then Viceroy Lord Curzon. In the discussions regarding how this education should be shaped, one overall agreement was that literacy instruction should be left out of artisanal education, because it was leading to boys leaving their crafts (McGowan, 2003, p. 162). Running in the same vein as the school curriculum mentioned above, the exemption of literacy instruction in technical schools enabled the colonial government to divide society in accordance with economic and political needs, in a similar way that it emphasised caste divisions.

## **2.9 The discourse of decline in handloom**

There were several reasons for the decline in handloom cloth production and domestic markets from 1800 onwards. These included the expansion of British rule, the ending of the East India Company's trade monopoly in 1813, the eradication of internal trade duties between 1844 and 1848, changes in fashion, the expansion of communications, building of railways (which meant imports could reach internal towns), and the dissipation of Mughal rule and the princely states with their patronage (Harnetty, 1991, p. 143, Parthasarathi, 2001, Subramanian, 2009). A further reason for decline was the mechanisation of various

stages of textile production such as spinning and ginning, and the importation of chemical dyes from Europe ruling out the need for vegetable dyes from the commercial crop producer, causing a radical altering of the structure of the textile industry as a whole (Wendt, 2009). Wendt argues these factors have largely been left out of previous histories of the decline of handloom. Despite the threats to handloom production, Roy and Haynes argue that the picture was more nuanced than that created by the nationalists and economic historians who used the destruction of India's indigenous textile industry by the British as one of the main arguments against British rule and while campaigning for independence. These narratives tended to 'group hand weavers of all types of cloth together, providing a generalised argument for the decline of cloth' (Roy, 2007 p. 67). Roy and Haynes (1996) and Harnetty (1991, p. 463) argue on the other hand, that coarse cloth did well in local markets, while specialised silk with decorative dobby border techniques that could only be produced on a handloom, fared well in the high-end urban markets. This suggests that weavers in Kachchh and Maheshwar were less affected by the threats listed above. Weaving was not the sole form of income for the Vankars in Kachchh, rather a supplement to agriculture, and undertaken when items were required by local clients. In Maheshwar production was mostly affected by the decline of patronage and the introduction of synthetic dyes which local producers had difficulty achieving fast colours with.

In terms of the consumer market, women continued to prefer highly decorative saris only achievable on the handloom. While some Hindu men continued to wear uncut garments, many men, particularly Muslims preferred western or traditional Indian cut garments, the fabric for which was produced in mills. The handloom sector maintained a market share of roughly one quarter of India's cloth consumption as late as the mid-1920s (Haynes, 1996), while becoming increasingly dependent on merchant-capitalists, who benefitted by gaining access to raw materials and distant markets via the imports from the west as mentioned above.

The significant drop in imports of raw materials during the interwar period, as well as the increase in powerlooms and mills further affected the industry and forced large swathes of weavers into areas such as the prominent handloom centres of Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and the growing industrialising regions of Gujarat. The industrialisation of cloth

production in India took two forms: conversion of handloom weavers to decentralised, informal powerloom units, and the setting up of mills, most notably in Ahmedabad and Bombay by wealthy merchant capitalists not from weaving backgrounds (Haynes, 2001).

### 2.10 Swadeshi and revival

The growth of India's industrialisation was happening at the same time as the nationalist movement was in full swing.<sup>13</sup> While Gandhi's *swadeshi* movement, which campaigned for the making and wearing of *khadi* (cloth handwoven from hand-spun yarn), was a big part of the nationalist strategy, nationalism was also an impetus to industrial growth, which was championed by the new Prime Minister of independent India, Jawaharlal Nehru (Leadbeater, 1993). The mill owners, who belonged to wealthy communities such as Parsis and Jains, were not from textile backgrounds and had little understanding of the country's textile history (Leadbeater, 1993, p. 18). They were initially sceptical of the *swadeshi* movement but when they could see profit from it, tried to control it (ibid),<sup>14</sup> even imitating *khadi* cloth and thus contradicting the essence of Gandhi's intention of *khadi* as a tool for self-sufficiency, to be made in the home (Bayly, 1986, p. 134). Nehru's modernist and socialist ideals shared 'a deep commitment to the centralised, urban industrial model' (Govindu and Malghan, 2016, p. 98), in that capitalist industries such as mills simultaneously generated employment and supported the economic development of the country.

According to the Indian government, at the time of independence there were three million handlooms in India, mostly of 'poor quality because of inferior raw material and ill-organised marketing infrastructure'.<sup>15</sup> The new government handloom development

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<sup>13</sup> The *swadeshi* movement originated in the early twentieth century in Bengal 'as a response to Britain's decision to partition the province' (Trivedi, 2003, citing Sakar, 1973). Gandhi adopted the movement for his own purposes and positioned *khadi* at the centre, as a symbol of national identity, a 'way of life, which promoted simplicity, self-reliance and purity' (McGowan, 2003, p. 359), and a political and social agent. 'All the values he held dear, all of the achievements of village India in terms of simplicity, cooperation and local self-reliance, were embedded in *khadi*' (ibid, p. 365).

<sup>14</sup> The Sarabhais were one of three pioneering mill owning families (the others being the Lalbhais and Mangaldas) and were close allies of Gandhi.

<sup>15</sup> Government of India Press Information Bureau (no date) *Handlooms in the Last Five Decades*, available at: <http://pib.nic.in/feature/feyr98/fe1298/f1712981.html> [Accessed 7 June 2017].

strategies were firmly based on the premise that the British government had severely damaged the handloom and handicraft industry in India, and that Gandhi's campaigns had provided a 'breakthrough' in reviving these industries.

The strategies were further based on a belief that economic productivity and expansion are achieved in the modern sector, and that the traditional sector's main advantage was employment generation (Mukund and Sundari, 2001). J. C Kumarappa was co-founder with Gandhi, of the All India Village and Industries Association (AIVIA), which later became known as The Khadi Village Industries Commission (KVIC) with an aim to revive decentralised rural employment. According to Govindu and Malghan (2016, p. 77), the responsibility of supporting these industries was placed on the nationalists because of an absence of government support, and because it went in line with the *swadeshi* principles, that of not only boycotting foreign goods, but also 'as a means of self-reliance in moral terms'. In contrast to the other initiatives to revive crafts that were concerned with aesthetics and their 'authenticity' (see section 2.12), Kumarappa argued for affordable locally produced goods for local consumption, rather than curio for export or luxury markets, which meant reliance on middlemen, despite luxury fabrics faring better than everyday cloth, as mentioned above.

The AIVIA's strategies were emblematic of Nehru's modernist ideals, while also resembling the colonial technical education, introducing new technologies to increase efficiency and employment. The *ambar charkha* which was introduced by the British and allowed for several spools of raw yarn to be spun at a time using a hand-cranked lever, was championed by Gandhi and Kumarappa and continues to be widely used by the KVIC today. The KVIC employs mainly women from non-weaving backgrounds to use the foot-operated hattersley looms and *ambar charkhas* in centralised workshops, as well as commissioning work out to traditional and first-generation weavers in their homes. This strategy, while providing 'cleaner' and more remunerative employment than the alternative for many rural women – agricultural labour – potentially reduces or standardises the skills of traditional weavers. Further, KVIC has a stringent hold on the *khadi* trademark and restricts other commercial entities from using the labelling without

receiving approval from the KVIC.<sup>16</sup> While Gandhi promoted the use of the *ambar charkha*, the lack of contact between the yarn and the hand, and the simplified process of simply turning a handle, has caused Jain to question the process as ‘hand-spun’, labelling it ‘quasi-industrial’ (Vasudev, 2015). While WomenWeave, the charitable trust in Maheshwar, use yarn spun on the *ambar charkha*, these fabrics are only labelled as handwoven. Goldsmith has termed this fabric ‘*naya khadi*’ (see chapter 4).

### 2.11 Educational reform

Education was also a key aspect of many *swadeshi* members’ campaigns, the most well-known being Rabindranath Tagore who established the school Santiniketan in Bengal in 1905. The aims of Santiniketan were to decentralise education and make it relevant to the students’ local culture and encourage freedom of expression (Mukherjee, 1970).

Santiniketan continues to function today, but its philosophies didn’t reach mainstream education, despite political and educational reformers’ efforts. Notable figures include Rajagopalachari who suggested elementary education for the ‘occupational castes’ three days a week and two days a week devoted to family apprenticeship, as well as for crafts to be introduced in formal education (Bakshi, 1990). Another is JP Naik who drew heavily upon Gandhi’s call for the vocationalisation of education. He envisioned a ‘learning society’ that would blend three types of education: incidental, learning in the environment one grows up in, non-formal, described as an apprenticeship-style learning, and formal schooling (Singh, 2013). Rajagopalachari’s and Naik’s campaigns were largely ignored by the Congress government at the time, and the education system continued much in the same vein as it had during British rule (Kumar Desai, 2010; Singh, 2013).

While colonial school curriculums which were based around rote learning, remained largely unchanged, they became increasingly accessible to low-status communities. Ambedkar campaigned for increased formal education opportunities for Dalits as well as places in politics. This led to the devising of a scheme of reservations for scheduled castes

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<sup>16</sup> An example of these restrictions in practice has been the recent file the KVIC has raised against Fabindia for allegedly selling factory-made cotton garments under the guise of *khadi*: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/cons-products/garments/-/textiles/khadi-asks-over-200-entities-not-to-use-terms-such-as-handwoven-without-nod/articleshow/64690766.cms>.

and tribes<sup>17</sup> in 1943, although this was not fully implemented until 1950, with 8.3 per cent of places in education and the government reserved for these groups. Concurrently, during 1948-9 post-matric scholarships were given to scheduled castes and tribes (Chanana, 1993). However, the inability of formal schools to shed their colonial influence, both in its curriculum and gearing scheduled castes towards jobs in the government, made it irrelevant to the context of most scheduled castes and tribes, and has produced thousands more graduates than there are spaces in government (Singh, 2013; Basole 2018). It has further been widely argued that the reservation system has accentuated socio-economic inequalities (Pinto, 2002).

In 2009, free and compulsory basic education until the age of fourteen became a constitutional right for all Indian citizens, although this has been difficult to achieve in a country with a population of over one billion. While literacy in India has increased with each census, it today stands at a depressingly low overall rate of 74 per cent, 18 per cent lower than India's much smaller island neighbour, Sri Lanka which has significantly fewer resources. To be considered 'literate', according to the 2011 census,<sup>18</sup> a person aged seven or above must be able to read and write with understanding in any language. While basic literacy and numeracy can increase freedoms and capabilities of weavers (Sen, 1999), such as writing receipts and managing accounts by way of avoiding master weavers' exploitation (noted by Kumar in her study of education of Banarasi weavers, 2000), such surveys of literacy do not ascertain the standard of education and its content in relation to the socio-cultural context of weavers and weaving knowledge and skill. Furthermore, there are increasing numbers of weavers attending further or higher education, and the higher level of education a weaver receives the more likely he is to leave his craft, although the chances of receiving the desired job are often low.<sup>19</sup> The reservations system has also

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<sup>17</sup> These terms were introduced by the new government by way of classifying low-status groups alongside the introduction of the reservation system. The Scheduled Castes and Tribes constitute 16.6 percent and 8.6 percent of the Indian population respectively.

<sup>18</sup> Census of India 2011. *Literacy in India* [online]. Available at: <https://www.census2011.co.in/literacy.php> [Accessed 18 December 2011].

<sup>19</sup> Evidenced by primary data which will be discussed in more detail in chapter 9 in relation to the ambitions and aspirations of weavers in Kachchh and Maheshwar, as well as in literature on communities of Dalits in other regions of India (Jeffrey, Jeffery and Jeffery, 2004).

caused cynicism and protests among communities that are positioned between scheduled castes and Brahmins who in turn feel marginalised (Basole, 2018).

## **2.12 Government development initiatives for weavers**

The AIVIA was one of several major government initiatives to rehabilitate crafts in the early to mid-twentieth century, and which particularly proliferated after independence in 1947 as part of India's 'nation building project'. These included technical education (particularly for weavers) marketing support, cooperatives, retailing, exhibitions and museums, and design intervention.

### **2.12.1 Technical education**

While formal schooling appeals to weavers and other artisans as an escape from their traditionally devalued occupations and marginalised statuses (Kumar, 2000; DeNicola and DeNicola, 2012) technical education and skills development continue to form key policies of the post-independent government in supporting economic development. Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh proposed in 2006, to increase the number of 'skilled workers' to 500 million by 2022 (King, 2012), by way of organising the unorganised sector that employs up to 94 per cent of the national workforce. The policies were generated under the Ministry of Human Resources as well as the Ministry of Labour and Employment, and involved creating pathways to post-secondary and higher education as well as securing job opportunities for '150 million students' who do not have access to colleges by 2020, as well as skill development in the labour force (Singh, 2012, p. 181) (including the crafts industry). King (2012) and Singh (2012) have highlighted the shortfalls in these policies, largely the government not recognising skills gained informally.<sup>20</sup> Singh further suggests that the low intake in many of the programmes is due to Indian society's long-standing prejudice against manual work. She illustrates her point by giving an example in Tamil Nadu where an educational rural curriculum called the 'Rajaji experiment' was abandoned

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<sup>20</sup> According to Singh (2012) only 10% of the Indian labour force has acquired vocational skills, which King (2012) argues is based on surveys done that only recognise those with training certificates as 'skilled.' Further, those who have learnt skills informally are more likely to experience difficulty moving into formal programmes. 'Currently there are limited mechanisms for recognising knowledge and skills acquired outside formal institutional settings. The unorganised sector, both rural and urban, employs up to 94% of the national workforce. But most of the training programmes cater to the organised sector (Singh, 2012).

due to no demand, and 'because it was viewed as a Brahmanical conspiracy, something designed to keep the underprivileged away from the prestigious academic curriculum' (Singh, 2012, p. 205). This suggests society's prejudice against manual work influencing manual workers (a term which constitutes several different roles), and hierarchies of formal and informal knowledge whereby only formal schooling and the jobs it results in, are valued.

Additional criticisms of both the skill development scheme and the reservations system is that students are expected to reach a certain standard at secondary level, which many students experience difficulty in, because of poor quality teaching. At the time of writing, Singh notes only fifteen per cent of India's secondary graduates are employable (ibid, p. 190). Basole, who has written on the handloom industry in Banaras, finds that 'in the twenty-first century, our skilled, uneducated workforce is being replaced by unskilled, educated workers,' and the answer is not to create more training programmes (Basole, 2018).

### **2.12.2 Weavers Service Centres**

The Weavers Service Centres (WSC), originally named Handloom Design Centres, were founded by Pupul Jayakar, chairperson of the All India Handlooms Board<sup>21</sup> in 1956. The first centres opened in Mumbai, Chennai and Varanasi in 1956 and subsequently they spread to weaving clusters all over the country and currently number 28. The centres later came under the Office of the Development Commissioner (Handlooms) (DCH), set up in 1976. The three main activities coordinated by the centres are design, technical training and dyeing. Few accurate surveys have been conducted on WSCs by the government to determine their impact (although personal communication with Additional Development Commissioner (Handlooms) in September 2016, indicates a formal evaluation process was underway at the time).

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<sup>21</sup> Pupul Jayakar also developed the idea for the Indian Institutes of Handloom Technology (IIHTs), the Handloom and Handicraft Export Corporation, and was heavily involved in developing the National Institute of Design (NID). In 1984 she was instrumental in co-founding the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), and almost simultaneously the National Institute of Technology (NIFT) was formed (Sethi, 2016).

Other government initiatives to protect and preserve handloom and crafts include the Geographical Indication (GI)<sup>22</sup> which was introduced in 1999 with the aim to protect crafts based on their region of 'origin' from being copied either outside of the region, or from machines. Both handloom practices in this thesis have GI status. There are two contending facets to the GI which have created debate amongst both academic critics and craft development activists. On the one hand, the GI can be considered a tool for the protection of traditional or indigenous knowledge systems, high on the agenda of development initiatives and viewed as important for their poverty reduction potential (Pottier, 2003; Basole, 2015). On the other hand, the GI is criticised for its continuation of the narrative of an idealised, historicised identity of crafts, fixing them to a particular (possibly imagined) place and time, and preventing dynamism and innovation (Sethi, no date; Kawlra, 2014; Basole, 2015). It has never been tested since its introduction and no craft association has ever used it for protection. According to informants in this thesis as well those in previous studies (Edwards, 2016), the GI is viewed mainly as an effective branding mechanism.

Awards are another initiative that the government runs to recognise skill, creativity, adherence to tradition and ability to spread knowledge to the community to ensure longevity of the craft. Since 1965 the government has provided National Awards, Sant Kabir awards, Shilp Guru awards, and Merit Certificates, and new awards were introduced in 2015 on the inauguration of National Handloom Day (seventh August) for 'excellence in design development and marketing of handloom products'.<sup>23</sup> The awards which carry cash prizes, are judged by several selection committees at the local and central level, described by Venkatesan as an 'elite, peripheral force' (Venkatesan, 2009). However, by the list of judges on the guidelines, including 'non-official experts from the handloom sector', it is

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<sup>22</sup> Government of India, no date. *About Us* [online]. Available at: <http://www.ipindia.nic.in/about-us-gi.htm> [Accessed 8 March 2018].

<sup>23</sup> Press Information Bureau, Government of India Ministry of Textiles, 2016. *Entries invited for Newly instituted Awards in Handloom Design and Marketing* [online]. Available at: <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=137123> [Accessed 10 August 2018].

not clear whether any of the judges could be experts from the weaving community, or indeed previous award winners.<sup>24</sup>

### **2.12.3 Marketing, cooperatives and retailing: The All India Handloom Board (AIHB) and cooperatives**

Numerous boards, associations and apex bodies were set up to support the marketing of handlooms and export promotion such as The Cottage Industries board set up in 1948 (Jain and Coelho, 1996, p. 361), under which came the Indian Cooperative Union (ICU), which conducted surveys on crafts communities. The results were used to recommend cooperative enterprise as the best way forward for the production and marketing of crafts (ibid, p. 359), despite as shown above, their low success rate prior to India's independence. The Gujarat State Handloom & Handicrafts Development Corporation (GSHHDC), the retail branch of which is Gujari that has stores all over India, has widely been recognised as successful in its support of handlooms and handicrafts in Gujarat. This success has been noted by several weavers in Kachchh during my field research, as well as those working in craft development (Jaitly, 1989, p. 173). Notwithstanding, Sundari and Mukund (2001) who focus specifically on Andhra Pradesh, the state with the second largest number of handloom weavers, argue that the centralisation of cooperatives, their top-down approach and multi-layered structure, result in objectives not being properly implemented on the ground. In many cases, master weavers were more successful than cooperative societies, being able to advance loans to weavers where cooperative wages were low, and they were able to provide enough work where cooperatives could not (ibid, p. 103). Jaitly (1989) argued that government schemes simply replaced the exploitative middlemen they were claiming to discourage. More recently Jaitly has taken to Twitter (2017) to criticise the decline in quality of Dilli Haat, a large craft market co-founded by Jaitly herself and now run by the government, as well as the running of stalls by traders or middlemen, rather than the makers themselves (Chaudhuri, 2016).

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<sup>24</sup> Government of India, Ministry of Textiles, 2017. *Circulation of new award guidelines – 2017 in respect of Sant Kabir Award, National Award & National Merit Certificate Award under National Handloom Development Programme (NHDC)* [online]. Available at: <http://www.handlooms.nic.in/writereaddata/UploadFile/guidelines%20New.pdf> [accessed 10 August 2018].

This criticism is problematic considering that the role of the 'artisan' is often nuanced, and one will often move from maker to mastercraftsperson or trader, and sometimes back again (Mohsini, 2016b). Further, the making of craft is often a collaborative or community effort, and not all artisans may have the ability to attend the market due to business pressures, financial restrictions and community rules and restrictions (particularly the case for women).

#### **2.12.4 Reservations and protection**

Cooperatives aimed to provide its members with easier access to government policies and subsidies. One such government policy to protect handloom cloths from imitation by the rise of the decentralised powerloom industry, was the implementation of the Handloom Reservation act in 1985. This involved subsidising the manufacture of particular cloth and materials, increasing the gap between excise duties on mills and powerlooms, ensuring an easy supply of yarn and freezing the production capacity of mills (Roy, 1993, p. 197; Srinivaslu, 1996). This act proved problematic. Firstly, differentiating between handloom and powerloom was difficult, mainly because many traditional handloom weavers were investing in powerlooms, and in some weaving clusters there existed a mix of both and these powerlooms often went unregistered (Haynes, 2001). On a visit to Sircilla, a small weaving town 80 km north of Hyderabad I came across a decentralised powerloom unit weaving designs that the owner admitted were handloom design copies, and the trader buying them would sell them under the handloom label. When I asked the owner if he would get penalised for this should the government find out, he said paying the fine would be a worthwhile investment. Further, it was not likely that he would be singled out for this considering the whole town had moved to powerloom which has suffered several adversities over the last few decades. These include: the weavers' own designs being imitated in larger textile industries in regions such as Maharashtra, the increase in cost of yarn with the liberalisation of the economy, missing out on relief funds given by the government which only handloom weavers were eligible for, and increasing electricity prices. The situation became so serious that during the 1990s more than 300 weavers or weavers' family members committed suicide, and it was only after this tragedy that the government stepped in. They reduced the electricity tariffs and implemented a subsidised

Textile powerloom park (Kumar, 2011), and the industry is being championed by some individuals keen to continue the industry and develop products for contemporary markets.

In 2015 the government was planning to lift the Handloom Reservation Act following pressure from powerloom lobbying groups but was shot down by stronger protests by handloom activist groups and development agencies. These examples demonstrate that 'traditional' electricity-free, and 'modern' powerloom industries are not the diametric opposites they are so often presented as in mainstream discourse, particularly those which demonise powerloom and romanticise handloom. On the contrary, the textile industry's continuum is much more nuanced and complex.

### **2.12.5 Craft revival and display**

Jaya Jaitly, mentioned above, is amongst the second generation of craft revivalists, succeeding pioneering members of the post-independent cohort such as Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay and Pupul Jayakar, who at different times have been directors of the ICU and the All India Handicrafts Board (AIHB). Jasleen Dhamija, one of Chattopadhyay's employees, remembers the work they did:

'We went from village to village meeting with craftspeople, researching and documenting, seeing what we could salvage, setting up training programmes with, in some cases, the last surviving exponents of the craft. We also studied textiles in museum collections' (Ahmed and Mansingh Kaul, 2016, p. 61).

The use of the term 'salvage' by Dhamija, brings to mind Jacob Gruber's term 'salvage ethnography' (1970), which he uses to describe the urgent collection and preservation of data on cultures feared disappearing in the nineteenth century, crafts being one significant aspect of this data for the British monographs, censuses and gazetteers on communities in India. This data provided a useful resource for the revivalists in gathering their information on crafts communities (Ahmed and Mansingh Kaul, 2016, p. 61). Some of these craft figures played key roles in the exhibitions during the festivals of India in the 1980s, which provided a platform for the 'salvaged' objects to be displayed on a global level. For host countries, exhibitions were ways of promoting cultural diplomacy and educating the British and American public about Indian culture, and for India were ways to showcase all things 'Indian' to the world (Wintle, 2017b). The exhibitions were criticised for ignoring 'ordinary, routine arts and crafts in the form they are carried out as part of social life'

(Durrans, 1982, p. 16) and the nuances of the categories that ranged from 'manufactures' for domestic use and 'handicrafts' for market or export (ibid). Thus, the exhibitions risked creating an idealised singular image of India and a homogenised cultural identity of Indian crafts.

Museums in India followed a similar trajectory creating displays for foreign tourists and aiming to educate Indians about their own national heritage and encourage pride in this heritage. A significant example is the National Handicrafts and Handloom Museum set up by the AIHB in 1956 in Delhi, now called the Crafts Museum. According to Greenough (1995), Jyotindra Jain, the director at the time of his writing, discouraged artisans from adapting and innovating within their craft, or any kind of move away from tradition. Jain envisaged the museum as a university for artisans (ibid, p. 222), in this way educating artisans on their own 'tradition' based on what the museum had selected as the best example of their practice. While artisans would be invited to give demonstrations at the museum (reflecting festivals of India abroad and colonial exhibitions to authenticate the experience for the visitor), they were excluded from curatorial decision-making processes. McKnight Sethi describes the Dastkari Haat maps which are on display in the Crafts Museum, as creating a homogenised sense of place and identity, and that while there are maps for each state (which on their own fail to address any movement or individual identity of craftspeople), they group crafts together to demonstrate 'pride of the nation' (2013, p. 73).

As if in response to Greenough's comments, in a more recent interview (Ahmed and Mansingh Kaul, 2016, p. 61) discussing post-independence craft revival and development, Jain expressed his intent when collecting and curating objects for the Museum of Folk Art and Culture of Gujarat at Ahmedabad in 1977 (part of the Shreyas Foundation and since named Shreyas Folk Museum):

'[...to] avoid the cliched, orientalist representation of Indian objects in western museums, and was apprehensive of the stillborn, colonial model of museum-making in India, especially the classification of cultural objects into random and overlapping categories of art, craft, design, ethnography, classical, folk, religious, secular, masterpiece and primitive among others' (ibid, p. 66).

Jain went on to say he avoided creating 'fictional' narratives by travelling around Gujarat

and acquiring from the artisans themselves rather than from art collectors and aimed to capture the nuances of each craft and its local context. However, most recent exhibitions of Indian crafts and textiles continue to position Indian crafts in opposition to the West, and to technological development. Mansingh Kaul and Varma (2015, p. 46) argue that the 'Fabric of India' exhibition held at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 2015-16, by showcasing only hand-crafted textiles, showed that the international appreciation of Indian designs lies solely in the hand-made.

Current debates around 'decolonisation' suggest the need to revise the concept of the museum, avoiding creating displays through the Euro or ethno-centric lens. Art historian Nana Oforiatta-Ayim (Singh et al., 2018) plans to set up a 'museum' (while also suggesting an alternative name more appropriate to the local context) in Ghana that focuses on 'shared narratives that are not limited by national boundaries but transcend them'. Indeed, objects have rarely come from one single place but have traversed several cultures, individuals and spaces.

Despite criticisms of these wide-ranging attempts to support craft by the governments and associated organisations, both have paved the way for NGO and commercial enterprise work, and the festivals of India have increased NGO presence (Niranjana et al., 2006). Non-governmental and commercial craft revival attempts such as Kala Raksha in Kachchh<sup>25</sup> have actively involved the owners or descendants of the owners of objects in museum collections to re-engage with them. This thesis discusses ways in which the weavers themselves display and promote their work which can both demonstrate certain inculcation of Euro-centric ideals while being a pragmatic approach to dealing with increasing numbers of visitors to their home. I engage with this theme more substantively in section 4 of chapter 9.

### **2.13 Post-Independence design education and the emergence of the 'designer'**

At the helm of many of the commercial enterprises and NGOs have been graduates of the National Institute of Design (NID). Founded in 1961, although the first students weren't

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<sup>25</sup> See chapter 4, section 3.4.

solicited until 1969, the NID was the first formal institute of design in India, and aimed to create a distinct Indian brand identity (Mathur, 2011). The curriculum emerged out of The India Report which was compiled by American designers Charles and Ray Eames after their three-month research trip throughout India's rural villages. The report advised that design needed to be defined as a 'value system' (Eames, C. and Eames, R., 1958), and to recognise the diverse needs of the country. The trip was sponsored by the US Ford Foundation which was part of America's Cold War public diplomacy policy (Clarke, 2016; Wintle, 2017a), while also fitting with Nehru's modernising agenda, within which 'design [was viewed] as a catalyst for change, newness and creativity for Indians' (Clarke, 2016 quoting Mathur, 2007). The Eames were also heavily influenced by the Bauhaus movement, and the NID formed strong associations with Bauhaus-inspired institutes in the West<sup>26</sup>, where faculty came from to teach (Clarke, 2016). Thus, the NID had both a nationalistic approach as it was inspired by Gandhi and situated in Ahmedabad, the centre of the *swadeshi* movement, and an international outlook (Balaram, 2005, p. 160). The institute continues to hold Memorandum of Understandings (MOU), with 52 institutes across the globe (NID, 2016, p. 16).

There are several aspects that suggest similarities between the NID and the colonial art schools, in that it shared the same contradictions between preserving traditional crafts and training designers that would support the growth of the country's modernising industrial manufacturing agenda. First, it was put under the Ministry of Commerce (Balaram, 2009) rather than under the Ministry of Education, and was directed by Gautam Sarabhai, a successful mill industrialist, to help increase India's industrial wealth and increase employment within the unorganised (namely craft) sectors (indirectly through creating a new middle class of designers). Second, as Wintle (2017) has argued, the NID's ties with the US through the Ford Foundation suggested a sort of 'informal imperialism allowing the US to frame India in its image'. Third, it was mostly reserved for the upper

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<sup>26</sup> The Bauhaus was founded in 1919 with a progressive outlook aiming to bring together crafts and fine arts and meet man's 'spiritual and material desires'. See: Naylor, G. (1968) *The Bauhaus*. London: Studio Vista. Its influence spread across Europe to the Hochschule for Gestaltung in Ulm, the Kunst Gewerbeschule in Basel, the Royal College of Art in London, and the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan.

classes and urban elites educated in English which, like the colonial schools, created divides between crafts and modern industry and craft classes and educated classes. Macaulay's Minute which aimed to spread the English language across India and eradicate vernacular languages was only partly achieved. It reached the urban middle classes, but not as far as most rural areas where children received and continue to receive, only basic primary education in the local vernacular or Hindi.

Founded during the same period as major crafts development initiatives discussed above, another aim of the NID was to support the country's dwindling crafts through socially-oriented design, a concept which was not fully defined until a decade after its founding, in work by Victor Papanek and later Arturo Escobar<sup>27</sup> (Clarke, 2016, p. 44). These authors sought to challenge the position of design as being led by the 'hegemonic culture of free market capitalism rather than social needs' (ibid, p. 45), which had commonly been delivered top-down with western countries viewing their own design models as examples to be followed. This subject was brought to the fore at the 'Ahmedabad Declaration' in 1979 which involved a ten-day congress hosted by the NID, the Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay and The Industrial Design Centre in Bombay, and the signing of an MOU by UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organisation) and ICSID (the International Council of Industrial Design, now the World Design Organisation - WDO), to promote industrial design in developing countries. The congress involved asking such questions as: 'How does the Indian designer define his/her role in what are his/her priorities', 'how can the Indian designer assist national efforts to improve the quality of life for such a vast segment of humanity', and 'what is right design for a "real world" full of hunger, illiteracy and ill health?'

Suggestions such as a museum for pots, alongside ideas for innovations to meet social needs, reflect long-standing contradictory approaches to craft development, that has been a theme throughout this chapter:

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<sup>27</sup> Design for the Real World: Human Ecology and Social Change (1971) and Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World (1995).

'This dialectic between preserving design as an embodiment of national identity and authenticity, and the explicit drive to innovate new designs fit for export to a western market was a defining theme of the design development agenda' (Clarke, 2016, p. 49).

The dialectic Clarke mentions entered against a backdrop of world histories and the beginnings of the use of the term globalisation during the 1960s and 70s in which the West took a central position, and the former colonies or under-developed countries were positioned on the peripheries (Huppatz, 2015).<sup>28</sup> This view leads to discussions of localised institutions such as the NID, as imitations of western-style frameworks, and can ignore the agency of the local actors in influencing the running of the institutions and using them to their own advantage. As Huppatz notes, systems were not simply copied by non-Europeans, but were 'adapted to local conditions, existing symbolic systems and cultural expectations' (2015, p. 192). This thesis discusses the involvement of a mix of foreign and local influence and agency in the founding of the two case study institutes, SKV and THS, while also challenging the stereotypical oppositions of east and west and local and global.

## **2.14 The emerging fashion and design industries**

In the first few decades of its founding, the NID received low numbers of entrants - only about twenty to twenty-five per year - and was little known amongst the wider public (Note, 2006). Design wasn't recognised as a bona-fide profession and designing for consumer products ran counter to India's modernist ideals. The public were discouraged to buy under the new socialist government's austerity plans to ensure availability of capital for investment (ibid). These policies kept 'disposable incomes low, consumerism was not widespread, and 'design' signified the ubiquity of functional goods for mass consumption, not a diversity of products, or a novelty of styles' (ibid, p. 269).

Fashion too came under this remit. The sari was widely worn and being made up of an uncut piece of fabric did not require much 'design' input. The *salwar kamiz* was a standardised set of garments that local tailors would make up for individual clients. Where newer styles were required, such as those inspired by Bollywood characters, the customer would ask their tailor to imitate them (Khaire, 2017, p. 352). Essentially the tailor took on

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<sup>28</sup> Such studies include William H. McNeil's *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community* (1963), Fernand Braudel's *A History of Civilisations* (1963), and Immanuel Wallerstein's *The Modern World System* (1974).

the role of designer to meet the needs of the customer.<sup>29</sup> According to Khaire, the first 'fashion designers' in India emerging in the mid-1980s, were self-taught members of the upper echelons of society, and so were well-connected. Therefore, their social network provided them their clientele. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, many of the fashion designers emerging in the industry had trained in design schools in London, New York or Paris. The opening of the National Institutes of Fashion Technology by the government's Ministry of Textiles, the first of which was opened in 1986, allowed for budding designers of a wider socio-economic background (ibid, p. 353). Private fashion institutes were also set up, such as the Pearl Academy in New Delhi. Founded by the Seth family who owned a major apparel export company, Pearl had a predominantly global outlook (ibid). The training at NIFT and Pearl is reminiscent of the clash of western and indigenous ideals. Western cuts were taught with a view to meeting wider global markets, while students and graduates were also encouraged to support the country's own indigenous textile and craft industries, which in turn met the desire for an authentic 'Indian' style. Such a fusion of styles was reminiscent of postmodern approaches to design globally at the time. Equipped with cultural, economic and social capital either inherited or accumulated through formal design education, designers assumed a 'modern' 'global' identity while also capitalising on a growing salience for the 'traditional' and 'authentic' (Note, 2006, p. 273; Bourdieu, 1984, p. 230).

Critiques of design education, mostly focusing on the NID, such as by Balaram (2009), Chatterjee (2005) and Ghose (1995), argue that the ambitious Ahmedabad declaration statement of intent never reached achievement. The local needs of craftspeople were not being met because urban educated designers continued to be too far removed from these needs. Homogenisation of education and the use of standardised text books meant that urban students were not learning about the diverse rural communities and traditions across their country. Moreover, national policy 'turned towards global and domestic competitiveness, and to measures that could stress international market success as the

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<sup>29</sup> Tailors are not considered artisans by the government so don't come under the remit of many of the government development policies listed above. While the confines of this thesis don't allow for the inclusion of tailors, the subject of fashion design education for traditional tailors would provide fertile ground for further research.

new hallmark of self-reliance' (Balaram, 2009, p. 61). This was strengthened in the 1990s as the country's economy was liberalised, and the need for designers became greater. The National Design Policy which was approved by the Union cabinet in 2007 laid out the visions for design in India primarily as being globally recognised and helping to improve Indian industries and competitiveness and did not address the vast craft community, which was at further risk from imitated imports of their products coming from countries such as China. Ghose (1995) describes the group of elite graduates emerging in the 1970s as 'designer stars', who claimed individual ownership of a design even if it incorporated skills and workmanship of traditional craftspeople. Amongst this cohort, Ritu Kumar, the 'doyenne of Indian fashion' (Dwyer, 2006), expressed the central role of India's crafts in the fashion industry, yet it is her name that is widely known, not the craftspeople who make her fabrics (Khaire, 2017, p. 359). While there are criticisms of socially-oriented textile designers working with crafts groups to 'westernise' craft products such as placemats, tea-cosies (Tyabji, 2008), and other products that were unfamiliar to village craftspeople, artisans in Kachchh attribute the change in fortune in their crafts to the newly emerging designers that were visiting Kachchh during the 1960s and 1970s.

DeNicola and DeNicola (2012) are critical of the social ideals of designers at this time, noting in particular the faults with the concept of the 'barefoot designer', which was a popular term to refer to the emerging socially-oriented designers and 'referred to the non-commercial work culture and unusual work environment' (Athavankar, 2002, p. 46). The concept is premised on a view that the urban designer should get to know fully the rural context he or she is working in and what the needs are. Balaram in his book *Thinking Design* (Balaram, 2011) went further to argue that the rural craftsperson should be able to have access to urban design education, but not to the same level that urban middle classes do, to avoid becoming more accustomed to urban than rural life (DeNicola and DeNicola, 2012). The NID invites artisans to visit and give demonstrations to educate and inspire the students, but the artisans are not eligible to study there themselves, while a key part of the design course involves students conducting a craft documentation project usually involving spending several months with a craft community. The diploma project also involves an intensive stay either in a craft village, with an NGO or with a corporate company to work on a design brief. All these instances demonstrate that formal design

education has not been considered an option for artisans. Master weaver Shamji Vishram Valji in Bhujodi village, Kachchh informed me of his experience attempting to join the NID in the 1990s but his English was not up to the required standard and he couldn't afford the fees. Several years later he was asked to teach there, and his family have for several decades supported NID student visits to their home.<sup>30</sup> Thus, artisans are expected either to continue their craft occupation as only an 'artisan' or continue formal schooling and get a job far removed from their traditional occupation, but not become designers themselves. The government training and development initiatives discussed above, being largely centred on employment generation and manual skills, have accentuated the divide between the artisan and designer. Despite efforts to form reciprocal collaborations outlined in publications such as *Designers Meet Artisans* (UNESCO, Artesanas de Colombia S.A, Craft Revival Trust, 2005), there continues to be strong criticisms of some such projects, particularly by anthropologists. Drawing upon fieldwork with block-printing communities in Rajasthan and phulkari embroiderers in the Punjab respectively, DeNicola and Wilkinson-Weber demonstrate this view:

'Conveniently, the construct of the generic, tradition-bound crafts worker facilitates a contrast with a designer or development worker whose knowledge and capacity for creativity is presented as uncontroversially superior in everyday talks about crafts across different arenas (DeNicola and Wilkinson-Weber M., 2016, p. 81).'

The authors argue that designers continue to be influenced by the discourses discussed above, on the romanticism of the traditional, and so are 'tasked' with protecting and selling it (DeNicola and Wilkinson-Weber M., 2016, p. 91), and that the artisan is limited in using their own design innovation and "becoming modern". Referring to Bourdieu's Distinction thesis, Herzfeld (2004, p. 207) notes a similar situation for 'marginalised' Rethemniot artisans in Crete who are expected to conform to traditions within the 'global hierarchy of value'. By contrasting the artisans with European bourgeoisie, who can be compared to the urban designers that DeNicola and Wilkinson Weber discuss, the former 'respectively formulate and propagate a seemingly universalistic ranking of distinctions', while the 'artisans in the periphery can display their talents only within a decidedly

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<sup>30</sup> Vishram Valji, S., 2016. Master-Weaver: Personal conversation with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 17 January.

localised and antimodernist space'. He adds, 'the Rethemniot artisans do not control the criteria of taste for the "tradition" that they supposedly embody, produce and represent' (ibid). Bourdieu's theories of different forms of capital and taste (1984) have informed this thesis, demonstrating findings contrary to those of Herzfeld's, specifically, that design education enables artisans to build cultural and social capital and influence tastes in their target 'modern' markets. At the same time, they may actively or instinctively conform to ideals of the traditional and local, based on market influences.

Socially-oriented design interventions, and indeed development in general are notoriously in tension with anthropological discourse; the former looking to the future to affect change, and the latter aiming to maintain distance from action-oriented development policies (Escobar, 1991; Mosse, 2005). However, these studies also note the benefits that each can have upon the other. Specific to design, the relatively new discipline of 'design anthropology' has been suggested as a useful discipline to inform socially-oriented designers, and even to displace 'development as the dominant term for deliberative, transformational change' (Suchman, 2018) as well as 'decolonising' design intervention practices in developing countries (Tunstall, 2013, p. 238). Following the rules of ethnography, combined with the problem-solving capacity of design, would enable the designer to maintain reflexivity and sensitivity to the diversity of specific local contexts, their histories, socio-economic background and diversity of skill, educational experience and social, cultural and economic capital of individual research 'subjects', as well as market demands.<sup>31</sup>

## **2.15 Re-centring the 'artisan' and the object**

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<sup>31</sup> For example, a very different approach would be required when intervening in a village or community in need of socio-economic development, for whom craft is not the traditional occupation but using it as development tool (Littrell and Dickson 2010), and intervening in a village or community for whom craft is part of the members' cultural identity. The latter approach has been adopted by many post-independent initiatives in India, such as Kala Raksha and Shrujan in Kachchh. An article by Littrell and Frater (2013) highlights these different approaches.

There have been intensifying debates across several disciplines on the need to challenge and move away from hegemonic decisions on art and craft objects and their creators in line with the Eurocentric 'art world'. This can involve representing objects from non-western cultures as ethnological, in opposition to western fine art or design. Gell stated that the task of anthropology of art is to 'define the characteristics of each culture's inherent aesthetic' (Gell, 1998, p. 1). It is upon this paradigm that he developed his theory of art objects as social agents, which I discuss in chapter 3, section 16. Emerging at a similar time to the discipline of design anthropology, the global design history discourse analyses the position of design movements, objects or designers, within dominant global narratives and transnational flows. It considers a growing need to re-position perspectives on design history and move away from the problematic historical discourse that views globalisation as a 'single, deterministic process in which the inevitable outcome is a homogenised world modelled on Europe or the United States of America' (Huppertz, 2015, p. 183). Perhaps most strongly argued in postcolonial subaltern scholarship, is the need to 'provincialise', de-centre Europe (Chakrabarty, 2000). Evident in the colonial attempts at educating craftspeople and displaying crafts, was the positioning of Europe as 'the scene of the birth of the modern' (ibid, p. 5). However, informing post-independent attempts at developing Indian crafts, Europe continued to represent the modern ideal, despite Gandhi's attempts at shedding its influence. Furthermore, throughout the second half of the twentieth century, Europe and America continued to be central to histories documenting industrialisation and development, with the rest of the world positioned at the peripheries. In such histories, "India" or "Indians" were presented as inadequate or lacking ability to 'modernise' (ibid). Rooted in these Eurocentric histories are the current narratives and representations of craft and artisans, introduced at the beginning of this chapter, as being 'outmoded' and in need of 'help'. By leaving out local perspectives, they ignore the impacts of gender, kinship, dynamics and social organisation of knowledge (Herzfeld, 2004, p. 209), upon artisans as well as: the nuances of roles, hierarchies, diverse skill level, educational experiences, occupational trajectories and identities that individual artisans may assume or move between at different stages of their career (Mohsini, 2016a).

To challenge and overcome imbalances of positioning, Herzfeld recommends conducting detailed localised ethnographies which also consider the 'wider national and international

structures of power at the level of the ethnography itself' (ibid, p. 208). This way the 'effects of global process can be brought under genuinely intense inspection', including the position of the ethnographer, design historian or designer within such a processes and discourse. Chapter 3 discusses positioning in more detail in relation to my adoption of the 'ethno-case study' method.

## **2.16 Summary**

This chapter has provided a summary of the main broad discourses across several disciplines which have informed the theoretical framework for this thesis and the analysis of the two case studies. The first few sections of historical analysis showed how weavers' caste and traditional occupation in India has been simultaneously associated with stigmatisation and subjugation, and a sense of pride. I have demonstrated that there have been several factors that influence the status of the weaver, including material specialism, market and whether they work in an urban or rural area, which would in turn dictate the success of weavers in the face of decline. I have discussed the various roles weavers pursued and the different ways production was organised from the early modern period up until the twentieth century, dependent on the market and the regional context. I then went on to discuss traditional training of weavers as well as the emergence of both technical and art education which respectively represented the conflicting views of 'traditional' craft during the industrial revolution and British colonial rule.

Section 10 explored the nationalist *swadeshi* movement, and the role cloth, both handloom and mill-made, played in defining the aims for regaining national identity. This was informed on the one hand by desire to celebrate traditional heritage and on the other to re-build the country's industrial power and economy. Post-independence technical and design education was influenced by these dual aims. I compared technical education with formal schooling and the ways in which increased access to higher education amongst scheduled castes encourages the social mobility of weavers and provides an escape from their oppressed status and occupation, while technical education can enhance caste and tradition. However, I also mentioned the criticisms of the educational reservations system both for their ways of accentuating social differences institutionally and failing to lead to employment.

The final sections in this chapter aimed to bring together arguments in anthropology, design history, design and development, by analysing the critiques towards designers working with artisans to develop their craft for new markets and the hierarchical divisions this arrangement can cause. It was also important to draw upon the discourse on global design history that critiques narratives that come predominantly from a western perspective and so position the West at the centre and the non-West at the periphery, and the risk of this approach failing to recognise the innovation and agency of the actors within these 'peripheries'. The following chapter discusses how this research aims to address such criticisms and how the discourse has helped to inform decisions on methodological approaches.

# 3

## Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the use of qualitative methodology, the adoption of ethnographic techniques within a case study format, and the reasons for choosing these methods in order to meet the main objectives. Several disciplinary approaches have informed the selection of methods. For example, socio-anthropological studies of learning craft skills informed the decision to conduct a weaving apprenticeship, and material culture and design history informed the analysis of artefacts, both the woven objects and documents such as curricula and student portfolios. The fieldwork in India was conducted over a period of fifteen months and three separate field visits. The first trip took place from September 2015 to January 2016, the second between June and September 2016, and a third brief trip was conducted in March 2017. During the breaks between field visits, I gathered and analysed the collected data, while taking note of any gaps that would need to be filled during the subsequent phase. In between the field visits and afterwards, I kept in touch with participants over the phone and on social media and conducted some interviews over Skype. During these breaks I also continued to collect and analyse institute documents and curricula. This chapter first discusses the overall methodology selected in relation to the theoretical framework within which my research sits. I then go on to discuss each method I adopted to collect data and the challenges, advantages and disadvantages of each, before discussing the analysis and writing process.

### 3.2 Qualitative research

The methodology in its broadest sense is qualitative, aiming to produce knowledge based on the experiences of people, rather than on statistical or scientific analysis. Quantitative studies of the impact of design education for handloom weavers, have been carried out on different levels by either the organisations themselves or other craft development organisations, which have been drawn upon for this study and which I discuss further in section 18 of this chapter. My role in this research was to 'study things in their natural

settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p. 3).

Qualitative research would allow me to take account of the perspectives of those studied – in this case, weavers in Kachchh and Maheshwar, and to develop an understanding of their experiences of design education alongside weaving work in general. Through employing a wide range of 'tried and tested' strategies, I was 'hoping always to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand,' as well as being aware that 'each practice makes the world visible in a different way' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p. 4). Thus, an adoption of multiple interpretive practices as well as triangulation across the resulting data, was important.

### **3.3 Ethnography**

Ethnography is a methodology that goes hand-in-hand with qualitative research as it focuses on people and their experiences. Since it emerged during the nineteenth century (when it was more commonly known as 'ethnology', and later became central to the discipline of anthropology (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), ethnography - 'writing about people' (Ingold, 2014) has been specifically employed to study 'other' cultures. This brought a tendency of ethnographers to position themselves as superior to the foreign subjects they were studying. The postcolonial functionalist and structuralist models, developed alongside the significant Chicago School reform, brought a critical shift from the separation of ethnographer and subject, to increased recognition of the researchers' own position in the process of studying communities.

Ethnography is currently used broadly across a range of disciplines and a range of settings such as educational institutions (Merriam, 1988), hospitals and to study design practices, as mentioned in chapter 2. Because of its wider usage, the term is now difficult to define. Ingold (2014) has noted that it has become so widely used that it is losing its meaning. At the beginning of the research, I was unsure whether ethnography was the most appropriate methodology to adopt, considering I'm not a trained social scientist. However, craft is inextricably linked to the social life, economy and culture of the communities in this study, and therefore I also looked to anthropology, and particularly anthropological studies of crafts (which adopt ethnographic methodologies) to help answer my research

questions. Wilkinson-Weber and DeNicola (2016, p. 4) assert that anthropology:

‘provides us with studies of great ethnographic depth among particular communities, while recognising that the movement of geographically specific, heritage-imbued crafts and the appearance of crafting in unexpected contexts spans the globe’.

Furthermore, having trained and worked in design I was able to bring a new perspective to the study of a crafts community that included a sensitivity and understanding of the approach to design and making, something particularly important in examining ways in which craftspeople learn and do design. The ethnographic techniques I discuss in the following sections involve engaging both with the research participants to capture their experiences and stories, ‘piecing together varying accounts of informants’ (Clifford, 1986, p. 8) and the textiles they produce (as expressions of their experience, identity, culture and social life), as well as the relation between the informants (weavers) and their textiles.

I found it important to develop an in-depth understanding of ethnographic techniques while being open, reflective and responsive to the context. I discuss below my preference of the term ‘ethno-case study’ to describe my adoption of ethnographic techniques within and alongside the two case studies and within a flexible, reflective and adaptable format. I also considered the ‘rules’ of ethnography, albeit flexible and adaptable to context, important to understand in determining my position in the field.

### **3.4 Reflexivity and researcher’s position**

In an attempt to challenge unequal, hierarchical or Eurocentric narratives in research with non-western communities, as discussed in the previous chapter, I had a heightened state of awareness about my presence as a white, middle-class young woman in rural regions which in the past have been sites of romanticism and othering. While as Clifford states, there is ‘no settled criteria for a good [ethnographic] account’ (1986, p. 9), it is important for the researcher to adopt a reflexive approach, to continuously construct oneself through the study (ibid), and to ‘recognise the similarities between the culture to which they belong, and the cultures which they study’ (Silverman, 2001, p. 8). Therefore, it was important for me to recognise the similarities in lived experiences between myself and the research participants and enter the field with a fresh but critical eye and shed any preconceptions about ‘traditional’ communities or ideas about development, and even assumed best practice. Indeed, many of the weavers in Kachchh and Maheshwar have

travelled widely, achieved good levels of education and are globally connected via the internet. This recognition forms 'part of an effort to acknowledge their agency, their subject status in lives lived, not for us, not for the anthropological lens that spies them, but for themselves' (Hardy, 2002, p. 10).

It was also important to recognise the common interest in textiles that I held with many of the research participants. The woven textiles, as 'social objects', served as tools for communication and as many weavers themselves recognised, design itself can act as a common language across cultures and communities. I discuss this further in section 3.15.

Reflexivity was practiced through continuous reflection and evaluation of selected methods and approaches, along with experimentation and iteration throughout the fieldwork. Thus the initial research design was tested and adapted based both on the effectiveness of the methods in helping to explore the key questions of the research, as well as for responding to 'what is found in the field' (Marcus, 1998). Indeed the reflexive approach lends itself well to maintaining the 'naturalist approach' which describes studying the social world in its natural settings, rather than 'artificial' settings which the positivist or scientific approach is defined by (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 8).

According to Hammersley and Atkinson, 'we need to reflect only on what seems – or can be shown to be problematic, while leaving open the possibility that what currently is not problematic, in the future may become so'.

I discuss in the following sections the strategies I adopted in attempts to avoid any power imbalances that may occur between the researcher and the researched, in relation to each particular research method. In general, it was important that I communicated to the participants the aims of the research, what would happen with the information they gave me, that they had a right to withdraw from the research and had the opportunity to remain anonymous, as well as getting permission for taking photographs and film.

### **3.5 Case study method**

The case study is described by Merriam (1988, p. 10) as 'an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit'. It was intended however that the case studies in this research

would not exist as 'isolated empirical enquiries', but as 'part of a cumulative body of knowledge' (Yin, 1993, p. 21). It was thus considered important to have a wide understanding of the general context of handloom and education in India. Early field visits involved conducting exploratory studies to gain a broad understanding of the handloom industry and the work being done by development organisations. I undertook a preliminary visit in September 2014 to the two main rural design education institutes I had identified as potential case studies. I approached the gatekeepers to request access, identified potential participants and conducted pilot studies. This visit enabled 'determining the feasibility of the desired research procedures' (ibid), as well as the suitability of the organisations based on the aims of the research. Finally, it enabled me to design the case studies in such a way that the initial hypothesis 'was subjected to empirical testing and deciding between multiple/single cases, developing protocol and defining relevant data collection strategies' (ibid, p. 25).

During the initial visit, I considered it important to determine whether there were any additional initiatives running similar educational programmes or pioneering attempts in handloom development. I visited Weavers Service Centres, a government *khadi* production unit and spent time in major cities to conduct pilot interviews with individuals holding key roles in craft development. Following the gathering of literature and methodology planning, the first phase of 'official' fieldwork from September 2015 to January 2016, allowed more time and funding for additional visits to handloom organisations and communities across South India. In Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, both states with large decentralised powerloom and handloom industries, I visited some powerloom units to gain an understanding of the sector of the textile industry that is widely viewed as a threat to handloom weavers. I also visited handloom development initiatives as potential additional case studies. These first-hand experiences along with the histories of the move from handloom to powerloom in India discussed in chapter 2, helped to locate the approaches to handloom development against the powerloom industry, the reasons for its survival and preservation, and its relevance in contemporary India.

At this stage, it was decided that any more than two case studies would make the study too broad and impact on the ability to study the two cases initially identified in detail. Therefore, the case study selection was finalised to two: Somaiya Kala Vidya (SKV) in

Kachchh and The Handloom School (THS) in Maheshwar, because these were the only two institutes I identified conducting formal, long-term curricula for traditional artisans. Conducting two case studies meant that I would always have less understanding of each than were I to conduct one by itself. However, according to Yin (2009, p. 29), examining one case study against another is more effective than analysing just a single case and 'enables the study of the relationship of one organisation against another'. Furthermore, the fieldwork inevitably involved 'multi-sited research', moving around the field, as I discuss below. Studying the cases alongside each other would help 'to determine, for example, whether they are competitive or collaborative, and in turn how this impacts on the aims of each, and the aims of the research' (ibid). It was important to recognise the distinct aims of each and the differing contexts they are situated within while making comparisons.

Finally, it was decided that particularisation rather than generalisation of studies would be most appropriate for this study. Generalisation involves taking the theories developed from a single or collection of cases and applying them to others, to understand whether the same analysis could be true of other similar cases. Having found during my exploratory preliminary field trip that each handloom region has a distinct culture, challenges and resources, particularisation was deemed more appropriate. According to Simons (2014, p. 465), particularisation can 'capture and report uniqueness in all its particularity and present in a way we can all recognise. [In this way], we will discover something of universal significance'. Thus, to reiterate a point made in chapter 1, it was hoped that the presentation of the findings from the two in- depth case studies will tell a story that readers may be able to recognise and apply to their own context.

### **3.6 The 'ethno-case study': negotiating research sites and time in the field**

Choosing to conduct two case studies each in a different field site, meant I wouldn't be spending a 'prolonged period in the field and immersion into the community of a culture-sharing group' (Parker-Jenkins, 2018, citing Hammersley). However, Parker-Jenkins, an education ethnographer, acknowledges that ethnography might be conducted in different spaces and for different lengths of time. Her adoption of the term 'ethno-case study' was drawn from her observation of the overlaps between ethnography and case study method,

as well as the evolving and dynamic nature of ethnography. It also relates to the way that communities have become de-centred and dispersed due to globalisation (see also Angrosino and Rosenberg, 2011, p. 472). Globalisation, in terms of the increased movement of people, goods and ideas across both international and national borders, raises questions on whether ideas and behaviours are 'indigenous' to a particular community or have come from elsewhere. I mentioned in chapter 2 the importance of avoiding the representation of non-western communities as passive recipients of hegemonic policies, and instead considering multi-directional flows of ideas and the agency of local actors to adopt and adapt such influences to suit their own needs.

These observations of ethnographic research in the context of globalisation are particularly relevant to this research. Weavers in both Kachchh and Maheshwar currently straddle multiple identities as they attempt to uphold their 'traditional' identity as weavers while attending further education, interacting with tourists, buyers and designers in person and online, and in some cases, travelling abroad and exhibiting in high-end galleries and boutiques. Neither of these locations are culturally homogenous spaces, cut off from the rest of the world, as many "classic" ethnographies may have aimed to portray, nor do they represent the 'total social or cultural reality for all the people who are in some way or another affiliated with the community' (Angrosino and Rosenberg, 2011, p. 472), but are diverse and multi-faceted globalised spaces. In Maheshwar particularly, weavers travel from different parts of the country to study at THS, as well as to cities which host exhibitions, high-end shops and the residences of important patrons of craft. While it was not possible to be in all these places at the times participants were there, it was important to experience and undertake observation in these places where possible, because all were sites in which important activities related to the research objectives took place. Additionally, I met with both urban designer-entrepreneurs and weaver-designers at home in the UK.

Furthermore, I was not aiming to capture a full life cycle of an individual or group of individuals, as this would not have been possible within the institutional boundaries of the PhD; but the experiences of a range of students and graduates of each institute. It was also for this reason that multiple visits at different times to the field, along with online engagement in the meantime, was preferred so that I could both meet new graduates and

determine the progress of student weavers between meeting them on campus, and then several months after they graduated.

‘Overall, the benefits of employing the term ethno-case study are that it:

- Sets boundaries for the researcher
- Acknowledges that it is a study located within a richer, wider context
- Conveys the sense of conducting an inquiry with people, employing ethnographic techniques
- Suggests limited research time and immersion in the context and/or data
- Gives the reader some level of expectation in terms of the project results and claims’ (Parker-Jenkins, 2018, p. 25).

The amount of time I would spend in the field was subject to ‘access limitations, project time available and the research orientation’ (Jeffrey and Troman, 2004, p. 538). My approach involved a ‘selective intermittent time mode’ defined by Jeffrey and Troman (ibid) as a ‘flexible approach to the frequency of site visits over a longer period of time’. This approach enabled me to navigate the various locations and the different schedules of each case study in terms of workshops and classes, as well as events and exhibitions occurring sporadically throughout the period of fieldwork.

Another benefit of the selective intermittent time mode was allowing for ‘time between visits to reflect on my observations and conversations with relevant theories to interpret the data from the site’ (ibid, p. 541), as well as to identify gaps, evaluate the effectiveness of the methods and make plans for improving these for the next visit. This mode allowed for flexibility to respond to changes of schedules, the availability of the respondents, and finding out about important events at the last minute, and naturally occurring conversations. It also allowed for tracking the progress of the cases over time and noting any changes or developments taking place. On return visits to the field, I could meet weavers, faculty or staff I had met on previous occasions who would often strike up conversations without the need for interviews. Such individuals would update me on specific events that had happened, new developments in the institute such as changes to the curriculum, and weavers would inform me of new clients they had gained, exhibitions they had attended and new collections they had developed. Furthermore, in between the visits the use of social media, while perhaps only on the surface level, was useful in keeping track of the progress of the institute, seeing weavers’ new designs and the events

or exhibitions they were becoming involved in, and hearing about key events that I might then be able to schedule additional field visits around.

### **3.7 Sampling and identification of participants**

Having conducted a broad scoping study across several handloom clusters, I was able to narrow down the selection of cases and participants based on the research objectives as mentioned above. Selecting participants to interview was relatively simple as there was not a large population to select from, as might be the case when studying a whole village. It was not possible for me to interview every single graduate of each institute, mainly due to our availability not always matching up, or in the case of THS, the graduates living in different parts of the country. The list of KRV and SKV graduates is on their websites, and I was also given names by staff in the organisations or people I'd met who had worked with the artisan. Staff working at THS passed on details of graduates in Maheshwar and other regions. I had met some students or graduates during the preliminary scoping visit to the campus or their village, and I was referred to some through a friend or colleague. Subsequently, 'snowball sampling' naturally occurred when one interviewee would refer me to others. Consequently, interviews were arranged with the help of my interpreter.

I took a similar approach to identify teachers. I would meet some at the exhibitions or other events as well as at the institute themselves. I was referred to some teachers by staff at the institutes, and again snowball sampling occurred.

The following sections discuss the ethnographic techniques that I employed to collect data and to develop accounts of individuals associated closely with the case institutes, as well as in-depth profiles of the institutes themselves. The individual methods include interviewing, observation (participant and moderate), analysis of documents and artefacts, and visual ethnography.

### **3.8 Interviews**

Considering a need to 'value the voices of the participants' (Parker-Jenkins, 2018, p. 25), for this research, interviews were selected to capture oral accounts of participants' experiences of design education. Interviews were conducted with various participants including weavers within each case, both those who had been through the design

education and some who had not, founder-directors, coordinators and other members of staff and teachers at both institutes (see Appendix B for full list of interviews). Interviews were planned with founders, directors and those involved in more prominent positions with the organisations as early on as possible, for two reasons: First, to ensure they were aware of the aims and direction of the research and how it might affect the organisation; second, it would help to get an initial insight into the main aims of the organisation, their objectives, and how the gatekeepers' presence, motivation and leadership influence the direction and effectiveness of the education; and what might happen if they were to not be a part of the organisation.

While it was important to note that weavers 'don't really talk about what they do, they just do it',<sup>32</sup> as my interpreter explained in Maheshwar, the ways participants responded, whether more openly or less confidently would reveal some of the effects of the education. Furthermore, it was apparent that those participants who had been through the design and business education were keen to be interviewed, hoping that it would raise their profile and make their work known, and they would talk openly and enthusiastically. Interviews with weavers who had not been through education often showed either a reluctance or shyness in answering questions, and uncertainty over the reason they were approached to be interviewed. In this sense, Hammersley and Atkinson's observation is useful, that:

'First, [oral accounts] can be read for what they tell us about the phenomena to which they refer. Second, we can analyse them in terms of the perspectives they imply, the discursive strategies they employ, and even the psychosocial dynamics they suggest' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 97).

During the first field trip informal conversations (Bernard, 2006, p. 171) would occur or unsolicited accounts (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 99) would be given during observations of classes at the institutes. This also happened during my weaving apprenticeship or visits to the villages, from which field notes would be taken. These conversations became useful for gathering 'information about the setting, evidence of perspectives' (ibid), and for identifying participants to conduct further, semi-structured

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<sup>32</sup> Kanere, G., 2016. Weaver-entrepreneur: Personal conversation with Ruth Clifford, Maheshwar, 6 July

interviews with.

The interviews were semi-structured, which allowed for the collection of reliable, comparable qualitative data and to demonstrate a clear intention to the respondents (ibid, p. 173). The same topics were covered with all the respondents interviewed, although questions would naturally vary from respondent to respondent, and be dependent upon their answers.

Before beginning the interview, the reason for the interview and the nature of the research was explained to the respondent. Additionally, I explained what in particular I hoped to find out from them, and what would be done with the information provided. The nature of the research was also explained on the Information and Consent form, both of which had been translated into Hindi and were given to participants at the beginning of the interview. This was both important for ethical reasons but also so that the most relevant responses were reached. As advised by Bernard (2006), I explained that I wanted to know what they thought about their experiences and that I was interested to learn from them about the subject. It was also stressed that they were welcome to interrupt me, ask me questions or add anything that I hadn't asked.

Some participants would be interviewed for a second time if after transcribing and translating the first interview scope for further questioning was identified based on the themes arising across other collected data. Other reasons to interview a second time would be if the participant had gone through specific changes in their career or business or to capture their voice on film, which I go into more detail about below.

Reflexivity in asking questions was important. Early on I noticed a temptation to feed answers based on the kind of presuppositions of what the weavers' experiences might be from either previous interviews or texts I'd read. It was therefore important to allow for space for respondents to think about how they would answer the question; probe if the response was quite brief, listen intently to the response without getting caught up in thinking about the next question (Bernard, 2006, p. 177); and to evaluate and identify ways of improving the interviews to ensure in-depth answers and that the participant felt at ease.

### 3.9 Language

Throughout the fieldwork, I was continuously contending with issues to do with researching in a different country, as well as communicating with participants who speak several different languages. This meant actively seeking solutions and methods to communicate in the most effective way to avoid loss of meanings 'by translation' (Filep, 2009). Additionally, knowledge is in part assimilated through language, thus, to achieve my aim of capturing and understanding weavers' knowledge, it was important to have some grasp of their language.

'Language is an important part of conceptualisation, incorporating values and beliefs, not just a tool or technical label for conveying concepts. It carries accumulated and particular cultural, social and political meanings that cannot simply be read off through the process of translation, and organises and prepares the experiences of its speakers.' (Temple and Edwards, 2002)

Currently across India 114 languages are spoken. The separation of states after independence was decided largely on language spoken, thus, each state maintains its own identity through its language. Since independence there have been changes in the constitution regarding the official and national language, but currently both Hindi and English are co-official languages (Vaish, 2008). In Kachchh, most of the population speak a minimum of two languages, mostly Kachchhi and Gujarati. Both languages share some of the same vocabulary and along with Hindi, derive from the Indo-Aryan family. Kachchhi does not have a written form, and therefore Gujarati, Hindi or English, are the languages that lessons are taught in in schools (see chapter 2, section 11). Those who are less educated, live in more isolated rural areas and interact little with people from other areas – mainly women of the older generation, may only speak Kachchhi. A large number of men speak Hindi, which includes all the weavers interviewed for this research, and some speak English.<sup>33</sup>

In Maheshwar which is in Madhya Pradesh state, Hindi is the main language spoken although the local language, Nimari, which has similarities to Gujarati is also spoken. Like Kachchhi, Nimari is commonly spoken amongst older women, but unlike Gujarat, where

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<sup>33</sup> Sindhi is another language brought to Kachchh by the communities who migrated from Sindh in Pakistan, including Meghwals, and is essentially the same dialect as Kachchhi.

Gujarati is most widely spoken with each other, Hindi overall is much more common.

Having remembered only scant Gujarati from my stay in Kachchh in 2008, I took a Hindi course at the start of the PhD, considering a large part of my fieldwork would be in Maheshwar which is a predominantly Hindi speaking area, and most weavers in Kachchh speak Hindi. Filep (2009) and Temple and Edwards (2002) state the importance of learning language, not simply using dictionary translations, in attempting to understand the culture of study. It can help to generate a true representation and interpretation of the research participant's response.

Whilst having key phrases helped to generate rapport with the participants (Bernard, 2006, p. 290), an interpreter was employed to ensure ease of communication with the participant. The selection of interpreter was important considering how that person could potentially affect the validity of the interview responses, and the way the participants' voices come across (Temple, 2006), as well as ensuring that the interpretation was as close to the intended meaning as possible. In Kachchh, I was assisted by Kanji, the nephew of Shamji Vishram Valji, a key informant throughout the research. Kanji had learnt weaving while he was young but had decided against pursuing it in favour of studying engineering, for which knowledge of English was essential. At the time of fieldwork, he was teaching in Bhuj Engineering College and could spare time in the evenings and weekends to accompany me during interviews. Employing an interpreter from a weaving family brought both advantages and disadvantages. Kanji understood weaving and was well connected to many of the weavers we interviewed, some of whom he was related to. This simultaneously eased access but potentially affected the way the responses were interpreted (Bernard, 2006). Further, with no experience in interpretation for research purposes, Kanji was unlikely to understand the importance of such issues. Thus, it was important to explain to Kanji the purposes of the research and the importance of getting detailed responses. I maintained awareness of what may affect interviewees' responses, such as the 'deference effect', when informants say what they think the interviewer wants to know, as well as the 'social desirability affect', when 'people tell you what they think will make them look good' (Bernard, 2006, p. 194), and to adapt my approach accordingly. One way of ensuring the validity of interview responses was to conduct additional interviews, with different interpreters and in different circumstances. When filming

interviews more open-ended questions were asked to allow for the participant to lead the discussion, and many participants would talk for long periods of time. Triangulation across methods was also important in analysing one data set against another to ensure the validity of the data.

For the initial interviews in Kachchh, I encouraged weavers to use their mother-tongue, Kachchhi to respond in, based on most weavers telling me it is the language they best express themselves in. After having conducted several interviews, I faced difficulties in finding professional translators who understood Kachchhi, a language particularly difficult to transcribe as it is not a written language. Eventually a friend and guide who had also worked as an interpreter for some of the interviews agreed to translate and transcribe a selection. Learning from this experience and noticing that many participants, particularly those who had been through the education or travelled more widely, were comfortable speaking Hindi, I proceeded to conduct subsequent interviews in Hindi.

The use of English in interviews, particularly English terms to describe elements of design, was itself an interesting phenomenon and one that helped to determine knowledge development. English is taught at SKV and is a key part of the THS curriculum. Many English words and phrases are used in the design teaching such as 'balance', 'rhythm', 'negative-positive', and these terms were used by respondents while showing me examples in their work. Furthermore, the use of English terms for describing basic design principals rather than local terms, suggested that such concepts don't exist in the local context and made it important to examine design innovation alongside the spread of English medium education in India. While it has been suggested that colonialism was a threat to local languages and diverse identities and cultures, which Vaish argues is 'a kind of postcolonial orientalism not applicable to India', it is also widely recognised by the state, development initiatives and artisans that English is 'an empowering vocational skill in a globalising economy' (Vaish 2008, p. 24). Indeed, English need no longer be viewed as the colonial language, and Indians and those of other former British colonies have taken full possession of it, evidenced particularly in the use of 'Hinglish' (Kothari and Snell, 2011). For artisans, it is seen as useful for either connecting with global markets or escaping their hereditary profession and getting a good 'white-collar' job.

### **3.10 Translation of interview recordings**

A combination of strategies was undertaken to transcribe and translate interviews conducted in the local language. One involved my own transcription of the English interpretation but listening carefully to responses in the local language for tone of voice and pauses, and if in Hindi, terms or phrases I understood. Subsequently some of these interviews were selected to be translated and transcribed by a professional translator. The reason for not selecting all was in part due to financial resources available, and in part due to the need to narrow down the interviews to the most relevant along with those that did not seem to have been fully interpreted during the interview. A professional translator was identified via the internet who took on the job in a very reliable and in-depth manner, capturing all the pauses, utterances and punctuation. I thus ended up with my own interpretations along with the interpreter's and translator's which created a challenge of 'triple subjectivity' and so it was important to address how each individual's responses affected the other: 'The interpreter's effect on the informant; b) the interpreter's effect on the communicative process; and c) the interpreter's effect on the translation' (Filep, 2009, p. 64).

The analysis process, which I will discuss in more detail in section 19, involved carefully interpreting meaning and maintaining awareness of both any preconceived notions I had of the respondent or ideas of themes I was looking for, as well as the potential for loss of meaning or misinterpretation via the language difference. Filepp (ibid) outlines several strategies to adopt to ensure correct interpretation of meaning in the process of translation. Those relevant to this research include: back translation; consultation around the use and meanings of words and phrases identified as problematic with people who are bilingual; and 'pre-testing or piloting the research instrument in the local culture; to ask respondents not only for their answer, but also for their interpretation of the item's meaning' (ibid).

The time it would take to follow these procedures would have gone beyond the limits of the research. However, it was important to be aware that language 'speaks of a particular social reality that may not necessarily have a conceptual equivalence in the language into which it is to be translated' (Temple and Edwards, 2002, p. 5), and consultation would

often occur over particular terms and their meanings in the local context. Finally, as I will discuss further below, audio-visual recordings of interviews enable the viewer or listener to hear the participant's own voice rather than that of the researcher or translator, as well as to see non-verbal language, gestures and interaction with the participant's environment and their designed and woven products. Added English subtitles based on rigorous translations done via the process described above allow for the participant's story to reach a wider audience that can make their own interpretations. Indeed, as Marcus (quoted in Angrosino and Rosenberg, 2011, p. 470) states, the results of ethnographic research can never be 'reducible to a form of knowledge that can be packaged in the monologic voice of the ethnographer alone'.

### **3.11 Visual ethnography: film and photography**

Visual ethnography was an additional strategy adopted to handle verbal language difference. The resulting recordings were analysed against and alongside audio-recorded interviews as a form of triangulation. Further, the nature of the subject of study is inherently visual, active and embodied, and so it was important not to rely only on verbal language. The visual ethnography approach 'recognises the interwovenness of text, images and technologies in people's everyday lives and identities' (Pink, 2007, p. 7). Additionally, 'images have the ability to evoke deeper elements of human consciousness than words do' (ibid).

Throughout the fieldwork I carried a compact digital camera, which I used to record my route and pathways through the landscape I was exploring (Spradley, 1980), as much as to record what was 'in front of the camera' (Pink, 2007). Photography and film were initially adopted as tools to capture the non-verbal aspects, sensory and visual experiences that could not be captured in field notes and interviews alone, and to address the observation mentioned above that 'weavers don't talk about what they do'. They were also deemed useful in recording the process of "what people do", which can be different to "what people say" (Hodder, 1998), in interviews and written documents. During my second fieldwork trip I hired a film maker to do this in a professional way with a view of using the film as dissemination of the research to broader audiences, as well as to provide a visual documentation of the processes involved in the craft, learning and designing, in the home,

workshop and institution. It happened quite naturally that many of the weavers we visited to film their practice would openly talk for the camera, in fact more so than the previous trip when interviews were only audio-recorded. It seemed that the graduate weavers were keen to tell their story, so I continued to interview some of the key informants on film. For the film interviews, a less directive approach was taken which involved 'allowing the respondent to talk at length on their own terms, as opposed to more directive questioning' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 101).



Figure 3. The researcher discussing old and new designs with Dayalal Kudecha

Having the interview on film served several benefits: 1) the camera could capture the interviewee alongside either the loom or some of the weavers' own work in the shot, which they would then talk through, explaining their thoughts behind the design, and communicating what they'd learned at the design institute. 2) Gestures, postures and stance were visible, all of which are a form of (body) language. 3) I could also be in the frame, rather than behind the camera, which had the potential of challenging divisions that can be created between the photographer and photographed or researcher and researched (Pink, 2007). 4) Each of the participants became known, and their own voice heard rather than that of the researcher or interpreter. This helped both to avoid any misrepresentations or misinterpretations, but also avoid any notions of anonymity of craftspeople or reinforcement of the notion that craftspeople exist only within collectives or communities. Finally, film has the ability to challenge the notion of written (or drawn)

language having superiority over embodied knowledge, and recognising that local knowledge might 'have properties beyond language' (Pottier, 2003, p. 3).

The film maker had previously done some filming in Kachchh and met many of the participants we interviewed. This helped in ensuring the participants were at ease. I decided against employing an additional interpreter due to the concern that we would be too many people descending on the modest dwellings and quiet villages of the weavers. All the weavers interviewed spoke fluent Hindi and appeared more comfortable talking to the camera than they had been on the previous visit when they spoke either in Kachchhi or Gujarati and only had their voices recorded. This could have been due to the respondent feeling more at ease with an outsider as interpreter or keener to perform for the camera or tell their story to a wider audience. While there was some repetition of information given in the previous audio-recorded interviews in Kachchhi, there was significant additional information and so analysing the interviews alongside each other as well as alongside documents and fieldnotes, ensured data validity and credibility. Having Hindi interviews made it easier to find a translator to work on these. The same approach was adopted in Maheshwar but with a different film maker, one local to the region. Because this film maker was not familiar with handloom, it was important to give detailed instruction regarding the positioning of the camera when filming the weaving process.

A reflexive approach was important during filming which was sought by recording and evaluating intentions behind particular photographs and film shots, and maintaining awareness of what was behind and outside of the images to 'maintain a reflexive awareness' and the 'limits of visuals as representations of the truth' (Pink, 2007).

### **3.12 Observation: moderate and active**

Observation is viewed as a key strategy of ethnographic inquiry, taking place in the 'natural loci of activity' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 102), which for this research included the SKV and THS campuses, as well as galleries, shops, the SKV fashion show, the villages and weavers' homes. The data received from observation can serve to illuminate data received from interviews and vice versa (ibid). At the sites, 'moderate participation' (Spradley, 1980, p. 60) was conducted, which involved maintaining a 'balance between being an insider and an outsider'. I would engage in informal conversations and take notes

where possible. Writing as if the ethnographer were not present which twentieth century ethnographies aimed for, is no longer considered necessary or indeed possible (Angrosino and Rosenberg, 2011). Being a white foreigner, my presence was immediately obvious. Additionally, many of the participants knew me as a former designer and there was an expectation that I would involve myself in the classes, and so it would have been remiss for me not to participate. Moderate participation involving for example, giving feedback on designs or helping set up presentations, allowed me to engage in conversation with students and faculty, gain rapport with them, and learn about their responses to the course, their understandings of the subjects taught, and interactions with other students and teachers. Moderate participation also allowed for maintaining a more collaborative relationship with the participants to ensure a balance of influence. This was helped by a continuous awareness of my presence and of how the participants wanted to be studied, while also ensuring objectivity through observations that were 'carefully conducted, clearly recorded and intelligently interpreted' (ibid).

At times my role took on a more active intervention aspect, involving delivering sessions at both institutes. At the request of the director of SKV, I delivered a session on marketing crafts in the UK to give students an insight into the positioning of crafts by 'designer-makers' within luxury markets and in turn the influence of this positioning on the crafts' value. At THS in the typical format of its flexible schedule, I was asked if I wanted to deliver sessions during the first few days of arriving for fieldwork, and what I would like to teach or discuss (it was less formal than the term 'teaching' suggests). I offered to deliver two presentations, one on colour and another on social media, based on my own experience and skills as a former textile designer, regular blogger and at the time, press officer for the UK Textile Society. I then planned the sessions two days in advance and showed the PowerPoint presentations to the course director. As I only had an hour for each session, I aimed at giving a simple brief introduction to these subjects, planting the seeds for the students to think on and develop throughout the course. Later they would receive more in-depth teaching on these subjects and it was important not to overwhelm them too early on.

The rest of the time spent at both campuses, over the course of the two fieldwork phases, was spent observing classes, having informal conversations with students, teachers and

administrative staff, helping in the English classes, conducting interviews with current and past students and other stakeholders, and, at THS, writing profiles of the students for the website and sponsors. The profiles meant the interviews with the students were not only beneficial for my research but for the institute also. Going between participant and direct observation and intervention was useful in retaining a certain level of detachment, and therefore avoiding too much bias.

### **3.13 Apprenticeship**

Since approximately the 1990s, apprenticeship as field method has become increasingly adopted in anthropological research with communities for whom craft is an important traditional occupation and marker of community identity and culture (for example; Dilley, 1999; Ingold, 2001; Simpson, 2006; Marchand, 2008; Venkatesan, 2010; Gowlland, 2015; Collard, 2016). Michael Coy (1989, p. 117) says apprenticeship is an extension of participant observation, in that the apprentice can 'get as close to the indigenous community as possible.' The craft process can communicate in-depth information about the community, particularly where these activities are entwined with everyday life and involve the individual not only learning the skills but also being socialised into the community. Furthermore, many of the anthropologists listed above including Venkatesan and Simpson, discuss the difficulty participants would have in describing the processes involved in their craft and therefore tell researchers to try it themselves. Dilley (1999) describes this method as 'performative ethnography' as opposed to 'informative ethnography', referring to the fact that the knowledge of weaving can't be verbalised, but only 'mediated through embodied action'.

By adopting apprenticeship as a method, I sought to step into the weavers' shoes, to get a sense of their view of weaving and learning to weave as well as to better understand the process myself and facilitate interviews and conversations with participants in the study. I discuss my experiences of learning weaving and how this helped to understand weavers' own experiences of learning in Chapter 5. I hoped that the apprenticeship would be a good way of 'learning about learning' (Coy, 1989 citing E. Goody), in aiming to understand how weavers navigate between the traditional embodied learning of weaving alongside formal design instruction as stated in the research objectives. However, I was aware that this

wasn't possible within only a short period of three weeks and in just one of the case study regions, considering the weavers themselves begin from an early age and over many years through 'legitimate peripheral participation' (Lave and Wenger, 1991), and there are variations in weaving between the two regions. I undertook the 'Craft Traditions' course aimed at non-traditional craftspeople organised by SKV and held in Bhujodi in the workshop of Shamji Vishram Valji. The curriculum for the weaving course was developed with the weavers who were paid. This was beneficial because it was well-organised and avoided any difficulties with taking weavers away from their duties and negotiating pay (I paid SKV directly for the course with a research grant I had been awarded). However, there was a risk of bias on the part of SKV, being the main organiser.

Nevertheless, the course was useful for getting to know better the rhythms and routine of the village, understand the mental and physical skills and characteristics required for weaving to a good standard, including the harmonious 'coordination of the body, mind and heart' (as told to me by several weavers), and for interacting with other weavers, observing their work and receiving feedback on mine. Furthermore, the apprenticeship created the space for spontaneous conversation to occur based on a more shared experience, which helped to avoid hierarchies between the researcher and the researched. In this sense I could relate to Downey's experience apprenticing as a dancer, during which he created a meaningful local identity with which his subjects knew how to interact (Downey et al., 2015, p. 187), and suggests that informants are likely to relate to a researcher more if she involves herself in their work:

'Unlike the conventional view of ethnographer-subject relations as privileging the educated outsider, or at least granting the ethnographer a degree of independence, the master-disciple relationship necessarily constrains the researcher'.

I considered undertaking a weaving apprenticeship in Maheshwar at the HSVN training centre (see chapter 6, section 2), but the courses here were held over a period of four months which my fieldwork schedule would not allow. While research finances would not stretch to fund an apprenticeship at WomenWeave, such as the one Varsha (see chapter 6, section 2) undertook, I spent long periods observing Varsha at her loom as she practised the skills she was being taught while asking her about how she felt about the learning experience. With the knowledge I had gained during my apprenticeship in Bhujodi, I had

the basic knowledge of weaving to understand what I was looking at when observing Varsha, experienced weavers in Maheshwar, and the students and graduates at The Handloom School.

### **3.14 Recording apprenticeship**

Taking notes or 'jottings' was not as practical during apprenticeship, which involved full immersion into learning, as it was during moderate observation. While I worked on an expanded account (see section 3.16) in the evenings, I set up a camera to film parts of the learning process, and to 'capture the multiplicity of dimensions, the complexity of interactions that can take place between learner and teacher' (Gowlland, 2015). This visual data was then used as units of analysis. Further, in the same way experienced weavers find verbalising knowledge difficult, it was easier to record my learning in a visual way to capture what was physically involved in the learning, and how 'senses are a vehicle for understanding' (Dilley, 1999). Mason (Downey, Dalidowicz and Mason, 2015, p. 190) used static cameras to film dancers and musicians, which facilitated recall and later analysis. 'Viewing the footage in post-production created a new experience in its own right, one that had to be framed by skilled analysis and description'. My weaving teachers and neighbouring weavers also took photographs and videos on mobile phones of their own accord and would share these with me. This became useful in making the experience more shared as well as seeing the process through participants' perspectives.

#### **3.14.1 Drawing**

During the apprenticeship there were several occasions when I would be required to wait for looms to be set up or warp yarns that I'd broken to be re-joined. These times provided space to chat to my teachers, make notes or observe what was being done on the loom. Drawing was particularly useful for understanding the technology. With the help of each teacher I labelled each part of the various tools, the loom, *adan* (warping frame), *paen* for sizing and starching the warp, the *utho* for transferring the hank onto the bobbin and the bobbin winder. This helped in understanding the technique and the technological language used by the weavers. Drawing is useful for paying full attention and so can almost have the opposite effect of photography or film, where you're not really watching the process, but looking through a lens and creating your own image. Drawing the woven objects in the

way Wettstein (2014) did for her study of Naga textiles, would also have been useful, but because it would have involved significantly more time, and objects were not the only focus of the research, was not deemed a priority. Drawing the woven objects would be something to consider for further research.

### **3.15 Field notes**

Taking notes is considered a key part of observation in ethnographic fieldwork, used to document and describe in detail, 'as much as possible of what is perceived to be relevant in the research process' (Coles and Thomson, 2016, p. 254 citing Walford). It allows the researcher to remove herself from the culture so she can 'intellectualise what [she's] seen and heard, put it into perspective, and write about it convincingly' (Bernard, 2006, p. 277).

At the site of observation or immediately after, I would take quick notes or a 'condensed account' (Spradley, 1980, p. 63) of my observations. I would then write up an 'expanded account' at the end of the day when I had more time. I also kept a separate fieldwork journal which, like a personal diary was used to set aims for the day and to record experiences, fears, mistakes, breakthroughs and problems.

Thomson and Cole argue that 'in-between' writing, writing done in between the fieldnotes and final report, is an important part of the analytical and interpretive process, of 'making meaning of initial fieldnotes' and knowledge production (Coles and Thomson, 2016, p. 257). These stages involved combining the descriptions made during observation with analysis of its meanings and combining this analysis with analysis of interview and film data, documents and the literature review. I discuss how I approached this analytical writing in section 3.19.

### **3.16 Analysing textiles**

As discussed in section 3.13, social anthropological literature informed the analysis of the weaving process in a technical, educational and social context. Additionally, artefacts including both woven objects and written documents, supported the understanding of the learning, designing and production processes. Artefacts serve as 'tools with which to think through and create connections around which people actively create identities' (Tilley, 2006). Material Culture is a discipline that brings together the study of objects and people,

rejecting 'the dualism of society and materiality' (Miller, 2005, p. 5), which, according to Tarlo (1996), early social anthropological studies in India, were guilty of. Developing out of anthropology, the discipline focuses on the objects, clothing and things used by cultures as representations of social relations. These theories can certainly be applied to cloth in India, which has been imbued with ceremonial and cultural importance at various stages of an individual's lifecycle, as well as in exchange and gifting. Cloth can communicate both the identity and status of the maker, wearer and their respective communities, based on choice of motifs, colour and material. Further, for weavers, as discussed in the previous chapter, cloth symbolises their identity, both as contradictorily 'polluted' manual workers, and as creative artists.

Distinct to theories of semiotics such as Saussure's which argued that since all cultural objects convey meaning, they can be compared to language (Hall, 1997, p. 36), within anthropological, sociological and material culture theories of art, objects are ascribed with a 'social life', an ability to mediate agency in the social milieu (Appadurai, 1986; Gell, 1998).

Thus, the understanding and analysis of yarns, tools, technologies – both 'traditional' looms and 'modern' phones and any other physical materials involved in the designing and weaving of cloth, is important in understanding how each influence the transformation of the cloth, its value and influence on weavers' status, level of skill, choices and trajectories.

'[Craft is] a vital and fertile means to understand the relationship between places, people and time [...] like history, [craft] is a tool that people use to negotiate their roles and places within the material and social environment' (DeNicola and Wilkinson-Weber, 2016b).

Analysis of woven cloth often took place alongside interviews or together with the weavers of the cloth, and the cloth itself facilitated conversation (evidence of its agency). I documented aspects such as motifs, types of yarn and yarn counts. A selection of these can be found in chapters 5, 6 and 7 and the appendix. It was considered important in this research to collect samples and photographs of textiles, as well as audio-visual records of the interaction between the weaver and his textiles, to communicate the biographies of both, each of which inform the other.

### 3.17 Analysing text

In this research, written documents (also artefacts of material culture), included institute curricula, annual reports, emails, written reports of events, administrative documents, application forms for the schools, news clippings and media articles, as well as surveys and reports conducted by the institutes or external organisations. Accessible and low cost, documents give historical insight (Hodder, 1998, p. 111). While they may have been carefully constructed, they are naturally occurring (Silverman, 2001, p. 154), haven't been produced at the intervention of the researcher in the way that interviews have, and thus show what the participants are actually doing in the world. It was important to examine how the documents studied were used in context, how the two case study institutes use these records, and how much their ways of working were dictated by the documents (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 165; Silverman, 2001, p. 154). Students' written work produced during the design or business course, formed evidence of the 'literate aspect of the culture' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), and helped to understand how the weaver had responded to teaching and in what other ways the school influenced his weaving practice. Furthermore, students' sketchbooks and other preparatory design work helped to inform ways that literate knowledge impacted on embodied knowledge, as discussed in chapter 8, section 4 (considering the equal status and similar root definition of writing and drawing).

Statistical reports conducted both by the institutes and external organisations provided a useful addition to capture statistics such as earnings, number of years' experience and other attributes that may not have been captured in interviews. These details could then be cross-referenced and inserted into profile matrices (Bernard, 2006) to determine, how for example, number of years' experience weaving or number of years' schooling may influence a weaver's experience of design education. It was important to be aware of the potentially low validity of this information considering that often rough estimates were given rather than exact numbers. Often participants did not want to disclose their earnings and keeping a record of age is not viewed with the same importance as it is in the culture of the researcher, particularly amongst the older generation, many of whom might not necessarily know their date of birth.

### **3.18 Social media**

Social media and the internet as a whole have become increasingly recognised as important both as repositories of research tools and objects of researching in their own right (Sharpe and Benfield, 2012, p. 193). Ethnography is increasingly conducted 'of, in and through the internet' (Hine, 2000). Indeed for this research, the internet, particularly social media has served both as a useful communication tool in sustaining engagement with research participants (Sharpe and Benfield, 2012, p. 193), and as a space for conducting observation, online communities being 'communities of interest' rather than 'communities of residence' (Angrosino and Rosenberg, 2011, p. 473). On the one hand, social media users can disguise their 'true' identities and the platforms are not reliable for reading natural behaviour, language or facial expressions. On the other hand, for this research it was useful for aiding understanding of the increasing importance of social media for the weavers in this study, how they present and view their work as well as the way it is used for gathering inspiration and connecting and interacting with markets and peers. As well as communication and platforms for learning, social media and the internet have also been significant in challenging social and geographical barriers. I discuss these effects of social media in more detail in chapter 8. In terms of communication, students and graduates would send me images of their work on WhatsApp, and many of them set up Instagram or Facebook accounts during the course. Online research opens up different and perhaps more complex ethical issues than ethnography done at a physical site. Most of the participants I interacted with online I had met in person too, thus, the individual would be aware of my research and would have given permission for their responses to be used in the final report. However, I would usually remind them and if I identified useful information or images from the online sphere, would again seek their consent.

### **3.19 Analysis**

Analysis of the collected data was a constructive and interpretive process involving a continuous and iterative cycle of classifying, refining and revising ideas, and interpreting and reinterpreting data which included text, images, artefacts and film (Bernard, 2006, p. 430). It also involved moving backwards and forwards between ideas generated and the data (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 159). Thematic analysis was used to code

commonly arising patterns or themes throughout the data, interspersed with writing about these themes.

The first step involved familiarisation with the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006) by reading and re-reading through the interview transcripts, fieldnotes and documents. This involved taking a semiotic approach, considering 'multiple meanings of particular words and utterances and determin(ing) the full meaning of the text which unfolds as it is read' (Denzin, Norman, 2002, p. 359). Simultaneous to this process came coding or 'bracketing', a term used by Denzin to describe 'dissecting the phenomenon, inspecting and taking it apart, analysing its elements and essential structures' (ibid, p. 355). I highlighted key quotes, observations or images which spoke 'directly to the phenomenon in question'(ibid). A combination of NVivo software and hard copies of the data were used to code the extracts based on arising themes. These themes were subsequently reviewed by distinguishing between them, identifying whether there was enough data to support each theme, and extracting and putting aside themes that didn't fit into emerging patterns but may prove useful at a later stage. By defining and refining each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006 p. 22), I was able to identify what was important and interesting about each in relation to my research question and this analysis formed the structure of my discussion chapters.

Along with various strategies to discover patterns across the themes, one useful strategy involved grouping interview responses to the same or similar questions together to make comparisons across them. This enabled me 'to compare and contrast the stories of many different individuals located in different phases of the experience under investigation' (Denzin, 2002, p. 355). During the analysis process, it was important to recognise my position as researcher in relation to the subject's position, as well as understanding that there is 'no single interpretive truth' but 'multiple interpretive communities, each with its own criteria for evaluating interpretations' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008, p. 35).

Furthermore, triangulation across data was important in reducing the risk of misinterpretation, described by Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p. 5) as 'the display of multiple refracted realities simultaneously'. The process involved cross-checking accounts and observations and comparing them for consistency (Sharpe and Benfield, 2012, p. 194).

Triangulation during analysis involved going back and forth from interview transcription to photograph or film clip, to document, to an interview with a different participant on the same theme, and so on. Going between different participants commenting on a similar theme, allowed for 'using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p. 5). It was important to be aware that what was said in response to an interview question by a participant may have been contradicted by the same participant at another time (for example, in an informal discussion), by a different person or in another document written about that individual. These responses are influenced by several factors, as discussed above in section 3.9. My responsibility was to take all these responses and interpret them in a way that did not attempt to create a concrete truth, but to present my evaluation and interpretation of a particular theme based upon a wide range of material gathered, triangulated and analysed, and within the specific conceptual framework outlined in the preceding chapters.

The metaphor of the bricoleur or 'quilt maker' is apt in describing my interpretive process (as well as for its textile association), which involved piecing together 'sets of representations that fit to the specifics of a complex situation' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008, p. 5), resulting in something like a montage or patchwork quilt. The piecing together or 'constructing the phenomenon' (Denzin, 2002, p. 358) involved gathering the themes and patterns to form a coherent whole. Contextualising the phenomenon thus involves locating the structures gathered during the previous processes 'back into the natural social world' (ibid, p. 359). I did this by revising existing literature and piecing together previous findings with my own. The writing itself was an important process of analysis, as much as it was for presenting the findings and final report:

'Writing ethnography is a key part of the entire research process. It is now widely recognised that the ethnography is produced as much by how we write as by the processes of data collection and analysis' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 192).

Writing gives the researcher the opportunity to begin formulating ideas and theories drawn from the identified themes, to think through the themes and refine them, as well as to situate them within the wider context and alongside previous literature. Thus, the process described above of connecting categories and themes was interspersed with

writing. In this sense, the analysis process was not simply followed in a linear way but involved constant moving back and forth between the entire data set, the coded extracts of data and the analysis of the data I was producing and writing about.

Initial writing about data involved short biographies of key participants whose stories I felt were particularly interesting in highlighting some key themes developing from the research. This process served as a form of bracketing, and as themes became more developed, sections of the biographies would be extracted to develop writing around a theme. Writing on the findings was structured within headings and sub-headings which directly related to the themes and sub-themes identified in the data analysis.

### **3.20 Ethics**

In the above sections, I have discussed issues and challenges faced with doing research as a foreigner with communities and cultures different to my own. While ethnographic research has the potential of empowering 'voiceless' people (Angrosino and Rosenberg, 2011), it is also important to take a reflexive approach and maintain awareness of the impact of the research and the researcher upon the people being studied. I entered the field already on good terms with some of the people who would become research participants, an inherent passion for the subject, interest in the work of the participants and admiration for the people I would meet. Whilst these feelings could risk subjectivity, they ensured I would maintain respect for all participants, a key cornerstone of ethical research conduct.

Ethical Approval was given by the University Ethical Review Committee prior to fieldwork following a submitted Ethical Clearance Checklist Form. The checklist included measures put in place to ensure the safety, security and respect for all participants of the research, and the university guidelines were followed throughout the fieldwork. The first stage involved requesting the permission to research the two institutes as case studies from the gate keepers, the founders and directors and explain what the research would involve in as much detail as possible. Subsequently, all participants were informed about the nature of the research and the reasons for them being asked to participate. This was done either verbally or in an email and via an information and consent form which can be found in appendix D.

Along with a brief paragraph outlining the research and the reasons for the interview request, the form listed the rights of the participant including their right to withdraw, and gave them the opportunity to decide whether to be kept anonymous, state whether they approved of their information being used in the final report, whether they were happy to be photographed and audio- or audio-visually recorded, and for their work to be photographed. For practical and time-limiting reasons and for the reason that I simply did not fully know what would be involved in the research at the early stages, it was not possible to tell every participant all there was to know about the research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 211). Furthermore, in situations where I conducted observation, it was not always feasible to get permission from every single individual in the space being observed, particularly where the space was public. Hammersley and Atkinson note that because 'ethnographers carry out research in natural settings, their control over the research process is often limited; they simply do not have the power to ensure that all participants are fully informed or that they freely consent to be involved' (ibid). In some, particularly more intimate spaces such as the small galleries where exhibitions of students' work were held, I would inform the gallery staff of my research and reasons for being there and taking notes and photographs.

But it was also important to following up with participants where possible once I had developed reports, journal articles and papers to be published that included their information. Where possible I would send these documents to the participant to cross check information, as well as to check that they were happy with being quoted in the text, and with any images of themselves or their work included.

### **3.20.1 Exploitation**

The risk that the research could be exploiting the participants in terms of gaining information from them with little to offer in return was something I was aware of and concerned about from the outset. The project finances could not cover payment for interviews, but I was informed by contacts in the region that most would not accept payment and could even be offended at the offer. Care had to be taken when scheduling interviews to ensure they would not impinge on order demands or piece-work wages. Many participants had busy schedules involving travelling to exhibitions or being busy with

orders. While the artisan participants were welcoming and eager to take time to include me in their schedule and allow me to interview them, oftentimes I found that they were saying yes to multiple people or trying to balance too many things. Thus, I had to be aware to plan my schedule with sensitivity to this observation.

In most cases, when the intention for the research to reach diverse audiences was explained to the participants, they could see benefit in their name and work being promoted and view such promotion as good for business. As Spradley (1980, p. 22) notes, 'dialogue with informants should explore ways in which the study can be useful to informants'. It was a little more difficult to convince the directors and founders of the institutes how the research might benefit them, particularly early on when the objectives were looser and subject to change. In most cases, it is not always likely that the researcher and the researched will view the research in the same way, and there may be conflicts of interests between the two. Thus, according to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 219, citing Becker) 'any good study is likely to provoke hostile reaction'. Indeed, the stakeholders of the two case study institutes naturally would not want their institutes to be shown in a bad light, but to ensure I was telling the truth (staying true to the data) in the final thesis, it was important to maintain impartiality.

### **3.21 Summary**

This chapter has discussed the methods considered most appropriate according to each research objective and the advantages and challenges of each. Multi-sited research and the 'ethno-case study' method were considered the most appropriate in terms of the research aims, to gain a deeper understanding of design education for weavers and to draw out its successes and challenges. Drawing upon ethnographic techniques was considered particularly useful for privileging the perspectives of the weavers and other participants involved in the education, as well as the social and cultural context of the textiles being produced. Thus, the data gathered through ethnographic techniques such as interviewing, observation and visual ethnography, was analysed and compared against each other, across each individual case and from participant to participant. All the while it was important to maintain awareness that each case had distinct aims and were situated in different cultural and social contexts. Object analysis was an important method

considering my own background, personal experience and knowledge of textiles which initiated the impetus for the research, as well as recognition of the agency of objects and ways they represent the people that make and use them. Fieldwork involved sustained and multiple visits to the the institute campuses which were the main research sites, interspersed with visits to other weaving centres. I also visited cities to visit museums, galleries and libraries and to interview key informants with experience and knowledge in the subject or association with either of the institutes. These methods yielded a wealth of data which is rigorously analysed, described and interpreted in the chapters that follow.

# 4

## Case Studies

### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I provide a background and context to each case study this research focusses on: Somaiya Kala Vidya (SKV) in Kachchh (and its predecessor Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya),<sup>34</sup> and The Handloom School (THS) in Maheshwar, both the only institutions in rural or semi-rural areas providing long-term formalised curriculums for traditional artisans in India, and therefore the reason for selecting them as case studies. I give a brief history of the region and the weaving industries of each, the development of designs, products, materials and technology and then position the development of each institute within these contexts, discussing the curriculum, aims and objectives.



Figure 4. A view of Maheshwar fort and *ghats* from the Narmada river

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<sup>34</sup> Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya (KRV) was the first design education institute in Kachchh. It was founded by Judy Frater who took the curriculum to new school Somaiya Kala Vidya in 2014. KRV is no longer in operation, but where I reference KRV, it is in relation to the weavers who studied there while it was active.

## 4.2 Maheshwar and The Handloom School (THS)

Maheshwar is a small *nagar panchayat*<sup>35</sup> town situated in the Khargone district of southwestern Madhya Pradesh, a two-hour drive from the city of Indore. The Handloom School (THS), located in Maheshwar, is the focus case study as this is where design and business are taught to weavers (those already equipped with weaving skills). However, to understand the context of THS fully, it is important to discuss the history of the region and its royal patronage of weaving, as well as the organisations preceeding THS and initiated by the same founder, Rehwa and WomenWeave.

According to the Rehwa Society's webpage, to visit Maheshwar is to 'enter a blissful time warp' (2017). The town is popular among domestic and foreign tourists and is also commonly referenced in craft literature, the main attractions being the impressive sixteenth century fort, Narmada river *ghats* (steps leading to the river), temples and sari weaving. According to the most recent census (Government of India, 2011), the population was 24, 411, of which 9,436 were engaged in work activity. The census doesn't specify the occupations and figures on numbers of handloom weavers are sporadic and contradictory. Government promotional literature on Maheshwari saris (DC (Handlooms), no date) states the number of weavers as 7347, and the number of looms as 2449. A diagnostic study conducted by UNIDO and the Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII) in 2002 (Ansari, 2002) states the number of working *handlooms* as 1000 suggesting a potential increase (providing the DC (Handlooms) report on their website at the time of writing was more recent). The subsequent break down of weavers by caste in the UNIDO report suggests that the authors use handloom numbers and weaver numbers interchangeably, and don't count the additional members of the family that may share the loom or those members (usually women) who work on ancillary tasks.

Along with agriculture, the handloom industry is a significant employment provider in and around Maheshwar. As one weaver said, 'there is no other profession in Maheshwar. Weaving is the only profession. It is our heritage'.<sup>36</sup> The majority of the population is Hindu

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<sup>35</sup> Notified area of council, a settlement in transition from rural to urban.

<sup>36</sup> Pralad, S., 2016. Unit-in-charge, The Handloom School: Interview with Ruth Clifford, THS campus Maheshwar, 25 July.

(77.86%) while 20.7 percent are Muslim, and members of both religions are engaged in weaving.

#### **4.2.1 A brief history of the town and its handloom industry**

The historical literature on Maheshwar is scarce, and there is little evidence of the handloom weaving industry in Maheshwar before the rule of Maharani Ahilyabhai Holkar from 1767 until her death in 1795, although it is presumed there might have been an industry before then because of the widely cultivated black cotton soil in the region. The most comprehensive study of the industry was done by Dubey and Jain as part of the Madhya Pradesh census in 1961 (published in 1965), which included a detailed historical context, documentation of the weaving process, demographic statistics, education, economics of production and analysis of designs. Dubey and Jain's study therefore, is the key text informing this section.

In his Arthashastras, Kautilya lists the town of 'Maheshla', the old name for Maheshwar, on the banks of the Narmada river, along with Madura, Aparanta, Kalinga and Banaras as 'centres of manufactures of cloths of the finest variety' (Dubey and Jain, 1965). Dubey and Jain were told by one weaver, that as early as the Buddhist period<sup>37</sup> 'cloth used to be transported to other areas on camel backs and traders came here from far and near to purchase the cloth manufactured here', although information on the industry from the time of the Arthashashtras until Ahilyabhai's rule is scarce. Descriptions of cloth from central India in the early European travellers' books suggests similarities with the style now known as Maheshwari. These accounts discuss 'cloth of the finest variety, especially saris of 200 count yarn and silk figured effects interwoven with gold and silver threads' (ibid).

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<sup>37</sup> Dubey and Jain don't give the particular dates of the Buddhist period. The dates are uncertain and vary in different literature sources, but it is widely believed that the Buddha lived somewhere between the fifth and third centuries BC and it was during this period the scriptures took shape (Bailey and Mabbett, 2009).



Figure 5. A statue of Ahilyabai inside the fort walls, in front of her temple.

From 1401 most of the region of West Nimar (now called Khargone district) was under Mughal rule until the strengthening of the Maratha empire in the early eighteenth century (Bhatt, 1998, p. 383). When Ahilyabai took the throne as queen of the Maratha state, Indore was the capital, but she moved it to Maheshwar and began to invite weavers from other parts of India to weave gifts for royals in neighbouring states and for the people of Maharashtra (Ministry of Textiles, 2007, p. 80). Ahilyabai was praised for her benevolence and piety (Burway, 1922), and continues to be an icon today because of her strong patronage of the handloom industry. Hailing from the Dhangar (shepherd) community, she has also been a symbol of pride for non-Brahmins, and an institution founded by untouchable leader Vitthal Ramchandra Shinde in Pune was named the 'Ahilya Ashram' after the Queen (Zelliot, 2002, p. 40).

The Khatri are the largest community in Maheshwar and are said to hail from Surat. The second largest is the Momin (also called Julaha or Ansari) who are Muslims and presumed to have migrated from Banaras or other areas of Uttar Pradesh. Other smaller groups include: Khangars who claim to have migrated to Maheshwar from Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh at the time of Ahilyabai's reign, and who traditionally work in agricultural labour; Kolis

who are also assigned a low caste status and have been affiliated with the Bhil, an indigenous 'primitive tribe' (although there is no ethnographic evidence to back this up); Koshtis who are known to be weavers of silk and fine cotton cloth, and said to be related to the Sales of South India, and to the Salvis (Chishti and Sanyal, 1989; Dubey and Jain, 1965). According to Chishti and Sanyal, the status of the Maheshwar Salvis is much lower than Salvis in areas such as Patan where they weave the highly-regarded *patola*, double *ikat*<sup>38</sup> saris. The Salvi women provided the service of brush sizing cotton yarn for the whole weaving community in Maheshwar. Low caste weavers including the Kolis, Bhamis and Dhobis combined the weaving of coarse cloth with other occupations such as agricultural labour, leather work and removal of dead animals, and washing respectively.

Broader academic studies on the handloom industry in central India suggest that these communities lived and possibly moved between different regions, such as the towns of Jabalpur, Nagpur and Burhanpur depending on where there was work (Haynes and Roy, 1999; Harnetty, 1991a). Harnetty discusses Momins living and weaving in Burhanpur, 170 km southeast of Maheshwar in the nineteenth century. By the late twentieth century, Chishti and Sanyal (1989) observed that some Momins brought new technologies to Maheshwar, notably the fly-shuttle and later powerlooms. While Burhanpur moved completely to powerlooms, the Maheshwar weaving industry today is made up of only handlooms. Maharashtra was the major market for several weaving regions in the central provinces, suggesting designs would have been shared between these regions as well as with regions in Maharashtra such as Paithan, a weaving centre known for its high-quality silk saris (Varadarajan and Amin-Patel, 2008, pp. 173-203).

Dubey and Jain's history of the town and its rulers shows that the handloom industry fluctuated according to the support of the ruler, although none was as instrumental as Ahilyabhai in their patronage (1965, pp. 4-10). After Ahilyabhai's death weavers struggled to innovate and adapt within their weaving and subsequent rulers were much less

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<sup>38</sup> Process of resist-dyeing by tying both the warp and weft yarns prior to weaving to create a pattern. Double *ikat* creates a more refined pattern than single *ikat* which involves tying only the warp or weft yarns.

supportive of the weavers, which triggered decline. The importance of Maheshwar went on declining and in 1901 the total population had fallen to 7042.

Studies on the textile industry in central India during this period show a likelihood that Maheshwar weavers suffered due to British imports from the 1860s (Guha, 1989; Harnetty, 1991). According to Chishti and Sanyal (1989), the adoption of silk by the 1940s could have been a strategy to avoid competition from imports as well as the country's own powerloom cloth. Further, cotton weavers had little access to local cotton which was largely being exported (Guha, 1989), and silk also ruled out the need for the labour-intensive sizing that cotton required. But the overarching factor contributing to the decline of the industry in Maheshwar in the early to mid-twentieth century, was the use of fugitive dyes which the weavers were forced to adopt to increase efficiency and compete with the powerloom industry. The weavers though were not able to perfect the technique required for the dyes and the colours were not fast (Dubey and Jain, 1965; Chishti and Sanyal, 1989).

Tukoji Rao III who ruled from 1903 to 1926 turned his attention to the weaving industry which was almost on the verge of extinction. He invited experts to examine the 'decaying' industry and make suggestions for its revival. The resulting report suggested the formulation of weavers' cooperative societies and granted them financial aid. Nineteen cooperative societies were formed. From then on, the weaving industry came under government supervision and stores were opened to sell the saris. The scheme saw good results but eventually the stores ran into losses. This decline was attributed to the conservatism of weavers and their resistance to adapt and innovate. A demonstration centre for teaching new technologies and weaving skills opened in 1921 but was unsuccessful and soon shut down (Dubey and Jain, 1965, p. 10). The limited success of cooperatives in Maheshwar reflects the wider Indian experience with cooperatives as discussed in chapter 2. From 1926 to 1937 the industry moved from being in the care of the Commerce and Industries department of the Holkar government, to the Ministry of Finance, neither of which achieved success at revival. When the government of India sanctioned two lakh rupees to support Maheshwar's industry, the 250 weavers in Maheshwar at this time had to purchase raw material from merchants belonging to Bania or Bohara castes (traditional trading castes) and more frequently from local Sahukars (also

a trading caste), under whose clutches the weavers found themselves. These Sahukars became dominant masters of the industry, forcing weavers to sell their produce at fixed prices while earning large profits.

Attempts were made by the government to set weavers free from the clutches of creditors, improve conditions and wages, find suitable markets and provide improved facilities. Government stores were opened to supply raw materials and the demonstration centre was remodelled. These initiatives seem to have improved the industry in 1936 – 1937. Then when the second world war began in 1939, imports of mill-made cloth were affected, and so handlooms had a hold on the market, which was reversed in the years following the end of the war, when imports began again. After independence when Madhya Pradesh was a newly formed state, the heavy custom duties that had been in place previously on mill-made products were removed and again, the sale of handloom products suffered. Shrivastav in the 1970 state gazetteer notes that the demonstration centre was listed under the factories act of 1948 but continued to work only as a demonstration centre with eight looms, until 1955 when it began training and improving equipment and technical assistance both to weavers' societies and individual weavers (Shrivastav, 1970, p. 146). The centre also supplied and installed fly shuttle sleys, dobbies, take-up motion warp beams, cloth rollers and warping machines. It helped with supply of raw materials and production of designs and marketing. In 1964 there were 50 workers working on an average day in the factory. Weavers earned INR 50 – 80 per month, and those using silk could earn more than INR 90. Several of the women weavers working for Rehwa and WomenWeave, which I discuss below, trained at the government training centre. Some also have gone onto study at The Handloom School.

According to Shrivastav (ibid, p. 147), in 1970 out of 300 looms in Maheshwar about 100 were involved in the cooperative societies, of which there were two: the Maheshwar Handloom Weavers' Cooperative Society established in 1947, and the Momin Weavers' Cooperative Society established in 1954. There were 400 Hindu weaving families and 100 Momin weavers' families. The societies assisted weavers in developing new designs, for example, light colours were introduced to appeal to 'modern tastes'. Some design names suggest influence from other weaving clusters. For example, *jala*, refers to the draw loom brocade technique, said to originate in Banaras but also used in Ahmedabad, Gujarat and

where many Banarasi weavers are said to have migrated from (Edwards, 2011, pp. 88 - 93). The *Ikal* design possibly refers to the sari from the region of the same name in Karnataka. Chishti and Sanyal (1989, p. 169) reported on their journey to Maheshwar in 1989 that the government training centre had stored a number of design samples since the 1950s, which the authors say 'are an invaluable lesson in the recent detours Maheshwar has made in an attempt to modernise'.

#### **4.2.2 Rehwa**

In 1966 Sally Holkar, an American graduate of Stanford University, married the Maharaja of the princely state of Indore, Richard Holkar. Although official recognition of the princely states disappeared after independence, ex-royals retained some of their former status in terms of hereditary wealth and property. Like many ex-royals across Indian former-princely states, the Holkars turned Ahilya fort into a luxury hotel. Ten years after Sally and Richard Holkars' marriage, as the Rehwa website describes, the couple were stopped during a stroll along the *ghats* by a man holding a piece of cloth. 'He eagerly showed them the light, fine fabric, telling them of the hardships his people faced due to the decline of handlooms' (Rehwa Society, 2017). The man asked the Holkars to help them revitalise the industry, and so in 1979, with a grant from the Central Welfare Board and an investment of 79,000 rupees to train weavers, they established Rehwa Society as a non-profit organisation (ibid).



Figure 6. The dyeing unit at Rehwa with the Ahilyabhai Joti School in the background



Figure 7. The central courtyard of the main Rehwa weaving workshop situated in the fort

The society set up twelve looms in an old building once housing one of Ahilyabhai's temples. One of the town's 'treasured master weavers' Ganesh Bicchwe and his family began to teach women to weave<sup>39</sup>. Gradually Rehwa built up a large stock range of saris.

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<sup>39</sup> Traditionally, like in Kachchh, it is only men who undertake the weaving full time while women would carry out ancillary tasks on a part time basis. Encouraging women to work full time in weaving has been a major part of development efforts by Rehwa, WomenWeave as well as HSVN, the government training centre which I discuss further in chapter 6.

The society particularly focused on training women after noticing large numbers of men were leaving the craft. However, many men returned after seeing the success of Rehwa. Rehwa introduced new 'high value and sophisticated' designs suggesting a luxury market, and according to current weavers' oral accounts, these designs were adopted by other self-employed weavers in the town. A successful master weaver, Arjun Chauhan remembers leaving Maheshwar to work in Indore when the industry was at a low and while his brother was employed at Rehwa. Arjun later returned to set up a family business seeing the success of the industry.<sup>40</sup>

Chishti and Sanyal (1989), at the time of writing report that other weavers working for master weaver-traders continued to produce saris for a middle class market, specifically the green sari traditionally worn for the *haldi-kumkum* stage of marriage, adding 'they adamantly believe that no attempt at altering the set image of the Maheshwari (sari) can help improve their prospects'. Today, these are difficult to find, and according to Arjun Chauhan, no one is weaving them anymore.

#### **4.2.3 Mapping Maheshwar**

It was partly the geographical positioning of Maheshwar in the densely populated and fertile Narmada valley, that helped it to survive the series of blows it received during the reign of the Maratha rulers as mentioned above. Its position at the extension of the Barwaha to Maheshwar road, which joins the Bombay-Agra highway, also provided further impetus to develop the town (Dubey and Jain, 1965).

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<sup>40</sup> Chauhan, A., 2016. Master Weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, 19 February.



Figure 8. Grain sellers at the weekly *haat*

If entering Maheshwar from Indore, you pass the nearest, larger town of Dhamnod and cross a Narmada tributary. The centre of the town sits at a cross roads. To the left is the bus stand and on Tuesdays it becomes the location of the weekly *haat* (market) selling vegetables, fruits, pulses and spices. The market moves from town to town each day. To the right at the roundabout is the bazaar, drive, walk or ride a motorbike down here for half a mile and you reach firstly a central square and then the old fort wall. Most of the weavers live to the east of the bazaar in the area of Mominpura, where almost every other house is a weavers' house. This appears to have changed since the time of Dubey and Jain's survey, which shows most weavers (at that time Khatri) residing to the west of the bazaar (see map in figure 9). Intermittently there are larger workshops where several weavers work for a master weaver.

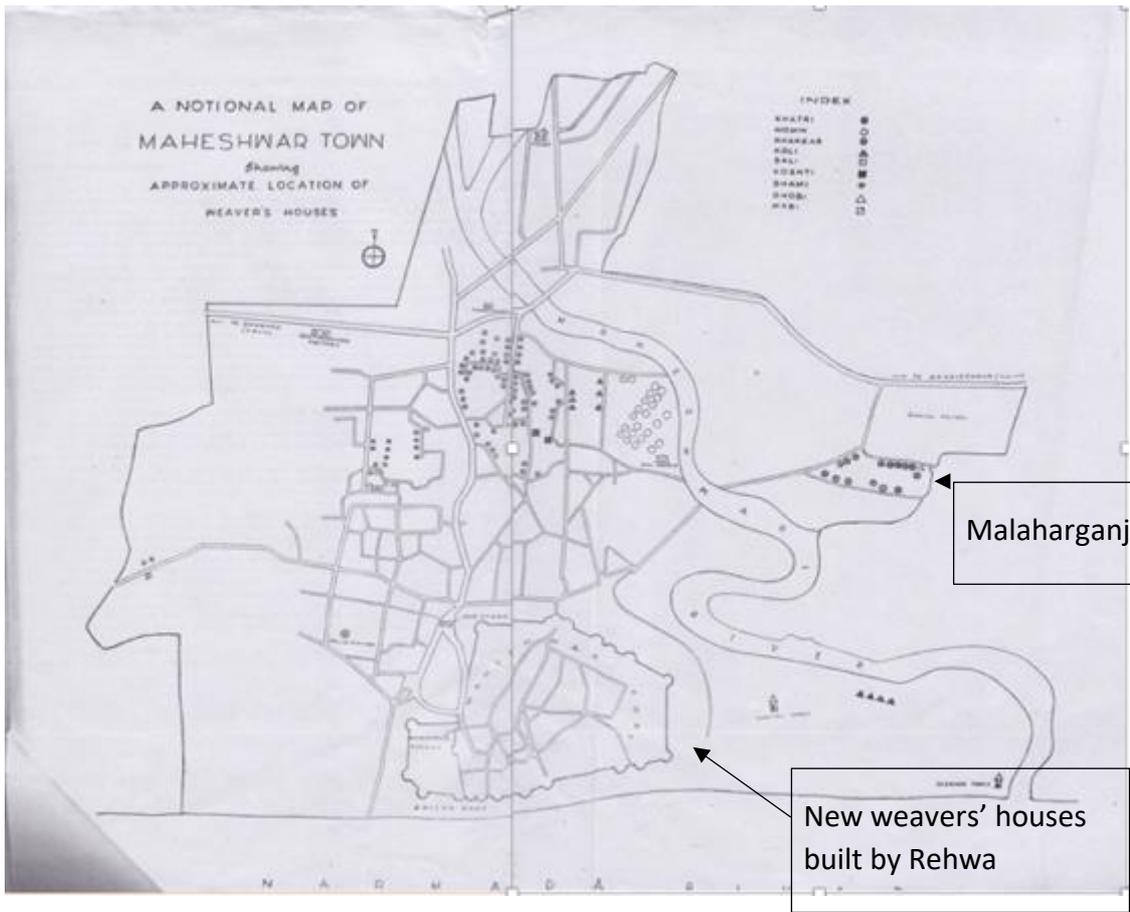


Figure 9. Map of Maheshwar town (Dubey and Jain, 1965) with labels added.



Figure 10. Weavers' houses in the Fort area



Figure 11. Arjun Chauhan's shop

The fort is built on the highest point of the hill directly above the river, positioned with a full view of the whole town. Within and surrounding the fort walls lie several new and old temples and ashrams, strategically positioned along one of India's most holy rivers, and suggesting a long history of religious education. The majority are devoted to Shiva,

Ahilyabhai's favourite deity. According to myth, the river was produced from Shiva's sweat while he was meditating. There is also a temple dedicated to Ahilyabhai herself which was the one she regularly prayed in.



Figure 12. The home of a weaving family in Malaharganj

Flanking the town to the east is the village of Malaharganj which according to oral accounts, is older than Maheshwar, and the layout and style of houses (one-storey with mud walls) corroborate with these accounts. In the 1961 census Dubey and Jain report the lower castes including the Khangars and Balahis residing here, and according to a more recent survey and my own fieldwork, this seems to remain the case.<sup>41</sup> The Bhamis, Kolis and sweepers live in Choukhandi and below the fort. Part of the work to revive the weaving industry by the Holkars in the 1970s, involved providing suitable housing for the weavers, and houses were built specifically for weaving families surrounding the fort.

The lower part of town is divided into colonies and the architecture is a combination of old small houses with signs of faded grandeur, new multi-storey (raw) houses built by

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<sup>41</sup> WomenWeave conducted their own survey of 943 weavers which I was given a copy of, see appendix E.

successful master weavers (which seem to be more prominent in Mominpura, the Muslim colony), and simpler houses with tin roofs.

#### 4.2.4 Products and designs

Maheshwari saris are distinguished by their borders which are inspired by carved patterns in the walls of the town's fort. The original Maheshwari sari was cotton, and then in the early twentieth century the *garbh-reshmi* (full silk) became famous and was particularly popular in the Maharashtrian market for weddings. Maharashtrian saris are traditionally longer than the average sari at nine yards. The *garbh-reshmi* was composed of a variation of silk checks on a cotton ground both in the warp and weft. This was replaced in the 1950s by the *neem-reshmi* comprising of a silk warp and cotton weft, to reduce the need for cotton sizing (Chishti and Sanyal, 1989, Dubey and Jain, 1965), and which creates a gossamer, translucent fabric. These features are considered to constitute a true 'traditional' Maheshwari sari, as told to me by many weavers, included in promotion material, and according to the Government's Geographical Indication (GI)<sup>42</sup> (Government of India, 2012).



Figure 13. Arjun Chauhan comparing a 'new variety' sari inspired by Rehwa's introduction of new colours and layouts alongside a traditional sari for the Maharashtrian market (blue

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<sup>42</sup> See chapter 2, section 12.2.

Figure 14. Maratha 9-yard sari worn in the *kachchha* style (left) (the fabric is passed through the legs and tucked in the back waist and then wrapped around the waist) and non-*kachchha* style (right) (only wrapped around the waist) (Varadarajan and Amin-Patel, p. 200). *Image removed for copyright reasons*

The GI for Maheshwar saris and fabrics was granted in 2012 after an application was put forward by a local cooperative Society, the Maheshwar Hathkargha Vikas Samiti, in 2010. The description of the Maheshwari sari in the application is published in the Government's GI journal. It lists the following features that characterise a 'traditional' Maheshwar sari: Thirteen types of yarn including 20/22 Dr. single, two, three and four-ply silk, 80s count cotton, 2/120s mercerised cotton, imitation *jari* (or *zari*, metallic thread, now copper or silver but would have once been gold), spun silk, *tussar*, linen and jute. The 'type of goods' that come under the GI are 'curtains, cushion covers, runner cloth, home furnishing, material table covers etc', and 'sarees, *dupattas*, stoles, *chunni* (blouse) yards, scarf, dress materials (Government of India, 2012, p. 36).<sup>43</sup> Turbans which, according to the Ministry of Textiles in *Tana Bana* (2007), were popular in the twentieth century are not listed. The journal lists the processes involved in weaving, the nature of the drape and feel, but

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<sup>43</sup> The level of protection from copying the GI gives is questionable. Will consumers really recognise the difference between different counts of silk or cotton and therefore judge what is a 'true' Maheshwari? On the other hand, these specific yarn criteria give Maheshwari weavers very little room for innovation. These potential downfalls of the GI may be amongst the reasons most weavers in Maheshwar don't apply the GI mark. However, it has been useful as a branding and promotional mechanism for many Maheshwari weavers.

doesn't list any particular patterns or motifs. This is unlike other weaving clusters such as Kachchh, where the motif repertoire is considered an important part of its identity. The reason for a lack of motif description in literature on Maheshwari weaving, may be because extra weft patterning was not introduced until the 1990s (ibid), presumably by Rehwa. Traditionally only extra warp patterning was done in the borders, which today is done using a dobby mechanism, while the ground was patterned with variations of stripes or checks in the body, and the *pallu* with plain coloured bands or *jari* (ibid, p. 80). Thus, lists of Maheshwari designs include mainly the geometric repeated *jali* designs used in the border.



Figure 15. Detail of the wall of the *Jama Masjid* in Chanderi



Figure 16. Detail of Maheshwari fort wall. Both show the repeated leaf design that in Maheshwari weaving is called kangra and regularly used in the borders

According to literature and oral accounts from my own interviews with weavers, there is a huge repertoire of these *kinar* (border) patterns, and influences come from other sari traditions too. A large part is considered Maharashtrian because of the long-standing supply to the Maharashtrian market. Furthermore, the fort which is distinctively Akbarian, would mean designs are likely to be seen on architecture of the same period in other regions. On my visit to Chanderi I noticed a design very similar to the Maheshwari *kangura* on the walls of the *jama masjid*. Indeed, Chishti and Sanyal note that the design terminology of Maheshwar reveals a similarity of approach and a great deal of exchange with Chanderi (1989, p. 174). There are also apparent similarities with the designs on the extensive fort buildings at Mandu, which is also reported as having a significant weaving industry in the past, and where many weavers in Maheshwar are said to have migrated from (although there is no in-depth historical research on this). Some other common border designs include *rui phool* (cotton flower), *heera* (diamond), *leheriya* (wave) and *ladu* (round-shaped sweet). Some more border designs are listed in appendix L.



Figure 17. Traditional *leheriya* (wave) or Narmada border design, with 'new' design in the ground, by FabCreation

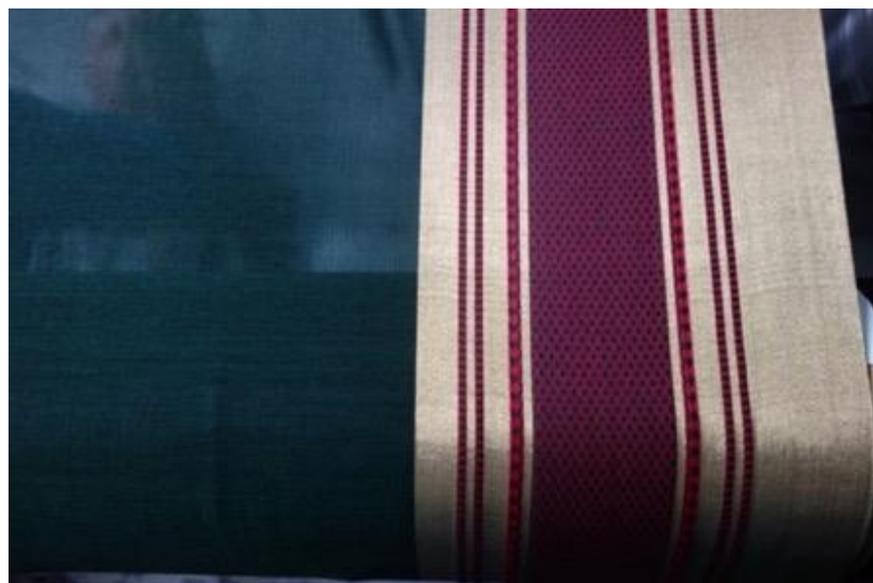


Figure 18. Detail of sari from Manish Pawar's workshop. The narrow red and black border is called *kangura* design inspired by the patterns in the fort wall (see figure 16)

Most looms in Maheshwar are frame looms, some with an additional mechanism that maintains the tension of the cloth. In neighbouring Malaharganj many houses still weave on pit looms. Looms are discussed in more detail in chapter 6, section 3.1.

#### 4.2.5 Organisation of weavers

There are three different types of weaver in Maheshwar: those who know weaving as an hereditary occupation or by learning in a workshop, but don't own a loom so work in a master weaver's workshop; those who have one loom and work for a master weaver in their home; and those who own many looms (master weavers), and run a workshop or hire weavers who work from their own homes. Some of the master weavers may have hardly done any weaving themselves if their father or grandfather were master weavers. Conversely, many weavers will say to be a successful weaver one must understand all the processes involved in weaving, as well as business and marketing. One respondent Rohit, whose family have a successful weaving and hotel business, said he knows weaving a little but has never had to work at it himself. This is because his family, at least until the previous generation, have always employed others to weave while the brothers manage the business tasks. Arjun Chauhan, another successful master weaver, explains a similar progression: 'We used to [weave saris] with our own hands. We didn't have any labour. We would weave it ourselves and sell it ourselves too'.<sup>44</sup> Rehwa was instrumental in increasing numbers of looms and improving the business of weavers such as Arjun Chauhan, whose elder brother worked there. After returning to Maheshwar from Indore, where he had moved when the family business was not working well, the business gradually improved and the family acquired several looms. Each loom would serve separate portions of their market.

#### 4.2.6 WomenWeave

After leaving Rehwa in 2002, Sally Holkar went on to found WomenWeave on the same principals as Rehwa: to train vulnerable women in weaving skills, provide design assistance, and connect weavers with viable markets. The organisation has developed several projects across Madhya Pradesh since its inception. The project in Maheshwar is called Gudi Mudi, which literally translates as 'scrunched' and describes the look and feel of the cotton '*khadi*' that they are weaving. The reason for deciding to weave '*khadi*' was three-fold. Firstly, it was an easier yarn for non-traditional weavers without prior skill in

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<sup>44</sup> Chauhan, A., 2016. Master Weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Maheshwar, 19 February.

weaving to handle. Secondly, while most of the raw materials used in Mahehsuari saris are sourced from south India (cotton and silk), China (silk) and Surat (*jari*), the aim of Gudi Mudi was to make use of local organic cotton, which the region's black soil is fertile enough to produce. The yarn is organic and manually spun on *ambar charkhas*. This means it sells at a premium, which leads to the third reason for focusing on *khadi*: its potential in high-end markets. This *naya* (new) *khadi*, as labelled by Goldsmith (2014), has become popular in the collections of high-end fashion designers including Rahul Mishra, Ritu Kumar and Rajesh Pratap Singh. Pratap Singh has described *khadi* as creating a 'soul-stirring reference in today's fast paced milieu' (Tewari, 2016) and according to Jay (2015), *khadi* allows consumers to wear their 'Indianness on (their) sleeve.'



Figure 19. The *ambar charkha* workshop at Gudi Mudi



Figure 20. A Gudi Mudi *khadi* stole (WomenWeave, 2017)

Neha Ladd, a graduate of the NID, was the main designer working with WomenWeave in their initial years. According to Elana Dickson, Advisory Board member, Ladd ‘set the grammar of design for WomenWeave’<sup>45</sup>, which has been built on with multiple variations in layout, technique and design. Over the years, WomenWeave gradually built up a large global client base and has received wide ranging promotion in the media. Being situated in the picturesque tourist town means they receive many visitors and they also travel globally to exhibit in fairs and trade shows. At the time of my interview with Hemendra Sharma (July 2016),<sup>46</sup> the organisation’s director from 2009 to 2016, WomenWeave were employing 200-225 people, had 300 regular clients, and an annual turnover of INR twenty million. They produce two collections a year and most clients choose from these collections, but some may provide their own designs. Design assistance comes from

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<sup>45</sup> Ladd, N., 2017. Designer: Skype Interview with Ruth Clifford, 24 September.

<sup>46</sup> Sharma, H., 2016. Marketing director, WomenWeave: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Maheshwar, 11 July.

student interns and professional designers including Neha Ladd and Geeta Patil, both NID graduates, who continue to work with the organisation.

By the time the Gudi Mudi project was in full swing, WomenWeave set up several other projects in other areas of India. The ongoing Synergy program involves facilitating collaboration between artisans of different crafts, and spreading knowledge and skills developed through Rehwa and WomenWeave to other weaving clusters across India via NGOs. More permanent initiatives were set up in Dindori and Balaghat, both traditional weaving centres in eastern Madhya Pradesh which had recently experienced severe decline.

#### **4.2.7 The Handloom School (THS)**

‘The idea for The Handloom School began in 1978 when my husband and I started an organisation called Rehwa Society to rescue the dwindling handloom community of Maheshwar, Madhya Pradesh....the idea was to bring young, talented weavers from marginalised weaving areas of India, so that the information dissemination and training could have a much larger impact....if we train young talented weaver men to become business weavers capable of dealing directly with the market rather than through middlemen, we are at the same time perpetuating their skill, enhancing their income earning abilities and bringing together an all-India team of weavers which is relevant to the market.’<sup>47</sup>

In 2009 WomenWeave began providing workshops in entrepreneurial skills, English language and practical skills such as dyeing, IT and photography, to weavers in Maheshwar and the surrounding areas. These workshops were informal and temporary, and provided the building blocks for The Handloom School which was officially launched in 2013. Along with the aims quoted by Holkar above, additional aims included enabling weavers to ‘earn a dignified and equitable livelihood’ and ‘gain a broader perspective of handloom’ (Holkar, Tiernan and Johnson, 2013). They are based on the premise that young weavers will: ‘stay in the trade if they perceive it to have a viable future’; that a cross-pollination of their skills is to their benefit, yielding positive results; and that there is a growing market for quality handloom products (ibid).

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<sup>47</sup> Holkar, S., 2016. THS Founder-Director: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Maheshwar, 9 July.

These aims were consolidated during a gathering of experts in the fields of alternative education, craft development, design education and business who were invited by Holkar to be part of developing the curriculum. These experts included Tamara Albu from Parsons School of Design and Carole Tiernan, a consultant in education from the US, both who also taught on the initial workshops and became members of the advisory board. Neelima Rao (advisory board member, designer, entrepreneur, and regular faculty member at THS) said the reason Holkar invited her to join the curriculum planning meeting was because of her experience in design as well as her education at a Krishna Murty school.<sup>48</sup> She described to me how the initial meetings panned out:

‘When we all got together, we were quite a motley crew, and all looking at each other as if to say, “what am I doing here?” There were 12 of us [...]. It was an intense weekend, a lovely weekend. We all sat around bonfires and chatted about what the possible parameters for what an education institute could be, what the reasons for existence would be, what the manner of teaching would be, so there were many things articulated there.’<sup>49</sup>

Rao went on to say the group of twelve comprised people from India and the West, all for whom working on a curriculum for rural weavers was something very new. They came up with a range of ideas, but most shared similar views on what the ‘kids should learn’:

‘[The students] should have a broad view of the world, they should be able to engage in it with confidence, what would be relevant, what manner of teaching would be relevant, what kind of curriculum should we take. Because most of the kids probably have not studied longer than five years in their life, don’t have much of an attention span, are not used to traditional forms of learning situations. They’re weavers: practical, hands on people’ (ibid).

During the weekend, the team all brainstormed and formed a chart that covered all the different ideas each member had contributed. Funding was also discussed. A few months later the group all met again in Bombay to develop ideas further and consolidate them into a preliminary curriculum. According to Rao, several key points were decided:

1. The students need to be able to communicate

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<sup>48</sup> Alternative schools which have a holistic outlook, focusing on creativity and personal awareness as well as academic capability. See: <http://www.jkrishnamurti.org/worldwide-information/schools.php>

<sup>49</sup> Rao, N., 2017. Designer and Entrepreneur: Skype Interview with Ruth Clifford, 15 January.

2. They need to understand their technology and not be afraid of it
3. Entrepreneurial skills are key
4. Colour and design should be taught

When this was all decided, Holkar suggested the length of the course be three weeks because students would not have the money to afford to stay for any longer and abandon their own work at home. The group thought three weeks was too short but began working on a plan to structure a course to include the main elements. There were inevitable challenges during the first class, notably not enough teachers due to insufficient funds. Lessons were and continue to be provided informally by designers or entrepreneurs who visit the school and are asked to share their expertise with the students. However, a main core group of teachers at the beginning included Rao and Aditi Shah Aman who taught the textile curriculum and Feruzan Mehta, an educationalist, taught communication. Other members of the advisory board would come to teach depending on their availability, but it was mostly done voluntarily. According to Mehta, the ultimate objective was to have 'a document that anyone can adopt and adapt to use in their own context'.<sup>50</sup> This went in line with THS's objective to spread the education to as many weavers as possible in need of it throughout India.

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<sup>50</sup> Mehta, F., 2016. THS Advisory board member, Founder-director The Peace Project: Skype Interview with Ruth Clifford, 2 June.



Figure 21. Liz Williamson, a weaver and University lecturer from Australia discussing her work with the fourth batch after being asked to give an ad-hoc session

Mehta had written the curriculum for the Ahilyabhai school which was set up by the Holkar foundation in 1989. As the school was specifically oriented towards children of weavers, arts and crafts sessions are held which include weaving on toy looms, painting, collage and other crafts. The members of FabCreation had attended the Ahilyabhai school. Nasir, Wasim, Asif, Mujamul and Rahat (all Ansaris) set up their collective enterprise FabCreation after attending the WomenWeave workshops



Figure 22. Pupils at Ahilyabhai school weaving on small frame looms

Mehta conducts interviews with the students at the end of each THS batch. After the first batch in February 2015 the overwhelming response of most students was that the course was too short. Therefore, the second batch in June 2015 was extended to three months and the third, starting in December 2015, to four and a half months. This was the first class I visited on my second trip to Maheshwar (first fieldwork phase). By June 2016 (second fieldwork phase) the class had extended to six months and has stayed that way for the subsequent three courses. The students so far have come from Maheshwar, Kota in Rajasthan, Chattisgarh, Nanital in Uttarakhand, Mubarakpur in Uttar Pradesh, Bikaner in Rajasthan, Bhuj and Jamnagar in Gujarat, and Varanasi. Sharda Gautam was director of THS from December 2014 until March 2017. Gautam initially trained in engineering and then took a master's at the Indian Institute of Management before moving to the grassroots development sector. Sourodip Ghosh has since replaced Gautam as director.

The daily schedule at the school was planned out so that students would not get bored with theoretical lessons, so classes are scheduled in the mornings and students weave in the afternoons. Classes usually start around 9 to 10 am, and the day ends at 6 pm at which point students can play cricket or badminton, hang out in the market, or even continue working until dinner time. They weave samples that will be showcased at the 'Buyer Seller Meet', a sales event and showcase usually held in Delhi or Mumbai at some point after the end of the course, attended by existing clients of WomenWeave and potential new clients. The last event in May 2016 generated several orders that were distributed amongst THS students and graduates. The event also enables the weavers to learn about their target market and practice communication with these clients.

After the six months on campus students continue to communicate with each other and the institute staff to manage orders. Some students will take on internships at established companies such as Nalli Silks or Jaypore in Delhi, the founders of which are on the advisory board. This enables students to understand retail, turn-around times, the ordering process and other aspects of handloom retailing and marketing such as display and presentation. A more recent initiative has been to invite graduates back to the campus for an additional two-week course to assess what they've been doing since they left and revise some of the lessons.

#### 4.2.8 The campus

When I first visited THS it was situated within the grounds of the Gudi Mudi offices on a narrow street in the Gadikhana area of Maheshwar. The space had been designed with Australian architect Sian Pascale. When I came back to Maheshwar in July the following year (2016), the campus had moved to the fort area of the town, approximately half a mile from Gudi Mudi, into a fort building that was previously used by Rehwa. It is a much more spacious building with several purpose-specific rooms.

This more permanent set-up marks the third phase of THS's development. The next and final phase is to set up replicate, networked learning centres in weaving communities across India, although conversations with various staff members and Holkar herself show that at present this plan has not yet been explored in detail.

In a later section I show the ways in which KRV in Kachchh invited local actors to provide advice and assistance on setting up the institute and its ongoing management. In contrast THS's advisory board doesn't include any local weavers or anyone from Maheshwar. Holkar's reason for this was that the goals and objectives for THS 'were far beyond anything that was being done in the town'.<sup>51</sup> This comment reflects THS's priorities of educating for development, entrepreneurship and employment generation over and above an emphasis on the heritage identity of the town and weaving (which lies within the responsibilities of the master artisan advisors at SKV). Such an emphasis is already within the remit of Rehwa: continuing the tradition of sari weaving, and WomenWeave: defining a contemporary local identity through *naya khadi*. However, while the spread of THS reaches further afield than Maheshwar, one would assume the importance of local actors offering support on the relevant educational approaches and methods based on an inherent understanding of the way weavers learn, the cultural and social context as well as the technical processes.

Pralad Sharma, one of the permanent staff members, is the Unit-in-charge and takes a significant role in teaching technical aspects of weaving as well as setting up and managing all the looms. Sharma is not from a traditional weaving family but trained at the local

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<sup>51</sup> Holkar, S., 2018. THS Founder-Director: Email conversation with Ruth Clifford, 18 August

government training centre HSVN,<sup>52</sup> has been working in weaving all his career and accompanied Holkar when she moved from Rehwa to set up WomenWeave. At the time of the fieldwork, Bunty Goud who is from a traditional weaving family but learnt the main skills at Rehwa, was working as production manager. He attended workshops run by Rehwa in 1999 which were set up in a similar way to the first WomenWeave workshops mentioned above. They included photography, dyeing, graphing and 'designing', and were run by designers from institutes such as the NID and NIFT. At that time 'people who were teaching [Goud and other weavers] could not come here, because there were no mobiles or computers at that time in Maheshwar'.<sup>53</sup> In the next chapter I discuss in more detail the learning that happens at THS and whether employing designers who have trained in weaving in urban institutes to teach is either: perpetuating hierarchies of knowledge; or enriching weavers' knowledge through combining traditionally acquired knowledge with formal education. The rest of the permanent team includes an accountant and marketing officer, both local to Maheshwar. Despite the little inclusion of master weavers in formulating the THS curriculum, elder weavers I interviewed were positive about THS. One such master weaver, Abdul Rahim said: 'The Handloom school is important because this is the traditional business. People can come and see and learn. It will improve the business and spread it all over the world'.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> See chapter 6, section 2.

<sup>53</sup> Goud, B., 2016. THS Production Manager: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Maheshwar, 25 July.

<sup>54</sup> Ansari, A.R., 2016. Master weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Maheshwar, 9 July.



Figure 23. The classroom in the original space, which is now the WomenWeave offices



Figure 24. Preparing a warp in the new campus courtyard

### 4.3 Kachchh and Somaiya Kala Vidya (SKV)



Figure 25. Kanji Vankar at his pit loom, Kotay village

#### 4.3.1 Kachchh weavers

Kachchh<sup>55</sup> is a semi-desert region in Gujarat bordering Sindh in Pakistan to the north-west and the Arabian Sea to the south, the gulf of Kachchh to the south and west, and the districts of Banaskantha, Mehsana and Saurashtra to the east and south. Situated on important traveller and trade routes, the region is inhabited by diverse communities who have settled here from as far afield as Central Asia and at least as far back as Alexander's invasion in 325 BC (Sheikh, 2010; Randhawa, 1998).

The Vankars (literally 'weavers') of Kachchh are part of the Meghwal community, which traditionally belongs to the Dalit or scheduled castes. They claim to have migrated to Kachchh from Marwar in Rajasthan, and each of the four sub-groups of the Meghwals, Maheshwari, Marwara, Charania and Gujura, are said to have come a different route into

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<sup>55</sup> I use this spelling: Kachchh throughout the thesis. Other spellings include Kutch and Cutch (the latter was commonly used by the British, and is rarely in use now).

Kachchh (Ibrahim, 2006). The most recent record of Meghwals in Kachchh is the 2001 census, which reported Meghwals constituting 6.7 percent of the total population of Kachchh and 71.38 percent of the total scheduled caste population in the district. The most recent census conducted in 2011, only provides numbers of scheduled castes as a group. The oral and recorded myths surrounding the arrival of Meghwals in Kachchh (Government of India, 2011)<sup>56</sup> recount that Meghwal weavers accompanied the Rabaris and Ahir community from Rajasthan to provide them woven cloth approximately 850 years ago.<sup>57</sup> Another myth that traces the Meghwals' route from Rajasthan tells that the Bhakti saint Ramdev Pir brought with him kin including Meghwals when he came to Kachchh from Narayan Sarovar to build and maintain upkeep of a temple. Bhujodi was gifted by the Jadeja Raos to the Rabaris and the Meghwals, having lower status than the Rabaris, settled on the outskirts of the village.

The Meghwals made cloth in exchange for grains or dairy products and the wool from the Rabaris' sheep. Meghwals have also been engaged in leather work and agricultural labour, occupations traditionally held by low castes all over India and which marked out Meghwals as 'untouchables' in the past. Most weavers today, specifically in Bhujodi, no longer need to rely on farming which in the past was done during the monsoon season to supplement their income when the demand for their cloth was low. The weavers in Bhujodi today tell of the demeaning practices expected to be followed by them in the past. One goes thus: Once an order of a *dhablo* or *ludi* was completed and ready to give to the Rabari customer, the weaver had to leave it outside the entrance to their house, not being permitted to 'pollute' the Rabari's residence with their bodily contact or presence. One Rabaran woman quoted in Edwards (2009, p. 26) suggests this process was approached as a pragmatic routine task: 'One wash is sufficient to rid the material of its "negative" characteristics.' Despite caste difference the two communities held close, long-standing relationships, bound by this mutual *haatar* (bartar/exchange system), as well as religious rituals the

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<sup>56</sup> Valji, V., 2016. Retired master weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 2 August.

<sup>57</sup> The Rabaris are a nomadic pastoralist community whose several subgroups have travelled to Kachchh along different routes and today large numbers are living throughout Gujarat, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

Vankars would perform for the Rabaris. The elder weavers today remember this practice and Vishram Valji says payment would be made in any form the clients felt appropriate:

‘So, as payment for my work, they would sometimes give me money, sometimes grains...they would give anything that their heart wanted.’<sup>58</sup>

Since the practice of untouchability was made illegal in 1950, caste discrimination has gradually reduced, and has all but ended in Kachchh. The number of weavers is now more than the neighbouring Rabaris and most of the weavers have reached better economic status. This is in part due to the increased access to higher education through the reservations system, which reserves places for the scheduled castes and tribes (SCs and STs) and Other Backward Castes (OBC)s, which are categories that weavers fall within.<sup>59</sup>

According to the most recent government census, there are now 500 handlooms and 900 weavers in Kachchh. The majority are situated in Bhujodi village, 9 km east of Bhuj city, where there are 250 – 280 weaving families in Bhujodi. Weaving is mainly done by the men of the community who are taught by their fathers or other male members of the family. The craft has been passed down this way for several generations. Women in the weavers’ families support the craft with ancillary tasks such as warping and winding the bobbins. Thus, weaving is rooted in the domestic sphere and the collaborative familial contribution is often described in a poetic, metaphorical way by weavers: ‘weaving involves the threads coming together and intermingling. Similarly, we all work together just like the threads in weaving’.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Valji, V., 2016. Retired master weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 2 August.

<sup>59</sup> See chapter 2.

<sup>60</sup> Vishram Valji, S., 2017. Master weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 5 August.



*anu*, the ceremony of bringing a bride to her in-laws (ibid). Most looms in use now are advanced versions of the older looms but with a *pankha* (literally translating to ‘fan’), the upright swinging mechanism incorporating the reed to beat the cloth, and the fly shuttle which is attached to the frame of the *pankha*. According to master weaver Vishram Valji, the fly shuttle was introduced in Kachchh by the government later than most other Handloom centres where it was introduced in the early twentieth century (McGowan, 2009, p. 174; Roy, 1993). Premji Siju remembered purchasing one in 1963 after receiving training on it in a nearby town.<sup>62</sup> Frame looms were also introduced both by the British and independent governments and are widely used in Kachchh, particularly in the more isolated villages. Almost all the looms in Bhujodi are pit looms.



Figure 27. The *haat sar* (handloom)

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<sup>62</sup> Siju, P., 2016. Retired master weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 6 January; Valji, V., 2016. Retired master weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 2 August.



Figure 28. Frameloom (Kotay village)

Significant motifs that are characteristic of Kachchhi weaving, particularly the *dhablo*, include the *chomak*, which represents the oil lamp used in *puja* (worship), the *dhokli*, ‘little drum’ composed of two horizontal v’s, and *panchko*, five-paisa coin. These motifs are woven in extra weft by hand alongside repeated geometric patterns such as the *satkhani* and *lath*. The borders of *dhabla* have a repeated *sachikor* (a triangular, temple motif). For the Ahir community bright colours are used, while the Rabari prefer natural un-dyed brown and white hand-spun sheep wool.



Figure 29. From left: *chomak*, *dhokli* and *satkhani*



Figure 30. Pachan Vankar showing an old family *dhablo*



Figure 31. Woollen Ahir *dhablo*



Figure 32. A group of Ahir men, the man in the middle is wearing a *dhablo*. Photograph: Kuldip Gadhi



Figure 33. Mass Rabari wedding, Bhuj, March 2008.



Figure 34. Bharvad wedding shawl, hand-woven, tie-dyed and embroidered



Figure 35. Naryan Samat Vankar modelling a turban, Sarli village

Kachchh weavers would have been little affected by the British imported cloths, as the region was more difficult to reach and the local demand was sustained for longer (Roy, 1993). Their market suffered more from the later flooding of the country's own mill and factory-made imitations of the traditional products. According to censuses, there were 4,800 handlooms in Kachchh in 1945 and by the 1970s, according to the Kachchh Gazetteer, the number of weavers 'of woollen blankets' stood at 800 (Patel, 1971, p. 242). As there are usually more weavers than looms, this shows a dramatic decline. Censuses and gazetteers vary in their focus on Kachchh weavers so these are some of the few numbers available and are not likely to be accurate. Nevertheless, factors such as the increasing availability of cheaper cloths, the sedenterisation of migrant pastoralist communities (Edwards, 2005), and centralisation and mechanisation of wool production all had negative impacts on the weavers. Today most of the wool used in Kachchh comes from Rajasthan or Ludhiana in Punjab state. In the 1980s acrylic became popular as it was

cheap, easily available and easy to weave and later merino wool was introduced for the higher-end markets (both also came from Ludhiana). This move from locally sourced yarn to that purchased by large traders, began to break this long-standing relationship between the communities, as well as make the weavers dependent on external capitalist forces.

In 1954 a cooperative was founded in Bhujodi by the village elders: the Bhujodi Sutar Un Haath Wanat Mandali. The father of Purushottam and Pachan who are key participants in this research, as well as the father of KRV graduate Murji Vankar were amongst the founders. By working for the collective weavers had access to subsidies and benefits, could produce yarns at better prices and negotiate better wages, than if weaving independently (Shah, 2012). In the same year Poonamchand Velji started a school paid for by the villagers. Daya Ala recalls sitting in the open air under a tree and learning a range of subjects informally with basic equipment.<sup>63</sup> Today there is a government Gujarati medium school which most weavers' children attend, or some go to Hindi medium schools in Bhuj. The original cooperative ceased to operate after the earthquake in 2001. The Kachchh Weavers Association was formed primarily to apply for the Geographical Indication (GI) (see section 4.3.3).

Many of the older generation of weavers today attribute the revival of Kachchh weaving to Prabhaben Shah who ran an organisation called Sohan based in Mumbai.<sup>64</sup> She first visited Bhujodi in the early 1960s and began to adapt the traditional products, the *dhablo* and *ludi* into shawls to sell in Mumbai. The first adaptations were a success and Prabhaben continued to visit Bhujodi and work with the weavers for several years. Vankar Vishram Valji was one of these weavers and talks fondly of the support Sohan gave. Through the weavers' cooperative (which today is no longer running), the Bhujodi weavers learned of the National Award (introduced in chapter 2, section 12) which Vishram submitted a piece for and won in 1974. The award led to many opportunities, the first of which was an exhibition in Delhi. In the same year Leena Behn Mangdalas, the founder of the Shreyas Foundation Museum of Folk Art, invited Vishram to an exhibition in Ahmedabad. Premji

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<sup>63</sup> Ala, D., 2016. Master Weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 7 January.

<sup>64</sup> Told during interviews and conversations with weaver elders including Premjibhai Siju, Dayalal Atabhai and Vishrambhai Valji in Bhujodi.

Siju, a recipient of the Shilp Guru award (the highest given by the government for craftspeople), recalls himself, Vishram and another weaver, Devjibhai, all going to Ahmedabad with Brij Bhasin, the founder of the Gujarat State Handloom and Handicraft Development Corporation (GSHHDC). 'Before then, we didn't know there was any appreciation of our work. But when we were in Ahmedabad, we realised we did very well.'<sup>65</sup> Premji went onto emphasise the importance of learning to weave in finer counts of cotton and wool, which was also encouraged by the designers at Sohan and the government: 'Vishram worked very hard and wove in 20 count. He told everyone it was possible and that was the start of weaving in finer counts.'<sup>66</sup> With each National Award since, the count of yarn has gotten finer and the number of ends per inch has increased. Other products that were introduced included rugs and bed sheets which required adaptation of looms. These products continue to be woven on a smaller scale in Kachchh. Other weaving traditions in Kachchh such as *tangalia*, *kharad* and *mashru*<sup>67</sup> have received less attention and the number of weavers in these clusters has reduced dramatically.

Later in the twentieth century, possibly due to the country's economic liberalisation in the 1990s, Kachchh weaving experienced a decline again. According to oral accounts, in Kotay, a small village 20 km north east of Bhuj, most weavers were forced to work in farming due to a very low market demand for handloom products.

After the devastating earthquake of 2001, there was heavy investment in the area by the government and NGOs as industries benefited from a five-year tax holiday and the region became more visible worldwide. The region now receives large numbers of tourists, craft

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<sup>65</sup> Siju, P., 2016. Retired master weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 6 January.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> *Kharad* is the Sindhi word for carpet, the weaving of which is practiced by Marwada Meghwals who hail from Sindh in Pakistan. Kharad weaving is currently only practiced by two families, a decrease from ten in the 1990s and probably many more previously. The looms are even simpler than the pit looms used by the shawl weavers and can be easily transported.

*Mashru* weaving is also practiced by Meghwal communities, mostly the Maheshwari Meghwals in Mandvi, southern Kachchh as well as Patan in northern Gujarat. See chapter 2 for a detailed definition.

*Tangalia* weaving is practiced mainly in eastern parts of Kachchh and Saurashtra in Gujarat. It is also traditionally woven for local herding and farming communities such as the Bharwads. The distinctive feature of *tangalia* is raised knots done in the supplementary weft.

enthusiasts and buyers from all over India and the world. In turn many craftspeople from Kachchh travel over India and some, the world to sell and showcase their craft. Weavers now experiment with a range of different materials including mulberry silk from South India, *eri* and *tussar* silk from Northeast India, merino wool, varieties of cotton counts, *kala* cotton<sup>68</sup> and bamboo. A return to local sheep wool has found success in high-end markets seeking rustic, authentic and ethically-made products. They have also introduced new colour palettes and experiment with layouts and composition and incorporate *bandhani* and block printing. These developments have been helped by visiting designers, NGOs and design education. The technology however, has largely stayed the same.

### 4.3.3 The Kachchhi shawl

In most weavers' houses across Kachchh you will find stacks of 'Kachchhi (sometimes called Bhujodi) shawls' in bright colours woven in either wool or acrylic. An example of one of these can be seen worn by the man on the left in figure 33. It is commonly light brown or grey with an all-over pattern in black or maroon. These are bought by the original local customers as well as visitors seeking a cheaper product. As Shamji pointed out in a conversation with Frater in 'Threads and Voices', 'we haven't forgotten our original customers' (Frater, 2007).

'We have Diwali customers who come every year from Mumbai. In August and December, we get the NRIs (non-resident Indians). They want different things. Different markets have different tastes. But our customers want Kachchhi shawls! The products need to have Kachchhi identity' (ibid).

During a group session studying 'traditional' Kachchh weaving as part of the Craft Traditions course (on which I learned weaving), Frater asked who first designed the 'Bhujodi shawl'. Shamji responded that it is unknown who made the first one but that it was likely to have been developed using leftover yarn. According to Shamji, urban designer Vijayaben Kotak from Madhapar, a suburb of Bhuj and director of Gujari for several years, introduced *abla* (mirrors) to the shawls in the mid-1980s, as a way of providing work for

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<sup>68</sup> Kala cotton has been developed by local NGO Khamir and is based on 'old-word cotton' that was cultivated in the region in the past. It is organic and needs little water. Khamir also have a unit similar to Women Weave where the cotton is spun on *ambar charkhas*.

Rabari women. The *jari patla* (a band woven in a metallic weft yarn) emerged at a similar time. These 'blingy' woven and embroidered shawls continue to be popular today.



Figure 36. Detail of *jari patla* and *abhla* (mirrors) on shawl for local market

The Kachchhi shawl was given GI status in 2011 after the NGO Khamir along with Kutch Weavers Association, formed by a group of sixteen weavers from different villages around Kachchh, submitted an application.<sup>69</sup> The chapter dedicated to the Kachchhi shawl in the GI journal of that year published by the government, contains a relatively in-depth description of the background to Kachchh weaving, the techniques used, motifs, process and materials (Government of India, 2011).

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<sup>69</sup> Leheru, G., 2017. Sr. Manager, Development: Email conversation with Ruth Clifford, 8 August.



Figure 37. The exterior of a weaver's house-cum-shop on the main street of Bhujodi village

#### 4.3.4 Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya (KRV)

Kala Raksha translates to 'Art Protection' in the local dialect and this 'preservation of the art of craft' (2008) is the concept that formed the basis of the trust. It was founded in 1993 by Judy Frater, an anthropologist and museum curator from Washington, and Prakash Bhanani, local to the village of Sumrasar Sheikh, 25 km north of Bhuj. Frater had been conducting research in the region for 23 years.<sup>70</sup> During Frater's Fulbright scholarship to study suf embroidery from 1990 – 1991, Dayaben Bhanani, Prakash Bhanani's sister, asked her 'why are you researching us, why can't you help us?' which initiated the idea for Kala Raksha. Frater and Bhanani began working with embroidery artisans in the village to develop culturally and economically viable products for sophisticated urban markets, and gradually their reach spread to increasing numbers of artisans throughout Kachchh (Frater 2010; Kala-Raksha 2010). As well as their commercial arm Kala Raksha set up a museum

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<sup>70</sup> A large part of this research was for a masters at the University of Washington, the thesis for which was adapted into the book *Threads of Identity* (Frater, 2003), focusing specifically on the dress and craft of the Rabari community.

within their headquarters at Sumrasar Sheikh, as well as an archive and documentation centre, as ways to educate both the artisans and visitors of the embroidery traditions of Kachchh. They also ran a programme teaching the mostly illiterate female artisans literacy and health. However, when the women could not see the benefit of this learning on their livelihood, Kala Raksha began a 'learn to earn' programme which involved teaching skills more directly related to their craft, and in ways they would see more immediate results in terms of earning from their embroidery work. The idea for a design education institute developed out of these workshops when Frater witnessed the conflict of interests emerging between professional designers who came to work with the artisans.

'We used to bring in young designers to work with the artisans. I saw them busy learning the tradition, and the artisans would roll their eyes because they were giving them exercises to do that weren't really - they certainly weren't based in the tradition and they [...] didn't relate to them and I thought, you know the artisans could learn to design faster than these people could learn a tradition. So that was in my mind for a long time.'<sup>71</sup>

After the earthquake the urgent need to rehabilitate the region gave even more impetus to begin the design institute. Frater then received an Ashoka Fellowship to develop the curriculum. She undertook research visiting other design schools and organised a workshop at Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), attended by experts in design curriculum development or training for traditional artisans. These included Aleta Margolis from the Centre for Inspired Teaching in Washington DC, Jan Baker, faculty at RISD, Krishna Patel, faculty at NID and Chip Morris who had done extensive work with artisans in Mexico. Consultants not present at the meeting included Dr Ismail Khatri, a master block printer in Ajrakhpur village, Kachchh, Maria Conelli, dean at Fashion Institute of Technology, New York, and Claire Buckert, consultant at Aid to Artisans (a US-based organisation working to provide economic opportunities for low-income artisan groups globally). Frater recorded all the discussions in the meeting, transcribed them and organised them all into index cards. Methodology was adapted in each class depending on

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<sup>71</sup> Frater, J., 2016. SKV Founder-Director: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Adipur, 20 January.

what worked well and what did not. The main goals set out in the curriculum (Frater, 2014, p. 3) were:

- To enable artisans to significantly improve their standard of living – including social and cultural as well as economic status
- To strengthen the vitality and viability of crafts in the national and international market
- To raise the level of education in the craft sector
- To provide a successful example of educational reform

The objectives set out to achieve these goals included:

- To build on tradition
- To increase the value of craft
- To enable artisans to develop critical judgement and the ability to assess their work, develop critical thinking skills and develop communication, interpersonal and literacy skills.

These goals and objectives demonstrate general development aims of building capabilities and nurturing creativity to continue tradition. They will be referred to in more detail throughout this thesis in relation to individual students and graduates.

From the start, local master artisans were invited to be part of the advisory board. These included: block printer Ismail Khatri, bandhani artist Ali Mohammad Isha, bandhani artist Gulam Hussain Umar, weaver Shamji Vishramji Siju and bandhani artist Umar Farouk Khatri. Each year the masters hold a programme focusing on the design traditions of each craft and they are part of the panel interviewing new applicants. Such involvement of local actors demonstrates avoidance of any kind of dominating western influence and continuing practices of imperialism, which Tunstall (2013, p. 236) observes occurring in the IDEO and Rockefeller design development projects in India and Africa. Tunstall argues that the role of western companies is a more active one than that of the local actors. The latter are 'represented as those to be passively guided and directed', while the former 'guide, serve, embed, build, pay and staff (the design processes)'. This approach is influenced by Eurocentric or western-centred discourses that position the west at the centre of

modernisation and industrialisation and the rest of the world at the peripheries. Chapter 2 discussed the growing need to de-centre Europe when writing design histories, and KRV (and SKV) provide examples of localised design practices and innovations while also challenging the existing polarisation between the local and the global, as I continue to demonstrate throughout this thesis.

For the first batch of students in 2006, KRV received funding from the Development Commissioner of Handlooms (DCH) which meant they did not need to charge the entrants, in fact they paid them to attend. Otherwise, Frater remarks, there would not have been any applicants. In the second year they could not afford to pay the students, but it continued to be free of charge. By the third year they no longer had the support of the DCH (a new DCH had come along and did not have the same enthusiasm for KRV's model as the previous one, a common occurrence in government as DCs move regularly from one department to the next), and so began to charge students. On the advice of the board of master artisan advisors, they made the entrance fee INR 10,000 which it continues to stand at today. This charge was originally met with contempt by most artisans, but as potential entrants have seen the benefits experienced by graduates, it has become increasingly accepted. Furthermore, paying to attend the programme has made students value it. If it were free, they would be less sure of its worth. Another criterion set out by the directors and the advisory board of master artisans, was that the students should be traditional working artisans from Kachchh. Frater has expressed uncertainty over this criterion, and they have had to turn away keen applicants not from traditional craft backgrounds (I engage with the theme of caste and occupational choices more substantially in chapter 9, sections 2 and 3).

The curriculum consists of six 2-week courses spread over one year: 1) Colour/Sourcing from Heritage and Nature; 2) Basic Design/Sourcing from Heritage and Nature; 3) Market Orientation/Concept/Costing; 4) Concept/Communication/Projects/Sampling; 5) Collection Development/Finishing; and 6) Merchandising/Presentation.<sup>72</sup> Students number ten to fifteen in each batch and are block printers, *bandhani* artisans, weavers and embroiderers.

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<sup>72</sup> For ease of reading, these course titles will be shortened throughout the thesis to the following: Colour, Basic Design, Market Orientation, Concept, Collection Development and Presentation.

At the master artisans' advice, women's and men's classes are held separately. All classes are taught in Gujarati or Hindi. In between each class students return home to apply concepts they have learnt to homework alongside ensuring their own, on-going work is under control.

Visiting faculty are professional designers working in industry, mostly graduates of urban design schools such as the NID. Frater sends the curriculum to each visiting faculty member, who then creates a plan for the two-week course they have been employed to teach, before sending back to Frater to approve and suggest any changes. After the first few years of KRV some graduates returned as mentors, helping to facilitate interaction between the faculty and students. There are, at the time of writing, two permanent faculty who are themselves traditional artisans and graduates of KRV or SKV: Laxmi Puvar, a *suf* embroiderer and Dayalal Kudecha, a weaver. The permanent faculty help to translate the concepts in the class in a way that relates to the artisan's own thinking and context. At the end of the course the students present their final collection samples to a jury, the feedback from which, students take on board as they develop collections to be showcased at an exhibition held several weeks after the jury. So far, the exhibitions have been held in Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Delhi. After the exhibition a sales analysis session is held, which involves the graduates analysing their sales and impact of their collection and identifying areas for improvement and development. Finally, a convocation ceremony is held when awards selected by the jury, are given in the categories including: 'best collection', 'most marketable collection', 'best presentation' and an award given by the faculty, 'best student'. More recently a sixth award has been added: 'best exhibition sales'. In the evening of the convocation a professionally choreographed fashion show is held and models walk down a lit ramp modelling each graduate's collection. In the years of KRV the fashion show was held in Tunda Vandh village, but since SKV began it has been held in Bhujodi. The show is one of the major events of the year, and the one I attended in January 2016 was attended by over 6,000 people from across Kachchh. Several weavers I interviewed said they were attracted to the course after attending the fashion show.

#### 4.3.5 Somaiya Kala Vidya (SKV)

Only five years after the KRV campus was built in Tunda Vandh village near Mandvi in southern Kachchh, two power plants were built within a mile of the campus. Like any huge industrial development, the plants have brought mixed impact, increasing jobs but at the same time restricting grazing lands and the movement therefore, of pastoral communities. Tensions have also arisen between the locals and the migrants who have moved here from other states for work. Furthermore, KRV began plans to relocate. Then, in 2013 and after the eighth class at KRV, Kala Raksha's co-founder, Prakash Bhanani sadly passed away. After taking stock and feeling the design programme had reached its limitation, Frater sought out funds to develop the programme into an institution. She was approached by the K.J Somaiya Trust<sup>73</sup> who had an interest in working with her. She then resigned from her position as director of KRV to join the K.J Somaiya Gujarat Trust and founded Somaiya Kala Vidya (SKV). While Kala Raksha Trust continues to run with continuing financial, design and marketing support, Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya ran one course using Frater's curriculum in 2015, but this ran them dry of funds so there have been no courses since. SKV runs with the same curriculum that Frater developed for KRV. Most of the faculty and some of the staff have moved over to SKV with her.

Since its inception SKV has been operating from a small building owned by the Somaiya Group in Adipur, situated half way between the town of Anjar and Gandhidham, the economic capital of Kachchh. It will move to a larger campus that is in the process of being built, also in Adipur. In 2014 SKV began the first post-graduate Business and Management for Artisans (BMA) course for graduates of KRV and SKV. The course runs over eleven months and, like the design course is split into five 2-week classes. Each class is taught by a

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<sup>73</sup> The Somaiya Group are a large family-based corporation hailing from Kachchh. Padma Bhushan Shri Karamshi Jethabhai Somaiya founded the K.J Somaiya Trust which supports Somaiya Vidyavihar, The K.J. Somaiya Medical Trust, The Girivanvasi Education Trust and Pragati Mandal, comprising over 34 educational institutions. These institutions extend from elementary level to PhD, rural to urban, vocational to professional, and cover diverse areas including medicine, the arts and sciences, engineering, religion, vocational studies, education, languages, and tribal development. Somaiya Kala Vidya was set up in conjunction with K.J Somaiya Trust to take forward the dream of the late Dr. Shantilal K. Somaiya, who wanted to start an education initiative in his native Kachchh. The trust and its activities are currently being led by Samir Somaiya. See: <http://www.somaiya-kalavidya.org/about.html>.

visiting teacher. Dayalal and Laxmi, having undertaken the BMA course work as permanent faculty on the BMA as well as the design course. The course covers learning to start or increase an existing business, managing money, planning and optimising systems of production, producing a collection for exhibition and analysing and maximising business performance.

At the time of writing, there has been a total of 185 graduates from both institutes since KRV's first course in 2006, 43 of whom are weavers. Sixteen of those graduates have gone on to complete the business course, four of those being weavers. Most graduates from KRV and SKV continue to 'innovate within their traditions', a key aim of the course, and have found growing economic success and wide national and global exposure.

#### 4.3.6 Outreach projects

Another initiative SKV began in its first year, was outreach projects involving design graduates in Kachchh collaborating with artisans in other regions who do not have exposure to viable markets (those that bring in a good wage) for their products. One of these is the ongoing 'Bhujodi to Bagalkot' project. Three weavers from Bhujodi visited the village of Kamatgi near Bagalkot in Karnataka where weavers have suffered from the loss of local markets of the traditional Ilkal sari, and relocation of their homes due to the expansion of the Almatti dam. Five weavers from Kamatgi also visited Bhujodi to experience the effects of design education on the weavers there. By 2016 four modules of the design course had been delivered to the Kamatgi weavers by Kannada speaking teachers.

The second project is 'Faradi to Lucknow' which runs along similar lines to 'Bhujodi to Bagalkot' but involves three *suf* embroidery artisans in Kachchh, and three *chikan*<sup>74</sup> embroidery artisans in Lucknow. More recently, there has been 'Kutch to Kumaon' which is a collaborative project with handloom development organisation Avni, based in Almora in the Kumaon region of Uttarakhand. These projects provide another pioneering approach to craft development and education, enabling artisans from different regions

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<sup>74</sup> *Chikan* is embroidery worked with white thread on white fine fabric for garments and accessories, traditionally produced for Mughal courts in Uttar Pradesh, and today is widely commercialised (see Wilkinson-Weber, 1997).

who, while speaking different vernaculars, can communicate using the ‘language of design’,<sup>75</sup> learn about each other’s culture, and exchange ideas, knowledge and skills.

SKV’s co-design projects which partner graduates up with students from design institutes in different parts of the world, follow a similar premise: to enable more equal collaboration than the top-down approach that can occur in partnerships with established designers (see chapter 7, section 9 for a more detailed discussion on collaboration and co-design).

#### **4.4 Summary**

This chapter has set the context for the two regions in which this study has been located. I have provided a brief history of both regions, the communities of weavers, the organisation of production and markets, designs, products and technology, drawing on the literature available as well as oral history. I then discussed the formation of the two institutes and their integration into the respective regions and social and cultural milieus. I have shown that while SKV was founded by an American anthropologist and museum curator and THS, an American graduate and Maharani, the formation of the institutes has been collaborative with local actors as well as drawing on global expertise. Sally Holkar and her husband in a sense, were reigniting ‘tradition’ through providing hereditary royal patronage to revive the handloom industry. Local expertise from master weavers was sought and the staff team includes Maheshwari master weaver Pralad Sharma, along with other experienced weavers. Graduate students come back to support teaching, and alumni form a supportive community both within and outside THS. The following chapters give more detail into the experiences of students and graduates relating to design and business learning, entering the market and making career choices.

Master artisans have been part of the development of KRV and continue as advisory board members teaching students about traditional designs in attempts to ensure their heritage is not forgotten alongside learning design concepts which I discuss in chapter 7. In this sense, efforts to ‘preserve tradition’ based on idealised past practices are not necessarily imposed by hegemonic elite forces or a ‘global hierarchy of value’, although they may be a

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<sup>75</sup> Kudecha, D., 2016. Weaver-designer, SKV faculty: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 15 January.

lingering influence. Master artisans demonstrate a sense of pride and emotional attachment to their weaving tradition and the designs that distinguish it from others, as I show in more detail in the following chapter. Furthermore, according to Frater, the purpose of having master artisan advisors is to ensure the students are 'aware of tradition, not to preserve it with a view to replicating it but to know about it', and 'in the end to preserve with an understanding (that) traditions live and evolve'<sup>76</sup>. Artisans also make up part of the permanent family at SKV by way of mediating between the faculty and students, interpreting the concepts being taught into terms the students will understand. Alumni artisan-designers sit as internal jury members to take notes on the jury's feedback and offer guidance to current students on request. They also participate in the seminars which are held every year during the jury to discuss issues faced in the artisan community. Before discussing the experiences of students at each design institute, the next chapter will examine the skills that weavers develop before entering the design education and the process of gaining these skills, alongside the processes involved in making a complete sari, shawl or other uncut handloomed cloth.

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<sup>76</sup> Frater, J., 2019. Founder-Director, SKV: Email communication with Ruth Clifford, 22 April.

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## Learning to weave: Kachchh



Figure 38. Rajesh Vishram Valji at the loom

## 5.1 Introduction

In the next two chapters I relay the processes involved in learning weaving in Kachchh and Maheshwar and outline the stages of the weaving process. For this chapter which focuses on Kachchh, I draw on a combination of my own experience of learning to weave in Bhujodi village, film documentation and observation, and conversations with weavers. A description of the pre-loom, on-loom and post-loom processes is presented. This chapter therefore, gives an insight into the skills, knowledge, technological choices and experience of a typical weaver from Kachchh. It helps us to understand how these skills, knowledge and experience inform the weaver's approach to design and business as well as how he balances or combines them with new knowledge learnt at SKV. In addition, the chapter positions the woven object and the craft in its social, cultural and physiological context.

## 5.2 The embodied knowledge of a weaver

Hereditary weavers involved in this study, and indeed across weaving clusters in India, are surrounded by weaving from birth. Weaving is an intrinsic part of their 'habitus', a concept derived by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu which refers to a set of common principles within a structure or set of structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72). These principles 'generate and organise practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes' (Johnson, 1993, p. 4). Further, these principles are 'durably installed', 'regulated improvisations' and 'permanent dispositions'. The concept of habitus is distinct to 'habit' in that it does not imply mere mechanical reaction or reproduction directly informed by actions previously set out, and 'entirely reducible to the mechanical functioning of pre-established assemblies, 'models' or 'roles'' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 78). Rather, in the habitus each learner seeks to develop new solutions within the bounds of tradition. For weavers this means supporting the continuity of the craft. I show later in chapter 7 that in order to meet the demands of luxury markets the designer-weaver must step out of the familiarity of his habitus to learn the rules or principles of the segments of the market coming from other habituses. For this and the following chapter, I focus only on the weavers' habitus and the weaving processes that are practiced within this habitus.

In most cases the loom and *charkhas* for bobbin winding (and sometimes warping frames

or drums) are situated in the household. At the beginning of my apprenticeship in Bhujodi, I practiced weaving on a 'toy loom' made up of scraps of old bamboo *phanni* (reed) and scrap pieces of yarn tied to sticks hammered into the ground. Some weavers' children use these or simply pick up and play with whatever is lying around. They are willed by a desire to overcome boredom which 'ignites independent and self-motivated observation, play and imagination', and 'guides one to realise essential causalities between things' (Pallasmaa, 2009, p. 81). Play is said to be an important part of learning craft in studies of traditional crafts by Wilkinson-Weber (1997), Venkatesan (2010) and Basole (2014).



Figure 39. Young boys from Bhujodi playing on the toy looms set up at the beginning of my course, January 2016

Other weavers say they learn through helping their parents with small tasks such as running to collect bobbins. Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 29) describe this type of learning in the home and surrounded by the activity, as 'legitimate peripheral participation', a term they use to incorporate not only the learning of the particular skill but also of the socio-cultural practices of the community within which the subject is living and learning.

Most weavers who at the time of the study were aged between 25 and 40 said they began learning weaving after completing either tenth or twelfth standard at school, between the ages of fifteen and eighteen. This usually referred to the point they started weaving full time, prior to which most would have practiced on the loom in the evenings after school. Of the weavers over the age of 50, most had left school earlier, between fifth and seventh standard at which point they would begin weaving full time. Vankar Vishram Valji in Bhujodi who is in his 60s, began learning when he finished fifth standard and approximately ten years old. Vankar Premji Siju, also in Bhujodi and a similar age, said he was around eleven years old when he began weaving. These ages may have been a rough approximation as many weavers and artisans in Kachchh don't pay heed to birthdays and birth dates, some simply don't know their birthday. This may also be the reason why few weavers could give a definitive answer of when or how they started learning weaving. Most would simply say 'weaving is our *parampara* (tradition)' or 'it is in our blood', suggesting that their knowledge is inherent, hereditary and simply a part of growing up. In some instances where weavers' level of English was more proficient, they might elaborate on this statement saying, 'we learn by being surrounded by our family members weaving'. According to Basole (2014), the weavers of Banaras said they have known weaving since they 'became conscious' – '*jab se hosh samhala*', and other authors report the same response amongst, for example *chikan* embroiderers in Uttar Pradesh (Basole, 2014, p. 173 citing Wilkinson-Weber, 1997), and weavers in Pattapuram (ibid, citing Roman, 2004). In Maheshwar children sit at the loom 'as soon as their feet can reach the peddles'.<sup>77</sup> Master weaver Abdul Rahim in Maheshwar said he first sat on a loom at age fourteen, out of curiosity, when no one else was looking. He wasn't supposed to be weaving and his mistakes would give him away. His brother would fix the mistakes which helped Abdul Rahim to learn. He had left school after seventh standard because the family's economic condition wasn't good, and he was required to work in the family business to earn. Such playful experimentation and curiosity chimes with Pallasmaa's description of learning by

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<sup>77</sup> Ansari, A., 2016. Master weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Maheshwar, 9 July; Holkar, S., 2016. THS Founder-Director: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Maheshwar, 9 July

doing quoted above.

When asked how long it takes weavers to become 'good' or an 'expert', the answers vary. Some say two years, some say ten to fifteen years, and weavers who have been weaving for more than twenty years say there is still room to learn more or become more skilled. Answers are likely to depend on products and target markets. For example, weavers in poorer areas who rely on government assistance and are given orders of plain fabric, say it takes around two years on an informal basis. The training at the government centre in Maheshwar lasts for four months with only two months at the loom. The women I spoke to who had been through this training said that this length of time is enough to reach a good level of skill, and that they will build upon these skills in employment. These weavers view handloom as merely a job rather than an 'art'. On the other hand, weavers who work towards getting a national award or expanding their market will continuously learn and experiment in new counts, yarns, products and ends-per-inch.

There has been a lively discourse on apprenticeship learning, embodied knowledge and enskillment over the last few decades within social sciences and education studies (for example: Coy, 1989; Dilley, 1999; Bunn, 1999; Ingold, 2000 and Marchand, 2016). Anthropologists and ethnographers have adopted apprenticeship as a field method to get a deeper understanding of both the craft process and skills of a particular community, how the craftspeople learn these skills, and to gain a better insight into the socio-cultural context of the craft. In addressing problems with unequal relations between researcher and researched as discussed in chapter 3, apprenticeship also provides an alternative to the ethnocentric approach. It has the potential to shift the belief in a single 'scientific' knowledge to a legitimization of plural local knowledges (Pottier, 2003, p. 9). Further, in anthropology in particular, apprenticeship has been 'rediscovered as a prime site for connecting theories of knowing to practical doing' (Marchand, 2008, p. 246). Lave and Wenger's theory of 'situated learning' has provided key material to such studies:

'The notion of participation [...] dissolves dichotomies between cerebral and embodied activity, between contemplation and involvement, between abstraction and experience: persons, actions and the world are implicated in all thought, speech, knowing and learning' (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 51).

Because the skills of craftspeople in India have not earned them a formal qualification, their

knowledge is widely perceived as inferior to knowledge gained through formal education. Basole (2018) and others studying indigenous knowledge in India describe the knowledge that weavers hold as *lokavidya*, the nearest translation to which is ‘knowledge in society’ or ‘people’s knowledge’. *Lokavidya* is importantly not ‘traditional knowledge’, because it is contemporary, dynamic and adaptable to changes in society, markets, technology and other influences on the weaver’s (or other skilled worker’s) work.

‘Every time a *karigar* community adapts to a new type of raw material, a new market or a new source of power, *lokavidya* is at work. Innovation, adaptation and change occur constantly in the world of *lokavidya*, often under duress and with very few resources’ (ibid).

Thus, *lokavidya* chimes with Ingold and Hallam’s argument that improvisation and creativity are inherent in the continuity of a traditional practice and its transmission from one generation to the next (2007),<sup>78</sup> and Bunn’s observation of design being inextricably linked with craft processes by way of continually striving to improve and problem solve (Bunn, 2016). While well-meaning post-independent development efforts by formally educated designers or development workers seek to improve the lives of artisans, the differences in ways of learning and ways of expressing knowledge can be barriers to effective results. Hema Raghunathan, a graduate of NID and socially-oriented designer working on government development projects, expressed this challenge saying, ‘words like “development” and “sustainability” don’t exist in local vocabulary.’<sup>79</sup> Ghose (1989, p. 39) has written of this in relation to the term ‘design’ too, stating:

‘no wonder then that neither the terms design nor development have natural equivalents in most of the Asian linguistic traditions, for they carry with them all the ideological underpinnings of first world associations, aspirations and debates’.

It is for this reason that the artisans Raghunathan works with are not necessarily able to verbally communicate to her what they need. Such mis-communication stands at the heart of critiques of ‘well-meaning’ development initiatives as discussed in chapter 2.

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<sup>78</sup> See my discussion of the term ‘innovation’ alongside Hallam and Ingold’s concept of ‘improvisation’ in chapter 1.4.7, as well as chapter 7, section 2.

<sup>79</sup> Raghunathan, H., 2015. Designer/project consultant: Personal conversation with Ruth Clifford, Chennai, 10 November

### 5.3 Learning weaving in Kachchh

Many of the weavers in this study who have been through the design and business education are much more likely to talk about the traditions of their craft, the patterns, motifs, origins and myths, than those who have been less exposed to contemporary markets seeking 'traditional' craft products. Design education has enabled artisans to verbalise and intellectualise the processes in their work to their markets, through 'giving partial translation of works into words' (Mitchell, 2012). For now I will focus on the learning of weaving itself, which includes very little verbal instruction when learning in the home or through the traditional apprenticeship. This was one reason I decided to take up learning to weave myself. Interpreting the theory of 'learned ignorance' (1977, p. 19), Bourdieu refers to the generalised responses makers give to anthropologists who ask about their work, the result he asserts of being unaccustomed to verbalising their knowledge. This then produces an 'outsider-oriented discourse' which anthropologists sometimes confuse with 'actual native experience'. In other words, informants are giving answers based on what they think the anthropologists or researchers want to hear. In their studies of skilled manual workers, Simpson (2006), Venkatesan (2010) and Basole (2014) were told when asking participants to describe their craft, to try it themselves or they 'would often see nothing worth commenting on regarding the learning process' (Basole, 2014, p. 172). That is not to say 'they have no language to talk about their craft, only that it takes a different form' (DeNicola and Wilkinson-Weber M., 2016, p. 90). My interpreter in Maheshwar made this point too, saying 'weavers don't really think too much about their work, they just do it'.<sup>80</sup> Such observations bring to life philosophical analyses of tacit and embodied knowledge, such as Polanyi's 'Tacit Dimension' in which he stated 'we can know more than we can tell' (Polanyi, 1966, p. 4).

It is important to mention however, that because my apprenticeship was organised by SKV (which I discuss in chapter 3, section 13) and my teachers had been through the course at SKV, they had some guidance and training on how to transfer their knowledge. The course was designed based on the learner having no previous experience of weaving, and I

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<sup>80</sup> Kanere, G., 2016. Weaver-entrepreneur and English teacher: Personal conversation with Ruth Clifford, Maheshwar, 6 July.

considered myself a beginner having only taken a brief module on weaving in my undergraduate Textiles degree over ten years previously and forgotten most of what I had learned. I had several teachers spread across the month so as not to keep anyone away from their own work for too long. In the first week my teachers were Purushottam Premji Siju, Jentilal (Jenti) Bokhani and often Prakash Naranbhai when he was available. In the second part of the course I was taught by Rajesh Vishram Valji, younger brother of Shamji Vishram Valji in whose family workshop we were learning. The final session of the course was taught by Prakash Naranbhai and sometimes Nitesh Namori Vankar. Having attended SKV most weavers had become accustomed to talking about their work and communicating with non-Hindi, Gujarati or Kachchhi speaking outsiders. For most except one teacher who had done a two-day course, they had never taught weaving before to their own family members or an outsider. They all had children of too young an age to start weaving. I was assisted by an interpreter for much of the apprenticeship but there were only a few occasions where this felt necessary. Most of the time I could understand through observing actions and the odd English word or phrase that my teacher would understand, and the odd Hindi word or phrase that I understood. The apprenticeship lasted only a month and even if it was a year, I would never fully be able to understand exactly how weavers learn because it is a lifelong process for most. Nevertheless it gave me a 'a more intimate knowledge of the paths that lead to mastery' (Downey, Dalidowicz and Mason, 2015). To support the description of the processes I also refer to observation of the processes being carried out by different members of both the weaving community and the neighbouring communities who undertake processes such as dyeing and spinning, as well as interviews and film.

Film was an alternative way of taking notes to document my learning process which, had the course have been longer, may not have been necessary as the knowledge would become more engrained with repeated practice, and I could document the process from memory. I used a simple small camera and tripod which was not too obtrusive. I would leave the camera filming for a certain amount of time and would place it at different positions depending on the task being done. Even within one task, I would move the camera around to include the actions of the different parts of the body and loom. As in many traditional craft apprenticeships (Dilley, 1999; Marchand, 2008), my teacher would

demonstrate the process after which I would try and they would watch and give verbal or action-oriented instructions. For my teachers this also involved slowing down their process, stepping back from it and ‘deconstructing their knowledge’ (Gowlland, 2015). Gowlland, who documented the process of a Chinese potter through film and apprenticeship, suggests that the images he created of the process, as well as his own learning, while not being a replacement for the actual apprenticeship, can serve as ‘equivalents to textual discussions on embodiment and practice’ (ibid). The combination of leaving a camera at a still position at different angles at different parts of the process, and capturing shots of my teacher, zooming in on the gestures and parts of the body that were most important for the particular process, was an effective way to show how the whole body is instrumental to the process. It was also effective in highlighting the relationships of these particular movements to the whole (Gowlland, p. 294). Further, film has the ability to represent the tasks in a truer and clearer way to the viewer: ‘Writing is linear, while the tasks are not’ (Lemonnier, 1992, p. 30).

## **5.4 Materials and tools**

### **Yarns and fibres**

One of the first tasks of my course, after practising on the toy loom, was to learn to identify different fibres, which we did by conducting burn tests and pulling apart yarns, before attaching them to a labelled piece of card. The weavers wouldn’t usually do such tests as knowledge was simply passed amongst family members. The same yarns were used across the weaving community and the introduction of new yarns would come either from a trader or designer who are likely to be the ones to pass on the qualities and benefits of the yarn to the weavers. Nevertheless, knowledge of yarn, ‘material consciousness’ (Sennett, 2008), is also crucial in understanding how the final product will feel and look. As one of my teachers, Rajesh said: ‘I know by the yarn type how the shawl will turn out’.<sup>81</sup> Prior to machine spun yarn, there would have been no such thing as ‘count’. Yarns were understood through direct tactile material experimentation, which would have informed the development of counts as a scientific record for industry. Thus, as Pallasmaa (2009, p. 79) notes, ‘the process of making gives rise to theoretical

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<sup>81</sup> Vishram Valji, R., 2016. Weaver-designer: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 16 January.

formulations rather than vice versa'. This introduction to yarns helped when I was on the loom and I began to realise the consistently close physical and visual connection the weaver has with the yarn. Testing yarns is encouraged during the SKV course to enable students to branch out into different materials and have a good understanding of the yarns, their qualities and their suitability to the product design and market.

### **Looms**

The next stage involved learning about looms. I was beginning to realise the extent and diversity of knowledge and skills required to weave. Understanding yarns requires a certain level of scientific knowledge, while understanding the loom requires knowledge of carpentry or even engineering and physics. The majority of weavers maintain their own looms and can adjust or fix them when required. When my loom was being set up, Jenti, Purushottam and Rajesh all worked together to ensure there was balance in the *pankha* (sley), and that the lengths of the string attached to the peddles and shafts were all equal. They took me to see other weavers' looms including wide bed sheet looms and *dhurrie* looms, and one of just a couple of narrow hand-throw shuttle looms in Bhujodi. This *hath saar* was being used to make traditional sheep wool *dhabla* for a small local market. The *kharad* (Sindhi word for carpet) loom is even more 'primitive' than the hand-throw shuttle pit looms, using just several tree branches attached to the ground with rope and pegs to make it easily portable. It is possible that the limits to this very old loom is the reason that *kharad* weavers have been less able than the shawl weavers to keep up with contemporary markets, although they may also have received less attention from development initiatives.

### **5.5 Pre-Loom processes**

The most time-consuming and important parts of the weaving process wherever it is practiced, happen before the weaver even sits at his loom. The first four processes outlined here are not traditionally done by the weavers but by Rabaris (who own the sheep) and Khattris (dyers), as mentioned in the previous chapter, and even today are only practiced on a small scale directly for the weavers. These practices have been revived for an increasing high-end urban and global market seeking products made completely by hand.

### 5.5.1 Sheep shearing

Sheep are sheared by Rabari men who traditionally exchanged this wool with the weavers for the cloth, along with dairy products and grains. The Khatroda community from Rajasthan, roving sheep shearers, also play an important role (Edwards, 2009, p. 23). There are two breeds of sheep in Kachchh, the Marwari and the Deesa which are shorn twice a year, in March and September. The sheep are identified by marks which attach them to their owner. The Rabari community we visited live in Padhar village, about seven kilometres further east of Bhujodi. They had been loaned land by the government who encourage them to settle to facilitate the building of factories in the region. The wool is usually sold to Deesa in northern Gujarat, Rajkot in Saurashtra, Bikaner and Barmer in Rajasthan where there are spinning factories. The fleece of one sheep weighs around 200 grams and will sell for between 25 and 50 rupees. After spinning the yarn weighs less, around 120 to 130 grams (minus the smaller hairs that can't be spun and traces of dirt).<sup>82</sup>



Figure 40. Sujabhai Rabari shearing a sheep, Padhar Village, August 2016. Photograph: Shradha Jain

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<sup>82</sup> Vishram Valji, S., 2016. Master weaver: Personal conversation with Ruth Clifford, Padhar village, 3 August.

### 5.5.2 Wool cleaning

Wool cleaning and spinning are traditionally done by Rabari women. Cleaning is done completely by hand without a carder and involves continuous separating of the fibres to smooth them out and remove dirt. Hand spinning in Kachchh has dramatically declined over the last few decades because it is not compatible with the large orders the weavers receive from urban clients. Before these clients came along a *dhablo*, *ludi* or any other woven item of clothing was woven only when required. Shamji is encouraging a revival of hand spinning in Kachchh and he employs a group of Rabari women to spin the *desi* wool for his *dhabla*, as well as the simpler adaptations of these which are very popular as throws in the western market.



Figure 41. Wool cleaning. Photograph: Shradha Jain

### 5.5.3 Spinning

Spinning is done immediately after the fibres have been cleaned and organised into piles. It is done on a Gandhian style wooden *charkha* which is operated by spinning a large wheel which is attached to the needle where the fibre is added. One hand pulls and twists the fibre while the other turns the wheel. In the past this would have been done on a simple drop spindle.



Figure 42. Hasuben spinning the sheep wool. Photograph: Shradha Jain

#### 5.5.4 Dyeing

The dyeing of yarn (before it is woven into cloth) is done by weavers themselves when just a plain colour is required. Certain products such as Rabari *dhabla* were always left the natural colour of the sheep wool. When a dyed pattern was required, an example being the Rabari *ludi* (veil) or *phulakiyun* (flowered veil) which are made distinct by red and black tie-dye or block-printed patterns (and embroidery), the Rabari client gave her preferred design to the Khatri Muslim community.<sup>83</sup> ‘Khatri’ translates to ‘one who applies colour to cloth’ and the community are engaged in block printing and *bandhani*. The Khatri women would tie the shawl in places which would resist the dye to create a pattern, and the Khatri men would then dye it. It was then ready to give to the Rabari woman who may embellish it with specific embroidery patterns to reflect her life stage. The combination of tie-dye and embroidery matched the property transfers of marriage (Edwards, 2009, p. 24). Colours such as lac for red and iron rust (or acacia leaves) for black were used for the *ludis*, Ahir and Rabari *adhvtos* and shoulder cloths, and the Ahir *dhabla*. When synthetic dyes were introduced they were used for the Ahir *dhabla* which traditionally use *panch rangi* (five colours).

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<sup>83</sup> The patterns reflected a particular stage of *ana*, the ritual visits made by the bride to her husband’s home. There are five patterns for the five *ana* (Edwards, 2009, p. 33).

Shamji's brother Dinesh began learning to dye with indigo fifteen years ago and has since been working on perfecting the process. Figure 43 shows him dyeing with synthetic indigo. The family use both synthetic and natural dyes, the former being cheaper and much quicker to process. Wool and silk yarns only need to be soaked for approximately fifteen minutes in acid dyes (it is not timed exactly), but if using natural dyes any yarn needs to be soaked for two to three hours. Acrylic is usually always purchased ready-dyed. Dinesh used no specific recipe and didn't measure out the dyes. He said: 'it's all practical, there's no theory involved'.<sup>84</sup> Regular practice leads to an embedded awareness of exactly how the solution should look, smell and even taste.



Figure 43. Dinesh Vishram Valji dyeing woollen yarns with acid dye. Photograph: Shradha Jain

The revival in interest in natural dyes over the last two decades has led to other weavers adopting them for value addition. SKV and KRV have provided the opportunity for Khatriis to share some of their dyeing knowledge with weavers and vice versa. In some instances, block printers have commissioned or collaborated with weavers to print on hand-woven cloth.

Once the yarn is ready, or if beginning with mill-spun yarn, the processes of hank winding, preparing the warp, setting and starching together takes about one week. I could not gain a full sense of time during my apprenticeship as I wasn't weaving for production and was just preparing short warps. My teachers would also often step in to help speed up the process to ensure all the processes could be fit into the time period.

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<sup>84</sup> Vishram Valji, D., 2016. Weaver and dyer: Personal conversation with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 4 August.

### 5.5.5 Hank winding

The spun yarn is wound onto an *upro* (creel), from which the bobbin is wound or the warp counted.



Figure 44. Gopalbhai Siju winding the hank. Photograph: Shradha Jain

### 5.5.6 Preparing the warp

The average length of warp in Kachchh is 50 metres, which takes two days to measure out. This is done on an *adan* (warping board) which is similar to those used on a small scale by handloom weavers universally. Another way of measuring the warp is by a mill or drum which is used by weavers in Maheshwar.

The yarn is either fed onto the *adan* directly from a creel or from spools. Several spools and strands of yarns may be fed through at the same time. Instead of attaching the yarn by hand which could irritate the skin, the weavers use a wooden pole with a small pole attached at a right angle to one end which the yarn is wrapped around, and this works to feed the yarn across the pegs and helps to keep the yarn at an even tension. The number of pegs the yarn goes around depends on the warp length, and the number of times the yarn is wrapped around these pegs depends on the number of ends per inch.



Figure 45. A 38 metres long warp for the *bhediy*-inspired blue and orange throws. Photograph: Shradha Jain



Figure 46. Manuben counting the warp from a creel. Photograph: Shradha Jain

### Project Notes

**Technique:** Plain-weave

**Size:** width: 19 inches (48 cm – weavers work in both inches and centimeters)

**Warp:** cotton

**Weft:** various

**Reed:** 1 end per heddle and 2 ends per dent (*ghar*), except for border – 4 ends per *ghar* (for extra strength)

**Warp Sett** (the number of warp ends per cm, calculated from the reed dent size and the number of ends per dent): 13 ends per inch

**Weft Picks:** various

**Number of ends:**  $247 / 2 = 124$  (warp set at 2 ply to halve the time) (19 inches x thirteen *ghar* (ends)), + 10 yarns on either



Figure 47. Counting out 2 metres of warp

When I began the warping process, I was very slow and would easily get confused over which side of the peg I was passing the yarn, although after a while this became easier and I did get faster. Purushottam and Jenti watched and on the odd occasion Purushottam called out “no!” if I’d gone the wrong way. The use of the pole also enables sitting rather than standing and walking from side to side. I could sit in one position and would just have to reach from one side to the other. With the help of my teachers I completed the measurement of the warp in one day.

### 5.5.7 Setting

After the full length was prepared (just over 2 metres), I had to separate the yarns. This involved sitting on the ground with legs bent and threading a stick or pole through the lease (loop of passes) at the end of the warp, and another on the other side of the lease. These poles kept each equal set of yarns separate. I then positioned the first pole at the tops of my feet in the joint of my shin and foot, so that the tops of my feet were pressing into the pole, and the second pole further up away from me. The other end of the yarn was tied taught to a pillar. The yarns were in between both feet and I passed each one

from one foot to the next to separate them. This ensures that the yarns don't clump together when they go into the starch solution. This process required the flexibility of the body and joints and I would regularly become stiff and have to re-position myself, not being used to sitting and leaning over for a long stretch of time. This process showed the ways in which weaving really does involve the *whole* body and not just the hands and head.



Figure 48. Setting the warp

### 5.5.8 Starching

Starch is applied to the warp yarns to strengthen them and help them to stay in place when on the loom. Two handfuls of wheat flour were mixed with water then added to a pot of simmering water. Once the water had boiled, we let it cool and added it to a larger bowl of cold water. The water becoming clear is evident that all the yarn has absorbed the starch. Then the yarn was stretched out on a frame called the *paen*. The yarns are separated and flattened out, and poles are inserted into the gap between the two sections. Then a *kolori*, large brush is used to comb the yarn. Jenti showed me how to apply the brush vertically with a good amount of pressure, saying “it’s good exercise, gives you muscles!” The brush should be passed down the length of the warp about three times. After brushing, the yarns need to be separated again. Usually starching is done in the early

morning before the sun is fully up so there is time to separate the yarns before they dry too quickly. When this process is complete the yarn is removed from the *paen* by wrapping it around the two poles.



Figure 49. Spreading the starch evenly onto the warp using the *kolori* brush

### 5.5.9 Joining



Figure 50. Joining the new warp to the ends of the existing warp

4				x				x
3			x				x	
2		x				x		
1	x				x			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

Figure 51. Threading plan

The new warp is now ready to join onto the existing warp on the loom. When the loom does need to be threaded, the warp yarns are passed through the *rach* (heddle) depending on the threading/drafting plan. The *rach* in Kachchh is usually made with twine rather than steel which is used in other weaving centres. My threading plan was a straight draft.

I found the joining technique the most difficult. It involves twisting the two yarns together to make as smooth a join as possible. If knotted the yarns can't pass through the reed as easily. Ash is used to keep the fingers dry. I practiced using a few scrap yarns by wrapping one piece of yarn around my toe, stretching it out taught and adding the new yarn. Again, the body served as a useful tool. I discovered the extent of dexterity required for this process which I didn't have. For my teachers this was second nature, and, according to Rahul Jain, skilled weaver and founder of the only workshop in Banaras using the drawloom technique to weave complex-patterned fabrics, like all the processes involved in weaving, joining requires a 'sixth sense': 'You and I will *straaain* our eyes to find out that detail [...] [the weaver] joins 10,000 warp threads from one warp to the other. And he's talking at the same time. So it's not by sight.'<sup>85</sup>

#### 5.5.10 Bobbin winding

Traditionally in a family set-up, the bobbin winding would be done by the women of the family alongside other household chores. This enables the men to weave continuously without having to break to fill up the bobbins. Many weavers in conversation would use the warp and weft metaphor to describe the harmonious coordination of the women's and men's tasks and the importance of this in maintaining a smooth process.

<sup>85</sup> Jain, R., 2016. Textile historian, weaver and founder of ASHA workshop, Varanasi: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Delhi, 24 June.

‘A cloth is made when we have a good relationship and our desires and emotions match. When the whole family is involved, the cloth will come forth in the same fashion.’<sup>86</sup>

‘We manage our business over dinner – this is the time we all get together and discuss things. If we have a pressing order to start on, will discuss this, then the women also know about the order so that they can help.’<sup>87</sup>

For the large-scale production work that is done in Shamji’s workshop however, people work on designated tasks. Deepak usually winds the bobbins, takes care of other odd jobs and makes tea. Parbat and his wife take care of washing and ironing. With an increased income coming from successful business, Shamji can employ others and keep the women in the family free to take care of household chores, look after the children and tend to the cows.

Having regularly watched women winding bobbins on the doorstep or in the home, I had always presumed it would be easy, but when I tried it soon realised the opposite. The trick to bobbin winding is to achieve evenness on the spool. A bobbin winder is constructed almost exactly like a spinning wheel. A looped piece of chord is attached to the wheel at one end and the metal rod at the other end, which the spool is then attached to. As one hand winds the wheel, the other hand feeds the yarn onto the spool starting at one end of the spool and moving downwards, and then back up again. This is repeated until there is enough yarn on the spool, but not too much that it won’t fit into the shuttle.



Figure 52. Left: Practicing bobbin winding: Right: Deepak winding the bobbin

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<sup>86</sup> Vishram Valji, S., 2017. Master weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 5 August.

<sup>87</sup> Siju, P., 2016. Weaver-entrepreneur: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 15 January.

The process requires good coordination between both hands and eye to ensure the yarn is spreading evenly up and down the spool.

#### **5.5.11 Setting up the loom**

The majority of weavers in Kachchh build and maintain their own looms. According to Roy (2008), in early modern India having a good level of carpentry knowledge was something that had influence on the length of the weaver's career, and that this was part of the reason pit loom weaving has survived up until today. The looms are easily dismantled and constructed and can be adjusted to fit the person using it. Two identical wooden posts are built into the ground on either side of the pit. Each post has another wooden post joined at the top at a right angle with a diagonal wooden post underneath forming a triangle. To the top of each of these horizontal wooden pieces the *pankha* (sley) is attached. The *pankha* translates to 'fan' and is the swinging frame which houses the reed at the bottom and beats the cloth. There are also two smaller posts at either side of the pit on the other side which the warp beam is attached to. The *tor* (cloth beam) is a rectangular prism shape and has a narrow groove running along it where the metal pole which is threaded to one end of the warp sits inside. A *trufani*, steel pole is attached at one end which is used to rotate the *tor* when the warp needs to be wound on. The final permanent piece is the *Ganesh*, the post which the rope that holds the warp is attached to. The *rach* are attached with string to the top of the wooden posts and to the pedals which lie in the pit. Everything is carefully measured so it is evenly balanced.

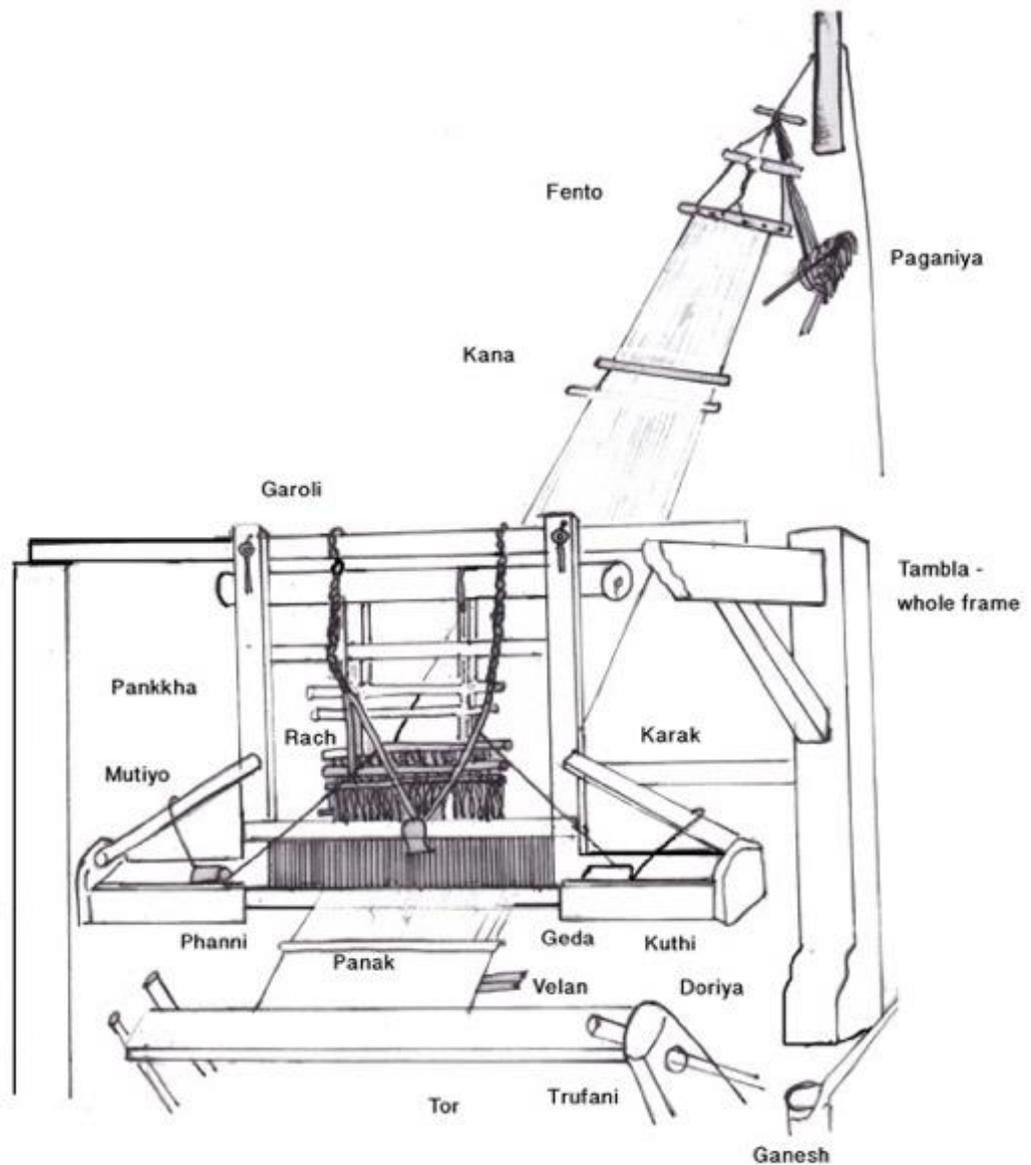


Figure 53. Front view (not-to-scale) of the loom with labelled parts

Drawing the loom which Rajesh encouraged me to do, provided an alternative three-dimensional way of engendering the technique, to writing. It was important to understand the technology for two reasons. Firstly, understanding the tools and technology used in the techniques helped to fully understand the whole process. As Lemonnier paraphrasing Conklin (1982) emphasises, ‘the reason then that the study of technology is important for this research is that, technologies are the “material expression of cultural activity”’ (Lemonnier, 1992, p. 3). Mauss makes a similar point in his *Techniques of the Body*, arguing

that ‘technology – the study of techniques – is integral to the social sciences as a whole’ (Schlanger, 2006, p. 3).

Secondly, understanding the technology along with the decisions to update or maintain technologies, helped to understand its impact on the design process, innovation and knowledge transfer within the weaving communities. The pit loom today is largely the same as it has been at least since the 1960s when the fly shuttle was introduced, the only implement adopted by most weavers in Bhujodi, although there are frame looms in use sporadically across Kachchhi villages. Lemonnier (*ibid*, p. 82) referencing Leroi-Gourhan suggests that choosing to adopt a particular technology ‘depends on its coherence with the internal milieu’. I demonstrate in chapter 6 how new technologies introduced in Maheshwar affect both the individual’s skill and the division of labour in the whole process. To understand the impact of technologies on skill, division of labour and productivity, it is useful to refer to Leroi-Gourhan’s five stages of continuum (Ingold, 2000, p. 301). This is based on degrees of dependence, from complete reliance on the human body to the opposite, complete reliance on technology. Bhujodi weaving lies roughly between the second and third stages. The second stage involves ‘the hand exerting an indirect motor function, by moving the tool in its grasp’. The third stage involves ‘applying force to a device, such as a spring, crank, lever or pulley cable, that in turn moves the tool’ (*ibid*). The reason the Kachchh weavers’ reliance on the tool or machine lies in between these stages is that they combine pulling the pulley which carries the shuttle across the cloth, with inserting patterns using only the hand, or with wooden slats to create extra patterning, as I show in more detail below. The latter could be compared to the potter’s operation of his wheel, in that he utilises his feet to operate his machine while he ‘coordinates manual, visual and tactile functions’ (Ingold, 2000) in shaping the pot. Weavers shape the patterns on the loom with their hands, mind and vision, while utilising their feet to move the peddles. In Kachchh, particularly Bhujodi, by maintaining traditional technologies they can maintain a harmonious familial division of labour and avoid any potential deskilling by more ‘efficient’ technologies (although shifts from family labour have started to happen more recently, as I show in chapter 8, section 6).

### 5.5.12 Blessing the Loom

Religion and worship are important parts of many weaving traditions,<sup>88</sup> and for Kachchh weavers who are Hindu, religious devotion was evident throughout my apprenticeship. Further, Vankars and Rabaris are known for their piety, which gives them status and moral standing in the community. Before I started weaving, we performed a *puja* (prayer) to bless the loom. This *puja* is dedicated to Lord Ganesh, the name also given to the sturdy post that holds the warp in place and keeps the tension. *Aarti* is performed with lit ghee and offerings of rice and *ladoo* are placed beside Ganesh. At the start of my warp several other weavers and neighbours came by to join in the ceremony. The *puja* is done to pray for protection while weaving and that it will work out well. Weaving work was accompanied by *bhajans* (devotional songs) as well as Bollywood songs, or the TV would be on the prayer channel showing live preaching by a respected *pandit*. Visiting the temple is an important activity in the daily routine, and most family households have shrines dedicated to different gods or goddesses, including their community goddess or *Mataji*.



Figure 54: Left: Ghee fire puja. Right: Ganesh shrine in the weaving workshop

## 5.6 On Loom Processes

### 5.6.1 Weaving

Immediately when I started weaving, I began to realise the extent of skill and bodily and mental engagement required. ‘Handloom’ doesn’t seem a sufficient term to describe the process because the engagement of the whole body, mind and senses, and the coordination of all of these, are crucial to weaving well. One weaver I interviewed,

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<sup>88</sup> The interconnection between weaving and worship is articulated in detail by Deepak Mehta of the Ansari weavers in Uttar Pradesh (Mehta, 1997).

Meghjibhai said: 'weaving is like yoga. It involves the whole body and mind. If all are not coordinating it doesn't work.'<sup>89</sup> Such coordination is commonly viewed to achieve effective results in skilful practices, as Pallasmaa articulates: 'for the sportsman, craftsman, magician and artist alike, the seamless and unconscious collaboration of the eye, hand and mind is crucial' (Pallasmaa, 2009, p. 82). Bunn made a similar observation in her study on Kyrgyz felt makers, adding the importance of the maker's environment too: 'skills of making are not properties of body or mind but of the whole person, indissolubly body and mind, human and environment' (Bunn, 2000, p. 347).

I started with simple plain-weave and wove the whole muffler using plain-weave to get the practice. This involved pushing the right two pedals while passing the shuttle from right to left, and at the same time as beating the weft yarn with the *pankha*, swapping feet so the left foot is pushing the left two pedals and then immediately passing the shuttle the other way, and repeating. If the pedals are not pushed hard enough, the shed is not wide enough to let the shuttle pass easily through and it can catch and break the warp threads. This happened often and gradually decreased the more practice I got. Jenti and Purushottam would join the broken yarn by twisting them back together, as described above (sometimes I would try but mostly fail). Sometimes a new warp thread had to be inserted. I was instructed to keep my right hand which was holding the *mutiya* (chord attached to the fly shuttle), close to the loom and left hand in the middle of the *pankha* (beater) and push the *pankha* as far back as possible so there was enough depth to pass the shuttle through. Then as I pulled the *pankha* to beat the cloth, I simultaneously swapped feet so that as I pushed the *pankha* back again I was ready to pass the shuttle across the opposite way. The initial pace was very slow as I worked out the coordination.

When weaving a simple weave at a fast pace the experienced weaver can seem almost as if he is dancing as his whole body bobs up and down to the rhythm of the shuttle clacking against the side of the loom. This dance is only achievable if the cloth is simple or plain in pattern. In Kachchh, pattern is achieved by manually lifting the warp threads (extra drafting or extra-weft), so the dance or rhythm is regularly interrupted by this action. But

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<sup>89</sup> Vankar, M., (2016). Master weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Rudramata village, 2 January.

to reach the level of body coordination required, a weaver will start by weaving plain cloth. The unevenness of the weave and several broken yarns in my completed plain-weave muffler, were evidence that I was far from achieving a coordinated, rhythmic dance.



Figure 55. Starting to weave

References to the body occurred often in my conversations with weavers: describing weaving as being good exercise, and sometimes in complaints that it gets physically strenuous and causes back pain. Furthermore, being in a good state of mind is key to weaving well, to ensure the weaver successfully coordinates the physical aspects with the mental. This further involves heightened use of senses, a good eye and sense of touch to check the tension is correct, the loom setting is even, and the colour, pattern and yarn are all working well together according to the design requirements. Kachchh weavers further express an emotional connection to the process, often expressed as putting their ‘heart into it’. For Kanjibhai in Kotay village, the coordination of the mind, heart and body is essential for weaving. ‘If we do a manual job, we get mental rest’,<sup>90</sup> but weaving is all-encompassing. Shamji said weavers ‘have to have the feeling for weaving - once they have

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<sup>90</sup> Vankar, K., 2016. Weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Kotay, 2 January.

the emotions, then it comes out'.<sup>91</sup>



Figure 56. Left: Cutting the stole off the loom. Right: The finished stole off the loom

### 5.6.2 Weave variations

With Rajesh as a teacher, I learned weft-faced weave which in local Kachchhi is called *chopera*, and twill (also called *chopera* in local language- I often got confused at the names of the weaves, but realised Kachchhi weavers may differentiate the weaves in a different way to the way we do in the west). After removing my muffler from the loom, I started on a new cotton warp set at the size of a stole with some extra warp for sampling. I soon discovered that a cotton warp was much more difficult to weave than an acrylic one, and I would regularly break yarns. I started a *pallu* (the term for the visible end of the sari, but also used to describe the two end borders of a stole or dupatta) of different coloured twill and *chopera* and then used white to weave a plain ground. I left spacing – *antri*, every few inches to practice both plain-weave and *antri* but also so that I could get the ground finished quickly. I had just got up to the start of the opposite *pallu* in the space of one day. Rajesh would call out the pedal numbers to push: '1 and 3', '2 and 4' and so on, and then instruct me using local terms, 'now one *naka*' (single pass of the shuttle back and forth across the cloth), or '4 *nakas*'. He could envisage the length to be woven by the number of *nakas* needed. I took a photograph, noted down measurements, colours and type of weave so I could mirror the patterns at the opposite end.

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<sup>91</sup> Vishram Valji, S., 2016. Master weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 5 August.



Figure 57. The second stole off the loom



Figure 58. *Pallu: chopera and twill*

Following completion of the stole, I did some sampling of various weaves with different yarns and colours. I then learnt *zari patla* (gold border) which has a similar pattern to twill but instead of alternating pedals 1 + 3, 2 + 3, 2 + 4 and 4 + 1, *zari* border involves pressing 3 pedals each time: 2, 3 + 4; 1, 2 + 4; 1, 3 + 4 and 1, 2 + 3 and to change direction this sequence is followed in reverse.

I also learned *lath*, which has a weft-faced texture created by leaving just one pedal up, (each pedal is lifted in order and then in reverse to change direction).

Weaving is traditionally finished at the end with *miri*, a braid made by plaiting several yarns together while the warp is still on the loom

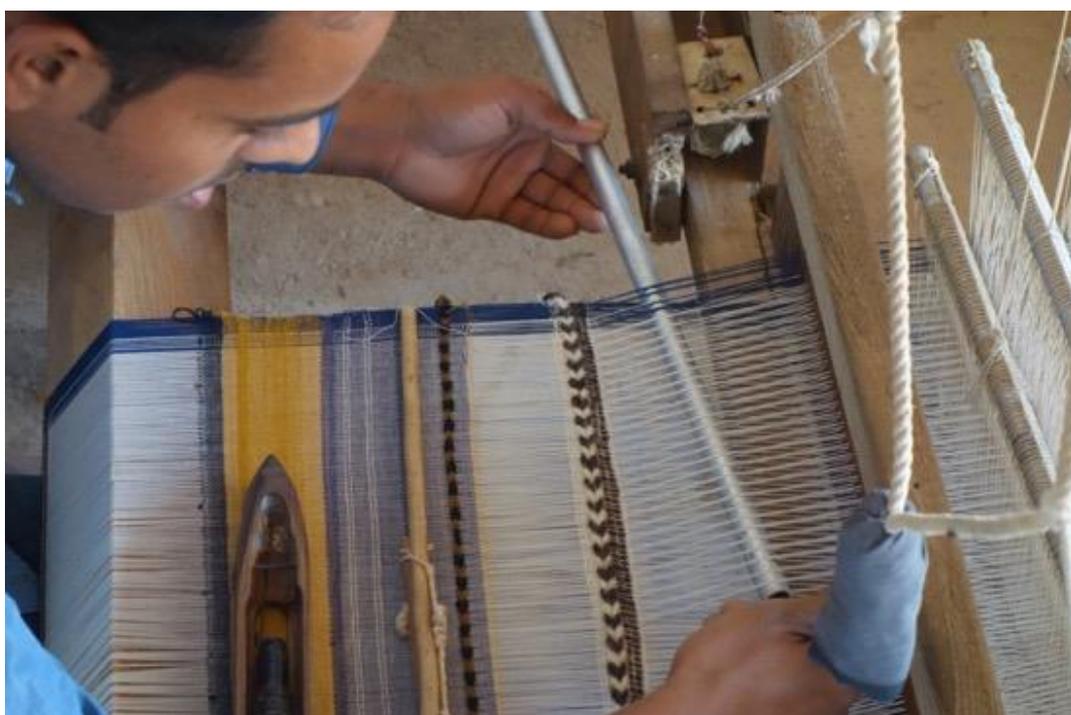


Figure 59. The first *miri* (black and white arrows) of the *dhablo* and practice *miri* (small black and brown arrows)

### 5.6.3 Drafting (Varach)

The final section of the course was spent weaving an 18-inch piece based on the traditional *dhablo* with help from Prakash Naran Vankar. The *dhablo* is made up of two parts stitched together but I wove a narrower stole version using the same cotton warp I had been previously working on, to save time adding a new warp, but also

because *desi* hand-spun sheep wool is more likely to be broken by the shuttle. I used hand-spun yarn for the weft, each *ghar* (dent) had four threads passed through and the weft yarn was 6 or 4-ply.

As the typical Kachchhi loom has just four pedals, to make extra patterning drafting is done manually by counting and lifting yarns and separating them with each finger and inserting a wooden flat piece of wood inside the gap.



Figure 60. Counting the warp yarns to insert the extra *vararch*

Once the wooden sticks are inserted, they are individually turned on their side to make the space in the warp yarns. This is done while sat at the loom. Each wooden slat is numbered, so for *lath*, the first pattern on the below image, number 1 is lifted, the shuttle is passed through one way (and another, and so on depending on how much of a gap you want between the stripes). Then number 2 is lifted and so on. For *popti* (butterfly), the sequence goes 1, 2, 3, 2, 1. For *char* wooden slat number 1 is lifted each time, which is called the



For continuous patterns going across the weft, such as the repeated diamond pattern *sathakhani* (seven steps) and the *vankiyo* (zig zag), weavers manually count the yarns to be lifted up while inserting the shuttle underneath these yarns by hand. This process is again in place of extra shafts (*rach*) and peddles. No lifting plans are used, instead Prakash would instruct: '4 up, 1 down', then '3 up, 2 down' while carefully observing and pointing out where I had missed yarns and miscounted. So *sathkhani* went like this:

1. 4 up, 1 down (right 2 pedals up)
2. 3 up, 2 down (left 2 pedals up)
3. 2 up 1 down, 1 up 1 down (right 2 pedals up)
4. 1 up, 1 down, 2 up 1 down, 2 up (left 2 pedals up)
5. repeat back the other way (right 2 pedals up)

*Vankiyo* follows the same lifting plan as *sathkhani*, minus the final step.

The *chomak* (four-pointed lamp) is an individual motif which floats on the surface, so the warp yarns are lifted by hand. The *dhablo* has symmetrical even positioning of the *chomak* across the width of the *dhablo*, but in some more modern shawl designs, either *chomaks* or *dunglis* are scattered evenly over the body of the shawl. Some SKV graduates, after learning about the concepts of asymmetry on the Basic Design course, started to place motifs more randomly or unevenly across the stole or shawl. For my *chomaks* I took extra pieces of cut or wastage yarn. Then I picked the yarns with my fingers, in a similar way to the *sathkhani* and *vankiyo* but only 4 at most. The number of yarns to pick up reduced to form the triangular shape. In between each row of extra weft, I passed the ground colour yarn (white) one way with the shuttle, then changed pedals, inserted the individual extra weft yarns, passed the ground yarn the other way, changed pedals and so on.

*Sachikor* is the border edge pattern, a staggered triangular shape that comes out from each side selvedge. For this black and white *dhablo* design, the white yarn was passed through with the shuttle, and the black thread inserted by hand, looped round the white yarn which is then pulled to the desired length. This was done several times and the black pulled to different lengths each time to achieve the staggered effect.



Figure 63. Left: Hand inserting a *chomak* Right: *Sachikor*



Figure 64. Inserting extra weft *chomak*, Ramparvekra village

## 5.7 Post-loom processes

### 5.7.1 Finishing

Finishing is another task traditionally done by women. However, my male teachers taught me and I did some extra practice in the evening with Priyanka Kudecha, the daughter of Dayalal. There are several ways of finishing a stole, shawl, *dhablo* or any other handwoven textile, none of which require any additional tools. The main methods include separating the ends and tying a simple knot at the end nearest to the weave; separating sections and then separating them again in two, twisting them and knotting at the end; or adding extra

scrap pieces of yarn to the separated yarn strands to make thicker tassels.



Figure 65. Four variations of tassels

To make the complete *dhablo* out of two narrower pieces, a *machikanto* (herringbone) stitch is used to join the two pieces.



Figure 66. Left: Shamji's mother stitching the two pieces of *dhablo* together Right: My completed *dhablo*

### 5.7.2 Washing

Finally, the completed woven product is washed to remove the starch and regain the natural fabric feel.

### 5.8 Time out

In Shamji's workshop, weavers will have a break for tea at about 11 am for fifteen minutes, then lunch at 1 pm for an hour, then another tea break around 4 pm, before finishing for the day at 6 pm. During the tea breaks, weavers either catch up on village gossip or discuss weaving work. The same then occurs at the end of the day when weavers meet in the street with neighbours to share experiences and tips on business and weaving techniques. Alternatively, they might join a game of cricket or football in the open, shared space behind Shamji's workshop.



Figure 67. A game of cricket at sunset

## 5.9 Summary

I have attempted to describe the key processes involved in weaving a traditional Kachchhi product by focusing on my own process, with some insertions of observations of others. The process varies depending on the product (see appendix J for more examples). In presenting these processes I have attempted to show how weaving is deeply embedded in the social, familial and religious routines of the family and village, and therefore the end product can serve as language itself. Further, the weavers attending SKV may add even more aspects to this process as well as different yarns and techniques such as dyeing, which involves readdressing their traditional knowledge. SKV's curriculum stresses that 'tradition is more than technique' when encouraging students to 'innovate within traditions'. This suggests that by continuing to weave, the weavers inherently continue traditional techniques and technology, but the patterns and designs unique to Kachchh must also be part of the ongoing repertoire. The ways SKV students are combining traditional knowledge with things learnt at SKV will form the focus of chapter 7. First, I provide a description of the processes involved in weaving and learning to weave in Maheshwar.

# 6

## Learning to Weave: Maheshwar



Figure 68. Varsha weaving a *khadi* stole

## 6.1 Introduction

A considerable amount of promotional material about the Maheshwar handloom industry includes only information about the weaving of saris and the heritage of weaving for royalty under Ahilyabhai's patronage. But the town's and surrounding region's history involves the weaving of everyday cloth for local clients too, which I discussed in chapter 4. Today, products (particularly saris) are woven only for urban middle-class markets and there is scarce information on lower-end markets for plain cloth weaving. Thus, this chapter relies on the process according to the weaving of saris, which presently are mostly woven in silk and cotton, but in the past were either woven in pure silk or pure cotton. I also discuss weaving the yarn introduced by WomenWeave, *naya khadi* (Goldsmith, 2014), which incongruously is likely to resemble cloth woven for everyday markets in the past, but now sells as a high-end product to fashion markets in India and abroad. The appeal for 'rustic' cloth is also demonstrated in the popularity of the 'revived' hand-spun Kachchhi *desi* sheep wool throws within a western market, which I discuss in chapter 8.

A long history of royal and state government patronage has meant that weaving has been significantly impacted by, or has depended on, the interventions of these patrons. For the many hereditary weavers in Maheshwar, the process of learning is similar to the way Kachchh weavers learn, evidenced in interviews with weavers and observation in family homes. However, many newcomers to weaving learn in government training centres (distinct to The Handloom School which provides design and business education only to traditional or trained weavers), and many women in particular have started learning at an older age. According to a survey done by WomenWeave of 943 people (see appendix E), 67 per cent had learnt weaving from their family, suggesting weaving had been in these weavers' families for at least one generation, 21 per cent have attended government training, 4 per cent have learnt from a master weaver, 3 percent from Rehwa society, 3 per cent from a friend, and 2 percent from Gudi Mudi. I will discuss such learning before going onto outlining the processes involved in Maheshwar weaving.

This section draws upon observation, film documentation, interviews and previous studies of the industry to outline the processes, techniques and technology involved in

Maheshwari weaving. I did not undertake an apprenticeship in Maheshwar but tried weaving on a few different looms to understand the feel of metal and wooden frame looms in comparison to the pit loom, as well as the different yarns. However, having learnt in Kachchh helped me to understand the process in more detail and understand what I was looking at, as well as to notice differences in the technology.

## **6.2 Teaching for development, learning for better employment**

At the time of the study by Dubey and Jain in 1961 (p. 6-61) 87.3 per cent of weavers in Maheshwar learnt the skill within the family, and the number of those trained in the government demonstration (training) centre,<sup>92</sup> was 9.7 per cent. Not all the students after completing the training would continue with weaving. In 1961-62 out of only ten taking up training, seven continued weaving and three found other jobs. In 1962 – 63, out of eight trainees, three specialised in sari weaving while two specialised in weaving *pagri* cloth (Dubey and Jain suggest the training is specifically geared towards sari weaving), one became a tailor, one a bus cleaner, and one had moved to Indore for marriage (ibid). The low numbers of entrants to the training course and the low percentage continuing weaving as an occupation, appear to mirror the low success rates of the colonial technical schools, which McGowan (2009) put down to traditional artisans rejecting formal learning, preferring to learn the traditional way in the home. Today the number of entrants to the subsidised government training courses has increased (21 per cent). The main course provided at Maheshwar is the one run by Hastshilp Evam Hathkargha Vikas Nagam (HSVN), an umbrella government organisation for handlooms and handicrafts across Madhya Pradesh. It is presumed this is the same centre or took over the centre that Dubey and Jain mention was in action at the time of their study, because the location is the same (see map, figure 9). Attendees are provided with a small stipend for the four-month course, which was reduced from six months and nine months before that,<sup>93</sup> despite it attracting increasing numbers of women in recent years. With the flourishing of the industry,

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<sup>92</sup> See chapter 4, section 4.2.1 for a discussion on government interventions in handloom in Maheshwar. The current government training centre is distinct from The Handloom School, Rehwa and WomenWeave. Prior to independence the royal rulers (Ahilyabhai Holkar being the most revered) took charge of the industry and its development. With independence, princely states were dissolved and the central and state governments took hold of internal political affairs.

<sup>93</sup> Om Prakash, 2016. Director, HSVN: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Maheshwar, 23 July.

weaving has provided a more dignified, remunerative and comfortable alternative to low-paid agricultural occupations in Maheshwar and from villages and towns within up to a thirty-kilometre radius. Furthermore, the occupation of weaving is considered 'cleaner' than agriculture and therefore brings a higher status.

Students don't learn every aspect of the process, only bobbing filling, weaving and threading the loom. They don't learn warping or joining, but when they begin working for a master weaver, these tasks will be done centrally so having knowledge of them is not necessarily required. The separation of tasks and specialisation as the result of increased industrialisation is discussed further in section 6.4. At the time of my visit the group of women students were three months into the course and all were weaving plain-weave, cotton checked towels with two shafts. They learn to weave in silk also, but the course does not go beyond the very basic techniques.



Figure 69. HSVN Training Centre

Giraja Vishvakarma was doing agricultural labour work before she was recommended to train in weaving by a friend so joined the six-month workshop at HSVN, after which she further developed her skills in a private workshop and then joined WomenWeave where she weaves with up to five shafts. Gudi Mudi pays her a better wage than the private workshop and she's been with them for approximately ten years. Giraja has a loom at

home too (subsidised by the government) but has little time to use it. She gets up at around 5 am to prepare the family's food for the day and take care of other domestic chores, before going to work at Gudi Mudi, and will again take care of cooking and domestic chores in the evening. Giraja's daughter, Varsha started learning weaving from her mother in 2009 when she would help Giraja on small tasks, and then in 2012 she attended the WomenWeave workshops. Varsha then got a job working for WomenWeave in quality control and finishing, and later took up some training in weaving with the Gudi Mudi Master Weaver managers Vijay and Satya Naryan, which she was also given a stipend for. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the types of cloth and designs woven at Gudi Mudi are dependent on the level of skill of each weaver. Varsha first learnt to make the loose plain-weave *naya khadi* checked stole which Gudi Mudi derived its name from (it translates to 'scrunched'). When the stole is worn the loose weave naturally 'scrunches' and the feel is soft against the skin. This involves weaving sections of relatively tight plain-weave by pushing the beater moderately firmly, followed by creating graduated textured stripes by carefully pushing the beater to leave a gap between the new weft thread and the previous weft threads (which is described in Kachchh as *antri*, mentioned in section 5.6.2). Varsha said she found the weaving easy, but the threading up the loom was a little difficult. After about ten days (from threading up the loom), Varsha had finished two neatly finished 'defect free' stoles and some samples on a single warp. When not weaving herself, she would help on other peoples' looms. Varsha aspires to do fashion designing but at present she is going between working for Gudi Mudi and teaching on the women's classes at The Handloom School (THS).



Figure 70. Weaving a checked towel at HSVN

### 6.3. Materials and technology

#### The Loom

In 1961 all looms were pit looms except for those in the government factory which were all frame looms with concrete structures for weavers to sit at (Dubey and Jain, 1965). This description fits the HSVN workshop today (see figure 69). Looms in the past were made of *shisham* wood, then at the time of the 1961 survey were made from *sagoun*, teak wood, but at the time of my fieldwork the majority were made with metal or a combination of wood and metal. All parts of the frame have holes running along them to allow for simple adjusting or dismantling by unscrewing and re-screwing. Rehwa still has many pit looms and most homes in Malaharganj use pit looms, but the majority of weaving workshops in the town, the government training centre and WomenWeave all use frame looms. At the time of the survey (ibid), there were 103 *hath-ka-kam* (throw-shuttle) looms, and 97 *shuttle ka kam* (fly shuttle) looms. According to Dubey and Jain, the weavers who continued to use throw shuttle looms did so because they found them easier to use than the fly shuttle. However, today there are no throw shuttle looms in use.

The fly shuttle pit loom in Maheshwar is similar to the looms in Kachchh, although the newer metal frame looms that are most common in Maheshwar town have a few main differences. Some use the drop box with the fly shuttle sley. The dropbox was invented by

Robert Kay, the son of John Kay who invented the fly shuttle, and allows for the use of multiple flying shuttles (in different yarn types or colours) interchangeably, by moving a lever which is attached to the *peti*, shuttle box. At the time of Dubey and Jain's survey the drop box was hardly in use except for in the government centre, while during my fieldwork I noticed some looms had them attached and some did not. At THS most looms had them attached, and for many of the students it was their first time using the device.

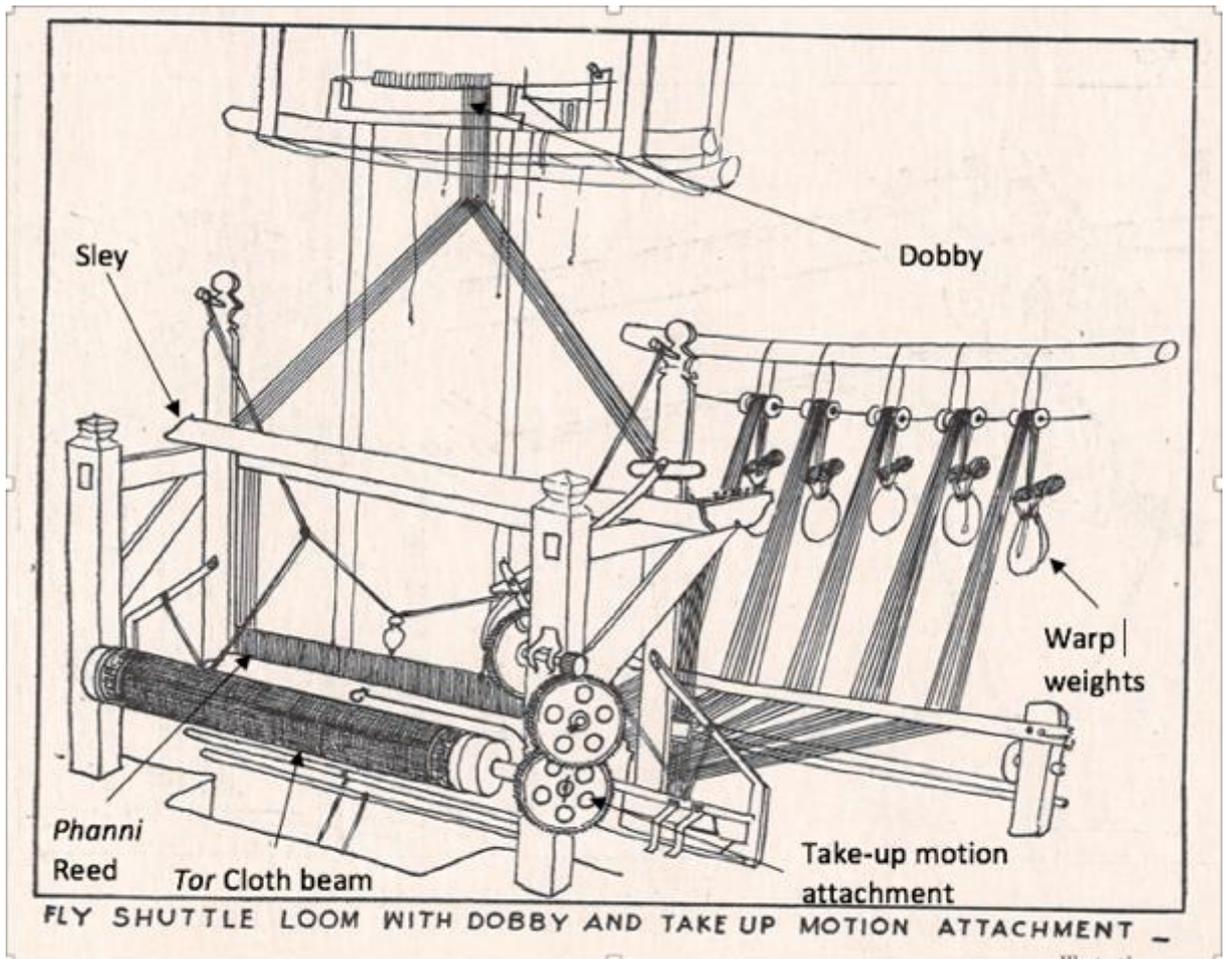


Figure 71. Diagram of a fly-shuttle pit loom (Dubey and Jain, 1965, with my own added labels)



Figure 72. Wooden and metal frame loom

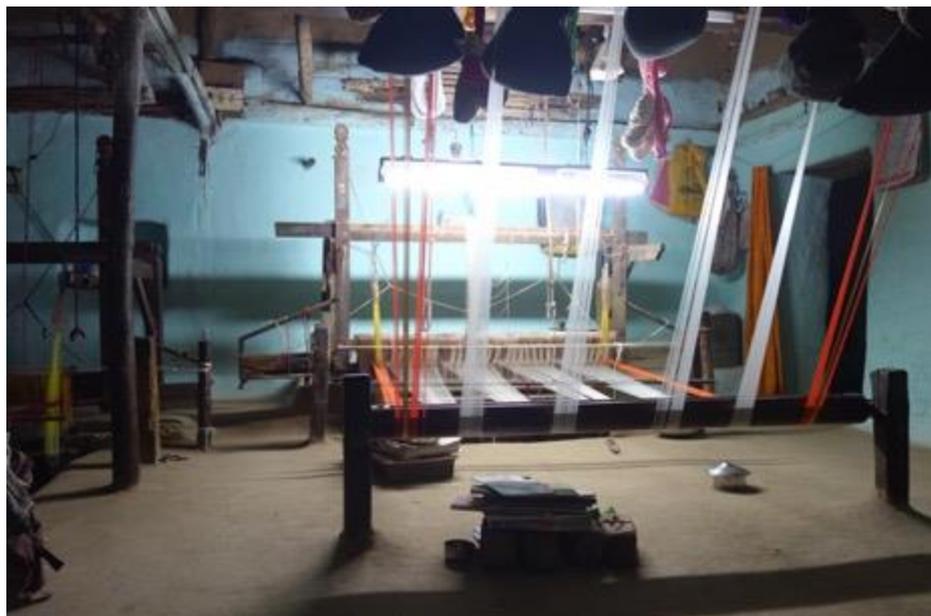


Figure 73. Wooden pit loom, Malaharganj

In Maheshwar the processes are rarely all done in the same home or family unit, largely due to the different technologies used, and because many weavers are not knowledgeable in all processes. A large workshop is likely to have a warping mill. Some weavers, such as Yogesh Ansari (figure 77), do warping for other workshops or families in the town. The introduction of new technologies results in increasing specialisation and division of labour across the *chaine operatoire*, the process that transformed manufacture in the industrial revolution. Whether this results in the weaver becoming merely an ‘animated tool’

(Frayling, 2011, p. 88), becoming alienated from the work,<sup>94</sup> is discussed further below in section 6.4.

## Yarn

The majority of weavers source their yarn ready (mill)-spun via local traders in the town who source cotton and silk from South India (predominantly Bangalore) or silk from China, and *zari* (metallic thread) from Surat. These are all common production centres of silk and cotton and provide the cheapest rates. Gudi Mudi source local raw cotton to meet their combined initiatives of 1) providing employment in spinning; 2) providing a yarn that is easier to weave for new entrants to weaving; and 3) promoting the use of locally sourced environmentally-friendly material. The raw organic cotton is sourced from bioRe Association in Khargone, which works with local farmers to cultivate organic cotton.<sup>95</sup> Thus, the distinct Gudi Mudi *khadi* embodies a new local identity.

## 6.4 Pre-loom processes

### 6.4.1 Dyeing

Yarn is supplied either ready-dyed or un-dyed. The latter will enable master weavers to work closely with local dyers to achieve the colours they need. Figure 74 shows the dyeing workshop of Kishore Bile, one of several master dyers in the town and the main dyer working for WomenWeave. He says dyeing is his traditional occupation, but he has also completed a six-month training course in Mumbai. He worked with Rehwa, which has its own dyeing unit, and his business has steadily increased with the increase in demand for Maheshwari saris. Kishore uses only synthetic dyes, reactive dyes for cotton and acid dyes

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<sup>94</sup> The increasing industrialisation of textiles which was the centre of the industrial revolution, has widely been used as an example of the impact of changing technologies on the division of labour and increased alienation of the worker and the fruits of his labour, the most notable of which is Marx's Capital. Esther Goody gives a concise account of the sequence of adaptation and invention of each process of textile production, in order that they would seamlessly fit together to create fast and efficient production (Goody, 1982).

<sup>95</sup> bioRe Association was set up in 2003 and is registered under the MP society Registration Act 1973. It is supported by bioRe in Switzerland, and also works as a 'social wing' to the textile industry, working with organic cotton farmers and training locals in spinning organic cotton on *ambar charkhas*. bioRe supplies organic cotton to Gudi Mudi. It also runs projects in education, health, environment, livelihood, research and promotion of organic agriculture. bioRe's handloom project Aavaran Handloom Society was registered as a separate society in 2009 (see: bioRe India, n.d. *About Us* [online] Available at: <http://www.bioreindia.com> [Accessed 5 May 2018]).

for silk. Before the early twentieth century dyes were made locally from *al* root and *kirmichi*<sup>96</sup> (Dubey and Jain, 1965), but as discussed in chapter 4 these were replaced by synthetic dyes in the 1920s.



Figure 74. Kishore Bile's dyeing workshop. Film stills: Chayan Sonane

#### 6.4.2 *Pajni* (sizing or starching)

A mixture of *jowar* (sorghum) flour and *til* (sesame) oil is applied to the yarn to strengthen and stiffen the yarn. According to Dubey and Jain, the women of the Gujarshali community traditionally specialise in this process. I would not often see street sizing done in Maheshwar but was told it is sometimes done early in the morning when the streets are quiet. There is less space in Maheshwar for street sizing than in Kachchh. One way that Dubey and Jain describe the process being done is 'hank sizing', in which the hank is simply stirred in a bucket of the mixture and 'thrashed so that the sizing mixture penetrates the hank' (p. 32).

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<sup>96</sup> Dubey and Jain don't give a translation of *kirmichi* in English, and I'm unsure exactly what it refers to. One e-commerce site selling '*kirmichi*' refers to it as a fruit producing a red colour: Indiamart, n.d *Kirmichi, Gunja red/white* [online] Available at: <https://www.indiamart.com/proddetail/kirmichi-gunja-red-white-7544102591.html> [Accessed 5 May 2018], while a Sindhi dictionary site, translates it to carmine, suggesting it is cochineal which traditionally produces the carmine colour: Sindhyat, n.d *Carmine* [online] Available at: <https://sindhyat.com/database/SindhiRomanDictionary/Kirmichi%20rang> [Accessed 5 May 2018].



Figure 75. Women on the rooftop of Gudi Mudi wrapping yarn that has just been starched. Film stills: Chayan Sonane

### 6.4.3 Kandi barna (winding)

Winding is the process that involves winding the hanked warp yarn onto bobbins. The hank is placed on a creel and a *charkha* is used to wind the bobbin. This job is usually done by women.

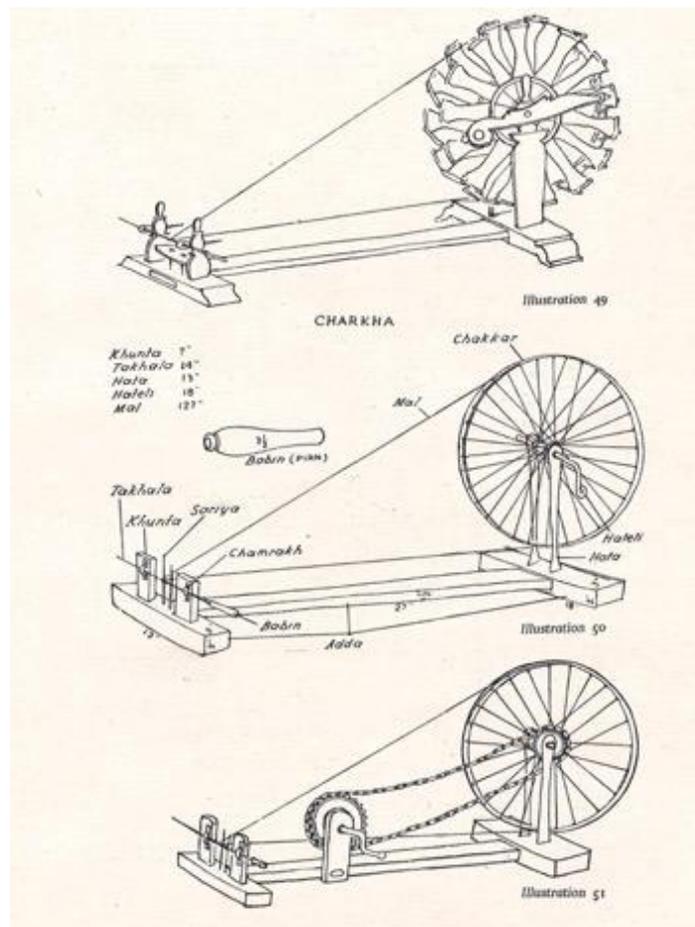


Figure 76. Illustration of the evolution of the bobbin winder from the traditional *charkha* to the adapted bicycle, the latter which increases bobbin winding speeds with the help of the chain (Dubey and Jain, 1965).

#### 6.4.4 *Tana banana* (lit. warp making)

Warping starts as soon as there is a sufficient number of bobbins ready. The average length of warp in Maheshwar is 50 to 55 metres which will make ten saris, with extra added to allow for wastage and shrinkage. Warping presently is almost always done on a drum in Maheshwar, while ‘primitive and antiquated street warping’ was done at least until the 1960s (Dubey and Jain, 1965, p. 33). This process involved creating a frame similar to the *paen* used in Kachchhi starching: two wooden sticks are inserted into the ground one crossing the other with a horizontal stick going across and pegged to the ground. The same structure is set up the warp’s length away. The warp is then passed between the two posts in between keeping them separate with lease rods.

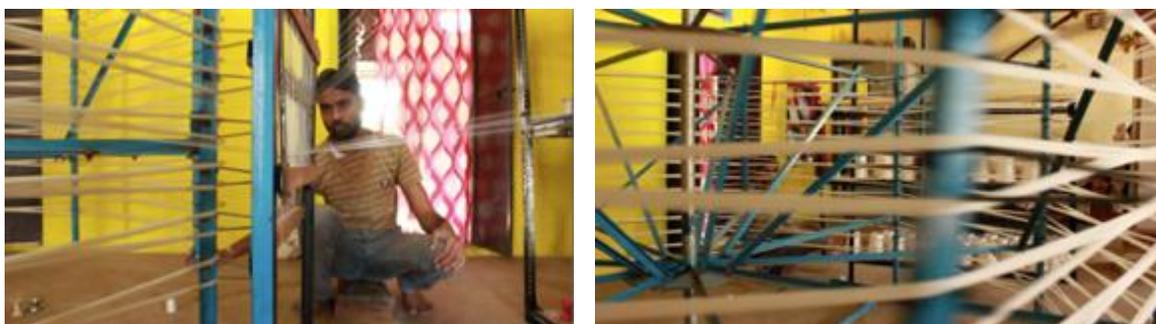


Figure 77. Yogesh measuring a warp on his drum. Film stills: Chayan Sonane



Figure 78. Bhim dada measuring a warp in Gudi Mudi. Film stills: Chayan Sonane

Bhim Dada, the man in charge of warping at Gudi Mudi will start his day by lighting incense sticks and offering flowers to the warping machine, to ensure that everything will go smoothly (WomenWeave, 2016).

#### 6.4.5 Beaming or weighting

Most looms in Maheshwar use the warp weighting system, which involves separating sections of the warp, gathering them in bundles, and tying a weight (usually sand bags but

in the past may have been pieces of stone or bronze as shown in chapter 1) to the end. Every so often these bundles need to be loosened to release more warp. In Kachchh the warp is usually stretched out and tied to a post both on pit and frame looms. But this method requires sufficient space which most workshops in Maheshwar don't have. The warper's beam was introduced by the government in the mid-twentieth century and is used in many government centres and workshops across India, but this was not adopted by most weavers in Maheshwar because of the extra space it takes up and the extra cost. Beaming could only be done if the warp had been measured on a drum warp, not the street warping method.



Figure 79. THS student Afril balancing warp weights. Film stills: Chayan Sonane

#### **6.4.6 *Rach bharna* (heald filling)**

This process involves threading the warp yarns through the *rach* (heald) according to the drafting plan. Once the *heald* is filled it lasts for several warps. The *rach* are either made with nylon or metal. I didn't see any *rach* being made in Maheshwar, but on a visit to Chanderi I passed a woman making one outside her house in the Nayapura area, the main centre for this activity along with *kanghi chedna* (reed making). After the *rach* is set, the *naka* threads are tied. The *naka* are used for making patterns needing extra drafting and are lifted using several wooden pointed blocks of wood which hang from the loom. Only one per cent of weavers in Maheshwar know heald filling. This is probably because most filled healds will last several warps and the task is not needed very often.



Figure 80. Making the *rach* (yellow), and *naka* (white), Chanderi



Figure 81. Loom with extra *naka* threads for extra drafting

#### **6.4.7 Tar Bharna (denting)**

Denting, the process of passing the warp threads through the *rach* and the reed, usually involves two people, one on either side of the reed. One person will separate the yarns and pass to the other who will catch the thread with a hooked tool and pull through the eye of the individual heddle and dent of the reed. According to WomenWeave's survey, 20 per cent of practicing weavers in Maheshwar know denting.



Figure 82. Varsha threading her loom

#### **6.4.8 Joining or 'tying'**

When a new warp uses the same drafting plan as the previous one, the two are joined. Like in Kachchh, the yarns are twisted together rather than knotted which requires speed and dexterity.



Figure 83. Joining the warp. Film still: Chayan Sonane

#### **6.4.9 The dobby**

The lattice dobby is a wooden mechanism attached to the top of the loom and used to create patterns in the border. The English term (a corruption of "draw boy" – the pre-mechanical process), is used by the weavers and it works in a similar way to the jacquard

mechanism. While the jacquard produces free-flowing curvilinear patterns by controlling every single yarn, the dobby mechanism controls only particular sets of threads to create geometric patterns. Patterns are graphed out and the empty squares on the graph paper correspond with the pegs (or lags) on a wooden chain of bars attached onto a rotating mechanism. The bars are attached to the border extra warp yarns, with strings which are weighted down underneath the warp. These strings in turn are attached to shafts so that the mechanism rotates at the same time the pedals are pressed and the weighted strings lift the selected extra border warp yarns. Therefore, with successive pushes of the pedal, the design is created. When one cycle of the mechanism finishes it starts at the beginning again. The patterns in Maheshwari dobby borders are usually repeated geometric patterns, and the extra warp yarns are often *jari* (metallic).

The dobby border is one of the distinctive features of a Maheshwari sari but at WomenWeave there are only a few dobby mechanisms and most looms produce plain or multi-treadle weaves. The survey produced by WomenWeave shows that, like tying there is a relatively low number of weavers that are skilled in dobby setting, 21 percent of 968 who took part in the survey.



Figure 84. Lattice dobby mechanism



Figure 85. View of the doobby strings attached to the extra warp yarns

### 6.5 Weaving

Once the warp has been attached to the front beam or cloth roller, the weaver will wind the beam so that the warp reaches the required tension. The weaver then inserts the bobbin into the shuttle and keeps beside him spare shuttles and extra bobbins in a bowl of water. Moistening the yarn keeps it smooth so it passes through the shed easily. Most looms in Maheshwar have just two shafts and two pedals for plain weave, and where there is extra patterning, usually for the *pallu*, the extra *rach (naka)* is added. Sometimes *butis* (small floral motifs) are created using the extra weft technique, hand inserting individual weft yarns to create individual motifs across the *pallu* (or sometimes the whole body) of the sari, in a similar process to the one used in Kachchh.



Figure 86. Hand inserting *butis*, The Mukhati workshop

I was told that there are few young people willing to work these more complicated techniques now. For this reason, it is more common to see the simple striped *pallus* with patterns only in the dobby border:

‘If we want a 25-metre warp, they should weave [...] if we want to change the design after every warp, they should [be able to], this kind of weaver is difficult to find [...] they can weave typical, (difficult) designs but they are trying to find easy work.’<sup>97</sup>

Furthermore, the WomenWeave survey shows that the majority of weavers who have under ten years’ experience, and who are aged between 20 and 30, do not know additional processes such as tying and dobby setting. This could suggest either that these processes are learnt later on, or that with increasing factory-like production (separation of tasks) to meet larger demands, weavers who know only weaving will only work in weaving to keep production going. Manish Pavar, a young weaver who attended THS in 2015, said he finds dobby setting difficult and usually leaves it to his father. It is possible that levels of

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<sup>97</sup> Ansari, A., 2016. Master weaver, FabCreation: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Maheshwar, 22 July.

skill and experience have coincided with the increasing demand for mid-range saris, for those who want handloom but can't afford the very finely detailed ones.

### 6.6 Technology and 'hand' loom weaving work

Another technology introduced by the government in the mid-twentieth century to improve efficiency was the take-up motion attachment, which today is widely used in Maheshwar.



Figure 87. Take-up motion attachment

The device shown in figure 87 and on the loom diagram in figure 71, helps to maintain the tension of the cloth. As the weaver pushes the sley to and fro, the gear wheels, which are attached to the sley rotate to withdraw the cloth at a constant rate to maintain an even tension throughout. Returning to Ingold's interpretation of Leroi-Gourhan's theory, this reliance on a mechanism to ensure increased certainty in the way the cloth will turn out, positions the use of the take-up motion attachment more firmly in the third stage of the

‘degrees of independence’. This stage involves the hand ‘exercising an indirect motor function, by applying force to a device such as a spring, crank, lever or pulley cable, that in turn moves the tool’ (Ingold, 2000, p. 301). This rotary motion is unachievable by the body, which can only achieve ‘reciprocating motions’ (ibid, p. 303, citing White, 1962), and was a significant device developed during the industrial revolution for increasing efficiency. While the Maheshwar loom relies more heavily on more ‘advanced’ technology than the Kachchh loom, both require the operator to continuously guide the motions and make ‘continual adjustments in response both to environmental perturbations and to his perceptual monitoring of the developing form’, while the fully automated machine is indifferent to its surroundings (Ingold, 2000, p. 301, citing Karl Marx). In this sense both processes continue to require human skill and human sensitivity, not just muscle power. However, the take-up motion wheel breaks the sensory connection between the weaver and the cloth and reduces the level of ‘exercise of skilled constraint [...] to feel or to respond to the work of the tool upon the material’. Does the addition of productivity-increasing technology therefore, decrease human skill? According to Fisher and Botticello (2016), it does not. They argue that industrial craft workers adopt new skills, ‘engaging with the vagaries of the machinery as part of their own rich practice’, expanding on Lemonnier’s observation that:

‘gestures and knowledge are adapted to the physical evolution of the material being worked; a change in tools usually involves a change in technological knowledge and gestures’ (Lemonnier, 1992, p. 8).

The label of ‘industrial craft workers’ by Botticello, seems to be an appropriate term, positioning the individual worker between artisan or ‘craftsperson’ and ‘labourer’ or ‘worker’ and therefore apt for the craftsperson turned machine operator. Fisher and Botticello’s argument, contrary to Marx’s reification, suggests that rather than workers becoming passive operators of machinery, their skills evolve along with the machinery. Skill is distributed across hand, mind, sight, material *and* machine, and so a good result relies on the harmonious coordination of all of these. Where technological implements are introduced, the role of the body perhaps becomes less, but it does not necessarily mean skill is less, if skill is considered to constitute know-how of the machinery.

This theory does not necessarily apply to those weavers who are less willing to weave the more time-consuming and hand-intensive processes such as extra-weft, because rather than use a separate implement to produce this technique, they are eliminating it all together. It is perhaps for this reason then that multi-treadle techniques are taught by THS, as a more efficient way of producing more complex patterns. ‘Multi-treadling’ involves adding extra shafts and extra treadles to the shafts operated by the feet. Rather than a change in the on-loom process therefore, multi-treadling requires a change in skill during the preparation – learning different drafting and denting plans. Additionally, when on the loom a different coordination of the feet is required depending on the pattern. Adopting the multi-treadle technique involves a move away from tradition for most Maheshwari weavers as well as many other students who are accustomed to weaving saris or plain fabrics



Figure 88. THS students Shahid and Dibya practising multi-treadling on different draft settings

A designer and weaver from NIFT in Delhi stays at THS for a week once every month to teach the students multi-treadling, and the permanent staff had to learn new techniques such as multi-treadling in order to support the students. Pralad Sharma who has been working with Sally since she began Rehwa, picked up multi-treadling easily, ‘just because of knowing weaving. Everything is new for me also, but I can learn easily because I’m

interested in weaving and working with WomenWeave'.<sup>98</sup> Before THS began operating, Bunty Goud another staff member, taught himself new techniques because there was nobody there to teach him. On the other hand, the weavers who are from traditional weaving families who have studied at THS have found it more difficult to apply the new multi-treadling techniques to their own or family business. This does not necessarily mean they don't have the knowledge, but that the investment (roughly INR 4000-5000) to adapt their loom to apply more peddles, when they have enough demand for saris only needing two peddles, means they comfortably continue weaving for that market. Ganga thinks that multi-treadling techniques are only compatible in a high-end market and for new products.<sup>99</sup> Many weavers who did continue to use multi-treadles did so on the looms in THS campus, dedicated for orders that were given via THS.

## **6.7 Summary**

I have shown in this section that learning to weave in Maheshwar has become a route to more sustainable livelihoods and therefore is more institutionalised than the informal learning done in hereditary weaving families. There are increasing numbers of women entering the occupation who demonstrate pride and enjoyment in their work, despite still upholding the traditional role expected of them in a predominantly patriarchal society, or they are single parents with heavy responsibilities. The last two batches at THS have been women's batches and both classes reached full capacity. Entrepreneurship and design opportunities for women are increasing and I discuss gender issues in handloom in chapter 9. While there are still more male weavers than female weavers in Maheshwar, women weavers demonstrate more keenness to learn and develop skills, which is likely due to having moved from much more laborious jobs, while many young men are losing interest in more skilled weaving work. The Handloom School aim to change this, and to provide more opportunities in handloom, and I have touched upon how teaching new techniques has been a way of enabling weavers to reach different markets. The following chapter will explore in more detail the experiences of weavers at THS.

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<sup>98</sup> Sharma, P., 2016. Unit-in-charge, The Handloom School: Interview with Ruth Clifford, THS campus, 25 July.

<sup>99</sup> Kanere, G., 2016. Weaver-entrepreneur: Personal Conversation on WhatsApp (voice call), 4 April 2017.

# 7

## Learning Design

### 7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I discussed the process of learning weaving which is an embodied and 'situated' activity, an intrinsic aspect of the weaver's habitus. In this chapter I examine the subjects taught and activities conducted at the two case study education institutes, SKV and THS and explore how weavers' experiences of design and business education inform, interact with, or are in conflict with, their embodied knowledge of weaving. The first section discusses the presence of 'design' (whether defined using this term or not), in the two handloom communities in this study, in the past and the present. I then discuss the impetus for a more 'formal' approach, to provide direction in design by the two education institutes which aim to focus on both the individual and collective identity of the weaver, his surroundings and environment.

The subsequent part of this chapter seeks to explore how artisan-designers develop an understanding of the market and the demands of potential clients. In *Distinction* (1985, p. 243) Bourdieu defines three forms of non-monetary capital: cultural, social and symbolic. This chapter considers the first two, in relation to the ways in which weavers accumulate cultural and social capital through new social networks and communities at the institute, and in spaces such as the urban gallery, high-end stores and the homes of craft buyers. The following chapter (specifically section 8.9) will focus on symbolic capital which can only be gained much further on in the weavers' career. Further, cultural capital constitutes three forms. Handloomed cloth and weaving knowledge constitute the first: embodied cultural capital. The knowledge gained in the design education institute forms both the second and third. These are institutionalised cultural capital: qualifications, and objectified cultural capital: cultural goods (books, instruments such as digital technology – see chapter 8) as well as the realisation or critiques of these theories. The proceeding sections therefore explore students' accumulation of both objectified and institutionalised capital throughout the duration of the design course.

Further on, I examine how the students, particularly at SKV, are encouraged to develop concepts by drawing on what they've learnt in the design and colour classes. This involves combining what inspires them from their own surroundings and lives with global fashion trends, supported by the experiences gained visiting a variety of urban spaces. And finally, I explore how collaboration or co-design both with other artisan-designers and 'urban' designers can bring together different types of knowledge and skills (capital) to reach a specific market, build social capital and challenge inequalities in knowledge and status. I end with a summary of the key findings of each section.

## **7.2 The presence of 'design' in the handloom weaving of Kachchh and Maheshwar**

When Kachchh weavers worked for the local market, they were the designers, producers and sellers of their product, even though design and production were considered inseparable. The move to larger, urban and foreign markets was the main factor that affected the change in roles, which occurred from the 1960s gradually across Kachchh, although there continues to be a small local market. Similarly, different parts of the weaving process were fragmented with increased industrialisation as discussed in chapters 5 and 6. Consequently, distinct roles such as designer and master weaver appeared in Kachchh. For the local market products were made for individual clients on a bespoke basis or would be produced as raw material for other artisans, such as the Khatri who would then dye it according to the clients' preferences. For the non-dyed products such as the *dhablo* and *khatho*, each client would have their own preferences within the Kachchh weaving repertoire and would buy directly from the weaver or family they knew they could trust and whose designs they could recognise.<sup>100</sup> Thus, Kachchh weavers have referred to their own surroundings, repository of ancestral pieces if available, and the preferences or trends of their local clients (the designs in the dyed products were mostly determined between the Khatri and the client). Through responding to these inspirations and changing demands, weavers continuously innovate or 'improvise' (Hallam and Ingold,

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<sup>100</sup> Vishram Valji, S., 2017. Master weaver: Personal Conversation with Ruth Clifford (via WhatsApp), 19 November.

2007) and problem solve (Marchand, 2016; Bunn, 2016) which contributes to their 'cultural capital'.

An urge to innovate and create new designs was evident during my interviews with 'job-weavers', who would say that ideas for designs came from their mind. They are likely to be influenced by their own experiences of being in the world and their perceptions of their environment (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Merleau-Ponty's theory of perception suggests that 'one's world, full of other objects, is a world of meanings posited by oneself through the interaction between the body and the world' (Hung, 2008, p. 361). The motifs and patterns in 'traditional' Kachchh weaving reference objects and scenes encountered in everyday life. The *chomak*, four-pointed lamp used in puja, and the *dhokla*, drum used in ceremonies are examples. These motifs have persisted throughout changing markets, distinguishing the weaving as distinctly Kachchhi. The motifs represent weavers' cultural knowledge that has been developed alongside the learning of weaving skills which, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, are absorbed in their environment and from skilled family members. The motifs and patterns weavers learn are informed and formed by the particular weaving technique. For example, in Kachchh the extra-weft technique is used to weave individual motifs such as the *chomak* and *dhokla*, which, as they are similar to embroidery on the loom can be improvised and extended into a variety of pictorial patterns, which will always maintain the distinct appearance of extra-weft patterning. Thus, the formation of patterns, symbols and designs and the learning of weaving skills are interlinked. I have mentioned that the learning of weaving skills also involves being socialised into the community. The selection of particular motifs, 'representations', is also part of the socialisation process as representations are selected to fit 'pre-existing, socially-approved schema' (Ingold, 2000, p. 159). According to Ingold, social anthropologists of perception believe that an individual's perception of their environment is influenced by the collective community, while cultural anthropologists (with Franz Boas at the helm), believe it to be psychological and individual (ibid). Throughout my analysis of Kachchhi and Maheshwari handloom design repertoire, the former appears more relevant. Several of the weavers I interviewed, both those who had been through the design institutes and those who had not, would extend the extra-weft technique to produce designs informed both by those that their parents and grandparents had woven, as well as

ones reflecting cultural and socio-political changes to their environment, or simply increased access to a wide range of visual resources through the internet, television and phones as well as through interaction with visitors (which I discuss in more detail in the following chapter). Weaver-designer Pachan, prior to undertaking the SKV course in 2015, showed me a narrative piece he had created to depict the damage being done to the environment in Kachchh due to factory pollution and road traffic. It included a road, ambulance, motorbike and smoke billowing out of factories, next to bare trees and drying-up rivers which people were desperately fetching water from. He had used the *panchko* (five-paisa coin) motif and cut it in half and placed one inverted half-*panchko* on top of another for the body of a person, the *dhokla* for water carriers, and *lath* to mark the edge of the road. He had used simpler plain-weave extra-weft for the trees and smoke coming out the factory. According to Frater, this adaptation of motifs to suit the time occurs in Rabari embroidery too, noting that the '*haathi* (elephant), a historical motif' was 'no longer culturally relevant so became a *kabaat* (a cupboard), a symbol of settlement and prosperity' (Frater, 2002). In Maheshwar, patterns are inspired by the Narmada river and fort, permanent features of the Maheshwari landscape and the weavers' surroundings. The geometric nature of these patterns makes them easily transferrable to the dobby technique in the borders. Like Kachchh weaving then, the techniques also, to a large extent have led the direction of designs. Because The Handloom School also teaches weaving techniques (and focuses less on the dobby technique), there is more opportunity to move away from these traditional aesthetic boundaries. Moreover, weavers are also inspired by the wider urban and global habituses which they are becoming more easily connected to virtually and physically, via increase in economic and social capital, as I discuss in more detail in section 7.5.

The knowledge of technology and material can also inform the design process, as articulated by Rajesh Vishram Valji: 'I don't draw designs, just start on the loom. I know 60-70 percent how it will look. I know by the yarn type how the shawl will turn out.'<sup>101</sup> Thus, materials too can inform design ideas, by giving 'shape to the forms of thought' (Ingold, 2010, p. 95). Knowing is not only situated in action and one's embodied skills but also

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<sup>101</sup> Vishram Valji, R., 2016. Weaver-designer: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 16 January.

embodied 'pre-knowledge' of materials (Groth, 2016, p. 4). Thus, an interaction with the made-world as well as the natural world are sources for inspiration.

Unlike the industrialised silk weaving regions of Banaras and Spitalfields, for example, there was no historic role of 'designer' in either Kachchh or Maheshwar. The position and process of design in Maheshwar is different to both Banaras and Kachchh. There is no specific role of designer, yet it has historically had a more distinct labour division than Kachchh. The main market for Maheshwari saris, in comparison to that of the Kachchh weavers, was more distant and disconnected, geographically and socially. As I have mentioned, Maheshwar's production was likely to have been organised in the *karkhanas* where several weavers work under a master weaver and designs were dictated by the ruler themselves, the merchant or master weaver.

Like Chanderi, the similar-sized weaving town in northern Madhya Pradesh, Maheshwar traders or those closest to the market often double up as designers but there is no formal apprenticeship process like there is for *naqshabands* (pattern-makers) in Banaras (Basole, 2014, p. 160). However, the main difference between the two towns is that in Chanderi designs are purchased from the trader/designer, while in Maheshwar design is part of the master weaver's or trader's role. These roles can be either distinct or can overlap, but there is no specified role of designer as such. Arjun Chauhan, a trader and master-weaver interviewed for this research, owns a shop selling directly to customers, wholesale to other shops and he also manages a large number of weavers. Therefore, he can develop designs based on what he can see is selling well in the shop or what shop owners or traders from other cities are requesting. Chauhan can also subcontract to other master weavers such as Ganga Kanere and Yogesh Ansari, who both manage a small number of weavers themselves. For these weavers, the task of design is dependent on getting time and space in-between business and other management tasks.

Nevertheless, as in any large industry, to stay competitive there is continuous demand for new designs. The phrase 'show me something new' is regularly uttered by traders and shop owners keen to stay competitive in the handloom markets in Banaras (Basole, 2014, p. 178), and amongst the Jamdani weavers of Andhra Pradesh (Mamidipudi, 2016), as well as in Kachchh and Maheshwar. Dheeraj Chippa, a master block printing artisan in Bagru,

Rajasthan said, ‘when we have the pressure of creating new designs, we just automatically do’.<sup>102</sup> In Kachchh, with increasing demands on production, a system more akin to the division of labour in Banaras can occur. Further, as soon as a product is made for commercial purposes, some of the designer’s own individuality and preferences must be compromised for the sake of meeting others’ needs. How graduates are managing these two challenges will be discussed over this and the following chapter.

Chaganlal Vankar, a successful master weaver in Sarli village in Kachchh, has never undertaken design education but instead gets ideas for new designs by attending exhibitions, his main selling platform where he responds to clients’ feedback and requests and sees inspiration in other weavers’ work, including that of his own *kharigars*. The collection of pieces he showed me included a mixture of typical ‘Kachchhi’ designs, some that incorporated tie-dye by local Khatriis (a popular current trend across the region that was started by two previous KRV students), and some simple, plain, single or multi-colour dyed scarves that didn’t include any typical traits of Kachchh weaving. It is this kind of improvisation that Frater described as ‘flailing in the dark’,<sup>103</sup> which she thought was inefficient, not cost-effective and something learning design could help to avoid. One graduate of the 2015 SKV batch, Poonam Vankar said ‘I created new designs before, but SKV provided proper direction.’<sup>104</sup>

### **7.3 Providing direction**

The teaching at both SKV and THS aims to be sensitive to the ways in which artisans are used to learning. Classes are planned with this in mind, encouraging as much activity as possible through a ‘learning by doing’ approach. Classes are also designed to directly relate to students’ existing craft knowledge. Interviews with faculty, directors and curriculum developers at both institutes suggested a common philosophy that the focus of education should be on allowing space and providing the tools for students to learn and be curious. Design faculty member Neelima Rao expressed that she and the rest of the advisory board,

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<sup>102</sup> Chippa, D., 2016. Master block printer: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bagru village, Rajasthan, 26 August.

<sup>103</sup> Frater, J., 2016. SKV Founder-Director: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Adipur, Kachchh, 20 January.

<sup>104</sup> Vankar, P., 2016. Master-weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Mota Vanora village, Kachchh, 2 January.

with a view that THS students are ‘hands on guys’, ‘had to get it across to [the teachers that] it had to be a very lively and interactive process of teaching’.<sup>105</sup>

A wide range of studies on education and learning show that allowing space for students to find out things for themselves is the most effective approach in building capabilities and empowering students. Capability in design is defined by Kimbell and Stables (2008, p. 18), both as ‘the ability to pursue the task with imagination and rigour, and to draw it to a resolution that makes a difference/improves the made world’, as well as ‘being able to deal with uncertainty, knowing how and when to use particular knowledge and skills’. Educator and designer K B Jinan conducts projects with children and non-literate artisans in various parts of India, ‘not only studying their knowledge system but also the conditions that enabled the creation of knowledge formation and their world view’.<sup>106</sup>

One example given by Jinan to illustrate the importance of nurturing the natural intuitiveness of artisans, was in a project with the children of potters in Kerala. He gave them only lumps of clay, nothing else, and told them to refer to their surroundings to make things. The children created ‘beautiful things’ (ibid). Some had achieved perfect circles to create a pot, some had created pictorial designs by carving with their fingers into flat pieces of clay. This led Jinan to suggest the importance of engagement with the environment and practical learning to keep in touch with our innate senses (Shaha, 2014).

Within this approach, some students may be more confident and willing to explore and experiment than others. Some may seek more direction and parameters. Frater found the latter to be the case with a group of NID (National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad) students she led a workshop with when preparing the curriculum for KRV. After a visit to the Honeycomb gallery which has a large collection of traditional textiles from Kachchh, she conducted an activity:

‘I divided [the whole group] into 3 groups. I gave two groups a Xerox of a tree and to the first said these are the colours you can use, so decorate the tree with only these colours. [To] the second one I said you can decorate with any colours. [To] the third group I said go in the garden and sketch some trees. My assumption was that anyone can be creative. In

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<sup>105</sup> Rao, N., 2017. Designer and Entrepreneur: Skype Interview with Ruth Clifford, 15 January.

<sup>106</sup> Jinan, K.B., 2017. Designer and Social entrepreneur: Email conversation, 25 June.

fact, when they came back, the one who had sketched the trees were very animated, were discussing what they had done, how they had done it, what they saw. Nobody else was talking like that. But when we put up the work and discussed it, the first group said they thoroughly enjoyed it because within those limitations they could play. The second group said it was a bit stressful because they didn't know which colours to pick. The third group said they enjoyed it because they could be creative. But then the big learning curve for me was which of these collections do you like the best. Guess which one's they picked? They picked the first one! Because it looked like it was 'designed'. So that was learning for me, because not everyone necessarily wants to be creative, and some constraints are useful.<sup>107</sup>

Frater's experience suggests that, like learning the skill of weaving and Jinan's example above, play is an important part of the learning process and for allowing creativity and exploration. However, play and exploration on their own would not necessarily result in something that looked 'designed' to the viewer. Thus, the process of making it appear to be 'designed' involves equipping the designer with a set of parameters and tools – the design principles which I go onto discuss below.

The urban design students Frater led the workshop with are likely to perceive a visual pattern differently to the weavers in Kachchh and Maheshwar based on the different environments and culture they grow up surrounded by (as I discuss in the previous section). An NID student may be less likely to encounter a *dhokla* (drum) in everyday life, or it may have less meaning to them than to the Kachchhi weaver. In the aesthetics of Kachchhi crafts, such as weaving, block printing and embroidery, a full design is considered auspicious.<sup>108</sup> Bhujodi weaver Pachan Premji Siju (graduate of the 2015 SKV batch) 'always thought a full design had a good market', and was reluctant to take on the advice of his older brother Purushottam, who had attended KRV several years earlier, about new design ideas.<sup>109</sup> The traditional *dhabla*, particularly those for the Ahir community were always filled completely with pattern in bright colours. The first National Awards winners in Kachchh in the 1970s such as Vishram Valji Vankar, had filled up the cloth with pattern to present the complete Kachchhi pattern repertoire and the extent of their skill, excellence

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<sup>107</sup> Frater, J., 2016. SKV Founder-Director: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Adipur, 20 January.

<sup>108</sup> See Pandya (1998) for a detailed description of the cloths that 'fill up' *bunghas* in the Banni region, the embroidered motifs that fill the cloths, and their meanings.

<sup>109</sup> Siju, P., 2016. Weaver-designer: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, January.

in skill being one of the key criteria of the award (Ministry of Textiles, 2017). By 1993 when Meghji Vankar submitted a *dhablo* filled with patterns in bright colours (figure 89, left), his piece was rejected. Two years later he submitted a completely different piece for which he had used several subtle blue shades and a pale green on a cream background (figure 89, right). This piece won him the award. The yarn used was a much higher count than the one used by Vishram twenty years before, and so the designs were much finer.<sup>110</sup> Meghji had used the traditional *panchko* (5 paisa coin) motif and built it into a larger geometric motif combined with *chomaks* around the edges. Therefore, by this time the tastes of the National Award judges had changed, or perhaps they realised a need to appeal to a wider market and so were encouraging adaptations and innovations within traditional parameters.



Figure 89. Left: Meghji Vankars's rejected National Award piece submitted in 1993 Right: Meghji's winning National Award piece, 1995

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<sup>110</sup> Vankar, M. 2016. Master weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Rudramata village, 2 January.

Furthermore, the motifs in the design on the right are of varying sizes giving it more balance. Such heavy repetition of small elements as in the design on the left can become overwhelming to the eye. This is not to say there is not balance in traditional *dhabla* or other products. The *pagri* in figure 90 demonstrates balance in combining wide blocks of colour with stripes of detailed patterns. The *jharman* (drizzle or light rain) border of the *dhabla* which includes the *sachikor* overlapped with stripes of variegated shades of brown sheep wool in the warp, demonstrates carefully considered design. Furthermore, many weavers continue to create pieces ‘filled up’ with traditional motifs by way of owning a repository of motifs that they or their children can refer to in the future. Thus, in ‘traditional’ pieces, designs are not only thought out based on aesthetics (what looks ‘good’) but also based on cultural beliefs and a desire to demonstrate skill and the full repertoire of patterns. In the Basic Design and Colour classes, by learning the key principles of design and colour theory, SKV students’ perception of their traditional designs changes and they learn to intellectualise and verbalise what they can see in the design they produce. They are then able to apply this new language to what they have already learnt through embodied and situated learning. As Pachan Siju shared:

‘Now when I see all this, I know that this is regular rhythm. This is the texture. This is the placement. Now I know all these small elements [...] And like you are here, and I can clearly explain to you that these are the elements in this. This is design. I didn’t know all this at that time. I didn’t want to talk this way at that time.’<sup>111</sup>

According to Bourdieu, Pachan has built a ‘capacity to see’ which in turn enables him to acquire ‘cultural competence’ or cultural capital, which I discuss in more detail later in the chapter.

‘In a sense, one can say that the capacity to see (*voir*) is a function of the knowledge (*savoir*), or concepts, that is, the words, that are available to name visible things, and which are, as it were, programmes for perception. A work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence that is, the code, into which it is encoded’ (*ibid*, p. xv).

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<sup>111</sup> Siju, P., 2016. Weaver-designer: Film Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 1 August.



Figure 90. Cotton handloom *pagri* in the collection of Shamji Vishram Valji (presumed to be approximately 30 years old)



Figure 91. Contemporary replica of a traditional *dhablo* with thick *jharmer* vertical borders (both sides)



Figure 92. Left: Assymetrical stole Right: Pachan demonstrating his 'colour blanket'

#### **7.4 Re-engaging with the environment and 'sourcing from nature and heritage'**

While understanding concepts of design such as balance, symmetry and perspective, can aid direction in meeting market tastes, Josef Albers notes, 'no theory of composition by itself leads to the production of music, or of art' (Albers, 1963, p. 2). Confinement in concrete school buildings, digital technology, running a business or even job weaving, can separate an individual from her natural environment. Therefore, teachers at both SKV and THS encourage students to (re)-engage with their surroundings and at SKV, their traditional repertoire of designs for inspiration and reference. In the first two classes at SKV, Colour and Basic Design, students are encouraged to identify the design principles they learn about in their surroundings, for example 'rhythm in the rows of houses',<sup>112</sup> as well as to find inspiration from nature and heritage. While some students were unsure of the point of these initial courses as they were happening, many of the graduates

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<sup>112</sup> Goel, A., 2016. Designer, SKV faculty member: Skype Interview with Ruth Clifford, 4 February.

interviewed reflected that Basic Design was the most useful course. The main goal of Basic Design according to the curriculum is to 'enable artisans to look beyond technique to the bigger picture of aesthetics, including layout. This will prepare them to understand the difference between the artisan and consumer view' (Frater, 2014, p. 16). It also encourages the facilitation of students to explore their 'own world' before getting too concerned with what the market wants.

Regular SKV visiting faculty member, Lokesh Ghai noticed in students first attending the SKV course, a lack of ability or effort to 'see' the world around them, noting: 'a lot of the artisans have started to use the internet and don't recognise the value of what is around'.<sup>113</sup> He noted a similar experience while teaching at an urban institute too, where a student had picked the theme 'carnival' for her design brief, but rather than attending a carnival, referred to the way a well-known designer had explored the theme. For this reason, Ghai reminds his students 'to look at things around them [...] Like if the theme is "Rann of Kachchh", I would like my student to go to the rann and experience it, take his own photograph'. If the artisan visits, he or she can 'immerse themselves in it, experience it. So, it is about making them have that consciousness'.<sup>114</sup>

Neelima Rao noted the initial difficulty THS students experienced with the concept of inspiration. When the students were taken for a walk around the town and encouraged to take pictures on their new smart phones, 'they were like "why are we taking these pictures"', but we were able to go through the connections and make it clear why they were taking pictures and how [the images] could translate into their fabric'.<sup>115</sup> These efforts to encourage students to observe their environment concur with Hung's proposal for education based on a Merleau-Pontian-inspired education:

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<sup>113</sup> Ghai, L., 2018. Artist, SKV faculty member and governing council member: Skype Interview with Ruth Clifford, 14 February.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Rao, N., 2017. Designer and Entrepreneur: Skype Interview with Ruth Clifford, 15 January.

‘Education of the naive, which takes the trivia including the pieces and details of ordinary life as part of educating: the scent of new grass, a glimpse of the star deep in the night’ (Hung, 2008, p. 362).

Similarities can be found here too with Jinan’s approach to taking inspiration from the way children learn, by constant perception and curiosity, which gets suppressed by formal schooling focusing heavily on literacy and numeracy, the territory of the brain’s left hemisphere (Shaha, 2014). Design is said to involve both the right and left halves of the brain simultaneously (Goel, 2014; Kumar Vyas, 2000; Tovey, 1984).



Figure 93. Left: THS students taking pictures of patterns in the fort walls. Right: Examining collections of objects from the natural environment, KRV

Several SKV graduates expressed enthusiastically the way the Basic Design, Colour and Concept classes helped them to see things in nature and their surroundings that they didn't see before starting the classes. Murji Vankar said, 'If we have the eye to see the designs in nature, we have many designs'.<sup>116</sup> Pachan couldn't understand the point of these classes at first, saying: 'they gave us tasks, like go get some leaves and flowers from the garden and I would say "we are weavers, what use would it be for us?"'<sup>117</sup> but like Murji, he came to realise the possibilities nature provided:

'I realised that everything we put into weaving comes from nature [...] like the *dungri* motif that has been derived from the (*raja ka ghad*), King's palace, so even our ancestors were inspired by nature, so what we have been taught at SKV and KRV is to derive things from nature.'<sup>118</sup>

THS run dedicated classes on design theory but on a less structured basis, partly due to funding limitations and availability of faculty. However, the long duration of the course gives students space to experiment and being an all-weaver cohort, they learn many concepts directly on the loom. Further, both the weaving sessions and classroom sessions involve cross-disciplinary learning. For example, during weaving sessions weavers practice talking in English about what they are weaving to each other and to visitors, and collecting inspiration involves practicing photography and using smart technology for sharing and sending the images. Learning both through theory and through practice is useful for meeting the different skill levels and different learning types of students as well as maintaining an awareness of the relevance of the things being taught to handloom. According to Holkar, many weavers before beginning THS didn't know that 'mixing blue with red makes purple'.<sup>119</sup> Colour classes involve painting a colour wheel and matching shade cards with illustrations in magazines, activities led by designer and regular visiting faculty Rekha Bhatia. On a loom set up with a multi-coloured warp, students experiment

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<sup>116</sup> Vankar, M., 2016. Weaver-designer: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 22 August.

<sup>117</sup> Siju, P., 2016. Weaver-designer: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 1 August.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Holkar, S., 2016. THS Founder-Director: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Maheshwar, 9 July.

with interchanging multiple colour yarns in the weft. THS 2015 graduate, Arun Vankar<sup>120</sup> was fascinated by learning that different yarns could be used in the warp and weft, and the possibilities for both colour and textures that this provided.



Figure 94. Left: Colour mixing on the loom Right: Colour class with Rekha Bhatia, 2016



Figure 95. Arun Vankar showing his textured stole, August 2016

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<sup>120</sup> Vankar, A., 2016. Weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Rudramata village, Kachchh, 18 August.

In the stole he is showing in figure 95, Arun had also used triple ply yarn in the extra weft which he found 'made it more attractive'.<sup>121</sup> Thus, inspiration comes through experimentation with materials, colour and technique, as well as the environment. While, as at SKV, THS students learn basic design principles such as proportion, balance, layout and scale, technique is also incorporated into the 'Design' section of the curriculum. Fabric structures, yarn qualities and dyeing are taught. One of the techniques considered to make fabrics particularly suited to high-end fashion is multi-treadle weaving. Hrishikesh, a weaver and designer from Delhi, spends five days a month teaching different structures and how to use lifting plans, and Pralad Sharma, master weaver and Unit-in-Charge at THS, continues to help students with lifting plans in the meantime. My conversations with respected figures in the craft development field revealed criticisms of this approach for standardising designs and ignoring traditional local characteristics. This view is likely to be influenced by the common narrative in craft promotional literature, as well as the requirements of the Geographical Indication (GI) of a need to sustain certain local patterns and techniques. While this view can be problematic in terms of potentially fossilising 'tradition', weavers in Maheshwar and Kachchh express a pride in their own weaving heritage and a need to maintain the aspects that make it distinct to their community or region.

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid



Figure 96. Sample lengths ready to take to a Buyer-Seller Meet, August 2016

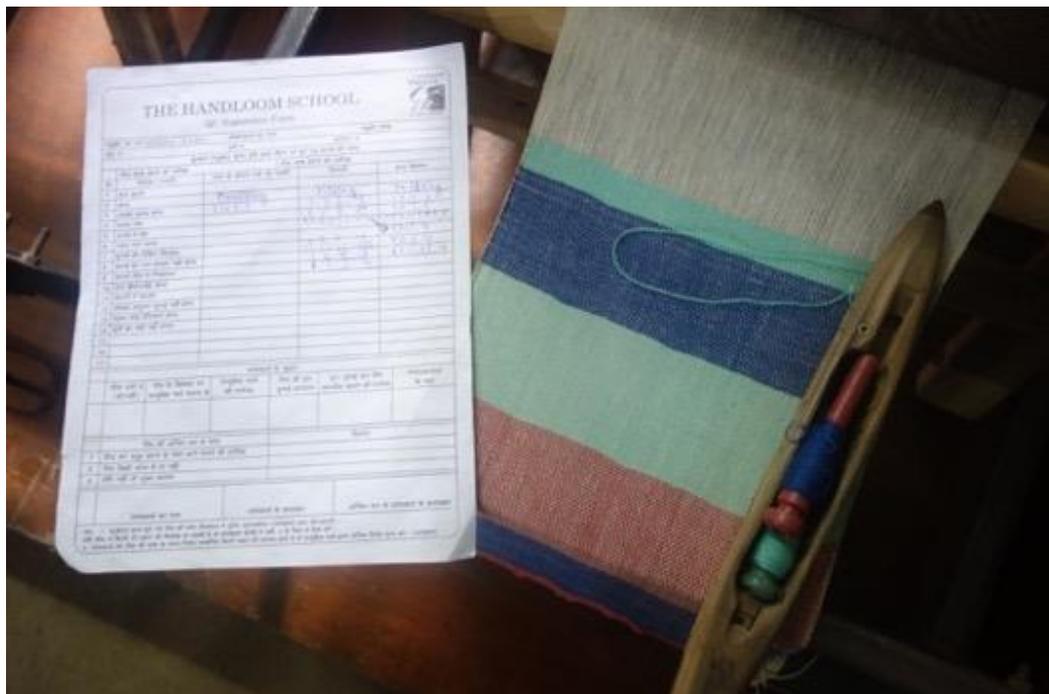


Figure 97. Experimenting with different lifting plans on a table loom

FabCreation is a collective of five weavers in Maheshwar who attended WomenWeave's pilot classes in 2013, prior to which, they had all graduated from degrees in commerce and engineering and were keen to get jobs in the city. But after completing the workshops they began to realise the potential in handloom, the popularity of Maheshwar as a handloom

'destination', and the benefits of maintaining the unique selling point (USP) of Maheshwari patterns. A conversation with one of the members, Asif revealed their reasons for this.<sup>122</sup>

Asif: 'now we are concentrating on traditional things. We go to the fort and try to capture the old designs and try to get them in the border.'

RC: 'Why is it important to maintain traditional elements?'

Asif: 'If a stranger picked a product from Maheshwar, how does he identify if it is Maheshwari or not?'

RC: 'How do you define 'real' or 'traditional' Maheshwari designs?'

Asif: 'Sometimes customers can get confused between Maheshwari and Chanderi because the materials are similar, but the main difference is the border. If we don't use the border, people will call it Chanderi.'

Other respondents showed me patterns such as the *kangra* (see figures 15 and 16 in chapter 4) considered distinctly Maheshwari (although this pattern does appear in Chanderi architecture too). Both Joheb Ansari, a class mate of the FabCreation group and Ganga also said the border was the most important element of a Maheshwari sari, but that 'in the body you could add new elements, different denting or colouring [...] so it gives a new look and new product for the customer, because they [have been] seeing traditional products since years and years'.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Ansari, A., 2016. Weaver-entrepreneur: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Maheshwar, 22 July.

<sup>123</sup> Kanere, G., Ansari, J., 2016. Weaver-entrepreneurs: Personal Conversation, Maheshwar, 22 July.



Figure 98. Joheb Ansari modelling one of his scarves

There is no specific teaching on cultural heritage and traditional patterns at THS. Students are encouraged to bring along examples of their work from home but having such a diversity of weavers does not allow for studying individual patterns, designs and their meanings, which is a key part of the SKV Basic Design class. Master artisans of each craft conduct sessions involving a sort of ‘show and tell’, talking students through old examples of their work. Most weavers I interviewed, both graduates of KRV and SKV in Kachchh, and weavers who hadn’t attended either institute, expressed the importance of maintaining motifs and patterns that are considered distinct to Kachchhi weaving:

‘[If the] Bhujodi motif is not included in our product, it has no value. Because these are our traditional motifs. Otherwise what is our USP?’<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Premji Vankar, C., 2016. Master weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 17 August.

'*Chomak* and all the other traditional motifs are our identity, and when we see people in other states wearing our shawl with the traditional motifs, we are very happy.'<sup>125</sup>

While upper-class craft revivalists and curators have been criticised for encouraging the preservation or revival of old motifs based on idealised views of the past (Maskiell, 1999; McKnight Sethi, 2013), both the makers and users of the craft products have an innate tendency to be nostalgic for the things that used to be. Designers draw upon the past as part of their lived experience while looking to the present and the future. Furthermore, the 'nostalgia' artisans feel for their traditional motifs is part of their strong sense of identity. According to Aspelund (2014, p. 205), who draws on Merleau Pontian theory, time is a key informant of the design process. The designer draws upon the past and present and anticipates the future which in turn informs the user experience. Including elements of past or existing designs ensures some familiarity so that the newness isn't overwhelming for the consumer. The designer however, challenges the viewer or consumer by adding something new or changing the combination of elements, which eventually becomes familiar and creates in the moment a lived experience of the design (ibid, p. 206). The product then becomes mnemonic through for example, its feel, motifs or colour combination, for both the designer and the user. Additionally, the experience of the different spaces or 'habituses', of the members of target markets, is important for the design process in ensuring their tastes are met.

### **7.5 Cultural capital and taste**

Despite a low social status attached to their manual occupation within the caste system, weavers' cultural capital acquired in their traditional habitus, attracts and influences the 'bourgeoisie' or higher classes. Weavers' own homes and villages receive increasing numbers of visitors seeking authentic cultural artefacts to demonstrate their own taste, cultural capital, knowledge of craft traditions and status, as well-travelled, cultivated and altruistic by supporting 'struggling' weavers. In turn, the valorisation of tradition, whether derived from 'mythical origins' (Baudrillard, 1968) or 'invented traditions' (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992), by this elite class inculcates or increases a sense of pride in the weaver.

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<sup>125</sup> Siju, P., 2016. Weaver-entrepreneur: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 15 January.

However, to build upon cultural capital gained in the traditional habitus, weavers must have awareness of the tastes and whims of the market, which may include desires for something ‘traditional’ or ‘modern’, nostalgic or avant-garde, luxurious or rustic, or indeed objects that intersect these styles.

Weavers who are less aware of such market tastes are less likely to be encouraged to continue the tradition of weaving or learn design. Amartya Sen (1999, p. 31) notes that while it has been argued that economic development can be harmful to a nation as it may lead to the elimination of its traditions and cultural heritage, opposing viewpoints present that, ‘it is better to be rich and happy than to be impoverished and traditional’. Buckley found that for weavers in Indonesia, ‘economic advantages from weaving are equally important to “maintenance of tradition” in motivating younger weavers to learn’ (Buckley, 2016). Indeed, like the handloom textiles of India, Indonesian ‘traditional’ textiles are valuable commodities in antique trade networks. The importance put on maintaining tradition versus focusing on economic benefits of craft varies from weaver to weaver in this study and is influenced by a variety of factors, including the family’s income and economic capital, contact with markets seeking ‘authentic’ or ‘traditional’ products, and whether they have attended either of the design institutes. At the centre of maintaining this balance though, is determining the position of the handloom product in the contemporary market.

### **7.6 Market Orientation: Circulating in new spaces**

While the initial courses at SKV encourage artisan students to take inspiration from their immediate surroundings and re-familiarise themselves with the designs in their own craft traditions, the third course Market Orientation involves the students developing an understanding of conceivable markets for their designs. If students are confused or unconvinced during the first two classes, the third class helps them to see the relevance of the design concepts they’ve learnt in a wider context. For artisans who have not attended design education as well as those who have, exhibitions are the most popular selling and marketing platform for their work.<sup>126</sup> They give artisan-students the opportunity to

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<sup>126</sup> ‘Exhibitions’ in the Indian craft context are largely commercially orientated and resemble European ‘trade fairs’ or ‘markets’, rather than displays of art works or products in the gallery or museum context.

experience first-hand the preferences of the market, to get ideas from other artisans and know their competition. Therefore, by attending exhibitions artisans are gaining some cultural capital through experience. Formal education can maximise this capital, because it involves a deeper insight into the lifestyles of the market they are targeting. Danji, a weaver in Sarli village said, 'I had been to many exhibitions, but KRV taught us something very different in marketing. Going to Ahmedabad was very useful'.<sup>127</sup>

While many weavers shortened the course title to 'marketing', it is named 'Market Orientation' with an aim to 'introduce the world beyond, which artisans know they have to reach but about which they don't have much experience' (Frater, 2014, p. 18). A field trip to Ahmedabad is central to the course and involves visiting stores, modern style hotels or restaurants, museums and galleries. The trip also involves visits to the homes of crafts consumers to understand how they live. Each of these spaces constitute what Bourdieu refers to as 'field', a 'structured space with its own laws of functioning and its own relations of force' (Johnson, 1993, p. 6). The fields are inhabited by those qualified to judge 'good' design craft by their status as designers, artists, creative entrepreneurs or collectors. In these spaces, students learn to 'perform in appropriate ways' (Hart, 2012, p. 51), and recognise particular tastes and preferences of the key players in the field. Eventually they become socialised into the values of this group (Kälviäinen, 1998), building their social and cultural capital through increased awareness of their target market's tastes. Visiting faculty and illustrator Allen Shaw, who taught the Market Orientation class for several batches expressed, 'the whole point of teaching them marketing is to open them up to this whole new world that they would have not otherwise have thought of', and went on to describe the field trip:

'We took them to a very low middle-class family to a middle-class to a very upper-class kind of situation so [...] they actually got to see [...] what is the taste of these people [...] because their aesthetics completely change when you change the context of the region, not just the region but the whole idea of a city and a village.'<sup>128</sup>

Thus, students also learn about demographics and that tastes in one area of India will be

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<sup>127</sup> Vankar, D., 2016. Weaver-designer: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Sarli village, Kachchh, 10 January.

<sup>128</sup> Shaw, A., 2016. Illustrator and SKV faculty: Skype Interview with Ruth Clifford, 28 January.

very different than in another, and that class, age and occupation can influence tastes too. They 'learn to distinguish which of the tastes, practices and preferences of others are representative of the particular field' (Hart, 2012, p. 51). This is exemplified by comments made by Pravin and Pachan, students of the 2015 batch:

'There are so many different clients. One particular class needs new designs, one class wants unique pieces, and one class only wants traditional designs.'<sup>129</sup>

'Colours for the Delhi market will only work in Delhi, and if we're going to Ahmedabad those won't work, this I didn't know [before the course].'<sup>130</sup>

Visiting peoples' homes also validates tastes or styles that have previously been dictated to artisans by intervening urban professional designers. Following Tyabji's (2008) frustration at the ways designers ask artisans to make products which are completely unfamiliar and irrelevant to their context, visiting faculty member Usha Prajapati discussed the surprise her students expressed when she suggested the idea of designing placemats. They could not grasp the idea of an '*asana* for *thalis*',<sup>131</sup> arguing, 'it's ok for human beings to put a piece of cloth where you sit but why do you need *asanas* for *thalis*?'<sup>132</sup> They had the same viewpoint about yoga mats, one student argued that when saints and sadhus do yoga they do it on a rock or by the river side: 'I have not seen anybody use a yoga mat in my life, how can I make it?'<sup>133</sup> Prajapati explained to the students that many foreigners come to India for yoga and spirituality and prefer to do yoga on mats. But this was not enough, the students needed to see evidence. In one Market Orientation course, after the cooking session which introduces students to costing, the students and staff all sat down to eat their meal using placemats and table runners to better understand their function.

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<sup>129</sup> Siju, P., Siju., H. 2016. Weaver-designers: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 6 January.

<sup>130</sup> Siju, P., 2016. Weaver-designer: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 1 August.

<sup>131</sup> *Asana* translates to 'posture' but is also used to describe the mat on which the posture is held. A *thali* refers both to the platter on which a meal is served and the mixture of small culinary dishes on which it is served all together, typical of South Asia.

<sup>132</sup> Prajapati, U., 2016. Designer and SKV faculty member. Skype interview with Ruth Clifford, 28 January.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

Judy said her idea for introducing visits to homes came from an experience in Delhi:

'I learned that from Aziz. [...] In the first year we did our sale in the home of a US embassy school director in Delhi. [Aziz] went into the bathroom and came flying out, he said "a shower curtain! It's a product!" Yeah where would he ever have seen a shower curtain if he doesn't get to go into these people's homes?'<sup>134</sup>

In the past few years, students have visited the homes of Mallika Sarabhai, a well-known classical dancer and activist, and from one of the city's most successful families, famous for their huge mill empire; Anar Patel, social activist and daughter of Gujarat's Chief Minister; and Harita Kapoor, fashion designer and owner of Artisans' Cottage store in Ahmedabad, amongst others.

Additionally, Frater often takes the opportunity to show artisan-designers around homes while in the city for their final collection exhibition. While I was in Mumbai for a 'Bhujodi to Bagalkot' exhibition, we all visited the home of Samir Somaiya, the chairman of K.J Trust (SKV's primary sponsor) and his wife, Amrita Somaiya, also a trustee. It would have been the first opportunity the weavers from Bagalkot had to experience how a wealthy Mumbai family live. Samir's father was an antique collector and so the house was full of antique furniture, paintings and sculptures as well as textiles. We also visited the home of Geeta Khandelwal, a textiles designer specialising in quilting, whose home was full of textiles from India and around the world. While the Somaiyas' home had a refined traditional feel, Khandelwal's had a quirky and eclectic feel. But both would sit well in the magazine *World of Interiors*. This provided the students with the opportunity to see the diversity of tastes of conceivable consumers and that lifestyle and profession can influence taste as well as age, city and class.

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<sup>134</sup> Frater, J., 2016. SKV Founder-Director: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Adipur, 20 January.



Figure 99. Visit to Geeta Khandelwal's home, October 2016

After returning home from the trip to Ahmedabad, for homework students choose two clients to produce pieces for based on their styles and tastes. The client could be a shop or one of the home-owners they visited. Finding that Anar Patel liked traditional styles, Pachan developed a dupatta incorporating traditional elements of the *dhablo*. He also combined the styles of the Rabari and Ahir *dhabla*, by using grey as the main ground colour and bright colours typical of the Ahir style in the extra weft patterns, *sachikor* border and the stitched join down the middle.



Figure 100. Pachan talking through the concept of the *dupatta* he made for Anar Patel

Several months after the end of the course, SKV graduates exhibit their collections in a high-end gallery in Mumbai, Ahmedabad or Delhi. In Mumbai, this has once been held at Artisans' Gallery. While the name 'Artisans' suggests it is distinct from the other 'fine' art galleries in the surrounding trendy, cosmopolitan arts district Kala Ghoda, it attracts discerning, fashionable elite Mumbaikers and globe trotters. Artisans were previously

excluded from these ‘bounded fields’ (Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006), because of their low social status. The late Hariyaben Bhanani, a patchwork artisan from Sumrasar Sheikh (KRV and SKV graduate), remembered a time when she was not allowed in the luxury store Taj Khazana in the Taj Hotel, but approximately twenty years later was invited for tea with the store’s buyer who had purchased thirty of her pieces.<sup>135</sup> This is suggestive of Hariyaben’s accumulation of cultural capital and subsequent acceptance into the luxury design field.



Figure 101. The 2015 SKV graduates’ exhibition at Artisans’ Gallery

At THS too, students need to be able to see the market potential of their designs before they can value the process and understand the importance of learning to design. During the six months on campus the students don’t make any organised visits to shops or clients’ homes, but they do interact with visiting clients as well as others interested in textiles, craft and weaving who come to Maheshwar. THS’s campus is relatively open and many of the clients who come to Gudi Mudi, just a fifteen-minute walk down the road, will be taken around THS. Holkar views this as particularly important for students to understand the tastes of their target market:

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<sup>135</sup> Bhanani, H., 2016. Patchwork artisan: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Sumrasar Sheikh, 4 August. Hariyaben sadly passed away in between finishing this fieldwork and writing. She is sorely missed.

'The aesthetics of the market are extremely different from the aesthetics of the weavers. They are upwardly mobile, slightly but they're small town kids. They take their aesthetic aspirations from TV and films they see and guys they see running around on motorbikes in their town. These aesthetics are completely different from the aesthetics they're weaving. And until they see the market reaction, they are completely unable to gauge whether they've woven something wonderful or not. Mostly they think they've woven something bland, in not an interesting colour, no great design in it. They're not confident or enthusiastic about the cloth they themselves are weaving, but when they see the market reaction, then they get it.'<sup>136</sup>



Figure 102. Clients visiting THS, August 2016

Student-weavers rarely express awkwardness or the sense of feeling a 'fish out of water' (Maton, 2012, p. 56) when entering into these new fields that they are not accustomed to. SKV students and graduates appeared relaxed at both the final collection exhibition and when they were in the homes of Khandelwal and the Somaiyas. When I walked around the glitzy, imposing Ritu Kumar store with SKV graduates Laxmi, Tulsi and Tara, they browsed the garments with ease and confidence.<sup>137</sup> Neelima Rao reported a similar observation of the THS students when they had a Buyer-Seller meet at the 'posh' residence of a friend of Holkar's in a wealthy area of Delhi. Rao said she and Holkar 'were worried how the students would be in this house', adding:

'they had [...] fancy sculptures on the wall, it was a rich house, [but the students showed] not a spot of reticence or overwhelm. They seemed to get into a position of clarity and just be in the space and just like what they saw. They were well-supported [...]. The people

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<sup>136</sup> Holkar, S., 2016. THS Founder-Director: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Maheshwar, 9 July.

<sup>137</sup> Fieldnotes, 9 October 2015.

came in and they were able to speak to them. [The students] seemed pretty cool in their skin.’<sup>138</sup>

The students may have developed this confidence and ease through the continuous conversation, presentation, evaluation and interaction during the course at THS. Mehmud Ansari said ‘we got the confidence to speak to buyers. We were made to speak in front of everyone so that made me more confident about the products’.<sup>139</sup>

Regular practice of presentations occurs at SKV as well. Before attending the classes, Pachan would avoid talking to any clients who came to the family’s shop or home, but by the end he was presenting his collections to fellow classmates and family, as well as the jury with enthusiasm and confidence. Jentilal (Jenti, KRV graduate 2010) echoed Pachan’s sentiment saying ‘in the beginning, at presentation, I hesitated to show my work, but later I was no longer afraid. Now I can talk easily, there is no problem’.<sup>140</sup> Jenti’s and Pachan’s comments were made on film which serves as further evidence of the artisan-designers’ confidence to articulate their knowledge, as well as pride in their work.

## **7.7 Exclusive market spaces**

The Santa Fe International Folk Art Market (IFAM)<sup>141</sup> is a space where the interactions of various players in the craft and design field, and the seeking and sharing of cultural capital and tastes, gets played out to the maximum (I would have loved to visit here during the course of this research, an ethnography of such a place would be invaluable in understanding the position and value of ‘traditional’ crafts in a global market in a single bounded space). The application process for a stall at the fair is rigorous and the stakes are

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<sup>138</sup> Rao, N., 2017. Designer and Entrepreneur: Skype Interview with Ruth Clifford, 15 January.

<sup>139</sup> Ansari, M., 2016. Weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Chanderi, 20 July

<sup>140</sup> Bokhani, J., 2016. Weaver-designer: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 1 August.

<sup>141</sup> This annual market was set up fifteen years ago to ‘create economic opportunities for and with folk artists worldwide who celebrate and preserve folk art traditions’. Over 150 folk artists from 60 countries exhibit at the fair each year and IFAM also provides mentoring in marketing to artists and opportunities for their stories to be told on their media platform IFAA: IFAM, no date. What We Do [online]. <https://www.folkartmarket.org/about/what-we-do/> [accessed 21 August 2018].

high. Several graduates of SKV, as well as other successful master artisans in Kachchh have attended the fair. Their success has provided an inspiration to artisans all over Kachchh, for whom attending Santa Fe is the pinnacle of their professional aspirations. *Bandhani* artist (as he prefers to be known), Aziz Khatri has been spotted at two consecutive fairs ‘rubbing shoulders’ with famous couture fashion designer Donna Karan of DKNY. According to SKV’s Facebook post about the instance, Donna Karan ‘was thrilled with Aziz Khatri’s innovative *bandhani* at the international Folk-Art Market Santa Fe’ (SKV, 2017).

The IFAM is an example of a hierarchised field, ‘with dominant agents and institutions having considerable power to determine what happens within it’ (Thomson, 2012, p. 71), yet there is ‘still agency and change’ (ibid). Aziz possesses such agency and the ability to influence the tastes of the dominant class. Aziz, as well as SKV’s other poster boy (literally, his face was displayed on a huge banner at the market), Dayalal Kudecha (weaver, SKV graduate 2008, 2014), block printer brothers Junaid (KRV graduate) and Sufiyan Khatri and *bandhani* artisan Abduljabbar Khatri, are regulars at the market. Dayalal earns more at the market than he would make in a year before he attended KRV. Thus, these artisan-designers keep returning and their dedicated clients and regular market visitors expect to see them there, including Donna Karan who after meeting Aziz in 2017, made a beeline to his stall the following year. However, the market’s stall limitation means the other aspiring artisan-designers of Kachchh have, to some extent been ‘elbowed out’,<sup>142</sup> prevented from attending, despite the market’s aims of making space for new artisans each year. Frater expressed her mixed views of Santa Fe, being simultaneously critical for the preference of accepting artisans known to bring in the money, and therefore excluding others, while not wanting to discourage the regular cohort because of their regular expectant clientele:

‘Most of [the 175 artisans who exhibit at Santa Fe] are returning artisans that have dug themselves in so deep that you couldn’t dig them out with a spade.’<sup>143</sup>

The Santa Fe scenario therefore, demonstrates the ways in which new hierarchies are being formed within the artisan community itself. Yet such a phenomenon is not unique to

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<sup>142</sup> Frater, J., 2016. SKV Founder-Director: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Adipur, 20 January.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

crafts. There isn't space in the elite fields for everyone, as Entwistle and Rocamora found in their study of London Fashion Week. Spaces have to be kept bounded to the extent that they maintain their exclusivity as 'system which ensures their reproduction' (Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006, quoting Bourdieu).

## 7.8 Concept

The fourth of the six SKV classes is 'Concept/Communication/Projects/Sampling' (Concept for short) and aims to bring together the influences gathered from the target market, and the students' own environments and traditions. Shamji articulated this importance, saying 'without tradition, [our weaving] is just fashion'.<sup>144</sup>

In Kälviäinen's study of the criteria for awards given to Finnish art-craft (high value craft, also described as 'contemporary applied art', 'contemporary crafts' or 'studio crafts') (Kälviäinen, 1998, p. 30), a category that Frater aims for the SKV graduate's work to sit within, she notes that the most important criteria is the concept intention of the product. While the concept is central to fine art and what makes it inherently valuable, in craft several other factors must be considered:

'The process of developing that concept, its strength and sustainability, coherence with the various design elements, the relationship between these elements and the product concept, and the aspect of functionality' (ibid, p. 34).

Thus, the concept can only be effectively communicated through good use of skill and good design. The Finnish judges also paid attention to the 'relationship between the "spirit of the time" and tradition', suggesting that while there should be reference to tradition, it should not be merely copied but 'renewed' (ibid, p. 36). These criteria have strong similarities to the aims of the SKV curriculum. Like the Finnish 'art-craft' judges, the SKV jury comprises of well-known and respected members of their field including designers, buyers, academics and artists, also from the upper classes that represent the artisan-designers' target market.

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<sup>144</sup> Vishram Valji, S., 2016. Master Weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 17 January.

The Concept class begins with analysis of global trends. The school receives donations of the LA Colours trend forecast, from which each student selects a theme, and with help from faculty, develop a colour palette. The students are strongly advised to interpret the trend in their own way, relevant to their own surroundings and identity. Frater has noted ‘the use of international trends in craft is itself challenging and controversial. But ultimately it takes artisans beyond their colour comfort zones’ (SKV Newsletter, 2012, 3). Weaver and student of the 2015 batch, Poonam, chose the theme of sky (*akash*) for his collection. He initially, along with several other graduates interviewed, found working with a theme difficult and did not fully understand the point.<sup>145</sup> During the Collection Development course taught by Lokesh Ghai, Poonam was stubborn to engage with the theme. He expected to be given the colours by the teacher. One early evening when all the students were up on the roof of the campus building, Ghai encouraged Poonam to come up too, but he refused saying he was happy to work downstairs. The sky was ‘red because of the rain’, but because Poonam hadn’t picked red for his colour palette, he didn’t see the need in referring to it. With encouragement from Ghai and the other students, eventually he became convinced and his resulting collection includes pale blues, greens, purples and hints of red, resembling the colours in the sky as the weather and time of day changes. A few months after he had graduated, Poonam said in an interview that he enjoyed experimenting with colour the most, and he continues to refer to colour trends.<sup>146</sup> The following year, he visited SKV specially to make his own print-out of the colour trends document.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Vankar, P., 2016. Weaver and SKV graduate: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Mota Varnora village, Kachchh, 5 August.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ghai, L., 2018. Artist, SKV faculty member and governing council member: Skype Interview with Ruth Clifford, 14 February.



Figure 103. Poonam modelling a stole from his final collection



Figure 104. Poonam's final presentation to the jury, September 2015

Ritu Kumar who was on the jury for Poonam's batch, purchased a large amount of his collection as well as Pachan's, to incorporate into the collection she designed for Rajasthan Fashion week which was held the year after the jury (see figure 107).

Ghai described the way he encouraged artisan-students to relate their theme to their own knowledge and surroundings:

'Suppose in the trend the theme is "drowning in splendour". This would be difficult for the artisan to follow, but it's a challenge to see what the artisan would come up with and for the teacher to see how "drowning in splendour" could be understood by the artisans. So, I look at what I can find in Kachchh that might relate to this theme. I will say, "Prag Mahal (the nineteenth century palace in the centre of Bhuj), will be a good place", so we visit there to get the [...] mood and feel. They will visit, take photographs. Everything gets localised.'<sup>148</sup>

Ghai taught the Concept class the following year, and the SKV newsletter described the process the students took to understand concepts:

'They studied trend forecasts, and learned to interpret concepts, first in installations *a la* Andy Goldsworthy, then in theme boards, in music, and finally in their own traditional media. They went on inspiration trips, brain-stormed, and went back to their traditions. Faculty and students grapple together with concepts, seeing them from different perspectives and levels. Thinking deeply, in new ways was a stretch. By the final presentation, the students had begun to demonstrate individual interpretations' (SKV Newsletter 2016, 2).

Pachan selected a universally recognised theme for his collection 'treasures of the sea'. His colour palette included varying shades of blue and accent contrasting colours in the extra weft. Motifs included an extended *panchko* (five-paisa coin), traditional to Kachchhi weaving, to create an abstracted fish. Abstraction is another concept taught on the course, and other weavers had also used the traditional motifs in Kachchhi weaving to create new geometric or figurative motifs including floral and animal motifs and even pictorial scenes (I discussed this in relation to responding to weavers' changing environment and inspiration in section 7.2). Jury member and head buyer for Fabindia, Anuradha Kumra was

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

particularly impressed with Pachan's bamboo stole, and expressed interest in placing an order.<sup>149</sup> Pachan's collection won the 'Most Marketable' award, one of several awards given out during the jury.



Figure 105. One of Pachan's stoles in bamboo, cotton and *tussar* silk

## 7.9 The jury

For SKV students, practicing presenting and talking about their designs throughout the course is important for developing their confidence and public speaking ability to present to the jury at the end of the course. The space in which the jury is held is usually on the campus of the institute and is thus distinct to the market spaces discussed above. It challenges long-standing practices in craft development whereby decisions on what makes craft suitable for sale, be displayed in museums and exhibitions, be protected by the Geographical Indication (GI), or to be given the contested National Award, are made by an 'elite peripheral force' (Venkatesan, 2009) and exclude the artisan's own input. The decisions made by such forces are likely to be influenced by views of Indian crafts that I refer to throughout this thesis – as symbols of tradition or 'outmoded'. However, the diversity of the SKV juries mean that advice given to artisan-students during the course and by jury members can often be contradictory. Ritu Kumar (one of the original cohort of

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<sup>149</sup> Fieldnotes, 24 October 2015.

fashion designers I discussed in chapter 2, section 14), regularly reminded the students whose work she was judging to stay true to their tradition, while Fabindia Anuradha Kumra was excited by the use of new materials and experimental innovations.<sup>150</sup> Most students have learnt to take on the advice but combine it with their own preferences and instinct. As Pachan noted:

‘I can’t change for everyone, today there’s one teacher, tomorrow there’ll be another, my nature will stay the same.’<sup>151</sup>

In the seminar that coincided with the jury I attended, one artisan-designer asked the panel ‘what does the market want?’ to which Ritu Kumar responded, ‘the market doesn’t know what it wants, you have to tell it!’<sup>152</sup> Frater shared this view. Likewise, the guidance for SKV faculty stresses that demands can be created, they don’t always have to be followed. To do this though, the artisan-designer must have a strong concept and confidence to communicate this concept. In her study of shoe designers, Braithwaite (2014) found that the majority of designers she interviewed were not dictated by fashion trends but by their individual taste and interaction with materials. One designer, Joseph Azagury expressed his desire to be ‘creatively free and unique, and not bound by commerciality and its needs for designs to fit into a fashion system that is defined by constant change and particular trends’ (ibid, p. 55). On the other hand, some designers would demonstrate an unconscious absorption of fashion trends, such as Hetty Rose who said, ‘I don’t consciously think about fashion or following trends, I think it is something that is just everywhere, and you automatically absorb it’ (ibid, p. 61). Further, trends reflect the contemporary time, events, celebrity, film and the economic and political context. The more interaction artisan-designers have with the players in various ‘fields of cultural production’ (Bourdieu, 1993), the more these trends are likely to be absorbed.

However, the market must realise the cultural capital and creative capabilities of artisan-designers if imbalances of power and hierarchies are to be eradicated. Frater noted how

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<sup>150</sup>Fieldnotes, 24 and 25 October 2015.

<sup>151</sup> Siju, P., 2016. Weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 1 August.

<sup>152</sup>Fieldnotes, 24 October 2015.

often the jury members, ‘if they are new people, they’re surprised. They have no idea that artisans can think!’<sup>153</sup> Mamidipudi argues ‘it is only in recognising the expert knowledge and aesthetic capability of craft production that designers can participate in ensembles with crafts groups and design for social change’ (2016, p. 106). While Mamidipudi (citing Ingold) is specifically referring to craftspeople’s skilled knowledge which she argues is interlinked with an inherent ability to design, the added design direction artisan-designers have, along with confidence to innovate and communicate their knowledge, can decrease the cultural and hierarchical gap between the artisan-designer and urban designer or buyer:

‘Any of our designers is not going to be, in some respects say at the same level as Sabyasachi or Ritu Kumar, but they may be able to work with them at least maintaining a certain level of self-respect.’<sup>154</sup>



Figure 106. Pachan’s final presentation to the jury: examining his silk-cotton sari

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<sup>153</sup> Frater, J., 2016. SKV Founder-Director: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Adipur, 20 January.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.



Figure 107. 'Poonam and Pachan for Ritu Kumar' (Somaiya Kala Vidya, 2015)

### 7.9.2 Dressing the part

When it came to the morning of the jury of the batch that included weavers Pachan, Poonam, Pravin and Ravji, the mood of the group was a mixture of nervousness and excitement, and students rushed around to get ready, went to get their hair cut and deliberated over what to wear. On a day-to-day basis, most young weavers in Kachchh wear jeans or tracksuit bottoms and a t-shirt. Since British colonial rule, trousers and shirts were widely adopted by men across India, while most women kept traditional dress, which in part helped the continuation of the sari weaving industry (see chapter 2). By adopting European clothing, men from low-status communities could disguise their identity, particularly when entering college or applying for 'modern' jobs. Conversely, for the SKV jury, fashion show and exhibitions, some weavers choose to wear their 'traditional dress', usually white *salwaar* and *kediyun* jacket, which is suggestive of a sense of pride in the wearer's traditional identity. The weavers' interchanging of outfits and appearance is suggestive of on the one hand, a conflicted sense identity. However, a more likely reason is

that through donning traditional dress, the weaver becomes a ‘performer’ of culture (Tilley, 1997) or heritage (Kendall, 2014), with an awareness of the expectations within the ‘dominant’ class, which includes a ‘salience for the local’ and traditional and whose appreciation they are seeking to receive (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 227). Indeed, the ‘traditional’ tastes and styles of rural artisan communities have as much influence on upper class designers, if not more, than the upper-class designers influence the artisans, who must navigate the whims of their target market.



Figure 108. Pravin (left) on the catwalk after his collection had been modelled on the ramp

### 7.10 Collaboration

The following sections explore how decreasing the gap between the artisan-designer and urban designer is supported through collaboration or ‘co-design’. Such practices seek to dissolve the boundaries between the habituses and fields discussed above as well as the stereotypical dichotomies between ‘traditional/rural artisan’ and ‘modern/urban designer’. While the aim of THS and SKV is for graduates to reach entrepreneur or designer status, drawing upon Frater’s comment above, to enter certain markets an ‘intermediary’ is required to transform the craft into a product, be it for fashion or interiors. I discuss firstly some collaborative projects that aim to overcome inequalities between urban

designers and artisans, and then some examples of collaborations between artisan-students, which involve mutual learning and teaching rather than uni-directional teaching by a professional urban-trained teacher.

### **7.10.1 Co-design and collaboration between weaver and ‘urban’ designer**

Collaborative projects involving the shared input of individuals from a range of disciplines are increasingly recognised as important in organisations in general, but specifically in the creative field, by way of bringing together diverse knowledge and skills to meet the diverse needs of the contemporary world and address social and environmental concerns (Seitamaa-Hakkarainen *et al.*, 2016; Valentine *et al.*, 2017, p. 971). Murray has discussed the benefits and challenges of ‘transnational’ partnerships, which I would argue apply to cross-cultural or urban-rural partnerships too:

‘Transnational partnerships with artisans can also be an important conduit for cultural understanding. They help connect communities that are not in contact with the global educated classes. This provides important perspectives on issues such as the status of indigenous cultures, the challenges of climate change and the impact of cultural dominance from the north’ (Murray, 2010, p. 141).

The importance of reciprocity between traditional artisan and urban designer has been strong in the craft development discourse in attempts to avoid exploitation (for example, UNESCO *et al.*, 2005; Scott, 2012; Rhodes, 2015), focusing specifically on each participant learning from each other and sharing knowledge and skills. At both THS and SKV, students from urban institutes conduct workshops or design projects with artisan students. This is helpful not only for the students to be able to understand potential end-products for their fabric, but also as a way of training in the process of collaboration. At SKV students from Maharaja Sayajirao University (MSU) in Baroda stay on the campus for the duration of the fifth class, Collection Development, to partner up with artisan-students and help develop their fabric into products. Some examples of past products have included bags (utilising the complete woven warp without the need for cutting the fabric), ponchos, simple sleeveless jackets adapted from large square scarves, waistcoats and other garments, homeware products such as quilts and cushions, as well as uncut pieces such as saris, stoles and dupattas. The curriculum emphasises that the dynamic should be different from

common designer-commissioned projects whereby the designer determines the brief and the end-product, while the artisan works on the (usually technical) aspects that he or she specialises in. Instead at SKV, the artisan-student is the client that the visiting designer is working for and the designer works to the artisan-student's brief: 'Artisan-students then choose from the range presented to make their collections. Collaborators will be prepared with the artisan-student profiles, themes and initial concepts' (Frater 2014). The curriculum stresses the importance of visiting designers studying the local traditions before they arrive and during their stay. These collaborations allow both the artisan-students and the urban design students to experiment and learn from each other while they are at similar stages of their education.



Figure 109. Ravji Meriya showing his fellow students and teachers his bag made completely from handloom cloth and the surplus warp yarn

Another type of collaborative arrangement is the 'co-design' projects which take place during the business course or for graduates of the design course. Initially these took place between professional, established designers and the recent graduates of SKV, and on the business course they took the form of a 'mentorship'. Frater realised the contradictory nature of this arrangement considering the school's aim was 'towards the artisans becoming independent artisan-designers, and then we ask them to work with a designer'.<sup>155</sup> However, she felt co-design would be an effective way to help the artisan

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<sup>155</sup> Frater, J., 2016. SKV Founder-Director: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Adipur, 20 January.

reach recognition in high-end markets. Initially, however, many of these mentorships failed:

'I tried to push from each side, the artisan's side and the designer's side, it did not happen. And in this interaction, it became very clear why not. The artisans were asked what their experience working with designers was. They had a lot to say and it was all negative.'<sup>156</sup>

The example Frater then gave was the same one that the artisan involved, Purushottam relayed to me. A designer had asked Purushottam to weave some saris in a particular design to which Purushottam refused, saying 'we don't work in this way'.<sup>157</sup> When the designer persisted, Purushottam invited him to his family's house and workshop so he could see how they were working. The designer stayed for three to four days, left and later returned to place a large order. This made Purushottam realise that the client must understand the process and what goes into the work for the partnership to work. Further, he expressed that prior to KRV he would not have had the confidence to challenge the designer. Two female graduates of the design and business courses informed me that while artisans learn about business ethics on the course, when they enter 'co-design' partnerships they begin to realise that not all designers conform to these ethics.

But complaints didn't only come from the artisan's side. One established independent fashion designer based in Mumbai, who had been partnered with a block printing artisan-designer in Kachchh, described to me an instance in which she had met with the graduate to share ideas, before they separated to work on their own aspects of the project. The designer faced difficulties in arranging subsequent meetings, but later found that the artisan-graduate had begun developing products that incorporated some of her ideas, which left her feeling bewildered and frustrated.<sup>158</sup>

Considering the challenges faced conducting these co-design projects, and with an aim to make them more reciprocal, Frater began to organise partnerships between artisan-designers and design students in other institutes. In 2016 a project was organised with the University of Wisconsin (UW) in America. Two lecturers took part in an SKV-organised five-

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Rao, S. (pseudonym), 2016. Personal conversation with Ruth Clifford: Mumbai, 21 January.

day block printing workshop in early 2016, and several months later conversations between the lecturers and Frater resulted in thirteen UW students selected to partner up with thirteen SKV graduates. Over the course of several months, the projects were coordinated online with students conversing over WhatsApp and Skype. Success varied across the partnerships and was often dependent on the personalities of each designer or artisan-designer and different working practices; as well as the identification of successful communication strategies, cultural and technical knowledge.

Erica Hess, one of the lecturers leading the team of UW students alongside course leader Jennifer Angus, explained the way the project ran and discussed the challenges and successes. The brief began with a selection of a theme from trend forecasts in the same way students are taught on the Concept course at SKV. This provided the first obstacle, as each party was used to working with a theme in a different way. The SKV students would usually select a colour palette first, while the UW students first develop ideas around the theme.<sup>159</sup> Another major challenge was the different ways of communicating design ideas. Artisan-designers in Kachchh rarely draw out designs, much less use CAD or Adobe Illustrator which the UW had been learning at around the same time. This affected the 'equality of the project'.<sup>160</sup> However, where artisan-designers had a lower level of digital skills, UW students had low levels of technical knowledge in the crafts. One student had developed designs with curves not realising they would be difficult to interpret using the Kachchhi weaving technique. However, some partnerships had overcome this difference in technical understanding. Embroidery artisan Tulsi explained to her partner Sage why the designs Sage had suggested wouldn't work.

'They sent lots of drawings back and forth and even though Tulsi has great language skills, they did it mostly through drawings and then landed on some more minimal triangular designs that worked well with the embroidery technique. Picked colours together, it was very cooperative.'<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Hess, E., 2017. Designer and UW Lecturer: Skype Interview with Ruth Clifford, 21 December.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

Hess' account of the collaborations between SKV graduates and the UW students suggests that the main challenges in co-design projects are communication, knowledge of each other's practice and expertise, meeting expectations and establishing ways to use each participants' knowledge and expertise in the most effective way. Even in projects involving all participants speaking the same vernacular, they may struggle to understand each other's disciplinary language. In cross-cultural co-design projects, completely different vernaculars are being spoken. However, visual language can overcome verbal language barriers, and design is a language shared by both the UW students and SKV graduates. Therefore, each partner of the project must then have the knowledge and awareness of the other's skills and capabilities, as well as making a combined decision on where the product will be positioned in the market, how the product will be branded and ownership negotiated and finally, how each participant's identity will be expressed in the final product. Even once the product is in the market it will assume a new meaning. Thus, 'the various multiple mediators contribute to the works meaning and sustain the universe of belief' (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 20), which could be the craft, design or fashion worlds (I discuss changes in meaning as the object moves across categories and contexts in chapter 8, section 12).

### **7.10.2 Peer to peer collaboration**

The SKV course brings students from different craft backgrounds together, while THS brings weavers from different weaving clusters together. At SKV collaboration on the men's course occurs in two ways. Firstly, through learning the techniques of each other's craft, for example: weavers learn dyeing techniques from the Khatris and the Khatris learn about different types of yarn and their qualities:

'They really get to know each other during the course and that's been a boon for the artisans who take the course. Every time we get the sample looms out, the first people who sit at them are the Khatris. They're fascinated, they say "show me, I want to learn!" And then once they learn about fabric construction, they become better at sourcing the raw materials.'<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Frater, J., 2016. SKV Founder-Director: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Adipur, 20 January.

This process was particularly useful for young students who had less technical experience with different materials, and students who had been used to doing job-work, which created a barrier to material engagement and experimentation. The second type of collaboration occurs in the design process, within the classroom at SKV and beyond graduation. Some students have paired up and created products that incorporate each of their craft techniques and designs:

‘They’re taking the concept, technique and knowledge and trying to help each other. The first batch dynamics was good, they still work with each other now. For example, the weavers get *bandhani* artisans to dye, [during the course] in their product development and after [completing] design education they’re using this more strongly. It’s nice to see these connections.’<sup>163</sup>

A particularly innovative design that has emerged out of an inter-craft collaboration has been that of weaver Jenti and block printer Khalid Khatri. They experimented with a technique completely new to the region, block printing on the warp before weaving, which created an *ikat*-style look. The whole ground resembled something akin to a more abstract eighteenth century French *chine*, and Jenti had added subtle extra weft motifs in the *pallu*, and in some stoles, across the main ground. While this method didn’t show off any distinct designs of the block printing traditions such as *ajrakh*, Khalid’s individual style is distinctly painterly and abstract (his work has featured in the upmarket boutique Bombay Electric and in Wallpaper magazine (Patel and Rayirath, 2011, p. 67)). Thus, the pieces resembled a combination of each artisan-designer’s artistic style as well as the traditional Bhujodi woven motifs. Almost the whole collection sold at an exhibition at Artisans’ Gallery.

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<sup>163</sup> Prajapati, U., 2016. Designer and SKV faculty member. Skype interview with Ruth Clifford, 28 January.



Figure 110. Jenti talking through a sample he created with Khalid. Film still: Shradha Jain, August 2016

Collaboration and ‘cross cultural kinships’ between peers is one of the main aims of THS (Holkar, Tiernan and Johnson, 2013). While teaching technical skills has been criticised for standardising techniques (see section 7.4), there is always a skill, material or technique that one student may know well, but another may not, and students have the opportunity to learn techniques from each other as well as from the faculty. Students from Kachchh for example, weave with four treadles and use extra manual drafting for more complex patterning, as well as extra weft techniques. Students from Uttarakhand weave complex patterns with several treadles in fine merino wool. Weavers who only knew plain weave learnt from the Uttarakhand and Kachchh weavers how to weave with multi treadles, as well as from visiting faculty Hrishikesh. Kachchh weaver Arun Vankar learnt the dobby technique from Maheshwar weavers, as well as the drop-box technique and the use of additional treadles.

The THS and SKV campuses therefore, provide a space for students to learn from each other in a new ‘community of practice,’ which according to Lave and Wenger can be just as important as learning from a ‘master’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 98).

### **7.11 Summary**

This chapter has followed the experiences of weavers as they go through the design course, their grasping of the concepts taught and their negotiation of the market. Starting at SKV or THS, students enter a space in which they are free to experiment and be

creative, while receiving direction on basic design and colour concepts. They then learn of the appeal and value for the aspects of their craft that represent their cultural identity within a wider luxury urban market, while also getting to know the tastes of this market by entering new spaces. Bourdieu's theories of capital and fields of cultural production and the interpretation of these theories by Entwistle and Rocamora (2006) in the fashion context and by Hart (2012) in the education context, were useful in framing the ways weavers circulate within the 'fields' – market spaces. Despite there being long-standing dominant agents and arbiters of 'good taste', weavers develop the agency and cultural capital to become influencers of taste within such spheres. However, not all artisans or indeed artisan-designers have access to the elitist of spaces which must continue to be bounded in order to maintain a certain level of exclusivity. Therefore, hierarchies can form within the artisan-design community itself (additionally to hierarchies within the crafts community as a whole, for example, between master weavers and job-weavers). Nevertheless, seeing fellow artisan-designers reach such success inspires others to aspire to this success.

Furthermore, I showed that artisan-designers interacting with clients at home in the village, and in Indian cities can be sufficient to develop social and cultural capital, status and respect within both the local community and wider market network. Entering into collaborations with fellow artisan-designers can boost creativity, while collaboration with external designers further builds cultural capital through more immersive cultural exchange, and the opportunity to broaden their market potential. The following chapter discusses how graduates utilise such capital as they develop their business or brand.

# 8

## Navigating the complexities and nuances of value: Innovation, technology and business

*'Right now, work is slightly slow because the workers can't do what we want them to do and I sit and do all this work. When I do this, my other work stops. How many products can one man make? This is one problem I have.'*<sup>164</sup>

### 8.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates the trajectories of the weaver and the woven cloth after the weaver graduates from SKV or THS. The previous chapter demonstrated the ways in which weavers experiment, explore and develop an individual creative identity, as well as begin to socialise in new communities of fellow artisan-students, faculty, visiting designers and the market. This chapter follows the weaver as he begins to professionalise his design practice. It discusses the transformation in value of the handloom product as it moves between different spaces, and the development of the graduate weaver as he negotiates the urban and global networks. A thread that runs through chapters 7, 8 and 9, is the various 'things' that come between the weaver and his material, 'natural' environment and embodied skills, which can be formal schooling, job work or, as this chapter specifically demonstrates, technology. This technology encompasses the loom as well as other implements used to process the yarn at different stages, the mobile phone and communication tools, and design technology such as both manual and computer aided graphing. The two education institutes encourage innovation in design, business and technique within the parameters of 'traditional' technology, considered crucial for maintaining the label of 'handloom'. This approach contrasts with those offered in existing

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<sup>164</sup> Vankar, P., 2016. Master weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Mota Varnora village, Kachchh, 5 August.

studies by Mamidipudi (2016) and Gajjala, Niranjana and Syamasundari (2013), who argue that weavers should be viewed as technological innovators, based upon embodied knowledge of material, technologies and techniques. These authors focus less on the aesthetics of the product.

I therefore analyse the use and choices of technology in Kachchh and Maheshwar, and the impact that maintaining the use of traditional technology has upon meeting the demands of an increasing market for handloom. Keeping things handmade inevitably involves the need for labour, and the bigger the order the more people involved. There are conflicting views on this situation. On the one hand, the need for labour generates employment while on the other it runs the risk of creating exploitative master weavers or reducing the exclusivity of handloom cloth, which is considered by both SKV and THS to be more achievable by producing small quantities for a luxury market. An analysis of the handloom textile as a commodity must consider the value of each textile product associated with each region, the Kachchhi shawl and the Maheshwari sari, and the change in value of the product as it ages and traverses different spaces. Learning business involves weavers navigating the complexities and nuances of value. The understanding of monetary and other forms of value including cultural, antiquity and perceived value will vary from weaver to weaver. A major aim of the SKV curriculum is to increase value in the crafted object, as perceived by both the artisan and the market. This is based on the view that Indian craft has become devalued by its association with toil and poverty, in contrast to developed countries where craft has been revalorised by scarcity. While SKV aims to make the value in Indian craft objects equal to those of the scarce commodity crafts in the west, made by designer-makers, THS aims to generate employment largely by meeting the demands of luxury cloth for high-end fashion designers.

## **8.2 Defects: sign of authenticity or sign of low quality?**

A lack of attention to detail or quality care has become an attribute associated with weavers and other craftspeople producing for cheaper markets demanding high levels of production, a situation in which the weaver is distant from the end-user and therefore has less concern over their particular choices. Both economic and emotional value is increased when the distance between the producer and the client is reduced. In the penultimate

class at SKV, Collection Development/Finishing, the curriculum document advises faculty that finishing is about 'value and value addition', and 'the goal is maximising the value of one's efforts' (Frater, 2014, p. 24). This involves a specific focus on the importance of details and the consideration that the final product could be the fabric itself rather than made into a garment or product. The course also involves creating a collection based around the selected concept (discussed in chapter 7), to give the customer a variety in choice of materials, layout and colour-way. Students then learn to plan the production of the collection in terms of cost and quantity of each design, to complete in time for a final exhibition at a high-end gallery that is usually scheduled approximately three months after convocation.

At THS achieving quality is one of the main priorities of the course. While the curriculum involves teaching finishing and how to convert stitched fabric into a finished product, a heavy focus is placed on achieving quality through technical proficiency. Students learn to achieve fastness in colour and about the properties of different yarns. A commonly discussed issue is defects in handloom and the importance of recognising and avoiding defects is regularly stressed to the students. One of the first measures of the evidence of impact of the institute, as told by former director Sharda Gautam, was that most graduates had developed the ability to achieve defect-free fabrics.<sup>165</sup> Mehmud Ansari, a THS graduate from Chanderi said recognising and rectifying defects was one of the key things he learnt at the institute. While he would previously try and cover up or ignore defects, the course made him more aware and he now takes care to avoid them.<sup>166</sup>

'Defects' in hand-crafted products are paradoxically celebrated as idiosyncratic signs of the presence of the hand and thus the exclusivity of product, in addition to being a sign of low quality and inconsistency. Fabindia, a large retail chain selling homeware and fashion incorporating crafts from all over India, includes on its labels a statement that reads simultaneously as a warning sign and a promotion of the potential presence of defects:

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<sup>165</sup> Gautam, S., 2016. Director, THS, December 2014 – October 2016: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Maheshwar, 13 July.

<sup>166</sup> Ansari, M., 2016. Weaver and THS graduate: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Chanderi, 20 July.

‘An irregular weave or print is not a defect - handloom by definition means uncertainty when it comes to uniformity.’<sup>167</sup>

IMBYOU, a brand based in London selling hand-made textiles from India also uses the irregularities in hand-crafted textiles as a promotional point. In conversation, the founder pointed out to me the lines in a hand-woven garment she was selling, which she believed gave the garment character and a uniqueness.<sup>168</sup> Thus, for the consumer a defect distinguishes handloom cloth from machine-made cloth and thus confirms its authenticity. On the other hand, both Holkar and Frater believe that the acceptance, or promotion of, irregularities of hand-made products serve as an excuse for low quality and they will not accept the excuse that ‘defects’ are an inevitable part of the handloom product. Achieving quality is a key part of increasing the value in handloom and avoiding its perception of being ‘cheap’ in efforts to successfully sell in a luxury market that is unforgiving of such irregularities. According to Pye (1968, p. 30), these attempts at regularity, like the adaptations of technology, move the maker and the product further away from nature. He writes, ‘anything of regularity and preciseness in ‘old times’ would probably have seemed a marvel to the user, [it signified that] man stood apart from nature and had a power of his own’.

Ways to achieve regularity in handloom clusters across India have involved adapting technology. The simpler the technology, the more laborious the work is for the weaver who must take care to ensure yarns don’t break. When yarns do break, the weaver must tirelessly and carefully un-pick all the yarns up to the section of the breakage, re-tie the broken yarn and re-weave the section (something I faced regularly during my apprenticeship as highlighted in chapter 5). Physical strength is also required to ensure the pedals are pushed hard enough for the shed to open wide enough as well as perfect coordination between lifting the feet and passing the weft yarn through, as also described in chapter 5. While there has been no specific device invented to reduce the chances of

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<sup>167</sup> Fabindia, no date. *Terms of Use* [online]. Available at: <http://www.fabindia.com/pages/Terms-of-Use/pgid-1124144.aspx>. [Accessed 20 November 2017]. A more detailed context of Fabindia is provided in section 8.6.

<sup>168</sup> Vallari M. Harshwal., 2016. Designer/Entrepreneur: Personal conversation with Ruth Clifford, Asia House Fair, London, March.

yarn breakage, except for perhaps the Hattersley loom which doesn't require the hand at all, only the feet (and has been widely adopted by the Khadi Village Industries Commission), there have been many other devices adopted across Indian handloom clusters to increase efficiency and reduce physical strain while maintaining the category of handloom.

One example is the take-up motion attachment which has been adopted by some weavers in Maheshwar and Chanderi, as well as other weaving clusters across India. This device regulates the force of the beater and thus ensures regularity in the weave (see chapter 6, section 4). In Andhra Pradesh, a device has been designed by an NID graduate and founder of craft brand Kora, to reduce the need for sizing and starching of the warp. One of Kora's key philosophies is to offer design technology intervention 'not to create a number or variety of new products, but to offer creative solutions to varied existing problems on a spectrum of uses within an existing context' (Satish, 2017). The device allows for the starch to be applied during the bobbin-winding process to save time and space, rather than the traditional street-sizing method. In some clusters weavers themselves have devised new technological innovations to relieve the physical constraint of handloom weaving. One weaver from Pochampally in Andhra Pradesh invented and patented the 'Laxmi Asu Machine' to facilitate the *asu* process, the local term for winding the warp. The machine 'has reduced the time it takes to complete a Pochampally sari from six hours to one-and-a-half' (Nitin, 2018). Mamidipudi who has, like Satish, worked closely with NGO Dastkar Andhra based in Hyderabad, focused on the importance of the recognition of weavers' status as technological innovators and that craft lies at the intersection of art and technology (2016, p. 27).

Interestingly, in comparison to SKV and THS who strongly encourage maintenance of 'traditional' technology in positioning handloom in luxury markets, Dastkar Andhra (DA) 'bucked the myth that handlooms were suited only to niche markets and demonstrated that there was a huge market for everyday cottons' (Sethi, 2016). DA's focus on everyday markets in turn enabled the employment of the 'large mass of weavers of ordinary skill levels' (Niranjana et al., 2006). Mamidipudi argues that if handloom has lasted this long it must have had to innovate (2016). Furthermore, according to Roy (2008), evidence in colonial documentation shows that while weavers innovated in terms of exchanging and

building knowledge, there were few changes in technology before the British and independent governments' attempts at increasing industrial efficiency. Simple technology was compensated by high levels of embodied skill, and maintaining these technologies ensured a continuity of skill transmission (Bhattacharya, 1966; Roy, 2008a). Weavers would usually maintain the technology themselves, which continues to be the case in Kachchh and Maheshwar, as demonstrated in chapter 5.

The decisions to adopt or not adopt new technology can be aligned with the paradoxical paradigms upon which handloom revival or development has been based: that of viewing craft as an authentic relic of a romanticised past (technology and techniques should be kept as 'traditional' as possible), and of an outmoded process in need of modernisation (new technologies should be introduced to weavers to improve competition with powerloom and increase efficiency). However, it is important to note that weavers will not simply willingly adopt or refuse to adopt technologies based on the belief a local development initiative holds. Before I discuss these decisions in more detail, I will give a brief context to the technological differences between Kachchh and Maheshwar and further technological nuances within each region.

### **8.3 Technology and scale**

The looms used in the two locations of this study embody notions of preservation and adaptability. Most weavers, particularly in Bhujodi use the wooden pit loom. Built into the ground, the pit loom is a metaphoric symbol of permanence and rootedness, although its development may have been based on practical considerations such as space saving and maintaining a degree of humidity required for cotton weaving (Varadarajan and Amin-Patel, 2008, p. 24). A simple but transformative adaptation to this technology was the introduction of the fly shuttle by the British. According to Roy (2002) the fly shuttle was little known before 1900 and by 1940, 700,000 out of 2 million looms in use across India were fly shuttle looms, which increased speeds of weaving by up to fifty percent (McGowan, 2009). Kachchh probably adopted the fly shuttle later than other weaving clusters, with weavers of the older generation, Vishram Valji Vankar and Premji Vankar

dating its infiltration into Kachchh to the 1960s.<sup>169</sup> Vishram began learning weaving with the fly shuttle in 1975, and today there is just one hand-throw shuttle in use in Bhujodi, owned by Hamir Vankar who uses it to weave narrow width fabric yardage in un-dyed, hand-spun sheep wool. The progression to the fly shuttle increased speed and efficiency and enabled the weaving of wider cloth widths, avoiding the need to stitch two narrow cloth pieces together to make such products as the *dhablo*, *khati* or *ludi*, and facilitated faster production of the newly developed Kachchhi shawl. There are several wooden and metal frame looms across Kachchh that have been provided at subsidised rates by the government or donated and are considered more suitable for the weaving of carpets and bedsheets, new products adopted for urban markets.

Weavers in Maheshwar commonly use weights to stretch the excess warp vertically from the top of the loom (although some use warp beams), rather than the horizontally stretched-out warps used in Kachchh. These frame looms take up less floor space but require higher ceilings and so are not suitable in many traditional low-ceilinged homes that are typical of village homes across India. As frame looms with beam or vertical weighted warps can fit more easily in an indoor space, weaving can be done year-round, while many of the pit and frame looms in Kachchh are only partly sheltered (see figures 25 and 28) and so often must stop production during monsoon season (although in recent years there has been scarce rain in the region). In some workshops in Maheshwar, but even more so in government cooperative-run workshops in villages such as Chenimalai in Tamil Nadu, looms are slotted in edge-to-edge, leaving little room to manoeuvre around them. While wooden frame looms are still widely used, in Maheshwar many of the looms are aluminium, or a combination of metal and wood. This makes them easier to move around and each part has several holes in the frame, making them easily adjustable. If pit looms resemble rootedness, these frame looms resemble either impermanence, change or adaptation.

The sounds of the looms also give clues as to the volume of production. Walking through the streets of the small villages of Kotay or Lodhai or the hamlets surrounding Nakhatrana

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<sup>169</sup> Valji Vankar, V., 2016, Master Weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 12 January 2016.

Taluka in Kachchh, subtle rhythmic ‘taps’ of the fly shuttle passing back and forth across the wooden pit loom can be heard from home workshops. In Bhujodi an increased volume of these sounds resembles the larger number of weavers in closer proximity. In Maheshwar several workshops house frame looms which when all in action, create a louder polyphonic sound, given added texture by several bobbin winders, a warping mill or even an electronic bobbin winder which Arjun Chauhan had in his workshop. Thus, scale or productivity can in one way, be measured in sound and volume.



Figure 111. Visual and sonic texture (when looms are in action, it was tea time at this point!) in Arjun Chauhan’s workshop. Film still: Chayan Sonane

While some weavers have adopted the frame looms in Kachchh, the act of continuing to use the pit loom could be considered one of ‘subversive naturalisation’ (Venkatesan, 2009, p. 263, citing Wilk), a refusal to move away from the existing order based not on passivity, as suggested by British commentators on local communities’ refusal to adopt new technologies, but actively choosing to adapt based on what suits the community (ibid).<sup>170</sup> Shamji Vishram Valji (son of Vishram, mentioned above) suggested the latter when he proudly recalled weavers in Kachchh collectively refusing to take on the government’s

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<sup>170</sup> A study of determinants of technology adoption on Assamese weaving clusters by Bortamuly and Goswami (2015), shows that the decision to adopt technology is largely down to access to credit to pay for the technology and access to training. Other factors include gender, annual income and distance to the nearest market. Further, it is contractors (job-workers) who are most likely to choose to adopt technology to ease the process and increase productivity which in turn results in increased wages.

suggestions to adopt the jacquard loom, as well as large orders for plain cloth. Shamji said this decision was based on their understanding of value for maintaining the traditional technology for the emerging elite markets seeking authenticity.<sup>171</sup> Visitors come and look round the weaving workshops in Bhujodi and thus have the opportunity to experience authenticity through seeing the looms in action, or (heritage) weaving being ‘performed’ (Kendall, 2014). Such a subversion of authority’s ideas contrasts with Paredes’ account of the Japanese government’s refusal to allow *mingei* potters to adapt their technology to reduce physical exertion and help them to meet demands (Paredes, 2017). In this instance, it was the government that wanted to preserve the authenticity of craft production for tourist visitors.

Conversely many attempts by NGO and government initiatives in India to ‘modernise’ the loom or make it more efficient don’t take the weavers’ considerations and the local context and practicalities in mind. Gajjala et al. (2013) view these technological interventions based on the ‘logics that articulate progress in neoliberal free-market, risk-based globalising hierarchies’ as disadvantaging rural weavers rather than empowering them’. Norris (2013) made a similar observation in her fieldwork in handloom centres in northern Kerala, where upgradation of weavers’ workshops was based on international standards of social accountability, but not practical in the local context.

In other handloom clusters of India, the pit loom has continued to be in use predominantly for its practicality. Unlike the *ghats* and workshops of Rehwa and WomenWeave, the village bordering Maheshwar that consists mainly of weavers’ houses receives very few if any tourists. Almost all the houses have low ceilings and would not fit a frame loom inside. Thus, even though demands might be high, efficiency in production is achieved through the maintenance of collaborative production and shared tasks amongst the family. On the several occasions I visited young weaver Bhavna Sunere’s house, her grandfather was sat at the loom weaving a detailed patterned sari with extra weft *butis* in the *pallu*, and her grandmother was helping him by lifting the wooden slats that lift the necessary yarns to make the *buti* patterning. Thus, the pit loom both works to maintain traditional ways of

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<sup>171</sup> Vishram Valji, S., 2016. Master weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 17 January.

production as well as the more laboriously patterned saris that are decreasing in Maheshwar because of the lack of interest amongst young weavers.



Figure 112. Bhavna's grandparents collaboratively working on their pit loom in their home in Malaharganj.  
Film still: Chayan Sonane



Figure 113. Badranisha's loom in Kaithun village, July 2016

In the weaving village of Kaithun near Kota in Rajasthan, the hand-throw shuttle loom is still widely used. This loom, like Hamir Vankar's in Bhujodi takes up less space than the fly shuttle pit loom and can be folded away when not in use. The women weavers, who make up the majority of 'job weavers' in Kaithun while master weavers are largely men, view weaving purely as an economic activity.<sup>172</sup> The technology has to be simple and practical enough that it can be accessed and put away quickly and efficiently to allow them to fit weaving around household chores. The mat weavers in Venkatesan's study expressed the same view (2009). It is not only the relationship of the weavers and the family working harmoniously together that maintains successful business and good product, but the relationship with the material and technologies too. In Kachchh and Maheshwar, bobbins must be wound ready for when the weaver requires them, and the warp be prepared ready for when the cloth being woven is complete. As soon as the loom is adapted to

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<sup>172</sup> Singh, V., 2016. Founder of Kota Heritage Society: Personal Conversation with Ruth Clifford, Kota, 1 July.

increase efficiency and speed (or indeed capacity is increased by people power, as I discuss below), the ancillary technology too must be changed in order for them to keep up with the weaving. To address this challenge, some families or individuals will specialise in preparing the warp by creating a dedicated space large enough to house a warping frame or mill to count out industrial length warps. This practice occurs in Bhujodi as well as Maheshwar. Thus, technology's agency influences the division of labour and in turn social life. Further, entrepreneurial innovation exists simultaneously alongside technological innovation.

As Lemonnier (1992, p. 82, referencing Leroi-Gourhan), hypothesised, 'as a technology evolves, the success of borrowing depends on its coherence with the internal milieu'. The weavers in Kachchh and Maheshwar make decisions on using technologies, whether it is loom technology, design technologies or digital communication technologies, depending on what is most appropriate to achieve a particular look and quality and build upon their 'own, rich, practice' (Fisher and Botticello, 2016, p. 5). Innovation thus, applies not only to experimenting with colour, layout and pattern, but the selection of tools and materials that will achieve the desired aesthetic and function of the final handloom cloth.

#### **8.4 Technologies for design: the graph**

As well as loom technology, some design processes such as manual and computer aided graphing can be considered as instruments separating the weaver's body from the material. These processes are particularly useful for larger quantities as they reduce risk (Pye, 1968) and ensure regularity in design across the batch, of stoles or saris for example, woven on a single warp. In the Banaras weaving industry there are several layers to this reduction of risk, firstly through drawing out designs on a graph by hand or computer, which are transferred to punch cards, predetermining the outcome of quality and design. Prior to jacquard technology the labour-intensive *jala* (drawloom) technique increased the amount of risk because it was operated purely by both a weaver and a draw boy who would manually lift the individual warp yarns. The workmanship of risk, according to Pye (1968, p. 8), is a trait specific to craftsmanship as the 'quality of the result is not predetermined, but depends on the judgement, dexterity and care which the maker exercises as he works'. To reduce the level of risk in labour-heavy techniques such as

extra-weft (albeit significantly less-laborious than *jala*), layouts are planned out and drawn in graph format.

For several years, student weavers at KRV would plan a collection by sketching small scale layouts in coloured pencils. However, faculty member Lokesh Ghai found that the students had difficulty translating these directly onto the loom, so he introduced the method of creating layouts in actual size. Block printers would print directly on paper to scale, and weavers would use graph paper to draw out their patterned motifs to scale. If the design was for a sari, just the *pallu* was drawn and at least one metre. While some students would initially question the exercise because of the length of time it took, including Pachan who preferred to ‘sketch’ his motifs directly on the loom, ‘usually when they do it, they realise the value because when they have the actual size, they realise how good the motifs are looking if they convert it proportionally’.<sup>173</sup>



Figure 114. Pravin showing his layout in a practice presentation, October 2016

Creating designs on graphs is a key part of the learning at THS, although in Maheshwar

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<sup>173</sup> Ghai, L., 2018. Faculty member and governing council member at SKV: Skype Interview with Ruth Clifford, 18 February 2018

most weavers, both those who had attended THS and those who had not, use graphs to develop their designs. This is in part because graphing is particularly suited to the dobby loom, but also because production is large and it is important to get the design exactly right before weaving starts.



Figure 115. Master weaver Ashok Bande showing his graph designs

‘The benefit of using graphing is that you can find out any errors in the pattern and visualise how it will look. We can also see different colours we use in the warp. After coming back from the school (THS), now we are using graphs to check where we should put which colour and which patterns in the shawl etc. With the new designs, graphics are useful to give an idea of how it will look, but in traditional designs it’s already set in our brain, so we don’t need graphics for [those].’<sup>174</sup>

Arun’s comment suggests that when developing ‘new’ designs for ‘new’ markets, design becomes a separate activity to the embodied process of weaving. Graphs can work as recipes or rules that can abstract the design process from practice (Makovicky, 2010, p. 77). Additionally, graphs are used as source material for future weavers to refer to, which, by serving as templates, can limit creativity and exclusivity. This also leads to a risk of competitors copying from them. The condition of Ashok Bande’s paper graphs in figure 115 suggest they have been referred to several times. One is a photocopy and the others are tattered and well-handled. In Kar’s study of knowledge transmission amongst Sambalpuri weavers (2012), weavers preserve their graph designs for their children to use, thus ensuring the continuity of particular selected designs. Further, the knowledge being passed down through paper designs rather than the woven objects themselves which are

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<sup>174</sup> Vankar, A., Weaver and THS graduate: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Rudramata village, Kachchh, August 2016.

less permanent, may result in a loss of learning through engagement and experimentation with material (see section 7.2), as well as the rhythmic performance of weaving.

Additionally, like advancements in technology, graphing and layouts potentially lead to labour division and hierarchies. The guidelines for faculty in the SKV curriculum strongly advise reminding the student that creating the layout is ‘not to draw it all out and get it produced’, but that the artisan should also be the producer (Frater, 2014, p. 22). However, some weaver-graduates do use the graphs to communicate the designs to job-weavers. One KRV alumni weaver, Murji Vankar (Bhujodi village) says he makes the layout ‘for the weaver and shows it to them to make it easier for them to understand’.<sup>175</sup> The work done by *naqshabands* in Banaras is termed *likhai*, which translates directly to ‘writing’ in English, because there is not a specific term for ‘design’. This term also positions design work and the designer in a higher status to the artisan who physically executes the design. Thus, Pachan, Arun, Pravin and Murji are potentially elevating their professional and social status by incorporating drawing into their process, but in doing so could be creating divisions between themselves and their workers. Graph designs therefore take on a particular agency and can become the ‘instrument which boundaries between craft communities are created, contested and negotiated’ (Makovicky, 2010). The use of graphs has the potential to fix knowledge and rules, while knowledge transmitted through demonstration and action, ‘bodily memory’, like oral storytelling is fluid and adaptable to changing times, the *lokavidya* discussed in chapter 5. Mamidipudi (2016), when drawing upon conversations with Seemanthini Niranjana of Dastkar Andhra, observes that the *theory* of weaving lies within the very practice of weaving. It is embodied in each individual weaver. This observation resonates with Mitchell’s discussion of making as a form of language, speaking and making ‘sharing common origins in the neural system and in the pattern of synaptic, electro-chemical connections between neurons’ (Mitchell, 2012, p. 7), and that ‘the inarticulateness of the artistic person is interpreted easily as a lack of intelligence while it is rather an intelligence expressing itself in other means than words’ (ibid, p. 8).

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<sup>175</sup> Vankar, M., Weaver and KRV graduate: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, January 2016.

Thus, innovation (conversely) is at odds with the attempts of development organisations that provide templates and outlines and is more suited to traditional craft practice than ‘designing’ through drawing and graph making. Graph making and other technologies that separate the weaver from the material, work as pre-set rules which Ingold describes as the ‘rationalisation of the process of production’, that during the industrialising process was seen as lacking in the craftsman’s art (Ingold, 2000, p. 295):

‘The effect of this rationalisation, however, is to remove the creative part of making from the context of physical engagement between workman and material, and to place it antecedent to this engagement in the form of an intellectual process of design.’

These observations demonstrate a tension between the use of graph technology in enabling experimentation and creativity, while running the risk of both fossilising designs and reducing the freedom to innovate with material and embodied knowledge. Further it could potentially lead to the very hierarchies that design education has sought to break – between the educated designer and the ‘worker’.

### **8.5 Technology for design, learning, marketing and communication: the mobile phone**

The opposing dualism that associates digital technology with modernisation and progression on the one hand, and handloom technology with traditionalism or ‘backwardness’ on the other, is one used by Gajjala Niranjana and Syamsundari (2013) to illustrate the paradoxical views of handloom I’ve discussed throughout this thesis. The authors point out that while the IT sector in India only employs thirty percent of the population, it receives wide global attention and is used as an example to demonstrate India’s fast-moving economic development. On the other hand, handloom is the second largest employment provider after agriculture, yet is much less celebrated for its advancement and relevance in a contemporary economy. It is also important to note though that the advancement of digital technology in India has had a dramatic effect on the handloom industry, in several ways. The first is its impact on knowledge transmission and hierarchy. All the skills involved in weaving and business would, in the past have been passed down from the older to younger generation. However, young people are more

well-versed than older people in digital technologies, and so hierarchies of knowledge are reversed. Secondly, social media narrows the distance between the artisan and his or her target market, enabling him to access it directly without the need of a middleman. Using digital technology and social media, artisan-designers can conduct trend and market research, use the phone's camera for capturing images of their surroundings, maintain consistent and easier communication with clients in cities and abroad, and turn-around orders quickly and efficiently. Thus, the phone has the agency to break down social and geographical barriers. Virtual space facilitates the accumulation of social and cultural capital as weavers learn about the tastes of others, whom they in turn influence while promoting their designs to the world.

According to Cook (2017), in India there are 350 million internet users, 200 million of whom are on Facebook and 25 million on Twitter. The estimated number of mobile phone users in India in 2017 was 730.7 million, and of those, 340 million are expected to be smart phone users (Statista, 2017). Landlines were largely bypassed in Kachchh and other rural areas of India, where initiatives such as Reliance Village Initiative introduced mobile phones in the early 2000s. By the time of my fieldwork from 2014 to 2017, mobile phones were consistently present. The majority of weavers participating in my study, particularly those who had graduated from either institute owned a smart phone. THS views the smart phone as a vital tool in maintaining a successful handloom business and so provide one free of charge to each student who enrolls. At the very start of my fieldwork I asked Dayalal Kudecha, permanent faculty at SKV if he could give me some numbers of weavers in Kachchh who may be interested in being interviewed for my research. Some of these weavers would then give me numbers of weavers in their network as a quick snowball sampling method. I would also communicate with research participants on the widely used and most popular communication application, WhatsApp to arrange meetings while I was there, and keep in touch when I was back home. I used my phone to record interviews and sometimes take pictures and film during interviews, visits and observation, while the weavers I visited or interviewed would take and send me pictures of their own work. During my visits to Shamji Vishram Valji's house, we would rarely have a conversation that wasn't interrupted by one of his two phones ringing. Having a phone is essential in maintaining contact with clients as well as his weavers to

track progress of orders. Thus, the phone is a central agent in the network of weavers, workers and the market.



Figure 116. Ganga taking a photograph of the author and weaver Bhavna Sunere outside her house in Malaharganj, March 2017. Photograph: Chayan Sonane

WhatsApp has been a significant tool, a ‘quiet facilitator’ (Border and Fall, 2016) for crafts across India. For graduates of THS and SKV it helps maintain networks after graduating from the institute, enables virtual collectives and sharing of ideas and challenges, and facilitates communication and photograph sharing with clients. Ganga Kanere, graduate of the pilot batch at THS, said there were two things in Maheshwar that were significant in developing and improving the industry and making it more known across India and the world: WomenWeave and social media or the internet.<sup>176</sup> THS founder Sally Holkar went further to say, ‘WhatsApp – keeps this country going now, because it’s free, easy [and] it’s understandable to anyone who’s even illiterate. So, WhatsApp is [...] one of our mentors’.<sup>177</sup>

Most weavers I interviewed, except for those working under master weavers, were heavily reliant on WhatsApp for sharing images of their work and liaising with buyers on

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<sup>176</sup> Holkar, S., 2016. Founder-Director WomenWeave and THS: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Maheshwar, July 2016.

<sup>177</sup> Shroff-Patel, H., 2016. Founder, Amba and Advisory Board member, WomenWeave: Skype Interview with Ruth Clifford, 12 November 2016.

design requirements. Weavers send images of the product they're making in progress to the client who can then reply with any changes to be made. Clients can also send drawings, plans or photographs to help the weaver understand what they want. Hema Patel, a designer in Mumbai who collaborates with Wasim Ansari, one of the members of FabCreation in Maheshwar, says WhatsApp 'is a big, big saviour (and) an amazing vehicle'.<sup>178</sup> It allows Hema and Wasim to maintain regular communication, ensure they understand each other and that the order is running smoothly. This suggests WhatsApp has the agency to maintain trust between producer and client, which is a key component in the running of a successful business (Menning, 1997, Bhagavatula *et al.*, 2010b). Wasim also noted the benefits of Facebook for the wider promotion of his products, telling Livemint magazine that once he puts a photograph up on Facebook or WhatsApp, he will receive orders for at least fifteen to twenty saris (Parakala, 2016). It is for this reason that few graduate artisans have developed their own e-commerce sites, as well as for other reasons including; the lack of infrastructure in rural areas to enable timely delivery of orders; the challenges with working to unforeseen demand; and the skills and time to administer the website. As Nilesh Priyadeshi, former marketing manager for Kala Raksha, who now works at Fabindia notes, 'the larger ecommerce companies have a warehouse, inventory, tie up with the courier agency. For the artisan, it is very difficult to handle the warehouse, the orders, communication and courier company'.<sup>179</sup>

Like the networks in East Godhavari discussed by Mamidipudi, the mobile phone has ruled out the need for middlemen, created a 'new forum for product feedback from lead users directly to producers' and expanded their client network, their social capital and their network of employee weavers (Mamidipudi, 2016, p. 180). The phone enabled the gaps between suppliers and clients to be reduced again, since economic relationships had broken down with industrialisation and commercialisation.

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<sup>178</sup> Shroff-Patel, H., 2016. Founder, Amba and Advisory Board member, WomenWeave: Skype Interview with Ruth Clifford, 12 November 2016.

<sup>179</sup> Priyadeshi, N., 2016. Regional Marketing Coordinator (Gujarat), Fab India: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Ahmedabad, August 2016.

Figure 117 shows THS graduate weaver Manish Pawar carefully positioning his phone on the cloth he is weaving while on the loom. He winds the warp beam to allow for more space and re-positions his phone and shuttles. He doesn't put the phone by his side on his seat but positions the phone back behind the *panak* on the weaving, alongside his shuttles. These gestures suggest the importance of being able to see the phone just as much as seeing his weaving work and having the other two shuttles ready. The image displays a juxtaposition of modern and traditional technology, suggesting the embracing of 'modern' technologies for social and business interaction, while maintaining 'traditional' technologies for the actual weaving process itself. By continuing use of the handloom, the weaver maintains his identity as 'traditional' weaver, an image portrayed and promoted via new digital technology to markets seeking authenticity.



Figure 117. Manish Pavar at his loom with his phone, THS workshop, Maheshwar March 2018. Film still: Chayan Sonane

## 8.6 Labour and scale

I alluded above to the importance of, and reliance on people power, in choosing not to increase technological efficiency. In this sense, the larger the number of clients, or size of clients and orders, the larger the labour force must be. Historically, the rigid caste system in India has dictated that weavers weave, while business matters are left for higher ranking castes such as the Banias. What happens then when weavers start to take hold of business matters too? In her analysis of the transformation of an agrarian class into a business class in rural Andhra Pradesh, Upadhy asks 'what kinds of cultural re-orientation

take place when a social group transforms itself into a class of business entrepreneurs?’ (Upadhyaya, 1997). In Kachchh and Maheshwar, the difference is that not all weavers are becoming entrepreneurs, rather there are currently enough job-weavers to sustain the master weavers’ businesses. I will attempt to explore what kind of cultural reorientation is taking place, by discussing the challenges faced by weaver-graduates of SKV and THS and the individual choices they make when entering the market and selecting clients, which vary from weaver to weaver.

The increased commoditisation of the Kachchhi shawl can be attributed to the expansion of urban markets from the 1970s, but the most notable influence was the liberalisation of India’s economy in the 1990s. From independence to the 1990s, a license raj was in place, restricting free global flow of commodities as part of the socialist government’s austerity plans to ensure availability of capital for investment (Note, 2006). This period facilitated importation of cheaper materials too, which in Kachchh was acrylic. It was acrylic shawls that marked a turning point in Poonam Vankar’s business. He was awarded a place at an exhibition in Guwahati, Assam by the government in the early 1990s, to which he took mainly acrylic shawls, because at that time acrylic was experiencing a boom. Poonam sold his full collection of shawls after the first two days. He said customers appreciated acrylic because of its lower cost. Wool shawls cost INR. 250-300, whereas acrylic shawls cost INR. 140. Labour charges were lower and production twice as fast as wool and cotton, because acrylic is easier to weave, stronger and more resistant to breakage.<sup>180</sup> Acrylic, in this sense, has particularly strong agency (Latour, 2005, p. 71) in determining the course of the Kachchhi shawl industry, the value of the handloom cloth and the (de)-skilling of the weaver.

Herzfeld in his study of Greek artisans, argues that ‘deskilling’ is an inherent part of positioning artisanal textiles in wider global markets in a process he calls the ‘global hierarchy of value’:

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<sup>180</sup> Vankar, P., 2016. Master weaver and SKV graduate: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Mota Varnora Village, Kachchh, 5 August.

‘The demand for quantity erodes the skill that is necessary for quality and cheapens the personal quality that is only recognisable in the skill of the craft or service provided. Within an economic system that increasingly demeans it, however, that skill is often the only form of cultural capital that artisans can transform into economic value. The effects of this kind of routinisation, not unlike the deskilling apparent in industrialised labour, can be devastating (Herzfeld, 2004, p. 57).’

For Kachchh weavers, it is not only their skill that constitutes part of their cultural capital however, but their designs too. Nevertheless, Herzfeld’s description is evident in the increasing popularity of Indian crafts that has coincided with higher income and shopping habits amongst middle-class consumers, as well as the expansion of brands such as Fabindia. The retail chain has marketed itself on celebrating the country’s diverse traditional crafts and has dramatically increased in scale over the last two decades, in correlation with the increasing middle-class consumer base that it targets. The brand started out small scale, specifically targeted export markets, and developed long-standing relationships with overseas buyers such as Terrence Conran at Habitat who understood the criteria and qualities of handloom - that it suited small production. Therefore, small production for a high-end market was sustained for several decades. Founder-director John Bissell had no wish to increase scale, but several events including IKEA buying out Habitat, and then the liberalisation of India’s economy in the 1990s, led to the recognition of a viable domestic market for their products (Singh, 2010). It was John Bissell’s son, William who saw the opportunity in the domestic market and expanded the company into a nationwide chain of stores, today numbering 253 across 93 cities and eleven international stores.<sup>181</sup>

Today, if the weavers in Maheshwar or Kachchh (and most likely from other craft regions too) get orders from Fabindia, it is a mark of success. Fabindia is Maheshwari weaver collective, FabCreation’s best client. Fabindia buyers are also sensitive to the local context such as climate, festival and wedding celebrations and won’t reject orders that are behind the deadline, but in turn they expect high quality.<sup>182</sup> Working with 80,000 artisans, orders

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<sup>181</sup> Fabindia, no date. *Store Locator* [online]. Available at: <https://www.fabindia.com/pages/store-locator/pgid-1124272.aspx> [Accessed 23 June 2018].

<sup>182</sup> Priyadeshi, N., 2016. Regional Marketing Coordinator (Gujarat), Fab India: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Ahmedabad, August 2016.

need to be planned well in advance, usually the year before the collection is due to be released and plenty of back-up time is allocated.<sup>183</sup> Junaid Khatri, son of Dr Ismail Khatri in Ajrakhpur village in Kachchh, whose family produce large orders of block-printed fabric, expressed his mixed views towards Fabindia. He said on the one hand Fabindia is a regular and reliable client, but on the other, places increasingly difficult-to-meet demands and lead times.<sup>184</sup> The family's workforce has increased to include workers from outside the community of Khatri, many who don't have a craft background, and have migrated from poorer regions seeking work in any of the numerous mushrooming industries in Kachchh. In this sense Ismail Khatri and family have taken a similar trajectory to WomenWeave, by increasing employment opportunities for vulnerable communities. However, this has not occurred in Kachchh weaving, because, according to Shamji and other skilled traditional weavers, it takes much longer to teach weaving to the level required for good quality, efficient production. I engage with issues to do with craft, skill and caste in further detail in chapter 9.

When deciding on whether to accept orders or not, the weaver must weigh up the economic and creative benefits and the production capacity he has available. Weavers fresh from graduation and new to the market eagerly take on orders, and some are too polite to refuse orders which can lead to difficulty with meeting demands. More experienced weavers however, have developed best working practices for managing orders. Jentilal explained that if a client approaches him with a large order, before confirming it, he visits his *karigars* and checks that they are free to work on the order. He then calculates how much time the order will take based on the number of available *karigars* and reports this lead-time to the client.<sup>185</sup> Another Bhujodi weaver and KRV graduate, Purushottam expressed that he often gets requests for '500 pieces, 1000 pieces':

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Personal conversation with Junaid Khatri, Kachchh, January 2016. Edwards (2016) discusses this issue in more detail.

<sup>185</sup> Premji Bokhani, J. 2016., Weaver, KRV graduate: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, January.

'But I say, come to my house, see how we are working. I also send my video to this person to give them an idea of how much work goes into these pieces.'<sup>186</sup>

Purushottam insists that only small scale is suited to handloom. Dhanji Hirjibhai Vankar (KRV graduate, Sarli village) also had to turn down orders from other clients so he could produce the 600 shawls and 600 stoles that Fab India had ordered.<sup>187</sup> Dayalal Kudecha has consciously made a niche for himself as the artisan-designer that Frater aspires for SKV graduates to become (see chapter 7). He meets SKV's aims of maintaining his traditional weaver status and the 'USPs' of Kachchhi weaving, while maintaining small quantities of high-quality, innovative work. Dayalal has attended the Santa Fe market four times in five years, and it is now his largest income provider. Before KRV, Dayalal was earning approximately INR 15,000 per month with two looms and now he earns INR 40-50,000 and manages ten looms. In a blog post, Frater quotes Dayalal saying he doesn't believe in scale in craft, that 'it is then not craft' (Frater, 2016). However, when asked if he would increase production should he get more demand, he responded 'yes...we'd like fifty weavers. But quality and finishing are most important'.<sup>188</sup>

While some weavers in Kachchh could easily find weavers to work for them, others say finding weavers that commit to regular work is difficult. Not long after graduating, Pravin Devji Siju (SKV graduate, Bhujodi) expressed concern over whether he would find weavers to work for his family's business should everyone start to attend SKV and become artisan-designers. Conversely, a widely held view amongst professional designers, institute staff and other key figures in craft development is that there will always be need for 'middlemen'. The graduates of SKV and THS are essentially becoming middlemen, in some instances replacing urban designers, but in others assuming the role of additional middlemen in a chain of several. One faculty member of SKV expressed anxiety when he saw some graduates outsourcing their work, that the institute was producing

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<sup>186</sup> Siju, P., 2016. Weaver, KRV + SKV graduate: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, January.

<sup>187</sup> Hirjibhai Vankar., 2016. Weaver and KRV graduate: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Sarli village, Kachchh, January.

<sup>188</sup> Kudecha, D., 2016. Weaver-designer and SKV faculty: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, January.

‘monsters’.<sup>189</sup> Others including urban craft entrepreneurs Subhabrata Sadhu<sup>190</sup> and Dastkar co-founder Tyabji, believe not every craftsperson or indeed designer, can be an entrepreneur.

‘I don’t think it’s necessary for the craftsperson themselves to toddle off to New York or even Fabindia to sell their products. Let someone else do it for them but make sure they’re getting a fair price.’<sup>191</sup>

Holkar agreed that there will always be both middlemen and ‘job-weavers’ because ‘we’re taking about rural India where there are ten kids in a family’ but that ensuring fair prices and ethical treatment of workers can be done by enabling the weavers to have a better idea of the client and their appreciation for cloth. She further added, ‘there is another way of looking at it – these boys will be able to create employment in their town, whereas the big master weavers are moving away from this now’.<sup>192</sup>

### **8.7 The Warp and weft of family business**

Within the traditional production and exchange system in Kachchh, as well as in production today, business is organised along patrilineal lines, the clan structure being conducive to dynastic organisation of any type of business. The larger the demand a weaving family receives, the wider they distribute the order within the community, managing labour horizontally rather than vertically. For example, Jentilal and his two brothers all take part in the weaving, but while his older brother who left school early concentrates purely on weaving, Jenti, having studied at school for longer and attended KRV, specialises in design sampling and business matters. It is only when Jenti receives an order that is too big for the family to manage in the requested timescale, that he asks other weavers to help (as mentioned above). Cousins Mukesh and Dilip in Sarli village, are the sons of two of five brothers all who work in separate weaving businesses, but if one

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<sup>189</sup> Allen, S., 2016. Illustrator and SKV Faculty member: Skype Interview with Ruth Clifford, 28 January.

<sup>190</sup> Sadhu, S., Designer and Founder, Sadhu: Personal conversation with Ruth Clifford, MADE Fair, London, October 2016.

<sup>191</sup> Tyabji, L., 2016. Co-Founder of Dastkar: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Delhi, 23 June.

<sup>192</sup> Holkar, S., 2016. Founder-Director WomenWeave and THS: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Maheshwar, July.

gets a large order or is attending an exhibition, they collaborate to complete the order, or provide work for the exhibition. Ramji in Sumrasar village, candidly described the obligation of helping others with orders:

‘sometimes when we are working, we get a call from a friend or someone says, “please come here, there is a little bit of work”. Then, no work (of our own) is done, but we can’t say no.’<sup>193</sup>

At the graduates’ final collection exhibition at Artisans’ Gallery in Mumbai, some graduates had brought along work done by other members of their family. This frustrated Frater who could pick out such designs as they had no relation to the graduates’ main collection theme. However, bringing along other’s work is part of the habit and obligation of collective working practices. It helps artisans bulk up their own collection, while helping others by selling their work too.

Weaving in Kachchh continues to be the stronghold of the Vankar Meghwal community, all of whom are related to each other either by blood or by marriage, even if distantly or unknowingly. These ‘natural’ ties of family and community (while loosening in some families as members of the young generation choose alternative professions or marry into a non-weaving family) are important for maintaining successful businesses, commonly illustrated by weavers using the metaphor of the warp and weft. Pravin Premji Siju (SKV graduate, 2015), designed his logo based on this concept. He used the traditional *satkhani* zig-zag motif to represent his brand name ‘Three Ws: connecting warp, weft and weaver’. In his practice presentation, Pravin said he took inspiration from his joint family business. Pachan Siju, Pravin’s classmate approached his logo design with a similar sentiment. He came up with the slogan ‘Three Threads’ based on weaving being the ‘thread that links me and my brothers’ (SKV portfolio, 2015). The premature death of Pachan’s father was an impetus to further strengthening these ties in order to provide a stable income for the extended family. With a low level of school education but high level of weaving and design skills, Pachan now specialises in weaving and designing in the family business.

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<sup>193</sup> Maheshwari, R., 2016. Weaver, KRV and SKV graduate: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Sumrasar Sheikh, Kachchh, August.

Purushottam has taken on the business and marketing role, something he had previous experience of during a stint working for an NGO and has more recently built upon during the SKV Business and Management course. Dhanji the eldest brother oversees production. The women of the family who undertake the ancillary tasks are integral to the whole weaving process, and by talking about business matters over dinner, all the family are involved so understand upcoming orders, tasks to be completed and deadlines.



Figure 118. Pachan (far left), Purushottam (right) and their families. Photograph: Shradha Jain

While SKV encourages individual creativity and innovation, the sharing of business tasks within the family encourages the sharing of designs also. On the first day of my weaving course, Purushottam brought along a stole that had been inspired by a traditional Rabari *dhablo*, drawing particularly on the *sachikor* border. The main ground was in grey and the *sachikor* and tassels were bright neon colours. It was very similar to a design Pachan had made for Anar Patel for the SKV Market Orientation homework just a few months previously (see chapter 7, section 6). Purushottam suggested that the piece was his own. It transpired that while Purushottam and Pachan each came up with their own individual designs during the design and business courses, the name the product was sold under depended on the market. Some clients, such as tourists passing through the village seek a Kachchhi shawl, the authorship of which is with the community of Kachchh weavers. But the client that seeks high quality contemporary designs is more likely to work with one

individual weaver, to sell something exclusive. This is when protection from copying becomes important.

## 8.8 Competition

Competition does exist within the family though. Shamji's younger brother Rajesh who graduated from the KRV design course in 2009, has little opportunity to work on his individual designs, and even when he does, they have to be approved by his brothers and often get lost amongst the wider range of designs the whole family produces. Rajesh joined the business course in 2016 alongside Purushottam and Tala, a *bandhani* artisan. One class included a discussion around competition, during which the students suggested that while designs are shared within one extended family or household, relations that extend beyond this household are often viewed as competition. Tala said his main competitor was his *mama* (mother's brother), who happens to be Jabbar Khatri, a successful master artisan who is well-known in global networks. It was not clear whether there was any competition between Rajesh and Purushottam during the course, although Rajesh would often seem to take care with his words.<sup>194</sup> Each of their final collections were very distinct though, which was the case with most of both design and business graduate collections. Even where students had utilised similar collectively owned motifs, patterns or techniques, each artisan-designer had adapted them in his own way.



Figure 119. Pravin discussing his *adhivto*-inspired shawl imitating the *machikanto* join using the ikat technique. Pachan, Pravin's classmate also used the *machikanto* stitch, but more literally in his dupatta for Anar Patel

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<sup>194</sup> Fieldnotes, 12 August 2016



Figure 120. Left: Mukesh's miri Right: Murji's miri



Figure 121. Rajesh's miri

The concept of individual intellectual property in design is rooted in capitalist and industrial production. It could be said that the Geographical Indication (GI), defined as 'that aspect of industrial property which refer to the geographical indication referring to a country or to a place situated therein as being the country or place of origin of that product' (G.o.I, no date) is also a primarily commercial and competitive strategy, capitalising on the global 'salience for the local' (Kawlra, 2014). Moreover, groups of artisans themselves were involved in the decisions on the Kachchhi GI, which centralises their perspective on what particular elements distinguish Kachchhi weaving as being from Kachchh. The examples above of individual weavers' innovations upon distinctive elements of Kachchh weaving, demonstrate a combination of individual and collective identity. They also demonstrate that Indian crafts need not be homogenously viewed as

collectively owned, in direct opposition to 'design' as individually owned. Rather, by bringing together creativity, design direction and an embodied and sensory awareness of craft skills and heritage, individual weavers take ownership of collectively shared elements, taking them in new directions.

### **8.9 Trust**

Both De Neve (2008) and Menning (1997) in their studies of handloom and powerloom weaving industries, find that close kinship ties help to maintain a steady workforce through the trust and loyalty between the workers and their master weavers and dedication to traditional caste occupation, even when the relations of the worker to the master weaver are distant. Bagavatula et al (2010, p. 248, citing Larson) argue that strong ties provide 'fine-grained knowledge' and promote 'trust and inter-firm understanding'. Shamji Vishram Valji and Chaman Premji Siju are two successful and well-known master weavers who strive to maintain reciprocal levels of trust with their employees and be socially responsible master weavers. Both view social values as important for doing good business, or 'appearing to do good business, and take a paternalistic approach to ensure they maintain the loyalty of their workers' (Upadhya, 1997, p. 58). Shamji employs a total of 60 weavers across Kachchh, and strongly asserts his position as an ethical and even altruistic master weaver. He has built 'symbolic capital' (legitimacy and prestige) (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 285; 1990, p. 119), through charitable support to his employees, providing stipends to his employees to attend SKV, being an advisor of SKV, giving classes on traditional Kachchhi weaving and seeing his role as one of preserving the industry.

'I travelled by bike, all over Kutch, every month for 2-3 days; to Adhoi, to Nakhatrana, to Lakhpat. I didn't work with them, just met weaver families. After that, I wanted to support crafts and give new ideas for the market. I think it was for this reason that I have become well-known.'<sup>195</sup>

The role Shamji has assumed which also involves efforts to revive spinning and lac dyeing and provide embroidery work to women in various villages around Kachchh, is like that of NGO workers and craft development activists. Like the Surat master weavers discussed by Menning (ibid, p. 64), Shamji asserts that the running of his business is largely based on

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<sup>195</sup> Vishram Valji Vankar, S., 2016. Master weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 3 August.

reciprocal trust between himself, his employees, suppliers and buyers. In the past Shamji monitored every job he contracted to his workers. He now relies on trust to maintain these relationships.<sup>196</sup> Of the government's awards for craftspeople, the one that specifically recognises social responsibility is the Sant Kabir award, which several master weavers in Kachchh possess, including Premji Siju who was also one of the pioneers of the Bhujodi Weavers Cooperative (although not currently in operation, see chapter 4, section 3.2). The award is given to a handloom weaver who is either already in possession of one of the other awards for craftspeople (the National or State Award or the National Merit Certificate), or is exceptionally skilled and 'who has contributed significantly to the promotion, development and preservation of the weaving tradition and welfare of the weaving community' (Ministry of Textiles, 2017). Premji's son Chamanlal aims to follow in his father's footsteps and talks of similar approaches to working relationships as Shamji. He has recently begun commissioning work from Tangalia weavers in Eastern Kachchh, a craft considered endangered and in need of revival.

Focusing both on small-scale niche markets and larger mass markets enables Shamji and Chaman to focus both on the collectively produced object, the Kachchhi shawl which is symbolic of community and local heritage, as well as individually designed objects, high-end pieces symbolic of individual creativity and their status as modern globalised entrepreneurs. Combined these foci help the weavers accumulate a combination of cultural, social and symbolic capital and high regard in both the weaving community and the wider trans-regional and transnational market network. I will now go onto discuss how choices are made to transform symbolic artefacts into commodities, depending on changing value.

#### **8.10 Monetary value: negotiating price**

Both Shamji and Chaman stressed their efforts to avoid letting money obstruct their ethical approaches and integrity. Chaman thinks that young boys today entering the business are too concerned with money, and retold the advice his father gave him:

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid

'He says money comes on the side, not first. He said your work is making cloth, your duty is making cloth for people all over the world – this is your duty. First you should think that, not just about money.'<sup>197</sup>

Shamji echoed Chaman's sentiments, saying:

'My father tells me, [if] you are thinking only [about] business, your product is without heart. So, I [say to] graduate students, work with your heart, and with tradition so it will have long life. If you just focus on business and more production, the craft will be lost one day'.<sup>198</sup>

Shamji and Chaman hope that the combination of working with 'heart' and 'tradition' will enhance the emotional and cultural value of the woven product. And it is by 'enhancing value rather than volume' that Frater believes is the answer to dealing with issues of scale (Frater, 2016). She goes onto argue; 'this would mean better wages and better quality of life for more people', as a form of horizontal, rather than vertical expansion. Thus, economic capital is not completely rejected, indeed it can lead to additional capabilities (Sen, 1999), bring increased freedom to enter the market and can be converted into cultural, social and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1984). Chaman followed his sentence above with a contradicting one, saying '[if] you're working with your heart, customers will come to your home and pay a lot of money'. Chaman appears to have caught onto a wider market for Kachchh textiles that seek authenticity based on a 'nostalgia for an idealised and fixed point in time when folk culture was supposedly untouched by the corruption that is automatically associated with commercial development' (Jansen, 2015, p. 119 citing Halter), which may have never existed. The increasing promotion and narrative material on Kachchhi weaving, helped by digital platforms, almost always mentions and often in a romanticised way, its history of non-monetary exchange and long-standing bonds held between the producers and their clients. Thus, the authenticity of Kachchhi weaving is not only confirmed by the inclusion of traditional elements, but also for the way it was sold and exchanged in the past, which many of the older weavers still remember, has been recorded in genealogical records which preserve caste lineages, and which younger generations tell the modern consumer to create a captivating story.

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<sup>197</sup> Premji Siju, C., 2016. Master Wweaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, January.

<sup>198</sup> Vishram Valji Vankar, S., 2016. Master weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, August.

In both Maheshwar and Kachchh, the woven product has always existed as a ‘commodity’ in that it has been exchanged, whether for other products considered equal in value or for money. An exception in Kachchh is the *bhediyo*, a shawl woven as an offering to Mataji, the mother goddess who is worshipped by both Meghwals and Rabaris (see appendix J). In Kopytoff’s terms (1986), the *bhediyo* holds ‘singularity’, a sacred or special quality. Shamji has developed pieces based on this design in a bright electric blue and orange, as well as in natural un-dyed sheep wool which have become popular in European markets as throws, thus transforming a ceremonial object into an economic commodity.

This adaptation of the *bhediyo*, derives out of the value that non-local clients hold in ceremonial objects, for their story and rich symbolic meaning. Applying a monetary cost to their products has been a challenge for the weavers over the last few decades as they have entered urban and global markets. During this transition craftspeople can be vulnerable to exploitation. Embroidery artisans (mostly women) in Kachchh whose products are probably the most distinct examples of those having ‘singularity’, which in the past were made for the self, the dowry or for ceremonies such as festivals or weddings; have been specifically subject to exploitation by traders seeking kitsch products for the tourist market. Low levels of numeracy skills are an additional cause of vulnerability to exploitation (as discussed in chapter 2, section 11). However, it is cooking, a job traditionally done by women, which is used in the SKV costing classes as an example of planning investment, spending, selling and profit making. Visiting faculty Allen Shaw first came up with the idea to teach costing through cooking, an activity he enjoys himself and one he thought the women in the Market Orientation class he was teaching, would relate to. Shaw divided the group into two and instructed each group to cook and sell a meal to the other.

‘They learned about management in terms of time, how do you manage the money when you buy the ingredients? You need a jeep to get to the city to get the goods. In this whole exercise money became an important issue. The whole point was for them to sell the food to the other group. The other group also had a limited amount of money with them. So, they had to learn pricing and profit making.’<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Shaw, A., 2016. Illustrator and SKV Faculty member: Skype Interview with Ruth Clifford, 28 January.

This activity is now a regular part of most Market Orientation classes during the design course. As SKV graduate Ramji discussed what he had learnt on the business course, he expressed admiration for women for their knowledge of money management and planning in terms of ensuring a continuous supply, and cost-efficient consumption of food supplies in their home.<sup>200</sup> Indeed these skills are transferrable to entrepreneurship, and a focus on necessity has made women successful entrepreneurs in other handloom regions such as Assam (Bortamuly *et al.*, 2014). However, factors such as lack of access to credit and markets, traditional patriarchal expectations of the woman's role being in the home and having little interaction with outsiders, have restricted women's full participation in entrepreneurial roles (I engage more closely with issues to do with gender in the handloom industry in chapter 9, section 7).

At SKV, costing is re-visited and revised when it comes to planning collections for the final exhibition at the end of the design course. Frater strongly encourages students not to under-value themselves and their product, and that the cultural value should be factored into the valuation. According to Shilpa Sharma, CEO of Jaypore.com which sells Dayalal Kudecha's work, whilst more expensive than some of the other weavers' work in Bhujodi, is 'totally able to pitch itself at a higher perceived value, because of the whole design content and his ability to play with colour'.<sup>201</sup> Dayalal is very business savvy and the way he has successfully balanced good design and business skills are what has made him successful today.

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<sup>200</sup> Maheshwari, R., 2016. Weaver, KRV and SKV graduate: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Sumrasar Sheikh, Kachchh, August.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid



Figure 122. A silk-cotton stole by Dayalal Kudecha. Dayalal was inspired by architectural details in the Almatti dam in Bagalkot during a visit there for the outreach project he was involved in. The wide panel in the *pallu* is an extension of the *popti* design

By contrast, Sharma who is also on the advisory board for THS and was involved in the early conversations and planning (although she is less involved now), placed orders with some of the graduates of the first batch of THS. She found their prices to be too high in comparison with large-scale established weavers, stressing that ‘If we have to work with the young weavers, whether it’s the first batch or the second batch, third batch, they have to be competitively priced as well, otherwise it will become extremely difficult for us to place large orders’.<sup>202</sup> She went on to explain the importance of competitive pricing as every customer of Jaypore is going to be comparing price-points across varieties. At the time of our interview, Sharma believed that not enough attention had been paid to

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid

teaching student weavers how to cost their product effectively, while also agreeing with Tyabji who believed that ‘students that graduate from prestigious design schools are not necessarily commercially savvy, they’re not particularly equipped to make a product commercially viable’.<sup>203</sup>

This scenario supports the argument for the need to collaborate with family members or employ intermediaries, as I discussed in section 8.7 and 7.9.1. Nevertheless, to justify the handloom product’s price, the weaver must position it in the relevant context with the necessary labelling and branding. Negotiating this positioning is another challenge for weavers that I will now discuss.

### **8.11 Value in changing contexts and categories**

SKV students are encouraged to consider their craft as ‘art’ to increase its value and in turn, to elevate their status. This view is premised on a resistance to the cheapening of cultural craft objects into mass-produced kitsch souvenirs, or objects produced by amateurs for whom craft is a hobby rather than an occupation. Craft is inferior to ‘art’ and creativity (Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006). Art holds high status through its association with professionalism, individual creativity, higher taste, luxury and the concept on which the creation is based (considered in section 7.7). According to McGowan (2015, p. 73), during the Arts and Craft movement ‘art ideals’ had been introduced into ‘craft evaluations’:

‘Specifically, this meant the introduction of the idea that craft should be considered in art terms, according to things like creativity, individuality and personal expression’ (ibid).

This marked a move from the labelling of Indian handloom objects specifically, as collectively produced ‘craft’ by the colonial state. Nevertheless objects have always moved through different regimes of value (Myers, 2001; Clifford, 1998), and are categorised according to the context in which they are positioned. The portfolio of handloom objects in Kachchh and Maheshwar alone, can be positioned within a wide range of categories. The Maheshwari sari is associated with luxury and royalty, and most labels or e-commerce

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<sup>203</sup> Tyabji, L., 2016. Co-Founder of Dastkar: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Delhi, 23 June.

site captions accompanying 'authentic' Maheshwari saris include the story of Maheshwar's handloom heritage. Exhibited in an ethnographic museum, the accompanying label is likely to describe the cultural, intangible or historical context of the sari, while a contemporary sari in a fashion show or boutique store will be distinguished for its 'style and fashionability' (Crang and Ashmore, 2009). For the Maheshwari sari clientele, the sari is a medium of their individuality, creative and cultural expression.

On the other hand, the Kachchhi *dhablo* – the object that most weavers would show me as an exemplar of their 'traditional' handloom weaving, has been transformed from a 'humble' and 'utilitarian' product that provides warmth and protection (McDonald, 2015) to an exclusive and culturally valuable fashion accessory. The *ludi*, with its inextricable links to individual status, identity and ceremonial importance, continues to be categorised as a cultural artefact and is more likely to be exhibited in a museum. On the other hand, as mentioned above, adaptations of the *bhediyo* have become commoditised into high-value interior furnishings. Some weavers have had their pieces displayed in art galleries in both India and abroad (Clifford, 2012).

Consequently, the artisan-designers' objects straddle the categories of cultural artefacts and contemporary art, fashion or design. On two occasions SKV held their final collection show at Artisans' Gallery in the arts district of Kala Ghoda in Mumbai. As its name suggests the gallery exhibits and sells work by artisans all over India. This includes work designed by individual designers but made by artisans. While the space is distinctly labelled as a gallery, exhibits usually comprise of larger quantities of products, rather than exclusive one-off pieces. The SKV exhibitions include exclusive 'master pieces' by graduates with striking designs and large amounts of detailed work displayed on the walls, while at a lower level, stoles, saris, shawls and garments are piled on tables or hung on racks. The result is a sort of high-end 'exhibition-cum-sale', to use the term widely applied to government and NGO organised events selling Indian handicrafts. Being arranged in this way, objects are presented as something in between an art object and a commodity, and artisans in between artisans and designers or artists.

## 8.12 Fashion and luxury

Today, the Indian fashion industry, largely concentrated in Delhi, is almost as big as other fashion cities in the world which have a much longer history. According to Khaire (2017), its value was estimated at \$27 million in 2001 and was expected to rise by ten to eighteen times this number in 2015. Many of India's fashion designers incorporate handcrafted techniques into their designs. As shown in chapter 2, a selection of these designers featured in the Fabric of India exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum, and designers using machine-made fabrics or digital technologies were disregarded. According to Vogue India editor, Bandana Tewari (cited in Varma, 2016) 'the emphasis on Indian craft is widely perceived as the USP of Indian fashion' and that 'Indian designers did best when working with craft and textile'. WomenWeave have tapped into this market, and several of the big names in Indian fashion have increased WomenWeave's profile.

Furthermore, 'functioning at the nexus of sustainable development, craft heritage and slow fashion' (Goldsmith, 2014), WomenWeave meet the markets seeking authentic craft objects and sustainable fashion, as well as those seeking to wear their 'Indianness on their sleeve' (Assomull, 2016). Indeed, handloom fabric, and more specifically *khadi* is the ultimate symbol of 'Indianness', most suited to women, the dominant consumers of fashion, in the form of the sari.

In contrast to Gandhi's *khadi* which many women rejected for its simplicity and coarse feel,<sup>204</sup> this *naya khadi*, (see sections 2.4.6 and 6.2) is considered 'homegrown luxury' (2016).<sup>205</sup> Both Frater and Holkar agree that handloom and craft is best suited to a luxury market, defined by Chandon, Laurent and Valette-Florence (2016, p. 301) as comprising of non-essential items, or items of indulgence. Borioan and De Poix (2010, pp. 119-121) cite

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<sup>204</sup> Tarlo (1996) discusses Jawarhalal Nehru's complaints over the coarseness of *khadi* and his request for finer fabrics, while later, his wife Kamala Nehru as well as the poet and politician Sarojini Naidu, 'the most politically motivated women...retained at least some decoration in their saris'.

<sup>205</sup> The sari as political agent has been discussed widely. Examples include: The link between former prime minister Indira Gandhi's sartorial choices and her aims of solidarity with weavers, as well as the demonstration of a more homogenous Indian identity on the global stage; non-Indian's appropriation of Indian dress; the contemporary association of the Indian sari with an increasingly extreme form of nationalism in the face of the current political populist climate. This climate has developed from a fear of globalisation and attempts to reassert community and religious divisions (Qadri, 2017).

several Indian fashion designers' ideas of luxury. For Rajesh Pratap-Singh, luxury is the quality of the work, the fact that 'the product is handmade and thus special'. Another designer, Asish N. Soni, said 'luxury has been the country's cultural heritage'. Sabyasachi Mukherjee believes luxury 'lies in the perfect cut, achieved with love and care' and Rana Gill says, 'a handwoven, well-draped sari is luxury to me'.

While the former two quotes suggest luxury (and therefore value) can lie in the craft product on its own, the latter two suggest that these designers' intervention is important for adding value or enhancing the product's luxury. To achieve the 'perfect cut', the intervention of a fashion designer is required. While quality, cut and drape are all aspects that artisan-students at SKV and THS are taught to consider, they don't learn pattern cutting (and indeed are not fashion designers), so to transform the handloom fabric into a fashion garment they require the input of a trained fashion designer, or they can simply sell the handloom fabric to a fashion designer. On the back of WomenWeave's success with high-end fashion designers, the THS course is designed around teaching techniques to weave fashion fabrics, rather than one-off un-cut pieces of 'wearable art', a term used by Frater to describe the sari. THS students have some space to experiment with their own designs, but the samples for the Buyer-Seller Meet are developed with professional textile designers. In 2017 fashion designers were also approached to develop the fabrics into garments to show on the catwalk at Amazon India Fashion Week (AIFW) in Delhi. Neha Ladd who has been working with WomenWeave since its early years worked on the fabrics for this collection alongside Bangalore based designer Sayan Chanda and the whole collection was coordinated by Rekha Bhatia who has held a long-standing association with WomenWeave through her own brand Kishmish in Mumbai. On projects for WomenWeave Neha draws upon the traditional elements of weavers she works with, whether in Maheshwar, Dindori or Balaghat, but this was not possible when designing for THS, with students from various handloom backgrounds. The only brief the two designers were given was the colour palettes and the warps. Neha had 20 warps, while Sayan had 30. The fashion designers commissioned to make these fabrics up into garments included Sanjay Garg whose brand Raw Mango is known for its rich colour palette and lustrous fabrics, along with Rajesh Pratap Singh, Neeru Kumar and Pero. The final choice of colours for the garment range included mostly muted neutral tones, which Neha was disappointed

by, having developed a broad range of colour combinations, and expected the fashion designers to be a bit braver in their colour selections, concluding that ‘perhaps that’s The Handloom School look’.<sup>206</sup>



Figure 123. THS at Amazon Fashion Week, February 2017 Photographer: Sachin Soni (THS, 2017)

This scenario suggests then that not only can the weaving techniques be potentially standardised, but the designs too, to conform to a brand identity that belongs to THS and not each individual weaver. The overall visual impact of the designs lay in the shapes and forms of the garments.

A concern for the loss or dilution of the individual weavers’ identity, as well as the distinct elements of the collective craft tradition as the fabric is transformed into a garment by a more well-known designer, is one reason Frater encourages SKV graduates to steer clear of producing yardage for fashion designers. The other major fashion event, equal in AIFW’s status, is Lakme Fashion Week, held annually in Mumbai. In February 2017, SKV ‘made history’ (Frater, 2017) when a selection of SKV graduates had their own slot, and the artisan-designers walked down the ramp alongside the models to be recognised as the ‘designers’ of the collections. The majority of pieces worn by the models were unstitched pieces - saris, stoles and shawls, but they were not simply worn on their own and draped in any of the (albeit numerous and regional) ways, but were combined with other garments or accessories, which as I watched the film (Fashion Feed, 2017) took my

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid

attention away from the woven details in the saris, the colour palettes and composition of motifs designed by the weavers. It seemed as if the stylists of the show had considered the handwoven pieces on their own as not 'designed' enough. They needed to be structured and striking to draw in the audience's attention. This made Frater question the role of crafted textiles in fashion design, asking whether craft should lend itself to fashion, or fashion to craft:

'Craft is creation by hand, essentially personal, made to satisfy a need and delight the heart. Fashion is about style, a look, an attitude: inherently about the body and creating desire' (Frater, 2017b).

Figure 124. KRV graduate and weaver, Chaman Siju's collection at Lakme Fashion Week (Payal, 2017). *Image removed for copyright reasons.*

Existing studies of non-western fashion cultures are centred around the distinct categories of fashion and craft, and distinct roles of urban designer and skilled craftsperson (for example; Jansen, 2015; Jay, 2015; Khaire, 2017). In the context of Kachchh and Maheshwar, these categories and roles are less distinct. There is a much more populated continuum of roles in which artisans are at one end and the market at the opposite, with a series of artisan-designers, weaver-entrepreneurs, fashion designers and fashion entrepreneurs in between, each relying on at least one if not more intermediaries. A similarly populated continuum exists between the weaver and technology, with various

forms of loom and digital technology adopted or rejected depending on design choices and market, as shown in the first four sections of this chapter. For the urban fashion designer-client, the artisan can paradoxically be expected to produce large quantities of yardage which compromises their 'traditional' ways of working, and to uphold a localised traditional identity through the cloth's hand-crafted qualities and attached heritage. When selling directly to a retail client at an exhibition such as the Artisans' Gallery, the artisan-designer has more freedom to express his or her creativity and cultural identity. However, this identity is not fixed, and the product embodies the diverse influences from the various spheres in which the artisan-designer socialises within (as mentioned in chapter 7).

Like their urban fashion designer clients, whose brand identity hinges on showcasing their national identity and cultural differences in a globalised world, the weavers in this study are also realising the value of their own cultural identity. At the same time, they negotiate and re-negotiate this identity, what it means to be Kachchhi or Maheshwari, a weaver, Indian, an artisan, or a designer. As I've pointed to in the previous chapter, students and graduates are accessing some of the social and economic resources of the trans-categorical (craft, fashion, museum object) market network and, the more the artisan becomes socialised into these communities, the more authority they gain to determine value, taste and trends. In this sense, artisan-designers mobilise from a 'working' class, utilising only manual skills, to an educated class. But to be fully socialised, to accumulate sufficient cultural and social capital, artisan-designers must also be accepted as educated class members and designers and therefore, potential trend and taste-setters, by the 'bourgeoisie'. When I explained my research to a founder-director of one of the plethora of urban design institutes whose intake is made up of only urban English speaking students, she brushed off the notion, saying 'but of course artisans could never be designers!'<sup>207</sup> suggesting a deep-rooted perception of artisans as 'doers', based upon the hierarchies mentioned early on in this thesis, as well as the rigidity of caste that current debate shows is proving difficult to shed. Indeed, the determinants of value as discussed above, have largely been influenced by a bourgeois market. What would be useful in

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<sup>207</sup> Surana, A., 2016. Founder-director, ARCH Academy of Design: Personal Conversation with Ruth Clifford, November.

considering the trajectories artisan-graduates choose, is considering the artisan's role in determining the value of the product and importantly, including them in the debate.

To explore this further warrants a discussion of the ambitions of students and recent graduates of the institutes, the routes that graduates take and the roles they take on, which the next chapter will focus on.

### **8.13 Summary**

I began this chapter with a discussion of the importance that both SKV and THS place on increasing the value of handloom and traditional craft, particularly focusing on ideas of the handloom cloth's quality and authenticity. By diverting into discussions of choices between adopting new technologies, employment of workers, and scale of production, I have demonstrated that these choices and the diverse trajectories that artisan-graduates take upon graduating from the institute, interact with notions and negotiations of value, both determined by the artisan-designer and by the spaces the woven object enters in the commercial sphere. It is useful to return to Kopytoff's notion of the biography of commodities here, by suggesting that the woven object, like the weaver enters markets depending on notions of identity and valuation:

'In the homogenised world of commodities, an eventful biography of a thing becomes the story of the various singularisations of it, of classifications and reclassifications in an uncertain world of categories whose importance shifts with every minor change in context. As with persons, the drama here lies in the uncertainties of valuation and of identity (Kopytoff, 1986).'

In this sense, the agentive power of the woven cloth, the technology used to weave it, the human actors including the weavers themselves, intermediaries such as teachers and fashion designers, all play a role in determining the value of the object according to both the weaver and the market. The next chapter will discuss the factors that influence decisions on the value of weaving as an occupation, amongst various agents including the family, community, the education institute and the state.

# 9

## Ambitions and Aspirations: Career Trajectories in Handloom

### 9.1 Introduction

One of the key objectives of this research was to determine the extent to which design and business education can lead to sustainable and desirable livelihoods in weaving. This chapter discusses how I've pursued this objective by focusing on the ambitions and aspirations of weavers as designers, entrepreneurs or any other role they may choose, and the trajectories they follow upon graduating from THS and SKV. I explore these choices and trajectories from a broader perspective of handloom communities, considering the industry as a whole as well the state. I therefore move beyond the specific focus on the relationship between the weavers, the woven cloth, family, technology and market as I did in the previous chapter. Hart (2012) in her study of the aspirations of students in a selection of UK schools, combines Bourdieu's theories of habitus, capital and field, which I have drawn upon in previous chapters, with Sen's capability approach to argue that the accumulation and activation of different forms of capital leads to the acquisition of individual capabilities, the 'freedom to lead the kind of lives we have reason to value' (Sen, 1999, p. 31). Thus, this chapter examines to what extent the occupation of handloom is valued, and how value is influenced by design and business education.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, when categorising and coding my data, the largest category was 'ambitions'. Indeed, education is a pathway into a career, a route chosen to reach better opportunities and to increase capabilities. Inevitably, students have on their mind what will come next. Data showed that ambitions and reality don't necessarily match and that the trajectories graduates follow are diverse and nuanced, and like young people in any part of the world, may take different forms at different stages of their life. I discuss the issues around craft and caste, which are inextricably linked. I question whether design education that is aimed specifically at traditional artisans strengthens caste identity, and if

so, whether this is considered positive for the pride it brings to weavers, or negative for craft's deep-seated association with subjugation. Contrary to assumptions influenced by the paradoxical views I keep re-visiting throughout this thesis, of weavers being symbols of tradition or as 'backward', the lived reality of these weavers demonstrates that options do not simply comprise the binary oppositions of either 'becoming a good weaver' or becoming well educated, as found to be the case amongst Ansari weavers in Banaras by Kumar (2007, p. 147). The routes graduates take are led by the forms of capital they accrue in the various habituses and fields they circulate within, and the activation of this capital into capabilities.

## 9.2 Family and social expectations

In his *Distinction* thesis (1984), Bourdieu argues that having a disadvantaged or less-privileged upbringing does not restrict an individual from having a 'privileged' lifestyle or entering elite institutions or jobs. Historically in India, the caste system did impose such restrictions on the social mobility of low caste groups, although *sanskritisation*, as discussed in chapter 2 demonstrates instances where communities were able to challenge the system. However, in contemporary times public and private institutions in India, as in other countries, while accepting of lower castes, can 'contribute to social inequalities as well as overcome them' (Sarojini Hart, 2012, p. 50). While on the one hand the reservations system has enabled the empowerment and social mobility of lower, historically subjugated castes, or created a 'class within castes' (Pathania and Tierney, 2018, p. 7), positive discrimination has a tendency to reinforce caste divisions too. Class status may be elevated, but caste status can linger. As Deliege (2011, p. 27) notes, 'a system that is based on the recognition of caste cannot lead to its suppression'. According to Pathania and Tierney (2018, p. 10), Dalits experience double stigmatisation on entering university through the reservation system, based on their caste identity and as a recipient of state provision. Furthermore, Basole notes the failure of the state in filling posts in reserved categories and reducing institutional discrimination against Dalit and Adivasi students.

'And so, our colleges and universities remain substandard imitations of Western universities, where teaching, learning and examinations have become performances to be acted out in order to draw salaries and receive often worthless degrees' (Basole, 2018).

Alongside the government's attempts at increasing education and employment opportunities for scheduled castes and tribes through reservations and subsidies (outlined in chapter 2, section 12), both the government's Development Commission (Handlooms), and the Ministry of Skill Development have policies to secure employment in weaving through training and subsidies. Thus, weavers on a whole are expected to fit into two distinct fields of work: jobs that represent 'modern' India and the economic aims of the country, such as an engineer, bank administrator or mobile phone dealer, or roles that resemble India's 'traditional' heritage: a skilled weaver or weaving technician, through training such as that provided by the Indian Institutes of Handloom Technology (IIHT) or Weavers Service Centres (WSC).

While many of their parents will not have attended higher education, increasing numbers of young members of weaving families today are studying for undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, the most popular subjects being science, commerce and engineering. These are subjects that the government encourages based on current policies and the economic needs of the country. While Singh (2012, p. 190) found at the time of writing, that just fifteen per cent of India's secondary graduates were employable, the number of college and university graduates far exceeds the job vacancies in the limited positions that scheduled caste communities are aspiring to (Basole, 2018). Several of the weavers in this study communicated corroborating experiences. While interviewing the 2016 batch of THS students to write their profiles, several weavers said they had been to college to pursue a bachelors or even a masters degree, after which Umashankar who was interpreting expressed, 'these days everyone wants to get a degree to have the certificate, but they hardly ever get jobs with them and they're mostly not good quality'<sup>208</sup>.

Kanji Siju, the nephew of Bhujodi master weaver Shamji Vishram Valji studied engineering up until MA level. He then acquired a lecturing job at the government engineering college in Bhuj, but not without facing intense competition.

'There were 270 [vacant seats] in Gujarat State and [...] almost 25,000 people applied for the same job. After a written test, they selected four [candidates] for the job and after

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<sup>208</sup> Patidar, U., 2016. Marketing Manager, THS: Personal Conversation with Ruth Clifford, Maheshwar, 13 July.

document verification they cut the ratio to 1:3. and then they call for a personal interview.<sup>209</sup>

Another weaver from Bhujodi, Vinay Namori Vankar had studied for an MBA at Kutch University and was hoping to get a job in a bank. However, after several months of applying he could not find a position and is now working on business and marketing for the family weaving business.

Interviews with both young weavers and the older generation of weavers demonstrate conflicting views on their children's future. On the one hand, they are proud of their family heritage and occupation, described by Kanji Vankar (Kotay village), as 'an important job'<sup>210</sup> and by Namori Vankar (Bhujodi), as providing one of the three basic needs, '*roti, kapra, makan* [...] people will always need clothes'.<sup>211</sup> On the other hand, weavers' parents seek to uplift the family's status and social capital through higher education influenced by wider society and social expectations. Furthermore, arts subjects are not valued to the same extent as science subjects. While Arun Vankar (THS graduate, Kachchh) was keen to study arts, his father encouraged him to take up a science degree, which he did for two years before deciding to leave and sign up for THS. Arun returned to Rudramata village to work alongside his father and has added additional treadles to his looms. He is particularly active on social media and the photos he posts demonstrate both his sophisticated design and technical skills in weaving as well as good photography skills to effectively capture the woven product.

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<sup>209</sup> Siju, K., (2018). Engineering Lecturer: Email Interview with Ruth Clifford, 27 January.

<sup>210</sup> Vankar, K., (2016). Weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Kotay, 2 January.

<sup>211</sup> Vankar, N., (2016) Master Weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 7 January.

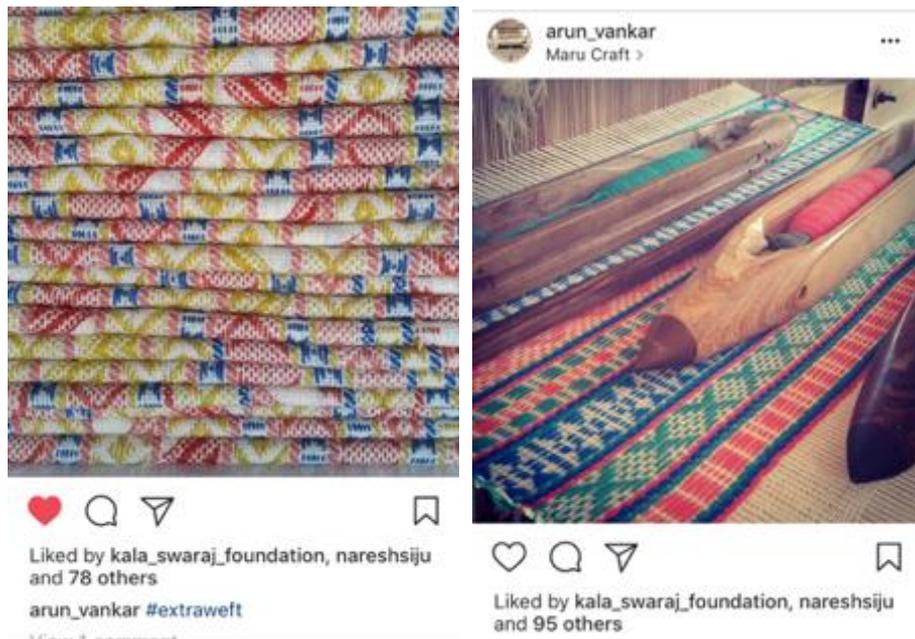


Figure 125. Two of Arun Vankar's Instagram posts (Vankar, 2018)

In Bourdieu's terms, Arun's 'social mobility is formed through and from the necessary "conciliation of contraries" of a life lived through the interstices of socially oppositional class/cultural fields' (Thomson, 2012, p. 75). Weavers' aspirations are influenced or even moulded by expectations of their parents and their immediate social field, and so they learn to 'play the game' and follow expectations, even if these expectations might be at odds with their innate talents, abilities and ambitions. Mamidipudi also finds that weavers in Andhra Pradesh have dual hopes for their children, and that by both being trained in 'merit-based open education systems' and trained in weaving, 'weavers can improve their status and enhance their caste identity' (Mamidipudi, 2016, p. 62). While parents and wider social influences can limit weavers' agency and their capability to develop aspirations based on their own volition, by building experience, weavers can select from these experiences which suits them best. Needless to say, the ability to aspire is also dependent on economic capital which continues to be the major factor limiting the choices of weavers particularly in poorer weaving clusters.

Financially struggling weaving families are under pressure to decide between sending their children for education or keeping them weaving to support the family income. Gulshan Dewangan, a student of the fourth THS batch in summer 2016 from Jangir in Chattisgarh, was working full time as a wage weaver to contribute to his family income, while his three

brothers were in college.<sup>212</sup> Gulshan could not have attended THS if not for the subsidy provided to cover what he would usually earn weaving. In our interview, he expressed keenness to learn how to develop new designs, improve communication skills and reach new markets. While THS opened up more options to Gulshan, in Hart's terms, increased his capability to aspire, it was difficult to tell whether Gulshan may have had 'concealed' or 'adapted' (Hart, 2012) these aspirations based on expectations of both the craft development sector and discourse, and what he thought myself and Umashankar wanted to hear, as well as the expectations of his family. Unfortunately, at the time of writing I have not been able to gain information on whether Gulshan was on his way towards reaching his aspirations.

Family responsibilities have a huge impact on the capability to aspire. The illness or death of a parent puts responsibility on children to support the family income and often means leaving school prematurely. Furthermore, in the 2016 batch of THS, the three students who were married demonstrated much more motivation than those who had less responsibility at home. Students with less responsibility said they joined THS to learn English and IT, which suggests they may go into occupations other than weaving. Some appeared to be simply biding their time and testing out their options. Such contrasting trajectories stemming from family background, educational level and economic capital are causes for Gautam's concern over the students they admit onto the course:

'When you go to the field it becomes tough to identify (potential candidates for THS) because we have two criteria which are contradictory in nature. One; we want them to be a good weaver, two; we want them to be educated. Usually good weavers have not gone beyond fifth class and those who have education don't continue to weave in a good way. To find those candidates who are good and educated and are interested to come and spend 6 months to learn here and go back and start an enterprise, is in itself a big challenge.'<sup>213</sup>

In contrast to Gulshan, Kamlesh from Chhodavadi village near Junagadh in Gujarat, was under less pressure to get a good job quickly and earn a salary large enough to cover family members. Kamlesh was sponsored by Udyog Bharti, a partially-government funded

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<sup>212</sup> Dewangan, G., 2016. Weaver and THS student: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Maheshwar, 23 July.

<sup>213</sup> Gautam, S., 2016. Director, THS, December 2014 – October 2016: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Maheshwar, 13 July.

organisation providing employment in *khadi* industries, to join THS. Before he joined, he was weaving part time while studying a BA in Sanskrit. Despite expressing plans to start a weaving business during the course, at the time of writing, a year later, he is working as a distributor for Cell Phone company Idea and had stopped weaving completely.<sup>214</sup> The opportunities in Gujarat in 'newer areas of employment' (Jeffrey et al. 2004, p. 977), are much more than in isolated and less developed villages in Chattisgarh and Uttarakhand for example. For others, such as Farhan Khan from Maheshwar who was planning to study pharmaceuticals but joined THS in the meantime, weaving was a fall-back option, a sort of insurance policy should other options fail, or should he require a supplementary income to fund his college studies.<sup>215</sup> Farhan had been working under a master weaver, which, for most job-weavers means they are not under a formal contract, but employed on a flexible basis and the job is not secure. This provides additional impetus to seek work elsewhere, particularly a comfortable office job that requires less physically strenuous work.

In Farhan's case, weaving was considered a manual job, with limited opportunity to be creative. Indeed, handloom in India is widely considered as a manufacturing industry, rather than a creative industry, while in the West, handloom weaving is only practiced on a small-scale and is considered part of the creative industry. In the UK, craft has experienced a surge in value because of its scarcity, attachment to a nostalgic past and as an alternative to environmentally and socially damaging mass manufactured products. According to a Crafts Council UK report (Hargreaves McIntyre, 2010), the craft industry in the UK employs approximately 36,230 people and the total number employed in creative industries (such as film and book publishing) along with craft occupations in non-creative industries is 149,510. The Gross Value Added of craft industries in the UK economy in 2012 was 3.4 billion pounds, and in 2017 the creative industries were reported to make up 5.3 percent of the total UK economy (Creative Industries Federation, 2017). The value of a creative job means individuals are willing to take on other less skilled or less desirable jobs to bulk up

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<sup>214</sup> Solanki, K., 2016. Weaver and THS student: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Maheshwar, 13 July. 2017. Whatsapp conversation, 9 April.

<sup>215</sup> Khan, F., 2016. Weaver and THS student: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Maheshwar, 23 July.

their income,<sup>216</sup> presenting a reverse to the choices of handloom weavers in India. In India, the value of handloom has not been accurately recorded because it is considered part of the informal economy, which contributes to fifty percent of India's gross domestic product, and employs over eighty percent of the population (ILO, 2018). Further, it has become much more accepted within the middle and upper-class circles in India to undertake creative jobs, who often benefit from the skills of artisans as just artisans who execute their designs (Mohsini, 2016).

In Kachchh the SKV graduates, who have travelled and interacted with representatives of various segments of the market, demonstrated more pride and value in their craft than some of the weavers at THS, such as Farhan and Kamlesh, who at the time of the fieldwork had not had the opportunity to attend an exhibition, fashion show or urban up-market stores. This suggests that understanding the urban and global markets' value for their craft is crucial for weavers' own perception of their traditional occupation and the value of their skills and the handloom cloth. Nevertheless, for handloom as an industry and occupation to be considered as creative, innovative and contemporary, there must be a radical change of mindset and policy amongst government and society in general.

### **9.3 Craft, caste and capital**

While traditional weavers such as Farhan, Kamlesh and others have sufficient economic capital, or are building capital to experiment with other occupations, there are increasing numbers of individuals from non-weaving backgrounds entering the industry in Maheshwar following its increased success over recent decades. Following Ciotti's analysis of Chamars working in the Banaras weaving industry (Ciotti, 2007, p. 334), by gaining employment in Maheshwar as weavers, the low-caste labouring communities enjoy enhanced status, yet may not necessarily hold pride in their work, having no genealogical ties to the occupation. While on the one hand, these new entrants to the industry can

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<sup>216</sup> My own social network including designer-makers shows this to be the case as well as formal interviews I undertook to capture experiences of UK designer-makers when giving a presentation at SKV (perhaps ironically!), to give them a cross-cultural perspective and understanding of how craft is positioned in countries other than India. One such interview was with Catarina Riccabona, a weaver based in London who was aspiring to be able to weave full time without the need for a part-time job which she was engaged in at the time of the interview (by email, 10 July 2016).

compensate for those who have left, some hereditary weavers who continue in the business, complain of the increased competition they bring. Conversely, in Kachchh weaving is still dominated by hereditary weavers and as I showed in chapter 8, section 6, others are not likely to be accepted into the occupation easily because of the time it takes to learn the skill. Furthermore, SKV currently only accept traditional (caste) artisans at SKV, a decision that was initially based on the premise that the traditional artisan owns ‘the cultural piece’.<sup>217</sup> In chapter 6 I quote several weavers discussing the importance of working within their traditional aesthetics and knowledge which signify their identity and give them a competitive edge. Frater recognises that this criterion could be problematic, and that the curriculum might be adapted to account for non-traditional artisans such as those working for block printing families. However, where such individuals have applied for the course, Frater has not been able to accept them due to the strong feelings of the advisory board of master artisans, whose support Frater heavily relies upon. This scenario suggests that the design institute is not necessarily influenced by the popular narratives in craft development and nationalist discourses of the ‘traditional’ artisan, but by the owners of such traditions themselves. Such preferences to only accept traditional artisans onto the course are based on pride of traditional occupation and *sewa* as discussed above (albeit perpetuated by popular market, development and nationalist discourses), but may also be driven by competitive and protective attempts by traditional artisans, to keep hold of their share of the craft market.

Therefore, Maheshwar and Kachchh present two contrasting attitudes to caste and handloom. In Maheshwar, caste boundaries are fragmenting on two levels: on the first, the acceptance of low status labourers and others to increase their status by entering weaving, and on the second, reservations allow weavers to enter formal education with an (albeit scarce) opportunity to ‘promote’ to a higher status job, which social capital can facilitate. In Kachchh on the other hand, low status groups have not yet entered weaving, but weavers have moved into other occupations. Nevertheless, each region has a distinct context. Maheshwar is rooted in royal patronage, and weavers moved to the industry for economic opportunity in the past, just as they do today and are as equally likely to move

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<sup>217</sup> Frater, J., 2016. Founder-Director SKV: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Adipur, Kachchh, 19 January.

to another role should it provide even better economic opportunity. On the other hand, Kachchh's weaving tradition is rooted in familial and community ties, which both weavers and SKV aim to honour.

### **9.5 Inherited and acquired economic and cultural capital**

The older weavers who have met success after graduating from SKV have either earned enough to send their children to pursue further education or inspired their children to study at SKV too. In Bhujodi Nitesh Vankar applied for KRV the year after his father Namori had studied there. Chaman's nephew Hansraj attended, and later Hansraj's brother Pravin, demonstrating that influence can pass along familial lines.<sup>218</sup> Chaman's family already possessed sufficient economic and cultural capital exemplified by their several national and state awards, regular urban and overseas exhibitions and wide range of clients. Conversely, Dayalal Kudecha was working as a job weaver for Shamji before attending KRV. Dayalal first developed a business upon graduating from KRV's design course in 2008 and developed recognition as a designer-weaver. By later becoming faculty at SKV, Dayalal challenged typical hierarchies between craft development professionals and artisans. He represents the move from being an 'object of development', to an 'agent of development' (McCarthy, 2018). Thus, he has been accepted in the fields of the market for handloom and craft, as well as the field of the craft development sector. Dayalal's younger son Dilip wasn't previously interested in continuing weaving as a career. He planned to attend further education like his older brother Nilesh, who studied engineering and landed a job at a local concrete factory but changed his mind as he experienced the success of his father. He was impressed by his father's international travel and the visitors they receive to their home from all over the world. Dilip joined the SKV course in 2017. Priyanka, Dayalal's daughter completed a course in tailoring and design after she finished school and would like to be a designer. All these routes have been possible due to Dayalal's success in weaving and accumulated capital.

These examples of inherited capital leading to aspirations to work as a designer-weaver or business-weaver stand in contrast to the observations made by Hemendra Sharma, former

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<sup>218</sup> Shamji's two brothers Dinesh and Rajesh have both attended KRV, which was in part out of Shamji's duty as advisor at the institute.

director of WomenWeave, of the industry in Madhya Pradesh. Sharma argued that the increase in wealth and capital accumulated by master weavers leads to the gradual exit of the industry by the younger generations who, with enough money and therefore little pressure to work, become 'lazy, proud and arrogant'.<sup>219</sup> He argued that the exit from handloom occurs gradually as the first or second generation of master weavers, having accumulated profits from handloom, will invest in properties and gradually lose interest in managing other weavers. These master weavers then discourage their children from working or even studying, because the family's income is already enough to cover their children's' too. This was one of the three biggest challenges that handloom faced, according to Sharma, alongside low wages and the limits to creativity that large production imposes on wage weavers. Sharma's observations had been gathered during his role as director of WomenWeave over the course of seven years, as well as prior roles in rural development in villages in Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand. While I didn't collect any evidence of anything resembling Sharma's description, occurring in either Kachchh or Maheshwar, some sons of successful master weavers in both regions emitted a nonchalant attitude when asked about their future ambitions, and suggested that they were in no rush to make any firm decisions.

The Mukhati family in Maheshwar have successfully capitalised on the two major industries in the town, handloom and tourism. The three brothers collectively manage both a hotel (the one I stayed at to conduct fieldwork, managed by Rohit) and a handloom business. All brothers are second generation master weavers so have never had to take part in weaving themselves. Rohit's nephew is studying for a Bachelor of Commerce (BCom) in Indore with a view to getting a government job in the city. When I asked if the next generation will continue the business, the answer was simply 'we'll see', suggesting no priority to sustain the tradition. Business was going well, the popularity of Maheshwari saris and Maheshwar as a destination place appears to be on the rise, so it is likely that at least one of the next generation of Mukhatits will continue the business. It is yet to be seen if the business goes in the direction that Sharma suggests. However, strong focus on handloom's business, economic or commercial prospects can thwart creativity and its

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<sup>219</sup> Mukhati, R., 2016. Master Weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Maheshwar, 12 July.

potential in luxury markets, which as I discussed in chapter 7 are considered the most lucrative and sustainable for handloom. On the one hand, inherited capital gives the weaver the freedom to explore and experiment, try different things, or simply live the life he has reason to value (Sen, 1999). On the other hand, it can result in a sense of complacency within the young weaver. Nevertheless, additional factors discussed in the previous sections of this chapter also influence the decisions and aspirations of weavers, including:

‘(a) the amount and quality of interest, support, encouragement and knowledge other family members have about education and (b) the extent that such resources are transmitted to the child in interactions with family members (Majoribanks, 2002, p. 12, cited in Hart, 2012).

Additionally, the fields that weavers traverse, the interactions they have with various members of these fields (teachers, designers and fellow artisan-designers), and the recognition they receive within these fields, all determine weavers’ sense of self and identity, choices and capabilities.

Hotel manager Rohit Mukhati and engineering lecturer Kanji Siju both from weaving families, say they know weaving because they have grown up surrounded by it, it is part of their cultural and familial roots, their habitus. Will the same be true of their children? Similarly, will children of designer-weavers inherit more design and business skills than weaving skills if their parents are only subcontracting the weaving to job-weavers outside the family home? As weavers’ habituses are becoming transformed by increased interactions with visitors, adoptions of new styles and tastes and new forms of capital, how the ‘traditional’ weaving skills, *lokavidya* or embodied knowledge, the ‘USP’ of their craft and occupation will continue, will only be understood through future longitudinal study.

## **9.6 Gender, creativity and entrepreneurship**

The limits of this research have not allowed for analysing in detail the trajectories of women weavers as compared to men within important feminist and development discourses on gender equality, and thus would significantly warrant future research. Further, on beginning this research, it was clear that design and business were firmly in the hands of men in the weaving families and production units of Kachchh and Maheshwar,

with the odd exception (discussed below). While women's roles are integral to the production process, they have been traditionally restricted to labour while the men are in charge of business and design, a common structure of labour division in craft industries across India, such as Orissan embroidery (Acharya and Lund, 2002) and Lucknow Chikan embroidery (Wilkinson-Weber, 1997), as well as weaving in most areas of India.

I have focused less on the women weavers in Maheshwar because at the time of my fieldwork most were employed as wage weavers and took little part in design and business. WomenWeave's role has been similar to that of the NGOs working with embroiderers in Kachchh, by way of providing secure and comfortable local employment. If this thesis was focused only on education for livelihood rather than education for enabling individual creativity and entrepreneurship, then discussions around gendered divisions of labour and the role of development organisations in opening employment opportunities to women, would have taken a more central position. Graduate designers and entrepreneurs of the two institutes at the beginning of the research were mostly men. However, I met a few women subverting the patriarchal hegemony of business and design and disrupting the long-standing boundaries between gendered spaces.

It was upon noticing the decline of interest in handloom weaving amongst male hereditary weavers in Maheshwar, that Holkar recognised an opportunity in training women (Holkar, Tiernan and Johnson, 2013). Furthermore, being a distinctly home-based activity, women could easily combine weaving with family responsibilities, reducing the worry over childcare they experience when going out to work in the fields. On a final brief visit to Maheshwar in March 2017, the first women's class was being held and the following two batches have also comprised of women. During my visit, the course was at its full capacity and the women were eager and excited to learn business and design skills and were planning to start a business together after the end of the course. The timing of this research alongside the schedule of the women's classes at THS has not allowed for determining whether their plans for a collective company were followed through. However, the initiation of these courses and their popularity is strong evidence of women's empowerment in traditional patriarchal home and work life in India, where their freedoms have been limited. It has also challenged women's hidden status as labourers in the handloom industry working on the ancillary tasks. The inaccessibility of THS to women

from other weaving areas of India, suggests a need for more localised handloom schools which is phase three of THS's proposed plan of development (Holkar, Tiernan and Johnson, 2013, p. 11).



Figure 126. First batch of women: From left: Giran, Sangeeta, Mamta, Famida, Swarna and Madhu

The women I did meet in Maheshwar who were taking weaving in new directions included those who had attended the initial WomenWeave pilot workshops in 2013. Varsha Vishvakarma who was introduced in Chapter 5, is working as part-time faculty at THS, which demonstrates in a similar way to Dayalal's progression to SKV faculty, her elevated social standing and agency by way of circulating in the same spaces as the development staff members. Varsha spent some time working at THS on product finishing and in quality control and expressed an aspiration to study fashion design so that she can develop handloom fabrics into garments. At the time of writing Varsha has just got married, so whether her ambitions will be compatible with married life, is yet to be seen. However, her confidence to express aspirations within the environment of the school campus, stood in contrast to responses to the same questions around aspiration by women in Kachchhi weaving families (who had not attended design education) while at home in the company of the male members of the family. Such a scenario suggested family and social expectations limit women's capability to aspire to alternatives to the long-standing traditional roles they hold.

Bhavna Sunere, a young women weaver from Malaharganj village who attended the

WomenWeave pilot workshops was able to express her ambitions to me in the company of her family. However, this may have been due to the pressure she was under to contribute to the family income as well as domestic chores. Her mother had poor health and she has just one sister and no brothers. While weaving had always been something Bhavna did in her spare time and to help fund her studies, by attending the WomenWeave workshops she became aware of the wider opportunities in handloom, other than just working for a master weaver. Bhavna was completing her BSc at the time of our interview and had several ideas for her future career. She liked the idea of starting a handloom business but was also interested in continuing higher education to study an MSc in maths after which she would teach maths in a school.

Thus, the picture in Maheshwar of women and weaving is one of transition, the examples of Bhavna and Varsha showing that choices for women in positions of higher independence and creative control are increasing and diversifying, but social expectations and family responsibilities continue to restrict women where men are at liberty to travel to cities and circulate within the necessary market networks.

SKV (and formerly KRV) which has been running for a longer time than THS, has produced several female artisan-designers and artisan-entrepreneurs. While the examples I will discuss are all embroiderers and a *bandhani* artisan, the institute has just this year received its first intake of women weavers which marks a distinct turning point in Kachchh.

Zakiya Adil Khatri is the first, and for several years, the only female *bandhani* artisan ever to study at KRV and pursue her own business in the craft (there have since been several more. In 2018 there was one female weaver and three female *bandhani* artisans). Khatri women traditionally tie the knots that resist the dye to make the pattern, and the Khatri men do the dyeing and take care of all design and business tasks (although sometimes women will help with dyeing where it is required). Zakiya's paternal family work in batik, and her maternal family work in *bandhani* and she learnt both while growing up. She would tie knots in her spare time, and because her uncles did not approve of a girl working in the workshop, she would go with her father in the evenings or on days off when her uncles were not present. Her father and other immediate family members have always been supportive of her choices and gave her the same opportunities as her brothers.

Zakiya excelled at school and speaks fluent English. After completing twelfth standard and with a long ambition of being a designer, she was offered a place to study at the Indian Institute of Craft and Design (IICD) in Jaipur but could not afford the high fees. She heard about KRV through her cousin Shakil, a batik artisan who had studied at KRV in 2009. Zakiya attended the design course in 2013, and won awards for Best Collection, Most Marketable Collection and Best Student. She took the Business Management (BMA) course the following year and subsequently started her own business. At the end of the course when the students come up with names and logos for their brand, Zakiya chose 'Bairaj', a local term meaning 'rule of women' and the name of a traditional batik design.

Getting her business off the ground was much more of a challenge for Zakiya than it is for men. Most of the people she would interact with on business matters were men, who were not used to a female business owner and wouldn't take her seriously: 'Everybody was laughing at me, saying "you're a girl, you're so small. This is a job, it's not a game, it's a serious thing"'.<sup>220</sup> Zakiya persevered and eventually people would get used to the idea of her as a business owner. She says she has been lucky in the sense that the women working for her support her as a female business owner. In many patriarchal craft groups, it can be women as much as the men who resist female empowerment and dominance (Acharya and Lund, 2002, p. 212). The support of Zakiya's family, her good formal schooling background and fluent English language as well as confidence, zeal and perseverance, have provided Zakiya with the capability to aspire and confidently activate her aspirations and develop cultural, social and economic capital. Zakiya has travelled abroad several times to exhibit and demonstrate her work, to Peru and America and plans to travel to the UK as part of a collaborative project with artists in Wales.

Zakiya was the only artisan-designer involved in the co-design project with Wisconsin University (see chapter 7), who was able to travel there at the invitation of the university. Tulsi Pavar, a *suf* embroidery artisan-designer and business classmate of Zakiya, was also invited but her family didn't allow her to go. Tala Pavar and Laxmi Pavar, both *suf* embroidery artisan-designers and Monghi Rabari, an embroidery artisan-designer were in

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<sup>220</sup> Khatri, Z., 2018. Bandhani artisan-designer and entrepreneur: Whatsapp Interview with Ruth Clifford, April.

the same 2014 business class cohort as Tulsi and Zakiya. Monghi also ‘forfeited the chance’ to go to Amsterdam with Frater.<sup>221</sup> Monghi had just married, so like Varsha from Maheshwar, her future will, to some extent, be negotiated according to her husband’s and in-laws’ expectations.<sup>222</sup> Laxmi, who is permanent faculty at SKV recently had a baby, and so Tulsi and Tara are covering her role as faculty on the women’s course. Non-governmental initiatives in Kachchh such as Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan (KMVS), have been instrumental in facilitating the empowerment of local women in artisan, pastoralist and agricultural communities, focusing on increasing their access to credit, basic education, healthcare and social justice (KMVS, no date). The education at KRV and SKV marks an additional step in the social development and empowerment of female artisans. Laxmi, Tulsi, Tara and Monghi have all developed their creative capacity, gained recognition, independence, economic capital and cultural capital. However, their ‘capability to aspire’, and to increase social capital in order to reach the same position as male artisan-designers, is limited by deep-seated traditional social expectations and the bounded gendered spaces that still exist in the craft industries of rural India.

Further, how far a woman in Kachchh can progress and how much her work is valued by others are factors significantly dictated by the craft specialism she has inherited. Varsha, Bhavna, Zakiya and the women weavers in Kachchh currently on the design course are working in craft that is considered a lucrative business, albeit traditionally dominated by men. On the other hand, Laxmi, Tulsi, Tara and Monghi all work in embroidery which was traditionally rarely done commercially, but for themselves, their dowry or for ceremonial purposes. NGO assistance in commercialising embroidery largely involves providing pre-printed patterns for women to fill in. While this method may increase women’s income, it can limit their creativity.<sup>223</sup> Devaluation is also caused by its association with free-time, like the ancillary tasks of weaving, as Wilkinson-Weber found in her study of the Chikan

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<sup>221</sup> Frater, J., 2018. Founder-Director, SKV: Email Conversation with Ruth Clifford, 9 June.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid

<sup>223</sup> While NGOs give designs to embroiderers simply to execute, which Kala Raksha and KRV aimed to challenge, embroidery is also becoming commercialised to a certain extent by master craftspeople themselves, for example the many weavers in Kachchh who incorporate embroidered motifs onto woven pieces for ‘added value.’

embroidery industry in Lucknow (1997, p. 62). The techniques and technology of weaving, discussed in chapter 8, mean that the time it takes to embroider one stole is probably equivalent to weaving up to a full twenty metres of warp. *Bandhani*, block printing and embroidery however, are less reliant on technology and more on human labour, yet embroidery is a much slower craft reliant on many more pairs of hands to meet large demands. Thus, while Tulsi, Tara, Laxmi and Monghi have experienced some success in creating small quantities of high quality 'art' pieces, the decrease in female embroidery artisans joining the course in recent years suggests a limit to how far this work can be sustained alongside family duties. Thus, how much of an influence these embroidery artisans will have on other women from embroidery communities to pursue such a trajectory, in the same way Zakiya has influenced women within her community, is uncertain.

Kachchh male weaver-graduates of SKV expressed to me a worry about where their labour resource will come from should all weavers go to design and business school.<sup>224</sup> Further, if young women weavers learn design and business, the question of who will work on the ancillary activities essential to maintaining the existing production process, also becomes pertinent. When women marry into a weaving family, they become extra helping hands for the family business. If they have not previously worked in weaving, they will be taught but according to Shamji, the combination of the limited experience of new female entrants to the family, and a reluctance of the husband to teach her, results in the male weaver eventually abandoning weaving all together and going to work in the factory. When the nuclear family lives separately to the extended family, which often occurs when the family start to grow and need more space, this nuclear family then has less support for weaving directly at hand:

'She [the weaver's wife] isn't able to give the time that a weaver or the man needs. So, they start arguing. Then the man thinks, instead of dealing with this headache, it is better to go and work in some industries or in the fields. The girl will then make his lunch, hand it

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<sup>224</sup> Siju, P. and Siju, H., 2016. Weaver-designers: Personal conversation with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 6 January.

over to him, and say, now go, don't come back until six in the evening. Do whatever work you want. This is how social system has changed.'<sup>225</sup>

It was just a few minutes later in the same interview when Shamji poetically expressed the importance of family unity in maintaining a successful weaving business, saying, 'a cloth is made when we have a good relationship and our desires and emotions match', suggesting that the woven object's identity is forged through not just the individual weaver but the whole family. It is the combined efforts of the family that represent the 'life in our clothes' (ibid). But when referring to women's involvement, Shamji was explicitly referring to ancillary labour-oriented tasks. Some of Shamji's employees are young women, and those I met in Mota Varnora, Kotay and Sarli villages were all either not yet married, or their children had grown up and their family responsibilities less. After a visit to KRV graduate Mukesh in Sarli village, and his cousins Danji and Dilip also KRV graduates, Mukesh took me to visit his uncle Kimji. Two of Mukesh's female cousins Hemalata and Krishna were weaving at the time of our visit, but when I asked if they would like to continue in the future, and if SKV was an option, they seemed to be inhibited to give an open answer. (In the time between this field work and writing up, Krishna did attend SKV in 2018). Upon leaving Kanji (my interpreter) said to me 'these girls will have to stop (weaving) after marriage'<sup>226</sup>. This was in line with traditional expectations, and the view that weaving needs to be done without domestic disruptions. Namori Vankar said of the women that have married into his family, 'in presence of her father-in-law, she doesn't like to weave. She is expected to work on household tasks. These customs in our family we are expected to follow'.<sup>227</sup> On one occasion I passed their workshop, Namori and his son Nitesh were rushing to weave fabric yardage out of recycled saris for a US client via a Delhi agent,<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Vishram Valji, S., 2016. Master weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 3 August.

<sup>226</sup> Siju, K., 2016. Engineering lecturer: Personal conversation with Ruth Clifford, 10 January.

<sup>227</sup> Vankar, N., 2016. Master weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 7 January.

<sup>228</sup> Ironically, the cloth Namori and Nitesh were weaving had no resemblance to their traditional weaves or techniques, or to the design styles they had developed since graduating from KRV. The cloth was for a boutique brand in New York, Laura Siegel, who promotes her products as having been made 'to help employ artisans and sustain ancient crafts around the world'. While the resulting products were sold for a high price, Namori's family's name is not mentioned on the website and for Namori and Nitesh, the job did not require much creativity, rather was a 'bread-and-butter' job. See: Laura Siegel, (no date) 'Philosophy', [online]. Available at: <http://laurasiegelcollection.com/about/> [Accessed 9 January 2017].

and Nilesh's wife and sister-in-law were cutting the saris into strips and making bobbins. Without the tireless hard work of the women in their family, Namori and Nitesh would not have met the deadline.

During a separate conversation with Shamji however, he suggested the decreased pressure put on the women of his own family to take part in ancillary activities because of their ability to afford labour from outside the family, and the increased centralisation of certain processes such as warping (see chapter 5). Furthermore, Shamji's daughter, in ninth standard at the time of my fieldwork, expressed a wish to study design at the design college in Gandhidham, the administrative capital of Kachchh, although Lokesh Ghai predicted Shamji would send her to SKV.<sup>229</sup> Indeed, *bandhani* artist Aziz sent his daughter to study on this year's SKV batch, but none of the weavers who have joined are daughters of weavers who have studied previously (except Suresh's cousin Krishna, mentioned above). As mentioned above, Dayalal's daughter Priyanka, a few years older than Nisha was keen to work in fashion design but had not yet decided for certain what she would do. Priyanka was continuing to help her mother, aunt and *dadi* with chores around the home including bobbin filling and finishing.

These examples demonstrate the inherited cultural capital of both daughters, clashing with women's expectations and a need to maintain women's traditional roles. I have suggested elsewhere the innate skills women have in business and costing through looking after the household. Furthermore, Frater 'not so secretly' found the women design students to be more creative than men. The course was probably the first opportunity the women had to experiment, play and use their creative imagination, which can derive out of a long-held sense of patriarchal repression (Nussbaum, 2000, p. 1). Zakiya has become a role model for other women across crafts who have long been a quiet but powerful force in the craft industries of Kachchh and Maheshwar and have increasing opportunities to be recognised for their creative and entrepreneurial agency.

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<sup>229</sup> Ghai, L., 2018. Artist, SKV faculty member and governing council member: Skype Interview with Ruth Clifford, 14 February.

### 9.7 Free time, aspiration and identity

Within the market network of designers, buyers, tourists and other visitors to the craft destinations of Maheshwar and Kachchh, and within the promotional and development discourse on craft, artisans are identified by their craft and the community of craftspeople, as 'artisans' or 'weavers'. However, in the past, Kachchh weavers did not rely only upon weaving for their livelihood, it was a part time activity alongside farming. Previous generations were less likely to be known by the name Vankar for this reason, but by their community name Meghwal.<sup>230</sup> The lives and identities of weavers in both Kachchh and Maheshwar have been, in the past and today shaped by marriage, festivals, family, religion and hobbies, as well as their occupation. In the UK when meeting someone for the first time, a common initial question asked is 'what work do you do?' suggesting that work defines one's identity. On the other hand, in India, the questions are most likely to be enquiries about the family and caste, then marriage depending on the age of the person. Similarly, aspirations may not only revolve around work, but can be dynamic and multi-dimensional, can change or emerge at any time, and may relate to home, education or work life (Hart, 2016, p. 326). While participants in this research expressed aspirations to grow their business, exhibit at Santa Fe or widen their market, because of the focus of my research being on the education itself, many respondents may have concealed aspirations to do with other aspects of their life that were of equal or more importance than their work ambitions. In Kachchh, while it is common to work most days of the month and rest only on *beej* (the day of full moon that marks the end of the month), this enables weavers to take longer holidays around festivals and evenings are important time to either spend with their family or enjoy leisure time. Several weavers in Kachchh and Maheshwar play competitive cricket, football or volleyball, and proudly post pictures on social media of their sports team, or just hanging out with their friends or at social events. During conversations over WhatsApp or social media, most weavers are more likely to send me updates on their family including pictures of theirs or a family member's wedding, or their children, than examples of their work, although they may send those too. Women were likely to talk more of their family or personal life than their work. Indeed, as women

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<sup>230</sup> Vishram Valji, S., 2018. Master weaver: Personal Conversation on WhatsApp, 8 August

continue to be restricted to the amount of free time that men enjoy in both Kachchh and Maheshwar, their lives are taken up just as much if not more by their family than by weaving. For most weavers participating in this study, success was determined by the happiness of their family.

These observations of aspects of weavers' lives other than their work as weavers, weaver-designers or weaver-entrepreneurs, corroborates with F. B Andrews' statement that 'there will always be people who live by their trade rather than for it' (quoted in Bunn, 2016, p. 39). Further, like the Scottish Vernacular basket makers in Bunn's study, Kachchh and Maheshwar weavers would not continue to weave unless they could sell their products, 'but this has not precluded some of them from refining their work and developing innovations' (ibid), which design education has been important in supporting.

With regards to their working identity, most weavers in Kachchh would introduce themselves as 'weavers', while some such as Murji Vankar suggested that if he was probed further, would say artist, designer or KRV graduate too.<sup>231</sup> In his SKV portfolio, Ravji Meriya says:

"I am my weaving; it is me [...] It is my livelihood, my means to being known." (SKV Newsletter, 2015)

To identify as a weaver is to be in touch with the cloth, which embodies 'intelligence' and 'empathy' (Adamson, 2018), his or her occupational lineage, as well as a ready market and an appreciative audience. Adding 'designer' or 'artist' to this title simply confirms the weaver's confidence or ability in meeting the market needs. Some hereditary weavers aspire to start a business either in weaving or something else entirely, because for example, like Farhan Khan they are bored with the repetitive nature of the manual process of weaving. Furthermore, trajectories and choices are sometimes not known, are rarely static and are pursued in response to social, cultural and technological conditions.

While this chapter and the previous two chapters have shown that graduates of SKV and THS have developed significant levels of cultural, social and economic capital as well as

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<sup>231</sup> Vankar, M., 2016. Weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Ramparvekra village, Kachchh, 22 August.

creative capabilities in design and business, the flow of such capital to the next generations as shown in the case of Dayalal and Shamji in Kachchh demonstrates the increased status and ease of access for the children of successful weavers to gain good schooling and base capital to open up their future choices, suggesting a possible future dispersal of 'caste' weavers to several other occupations. These occupations may include designer-weaver, weaver-entrepreneur and artisan-weaver, but may also include roles more commonly associated with the urban middle and upper classes. DeNicola and Wilkinson-Weber suggest that 'detaching tradition from craft may well allow for it to be usefully compared with other kinds of economic activity from which it has been habitually excluded' (2016, p. 97). Ultimately the trajectories suggest that 'weavers' in the future may have as many choices as urban middle classes do at present, from IT to engineering to science, as well the increasingly accepted field of creative roles. Moreover, it will be important to place continued focus on the impacts of the flow of capital and these changing trajectories upon the traditional embodied skills of weavers, skills which are valorised by urban designers and within the wider discourse on the revival of interest and importance in craft skills.

## **9.8 Summary**

This chapter has discussed the ambitions, aspirations, choices and trajectories of handloom weavers upon graduating from THS or SKV. I have attempted to present the various social, historical and cultural factors that have a bearing on what choices weavers make and the capability of weavers to activate their aspirations. I first analysed the ways in which weavers' traditional occupation can imbue a sense of pride in weavers on the one hand, while its stigma and association with backwardness, or simply its supposed incompatibility with aspirations of modern city life, can encourage weavers to seek alternative occupations on the other. However, the lived reality of weavers suggests the options are not this dualistic. Parents' influences on their children come from their own experiences, social expectations or wider national social norms. Those parents who have been through design and business education are equally as likely to inspire their children to do the same, as they are to provide enough economic capital for the children to have a wider range of choices, some which will include entering completely different occupations.

Discussing economic capital accumulation within weaving families showed that some families, exemplified by the Mukhati family in Maheshwar, by continuing the 'craft' of handloom, are not necessarily preserving a 'tradition' in the way craft revivalists would hope, but can simply be driven by business, capitalising on the 'salience for the local' (Kawlra, 2014). Burgeoning businesses however, can in turn benefit non-hereditary weavers seeking better employment and increased status. Women have also enjoyed better employment status and economic capital, although restrictive social expectations continue to linger. Nevertheless, the stories of women weavers (as well as embroidery and *bandhani* artisans) show that these pressures strengthen their motivations and aspirations, and that without localised design and business education these aspirations are less likely to have been realised. Focusing on those graduates who have become faculty members showed a further trajectory which allows artisans to become agentive in education and in turn the craft development circuit. Finally, I discussed weavers' sense of self and identity which is certainly not only formed by their work, although can form a significant aspect. By taking these factors into account, state narratives of weavers as 'objects' of development through collectivising, marginalisation and anonymisation, becomes vastly inefficient for understanding opportunities within handloom that transcend fixed ideas of the traditional and modern, rural and urban and local and global.

# 10

## Conclusion

### **10.1 Introduction**

By critically analysing the experiences of handloom weavers who have been through the design and business education at Somaiya Kala Vidya (SKV) in Kachchh or The Handloom School (THS) in Maheshwar, this thesis has found that the education can firstly; enhance the value of both the handloom cloth, and occupation of handloom weaving; secondly, enhance the capabilities of weavers to innovate within their traditional skill set and intellectualise inherent creative capacity, and thirdly; increase cultural and social capital to influence market tastes and challenge disciplinary and social hierarchies and stereotypes. Furthermore, by including analyses of other actors involved in the institutes within detailed case study analysis, I have highlighted the successes and challenges of each institute in meeting their aims, specifically, to ‘innovate within traditions’ and to increase employment in handloom. Additionally, I have highlighted the extent to which graduates’ trajectories meet the aims and ideals of the institutes.

Education is a key indicator of human development and handloom continues to be a major income provider for vast numbers of village dwellers of India. Yet these two areas have rarely been analysed in reference to each other. Keeping these discourses separate, risks the continuation of a simplistic perception of opportunities for young weavers; that of either moving out of the occupation into ‘modern’ employment in cities, or continuing to honour their heritage and ancestry, but by merely working for master weavers or ‘designers’. This thesis has therefore challenged such simplistic boundaries and highlighted the nuances of the handloom industry, handloom weavers’ roles and future trajectories.

### **10.2 Challenging dualisms and rigid definitions**

#### **Traditional and modern**

Education enhances the weaver’s agency and various forms of capital, which he uses to make informed choices about his target market that suits his business strategy and

creative aspirations. Weavers' cultural capital is embodied in his woven cloth which is neither a completely 'new' product' nor a 'traditional' collectible artefact, but a hybrid of individual creativity and the identity of several agents in the designing, making and marketing process; the weaver, the family, and depending on the market, the buyer or 'co-design' partner too.

### **Formal and informal knowledge**

The education at SKV and THS intersects formal and informal ways of learning, showing the relevance of cognitive or theoretical knowledge to embodied knowledge and vice versa. Theorising and intellectualising craft knowledge enables the weaver to develop designs in a more managed and controlled way in order to meet the demands of his target market. It also enhances his ability to communicate ideas and concepts behind the design to his clients, or indeed, collaborating designers. Design education for artisans does not claim to eliminate intermediaries or collaborative partners but recognises the possibilities and benefits of combining different forms of knowledge and diverse skill sets. Reciprocal co-design projects thus simultaneously nurture learning and break down social, geographical and cultural barriers.

### **Rural and urban**

Kachchh and Maheshwar are heterogeneous, ephemeral and globalised spaces. In Bhujodi, continuous renovation is material evidence of weavers' increasing economic capital. Dayalal Kudecha recently added a new storey to his house to accommodate clients. He cemented the floors, added a western style toilet and a water purifier with a view to making clients' stay comfortable. By contrast, Shamji Vishram Valji's house represents the archetypal rural household with multi-purpose rooms in single-storey buildings that surround a courtyard. A *toran* and a Bhujodi shawl adorn the door to his showroom, cows are brought into the courtyard for the night and an out-of-use pit loom stands like a museum relic, surrounded by *charkhas* and pieces of loom equipment on the wall. These markers of 'authenticity' have been widely photographed and instagrammed both by Vishram's own family members, as well as the regular flow of visitors they receive. In fact, Shamji was planning to turn the space into an official 'museum' or demonstration area so that his family can have a home that is not encroached upon by tourists and buyers.

Chamanlal Premji Siju also plans to build a museum, or rather, a 'small exhibition' expressing a dislike for the term museum: 'it's like "death hall".' He hopes that the exhibition space will enable the new generation 'to see our old pieces and be inspired by them'.<sup>232</sup> These aspirations are possibly influenced by the 'demonstration studio' (a term preferred over 'museum') built by Ismail Khatri in Ajrakhpur village, as a way to reduce the repetitive and demanding work of talking regular visitors through the block printing process. Further, by operating these local demonstration areas or exhibitions, artisans can reclaim ownership of their heritage which, since the colonial proliferation of museums (themselves a distinctly western concept) in Britain and abroad, had centralised and de-contextualised.

Other weavers in Bhujodi and weaving villages across Kachchh are taking their businesses in diverse directions, some building shops on the main street running through the centre of the village. But none of the weavers who have continued weaving, whether setting up a business or working for a master weaver, have left their village. Weavers Kanji, Ramesh, Lalji and Vinod from Kotay village, all agree that they would choose weaving over any other job because it enables them to 'work from home and its flexible'.<sup>233</sup> In Maheshwar, the FabCreation members all said 'we love Maheshwar',<sup>234</sup> and had no desire to move to the city, which was their ambition when they studied at university. Indeed, both regions are 'destination' places and will continue to receive visitors, reducing a need for weavers to re-locate to urban areas.<sup>235</sup> On the other hand many of the graduates of THS return to isolated villages which receive few visitors. Examining each of these villages and their socio-economic context was beyond the limits of this study. However, if THS does meet its aims of increasing the spread of its education and impact, perhaps these places too will

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<sup>232</sup> Siju, C., 2016. Master weaver: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Bhujodi, 5 January.

<sup>233</sup> Vankar, L. and Vankar, V., Weavers: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Kotay, 2 Jan 2016.

<sup>234</sup> Ansari, N., 2016. Master weaver and member of FabCreation Collective: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Maheshwar, 22 July.

<sup>235</sup> There is one exception to this finding: during the course of my fieldwork, weaver and SKV graduate Ramji Maheshwari from Sumrasar Sheikh village, was having a new house and workshop built near Madhapar, a wealthy suburb of Bhuj on the way to Bhujodi. There are no other weavers in Sumrasar, and Ramji was keen to be in an area more accessible to visitors as well as to build a larger and more modern house.

receive 'destination' status and receive increasing visits by representatives of luxury markets.

Edward Simpson (2016) has identified the need for a new name to be given to the vast sprawl of urbanising spaces in India's countryside, noting 'they're not cities, they're not villages and they're not even a mixture of both'. These new spaces are distinctive of contemporary India, which is often described as straddling the traditional and the modern. The same could be said of the physical and ideological space where the craft community (village) and fashion market (city) meet and intersect, and therefore suggests the need for a new language to describe both the objects made by the weavers, as well as the spaces they circulate within.

### **10.3 Summary of key findings**

- Design and business education has the potential of developing rural economies by capitalising on crafts and the in-depth traditional knowledge artisans hold, but importantly by recognising and valuing this knowledge and building upon it to make it relevant to contemporary markets. The education has been successful in increasing the cultural and economic value of the crafts that the artisan-students specialise in, for both the artisan: as a desirable occupation and an opportunity to be creative, and the client who seeks products that have an intriguing back story, are contributing to the continuation of a craft and are a meaningful alternative to products with an unknown origin.
- Graduates accumulate social and cultural capital and the ability to set trends and influence the taste of their target markets while gaining respect in their local craft community as well as the wider market network. However, uncertainties avail when considering the inheritance of such capital and its impact on traditional skills and the holistic relationship between mind, body, materials, environment and tools. While these skills are a key component of cultural capital, if they are not learnt in the home at a young age (a potential side effect of accumulated economic capital), there is a risk that the 'USP' of traditional crafts: embodied skills, regional identifiers, will be lost.

- The market and mainstream craft development discourses have tended to perceive artisans as marginalised and therefore objects of welfare, outmoded in their use of traditional technology, or as symbols of 'tradition' or indeed all these together. Discourses need to move away from such generalised stereotypes and recognise the nuances in roles of artisans, as well as their creative and entrepreneurial abilities. Equipped with communication skills, social and cultural capital, graduates of the two design education institutes with increasing social mobility can be part of, and influence changes in this discourse.

#### **10.4 Summary of chapters and theoretical contributions**

The first part of Chapter 2 set a broad socio-economic and historical context of the handloom industry and education in India. It took a broad geographical perspective for the following reasons: firstly, to address the ways in which designs, techniques and technologies have travelled or been adapted as weavers have travelled and settled in new areas with better economic opportunities; secondly, to understand the status and perceptions of weavers in society and the caste system, and how factors such as geographical mobility or material adaptation can lead to social mobility; thirdly, to address the diversity of the weavers attending The Handloom School; and finally to understand how histories of handloom in India have influenced ideals of national and local identity, and the ways in which these histories perpetuate the view of artisans as marginalised and lacking agency. Intertwined with this analysis was a discussion of the types of education weavers have typically had access to, the emergence of urban design education and critiques of the impacts of these in anthropological literature. This thesis has built upon this literature and demonstrated ways in which education has the potential to challenge narrow representations of artisans.

Chapter 4 presented a historical and cultural context of the two regions in which the case studies are located, Maheshwar and Kachchh, in order to understand how the design and business education sits within these contexts. It also discussed the products with a distinct regional identity, the Kachchhi shawl and the Maheshwari sari. These objects have received little in-depth study, particularly with the input of weavers themselves, and so this chapter, along with chapters 5 and 6, have contributed significantly to existing

documentation on traditional craft practices. By interweaving my own learning and interpretations of the crafts practices and context in chapters 5 and 6, with experiences of the artisan-informants and teachers, I demonstrated how the skills involved in the weaving process are learnt and honed. I also demonstrated that the practice of weaving is entwined with routine, lifestyle and a deep-rooted sense of identity and pride, while the following chapters showed the relevance of weaving and learning to weave in the contemporary globalised world, supported by learning design and business.

Chapter 7 discussed the ways student weavers on the courses learn and grasp design principles, establish a theme and understand their target market. I discussed pedagogical approaches and methods that attempt to make the design learning relevant to the weavers' ways of learning and skill, which varied from weaver to weaver depending on product specialism, level of formal schooling and whether he or she was a job-weaver or business weaver. The campus provides a space for weavers to learn from each other, in a new community of practice, as well as to collaborate and create innovative new designs combining the different participants' skills. I demonstrated through analysis of students' interaction with potential clients in various 'fields', as well as through collaborative projects, the ways in which students accumulate cultural and social capital, which in the subsequent chapters I showed is built upon after graduation and creates capabilities for influencing taste in the market.

Chapters 8 to 9 discussed weavers' transition into a professional career as a weaver-designer or weaver-entrepreneur, as well as common aspirations. Chapter 8 proposed that various factors can separate the weaver from the haptic physical and sensory contact with materials and the experiential process of learning and designing through weaving, a process that Bunn (2016) and Marchand (2016) argue makes craftspeople natural designers and problem solvers without the need for formally 'rationalising' the process. By theorising design and visualising end-products through graphs, drawing and sometimes the computer, there is a risk of standardisation, replication and fossilisation of designs. On the other hand, improvisational design does not necessarily bring in regular clients or meet specific demands. Design and business students learn to navigate potential high-end markets and develop an understanding of the tastes and whims of these markets. The

weaver-designer will then select the market that most suits the way he aspires to work, which may involve both high-end boutiques and art galleries which offer the opportunity to be more experimental and creative, and large stores such as Fabindia which provide a reliable and constant 'bread and butter' income.

The final two chapters also built on the notion of informal learning and embodied knowledge, by questioning what may happen as children of weavers spend more years in college education, have increasing access to digital technology and the internet, or indeed grow up within a new habitus, shared with other artisan-designers, entrepreneurs, and urban and foreign buyers and designers. However, not all weavers strive to be designers or entrepreneurs. Some weavers, particularly those in the more isolated villages of Kachchh are happy weaving for someone else and prefer to avoid the responsibility of starting a business or risk that may come with experimenting with new designs. Further, I have shown that some children of weavers may choose alternative occupations, while some may bring in skills learned in higher education or other jobs to the family business. SKV or THS graduates may choose a role that suites their talents, skills or what they enjoy doing, such as specialising only in design, marketing or business. Master weavers also note the importance of providing their 'job workers' with an opportunity to develop their skills and if the master weaver is also a design graduate, the apprenticeship may include design learning too. In other words, aspirations of weavers and the choices they make are diverse and dependent on a variety of factors. This thesis has presented new understandings of artisans' perceptions of their hereditary occupation and relationships with it, as well as with design and other forms of education.

The close and extended familial network continues to provide important security to weavers both for meeting client demands and bringing together different skills and expertise. The aims of SKV for graduates to become individual small-scale artisan-designers, akin to 'designer makers' in the West, are not necessarily conducive to local ways of production that is rooted in collective activity. Weavers are using this traditional way of working to their advantage, and such an approach is also a way of dividing skills and specialisms horizontally rather than vertically.

Moreover, recent blog articles by Frater, such as ‘Who are the Workers? The Artisans’ view’ (2018) show that the continuing role of SKV involves ensuring artisans are involved in debates and discussions around key issues that arise in their craft.

Artisans have never been passive recipients of development initiatives, and the role of an artisan can be nuanced and change at multiple times within his or her career, highlighted in existing research (for example Mohsini, 2016; DeNicola and Wilkinson-Weber, 2016). What the present thesis has added to the argument is that design and business education has the potential to enable the *recognition* of artisans as designers or entrepreneurs with agency and capability to adapt, negotiate and re-negotiate roles, within the local community and the wider craft market network. Tyabji noted in a symposium on the ten years of education for artisans through KRV and SKV (Somaiya Kala Vidya, 2018), that buyers and the producers of craft objects are unlikely to socialise in the same spaces, which risks continuing the positioning of artisans as socially and creatively subordinate. Similarly, Basole observes that the social spheres of ‘scholars’ and ‘artisans’ are ‘largely distinct and there are few public spaces where they can interact as equals’ (Basole, 2018). However, the education at SKV and THS allows for previously disparate classes and communities to interact, and while artisan-designers are learning about the tastes of their target markets, it is equally important that the cultural capital, creativity and skills of artisan-designers are recognised, and they are not simply viewed as labour capital. It is for this reason also, that this thesis has brought individual, previously liminal narratives to the fore, with the hope that in future design histories, individual artisans will become acknowledged as pioneering designers and leaders in their field, rather than unnamed makers of high-value craft objects. In turn, the impact of individual recognition on a community-based craft will require continuous focus.

By presenting weavers’ aspirations and ambitions, I have highlighted that design and business education should not coerce them into a particular role based on any prior idealised notion of their craft. However, it also shows that artisans may use such ideals to their advantage, understanding the appeal in their craft for its authentic connection to a rich and varied history and cultural identity, and therefore promoting it in this way. Additionally, whether either influenced by discourses of romanticism or their obligation to their parents and ancestors, many artisans demonstrate an internal pride in their

occupation, wealth of skills and cultural capital. With design education artisans are equipped with capabilities to gear these skills in directions relevant to them and their family or community. While at present, weavers are practicing weavers, weaver-designers, weaver-entrepreneurs, entrepreneurs, scientists, mathematicians and teachers, in the future could roles even expand to curators, institute founders, directors or curriculum developers? By moving into roles that have for so long been associated with the middle and upper classes, artisans will become increasingly visible as active agents with diverse skills that have contemporary relevance and importance for building the creative and economic development of future generations in 'rural' communities.

### **10.5 Methodological contribution**

Ethnography is particularly conducive to the analysis of learning processes and ways of learning in different environments. By bringing together two categories: 'craft' and 'design', that have rarely been analysed alongside each other, particularly within the field of rural craft economies, this research has made an important contribution to the relatively new discipline of design anthropology. It challenges previously unshakeable views of craftspeople as merely 'doers', by demonstrating the benefits of craft skills to the design process, and the benefits of design thinking to making craft relevant in the contemporary world.

The research has added to a wide anthropological debate about the divides caused between artisans and designers with the simultaneous rise of urban education and burgeoning middle class, along with the increasing interest in craft and desire to demonstrate individuality and 'Indianness'. Considering artisans as designers which has not been approached in previous academic debates, goes some way to challenge these deep-rooted divisions. Furthermore, as mentioned above, conducting multi-sited ethnography is an important way of appreciating and understanding the mobility of artisans and their varied and nuanced roles and capabilities.

These case studies will be useful for actors seeking ways to develop the economic and creative potential of craftspeople in regions where crafts are a significant employment provider, traditional knowledge set and cultural identity. They provide constructive reference for curriculum development, highlighting factors to consider such as ways to

meet the diverse needs of students based on skill and socio-economic and cultural background, technologies and market. The research may also prove useful for urban designers or entrepreneurs across the world who design with or market traditional crafts.

Furthermore, the research has demonstrated the ways in which craft research may be approached, and the importance of considering the implications of the researcher him or herself upon the community of participants and the subject itself. I have discussed in detail the challenges and successes of the methodologies I adopted and the importance of reflexivity and understanding the researcher's own position within the field, and in relation to the participants of the research. I discussed the importance of the researcher establishing as equal a footing as possible with the participants or informants, and continually evaluating and adapting approaches to ensure such equality and reciprocity is maintained. A key influence upon these approaches for me was to recognise similarities between myself and the artisans as well as shared interests, notably the textiles themselves. Thus, both the objects and the artisans are brought into the centre of the narrative by way of demonstrating their agency and the important influence each has on the other.

### **10.6 Implications and limitations**

While the two case study education institutes, SKV and THS are making a seemingly small mark on the handloom and craft industry in India, it is evident that their impact may spread further afield. Since its inception, local master artisans have played key roles in the decisions of SKV but increasing numbers of artisans are taking roles as faculty. This opportunity may reach more graduates if the institute is expanded, which is in the planning once they move to the larger campus. Furthermore, SKV is conducting outreach projects to deliver the curriculum to craft communities in other parts of India. These initiatives are not only widening the reach of the design education but are enabling graduates of SKV the opportunity to share their knowledge with artisans in regions with different languages and variations in techniques, materials and processes, yet a shared understanding of the core processes of weaving. This shared understanding supports a reciprocal collaborative process of learning through craft and design language. Kachchh graduates learn more about another craft tradition and can find design and technical

inspiration in an environment they've never visited before as well as the craft itself. The artisans in the region SKV 'reaches out' to learn not only design concepts, processes, marketing and presentation but see the impacts of design education on the visiting graduates from Kachchh – their confidence, social and cultural capital and enthusiasm in their work.

While the limitations of this research have not allowed for in-depth studies of the outreach projects, the benefits of collaborative learning, both amongst artisans working in different crafts and artisans working in the same craft from different regions, have been evident in the examples presented in this thesis of both cross-craft collaborations in Kachchh, and inter-geographical learning in Maheshwar. Male batches made up of weavers from different parts of India can teach and learn from each other as well as from the 'master' and become socialised into supportive learning environments. Furthermore, graduates channel their learning back to their respective weaving communities, another way in which design education can have wider reach.

This thesis has focused in detail on the impacts within Maheshwar; while visits made to interview THS graduates in Kumaon, Uttarakhand, Varanasi, Chanderi in Madhya Pradesh and Saurashtra in Gujarat touched the surface of these weavers' experiences. The wide geographical spread and time limit of the Ph.D. did not allow for in-depth investigation into their experiences but provided the potential for further investigation in these weavers' trajectories considering the local context. Gautam, the director at the time of my fieldwork gave me two examples of graduates who had implemented their learning to set up enterprises, which is a key aim of the school. Firstly, two weavers from Mubarakpur in Uttar Pradesh who were facilitated by AIACA's (All India Artisan and Craftworkers Welfare Association) branch in Varanasi, set up a Self-Help Group (SHG). They manage a group of 20 weavers and have replaced the two AIACA members to manage marketing and communication and help other weavers with production.<sup>236</sup> Secondly, four weavers who were sponsored by the organisation Rangсутra in Bikaner, Rajasthan set up their own

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<sup>236</sup> Tiwari, V., 2016. Project manager of AIACA's Varanasi Weavers and Artisans society: Personal conversation with Ruth Clifford, Delhi, 5 September; Gautam, S., 2016. Director, THS, December 2014 – October 2016: Interview with Ruth Clifford, Maheshwar, 13 July.

enterprise and employ other weavers in the region. These examples present the progression from 'object' of development to 'agent' of development, a similar progression to that of Dayalal Kudecha, Laxmi Pavar and the artisan faculty members in Kachchh, as well as Varsha Vishvakarma in Maheshwar.

While design education has the capacity to reduce inequalities, specifically between informally educated, traditionally low-status artisans in rural areas and formally educated 'designers' in urban areas, it can lead to 'sub-segregation' (Hart, 2012, p. 183) within the community of artisans themselves. Inequalities persist in handloom between weaver-designers or weaver-entrepreneurs and their 'job workers' as well as between men and women. Male weavers have always dominated the design, business and decision-making process in the family unit of artisans and talk of the importance of women's work in maintaining flow and reaching order deadlines. Nevertheless, this organisation of labour denies women more central, creative roles, an issue that has become particularly pertinent in the increasing commercialisation of craft. While these restrictions are tied to deep-rooted socio-economic traditions and values, it is 'possible to overcome the barriers of inequality imposed by tradition through greater freedom to question, doubt, and – if convinced – reject' (Sen, 2002, p. 274), which this research has shown several women in Kachchh and Maheshwar have done. Design and business education provides the opportunity for this 'critical agency' (ibid) to be realised. Studies into design and business education for women would be important and timely, particularly considering global concerns and aspirations toward gender equality.

Nevertheless, not all individuals will succeed in becoming business owners, and as mentioned above may not aspire to such a role. Thus, responsibility lies with government policies, craft development agents and discourses, to; 1) recognise the diverse trajectories artisans may take and be aware of the socio-economic, cultural and familial influences upon aspirations; 2) shed any perceptions that formal education equals a higher aspiration than continuing to weave in the home or do something else entirely; 3) recognise handloom as creative and progressive and a rich part of both the country's heritage and its contribution to the economy, and promote it in this way; and 4) recognise the agency artisans possess to affect change, be part of the discourse, and negotiate and re-negotiate the trajectories and the roles they pursue.

There will never be a 'one-size-fits-all' model of education for artisans, particularly in a country that is significantly diverse in its handloom weaving traditions and local cultural and socio-economic contexts. Various factors must be considered in determining any institute's success which are subject to continuous change. Focusing on the diverse individual lived experiences of weavers, as this research has done, can help policy makers, curriculum developers, teachers, urban designers and others working with artisans to nurture capabilities and aspirations, and to ensure that artisans have the freedom to choose a livelihood they will value.

# Glossary

**Adan:** warping frame (lit. 'that which is used for establishing').

**Ajrakh:** geometric style block printing traditional to Kachchh, Sindh, northern Gujarat and Barmer in Rajasthan. It has various definitions including 'blue' – derived from the Arabic term *azrak*, and 'keep it for today'.

**Ambar Charkha:** multi-headed mechanical yarn spinning device.

**Asana:** lit. 'posture' but also used to describe the mat on which the posture is held.

**Bandhani:** tie-dye or shibori.

**Bahen** (Hindi, Gujarati): Sister, commonly attached to the end of a person's name as a sign of affection or respect, particularly in Gujarat.

**Bhai** (Hindi, Gujarati): Brother, commonly attached to the end of a person's name as a sign of affection or respect, particularly in Gujarat.

**Bhajan:** Religious devotional song. Derives from the stem *bhej* which is also where the word *bhakti* comes from.

**Biradari:** community.

**Bunkar** (Hindi): weaver.

**Buti:** small floral motif.

**Chameli:** jasmine.

**Chomak:** four-pointed lamp, traditional motif in Kachchhi weaving.

**Chopera:** weft-faced weave.

**Chintamani:** peacock blue.

**Chir:** the inch or so at the end of the sari which is left without any weft threads. It is the technical device for stretching and adjusting the warp and acts as a measure of the 'complete' sari (Chishti and Sanyal, 1989, p. 18).

**Dada:** granddad

**Dadi:** grandma

**Dalimbi:** deep pink – dalimbi and green were the colours in the 'traditional' Maheshwari sari used as an auspicious gift at a wedding (Chishti and Sanyal, 1989, p. 173).

**Dalit:** lit 'oppressed'. Member of the lower castes.

**Darshan:** the beholding of a deity, revered person or sacred object in Hinduism

**Deh:** body of sari.

**Dhabla** (pl), **Dhablo** (s): traditional blanket or shawl woven in Kachchh for the men of the Ahir, Rabari, Bharwad and Charan communities. For the Ahir, the designs are heavy and multi-coloured, for the Rabari, the motifs are similar but less and woven in un-dyed white and brown sheep wool.

**Dhabli:** smaller *dhablo* or cotton/wool mix for elder women's skirts.

**Dhadi:** the measure of the fold by which the sari is most efficiently packed and sorted. As the first fold comes most often at the end of the outer end-piece, the sari's length can easily be measured by the counting of the folds without unfolding it.

**Dharki:** shuttle.

**Dhurrie:** (Hindi/Urdu) – carpet.

**Garbh Reshmi:** lit. 'full' silk.

**Gatha:** song or verse.

**Ghar** (lit. house in Hindi): used by weavers in Kachchh to name the dent, spaces in the reed that the warp yarn passes through.

**Ghat:** Steps leading to a river.

**Garha:** generic coarse cloth.

**Gul-bakshi:** Magenta.

**Gurukul** (or *gurukula*) (Sanskrit): the oldest form of education in India involving students living in or near the residence of the guru, and centred around religion.

**Hath Saal:** Hand loom.

**Hara:** green

**Ikat** (Malay): Method of resist dyeing by tying the yarns prior to dyeing and weaving to create a pattern.

**Jajmani:** the system of exchange between land-holding castes and landless service castes.

**Jala:** used to describe the drawloom, the technique that pre-dates jacquard, of lifting individual warp yarns to create complex flowing designs, and also the designs that are created using the technique, particularly floral brocades .

**Jamla:** Purple.

**Jarmar:** drizzle or light rain - pattern on the borders of *dhabla*.

**Jati:** caste.

**Jari** (or *zari*): metallic (traditionally real gold) thread.

**Kamal:** lotus or 'pale red', derived from Arabic word for perfection and excellence.

**Kala:** art.

**Kalakar:** artist.

**Kangra:** turret.

**Kaasini:** light violet.

**Kam:** work.

**Kapra:** cloth.

**Karigar:** artisan/skilled worker.

**Karkhana:** factory or workshop.

**Karkhanadar:** workshop owner.

**Kharad** (Kachchhi/Sindhi): carpet.

**Khatha:** large Kachchhi woollen shawl.

**Khathi:** small Kachchhi blanket.

**Kolori:** large brush used to apply starch and separate yarns.

**Kinar:** (Hindi) edge or border.

**Kumkum:** red powder used for the *tikka* mark applied to the forehead in religious Hindu ceremonies.

**Khilat:** 'robe of honour' in Arabic. Gifts presented by Mughal Emperors.

**Kurta:** upper garment similar to a tunic.

**Ladu:** round-shaped sweet made of dough and sugar.

**Lath:** decorative weave traditional to Kachchhi weaving.

**Leheriya:** wave.

**Ludi** (Kachchhi): women's shawl or veil.

**Machikanto:** stitch used for joining the two narrow width wool pieces to make a *dhablo*.

**Mahajans:** shopkeepers (North India).

**Minakaar:** brocade with gold backgrounds ornamented with coloured silk.

**Majdoor:** labourer.

**Makan:** house/shelter.

**Mashru:** silk and cotton satin-weave fabric.

**Masjid:** mosque, **Jama Masjid:** Friday Mosque.

**Mata:** Mother.

**Miri:** decorative plaiting technique used to finish off a piece of weaving (Kachchh) but some weavers have innovated on technique incorporating it into different parts of the stole/shawl.

**Mutiya:** handle attached to pulley that pulls shuttle across.

**Nagar panchayat:** notified area of council, a settlement in transition from rural to urban.

**Nari bharna:** bobbin winder.

**Naqshabands:** pattern makers (North Indian *jala* weaving centres).

**Naukri:** lit. 'job' but used to describe particularly a service or office job rather than manual or craft occupation.

**Naya:** new.

**Nayat:** sub-caste.

**Neela:** Blue.

**Ottu** (Sanskrit): weft.

**Parampara:** tradition.

**Paen:** starching frame (Kachchh).

**Pachhed:** cloth strips to be stitched into women's skirts.

**Pagri:** turban.

**Pallu:** decorative end section of sari that hangs over the shoulder/arm.

**Panak:** wooden stick used to maintain the width of the fabric on the loom.

**Pandit:** priest or preacher.

**Pankha:** lit. 'fan', part of the loom that swings like a fan to beat the cloth.

**Pheri:** traditional system involving master weavers making a personal list of clients in the towns he visits with his wares, once a year.

**Pita:** father

**Popat** (Gujarati): parrot

**Popti** (Kachchhi): butterfly.

**Phanni**: reed.

**Puja**: prayer/worship.

**Punchra**: fringe edges of a sari.

**Rach**: shaft.

**Rani**: Queen, also deep mauve pink (Maheshwar).

**Roti**: literally bread but used to describe food in general.

**Rumal**: square handkerchief.

**Rui Phool**: cotton flower, typical Maheshwari border design.

**Sachikor**: real border (on *dhabla/khata*).

**Sanskriti**: culture.

**Sastra**: teaching or scripture.

**Seva**: duty or service.

**Shilpa**: arts.

**Shilpasastra**: art teachings.

**Silpin**: artist.

**Silip Guru**: exceptional master artisan.

**Shudra**: the lowest rank of the four *varnas*.

**Tapkeeree**: deep brown.

**Tana**: warp.

**Tansal**: warping on a frame.

**Tantu** (Sanskrit): warp.

**Tantra**: lit. 'loom' commonly known as ancient esoteric Hindu or Buddhist teachings.

**Tantuvardan** (Sanskrit): weaver.

**Thali**: refers both to a platter which a meal is served on, and a variety of culinary dishes all served together, traditional to South Asia.

**Tola**: British-Indian unit of measuring weight developed in 1833. 1 *tola* = 11.66 grams.

**Tor:** cloth beam.

**Varnas:** classes or callings on which the Indian caste system is based.

**Vidya:** knowledge

**Virasat** (Hindi): heritage.

**Vrtti:** lit. 'instinct', also used to describe occupation (Mishra, 2009).

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# Appendices

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## Appendix A: Fieldwork Schedule

### FIELDWORK PHASE 1: 4 OCTOBER TO 20 JANUARY 2016

DATES	Location, institute or organisation	Activity / Methods
<b>OCTOBER 4 - 7</b>	Kamatgi village, near Bagalkot, Karnataka.	Visited the weavers involved in the SKV Bhujodi to Bagalkot project with SKV programme coordinator.  Observation and informal interviews during sessions on costing, reviewing collections for exhibition.
<b>9 - 11</b>	SKV Campus, Adipur, Kachchh	Selection Committee for Design Craft shop (shop in Mumbai affiliated to SKV and run by Somaiya group)
<b>12 - 26</b>	SKV Campus, Adipur, Kachchh	Final session of the design class – presentation, and jury. Observation – direct and moderate
<b>OCT 29 - NOV 1</b>	Artisans' Gallery, Mumbai	Outreach exhibition of Bhujodi to Bagalkot and Faradi to Lucknow projects
<b>NOVEMBER 2 - 4</b>	Hyderabad	Interviews with Uzamma, founder of Dastkar Andhra and Malkha, Poludas Nagendra Satish founder of Kora, visits to Malkha and Dastkar Andhra

<b>5 – 6</b>	Chennai	Met Shilpi manager and founder Bamini Narayan, visited WSC Chennai, Kalakshetra museum
<b>9</b>	Kanchipuram	Visit to Kanchipuram WSC, interviews with designer and director, visit to master weaver and cooperative stores
<b>10</b>	Bangalore	Interviews with designer and NID graduate Hema Raghunathan, Neelam Chhiber - founder of Industree Foundation and Mother Earth stores, Sampath Kasirajan - founder of FiveP Venture, handloom development organisation. Visit to The Ants store, informal interviews with founder and staff member/SKV faculty member Shweta Settar
<b>15</b>	Hyderabad - Sircilla	Visit to weaving town of Sircilla – 140 km north of Hyderabad. In the government handloom workshop five elderly weavers wove plain-weave cotton checked towels. The rest of the town had converted to powerloom.
<b>16</b>	Hyderabad	Creative Bee studio and informal interview with founder Bina Rao
<b>19</b>	Rajamundry and Vijayawada	Visits to government handloom weaving centres and skill development schemes with staff.
<b>20 – 28</b>	Break	

<b>30</b>	Erode and Chenimalai	Visit to Five P Venture and handloom cooperatives
<b>1 DECEMBER</b>	Salem	Visit to Indian Institute of Handloom Technology (IIHT)
<b>3 - 5</b>	Travelling back to Ahmedabad via Bangalore and Pune	Dastkari Haat Samiti Bazaar in Pune
<b>6 – 11</b>	Ahmedabad	Gathering research at the NID library (craft documentation projects and NID publications)  Visits to museums and collections.  Interviews with Aditi Ranjan, Erroll Pires and Nilesh Priyadarshi
<b>11 – 18</b>	Maheshwar	Observation and Participant Observation at THS- teaching and interviews
<b>21 - 23</b>	Artisans' Gallery, Mumbai	Exhibition of 2015 batch final collections
<b>26 - 28</b>	Kachchh	Interviews and observation in weavers' homes
<b>DEC 28 – JAN 18</b>	Kachchh – Bhujodi	Apprenticeship, SKV Fashion Show, interviews
<b>JANUARY 18 - 20</b>	Kachchh – Bhuj and Adipur	Interviews

FIELDWORK PHASE 2: 22 JUNE TO 13 SEPTEMBER 2016

DATES	Location, institute or organisation	Activity / Methods
JUNE 22- 26	Delhi	Interviews with Laila Tyabji, co-founder Dastkar, Shilpa Sharma, founder of Jaypore, Rahul Jain
JULY 1 - 4	Kota, Kaithun	Visit to <i>karigar</i> weaver Badrunisha and master weaver Azgarbhai
4 – 28	Maheshwar (with three days out to visit Chanderi)	Observation, participant observation, interviews
28 – 31	Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar	Delivered talk at NIFT, Gandhinagar  Interviews with SKV and THS faculty  Secondary research at NID library
AUGUST 1 – 5	Kachchh	Filming the process of weaving in Bhujodi, Sarli and Padhar villages
11 – 15	Adipur – SKV business course	Observation –direct and participant, delivered session on UK crafts positioning and branding
16 – 21	Kachchh – various villages	Interviews
22 – 24	Dhrol near Jamnagar, Gujarat	Interviews with two THS graduates – Hemant and Ramji

25 - 28	Jaipur	Visited and gave talk at IICD, interviewed two students and two graduates (Sanganer and Bagru)
29 – SEPT 2	Buri Bana village, Uttarkhand to	Visit to Kilmora, an NGO that has introduced weaving to the region as a form of employment. Interview with Vijay Singh, graduate of THS and director of Kilmora, Sarika Samdani and informal conversations with other Kilmora weavers
SEPTEMBER 3 – 6	Delhi	SKV outreach exhibition at the Attic gallery, Connaught Place  Interview with ADC Handlooms  Dastkar Nature Bazaar, visit to AIACA
6 – 9	Varanasi	Visit to Loom to Luxury, informal interview with founder Jitendra Kumar, and THS graduates Suresh and Rahul
9 – 12	Maheshwar	Visits from Development Commissioner (DC) (Handlooms) and Harvard South Asia Institute

FIELDWORK PHASE 3: 13 FEBRUARY – 16 MARCH

DATES	Location, institute or organisation	Activity / Methods
16 – 19	Maheshwar	Filming process and interviews. Second female batch
21 FEB – 12 MARCH	Kachchh	Textiles tour assistant (non-research)

## Appendix B: List of Interviews

Somaiya Kala Vidya						
	Name of Interviewee	Occupation	Date and Place	Interpreter	Language	M /F
1	Judy Frater	Founder/ Director, SKV	20 <sup>th</sup> January 2016  SKV Campus, Adipur, Kachchh	None	English	F
2	Lakhabhai Rabari	Office Manager	16 <sup>th</sup> August 2016  SKV Campus, Adipur, Kachchh	Anuj Kumar Chaudhary (SKV programme coordinator)	Gujarati and Hindi	M
3	Nilesh Priyadarshi	Regional Market Coordinator, Fabindia.  Former Marketing Manager, KRV  Occasional Faculty at SKV and compare at SKV fashion shows	8 <sup>th</sup> December 2015  Café Coffee Day, Ahmedabad	None	English	M
KRV Graduates						
4	Chamanlal Premji Vankar	Master weaver	17 <sup>th</sup> August 2016	None	English	M

			weaving workshop, Bhujodi village			
5	Dayalal Kudecha	Weaver-designer, SKV faculty	15 <sup>th</sup> January 2016 3 <sup>rd</sup> August 2016 (film), Dayalal's home, Bhujodi	Kanji Siju Shradha Jain	Kachchhi/ Gujarati  Hindi	M
6	Dhanji Hirji Vankar	Weaver-designer	10 <sup>th</sup> January, Sarli village (Kachchh)	Kanji Siju	Kachchhi	M
7	Dilip Kayabhai Vankar	Weaver-designer	4 <sup>th</sup> August 2016 Sarli village (film)	Shradha Jain	Hindi	M
8	Hansraj Devji Vankar	Weaver-designer	6 <sup>th</sup> January 2016, Bhujodi village	Kanji Siju	Kachchhi	M
9	Jentilal Premji Bokhani	Weaver-designer	6 <sup>th</sup> January 2016, Bhujodi village 1 <sup>st</sup> August 2016, Bhujodi (film)	Kanji Siju	Kachchhi	M
10	Mukesh Naran Samat Vankar	Weaver-designer	10 <sup>th</sup> January 2016, Sarli Village 4 <sup>th</sup> August 2016, Sarli Village (film)	Kanji Siju Shradha Jain	Kachchhi  Hindi	M

<b>12</b>	Murji Hamir Vankar	Weaver-designer	22 <sup>nd</sup> August 2016 Bhujodi village	Nilesh Kudecha	Kachchhi	M
<b>13</b>	Namori Manjibhai Vankar	Weaver-designer	7 <sup>th</sup> January 2016 Bhujodi village	None	English	M
<b>14</b>	Nitesh Namoribhai Vankar	Weaver-designer	7 <sup>th</sup> January 2016 Bhujodi village	Kanji Siju	Kachchhi	M
<b>15</b>	Prakash Naranbhai Vankar	Weaver-designer (carpets)	15 <sup>th</sup> January 2016 Bhujodi 1 <sup>st</sup> August 2016, Bhujodi (film)	Kanji Siju Shradha Jain	Kachchhi Hindi	M
<b>16</b>	Purushottam Premji Siju	Weaver-designer	15 <sup>th</sup> January 2016, Bhujodi 1 <sup>st</sup> August 2016, Bhujodi (film)	Kanji Siju Shradha Jain	Kachchi Hindi	M
<b>17</b>	Rajesh Vishrambhai Vankar	Weaver-designer SVK business graduate	16 <sup>th</sup> January 2016, Bhujodi	Nisha (Rajesh's niece and Shamji's daughter)	Kachchhi	M
<b>18</b>	Ramji Hirabhai Maheshwari	Weaver-designer	4 <sup>th</sup> August 2016, Sumrasar Sheikh village (film)	Shradha Jain	Hindi	M

19	Varsha Bhanani	Embroidery artisan-designer	4 <sup>th</sup> August 2016, Sumrasar Sheikh village (film)	Shradha Jain	Hindi	F
SKV graduates						
20	Pachan Premji Siju	Weaver-designer	15 <sup>th</sup> January 2016, Bhujodi 1 <sup>st</sup> August 2016, Bhujodi (film)	Kanji Siju Shradha Jain	Kachchhi Hindi	M
21	Poonam Arjunbhai Vankar	Weaver-designer / Master weaver	2 <sup>nd</sup> January 2016, Bhujodi 5 <sup>th</sup> August 2016, Mota Varnora (film)	Kanji Siju Shradha Jain	Kachchhi Hindi	M
22	Pravin Devji Siju	Weaver-designer	6 <sup>th</sup> January 2016, Bhujodi village	Kanji Siju	Kachchhi	M
23	Ravji Lakhmshi Meriya	Weaver-designer	19 <sup>th</sup> August 2016, Rampavikra village, Kachchh	Kuldip Gadhvi	Kachchhi	M
24	Suresh Parbat Vankar	Weaver-designer	19 <sup>th</sup> August 2016, Sarli village	Kuldip Gadhvi	Kachchhi	M
25	Hariyaben Bhanani (mother of Varsha Bhanani)	Patchwork Artisan	4 <sup>th</sup> August 2016, Sumrasar village, Kachchh	Shradha Jain	Gujarati/Hindi	F

<b>26</b>	Zakiya Adil Khatri	Bandhani artisan-designer	11 <sup>th</sup> October 2017 via WhatsApp	None	English	F
SKV visiting faculty						
<b>27</b>	Lokesh Ghai	Artist, teacher	14 <sup>th</sup> February 2018, Skype	None	English	M
<b>28</b>	Anuja Goel	Designer, teacher	4 <sup>th</sup> February 2016, Skype	None	English	F
<b>29</b>	Shewta Dhariwal	Designer, teacher	20 <sup>th</sup> December 2017, Skype	None	English	F
<b>30</b>	Allen Shaw	Graphic Designer/ Illustrator, teacher	28 <sup>th</sup> January 2016, Skype	None	English	M
<b>31</b>	Usha Prajapati	Designer, brand owner	28 <sup>th</sup> January 2016, Skype	None	English	F
SKV permanent faculty						
<b>32</b>	Laxmi Puvar	Suf embroiderer-designer	14 <sup>th</sup> March 2017, Bhuj	None	Hindi	F
Kachchh other weavers						
<b>33</b>	Shamji Vishram Valj	Master weaver	17 <sup>th</sup> January, Bhujodi 3 <sup>rd</sup> August (film) Bhujodi 10 <sup>th</sup> March 2017 Bhuj	None Shradha Jain None	English Hindi English	M

<b>34</b>	Vishram Valji	Retired master weaver	2 <sup>nd</sup> August 2016 Bhujodi (film)	Shradha Jain	Hindi	M
<b>35</b>	Dayalal Ala	Master weaver	7 <sup>th</sup> January 2016 Bhujodi	Kanji Siju	Kachchhi	M
<b>36</b>	Chagganlal Vankar	Master weaver	10 <sup>th</sup> January 2016 Sarli	Kanji Siju	Kachchhi	
<b>37</b>	Meghji Vankar	Master weaver	2 <sup>nd</sup> January 2016 Rudramata	Kanji Siju	Kachchhi	M
<b>38</b>	Premji Vankar	Master weaver	6 <sup>th</sup> January 2016 Bhujodi	Kanji Siju	Kachchhi	
<b>39</b>	Group: Rajesh, Ramesh, Kanji, Dinesh, Lalji, Vinod	Job-weavers and THS graduates (Lalji and Vinod)	2 <sup>nd</sup> January 2016 Kotay	Kanji Siju	Kachchhi	M
<b>40</b>	Group: Khimji (M), Hemalata (F), Krishna (F)	Job-weavers	10 <sup>th</sup> January 2016 Sarli	Kanji Siju	Kachchhi	
<b>41</b>	Group: Umarshi Tejabhai Jepar (father), Nilesh Umarshi (son),	Job-weavers	2 <sup>nd</sup> January 2016 Mota Varnora	Kanji Siju	Kachchhi	

	Lachuben Umarshi (daughter)					
42	Group: Karsan Rama Jepar, Haresh Karsan Jepar, Premji Daya Loncha, Naran Hamir Jepar, Kanji Premji Loncha	Job-weavers	2 <sup>nd</sup> January 2016 Mota Varnora	Kanji Siju	Kachchhi	M
43	Devji	Mashru master weaver	21 <sup>st</sup> August 2016, Godhra village, Kachchh	Dharmishta Gor	Kachchhi	M

The Handloom School						
	Name of Interviewee	Occupation	Date and Place	Interpreter	Language	M /F
44	Sally Holkar	Founder/Director THS	9 <sup>th</sup> July 2016, THS campus	None	English	F
45	Sharda Gautam	Director, THS December 2014 – October 2016	13 <sup>th</sup> July 2016, THS campus	None	English	M
46	Hemendra Sharma	Marketing director, Women-Weave, August 2009 – August 2016	11 <sup>th</sup> July Gudi Mudi office, Maheshwar	None	English	M

47	Neelima Rao	Designer, Women-Weave advisory board member and THS design faculty member	15 <sup>th</sup> January 2017, Skype	None	English	F
48	Hema Shroff-Patel and Darshana	WomenWeave advisory board member (Hema) and designer	14 <sup>th</sup> November 2016, Skype	None	English	F
49	Neha Ladd	Textile designer	24 <sup>th</sup> September 2017, Skype	None	English	F
50	Shilpa Sharma	CEO Jaypore and Women-Weave advisory board member	22 <sup>nd</sup> June 2016, Jaypore office, New Delhi	None	English	F
51	David Goldsmith	Designer, PhD candidate and THS advisory board member	17 <sup>th</sup> February 2017, THS campus	None	English	M
52	Feruzan Mehta	THS Advisory board member, Founder-executive director The Peace Project	2 <sup>nd</sup> June 2016, Skype	None	English	F
THS permanent staff						

53	Pralad Sharma	Unit in Charge, THS	25 <sup>th</sup> July, THS campus	Ganga Kanere	Hindi	M
54	Bunty Gould	Production manager	25 <sup>th</sup> July, THS campus	Ganga Kanere	Hindi	M
55	Umashankar Patidar	Marketing manager	15 <sup>th</sup> February 2017, THS campus (film)	None	Hindi	M
'Young weavers' (graduates of first pilot workshops at WomenWeave)						
56	Bhavna Sunere	Weaver, student	8 <sup>th</sup> July 2016, Malaharganj	Ganga Kanere	Hindi	F
57	Varsha Vishvakarma	Weaver, Quality control, Women-Weave	8 <sup>th</sup> July 2016, Maheshwar	Ganga Kanere	Hindi	F
58	Ganga Kanere	Weaver-Entrepreneur, English teacher	20 <sup>th</sup> December 2015, Malaharganj	None	English	M
59	Bhavna Bicheweye	Weaver	15 <sup>th</sup> July 2016, Maheshwar	Ganga Kanere	Hindi	F
60	FabCreation (Asif, Nasir, Wasim, Mujammul, Rahat)	Master weavers	22 <sup>nd</sup> July 2016	None	English	M
61	Joheb Ansari	Master weaver	22 <sup>nd</sup> July 2016	Ganga Kanere	Hindi	M
62	Yogesh Ansari	Master weaver	7 <sup>th</sup> July 2016	Ganga Kanere	Hindi	M
THS graduates						

<b>63</b>	Manish Pavar	Weaver	1. 7 <sup>th</sup> July 2016 2. 16 <sup>th</sup> February 2017 (film) Maheshwar	1. None 2. Chayan Sonane	1. English 2. Hindi	M
<b>64</b>	Mudassir Ansari	Master weaver	1. 7 <sup>th</sup> July 2016 2. 16 <sup>th</sup> February 2017 (film) Maheshwar	1. None 2. Chayan Sonane	1. English 2. Hindi	M
<b>65</b>	Lalji, Vinod and Mansukh Vankar	Weavers	18 <sup>th</sup> August 2016, Kotay, Kachchh	Kuldip Gadhvi	Kachchhi	M
<b>66</b>	Arun Vankar	Weaver	18 <sup>th</sup> August 2016, Rudramata	Kuldip Gadhvi	Kachchhi	M
<b>67</b>	Raghuvir and Keshab Koli	Weavers	20 <sup>th</sup> July 2016 Chanderi	Himadri Banerjee	Hindi	M
<b>68</b>	Mehmud Ansari	Weaver	20 <sup>th</sup> July 2016 Chanderi	Himadri Banerjee	Hindi	M
<b>69</b>	Suresh Yadav and Rahul Maurya	Weavers	7 <sup>th</sup> September, Loom to Luxury office, Varanasi	Jitendra Kumar	Hindi	M
<b>70</b>	Harish Pipalade	Weaver	24 <sup>th</sup> July, Karondiya, Khargone (nr Maheshwar)	Ganga Kanere	Hindi	M

<b>71</b>	Hemant Parmar	Weaver	23 <sup>rd</sup> August 2016, Dhrol, Gujarat	Durgesh Jadeja	Gujarati	M
<b>72</b>	Ramji Rathod	Weaver	23 <sup>rd</sup> August Dhrol, Gujarat	Durgesh Jadeja	Gujarati	M
<b>73</b>	Soheb Mansuri	Weaver	16 <sup>th</sup> July 2016, Maheshwar	Ganga Kanere	Hindi	M
<b>74</b>	Mohammed Idris	Weaver	16 <sup>th</sup> July 2016, Maheshwar	Ganga Kanere	Hindi	M
<b>75</b>	Vijay Singh	Weaver	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2016, Kilmora workshop, Buri Bana, Uttarakhand	Puja Singh	Hindi	M
<b>76</b>	Farhan Khan	Weaver	23 <sup>rd</sup> July 2016	Umashankar Patidar	Hindi	M
<b>77</b>	Ghausal Qamar	Weaver	22 <sup>nd</sup> July 2016	Umashankar Patidar	Hindi	M
<b>78</b>	Gulshan Dewangan	Weaver	23 <sup>rd</sup> July 2016	Umashankar Patidar	Hindi	M
<b>79</b>	Jayesh Solanki	Weaver	14 <sup>th</sup> July 2016	Umashankar Patidar	Hindi	M
<b>80</b>	Kamlesh Solanki	Weaver	13 <sup>th</sup> July 2016	Umashankar Patidar	Hindi	M
<b>81</b>	Prakash Dewangan	Weaver	23 <sup>rd</sup> July 2016	Umashankar Patidar	Hindi	M
<b>82</b>	Raju Dewangan	Weaver	10 <sup>th</sup> July 2016	Umashankar Patidar	Hindi	M
<b>83</b>	Shahid Ansari	Weaver	22 <sup>nd</sup> July 2016	Umashankar Patidar	Hindi	M

84	Shubham Bangade	Weaver	25 <sup>th</sup> July 2016	Umashankar Patidar	Hindi	M
85	Tribhuwan Kumar	Weaver	25 <sup>th</sup> July 2016	Umashankar Patidar	Hindi	M
86	Virendra Fulkar	Weaver	22 <sup>nd</sup> July 2016	Umashankar Patidar	Hindi	M
87	Zahir Khan	Weaver	22 <sup>nd</sup> July 2016	Umashankar Patidar	Hindi	M
Maheshwar master weavers						
88	Abdul Rahim Ansari	Master weaver	9 <sup>th</sup> July 2016, Maheshwar	Ganga Kanere	Hindi	M
89	Akil Ansari	Master weaver	9 <sup>th</sup> July 2016, Maheshwar	Ganga Kanere	Hindi	M
90	Ashok Bande	Master weaver	7 <sup>th</sup> July 2016, Maheshwar	Ganga Kanere	Hindi	M
91	Rajendre Dadse	Master weaver	7 <sup>th</sup> July 2016, Maheshwar	Ganga Kanere	Hindi	M
92	Rohit Mukhati	Master weaver	12 <sup>th</sup> July 2016, Maheshwar	None	English	M
93	Arjun Chauhan	Master weaver	19 February 2017, Maheshwar (film)	Ganga Kanere	Hindi	M
94	Om Prakash	HSVN director	23 July 2016	Ganga Kanere	Hindi	M
95	Pramilla, Jeevan, Shanti, Anita, Aarti, Renuka	Trainee weavers, HSVN	23 July 2016	Ganga Kanere	Hindi	F

96	Rajdeep Shah	Director, Rehwa Society	14 <sup>th</sup> July 2016	None	English	M
97	Krishna Kewat, Chandraben Palanpuri, Ramesh Kewat	Weavers, Rehwa Society	14 <sup>th</sup> July 2016	Kirdi and Danya – NIFT interns	Hindi	

Other interviews						
	Name of Interviewee	Occupation	Date and Place	Interpreter	Language	M /F
98	Rajesh Kumar Sahu	Additional Development Commissioner (Handlooms)	5 <sup>th</sup> September 2016, Udyog Bhavan, New Delhi	None	English	M
99	Laila Tyabji	Co-founder Dastkar	23 <sup>rd</sup> June, Dastkar, Andheria Modh, Delhi	None	English	F
100	Jaya Jaitly (informal interview)	Founder Dastkari Haat Samiti	Dastkari Haat Samiti office, Hauz Khas, Delhi	None	English	F
101	Binil Mohan (informal interview)	Assistant Professor, Indian Institute of Craft and Design (IICD)	29 <sup>th</sup> August 2016, IICD, Jaipur	None	English	M
102	Chinar Farooqi (informal interview)	Designer	28 <sup>th</sup> June, 2016	None	English	F

<b>103</b>	Anjali Bhatnagar (informal conversation)	Enterprise Coordinator, AIACA	5 <sup>th</sup> September 2016	None	English	F
<b>104</b>	Ritu Sethi (informal interview)	Founder/ Director, Craft Revival Trust	24 <sup>th</sup> June 2016, Delhi	None	English	F
<b>105</b>	Rahul Jain	Textile historian, weaver and Founder, ASHA weaving workshop, Varanasi	24 <sup>th</sup> June 2016, Delhi	None	English	M
<b>106</b>	Sarika Samdani	Director, Kilmora, KGU, Uttarakhand	1 <sup>st</sup> September, KGU Office, Kashiyalek, Uttarakhand	None	English	F
<b>107</b>	Dheeraj Chippa	Master block printer-designer	26 <sup>th</sup> August 2016, Sanganeer, Rajasthan	None	English	M
<b>108</b>	Kushiram Pandey	Master block printer-designer	27 <sup>th</sup> August 2016, Bagru, Rajasthan	None	English	M
<b>109</b>	Erica Hess	Faculty at Wisconsin Madison University	21 <sup>st</sup> December 2017, Skype	None	English	F
<b>110</b>	Graham Hollick (informal interview)	Designer and co-founder, Stitch by Stitch	30 <sup>th</sup> March 2017, London	None	English	M

## **Appendix C: Interview Questions**

### **C1. Interview Questions: Weavers**

#### Learning to Weave

1. How long have you been weaving?
2. How did you learn weaving?
3. Do you enjoy weaving?

#### Experiences of THS/SKV

4. Why did you decide to join [THS/SKV]?
5. What were the reactions of your family members and friends when you decided to join?
6. Did you enjoy the course?
7. How has the course helped you?
8. What did you find most useful about the course?
9. What did you find difficult?
10. Have your earnings increased since graduating?

#### Design Process

11. Where do you find inspiration from for designs?
12. What process do you take when developing a new design and applying it to the loom?
13. Do you like the designs you create? (i.e if working for a client, is it based on what they want, or do you have the lead?)
14. How would you describe your work?
15. What are the unique characteristics of your weaving (or USP)?
16. Do you think it's important to keep elements of the weaving that your community is known for, and if so which?

#### Market

17. How many clients do you have?
18. Who are your main clients and how did you connect with them?
19. How do you market your products?
20. What is the size of your average order?

#### Business

21. How much time do you spend weaving?
22. Do you have weavers working for you, and if so how many?
23. What challenges do you face with your business?

24. What are the most important qualities to have as a weaver/designer/entrepreneur?
25. Where do you see yourself in 10 years' time?

### **C.1 Questions for teachers**

1. What course(s) have you taught, and how long have you been teaching for?
2. How did you find the overall experience?
3. How did this role compare to other teaching jobs you've done?
4. Why did you want to teach at KRV / SKV / THS –and how did you come to know of the role?
5. What would a typical day involve?
6. How did you plan the course?
7. How did you make the teaching relevant for all the students who are usually from different crafts? / from different regions and weaving traditions?
8. How did the students respond to your teaching?
9. What were the main challenges and successes?
10. How much did you know about the crafts of the area before teaching on the course?
11. Do you keep in touch with the graduates?
12. What do you think is the best way of combining the development of new design ideas with traditional crafts skills in this education?
13. What methods do you use to assess the students' work?
14. What things would you change about your approach if you were to go back and teach again/or have changed when returning for additional classes?

## **Appendix D: Information Sheet and Consent Form**

Nottingham Trent University, UK, Department of Art and Design

Research Participant information sheet and consent form

Researcher: Ruth Clifford

Research title: Handloom Weaving and Design Education in India

Dear

I am conducting a study into handloom weaving and design education in India for a PhD at Nottingham Trent University, UK. I aim to analyse the successes and challenges of design education and innovation with weaving communities in India. \_\_\_\_ is one of my focused case studies, and as you have studied on \_\_\_\_ course, your participation in the study would be very helpful.

There are a few questions I'd like to discuss with you to do with your work, and your experience at \_\_\_\_\_. However, you only need to respond to the ones which you wish to. There is no time limit on this interview; it may be as long or as short as you wish. Most interviews last around one hour. All interviews may be recorded and/or filmed and transcribed into text form. Quotations may then be included in the final report. The final output of the research will be a thesis that will include photographs and film and will eventually be available publicly. If you would prefer your name and identity to remain anonymous, or any identifiable details to be excluded, please state this below. All recordings and notes taken will be stored securely and remain confidential.

All participation in the project is voluntary. If you decide at any stage you no longer want to be part of the project, just let us know and we will make sure any information you have given us is destroyed.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Nottingham Trent University Joint Inter Ethics Committee.

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### **Please read the following statements and circle Yes or No**

I give permission for the interview to be audio-recorded. **Yes / No**

I give permission for the interview to be filmed **Yes / No**

I give permission for my photograph to be taken and agree for it to be potentially published in the final report. **Yes / No**

I give permission for my work (woven cloth and any accompanying design work) to be photographed and for it to potentially be published in the final report. **Yes / No**

If you would prefer to be kept anonymous and any names, places or identifying details left out of the final report, please tick here:

**Please read the following statements:**

I have read the above project description and had an opportunity to ask questions about the research and received satisfactory answers to my questions.

I have had sufficient information to decide whether or not I wish to take part in the study.

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time by informing the researcher of this decision.

I agree to take part in the study

I understand that quotations from this interview may be included in material published from this research.

I am willing to participate in an interview as part of this research project.

I give permission for quotations from the interview to be included in the final thesis.

Signed: .....

Full Name: .....

Date: .....

If you have any questions, please contact Ruth Clifford (+91) 8879598863 or [ruth.clifford2014@my.ntu.ac.uk](mailto:ruth.clifford2014@my.ntu.ac.uk)

**Compliance with the Research Data Management Policy**

Nottingham Trent University is committed to respecting the ethical code of conducts of the United Kingdom Research Councils. Thus, in accordance with procedures for transparency and scientific verification, the University will conserve all information and data collected during your interview in line with the University Policy and RCUK Common Principles on Data Policy (<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/datapolicy>) and the relevant legislative frameworks. The final data will be retained in accordance with the Retention Policy.

**What are the possible risks or discomforts?**

Your participation does not involve any risks other than what you would encounter in daily life. If you are uncomfortable with any of the questions and topics, you are free not to answer.

### **What are my rights as a research participant?**

You have the right to withdraw your consent and participation at any moment: before, during or after the interview. If you do wish to withdraw your consent, please contact me using my contact details above.

You have the right to remain anonymous in any write-up (published or not) of the information generated during this interview.

You have the right to refuse to answer to any or all of the questions you will be asked.

You also have the right to specify the terms and limits of use (i.e full or partial) of the information generated during the interview.

You have the opportunity to ask questions about this research and these should be answered to your satisfaction.

If you want to speak with someone who is not directly involved in this research, or if you have questions about your rights as a research subject, contact Professor Michael White, Chair for the Joint Inter-College Ethics Committee (JICEC) in Art & Design and Built Environment/Arts and Science at Nottingham Trent University. You can call him on (+44)0115 848 2069 or send an email to [michael.white@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:michael.white@ntu.ac.uk).

### **What about my Confidentiality and Privacy Rights?**

Participation in this research may result in a loss of privacy, since persons other than the investigator might view your study records. Unless required by law, only the study investigator and members of NTU staff have the authority to review your records. They are required to maintain confidentiality regarding your identity.

Results of this study may be used for teaching, research, publications and presentations at professional meetings. If your individual results are discussed, then a code number or pseudonym will be used to protect your identity if you have opted to remain anonymous.

### **Audio/visual recordings**

Permission to use audio or visual recordings of your participation, for presentations in the classroom, at professional meetings or in publications, is requested above, as this may be necessary to understand and communicate the results.

Any recorded data will be kept confidential and in a secure place in line with the Research Data Management Policy and destroyed in line with the current RCUK/University Guidelines.

**Appendix E: Maheshwar Survey Data, conducted by WomenWeave.**

**Sample: 943 people**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	637	68
Female	306	32
<b>Age</b>		
0-25	260	28
26-35	285	30
36-50	297	31
51-74	93	10
75 and above	8	1
<b>Family Members</b>		
0 – 2	43	6
3-5	391	56
6-8	226	32
Above 8	40	6
<b>Education</b>		
Middle	601	64
High school	105	11
Higher secondary	46	5
Graduation	20	2
Post-graduation	4	0
Uneducated	167	18

<b>Caste</b>		
General	55	6
OBC	714	76
SC	115	12
ST	59	6
<b>Religion</b>		
Hindu	621	66
Muslim	322	34
Sikh	0	0
Christian	0	0
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	720	76
Unmarried	188	20
Divorced	4	1
Widow	31	3
<b>Type of House</b>		
Pucca	11	1
Raw	195	21
RCC roof	193	20
Tin roof	544	58
<b>Travelling Recourse</b>		
Bicycles	240	25
Bike	179	18
Car	6	1

None	541	56
<b>Resources</b>		
Gas stove	649	29
T. V	708	31
Mobile	825	37
None	78	3
<b>Water facility</b>		
Tap Water	638	68
Gov. taps	236	25
Well	46	5
Handpumps	23	2
<b>Animals</b>		
Cow	21	2
Buffalo	15	2
Goat	51	5
None	864	91
<b>Number of years' experience in weaving</b>		
0-15	260	28
6-10	212	22
11-15	116	12
16-20	133	14
20 and above	222	24
<b>Handloom skills</b>		
Weaving	928	48

Heald filling	10	1
Tying	397	21
Denting	391	20
Dobby setting	195	10
<b>No. of people working in handloom (in family)</b>		
0-1	275	39
2-3	380	54
4-5	40	4
6-7	4	2
8 and above	1	1
<b>Loan provider</b>		
Bank	55	6
Moneylender	55	6
Owner	562	60
S.H.G	81	8
Relative	16	1.69
Friends	3	0.76
None	171	18
<b>Child's education</b>		
Government	290	40
Private	437	60
<b>Problems</b>		
Economic	342	27
Familial	38	3

Educational	130	10
Residential	124	10
Health	86	7
Other	272	21
None	288	22
<b>Knowledge of Gudi Mudi</b>		
Yes	819	13
No	124	87

## Appendix F: THS Curriculum

### Curriculum for the Handloom School (18 weeks program)

<b>COMPUTER SKILLS</b>			
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Contents</b>	<b>Hrs</b>	<b>Details</b>
1.To understand the basic working of computers	Starting and shutting down, Creating folders and saving, retrieval of information etc	10	Learn to set up face book page
2. Inculcate the ability to search on the web	Net Searching, saving textual and pictorial information	24	Browse history of Maheshwar or home town. Prepare a simple word Document information, knowledge on the net About Indigo and the freedom struggle, trade routes? Research yarn/dyes /colors forecasts, trends
3. Explore various Graphic Effects to create Digital designs			
4. Create an understanding of computerized Data Management	Image correction with Corel Draw – Cropping an imported image and combining- Enhance using adjustments options	70	<input type="checkbox"/> Demo: interpret sketch on the Computer Corel Draw, Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop <input type="checkbox"/> Photo editing using adjustments – brightness / contrast <input type="checkbox"/> Colour balance – Hue/saturation – gamma correction, <input type="checkbox"/> Effects – tone curve, replace colours – paste inside
5. Computer Etiquettes	Data formatting & Editing technique through data Management tools	20	Using technology to plan and coordinate <input type="checkbox"/> Formatting cell <input type="checkbox"/> Changing column widths & row height <input type="checkbox"/> Creating conditional formatting & style <input type="checkbox"/> Layout and Page set up of worksheet <input type="checkbox"/> Formatting a chart <input type="checkbox"/> Adding Label and Arrows
	Computer etiquette	20	Interactive Skype Sessions: Case Studies of established Handloom Businesses: Stories, Problems, and Solutions. Q & A.

			To cover 6 different Businesses over 6 days Business Correspondence
<b>ENTREPRENEURSHIP</b>			
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Contents</b>	<b>Hrs</b>	<b>Details</b>
1.To Help the students to understand and comprehend the process of identifying business opportunity.  2.Ability to assess the resource needs and convert that into business proposition  3 build vocabulary to understand enterprise, markets and segments  4. To develop confidence to venture into new domains or do better transaction in existing ones.	Introduction and meaning of Entrepreneurship	12	Entrepreneurship, Business, Issues (Establishing previous knowledge) Marketing & Business. Establishing knowledge, revisiting assumptions, sharing experiences, guiding that with inputs given during the session
	Understanding the Markets	10	Product Diversification with a Marketing Perspective – Introduction with samples, examples Target Markets, Marketing mix, spreading risk over different market segments, price sensitivity and buying power, B2B, B2C Market intelligence and trends, unique marketing opportunities, Market cycles, Seasonal cycles, Production Cycles, Calendar
	Setting up a business	20	Planning and Timelines: organizing, preparing calendar, contingency planning, professionalism, commitment Setting up and running a Business – overview and orientation. Student's Business case studies –Share the general story, problems, challenges, discuss solutions, make a plan Promotion & Marketing, Marketing Strategies, Marketing Avenues, Understanding Consumer Behavior, Participating in exhibitions. Student's Business case studies wrt Marketing – Share the story, problems, challenges, discuss solutions, make a plan Business Promotion and Marketing (Physical & Digital), Websites, Leveraging the Net, Websites, Social media

	Financials and budgeting	15	Access to Funding & Finance: Funding Bodies, Banks, Microfinance, Investors. Student's Business case studies wrt Funding –Share the story, problems, discuss solutions, make a plan Costing, Accounting, Financial Planning & Management - Budgeting, Expenditures, Business Projections & Planning vis e vis commercial viability of enterprise. Student's Business case studies wrt Accounts & Finance: Share the story, problems, challenges, discuss solutions, make a plan
	Business Management	15	Introduction to Design Development with a marketing perspective; product mix, market mix Logistics, quality control, standard operational procedures, systems management, supply chain management. Negotiation Skills, Maintaining Records, Books of Accounts, Computerized Accounts, Working with MS Excel, other accounting soft wares

#### PRESENTATION TECHNIQUES

Objectives	Contents	Hrs	Details
1.To train students to create an effective presentation of their work 2. using the right media to present their work	Preparing a presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define the objective</li> <li>Understanding your audience</li> <li>Deciding what to say and getting organized</li> <li>Developing effective visuals</li> <li>Rehearsing</li> <li>Making an effective</li> </ul>	20	Presentation skills, tools of presentation, power point presentation, flash cards, static tools, flip boards etc  Presentation by all the students in English on the product woven by them.

delivery			
	Photography for presentation	20	Photography (using mobile phone), Product Promotion and Marketing, overlaps- across Design, technology, market What next and why - Clarity on segments: Educational training and Internship + Design Collection Session with THS Director: respect, self awareness, confidence Interpret and draw ideas, create design concepts by hand - sketches (colour, texture, weight, opacity). Group to design a collaborative collection under faculty's guidance
	Presentation on social media and interactive sites	20	Putting the Collection on Pintrest Grooming, Social Skills, Soft Skills, Business Etiquette for – Direct & Online Promotion, Social Media Etiquette etc. Negotiation skills, Dealing with Clients & Customers Each Student to make a 5 minute pitch about the USP of their repertoire and own work. Client to brief the students for a Design Collection. Brief to include product, target audience, colour palette, colourways, textures, price points
	Visual and verbal Presentation of a collection	12	Browse and Watch Fashion Shows on TV, Computer to understand the presentation formatys FICCI Ladies –Mock Exhibition by Students Talk about Client's enterprise; Q & A

#### DESIGN PROCESS FOR WEAVING

Objectives	Contents	Hrs	Details
1. To develop an understanding the	Introduction	40	Introductions, Breaking in, Logistics, Sharing, talking about samples brought by students. Mandatory for each student to bring actual samples of their work – products

			Theory / Practical with Faculty - Dyes & Yarns. Visit to dyeing unit. – select a hit colour as accent
Quality parameters	25		Theory / Practical with Faculty - Dyes & Yarns Colour fastness, quality, wastage, pricing Go on Field at 1.30 with packed lunch for Treasure Hunt. Break into groups, take phone, local partner. Find location on google map, go there, take pictures, survey, interview, collect communicate with rest on What's app Debriefing with Faculty Fine-tuning the Collection, costing, pricing, identifying gaps, charting way forward for next piece Stole 7 - Treasure Hunt collection design # 2 (Thematic) Weaving theory session - Detailing and finishing techniques on the loom. Adding Texture to fabric
Fabric Defects	8		Students to Create directory of Defects, Quality parameters, Quality control, Recycling defective pieces
Design of engineered garment	30		Design Sketch, discussion on layout, planning to minimize wastage and costing. Execute the design on loom weaving the engineered garment / products on 12 large looms in 48" width. Time: four days
Detailing and finishing	20		Detailing, Finishing. Conversion of unstitched fabric into finished products Tailoring of engineered garment with the Tailor Shadow the Master Weaver # 2 Students – Skype/ Call Family – do Costing of Designs
Putting together a Collection	33		Conceptualize the Collection, make sketches on paper; Client to give feedback to each, how many pieces, price points etc Students to work and fine-tune the Design collection. To continue correspondence / Skype with Client/ Students start working on the Fashion Show
Presentation in a Fashion Show	15		Start work on the Fashion show, Assisted by local weavers, DJ, local male and female models etc, to put up the show

			Work on the Fashion show, Assisted by local weavers, DJ, models etc to put up the show Review of work done for the Fashion show, supervised by THS Director & Sally Holkar At venue, Fashion Show starts at 7 pm, leading up to party
<b>COMMUNICATION SKILLS</b>			
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Contents</b>	<b>Hrs</b>	<b>Details</b>
1.To impart the basic principles of communication, ethics and etiquettes at the workplace	What is communication? How do we communicate? Various factors in communication? Communication Barriers, Para verbal Communication Skills,	15	Lecture followed by class discussions  Documenting local language Vocabulary (words, terms) used in each Student's region, design repertoire in weaving, loom, design, communication etc and subsequent discussions.
2.To understand how people interact and respond through various forms of communication	Non-Verbal Communication	20	Introduction to Non-verbal Communication , body language, use of gestures and expressions as communicators
3. To understand various ways to make effective communication	Using a dictionary	14	Dictionary symbols, pronunciation through dictionary  Read a short story or an article provided by the teacher. Make a list of 10 difficult/ new words (list the page number) Find out their meaning with the help of a hindi to English dictionary. Narrate the story in simple English to the class.
	Speaking skills, overcoming hesitation, initiating conversations	15	Listening skills, asking good questions and art of conversation  Select one of your woven products and try to communicate its making process in English to the teacher and peer-group. (Something on the lines of show and tell)
	Business Writing	8	Written Communication

**Appendix G: Summary of Design for Artisans Curriculum (Frater, 2014)** (full curriculum removed to protect copyright)

**Vision statement summary**

The aim of the design for artisans program is to ‘develop a new approach to design education based on existing traditions’. The curriculum is based on the concept that tradition comprises concept and knowledge as well as technique. The curriculum draws upon traditions and their ‘salient features’, while focusing on ‘acquiring knowledge and skills that will enable artisans to use design effectively in their work, in order to successfully reach new markets, while at the same time strengthening their traditional identity’.

The design course is eleven months in duration and is broken down into six 2-week sessions. In between these sessions the students return to the home/workplace where they carry out homework to put what they have learnt at the session into practice and prepare for the following class session. During their time at home students are visited by the permanent faculty and mentors who ensure the students are applying what they have learnt in their ongoing work. ‘At the conclusion of the course, all students present final collections juried by professionals.’ In the first few years of Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya (KRV), this was carried out during a convocation event open to the public but since the curriculum moved to Somaiya Kala Vidya (SKV), the jury takes place immediately at the end of the course and the convocation is held at a later date. Another more recent addition to the SKV curriculum is an exhibition of students’ final collections at an urban gallery and a follow-up analysis session.

**Program goals**

\*To enable artisans to significantly improve their standard of living- including social and cultural as well as economic status;

\*To strengthen the vitality and viability of crafts in the national and international market;

\*To raise the level of education in the craft sector; \*To provide a successful example of educational reform.

**The Design for Artisans curriculum intends to achieve these goals by** (original document provides more detail):

1. Building on tradition
2. Increasing the value of craft

**Educational goals** (original document provides more detail):

- 1. Develop critical judgement and the ability to assess their work**
- 2. Develop critical thinking skills**
- 3. Develop communication skills**
- 4. Develop interpersonal skills**
- 5. Develop literacy (verbal, research, computer and math)**

**Selection criteria**

Candidates are expected to have knowledge of own tradition including materials, quality, patterns and motifs, colour and have basic knowledge of mathematics and geometry. They are also expected to have mastery of tools and techniques of their own tradition.

**Course sessions** (original curriculum document includes the objectives for each session, for skill development, concepts, attitudes and exposure):

**Session 1: Colour/Sourcing from heritage and nature**

**Session 2: Basic Design/Sourcing from heritage and nature**

**Session 3: Market Orientation/Concept/Costing**

**Session 4: Concept/Communication/Projects/Sampling**

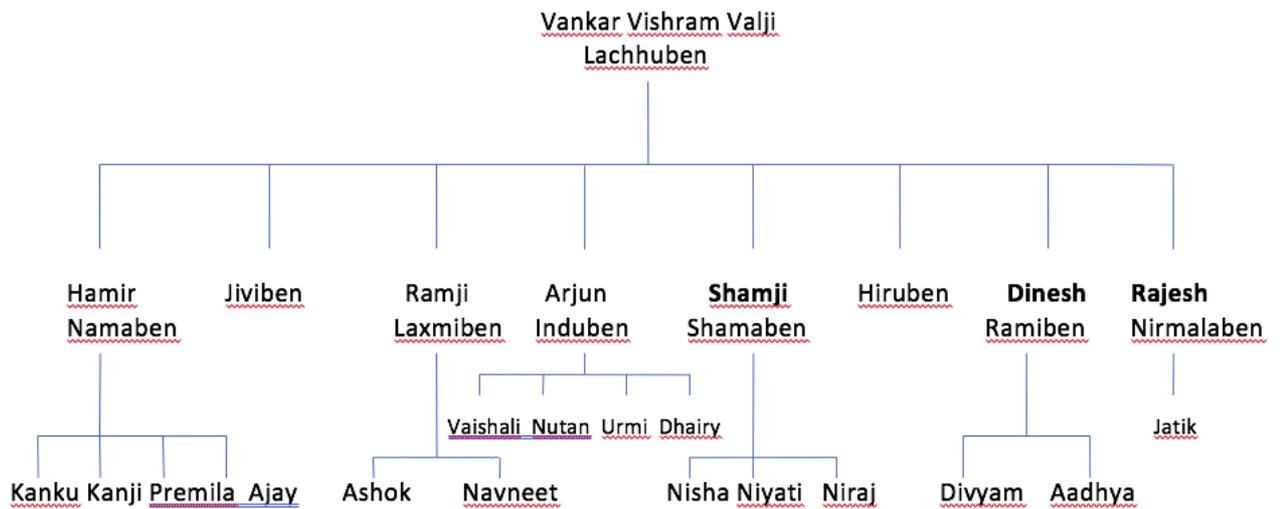
**Session 5: Collection Development/Finishing**

**Session 6: Merchandising/Presentation**

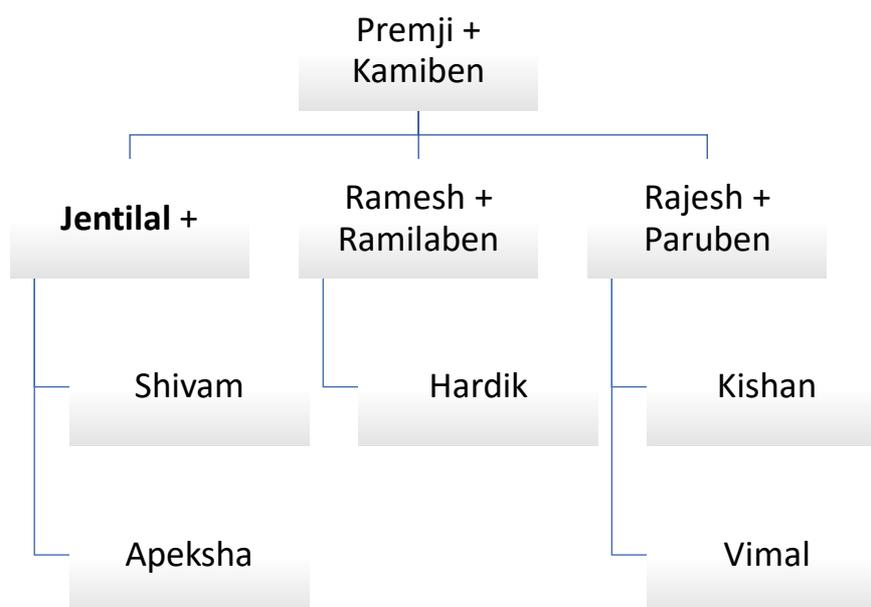
## Appendix H: Family Trees

### H.1. Kachchh

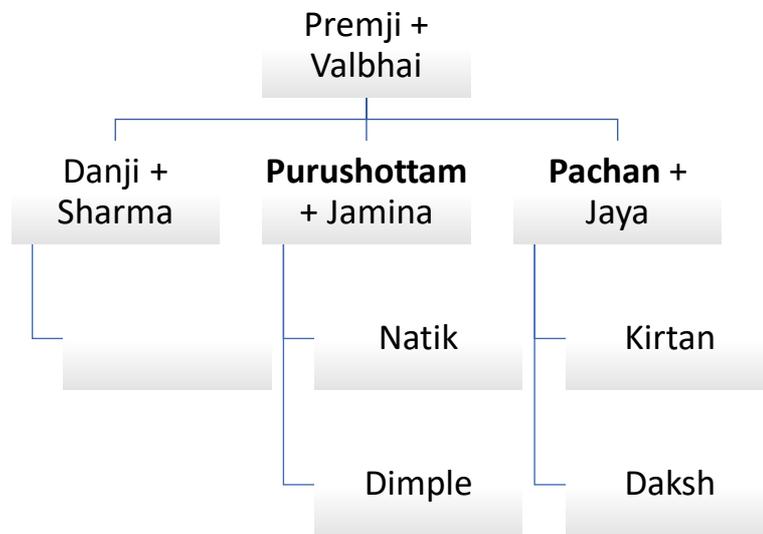
#### Family of Vankar Vishram Valji



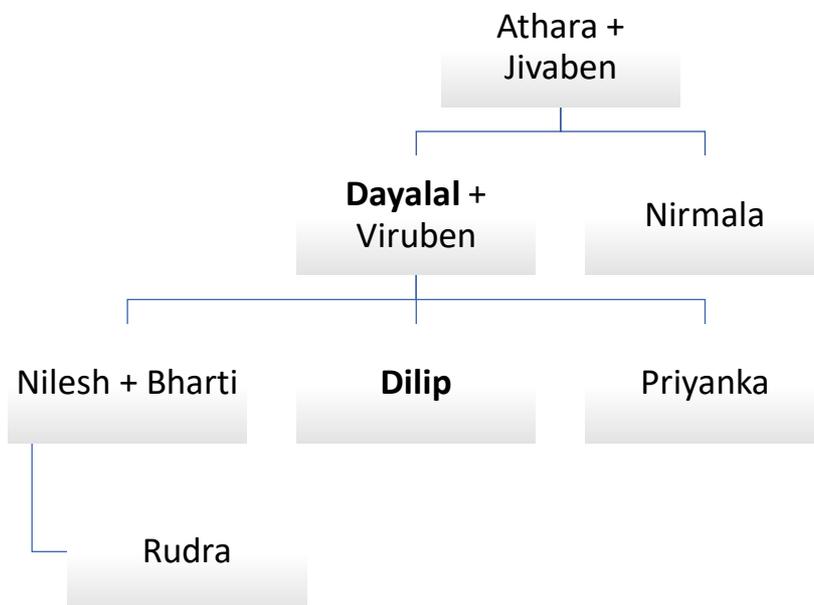
#### Family of Jentilal Bokhani



### Family of Purushottam and Pachan Siju

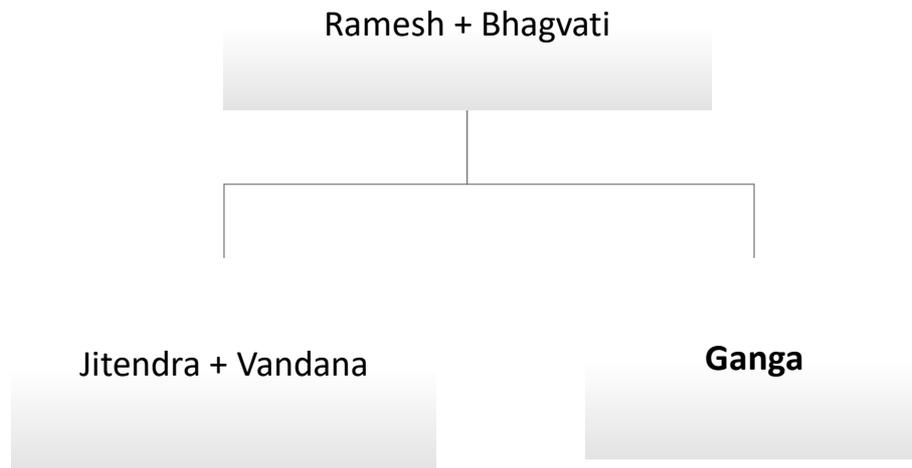


### Family of Dayalal Kudecha



## H.2. Maheshwar

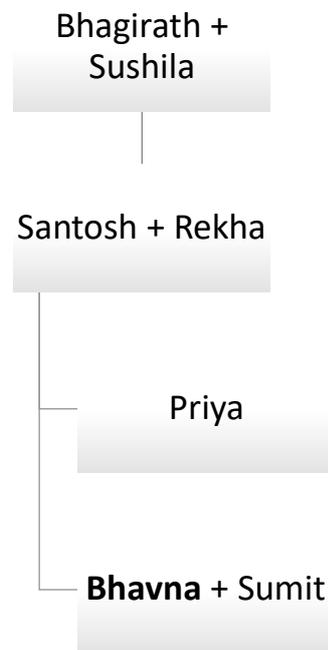
### Family of Ganga Kanere



### Family of Varsha Vishvakarma



## Family of Bhavna Sunere



## Appendix I: Selection of film transcripts

Dayalal Kudecha (Hindi), filmed by Shradha Jain, translated by Roohi Khan		
Time Stamp	Speaker #	English
00:00:00	Speaker #1	Earlier, people didn't know so much. They would sometime watch it on TV, etc that people came to our village and bought these things. That's the only thing we knew that foreigners also used to buy our products.
00:00:10		We didn't know who would buy it and what is its value. At that point, I had very little time. I would work on the loom the entire day. I never saw the outside world.
00:00:19		In 2008, when I did the design course and met other people, at that point I didn't even have much idea about NID before 2008. Only then did I come to know that in our Gujarat, near Ahmadabad, there was such a good design college.
00:00:33		After that, many students started to come to me. That's when I came to know that our craft can become more successful. Then I decided that whenever I get the opportunity to take our craft and our community forward, I will make use of it.
00:00:52		I became a means for it. I believe that America is great and I got the chance to go there too.
00:01:00		Like, I feel that V&A covers Europe. When I went to Santa Fe, I covered America. Before 2008, it wasn't like this.
00:01:12		But from 2008, there was this spark that I have to take my craft to the whole world. We can reach the world. There was something asleep inside of me, which awakened after that.
00:01:24		That's when I decided that even I can go to the world. In 2008, they asked me would you do this design course. What would you do after that? What is your future?

00:01:37		This is what I said in 2008. I didn't know that it would come true. I had said that I would like to give a good education to my son. I want to do my own business.
00:01:49		I will also do an exhibition at least once in America. I will make my craft more successful.
00:01:58		All my three dreams came true. I provided good education to my sons. I also did seminar, exhibitions overseas and I also have my own business.
00:02:08		So, the three dreams I had, they came true. Now, I do weaving. I have a nice studio at home, with all the facilities in the world. Anyone from around the world who come to me, I teach them. Like small sample looms.
00:02:28		There is AC etc. I mean what people demand these days and if foreigners want to learn it, I can teach them too.
00:02:38		I want to teach weaving to as many people as possible. I want to contribute to this craft and make it as popular as possible in the whole world. This is what I want.
00:03:03		-END-

<b>Pachan Premji Siju (Hindi), filmed by Shradha Jain, translated by Roohi Khan</b>		
Time Stamp	Hindi	English
00:00:00	वो पहला पीस बनाया न वो भी अपने भाई के नाम पे नैशनल अवार्ड के लिए। उसको भी पता चले कि हम इस तरह से काम कर सकते हैं।	I made the first piece in the name of my brother for the National Award. He also found out that I can do this kind of work.
00:00:06	तो उन्होंने मेरा काम देखा न तो उन्होंने बोला कि यार इतना क्यों मेहनत कर रहे हो, हम वहां तक पहुंच नहीं पाएंगे क्योंकि ये हम	When he saw my work, he said, why are you putting in so much of effort. We won't be able to reach that stage. We have never done this, why are you worrying about it.

	कभी किए नहीं है तो क्यों परेशान हो रहे हो।	
00:00:15	तो मैंने बोला नहीं अभी आपको समझ में नहीं आएगा। स्टार्ट हो जाएगा न तो आपके दिमाग में आहिस्ता आहिस्ता आइडिया आएंगे।	I said, you won't understand it now. When I start doing it, then you will have ideas slowly in your mind.
00:00:21	फिर मैंने यहां तक पल्लू डाला न, तो उनको पता चला कि नहीं नहीं ये तो कुछ नया निकल रहा है। तो फिर मैंने डिज़ाइन है जो ट्रेडिशनल उसको ही एक्स्ट्रैक्ट करने की कोशिश की।	Then when I made this Pallu till here, he realized that something new is being created. I then tried to use the same traditional design.
00:00:30	डिज़ाइन वही है। जो ट्रेडिशन चली आ रही है वैसे। उसको ही मैंने इस तरह से प्लेसमेंट किया क्योंकि वो है डिज़ाइन पुराना, नया निकल गया है।	Design is the same traditional design. But I made such a placement that the traditional design started to look new.
00:00:40	इस तरह से मैंने इसका पूरा प्लेट फॉर्म रखा कि वो नेगेटिव पॉज़िटिव नज़र आए। जो अभी मैंने सीखा है उसके हिसाब से ये पूरा नेगेटिव पॉज़िटिव नज़र आए।	This way I made the whole plate to show it in the negative positive form. I did this negative positive according to what I learnt.
00:00:50	तो डिज़ाइन का। उस टाइम मुझे पता नहीं था कि ये नेगेटिव पॉज़िटिव होगा। कि डिज़ाइन इस तरह से प्लेसमेंट उभर के आएगा। टेक्सचर इस तरह से दिखेंगे।	At that point, I didn't know that this would be negative positive or that the design would show up so clearly or the texture would be this way.
00:00:58	तो ये अभी मैं जब देखता हूं न तो मुझे पता चलता है कि ये रेगुलर रिदम है। ये टेक्सचर है	Now, when I see all this I know that this regular rhythm. This is the texture. This is the placement. Now I know all these small

	इसमें। इसमें प्लेसमेंट है। तो ये सब छोटे छोटे एलिमेंट अब मुझे पता चले हैं। तो उस टाइम पे मेरा सोच ऐसा था।	elements. At that point, I used to think this way.
00:01:10	तो अभी तो मैं इसमें कल और भी नया कुछ निकाल के ला सकता है इसमें। तो ये चीज़ें मुझे काफी जानने को मिली हैं।	Now, I can make something new from this in the future. So, I learnt all these things a lot.
00:01:18	और जैसे आप आई हैं तो मैं आपको क्लियरली समझा सकता हूँ कि ये ये इसमें एलिमेंट हैं। ये डिज़ाइन है। तो ये उस टाइम मुझे पता नहीं होता था। क्योंकि मैं उस तरह किसी से बात करना भी नहीं चाहता था।	And like you are here and I can clearly explain to you that these are the elements in this. This is design. I didn't know all this at that time. I didn't want to talk this way at that time.
00:01:28	क्योंकि मुझे न किसी से बात करने में मज़ा नहीं आता था। वो बोलते थे तो मैं मना कर देता है कि भई घर पे कोई नहीं है, जाओ चले जाओ। ऐसे ही बोल देता था। उनका ऐसा लगता था ये आदमी है क्या है।	I didn't like to talk this way with anyone. If someone asked me, I would say there is no one at home, go away. I would tell them this way. They would also feel what kind of a man is this.
00:01:36	फिर मुझे पता चला कि जैसे हम अपने काम की खुद क़दर नहीं करेंगे तो दूसरे क्या करेंगे। सबसे पहले माध्यम हम है काम के। हम ही उनको नहीं समझाना चाह रहे हैं तो वो समझना क्यों चाहेंगे।	Then I realized that if we don't respect our own work, others won't do it either. We are the first medium of our work. If we don't explain it to them, why would they want to understand.
00:01:48	ये सोच वहां पे काफी जागृत हुई।	This awareness happened in that place.
00:01:52		-END-

Varsha Viswakarma, Maheshwar, filmed by Chayan Sonane, translated by Roohi Khan			
Timestamps	Speaker	Transcript (Hindi)	English
00:00:41	Varsha	Hello, my name is Varsha. Varsha Vishwakarma. And I live in Maheshwar. I am learnt about BA First. मुझे वीविंग भी करती हूँ। और स्टीचिंग, पॉमपॉम वगैराह, सिलाई, ये सारा गुड़ीमुड़ी में भी करती हूँ।	Hello, my name is Varsha Vishwakarma and I live in Maheshwar. I am studying in BA First Year. I also weave, stitch, make pompoms at Gudimudi.
00:01:07	Varsha	और पढ़ाई भी और काम भी दोनों चीज़ करती हूँ साथ में। वीविंग भी आता है और मेरी मम्मी के साथ मैंने 2009 में मतलब कि बुनाई स्टार्ट की थी सीखने के लिए। और फिर मैंने 2011 में गुड़ीमुड़ी में सेली मैम न कहा था तो हम लोगों ने एक वर्कशॉप थी तो वो हम लोगों ने स्टार्ट किया था, सीखा था, बहुत सारी चीज़ें सीखीं थीं हमने टेक्स्टाइल के बारे में।	I study as well as work. I know weaving. I started learning weaving with my mother in 2009. In 2011, Sally Ma'am asked us to participate in a workshop in Gudimudi. We learnt a lot of things about textiles there.
00:01:33	Varsha	मतलब कि कैसे वीविंग कर सकते हैं। कैसे कलर कॉम्बिनेशन ले सकते हैं। ये सारा। फोटोग्राफी वगैराह। सब सीखा था हम लोगों ने। वहाँ से हम लोगों ने, मतलब अभी तक आगे सीखते आए हैं, सेली मैम हम लोगों को बहुत सपोर्ट करती हैं। और हम लोगों को मतलब डेविड सर एंड जे फॉक्स, ये लोग आते हैं बाहर से, ये टेक्स्टाइल के बारे में सीखाते हैं।	Like, how we can weave and what color combinations we can take, and photography, etc. We learnt everything. We continue to learn and Sally Ma'am supports us a lot. David Sir and J. Fox come from abroad and they also teach us about textiles.
00:01:57	Varsha	फोटोग्राफी, फोटो। मतलब कि अगर ड्रेस बनाया है, या साड़ी बनाई है, दुपट्टा बनाया है, तो उसका ड्रेस फोटो कैसे ले सकते हैं। इस टाइप से मतलब	They teach us photography. Like, if we need to make a dress, make a dupatta, how we can take a photo of the dress. We do all this and

		के हम लोग ये करते हैं, और आगे हम लोग किस बेस पर पढ़ाई भी कर सकते हैं। इसमें पढ़ाई भी कर सकते हैं। तो ये लोग भी हम लोगों को बहुत सपोर्ट करते हैं। मतलब इस टाइप से नहीं इस टाइप से कीजिए। ये सारा सीखाया जाता है मतलब।	we can study based on that. These people support us a lot. They teach us don't do this way, do it this way. They teach all these things to us.
00:02:23	Interviewer	और अभी आप वीविंग काम करते हैं?	And you do weaving these days?
00:02:26	Varsha	मैं वीविंग तो नहीं करती हूँ अभी मतलब वीविंग कम करती हूँ। मम्मी की थोड़ी-बहुत हेल्प करती हूँ। और ज़्यादा फुल टाइम में गुडीमुडी में काम करती हूँ। मतलब कि वहाँ पे कुछ नए-नए प्रोडक्ट्स करते जाते हैं, जैसे सिलाई हुआ, या फिर कुछ स्टोल में, पॉमपॉम वगैराह। मतलब कुछ भी ऐसा नया तरीका ऐसा बनाना हुआ, तो वो सारा चीज़ मतलब फर्स्ट बार सैम्पल बनाकर उसे मतलब कि आगे लेकर जाते, एक्जिबीशन में सेल करना।	I do little bit of weaving to help my mother. Most of my time I am working at Gudimudi, such as making new products, stitching, making stoles, pompoms, etc. We make new things in new ways, make new samples and sell them in exhibitions, etc.
00:02:53		ये सारा चीज़ करवाते हैं। मतलब फर्स्ट टाइम कुछ नई चीज़ बनाई, स्टोल, बैग, या फिर पॉमपॉम सिलाई का, नैपकिन वगैराह। ये सारा बनाकर के और मतलब कि आगे मतलब सेल करने के लिए हम लोग कुछ अच्छा बनाते हैं। तो वेस्टेज कपड़े को भी हम लोग यूज़ करते रहते हैं, मतलब वेस्टेज नहीं जाने देते, मतलब कुछ भी इतना-सा भी कपड़ा वेस्टेज जाएगा।	They make us do all these things. We make new things, such as stoles, bags or stitch pompoms, napkins, etc. We make nice things to sell. We don't waste cloth even a little bit, we make use of it.

00:03:15	Interviewer	And what do you like doing most?	And what do you like doing most?
00:03:27	Varsha	मुझे सबसे अच्छा पसंद मतलब कि वीविंग में ही कुछ करना, कुछ अच्छा नए-नए, कुछ नए तरीके से खुद से भी वीविंग करो और कुछ नए डिज़ाइन बनाओ। कुछ भी अगर हाथ से भी अगर कपड़ा अगर ले लिया है, उससे भी मतलब बैग बनाना है, तो उसमें थोड़ा थोड़ा थोड़ा। दूसरा भी कपड़ा लेकर के यूज़ करके मतलब उसको भी थोड़ा-सा स्टीचिंग हाथ से करके या पॉम्पॉम डालके उसको बैग टाइप या कुछ भी नए तरीके से बनाना। ये चीज़ अच्छी लगती है सबसे बढ़िया मेरे लिए। मतलब ज़्यादातर तो वीविंग ही बहुत पसंद है मुझे।	I like doing something in weaving, doing something using a new technique or new design. If there is a cloth in my hand, I like to make a bag out of it slowly. If I get another cloth, I will stitch it, place pompoms into it and make a bag out of it using a new technique. I mean I mostly like to do weaving.
00:04:01	Interviewer	So, the workshops at Woman Weave they're very helpful?	So, the workshops at WomanWeave they're very helpful?
	Varsha	Yes. Is it very good.	Yes, they are very good.
	Interviewer	So, before the workshops what did you want to do? Did you always wanted to be working in weaving?	So, before the workshops what did you want to do? Did you always wanted to be working in weaving?
	Varsha	Yes. Sorry?	Yes. Sorry?
00:04:19	Interpreter	वर्कशॉप से पहले आपको क्या करना पसंद था? क्या पहले से ही आपकी इसमें दिलचस्पी थी?	What did you like to do before the workshop? Were you interested in this then also?
	Varsha	नहीं, मतलब पहले से ही मेरा दिलचस्प तो वीविंग में ही था। मतलब पहले से ही मैं वीविंग करना चाहती	I was always interested in weaving. Along with my studies, I also wanted to help my mother. Then I

		<p>थी। और पढ़ाई के साथ-साथ मम्मी की भी हेल्प करना चाहती थी। तो गुड़ीमुड़ी में जाकर वीविंग सीखा थोड़ा-बहुत। फिर वहाँ से मैंने, घर की स्थिति हमारी थोड़ी-सी मतलब खराब हो गई थी, तो हम लोगों ने मम्मी-पापा की हेल्प करने के लिए वीविंग स्टार्ट किया।</p>	<p>learnt weaving at Gudimudi. At that point, our household situation was quite poor, so we started weaving to help our parents.</p>
00:04:47	Varsha	<p>फिर गुड़ीमुड़ी में वर्कशॉप भी स्टार्ट हुई। तो वहाँ पर कुछ नई-नई चीज़ें सीखाई गईं। उसी को मतलब गुड़ीमुड़ी में हम लोगों ने यूज़ किया। मतलब आगे कुछ बनाया। वर्कशॉप में भी हम लोगों को वीविंग अलग तरीके की सीखाई गई थी। कुछ नए-नए डिज़ाइन वो लोग देते थे और फिर हम लोग हाथ ही से पूरा खुद से डिज़ाइन बनाते थे। वो चीज़ बहुत अच्छा था मतलब हमारे लिए। मोडाक से भी कुछ बच्चे लोग आए थे वहाँ पर। कुछ नए-नए उन लोगों ने ड्रेस डिज़ाइन दिए थे कि हम लोगों को मतलब इस टाइप से ड्रेस बनाना है।</p>	<p>Then they organized workshops at Gudimudi, where we learnt new things. We used the same things from Gudimudi and made new things. We were taught a different type of weaving. They gave us new designs and we would make them with our own hands. That was very good for us. Students from Modak also visited and gave us new dresses to design. We had to make dresses in a specific way.</p>
00:05:16	Varsha	<p>तो हम लोगों ने खुद से वीविंग किया। खुद से ही मतलब वो ड्रेस में डिज़ाइन डाला है। कि आपको जो डिज़ाइन यहाँ पे चाहिए, वो डिज़ाइन हम लोग यहाँ पे डालेंगे। विडआउट वो डिज़ाइन कटिंग हुआ मतलब वो पूरा ड्रेस बनाना था हम लोगों को। मतलब वर्कशॉप में ये सारी चीज़ें सीखाई गईं थीं। कुछ उनसे सीखो। कुछ हम लोग सीखें।</p>	<p>We did the weaving ourselves. We had to put the design in the dresses. They would tell us where we had to put the designs and we would do that. Without doing any cutting, we made those dresses. We were taught all these things at the workshop. We learnt a few things from them too.</p>

00:05:36	Varsha	और सेली मैम भी हम लोगों को बहुत सारे आईडिया देते हैं कि मतलब हम लोग बाहर अगर जाएंगे तो किस टाइप का कलर लेंगे और उसके साथ कौन-सा कॉम्बिनेशन ले सकते हैं। ये सारी चीज़ वो खुद भी बताते हैं। और डिज़ाइन कौन-सा ले सकते हैं। अगर महेश्वरी है तो महेश्वरी में पहले पूरा ट्रेडिशनल मतलब पुराना जो डिज़ाइन था वो हम लोग लेकर के, पुराने डिज़ाइन को लेकर के फिर नया डिज़ाइन बनाते हैं।	Sally Ma'am also supported us and gave us new ideas. Like, if we go out, what types of colors we can take and what combinations work with them. They told us about all this. They would tell us what designs go with what. Maheshwari has its own traditional designs. So, they taught us to take the traditional designs and combine them with something new.
00:06:02	Varsha	मतलब उनका बोलना था कि हम पुराने डिज़ाइन के साथ ही काम करें। अगर हम नया लेंगे और पुराना भी, दोनों को मिक्स करके बनाएंगे, तो वो कुछ नया बनके आएगा।	They would tell us that we should work with traditional designs. We should mix the new with the traditional designs and make something new.
00:06:12	Interviewer	So, what would you like to be doing in the future?	So, what would you like to be doing in the future?
	Varsha	I like textile designer. Textile working.	I would like to work in textile designing.
00:06:26	Interviewer	So, you would like to have your own business?	So, you would like to have your own business?
	Varsha	So. I don't know I have business.	I don't know whether I would have my own business.
00:06:36	Interviewer	So, what kind of textiles would you design? Different form of garments?	So, what kind of textiles would you design? Different form of garments?
	Varsha	Yes, garments and long kurtas. Long kurta design. Top design and neck design. Sleeve designs.	Yes, garments and long kurtas. Long kurta design.

			Top design and neck design. Sleeve designs.
00:07:05	Interviewer	What do you think you need to learn more for this? Do you need to study more for textile designing course or would you just like to learn yourself?	What do you think you need to learn more for this? Do you need to study more for textile designing course or would you just like to learn yourself?
00:07:18	Varsha	अभी तो मैं खुद से ही प्रैक्टिस करती रहती हूँ, मतलब अभी हम लोगों के पास इतना वो नहीं है कि हम टेक्स्टाइल कॉलेज में जाकर हमारे मम्मी पापा पढ़ा सकें। लेकिन अभी यहाँ से आगे मतलब थोड़ा बढ़कर अगर हो सका तो कभी न कभी तो मैं टेक्स्टाइल के लिए कॉलेज में कहीं पर भी अप्लाई करके वहाँ से पढ़ाई करूँगी। टेक्स्टाइल पढ़ाई करके कुछ आगे करूँगी। अभी मतलब कि हमारे यहाँ पर, हमारे एरिया में मतलब टेक्स्टाइल कॉलेज भी नहीं है जो कि हम लोग जाकर टेक्स्टाइल कॉलेज में पढ़ सकते हैं।	As of now, I practice myself. I can't afford to go to textile college as of now. Our parents cannot send us to college. Later on, some or the other time, I will try and apply to get into a textile college. I will study textiles and do something in the future. There is no textile college in our area as of now where we can study textile designing.
00:07:55	Varsha	क्योंकि यहाँ से अगर बाहर जाएंगे फिर वहाँ पर पढ़ाई करना होती है, जैसे इंदौर हुआ, भोपाल, उज्जैन। मतलब अलग-अलग बाहर जगह पर होती है। तो अभी हम लोग मतलब इतने वो नहीं हैं कि वहाँ पे जाकर अभी पढ़ेंगे। तो थोड़े दिन बाद हम लोग पढ़ेंगे।	We will need to go outside this city, like, to Indore, Bhopal, or Ujjain. As of now, we cannot afford to go outside the city and study. So, maybe a few years later.
00:08:13	Interviewer	Anything else you would like to add?	Anything else you would like to add?
	Varsha	No.	No.

	Interviewer	Thank you.	Thank you.
00:08:22		[END]	[END]

**Arun Vankar (Gujarati) Author's own film, interpreter and translator: Kuldip Gadhvi**

Arun

First of all its our family tradition, that's how I got engaged with weaving. The reason to go to the handloom school was that here we already know the tradition of Kutchi weaving but the market and customers want something different. So to help produce something different for these markets, I joined the school. [1.27] I learnt a lot there about what the market wants, and what artisans are making. And how to harmonise between these two. [1.41] - What the market wants we should produce, that's what we learned there. There were weavers from about 6 - 7 states of India. [1.57] and the way they weave and the patterns they use were different. [2.06] So we exchanged a lot of ideas about what type of design they're making and how they're making. What type of materials, yarn they're using. [2.22] - the use of different colours in the warp and weft. The handloom school we learned a lot of good things.

**Clip 68**

Arun

00.17 The most interesting thing I learned was the use of different colours and different yarn in the warp and weft. 00.31

**Clip 69 (58 seconds)**

Interviewer

What kinds of yarn were you using?

Arun

Mulberry silk, eri silk, differnt types of cotton, mercerised cotton, khadi, wool - in different counts - 280, 260. In one single warp we used different yarns

**Clip 70 (1.59)**

Arun

Dobby is good as long as it works, but there's any error with it, or if it breaks down, you won't be able to fix it yourself, so that's the limitation of using doobby for us. [0.12] - Its difficult to set.

Interviewer

Do you know how to use graphing?

Arun

First we made a graph and then set the doobby (*describes doobby process*)

[00.50] - when we press a switch on it, it lifts the warp, and that's how it creates the pattern. In doobby if its in plain weave, then its pre-set - you keep pressing the two peddles and the rollers move round automatically. The school told us we can learn doobby

Interviewer

So did you learn doobby?

Arun

No we didnt learn doobby. there were doobby looms at women weave.

Interviewer

*did you try?*

Arun

Yes I saw it and tried it, but its very difficult. [01.40] - if there's a graph and it's set on a doobby, you can use it, but if there's any error, its difficult to fix.

### **Clip 71**

Interviewer

Are you using graphing now?

Arun

The benefit of using graphing, is that you can find out any errors in the pattern and visualise how it will look. we can also see different colours we use in the warp. [00.26] - after coming back from the school now were using graphs to check where we should put which colour and which patterns in the shawl etc

*led to discussion about possibility of graphing affecting freedom of imagination and creativity*

[00.44] - With the new designs, graphics are useful to give an idea of how it will look, but in traditional designs its already set in our brain so we don't need graphics for that.

### **Clip 72 (00.36)**

Interviewer

What was the difference between the two looms, the one you use here and the one you used there at ths?

Arun

The set up was the same, here we have four treddles. Women Weave started thinking about this school back in 2003 and in 2010 they started doing experimental courses with local weavers in Maheshwar.

### **Clip 37**

Interviewer

Did you find anything difficult?

Arun

Learning was a bit difficult. There was computer class where we could learn about different designers, and how you can market using internet. We had english class, marketing class. We did case studies

Interviewer (Kuldip)

Do you remember any case studies?

Arun

There were many. Some were about master weavers and the mistakes they made and what we should avoid.

### **Clip 39**

Interviewer

What were you doing before, did you always want to be a weaver?

Arun

Before weaving I was studying, and because its our tradition, my father and brother were weaving, so coming back from school we finished our homework, go on the loom and learn bits and pieces and gradually I also started weaving. [0.50] - so when I started BA which was half days, I would study for half a day and weave for half a day. When I passed my senior secondary school my father suggested to me to take commerce or science and I told him 'no I'm going to take arts'. I was not interested in studying, I wasn't into it, but I wanted to study enough to support my family business (many students study to do something different).

### **Clip 40**

Interviewer

What are you doing now that you've learnt from the handloom school?

Arun

I'm using different yarns, different colour combinations, khadi, silk - mulberry, eri, those things that I found interesting - using different colours and yarns, that's what I'm practicing now. [0.33] in one warp, mulberry silk and wool together, in another khadi and

wool. Personally I found that interesting.. [01.00]... I repeat things from there and put it in our kutchi weaving. Visitors at the 429an utsav who visited my home found it interesting.

#### **Clip 41**

*(showing some pieces)*

[0.36] - *(black and white stole)* this is a traditional design. Before the handloom school we were making similar designs but in white. Only using white it was not that attractive. But now I'm using the same yarn but using different colours in the warp so it looks more attractive.

[02.15] - *(shows a cotton stole with different textured pallu)*. Extra weft, warp is 240 count and weft is 240 but extra wet is triple yarn. Because of this uthav ghano ave chhe *(it becomes more attractive)*.

## Appendix J. A selection of traditional Kachchhi woven cloths

### Rabari *Dhablo*

The *dhablo*, both for Ahirs and Rabaris was woven with double ply yarn in the warp and two or four-ply in the weft. This made it strong and durable. Shamji says his father could tell by the yarn what the weight of the cloth would be. The main essential criteria for the *dhablo* is that it must have a border. Without the border, it is not a *dhablo*. The border gives it strength and makes it durable, but also works as a frame and makes the white ground stand out.



Figure A. *Dhablo* belonging to Purushottam and Pachan



Figure B. Vagaria Rabari *dhablo* belonging to the family of Vishram Valji Vankar

### ***Khati* – Shawl**

The *khati* is a lighter version of the *dhablo*. It is woven with single ply yarn in the warp and weft, and so is less durable. It would be draped over the shoulder, while the *dhablo* was designed to be used as a blanket or mat and be more withstanding to harsh climates. Each sub-group of Rabari had different preferences on the design, as well as the Ahir.

The *khati* shown in the images below would have been worn by a Kachi Rabari. Older men wore just black and white, while younger men wore red. Dhebaria Rabaris wore multi-coloured borders.



*Figures C and D. Khati in the collection of Shamji Vishram Valji*

Some Rabari shawls would have three dimensional motifs woven into them and seeds were inserted inside which produced an aroma to ward off insects.

### **Pagri** (turban)

The turbans made for Dhebaria Rabaris used cotton in the warp, but lac dyed wool in the weft as wool took to lac more easily.



*Figures E and F. Two pagris in the collection of Shamji Vishram Valji*

### **Adhivto**

The *adhivto* is a piece woven mainly for the Ahir community which would be worn as a shoulder cloth. According to Frater (2007), it was made in 2 ½ parts and would be used for the *anu* ceremony of bringing a bride to her in-laws home.

‘Men would wear it with the medallion placed on their shoulder when they went with the *jaan*. After that, it was kept at home for good luck.’





Figures G and H. An *adhivto* in the collection of Shamji Vishram Valji

### ***Khesado***

The *khesado* is a cotton shoulder cloth worn by the Dhebaria Rabari men. The main ground of the cloth is black and white check and the end piece is woven in multi-colour stripes in extra weft, *chopero* (weft-faced weave). The *khesado* is closely related to the *khes* of Sindh, which was documented in Forbes Watson's Textile Manufactures of India (Edwards, 2011, p. 87).

### ***Ludi or Odhani***

The overriding criteria of the *ludi* worn by Rabari women in Kachchh is that it must have a black ground. Wool is also considered ritually pure, surpassing silk, and 'considered to be a gift from Krishna (alternatively the goddess), to mark them as chosen people' (Frater, 2003, p. 42). However, most women today prefer synthetic *ludis* which are more affordable. Rabari women in Rajasthan and other parts of Gujarat wear red (Frater, 2003, p. 40). There have been different reasons given to

why Rabaris in Kachchh (Kachi, Dhebaria and Vaghadia) wear black. Frater (ibid, p. 42) says the wearing of black;

‘most probably relates to a decree made by Chach a Hindu ruler who conquered Sindh in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Chach degraded Sindhi Pastoralists (such as jats and lohanas), by forcing them to wear “dark rough” cloth. If the present-day Kutchi Rabaris were not already wearing black wool by the time, they migrated to Sindh in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, they maintained intense enough contact with local pastoralists while in Sind to make adopting elements of their dress desirable.’

Frater goes onto say that all three subgroups of Kutch Rabaris explain their use of black for ritual mourning for the death of a king, and that black was readily adopted by the Rabari because of the trauma that compelled them to migrate (ibid).

Tie-dyed or block-printed patterns combined with embroidery, reflected the life stage of the wearer and matched the property transfers of marriage (Edwards, 2009). As the women ages the extent of decoration in their clothing reduces.



*Figure I.* Tie-dyed *ludi* in the collection of Vankar Shamji Vishram Valji



*Figure J.* Rabaran woman in Padhar village wearing a simple black *ludi*



Figure K. Handloomed, tie-dyed and block-printed *pached* – fabric for women's *ghagra* (skirts)

### **Bhediya**



Figure L. Bhediya woven in natural, un-dyed sheep wool with synthetic-dyed orange and red borders and extra weft. In the collection of Shamji Vishram Valji

*Bhediya* are made during Navratri over the course of one day when there is a full moon. Early in the morning a sheep is selected and shorn, then several women work on spinning the yarn, preparing the warp, starching, joining the yarns onto the existing warp, and filling the bobbins. One weaver then weaves the *bhediya* which is made with hand-spun, un-dyed sheep wool for the main ground and the borders and patterning are a bright orange colour. The weaver must finish before sunset, at which time he passes the *bhediya* to the Bhopa, the priest in the Mataji temple. All those involved fast from sunrise to sunset. Rabaris and Vankars then gather to perform puja, sing *bhajans* and dance and offer the *bhediya* to the Mataji.

### **Carpet**

Carpets or *dhurrie* and *panja dhurrie* (thick carpets) are woven on frame looms, on a small scale by one family in Bhujodi village. Naryan Siju Vankar's father began making them in the 1970s for both the Rabaris and for the emerging urban markets.



*Figure M.* Carpet in the workshop of Naryan and Prakash Siju. Acrylic and wool for domestic use



*Figure N.* Prakash Siju's loom. Prakash and his family's production is dominated by orders for a Finnish homeware company via local NGO Khamir. This design on the loom is typical of the company's style.

### **Bedsheet**

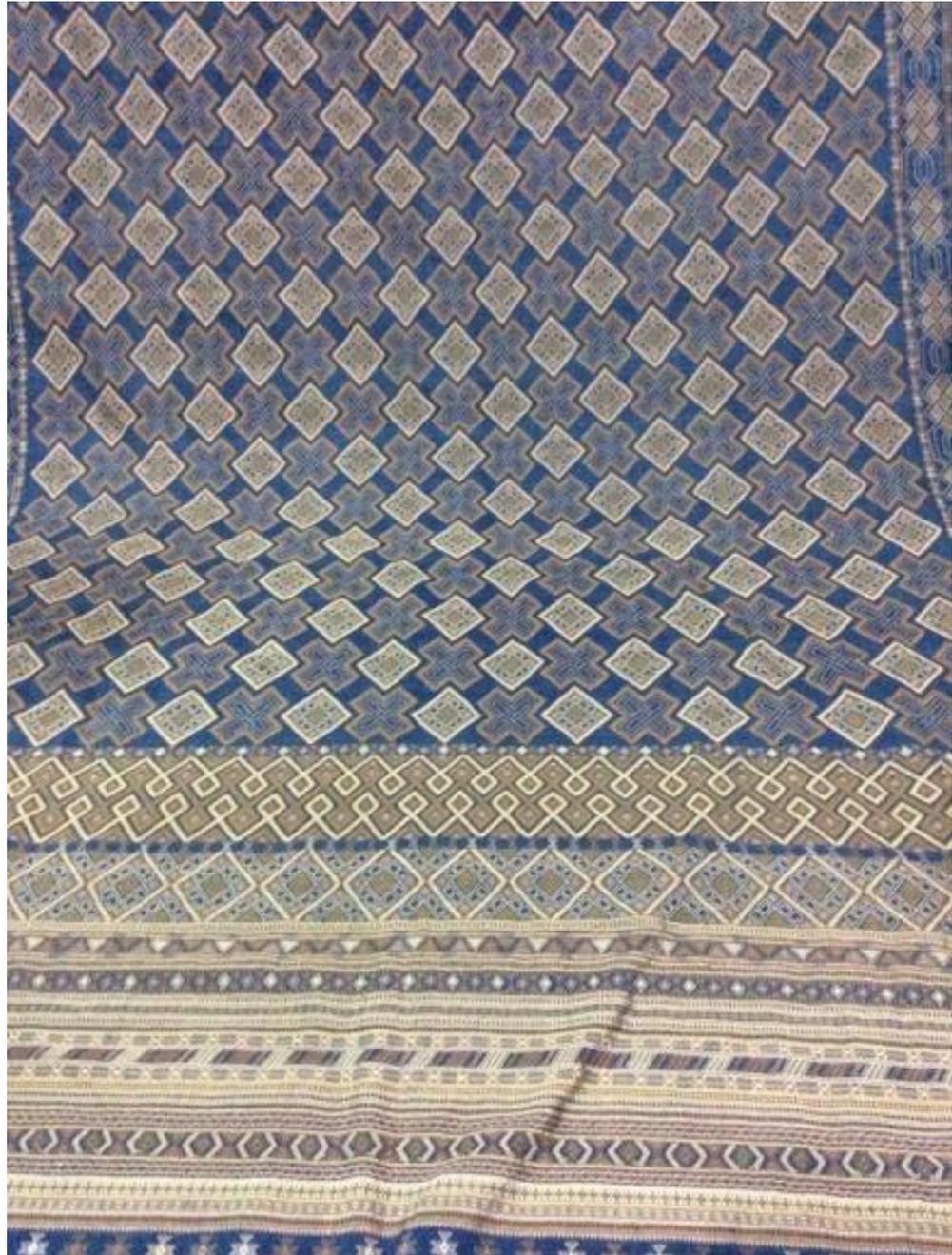
Bedsheets are also items that started to be made for increasing urban markets within the last three to four decades.



*Figure O.* Bedsheet, 90 inches wide, woven in Bhujodi for Shamji Vishram Valji



*Figure P.* Bedsheet loom, 90 inches in width (standard loom is 36 inches)

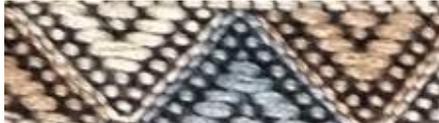


*Figure Q.* Shamji Vishram Valji's National Award-winning shawl, 2005. The piece is almost all extra-weft, evidenced by the dense loose threads on the back of the cloth which Shamji hid with backing cloth but reveals to prove the authenticity of the work. It is made with natural-dyed cotton in the warp and the weft and extra-weft are silk. It took Shamji between 8 and a half and 9 months to weave.

### Appendix K: Kachchhi motif names

The designs in Kachchhi weaving vary slightly from weaver to weaver and village to village, but there is a repertoire of commonly used base motifs and patterns. The variations on the motifs are endless, and the basis of each provides a sort of template from which the individual weaver can expand and play with. So, for example, the *chomak* could vary in size, may be split in half with a negative space down the middle, may just have the outer triangles, or may also have an inner section. Every so often particular extensions of pattern will catch on, such as the extension of the *panchko* (five-paisa coin) motif into a series of tessalated diamond and square shapes which when first used won the national award. Weavers who have been through the design course extend these motifs even further, often to make more pictorial images, or to apply them using any of the several design concepts discussed in chapter seven (for example in an asymmetrical format or in contrasting sizes).

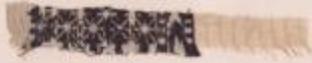
	<p><i>Panchko</i> (5 paisa coin)</p>	
	<p><i>Satkhani</i> (7 pick ups) (newer version)</p>	

	<p><i>Adar / aura</i> (negative -positive)</p>		
	<p><i>Dungali</i> (small drum)</p>		
	<p><i>Char</i>  <i>Hurdi</i></p>		

Appendix L: Maheshwar border designs (courtesy of Ganga Kanere)

BORDER- NAME	BORDER- NAME HINDI	SAMPLE - BORDER
MEENA	मीना	
MOHANIYA	मोहनियाँ	
MALA	माला	
NARMADA	नर्मदा	
POAT	पोत	

RUI-FOOL	रुई-फूल	
RASA	रासा	
RAJ	राज	
SHIRIN	शिरिन	
SMALL-HANSA	स्माल हंसा	

SINGORA	सिंगोरा	
TARA	तारा	
BAL	बाल	

AAJI	आजी	
AANKH	आँख	
AMRIT	अमृत	
NEW BAL	न्यू बाल	

BUNDI	बूंदी	
BUGDI	बुगड़ी	
CHATAI	चटाई	
CHOWKA	चौका	

DUM	दुम	
DOUBLE-BUGDI	डबल बुगड़ी	
EENT	ईट	
HEERA	हीरा	

KUMKUM	कुमकुम	
LAHAR	लहर	
MONO	मोनो	
BIG-MONO	बिग मोनो	

HANSA	हंसा	
HALF-CHATAI	हाफ चलाई	
KANGRA	कांगरा	
KARWAT	करवत	

## Appendix M: Samples



## **Appendix N: Selection of audio-visual clips (Compact Disc attached)**

Clip 1: The warp joining process, a weaver in the Gudi Mudi workshop

Clip 2: Fast, rhythmic weaving of plain cloth, a weaver in Mudassir Ansari's workshop, Maheshwar

Clip 3: Slow, extra-weft weaving, Rajesh Vishram Valji

Clip 4: Pachan Siju explaining his ideas behind the design for a stole

Clip 5: Bhavna Sunere explaining the parts of the loom at her home in Malaharganj