

5 DOCUMENTATION FORMATS

ACTIVITY 5.1

DOCUMENTING THE PROCESS

Class : XI

Time : One period

Read the following passage and record the step-by-step process of making an effigy of Ravana in the format given in the next page. You can even adapt this format for any other traditional craft.

Making an Effigy of Ravana

In the days preceding Dussehra, many villages and towns in North India witness the construction of tall, imposing effigies of Ravana, his brother Kumbhakarana and son Meghnath. For many craftsmen all over India making these large figures is an important way of earning their own livelihood. In Delhi, every October, thousands of these artisans come from different parts of India to make and sell these large figures. Most of these workers specialise in designing different parts of Ravana. While some are proficient in erecting the frame, others are masters in making the moustache and some are good painters.

The process of making the effigy starts with erecting two kori (one kori comprises two bamboos). After wrapping the bamboo frame in two layers of paper, it is painted and decorated with different colours. A lot of crackers are stuffed inside the effigy. The aim is to make the demon king look as villainous as possible.

Find out the step-by-step process of making an effigy of Ravana



Documenting the Process of a Craft

- ◆ Name of craft : *Making an effigy of Ravana*
- ◆ Region : _____
- ◆ Process
 - Step 1 _____
 - Step 2 _____
 - Step 3 _____
 - Step 4 _____
 - Step 5 _____
- ◆ Materials used : _____
- ◆ Size of the image : _____
- ◆ No. of craftsmen working together : _____
- ◆ No. of different skills/crafts needed to make the image : _____
- ◆ Festival with which this craft is associated : _____

NAME : _____

CLASS : _____

ACTIVITY 5.2**DOCUMENTING CRAFT TRADITIONS**

Class : XI

Time : One period or homework

Read the two passages given below and find out how much you can learn about the crafts and its makers described in them. Fill in the documentation form (page 55) using information given in the following passages as an exercise in learning how to document.

Making an Idol of Durga

... One such idol-maker is a young man, Khoken Chittrakar, who hails from Midnapur, near Kolkata. He especially comes to Delhi every year to make idols.

Explaining the process of making an idol, says Khoken, "First and foremost the frame of the idol is made with the help of wood or bamboo. It is this frame, which holds the idol erect. After the frame is made, it is stuffed with hay and fastened with a thin rope. The next step is to cover the frame stuffed with hay with mud. The first coat is done using relatively firmly kneaded mud, in order to give the idol a definite shape. This forms the base of the statue. After this dries up, the next coat is done with mud again, but this time not as firm as first the coat. While it is drying, the statue is chiselled and given shape by hand. The mud-laden frame takes about ten days to dry. After it dries, the idol is painted in vibrant colours, which are also left to the discretion of the artists. This is followed by decorating the idol with the ornaments, clothes and hair. It takes about fifteen days to make one idol of Goddess Durga."

Khoken hires a helper, and when the work is heavy, his wife too helps out. Khoken's children too are already into it, but he doesn't let them meddle too much, since he fears their obsession with idols may affect their studies.

The ceremony of Visarjan is performed at the end of Durga Puja, when the idol is immersed in the holy waters of the Yamuna river. With this, the task of the idol-maker comes full circle, and he begins preparing for the next season.



SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

In the last two examples you have seen how craftspersons get involved in religious activities. Making effigies of Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Meghnath during Dussehra is as elaborate as making an idol of Durga. Find out:

- ◆ The locality in your city where the effigies or idols are made for Dussehra and Durga Puja.
- ◆ Who are the people making these idols or effigies?
- ◆ What is their profession for the rest of the year?
- ◆ How many effigies/idols do they make?
- ◆ How do craftspersons get their payment?
- ◆ Is it a community service which they do free of charge or do they get payment in cash or kind?
- ◆ What are the different processes of making these impermanent forms?

Rajasthani Painting Tradition

Situated in Mewar, a region known for its tradition of painting and visual culture, Nathdwara is also the centre for Pushtimarg Sampradaya founded by Vallabhacharya. Pushtimargi Vaishnavism lays great store by bhakti in the form

of seva. Seva or service lavished with love and care of Shri Nathji, as Krishna is known at Nathdwara, has been elaborated through ritual, poetry, music, cooking, garment-making, crafts of ornamentation and decor, or sajavat, and painting.

Two groups of artists live in Nathdwara. The Adi Gauds, live in the Chiteron ki Gali behind the main shrine or in the market-place around the temple complex, while the Jangid clan, later migrants to Nathdwara, constitute the Nai Haveli, also known as Chitrakaron ka Mohalla.

The Soni caste, traditionally goldsmiths, have also branched into painting; in fact the entire painter community, despite its claim to Brahmin caste names, appears to belong to workman stock – masons and carpenters – going into fabrications like cushioning furniture, carving portraits, silversmithy,



enamelling and painting. These pursuits remain alternative, sometimes dual professional outlets depending upon individual talents, facilities and the prevalent market demand.

At Nai Haveli each home is a painting studio, a silversmithy or a meenakari (enamelling), workshop. Most of the artists conduct their business directly from their homes, either through sale, commission or through dealers who take their work to Jaipur, Delhi or Bombay. The better known artists now work mainly on commission and have very little to show in their studios. Nai Haveli is something like an extended family bastion where artists live and work in and out of each other's houses, sharing lives, professions and trade secrets, willy-nilly sometimes! They are all interrelated and those who have no sons (alas!) can borrow nephews, for it is from father to male heir that the brush is carried.

Unique to the Pushtimarg Sampradaya is the form and concept of the painted pichhvai. Literally, the pichhvai is a large cloth serving as a backdrop to the deity. Alternatively to pichhvai being painted with pigment (tempered with acaciagum) it can be embroidered, printed, woven, quilted, appliquéd or painted with dyes (kalamkari). The sensuous impulse to fabricate, design and adorn a parallel world in which the grace, pushti, of Shri Nathji may permeate, the theatric aspect of the feudal rites of the Haveli which houses the deity and the highly developed visual language of the paintings of Mewar and neighbouring regions combined to create the form of the painted pichhvai which is capable of an encyclopaedic vision.

The scale of the pichhvai ranges from big to monumental, up to three metres high and wide, or more. The central portion of the square or rectangular pichhvai carries the thematic load of the image.

The trifold interconnection between Pushtimarg, painting as a professional activity and a feudal Rajput patronage structure was developed in the nineteenth and the first quarter of the twentieth century. This was the time of the great pichhvai paintings, now in museums and private collections.

Within this has been intertwined an alternative commerce generated by the patronage of the followers of Pushtimarg, a prosperous merchant community, which brings the tradition to our times. Though the feudal structure of Shri Nathji's citadel remains intact, its spending power is made possible by the will of the rich believer community constantly thronging to Nathdwara. It is that which makes possible the flow of commerce





Pichhvai, Rajasthan

through the haveli, bazaar and studio-homes of the artist community.

Painting is not only religious at Nathdwara. A whole range of subjects and styles of painting have come and gone through its ateliers. The landscape paintings of Nathdwara with their lush foliage painted rapidly yet densely, sold as cheap souvenirs to visitors, were a very popular genre of painting.

The last few years have seen a revival of traditional Rajput and late Mughal idioms. This revival has some extraordinary aspects. The interest in painting and more often than not, reproducing paintings of a certain region of a certain historical time, cannot be considered independent of an international interest in traditional Indian miniature painting and procurement of these by museums and private buyers.

Painters at Nathdwara reproduce manuscript painting with some art history awareness besides a consummate skill. Earlier this reproduction was done from paintings they had seen; either brought to them for repair or from family trunks, and so the styles copied were from regions close to Mewar. But now with the increase of reproduced pictures, Nathdwara artists speak with assurance about the provenance and time of the several styles adopted in their paintings. Yet it must be admitted that attempts at originality do not extend far. They amount to a pot-pourri of

figural and facial types, gestures, postures and landscape motifs, familiar and already known.

— NILIMA SHEIKH

Fill in the documentation form (facing page) precisely and briefly

Documenting a Craft

- ◆ Name and occupation of craftsperson _____
- ◆ Address _____

About the Craft

- ◆ Name of the craft _____
- ◆ Local context and function _____
- ◆ Is it a seasonal craft? _____
- ◆ How long does the process take? _____
- ◆ How is the craft made? _____
 - Step 1 _____
 - Step 2 _____
 - Step 3 _____
 - Step 4 _____
 - Step 5 _____
 - Step 6 _____
 - Step 7 _____
 - Step 8 _____
 - Step 9 _____
 - Step 10 _____
- ◆ What materials are used? _____
- ◆ How many different craftspersons are involved? _____
- ◆ What tools are used? _____
- ◆ Usage of the craft _____
- ◆ How is the form designed to suit the function? _____
- ◆ Describe the oral traditions, myths and legends associated with this craft. _____
- ◆ The changing patronage of the craft _____
- ◆ How and why do communities change their occupations? _____
- ◆ How has the craft adapted to the changing needs of the market? _____

NAME : _____

CLASS : _____

BATIK MAKING

SUGGESTED TOPIC FOR SHORT ASSIGNMENT

Find out about the process of making batik from the library, the Internet or by interviewing an artist.

The following pictures show Sri Lankan women making batik. Write a caption for each step of the process of making batik and the materials and tools used by them.



Batik, Sri Lanka



1. _____



2. _____



3. _____



4. _____



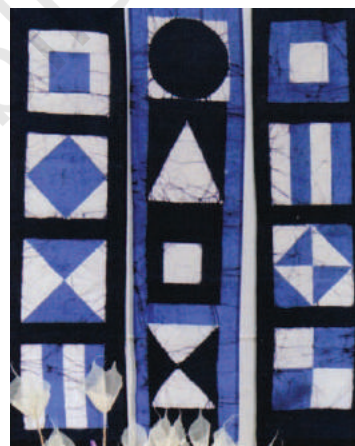
5. _____



6. _____



7. _____



ACTIVITY 5.3**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CRAFT TO THE CRAFTSPERSONS**

Class : XII

Time : One period or homework

Using information from the following passage, develop a list of questions you would ask the Rajasthan *phad* painter at an interview.

Music, drama, dance, painting, crafts — all these come together to tell stories in India. The art and craft of story-telling often brings together many of our art forms. For instance against the dramatic backdrop of a painted phad scroll, the Rajasthan bhopa narrates Pabuji ka Phad. These large scroll paintings dominated by the figure of a moustachioed man, tell the story of the Rajasthani hero, Pabuji. His four companions, slightly smaller in size, face their leader. His famous mare Kali Kesari has an important place below the seated warriors. Each one of these scrolls is very large, typically 18 feet long and 3 ½ feet wide. It is against the dramatic background of a phad that the Rajasthani storytellers, the bhopa and his wife narrate the age-old ballad. Though the phad resembles a contemporary comic strip, the story of Pabuji is not painted in logical order. The major incidents of the story are scattered around the cloth. They do not follow any particular sequence. A phad lasts for over 50 years. The vegetable dyes and colours used to paint it can withstand the heat of summer, the humidity of monsoon and the cold of winter.



Pabuji Ka Phad,
Rajasthan

How closely ritual and storytelling are linked is clear when we examine how the painting is made. To get a new phad made, the bhopa travels to Bhilwara after he has either left the old phad at the temple of Kolu Mandal (where Pabuji is supposed to have been born), or after he has ceremoniously immersed it in the Pushkar lake. The bhopa spends several days with the painter while the phad is painted. His earnings from the first show with the new phad must be spent on an offering to Pabuji in a temple.

The entire song of Pabuji is never recited in a single stretch or at one go. Different sections of this long ballad are sung for different ceremonial occasions. As the bhopa plays on the ravanhatta and sings out the story, his wife moves with a lantern to light up the appropriate sequence on the scroll. The flickering light of the lantern almost bring the figures painted in bold colours alive; coupled with this is the guttural rhyming verse of the song and the devotion of the listener who has heard this many times before. The ravanhatta that the bhopa plays is Rajasthan's most popular stringed instrument. It is said that Ravana, King of Lanka, made it with his own hands (hath) — hence the name. It is also supposed to be a precursor of the sarangi. Made of one half of a coconut shell, a membrane bound by cords and a bamboo stick, it is played with a bow that has bells attached to it.

— FEISAL ALKAZI AND PRITI JAIN, *Discovering Jaipur*

EXERCISE

1. Read the above passage and develop a questionnaire with clear sections on:
 - ◆ the craft
 - ◆ the performance
 - ◆ rituals associated with it
 - ◆ music and musical instruments used in the performance
 - ◆ the craftsman and his family.



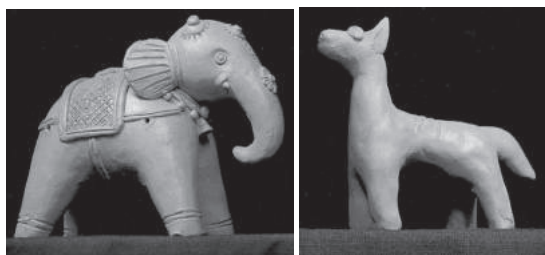
Ravan Hatha



ACTIVITY 5.4**UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF CRAFT***Class : XII**Time : One period and homework*

The term 'craft' used in a specific sense means those activities that deal with the conversion of specific materials into products, using primarily hand skills with simple tools and employing the local, traditional wisdom of craft processes. Such activities usually form the core economic activity of a community of people called 'craftspersons'.

The area of crafts in India is a vast one with many intertwining strands of tradition, values and culture, especially in the area of traditional crafts as practised over generations. These living crafts of India are a legacy and repository of our traditional heritage — of forms, motifs and craftsmanship. Traditional wisdom, folklore, the folk idiom and sensibility are vital components of any craft and are seen in the forms, textures, colours, techniques, and embodiment of culture by means of material. Each of these has evolved over a long period of time to attain particular regional characteristics that can be identified through the distinctive styles and techniques employed. Beauty and creativity form an integral part of craft products along with their function and utility value.

**ACTIVITIES**

1. From quotations and extracts given in this book find five varying definitions for crafts. Add your own definition to this list.
2. (i) Make a list of aspects we need to consider while understanding the complex discipline of living Indian craft traditions — for example, history of the craft.
(ii) Is it possible to arrange your list in an order of priority?
3. List craft items which have been made out of a single material like stone, paper or metal. See the following example.

Clay

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| ◆ Pots for plants/storage | ◆ Toys |
| ◆ Diyas for Diwali | ◆ Religious figurines |

ACTIVITY 5.5**CHILD LABOUR AND CRAFTS***Class : XII**Time : Assignment*

Properly regulated, the age-old system of apprenticeship could be developed as an alternative means of education rather than a system of exploitation. A blanket ban on children learning crafts would mean loss of a unique opportunity to create a skilled workforce of potential high earners. It would also imply the loss of an opportunity to generate self-employment in a country with rising unemployment and few employment avenues for rural youth, especially home-based women. However, every child under fifteen years should go to school and can learn the family craft while at home.

Sadly, in the craft sector in India, the choice is often between a craftsman's child learning ancestral skills (while on the job, and contributing to the family income in the process) while remaining illiterate, or getting a conventional education. Formal schooling might not actually equip him or her for any job in the future. In Ranthambore, the village school teacher would report to duty only to sign his/her daily attendance sheet, and then go off to the forest as a tourist guide!

The crucial issue is not poverty, which is often cited as a justification for child labour, but whether there are alternative educational opportunities available for the child that would give him/her the same employment opportunities. Can child labour be transformed — through legislation, innovative new planning and educational mechanisms — into a vibrant new form of training and empowerment?

Training in craft skills, whether at home or through the traditional *guru-shishya* relationship, should be recognised as industrial training, and given the same support as other forms of technical and vocational education. The family, master craftsman, cooperative society, institution, or NGO imparting the training should receive some stipend so that the child rather than the employer receives any money that he/she may earn during the period. Otherwise,

Children learning clay-work



What is the difference between learning crafts at school and working with a skilled crafts person?

there is the temptation, often succumbed to, of practising bonded labour of children under the guise of imparting a skill — as in the brass industry in Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh where the craft has moved from being a family occupation to being an assembly-line mass-manufacturing activity. The carpet industry is another notorious example, though international pressure and legislation have brought about some changes. For example, the Rugmark Smiling Carpet campaign, though not perfect in either concept or application, could be one such module used for developing further strategies.

Craft skills should be on par with other forms of vocational training, especially in traditional crafts pockets, and should be part of a properly structured curriculum, with trainers or parents paid to impart the skill, rather than using children as unpaid labour. Equally important is the issue of providing facilities for conventional education alongside those for teaching traditional skills, scheduling semesters and hours according to the work structures and seasonality of craft production. Most young craftspeople do not go to school because school hours and locations make it impossible to avail of both disciplines. Much craft production is usually a seasonal affair, with peaks and lows according to market demands. School terms and curricula could be organised accordingly. In a country as diverse and multidimensional as India, there is no one single solution or methodology and we need to find ways for children of craft families to learn a craft and go to school.



School children learning to make kites

ACTIVITY 5.6**CHILDREN FROM CRAFTS COMMUNITIES**

Class : XII

Time : Field study

Children of craftspersons grow up in the atmosphere of the workshop. Exposed to the living tradition, unconsciously they grow familiar with the forms, the symbols, and the techniques. Knowledge is communicated from parent to child, master-craftsperson to apprentice. The craftsperson is at once both designer and teacher...

– PUPUL JAYKAR, The Earthen Drum

EXERCISE

Read the passages given above and note what distinguishes a child growing up in a crafts community. Undertake the documentation of the childhood of one such child from a crafts community and write his/her story. The following points should help you.

- ◆ How old was the child when he/she started learning the craft?
- ◆ What aspects of the craft-making process does he/she learn first?
- ◆ What else does the child do — housework, marketing etc.?
- ◆ What games does he/she play?
- ◆ What does the child want to do when he/she grows up?
- ◆ Does he/she go to school?
- ◆ What does the child most enjoy doing?





Part II
FIELD STUDY
Long Assignments