

Fifth Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay
Memorial Lecture

Can our future be handmade?

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KAMALADEVI CHATTOPADHYAY

Known in her student days as the ‘uncrowned queen of India’, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay was a rare combination of beauty, intelligence, courage and commitment. In her person, since her early childhood, she assimilated the values imparted by her mother, grandmother, and the English suffragette Margaret Cousins; in short, a generation of women who instilled in her values which guided her life and work for over seven decades. Kamaladevi represented a generation of Indian women who were freedom fighters, in and out of jail, but also those who were responsible for freeing Indian women from the shackles of narrow social and economic boundaries.

In this long journey, Kamaladevi eschewed power, position, explicit political leadership. No public office could attract her, and, instead, it was the mission of alleviating the suffering of the people which was her calling. She was active in the movement of rescuing women soon after Partition. She gave her full energies to the Faridabad refugee camp. Cumulatively, her proximity to Mahatma Gandhi and conscientiousness of the creativity of economic disempowerment gave rise to the Indian cooperative movement. It was this movement, along with her work at the grassroots level and her advocacy, which resulted in the recognition of Indian handlooms and handicrafts. She not only nurtured craftspeople but also gave dignity and value to their products. All this and more has brought about a sea-change in the tastes of the modern generation. Today, the handicrafts sector is recognized both for its vibrancy and its market value in India and abroad. The institutions of the All India Handicrafts Board and the All India Handloom Board came into existence as a result of her active advocacy.

For Kamaladevi, life was an integrated whole – the hand, the heart and the mind, and an unflinching commitment went together. As a young girl, she had defied convention to be a theatre artist. The arts were her love and passion, be it music, dance, theatre or the crafts. There was not an occasion when

she did not discover a remote tradition of handloom or craft, or an obscure theatre form, to nurture it, to promote it and to present it.

And yet, there was a last mission to be fulfilled, to integrate the rich diverse and living traditions of our cultural heritage with the formal systems of education. It was her firm belief that unless there was equity between the creativity of the hand, the intellectual critical discriminating mind and the pulsating heart, a total human being would not be possible. It was this vision and conviction which motivated the Government to establish the institution of the Centre for Cultural Resources and Training (CCRT).

Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan

KAMALADEVI CHATTOPADHYAY

Personal Details

1903 April, 3 Born at Mangalore, Karnataka
1988 October, 29 Died at Mumbai, Maharashtra

Major Publications

The Awakening of Indian Women. Madras: Everyman's Press, 1939.

Towards a National Theatre. Aundh Pub. Trust, 1945.

Socialism and Society. Bombay: Chetana, 1950.

Indian Handicrafts. New Delhi: Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1963.

Carpets and Floor Coverings of India. Bombay: Taraporevala, 1969.

Indian Carpets and Floor Coverings. New Delhi: All India Handicrafts Board, 1974.

Handicrafts of India. New Delhi: Indian Council for Cultural Relations, 1975.

The Glory of Indian Handicrafts. New Delhi: India Book Co., 1976.

Indian Embroidery. New Delhi: Wiley Eastern, 1977.

Tribalism in India. Leiden: Brill, 1978.

The Glory of Indian Handicrafts. New Delhi: Indian Book Co., 1978.

Indian Women's Battle for Freedom. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1983.

Inner Recesses, Outer Spaces: Memoirs. New Delhi: Navrang, 1986.

Major Awards and Recognitions

1955, the Padma Bhushan of the Government of India.

1966, the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership.

1974, the Lifetime Achievement Award of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, the Ratna Sadasya.

1977, the UNESCO Award for promotion of handicrafts.

1987, the Padma Vibhushan of the Government of India.

PROFESSOR ASHOKE CHATTERJEE

Professor Ashoke Chatterjee, received his education at Woodstock School (Mussoorie), St Stephen's College and Miami University (Ohio, USA). He has served as an Executive Director of National Institute of Design (NID) from 1975-85, Senior Faculty Advisor for Design Management and Communication from 1985 to 1995, and Distinguished Fellow at NID from 1995 until retirement in 2001. He has also gained experience in the engineering industry, International Monetary Fund and India Tourism Development Corporation.

He has served a range of development institutions in India and overseas, particularly in the sectors of drinking water, sanitation, disability, livelihood and education as well as working with artisans in many parts of the country.

He was Honourable President of the Crafts Council of India for over twenty years and continues to serve CCI and other institutions linked to artisans and crafts. He continues to assist design education in India and overseas. An author and writer, his books include "Dances of the Golden Hall" on the art of Shanta Rao and "Rising" on empowerment efforts among deprived communities in rural Gujarat.

Professor Chatterjee lives in Ahmedabad with his son Keshav, daughter-in-law Pratibha and grandchildren Kabir and Alisa.

Can our future be handmade?

Professor Ashoke Chatterjee

This paper explores dichotomies of India's craft experience. These reflect the centrality of hand production to the Freedom struggle under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership, bold experiments in craft development as part of national planning once India was free, and contrasting notions today of what should represent modernity and progress. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay pioneered a range of institutions and approaches intended to empower artisans and to secure a lasting position for craft in India's culture and economy. Her efforts and those of craft masters and other leaders registered many achievements, as Indian crafts swept the country and the globe, demonstrating an ability to evolve and change with new times and new challenges. A craft renaissance was achieved over many hurdles and India's craft leadership became unquestioned. Yet in more recent times there has been a distinct retreat in understanding and support. Suddenly, the artisan and her culture and skills have been interpreted as representing a primitive past that is out of step with ambitions of global power and influence. New attitudes were revealed in the term 'sunset industry' that began to be applied to the craft sector. A sense of crises now threatens the legacy of India's craft pioneers and the achievements of another generation of activists. Meanwhile, industrially advanced societies are striving to recover their own craft heritage as a source of creativity indispensable to contemporary need. New approaches in the understanding of development also suggest the incredible value of India's craft advantage. What is now at stake, and where can we go from here?

Background: A crisis in the making

A year or so ago, the Government of India mooted a plan to assist handloom weavers by attaching a small electric motor to their looms. Official worthies further proposed an amendment

to the definition of handloom fabric, a move that would be to the great advantage of the dominating power-loom sector. The logic of the motor was to increase productivity and therefore the earnings of deprived weavers — estimated by some at 13 million — competing against power-looms, mills and imports. No questions seemed to have been asked as to why these millions of weavers were still deprived despite global demand for their production, decades after Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay had helped establish institutions and systems that were meant to empower artisans and to sustain their crafts. No questions seemed to have been asked about the logic of converting handlooms into power-looms, removing at one stroke the quality of the hand that distinguishes handloom fabric from power-loom and mill alternatives and providing the handloom product with its global USP. No questions seemed to have been asked about what weavers might think of this extraordinary strategy to serve them by destroying their craft advantage, nor of where the power would come from to get those motors moving. For decades, weavers have been awaiting functioning light-bulbs that could illuminate their cramped workplaces. No questions seemed to have been asked about what clients of handloom production all over the world might think of the motorised fabric that would now be offered to them, devoid of that handmade quality that created demand. This incredibly foolish or diabolically wicked plan — the choice depends on one's faith in humankind — may well have gone through. Fortunately, it did not. The credit for this goes to one vigilant soul in the now defunct Planning Commission — who happened to notice that this project defied both Twelfth Plan allocations as well as the definition of handlooms on which Plan allocations had been made. Her vigilance was supported by weavers and craft activists around the country. A nationwide movement followed to protect India's great handloom advantage from an official threat that compounded the harsh competition from mass production. That *abhiyan* is still on-going, with the need now to deal with a new political environment committed to what we must welcome as 'market forces'.

The handloom crisis erupted while Government and civil society were working in partnership to bridge another crisis: the absence of reliable data (outside of exports) about the scale and contribution of the hand sector to the national economy — despite repeated acknowledgement of handcraft as a source of Indian livelihood second only to agriculture. This partnership between official and non-government stakeholders succeeded in 2012 to include artisans for the very first time in the National Economic Census. The Census outcome is now awaited to help correct current estimates of artisan numbers that can range as widely as 13M to 200M, and to provide for the first time some understanding of India's stake in its craft economy. By indicating scales of risk and opportunity, robust data might offer a brake on foolishness of the kind that led to the handloom crisis. Six years earlier, Gopalkrishna Gandhi had reminded us in 2008 that Government's heart is to be reached through Government's mind, and that facts would need to speak louder than sentiments. For this, economics must be summoned to the cause. He was referring to proclamations from high places in New Delhi that India's crafts were a sunset activity, an exotic and quaint facet quite out of step with national ambitions of global power and modernity. An attitude of benign neglect would speed a sunset's journey into night, allowing sunrise to greet a modern India cleansed of embarrassing reminders of a primitive handcrafted past, and ready to compete with Singapore and Silicon Valley.

These current experiences and the attitudes they reflect should suffice to warn us that almost seven decades after Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay and other stalwarts pioneered handcraft development in national planning, the sector is in crisis. Institutions established by Kamaladevi and like-minded visionaries appear to have abandoned their mandate or been sidelined by vested interests. While India's global reputation for craft excellence remains unmatched, there are today dire predictions about the future despite all the opportunities of a massive market at home and overseas, as well as growing recognition of the importance of artisanal cultures and

industries. These are acknowledged to not only protect and reinforce identity and opportunity within the global village but equally to help sustain the capacities of creativity and innovation that international trade now demands.

Kamaladevi's vision and after

It is in this context of opportunity and threat that we pay tribute today to the memory of Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay. Kamaladevi is often called the Mother of Indian Handicraft. Does she then bear some responsibility for the current fate of her children? Did the parent fail the child? Or have we failed Kamaladevi? In these years of transition, how have the skills and values to which Kamaladevi's generation were so powerfully committed grown, matured, transformed, flourished or failed?

Personally, I am not at all sure that Kamaladevi would appreciate the parental label that is so regularly attached to her. It smacks of *maa-baap* patronage that somehow does not blend with her other no-nonsense reputation. I prefer to think of Kamaladevi as a trustee — conscious of India's huge advantage of living crafts, and determined to transmit that heritage to the future.

Experience in the application of that advantage to the Freedom movement, Kamaladevi's early efforts at craft-based livelihoods were to help rehabilitate women who were flooding into refugee camps from what was now Pakistan. The Indian Cooperation Union's modest handicraft store was established as the outlet, precursor to the Central Cottage Industries Emporium that started in 1948. 'Cottage' was to become a symbol of free India's faith in Gandhiji's example and in his advocacy of decentralised economic opportunity, heightened by awareness of so many in our society who live by their hands, including those now dispossessed and uprooted by Partition. Much has been written of Kamaladevi's role in launching free India's programmes for handicraft and handloom development

in 1952 at the behest of Jawaharlal Nehru. The Cottage Industries Board, the Indian Cooperative Union, the All India Handicrafts & Handloom Board, the Cottage Industries Emporium, Regional Design Centres, new experiments through Marketing Clinics in different regions, the Crafts Council of India, the Crafts Museum, the National and State Awards that have done so much to recognize excellence — all these are milestones on Kamaladevi's journey towards a craft renaissance. That renaissance has included a national and global awareness of Indian craft and made it an integral part of our way of life, an inescapable element in the very idea of India. National and world demand for handmade quality from India has never flagged, even during years of economic recession. The visibility of its crafts and artisans gives India global leadership in the sector. With such a backdrop of history from Mohenjodaro to the Mahatma and to Ministries of national planning, with India as the first post-colonial economy to incorporate handcraft into national development and to bring the craft culture to global attention — with all this, why then should Indian artisans and their crafts be in crisis today? Perhaps because this familiarity has led to a sense of taking a priceless heritage entirely for granted, turning familiarity slowly into contempt. The seeds of crises that I have recalled were sown in the very institutions Kamaladevi helped establish.

The sunset syndrome

This crisis demands understanding not merely because millions of Indian lives are at stake. More critical is the crisis of values and of mindsets that is the root cause. How and when did pride and confidence in India's artisans transform into apathy and contempt, their skills dismissed as obsolescent and their culture as defeated? A nation that lacks basic data for its second largest industry is clearly not committed to it. If even economic potential is ignored or regarded as a threat to modernity and power, what chance is there for those other craft values that are cultural, social, environmental and spiritual? Has an India emerged that no longer values the need for

different knowledge systems to coexist and enrich one another? The only constant over these years has been showcasing of crafts and artisans on festive occasions, to the accompaniment of mantras extolling our ancient heritage and cultural superiority. Walking the craft talk has been another matter altogether. While Kamaladevi's generation epitomised India's capacity for synthesis, diversity and tolerance, today's schizophrenia mixes mantras of an ancient past with cultural intolerance masquerading as pride, and garnished with Singapore/Silicon dreams. Crafts and artisans are caught in a bind — simultaneously needed for cultural window-dressing and dismissed as irrelevant relics. The handloom crisis I have described is a symptom of this malaise.

Perhaps my generation must own some responsibility for this failure. We matured in an India which took its craft heritage for granted. We accepted the mantras of culture and aesthetic superiority. We did not ask questions about economics or sustainability or about artisan rights. We did not pay adequate heed to their repeated demands for basic social security that could offer a safety-net against market uncertainties and offer an incentive to remain within the tradition. Nor did we anticipate the mimicries of taste that globalisation would come to mean. Not a few of us made careers that impinged on the paths that Kamaladevi and others had prepared for us. Then came those jolting references to a sunset sector. Recovery is taking its time.

Our effort to recover is a story in itself. It began in the Planning Commission with an effort to communicate what was at stake to policy-makers — and to communicate this in economic terms. It had become clear, just as Gopal Gandhi had predicted, that unless the economic argument was made, all other arguments would be left unheard. With this vast sector of the economy adrift without a factual anchor that could to justify investment, a research methodology had to be evolved and tested to gather data. We also discovered that New Delhi accommodates some 30 ministries, departments and authorities

that impinge on artisans. They do not consult. There is no sector overview, little synergy. Two key offices — the Offices of the Development Commissioner of Handicrafts and of the Development Commissioner of Handlooms — together representing the nation's second largest industry — are nowhere near the high tables of decision-making. If that was not enough, both are currently attached to a Ministry of Textiles whose first concern is mass production of fabrics by mills and power-looms. It does not seem odd to anyone other than ourselves that a textiles ministry should be responsible for brass, metal, stone, wood, cane and bamboo. What to say then that this Ministry is not even accountable for India's wondrous khadi? That great fabric is left to the mercies of small-scale industries and even smaller-scale Gandhians. Against such a backdrop of contextual confusion and missing data, handlooms can be transformed into power-looms. No one is watching.

What has speeded this great descent from the heights of Gandhian thought, Tagore's demonstration at Sriniketan, Kamaladevi's torch-bearing efforts, Smt Pupul Jayakar's spectacles of craft diplomacy, and so much other evidence of craft quality? Perhaps early warnings had been ignored. In September 1964 a committee headed by Asoka Mehta laid emphasis on "regulated transition of handlooms to powerlooms" with steps to install 10,000 power-looms in the handloom sector. One of Kamaladeviji's colleagues, Jasleen Dhamija, has recalled that even in the early 'fifties, economists from Western schools in the Planning Commission regarded 'cottage industries' as non-productive welfare. Their Marxist colleagues opposed the hand sector as exploitive. Pupul Jayakar, that other great craft leader, was to recall that the only argument that seemed to make a lasting dent was that of export promotion. India then was in desperate need of foreign exchange to help build its basic industries. The global reputation of Indian hand skills was therefore an opportunity not to be missed. The Ministry of Commerce, which handled foreign trade, was made responsible for craft development. A list of exportable crafts was developed. To this day, that

list represents the mandate of the Office of the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts). This explains why such classic handcrafted products as clay pots, jhadoos and chiks or items created from re-cycled materials are not the concern of this Office, even though thousands are involved in their manufacture and sale at every corner. The Khadi and Village Industries Commission may or may not be responsible for khadi. That depends how you interpret the term 'responsible'. This confusion extends right down the line at state and local levels. There are no federations or fora that bring artisans together. No chambers of commerce or B-schools are bothered with their business. Artisans do not block highways and train tracks. Like farmers, they are voiceless. They commit suicide.

The concept of cultural industries

Almost at the same moment that influential Indian planners were declaring craft a sunset activity, the European Union could be heard proclaiming that the 'future is handmade'. So what would Kamaladeviji, Pupulben, L C Jain and so many other past stalwarts make of these contradictions? How would they respond to the contrasting message given out from the EU of all places? Would they ask bemused whether Europe is planning to abandon the machine and revert to its pre-industrial artisanal past? And if that is unlikely, then how indeed is the global future to be handmade? The European response would have resonated with their own deep understanding of craft cultures within the larger human consciousness. The call from Europe is a reminder that creativity and innovation are the only human capacities available to any economy if it is to survive and to flourish in today's globalised economy. This creative ability to respond to change is embedded in cultures that harmonise the hand, eye and mind. Destroy these deeply-rooted capacities, and not just crafts but all national creativity is endangered. Japan, Taiwan and South Korea have long attributed their success in electronic, computer and automotive

industries to craft attitudes embedded in their national psyche. One example is Kanazawa in Japan, now registered as a City of Crafts in recognition of “The spirit of artistic production that made possible Kanazawa’s own industrial revolution and made it the home of top engineering companies”. Switzerland, Scandinavia, Germany and Italy recognize their craft heritage in the success of precision and engineering industries as well as in design leadership. Thailand and China are making major investments in craft strategies, while the USA and the UK are rediscovering the potential of their craft sectors. There is today a growing literature of cultural economics as a discipline which appreciates that cultural goods and services actually add much more value than what is realized in the market. We Indians have neglected this link despite brilliant demonstrations that range from Dilli Haat and the Festivals of India to Titan watches and the machine tool industry of Surat. In 2005 India was host to a world symposium that culminated in the Jodhpur Consensus on Cultural Industries which recognized these industries “as a source of capital assets for economic, social and cultural development” and as “a vital source for the cultural identities of communities and individuals which lead to further creativity and human development What cultural industries have in common is that they create content, use creativity, skill and in some cases intellectual property, to produce goods and services with social and cultural meaning”.

The reminder that artisans “produce goods and services with social and cultural meaning” addresses those for whom the term ‘cultural industries’ can be disquieting, with possible overtones of selling out. What protection is there in the marketplace for the culture of the spirit through which craft traditions travelled through the centuries, not as mere products but as rich expressions of the mind engaged in service? In Kamaladevi’s words, it is the artisan’s tender care of the substance of everyday life and of nature’s own rich store house that adds a finer dimension to our being. Is there place in the market for such caring?

Perhaps a first need is for a respectful acceptance of the marketplace as a space familiar to Indian artisans throughout history, and the only space that can deliver meaningful livelihoods. Today's challenge is to empower the artisan to negotiate effectively with market forces, rather than to fear them. Gandhi's respect for the customer, the ultimate user of the handmade, was legendary. His understanding and ability to use the market enabled the Swadeshi Movement and made possible the handloom revolution. To my generation, Cottage Industries, Contemporary Arts & Crafts, Sohan, Handloom House, Sasha, landmark Khadi Bhavans and the Fabindia of John Bissell were among the craft experiences that moulded us while also delivering to artisans the possibility of dignity and hope. It was the changing market in India and overseas that forged partnerships between craftspersons and designers to develop an idiom of Indian craft that could respond to contemporary need. The challenge therefore is not one of market threat but rather fostering the capacity of artisans to negotiate effectively with the market, and effectively protect their own interests within a situation of constant change and unrelenting competition.

Building demand for hand quality

To do this requires building consumer awareness of craft quality and thus generating a demand for the quality that only the hand can deliver to markets at home and around the world. Demand requires awareness. Awareness begins with education — education that can sensitise the Indian child and tomorrow's consumer to her craft heritage and its relevance to her own well-being. An important opportunity is now available through the craft curriculum offered to Indian schools through the NCERT. The curriculum reflects the thought and effort of Prof Krishna Kumar. He shared his perspective from this podium through the second Kamaladevi Memorial Lecture "Hastkalayein aur Shiksha" in February 2011. I would urge CCRT to translate Prof. Kumar's lecture not only into English but into every language so that his insights can reach and engage the entire sector.

India's artisans themselves represent a great educational advantage. They are unmatched in their ability to communicate through their hands an understanding of materials, technology, function and aesthetics. Yet our master artisans are excluded as educators because they lack the formal degrees and certificates of the so-called qualified. This must change because without another generation of Indians who understand the value of the handmade through direct encounters with the craft culture and wisdom, respect for artisans and demand for hand-made quality may be impossible to ensure. Education and awareness cannot be restricted to formal and informal channels of education. The father-to-son and mother-to-daughter channels to which crafts have passed through generations represent not just vocational education and training but lessons in aesthetics and in the human spirit that no school can match. Today these traditional channels can be challenged by the need to distinguish between craft *paramparas* on the one hand and the issues of caste barriers and of child labour on the other. What education must offer to the children of artisans is the option of a hereditary profession by choice and not by compulsion. For other children, it should be the option to join and to participate in a shared legacy of heritage. This is not an impractical dream. It is happening in Maheshwar, Kutch and elsewhere.

Transformed landscapes, tectonic shifts

Many of us who have been trying to manage the challenges of traditions in transition tend to ascribe failures to our own incapacities, or to the poor framing and execution of national policies, to bureaucratic insensitivity, or to the absence of any clear strategy to raise demand for handmade quality. Perhaps we need also to go beyond these symptoms of crisis to an even deeper understanding of tectonic shifts taking place on our ground. These shifts include those which I have described of attitude and perception. The aspirations of artisans and their clients have also changed from acceptance of past identities to those associated with new concepts of progress and modernity. There are also huge market transformations,

transitions demanded by urbanisation, the impact of political forces, and the colossal influence of environmental change.

Perhaps the most obvious shift has been that of a transformed market. The struggle for livelihoods is bereft of pre-Independence barter systems and the patronage of temple, mosque and palace. Systems of support from Central and State authorities made major contributions to the sector, keeping it alive within a protected economy. In the so-called free market of liberalised globalisation, past schemes have become increasingly irrelevant. The self-sufficient village of centuries, the gram rajya of Gandhiji's dream, is now a space invaded by urban dreams and demands for urban services. The user of what the village artisan makes is now a distant, most often unknown entity located in the cities of India and the world. To understand her and to influence her choices requires a range of 'middleman' functions: access to market knowledge, to design and technology, to finance and to channels of distribution. Each function can be exploitive or supportive. Which it will be now depends primarily on the artisan's capacity to negotiate and to influence the market chain with its demands of timely delivery, quality control, merchandising, trade regimes and, above all, of competition from alternatives. The need now is for building greater management capacities and services at the grassroots, for entrepreneurship capacities that can negotiate unlimited market opportunities at home and overseas, as well as the range of market threats. Self-reliant entrepreneurship rooted in inherited wisdom and combined with current knowledge is perhaps the most essential prerequisite for sustainable livelihoods from handcraft. The most essential, but certainly not the only prerequisite.

Rural crafts or a rural myth? The challenge of sacred spaces

Access is another. Access to markets and to services that have failed to reach the village doorstep, forcing the movement of artisans away from villages into town and cities.

Many of us are still obsessed with the myth of preserving a rural culture — ‘cottage’ industries, handmade in *kutirs*. The truth is that many of our craft traditions have moved into urban slums and pavements. Every Indian city reveals this fact, with artisans working and selling at whatever corner of space they can find.hovels, not *kutirs*, crowded with artisans in search of markets, materials and finance. This trend will accelerate as India evolves as an urban society, a transformation to which the present administration is wholly committed. The implications are huge for re-defining or re-discovering the cultural integrity of Indian craft. The shift is not just physical. It is a movement of the mind.

Contrast this reality with another recalled by the Pupil Jayakar in her classic work *The Earth Mother* over twenty years ago: “The rural arts of India are the arts of the settled villages and countryside, of people with lives tuned to the rhythm of nature and its laws of cyclical change, an art with a central concern with the earth and with harvesting...The rural arts of India are the visual expression and technological processes that had remained static for over two thousand years...Rural arts are also the arts of people living in forests and mountains, the ancient inheritors of this land, who claim to be the first-born of the earth...”. Pupulben went on to observe, even two decades ago, that ‘The danger to rural India lies in its accepting the values and norms of technological culture and of a consumer-oriented society, and in doing so, losing communion with nature and its inexhaustible resources of energy. The danger is of losing the sense of mysterious sacredness of the earth that ‘life-giving, tranquil, fragrant, auspicious Mother’ invoked in the Atharva Veda.

Kapila Vatsyayan has also reminded us, time and again, of the danger of contextual loss when the earth is no longer a sustainer but is used as a resource to be exploited. “The moment of disassociating life functions from art/craft was the moment of also accepting the disassociation of Senses, Body, Mind, Intellectual and Spirit from one another”. Perhaps our first

task then is to explore whether that ‘mysterious sacredness’, for generations the heartbeat of Indian creativity, can survive and flourish away from contact with the earth, forest and sky, within the dense squalor that is life for India’s urban poor. What is needed to foster an idiom of creativity and sacredness in this new setting? Is it past memories that need to be secured and carried into new places? Is it the need for a wholesome quality of life in which sacred links with nature can be re-defined and re-drawn? Do we who work for artisans need now to assist them in finding new centres of the spirit within our urban chaos, so as to nourish civilizational roots in settings so far removed from their past? Have we the capacity to do what the city of Kanazawa has achieved in Japan? Where can such a struggle for context begin? What new partnerships may be needed? Is it with rural and urban educators? Is it with scholars of anthropology, sociology, culture, language and the arts? Or with city planners? Or with master artisans, encouraged to reflect on these changing contexts and on what they consider as tomorrow’s benchmarks of craft integrity?

Mother Earth and her artisan children

The shift is not just cultural. The natural environment is degrading at a pace that threatens not just the craft inspiration which Pupalji and Kapilaji have described but its materials as well. Crafts have depended on nature for so many resources, elements and benchmarks of excellence: woods, grasses, fibres, stone, natural colours, earth and water, not to speak of design inspiration. Yet today each of these essential elements is threatened and often far removed from direct experience. Resources that once were free or accessible within habitats have disappeared due to environmental degradation, natural disasters and greed. How can motifs drawn from nature retain their freshness if new generations are denied the inspiration of having lived with nature and having absorbed the inspiration of changing seasons? And what of climate change that today threatens us with intensifying disasters of the kind Jammu & Kashmir have just witnessed, that Assam and Uttarakhand have

endured, and that have brought such havoc to coastal Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu — everywhere destroying the materials, tools, and stocks of artisans? If nature's integrity is a *sine qua non* of craft inspiration, does this require that craft activists now partner efforts at protecting the earth? Must we help redress the imbalance between development and greed with a culture of replenishment and concern for tomorrow? This is the message of Dastkar's Green Bazaars, with which CCRT teachers may be familiar.

Craft harbingers of justice

Another shift is political and social, recalling the million mutinies of our land. A map of Indian tensions would include the Naxal corridor, Kashmir and north eastern states. These locations are also our richest craft resources. Does this fact tell us something about those attitudes of sunset and neglect, and of the potential of Indian crafts as a huge social and political safety net? Can craft cultures flourish amidst violence and injustice? Consider the reality that the vast majority of India's artisans comprise those marginalised by society: scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, minorities, women, and citizens of some of the most disturbed areas of the land. Can we expect rich craft contributions from those deprived of rights others take for granted and living with neglect and violence? Is our craft culture then a valid argument to be advanced in the cause of peace and justice? If so, what demands does that make on us craft activists? Does this mean that the struggle for human dignity and for human rights is an inescapable aspect of our movement toward sustainable crafts? Does this demand that we forge new partnerships with those who struggle for justice and for peace? Do we have the stamina now to be rights activists as well? Do we, should we, have a choice?

The development agenda: a craft opportunity

Such a range of challenges may seem an impossible agenda for most of us who are still led by passions of the heart,

not by strategies of the head. Applications of social sciences, politics and management are still unfamiliar to most of our work territories. Indeed they often appear as threats to the cultural and spiritual qualities we hold dear. Yet the sector's greatest strength may well be that its impact and influence are cross-cutting, intersecting with so many national and global priorities. Perhaps as no other industry, craft is deeply involved with the most fundamental development agendas of our time: managing threats to the environment, promoting justice and equity and peace by bringing the deprived into the centre of concern, empowering women through recognition of their craft roles and contributions, offering identity and confidence in an era threatened by globalised uniformity, providing sustainable livelihoods to households and communities in their own locations through the use of local resources, protecting them from the miseries of migration, and leaving a light carbon footprint to address the threat of climate change. In other words, an industry that probably reflects as no other, both the issues as well as the opportunities for sustainable development. The opportunity of craft is to bring back what Kapilaji has described as "The experience of the whole, the total, in its multi-layered interwebbing and inter-relatedness". Thus, a cutting-edge industry which represents in itself a development agenda, a movement that is social, cultural, political and environmental, and one that carries within it the seeds of spiritual awakening.

Craft as sustainable development

For these reasons, I do not use the term 'cutting edge' lightly. We are on the threshold of one of the most important debates in economic and political history: the new development agenda that will be framed in 2015 as the Sustainable Development Goals to replace the more limited Millennium Development Goals or MDGs. The new SDGs are meant to take us as nations into a future that is more socially just, more equitable and inclusive, and therefore more sustainable. Preliminary documents are emerging out of the UN system that include the elusive concept of well-being as the primary

goal — well-being understood as a situation in which social, economic and environmental sustainability are not trade-offs but together address the needs of billions at the bottom of the global pyramid, empowering them with a bottom-up, rather than a top-down, trajectory of development.

The backdrop to MDGs and now to SDGs is the shift to human development indicators (HDIs) evolved by Amartya Sen, Maqbool ul Haque and others to reform global systems of assessing progress. These indicators can be interpreted as a powerful case for artisans and their crafts around the world. In India, the indicators can highlight that few countries are as privileged to have a sector that addresses at such a scale every major issue of national wellbeing: economic, social, political, ecological, cultural as well as spiritual. This is the Indian advantage that needs to be brought back into the centre of national consciousness. That is where a future that is handmade must begin, and the forthcoming SDGs offer an opportunity to do so.

In his report on the UN's development agenda beyond 2015, released over a year ago, UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon laid emphasis on inclusive growth, decent employment and social protection and on the need to ensure that “sustainable development must be enabled by integration of economic growth, social justice and environmental stewardship” as global guiding principles. Craft industries do exactly that. The report is fore-grounded in the language of human rights and justice, pointing to our own need to position the craft movement as representing the rights of deprived millions. The report provides a credo of “international action for our collective wellbeing” that is to be achieved through addressing “global challenges with local solutions”. Again, exactly what decentralised crafts are capable of achieving.

Preliminary work on the SDGs in India and overseas has focused on 15 Key Concerns translated into Goals. Many of these are immediately relevant to the future of Indian artisans

and their crafts. The first SDG is to end poverty in all its forms everywhere. This is followed by the goal to end hunger and to achieve food security, nutrition and the promotion of sustainable agriculture. The invisible 50% India's artisanal population are women, and another goal is about the need to attain gender equality and to empower all women and girls. Then there is Goal 8 to "promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all" — the very argument we have been advocating at the Planning Commission. Note the word '*decent*'. And then, critically important for us, there is Goal 12 which is to "ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns" that can reflect a middle path of wellbeing in which the progress of the human and natural ecologies is established as a single trajectory, and not as a competing one. Perhaps no other industry addresses this Goal as responsibly as craft. This is backed by Goal 9 which aims at inclusive and sustainable industries that foster innovation. Another goal concerns the need for urgent action to combat climate change, and yet another aims to "protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial eco systems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt bio diversity loss" — each element critical to the natural resources on which so many crafts depend. A UN High Level Panel has recommended the need for turning to the private sector as well as to civil society "within market principles". For us, this is an opportunity to re-emphasise that marketing and entrepreneurial capacities are essential keys to sustainable livelihoods from handcraft.

Handmade in India for the world

The coming year will see heightened levels of debate and discussion on the meaning of sustainable development and on how the SGDs will be interpreted for action at national and global levels. This is our new opportunity. We can now take the legacy of India's craft advantage to another level of understanding by linking our heritage as well as our current

concerns to the most contemporary developmental challenge of our time. We can try to bring back that understanding of the whole, that context that has given Indian craft its age-old power. As the largest craft concentration in the world, Indian artisans can make a massive contribution to the search for a more socially just, equitable, sustainable and inclusive planet. At last we have an opportunity to demonstrate why the legacy of Gandhi, Kamaladevi, Pupul Jayakar, L C Jain and so many other stalwarts of the Indian craft movement is not just about a proud past but equally about the future we all want for our children and for theirs. At the end of the day, there are only two tasks that truly matter: caring for each other and caring for the earth. That is indeed a future that Indian hands can help make — handmade in India for the world.

ABOUT THE CCRT

The Centre for Cultural Resources and Training (CCRT) was established in May 1979 as an institution to bridge the gap between the systems of formal education, and the diverse, rich living cultural traditions of India. Its principal aim and objective is 'to draw upon all the cultural resources and interweave them into the educational system at all stages of formal and non-formal education'. As, for example, to use the traditional arts – ranging from pottery, carpet-weaving, print-making, block-making, different forms of puppetry, and multiple forms of music and dance – as pedagogical tools in disciplines such as mathematics, chemistry, physics, not to speak of history and the social sciences.

In order to meet these goals, several innovative schemes have been evolved. At the level of programmes, regular workshops are held for educational administrators and teacher trainers; orientation and refresher courses for teachers; and workshops and camps for students. Finally, for the identification of cultural talent and scholarships, the CCRT serves as an institution for a Government of India scheme.

Towards fulfilling these objectives, the CCRT collects and documents material, and prepares audio-visual kits, which are used in different configurations, to promote, say, the study of a regional culture or a specific art form, and knowledge about the people who create these art forms.

Institutionally, the CCRT has established a wide network with the SCERTs and, of course, the NCERT. Today it has three regional centres – in Udaipur, Hyderabad and Guwahati.

The CCRT has played a vital role in concretizing the noble ideals of fostering national integration and cultural identity amongst the student and teacher community in India. In a land of such rich and diverse natural and cultural heritage, it is

important for young people to grow up with an understanding and deep appreciation for their culture and that of others.

The CCRT owes its genesis to the vision and efforts of Shrimati Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay and Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan, who served as its first Chairperson and Vice Chairperson, respectively, and to the support of the Government of India, Ministry of Education, Social Welfare and Culture, during the 1970s.

Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan

P.S. - The CCRT also implements some other important policies of the Ministry of Culture, e.g., awarding 400 Senior Scholarships, 200 each Junior and Senior Fellowships focusing on “in-depth study/research” in various facets of culture. These include New Emerging Areas of Cultural Studies.

The CCRT has started organizing training programmes on arts management under National Institute of Culture and Heritage Management (NICHM) Scheme, a new initiative of Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India.

The CCRT, recently, has been assigned the implementation of the Scheme, “Cultural Heritage Youth Leadership Programme” (CHYLP) by the Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India. The scheme aims at promotion of social values and community engagement amongst the youth of the Country.