

KUTCH TO KUMAON: 2020

Daily report: LOKesh Ghai
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Kutch to Kumaon is an Outreach project of SOMIYA KALA VIDYA (SKV), initiated by founding director Judy Frater. The aim of the project is to empower traditional artisans of Bora community and other weavers with Design Education. The project is hosted by AVANI a corporative co-founded by Rashmi Bharti focusing of sustainability. The first Phase of the design education session was conducted by SKV in April 2018, followed by a jury and exhibition. This report is of the second phase of the design education conducted by SKV team in March-April 2020 at AVANI Campus.



AVANI and SKV Team

12th March- Day1

INITIAL MEETING: The SKV team updated Rashmi ji the objectives of the Design workshop. It was also explained why it is important to continue with the same participants as an education programme. Rashmi ji was open to the idea of having new design variations; she was keen on having Himalayas as an inspiration theme. Rashmi ji suggested that Kutch traditional weaving of extra yarn insertion could be taught to the women in order to explore motifs such as Himalayan birds etc.

INTRODUCTORY MEETING: SKV team, Rashmi ji, Avani production/ inventory team along with all the six women participants had an introductory meeting to discuss the product line and exhibition location for the designs that would be made during the design workshop. Avani team shared a good response and sales of the new designs made as outcome of the previous workshop (phase on conducted in 2018 by SKV).

Bangalore and Hyderabad were considered as possible exhibition locations for September 2020 exhibition. Sari and Stoles were considered as the product line. SKV team clarified that no new weaving technique would be taught. The aim of the design workshop was to explore new designs within the existing weaving tradition of the region.

INAUGURATION WITH EXIM BANK REPRESENTATIVES: An oil lamp was lighted to formally the start the design workshop; this was followed by all staff and children at the Avani Campus school singing prayers. The two Exim bank representatives from Mumbai expressed pride in supporting the workshop. The representatives presented each of the six women weaver with the tool kit prepared by SKV staff for the workshop that was brought from Kutch.

The six participants were suggested to find colours from the Avani store. These were placed as a story and were photographed, although later in the days to come, these would be changed.

In the evening Rashmi ji suggested that we all travel to Digoli village, to one of Avani's oldest center. Digoli was suggested as the design-workshop location. Rashmi ji also suggested 'Rain Tree' and 'Serenity' as god possible exhibition venues for Bangalore, and to inquire about 'Wasva' and 'Lahe-Lahe' also as venues.

13th March- Day2

VISIT TO DIGOLI: It took a little over one and a half hours to drive to Digoli village. The drive in the last half hour was difficult due to steepness and the kachha road. Digoli is primary a Bora community village. It is the maternal home of Deepa and Saroj, two of the participating weavers. Avani Centre is built on the base of the village. The main village is a climb up the valley. Lalita ji and Govind ji looks after the Centre. As the back of the Digoli Centre had a beautiful view to the Valley, the six participating women students were assigned to draw what they saw in the valley. To encourage the women, Rajesh bhai and Pachan bhai too sketched. After this, the students were suggested to paint anything,

using lines with brush and wet colours so they develop confidence in using the medium. Most of the women decided to paint *apan* design. This was followed by a brief presentation of the drawings.

Pachan and Rajesh bhai explained what are Primary colours. The women were shown the Colour Wheel and assigned to use wet colours from their tool kit to paint primary colours. Each of the student painted the colours with Rajesh and Pachan bhai's help. After this the students were introduced secondary colours. The students patiently painted the colour wheel. Colour wheels of secondary colours were painted with overlap of three primary colours (yellow + blue resulting green, blue + red resulting purple and yellow + red resulting orange). Considering that this was the first time for most of the women to use wet colour on paper, they did quite well.

I realised that the students would be more productive if they worked in their team along with Rajesh and Pachan bhai, so that it becomes clear - who is responsible for which artisans.

We concluded by the day by looking at traditional examples of *gadda*, *bora* and *rope* made with using hemp by Bora community. We drove back to Trupradevi Centre and reached back by night.



Shanti Devi presenting her sketch

14th March- Day3

TINTS: Pachan and Rajesh bhai taught the students how to paint tints (*ek-ranga*). Each of the student chose one of the colour she had learnt on the previous day, and painted tints of a colour by mixing white.



Practicing colouring



Rajesh bhai guiding the artisan-students

Thereafter, the students looked for inspiration for tints in nature at Avani campus. The students found leaves with tints of green, flowers with tints of yellow and purple. We discussed how nature is an inspiration. The students were assigned to look for matching yarns from the Avani storage for the tints they had painted.

The students wrapped these in a sequence on a card board. A brief presentation was made of the same to ensure if the everyone understood what was learnt.

15th March- Day 4

WEAVING COLOURS: There looms were set with primary colours warp of: blue, yellow and red. All the students took turn to weave all the three primary colour weft in the three warps.

Thus student experienced that:

Yellow warp + Yellow weft resulted in yellow fabric

Yellow warp + Blue weft resulted in green fabric

Yellow warp + Red weft resulted in orange fabric

Similarly, all the students wove a sample in all three warps. After this, the students took turns on the three looms to weave tints in stripes as a gradation.

First studying the theory on paper by painting colours, and then weaving the colours helped in establishing the Colour Concept clear.

16th March- Day 5

The day was started with revision of what was covered during the course so far. Each student presented what she had woven.

SOURCING COLOUR INSPIRATION FROM NATURE: Pachan bhai had brought with him 'sourcing colours from nature assignments' assignment he had made as a student at SKV during the colour course. This proved as a good introduction to what would follow.

The students were introduced the idea of looking through a frame. They were given a paper with a window cut out and suggested to looked through it; with this they were encouraged to select a picture they liked by changing the keeping the frame at different angles. Next, the students were assigned to take photos of what ever they liked in their surroundings through mobile phone. Rajesh bhai and Pachan bhai helped the students with their mobile phones. Some of the students shared that they were shooting a photo was the first time in their life!



Pachan bhai explains about frame

By lunch time everyone showed what they liked on the mobile screen. Interestingly all the students had taken Himalaya's photo. Eventually the students selected the photo they liked the most, this was given for print out. Colour printing at Avani was faded, however this had to be used as there was no other option.

The students were made to sit along with their mentors Rajesh and Pachan bhai separately and identify the colours visible in the image.

Both Rajesh and Pachan bhai discussed individually with each student-

- (i) What was the first and most prominent colour in the image where the eye travels.
For example, even though less in quantity, the eye first gets attracted towards the colour of snow in the mountains. That is what is the 'emphasis', even though the sky and valley may be larger in proportion to the snow.
- (ii) Colour in proportions: identify colours in the image from maximum to minimum proportions. For example, the sky may be dominant in the image with blue colour in maximum proportions and the snow of silver colour although an emphasis, may be minimum as a colour proportion.

Using poster colours, the students painted the colour palate as per the above two with guidance of their teachers.

17th March- Day 6

TEXTURE & LAYOUTS: Rajesh and Pachan bhai made the students touch different fabric surface and asked them to tell how they felt. The students were explained what are textures and how to differentiate between Visual and Tactile textures.

The students were assigned to find textures in their surroundings and make impression of there on lose paper with dry medium of colours. Once the students started, they really got involved and made creative textures. Students themselves thought of ideas for creating textures using articles such as baskets, dry leaves, stones, walls, railing, tree bark etc. After this we had a brief presentation of the textures achieved by each student. This sensitized the students to look at kind of textures in the photos they had shot the previous day.

As per the previous discussion with Avani team, it was decided that designs of stoles and saries would be the product range outcome from the workshop. Each student was assigned to sketch layouts in their vertical-red-notebook.

It was mutually decided that each student could have one warp from her colour palette for exploration of samples. Rashmi ji had already suggested that we could get support for reeling to save time. The selected colour for warp was given for reeling. The timing for reeling was appropriate, as it did not constrain of the students, rather gave them a direction after their initial colour exploration!

The day was concluded by a presentation of the layouts made so far by the students. I gave individual feedback. Such as Malti Devi was encouraged to incorporate textures as per her inspiration and Deepa Devi and some of the other women were suggested to use their strong ideas in sari layouts too, that they would make next day.

18th March- Day 7

LAYOUTS & WEAVING SAMPLES: The students spent first of the day making layouts. Now they made focused layouts considering their warp planning. Individual feedback was given to the students by Rajesh and Pachan bhai. Warps were prepared on the loom.



working on layouts

Samples were woven by the students with guidance from Rajesh and Pachan bhai. Most of the students were encouraged to try a small sample. It was felt that if they started weaving a few hours early, it may have been better. To manage the time, everyone worked until 9.30 PM.



Malti Devi with new layout idea, based on inspiration image and colour exercise

19 March- Day 8

SAMPLING: Everyone started early with weaving samples. By mid day all the students had completed with three stole samples and started with a sari samples.

With close guidance and encouragement by the end of the day, all the students were able to complete five new design samples each.

In the evening Rashmi ji returned from Alomra and sat with all the wavers in the evening to see what each had made. This was a useful exercise; however, the cutting of paper could not be completed. Later it was realised that during the next day, enough time was not left for presentation practice.

20 March- Day 9

FINISHING AND REHEARSAL: In the morning the students were assigned to cut the threads of their samples and get them pressed through the calendaring machine. As the presentation was scheduled for 2.pm, enough time was not left for practice of explaining the work. In the year 2018 we had enough time for rehearsal. The same is suggested to plan for the next workshop.

PRESENTATION: Due to fear of Corona-Virus not many people were invited to the presentation.

Shanti Devi, with support of Pachan bhai, started with the presentation. She explained all the exercises in sequence and concluded by showing what she made. Her stole samples with texture were particularly appreciated by everyone. Shanti Devi seemed to have gained lots more confidence as compared to last time.

Hema Devi with support of Pachan bhai started with the presentation. Hema Devi's samples were appreciated by everyone. All her sari layouts were liked by everyone for production. Tint stoles design made by her too was good. Her quality of weaving was of high standard. Hemi Devi was quite confident in presenting her work.



Malti Devi, with support of Rajesh bhai made a presentation. Malti Devi had focused on textures. Her colour story was the most different from others and was well executed. She has an eye for details. Her designs were quite festive, rich and sophisticated! Malti Devi's designs are comparable to big fashion designer's designs. Everyone appreciated all of Malti Devi's designs and her ability to translate from image to textile! This was possible only through her ability of building over the two workshops offered by SKV. Malti Devi is still quite shy, more opportunities for her to make presentations would be useful.



Avani team reviewing the new designs

Deepa Devi, with support of Rajesh bhai made a presentation. Deepa Devi presented her journey from inspiration to implementing in Designs well. She made beautiful textures and took risk for experimenting with various yarns. Her application of Alomra-patterns was appreciated by everyone. Rashmi ji gave the feedback of checking yarn shrinkage when combing different kinds of yarns, particularly linen. It was concluded that an entire stole could be woven to test; alternatively one of the yarn could be replaced in the same colour combination. Raju ji appreciated Deepa Dev's layout based on the traditional *gadda*. Overall, Deepa Devi's confidence and work was much appreciated.

Champa Devi, with support of Pachan bhai made the next presentation. Champa Devi was quite confident about her work. She is good with paper artwork and made beautiful colourful layouts. Some of the layouts of stoles were appreciated. More experience in Design workshop and weaving would be useful. There is scope for Champa Devi to grow.

Saroj Devi, with support of Rajesh bhai made the last presentation. Sarooj Devi is extremely shy; she is enthusiastic to learn. Considering this was her first workshop, Sarooj Devi did well. Her stole design has potential to be considered for production. More experience in Design workshop and weaving would be useful. There is scope for Champa Devi to grow.



Since this was Champa Devi's and Sarooj Devi's first Design workshop, a difference was clearly visible between them and the four students; how they had already participated in the first workshop.

It is strongly recommended to continue with the same participants and not change the students every year.

Feedback by SKV Graduates-

1. WEAVING KNOWLEDGE: The younger women who are part of the Design Education should be taught the regional weaving skills such as Alomra pattern.
2. LIGHT SOURCE: Some of the Looms currently have light bulbs attached on the loom's frame on the right side of the weaver; this puts stress on eyes; additionally, light distribution is not left side. It is highly recommended the light source should be on top of where the weavers sit.
3. SARI BLOUSE: Currently Avani makes saris without blouses. Sari as a product line of Avani is relatively small compared to accessories. The price range of sari has increased considerably from last time. The consumer could expect to have a blouse more so if they are buying a sari above twenty thousand rupees. Hence, it is highly recommended to have blouse with sari.

Additionally, if customer is purchasing a natural dyed sari, she is likely to desire a natural dyed blouse.

4. TRADITIONAL SAMPLE: For reference purpose
 - As we were stuck at AVANI after the project for longer period than expected, Pachan bhai helped in repairing of the looms. After this both Rajesh and Pachan bhai taught starching of warp to Avani weavers.

ARTISAN ASPIRATIONS AND QUOTES:

“I enjoyed the exercise of taking photos from the frame and making sample on that.” – **Shanti Devi**

“My dream- that I continue weaving, my children remain well, and we have enough food.” - **Shanti Bora Devi**

“Indigo is my favorite colour since I was a child.” – **Hema Devi**

“I would be *passed* when my designs sell well fast!” – **Hema Devi**

“I was first wondering if I would be able to Design or not! But, I was able to weave the first design, then the second design and by the time I woven the last sample it just happened by itself!” – **Malti Devi**

“I enjoyed using water colour.” – **Malti Devi**

“I really enjoyed making textures. I had never thought textures could be made in Alomra pattern!” – **Malti Devi**

My dream- that I would grow in life through the art of weaving. - **Champa Roteli Devi**

I really enjoyed the workshop, this was new experience for me. - **Sarojni Devi**

“I want my daughter to go to a good school”- **Deepa Devi**