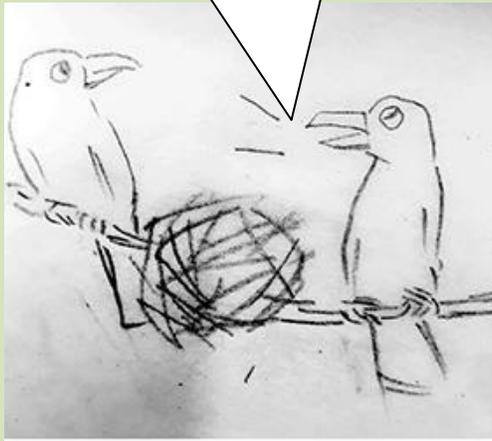


News and Views -11
from a g rao

Seasonal Cartoon

**Earlier I was only building my nest only with bamboo fibres, because it is *warm and eco-friendly!*
Now I am using *plastic straws...*All the bamboo craft-
persons have vanished from this village!**



Mud gem

We as human beings suffer with the 'obsession' of teaching Others and forget to learn from Others!

Recent additions

- ***Training of Trainers-video***
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSUJWm3sigk>
- ***Willem's Report***
- ***'TOT Challenge 1: Opening the minds for 'Creativity'***

My thoughts

As the election season comes to an end, the employment problem stares us! In an area like bamboo craft, much of the spending has not resulted in compatible results. It is time to look with a long term 'vision'. We have created elite Institutes of Education like IITs and NIDs, in which bamboo craft is talked about, even put on a pedestal on few occasions, like a visit by a VIP. We even think that students in these elite institutes ought to learn crafts! But the fact remains that a young craft person with high skills in bamboo or other crafts has no chance to enter these institutes by virtue of his/her skills!

So what do we do?

Recently we had a chance to experiment at co-learning of design students and bamboo craft persons for a week! It indicates a possible framework for design schools to adopt and with financial support by Government agencies !

A separate article 'TOT Challenge 1: Opening the minds for 'Creativity', elaborates the experience of 10 Craft- trainers working with post graduate design students as co-learners! We can't eradicate the existing educational structures! But we may be able to transform them! Day by day, it is being realized that our current educational methods are by and large 'out dated'. Self Motivation to learn is in deficit! We will soon be looking for radical changes in learning systems!

It will be inevitable to create new structures for 'Learning'.

At this juncture I will try to elaborate the possibilities for bamboo craft education.

Craft Education and its multiple Manifestations(Rupas)

a g rao

Craft is so far seen as a mere physical skill. This is what is admired in traditional crafts of bamboo basketry or clay pottery! So called 'skilling courses' in traditional crafts have been totally centered on the 'tacit skills' of a traditional crafts person and his/her current mind set. No attempt has been made to create a formal framework for an 'educational programme' based on the 'reflective practice'. Donald Schön at MIT, for the first time has thrown light on the importance of articulating ' Tacit knowledge' based on 'reflective practice' in the context of Architecture in his significant books : 'Reflective Practitioner' and 'Educating the Reflective Practitioner' in 80's. Well established practicing fields like Architecture and

Industrial design are still trying to establish a 'pedagogic frame work' akin to 'Science and Engineering'. Churning of these fields by leaders in Design Research' has brought in, terms like 'Design Thinking' and 'Designerly thinking' into the arena.

'Bamboo Craft' has not been fortunate to get such an 'academic importance' till now. Design Research into 'Bamboo Craft' can open the doors of research into all traditional crafts. Education of 'craft' needs to be looked at with a fresh eye! It needs to be integrated with the main stream of 'Education on one hand and given 'intellectual parity' with subjects like engineering, architecture and design. Crafts are going to play a significant role in the coming 'Age of Artificial Intelligence'.

We can identify 5 areas of Craft Education for further elaboration:

- 1. Craft Education for Livelihood*
- 2. Craft Education for elite professions like Design and Architecture*
- 3. Craft Education in Schools.*
- 4. Craft Education as a Cultural Pursuit*
- 5. Craft Education as stress reliever or hobby!*

1.Craft Education for Livelihood

Traditional craft in bamboo as practiced by tribal communities differ with population from Plains. In tribes the function of making bamboo items is not segregated to particular group or cast. In some places like Tamenglong almost everybody knows how to make a basket of some kind. Products are of high quality as they are made by those who had passion to make! But they are less commercialized. No established system for transfer of knowledge exists, with the result some products have become 'extinct'.

In the plain lands bamboo craft is practiced by certain castes like Medars and Mahadev Kolis in Maharashtra! In these communities knowledge transfer is family wise. Children learn from their parents!

A mix of tribal and other traditional craft persons numbering 13.5lakhs(1.35million) are engaged in bamboo as of now, their work causes least damage to our eco-system!

Unfortunately their earnings with traditional engagement are very low.

Schooling in the modern system has further alienated children from practice of bamboo craft. There are no role models to emulate! Even a well earning craft person does not aspire for his/her child to become a 'craft person'!

*Here comes the urgent need of creating new positioning for bamboo craft! Realizing the aspirations they have, I had proposed a 'one year programme' for bamboo craft after 12th! Fortunately we got the unique opportunity to develop the curriculum as well as contents for such a course at STRC(Science and Technology Research Centre) Gondwana University, Gadchiroli (GUG). We envisage that the students passing out will have thinking, planning and making skills in bamboo craft and will become a new type of *Craft Entrepreneur in a postmodern context!**

A new 'designerly frame work' for pedagogy based on 'studio culture' is being developed for the 1year programme. The task is pioneering and can become a game changer! But it demands a change of 'mind sets' at many levels. Key persons in this task are craft trainers! Thus the challenge of 'Training the Trainers'(TOT) was taken up as an initial task in the project. A 4month learning effort has brought many 'insights' which will become foundation for building the 1 year programme. I plan to elaborate these insights in a series of articles. The first

'TOT Challenge 1: Opening the minds for 'Creativity'



is uploaded under 'Training Of Trainers –TOT'in my website www.agrao.in

2. Craft Education for elite professions like Design and Architecture

With an increased awareness on global warming and ‘number of eco damaging episodes’ coming to focus in media, young designers are eager to work on bamboo craft products. Often they are frustrated to find little access to the knowledge base on raw material as well as skilled craft persons!

Bambu Studio at IDC is a unique lab to give such support. An elective called ‘Craft, Creativity and Post Modernism’ is being offered for more than 15years.! Course has taken a refined shape and is offered as a post graduate course to all disciplines at IITB. It also attracts foreign students! Feedback given by Willem from Europe has been uploaded.

‘Willem’s report on Craft, Creativity and Postmodernism’ can be seen under ‘Teaching Learning Experiences’ in my website www.agrao.in

3. Craft Education in Schools

Craft Education for School Children has been a passion for me. Several workshops were conducted for children for many years. Some of the workshop reports for Children and Teachers as well as write-ups can be seen under ‘Aaduko Maduko-Children as Focus’ on my website www.agrao.in . More write ups are in the pipeline. A year long project called ‘Doors of Learning’ , sponsored by MHRD was undertaken for a specific group of 7th standard children from Campus and 3 municipal schools! Designerly way of teaching ‘Maths and Crafts’ was attempted. De-schooling sessions to learn were held every Saturday afternoon! To our surprise Math scores of children improved after one semester! A film made for Aviskhar (can be seen in ‘Videos and Talks’ on my website www.agrao.in)by Mazar Kamran gives glimpses of the workshop.

I am convinced that the only long term solution for survival of traditional craft is to introduce it in all schools as a Policy! It has enormous benefits to offer!

- *Creativity at a fundamental level will get enriched.*
- *Other subjects like Mathematics, History,.. can be integrated with craft learning!*

- *It will offer a position for traditional craft persons as teachers in Schools, fulfilling their social aspirations.*

4. Craft Education as a Cultural Pursuit

Quite often many crafts are embedded in religious, cultural and Art pursuits. Chat Puja in Bihar involves use of a special basket to carry. Marriage foods like 'laddoos' are given in freshly made bamboo baskets as a convention in Maharashtra. In Majuli, Assam a specially made hand fan in Cane is used for 'Gods'! A traditional hat in bamboo-'jhapi' of Assam is well known.

These products with their symbolic value will go along with traditional cultural practices. New frame works for 'Learning' need to be formulated as they are likely to vanish in the current socio economic frameworks! Design Research need to focus on this area!

Tribal art promotional bodies seek positioning of tribal skills in bamboo craft for enhancing their 'Markets'! Postmodern design can offer a theoretical framework.

Can new meanings be embedded in daily used products by Design?

-a challenging 'space' for designers!

5. Craft Education as stress reliever or hobby!

Craft has enormous benefits to offer as a stress reliever. Continuous digital engagement brings physical stress causing health problems. Software engineers and designers are already looking for weekend engagements with crafts. A suitable frame work needs to be developed using the skills of traditional bamboo craft persons. Hobby kits to learn bamboo craft have not yet been positioned in this zone!
