

RE-INTERPRETATION OF TRADITIONAL CRAFT- KAAVAD

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ABSTRACT: The effects of modernization and urbanization are causing abandoning of our roots and traditions; also amongst them are the craft of Kaavad- 400 years old tradition of three dimensional form of storytelling. Within the hinged, there lies the mystery and secrets of an unrevealed story. Kaavad is a travelling temple which has pictorial references of God, Goddesses, local heroes, epics, saints and patrons. The 3D form is constructed by the Suthar (carpenter) community from Mewar. The entire structure is made up of wood, having many panels attached to it with hinges. The allure of enigmatic stories has kept and fastened the tradition of storyteller and his patron.

Being adornment, it is an integral and vital part of human life and is prevailing from ages. This paper will use qualitative method to revive the craft of Kaavad with the twist of sustainable accessorization for today's generation. It is an exploratory study of the secret and valour in stories and social messages through accessorization. Each segment of an accessory will depict a scene of a story which will be followed by a sequel scene of the same story in another segment. This way the entire piece will convey a complete story all together. The paper also depicts the methodology of a technique which will be organic and non- hazardous to the environment.

This will collectively give a new direction to Kaavad artisans in pace with the fashion industry, uplift the vanishing heritage of Suthar (carpenter) community, and reinforce awareness in society.

KEYWORDS: Kaavad, Accessorization, Story.

DESIGN/METHODOLOGY/APPROACH:

This paper is based on literature review and takes an exploratory research method. It is a collaborative approach of taking Kaavad craft with contemporary accessories to convey the message of women empowerment to the world, with the spark of sustainability which will help in expanding the craft dimensions.

PAPER FOCUS:

The revival of Kaavad craft with the range of modern accessories which will together propagate the social message of women empowerment.

The lifestyle accessories must portray the richness of the 400 year old tradition of storytelling communicating the social message of women empowerment.

All the material used will be organic and non-toxic to nature promoting sustainability.

The collection should follow the same concept and direction.

All the techniques used should help in the upliftment of the vanishing craft of Kaavad and the Suthar community.

PRODUCT RANGE: Belt, Necklace, Buttons, Bag, Scarfs, Accessories etc.

LOOK: Ethno (Ethnic) Contemporary Fashionable

AGE GROUP: 20-35 years.

OCCASION: Casual Wear

MATERIAL USED: wood, natural colours, metal hinges, colourful yarns and threads.

INTRODUCTION OF INDIAN ART & CRAFT:

Handicrafts are known to Indians from historical times. It has its own poetic saga and peculiarity. Craft existed and flourished because of their association with social, economic and religious pedestals. Each craft has its own unique style which is passed on from one generation to another.

India is a traditionally and culturally rich country. Temples such as Meenakshi Amman, Konark, Virupaksha and Khajuraho; caves of Bhimbetika, Ajanta, Ellora, Undavalli and Mogalarajapuram; cities such as Hampi and Vijaywada are great examples of the splendid heritage of Indian culture of art and crafts.

Types of art forms such as; Plastic Art (*Ceramics, pottery, Sculpturing*), Visual Art (*Paintings, Printmaking, Design, Crafts, Photography, Drawing, Video, Filmmaking, Architecture*) and Textile Art has made a unique identity of Indian craftsmanship in the world. Being such a diverse country there underlies impetus energy which acts as a bonding force.

The reason behind the popularity of crafts in the society is the pragmatic nature of crafts, local availability of raw materials and its accessibility to the people. Adaptive nature of the artisans, keeping pace with the fast moving society has helped in blooming of the craft industry.

PRESENT STATUS OF ART & CRAFT

Present scenario of Indian craft is in debt of prosperous and sumptuous past traditions of arts and crafts. Increasing globalization, commoditization and marginalization are having an adverse effect on our natural resources, traditions and cultural crafts, due to which the crafts are struggling for identity and survival. The collaborative innovation between designer and artisans can expand the spectrum of craft thereby helping in the promotion of the traditional crafts. The aim of this research paper is the revival of the dying craft of ‘KAAVAD - the ancient art of storytelling’ which is battling for its existence, through sustainable accessorization.

SUSTAINABILITY AND CRAFT

Sustainability is a concern for the future generations for the longevity in all aspects of life. Craft and sustainability goes simultaneously in promoting a more salubrious world. “Exploration of the nature and practice of craft contributes both to alternatives and more creative definitions of sustainability”^[b]. The material and resources used in the craft are non toxic and non hazardous. It further helps in the bonding between the maker and the nature. The potential to elevate the entire

economic system towards a rational world, it also contributes to the structural framework of re-localized, resilient groups.

ROLE OF ACCESSORIES IN ONE'S LIFE

An adornment is generally an accessory or ornament worn to enhance the beauty or status of the wearer (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/adornment). Body adornment is an act of beautifying oneself in order to express cultural, social or religious beliefs or status. It is a practice followed in almost all the societies around the world. It started with early man and continues to have splendid effect on today's culture.

Usually adornments are bold and colourful to attract attention. It can be of many types from feathers to bone, tattooing, piercing, make up, body painting, lip plates, braiding, modern accessories such as bag, belts, jewellery etc.

Accessorization plays an important role in today's lives; it is a medium where one can reflect herself/ himself to the social world. It plays a vital role in expressing one's individuality and being able to leave a mark in order to get acceptances and appreciation from the community. Living in today's fast moving globalized society with lots of diversification, people struggle for their own uniqueness and identity. Due to lots of options and varieties available in the market it is getting tougher and tougher to express one's self. The concept of bringing together the secrecy of Kaavad craft and accessorization into a life style product will definitely give a distinctive style to today's generation.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:

In India, gender discrimination is apparent in almost every segment of social life. The most pronounced is female foeticide, the continuous reduction of female ratio to the men. Other communal stereotype and cruelty are: discrimination against female child, dowry, girl education, etc. "India has also ratified various international conventions and human rights instruments

committing to secure equal rights of women. Key among them is the ratification of the convention on elimination of all forms of discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1993.^[d]

For the sociological and economical balance women want the same status and strategies of change that men are enjoying from ages. The concept of connecting social issues with the art of storytelling i.e. Kaavad will definitely bring a difference among today's generation as it will impart knowledge about gender inequality. Moreover it is an initiative to lay down the foundation of a free and fair society.

INTRODUCTION OF KAAVAD - THE ANCIENT ART OF STORYTELLING:

Storytelling is communicating events, memories, myths, and fantasies through words, images and expressions; often by contriving and exaggerating. Stories have been a component of almost all civilizations and cultures known to mankind. Narratives serve as a means of amusement, restoration, cultural preservation, knowledge and moral values. The listener imagines a fanciful mental image and gets lost in the world of mystery and heroism.

HISTORY:

The dictionary (Apte, 1996) defines kaavad as either a 'Kavaat', 'Kapaat' or 'Kivaad' meaning half a door or panel of a door^[2]. Kaavad also resembles the sling made up of a bamboo pole tied with a basket on each end which was used by Shraavan. He carried his mother and father in the kaavad for the pilgrimage. Shraavan is a mythological character from Ramayan who accidentally got killed by king Dashratha while hunting. That is why kaavadiya bhat carry the wooden temple (Kaavad) to people for Pilgrimages.

The 'Suthar' community (carpenter) of Mewar constructs the dimensional form of Kaavad, for the storyteller (Kaavadiya Bhat) from Marwar. Kaavadiya bhats are nomads who carry Kavaad and travel from Marwar to different places of Rajasthan, to patron's houses. Each Kaavadiya Bhats have a number of patrons, they travel and narrate mythological and genealogical stories to them. Kaavadiya bhat come to their patron's houses with Kaavad and recite the stories of their ancestral bravery and valour^[2].

It is assumed that the concept of portable temples was initiated by Suthar and Kaavadiya Bhats. The portable temple/Shrine comes to the devotee rather than the devotee going to the temple. This made this art of storytelling sacred and holy which needs to be performed with proper rituals. Storytellers eulogize the goodness of Patrons and honour them by performing in front of the gathered listeners about the rewards and gifts given by their jajmans (Hereditary Patrons). Rewards can be in terms of meal, money, clothes and livestock.

STRUCTURE OF KAAVAD:

Kaavad is a travelling three dimensional wooden temple, illustrated with images of god, goddess, social heroes, epics, saints, patrons and stories from Ramayana and Mahabharata. This wooden structure has multiple doors that are hinged together creating foldable facets which have stories of great valour. Traditionally the stories were painted by organic colours which were handmade and sustainable. The fine paste of powdered minerals, water and glue (obtained from wood) was made, which was then assorted and used for painting the stories. The main colours used were red, yellow, green, blue, white and black. These colours were kept and stored in coconut shells. Even the brushes used were handmade using animal hair, generally squirrels’.

BENEFITS:

Kaavad is the only source of income for the Kaavadiya Bhats. Patrons maintain their identity, and feel immense pleasure through their stories recited by the Kaavadiya, who tells their genealogies in a heroic manner. Schedule caste people who were not allowed to enter temple in earlier times, connected themselves with God by hearing their great stories from story tellers. Suthar community feels honored and dignified for being the only makers and preservers of Kaavad craft. Listeners get the experiences of a yatra, without a Pilgrimage. Also the information people get through from storyteller becomes important during arranging marriages, as they get to know which families they can or cannot marry into. This over all synergy between the storyteller, patron and the Suthars has kept the tradition and craft of Kaavad alive.

CONCLUSION:

As, today’s generations has more concern for the environment and use of sustainable products, the consumer chooses their consumables and products carefully. They have good knowledge

about the materials not only in terms of their visual appeal but also their content. Their approach in selecting a product is going back to basics. This paper will collectively uplift the craft of Kaavad as well as deliver the social message of women empowerment to the people. The accessories have their roots in the traditional craft Kaavad but yet maintain the contemporary look.

PROCESS OF PROTOTYPE (Accessory Belt):

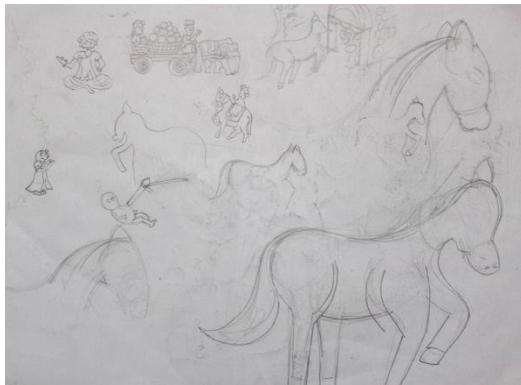


Fig. 1. Form Generation



Fig. 2. Evolving Storyline



Fig. 3. Finalizing each frame for the story



Fig.4. Coloured story frames

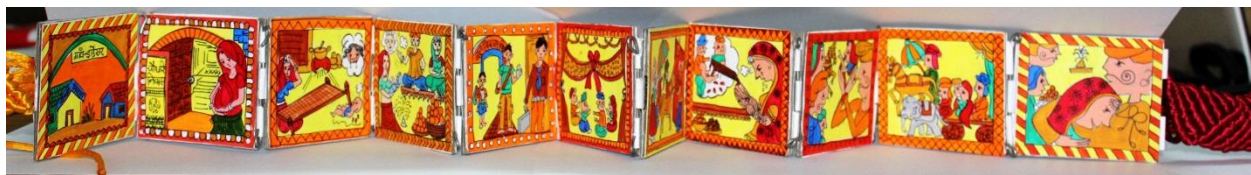


Fig.5. Final Belt

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