

Acknowledgements

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Reader's note

We had an opportunity to visit Bhuj on the 27th and 28th of September for an ethnography field trip. During these two days, we conducted research on some of the most prominent craft places like Ajrakhpur, Khamir, and Nirona.

Bhuj, the headquarters of the largest districts in India. Kutch is a major tourist destination for a variety of handicrafts. With its desert climate, it experiences unbroken sunshine throughout the year. The area is relieved of the scorching sun during the monsoons. In 2001, an earthquake devastated Bhuj and its adjoining villages on the morning of India's Republic Day. The Mw 7.7 earthquake was one the most brutal intraplate earthquakes ever recorded. The trauma from the tragedy did not hold any bounds to the people of Bhuj. After two decades, Bhuj has rebuilt itself, restoring the economy and infrastructure and reviving its heritage simultaneously.



CONTENTS

1.	DOORS	2-9
2.	WINDOWS	10-12
3.	EXTERIORS	13-29
4.	INTERIORS	30-31
5.	TEXTURES	32-35
6.	ANIMALS	36-37
7.	FOOD	38-39

P

A

M

Bhuj - Bhachau Hwy

LLDC/Srujan trust
LLDC

Learning Design Center

LLDC Auditorium

Ajrak khatri muslim
khatri jamaatkhana
Cement factory

Bandhani

Block printing

Ajrak block printing

Dyeing

Chemical dye

Abdulkadar khatri

Ajrakhpur



Faultless





Rahasya

Om B



Isha A C



Om B



The villages that rose from rubble, constructed contemporary homes. Although the people chose modern ways of construction, their homes still bear a sense of tradition. The homes have cement walls, and the doors and windows are majorly made from dense wood. In the Indian culture, the doorways often bear cultural identity and are associated

with new beginnings. Wooden doors have been used for generations mainly for their durability. The dense wood doors stand as fortifications against the harsh climate, preventing sand from entering during sandstorms. They keep the interiors cool during summers and warm during winters.



The most notable features of these doors are the 'sakadi' and 'kada'. Sakadi is a metal chain that hangs from the top of the door, used as a lock. It is locked in a hook and is also used as a knocker. The kadas are metal loops placed on either side of the door. The heavy doors are pulled with their help.

Lavender Dreams

Om B



Way to sweetness

The windows similar to the doors are made from dense wood. Some of them are made entirely out of wood while some have wooden frames. The house would comprise a minimum of four windows. Some of the doors and windows have beautiful intricate borders of lippan kaam.

Ovi U



Chaukhat



The doors have a small window in-built into them. These help the women to communicate and receive parcels from people. Each house has at least two doors- one opening into the house and the other into the backyard.

Dwaar



Kivadd



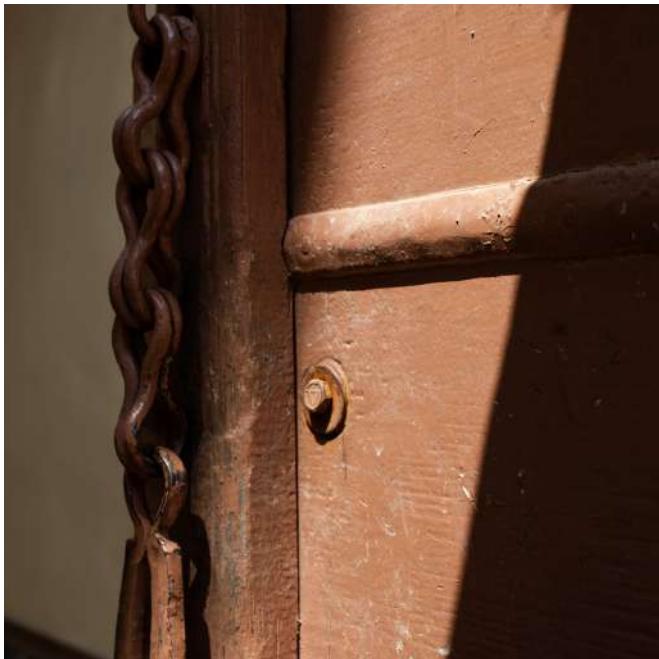
Hanging through the cracks





See through

Om B



Touch Wood

Om B



Ajar









Life in concrete



Mid-day Blues



Through the greens

Another common feature of the houses was a long aangan that stretched to the roads. The water tanker, bikes, and several other things are kept here. The exteriors of the homes are not as elaborately decorated as the interiors. They

prefer painting the walls in single color with minimal or no decoration. The pastel and beige painted homes blend into the warm environment.



Specimen

There are different huts/studios dedicated for weaving, dyeing and plastic recycling. Each house has small storage rooms, where all the day to day material is kept. Each studio is built in same style, i.e. 2 rooms on one side, 1 in front and the roofs are slanting.

Anushri B



Work place

Aesha



Earthy

Om B



Surprised



Tile shaped beauty



Sealed with lippan



Even if these villages are deprived of the most basic amenities, the people live in harmony with nature and communities, lending a helping hand when needed. The communities strive their best to promote each other's crafts and are true epitomes of unity in diversity.



Felt like Greece



Jeevan gaatha



Lights out



On Fire

The dyeing facilities are in close vicinity of each other. Here workers create a bath of indigo dye, the colour that gives Ajrakh its identity.



Workout sessions



Jalashay



Life

The village has a huge water tank that is able to hold up to thousand liters of water. A majority of families are engaged in the craft of Ajrakh. This age-old craft requires a lot of water and its supply is not enough.



Dye Drying

Cleaned plastic is cut into long strips by women from villages near Kukma. The plastic strips of different colors are woven into durable textiles. Nylon is used for the warp, and plastic forms the weft, creating a thick dense material useful for mats, backpacks, or cushions. Weaving is a skill intrinsic to the Kutch, and the recycled plastic is woven using a technology ancient to Kutch the pit loom.

Khamir's Kala Cotton Initiative is a reinterpretation of an old craft value chain made for the modern market place. Kala cotton is indigenous to Kutch and organic, as the farmers do not use any pesticides and synthetic fertilizers. It is a purely rain fed crop that has a high tolerance for both disease and pests, and requires minimal investment.



Rang De



Alive Beauties

It is resilient and resurgent in the face of difficult land conditions. It forms a strong, coarse and stretchable fiber that is often used in denim. As it is difficult to produce fine quality textiles with it, as its short staple length translates to fewer twists per inch of yarn, over time its use has diminished significantly in mainstream markets.



Aesthetics



House of colours



Shoe rack with a hack



Accidental composition



Arrangement

Om B



Rasoi

As we stepped into the homes of the craft persons we were welcomed with cool water from earthen pots. Their homes had four to five rooms- a common hall, kitchen, and two to three bedrooms with traditional khatla (cot) beds. Some of the houses had small studios for the craft persons to work. The people adorned the homes with their creations. We noticed that the utensils were arranged in an orderly manner on the madia (ceiling storage rack) instead of a cupboard. They showcase their utensils proudly as a sign of wealth and privilege.



Hungry Head

The bathing area and lavatory are mostly built outside the premises. This ensures protection from germs and bacteria entering the homes. Most homes have a backyard where they have a garden to grow their own vegetables. They also use this space to dry their clothes. Women sit in their backyard chatting around and doing handicraft work during their leisure time.



Back to yard

Textures of kutch



Oxidised Scribble



Grey lines



Waying out



Safed ret

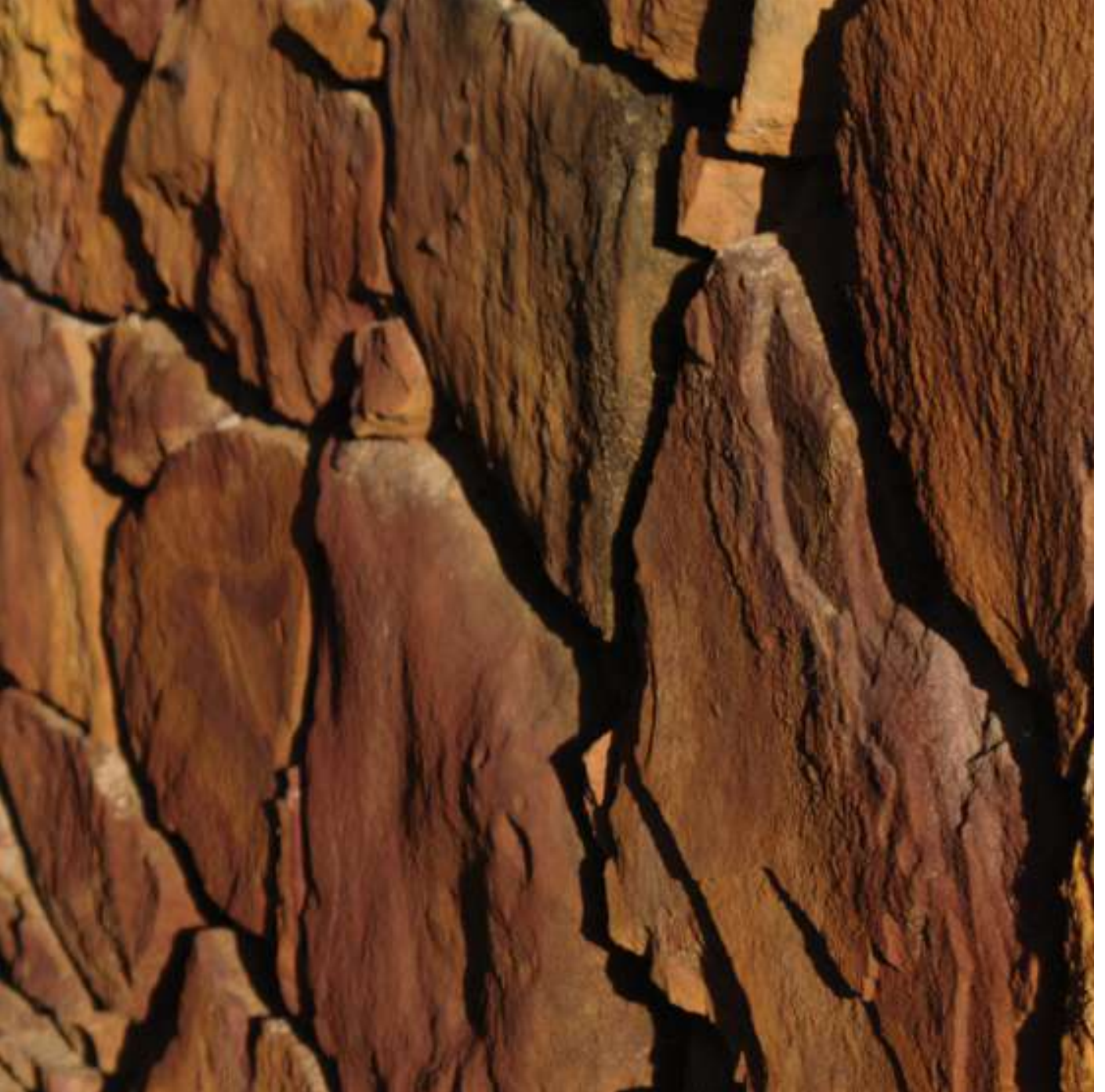


Mudding



Quadrant







Instagram ready



Bull's eye

The villages are well connected by tar roads to the neighbouring cities. The roads inside the village however are very poorly constructed, making it difficult to transport goods. Public transportation is scarce, having people rely on private vehicles.

The dry, desert land is lowly populated and surrounded by very little variety of vegetation. The cattle here roam around the open spaces. Although the village covers vast stretches of land, the houses and workshops are arranged in close proximity. The craftspeople can work, and supervise, cutting the cost of transportation.



Gau



People there eat traditional and authentic Gujarati meal which consists of dal, roti, rice, vegetables, salad, chaas (buttermilk), farsan followed by a sweet dish. Some of the famous Gujarati delicacies include, jalebi, dhokla, fafda, khandvi, dhal dhokli, undhiyu, handvo, ganthia, dal Wada, khakhra, and thepla. Since they are a Muslim Community, they also eat Non-Vegetarian Food like mutton (meat) rice, mutton curry. But they don't eat Non veg all the time, only sometimes it is cooked in their homes.

Bhojan



Riwaaz

In these dishes, the flavours are a blend of sweet, spicy and sour tastes. A typical dinner includes bhakri-shak or khichdi-kadhi and sometimes "rotlas" that is a thick roti which is made from jowar and bajra. 'Kutchi Dabeli' is quite famous in Kutch. The Gujaratis are noted for their sweet tongue, and hence every meal is followed by a sweet dish or sometimes even jaggery.



