

## Preserving ‘Dhokra Craft’, an IIT Hyderabad endeavor

*The Design Intervention workshop by the Department of Design, aimed at safeguarding the Dhokra crafts of Ojha Gonds Community in Telangana.*

### **Highlights:**

- **Community building and peer learning for the Ojha craftsmen.**
- **Creating Sustainable livelihood opportunities for the Ojha craftsmen.**
- **Documenting the traditional process of the metallurgy and regional artifacts of the Raj Gonds of Adilabad district.**
- **Create a digital repository of the traditional artifacts to trace the design evolution in the Ojha Craft.**
- **Encourage younger generations of the Ojha families to adapt and safeguard their ancestral crafts practices.**
- **Generate awareness of the traditional craft practices of the Ojhas’ among the common people of the region.**

**Hyderabad, November 19, 2021:** Professor Deepak John Mathew, Department of Design, IIT Hyderabad, along with his team has conducted a design intervention workshop on Dhokra crafts of Ojha Gonds of Adilabad as a part of an ongoing project under his supervision **“Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Telangana”** supported by Science and Heritage Research Initiative Programme, Design Innovation Centre, and Institutional Innovation Centre IIT Hyderabad. The workshop was focusing on training the younger generations of the Ojha community in the traditional Dhokra Crafts under the supervision and training of the Master Craftsman. Traditionally the artifacts were majorly created for the ritualistic purposes of the Raj Gonds, which is a part of the Intangible cultural heritage of the Raj Gonds of Telangana. The workshop aimed at retaining and sustaining the traditional craft practices of the Ojha’s and to provide them opportunities to generate livelihood from their ancestral occupation of Dhokra crafts. The workshop also had an objective of community building, and peer learning, skill development, and training. Thus, the Master Craftsman was chosen from Ojha Community itself.

One more aspect of the workshop is to create a digital repository of all the artifacts created in the workshop by using Photogrammetry and 3D digital printing which will be useful for the researchers for further studies as well as for the visitors from all over the world to get insights in the Cultural heritage of the Raj Gonds and associated communities and their traditional practices. The digital museum is being intended from the workshop to preserve the traditional artifacts with the non-destructive methods where the original artifacts will remain with the community and 3D printed artifacts will be served to fulfil the Knowledge sharing purpose on the Cultural Heritage of Telangana on the global level, where the museum can be visited virtually from anywhere in the World.

*“We define IITH as Inventing & Innovating in Technology for Humanity. Preserving Dhokra using the Design Concept & encouraging future generations to sustain it, fulfils our motto. IITH also has a Rural Development Centre to uplift the rural livelihood with the aid of technology”, added Prof B S Murty, Director, IIT Hyderabad.*

*The workshop was intended to revive the traditional “Whojari Kala” (literally translates art of the Ojha Community) and encourage younger generations of the Ojha families to adopt the traditional occupation by providing design intervention through the workshop. It will also facilitate the creation of products that*



can fulfil the market's needs; thus, our traditional crafts can provide sustainable livelihood to the Community, said, Master Craftsman Mr Uika Inderjeet.

Speaking about the project, Ms Krishna Trivedi, PhD Scholar, Department of Design, said, "Raj Gonds are one of the Oldest indigenous communities of India, the Ojha's Gonds are associated with the Raj Gonds by providing Dhokra artifacts for the Ritualistic, Utilitarian and Decorative needs of the community, which is gradually declining due to the lack of the patronage and with the adaptation of Industrial goods, thus, systematic documentation, preservation, and safeguarding of the Ojha's Dhokra crafts practices is important and crucial need at present.

Enumerating the advantage of Digital Documentation of the Craft, Mr Naquash V, PhD Scholar, Department of Design, said, "The Documentation of the traditional process of the Metallurgy followed by the Ojhas of Adilabad district is unique and differs from the Dhokra crafts process followed in West Bengal, Bastar, and Orrisa states. The ancestral practices of the Ojha's are the Intangible cultural heritage itself, Thus, the workshop gave insights into the detailed process followed in creating the Dhokra artifacts.

Furthermore, the Workshop attracted the attention of the local visitors who visited the workshop and had an interactive session with the Craftsmen, the workshop also served the purpose of community building and awareness generation regarding the cultural heritage and practices of the Ojha Gonds.

**Electronic press release on Dhokra Craft:**

Part-1 (Workshop Objectives):

<https://youtu.be/g19qrmOTzI>

Part-2 (Brief on Dhokra Casting):

<https://youtu.be/GEnaazvezf4>

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