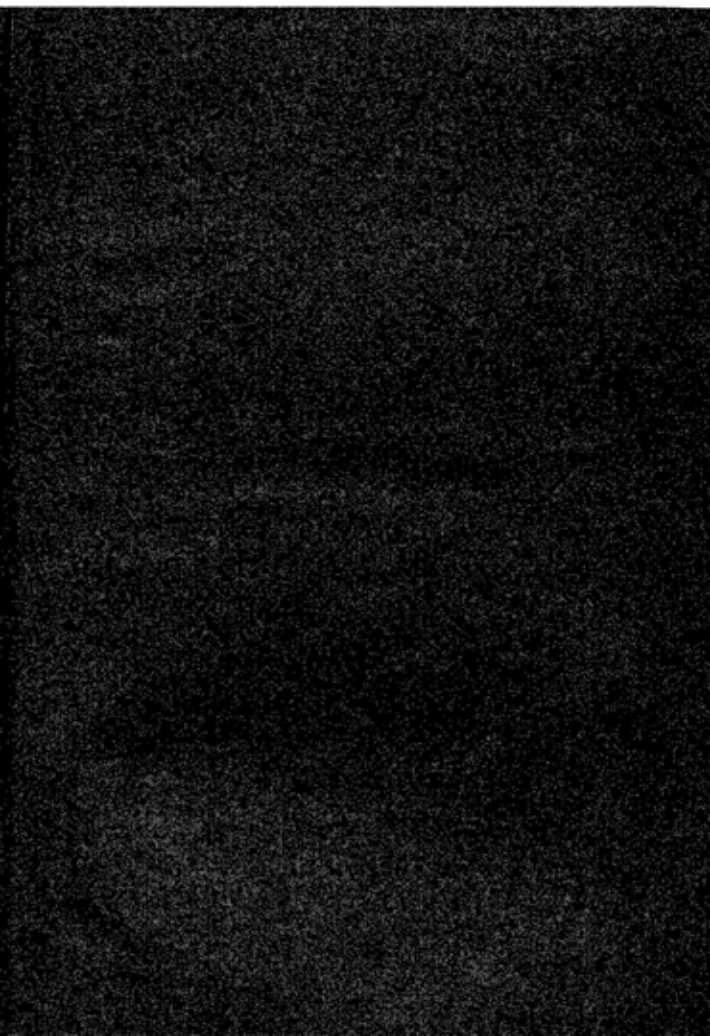


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**The Glory of
Indian Handicrafts**




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Preface

The handicrafts in this country were in a manner revered as an important part of our rich cultural heritage. Now though this sentiment continues to be repeated, there is a pronounced change in the general attitude towards crafts, which is completely unsettling our basic sense of life values. For though handicrafts fulfilled a positive physical need in the daily requirements of the people, they also served to satisfy the aesthetic hunger in man and provided a vehicle for his urge for self-expression which reveals a conscious aesthetic approach. The inspiration had come from the tender core of the substance of everyday life and nature's own rich storehouse. These significant and meaningful facts are being rapidly forgotten. Today handicrafts are becoming just commodities for sale, not the essentials in life.

The concept behind handicrafts as originally conceived was imbuing everything used in daily life, no matter how common or mundane, with a touch of beauty to add brightness to an otherwise dull and drab existence. In fact in the ancient Indian concept beauty was equated with godhood. The decoration was a purposeful factor, not a superfluity or a status symbol.

The handicrafts have now got partially submerged under the rising forces of modern industrialisation with its high mechanisation, and lost their basic role in the overall perspective. We are losing not only an ancient heritage but a most essential element in our social composition which has been a strong cementing force. It is not surprising that we are being torn apart and our very foundations are weakening.

What is the real significance of handicrafts? It lies in the newness and surprise of each object. No two are alike, for each is a fresh creation. Standardisation is alien, in fact a negation of all that handicrafts stand for. Even the poorest enjoyed a variety in the articles of everyday use, for a special article was assigned

for a particular use. This meant a wide range even in the clay water pots and pans, clothes and garments with distinctive colours and designs. Wall and floor decorations varied according to the days of the week and to mark special festivals. All this broke monotony which is perhaps the most deadening element in life.

In an age of machine-tooled monotony, the handicrafts stand as symbols of a ceaseless flow of creativity instead of a dull repetition. The choice was wide and selection very individual and therefore a source of genuine pride. In this fast-moving world, however, handicrafts too have become transitory articles. This is bound to undermine quality. The interest and hence motivation too have become positively commercial. The stress on mechanisation and on mass production adds to the tenseness in the atmosphere with the sharp contours of the buildings, the terseness of modern furniture and the sleekness of the walls and floors. As blossoms in the garden, growing grass in the courtyard, animal pets and birds on the trees, all add to complete the human personality, so did handicrafts add a finer dimension to our being.

Complicated and elaborate techniques evolved over the ages to produce imaginative effects are being lightly discarded and bland ones are wrought to speed up to gain time. There is no other motive here, except cash profit. Here, in this book, a small attempt is made to catch a glimpse of a mighty panorama which would not be exhausted even if one were to fill volumes. But if this small book can serve to even lift a small corner of the veil of ignorance that is descending on this vast treasure, the effort will not have been in vain.

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KAMALADEVI CHATTOPADHYAY

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Woven Textiles

A SUBSTANTIAL PART of the wide range of textiles that India produces seem to derive their characteristics from the local contours of their physical surroundings. But while the local environment made for divergencies, the common religious heritage has ever emphasised the basic unity of the people. Thus while the physical element sounded the richness of diversity, the emotional one the wealth of likeness.

Cotton fabrics hold a prominent place in Indian weaving which produces rare types. It seems natural that they were given fancy names like 'Evening Dew' (because they became indistinguishable when laid on the grass), or 'Running Water' (because they became invisible when dipped in water), or 'Sherbati' (because of their appearance and cool feel on the skin). And, as even a five metre piece could pass through a little ring, it came to be named 'Air-Woven'. A fact to note is that these muslins were from fine threads spun with hand spindles, not the spinning wheel, i.e., the thread drawn by twirling the spindle. The weightlessness of these fabrics seems to have inspired many poets, who compared them to the moonlight on the tulip or a dewdrop on the rose.

These craftsmen seem to have sensed the subtleties of perspective in colour ranges by the mere accuracy of their eye, and trained their vision to fill in the shades with precision while simultaneously moving their hands as though with mathematical calculation. They also developed a colour science of their own to achieve a blend through regular or diffused or composite reflection.

The Indian tradition has been remarkably flexible in colour

combinations, perhaps because of its closeness to nature, and not thwarted by rigid conventions that prevail in the West. For instance, pink and red, which are ruled out as irreconcilable by the Western matching code, are combined very freely in India with attractive effects. Similarly, blue with lavender. The Indian craftsman's eye seems to swing between delicate undertones and strong overtones, from the youthful to the mature while a tonal balance is maintained.

Colours also came to be associated with seasons and rituals. Thus crimson became the colour of good omen to be worn by brides or on auspicious occasions, ochre, the sign of renunciation, yellow, the colour of spring, and so on. Even the gods came to have individual colours—Brahma was red, Shiva white and Vishnu blue. Colours also became synonymous with certain emotions as with musical tones.

The legendary muslin, once called the royal muslin, is not a legend of the past but a fact of today for superfine yarn is still spun and superfine Khadi (hand-spun, hand-woven fabric) still continues to be produced in places like Madhubani in North Bihar and Ponduru in Andhra Pradesh.

Apart from the environmental influences, the traditional and customary choice of dress and fabrics in the villages vary from region to region, each region comprising hundreds of villages where the handlooms are operated to cater primarily to the needs of the local village folks. Thus in India, we get the great variety in handloom textiles in a wide range of materials, colours, designs and other features.

Though the bulk production for the masses may be thick and at times coarse, the material is always beautiful, made in multifarious colours, distinctive in design. Considerable effort goes into the weaving to maintain the traditional designs and each becomes an individual piece. Hence some of the most attractive and unusual designs and colour combinations are to be seen only in the countryside.

The fly-shuttle loom, thrown from side to side, is commonly used. The hand-jacquard has been introduced, in which figured designs are woven by a mechanical selection of healds controlled by perforated cards for each design so that almost any orientation can be made in an existing design. Sometimes, particularly in sarees, this is doubled with a coloured patch

intervening in between. The finer white dhotis have plain-coloured borders sometimes rimmed by a zigzag line, or a heavy *rudraksh* (a seed with many facets) patterns.

The inexpensive cotton sarees of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh have a dignity. The broad borders on either side or a single decorative touch by a heavily-patterned *pallu*—the saree end which falls over the shoulder at the back—lend them a distinctive character. The Karvavai, as the solid border is called, where the weft threads do not enter into the borders, is their speciality. These sarees with a single border are worked with two shuttles, the double border ones with three shuttles. The country jacquard is used for designs on the borders. The severe plain white with a gold band for border, and a similar one on the *pallu* is typical of Kerala, known as Karalkuda. Similar sarees are also made in Coimbatore and Madurai in Tamil Nadu, Chanderi in Madhya Pradesh, and Venkatagiri in Andhra Pradesh. The last named is, however, a sheer weave and has gold dots, coins, leaves, parrots, or simple geometrical patterns.

In Manipur cotton weaving is common and is not the monopoly of any section. It has its own legends and beliefs around which the weaving tradition revolves, and the designs are based on religious, ceremonial and social functions and dance customs. The most popular designs are Akoibi and Ningthou Phee, said to be patterned like a snake's skin, and mostly used in the *phanek*, the woman's *lungi*. Morangphee has the temple design and is the hallmark of the Manipuri saree. There is the Likli design, a copy of a loom accessory though inexplicably called a bottle design. It is popular and widely used on shoulder-bags and bed covers along with flowered designs. Another famous fabric is lashing *phee*, an artistic quilted material which serves as a warm cover in winter, as Manipur has no indigenous woollens. The borders have figured designs resembling the *jamdani*, with horses, swords, spears, for special use in rituals. Shamilami is a combination of weaving and embroidery, once a high status symbol. The pattern revealed by the natural tissues of the wood when chopped and exposed is known as Maibung Hijamayak, meaning a boat design. This design is used in fabrics worn only at death ceremonies.

Maheshwar in Madhya Pradesh is famous for a special type of saree which owes its origin to a benevolent queen who once ruled there. The Maheshwari saree, though simple, has a few singular charming touches. It usually has a plain body, sometimes stripes or checks in several variations. Among the plain ones the best known are Chandrakala (midnight blue) and Baingani Chandrakala (dark purple). Chandratara, with the moon and star design, has lengthwise stripes of two shades and the pattern is arranged with four stripes of one shade alternated by one stripe of another shade. The Beli consists of lengthwise stripes of six dents of two shades, two dents of one, and four of another. Parbi is the chequered counterpart of Beli.

Maheshwari has a reversible border which can be worn either side, known as *bugdi*, and the weaving process is the same as for figured weaving. It consists in lifting of warp threads and passing the weft threads between these for making a particular design. The border designs, known as mat design, have a wide range in leaves and flowers. Maheshwari *pallu* is also distinctive, with five stripes running along the width, three coloured and two white alternating, and in each of the white, four lines of the same colour are inserted. The sarrees are now made mostly in cotton and artificial silk mixed, fewer in pure silk.

Other variations of this style are made in several places, particularly in Maharashtra around Poona up to Sholapur and parts of Karnataka. A big centre is Shahpur in Belgaum district, Karnataka State. But while Maheshwaris are normally in bright colours, Shahpuris are in soft pastels or shots in two colours, one in warp, other in weft, with colours to match the border and the *pallu*. Poona has a special kind with a gold thread speckled panel for the *pallu* and a narrow gold-patterned border.

From Hubli-Dharwar to Bijapur in Karnataka, cotton sarrees are made in dark earthy colours, which mark them out, as also their heavy maroon red or chocolate red borders with coloured or white lines or stripes alternating with white rows of arrows in two or four lines, or in mat design in white or yellow. The border is also made in the *rudraksh* pattern, which is very popular in border designs, while the *pallu* is unique in white

and red alternating bands with mounts at the two ends, woven either in cotton or silk. This area also produces white dhotis and turbans with the same kind of picturesque border designs in lovely bright red. The sarees in this style in Karnataka are known as Irkal after a village of this name in Bijapur district, from where the type originated. Large quantities of yardage for blouse pieces in the Irkali style are produced in a little village called Galedgudda in the same district and supplied to markets all over. Irkali style sarees in finer counts are also made in Narayanpet in Andhra Pradesh. Irkalis have a rich colouring of their own like the pomegranate-red, peacock-blue, parrot-green, etc. In the *rasta* design horizontal lines in subtle matching colours run through the saree.

Gadwal and Kothakota near Vanaparti in Andhra Pradesh weave fine cotton sarees with rich gold borders and heavy panel-like *pallus*. Cotton sarees with gold *pallus* and borders are made in places like Siddhipet and Armoor which once produced these styles in silk. They now manufacture curtains, bedspreads, etc. using the same old motifs for ornamentation.

Amongst elaborate cotton weaving is *jamdani*, done with great intricacy. The weaving is somewhat like tapestry in which small shuttles filled with coloured, gold or silver thread are passed through the warp and the fabric shows shadowy figure designs. In Tanda in Faizabad district of Uttar Pradesh, *jamdani* patterns are worked in white on a surface of the same colour. The extra weft threads which create the patterns are of the same fine quality as those used in the fabric, so that they are easily absorbed into the fabric, which becomes discernible clearly only when held against the light. The designs in floral sprays scattered over the surface are called *butidar*, and in diagonal rows, *tirchha*. They have large bold motifs in corners, like the shawl pattern cones. When the floral motifs form a regular network it is known as *jhalar*. The most striking, however, is the *panna hazara* which means a thousand emeralds in which the floral design is made to stand out with flowers in gold or silver shimmering like precious stones. At present the Banarasi weavers have reoriented the *jamdani* into cut work by throwing the weft across the width and when the weaving ends, the loose threads are finely cut to bring out a pattern. Masuriya is a rare cotton of lovely texture woven in the Masuriya

village in Rajasthan with a sheer body, usually plain but sometimes with a ribbon border.

Himroo is a kind of brocaded material woven on a simple throw-shuttle loom on the principle of the extra weft figuring, with cotton used in the warp and art silk in the weft. In this the preparation of the *jala* or design is most important for this is where initially the entire design is actually worked out, and prescribes where the extra weft silk yarn is to pass through some of the warp threads. The *jala* consists of a bunch of the threads being tied each to the threads below in a horizontal position by wooden supports. Twine loops hang to receive the warp threads on their way to the heald, which when ready is attached vertically to the loom. The weaving consists in the interlacing of the weft yarn with the warp yarn at right angles, a helper sitting opposite the *jala*. This brocade cloth called Himroo and Mashru is said to have been contrived to provide Muslims courtly clothes within the permitted category.

In Himroo the designs are either geometrical, like circles, octagons, ovals, ellipses, diamonds, and hexagons, or fruits like pomegranate, almond, pineapple, and mango, or flowers like rose, lotus, and jasmine or leaves interlocking with stems to form running designs. This material is used for coats, cloaks, shawls as also for furnishings. Mashru is also a similar material but lighter, woven only in gentle parallel and diagonal lines, intersecting each other. It has a satiny glow, is popular for vests, blouses and scarves.

Silk not only has a very ancient tradition, but enjoys also a significant status because of the preference that has been shown for its use at rituals. This may perhaps partly account for the concentrated development of silk weaving at places of worship like Banaras (Varanasi) and Kanchipuram. Banaras is, however, in a class by itself not only for its superb weaving in gold and silver, but also for the very wide variety of techniques and styles.

The best known Banaras product is the brocade, *kinkhab* as it is called. Its loom is very complex in which pairs of healds are separately connected to strings and taken upwards and worked from above. Elaborate brocades are woven by combining this with double warps and border warps. The old and best-known brocades are *beldar* or scroll pattern which appears

in the Ajanta frescoes. Another is the *butidar* or sprig design. Some are all over gold without use of silk, with floral, mango or creeper design or spangles strewn over or scenes of human and animal figures in bands and lozenges. All these sarees usually have heavy gold *pallus* and borders, or silver background with a superimposition of gold patterns. A very delicate and fascinating item is the tissue in gold or silver. Some have additional borders in tapestry weave, separately woven and then attached.

Banaras has an old tradition in weaving special styles for export to specific countries of West and South-East Asia with apt poetic names like Chandtara (moon and stars), Dhoopchhaon (sunshine and shade), Mazchar (ripples of silver), Morgala (peacock's neck), and Bulbul Chashm (nightingale's eyes).

Gujarat developed its own style of *kinkhabs* (brocades) woven with extra weft patterns. There are several designs like Taramandal (a rather complicated 'constellation'), animals, fruits, stylised dance figures, peacocks, women waving fans, and lotuses in many shapes. Rudrol in Mehsana district, Jamnagar and Dolka produce them. Here other varieties of silk such as satin (Gajji), a lovely melting fabric, and mixtures like Mashru, are also made. A special item is the famous Nathdwar Pichwai in the brocade style.

India has long been famed for filmy cottons patterned in gold. The startling compositions are: a thin red and violet muslin with olive green borders, and an all over gold pattern in tapestry weave; a diaper design with cones at corners and an inner border of diagonal bands and an ornamental twill weave with a gold lozenge pattern at the end. It is a loom tapestry, gold threads having been inserted with tiny bobbins while weaving, and passed through and around the warp threads. Similarly, long turbans and scarves in thin cotton are woven in single or double colours like rose and lemon plaids with bands of golden yellow silk.

Mubarakpur, in Uttar Pradesh, is an important silk centre, mainly catering to the rural needs, with their typical designs made with the jacquard. Nagsi has gold circles all over with rich floral designs in the *pallu*; the *chumari* has the same ground but the *pallu* is ornamental with *zari* flowering shrubs and elaborate flowers with a narrow border on one side,

and broad one on the other; the *phulwar* has all over floral patterns with a lovely blend of colours.

The Baluchar of West Bengal, always in saree form, is plain woven with a flowery border and brocaded with untwisted silk thread with *butis* sprinkled all over. The main piece is the big panelled *pallu* with mangoes in the centre, bordered by very diverse designs, depicting a royal court, domestic or travel scenes with horse riders and palanquins, the lotus, the bee, and rosette, the stylised peacock, the *alpana* (floor designs), the Taj, etc. They are always in dark rich shades, particularly red, purple, and chocolate. In the 19th century ones can be seen European faces mingling with Indian.

Tranchoi is an exquisitely delicate brocade whose designs put you in mind of our fine miniatures. It is traced to three Indian Parsis by the name of Choi who learnt this craft in China and began practising it in Surat (Gujarat); hence the name Choi (meaning three). Satin is the base and weaving consists in the merging of the extra weft 'flouts' in the fabric. In Tranchoi sarees the designs are always floral with interspersing of birds. The usual ground is bright blue, purple, green or red with areas patterned in tabby weave. Flying birds, paired cocks amidst floral sprays, even hunting scenes are worked in. In some the *pallu* is more solidly done with peacocks, baskets or bunches of flowers, etc. Tranchoi is available in saree form and in yardage material.

Patola is a most colourful and ostentatious weave with its figured body, and the subtle merging of one shade into another. The most renowned Patolas are the sarees made in Pattan (Gujarat), particularly the wedding saree in magnificent ruby red ground, with dark green, white and yellow with leaf and flower patterns and the *pallu* featuring dancing girls, parrots or swans.

The warp colours are dyed in the lightest colour to be used in the pattern, then the portions which are to be of the next darker shade are traced on a bundle of the threads either by charcoal or pencil. The threads within the pattern are then tightly tied with a cotton thread where the marks are made and the formula is continued with threads that are to bear the next shades of the pattern until the darkest shades are reached. The weft is also treated in the same way. This technique is

named by ethnologists as *ikat*, the equivalent of the Indian *bandhana*.

Orissa has its own Patola style, done in tusser silk and in single *ikat*. The designs usually are in floral patterns, with animals and traditional motifs. The single *ikat* makes the designs suggestive, and does not sharply delineate them.

The cotton *ikats* in Orissa are in a way more fabulous with firm accent on the geometrical patterns in heavy weaves. Patolas are also woven in Pochanpally and Chirala in Andhra Pradesh which originally did only large cotton handkerchiefs called *tilla rumals*, with more pronounced patterns in geometrical designs.

The village Paithan in Maharashtra has a very beautiful saree called Paithani. It is woven on a *zari* warp thread, the weft interlocked with different colours. In this technique complicated patterns of highly stylised flowers, swans, parrots, peacocks, and the like in bright colours are woven. The *palu* is a piece of gold tissue round which are seen brightly coloured rosettes and sometimes birds, giving the piece a fascinating look.

Assam has several varieties of silk. Endi silk has a yellowish tinge; it is in rough as well as smooth varieties, and is used in winter for its warmth. Musa has two varieties. The Champa Adakari or Mejamkari which has a scintillating golden shade and is only produced in Assam, and because of its brilliance the yarn is in demand all over India for decorative purposes like embroidery. Pala is the mulberry silk.

Sualkuchi in Assam is a famous centre for silk weaves of delicate texture, dainty designs and delightful natural colours. Their specialities are the typical Assam items like *mekhela*, a woman's *lungi*, mostly in plain body, but sometimes pretty motifs are strewn over the fabric, with a heavy design at the ends; the *chaddar* and *riha*, both in smaller lengths, the former going over the shoulder to provide a *palu*, the other wrapped round the waist. The designs consist of sprays of flowers, elephants interspersed with leaves and sprigs and numerous combinations of geometrical patterns.

Kashmir has its traditional silk. But over the last several years, modern silk fabrics have been introduced there like *crepe de chin*, georgette, chiffon, ninon, etc. and this area has become an important centre for the lighter type of silks.

South India is famous for its high and heavy quality silks. At one time silk fabrics were sold here by the weight, so heavy were the weaves. Tamil Nadu and Karnataka are noted areas for this type of silk. A village of Karnataka called Molkal-moru has a richly designed saree all over with motifs each enclosed in a check. The border is done in *ikar* weave. The *palu* is daintily decorated with birds, fishes, etc.

In Tamil Nadu the pride of place goes to Kanchipuram, though Kollegal in Coimbatore district and Kumbakonam in Tanjore district, Salem, and Arni have also very fine weaving with their own distinct motifs like the *yali*, lion, swan, etc. Here the throw-shuttle loom is mostly in use and for complicated designs a local type of jacquard. Very intricate designs are woven into the body in gold thread, of human and animal figures, geometrical patterns, with temple towers along the borders. A characteristic which lends great distinction and dignity to the Kanchipuram saree is the wide contrast borders in different designs and colours. For this three shuttles are needed and while the weaver weaves the right side, his aide manages the left with separate shuttles. The *palu*, however, has to have another warp and, where this is of another shade, it is separately woven and then joined very delicately. Zigzags are greatly used in borders, at times also in the body, locally known as *vanki*. Sun, moon, chariot, swans, peacocks, parrots, lions, coins, mango and leaf are a few of the many patterns. In some a very delicate jasmine bud is placed inside a square or buds are scattered like dew drops over the body called *mallimuggu*. Then there are patterns worked through lines and squares—jasmine buds. *Thandavelam* are the parallel lines that run along the length of the saree. *Putta* has the figures and flowers independently worked into the saree with gold lace or silk yarn, but only on the *palu* or the border. Of late silver is being used either in addition to gold or by itself. A very gorgeous specimen is the tissue in which the entire weft is woven in gold or in silver. It carries exquisite designs.

Ganeshpur, in Bhandara district of Maharashtra, has almost half its working population engaged in producing tusser silk. Some of the varieties produced here are *motha choukada* (big squares), *lahan choukada* (small squares) and *gujja salai* (diagonal designs along with coloured lines at regular intervals, in green,

blue or orange). Other variations of these are made such as *teen-dhari choukada* (three square pattern) and the *rasta choukada* (squares with horizontal lines running through).

The use of wool being limited, wool weaving is more restricted. Wool seems to have some religious significance as tradition believes it to have been created directly by Brahma like the *kusha* grass used in worship. Amulets and charms are tied by woollen strings. In fact, black wool thread is commonly used to keep off evil spirits.

The most highly-prized wool is *pashmina*, made out of the wool from the under-belly of a Himalayan goat, which this animal grows when it lives 14,000 ft. or above sea level. The discarded wool after *pashmina* is sorted, is spun into what is called *sheli* and used for making floor coverings called *karcha*. The finest in wool is *shatush*, which makes a superfine fabric almost melting to the touch. Although it is extraordinarily light, it is amazingly warm.

Shawl is amongst one of our best wool products. It is unique in that while it offers the intimacy of a warm garment it leaves you free and unencumbered.

The most complex woven product in shawls is the *jamavar* (from *jania*, a robe, and *var*, the yardage). The *jamavar* is woven rather like a tapestry, as numerous *kanis* or shuttles loaded with rich-coloured threads are moved around even in a single weft line because of the constant almost fantastic change of colours which could be even as many as 50 in a single piece. It is said that something like 300 tints of vegetable dyes were used once in shawl weaving.

The most important job is the pattern drawing which is transferred to a graph by a highly skilled craftsman, rated higher than any weaver. The colouring is, however, done by the colourist with a black and white drawing before him, beginning at the bottom and working upwards, calling out each colour. A second weaver sits on the loom to accelerate the process and the chief weaver recites the weft repeat for him to follow. In some shawls the two sides have the same design but sometimes different colour schemes on either side, known as *do-rookha*.

The mango (*kairy*) design, also known in its westernised version as paisley, and probably the most popular, is seen in

countless varieties. The woven designs are often enhanced by embroidery and one finds the main motifs in the background woven but later connected by embroidery. The colour combinations are often fantastic, like magenta with pink, mauve with red, a shocking pink against a brilliant turquoise and so on.

The Himalayan region is a great shawl-producing area, especially Mandi, Kulu and Chamba in Himachal Pradesh. The shawls here are mostly woven in geometrical motifs grouped in straight horizontal lines, or vertical bands and stripes. Amongst designs is *bumba*, a kettle-shaped design with colours woven in between; *chatham*, a big cross tipped by tiny crosses at both ends; *khabatobi*, the typical central Asian key; *trishul*, the trident from four corners crossing in the centre; *yashin*, a staircase of bands with a square in the centre; the *chorten* and the *swastika*. *Kambroodar* is a special pyjama for which a patterned fabric is prepared, highly ornamented with coloured inlay designs of the shawl type to cover the legs from the knees down. The common designs in this region are : *gau*, the guardian knot enclosed in a coloured rectangle and *gargur* a reversed 'V'. Kinnaur also has these designs, some of which are seen in *dohru*, the women's garment.

In the Kulu valley wool-weaving is a major industry. *Pattu* in blue-black and white chequered squares is used by the Gad-dis (shepherds) of Brahmore in Chamba district as top covering. *Dohru* is the special cloth for women with beautiful colour combinations like a black surface with red temple spires going into the body, with a cross border of red, green and yellow. These borders have poetic names like *bulbul chasm* (nightingale eye) which is a dot with a dark shade around; *lahariya* (waves) is in zigzags; *cheedi* (birds) are small crosses in various colours; *gudi* (doll) is a stylised doll in a dancing pose; *chanjee* (tears) is in rectangular form. *Pattu* is a tough material made in natural colours for coats.

Amongst blankets the *gudmas* are a speciality, made of light and long-firbed loose flossy wool, fibres teased out and then brushed, woven in natural coloured stripes or in white, set off by a wide crimson at the two ends, and has a luxurious appearance.

In the two very remote Himalayan villages, Lahaul and Spiti, woollen weaving is done. Spiti, in particular, has fine weaves in different styles.

Unmixed goat-hair called *bakratha* is used for weaving floor coverings. Sometimes *bakratha* is mixed with *sheli*, the coarser *pashmina*, to form a different texture, woven in black and white.

Hand-painted Fabrics

DECORATING CLOTH WITH painting was one of the diverse ways of ornamentation of textiles besides complicated weaves, and took very definite forms in different regions and each attained its own distinction. Today we have only some of the remnants left of that distinguished heritage.

The exquisite sophistication and extraordinary beauty of these fabrics have the flavour of mosaics. Their likeness may be seen in the miniature paintings of the time.

Very antique and still struggling to survive are the painted temple cloths. They were probably successors to the illustrations on palm leaves on which the ancient texts were written. This art grew up naturally around places of pilgrimage where it could get patronage and purchasers. The madder and indigo processes were both used for this cloth—but no blocks. In the temple cloth of Nathdwara (Rajasthan) the tempera technique was developed evidently under the Vaishnava influence—a sect which strongly emphasised love and devotion as the main religious path.

Kalahasti in Andhra Pradesh is noted for its *kalamkari* cloth. Here vegetable dyes of deep rich shades are used with strong outlines in brown and black, all of which produce a bold and striking effect. Flowing water as from a river is preferred to clear it of starch as no washing material is used. It is given a myrobalan solution bath to make the black dye permanent. The outlines of the drawing are traced out in free-hand from memory or copied from an old piece, with charcoal sticks made of burnt tamarind twigs. The final lines are drawn with a sharply pointed bamboo stick, using a black

solution called *kasam*, a mixture of molasses and iron filings. The artist first fills in the background colour, then the various figures. Where red is the background, it is made a deeper shade by first applying alum to the cloth surface. Over this, figures also in red, are made more subdued, so the reds do not merge. The uncovered areas are bleached to take on other colours like blue, yellow, green.

The women figures are usually in yellow, gods in blue, demons in red and green. Some figures are left unpainted. Women wear heavy jewellery and clothes elaborately patterned. The cloth is also dipped in milk solution to prevent colours from running. The paintings are made up in panels, each depicting a story from the epics. The figures are so vivid, they seem to pulsate with life and stand out in tremendous dignity. It is amazing to see these lively forms take shape under the simple free movement of the artist's hand, from whose fingers they seem to just flow and coalesce into various characters. The forms are folk, more imaginative than realistic. Even though each painter seems circumscribed by tradition, within this the individual artist has sufficient scope for self-expression. Thus no two panels will be alike though the theme may be the same. Beneath each panel are written with dark *kasam* verses from the original source to transcribe the story and make it intelligible. As this was a family vocation, all members had to be well-versed in the epics to faithfully depict the chosen scenes. The special charm of these paintings comes from the superb swab of the brush. Frequent use is also made of beaded lines and polka dots.

The panels have decorative borders of line drawings each with a name. A complicated one is called cat's foot-steps, a petal shaped wheel is a cartswheel, a lotus within a circle of curved lines is called *kangora*.

These fabrics are used as hangings in temples both for decoration as also for religious instruction—in temple cars during procession, and behind the image for ornamentation. The story itself is, however, painted in compartments and rolls off in a linear manner, left to right. The background is mostly in dark red with lotus and flowers here and there. Women unusually have chins, men moustaches. The eyes are large and beautifully expressive.

The temple cloths of Chikkanaicanpetta near Kumbakonam in Tanjore district (Tamil Nadu) called *vasamalai*—that which is hung on the wall—resemble the Kalahasti *kalamkari*. Though technically painted the same way the figures are not folk but lean more towards the temple images in form. The colours used are bright in contrast to the deep dark ones of Kalahasti, as here chemical colours are used instead. There are also geometrical patterns at the borders, or even as background.

Both the centres now produce smaller panels with brief incidents from the ancient lore for supply to the public. Chikkanaicanpetta also makes curtains and bedspreads with only the geometrical designs which look most attractive.

Kuralam is a decorative cloth of a ritual nature to hang on either side of the chariot during the procession. The ornamentation is done with woollen cut work, some of it quite elaborate. These decorative pieces are usually given as votive offerings by devotees.

The word *kalamkari* is derived from *kalam* (pen) and *kari* (work). This kind of picturisation on cloth is done in other parts of India too, but the best known is in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Orissa and West Bengal. This is both religious as well as secular.

This tradition probably goes way back and was devised to give full scope to picturisation either to be a pleasant entertainment as a performing and declamatory art or as a substitute for it. It speaks of an age when there were no fixed performing centres like theatres, and shows could only be improvised. These wandering shows of painted textile pieces are carried around by itinerant showmen who are called in the ancient Sanskrit books *shobhanikas*, and in Jain and Buddhist literature, *mankhas*. The showmen still do the round of the villages carrying the scrolls, and as they are unrolled, the *shobhanik* sings and enacts the stories. The illustrations, being pleasing and full of dramatic interest when enhanced by ballads, make an exciting experience for the audience. The main burden of these themes is that goodness triumphs over evil and is ultimately rewarded. The brave man and the virtuous woman are the hero and the heroine who elate and inspire the audience and leave a little spark behind even after

the showmen have departed. Bengal and eastern Bihar have particular shows known as the Yama-pattaks in which the final moral is illustrated by showing Yama, the king of death and hell, as a finale to life.

In regions like Rajasthan the painted themes are built around local legends, especially heroic tales. Though some of these characters are now deified by devoted villagers and worshipped, these *pads*, as the scrolls are locally called, cannot be exactly classed as temple cloths. Here long tales are picturised on lengthy pieces of cloth with bright tints, red being the dominant colour. The best known are tales of Pabuji, a great local hero and of Dev Narain or Deviji as he is popularly called. On certain days which are sacred to them, people gather and these *pads* are hung up and worshipped.

To get the full ethos and sentiment behind them it is necessary to get an idea of the background and to know how the custom came to be evolved. The most popular is the story of Pabuji around which most scrolls have been painted and the theme sung. He is the great hero of the Rabaries, a very colourful desert tribe who live with their cattle. In the dry season when they took their animals to Malwa for pasture, the local Bundhalas would harass them. Once when the latter detained them it was Pabuji who valiantly fought and rescued them but lost his own life in the struggle. To cherish his heroic sacrifice gratefully they worship the *pad* illustrating this tragic tale which is sung through the countryside by the wandering singers of Rajasthan known as Bhopa and Bhopi, the man and his wife, he playing on a one-stringed instrument and she joining him in the ballad singing. The scrolls are painted by the Joshis attached to the temples. Now many small panels are painted in the same style, enclosing one or two important figures and their tales for local sales.

Amongst the religious *pads* the most famous is of Srinathji, as Krishna is called in the Nathdwara temple near Udaipur. It is usually made in Bhilwara and Shahpur in Rajasthan. In western India painting of deities on cloth is known as *pichwai*. It developed around the temple of Srinathji, as the centre gained sanctity because the image was originally brought from near Govardhan, one of Krishna's favourite haunts, by the devotees. This drew large numbers of pilgrims

and it grew into a big cultural centre where arts and crafts came to flourish.

At first the *pichwals* were only religious pictures made to be hung behind the image and were changed according to the season, whose mood the artist translated into picturisation and there were special ones for festive occasions. But as Srinathji's growing fame drew more devotees, He also came to be depicted in these pictures as a popular souvenir for the pilgrims.

The painting is done on a rough handspun and handwoven cloth after it is prepared by applying a thin layer of starch on it and mixing it with the pigments to soften their tones. The outline is worked in contrasting colours on the prepared background. Though the figure of Srinathji is recognisably the same, the composition differs from picture to picture. Bright vermilion is the usual background, sometimes deep blue. Srinathji's face is always a lovely luminous dark blue shade known as *shyam*. The other figures around—mainly of worshippers—have a bright blue background.

Some pictures also show cows, Krishna's unfailing companions, with their heads raised, their eyes towards Krishna and the ears pricked up for listening to Krishna's flute. Often Krishna is also shown playing with *gopis*, his girl playmates. The background too varies. In some it is a rural scene, in some there are tall structures; others show a temple with worshippers. The faces are most expressive. The love, compassion and thoughtfulness on Krishna's face, the devotion in the worshipper's eyes, the touching adoration the cows display, all make these pictures very unusual and deeply moving.

In Gujarat the main centre for *kalamkaris* is Ahmedabad where the *devi-ka parda* (curtain of the goddess) is painted. The outline is done in black with a block and the body filled in by a large figure of Durga riding triumphantly on a buffalo in the centre, with other epic scenes around in dark maroon and white reflections. Since they are largely used as canopies over the images they are called *chandaos*. Only the outline printing is done by men; the painting is the prerogative of the women of the Vaghri families. These cloths are prepared in the old madder process.

Orissa paintings on cloth called *patachitra*, or popularly

pat, are in a different style and technique. A thinly woven cotton cloth is used for the base. This is prepared by coating it with a paste of chalk, gum and tamarind seed, which gives the cloth a leathery surface as the base to paint on. For large size paintings three layers are gummed together. The outline is first drawn with a copper or bronze style and the painting done with earth and stone colours. The speed and the ease with which the *patidar* does it in sweeping strokes is most astonishing. The favourite colours are bright red and dark rich blue. Very popular is the figure of Lord Jagannath, the chief deity of Puri, in between Balaram and Subhadra. The background is bright red and the three figures which are always shown very squat, have dark faces with huge white eyes. Most scenes figure Krishna in various poses, dancing with two of his mates in complete abandon or Krishna teasing two *gopis* very provocatively.

In West Bengal painting on cloth is made in the form of scrolls. These *pat*-painters are known as *patidars*. On a very long old piece of cloth is laid a paste of black earth often mixed with cowdung. When dry, a coating of lac is given to stiffen it and fill up the porous surface. The outline for the figures is in lamp black on red after which the colours are filled in. They are of vegetable extraction and retain their brilliance over a long period. The figures are symbolic, bold and vigorous in style.

The scrolls serve both ritualistic as well as entertainment purpose. The *patidars* were once very popular figures for they constantly used to do the round of the villages. The scroll would be unwound like a reel before the audience as the *patidar* sang and recited each tale, visualised with related pictures. The scrolls sometimes covered also current happenings to make them topical, when the witty recital would be appropriately improvised.

From painting on cloth to batik is only a step. In fact, the *kalamkari* of the Coromandel coast is very similar to batik. Unlike in printing, the artist here can give a full shape to his idea of designs for in batik continuity of designs is maintained. The process is as follows. The surface of a finely woven fabric has melted bees wax and paraffin applied with a brush as a resist to block the parts which are not to be

dyed or meant to be in light shades. After this it is immersed in a cold dye bath which colours the background. Then the other parts are dyed, part by part, shutting off each time the ones not to be covered. Finally, the entire fabric is cleared of wax with boiling water and soap, the wax coating breaking up into a kind of irregular network of thin hairlike cracks through which the dye finds its way and involuntarily creates a design of its own, giving the fabric a fresh added quality and enhancing its attractiveness. Sometimes the fabric takes on the quality of stained glass.

The theory is that this craft went from the Coromandel coast to South-East Asia which in turn developed its own designs and form of painting and the world came to know of it from Indonesia. In fact *batik* is a Javanese word meaning wax painting. It later came back to India to be revived in Shantiniketan near Calcutta, and has now gone all over the country. As it has no traditional base, it is practised everywhere.

Tye and Dye

Bandhani, as the craft of tye and dye is called, is a complicated and sophisticated method of decorating cloth by just manipulating the dyes. Though the basic process is the same, not only each region, but even a village has its own special designs and colour schemes. *Bandhani* is an ancient art practised in a great many places. In Gujarat State, Jamnagar, Anjar and Bhuj are famous for it. The wide variety was evolved over the centuries because of its close links with the religious and social customs of the different people. The survival of this craft in the face of the powerful competition from machine printing of some of the *bandhani* designs, proves how deeply involved it still continues to be in the life of the people and retains its own inner dynamism.

The *bandhanis* of Jamnagar and Bhuj are unique. The craftsmen are Brahma Kshatriyas and Khatri Muslims. The cloth is first dipped in an indigo solution, folded twice lengthwise and then breadthwise to reduce the cloth to a quarter of its original size. The border and the *palhu* are marked out by a string dipped in ochre colour to separate them from the

main ground. By the careful use of a number of small dots and circles, it is possible to produce a kind of free rendering of any shape by tie-die. The veteran craftsmen still mark designs without the help of a hand block or even a coloured string just by free-hand. Increasingly, blocks dipped in red paste are being used to save time.

The entire process is one of tying, colouring and discharging of the colour and again repeating it starting with tying. Tying of the border is a special process known as *seve bandhavo*. In this, the border is tied according to the desired pattern by passing the thread from one end to the other in loose stitch so as to bring the entire portion together by pulling the thread from one end. The border portion is then covered up.

It is a fascinating experience to watch the dexterous manipulation done with such an ease but with infinite care, which, when completed, stretches before you yards of magnificent panorama. The admirable skill the *bandhani* workers display in the composition of the design with minute attention to details, the endless colour schemes that are wrought and transformed as though by some alchemy, compel ungrudging admiration.

The tying of the cloth into knots is done with a pointed nail or a special thimble. First the entire piece is dipped into the lightest colour to be used. Then the portions which are to retain this light shade are tied, after which the cloth is dipped again in a darker shade and those parts where this particular colour is to be retained are then tied. This process is thus continued until the deepest colour in that scheme is applied. The final process involves dyeing the cloth in that colour which is marked as the ground colour. This technique is done in Saurashtra and Kutch in Gujarat.

The *bandhani* designs are too many to be enumerated; the two important ones are: *bar bag* or *bavan bag*, which means twelve gardens or fiftytwo gardens. It is said that the entire *bandhani* tradition of Saurashtra is manifested in the *gharchola*, which means the woman's house-garment and these are the two varieties in which it is produced. *Gharchola* is an essential item in the girl's dowry. The rich ones have gold squares, others have plain squares running diagonally through

the saree. The entire body is covered with repeat designs in dots, and when the saree is opened out it looks like a number of gardens with complete beds of flowers. Each square encloses a motif, such as elephant, doll and flowers, *amba dal* and *choki dal* are simple square designs of dots, while the *mor-zad* design depicts the peacock; *basant bahar* (spring) is a riot of flowers being a symbol of spring. The traditional ones are usually found in red, green, yellow, blue and black, with all the combinations possible with these hues. Unusual compositions in pink and grey, violet and pink, peacock blue and black are also found in these *bandhanis*. Jamnagar has a satiny, stiff kind of glazed silk on which *bandhani* is done for blouses, vests and now for lamp-shades. New items in *bandhani* are household linens, ties, scarves, stoles, etc.

Rajasthan has a slightly different process. Here, after the portions which are to retain the base colour are tied, a number of colours are daubed on to different areas with a felt pad and these areas are then tied. The cloth is then washed to take away the extra colours. Men draw the designs, women do the tying. One sees an infinite variety of motifs: flowers, leaves, creepers, all sorts of animals, birds and human figures in dance poses, etc.

There are also varieties of geometrical patterns. The designs have special names like mountain design, kite design, doll design. Dyeing is also done in diagonal lines in matching or contrasting colours. These are used in turbans, sarees, and wraps. The dot is very significant and clusters of them are often used to build up an elaborate design. These dyers do the *do-rukha* dying—two different colours on either side. *Lahariya* has long lines or bands in various colours running diagonally through the entire piece of cloth or saree. Some *lahariya* pieces are known by their colours like *panchrangi* and *satrangi* (five-coloured and seven-coloured). Certain *bandhanis* are associated with certain seasons, festivals, rituals through special designs and colours. Scarves and kerchiefs, light and flossy are popular, for even a small knot of this at the throat or streak round the head or neck lights up the ensemble like a single jewel.

Madhya Pradesh has unusual and very attractive *bandhanis*. The best known centres are Tarapur, Umedpura and Jawad.

Some excellent work is done also at Bhairogarh, but on a smaller scale. The commonest patterns are chains of grains represented by dots on the body called the *damu* design with elaborate patterns on the borders and *pallu*. The *pallu* which is tucked inside, known as the *utaru pallu*, starts with a continuous repeat of semicircle motifs on a red background, and at the joining has triple leaf motif and bands of two dotted lines with small repeat motifs like a cock or a flower between lines. The *pallu* that goes over the head called *chadhan pallu* has two additional bands, one of which has dancing figures. The borders have zigzags. In *chunri*, a large scarf like a stole, the body has three designs one of which resembles the Maltese cross within two concentric circles. When the *chunri* body is red, the borders and *pallu* are indigo blue. In another *chunri* the background and the *pallu* are indigo blue while the centre is red. The design consists of a band inside which is a creeper and triple leaf motif which is repeated. In the last band are flower and bird motifs. On the borders zigzag motifs are preceded by minute slanted vertical lines. The startling contrasts in colours as well as unusual blends in harmony, deep lines with strange broken circles, suggestive outlines of various forms, all create a bewitching effect.

In Jawad is made the woman's wrap called *pillya* in red colour fully filled with leaves, flowers, dolls, elephants, arranged in the form of two big circles side by side. The same motifs are repeated on the border and *pallu*. Its special significance lies in its association with Holi, the spring festival, when it is given by a father to his daughter, and also when the daughter has a baby. A small but lively item made in *bandhani* in Jawad is a bunch of hair strings from cotton yarn called *lachchhi*. They are dyed in multicolour and lend a charming air to even lustreless hair.

In Madurai (South India) is a small Saurashtra community, settled there a long time ago, doing *bandhani* work. They normally use the solid South Indian red and black shades or dark blue or purple, all deep dyes. Their designs are depicted only through dots. In recent years they have been encouraged to widen their colour range, but this is done within the

solid shades, which makes these sarrees, known as *sungadi*, quite distinctive. Their adoption of the regional *kolam* patterns (decorations drawn on the floor) has added great variety and new dimension to the fabric.

Handprinting

HANDPRINTING IS ALMOST as universally practised in India as weaving. Each region, sometimes even a small centre, has evolved its own technique and way of presentation.

Printing may be roughly divided into the following techniques. In the direct process the block is directly pressed on the fabric and the desired impression made. In the resist-print process certain areas which are intended to be kept in the background colour are impregnated by applying resistant substance such as wax, clay, gum, resin with brush or block or hand, so that when the cloth is subsequently dyed the colour does not penetrate there. After the cloth has been dyed and the resist removed, printing is done on the portions of the cloth which retains the original colour.

For the mordant, madder or alizerin process, also called the discharge process, the cloth is prepared with various mordants so that when it is immersed in a dye bath, the reaction produces different colours on the cloth. Only the prepared portions take the dye. Various deep and brilliant shades are produced by variable use of the mordant. Alizerin is the colouring substance of madder. In the current discharge process, cloth is dyed in the desired background colour over which the pattern is printed. Then with certain chemicals remove the background colour from which the discharge parts of the design are to be further processed.

In the indigo process the cloth is washed in running water, and when dry, block printed with a paste which is a mixture of clay, gum and jaggery, used as resist. When ready, the

design has a broken effect like batik.

Rogan printing is done with a thick pigment made by mixing a yellow colour powder with castor oil and heated and applied to the fabric, thereby producing patterns which appear to be encrusted on the fabric. Sometimes gold powder is used in the pigment, and then this becomes tinsel printing.

The same inspiration that spurted the effulgence in miniatures, stone inlay and enamelling, also resulted in a rich outburst of trees, flowers and gardens in the printed patterns, and the shades deepened into richer tones. Often in the floral motifs, variations of a single hue are used in the same design to create a wonderful orchestration in harmony.

Many of these highly stylised classical designs are still in vogue, like the famous design of seven geese around a lotus, the latter represented by two concentric circles, a large outer one and a smaller inner one, with a four petal flower in the centre.

Rajasthan has very wide areas of handprinting. Barmer, in a sandy desert, has a very special print of dark shades of blue and red geometrical patterns all over, called *ajrakh*, printed on both the sides. This is used for turbans and shawls as dark colours are a protection against the fierce desert sunshine. The Barmer designs are bold, a popular one being the *chirkala buti*, the flaming red chilly, sharply emphasised by a deep blue-black outline of trees laden with flowers.

In Nathdwara, prints are available as sarees, wraps, large kerchiefs and quilt covers. Some designs are linked with Srinathji like the *pichwais* to cater to the religious sentiments of the pilgrims who buy them. A curious innovation is the use of sandalwood blocks for printing which leave a lingering perfume in the folds of the cloth.

Chittorgarh prints fabrics for women's skirts and wraps; also floor coverings called *jajams*. Of special interest are the wraps made for the wandering Gadodia Lohar (blacksmiths) women, with a bright red background and stylised chillis distributed all over. The *jajams* look very rich with their mosaic patterns in black and red or black and olive green.

Jaipur prints are in a class by themselves. As a result of their having been directly under the patronage of the rulers who used them themselves, they attained a finesse and sophisti-

cation of their own with stylised designs in delicate shades with a wider range as distinct from the rough fabrics of big bold patterns and deep colours preferred by the common people. Sanganer, a village near Jaipur, was once a prominent centre for such prints made with very complicated techniques which attained great fame. The Jaipur-Sanganer designs have stylised sunflowers, narcissus, roses and other flowers with luxuriant foliage. The religious prints are pieces of various sizes with the deities' names, and such objects as the tiny *damru* (drum) and the trident forming the cross border and the *dhatara* flowers distributed in rows.

Jaisalmer in the border desert of Rajasthan has a special style of resist print done only in winter and that too at night, as it needs very low temperature. The printing table is covered with sand sprinkled with water and covered by a wet cloth. A special block with raised surface and deep grooves is dipped in liquid wax and pressed over the cloth and when it comes into contact with the cool surface, it solidifies the wax. The whole material is next dyed in dark red colour and then dipped in hot water to melt the wax. The piece presents interesting tonal effects. The local ritual saree called *jarribhat* has an elaborate design built up of squares against an unusual background of black, red and pink.

Gujarat is also an intensive area for printing. Once it was famous for the heavily glazed or madder-dyed cloths known as *saudagiri* (trade) prints, with small flowers all over and borders of fluting lines or looped garlands. Ahmedabad and Baroda make large quantities of a wide range of *ludhas*, i.e. four-yard sarees, in the traditional large mango design on red or blue ground with heavily printed fluted lines on the *pallu*. There are several other centres like Jamnagar, Bhavnagar, Rajkot, Vasna, etc. each of which has its own rich tradition. Some have gone completely over to screen printing like Jetpur in Saurashtra, where 75 per cent of its population is engaged in this.

Kutch is one of the oldest places for perfect printing styles and techniques both on cotton and silk, specially famous for its prints on the local satin known as *gajji*, a fabulous product of melting softness. The colouring is black and red and the motifs peacocks, dancing figures, birds, animals, flowers, and

shrubs. The lines are clear and firm and the total effect sometimes is of embroidered work.

Farrukhabad in Uttar Pradesh is probably the biggest printing unit. It is a veritable treasure-house of traditional designs ranging from the classical *butis* (dots) to the famous Tree of Life. The *butis* are restful even though sparkling when tinted in solid colours. *Mango*, 'paisley' as it is known in the West, is made in a vast variety of shapes, and used in bold, medium and even fine designs. Its appeal can only be matched by the ubiquitous Tree of Life. This Tree is evidently of Indo-Persian origin influenced by Muslim architecture. The real Tree of Life in its original form is printed with blushing floral designs and bouquets in panels, resist dyed in glowing tones of crimson, rose, mat-brown, soft yellow, blue and green set against shapes or *mehrab* and arches with symmetrical trees, or *jali* designs, bordered with picturesque calligraphy and inlay work. The piece is so complex that a complete block consists of anything from 1,000 to 2,000 pieces.

The composition is first printed in harmonising colour and later elaborated with delicate details painted in with a brush, which shows how zealous those craftsmen are to perfect their handiwork. A variety of blossoms merge in this luxuriant tree. It is primarily a decorative piece unrelated to any symbol but has a flavour of growth, prosperity and immortality. The entire surface is filled with so many ingenious details that one may go over it as on an endless voyage of discovery. The spirited heraldic lions that guard the Tree speak of a Hindu tradition. Leaf-bedecked hunters with an apron of leaves, seem to hail from some primitive forest tribe. Originally the big pieces were used as wall hangings, later as prayer carpets, and now for household uses but mostly in smaller sizes.

Lucknow's speciality is the 'paisley'. Other designs seem to be influenced by the local *chikan* embroidery patterns.. Jehangirabad is distinguished for its bold lines and toned down colours, influenced by the *jamdani* and *jamever* weaves.

Tanda (Faizabad) known for its *jamdani* weave is also the centre of a very elaborate printing of graphic quality which gives the fabric an antique look, achieved by juxtaposing printing blocks. Two blocks with the same design are used, one perforated and stuffed with cotton to a saturation of colour,

while the other is plain. These are then printed and reprinted and juxtaposed in the process, developing a dark red colour for printing the motifs. The background shade however varies. Sometimes against an indigo background a dark blue is blended with the red and presents a most unusual combination. A very picturesque design is the *batoli chintz*, in which against a deep black indigo are placed red diamond-shaped dots of varying sizes that create startling effects.

Mathura, a noted place for pilgrimage, has crafts rooted in its environment, including printed figures of deities, names of popular deities printed in rows all over; the famous scenes from Krishna's life and such other popular episodes, in bold outlines, which pilgrims buy as mementoes.

Masulipatam, the ancient Mecca of the painted cloth which went all over the world, is still a name to conjure with. The *kalamkari* here is a mixture of printing and painting. The cloth is bleached, then soaked in a myrobalan solution mixed with fresh buffalo milk to prevent colours from running. The cloth is washed in running water before sunrise, then starched, and the wax process done with the *kalam* (pen) made of an iron loop attached to one end of a bamboo stick, while the loop is covered by a thick pad of human hair secured by a string. The wax is run down the points of the *kalam* by women by pressing the pad gently to cover all the required areas excluding those that have to be covered blue. The whole cloth is then dipped in the indigo dye, after which the wax is removed by boiling. The other colours are then applied at the appropriate places, with a small *kalam* made of a bamboo stick with a piece of felt to absorb excess dye. The piece is then washed in running water for two days and dried over water weeds which is supposed to give a brightness and polish. Actually the entire process takes several weeks.

Amongst *kalamkari* sarees *balabuta* has a white background, red and yellow borders, with flowers scattered over the body; the Multani sarree has a white background with red and black designs, wide *pallu* and borders. There is a great variety in borders: *muthyala pandiri*, literally a pandal studded with gems, has four leaves and hills; *gandabherunda*, a double bird design, is used on borders of ritual or temple canopy cloths. Other popular designs are parrots, swans, elephants, horses, camels.

Bombay city has become a very big printing centre with printers from Gujarat or Rajasthan mainly because of the rapid expansion of export of prints. Not being a local product, it has nothing indigenous or special in the way of styles or techniques.

The Malva region of Madhya Pradesh has long been renowned for its printed cottons. Different techniques like direct dyeing and printing, resist dyeing and printing, *rogan* printing and now screen printing are practised. The important centres are: Jawad, Bhairongarh, Tarapur, Umedpura and Sheopur.

The best known prints are the *nanana* pieces used by the local Bhil tribal women for skirts of dark indigo with a variety of designs. *Nanana* is in different types. *Chapakali* which is evidently a corruption of *champakali*, a ten petal flower, is at the top in all its golden glory, while the stem curves slightly at the base towards the right, with branches bearing orange or yellow foliage on both sides laden with red fruits. The *mirchi* (chilli) motif has the red and white stem, and the background tinged red with thick lines in white. The *buta* motif is a fruit-bearing tree with branches, leaves and flowers. Another traditional piece is the Bhil women's borderless *neela-ki-saree*, printed in wax resist process. Of several varieties *hodi*, *kari* and *imli* are the important designs. *Hodi* is a boat with a mast and sails in abstract and more suggestive than real. *Kari* is a wheel and looks somewhat like a flower in a circle, with its ten petals spreading outward. In the *imli* the leaves of the tamarind constitute the pattern. Only indigo is used as dye.

Another saree cloth is called *neela lugda* as indigo is its main background. It is printed only at Bhairongarh in the clay resist process. The ground colour is sometimes red or brinjal, i.e. purple, with some blue in it. It has a most decoratively printed *pallu* in intricate designs. The most popular is the *gamla* design supposed to be the wheat grain, arranged diagonally in parallel lines with each grain enclosed in a diamond shape of dots diagonally slanted. Where the ground colour is changed from the normal indigo, only the *lahariya* (waves) are depicted, where the ground is black, only the border is printed and nothing on the body. The borders carry the *janjira* design which is two dotted parallel rows with semi-circles or incomplete circle in between, so interlocked as to form a pattern.

These sarees have the most elaborate *pallus*: each starts with a black border, after which comes a white line followed by a green band delineated by two black lines anteriorly and posteriorly. On this is a continuous leaf and star repeat motif linked like a creeper, the leaves inclining towards the right. In the middle of the black band is an arch-like repeat of a tree motif with branches, leaves, flowers and birds. Prominent in this are two leaves and a star-shaped flower in yellow and a tree with leaves, flowers, fruits and birds. The stem and leaves are in green, fruits and birds in white with black dots inside. After the blue band the earlier order is repeated except that now it is in reverse order. Then comes a complicated pattern called *gabla* made up of four thick black lines, the intervening space being coloured orange, on which are printed convex and concave geometric motifs in repeat, and white dots on the black lines. Thus it goes on into the second complex called *banwala gabla*, a pattern which has two new innovations, five petal flowers instead of the star-shaped, and a cluster of birds. The rest is a repeat of the earlier patterns.

There are other fabrics used by men and women each of which has a special design and colour scheme. *Angochha* is a man's shoulder garment which dangles down or acts as a turban, which has a certain status in society. On its body are the wavy conical zigzag bands running parallel to one another, and detached red circles all over the bands. Rows of black squares linked with one another at the corners of the squares, with four such squares forming another square in between them, makes another pattern, in which one is kept plain, the others marked with nine dots each, are arranged in three rows. The square flower is a broad oblique cross hatching, with eight-petal flowers in each square formed by the intersections.

Every intersection has a four-petal flower. The grain design shows dots of that shape all over the body. The border consists of parallel lines of dots running in a row with a four-petal flower motif between the lines. A little distance away there is a creeper and a combination of a number of half moon motifs which go to make a kind of a leaf. The same is repeated twice, and in the space between the two there are other designs, a common one being a twig with leaf buds arranged in an ellip-

tical form. The ground work is pinkish white, on which the motifs are impressed in rust brown.

Abotiya is a large scarf commonly known as *odni*. On this there is the *batana* motif which is a star pattern and *chauphooli*, a four-petal flower. There is another rather uncommon one in which a six-petal flower alternates with an eight-petal one. One peculiar design on it is the presentation of strange disconnected motifs on the *pallu* called *buta*. These being very 'folk' are essentially abstract but definitely indicate warfare with a semblance of battle weapons and combats with wild animals, and suggestions of fierce claws and piercing stings and the like. It is presumed that this was done to stimulate certain contrary sensations which may prove pleasurable.

The large floor covering *jajam*, has the most impressive designs. The background is pinkish white and the printing in alizarine red. The overall design is constituted by groups of patterns separated from one another by black or dark red lines along the length and breadth of the piece.

A noted design on the *jajam* is *neempatti*, a magnificent 24-petal flower, bounded by four *neem* leaves linked together by two four-petal and two six-petal flowers arranged alternately. The border has a flower and leaf motif running like a creeper.

Some *jajams* have geometrical octagonal motifs arranged in squares to form a modified check pattern. Others are small floral and leaf motifs placed around a central circle in the form of a square. *Surajmukhi*—a large sunflower—is printed all over and creates a luxuriant effect. The borders are in leaf and flower. Bhairogarh is famous for quilts (*razais*) which are more intimate and more universally used. *Mungfali* (peanut) is a common pattern on quilts, printed on a red ground in conical file-shaped black motifs. These form checks inside each of which there is a floral motif. The *kalaswali chakra* design has two semi-circles facing each other at two ends, linked together by coils and crests to form a many-petal flower, with a twin leaf and bud on either side. The *firma chakra* design is a wheel, formed of three concentric circles within an inner circle in which a twelve-petal flower. Ten buds of different sizes radiate from the edge of the outer circle, bounded in all sides by flower and leaf motifs.

Special designs are made on bed spreads. One is the *kangoora (jali)* in which leaf motifs of uniform size are printed with the intervening space covered with elliptical punch marks arranged in the form of an hour-glass, bounded by zigzag vertical lines. The key stamp design has a circle with a wavy outer line and a cross inside printed only on any two diagonally opposite ends. *Odnis* are big scarves used by women on which multicoloured patterns are obtained by clever dying.

Sujjanshahi which means belonging to the regal bridegroom is a design in which dyeing is done by folding the cloth in a way as to obtain stout stripes arranged diagonally or in check patterns. *Samundarlahar*, which means sea wave, is obtained by dyeing wavy bands. *Dhanushaban*, i.e. arrow from the bow, has horizontal bands of different colours which look as though they had been shot like arrows from the bow. In *patang* (butterfly) the colours used are in regular patches to make them resemble the galaxy of hues in a beautiful butterfly. Some of the most exciting colour effects can be seen in turbans.

In Bihar printing is done on cotton, wool and silk. Places like Bhagalpur, Bihar-Sharif, Darbhanga, Saran, Patna are well known for this craft. Gaya being a famous place of pilgrimage has the religious textiles with names or the feet of deities printed all over in ochre or red.

In the *chunris* of Bihar are seen a whole panorama of designs in folk style: springs swirling round a peacock or parrot, the conch, the mango with the end of its cone curved inwards, small panels with a stylised animal in each or an animal surrounded by motifs, doll alternating with elephant; fish alternating with birds; large panels with traditional figures of deities, lotus in varied shapes.

There is a small printing sector in North Bihar at Sursand where only mica printing is done. Bright colours are used with large dots and stars strewn all over to form designs.

The Calcutta region has an old tradition in printing, particularly in Sirumpur, which specialises in large running designs somewhat in the *jamdani* style.

Amritsar in Punjab, once produced hand-blocked kerchiefs, wraps, and stoles usually in big bold floral and geometrical patterns that had some flavour of the local *phulkari* embroidery. But

now though the place does hum with this industry, it is completely gone over to screen-printing.

The Vidarbha area of the Maharashtra State has concentration of printing. Saoner in Nagpur region, Wani in Yeotmal district, Amraoti and Chanda are the chief centres. Floor coverings, bed rolls, quilts, and wraps are the main products done only in alizarin black and red. Though some designs have a semblance of Uttar Pradesh products, a strong local flavour of the heavy earthiness typical of Maharashtra predominates. Large floral designs and animals are done in the traditional folk style.

Among the block-printing centres in the South, the Pondicherry area is noted. It still uses mordant applied with a block or brush. For colouring, pieces of felt are kept in vats containing colours and the design block is pressed on them to take up the colour, and then impressions are made by them on the cloth. Final touching up is done by brush.

4

Embroidery

INDIAN EMBROIDERY HAS perhaps few equals in richness and the wide range of varieties, for each region has its own special stitch and style.

Punjab

The *phulkari* of Punjab and Haryana has a flowery surface, in fact, *phuikari* means flowering. But the stitch itself is the simple darning done from the back, either by counting the threads or with the help of a thread line with unusual care, for a single miss can throw out the whole pattern. They are dispersed over the whole surface. In the *bagh phulkari*—*bagh* means garden—the entire fabric is ornamented by a connected pattern with skilful manipulation of the darning stitch, and numerous varieties of intricate designs contrived through horizontal, vertical and diagonal stitches, as also tonal variations in colours. There are several kinds of *baghs* like *shalimar bagh*, *chand bagh*, *dunya bagh*, as also *satranga* (seven coloured), *panchranga* (five coloured) and so on—each splendid in its own way.

The third kind is the *chope* where the edges are embroidered, with stylised motifs of flowers, fruits, and birds along with the geometrical ones.

The stitching is done with silk thread, though occasionally cotton threads in white and green are introduced—sometimes even woollen. A peculiarity of this is that the fabric itself is used geometrically as an inner decoration by observing absolute accuracy in thread counting. In *bagh* work the stitch is so refined that the embroidery becomes the fabric itself.

As *phulkari* was part of a girl's trousseau, and also worn at a particular wedding ceremony, she had to work on it from very early age. In fact her proficiency in this seems to have added to her eligibility as a bride.

Madder brown, and rust red indigo are the usual background colours. The stitches are mainly in golden yellow or white or green. A few bright colours are introduced in the borders. In parts of Punjab highly decorative quilts called *gudris* are made from pieces of old cloth as warm wraps. The best work in *phulkari* is found in Gurgaon, Karnal, Hissar, Rohtak, and around Delhi.

Gujarat

Of the gorgeous Gujarat embroidery the best known is the *heer* or *kathi* named after the Kathi nomads who drew for themes on their own tales of romance and heroism, rendering them into vivid pictures; as also from religious subject, particularly Ganesh who is embroidered into small-size squares called *sthanapanas* used as shrines for worship, especially at a marriage. Certain animals associated with their rituals like the elephant, the tiger, the monkey as also the cobra, are used as motifs.

Heer embroidery is very rich, deriving its name from the flossy silk used in it and known as *heer*. Embossed designs form an all-over design. The patterns run in triangles, each parallel to the weft and yield unusual textures with a clever illusion of light and shadow without changing the colour of the thread. The main colours are madder red emphasised by touches of black and off white and spots of indigo, ivory, yellow and green. A little mirror is inserted in coloured stitch to emphasise a design. A special elongated drawn stitch called *adiya fatiya* endows the pattern with a vibratory quality, so that glittering objects do not need to be used for high ornamentation.

In Gujarat, embroidery is used for decoration of the entire house almost like a ritual. The embroidered panel over the doorway is a sign of good omen, called *toran*, from which are suspended small flaps with motifs, and from corners hang embroidered pieces, called *pachitattis*, all to welcome the guests graciously and elegantly. Square embroidered pieces called *chaklas* cover the furniture while equally decorative rectangular

pieces called *chandrawas* hang on the walls. The most imposing wall hanging is *bhitiya*, a combination of three or five diamond-shaped embroidered pieces.

In more elaborate embroideries a variety of effects are produced like gardens in bloom, waterfall, rain cascading down and so on. Romantic tales and episodes from epics are illustrated forcefully through vigorous panels.

There are also vivid and powerful compositions reflecting the everyday life. They have a striking lively air, intense movement, everything in action, like the horses galloping, the lions springing, the dog leaping and the deer making fluttering movements. Composite animals figure in the motif like the *gajasinha*—half elephant, half lion, *minavaji*—half fish, half elephant, *kinnara*—half man, half horse. Then there is the symbolic golden swan with two heads, one looking forward, the other backward. One of the most powerful figures is of the *kesari sinha*, king among the 32 kinds of *sinhas* (lions), described as possessing long hair, hump like that of a sheep, body of a horse, with a stately walk and a long tail; the sun and the moon, the former in his chariot, and the moon symbolised by a hare.

Themes like marriage scenes are full of colourful details and display forceful imagination and dexterity in execution showing huge processions of cavalry elephants, chariots, palanquins, trumpeteers, numerous escorts with the bridal couple, the marriage *pandal* and even some rituals being performed.

The borders have a character of their own and are usually composed of chequers, chevrons and lozenges. These are sometimes interspersed with flowers, birds and discs, the symbol of the sun.

The *abhala*, a mirror inset embroidery, is today the best known and most universally used. In it, designs are composed by fixing small mirrors to the material with closely worked silken threads. The colours are rich; however, it is the mixing of colours that is interesting; rust for instance mingles with deep red, light green with Indian pink. They serve to accentuate the reflective nature of the mirror. Generally, the motifs are flowers and creepers and often the mirrors are worked together to form a glittering pattern. Currently this work is done on a dark background to bring the mirror into greater relief to

make it popular as table linen. Especially at a candle light dinner, the candles and the different colours are reflected through the mirrors and create a fairyland air.

In Saurashtra, embroidery known as *mahajan* gets fine effects with a satiny shine with special manipulation of the satin and herring bone stitches to which is added an interplay of glowing red and various shades of violet. The borders may be triangular crested with peacock's feet-print, followed by lozenges and then a double series of mirrors.

The embroidery of Bhavnagar in the Saurashtra area of Gujarat is characterised by its tiny white chain stitches with bold floral designs. It is noted for its precision of workmanship and miniature character. The flow in the overall pattern is conveyed through the tautness of lines with the chain stitch, and a running stitch around the figures to emphasise their movements. In this style are made geometrical designs as also horse riders, a lady borne along in a palanquin, a parrot, the sunflower and the zigzag for waves or lightening.

The embroidery of Kutch has a splendour that puts it on a par with jewellery, called *aribharat*, after *ari*, a hook plied from the top, fed by thread from below with the material spread out on a frame. It is also popularly known as *mochi* (cobbler) stitch, as originally cobblers used it to do embroidery on leather and later it was transferred on to fabrics. This is done on silk, or the locally made satin called *gajji* and on a silky satin fabric, *atlash*. On garments, the most common are *bootis* (polka dots) rounding off with a big sized one known as the *Nadir Shah booti*. Sometimes parrots or *bulbuls* are seen perching on twigs. The popular figures are the doll or damsel, and flower-shaped jewellery items.

On a larger surface are worked highly stylised flowering bushes, dancing peacocks and human figures. The embroidered surface suggests such a depth as if it were an engraving rather than a stitchery.

The *kanbi bharat* is done with cotton thread with preference for yellow and saffron, and at times with white, purple and green. Their special items are embroidered decor for covering the back of bullocks, the very gay tasselled covers for the horns, adornments for the forehead, face and the muzzle. During festivals and marriages, specially gorgeous ones are

made. Their favourite motifs are sunflowers and the golden scented cactus flower, *kepada*, mango shoots and creepers.

The Rabaris do quite impressive work against a dark *khadi* background, usually deep maroon with any subtle shade that would show off the needle work to advantage. A special feature is the combination of mirrors with colourful threads which renders this typical peasant work most attractive. In the Banni area bordering Sind, the Lohanas do very fine work on dark maroon *khadi* silk with silk thread thickly piled in deep orange, golden yellow, dark red and bright blue. Prominent motifs are octagonal medallions with *bootis* inset with mirrors. In striking contrast the Jats and Mutuwas use fine handspun cotton and good quality silk for personal garments. The main colours are red, white, golden yellow, sometimes blue and black. Geometrical patterns and *bootis* are commonly used interspersed with birds, animals and dolls. Tiny mirrors are inserted and exquisite jewellery patterns worked out.

Saurashtra and Kutch are also noted for their bead-work. Basically the designs in bead-work seem to lean heavily on the needle work as well as *bandhani* patterns. On a white background material, uniform sized beads are used to so work out the motifs and designs as to compress and elongate them, and it seems as though each is enmeshed in a flow of gay multicoloured net. Other articles are also made out with beads, like decorations for domestic animals, for cradles, decorative coverlets and hangings, door pelmets, purses, little perches that sit on the head to balance water pots, fans, and a wide variety of ornamental pieces for the house.

The small community of Garasia women in Kutch do excellent type of needlework called *soopbharat*. They work very painstakingly for they do not do any outdoor work, so can concentrate better on needlework. They draw but one which involves doing the stitches on the base by counting every single thread, and keeping that as base do the stitches by counting every single thread, which makes the work exceptionally neat.

Applique is an integral part of the decorative needlework of Gujarat for it goes hand in hand with embroidery. Applique in Gujarat is quite distinctive and different from the applique of Bihar or Orissa. Here it is based on patchwork in which

pieces of coloured and patterned fabric is finely cut in different sizes, shapes and colours to form the motifs, and stitched together on a plain background to form a composite piece, but only on items of household use and not on personal items. They are often in brilliant colours like with peacock in their full plumage, or gay looking birds like parakeets; horse with a warrior in resplendent armour and caparisoned elephants with a howdah.

Rajasthan

Rajasthan has a wealth of varied embroideries. The most noted is the *pichhwai*, a rich embroidered cloth which grew up around the temple of Srinathji, as Krishna is known here, and was fostered by it. It depicts Srinathji with his dark blue face surrounded by his playmates and cows under trees in full bloom. While the outline is in black the surface is in colourful embroidery. Sometimes gold thread is also used to heighten the decorativeness.

*Pichhwa*s are also made in applique using different materials. Here red cotton background is usually used, a white cord for the outlines and cream, green yellow and black in the needlework.

The Jat women of Sikar and Jhunjhunu do lively work on their cotton skirt border showing horses, camels, lions, peacocks, simple tree forms, all juxtaposed together to form definite patterns.

In Bikaner, embroidery is done by Jat women on their thick red wraps by counting the threads and it resembles a *bandhani*. The pattern is built up closely following the warp and weft threads and because of a double running stitch, it gets the same effect on both sides. The Meos of Alwar produce rich designs in chain stitch using contrasting colours.

In Jaisalmer the women do very beautiful embroidery with almost every kind of stitch and a clever use of mirrors. They decorate everything they have on themselves and around them. Their applique is equally ornamental, specially a spread called *ralli* made by stitching different coloured cloth pieces into a decorative pattern.

A feature of this region is the elaboration of silk designs with bold designs and bright colour on leather, because of its wide use there. Shoes in this style are a speciality. But in the

more urban areas, simple leaves and flowers flow over the surface of the leather and a subtle gold thread replaces the bright shades of the rural areas to emphasise certain facts of a design—the decorations on the horse and camel saddles done with a hook have a rare splendour.

Bengal

Bengal is noted for its *kantha* embroidery. The word *kantha* means patched cloth. It is made of discarded sarees or dhotis piled up according to the required size and thickness, depending on the desired type of *kantha*. The pieces are sewn together using the darning stitch in white thread, to cover the entire surface. The threads are drawn so close across the surface in one direction that the edges of the several pieces are practically imperceptible, and they give a wavy rippled look to the surface. Coloured threads for embroidering the designs are taken from the coloured borders of saris with which rich patterns are worked out.

The embroiderer has always prided herself on the originality of her innovations, employing her skill in executing fresh forms and figures, scrupulously avoiding imitating others.

The striking feature of *kantha* is the pleasing appearance achieved through a harmonious composition of a host of heterogeneous objects like the comb, mirror, candelabrum, nut-cracker, umbrella, pitcher and other items of everyday use. The shapes of the objects do not conform to reality but reflect rather the embroiderer's own imaginative notion of them. Thus even familiar things take on an air of unusualness, and the mundane of a new romance, a tribute to their artistic sensitivity to form and colour.

The designs may be roughly divided into illustrations of epic and folk stories, ritualistic motifs, luxuriant vegetation of woods with animals roaming and deer running, peacocks dancing, houses with balconies full of people, temples with friezes; or the articles of daily use like caskets, baskets, nut-crackers, *hukkas*, beds; or the personal items like costumes and jewellery, vehicles like chariots, palanquins, elephants, with howdahs and horses with saddles. There are also verses and rhymes, some philosophical, others colloquial. Figures of

deities are rarely done in *kantha*, they seem to be mostly represented by their *vahanas* (vehicles), which have a significance of their own. We thus see Nandi, the bull, peacock, swan, elephant, and lion, cat, mouse, *garuda*, the eagle, owl, etc.

The real *kantha* embroidery is *dorookha* (double faced), a style in which the stitches are so skilfully made that the details of each design appear identical on either side. As the sarees used in Bengal are mostly white, the basic material is generally in that shade, and to break the monotony of this, open work is introduced by drawing out threads or pulled stitches and pierced holes. The result is a cut-ornamentation held together by bars.

Applique is far less in evidence. It is in two styles, the bigger and bolder patterns done on large objects like tents, canopies, banners, bedspreads, hangings, etc.; and the small patterns worked on items of personal use as also in theatricals. It is done by stitching ribbon-thin pieces of bright cloth, particularly red on white background, done meticulously so that the stitches do not show to mar the overall effect of the work.

Lotus usually fills the centre of a piece and an overall lotus pattern is built up by alternating red and black petals, each lotus being separated by a circular surrounding and a rippling movement created by the running stitches moving up and outwards. A tantric motif like *vajra* (the thunderbolt) is found at times stuck in the heart of a lotus; the swastik and along with it the spiral, the whirl, the vortex form a ritualistic ensemble of motifs.

Different kinds of *kanthas* are made for different purposes. The most spectacular, the *sujani*, generally rectangular in shape, is used as spread on ceremonial occasions. The central lotus is often flanked or surrounded by *kalgas*, some of them in stylised tree forms. The *sujani* hums with activity, for the scenes always depict life on the move—men riding, women dancing, animals prancing, birds pecking at fruits, bees, dipping into flowers and processions moving. Sometimes, scenes from epics or folktales are depicted. The *sujani* borders are in geometrical patterns or ornamental. The corners have large floral or *kalka* or *kadamba* tree designs. The *kalka* or *kalga* is cone-shaped like the pine cone.



Lep kantha is a warm coverlet in which the entire surface has a wavy rippled appearance over which simple embroidery in geometrical patterns with coloured threads is made.

Bayton kantha is also a wrap for tying up books and valuables, elaborate in designs, and colourful, the shades used being red, indigo blue, yellow and olive green. The lotus in the centre is often a gorgeous blossom with a hundred petals. Some have a tree candelabra with the sun or a lamp hanging as the fruit, loaded with delicate flowers and birds perched there. Some also show divinities with their *vahanas* (vehicles). Special designs are worked on the *bayton* used for books, like the swan to represent Saraswati. The oldest design on the *bayton kantha* is the *mandala*, to symbolise the basic unity of all manifestations of life.

The *oosar kantha* is a picturesque pillow cover, with a decorative border of foliage. Sometimes a deity like Durga or Krishna may also be shown.

The *durfani kantha* is a wallet with a lotus in the centre and an embroidered border. Three of the corners are folded inwards for the edges to be sewn up to turn into a kind of an envelope-shaped wallet. *Pipal* leaves, serpents, or other objects from nature are embroidered on it.

The *arshilata kantha* is a cover for the mirror, comb and such toilet articles. The motifs are the zigzags showing running water associated with fertility rites as also the trident, scrolls, spirals and inverted triangles.

The *runal kantha* is the smallest, just a kerchief. It has the lotus in the centre around which are arranged plants, animals and the usual motifs and a well ornamented border. Though every *kantha* is functional and founded on thrift, it is imbued with so much romance, sentiment and philosophy that it transcends the orbit of a mere craft as does a painting or sculpture.

Bihar

The *kashida* of Bihar is done by the women on their personal or children's garments such as baby caps, or on articles like the pillow covers or the bolster. The chain stitch which they use is popularly called *jhinkana*, because of the slight sound

made by the needle when it is pulled through the cloth. As the items are intimate, the women are moved to give free scope to their inmost emotions, and for designs draw freely on the objects around and on their treasured possessions like jewellery.

The *Bharat* style is akin to the *Bagh* of Punjab, the stitch following the warp and the weft, creating a parallel to the weave of squares, rectangles, wavy lines, diamonds or simple flower motifs. The background is a red surface on which the white stitches along with a gentle yellow and a type of bottle green look stunning. Sometimes on a white surface, black and steel blue create a most unusual colour scheme.

Another type done on blouses combines chain stitch with applique, woven tapes and laces. These demonstrate the inventiveness and originality of the women, for hardly are two blouses or two caps alike. Reflected in their work is nature or the sights around like green parrots flying, a tree with a wealth of flowers in bloom, fishes swimming, an elephant with a rider and so on.

The quilts of Bihar, known as *sujnis*, are old sarees sewn together with tiny running stitches in white threads drawn from the fabrics. The central motifs are done in coloured thread extracted from the borders of old sarees. The *sujni* designs are bold and pronounced like kids flying kites, a palanquin with a gaily adorned bride, swans sailing, birds pecking at fruits, all in the abstract folk style.

The *sujni* is generally used as a wrap for musical instruments, books, and valuables. The status that they once held, which explains their being so decorative, is best judged by their appearance in Mughal miniatures.

The applique work of Bihar is noted. One is done for personal use the other for commercial purpose. The designs for personal use are either abstract folk or highly stylised. They show more imagination and greater delicacy in handling. Two techniques are used, the *khatwa*, more complicated, where a complete piece of cloth is cut into different patterns and the entire composition attached. In the other, strips are cut out in the shape of motifs and stitched on to a single piece of cloth to make a composition. Strips are also used to make running borders. The layout and execution show an instinc-

tive awareness of both the decorative forms as well as the texture. A mixture of different textures also results in unusual and attractive effects.

The applique for commercial purpose is mostly confined to canopies, tents, and large walled enclosures and *kanats*. The traditional designs have trees, flowers, animals or birds, done in the *khatwa* style. The background colour is usually dark red or orange and the motifs worked in white with some parts picked up in blue.

Orissa

The famous applique of Puri in Orissa is used in the larger items like umbrellas, canopies, large tents. But while in Bihar these were a legacy of the Mughal regime, here it was evolved around the famous Puri temple and its many festivals with its vast crowds. Here small patterns are cut out and sewed on a plain background to form large designs. Smaller versions of these items are being adapted to the articles of the modern use like garden umbrellas, lamp shades, canopies for parties and large tents for public gatherings. Normally the background is white while the applique is done in bright red.

Tamil Nadu

A unique type of applique is done in Tanjore (Tamil Nadu). It is for decorating temples with hangings, smaller sizes being especially used in temple chariot processions. Some are flat pieces hung behind the image as a back drop, others long and tubular hung beside the image, like colourful pillars. The motifs are religious, like the images of Durga, Ganesh, Kartikeya, Shiva-Parvati and so on. To brighten the effect, the pieces of felt in muted colours are used for appliquing along with strong dark shades with superb effect.

Karnataka

The *kasuti* of Karnataka is essentially designed for the saree and the blouse which seem to show up its special charm.

There are structural patterns like the beautifully carved temple car side by side with a baby's cradle.

Kasuti embroidery has some special stitches. The *gavanti* is a double running stitch and the *murgi*, the zigzag done within the darning stitch. In both, the two sides of the embroidery are identical. The *negi*, the ordinary running stitch, is used mainly in large designs varied to get the overall effect of a woven design with extra weft threads. *Menthi* is a cross stitch worked with the stitches close together by the counting of two warp and two weft threads largely used in structural designs.

The designs are so laid out in a saree that the larger ones are closer to the *pallu*, thinning out as they move away. They include the very elaborate platform for the *tulsi* plant, the majestic temple chariot, the elephant with howdah, the palanquin with the bride and Nandi, the sacred bull. They are followed by smaller ones of a variety of animals and birds, elaborate floral designs and geometrical patterns.

Coorg, though now a part of Karnataka, is a distinct cultural unit and amongst its art expressions includes its own style of embroidery. It is a combination of the cross stitch and the line or double-running stitch. The main design is done in a cross stitch, and the spurs and the flourishes are worked in the latter stitch and makes the design very elegant.

Uttar Pradesh

The *chikan* embroidery of Lucknow is a very delicate and subtle stitch done in white thread on white and seems patterned on lace. The aim is to make the little white stitches with their own excellence provide the ornamentation, and eliminate colour. The charm of these stitches lies in their miniature size and an unbelievable evenness. The design *bakhia* is important in which inverted satin forms are worked on the right side with minute stitches, while the thread accumulates on the wrong side giving an opaque quality to the pattern. Here we see the real *chikan* work, shadow work as it is called, for the stitches that cover the back of the cloth in the herring bone style, produce the shadow effect on the

surface. Simultaneously are also produced various floral effects made by minute strokes that resemble those of the back stitch.

A *bakhia*-like effect is also produced by a minute applique work called *katao*, in which the same fabric as the background material is used for appliquing small cut out pieces.

Kashmir

All the facets of Kashmir's incomparable beauty of landscape and environment seem to be reflected in Kashmir's superb needlework. The favourite motifs are the cypress, the cone, the almond, the *chinar* leaf and the lotus. Even though Kashmiri embroidery looks gorgeous, the stitches are simple, done with a single thread, giving the needlework a flat formalised appearance. Embroidery here is known as *kasida* which is worked in several different forms. *Zalakdozi* is chain stitch done with a hook in long flowing designs on any textile in use from the refined shawls to the coarsest floor coverings. *Suzni* on the other hand is done only on superior material. *Vata chikan* is the button-hole stitch used only in thick fillings seen in landscapes, garden and hunting scenes. The *dorookha* is double-sided work, in which there is no right and wrong side. Sometimes *dorookha* is done in two colours, one colour on one side and the other colour on the other side.

A delicate filling in stitches in multicoloured threads is done to enhance the fine lay-out of the *jamevar* or *kani* shawl. A lacy trellis pattern; *jali* work as it is called, is another style which imparts to the fabric an entrancing look.

A special kind of needlework known as *crewel*, a chain stitch, is done on a carpet called *namda* made by pressing felt. Rows of chain stitches form solid patterns usually rotating from centre. *Crewel* work is now done on thick material popularly used for furnishings, and usually carry flowing floral and creeper designs. On the thick background the hook-work can create embossed effect with added richness to the textile. *Gabba* is another floor covering on which applique is done with a circular star in the centre named as the moon. Embroidery is also done on the *gabba* but with a hook. Both

these floor coverings carry big and bold designs in floral and geometrical patterns. They also serve as wall decorations. Small sizes for children's rooms have animals and birds, or nursery rhymes or scenes from popular children's stories on them.

Manipur

The Meities, the indigenous inhabitants of Manipur, have traditional designs in their embroidery whose origin is traced back to intriguing legends. The best known is the work done on the border of the *phaneyk*—a *lungi* (*sarong*) worn by the women. The pattern is first drawn, then worked with untwisted silken thread in a dark but matching shade, usually red, chocolate or plum. The stitching is so finely chiselled and even, that it seems part of the weave itself. In a way this very subdued surface serves to highlight the charm of the embroidery. A very simple pattern is *tindogbi* done in satin stitch. It is said to have been inspired by the sight of a caterpillar sitting on a castor leaf and eating it. An elaborate design called *akoybi* is circular, one circle joining the other, with each circle being further broken into patterns.

There is a romantic tale tracing it back to the legendary snake Pakhamba who was killed by the husband of a goddess and who later, in remorse, tried to atone for it by copying its scaly skin patterns to perpetuate them in the form of a textile design. Another interpretation is that it is the circular swirls of the water. The central motif is a dot for a bee hovering over lotus buds. Four petals are seen on the side of the dot. Some half-open circular designs make a pattern to indicate the fishing hook design. The white patterns between each circle at the top and bottom is the bow design while the two borders to the top and bottom carry the parrot design. This brief description, however, barely gives an idea of the real complexity of the *akoybi*.

Another well-known design is called *hijay*—a boat, said to represent the natural contours of a piece of wood revealed after it is cut to scoop out a boat. *Hijay* is shown to advantage by a careful use of white and black to accentuate the running lines and circular movements. What is unexpected

is the presence of a spot of pink quite pronouncedly in the total colour scheme.

A delicate applique of white on white found only in turbans is very attractive. Then there is the mirror-work embroidery but done only on the *ras* dance costume. The well-known black shawl, popularly called the *Angamin Naga* shawl but whose real name is *sami lami phee*, the literal meaning being the wild animal warrior cloth, depicts animals. One time it used to be bestowed on distinguished warriors by the rulers for their successful exploits and was therefore highly coveted. The background is always black, divided into horizontal panels by woven bands of colours. Embroidered within are an array of animals and conventional motifs in bright green, red, yellow and white.

Himachal Pradesh

The Chamba embroidery of Himachal Pradesh, is one of the liveliest. The facial expressions of its figures are vividly alive and the bodies full of movement. It is also most picturesque for obviously this was influenced by the Chamba Pahari school of painting.

Chamba embroidery is best known through its gay *rumals*, the large kerchiefs. These had a distinct entity and personality, though they started no doubt as scarves, tied either round the neck or round the head but later became tokens of greetings and goodwill, exchanged on festive occasions and also used for wrapping up wedding gifts.

The *rumal* is a cream-coloured silk piece. The flowing lines of the figures, the balance and harmony between the different pieces that make up the picture as between the subtle hues drawn from the stones, all give one the feeling that each is a composition of a master artist as it were. The motifs of trees and flowers are stylised and the shades used are ochre, yellow and dark green in lively muted shades. The finest *rumals* have a definite atmosphere as in a Radha-Krishna scene where the mood of the trees, flow of the water, light clouds hanging in clusters, a shy moon half peeping out, combine to spell out the surging emotions of tender love; or the *rasleela*, the big dance of the *gopas-gopis* with Radha and

Krishna in the middle in complete abandon, the spaces being interspersed with flowering bushes, climbing creepers, animals and birds.

There is colourful picturisation also of the different moods of the seasons and months, very imaginatively and colourfully presented. The stitches are flat, simple running ones, the return stitches filling the gap providing a uniform appearance to both sides.

There is also a folk style the women use on their garments which show more original innovation in patterns though some of the eternal Radha-Krishna episodes, the *rasleela*, etc. are also repeated. But the figures are simplified and abstract, the body being a simple cone with a face that has the suggestion of a bird in it; the elephant in a rectangular box moving staidly across, sometimes with a lotus in its trunk, a prancing horse conveyed by a bold semicircular stroke with an unlifted tail on one side and head on the other. The borders are of moving creepers while the spaces are filled in with trees, flowers, birds and animals in typical folk style.

The colours here are brighter and contrasting. Krishna has a deep blue body with crimson feet, *gopis* clothed in bright purple and lemon yellow or crimson with flaming yellow. A point of some significance is that these personalities seem to acquire quite a different dimension in these glowing colours. The double satin stitch which gives the same surface on both sides is commonly used.

Metal Wire Embroidery

Embroidery done in metal wires by *kalabattu* or *zari*, as it is popularly called, is a class by itself. The manufacture of real *zari* threads was once a large and important industry, which has declined with the advent of synthetic materials. Surat in Gujarat and Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh are the most important *zari* centres. The process is elaborate, starting with the melting of the metal ingot into bars known as *pasa*, which is drawn to a length by gently beating it after treatment. The material is next pulled through perforated steel plates to turn it into a long wire form after which comes the *tarkashi* or *taula* process to reduce the wire to the required thinness like a wisp of wire,

using rubber or diamond dies. The last stage called *badla* is when the wire is finally flattened, now done by machines, and then wound on silk or cotton thread, which when twisted becomes *kasab* or *kalabattu*. The dexterity and near perfection with which this is manipulated is ingenious and the uniform evenness, flexibility, softness and ductility it attains is indeed remarkable.

While *zari* is widely used in weaving, it is also used more selectively in embroidery. This too has an old tradition going back to the Vedic times where reference is made to gold and silver embroidered fabrics.

We now come to some of the materials used in this embroidery. *Gijai* is a circular thin stiff wire, used in intricate patterns. *Sitara* (star) is a small round metal piece, which when set in an embroidery, looks like a star, and is mostly used in floral designs. This type of embroidery is known as *salma-sitara*.

Of the different gold threads, the thicker, *kalabattu*, is braided gold thread used in the border, while the thinner variety is used at the end of laces of *batuvas* (purses), tassels, necklace strings, etc. *Tikora* is gold thread spirally twisted for use in curves and convolutions in complex designs. The dull *zari* thread is *kora*, and a lustrous one *chikna*. The design is first traced out on a paper and its outline pricked with a pin or needle, then a cloth-dauber of white chalk powder is lightly rubbed on it. When the background is white, coloured chalk is used.

Of the two main items of equipment used for gold and silver embroidery, one is a rectangular wooden frame called *karchoba* supported on two tripods to enable the craftsman to sit on the ground and embroider, the other is a wooden leg called *thapa* used for sewing in laces.

There are two kinds done on the *karchoba*. The *zardozi* is the heavier and more elaborate work used in coverings of all sorts like heavy coats, cushions, curtains, animal trappings, canopies, shoes and the kind. The ground material for this is in heavy silk, velvet or satin. In this *salma-sitara*, *gijai*, *badla*, *kotori*, seed pearls, etc. are used. The other is *kamdani*, a lighter needlework done on lighter material, mostly on woven apparel, such as scarves, voiles, caps, etc. In this the needle is

threaded with ordinary thread doubled, the ends being secured with a knot. When the knotted end of the wire is pressed and pulled through the material with the wire pressed down at every stitch, small dots of over-lapping satin stitch are thrown up, producing a lovely glittering effect, especially in a design known as *hazara booti* (thousand dots) done with *zari* thread. There is *mina*-work (enamel) done in gold. A very pleasing border pattern is the *kataoki bel* made of stiff canvas with the whole surface filled in with sequin edging. Another border technique is lace made on net and gracefully filled in with *zari* stitches and spangles.

Makaish is considered one of the oldest styles, done with the use of silver wire *badla*. In fact, this serves as a needle for piercing the material to prepare a variety of designs. Then there is *tilla* work done by twisting gold thread on the surface while a needle is pushed at the back to stitch the gold thread down to the basic cloth. Very popular is the *gota-kinari* work. Here the chief feature is cutting the woven gold border into different shapes to be sewed on to the material to create the surface of a variety of textures in the patterns. In Jaipur the *gota* is cut into fine shapes of birds, animals, human figures, etc. attached to the cloth and encased in silver and gold wires, while the space around is covered with coloured silks, to get the effect of enamelling.

Zari embroidery is practised all over India with concentration in some areas and places like Kashmir, Delhi, Agra and Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh, Ajmer in Rajasthan, Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh—which specialises in small fancy bags called *batuwas* used for small coins, beetle nuts, scent bottles, etc.—in Bombay, Hyderabad, Madras and a host of other lesser known places.

The production of beautiful embroidered liturgical vestment in traditional designs is a branch by itself in embroidery. As Christianity took root very early in Kerala, this came to flower perhaps at its best there. This is not surprising as embroidery is well developed in that region.

The cloth to be embroidered is stretched out on a frame. It is worked in oblique stem and satin stitches, the former being worked without a foundation of running stitch. Leaves are

generally worked in raised satin stitch entirely covering the cloth.

For silver cords and spangles, the design is outlined on the foundation with an invisible overcast stitch. At the beginning and end of every round, the cord is threaded into a needle of appropriate size and passed through to the wrong side. When this outline is completed, the inside of the design, which may be the petals of a flower, are filled in with spangles, each secured with a small piece of purl in the centre. In some, only the purl is worked in. The piece in some cases is finished off with an edging of golden lace. The colours in these vestments are fixed: white is symbol of light and purity; red is for blood and in use at Pentecost and on martyrs' days; green is hope for certain Sundays such as after Epiphany; violet or purple for penance used in advent and lent; rose for joy, after advent and lent; black for mourning used on Good Friday, and All Souls Day, mass for the dead. The main vestments are flowing robes, stoles, cloaks, surplices, etc. One notable feature of this craft is that it is done only by men.

Bead Embroidery

Bead embroidery on textiles is done in a few regions. Geometrical designs are worked on fine fabrics, usually sarees and blouse pieces, setting off the background material to better advantage by using white and coloured heads on dark and bright shades which brings out the beauty of the head design. Jangaon in Andhra Pradesh is the best known for it. The blouse pieces usually have all-over designs with long flowing lines, floral designs along with geometrical patterns.

Crochet Lace

Crochet work may not seem like a traditional occupation. Nevertheless, it has been practised in India at least for the last three to four hundred years. The oldest centre is Jamnagar in Gujarat where the women of the Vohra community have been engaged in it at least from Aurangzeb's time. They specialise in a particular type of cap. A point of interest is the use of a mould of a conical shape for shaping the cap while croche-

ting, for these caps are conical in shape. The designs owe their inspiration to print motifs like *buti*, floral nosegay, almond, date, etc. The colours are dark, black and brown with white, and look effective, at times like *ikat* weave. The women have now begun to make other items for household use as well.

Kerala also produces crochet items, but more pronouncedly local in design like elephant, bamboo and coconut tree.

Crochet lace is well developed and spread extensively around the delta area of the river Godavari. Narsapur was an important port town once. Women in about a hundred villages of the district are engaged in it. They are mostly from the fishermen's community. They may have had familiarity with this work through making nets. There are different types of crochet. *Chetipani* or handwork is the simplest, and most novices do it, and is extremely beautiful. The other is *athakupani* or joint attachment. As the name suggests, it is an assemblage of small pieces, mostly different kinds of flowers. Certain villages specialise in certain flowers. The flowers too have different patterns, the soft pattern where the flowers are flat, the raised pattern whose petals stand out distinctly. Some of the agents collect the flowers and pass them on to the assembler on whose imagination and dexterity the success of the final composition rests, for not only should the joining not show, but the combination must have a naturalness and harmony.

Larger linen pieces are also prepared by working the lace pieces into fabrics for curtains, bedspreads, dress materials, and matching borders attached to round them off. This is largely for the internal market as large pure lace pieces are mostly preferred by foreigners. Both white and coloured threads are used. The designs used in lace are both Indian and foreign orientated, as the lace is mostly exported. The Narsapur women proudly boast that they can make as many as 300 designs.

Carpets and Floor Coverings

IN A COUNTRY like India where people squat on the floor, coverings for the floor is bound to occupy a prominent place. It is, however, natural that they should be largely in cotton. But normally when reference is made to the carpet it is the woollen pile carpet which took birth in this country in the 16th century. Though its origin may have been Persian, once the Indian weavers picked up the craft, they made it their own. This is characterised by the meticulous attention to details, presentation of figures full of life and energy, and the delineating separately each plant down to its very root are evidences of its Indian orientation.

The carpets have some significance and the patterns carry certain symbols. The circle is continuity; a zigzag, water or lightening; the swastika, light; the tree, bounty. The growing interest of the Western countries in these carpets with their variety of fascinating designs and harmonious colour schemes filled the void created by the passing away of the Mughal patronage. Owing to the growing and the very diverse demand of the foreign market, the Indian carpet weavers have been able to successfully meet a surprisingly wide range of demands from the delicate Indo-Persian to the abstract Scandinavian, from sturdy Central Asian to the reticent 'Queen Anne' and the quiet Aubusson, from the heavy savonnerie to the quaint Chinese. Whatever a customer demands from any part of the world is available here. In recent times, even a Carbusior design has been copied in a carpet.

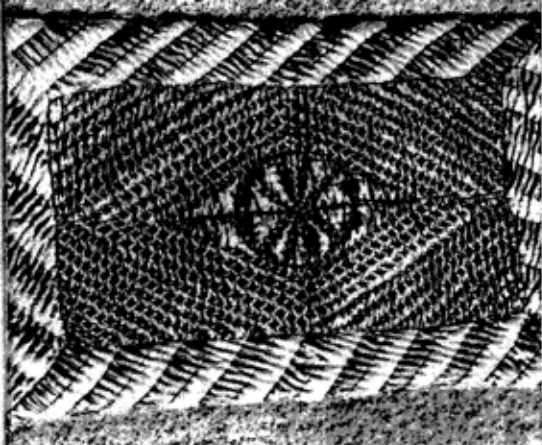
Carpet designing calls for special skills both in designing and colouring, for it must be so devised as to make the object

stand up in spite of its flat position on the floor. This is where the carpets with traditional oriental designs show their superb quality. A carpet is a multipurpose object and has to fulfil what may be termed contrary functions. It must enliven the environment but soothe also. It is an object of high decoration, yet be under the feet of people, to give warmth and protect them from dampness. It has also to relax tensions when one sits or reclines on it.

The use of colours in a carpet is very special too, and they have to be so arranged as to eliminate any shadow. An equally important factor is the need to distribute a finely balanced composition to maintain symmetry. For, colours like designs have a basic symbolism all their own and the carpet itself is supposed to prefigure space and eternity, while the general patterns stand for the fleeting and the ephemeral, and every motif, be it human figure, flora, fauna, landscape or water, has an inner meaning. It is said that the irregularities one sees in the lines or composition are deliberate, designed to avert the evil eye.

Amongst woollen pile carpets (*kalin* as the product is called in India) the Kashmiri ones are accepted as the finest and are the best known. From the use of the *talim*, a weavers' alphabet that was originally evolved for the *kani* shawl, into carpet weaving, it is established that the present carpet weavers are the descendants of the original *kani* shawl weavers. The *talim* consists of a line of numerals starting with a circle which connotes the stitch and is continued to indicate the numbers of knots to be woven. Along with it is the colour card which carries actually dyed pieces of thread to indicate the colours to be used as well as the different symbols for which they stand.

Over each *talim* a circle or sign is marked to symbolise a specific colour, like two dots for white, a crescent for green, a line for yellow, a cross for pomegranate red and so on. The *talim* has to be very elaborately prepared, for even with the graph where each square stands for one knot and the whole design is built up on that basis, it is a complicated affair. It needs great skill on the part of the *talim* writer to note the symbols for each line of knots, for he has to help decide when the colour has to be started, where it has to end and how many stitches have to be worked out. Thus the *talim* and the



1.

1. An Indian quilt.
2. A mud mural.
3. Wood carving from Arunachal Pradesh.



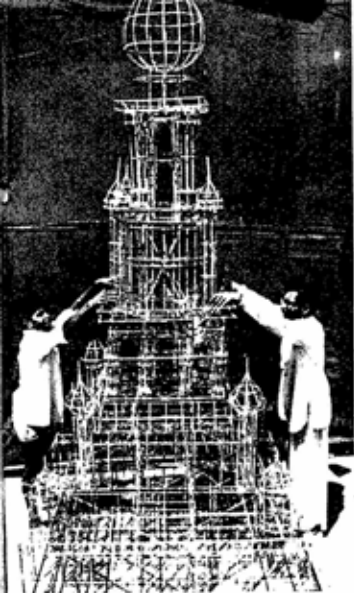
2.



3.



4. Image in stone.

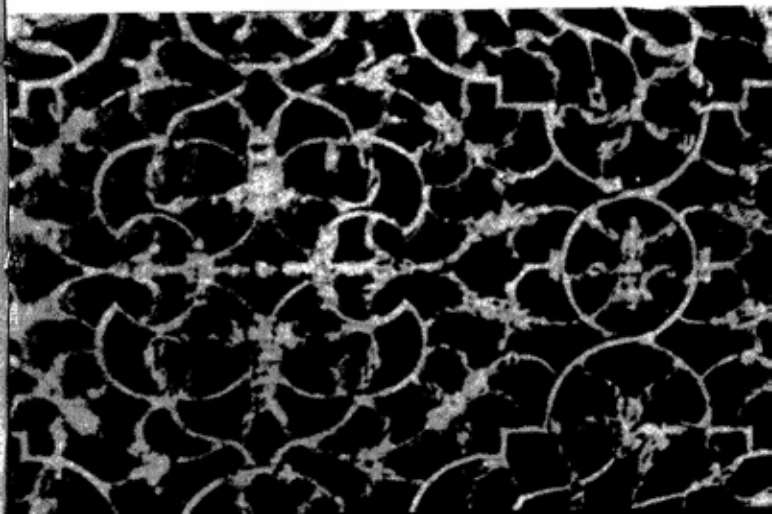


5. Tazia structure of bamboo strips tied at cross points.



6. Papier-mache mask of Shiva with tissue cloth and bead work, head-gear of Chhou dance of Serui Kela.

7. Mughal jali made of papier-mache.

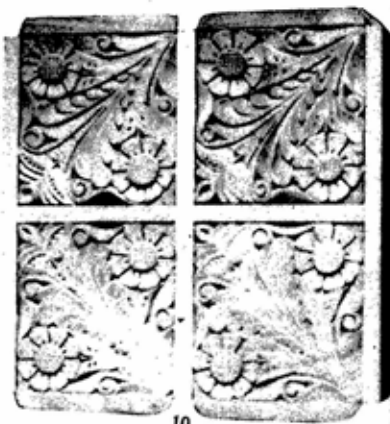




8.



9.



10.

8. Marionettes from Rajasthan made of wood with cloth costumes.
9. Nataraj (bronze) from Arunachal Pradesh.
10. Woodcut.
11. About 500 years old wooden "bhoota" figures from an ancient wooden temple in South Kanara district, Karnataka.
12. Wood painted devil dance mask from Kerala.
13. Effigy of Taraka.



11.

12.



13.





14.

- 14. Coloured glass bead mural.
- 15. Papier-mache marionettes from Andhra Pradesh, costumed and ornamented.
- 16. Clay toy.

15.



16.



17.



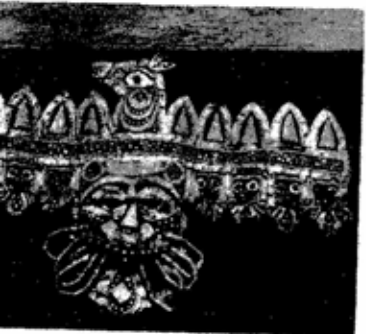
17. Embroidered garment from Bihar.
18. Jewellery.

18.



19.

20.



21.

19. Brass mask of Hanuman.

20. A panel made of paper.

21. Zari applied cloth mask of Ravana.



shade card— *rang* ticket as it is called —have to go together for the weaving operation.

The *talim* when ready is tucked into the warp threads and one weaver calls out the *talim*, i.e. the different colours in which the knots are to be tied in a particular zigzag way, and the one who is being instructed responds back as he keeps knotting rapidly and precisely. A *talim* writer is said to take at least three months to write the entire *talim* for an average-size carpet, of course, depending entirely on the number of knots which vary between 125 to 500 a square inch. The appearance of the back of a carpet indicates the quality of a carpet. The best carpets are made in the famed *panalidar* back in which the ribs running the length of the carpet are fully covered with pile yarn.

Kashmir still makes the old Indo-Persian, the Central Asian like Bokhara, as also the Turkish. Most of them are woven on cotton warp and with quality wool pile for weft. Silk ones are also made.

The best known are with the trellis designs divided up into quarter foils and stars, each with a blossoming plant, or with large blossoms at the inter-sections, medallions in several and strange shapes particularly the borders. Composite designs are wrought with rosettes, clusters of flowers and leaves.

Though the common method for patterning large carpets is to use a series of repeats of a few designs, they do not lead to monotony for each hand-made object is an individual piece. *Barajasta* is a novel carpet in which, while the design is worked out in pile, the rest of the body is done in plain weave, but with gold threads in the background worked in producing a most glamorous effect.

Of the Central Asian designs made in Kashmir, *Bokhara* is the most outstanding. In this the warp is also prepared in wool. Three rows of octagons form the main motif with irregular sides or four of the sides indented; sometimes the octagons are elongated and made wider than their vertical dimensions and has a flat woven web extending beyond the pile and end borders diamond shaped or geometrical motifs in herring bone or latch hooks. These hooks are quartered with ivory, red and a little blue or green in the centre, or each section contains a small geometrical figure or leaf. The field is in

wine red or with a little mahogany, dark green and burnt almond or orange in the octagons. Between each of the main octagons is a row of smaller *guls*, that is, conventionalised polygonal motifs. Every *Bokhara* has a flat woven web extending beyond the pile. In most there is a panel at each end, the design on these end borders being usually the herring bone or latch hooks, diamond shaped or the Tree of Life or any geometrical motif.

Jaipur was one of the noted centres for quality carpets and still produces the traditional designs but only 16 to 36 knots. Among them the noted ones are the Indo-Iranic designs consisting of small angular motifs enclosing little rosettes. In some the medallions with the corners are in blue and the field between in a lighter shade; the field itself is blue or red with purple tints. A counterpart of this is outstanding for the boldness of the curving stems and the soft mingling of colours like green and deep blue. On the border outlines of bold flowers alternate with long leaves swinging gracefully from undulating stems. The *Indo-Kirman* has an ivory or cream field with overall floral sprays and a dainty flower in the centre. Carpets are also produced in Ajmer and Bikaner, in Rajasthan.

The largest concentration of carpet-weaving in the country is in Uttar Pradesh with 90 per cent of the production and 75 per cent of the weavers. The main centres are Mirzapur, Bhadohi, Khamaria and about 500 villages in this area. The industry here, was sponsored or encouraged by the British who took to trade in carpets because of a growing demand for them abroad. Now, however, it is practically all Indian-owned. The present centres are all export-oriented and therefore can produce almost any design. They have some special designs of their own like the *Taj Mahal*, in natural colour or any tint. Others in the same style are *Rajasthan* and *Sirdar* in plain body and subdued colours with hand-embossed or hand-carved borders in rose-beige, honey-beige, ivory and soft green. They also make the 18th century designs with their procession of flowers made with short clippings of the yarn around the contours of the pattern to give it a sculpturesque look but details well shown up. Mostly pastel shades are used but intermingled with bright colours. Though they bear oriental names, some of them are made in French designs. The *kand-*

hari is actually the *savonnerie* pattern made in gold and white, green and white, while *kalabar* is made in the Aubusson design, in rose-beige, cream and green.

The design is carefully prepared on a graph paper with extreme care, for it has to guide in the tying of the knots and the use of the proper colours. Twisted cotton thread is used for the finer weaves and sometimes jute twine for the rougher qualities. The threads hang easily within the reach of the weaver, who twists the thread into two-warp threads for weaving and ties the knot. The carpets of this region are mostly in medium quality and the knots are around 60 per sq. inch as the sculptured styled carpets do not call for a large number of knots. There is specialisation in the production of carpets which are popular export items today.

Agra in Uttar Pradesh is one of the old carpet centres of the Mughal days. In spite of some decline in the old tradition, carpet-weaving has continued. It is today a compact-sized industry and produces both the traditional as well as the new designs. Here prevails what is termed the "calling out" system in which the master weaver alone follows the design and keeps calling out to the weavers the colours to be used for each knot. Among the oriental design carpets made, the *Indo-Ispahan* and *Indo-Kashan* are alike except that the former has the long leaf and the latter the small leaf and flower. In the *Indo-Turkoman* the *Mohra Bokhara* is made with the typical octagonal patterns. An interesting point in its colouring is using the same colour in different shades. For instance, a red background will have a dark blue border with two shades of blue, one light, another medium. Similarly there may be two greens, two shades of brown and gold, etc. In some even four shades of one tint are mixed.

In Shahjahanpur (Uttar Pradesh) both cotton and woollen carpets are made. The designs are of the old Persian style. The overall ground colour is a clear soft scarlet and the field diapered with golden yellow diamond shapes scattered around, broken by a black line wandering through the field. The border is formed by geometrical yellow floral and dark lineated leaf designs rising at right angles to a black centre line. Among the traditional designs are *kethariwala jal*, which has black lines against a maroon background, *jainamaz takhdar* and

chowrangia, In some the background is in natural cream.

The speciality of Amritsar in Punjab are the *Mauri* carpets, the design being from Meru in Central Asia, belonging to the Turkoman family, but here the octagons are smaller and the shades lighter. The background is deep red, golden yellow and white, matching with soft shades like olive green or patterns worked in black and red. These carpets are woven with the double knot, i.e., the two pairs of threads of the warp round which the thread is twisted and one of which lies in the front and the other at the back in the single knotting process, now become adjacent and parallel, the knots therefore appear double though there is only a single one. Amritsar is the only place where the old *talim* method still continues as used by the early *kani* shawl weavers.

Panipat and Palanpur in Punjab are new carpet centres. The former rose as a result of the refugees settling there and starting new industries. Panipat usually makes mainly plain carpets and a few patterned ones. But it caters mainly to local demands. In Palanpur, the designs are based on those of Kashmir, and the same *talim* system is also in vogue.

Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh was once famed for the traditional designs. But now it produces both old and new designs.

Obra in Bihar is an ancient carpet centre, tracing its origin back to the Buddhist and the Mauryan eras, when high class floor coverings used to be woven there. But later the pile carpet flourished under royal patronage. It is now on the decline but still continues to produce the old *Indo-Persian* styles, but in rougher quality. Sasram near it also produces carpets of the coarser variety in the usual floral and geometrical patterns.

The entire region along the Himalayan foothills hums with the buzz of looms, worked mainly by women. The method of weaving, the use of decorative motifs and colour schemes, have a similarity. They are mainly geometrical, using blocks of colour to build up a pattern. The loom has two vertical wooden beams with fixed pegs at the top and bottom, while two horizontal beams carry the warp threads of cotton tied to each other. The knotting is done by looping the thread around the warp, and the rod which is used for looping is placed horizontally and at right angles to the warp. When a motif or other colours have to be introduced, the ground colour is cut and

a new thread inserted by twisting into a single warp thread and looping. Then a three-ply twisted wool is thrown across twice to be used as weft. This is a distinct form of weaving that merits attention.

The Bhutias weave a small bedside carpet, the *dun*, with 60 knot to a square inch, also squares to sit on called *asans*. For designs they are the old *alpana* patterns drawn on the floor on festive occasions, geometrical and floral ones, as also adopt Tibetan motifs like the two Tibetan birds called the *dak* and *jira*, dragon, lion and the God of Lightning, and the zigzag line. Some Central Asian motifs creep in like the famous key and the swastika which here is curled. Lahaul, a remote mountain area in Himachal Pradesh, makes a coarse carpet called *chali*. The coarser wool left over after the fine *pashmina* wool is sorted, sifted, and then spun into a yarn called *shell*, then woven into rough carpets known as *karcha*, *chuktu* and *chugdan*. When the ordinary goats' wool called *bakratha* is mixed with *shell*, a slightly different texture results, mostly in black and white. Pangi in Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh produces a carpet called *thobi*, also from goats' hair, woven on a two-head loom, so small that four to five pieces have to be stitched together to form a full *thobi*, also in black and grey. Though these rugs are in their natural colours, by a clever arrangement of the black and white threads a regular design is made to emerge thereby. The rugs also have designs like *trishul*, swastika and odd symbols like an eight-pointed motif composed of a diamond and a concentric circle.

Some Muslim families in Elluru, near Masulipatnam in Andhra Pradesh claim to be the direct descendants of the Persian migrants who made the carpets famous for their *Indo-Persian* style. They have, however, over the years reoriented the old designs by introducing into them local motifs giving them a new flavour with typical Andhra names. The central ground is called *khana* and the border *anchu*. In the latter the various patterns are named after the fruits or flowers. The body designs are named after patrons or those associated with them, like *Ramchandra Khani*, *Reddy Khani*, *Gopalrao Khani*, etc., or after fruits like *anannas*, *ambarcha*, *babul*, *guava* etc. Ordinary carpets of 16 to 36 knots are made. The designs are mostly floral and geometrical and often quite beautiful. Soft

shades of blue and green mixed with soft yellow and cream are used in a quaint way. The design is so surrounded by a coloured outline in contrast with the surrounding colours that it looks as though the design is slowly blossoming out.

The pile carpet came to Warangal with the Mughal army, for the military camps had not only soldiers but also artists and craftsmen who carried on with their normal work even when on their march.

The Warangal weavers also evolved their own designs in course of time but with the flavour of the old, like the Persian lancelet leaf transformed into a flower. Here again we find the names of patrons passed on to designs in addition to some of their own, like *Muhibub Khani*, *Teerandas Khani*, *Hashim Khani*, *Delli Khani*, *Thotti Kani*, etc. The background weave is usually in the natural off-white wool colour. Against this, deep green and orange are used. The *Dilli Khani* has the medallion in the centre known as the *kishti*, boat, and four flowers done in the palmette pattern, called the locust. On either side of the medallion is the four-petal flower known as the *kite*. Near the border is an eight-petal flower called the eight-turbaned blossom. The curving leaves outlining the medallion are given a most unlikely name: *burg*, the spinal cord. *Thotti Khani* is in a whole composition built around the flower-pot, for *thotti* is a clay flower-pot. Among the locally evolved patterns the henna leaves and flowers are popular.

In Tamil Nadu, Walajapet is about the only place where pile-carpet industry still lingers. The quality today is very ordinary, for the industry caters to the low-income groups abroad. The wool used is the plucked or 'lime', i.e. gathered from the tanneries around, which is rough and uneven, the staple length short and the quality low. Nevertheless a less expensive but attractive carpet with ornamental motifs has found many admirers and a definite market of its own. A traditional design called *kalabeed* is made in a blend of two colours, light blue and rose pink, with interlacing of square designs with small flowers in the middle. A highly ornamental one is *bontha*. Here too we have the famous *Hashim Khani* with its long row of symmetrical flowers round the borders, and the centre a blaze of red, blue and pink flowers.

In Darjeeling the Bhutia womenfolk have started carpet-

weaving in wool. They weave Tibetan style designs around 100 knots. The Tribal Welfare Centre is a similar venture, which makes ordinary carpets on the big looms, but better ones on the lion loom.

The Tibetan Refugees Self-Help Centre weaves up to 40 knots, all in Tibetan designs. The common motifs are the dragon and floral, also interpretations of elements from Tibetan iconography and ancient beliefs, all of which make impressive designs. In colouring, strong colours are set against a restrained background.

The important Tibetan designs include varied dragons, the most conspicuous being *dug goh*, which shows the dragon standing still and staring at you. In the *dhuk thang gyaja*, a bird is added to the same setting. There is an equally broad variety in lotus. There are, for instance, *pema gyaja* (lotus and bird), and *pema thang tsi tsi gyampo* (lotus and bats and so on). There are various flower designs, some with combinations like the *gyaja thang medok* (bird and flower), *nehtsho thang medok* (parrot and flower) etc. The strangest is *ganachari*, the wall of China!

Kalimpong has also grown into a centre for Tibetan carpets. In addition there is a mixed group of Bhutanese, Nepalese and Lepcha weavers here making Tibetan style carpets. But while the former are mostly exported, the latter only cater to local needs.

Amongst recent innovations in carpet-weaving is the introduction of new raw materials such as sun-hemp fibre in Gopalasamudram in the Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu. In these carpets, white cotton is used in the warp and hemp in the weft. The master-weaver holds the design and directs the others on the knots to be tied in different colours. Knotting is simple, about $3\frac{1}{2}$ to a square inch and the designs are new.

Kerala has an old tradition in carpets and had at one time attained considerable distinction for very striking carpets in wool and silk. The new attempt is to use coir. So far only simple designs and colour schemes have been attempted with this material.

The largest number of floor coverings in India are made in cotton all over the country, known as *durrles* or *satarangees* either in single colour or with simple stripes in different colours,

or broken into rectilinear sections or quiet patterns. An interesting fact is that most wool centres also weave cotton *durries*. Amongst the picturesque are the colourful *durries* of Navalgud, a small place in Dharwar district in Karnataka. This was once woven in wool but due to its decline the expensive wool was replaced with cotton. But the old rich intricate designs continue. They can be recognised by their unusual designs and stunning colours. The main designs are geometrical in juxtapositions. The outlines are in delicate tracery with floral motifs in the cross-borders with an occasional bird or animal form inserted.

The Bhawani *durries* of Coimbatore district in Tamil Nadu are woven in cotton and silk. On the cotton base, cotton stripes or traditional designs are woven, the same is done in silk. Some, however, have silk designs on cotton. Originally this place was famous for silk *durries*, now staple has taken the place of silk for economic reasons.

The *durries* of Jobat and Tipgaon in Madhya Pradesh are noted for their sturdy character and delightful colours. Weaving in Jobat is simple, done in the pit loom with *panja*. The dyed yarn is shuttled by hand up to the point where the coloured weft is required, then taken back; the point at which it stops, i.e. wherever the coloured weft is changed, is called *tellis*. These *durries* had become popular because of their pleasing colours but due to a decline in the trade, the colours have been abandoned, as use of more *tellis* involves greater labour and higher cost.

A special type of *durree* called *sutada* is made in parts of Bijapur and Dharwar districts of Karnataka, which has simple horizontal stripes of different colours. Mulgund and Murgoa, also in Dharwar district, make a sturdy floor covering in striped pattern by joining together nine inch wide pieces. An attempt is now being made to revive them in their conventional patterns and old colour schemes by adopting traditional wall-painting scenes from their own region as also those found etched or painted on their wooden measures. Amongst these, there are special designs for particular festivals which lend a significance to the object. *Durries* are produced on a wide scale in Warangal in attractive shades, sometimes with contrasting colour borders or simple motifs woven into the body. They

are also made extensively in and around Obra in Bihar.

Himachal Pradesh, though essentially a wool region, has also cotton *durrees* usually plain, in blue, red and at times in other colours too. The expert weavers in areas of Sirmaur in Himachal Pradesh use the pitloom with two healds and produce different effects by using threads of varying thickness, thin for the warp and thick for the weft.

In Punjab, Nikodar is a big centre that makes two types of *durrees*, those for the bed on pitloom and others for the floor on a loom called *adda* on which about three can weave. The former are in multicolour stripes, while the latter are in two contrasting colours. Mani Majra just outside Chandigarh makes very distinctive textures and designs.

Khas is a floor covering made out of yarn from old cotton of used quilts and mattresses, spun into rather coarse yarn and made in twill weave usually in white. But sometimes half the yarn is dyed black and chequered designs are woven in black and white.

The most interesting and colourful are the Panja *durrees* made by Panjabi women from handspun yarn as a domestic vocation. A girl, as she starts embroidering, also begins weaving articles for the home and makes each an individual piece. The designs are bold folk motifs, strange animal figures, but in an indigenous abstract, therefore, meaningful way, for they are the direct impressions and interactions of their environment which mingled, into their weaves. They are fantastically colourful. These, however, are only found in villages. Bhatinda in Punjab makes *durrees* from the *aak*-plant fibre with a very different texture.

In Darjeeling (West Bengal), the local Bhutias traditionally weave *durrees*. Their designs show strong Tibetan influences, with dragons, clouds, etc. Around Sriniketan, where poet Tagore had initiated a revival of handicrafts, interesting experiments have been made using jute yarn for the weft and cotton for the warp, with local folk designs from old *kantha* embroideries. These designs, however, take on a new look when presented in this broad weave. The loom is a simple bamboo frame and the *panja* is used to beat the weft thread.

Druggets are woven in most places that make carpets as they are woven with cotton and woollen waste. The carpets

and druggets have practically the same designs as they are both turned out usually by the same persons.

Two quite different and interesting floor-coverings are the *namdas* and *gabbas* of Kashmir. They are attractive and each distinctive in its own way. The *namda*, locally prepared, has felt for its background. Applique decoration is made on it sometimes by laying dyed wool and pressing it and sometimes with a crochet-needle with a hooked end. The designs are mostly floral and geometrical. *Gobba* is a rug made from old tattered woollens, on which are sewn with the chain-stitch assorted coloured pieces in various shapes. The border and the body are embroidered. They usually have a gay look with bright flashes of design against a sombre background. Rajasthan also makes *namdas*. Here the decorations are from local tradition and either embroidered or painted.

The hook-rug is a new item in Indian crafts. The base in this is the burlap on which the design is marked and the burlap tacked on to a frame, which can be simply improvised almost out of anything with four bamboo sticks. The operation is done with a special kind of hook. An old flannel strip is held under the burlap and a hook is thrust through it to the surface. Then a couple of meshes of the burlap are passed over and the hook is thrust in, but this time it is the loop that is pulled up. Greater variety in the texture is provided if different materials are used, especially old hand-knitted sweaters. Endless designs in geometrical patterns can be created as also mosaics with marble effects. The hook has been working well in Kashmir, where it was first introduced, and in Dharamshala (Himachal Pradesh).

Coir fibre was used in Kerala from very olden times as also exported to far off lands, to be used for making ropes, so important in those sailing days. Today it is a thriving industry with 2,00,000 workers engaged in it.

The item most widely in use is coir matting, especially the quite long ones to cover corridors or long staircases. The shorter ones which serve as door-mats on which all the dust from the roads is deposited are covered with tufts of coir yarn, sometimes with the yarn itself. Designs are worked on with either dyed tufts of yarn or by spraying dyes through stencils.

These mats vary according to the pattern. The commonest have tufts of fibre inserted through the warp to form the top surface. In another type, the rod mats, the surface, consists of fibre tufts with the base of yarn. The third type is known as 'creel' in which the weft is made of alternate rows of the tuft with very decorative designs which can even serve as carpets, for they are equally attractive. Some, in fact, find them more charming because of the texture. Pieces of matting are also cut and made into compact rugs and the ends finished in a number of ways. A coir *durree* which also serves as a rug, called *mourzoak*, is woven with the surface pattern being formed by the weft, not the warp. Quite intricate patterns can be introduced into the weave by this method.

Leather-work

LEATHER-WORK IS PROBABLY as widespread as earthenware-work for there is hardly a village where there is no cobbler. This is an old hereditary craft which at one time used to be only confined to the group now known as *mochis*. They make simple items like bellows for workshops. The *mochis* in the towns, however, have been moving with the times and learning the more modern styles in footwear. A large number of people are engaged in leather-work. As with other crafts, more or less the entire family works on the products, the women mainly doing the stitching.

India's largest leather products are in the footwear line. Like pottery, they greatly vary from place to place in shape, composition of pattern and decor. The traditional ones are more original, individualistic and colourful, and largely embroidered or done up in brocade or decorated textile.

A particular type of thickish shoes called *mojdis* are made in Rajasthan. Sewn out of locally cured leather, they are usually ornamented with silk or metal embroidery or beads, or designs done in applique with thin leather pieces of different colours. They are very popular with the common people. In Jaipur, this has been refined to an art and the most fancy and sophisticated footwear is turned out. They are so soft and dainty, the pair can be rolled into a little ball. The designs are extremely delicate and the colours subtle. On the Jodhpur ones, the embroidery is in virile patterns, in bolder shades in strange contrasts.

An equally colourful item is the knuckle-pad on which choice miniature landscapes and festive scenes are embroidered.

The careful working out of the details in group compositions such as shades created by falling of light, unusual effects wrought by colour contrasts, were easily noticeable in such scenes coupled with maidens plucking flowers in a garden, a couple romancing in moonlight, swans and ducks sailing and even picking up food, etc. Bikaner and Jaisalmer have ornately decorated saddles for horses and camels. A rather unusual and attractive object is a peculiar type of water-bottle called *kopi* made in Bikaner from camel hide in different designs, with thick leather for the mouth. The process is like this. The leather is first softened and then stretched over a clay mould made of the desired shape; when hardened, the clay is washed away. The pattern (for decoration) is first drawn on the leather, then the portion to be ornamented raised by applying a mixture of shell powder, glue and a kind of wood apple. When the surface rises, it is painted in gold and other colours while the base is coloured black or red to project the shades at the top vividly. This style is in fact a copy from the local wall paintings. Beautifully shaped lamps and lampshades are also made from the camel stomach that are reminiscent of the exquisite marble work of the Mughal era.

Many modern decorative and utility articles have now entered the leather field, particularly in Shantiniketan, Bolpur (West Bengal). The footwear still leads, but the style is confined to open sandals, the plain ones being made in sophisticated designs, the others in leather painted with colours and patterns; hand-bags, especially for ladies, in which there is also a very wide range and are popular abroad. The designs on them are in batik style with the cracks, the bold curves and lines and motifs.

Then there are the raised leather seats, puffs or *pidis* as they are known in India, highly decorated with geometrical patterns or motifs, largely copies from *alpna* designs, or from embroideries. They are beautiful and convenient at home, for they are mobile and do not clutter up space. Semi-leather seats are also made using wooden or bamboo frames and legs; and on backs of leather seats, white or black designs are applied on the leather—sometimes with even little touches of brass. Bengal still leads in decorative leather.

Leather-work of Kashmir is quite outstanding and orna-

mental. Some of the finest embroidery goes into the decoration leather items of which hand-bags are the most outstanding. Many utility articles are made in leather, including attractive travel-kits. Leather garments, though not new, have of late come into vogue. As their use in the country is rather limited, they are mostly exported.

Wood-work

INDIA HAS A LUXURIANT range in wood, and every locale has its own kinds, each with its particular properties of grain and strength. The discerning wood-worker has evolved styles and items depending on the quality of available wood and his own ingenuity to tackle it, thus creating an enormous range in wood products.

Kashmir produces an infinite variety of the most alluring objects with the lovely grain and natural colour of the soft-toned elegant walnut and the facile sturdy *deodar*. Most items that are made are suitable for modern living like furniture, bowls, trays, picture-frames, cabinets, screens, table-tops, lamps, vases, etc. on which minute and detailed work is tastefully executed. These craftsmen seem to have an instinct for beautiful tracteries, the chiselling being attuned to the function of the article. Most exquisite carving is to be seen on the delicately shaped jewellery caskets.

Himachal Pradesh which once abounded with elaborately carved wooden temples makes domestic ware like pitchers for carrying water and bowls for eating and skilfully shaped wooden vessels still in use. Near Brahmour, the village Koona is noted for them. Chamba specialises more in large wooden boxes for grain storage, shaped in geometrical forms. Traditional motifs, quite abstract, are cut out on their lids as also animals or geometrical forms, but such as to emphasise the shape of the article. There are a few important designs. *Nagh-bel* is a zigzag line which combines the serpentine pattern with a three or four petal flower on each side of the line. *Dori* is a continuous line of flowers. *Kutheri phool* is a multi-sided figure,

sometimes enlarged and the pattern laid in a *jali* to serve as a ventilator. The circle, the swirl and the spiral are also common.

The old tradition of structural carving still continues but in low relief. The traditional houses look as in the old Kangra paintings, square-carved boxes with picture windows, richly carved doors, and brackets of figures leaning out.

Gujarat is very rich in structural wood carving. A very beautiful well-carved wooden structure and a pigeon-house are a common sight in Gujarat region. It is sometimes very ornately carved and is extremely imposing, sometimes in 200 tiers.

One of the fascinating features of Gujarat carvings is the 40 to 50 variations found in shapes, poses and styles in a single motif like the lotus, parrot, peacock, swan, etc. Carved furniture both in the old Indian style with low seats and tables as well as Western oriented is produced. In the former, the two well-known *nav khamia* and *tran khamia*, cupboards with nine and three compartments for personal things, as well as the *paniara* stands for water pots, need special mention for their lovely carvings, mostly floral or geometrical. Sometimes animals are also introduced and they are usually shown in quaint positions. A very popular, even indispensable, article is the swing (*jhula*) without which no Gujarati home is complete. It is often a fine piece of carving and an heirloom.

Pethapur in Mehsana district is famous for engraving of blocks for textile printing. Blocks of varying sizes are cut, the surface smoothed by applying chalk mixed with gum. On this the required design is traced with a stencil. The intervening spaces are then chipped out with gouges as in ordinary wood carving, except that here the work is very minute and has to be done sensitively in deep relief. Some of the hand-block printing techniques are complicated and sophisticated and they produce stunning effects which no machine or screen can ever produce.

Assam is noted for its special objects and styles. The most striking is a wooden house called *namghar* or *kirtanghar* (the house for worship or singing religious songs). It contains a throne-like seat often peacock-shaped raised in tiers ranging from three to nine, supported by sculptured lions, sometimes standing on elephants while the lowest tier rests on tortoises.

The sides are covered with mythical figures on animals like *garvoor*, also birds wearing strange carved crowns.

Assam is also famous for finely-carved chests for storing everything from ornaments to vessels, for small seats to sit on and stool-like tables to go with them, book-rests, *kukkas* and sandals. The last named are widely used and often decorated very elegantly. The most traditional are the figures and the icons.

Punjab has wood-work centres each with its own distinct style. Hoshiarpur, Jullundur, Amritsar and Bhera are known for their ornamental products, especially furniture. The carving is generally in low relief, cut in geometrical patterns or floral designs. One of the specialities is trellis work done in delicate tracery which from a distance creates a fairy-like effect. These patterns are prepared singly in pieces and then put together to get the total effect.

In Uttar Pradesh, Saharanpur has burgeoned into a big commercial centre largely in modern household items; their production is on a large scale. Nagina does select work only on ebony. Here the carving is more delicate and meticulous and nearer to the tradition. Toilet and trinket boxes are their specially. Aligarh, Lucknow, Ghazipur, Mathura and a number of places are full of good wood-work.

In Tamil Nadu, Virdunagar, once a traditional centre, now makes articles for current household use. Devakottai and Karaikudi make traditional panels in different sizes. Here are also found small portable shrines finely carved in wood which devotees carry on their heads as they go singing or chanting. Some of these panels are now used as wall decorations. Nagercoil and Suchindram have traditional carvers who make religious figures.

Some wood carvings are appreciated also for the special wood used in them, like rosewood for its faint perfume likened to a smell of rose water and for its lovely ebony-black colour.

Madura is famed for its rosewood carvings, marked by its bold forms and very detailed work. The table-tops are covered with floral motifs or lovely parrots or panels with epic scenes, the legs elegantly carved in the shape of *yali*, a local motif, or the elephant. Sometimes the table rests on the elephants back or head and the body is eliminated. Tiny elephants run round

the edges to form the rim. The elephant also holds a lamp on its trunk. A cobra is also used as a pedestal.

Tirupati area in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh has red sanders, known as *raktachandan*, literally blood-coloured sandalwood, with a rust-red tint. Tiruchanur and Madhavmala are noted for the production of religious figures and dolls of a particular style. Amongst the religious figures are *kaliyamardan* (Krishna dancing on the serpent's hood), Krishna with the flute and Venketeswara (the deity of the famous Tirupati temple). The coppery glow in the wood lends a special charm to the objects. Udaygiri, also in Andhra Pradesh, prepares delicate lacy-looking fret-work objects, such as cutlery, dainty boxes, paper knives in various designs in this rust-coloured wood.

Nirmal in Adilabad district of Andhra Pradesh is a big centre for wood-work. The traditional household articles of daily use used to be brilliantly tinted, and designs painted on them with the technique and flavour of classical miniatures, which gave them a rare distinction. An ample serving-plate with a large dome-like cover was one of its specialities. Both the plate and dome would be gorgeously embellished with bold patterns, the lotus being a favourite.

A sophisticated version of Nirmal sprayed with modern colours has been introduced in Hyderabad, particularly in furniture, as also a large variety of utility articles like boxes, trays, coasters, etc. Though both these wares go by the same name Nirmal, the two are wide apart in style and flavour.

Another wood which has won renown for its own intrinsic worth and the superb carving that is possible on it is sandalwood. Sandalwood is found in the Karnataka forests, the region which is inhabited by some of the most talented carvers. Some of the choice utility articles they make are photo-frames, trays, combs, paper-knives, walking sticks and fans—the last being a prized item; while the new items are cigarette-cases, card-boxes, name-cards, teapots, picture-frames, etc. Their masterpieces are, however, the different deities, elaborately carved with their full insignias and interlace foliage and scroll work around them. Elaborately carved boxes are amongst their specialities with ornamental flowers, creepers, birds, animals and figures of deities etched on them. An unusual article is the whisk made out of a bunch of fine hair-like

sandal-wood strips attached to a highly decorated sandalwood handle, to be waved before a deity.

The types of carving are: in the round, in relief, chip, incised and piercing. In the first, the object is totally detached from any background wood, such as a human or animal figure. In relief, the figure is etched and raised on a background, and can be in high or low relief. Chip consists of evolving designs by chipping the wood, used mostly in ornamental and decorative work. Incised is done without ground work, mainly for flower and creeper traceries. Pierced is for effective ornamentation, in which the wood is completely cut away leaving just the design, and calls for extra skill.

Karnataka is also famous for rosewood articles. Mostly modern furniture pieces and a variety of elephants, are made, which are always in great demand. Some of the best specimens of wood-work is provided by the mighty pyramidal gateway to temples. An extension of this covers the temple chariots, *rathas*, as they are called. The one in which the deity is carried is called *agami* and is the most heavily ornamented with numerous sculpturesque figures, flying angels, giant-size guards (*dvarapalakas*), horsemen and a whole host of things all over the ceiling and doors. Its characteristic is the four lions in a rampant attitude in the corners and in between them a host of smaller figures tastefully carved, and panels with elephant, eagle, swan, tiger, etc. All the chariots are topped by a pyramid-shaped roof covered with close prodigious ornamentation.

Equally elegant and artistic are palanquins which, in fact, are found all over the country. Here again delicate traceries are made on the panels, while the poles are carved into various shapes of animals, birds, and so on.

Then there are the folk deities, some in abstract and some in quaint and even grotesque forms. One typical but unusually large collection is in an ancient temple in the Mangalore forest. The oldest specimen amongst them is estimated to be about 800 years old, the newest about 300. These are built up around a special cult called *bhoota* (spirit). Their chief characteristic is their immense size, some figures rise up to 18 feet and the wide range of animals, including the elephant in real life-size have unusually bold modelling, elegant body lines,

startling expressive faces and intricately carved ornamentation. The odd thing about them is they are unlike any of the carvings anywhere else in India.

In Rajasthan, in Pipar city and Bhari-Sajanpur in Pali district, paper-thin bowls are prepared for Jain munis. Some of the most interesting figures made in Bassi, a little village near Chittorgarh, are almost entirely devoted to wood carving. The place is famous for making figures, especially the Rajasthani puppets. The figures of Ishar and Gauri made for Gangaur festival have features distinctively stylised and the two figures stand upright, hands stretched out, often decorated with ornaments, while clothes are indicated through colours. There are hundreds of such festive occasions throughout the country when special figures are produced. Famous among them is Jagannath Puri in Orissa, carved annually in wood, worshipped and then destroyed. At the Ramdeo festival in Rajasthan, among the gifts offered are wooden horses in various sizes carved with taste, in memory of Ramdeo's attachment to his horse who served him faithfully on his many mercy missions.

Kerala has many splendid samples of sculptural carvings in temples as well as in churches. In the latter, the altar or the pulpit and the ceiling are elaborately carved. Now the trend is to produce articles of modern use along with ancient statues of Hindu deities and animals for which Trivandrum and Trichur are noted. Changancherry, Ernakulam, and Kanirantham specialise in Christian religious figures, as also in ordinary human figures.

Kerala produces elephants in profusion in a variety of postures and sizes, from the microscopic to the huge. Elephants are shown pushing and pulling logs of wood or caught in a fierce fight. There are also figures of women shown at work in various vocations. Rosewood beds are a speciality, the legs and the panels at the two ends carved or plain; also chests and tables, stools, bookstands and book-ends, etc., all beautifully carved.

Goa has a good tradition in wood-carving judging from the old structures. After the advent of the Portuguese, this talent was turned largely to Western style furniture-making of superb quality, largely for export. The designs used in the body are,

however, purely oriental, the usual floral, animal, human ones. The main places of production are Verem, Bardez and Cuncolim.

In treating wood-carving one may touch upon ship-building because of the eminence it attained in decorative carving. There are many evidences of the picturesque boats with rims covered with designs and the prow carved in the form of animals, like the horse holding up a noble head. A very picturesque scene drawn on a boat showing Rama, Sita and Lakshman crossing the Ganga as they departed in Guha's boat into exile, is seen in one of the Cochin murals. An ancient sculpture in Orissa shows a pleasure boat with elaborate all-over carving with small *mantaps* (pavilions) with figures in them. In fact, it is of interest that *Yuktikalpataru*, which contains a complete treatise on ship-building also includes instructions on their decoration and furnishing, the colours to be used, and the shapes of the prow, of animals, birds, even human figures. Even the warships were lavishly decorated.

Inlay

Though wood is beautiful in itself man has tried to ornament it still further. One innovation is inlay, which is done by decorating the surface of one material by setting pieces of other materials into it. Karnataka has inlay of rosewood and ebony with ivory, some of the best examples of which may be seen at the Seringapatam mausoleum. The doors of the Amba Vilas Palace in Mysore have fine inlay work on them. Gradually various types of wood in different shades have supplanted the original expensive materials, producing a cheaper medium, creating new effects and greatly expanding its scope with the introduction of a wider range in textures and colours. Here success depends entirely on the artistry and skill of the workman, for the charm lies in producing a delectable ensemble of contrasts. The articles made are panels, plates, boxes, teapots, power-boxes bowls, cigarette-cases and several other items. Colourful scenes are depicted on the panels such as landscapes, pastoral sights of a shepherd with a flock of sheep, maidens plucking and stringing flowers, women carrying water-pots, flock of birds on trees, and in particular, the resplendent

Dusserah procession, as also popular pieces from the epics interspersed sometimes with floral and geometrical patterns.

This is one craft where the designer need not also be the executer, the two could be separate. A paper tracing of the design is pasted on a card-board and the templates cut with a chisel, are placed on the selected wood or ivory pieces, and the outline traced on them and then cut with a saw. The marked position on the main background is scooped and the pieces fixed in to form the design.

Hoshiarpur in Punjab specialises in wood-inlay work. Originally, only ivory pieces were used but now due to its scarcity and very high cost, substitutes are used such as old piano-keys, *badla* (zinc) and, of late, plastic. The industry has grown considerably over the years.

The articles turned out are the usual table-tops, teapoys, trays, table legs, screens, bowls, cigarette-cases, and, of late, chess-boards. The designs are largely floral and geometrical.

Gujarat, especially Surat, has its famed marquetry as *sadeli*. It is a kind of a mosaic worked around panels, more like appliquing. In this work thin long or triangular strips of ebony, ivory, redwood, green-bone and tin are stuck together with extraordinary precision. Thin slices are then cut and glued together in the shape of hexagons and octagons, which, when dry, are made into strips to form triangles, squares, diamonds, etc. so minutely that a hexagon measuring 3/16 inch can hold nearly 70 pieces. They mostly decorate boxes, caskets, trinket-boxes, bowls, small trays, with delicately wrought inlay.

Marquetry though comparatively new (i.e. not traditional), Kerala has developed fairly well. Apart from the charm it gives to the article, it enables any piece of wood, in spite of any of its anatomical defects due to malformation, to be purposefully utilised. Only superior types of wood like teak, rosewood, *agila* (white cedar), are used to prevent easy cracks.

Generally, simple articles are made as there is considerable labour involved. Trays of various types, teapoys, stools, vases, boxes and ashtrays are the usual items, and occasionally, photoframes.

Another effective style of decorating wood is by binding chests and boxes with brass bands, sometimes plain, or with patterns. The body is dotted with brass pieces, sometimes

applied or embossed with heavy motifs as flowers. Kerala has a rich variety of it. The *natturpetty* is a traditional jewel-box with eight sides, four at the bottom and four at the top converging in a line at the top, the joints fully covered with rich decorations.

Bhavnagar in Gujarat is noted for large-size chests known as *pataras*. The bride carries in them all her belongings from bed-rolls to jewellery when she moves to her new home after the marriage. It has at least eight secret drawers for valuables. A thick metal sheet called *kalapatara* is used to provide cover, strength and durability to the box; a thin sheet called *safed patara* is used for making decorative pieces for which it is coated with yellow oil paint, cut into squares and rectangular pieces which are embossed with dies or punched with pointed tools and perforated. These are then fixed, usually in geometrical shapes supported with iron strips on the front part of the *patara*, called *darshan bag*. Side handles and staples are made from iron rods and the lid secured to the chest with brass or iron hinges. Two moulded brass stoppers are fixed on the lid covered with thin white iron sheets. When finished, it looks magnificent.

Wood-inlay is one of Bihar's ancient industries. The inlay is done with different materials, metal, ivory, stag-horn, clips of wood or other grains or tints, all used to get varied effects to great advantage. Apart from decorative pieces like wall-hangings and table-tops, a number of utility articles are also ornamented with inlay work.

Patna also manufactures articles in diaper work utilising waste pieces of wood. The old skill, the experienced eye and the innate taste of the veteran craftsmen are seen here in the marvellous objects like trays, boxes and other articles for the household. The designs are mostly geometrical but extremely fine and colourful.

Painting

Painting seems to have been one of the earliest attempts to decorate wood and enhance its uses by making it an adjunct to structural innovations, especially in temples. Generally the patterns would be just geometrical or ornamental, but

in temples whole religious or epic scenes were painted, resulting in a unique blending of carving and painting, as also bringing the curvatures into greater relief.

Painted doors have always been a speciality of Rajasthan. Sometimes even stone-carved structures are painted. In the well known Bassi village, items meant for rituals are gaily painted like the Ganghor figures. The *Kavadi* (mobile wooden shrine) with deities has epic scenes and verses from scriptures painted in bright colours; small painted platforms (*pithas*), are especially made for marriage rituals; the vanity (*sindoor*) box is topped by a peacock-shaped boat with two riders and a bridal procession painted in brilliant colours. In Andhra Pradesh wandering performers with masks carry a large wooden box vividly painted with scenes of *yamaloka*, land of the dead, also from epics, to demonstrate the tales they chant or recite.

Fine specimens of painting on rich wood carvings can be seen in some of the Kerala churches to embellish them by appropriate colours. The foliage, the floral designs, raiments of the personages, wooden structures, pedestals, all stand out festively, each harmoniously melting into the other like tones in an orchestra.

Another style of wood ornamentation is plating with precious metals like silver and gold, normally done on temple doors but also extended to other objects in use at temple worship like the chariot, the whisk, the swing, and the cradle. In fact, a special technique in metal plating has been evolved wherein thin sheets of gold and silver are so applied that the entire base-piece appears to be made of these precious metals. The best examples of them are seen in Gujarat in the Vaishnava temples and Jain households.

Lacquer-ware

Another method of ornamenting wood is lacquering, in which countless designs and colour schemes can be executed. Lac is a kind of resin. For application it is heated to get it into a plastic condition, then it is kneaded, colours added to it and then it is drawn to be made into sticks.

Before applying the lac, the wooden article is smoothened

by rubbing with fine pottery powder, then put on a lathe and rotated, while the lac stick is pressed against it. The friction softens the lac which is then smeared all over. If more than one colour is to be applied, spots are left blank where more rounds are taken to cover each up with different tints. Ornamental lacquering involving intricate manipulation is classified as zigzag and *dana* work, *atishi* or fire, *abri* or cloud, *nakshi* and etched *nakshi* and painted decorative work. The *nakshi* work which is rather unique, is best seen in Kashmir and Rajasthan. A number of layers, usually four, of lacquer in different shades are laid one over the other. On this the craftsman works out the designs with a chisel, then scrape out the colours thus creating designs which otherwise would be impossible. Whole landscapes and hunting scenes emerge projecting a wide range of objects like coloured flowers, figures riding or running, animals creeping among bushes, all showing extraordinary skill and delicacy. Kashmir makes large-sized lamps, big flower-pots, fire screens, and tall household lamps with rich patterns of birds like *bulbul*, and wall decorations with the fiery looking king-fisher, colourful roses, cherry blossoms in the *nakshi* and etched *nakshi* style; and other objects with lacquered papier-mache such as letter-cases, table-mats, etc. with the typical Kashmir designs. Kashmir also makes articles like wall paintings of a composite style by combining painting with lacquering. The object is varnished with lac dissolved in spirit, then the design drawn on it. As no ground colour is given, the fine texture of the wood shows the transparency of the lac varnish.

Amritsar and Jullundur make traditional lacquered furniture with the bold and pronounced designs characteristic of Punjab. Legs for beds and dewans are a speciality, also a box known for its purple coloured lac on them. The work here is in the *nakshi* style.

Sankheda in Gujarat is noted for very artistic furniture of low seats and tables, stools and swings, all gay with colours and designs in the tinfoil style. Junagadh and Doraji in Rajkot district are known for their cradles with stands, and the cup-broads with cubicles typical of Gujarat.

In *atishi*, the article receives a coating of finely divided tin-foil made into a paste with glue; the coating can also be made

of a multitude of minute dots. The name firework is also applied to this because of a fiery glow created by the laying of a layer of red or yellow lac on the tin and polishing it by an agate or similar stone which produces the heat to make the lac transparent.

A new type of lacquering with a golden finish of a transparent metallic effect and flavour of enamelling that gives it a special allure is being made at Rupayatan in Junagadh. Here the initial cleaning is done with zinc oxide mixed with glue, and a tin coating given after this dries to provide the shine, after which the background water-colour is spread.

The Banni area in Kutch has its own distinctive lacquerware. The lines are thick and the designs bold, a kind of masculinity of character in keeping with the harsh arid land around. The items are mostly for household use such as bread-rollers, spoons, churners, oil-containers, legs for beds, wool spinners, and so on.

Udaipur in Rajasthan has a long tradition in lacquering in the zigzag and *dana* technique. Its wares are in gentle shapes, graceful designs and soft shades. It once produced only simple household items, like *chakla* and *belan* (stand and roller for making bread-*chapatees*). Now, however, they too make the usual tables, teapots, lamps, decorative plates, etc.

Chennapatna in Karnataka uses the painted zigzag and *dana* techniques for which parallel lines are scraped on a lac-coated surface, then an eccentric movement is made while a piece of hard wood is pressed firmly against the lac coating to turn the straight lines into zigzag. Formerly Chennapatna used to make mostly geometrical designs, now other designs are in use like countryside scenes, landscapes, dance ensembles, etc. on wall plaques or plates. Other items are the usual household articles, with additions like napkin-rings, egg-cups, incense-stick stands, etc. Among their original items are two quaint shapes or sometimes heads of animals and vegetables for the salt-and-pepper set, and stationery which is their speciality. They also have a series of typical local figures dressed in indigenous clothes like the fruit-vendor, woman carrying a water-pot, fortune-teller, etc. Another original item is the depicting of couples from different nationalities like a Japanese couple, an English couple, and so on.

Savantwadi in Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra makes lacquered imitation fruits and vegetables, with rare faithfulness which is its chief attraction. It makes a few other items also. Initially the article is smoothened with a paste of tamarind seed and white glue which when dry is sandpapered and then lacquered. At one time this was a big craft centre, especially for the manufacture of round, decorative lacquered and pictorial playing-cards.

The origin of these imitation fruit items here is traced to a local custom which expects the father-in-law of a new bride to present the imitation objects of this type along with toys during the auspicious Shravan month.

Lacquer-ware seems most natural in a place like Bihar where lac has been gathered and used for ages. And, as it is an area where traditions are still strong, the lac articles have come to acquire a ritualistic value, too. Thus, during marriages a beautiful round or oval box called *sindoordan* (vermillion container) made of lac is essential. Another ritualistic item is a round conical box, in which the bride's parents present her with a nose-ring at the marriage. On the red body of these boxes are engraved motifs like the fish, peacock, *chakra*, the symbols of fertility and longevity. *Sindoor*-boxes in various shapes are a speciality, with different designs of a unique rhythmic quality. Other equally colourful articles similarly ornamented are the *chapatee*-box and dry fruit containers.

In Orissa, in Navrangpur, there is a distinct type of lacquering and many decorative items and toys are made. Their speciality is a box made of papier-mache, brightly lacquered and highly decorated. The boxes have attracted attention abroad, for they are roomy and light and are very colourful.

For tinfoil ornamentation, a fragment of coloured lac is placed on a sheet of tinfoil and melted to fully cover the desired spot. This is used as an adjunct to ornamental turnery. Areas that cannot be treated on the lathe, as in the case of these boxes, are thus ornamented by tinfoil clippings, plain or coloured, in various shapes and forms.

Then there is the cloud work, called *Abri*. On a yellow coating, the surface is touched intermittently with a red stick even as it revolves, the tremulous movements making irregular coloured spots around which a black border is drawn. Finally,

the inter-spaces are filled with white and a total cloud effect is produced which lends itself to a good many variations of a single pattern, resulting in different types of cloud scenes with shadowy effects. This technique is greatly used in Punjab and parts of Gujarat.

8

Ivory

IN INDIA IVORY has been used for a number of purposes from sacred images to dice. A Vedic text includes ivory-work amongst the noblest of crafts. It is hardly surprising, for the techniques refined over the centuries have brought forth classical products of grace and beauty.

Though ivory is tough it seems to yield to the craftsman's masterly handling and becomes almost pliable and shines with a soft lustre like a cool moonbeam. At the same time it has a grandeur and nobility of its own. Among raw materials, it is unique and unrivalled.

The cutting of the tusk calls for extreme skill and the operation is done with a bow-saw, and the surface smoothed with a file. The object to be made is sketched on the ivory piece in pencil, and the carving on the sketch is done with care to avoid damage, using a variety of chisels which can do the minutest of work. The surface is first smoothed out with sandpaper, then with a brush dipped in methylated spirit if it is white or when yellow, in water mixed with hydrogen peroxide which whitens it.

Apart from carving, designs are also etched on the surface like floral or geometrical patterns, birds, animals and religious and aesthetic motifs for which very delicate and deft hand-and-finger work is essential. The outer circular surfaces of the conical ends were used at one time exclusively for making bangles.

The solid inner pieces, known as *gullas* in the North and *gablas* elsewhere, are utilised for carvings. The hollow part as well as the points are preferred for smaller items.

Today because of non-availability of raw material, only a few practise this craft.

Delhi is one of the main centres for ivory carving. Popular items are chess sets and small articles like scent bottles, compact cases, paper knives, salt-pepper cellars, bookmarks, trinket or *pan*-boxes, a number of jewellery items like beads, necklaces, ear-tops, broaches, bangles and rings.

Rajasthan, particularly Jaipur, has been famed for a surprising number of diverse objects in ivory. Being of precious and rare material, it was once patronised by the royalty and the nobility and the craftsmen naturally sought to turn out all types of articles. Today, they make the usual household items like salvers, tumblers, hukka bases, furniture pieces, toys carved in the shape of animals, birds, fishes, and jewellery items. A unique item is *bartana* shaped like a paper knife, to pass between the forehead and the turban to ease tension. The superb items, however, are the fan and the mat wrought by weaving very fine ivory strands and the delicately chiselled flowers for decor. The elegant fish-shaped phials for *surma* for the eyes, as also trinket and beatlenut-boxes with rich flowered tops are popular items.

A novelty is the 'magic balls'. Each of these balls consists of five to nine smaller concentric balls contained within the outer ball hewed out of a single spherical piece of ivory. The inner balls, however, are completely detached from one another. The ingenuity lies in carving so many little ones all within a single ball.

Mahuva in Bhavnagar district of Gujarat has long been a well-known centre for human figures and statues of deities of excellent quality, elegant rosewater sprinklers, decorated elephants and camels and other small items made in ivory.

Amritsar in Punjab is known for its ivory-work. The industry here is fully mechanised as power-driven lathes are used. It seems to cater to far off cities in India and abroad. Here are made chess sets, lamps of all sorts, toilet items like brushes, combs and mirror frames with the same stylised floral and bird motifs balanced with complicated geometrical forms, and the superb lattice (*jali*), looking like a piece of delicate lace. Very distinctive are figurines depicting characters from folk or heroic tales. On large surfaces poetic scenes are etched and

sometimes tinted, looking almost like miniatures.

Lucknow does low relief in geometrical or floral designs. Plates, boxes in particular, with lattice-work are most attractive. The chess sets are ornate, each figure being carved with great attention and is coloured and ornamented. Varanasi has figures of deities, dancing poses and animals, especially a novel bridge made of animals, decorative plaques are beautifully fashioned. Then there are copies of strange foreign figures like the laughing Buddha.

Kerala over the years has won great renown as a centre for ivory carving. It seems to have enjoyed patronage at home as also received encouragement from overseas markets, as Kerala had trade links with Arab and even the Mediterranean countries. The ruling Maharajas not only took interest in this craft but later actually got an arts and crafts school started so that the young people, even those who were not hereditary artisans, could get proper training. Even though they learnt in a modern school, these youngsters nevertheless maintained the high standards of grace and dignity set by the old masters. Here, therefore, the carving work is not confined to a single caste or group. This in a way seems to have given a broader base to the craft and helped it to grow and make Trivandrum one of the biggest production units. It has specialised in figures, particularly deities, of superb workmanship. Most alluring are groups or even single characters from ancient tales in exquisite lines and liveliness. Some standing figures seem so very alive with their vivid expressive poses and gestures.

Though small, even a single figure has enough details to make a story. Bigger scenes from the *Ramayana* and other epic stories are depicted in the same chaste and vivid manner. Equally excellent is the statue of St. George on a giant charger, killing the dragon with his spear. Then there are dancing figures with transparent drapery, shown in different poses delineating the suppleness of the body.

Kerala has a tradition of a beautiful form of painting on ivory. The area to be painted on is perfectly smoothened with sand-paper, and the outline of the picture drawn on it sketched in pencil. It is then pierced with needle, and water-colour is applied on the surface with a pointed brush, so that the colour penetrates the little holes. The portion is pressed again with needle.

Basketry, Mat-weaving, Bamboo and Cane-work

COILED BASKETRY is obviously the earliest form of production in which the foundation is laid by coiling the cane round the central core at the base, then building up spirally and widening to get the desired form. There are two types in which each coil is fixed to another. One, the simple over-sewn coil where each stitch passes over the new portion of the foundation coil below; the other, where the figure of eight is worked as it were, by passing the stitch behind up, over and down under the preceding coil and over the new coil.

In Bengal, this fixing of the coils is done with bamboo splints and a number of coiled articles ranging from rough storage jars to very elegant jewellery boxes are turned out. Plaited basketry is made by crossing two or more sets of warps and wefts. One of the main varieties is chequer where each strand passes alternately over and under two or more warps produced by varying widths, as also by colour contrasts. Where the warp and the weft are of different colours, a chequer board pattern is formed. In twill work the warp and the weft are of equal thickness, and the weft passes over and under two or more warps, producing various diaper patterns with coloured strands.

Wrapped work is one in which flexible wefts are wrapped round each warp in passing. Twined work has the warp strands thicker and stiffer than the weft, the latter being used two or three at a time with the strands twisted, crossing obliquely, so that wrapped, plain and diagonal designs are formed. In thicker work the warp is thicker than the weft, and in

weaving, each weft passes alternately over and under the warp, giving rise to a series of ridges on the surface. In the hexagonal, the wefts are worked in three directions forming an open hexagonal in the space.

The border weaving includes three strand warp border, simple wrapped border, and fastened twine. Sometimes the borders are fixed to the basket with long cane strips. Ornamentation is in simple lines, bends or spirally raising ridges.

In Assam the sieves and the winnowing fans are exquisitely done like works of art. In baskets *korahi* is cleverly done by gradually bending the square form to be rounded at the final stitching with flexible cane strips so as to let the water pass through easily in washing rice and fish. The tray is made in the twill technique in which the weft strands pass over and under two or more warp strands at a time, producing a diaper design. Such a sieve is seen in diverse uses from rearing silk worms to winnowing grain. Fishing contraptions are prepared from bamboo and cane each with a distinct shape. *Jaki* is a dome-shaped structure which can either be dragged along or placed on the water bed to catch small fish. Amongst traps, a finely woven one is like a rectangular travel box fitted with a *dori* so as to prolong a bamboo screen inwards from either side of an oval mouth, while the pointed splints are interlocked.

The most interesting and colourful item, however, is the bamboo and leaf headgear called *japi* for farmers and tea garden workers. Although it is made all over the state, those made in Nalbari and villages around are more attractive. Against a bright red background, a spiked circle is made with two bamboo strips, one inside the other, interspersed with a number of motifs like the cross, crescent, stars and a small circle with circles of butterfly-like designs, and a face in the centre. Umbrella handles made of *muli bamboo* are a speciality here. The bamboo to be used is fully filled with sand so that the stick does not crack when bent, and the mouth is sealed with cowdung. The portion to be bent is made red hot and turned with a bending hand-tool. The designs etched on the handle are of leaves, creepers, plants, and motifs like rings, crosses, etc. Apart from baskets, furniture is also made from cane and bamboo, which is a prestigious item in cities.

The best known places for basketry and mats in Assam are Kamrup, Sibsagar, and Nowgong. Cachar district is noted for the very special *sitalpati* mats.

Tripura State is famous for bamboo screens made from split bamboo, so finely woven that they look like ivory. They are delicately appliqued with coloured bamboo chips.

The basketry and the mats of Assam and Bengal are practically the same. *Sitalpati* which means cool spread, is a most appropriate name for this lovely mat, made from green cane slips. It is also woven with maroon dyed slips which make a lovely contrast against its own natural golden shape.

As with all fine mats, here the processes involved are long and laborious. After the reeds are washed in soda and dried, they are split and sized to pieces of equal width which are then boiled and dried. The process is repeated and where necessary dyed. To get the ivory shade, the splits are boiled along with rice juice. For colours, hibiscus, tamarind leaves, etc. are used. For black, they are wrapped up in mango tree bark and kept in mud for a few days. The weaving is mostly done in twill. Generally the warp is of one colour and the weft of another. Sometimes two styles are worked together to produce a number of designs. The usual motifs are trees, creepers, animals, birds, stylised human forms, as also geometrical designs. Each design is normally enclosed in a square made up of lines. Circles are mostly repeated with different decorations. Some have the *chowpat*, four squares with four empty spaces. Here women do the weaving while men take care of other processes. Another Bengal mat also well known for its fine quality, high decoration and rich finish made from the *madher* grass is the *maslond* of Midnapore district. It is woven with intricate patterns especially the mango, structural designs like temple spirals, with a flavour of the *jamdani*.

The long *panthi* mats more than a 100-yard long meant to seat two to three hundred at ceremonials, marriage dinners etc. are still seen in rural areas though not much in vogue now.

Bengal has also a rich variety in baskets. There is the famous *Lakshmi* basket, which is double walled, cane inside and bamboo twill work outside. This is generally covered with a red cloth on which are decorations like floral designs worked out of small shells. Other items are oval boxes, large

size *pataras*, oblong *jhipis* and flower baskets called *phulsajis*. These baskets are beautifully decorated with floral, figured and geometrical patterns using coloured strands as also accessories such as shells, beads, etc.

Orissa has some outstanding items, like articles made from what is known as the golden grass. This raw material is the stem of the *khushkus* plant, which has a shining golden colour. The skin of the stem when woven produces the most delicately textured mats which can lend distinction to any home. Very delicate-looking boxes of various sizes are also made in sets, one inside the other. There is something gentle and soft about these articles, that touch the very core of your heart. There is quite a range for these boxes from food-boxes to trinket cases, for though simple, they have a warm glow.

Some regions produce a very special class of baskets that merit mention, like the willow-baskets of Kashmir. They are woven artistically and though simple, look quite decorative, for the willow is itself an attractive material. They are only used for carrying stuff and are strong. A popular item is the picnic basket with double lids over two compartments and a handle in the centre. There is a very tall and most elegant office-paper basket which is produced by inserting bye-stakes and up-sets. They hardly age or if they do, in a mellow, lovely manner and never look ragged.

Manipur has very unusual all-purpose baskets, like the prestigious dome-shaped one with the lid made out of bamboo, and a square-shaped body of checks and squares in black and white, resting on four prominent legs. Called *chembong*, it is used for storing valuable clothes.

There is an elaborate black and white square bamboo-box, with black in the centre and a big white design where the lid comes to rest, which is made in Kerala. It has white twill-worked bands round the bottom rim and white chains covering the entire lid on a black ground. It is known as *mulapatty* and is also meant for keeping valuable clothes.

The common palm called the palmyrah grows practically everywhere and naturally the palm leaf is universally used. In the southernmost part of India, this leaf has been transformed into a great many utility items, endowed with extraordinary beauty, using high imagination, fine skill, and painstaking

labour. The districts of Ramnathapuram, Tirunelveli, and Kanyakumari of Tamil Nadu are well known centres for them—especially Manapad, a sandy village in Tirunelveli district. This village is noted for artistic and delicate basketry made without the core of the leaf. For this the tender leaves separated from the strips are joined together by winding over them a running strip. This band is then furled like a ribbon and fastened with a thin strip of the leaf connecting the successive layers at fixed intervals, yielding thereby a uniform and rhythmic pattern. They have soft colours and refined textures that speak of rare elegance and subtle taste. One of the reasons for their high quality is the careful attention to details. The fruit-trays are allocated for different fruits, each with a particular design and marked like pine apple fruit-tray, guava fruit-tray, mango fruit-tray etc., the design in each case being akin to the fruit. Suit cases, boxes, shopping bags, hand-bags, screens, chicks, mats, glass-holders, vases and a number of other things are woven. Basketry is done only by women.

In Chittarkotai (Ramnathapuram district), the leaf strip is used as a fastening hand over a frame-work, of *erks*, which are supposed to make the article durable. This place specialises in hats and purses.

Ramnathapuram is famous for its beautiful sieves and winnows, while Daripatnam specialises in hand-fans and square mats. Rameswaram has attained great fame for its highly decorative square boxes with their raised patterns, which make excellent trinket-boxes. There are special baskets made in Ramnathapuram district by some housewives in a variety of colours with abstract animals, birds and geometrical designs, distinctly different from other local products, for they show more imagination, closer folk tradition and a sense of aesthetics.

Nagore makes palm leaf articles, particularly shopping bags, dinner cases and the ornamental folding fans. The last named have been greatly fancied in India as well as abroad. They are made by removing the ribs of tender leaves and drying them in the sun and smoothly rounding them off. The fans are quite unique, for a 10-inch fan has about 56 blades, while an 8-inch has 37 blades. To ensure uniformity of size, the blades are cut with an iron die and the handle from a bomboo by splicing it into thin narrow strips. The blades are tied together with a

thin copper wire passing through holes pierced in the blades, then so sewn together that they can spread out to become a fan. But the sewing has to be very subtly done, so that the stitches are not visible. The blades are then painted with floral designs.

In Pondichery, the mats are woven with *kora* grass; cotton or aloe thread is used in the weave as aloe grows plentifully around, from whose leaves the thread is extracted. The designs are divided between horizontal and vertical in the form of stripes and flowers. For the floral, *chittipoo*, *thuthipoo* and *vazhaippoo* are popular designs, usually in red, and elaborately woven. As 60 wefts are used in each flower, and only the warps differ, all the flowers are brought about in one line, horizontal to the width of the mat. There is a special mat carrying the diagram with squares for playing the Sokkatam game known as the *Sokkatam* mat.

Kora grass mats have attained exceptional excellence in Kerala. This grass is cut into longitudinal strips, the inside pith removed, it is split again into thinner pieces, then it is dried and soaked in coloured water thrice. Later it is buried under mud or clay for 24 hours until the applied colour has stuck fast. The favourite colours are red, black and white.

In the weave the warp is of cotton or aloe fibre. Two bamboo collars are fixed parallelly on pegs, the distance being determined by the length of the mat. Yarn is drawn through the dents of the reed in the form of continuous thread and is taken through the heald, and its ends are tied on the bamboo rollers to form the warp. The shuttle is a simple piece of wooden stick with a hole through which the grass is passed. The reed is then beaten and pressed with leg as in any loom to alternate the yarn while a fresh piece of grass is inserted. For design weaving, the warp threads have to be pulled up with fingers as per the pattern. When ready the edges are stitched with twisted cord and the mat is rubbed with a polishing stone to smoothen it. Here men generally weave while women help in all the other processes. In most of the mats the centre is dominated by lozenge hatchings, with one or two strips at either end in different colours. Some have intricate design like the palm or bamboo tree or a boat in the centre, with simple or elaborate border and corner designs. The grass strips have to be reduced to fine counts

in order to manipulate the subtler designs. Geometrical patterns come out perfectly on these mats.

Screwpine is another gregarious shrub with sword-shaped leaves from which mats are made. To begin with, the two thorny edges and the midrib are first removed by the ingenious method of gliding a long thick coconut fibre along the leaf. The finer varieties need hair-thin splits which are boiled, cooled and dried, and by then they take on a soft cream shade. It is said that where extra silkiness is needed, they are boiled in milk. For ornamental designs, hemming and special varieties, the strips are coloured.

For weaving the fine variety, one long strip is placed crosswise under the big toe, facing the inner side upwards and another side is placed lengthwise. Then one more strip is placed parallel to the first one and the ends of the first strip are folded and put straight along the lengthwise strip, and the process repeated, the interlacing continuing as new strips are added. In the case of the coarser variety, the edges are also woven simultaneously. Here the weaving starts with two strips, but once the corner is completed and edges formed, the weaving continues with single strips and new strips added. The screwpine mat is an exquisite piece and people spread it on their bed or divan in summer to sleep or recline on. Articles like table-mats, writing pad-covers, bags, etc. are made out of it. An added attraction is provided by embroidering on some of these items, since the material lends itself to decorative stitching.

The common reed is a firm-stemmed grass with a hollow stem, somewhat like the bamboo with which it is interchangeable. Being sturdier, reed mats can be used even as walls for structures and roofs.

The matting is done in the twill variety, starting at one corner with the plaiting done diagonally, for which a long strip of reed is folded at the middle and another with folded ends inserted crosswise. The creases of the crosswise strips form the edges of the mat. To give artistic touch colours are introduced. Alwaye in Eernakulam district of Kerala is famous for such select fancy reed items. Reeds make sturdy baskets.

Grass bags of a certain type are made by the leather workers who neatly cover leather hand-bags with grass to produce an attractive novel item.

A special kind of *korai* grass growing wildly by a river in Tirunelveli district (Tamil Nadu State) produces the finest mats. A peculiarity of this *korai* grass is that it is available in the very fine variety only when it grows wild. Every attempt to cultivate it has been frustrated because of the coarseness it then develops. As the supply of the wild type is limited, the mat weavers of Pathamadai who weave these special mats are usually in short supply. They get round it by buying coarser species from other places to use for the thicker mats, and reserve their own finer grass for the finer products. The grass is first dried until the green colour turns to a golden, then soaked in the running water, with a stone tied to each bundle to protect it from being washed away, then left shaded from the glare. The weight of the stone on the stalks has to be shifted constantly from side to side. The fibre is split into thin wire-like strands for weaving. Twisted cotton yarn rinsed in rice paste is used for the warp. The weaver alternately presses a split bamboo piece, to do the necessary shedding, for, as each weft is a separate strand, it is not possible to use a shuttle. Instead, the weft is passed through the warp thread with the help of a long stick with a hole in it like a gigantic needle. For a complicated design two or even three of them are used. Each grass strand as it is pressed into the loom is moistened with water.

When the needle reaches the other end of the warp, the grass ends are twisted and beaten into position by the reed, after which the shedding is provided and the weaver then starts again with a fresh strand. To ensure closeness of the texture, occasionally during the weaving the weaver does what is called tightening the weft, and though normally women weave this process is only done by two men. They sit on either side, wet their hands, place one palm downwards on the mat and one palm upwards from under the mat, and rub on the woven surface, taking care at the same time to see that the fine cotton threads are not damaged by this pressure. The weaving itself is very slow and has to be done with enormous care. In a 100 count mat in a span of 9 inches there will be one knot for every 50 strands; one for every 60 strands in 120 count and one for 70 strands in 100 count, a task in which time seems countless. The traditional colours used are red, green and black. But

now that chemical colours are in use, all kinds of colours are utilised.

The ivory-white mat, simple with no trace of design, is a superb piece, for its very simplicity has an allure, all with its soft liquid surface. The design called *malaikulam* has squares in the centre in various colours, then geometrical designs, and the border is left plain white. The design *gopuram* (temple tower) has only two colours, the natural and green, with the towering roof in the centre. Monuments like the Taj Mahal are also woven. The old patterns consist mainly of stripes, usually at the two ends, or little streaks through the body. In fact these bring out the beauty of the texture more effectively. Several articles are made from these mats, but at Patthamadai itself the concentration is only on sophisticated ladies' bags which have a large demand both in India and abroad.

Cane, or *rattan*, as it is also called, is a kind of a climbing palm with long, thin, solid and many jointed stems which are extraordinarily strong. These stems are dried after their green sheath is removed. Cane sticks, when twisted together, can be used as cables or cordage in country crafts. The most useful and elegant items made out of cane are furniture pieces. For this, the rods after drying are cleaned and heated over a fire, which go to make legs and supports, while for actual interlacing cane splints are used. Cane furniture is durable as also decorative and dignified, and even a few pieces lend fullness to a room. Low seats called *mooras* are made of bamboo and cane, the top being woven in artistic designs. They are a major item of export, made all over the country.

Baskets and other articles are made from bamboo cane and raffia in many places of Uttar Pradesh. Allahabad, Bareilly, and Varanasi have concentration of specialised raffia products. Raffia or *moonja*, as it is locally called, is a grass which grows wild on river banks. The two outer stalks are dried in the sun and preserved in tin or wood containers for use. This work is hereditary and every girl starts on it as soon as she can handle the splits. A very large variety of items are made from raffia like baskets, trays, wall decorations—the children's furniture being most attractive.

The *sikki* grass articles made by the women of north Bihar are entirely different from anything else you see anywhere.

Being seasonal the cut pieces are stored for use throughout the year. As it is intimately connected with important ceremonies and rituals, it has evidently come down from very ancient times.

The coiling technique which is the oldest, is used in *sikki*. The common long grass is coiled and stitched together with the *sikki*, dyed in several different shades, using a thick needle called *takua*. Especially in constructing the sculpturesque forms the whole build-up is made from the coils. These forms are completely folk and in a style all their own. There are human figures, animals and birds. Each is a unique piece, naive yet highly expressive and most decorative, like the elephant with a rider, horse with a rider, etc. Tassels are used for extra embellishment and brilliantly hued wings of the beetle or coloured buttons to emphasise eyes and ears. All sorts of functional items such as boxes for keeping clothes, spices, toilet articles, dry foods are all wrought out of *sikki* in a multitude of shapes in dazzling colours. The clothes-box is in the shape of an elephant while the back of a horse becomes the stand for a large tray set off by gay tassels; a fish does for a make-up box, an owl whose head could be detached turns into a jar.

Bihar is greatly noted for its bamboo-work. The use of cut bamboo as a container to drink water out of, is an ancient practice; also simple scoops for kitchen use and large containers for storing grain. In fact the rural people in remote bamboo-growing areas still keep their precious possessions in bamboo baskets with lids of various sizes and shapes. Commendable experiments have been made in Patna to adapt these very objects to modern use. In fact many household items like well-shaped lamps and lanterns, elegant furniture, complete table ware, travel kit, almost anything seems possible to get out of the bamboo.

Mats from *tapper* made of fibre from the sun-hemp plant are wrought on large scale in Palamau district of Bihar. The usual method of soaking and using pressure is employed to extract the fibre which is then spun into yarn and used for making *tapper*. Indigenous colours like black, green and red are used. A number of articles of modern use are made like travel kit and hand-bags, some of them quite stylish. Hazaribagh and Purnea in Bihar also produce *tapper*.

Jute cloth, which one time was only regarded as packing

material, has now taken on new roles. Its natural colour, the heavy texture and twilly kind of body with strong earthiness attracts attention. It forms the base for embroidered curtains, cushions, table-mats, bags of all kinds, and floor coverings.

A new experiment has been launched to use pine-apple fibre for making textiles and various utility items from bags to floor coverings. It has an unusual sheen that gives its texture a silken look.

Horn, Shells, Shola-pith and Papier-mache

THERE ARE A FEW minor raw materials from which utility as well as fancy articles are made. The most widely used is horn, as this raw material is available almost everywhere. Though not a traditional material, the craftsmen have earnestly responded to it, using the grain in its composition and the variations in colours to excellent advantage.

Horn

The most common item made from horn is the comb, made in a variety. Some are traditional, double-sided with gentle carvings on them, others more decorative with ivory or mother-of-pearl inlay, and small-sized ones as ornamental pins and combs to be worn in the hair. Copies of jewels, flowers, etc. are also made. Some are intricately carved in trellis patterns, others are scooped hollow and filled with a little oil which flows out when the comb is passed through the hair. Other items are toy animals and birds, furniture, everyday use objects like buttons, trays, cigarette-cases, little boxes, ash-trays, pen-stands, lamps, etc.

Vishakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh, Honavar and Belgaum in Karnataka, Trivandrum in Kerala, Cuttack and Parlakimidi in Orissa and Sarai Taran in U.P. are some of the well-known centres for horn-work. Though in the main the items remain the same, variations can be observed in the designs. Orissa for instance makes lively stylised birds and animals, especially cranes which look as though they would just fly

away or birds which appear as though they might twitter, or tigers ready to jump at you.

The craftsmen in each Centre specialise only in a couple of items and attain greater proficiency in that particular form. Ornamentation by them on the combs is exquisitely done. Sometimes even a fine classical figure has hair pins attached to it to make it into a beautiful hair-jewel. In Orissa, little touches of silver filigree is added to the horn-article to give an unusual look to objects like bangles, perfume-jars, etc. Sarai Taran specialises in cutlery handles as also toy-furniture decorated with engravings. Kerala cranes are particularly famous, as also animals like elephants, tigers and the lions with their very majestic main. In Sawantwadi, Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra, horn was turned into a water-carrier to be used for an unusual purpose, pouring water over the deity at worship. It is said that once something like 35 shapes were made of this, some of them quite fancy.

Lotuses, caskets for keeping small images, little lamps, cups, even trays are made from the bison's horn which is quite large. Different kinds of animals are also made from it.

Shola-pith

Shola is a herbaceous plant growing wild in marshy and water logged areas. Bengal and Assam have large supplies of this. The *shola*-pith has been widely utilised in Bengal for artistic decoration. Flowers of a large variety are made from it. Their masterly work is the making and decorating of the big deities at festivals, like Durga for Dusserah celebrations, when she wears a huge headgear with lavish and elaborate designs. The crown itself is made in paper-pulp with the pith decorations fixed on it. It is one of the most impressive forms of ornamentation. The craftsman spends months over completing a figure, for each little detail in this huge composition is minutely and meticulously worked out in delicate and exquisite taste with this simple material. The deftness of the hand becomes even more astounding when you see them execute their craft through just one or two sharp-edged knives, a pair of scissors and a few moulds. These heavy decorated forms are made in Assam, Bengal and Orissa.

Tiruchirapalli in Tamil Nadu is famous for structural in pith. The craftsmen here make remarkable models of temples including the local Rock Temple, and different monuments of India, with delicate precision and remarkable attention to details.

The womenfolk belonging to the sandalwood-carver families show equal skill, imagination and taste. However, they specialise in making pith-flowers, wreaths for the hair and garlands of pith, also coronets for marriages and for the harvest dance. For this the white core of the stalk is cut into cylindrical pieces, after which the outer layer is peeled off and then paired into sheets which are rolled one within the other and tied tightly at both ends. The roll is then cut into two and on the cut-side V shapes are made and dipped in colour solutions, then dried. Holding the coloured end, the worker tears out from the roll inch-long pieces, and by holding tight the uncoloured end between the thumb and the index finger, she twists the pith-piece into a flower. Several types of flowers are made like plain white jasmine, tuberose, chrysanthemum, which look lovely in chaste white.

These flowers are strung on a thin wire to make a crescent shaped *veni* (row of stringed flowers) with a wire-fastener for the hair. Glittering tin-foils are used for extra decoration, the tin-foils being cut into the different designs and pasted to the pith pieces. Glass beads too are used for the same purpose. Thin gold and silver threads are also sometimes stuck into the pith flowers to embellish them. The marriage coronet is always in a pair. For the bride it is made in the form of a turban and decorated with pith flowers and tin-foils, a string of pith flowers being hung from the back to decorate the girl's hair-plait. The bridegroom's is more elaborate and consists of several pieces of pith fixed upright on a square or rectangular piece of card-board. It is then embellished with coloured tin-foils and glass-beads. It goes high up in at least two or more tiers and is very imposing.

The *suggi thurayi* is used as headgear in the *suggi kunitha* dance at harvest time in the coastal areas of North Kanara. Savantwadi in Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra makes similar decorations but uses the wood and the root of a bush locally called *bhend*, which is peeled and sliced into very thin sheets

and coloured appropriately. The pieces are shaped into buds or flowers to be made up into wreaths for the hair, garlands, etc.

Shells

The tortoise-shell at the moment is used in a very limited way as it is in short supply. Vishakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh is a prominent centre where the tortoise-shell is freely used for making trinket-boxes but along with ivory. The shell surface is overlaid with intricate patterns of ivory fret-work through which alone one can glimpse the orange shell. The best known product of this shell is the beautiful octagonal jewel box with the ivory net cover.

The coconut is one of those plenitudinous fruits every bit of which is utilised, beginning with the coconut-shell which encloses the kernel and is a very beautiful hard object. A variety of coconut-shell articles are made, like bowls, vases, flowers, rosewater-sprinklers, teapots and so on. Gradually a hookah was evolved out of it for which a foreign market was found. Then followed the lamp-stand encased in brass. The smaller shell articles are made in Trivandrum, Attingal and Neyyatingara in Kerala, and the larger ones in Quilandy, Kozhikode district.

For manufacturing objects of this shell, the process adopted is simple. A shell of the required size is selected, its outer surface rubbed with a steel-tool while the inner part is smoothened with a chisel. A circular base and a handle separately made with shell are attached to the cup by fixing screws. First, bootpolish is applied and then a final coating of French-polish given. But the preparation of the lamp-shade is elaborate. Bees-wax and charcoal are mixed and melted, filtered through a piece of cloth and deposited in cold water, and when cooled, heated slightly and pressed on a small square piece of lead with a variety of designs, square pieces being later taken out to be pressed against the wooden model of the article under preparation.

When this model has been completely covered with the wax pieces, it is removed and the wax mould given three coatings of a mixture of clay and chalk-powder, to which paddy husk is also added and dried in the sun. Under the

heat the wax comes out through the opening provided for the purpose. The mould is placed over a crucible in which copper and zinc are melted, and the position of the two are inter-changed so that the liquid fills the cavity left by the melting of the wax. When the metal cools, the mould is removed and the coconut-shell is fixed inside the frame with the help of a gum and a paste of boiling sealing wax is rubbed over the coconut-shell to give it an attractive colour.

Conch-shell

Conch has been a symbol of religious significance and good omen. Conch ornaments have been in use over the ages. Once there were large workshops all over the country for the production of conch articles, particularly bangles. The Indus valley excavations revealed numerous conch-shell products, including some inlay work requiring great skill. Even buildings were decorated with conch pieces. The conch bangles held sway for a considerable time and even today they have a demand, for they are the sign of a married woman.

Bengal could be said to be the home of the *shankh*, conch shell. To work on the conch, its apex, tip and edges are first cut off with a hammer and the inner dust is cleaned through the broken apex. The shell is next placed between the right heel and left toe of the artisan and with a saw the base is cut and from the remaining portion the ring shapes are sliced with a curved saw. Machines are now being introduced for this. The outer portions of this are polished on the sandstone, while the inner ones are rubbed on a sand-covered mandrel. The bangles are then bleached in nitric acid solution and finally polished with a dry cloth. In order to utilise the broken pieces, they are joined together with a lac-stick, resin and shell-power to make them into coloured bangles. The pieces are tied together with an extremely thin tin-coil and because of the ingenious way the craftsmen colour the joints, they are not visible.

Plain white bangles form the bulk production, coloured bangles are generally worn by women and in three kinds: *sonamukhi*, *maya* and the red bangles which are only used for marriages and rituals. *Sonamukhi* (golden-faced) is of a piebald

type gaily painted in yellow, green and red, with the five red drops on the mouth. In *maya*, the designs are made with a bamboo pen. The plain bangles are ornamented by embossing with a file different coloured designs. One of them is *jaltarang*, named after a musical instrument of this name, consisting of wave-like patterns, for which a raised line is obtained by indenting the surface of the area around—no colour is used. *Matardana* has a pea-like motif engraved on the periphery with a file, made by raising a portion. *Matidana* is a pearl-like mark within a rectangular area engraved on the outer surface. *Bhatia* is an intricate design with three slanting lines followed by a M-like figure on the periphery. *Mane-na-Mane* has different dots on both sides of a line engraved in the outer surface. Special small bangles are made for children called *Gini Bala*.

Conch-shell work has in recent years been started in the Neyyattingara area near Trivandrum (Kerala). Small items are made for daily use. As this spot is near the sea and not far from the pearl fishing area, it has every prospect of larger development.

Shell-horn is the whole intact conch used for religious purposes. On this, very beautiful symbolic ritualistic designs are made, mostly floral, sometimes figures, the most popular being the lotus. Conch-shell pieces are also shaped into eyelids to be inserted into the sockets in the icons' faces, to serve as eyes.

A new raw material that has been pressed into service for making animal and human figures, birds, etc. is coconut-pith, normally thrown away as refuse. The products come out in a very dark brownish shade. As this is not easily breakable, great many items including models, toys, dolls, etc. can be easily manufactured. The trial productions have been confined so far to Kerala. The animal and *Kathakali* models have had success. Imaginative modellers could venture into many more items.

Papier-mache

Papier-mache is a new craft in India. The raw material is simple and comparatively inexpensive. It is believed to have been encouraged by potters as papier-mache is more durable than clay. The pulp is obtained by beating moistened waste-

paper, which is then mixed with liquid gum and powdered clay. The composition depends on the object to be made, whether it is a pliable piece with complicated contours or a hard composite one. The pulp is rolled into thin sheets and pressed into the prepared moulds of wood or plaster of Paris. After drying the articles are taken out to be finished and polished.

Papier-mache articles are made in several places. In Kashmir a large variety of utility articles seem to become like art-pieces after passing through the hands of the ingenious Kashmiri craftsmen. Some items like bowls and vases are brass-lined to widen the scope of their utility. Flowers and fruits of all varieties including the heart-shaped Kashmir *chinar*-leaf, the iris, rose, tulip, hyacinth, cherry and almond blossom. It is said that on special orders, gold and silver leaves are also fixed on the surface.

Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh is such a centre but largely for toys. Ujjain in the same State makes popular figures of deities besides toys.

Jaipur has achieved some distinction, both in design and quality, but concentrates largely on small items like toys, and birds (a speciality), which are exquisitely made.

Very fine papier-mache images are made in Madras with fine finish and a distinct character of their own, which have found a good market abroad.

Toys and Dolls

INDIA HAS A GREAT tradition of toys and dolls which also figure in ceremonies, festivals and auspicious occasions. At Dusserah for instance, dolls are arranged on the altar of worship even if there were no image of Durga. The largest variety is in clay. Assam's clay toys and dolls are mostly abstract in form. In fact, the dolls hardly have any limbs. Assam has a variety of abstract animals. Exquisite dance figures are also made in clay. There are special anthropomorphic figures which stand out distinctly as typical Assamese—like the female figure with a bird-like beaky face. Then there are charming palanquins, sets of toys, cooking vessels, little animal heads on wheels perfectly adorable to look at, horses with long legs and long necks on which a rider squats looking puny and lost, complete sets of miniature articles of worship, etc.

Bihar has a wealth of clay toys done in abstract folk style. These include whole array of various kinds of elephants. They are delightfully simple, yet so alive, having even vivacious expressions. There is a remarkable dance ensemble which gives a powerful illusion of a group of dancers circling round.

There is a charming festival in Bihar called *Shyama Chak* in which the entire story of the festival is related through clay images made by the girls of the family. The scarecrow figures significantly in it, as only after it is hung up in the fields, is the story enacted most vividly by the girls in song and dance.

Darbhangha has special clay toys for festivals, like the turbaned and moustached man circled by four *devi* figures with their arms stretched out as in a dance. There is a special highly decorated elephant with clay ornaments on the head and over

the ears, kept on the roof of a house where a marriage is on. There are impish animals with mischief in their eyes.

Lucknow specialises in toy-sets like people of India, showing different faces, costumes, decor; *sadhus* of India, depicting different sets, musicians of India featuring musical instruments, brides of India in a vast range of bridal costumes and ornaments. The figures are realistically and colourfully produced.

Bengal makes different types of peasant figures, huts, temples, carts, as also the domestic animals which are part of the countryside. Jainnagar and Rajanagar are known for these toys. While some are totally abstract, others, like the Shantiniketan ones, are more realistic, some in earth-colours, yet others brightly painted.

The Krishnanagar clay toys are more like refined works of art, delicately shaped and chiselled with great attention to details. Mostly village scenes and religious figures of deities are made in the traditional style. Because of their superior quality, they have received world-wide recognition and found their way into museums abroad. Though the children start at a very early age, they gain proficiency of this high standard in hand-modelling only after putting 10 to 15 years.

Special figures are made in connection with rituals, which also serve as toys. The figure of *Sasthi*, the protector of children, is an anthropomorphic figure, a woman with a bird-like mien, huge toes, and children clinging all over her. The deities are mostly made at festival time. The craftsmen also make ordinary toys, with the use of moulds, which are inexpensive. The toys have large sales. Imitation fruits are very popular.

Very gay and highly stylised are the wooden toys of Bargarh (Sambalpur District, Orissa), whose richly caparisoned animals portray great strength and power. There are mythical animals like a lion with a fat squat body and a huge stylised neck, and highly decorated face and neck, shown riding on a brightly caparisoned elephant, called *gaja sinha*, probably once used symbolically in rituals.

In the Puri wooden toys, the religious subjects, especially the figures of Jagannath, Subhadra and Balaram, popularly called *Bara Thakur* are made in the abstract. In fact, they consist of an enormous head, large eyes—round or elongated—that cover almost half the face, short stunted hands that jut out

like two stout knobs. They have no legs, and sit squat on the ground. Ravana—with ten heads, a full figure standing on his feet, brightly coloured—is very popular because of its unusual appearance. Puri has gaily-painted horses and elephants, human figures, especially of women colourfully clothed and decorated with ornaments, which are not so pronouncedly folk.

The best known with the widest range in Andhra Pradesh toys are those from Kondapalli, a little village in the Vijaywada district. The themes are centred round the villages and the different vocations common to rural life, through a series of separate scenes like a small hut and a woman cooking with various household implements around, a man climbing a palm tree, a boy tending cows, or a figure spinning on a wheel, etc. Single figures depict deities, especially the ten *avatars* (divine manifestations) are extremely well done and some in very large sizes. The style is realistic, but has a rare delicacy of touch, the faces sensitively expressive.

These toys have attained fame for their originality and beauty. The wood is heated to dry it. Every single limb is separately carved and joined to the body with an adhesive paste of tamarind seeds, then coated with lime glue. The painting is done with goat's hair brushes which are very fine. The birds like the swan, peacock, parrot, etc. are particularly striking. Their occupation series have also an educative value for they show a number of artisans at work making different things. The weaving set, for instance, depicts, amazingly enough, 13 different processes in weaving.

Equally well-known are the Tirupati dolls of Tiruchanur village near Tirupati, made in the red sanderswood. They largely reproduce the religious figures in the traditional classical style of temple sculptures in small sizes like dolls. Ordinary dolls are made in couples, with clothing and ornaments carved on the body, a chiselled nose, and a dignity about the figure. Being also solid, children can handle them with ease and derive a sense of comfort from the very solidity. The reddish hue of the wood gives them an added attraction.

Nirmal, a village in Adilabad district in Andhra Pradesh, is widely famed for its toys. Though at one time Nirmal used to make religious figures, today it concentrates on animals but

more on birds, especially in flying formations—particularly wall plaques with the flying birds.

Ettikoppaka, a village in Vishakhapatnam district in Andhra Pradesh, specialises in lacquered household articles in toy-sizes, including complete sets of cooking vessels, table-ware, furniture, etc. The special items are mirrors in fancy frames, and toy carts. Lacquering is done on a lathe, hand or machine-operated. For turning slender and delicate items, hand-lathe is considered suitable. For this lac is applied in a dry state, that is, the lac-stick is pressed against the wooden ware to be lacquered and as the latter keeps revolving, the heat from the friction softens the lac, enabling the colour to stick. For transparent applications, lithopene powder and aniline colours are mixed. It is with remarkable skill that the craftsman manipulates the stick so that the colours spread uniformly, especially where several colours are used. Designs are painted with brush to make clothes or ornaments on figures or on toy furniture and such other items as need to be embellished with patterns.

Bihar has a rich tradition in wooden toys like the usual birds, fishes and human figures, excellent pushtoyes and rolling animals especially devised for little children. There are quaint ones like the wooden birds with long bodies and even longer legs but short necks fixed squat on the body.

A great variety of toys in folk style are also made from bamboo. A striking one is a silly-looking bird with two very long thin legs, and a long bushy tail, a crocodile on wheels with a long wide open mouth, with three figures in the abstract folk style riding on it, a man leading a tiger with a long pole, which rather excites children. Then there are scenes from tribal life, tribal villages with typical huts, men and women at their daily chores, with some animals and birds around.

The wooden toys from Toupadana near Ranchi in Bihar are quite unusual. Totally abstract, they are just pieces of wood painted up to look like human figures, with angular lines but no separate limbs, hands indicated only by painting lines on the body. They are always in pairs, each figure in a different costume, crown and ornaments to mark out the sex of each. They are different from any other doll.

Rag dolls are made by women out of left-over remnants. These are painstakingly collected, dyed into different shades

to work out a variety of colour schemes. They are folk—so mostly abstract. The commonest is the doll standing upright, two arms stretched out at the side and holding in between their fingers the ends of *odni* which goes over the head and hangs down the shoulders, the eyes and the mouth indicated with black lines which lend life and expression to the doll. The body is authentically clothed and decorated. Some typical rural figures are like a woman with a water-pot, or basket of vegetables or grass. There are group compositions like a batch of women dancing, or a community dance, king and queen, epic and historical figures, also animals and birds, all in the simple folk style. Women who are now being purposefully trained in this craft, make realistic figures, copying the types they see dressed in current fashion and marked as a 'modern' lady. They also make the very sophisticated dance figures in classical styles like *Bharatnatyam*, *Kathak*, etc.

Amongst lacquered toys, the products of Chennapatna, (Karnataka State) are rated high. A typical Chennapatna item is a set of cooking vessels and kitchenware and allied items like a grinding stone, mortar, pestle, a rolling pin, even a well to hold water, all sold in basket-boxes. The modern innovations include telephone sets, planes, engines, trains, trucks, rattles, balls, etc. There are special dolls like a series in ethnic groups which include some non-Indian also. Then there is a series of street vendors, a figure with a fruit and vegetable basket or pot on the head, the snake-charmer, a set of music makers playing on various musical instruments, a lady in a dance pose, etc. They are made mostly in folk designs, even modern ones like the steam-engine, aeroplane, etc. are abstract and more suggestive than real. Several villages round about, like Makkan, Yelekeri, and Diara, are engaged in lacquerware.

The educational toys of Mysore city have been pioneers in the field. Turned out in fret-work are plants, fruits, flowers, animals and birds to familiarise the children with their varied characteristics. This is today quite a big toy industry.

Belgaum (also in Karnataka State) has similar smaller centres which make fret-work pieces. The items are animals and birds, domestic as well as wild, simply made, but imaginatively designed and attractively painted. Every figure is fixed

on a batten with wheels which are painted black or blue. Eyes, ears and ornamentation are done with a pencil brush. Some of the figures have oscillating heads, the duck in this class being a favourite. A bullock-cart drawn by one or two oxen is very charming. A toy perambulator daintily decorated with floral designs and the jockey on a racing horse which seems to be leaping into the air, are the most exciting to the children.

Gokak in Belgaum district is noted particularly for artificial fruits and vegetables. The wooden products under preparation are first given a coating of a paste of powdered pebbles and liquid gum. It is repeated several times with an additional coating of a paste of chalk powder and liquid gum. A countless variety of fruits and vegetables are made; actually over a hundred items are listed for sale. They are produced singly or in bunches which are made by attaching the fruits to the peduncle and then adding leaves to it. A natural touch is added by having on a single bunch a ripe fruit, a ripening one and a third still green. Some like the melon or pomegranate are shown as cut, exposing the inner portion realistically. Some are only shown in bunches such as grapes, bananas, cashew-fruits. Whole trays piled high with fruits, which make a luxurious sight on a dining room side board, betel-nuts and leaves, lime and other spices look fantastically real.

The wooden toys of Kinnal, a village in Raichur district (Karnataka State), are differently made with an extra-unusual ingredient used, a sticky substance prepared out of jute-rags which are soaked, slivered into pieces, dried, powdered, then mixed with saw-dust and tamarind-seed paste and made into what is called *kitta*. The mixture of the pebble-powder paste with liquid gum and glue is used for embossing ornamentation like jewellery on the body of the figure. The choice of colours seems to be left to the painter and the paint brush used is made from the hair of the squirrel's tail. In production the preference seems to be for figures, birds and animals. There is a big range of animals from dog and goat to deer and elephant. Similarly, the birds range from the pigeon and the cock to the crane and the peacock. The cock particularly has a proud plume and stands with a snooty air about it. The style is realistic but the designing and chiselling lines are

finely drawn. A serenity and dignity on the dolls' faces is a striking characteristic of Kinnal as though they were well composed beings. A calf drinking milk from its mother's udder is a pleasing model. Some animals look very lively, like a running hare or a stag as though startled with fear. Some toys are made in cowdung and saw dust, especially for fairs and festivals.

Udaipur in Rajasthan is a big centre for wooden toys. They seem to play there such a pivotal role that when a marriage is fixed the boy's family makes sure that the bride-to-be is familiar with lathe. The lacquering is done in the usual way, pressing the lac stick against the revolving article. The leaves of flowering cactus are used for polishing. The articles are either in single colour or in rings or bands of different colours. Some complicated designs and colour schemes are effected by manipulating the lac turnery and using multifarious techniques.

The traditional ones include a cart drawn by a sparrow which makes a charming picture as also the kitchen-sets, *singardan* (toilet-box), grinder, cradle on a stand, etc. The modern ones cover a lantern, gramophone, train, car, jeep, aeroplane, counting bead-stand, clock tower, etc. Apart from the attractive shapes, the colouring is delightful. Imitation fruit is a very special local product.

Jaipur has very striking animals made out of old cloth, dyed afresh and stuffed with waste material, and gaily decorated with coloured paper and tinsel. They seem very alive with expressive faces. Jaipur also makes delightful toy animals particularly birds in papier-mache, which are highly imaginative, exquisitely modelled, and delicately coloured.

Bassi in Chittorgarh district (Rajasthan) is another noted place for wooden toys. The whole village in fact is engaged in carving and painting wooden products. Figures of *Ish* and *Ganghor* (Iswar and Gauri) made in small sizes also serve as toys. A very striking object is the peacock boat with two riders, brightly coloured, which is actually a toilet-box given to the bride at her marriage. But it is also a favourite with children as a plaything.

Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh has a special type of traditional rag dolls, dressed in traditional costumes in paper and whose

eyes are drawn in such a masterly fashion as to make them lively and expressive. The arms are stretched out on either sides, the palms daubed and the fingers streaked with red. The male carries on his head the typical boat-shaped turban of Gwalior, and the woman is clothed in a paper saree. The dolls are highly decorated and the costumes covered with tin-foil, span-gles, beads and tassels. As this particular pair of dolls is the innovation of a woman named Battubai, they are known as the Battubai dolls. The large ones look very impressive.

In the traditional types many paper-toys can also be found—some quite exciting. These are largely either mobile or oscillating, both folk in concept and abstract in execution.

Tanjore in Tamil Nadu was once reputed for its elegant and excellent oscillating paper-toys. They are now found more in the neighbouring centres of Kumbakonam and Mayava-ram.

In Kerala and the region around, paper-toys, particularly mobiles in the shape of a variety of birds, tiny animals, small dolls and lamps, are seen mostly at fairs. A favourite is a flower-shaped wheel with convoluted petals, which is attached to a stick and keeps spinning round and round making a great whirring noise and so is called a 'moth'. There is also a long curled-up snake with a whistle attached to the tail and when the child blows into the whistle, the whole snake is unfurled and opens out its hood at the other end, the opening of the paper making the snake's hissing sound. A monkey or a dog is attached to a pair of bamboo-sticks and keeps on performing somersaults. Then there are exciting double-toys all folded up. When you open one side you see one toy, then you open the other side, you find another, a perennial source of surprise and delight for children.

Papier-mache toys are made in a number of places throughout the country. Mathura papier-mache toys are quite distinctive and based on the local tradition like Sheshanag, the great snake on whom Vishnu reclines, Kali, Narasinha, and Ravana with his ten heads, either in a circle or in a row. There is a deep cup with the figure of Krishna standing in it with a passage to conduct the water down and out. You may fill up the cup but the water starts the downward flow only when the water in the cup is high enough to touch Krishna's

feet. Otherwise, whatever the quantity, the water stands still. This is to signify the baby Krishna's toe touching the river water which parted to make a path when his father Vasudeva fled with him across to Gokul to save his life.

Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh is one of the largest toy producing centres. Toys are made in wood. They are available packed in boxes, in sets of birds, animals, orchestra, dance ensemble, etc.

In Chitrakut (Uttar Pradesh), wooden toys are abstract and very quaint. They are mainly animals, snakes, crocodiles, rats, rabbits, lizards, frogs, all gaily painted. The rat may be purple, the elephant red, the rabbit yellow, snake green, and so on according to the fancy of the craftsman.

In Kerala, animals are made out of beautiful rosewood, elephants taking precedence over all others. A great favourite is two elephants fighting each other with their trunks flung out. A long range of Kathakali figures with their elaborate make-up and costumes have a great appeal and the various Kathakali characters each doll represents, excite the childrens' curiosity.

Pondicherry makes attractive and beautifully moulded toys in clay, papier-mache and plaster of Paris. A large variety of figures are also made naturalistic in style and in attractive colouring. The dolls represent the different Hindu deities in diverse postures or as symbols of different characters. They also show people engaged in their multifarious day-to-day activities. For animals, birds, fruits, and vegetables, there is a faithful copying of nature. There is, however, an established convention under which certain colours are used to depict men and women in different walks of life. For figures shown engaged in ceremonials, orange or rose colour is used, while grey is used to show those engaged in personal labour. The objects depicted are: workers labouring in a field or at a smithy or at carpentry, pulling a rickshaw, a shepherd watching sheep, a barber shaving, etc. If it is a marriage procession, the bride, the groom and party are in orange or pink, while the bandmen playing on instruments, the torch-bearers or those carrying gifts are in grey. But in the case of plaster of Paris toys the entire surface is finished with only *one* colour, white or cream or pale blue. In the case of deities, their jewels and special

clothes are splashed with gold colour.

Further south, in Panruti near Cuddalore and Vandipalayam in South Arcot district of Tamil Nadu, clay toys are a speciality. Panruti is famous for its wide range of secular and religious figures. They are both moulded by hand as also made through moulds. These are made more in the naturalistic style reflecting very much the local village scenes showing people in their various occupations. They have a good tradition in the excellence of workmanship and fine colouring. Karigiri near Vellore makes very colourful toys. Most popular is the toy zoo filled with a collection of wild animals made to glow with their appropriate coloured glazes.

There is a variety of comic toys going under the name of Chettiar toys. They are in truth such highly realistic portraits as to be almost comical at times. Some are in the traditional garb with caste marks, sacred thread and the inevitable paunch. The same but a more modern version of this Chettiar is now seen in pants and bush-shirt and an oscillating head.

Sawantwadi in Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra has a set with a man and woman and a toy winnowing fan in folk style with special local characteristics. Some are also lacquered. Wooden imitation fruits and vegetables gaily painted are also made.

The toys in metal-ware are very striking. The soft flexible fish of Ganjam in Orissa, for instance, is full of incredible verve and is most elegant, decorated with intricate patterns and is one of the acknowledged marvels of craftsmanship in sheet metal. Kontilo, a well-known metal-ware centre, makes perfectly cute figurines of cut-brass, specialising in small sizes. These are mostly religious figures but also serve as toys.

Bihar makes brass toys in folk style, with a large number of animals, birds, insects and human figures. In the Hindu pantheon, the smallest had a stake in the larger scheme of things. Thus the much despised rat is the vehicle of the much-loved Ganesh.

Metal figures in small sizes which could become inter-changeable with toys are made all over the South. They are usually available at important places of pilgrimage and large cultural centres. Madurai, in Tamil Nadu, however, is a unique centre which specialises in a large variety of insects, frogs, etc. in

brass in the realistic style. They are remarkable reproductions, with careful attention to details and most attractive.

Gujarat is particularly famous for its splendid animal toys made of embroidered or appliqued fabrics, which are exported to many parts of the world. Gujarat's unique shapes are, however, to be found in clay in the votive offerings found also in small sizes. The *Bil* horse, made on the wheel is quite unique, hollow, with a very short body and at the back where the tail should be, there is a wide opening into its belly. A centre in Baroda makes wooden toys which are stylised, some are rather abstract like the folk, the designs are entirely new, and though rooted in tradition, have broken new ground.

Madhya Pradesh has a centre which produces leather toys, largely animals. This is a new venture and probably the only one of its kind. Real skins of animals are stuffed and given a very life-like anatomy which is one of their attractions. They can look very lively like the fighting bulls ready to pounce, a prey, the stately horse with a rider about to take off, and the graceful deer on a gallop.

Toys and dolls are today made all over the country. They are not made only by the traditional communities but by a whole lot of new-comers to this field. The designs are new, some off-shoots of the traditional, some completely original and novel.

12

Folk Paintings

IN INDIA, THERE is an established tradition of painting on various objects, particularly the floors, walls and intimate objects of everyday use, and the art is usually associated with some ritual, but now due to long usage, has become almost a daily routine. It is known by different names in the various parts of the country—*alpana* in Bengal and Assam, *aripana* in Bihar, *mandana* in Rajasthan, *rangoli* in Gujarat and Maharashtra, *chowkpurana* in Uttar Pradesh (except the Kumaon region), and *kolam* in the South. These are perhaps the most expressive of folk pictures.

Floor Paintings

There are regions where decorating the floor is a daily routine—particularly where its observance is still accepted as a good omen. The entrance to the house is decorated, the patterns changing every day. The entrance decoration is a must, for a guest has to be made welcome with appropriate symbols. Similarly it is enjoined that one should eat in beautiful surroundings, beauty being equated with godliness. The decorating is done as a ritual, the women singing songs relating to each design as they draw it. While simple designs can make do for everyday, elaborate ones are prepared on ceremonial occasions. Some of these designs take even months, with several women working on them. Rice paste, wheat flour, earth and vegetable dyes are used for colours. For the brush, normally the hand itself serves, the tips, the fist, and the palm

being brought into play. Where necessary, thin sticks wound with a rag or cotton are used.

The designs are symbolic and basically common to the whole country, consisting mainly of geometrical patterns. Even the remoter Himalayan region like Kumaon is rich in this art, locally called *alpana*, a local adaptation of *alpana*. The Kumaon women use rice paste and work with their fingers with extraordinary swiftness on patterns to symbolise the deity along with the usual decorative motifs and any new innovation imagination may prompt.

Pltha is seat of Shiva and consists of concentric squares or circles with a cross to form the centre towards which four pathways lead from the four corners. The largest square is the altar while the lines around represent the steps. On either side a zigzag border stands for the ocean, called *lahari bel*, wave-creeper.

The *chowki* (seat) of Lakshmi (goddess of wealth and good fortune), done at Diwali, has two interlaced triangles signifying also the deity of learning, Saraswati. Encircling this is a twentyfour-petal lotus flower border, the outer circle being decorated with Lakshmi's foot-prints which are repeated in the four corners. This design is with triangular lotus petals or swastikas in the border.

Saraswati has a special *chowki*—a dot signifying the absolute, with a number of concentric circles around to depict growth and expansion. The deity is represented by two interlaced triangles, round which is a circle from which emanate 16 triangularly-patterned lotus petals. The four corners also carry similar triangles but shaped like betel leaves.

Durga (goddess of strength) has a central design, intricately drawn with swastikas, the outline done by putting nine dots horizontally and nine vertically to invoke the deity's nine names under which she is worshipped for nine days at the time of the Dusserah festival. There are two simple but very pretty designs. One is done for the initiation ceremony of the boy and is composed of seven stars within hexagons to represent the seven Rishis, the learned men of the epics. These are surrounded with floral decorations and the usual motifs like shells and the crown, while the borders are drawn as waves.

In Madhubani—meaning the forest of honey—a village in

Darbhanga district of Bihar, geometrical designs as also highly stylised figures are drawn. Lakshmi's feet are drawn at the door, the toes pointing in in order to indicate her entrance, the lotus with four to several petals is a symbol of the life force in the centre.

The *alpanas* of Bengal and Assam are highly decorative, with complicated patterns in flowing lines, geometrical and floral, winding spirals, zigzag lines of crinkled leaves, discs, wavy lines, circles, etc. The *mandana* of Madhya Pradesh has a special design at the entrance on a new moon night in the form of several stylised fruits and leaves, in ochre and white lines with olive green background to symbolise fecundity. At Holi, triangular patterns of the drum, sacred to the deity, are made with the outlines in double and filled in by tiny lines, while the body of the triangle is filled with smaller dots and lines, after each is divided into diminutive triangles.

The *kolam* of the South is different. The drawings are essentially sketches, only the outline done in chalk powder on a wet ground with rice paste on dry surface on special occasions. With the latter, the lines are drawn with the ring finger of the right hand, by dipping a small piece of cloth in the paste. The outline is done with dots and the lines are drawn across them.

Though the *kolams* are mostly in geometrical patterns, each is symbolic. There are flowing lines and floral motifs. All the Indian zodiacal signs are in use, especially the sun and the moon. For Tulsi *pūja*, the conventional Tulsi platform may be drawn; on Krishna's birth day, a cradle with the baby in it and baby foot-prints at the door. For harvest festival the convention is for symmetrical *kolams*, so designed with only dots and lines and with a pot depicted to symbolise the cooking of the new grain. There is a special day dedicated to birds, the crows in particular, for they are supposed to be the contacts between the world of the living and of the dead. On this day tiny *kolams* are drawn, on which food is served to the other-world messengers. In some temples, during festivities decorations are made on the floor only with flowers, the designs being related to the worship and are hence highly ritualistic.

Floor paintings in Andhra Pradesh are known as *muggulu*.

Each day of the week has a set symbol and the design is built around it. The basic motifs are the usual lotus, swastika, conch-shell and discs. In these Shri figures frequently—*Shri* is another title of Lakshmi and she is also described as the goddess of fertility.

Another design is a mystic grill with Shri in the centre which is symbolised by geometrical patterns. There is a very simple one of two conch shells with vertical lines on either side.

Wall Paintings

The paintings on walls also become narratives. Some outstanding ones are done in the Madhubani region where women are able to find expression in vivid forms and whose lines flow with energy. Their multi-armed Durga riding the lion, flanked by serpents with up-raised hoods is awesome. Vishnu in his manifestations as the tortoise (*kurma*) and as the fish (*matsya*) is remarkably expressive. They are surrounded by flowering branches, fishes, birds and snakes. The vacant spaces are filled with fertility symbols on which is a great emphasis. In symbolism the lotus is female, the bamboo male. An interesting picture has Shiva as an ascetic squatting high up in a corner, one arm encircling Parvati while she nestles close to him.

Their most elaborate picture is in the nuptial chamber—the *Khobar Ghar*—designed to bless the couple. Here there will be divine couples like Shiva-Parvati, Radha-Krishna, then signs of fertility and prosperity like the elephant, fish, parrot, turtle, sun, moon, bamboo tree and lotus flower in bloom. They make their own indigenous colours and use bamboo sticks wrapped in cotton for painting. Gods and goddesses who provide the blessings are depicted, sometimes with the figures of the bridal pair and even their attendants.

Painting on the wall is a communal act joined in by all the women of a family or group. These patterns are usually carefully preserved and care is taken to see each succeeding generation of girls continues it. This may be one reason why each community still preserves its own distinctive style which are similar in purpose but definitely vary in style.

Himachal Pradesh has its own distinctive picturisation on the floors with many geometrical patterns. Here one finds the lotus symbolising the unfolding of life; the serpent, the eternity of life; the wheel, the ceaseless revolution of time.

Maharashtra has its own modes in floor decorations but built up around the usual lotus, swastika, etc. *Modak* is a conch-shaped design in imitation of a sweet of that name and honoured as a favourite of the popular deity Ganesh. *Shankh-kamal* (shell-lotus) has eight petals and from each emerge snake-like lines. *Jhela* has small crosses manipulated with circular strokes into a four-petal flower joined together to become a grill. Swastika appears in many designs and in one it is elaborated with seven crosses vertically and horizontally, and as the design goes on, one cross is dropped in each line until it ends up in a single across. Each swastika then gets interlinked and forms an intricate grill.

Wall paintings in Punjab, outer Delhi and Rajasthan are usually made at festivals and special occasions like marriages. The *Sanjhi* image at Dusserah is made on the wall by fixing star-shaped pieces of clay, which are first painted white, then given touches of different colours to make the Devi a rich ensemble. The image is richly decorated with ornaments deftly made of lime stone and clay, topped with gay feathers, mirrors, stars and spangles, the attempt being to identify the Devi with the women of that area, from the headgear down to the ornaments on the feet and even to the pot on the head. This is a community function, several women jointly doing it. The body itself is abstract, which seems to give vitality and movement to the sculpture. The entire composition is done in free-hand without drawing lines or measuring. In Eastern U.P., Varanasi and places around, as also in Rajasthan, wild life figures a good deal in the wall paintings, like tiger, elephant, lion, antelope, deer, etc.,. Sometimes two beasts are shown locked in a fierce fight or a man hunting them. Sports like wrestling and horse racing are also shown. In short, objects seem to be in motion and nothing is static.

The wall paintings in Rajasthan are done by women with themes from epics and heroic Rajput tales. The popular Ganghor figures Ish (*Ishwar*) and Parvati worshipped at the Ganghor festival are seen on these walls. The images of

Srinathji and Jamnaji, his wife, around which the famous art of *Pichwai* developed on cloth, has a place in these paintings. Small hand-size paintings are produced on thin paper in brilliant tints for sale at a very nominal price. *Jataka* tales from the Buddhist lore which have animals for their central characters are here invested with human emotions and they seem to rise to great heights.

In the Kumaon region of the Uttar Pradesh Hills, the usual wall pictures are known as *bar-boond* (meaning dash and dot). The design is made by joining together dots by lines which are then filled in by different colours. Though simple, it needs care, for an error in a single dot or dash can upset the entire composition. Each pattern is known by the number of dots used, so the *Masti-harmat* design is in ten dots and the colours used are yellow, red, violet and green. There are also mat-like flower designs of rose and jasmine covering the entire wall.

In some designs, especially the floral, the feel of textile is very strong. There is a simple but very moving picture made every spring called *Nata Gandhana*, tying the knot of kinship. Rows upon rows of grain are shown standing side by side, symbolising prosperity and the ears of grain are joined with each other to show intimacy and concord. The overall effect is of an imposing structure, executed in perfect symmetry. The most noted are *pattas* made on festival days depicting the particular deity worshipped, along with the deity's various attributes. They are very large and run from wall to wall as they narrate long and very involved stories. Lakshmi holds the lotus, conch-shell, trident and disc made for her *puja* at Dewali, herself standing on a lotus between two elephants pouring water over her. The elephants symbolise the clouds and the water rain. During the ritual itself, the foot-marks are drawn from the door right into the inner chamber to symbolise prosperity entering the home. The *Durga patta* is the most elaborate, done at Dusserah when Durga is worshipped. Here Durga is represented with her eight arms under a canopy, below her are two lions and around her are other Devis. Sometimes Nava Durga is shown, i.e., with nine heads and eighteen arms. Amongst these many Devis are twins with joined hands called Anyari and Ujyali Devi deities of night and day. A great favourite with the hill

people is *Sur-Sarang*, Vishnu and Lakshmi reclining on the great serpent, Sessa, with Brahma sitting on the lotus rising from Vishnu's navel, a symbol of creation.

The wall pictures made in Kumaon to mark family rituals like naming a new-born child, thread ceremony, marriage and the like, have their basic designs around *jiva matrikas*, which means mother of living beings and the pictures are therefore known as *gyonti*. Kali, Lakshmi and Saraswati are painted as embodiments of the three powers while Ganesh is always there as the remover of obstacles, as also the Sun, giver of light, and and the 16 *matrikas* depicted through conical shapes.

The *gyonti* for the marriage is the same, except that in the middle is put a lotus design, and two evergreen trees with two parrots and in the centre Radha and Krishna.

The wall paintings of Himachal Pradesh done in the same style of mud plaster and cowdung as reliefs on the walls. The flora, animal, bird and human forms are abstract in presentation and composed into space-areas like the circle, the square or the rectangle. In the larger representation, the colour energies seem to flow with vigour in their natural course of bold linear rhythms. The folk touch with the deep brush strokes give these objects a breadth of life and make them to pulsate. The symbolism of the amours of Radha and Krishna is common. Tense scenes show how Radha waits expectantly for Krishna, clothes in disarray through restless movements of impatience perhaps, eyes distended with pensive apprehension. The earth is shown red with the trees mature in full bloom, and the fresh grass looking up. Radha seems to hide her dismay under a blue mantle which pales beside the glowing blue of Krishna's body.

Painting on Objects

The *patachitra*, as the folk painting of Orissa is called, has a history of great antiquity. The current pictures have a basic resemblance to the old murals of that region dating back to 5th century B.C. The best work is found in and around Puri, especially in the village of Raghurajpur. The artists' colony is known as Chitrakar Sahi, in the vicinity of the local temple. The painting is done on cloth which the artists process by

coating it with a mixture of chalk and gum made from tamarind seeds to give the surface a leathery finish, on which the artists paint with earth and stone colours. Apart from the epic stories, there are figures like a dancing girl or mother and child.

Most of the scenes are however from the life of Krishna, a fountain of inexhaustible anecdotes of colour and excitement that people never tire of. Krishna dancing with *gopis* is a favourite—Krishna holding up mountain Govardhan, Krishna playing pranks on his playmates and the entire environment charged with an air of mischief. The eternal idyl of Radha and Krishna, Krishna dancing with Radha clasped fondly in his arms, his eyes lit with love gazing into hers. All these are set in picturesque surroundings and often an exhilarating riot of colours meet our eyes—vivid-red, orange, yellow for the background and lapis lazuli-blue for the sky, dark green for dense brooding trees and parrot-green for the grass. Against this glowing background will be the blue figure of Krishna, and Krishna's playmates in pink, purple, wheat-brown and a whole host of shades touched off by gold and silver brushing.

A very common article on which folk painting is done is pottery, for man seems to have been eager to embellish the surface of objects. Gradually, as pottery developed the ritualistic associations, the designs whether geometrical or anthropomorphic, painted or incised, began to take on symbolic meaning and magical purposes. So, sometimes when a village woman—ornamentation on pottery as on walls, is always done by women—decorates a clay-ware, she serves some ritual besides beautifying the article. For important occasions there will be sumptuous vessels, each rimmed with doves, or gaily painted with trees, creepers, leaves, flowers, animals, etc. Kangra pottery with a black or red base has one geometrical pattern or creepers charmingly lacing the mouth, in brown and white. Painting is done with brushes using clay and powder from a stone rich in iron oxide or by incising and cutting the raw pottery in which comb-like and knife-like tools are used.

Gujarat and Rajasthan have a wealth of painted and decorated pottery. The pumpkin-shape, common in kitchen vessels is often covered with floral designs, naturalistic or highly stylised. A popular design is a row of deer or swans or

elephants or even tiny clusters of seeds around the concave rim of any bowl; or just sweeping curves in double lines below the rim, giving the appearance of a far larger surface; sometimes a dainty line of stylised leaves which is seen on shawl borders. What is of interest in this context is the fact that many of these designs are found amongst the potteries excavated from the Indus Valley, dating almost 5,000 years back.

The painted pottery of Bengal is aesthetically rated high and some of it is quite sophisticated. An interesting earthenware known as *Sakherahari*, is decorated with a variety of colours either after the items have been baked, or on the raw pot with different kinds of clay, and the colours are then burnt in. Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh and its environs are famous for decorated pots, specially those made for marriages and festivals in bright colours. The designs are mainly of animals, tiger being prominent, and also of leaves and flowers,

Tanjore developed a delectable tradition of its own in folk painting on wood. The themes were from the epics but mainly from Krishna's life. They are naturalistic in outline, with perfect harmony and rhythm in the composition and colour blending, with pleasing and expressive faces, even though bright shades are used. The speciality of these pictures lies in their ornamentation. The images in these pictures are adorned with golden leaves, gilded metal pieces, coloured stones, traditional jewellery till they are fully decorated. The skill here seems to lie in composing and working out the ornamentation, especially with the balancing of the gold leaf and the coloured stones.

A rather unique item in painting is the pack of playing cards known as *ganjifa*. They are round in shape, richly decorated and shaped. The method of making these is rather intriguing. They are made from pieces of thin cloth pasted in three layers with gumlike substance, then coated with liquid chalk to give it a white surface. The pieces are then turned into a round shape, polished with stone and painted like a miniature, then the backs are coated with lacquer.

In the *Dashavatar*, the ten manifestations of Vishnu are

shown. Then each *avatar* is shown in ten different phases. Thus this set has around 120 cards. In the *Hukmi* set which means bidding, mythological scenes and figures are drawn. The lines are fine and chaste and the colours very pleasing.

Metal-ware

THE ANTIQUITY OF the use of iron proved by monuments like the Konark Sun Temple and the iron pillar at Qutub Minar are two out of numerous examples of the durability of the old iron-works in this country.

Copper and bronze were probably the earliest non-ferrous metals which man shaped into tools, when copper and tin were mixed to contrive them into a new alloy, bronze. The *Matsyapurana* describes methods of casting bronze images at the start of the Christian era, when uses of a large range of alloys obtained by varying the combinations and compositions of metals to meet various requirements seem to have been discovered and practised.

Metal-ware in India may be roughly divided into religious images, ritualistic items and objects of utility. In the last, there is both plain and art metal-ware. The metals used are brass, copper and bell-metal. Brass is an alloy of copper and zinc; bell-metal is a mixture of copper and tin. When the simple domestic metal-ware spread out into the prestigious ritualistic field, countless representations of gods and goddesses became one of its prerogatives together with a vast variety of temple accessories.

The shaping of an object is done either by beating the ingot or sheet metal to the approximate shape with a hammer while heating, or by pouring the molten metal into a mould, made of clay for ordinary ware, wax for more delicate objects. The beating process is preferred particularly for bell-metal and copper-ware as it is supposed to make the object more durable. Further tempering is done by heating the article red-hot and

immediately dipping it in cold water. If it turns black in the process, it is rectified by light hammering.

There is also the turning process done on the lathe often worked by a string.

Soldering is done by using a metal alloy which the artisan himself prepares, where an article is manufactured in more than one piece that have to be joined together.

Bell-metal is most attractive with its soft surface and the old gold tint. It is mostly used in cooking ware and dinner plates, for it does not tarnish and needs no tinning like copper.

Orissa has bell-metal production establishments all over to make a large variety of vessels pleasing in shape, some really exquisite.

Kerala is also a home of bell-metal. Its cooking vessels, wide open, with flat or curved rims, called *urlis*, are classic in line and can be used as prestigious table-ware, their plain surface adding to their dignity. A giant cauldron called *varpu*, which is magnificent in form, is used in temples. A simple oil-can with its swirling lines and tapering up like a candle could indeed be taken for a Greek vase, so chaste is its outline. Kerala also has a great tradition in tumblers for drinking which have a wide range in sizes and are very elegantly shaped. There is also a jug, the lower part rounded in convolutions and a long spout jutting out at the side. Trivandrum, Irinjalakuda and Kasargod are bell-metal centres. In the ornamental line there is a variety of jewel-boxes, oval or square, with eight sides, fastened in the front with a big bold ornamented chain and *pan*-boxes, lime-jars, each with a different artistic finish in brass in floral or creeper design.

Nachiarkoil in Thanjavur district of Tamil Nadu is an important bell-metal centre. This is due to the presence of a light brown sand called *vandal* on the banks of the Cauvery, ideally suited for making moulds. Some of the articles made by casting are: vases in different shapes, tumblers, water-containers, plain and decorated, ornamented spittoons, which are a speciality here, food-cases, bells, candle-stands, kerosene lamps, picnic carriers, and a large variety of oil lamps. Of these a few like tumblers, food-cases, milk-containers are in bell-metal, the rest are in brass. A special jar or container

with a cashewnut design and called after it, has become a kind of hall-mark of Nachiarkoil.

Assam has its own special shapes and patterns in metal-ware, Gauhati and Sartbari being the main centres. A shallow bowl on a stand, with a dome-like cover is a typical item made both in brass and bell-metal, called *horahi*, used in rituals. There are delicate motifs on the sides and sometimes also on the cover. Something similar called *donari*, but embellished by dangling pendants, is a must in a wedding, as a part of the dowry. There are pitchers and sieves with special designs. Assam also has beautifully shaped, finely decorated *pan-boxes*.

Manipur is well known for its bell-metal, particularly ceremonial artifacts produced by the *cire-perdue* casting. For this a mould made of clay mixed with husk is made of the object to be cast, which is then dried and polished and wrapped in a cover of fragile melted beeswax wires. The mould provides on its upper rim a clay walled orifice leading into the wax replica which serves both as a drain hole when the wax is finally melted, as also a pouring channel for the molten metal to pre-empt the vacated space in the final casting. Several coatings of clay are applied and dried until the clay mould gets leather-hard, after which the wax is melted out. The molten metal is then poured into the voided replica-chamber while the mould is kept red-hot. The article is then ready.

Manipur has its own distinct shapes. A dish in the shape of a large bowl with a broad rim running around at its neck and resting on a small pedestal, is most beautifully formed, which is called *krishna kanti*. The lidded betel-nut container, which looks more like a ritualistic lamp and is called *senga*. An article with very chaste lines is a large bell with *garuda* at the top. The *Nayatpi* design is an attractive ornamentation formed on the surface and the borders by simple patterns made with the hammer, like dots, lines and circles repeated. Sometimes the patterns look like fish scales. The *Nayatpi* design is put on smaller items like cups and bowls. It is made, however, on the mould itself. *Yamguleiba* is just lines inscribed horizontally, mostly on water pots.

Beautiful metal-ware articles are made in several parts of Gujarat, the best being in Jamnagar, Wadhwan, Visanagar and

Sihor. Visanagar in fact was once a hall-mark of quality.

Amongst ritualistic articles are large temple-bells. The famous temple-bell on Girnar Hill, weighing 240 kg. was made in Sihor. Sihor is also known for its animals and birds. Other specialities are the very large temple-drums made of copper for which Dobhoi is noted. The ritualistic articles are often decorated with images of deities.

Gujarat is noted for its great variety of designs of the same object. Thus one can see dozens of parrots or swans or horses, yet each distinctly different from the other. In ornamental work, Visanagar is famous for its repousse-work. Brass furniture is the speciality of this region. Some are of pure metal, some of metal inlay on wood. Most popular are the typical low square stools and low-arm chairs. Once pure metal furniture highly ornamented in a variety of styles was used in palaces as also by the very rich. Today a few items are seen in palaces and temples in fine trellis-work, mounted with statuary.

Uttar Pradesh is the largest brass and copper making region in India with thousands of establishments. In domestic-ware each of the scores of *lotas* (small water-pots) is known by the name of its origin, like Etawah, Banaras, Sitapur, etc. The ritual articles are largely in copper like *tamrapatra* (pot for storing water); *panchapatra* for holding in all the articles needed for worship; *sinhasan* a seat for the deity; *kanchanthal*, plate for offering flowers and sweets, and a host of such things. Some centres of Varanasi also cast icons. A little village called Srinagar makes very beautiful traditional images with prominent conch-shell eyes.

Two methods are used in casting. *Para*, mould-casting for making a single composite item of a simple kind and *darza*, sand-casting where various parts of an intricate object are separately prepared and then soldered.

West Bengal, particularly Bankura town and Asansol, are well known for bell-metal and brass *thalis*, tumblers, kitchen-ware and water-pitchers.

The water-carrier is a most crucial article in a desert area like Rajasthan. The well-known modern zinc container, covered with cloth and a tumbler on the stopper is quite an original item, called *badla*, cloud, to signify that it carries water.

At present the main centre for *badla* is Jodhpur. Once an aristocratic article, decorated with gold and silver, is now simpler and caters to all. Semi-circular shaped pieces are cut out of the zinc sheets and two such pieces are needed to form a *badla* by soldering. Holes are made in the body for the tap and the ice-chamber. The body is then covered with cotton or woollen cloth or felt, on which decorations are made, either with numerous coloured tapes, or metal-engraved designs of flowers, birds, animals fixed in the centre or on its shoulders. A metal stand is fixed at the bottom of the *badla* with nuts and bolts or is soldered. In some, a brass self-closing stop-cock and tumbler are fixed. The threads of metal ring at the mouth of the *badla* holds the lid tightly.

There are three varieties in *badla*: round, the semi-circular and the rectangular kettle. The smaller ones have shoulder straps, the larger ones handles. Special ones have ice-chambers and taps.

In Karnataka State, Bangalore city, Nagamangala, Sravana-belgola in Hasan district, Udipi, Buntwal and Karkal in Mangalore district are important metal-ware centres. Karkal is an old Jain centre where special Jain icons are available. Mangalore has special domestic-wares in bell-metal, with distinctive shapes for specific purposes like a milk-container with a lid called *milli*; a special round bowl with a long handle, the end gracefully curled called *gurdano*, used for feeding babies. Udipi is famous for small images and various ritualistic articles.

In ritual items the best is statuary which represents the visible forms of the deity to be worshipped. For this the *Shilpa-shastra's* elaborate treatise on bronze icon-casting are faithfully followed. From the *Rig Veda* time there have been references to two casting processes, solid and hollow, termed *ghana* and *sushira*. While the images are countless, each is very individualistic, and the craftsman has to learn not only the physical measurements of the right proportions to make the images but also familiarise himself with the verses describing each deity, its characteristics, symbolism and above all the aesthetics. These verses are known as *dhyana*, which means meditation. This is to convey the need for intense concentration on these instructions. The compulsion of these guidelines may lead one to fear that they would restrict the creative urge and circum-

scribe the craftsman's innate talent. But the individuality of the images both the old and the new are a convincing proof that each reflects its maker's talent. The vibrant life which seems to pulsate in the masterpieces, the lines of beauty which flow through the limbs can only come out of the artist's genius and not any book of rules. While the tradition is there to preserve the core of our heritage, obviously the craftsman is expected to do much more than merely put the limbs together, endow them with the character each image has to convey from out of his own emotions, thoughts and volutions.

To give guidance in modelling each of the important parts of the body, it is likened to some object from nature: eyebrow modelled after *neem* leaf or fish; nose, the sesume flower; the upper lip, a bow; chin, a mango stone; neck, the conch-shell; thigh, the banana tree-trunk; knee-cap, a crab; ear, the lily; and so on.

Icon-making is still a laborious, time-consuming and concentrated job and demands a formidable array of tools, extreme skill and precision. Usually a coconut palm-leaf is used for making out the relative measurements for the icon with marks made by folding the leaf. In solid casting the mould is made by giving several clay coatings on a prepared wax model, but with a different clay each time. These convey the contours of the model to the cast-image and are, therefore, important. The molten alloy is then poured in a thin and even stream into the mould made red-hot. When the mould is broken, care is taken to see that the head of the icon is out first as a good omen. In complicated castings connecting rods are used for support, which are later detached.

In hollow-casting a clay model of the object is made over which is applied a thick coating of prepared wax, the thickness of which must match the thickness of the article under preparation. The mould is kept rotating on the lathe as the hot wax is spread, over which are marked and pressed the designs for decorating. Other coatings are given of a paste of burnt clay to keep the wax intact. An opening is provided in the outer shell and when a fire is lit around it the wax melts and flows out through it. Into this empty space is poured the molten metal. This is subjected to the usual method of tempering by subjecting it to heat and cold alternately.

Tamil Nadu is one of the famous bronze-casting regions. Stylistically the images belong to different periods like Pallava, Chola, Pandyan and Nayaka and images which are now produced are more or less one of them. The icon-makers are known as *stapatis*. The chief centres of production are: Madurai, Karaikudi, Srivilliputtur in Ramanathapuram district, Swamimalai in Thanjavur, and Chidambaram in North Arcot. Of these Swamimalai is best known as it is almost wholly engaged in image-making, both in stone and bronze.

The most important among figures is the world-famous Nataraja. This is a pedestalled icon usually shown in the *tandava nritya* pose, the right foot stepping on demon Mayalaksha, the upper left hand with open palm and extended fingers pointing downwards, held obliquely across the body known as the *gaja hasta mudra*, symbolising destruction, hence the nomenclature *tandava*. The lower hand holds a flame, while the right lower has the palm open with extended fingers and held upwards in a frontal pose with the cobra wound around it, a gesture symbolising divine assurance and protection, and the upper one holds the drum beating the cosmic rhythmic sound of the primary creative force. The other left pointing across the body to the upraised foot signifies deliverance. Stylised flames which emanate and form a halo to encircle the dancing figure stand for the cosmic function of creation and destruction, the eternal circle. Under the right foot is Mayalaksha, the cloud of materialism to be disintegrated by the power of the divine spirit.

A companion figure to this is Sivakami, dancing Parvati, Shiva's consort, also on a pedestal. It is rather an unusual pose, the upper part of the body from the hips makes a sudden sweep to the left, one of the legs stretching forward while the hips are twisted to the right for balance. The left hand is doing the *lola-hasta mudra* that is stretched downwards along the side of the body with open palm and extended fingers pointing downwards, and the right is in *kataka hasta* as though holding flowers or other offerings.

A popular image very widely worshipped is Durga—the feminine power in her pose of *Mahishasura Mardini* which usually stands on a rectangular pedestal. The figure is depicted with four arms, the right leg crushing the demon in

buffalo-form and the pointed end of a spear piercing into the back of the demon.

Trimurti—the three gods—Brahma, the creator, Vishnu the preserver, Shiva the destroyer—amalgamated into one depicting three faces on a single body with six hands, the two front in *abhaya* and *varada hasta*, the former for assurance and blessing and the latter for charity, where the palm is open and held outwards with the finger stretched and pointed.

The *stapatis* specialise in a number of dancing figures in numerous dance poses. The *Murli* pose shows a dancer on an oval pedestal, with her hips twisted to the right while the body stays perpendicular, and the hands are shown playing on a flute. In the *Atibhanga* pose, the dancer is on a circular pedestal, the upper part from hips onwards slightly sweeping to the left, while the hips are twisted to the right with the left leg stretched a little forward.

Thilothamma is the celestial dancer shown with the left leg crossed in front of the right leg and placed a little right on its toes. One end of the attire is extended up to the pedestal on the left to balance the image, and in the right hand is a parrot.

The chief centres in Kerala for icons are Trivandrum, Payyanur in Cannanore district, and Angadipuram in Palghat district. Some fine work in images is also seen in the rafter shoes in which a quaint use is made of a bronze as an ornamental cover fitted to the outer end of a rafter for protection from fire. There is a wonderful directness, devotion and serenity associated with the Kerala religious images. Kerala has an unusual *tandava* dance, known as *gaja tandava* or *gajasamhara*, where Shiva is crushing the demon in an elephant form.

Durga is the favourite image in Bengal with variations in decor. Particularly popular are heads of the goddess, highly decorated and topped by a crown. They all have the fish-shaped elongated eyes.

Basically the emphasis in Indian metal-craft was on chaste lines and elegance of form and ornamentation was never used to cover up flaws in the original shape. Nevertheless, as metal entered the ritualistic world, decorations became inevitable, especially in temple accessories, the numerous vessels used in

the worship, incense burners, whisks, lamps and musical accompaniments like bells, cymbals and gongs. Ornamentation grew up in the vicinity of the temples even as the latter became monuments of art.

Under this category we may start with lamps. Probably no other country has such imagery and symbolism built around lamps as India. For, as a symbol of Agni, the fire-god, lamps are deemed auspicious and waved at marriages as also to welcome important guests. These waving lights are found in many different patterns with a handle to a small tray, shaped as a cobra, fish or swan; little ones to light small rooms and for quiet personal worship, and large pedestal ones to light a spacious hall.

Temples also have the *stambha*, heavily carved pillar lamp, formed by a number of circular recesses placed around a very tall central stem, bigger ones at the lower end growing smaller as they go up, to give it a conical shape. There is a pedestal lamp with a petal-shaped receptacle for wicks arranged in a circle, while the top is shaped into various-forms like a swan or parrot, or animals like lion or *yali*, a mythical animal.

A horse-lamp consists of a bowl with a horse and a rider, its front legs raised up into the air and its hind legs standing on the rim of the bowl, while a chain runs up from the horse's head to the rafter or whatever it is attached to for hanging. There is a cobra-lamp wherein a niche on the raised hood of the snake holds the oil and wick.

Every lamp has a special purpose. A brass box-like lamp with decorated perforations, makes a garden-lamp for the courtyard. Small lamps are for the niches adjoining the door-lintels. A standing feminine figure has the bowl for oil and wick in her hand and often a parrot perched on its rim or on her arm or even on her armlet. The *kumbha* lamp is elaborately decorated with a cobra pouring oil into the receptacle, while the baby Krishna crawls up the handle; another has a highly decorated elephant in a saluting pose with the trunk twisted up to touch its forehead while a peacock forms the actual lamp. The hanging lamps have highly ornamented chains.

Lamps in North India are perforated with diverse designs. The usual motifs are stylised creepers, leaves, flowers, fish

scales, and geometrical designs. Some lamps are in four or six-sided shapes often with *mehrab*-shaped openings. There is a round one, the top shaped like a minaret, but the middle is hexagonally cut to feature six *mehrab*-shaped ground glass openings, while the base is an inverted dome with flower and leaf motifs. The *pahaldar*-lamp, so called because of the two concave pillars (*pahals*) on either side of the *mehrab*-shaped opening, is perforated in diamond or leaf shaped pattern. One lamp is made completely a network of fish scale pattern. The Jaipuri lamp is elaborate with *mehrab*-shaped openings set in hexagonal frames, topped by a bowl which is mounted by a column ending in a perforated sphere and an inverted pinnacle at the base.

The original niche for oil and wick and the socket for a candle is now replaced by an electric bulb.

An unusual metal-workmanship is the metal-mirror, a special product of Aramula, a village near Chengannur in Kerala, made out of an alloy of copper and tin, its polished face resembling glass because of its wonderful reflecting quality. The artisans are said to have stumbled on this when they were once making a crown for their deity. The temple chief was so delighted with this mirror that he had it included among the eight auspicious items used in worship, and the deity is now popularly known as the idol of mirror.

Art Metal-ware

The attractive contrast in colour and texture of metals has been the basis for the evolution of many decorative techniques such as the overlaying appliqueing, inlaying, enamelling and fusing of various colours, etc.

The technique of metal ornamentation has a far wider range than wood. The work done in Jaipur, Moradabad, Delhi may be taken as representative of art metal. Brass ornamentation may be divided into hammered, chased, perforated, pierced and repousse.

Repousse or embossing work which is one of the specialities of Varanasi and Jaipur is done by raising the design in relief. The design is traced on the article by hammering the outline in dots. The article is then inverted and placed in a

warm bed of sealing wax, resin, mustard oil and brick-dust which, when cooled and hardened, acts as a protective cushion. By means of a hammer the craftsman depresses the design along the dotted line while elaborating it. When turned face upwards, the depressed areas will be seen as raised in varying degrees.

Chasing is the art of engraving of a design on the surface of metal with a blunt chisel. In the chasing process the chisel, under the light blows of a hammer, only leaves an imprint on the metal.

Engraving is probably the earliest effort in ornamentation by cutting or scratching lines. Sometimes figures in tin are introduced. In the engraved brass work, impressions are first made with a dye by hammering, the work then completed by cutting away the brass in the space between the figures and given a granulated look by the graver. As the tracery gives a finely granulated surface to the metal it is called frost work. Sometimes, the brass is encrusted with figures of copper, fixed on the base metal by hammering. The figures are finished with a graver or chisel. Punching creates a decorative effect by arrangement of lines and dots in a definite artistic pattern. Etching is similar to engraving but the lines in this are thinner and rather superficial and drawn with the help of acid. There is a low relief type of embossing called basso relief which makes the article cheaper. When the article is polished and ready, it is washed with a lacquer solution. Lacquer is also sprayed on the article by a machine.

In decorative metal-ware a variety of scenes can be depicted, of war and royal court, landscapes, group dances, temples and deities. There are also combinations of different techniques in a single object like a lamp with a perforated body and embossed stand. Trays have the sun and the signs of the zodiac. For fine engraving, scroll pattern is used with delicate three-petalled flowers.

Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu has a fabulous style of encrusting metal on metal. These craftsmen combine in themselves diverse skills. For the base plate can only be prepared by a heavy-metal worker, the reliefs by a jeweller and the encrusting by a fine stone-setter. But normally a certain amount of division of

labour and specialisation goes on, though there are some who can do all the three processes.

The plates show deities, little epic scenes like marriage of Rama and Sita, even temples, as also flowers and animals which are rich and varied in appearance. Some are etched, others deeply cut or diapered with delicate designs. Encrustation is done on copper with silver or gold. Because of the vast complexity of techniques this plate has been called a dictionary of decorative methods.

Moradabad in Uttar Pradesh has become synonymous with art metal-ware. It is specially noted for its coloured enamelling and intricate engravings in *niello*. Engraving here is either *nakashi* done on tinned-surface where the indentations are from a pattern, simpler ones being done from memory, or *khudai* done on unpolished brass, and in which the depressions represent the surface other than the pattern. A thin coating of lac is given to the article under treatment and the pattern traced out on it with a steel-pointed pencil and only then engraved. Thereafter, the grooves are filled with lac of different hues. Moradabad makes decorations in golden colour against a background made white by chaste tin polishing.

Delhi is known for art metal-ware, especially perforated lamps with lacy patterns. Also, Delhi has a very special plate in the *paildar* or pie-crust pattern, as it resembles the border of a pie-crust achieved by a hemming process for which the narrow concave rim is inverted.

Koftagiri is laying of a light metal on a dark one, technically known as damascening. An iron or steel sheet of the required size is heated and slightly hammered to get a flat surface on which numerous grooves are made by hammering; then a lac base fixed, on which designs are drawn with a chisel. Minute bits of gold or silver threads are sensitively hammered on to the pattern outlined and heated, then rubbed again with black paint or vaseline to give the blue-black tint a gloss. At present it is practised in Kerala, and a number of objects picturesquely decorated in *koftagiri* are produced.

Bidri is also a type of damascening. Here, an alloy of zinc, copper, tin and lead is used with zinc as the base. The design is drawn with a free hand on the surface, then engraved with a sharp chisel in varying depths. Then silver-wire or pieces of

sheets are embedded on the chased patterns by hammering. Those highly intricate are, however, introduced at the time of the casting itself. The slight variations in this craftsmanship are: *tarkashi*, inlay of wire; *tainishan*, inlay of sheet; *zarnishan*, low relief; *zarbuland*, high relief; and *afstabi*, cut out designs overlaid on metal sheet. More than one style may be used in the same article.

Tarkashi, the brass metal-wire inlay work, was originally done in Mainpuri (Uttar Pradesh), but here brass-wire is used instead of pieces. It was once done on wooden footwear, when it was universally used in homes. Now it is increasingly used for furniture decoration, especially in Jaipur and Delhi. Trivandrum in Kerala has *tarkashi* done in silver-wire and attractive panels depict whole scenes in this style.

There is still another type of ornamentation called *mumabat-kari* in which the patterns are wrought at slightly raised levels over the surface of the article, so the designs look overlaid. *Bidri*-ware has a wide range of variety, originality of designs. In *bidri* there are hukka bases, furniture legs, elongated spiral-designed legs for beds, all with rich silvery tracteries on them, tender looking betel-boxes with diagonal lines, powder-boxes in octagonal shapes with star motifs; rectangular boxes with peacock feathers spread all over, coconut-shaped lamps, mirror-frames with creepers crawling round the frame, fish-shaped ashtrays and lotus-shaped goblets with floral designs. Though the original home of this *bidri* is Bidar in Karnataka, many craftsmen are carrying on the craft also in Hyderabad.

Kashmir is famous for metal engraving. But it specialises in a few select items into which have been introduced quality, precision, ingenuity and gaiety. In many cases the engraving is done on wood-like walking sticks, nutcrackers, carving-sets, cutlery, garden scissors, daggers, knives and the like. Hukka-bases of various shapes are also the pride of Kashmir crafts. Here tin is soldered on copper which has previously been graven over with diffused floral designs and the sunken ground of this is then filled with a black composition. These objects studded all over with raised flowers shine like frosted silver on a darkened foliated scroll. A speciality is a mosaic effect introduced on a brass surface when recesses of a pattern are

compacted with fragments of turquoise embedded in cement. In this a large variety of both general utility items as well as jewellery pieces are available.

The Himalayan foothills have a lovely copper metal-ware in the Ganga-Jamuni style, that is a blending of brass and copper in the same article with a little German-silver in it. Their special item is a high-necked water pitcher, *kalasi* in the local idiom, the body ornamented with gentle repousse touch. Copper is a prestigious item in this region and till recently wealth was assessed by the quantity of copper one possessed. Several new items, such as bowls, trays, boxes, and vases are now being made in this style.

The most alluring and sophisticated ornamentation is enamelling. Now it is done on silver, copper or brass, not only gold. Enamelling may be described as the art of colouring and ornamenting a metal surface by fusing over it various mineral substances.

Many more colours are attainable on gold and the lustre too is greater. In the Champleve technique the metal part to be enamelled is engraved or repoussed or blocked out and the enamel dust of the requisite colour is poured into the grooves formed, then placed in a red-hot furnace which melts the dust and the coloured liquid gets diffused equally. It is then burnished with a wet stone resembling blue copper. In another method, wires are fastened by a gum or impinged or welded to the surface. The third method is to paint the surface with a silicated or fusible paint and give it a little heat to just melt the colours.

Sometimes in a silver ornament only a small part is gold-plated for enamelling purpose. Enamelling is lavishly used in jewellery. Beads of many colours are also made to be used in ornaments. A quaint item made in enamel is the 'eye' used in images of deities, in which the enamelling is done on copper. Delhi, Jaipur and Nathdwara (Rajasthan) are the chief centres of enamelling. Enamelling of a special kind is done in Pratapgarh (Rajasthan), on glass and usually in green. The work is very minute and exquisitely done in the style of miniatures, with the same vivid lustre and grace.

Tarbha in Bolangir district of Orissa is noted for its very lovely silver-ware. A plate for betel leaves and nuts, has its

inner space divided into several parallel running circular rings, each carved out most artistically, while the outer ring contains shapes of flower beds, the second of creepers, the third of fruits, mainly mango, and the innermost depicts the delightful scene of a butterfly sucking honey from flowers. The edges are made of semicircular curvatures with figures of the moon and a star on each of the protruding portions.

Kashmir has silver carving of high quality. Some of the best examples are in hukkah with deep cut ornamentation with the lotus, *chinar*, trailing creepers, etc. For modern use tea-sets are popular.

There is a very beautiful silver hukkah with rich decoration called the *chamardhal* hukkah made in Amreli (Gujarat), used by shepherds. A large ceremonial pot, which is shaped like three pots, one on the top of the other, with excellent relief work all over is a speciality of Palitana (Gujarat).

Rajasthan has outstanding work in silver in items like the spice-boxes, rosewater-sprinklers known as *gulabposh*, baskets, hukkahs, all of which are ornamented with spirited figures of birds and animals and elaborate ones of dance poses, hunting scenes in the midst of foliage. Some objects like eating-plates, tumblers, and water-pots are left plain to show to perfection the chaste elegance of their lines. Silver furniture-pieces, especially legs for beds and divans are elegant swings as also which hang by chains whose links are sculpture-pieces of dainty birds. A beautiful item is the brazier, embossed or pierced with fine chiselled shapes.

Kutch (Gujarat) is outstanding in silver work, both for its superior designs as for its workmanship of deep carving. For manufacturing, the silver article is moulded and filled with wax. The design is then traced on the surface and first worked by driving in with a nail and hammer, then the molten wax poured out by heating. This may be repeated several times, for the deeper and sharper the tracery, the more superb the work.

Silver-ware is used on special occasions. The bowl in which sandalwood paste is offered to guests, the rosewater-sprinkler, perfume-container, flower-baskets, trays in which gifts are given, are all in silver and beautifully ornamented.

Silver is widely used in ritualistic objects like images of

deities worshipped in temples as in homes especially those given to temples as votive offerings, receptacles, carved or embossed, for keeping the images for worship. *Mohras*, i.e. impressions of popular deities are made on silver sheets by repousse-work and used as medallions. Several vessels used in rituals are in silver; also accessories used in worship, such as the *chauki* also called a throne, which is a platform with a decorative screen at the back covered with fine traceries on which the deity is seated; *chhatra*, a covering hung by strings over the image, made of flattened plate, covered with floral carvings; *kalsha*, a hollow cone kept in the corners of the *chauki* or on a palanquin; beautifully carved crowns, canopies, umbrellas, and seats used in temples.

Silver-filigree is a style by itself which Cuttack in Orissa and Karimnagar in Andhra Pradesh produce in pure metal and of a high quality. For this, pure-silver ingots are put through a wire-drawing machine. In the pre-machine days the ingots were beaten on an anvil and elongated into a long wire by passing it through a steel-plate-wire-gauge with apertures of different gauges. The very fine hair-like wires are still done only in the old drawing technique, then twisted and flattened. Two thinnest wires are wound together two or three times on a *charkha* after heating, then flattened again to get it as thin as the single wire originally was, but with granular edges on either side which is bent into the required shapes. A filigree-object is a combination of a number of component parts pieced together. The space within the frame is filled with the main ribs of the design which are usually the creeper-stems, leaves, flowers, etc., which sometimes themselves form into small frames shaped as heart, circle, flower petals, leaves, etc. The most important part, of course, is the filling of the inter-spaces with the delicately bent pieces which gives filigree its character, and the distinction comes from the contrast of the thick ribs as against the fine granular surfaces which brings out the exquisite artistry of the design.

Many articles which are made in plain silver are also made in filigree, like boxes, trays, bowls, spoons, etc. Orissa, where it is known as *Tarkashi*, specialises much more in filigree jewellery. Karimnagar, however, has its own designs and the more elaborate the item the more complex the pattern. There is a

large complicated design known as the *Karimnagar* design which reflects best the highly refined tracteries that speak of powerful imagination. The perfume-containers of Karimnagar are complex in shape and a speciality of the place.

Jewellery

INDIAN JEWELLERY IS of two types, the heavy kind in silver worn by the village women and the more finely wrought which adorns the urban women. It is still profusely worn in the countryside. A curious fact which adds to proliferation is the multiple variations of the same piece. For instance, an ornament called *chak* worn on the head, is a hemispherical boss with raised work all over in floral patterns carved out in horizontal circles, encased in lines of dots and dashes, and a star in the centre. Now there are half a dozen varieties of *chak*. When at the top-centre a coloured stone is fixed in it, it becomes *chak uchha*. Where several round beads are hung at the edge with silver chains, it becomes *chak boronwala*. When two additional *chaks* are linked to the outer side they are known as *chak phul*. A slight variation in its convex shape turns it into *chak chandiara*. When green or blue enamelling is done on it, it becomes *chak meenawala*.

In Kinnaur, *jutti* is a very beautiful, long, hair-pendent hung at the end of a plait, made with two or three hollow pipes, thick in the centre and conical at the ends where a cluster of drops are hung. Silver hairpins with floral motifs and tiny jingles attached are universally used. A set of attractive items for the forehead go by the general name of *shringar-patti* which includes a fringe worn on either side of the face, consisting of star or geometrical-shaped pieces linking each other, with *pipal* leaves or stars or drops hanging from it. Moon or crescent-shaped plaques, sometimes enamelled, are suspended in the middle forehead. *Bindi* has a central pendent hanging from the parting of the hair, and intricately worked

chains with silver globules extend on both sides up to the ear. The Pangi women in Chamba (Himachal Pradesh) wear a long silver chain round the head called *shangli*.

The Ladakh women wear a head-jewel called *perak*, reaching right down to the ankles at the back, closely studded with turquoise, coral and other stones, the largest being at the top.

In Rajasthan *morpatta*, a chaplet of peacock feathers or leaves and *rakhadi*, a flat ornamented piece are popular hair ornaments. *Rakhadi* in the South, consists of a coloured gem set flat in a beautifully ornamented circular medal with granular or repousse-work. A companion to it is a serpent's head done in coils and sometimes set with stones. Two gem-set hair-jewels worn on the head are shaped round for the sun and crescent for the moon. Small ones wound into the bun are imitations of different flowers. The South has also a magnificent chased piece which hangs down from the head having at the top a five-headed cobra. Some are a copy of the snake and its scaly body. Some in circular coins strung together are embossed with chrysanthemum in diverse shapes. In the South the *bindi* has the shape of a crescent, or two swans, with two or three lines of teeth-like decoration on the outer surface.

In the hill areas like Kulu and Kinnaur in Himachal Pradesh, caps that women wear are adorned with bunches of shimmering silver *pipal* leaves hung on both sides.

In earrings, the *jhumka* or *karanphul* is common. The upper part that covers the lobe is a chased cone-plaque, enamelled or set with stone, which in the hill areas is almost always a turquoise. Its outer edge resembles a star or is applied with a wire ring with impressions of round knobs from which is suspended a bell with a number of small balls. A special hill variety called *bragar* is a large gold one with two round pearls with a conical turquoise suspended in the centre, some of the stones being encrusted with fine trellis work of gold grains and a few drops hung from it. An earring worn by Gujjar women has hollow beads at its lower edge connected to two round tinsels with a wire-knit chain. The ring is put in the lobe while the tinsels are hung in the hair just above the ear by a hook to take the weight off the ear.

Kinnaur and Mahasu have a special decorated cloth-pin. *Khul kantace* is a bunch of earrings not worn in the ear but

hung down from the hair over the ears, mounted on a strap of cloth in a symmetrical arrangement. Similarly worn is *mulu* in several clusters of silver-leaves linked to a triangular plaque.

Rajasthan's ear-drops are *phul-jhumka*, bell-shaped flowers; *karanphul*, star-shaped; *toli*, parrot-shaped; *latkan*, grape-shaped and *pipal patti*, leaf-shaped. The earring most universally used as a top particularly in the urban areas is a frame made in the shape of a five-petal flower, mostly set with stones or pearls.

In the nose-ornaments, *bulak* is most prevalent but it varies in each region. It is composed of bunches of hollowed out, pointed *pipal* leaves with a big convexed leaf of varying designs in Kinnaur; in other regions it is a fully decorated disc in betel leaf shape, suspended from the centre. In the urban areas, especially in the South, the designs are worked out in diamonds, rubies or mixed coloured stones. The *nath* hung from the side, has a wide range from the wire twisted *laung* (clove) to the majestic crescent-shaped jewel, set delicately with tiny pearls and stones and one big pearl. The *balu* of the Kinnaur women is heavily ornamented with a belt or stones encased in two grain-worked, semi-circular balls, or by fitting flat round plaques to the half portion of the wire ring with pearls in the centre, sometimes shaped as birds or flowers. One of the loveliest nose-rings is in the shape of a peacock with feathers spread out and is made in a combination of granules. Everywhere it is a symbol of *sumangal* (good omen). In the urban communities mostly single-stone-studs, sometimes half-moon-shaped with tiny pearls are used.

In the foot-ornaments, the toe-ring known as *angustha*, consists of several straight lines joined together in a circle to form the ring and the edges take hexagonal or octagonal shapes. They are also modelled in the shape of a fish, scorpion, flowers or just circles of granules on the surface. Rajasthan has one with the semi-spherical forms combined with globular bells.

Sometimes an anklet and the toe-ring are combined by chains of a number of longish, decorated pendants strung together to lie flat around the ankle and the end slipped into the toe. *Painre* or *rua painre* and *paijam* are most universal. *Painre* is a tubular, oval-shaped anklet curved to the side with striped bands with circular lines and clusters of overlaid beads in

conical shapes. *Paijam* has interlacing of several chains of small circular metal pieces linked to another flower-shaped piece below by two wires. These are again joined to the bigger flower-shaped pieces set below on a thin plate. Each flower-piece is hinged to the other by semicircular-shaped wires, from which hang small hollow balls, looking like a band of lace. At one end is coin-like metal piece with a swan or peacock or flower on it. Madhya Pradesh has a very attractive anklet of clove-shaped beads all cast in one piece, called *laung kasauti*.

In the Deccan the popular anklet is *toda*, formed by the twisted coiling round of thick rope-like silver wires. Many ankle jewels are embellished with jingles of all kinds to make them ring out sweet sounds. Some of them are named after sounds like *kinkini* and *jhanjhan*. Tamil Nadu has an anklet in the shape of a long bean, with the inner embossed circle on each ring of the anklet imitating the swelling of the seed within the pod. Another anklet is made of simple rope-like delicately twisted chains from which hang the typical southern pendants called *padakams* in peacock, *yali* and fish designs.

Girdles have always been popular. Orissa has the beautiful *phulgunchi*—flower girdle—intertwined and closely knit silver threads spun into various patterns. The chain is formed of five or six prominent lines and tiny oval-shaped silver plates. A panel of flowers is inlaid on a small plate and soldered on to the inter-laced slots. At the two sides are two panels on which again flower designs are inlaid. A knitted pattern with several rows of circles is known as *kadi gunchi*. The simpler ones are worn by men and women. For children there are soft malleable ones of round or flattened chains. Sometimes plates, flowers or buds intersect the chains.

Usually belts are stiff broad bands of twisted metal, in silver or gold, amply ornamented, encrusted with gems and embossed with exquisite designs. The South is particularly famous for them. These belts are usually finished off with clusters of beads. There is a belt in Maharashtra composed of a series of plaques, chased with flowers in the centre as also at the edges to form a full border.

We have a large range in armlets. There are two types: the ordinary ornament and the amulet which also is an adornment.

Toda is a gorgeous piece in several variations. Two or three circular tubes make the framework on which thick plates are soldered. On this plate are laid long stripes of flowers and beads both in perpendicular and horizontal directions. A cup-like, hollow-curved plate is placed on the base-plate on which small balls are kept. A conical shape now protrudes. A more ornamented *toda* is also made. It is used on the right arm.

Bahasuta is an equally decorative armlet made of interwoven silver wires held together by silver bands at regular intervals, and above each, flower-shapes are carved out on plates. This too has a protrusion flanked on both sides by similar smaller protrusions. It is worn on the left arm. *Nagmuri* or *nagmurji* is generally made of a long thickish silver wire intertwined into shapes of U and inverse V alternately, or a broad band woven in mat-style and has a front projection of a flower or just thick decoration. Above this is worn the *vanki* or *vanksari* made in fine wire-work or filigree. In the South it is coiled up like a cobra in filigree, with a raised hood which is studded with gems. *Bazuband* is semi-circular, usually hollow, the ends furnished with loops of the same metal, silver or gold, and secured by skeins. It is finished with a pendant. Armlets are also made in ivory or in gold lace, decorated sometimes with gold bands or stripes. *Saptami* and *anant* are amulets worn as armlets. *Saptami* is a silver circle with seven spiral marks, *anant* is similar to *saptami* but has fourteen marks on it. Men also wear it. *Jantar* is a small silver-case to keep a talisman.

Tamil Nadu has a rich array of armlets, some in repousse-work depicting *garuda*—the eagle, parrot, serpent's head, *yali*, etc. There are also combinations like the lotus and the bird; others are square and hexagonal shapes made largely in silver with gold stripes or in pure gold.

Neck-jewellery starts with a *chokar* of silver wire-work to richly gem-set, pearl-ornamented ones. Beads continue to be an essential part of every woman's ornaments. In fact ornaments of shell and ivory, and beads with pendants can be traced as far back as 2000 to 3500 B.C. Beads range from plain globular to the delicately wrought filigree or glass. Glass beads and seeds are strung along with small metal beads or with pearls, corals, coins or plaques.

Kinnaur has an original necklace called *trimani*, with three hollow gold beads in the centre whose surface is appliqued with grain-work in artistic designs. At each end two triangular plaques are set to merge five strings of silver beads into one to which corals are added. The loose, hanging bead-chains are called *hars* or *melas* (garlands). The *dodmala* of the hill region is made of big hollow beads with two betel-leaf shaped plaques at the two ends. Very universal is the string of beads called *kanthi* which varies from place to place. Necklaces called *ashtmangalaka mala* has tiny fruit and flower motifs. *Mohan mala* has the melon-seed shaped gold beads. Each chain is called after the shape of the bead. A coin necklace with a pendant or plaque is known as *chandramalang* in Kinnaur and *chattahar* in Mandi. *Chandrahara* (moon-garland) is a necklace of chains of star-shaped units with a flat round surface in the centre, the ends linked to a triangular plaque covered with fine trellis-work. *Kach* is a choker of multifaced silver beads and triangular plaques worn by the hill women of Himachal Pradesh. *Hasli* is a neck-collar, thicker at the centre with two ends shaped into round knobs curling outwards. Decorations are made on the centre surface by line designs, etching*, embossing, or thick spiral rings in front and a decorative clasp within. *Bandi* is a neckwear made in silver or gold, by stiff wire-work round a thick rod-like circle, and covered in the centre by wire-beads, puffed out like little fruits.

Jaipur has beads of precious stones, pierced and strung and worn in strands, made from rubies, emeralds and amethysts, which are held together by a decorative clasp.

The *chakra*-necklace has flat *tiklis*, strung in many chains that glitter and jingle. *Champakali* has beads like buds of the *champak* flower. A set of vegetables strung together is called *shringarkarmani*. There are chains made of pieces resembling various types of grain-like rice or wheat, or the body of the bamboo or fishes linked together, made in gold or silver. There is a special *hasli* in the South, with a flat scaly shining surface called *hathikat*. A striking neckwear of Tamil Nadu is *addigai*, made of a row of flat uncut stones, mostly rubies, sometimes diamonds or emeralds, in deep close setting. The *mangamalai* (mango-garland) is a long necklace of uncut rubies shaped as little mangoes. All these have a central pendant to

elaborate the ornament, called *padakam*, made in various shapes like peacock, swan, lotus, *garuda* (eagle) with pearl edging. Plaques and pendants embossed with mythological figures are used in all types of ornaments. A special necklace in which only plaques are strung together is called *phalakaras*.

The smallest bangle thick and rounded to fit the wrist is the *kada*, with various designs on it with the two ends carved into a fish or elephant or crocodile or parrot, or some attractive form. Among the rural women, a single broad one, a sort of gauntlet is sometimes worn. On this floral, tree or fish designs are engraved. Sometimes four or five bangles are joined together with a clasp. In some, designs are carved thin narrow plates which are soldered in between two bangles with small beads on the joints.

Patli is a flat bangle, clean and chaste that retrieves the high ostentation. There is a very beautiful bangle covered with little mounds of gold-wire done in a kind of filigree usually worn next to the flat *patli* to accentuate its own decorativeness.

In folk jewellery a beautiful bangle is *kataria* in which the outer surface of the tube is carved with lines at small spaces with very tiny protrusions. *Bandari* is a disc with sharp projections artistically decorated. The *katarias* are tubular in shape; the one that has designs carved on the tube is *phula kataria*, on the intervening spaces giving the appearance of trellis work is *jali kataria* and when several stripes are made by drawing parallel lines, it is *patta kataria*.

Hathphool is a hand ornament with a central flower and chains flowing out of it to attach it to the back of the hand. Amongst rings an unusual one is the *arsi*, set with a tiny mirror.

In Himachal Pradesh the *'kangan* (bangle) is thinner and plainer in the middle but widens towards the two ends which are engraved into heads of crocodiles, tigers, elephants and so on like in *kadas*. In Chamba the middle part is made of silver twisted together to make it into a creeper and is called *gokhru*, which is the name of a thorny plant.

Sarpach is an ornament worn on the turban right in the front which either tapers or curves at the top. It is heavily

studded with coloured stones, and is part of a royal insignia ringed with pearls.

Techniques in Jewellery Work

As gold is too soft, it is mixed with copper or silver or with copper and zinc to give it certain hardness. For manufacturing, a model is made in resin which when boiled and hardened, is enclosed in a mixture of clay and cowdung. The metal in the sealed crucible when placed on the fire, surges up and as the molten metal enters the resin model, it melts, and takes on the form of the model. When hollow models have to be made, they are prepared in two halves and then joined.

For *kundan* which is open-stone setting, the hollows in which the stones are to be encrusted are filled with gold of high purity. The setting is done with open lacy-work which has an unusual mellow charm. Generally uncut stones are used for this.

Enamelling is the most colourful ornamentation. For this the piece is fixed on a stick of lac and delicate designs of flowers, birds and fishes are etched on it, while engravings are made in the grooves to heighten the interplay of the transparent shades, thus enhancing the beauty of the jewel. The enamel colours are filled in painstakingly with infinite care and applied in the order of their hardness, those requiring more heat first and those which require less, later. When set, it is rubbed gently with the file and cleared with lemon or tamarind. The brilliant ruby-red is the most valued and rare and only an experienced hand can bring out the right shade.

Varanasi is also noted for the lovely pink enamel. The technique used here is to cover the base with enamel on which the design is done in a different shade. When it is fired the mingling of the colours produce a wonderful effect. The special pink is, however, dominant. The colours used are white, black, yellow, pink, green, red, blue, orange, and salmon. Gold admits more colours than other metals, and as in *kundan*, purity of the gold is needed. The application usually starts with white and each colour is burnt in separately, though occasionally two or more may be fixed at one firing. Amongst the impressive pieces of enamel jewellery are necklaces consist-

ing of a number of pendants and the *kada* for the wrist (heavy bangle) the ends of which are carved into quaint shapes, in which contrasting colours are used, one for the body, the other for the heads, and sometimes even more than two, as an attractive colour composition. *Kundan* and enamelling are often combined to give the jewel two equally beautiful surfaces, enamel at the back and *kundan*-set gems in front. Pratappgarh in Rajasthan has a special type of quasi-enamel work, in gold prettily done on green enamel, which forms the base.

Nathdwara in Rajasthan now does a good deal of enamel work on silver and even on other materials. Thus a large variety of enamel ornaments more reasonably priced are easily available. Enamel beads in glowing colours are also made.

Filigree is another charming style in jewellery-making. Among the important centres are Cuttack in Orissa and Karimnagar in Andhra Pradesh. As twisted silver wire is the material, the articles have the trellis-like appearance of *jall* which endows them with a rare charm.

In the filigree-work, wire is first drawn, then pressed into different shapes, the smaller ones being directly moulded into various designs while the large ones are made up of smaller components pieced together. The last one has to be dexterously handled to make it uniform and harmonious.

In Cuttack, most filigree patterns are built up around flowers. In Karimnagar, creepers and leaves predominate. Pearls are as widely used as gems, and like beads, pearls are worn on all important occasions and have a special prestige value. Corals are also rated high in jewellery both for their lovely colour as for possessing certain powers. But they are more widely used along with gold or silver beads. In *kaikatta*, a bracelet, small coral beads alternate with tiny gold flowers. In *kashitali*, a necklace, large corals alternate with octagonal gold beads.

Exquisite jewellery items are made from ivory, but because of the scarcity of ivory, the manufacture is limited. Most popular are ivory bead necklaces and bangles. The other items are small broaches, rings, ear-tops, and pendants. Ivory bangles are also dyed in different shades by dipping them in coloured solution and boiling until each article picks up the tint. The favourite

colour is maroon red. Lac makes attractive ornaments which are also prized for their alleged power as a charm. Lac is the resinous substance which a female lac insect produces in a translucent reddish fluid when it is embedded in a kind of cylinder of *pipal*, *bel* or *ber* tree twigs to lay its eggs.

The lac is used in two ways, one as raw material for turning out various ornaments, the other for colouring some of them. The lac ornaments are used by all classes of people, and are available in endless designs and colours.

Bengal has the long *har* or *mala* (neck chain) in golden colour with about 200 ring-shaped pieces interlocked. The bangle called *rull* is made from lac dust, the waste left over, with a flat surface, and had a wide demand. It is in various designs. *Machkanta*, fish bone, is designed with colours and coloured threads, or coils prepared from varying pigments mixed with lac. *Dhenkua jal* has double chains patterned on the outer surface of the bangle with the help of different colours and threads, or coils made from these colours which produce the overlapping zigzag effect. *Thapa deoa* has round coloured drops and is called drop design. *Jal bandha* is called the wired net-design because of its resemblance to net.

In *sikri jal*, the base colour is yellow and in some red and yellow intertwined threads are adjusted, and a zigzag is formed on the bangle in red with the fingers. *Barphulia* is distinguished by four chains on the surface again made by the use of various colours and threads. In the *mayurpank* the designs are patterned, as the name suggests, on the peacock feathers, by the dexterous use of red, yellow and black. *Bala* is a bangle with a round surface, usually with two designs on the outer surface made with a brass mould and engraved on both sides. Lac work is done in West Bengal (in the Burdwan region) parts of Chota Nagpur, and Purulia in Manbhum district.

Lac jewellery, largely bangles, is worn in Rajasthan on auspicious occasions as a sign of good omen. Some bangles are plain, others are studded with glass-pieces, bright stones, beads, etc. The designs on the plain bangle are the traditional *leharla*, wavy or zigzag. But in the ornamental, the patterns are *patla* and *phooldar*, the latter floral being popular, Rajasthan bangles are also set with *salma patri*. Jaipur is a big centre for these bangles.

In Assam, a composition of clay and lacquer form the body of the bangles, and the decoration is made of pure lac, coloured and laid on in narrow strips of red, yellow or blue, which look very colourful.

In Madhya Pradesh the best known lac jewellery is in Rewa and Indore, where ornaments such as *choker*, earring, hair-ornaments, and large octagonal head-chains are made in the traditional style. Here lac is placed over the tin foil and melted, so the latter is fully covered with lac, and it shines with gold-like effect.

Special kind of jewellery is made in Delhi by decorating lac items with spangles or beads. Some are coated with tin ground to powder, to apply as paint, then covered with a tinted transparent varnish to give a metallic glimmer. To silver the bangles, tin-foil is mixed with dry glue, then pounded together to amalgamate and this mass is then washed and boiled and left to stand until a silver glue gets formed. This is spread with a brush on the lac. Further ornamentation with glass-beads, bits of tin or copper foil stuck along the edge, is made. Lac ornaments are also made in Ellichpur in Berar and Lalitpur in Uttar Pradesh.

Dohad in the Panch Mahals district of Gujarat is an important centre for lac bangles. They have lovely golden tint and the ornamentation is completed by studding the bangles with drops of tin and red-coloured lacquer. Glass is most important in bangle-making. Glass-bangles are not merely coloured glass circles but made in large varieties of designs in Ferozabad in Uttar Pradesh. But the studded glass-bangles of Hyderabad are elaborately made. On a plain glass bangle metallic lac is applied and then studded with stones of glass. If it is proposed to have more than one row, more glass-bangles are added. These glass-stones are made by pouring molten glass into tiny tin containers. Varieties of colours and patterns are worked out in these stones with distinct names. *Saras* is a single stone setting *satpuli*; or *kabuthar ankh* (pigeon's eye) has three rows with one colour stone in the middle, which is said to dazzle like an eye; *kanjar* has five stones in alternate colours in the form of V; *kulasathpuli* is one colour stone in the middle with six white stones around; and *simiti sarak* (cement road) is a flat white pattern.

Originally only *masala* (small pieces of aluminium foil, gold-thread and glass-pieces) was used as ornamentation on the bangle, until stones came into vogue. The old style ornamentation still continues and has its own distinctive patterns with pieces, foil, etc. with names like *danna*, *jhaln-i-chaniki*, and *zulp zam zakir*.

As gems have enjoyed great popularity with the Indian people, a large gem cutting industry exists in this country in areas like Rajasthan, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Engraving on precious stones, corals, conch-shells, etc. is a well developed art in India. The common ones are the crystal-pieces which carry etchings of the sun, the wheel, Durga, Lakshmi and other deities and ritualistic motifs. On corals, the popular figure is Ganesh. The cords used in jewellery are beautifully twisted with gold and silk threads and dangle from the ornament tied with tassels of gold thread, beads, pearls, etc.

15

Stone

INDIA IS BLEST with a very large variety of stones. Since stone continued to be worshipped as physical manifestation of the invisible spirits all over the country, it evidently exercised a great impact on man's mind.

Magnificent stone-monuments are fairly common all over the country. But stone-carving itself has shrunk considerably as there is normally little scope for that type of large-scale carved structures; though the talent is there, and when occasion demands, skilled stone-carvers are recruited who give immense satisfaction. But actual stone-carving is confined to images and smaller items.

Midnapur district in West Bengal is an important traditional region for stone-ware and the main centre is in Simulpal. The stones here are reddish and greenish in one quarry and greyish and blackish in another.

Making stone-ware is one of the crafts in which the artisan has to work literally from scratch, that is, quarrying, and this is something which is changing only very slowly. As some of the required tools like the spade, crowbar and pick are heavy and therefore expensive, they are often shared, and each artisan may possess only a couple of small tools of his own. Quarrying becomes even more strenuous because the digger has to go deep down as the surface stone is too brittle.

To give the slab the desired width, the artisan strikes it as it lies slightly slanted between his feet, then presses one end of his left palm and hits on the edges with the blunt hammer-like end of the axe held in his right hand. The slab is rotated with the left hand as he hammers the edges of the slab, till a

circular is obtained. If a disc is desired, he places the tip of his thumb in a central place of the slab. The circular pieces are used for making *thals*, plates, ashtrays, bowls, etc. The bottom surface of these discs are scraped and heated over a wood fire and grains of seed-lac are placed at the heated spot. A rope is wound round a lathe with knots at the end and is pulled to rotate it, usually done by woman. When the article has reached the desired size and shape, it is polished with a chisel to prepare for designing. Quite a few designs are etched on the objects. The *tana buta* design consists of irregular curves of zigzag lines placed at symmetrical distances from each other; while *jata bhista* consists of straight lines converging to a centre, and slanting lines placed at symmetrical distance from each other, so that in the total effect the slanting lines appear like a whirl while the convergent straight lines form a kind of a star. *Ank (aankh)* is another charming pattern made of concentric circles to resemble the eye, and though simple is used as a decorative motif.

The articles made, with few exceptions, are for domestic use like the *thali*, and plates of various sizes to eat out of. Some have a raised brim which in some plates slants towards the base, while in others slope away. A popular multipurpose item is *bati* (saucer), with a raised brim, and the circumference almost double that of the base. A distinctive article is a quintuple T-shaped lamp called *pradeep* with five depressions in a row at one end of a long bar to hold the oil and wicks.

Gorahari village in Hamirpur district of eastern Uttar Pradesh with its rich deposits of beautiful soft stone has a busy stone-carving industry, the main centre being Varanasi. The items are table-ware, plates, glasses, bowls, food containers, candle-stands, etc. Varanasi uses power-operated machines. The stone is many-coloured with predominance of a lovely red shade. Thus each item is shot through by several shades which give it an added allure. The articles are simple but exquisitely made. Marble is also used, especially for making statues.

Agra is widely known for its marble work, flourishing under the shadow of the famous Taj Mahal. Models in marble of the Taj and other monuments are popular along with vases, boxes, lamps, plates, bowls, pitchers, all carved and beautifully decorated, finally set off sometimes by perforated traceries

revealing subtle designs. A variety of structural pieces are also produced, like lattice-windows, mirror-frames with lace-like fringes, richly carved brackets, canopies with elegant pendant, fretted balusters, large basins with filigree rims to float flowers and other lovely but useful items.

Agra is also famous for delicate inlay-work, drawing inspiration from the superb Taj Mahal, which has some of the finest examples of marble inlay.

The designs are mostly foliage and floral intertwined with geometrical patterns reflecting the mosaics in the Taj. The craft is reminiscent of damascening. Once real precious stones were used to form these mosaic patterns. Today semi-precious or fine-coloured stones are used instead. There is a wide selection of household articles in marble mosaics like artistic jewelry, trinket and powder-boxes, trays and table-ware such as plates, bowls, glasses, furniture like settees with latticed backs and arms, chairs, tables, and panels.

Vrindavan near Mathura in Uttar Pradesh produces marble as well as alabaster articles. As alabaster has to be imported, it is rare. Vrindavan acquires and uses a large variety of stones from several of its neighbouring States such as marble from Rajasthan, black stone from Bihar, green from Madhya Pradesh and so on. Soft stone has replaced alabaster for making exquisitely decorated delicate articles. Some are embossed with semi-precious stones or the cheaper synthetic gems. This being a famous place of pilgrimage, many momentos of Krishna are also made.

A dark-brown stone with yellow spots and lines called *sange-rathek* is found in Jhansi and its neighbourhood, from which lamp-shades, incense-stick stands, small *kharals* (medicine-grinders) are made.

Patharkatti in Gaya district of Bihar has blue-black pot-stone from which images and household articles like pestle, mortar, *kharal* (medicine-grinder), etc. are made. Buddhist icons are a speciality. In Chandil and Karaikalla in Singhbhum district and Dumka in Santhal Parganas, a greenish black, beautifully-grained soap stone is worked upon.

In Tamil Nadu there is a great tradition in stone-work, mostly carving of icons which are of classical excellence. There is a convention that when an image is created, the eyes are carved

out last because of the traditional belief that only then does the image assume its entity. The *stapatis*—image-makers—also engage in temple construction or repair works. Thanjavur Tiruchirapalli, Ramnathapuram, Tirunelveli, and Kanya Kumari districts may be mentioned as centres of note.

There is a very particular guidance on how to prepare an icon, from the selection of the site of the quarry to the final polish. There are vivid and picturesque descriptions of different compositions of the stone to help one in the correct selection. For instance, the lines in a stone can be like a rope or sun rays or showers of rain. Similarly, spots or dots can be like ripe or unripe grape fruit, or the leaves of the wild date or the tender leaf of a bamboo tree or a spider's legs. Stones are also classified according to their tonal quality into the male or female. For instance, those that give out sounds like the rustling of palm leaves and are long-shaped, are feminine.

There are also regular verses to give a clear picture to the carver of the attributes and qualities of the deity whose image he is to make and which he invokes before starting. The final polishing is, interestingly enough, done with iron-powder which is used in various graded forms, starting with the thick and going on to the very fine until the image glistens. It is not surprising that the best talent went into the stone-carvings of the structures of temples and images.

A striking characteristic of the Southern carving is the meticulous attention paid to the anatomy of each animal, e.g. the irregular contours of the elephant or the horse which prove^s the carver's intimacy with the animal world. The use of animal and bird concepts in art are more symbolic. The lion has a formalised mane of close circlets, the body made to look more powerful by shortening it. Similarly, swan is transformed into a legendary bird with a great crest and sumptuous plumes.

In the Southern cosmology, the creature called *yali*, a combination of the lion-like and elephantine elements, is imposing and continues to remain exclusively regional. Tradition has endowed the *yali* with supremacy over the animal world, so while other animals feared one another, the *yali* feared none.

The traditional icon-making has been given a new lease of life in Mahabalipuram through the establishment of a training institute for instruction based on the tenets of *shilpishastra*.

Stone-icons are also made in Gopichettipalayam and Satyamangalam in Salem district as also in Tiruvannamalai. In the village of Madayur near Vellore, small-sized figures—human, animals, birds, reptiles—are made in folk style.

Stone-carving is done all over Rajasthan. The green spotted and copper-coloured *tamra* stone is found in Sawai Madhopur and is used in images. Dungarpur has soft choloriate stone which turns black when oiled and it is used in icon-making. There is a lovely soft stone in Bhilwara which for its pliability is used as a substitute for alabaster.

Jaipur, however, holds the pride of place for marble articles. The traditional religious images are the major products, but several new items of current use are also made, such as tea and dinner-sets, punch-bowls with glasses, and table-ware, all exquisitely carved. When special orders are placed for images the carvers show the great skill and mastery over the craft.

Very different in tradition and style is the stone-ware of Dungarpur, where black stone is used. Here, too, the chief items are statues but the carving is rougher, bolder, more earthy, and very expressive of the Jaipur tradition. A special feature here is the carving of the Sun God not found in other parts of Rajasthan. It is perhaps due to the influence of Gujarat and its Sun temple.

Puri in Orissa is the centre for stone figurines. They are very alive and seem to vibrate with life. They are shown in different dance poses. As soap-stone lends itself to twists and bends, curves flow in liquid lines. They are beautifully decorated with various pieces of jewellery. Red sand-stone as well as granite is used, the latter in images. These are generally modelled on the temple figures. Some household items are also made from sandstone.

Durgi, a village in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh, produces images of deities in the folk style that are quite distinctive.

Belaghat in Madhya Pradesh has a lovely green stone out of which a number of small items like animals, boxes, trays, etc. are made. But the important products are the religious images.

There is an unusual stone available in Tehri Gharwal district of Uttar Pradesh, which is white but has spots on it.

Articles made out of this look quite stunning.

Kerala is rich in granite which is largely used in structures and image-making. Changanur is an important centre for granite carving. Apart from the icons, household articles are also made. The special variety used in image-making is known as Krishnasila, available only in Tirthala near Pattambi. A legend endows this place and the stone with special sanctity because of the virtue of a holy man who lived there and had the stone blest. For polishing, a mixture made of sealing wax and steel-powder, melted and moistened, is used.

Himachal Pradesh can boast of a heritage in stone-carving equal to that of any other part in India. Its giant monolithic carving of the rock-cut temple at Masrur in Kangra district is most striking in its daring and meticulous in its attention to details, elaboration and delicate chiselling. The early Pahari carving is very stylised, the figures in cylindrical style seem imbued with mobility and almost organic action. These images are still being carved in Kangra.

16

Pottery

POTTERY HAS BEEN called the lyric of handicrafts. A publication of the Geneva Museum of Ethnology says: 'Nowhere in the world is the part played by traditional folk pottery greater than in India.' This exceptional importance, both numerical as well as functional, arises from the fact that while working in clay in India has a sociological basis, it has a religious one unlike in most other countries where it is mainly utilitarian. For example, if for worship no image of deity is available, a water pitcher does duty and it is called *mangal-ghat*—a good omen.

Domestic pottery is in profusion and found in innumerable shapes and sizes, and is inseparable from any Indian scene. The common earthenware is unsophisticated in that it is free of eccentricity and artifice. The shapes are organic, simple but attractive, and true to the material. In India the emphasis has been on the chasteness of the line to lend dignity to the form with no attempt to cover it up with colour and ornamentation. Where decoration is used it is harmoniously related to the form. Above all, it has to be comfortably functional. The commonest clay object is the all-purpose *kulhar*, used for water, tea, depending on your need and is sometimes also decorated with geometrical or floral designs. Those used for festive purposes are particularly gay with bright tints. The ones used for storing grain or water are immense in size. For certain functions clay-ware is still considered essential, for instance, for setting milk to make curd, for it lends a certain flavour to the food item that people have come to fancy.

Its use is somewhat restricted for eating purposes because

of an impurity taboo which makes it obligatory to throw it away once used for eating or drinking. This, however, helps to keep the production cycle moving.

There is a bewildering veritey in pottery. Each item has a special use and there are differences between the pots even though they superficially look alike. For instance, the *matka* (clay-pot) can be used for storing grain, but can also be used for water when its mouth has an outwardly bent thick circular rim to provide a brake in the slanting slope to enable one to lift and carry it about for fetching water. When its mouth is narrowed, it becomes a water pot. When a *matka* is reinforced with longer baking it is called *chaupatia* and used for churning curd. Two vessels similar to *chaupatia*, one bigger and the other smaller, outwardly bent but without a rim on the mouth, are called *handla* or *handli*. They are used for carrying butter-milk or even water to the fields.

The throwing process is primary and one in which the art and dexterity of the potter are most needed and which he learns as a child. The commonest method of moulding is beating, whereby a piece, first roughly shaped on the wheel, is finished by beating its outside with a flat-wooden beater with a mushroom-shaped stone-block held inside the object one is shaping, to resist one's blows, until it is thinned down.

In Bengal the common water-jug, *surai*, is made by four pieces joined together, with a decorated disc for the top, an ordinary one for the base. The neck alone is made on the wheel, and attached to the three-piece combined body.

The wheel is the common kind, thick with short spokes, turning on a pivot of hard wood or metal, provided with a large hub acting as a revolving table. The impulsion is given by hand with a vertical stick inserted in a hole in the rim. The potter throws the well-kneaded clay into the centre of the wheel, rounding it off, then spins the wheel around with a stick. As the whirling gathers momentum, he begins to shape the clay into the form he wants. When finished he severs the shaped bit from the rest of the clay skilfully with a string.

In villages, kilns are improvised within a circular pit with the articles just piled up and covered with the cheaply available cowdung-cakes. The quality or beauty of the products is, however, not affected. Some established potters may use

wooden pieces or shavings, for wood is very costly.

Despite the paramount role played by domestic earthenware it is its religious association that gives it a far wider dimension and higher status. India has a rich and very cosmopolitan pantheon of chief deities and tutelary spirits. Each village sometimes has special deities to be worshipped on special occasions. As clay is easily available and is comparatively inexpensive, it is not surprising that religious earthenware was proliferated. There are figurines of divinities, ceremonial pottery, and votive offerings. In the first category, the most popular is Ganesh, the god of good omen. Rich and poor alike worship a clay Ganesh during the festival devoted to him. Durga at Dusserah time and Saraswati are also nationally worshipped. A variety of objects specially produced for specific occasions, like *diyas* (lamps) for Diwali; toys for Dusserah; pots for seedlings on Sankranti; and the gaily-painted pots, sumptuous elephants surrounded by *mangalghats* (sacred vessels), the whole surmounted by a peacock for auspicious occasions, like marriages, as also perforated pots painted with designs of animals, goddesses, trees, leaves, creepers, and flowers for ceremonies. As these divinities are believed to lose their propitiatory qualities once they are worshipped, they are then left in some quiet spot to crumble back into Mother Earth again. For each occasion fresh images have to be made.

The votive offerings obviously are a substitute for sacrifices for they consist of a variety of clay animals, offered in fulfilment of a vow or to ward off disease or to obtain a favour. There is usually an intriguing symbolism in the size and form of each. For instance, while the horse is big, the rider is relatively small. The explanation is that while the horse is supposed to have a divine essence, the rider is only a human representation. When a couple ask for a son, a large horse with a rider is offered, if for a daughter a smaller horse.

The votive offerings vary. Some animals seem to have a double neck but actually the second is an extra-thick rope round the neck, making it look like two, which is supposed to enable the rider—here a divinity—to guide the mount across difficult terrain when out on its protecting mission. On rare occasions, one can in remote areas come across *Yama*

pukar, a tank-house for the soul of dead, said to shelter temporarily those recently dead, pending their ascent to heaven through one of the lateral openings. This singular object has been compared by a foreign student of terracotta votive offerings, to the funerary vases of the second millenium B.C. found on the Phoenician coast. Simillar ones were also found in the ancient Egyptian graves.

Occasionally human figurines are also produced as the local protective spirits. In some places a local hero also gets transformed into a similar spirit through such association. Some, both human and animal, are life-size. They are offered either at an established shrine, but more often under spreading trees or secluded enclosures in jungles. Many of these offerings are highly decorated, done by women with their deft delicate fingers. To them it is a ritual and their whole religious fervour seems to flow into their creation. In fact the *gram devata*—village god—tradition has blossomed into a wondrous art by itself.

The association of the terracotta with religion led to the terracotta sculpture in temples. Though this started with figures and other external decorations, later forms which go direct into architecture like moulded bricks, tiles, etc., designed in artistic forms grew. Bengal has some of the finest specimens of temple terracotta panels. Very striking are the panels of Molera, a village near Udaipur, where clay deities are embossed on a flat surface, then tinted with brilliant hues.

Each region has one or two famous *devatas* like the serpent deity, Manasha of Bengal, Thakurani of Orissa, Aiyandar, Karuppan and Muthaiyan of the South.

Glazes were well developed at an early period, then declined but came back in a big way again and took root with the advent of the Muslim influence under art-loving rulers like the Mughals, largely through their use of tiles which came to occupy such a prominent place in Islamic architecture.

Delhi has its famous blue pottery which is very distinctive. The base is powdered quartz mixed with gum to make a kind of soft paste to be moulded, and is vitreous and semi-transparent. While the product turned out has a Persian flavour, it is in reality quite original in its composition. It has a penetrating blue, bordering on turquoise, sometimes shot with green.

The Jaipur blue pottery is equally famous but also quite unique. The basic form is prepared out of the material from which the slip is made and no clay is used. A simplifying factor is that the materials that go into the composition, quartz, raw glaze, sodium sulphate, fuller's earth, known locally as Multani clay, all require the same temperature, and the pottery needs to be fired only once unlike other types. Also the slip does not develop any cracks as it is more impervious and therefore also more hygienic for daily use. Only the neck and the lip are shaped on the wheel. For the decorative work, the pot is put on the wheel and rotated and the ornamentation is done with a brush made of squirrel's hair.

The typical turquoise is obtained by mixing crude copper oxide obtained from old scrap baked in a kiln, with salt or sugar and filtered for use. The object is dipped into the solution or painted upon. The decorations are mostly arabesque patterns, interspersed with animal and bird motifs. The outlines are in dark ultra-marine got from cobalt oxide.

The Rajasthan pottery has certain distinct characteristics like small mouths of water-pots, probably to prevent spilling, since water is scarce and precious. The colouring too is special, the shoulders painted in black and white patterns. Alwar is noted for its paper-thin, almost sheer-body pottery, known as *kagzi* (paper) pottery, which evidently has ancient root as excavations have shown. The double-walled surface is cut into different attractive patterns, which helps to circulate the air and keep the water cool. Pokharan has pottery-pieces made in different shapes in both white and red for varied uses. For decoration, geometrical patterns are etched. The important thing here is that the shape is dictated by the function. The best known item is the water-bottle for long journeys. The painted pottery of Bikaner is tinted with lac colours to which the gold shade is given. The Nohar centre in Bikaner makes them.

In Uttar Pradesh, Khurja has evolved a style of its own by raising the pattern with the use of thick slips into a light relief. It also works out its own shades in warm autumnal hues like orange-brown, special light-red with arabesque patterns and floral designs in sky-blue worked against a white background. A speciality of Khurja is a type of pitcher like a pil-

grim's bottle, decorated in relief by a thick slip. Rampur *surahis* (small water-pots) are noted for their uniform green-blue glazes with plain surface. In Rampur the base is prepared from red clay and then fired. Chunar is also famous and at one time used to glaze its wares with a brown slip, interspersed with a number of other tints. The tinting practice seems to have gone out of use, so now its wares are covered with a dark brown slip or left chalky white. Excellent water containers are made in other parts of Uttar Pradesh like Meerut and Hapur, which are both turned and moulded. They stand out with their striking designs of flowing lines often capped by weird shapes.

Two new centres have come up in Uttar Pradesh, viz., Chihat and Mausalia. Chihat, which once made ordinary domestic articles, now specialises in glazed items for modern use, mostly table-ware; and Mausalia also makes similar glazed ware.

A very special kind of earthen-ware peculiar to Nizamabad, in Azamgarh district of Uttar Pradesh, is distinguished by its dark lustrous body obtained by dipping it into a solution of clay and vegetable matter which imparts the sheen. It is then dried, rubbed with vegetable oil, and then fired. On this, scintillating silvery ornamentation is done by incising the pattern on the surface after baking and rubbing in mercury and tin. The use of this type of wares is, however, limited; for, as the clay is fired at a low temperature, it becomes brittle and cannot hold any liquid.

Kangra in Himachal Pradesh has mostly black or dark red wares but in a wide range in the attractive traditional form for domestic use. Some of the distinctive items are *gidya*, a jug for milk or *ghee*; *patri*, a bowl for curd or butter; *narele*, the coconut-shaped tobacco-smoking pot.

Kanapur in Belgaum district of Karnataka is known mostly for its large-sized containers and jars, used for storing and preservation. Because of the excellence of its clay, a thin variety of pottery with designs etched or stamped on the body has been evolved.

The richness of the artistry of Saurashtra and Kutch is equally reflected in the humble clay medium. Natural white wares, gentle and pleasing to the eye are a speciality of Vidi, a small hamlet in Kutch (Gujarat). Banaskantha has artistic water-pots, skilfully decorated. Saurashtra has a clay called *gopichandan*

because of its likeness to *chandan*, sandalwood paste, when it is tempered with water. A finished article glows with a soft golden glow.

Potters from Gujarat have settled down in Bombay suburbs in a colony at Dharavi. They make many new functional items, but the traditional base is retained because of their attraction and popularity. Take, for instance, the flower-pot modelled on the *tulsi* platform pattern, with its raised structure based on an inverted cone with powerful contour lines. It is ideal for cactus or decorative stunted shrub, or the Diwali lamp founded on a temple structure. Of special interest is a kind of a horizontal vase produced on a vertical lathe but, as its actual use is horizontal, it has functional openings on the wall facing upwards. Its outer surface is embellished with patterns. It has a device also for hanging and it lends itself for training up creepers. Apart from its unusual technique of production and its attractive appearance, it is intriguing to find its counterparts in the articles excavated in Lothal in Gujarat, said to be a contemporary of Harappa and Mohenjo Daro. A large variety of toys as well as other items in miniature sizes are made, favourites being sets of household wares, painted in a soft gold sheen.

Kashmir has wares of ordinary clay but with a glaze-like surface which has gained great popularity. Once the classical symbol was the hukkah-base, which was made in a large variety of traditional shapes. But now there is a switch-over to modern table-ware, glazed to resemble the cracks of a *batik* surface. As these products are sold along the Dal Lake, they are popularly known as the Dal Gate pottery.

Goa earthenware with its deep rich-red, velvety surface, has a charm and style of its own. Apart from a large variety of domestic ware which includes attractive water and flower-pots which are one of its speciality, a wide range of figures more in the nature of sculpture are made like individual studies, such as an old man or woman, mother with a child or two children playing, and a variety of other such themes. Then there are panels which tell religious or historical stories. Borde and Bicholim are amongst the best known for pottery, though it is found all over.

In the South, Vellore in North Arcot district has black and red wares. Usilampatti in Madurai district has black pottery

painted over with a special yellow substance. Panruti in South Arcot is famous for a large variety of earthenware, large and small figures of deities, toys, etc. Karigiri in South Arcot is the most famous.

This pottery is unique in many ways. The base is a local semi-vitreous and low-fusing white china clay, known as *nanta-katti*, which has high plasticity. Intricate items are made in parts and then joined together. The distinctiveness of this pottery lies in its highly artistic shapes, its very original colours in glazes and attractive ornamentation. This pottery was once patronised by the local rulers. The decoration is done very skilfully on the raw ware, using rubber-stamp-like devices made of clay and pressing them against the soft body. This is first sun-dried, then put through a preliminary firing, then glazed, after which the final firing is done. The colours in the glazes are quite different. The best known are green, yellow, brown and blue, locally made, through indigenous materials, using low-temperature melting glazes. Every article is distinctive, even the very common clay-pipe *chillum* becomes noteworthy item, both through its elegant shape and its deep-blue or green glaze. The other traditional items are water-jugs, superbly shaped and gorgeously coloured. A popular item is the magic pot, which is filled up through an aperture from the bottom. But when the pot is turned back on its base, the water stays and does not run out. It is usually made in fresh olive green and limpid blue. Many new table-ware items including tea and dinner-sets are now made in this style and colour scheme. There are also fancy items in ash-trays, flower-vases, some highly decorated with figures and floral designs. Decorative animal figures, ferocious in appearance, locked in a fierce fight, are also made as paper-weights. A big golden and majestic fish is a speciality.

The pottery from Karukurichi in Tirunelveli district is technically superior and the pieces have novel and attractive shapes with red, gray and black clay for the base. Commonly, the body has a rich coating of red ochre. But for special items, a decorative lac coating is given. Amongst these are items like a water-jug with the face of a cow for a snout which is tradi-

tional, a jug with a lion's head with a handle, a circular-shaped jar with a wheel-design on its body known as the Asoka-wheel jar. A popular item is a cooling carrier known as the poor man's fridge as it is contrived to keep the temperature low.

Glass

GLASS IS ONE of the most beautiful materials contrived by man. It did not take the Mughals long to sense appreciatively the decorative properties of glass, since it has the quality of opalescence and the glitter of a myriad diamonds when cut. Thus glass articles like bowls, tumblers and above all bottles for precious stuff like Indian scents, attars, the highly concentrated essence of Indian perfume, became a gauge of the level of sophistication in society. It was once the fashion to distribute beautiful bottles of scent at auspicious gatherings, marriages, parties, etc. As fresh perfumes were being discovered, new designs in bottles got shaped, for the containers were as important as scents. A variety of exquisite shapes were manufactured, some embossed with gold or coloured designs, for the scent is itself an exotic object.

The engravings on glass of the Mughal period naturally reflect the delicate foliated decorations of the period. Glass is said to have been exported to Europe at this time, up to about the 16th century. There is even a surmise that the Venetians may have drawn their early inspiration from the Indian objects.

This tradition which was mostly prevalent in the North seems to have declined. But glass items such as phials, bottles, jars, lamp-chimneys, globes and similar utility articles, even fancy walking-sticks continued to be made.

One of the items for which there is a big and continued demand is the glass bangles. They constitute a very vast dimension for they are in infinite varieties. Each place has a special style and design for it.

In Ferozabad (Uttar Pradesh), the entire community seems involved in making glassware. Originally, only bangles were made, but now all manner of sophisticated glass-ware, including tasteful table-ware is produced. Varanasi specialises in glass-beads, and now with very modern methods in a wider range, many of which are exported. It also makes a very thin glass out of which little pieces called *tikli* are cut out, to be worn by women on the forehead as an ornament or for decorating of fabrics, costumes etc. Saharanpur makes intriguing toys full of coloured liquid called *panchkora*, and also glass mouth-pieces for hukkahs.

The composition of the raw materials, however, does vary from place to place. Two main ingredients used are old broken pieces of glass melted or a mixture of sandstone-powder and carbonate of soda. In some places, the carbonate of soda is mixed with saltpetre, water and an alkaline earth—found near Rohtak and Gurgaon in Haryana—and is heated, which serves as a raw material for making bangles. Pieces of broken bangles are used as raw material to make bangles where they have a mixture of lac, charcoal and carbonate of soda. The finer kind of glass made in Panipat is out of old glass with red sandstone, carbonate and saltpetre. Patna once used to turn out very elegant glass, mostly table-ware, which has gone into decline. It has, however, revived glass in another form. Glass objects are now decorated in the *tikuli* technique, i.e. traditional pictures like those made on the walls of houses are made on glass with gold or silver pieces to fill up the entire picture. A number of utility articles are made in this style such as wall-decorations, boxes, trays, table-tops, place-mats, etc. This is a highly specialised work involving several skilled processes. One sees on the glass the same stylisation so characteristic of North Bihar handwork.

The South, particularly the Thanjavur area in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra have an equally ornamental method of decorating glass, which is done by painting. This may perhaps be the folk version of the classic style of embellishing paintings with gold leaf and gems. Generated by a more earthy inspiration, this is closer to the folk style, and has therefore a vitality. Here the images, though basically traditional, show wider influences and the later ones have even an air of theatri-

cality about them as though the scenes were set on a current stage. The heavily fringed draperies with tassels around the deities accentuate this illusion. The paintings are in tempera, and the outlines in brush prominently work out very great details that seem to fill up almost the entire surface. The colours are obviously filled in later. Though most of the themes are religious, other scenes are also depicted, all richly decorative, so the secular ones centre round kings, thrones, palaces, and the religious ones round gods, goddesses and worshippers. The shades have a passion in them and make a deep impression, especially the deeper colours. Very little of this is now done, and though the Thanjavur classical style of painting has been revived and has gained popularity, no such effort is being made in the case of this decorative painting on glass.

Glass is made in many places in Rajasthan, particularly around the Ambar Palace in Jaipur from the saline local soil which collects in local pools when they dry up. The carbonate of soda and potash thus obtained are melted, remelted and from this substance various articles mainly phials and a large variety of bangles are made. In order to make a mirror, the glass is formed into a small hollow globe, molten zinc poured in and rapidly revolved so that the inner surface becomes evenly coated with the metal, and when dry the sphere is broken up into the required forms and sizes.

Theatre Crafts

THE CRAFTS OF the Indian traditional theatre are vast and varied. Among them the puppet has an honoured place. India has practically all types of puppets, string, glove, rod and the leather. The *sutradhar*, literally the manipulator of strings, as the controller of puppets is called, has always had a special place in Indian cosmology. The best known leather puppets are the *Tholu Bomalatta* of Andhra Pradesh. These trace their origin back to about 200 B.C. as they are mentioned in the very ancient books, the Mahabharata in particular.

Puppets

Leather puppets are made out of the hide of goats, deer and buffaloes. The skin is treated with indigenous herbs and oiled and put through a process of beating until rendered translucent. The different parts of the body and the limbs are separately cut and then secured together with a thick knotted string to facilitate easy movements and produce the required dramatic effect. The joints are at the shoulder, elbow, knee, hip and neck. A split-bamboo or palm leaf stem is then used for the main central support, which runs down the head to where the thumb and four fingers join to form a ring. The legs hang loosely from the knees and the manipulator with a certain amount of jerk gets the swaying movement of the legs. The dancing puppets, mostly female, have to have extra joints at the waist and the head which is separately attached by a stick and a thick loose string to the shoulders for greater

mobility. The legs are not separated, and they are part of the long skirt. The arms have a shoulder, elbow and wrist joints, and for such a puppet two people are needed for manipulation. This type of puppet is so agile that it can do all the intricate movements of the Indian classical dances and get admirable effects on the shadow screen.

The gods and heroes are the largest because of their importance. Minute and elaborate shapes are punched to mark out gorgeous costumes and jewellery on the figures. They are then dyed in the different colours assigned to each of them. Carving out of the eyes is done the last, for it is symbolised as bringing life to the figure. The angle of the head has significance: a downward glance suggests modesty, a high chin arrogance. The colour too has a meaning: giants, bullies and their kind have red faces, while white stands for a fiery nature.

The women puppets' bodies are bedecked with a great many ornaments and their heads painted with very elaborate and ornate headgears. For manipulation, a long thin date-palm strip or bamboo-stick runs through the middle part of the puppet, from the head to the loins, tied with thread. A part of this stick extends downwards and this the player holds and with it directs the puppets as he needs to.

The length of the hands and arms has to be proportionate to the height of the puppet. Thin bamboo cones of the required specifications and small pieces of cane are tied to one end to serve as cross pieces which are slipped through holes made in the hands of the puppet. The long cones now dangle from the puppets' hands and by holding the free ends the players can manipulate movements of the hands.

The stage and screen for the shadow show consists of a bamboo-box-like stage erected in the open air. The footlights in rural areas are made of split coconut shells holding coconut wicks lying in oil, giving a fairy-like air to the scene.

The puppet-makers are special craftsmen and certain villages have a concentration of them. Disipalli village in Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh is one of them.

The Orissa shadow puppets are small, simple and have a child-like quality about them. They are only in black and white or are creamish. This perforations too give only the bare outline to the figure to accentuate the few accessories. Some-

times, tin-foils are used to bring out sharp points. Curiously enough they have no joints and are just in one piece, held upright by a cane or bamboo. This theatre has a setting of trees or structures like pavilions, thrones, etc. as a realistic background. These puppets are known as *Ravana Chhaya*, Ravana's shadow, with characters from the Ramayana.

The shadow puppets of Kerala are one-piece figures with no limbs and only in black and white, known as *pavaikuthus*. Since these puppets are in black and white, as the light comes through, they look like magnificent sculptures in black stone. Here too, the puppets are made in certain villages like Koonthara, near Shoranur.

In Northern Karnataka, shadow-puppets are known as *togai bommeatta*. They rather resemble the Andhra ones, but are more sensitively drawn, the faces more refined and the colours more brilliant. The themes are the same but the story is unfolded more in a tableau form hung up on the screen, and as the narrator sings out the tale, one person behind the screen holds one or two oil lamps behind the puppets acting at the time. It tells the story in a tableau form.

Amongst the string puppets, the best known are the *kathputlis* of Rajasthan. They are normally small with highly stylised wooden heads, exaggerated limbs, particularly the nose and very large eyes giving them an air of all-round awareness as though they can see everything, which adds to their intriguing appearance. The body is made of stuffed rags and cloth, and has no legs, to provide easier movements. It is not noticeable because of the long garments. But puppets who perform as stunt horse-riders are provided with legs. They are so cleverly made that although they may have only one string, one end tied to the head and the other to the waist, that a single pull sets all the limbs and even the neck moving. Rajasthan puppetry has its own special kind of stage made of two *charpals* (bamboo or wooden bed-frames), with a back-drop and a decorative front curtain with arches. It is therefore known as the *Taj Mahal*.

In Orissa, the string puppet marionettes are known as *sakhi nata* and *kandhai nata*, meaning doll dances. The shows are known as *Gopi Lila* or *Radha Krishna*. The small-sized have no legs but long garments. The heads are large, well designed

and almost one-third the size of the whole doll, made from a very light wood. Provided with more joints than the Rajas-thani, they have smoother movements, are more tastefully clothed and the ornamentation is finer with more attention paid to details. The strings have a holding prop made of a triangular wooden frame to hold the two strings from the puppet's hands, another two from each side of the head and one from the back of the waist. Orissa also has an ornate stage with the rich embroidered or appliqued curtain. The *sakhi* or *kandhai nata* presents *Krishna Leela* episodes.

Bomalattam found in the Thanjavur district of Tamil Nadu, is a combination of string and rod puppets which are quite heavy, being carved out of thick wood. So, strong strings are used, and each puppet attached to a cloth covered cane or iron ring to fit the manipulator's head like a crown, which thus carries the load leaving his hands free to operate through strings as also rods which split and form a ring-like hold that is tied and fitted into the forefinger and thumb of the puppet. Though even the arms and hands are also made of wood, these are covered loosely over with cloth which gives it a softer appearance. They are well costumed and ornamented.

The string puppets in Kerala are called *pavakali*. In the Karnataka region these puppets are bigger and heavier. These have no set type of stage, only an improvised one. Further south along the coast are found the wooden *sutragombe* (string-doll) beautifully carved and tastefully adorned. These puppets have legs which too are manipulated. The presentation here follows the folk-drama technique and the show is conducted by a music-master known as *Bhagavatar* which means one who sings the songs of the gods, one who in recent years has also come to combine in himself in addition to singing the making and manipulation of puppets as well.

The traditional stage was a beautiful piece of craftsmanship, decorated in the old style, with glass pieces and green beetle bodies. The puppeteers now have a very modest but finely built artistic stage and it is not an impromptu affair.

The traditional glove puppets are rare. Orissa has some made of wood and paper, and clothed very like the local string ones, for they have no legs. The box-like stage is just large enough to hide the performer in a sitting position. The Kerala glove

puppets are the most interesting. They have arms made of clay and husk covered with paper and body of wood. The puppets wear glittering headgears which rise in magnificent circular shapes like regal crowns. They have no formal stage but erect a curtain from behind which the puppeteers manipulate. They are mostly seen in Palghat district, Kerala.

Tamil Nadu also has glove puppets in Thiruchendur, exactly like the Kerala ones in composition. The head, however, is covered with paper, used suitably to accentuate the necessary features and accessories. The characterisation of the various personalities is sharp yet charming. The show usually ends with a folk dance.

Bengal alone has rod puppets. They are tall and built over bamboos. The body and limbs have a bamboo base covered and plastered with hay and rice husk, mixed with clay to give the required shape. The finishing is done with a smooth coating of banana leaves. When dry they are finely painted in bright colours and clothed. The puppets are manipulated by strings and rods projecting from the elbows which act like a lever. They have no legs but the lower parts are covered with garments. There is a curious hip movement produced by a straw-loop attached just below the waist and operated from under the covering garments.

Masks

Masks are used extensively in many forms of traditional theatre. They are made of wood, papier-mache, metal sheets, pith and cloth. Mythical personalities are often depicted with the help of masks and where spectacle forms an essential part, masks serve to heighten that purpose. They are used not only to personify invisible spirits or supernatural beings but even ordinary humans to accentuate certain characteristics in the personality.

Ramlila masks are the most popular as they are used in community-organised public shows for the general mass of the people. Beautiful masks made of *zari* (gold) thread are used in Chitrakut, in Uttar Pradesh. There is a magnificent one in this style of Ravana with ten heads, all throwing out sparks of light as it were. They are quite flat, the gold thread being

embroidered on cardboard, with a slit for the mouth, and two slits for the eyes. Brass masks are superbly done of Durga and Hanuman, and are striking pieces of art. Wooden masks used by the *Bhand Pather* players of Kashmir are strangely reminiscent of the realism of the old Greek masks.

In Orissa, brightly painted masks are carved out of wood, *shola-pith* and other indigenous materials, for use in the *Sahi Jatra*, a form of *Ramlila*, showing mainly the death of Ravana. Prominent characters in this wear these masks which resemble the temple sculptures of Orissa. Some of them are made in papier-mache. The form is taken out on a mould, but each character is carefully painted in appropriate colours.

The *Purulia Chou* masks appear in the spring shows when episodes from epics are presented. The masks are simpler, made of papier-mache.

The *Chou* dance of Seraikala in Bihar, uses highly sophisticated and stylised masks. The brush is used on it very daintily as though it were a fine mural. The mask is more than an object, it is a living character, be it human or animal or bird; and it has to project its salient features to give meaning and purpose to the drama. *Chou* masks are in pastel shades, the only Indian masks to be so subdued. When depicting animals, some stylised human modelling is indulged in. For instance, when a deer has been hit by an arrow and is in great physical agony, the mask most ingeniously shows it through eyebrows knitted in piercing pain. Even moods of the day or seasons are projected through the mask. For instance, night is shown as a human face with drowsy, half-closed eyes, which seem to droop under the weight of sleep. Though every mask has a human face, it can serve equally as a swan or peacock or any other living being. Where the mask is the central point to determine the mood of the drama, the superb quality of the mask is revealed by indicating its character or thematic idea in this stylised manner. The dance movements too are so patterned as to make the mask mobile and communicative for the mask is impregnated with articulate meaning. The *Ramlila* masks are refined and stylised. As it is an essential item in this presentation, mask-making has been a hereditary vocation like all others. But the curious thing here is that only those who were dancers were permitted to make these masks. Originally they

were made of wood, later of bamboo, then pumpkin shells and now of papier-mache.

Very different are the masks from the Chota Nagpur area. They are rather primitive and fierce and represent what in India is known as *tamasika*, in which every bodily form as well as expressions of elemental passions are highly exaggerated.

In Himachal Pradesh, masks seem influenced by Buddhism particularly Tibetan demonology. Some are so starkly simple with just the suggestion of a crown on the head, gaping holes for the eyes and the mouth, all of which bear almost an uncanny kinship to a Greek mask. Dead ancestors are also represented by masks.

Masks are used in the dance-drama, *Krishnattam*, in Kerala. As it is in Sanskrit, to enable it to be enjoyed by the people, the appeal here is through spectacle. The masks are big, larger than life-size, with greatly exaggerated features to make the necessary impact on people while the designs and colours indicate the character of the wearer. The mask of Gulikan, one of the Lords of Death, is mostly eyes, there being three of them, two large enough to cover half the face and one in the forehead almost covering the head.

The use of masks is not confined only to demons and evil spirits. Brahma, the benevolent creator, himself has to appear in a four-faced mask, but done in a soft natural flesh colour to denote benevolence and has to be endowed with that quality. Murasura, the demon, however, has a five-headed mask which is a complicated exercise in lines and colours, built up to endow it with the demon-like quality by sweeping curves traced in different colours. Puthana, the demoness, wears a deep black mask strangely flanked on either cheek by a crescent-shaped design in white and red in sharp contrast, and the lips fierce red over which appear long pointed teeth indicative of her carnivorous nature. The wide sweep of the stylised eyebrows heightens the demoniac expression of Puthana. Yama's mask is a dark sickly green, conveying the cold sombre air of death. In Velan Thullal, women dance to the beat of drums wearing wooden masks. Plays in which masks are generally not used, certain characters are made to wear them for emphasis, like Ravana in *Ramlila* and Narsinha in *Bhagwathmela* and Kuchipudi.

Mathura, a big centre for theatre materials, makes the gorgeous but lively *zari*-embroidered masks, the finely sculptured brass-masks and a very large variety of papier-mache masks, as also the special ones made annually for *Ramlila*. Then there are the cheap masks, common papier-mache ones. Apart from the well-known epic figures, a variety of animals are also made, greatly fancied by children. They are simple but with expressive faces.

Headgears

The headgear is the most outstanding and more universally used among traditional theatre properties.

The *kiritas* (elaborate headwear) in the South are generally made of wood finely carved inlaid with mirror, glass and artificial stones. For further adornment gold thread and paper, silver beads, peacock feathers and quill, woollen frills, felt, various coloured foil, green wings of beetle, etc. are used. The *kiritas* have elaborate side attachments to enhance their majestic quality, like a disc at the back fully adorned, wings at the sides, and very often the latter with parrot or peacock perched on a branch, with curved neck of the bird with its flowing tail.

The headgears in the North are made of canvas worked with gold embroidery and inset with artificial gems. Some have the discs.

The turbans are in a wide range with many variations of structural contours where they are devised to suit certain characters by sharp deviations. They symbolise dignity and high status. The purpose of headgear is to provide the necessary majesty and splendour to the important personages as also accentuate the chief elements in the character of the wearers.

Kathakali undoubtedly has the most outstanding headgears. In this dance-drama, the characters express certain principles or qualities and each of them is known by an epithet. One is *pacha* (green), the benevolent and noble; the *kathi* (knife) symbolises evil and demon-like qualities. Each headgear consists of two super-imposed domes carved out of wood, ending in a bud-shaped final, a large circular disc behind it

and halo between the coronet and the disc. Every row is decorated with closely knit silver beads on red scarlet base, and beetle's wings set vertically in parallel rows, glass-pieces fixed on aluminium-foils, large flower-petals, of glass and small silver-beads in the centre. Between the top of the second dome and the final, is a neck of green glass pieces giving the appearance of a peacock. The two domes are encircled from both sides by a horse-shoe halo, beautifully decorated with carvings and all the other ornamentations. The disc is like a perfect piece of jewellery and it is equally picturesque on both sides, so that when the wearer has his back to the audience, it presents as elegant an appearance as the front. This is just a very brief description, for full details would run into a sizeable booklet.

The headgears of those who come in the third category called *thati* (beard) are of three kinds: red, white, and black. The first is the vicious and vile; the second strong yet gentle devoted and loyal, like Hanuman; the third is the destroyer like Kali, which includes all hunters and the like. The red and black beards have the large headgears with decorations modelled mainly on the one previously described, except that here the edge of the disc is decorated with woollen tufts.

The headgear of sages (*rishis*) contrived out of wood consists of two domes, the usual adornments along with carvings including lines resembling twisted coils and a *rudrakshamala* (rosary of several-faceted seeds) to encircle the dome. The hunter's headgear resembles a blooming lotus, the cane frame rising from the bottom, covering almost half the height which gives it that shape. This is covered with a dark cloth which is decorated with silver petals resembling the screwpine blossoms.

Krishna has a special headgear of conical hemispherical dome with a woollen garland of different colours encircling its tip, over which are fixed the eyes of the peacock feathers to create the form of an expanding lotus. It has also a margin of oval-shaped flowers formed by peacock feathers. An oval piece of blue or black ornamented cloth hangs behind the coronet and forms a beautiful coverage.

Costumes

The traditional costumes are rigidly prescribed for each type of drama, therefore the variety is infinite. They are in single or multicolour, the dye again being fixed. The fabric may be draped or tailored in special fashions. The costumes are embellished with embroidery, tinsel material or applique. The designs and colour schemes are according to the accepted conventions of the region and local dramatic styles. Decorative motifs are worked on a background material with gold thread, using semi-precious stones or in some cases even coloured glass as decoration. The second category are the richly gold or silver embroidered tailored costumes to suit royalties and such like dignitaries. They are usually made out of velvet, satin or silk.

The folk dramas have very distinctive garbs, original, imaginatively designed, and strongly expressive. There is the very elaborate *Raslila* skirt of Manipur, cylindrical in shape, taut with canvas lining, with the *poshwan*, the short wavy upper skirt made of gauze-like cloth with bordered edge stiffened with cane. The *kat-katchni* of the Vrindavan *Raslila*, has rows of wide frills stitched one above the other, forming a kind of coat coming down to the ankles. The *kacha* of the folk dance, *Ottanthullal*, made of several yards of cloth, is looped many times through the waist band, to form a sort of a skirt. Male *Kathakali* wear consists of thick and somewhat oversized jackets generally made in red with full sleeves and open at the back on which woollen threads are suspended to give it a woolly appearance. Two or three white scarves and a red one in silk, the ends of which are folded to give a look of the lotus, are worn on the neck and reach down to the waist. They have concealed cunningly in their folds at the extremities, small circular mirrors which the actors use with a kind of sleight of hand, to examine their make up. Every character wears a different skirt built up of layers of 20 to 30 thick white cloth bands folded and tied round the waist with a thick cord of twisted cloth which reaches just below the knees. Ornamental tapes are hung, two from the loins on either side of the legs and one in front. The exceptions in colour scheme are Krishna whose jacket is blue-black and often of velvet

and skirt yellow, while Balarama wears a yellow jacket and a blue skirt.

Most male characters wear an ornamental triangular piece of red cloth suspended from the middle of the waist with a woollen tuft of varied colours attached to three sides of this, while the centre is decorated with silver crescents with a silver flower above each, and a border of silver beads. A breast plate is worn by the male actors, oval in shape and consisting of a number of wooden pieces carved with designs.

Women characters wear on the left side of the head a small cotton padding and over it a long veil which hangs down the back which is really the old hair-do of Kerala women. They also wear tight-fitting jackets with long sleeves, and open at the back. Finally a white cotton cloth with graceful folds reaches down to the ankles.

In women's costume, breast-plate is most elaborate. The top portion has a woman's breasts carved hollow in wood and covered tightly with red cloth. Below is a horse-shoe plate to cover the abdomen, consisting of several wooden pieces with decorative designs, and glass-petal flowers with a golden border. In the centre are several smaller plates of varying designs, and an all-round border of woollen flowers with golden foils fixed over the surface.

In *Yakshagana*, a folk drama prevalent in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, the men wear small vest-like garments in green or red, and for the lower part, a dhoti with checks all over in orange, red and black. Round the waist there is a trapping and a sail-like cloth of plain red and white at the back. The women characters wear the same saris as the local women do.

Ornaments

Each type of drama has its own special adornment but it is usually costume jewellery of light wood carved into shapes of ornaments covered with golden foil, inlaid with coloured glass or mirrors, artificial stones, red felt, green beetles' wings, etc. On fabric or canvas, metal-embroidery or applique is done, especially on velvet, to form decorations for coats, vests, belts, armlets, head-bands, crowns, etc.; small ornamental motifs are also made with metallic wires or by embroidery to serve as

jewels, like ear-tops, pendants, forehead and hair ornaments, with motifs, like the fish, flower, leaf, star, peacock, parrot, etc.

In *Yakshagana*, elaborate carved and highly decorated ornaments are worn, especially the shoulder one with a concave bend which consists of a number of wooden pieces, square at the bottom with a silver flower in each square, and semicircular at the top with a cluster of flowers. The edges are covered by golden foils.

The Kathakali characters wear quantities of ornaments, one for each part of the body. The ornament tied just below the headgear is a string of wooden beads chiselled into the shape of cotton fruit, covered with golden foil. A large variety of necklaces worn by both men and women, provide a continuous decoration of varied colours from the neck down to the waist. Woollen flowers in golden or silver pedicels are suspended along with these chains. A profusion of wooden bangles are also worn. Four or five bangles are sometimes carved on a single piece, the dividing lines being covered with silver beads. Each bangle is topped by an ornamental central flower of several concentric circles of different decorative designs with a coloured stone in the centre.

A very curious custom is the use of silver nails, elegantly tapering, worn on the left hand fingers by the male actors to give an emphasis to the movements and render them graceful.

Girdles are very prominent and worn by men and women. One is a broad boat-shaped chain, with beads and other motifs suspended from it, and covered with artificial gems. Some characters wear anklets. There is a special jewel tied on the forehead, made of white glass-beads worn by men and women.

There is a circular ring beautifully carved and fully decorated with coloured stone, glass, silver beads, etc. worn by the men in their ears. The women characters generally wear earrings, shaped like pumpkin seeds, with three stones at the top and one stone in the centre. The top ones are red when the single is blue, or green when the single stone is red.

After a review of this panorama, one fact emerges that in the traditional Indian theatre, a basic relationship existed between painting, sculpture and the decorative arts, and the performing art was a closely integrated complex of all art expressions.



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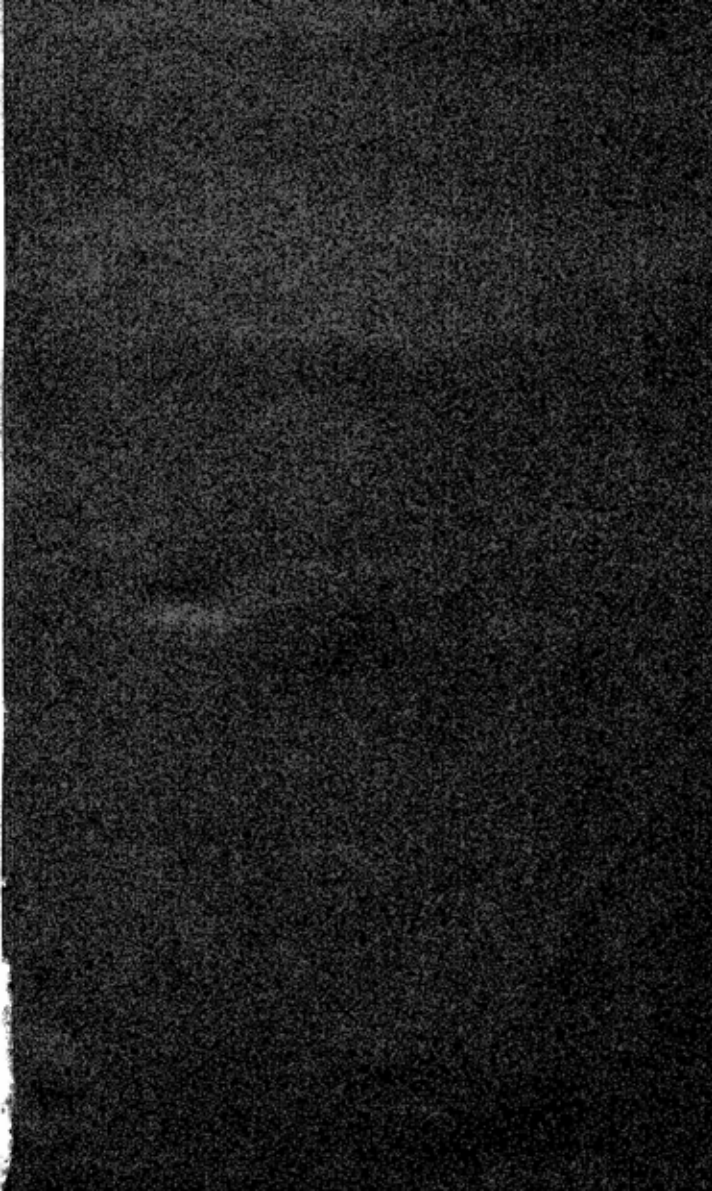
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