

NATH Gopika (India)

A RETURN TO TRADITION paper

Through my interactions with the weavers (tribal area of Bastar in Central India, Ikat weavers in Andhra Pradesh etc.) and embroidery artisans (Kashmir-chain stitch), as also some historical research into the practices of crafting in India, I have seen, heard, and read much that defines and redefines the purposefulness of my practice as a Textile designer and fiber artist, which also paradoxically question its very relevance.

Craft in India is still a large scale activity. In the Western world, craft is fast becoming replaced by design, as is evident by changes in naming institutes such as the American Craft Museum in New York City, which has been renamed the Museum of Arts and Design. etc. The Fiber Artist/Craftsperson is now being presented as a designer- craftsperson. In ancient Indian society, craft embodied this dual role of designing and crafting. However in the present context of crafting in India, the practitioners have been relegated to merely skilled labour. This is primarily so because the 'market needs' are not comprehensible to them as this 'market' is now too large and complex. (In a traditional context, the craftsperson catered for the needs of the village he lived in and not beyond.) Therefore there is a growing dependence today, upon the professionally trained-urban-designer interface.



At the village water pump, Takajal, Bastar (Central India)

The practices in ancient Indian society validate my own practice as a Fiber Artist, but the present predicament which has moved away from this ideology also questions its relevance. The people that I have worked with, their lives, their work and wealth of skill are such that anyone who

encounters them will be faced with many dilemmas. I believe that India has to be integral to any discussion involving textile making and its practices. Therefore I

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would like an opportunity to present my work and its journey which is in essence A
RETURN TO TRADITION.

Gopika Nath is a textile Designer and Fiber artist who lives and works in New Delhi, India. An alumni of the Central School of Art and Design, London, U.K. She was awarded a Fulbright fellowship to research fiber arts(embroideries) in the U.S. in 2000.
