CONCLUSION

The foregoing study of the Arts of the Kharak community should help to demonstrate that at least in certain parts of the country the prevailing patterns of peasant life sustain certain art and craft activities. That these merit such a study may not be readily evident to a casual visitor to the Kharak villages; the mud houses look simple and weather-beaten and common, the people look indistinguished, the craft shops, more often than not, look dark and sordid. It is only when Kharak women come out in their ceremonial dress or a Kharak house celebrates a wedding that a casual observer gets glimpse of their refinements. But to people who care to see them from near, their households and their effects, their life and various skills, the picture is different, especially they in comparison to the barren urban neighbourhoods. Of the above arts, some are those that the peasant themselves practise. Others are practised by professional craftsmen serving their needs.

Both depend on certain ground factors. For instance, the practice of traditional embroidery persists among the Kharaks because their traditional costume persists, as also the traditional custom that requires a girl to make her own trousseau, with the help of other members of her family.
Certain traditional attitudes help too, like the frank admiration of a girl's skill at embroidery evokes in the rest of the community.

Besides these, there are certain other factors, no less important. One of these is that the young people of the community cultivate a variety of manual skills from their early childhood, some simple practical skills, others more developed and creative. They grow up in an environment where a large number of their grown-ups practice these; exposure to community activities itself provides them their education.

The way young Kharak girls, just past the years of infancy, pick up these skills, without any rigorous spell of training is itself quite astonishing; one rarely sees a girl found wanting, though there may be some found specially adept. This exposure, again, is provided by a pattern of life in which individuals make, mend, or embellish their own things with minimum professional help, and, even when they take professional help, taken an active, if subsidiary, part in the activity. This is part of their education as well as recreation. The spread of school education (largely planned for urban needs) works counter to the pattern with its methods (which place greater stress on verbal than on body skills), its orientation (which attaches more importance
to streamlined efficiency and impersonal standards) and its tendency to isolate growth from the usual productive avenues of life. If the Kharak girls still have time to devote to manual skills it is because they have not given into this education in a large way; there are very few girls in the community that have gone beyond the primary stage. Their natural conservatism and the seasonal urgencies of agriculture keep them out. The former prevents them going too quickly for new alternatives. Although Kharak men, especially the youth, would probably like their women to change their traditional mode of dress, Kharak women have so far resisted such change. Even in ways Kharaks are slow to accept change in their modes of life, their habitations, furniture, transports and like; they seem to derive enough satisfaction from what they have, without feeling any sense of inferiority; they take pride in their modest possessions and refinements. One middle aged Kharak woman, for instance, rather taken aback by the interest shown in her household and household arts, was heard to say, with a mixture of humility and pride 'a garana gokul cha', which in translation would mean that her house is a 'mud-hut for the gods'. But this may not be the case in days to come.

To expect, as many enthusiasts of village arts do,
that the peasant community will live in pristine simplicity within a pre-industrial set-up while the rest of the country is changing, removed from the impact of modern education is neither proper nor realistic. It would be useful to enquire whether, even within these changes in the offing, some of their skills and cultural refinements cannot be preserved.

One of the main reasons why such an enquiry is rarely undertaken is the widely held notion that village and peasant arts are inalienably related to a life wedded to religion and ritual, and since these are under attack in a modern world, such enquiries will be futile. From the above study, it would seen that though these arts correspond to a calendar of customary practices, they are not exclusively religious or ritualistic. On the other hand, Kharak ritual drawings are certainly not the most impressive examples of their wall-drawings; the more attractive specimens are their other wall-drawings which are decorative than ritualistic in intention, unless the notion that a drawing sanctifies a new building or a wall is considered as such. Their embroideries too depend more on certain social customs than religious ones; their use is larger in scale on social, not religious occasions. It is reasonable to imagine that changes in life pattern even of their ritual bases become remote or
obsolete (as observed in the case of the educated classes in our society); and it is in their persistence that the future of these arts and crafts lie.

The data collected for the present study seems to indicate that the circumstances that lead to the disappearance of arts and crafts from such societies under the pressure of economic change, are:

1. a growth set-up that isolate the young from the old and keeps young people outside the stream of productive activities to a large extent,

2. an educational set-up that gives little or no importance to the development of hand-skills, and gives less status to working with hands,

3. a value system which presents the (industrial) urban ways, good and artifacts as superior to the (non-industrial) rural, and a work system solely controlled by economic factors,

4. a notion that creativity is the privilege of a few and that the rest are condemned to mediocrity.

If our economic, social and educational planners
take note of these, they should be able to devise patterns of growth with due safeguards, which to say that even within the new economic trends, if things are so planned as to encourage young people to work with their hands and learn manual skills, keep them within the normal avenues of life, and be certain to the extent they are capable and are not completely handed over to the work and value systems of a consumer society, our rural environment will not be as barren as our urban ones tend to be, and a place could be provided for the presence of art and craft. There would certainly be some changes in their nature; certain non-professional forms would assume a professional character (as the ritual paintings of Mithila women have assumed of late), certain ritual forms would be practised for purely decorative purposes, and the notion of personal creativity may gain greater currency; further, hand-crafts may be nourished for more than economic reasons. And all this should be easier in a peasant society, where people tend to be close to the land and have a better sense of community.

That all people can be creative to a certain extent is demonstrated by the wide practice of wall-drawing and embroidery by the Kharak peasants. The results are most effective where the art form does not overtax the
individual's skill. This has already been discussed at the end of Chapters III and IV. This is useful to recognize in any creativity programme, that different individuals are endowed differently, but each individual can use his or her modest gifts to considerable advantage. One also notices a similar characteristic in the professional crafts. Here the results are best where commercial pressure on the craftsman is not excessive. Excessive demand can do injury to a craft, no less than insufficient demand. This can also happen when the demands are not sensitive to the special nature of each craft. A close look at the developments in the metal craft and blanket weaving of this region will bear this out. These too will be useful for planners to know.

All the same if our present day planners do not take notice of these factors and let things drift towards what many have considered the inevitable end, the records of craft expertise and design change contained in this study should be of some use to craft enthusiasts in future.