CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

AND

RECOMMENDATIONS
Conclusion and Recommendations

All over the globe it had been observed that the survival of any craft form has been ensured whenever it has found meaning, relevance and utility among the people themselves as well an aesthetic appeal for the people who travel to that land as tourists and carry it as a way of valued artifact. (According to the summary of the findings of the National Level brain-storming sessions of the Working Committee on the Crafts under the Chairpersonship of Laila Tayebji and Gulshan Khanna, the Chairperson of the Cottage Emporium of India. These workshops had been held among crafts persons and allied stakeholders all over the country to determine the way forward) (Govt. of India n.d.).

This is also in synchronization with the key conclusions derived from the international experiences pertaining to the crafts or the rural industry of most places. In the ultimate analysis, the constraints, difficulties, pressures and threats faced by the dwindling handicraft activities or rural industry of a people are a mirror image of the “small enterprise development as a whole in the developing world. The promotion of rural handicrafts as a livelihood strategy also demands a complex package of interventions to address issues of markets and marketing, raw material availability, access to finance, technology, education and training and institutional structures” (Rogerson 2000).

According to the cardinal interest expressed by several workers in UNESCO, it is imperative to safeguard culture that the tangible heritage and intangible heritage of a people be safeguarded.

“Just like culture in general, intangible heritage is also constantly changing and evolving, and being enriched by each new generation. Many expressions and manifestations of intangible cultural heritage are under threat, endangered by globalization and cultural homogenization, and also by a lack of support, appreciation and understanding. If intangible cultural heritage is not nurtured, it risks becoming lost forever, or frozen as a practice belonging to the past. Preserving this heritage and passing it on to future generations, strengthens it, and keeps it alive while allowing for it to change and adapt” (UNESCO n.d.).
5.1 Safeguarding the Living Heritage as Embodied by the Thathera

The living heritage is embodied in life, livelihoods, crafts, music, dance forms, cuisines, in fact the sum total of people’s culture. There is a due need to safeguard this. In fact based on present research it can be said that this concept of safeguarding focuses largely on the following:

- The process interwoven into the successful transmission, or communication of features of the intangible culture heritage of a people from age-to-age, and generation-to-generation over the time and space.

- The production of the manifestations of culture, in this case the craft form practiced by the hand-beaten metal craftsmen of Jandiala Guru.

- Safeguarding could also connote the fact that each member of the community addresses the need to ensure that the intangible cultural heritage of the human settlement becomes an active and vibrant asset for the elderly, the middle aged and the youth—all generations active so that they can be handed over to next generation.

- Initiatives for safeguarding this embodiment of the intangible cultural heritage would revolve around the identification and documentation of such a heritage.

- It would include extensive research, restoration, preservation, propagation, promotion, improvement, enhancement and even transmission of its essential micro, minor and major elements.

- This safeguarding would be ensured particularly through the imparting of formal and diversified non-formal education.

- It would simultaneously safeguard the project of revitalising its several aspects. Even as the physical monuments and works of art which are main tangible heritage are identified, collated and collected, the vast and varied intangible cultural heritage of the mankind through the
efforts of qualitative research methodology can also be gathered and recorded.

- Thus it is a prime duty of a state to take the first step towards safeguarding this intangible heritage by attempting to identify all the expressions and the discrete manifestations that can be collected and described for the entire making a detailed and faithful record, or inventory of them.

- The collection of such inventories would then probably be taken to be the substratum on which the process of all those safeguarding measures that could be tailor-made to fit all the manifestations and expressions which have been diligently included, and described in the inventory being prepared for the intangible heritage of the community.

- It must be understood, however, that the communities must take the initiative of defining their intangible cultural heritage. It is their prerogative to decide which cultural manifested arts and craft practices are essential and indelible parts of their cultural heritage.

Since 2001, about 40 countries have called on the UNESCO in order to obtain strategic tools to help boost their institutional capacities and allow them to better define their national cultural policies. Such initiatives to assist Member States contribute to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and are carried out through numerous partnerships with UNESCO (UNESCO 2006).

5.2 Sustenance of the Crafts

Craftwork makes a significant contribution to the local people’s diverse and multiple livelihood strategies. More specifically, it is an important contributor to a fairly diverse rural livelihood portfolio collection that tends to include the several land-based strategies of arable farming, which include livestock husbandry, the exploration. It would also include off-farm sources of income like: labour, wage employment, vendors and migrants. Even though it has been widely acknowledged in research as well as initiatives economic
aspects of the “trade in craftwork has been poorly understood” (Kepe and Mokhado 2007).

- This is particularly noticeable amongst small timer craftspersons and craft units which have provided small but essentially crucial source of revenue to the groups subsisting together especially in remote areas.

- Market promotion support of these products can provide vital incentives to the craft persons so that they can continue to use and transfer their traditional skills from generation to generation which would, otherwise, have disappeared.

- While crafts propagations may have some negative local impact on certain resources it must be acknowledged that the craft persons have over time evolved strategies and salient practices for the sustainable resource management so that they are under no threat of being depleted altogether.

- However, it is the external factors that impinge upon successful propagation of these resources. They influence from the outside world and create problems which at best could have been avoided or easily resolved if suitable action had been taken to ameliorate the situation there and then.

5.2.1 Some Encouraging Initiatives for the Crafts

“UNESCO is involved in promoting innovative training concepts relating to creating new products, new wrapping, new marketing and management techniques for small business while stressing training for women and youth” (UNESCO 2006). This would go far towards strengthening the hands of crafts communities. It would be a support system that would supplement their inherent cultural folkways and mores.

5.3 Salient Findings of the Research

- The older order of the Thathera exists but they are unwilling to put in the newer order or the younger generation into the profession. The older craftsmen are proud of their skills but do not feel that future generations would take up this occupation. Most of their
dependants are working as salesmen in cloth shops or electric and electronic shops. A few of them are even working as daily wagers or common labour.

- The average age of the Thathera is 50 years of age with the youngest being 27 and the oldest being 78 years of age. This indicates that the age of the practitioners is increasing with minimum back up of younger talent to replace them, thus the craft is in danger of dying out altogether.

- The average earning of the Thathera is about Rs. 150/- per day with the least being at Rs. 100/- per day and the maximum being Rs. 220/- per day. This earning is restricted, however to the peak season of three months in a year from December of first year to February of the next year.

- Education-wise most of the Thathera have studied up to the middle class (Class VIII) level. Almost all of them began learning the craft well before their teens. Many of them accompanied their fathers to the work place and learnt the trade as apprentices. However, with the decline of the business in the past two decades, none of the children of the Thathera are interested in following in the footsteps of their fathers. They would rather earn as daily wager as salesmen or take up apprentice work in mechanic shops. The children of the Thathera too, however, are not inclined towards pursuing higher education.

- The numbers of dependants on the Thathera are also significant to their economic status. On an average each household has 3-5 children. With the meager earnings there is a major impact on the upkeep of the household in terms of provision of basic amenities and also pursuing higher education among the children.

- There are number of health hazards related to this metal craft. Impact due to release of fumes (copper and zinc) into the air during the smelting scrap, which is primary raw material in such processes, such metal fumes do not break down in the environment and has a tendency
to accumulate in plants and animals. Pulmonary problems were found in many artisans due to their exposure to fumes and dust in the production process. As it is also reported by Govt. of India (n.d.) that leather tanning, pottery, metal work and glass-work all had very damaging pulmonary impacts on craft producers. In pottery and wooden fired kilns, a lot of smoke and fumes are emitted that are potentially carcinogenic. Heavy metals such as copper, cobalt and cadmium, present in the colours used, are known to have adverse impacts on the health, attacking the neurological system in the body. In metal casting, burns occur commonly during repeated heating of the metal ingots where cinders scatter from the fire. The arms and feet are most prone to burns as they are more exposed. Cuts on the hand from handling sharp edges are also common. Disturbingly, older workers suffer from severe tremors of the hands, even as a few younger ones are also seen with mild tremors in the fingers, which may be due to metal toxicity as well as muscular fatigue owing to the strenuous work pattern.

Poor eyesight and eye-related ailments are common across crafts clusters. Eyes are affected by the direct impact of chemical agents such as metallic fumes and physical agents such as dirt, dust and particles. Poorly lit workplaces also put strain on the eyes, which leads to watery eyes and poor eyesight.

- **Lean period as there is no work in the summer** session. The peak season is from December to February (When marriages and festivals taken place in North part of the country)

- The Thathera are paid by the Kasera only making charges per vessel. The ownership of raw material as also the foundry rests entirely with the Kasera as also the sizeable profit. In 50% of the Thathera, the workshops where they manufacture are in fact owned by the Kasera. Thus, the Thathera are one step away from being bonded labour for the Kasera, dependent on them for orders as well as the means of
fulfilling them. Many of them are also labouring under long-standing debts.

- The kinds of utensils the Thathera can fabricate are many and varied. These days there is very little demand therefore they have become restricted to the manufacture of a select range of items like parat, patila and deg.

- Limited orders from different parts of the country has also impacted to their work to the great extent. Earlier they were getting order from many places in the state as well as the country such as – Abohar, Fazilka, Tarn Taran, Malwa, Ganga Nagar- in Punjab and Rajasthan, Lahaul-Spiti, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Jagadhari, Delhi, Moradabad, Jammu & Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh Market.

- In UP and Bihar as also in Rajasthan some of the large sized storage vessels like degbara and gaggar are still being demanded. They are given as a part of the dowry at marriages of daughters, but this trend too is on the decline and there is little demand. Thus, they are made only to order.

- The seasonal nature of work allotted to the Thathera as well as the current practice of commission based pro rate payment is causing a severe economic decline amongst them. This is compounded by the fact that they are functioning as individuals, thus increasing their vulnerability to lean periods and reducing their ability to have cash reserves to absorb losses. The Kasera do not have much incentive to carry on manufacturing the traditional vessels, and many prefer to trade in steel and aluminum vessels, where demands and profits are higher. This leads to further unemployment and impoverishment of the Thathera.

- The Thathera are open to learning about and making new items but at present they are scared that the rising costs may make the design development exercise cost prohibitive. A few of them have in their lifetime made a few new items of which they have kept a
sample or two. The Thathera are very open to upgrade their knowledge through training and design development, and sustain their craft. It is clear to them that organizing themselves into a group will decrease their vulnerability and improve their position. Thus, they are open to any overtimes that would give them a renewed lease on life.

- The Thathera are willing to do anything to make their livelihood more conducive to their sustenance rather than dying out slowly as they are now doing. **They are already formed a committee and have a Thathera as a Pradhan (head).** Even within this committee there is another group made up exclusively of the Thathera and they too have their own Pradhan.

- **It is clear that the Thathera are at a crossroads,** having memories of better times when raw material and manufacturing processes were more under their control, but are now on a downward spiral, where the workshop premises and foundry are beyond their control. They are not able to transmit their skills to the next generation, indicating that the skill will die after them. On the other hand, the Kasera too are suffering from taxation regimes like VAT, removal of subsidy on coal and scrap and increased labour costs to say nothing of the escalating cost of living and the newer pressures of lifestyle expectations.

### 5.4 Findings and Constraints in Handicraft Sector

Despite its social and economic significance, the growth of the handicraft sector faces a number of threats and challenges. These can be addressed through appropriate policy measures like:

#### 5.4.1 Scattered Working, Dissipated Efforts:
Most artisans work independently. All activities are decentralized, thus there is no formal collective structure, minimizing efficiency and productive capacity. Efforts should be made to formalize the artisans into groups and institutional structure for participation in several government policies and departmental schemes. This view was also authenticated by the XII Five-Year Plan working committee, Govt. of India (n.d).
5.4.2 **Credit Access:** As seen in the analysis part, most artisans are from economically weaker sections, riddled with debts and constantly face problems due to lack of resources. A massive deficit exists between the financial requirements and their daily earnings. Various schemes and services have been initiated by the government and several other institutions to help craft persons as stated in the XII Five-Year Plan for Handicrafts (Govt. of India n.d.).

5.4.3 **Empowerment Required:** Large unorganized and informal sector has a high level of dependence on external support factors in the input and supply chain. These external factors are traders who exploit the artisans for their own benefits. Introducing formal organised structures of function can improve the situation.

5.4.4 **Archaic Methodology:** Age-old inefficient technology and method of production, as in the case of the Thathera of Jandiala Guru, restrict production capacity and quality of output. Infrastructural inputs, civic amenities, transportation costs, irregular power supply, lack of work sheds, warehousing, etc. impact to a large extent on the magnitude of sector.

5.4.5 **Sporadic Exposure to Markets:** Although the demand of handicraft products is huge, varied and majorly governed by the buyers demand and requirement. It is not supplied despite the high demand; most of the artisans are unable to access beyond the local markets. The artisans are dependent on traders or middlemen. Newer linkages are required to facilitate the development of the entire sector.

5.4.6 **Influx of Machine-made Products:** Increasing mechanization processes have flooded market with machine-made products. One adverse resultant was the large-scale unemployment as many Thathera were laid off with the advent of aluminum units in Jandiala Guru.

5.4.7 **Capacity Building:** As these crafts are on the verge of extinction, there is an urgent need to safeguard the interests of the artisans through training more apprentices, and encouraging young people to take courses at formal and informal institutions.
Conclusion and Recommendations

Handicraft enterprises are ideal for the Indian economy. It has low capital, high intensity of employment and wide geographic dispersal. Large employment generation with minimal capital use is the hallmark of this industry, yet it is plagued by the problems of finance, marketing and technology (Govt. of India n.d.).

5.4.8 Innovations in Design: The Thathera are replicating and copying old designs. Two types of technological interventions could boost this field. These are soft technology inputs like design and branding on the one hand and on the other hand the hard technology inputs like physical infrastructure, which will definitely improve efficiency.

Another lacuna in the Indian handicrafts sector is branding. Branding gives a globally competitive edge to the product. While exports of Indian handicrafts appear to be in sizeable numbers, yet the share in the world market is less than 2% (Govt. of India n.d.).

Thus the handicraft sector needs to concentrate on environment, nurturing enterprise, promoting concepts of business management and costing, giving a boost to production and productivity through provision of infrastructure and technology, foci on marketing and branding and access to credit. Focus on overall development is urgently required.

5.5 The XII Five-Year Plan Envisions For the Handicraft Sector: A Vision

“To create a globally competitive Handicrafts Sector and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities to the artisans through innovative products designs, improvement in product quality, introduction of modern technology and preserving traditions.” (Govt. of India n.d.)

The strategy deployed to achieve this vision is as follows:

5.5.1 “Product Development and Production: The product development strategy focuses on developing demand-driven products based on market requirements. The strategy builds upon already existing skills and cultural heritage, coupled with inputs from new designers, training in core business areas, horizontal and vertical linkages, ensuring access to raw materials and
the fostering of entrepreneurship. The core of this strategy lies in the successful implementation of the design development; compliance, quality control and capacity building components that have been introduced in the schemes. Also the success of raw material banks component in its revised form will impact the overall production base.

5.5.2 Marketing and Compliance: The overall marketing strategy focuses on the steps needed to enhance the marketing efforts of the sector to capture a larger market share, and to seize the opportunities associated with the expanding tourism and corporate investments being made. One of the key areas entwined at each step in this strategy are addressing the compliance issues, so that the products are acceptable internationally. The marketing strategy focuses on identification of the most appropriate market niches, ensuring quality and standardization of products, ensuring proper market access, branding, and marketing of the products efficiently.

Sales of handicrafts continue to be confronted by obstacles in meeting the quantity, quality, and cost demands of different segments of the market. For producers to be able to take advantage of new economic opportunities and capture new market segments they need assistance in expanding their production capacity, in upgrading the quality of their products to the standards demanded by buyers, and in overcoming the many obstacles they face in meeting the requirements of the targeted markets.

5.5.3 Infrastructure Development: This strategy seeks to respond to the main challenge faced in the availability of infrastructure and latest technologies in the sector and suggests solutions to these challenges by ensured focused interventions. A new scheme of ‘Infrastructure and Technology Development’ will be critical in filling the institutional gaps in the sector.

5.5.4 Livelihood and Working Environment: The strategy for livelihood and working environment bases itself on providing social security to the artisans and their families. It also makes provisions for financial/ policy support and the necessary regulatory framework that fosters the development of viable entities, which enable artisans micro enterprises (individually and collectively).
Conclusion and Recommendations

Provisions have also been made for supply of tools and technologies, designs and marketing at the grass root level through the cluster approach" (Govt. of India n.d.).

5.6 Policy Implications on Preservation and Propagation of the Hand-Beaten Metal Craft

Some of the implications of the findings during the research have a direct bearing on the policy and cultural sustenance of governmental writs on the survival and sustenance of the crafts per se and the handicrafts in particular. What was of vital significance to the crafts persons was the provision of their essentials through subsidized rates or through loans with a built in option to buy and sell through that same financial institution. The implications to the policy framework on the handicrafts would be:

5.6.1 Grouping of the Crafts persons: It is difficult for an individual to sustain an enterprise for very long mere on his or her own efforts. What is required is that the following interventions be looked at minutely and with a special emphasis on the position of the crafts persons and their take on the various activities. The Thathera of Jandiala Guru who are the hand beaten metal crafts persons can be grouped into:

5.6.1.1 Joint Liability Groups (JLGs): Here 10 to 12 members together group themselves and agree to work together under one common unit. They can approach a bank and under the current financial stipulations, they can share the liability of a loan taken collectively in their group’s name. This loan can be used to procure raw material or cover sundry expenses, which the ‘Thathera’ is otherwise hard put to pay and then the group can jointly defray the amount through regular payments on easy installments. This form of loaning can be availed of any number of times. Once the group has established its credibility there is every possibility that the JLG can go in for more and more involvement in procurement and production and then sustain the group enterprise as well as individual unit.
5.6.1.2 **Self Help Groups (SHGs):** This concept of ten to fifteen like-minded people forming a group to sustain a micro-enterprise is finding great popularity among crafts persons because here the individual gets to progress according to his or her own genius. While the group functions together, there is a security of being there in a group. Here the group takes up a loan but the loan can be distributed among all the members according to their need, or they may even take the loan on a rotational basis. In this manner the loan is taken up by several of the members and they can utilize the amount according to their needs to build up their enterprise and cover all forms of expenses that they may incur. With the help of the SHG backing, the Thathera can participate in far off exhibitions and even have the ability to buy stock as per their needs. The interesting aspect about loaning within the SHG umbrella is that the amount of the loan keeps on multiplying. The first loan is four times the collective micro savings. Once this is returned successfully, the second one is about seven times and this goes on till the requirements of the group members are met. There have been SHGs that have risen from their micro-enterprise levels to become large, well established enterprises.

5.6.1.3 **Activity-based Groups (ABGs):** This form of group is the one where all members are involved in a single activity like the Thathera. They can work collectively to take orders, purchase raw material, defray travel and other expenses as also look after the sales and marketing through the production of relevant promotional material. This activity-based group is recognized as such by the financial institution, which also promotes it by giving support and promotional boost for various regional, national and international expositions and trade or sale opportunities.

Thus, all of the above groups have their unique points of benefit for the craftsmen. Yet there is a large lacuna because of the lack of awareness about these groups. It is the responsibility of the financial institutions and the civil society bodies to look into the information needs of the crafts persons and help them obtain whatever they
require and whatever point it is required. Lack of awareness and education about these schemes is the biggest problem that needs to be tackled. This can easily be done by the committed NGOs in partnership with the various financial institutions. The benefits of joining such groups are:

- Allegiance with such groups could help the Thathera to get out of their desperate positions of debt and despair riddled by the inability to pay back the high rates of interest.
- Working together can give them the confidence to take up larger orders and fulfill them
- Group representation at exhibitions in the domestic and international sector would give the necessary boost to the dwindling craft.

5.6.2 Raw Material Bank: As the raw material for the Thathera is mostly scrap metal they are always in need of a reservoir of such raw material to be able to experiment with the alloys they make and the products they need to frame. They have not been able to organize a central pool or bank for the raw material despite having worked for so long in this field mainly because of the following reasons:

- None of the Thathera or the Kasera had the financial ability to purchase large columns of scrap from government auctions.
- The maximum holding capacity of the hand beaten metal craftsmen has been about 20 tones of scrap, which they could hold in their units. To have a larger holding they would need to have a larger warehousing facility, which could only be possible under sanction from the administration. Under the authority of the Municipal Corporation some land could be allocated for the construction of a huge facility for holding various forms of scrap. It could be a state of the art facility that could cater to the short
term and long-term needs of the entire Kasera and Thathera community.

- Either this same warehouse facility or another warehouse could be constructed to ensure that there was ample space to put away the finished goods as well.

5.6.3 Wholesale and Retail Marketing Outlets: The products of the hand-beaten metal craftsmen were showcased only in the shops of the Kasera of Jandiala Guru. Only a small fragment were taken and showcased in some of the traditional markets of Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir. In case these products are to have greater visibility there is greater need to focus on:

a. Market Promotion Initiatives like:
   i. Comprehensive catalogue
   ii. Interactive Website
   iii. Branding
   iv. Quality Assurance
   v. Bar Coding
   vi. Promotional material in tourism oriented literature
   vii. Documentation in in-flight magazines and coffee table books

b. Setting up retail outlets at tourism hubs.

c. Extensive participation in domestic and international exhibitions.

d. Showcase the products in and around all tourism-oriented places in Punjab and Delhi.

e. Setting up of Zonal Retail Outlets in East, West, North, South and Central India.

f. Showcase products at all international airports and entry points of tourist influx.
g. Training in soft skills for the Thathera and the Kasera to equip them to deal with both domestic and international tourists.

h. Each Thathera and Kasera Unit to be a manufacturing and retail outlet where live demonstrations can be managed by the tourist as well as young entrepreneurs.

5.7 Recommendations for Policy Implementation

The Ministry of Textiles, Government of India is responsible for formulation, policy, planning, implementation, development, export promotion and regulation policies of the entire handicraft industry. Various bodies and organizations help formulate and execute these policies, which are implemented for the greater development of the handicrafts sector and in turn strengthen the country’s economy. Some of the challenges have been

- Lack of policy options for handicraft activities and development of the handicraft sector
- Absence of an organized regulatory and legal framework for the handicraft sector
- No directed efforts by government to link tourism, cultural and historical heritage and promotion of the handicraft sector.
- Absence of established national level association of artisans.
- Poor commitment of business development agencies for the handicraft sector.
- No bar coding
- No market promotion.
- Brand promotion

Globally appreciated initiatives like creation of story (hangtags), participation in fairs, exhibitions, interactive website creation, mobile demonstration, etc. to be implemented.
5.8 Visions and Strategy for the XII Five-Year Plan Period

Production of handicrafts is the expression of our priceless cultural heritage. The handicrafts are a sub-set of the knowledge economy. It is the only production activity in which the knowledge and skills are used to create a tangible physical asset at the origin. Some workable activities could be:

- Innovative schemes for design and marketing development can be developed taking leads from India’s rich culture and diversity in certain unexplored areas like the Mughal theme or Adivasi theme (vegetable dyes and organic material) etc. introduction of literature which can be linked with publishers.

- Regarding documentation, several write-ups on handicrafts can be supervised and prepared. Short duration films and documentaries on the selected Indian crafts dealing with cultural, social and economic aspects may be aired on TV channels like the National Geography, Discovery, Travel and Living etc.

- Reverse Buyers and Sellers meets may be conducted in clusters. The programmes conducted at Swamimali and Bargu were very much valuable for craft persons.

- Dilli Haat and similar domestic and international expositions should be properly monitored.

- There should be a scheme for extending scholarship to young talented crafts persons.

- There should be an award to the person or an organization that revitalizes craft community or a cluster.

- Selection for National Award from the same family be avoided (Govt. of India n.d.).

Lastly, but not the least, to conclude, it has been proven over the passage of time and in various spatial locations that countries or areas where commercial marketing of crafts has taken place, the designs have become
increasingly elaborate, attractive and fetching. Craftsmen all over the world have been constantly experimenting with newer materials and techniques. They have responded at various times to the commercial demand generation for particular utensils and demands from metal craft workers. Trends since the 1970s have shown that commercial marketing of the craft products have been a dependent function of the quality and rate of production. It is the craft that sustains the craft persons and the undying efforts of the craft persons that sustain the poignant reality of the products in time and space. The revival and the progress of the hand-beaten metal craft artisans promises to be a journey that will burnish the metal craftsmen in their own furnaces but the end result is better than copper, brass and bronze- in fact it is literally gold. It is this satisfaction of having done a good job that sustains the Thathera and the Kasera of 21st Century Jandiala Guru.