CHAPTER-3

RESEARCH METHODS
3.1 Research Design

Scientific research entails looking at the facts in the original situation and after studying them thoroughly attempting to analyze and derive conclusions. These conclusions may even have serious impact making effect on the ground realities. Therefore they are often clubbed as recommendations. In case the findings of the research have the ability to propose policy changes, these policy implications are detailed elaborately as one of the major outputs of the research effort. Most of the research work conducted in the social sciences has focused on bringing to light specific aspects of a people or a culture in time and space. This had been the underlying thought when the researcher began the preliminary work on the field. When confronted with the idea that a particular community specializing in a certain craft was poised on the edge of virtually disappearing from the world altogether, the research was seized with the objective of documenting and putting down for posterity the details of the existence and spread as well as the reasons for the withdrawal of this singular craft totally.

All research is planned and centered along certain central foci that determine the span, volume and magnitude as well as the direction a particular investigation may take. This is taken by the research design or the plan of the research work. Almost all research undertaken in the modern scientific world is concerned with the discovery of a well-thought out plan of action for embarking upon the investigation concerning a particular subject.

According to Blaikie, the process of “making all the decisions related to the research project in hand before they are carried out is called the social research design” (Blaikie 2010). A research design provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data. A choice of research design reflects decision about the priority being given to a range of dimensions of the research process (Bryman 2012). The research design forms an integrated statement that provides all the required justification besides making the technical decisions that go into the planning and implementation of a directed research project. Several workers have defined the research design as they have evolved and finalized it. A working definition of the research design proposed by several researchers is as follows: “A research design is a plan
for collecting and analyzing evidence that will make it possible for the investigator to answer whatever questions he or she has posed. The design of an investigation touches almost all aspects of the research, from the minute details of data collection to the selection of techniques of data analysis.” (Ragin 1994 cf. Flick 2006). A design tends to plan in advance the several steps and composite actions that contribute towards procedures or processes, the design is constituted and modified by virtue of the decision in favor of particular alternatives (Flick 2006).

For the present study, the researcher kept in mind the desired objectives, resources and time frame while preparing the research design. The focus of the current research has been the metal craftsmen settled in Thathera Bazaar of Jandiala Guru in district Amritsar. They are further comprised of the distinctive divisions of firstly, the hand-beaten metal workers who are popularly referred to as the ‘Thathera’ and secondly, the traders who handled the markets, trading, the purchasing and sales ends of the hand-beaten metal works industry and were referred to colloquially as the ‘Kasera’.

3.2 Foundations of Interest in the Research and Problem Identification

The foundations of the interest in this particular research problem were laid during the internship program participated in by the researcher during the Masters Degree program. As a part of an NGO working with the marginalized artisans and craftsmen as well as the dwindling rural industry of northern India, the researcher obtained the opportunity, for the very first time, to closely examine the hand beaten metal craft community upfront. The internship program enabled the researcher to live in that area and closely observe the craftsmen as they worked at various stages of their craft in their natural settings. It was June 2010. That short sojourn in Jandiala Guru during the summer of 2010 equipped the researcher with the essential firsthand experience of living in the closely-knit rural artisans working community like that of the Thathera. The researcher could observe the artisans making different kind of artifacts of Brass, Bronze and Copper with different kinds of handheld tools, which they used to shape the different vessels. The researcher was greatly impressed by the vast technical knowledge held by them. However, despite their great skills and knowledge, the artisans were
dwindling and their craft too was languishing. The researcher was pained and scientifically concerned about the vital processes that were at work. The researcher realized the potential for in-depth investigation into the vital pulls and pushes that were contributing towards the gradual disappearance of these artisans of traditional metal work utensils. It was during the internship program that the researchers decided to give in to his anthropological instincts and prepare to conduct a close study of the struggle for existence being experienced by these artisans. The researcher was fired by a deep seated curiosity to ascertain the kinds of dilapidated conditions they are living in despite the fact that they were getting orders from different areas. The hand-beaten metal workers were prone to working practical from sun up in the morning to sun down and even then they were experiencing greatly striated conditions. The socio-economic condition of these artisans had declined from a peak just a few decades ago to an absolute low during the time of initiation of the research work. It was not difficult to understand that the hand-beaten metal craft was on a rapid decline and the skill set of this particular community was bordering on the very edge of extinction.

Action Anthropologists have worked with various communities the world over and have made great contributions towards the preservation and propagation of the inherent cultures unique to various niches of the world. The current study is also aimed at documenting the community under study, determining the factors that are causing its decimation as also examining the possibility of future interventions that may contribute towards the conservation of the definitive skills of these people as also their craft. Anthropologists working on various communities have not only – worked towards preserving their material culture and norms nor merely documented the typical peculiarities of a people. Their work has had the impact of conservation, preservation, propagation, development and to a large scale even bringing certain cultural materials back from the brink of virtual extinction. It was with this motivation and zeal that the researcher decided to conduct incisive research into the hand beaten metal craft as well as the traditional craftsmen of this unique niche craft of India. The objective was to document in detail all aspects of this ground reality in order to save that particular skills set of this community from dying out. Therefore, after the exposure during the internship,
the researcher focused on taking up detailed research work on the community, their skills, their products and technical prowess as well as their knowledge and exploring the potential for further development through specific interventions if any.

3.3 Universe and Unit of Study

The universe of study for the research work was the Bazaar Thatheran of Jandiala Guru, an old world; small town located just about 17 kilometers short of the holy city of Amritsar in Punjab on the National Highway 21.

The units of study for the present work were the Thathera or the hand-beaten metal craft artisans and the Kasera or the traders’ community that is closely associated with the Thathera. Some of these traders may have begun working initially as artisans and had then gradually turned into traders with the gradual passage of time as well as their changed circumstance. From now on the artisans had the role of making those utensils and the traders had the role of dealing with the outside market and selling those traditional products to the outside market. Thus, the role of the Kasera was equally important and contributed in a major way to the economic sustenance of the people. An in-depth study and analysis of this unit of study was essential in order to foster a deeper understanding of these traditional metal craft workers and the challenges being faced by them.

3.4 Sampling the Study Base

As it is not possible to conduct a limited time period study over an entire population it is necessary to plan a sampling to ensure that sample of respondents drawn is fully representative of the actual population under study. The sample plan is a mapping of the volume and magnitude of the population being taken up for the research work. The sampling for the current study was purposive and snowball sampling. The distribution of the sample was drawn along the categories best suited for equal and proportionate representation. In social science research it is very difficult and to some extent almost impossible to study all members of the group under study.

The process of sampling allows us to study a workable number of representative cases that are drawn from a large population. Therefore, the
researchers select few elements or cases from the population that they aim to study. Many of the workers in the social sciences have propounded that “results or interpretation from that sample data is applicable to the total population only if the sample drawn is representative of that population” (Monette et al. 2011). In purposive sampling the researcher relies on his or her expert judgment to select units that were “representative” or “typical” of the population. For carrying out this form of sampling, the researcher needs to have considerable knowledge of the population under study before the sample is drawn (Singleton Jr. and Straits 2005).

Snowball sampling is essentially a sampling strategy built around referrals. The researcher starts with few respondents and they in turn give reference of some other known people who can be included in the study for the particular purpose (Ruane 2005).

Snowball sampling method ensures that one case leads on to another and so on. This sampling technique is dependant upon the sampled cases being known to the other, prior cases and where the members or cases interact with each other routinely (Monette et al. 2011).

The chances of a personal bias creeping in such kind of sampling methods are more and it cannot be denied that there is no subjectivity involved while picking up the respondents by this kind of sampling method. Besides this the researcher ensured all attempts at being objective in choosing the respondents.

The sampling tools prepared and whetted were the interview guide, which had a number of close ended and open-ended questions. The Interview guides were modeled to elicit responses from five different categories of respondents. These five categories were the foci of the following:

1. In-depth interviews among the Thathera
2. In-depth interviews among the Kasera
3. Key Person interviews (Head of the Thathera committee and Kasera committee, opinion Leaders like members of the Municipal Corporation and similar such officials)
4. Focus Group discussions (Purposively Segregated groups on age and specialization)
5. Transact Walk (Random Opinion Sharing among respondents who are not artisans of the hand beaten metal craft but live proximally and have been using their products)

**Figure 3.1: Sample Plan of the Research**

![Sample Plan of the Research](image)

The total member of respondents as per the plan above is depicted in the Figure 3.2:

**Figure 3.2: Number of Respondents in Each Category**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Respondent Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>IDIs- the Thathera</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>IDIs- the Kasera</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Key Persons Interviews (KPIs)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>FGDs – the Thathera</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>FGDs – the Kasera</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Transact Walk Interviews (TWI)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Case Studies</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>310</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Though numerically the strength of the hand-beaten metalworker community is currently not very large as several of them have left the field and others have taken up alternative occupations. It was most favorable that they are not dispersed over a vast geographical area. Therefore, gaining useful insights into the close-knit work unit was feasible quite easily where a total of 310 respondents had been contacted directly for the generation of research data using the tools of classical, empirical research. Along with these, the empirical observations of the researcher were also incorporated to add to the qualitative richness of the data. The photo-documentation of the process of making the product; their tools and techniques; and the finished products was given importance throughout the research work in the field and during the presentation of data in the thesis.

3.5 Pilot Study

The term ‘pilot studies’ refers to mini versions of a full-scale study (also called ‘feasibility’ studies), as well as the specific pre-testing of a particular research instrument such as a questionnaire or interview schedule. “Pilot studies are a crucial element of a good study design” (Teijlingen 2002).

For a comprehensive understanding of the locale of the study, it is important to explore the site and assess feasibility of pursuing the desired study. It was with this intent that the pilot study was conducted in the area in the month of July 2011 to finalize and formulate the research objectives as well as the tools to be utilized for conducting the classical empirical research like the interview guide. The researcher went to the field area with an unbiased and scientific approach. All aspects of the study were well grounded in sound theoretical perspective. During the pilot study, the researcher could identify and locate the artisans and their respective working areas. The secondary data pertaining to the population and the census was also collected to obtain an idea of the number of artisans approximately. This helped in further narrowing down the future plan of action of the research work. During the pilot study, the researcher decided to make photo-documentation and video documentation of the field area; the traders; the artisans; their tools, techniques and the artifacts being produced by them. In
the beginning there was some resistance but later they were conducive to having their work recorded.

When the researcher went to the field for the pilot study, the local residents informed him that about 50-60 families of these artisans remained of the more than 500 families’ strong community that had settled in Jandiala Guru post the Partition period. Since the focus of the study was on the artisans and not on the household, it was observed that there were around 150-200 artisans in that area. They considered a father and his son (both artisans) as a single unit. Therefore the number according to them was less than the actual number of artisans present there. During the pilot study the researcher lived among the community members with the aim of rapport establishment, which is a most essential component in empirical research. Rapport establishment starts from the point when one enters the field from the very first day.

3.6 Rapport Establishment

Many factors affect the process of trust and rapport building in the population being studied- how one presents himself or herself; the role one chooses for the field; and the events that encourage, limit or make it impossible to achieve trust. Trust is the incremental developmental process built up over time and seems easier to lose once it has been built up than to gain in the first place. One needs tremendous reservoirs of social skills and personal charm to build rapport. A researcher builds rapport by getting along with the members in the field and forges a friendly relationship, shares the same language, and laughs and cries with members (Neumman 2006). It is not easy for the new researcher to go to the field and successfully establish a good enough rapport with the respondents and other members in the area to be able to collect the relevant data. The behavior of the researcher and his activities help in establishing a healthy relationship with the respondents. The nature and quality of data is also to a large extent depends upon the rapport of the researcher in the field area. Keeping this in mind, the researcher entered the field area very carefully. Before starting the generation of actual data in the field, the researcher tried to build a good rapport with the
respondents. The generation of the data is not solely dependent upon the relationship of researcher with the respondents only, but also with other members of that area; how one conducts himself or herself in the field as an individual and as a researcher. However, initially, it was not easy to meet some of the key opinion leaders and convince them about the nature of the researcher being carried out.

3.7 Objectives of the Study

After careful review of related studies and from pilot study, the following objectives were made for the present study

1. To provide anthropological insights into the dynamic yet slow descent of a skilled community into the oblivion of decadence, dissolution and total destruction.

2. To know the socio-economic status of the community associated with this work, and the skill set of the artisans and the potential for their development.

3. To find out the various push and pull factors that influenced the decline of the Thathera community (hand beaten metal workers) of Punjab.

4. To investigate the functional place of the arts and crafts in the social system (use of art in daily, religious, social functions, economic benefits and their benefits thereof).

5. To analyze motifs, designs, stylizing, etc. and the changes brought about through their exposure to modern art, product development and their value appreciation as works of art.

6. To elicit the details of material used their sources of supply, production, etc. along with the attempt to use new materials. Further, the present position of the craft will be analyzed.

7. To know the dynamics of traditional markets and traditional usage of some utensils that still continues despite all changes.
Anthropologists have always held the view that culture is not a collection of discontinuous parts and have found it to be a composite whole. The part can never be fully known from isolated studies, since they derive the complete meaning from their functional position in the pattern of the whole. “The full meaning of any aspect of culture cannot be conceived without considering the interactive operation of the total culture” (Maiti 2004).

3.8 Data Generation

Qualitative data refers to descriptive, non-numerical data in the form of written text, including field observations, interviews, and documents as well as images, video, and audio material that has been transcribed. Qualitative data are usually produced through field research – that is, extended stays in a specific local setting. They are particularly suited to the analysis of meanings that people attribute to structures, processes, and events. Moreover, “they are especially useful in exploratory studies” (Miles and Huberman 1994).

For the present study the primary data were generated and secondary data were collected from different sources. For primary data the two stakeholders- the Thathera and the Kasera were interviewed with carefully structured interview schedule and interview guide. For collection of secondary data, the researcher went to various libraries, reviewed literature from many related books and journals, collected material from Municipal Corporation of Jandiala Guru, Census office Chandigarh, and through various sites on internet.

Interview schedule was used to collect the personal, demographic profile of the respondents and the semi structured interview guide was used to generate the data keeping in view the objectives of the study. Besides this the researcher conducted focus group discussions with the Thathera, the Kasera, and the Municipal Corporation Committee of Jandiala Guru. Few case studies of the master craftsmen in Jandiala Guru have been done and reported in the analysis part.
Transact walk interviews were conducted to get the general notion and attitude of the general public in the area. However, it was taken care that views of both the males and females belonging to different age groups were recorded regarding the hand-beaten metal craft products and the producers. The Transact Walk is an exercise in observation that enables the researcher to obtain information that may not be possible in a formal interview session or Focus group discussion. During this exercise the researcher walks through the area of investigation as a casual, uninterested visitor who is only interested in knowing about life in general. At any given spot the investigator may pause during his or her walk, study the environment; listen to daily, everyday sounds of the area under study besides observing the routine, the actions and activities along with the relationships between various actors in the scenario. This form of observation provides insights into the life and lifestyle processes of a community. It is an approach to obtaining preliminary, primary, first hand data on the people the researcher is conducting research on. It provides grassroots level data that can then be the substratum to base subsequent data gathering on. The Transact Walk is an additional investigation tool to supplement the body of data that is being amassed by the researcher through various other primary and secondary data sources.

The interview guide provides a general approach to the researcher and covers the important points/issues to be covered during the interview by the researcher. The actual questions are composed on the spot to fit the natural rhythm of the dialogue and to promote maximum, unbiased disclosure by the interviewee. Patience hearing and gentle probing at times without suggesting desired results is necessary for good interview (Dooley 2008).

There were more of open-ended questions in the guide, where the respondents could relate and share their experiences with the researcher freely. The discussions with the respondents sometimes extended to more than 5 to 6 hours, and with few respondents (The Thathera), the researcher spent the whole day with them in their working space/unit. The researcher had tried to keep it informal discussion but by keeping the research objectives of
the study in mind. The time value of these artisans were kept in mind and without any disturbance in their work, the researcher observed them working with their tools and making the artifacts in which they were specialized with probing at times whenever needed.

The researcher had an aim of video record the interviews and group discussion for future reference and for the purpose of cross validation of the verbatim and the data. But due to certain restrictions in the field it was not possible to record the interviews through any audio or video instrument as the respondents were not comfortable in front of any such gadgets or instruments. With the fear of loosing the data, the researcher kept the audio recorder and video camera aside. All the interviews were conducted in their natural setting i.e. the area where they work and produce these artifacts.

Diaries are unlikely to be used as a ‘stand-alone’ method, but can be used to advantage in mixed methods studies (Barbour 2008).

As we know the importance of field diary so the field notes were made regularly and observations were recorded on the field diary and photographs were clicked only after getting the permission from the respondents.

The notion of photographs as visual diary reintroduces the researcher and the qualities of the medium into the research process. That is, a diary is a self-reflexive and media-literate chronicle of the researcher’s entry, participation in, and departure from the field. The images generated within this paradigm are acknowledged to be the unique result of the interaction of a certain researcher with a specific population using a particular medium as a precise moment in space and time (Prosser and Schwartz 1998).

To conduct focus group discussions, the Thathera respondents were segregated and divided on the basis of- their skill set and their speciality in making different kinds of products and according to their years of experience in this work.
Picture 3.1: Researcher with the Thathera Respondents
3.9 Ethical Consideration

Ethics are very much of importance in social research. The researcher keeping this point in mind clearly defined to the respondents the nature of his work and objectives of the study. Before starting with data generation in the field, the researcher made contact with them and explained them about his work. Then assurance was given to the respondents that their identity would not be revealed to anyone during or after completing my research work. Therefore, in order to safeguard the privacy of the respondents that the names, wherever used in the thesis have been changed to some other name purposefully to safeguard the identity of the respondents. During the fieldwork the researcher was not allowed to record those interviews or conversations. Many other scholars suggested the researcher to use the recorder without telling the respondents. But it was against the research ethics. Therefore, the researcher made the notes personally at the time of interview itself.

3.10 Problems Encountered in the Field

It is impossible virtually to expect the ideal circumstances in the field situation. Therefore one cannot say that one does not face any problems in the field. In fact there are many problems that researchers face in the field during the generation of data. The first and foremost problem was to get time from the respondents. It took quite some time to convince the respondents to participate in the research work or to give time to the researcher. The main question raised by most of the respondents was “Iss se humein kya faida hoga?” (What will be our benefit in this?). The researcher tried to convince them without making any false promises. He informed them that the data was being collected for his research work and his report of the findings could impact upon their situations to some extent in the long run especially if there were some policy implications which could be highlighted in any possible way through his work. Every time the researcher went to the field area, the
respondents said “sadi madad ta kiti ni hje tak” (you did not help us so far) as they were in a very desperate state for some help for ensuring their survival. Despite informing them a number of times that the researcher was not from any governmental organization, some of the respondents kept on thinking that they were being deprived of some or the other scheme or service being sponsored by the government. At times it was most difficult to take in the situation where the craft was dwindling rapidly and the artisans were falling into the mire of debt, alcoholism and other substance abuse and finally leaving off the craft altogether. This is one of the most challenging aspects of the study where the expectations were high but there was no succor that the researcher could provide. Even though there was hostility to participate in the research queries to some extent the researcher ensured that prior consent was sought from all participants so that they were well-informed of the tenets of the research work and did not harbor any unfounded aspirations or expectations.

Getting accommodation in the field area was also a challenging task. The researcher wanted to live in close contact with them. But the researcher had to live in the Amritsar city, which is about 17 Km. from the field area. Few photographs were taken but that too for purely documentation purposes of the research work and with the prior permission of the respondents.

3.11 Analysis of Data

Analysis is the search for patterns in data. During research, the researcher generates ideas that help explain why those patterns are there in the first place (Bernard 2006). In the present study both quantitative and qualitative analysis is used. The data thus collected and generated was compiled, collated and analyzed. Simple mechanical statics was utilized to bring forth the comparability of various parameters. The data presentation was in the form of tables and graphs. The quantitative data complements the
qualitative inputs. The section of data analysis has been divided into two broad themes- the quantitative analysis and the qualitative analysis. The Thathera, the Kasera and the Key Persons were dealt differently in the analysis of the data to better understand the position.