

# HANDICRAFTS INDIA

# PREFACE

Handmade crafts are an integral part of India's social and economic fabric. India's rich and colourful national heritage stems from these crafts. Millions in each known and unknown corner of this gigantic country depend upon handicraft for their livelihood, directly or indirectly.

Inventions and technological upgradation are gradually eroding this field slowly but surely, efforts are being made to find new raw materials and usage of these products. The survival of crafts depends upon mass consumption and acceptance by the common man rather than being used as object d'art for the connoisseurs.

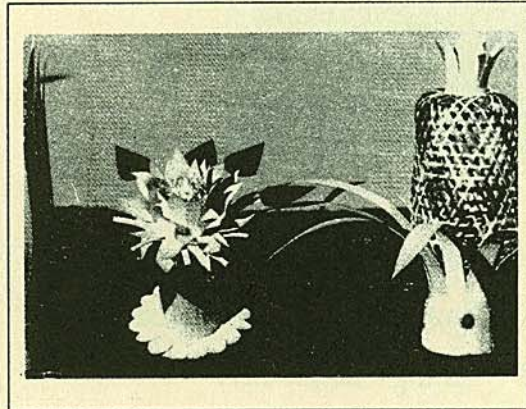
India is so vast and in every corner new crafts are being developed which never reach the consumer. Some of these are ideal solutions for products in some other areas. This lack of information and new design orientation have been responsible for the growth and acceptance of these products. This book has tried in its own small way to bridge this information gap and wherever possible provide names and addresses and new designs developed.

Started in 1986, this book has come a long way in providing the information actually wanted rather than other people's choice.

This edition is just not an year long effort of our team. It is also an effort of patient cooperation assistance and continuous encouragement we have received from people known and unknown. It is not possible to list all those names who have made it possible for us to produce this book which has undoubtedly been a Herculean task especially when the subject is so vast and exhaustive. Last but not the least we thank everybody who has chipped in to make this book a reality. We also look forward to your critical analysis and continuous feedback to help us perform better.

# HANDICRAFTS INDIA YEAR BOOK

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# CANE, BAMBOO, GRASS LEAVES AND FLAX

**T**hese natural materials have been used to make various objects of utility like baskets, mats, boxes and trays. Craftsmen have been making toys and dolls out of these materials, besides costume jewellery and wall hangings.

Basketry is primarily a folk craft. Whether in the hilly tracts of Tripura or in the jungles of Assam, Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and the Nilgiris or the dense uplands of Kerala the inhabitants have preserved their tradition of basket making to the present day. The valleys of Kashmir and the plains of Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and many other parts of India also produce beautiful baskets. Baskets are used for carrying and storing foodgrains and a number of other things. Hill tribes like the Kukies, the Mikris and the Mizos use baskets with locking arrangements for storing ornaments and clothes.

The raw material is flexible and pliant and can be used in a variety of ways. Minimum tools are used and there are two basic techniques used for basketry - the coiled technique and the plaited or woven technique. Coiled basketry is the earliest form of basket making.

In woven plaited basketry, two or more sets of the warp and the weft are intertwined to form a variety of chequered patterns.

A very high degree of skill is required to make the fine and perfectly woven baskets of north eastern India. The cane or bamboo is sliced into extremely fine uniform strips and dexterously woven to form a large array of different forms and shapes.

The north eastern states are famous for articles in cane, bamboo and grass. In **West Bengal**, floral geometrical and figured designs are produced by means of multi-coloured strands and accessories like cowrie shells, beads, etc. In **Bihar**, Darbhanga, Ranchi, Hazaribagh, Patna and Muzaffarpur are famous for split bamboo baskets and sikki objects.

**Tamil Nadu** is known for its cane weaving and palm leaf products including trays, flower baskets, shopping bags, folding fans and toys. **Kerala** offers a variety of baskets of screw pine leaves and *kora* grass.

Among other centres of basketry, mention may be made of Chanda in Maharashtra, Bangalore in Karnataka and Allahabad and Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh. The Kashmiri willow baskets are also worth a mention.

Toys and dolls are also produced at various places from grass, bamboo and cane which are sometime purely decorative in character while at other may express some ritualistic impulse.

Furniture made of cane, bamboo and willow, though without a long tradition has made considerable progress. In recent years, fairly modern designs have been reproduced in cane furniture.

## CANE AND BAMBOO

The north eastern states have a rich natural wealth of cane and bamboo. Since ancient

times these have provided the raw material for basketry and mats. These are essentially rural crafts intimately connected with the everyday needs of the people.

But the craftsmen have developed this craft into a delicate work of art. Today the artistic things produced by craftsmen have found wide acceptance in the urban milieu, both in India and overseas.

## BAMBOO ROOT CARVING

Bamboo root carving is a rare craft. It is essentially a personalised craft determined by the vision of the craftsman.

Certain species of bamboo grow in club formations. The roots of these, when



extracted, present a fascinating form. These are kept under water to draw out the sap after which the sculptor decides what shape would suit them best. The work is done along the grain, so that the material does not chip.

This form of craft is practised mostly in Tripura and Manipur and also in some isolated pockets of Assam.