

When  
Walls  
Talk

bheent  
kì boli  
Molela Mrinkala

Craft Documentation 2021

bheent  
ਕੀ ਬੋਲੀ



Molela Mrinkala



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# acknowledgment

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We would also like to thank Miss Lavina Bhaskar, our mentor and guide who helped us achieve are maximum potential given the time constraints and allowed us complete freedom to explore our creative horizons. This activity has left us richer and warmer to plethora of heritage our country has to offer.





## preface

Molela pottery is one of the cultural treasures of the state of Rajasthan. The form of terracotta craft is unique in its own rank and known to be the only terracotta art in the country practiced on tiles. Over centuries of practice has been invested in this craft and it stands to be one of the most emotive semi 3D craft to exist in the world. The small village of molela lies about 50 km North of the Mewar city of Rajasthan- Udaipur. Attracting many sentiments and hearts of tourists world wide, the craft is one of the hidden gems emerging from the archaic this document we explore the various meandering aspects of the craft and where it stands today in the modern ecosystem

# objective

For the subject of study- Craft Cluster Documentation, in the fifth semester of Fashion Communication at NIFT New Delhi, we were tasked to do an intensive research on a chosen craft over the span of one month. The aim of this study was to better understand the history and the present scenario of the chosen craft, identify gap areas that are critical to the prosperity of this craft and provide plausible creatives as budding to designers which celebrates and promotes the chosen craft. In groups of seven, we have paid close attention to the following aspects of the ‘Molela Pottery Craft of Rajasthan’ :

- Origin and history of craft
- Essence and importance of the craft in India.
- The processes involved in making of the final output (Tools, processes, raw materials)
- Existing product designs
- Understand the socio economic status of the communities that practice this craft
- Underlying problems and gap areas which endanger the continuity of the craft.
- Alternatives and competitors in the market; what all season expect sales
- Government and media interference
- What students of Fashion Communication have to offer.



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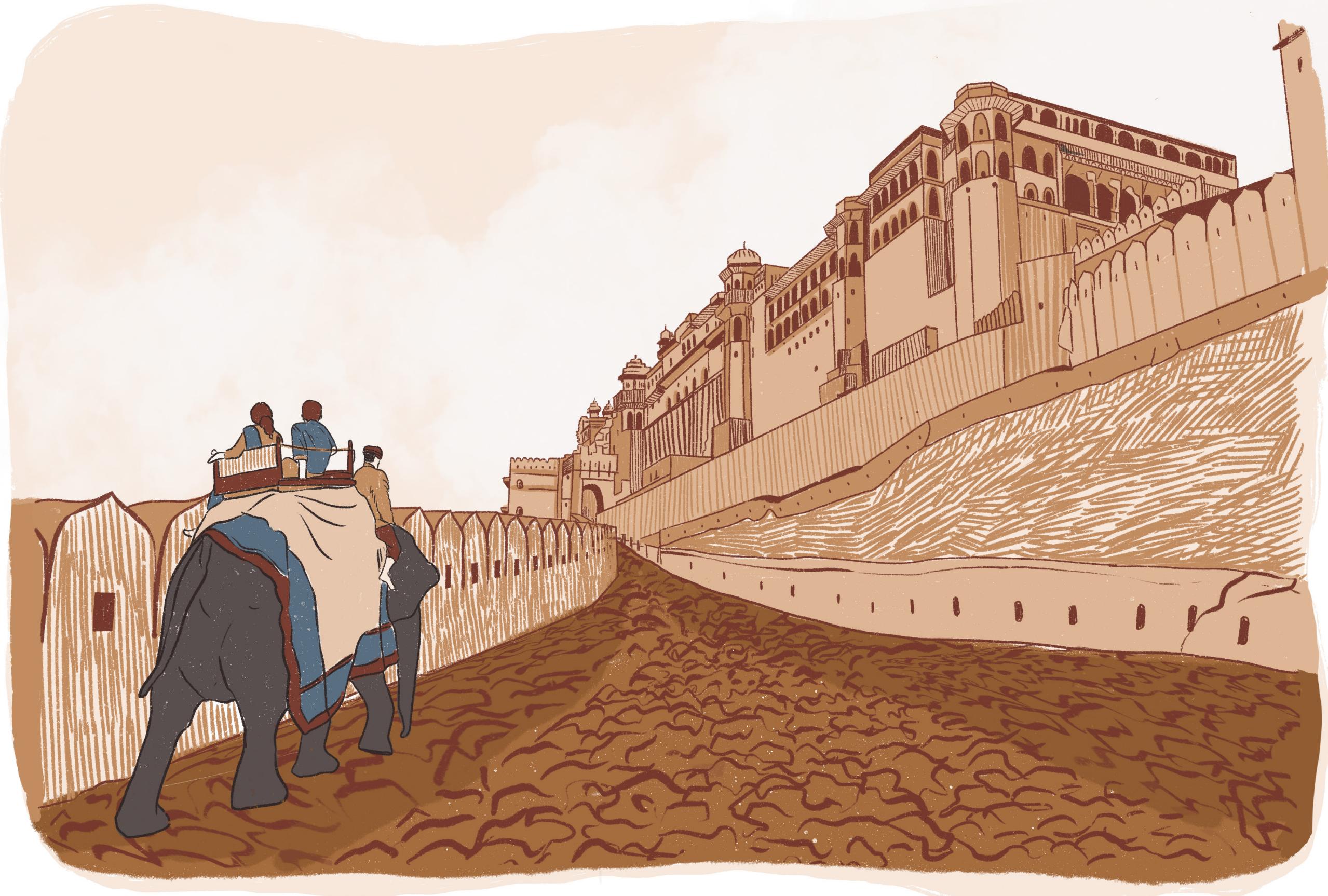
# introduction



Molela is a village near Udaipur in the state of Rajasthan. The village is internationally known for its production of brightly painted terracotta plaques and figurines of the local deities and gods which is referred to as 'murtikala'. These clay gods are installed in the temples of towns and villages.

What makes these artisans stand out is the fact that even though they are often associated as potters, their craft rarely depends on the potter wheel. They use their hands and feet to model out beautiful and intricate plaques with use of no machinery.

These murtis can be multicoloured or can have a terracotta hue, as can be seen in various temples in Rajasthan and Gujarat. While the potters of Molela are known for votive murtis, and also procure their livelihood from these, they also depict scenes that express what the artisan can see in his/her surroundings on plaques..



# raj bhoomi

# rajasthan

Land Of Kings- Rajasthan

Venice of the East

Molela

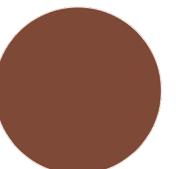


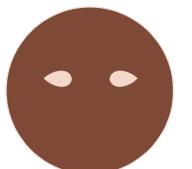
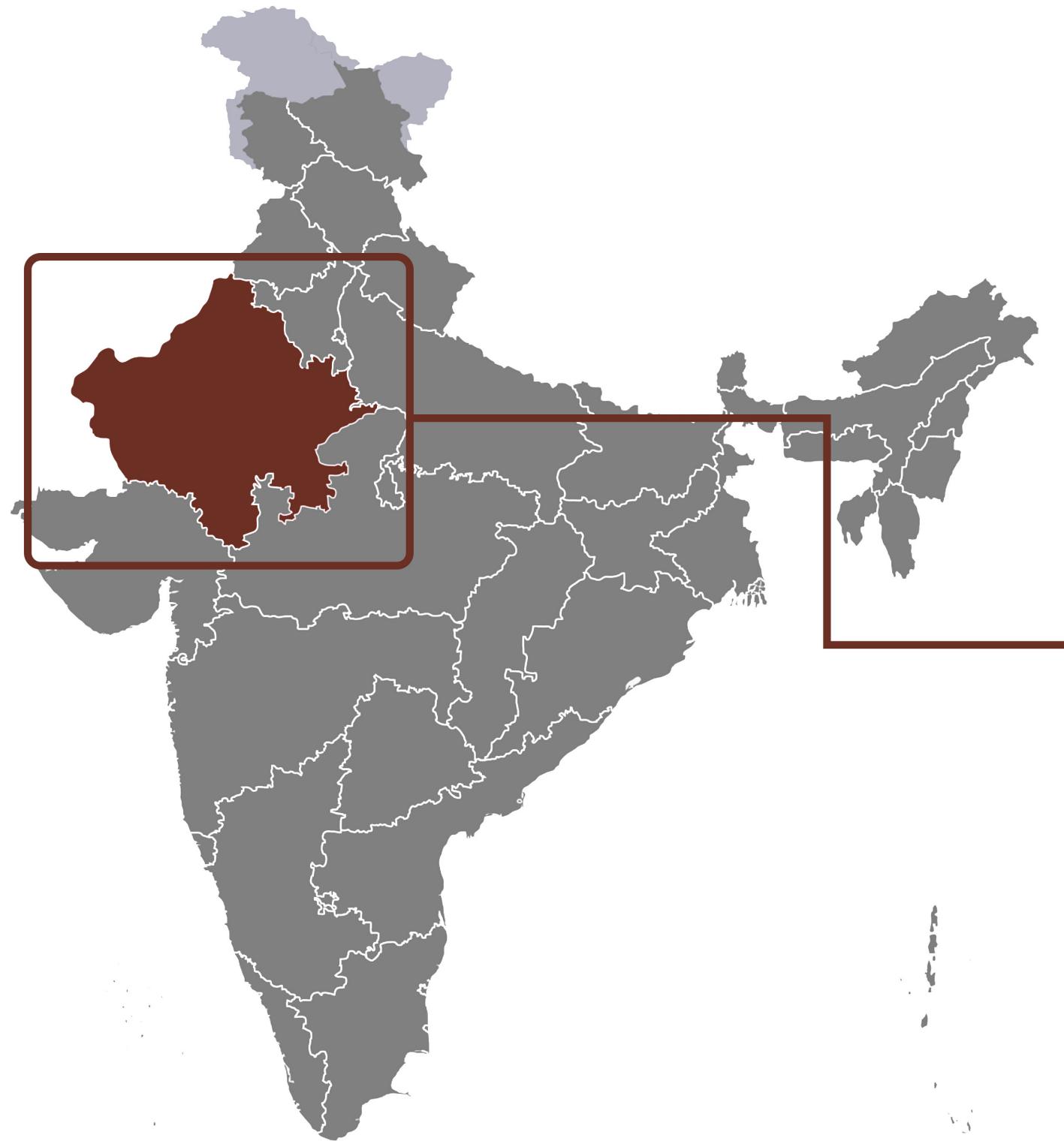
<https://www.deccanherald.com>

# rajasthan land of kings

Rajasthan is a regal land. Literally meaning the ‘Land of Kings’, Rajasthan has always been synonymous with valor, royalty, and honor. This is a rugged, earthy land, home to a race of fierce warriors – the mighty Rajputs. Southwest of Delhi, the fertile plains roll into sharp tree covered crags of the Aravali Mountains. These hilly protrusions start from the northeast tip of Rajasthan, traveling down to the south. They peter out in the west, giving way to the yawning sea of sand, the forbidding Thar Desert

The state of India is well renowned for its flamboyant architecture, its flair for the color of all cultures, the river drained plains and the arts and craft. Many patterned crafts adorn the homes of locals and now the foreign folk in forms of decorative pieces and utility products. The famed ornaments of Rajasthan are well sought after by many tourists, making Rajasthan a cultural hotspot of vibrancy and tradition.







# heritage

Rajasthan has three UNESCO World Heritage Sites – Jantar Mantar, the Keoladeo National Park, and the serial site of six Hill Forts – Chittorgarh, Kumbhalgarh, Sawai Madhopur, Jhalawar, Jaipur, and Jaisalmer.

The Ghoomar dance from Jodhpur and Kalbeliya dance of Jaisalmer have gained international recognition. Folk music is a vital part of Rajasthani culture. Bhopa, Chang, Teratali, Ghindar, Kachchigghori, Tejaji, parth dance etc. are the examples of the traditional Rajasthani culture.

Folk songs are commonly ballads which relate heroic deeds and love stories; and religious or devotional songs known as bhajans and banis (often accompanied by musical instruments like dholak, sitar, sarangi etc.) are also sung. Kanhaiya Geet also sang in major areas of east rajasthani belt in the collecting manner as a best source of entertainment in the rural areas. Rajasthan is known for its rich plethora of crafts ranging from textiles, precious stones to pottery.

## climate

The current population of Jaipur stands at a 30.5 Lakhs (2011) making it the 10th most populous city in India. The capital city has a semi arid climate with temperatures upto 30 degrees in July and an annual rainfall of 26 in at an average.

The climate in India keeps varying as per the latitude, altitude and season. Now, coming to Rajasthan, the climate here keeps varying because of its topography. It is the driest region in India.

## cuisine

Major crops of Rajasthan are Jowar, Bajri, Maize, Ragi, Rice, Wheat, Barely, Gram, Tur, pulses, Ground nut, Sesamum etc. Millets, lentils and beans are most basic ingredients in food.

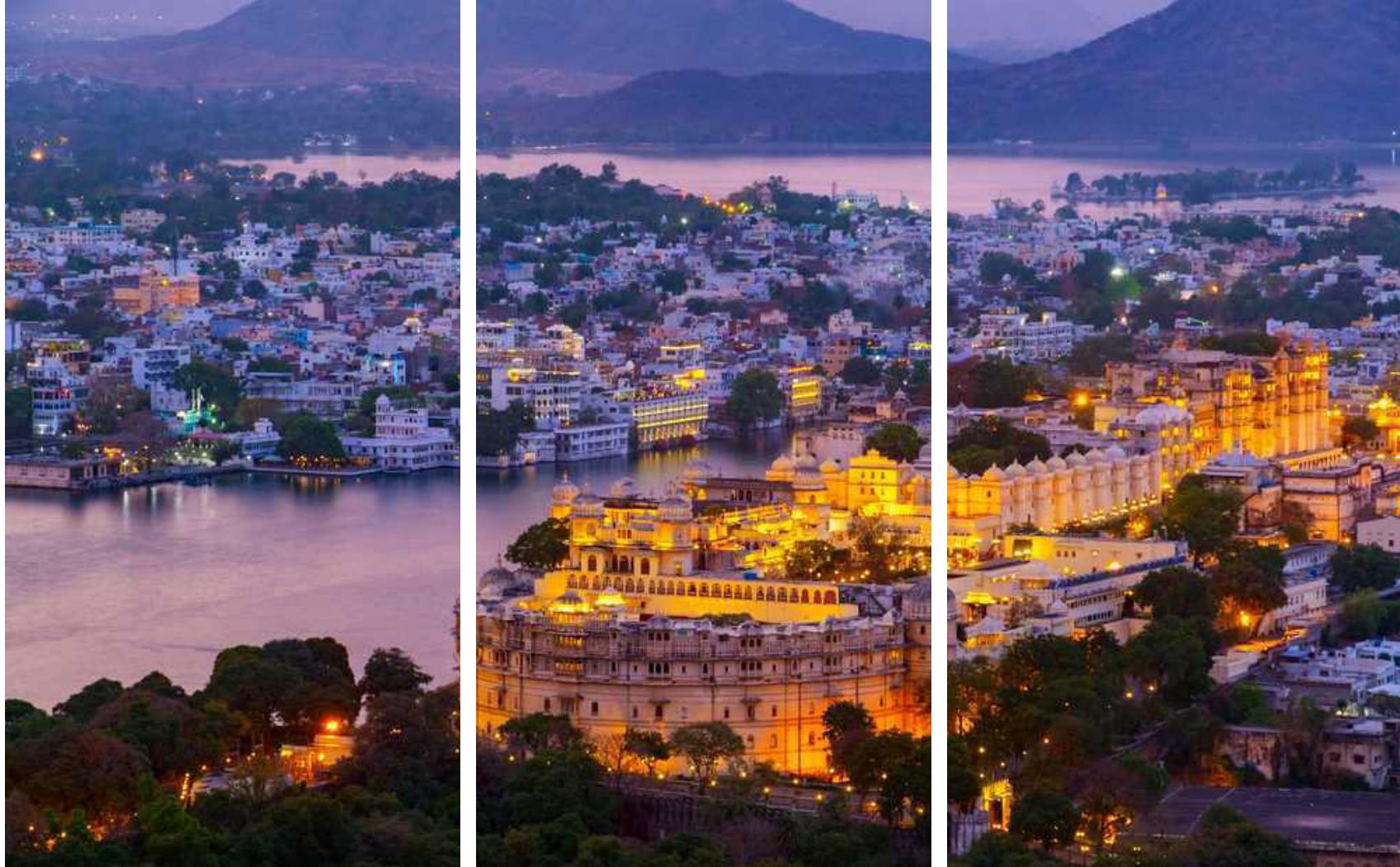
Rajasthani cuisines are a whole lot of varieties varying regionally between the arid desert districts and the greener eastern areas. Most famous dish is Dal-Baati-Churma. It is a little bread full of clarified butter roasted over hot coals and served with a dry, flaky sweet made of gram flour, and Ker-Sangri made with a desert fruit and beans.



Rajasthani people pride them selves to be impressive ly hospitable. Once you enter a Rajasthani household, its impossible to leave without food in your belly!

The majority of Hindu and Jain Rajasthanis are vegetarian. Rajasthani Jains do not eat after sundown and their food does not contain garlic and onions.



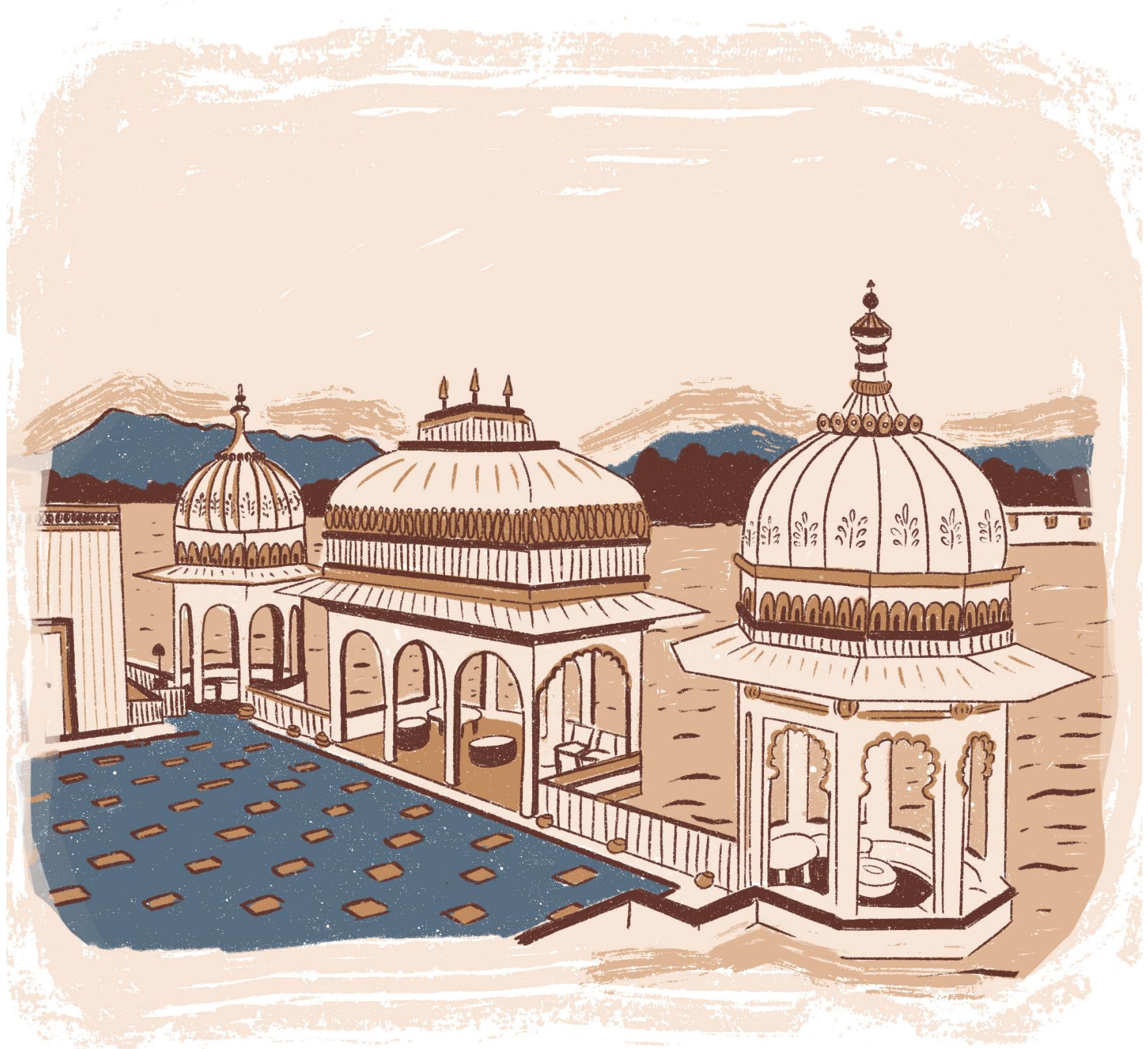


# Udaipur

## Venice of East

Set around the vast Pichola lake, and dominated by dramatic palaces, Udaipur is Rajasthan's most atmospheric and picturesque city. The city is peppered with high whitewashed houses, narrow winding alleys and shimmering lakes owing to its almost medieval charm. The original settlement of Udaipur was focused around the grand city palace at the western shore of lake Pichola. To the north is the bungling maze of tightly winding streets that constitute the old city. James Bond's movie 'Octopussy' showed a manic boat chase which was shot in the waters of Lake Pichola. A road encircles Lake Fateh Sagar north of Lake Pichola, yawning west to a superb crafts village of Shilpgram. This village showcases all types of traditional Indian handicrafts.





## city story

Udaipur takes pride in having been the capital of state of Mewar, the only one of the seven major Rajput states to uphold its Hindu allegiance in the face of Muslim invasions and political compromises. Maharana Udai Singh II founded Udaipur in 1568 after his citadel Chittorgarh was sacked by Mughal Emperor Akbar.

The legend says that Udai Singh was guided by a holy man meditating on the hill near Pichola Lake to establish his capital on this very spot. Udai Singh was succeeded by Maharana Pratap who warded off subsequent Mughal invasions. Maharana Pratap is the most revered Rajput icon and gallantly fought the Mughals at the Haldighati in 1576.

In 1736, Mewar faced the pillage brought by the ruthless Marathas and the once prosperous city was brought down to ruin. When the East India Company, whose purpose at the time was purely commercial, picked up the pieces of a broken Mewar and offered the Maharana with a treaty of 'perpetual alliance and friendship' in 1818.





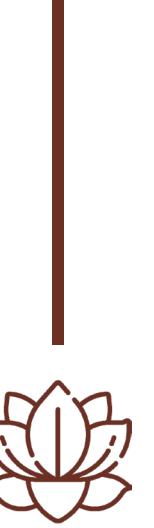
<https://medium.com/@trilingo.in/the-bowmen-of-rajasthan-d60d82d794fe>

## the bhils

Udaipur dwellers are really friendly and good to be with. On your first look, you will find them rugged, but these people are really good at heart. Untouched by the pace of modern times, these desert people are well-built, simple and cheerful. The city is still inhabited by people of Bhil tribe, so you could see people dressed in typical Rajasthani dress (Ghagra choli or angrakha and dhoti) with loads of silver jewelry.

Numbering in 2.5 million, the bhil community is also found to live in part of madhya pradhesh, Gujarat and Northern Maharashtra. However they are concentrated in the South of Rajasthan in the areas of Udaipur, Chittorgarh and Dungarpur. The word ‘Bhil’ literally translates to bow owing to the fact that these tribespeople were formerly hunter gatherers. They are mostly farmers now but are still renowned for their impeccable archery skills.

Historically there were several instances where they lent their invaluable support to the rajputs in their defence against the mughals. The Bhil language bears a close resemblance to Gujarati and Hindi and their religion shows similarities to Hinduism.



# CUISINE

Udaipur cuisine comprises vegetarian dishes as the place is highly dominated by Jainism and Vaishnavism. Food is usually made from lots of vegetables and lentils. It is seasoned with a great variety of spices that are unique to the lands of Rajasthan.

# Mewar festival

Mewar Festival is considered as the second World living Heritage festival of India. The festival marks the advent of spring in the city. The city gets decorated at its best and the local shops and markets are seen beautifying their facade with impressive lightings and colours. Women put on their finest attires. As a part of the tradition they all gather to dress up the idols of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati.

After which a procession takes place in which the women carry idols on their heads and pass through different parts of the city. The procession comes to its final halt near Lake Pichola and the idols are transported into special boats which then get immersed in the middle of the lake.



The traditional sweet named Ghevar is prepared as an offering to the Lord and then gets distributed among each other as Prasad.

Women often celebrate and pray for continued marital bliss and harmony, whereas the unmarried ones pray for an ideal match.



Mewari is the primary language of Udaipur, yet Rajasthani, Hindi and English are also common in the city.



# crafts of udaipur

The glittering jewelry and attractive handicrafts of Rajasthan are sure to leave any shopper speechless. Come to Rajasthan fully prepared with good amount of cash and credit cards, as once you start shopping, there will be no stopping you!



<https://udaipurcycling.com/tours/art-and-craft-udaipur/>



Most would believe Udaipur to be famous for its picturesque environment, lakes and palace ruins. Well, they aren't wrong. But that's only a sliver of what Udaipur offers to the cultural scene of India.

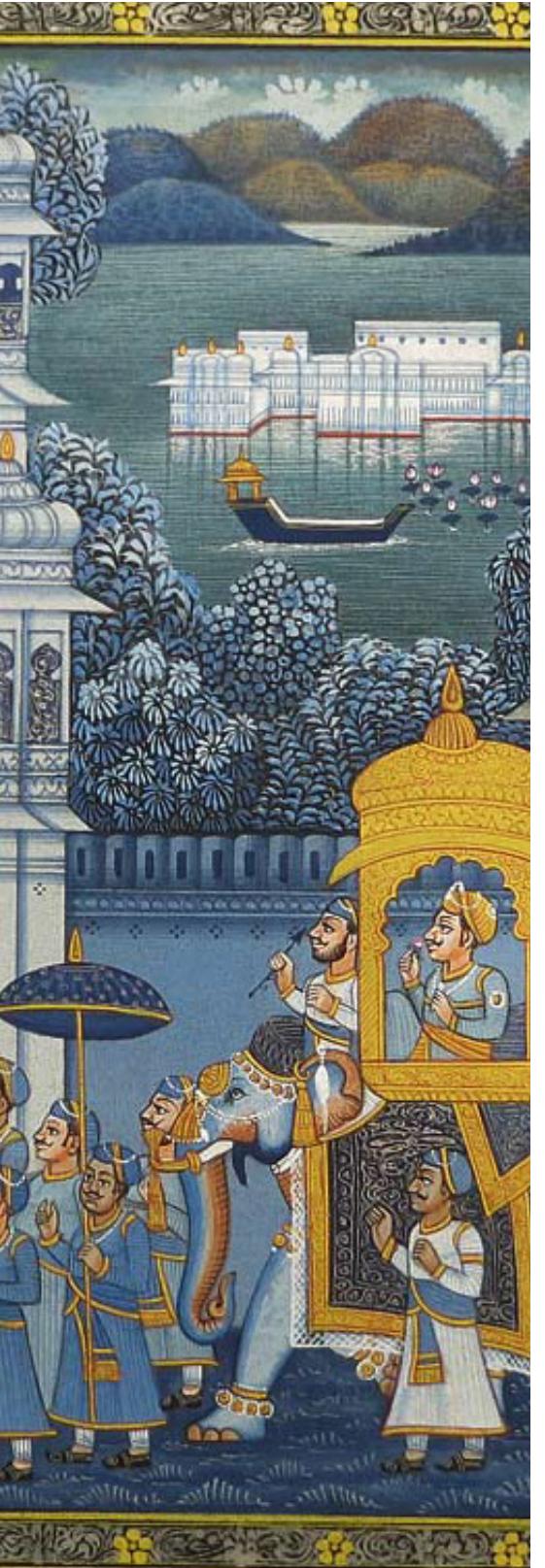


# miniature paintings

AS the city flourished, its arts prospered. Mewar to date prides itself of its superior school of miniature painting. This art is famous not only in India but also overseas. One may find artists in every alley of the old city. And not just confined to the old city, many art galleries showcase a variety which is located outside a set circumference.

Each painting takes a couple of days to finish depending upon the size and detail required. The paintings are made with true stone colors. The powder is mixed with water and gum. To check if the color mix is ready to be used for art, it needs to be touched with a finger to see if it doesn't stick back which confirms that the color is mixed well. It can then be used for painting on silk cloth or canvas.

Black colors are derived from soot which is obtained from vessels put over chulhas fireplace used for cooking in villages. Gum doesn't mix very quickly with these stone colors hence some laborious mixing is needed to develop them into colors apt for painting.



<https://shop.gaatha.com/buy-blue-Miniature-painting-Udaipur>

# phad painting

One of the oldest handicrafts and truly a gem of excellent craftsmanship is the phad paintings of Udaipur. The specialty of these paintings is these are usually made on cloth or wall depicting the story of local hero gods Pabuji and Dev Narayan Ji. Phad paintings are deemed an essential part of ritual songs, ceremonies and customs.

# marble handicraft

Marble is often called the king of handicraft for its luxuriant products and detailed finishes. In Udaipur, marble handicraft takes shape of intricately made products and artifacts made and sold near Nathdwara.



# bharatiya lok kala

Udaipur's folk museum caters to multitude of exhibits showcasing village aintings, puppet of all descriptions to Rajasthani Folklore and arts, printing blocks, terracottas, costumes, musical instruments, toys, jewelry, photographs of the local bhil people and garasia tribal people. The Bharatiya Lok Kala is on the Panchvati Road just North of Chetak Circle.

# shilpgram

The rural arts and craft centre lies north of the Fateh Sagar road near the village of Havela. It is an outstanding crafts village- amongst the best in the countr- and was set up to promote and preserve the traditional architecture, crafts and music of the tribal people of Wesr India. It hold few of the rarest displays of diverse traditional lidesyles and cultures of the Indian rural population.



<https://www.hellotravel.com/events/shilpgram-art-and-craft-fair>

# molela mrinkala

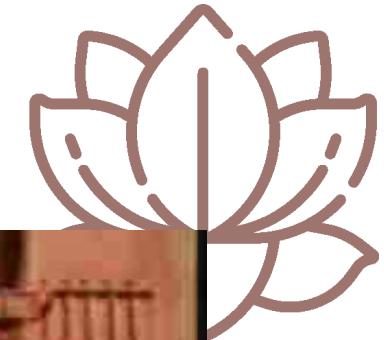
Molela mrinkala or the molela terracotta utilises one of the oldest traditions of craftsmanship known to man. It is almost outworldly when you realise that man has managed to breach the boundaries of his material existence and tap into his inventive state; to harness the power to set his imagination in clay.

The history of terracotta art dates back to the Indua Valley Covilisation in the Indian context and molela craft in particular celebrates it existence for over a millenium.

Molela village has emerged as a concentration of the art of creating enticing dedicated, plaques or idols of gods with terracotta. Whereas the first creations were originally standing idols of native deities and numerous Vishnu forms with complete handmade molela clay work art. However Nowadays, these figures are typically mounted on tiles or plaques and are decorated from the walls of temples and houses.



Mohanlal Ji founded an institution named ‘Mohan Terracotta Art Research & Development Centre’ to teach the people of the world, the unique art of Molela Terracotta.



This ‘Murtikala’ passed from generation to generation, getting evolved with generation. Amongst numerous artisans in the village, one of the pioneers of this art form is Mohanlal Chaturbuj Kumhar who has been practicing and teaching the art to his family members and other people of the village from around a decade.





## ମୋଳେଲା village

According to Census 2011 information the location code or village code of Molela village is 097275. Molela village is located in Nathdwara Tehsil of Rajsamand district in Rajasthan, India. It is situated 13km away from sub-district headquarter Nathdwara and 28km away from district headquarter Rajsamand. As per 2009 stats, Molela village is also a gram panchayat.

The nearest railway station to molela village is approximately 10km from the village area. The closest railway station to Molela is Nathdwara Railway. The fastest and the only feasible mode of transportation to molela village from Udaipur Railway station is by car via NH58.





# मोला community



The total geographical area of village is 1022 hectares. Molela has a total population of 4,275 peoples. There are about 885 houses in Molela village.

A potter belongs to the many varieties of the Caste of Kumhar (potter) which in some cases have a close relationship with religious ceremonies. Prajapati community from Molela learned shape clay from their ancestors. In the present day, the Maru community, considering themselves as the posterity of that craftsman, continue this centuries old tradition.

The Maru community lives in Molela, a small village in Rajasthan. A small village inhabiting about 30 families, Molela is the sole hub and proprietor of this craft. All of these 30 families practice this craft.

These potters farm their land, keep cattle and produce pottery on a large scale within their own tightly and hierarchically knitted family units. Some of them have been to Europe and regularly take part at International art fairs. The potters of this village belong to the many varieties of Kumhar clan.



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# puraan katha

Borne Of Beliefs





## इतिहास के लोला

Molela's peasant potters have passed down their craftsmanship over to the next generation for decades now. It is believed that the craft has been alive for more 5000 years now and is known to be the only pottery craft in the country to create beautiful semi 3D narratives on a tile. The origin of clay craft of molela terracotta itself is steeped in myth and divinity as the Kumar's of this village believe that their clay craft is "God-given". To substantiate that claim a story very often narrated by many of them is that of a blind potter of the bygone age.

The story goes like such; One day Dharmraj or Devnarayan (Vishnu) appeared in a blind potter's dream. Being summoned by the gods himself, the potter was asked to make a vaahan for Dev Narayan ji. Next morning the potter immediately got to work. He went to the riverside of Banas and collected the clay he needed. He fulfilled the task assigned to him. Pleased by the outcome and the potter's devotion to his skill, Dharmraj restored his eyesight. from that day the clay craft stayed in the family of the potter and art traveled through generation. Thus Dharamraja on horse is dominant motif in terracottas of Molela.



Yama is the Hindu god of death, king of ancestors, and final judge on the destination of souls. He is also known as the 'Restrainer', Pretaraja or 'King of Ghosts'. He is also given the title of Dharmaraja or 'King of Justice'.

Dharmaraj has been linked with many gods such as Sun-god Surya, Varuna, Vishnu, Yama, Shiva and even with Buddhism.



# Bhileya Pottery

*Usually, a priest accompanied the tribal to advise him on which god would benefit them the most. This Molela pottery would then be bought by the Bhils and worshiped at home.*



<https://www.flickr.com/photos/ishanz/6308017397>



The main gods were Devnarayan on a horse holding a spear and a lotus. Other gods are accomplices of Devnarayan like Yamaraj, the god of the dead, Bhairon in two forms— dark and ferocious, fair and compassionate, Ganesh, Durga, Sheshavtar, the serpent god Nagdev, etc





## ~~dharamraj~~ the rajput hero

The main local deity of Dharamraj was once a Rajput hero, and is said to ride through the village at night, on his horse, protecting the villagers against bad omens or accidents. Many Rajput epic myths seem to originate from this period - e.g. the epic of Pabuji. The horse itself has a special significance all over India.

The Hindu tradition gives the horse a very important religious meaning. The horse in the Hindu culture is the symbol of loyalty, respect and power. In Hindu mythology, the origin of the horse is traced to the "Samundra Manthan" episode. This is one of the fundamental myths of Hinduism. According to this myth the first horse called Uchaisravas, a seven-headed flying horse that is the ancestor of all the current horses and one of god's treasures.

The minorities of Gujarat, for example, make ritual offerings of terracotta horses in their hundreds at their shrines, to appease a deity or a god, to bless their families or even cattle with good health, a good harvest or solutions to any other problems



## devī plaques

In Rajasthan terracotta images of the mother goddess showed in various incarnations are broadly worshipped by the tribals. Molela lies in the Mewar region of Rajasthan where great reverence is given to the mother goddess or ‘Mata’. The devi is the symbol of valour and is worshipped with great devotion and zeal. As Devi is manifested into many different forms, her image has been a popular subject to the craftsmen of Molela Terracotta.

Devis are often depicted on their respected vaahans and are creations of lovely craftsmanship. The most sought after Mata plaques by the tribal clients are Chamunda on the elephant, Kalika astride buffalo, Durga with the lion, etc.

It is interesting to note that the mother goddess is a revered feature of many civilizations and cultures. She appears in various forms to different eyes but she is a figure of great power and is worshipped to avert any misfortunes in the respective beliefs.



## pabuji ki kahani

Pabuji is a renowned folk hero in the Rajasthani culture and subject to not only many molela plaques but also many Phad paintings. The narrative of Pabuji is sung by the Bhopa poet-singers of Nayak community is based according to the tradition on a text, the Pabuprakasa.

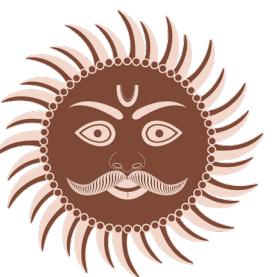
Pabuji was one of Dhadal Rathore's four children in the village of Kolu. However unlike his siblings, Pabuji was born of a celestial nymph and was known to be god's incarnate. He was twelve years old when the nymph said that she would return to him in the form of a mare for him to ride.

He had four companions: Chando and Dhebo, two brothers of whom Dhebo was a colossus with an insatiable appetite for food, drink and opium, and immensely aggressive. One of his popular exploit detail how he overthrew Mirza Khan the cow killing patan. After his conquest he then went to bathe in the holy lake of Pushkar to cleanse himself of the sin of bloodshed. Whilst he was bathing his foot slipped, and he was saved from drowning by the snake-god Gogo Chauhan.



# śāmagrī

Materials Involved





## Materials Used

The Molela community of peasant potters has been practicing the craft of gods for over 5000 years. The craft prides itself in not only being able to translate the beautiful lyrics of Indian mythology and culture, but also the fact that the entire process is true to Mother Nature.

All raw materials used in this craft, from the clay to the final varnish are derived from natural resources. The Molela craftspersons remain undeterred by the augmented modernization of the world. The craft is sacrosanct and known to exhibit the greatest craftsmanship as it relies on the talent of the hands of the artisan to bring out exuberant details, emotions and narratives.



### terracotta clay

Chikni mitti or earthenware clay of two kinds is extracted from the local river beds and Talaabs near molela district. These are the pure clay and the sandy clay/reta. The two are mixed together in equal proportion after the impurities have been sieved out. It is interesting to note that the level of impurity in the clay used determines the colour of the baked products!

The soft, purer clay dries to a dark grey color which when fired turns to terracotta red or even lustrous black at times! The impure clay containing large proportions of sand fires to a light pink.



### donkey dung

This sieved clay is then mixed with donkey dung and water to prepare dough. Rajasthan has one fifth of India's donkey population! The donkey dung or commonly termed as kandhe adds to the plasticity of the clay so that the finished tiles do not have any cracks.

When the plaque is fired, the dung simply burns off reducing the weight of the tile. The kneading is done with the hands and the feet with much deftness. The final dough is stored for 2-3 days before it is ready to be worked on.



## wood

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Electricity often plays hooky in these parts of the state hence artisans rely on the traditional wood fired kilns for baking purposes. Wood from babool trees is used often as fuel in these kilns. This is a tedious process where someone has to feed the fire every 10-15 minutes. Often broken pottery pieces, and impure sandy clay are used to put together an open kiln.

The artisans can determine and regulate the temperature of the kiln just by looking at the colour of the burning wood! They know when to stop on seeing the kiln light up in green colours and the wood burns a deep red.



## palewa

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Clay Slip is referred to a dense gooey mixture of clay and water (mixed in the ratio of 4:1). The clay is sourced from Banas river. It is mixed with mineral colours, white stone powder and natural gum from Babool and Keekar trees to give slip. Seven colors have been traditionally used for generations—blue, yellow, green, orange, red, peach, and black. The colour black is sourced from the soot formed on cooking pots.

The plaques are first painted white and then with brightly tinted palewa. The brush used for applying this paint is made of fine hair from donkey's tail.



## geru

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Geru or Gairika is the native term for hydrated ferrous oxide deposit found in the Rajpur, Banaskantha, Jamnagar and Kuchchh regions of India. It normally takes up a yellow ochre colour. But depending on the level of oxidation, geru can also be found to be brick red.

It is not always that the plaques are coloured. Depending upon the order placed with the artisans, the finished product may also be requested in its natural terracotta colour. For this, a brick-red geru mixed with gum is applied on the plaque before the firing to fix the deep terracotta colour.



## jala

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A lacquer coat, called jala is used to give a lustrous finish to the product. It is made of plant gum and oil and used for varnishing purposes..

Natural vegetable gum extracted from trees is used as a binder. Jala provides a finishing to the product before it is made commercially available. In the molela community, a few families are known to make Jala.



# aujaar

Tools Used



## tools

The artisans of Molela are called Kumhars by the natives. Kumhar literally translates to ‘potter’ in English. We often associate potters to their wheel and plethora of ceramics in their workshops or studios. However, for molela potters, this is far from the truth. This skill of terracotta is unique in India and rarely utilizes the potter’s wheel.

These artisans rely of their hands and feet to translate images out of their beliefs and surroundings with little help of traditional tools. No machinery or mechanization is involved in the process.



mohri

Tool to beat the solid clay knots to powdered form. It is used to break down any lumps or big impurities in the clay collected.

While this tool is used to refine the clay, the potters rely on their feet to finally prepare the dough.



pindi

One of the beating tools used in the process, taken into account when donkey dung is mixed with the clay to create a moldable paste.

It is a rounded rock used to flatten the ball of dough to create the base.



## lohe ki bhaardid

It is a flat tool with a sharp edge; it has ferrous composition and thin cross section, generally used to scrape clay, cut the clay coils or to form the desired shapes through clay.



## takdi ki patiya

Patiya is a flat plank of wood, a general tool that can be used to collect or pick up the clay from ground and it is also used to form a flat slab of clay with uniform thickness. Water is used every step of the way to give a smooth finish.



## baldi

Local name for a chisel like tool used for shaping the plaque.

Both ends of the baldi are used, one end for drawing lines and patterns on the clay, and the other end for making holes. Holes are made on the slab to remove the air which is trapped otherwise the product might crack during baking process in the fire.



## cloth waste

As the process involves dealing with clay paste, colors, clay slip; old or used clothes are required to wipe out the undesired patches and spots.

As fabrics are good absorbents, cloth is also used to apply Geru to the plaque. It is also used to apply the natural varnish/Jala.



● REDMI NOTE 8 PRO  
● MOLELA TERRACOTTA



kunchi

Owing to the large donkey population in Rajasthan, A paint brush made with donkey hair, used to paint various colors on the formed plaque.



chaak

A local name for potter's wheel, mostly utilized to form uniform circular or spherical shapes.

The potters wheel is used only rarely, if a new form has to be shaped it is done on the wheel to clarify an idea.



# banavat

How is it made?

# process involved



The weather is conducive for this process in the winter months, as the harsh summers cause cracks while drying the product. The images are sculpted and polished using techniques of basic clay work on a flat clay slab. They are made with hands and simple tools.

No machine work is involved. The craftsmen dab clay, mould them with hands and use techniques like coiling, cutting, scratching and pinching to work in the details. The community works as one organism to deliver the finished products before the Maag season when the tribal communities arrive to partake in the plaques made. An exchange system is set up between the Molela artisans and the tribes in terms of goods, supplies, textiles and money.

# preparing the clay

Clay is sourced locally from areas along small drains and ponds. This clay is extremely moldable and is of two types: Nada, a coarse black clay with sand content and Alu is finer gray clay used for throwing, both are mixed in equal proportions.

Nearly 15-20% measures of donkey dung are also added. This dough is kneaded with hands and feet and stored for 2-3 days. The mined clay is brought and beaten with the help of Mogri to reduce the particle size.

It is then collected and brought for plaque preparation. Dried and sifted donkey dung is first spread on the ground and then the prepared clay is laid on it.

The level of impurity in the clay used determines the colour of the baked products!

The soft, purer clay dries to a dark grey color which when fired turns to terracotta red or even lustrous black at times! The impure clay containing large proportions of sand fires to a light pink.



Each plaque is made with extreme care and under the scrutiny of a religious elder. Traditionally, if votive of god is even chipped slightly during production it is declared 'khandit' and cannot be used in the ceremonies.

Preparation of the clay is of utmost importance as it determines the plasticity and mouldability of the clay which in turn prevents cracks on the plaque during firing.

< *Rajender Kumhar preparing the clay*



## creating the thaal

The mixture of cow dung and clay is then beaten through Pindi, a beating tool made from stone. During the beating, clay is scraped off the Pindi using a cutting tool called Baldi. The beating is continued till a clay slab 1.5 inches thick is attained.

After this, a wooden plate called Patiya is used for beating. As a result, a surface is formed by conditioned clay, the outline of which is made uniform by slitting out the irregularities through Baldi.

The flat surface attained is the base of the plaque, it is called Thaal. Several holes are dug into the slab with an iron tool called Bhaladi. These holes help in the removal of pores or trapped air, which can result in irregularities during firing.

The thaal is often adorned with 'doli' on the edges. This allows the artisan to fix the size of the base. The doli is smoothly rolled clay applied to all sides of the thaal with water. This border is one of the first steps taken before the sculpting.



# Making the shapes

The wet clay is then cut into the desired shape using a stencil and measuring scale. The main shapes are cut and outlined. Thick coils are then made by rolling the clay, which are then placed on the slab according to the design and flattened to make a shape.

Thinner coils are used for the detailing. Square coils are used to make tapered noses and tiny balls of clay are used to make finer details like jewelry. The clay is squeezed, punched, twisted and dried to a certain extent in the hands to give desired details.

The artisan often make scratches on both the edges of the thaal and the figure before sticking them together . It is a quite scientific approach to artistry as the artisan know that the clay will interlock and grip better and the figures will not fall off the thaal during firing This only shows that the artisan have the research and experience of centuries backing their craft.

The craftsmen skillfully shape the plaque image in such a way that the characters on the plaque are hollow from the inside, this makes the plaque light and easy to handle and also leads to efficient firing of the plaque.

*The base is cut to a square and basic shapes are made>*



Molela pottery is popular to display emotive figures. Once the spatial layout is determined after the main body is sculpted, the artisan pay great attention to finer details like the eyes, nose, trees etc.

Incarnations of Durga, Dashavatars, Shrinathji, Gauri nritya, scenes from Ramayana, and everyday village life is the most popular depiction in terracotta. Deities and gods are often depicted riding on a horse, a bull, a pig, a dog and even a crocodile.

## decoration

Now that the basic shape is done, the artisan work to create finer details on the plaque. He does this through a metallic tool called the 'Bhalaadi'.

Its an filed piece of oblong metal. the smaller end is used to make minute details like the bangles, necklaces, mouth etch, whereas the broader end is used to make larger details like the folds of the skirt etc.



## drying

The slabs are left out to dry in the sun. This step is important because any leftover moisture in the clay would cause the plaque to crack upon heating in the kiln.

Some sculptures can be several meters high, so they are built over a pile of pots thrown together. These are left to dry for almost 4 to 14 days, depending on the weather. The Red Geru is mixed with the glue and it is used to cover the idols just before the firing is done. This is done to seal the teracotta colour of the plaque.

Our secondary research revealed how many artisans learnt their craft by playing in the mud and clay. Years later, what used to happen 'khel khel mein' is now their source of bread and their pride.

This goes to show that there is a certain childhood culture in the molela village which allows the children a creative domain to explore the craft on their own.



The damaged pieces are repaired and stacked. This almost takes up an entire day. Fire wood is chopped and pots to build the kiln are brought in. The pieces which were placed to be dried are then carried to the kiln by the family members.

Firing is done as a community activity once a month or once in six months depending on the demand.

- < 1. Bangles beind added to the figures
- 2. Plaques ready for firing





## firing

The idols are made to stand in an open kiln, which is covered with pieces of broken pottery and impure clay. The structure of the kiln is still traditional and is constructed like a well out of bricks.

Babul Wood is added slowly to this open structure, to keep the temperature constant. The right temperature is determined by the craftsmen according to the height of the flame and the colour of the wood. Firing is a tedious process where the wood has to be regulated every 10-15 minutes. Luckily firing is a community affair where everyone pitches in to help with the kiln.

A large basket sprinkled with water is held in one hand by the craftsmen as a shield, citing that the temperature in the kiln is quite high. The kiln can easily reach the temperature range of 700 degrees to 1000 degrees. Two people hold a large cloth against the kiln to break the intensity of the wind which may dangerously fan the flames.

## repair

Some artifacts might crack while firing in the kiln. These cracks are then filled with a mixture of ground fired clay, water and Fevicol.

The ground fired clay is used to fill the larger gaps while the Fevicol and water mixture will suffice for the narrower openings. After this the entire surface is covered with a liquid, which is made with powdered clay and water to create a uniform surface finish.

## finishing

If the plaque has to be colored, it has to be chosen from traditional seven colors i.e. blue, green, black, orange, peach, red and yellow. These colors are applied by mixing them with clay slip and glue. Black colour is derived from the soot of freshly baked earthenware.

Some icons are decorated with thin foils of silver paper while still wet with varnish. This is again left in the sun to dry for the glaze to harden. Many plaques are often left in their natural colour ie. earthy red.

Our secondary research revealed how many artisans learnt their craft by playing in the mud and clay. Years later, what used to happen 'khel khel mein' is now their source of bread and their pride.

This goes to show that there is a certain childhood culture in the molela village which allows the children a creative domain to explore the craft on their own,



Pregnant women in Molela in early days were even advised by doctors to fulfill their calcium deficit by having clay capsules in Molela clay! And it has been found that it was very effective to fill those deficiencies without eating anything chemicals.

These were methodologies which may seem primitive but were effective and based on the true logic of natural sustenance. However with rising pollution, these methods are inadvisable to resort to.

*“Molela pottery not only bound clay together, but also three communities—the artisans, the tribals and the priests.”*



Vis Gaatha.com



The average size of a local kiln in molela is approximately 4 x 6 ft. Plaques or tiles within those dimensions can be easily fixed in the kiln for firing.

However, the artisans nowadays prefer to make tile sizes of 1 x 1ft so that it is easy in logistics and cheaper to ship or transport, this also helps in reducing breakages during transportation or shipping.

Large tiles are broken down into parts and assembled after firing into the wall installation or mural.



## magic mounting

Traditional handicrafts of India have been practiced over centuries and generations and Molela is no exception. It's evident how craft undergoes multiple evolutions with time through multiple hands however the ethos and essence of the craft somehow still remains preserved.

There are little nuances to the lyrics of the craft but the sound produced remains immaculate. The evolution a craft undergoes reflects in terms of a latent research and development done unconsciously by the artisan. For molela, such a revolutionary change was brought about when the artisans managed to make an entire tile of dense clay and sand to become lightweight and functional!

The plaques that are made contain relief work done in such a way that the figurines and elements are hollowed. This saves up on the material used in the process of making the molela tile and also makes the finished product lightweight and more ergonomic!





# दिश्प्लैय अंड इसले

The artisans take orders at home and also display their wares there itself. An intensive ceremony is involved in the barter of the murtis. These will be discussed in much detail in the coming sections.

Payment for these murtis is usually made in the form of money, cloth, grain, and other offerings depending on the custom of the temple of the buyer. Intricacy of work and size together determine the price of the murtis. The demand for a potters' work tends to be seasonal as new vessels and votive murtis are more needed at festival and harvest times. The artisans turn to agriculture to sustain themselves in the lean months.



## traditional market

The artisans of Molela descend from a tradition handed down within families for over 5000 years and are today still satisfying a need for functional ceramics such as water pots, cooking vessels etc. and also decorative and religious ceramics. The potters belong to the many varieties of the caste of Kumhar which in some cases have a close relationship with religious ceremonies

# tribes of madhya pradesh

Bhopa is the Rajasthani term for a village elder who heads a religious ceremony. According to history, in the Maag season of January and February, the Bhil Tribe members would visit the Molela Village of artisans and ask them to make tiles of gods and goddesses.

The original inhabitants of Molela are the Mina and Bhil tribal's who have adopted icon worship into their own tribal systems of worship. They come to buy clay plaques depicting the images of the Gods who have fulfilled their wishes. The votive icons are replaced every three to five years in gratitude for the blessings received.

The deity chosen by the Bhopa is ceremoniously bathed in the nearby Banas river to the accompaniment of prayers and floral offerings before it is carried back to the village to be consecrated.





# jhaavali

Anatomy Of A Molela Tile  
Tales On Teracotta

# mounts of molela

The Kumhars of molela are known to create nuanced versions of Hindu mythological stories of gods and goddesses. The images of folk deities sculpted by these artisans are highly revered in Rajasthan.

The art is popular among the tribes who visit Molela to buy plaques of popular figurines which include the gods and goddesses worshiped by them in the fairs.



Via Smriti Dutta



<http://www.abhijna-emuseum.com/artist-portfolios/molela-terracotta-artist-mukesh-prajapat/>

The journey is in large gatherings to Molela and is headed by a religious elder called Bhopa. Under the scrutiny of the Bhopa, the plaques are made with utmost detail and care. In fact, the entire process of making of the votive to their installation by the tribes is ceremonious and each step is carried with deep veneration.

The deity chosen by the Bhopa is ceremoniously bathed in the nearby Banas river to the accompaniment of prayers and floral offerings before it is carried back to the village to be consecrated. On the long journey back, these plaques never once touch the floor. They are always kept above waist level as a sign of reverence to the deity.





## what is made?

Traditionally each tile is a miniature depicting a cross section of a temple. It is made in such a way that it occupies less space while retaining the grandeur of a fully fledged temple. For something that is made entirely out of hand, the molela tile is significantly detailed and expressive.

The craft is passed down for more than 18 generations but this anatomy of the miniature remains omnipotent even today when multiple adaptations have been seen in the molela tile. The long established design of a molela tile includes the following elements.



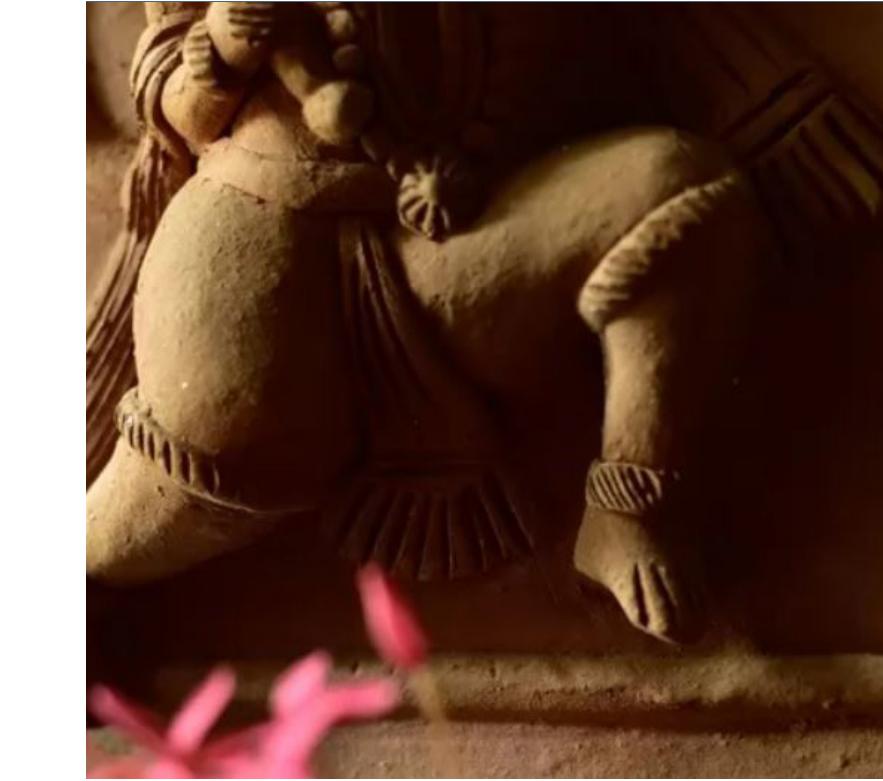
## five domes

Principle of balance in temple architecture created through 5-domes arrangement, with a larger one as central dome and two on each side. It also brings structural & visual balance to the Temple Architecture.

## pillars

Symmetrical two pillars on both sides as the support for the domes, and elevated cylindrical design is done to create a three dimensional look. Together they form the entrance to the garbhgriya where the god/goddess are molded.





## centre stage

The God and Goddess are placed at Garbh Griha (sanctum), since the central area is always the source for direct energy from Planets and the Sun.

Generally the garbhagriha is a windowless and sparsely lit chamber, intentionally created thus to focus the devotee's mind on the tangible form of the divine within it.

## steps

It was always considered that temples being higher on the spiritual plane, the design and composition should hence symbolize that, therefore use of stairs is a symbol of moving on a higher plane, ascending from worldly thoughts to complete meditative state.

The garbhagriha is normally square and sits on a plinth, its location calculated to be a point of total equilibrium and harmony in the Universe.

## central dome

The space for centralizing the maximum positive energy, with adequate light and air circulation. Also giving the person sufficient space architecture wise on all sides to feel free, composed & meditative.

## gods and goddesses

It symbolizes the presence of an almighty; the ultimate source of life, love, peace & happiness. Apart from gods and goddesses, often, folk heroes of Rajasthan are also given the same stature in the plaques



## lotus bean

At the end of each dome and on the pillars, lotus beans are modeled by molela potters.

The lotus beans as a symbol of purity, enlightenment, self-regeneration and rebirth! Here rebirth is not literal to be born again, but a new beginning of thoughts & behavior.

According to Hinduism, within each human is the spirit of the sacred lotus. It represents eternity, purity, divinity, and is widely used as a symbol of life, fertility, ever-renewing youth. The lotus is used to describe feminine beauty, especially female eyes.





The repetitive use of these aesthetics brings to notice the philosophical contemplation that has been invested on creating the composition. It is also common observation to find multiple instances of these compositions in all forms all over India's heritage maps indicating their significance

There have been many debates which draw heavily from the fact that the spiritual constitution that has been constructed has strong scientific backing and how like the golden ratio, this too fits into material or metaphysical aspects of life.

(Picture Credits- Smriti Dutta)



<https://www.flickr.com/photos/ishanz/6308551622/in/photostream/>

The serpent God Nagdev has been worshiped in India since ancient times and the images usually have a central figure bounded with several snake consorts.

Another popular subject of the tiles are the Bhairav who bears a distinct similarity to the Lord Shiva, holds a trident, a thunderbolt, a head and a nose. His mount is a dog and his image is installed in every temple with that of other gods and goddesses

# hindu pantheon

Originally idols and figurines of gods and goddesses were practiced by artisans. This included depictions of Lord Vishnu. With the modern market demand, these idols are now mounted on plaques or tiles to be decorated on the front entrances of homes, and interiors.

Other mounts include, Goddess Durga she sits across a lion, as chamunda an elephant, mounted on a buffalo as kalika or holding a weapon as Aawanmata. The serpent God Nagadev has been worshipped in India since ancient times and the images usually have a central figure bounded with several snake consorts.

Another popular male deity the potters make is Bhairav represented by two images signifying the deity's omnipotence-Kala Bhairav and Gora Bhairav, the dark and the fair. Bhairav who bears a distinct similarity to the Lord Shiva, holds a trident, a thunderbolt, a head and a nose. His mount is a dog and his image is installed in every temple with that of other gods and goddesses.



## folk heroes

A lot of what is sculpted on the molela tile stems from the socio economic and cultural beliefs of artisans practicing the craft and the tribes demanding the craft. These range between folk heroes and heroines Tejaji, Gora Bhairon, Kala Bhairon, Vasuki, Bhuna, Panchmukhi and others. Folk deities and local heroes like Pabuji and Dev Naraian ji are also seen on the tiles

## daily life

Molela potters have seen to expand their creative horizons even more. Today, almost every aspect of the rural lives around the artisans can be translated by them into tangible stories set in clay. This contemporisation only highlights the talented nature of these artisans. The adaptability and years of practice can now reproduce any image or element. The modern narrative and demand have also given a natural boost in the imagination of these artisans who now create terracotta series of folklores of Rana Pratap, Mira Bai and other kings of Ajmer.







# upyog

About Artisan

Palette of Peasant Potters

When Craft Meets Utility



## about

Rajendra Kumhar ji is the son of the padmashree award winner Mohanlal Chaturbhuj Kumhar. He has been practising the art of molela terracotta for 18 years now! Being an artisan came naturally to him. While he attended school and got proper academic education, he spent a large chunk of his childhood watching his father work and eventually adopted the craft and decided to take it forward. He has been called in to give expert talks and workshops all across the different centers of NIFT.

“Molela a tourist hotpot”, he says, “Nathdwara and Haldighati are close by so tourists who come here definitely come to molela! They like our work so much that they sometimes even buy unfinished goods!”

In our session with him, Rajendra Ji very amicably informed us of what Molela was all about and even though the experience was through the digital platform of Google meet, it was very fascinating to see what we had only read about till now.

## awards

Like they say, the apple doesn't fall far from the tree, Rajender ji, like his father has been awarded many laurels for his excellent and immaculate craftsmanship. He was awarded the National award by the Ministry of Textile, Government of India for his skill in Terracotta.

He has also been an expert speaker for various workshops and has been a part of many exhibitions in various centers of design and craft. These include Indian Institute of craft and design Jaipur, Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sanghralaya, Ashtamudi Craft Art Festival in Kerela, Dastkar Haat Samiti, Saras Mela in Mumbai etc.





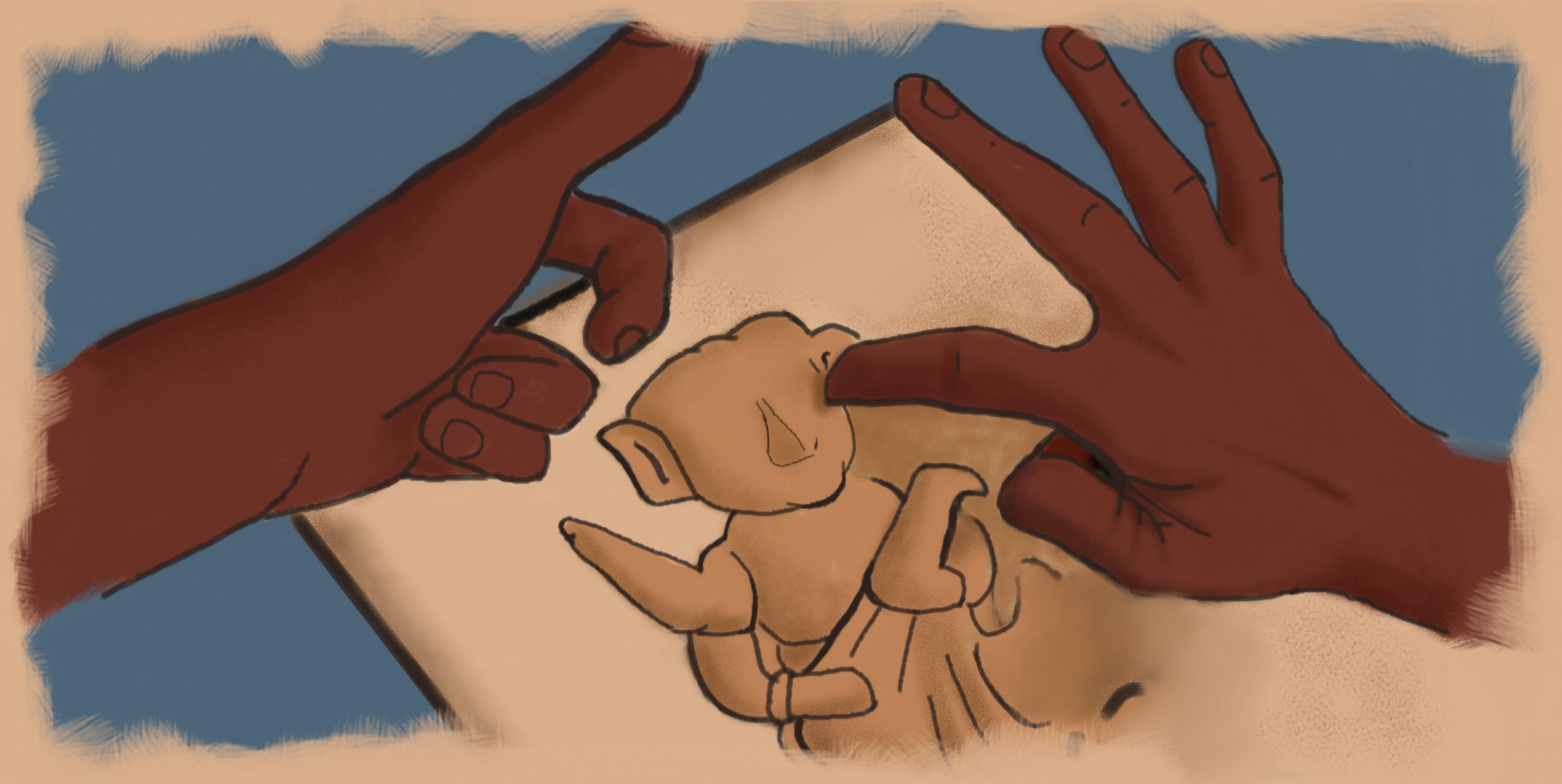
## Lifestyle

Rajendra ji comes off as a very down to earth person who takes great work in his pride. Even when he spoke to us we could see him fiddling with a semi dry pot. To the untrained eye, the pot looked finished and perfected! But he continued to run a soft white stone pebble over it to polish the surface.

When asked about his daily routine, he replied very nonchalantly that work happens when there is motivation, inspiration and requirement. There is no morning prayer before starting work. At a stretch he might sit crouched in front of his piece with his tools and work for long hours. But when inspiration is scarce, he prefers to take walks around his house and on the village streets to clear his head.

Rajendra ji used to play around his father's workshop quite often as a child. Sitting on the wheel or just imitating his father with clay. A big part of his childhood was spent in his fathers studio, he says and we quote, "I don't even know when all these fun and games became my profession. It was all so natural!"



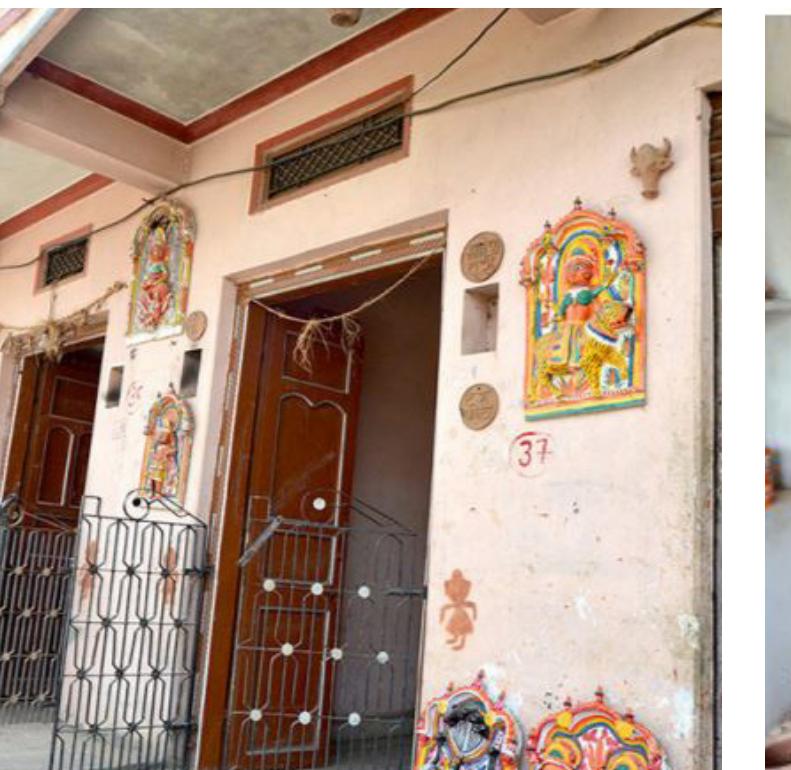


# in the virtual workshop

Rajendra ji showed us his workshop without any hesitation! There were two rooms connected by a small alleyway. In one room, 4-5 plaques were laid on the floor and were drying before the firing process. There were sacks of clay covered in tarpaulin in one corner. This clay, he predicts might last them for a few months more but things look grim in the lieu of the pandemic when the stock finishing. Molela art is sustainable in its own rank as the potters make items on order bases. This allows minimal wastage of raw material.

In the other room, a cot was seen in the far right corner. The walls of this room were peppered with honors and awards. On the shelves we saw small ornamental figurines and pots kept for sale. The floor had stacks of plaques depicted themes like the “Raas Leela”, “Dharmraj ji”, “The Bhairavs”. He informed us how the smallest piece would probably be sold for Rs. 5 while the bigger pieces could get be worth more than Rs 250. The finished products are shipped in cardboard boxes filled with grass to provide cushioning.

Like him, Rajendra Ji’s son has also begun learning from a very young age continuing the legacy of the Kumhars of Molela





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## concerns

The future of molela is shrouded in uncertainty and the pandemic continues to rage and wreck havoc in the lives of these artisans. However the pandemic (Believe it or not) is not topping the list of concerns these arisans are facing.

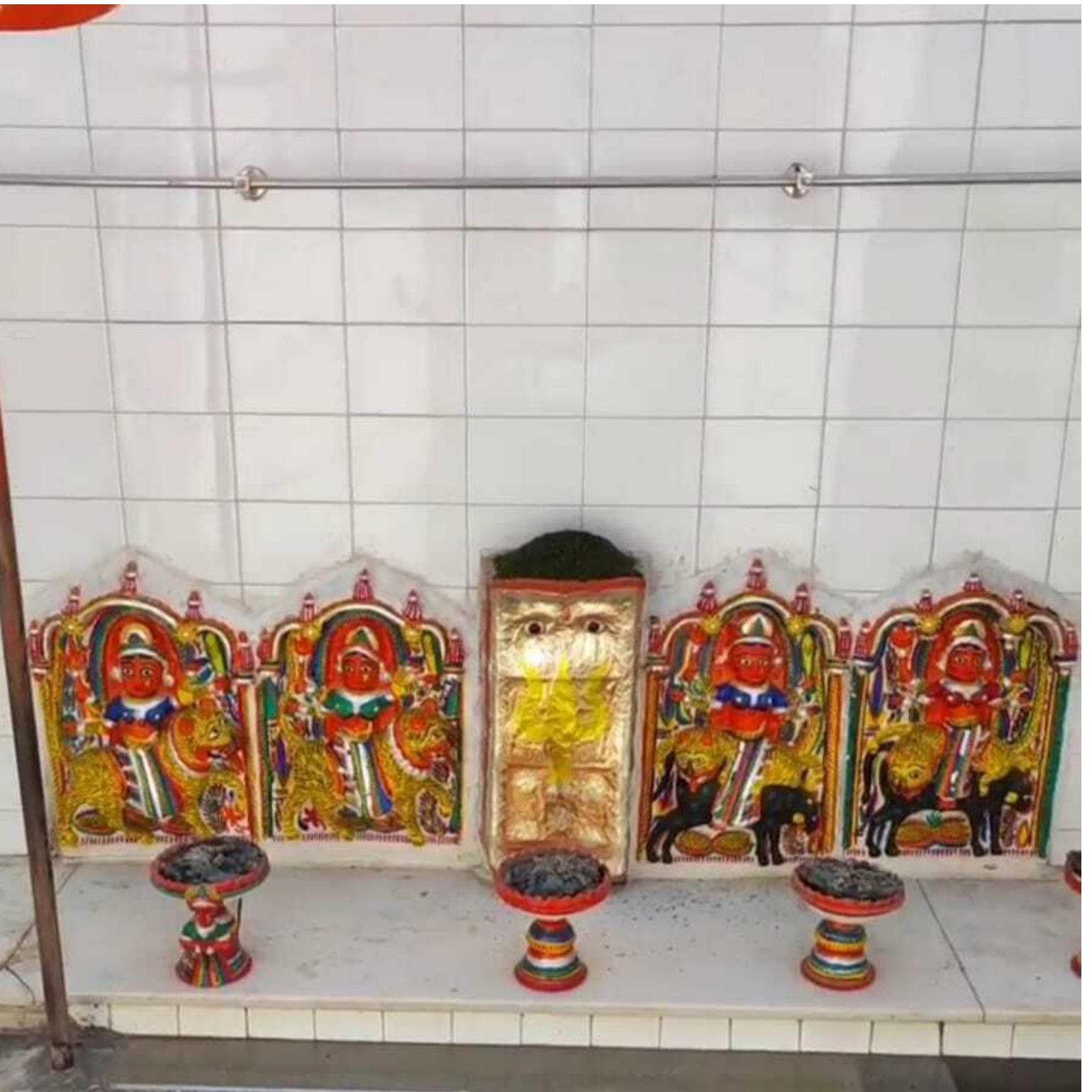
The biggest issue for the Molela craftspeople is the lack of raw material! There are many brick kilns that have been set up in the near by areas who have exploited the nature's resources like the clay found on riverbeds. These artisans also use the clay however their claim has been usurped. The land has been encroached by the brick kilns who take all what the riverbed has to offer leaving barely anything for the artisans to use.

Rajendra ji's family had luckily procured a healthy stock of clay before the pandemic and are managing. However this situation doesn't bode well for everyone in the village. There are many artisans who are struggling as the raw materials slip from their fingers. There have been many reports, pleas and petitions filed by these artisan to the local authorities but little has been done to secure the land and their clay.





140



141

Slips are mainly used on the functional wares while the icons are painted with watercolors after baking the sculpted figurines. But over time, these traditions have undergone some changes and synthetic paints are also being used.



Via Ishan Khosla



Originally, the craftsmen made use of only natural colors – like natural stone and mineral colors- to paint the figurines and other sculptures in bright colors.. Silver is made with Palewa and water.

The red color is made when Geru (Red soil) is added to the mixture. As the binder, they use a vegetable gum called Dawrigund collected from the trees.

White color is powdered Mica (quartz rich rock), turning a greenish white after firing. Black is produced by the mixing of carbon and water. The carbon is scraped from bread pans and burnt coconut skins.





# vyapaar

Market Study

Aditi India Festival

Molela at Udaipur Railway Station

SWOT

# market

The traditional market of molela as discussed in the previous sections caters to the Bhil tribal folk who journey to molela annually to purchase icons of their gods and goddesses. The exchange is ceremonial but also a major part of the sale of Terracotta craft from Molela.

The artisans also sell local wares like earthen pots and pans in local markets. Today as Molela reaches a wider platform, it has touched hearts of many in India and Abroad. Many architects and decor artists have begun to incorporate molela plaque and tile work in interiors of homes and offices. This exposure has also helped them to interact with the Western market and they have demonstrated their production techniques in America, Europe and Japan.

The demand has also had an effect on the style of their work. For various exhibitions these artisans are called upon to create large panels of terracotta work that brings in not only monetary benefits but also gives them recognition for their skill.

Molela craft has also diversified in the sense that artisans no longer make only plaques or earthenware. They have learnt how to create temporary products and trinkets known for their beauty and lightweight attributes.

*Molela artwork done by Dinesh Chandra Kumhar  
for Serendipity Arts Festival 2016 Goa >*





## aditi-india festival

One of the major boosts to the Molela Terracotta craft occurred in the 1981 when the Aditi India Festival was arranged. One of the senior most craftsman Mohanlal recollects, “prior to that, none of us made anything other than traditional subject like local deities, folks heroes and clay pots and kitchen vessels.

For the fair, the exhibition organizers met with the artisans to create a series of wall panels titled ‘Fair Time’ . A landy member in the organising team especially pushed these artisans to try something ‘different’. This roughly marked an evolution of the Molela community. Their subject matter expanded and they started to absorb and build scenes from their daily life. Consequently various square tiles depicting the the day to day village life were made and then organized to give a larger tile.

Those panels gave birth to the contemporary – secular plaques out of Molela clay work. Subsequently these strikingly variant panels also led to reworking of traditional subjects by jumbling together of various unrelated gods, goddesses, folk heroes and symbols into one single panel.

# Udaipur railway station

The front facade of Udaipur City Railway station showcases one full wall of earthy red terracotta panels. The entire wall is covered in square tiles put together to form one single panel. These terracotta tiles were created with finest craftsmanship to promote molela craft and in an effort to bring it back from the archaic.

The wall shows detailed figures of gods, goddesses on their respective mounts. There are also tiles which depict mundane scenarios. Each tile is handcrafted with utmost details and expresses a thousand words. It is one of the beautiful embodiments of Rajasthan's diverse ethos of handicrafts.





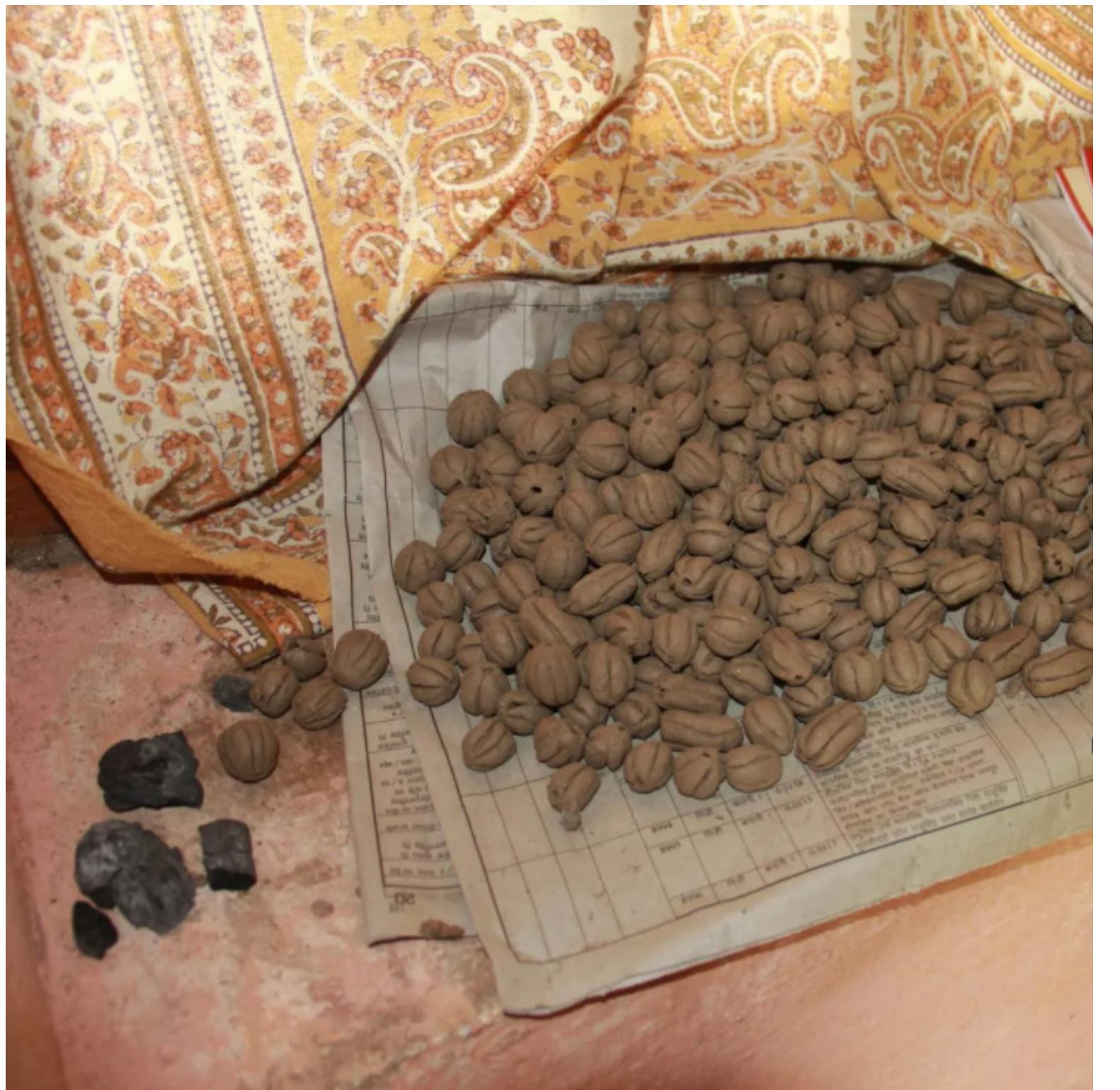
<https://manishjaishree.com/terracotta-plaques-of-molela/>

*Terracotta Lamps*



<https://manishjaishree.com/terracotta-plaques-of-molela/>

*Figurine, Kalash and Lanterns*



<https://manishjaishree.com/terracotta-plaques-of-molela/>

*Terracotta Beads*



<https://mybageecha.com/products/terracotta-elephant-planter-1>

*Garden Planters*





# śāmkalin

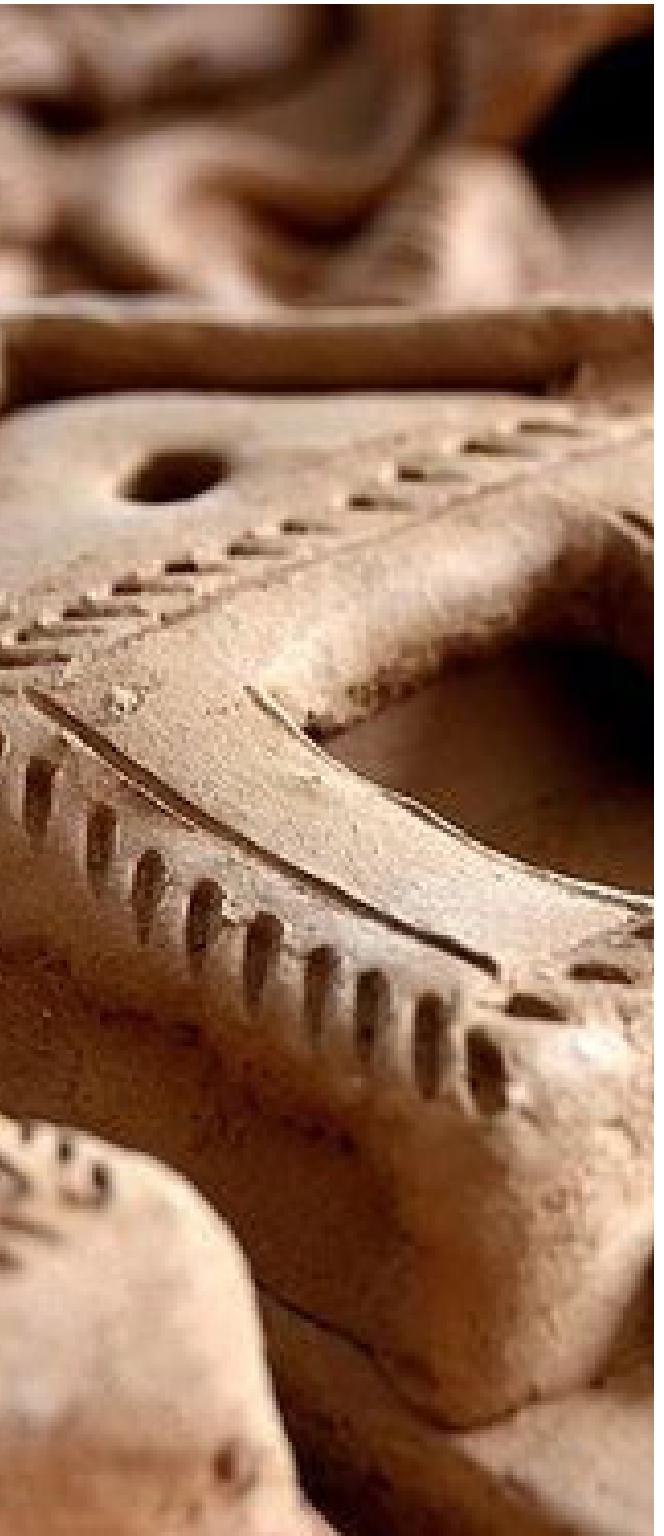
New Age Of Molela:  
Government Intervention  
Co-design





## સ્ક્હેમેઝ

Government Intervention occurs in various mean. The artisans are provided different loan schemes with good subsidies, through which they are able to buy advance equipments & better raw material to manufacture better marketable products, in different national handicraft fairs, like Dilli Haat , Gandhi shilpbazar, craft bazaar Rashtriya shilp mela etc. , organized by the government. They earn i appreciable profits, which becomes a mean to boost their confidence



Via d'source.in

## craft cluster

The ministry of textile has incorporated a mandatory craft cluster project in curriculum in the National Institute of Fashion Technology in hopes to spread awareness of the multiple indigenous crafts in India. As a result many NIFT students are exposed to multiple practices of the craft industry of our country.

Apart from inculcating a deep knowledge base of the craft, the students of NIFT are able to document the process and put it up on multiple open source channels on the internet for other interesting eyes, thus creating a chain of transference of knowledge. Along with the document, design students are able to pro

cess, contemplate and eventually produce new results which may help the craft industry keep up with the coming trends, hence creating a symbiotic bridge between designers and craftsman.



## geographical indication tags

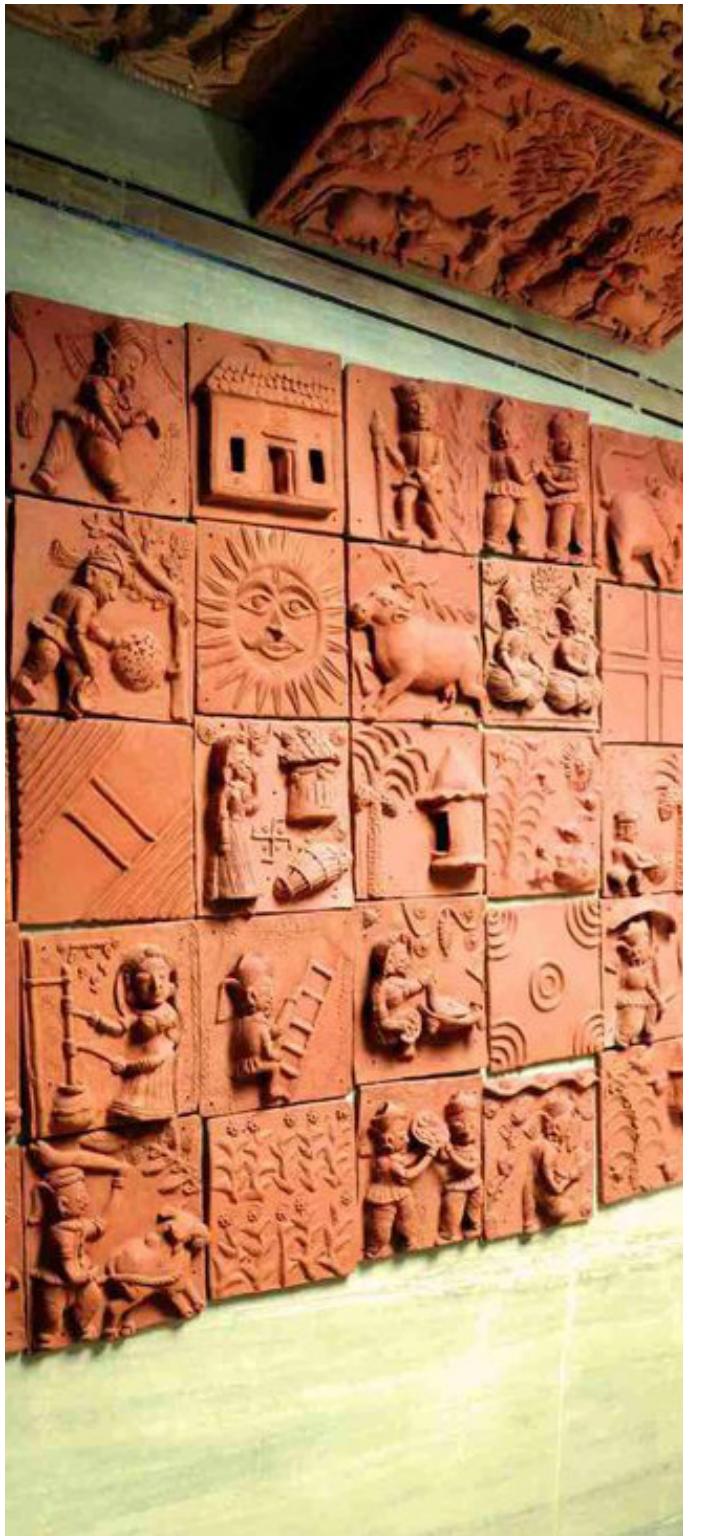
GID or Geographical Indication of Goods is defined as the aspect of Industrial property that indicates to a particular geographical location or region therein being the place of origin of the product. Such a name comes along with assurance of quality or a hallmark of the products purchased by the consumer.

It also highlights the distinctiveness of the product and makes it stand out in the market as it essentially is an attribute of the particular place of origin. Any craft registered under the GI, hence, gets a government backing, aid and support. It also provides an incentive for the consumer to purchase that particular product.

A GI assurance from the government also boosts exports of the products allowing artisans to reach the global market and sell their products at a premium price. It deems legal protection from the government as well and promotes economic prosperity of the local artisans.

The few drawbacks however of this policy are the fact that artisans from remote areas are unaware of this particular scheme. Even if they are aware, they find the task very tedious for it requires filling multiple forms and paying a hefty sum of Rs. 5,000. This fees has to be paid in a specific format of a money order or a bank draft. These pose as threats for the artisans to partake in the scheme.





## workshops and fairs

There are instances where the government allows and funds artisans to put up workshops and exhibitions to showcase their work all across India. Often these opportunities extend to foreign exhibitions as well. As part of an integrated design and technology development project in 2016, the molela craft artisans got the opportunity to showcase a series of fresh and unique pottery craft in the International Fair. Some of them have been to Europe and regularly take part at International art fairs.

Big artisans like Mohanlal Kumar, Dinesh Chandra Kumar often host workshops for the common folk to appreciate and absorb this craft and heritage better. Mohanlal Ji founded an institution named ‘Mohan Terracotta Art Research & Development Centre’ to teach the people of the world, the unique art of Molela Terracotta.

Artisans often demonstrate their craft and its process at the City Palace and at other important monuments. Any monetary value brought in by these performances is solely taken by the artisans

<https://craftcanvas.wordpress.com/tag/molela/>

## western markets

These potters have also been noticed by architects and decorators and have gained much prominence. Their art and craft is being used to decorate the walls of urban Indian homes, farmhouses and corporate offices.

This exposure has also helped them to interact with the Western market and they have demonstrated their production techniques in America, Europe and Japan. The demand has also had an effect on the style of their work. The potters often make large plaques and instead of the traditional images they often depict local scenes of everyday life.

Allowing these arisans to set up shop in popular public hotspots like Dilli Haat, Gandhi shilpbazar, craft bazaar Rashtriya shilp mela etc have allowed these artisans to gain a new market.



Ceramic Painting by Anastasia Tumanova

# સ્વાચ્છ ભારત

In Molela, the tiles of god and goddess were used on wall not only for decoration, but to have common faith, respect, cordiality and interestingly the areas outside the house and nearby always remains clean, so innovative ideas and strategic placements of god and goddess in form of Molela terracotta on boundary walls, homes, vicinity created 'No Littering' areas.

In the evening when diyas were placed in these smaller temples (tiles) of boundary wall, it used to act as street light for passerby.

# zero waste

The technique to make the tiles and murals in Molela has been always custom-made, one can customize the designs based on their needs and quantity. It always ensured that there are no dead stocks, over-production or wastage that happens in the process of making things



# Co-design

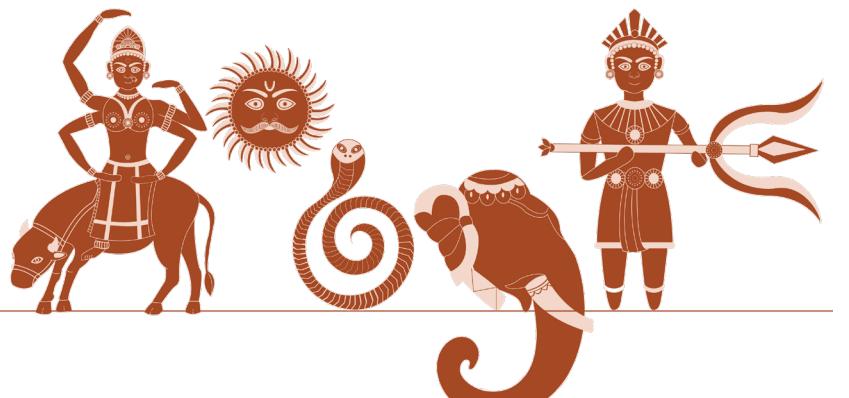
Reaching an equilibrium, an understanding;  
*a symbiosis*



*The Terracotta Studio, Vietnam*



In a valuable session with Ms Judy Frater, our group was highly moved by her words. She put the amalgamation of designers and artisans quite well when she said how its imperative to *co-design*. Taking forward her advice we present to you an awareness centered project which includes a custom made Google doodle and our service pitch to Rajasthan Tourism; '*Geru*'.



## google doodle!

'Pottery has been called lyric of handicraft, but it is the association of religion with this very humble object that has given it a deeper significance and wider dimension' —Kamala Devi Chattpadhyay

Molela pottery holds a place of pride for India. During our research we discovered how this unique pottery, which uses no potter's wheel, has been passed down from generation to generation and practiced in one village, not far from Udaipur. We felt Google would be the best platform to celebrate this craft and highlight the skill and dexterity of the artisans involved.

The illustration style and colour tray has been inspired from the craft, to mimic the beautiful red-clay pottery. All the figurines and designs have been inspired from the craft and manipulated to fit the form as letters of the word 'Google'.

The doodle starts with the rising sun, to demarcate the beginning of a new day. Mother goddess is depicted in various incarnations. As Durga, she sits astride a lion, as Chamunda on an elephant and others. Here Kalika is shown mounted on her buffalo. Usually their four hands are depicted holding weapons and various other props. Similarly, it has been used for the initials of google in our design.

## WHAT IS THE HYPE ABOUT?

A 'Craft Quest' for inquisitive tourists to know more about the craft and its significance.

[Do the Quest](#)

**TALES ON TERRACOTTA**  
EXPLORE THE HIDDEN GEM OF MOLELA VILLAGE!  
**It's Storytime!**

**WELCOME TO GERU!**  
A student initiative that aims to create a univocal ecosystem between artisans and the common folk. It is a platform that explores physical and digital means to not only spread awareness of the craft but also celebrate it while providing the artisans with a prospective market outside their traditional means.  
[Learn More](#)

## #SETINCLAY

**SHRINATHJI TEMPLE**  
Shrinathji Temple is a Hindu temple dedicated to Shrinathji in...

**STATUE OF BELIEF, NATHDWARA**  
It is located in the Aravalli hills, on the banks of the Banas River...

**DAJASMAND LAKE**

**geru**

Geru is a student initiative that aims to create a univocal ecosystem between artisans and the common folk. It is a platform that explores physical and digital means to not only spread awareness of the craft but also celebrate it while providing the artisans with a prospective market outside their traditional means.

Our website intends to offer a 'Craft Quest' for inquisitive touristers. This aims to utilize the fact that Rajasthan is one of the tourist hotspots of the country owing to its heritage and its magnetic atmosphere. This quest maps out your itinerary perfectly and allows you to not only see the miracles of molela but also around it. This is what makes it perfect for young tourists! Now they don't need to invest in the plethora of websites before them but just refer to ours. Not only that, our website offers this quest with an incentive!

When someone completes this quest they get a custom made souvenir as a thank you from our artisans. How does this aid the artisans? Every time a consumer registers for this quest they provide a minimal monetary patronage to our artisans. They not only avail our services enlisted but also help create a channel for these artisans to propagate to others through their experience!

174

175

# check our Instagram!

Geru also brings to you an interface where you can register for the newest workshops we organise with our artisans. Apart from Workshops, we intend to use the means of this platform to expand the horizons of molela craft to the common folk as it remains a domain not explored by the molela artisans.

Our latest workshop comes out soon for school children and promises a digital experience like never before!

Another feature of geru is that it allows you to link your Instagrams to us with #setinclay and lets other people visiting our website to enjoy a virtual craft experience through your lenses!



@geru\_tot

# nishkarsh

While we are deeply remorseful of the fact that we did not get to experience the culture of Molela as vividly as we hoped, there is no denying that we most undoubtedly felt it. Thanks to numerous Online blogs, journals, research papers at our disposal as well as the invaluable session with our artisan we felt connected, even if the distance we breached was minuscule. The journey has been quite insightful and even now we are constantly in awe of what spoke out of a slab of clay. Every piece is unique, emotive and beautiful and it is a shame that there are many that are unaware of its beauty.

As communication designers, we aim to create a better ecosystem for this craft where walls talk and you listen! Through this work of literature we hope that it brings the reader a step closer to the diverse and copious culture this country has to offer. In fact, we hope it leaves you in awe that only a 10.22 sq.km of area is brimming with such cultural energy that you can feel it ebbing with life, And you cannot help but think *what of the rest of this country?*





# granthśodhi

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# bheen ki boli

When Walls Talk

Molela Pottery, Rajasthan

Craft Cluster Documentation Initiative 2021

Department of Fashion Communication Design, NIFT New Delhi

Ministry Of Textile Govt. of India