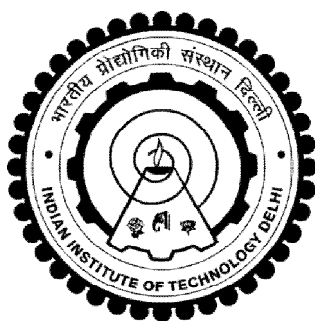


DOES CRAFT REALLY MATTER?
TIME, MOVEMENT AND FEELINGS IN THE MAKING OF
DHOKRA

RAVI SHANKAR MISHRA



DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY DELHI
MAY 2018

DOES CRAFT REALLY MATTER?
TIME, MOVEMENT AND FEELINGS IN THE MAKING OF
DHOKRA

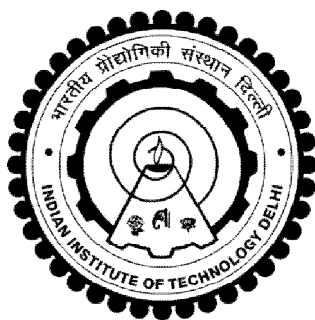
by
RAVI SHANKAR MISHRA

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

Submitted

in fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

to the



Indian Institute of Technology Delhi

May 2018

To

THE GOHONZON,

**the object of Devotion of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, which helped me
to generate all the forces without which this work would not have come to
the existence and helped me to not give up in the most difficult of my
situations**

Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis titled **Does Craft Really Matter? Time, Movement and Feelings in the Making of Dhokra** being submitted by **Mr. Ravi Shankar Mishra** to the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** in Humanities and Social Sciences is a record of original bonafide research work carried out by him under my supervision. The work presented in this thesis has reached the requisite standard and has not been submitted elsewhere either in part or full for the award of any other degree or diploma.

Dr. Milind Wakankar

Associate Professor

Department of Humanities and Social sciences

Indian Institute of Technology Delhi

Acknowledgements

In my dedication of this thesis, I have mentioned the object of devotion—the Gohonzon—of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism that helped me to generate all the forces without which I could not have been able to complete this project. These forces were very much firstly generated within me and then within the materials that I have gathered for my work—both during the field work and the time of writing of the dissertation when I was refurbishing the tools and methodology that I was trained in. Most of the time, much of the materials and equipment did not work and I felt like giving up on such occasions when the field reality did not correspond to the available theoretical deliberations in the field of study in which I was trained in. During my post graduation and until five years of my PhD course, I studied sociology. And therefore, I continued using the same sociological concepts and sets of tools and methodology for much of the duration of my doctorate course that I was trained in. Even after putting five years of my earnest efforts in the work, I was not progressing in any clear direction with regard to my goals and objectives, until support and encouragement came as a gush of force from within the system itself (the institution where I work) and many benefactors from multiple directions rushed in to relieve me of my distress. So, besides my perseverance in the most difficult times that kept me going, this work would not have come to fruition without the support of many people who came to aid with force to ensure that I was through with my work.

At a time when I had reached a deadlock with respect to my work, Dr. Milind Wakankar, my present supervisor, joined the Department of our institution. I would not have been able to complete my work this day if he had not readily agreed to guide me in my work, which had taken a sudden intellectual turn long before I came in touch with him. It was due to his compassionate guidance and constant encouragement that I have been able to execute this

work. I also want to record a debt of immense gratitude towards Professor V. Sanil, whose input has been invaluable from the time I have pursued this course of inquiry and proved to be the catalysing force that first time put me in touch with my present guide. I am also thankful to my ex-guide, Dr. Farhana Ibrahim under whose supervision I was able to do in-depth field work and to remain alert to the issues at hand during the period of my field work. However, it is unfortunate that due to a shift in my intellectual trajectory I could not work with her in the end. Professor Roma Chatterji of Delhi University, Professor Ravinder Kaur and Professor Bijoy Boruah of Indian Institute of Technology also gave me relevant inputs and critical comments that helped me to revise alter the course of my work. I am immensely thankful to them. I feel especially fortunate to have Professor Avijit Pathak of Jawahar Lal Nehru University as one of my teachers, who has always been a source of inspiration for me for his indefatigable spirit and for his belief in Upanishadic thought. I still retain one of the lines of his one of the talks—“where there is difficulty, there is possibility”. I am full of gratitude towards my host-cum-respondents—the families of the Jadupatias—during my field work in the Jharkhand, who were not at all hesitant to extend their hospitality during my stay at their home. In this regard, I am especially thankful to Lizam, Hakim, Nasser, Hussain and Prahlad, who were keen to answer all my questions regarding their work or their lives. I am also thankful to my one of the long time acquaintances, Ramanand Prasad, who is lovingly called by many of us in our friend circle as *Kaka*. He told me much about the Jadupatias. Above all, I think I would never be able to repay my debt of gratitude to my elder brother Hari Shankar Mishra, who always encouraged me and did not lose confidence in my capability during my difficult times. I consider myself fortunate to have friends like Aswini, Basil, Prakash and Vijay who were always ready to lend their ears at times of distress. I also extend my gratitude towards my well wishers of the Buddhist Organization Soka Gakkai of which I am proud to be a fellow member.

No doubt, this work is a craft work, produced under the forces of materials and training that I gathered over one and half years of my intensive field work and five years of extensive studies on a wide range of literature on the issues of craft. However, the work took a decisive turn only by the beginning of the sixth year when there was felt a necessity to employ exclusively the two philosophers—Heidegger and Whitehead—to discuss those entities of nature and aspects of craft practices which are relevant and natural aspects of the craftsman and the environment of her/his making. No doubt, the work is not even a scintilla of what the great philosophers of great cosmologies have done. They churned out grand works through their flights in imaginations and in grand speculations that they were engaged with. Through my limited training, I could not have the audacity to navigate through the similar channels of adventure that these experts dived into; as a trainee pilot who in the beginning of his training is made to go through a simulated environment than the actual atmosphere, I always wished to be guarded from the impending failures and disasters and I am thankful that the institution where I work provided me with this opportunity.

From the beginning, I was aware that this work can never fulfill the expectations of Whitehead in proportion to what he would have liked to call as a *clever* and *good* work. If at all it draws even a perfunctory attention of the philosophers who deal with Whitehead's stuff, I would consider this work to have fulfilled its aim. Nevertheless, just as sociologist Sennett has not ascribed craft to innocence, this work too was never innocent; never free of challenges; there were a lot of interruptions, failures and disasters. Yet, it has survived its failures and disasters over days and years, despite the occasional threatening to succumb prematurely. No doubt, it is a puerile work in the sense that I have a great deal to learn. Yet, it

has finally come to an existence in the process of reading, writing and sometimes in an unconscious desire to construct something.

Ravi Shankar Mishra

Abstract

The present thesis explores this central question—Does craft really matter? Given the nature of the question, the purpose of this thesis is not to arrive at any hasty conclusive answer. It is rather to insist on the irresolvable complexities, uncanny paradoxes and uncomfortable issues that constitute craft as a process. The questions raised by the scholars across the disciplines on craft remain pertinent in this work. In fact, they have been inflected further to show such complexities. No doubt, Whitehead and Heidegger have been the philosophers in discussion in this thesis for their critical and deep insight about the process of production. They dive deep into metaphysics to deal with the categories they created. My task has been to think through their categories and understand the process of making, especially in the context of *dhokra* making. However, while they concentrated mainly on the process of production or creation, this work could not ignore the category of “craftsman” which has more to say about the problems of the maker and the process of making—craft. Therefore, the category “craftsman” as indicated by Sennett is as significant here in this work as the category “craft”. Here, the latter is more about the “process” and not the end product and the “craftsman” is more about the striving and skill through which she tries to master the craft.

In the context of the Jadupatias, at the first sight it appears that the craft of *dhokra* has evolved into a crafty relationship between the craftsman and the crafts officials. While the officials complained about the craftsmen that they are resistant to drawing the benefits that the government has announced for them, the craftsmen complain that they are always kept in the dark and deprived of any real benefits. But in the very process of studying the work of the craftsman and writing of these chapters, I observe the significance of the very subtle nature of the categories of existence, such as time, movement, feelings etc. They can be said to be contributing significantly towards all contentions and misunderstanding between the

craftsmen and the officials. This work neither explores the frailties of the state nor of the individuals. It is rather overwhelmed by the vicissitude of entities such as time, movement and feelings.

क्या कला-वस्तु ('क्राफ्ट') का वास्तव में कोई अस्तित्व है? यह खोज-प्रबंध इस प्रश्न के उत्तर की खोज प्रणाली निर्मित करता है। प्रश्न की जटिलता के अनुरूप ही न तो इस प्रश्न का उत्तर वस्तुनिष्ठ हो सकता है और न ही सहज ही मिल सकता है। 'क्राफ्ट' विषय अपने अंदर कई अखण्डनीय जटिलताओं, रहस्यमयी विसंगतियों और प्रतिकूल विषयों को समाहित किये हुए है। इस सन्दर्भ में विभिन्न विषयों के विभिन्न विचारकों ने कई तरह के प्रश्नों एवं विषयों का विश्लेषण किया है। कुछ ऐसे ही प्रश्नों एवं विषयों को भी इस खोज-प्रबंध में उठाया गया है। वस्तुतः उन प्रश्नों को नयी दिशा प्रदान करने के प्रयास में विषय सम्बन्धी कई जटिलताओं का भी सामना करना पड़ा। निःसंदेह इस खोज-प्रबंध में उत्पादन की प्रक्रिया को समझने के लिए दार्शनिक वाइटहेड और हाईडिगर के सूक्ष्म दृष्टिकोण एवं अंतर्दृष्टि का विश्लेषण हुआ है। उन्होंने आध्यात्मिकता ('मेटाफिजिक्स') के महासागर में गोता लगाया और ऐसे प्रवर्गों ('कैटेगोरिस') का निर्माण किया जिससे उनका उद्देश्य पूरा हो। इस खोज-प्रबंध में मेरा उद्देश्य यह रहा की उनके द्वारा बनाये गए प्रवर्गों के द्वारा मैं किसी भी तरह के निर्माण-कार्य को समझ सकूँ, खासकर ढोकरा शिल्प के बनाने की प्रक्रिया का विश्लेषण कर सकूँ। हालाँकि उन्होंने मुख्यतः उत्पादन या निर्माण की प्रक्रिया की ही चर्चा की है, यह खोज-प्रबंध 'क्राफ्ट्समैन' के प्रवर्ग को अनदेखा नहीं कर सका। इस खोज-प्रबंध में 'क्राफ्ट्समैन' की समस्याओं और 'क्राफ्ट' की प्रक्रियाएँ-- दोनों का ही विश्लेषण हुआ है। इसलिए इस खोज-प्रबंध में सेनेट द्वारा वर्णित 'क्राफ्ट्समैन' प्रवर्ग भी उतना ही महत्वपूर्ण है जितना की 'क्राफ्ट' प्रवर्ग। यहाँ कला-वस्तु ('क्राफ्ट') का अस्तित्व किसी वस्तु के

निर्माण होने की प्रक्रिया से है न की उस प्रक्रिया के 'अंतिम उत्पाद' से, और 'क्राफ्ट्समैन' का अस्तित्व उसके प्रयास और कौशल से है जिसके माध्यम से वह किसी 'क्राफ्ट' में दक्षता हासिल करता है।

जादूपटियों के ढोकरा क्राफ्ट के सन्दर्भ में पहली नज़र में ऐसा मालूम होता है कि जैसे की 'क्राफ्ट्समैन' और क्राफ्ट अधिकारियों के बीच कोई चालाकी भरी खींचातानी के सम्बन्ध हों। जहाँ अधिकारियों का यह कहना है कि कारीगरों के लिए सरकार के द्वारा घोषित किये गए लाभों की सूचना जादूपटियों तक पहुँचाने के बावजूद भी वो उन लाभों को उठाने से कतराते हैं, वहीं जादूपटिया यह शिकायत करते हैं कि उन्हें हमेशा अँधेरे में रखा जाता है और उन्हें वस्तुगत लाभों से वंचित रखा जाता है। लेकिन जादूपटियों के काम का अध्ययन करके और खोज-प्रबंध के अध्यायों के लिखने की प्रक्रिया में मैं यह महसूस करता हूँ कि समय, गति और अनुभूति हमारे जीवन में अप्रत्यक्ष तत्वों के रूप में क्रियान्वित हैं, किन्तु उनका असर हमारे जीवन और कर्म-प्राचुर्य में प्रबल होता है। 'क्राफ्ट्समैन' और 'क्राफ्ट' अधिकारियों के बीच सभी विवादों और ग़लतफ़हमी का योगदान इन अप्रत्यक्ष तत्वों का भी होता है। यह खोज-प्रबंध न तो 'नेशन स्टेट' की आलोचना है और न ही व्यक्ति विशेष की कमियों का। अतः यह कहना अधिक उचित होगा कि यह खोज-प्रबंध समय, वेग और अनुभूतियों के परस्पर सूक्ष्म क्रियान्वयन किन्तु प्रबल प्रभाव से अभिभूत है।

Contents

Section	Page
Certificate	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Abstract	viii
No.	Page
I Chapter One: Introduction	1
IA Brief Comparative Literature Review	2
IB Fleshing out the Methodology through a Comparison between Methods	9
IC My Role/ Status as Analyst	26
ID More about methodology: Philosophy of Craft	28
IE A Brief of the Chapters	50
II Chapter Two: Time in the Making of <i>Dhokra</i>	52
III Chapter Three: Movement in the Making of <i>Dhokra</i>	78
IV Chapter Four: Feelings in the Making of <i>Dhokra</i>	104
V Chapter Five: Cosmology in the Making of <i>Dhokra</i>	121
VI Chapter Six: Conclusion	143
VII References & Bibliography	154
VIII Bio-data	161