

The Project titled Visual Ethnography of Invitation and Wedding Card by Palash Bawankar is approved for partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of 'Master of Design' in Communication Design.

Prof. Nina Sabnani

Guide

DECLARATION

I declare that this written submission represents my idea in my own words and where others' ideas or words have been included, I have adequately cited and referenced the original sources. I also declare that I have not mispresented or fabricated or falsified any idea/date/fact/source in my submission. I understand that any violation of the above will cause a disciplinary action by the Institute and also can evoke penal action from the sources which have not been properly cited or from whom proper permission has not been taken when needed.

Palash T. Bawankar 15625 0009 IDC School of Design, Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to those who have been a part of this project.

Prof. Nina Sabnani, my guide, for her encouragement to work on this topic and help me to take this project at this level.

Mr. Sanjay Dhande, for his valuable time from his busy schedule. He introduced me to various craftsman working in the area of Invitation and Wedding Card in Nagpur.

Khot, Padole, Gadekar and **Bhange family** for their valuable time, generous support and sharing their views without any kind of hesitation.

Also Mr. Venkat for allowing me into their workstation and observe the whole process of die cutting.

Mr. Mukesh Jain for their precious support for showing latest samples of invitation and wedding cards from their shop.

And finally **my parents** for their support throughout my project and for just being there.

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The encouragement to select this topic for visual ethnography came from relevance and importance of the topic in Communication Design. It was also one of my childhood interest to cut the stamp foiled Ganeshji or any deity or beautiful decoration in golden shining on it on these cards of invitation. It had always been the topic of my curiosity that how this beautiful pictures are engraved in such a small cards and how papers are cut into such a small pieces of drawing.

Luckily, Visual Ethnography gave this chance to me to study this craft closely and entirely. I could study the interesting process of manufacturing invitation and wedding card and its impact on the people in this profession. Some people were sticked to traditional printing technology but become outdated due to the influence of the digital world. Some of them could adapt themselves according to the situation and manage to adjust with the technological changes coming time to time. Due to which they are dwelling with time being.

Visual Ethnography was completely new field for me. With the excitement of a new subject and an old craft tradition to explore, which is driven by my own interest, I embarked on this journey of understanding the craft of invitation and wedding card.

INTRODUCTION

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The culture of sending invitations by distributing printed invitation cards at the homes of relatives either by courier or by direct meeting is very popular and common today. Wedding invitation cards are sent out separately by the bride and groom to their respective guests. With any kind of program or ceremony, the first thought is concerned with the number of people to invite, which ultimately move people to the invitation cards. It has become an integral part of our social life.

It is said that the culture of sending invitation might have been started from Narad Muni, a character mentioned in the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, as well as in the mythologies of the Puranas who used to carry the news and messages among Gods. This tradition of sending invitation was followed in towns by saying 'aaj chul band' which means - no cooking at home today, which indirectly gives an idea of the function or ceremony happening in town.

In the early 1700s, these wedding invitations were typically verbalized. In fact, they were usually issued loudly by and large or when people heard it, they could decide to attend the wedding or not to attend as per their relation with the family.

The people in that era were non-literate. So the invitations had to be orally announced. This was not applicable to the wealthier families and royal families who would create rich invitations. Monks were well-known for their beautiful handwriting. Their calligraphy was highly coveted, and they were often commissioned to write wedding invitations by those who could afford to do so. Many of these families also had the family crest added to the invitation. This was also used as a means for identifying the family.

Today when almost everyone sends printed card, the perspective of the people to look at these invitation cards has totally changed. People look at a wedding card as a representation of the wealth of the family. It also represents overall theme of the event or a program. It has become one of the first sign of the theme of the program or event.

Today people have many choices when making a decision for a wedding card. Indian marriages have more events, more functions and also more importance to the relations which makes it different from Western type of weddings. The details of the program as well as the family are seen in the Indian wedding card with timings.

The profession of invitation and wedding card is connected largely with the printing industry. The people who had printing machines and were used to only print the stuffs, have now began to enter into the field of designing as well as selling invitation and wedding cards.

With the arrival of new technologies, there has been a shift towards digital cards/ invitations. This Ethnographic study is about how families involved in 'designing and selling invitation and wedding card' are facing the challenges of surviving in the increasingly digital oriented world. This project also involves the study of process of making invitation and wedding cards.

The whole study has been done at my native place Nagpur, which makes it easier for me to visit the families again and again so as to understand these families closely and connect with them. These families were mainly located in the area nearby Mahal and Nandanvan.

The distance of Nagpur from the metropolitan cities like Delhi is 1094 kms, from Mumbai is 837 kms, from Kolkata is 1140 kms and from Chennai is 1092 kms. Also the major state and central government offices are sited at Nagpur. Nagpur is bordered by Amravati and Wardha in the West, Bhandara in the East and Chandrapur in the South. In the North, it shares its boundary with the state of Madhya Pradesh.

It is famous for the Nagpur Orange and is known as the "Orange City" for being a major trade centre of oranges cultivated in the region.

REASON FOR CHOOSING NAGPUR

Nagpur is my native as well as birth place. Thus is important for me in many perspectives. As per the importance in printing industry, Nagpur is considered as a second printing hub for the whole Vidarbha, Chhattisgarh and nearby region after Sivakasi in Tamil Nadu. Nagpur has some shops having latest technology in printing as well as other technology required for enhancing the visual appearance of invitation and wedding card.

There are many invitation and wedding card vendors as well as printing shops in Mahal, which is the oldest part of Nagpur, and it is located on the banks of Nag river.

VISUAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Ethnography is the systematic study of people and cultures. It is designed to explore cultural phenomena, where the researcher observes society from the point of view of the subject of the study. An ethnography is a means to represent graphically and in writing the culture of group.

Visual Ethnography is a research method which uses different visual techniques such as photography, video, painting, sketching, etc. to depict the research based on observation of people and their environment and the co-relation between them. This makes it different from a formal research setting where the researcher and subject stick to a format and answer questions which are pre-formed. Ethnography lets the researcher see beyond their preconceived notions and lets them immense themselves in the world of others. Most importantly, it allows the researcher to see behavioural patterns in real life context. Ethnography is not merely a method of data collection but is a way of creating and representing knowledge about the society, culture and individuals that is based on the ethnographer's individual experience.

It was the very first time I was doing Visual Ethnography. To deal with it, I went through all the reading materials which were there on D'Source. I could not only get to know the depth of this field and the ways of conducting it but also got aware of the different structures for different topics. I could know, that Visual Ethnography is not only about observing and taking the information of the craft but it is beyond it. And also includes study of the people following that craft, their relation with the profession and their views to look at it.

My secondary data collection include the overview of the history of invitation and wedding card. Through this data collection, I could study the shift of people from traditional printing to the contemporary printing technology. I could also come up with the questionnaire for interviewing the families which are into the profession of invitation and wedding cards.

With the questionnaire, I could discuss my topic with Mr. Sanjay Dhande, who helped me connecting with the people of the community which are into the profession of making and selling invitation and wedding card.

I could know the views and get the idea of the people of this profession due to the immense and valuable support from Khot, Gadekar and Padole family.

CONVERSATIONS

CONVERSATION WITH KHOT FAMILY



~

Mr. Devendra Khot is 46 years old, the one who is head person of Khot family. He has been working since 25 years in the field of Screen Printing and has

his own studio at home. Due to poor wealth condition, he could not continue his education after 4th std. At the age of 20, he started screen printing work to his uncle's friend.

He said, "It was the situation when I could have done anything that comes in front of me. It was the question of earning my daily bread."

Devendra uncle works with his family, mainly wife Mrs. Sushilabai Khot. Master Yogesh, the younger son, learning in 11th Std and the only daughter Ms. Namita has been pursuing her graduation in B. Com. Both are fully determined towards education. Mr. Devendra Khot has two elder brothers Mr. Dinanath Khot and Mr. Lalit Khot, who used to stay in the same house. It makes Khot family a larger joint family. Both elder brothers do work separately in another profession.

I knew Devendra uncle since my childhood, as he always used to come in my father's painting shop. He is sincere, diligent and very hardworking person. This project gave me an opportunity to connect with such an energetic and dedicated person and know him closely by his profession.

Though my project was the main concern for meeting, I never wanted to be so formal with Devendra uncle. In our first meeting, we talked more about my field, as uncle was curious to know about the field which was quiet new for him. He said, I relied on experience rather than taking an education of this field. Because directly working into the market and earning practical experience was the only thing which could help him earn money in less time period. Though he was aware of Bachelor in Fine Art, he

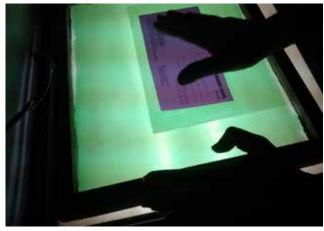


didn't know there is further education in Design schools with specialization like Communication Design. At the same time, he is very much concerned about his children's education. Though master Yogesh is sincere in his studies, uncle was worried about his career due to not having an idea about future possibilities in his education. He asked me to give him guidance regarding future studies and encourage him for the same. He also asked Yogesh to stay connected with me for further guidance.

During my visit to Khot family, I could see the dedication and the deep interest of uncle though he

was growing older into the same field since very longer time. Though the uncle was driven by his interest, I saw the hate for bringing his own son into the same field. He never wished to repeat this profession by his own children. He said, "everybody wants prestige, good status in the society, which cannot be earned through this profession. It has mainly the reason that, everybody has been getting the desired result in very less time with the arrival of latest printing technology. Many of people nowadays are ready to compromise with the quality but not with the time. They want everything within less period of time. That might be the reason, they couldn't value





the time consuming process and the efforts taken for the same by the people like us.

I deeply realized Devendra uncle's immense patience and his serious involvement into my project by example when I wished to see the process of screen printing the invitation cards in front of him. He called me 3-4 days later as he had no work to do before that particular time. Early morning, he decided to call me

so as to start working in front of me. Unfortunately my phone was unreachable. He waited till afternoon just to ensure my presence. In the end, when my phone was still unreachable, he called my father and asked him to let me know.

When I asked him how satisfied he is with this work, he replied –

"If you're fully devoted into any kind of business, it gives you good amount of money in return. I am also satisfied with whatever I earned through this work. But you cannot get prestige when you are stick only to this work.

Today there is tremendous competition out in the world, and you cannot survive on the basis of such work. It needs a lot of efforts. It's a laborious job. You have to be fully engrossed in your work. You will have to leave everything due to the deadline given by your customer. Customers sit on your head when they want something within their decided time. It is the main reason for which I didn't bring my both child into this profession. I kept them away from this and let them dwell into the studies.

Today the situation is like you get very few works within a month. You cannot depend only on this work. I also had a situation when I had to move on and start something new beside this work. Digitalization brought recession in Screen Printing. We started making thermocol temples for Ganesh festival season and selling small 'Pepsi ice.' Though it had nothing to do with your profession, you have to do it for money.

I am very much thankful to my wife for her unconditional support throughout my professional career. I could continue this work because of her. She always helped me in every situation and had no complaint when there is enormous pressure of work to complete the task in given time."

Overall I found, Khot is very caring, helping and loving family. Every family member was supporting me throughout my project. Even not for a single time they missed asking me for a tea or lunch or sometimes dinner.





Tools

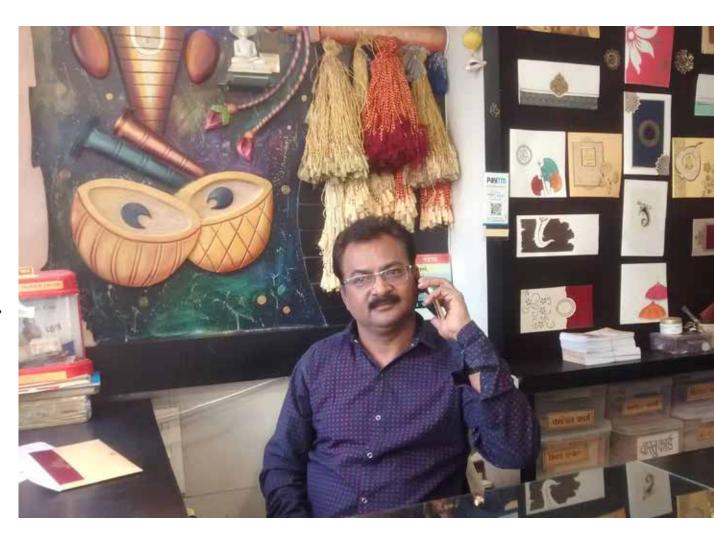
CONVERSATION WITH GADEKAR FAMILY



Mr. Jitendranath is 52 years old young and energetic and passionate personality from the family of Gadekar. He has been working in the field of Printing as well as selling invitation and wedding card since 30 years. Driven by his own interest since childhood and then by the peer pressure, Mr. Jitendra entered into this profession. He told he was overwhelmed, when he saw screen printing equipment for the first time when he was in 7th Std. Now he runs his own shop, Gadekar Cards at New Shukrawari Road, Mangalwari, Ganeshpeth Colony, Nagpur.

Jitendra kaka have his wife Mrs. Aparna Gadekar, who also works with him in the same profession since marriage. Jitendra kaka and Aparna kaku used to seat together at their shop. Aparna kaku handles the shop in Jitendra kaka's absence. Mr. Shainath Gadekar is an elder brother of Jitendra kaka. Though I couldn't have conversation with him, I heard so many admiring words from Jitendra kaka for him. Mr. Shainath also works in the similar profession and has his shop nearby Mahal area where he sells ink for printing.

Jitendra Kaka has two daughters, both of them are married. They rarely peeped into father's profession. They completed their degree of Engineering and now doing job.



I was first introduced to Jitendra kaka by my father's friend Mr. Sanjay Dhande, who is Graphic Designer by profession. At the first glance, by appearance I assumed Jitendra kaka, a very corporate person, who would be fully commercial. But when we met

for discussion, it was total antithesis of what I had been thinking about him. I realized that he is very kind hearted and talkative person, who has no hesitation sharing his good and bad experiences. His loyalty towards his profession makes him firm while



behaving with his clients. During meeting he was so free talking to me, where I felt surprising that how can he be so free with a completely new person like me. I felt astonished for his all-time giving nature as well as felt miserable too for myself who was only receiving or taking the things from him. But yes, certainly my role doesn't end here. I would love if I will be able to

do something for such a kind and lovable people of this profession.

From his view point -

"Nearly 25-30 years back it was considered as monopoly business. People used to hide their work to not let someone start the same business. If somebody comes to see what work is going on, craftsman used to shift from that work to another to maintain their monopoly.

Only being interested in working is not sufficient. Person has to think about his livelihood. Automatically it makes him think about the money.



Due to digitalization, people started sending invitations through the messaging apps like WhatsApp. It was the situation when we all started thinking that all the printing industry will get collapse. No one will send printed invitation or wedding cards. But this situation didn't stay for longer time.

Very soon people came back to the printed invitations. The wave of excitement resulted in the saturation of sharing images. Everyone was sending images to each other. Everyone's mobile started flooding with number

of images. So if someone has sent the invitation of any program or wedding ceremony into those flooding images, people used to omit it with other groups of images.

Both of my daughters repeated this digital way of sending invite. They sent invitation of their wedding ceremony to some of their friend through e-mail. But those friends were absent in the wedding. Later when we asked them the reason, they were saying – "We didn't even know when you send the invitation." Some

of them opened their inboxes after the ceremony date. So at that time, with experience, we realized that - It is always better to send printed invitation. It also let you meet people and make them remember the event.

Acceptance of your profession by the family members gives you mental support. Only due to their acceptance, I could satisfy with whatever I am earning and doing in this profession."

By seeing the courageous personality like Gadekar kaka, and talking about his profession in detail by the occasion of this project, I could come to know that the proficiency I could see in his personality today, had a lot of experience behind which came through the vigorous efforts in the past. His experience has been helping him tackle many unusual clients asking for customized cards. Also he has good choice of readymade invitation and wedding cards, which are showcased at his shop. He knew every details required or used for printing these cards. He has an ability to analyze what will be appreciated by the customers and what will be not, which I think has come through the prolonged work experience. He is a person well aware about his field knowledge. Till date he has attended several technical and printing fairs as well as exhibitions, which enables him to know about latest printing technology in the market. He has range of clients in the market, which I could see coming time to time at his shop by which I could assume his better service to his clients.

Customer dwells at Gadekar Cards and could expect a good service, because of good co-ordination of Gadekar kaka with his servants. He knows how to handle his servants by sometimes using harsh words but soon after that praising them for the improved quality of work. Gadekar kaka also manages to import quality cards from some well-known shops at Mumbai and Delhi, which signify the beauty of their shop's showcase.

In our concluding meetings, I could show my college project to him so that he could also have an idea of the work I do. He liked and appreciated the work I showed and got excited to know about further possibility of the current Visual Ethnographic project.

I could never forget the Kachcha chivda eaten with our these conversations and the love I got from Gadekar family.

CONVERSATION WITH PADOLE FAMILY



Almost three generations of Padole family had worked in the casting of metal typefaces. The late Mr. Ramlal Padole, father of Mr. Sudhakar Padole was the first member from Padole family who entered into this profession. Since the year 1938, he worked in 'Hind Press Printing' at Nagpur as a 'Typecompositor'. After 1958, Mr. Ramlal got inspiration to start his own business of block making. At that time, there were very few families who had been into block making. In whole Vidarbha, Padole family was famous for their better craftsmanship and service among their community. Sudhakar Ajoba (grandpa) had this profession in front of his eyes since birth . So there was no question even of thinking about any different profession.

As per the conversation with Sudhakar Ajoba, Padole family started 'type casting' since 1975. They had a large foundry at Raipur. Sudhakar Ajoba and his cousin worked there for about 12 years long. This family used to import the Lead (Scientific name Pb-Plumbum) from the state of Odisha (Orissa), an Eastern state on the Bay of Bengal. Lead was used to make typefaces of 48 point size to 72 point size. Typefaces of larger point size used to import from Meerut, a city in Uttar Pradesh. These Typefaces were wooden and mainly used for headlines.

Till the year 1995, this block making technique was used. Nearly till 2003, Padole family continued making those lead as well as metal typefaces.

Due to the development in the technology, this profession got highly affected. Majority of people shifted from traditional Treadle printing to contemporary Offset Printing. Due to which, the material i. e. the Typefaces required for Treadle printing machines become outdated.

"Technological development is good for the people's convenience and also for the environment. But not for the workers who are completely dependent on traditional printing technology."

When I asked Sudhakar Ajoba about their future planning and desires, he told he is planning to establish a new shop for designing as well as showcasing invitation and wedding cards. His son wanted to help him by doing ink business.

I could see the situation of Padole family highly affected due to the development in the printing industry. The traditional printing technique called Treadle printing is now become a history. It brought major recession in the life of metal block maker Mr. Sudhakar Padole. The profession this family had at its peak level at one time and this sudden change which time interval has brought was very large. All the aspiration from this profession which was there



"This was the business like 'Sone ki Chidiya' (Golden bird). People in this profession were considered wealthier as well as prosperous. Metal of 5 rupees were used to sell in the market at the price 30 times more of the original cost that means almost in 150 rupees after casting letters from it. That was the time when we were one of the wealthier families.

Due to digitalization, this profession got highly affected and nearly collapsed.

Change is the rule. Digitalization is beneficial for better environment. It encourages deforestation. We had to accept the things to move on. Both of my sons had to find another work for their livelihood.

We sold our old Treadle printing machine in the scrap at the cost of just 300 rupees, which was purchased at the cost of 10,000 rupees. Another machine of cost 2 Lakh rupees was sold only at 18,000 rupees.

Today we have decided to continue the Ink business and attached to this we are opening an office for the design and display of invitation and wedding card."

CONVERSATION WITH BHANGE FAMILY





Mr. Shyamrao Bhange, a 65 years old, an optimistic and energetic personality running his shop - Uma Printing Press, in the area of Mahal, Nagpur. Mrs. Lalitabai Bhange, 57 years old wife of Mr. Shyamrao

Bhange has been helping him in the same profession. Mr. Sachin, 33 years old son dedicated to the same profession and conitinuing working on the same Treadle printing machine. Uma Printing Press is best known for their service in the nearby area. They are

having the oldest Treadle printing machine, which is unique in the whole Nagpur area as it becomes outdated and nobody wants to spend their time repairing it.

I was introduced to Mr. Shyamrao Bhange by Mr. Sudhakar Padole and Mr. Sanjay Dhande also helped me appoaching him. When I approached Bhange kaka (uncle), I could see that whole the responsibility were taken by his son and he was the only one working in the shop under the guidance of his father. But both mother and father used to sit in the shop everytime and help Mr. Sachin anytime when he needs.

Curiously I asked Bhange kaka, that how can you run this traditional machine in today's digital world? He replied - "This profession gave me everything when I had nothing. I was completely dependent on this machine in my hard times. I can't throw it into the scrap so easily. I am happy that I could continue my service these days too, and manage to earn some money."

Bhange uncle was aware that this printing technology has become outdated and he also will have to close this machine in coming 2-3 years. But still he strongly believe the mindset of the older people and the technology in those past years. He was completely unaware of what to do in the future. At the same time I wondered when his son too had complete reliance on the traditional printing technology.

Bhange family believes that this older technology needs more efforts but it gives better results if these efforts are alligned to their higher extent. When Bhange uncle talked about today's generation, he said - "Today everything has become faster. Everything runs on single click. Just by clicking, you can copy-paste one's face to another.

But in olden days, it was not the same. There were many artists all around. Everyone wanted to learn something. They were ready to take time taking efforts. You needed to apologize in front of many people to learn something from them. People were also patient. They used to value personal skills of the people. Because they knew that only deep efforts taken by some of the skillful people could bring their thought into existence.

But today, the situation has totally changed. People are getting the results faster due to the developed technology. So the people too expect to get everything faster. Time has become their main concern with some compromise with the skills."

I was very lucky that I got an opportunity to see many traditional materials required for running treadle printing machine towards Bhange uncle. This family has well maintained them since longer time. There is requirement of keen care to maintain all these stuffs because there are rarely some people who manufactures such things today. If any of the things get lost, they need to travel long to get that same thing manufactured newly. Bhagne uncle used to print

polythenes, clothing, sometime calendars, pamphlets, etc. with the help of treadle printing machine.





Metal typeface - small size



Wooden Display Type

◀ Image - Sachin uncle with traditional Treadle machine







◀ Font depositor

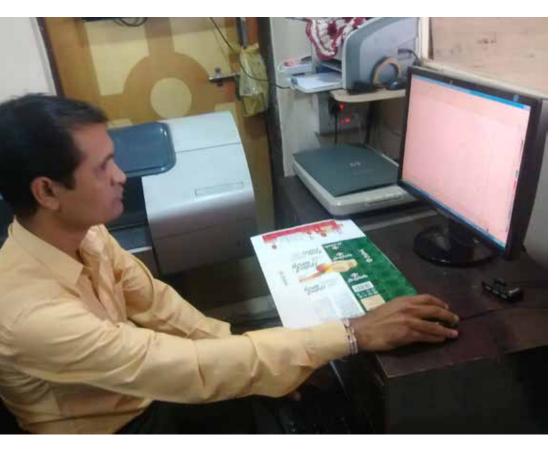


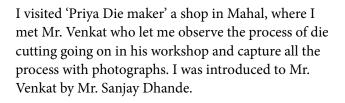


◀ Composing Unit



PROCESS - DIE CUTTING























SAMPLES









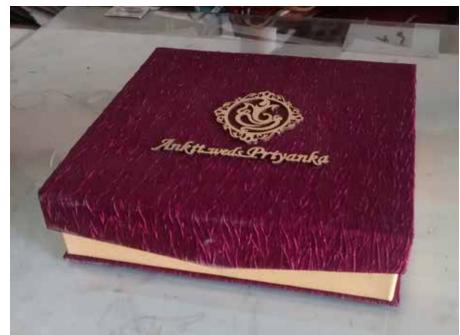
To collect the latest invitation and wedding card samples, I visited the shop OASIS - Card maker, near Shukrawari lake, Mahal, Nagpur. With the help of Mr. Mukesh Jain, proprietor of the shop, I could see the various trends of invitation and wedding cards available currently in the market.















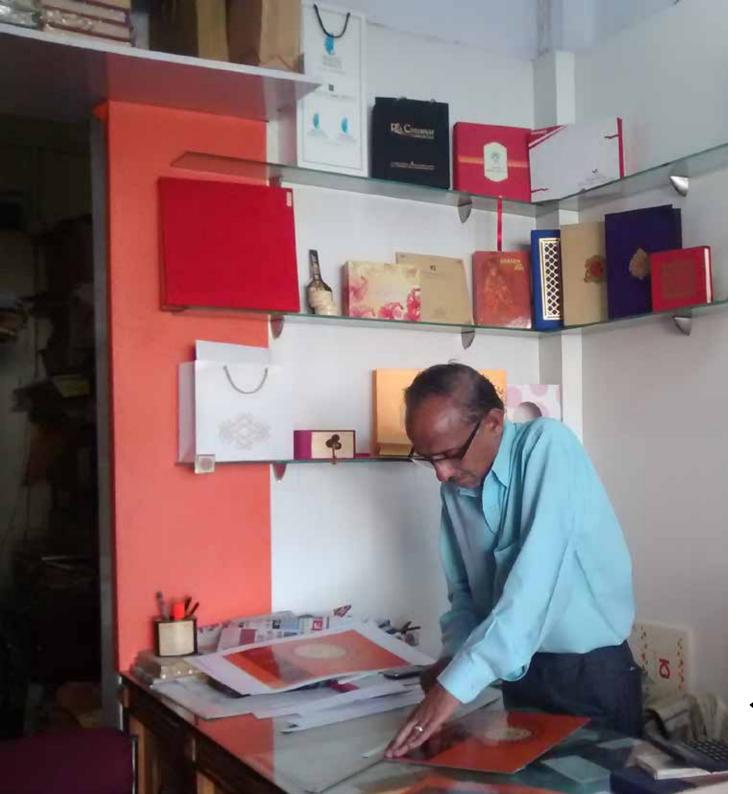












◀ Proprietor Mr. Mukesh Jain working at his shop.

INSIGHTS

I could observe and meet a totally new community closely and entirely because of this project. This was the very first time, I was doing Visual Ethnography and found it very interesting to connect closely and deeply with newer people and their profession.

Some of the families to whom I met, were struggling for finding their position in the digital world. But some of them have well adapted themselves according to the situation.

There are the families like Bhange family, who do not want to ruin their existence due to the impact of digitalization. They still believe sticking to their older tradition, though they have no idea of what they will do in the future.

Gadekar and Padole were the only families who had quietly educated members among the families I had conversation with. I could see that the education was also playing the major role in their better survival in the influence of digital world.

Gadekar uncle taught me how the efforts taken in working helps in developing the sense of taking better decision and managing the things beautifully.

There are the families in this profession like Khot family who has better skills and are ready to take seamless efforts, but they couldn't manage to take themselves to the higher level. I think they need an encouragement for bringing out their hidden creativity. These people are taking sincere efforts in

their fields but they are losing hope somewhere under the influence of digitalization.

Making and selling invitation and wedding cards has major scope in today's world. There is major shift in the perspective of people looking at these wedding and invitation card. These cards have become the representation of the status of the families.

All the families, I met were very loyal and sincere towards their profession. Most of them were from middle class background. Few were still struggling for the money.

I found everyone very caring and generous minded and had no hesitation sharing their core experiences which they earned because of their prolonged efforts.

This project definitely does not end here. It has opened the way to communicate further to the people of this profession which encourage me as a communication designer to know their problem deeply and find some solution for their existence in today's digital world.

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