

POTTERY & CERAMICS IN GUJARAT

DESIGN RESEARCH SEMINAR
MVDSPL-29

BY
ARJUN BAVALIA
146390006

GUIDE: PROF. RAJA MOHANTY



INDUSTRIAL DESIGN CENTRE
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY BOMBAY
2016

POTTERY & CERAMICS IN GUJARAT

DESIGN RESEARCH SEMINAR
MVDSPL-29

BY
ARJUN BAVALIA
146390006

GUIDE: PROF. RAJA MOHANTY



INDUSTRIAL DESIGN CENTRE
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY BOMBAY
2016

Approval

Design Research Seminar
Pottery & Ceramics in Gujarat

By Arjun Bavalia
M.Des Mobility & Vehicle Design 2014-16

Is approved as a partial fulfillment of requirements of a post graduate degree in
Mobility & Vehicle Design at IDC, IIT Bombay

Project Guide



(Prof. Raja Mohanty)

Declaration

The content produced in the project report is original work and takes due acknowledgement of referred content wherever applicable. The thoughts expressed herein remain the responsibility of the author undersigned and have no bearing on or does not represent those of IDC, IIT Bombay.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, followed by the date '27/05/2016' written diagonally below it.

Arjun Bavalia
146390006
2014-2016 Batch
2nd year M.Des, Mobility & vehicle design
IDC, IIT Bombay

Acknowledgement

I am thankful to Prof. Raja Mohanty who gave me an opportunity to do this research seminar under him. While doing research seminar he also taught me about pottery and encouraged me towards think about it.

I am thankful to Shree. Virjibhai and his family to incredible cooperation to demonstrate the process.

I am thankful to Mr. Tushar Prajapati owner of Bharat Ceramics At Thangarh who explained entire ceramic process of his plant.

I am thankful to Shree. Ghatit Leheru who has given me opportunity to visit their organization and also thankful to their staff members and Ramjubhai who directed me to visit potter community in Anjar.

I am thankful to Md. Ibrahim and his family and Md. Abdul Bhai and his family-a Muslim potter family in Anjar.

I am thankful to Somabhai Prajapati who has shown overwhelming cooperation to explain their routine life and pottery.

I am thankful to Virginia Vicente Luis from Spain who has always been there for her indirectly support for this project.

I am thankful to my brother Kishan Bavalia who has given his time to accompany me in this project and my family for incredible support.

Last but not least thankful to my friend Ratilal who for helping us for travelling in Kutch.

I am thankful for my friends who are always there in my support directly and indirectly.

Abstract

The pottery is can be synonym for birth, creation. In Hindu mythology also there is vast description of pottery. I chosen this topic as my research seminar because it has touched me. Whenever I use to go to some shopping place or malls and entering in any big shop selling beautiful ceramic pots which are very expensive I come up with an applaud and word'- "Wow". But I also sometimes think about that who created it who is behind it. Why we have limited those pots for decoration purpose only. Why they are so expensive and very limited available. To answer certain questions arouse in my mind I took up interest and did some study from internet, books, travelling to some places in Gujarat, interacted with potters and their family. Tried different clays and got an hands-on experience obtained from different places of Gujarat.

Content

1	Introduction & History	1
2	Journey to Gujarat	2
3	Thangarh	3
4	Kutch	7
5	Limbdi	9
6	Clay test in Studio	10
7	Studio work	12
8	Learnings and conclusion	13
9	Bibliography	14



Introduction & History

Gujarat is a state in India where old Harappa civilization was established 5000 B.C. which is a part of Indus civilization. In Indus civilization pottery is the oldest crafts activities. Pottery is the method they learnt to create pots to store water and grains from other civilization from Egypt and Mesopotamia. It is considered that the wheel first used for pottery rather than for transportation. In Indus civilization the pots have been found they still have the motifs of different animals and nature which is the art they borrowed from Mesopotamia civilization.

Pottery is the method of crating a pot from mud or clay on turning wheel.

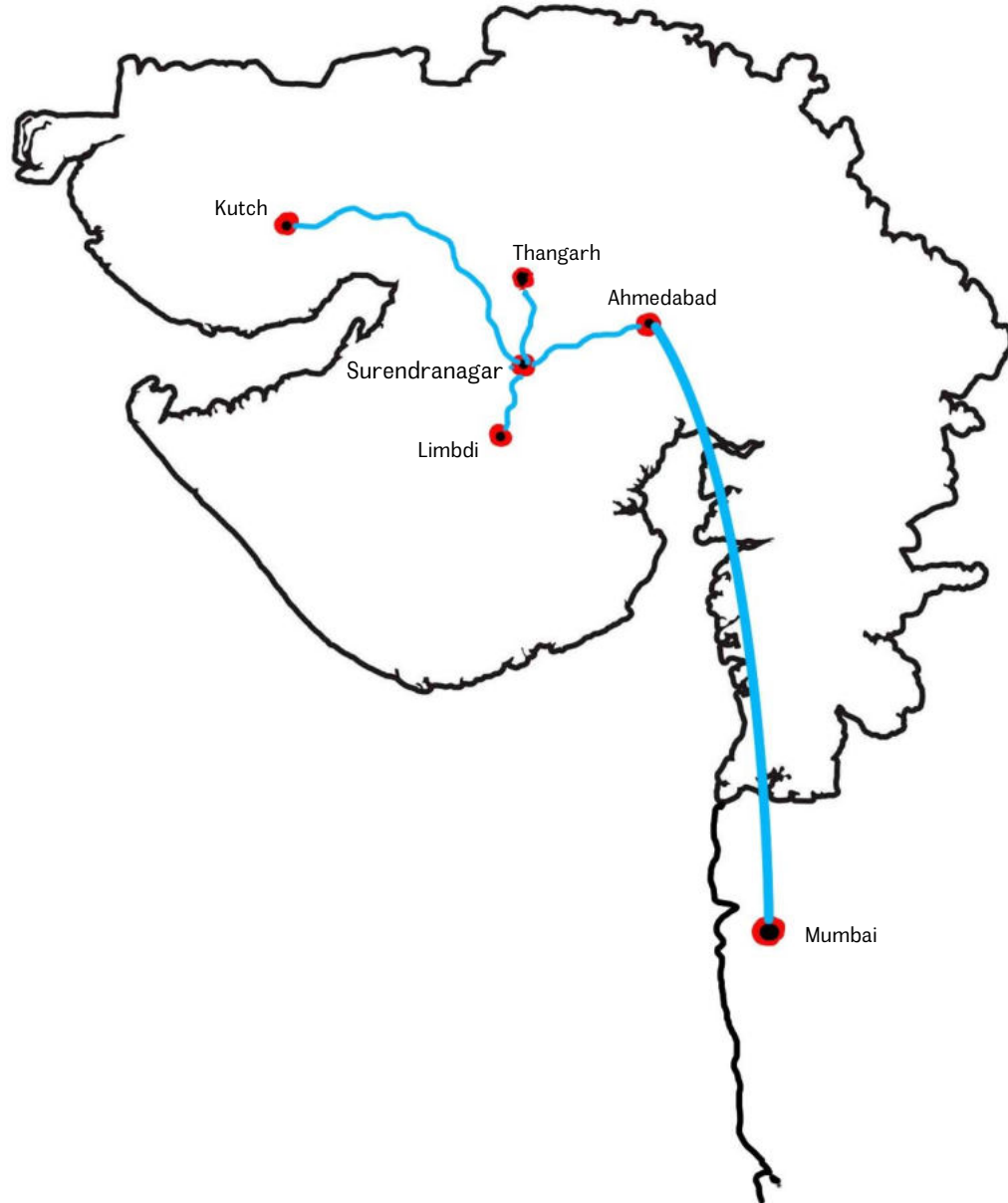
Gujarat is a land of rich culture and tradition. It has evolved in various types of handicraft activities, pottery, ceramics, leather, weaving, etc. But amongst all the pottery is one of the oldest handicraft and has become rare due to the industrialization and mass production.

Gujarat has been derived form Gurjar. Gurjar are the communities in 700 B.C. around involved in the pottery business but with the passage of time they scattered in the different parts of the country.

These Gurjar potters are also called as Prajapati. The name has been derived from Hindu mythology Lord Prajapita Brahma. Who is responsible for creation.

Pottery is much evolved in Gujarat compared to other states of India because of the footprints of history, availability of resources.

In Gujarat there are two potter communities we can find viz one belongs to Hindu religion (also called as Hindu Kumbhar and other belongs to Muslim religion community called as Muslim Kumbhar. Hindu Kumbhar also has given the well known title called Prajapati.



Journey to Gujarat

My journey started to explore about pottery in Gujarat from Mumbai. Before starting journey I did some internet and books study and then I found the Gujarat is a suitable place to explore more about it. I selected few places to explore in Gujarat which are rich in this business and tradition it is because of the connection with history, art, availability of resources and at last more Gurjar in that place. I decided to visit some village in Saurashtra Kathiawar and Kutch district. These both regions are very much evolved in tradition and culture. I started from Mumbai and travelled to Ahmedabad in Gujarat it takes around 1 hour by flight, 10 hours by Indian railways. This was a trip of 5 days in Gujarat where I met few rare potter families which are still involved in such pottery in the time of mass production and industrialization.

Thangarh

On day one my journey of exploration in pottery starts from a place called Thangarh. Thangarh is a small village in Surendranagar district of Gujarat. It is about 70 km from Surendranagar and it takes around one and half hours to reach. Thangarh is a place which is rich in fireclay and because of this raw resource this village has much developed in the ceramic business and which has not only capture the Indian market of ceramics but also established their business into Middle East & African countries as suppliers. Thangarh population are mainly engaged in pottery and ceramics business. But with the passage of time, lack of resources and more business opportunities available in other domain, people has shifted to other business and only limited them to ceramics only rather than pottery.

While reaching Thangarh first it was difficult to find potter family who are still involved in the pottery business in todays date. But at last we were succeed to find and we found only one family who are still involved in this.





We met Virjibhai Prajapati and his family. Virjibhai is 75 years old and he has three sons and his wife. He lived with his wife and his younger son Arvind. Arvind sometimes use to help him in getting clay from pond and also preparing it for turning and apart from this he also works in ceramic plant. His wife take care of home. Other sons are living nearby society and they also works in ceramic plant. Virjibhai is the only person who turns pot. Because of his age he also does it intermittently. While meeting him we interacted and found that the pottery in Thangarh will no more exist after him. The pottery is a business which is not a one man business. It involves the participation of every person in the family into it to run it smoothly. It requires very hard work and patience. And because of this reason and more opportunity to earn readily his sons are no more interested to take it further. But still he expects that his family should continue.

Virjibhai used to turn and make around 15-20 pots daily according to his age. The pot sizes are generally turned by him is medium sized which are generally used by people in village for storage of buttermilk. Also for festive season like Diwali, *Shrawan mas* and occasional purpose he used to make accessories (shallow saucer for *diya* and lid for pots).

During interaction he shown us turning pot on traditional wheel (*chaakdo*) turned by stick. After turning, turned pot is kept for drying in ambient temperature for 6 hours. The same turned pot will be smoothened to round shape by using wooden flat mallets and they kept for another 24 hours to dry up. On the next day the pots are heated in fire kiln. The heating duration generally varies and which depends on the type of clay. It may be around 2.5 to 4.5 hours.



His son demonstrated the processes involved in the pottery. They get clay from nearby pond in the village. The clay available in the pond has rich content of fireclay. And clay is dark grey slat color. But due to the more industry coming the availability of the clay has decreased in that region. Rather than it is the place from where most of the clay is supplied to other places for pottery because of its good inherent property.

For preparing clay to they use to mix it with horse dung which creates the binding properties.



During my visit to Thangarh we also visited a ceramic plant. His owner Tusharbhaji Prajapati explained the entire process and about plant. They are in the production of toilet tub and water basin. Generally daily production is about 700 -1000 pieces. Around 500 workers are working in two shifts in the plant. They are supplying their products in India as well as Middle East countries.

Kutch

On day two we left for Kutch. From Surendranagar it takes around five hours by bus or train.

Kutch is a region in the Gujarat which is known for its old rich cultural traditions. And it is also closely connected to the Indus valley civilization (Dholaveera-Harappan site). It has more influence of civilization in its culture like in the handicrafts, way of people still living, motifs, imitation jewelry etc.

In Kutch, we visited Khamir organization in Kukuma village. This organization has established after earthquake in Gujarat and now it is more or less involved in developing handicrafts in Gujarat and promoting it by involving various people from surrounding villages by organizing and conducting various workshops and vocational training camps. Khamir is undertaking various types of handicraft work like dyeing, weaving, leather works, metal bell works, wooden works like (*laakh*). I met Ramjubhai who is Muslim Kumbhar. He and his forefathers have involved in the pottery business. His every family member also engaged in pottery.

Generally gents of family usually involves in collecting and preparing clay and turning and shaping pots while ladies involves in decorating with beautiful motifs and also in selling and distribution activities along with men.

On reference of Ramjubhai, I got opportunity to met Abdul Bhai and his family and his brother Ismail Bhai and his family living outskirts of Anjar. Anjar is a developed town in Kutch district. These were two families are involved in this pottery. In each family every members are involved in the pottery activities.





I met Abdul Bhai, Ismail Bhai, Ibrahim Bhai, they used to make small pots, money collection pot, toys etc. while interaction they said that they have good market in that area because of mostly surrounding rural area.

There are different type of clays are found in Kutch depending upon the composition of soil. In Khamir, they uses *Khadi Mati* which is obtained from near by Khadi and mines. Also they obtained clay from a place called Tona beach and Lodai. The clay from Tona is called as Tona because of the name of beach place and which is considered as best one due its cooling properties but it retains for 7-8 months and after that start to erode. Whereas the clay from Lodai are generally used for small pots, cups, deep saucers, lid, toys etc. other than cooling purpose pots. The clay from Tona is generally blackish brown in color compared to clay from Lodai and Khamir. Khamir clay is much brighter and cream color than Lodai. Lodai clay has yellowish grey color.

After making pots the pots are generally decorated by painting motifs like small patterns which also shows the pattern of net (*jail*). Generally the decorating work is done by ladies in the family. Mostly painting have resemblance and are derived from oldest Harappa civilization which is followed like small small lines and patterns and involves color like white and red.

We found in our exploration there is bit difference in the work of Hindu Kumbhar and Muslim Kumbhar. Generally Hindu Kumbhar likes to draw big patterns and Muslim involves in fine pattern work.

Limbdī

On Day four Limbdi is the last place we visited. Limbdi is a small town which is 30 km from Surendranagar and it comes under Surendranagar district. We met Somabhai Prajapati and his family. He has two sons and two daughters and his wife in family and all are engaged in the pottery taking care about different activities. But because of it demands more work he has shortage of people to do the business so he kept one labor whose name is Shankarbhai Prajapati.

When I met him and saw the work I felt disgrace because I found they have lost the essence of Kathiyawadi style of form in their pots. It was because they were deployed labor from Rajasthan.

I feel the pottery is not just about to make pots and it should function well, rather than it has identities and it represents the place culture. So we can see that today it has become rare and it is losing its identity somewhere around. One day will come where the turned pots will be only up to the studio design and up to the exhibition only.













Somabhai used to manage all the necessary resources related to pottery and preparation of fire kiln. His wife and elder son involve in selling and distribution in nearby villages. Daughter of Somabhai are studying and also take care of household activities.





They used to obtain clay from pond in nearby village called Devpara. This village is situated 10km from Limbdi. The clay of Devpara is known for cooling. Daily basis they used to make 25 to 30 pots and they are much big in size. The pots are used by village people for water container. They used to fire pots for 4-5 hr.



Clay test in studio

We got sample of four types of clay from Thangarh, Kutch and did some simple physical test like flexibility, twisting, shrinkage and also turn some pots. This test helped in understanding clay.

Test	Thangarh	Khamir	Lodai	Tona
Color	Dark grey 	Light grey 	Light brown 	Grey 
Bending (after 5 hrs. drying): A test performed on 50X25x5 mm sample pieces Thangarh clay is better in bending	can bend up to 30 deg	15 deg	10deg	10 deg
				
Twisting(after 5 hrs. drying): A test performed on 50X25x5 mm sample pieces Thangarh and Tona are equally good in twisting	Take up to 80 deg 	45 deg 	60 deg 	90 deg 

<p>Shrinkage : slab of 150x25mm After firing Thangarh clay is more shrinking clay</p>	<p>140 mm</p> 	<p>145 mm</p> 	<p>142 mm</p> 	<p>141 mm</p> 
---	--	---	---	---

Studio work



Learnings and Conclusion

During my exploration I come across with many interesting things:

I still found the toys made of clay exists and which are bought by rural people.

I disgrace when this handicraft is becoming rare and losing its cultural identity.

In few year it will become rare and we will only able to see the pots in the exhibition and for decoration purpose but not as daily usable item.

I found there are organization are putting their efforts to sustain this culture.

It was a great experience and learning from the potter families. As being grown up in potter family I feel that I should not forget the old tradition of my community profession and which I learnt from this project.

Bibliography

- Pottery in India
- Pottery techniques in Peasant India
- Turning the pot, tilling the land- Kancha Ilaiah

<http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/essay/essay-on-pottery-growth-of-pottery-in-india/24371/>