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## Enamoring Rajasthan's Heritage: Thikri craft

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### Abstract

On looking carefully, we will find that many conventional Indian art and its forms are unnoticed. As a matter of fact, most folks do not even acknowledge the existence of many Indian forms of art! The cost of making handcrafted merchandise is higher than the price of machine-cut merchandise. For obvious purposes, the distinction is. Handcrafted products require a niche and professional labor, making them distinctive. Udaipur, one of Rajasthan's most prominent towns, is very famous for its lakes and palaces. This town has a heritage craft that will make everyone fall in love with Thikri art. As "Thikri" or mirror inlay or glass mosaic, the art of inlaying hand-cut items of mirrors mistreating diamond scalpels into good shapes and arranged into frescos on the ceiling and even the walls to render geometric reflected mosaic patterns is known. As a culture, the lack of support from our side makes it extremely troublesome for the artisans to continue their efforts; they are struggling to achieve their goals. Governmental and non-governmental organizations need to put strenuous efforts to make this art more recognizable. Integrated cluster development approach can play big role for the survival and sustenance of this beautiful art.

Key words: conventional art, unnoticed, master artistry, heritage craft, Thikri

### Introduction

"Art is something that makes you breathe with a different kind of happiness." -Anni Albers

India has a plethora of landscapes, varied flora and fauna, a great heritage and culture. India is a vibrant potpourri of arts and crafts, a land where classical melodies blend seamlessly with a hypnotic mosaic of beautiful drawings, ancient weaves and other handicrafts, sacred forms of dance, fascinating festivals and glittering festivals. The nation sparkles with energy and vivacity with every one of its states and union territories overflowing with ethnic flavors that multiply at every turn. With a kaleidoscopic array and rich cultural heritage, India is one of the world's oldest civilizations. Ever since Independence, it has achieved all-round socio-economic growth.

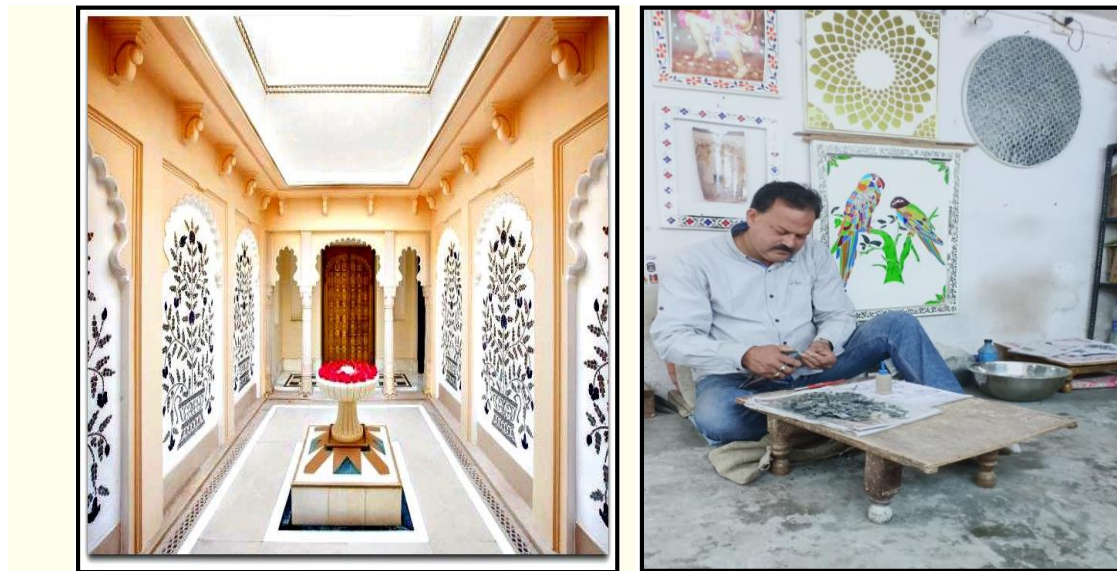
During the third millennium BC, the root of Indian art was taken from prehistoric settlements. Indian art, in addition to philosophical influences such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, religion and Islam, has had cultural influences on its way to the modern world. In spite of this advanced combination of religious practices, the main spirit has usually shared the dominant mode at any time and place. Indian art, along with painting, sculpture, pottery, decorative arts, etc., consists of a number of art types. Geographically, together with what is now India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and the Japanese Asian region, it spans the entire Indian land mass. Indian art is characterized by a clear sense of style and can be checked in its stylish and ancient styles.<sup>1</sup>

With drawings, sculptures, relief works, mirror works, administering ornament to the walls of human habitats is ancient, although the term may be different. Many of *Shekhawati's* wealthy *Marvadi* merchants had numerous expert craftsmen decorate their *Havelis* and mansions with the most beautiful colorful mirrors from the Kingdom of Belgium to make the collection and richness of the palace. The eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries contain these field beauties coated in imported colors. In addition to the change of state, however, visibility and surveillance may also be a variety of the reasonable uses of this art, each on the outside and also the inner walls individually.

### Beauty of the art-

Rajasthan's unique art history & architecture contains a rich heritage. Several of these types of art have survived for centuries and are still part of Rajasthan's contemporary culture. Rajasthan's glittering jewellery and attractive designs have captured the imagination of people around the world. Art in Rajasthan finds expression in numerous crafts that, as a result of their simplicity, elegance, and usefulness, has irresistible charm. Regional use of the materials on the market the artisans of Rajasthan obtain to fulfill the needs of individuals, and thus provide expression to their artistic desires and heritable talent.<sup>2</sup>

Udaipur, one of Rajasthan's most prominent towns, is very famous for its lakes and palaces. This town, known as the '*Jewel of Mewar*,' was built in 1553 by *Maharana Udai Singh*, on the banks of *Lake Pichola*, claimed to be the most romantic city in the colorful and heritage-rich royal state of Rajasthan. This town has a heritage craft that will make everyone fall in love with Thikri, this art. As "Thikri" or mirror inlay or glass mosaic, the art of inlaying hand-cut items of mirrors mistreating diamond scalpels into good shapes and arranged into frescos on the ceiling and even the walls to render geometric reflected mosaic patterns is known.<sup>3</sup> The *Mughal-e-Azam* milestone variety puts before people that *Sheesh Mahal*, also the main song in the history of Indian cinema to add colors to the otherwise black and white projector, was embellished by *Madhubala* dancing in unison inside the lovely mirror. That was the magic of Thikri Art, the junction rectifier of the magic of making out of one thousand *Madhubala*. A heritage craft about 400 years old that, with the aid of a dedicated artisan and interpreter, is used in contemporary recreations.<sup>4</sup>



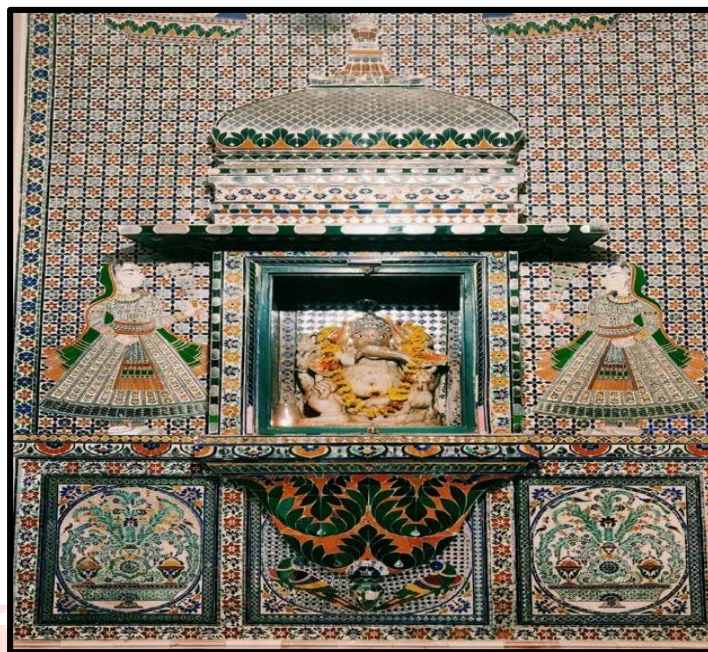
These lovely thikri art pieces created by artisan Rajesh Anant himself at Glass Inlay in Udaipur

Wherever lime stone or sedimentary rock, the foundation for thikri abounds, an ancient Rajasthan art form, thikri work makes the walls, ceilings, niches of a house and even panels, tiles and fixtures beautified. This work is often seen in many of the landmark palaces and heritage *kothi's* of Rajasthan, along with the well-known *Amer Fort* and *City Palace of Jaipur*, wherever the ceilings, walls and niches within the *Baradari* restaurant bear witness to this type of heritage art. Thikri art, known as the treasure chest of Indian art and craft, tells a tale of a beautifully intricate example of colorful glass inlay work, fitted with an expensive and imperial design that comes to life on the walls of the palace.<sup>5</sup>

## Antiquity-

The *Mughal* royalty began using the mirror craft in their art forms, facts and hypotheses show that *Mughal* patronage brought in artisans from far and wide who specialized in the mirror craft. Glass Inlay has its origins dating back to the *Mughal* period. Mirrors were often seen as a rich material that could be used to boast of royalty, privilege and patronage! When the glass began to shine in the eyes of the *Rajput* Rulers, it was not long; when used in such a way, they figured this material could reflect their royalty better than other crafts! All over the *Rajput* dynasty, rulers began to use this art of Thikri Kala in their palaces in various shapes, sizes, purposes.

In India, the history of mirror mosaic work generally referred to as 'inlay' goes back to the *Sheesh Mahal* (mirror palace) made in 1631 by the *Mughal* Emperor *Shah-Jahan*. The mahals of Rajasthan are a mirrored picture of the splendid lavish living style of the *Rajpoot* royalty in medieval times, decorated with *pietra dura* (stone inlay) and complicated impression of the highest quality that allows gleaming results inside the royal halls and courtyards. The eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth century's belong to these constructive beauties outlined in thriving colors.



400 Year old Thikri work done inside city palace of Udaipur

## Ethnography of the craft making community:

Traditionally the community of *Suthar* (Woodworkers) and artisans of *muslim* communities started learning and practicing the art of glass inlay. It was not really restricted specifically to these communities but extended to other craftsmen communities and aspirants as well!

## A traditional practice as a thriving business:

Traditionally this craft was largely used by royalty in their palaces to boast and depict their grandeur, with time this craft became a profession for many people, people like Mr. Rajesh excel in this craft and have devoted their time and expertise to revive this craft and take it to the height at which this is currently!

## References in regional folklores, customs and rituals:

Mughal and Rajputi folklores have more references than any other! The usual story was about the royalty loving the working and then mending it according to their own tastes and using them to depict their grandeur. Many modern day

movies draw the reference of the “Sheesh Mahal” of the Rajputi Reign in their movies with reference to the work of Thikri to depict a story line!

### Material used, accessibility to the raw material its cost and procurement :

#### 1. Thikri Kaanch (Thikri Glass):

- Curved Metallic Glass Scrap :
- Procurement : Desi Bhatti (Furnaces ) , from Gujarat

#### 2. Flat Glass:

- Flat transparent glass
- Wide range of colours available
- Procurement : Belgium , America and also dealers

#### 3. Fevicol:

#### 4. Marble Powder:

#### 5. Lime:

#### 6. Putty:

### Choice of material, design, and motifs with the time period

#### Change In material:

- Flat glass: In the earlier times the glass was imported from Belgium, considering it the finest! But with time the price seems to be an issue and also competition from other producers as well. As of now there has been a change from Belgium to America as a source of Flat glass.

#### Design and motifs:

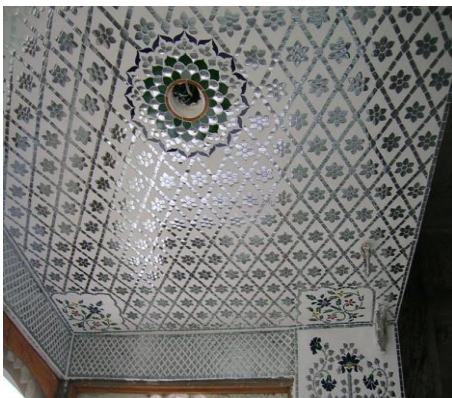
When looked upon the earliest evidences of the craft the design and motifs were mostly restricted to floral and ornamental theme. But with time and demand from customers from all across the globe, Craftsmen have started to take up anything that can be transformed in form of Glass Inlay. Customers have been asking to transform an entire composition (as simple as a sketch) into the form of Glass inlay, and of course the craftsmen execute it so well the sketch sometimes the original reference catches up on a complex. So as such there are no specific motifs that are repeatedly used , but there some themes like peacock ,floral , vegetation , geometrical , animals , deities etc. which are more popular and are often used by craftsmen in their work .



Thikri work wall décor



Thikri work wall tree project



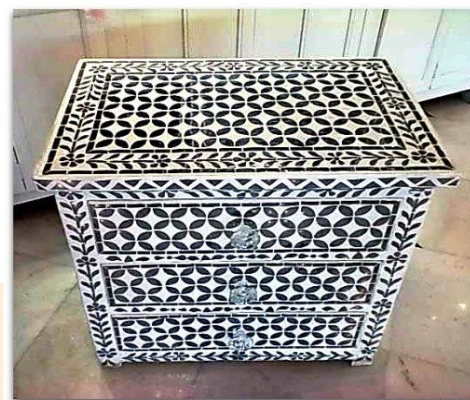
Thikri work on Ceiling



Thikri work on wall



Thikri work as Bathroom Interior



Thikri work Trunk

**Innovations in Technique:**

In the earlier times the art of Glass inlay was restricted be done on a wall , but with innovations in the process and application craftsmen came up with other mediums upon which the craft could be practiced such as wooden boards , furniture , wooden articles and many more.

**Technique of Glass Inlay:**



Step 1: A drawing is drawn on a paper and then is traced on an OHP sheet



Step 2: The OHP sheet is split into the various parts of the drawing traced upon it and is then stacked in a specific sequence of big to small



Step 3: The OHP parts are then traced onto the final mirror pieces according to their colours and Specifications.

Step 4: Mirrors are then segregated according to their color, shape, size and number of pieces.



Step 5: The magic begins! Skilled craftsmen then cut the mirror pieces according to the outline with a Hirakni (Diamond Cutter)

Step 6: The pieces are cut, arranged into the original sequence and are pasted onto their places.

Step 7: The piece is now ready for the next stage of process(no image)

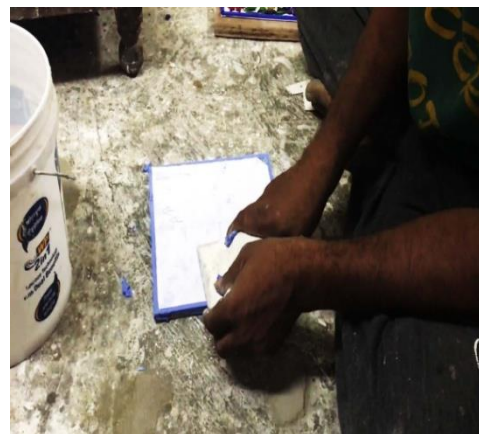


Step 8: A mixture of marble powder, lime and putty is prepared

Step 9: Base is covered with fevicol



Step 10: The putty and marble powder mixture is applied evenly on the base and then flattened with a planer



Step 11: The original mirror pieces are applied onto the putty base



Step 12: The thin layer of paper is wetted and peeled off the surface



Step 13: Completion and finishing touches

### Health Hazards related with the craft

There are no major health hazards associated with the craft process, but as mirror is the major part of this craft, the hazards associated with the ill handling of the glass may be the only problem.

### Waste Material Treatment and Disposal

Whatever glass pieces are left after crafting the original panel, the small and discarded glass pieces are then further used as more intricate pieces. These discarded pieces are used until they can be no longer used to craft another panel or piece of work. The final discarded lot of glass pieces is then disposed off normally in the garbage.

### Efforts of value addition to the craft

People around all India have been practicing this craft, but Mr. Rajesh has not just been practicing the craft he has been making innovations in the technique, the colors, the motifs and its application. These innovations and his constant efforts to combine the heritage of the craft and modern thinking has led him to score some big clients in the country and making this craft iconic.

## Traditional vocabulary of the craft

Not every motif and design has a word for it in the vocabulary, but some have:

- Lehariya Style
- Madrum Jaali
- Khaanche
- Ankhon wali jaali

## Conclusion:

Users have direct contact with others around the planet these days. As a result, conventional Indian art and its forms are unnoticed. As a matter of fact, most folks do not even acknowledge the existence of many Indian forms of art! The cost of making handcrafted merchandise is higher than the price of machine-cut merchandise. For obvious purposes, the distinction is. Handcrafted products require a niche and professional labor, making them distinctive. Whereas, there is no such need for machine cut merchandise and it could be produced in bulk to produce them simply at hand. This ultimately led to a lack of demand for handcrafted products. The increasing demand of machine-cut, factory-made product isn't solely impacting ancient art forms however the master artistry and conservator of it too! The artisans, the craftsmen, the creators, the designers are trying hard to save a lot of the legacy of our homeland.

As a culture, the lack of support from our side makes it extremely troublesome for the artisans to continue their efforts; they are struggling to achieve their goals. The future generation of artisans, artists and designers are afraid to pursue their art and end up choosing a special profession.<sup>5</sup>

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