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SPECIAL FEATURE

Shop India

Join our Hinduism Today correspondent on a tour of the arts and crafts shops of fifteen states

Rajiv Malik, New Delhi

The fine Indian crafts which Hindu kings and queens in olden times ordered custom made--and received only months later--are available to you "off the shelf" at the State Emporia Complex in Connaught Place, New Delhi. This centrally located mall contains twenty-two state emporia lined up like beads on a string, half a kilometer long. Each is a branch of its state's handicraft corporation and features that state's traditional crafts and signature products. Museum-quality bronze Deity images and brass lamps from Tamil Nadu, silk saris and beautifully inlaid rosewood furniture from Karnataka, woolen shawls and intricately embroidered dupattas from Punjab, small portable home shrines and the famed tie-dyed saris from Gujarat--all these and much more are displayed in mind-boggling variety.

There is an immense variety of Hindu religious items in every store. These account for half of their annual sales--which run to tens of millions of dollars. Most popular by far--with Indians as well as the foreign tourists who frequent these shops in droves--are the statues, paintings and engravings of Lord Ganesha. The Maharashtra Emporium alone, famous throughout Delhi for its exquisite selection of the elephant-faced God, brings in truckloads of murtis every year for the Ganesha Chaturthi festival. Ganesha's importance is also evident in the daily worship of His murti with coconuts, garlands, flowers and incense at nearly every store's entrance. Ganesha and all the other Gods and Goddesses have been providing a livelihood to hundreds of thousands of craftsmen in even the remotest parts of the country for thousands of years, and there is no sign this will ever change.

Rajiv Chandran, a New Delhi art lover and critic quoted throughout this article, shared this observation on Ganesha: "He, I think, is a very beautiful brand for the Indian handicrafts. Ganesha is immediately linked to our culture. He is a combination of siddhi and buddhi, success and intellect. There is a playfulness and childlike joy to Him, but at the same time there is great reverence for Him. Ganesha is a brand for India, and we have to explain the Ganesha brand to the world.

"You see," Rajiv went on, "we have certain pan-Indian symbols; these are the threads which connect us. The sari is the first, worn from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. There may be variations in its form and color, but a sari is a sari and presents certain cultural values. Then there is the bindi of the women, the River Ganga and Lord Ganesha. These are the four symbols that unite India."

Connaught Place has long been home to small state-sponsored emporia, but the present, highly focused complex was conceived in 1974 by the famed freedom fighter and craft lover Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya. Recently an adjacent block was added to accommodate nongovernmental organizations also engaged in the selling of craft items. Both the state and NGO emporia are subsidized by the government of India as well as by individual state governments. All work together to actively support India's artisans, not only by providing retail outlets but by setting up production centers and financing individual artisans. In this way employment is provided to hundreds of thousands of craftspeople throughout India. The state handicraft corporations maintain a network of stores throughout their state, and even in other states; but it is always their Delhi emporium that outsells every other store. It is here that NRIs and foreign tourists are most apt to do their major shopping in India, for here is the greatest selection. Whatever they can't carry home by suitcase travels by sea or air cargo. Shipping services are provided by all emporia, a great convenience to the tourist, whose purchases quickly outstrip his baggage allowance.

In the emporia, one finds the arts and crafts of a vast culture extending thousands of years into the past, a tradition which defines us as Indians and as Hindus. But the emporia face stiff competition from two sides: the nearby Dilli Haat complex, where craftsmen sell directly to the public at lower prices, and Delhi's Western-style shopping malls which offer "modern" products. The latter is both an economic and cultural challenge. Rajiv Chandran observed, "What we are facing today is this dilemma of tradition and change. The question is how to get the youth involved. Today we have the first generation of Indians with a lot of spendable income. Some years ago they were running to get the latest cell phones and television sets. That phase is fast coming to an end, and people today want to know their roots. They

want to know where they belong to and why they are different."

Chandran explains that the various state emporia have evolved over the years as they carefully determined which of their traditional handicrafts have the best and most unique sales potential. The Northeastern States' emporia focus on their exclusive bamboo products. Kerala has its wood and coir products and a wide range of elephants and lamps. Tamil Nadu also has lamps, besides the bronze statues. The Andhra Emporium specializes in beautiful ikat and kalamkari, cloths died in exquisite and traditional ways. Andhra and Karnataka emporia also have wooden toys. Every emporium has looked at how it can best represent its state.

Our Saga Begins

Accompanied by photographer Thomas Kelly, I set out with my wife Renu, daughter Palak, her friend and classmate Divya, my sister Suman Taneja and her daughter Aashta on an all-too-brief three-day tour of the complex. We all wished we could explore this shoppers' paradise in more leisurely fashion. I must warn the reader that it is risky to one's credit-card balance to enter the stores with so many family members! Each of us found at least one "must-buy" item in every store.

In planning our venture, we were fortunate to have the assistance of Mrs. V. Hemalatha, manager of Tamil Nadu Emporium. She not only gave us the full tour of her own store, but helped us identify six representative emporia and secured permission from their managers for our official visit and photo shoot. With her guidance, and wishing we had enough time to visit all twenty-two stores, we decided to explore the shops of six states--Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Orissa, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat and Punjab--plus Dilli Haat.

Poompuhar: Crafts for Kings

The moment you enter a store called Poompuhar, you are transported back in time. You find yourself surrounded by hundreds of beautiful shining brass lamps and bronze statues, Tamil Nadu's signature products. The small Ganesha shrine, right at the entrance, is decked with fresh flowers, garlands and lit incense sticks emitting

an intoxicating fragrance that blends with the powerful scent of sandalwood emanating from various products made of that rare wood.

Manager V. Hemalatha explains the name: "Poompuhar was a fabled Chola seaport whence the crafts and the culture of the prosperous Tamil kingdom were shipped as far east as China and as far west as Europe." Sixteen Poompuhar emporia are run by the Tamil Nadu Handicrafts Development Corporation. The Delhi branch, established in 1973, specializes in brasswares, Thanjavur paintings and wood carvings.

Poompuhar sells about 50,000 lamps a year--over a hundred a day. Lamps make up 10 percent of total showroom sales. Most cost one to eighty dollars, but each year one or two huge ones are purchased for \$15,000. The largest of these multi-branched, twelve-foot lamps are stored elsewhere and displayed in the store only by photographs. Ganesha, Lakshmi and Sarasvati lamps are used in worship. Other lamps are adorned with Nandi the bull, peacocks or elephants. Elaborately decorated hanging lamps are suspended by brass chains. Many of these lamps are typical South Indian temple items.

In addition to their use in temples and shrines, lamps are a vital part of daily Hindu life. Hemalatha tells us: "At the beginning of any official program, there is a traditional lamp lighting. For each and every occasion, the lamp is lit, whether it is a happy event or a sorrowful one. It is lit at a wedding, upon the birth of a child, and when someone passes away." Lamps are auspicious, driving away darkness and ignorance, and are harbingers of happiness and wealth. The Emporium's brass lamps figured strongly in the televised Ramayana and Mahabharata series, visible in four out of five scenes.

Poompuhar is a major outfitter for Delhi's temples. The gold chariot for the Tirupati Balaji temple in Ramakrishna Puram came from here, as did the twenty-foot-tall doors. As a special order, Poompuhar cast the bronze Deity for the Mahalakshmi temple in Rajendra Nagar, Central Delhi.

Each of us was drawn to different items. My sister Suman was fascinated with the sets of temple jewelry made of semi-precious stones, while my wife, Renu, was enthralled with the gold Thanjavur paintings with jewels embedded on the dresses

of Krishna and Radha. The cost of these ranged from hundreds to thousands of dollars.

In the basement of the Tamil Nadu emporium is the Tamil Nadu Handweavers Cooperative Society, popularly known as Cooptex, which is famed for its Kanjivaram saris. Established seventy years ago, today the coop employs 300,000 weavers and supplies shops all over India. Mary Jolly, the manager, explained that they maintain a high standard by engaging the national institutes for design and fashion, along with traditional institutions such as Kalakshetra in Chennai. At several other emporia, we would learn of similar efforts being made to give a modern touch to the various arts and crafts, while not losing the traditional look and feel.

All saris here are handwoven. A simple cotton one sells for \$10, while the silk saris range from \$70 to \$700. The Kanjivaram saris are woven with zari--real gold and silver thread--and priced accordingly. The heavy silk Kanjivaram sari is a favorite for weddings. While sales are substantial, Mary said their trade has been adversely impacted by the trend among youth for the Western clothes available at the new shopping malls.

According to art critic Rajiv Chandran, "Tamil Nadu Emporium is easily one of the best cultural centers in this complex. If you look at the bronze sculptures here, they are of the kind that you will find in the museums all over the world. What you see in the museums in USA, UK and France is the same quality as this collection. But people do not recognize this because there are a thousand such bronzes in the store, and they are not set out individually as in a museum with good lighting and an explanation of the history. Yet, this is one of the best collections of easily-accessed bronzes in the country. The best examples of Siva Nataraja are on display here. Even in Tamil Nadu you cannot buy such things, as they are sent to Delhi for sale. I have seen museum curators and art collectors among the customers here."

"Consider our Indian concept of love," Rajiv went on. "Today we celebrate Valentine's Day in the most silly manner by sending cards. But just see in these bronzes how the Indian imagination visualized Cupid. He is riding a parrot and holding a sugarcane. Kamadeva, our God of Love, appears in springtime. His consort Rati is beautiful in every way. Together they represent the physical and spiritual aspects of love. This is how our philosophy is contained in these sculptures."

Karnataka: Silk and Sandalwood

Cauvery, named after the state's most important river, is the emporium of the Karnataka State Arts and Handicraft Corporation. Its manager, Adishwar Pershad, who is also president of the Emporia Welfare Association, recently convinced the Delhi government to do a complete renovation of the complex.

Karnataka is responsible for three-quarters of India's silk production and much of its sandalwood. The main crafts on display here are sandalwood carvings, rosewood inlay work, Channapatna toys and Bidriware. The latter is a craft unique to Bidar, the 16th century capital town of Karnataka. Bidriware is an alloy of zinc, copper and other nonferrous metals. After an object has been cast--frequently a box, vase, bangle, or elephant sculpture--it is inlaid with silver wire, polished and then dipped into an oxidizing solution prepared with soil found around the Bidar fort. The zinc alloy turns a lustrous black, with the polished silver in stark contrast.

Many items of lacquerware are sold here, produced in Channapatna, a small town near Bangalore. Lathe-turned objects, such as toys, bead curtains and bangles are decorated by melting sticks of colored lac onto them as they turn.

The inlaid rosewood furniture is breathtaking. It draws many NRIs and foreigners as well as affluent Delhi customers to Cauvery. My niece Aastha Taneja said, "If tomorrow God blesses me with tons of money, this is going to be the first place I will come and shop."

Manager Pershad tells us, "Our objective is to promote the craft products of our state for the benefit of the artisans. Buying habits of people change, but tradition does not. For example, the murtis of our Gods and Goddesses are made as they were in the past. I see no reason for this to change, as the God that I worship today will be worshiped by my children tomorrow."

Pershad said sixty percent of their business comes from religious items, mostly murtis and incense. Ganesha, by far the most popular God, is sold in all mediums, from sandalwood to metal to paintings. Krishna is also popular. Cauvery specializes

in small home shrines ranging in price from \$20 to \$2,500.

Pershad points out that his store's crafts are not necessity items, and he hopes that as India's economic conditions improve, a greater awareness of these products will be created.

Orissa: Sandstone and Silver Filigree

Utkalika, "excellent art," is the outlet for the Orissa State Cooperative Handicrafts Corporation Limited. According to manager Sabita Rath, the store's most popular items are their sandstone sculptures. These include Gods and Goddesses, replicas of Konark temple's giant sandstone chariot wheels and statues of dancing girls, all ranging in price from hundreds to thousands of dollars. Utkalika provided the twelve-foot, \$8,000 sandstone wheels that are on display at the Government of India's Ministry of Finance and at the Delhi Development Authority. Rath said, "We export sandstone items in a big way. It is our exclusive item not available in any other emporium." One such item is a large sandstone bas-relief of Krishna and Arjuna on the eve of the Mahabharata war. Priced at \$4,500, it is the most expensive in the store at present.

Another specialty is silver filigree, which is normally used in jewelry, is used here to create striking replicas, ranging in price from \$40 to \$400, of the Kalinga boats that transported goods from Orissa to foreign countries in ancient times. Other filigree works include a small silver version of the Konark temple wheels for display in the home.

The Utkalika emporium also features pata chitra, paintings. Created with natural pigments on cloth, these narrate incidents from the epics. Very large pata chitra paintings sell for over \$1,000. Other forms of wall ornamentation available here are etchings and paintings on palm leaves stitched together from large wall hangings. Utkalika carries a wide range of tribal items and periodically holds exhibitions to promote tribal crafts, such as small animals and lamps cast in dhokra, an alloy of brass, copper and nickel. Tribal items also come in iron and terracotta.

As with in the stores, fabrics and saris sell well here. Orissa is gaining renown for its colorful appliqué work, used to create canopies, wall hangings and large gaily colored umbrellas. Many of the latter are sold to hotels in Switzerland and elsewhere, as beach umbrellas. Silk saris here start at \$100 and go up to \$500; even a cotton sari can cost \$100. But many items are quite inexpensive; Utkalika is popular with college students who buy stoles and dupattas for under \$10, and cotton dress material for just \$2 per meter. "In the past," explained Rath, "there was an impression that the emporia were expensive. But now people are more interested in variety and quality, and our rates are reasonable." Abhishek Bhargava, an IT consultant from Melbourne, Australia, shopping here for gifts for friends remarked, "I find everything here so pure, and it reminds me of the rich cultural wealth of India. This is the best of India."

Himachal: Shawls and Stoles

Himachal Pradesh is one of India's northernmost states. Their specialties since ancient times are handmade wool shawls and blankets. According to the manager, D. D. Sharma, the parent company, Himachal Pradesh State Handicrafts and Handloom Corporation, employs 33,000 weavers who are provided facilities and financial support. They use a variety of wool types for their shawls and stoles, and are experimenting with blending modern designs and colors with traditional ones--the same kind of controlled innovation other emporia are attempting. The shawls, which run from \$10 to \$800, are not complete without a Kullu cap with its distinctive red patches, or a Bushari cap with a green velvet patch. Himachal also carries tribal arts, including the ethnic Kullu and Kinnauri dolls in colorful native costume; and it is famous for Kangra, Chamba and Gompa paintings depicting nature scenes and stories from the life of Krishna.

Chamba rumal is a fine-stitched, hand embroidery depicting Deities, flowers, birds or animals which can be viewed from both sides. Customarily, men use these as shoulder shawls and women as flowing veils; nowadays they are also being used as wall hangings, door and fire screens, cushion covers and bedspreads.

More than other handicrafts, the woolens face competition from modern methods. Power loom products are cheaper and sometimes more refined. In response to this challenge, the state handicraft corporation has ceased to rely entirely on its own production centers and has sought out independent weavers who are bringing in appealing new designs. The government of India is working with them to set up two

new handloom clusters, one in Kullu for 10,000 weavers, and the other in Mandi for 5,000.

Historically, Himachal weavers have been primarily engaged in agriculture, with the handloom providing additional income. But with the advent of better education and higher-paying jobs, some communities, such as that which produces the popular Kinnauri shawl, no longer need the supplemental income, and their weaving is becoming an endangered art. Woodcraft is meeting a similar fate. The new clusters are the state's attempt to reverse this trend. Sharma told us, "To keep our handlooms alive, the government will have to ensure that certain sectors are reserved only for handlooms to the exclusion of power looms, which produce the same goods."

Gurjari: Everyone's Favorite Emporium

Blessed with a prime location in the complex and appealing, affordable products, Gurjari Emporium is the favorite of Delhites and tourists alike. Its name comes from the markets found in every rural village of Gujarat state since ancient times. Entering the emporium takes one back to these village markets--albeit in a multi-storied concrete building. Gurjari has created a regional atmosphere that other emporia seek to emulate.

This emporium sells handwoven Patola wedding saris and a wide variety of tie-dyed products. These include colorful fabrics sold in bulk, dupattas, saris, silk scarves and various decorative household items. Kutch embroidery is featured on jackets and shawls.

Decorating the store are large clay panels with bas-relief designs in tribal style, embedded with small pieces of mirror in the typical Gujarati manner. One can buy painting-size panels, or commission large-scale work for offices and homes.

Small home altars sell well during the festival season. These are of various sizes and can be dismantled and packed in a suitcase; many are bought by NRIs. Statues of all the Gods and Goddesses for home worship are available. The store manager,

Mrs. Sharma, said, "Our foreign clients want to take back with them some souvenir that symbolizes India's spirituality. They buy fabrics decorated with 'Aum' and 'Ram,' as well as a large number of Ganesha statues."

Ritu Kumarj and her husband Pravin were here shopping for gifts before returning to their home in the UK. Pravin said, "Our friends in UK would love to have something traditional from India. These crafts are important outside India, for they connect our youth with their tradition. Here I can find unique items not available elsewhere."

Suzanne, a teacher from Sweden, was here to buy hand-made paper and decorative cloth presentation folders. These are Gurjari's second-best seller, after fabrics, with hundreds sold each day at \$1.50 to \$2.60 to institutional buyers organizing seminars and symposiums.

Rajiv Chandran told us, "Gurjari was the first to start the renaissance in crafts. Mrinalani Sarabhai, the famous dancer, was the emporium's chairperson. In the early seventies she revived the crafts of Gujarat at the grass-roots level. Gurjari was the outlet for promoting all those crafts, including block printing and bead work."

The emporium is planning an exhibition in South Delhi shortly that will allow direct sales from Gujarati craftsmen to customers--along the lines of Dilli Haat. Experts in jute furniture, Pithora paintings and clay work will be present.

Phulkari: Home of Punjabi Embroidery

Phulkari is the outlet for Punjab state. Its manager, Shri A. K. Chhabra, explained that phulkari means "flower making." It is a form of embroidery practiced by rural Punjabi women since the 15th century. There are three styles. The first is called true Phulkari, where the pattern is repeated at intervals over the cloth. The second is Bagh or garden Phulkari, where the whole surface of the cloth is embroidered. And the third is called Chope, where the embroidery is only along the corners and the size is much larger.

"In a recent development, the fluffy silk threads used for Phulkari are being replaced by more manageable cotton thread and colorfast synthetic yarn. Nowadays one sees a simpler form of Phulkari which is not as elaborate as the traditional three styles." These Phulkari styles are used exclusively for women's salwar kameez, dupattas and saris. Punjab's cities of Ludhiana and Amritsar are famous for shawls. Here they start in price at \$10 and range to \$1,300 for embroidered pieces in pure pashima wool.

Other popular items, especially among native Punjabis, are the small ceramic figures of a bhangra dance team, the inlaid furniture and decorative items and the large selection of household items and men's clothing. Inlaid images of Radha-Krishna, Ganesh and the Sikh gurus, made in the Hoshiarpur district, are also good sellers.

As with all the emporia, Phulkari's best customers are institutions, large businesses and the various government departments. While an individual might buy one or two of an item, these institutions will purchase hundreds. The Ministry of External Affairs, for example, buys goods for embassies overseas and as gifts for visiting dignitaries. In Hindu tradition, a shawl is given to honor a person; consequently these institutions buy large numbers year-round.

Dilli Haat: Power to the People

Our last shopping area is not one of the state emporia, but rather a joint project of the New Delhi Municipal Council and Delhi Tourism. Dilli is another name for Delhi, and haat is a temporary village market. Now a popular cultural landmark in Delhi, Dilli Haat is a permanent marketplace, open year-round, where 200 craftsman at a time can set up shop for two weeks and sell directly to the public. Administrative costs are offset by a 15-rupee (40-cent) entrance fee, plus commissions from the craftsmen. According to the chief manager, Shri Pradeep Ahluwalia, since its opening 13 years ago, 20 million people have bought wares from 50,000 craftsmen. In addition to the crafts, Dilli Haat has 25 food stalls which offer regional cuisines, and there are a variety of cultural programs, exhibitions and performing arts. This combination of craft, cuisine and entertainment has made Dilli Haat a big hit with tourists and craft lovers. Eliminating the middleman keeps the prices low--and can sometimes afford a buyer the rare opportunity to watch his purchases being created. According to Ahluwalia, Dilli Haat is serving as a model for such marketplaces across India.

Although most stalls here are manned by the craftspeople themselves, one is run by two Gujarat organizations, Shanti Sewa Mahila Sansthan and Shashwat Mahila Sangathan. This stall markets the crafts of the state's Kutch region, where the devastating earthquake of 2001 destroyed over a million homes, killed over 25,000 people and left countless people homeless, widowed and orphaned. The items sold here, such as Gujarati dresses, men's jackets and embroidered wall hangings, benefit those victims.

My daughter's friend Divya is a frequent visitor to Dilli Haat. She explained, "The major difference between the emporia and Dilli Haat is that while the emporia function as shops, this place provides the opportunity to directly buy the crafts from the craftspeople who take the stalls here. Here the prices are supposed to be less than the prices that prevail at the emporia. Moreover, you can buy small things at very reasonable prices. In fact, the variety here is much more than what you get at the emporia."

D. D. Sharma, manager of Himachal Emporium, pointed out, "Dilli Haat has an advantage over the emporia because they hold cultural programs which attract a lot of people and because they offer the crafts of all states of India in one place. Also, the craftspeople don't have the administrative overhead we do."

Other Emporia

There are other emporia and crafts markets beyond Dilli Haat and the six we have just covered. Among the most notable are the emporium of Assam, famous for its exotic tea collection, Bihar for its tusser silks, Delhi Emporium for its embroidered salwar suits, Andhra Pradesh with its thirty crafts, Madhya Pradesh for its Chanderi saris, Uttar Pradesh for its fine chikan work, Rajasthan for its Jaipuri quilts, West Bengal for exquisite kantha-work saris and dress materials and Haryana for its vast collection of furnishing fabrics.

We must also mention the Cottage Emporium and Khadi Emporium. These are not connected to the state emporia, but are likewise immensely popular and successful enterprises engaged in the promotion of crafts. Rajiv Chandran commented, "Cottage Emporium is different from the state emporia and Dilli Haat. It looks at crafts from a national perspective and in terms of mass production. For instance, if

a corporation has to buy identical gift items for 300 employees, they go to Cottage, because the emporia may not have so many identical things at one time. At a state emporium you come to buy one thing which is special and unique."

Rajiv said, "Khadi, handloomed cotton fabric, has had a beautiful place in our history. The role that Mahatma Gandhi played is absolutely wonderful. Now for the past few years Gandhi's granddaughter Tara Bhattacharya is the chairperson of the khadi movement. Khadi Emporium has involved the designers and they have also brought in new spaces. They have worked with young designers. For example, the famous designer Rohit Bal has created for them special collections using khadi. So khadi has evolved. From a peasant fabric it has become a high-fashion fabric. Designers from Paris and Milan have now started looking at khadi as eco-friendly and fashionable."

A Final Word

Despite the onslaught of the shopping mall culture, the state emporia are effectively and beautifully performing their job of showcasing India's ancient arts and crafts. They are keeping our craftsmen employed and the crafts alive, while some work to judiciously modernize both the methods of production and the design of the products. G.V. Subramanyam, manager of Andhra Pradesh's Leepakshmi, pointed out that "most crafts are languishing because of lack of design input." He recommends more government research. In large part, the physical objects and utensils of our Hindu religion are a principal product of these many craft forms.

It is no small achievement that when you ask a common man on the streets of New Delhi where one can buy some traditional crafts of India, he will instantly reply, "The Emporia Complex, near Hanuman Temple." No wonder then that the emporia have a place of their own on the art and craft map of the city and are being visited and patronized not just by our city's residents, or Delhiwallas, but also by visitors and tourists from all over India and around the world.

Some wonder whether our craft culture can survive in this jean age. Rajiv Chandra is emphatically optimistic: "Fashion lasts for a week, but the classical remains forever. There are some things which are shashwat, eternal, and some things which are fashionable. The emporia are not a fad; they represent our shashwat dharohar,

our eternal heritage. This is the beauty of this entire complex. It is a huge dictionary for India located in a single street. Companies coming here to do business from abroad can understand India through these emporia. Every state government needs to continuously invest in their emporium. They must see to it that their outlet is top standard, because they are now attracting a global clientele. But even as is, the emporia are a paradise."

We must acknowledge Mrinalani Sarabhai and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya for thinking so far ahead of their time in promoting India's traditional crafts and setting up such a complex. Chattopadhyaya wrote, "The pride the craftsman derives from his creation and the delight in the perfection of his finished product sustains him. It is this knowledge that is enshrined in our faith in crafts."

Nothing succeeds like success. The emporia will keep serving the glorious craft tradition of India as long as clients keep shopping from them. Museums and craft shows are all fine and good; but as succinctly put by one emporium employee, "It is finally only through commerce that the art can survive."