

कहानी पीढ़ियों की

बज़ाराना



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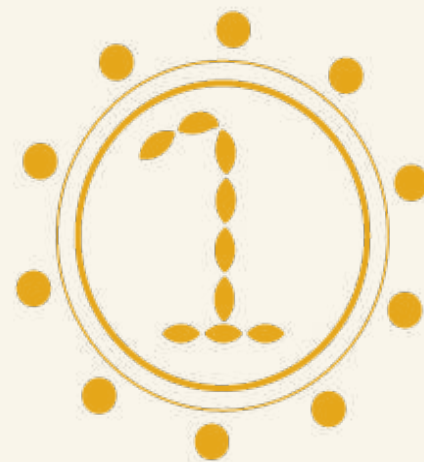
Acknowledgement

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We are extremely grateful to all the artisans who helped us conduct our research smoothly by constantly cooperating with us and sharing their profound knowledge and skills on the craft.

We are thankful to the department of Fashion & Lifestyle Accessories for providing us with the necessary resources and supervising the project throughout. Lastly thanking our parents and classmates for their collateral assistance and support in making this project a success.

Contents



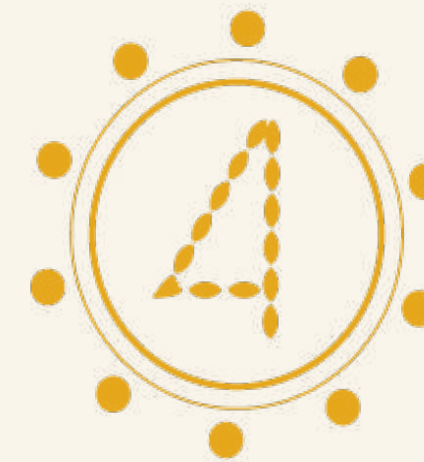
Abstract
Preface
How to reach?
Topography, Climate
Food and Cuisine
Demography



The Tribes
The Tapestry of Traditions
and Heritage
Folk Stories
Exploring Chamba
Market Study



Metal Craft
An Amalgamation of Emotions
Thaal- Origin
Diversity of Metal Craft
Materials & Sourcing
Tools & Equipment
Thaal - Process
Murti- Process



Challenges Faced
Future Scope
Meet the Artisans
SWOT Analysis
Our Team
Glossary
References

Abstract

As part of our Craft Research and Documentation module, we were required to visit and study the crafts of Chamba, Himachal Pradesh and our group was to focus on the Metal crafts of Chamba. Renowned for their intricate designs, exquisite craftsmanship, and rich cultural heritage, Chamba crafts hold a significant place in the Indian handicraft industry. The people of Chamba are skilled in various handicrafts such as embroidery, pottery, metalwork, and wool weaving.

So, we ventured out to the famous *Chaugan* Market to meet the artisans who worked with metal and conducted our research. Our goal was to gather as much primary information as possible on the origin, variety, techniques, process, significance etc. on the aforementioned craft.

During these 7 days, we learned and understood the true essence of metalcraft, the struggles faced by the artisans, their unique lifestyle and work environment. While exploring Chamba and travelling to the nearby destinations, we witnessed the remarkable culture and traditions and were inspired to experience a different way of life. We also interacted with the locals who provided us with a lot of insight and helped us effortlessly explore Chamba.

Going forward, we wish to continue our study on how to combine technology, skills and design to create new goods to respond to the needs of the people and help the artisans in taking their craft to new heights.





Preface

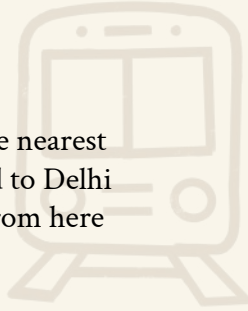
Metal craft, popularly known in Himachal Pradesh as “*Mohra*” craft, is a distinct identity of Chamba. It has been in practice by the artisans of Chamba for centuries and is one of the most acclaimed crafts in India. The artisans skilfully create metal objects, including copper utensils, decorative items, and intricately designed jewelry. The metalwork often incorporates techniques like repoussé, engraving and filigree, showcasing the mastery of the artisans in manipulating metal into beautiful and functional creations.

The metal craft of Chamba has been passed down through generations, with artisans honing their skills and preserving the traditional techniques. The intricate detailing, engraving and embossing techniques employed by the artisans make Chamba’s metal craft a unique and cherished art form, showcasing the rich cultural heritage of the region.

How to reach?

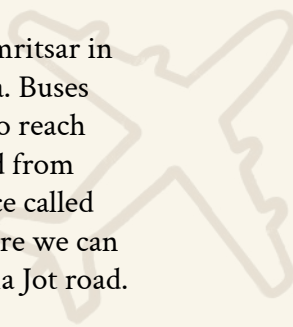
RAILWAY

Pathankot, 140 km from Chamba, is the nearest railway station. Pathankot is connected to Delhi and Mumbai through regular trains. From here Chamba can be reached by bus or taxi.



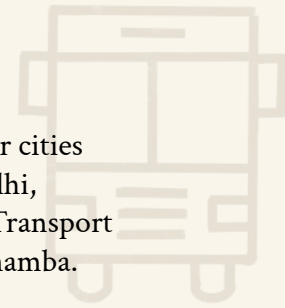
AIRWAY

The nearest airport to Chamba is at Amritsar in Punjab, which is 240 km from Chamba. Buses or taxis can be availed from Amritsar to reach Chamba. Gaggal airport can be reached from Delhi, from where one can reach a place called Lahdu via Nurpur or Sihunta. From here we can easily reach Chamba via Banikhet or via Jot road.



ROADWAY

Chamba is connected by road to major cities of Himachal and Punjab as well as Delhi, Dharamshala and Chandigarh. State Transport Corporation buses ply regularly to Chamba.



Topography

Chamba is situated in the western Himalayas and is known for its picturesque landscapes and mountainous terrain. The district is surrounded by the Dhauladhar and Zaskar mountain ranges. The topography is characterized by lush green valleys, deep gorges, and towering snow-capped peaks. Chamba is also home to several rivers and streams, including the Ravi, which flows through the region.

Climate

Chamba experiences a temperate climate. Summers, from April to June, are pleasant with temperatures ranging from 20°C to 35°C. Monsoon season arrives in July and lasts until September, bringing moderate to heavy rainfall. Winters, from November to February, are cold with temperatures dropping below freezing point. Snowfall is common during this period, especially in higher elevations.





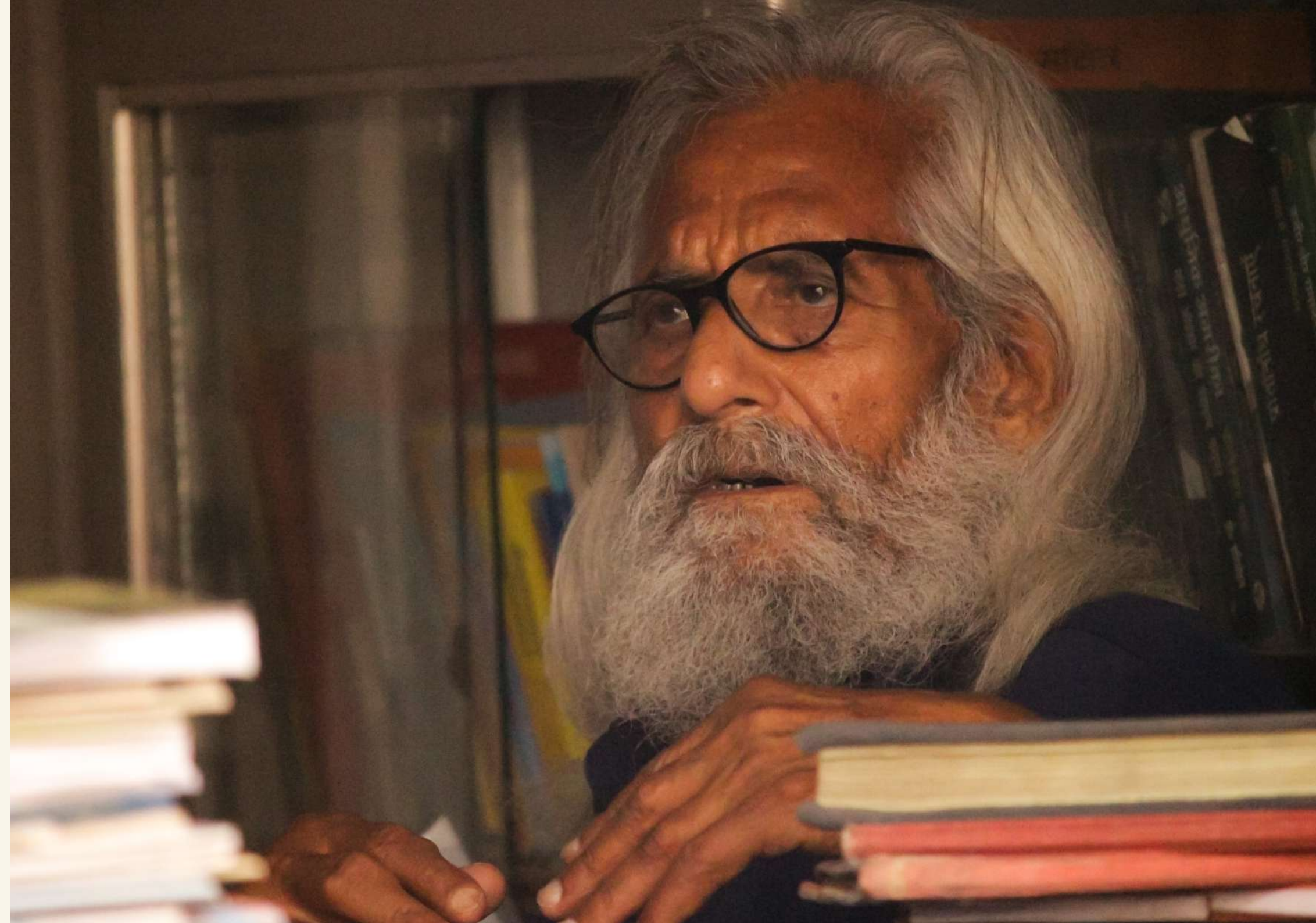
Food & Cuisine

Some of the most popular dishes of Chamba are *Madra*, *Meethe chawal*, *Teliyah Maah*, *Kachodi*, *Chha Gosht* (lamb curry), *Siddu* (a steamed bread) and the very scrumptious *Chambiyali Dham* which consists of various delicacies such as *madra*, *meethe bhaat* and local *khatta*. A must try! There's also *Tudkiya Bhath* which is a special kind of pulao consisting of *rice*, *dal*, *dahi* along with vegetables and spices. Dishes like *Aktori* and *Kullu Trout* fish are also popular and are prepared mostly during festivals.



Demography

Chamba has a diverse population consisting of various ethnic groups. The total population of Chamba is 19,933. Majority of the population comprises native *Himachalis*, with the *Pahari* community being the predominant ethnic group. Additionally, there are small populations of *Gujjars*, *Rajputs*, and *Chambiyal*, a clan of the *Rajputs* of Himachal Pradesh. *Chambeali* is the native language of Chamba. As per the Census 2011, the literacy rate of Chamba is 91.8%. 89.73% of the total population consists of Hindus, 4.76% Muslims and rest of other religions.





The Tribes

Gaddis are a semi-nomadic tribe primarily residing in the higher regions of Chamba district. They are known for their expertise in sheep and goat rearing and are often referred to as shepherds. The *Gaddis* migrate seasonally with their livestock, moving to higher altitudes in the summer and descending to lower areas during the winter months.

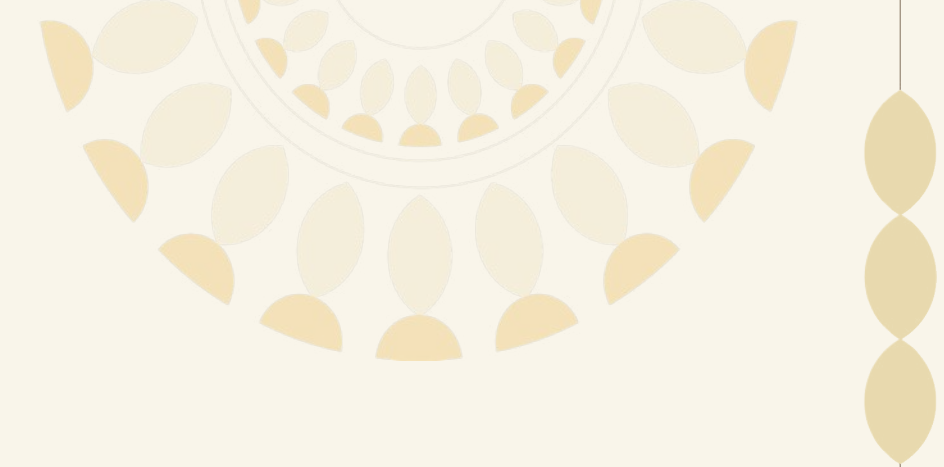
Gujjars are a pastoral tribe found in various parts of Chamba district. They are known for their skills in animal husbandry, particularly cattle and buffaloes. *Gujjars* traditionally lead a nomadic lifestyle, moving with their herds in search of grazing lands. Now, many have settled in permanent villages.

Kolis are an agricultural community found in different parts of Chamba district. They are engaged in farming, primarily cultivating crops like wheat, barley, and maize. *Kolis* also rear livestock and are skilled in activities like weaving and pottery.

Bhots are an indigenous tribe inhabiting the Bharmour region of Chamba district. They have a distinct cultural identity and are deeply connected to the local folklore and religious practices. *Bhots* are skilled in various crafts, including wood carving and metalwork.

Pangwals are a tribal community concentrated in the *Pangi* Valley of Chamba district. They primarily rely on agriculture and animal husbandry for their livelihood. *Pangwals* are known for their unique wooden architecture, including their traditional houses built on stilts.

Bhandaris are a tribal community known for their traditional occupation of brewing and selling local alcoholic beverages like *chhang* and *bhattu*. They are found in various parts of Chamba and are an integral part of the region's cultural fabric.



The Tapestry of Traditions and Heritage

The region's rich heritage continues to be celebrated through its art, architecture, festivals, and traditional crafts, making it a culturally significant part of Himachal Pradesh. Chamba has been inhabited since ancient times, dating back to the 2nd century BCE. It was ruled by the Khasas, a tribe of ancient India. Later, it witnessed the rule of Rajput dynasties. Buddhism flourished in Chamba during the medieval period. The region was a part of the Tibetan cultural sphere and Buddhist monasteries were established, leaving an impact on the local culture and traditions.

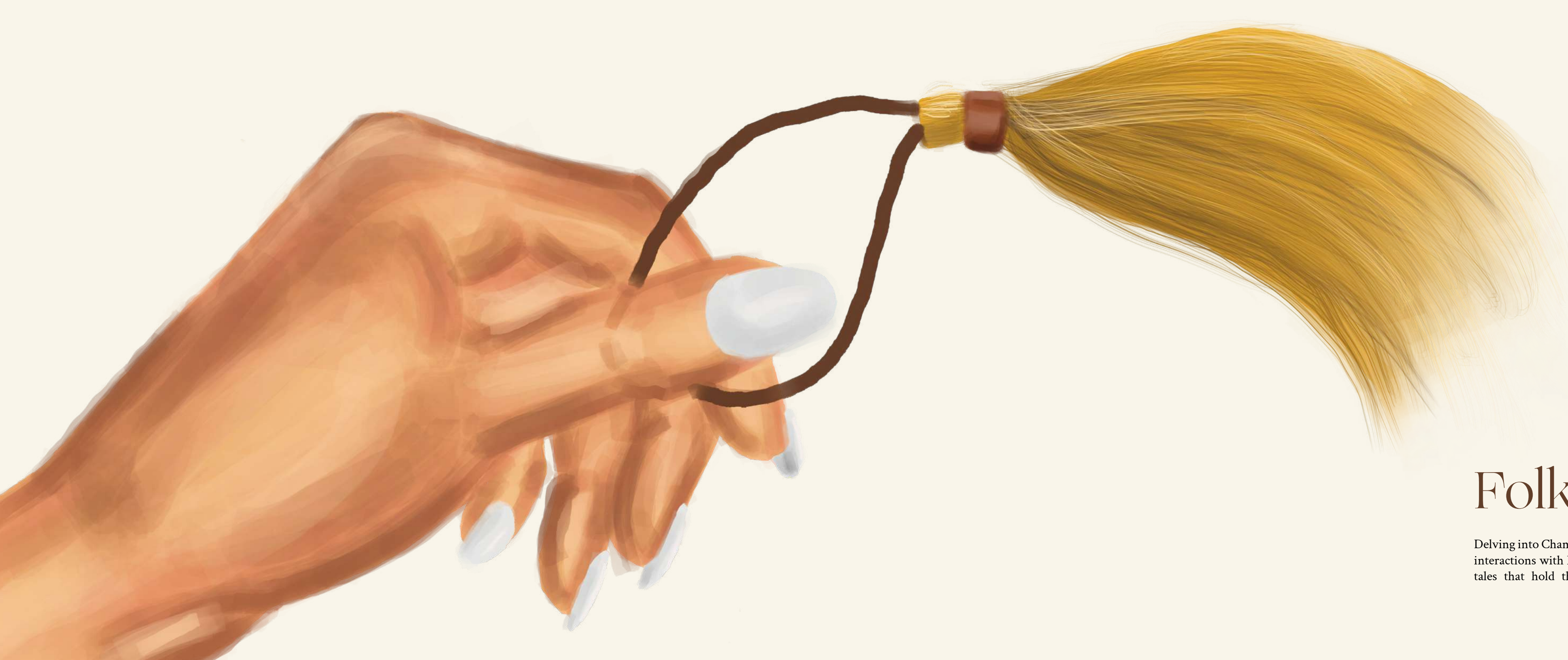
The most notable ruler of Chamba was Raja Sahil Varman, who reigned from the 10th to 11th century. He is credited with establishing the ancient town of Chamba and laying the foundation of its unique architectural style. Chamba is famous for its distinctive art style known as the Chamba School of Art. It developed under the patronage of the rulers and is characterized by intricate miniature paintings, murals, and exquisite woodcarvings.





Chamba is home to several ancient temples, including the Lakshmi Narayan Temple, Champavati Temple, and Bhuri Singh Museum. Chamba has a vibrant tradition of folk dances and festivals that are deeply rooted in its cultural heritage. The famous “Chamba Dance” is performed during the annual “*Sui Mata Mela*” festival, celebrating the local goddess Sui Mata. Other important festivals include the Hari Rai Mela and Shivratri.

The people of Chamba are skilled in various handicrafts such as embroidery, pottery, metalwork, and wool weaving. Chamba is also known for its unique textile art, including the famous Chamba Rumal, which is a finely embroidered handkerchief. Women wear colorful, intricately embroidered traditional attires called “*Chamba Pahari*”. These dresses are adorned with exquisite designs and patterns, showcasing the artistry and craftsmanship of the local artisans.



Folk Stories

Delving into Chamba's rich folk stories, gathered through interactions with locals, unveils a tapestry of captivating tales that hold the essence of this charming region.

Story of Champavati

Chamba is a treasure trove of folk stories and legends that have been passed down through generations. These stories are an integral part of the local culture and folklore. According to local folklore, Chamba is named after Princess Champavati, the daughter of Raja Sahil Varman, the founder of Chamba. The legend tells the story of how Champavati, a pious and compassionate princess, brought prosperity and divine blessings to the region. Rani Prithvi is a revered figure in Chamba folklore.


She is said to have possessed supernatural powers and is regarded as a protector of the people. Legends narrate her bravery, intelligence, and her relentless fight against evil forces to safeguard her kingdom. Gugga Peer is a revered folk deity in Chamba. The folk tales surrounding *Gugga Peer* tell stories of his extraordinary powers and his ability to cure snake bites. He is regarded as the protector of cattle and is worshipped by many in the region.



An illustration of a woman with dark hair in a bun, wearing a red sari, sitting in a meditative pose on top of a large, brown, jagged rock. A vibrant teal waterfall flows down the side of the rock. The background is a textured, light yellowish-brown.

Story of Sui Mata

Sui Mata is a revered local goddess, and her story is celebrated during the annual Sui Mata Mela festival. Folklore narrates the tale of Sui Mata, who sacrificed her life to protect her people from an evil demon. The festival includes performances of traditional dances like the Chamba Dance in honor of Sui Mata. Bala Sundri is considered a powerful goddess in Chamba. According to the folklore, she defended the region against demons and evil spirits.

An illustration of a woman with dark hair in a bun, wearing a red sari, sitting in a meditative pose on top of a large, brown, jagged rock. A vibrant teal waterfall flows down the side of the rock. The background is a textured, light yellowish-brown.

The legend of Bala Sundri depicts her divine strength and protection of the people. These folk stories and legends not only entertain and captivate but also serve as a way to preserve the cultural heritage and beliefs of the people of Chamba. They reflect the local customs, values, and traditions that have shaped the community's identity over the centuries.

Exploring Chamba

CHAUGAN MARKET

The *Chaugan* Market of Chamba is a bustling and vibrant marketplace located in the heart of Chamba. There is a large ground where the *Minjar* fair is organized every year. *Chaugan* is the prime hub for all the traditional crafts and cuisines of Chamba. It is the most popular tourist spot as many temples and other attractions are located in the proximity.



BHURI SINGH MUSUEM

The museum is named after Raja Bhuri Singh, who ruled here from 1904-1919. The exhibits include sculptures, ancient coins, weapons, jewelry, textiles, and other valuable artifacts. This museum also has miniature paintings of Basohli and Kangra Art School that represent various themes like religious and mythological scenes, portraits, and depictions of local life.



CHAURASI MANDIR

This temple complex is located in Bharmour. It is dedicated to a variety of Hindu deities, including Lord Shiva, Lord Vishnu and Lord Ganesha. The prominent temples within the complex are the Lakshmi Devi Temple, the Ganesh Temple, and the Manimahesh Temple. All temples are built in pure Himachali and Shikara-style architecture.



RANGMAHAL

This ancient and huge palace is situated in Surada Mohalla. Himachal Emporium has now been made in the palace. The foundation of this palace was laid by Raja Umaid Singh (1748-1768). This palace is a mixed example of Mughal and British style. It was the residence of the rulers.



Exploring Chamba

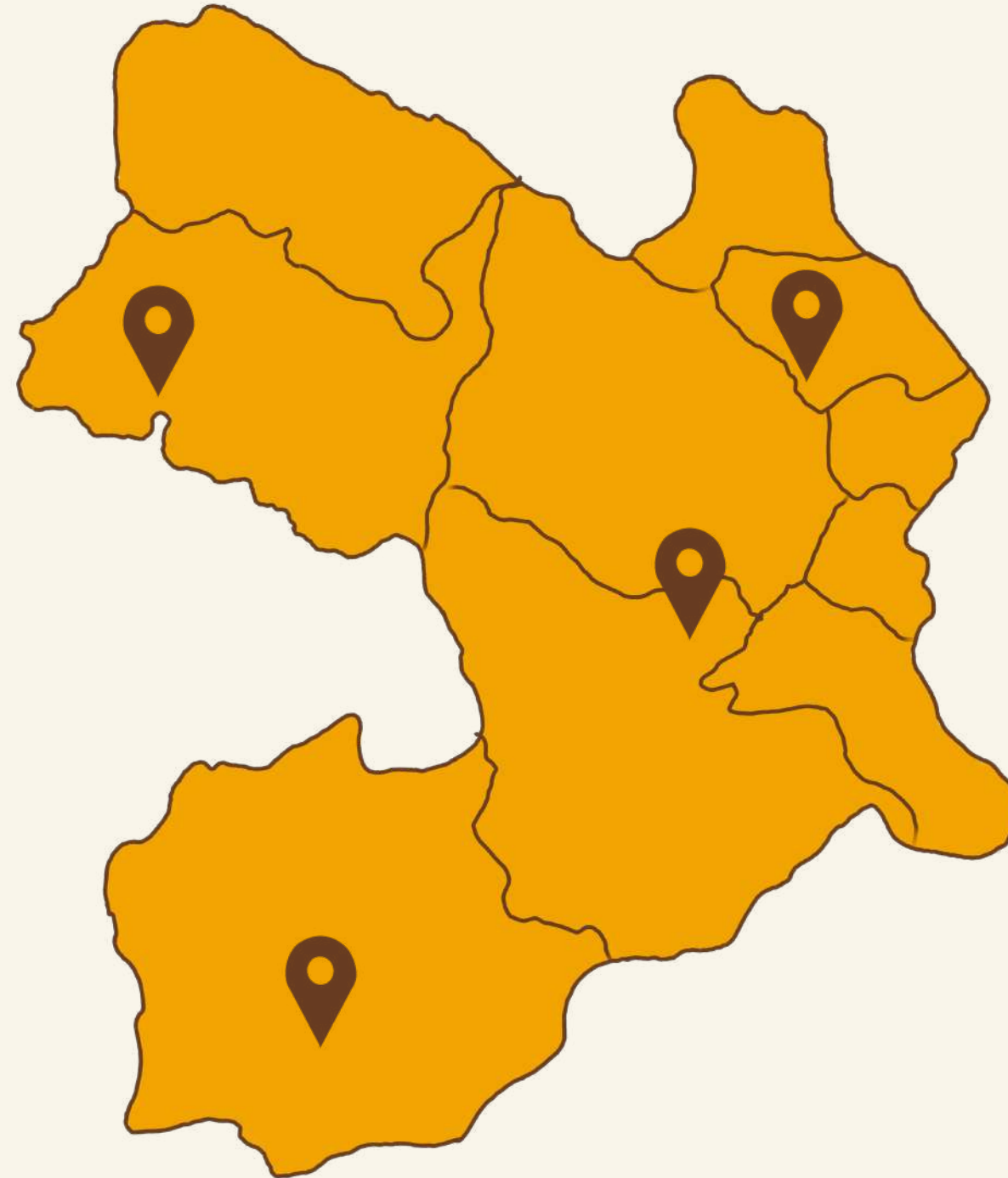
CHAMUNDA DEVI MANDIR

The devotees know the temple as Chamunda Nandikeshwar Dham, where it is thought to serve as the abode of both Shiva and Shakti. Positioned on either side of the main deity's statue, Lord Hanuman and Lord Bhairav are venerated as sentinels of the Goddess, underscoring their roles as protectors.



LAXMI NARAYAN MANDIR

This temple is an excellent example of traditional architecture and sculpture. It is the largest and oldest among the 9 major temples of Chamba. It is said that earlier this temple was located in Chaugan of Chamba but later it was established along with Rajmahal. This temple, dedicated to Lord Vishnu, was built by King Sahil Varman in the 10th century. It is built in Shikhar style. The temple has a vimana and sanctum sanctorum. The structure of the temple is similar to a pavilion.



BOOKSTORE

A small bookstore located near Laxmi Narayan Mandir, owned by a reputed "Pandit Ji" who is around 75 years old. The store contains books about Chamba, its history, culture and interesting folk stories. *Pandit ji* has been a member of the Chamba society since a long time and is extremely knowledgeable. He is well-known amongst the people of Chamba and is respected a lot. He wrote a book on the *mandirs* of Chamba.



BHARMOUR

This ancient capital of Chamba was earlier known as Brahmapura. Situated 65 kms away from Chamba and at an altitude of 2195m, Bharmour is surrounded by dense forests and the Dhauladhar mountain range. The most famous temple here is the Chaurasi Temple, which consists of 84 shrines, including the ancient Manimahesh Temple. The trek to Manimahesh Lake is a popular pilgrimage trek for devotees of Lord Shiva during the Manimahesh Yatra.

Market Study

Chamba Chappal

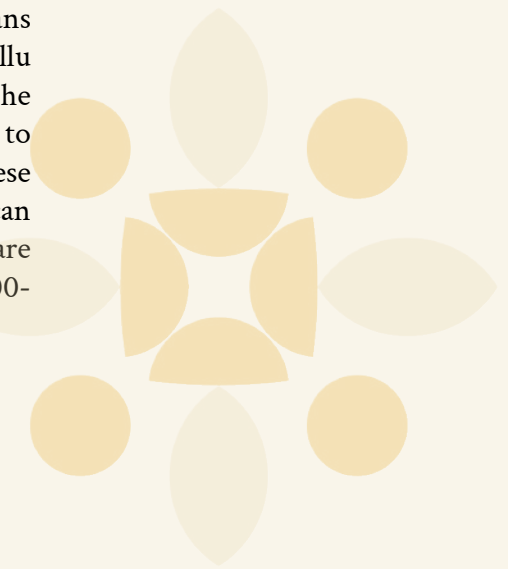
Chamba chappals are famous all over India. There are many dedicated shops located in *Chaugan* that have been running since 1970s by the artisan families and their generations. They offer various options like embroidery, mirror work, buttons, *zari* work, beads, stones and colour options. All designs are authentic and display the artisan's skills. Most of them are made in pure leather which is sourced from neighbouring states and cities like Jalandhar, Amritsar and Delhi. They also sell the famous Punjabi *Juttis*. The prices are reasonable and vary according to the design, ladies chappals are priced between 300-400 rupees while gent's *chappals* are 500 rupees and above. They're chic and comfortable.





Chamba Rumaal

The very famous Chamba Rumaal is a specialty of Chamba. It is cloth with colourful embroidery on it of various theme based designs like human figures, deities, nature, animals, Radha and Krishna etc. The embroidery is done in such a way that it appears the same on both sides of the rumaal. It requires a lot of skill and patience and many artisans in Chamba still practice it. The cloth used is usuallu cotton, rayon and sometimes silk since it's expensive. The embroidery is done using silk threads hence they need to be dry-cleaned to prevent the colour from fading. These rumaals are used as a display showpiece or the designs can also be found on clothes like *sarees*, *suits*, *kurtis* etc. They are priced according to the size and design, ranging from 600-5000 rupees.



Jewellery

Chamba jewellery is known for its intricate and delicate designs of nature-inspired motifs such as leaves, flowers, birds, and animals. The skilled artisans use a combination of silver, gold, and precious or semi-precious stones to create the pieces. The artisans employ techniques like filigree work, engraving, and embossing to create the detailed patterns. There are multiple stores owned by generational families offering a wide range of earrings, necklaces, bracelets, rings, bangles, nose rings etc. The designs are traditional and are gradually adapting the modern trends. The prices vary according to the material, weight and design of the jewellery. Walking around Chamba you'll find all women adorned with Chamba jewellery as it marks their identity and status.

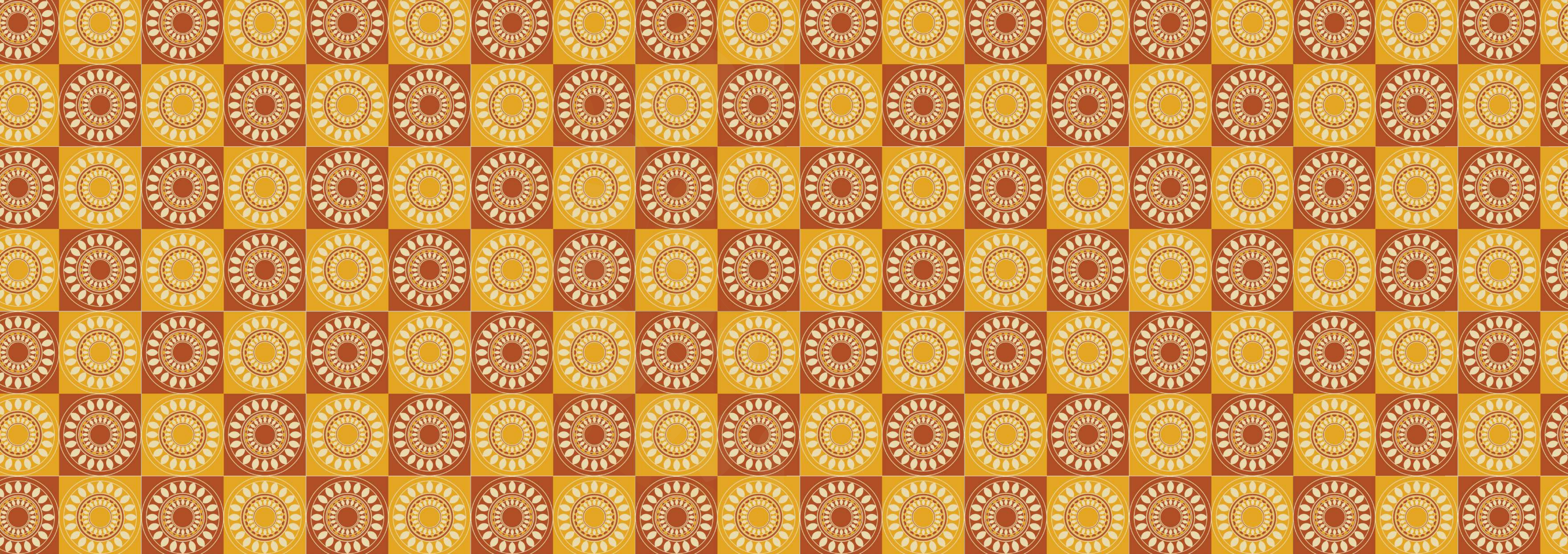




Miniature Painting

The miniature style of painting that evolved out of Himachal Pradesh and spread across Jammu & Kashmir, came to be known as the Pahari School of painting. Pahari painting developed in the independently ruled hill states in two different forms, the Basohli and the Kangra styles. Miniature paintings to the craft of embroidery was a natural transition. The rounded hillocks, with little blobs of green paint shaped like trees may be recognized as simplified landscape motifs. Miniatures vibrate with realism, natural emotions and their colours echo with softness of music. The use of primitive colours- red, yellow and blue, plain or decorative fine borders, carefully brushed jewellery, neatly laid buildings and richly relieved landscape balanced with contrasting colours. Chamba is known for its typical and distinctive female figures endowed with the most charming appearances. Even after 300 years there is no speck of dullness in them.







Metal Craft

Metalcraft in Chamba involves the intricate carving, engraving, and shaping of various metals to create decorative and functional objects. Copper and brass (pital) are the commonly used metals in Chamba's metal craft.

This craft is adorned for its intricate engravings and decorative motifs that add to their aesthetic appeal. Artisans meticulously carve detailed patterns, floral motifs, and mythological scenes onto the metal surfaces. The designs are often inspired by local folklore, nature, and religious themes. This intricate detailing brings a sense of beauty and elegance to the metal objects. The renowned "bronze sculptures" were a Kashmiri influence on Chamba. Lakshmi, Ganesh and Narsimha bronze statues in

Bharmour, Harirai and Gauri Shankar at Chamba are the marvels of Bronze sculptures. Chamba metal craft also encompasses the creation of decorative items such as wall hangings, panels, lamps, and figurines.

These items are often embellished with elaborate engravings, patterns, and sometimes even semi-precious stones. Chamba metal craft is closely linked to religious practices and rituals. Artisans create intricately crafted metal objects for use in temples and religious ceremonies. These include idols of deities, prayer accessories, incense holders, and decorative elements for shrines. The religious artifacts showcase the devotion and spiritual significance associated with the craft.

An Amalgamation of Emotions

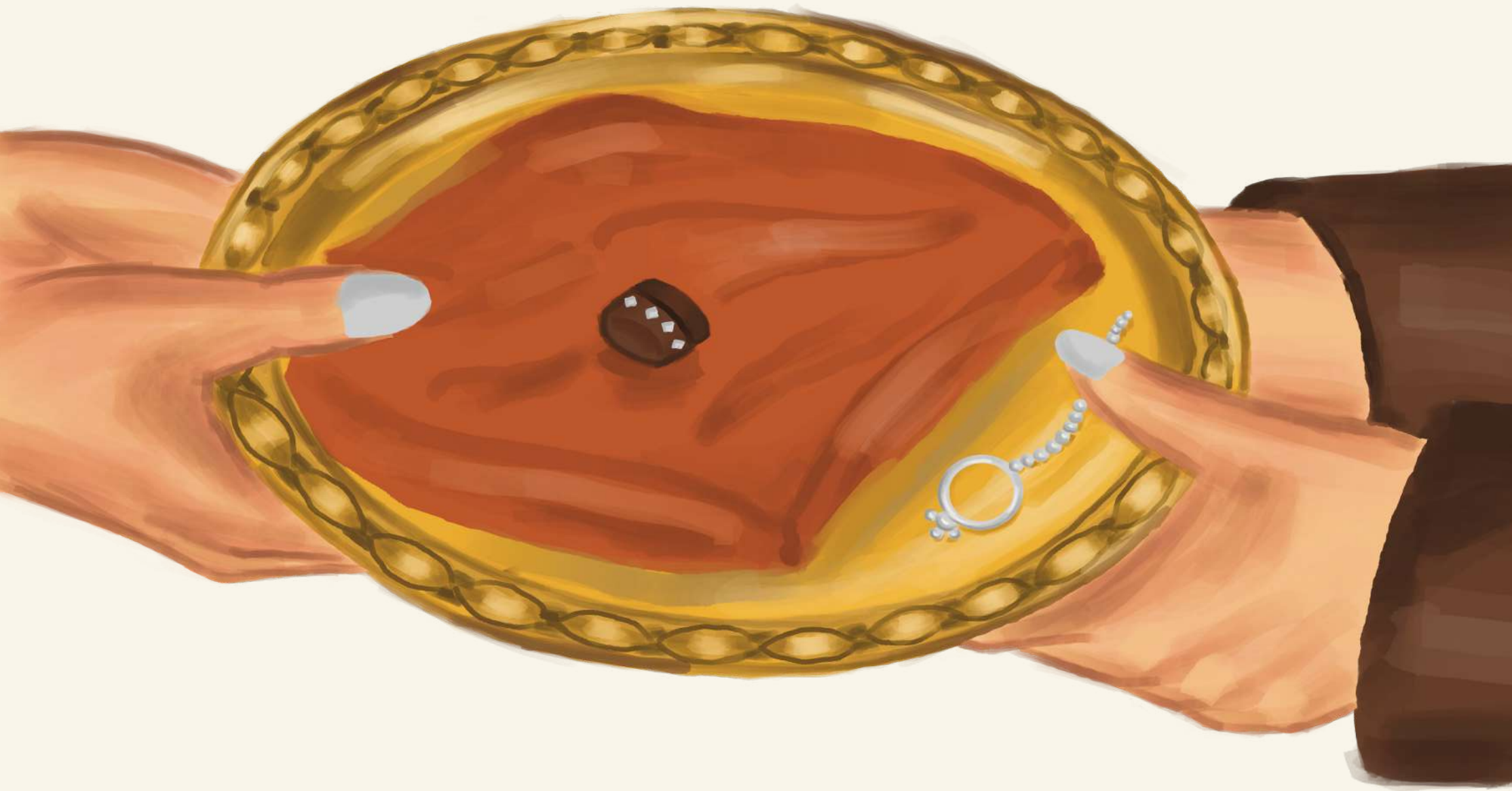
The erstwhile princely state of Chamba in Himachal Pradesh was famous for unique art and crafts. The two sided hand embroidered chamba rumal is famous, but little is known about the Chamba thaal. The Chamba thaal is an embossed metal craft where brass plates are embossed with images of Gods and Goddesses. The thaals are entirely and painstakingly handmade.

Most commonly embossed images are the nine avatars of Vishnu, Ashtalakshmi and the various forms of Maa Durga, Radha-Krishna and Shri Ganesh. Since the legacy of metal craft in Chamba is passed down through generations, there is a sense of emotional connection amongst the craftsmen that lies in the pride and sense of identity associated with the craft. It is the only means through which they can express their true creativity, skill and dedication to their craft.

Chamba metal craft is not just an individual pursuit but also a community activity. Artisans often work together in workshops, sharing techniques, ideas, and stories.

The emotional value lies in the sense of belonging, camaraderie, and shared cultural identity fostered through this collaborative process. Chamba metal craft has a long history, with its roots dating back centuries. By practicing and supporting this craft, the people of Chamba maintain a connection to their ancestors and the traditional way of life. The emotional value lies in the nostalgia, reverence, and connection to the past that this art form represents.





Thaal- Origin

Thaal is one of the most auspicious products handcrafted by the artisans in Chamba. It dates back to 40 years ago when it was first produced by Prakash Ji (Rajesh ji's father) which was used to gift the *shagun* to his newly wed Bua (father's sister). The motifs on the thaal are inspired by the Hindu deities and the eye-shape design was adopted from the eyes of the deities itself and modified in a way to suit the thaal's design.

The artisans have now derived various ways to create new motifs and designs for the thaals. They have also started creating hand painted thaals that, to their delight, received a positive response and hence they continue to work in it.

Materials & Sourcing

Silver
Sourced from Amritsar and Pathankot



Brass Sheets
16 gauge thinnest
22 gauge Thickest
Sourced from Jagadri



Copper
The most used raw material
Sourced from Jagadri and Pathankot



Gold
Gold is sourced from local jewellers



Bee Wax
Beeswax is a natural wax produced by honey bees, sourced locally



Ashtdhatu
made up of 8 dhaatus
Used to make chamba murti



All the backstock metal products are recycled.

Tools & Equipment

Hammer & Mallet



Divider & Compass



Pencil & Marker



Cheni



Eye shaping tools



Katta & Khancha



The artisans are not only skilled in making the craft, but also in finding a “*jugaad*” for their tools and equipment. Most tools are usually self-made, and once they lose their sharpness, they are recycled. Some tools are exported from Delhi as well. If not, they arrange for old machinery parts or objects and innovate them to suit their purpose.

Sand Casting Process

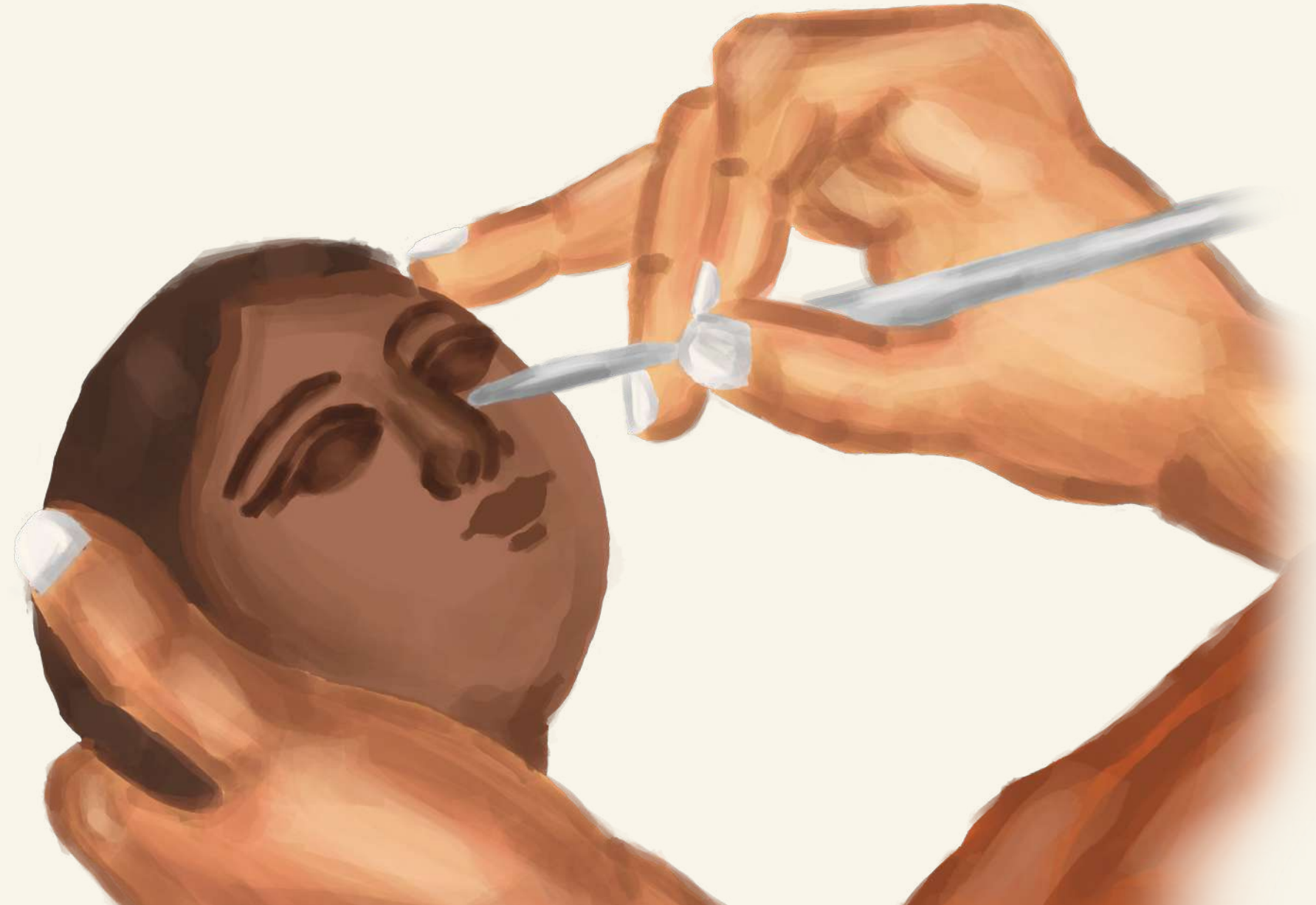
- Murti

In this technique, first the silicon based sand gets prepared by spraying water over it and mixing it properly so that the sand gets holding strength. The idol is kept under the mould box and the sand is poured over the idol inside the box. The first half of the is mould is kept on the floor by inverting it.

A layer of talcum powder is applied over the top so that the sand doesn't stick to each other. Then, two pipes are kept over the idol and again the same solution is poured over the second mould box. After fixing the sand properly over the mould, by beating it with a wooden hammer the pipes are taken out.

The idol is taken out from the mould by opening the it carefully so that no sand particles fall in the cavity of the mould. The moulds are attached once again with each other. Molten metal is then poured through the hole created until the second hole get filled. It is then kept for cooling.

After 2 to 3 hrs, the idol is taken out by opening the mould. 3-4 idols can be made per day through this process. For making a new idol, the previous mould is broken down and mixed with sand and water. At last, the rough edges of the idol are smoothened using acid wash and the polished idol is ready.



Lost Wax Process

- Murti

Castings were often made in pure copper, but bronze quickly became the preferred material. In this technique, first the idol is made out of bee wax. Because of the level of intricacy, this part of the process takes 2-3 months, depending on the size and details. This process is preferred to be done in the winter as the wax melts in the heat.

Layers of *chikni mitti* are used to cover it, leaving a small space below, for when the clay is dried completely, the wax is burned off and thus the name lost wax. You are left with the mould of clay in which molten metal is poured. After the metal is solidified, they break off the clay mould to take out the *murti*.

Since in this process the master pattern and clay mould are broken, only one *murti* can be made at a time, which results in their cost being high. At last, the rough edges are smoothened using acid wash and the polished idol is ready.

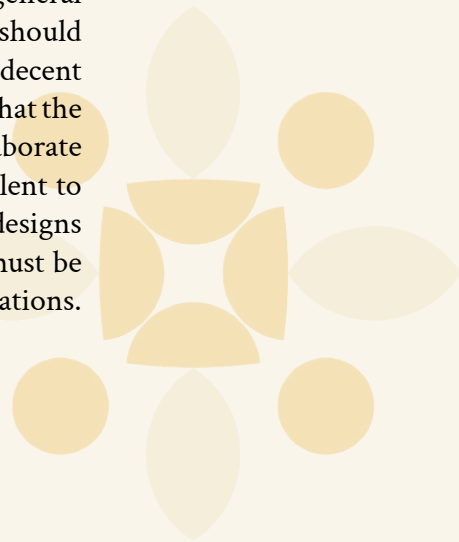


Challenges Faced

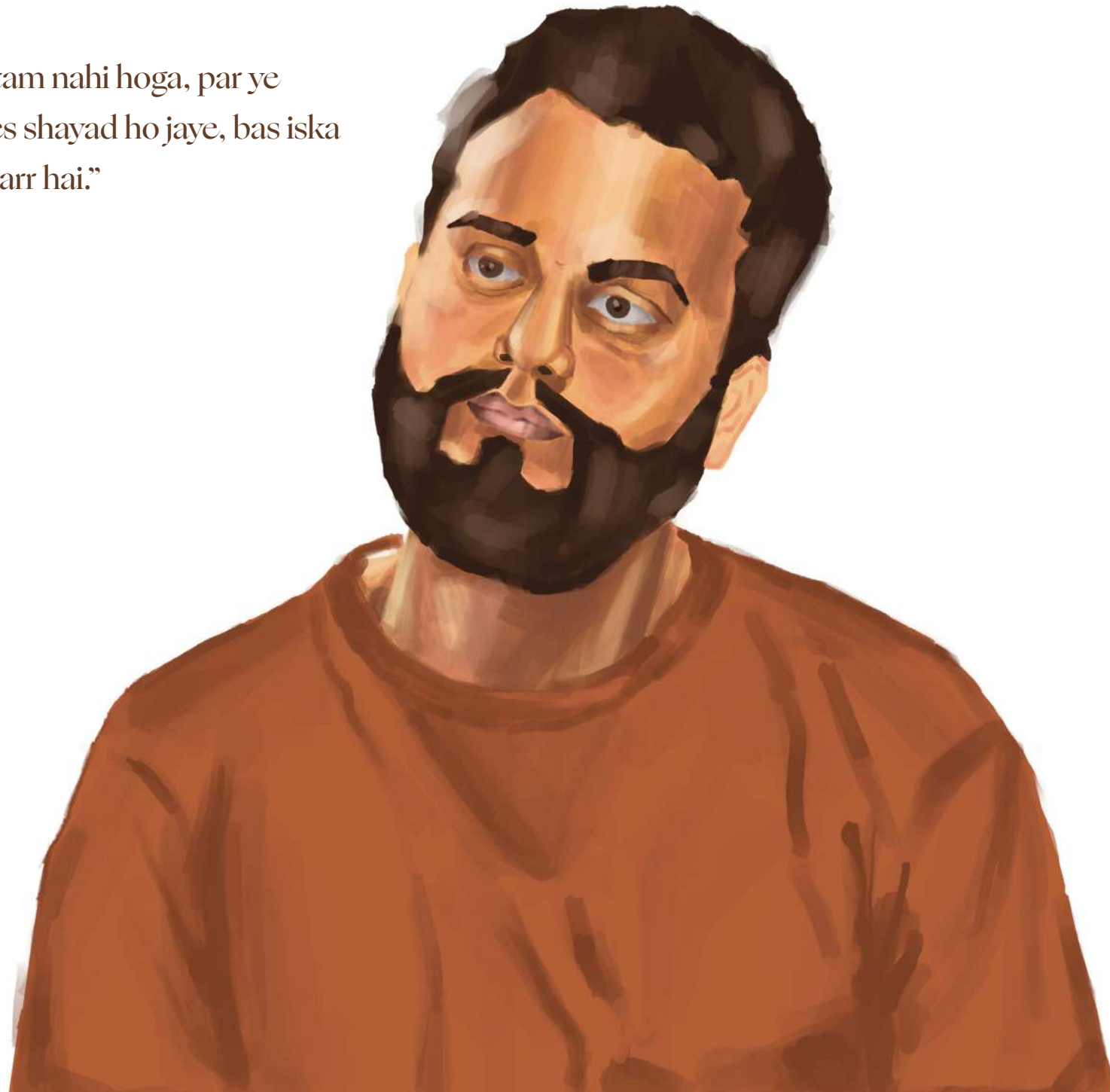
The metal craft industry of Chamba faces serious economic issues in terms of its demand and consumption. There's heavy competition within the small region which impacts the artisans' income. Many artisans are forced to rely on local markets and cannot access the markets outside their region and hence, small customer base. Since this craft is passed down to generations, there's a chance that the upcoming generations might lose interest or skills which can lead to a potential decline of the craft. There is also a lack of proper infrastructure and access to new tools and technology which hinders their progress. Furthermore, the metal craftsmen are greatly inspired by the local culture and traditions for their designs which might not align with the current contemporary demands and trends that suit the younger audience.

Future Scope

Metal is a material that will never reach extinction. It shall always be one of the most used and demanded commodities worldwide. Handskills of the artisans when combined with appropriate technology and useful resources has a lot of potential at taking the metal craft of Chamba to greater heights. The material can be still be explored and the designs can be further developed in various methods if given the right opportunity. This craft needs adequate promotion through social media, general awareness and popularity. The government too should provide the craftsmen with proper workspace, a decent lifestyle and incentives through their schemes so that the craft can truly flourish. The artisans can also collaborate with NGOs which might help them take their talent to other places in India and abroad. Since their designs are linked with their culture and religion, they must be preserved and carried forward to the future generations.



“Craft toh khatam nahi hoga, par ye generational families shayad ho jaye, bas iska darr hai.”

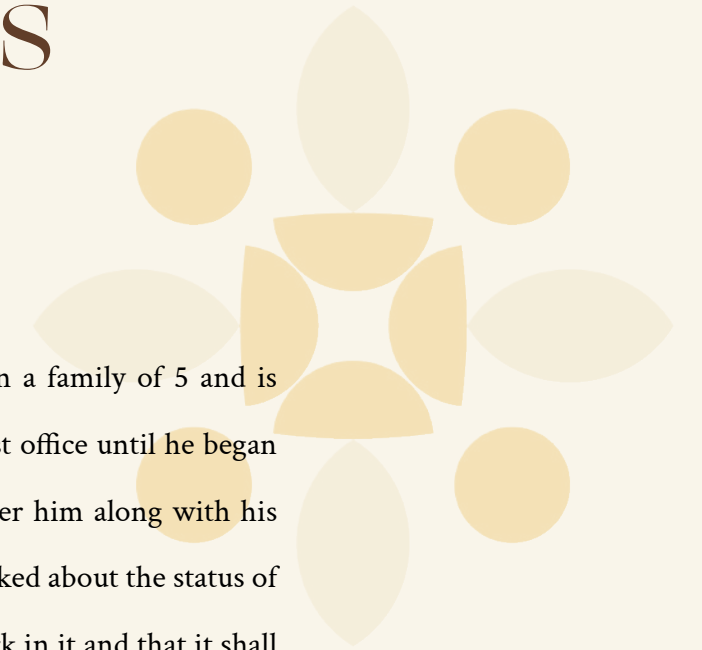


Meet the Artisans

Ankit Verma

A 32 year old hardworking and devoted artisan, Ankit Verma lives in a family of 5 and is the 10th generation artisan of his family. He started working at the post office until he began working with metal in 2012. He currently has 3 artisans working under him along with his father who has been involved in this craft for almost 50 years. When asked about the status of his upcoming generations, he stated that he shall not force them to work in it and that it shall be their own choice.

He works with mostly copper and brass and sometimes silver. Most used process- wax casting. They make various products like *ransingha*, *ponh*, *thaal* etc. His designs are inspired from the internet or the miniature paintings. The pricing of the items is variable. *Thaal* prices range from Rs 2000 - Rs 40000. Their retail process is independent as they have no association with any NGOs. To promote their craft, they rely on social media (instagram, facebook, whatsapp). He's proud in his work and wishes to explore with new materials and designs if given an opportunity.



Harshit Malhotra

Working since 4 years, Harshit is a 24 year old artisan who is extremely patient and diligent in his work. He's currently the 7th generation artisan of his joint family and has a small but dedicated team comprising 2 of his friends who help in production and his father, Harinder Malhotra. He has also employed a few women who help with pasting and polishing work. He loves the craft by heart and is truly motivated towards expanding his business.

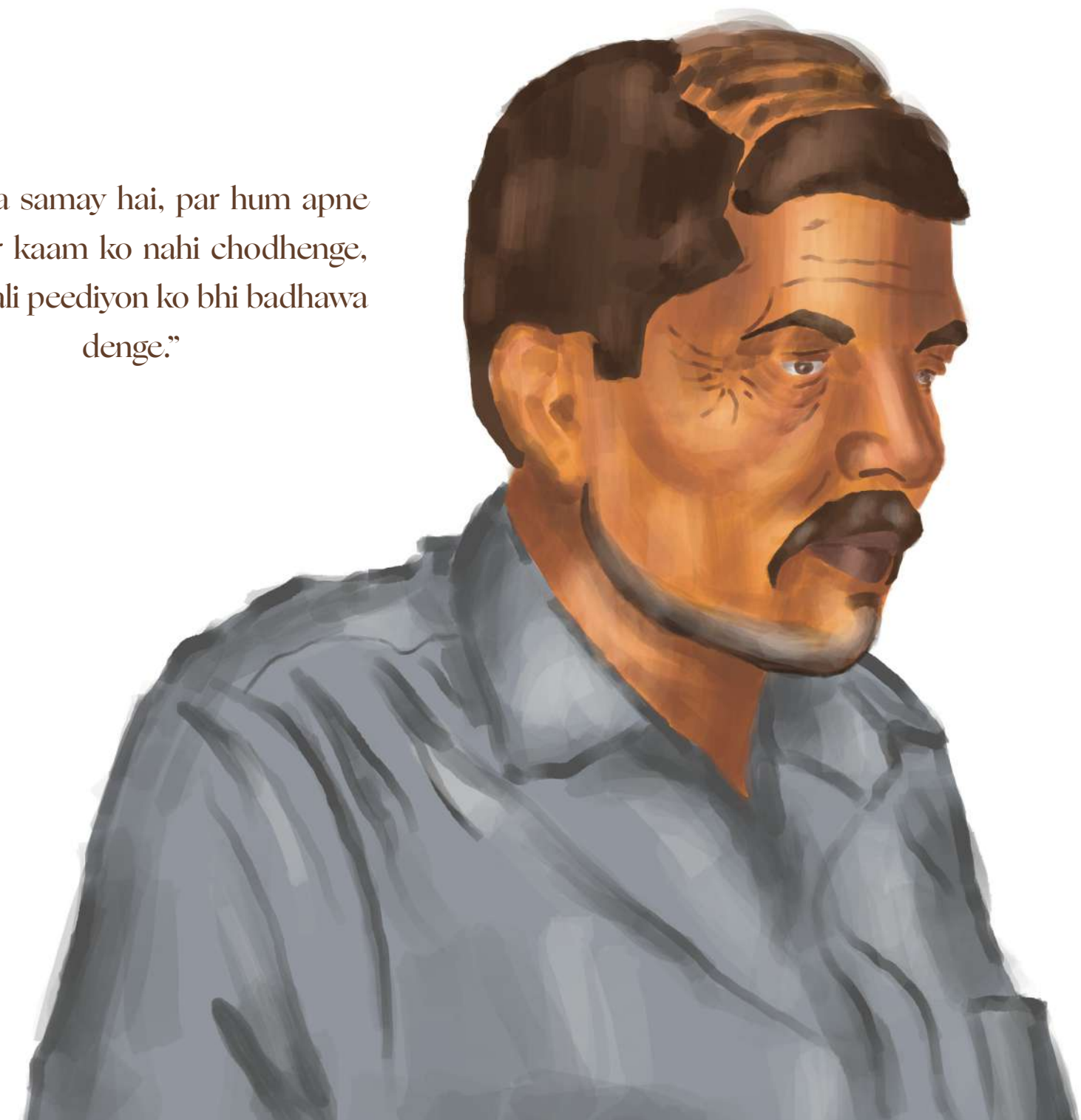
He works in copper and brass and also uses recycled materials. He's adept at wax casting and welding. Wax carving and master pattern making is an intricate process, hence it is done by his father. His designs are mostly inspired from the motifs present at the temples or deities. Per day, they're able to make 3 small, 2 medium and 1 large thaal. He recently started making handpainted thaals which received a lot of appreciation from the local shoppers and even tourists.

Although his working space is very cramped, he knows how to make the most of it but he also claimed that if given a better environment, he can increase his productivity and grow faster by experimenting more. The fact that this craft is completely handcrafted and requires a lot of skills encourages him to continue and promote it.

“Saalon se yahi dekh raha hu, ab aadat ho gayi hai aur acha bhi lagta hai”



“Badalta samay hai, par hum apne kala aur kaam ko nahi chodhenge, aane wali peediyon ko bhi badhawadenge.”



Rajesh Anand

Rajesh ji is the son of Prakash ji, who was a national awardee. He had been working in this craft for more than 50 years. Thaal making was started by him 40 years ago and earlier they made '*bel paati*' and figures as motifs. They also started the tradition of gifting '*shagun*' in these thaals. Since Prakash ji is 87 years old and has retired, the work is now continued by Rajesh ji (53 years old) and his son Himanshu. They have 2 artisans working under them. Their working hours are 9am to 8pm everyday except Sunday. Rajesh ji has been working since he was 15 and has made many sculptures that are now displayed at the museums in various parts of the United States.

In Chamba, they have their own shop by the name of “Anand Metal Works” near *Chaugan*. Their house is constructed above the shop itself. They use various dhaatus for their products like brass, copper, bronze and silver. They usually find jugaad for their tools or make it themselves. The largest thaal ever made by them was 4ft wide. The *murti* established at Sui Mata Mandir is also made by them. They mostly accept customisation orders and make each product with utmost patience and dedication. They pay their workers Rs 5000-6000 during training and then later according to performance. They promote their craft independently via exhibitions and social media as they have no association with the government or any NGO. To them, this craft is their sole identity and they are extremely proud of it.

We'd like to extend our Special Thanks to Rajesh ji for beautifully handcrafting our customised thaal at the last hour and helping us end our expedition with success in our hands!

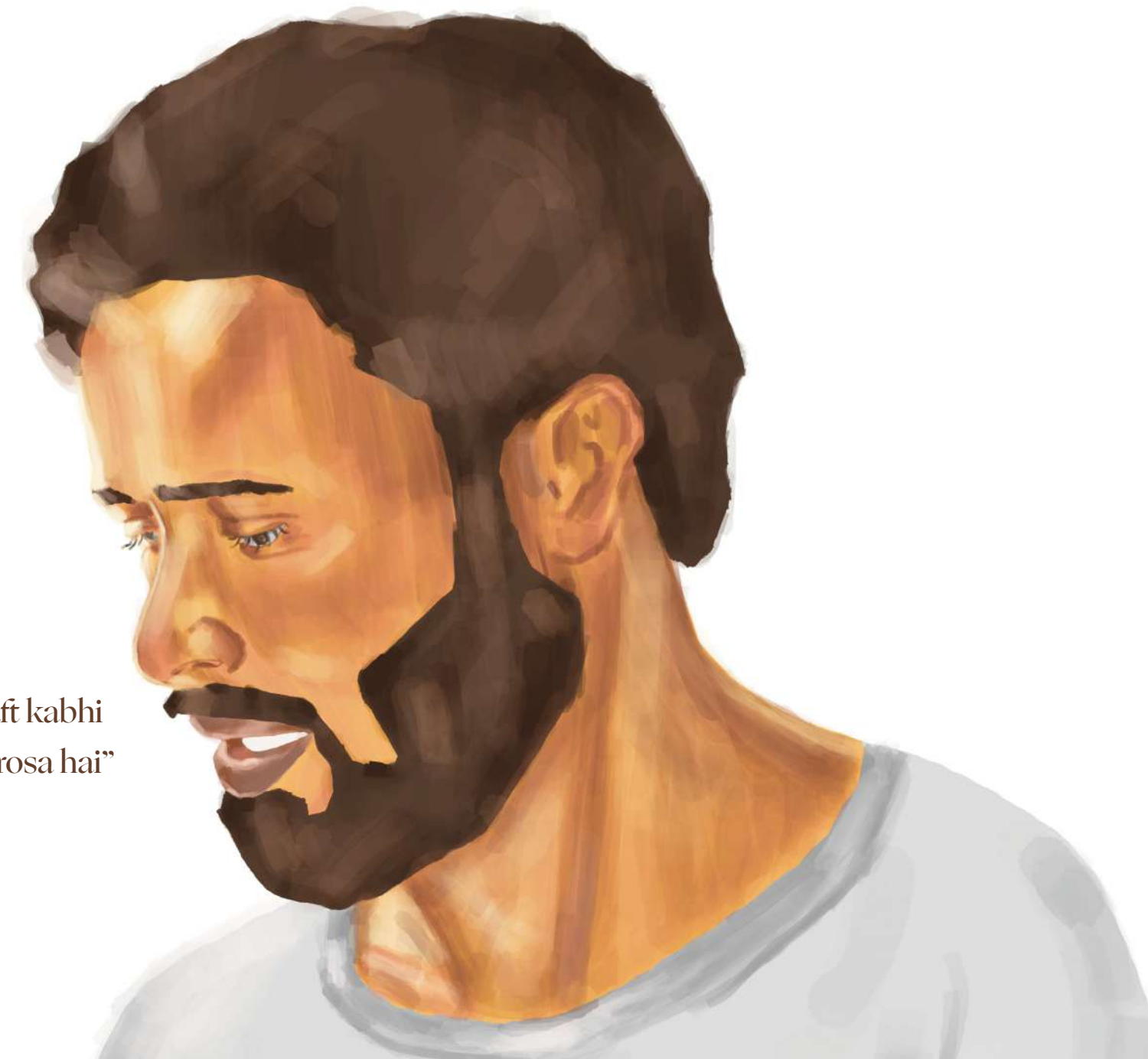
Shiva Verma

Professionally working since 15 years in Bharmour, Shiva is a 31 year old metal craftsman. He and his sister work together and she mostly does all the work including *dhalai* and *chilai*. Their whole family is involved in this craft and one of them is currently working in Chandigarh. They take their design inspirations from the internet and the temples. He is quite skilled at the Nandi bail process and back in the days the *Nandi biyal* was constructed by his ancestors within a day! Most of the work is done during the festive season (Manimahesh yatra) due to high demand and footfall. He stated that during winters due to heavy snowfall, all roads are blocked and they have to store food for 6 months in advance. The government also provides them with raashan. The extremity of their working condition!

His customers are mostly local people and Jammu residents. His most high priced murti ever was sold recently at Rs 80000! They use newspaper for packaging purposes. For promotion, they currently rely on Facebook. Apart from this craft, he has a stationery shop and does photography as a hobby. Since he is extremely religious, he believes that the metal craft will never die under the presence of God.

Contact information : 9805250784

“Bhagwan ke hote hue ye craft kabhi
khatam nahi hoga, poora bharosa hai”





S

Strengths

- Designs are inspired from the local culture, traditions and religion, hence the legacy is carried forward.
- The skills are inherited from generations which preserves the uniqueness and authenticity of the craft.
- Himachal has a pool of resources such as wood, stone, metal etc. which are useful in producing the craft.
- The craft provides employment and livelihood opportunities for skilled artisans.



W

Weaknesses

- Many artisans do not have access to markets beyond their region which hinders their sales and popularity.
- Most designs are traditional and do not align with the current contemporary trends.
- Many artisans do not have access or the financial resources to set up a proper infrastructure and technology. they still rely on the old techniques and tools.
- Handcrafting each product is a time consuming and laborious process.



O

Opportunities

- The rise of e-commerce and online marketing can help the artisans reach a wider audience.
- Metal craft can be established as a distinct identity of Chamba which will attract tourists as they'll purchase it for gifting and as souvenirs.
- Collaboration with certain NGOs and designers to learn new techniques and designs which can help them upskill themselves and make the craft more relevant to the contemporary markets.
- Artisans must also explore new materials and acquire better knowledge on the craft instead of relying on the age old practices.



T

Threats

- Mass producing industries pose a serious threat to the local artisans.
- Inadequate infrastructure, such as transportation and communication can hinder the distribution and marketing of the craft.
- The upcoming generations might lose interest and skills in the craft and lead to its potential decline.
- Advancements in technology and design innovations is hard to keep up with for the artisans.

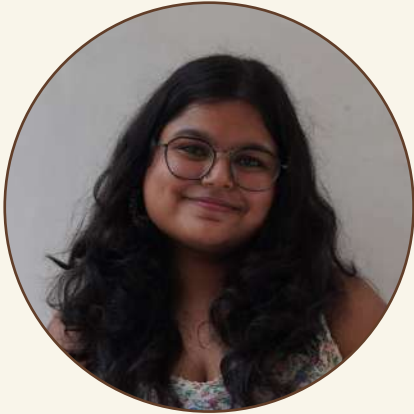
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Glossary



- **Mohra** : Metal Craft, specifically thaal in Chamba is called Mohra.
- **Dhaatu** : Dhatu is a Sanskrit word that refers to the seven building blocks of the physical body.
- **Ashtdhatu** : Ashtadhatu is an alloy comprising the eight metals of gold, silver, copper, lead, zinc, tin, iron, and mercury, often used for casting metallic idols for Jain and Hindu temples in India.
- **Dham** : Dham is a mid day meal served to the people in himachali culture on the occasions of marriage, birthday party, retirement party or any religious days.
- **Madra** : A special yoghurt and Rajma based dish prepared on special occasions. It is simple and absolutely delicious.
- **Cheni** : A type of tool with a flat edge used for engraving the thaal and other crafts.
- **Khandit** : An alternative name given to sand casting murti as it is made by joining different parts together.
- **Lac** : Lac is a resin extracted from wild trees. It is accumulated by insects. In handicraft industry, it is predominantly used in crafting of jewellery items like necklaces, bangles, earrings and jewellery boxes.
- **Thaal** : One of the most predominant metal crafts of Chamba handcrafted in brass and using various tools.
- **Kalash** : Kalash is an auspicious symbol in Hinduism and is a copper vessel with a big base and a small mouth. It is used during all rituals in Hinduism.
- **Reja** : A kind of tool used for embossing.
- **Katta** : A tool made using an old tyre used as a base for beating thaal.
- **Khaancha** : A tool with eye shaped grooves in it used for embossing the eye design around the thaal.

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