

## How Generational Artisans Sustain Textile Heritage

**Image no: 1**

**Caption:** William Simpson, Detail, *Cashmere Shawl Manufactory*, 1867, Chromolithograph, X108(2), The British Library, London.

**Link:** [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Shawl\\_makers\\_in\\_Kashmir\\_\(1867\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Shawl_makers_in_Kashmir_(1867).jpg)

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**Image no: 2**

**Caption:** Detail, *Spinner*, c. 1800s, Columbia University Photo Library, New York.

**Link:** <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:X15.jpg>

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**Image no: 3**

**Caption:** Detail, *Two Men Preparing Dye for Fabric*, c.1800-1899, Watercolour, With fine brush, 21.5 x 20.2 cm, 575924i, Wellcome Collection, London.

**Link:** <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/hv4t4udb>

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**Image no: 4**

**Caption:** Detail, *Indian weavers*, c. 1840, gouache, With gold and gum arabic, 28919j, Wellcome Collection, London.

**Link:** <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/g7jgv3e2>

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**Image no: 5**

**Caption:** William Simpson, Detail, *The Thug School of Industry, Jubbulpore*, 1867, Chromolithography, X108(21), The British Library, London.

**Link:** [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The\\_Thug\\_School\\_of\\_Industry,\\_Jubbulpore.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Thug_School_of_Industry,_Jubbulpore.jpg)

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**Image no:** 6

**Caption:** Pragadeesh Marimuthu, *Sadin Pangking and Akum Tayeng Prepare warp on a Backstrap Loom*, Rani, East Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh, 2021, Film footage. © MAP Academy.

**Link:** N/A

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**Image no:** 7

**Caption:** Arthur William Devis, Detail, *Four boys and an Old Man Working on the Loom*, c. 1800s, Coloured stipple engraving, 44.4 x 61 cm, 580108i, Wellcome Collection, London.

**Link:** <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/xzwqqsac/images?id=uctcypve>

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**Image no:** 8

**Caption:** Briana Blasko, Detail, *A Woman Helps a Weaver Settle the Muga Silk Yarn onto the Handloom Frame*, April 2010, Photograph. Courtesy of the artist.

**Link:** N/A

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**Image no:** 9

**Caption:** Pragadeesh Marimuthu, *Miti Darang Hand-picking the broad central extra weft*, Rani, East Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh, 2021, Film footage. © MAP Academy.

**Link:** N/A

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**Image no:** 10

**Caption:** Detail, *A Man Block Printing on Textiles*, c. 1800s, Gouache painting on mica, 13.5 x 10.3 cm, 580795i, Wellcome Library, London.

**Link:** <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/jfrvf99p>

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**Image no:** 11

**Caption:** Detail, *Two Men Doing Embroidery on a Piece of Cloth*, c. 1800s, Gouache painting with brush, 11.7 x 18.5 cm, 576627i, Wellcome Library, London.

**Link:** <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/wfs3a76m>

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**Image no:** 12

**Caption:** Pragadeesh Marimuthu, *Deepika Pait Weaves patterns into a Mishing textile*, Akajan, Dhemaji District, Assam, 2021, Film footage. © MAP Academy.

**Link:** N/A

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**Image no:** 13

**Caption:** Shailen Guleria, Detail, *Free Standing Loom*, 2016, Digital photograph, Wikimedia Commons. [CC BY-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

**Link:** [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Free\\_Standing\\_Loom.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Free_Standing_Loom.jpg)

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**Image no:** 14

**Caption:** Pragadeesh Marimuthu, *Dulumoni Baidew's Grandchildren Harshita Chutia and Jesika Pait Playing with Toy Looms (1)*, Akajan, Dhemaji District, Assam, 2021, Film footage. © MAP Academy.

**Link:** N/A

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**Image no:** 15

**Caption:** Pragadeesh Marimuthu, *Dulumoni Baidew's Grandchildren Harshita Chutia and Jesika Pait Playing with Toy Looms (2)*, Akajan, Dhemaji District, Assam, 2021, Film footage. © MAP Academy.

**Link:** N/A

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**Image no:** 16

**Caption:** Briana Blasko, Detail, *Indigo Cakes are Cut into Cubes to be Dried in the Sun in the Final Stage of Production*, Tamil Nadu, 2010, Photograph. Courtesy of the artist.

**Link:** N/A

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**Image no:** 17

**Caption:** Pramati Anand, *Indigo Dyeing*, Gujarat, 2018. Courtesy of the photographer.

**Link:** N/A

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**Image no:** 18

**Caption:** Rick Bradley, Detail, *Madder and Tesu (Flame of the Forest) Dyebaths*, 2009, Digital photograph, Flickr. [CC BY 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/).

**Link:** <https://flic.kr/p/73n7Ds>

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**Image no:** 19

**Caption:** Briana Blasko, Detail, *Threads Being Dyed*, 2009, Photograph. Courtesy of the artist.

**Link:** N/A

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**Image no:** 20

**Caption:** Madeline Tosh, Detail, *Madder Silk*, 2008, Digital photograph, Flickr. [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#).

**Link:** <https://flic.kr/p/4qSBoR>

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**Image no:** 21

**Caption:** Briana Blasko, Detail, *Man Dyeing Fabric*, 2009, Photograph. Courtesy of the artist.

**Link:** N/A

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**Image no:** 22

**Caption:** Pramati Anand, *Scenes from Hornbill Festival-I*, Nagaland, 2016. Courtesy of the photographer.

**Link:** N/A

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**Image no:** 23

**Caption:** Pragadeesh Marimuthu, *Deepika Pait Weaves a Sador on a Taat Xaal Loom, Set Up in the Front Yard of a Mishing Home*, Akajan, Dhemaji District, Assam, 2021, Film footage. © MAP Academy.

**Link:** N/A

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**Image no:** 24

**Caption:** Pramati Anand, Detail, *Scenes from Hornbill Festival-II*, Nagaland, 2016. Courtesy of the photographer.

**Link:** N/A

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**Image no:** 25

**Caption:** Briana Blasko, Detail, *A Kalamkari Textile Cloth Immersed in Buffalo Milk for Stability of the Colour*, 2010, Photograph. Courtesy of the artist.

**Link:** N/A

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**Image no:** 26

**Caption:** Pramati Anand, Detail, *Chizami Weaves, NEN(North East Network) Nagaland*, 2016. Courtesy of the photographer.

**Link:** N/A

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**Image no:** 27

**Caption:** Avantikac98, Detail, *Silk Weaver at a Loom in Chanderi Village*, 2018, Digital photograph, Wikimedia Commons. [CC BY-SA 4.0](#).

**Link:** [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Silk weaver at a loom in Chanderi village.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Silk_weaver_at_a_loom_in_Chanderi_village.jpg)

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**Image no:** 28

**Caption:** François Zeller, Detail, *Creative Hands - Ellora (Maharashtra, India)*, 2017, Digital photograph, Wikimedia Commons. [CC BY 2.0](#).

**Link:**

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Creative\\_hands - Ellora \(Maharashtra, India\) \(33649578246\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Creative_hands_-_Ellora_(Maharashtra,_India)_33649578246.jpg)

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**Image no:** 29

**IMAGE CREDITS**

**Caption:** Briana Blasko, Detail, *Weaving Community*, 2008, Photograph. Courtesy of the artist.

**Link:** N/A

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The makers of handcrafted textiles in the Indian subcontinent share a unique relationship with their work. Beyond serving as a source of livelihood, traditions such as spinning, dyeing or weaving are integral aspects of their social and cultural lives.

Textile producing communities have traditionally operated within extended family units, sustaining and disseminating their practice within these groups over generations. Master weavers or dyers have typically passed on ancient traditions, techniques and details of their work to younger members of their communities. It is through this process of learning that particular practices have been preserved and protected.

Let's look at some of the ways in which textile makers acquire their skills, practice inherited traditions and document their processes.

### **Unique Practices**

Most artisans follow techniques which have evolved over centuries. These are so particular to the individual communities they belong to that they often cannot be exactly replicated by outsiders, including other textile makers.

The specificity of textile traditions results in communities working with raw materials, tools and even design and technical vocabulary that are unique to them. Weaving clusters, for example, tend to have specialised looms that are particularly designed to suit their needs. The subtle nuances in relation to the techniques and technology of their practices are known only to community members.

### **Sensorial Familiarity**

The intergenerational nature of textile practices in India implies that most textile makers grow up watching family elders, and develop a sense of intimacy with their work.

Master dyers, for instance, often rely on faculties of taste, smell and touch in relation to their processes. In fact, by simply tasting a dye, many dyers can identify

the exact shade it will take on the fabric. Textile processes are so deeply ingrained in communities that artisans rarely refer to written instructions or recipes for their work.

### **Sustaining Traditions**

In addition to relying on their intuition, artisans often preserve details of their practice through rituals, folktales and performances. These traditions not only keep certain forms of costumes alive, but can also inform beliefs and taboos around textile making in the community. For instance, in some indigenous communities of northeast India, women take on the role of primary weavers because they believe that men who touch the loom could be struck by lightning. Such oral traditions often provide us with insight into particular practices in ways that other forms of records might not.

Many of the textile traditions that we see today are practiced by the same communities who have engaged with them for centuries. Artisans act as gatekeepers of ancient traditions that have stood the test of time. Even as they continually evolve their practices to suit contemporary needs and tastes, the secrets of their trade remain carefully preserved within the folds of their community's life and culture.

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