

NMCM Bead-Making Workshop Strengthens the Link between Ancient Traditions and Contemporary Initiatives at IGNCA

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The National Mission on Cultural Mapping (NMCM), implemented by the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), organised a comprehensive two-day lecture and workshop on the 'Art of Bead-Making Craft of Khambhat, Gujarat' under its flagship programme 'Mera Gaon Meri Dharohar'(MGMD). Held on 13th and 14th November at IGNCA, New Delhi, the programme brought together eminent scholars, master craftsmen, researchers, and students to explore the historical depth, technological sophistication, and contemporary relevance of India's oldest bead-making traditions.



The inaugural session on 13th November was chaired by Dr. Sachchidanand Joshi, Member Secretary, IGNCA, who affirmed NMCM's continuing efforts to document and revitalise India's cultural wealth. He highlighted the achievements of the MGMD Portal, launched in 2023, which has culturally

mapped over six lakh villages, cataloguing their oral traditions, customs, art forms, festivals, attire, and local landmarks. He emphasised that this expansive cultural mapping encourages community participation and strengthens rural economies by nurturing cultural awareness and pride.



The second day of the workshop convened under the chairmanship of Dr. Ramesh C. Gaur, Dean (Administration) and HoD Kalanidhi Division, IGNCA. Dr. Gaur reiterated NMCM's initiatives, including future possibilities of supporting the bead-making craft as an economic enterprise for local communities. He also referenced the scale and scope of the MGMD Portal, emphasising its central role in cultural preservation.



Earlier, in his welcome address on the first day, Dr. Mayank Shekhar, Mission Director, NMCM, outlined the Mission's broader objectives to integrate cultural documentation with long-term development strategies. The keynote address, 'Indian Stone Beads: Interlacing Craft, Culture, and Technology', was delivered by Prof. Alok Kumar Kanungo, archaeologist and faculty at IIT Gandhinagar. Drawing from extensive fieldwork, he traced the origins of stone bead-making in Khambhat to the Harappan era, offering insights into the continuity of India's craft traditions and the advancement of ancient drilling, polishing, and production techniques. He demonstrated how these practices illuminate the technological, social, and economic organisation of early civilisations.

A special address was delivered by archaeologist and scholar Prof. Ajith Prasad of the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, who spoke on Harappan Stone Beads and Gujarat. He discussed Gujarat's centrality as a historic hub of bead production, enriched by mining activity, scientific experimentation, and its place within ancient trade networks.



A highlight across both days was the live demonstration led by National Award-winning master craftsman Shri Anwar Hussain Sheikh from Khambhat and his team. They showcased the multi-stage process of bead manufacture using traditional tools and age-old Harappan techniques. Participants were also given a rare opportunity to engage hands-on with the craft, creating their own beads under expert guidance.

The study and documentation of Harappan bead-making technologies hold profound significance for NMCM, offering a deep historical context for understanding India's living craft traditions. Through initiatives such as this workshop, NMCM seeks to bridge archaeological research with contemporary artisanal knowledge, ensuring that India's millennia-old cultural expressions continue to flourish within modern society.

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