

Report
Vetiver Training Programme
Bangkok, Thailand

Vetiver Handicraft Training Program at Bangkok

Attended by :	Zehra Tyabji & Rashmi Ranade from WomenWeave, Mumbai, India
Trainer :	Ms. Petai
Duration of Training :	1st May to 11th May 2007
Training Initiated by :	Mr. Richard Grimshaw (The Vetiver Network) Ms. Sally Holkar (WomenWeave, India)
Training Supported by :	The Vetiver Network
Training Organised by :	Office of the Royal Development Projects Board, Bangkok, Thailand
Location of Training :	Bureau of Cottage Handicraft Industries Development, Bangkok, Thailand

Program for Training Course on Vetiver Handicraft

At the Bureau of Cottage Handicraft Industries Development,
Department of Industrial Promotion, Ministry of Industries, Bangkok

May 1 to 11, 2007

1 May 07	10.00 - 10.30 10.30 - 12.00 13.00 - 16.00	Introduction General knowledge on Vetiver Grass Knowledge on materials, tools and material preparation
2-3 May 07	10.00 - 16.00	Understanding of the solid foam model and solid foam model-making
4 May 07	10.00 - 16.00	Basic weaving patterns and handicraft making
5-7 May 07		Weekend and National holiday
8 May 07	10.00 - 16.00	Basic weaving patterns and handicraft making
9-11 May 07	10.00 - 12.00 13.00 - 16.00	Weaving of continuous patterns Decoration and assembling of patterns into an object

Observations and Comments on the Training

(please see photographs on pages 10-15 for the entire training process)

Training Imparted

1. General information on Vetiver leaves
2. Tools and supporting material requirements
3. Vetiver leaf selection and grading
4. Vetiver leaf-sizing and splicing
5. Introduction and method of making foam models
6. Basic weaving patterns
7. Weaving of continuous patterns
8. Converting the weaves into objects
9. Making three-dimensional animal forms
10. Dyeing

Our training at the Bureau of Cottage Handicraft Industries Development, Bangkok provided us a comprehensive overview of the entire Vetiver Handicraft process. As designers attending the training, we came away with a good feel for the Vetiver grass, its potential and limitations. In truth, we felt that the training worked as an excellent opportunity for us not only for the learning of a skill, but more importantly to have had exposure as *observers*, who will now be able to initiate and provide direction to some Vetiver craft programmes in our country.

We had taken with us in advance some design concepts that we thought might work well as Vetiver designs for India. As can be seen from the photographs, we did manage to successfully integrate some of these with our training course material.

Based on the training, we have divided Vetiver Handicraft into the following product categories:

1. Vetiver basket/mat/box weaving
2. Vetiver on-loom weaving
3. Non-woven Vetiver products

Our training dealt primarily with the first and third categories. While we were able to fully grasp the making of non-woven Vetiver products (mainly three dimensional animal forms), we must admit that we wished the training had extended to an entire month, as this was our first hands-on experience with basket weaving! It took us a while to grasp the intricacies of the patterns and the rhythms that create the weaves. (We were surrounded by women of 30 years or more experience!) We felt that perhaps it might have been useful to have taken along a video camera, instead of relying upon a series of step-by-step still shots taken hastily in between having to remember the sequence of several loosely strewn Vetiver leaf strands. Perhaps a video camera is an essential tool (amongst others) to facilitate teaching/learning of basket weaving skills!

Our thanks go to our trainer Ms. Petai, who bore out our inexperience with remarkable patience or what seemed like patience, as communication was completely by way of gestures, given our near total lack of the Thai language and likewise, hers of English.

Another most essential tool for Vetiver Handicraft training in Thailand is an interpreter.

Eventually we produced four basic patterns in a 6*6 inch sample format. We learnt how to introduce a fresh strand of Vetiver leaf

to neatly form a continuation at the termination of the previous strand. We learnt how to conclude a weave by turning the strands back neatly into the weave with the help of a darning needle.

As we learnt to weave in a circular format, we understood how important it was to increase the number of Vetiver leaves radially in order to increase the diameter of the circular mat. The mat, as you will see from the photographs, remains incomplete, as the constraints of time dictated that we move on to the next topic in our training schedule.

To make a three dimensional container, we learnt to turn the four edges from the two dimensional mat by making a change through the creation of a turned border. This was easy, provided that one did not run short of the length of leaf. If that happens, it does get difficult. However we did manage to produce a couple of rather nice looking coasters complete with turned edges and finished corners. One of them even by inserting a second colour.

A peacock (the Indian National bird) was the result of the training in the third category mentioned on the previous page. We were lucky to find the right shades of pre-dyed Vetiver leaves which helped form its rather large back plumage, a feature which we later realised led to the bird standing completely off balance and looking more like an exotic Bird of Paradise! Incidentally our peacock has survived the rigours of being unceremoniously shoved into bursting suitcases, on our travel back to India!

Dyeing of the Vetiver leaves is an important and exciting process, because the correct selection and use of colours in a finished handicraft product cannot be overstressed.

Between us, we have both had previous exposure to dyeing of silk and bamboo, so it was interesting to know that Vetiver leaf-dyeing too, followed the same basic procedures, barring the nature of dye-fixers. The dyes used during our training were chemical fast-fixing dyes.

It might be interesting to experiment here in India with natural dyes, with the knowledge that the colours that result, would not be as brilliant as in chemical dyeing.

The Tool List

1. Commercial pins
2. A pair of small sharp clippers
3. A pair of small sharp scissors
4. Styrofoam (expanded polystyrene or thermocole)
5. Sandpaper blocks
6. BOPP Packing tape
7. Large and wide-eye darning needles
8. Sewing needle and thread
9. Glue-gun (electrically operated) and glue-gun sticks
10. Water-based wood adhesive
11. Water spray-cans and bowls of water
12. Old newspapers
13. Dyes
14. Soaking trough and running water
15. Vats for boiling water
16. Burners

A Broad Outline for Vetiver Handicraft Outreach and Promotion in India

We feel that the following approach and suggestions might be suitable for the spread and dissemination of our observations/training of Vetiver Handicrafts in India.

1. Introduction of Vetiver leaf as a new material within our already existing traditional handicraft clusters in India

We have a large number of established handicraft communities that already work with traditional organic materials such as bamboo, sisal-hemp, cane, banana fibre, jute, rattan and coconut fibre. Most groups work with NGO's or have their own already established marketing networks.

a. We propose that Vetiver be introduced first as a raw material to the areas where the communities are located. Once the raw material supply is established, we envisage that Vetiver can be used as an additional material that will augment its spread and increase the incomes of the communities.

b. We observed that many of the weaving patterns from our Vetiver training were common with those already being generated by bamboo and cane workers in India. Since the craftspeople in such communities are already highly skilled in the weaving process, we suggest a mere transfer of skills from traditional materials such as those mentioned above, to Vetiver.

c. We also envisage the use of Vetiver as a combination material with already used traditional ones.

d. The requirement of tools in the Vetiver handicraft is minimal. The leaves are softer than cane and bamboo, therefore, splicing and cutting of the leaf is relatively simpler. Hence, we don't see the immediate need for provision of any specialised machinery for Vetiver in particular to the craft groups. In fact, some machines are already being used for braiding in the banana fibre craft and may be of use in Vetiver braiding as well.

2. Introduction of Vetiver Handicraft as an Employment-Generation Alternative

Vetiver handicraft can be introduced as a new skill in Vetiver growing areas, with the assistance of The Vetiver Network to locate and co-ordinate with the same. To accomplish this, we will have to, for short durations, (spread out over a year), induct already skilled craftspeople into these regions, who will train and guide others. Such regions may already have associated NGOs who might be willing to accept this new material and act as local co-ordinators for training programmes. We observed that a large capital expenditure in the spread of Vetiver craft is not necessary. A small monetary grant can be can be rotated to newer groups till they become self reliant.

We see Vetiver handicraft also being introduced to already existing urban and rural Womens' Self Help Groups. The likelihood of a successful Vetiver venture with such groups will be higher than with unorganised groups since they will already have their social, credit and insurance systems in place. The latter will essentially be a long term activity and will need initial field-work and sustained co-ordination during the induction period.

3. Introduction of Vetiver for On-Loom Weaving

Although our training did not include Vetiver On-loom weaving, we see this as a great potential area of work in our country.

There are weaving looms peculiar to different states in India. These can introduce Vetiver leaves, into their textile weaving programmes and a new and exciting mix of different weaving textures can be generated market oriented.

We are optimistic enough to foresee their resulting success.

4. Potential for Alternative Uses of Vetiver Leaf

As designers, we also see a potential for the spread of Vetiver leaf for use as alternative material to some of the following activities.

Many of these have been already outlined in one form or another by the Vetiver Network, but we list them here nevertheless because we wish to emphasise their usefulness and relevance to our country.

1. Handmade paper
2. Particle board
3. Cooking fuel in briquette form for smokeless choolahs
4. Bio-fuel
5. Roofs in temporary shelters
6. Fabrication of scrubs, brooms etc.
7. Outdoor pit-fires and barbeque cooking!

The Training Process

Sorting, Grading and Sizing



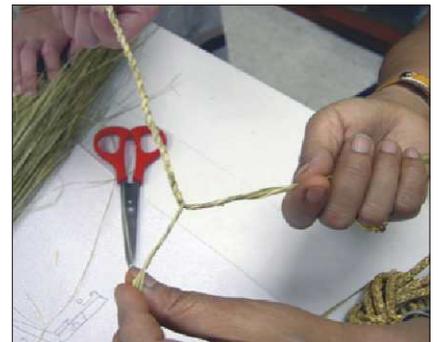
1. Sorted Vetiver



2. Sizing the Vetiver



3. Splicing



4. Braiding



5. Starting on the basic weave

The Basic Weaves



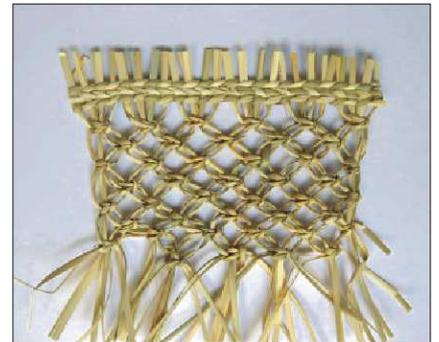
6. Starting a new row



7. The first pattern



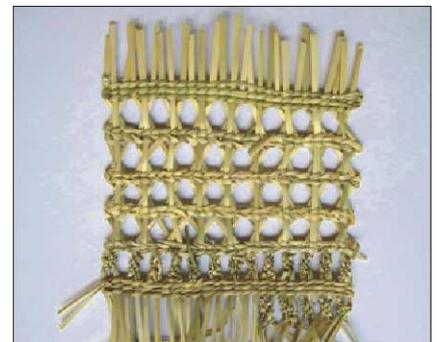
8. Starting the second pattern



9. The second pattern, complete



10. Third pattern



11. Fourth pattern

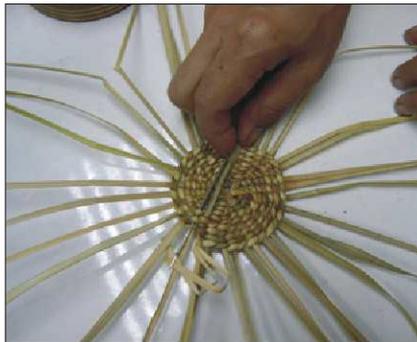
Box Weaving



12. Making a foam mould



13. Starting a cylindrical box



14. Working on the round



15. Turning the edge

**Making the Coasters
and Tray Ends**



16. Base of the coaster



17. The finished coaster



18. The finished coaster



19. Starting the tray edge



20. The finished tray

Dyeing the Vetiver



21. Making bundles



22. Soaking in water for 6 hours

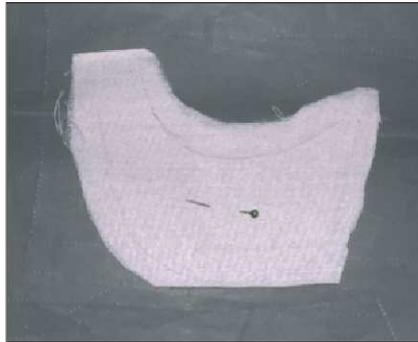


23, 24. Adding the dye and common salt and boiling for about 30 minutes. Zehra and Ms. Petai tackle the blue, Rashmi works with yellow.



25. The dyed Vetiver leaves

Making a Three-Dimensional Form (non-weave)



26.The animal form in fabric



27.The stuffed inner with the Vetiver leaves glued on



28.The peacock gets its plumage



29.The finished peacock

Brief Background of the Trainees

Ms. Zehra Tyabji, *graphic designer*

Education and Qualifications

Central St. Martins School of Art, London

Royal College of Art, London

Kunstgewerbeschule, Zurich

Pratt Institute, New York

L'Ecole de Beaux Arts, Paris

Institute of Product Design, Italy

Ulm Institute of Design, Germany

Work Experience

World Expos, Trade Fairs and Exhibitions at New Delhi, Seattle,
New York, Montreal, Osaka, Moscow

Corporate Identities and Graphic Design for Hotels in India and Egypt
Book Design

Exhibition Design for Festivals of India, National and International
Film Festivals

Consultancies

Business India Group, New Delhi, India

National Institute of Design (NID), Ahmedabad, India

Asia Pacific Conference of Crafts, Kyoto, Japan

Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Export, West Bengal, India

Crafts Council of India

Prime Ministers Secretariat, New Delhi, India

Heritage Projects in England

UN observer to the Angkor Wat Complex, Cambodia

Brief Background of the Trainees

Ms.Rashmi Ranade, *product designer*

Education and Qualifications

Sir J.J.College of Architecture, Mumbai, India
Industrial Design Centre (IDC), Mumbai, India

Work Experience

Consumer Products, Packaging Design, Graphic Design, Book Design, Museum Design and Exhibition Design for National and Multinational Corporates

Product Planning, Strategy and Business Promotion through Design

Designing for Craft Sectors - Bidriware (damascening), Dhokra (cire Perdue) , Leather Toys, Tambats (coppersmiths), Papercraft, Sericulture.

Designing for Heritage related issues

Project Management in Design

Other Activities

On the Executive Committee, Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), Pune Chapter

Visiting Faculty to Industrial Design Centre, Mumbai and Symbiosis College of Design, Pune

Consultant to RDTDC, Ministry of Handicrafts, India

Talks on Design at various local fora

Published Papers on the Madhubani Craft and on Sustainable Desert Living

Work in progress - a book entitled : Sacred Spaces-The Living

Acknowledgements

1. Ms. Sally Holkar
2. Mr. Richard Grimshaw
3. Ms. Suwanna Pasiri
4. Ms. Petai
5. Mr. Chinnaphat
6. Ms. Nongpun Meechuen
7. Ms. Nutta

