



sandur

Sandur Kushala Kala Kendra

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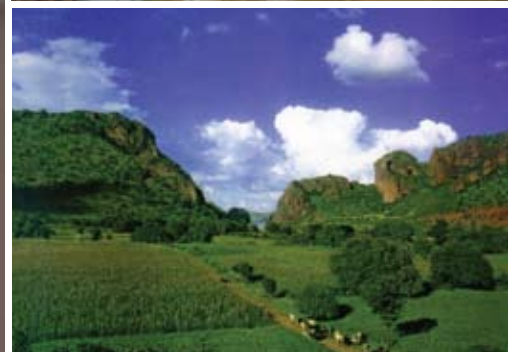
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THE ‘town between hills’

Once upon a time, it was known as Skandapuri... in honour of the temple dedicated to Skanda, or Kumaraswamy, that still stands today. Home to panthers, deer, chinkaras or Indian gazelles, peacocks and lush vegetation, it was a glimpse of paradise, set in one of the earth’s oldest rock formations.

Today it is known as Sandur, which in Kannada means “town between hills”. It is an appropriate name for an area that is defined by a valley surrounded by hills, with two natural gorges on each side. The land continues to be rich in forests, flora, fauna and deposits of iron and manganese ore.

Sandur has weathered time well enough for Mahatma Gandhi to have described it as an oasis, when he visited in 1930. Its population includes people who have had their roots in its soil for many, many generations...and those who came as nomads, and then decided to stay.



FROM nomadic routes to permanent roots

The Banjaras are a nomadic tribe, believed to be descended from the original Aryan Roma gypsies of Europe. These gypsies migrated through Central Asia and Afghanistan, to settle in the deserts of Rajasthan. Their nomadic lifestyle led them to travel across India, taking with them grain, salt and messages. In the course of time and travel, they put down roots in different

corners of the country. They were known by different names in different parts. In Karnataka, they came to be known as Lambanis or Lambadas.

It is believed that the Lambanis came to the Deccan in the 14th century, transporting possessions for Aurangzeb's army. They stayed on, becoming suppliers of grain and cattle to the British. With the advent of

modern transportation, their nomadic life gave way to one rooted in agriculture, manual labour and craft.

They are a joyful people, known for their lyricism and love of dance, music and craft. They wear their wealth, and they wear it aesthetically. They continue to make a spectacular sight in their distinctive, exquisitely handworked clothing and dazzling jewellery.



S KILL with the needle and a 'feel' for colour

The Lambanis follow an animistic religion, worshipping nature and respecting natural processes. They have also absorbed elements of local religion and culture. This gives them a rich body of evolving traditions and beliefs. All of which is reflected vividly in their crafts.

Maybe as a result of their itinerant lifestyle and limited possessions, Lambani women became experts

in creating marvels out of scraps. Using thread pulled from old saris, they sewed small pieces of cloth together to create beautiful clothing, accessories and household items. These were embellished with embroidery, decorative borders, mirrors, shells and coins. Designs, motifs and colours were inspired by images from their nomadic lifestyle and their folk traditions and rituals.

Traditionally, these painstakingly created items were an essential part of the bridal trousseau. In the past, work on a trousseau began as soon as a girl was born!



SANDUR Kushala Kala Kendra

Sandur Kushala Kala Kendra (SKKK) had its beginnings when twelve local Lambani women, from the thanda of Susheelanagar, were brought together to work as a group. The year was 1984 and this modest initiative heralded the start of a significant change in the lives of not only the Lambanis, but also other traditional craftspeople who lived in and around Sandur.

Today, about 500 artisans work with SKKK. It has helped twenty self-help groups to become active. And local craftspeople are benefiting from, and growing with, the organisation.

SKKK owes its existence to the initiative and involvement of the Sandur Manganese and Iron Ores Limited (SMIORE) and its Chairman Emeritus,

M.Y. Ghorpade, who also held the portfolios of Finance Minister and Minister of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj in the Karnataka government.

SKKK's objectives were manifold: encouraging the revival of indigenous crafts, ensuring a better life for the people who made them, finding new markets and making the crafts more relevant to modern tastes.

Initially, activities of SKKK were supported by SMIORE whose infrastructure and marketing support—along with the emphasis they placed on design innovation and consistent excellence of quality—have enabled SKKK to become self-sufficient. And have extended the reach, scope and popularity of its products. To everyone's benefit.



EMBROIDERY and embellishment

CLOTHES : *Saris, skirts, blouses, kurtas, dupattas.*

ACCESSORIES : *Bags, wallets, purses, phone and spectacles cases.*

HOME & LIFESTYLE : *Bed linen, cushion covers, table napkins, wall hangings.*

Lambani needlework is an art that has evolved over centuries. The colourful clothes, accessories and home and lifestyle products made by Lambani women are distinctive and unique. They reflect the tribes' historical roots in Rajasthan and Punjab, their nomadic lifestyle and their social and cultural traditions.

The roots of this craft form can be seen in traditional Lambani clothing, in which pieces of mirror, coins,

shells and costume jewellery are attached to cloth with intricate stitches. Lambani needlework combines pattern darning; embroidery; and appliqué, patch and mirror work on a handloom fabric base. Products continue to be dramatically embellished with shells, trims, mirrors and cotton and wooden tassels weighted with lead and glass beads.



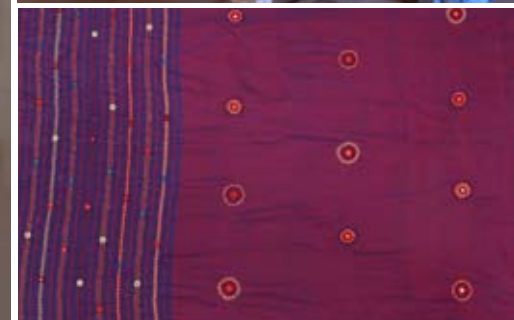
EMBROIDERY and embellishment

Of special note is the traditional *Karnataka Kashida* or *Kasuti* work, a unique form of needlework native to North Karnataka. *Kasuti* work is based on the Holbein stitch and is characterised by beginning and closing stitches meeting, without a break, at the same point. The result is that the two sides of a *Kasuti*-worked piece appear as mirror images of each other. Only a very

discerning eye can distinguish between the right and reverse side. The different stitches used in *Kasuti* work include the double running stitch (*gavanti*), the zig-zag done with the darning stitch (*murgi*) and the ordinary running stitch (*negi*).

The patterns used in *Kasuti* embroidery range from geometric motifs to flora and fauna, and even temple

outlines. Interestingly, *Kasuti* patterns are not traced on to the main fabric. They are worked on a piece of gauze and then attached to the “target fabric”. The gauze is carefully removed afterwards to reveal the intricate needlework. *Kasuti* work is a dying art and SKKK is making efforts to revive the tradition.



NATURAL dyes and khadi

In 1995, SKKK organised a workshop on the use of natural dyes, led by the late Chandramouli and designer Lakshmi Narayan. Subsequently, they began to use vegetable and natural dyes—from seeds, bark and fruit peels—in some of their yarns and block prints. A professional designer assists in the process.

SKKK has a unit dedicated to the production of khadi cloth. About 200 women from three different villages in the region—Yeswantnagar, Krishnanagar and Sandur—spin and weave the khadi. Spinning is done on the amber *charkha*. Handlooms are used to weave the yarn into khadi cloth.



S CULPTING in stone and working with wood

India has a rich tradition of sculpture in stone. The skill, imagination and inspiration of generations of Indian sculptors is evident in temples across the country. Karnataka is home to some of the best examples of sculpture in the world. Stone craft at SKKK includes sculptures of deities, carved panels, garden pieces, tiles, paper weights, pen stands and more.

The tradition of wood carving is an essential and enduring part of India's cultural history. Woodcraft is seen in temple chariots and sculptures; statues; carved doors, pillars, posts and gateways; furniture; and toys, puppets and masks. Woodcraft was considered both an important art and valuable trade. In continuation of tradition, sculptors at SKKK apply chisel to wood

to create everything from religious statues to elegant, decorative tableware.



RAFTS from natural fibres

- FURNITURE
- BASKETS
- LAMPSHADES
- TABLEWARE

Cane, grasses, reeds and fibres make the perfect material with which to craft a range of items. They have many virtues: they are strong and flexible, environmentally friendly, light weight, durable and easy to maintain. They are also available locally. Fibrous plants like Sisal are grown along the banks of the Tungabhadra River, near Sandur. Craftspeople at SKKK create a range of

utility and decorative products from these versatile materials.

Certifications and awards

Craftmark certification from the All India Artisans and Craftworkers Association, New Delhi (AIACA).

Seal of Excellence for Handicrafts Products in South Asia, 2004, by UNESCO-CCI.

National Award from President of India, 2002, for Banjara Embroidery Wall-hanging by Smt. Shanta Bai Kallahalli.

National Excellence Award from Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (KVIC), 2004, for Banjara Embroidery by Smt. Gowri Bai Ambu.

Karnataka State Award, 2004, for Banjara Embroidery by Smt. Sithavva.

Our associates...

Crafts Council of India, Chennai.

Crafts Council of Karnataka, Bangalore.

Dastkar—A Society for Crafts and Craftspeople, New Delhi.

Aid to Artisans, USA.

Trade Craft, UK.

Asian Heritage Foundation, New Delhi.

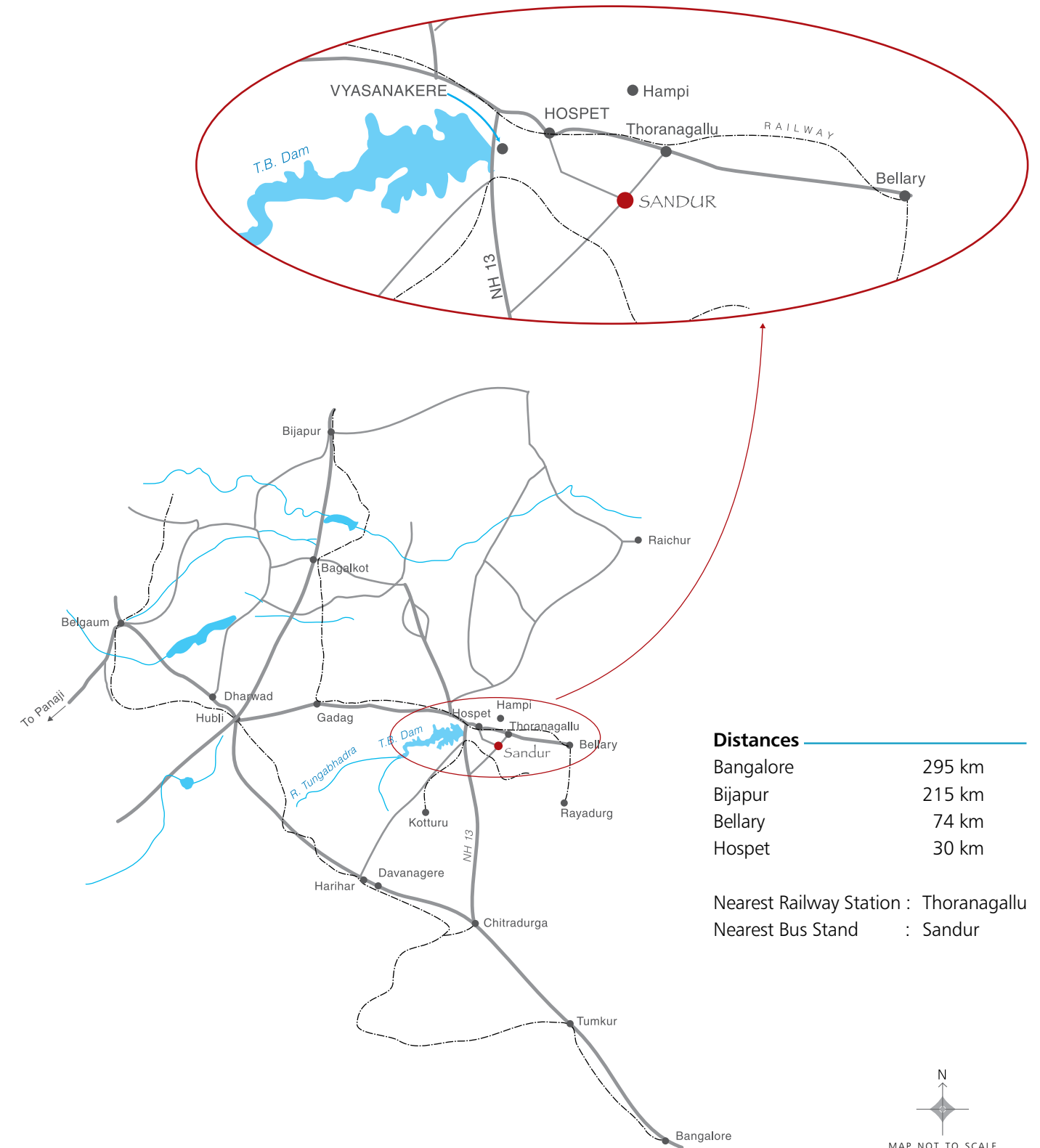
...and development partners

DC Handicrafts, Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, New Delhi.

KVIC, Mumbai.

KVIB, Bangalore.

NABARD, Bangalore.





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