



JK LAKSHMIPAT UNIVERSITY
Institute of Design
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Sugri Shala:

Crafting knowledge through local context and
sensorial learning

VOL. 1 of 1

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The Evaluation Jury has recommended Yuktarth Mishra
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Herewith, for the project titled "Sugri Shala: Crafting knowledge through local context and sensorial
learning"

Jury Chairman

Jury Member

Jury Member

Subsequent remarks regarding fulfillment of requirements

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About Kutch

Kutch, a district in the northwestern corner of Gujarat, is a land shaped by extremes of climate, terrain, and creativity. Bordered by the Arabian Sea and the Great Rann, its semi-arid expanse may seem barren at first glance, yet it holds one of the richest traditions of craft and indigenous knowledge systems in India. The rhythm of life here follows both nature's cycle and the cycle of making. In every village, craft is not a separate profession, it is culture, memory, and identity in motion. Weaving, pottery, bandhani, metalwork, leathercraft, lacquer, and embroidery thrive not in museums but in everyday homes, where knowledge is passed down through practice and participation.

What sets Kutch apart is that its crafts are not just about aesthetics or economy; they carry ecological wisdom, historical memory, and intuitive science. The weaver understands ratios through pattern, the potter senses chemistry through clay, and the embroiderer maps symmetry without needing a compass. For generations, children have grown up watching their parents work with their hands, learning not through instruction, but through immersion. Yet, much of this living knowledge remains excluded from our classrooms, as modern education often reduces learning to reading and listening.

Kutch becomes more than a backdrop in the documentary film- Sugri Shala, it becomes the teacher. It reminds us that education can be sensorial, situated, and meaningful when rooted in place. In Kutch, we see a possibility of a learning that is not abstract or distant, but local, alive, and woven into the fabric of community life.



Synopsis

Sugri Shala is a documentary film that explores a reimagined vision of education rooted in the cultural and craft ecosystem of Kutch, Gujarat. As part of my Graduation Project in collaboration with Khamir Foundation, this film documents the story of Sugri Shala, an initiative that integrates traditional craft practices into the formal school curriculum to make learning more experiential, rooted, and meaningful.

The current education system, tends to limit the way knowledge is accessed—primarily through sight and hearing. In contrast, craft engages all the senses. It is tactile, rhythmic, embodied, and intuitive. Through this film, I have tried to communicate how learning through craft activates the body as much as the mind, offering children a deeper, more holistic understanding of concepts in science, math, and beyond.

Today, Sugri Shala is being implemented in seven government schools in and around Bhuj, with growing interest from other educators. This project is a reflection on what education could look like when we honour the wisdom in our hands, homes, and heritage. It hopes to inspire educators, policymakers, and learners to rethink where and how real learning begins.



Objective

The objective of Sugri Shala is to showcase the potential of integrating traditional craft-based knowledge into formal education systems, focusing on Kutch, Gujarat. This documentary film aims to explore how traditional crafts can provide a hands-on, experiential learning experience deepening their understanding of academic concepts such as science, math, and social studies connecting children with their cultural heritage, while also connecting children with their cultural heritage. By focusing on Khamir Foundation's Sugri Shala initiative, the project aspires to highlight the transformative power of craft-based pedagogy in addressing the gaps in the current educational system.

This project serves not only as an educational tool but also as a catalyst for change, seeking to inspire educators, policymakers, and communities to reconsider how education can be more inclusive and rooted in local contexts. It advocates for the value of indigenous knowledge and its integration into modern educational frameworks, ensuring that students not only learn but live their culture in meaningful ways.



Client & Design Brief

Client: Khamir Foundation, Kutch

Khamir is a platform in Kachchh that works to preserve, promote, and evolve the rich craft heritage of the region. With a commitment to sustainable and community-rooted development, Khamir engages with local artisans, promotes indigenous materials, and builds collaborations that bridge traditional knowledge with contemporary relevance. Within this vision, Sugri Shala was initiated as a response to the limitations of formal education in the region, seeking to reimagine learning through the lens of craft.

Design Brief:

To conceptualize, shoot, and edit a documentary film that captures the essence and journey of Sugri Shala, a craft-based educational initiative by Khamir Foundation. The film should:

- Showcase the gap in the current education system and how Sugri Shala attempts to bridge it.
- Document the lived experiences of students, artisans, and educators involved in the program.
- Use visual storytelling to reflect the educational and cultural value of crafts in classroom settings.
- Offer a narrative that's both personal and systemic, one that explores change while being rooted in the local context of Kutch.
- Capture the pedagogical philosophy, community engagement, and broader impact of Sugri Shala on education.
- The final output was to be a short documentary film (10 minutes).

Research

Understanding the Context: Education and Craft in Kutch

Kutch is a region where learning often happens outside the classroom. Children grow up surrounded by spinning wheels, looms, potter's wheels, and dye pits. These tools aren't just remnants of tradition—they're living objects, holding within them complex knowledge systems that have been passed down generations.

Yet, when children step into schools, this wealth of local wisdom is left behind. The classroom becomes a place disconnected from the rhythms of home and community. Textbooks dominate learning. The hands are stilled, and only the head is engaged.

Through conversations with educators, artisans, and curriculum designers at Khamir, it became clear that the problem isn't just outdated content—it's a system that fails to see the child in context.



Primary Research: Field Visits and Observations

My initial research involved visiting multiple government schools in Kutch where Sugri Shala sessions had been implemented. I observed classrooms both with and without the program to understand:

- Student engagement levels
- Teaching methodology
- How local knowledge (or its absence) shaped perception of learning

I also spent time in artisan households, watching them spin, weave, dye, and build. In these spaces, I witnessed children playfully engaging with the craft tools, asking questions, replicating movements. It was an education, just not the one rewarded by marksheets.



Secondary Research: Literature and Educational Models

To place Sugri Shala in a wider context, I studied:

- Nai Talim (Gandhiji's philosophy of education): where learning is rooted in productive work, and children learn through doing, thinking, and feeling together.
- Reports from organizations working in alternative education, including the National Education Policy 2020 which highlights the need to integrate indigenous knowledge systems into mainstream education

Insights Gathered

- **Craft as Curriculum:** Craft isn't just a skill it's a system that naturally embeds all the subjects that are taught in classroom.
- **The Role of the Artisan:** In a world of degrees, the artisan is often unrecognized as an educator—but their teaching is deeply impactful.
- **Children Learn Best When Learning Feels Like Play:** When spinning a charkha or shaping a pot, children don't feel like they are being taught—but the learning is profound.
- **Systemic Resistance:** Any new pedagogy must work with the system, not around it. Craft-based learning has to align with school curricula to be accepted.
- **The Missing Voice:** Children, artisans, and even teachers often go unheard in education policy. Sugri Shala brings their voices to the center.

Data Collection

Approach

The process of data collection for Sugri Shala was designed to be immersive and ethnographic. Since the project is rooted in lived experiences, it was crucial that the data not just be numerical, but also emotional, cultural, and sensory.

The data collection happened in three forms:

- In-depth Interviews
- Participant Observations
- Archival and Audio-Visual Material



1. In-depth Interviews

I conducted interviews with key stakeholders involved in the development and implementation of Sugri Shala:

- **Sushma (Program Head, Sugri Shala)**

Talked about the genesis of the project, her concerns with mainstream education, and her vision for an ecosystem-based learning model.

- **Khyati (Curriculum Designer)**

Shared detailed insights into how textbook concepts were mapped onto craft activities, and the resistance and acceptance she faced while working with government schools.

- **Rishikesh Bhai (former Curriculum Designer)**

Gave Knowledge about sensory involving learning methods and talked indepthed about *Nai Talim*.

- **Ghatit Bhai (Former Director of Khamir)**

Gave the history of the program and also helped understaning the social, economical dynamics of craft communities.

- **Krishna Ben, Subadra Ben & Pushpa Ben (Feild facilitator)**

I spent most of my time on feild visits to school with them. I learnt a lot about how the curriculum is being implemented and how the activities are being performed in schools.

- **Teachers from Pilot Schools**

Gave feedback about how students responded to the sessions and whether the understanding of textbook content improved.

- **Local Artisans**

Spoke about their role in education, how it felt to be seen as a teacher, and their interaction with students.

- **Students**

Shared their experiences with the sessions, what they enjoyed, and what they remembered. The most valuable insight here was how students started seeing everyday craft tools differently—as tools of learning, not just work.

- **Hussain Bhai (Potter)**

He shared how he enters the classroom and teaches various subjects through pottery, explaining what he keeps in mind during the process and why this approach is important.

- **Vankar Shamjibhai (Master Weaver)**

He spoke about how children of artisans learn the craft at home and the process they follow. He also shared ways to spark curiosity in a child when introducing a new topic.

2. Participant Observations

Over several weeks, I spent time:

- Inside classrooms during regular classes and Sugri Shala sessions
- At artisans' homes and workshops
- At team meetings and feedback sessions
- I observed body language, curiosity levels, participation, hesitation, and moments of connection.

These observations helped me build a narrative that wasn't just factual, but human and felt. For example:

“A student learning kinetic energy from a spinning charkha smiled as the loom creaked—*‘Yeh toh wahi hai jo class mein padhaate hain!’*”

Such small, spontaneous recognitions became key emotional cues in the film.

Ethical Considerations

- All interviews were recorded with prior consent.
- Children's identities were protected, and footage was used respectfully.
- Artisans were acknowledged not just as contributors but as co-creators of the learning process

3. Archival and Audio-Visual Material

- I accessed video documentation from Khamir's archive that included early pilot sessions, craft demonstrations, and team reflections.
- From this, I handpicked clips that aligned naturally with the voiceover and built the visual tone of the film.

Design Process

Initial Phase: Understanding the Brief and Context

The journey began with immersion—understanding Sugri Shala not just as a program, but as an evolving practice rooted in the ethos of Khamir and the region’s craft traditions. I spent time with the Khamir team, observed classroom sessions, and studied internal documentation around Nai Talim and experiential learning.

As the research deepened, the objective of the film began to take shape:

To clearly show what Sugri Shala is doing on the ground, and to articulate the thought and vision behind it.

While Sugri Shala has been active for some time, its story hasn’t reached many schools, educators, or institutions that could benefit from its approach. The film needed to fill this gap—not by simply promoting the program, but by thoughtfully documenting its practice and purpose. The design challenge was to create a film that could introduce this unique educational model to a wider audience, while staying true to its rooted, reflective nature.

Finding the Narrative Core

I began listing down moments, quotes, visuals, and personal reflections from my time on the field. Patterns began to emerge—clock ticking in classrooms, the movement of the charkha, children’s wonder at tools they had grown up with but never questioned.

This led to the development of the **7-Step Story Structure** (based on John Truby’s framework), which became the backbone of the film:

Weakness and Need – The disconnect in mainstream education

Desire – To make learning more rooted and relevant

Opponent – Resistance from systems and mindsets

Plan – Introducing concepts through craft-based methods

Battle – Struggles for acceptance and scaling

Self-Revelation – Understanding that transformation lies within existing systems

New Equilibrium – A classroom that embraces its own culture

Script Development

Once the structure was set, I wrote the film in scenes—not just in terms of voiceovers, but visual rhythm. I paired each voice with an atmosphere. For instance:

- When Sushma speaks about Nai Talim, we see the charkha spin—grounding philosophy in materiality.
- When Khyati speaks about systemic resistance, we enter a school meeting—glances, hesitations, and eventual shifts.

The script moved between:

Observational footage

Voiceovers (collected from interviews)

On-screen text

Environmental audio (tools, classroom chatter, bhajans)

Visual Design and Footage Curation

While editing, I realized I needed more shots to evoke the craft landscape of Kachchh. I reached out to Krutika, who had covered multiple crafts in the region. She generously shared her footage.

I carefully watched each video, selecting only those shots that aligned with the emotional and narrative beats of the film.

Every selected shot was then:

- Color corrected to maintain a consistent tone
- Sound balanced to avoid distraction
- Integrated rhythmically with the narration



Sound Design and Music

- I used the ambient rhythm of the charkha, loom, and spinning wheel to create texture.
- I recorded weavers singing bhajans and layered them into the film's ending. These songs became emotional bridges—connecting the viewer to the inner world of the artisan.
- Classroom sounds—bells, footsteps, pages turning—were consciously layered to highlight the tension between formal and informal learning spaces.
- The background music and sound effects were taken from *Pixabay*.

Edits and Refinement

The film went through multiple cuts. Each draft was screened internally at Khamir. Feedback centered around pacing, clarity, and emotional tone. I made sure to keep the voice honest—not overly polished or preachy. It had to feel like a conversation with the land and the people who make it.

Final Output

The final film is a 10-minute documentary titled *Sugri Shala*.

Methodology

The methodology for Sugri Shala was designed around an ethnographic, observational, and narrative-based approach—one that could respectfully hold the complexity of craft knowledge and education reform. The nature of the subject demanded a sensitive, slow, and immersive process, not just a structured technical one.

1. Ethnographic Approach

I immersed myself in the environment of Khamir and the schools engaged with Sugri Shala. This meant spending time not just during “sessions,” but in the in-between moments—tea with facilitators, watching artisans at work in their homes, sitting in on curriculum planning meetings, and simply walking through the corridors of schools.

This phase was crucial in shaping not just my understanding of the initiative, but also my relationship with the people. I wasn’t an outsider collecting data—I became a part of the rhythm.

Key observations during this phase included:

- The difference in body language between children inside and outside the classroom
- The ease with which artisans used scientific language unknowingly
- The quiet transformation happening in the attitudes of some teachers

2. Semi-Structured Interviews

conducted conversational interviews with key team members:

- Sushma, who provided the ideological foundation of the project
- Khyati, who explained the pedagogical vision and struggles
- Several facilitators and school teachers, who reflected on the evolution of sessions

These interviews weren't rigidly planned. Instead, I let the conversations flow, often letting silence guide the next question. This helped me capture not just facts, but tone, pauses, emotions, and unspoken tensions.



3. Participatory Observation

I participated in actual Sugri Shala sessions—watching, filming, helping students with tools, and engaging in informal conversations. This helped me understand the impact of the sessions beyond what interviews could reveal.

It allowed me to:

- Observe how children interpreted tools differently
- Notice how teachers began connecting textbook concepts with what was being taught through craft
- Understand how facilitators navigated school hierarchies and constraints



4. Visual Ethnography

My core medium was film. So the methodology had to also be visual. I treated the camera not as a recording device, but as an extension of my eye. The device I used to shoot is Iphone 13. The reason behind using phone is to blend in easily with in the class environment. I didn't want the children to feel that they are being recorded all that time. It may make them nervous. I looked for small gestures, the way children touched cotton, how an artisan paused before explaining a process.

Rather than large dramatic moments, I focused on:

- Slowness (spinning wheel turning)
- Everyday beauty (hands stained with indigo)
- Repetition (loom movements, steps, cycles)

This approach helped the film carry a tactile and sensory language that complemented the verbal narratives.

Framework

The framework of Sugri Shala as a project lies at the intersection of alternative pedagogy, cultural knowledge systems, and documentary storytelling. To design this film and document its impact meaningfully, I constructed a narrative and research scaffold that stayed true to both the philosophical intent of the initiative and the lived experiences of its community.

This framework was not pre-decided—it was shaped over time, evolving as I went deeper into the field. What follows is a breakdown of the core pillars that guided this film’s conception and structure.

1. Pedagogical Foundation: Nai Talim and Craft-Based Learning

At its core, Sugri Shala draws from Mahatma Gandhi's Nai Talim—an educational philosophy rooted in:

- Integrating head, heart, and hands
- Making productive work the basis of learning
- Valuing local knowledge and lived experience

This philosophy became the baseline against which I framed every sequence, shot, and question. The film's voice needed to embody learning through doing, not just talk about it.

How it informed the framework:

Every scene that juxtaposed textbook knowledge with craft practice was placed with this tension in mind. For example, the charkha being used to teach kinetic energy wasn't just a metaphor—it was an act of re-centering pedagogy around experience.

2. Documentary Structure: The 7-Step Story Spine

To give the film a structured narrative arc while retaining its conversational authenticity, I adopted John Truby's 7-Step Story Structure. This helped balance philosophical depth with emotional clarity.

- **Weakness & Need:** The disconnect between formal schooling and indigenous knowledge
- **Desire:** The urge to bridge this gap through experiential, craft-based learning
- **Opponent:** Systemic rigidity, bureaucratic challenges, and resistance to change
- **Plan:** Working within schools to embed craft in existing curriculum
- **Battle:** Navigating doubt, rejection, and institutional pushback
- **Self-Revelation:** Realization that change must happen inside the system, not outside it
- **New Equilibrium:** Schools accepting Sugri Shala, children learning through their roots

3. Multi-Modal Research Integration

Finally, the film was built not just on visuals but a layered integration of:

- Archival philosophy (Nai Talim writings, Gandhian thoughts on education)
- Field research (observations, interviews, sounds, textures)
- Design thinking (user-centered lens applied to children, facilitators, and teachers)

This helped position the film not as a flat narrative but as a living, layered document of change.

Explorations

Exploration, in the context of this project, was not just about design iterations—it was about immersing, observing, absorbing, and then gradually uncovering the tonality, texture, and truth that Sugri Shala needed to express. The film emerged not from a single storyboard but from multiple explorations—of space, sound, narrative, and visual rhythm.

This section outlines the various directions and experiments I undertook before arriving at the final language of the film.

1. Visual Explorations

a. Scouting and Frame Composition

My initial visits to Khamir and surrounding schools were spent observing without a camera. I was looking not just for locations, but for moments that carried meaning.

b. Craft Demonstrations and Re-enactments

I captured spontaneous interactions: children mimicking loom motions, artisans explaining threads to curious students. These gave me clues on how to choreograph scenes that didn't look staged but still communicated effectively.

c. Contrast Studies

I explored how contrasting visual spaces could narrate the gap between textbook learning and community knowledge:

The sterile symmetry of a school corridor vs. the earthy clutter of a weaver's home
These contrasts became central devices for building visual tension and reflection in the film.



2. Sound and Music Explorations

a. Sonic Textures of Tools

Each craft tool had its own music:

The hum of the charkha, the creak of the loom, the soft thuds of clay on a potter's wheel.

I experimented with layering these as rhythmic elements under voiceovers.

b. Bhajans by the Weavers

I made a dedicated trip to record bhajans sung by local weavers. Their songs deeply tied to rhythm.

c. Classroom Ambience

School bells, footstep echoes blackboards—all were recorded live and added as subtle background layers to maintain sonic authenticity.



3. Narrative Explorations

a. Style of Voiceovers

Should it be an observer's voice or a participant's?

I initially explored an omniscient narration style but eventually moved to first-person voiceovers from Sushma and Khyati, allowing the story to stay conversational and grounded.

b. Structure Experiments

I tried different sequence arrangements:

- Starting with artisans and moving to the school
- Beginning inside the classroom and letting it expand outwards

Eventually, I chose the latter as it more naturally led the viewer into the central question—what lies outside the classroom walls?

c. Showing vs. Telling

Many times, I dropped full voiceover lines in favor of visual storytelling—letting a spinning wheel or a child's curious gaze convey the point instead of a scripted line. This helped the film breathe with moments of silence.

4. Color and Tone Explorations

a. Natural Color Grading

I explored muted earth tones with occasional bursts of color—like dyed yarn or school uniforms. These choices helped maintain the emotional authenticity of the setting without romanticizing it.

b. Temporal Transitions

Some scenes were captured during different times of the day to explore how changing light and shadows could signal passage of time and mood—a quiet noon at school vs. a golden dusk in a weaver's home. Eventually, I chose the latter as it more naturally led the viewer into the central question—what lies outside the classroom walls?



Design Development

The design development phase of Sugri Shala was where the threads of narrative, visuals, and audio began to weave into a coherent film. Unlike traditional design processes that may rely on sketching or prototyping alone, this film-based project demanded a simultaneous evolution of scriptwriting, fieldwork, shot curation, sound editing, and postproduction storytelling.

1. Refining the Narrative Arc

Using the 7-step story structure by John Truby, I shaped the script into a progressive journey:

- **Opening Scene:** A classroom lesson on kinetic energy sets the tone—structured, scripted learning.
- **Juxtaposition:** The same concept is seen in a spinning charkha, demonstrating how science lives within craft.
- **Voiceovers:** Personal, honest, and locally rooted voices (Sushma and Khyati) helped maintain trust and clarity.
- **Turning Points:** The idea of building a separate school becomes a moment of reflection before reaffirming the goal to work within existing systems.

Every step of the story was emotionally mapped—building empathy, asking questions, and arriving at a quiet but powerful conclusion.

2. Visual Storytelling and Editing

a. Footage Selection

Working with both my own footage and shots received from Krutika (who had documented various crafts of Kutch), I painstakingly curated visuals that aligned with each voiceover. Not every beautiful shot made it in—only the ones that carried meaning and matched the emotional pacing.

c. Rhythmic Editing

Pacing was deliberately slowed down at certain moments to allow space for reflection.

3. Sound Design and Voice Integration

a. Bhajans as Emotional Undercurrents

The weaver's bhajans, recorded on-site, served as both score and cultural pulse of the film.

b. Voiceovers with Human Texture

Instead of polished narration, I kept slight imperfections—pauses, breath, ambient background noises. This preserved intimacy and made the voices feel real, not scripted.

c. Ambient Layering

The subtle layering of everyday sounds—bells, footsteps, scribbling chalk, rustling cotton—added texture and realism. It wasn't about filling silence—it was about letting the film breathe in its own rhythm.

4. Color Grading and Visual Mood

I used a restrained palette, drawing from:

- Earth tones of Kutch: browns, ochres, indigo
- Pops of local color: threads, tools, student uniforms

6. Collaboration and Finalization

This phase was not done in isolation.

- Krutika's contribution of additional craft footage was pivotal. I went through each of her shots, matching them with my script and selecting only those that enhanced the narrative's truth.
- I consulted the Khamir team, ensuring the script was aligned with their philosophy and accurate in representation.
- After each rough cut, I sought feedback from peers and mentors to refine the timing, flow, and emotional clarity.

The result is a film that feels not like a documentary about education, but a portrait of a quiet revolution

Synthesis

The process of creating Sugri Shala was not just about crafting a documentary—it was an exercise in listening deeply, observing closely, and finding meaning in moments that may otherwise go unnoticed. The synthesis phase brought together all the threads of research, field immersion, interviews, design development, and postproduction to uncover the core essence of the film.

Thematic Core

At its heart, Sugri Shala is about redefining education—not as a formal structure confined to four walls and textbooks, but as a lived, embodied experience that draws from culture, tradition, and practice. Through storytelling, I synthesized the following themes:

- **Education beyond classrooms:** Learning doesn't start and end with textbooks only.
- **Artisans as educators:** The traditional separation between “knowledge giver” and “craftsman” is blurred.
- **Children as explorers:** When connected to their context, children are not passive recipients—they question, reflect, and grow.
- **Change from within:** The film doesn't suggest a complete rejection of schools or textbooks, but a transformation from inside—by planting seeds of curiosity and connection.

Analysis

As the film *Sugri Shala* came together, what unfolded was not just a story about education reform—it became a mirror reflecting the gaps, the potential, and the quiet resilience of a community that learns with its hands and teaches with its lived wisdom. This section offers a critical analysis of the impact, challenges, patterns, and nuances observed during the journey.

1. Understanding the Systemic Gaps

The data collected from school visits, interviews, and classroom observations revealed a consistent pattern:

- Learning was often detached from the child's context. Concepts like kinetic energy, chemical reactions, or geometry were taught in abstraction, with no tangible connection to everyday life.
- Craft knowledge remained invisible in formal settings, despite its presence in children's homes. A potter might sit in the courtyard, spinning clay with precision, while their child inside memorizes textbook definitions of force.

This divide created a dissonance—not just educational, but cultural. Children were unconsciously made to feel that what they saw and learned at home was secondary or even irrelevant.

2. Interventions That Shifted Perception

What Sugri Shala did differently and effectively was bridge this gap through minimal yet meaningful interventions:

- It didn't overhaul the syllabus. It worked with what was already there.
- It didn't replace teachers. It collaborated with them.
- It didn't romanticize artisans. It positioned them as knowledge holders.

These subtle shifts led to noticeable change:

- Children began retaining concepts longer when they learned through tools like charkhas or potter's wheels.
- Teachers, who initially hesitated, started showing interest in using these methods themselves.
- Schools that gave the project limited time slots began requesting longer engagement and repeat sessions.

3. Impact Beyond the Screen

As a design student, what stood out most was that this was not a film created to entertain—it was created to spark a conversation, plant a question, and validate a community.

The true success of Sugri Shala won't be in its festival screenings or accolades. It will be in how many schools pause and ask: "Can we teach differently, using what we already have?"

Learnings

Creating Sugri Shala was as much about understanding the intricacies of film production as it was about gaining deep insights into the intersection of education, culture, and community. The process taught me valuable lessons that extended beyond the scope of the project itself. These learnings can be categorized into three primary domains: Narrative Construction, Pedagogical Understanding, and Design Thinking.

1. Narrative Construction:

Embracing Complexity in Simplicity:

One of the most important lessons I learned was how to tell a complex story in a way that feels intuitive and accessible. Sugri Shala is not just a film about education; it's about community, tradition, and the integration of knowledge systems. This layered complexity could easily overwhelm the viewer, but the challenge was to distill it into a narrative that felt seamless and engaging.

2. Pedagogical Understanding:

Experiential Learning as a Medium of Engagement:

Through working with Sugri Shala, I gained a deeper appreciation for experiential learning—an approach that places the learner at the center of their education. Unlike traditional methods, which often treat students as passive recipients, experiential learning encourages them to explore, question, and connect with real-world knowledge.

- I observed firsthand how children engaged differently when concepts like physics and chemistry were taught through craft practices. It wasn't just about understanding theories—it was about living those theories.
- One poignant realization was that crafts provide a tangible connection to knowledge that formal textbooks often fail to offer. The process of weaving or spinning creates an embodied understanding that deepens cognitive comprehension.

What this reinforced for me was that education should not just be about acquiring facts, but about building meaningful relationships with knowledge. This insight is now central to my understanding of design in education.

3. Personal Growth:

The Courage to Follow the Narrative's Pulse:

On a personal level, this project taught me the importance of listening to the story itself. There were moments in the editing process where I felt uncertain—wondering if I was choosing the right shots or if the voiceover was conveying the intended emotion. But with every layer added, the film began to resonate on its own.

The film taught me to trust my instincts as a storyteller and as a designer. Every time I followed the pulse of the story rather than forcing a direction, it resulted in a stronger, more authentic narrative. This was one of the most liberating aspects of the process, and it gave me the confidence to take risks, to experiment, and to leave room for the narrative to evolve.

4. Reflecting on the Bigger Picture:

The documentary wasn't just about one small initiative—it was a reflection of a larger societal issue. The lack of connection between formal education and local knowledge is a global problem, not just limited to Kutch. Through *Sugri Shala*, I learned how small interventions can ripple through larger systems. A film isn't just an artistic endeavor; it's also a tool for change, an instrument that holds power to challenge existing norms and propose new possibilities.

Reflection

As I reflect on the journey of creating Sugri Shala, I realize that the project was not just about the act of filmmaking, but about embodying change—both for the community involved and for me as a designer and storyteller. The film is a personal testament to the transformation that education can undergo when it embraces its cultural roots, when it allows the hands of artisans and the minds of students to collaborate in meaningful ways.

1. The Role of Education in Society:

One of the most profound lessons that emerged during this project was the realization that education is not a one-size-fits-all system. The conventional methods that have been employed for decades may not cater to the diverse needs of students, particularly in rural or underprivileged areas. Sugri Shala is a call to rethink this framework—an invitation to explore more holistic, inclusive, and culturally relevant educational practices.

When I first began working on the project, I saw education primarily through the lens of textbooks and examinations. But through the eyes of the artisans, teachers, and children in Kutch, I began to see education as a living, breathing thing—something that should flow through all aspects of life. This realization shaped my approach to storytelling. Rather than focusing solely on the academic elements, I sought to highlight the rich cultural practices that make the Kutch community so unique.

The reflection on this broader purpose kept me grounded throughout the project. I began to see my work not just as the creation of a film but as a contribution to a larger conversation about the future of education. The film, through its careful attention to craft-based pedagogy, demonstrated that there is untapped potential within local knowledge systems, and it challenged the idea that learning should be confined to books alone.

2. Personal Transformation:

On a personal level, working on Sugri Shala has been transformative. The journey of blending art, culture, and education has deepened my understanding of the potential of design to influence social change. It has reinforced my belief in community-driven design, where the process is as important as the outcome, and where the voices of the people involved must shape the final product.

Throughout the film's development, I learned the importance of flexibility. While I started with a specific vision for the film, the process unfolded in unexpected and beautiful ways. There were moments of doubt, of course—times when I felt uncertain about whether I had enough footage or whether the narrative would come together as I imagined. But by staying open to the evolving story, I was able to create a film that felt authentic and connected to the real-world impact it aimed to showcase.

The project also deepened my understanding of storytelling as a tool for advocacy. As a designer and filmmaker, I have always been drawn to visual storytelling, but Sugri Shala showed me how much more powerful a story becomes when it serves a purpose beyond entertainment. It becomes a voice for change, a vehicle for spreading ideas and challenging the status quo.

3. Looking Forward:

As Sugri Shala nears its completion, I find myself reflecting on what lies ahead. The project has given me invaluable experience in both storytelling and design, and it has shaped my approach to future work. However, the journey doesn't end here. There are still many challenges to overcome in making craft-based education a mainstream approach. The impact of this project needs to extend beyond the documentary; it needs to spark a wider conversation about curriculum reform, educational accessibility, and the preservation of cultural heritage.

Moving forward, I see myself continuing to work in spaces where design and education intersect. I believe that projects like Sugri Shala are not isolated initiatives but part of a larger movement to rethink how we educate and empower future generations. Through my future work, I aim to explore more ways to connect the local and the global, the traditional and the modern, in ways that make education meaningful for everyone, no matter their background or location.

Sugri Shala initial Script

OPENING

BLACK SCREEN

On-screen text (quote):

“By education, I mean an all-round drawing of the best in a child and man—body, mind and spirit... literacy in itself is no education.”

– Mahatma Gandhi

SCENE 1 – INSIDE A SCHOOL CLASSROOM

Visual: A government school in Kachchh. A teacher is explaining the concept of kinetic energy on the blackboard. Children sit, listening.

Cut to: A clock ticking outside the class, in the corridor, It's almost half past one in the clock. The school bell rings and it's time to go back home.

Visual: Children rush out of the class with schoolbags, running down the stairs. Footsteps.

SCENE 2 – THE MASTER WEAVER'S HOME

Visual: A charkha spins slowly. A master weaver works, surrounded by curious children.(Charkha follows the same concept of kinetic energy that was being taught in the class.)

Sound: Rhythmic turning of the charkha and subtle creaking of the loom.

Visual: Children play with cotton, experiment with the loom's movement. Their fingers trace the mechanics.

Camera zooms out slowly: A wide view of the weaver's humble home, sound of tools.

VOICEOVER – SUSHMA (Founder, Sugri Shala)

“Mahatma Gandhi was deeply disturbed by the education system, Like many of us are today That's when he envisioned Nai Talim, a mode of experiential learning that brings together the hands, the head, and the heart.

Education is not just about literacy, it's about nurturing a full personality.

Craft practice becomes a cradle for such learning. It naturally holds within it the concepts of science, maths, history, geography...

But how many children in our schools even know this?”

SCENE 3 – KUTCH LANDSCAPE & CRAFTSMEN AT WORK

Visual: Montage of local artisans metalwork, pottery, weaving all happening within everyday homes.

VOICEOVER – SUSHMA

“In Kachchh, craft is a living knowledge. You’ll find artisans in every house.
But this legacy never reaches our classrooms. Why?”

VOICEOVER – KHYATI (Curriculum Designer, Sugri Shala)

“Children watch their family members weaving, spinning, shaping clay... but still believe that real learning only happens inside classrooms.

So how do we bridge these two worlds, the formal learning of schools, and the rich indigenous knowledge that lives just outside their walls?

This wisdom deserves a place in our classrooms.”

INTRODUCING: SUGRI SHALA

SCENE 4 – INSIDE A SCHOOL CLASS WITH SUGRI SHALA

Visual: Children engage with spinning tools, explore charkhas, calculate speed and torque. Teachers assist.

VOICEOVER

“Sugri Shala works hand-in-hand with schools, teachers, and artisans.

We don’t create new syllabus. Instead, we take what’s already in the textbooks—concepts like torque, kinetic energy, chemical reactions etc. and explore them through craft.

Spinning teaches physics. Pottery introduces chemistry. We’re simply expanding what already exists—using the language of the local.”

SCENE 5 – THE STRUGGLE TO BUILD ACCEPTANCE

Visual: Sugri Shala team in a meeting with school staff. Teachers watching demo sessions.

VOICEOVER – KHYATI

“It wasn’t easy. Some schools treated it as an elective, something extra.

We wanted to make students more curious, more engaged.

But we weren’t teaching ‘craft’. We were teaching through craft.

At one point, we even thought of starting our own school... but we realized: the goal isn’t to build another institution.

It’s to bring this pedagogy to every school in Kachchh.”

SCENE 6 – RECOGNITION

Visual: Children in classrooms, understanding, questioning, experimenting with tools. Teachers observing with interest.

VOICEOVER

“We continued. Even when time slots were small, even when interest was low.

Slowly, schools started offering more time. They saw something shift.

Children began understanding concepts they had struggled with before. They started asking more questions. They started to connect.”

SCENE 7 – ARTISANS AS EDUCATORS

Visual: Artisan explaining a concept to students. Children responding with wonder.

VOICEOVER – SUSHMA

“This journey is also about acknowledging the artisans as educators.

Giving them their due credit.

It’s about reconnecting children to their land, their legacy, their ecosystem.

It’s not just about subjects, it’s about understanding who we are.”

CLOSING SCENE – DATA AND IMPACT

Visual: Schools in Kachchh with “Sugri Shala” sessions in progress. Teachers, facilitators, children, artisans—together.

On-screen text:

“Over X government schools in Kachchh have adopted Sugri Shala’s craft-based learning approach, reconnecting children with their cultural roots while deepening their academic understanding.”

FADE OUT.

End credits roll with soft background music – ambient sounds of the charkha, classroom chatter, spinning wheels.

References

Websites & Digital Resources

Khamir Foundation (2024). Khamir's Craft-Based Education Programs. Retrieved from www.khamir.org/education.

Khamir's official website provided comprehensive details on their ongoing initiatives in integrating crafts into the educational system in Kutch.

UNESCO (2021). The Role of Crafts in Education and Sustainable Development. Retrieved from www.unesco.org/crafts-education.

This article offered global perspectives on the role of traditional crafts in education, highlighting successful programs in different parts of the world.

Youtube Channels

- Mark Bone
- Luc Forsyth
- Kyle Mcdougall
- Austin Meyer
- Alex Zarfati

Glossary

Artisan: A skilled craftsperson who creates handmade goods, often using traditional methods. In the context of Sugri Shala, artisans are central to the integration of craft-based knowledge into the educational process.

Curriculum Design: The process of planning, organizing, and implementing a course or program of study. In Sugri Shala, this involves creating a curriculum that blends formal education with hands-on craft learning.

Craft-Based Education: An educational approach that uses traditional crafts as a medium for teaching academic subjects, encouraging experiential learning and engagement with local cultural practices.

Experiential Learning: A process through which students learn by actively participating in the learning experience, rather than passively receiving information.

Kutch: A region in Gujarat, India, known for its rich cultural heritage and diverse craft traditions. Kutch is the setting for Sugri Shala and the community at the heart of the film.

Image Credits

The following individuals and sources contributed images that were used throughout the documentary and the graduation project document. All images used in the document and the film were selected to maintain authenticity and support the narrative of Sugri Shala.

- **Khamir Foundation Archives**

Images from Khamir's educational programs, workshops, and community engagement events were sourced from their official archive, showcasing the integration of craft-based knowledge in the local schools.

- **Feild facilitators/Educators, Khamir Foundation**

Photographs from various sessions conducted with students and artisans, which were part of the Sugri Shala pilot programs, were provided by Krishna Ben, Subadra Ben & Pushpa Ben, members of the Khamir team.

- **Personal Photography**

All additional images related to the behind-the-scenes of the documentary shoot, including the visuals from the weavers' bhajan sessions, were taken by the filmmaker (Yuktarth Mishra).

- **Jainul Nadaf, Photographer**

He was the second camera person who assisted me in capturing shots during the interview and field visit.

