Role of Craft & Technology in Interior-Architecture Prof. Ar. Smriti Saraswat Department of Architectural & Planning Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee

Lecture – 06 Interior-Architecture: Documenting Knowledge and Skills

Namaste! Hello everyone, welcome back to my course the online NPTEL course on Role of Craft and Technology in Interior Architecture. We are heading towards the module 6. So, module 6 focuses on establishing the importance of Documenting Knowledge and Skills within the realm of Interior Architecture.

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Contents Interior-Architecture: Documenting Knowledge and Skills – Discussion and Examples References

The broad content for today's module interior architecture documenting knowledge and skills, where we will have some examples and will have discussions over them, and then some important references, which would be beneficial for all of you.

Now, if we talk about interior architecture; like any other discipline of field say medicine, sciences or fine arts.

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Interior architecture also has a huge knowledge base and resources. If, we see different regions of the country and different parts of the world different communities. They have all practiced different styles of interior architecture, which have evolved out of their needs climate concerns their way of life and material knowledge, skills that they possess. So, there is already is a knowledge base and there are several resources.

At times we find them documental, at times we find paucity of this documentation. So, the importance of this module is that we are trying to understand why this documentation is required and how it is important for all of us? So, since the knowledge base already exist and there are several other resources, which have not been tapped, which have not been documented.

The emphasis here is on creating this resource hub through documentation. Documenting the knowledge and skills which are very crucial, which are very empirical and important, which have been collated through experiences and generations of wisdom then how to transfer it to the other generations, next generations, contemporary generations and then how to share it and take this knowledge forward.

In a literal sense if we talk about documentation, then it refers to an act or instance of authenticating with documents. It is essentially a process of ensuring conformity to

historical facts, but if I focus a little bit on interior architecture here which is the primary focus of our module and this course also.

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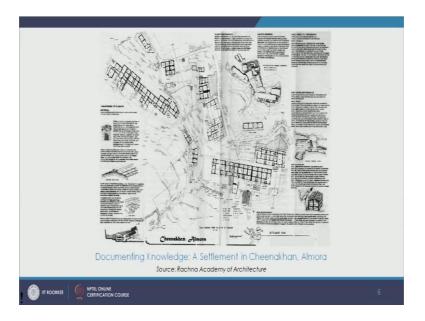


Everything may not be proved through the facts or theoretical constructs. Sometimes it is not possible, but empirical knowledge and skills these are the crucial repositories, which we can fall back up on. So, there are lot of oral traditions, there are lot of knowledge systems which have been practice but there is no documentation. So, there is no particular book or particular theory or particular documentation report, which can be really looked into or referenced to.

So, here what I am trying to say is that lot of these untapped knowledge base and skills. They need to be understood while observing the community and then slowly the generations like ours and the generations to come, understand them document them and then share them. Recognization and documentation of knowledge, skills and practices, associated with interior architecture, specially within the context of India is an important step towards resource building and knowledge sharing, such documentation proves that knowledge has existed in the communities personal or particular areas.

So, it is very important that we focus on documentation and try to understand and learn these existing knowledge systems, knowledge bases and skills.

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This is one drawing here it is an image; this is some documentation work which is done by the Rachna academy of architecture. And, they had taken up a settlement in Almora, which is called Cheenakhan. It is a very old settlement and they have a very unique pattern, because the site is on hills there are contours over there. So, the way it is constructed responding to the site conditions and the contour levels and the lifestyle of people, the weight has been designed it was very interesting to study this understand this and document. So, already one set of documentation is done.

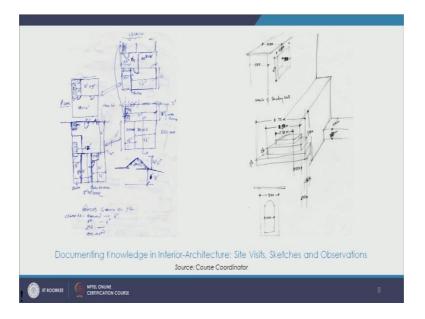
Now, there is another project at IIT Roorkee, which is going on where further documentation taking the base work which is already been done is going on. So, here while documenting this there was lot of knowledge sharing there was lot of understanding on how this community. In those times in a context like this in a hilly area like this they are there is susceptibility to earthquakes and there are adverse climate conditions. How these kind of settlements came up majorly most importantly in response to the way of life and the way the people live there.

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So, after that as part of the ongoing project, these are some sketches or some drawings which were done on the side, there was lot of observations that happened on side, there were lot of interviews and people were talked about.

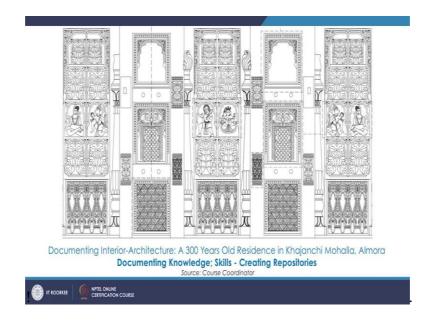
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This is another set of data that was generated and we were also trying to understand in local parlance, what are the elements of space making call there what is a door call there? What is a courtyard call there? So, I am not getting into the details of the

documentation right now maybe when we focus on Uttarakhand as are case study area, then will have a look at those, but what I am trying to say is that documentation is an essential part of understanding the existing knowledge and skills, which these communities possess and they have been transferring them from one generation to another.

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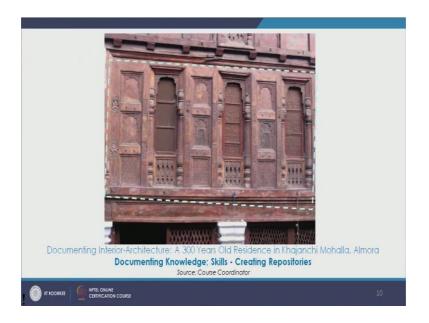


This is another residence in Khajanchi Mohalla, which is again in Almora. Now, this is a very exquisitely carved facade it is in timber the local wood, which is which was available at that time called *Tun*, which has excellent material properties. It is a 300 years old residence, it is still in a very good condition, because the kind of material used and the kind of knowledge that the local masons and the artisans had. They have applied it here with full purity and in complete accordance with the lifestyle of the people.

So, it was very interesting for a first for us to document this house and to understand what are the spaces that lie within this façade? And, what are the different motives and meanings behind this elevation and the stories that it tells us. So, this was an important part of documentations.

So, documentation is not just creating a set of drawings, but also understanding the associated meanings and the way people live and the cumulative experiences over generations and the wisdom.

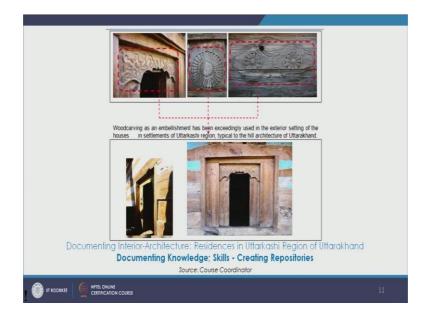
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So, this is the elevation we just saw the drawing. So, by documenting such unique architectural styles, interior architectural styles; we are creating repositories and resource hubs, which will be very beneficial for the times to come to understand the material palette, which was used in these times. I mean what was so unique about them that this house still stands and the condition is fairly intact and the aesthetics are still quite intact and we see lot of scale and proportion, which is like beautifully done, which we see sometimes missing in the contemporary buildings not all but few of them.

Now, this is another example of documentation these are residences in the Uttarkashi region of Uttarakhand.

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And they are constructed in a very unique style, which is called as the *Koti Banal* style of architecture. It is a very indigenous style responding to the climatic conditions and the earthquake resistance. If we see these residences they also have very unique wood carving and they are done by the local masons the indigenous community artisans all of them come together and construct these houses.

So, this is again a very interesting example where while documenting and talking to these people we could understand lot of nitty-gritty of what kind of construction happens? And, how this carving happens? And what are the integral parts of this cluster where the temple is situated and where the houses are situated?

So, documentation and talking to the people trying to understand the local parlance and materials, it always helps us understand the habitation and environment better and how these constructions happened in harmony with nature.

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Exquisite woodwork has been the specialty of Uttarakhand since times immemorial. Abundance of timber, the suitable temperature for insulation of wood, availability of local, skilled craftpersons, prevalence of family tradition has contributed to the growth of this craft in this region. Historical evidences also support the presence of intricate wooden carvings in Uttarakhand. Entire woodworks of 'chaukhats' (frames) and 'tibaaris' (windows with three panels) found here are now on display in the National Museum of Delhi. Utility and decorative items like walking sticks, animal figures, miniature models of famous temples, idols of Gods etc made by Uttarakhand craftsmen have acquired special place. Intricate wood crafts have been seen in many residential and religious structures as well.

Documenting Knowledge and Skills

Source: Dr. Yoshodhar Mathipot. Course Coordinator

So, if we go by Doctor Yashodhar Mathpal several researches what we understand is that we can see exquisite woodwork in Uttarakhand both in Garhwal region and the Kumaon region. And there is an abundance of timber and the temperature over there is suitable for insulation, there is availability of a local skilled craft persons, there are family traditions which have been passed on from one generation to another. So, all of this has contributed in this kind of craft and construction and interior architecture.

So, he has also made a small contribution by in fact, a huge contribution by documenting all these residencies in Garhwal and Kumaon and has is done a base work, which the scholars like us are carrying forward. So, there are historical evidences also with support the presence of intricate wood carvings in Uttarakhand. So, if we see the houses in Uttarakhand wood carving has formed a very innate part of interior architecture. So, it is not just a piece of decoration or aesthetics, but how these carvings the motives and the meanings, associated with them are an integral part of the lifestyle of the people and the interior architecture which they live in.

So, if we see the entire woodworks of the frames and the windows the local parlance for the 3 panel window here it is very interesting it called it is called *Tibaari*. They are now on display in the National Museum of Delhi. So, such is the importance of documenting these old knowledge's, bases their skills, and the important meanings that they have.

Utility and decorative items like walking sticks, animal figures, miniature models, idols of gods etcetera also made by the craft persons in Uttarakhand they have also acquired a special place.

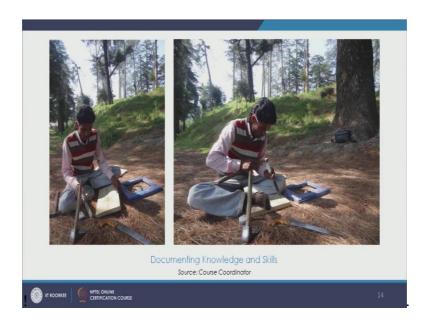
So, integrate woodcraft have been seen in many residential and religious structures as well. So, documentation which has already been done suggest that there is a very exquisite woodcraft that is found in this region and there are several structures and products with still any documentation, dissemination and sharing.

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Here what you can see is Mr. Diwan who is demonstrating the wood carving craft. He belongs to the Diwan community of craft wood carving craft persons. And while I was talking to him he was telling how the traditions have transferred from one generation to another. So, from his grandfather who he fondly calls is Bubuji and then it got transferred to his father Babaji and then he is the third generation and he is still caring forward these knowledge and skills.

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So, the different kinds of tools that are being used and what kind of carvings are done in this region. So, we will see few videos where he explains everything.

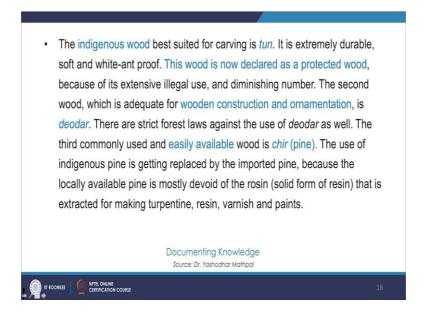
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Also what is the importance of wood carving in this region and he is very proud to say that nowhere else in India such kind of wood carving exists and it is only in Uttarakhand and he talks about the uniqueness of this craft and the knowledge and the skills. So, let us see some videos now .

So, through this documentation and interviewing Diwanji and many other people from his community also going through the research is done by a lot of scholars in Uttarakhand specially doctor Mathpal.

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We could know that the indigenous wood, which is best suited for carving is *Tun*. Now, it is a very old kind of naturally available wood, which is found in Uttarakhand and now it is a rare commodity it is been declared as a protected wood. So, if we see very old houses say 100 years old 200 years old we still see the traces of work which is done in *Tun* and it is of such good quality that the those carvings in houses furniture they still exist.

The second wood which is adequate for this construction and ornamentation is *Deodar*. And there are several *Deodar* trees, but because of strict forest laws. Now, even this is not used as much as it was and is not very easily available. And the third common one would be the fine wood, which is called in local parlance as chair the use of indigenous pine is getting replaced by the imported pine.

So, now because of strict forest law so, the imported pine is taking place of the locally available pine but the indigenous woods like *Tun*, *Deodar* and then *Chir*, they have proved to be timeless we see them being used in construction ornamentation everywhere.

So, out of documentation and by observations going on site talking to people some oral narratives only through all that this repository has been accumulated. So, it is very important to give emphasis on documentation of knowledge and skills.

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This is again the same house we just saw from the outside this is the interior. And, we see another kind of intricate art work here, which is called as the *Aepan* art. And this is done by the women of the house and these paintings are original and they are 55 years old. So, if we see all these paintings, we find several motives we find several floral motives, geometric motives, we find god motives, we find symbolic motives like tree of life. So, all of these enhanced the interior architecture and they also have several embedded meanings within them which communicate lot of stories about all these indigenous communities and they narrate their ethos and the way they used to live. So, through this documentation those stories still survive and tell us a lot about the way of life of people and what went on in that era.

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This was one interesting research that I could find where they original motive from *Kumauni Aepan* art have been documented. So, if we see all of these they all talk about nature, religion, society. So, if we see you know *Vishnu Chauki* or some *Chauki* related to Lord Shiva, we see here sun god, we see the motives from the tree is the base and the flowers. So, they all are associated with our daily lives.

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This is another one from the same research paper and here also the original motives have been researched upon and talked about.

So, when we see them there are several stories and when these kinds of stories are depicted within the interior architecture, it creates another user experience and it becomes very divine. So, to understand also other than the structure, what goes on the surface and what are the narratives that are communicated through them is also of paramount importance. So, as Taylor has also said:

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• "Culture is an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which [people] communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life."

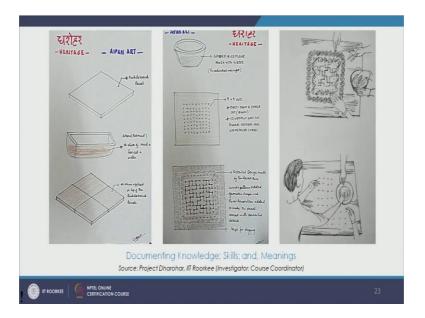
- (Taylor, 1991, 91)

Documenting Knowledge; Documenting Stories

Culture is an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols. A system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which people communicate perpetuate and develop their knowledge about an attitudes towards life. So, all these meanings and symbols that we see within the interior architecture, they communicate a lot detail about the life of people, who inhabit them. In continuation to what we saw in few residences just talked about a last few slides, there was one national workshop that happened in IIT Roorkee, it is called *Dharohar* it is a part of project *Dharohar*.

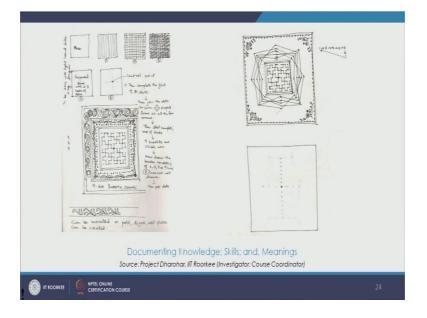
So, there the indigenous artisans and craft persons and masons were invited and their skills and knowledge was documented.

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So, this is some work done by the students and it documents step by step, you know what were the particular materials that we use in these art and craft forms and how did it go on the interior architecture, whether it is there on the wall or the floor? And how would one start you know from which point and then how it would end? Where would be the borders and what are the underline line meanings behind these?

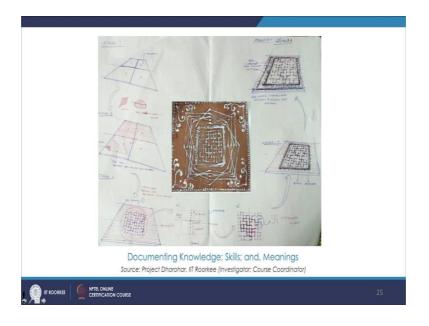
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So, like this is one *Chauki*, the *Aepan*, which is called as the *Swastik Chauki* and it here the documentation done by the student group clearly explains you know. So, where this is the central point this is where one begins and then there is a 9 grid the 9 sorry 9 dots *Swastik* over here that we see in the centre. Which is then expended and then there is this complete grid of 81 dots and outside there is a border and then there is one final border. So, there is a complete mathematics also it is not just aesthetics. So, it talks about culture, it talks about ethos, and these are craft forms also talk about the science and the mathematics.

So, why would somebody start from center and what these 9 dots connote and what does 81 dot grids connote. So, there is a huge science behind this and these knowledge systems and skills which were possessed by these communities they are becoming more and more rare. So, it is all the more important that we start documenting and disseminating them.

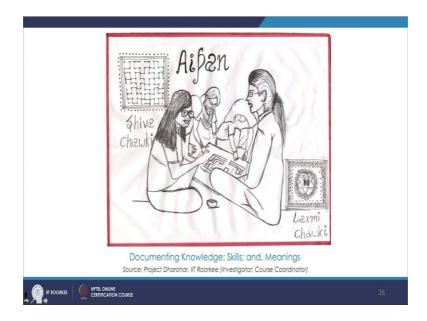
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In continuation this is another documentation which was done by yet another group another one here. So, they have shown the *Lakshmi Chauki* and *Shiva Chauki*.

Moving ahead this is another these are 2 documentation projects which were done by me.

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So, they are they have covered the different parts of our country.

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If you see the left hand side this talks about the stone crafts of India. And you know different parts of the country North India and South India. And, since we are talking about knowledge skills motives symbols meanings this research was particularly about narratives and narratives into space.

So, how do building speak to us, what are the stories that they tell? And how are the stories communicated through the medium of skills and craft? So, how does stone craft being a medium in all of these you know interior architecture styles, how do they communicate the different stories, different narratives, visual, textual, cultural, and spatial of course. So, this was one very interesting project which combines all of what I have been talking about in the previous slides.

This is another one this project focused on city palace Udaipur and documenting varied interior architecture of the palace. Also the different art and craft forms and how these forms the knowledge and the skills by the indigenous people have enhance the interior architecture of the palace and increase the overall experience for a user right from the gateway to the interiors.

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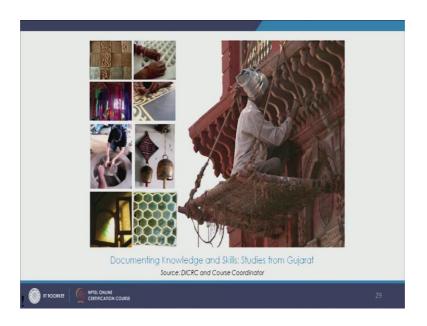


So, here this is again in continuation to the city palace project this is one workshop Gopalji and his family, and we had documented how the mirror work is done, how it was done originally in you know palaces like city palace or Amer fort and how it has transition and transformed today.

So, entire processes you know fixing the mirror the kinds of tools that have being used what kinds of mirrors, coloured mirrors, in plane mirrors, techniques like emboss and

mosaic. So, all these things they add to the experience of interior architecture, they celebrate material, they celebrate, knowledge, and the skills and how all of them when they come together contribute to the making of a space and creating a unique experience within it.

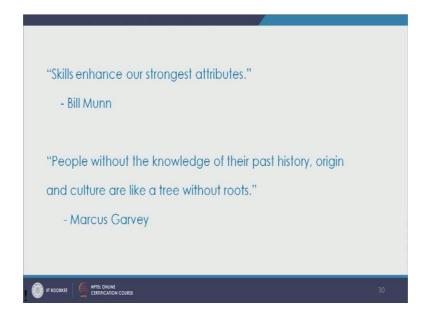
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This slide is from Gujarat and it shows varied materials, knowledge and skills and the work done in stone, the work done in copper, bell making, terracotta, making of tiles, mirror work again which is seen in Gujarat as well.

So, when we try to you know document all these interior architecture forms the related art and craft forms the associated knowledge and the skills. We get an overall holistic picture and it is very much in harmony with nature and the indigenous communities in accordance to their lifestyle is also reflected in what is being constructed. So, documentation and understanding the knowledge and skills contribute a lot in our understanding of interior architecture styles and the region where they belong to.

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I would like to end with these 2 beautiful quotes; "Skills enhance are strongest attributes" "People without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture are like a tree without roots"

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So, just a glimpse of the next module, we will discuss traditional knowledge systems and the ingenious skills of the communities. Some references, all the references are clubbed starting from interior architecture, space making crafts, traditional knowledge systems, skills knowledge, material and technology concepts of space making stone craft.

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Paradigms of Indian architecture.

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These are some contributions, that I have done and all of these papers and books they focus pretty much on what we have been discussing all through this course.

Thank you I will see you in the next module.