

5-day course-cum-workshop on 'History, Sci & Tech of Stone Beads' was held

**RETURN TO THE ARTISAN**

Craftsmen from Khambhat gave live demonstration of bead-making

# Stone beads fiesta at IITGn

## 80 aspiring archeologists from 8 countries learn traditional bead-making

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It was a grand five-day treat of sorts for around 80 aspiring archeologists at the Indian Institute of Technology - Gandhinagar (IITGn), as the campus was gushing with 20 established archeologists from UK, Thailand and Japan on one side and live demonstration of bead making by craftsmen of Khambhat on the other.

They were present on the campus from August 10 to 14 for a short term course-cum-workshop on 'History, Science and Technology of Stone Beads' organised by IITGn in collaboration with the Archeological Survey of India (ASI). The workshop, which was attended by around 80 participants included lessons on the history, evolution, industrial production and technology of stone bead making from the Stone Age through various civilisations to the current scenario. Dr Vinod Pilai, faculty of archeological science, IIT, said, "The objective of the workshop is to revive the dying technology of bead making and at the same time give the participants a taste of traditional technology. We taught how to report, document, study and analyse various types of stones available at different sites in the world."

Five craftsmen from Khambhat, which is said to be the centre of stone bead making industry for the last 5,000 years now, gave hands-on experience to participants on processes like chipping, flaking and polishing. The participants were also taken to Lothal to see evidences of bead making discovered at the excavated workshop and museum. They visited Khambhat too to take a close look at the civilisation of one of the oldest centres.

Dr Phaneesh Babu, student of Post Doctorate in Archeology, said, "This has given us a detailed insight into technology of stone bead making."



Price of beads	
Type of stone (raw material for beads)	Cost per Kg
Carnelian agate	₹100 to 400
Fancy agate	₹10 to 20
Blood stone	₹50 to 80
Jasper	₹15 to 40
Lapis Lazuli	₹100 to 400
Blood fancy	₹50 to 150
Crystal	₹30 to 400
Rose Quartz	₹20 to 80
Amethyst	₹70 to 150

### Bead making facts

Carnelian stone is found naturally in yellow colour but turns red on heating and is then used for bead making

Stone bead making flourished the most during Harappan civilisation

Earlier a leather belt was used for polishing but now a polishing wooden wheel is used



### National award winner

Shadab Shaikh, a craftsman from Khambhat who was present at the workshop, has bagged a National Award for making a 22-inch diameter bowl from agate stone, from late former president Dr APJ Abdul Kalam. He said, "I have been into bead making for the last 15 years now. My brother Anwar and I are the fifth generation members of my family who are engaged in this occupation."

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**Dying tradition** - There were about 500 craftsmen in Khambhat earlier. Now there are hardly 50 who are into bead making. A precious stone like Carnelian agate, which is excavated from Jhagadia near Bharuch, is now rarely found.

**Most expensive piece of art** - Necklace from fancy agate, which was bought for Rs5,000.

### Process involved in bead-making

- Identifying the kind of stone
- Remove impurities from the stone
- Drilling or piercing
- Use of lubricant for smooth piercing of beads
- Shaping
- Polishing

### Craft dying in Europe

Massimo Vidale, professor of Archeology, University of Padova, North Italy, was invited as a faculty for the workshop. He shared his knowledge on the evolution of stone bead making during various civilisations. He said, "Stone bead making has almost died in Europe. I visited Khambhat 25 years ago along with some of my students for the 'Khambhat bead project', where they interacted with the craftsmen and learnt the technology involved. India is a cradle of various traditional arts."



### Participant from Nagaland

Dr David, faculty of Anthropology, Nagaland University, Nagaland, said, "Beads have been a part of the culture of Nagaland. They were used as status markers as there were different beads for the rich, poor and certain people were entitled to wear certain beads according to their role in the society. But the production of beads in Nagaland has stopped today. So I am taking part along with my student who is a research scholar, to understand the technology that is used for bead making."

