

**DESIGNING THE VERNACULAR:
AN INQUIRY IN THE PROCESSES OF MAKING IN KUTCH, INDIA**

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As understood popularly, vernacular is not just a simplistic interaction between the climate, culture and craft, but rather a composite body of knowledge processes developed over generations of experience through trial and error in response to the needs of people occupying them and to the requirements of the changing physical environment around them.

With the hegemonic advent of present global monoculture, the evocation of sentimental vernacular seems quite a natural response in places with strong cultural traditions and their unique craft expressions. I am referring to that nostalgia for the vernacular which is being conceived as an overdue return to the ethos of popular culture. Rather than the critical perception of reality and creative synthesis, it rather evokes the sublimation of a desire for direct experience through imagery and rhetorical information. Its tactical aim is to attain, as economically as possible, a preconceived level of instant gratification in behavioristic terms.

The aim of this paper is to explore the issue of validating the vernacular and inherent contradictions within it through two recent projects in the Kutch region of Gujarat in India. First project, Khamir Crafts Park, is a nongovernmental institution working for the development of craft traditions of Kutch region while the second one, Sham-e-Sarhad

is an eco-resort built and run by local residents of Hodka village in the desert of Kutch. As the building craft and artisanal traditions of this region are intrinsic to making of both these projects, this paper will examine the process of interpretation and reinterpretation and the nature of the resultant architectural synthesis.