



Course Name: Material Culture in the Himalayas: Processes, Practices, and Preservation of Likir Pottery

Artisan Name: Rigzen Namgyal

Campus: Ahmedabad



शिल्प संगम



About Craft

Likir pottery, also known as dzam dzey, is a traditional craft from the village of Likir in Ladakh, with a history spanning centuries. Once practised more widely, it is now confined to only a few families, such as the dzam khan (potter) Lumchung Tsepel and his family. The craft holds significant cultural importance, as these pots were once essential to the daily lives of local villagers and monks.

The process of creating these pieces is entirely manual and relies on locally sourced materials. Artisans collect a mixture of clay and fine sand from the mountains. They knead the materials to achieve the right consistency. Using a hand-turned wheel and a few simple tools, such as a paddle and an anvil, they meticulously build the pots. The final pieces are fired in a traditional kiln fueled by dry shrubs and cow dung. Products include utilitarian items such as incense pots, lamps, and teapots, as well as decorative animal toys and other pieces. While the craft is not tied to a specific caste, it has been traditionally passed down within a few families in the village.

Course Objectives

- Through hands-on engagement, collaborative projects, and reflective dialogues, participants will explore the multifaceted nature of craft—its rituals, cultural significance, and contemporary relevance.
- Enjoy the privilege of co-creating with Craft practitioners and exploring the historical foundations of craft practice, rooted in the cultural landscape.
- To spark creative detours, an infusion of unbiased interdisciplinary participation, and breakthrough
- Outcomes that celebrate diversity in thought and contemporary themes in a traditional setting
- Through the platform, opening up possibilities for intercraft collaborations.



About Artisan

Rigzen Namgyal is a master potter from the village of Likir, Ladakh, who is dedicated to preserving and continuing the ancient pottery tradition of his village. The craft has been passed down through his family for generations, and he learned it from his father, Lamchung Tsepail. Likir is known as the only village in Ladakh where pottery is still actively practiced. Rigzen utilises a specific type of local clay and sand to craft his pottery, which encompasses traditional items such as teapots and incense burners, as well as contemporary designs. He also hosts a homestay where he teaches visitors about the craft, helping to keep the unique art form alive.

Course Methodology

- Demonstration by Master Craftsperson
- Learning the basics of the craft, explorations of traditional forms
- Developing contemporary themes for contemporary narratives and new possibilities
- Making prototypes
- Finishing and displaying new outcomes to encourage conversations around them.

