

**Name of the Element: 'Satranji'/Rug weaving**

**Name of Inventory: Test Inventory (T1)**

**Serial No: D5-00003**

### **Brief Description**

Shatranji, rug weaving, is a traditional art of weaving, and is close to modern tapestry technically. Shatranji has in the past been perceived as a status symbol of royal families. A very stylish and vibrant fabric was used to make seat cover, bed sheet, and wall mat for home decor. Even shatranjis of extra large size were produced and used to host meetings or music conferences to cover a place of big public gathering. Now-a-days, shatranji is used to create a range of innovative items such as coin purses, hand bags for ladies, and table mat.

The diversified use of shatranji in the upper-class society was very common during the British rule in India. Collector of the district of Rangpur Mr. Nisbet volunteered to be the lead patron of local shatranji weaving artisans in 1880. He was very fascinated to see Shataranji's creative style and knitting there.

Mr. Nisbet provided all his assistance for the production and marketing of its shatranji products to the weavers in that area. An exclusive industrial park was built at a place 5 kilometers from Rangpur town for shatranji weavers. That place, later known as Nisbetganj, became the hub of shatranji materials production. After meeting domestic market demand across India, a huge volume of Nisbetganj shatranji was exported to many countries including Sri Lanka, Burma, Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia. The practice of shatranji weaving is believed to have been there even before 1830. Historical evidence found locally reveals that during Mughal rule Rangpur was a leading center of shatranji production. So the art of shatranji weaving is evidently a deep-rooted tradition of crafts in North Bengal. After India partitioned in 1947, shataranji 's demand began to decline as its substitute goods were manufactured in undersold shatranji mills and factories. As a result, most shatranji weavers had to change their work. However at present, the art of shatranji weaving still survives to a very limited extent in Rangpur although the artisans concerned face many limitations including inadequate capital, unplanned marketing, poor attention of the consumers and the traders and overall a very small market. As a result, shataranji; a unique, industrial and potential art form of weaving, is now disappearing. The principal raw material for weaving shatranji is yarn. Cotton yarn, jute yarn, wool and different types of fibers, after buying from the market, are dyed and dried by the weavers, 10 to 35 feet long bamboo frames are used to dry the yarn. Then the bundles of yarn are made and those bundles are fixed in the loom or laid down on the floor to knit a shatranji by hand following a set design. The art of shatranji weaving mainly depends on skillful operating of fingers. A comb-like instrument called panja is used to tighten the knitted yarns. Thus, one to three hours of time is required to make one square feet of shatranji. The common designs of shatranji include: face of a woman, animals-birds, a farmer boy, a lady with pitcher, boats, king and queen, gods and goddess, mythological characters and scenery of nature. New designs are also depicted on demand of the buyer. Red, blue and black colours are very much dominating in their designs.

A shatranji reveals not only the professional excellence of its artisan but also his or her level of the sense of aesthetics. So, both the excellence and the sense of aesthetics of an artisan are equally important for shatranji weaving, which is not only his profession but a professional craze indeed. If the existing problems like dearth of raw material, absence of governmental patronisation, lack of coordination and marketing facilities at home and abroad can be solved, the art of shatranji weaving will expand successfully and get back its past glory. [Mahabubul Haq]

Source: <http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Shataranji>

Region: Nisbetganj, in Rangpur, is the hub of shatranji materials production.

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