



KALA RAKSHA
Preservation of Traditional Arts

KALA RAKSHA VIDHYALAYA



KALA RAKSHA VIDHYALAYA BEGINS TO UNDERSTAND ITS MISSION

"I didn't like the other school, but I enjoyed this school!" Sangita, class of 2012

"I learned to find inspiration," Jaishri, class of 2012

PROJECT REPORT 20 DECEMBER 2011- 12 APRIL 2012

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THE LICENSE TO LEARN

Not long ago, Faculty members from the Manchester School of Art came to Kala Raksha to initiate collaboration. They showed our members the technique of cyanotype--- so old that it seems new. As everyone observed, a difference in Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya graduates was clear: they were open about their interest, and voiced their observations with excitement. We realized that one gift of the course is the license to learn!

The good news is that Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya won an award for social innovation. However, when we reached the stage of finalist and presented our project, the jury decided that our category should be changed from "education" to "livelihood." One jury member commented, "Why do you have to teach design to artisans? Companies have designers who come and give designs, and that way everybody earns."

And so we return to the point from which we began: people see artisans as being able to do and not think, hands severed from the head. Most people understand them as workers.

The extension of that concept is that if one offers design courses to those workers, it is not education but livelihood. And this leads us to the ancient system of caste: Varna and Jati. According to the Laws of Manu, education of the working class was a sacrilege. Perhaps at a deep, even unconscious level this attitude persists.

So we realize just how innovative Kala Raksha's approach to education is. Kala Raksha aims to deliver quality professional education directly to people with little formal education, but for whom the material is important and useful. It is an example of how the under educated can be empowered to extend and utilize their traditional knowledge and participate more equally in the contemporary world.

And the reason why we offer this education is so that artisans can utilize their rich resources to earn at a more equitable rate than they will if they simply produce a company's designs.

When we see the intensity with which our new students absorb all that they can from their experiences, we know that this is genuine education. The fact that the jury did not share this vision defines our challenge.



KALA RAKSHA VIDHYALA begins its Seventh Year

In January, Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya began its seventh year of classes. This year we welcome seven weavers, printers and bandhani artists, and eleven women embroiderers. As ever, these talented artisans embarked on a year of design education with great enthusiasm and high hopes.

Progress Observed

For women, just getting here, being away from village and family is a huge and courageous step. After six years we realized that we no longer hear women complaining that the "wages" (stipend) we give are less than standard wages. They have come to understand education as other than labour work. They no longer feel the need to have a chaperone for young artisans to stay on campus. And they no longer say "we are uneducated."

Course 1- Colour, Sourcing from Heritage and Nature, was taught by National Institute of Design graduate Sanchari Mahapatra and University of Mumbai graduate Pavitra Shyam, KRV's new Project Leader. Course 2 - Basic Design, was taught by Nita Thakore, fiber artist and educator, and NID graduate and designer Aditi Prakash.

In just two classes we experience the transformative power of education. Artisan students have learned to see nature and their own traditions with new, appreciative eyes. As societies change and artisans become distanced from their heritage, our program assumes value and even urgency. This year's men asked probing questions while viewing our museum collections and discussing with Master Artisan advisors, wanting in a sentence what it takes a lifetime to learn.



On completing his second course, bandhani Artist Sohail said, *"We worked so hard on colour presentation, absorbed the material, and now when we start to work on Basic design, we feel we can do colour in our sleep!"*



One benefit of our residential program is the extracurricular experiences that accommodate the academic and technical courses. The Vidhyalaya prides itself in the barriers we break. This year, the men, Hindu and Muslim, are sharing one dormitory room, out of choice. They have already formed bonds that will extend beyond the year's program, and help them continue to innovate in their traditions. The harmony and support among the group is apparent. They call themselves the "Seven stars." Among the women, caste barriers are gently nudged, while age becomes a more effective divider.



Aditi Prakash, who had not taught at KRV since 2006, was impressed with how the institute has grown. "I came to learn and be inspired," she confided. She observed that the experience of teaching artisans above all enables you to see them as individuals.





By the end of Course 2, the women were enjoying the process of thinking before doing, were already confident in presentation, and could make jokes using design terminology—owning the meaning of terms.



INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In January 2012, continuing with our plan for financial sustainability, KRV held workshops with Liz Williamson, professor at the University of New South Wales Australia, as part of an elective course at the the National Institute of Design. Teaching a course on Cultural Textiles at NID, Dr. Williamson brought NSW and NID students together to learn traditional block printing with KRV graduates at Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya. One student will return for more in-depth work.

In the same month, Barney Hare Duke brought a group of 16 art and design professionals from UK who have keen interest in the ‘Cotton Story.’ At Kala Raksha, the group learned patchwork with KRV graduates to understand how the cotton story extends into Kutch, and to experience the end of the long process chain.

In March, a group of artisans from an NGO in Rajasthan came to Kala Raksha on an exposure trip. They were all bundled in their colourful veils. KRV graduates from Sumrasar came to address them. Miraben, who had enrolled in the course last year with great trepidation, compounded by doubt from the community, confidently began to explain Kala Raksha, the design school, and our philosophy to the group. No senior staff were needed. Miraben and her colleagues held a lively discussion that lasted hours.



ALUMNI AND OUTREACH

KRV women graduates created a series of narrative works depicting their memoirs of traditional life, and the rapid changes they have experienced. The exhibition, **Deserts and Mountains - East and West of the World**, a collaboration with students of the Art Institute Vittoria of Trento, won a prize for peace dedicated to Giancarlo Bettiol. The exhibition was shown at Spazio Archeologico Sotterraneo del Sas in Trento, Piazza Cesare Battisti from 9 February through 15 April www.trentinocultura.net/archeologia.asp

Project Director Judy Frater conducted a number of lectures in conjunction with the exhibition.. She also inaugurated a series of discussions of issues in contemporary crafts at Dastkar Andhra in Hyderabad in January.

2010 graduate Khalid Amin Khatri held the first solo exhibition of a KRV graduate in the prestigious Artisans Gallery, Mumbai, from 9-11 April. The show was highly successful for several reasons. Khalid's work was acclaimed by the press and visitors, he earned well in his first solo experience, and most important, the show was a landmark as it succeeded in crossing the boundary between "craft" and "art."



The KRV website is progressing! Nearly all of the men graduate portfolios are uploaded. We now look for active interaction with the market. Under the able leadership of current president Juned I Khatri, KARVADA, the Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya Artitsan Designers Association, is seeking appropriate market venues, defining policies, and planning workshops.



The fourth group of KRV design interns, sponsored by the COMO Foundation, got off to a great start with products for a recent exhibition in Mumbai. New design enabled good sales despite the dates being soon after the previous show at the venue. The interns will now focus on work for a trip to the USA in July.

A beautiful colour feature on Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya has been published in the March 2012 [Marg Magazine](#). In October 2011, Annie Waterman published "[Empowering the Artisans](#)" an article about KRV in **Hand/Eye**. Articles on Artisan Design have also been published in three important online craft journals: **Hand/Eye** www.handeyemagazine.com 3 February 2010; **Craft Unbound** www.craftunbound.net 27 January 2011, and the **Craft Revival Trust Newsletter** www.craftrevival.org vol 110, issue 2 Winter-Spring 2011.

Artisan Design Online

Find Kala Raksha Artisan Designed work online at www.equalcraft.com

Kala Raksha is now on [Facebook](#).

THANKS TO GLOBAL GIVING!

The Indian financial year spans between April 2012 and March 2013, and our seventh year of classes has begun. KRV succeeded in raising the funds to cover the academic year of 2011! We raised \$72,309. Of this, 5% was earned through the sustainability program, and 7% was raised through individual donations- the equivalent of four scholarships.

This year, we have the challenge of raising almost \$75,000 to operate our program. KRV relies entirely on donations. Global Giving has made a substantial contribution. As one donor wrote, **"The Global giving website is easy to navigate. It makes giving so much easier." Your generous contribution can help!** You can make a difference in the lives of our very creative constituency!!

THE NEXT PHASE

As KRV has focused on becoming more self sustaining, opportunities are coming our way. In the next year we will institute the sale of educational materials to raise funds, in addition to workshops for which we steadily receive inquiries. We are also planning a major fund raising event in the fall. Financial sustainability is always a huge challenge for an educational institution. We welcome any entrepreneurial ideas –and ideas for increasing visibility-from our supporters.

And again we thank you, our supporters. With your support, KRV will realize its mission of relevant, genuine education for traditional artisans!