



**KALA RAKSHA**  
Preservation of Traditional Arts

# **KALA RAKSHA VIDHYALAYA**



**KALA RAKSHA VIDHYALAYA  
SHINES AT INTERNATIONAL  
SYMPOSIUM**

**PROJECT REPORT  
9 JULY-29 OCTOBER 2012**

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## FROM CULTURAL IDENTITY TO INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Kala Raksha demonstrated its cutting edge approach in a paper presented at the Textile Society of America's 13th Biennial Symposium, held in Washington DC in September 2012. As part of the panel *Artisan Enterprises: Challenges for Sustainability*, Project Director Judy Frater used the example of Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya to illustrate how artisans could utilize their cultural identity as a key resource to increase the value of their traditions in the contemporary market. In a three day event attended by delegates from over 30 countries, the panel was one of the best attended. A synopsis follows:



In Kutch, ethnic communities have embroidered for centuries. This traditional art was never assigned commercial value. It was created for social exchange and, above all, proclaimed identity. Yet, each piece was always unique; the concept of repetitive production was completely alien.



Commercialization of traditions provided a viable income to artisans, but ultimately its industrial model—a goal of faster, cheaper and more uniform—and its disregard for tradition, insidiously eroded the artisans' sense of aesthetics and self worth. This threat to cultural heritage motivated Kala Raksha to take the challenge of creating work with cultural integrity for the contemporary fashion market. The Trust began with a museum of local textiles, and encouraged



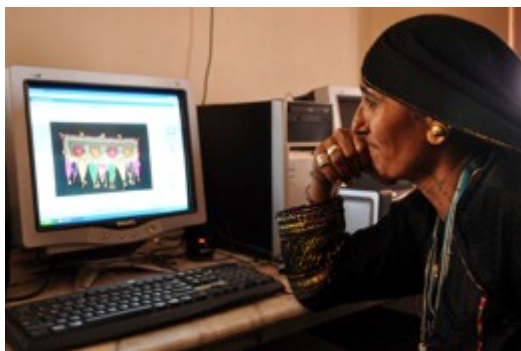
artisans to draw from their traditions. Yet, artisans were still considered laborers.



Kala Raksha observed that in their own living traditions, artisans created exciting solutions for design problems. An experiment with a bag designed by Pabiben proved that these artisan designed works were highly marketable. The Trust was clear that income could not justify the loss of cultural heritage; empowerment must be cultural as well as economic. We knew that we needed to think of alternatives to the industrial development model, and to take into account intellectual property—not only skills but also knowledge, and transfer these important assets to new arenas. We returned to the challenge of maintaining cultural identity and increasing value for handwork, with the understanding that the artist is the steward of tradition. Thus, in 2005 Kala Raksha launched Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya- the first design school for artisans-- as a sustainable solution for the survival of craft traditions.



KRV encourages artisans to draw inspiration from their traditions and nature, to see, and to think. The curriculum guides artisans to appreciate the unique aspects of their traditions in the context of the world. Students have expanded their cultural knowledge about the global market by learning to segment markets and to interpret and evoke trend forecasts.



The year-long course teaches artisans to use a variety of media, to work with different ethnic groups, and a range of ages.





Graduates have gained confidence as well as the ability to effectively reach new markets. They have expanded their capacity to create, their prerogative to collaborate, and their ability to connect to clients.



Each artisan makes a final collection, which is juried by craft and design professionals and presented in a fashion show with a public attendance in thousands. The fashion show has highly motivated artisans, and has been an important instrument in educating the public to think about craft and artisans in other ways.

In 2010, Kala Raksha launched the concept Artisan Design, a trademark to certify that a product is an artisan's own creative innovation. Subsequently, Kala Raksha has employed graduates to design a new line of Art to Wear garments. So we find we have come full circle, to the original concept of each piece as a unique work of art! The concept Artisan Design eventually accesses intellectual property to raise income and respect above the level of manual labor.

Kala Raksha's challenges now are to reach markets that appreciate and value products with cultural integrity, and to equip artisans to effectively tap cultural heritage for contemporary markets. As fashion draws worlds closer, this becomes very possible. When a Pabi bag sells briskly in New York and a village artisan purchases a top from Fabindia, Kala Raksha artisans can think of wearing the garments they make-- as they always did.

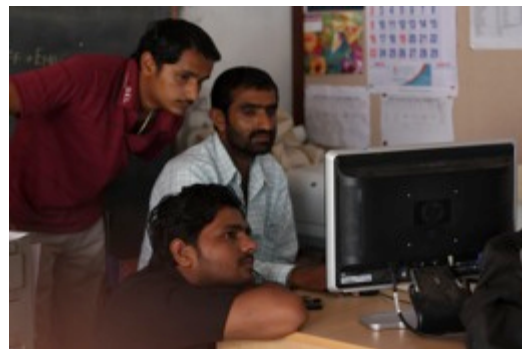


### ARTISAN DESIGN

In July and September, Kala Raksha tested two collections of one of a kind art to wear jackets. The market response was unanimous: both sold out! And each collection is better through the continued experience of design. The Artisan Designer group has been institutionalized at Kala Raksha.

### YEAR 7 AT KRV

July to October saw the grand finale of KRV classes. From 15 July to 2 September, the students worked to complete their collections. Course 6- Merchandising, Presentation, was taught by Sanjukta Roy from 3 September to 13 October, with a two week break in between for local holidays. Sanjukta had taught the men's section last year, and utilized her experience to enrich the curriculum.

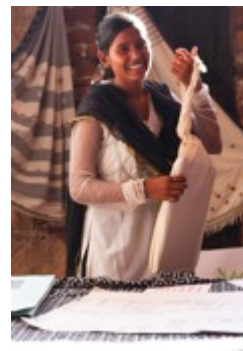


In the men's class, artisan students learned to photograph their own work and organize it as portfolios. Each student created a brand identity and logo. They focused on the always important skill of editing and learned to display and present their work. For the final presentation, KRV graduates as well as family members gave important feedback that will help put the final touches on each student's collection.





The women's class made great efforts in the final class of the year to overcome chronic shyness. The progress in this two week intensive session was clearly evident in the final presentation. The women used the course as an opportunity to review the year's work, as well as learning photography, graphic design, and editing.



Each student created a logo and brand identity. Sanjukta also taught them the simple, traditional technique of wrapped packaging. At the final presentation, the class enjoyed a great sense of achievement.

### **THE SEVENTH ANNUAL KRV CONVOCATION MELA**

Mark your calendars for our annual graduation party! This year, 18 artisans will graduate on 2 December 2012. The final jury will be held from 30 November to 1 December, and the gala Fashion show will enthrall visitors on the evening of 1 December. Chief Guest and keynote speaker for the Convocation is National Institute of Design Director Pradyumna Vyas. For details see the home page of [www.kala-raksha.org](http://www.kala-raksha.org)



## INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Networking and collaborating with established design institutes is a goal for KRV. A proposal for establishing an MOU with a major design institute is under discussion.

In August, Kala Raksha hosted workshops for students of the Maret School in Wahsington DC. KRV Director Judy Frater met the students and faculty in September. We hope to develop an annual program with this very progressive school. Also in August, Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya held a workshop with Jennifer Varekamp Associate Professor, Fashion Design Massachusetts College of Art and Design.

In October, Kala Raksha and the Vidhyalaya hosted a two week program with Lindsay Roberts and Jennifer Allison, Scottish artists participating in the ReSide residency program of Creative Scotland's 'Creative Futures.' The first of two exchanges, this trip was to gain maximum experience. Lindsay and Jeni spent time with the women's final course at KRV, offering feedback and insights, and did workshops in weaving, printing and bandhani with KARVADA tutors. Exchanges went several ways and the women students learned knitting and indigo dyeing along with Lindsay and Jeni. Finally, the Scottish artists attended a KARVADA meeting, where they shared their art work and experiences in Kutch. KRV graduate Murjibhai Hamir, who had been to Scotland on the

same program, shared his experiences with the group as well. We are all excited to see the creative results of this enriching program.

## ALUMNI AND OUTREACH

KRV Visiting Faculty member LOkesh Ghai and KRV Advisor Shyamjibhai Vishramji participated as Artists in Residence in the Cotton Exchange Project in Manchester, UK. The program centered on four stories, two of which were Kala Raksha and KRV graduate Khalid Amin Khatri. Exhibitions of work were held at the Manchester Art Gallery and the Harris Museum in September, and the Gallery of Costume in October.

KARVADA president Juned Ismail Khatri participated very successfully in the Crafts Council of India's sari exhibition in Delhi in September, underscoring the importance of design in tradition. KARVADA is now working toward a solo show in Mumbai in December, and KARVADA and KRV women graduates are all working together toward a major event in Delhi.

## KRV online

In September 2012, Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya enjoyed a feature by Jessica Marati "Teaching Design," in Hand/Eye 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](http://www.handeyemagazine.com) 3 February 2010; **Craft Unbound** [www.craftunbound.net](http://www.craftunbound.net) 27 January 2011, and the **Craft Revival Trust Newsletter** [www.craftrevival.org](http://www.craftrevival.org) vol 110, issue 2 Winter-Spring 2011.

You can find Kala Raksha Artisan Designed work online at [www.equalcraft.com](http://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 is completed. KRV relies entirely on donations. This year, we have the challenge of raising almost \$75,000 to operate our program. We are happy to announce that we have reached about half of our goal.

Global Giving has made a substantial contribution. Prompted by the October Matching Day, Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya received an additional \$900, bringing the total to \$1,700 this year. 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 this 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 February. 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!