



**KALA RAKSHA**  
Preservation of Traditional Arts



# **KALA RAKSHA VIDHYALAYA**

An Institute of Design for Traditional Artisans

## **Assessment of Women Graduates 2006-2010**

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Judy Frater  
Project Director, Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya

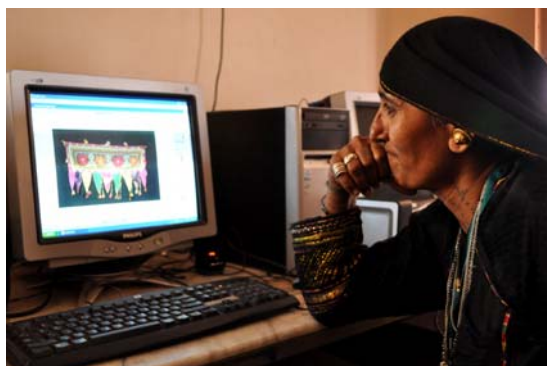
Prakash R. Bhanani  
Chief Executive, Kala Raksha

**Kala Raksha, Parkar Vas, Sumrasar Sheikh, ta. Bhuj, Kutch 370 001, INDIA**  
tel. +91-2808-277237/277238 fax +91-2832-255500/250410  
[www.kala-raksha.org](http://www.kala-raksha.org)



### The Graduates

Between 2006 and 2010, fifty-two women graduated from Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya's year long course in design education. All were traditional textile artisans: embroiderers of Rabai, Jat, suf, styles, and patchwork and appliqué artists. No age or education requirement was imposed. The only two criteria are that the individual must be a traditional artisan, and must be practicing. We thus had ages ranging from 11 to 80, sometimes in one class, and education ranging from tenth standard to no education at all.



Each individual was unequivocally transformed by the experience, in terms of design understanding, creative capacity, self esteem, and personal growth.



Many lasting relationships were built across ages and ethnic communities. Women artisans of Kutch need to earn to support their families. One of Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya's major aims is to enable participants to earn at better wages, and with increased appreciation and social status within the community and in the world. The following report assesses the extent to which we have achieved these goals within five years.

### **Increase in Earnings**

With the exception of artisans impacted by major industry and 4 individuals with extenuating circumstances, women graduates of KRV have clearly been able to increase their income after completing the course.

Graduates of the first year were all from Tunda Vandh, the neighboring Rabari village. Very unfortunately, this village as well as Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya itself have been severely impacted by the construction of two massive coal fed thermal power plants on either side. The majority of artisans from Vandh have stopped embroidering to take advantage of more lucrative earning opportunities, perceived to be for a limited time only. Among the 14 graduates, 7 are still practicing artisans. One is deceased, and one recently widowed. The other 5 have stopped embroidering. Of the practicing artisans, the income of 5 has increased between 115% and 342%. The income of the other two has decreased 60-90% due to the impact of the power plants.

Among 11 graduates of 2007, the income of 8 increased from 10 to 161%. Two artisans from the power plant affected village Vandh, stopped working. The final graduate's income decreased by 60%. She is a good artisan and had also served as a COMO intern in the second group. Unfortunately, she suffers from some mental and household instability.

Among the 7 graduates of 2008, the income of 6 increased from 4-116%. The seventh graduate's income decreased by 10% as she is involved in preparation for her marriage.

Among the 14 graduates of 2009, the income of 12 increased from 10% to six times. One artisan, a nomadic Rabari, is not currently embroidering as she is migrating with the herds. The last graduate's income decreased by 30% as she has not yet become a regular artisan.

Income of the six 2010 graduates can not be evaluated, as these artisans have recently graduated.



### **Effects on Work Patterns**

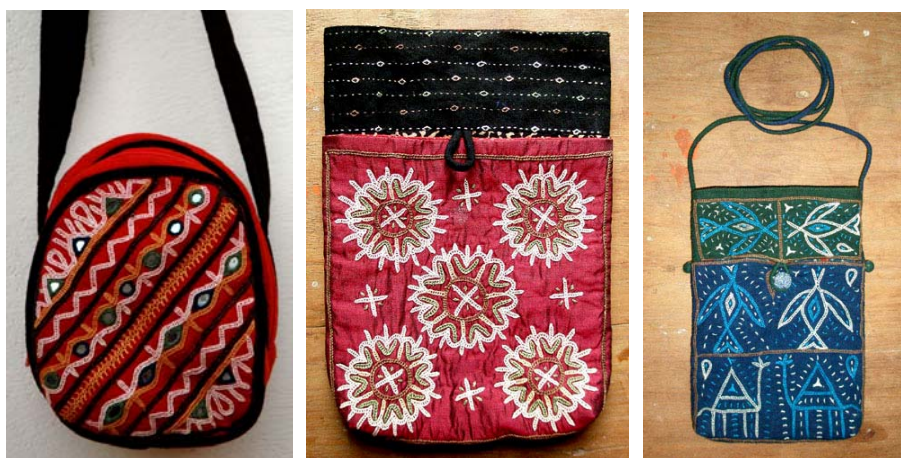
Evaluating effects on work patterns has been done by observation. Those women who have graduated from the course clearly gain self confidence. Furthermore, the extended contact and input enables them to emerge as distinct individuals with recognized capabilities. This favors them being chosen to participate in internships, workshops, interactions with guests, and exhibitions, and a mutually reinforcing professionalism has developed among the graduates. One graduate began a new group after marrying and relocating to a new village. One participated in the Santa Fe International Folk Art Market, two assisted in an exhibition in Mumbai, two at an exhibition in Delhi, and two at an exhibition in Ahmedabad. One participated in the Ahmedabad Fashion Week fashion show. Several participated in a major design workshop, and others taught embroidery to international visitors in two workshops. Ten were COMO design interns at Kala Raksha in two six month periods.





### **Products and Sales**

After each graduation, products were selected from final collections and class work, and produced by Kala Raksha. From the graduates of 2006, 41 products were produced. As this was an experiment for Kala Raksha, none was produced in large quantity. Nearly all products sold at a rate of at least 50% to 100%. In sixty eight percent of the products produced, over 60% of what was produced sold. Ten products sold 80-100% of what was produced. Eighteen sold 60-75% of what was produced. The most popular collection was the sea theme. Home furnishings and bags were best sellers. As this is the oldest group, the women had opportunities to design new products as alumni. For a collection of small pouches 47 of 75 bags (62%) sold.



In the class of 2007, 13 products were chosen for production. In 2010, one more was the inspiration for garment embellishment. As the concept of artisan design continued to be an experiment, again these were produced in small quantities. All but one product sold at least 50% of what was produced. Five, including the one translated to a garment, sold at 80-100% of what was produced. Six more sold at 60-65%. Again, bags were the best sellers.

The class of 2008 was a small class. In addition, during this year the Kala Raksha design team was spread thin as we worked with Aid to Artisans to prepare a collection for the New York Gift Show, and at the end of the year began the COMO internships. Nine products were chosen for production, and two were used as inspiration for garments. Of these, only one sold at 80%. Four sold at over 60%.



The class of 2009 was a much larger class. From these graduates, 15 products were produced. Three were used as inspiration for garment embellishment. Four have been selected for sampling but not yet finally produced. By this collection, Kala Raksha began to understand the potential of Artisan Design. We produced the products in small quantities and invested efforts in combining the samples to form coherent collections. Four products sold at 100% of what was produced. Four sold at 50-66% of production. This was the first year we had patchwork and appliqué artisans. Their products held the greatest appeal, for export clients as well as domestic markets.



The class of 2010 graduated very recently. Even so, several of their products were produced for two end-of-the year exhibitions. Nine products were selected for production. Of these, two sold at 100% of production. Four sold at 60-66% of what was produced. Four garnered export orders.





### **The COMO interns**

The COMO interns were all graduates of Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya. The opportunity to design collections after their year of education and under Kala Raksha's guidance resulted in markedly more sophisticated products. The interns were chosen by their merit as artisan designers. For the first group, young artisans who might not have another opportunity after they are married were preferred. For the second group, Rabaris were preferred, first because their work sells well, and second as an attempt to encourage artisans affected by two power plant projects to continue their creative efforts.

### **Increase in Earnings**

Eight of the ten interns enjoyed significant increased in their earnings. Of the ten artisans of Tunda Vandh who continue to embroider, six were COMO interns. Four are among the five whose income increased by 94-342%. Only one has been negatively impacted by the power plants. The two suf embroidery interns from Sumrasar increased their earnings by 50 and 115%. Bhagvatiben is preparing for her wedding; otherwise she too would have enjoyed a more dramatic increase in earnings. The final two interns were Dhebaria Rabari embroiderers from Kukadsar. Though both extremely talented, one suffers from mental and household instability. Very unfortunately, her income decreased by 60%. The final artisan is simply whimsical. Her income increased by 10%.



### **Effects on Work Patterns**

The COMO internships were an experiment in creating clearly recognized value for the education of Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya. In both groups the participants clearly felt recognized. The designs they created were understood by themselves and our staff as their own, and have been named informally as such. In order to distinguish the work of the interns from that of other artisans, we decided to pay the interns on a salary rather than piece rate basis. In the first group, this worked well. However, in the second, the artisans saw an opportunity to earn a salary as well as piece rate. Further, the onus to continue to provide design projects rested on Kala Raksha rather than the artisans. .



### **Products and Sales**

With the first group, an international opportunity in the form of a trunk show in UK, and later the KRV fashion show, motivated production of 13 of 36 samples. Of these six sold at 93-100% of production. Six sold at 60-75% and one sold 50%. The organic collection had been sampled for another organization, and has not yet been produced. The Museum purse collection will be launched next year.



The second group was focused in designing samples for the Santa Fe International Folk Art Market. The brief was to design pieces that were clearly within the traditions. Three styles of jacket, quilts and stoles were produced. Twenty five samples were produced. As the pieces were larger and more costly, they were produced in appropriate quantities. While the designs were appropriate for the Santa Fe Market and sold well in the USA, they were a slight risk for the domestic market. Nonetheless they were taken to shows in Mumbai and Delhi and sold well. Of twenty-five designs, 9 sold at 80-100% of production. Five sold at 60-75% of production. Six sold at 50% of production. Three were not produced, one did not sell due to the colour, and the final design sold at 40%.

### **Conclusion**

In 2010 Kala Raksha launched the trademarked concept Artisan Design to highlight the value of the artisan's creative input. Kala Raksha recognizes that the COMO internship program has had a positive impact and has been very important in helping to establish value for design education among women. Therefore, we intend to continue the program. With the next group on interns we have decided to try a higher rate for sampling, coupled with a form of royalties for production and sale. Kala Raksha would also like the next interns to create limited edition Art to Wear pieces for participation in the biannual Surface Design Association meetings, in which it will participate in June 2011.

