



KALA RAKSHA
Preservation of Traditional Arts



Appraisal of Male Graduates of Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya to 2012

April, 2013

KALA RAKSHA VIDHYALAYA

Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya (KRV), founded in 2005, is a coherent design education program expressly for artisans. It intends a new approach to design education. Working within existing traditions, KRV's curriculum, schedule and instruction are appropriate to artisans of Kutch. Artisans acquire knowledge and skills to use design effectively and innovate successfully for new markets, while at the same time strengthening traditional identity. KRV's effectiveness is in the relevance of the education provided. By approaching education through a vital subject, the institute enables direct access to higher education and ultimately raises the capacity of the participants and the entire craft sector. Founder and Project Director Judy Frater was awarded the prestigious Sir Misha Black international award for the project in 2009, and the Crafts Council of India Kamla award in 2010.

As of 2012, fifty men from weaving, block print, batik, and badhani traditions of Kutch have graduated from the program. Between August 2012 and Jan 2013 an assessment of forty two male graduates was conducted to ascertain the impact of their education on thinking and lifestyle.



Executive Summary

100% of the artisans who have graduated from KRV have benefitted from the course. All have gained a new perspective for their craft, and learned to be open minded and observe design in everything they see.

100% of KRV graduates have gained confidence in terms of understanding the requirements of clients, creating new designs based on themes, and experimenting with colours and materials.

56% of KRV graduates have grown in their designing capabilities.

25% of KRV graduates have started their own independent businesses post graduation.

9% have helped their family businesses take new directions.

13% have had an increase of 10% to 20% in income.

7% have had an increase of 21% to 40% in income

7% have had an increase of 40% to 60 % in income

5% have had an increase of 61% to 80 % in income

5% have had an increase of 100% in income

9 % had an increase of 300% in income

About 80 % of the artisans are aware of various schemes and organizations that can help them with their work, but only about 20% know how to apply for these benefits.

Most of the graduates are not aware how to benefit from the KRV website.

85% feel that KARVADA must be streamlined for it to be useful to all artisans. Unity within the organization is critical at this juncture.

100% feel that the campus of the Vidhyalaya should be shifted from its present location.



The assessment was analysed by craft, and a summary is presented here.



BATIK

Total KRV Graduates: 2

Both graduates are working in family businesses. Both said that they learned from their experience at KRV. Both artisans agreed that they have improved the quality of their products, and both try now to experiment with new designs and make products for special niche markets. Both have learned tailoring, and have even made stitched garments for women. One artisan began making saris, a product that had not been made for contemporary markets, and has found a good market response.

Both artisans have collaborated with designers post KRV education and felt that their education enabled them to better understand the requirements of the product. Both have enjoyed growth in their businesses post KRV education, one with a 30% increase in business turnover.

Both graduates expressed willingness to serve as Mentors and participate in internal juries at the Vidhyalaya, and to conduct workshops for visitors. They felt these opportunities enabled them to grow professionally. Both said that they have explained the benefits of the KRV course to other artisans and encouraged them to attend.

Regarding needs for professional development, both artisans expressed a desire for assistance in marketing. They would like help in identifying better markets and additional input in basic management and marketing skills.

Both artisans are aware of schemes and programs offered by other government and non-government organisations. But they have not availed of aid so far, aside from enjoying a government subsidy on wax, which has subsequently been withdrawn.

Both artisans have posted images of their work on the KRV website e-portfolios. They received an inquiry from Panama through the website, and one artisan is currently pursuing development of designs with the contact person.

Regarding KARVADA, the alumni association, both feel there must be more unity within the organisation for it to become viable and self sustaining.

Comments:

“My confidence in being able to design grew. My contacts with designers, students and buyers have grown. The greatest challenge is to find a way to balance fulfilling running orders with taking time to experiment, so that home expenses are not upset. New work must be lucrative. I feel that only 10% of KRV graduates are really utilizing their education fully.”

-Shakil Ahmed Kasambhai Khatri, 2009

“I continue to use colour and concept class inputs. I make use of telling a story through my work. If I am inspired by something, I try and see different variations, products and layouts through that inspiration. I have begun making saris, and enjoy that. I feel saris are a beautiful dress for women and an identity of India, and my best sales are in saris. Batik should become recognized as a craft of Kutch, and if this is supported thru KRV it would be great.”

Anwar Hussain Abdul Rajaqbhai Khatri, 2010



BANDHANI

Total KRV Graduates: 11

Interviewed: 8

All of the bandhani KRV graduates felt the Vidhyalaya education was relevant. Although not all of these graduates benefitted financially, all felt they have benefitted from the exposure and contacts they enjoyed through the KRV experience.

Forty percent of bandhani graduates came to KRV with family support and independent businesses in place. Of these, 50% have increased their businesses by 75% to 300%.

Eighty-five percent of bandhani graduates have begun to use their own designs, and some have had the opportunity to collaborate with other designers. Although 50% would like to experiment with stitched products, most are hesitant due to lack of a competent tailor.

Fifty percent were previously working for other artisans, but have been able to begin their own initiatives and are slowly growing.

Ten percent of those graduates who were already operating independently have not been able to find time to experiment with new products while fulfilling running orders.

All of the bandhani graduates expressed willingness to help KRV through mentoring, participating in internal juries, and teaching in workshops. All said that they recommend the course to other artisans. Some bandhani artists were willing to make financial contributions to KRV as well.

Some bandhani graduates feel an urgent need to shift the campus of KRV. Several artisans suggested a year break in classes in order to increase enrolment. Some also felt a need for higher standards for admissions, in order to maintain the reputation of the institute.

Seventy-five percent of bandhani graduates were aware of the schemes offered by government and non government organisations. Sixteen percent said they had availed of benefits from other organisations.

Twenty-five percent said they did not know how to apply for schemes and would like assistance. All of the graduates would like help in marketing their products. None of the graduates was aware of how to use the KRV website and e-portfolios.

Comments:

“When I graduated, KARVADA was not yet formed. We had invested a lot in our collection products but did not have assistance for marketing. And we had to support our families. So we reverted to old products. Although I understood what I learned in the color and basic design courses, I have to look after the regular work load, so I do not do anything new.

I feel KARVADA's method of selection of participants for exhibitions is not fair and needs to be improved. ”

-Vakas Abdul Gafur Khatri, 2006

“ At KRV I learned how to mix techniques and learned to have an open mind. This has helped me look at things differently.

The first KRV exhibition at Delhi was not successful. I lost money, and I stopped designing. But recently I began working again and experimenting with shibori and natural dyes. The exposure at KRV introduced me to these techniques.”

-Zuber Anwarali Khatri, 2006

“Improve the running of KARVADA; send the younger graduates for exhibitions.”

- Abdul Aziz Alimohammad Khatri 2006.

"The KRV initiative is great. We are where we are because of this idea. The monopoly of the older artisans was broken and today small artisans are being recognized and are becoming successful at business if they are interested."

KARVADA should support the small artisans to produce their products and go to exhibitions. They should tell the artisans who can afford to go on their own to do so. The small artisans can take a few pieces each but they should go to exhibitions and get new markets."

-Suleman Umarfaruqbhai Kahtri- 2008

"KRV education has helped me in dyeing, selection of fabrics for products, and in understanding the look of the finished product. I learned to adjust the rate of my bandhani products. I have had a 400% increase in business post the education. I am always ready to come and work at KRV, and ready to keep my work at the Vidhyalaya as examples of our progress over the years."

-Abdul Vahab Khatri- 2008

"Through Kala Raksha I sent my work to the Santa Fe Folk Art Market. I have improved through all the workshops in which I participated, and been able to make direct contact with buyers."

-Sohel Abdulsatar Khatri 2008

"Before taking the KRV course I was doing job work for another artisan and I hardly knew much about my craft. But I knew the technique, so now I can both design and produce. I have started on my own, and now I am making designs for the local market and for designer markets."

-Abdulla Elias Khatri 2009

"To work on a theme is good for the market. After studying at KRV, I have made saris, duppattas and stoles based on themes and they are selling well."

-Mohmmad Hanif Abdul Majid Khatri 2010



BLOCK PRINTING

Total KRV graduates: 15

Interviewed: 12

All of the graduates learned something new from the KRV course. For some it was the first time they thought of learning more about their traditions. All graduates have had an increase in their level of confidence to meet and interact with people. Eighty percent have appreciated the exposure and new contacts they made during the course.

Thirty percent of block print graduates have collaborated with designers post their education. Twenty percent have experimented with new products. A few artisans have tried stitched products but find the process very expensive. Twenty two percent have managed to balance experimenting with new ideas with maintaining their existing orders. Strong support from their families has been a critical factor. Eight percent have been able to become independent and take their work in new design directions. Those who have been able use design to produce new products have enjoyed a 30% to 50% increase in income.

Since most block print graduates came from family business backgrounds, 70% have found it difficult to break into new design realms and most have been absorbed in fulfilling existing running orders.

All block print graduates are willing to support KRV by serving as mentors and participating in internal juries. Most express readiness to produce fabric for Kala Raksha. They expressed dissatisfaction with lack of follow up on sampling done to date. All are willing to recommend the course to others. They believe that as others become educated in design, the quality of the craft will increase and counter-productive competition will decline.

Half of the block print graduates are happy with the working of KARVADA. Most do not have the capacity to produce on a large enough scale to enable them to sell in exhibitions. They have suggested that a neutral person be appointed to take smaller quantities of all the artisans and represent the group at exhibitions.

All have uploaded images for their e-portfolios on the KRV website, but are not aware of how the website can be used.

Comments:

"The KRV education was a good experience. I am still using inputs from the colour class and layout inputs in my running orders. But now I am fulfilling running orders single handedly and do not get time for new work. Also, I had an accident, and after that I have not really applied myself."

-Irfan Abdulla Khatri 2006

"I would like to have another course on computer design programs such as Corel Draw, Photoshop and InDesign, so that we can learn to design on the computer and bring out newer designs."

-Juned Haji Ismail Khatri- 2006

"Many people are shifting to screen printing. Most of the garment makers are using screen printed Ajrakh, as it is cheaper for them. Even our regular block print customers who made garments with our fabrics are feeling the pinch. But through the KRV course I have recognized that there is a separate market interested in craft, and after the course I have made products targeted at these clients."

- Irfan Anwar Khatri 2006

"Presentation was my favourite course. Today I am still using what I learned in that class."

-Ovesh Musabhai Khatri 2008

"We had high professional teachers for us uneducated students. They taught us the basics in only 12 days. A longer course with more depth would be useful. Regular drawing should be included in all courses. English was also a problem. Maybe include some English classes."

-Abdul Rauf Rajakbhai Khatri- 2008

"KARVADA should become a registered organization so that it can get government funding and organize workshops to support us. "

-Khatri Mubin Abdulgani 2008

"At KRV I gained great confidence to make new products, and I learned that if we want to we can get a whole new market. But to do that we have to jeopardize our existing market, or juggle the two. I chose not to try this at the moment because the risk is high and I have to support my family."

-Salemamed Khatri 2008

“Block printing has gotten a lot more competitive. Everyone wants to earn immediately and they have forgotten the value of the craft. We should make an association for block printers, to support each other, so that everyone is not cutting each other ruthlessly. Quantity too is getting affected. If one has to make things in quantity especially for exhibitions it becomes difficult for a small craftsman. He has to disrupt his regular production and incur losses. We need a KARVADA representative who is impartial and will make an effort to sell everyone’s products. Then we could each send small quantities of products to exhibitions. Also, if KARVADA meetings could be held at different venues it would be good. The members from Bhuj come late and we who come from far have to wait and waste a lot of time.”

-Khatri Mohamad Hussan Ismail, 2009

“We have now learned to look at the overheads that we never used to consider. It changed our costing.”

-Ahmed Hajji Abdulrajakh Khatri, 2009

“KRV was a good experience. Earlier I had thought to do different work. Now, my work is unique..... It was good!”

-Khalid Amin Khatri 2010

“After my experience at KRV, I know more about the traditional aspects of the craft, and how to make new designs. I now have better speaking ability. and my confidence to speak and market has developed.”

-Nomam Haji Abdul Jabbar Khatri, 2011

“KRV was helpful and a good experience for me. I had the opportunity meet foreign students and people from outside Kutch.”

-Aakhib Ibrahim Khatri, 2011



WEAVING

Total KRV Graduates: 22

Interviewed: 20

All of the weaver KRV graduates felt they had learned from the course

Sixty percent already had family businesses. Of these, 20% were able to help change the direction of their business after graduating. Forty percent of weaver graduates started their own production units after graduation, and became independent.

Fifty percent of weaver graduates have designed new products after graduating. New work remains unconstructed, loom ready, as the weavers do not have a good tailor with whom to work. Thirty percent of weaver graduates enjoyed an increase of 10%-30% in income post graduation. Twenty percent have had at least 100% increase in income. However, some weaver graduates have not been able to utilize the design based model of working.

All of the weaver KRV graduates are ready to recommend the course to others. A few feel that the quality of students entering and graduating should be strengthened, and some suggested that that the Vidhyalaya offer the course in alternate years as a means of increasing enrolment.

Eighty percent of weaver graduates expressed willingness to participate in KRV as mentors, internal jury members, or workshop tutors. Some said they were educating others in the field to support growth of the tradition.

Forty percent of weaver graduates said they were aware of government schemes. However, of these 80% do not know how to avail of the schemes. All weaver graduates are aware of other organizations who help, and seek their support if required.

All weaver graduates expressed need for support for marketing their products, as well as financial support for purchase of raw materials.

All of the weaver graduates have had products photographed for the KRV website, but are as yet unaware of how to utilize the facility.

The weaver graduates opine that KARVADA suffers from lack of unity, which prevents access to its utility.

Comments:

“I was in the first class at KRV. We thought that they would teach us new things on the loom, and when our teachers told us about colours, we thought it was a joke. Only when we learned about concept and understood that we had to make designs based on themes and extract colours from those themes, did we realize the significance of the colour course.”

-Khimji Samat Vankar, 2006

“Before the earthquake we needed newness, but now is the time to nurture the artisans and help them grow. I feel there is too much noise being made and things have to be simplified. NGOs should work to help the artisans, especially since factories are taking them away at higher wages.”

-Chamanlal Premji Vankar, 2006.

“At KRV I learned confidence to talk and market my work. Now I am going to try and restart my designing”

- Magan Govid Vankar, 2006

“Because I knew weaving, I could better understand. It is necessary for KRV students to have hands on experience in their crafts to understand what they will learn. Traditional background is not essential. People who have learned craft should also be encouraged to take the course as they are helping to keep the craft alive. I would like to see opportunities for previous graduates to interact with new graduates at the end of the course.”

-Dinesh Vishramji Vankar, 2006

"All of the inputs of KRV helped me. I enjoyed the Concept class most, and the Presentation class helped in my work. The course changed my outlook on craft. We have trained six families in durrie making, but now only one family is continuing this craft. As weaving shawls is easier, most are reverting to making shawls.”

-Prakash Naranbhai Vankar, 2008

“The Market Orientation course was my favourite. Before KRV I did labour work and did not even know how to do costing. Now I am an artisan. The KRV initiative should continue. We

all should try to keep alive the craft of Kutch. The new generation has to bring forth their own talent and catch the baton."

Ramji Hirabhai Maheswari, 2008.

"Today many young people from traditional craft backgrounds are seeking easier means of livelihood. It is important to encourage people who are interested in the craft to take the course in order to preserve craft. People who are not from traditional backgrounds can learn about the traditions of a craft when they are in the Vidhyalaya."

-Dayalal Atmaram Vankar, 2008

"At KRV I learned to value the traditional knowledge that we had. We realized what we were being taught and we had to work hard. We had to make efforts to understand Basic Design concepts. When we understood, it was good.

It would be good if people realize the value of the school and enrolment increases. Running classes every other year could build enrolment. Or, we can accept students without traditional background. KALA RAKSHA means art preservation. Kala Raksha must support all craftsmen to protect the craft. We can also take students from outside Kutch. This may make Kutch artisans realize value for the course and come to benefit from the great teachings. At the same time, I feel the quality of KRV must be maintained.

KARVADA has too many political problems. It needs to become strong. It is not only for exhibitions but also to help us improve by holding workshops. We could collaborate with other design schools. We need assistance in finding direction and stability."

-Murji Hamir Vankar, 2008.

"For me, the impact of my education at KRV is this: whenever I feel like doing something new I sit on the loom. When any of our artisans shows interest in making something new, I change placements and layouts within designs and show them that little changes can make a big difference. I wish other artisans understood the value of this education. Maybe if the course was stopped for a year- as it was in 2007- artisans would realize that they might not get the opportunity again."

-Rajesh Vrambhai Vankar, 2009

"Market Orientation was my favourite course at KRV. We got to see and learn new things.

To help the smaller artisans market, KR/KARVADA should purchase products or take them on consignment for exhibitions. If they could take smaller quantities from all the artisans and after sales settle the accounts amicably, it would be good."

-Ramesh Virji Vankar, 2008.

“KRV is a great idea. With my education here I have been able to change my life around. I especially enjoyed the Basic Design course. We learned to make different layouts and hence can continuously keep changing our designs and keep our customers happy.

We need to work on the operation of KARVADA. If this year some artisans go to an exhibition, next year others should be allowed to go, so that everyone benefits. Or, names could be drawn like a lottery. Or whoever has new stock should be sent. Having one person go with others' products might not work as he will have difficulty explaining others' work. Another idea is to take a large space for KARVADA and let whoever wishes go. But whoever goes should have new products. Everybody should have the integrity to ensure new products.”

-Puroshottam Premji Vankar, 2008

"I gained confidence through the KRV course. Though I not been able to do too much work due to family commitments I would like to go back to the Vidhyalaya as a mentor or for a workshop. If I am called for the class, I can get to learn more about what is happening in the market.”

-Shantilal devibhai Vankar, 2009

“I learned how I can enhance things with less effort.”

-Siju Chandresh Virambhai, 2009

“Our business improved at least 30%. Now we know how to cost our products and have more confidence to explore and produce new designs”

-Namori Manjibha Vankar, 2009

“Although I have not really worked too much with new designs after I graduated from KRV, I know if I apply myself well I will be able to do good work through KARVADA.”

-Govind Meghijibhai Marvada, 2010

“The KRV course was helpful. Colour class opened my eyes to new colours and combinations.”

-Nitesh Namoribhai Vankar, 2010

"The KRV course was helpful. But as we do not plan our work on paper that method was confusing. I liked the Concept and Market Orientation classes best. Both helped me understand things – from old to new."

-Jayanthi Premji Bokani, 2010

"I suggest adding material about business: bank transactions, shipping, etc."

-Hansraj Devjibhai Vankar, 2011

"I am grateful to KRV. My life has changed post the course. Having teachers from colleges outside Kutch was a great exposure."

-Hitesh Dayalal Vankar, 2011

"Artisans should understand the benefit of the course, to encourage others to join. The fees in my opinion are reasonable."

-Dhanji Hirjibhai Vankar, 2011

