



KALA RAKSHA
Preservation of Traditional Arts



KALA RAKSHA VIDHYALAYA



KALA RAKSHA VIDHYALAYA STUDENTS GO FROM AHMEDABAD TO THE WORLD

"I learned a lot from Tanvir!" Prateek, student of Pearl Academy, Delhi
"We will never see textile arts in the same way; we have learned to appreciate them," Niharika, student of Pearl Academy, Delhi

PROJECT REPORT 14 APRIL- 8 JULY 2012

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YEAR 7 AT KRV

April to July saw the majority of KRV classes in action. In the men's Market Orientation course, taught by veteran KRV Faculty Lokesh Ghai, artisans took a three day field trip to Ahmedabad city. There, they considered art as well as design, visiting artists, galleries and shops and absorbing experiences with great intensity. On return, they created designs for individuals and shops they had visited. As always the individual catapulted them beyond known limitations. Craft remains essentially personal.

"I learned that people want quality and are ready to pay; I saw it everywhere."

Tanveer, class of 2012

"We learned from the Chitaras that if you work carefully, you can create your own work and name," Salman, class of 2012



In the Women's Market Orientation course, taught by veteran KRV Faculty Shweta Dhariwal, the group also visited shops and homes in Ahmedabad, many for the first time in their lives. This year we saw a clear indication of a narrowing of the gap between artisans and contemporary consumers, when the women purchased garments, household decorations, ornaments, organic tea and underwear from a range of shops they visited. The students felt the prices were appropriate. More important, their taste coincided with urban offerings, and they demonstrated concern for issues such as natural and organic fibers. By the end of the course, the women realized they had underpriced themselves, and began to calculate the value of their thoughts as well as efforts.

"We visited Carminaben and Shimolben's homes to see how they decorate; we don't do that in our homes," Parmaben, class of 2012

"At House of Mangaldas, they created new things from old!" Hetalben, class of 2012



The men's fourth class, **Concept, Communication, Projects**, taught by Neha Puri, began with learning to stylize- and most importantly not to stop with "It will do." As permanent faculty member Dayalalbhai says, "'It will do' *always* means just the opposite!" The next step in learning to express a concept was reflecting on professional trend forecast boards. Though we have used these boards in a number of classes before, each person sees through his own experiences. This year, Snow Palace became Vijay Vilas, and Tropical Tango became the Bhuj railway station! The group took a field trip from KRV to Banni and back to Mandvi. On return and much further pondering, Vijay Vilas evolved to Treasure Hunt.... And the railway station became Life's Journey.



The men worked earnestly in finalizing their colour palettes, creating a motif bank, and thinking of appropriate layouts. This was a tough class of long hours thinking, a realm not preferred by men who work with their hands. But by the final presentation, they realized they had come a long way in developing new directions for their work.

KRV alumni Shakilbhai and Anwarbhai gave invaluable input in the final presentation. Anwarbhai- *"A concept is the basis of a collection. The effort starts here. Until you get into it, you have to persevere."*

Shakilbhai- *"You have to get so into your theme that you see it everywhere. I started buying clothes in the colours of my theme! You can't get the original look, texture from a picture. Nature is the biggest treasure house."*

Soyabbhai agreed, *"When the leaf dried, the colour changed and the texture emerged. That is the specialty of nature. In making motifs, I began to understand."*



Since KRV's inception, the women's Concept course has had the challenge of having fabric appropriate to different embroidery styles ready in the colours the students choose for their themes. This year, Visiting Faculty Sanchari Mahapatra decided to begin with the colours and create a theme from those selected. While practical, the approach needs some fine tuning to insure that the themes lead to visual imagery and experiences to which the artisans can directly relate. The use of international trends in craft is itself challenging and controversial. But ultimately it takes artisans beyond their colour comfort zones to fresh explorations. A note on this observation to renowned trend forecaster LA Colours resulted in a generous donation of new trend books, which we will relish next year. This year, the women went on a field trip to Mandvi, and when they could not go to an inspiration, they brought one to KRV. For her theme "children," Jivaben called nearby Vandh children and interviewed them on our campus.



The women revised their theme boards, made some sketches, and finally began working on a motif bank in embroidery.



KRV's fifth class: **Finishing, Collection Development**, is the most complex of the year. Since 2008, KRV has incorporated collaboration with urban design students to

create patterns for new designs. In this year's men's course, taught by Shweta Dhariwal and Shital Naik, four students from Pearl Institute worked with the KRV weavers, printers and bandhani artists. The brief for the project was for KRV students to indicate the basic range of the collections they wish to create. The Pearl students would collaboratively decide on silhouettes, and create patterns and prototypes, and the KRV students would be responsible for the surface/ craft design, and ultimately for the products. A basic pre-requisite of collaboration is mutual understanding and respect. A key goal for the project was to provide an intensive one-to-one experience with traditional artisans in an educational environment, so that the Pearl students could learn how artisans think and work, learn to assess technical strengths and limitations, and thus learn to design to capitalize upon a craft, rather than use craft to embellish a design. On day one, when all of the students introduced themselves and presented their work to date, the vast difference between the rural and urban worlds was starkly clear. Further, it was clear that the institutional environments, methods and pace were very different. Pearl students shared that they made a several garments in a year. At KRV they were going to make eight to sixteen garments in two weeks!



By the second week, teams were intently working on patterns and test fits. The delight of Australian visitors cheered everyone on. And by the end of the class each team had developed a visible harmony. As the Pearl students prepared to leave, they said they would never look at textile arts in the same way again; they had learned to appreciate how they were made and would think in terms of creating garments to best use them. This was a clear indication of success.



Lokesh Ghai taught the women's fifth session. Beginning with a review of theme development, he then taught some basics of finishing techniques. Using the humble bori button, he illustrated how each detail of finishing can support a theme, and guided the women to creatively and practically explore their themes further. The women's section collaborators this year are students from MS.University, Baroda. Building on last year's experience, the MSU students were asked to familiarize themselves with Kutch

embroidery traditions through a visit to the Kala Raksha museum. This will equip them to highlight the strengths of each tradition in their designs.



As we go to press, the younger KRV students are meanwhile taking tutorials in their traditions from mentor and KRV graduate Hariyaben, and studying further finishing techniques with Kala Raksha master tailor Rameshbhai.

INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Networking and collaborating with established design institutes is a goal for KRV. This year we are happy to be collaborating with both Pearl Academy in Delhi and M.S. University, Baroda.



KRV's April natural dye workshop with Jagada Rajappa was pronounced the best so far by its participants. Held on the KRV residential campus over a six-day period, the workshop worked because of sustained input- one of KRV's core strengths. We look forward to see implementation of new skills in this year's KARVADA collections.

Design and craft workshops are planned with students of Maret School, USA, in August, The ReSide residency program of Creative Scotland's 'Creative Futures' in October, and Dr. Gabriele Tautscher, Kultur Institut für SA, in February.

ALUMNI AND OUTREACH

Mark your calendars! You can meet 2006 Graduate Lachhuben Raja at the 2012 Santa Fe International Folk Art Market- 13-15 July 2012. After this wonderful event, the Kala Raksha team will teach workshops in Rabari traditions in Los Angeles and Seattle. The trip is generously sponsored by **Coastal Gujarat Power Limited- Tata Power**. Look for details on www.kala-raksha.org

KRV women graduates collaborated with UK fiber artist Alice Kettle in an exhibition in the Queen Street Mill, Burnley, BB10 2HX as part of the Cotton Exchange Project Global Threads from May 31-July 15, 2012.

2008 KRV Graduate Murjibhai Hamir has been selected to participate in ReSide, a four month residency in Scotland. In September he will travel to Scotland for the first round.

KRV's website www.kala-vidhyalaya.org is gaining a following. The men's e-portfolios have been instrumental in short listing participants in a December event in Mumbai, and securing participation in an India-Australia residency with Happy Hands for graduates Aakib Khatri and Hanif Khatri. The women's portfolios are in the final stages of production.



The current Kala Raksha women design interns have finished a series of art to wear garments for the USA market. They benefited from input from Rhode Island School of Design faculty and students, and fellows from the organization NEST. In an amazing critique of works in process, it was clear that the Kala Raksha Artisan Designers and the RISD Design Faculty were not only speaking the same language, but also following very similar trains of thought. The review strengthened the work and we are anticipating a great response.

While the USA garments were being finished, the next project began. KARVADA and KRV women graduates are all working together toward a major event in Mumbai. NIFT students Divotsana from Bangalore and Nisha from Kunnur are facilitating development of all new collections for this event. Look for details in the next KRV News.

A beautiful colour feature on Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya has been published in the March 2012 [Marg Magazine](#)

KRV online

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.

You can find Kala Raksha Artisan Designed work online at www.equalcraft.com
Kala Raksha is now on [Facebook](#).

Project Director Judy Frater will present a paper at the September meeting of Textile Society of America in association with a chapter in the forthcoming Berg Publications **Fashion Handbook**.

THANKS TO GLOBAL GIVING!

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

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 June Matching Day, Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya received \$750 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 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!