



**KALA RAKSHA**  
Preservation of Traditional Arts



# KALA RAKSHA VIDHYALAYA

An Institute of Design for Traditional Artisans

## LEARN WITH THE MASTERS: WORKSHOPS WITH ARTISAN DESIGNERS OF KUTCH



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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya, the world's first design school for traditional artisans now offers workshops to the world with its graduates in textile crafts including weaving, block printing, batik, bandhani, embroidery, appliqué and patchwork. Expert traditional artisans of the desert region Kutch, India, educated in design, are well prepared to teach concepts as well as skills. Close interaction with these young masters provides a richly rewarding experience in understanding traditions and an unparalleled opportunity to broaden the comprehension of art, craft and design.



Colorado State University faculty and students 2011: *“Kala Raksha workshops were the highlight of the trip. We loved working with the artisans-- it was a once in a lifetime experience!”*

## **BACKGROUND**

One of the unique aspects of India is the persistence of a broad spectrum of distinct cohesive rural cultures. These cultures can be quickly marked by material culture: dress and traditional arts and crafts. The unique aspect, however, more than the dress and crafts themselves is the fact that such expressions emanate from a shared understanding of the world, a shared identity, and an environment in which art is integrated into daily life. Further, the arts are the product of traditional learning systems, which differ from those of formal learning with which we are familiar. With accelerated urbanization and globalization, such rural lifestyles are today endangered. Yet, we can gain from them while they are still intact.

Kutch is one of the richest regions for textiles in India. World renowned extra weft wool weaving, intricate natural dyed hand block printed ajrakh, the finest bandhani (shibori), distinctive batik, and a dazzling range of mirrored embroideries and appliqué are all practiced in this small, historic desert land, circumscribed by the great salt marsh Rann of Kutch and the Arabian Sea.

In addition to textiles, Kutch is also home to wood, leather, pottery, and metal crafts. The pristine sea coast is home to legendary hand building of wooden dhows that sail to Africa and the Middle East. Migratory birds of many species winter in the region. And one of the most important Indus Valley sites, Dholavira, is located in Kutch, making this an ideal land for additional sightseeing.

## **THE INSTITUTE**

Kala Raksha, a registered Society and Trust (NGO) based in Sumrasar Sheikh village in Kutch, has worked with many artisans of the region since 1993. With a mission to preserve and protect traditional arts, Kala Raksha's strengths are a deep understanding of culture and arts, and its focus on the artisan. Kala Raksha's work includes income generation, preventive health care, micro-credit, design education for artisans, and teaching about rural traditions.

Kala Raksha established Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya (KRV), the world's first design school for traditional artisans, in 2005. KRV has developed a new approach to design education based on existing traditions. Its Advisory Board comprises master artisans of Kutch, and the faculty includes both local and international teachers. KRV's effectiveness is in the relevance of the education provided. Approaching education through a vital subject, the institute enables direct access to higher education and ultimately raises the capacity of artisans and the value of traditional arts. KRV graduates have increased their market reach and incomes through good design. They have been honoured with awards for excellence and invitations to participate in international programs.



The impact of design education on artisans has been recognized internationally as well as locally. In 2009, the Sir Misha Black Medal for Distinguished Service to Design Education was awarded to Project Director Judy Frater for the establishment of Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya. The medal, likened to the Nobel Prize for Design Education, is awarded through an association of UK bodies, including the Royal College of Art. In 2011, Ms.Frater also received the Crafts Council of India Sanman Award.

The Vidhyalaya does not levy fees from women artisan participants, and takes a token fee from the male artisan students. Because KRV does not have an endowment, funds must be raised on a continual basis. Fees from the workshops will contribute to the operation of the institute.

To learn more about Kala Raksha, please see our websites: [www.kala-raksha.org](http://www.kala-raksha.org) and [www.kala-raksha-vidhyalaya.org](http://www.kala-raksha-vidhyalaya.org)

## **THE WORKSHOPS**

Kala Raksha, a social enterprise working with textile arts in the desert region of Kutch, India, now offers workshops focusing on concept, design and techniques of textile arts of Kutch for design and textile enthusiasts. The workshops are taught by master traditional artisans who have graduated from its design school Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya, and coordinated by Project Director Judy Frater.



### **Facilities**

The Vidhyalaya campus rests on eight acres of land near Tunda Vandh, in Mundra Taluka, Kutch. The campus includes a guest house with four double rooms, a large courtyard, classroom, office and computer lab. Studios for weaving, block printing and dyeing are constructed in traditional style with stone and lime mortar, and antique wood and stone elements. These structures have revived languishing eco-friendly techniques while contributing to the beautiful, inviting atmosphere of the rural campus.

Participants stay in the guest house and dormitories. Simple, healthy Gujarati vegetarian meals are included in the workshops

### **Objectives of the Workshops**

Workshops include extra weft weaving on a pit loom, hand block printing, batik block printing, bandhani (shibori), and dyeing with synthetic and natural dyes. Embroidery in Rabari, suf, Jat and pako traditions, patchwork and appliqué can be taught in either the Vidhyalaya or Kala Raksha Center campus, where participants can also visit our textile museum.

Participants learn age old traditional techniques, traditional concepts of color, form and patterns, and creative evocation of artisans' experiences through their arts. This is an excellent opportunity to experience the vibrant culture of Kutch artisans. Participants will appreciate concept as well as learn exciting skills, through working with traditional artisans. By the end of the workshop they will have produced a genuine textile in the art form chosen, and have had the enriching experiencing of working directly with these fascinating artisans.





The expected outcomes are that participants will

- \*learn a traditional aesthetic style
- \*learn one of the traditional techniques
- \*experience a traditional system of learning and expressing
- \*understand traditional art as an integrated part of life that expresses a world view
- \*understand traditional art as a combination of aesthetics and skills
- \*gain a perspective of their own culture and subculture

### **Activities**

Workshops can be for the duration of 1 day, 2 days, or 5 days.

Included in all are brief introductory lectures, on traditional textile arts and their cultural context, by Judy Frater. Award winning films and illustrated lectures can be included. A list is available



### **Instructors**

In all workshops, participants work with traditional artisans who have graduated from Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya- weavers, printers and dyers, the inimitable nomadic Rabaris and other embroiderers. Profiles of instructors will be available when the dates of the workshops are set. You can view profiles of all graduates of KRV on our website [www.kala-raksha-vidhyalaya.org](http://www.kala-raksha-vidhyalaya.org)



## ABOUT THE TRADITIONAL ARTS



### **Weaving**

Kutch weaving is practiced on a 4 treadle, fly shuttle pit loom. The specialty of the tradition is hand insertion of ornamental extra wefts, almost like embroidering. Traditional dhabla/ blankets which used interlocking or tapestry wefts were made with a hand thrown shuttle.

### **Block Printing**

Kutch block printing is largely done with resist, so that the pattern is light on dark. Substances including gum Arabic and lime, or mud and millet flour are printed on the fabric with wooden blocks. When the fabric is immersed in the dye bath, the colour cannot penetrate the printed areas. Typical patterns are complex, using two or three blocks to create the motifs. The most traditional fabric, Ajrakh, is printed separately on the back and front. Thus, registration is a critical skill.

### **Batik**

Batik in Kutch is a particular form of resist printing. The wax is applied with wooden blocks. Again, the patterns are light on dark. But the technique of printing is specifically swift because the wax must be applied while it is hot.

### **Bandhani**

Bandhani, or shibori, is a tie dyed resist. The fabric is folded for double thickness, printed with a basic pattern, and tied with fine cotton string in knots along the patterns. When the fabric is immersed in dye, the dye cannot penetrate the knots and a dotted pattern results. The technique requires manual dexterity.

### **Natural Dyeing**

Traditional Kutch textiles were dyed with natural substances, including indigo, iron acetate, madder and pomegranate rinds. Natural dyes on cotton fabrics require mordants. So the process is multi stepped and based on an understanding of chemistry.

### **Embroidery**

Many styles of embroidery are practiced in Kutch. All employ intricate stitching techniques, and setting mirrors. Rabari work is renowned for its prolific use of mirrors of a variety of shapes, and its wide repertoire of stitches. Suf is worked from the reverse of the fabric in surface satin stitch counted on the warp and weft. Garasia Jat embroidery is a cross stitch variation also counted on the warp and weft, and using minute mirrors. Pako uses nearly the same techniques as Rabari work, but is denser with predominantly floral motifs.

### **Patchwork and Appliqué**

Patchwork creates a fabric by stitching together squares and triangles of cloth. Appliqué creates patterns by stitching pieces of cloth upon the fabric. Both techniques are relatively easy to learn and can be used to make larger, utilitarian products.

## WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

### 1. Day long workshop

Examination of □ raditional pieces, with explanations by artisans of pattern, technique and conceptualization.

Learn the basic techniques of the chosen craft

Design and execute a small piece.

Exhibition, sharing and wrap-up with the group

### 2. Two day workshop

Day 1

Examination of traditional and narrative pieces, with explanations by artisans of pattern, technique and conceptualization.

Learn the basic techniques of the chosen craft

Experiment and innovation

Day 2

Learn basic forms and color patterns.

Design and execute a small piece.

Exhibition, sharing and wrap-up with the group

### 3. Five Day workshop

Day 1-

**Discussion:** Introduction to the crafts, history and lifestyle. With focus on when and why these crafts are practiced

**Activity:** Examine traditional textiles and learn basic techniques

Day 2-

**Discussion:** Illustrated lecture on concept and techniques.

**Activity:** Learning traditional and contemporary patterns and continue with techniques

Day 3-

**Discussion:** Film: **The Masters' Voices**- artisans discuss design in traditional textiles

Examination of examples, with focus on discovering the relevance of patterns to lifestyle.

**Activity:** Learn basic form and color patterns. Advanced techniques. Design the final products

Day 4-

**Discussion:** Illustrated lecture on motifs in cultural context

**Activity:** Begin to execute project.

Day 5-

**Discussion:** Illustrated lecture on colour and pattern in Kutch

Participants discuss what they have learned about life and art in rural Kutch.

**Activity:** Participants finish projects

### **Post workshop**

Exhibition and sharing, Celebrate with Kala Raksha artisans- an afternoon of song, and craft sales.

## **KALA RAKSHA STAFF AND TRUSTEES**

### **MANAGEMENT RESUMES**

**Prakash Bhanani** - KR Co-Founder, KR Chief Executive

- LLB Gujarat University(1989), B.Com Gujarat University(1987)
- Member of Steering Committee (Handicrafts) Planning Commission, Govt.of India
- Lifelong experience of traditional arts/cultures, 15 years experience in management of cultural development/income generation projects.

**Judy Frater** – KR Co-Founder, KR Project Coordinator, KRV Project Director

- MA University of Washington(1987) – Anthropology, Museology,  
MA University of Minnesota(1981) – South Asia, Marathi Language,  
BA Lawrence University (1974) – Anthropology/Education,  
Ashoka Fellow
- 2009 Sir Misha Black Medal for Distinguished Service to Design Education
- 39 years experience in culture/arts (South Asia), textiles/research, museum curating, development.

### **KALA RAKSHA TRUSTEES**

Prakash Bhanani, Kala Raksha Co-Founder and Chief Executive,

Member of Steering Committee(Handicrafts) National Planning Commission – Government of India

Judy Frater, Kala Raksha Co-Founder, KR Project Coordinator, KRV Project Director, Ashoka Fellow

Rajni Patwa, Architect

Ashoke Chatterjee, Previous Director, Crafts Council of India

Nita Thakore, Textile Artist, Faculty Pearl Academy of Fashion, Jaipur

K.V. Raju, Faculty, Institute of Rural Management

Mira Poonam, Artisan

Hariya Uttam, Artisan

Babri Moru, Artisan

Haku Shah, Padmashree, Artist & Historian

Jayanti Nayak, Faculty, National Institute of Design

Daya Dohat, National Awardee, Artisan

Rai Singh Rathod, Tracer, Gujarat Electricity Board, Local Guide



### **KALA RAKSHA VIDHYLAYA ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS**

Ismail Mohammed Khatri - block printer, Ajrakhpur

Shamji Vishramji Vankar- weaver, Bhujodi

Lalji Vankar - weaver, Nirona

Gulam Hussain Umar - tie dye, Bhuj

Ali Mohammed Isha - tie dye, Bhuj

Umar Farouk - tie dye, Badli

Qasimbhai - batik, Mundra