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2020: Connecting the Strands
Background: Contribution of Gramshree and Craftroots

About Gramshree

Gramshree was founded in 1995 by the first women CM of Gujarat Smt. Anandiben Patel with a prominent social entrepreneur Smt. Anarben Patel to empower and support marginalized women residing in rural and urban slums of Gujarat through income generation activities. The empowerment process was further strengthened and headed by Smt. Vandana Agrawal.

Gramshree aims to elevate the social stature of the women deprived of opportunities due to their geographical, family, and societal incompetence and make them self-reliable through teaching them skill-based jobs (e.g. handicraft, cooking, driving, nursing, and more).

With women forming more than 60% of the workforce in the handicraft sector, Gramshree significantly impacted the sector by employing vulnerable yet trained women to become artisans.

In the past 25 years, Gramshree has worked with 75000+ women in slums, lower-income areas, and the rural stretches of the country.

Craftroots: Enriching the lives of Artisans

In 2001, The Gramshree Women Empowerment gave the world of Indian handicrafts a warm and profoundly rooted establishment termed Craftroots.
During the wake of the Gujarat earthquake, a significant portion of the state, especially Kutch and Bhuj, was wrecked by the catastrophe. The team of Gramshree with Manav Sadhna reached the barren yet beautiful rann and spent an entire year in the rural stretch of the state.

The underlying motive of the journey to Kutch and Bhuj was to revive the livelihood, rebuild the infrastructure and reinforce the zeal of the villagers. Volunteers from both organizations joined hands and worked in synergy to reconstruct roads, schools, homes, drainage systems, wells, dams, and toilets.

"Only by giving are you able to receive more than you already have."

That's what happened to us. Spending an entire year in Kutch and Bhuj and nearby villages such as Ludiya and Gandhi nu Gam serving, we were fascinated by indigenous people's lives, culture, and vibrant crafts. The divinity of the learning and experience sowed a thoughtful seed in our founder's heart that led them to advocate for the Indian Handicraft.

Hence, the establishment of a platform where various stakeholders co-create and promote India's treasures. Over the years, profits acquired from selling the handicraft products crafted by our artisans (the majority of which are women) support health, education, personal finance, and leadership training programs of the craft community.

Today, Gramshree & Craftroots combined have over 25000 artisans spread over 45 crafts across 14 states through a circle of 15 NGOs enriched over the last 25 years.

Objectives

The core functions at Craftroots are vital to staying true to its ideals. A sustainable, empowering, and compassionate approach is a must while considering to include any craft or textile into the database.

1. Survey and Documentation: By being a part of Craftroots, many artisans are benefitted from resources that make them capable of having a stable income source. These bonds are kept for long, with each achievement documented for the villager’s encouragement.

2. Education and Awareness: By education, Craftroots does not limit itself to just textbooks. It documents and presents stories of individuals who brought happiness back into their lives through their crafts.

3. Design Development: Craftroots is a platform that gives everyone a space to voice their opinions, challenges, and difficulties to come up with sustainable solutions. The design development aspect of Craftroots connects artisans with designers for the exchange of various ideas, leading to a unique outcome.

4. Sales and Marketing: The existence of craft traditions is dictated by the demand it has. Marketing the masterpieces as sustainable, traditional yet modern creations is the Craftroots way of engaging the audience of today.
5. Social Services: As per the feedback we receive through these programs, we cater to the particular issues unique to each village by creating initiatives for their betterment. These activities were also successfully conducted during the pandemic, maintaining the regulations and guidelines.

VISION

To nurture the mind, body, and soul of marginalized women through various programs that strengthen their self-reliance, promote sustainability, and enhance their quality of life which further benefits society.

MISSION

Encourage the holistic development of vulnerable women through vocational skill training, income generation activities, and education and awareness-centric ventures to foster women's self-reliance and integrity.

VALUES & PRACTICES

We inspire our people to participate in practices that ignite a human's fundamental generosity, thus catalyzing inner and outer transformation.

In addition, one of the core practices of our ecosystem is that we commence our day with an all religion prayer and meditation to spur inner peace. Finally, our value-established ecosystem encourages our team to spread kindness by doing various acts of kindness.

Notable Milestones of 2018-19

2018-19 has been the year of acceleration for Gramshree to involve volunteers, teachers, and advisories to conduct various skill development activities and programs for a social cause.
Metal Craft workshop was organized and conducted by the Faculty of Design, Design Innovation and Craft Resource Center (DICRC), CEPT University in collaboration with Craftroots and Gramshree, Ahmedabad. The workshop had the industry support of the International Copper Promotion Council (India), Mumbai, and Rachaita Creative Solutions, Baroda.

The workshop focused on different types of metal crafts like metal embossing, beaten metalwork, cutwork, metal engraving, sheet metal work, lost wax casting (Dhokra), traditional metal casting, along with upcoming technologies. Gilding workshops, site visits, and industry visits to Patan and Baroda were also conducted to expose the participants to various crafts and fabrication work.

The workshop constituted of 27 Craft Participants, which included Master Craftspeople, Fabricators, and Helpers who came from the Kutch, Mehsana, and Nadid districts of Gujarat. Many also came for the workshop from Andhra Pradesh and Orissa.

Experts for the workshop included UG and PG students from Architecture and their faculties. The craftspeople, fabricators, and design participants worked together on the specific design brief dealing with the spatial applications. Through a collaborative craft-design process, various outputs related to Interior Architecture were produced by hand-on explorations with various metal crafts.

Patwa Craft

A workshop was organized to learn Patwa craft from the best artisans from Rajasthan. More than 14 participants who included Master craftsmen, fabricators, interns, designers participated in this 7 days long workshop. During the workshop, the participants were taught the details of the theory, which was later put into practice when the artisans enthusiastically created samples with the help of master artisans.
Paper Making Craft

The workshop on Paper Making focused on the creation of handmade paper from scratch and utilizing it to create handmade products eligible for sale. The curriculum also taught the participants how to recycle old paper accurately, by turning them into boxes, trays, and bags. Japanese binding and book covering were also taught for creating a handmade diary.

Promotional Strategies

Exhibitions

Exhibitions act as a two-way connection for the artisans and the end consumers. Artisans get the chance to interact with their customers directly, which gives them exposure to the marketing aspect of handicrafts, along with understanding the expectations of the interested consumers. Craftroots’ exhibitions have been an informative platform for the consumers alike, as they are sensitized to the hefty processes of handicrafts, thus adding to its value, and eliminating the middlemen in the spectrum.

These exhibitions also include small workshops for the viewers to indulge in basic handcrafted arts such as pottery and painting. For the complete event, Craftroots invite the artisans without any fee, thus encouraging these small-scale artisans to showcase their skills and expertise to a wider audience.
Craftroots have conducted over thirteen exhibitions in the past three years benefitting 80-100 artisans, the event being a catalyst to spread the positivity of handcrafted creations in various cities. As times are changing, the world is gradually opening up to sustainable practices in the care of the environment. Thus, we aim to execute up to 8 more exhibitions by March 2022.

Previews and Sales

The Craftroots flagship store is always open for anyone to observe the variety of intricacies in handicrafts from various regions of Gujarat and nearby states. Previews and sales promote a new upcoming launch for the viewers to stay updated with the collections of Craftroots. Along with the store, previews also provide exposure to the handcrafted products in various exhibitions and workshops.
In the past three years, fourteen previews have made it possible to circulate the priceless nature of Indian handicrafts and textiles.

Workshops
Craftroots collaborates with Iteeha to conduct skill-building and experimental workshops exploring the traditional crafts, weaves, and beads of India. The workshops are guided by artisans who have expertise in the concerned craft. The participants need not have any prior experience to be a part of the workshop. Calligraphy, warli and Madhubani painting, various styles of embroidery, mandala and fluid art, block printing are some of the handworks taught by the artisans.
WORKSHOP
10-11 AUGUST 2018
10.30 to 06.30

Malaysian Batik
10/08/2018 | 10.30 to 01.30 | 2400/

Madhubani Painting
10/08/2018 | 02.30 to 05.30 | 1500/

Warli Painting
10/08/2018 | 03.30 to 06.30 | 1500/

Silk Shibori
11/08/2018 | 10.30 to 01.30 | 2300/

Mandala on Clutch
11/08/2018 | 11.30 to 01.30 | 1500/

Lipan Kaam
11/08/2018 | 02.30 to 05.30 | 1800/

Kalamkari Painting
11/08/2018 | 03.30 to 06.30 | 1500/

Ground Floor Veer House, Opp Castrol Institute Of Motoring, Bodakdev, Ahmedabad, Gujarat 380054 | 079 4800 7711

Gond Painting Workshop

Date: 03/07/2018  Time: 2.30 pm to 5.30 pm  Venue: Craftroots, Ahmedabad  Fees: 1500/- (inclusive of all Material)
In the past three years, Craftroots with Iteeha have conducted over ten workshops with 20+ crafts in seven cities (Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Indore, Surat, Rishikesh, Vadodara, and Hyderabad).

2020: Connecting the Strands

One major reason for handicrafts becoming obsolete is survival through time. The timelessness of sustainability doesn’t appeal to every audience, thus, contemporary designs created from old practices can give a new life to the creations of handicraft artisans, along with enticing the coming generations who have a broader mindset towards the world.
Gramshree aims to connect ideas, dialogues and come up with never-before-seen masterpieces, which is possible with the combination of the skills of artisans and the thinking of new-age designers. Up to 3 apparel collections and adjoined home decor collections will be previewed through Craftroots to promote the handmade nature of the products.