

AGA KHAN DEVELOPMENT NETWORK



NOOR

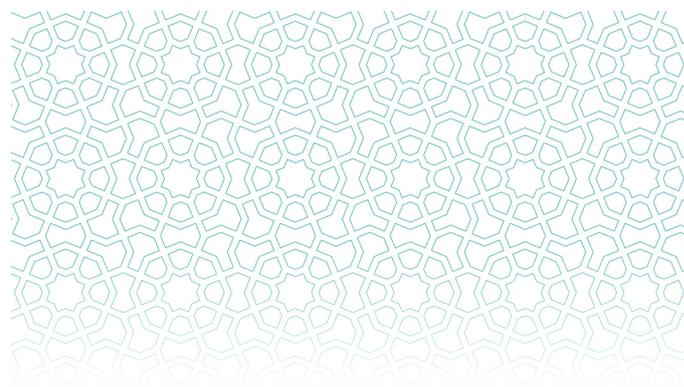
Self Help Group from Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti, New Delhi Developed as a part of **NIZAMUDDIN URBAN RENEWAL INITIATIVE**

**Established in
November 2009**

THE CONTEXT

The Cultural revival component of the Nizamuddin Urban Renewal Initiative adopt an integrated approach with an underlying principle of preserving the living culture of the area while supporting socio economic development of the community. During interactive sessions with community vocational training opportunities emerged as the key need that could link up to livelihoods and income generating activities for youth and women. Based on the need assessment the craft programme for women was started on traditional paper cutting art form popularly known as Sanjhi.

Sanjhi is an art of cutting paper with the help of special pair of scissors that originated and still visible in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh. Traditionally, sanjhi motifs were derived from stories of Krishna, but the patterns used by Noor are linked to the culture and heritage of their area through the use of design elements and motifs from local monuments.



FORMING THE GROUP

With around 10 members, the formation of Self Help Group, Noor was facilitated in November 2009 with an objective to empower weaker section of the society through collective action which could serve as a means to improve the quality of life.

Self-Help group is a voluntary association of people, which functions democratically and accountably, to achieve the collective goals of the group. It is a noble way in organising particular section of the community into a group with a specific purpose and makes them visible in the larger community.

While initiating the process of forming SHG, the needs, issues and concerns of the women were addressed. They were made aware about the concept of SHG and its key features as below:

- Determine the goals and objectives of the SHG and to constitute rules and regulations for better functioning
- Active participation and distribution of leadership.
- Equality of power and influence.
- Cohesiveness.
- Diagnose the problem areas and involve all the members to deal with the same
- Support and appreciate each other's work
- Address disagreements in a constructive manner
- Elect leader and other functionaries of the group
- Regular attendance
- Savings on monthly basis
- Sanctioning of loans and loan repayments
- Book keeping and documentation
- Audited statements

A training schedule was developed in association with Lupin Human Welfare and Research Foundation, Bharatpur, Rajasthan and the members were trained for a week in November 2009, keeping in mind the above mentioned points of reference.

ORIENTATION AND TRAINING:

Two successive training programmes on Sanjhi craft were organised. The **first training workshop** with a group of 15 women was conducted by Mohan Kumar Soni, winner of state award for excellence in paper cutting in **November 2009**. It was challenging to get the women out of their homes for a training workshop. But the prospect of economic independence using their newly acquired skill encouraged them to make a success of the first training session. Subsequently they continued with their practice sessions at home till they were satisfied that they can match up to the standard of the contemporary products in the market.

A **second training** session was conducted in **July 2010**. The training workshop was conducted by Ram Soni, recipient of National award and Shilp Shiromani in paper craft. The week long training workshop included site visits to Humayun's Tomb and Sunder Nursery to derive inspiration from the lattice screens in the surrounding monuments. The same cuttings were also introduced in cloth.

The **third and final training workshop** was conducted in **April 2012** over a period of 10 days. The objectives of the training sessions were to brush up the skills of the already trained members and to conduct fresh training for new members and experiment some new patterns. After the training programme, the women continued to practice at home as per the given assignments which were supervised by the master trainers on their occasional tours to Delhi. Such visits were facilitated by AKTC. In all 30 women members from the community were trained and after evaluating their craft skill by the master trainer, 12 members were shortlisted to form the group.

Through these training workshops a lot more variety to the range of products were introduced.



EXPOSURE VISIT TO DASTKAR RANTHAMBORE

In February 2011, a two day visit was organised for the group members the Dastkar Swayam Samuh Sahayata under Dastkar Ranthambore project. To make the group members aware of the importance of such site visits, lectures were organised on **Enterprise Development**, where successful case studies were taken up including Dastkar Ranthambore Project. The exposure visit out of Delhi created an opportunity for the members to interact with diverse backgrounds of people engaged in crafts sector under different circumstances.

The purpose of the exposure visit was to show a working model and provide the information of the overall process of functioning of Self Help groups. The visit helped them understand that success in functioning of such groups depends on group action. It gave them lessons about quality control, production and pricing details and consumer preferences. They also felt the necessity of a crafts centre where all sections of women from the community come together to learn and practice these skills or often simply to interact and observe.

To carry forward the work of the SHG the members realised that there is requirement for working capital. They wanted to adopt the joint revolving fund as modeled by the groups for sustaining production.

WORKSHOP WITH FULBRIGHT ARTIST

In February 2013, a three day design workshop for the paper cutting group was conducted by Fulbright Scholar Tanya Gill. The workshop focused on stimulating the women to develop their ideas to create their own designs and introducing 2-3 layers in paper cutting art. Government affiliations

To strengthen the group, all the individual members were empanelled with the premier national and autonomous bodies which promotes traditional art and craft like the **Development Commissioner Handicrafts, Ministry of Textiles**, Dastakar and Dastakari Haat Samiti. The identity card given to all the members allows them to put up stalls at government facilities and also enables them to take loans to build capital.



LAUNCH AT NATURE BAZAR, OCTOBER 2010

During the workshop, with some design intervention a range of products were planned keeping in mind the trend in the market. The group was launched along with around 10 products that were developed over the past few months and showcased at the Dastkar Craft Bazar at IGNCA grounds for the first time. The products sold well and the concept was received well by the people.

MARKET LINKAGES

Since the first exposure to the crafts Bazar in 2010, the group has been regularly participating in all the major crafts events, Diwali Mela organized by the neighborhood RWA's, winter and spring festivals of different Embassies.

Besides selling at the crafts exhibitions, the group is also catering to separate orders from individuals and institutions. Some of the important customized orders have been for AKF USA, German Embassy and World Partnership Walk for AKF Canada consecutively from 2011-12 and 2014- 2015.

Noor has made its sales largely through the following markets:

- Craft Bazaars organised through Dastkaar and Dastkari Haat Samiti
- Blind School Mela
- Souvenir shops at Crafts Museum and National Museum
- Central Public Works Department
- Ford Foundation
- NABARD, Mumbai, ISB, Hyderabad (Mayura Balasubramaniam)
- Ritika Book house
- World partnership walk, Canada
- Sensations (design house)
- Online Shopping www.eyass.com, www.feumo.in, www.shopo.in www.indiameetsindia.org
- Exhibitions at corporate houses
- AKTC and Embassy Network

Continuous negotiations with the Archaeological Survey of India by the project office led to granting of required permission to open a craft kiosk at the Humayun's Tomb in January 2015. These allowed the group to exhibit and sell their products at Humayun's Tomb throughout the year.



OPERATIONS

Noor works mostly on assignment basis. Patterns are distributed to the women as per the order finalized with the client or in general for making products to be sold at Crafts Bazar. They are paid a predetermined amount (decided by the group in a common meeting) for each cutting based on its size and level of intricacies. The cuttings are then taken to the next step into production (printing, binding, pasting, framing etc) from external sources, and this is funded by the group account. The members work from home.

COSTING

After the products are done, then the members determine the cost of the product taking into consideration the expenses to get the product ready i.e. labour cost, material cost, fabrication cost. Added to it are 30 % admin and 20% profit. The sale precedes goes into the group account. And further divided amongst the members as per their due for making the cuttings. The members are also paid from the group to attend the kiosk at Humayun's Tomb and various other crafts exhibitions. The outside vendors are paid from the group account as per their bills against their services. A range of products are kept in stock, and production for this takes place as and when required for replenishing it.

MEMBERS AND REGULARITY

There are currently 30 women in the Basti who have been trained in the art of sanjhi, out of which 21 members have been associated with the group and benefited financially though the period of association varies amongst the members. At any given point of time at least 9-10 members are working for the group. All the active members deposit Rs 100 to a separate savings account each month and an individual account book is maintained.

The group has been meeting on a monthly basis to decide the future course of action and a community member has been coordinating the activities as well as record keeping for the group. There is a President, secretary and treasurer of the group elected by group's consensus. A member from the community is appointed as the coordinator of the group and is supported by AKTC.

The members of the group have been conducting sanjhi craft training workshop at different schools and institutions and helping the outreach of the traditional craft form amongst various sections of the society. The charges taken by the members for conducting the workshop vary from Rs.500 to Rs.2000 depending on the size and nature of the group.



**OUT OF 30 MEMBERS TRAINED IN 3 DIFFERENT SANJHI TRAINING WORKSHOPS,
20 MEMBERS HAVE FINANCIALLY BENEFITED FROM THE GROUP.**

Sl no	Name	Total income	Year	Remarks	Holder of Identity cards from DC, Handicrafts
1	Anisa	92,296	2009-2015	Continuing	Yes
2	Razda	1,15,023	2009-2015	Continuing	Yes
3	Shama	87,053	2009-2015	Married in 2015 and shifted from Basti	Yes
4	Reshma	88,173	2009-2015	Married in 2015 and shifted from Basti	Yes
5	Shaheen	98,875	2009-2015	Continuing	Yes
6	Shabnam	77,176	2009-2015	Continuing	Yes
7	Farheen	74,498	2009-2015	Continuing	Yes
8	Farheen Akhtar	35,275	2014-2015	Joined in 2014 and continuing	
9	Saima	56,947	2009-2015	Continuing	
10	Shabana	3820	2010	Short term	
11	Nargis	300	2010	Short term	
12	Shabina	18,947	2009-2013	Married in 2013 and shifted from Basti	
13	Reshma khan	5,568	2009-2013	Married in 2013 and shifted from Basti	
14	Saba1	10,391	2009-2014	Took a break after marriage in 2014 and joined back in 2016	
15	Saba2	5,781	2009-2012	Married in 2012 and left Basti	
16	Fatima	23,876	2012	She trained her daughter Fareen, who is now with the group	Yes
17	Ummi	22,885	2009-2015	Continuing	
18	Sumayya	46,094	2009-2015	Continuing	Yes
19	Sonia	12,102	2009-2013	She got a job and left the group 2013	
20	Sana	2746	2009-2012	She got a job and left the group in 2012	

INDIVIDUAL PAYMENT DETAILS (2009-2015)

NAME	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	TOTAL
ANISA	10736	7580	14630	4305	28280	26765	92296
SHAHEEN	11932	6527	17826	4500	28800	29290	98875
SHABNAM	4700	2123	8653	4045	28770	28885	77176
SHAMA	8255	7785	13008	3835	28115	26055	87053
RESHMA	9550	7785	13008	3835	28120	25875	88173
SAIMA	4195	5307	8695	4065	8970	25715	56947
UMMI	1300				14905	6680	22885
RAZDA	15199	14351	23723	1350	32325	28075	115023
SHABINA	880	5307	8695	4065			18947
SHABANA	3820						3820
NARGIS	300						300
SABA 1	2130	280	1736		6245		10391
SABA 2	1230	1805	2746				5781
SUMMAYYA	5408	4095	7131	3700	15690	10070	46094
RESHMA KHAN	1503			4065			5568
SONIA	5307	1038	4117	1640			12102
FATIMA		764	23112				23876
FARHEEN	2712	2123	8653	4045	28500	28465	74498
SANA			2746				2746
FERHEEN AKHTAR					10260	25015	35275
GRAND TOTAL	91869	66870	158479	43450	258980	260890	880538

FINANCES

The women group trained in the craft skill of paper cutting have been doing good in terms of production and sale since they came together to form the SHG with their separate bank account in December 2009. An amount of Rs. 8, 80,538 has been paid to the members over last 5 years (2010-1015)

The table below summarises the annual sale amount, total payment to members and total amount paid to different vendors for their services from 2010 to 2015. The closing balance as of 31 December 2015 is Rs. 2, 63,008.

Year	Payment to Members	Payment to Vendors	Total Sale In general	Total sale in Exhibitions	Sale in HT Kiosk	Total Sale	Closing balance
2010	91,869	54,156	1,64,456	84,291		2,48,747	52,444
2011	66,870	1,32,302	1,81,636	69,500		2,51,136	1,64,420
2012	1,58,479	49,894	54,695	82,410		137105	183403
2013	43,450	1,01,372	1,90,344	20,195		268539	158662
2014	2,58,980	2,21,454	2,81,452	32,874		314326	82,155
2015	2,60,890	3,11,025	440719	27,383	321909	790011	2,63,008

Vendor payment details

2009-2010	
Vendor Name	Amount
Paramount Printographics	28125
Swift Enterprises	26031

2011	
Vendor Name	Amount
Paramount Printographics	50159
Swift Enterprises	82143

2012	
Vendor Name	Amount
Paramount Printographics	46032
Swift Enterprises	3862

2013	
Vendor Name	Amount
Paramount Printographics	83707
Ghanshyam Bhatt	17665

2014	
Vendor Name	Amount
Paramount Printographics	183840
Ghanshyam bhatt	28800
The corporate	8814

2015	
Vendor Name	Amount
Paramount Printographics	185663
Ghanshyam Bhatt	27040
First Envelopes	15960
Shubham picture	19912
Aadil	4200
Mahavir enterprises	58250

STOCK AS OF JANUARY 2016

Book Mark	430
Box Rectangular	36
Box Round	51
Box Square	136
Greeting card (Big)	545
Greeting Card	Out of Stock
Lamps round small	43
Lamp Rectangular Big	1 (Sample)
Lamp rectangular Small	31
Luggage Card Laminated	79
Luggage card Paper	101
Notebook Big	87
Notebook Medium	263
Notebook small	18
Notebook Binding	229
Notebook stitching	47
Planner 2015	46
Tealight Single	76
Tea light box double	125
Tea Light single box	
Wall hanging	38

Usually this is the general stock but in case of preparing for exhibition season (October –December), the numbers gets doubled.

SUPPORT FROM THE PROJECT OFFICE:

Orders coming directly to the project office were initially handed by the staff from project office and then forwarded to the coordinator of the group. However with face book page, kiosk at Humayun's Tomb, direct contact number for the group, the dependence on project office is declining over last few years. Finances of the group are also reviewed by the project office. Salary of the Coordinator of the group is taken care by the AKTC since 2009.

From 2009 November till December 2011, the programme was supported by the Ford Foundation, which included training and exposure visit support, purchase of tools and raw materials.

The sanjhi training programme in 2012 was supported by HUDCO under the larger grant to undertake skill development training for 200 disadvantaged people in Nizamuddin Basti through a need based programme focused on vocational training.

In 2014, to prepare a range of products for the opening of the HT Kiosk, AKTC supported the group to purchase raw materials to enable them to go for bulk production. The financial assistance was of Rs.2, 00,000/-

Support of project office since 2012:

Payment to coordinator: 2012	Rs.93600
Payment to coordinator: 2013	Rs. 103440
Payment to coordinator: 2014	Rs. 64929
Payment to coordinator: 2015	Rs. 108000

Grand Total : 2012 to 2015 **Rs. 369969**

Support for raw materials in 2014 Rs.2,00,000

DESIGN INTERVENTION:

The first design intervention to the product range was done in 2010 with the support from the Ford Foundation. The next design phase happened in 2015 which was supported by the SDV logistics.

The second design intervention was mainly to cater to the clientele of the Kiosk at Humayun's Tomb. Over a period of three months of constant interaction with the designer and the craftsperson few products were developed that highlighted the monument, motifs and colours found in the Humayun's tomb area.

Since several craft groups were operating under the project in Nizamuddin, it was decided to bring them under one umbrella called as "Insha e Noor" for better management. Though the bank account and management body remains separate as it was in the beginning; Insha e Noor helped creating a distinct identity for the craft products from the Basti. Standardization of products, packaging, outreach and publicity was put in place and the new brand name "Insha e Noor" was introduced in January 2015.

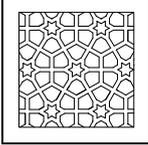
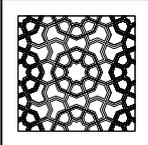
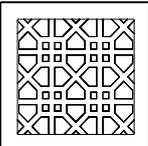
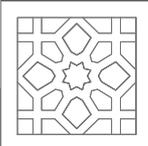
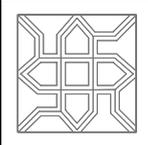
Sl. No	DD Code no	Product name	Colors	Remarks
1	69-71	Mirror frame with candle stand	2	Failed: Scissor gets damaged by the glue paper
2	72	Framed wall art	1	multi layered cutting details like pillars were not stable
3	74-78	Coasters	4	Same as sl 1 & plastic sheets got scratches while cutting them into square pieces
4	79	Gift box SMALL	3	On sale
5	80	Gift box BIG	3	On sale
6	81	Box file	1	Product was not cost effective
7	82	Greeting card Big	2	On sale
8	83	Greeting card small	3	On sale
9	85-86	Centre stitch notebooks	2	On sale
10	89-92	Folders	1	Product was not cost effective
11	93-94	Framed art	1	On sale
12	95	Calendar	1	Product was not cost effective
13	96-97	Tea Light	2	Same as Sl no.1
14	98-100	Lamp shade designs	2	On sale
15	101-102	Spiral notebooks	2	On sale

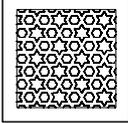
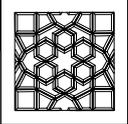
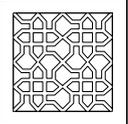
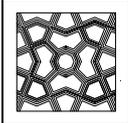
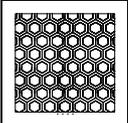
VENDOR DETAILS

Address	Contract person Nos	Services in products	Payment
Paramount Printographics – 4225-A (GF) Ansari Road Daryaganj New Delhi 110002	Anand/Atul 23271568 9810082929	notebooks, greeting cards, bookmarks	5,77,166
Ghanshyam Bhatt paper craft 67A, khizrabad, New Delhi-110065	Ghanshyam 9971291098	lamps, tea light	73,505
First envelopes D.D.A park Gayani bazaar 1810 , KOTLA MUBARAKPUR NEW DELHI	Babu Khan 9811205090 24649642	luggage tag, luggage card, gift -pouches, boxes, folder, calendar, mounting of cut works	15,960
Mahavir enterprises B-2/3 Building 11 Nehru palace New Delhi	Rakesh 9958126298	notebook binding and centre stitching	58,250
Adil Gali no 12/1 Cohan Bangar New Selampur Delhi 110052	Syed Aadil 9718658873	lamps base/stand, tikli	4200
Kushal Graphics 1805 first Floor parsadi gali near d/56 south extn part one New Delhi 110003	Babulal Jain 2469753	envelopes for greeting card	
Shubham Picture Frame shop no-11/4, Bhogal road, Bhogal, Delhi - 110014	24378570 981031972	Wall hanging frames	19,912

OBSERVATIONS:

- Most of the members have been regular and have been associated with the group over the years. Some of the members who have not been able to continue are mainly as they have to shift from Nizamuddin Basti. As such there is very good coordination amongst the members of the group and are keen to take the work of the group on themselves.
- The products satisfy the requirement of a niche market, who appreciate the uniqueness and finesses of the products. However the limitation in range (stationery mostly) a variety of products with lesser monetary value could attract a wider audience.
- The group is making all the expenses meet from the group's account since 2010 onwards. The sampling cost and raw material cost was taken by the project office till 2012. Payment to the members is done from the group's account since 2009.
- The group still needs a support of Rs.2,00,000per annum which should take care of a part time coordinator and a draftsman.
- Design intervention needs to be facilitated at least every two years to keep the creative element constant in the products. Tie ups with design schools could be explored.
- There have been some discrepancies in the overall accounting mainly because the coordinators for the group were not adequately trained to handle the accounts.
- Book mark and wall hanging are the most widely sold products.

Jali Photo	Location	Drawing	Photo Of The Products	Description
	Humanyu's tomb upper plinth parapit Jaali			Tealight Colors Orange, offwhite lemon yellow. comes with a diya and tikli.
	Humanyu's tomb upper plinth parapit Jaali			Greeting Card Black, Pink, Brown, Red
	Humayun's tomb upper plinth parapit Jaali			Boxes, Notebooks
	Chaunsath Khamba main chamber Wall Jaali			Book Mark Colors Red, Purple, Pink, Blue
	Chaunsath Khamba main chamber Wall Jaali			Small Greeting Cards Not in Production anymore Yellow, Red, Brown
	Chaunsath Khamba main chamber Wall Jaali			Chocolate Boxes Circle Square Rectangular Green, Pink, Blue

Jali Photo	Location	Drawing	Photo Of The Products	Description
	Humayun's tomb main Chamber west facade Jaali			Note Book Greeting Cards
	Humayun's tomb upper Chamber North west facade Jaali			Lamp Wall Art
	Humayun's tomb upper plinth parapit Jaali			Greeting Card
	Humayun's tomb main Chamber west facade Jaali			Note Book
	Humayun's tomb upper plinth parapit Jaali			Note Books
	Humayun's tomb upper plinth parapit Jaali			Lamp Shade not in production as of now

Noor: Bringing a new light into lives of women from Basti Nizamuddin

Submitted by TwoCircles.net on 23 January 2015 - 9:19pm

By Nita Khan, TwoCircles.net,

New Delhi: Her delicate fingers expertly cut the paper to bring out a magical jaali which is then put on to a harder paper to turn into a captivating greeting card. She is still shy to talk but her work speaks for her.

She is one of the 10 girls and women at Basti Nizamuddin area in the national capital. These women are trained in the near extinct art and craft of paper-cutting that was introduced to create income generation opportunity, a means of empowerment. And the girls and the women from the conservative ambience lapped up the opportunity.



The idea was simple. They need not go far from home – in fact, they do part of their work from their homes too – and yet, be involved in an inspiring and meaningful activity. 'Noor', a self help group of women for the marketing and promotion of products has brought a new light into their lives, literally.

It started in 2009. These young girls and women from the Nizamuddin Basti were trained in the traditional art of paper cutting, under the guidance of master craftsman. The 10-day training module was followed by two hour practice sessions.

The workshop location was the South Gate of Humayun's Tomb and the motifs were drawn mainly from the decorative elements and jaali designs of the monument. "This created linkages between the people with the historic monuments in their vicinity and it provides them with means of income," said an official associated with the project.



Fehmina, who goes by single name, is part of the self help group under Noor Craft Centre. She tells about the first training session for what is called 'Sanjhi' art – the name for this paper cutting style. The design elements and motifs were drawn from the local monuments. And the result was: Stunning note books, greeting cards, lamps and other items.

These have been developed into daily use and gift products to make the venture economically viable. "We take our products to Dastakaar, Delhi Haat and other such fairs/exhibitions," Fehmina says.



Needless to add, the women are happy with the income generation. They take home upward of Rs 5,000 per month. Ranging between Rs 25 and Rs 2,000, these products have found many takers.

This programme for women is part of the larger vision of the AKTC project to conserve and develop the three presently segregated albeit historically connected sites of Humayun's Tomb, Nizamuddin Basti and Sunder Nursery into one cohesive and integrated complex. The Urban Renewal initiatives include conservation of monuments, renewal of surrounding spaces and environment and (implementing) sustainable socio-economic development to improve the quality of life of the resident community. Noor and other programmes for women is part of this initiative that has helped more than 200 women overall.



And the efforts are paying off. Last year's AKTC annual report recorded: "The impact of these programmes has been that of the 200 + women trained, most of them are linked to a savings programme through self help groups and this has had a positive impact on the household economy. The 10 girls and women in the Noor Crafts Centre began retailing their products since 2011. This investment is seen to enhance the annual family income by several thousand rupees, which translates into an at least 40 % increase in the family incomes."

These products are regularly taken to various exhibitions, Haats, Diwali Melas and also will be displayed and sold through a souvenir shop at the Humayun's Tomb.

(Photos courtesy: Humayun's Tomb - Nizamuddin Basti Urban Renewal Initiative)

Paderborner 'SJ' Blog

AUGUST 13, 2011 · 20:12

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The art of Paper-Cutting: Women's Self-Help Group from Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti created the Noor products

[The art of Paper-Cutting](#)

- NOOR PRODUCTS : Base of the lamp
- NOOR PRODUCTS : Notebooks
- NOOR PRODUCTS : Paper-cut Screen.
- NOOR PRODUCTS : Greeting

The near extinct art and craft of paper-cutting was introduced to create income generation opportunities for women and girls. Training under a master craftsman enables the women to supplement their incomes through sale of their products. The craft was linked with the culture and heritage of the area through its use of design elements and motifs from local monuments. A designer line of note books, cards, lamps and other items has been developed to make the venture economically viable.

The initiative helped set up 'Noor', a self help group of women for the marketing and promotion of products. These will also be displayed and sold through a souvenir shop at Humayun's Tomb. Young women from the Basti have been trained in the traditional art of paper cutting, under the guidance of master craftsman. The 10 day training module is followed by 2 hour practice session each day at the MCD School. The training serves a two fold purpose. It creates linkages between the people with the historic monuments in their vicinity and it provides them with means of income. The workshop location was the South Gate of Humayun's Tomb and the motifs were drawn mainly from the decorative elements and *jali* designs of the monument.

Future plans include setting up of self help groups and identifying a designer who will work with the groups to develop a range of products for exhibition and sale.

For Enquiry, please contact:

NOOR – A Women's Self-Help Group from Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti,
233 Mashaikh Manzil,
Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti,
New Delhi – 110 013
Phone No.: 011-65545700 Email: mail@nizamuddinrenewal.org

◀ <http://ns1.imc-usa.org/2015jan23/1422028187.html#VrMnaLJ96M8>

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(Clockwise from top left) Masland mats from Green Earth, Sanjhi craft-inspired products from Noor, and Longpi pottery from Hao Craft photos: v.v. krishnan

EXHIBITION Infused with contemporary innovations, age-old craft techniques find newer expressions at the 18th Nature Dastkar Bazaar, notes SHAILAJA TRIPATHI

They are all there. The usual suspects, the ordinary and not-so-ordinary dot the 18 {+t} {+h} Nature Dastkar Bazaar, currently on at the IGNCALawns. Every year, this pot-pourie of art, craft, design and food manages to catapult the structure of IGNCALawns, which otherwise gives out the impression of being unwelcoming and inaccessible, into a space of abundant energy. Themes vary, year after year, but the focus doesn't waver. Even as Laila Tyabji's Dastkar turns 29 this year, discovering traditional skills, reviving age-old crafts and devising an appropriate revenue model for the artisans to sell their products have remained at its core. Here, we tell you about a few spotted at the fair, engaged in giving a whole new twist to traditional practices with zeal and enterprise.

Noor

Sanjhi, the ritualistic craft of paper-cutting with its roots in Mathura and Vrindavan forms the basis of the initiative led by Aga Khan Foundation. The intricate jaali patterns found in the ruins of Humayun's Tomb and Chausath Khamba that adorn the notebooks, lampshades, wall hangings and greeting cards are flying off the shelves, insists Deeti Ray, Programme Officer – Cultural Revival, Aga Khan Trust for Culture. As part of the Aga Khan Trust For Culture's Urban Renewal project, which aims to protect the rich heritage of Humayun's Tomb – Sunder Nursery – Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti, it has imparted the necessary skills to the women inhabitants of the vicinity. "Since drawing is imperative to Sanjhi, they had to go to Humayun's Tomb to sit there and copy the patterns. The family members objected, but with the generation of income it vanished and now women complete their work at home and their husbands come to submit it," says Ray. Trained in Sanjhi by master craftsman Ram Soni, women make anywhere between Rs. 7,000 and 9,000. Going a step further, the organisation is now trying out intricate Sanjhi designs in cloth and is negotiating with ASI to open a stall of their wares at Humayun's Tomb on Lodi Road.

Hao Craft

Why Hao Craft needs a mention is because, unlike in most other cases, it is not an external organisation or an individual which is building a setup to promote the black pottery known as Longpi pottery. It is one among them; Apan took up the cudgels to popularise the ancient pottery, made by the Tangkhul Naga tribes of the Ukhul district in Manipur, outside the state. With 11 artisans as its permanent staffers who stay and work in the house-cum-workshop in Vasant Kunj, Apan's enterprise churns out desirable products fashioned out of a peculiar black stone available in Longpi village, like bowls, trays, platters, kettle sets, bathroom accessories and other home accessories like vases, tea light holders and lamp shades. Though it has a presence in very few stores in Delhi and Bangalore, it has been supplying its products to the Taj Group for a while now.

Green Earth

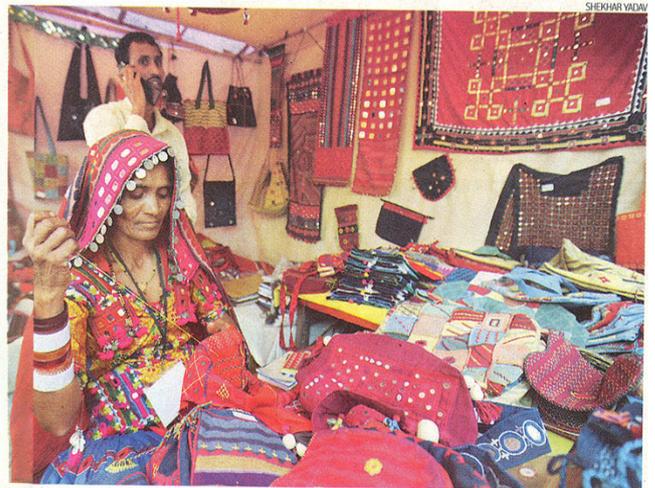
Yet another first-timer, Kolkata-based Green Earth takes pride in rediscovering and reviving the craft of reed mats known as madur or chatai, which used to be hand-woven by the craftsmen of Midnapore in West Bengal. Jointly run by Bashobi Tewari, a trained graphic designer from NID, Ahmedabad, and Mayank Mansingh Kaul, Green Earth also boasts items made out of bamboo, jute, water hyacinth and cane. However, reed and sitalpati mats are what its forte lies in. Three varieties of mats for the purposes of yoga, meditation and massage – woven in masland, ek hara and do hara – in beautiful designs are available for sale in the stall. While masland employs an extremely fine weave, the other two are relatively thicker. "Since it is as fine as muslin cloth, it is called masland. Not many are left who practice this craft but we have identified a few who are based in Midnapore. They, in turn, get it woven for us. Everywhere in South East Asia where these mats are woven, the splitting process has become mechanised except in India, which is why we need to protect it," says Kaul.

(Dastkar Bazaar is on till tomorrow)

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<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-features/tp-metroplus/craft-conscious/article857903.ece>

it's FRI DAY!

(Right) Atshole Thopi from Chizami village, Nagaland, helps women from abjectly poor backgrounds earn a few bucks more by weaving in their free time; (far right) A Lambani woman from Sandur in Bellary district, Karnataka, gets busy with the work that has helped her nomadic community to settle down in life



STORIES BEHIND DASTKAR BAZAAR

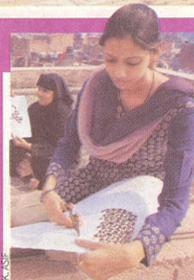
by Archana

WHEN MOHD. Nasruddin was four years old, both his parents died and his elder brother brought him to Delhi from his village in Sitamarhi, Bihar, and left him with an NGO. He grew up scarred, not just because of the permanent absence of his parents but also because the man who ran the NGO — he doesn't want to name the either — had enough food for his half-a-dozen dogs but nothing for the street kids he ostensibly nurtured. Nasruddin learnt to steal food from the bowls of the dogs. But when he grew up enough to lead a life out of the so-called shelter of the NGO, he was sure that he would support kids with a history like his own but not fill their childhood with memories that his own babyhood was punctured by.

Today, as Nasruddin sits at his stall at the ongoing Dastkar Nature Bazaar at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) selling highly attractive cloth bags, chulches and wallets, he smiles when he talks about his food-for-dogs story. The products at his stall are made of cloth that people have no use for, and fashioned into fetching bags by 25 young boys that the NGO Lakshya nurtures. Faridabad-based Lakshya was put together by a group of young men like Nasruddin who all had been brought up by NGOs. Umesh Gupta, a senior member of Lakshya informs with a hint of pride that they are now even sending 10 of these boys to school.

It's easy for stories such as these to get lost in the bright dazzle of the bazaar, where by now, almost anybody who is ethnically-inclined in this city has gone more than once to raise their own and their home's ethnic quotient. But it's these stories that render the bazaar so stirring, the products more special. Right next to the Lakshya stall sits a young girl, Atshole Thopi from Chizami village in Phek district of Nagaland. Her story is equally emotive as the NGO, the North East Network, that she is a part of, supports disenfranchised women in the district. They weave sarongs, stoles and skirts when they get free from their household chores and agricultural work. It sounds rather simplistic but this extra activ-

Jagat Ram Devangan, seen here with his wife Trilochini, from Kondagaon in Bastar, lives 30 km away from the Maoist dominated region of the state but has not let that reality affect his life. He is a big draw at the Bazaar because of his lamps, planters and flutes fashioned out of wood and dried gourd



A young woman at Nizamuddin Basti making a Sanjhi design

DREAMS OF EMPOWERMENT ON PAPER

A visit to the Noor stall at the Dastkar Nature Bazaar, selling exquisite products of Sanjhi art — the traditional paper craft of western Uttar Pradesh — is an example of how cultural conservation plans for local heritage development lead to economic empowerment of women. As part of the vocational training programme of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture's (AKTC) Urban Renewal project in the Nizamuddin area, master Sanjhi craftsmen like Mohan Verma and Ram Soni have been training women from the Basti, who have now formed a Self Help Group (SHG)

called Noor to produce and market products made at home. The main objective of the programme was to link economic opportunities for women to the heritage of the area and motifs from Humayun's Tomb are used on products such as greetings cards, lampshades and more. Noor was set up in November 2009 with 10 members but the economic gains encouraged other women to join and it now has 35 members. Deeti Ray, programme officer (cultural revival), AKTC, says that the group will be supported until it becomes sustainable. "We hope that more

women will join to provide critical mass and enable the Basti to become a hub for handmade products," says Ray. Most of the women at Noor are housewives with little or no education. For some, this is their only source of income. The average amount that a woman can earn here ranges between ₹2,000 and ₹7,000. Shaihin, a housewife working with the group, adds, "By learning this craft, we have been able to value and connect with our own heritage." The Dastkar Bazaar is the first public event that the Noor women are participating in.

— The Dastkar Nature Bazaar is on at the IGNCA, Dr Rajendra Prasad Road, till October 31, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Jaali work empowers them

Richi Verma | TNN

New Delhi: Twenty-eight-year-old Anisha, now a mother of four, was married off at the tender age of nine. Born and brought up in Bihar, she landed in Delhi with her husband, who paints for a living. From her ordinary existence as a housewife in Nizamuddin basti, she has emerged as a respected earning member of the family who brings home up to Rs 5,000-8,000 every month. For this, Anisha put in almost three years to train herself in traditional sanjhi cutting and jaali pattern work.

"I started undergoing training for sanjhi cutting and the response has been tremendous. Not only am I able to financially help my family, but the project has given me a great exposure," said Anisha, who has never worked before. She said her family has provided all the support she needed. "I work part time from home and now, I am working on my communication skills too," she said.

Along with Anisha, 34 other women from the basti have come out of the dark to help support their families and at the same time learn the much-neglected art of traditional paper cutting, which originated in Mathura, UP. They have formed a self-help group — Noor — to market the products created at home. Much like the youths of Nizamuddin — who are training to become tourist guides in the heritage-rich area — these women have also taken the initiative to become independent and improve their quality of life. The products made by them include jaali patterns in the form of monuments, greetings cards, notebooks, lampshades, wall hangings, etc. Besides, the women make customized cuttings and products — all of which are currently on sale at the Diwali mela of the Blind School in Sunder Nagar. At the recent Dastakar mela held at Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, their works brought them a total of Rs 15,000 on one single day.

Ranging between Rs 25 and Rs 2,000, these products have found many takers. In fact, talks are on to market the items through a souvenir shop at Humayun's Tomb. AKTC officials added the corpus of Noor is strengthened by bulk orders such as that from the German Embassy

and Aga Khan Development Network offices. "After a year, the women have gained confidence through life-skills training. So far, Aga Khan Development Network agencies have purchased their products. The phenomenal success at the mela will encourage many other women to join in. Further training in management and marketing will be provided," said Deeti Ray, programme officer, cultural revival, AKTC.

This cultural revival project is a part

of the vocational training programme of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture's urban renewal project in the Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti and is co-funded by Ford Foundation. The women have been trained by skilled craftsmen. According to officials, the project aims to link heritage with opportunities for economic gain by training both women and men. When the programme started in 2009, Noor had 10 members. As more women came forward, the increased to 35.

Photos: Rajesh Mehta



NEW SKILLS: Products made by group Noor were selling at Diwali Mela in Sunder Nagar

