



ankur kala

Sowing Seeds of Hope



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Decision making at Ankur Kala is democratic, participatory and with a view to encourage women trainees and artisans to become responsible.

A movement for empowerment to women and a life of dignity

George Bernard Shaw once said, “I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work the more I live.” He said this of his desire to work for the community.

Engaging in community welfare comes not from some terrible sadness in our hearts, a surge of humanity or a hugely philanthropic motive. It comes from the realization of self actualization, self esteem and the need to stand up to ones own self.

Thus, Haniel Long, author, poet, journalist of the early 1900 America echoes, “Each of us is a being in himself and a being in society, each of us needs to understand himself and understand others, take care of others and be taken care of himself.”

The vision of **Ankur Kala** dawned in the cradle of charity, but drew away from merely being bracketed as a non-governmental organization for intervention to a committed workforce fostering integration and inclusive growth.

It did not have to see far to find out what it wanted to do. In a poor country such as ours, it was not impossible to find a cause to live for, especially if one had the fire in the under belly. The women race in India, as elsewhere in the dark deep world of ours, has from time immemorial continued to live in desperate conditions and mostly uncared for. At best, one would detect sympathy from a

few crumb throwers, consciously magnanimous in their deeds if only for the photo shoots that followed their hallowed work, often exaggerated.

The **Ankur Kala** model focuses more on training these women to become self-reliant instead of finding them dole money to carry them through their shameful lives. Its ‘training for empowerment’ and finally ‘rehabilitation’ of the marginal and destitute rural and semi-urban women through entrepreneurship development programmes, rightfully aimed at instilling self confidence and dignity to their lives, thus enabling them to stand up to economic and social exploitation.

The battle has commenced, but the war is far from over.....



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A movement for empowerment to women and a life of dignity

At a time when most NGOs and institutions were focusing on charitable activities to alleviate the hardships of destitute women by providing succour through health support and vocational training, Ankur Kala in 1982 took up the challenge of creating a sustainable model for economic self-reliance by motivating women to achieve excellence in vocational skills and then produce and sell their handicrafts in the open market.

Starting as a self-employment training center for Batik handicrafts, Ankur Kala has over the years added training in other vocational skills to meet the growing need among a larger number of marginalized women for economic self-reliance. Besides Batik, Ankur Kala provides vocational training in tailoring, catering, making of jam, squash and pickle, silk screen printing and vegetable dye designing.

The seed of Ankur Kala sown in 1982 has grown over the years and today it has established itself as a leading institution in West Bengal for selfemployment training in both vocational and business skills for marginalized and destitute women.

Brief information about Governing Body member and Staff:

Ankur Kala's Governing Body consists of 10 members. They are persons who are qualified and have many years of experience in the field of social action. They play an active role in the organization in terms of training and counselling the women and also by participating in various activities.

The staff members who conduct the daily activities and supervise the programmes are also qualified and experienced. It is their sincerity and commitment to the mission of the organization that has helped Ankur Kala to be recognized as one of the main institutions for training in self – employment and marketing to marginalized and destitute women in West Bengal and many destitute women are sent to Ankur Kala by other organizations.

Structure, Governance and level of decision making:

The programme policies of the organization are formulated by the governing body and implemented by the Main-Co-ordinator and her staff consisting of Co -ordinators, Supervisors, Resource Persons and Administrative personnel who are involved in the implementation of the organization's programmes through regular activities consisting of training, constant monitoring and evaluation, marketing, education and networking. Decision making is a democratic process and is done through group participation of both the staff and women at different levels. This encourages the women trainees and artisans to become responsible in their work and ensure that team objectives are achieved.

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INTRODUCTION

Ankur Kala's Training for Empowerment and Rehabilitation of Marginalized and Destitute Women (TERW) Project is focused on providing training in vocational and marketing skills to women and non formal education. The women are provided training in batik, tailoring and embroidery, handicrafts and making of jam, squashes and pickles (J.S.P) and also training in marketing skills for selling their products to various customers.

The programme activities help the women artisans to develop self-confidence in their ability to produce and sell quality products to various customers thereby learning to become economically self-reliant and thus empowered to stand up for their rights and dignity in a male dominated society in which most destitute women have become victims of economic and social exploitation.

ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION:

Organizational MISSIONS, GOALS, ACTIVITIES:

Ankur Kala's mission is sowing seeds of hope among marginalized and destitute women. Ankur Kala's goal is to facilitate economic and social empowerment of destitute women.

Ankur Kala's activities are focused on:

- (a) Providing vocational skills in Batik, Handicrafts, Tailoring & Embroidery, Block Printing, Silk Screen printing and making of Jam, Squash and Pickle.
- (b) Conducting Training programme on small business management.
- (c) Holding non-formal educational classes.
- (d) Village level education classes for drop out girls of poor families.

THE ORGANISATION

Background

In a society where more than 60% of the population live in poor economic conditions, the position of women is very insecure. Poverty along with male domination has forced women to play a submissive role and in most cases they become victims of oppression and exploitation forced to shoulder the burden of family life, both domestically and economically.

Ankur Kala's History

The seed of Ankur Kala was sown in 1982 by Annie Joseph, a qualified social worker with the support and blessings of Mother Teresa and under the inspiration of Brother Roger of Taize in France.

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Ankur Kala is not a project, it is a movement. A commitment to liberate deprived and under-privileged women from their own fears of being useless.

Foot soldiers of the movement called Ankur Kala.

Anjana came to Ankur Kala in 1977 with practically no academic learning and very poor health. Like many others before her, she was welcomed with open arms. From here Anjana started her new journey. First she tried her hand at the canteen. She failed, her health being the principle deterrent. However, in the accounts section, she was more comfortable. Seeing some of the more educated girls at work gave her confidence. With guidance and support, she gradually progressed. Her next step was taking lessons, the basics of managing a business.

Today, she teaches the new entrants things she has learnt. Anjana is a confident woman. But more importantly, she has learnt not to give up.

Deserted by husband, a pregnant Razia knocked at the doors of Ankur Kala in 1990. Ankur Kala helped her deliver a child and also found her a place to stay. Even then being a single mother was not an easy task. But Razia battled on. With support she eventually learnt to read and write in English and Bengali. She also learnt the art of making Jam, Squash and Pickle. Alongside, she completed her training in basic business management where she learnt entrepreneurship. Life has changed since. Even her daughter, Sabia is getting regular education and hopes to become a teacher someday!

Ansari Begum is a unique example of women empowerment. Riddled with problems at the home front, she realized that without stepping out she would never set her life right. So she approached Self Employment Oriented Multi-Purpose (SEOMP), an institution which trained such women. Here she met her teacher who led her to Ankur Kala. Overcoming her conservative background, she learnt Batik, a fabric painting skill. She also mastered things like understanding the market, operating a bank account and also the art of starting a business enterprise.

Ansari Begum remained within the Ankur Kala system for eight years before setting out to becoming a supervisor at a city boutique looking after quality control, accounts, purchase and sales. She earns a decent living to support her family, but still dreams to be her own master someday.

Shibani was orphaned at a very young age. Homeless and poverty-stricken, she was directionless and desperate. She tried her hand at odd jobs to somehow survive. Providence led her to Ankur Kala when she was advised to take some training at SEOMP. That was 1986. Here she learnt the art of batik. She went on to train in Vegetable Dye and Silk Screen etc. Through Ankur Kala she got opportunities elsewhere to take part in other spheres. Growing in confidence and compassion, she took to training new comers who like her came from desperate backgrounds. Today she finds happiness in the smiles of those she trains.

Economic Empowerment Through Marketing:

The project entails training women artisans, both in the urban and rural areas, to produce and market handicraft products and food items. These products will be made by the women from local resources, packaged and sold by them through diverse marketing outlets – door to door, schools and colleges, public places and corporate offices within West Bengal and in other states of India. Upon experience, these women will be encouraged to create their own self-help groups and work independently with network support from Ankur Kala.



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Ankur Kala is registered as a Trust under Income Tax Act and also with the Ministry of Home Affairs and has a FCRA number.

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