

Tree Of Life Centre

A Creative Space for Women

It is a known fact that over the past half century, natural fibres have been displaced in our clothing, household furnishings, industries and agriculture by man-made fibres with names like acrylic, nylon, polyester and polypropylene.

The success of synthetics is due mainly to cost, unlike natural fibres harvested by farmers, commonly used synthetic fibres are mass produced from petrochemicals to uniform strengths, lengths and colours, easily customized to specific applications.

Natural fibres are of major economic importance to many developing countries and vital to the livelihoods and food security of millions of small-scale farmers and processors.



Most people know natural fibres provide natural ventilation. The emerging "green" economy is based on energy efficiency, renewable feed stocks in polymer products, industrial processes that reduce carbon emissions and recyclable materials.

Natural fibres are a renewable resource. Growing one tonne of jute fibre requires less than 10% of the energy used for the production of polypropylene. Natural fibres are carbon neutral.

Processing produces residues that can be used in bio - composites for building houses or to generate electricity. At the end of their life cycle, natural fibres are 100% biodegradable. Natural fibres are at the heart of an eco-fashion or "sustainable clothing" movement that seeks to create garments that are sustainable at every stage of their life cycle, from production to disposal.

In the above context, CAPRE Foundation established its first 'Tree of Life Centre' in 2009 in Dumka which is the second capital of the newest state in India called Jharkhand.

The Tree of Life Centre is a craft development centre being run as a livelihood project by CAPRE Foundation involving women that have been marginalized by the society.



Seeing its popularity in Jharkhand its branches were also set up for other underprivileged people in modest premises in Ganne Gaon a village which is about 20 kms from Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh and also in Bagdogra in West Bengal.

The centre was started with the aim of providing training and an alternative means of livelihood and income augmentation for the women of rural tribal region surrounding Dumka region.



Having started with a small group of 15 women who were initially trained in the skill of appliqué and embroidery now we are training women at our small but thriving centres in making grass items, water hyacinth and banana fibre items all of which are sustainable microenterprises which enable women to support themselves as home workers working with natural materials available in their region.

The home working women artisans are also teaching others in their villages. The technique has thus spread outside the boundaries of a few homes where it all began. Today the centre has over 200 registered members who are engaged in various craft development. The centre is a safe creative place they can call home while earning a living to provide for their families.

Most of the home working women assisted have experienced some form of discrimination or other scarring incidents that have given them a social stigma, making it hard to find decent employment. Some of the women are former prostitutes, others have been affected by diseases, others still have been divorced or abandoned.

At the centre the women find a safe place where they can earn a living, as well as share with the other women in a family-type atmosphere.

The Tree Of Life Centre prides itself on making unique lifestyle fabric items and considers the quality and production of their designs, their good prices, timely deliveries, and strong relationships with customers the strongest selling points than the fact that all their goods are fair trade - something they think should be the norm rather than an exception.



The Tree of Life Centre is a centre which practises fair trade, seeks to help craftswomen gain awareness, rights and human dignity in order to combat poverty. Some of the training run by CAPRE Foundation through the centre are Banana fibre extraction and craft making from the fibre, Areca

nut plate and disposable utensil making, Water Hyacinth craft making, Sisal, Lantana, Jute, Palm leaf, Vetiver, Kansa/Moonj grass, crafting.

In addition to craft training, the centre runs a variety of programs that promote women's rights and provide integral services like legal aid, education, health care, and leadership development.

The Centre's programs currently directly and indirectly benefits 400 women. In addition to contributing to the family income, the women who participate in the project learn to read and write, have access to craft training, to health care and free legal information,

The high quality products handcrafted by the SHG member artisans are sold according to international fair-trade practices. The centre is committed to sustainable social and economic change while preserving the natural environment this is why it works only with natural materials.



The Tree of Life Craft Development Centre is a collective enterprise of home based workers. It markets their products besides helping them improve on design and skills, provides sustainable employment. It is a known fact that workers from unorganized sectors remain poor and vulnerable as they don't have any fixed employee-employer relationship envisaged with certain minimum protective terms and conditions.

These people solely depend on their own labour for their survival. Their problems again get amplified with the degrading condition of illiteracy. They barely have any assets or working capital. But these hard working people make a significant contribution to the economy. In fact, today about 64% of India's GDP is accounted to self-employed labourers of our country.

Activities being promoted through The Tree of Life Centre

Detailed embroidery to embellish a variety of products including textiles, wall hangings and garments

- . Design guidance
- . Colour matching
- . Packaging and marketing
- . Organizing exhibitions and fairs
- . Organizing exposure visits for artisan

- . Design and product development
- . Branding
- . Market linkage
- . Value addition
- . Encouraging excellence in the showing, teaching, and making of art

We have participated, exhibited and sold our high quality craft at important platforms like BASANT BAZAAR and NATURE BAZAAR in New Delhi. Design development and marketing have been given special attention. New trends in designs have been introduced through workshops and marketing agencies have been contacted for a better market outreach.



All the activities are aimed towards promoting the activities by the artisans in the market and also promising more work to its artisan. Benefits of these activities

- . To revive, preserve and support declining indigenous knowledge, resources and skills.
- . To update artisanal technologies.
- . To create a sustainable source of raw material, to act as facilitator in assisting the crafts community.
- . To understand the ever changing markets.
- . To awaken the creativity of a community through sensitive design intervention.
- . To organise income generation program for women by imparting training and setting up various production centres.
- . To organise craft workshops in various schools.
- . To organise crafts workshops for children of crafts persons to ensure continuity of tradition.
- . Up scaling production capacity

- . Exploring and establishing new marketing linkages
- . Capacity building of existing staff
- . Social empowerment for member artisans
- . Creation and bolstering of infrastructure support