

SOMAIYA KALA VIDYA

Education for Traditional Artisans



Somaiya Kala Vidya, a division of K.J. Somaiya Gujarat Trust based in Adipur, is an institution of education for traditional artisans of Kutch. Its mission is to preserve and promote traditional arts. Its strengths are a deep understanding of culture and arts, a focus on the artisan, and a sustained, long term, coherent program.

K.J. Somaiya Trust has a 50-year, highly esteemed track record with its Somaiya Vidyavihar, Mumbai. The Trust manages over 30 different educational institutions, extending from elementary level to Ph. D., and covering diverse areas including medicine, engineering, the arts and sciences, religion, vocational studies, education, and languages. The institute serves over 30,000 students and employs 1,500 faculty.

Somaiya Kala Vidya offers design and business education for artisans of Kutch using an approach based on honoring and incorporating existing traditions, and teaches a spectrum of others about rural traditions. The institution's curricula, schedule, and language of instruction are designed to accommodate the lifestyles of its artisans. The only prerequisite for admission is knowledge of traditional crafts. The education allows students to focus on acquiring knowledge and skills that will enable them to use design effectively in order to successfully reach appropriate new markets and to strengthen the traditional identity of their work. Somaiya Kala Vidya's Advisory Board comprises master artisans of Kutch, and the faculty includes both national and international teachers. The effectiveness of the institution is in the relevance of the education provided. Somaiya Kala Vidya students 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. By approaching education through a vital subject, the institute enables direct access to higher education and ultimately raises the capacity of artisan participants from the drought, earthquake, and cyclone prone region and positively impacts the entire craft sector.

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 Founder Director Judy Frater. 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 for outstanding merit in the handicraft field.

In 2014, Somaiya Kala Vidya launched the **Business and Management for Artisans** course, a "post graduate" course for artisans who have completed the course in design. This is the first business course expressly for artisans.

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