

## AIACA Newsletter Issue 4

November 2016

We are happy to publish the fourth issue of AIACA newsletter. Our major initiatives in the last quarter have been a Policy Seminar to mark 10 years of Craftmark, the flagship programme of AIACA and our visit to Kyrgyzstan to initiate a cultural exchange programme with Central Asia. We have also launched a Facebook store of Craftmark products, to enable especially smaller producers to maximize the benefits of online marketing. As part of our Enterprise Support Programme, a number of key business development services were also provided to our members and project groups.

We thank our partners and donors, supporters and friends for their continuous support and collaborative efforts which are motivating us to think and build further. To join us in our collective efforts, please follow us at :

<https://www.facebook.com/craftmarkhandmadeinindia/>

<https://www.facebook.com/aiacaindia/>

Our Guest Columnist for this issue is Suruchi Khubchandani who is a Culture Fellow at YES Institute, practicing think-tank of YES BANK. Her article is on “Handicrafts, a national advantage for building sustainable creative economies”. We thank Suruchi for her contribution.

Enjoy reading and write to us to contribute to our Newsletter!

**Madhura Dutta**  
Executive Director

### Stories from the Field



### Enterprise Support Program



### Policy Update



### Guest Column



### Highlights & Upcoming Events



### FOSTERING SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND EXCELLENCE

Mustafa and Hussain, two young and enterprising weavers from Mubarakpur, were invited by The Handloom School, Maheshwar in August for a two week long advanced weaving course on multi-treadle loom. The training was a follow up to an initial training that took place over twelve weeks during May-August 2015 which Mustafa and Hussain had attended. It was their first ever exposure to such an intensive training and they were identified as some of the brightest students in the group.

With Mubarakpur now becoming a successful model of rural handloom weaver-led enterprise with support from AIACA, an important part of strengthening livelihood through traditional craftsmanship is also to be able to develop new designs using different techniques and looms. The advanced course has now further equipped Hussain and Mustafa to read and develop design plans for multi-treadle, to set up a multi-treadle loom and to weave on multi-treadle loom.

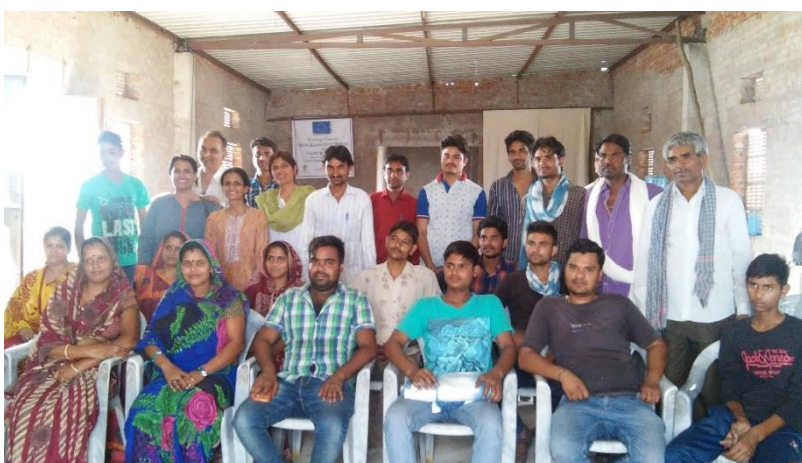
The mission of The Handloom School, conceptualized and led by Ms. Sally Holkar from WomenWeave in Maheshwar, is to connect younger generation handloom weavers with designers and buyers of fashion textile that are individualized and differentiated by style, fibre and colour combinations. The Handloom School, conscious of the fact that young weavers are not from a scholarly or academic background, has adopted a unique teaching pedagogy. Students are taught using very simple case studies, clips from films, group discussions, hands-on exercises and simulation games. Hussain when asked to share his experience said “The course really helped me understand the different loom settings, and encouraged us to intern with big organisations such as Fabindia and Raw Mango where I learnt the importance of finesse in weaving.”

Samples developed during this training will be presented in a weaver-designer meet at Bikaner House in Delhi on 26th November, 2016. This meet will help the students of the school to explore and establish a long, fruitful working relationship with the handloom designers and buyers. Eventually this linkage will help the young weavers shape their dreams of leading handloom enterprises in their areas. When asked about the experience and the learnings, Mustafa said “Apart from learning a new technique, I also understand the usage of different yarns now.”

In the recently concluded Policy Seminar hosted in New Delhi Hussain talked extensively about the perils of working under a master weaver and the decline and loss in traditional craftsmanship. Many of these Mubarakpur weavers wanted to or were leaving this trade due to the lack of markets, absence of creative independence and the exploitation and control of the master weavers. With AIACA’s intervention in Mubarakpur that began in the year 2014, the cluster has been able to revive their skills and form an SHG of 20 weavers, who now work independently. With the help of skill trainings and design interventions, the group now directly reaches out to the market and is hopeful about the future of weaving. Hussain added that because of the direct market linkages, he now works as an independent skilled weaver and there are others who also wish to join the cluster looking at its success and economic independence.







## NATURAL DYE WORKSHOP IN BAGRU, JAIPUR

Bagru, a small town on the outskirts of Jaipur where the Raiger and Chhipa communities hail from, is known for hand block printing, especially *dabu*, which is mud resist printing and dyeing, with natural dyes on textiles.

Historically and traditionally, Bagru has been an established cluster in the use of natural colour. However, with changing market dynamics, it slowly lost that edge and started using a lot of chemicals while dyeing.

Recognizing the growing consciousness among consumers and to retain an edge over competitors, some of the printers from this cluster have recently wanted to get back to the authentic use of natural dyes as the artisans understand its need and importance. Keeping this shift in mind, AIACA with its partner Aura Herbal conducted a series of trainings, meetings and workshops with the *dabu* blockprinters on using authentic natural dyes.

Initially, a Natural Dye Training Workshop was conducted with 17 block printers which created awareness on the use of certified natural dyes, advantages of using such natural dyes and the huge demand for these products. How the artisans can command a premium price by using these dyes was one of the main highlights of the trainings. The problem of maintaining consistency while using natural dyes was addressed and this generated a lot of enthusiasm amongst the participants. The sessions were very interactive and the participants benefitted greatly as practical solutions to the problems faced by them were discussed and addressed. A follow up 'Natural Dye Experimental Demonstration Workshop' was also organized to strengthen capacities further for ensuring the fastness of these dyes.

Apart from the training on dyes, the advantages of using and working with organic cotton were also discussed. The trainers showed videos on the effects of pollution on the environment and occupational health hazards which the artisans could relate to.

These trainings will now be followed up with a final advanced training where specific issues relating to *dabu* printing will be addressed.



## AIACA RESEARCH ON TODA CRAFT

The Toda tribe is one of the most ancient and unusual tribes of the Nilgiri Hills in Tamil Nadu, India. Living on the isolated Nilgiri plateau of southern India, the small pastoral community has their own language and practices their own customs and regulations. According to Census data collected in the past few decades, the Toda population has hovered between 700 and 900 during the last century. During the last quarter of the 20th century, some Toda pastoral land was lost due to agriculture by outsiders or afforestation by the state government. The population of the tribe has also come down drastically from what it was until the 19th century. Presently they are supporting their existence through a few local mainstream jobs and their unique embroidery works.

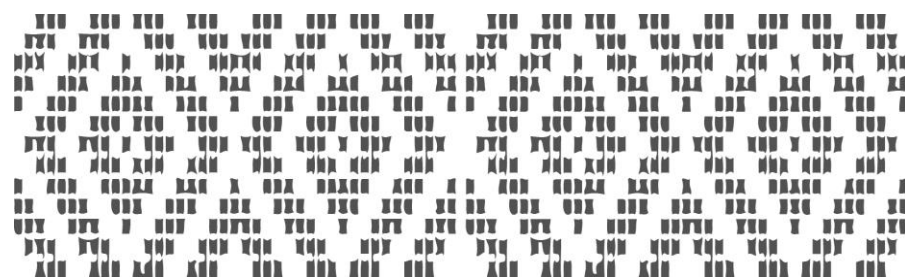
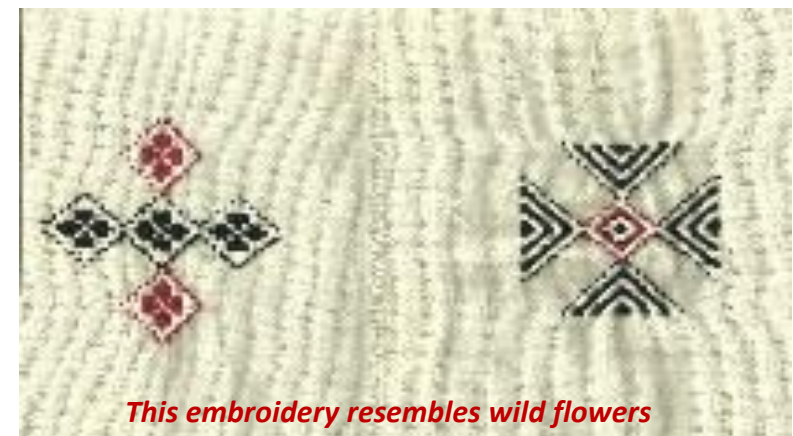
The Toda community is well known for their embroidered garments. These are made usually by Toda women using red and black threads on a white background, giving a rich effect to the textile. Their unique embroidery that has been passed on through generations has been recognized by the Government of India, and the Registrar of Geographical Indication has given it GI status. The status not only ensures uniform pricing for Toda embroidery products but also insulates the art from being duplicated.

Toda as an embroidery is made using a single stitch darning needle. No embroidery frame is used, and the women count the thread with their fingers. The craft encompasses a very wide variety of motifs that are all inspired by their natural setting and way of life. With time, the craft's richness seems to have gotten lost, and complex traditional motifs are struggling to find their space among the new-age artisans.

Over the last four years of a cluster development project among Toda artisans, AIACA has observed and appreciated the exquisite skills that the Toda artisans exhibit. Recently, AIACA has conducted a research study on Toda embroidery with the objective of preserving this traditional skill through digital documentation of the embroideries and patterns, highlighting the meanings of these patterns and sources of inspiration which are integral to the lifestyle of the tribe, and upholding the beautiful works of the Todas to the world for strengthening recognition of the artisans themselves.

At the core of this study, AIACA has worked towards building a repository of motifs that can evolve to become a source of reference for next generation artisans and designers as well as inform and educate researchers and buyers about the beauty and uniqueness of this craft.

## TODA MOTIFS





## CRAFTMARK TRAVELS TO KYRGYZSTAN

AIACA was invited by the Central Asian Crafts Support Association’s Resource Center in Kyrgyzstan (CACSARC-kg) to establish a partnership in order to take forward sustained creative collaborations between the similar crafts of India and Central Asia.

To start this process, AIACA, as a national network of artisan organizations from India, visited Kyrgyzstan and participated in the international OIMO festival, an annual 10 day cultural event and crafts fair that took place this year in the heart of Bishkek from July 29 to August 7, 2016, with representatives from 6 countries. The visit included participation at the fair as well as meeting and interacting with local artisans, exchanging ideas, and developing the plan for starting a long term creative exchange programme supported by the CACSARC-kg. AIACA finds great potential in this exchange programme for promoting cultural diversity and intercultural growth. At the festival, artists, vendors, and presenters from different parts of the world came to share their unique cultures and celebrate regional bonds and friendship.

Team Craftmark constituted of natural fibre and textile artisans of West Bengal (supported by SASHA World and Banglanatak dot com). Madurkathi, Handloom Weaving, Shantiniketan Leather, Dokra and Kantha were showcased. Among the Craftmark members who travelled was a National Awardee Madurkathi artisan, Gauri Rani Jana from Paschim Medinipore, whose exquisite work received much appreciation. The response at the fair was excellent and all products were sold out and highly appreciated.



Kyrgyzstan’s glassy lakes, imposing mountains and spectacular glacier-studded canyons seemed to have come straight out of a postcard. What was absolutely fascinating was AIACA and the craftspersons’ trip to the artisan villages, after the festival, where the Bengal artisans exchanged skills and creative ideas with Kyrgyzstan artisans and bonded through creative expressions and the language of craft. The similar crafts included Natural Fibre Weaving (similar to Madurkathi), Yurt Making (Wood craft), and Weaving (on small looms with coarse yarn).



The Indian team received a very warm welcome from the Festival organizers and the President of CACSARC-kg. The Craftmark team was also invited to a welcome dinner at the Indian Ambassador’s residence which was indeed a great experience!

Going forward, an exchange program between the artisans from Kyrgyzstan and West Bengal has been planned in the coming months, when the visiting organizations will play host to the international team.



## ENTERPRISE SUPPORT PROGRAM

### DIGITAL TRAINING WORKSHOPS

Digital empowerment is no more just a concept. With globalization shaping our businesses and lives, the online space is growing at an exponential rate. AIACA designed and facilitated a day long digital training workshop for organizations working primarily in the handicrafts sector as well as some Craftmark Members. This workshop, held in Delhi on the 18th of July, introduced the craft organizations to the use of technology for promotion and marketing and enhancing their online presence in the sector.

AIACA conducted this workshop in collaboration with Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF), which aims to connect unreached and underserved communities of India in an effort to bring them out of digital darkness and empower them with information access through digital literacy.

Through all its diverse activities, what DEF addresses is the issue of information darkness and how to overcome the information barrier through digital tools and the internet. The training dealt with use of digital devices and developing low cost but effective digital content through simple easy methods that the small craft organizations/practitioners can implement themselves to achieve visibility and strong footing in the competitive and fast changing global market space.

Following up on this workshop, a two day training on 'Business Skills Development and Market Exposure through Digital Education' was organized in August 2016 at Varanasi Weavers and Artisans Society (VWAS) in Varanasi city. The training was attended by twenty nine enterprising weavers from Kotwa, Lohata and Ramnagar clusters. Of these, nineteen are registered members of the Society and others are in the process of becoming one.

The objective of the training was primarily to understand and apply technology for knowledge enhancement, and development of communication and marketing avenues, especially for the weavers who were completely marginalized with no access to information and knowledge on designs, urban markets and the world outside their villages. Specifically, it focused on the need for promotion and branding through digital marketing and the use of digital tools for e-commerce.

The weavers greatly enjoyed the workshop and clearly recognized the need and importance of technology in branding and marketing. They have requested for more such workshops in future. Some have created Facebook pages and some have started selling regularly through WhatsApp.





## THE NEW FACE OF THE HALDIPARA BAMBOO ARTISANS

AIACA has been working with a Bamboo cluster of over 75 rural artisans in Haldipada, one of the poorest and most isolated Dalit artisan villages in the Balasore district of Odisha, with the aim of upgrading their bamboo weaving skills and turning them into a bamboo craft based self-sustaining enterprise. To mobilize the community members to believe in themselves and in the potential of their cluster and take pride in their skill, an important step was building a collective identity for them. To this end, the SHGs formed by these artisans have now been registered as micro enterprises under the scheme of Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, and a new identity “Haldipada Bamboo Works” and a logo has been created for the cluster.



The artisans currently produce varied bamboo products such as different types of lamp shades, fruit baskets, laundry baskets, etc., and are getting market exposure in urban fairs in Delhi. They will soon be travelling to other parts of the country.

## A GLIMPSE OF SOME OF THEIR NEW PRODUCT OFFERINGS





## AIACA CELEBRATES TEN YEARS OF CRAFTMARK

To mark ten years of the Craftmark Programme, AIACA in collaboration with UNESCO organized a Policy Seminar and Exhibition of Craftmark products on September 2, 2016 at India Habitat Centre.

Ms. Rashmi Verma, IAS, Secretary, Ministry of Textiles (MoT), GoI who was the Chief Guest, addressed the audience about the importance of the handloom and handicrafts sector in the economic development of the country. Ms. Moe Chiba, Chief, Culture Sector, UNESCO talked about the importance of a quality standard in the sector to cope with the modern market, in particular the development and strengthening of professional services in allied areas such as finishing, packaging, transport, as well as quality and safety control, to name a few.



*Exhibition of  
Craftmark certified products*



*The backdrop at the Policy Seminar*



*Secretary, MoT, GoI  
appreciating the exhibit*

The policy seminar focused on how the creative assets of India in terms of the vast diversity of craft skills and craftspersons can be organized and promoted into economic value for the artisans and enterprise growth at a scale that makes the sector economically vibrant. The seminar also encouraged discussions focused on new initiatives and success stories in the field of creative and cultural industries, continuing challenges in design, capital, skills, technology and business growth in the sector, and potential collaborations between different stakeholders to spur enterprise led growth and increase incomes of artisans.



*Ms. Rashmi Verma, IAS,  
Secretary, MoT, GoI  
addressing the audience*



*Ms. Moe Chiba,  
Chief, Culture  
Sector, UNESCO*



*Mrs. Rathi Vinay Jha,  
President, AIACA  
Governing Body*



*Mr. William Bissell, MD Fabindia,  
addressing the audience*

The seminar was attended by multiple stakeholders including government officials, sectoral experts, civil societies, banks, donors, design institutes, international organizations and Craftmark members.



The half-day event included a series of presentations and a panel discussion by influential thought leaders of the craft industry such as William Bissell (MD, Fabindia), Neelam Chhiber (Co-Founder and Managing Trustee, Industree Foundation), Meera Goradia (Cluster Development Head, Jaypore), Anuj Mishra (Head of Sourcing, House of Anita Dongre Limited), Maximiliano Modesti (Fashion entrepreneur for International Luxury Brands), Payal Nath (Founder and CEO, Kadam, and a Craftmark Member), Sharmistha Mohapatra (Head - Livelihoods and Rural Enterprise, IL&FS Cluster Development Initiative Ltd), Srinivasan Iyer (Program Officer, Ford Foundation New Delhi), Sushma Kaushik (Principal, Aavishkar), and Utpal Gokhale (GM, EXIM Bank). Craftmark members from across India also voiced their opinions and thoughts.



***Inaugural Panel: Ms Moe Chiba, Mr. William Bissell, Ms. Rashmi Verma, Mrs. Rathi Vinay Jha, Ms. Neelam Chhibber (left to right)***



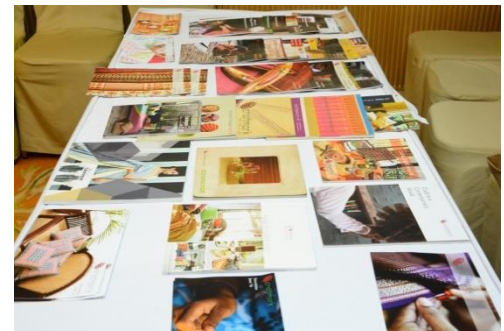
***Session I: Ms Meera Goradia, Mr Anuj Mishra, Mr Maximiliano Modesti, Ms Payal Nath, Mr Hussain (left to right)***



***Session II: Mr. Utpal Gokhale, Mr. Srinivasan Iyer, Ms. Sushma Kaushik, Ms. Sharmistha Mohapatra, Mr. Adarsh Kumar (left to right)***

The presentations and discussions generated recommendations about skill upgradation and sectoral capacity development which requires an integrated approach; the importance of enterprise promotion at scale and developing business capacities to increase the profit share of the producers vis-à-vis artisans working as wage labourers; enhancing quality and efficiency of raw material support and technology support; branding and certification where the success of Craftmark was reiterated; and the need for convergence, institutional strengthening and effective implementation of schemes.

This seminar brought forth the fact that this sector now needs the combined forces of the government, private and social enterprises, NGOs and collectives/ associations of actual producers to come and work together for achieving the common goal of enterprise led growth of crafts and promoting the crafts sector into a globally competitive creative industry.





### HANDICRAFTS, A NATIONAL ADVANTAGE FOR BUILDING SUSTAINABLE CREATIVE ECONOMIES

The Annual Report of Ministry of Textiles 2014-15 observes that the adoption of modern techniques and economic liberalization has adversely impacted the handloom sector. Competition from power looms, availability of cheaper imported fabrics, changing consumer preferences and alternative employment opportunities have threatened the vibrancy of the handloom sector.[1] There is thus an urgent need to realize and acknowledge the value of ‘*handmade*’ which is not only integral to the artisanal industries of India but is also a beckoner of intimacy and exclusivity, a rare phenomenon in alienated urban habitations. The intrinsic element of ‘hand driven’ production is literally ‘a labour of love’ of the multifarious communities located at far strewn belts of the country. The geographical richness of each cluster provides competitive advantage to the producers and the country, claiming superiority for unique goods against myriad mass-produced goods up for sale in the world.

A hallmark of most of India’s place goods (goods produced, grown and manufactured in one geographical location) is that they are low on energy consumption, intensive on labour and high on the use of recycled materials or minor forest produce which are locally available.[2] Goods belonging to their native geographical location harness natural resources from areas that are predominantly rural. *Bagru*, a village near Jaipur, Rajasthan inhabited by the Chhipa community, is involved in natural dyeing and block printing for over 100 years. The community utilizes naturally available traditional vegetable dyes for printing cloth. The wise use of locally available resources makes them exclusive as well as sustainable. They represent superlative skill and a mastery of material which is only possible within the ecology of special places. Preference for environmentally sound and socially responsible products will also help boost the demand for the ‘Made in India’ tag.

Kala Cotton, a desi cotton variety relegated to the bottom of textile hierarchy during the British Raj, is another case in point. A shift toward long staple import breeds and genetically modified BT cotton post 1947 and 2002 respectively led to the decline of desi cotton production. Private entrepreneurial efforts in Bhuj have led to the revival of this low maintenance, rain fed, drought and pest resistant crop, and eco-friendly fashion collections have sprouted to advocate a new paradigm of sustainable and responsible fashion that focuses on indigenous resources and employment viability. This is a new wave which takes into account the entire life cycle of a piece of clothing, from its carbon footprint to the livelihood of the artisans who made it with focus on ethical practices of production.

The Asia-Europe Network of Urban Heritage for Sustainable Creative Economies report developed by INTACH in 2015 qualifies cultural content creators such as artisans as well as entrepreneurs who create and market cultural content as part of the creative economies, placing equal stress on the role of all stakeholders in the wealth creation chain. The ‘creative economy’ is an evolving concept based on creative assets potentially generating economic growth as well as promotion of social inclusion, cultural diversity and sustainable development. There is a need to spur enterprise-led growth in the non-farm creative manufacturing sectors with an aim to facilitate growth of all stakeholders in the value chain. Within these parameters, a modern cooperative is an appropriate model that is value-based, community-supported and member-controlled. Local community engagement at prime level will garner and produce interest in individual product narratives. Content and engagement can bind the creative market connecting buyers with the larger reality of these exclusive ‘hand-made’, ‘hand-spun’ products, which communicate stories of rich geographical assets of India. These trends if harnessed can deliver higher value directly to grassroots entrepreneurs in the creative manufacturing sector rapidly.

-Suruchi Khubchandani, Culture Fellow at YES Institute (YES BANK think - tank)

[1] G. Srinivasan and N. Srinivasan, *State of India’s Livelihood Reports 2015*, Sage Publications and ACCESS Development Services.

[2] A. Kapoor, *Made Only in India: Goods with Geographical Indications*, Routledge India (2016).



## HIGHLIGHTS

### PARTNERING WITH YES BANK FOR A CULTURAL TOURISM SEMINAR

YES Institute – YES Culture in partnership with AIACA co-hosted a dialogue: 'Living through the Crafts: The Travel Lens', on 14 Oct 2016, that aimed to highlight the vital role of tourism in promoting India's craft community and aligning plans for livelihood development.

### PARTNERING WITH ARTISANS' MUMBAI TO CELEBRATE 10 YEARS OF CRAFTMARK THROUGH THE TRAVELLING EXHIBITION

Craftmark exhibited a line of its creations at Artisans' Gallery, 52 - 56, VB Gandhi Marg, Kala Ghoda Fort, Mumbai between September 29 – October 1, 2016. The line-up brought forth the different flavors and variety that makes Craftmark versatile and exquisite. The collection was a mix of ethnic handloom collection, home décor, fashion accessories, wooden kitchen and lifestyle products.

### ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSION ON DIGITAL FINANCIAL INCLUSION

A round-table discussion on digital financial inclusion was hosted by Industree Foundation on October 6 at Roshanara, Taj Palace Hotel, New Delhi in collaboration with Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth, Dalberg Global Development Advisors, World Economic Forum and All India Artisans and Craftworkers Welfare Association.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

-DASTAKAR, NATURE BAZAAR FOR PATACHITRA & DOKRA CLUSTERS BETWEEN 10TH TO 21ST NOVEMBER

-DASTAKAR WINTER WEAVES FOR VARANASI WEAVERS & ARTISANS SOCIETY BETWEEN 15TH TO 26TH DECEMBER

**OTHER PARTNER INITIATIVES : CRAFT TOURS IN INDIA BY BREAKAWAY- AN INITIATIVE BY JAYPORE IN COLLABORATION WITH BREAKAWAY THAT ENSURES FOR YOU 'JOURNEYS OFF THE MAP'.** Breakaway presents curated journeys to the enthralling cultural landscapes of India. Glimpses of some of their journeys are given below.



### A Textile Trail in Ahmedabad & Kutch

Prints, weaves, and exquisite embroideries... From the bustling metro of Ahmedabad to hamlets in the Kutch region of Gujarat, age old printing, dyeing and embroidery techniques kept alive. Breakaway takes you on a journey to meet textile craft communities in Gujarat.



### Visiting the looms in Tamil Nadu

Experience Tamil Nadu's diverse world of textiles, their humility, spiritual residence and pathways to the past which may give you a perspective into why the South has it best. A land infused with cultural wonders, historical vortexes and perhaps the best South Indian food you can imagine, Breakaway takes you on a journey of a lifetime.



For more information on their tours, visit their website : <http://www.break-away.in/>