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PRABHAAV

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‘Prabhaav’ is a rural immersion program, that takes empathetic changemakers to Indian villages, which are homes to indigenous arts/crafts/architecture.

What is the project about?

The idea of this programme was born from a simple question – What are India’s design stories? While the question may be simple, the answer requires a deep dive into the heart of India-her villages. The present system of design/architectural education places emphasis on historic and contemporary design movements across the West, with comparatively less learning focus on the Indian idea of design. Once they complete their education, designers fail to understand the critical role they play as context-sensitive creators. For those who do identify this, there is no well-defined path to engage at the ground level. The entry into this sector is unclear, dissuading many from foraying closer to it.

To address an issue like this, while a top-down approach to alter the syllabi can take a much longer time, a bottom-up approach can be less complex, yet effective. Prabhaav is born from such an approach, that works with the young changemakers directly, taking them on a meaningful journey, internally and externally.

It happens in the village of Banavasi, in collaboration with Outdoor World Sustainable Tourism. Banavasi is home to pith coronet making. Pith is the root of a certain water-reed and is used to make headgears, which are worn by brides and grooms of local communities at the time of their wedding. This art form currently faces the threat of extinction at the hands of its cheaper, synthetic rival – thermocol. Thermocol's production rate and cost being half of the pith, have made it reach the shelves faster, making pith almost obsolete. Sharadakka, aged 85 plus, is one of the torchbearers of this art; an integral part of Prabhaav is engaging with Sharadakka and her art.

For Prabhaav, participants are shortlisted through an application process. Upon reaching the village, facilitators help create an environment of safety and trust. This includes activities, discussions, agreements, and setting of intentions to understand – "Why are we here?"

The program has different components to it: Structure Framework and the Unstructured Framework.

The structured parts of the program include understanding frameworks, participating in activities, simulations, hands-on activities, sharing circles, debriefs and field visits. Field visits and hands-on learning comprise engagement with artisans, farmers, participation in hands-on crafts. These interactions form the backbone of the program

The un-structured parts of Prabhaav is where the magic happens – participants are given time to be with themselves and reflect, and also to engage with the villagers, outside of an agenda. This is essential to mental well-being, for the intensity of the structured component demands some time and space for self.

Service-learning – During the coursework, participants identify what they can do to be of help to the village, during their time there.

Together, each of these pieces helps give a clearer understanding of the rural context of design, and factors associated with it.

What is the impact?

This program aims to create an impact at three levels – The self, the cohort, and the local community. The logic is simple- An impact within the self leads to impact within the cohort, which can collectively create an impact in a local community.

A program like this serves to:

- Understand the state of indigenous design and craft today.
- Recognize the direct/indirect effect of socio-political and cultural factors on indigenous design
- Identify design possibilities: how can one get involved, and work with the villagers, upon completion of the program?
- Offer one's service to the villagers during the length of the program.
- Create a network of changemakers: Upon completion of the program, participants are inducted into the Unbind Collective which is a community of alumni and collaborators of the program. The Alumni of the program are a tightly knit group of changemakers working across different fields. This community becomes a launchpad for meaningful collaborations.

The impact of Prabhaav need not necessarily be contained to Banavasi alone. Through the immersion, participants are encouraged to think about their local/native surroundings and ways in which they can take their learnings from Banavasi and apply it there. The intention of Prabhaav is to create a ripple effect. Providing support through the unbind collective post program is as important as the experience itself.

The larger dream for this programme is to create an ecosystem of villages and passionate changemakers. An ecosystem that is filled with symbiotic learning, gratitude and joy.

Project Funded by

Prabhaav follows a sliding scale payment system. This means, participants are given a financial range, and they are encouraged to choose an amount within this that is comfortable for them. The idea of this is to ensure that each person pays according to their unique financial ability. If people pay towards the higher end of the financial scale, the surplus funds are utilized to support participants who are in need of scholarships. We believe this method to be honest, and non-commercial. This is our funding module.

Stakeholders Involved

Prabhaav is supported by organizations working on-ground all year long who have a shared passion for creating change meaningfully : Outdoor World Sustainable Tourism, headed by B C Kiran: Outdoor World Sustainable Tourism runs a guest house in Banavasi. Their organization aims to rejuvenate rural tourism through the integration of the local economy. It is through their efforts that we are able to work with Banavasi's pith coronet makers and other artisans.

ServeLots is headed by Gopi Krishna.

About Unbind:

Prabhaav is organized by Unbind. Unbind is an organization that creates learning experiences in the design sector. The organization, co-founded by 7 architects who share a common vision, hosts workshops, immersion journeys, and fellowship programmes that are centred around different aspects of learning and engaging with design.

Links to read more:

[A link to the project.](#)