

## Habitat Centre – Fabric Thread Art workshop – note

The paid participation enabled me to invited three autistic children, Mamta, Anjali and from Udayan Care Orphanage, and two girls Kusum from Nai Disha an organization that provides learning to under-privileged children. In addition, I also invited two craftsmen from Bihar who have been doing embroidery since the age of around five, by just watching their fathers and people around them. All together there were thirty participants, including teachers, teenagers and corporate executives.

Doordarshan Television was there for a while recording the proceedings and mid-way through the workshop, after the participants had done some exercises to explore fabric and thread's potential to express emotion, they interviews some of the people and also the children. When Sushma Khan, the producer said to fourteen year old Anjali from Udayan Care, that she had done well expressing her anger through the fabric exercise, but how would she express happiness, Anjali said, "nahin jaanti", Shushma persisted when Anjali said, "bhool gayee khushi hoti kya hai." These words, pulled at my heart bring forth tears. And even as I write today, some weeks later, they still have the same power. Mamta, one of Anjali's mates, didn't speak throughout the workshop but when she was given fabric to play with, there was no hesitation in how she put it all together and how swiftly she created this.

To begin with, I had shown them slides of international artists who work with needle and thread and then discussed my work with them in greater detail, as it's easier to say exactly what was going on where when I was working on a particular image. I then gave them words to play with, acting it out without words, just the action, which was then translated into what they did with the fabric, followed by some music and body work to relax them and Garima Vashist, said the "really loved the music therapy exercise" which helped her open up to create an image using some Ajrakh fabric which she called ' See the World through My Eyes' – a globe of blue Ajrakh, a hand that continues this work with an eye that signified someone up there looking out for you.

Nilima and Nina, middle-aged and full of fun, willing to explore came to this workshop to relive their childhood hobby centre days. Vibhuti, another of the participants later wrote on the facebook event page when I posted some of the photos saying "I was there today and saw all the talent in the group.....and I learned that there is lots that can be done to stimulate the creative juices..... Gopika, you have sowed the seed to help me overcome moments of loneliness to find a way to express my emotion"

### Other Comments / feedback on the workshop

" wonderful workshop Gopika, this kind of engaging creativity, out of the box ability, and playfulness will do a world of good for so many, thanks..... Chhaya"

"I must say that the Ajrakh cloth completely conveys my message.....This was truly after the music exercise we did yesterday.....I would name it as "SEE THE WORLD THROUGH MY EYES".....i have made a globe with blue Ajrakh print and the Godly hand says that continue with the work what you are doing or the role you are playing in this world.....Someone up is observing you!!! ....." - Garima Vashist