



Purkal Youth Development Society

Rising to a Better Future

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STREE SHAKTI A Program for Women's Empowerment

The Program

Our Stree Shakti program serves as an **income generating opportunity for underprivileged women in this rural community**. Many families are dependent on a single income to sustain and lack sufficient income to care for their family and children. The program **aims to empower women to become income earners in their family by providing them with the resources and training for producing and selling handmade textile products**.

Highlights:

- Empowers over **70 women working in Self Help Groups**. They produce hand stitched quilts, cushion covers, handbags, placemat sets and a variety of beautifully handmade textile products.
- The **women are taught new skills** that add value to the products and improve their knowledge and income.
- The Self Help Groups cultivate the saving habit of the women who contribute to a **Group Fund**. Each Group today has a fund from which to lend to its members in need.
- **Group leaders**, assisted by an Assistant and Treasurer, manage the production and accounts. All sale proceeds are received by the groups and accounted by them.
- **Free transport** is provided to help the women commute from their home to the work place.
- Two women from the village have been sponsored to participate in a **one year Technology and Design course at the ONGC Polytechnic** and now serve as Supervisors for Stree Shakti.
- Many of the women participate in the **PYDS Young Adult Program** where they undergo English and Computer Training to build their professional skills and enhance their opportunities for the future.
- PYDS has built **52 toilets** in the community and homes of many of the women to ensure safe and healthy sanitation. Another 300 are being planned for construction.
- For Rs. 500 per annum, the women and their families receive quality **healthcare** and access to a Nursing Home, pathology, surgery, delivery, room stay, X-ray and other services at subsidized rates.
- PYDS subsidizes the costs of the production program through **free working capital**, management, marketing, design, product development, infrastructure and transportation for the women to help them earn and enhance their production.



The Impact



Over the last five years, we have grown and currently are helping to provide training and **employment to over 70 women**. The impact has been:

- helped to improve the economic situation of the women and their families
- bring about a personal change in the women and how they are viewed in the community
- The overall **status of the women has improved**. The women now have **more respect in the community and greater self-confidence**.

- They are more empowered to express their self and **make decisions in favor of their family's welfare**, such as health and education.

Case Studies of Women (names changed)

Malika, 42, is a quiet and humble woman who has suffered a great deal at the expense of her drunkard husband. A drunkard and a chauvinist, he made the lives of Malika and her daughter, Shivani, miserable by abuse and reduced them to poverty by selling all their lands and drowning himself in alcohol. Malika now is able to earn money through our Stree Shakti program that pays wages every Saturday for the women's work. Shivani participates in the PYDS education program for youth and after completing her 12th class has joined the Bachelor of Tourism Program where she hopes to become a travel executive and support her mother.

Sonal, 22, joined our program after she was abandoned by her husband - a drunkard who always beat her and finally left her when the daughter was born. She now stays in a nearby village with her parents and takes the Stree Shakti bus that transports her to the production center where she is able to earn a wage to care for her child. With donations from our kind donors, the society operates a bus free of cost for students, teachers and women in the Stree Shakti program.

Aarti, 36, was leading a happy and comfortable life before losing her husband to an illness he contracted while doing work as a carpenter in the Middle East. All the money earned from his work disappeared after trying to save his life with expensive treatments. With help from PYDS, Aarti and her daughter are able to rebuild. Aarti is good with embroidery and her talents are now helping her earn a good wage for her and her daughter, who participates in the PYDS education program for youth.

Meenu, 37, is a woman with tremendous will power. With a polio affected left leg, her parents married her to a much older mentally ill balanced man. Even though she had learnt to sew it was impossible for her to go to the city and earn. It was Meenu's need which in fact was the stimulus and motivation for starting Stree Shakti. Meenu is now a very senior member of our workforce helping to lead our team of women. Unfortunately due to the lack of toilet facilities available for women in the village, she lost her second daughter to a Cobra bite when she went to the forest to relieve herself. Thanks to the toilets built by PYDS, the women do not need to use the open to ease themselves anymore.

The New Building

We are currently working on a **new Stree Shakti building** to house the women and their work. At present, the work is being done in the home of a private residence, but with the success of the program has surpassed its capacity.

Constraints of workspace are proving a major hurdle in the expansion of the project. The new building will not only house spacious, well lit work areas, but also a design workshop, organized storage of raw materials, as well as stocking and display of finished products. The building will also include a showroom and facilities for day care of children and the comfort of the women. Since the new building is to be next to our Yuva Shakti Learning Center, the recreational area in this campus will be available to these members as well. The aesthetically designed building will also be a 'green' one using solar power for lighting and water heating and a rain water harvesting system for its water requirements.



A new building means (1) organized and sustained production, (2) better marketing capacity, (3) enhanced profits and (4) improved welfare for over 100 women and their families.

We have commenced construction of this building and plan to **complete it in early 2009**. The building is estimated to cost Rs. 40 Lacs and is making good progress. We consider this investment very worthwhile since it would enable us to employ another 50 women and provide support to 50 more families in need. The rippling effects **create jobs for the community** and ensure welfare for the women and their families. We are already distributing wages of about Rs. 6 Lacs in twelve months and with the expansion planned and additional skills acquired by the women, we expect to distribute about Rs. 25 Lacs per year.

Marketing and Sales

Stree Shakti products are easily **available locally and abroad**. Products can be **ordered online** through the Product Gallery and shipped anywhere in the world. The **new Stree Shakti building will also contain a shop** for displaying and selling their products.