
RISE OF CONTEMPORARY TEXTILE CRAFT COLLECTIVES TODAY / A CASE STUDY OF THREE TEXTILE COOPERATIVES AND THEIR LEAD WOMEN*

Lin HIGHTOWER*

ABSTRACT

This study looks at three women in three different areas of the world who play a leadership role in not-for-profit textile collectives. Globally the number of textile collectives / cooperatives are on the rise in developing, emerging and even in industrialized countries. These collectives create opportunities for textile artists/workers to create fair-trade studios and/or companies that provide economic benefits by providing consultation, design, and cooperative marketing services. Members of these textile collectives are typically women and often the textile goods are created in their own homes. Typically, a principle women will organize the collective and the artisans will pool their economic resources or seek financing through micro loans for start-up capital. Similar to the Renaissance guilds, stronger lead artists often emerge who establish their own collectives. The three women who are the subject of this study have in common a passion for preserving the indigenous textiles of their culture and an eye on contemporary trends in the world textile marketplace.

Keywords: Textile Collectives, Textile Cooperatives.

ÇAĞDAŞ TEKSTİL EL SANATI ORTAKLIĞININ GÜNÜMÜZDEKİ YÜKSELİŞİ/ ÜÇ TEKSTİL KOOPERATİFİ VE ONLARIN KADIN LİDERLERİ ÜZERİNE VAKA ÇALIŞMASI

ÖZET

Bu çalışma dünyanın farklı bölgelerinde kar amaçlı olmayan tekstil ortaklıklarının lideri üç kadını ele almaktadır. Günümüzde küresel tekstil ortaklıkların/ kooperatiflerin sayısı, gelişmekte olan ve hatta sanayileşmiş ülkelerde bile giderek artmaktadır. Bu ortaklıklar, tekstil sanatçıları/ çalışanlarına danışmanlık, tasarım ve kooperatif pazarlama hizmetleri sunarak onlar için ekonomik fayda sağlayan çeşitli olanaklar yaratır. Bu tekstil ortaklıklarının üyeleri genellikle tekstil ürünlerini kendi evlerinde yapan kadınlardan oluşur. Genellikle ilkeli bir kadının organize ettiği ortaklıkta sanatçılara ekonomik kaynak veya mikro ölçekte başlangıç sermayesi sağlanır. Rönesans loncalarına benzer şekilde, sıklıkla kendi ortaklıklarını kuran güçlü, yol gösteren sanatçılar meydana çıkar. Bu çalışmanın konusu olan üç kadın, Dünya tekstil pazarındaki çağdaş eğilimleri göz önünde bulundurarak kendi kültürlerine ait yerel tekstilleri korumak için ortak bir tutkuya sahiptir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Textil Ortaklıkları, Tekstil Kooperatifleri.

Members of these textile collectives are typically women and often the textile goods are created in their own homes. "At the heart of every human experience is the desire to survive and prosper. To live without fear, hunger or suffering. To imagine how your life could be better and then have the means yourself to change it. Yet, every day, 1.2 billion people- one fifth of the world's inhabitants- cannot fulfill their most basic needs, let alone attain their dreams or desires (<http://www.ruralpoverty-portal.org/web/rural-poverty-portal/topic>). My research looks at three women who have dedicated their lives to confronting this poverty in their home countries: Smarita Sengupta, Director of Destiny Reflection, Kolkata, India, (<http://www.destinyreflection.org>); Nilda Callanaupa Alvarez, Centro De Textiles Tradicionales Del Cusco, Peru (<http://www.textilescusco.org>); and Meera Bhattarai, Association of Craft Producers, Kathmandu, Nepal, (<http://www.acp.org.np>). Their work has ensured that the less fortunate have opportunities to gain employment, fair wages, and to become self-sufficient, so they too may dream and attain some of those dreams. The vehicle for this change has been membership in textile-focused craft cooperatives. My research seeks to answer the question: What are the attributes of successful textile-oriented craft collectives and their leaders?

In the late 20th C and early 21st C there has been a surge in the formation of collectives in emerging and developing countries, often seeking to change the economic and social circumstances of populations in emerging and developing countries. Many of these collectives are staffed mainly by women with a focus in textiles. My research looks at three successful craft cooperatives that focus on textiles, the three women founders and the artisan members of these collectives and the collectives' commonly shared traits that have led to their success. Knowledge of the traits of these successful collectives may be helpful to others who are organizing and developing collectives. Definitions of what a work collective, an art collective and a cooperative are necessary to understanding the terminology used in this research. A work collective is a partnership of individual professionals, such as craft artists, that recognizes the individuals as equals and rewards each equally for their expertise and contributions. Artist collectives are often formed for community and for the collective intelligence and cross-pollination of ideas that are shared among members of the community. A cooperative is a self-governing association that is owned jointly and controlled

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* Dr., Kennesaw State University, School of Art and Design, lighthowl@kennesaw.edu.

through democratically voting members. Any of the above organizations can be legal entities that can be nonprofit, non-capital stock or unincorporated associations. In this paper the terms collective and cooperative will be used interchangeably and defined as an association where the business functions as a partnership of artists or artisans as equals, formed for their collective intelligence, cross pollination, contributions and expertise and is a self-governing association that is owned jointly and controlled through democratically voting members. Typically these types of organizations provide professional workspace, equipment, and educational training and resources. The directors of these associations are typically elected from among the members. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artist_collective, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_cooperative, <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Collectives>, http://cultivate.coop/wiki/Differences_Between_Worker_Cooperatives_and_Collectives).

As early as 198 ACE mosaic mural workers and fresco painters formed guilds to: establish training, set fair prices, protect their rights, raise their status and power, establish bargaining power for work, set quality standards, and provide for families in event of a worker's death (Hauser, 1985). Guilds fought to change the lowly status of artists that had been established when most artists were slaves who toiled with their hands for the wealthy conquerors of their people (Feldman, 1982). Regulated art guild systems of workshops were established with master artists training apprentices to work in the master's style and become part of the workshop's team. Apprentices studying to be artists and artisans learned and observed all aspects of the master artist's career: the business organization of the studio, purchasing of art materials, preparing art materials, working with clients, keeping business records, and the pricing of work (Hightower, 2000). From this system artists who aspired to create original compositions, experiment with materials, to use original approaches and conceptual ideas arose and were recognized as "divinely inspired". These artists found patronage that allowed them to continue their new methods of working and expand their education into areas beyond guild training such as: history, philosophy, religion, languages and science. In the developed world the Bachelor, Master and Doctorate of Degrees of Fine Arts became awards of Higher Education institutions to denote professionally trained artists. The definition of artisan denotes an individual who has technical training in an art area. The guild systems produced many artisans who would not choose to venture past production and emulating the master, but there were a few who, once trained, realized that they had original ideas to contribute to their field of practice. The craft cooperatives that are developing today around the globe to train artisans and to change economic circumstances of people will most likely produce some of these artisans who will join the next generation of designers and artists seeking higher education degrees to enable them to contribute original creations to the world community and to possibly give back to the communities from which they come.

The Three Cooperatives: Destiny Reflection Organization (<http://www.destinyreflection.org>), Centro De Textiles Tradicionales del Cusco (<http://www.textilescusco.org>), and the Association of Craft Producers (<http://www.acp.org.np>) focus on textiles as their main products for the market. Why textiles were chosen as the collectives' main products is one of the key factors in their success. Fiber and textile work has been an ongoing part of daily human life and celebration rituals for thousands of years with the earliest known fiber work, felt, occurring in the late Stone Age, approximately 100,000 years ago. Fiber and textiles have historically been mainly viewed as women's work, although in some cultures men also become weavers and tailors. Fiber work has been considered a craft in Western Art, which relegated the work as less than one of the "Fine Arts", which is typically designated as painting, sculpture and architecture. Some cultures, such as the Middle Eastern, Asian and South American Peruvian cultures classify work with fibers and textiles as a major art form. Fibers and textiles have historically been at the center of women's lives and served a functional role, similar to cooking, cleaning, and childcare. (<http://womenshistory.about.com/od/artcrafts/tp/weaving.htm>, <http://www.nyfashioncenterfabrics.com/history-of-fabric-and-textiles.html>). Remnants of fibers, yarns, fabrics and the tools for creating textiles are some of the earliest relics found in archeological human habitation sites such as: Paleolithic 27,000-year-old clay plain weave impressions from Dojni Vestonice (modern day Czechoslovakia), fiber vessel work dating back to the Paleolithic or Mesolithic periods of netted fiber imprints in dried mud remnants, 10,000-year-old Mesolithic period woven vessels from the Peruvian Guitarrero Cave; Neolithic 8,000-year-old Anatolian simple woven burial garments from Catal Huyuk; 5000 BCE Egyptian linen fabric fragments; 3000 BCE cotton textiles from India, Bronze Age Scandinavia and Switzerland woolen textiles, and woven silk from China since 1000 BCE (Gillow, John, and Bryan Sentance, 2007) (<http://www.factmonster.com/ce6/society/A0861508.html>, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visual_arts_by_indigenous_peoples_of_the_Americas#Textiles). Females are physically weaker than their male counterparts, bore and fed the babies, and most likely looked to males for protection and survival from depredations from animals and other tribes. Historians believe the aforementioned conditions caused women to become the natural gatherers and artisans who first worked with the fibers to create vessels, clothing and carrying and transport fibers. This long history of women's involvement with fiber makes textiles a craft that most women are acquainted, whether by working with fiber to create or by being a consumer of fiber goods. Fibers comfort and warm the body, convey visual signals equated with celebrations, rituals, births, royalty, and nations. Before steam-driven looms, textiles were hand-crafted and time consuming to make and many records of women gathering to work on large textile projects together or personally weaving, sewing, and embellishing needed household and clothing textiles have survived. Time spent working together, socializing, sharing fiber techniques and possibly recipes, stories, laughter and comfort have made textiles an integral part of women's lives until the steam-driven looms (Barber & Wayland, 2008).

Ann Futterman-Collier, UK art therapist and author of *Using Textile Arts and Handcrafts in Therapy with Women: Weaving Lives Back Together* (2011) stated "that fibers and textile have historically been at the center of women's lives and served as a functional role" (Futterman-Collier, Ann, 2011). She stated "I found a universal, non-verbal language to connect with women through textiles: from remote villages in Laos along the Mekong River, to small hamlets in rural Indonesia, to sheep farms in the far south island of New Zealand, to isolated Pacific atolls in Micronesia and Polynesia, to dirt pathways behind storefronts in Ubud, Bali. My training in textiles came from girls, young women, and old women all over the world; they taught me different ways to weave, shear sheep, felt, use a kajip, batik, spin and sew. And while I learned and watched, I created personal connections with strangers who had very little in common with me aside from our love of cloth" (Futterman-Collier, Ann,

2011). Additionally she noted “In my textile research, the more emotionally arousing the fiber-making activity was (weaving and quilting were rated as the highest), the more effective it was at mood repair and rejuvenation. Thus excitement about fibers, mentally challenging and engaging textile projects, and even the movement associated with making textiles, all appear to be good for your mental health” (Futterman-Collier, Ann, 2011). The history of textiles and the ubiquitous use of a wide variety of textiles types, techniques and colors for today’s homes, fashion and accessories make textiles a natural choice for many women collectives. I will now discuss the three international collectives that I have studied, and their leaders and membership.

Case I: Destiny Reflection in Kolkata, India: Smarita Sengupta attended the Bhawanipur Education Society College, Kolkata, India and received a Bachelor of Commerce degree, but her chosen life career has gone far beyond her degree area. Smarita’s journey as an advocate began when she worked with an anti-trafficking unit in Bihar, India, where she witnessed fathers and brothers selling their daughters and sisters. She comes from a more privileged and traditional background than the girls and women she helps through the organization she co-founded, Destiny Reflection (DR), (<http://www.destinyreflection.org>), with Becky Bavinger in 2007. Her cooperative is younger than the other two cooperatives I am studying. As of 2012 Destiny has provided training for 70 women. She admits she had to learn about social work since she did not have academic training in this area. Smarita has overseen training for women from brothels and from Destiny’s five other Indian partner women’s shelters. Start-up funding came from a US group called “The Emancipation Network”, the Clayton family and “Made by Survivors”, USA-based organizations that fights human trafficking through employment and empowerment. Destiny works with rescued trafficked, 13-40 year old females who have been prostitutes and/or slaves and who are at risk for trafficking and provides them work skills to enable the women to plan and control their own futures. Destiny has also been responsible for securing growing school education sponsorship programs for numerous girls. In prostitution the women have no access to their own income and little chance of escaping the sex-trade life. The women and their children have shortened life expectancy and the problems become multi-generational because children born to sex-trade mothers, typically grow up to become part of sex trade business. Because most of the young girls and women do not have families, Destiny Reflection has set up their organization to operate much like family units and provides the women contact with other women like themselves who often share their experiences, and DR provides the women with role models who are further along in their journey of building new lives and work skills. In addition, trained mentors are available on site as well. Destiny operates as a registered charitable operation that provides the women with seamstress’ skills, business skills, cooperative operation skills, health information, further education, self-esteem training and some funding for at-home businesses and for business start-up funding of collectives, such as sewing machines. In an interview Smarita explained that she choose sewing because “I noticed that women in the shelters were sewing and embroidering to make items to beautify the shelter or items for their own clothing and accessories. I believe that most women have an almost inborn affinity for fibers and textiles and I also believed we could find a market for well-crafted, well-designed hand-sewn products. And we did find a receptive market.” The registered business entity of Destiny employs approximately 20 full-time and 30 part-time women who make a variety of home and fashion accessories for the market such as purses, bags, wallets, laptop cases, aprons, towels and letter folders, as well as block-printed yardage. Destiny is currently seeking Fair-Trade recognition for their organization and products. Women in shelter homes who have an interest in crafts and have basic sewing skills are offered an opportunity to train as seamstresses. They receive a stipend during training and Destiny tries to find them employment at the conclusion of their training. The focus of the work skills is sewing, seamstresses’ skills and quality control to enable the women to create home and clothing and fashion accessories that will succeed in the marketplace. Once trained, some of the women continue to work directly for DR and other women establish a home business or become part of cooperatives that are connected to Destiny Reflection, so that the women continue to have access to help resources and Destiny can help market their products. Destiny Foundation’s goal is that the women will have sustainable economic independence, awareness of good health practices, strong self-esteem, educational opportunities and social skills for themselves, live a life with dignity with their children so they can be socially reintegrated into communities and neither the women nor their children will be exploited in the future. Women who have been recipients of DR training who were surveyed reported that they feel they have been better accepted into communities because they received psychological counseling, feel stronger and more capable, feel that they have experienced a reduction in stigma since they are now working in respectable employment and have little risk of re-trafficking. Destiny provides information about their organization online, as well as through videos and hopes to reach beyond their geographical area to inform millions of viewers, including trafficked individuals, of the immense numbers of women and children who are trafficked every year, how trafficking happens and the options available to help victims gain work skills and economic independence from a life of prostitution, and modern-day slavery, which is rife with disease and violence.

Destiny Reflection has developed a solution to poverty that is sustainable on an individual and macro scale by designing and creating hand-sewn home and fashion accessories that are sold by Destiny Reflection locally, nationally and internationally. Destiny Reflection understands the long history textiles have played in India in its cultural traditions and development, in its journey to freedom from British occupancy and in its role in the modern day textile industry. DR employs their knowledge of historical designs of India to design specific cut blocks for block printing on textiles. DR has developed several types of products it makes by incorporating these hand printed block textiles, which are made by women that have been rescued from trafficking by police raids and who are presently living in the shelter homes in Kolkata. Many of the block-printed textiles incorporate the paisley pattern, which has a history that is thought to have originated in Persian culture, but has long been used in textiles and jewelry in India. Destiny has found that their block prints and Indian sari fabric products outsell their product with manufactured fabrics. The home and fashion accessory products are designed by local designers and designers from around the world all who have volunteered their design skills. Destiny Reflection brought in volunteer experienced seamstresses to train the first women how to sew and now the best and more experienced recipients of that training have become the trainers. New fabrics are selected and new products are designed when the volunteer designers make suggestions or buyers request particular types of fabrics or products, then models are developed and market tested and then the selected fabrics and

products are put into production. Destiny Reflection fosters skill development paired with well-paid employment in making textile products and has the goal of continuing to expand its operations in order to train more rescued women and to provide employment options that allows women to become self-sufficient. Destiny is not 100% funded by donations and currently receives no government funding, so the income from their textile products is essential to their operation and future expansion to help additional women. Destiny hopes to purchase their own land for a women's shelter, training center, production center, an educational unit and playground for the children and to establish a textile block printing center in the red light district so that women can see a viable alternative employment. Destiny Reflection is a relatively young successful textile cooperative and the summary of the components and leader's attributes follows:

A. The Components of the Cooperative Are: 1) Comprised of sex-trafficked women who have been rescued. 2) concerned with sustainable gainful employment for the women, 3) a textile cooperative of sewing and block printing, 4) skills training in sewing and block printing, 5) self-esteem training, 6) business training on how cooperatives work, 7) seeks to provide education to interested women and their children, 8) contemporized indigenous quality-controlled textile products, 9) has many women to help so the labor force and skills will continue to grow.

B. And the Attributes of the Woman Leader Are: 1) native to country and has higher education degree. 2) has traveled abroad and is knowledgeable about the world community, 3) has the ability to run a business, 4) believes that women have an intrinsic understanding and affinity for textiles, 5) believes that textiles would be marketable, 6) has a passion for helping those less fortunate, 7) interested in providing training for women to provide them job skills, business and self-esteem training to enable them to earn a sustainable living above the poverty level, thereby preventing them from being re-trafficked.

Case II. Centro De Textiles Tradicionales Del Cusco, Cusco, Peru: Nilda Callanaupa Alvarez, a native of Chinchero, Peru, the director of The Center for Traditional Textiles of Cusco (CTTC) was five when she began to learn the spinning, weaving, knitting, braiding and dyeing with the natural fibers of the Andean highlands. She was recognized as a master textile crafts-person by visiting anthropologists and as a child prodigy by fourteen, when she was selected to demonstrate Peruvian textile techniques at the Smithsonian Institution and at the American Museum of Natural History. She later attended and graduated from the University of Cusco, studied weaving history in America at U.C. Berkley in California, then earned a graduate degree from a Cusco Tourism Program. She has dedicated herself to improving the economic living standards and independence of the Peruvian families, particularly women, of her area and preserving the more than 1000 year old indigenous textile techniques of the Southern Peruvian Andean Highlands in combination with natural dyes and the wool of their native alpacas, llamas and sheep. Through her diligent work she founded the non-profit Center for Traditional Textiles of Cusco in 1996 where young girls and women can attend school and weave in native costumes, learn textile techniques and participate in a weaving cooperative to make and control the sale of their products. CCTC has also organized other textile producing communities. The Center and the other textile communities each have a president, and a governing board, and participating weavers give a percentage of their textile earnings to a fund to help women in their groups with special needs and emergencies. The weavers have learned how to work with a governing board and a president, document their sales, pay sales tax, and attend meetings. The weavers wear their traditional clothing, which in the beginning met with much criticisms going backwards in history as the traditional clothing was associated with rural poor people with no education. Today the clothing is worn with pride and is celebrated by the community because of the national and international recognition that the Center and the women have received for their contributions to save the historical textile knowledge of Peru. The Center has established a yearly prize to encourage weavers to create the most original work of the highest quality. The center has developed and surveyed their weaving communities to document the changes the Center has achieved.

The CCTC work is of essential importance for the mostly indigenous population they serve, which is 90 % women of the Southern Highland Andean area of Peru. In 2010 31.3 % of the Peruvian population were living below the poverty level, but in the arid Andean Highlands, where the majority of the indigenous Quechua and Aymara communities live, 61 % of the population were living below the poverty level. Poverty level is the minimum amount required to provide family with the most basic daily essentials. This is where the weaving center is located (<http://www.peruviantimes.com/30/perus-poverty-rate-drops-to-30-8-percent-inei/15436/>). Currently women in the region face maternal death rates that are high, one-third of pregnancies end in abortion, high levels of violence against women, and a high rape level, as noted by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development website. Women also have a higher illiteracy rate, receive lower pay, and have fewer work opportunities than men. The majority of rural women work in farming, tend the animals and/or take care of household chores and children, which allows the men to travel to search for temporary employment. On average, they earn 46 percent less than male workers. The income from the textiles allows family to meet their basic needs and to address health, educational needs of their children and to save for emergencies. Nilda's organization has provided work for these women and a smaller number of men who have chosen to create textiles and keep ancient pre-Columbian Peruvian textile techniques from disappearing and Peruvians from losing their connection with their heritage. Peruvian textiles honor Mother Earth, Pacha Mama, from the creation myth and the textile patterns represent the sacred landscape of the earth, its animals, plants, people and the ancient belief system of the Peruvian peoples. Nilda has been successful in obtaining funding through Peruvian governmental sources, as well as international funding for the Center through grants and donations. She speaks internationally about the Center: how it was formed; its mission; how the collective operates; and how the Center has changed the economic lives and self-esteem of the Peruvians in the collective. The center is engaged with nine different Peruvian Southern Highlands Andes communities: Accha Alta, Acopia, Chahuaytire, Chinchero, Chumbivilcas, which are all part of the Peruvian Cusco Southern Highlands region. This currently includes approximately 350 adult weavers and 250 children. The designs, colors, sizes, and materials used in each textile item vary from region to region. Each community differs in its patterns, styles of weaving and types of traditional clothing. The center researches and documents historical information about Peruvian textiles of the region: use of textiles, communities who made textiles, materials used, dye information, patterns, stories associated with patterns, equipment used and weaving techniques. The weavings made by the collective vary from daily textiles, textiles for

transporting goods, daily and festival wearables, home goods and textiles created as offerings to honor the gods. The Center has researched and documented what plants, minerals and insects are used for natural dyes, the gathering time for plants or insects, preparation of dyes, temperature of the dye solution, timing for dyeing wool yarns and methods to set dyes. Examples of dyes are: the insect Cochineal, with a combination of different mordants gives different shades of pinks, reds, and purples; the Qolie flower produces yellow; the Noyal plants yields browns; Chilca leaves return greens; and Indigo results in blue. The center works with the rural and Cusco schools to develop teaching materials relating to textile heritage and textile techniques, offers beginning weaving courses to locals and foreigners and serves as research center for Peruvian textile information. Education of the younger generations is essential to maintain textile interest and textile production, and to build an appreciation of contribution of textiles to Peruvian culture and heritage. This documentation has built a sense of pride of heritage in the women, as well as a sense that this information is important, not only for the local, indigenous Peruvians to preserve, but also for Peruvians at large and the world community. The Center has served as a model for other cultural communities in Peru and other countries around the world seeking to research and preserve their textile heritage. The center has succeeded in creating modest but dependable income for approximately 700 weavers in 9 communities and has improved the living conditions and enhanced the women's abilities as decision-makers and in self-governance. The center has developed partnerships with the public sector, business and civil society locally, nationally, and internationally (<http://www.iaf.gov/index.aspx?page=577>).

Centro De Textiles Tradicionales Del Cusco is a established successful textile cooperative and the summary of the components and leader's attributes follows:

A. The Components of the Cooperative: 1) membership is comprised of indigenous tribes of Southern Peruvian, 2) Highlands, over 90% women, 3) concerned with sustainable gainful employment for the poor, 4) is a Southern Highland Peruvian textile cooperative, 5) has self-esteem training, 6) has business training on how cooperatives work and how to work cooperatively, 7) is a textile cooperative, 8) teaches weaving, and dyeing and history of these subjects, 9) documents, conserves and contemporizes local indigenous quality- controlled textiles, 10) continues to teach young people to weave and they receive regular modest income and they are few alternative opportunities for work for these women.

B. And the Attributes of the Woman Leader: 1) native to country and has a higher education degree, 2) has traveled and is knowledgeable of the world community, 3) has developed the ability to run and market the business portion of the organization, 4) believes that preserving the indigenous textiles is essential to maintaining Peruvian heritage, 5) believed that textiles would be marketable, 6) has a passion for helping those less fortunate, 7) wants to improve the self-esteem, status and economic situation of indigenous Peruvian women.

Case III. Association of Craft Producers, Kathmandu, Nepal: Meera Bhattarai, the founder of Association of Craft Producers (ACP) obtained a Bachelor of Arts in psychology and was an early member of the Nepal Women's Organization where she was in charge of craft production, but found the government foundation overlooked the plight of the Nepalese poor, particularly women. Meera believed Nepali handcraft business needed three changes to be successful and competitive in the world marketplace: 1) guarantee that crafts meet international high quality and design standards; 2) reintroduce the recognized indigenous old crafts of Nepal; and 3) establish a strong artisan workforce of women with family and possibly agricultural responsibilities. The workers in the collectives are selected based on having no other career opportunities and their existing or learned skill in craft making. In 1984 she founded ACP and as the director she began her work to advance the status of poor women economically and educationally; to improve their work production skills in the arts and crafts; as well as to provide counseling and lecture series to raise the women's self-confidence and business skills. Women make up approximately 90% of the ACP workforce. Meera served as the founding chair of the Fair Trade Group for Nepal for 10 years. ACP was a founding member of the Asia Fair Trade Organization and is a member of the World Fair Trade Organization. In Nepal over 24% live below the poverty level earning about 1.25 USD per day. Eighty-one percent of the women have experienced domestic violence; rape is common and typically unprosecuted. While laws have changed about women's rights, women often do not pursue their rights because of social stigma and are still in position of lower status than males. Often in-laws and husbands control a woman's living, her working conditions and the hours she works. If the husband dies often the woman is ostracized from family and community and is seen as a half a person (the couple represented the whole person). Only 28 per cent of Nepali women can read and write. (<http://www.womenepal.org/>, <http://www.welnepal.org/index.html>, <http://www.nepalvista.com/realnepal/literacy.php>). The Association for Craft Producers is located in Katmandu, Nepal as a local not for profit and fair trade organization. The organization provides training in design, marketing, management and technical services to low-income Nepalese artisans. The craft producers earn fair wages and receive benefits, which includes monetary allowances for children's education (up to two, one being a daughter), medical, festival, clothing, emergency funds, and retirement. ACP has grown from 38 artisans to 1200 artisans, who reside in 15 Nepali districts, from a 4000 sq. ft. facility to a 45,000 sq. ft. facility, has 22 art production areas and exports to 18 countries. ACP reports that artisans' social status and self-esteem has risen as the artisans have become more financially independent and stable, as well as gaining recognition and respect from their male counterparts.

Textile areas include sewing, felting, weaving, crochet, basket-making and screen printing that preserve their indigenous crafts, yet ACP is open to modernizing their crafts' designs for the current market. ACP works with designers of purchasing companies to create designs that meet buyer's needs, as well as inviting volunteer designers from around the globe to infuse ACP's designs. In addition ACP has been environmentally conscious. Examples include harvesting rainfall, installing a water waste treatment system, changing from kerosene to electric firing for ceramics, using recycled paper, discouraging use of plastic bags, and has shifted from oil-based to water-based pigments. Wages have increased- as shown by the example of one of their weavers who earned 1,000-1,500 rupees (18.50-27.50 USD) per month before working for ACP and now earns 6,000-8,000 rupees (110.00-150.00 USD) per month and is able to support her household with two children, provide education and healthcare and is also able to save 500 rupees (9.00 USD) each month. The Association of Craft Producers is an established crafts, mainly textile cooperative and the summary of the cooperative components and leader's attributes follows:

A. The Components of the Cooperative: 1) Comprised of poor people who are already artisans or are willing to be trained in

needed craft areas. 2) Concerned with sustainable gainful employment for this population. 3) Is a craft collective, with large textile component. 4) Has self-esteem training. 5) Has business training on how cooperatives work, 6) Has quality control of their products, 7) Contemporized indigenous quality controlled textile products,

B. And the Components of the Woman Leader; 1) Native to country and has higher education degree. 2) Has traveled and is knowledgeable of the world community. 3) Has developed the ability to run and market the business area of the organization. 4) Believes that preserving the indigenous crafts is essential to maintaining Nepalese heritage, 5) Believed that textiles and crafts would be marketable. 6) Has a passion for helping those less fortunate. 7) Wants to improve the self-esteem, status and economic situation of Nepalese people.

Conclusions: In reviewing the three cooperatives for common success indicators, it is apparent that the following characteristics are shared by the three cooperatives: The cooperatives all produce high quality textiles that have been contemporized, but are still based on the indigenous textiles of their country, focus on skills training and establishing sustainable income for the cooperative and its members, as well as offering business and self esteem training to its members. The leaders are women are leading women: each native to the country where the cooperative is located, the leaders had access to education and have obtained a bachelor's degrees or higher, the leaders have had exposure to the world at large, have an ability to lead, inspire, manage, promote, and market their cooperatives' products. Each woman leader has a strong belief system in helping those more unfortunate, combined with a driving passion to change women's lives so they become financially independent, better educated, and have a sense of self-worth. The leaders all have an affinity for textiles and a strong belief that indigenous textile arts have intrinsic value that is not only monetary, but also has a healing value for building the self-hood and pride of heritage of the women involved in their making. The organizations have planned continual intake of youth into their organizations to make certain the indigenous crafts do not perish and their will be a continuum of possible employment for the youth. Education for children and some interested mothers is a possibility, as well training in good health practices and nutrition. Out of the work of Smarita, Nilda, and Meera comes economic independence at grassroots level for the poor and often deemed lower class women of their countries, as well as dignity and higher status for these women. These three leaders have created socially responsible business models for their counties for replication locally, nationally and internationally based on continuation of the indigenous crafts of their cultures. These three women lead the way as business entrepreneurs and as socially responsible change agents. Their work benefits human rights movements.

As world citizens we are all the better for their social actions, which create a more equal and just world.

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