



Rekha Kharpade

Beneficiary TEDP

Tribal Artist

Warli Painting

Why Rekha Kharpade plans to take her children's help to expand her online business

Rekha Kharpade, 37, comes from a line of women, who were Warli artists in their own right. However, she got the opportunity to become one only after her marriage. Today, she not only paints professionally, but even runs her own business in this field.



She lives with her husband, a farmer and rickshaw driver, and three children in Udvad village of Talasari taluka in Dahanu. "As a kid, I was quite taken up with Warli art when I saw my mother make these *chauks* during marriages," she says. "Even my *maushi* and all the *savashinis* of our house were good. They were often invited to make *chauks* in the neighbourhood," she adds. *Savashinis* are married women who make the *chauks* with rice paste.

Lagnachauk (one of the central motifs in Warli painting) are made during marriage ceremonies to seek the blessings of Palghat Devi on the bridal couple. Every tribe has its own Palghat Devi and the *chauks* depicts her in the center with geometrical strokes and designs considered to be her ornaments.



These intricate drawings attracted Rekha and she started dabbling in them. "It was in school that we had an art teacher who knew Warli art. He taught me to make Warli paintings," says Rekha, who could not study or pursue painting further due to personal reasons.

However, 10 years ago, she got married into the Kharpade household which re-introduced her to her first love – Warli painting. "My elder sister-in-law has been an artist for the past 20 years. She taught me how to paint and make a living out of it," she adds.

Since then Rekha paints on cloth, canvas, sarees, glass, wood, etc. She assists her sister-in-law who participates in various exhibitions across the country. "It is only since 2019 that I started going to the exhibition. Otherwise, I would just help in painting the products," she says.

With her art, Rekha can earn anywhere between Rs 10,000 to Rs 15,000 a month. While there are only three to four exhibitions held a year, she also works on direct orders from the customers, which helps her to shoulder the financial responsibilities of her family. “My children are studying and we need to ensure they complete their education for a better future. So, both of us work to fulfill our responsibilities,” she adds.



The lockdown of 2020 forced Rekha to look for other options to sell her work. “With no direct sales and exhibitions, we need to find ways to reach the customers. Online marketing seems like a good option,” she says.

To help such artisans become entrepreneurs is the Tribal Entrepreneurship Development Programme (TEDP). It is a joint venture of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MOTA) and Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM). It trains tribal artisans to become self-sufficient with upgraded skills and promote themselves via digital marketing.



Rekha was a part of the online marketing workshop held under TEDP recently. Though she is still trying to grapple with technology, she has understood that online marketing is the way forward. “I do not have a smartphone, but my kids do. I will take their help to expand my online business,” she concludes.