# Embracing Empowerment with Shakti

Posted on


The vibrant set- up of the Shakti Gallery, with the work table sitting in the center of the room

**Shakti of the SHA Trust, empowers women and girls by providing them the skills to produce quality crafted products; giving them the opportunity to uplift their lives.**

**Words** Venuri De Silva
**Photographs** Vishwathan Tharmakulasingham


Delicately hand-crafted
greetings cards

Shakti co-exists with Tea Tang within the same premises on Havelock Road. On entering the outlet, the ambience is colourful and bright with Tea Tang products being displayed on one side and the Shakti products on the other. A separate tea

tasting area has been created for customers to select their own preference from the collection. A large work table sits at the centre of the Shakti Gallery, with display shelves filled with the vibrant products surrounding it. Bright lights highlight the different colours and dynamic patterns to the eye.

The Shakti Gallery showcases the skill and dexterity of particular superwomen. These women due to either family circumstances, physical illnesses or other challenges, are unable to secure employment in order to support their families. Nevertheless, due to their talent for sewing and stitching, Shakti ensures that they have economic support while they work from home. There is furthermore, a training period to ensure that the adequate skills required for making the products are acquired.

The system of production entails around ten chosen ladies who come into the shop twice a month to meet around the centre table and cut the material needed for the products, using the cutting templates provided for them. All materials are provided, from the cloth to the zips and thread. These are all stored in a store room within the same premises. Machines are either loaned or bought for the ladies of which they can then pay back the cost in gradual instalments. The system works so well due to the more experienced ladies mentoring and helping others.

Shakti products range from bags, wine bottle covers, iPad covers, toiletry cases and coin purses to handcrafted cards for various occassions. Every aspect of an individual finished product embraces quality and precision. All items are fabric based with a handloom component reflecting the Sri Lankan identity. Most of the raw materials used are sourced locally, with exception to the printed fabric. Unique and limited pieces are created by cleverly mixing and matching locally sourced handloom with these unusual prints. An exclusive brand themed lining which the ladies call 'our Shakti lining' is also used, as well as tags bearing the name of the lady who made each product. The greetings and occasion cards are also crafted using the same materials, ensuring that nothing goes to waste. Each product reflecting the quality, time and effort taken to create the one of a kind limited edition products for all seasons.

Shakti strongly believes that while individuals should make something of their lives, the greatest and most imortant thing is to be able to give them a platform to do so. The Trust enhances interaction and growth with the hope of encouraging the women to venture out on their own in the future, with better knowledge of the market. The very essence of this Trust and initiative centers around giving people the chance for betterment, the promotion of Sri Lankan talent, as well as the

creation of art with a purpose.

**Shakti Gallery**
**11 Havelock Road, Colombo 5**
**charity@teatang.com**
**(+94 11) 7276592**
**Opening hours: 8.30am till 6pm (Daily), 9am till 5pm (Saturdays) and closed on Sundays and Poya days**

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