



DI: Why did you set up the Princess Diya Kumari Foundation (PDKF)?

Princess Diya Kumari: PDKF is a non-profit organisation founded in 2013. Over the last one year, it has been established as a functional and sustainable organisation. I've always felt the need to give back to the society, and my parents [Late Sawai Bhawani Singhji and Padmini Devi] taught me the importance of helping those in need. In Rajasthan, there are many cultural, social, and economic barriers faced by women. I felt the need for a collective effort to improve the lives of these women who might not have had an opportunity to pursue education due to early marriage or financial constraints.

DI: What measures do you take to promote PDKF among foreign tourists?

PDK: We promote PDKF as an organisation when we travel to international destinations. Also, my son, HH Maharaja Padmanabh Singh of Jaipur, helps me promote the Foundation. Even social media has helped [spread



the word] about PDKF. We have had people from all over the world who see our products on Instagram [[@princessdiyakumarifoundation](#)] and reach out to us. Foreign tourists visit the Foundation at Badal Mahal [near Jai Niwas Garden in Jaipur], where we give them an insight into heritage crafts of Rajasthan.

DI: What are the main areas that the Foundation focusses on?

PDK: Our main focus areas are skill building and livelihoods, promoting heritage crafts, supporting education for girls, women's empowerment, and facilitating health programmes. We have a team that's led by our trustee comprising administrative officers and supervisors at our three centres. We have over 80 women who regularly come to our centres.

Our day-to-day function is varied, every week we have visitors from all over the world who come to visit our

Anti-clockwise from above: The members of PDKF with Princess Diya Kumari, President, and Shivina Kumari, Hon. Advisor and Trustee (in blue sari); *potti* and cosmetic bags, prepared by PDKF, are inspired by local motifs; handicraft products by PDKF on display at a stall.

Foundation, and interact with our staff. We have volunteers from Europe, and even Australia, who come to learn about Rajasthan, its culture and heritage crafts. The daily operations include providing training, infrastructure, design, materials, and guidance to the women who come to our centres. We support their livelihoods, provide a safe environment, and empower them to feel confident about themselves. We also conduct outreach activities, such as free health camps.

DI: How is PDKF making an impact to support women's empowerment?

PDK: We have empowered women financially by helping them learn skills that can provide them livelihood.



India Shining

The India story would be incomplete without highlighting the people and organisations, which drive the growth of the country, and are instrumental in finding a place on the global map. The Princess Diya Kumari Foundation, an NGO responsible for the development of Rajasthan's underprivileged women, is one such example. *Discover India* caught up with its president and founder, **Princess Diya Kumari** of the Jaipur Royal Family, to find the grassroot-level functions and what is it about PDKF that attracts visitors from around the world.

By **AINDRILA MITRA** Photographed by **LODOVICO COLLI DI FELIZZANO** [@iodoclick](#)



CONTACT DETAILS

Princess Diya Kumari Foundation,
Badal Mahal, Near Jai Niwas Garden
& Govind Devji Temple, Jaipur;
princessdiyakumarifoundation.org or
email at pdkinfo@gmail.com

I believe financial inclusion for women is very important. We have assisted our members in opening their own bank accounts, so they can control their finances. In addition, we help connect them to various government schemes.

DI: What are PDKF's signature products, and what's the creative process behind making them?

PDK: We develop contemporary designs using techniques that are traditional, and we try to include multiple techniques on each product [to be able to assign work to as many women as possible].

DI: How are PDKF's products priced?

PDK: We make products in two categories. The first category caters to tourists who are looking for souvenirs, such as key chains, soft toys, coasters, fabric necklaces, and bags in the price range of ₹150-₹1,000/US\$2-US\$15. We also make

Above: Local women at a PDKF centre in Jaipur. *Left:* An old woman working on a coin bag.

garments, such as children's clothes, quilted jackets, *lehengas* (ethnic long skirts), embroidered scarves, shawls and saris in the range of ₹1,000-₹10,000/US\$15-US\$145.

DI: As a Jaipur royalty, does your family lineage help you with your work?

PDK: I am able to support PDKF in various ways; we have a PDKF stall and a store at City Palace, Jaipur where we sell the products made by our ladies. Plus, we look at taking part in various exhibitions, trade shows and events that benefit the Foundation.

DI: What are your personal favourites from PDKF's range of products?

PDK: I love wearing some of the saris made by PDKF, using embroidery techniques, such as *zardozi* and *gota patti*. 