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SECURING INDIA'S HANDLOOM HERITAGE

HANDLOOM WEAVING: ANCIENT ROOTS TO MODERN MARVEL

DISPLAYING A WIDE REGIONAL DIVERSITY

Know India Better

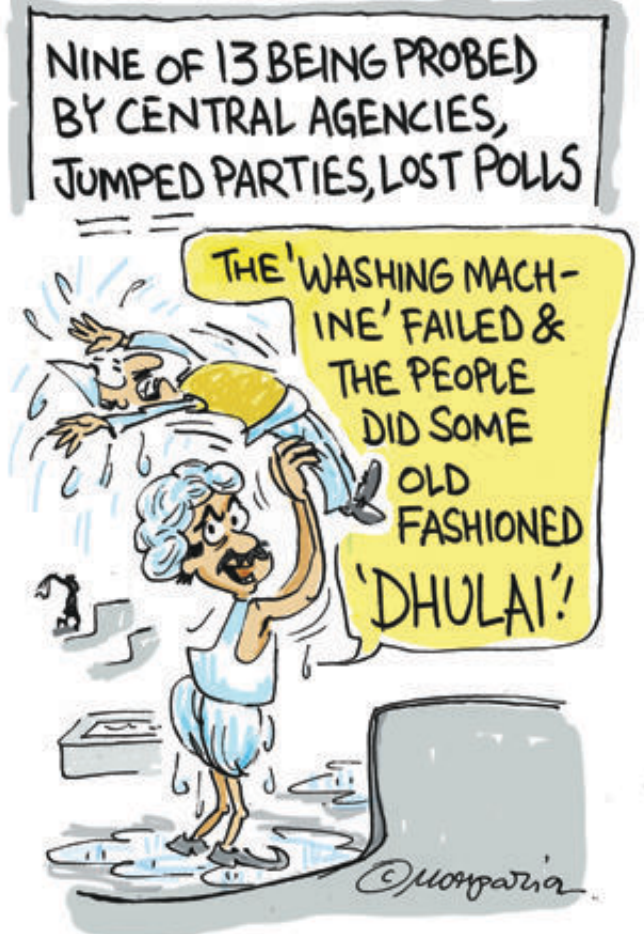
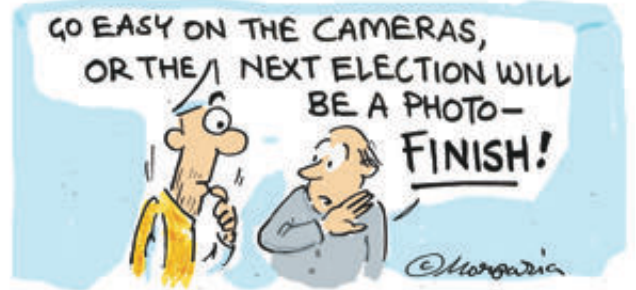
THE MAJESTY OF SUNDERBANS

GOA SHEDS OLD SKIN TO
RE-EMERGE ANEW

Face to Face

RAJU GUSAIN

EKTA BHATTACHARYA



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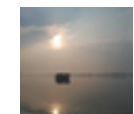


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Securing India's handloom heritage

*Listing measures that could preserve the country's rich handloom heritage, **Ritika Seth** asserts that encouraging responsible sourcing and transparent supply chains enables consumers to identify certified handloom products originating from reliable sources committed to socially conscious business practices. Educators can play a significant role in training younger generations in preserving traditions and cultivating entrepreneurial skills necessary for independent sustainability.*



It is important to preserve the country's rich handloom heritage by empowering our artisans

India's handloom heritage is an amalgamation of its rich cultural history, craftsmanship, and artistic expression. This heritage is not just about creating beautiful textiles; it encapsulates centuries of tradition, regional diversity, and the spirit of communities. Preserving this legacy for future generations is paramount for maintaining cultural identity, supporting artisan communities, and fostering sustainable development.

In this regard, education, awareness, and consumer support play crucial roles in sustaining traditional handloom weaving techniques and empowering the artisan communities who bring these techniques to life. To encourage long-term sustainability in the handloom sector, policymakers, designers, retailers, and consumers must adopt collaborative approaches focused on education, capacity building, marketing strategies, fair trading practices, product certification schemes, and legal



Risa an upper garment worn by Tripura women which has been given the GI tag

frameworks protecting traditional knowledge and cultural expressions.

Encouraging responsible sourcing and transparent supply chains enables consumers to identify certified handloom products originating from reliable sources committed to socially conscious business practices. Educators play an essential role in training younger generations in preserving traditions and cultivating entrepreneurial skills necessary for independent sustainability.

Retailers should prioritise showcasing genuine handloom products, educate consumers about the differences between mass-produced and handmade goods, emphasise ethical sourcing standards, and minimise waste generated during production processes. By doing so, one can protect the endangered craftsmanship. Collectively, implementing these

measures promotes sustainable handloom fashion practices while benefiting traditional artisans economically and preserving valuable aspects of this invaluable heritage for future generations.

Preserving tribal heritage

In May 2022, then-Chief Minister of Tripura, Biplab Kumar Deb, initiated the process to secure a Geographical Indication (GI) tag for the traditional garment 'risa'. The aim being to boost its global appeal and marketing potential. In March 2024, in a significant cultural milestone, risa was officially granted the GI registration. This was a culmination of the combined efforts of the Killa Mahila Cluster of Gomati district supported by the Tripura Rural Livelihood Mission (TRLM).

The coveted recognition is a step in the direction of celebrating Tripura's rich tribal heritage. Risa is a handwoven cloth that is used by the women of the region as an upper garment. It is common in almost all 19 indigenous tribal communities of the state. It incorporates stylish designs and unique colour combinations and is a beacon of local tribal art of Tripura. It's the tribal women who create this fabric using loom looms – with colourful warp and weft threads.

This move also highlights the efforts taken by the government in 'preserving and promoting the unique cultural identity of the state.' The GI tag for Risa not only 'safeguards the traditional craftsmanship and authenticity of the attire but also opens doors for economic opportunities and increased visibility on the national and international stage.'

The nomadic Lambani community in Karnataka is also striving to preserve its unique handloom heritage. The women's traditional attire is an exquisite work of mirrors and embroidery on the fabric, an example being the Phetiya Kanchali. The women have taken things in their hands to ensure revival of this ancient textile art.

Over decades, the community has been hit with poverty, alcoholism and rampant migration for livelihood which has directly jeopardised their existence and the Lambani art. With the help of NGOs and their new-found dedication, the Lambani women weavers and artisans are working hard to create traditional fabrics and textiles that are supporting them financially and ensuring survival of this dying art.

In 2020, the government had launched "Aadi Mahotsav - Madhya Pradesh" to help transform the lives and livelihoods of the tribals of the zone. Aadi Mahotsav, a joint initiative of Ministry of Tribal Affairs and Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED), is a national tribal festival showcasing traditional art and handicrafts and cultural heritage of the country.

Tribal communities are major contributors in terms of providing raw materials for silk and other fabrics that are the backbone of the handloom industry. But they are often at the fringe of the economic chain. Initiatives are being taken to provide them skill development training and making them self-reliant so they can get a fair price for their work and at the same time preserve traditional skills.

Cultural continuance

Handloom textiles are a reflection of India's rich cultural diversity. Each region has its own unique weaving styles, patterns, and motifs, often carrying significant cultural and symbolic meanings. Preserving these traditions helps maintain the cultural identity of various communities and ensures the continuity of their heritage.

The industry is a significant source of employment, especially in rural and semi-rural areas. It provides livelihoods to millions of artisans, many of whom belong to marginalised communities. Ensuring the sustainability of this industry is crucial for the economic sustenance of these communities, which in turn will ensure preservation of their heritage.

Handloom weaving is not just a craft; it is an art form that allows for immense creativity and innovation. Preserving this heritage nurtures artistic talent and keeps traditional art forms

alive. Promoting these practices contributes to environmental sustainability and counters the adverse impacts of factory-made products which are energy intensive.

Role of education

Providing education and training in traditional weaving techniques is essential for their preservation. Initiatives that teach young artisans the skills of their forebears help ensure that these techniques are not lost. Incorporating modern design and marketing skills can also enhance the appeal and marketability of handloom products.

Including handloom weaving and textile arts in educational curricula can raise awareness and appreciation among younger generations. This fosters a sense of pride and encourages them to engage with and support these traditions.

Academic research and documentation of various handloom techniques, patterns, and their historical contexts are crucial. This helps in preserving knowledge and provides a rich resource for future generations to study and build upon.

Awareness campaigns can highlight the cultural and economic importance of the handloom sector. Celebrating National Handloom Day and other such initiatives can draw public attention and appreciation.

Leveraging media platforms to tell the stories of artisans and their crafts can create a deeper connection with consumers. Documentaries, social media campaigns, and articles can bring to light the skill, dedication, and cultural significance behind each handwoven piece.

Organising cultural events, exhibitions, and fashion shows featuring handloom textiles can raise awareness and showcase their beauty and craftsmanship to a wider audience. Other initiatives include ethical consumerism, promoting fair trade with equal economic opportunity, strategic collaborations and partnerships, etc.

Empowering artisan communities

The most important step towards protecting endangered skills and preserving the country's rich handloom heritage is empowering the creator or the artisan – the handloom weaver. This can be done through cooperatives and self-help groups that provide them with a collective voice and bargaining power. These organisations can facilitate access to resources, training, and markets and, at the same time, prevent exploitation.

Government and non-governmental organisations can provide financial support, subsidies, and incentives to handloom weavers. This can help them invest in better tools, raw materials, and infrastructure.

And, most importantly, implementing policies that protect the intellectual property rights of artisans and provide them with social security benefits can significantly improve their livelihoods. Ensuring that these policies are effectively enforced is also crucial.

Preserving India's handloom heritage is not just about maintaining a craft; it is about safeguarding a vital part of the nation's cultural identity, supporting the livelihoods of millions of artisans, and promoting sustainable development.

Ritika Seth works with DraftCraft International as a Media Researcher and writes mostly on issues affecting the Fourth Estate. She likes reading contrarian literature and analysing sources of news.

Handloom weaving: Ancient roots to modern marvel

*Handloom weaving holds immense cultural value in India, playing vital roles in social customs and rituals. Tracing the genesis of handloom craft in India, **Nandini Rao** observes that today it continues to be celebrated -- domestically and internationally -- for its craftsmanship, diversity, and sustainable practices. Each region offers unique textiles characterised by distinct weaving techniques, patterns, and motifs, reflecting the country's rich cultural heritage.*



Indian handlooms are symbolic of the enduring legacy of traditional craftsmanship

Throughout human history, clothing has always served not only practical purposes but also artistic ones. Handloom weaving has played a pivotal role in satisfying these two needs since ancient times. India boasts some of the oldest recorded examples of handloom weaving. Evidence suggests that early inhabitants used fibres extracted from plant sources like cotton and jute along with animal hair and skin.

One such site excavated in Maharashtra revealed fragments of looms and evidence of dyed cloth remnants dating back centuries ago. This discovery implies that India may be the birthplace of handloom technology. Early Indian societies valued this skill highly; thus, they developed sophisticated patterns and techniques using natural dyes derived from plants, minerals, insects, and animals.

History of handloom

The history of handloom weaves together tradition, culture, and the evolution of textile craftsmanship over millennia in India. The origins can be traced back to ancient times, with evidence of cotton cultivation and weaving dating as far back as the Indus Valley Civilisation around 3000 BCE. This early society

showcased advanced weaving techniques, as evidenced by the discovery of spindles and woven fabrics at archaeological sites such as Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa.

During the Vedic period (1500 – 500 BCE), handloom weaving became more sophisticated, with references to textiles and weaving techniques found in ancient scriptures. The Rigveda, one of the oldest known texts, mentions various types of fabrics and dyes, highlighting the importance of textiles in everyday life and ritual practices.

By the medieval period, India's handloom industry had reached remarkable heights, with different regions developing distinct styles and techniques. The Mughal era saw the patronage of fine textiles such as muslin, brocade, and silk. Cities like Varanasi, known for its luxurious brocades, and Bengal, famous for its fine muslin, became renowned centres of textile production.

The colonial period, however, marked a challenging era for Indian handloom. The British East India Company systematically de-industrialised the Indian textile industry to promote British-made textiles. This led to a decline in traditional

weaving practices and a significant loss of livelihood for many artisans. The imposition of heavy taxes on Indian textiles and the introduction of machine-made fabrics from England further exacerbated the plight of Indian weavers.

Despite these challenges, the handloom sector demonstrated resilience. The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw a revival of interest in traditional Indian textiles, spurred by the Swadeshi movement, which advocated for the use of indigenous products as a form of resistance against British rule. Mahatma Gandhi's promotion of khadi became a symbol of self-reliance and national pride, rekindling the importance of handloom in India's socio-economic landscape.

Post-independence, the Indian government recognised the cultural and economic significance of the handloom industry. Various initiatives and schemes were introduced to support weavers, promote traditional crafts, and preserve the diverse textile heritage of the country. Institutions like the Handloom Export Promotion Council (HEPC) and the establishment of handloom clusters have played crucial roles in sustaining and promoting the sector.

Diverse techniques and materials

Over the millennia, Indian handloom weavers perfected countless techniques and incorporated diverse elements into their textiles. These include the following:

- **Warping:** In warp preparation, threads were stretched horizontally onto wooden frames called reeds or sticks tied together. This method produced parallel rows of threads ready for weaving.

- **Weft Insertion:** Threads called the warp are fixed vertically on looms while horizontal threads called the weft pass through warps creating interlocking structures upon tension.

- **Shuttle Passage:** A shuttle passes through each loop of thread created by the warp and weft simultaneously lifting up and dropping off yarn. This mechanism controls the shedding process during weaving.

- **Tafting / Tacking:** Tafting refers to inserting additional sets of threads to hold down adjacent groups of warps when passing the shuttle. Tacking involves tying knots within those groups of warps so that they don't shift positions accidentally during the weaving process.

- **Re-warping:** After finishing weaving, the whole structure must be rebuilt with fresh threads. This step ensures evenness throughout the next weaving session.

- **Finishing Techniques:** Once completed, handloom products undergo several processes depending on their intended purpose. Examples include washing, dyeing, printing, block printing, and embroidering.

Materials employed in producing handloom textiles vary based on region and availability. Early Indian handlooms utilized organic fibres including cotton, silk, wool, linen, hemp, ramie, bamboo, and jute.

Natural colours derived from plants, insects, and minerals were commonly used to achieve vivid hues without damaging the fabric. Additionally, copper oxide-based pigments were frequently applied directly to yarn before weaving to produce bright reds. Motifs representing religious beliefs and mythology often adorned the fabric reflecting ancient social norms and cultural values.

Cultural significance

Handloom weaving holds immense cultural value in India, playing vital roles in social customs and rituals. Textiles serve multiple purposes ranging from everyday wear to ceremonial attire. Some popular uses of handloom fabrics include wedding dresses, festival clothing, prayer mats, bedspreads, blankets,

scarves, towels, and more.

People associate certain motifs and patterns with specific occasions or deities. For instance, peacock pattern symbolises good luck and prosperity associated with Lord Krishna, whereas lotus flower represents purity and fertility linked to Goddess Lakshmi. Such symbolic representations contribute significantly to the emotional connection individuals establish with handloom textiles.

India boasts numerous local communities specialising in distinct styles of handloom weaving. Each style carries unique characteristics relating to design, pattern compositions, materials, construction techniques, and finishing treatments. Local businesses thrive around promoting and preserving these variations contributing further to the economic aspect of handloom weaving.

Socially, Indian families consider owning handloom textiles precious heirlooms handed down through generations. Owning handloom clothes offers comfort and prestige because of its association with traditional heritage and skills preserved meticulously by skilled workers for ages.

The myriad motifs

Each region in India has unique handloom motifs, which are not merely decorative but also imbued with symbolic meanings, cultural narratives, and local folklore. The intricate patterns woven into Indian textiles tell stories of history, nature, spirituality, and societal norms, making handloom an essential aspect of India's intangible cultural heritage.

Floral and faunal designs are among the most prevalent. These motifs are inspired by the natural surroundings and often carry symbolic meanings. Geometric patterns are common in Rajasthan, Gujarat, and the northeastern states. These patterns often carry mathematical precision and symmetry, reflecting the weavers' exceptional skill and attention to detail.

Indian handlooms frequently draw on mythology and religion for inspiration. Textiles often depict scenes from Hindu epics like the Ramayan and Mahabharat. Similarly, Kalamkari from Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat narrates stories from ancient scriptures through detailed and expressive motifs. These designs not only embellish the fabric but also serve to propagate religious and cultural stories, connecting the past with the present.

Tribal and folk-art motifs are integral too. The Warli paintings of Maharashtra, characterised by simple yet profound motifs representing everyday life and natural elements, are translated into textiles, maintaining the rustic charm and cultural essence. Similarly, the Gond art from Madhya Pradesh, known for its vibrant colours and intricate detailing, is another example where folk-art influences handloom designs.

Today, Indian handloom continues to be celebrated both domestically and internationally for its craftsmanship, diversity, and sustainable practices. Each region of India offers unique textiles characterised by distinct weaving techniques, patterns, and motifs, reflecting the country's rich cultural heritage. From the vibrant Patola saris of Gujarat to the intricate Pashmina shawls of Kashmir, Indian handlooms are symbolic of the enduring legacy of traditional craftsmanship.

Nandini Rao is a media researcher with The History and Heritage Project – A DraftCraft International Initiative to document details, analyse facts and plug lacunae generated by oversight or to further national or foreign agenda in History and Heritage Across India and Beyond Borders.

Displaying a wide regional diversity

Indian handloom textiles narrate histories bound together with traditions, faith, passion, and innovation transcending geographic boundaries. Each region possesses distinctive characteristics defining it culturally and economically impacting its people profoundly. **Anushka Singh** takes a long look at handloom craft flourished in different states with a culture of its own and says each is in a class of its own.



The diversity of the handloom industry in India represents the country's cultural vibrance

Indian handlooms occupy an important space in the country's culture and heritage, serving not just as fashion accessories but also as embodiments of regional pride and identity. With a legacy spanning thousands of years, handloom weaving has flourished and diversified across varied landscapes and cultures encompassing vast geographical territories.

The regional diversity of Indian handlooms can be seen in the form of key characteristics, traditions, and specialised craftsmanship of famous regions like Banaras, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Assam, Kerala, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Goa, West Bengal, and Northeast India.

Home to some of India's finest muslin textiles, Banarasi silk sarees remain one of the most sought after varieties

worldwide. Using locally sourced raw materials like mulberry silk worms and locally grown cotton, Banarasi weavers employ traditional techniques inherited from ancestors. Their expertise lies in intricately designing sarees using gold and silver zari borders alongside delicate motifs inspired by ancient temple sculptures, flowers, birds, and paisleys.

Colourful traditions

The diversity of the handloom industry in India represents the country's cultural vibrance. Some of the popular handlooms across Indian states are Kalamkari from Andhra Pradesh, Muga Silk from Assam, Paithani from Maharashtra, Bandhani from Gujarat, Kunbi from Goa, Pochampalli Ikat from Telangana, Chanderi from Madhya Pradesh, Kasavu from Kerala, Mysore Silk from Karnataka, Kanjeevaram from Tamil Nadu, Apatani from

Arunachal Pradesh, Bhagalpuri Silk from Bihar, Kosa Silk from Chhattisgarh, Panja Durries from Haryana, Phulkari from Punjab, Pashmina from Jammu and Kashmir, Eri Silk from Meghalaya, Kuchai Silk from Jharkhand, etc.

One of the most important states in the handloom sector is Telangana. Interestingly, the state boasts about 59,325 handloom weavers and more than 41,000 powerlooms working in the state. Telangana's colourful handloom weaving traditions are particularly renowned for Ikat textiles.

The region is home to Pattu and Pochampalli sarees, the latter featuring bold stripes and checks in contrasting colours paired elegantly with contrasting borders. Designed mainly using locally cultivated cotton and silk yarns, these sarees represent the state's rich agricultural heritage.

Another southern state is Tamil Nadu that produces high quality silk sarees and fabrics recognised globally. Emphasising finesse, precision, and durability, Tamil Nadu silk weaving centres excel in producing luxurious silk saris adorned with beautiful zari borders alongside elaborate Pallav (end) designs.

Traditional cotton and handloom fabrics showcase striking prints, patterns, and colours synonymous with the state's lush green landscapes, temples, and music scenes. Motifs inspired by wildlife, folk tales, and daily life scenarios adorn these textiles providing a window into Tamil Nadu's vibrant cultural heritage.

The origin of Kanjivaram silk sarees can be traced back to the seventh century when the Pallavas ruled who were patrons of arts and crafts. They initiated and supported silk weaving in Kanchipuram, which, over centuries, became integral to the local economy, making Kanchipuram famous for its exquisite South Indian Kanjivaram sarees.

The process of creating Kanjivaram sarees requires a superior level of skill and intricacy and is very labour-intensive. Traditionally, the weavers engaged in this work have been doing so for generations. The mulberry silkworm abundant in South India is the source for the silk.

After the silk thread is made from the cocoons, it is dyed using natural colours from plants, flowers, and other sources. The dyed threads are then woven on a loom using the 'pit loom' technique, which employs pedals and pulleys to create intricate patterns and designs.

Diversified art and craft

One of India's largest producers of handloom textiles, Gujarat exhibits remarkable variety and versatility in handloom fabrics. Producing cotton, silk, and woollen items, Gujarati handloom weavers display exceptional mastery in utilising diverse motifs and techniques like Batik, Bandhani, and Kantha embroidery.

Utilising locally sourced cotton and silk fibre, Gujarat produces excellent double ikat sarees, bandhani dupattas, and kalamkari prints exhibiting intricate patterns and deep colours characteristic of the region. Woven traditionally using wooden looms, these fabrics bear testimony to Gujarat's thriving textile industry powered by innovative enterprise and robust infrastructure.

In Gujarat, the Kalamkari work manifests in the form of *Mata ni Pachhedi* and *Mata no Chandarvo*. This form is prevalent in Ahmedabad and is a unique textile-painting and block-printing tradition practised by a few members of the Waghari community. These textiles are used for religious rituals during festivals such as Navratri.

Assam stands out for its natural silk and ethnographic motifs. Native Assamese silk weaving has existed since time immemorial, drawing inspiration from indigenous musical instruments like Bodho drums, traditional dance forms like Bihu, and folktales revolving around heroic legends.

Silk fabrics exhibit classic Assamese patterns characterised by elegant diamond shapes, circular figures,

radiating lines, crosses, stars, fish scales, palm leaves, bird feathers, elephant tusks, among other motifs. Cotton fabrics weave stories related to agriculture, rural lifestyle, tribal culture, and the flora and fauna native to the region.

Kerala, best known for its spices and coconuts, too harbours a rich tradition of handloom weaving centred around cotton and silk fabrics. Producing soft, lightweight cotton saris embellished with fine silk borders bearing detailed floral patterns inspired by temple architecture and lotus motifs, Kerala's textiles reflect the harmonious blend of simplicity and elegance intrinsic to its culture. Malabar silk sarees display intricately designed border patterns combined with solid colours making them attractive choices for formal events.

Cultural heritage

Some of the most popular handlooms of the country come from Rajasthan which presents a fascinating mix of Block Printing and traditional Bandhani work. Known for its vibrancy and sophistication, Bandhani works utilise vegetable dyes to resist dye absorption creating patterns in blocks resembling tattoos on humans.

Garments feature dense floral motifs offering glimpses into Rajasthan's royal past steeped in valiant warriors, majestic palaces, and regal lifestyles. Block printed cotton and silk fabrics showcase a plethora of patterns depicting peacocks, elephants, camels, deer, horses, owls, parrots, and other creatures, celebrating Rajasthan's love affair with nature and animals.

Located amidst tropical forests and coastal waters, Andhra Pradesh specialises in producing lightweight cotton fabrics painted with intricate botanical motifs. Inspired by natural resources and abundant biodiversity, Andhra Pradesh's handloom weaving centres paint storylines focusing on village life, farmworkers, harvest festivals, water sports, and marine themes. Bright colours and contrasting border patterns make these stand out distinguishing them from other Indian handloom collections.

Weaving is integral to Odisha's socio-economic framework, predominantly practiced by tribal communities. Creating intricate temple motifs on cotton fabric and visually stunning ikat patterns, Odisha handloom weavers showcase impressive artistry reflecting local folklore and culture. Fabric patterns incorporate images of gods and goddesses, suns, moon circles, butterflies, trees, etc., celebrated in everyday life. Classic Sambalpuri silk sarees exemplify refined traditional craftsmanship imbuing aesthetics of the zone seamlessly.

Situated amidst hills and rivers, West Bengal's handloom textiles echo India's literary heritage evoking emotions through poetry and literature reflected in their artwork. Bengali silk sarees adorned with intricate motifs portraying epics, classical poems, characters from Indian mythology, nature scenes, and abstract patterns resonate well with West Bengal's rich cultural ambiance.

Handloom jamdani textiles exhibited in museums around the globe demonstrate craftsmanship excellence prevalent in West Bengal. Jamdani silks manifest traditional motifs complemented by contemporary interpretations offering insights into its cultural complexity.

Indian handloom textiles narrate histories bound together with traditions, faith, passion, and innovation transcending geographic boundaries. Each region possesses distinctive characteristics defining it culturally and economically impacting its people profoundly.

Anushka Singh works with DraftCraft International as a Media Researcher and writes mostly on issues affecting the Fourth Estate. She likes reading contrarian literature and analysing sources of news.

Handloom Heritage

Sustainable choice with economic benefits

The handloom industry plays a vital role in providing sustainable employment, stimulating local economies, and promoting social empowerment. By choosing handloom, one chooses a sustainable and economically beneficial future. Gauravi Patel points out that heritage apart, the traditional craft has a number of economic advantages over mass-produced goods, making them a viable and sustainable choice for consumers.



More than 60 per cent of India's total handloom exports are home textiles

Handlooms, a traditional craft that has been passed down through generations, offer a unique blend of cultural heritage and economic benefits. These wares and textiles, woven by hand, present several economic advantages over mass-produced goods, making them a viable and sustainable choice for consumers.

When consumers prioritise buying locally made handloom items, it strengthens nearby economies. Retailers, wholesalers, distributors, embroiderers, dyers, and printers all contribute to job creation and the maintenance of local craftspeople. Purchasing handmade goods creates a ripple effect that benefits various sectors of society, resulting in multiplier returns.

Handloom artisans retain ownership and control over their creations. They have the freedom to design and produce textiles according to their creative vision, without the constraints often

imposed by mass-production industries. Moreover, they have control over their tools and selling strategies, allowing them to adapt quickly to market changes and customer preferences.

The handloom industry of India is one of the oldest and the largest cottage industries in India. The sector is one of the largest sectors of unorganised economic activities. And, with over 28 lakh looms, it is India's largest cottage industry and the second-largest employment provider in rural areas with the direct and indirect or allied engagement of more than three million people.

As per the Handloom Census 2019-20, there are more than 35,22,500 handloom workers employed across India and of these a little over 72 per cent are women handloom workers. The handloom industry is flourishing owing to large exports from India that includes items such as carpets, bedsheets, other

handloom articles, etc.

The demand

The major handloom export centres in India that produce wares for export are Kannur, Varanasi, Panipat and Karur. The popular items of export include curtains, linen, embroidered textile materials, etc. The top importers of Indian handloom products are USA, UK, Spain, Australia, Italy, Germany, France, South Africa, the Netherlands, and UAE.

For the last eight years, USA remained the biggest importer of handloom products from India. In 2022-23, USA imported handloom wares from India amounting to a total of USD 58 million. The second largest importer in the same year was UAE with imports valuing USD 12.72 million. In terms of share, USA exports comprised 32 per cent of the total handloom exports from India in 2022-23 while UAE exports totalled seven per cent and Spain came to 6.9 per cent.

In the 2022-23 period, other countries that also imported handloom items from India included Japan, Brazil, Portugal, Sweden, South Africa, Canada, Russia, Malaysia, Singapore and Belgium with the share totalling to 14 per cent.

More than 60 per cent of India's total handloom exports are the home textiles. In 2022-23, the export of rugs and carpets alone totalled INR 784.93 crore (US\$ 97.95 million). In the same period, cotton durries exports accounted for INR 1,159.41 crore (US\$ 144.61 million). Indian silk scarves, in high demand around the world, accounted for INR 106.06 crore (US\$ 13.2 million).

In the period from April 2022 till March 2023, India exported handloom products worth USD 10.94 billion and these primarily included cotton yarn / fabrics / made-ups. In the period following that, from April 2023 to February 2024, the export of these same items was valued at USD 10.59 billion.

Low production cost

Handloom items have lower manufacturing costs compared to factory-made items. The production process doesn't require expensive machinery or high energy consumption, making it cost-effective. The savings in production costs can be passed on to consumers, making handlooms an affordable choice.

Additionally, they also offer shorter supply chain times. The production process, from raw material to finished product, is often localised. This reduces the time and cost associated with transporting goods across long distances, leading to quicker delivery times and lower carbon emissions.

Also, there are reduced inventory risks unlike mass production, which often requires large minimum orders. Handloom production can be easily adjusted based on demand. This flexibility prevents overproduction and reduces the risk of unsold inventory. Handloom producers also have the ability to be more responsive to market trends. They can quickly adapt their designs and production based on changing consumer preferences, ensuring their products remain relevant and in-demand.

Handloom products offer flexibility in product customisation because each piece can be individually crafted to meet specific customer requirements, allowing for a high degree of personalisation that is not possible with mass-produced items.

Boosting local economy

Handlooms have strong connections to local economies. They provide employment opportunities and help preserve traditional skills and knowledge. By purchasing handloom products, consumers are directly supporting local artisans and contributing to the economic vitality of their communities. The

handloom industry, a traditional sector of the Indian economy, is a significant source of livelihood for millions of people, particularly in rural areas.

This industry is characterised by its labour-intensive nature, with a substantial portion of the workforce being women. By employing them, the industry provides the weavers, artisans and other workers with a steady source of income. It plays a crucial role in income generation and poverty alleviation.

Interestingly, handloom workers typically earn higher wages per unit produced compared to those in mass-production industries like garment manufacturing. This is because handloom products are often seen as premium goods due to their unique, handmade quality and the labour involved. Consumers are willing to pay a higher price for these items and that means better wages for the artisans.

The handloom industry also stimulates local economies. The money earned by handloom workers is often spent within their local communities, supporting other businesses and services. This cycle of income and expenditure helps to boost the overall economy.

A significant portion of the handloom workforce is made up of women. This industry promotes female participation in formal employment, empowering them economically and socially. Women who work in the handloom industry often gain increased independence, self-confidence, and respect within their communities.

The income generated from handloom work helps improve access to education and healthcare services. Families with a steady income are more likely to send their children to school, leading to better educational outcomes. Similarly, they are more likely to seek medical care when needed, leading to improved health outcomes.

Trade balance

Handloom exports contribute significantly to India's foreign exchange earnings, positively strengthening its trade balance. The export of handcrafted items promotes tourism, encourages cross-cultural exchanges, fosters diplomatic relationships between countries, and showcases Indian craftsmanship on the international stage. Additionally, exporting handloom products supports domestic industries by attracting foreign investment and increasing demand for locally sourced raw materials.

Investing in the handloom industry uplifts rural areas by driving economic activities, improving living standards, promoting inclusive growth, supporting agricultural diversification, enhancing food security, encouraging agroforestry integration, and conserving natural resources. Handloom centers act as hubs for entrepreneurial training, skill development, value addition processes, and marketing schemes. While rural transformation occurs gradually, it significantly impacts India's holistic economic growth trajectory.

The handloom industry plays a vital role in providing sustainable employment, stimulating local economies, and promoting social empowerment. By choosing handloom, one chooses a sustainable and economically beneficial future.

Gauravi Patel is a researcher with The History and Heritage Project – A DraftCraft International Initiative to document details, analyse facts and plug lacunae generated by oversight or to further national or foreign agenda in History and Heritage Across India and Beyond Borders.

Artisans behind the looms

Harshita Singh applauds the deft artisans who with their adroit fingers create the vibrant handloom magic that comes in myriad forms. The heroes who rarely get their due for their work are the spine of handloom industry that has seen generations pass in their unsurpassed skills. She says the least we can do is to appreciate their artistry, support their livelihoods, and choose handloom textiles that carry the soulful touch of human hands.



Despite their immense skill that are passed down through generations, handloom weavers often grapple with several challenges

The skilled artisans who keep the tradition of handloom weaving alive are the backbone of the industry. It's well known that India's rich cultural heritage is intricately woven into its textiles. The vibrant fabrics that adorn our lives—saris, dupattas, and more—are often the result of painstaking craftsmanship by skilled artisans.

These artisans, with nimble fingers and a deep connection to tradition, are the unsung heroes behind the looms. Their stories, challenges and the critical role handlooms play in their livelihoods are as important.

Handloom weaving is often a family tradition passed down through generations. These artisans learn their craft from their parents or grandparents, imbibing not just the technical skills but also the cultural significance of each motif and design. Their hands deftly move the shuttle, creating intricate patterns that tell tales of their heritage. For example, a young weaver in Kutch might recount how he learned the Ajrakh dyeing technique from his grandmother, each pattern holding a story from their village's history.

From the vibrant motifs of Odisha to the Bagh block printing technique of Madhya Pradesh, India's handloom tradition is as diverse as its landscapes. Each region has its unique techniques, materials, and designs.

The weavers of Varanasi, for instance, create exquisite silk brocades that shimmer like moonlight on water. In contrast, the Kanchipuram weavers specialise in heavy silk saris adorned with temple motifs. In Assam, the handloom artisans produce the elegant Mekhela Chadors, which are characterised by their intricate floral and animal motifs, reflecting the natural beauty of the region.

Hardships and challenges

Despite their immense skill, handloom weavers often grapple with several challenges. The income from handloom weaving is often meagre. Weavers struggle to make ends meet, especially during lean seasons when orders are scarce. A weaver from West Bengal might share how the monsoon season, which is typically a slow period, forces her family to take on additional jobs to supplement their income.

Like the case with most cottage and small-scale industries, handloom industry also faces threat and competition from the mass-produced textiles created with power looms which flood the market, undercutting the handloom sector.

These power looms can churn out fabrics at a fraction of the time, but they lack the soulful touch of handwoven pieces created by artisans with a personal touch and craftsmanship.

Many traditional weaving techniques are at risk of being lost as modern manufacturing methods dominate the market. Indian handloom fabrics, for example, are created using skills that have been passed down through generations. These techniques are not only labour-intensive but also require a deep understanding of the craft. By incorporating handloom textiles into contemporary fashion, one can ensure that these skills are preserved and that artisans are supported. This helps maintain cultural heritage and provides economic opportunities for weavers.

Cultural preservation

Handlooms are repositories of culture. They carry the essence of India's diverse heritage—the stories of kings and queens, gods and goddesses, and everyday life. By preserving these traditions, weavers contribute to the continuity of our collective memory.

For instance, the Baluchari sari worn by women in West Bengal, Assam, Tripura and the adjoining areas, tells stories from ancient Indian epics through the elaborate mythological scenes depicted on the *anchal* or the *pallu* of the fabric. These stories and folk lore have been passed down from one generation of weavers to the next. The Baluchari sari was granted the status of Geographical Indication for West Bengal in 2011.

In Maharashtra, the exquisite Paithani sarees which are generally made from silk have a typical oblique square design on the borders. In these sarees, the pallu is heavy depicting motifs inspired from the heritage of the zone and comprises elements from Buddhist cave art like lotuses, peacocks, parrots, etc. The Paithanis are very integral to Maharashtra and originated in the royalty of Paithan, a town near Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar (erstwhile Aurangabad).

Sustainable practices

Handloom weaving is inherently eco-friendly. Natural fibres like cotton, silk, and wool are used, minimising the environmental impact. Additionally, the decentralised nature of handlooms ensures that communities remain self-reliant. In Gujarat, for example, the entire village of artisans might participate in the production of Patola saris, from spinning to dyeing to weaving, fostering a sense of community and shared purpose.

The stories of handloom weavers in India not only depict their artistic prowess and cultural heritage but also highlight their inherent commitment to preserving the environment through eco-friendly weaving techniques.

Across the diverse landscapes of India, handloom weavers have long embraced practices that minimise their environmental footprint and promote sustainability. One such practice is the use of natural fibres sourced from organic sources such as cotton, silk, jute, and bamboo.

By eschewing synthetic materials and chemical dyes, these artisans not only produce textiles that are gentle on the skin but also reduce the harmful impact of toxic chemicals on the environment.

Handloom weaving is inherently energy-efficient as it relies mainly on manual labour and traditional looms which are powered by human hands rather than electricity. Unlike mechanised textile industries that consume vast amounts of energy and contribute to carbon emissions, handloom weaving preserves the natural resources and minimises pollution, making it a sustainable alternative for textile production.

In addition to their choice of materials and energy-efficient practices, handloom weavers in India also uphold the principles of zero waste and resourcefulness in their craft. Leftover yarns and fabric scraps are often repurposed or recycled to create new designs or embellishments, ensuring that nothing goes to waste. This ethos of sustainability not only reduces the environmental impact of textile production but also reflects the weavers' deep-rooted respect for the materials they work with and the environment they inhabit.

Community development

Furthermore, many handloom clusters in India are organised around principles of community-based production and fair trade, ensuring that artisans receive fair wages and work in safe and dignified conditions. By empowering local communities and preserving traditional craftsmanship, these initiatives promote socio-economic development and contribute to the conservation of indigenous knowledge and biodiversity.

When one buys a handwoven sari or stole, he empowers not just the weaver but an entire community. Handloom clusters become hubs of economic activity, providing employment to spinners, dyers, and other ancillary workers. In rural Karnataka, the revival of traditional Ilkal sari weaving has not only preserved the craft but also uplifted the local economy, enabling women to gain financial independence and support their families.

The artisans behind the looms are more than mere weavers; they are storytellers, culture bearers, and custodians of tradition. Despite their diverse backgrounds and circumstances, these stories of handloom weavers in India share a common thread of resilience, passion, and commitment to their craft. They embody the soul of India's rich cultural heritage and serve as custodians of a tradition that has withstood the test of time. As a consumer, one can play a vital role by appreciating their artistry, supporting their livelihoods, and choosing handloom textiles that carry the soulful touch of human hands.

Harshita Singh is a researcher with The History and Heritage Project – A DraftCraft International Initiative to document details, analyse facts and plug lacunae generated by oversight or to further national or foreign agenda in History and Heritage Across India and Beyond Borders.

Revival, innovation in handloom trade

The Indian handloom industry faced with a plethora of challenges, Neeti Prakash makes out a fervent case for the revival and innovation and advocates the collective effort of the government, NGOs, designers, and most importantly, the consumers. By embracing the handloom industry's potential for innovation while honouring its traditions, one can ensure that this ancient art form continues to thrive and sustain as symbol of country's artistic heritage.



Local women selling stoles and shawls to visitors at a market near a tourist spot in Nagaland

The handloom industry in India is not just symbolic of the country's artistic capabilities but also a cornerstone of its socio-economic structure. It represents the confluence of tradition and livelihood for millions. However, the industry has faced significant challenges, necessitating a multi-faceted approach to ensure its revival and sustainable innovation.

According to Fourth All India Handloom Census (2019 - 20), there are 26,73,891 handloom weavers and 8,48,621 allied workers in India. The Office of the Development Commissioner for Handlooms under the Government of India's Ministry of Textiles has implemented several schemes for the development of handlooms and welfare of handloom weavers across the country.



A handloom exhibition at the World Trade Centre, Mumbai

These include National Handloom Development Programme (NHDP), Comprehensive Handloom Cluster Development Scheme (CHCDS), Handloom Weavers' Comprehensive Welfare Scheme (HWCWS), and Yarn Supply Scheme (YSS).

Government initiatives

The NHDP stands as a beacon of hope for the handloom sector. With its comprehensive approach, it addresses critical areas that include infrastructure, skill development, marketing support, etc.

This means it facilitates upgrading facilities to improve

the quality and efficiency of production, creates training programs to help weavers adapt to contemporary market demands while preserving traditional methods, and develops initiatives like the 'India Handloom' brand which promote the domestic and global marketing of handloom products.

The cluster development programmes, on the other hand, play a pivotal role in creating synergies among weavers. By pooling such resources, the artisans can share knowledge and exchange traditional techniques and designs, fostering innovation; can access markets so that the collective bargaining power helps in securing better prices and access to larger markets; Improve quality so the standardisation of processes leads to improved quality, enhancing competitiveness.

The Comprehensive Handloom Cluster Development Scheme (CHCDS) has developed Mega Handloom Clusters to cover at least 15,000 to 25,000 handlooms and financial assistance as Gol share. The eight mega handloom clusters include Varanasi, Sivasagar, Virudhunagar, Murshidabad, Prakasam & Guntur districts and Godda and neighbouring districts (2012-13), Bhagalpur and Trichy (2014-15).

The Weavers Comprehensive Welfare Scheme (HWCWS) has been implemented to ensure 'life, accidental and disability insurance coverage' under the Pradhan Mantri Jivan Jyoti Bima Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana and Converged Mahatma Gandhi Bunkar Bima Yojana.

Another effective scheme, the Yarn Supply Scheme, is being implemented, through National Handloom Development Corporation, to ensure availability of all types of yarn at Mill Gate Price. It offers subsidy with quantity caps on hank yarn which includes wool, cotton, domestic silk, and linen yarn.

Legal protection

The Geographical Indications (GI) Tags are very important in the handloom industry as they serve as a badge of authenticity and pride to the artisans. A GI Tag is a sign that is used on products with a specific geographical origin and these products have qualities or a reputation that are due to that place of origin.

The GI Tag helps in creating a brand identity as they help in building a distinct brand identity for handloom products, linked to their place of origin. They offer legal protection against imitation, ensuring that only genuine products carry the name and build consumer trust as the customers are assured of the product's authenticity and quality.

The Self Help Groups (SHGs) which are the grassroots engines driving change in the handloom sector have been very effective in the revival and sustenance of the handloom industry. They empower the weavers by providing microfinance and ensuring access to credit which allows weavers to invest in materials and loom upgrades.

Secondly, the SHGs encourage women participation as women form a significant part of the weaving community. By doing so women gain financial independence and decision-making power. SHGs also facilitate collective action as they enable weavers to act collectively, giving them a stronger voice in the market.

Several skill enhancement programmes have also helped the industry. These programmes introduce the weavers to contemporary design trends to keep their creations relevant, train them in quality control which ensures that products meet the high standards expected by consumers and educate the weavers on business management and market dynamics to help them thrive independently.

Creating market linkages is essential for the handloom industry's growth. SHGs and NGOs facilitate platforms for direct sales to eliminate middlemen, ensuring fair compensation for weavers. By establishing an online presence, it opens up national

and international markets. They are also offered assistance in brand building which helps weavers to tell their stories and connect emotionally with consumers.

Getting innovative

Collaborations with designers inject creativity and freshness into traditional weaves. These partnerships highlight craftsmanship as they bring attention to the weavers' skills, showcasing their work on prestigious platforms. Designer-weaver collaborations often result in trendsetting products that appeal to a modern audience. By making handloom products fashionable, these collaborations help ensure the economic viability of the craft.

Fashion weeks are more than just glamour events now as today they serve as stages for the rich cultural narratives embodied in handloom textiles. The new and innovative uses of handloom fabrics are displayed, inspiring others in the industry. At these events, weavers and designers can network with buyers, retailers, and influencers, opening up new avenues for growth.

Social media has emerged as a powerful tool for the handloom industry. Social media campaigns help raise awareness about the value of handloom and the stories behind each weave. The interactive campaigns can engage a broader audience, creating a community of handloom enthusiasts. Also, effective social media strategies can translate into increased sales and support for the handloom sector.

On 1 December 2016, the Hathkargha Samvardhan Sahayata (HSS) was launched with the aim of providing looms and accessories to weavers to boost their earnings by enhancing the productivity and quality of handloom products. Under this scheme, the Government of India covers 90 per cent of the cost of the loom or accessory, while the remaining 10 per cent is paid by the beneficiary. The share of the government of India is directly transferred to the beneficiary's bank account through a designated agency.

Similarly, an initiative was taken on 7 August 2015 to make the Indian Handloom Brand during the celebration of National Handloom Day. The 'India Handloom' brand was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to promote high-quality handloom products. This brand focuses on producing niche handloom products with authentic traditional designs that are environmentally friendly and defects free.

This has been received very well across segments and since its inception, 1,232 registrations have been issued across 122 product categories, generating a whopping sale of Rs. 833.69 crore.

Another innovative concept that has helped in the revival of the handloom industry is the concept of an urban haat. These have been established in major towns and metropolitan cities to provide direct marketing facilities for artisans and weavers, and in the process eliminate intermediaries. More than 35 such urban haats have been sanctioned across India and have received overwhelming response from sellers and buyers.

Neeti Prakash is a media researcher with The History and Heritage Project – A DraftCraft International Initiative to document details, analyse facts and plug lacunae generated by oversight or to further national or foreign agenda in History and Heritage Across India and Beyond Borders.

Handloom fashion and global impact

While on the one hand the discussions have been centering on the challenges faced by the handloom industry and the remedies to overcome, there has been a welcome rejuvenation. **Ruchi Verma** finds that consumers across the world are now evincing greater interest in handloom textiles for reasons relating to sustainability and cultural relevance. Handloom fashion is making an impact worldwide and how for fusion of style, comfort, durability, and sustainability!



Emerging designers introduce new interpretations of classic handloom styles, breathing fresh life into traditional crafts

In recent times, there has been a resurgence of interest in handloom textiles around the globe. Consumers are increasingly looking for sustainable and culturally relevant clothing options, prompting designers and brands worldwide to integrate these traditional crafts into their collections.

Handloom fashion offers an exciting fusion of style, comfort, durability, and sustainability — making it appealing to customers concerned about preserving cultural heritage while embracing environmentally responsible consumption habits.

The journey of handloom textiles is long and interesting, originating thousands of years ago, dating back to ancient civilisations such as Mesopotamia, Egypt, India, Greece, Rome, China, Persia, Japan, Mexico, Indonesia, Turkey, and Africa.

These early societies developed weaving techniques that

not only met practical needs but also served as expressions of cultural and religious significance. Initially, handloom textiles were used primarily for religious purposes, adorning temples, altars, and figures of deities, and they were often reserved for royalty and elite members of society. This exclusivity underscored the textiles' value and the high level of craftsmanship required to produce them.

Over the millennia, handloom cloth evolved and became integral to everyday life for ordinary citizens. This transformation was driven by the increasing accessibility of materials and the dissemination of weaving knowledge.

As a result, handloom fabrics began to be used in daily attire, household items, and communal activities. They became symbols of cultural identity and social status, reflecting the unique traditions and artistry of each community.

(Continue on pg 29)



The majesty of Sunderbans

*The Sunderbans, a mystical labyrinth where land and water merge in a breathtaking dance, captivates the senses with its ethereal beauty. Verdant mangrove forests stand tall, their roots intertwining like a web of life, offering sanctuary to a rich tapestry of flora and fauna found nowhere else on Earth. Amidst this serene landscape, elusive Royal Bengal Tigers roam freely, while graceful estuarine crocodiles glide through the water with silent elegance. **Manjira Majumdar** paints an attractive picture of the Sunderbans, a testament to the sublime beauty of the natural world.*

Text and photographs: Manjira Majumdar



The dense mangrove forests are on one side while the habitable islands are on the other

You may not spot the elusive Royal Bengal Tiger in the forests of Sunderbans, but the bright sun, swirling rivers and a sudden sight of baby crocodiles basking in the sun, can totally rejuvenate you.

The tiger, for most of the time, remains elusive. The stories about tigers, however, abound. The stories of tiger widows, the love-hate between the villagers and the deadly man-eater prevail. The fear of the honey collectors who foray into the forest and the fishermen is palpable but humans and animals have to survive. Talks of adequate compensation etc., are the folklores of the region, where Bon Bibi, the goddess of the forest is invoked daily by villagers, cutting across faith.

There is so much more to this delta region which is at the confluence of three major rivers of Ganga, Brahmaputra and Meghna. A huge chunk of the Sunderban crosses to the Bangladesh side.

To visit Sunderbans is to inhale oxygen and to connect with nature in its pristine glory. The dense mangrove forests are on one side while the habitable islands are on the other with various rivers separating the two segments. It is all about being surrounded by water on all sides and the all-pervasive scenic greenery. Amid all this you may spot a wildlife or two and different kinds of birds.

I recently visited one of the 54 deltaic islands of the total

104 habitable islands on the West Bengal side, when the weather was balmy in March.

It is almost late afternoon when I arrive after two ferry rides, one to Godhkali and then onward to Satjelia where the eco resort is located. After a hurried lunch there is still time for a short cruise on the River Bidya. As the boatman breaks into a song about how the mon pakhi, the bird aflutter in his heart is waiting to be freed, the last rays of the evening sun look to nestle on the simmering waters. Watching the sun set over the horizon and creating little golden pools on the river, will remain one of the most beautiful sights forever etched in my mind.

Early next morning we are on the boat again. The only thing a tourist can do in Sunderban is to stay afloat for most of the time; zigzagging on the waters you encounter other tourists on the different launches and steamers coasting along the forest banks. This dense forest curtained by the sundari trees, from which the forest gets its name, is the habitat of the tigers and one is strictly advised against venturing into it.

Sometimes the boat pulls up along an island in which there is a natural animal reserve with a watch tower, from where you can gaze into the forests and spot deer, wild boar etc. Wildlife enthusiast on photographic missions usually set up all-night vigils to capture images of the tiger. If they are lucky, their patience is rewarded. If you are interested in birding, keep



A beautiful sunset over the horizon creating little golden pools on the river

your binoculars ready to spot varieties of kingfisher, the crested serpent eagle, or even the spotted dove, among other birds.

Sometimes, the steamer pulls up along another boat selling something. It could be the fresh catch of the day or seafood like crabs and jumbo prawns. While our boat has been well-stocked with provisions such as vegetables, oil, cooking fuel, the fresh fish is loaded from another.

The rivers Bidya, Vidyadhari, Matla at one point meet before they merge with the Bay of Bengal; only the locals can identify the different rivers. The tides here come and go.

The lodges are positioned as ecological properties, built with eco-friendly materials. Luckily no chrome and glass have yet made their way in here so you do get a slice of being literally in the wild unless you wish to spend the night on a launch, with bunkers below.

From our upper deck, we spot baby crocodiles basking in the sun, ready to slither into the waters at a whim. The fresh breeze, the soothing waters all around work their magic and it is indeed a therapeutic experience. Our guide teases the lady cook on the boat to ask, “So sundari (pretty) of Sunderban, what have cooked for us?”

Her name is Manasi and she has been busy below the



Simple but tasty village fare served on the boat



Musicians entertaining tourists at the resort

boat in a tiny kitchen space, rustling some simple yet tasty village fare. There is quite a spread of rice, dal, bhaji, a couple of freshly cooked vegetables, fish curry, shrimps with vegetables and chutney.

Most of the supplies, except fish, comes from the mainland, the nearest being Gosaba. The soil is poor and the river water is highly saline.

Gosaba is from where one has to take a ferry to whichever island you plan to stay or resort you have booked into. Sometimes, it entails two ferry rides. The trip can include walks into the nearby villages to observe simple rural life where some attempts to grow paddy and a few vegetables/fruits for local use are successful with the sweet waters of the inland ponds and canals.

Once you return at the resort, tired after a long day on the boat and in the sun, you can relax to the sound of the crickets' incessant chorus. If very adventurous, you can make another trip when it is dark, yes on the boat, to catch some luminous



Collared Kingfisher sighted during a boat ride



The only thing a tourist can do in Sunderbans is to stay afloat for most of the time

creatures under the waters. Though there is electricity, the entire region seems cut off from the rest of the world as the peaceful night settles in and you are ready to return re-energized to the hustle and bustle of the city life the next morning.

If you are visiting Kolkata, two nights away at Sunderban is great. Do avoid the rainy months. Ideally, the months between September and March are the best.

To get there, you can customize your trip by being picked up from your destination and dropped. Once you reach Gosaba in Canning, there are ferry rides to whichever island you have chosen to stay.

There are also cruises which sail from Kolkata on the Hooghly and coast along the Sunderbans to make a round trip.





Goa sheds old skin to re-emerge anew

*Welcome to the new, swanky Goa, where the essence of its vibrant culture meets modern luxury. Beachfront villas boast sleek designs and panoramic views, while upscale restaurants serve innovative takes on traditional Goan cuisine. The nightlife pulsates with energy, with trendy bars and clubs offering a mix of local beats and international rhythms. Whether you seek adventure or tranquility, the new Goa promises an unforgettable experience where opulence meets coastal allure. **Manjira Majumdar** says the new Goa is the newest hotspot on the Indian tourism map after Covid, drawing more domestic tourists and hopes it does not become another chaotic tourist carnival.*

Text and photographs: Manjira Majumdar



Our Lady of Piety Church, Divar Island

As an annual visitor to Goa, I have stories to tell about this cute little State. Stories that speak of change, but whether for good or bad, only time can tell.

The first visit was all about fish, rice and feni, with xacuti thrown in-between. Watching the sunset over the sea, enjoying beer and kingfish fry at a shack on the beach was what dreams were made of. We were younger then and smelt a certain freedom in the air that did not clash with a society that took things easy yet was conservative at the same time. They let everyone be. The quaint haciendas, the music, cuisine and the sea struck up an orchestra of south flavours.

The next visit was after a couple of decades. This revealed the big changes. Informed about expatriates buying up old properties from the locals who could not maintain their old houses, and refurbishing these into swanky villas, started changing the DNA of the region somewhat. Parts of north Goa took on a new look with tourists looking for different adventures. The churches, temples, beaches notwithstanding, people were travelling to sample food that was served in an entire mind-boggling range.

In a recent visit, within a year, I found that Goa had changed once more. It is indeed changing very fast. There are so



Goa tiles as placemat

many things to do and enjoy and though that is not a bad thing at the outset, one can only send up a prayer that Goa retains the mixed image that history has bestowed on her.

The new Goa is not about tourists from the United Kingdom arriving in chartered flights. It is also not about the hippy, who could or could not afford Goa, but came and settled down here. It is a way of life. They succumbed to the very laid-back life in the warm sun as they sold bakery items and different kinds of home-made cheese. However, this generation has passed over to reveal a new layer of Goa.

So what is Goa today? Apart from the development in roads and bridges, it can be described, in short, as the multi-layered Goan cake known as the Bebinca, made with flour, egg yolks, coconut milk, cream, you name it.

You can peel away at the layers and discover things to do in between your visits to the various churches or the Mangeshi and Shanta Durga temples if you have not done that already. The early mornings are definitely to be kept for swimming at the sea and walking the beach. You can go back in the evenings to watch the sun set and take a stroll but as the twinkling lights are gradually switched on, the action swings



Manohar Parrikar International Airport, the new airport in Goa

towards music, and cuisine and drinks.

One noticeable thing is that places of fine dining are still understated in their décor and mostly done up in cane and soft lamps, when not within old houses.

And while the locals may complain that they no longer hear the soft lapping of the sea or the seagulls, the happy chatter of well-heeled tourists make it a happy place for the latter to be in.

There are various cheaper options and reasonable priced places to stay in as well even if prices have overall gone up. The young visitors may look for their own music, fashion and fun, while families can choose from nature and heritage walks, curated art and music shows, play readings to shop for beautiful studio ceramics.

The visit to Panjim is not just for the stroll around the Fontainhas, the capital of Panjim's Latin Quarters. The vividly coloured Portuguese villas with their typical balconies and windows offer a tiny slice of exotica.

A couple of boutiques sell the famous glazed azulejo tiles that are Arabic in origin, made famous via Spain and Portugal, due to the Moorish invasion. Panjim is also the area for a



Night market at Baga



Tourists at Vagator Beach after sunset

number of art and cultural events.

Goa is a photographer's delight. A café sign said the beach is boring, indeed it is! Look beyond and you will find little details of Goan life and culture that the ordinary tourists may miss in their loud sojourns. And for food, do not miss the Konkani fish thalis even as you tuck in pork vindaloo and fusion fare.

It is all about those various influences of the ancient past mingling with the present where opportunities in the tourism trade have opened up avenues for citizens from outside the state. The locals may complain about this intrusion but this is a reality that one has to pay for any development.

Those seeking an immersive experience in art can spend a quiet afternoon at the private Museum of Goa or MOG, a private art gallery located in Bardez, again in north Goa. The adjacent café and a museum shop make it a complete affair.

Designed by the local artist Subodh Kerkar, it is a smart three-storied building that houses his private gallery. His creations in a number of mediums including installation and huge sculpture are on display though MOG holds retrospectives of other artists as well.

South Goa is known for lesser-known beaches such as



Art lovers can spend a quiet afternoon at the private Museum of Goa (MOG)



An old Portuguese house with owner offering Goan cuisine

Palolem, Agonda, Majorda compared to the better-known ones of the north like Vagator, Calangute, Baga and Anjuna. Another important discovery was the Divar Island this time. Apart from some lovely vintage homes, there are churches galore on this island for which you have to cross the River Mandovi to get there.

Of these Our Lady of the Piety Church stands out on a hillock with a lovely view of the river. It is believed that there was a Ganesh temple here once upon a time. There is another beautiful temple known as Shree Hatkeshwar Temple dedicated to Lord Shiva.

Goa, over the years, looks more like a swanky new tourist spot, in which you can tailor make your requirements for slow relaxation combined with delectable food and drinks.

There is water sport, casino, heritage walks, art camps and fashion. No one bothers you and lets you be. If you visit this lovely state, make it no longer than a week to spend in it, unless you are working on a creative project.

Or else, you will never want to leave it. While the new Goa is the newest hotspot on the Indian tourism map after Covid, attracting more domestic tourists, let us hope that check and balances are in place in the name of development.

It should not become another chaotic tourist carnival without the unique blend of the east and west that it already is.



Manjira Majumdar studied Comparative Literature and is presently an independent journalist and author. Her areas of focus are people, places, livelihoods, crafts, films and society. Surrounded by books, house plants, cats, she hopes to bring all her experiences together to write more books, both fiction and non-fiction. She lives in Kolkata, when not traveling.

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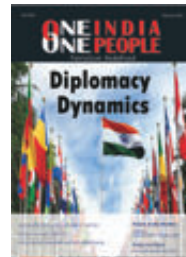
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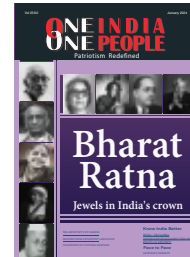
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“Beatles Ashram buildings are lying in neglect, they should be revived in a phased manner.”

Raju Gusain is the Indian Ambassador of The Beatles Story, the biggest museum of the band located in Liverpool. A freelance journalist, Gusain has seen the Beatles Ashram (also known as Chaurasi Kutiya) in Rishikesh up and close. In a free-wheeling chat with **Tuhina Banerjee**, he shares his thoughts about the place and the Fab Four.

How did your association with Chaurasi Kutiya (Beatles Ashram) in Rishikesh begin?

I came to Chaurasi Kutiya for the first time in 2003. The intention was to write a report for the Hindustan Times, the newspaper I was working with as correspondent at that time. After 2003, my tour to the Ashram became quite regular as I used to go there to identify old buildings and conduct tours for media friends. I got obsessed with my research on the Beatles stay in Rishikesh. With this, my pursuit to get archival newspaper clippings and photographs of the Liverpool boys in Rishikesh started. I approached various people in Rishikesh but failed to get proper documents. After that I used the internet to establish contact with people who were here in 1968 learning meditation at the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi Ashram. This worked and I now have old newspaper clippings, books on the Beatles staying in India and photographs.

Can you please share some rare or little known things or facts about the place?

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi took this Ashram land on lease from the forest department. The annual lease rent was ₹ 150 per year. The 20-year lease ended in 1981 and after that the Maharishi Ashram made many attempts to get the lease renewed. The process involved moving from Rishikesh to Dehradun to Lucknow, but it never got completed. When the lease renewal process was in the final stages, the forest department decided to impose commercial lease rent. Even this took a long time and in the process, the Supreme Court of India passed a judgment on a PIL in 1999 that any person or organisation living inside forest area without a valid lease permission should be removed. After that, the Ashram came under the control of the Rajaji National



Raju Gusain

Park (now known as Rajaji Tiger Reserve).

How was the place when you first visited it and how is it now?

When I came here for the first time in 2003, the building had fresh paint and whitewash. Though the buildings were vandalized but were strong. Now the buildings are crumbling and are lying in a state of complete neglect. I still remember, a jungle developed in the Ashram. It was hard to move inside with dense bushes. It was dangerous to venture inside as wildlife and reptiles were spotted on the campus. I was the happiest person when the Uttarakhand government decided to reopen the Chaurasi Kutiya Ashram for visitors in 2015. The bushes were cleared and the wall repaired to make the place safe for visitors.

You are also the Indian Ambassador of The Beatles Story, the biggest museum of the band located in Liverpool. How do you see your role evolving?

It is a huge honour. Though the position is honorary, it is a great feeling to feature among 26 Ambassadors of the Beatles Story from 21 countries. Presently, an exhibit of the Beatles in India is underway at Liverpool. I conducted a tour of the Beatles Story team, when they were here in 2017. Walking with Diane Glover and Clare Ireland and sharing stories of the Fab Four in the holy township was a memorable outing.

You have been closely associated with the setting up of the gallery housing Beatles band's photos during their stay in Beatles Ashram. How was the experience like?

That was possible only because many like-minded people with

the intention of doing something at the Ashram joined hands. The Maharishi Mahesh Yogi family members and his followers played key roles. We are thankful to famous Canadian filmmaker Paul Saltzman for providing the rare and stunning photographs of the Beatles' stay in Rishikesh for the photo gallery. The list of names of people who made it happen includes Raja Richard, Tony Ellis, Tim Jones, Anand Shrivastav, Laxman Shrivastav and the then director of Rajaji Tiger Reserve Sanatan Sonker. The photo gallery and Maharishi Knowledge Centre are a major attraction in the Ashram.

How do you see Transcendental Meditation propounded by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi? Why do you think the Beatles got drawn to it?

The Beatles achieved name and fame at an early age. The pressure of being icons on the youths was immense. George Harrison's wife Pattie Boyd inspired the Beatles to opt for Transcendental Meditation (TM). By practicing TM, all the members of the musical group benefited. TM is still popular worldwide. I would urge the youths to try meditation and witness the magical change in their lives.

The Beatles abandoned western clothes and adopted Indian costumes. They led a simple life in the Ashram by eating vegetarian food and staying away from drugs and liquor. The peaceful location of the spiritual camp inspired them to compose 48 songs. The trip had a big impact in the lives of the Beatles group.

Please tell us about the various murals on the Ashram premises that add to the beauty of the place.

Now, many art lovers tour the Ashram to see the murals. They are at many places. The art captures Rishikesh scene, Beatles, hill life, etc. Legally speaking, making graffiti on the government land is not allowed. With a big number of posts and photographs available on social media, Chaurasi Kutiya now attracts a big number of youth who want to take photographs of the mural paintings. They will just ask the forest staff, "Where is the painting hall?" They head directly to the painting hall and explore other wall paintings in the Ashram, courtesy social media.

How did the visit of Beatles impact the place?

The visit created media hype about Rishikesh worldwide. Earlier, it was used as a camping site by the pilgrims heading for the Char Dham – Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri -- but after 1968, Rishikesh emerged as a top destination for foreign tourists.

Currently, the Beatles Ashram is in ruins. Some say the structures should be revived and repaired while others say it should be left as is. What's your take?

I think all the infrastructure should be revived in a phased manner. The infrastructure should be used. Or else it will go from bad to



Gusain showing the visitors around Chaurasi Kutia also known as The Beatles Ashram

worse. We shouldn't let it languish in ruins. The place should be properly restored and a slice of the glorious past taken care of.

Do you think Chaurasi Kutiya or Beatles Ashram should be turned into an international heritage tourism destination?

Yes, but for this multiple activities should be introduced there. I was at Rajaji Tiger Reserve office a few months back and came to know that the department is planning something big. Let's hope that happens and everyone is benefited. In the past, they wanted to start a natural trail and bird watching – an ecotourism plan.

If you were given the reins of Chaurasi Kutiya or Beatles Ashram, what would be your plan of action?

A: Ha..Ha (laughs). I don't think I am the right person to reply to this question. The Rajaji Tiger Reserve is the right authority to answer it. They should have a plan of action.



The writer is a freelancer who specialises in lifestyle and wellness issues.

“We try to celebrate the traditional art mediums as much as the new technological breakthroughs.”

Ekta Bhattacharya is so pretty that you might mistake her for an actress. And this, without a touch of make-up on her pretty face. She has evolved from an artist-as-hobby to a sole woman who has founded her own company of design called Ekta Creative Tales based in Kolkata. She is a designer par excellence who designs imaginative and contextually relevant film posts, book jackets, and so on for films in West Bengal and now, much beyond Kolkata. She opens out on a one-to-one with **Shoma A. Chatterji** about her rise as a single woman running an entire designing concern all on her own.



Ekta Bhattacharya

Let us know about your interest in art from the beginning.

I was inclined towards painting and illustrations from my very childhood. Like most parents ask their kids whether they are interested in dancing or singing, when my parents asked me the same, I was insistent on learning painting. I was fascinated by sketches and various derivations of this art form and I guess that is what helped in growing my love towards it.

How and what made you begin as a self-employed entrepreneur instead of opting for the safe security of a job with an ad agency or an art studio?

Ever since I realised by knack and passion for this art field, I have been a freelancer. I knew I did not want to be confined in the cubicle culture of working in a company or under anyone. But things were not smooth sailing to begin with. I was almost at the verge of leaving this city when I got the opportunity to go for higher education at one of the leading management colleges in this country. It was then that prominent actor and thespian Phalguni Chatterjee, who was familiar with my art work through social media, talked me out of it and convinced me to refocus on my art and trust my intuition. Slowly, I began with theatre poster designing. I was not sure then about the nature of work or remuneration but the workflow was steady. Soon, there were short film and feature film projects. To process all this I decided to found my own agency and build my own team.

That is how Ekta Creative Tales began its journey in 2013. Since then we have ventured into various formats of designing.

Why have you named your concern Ekta Creative Tales?

From the time I ventured into professional designing back in 2013, I wanted my name to reflect on the artwork, flyers and posters, as part of artist's identity. When the workflow began rising, I had to build a team and an agency of my own. People who collaborated with me and trusted my craft suggested that I incorporate my own name 'Ekta' in my company title and logo to create wider visibility and brand integrity.

And I included 'tales' because our aim is inclined towards storytelling through every design we work on. Soon, Ekta Creative Tales became a prominent icon on most of the film posters, event hoardings and associate sponsor credits.

How would you rank your assignments in a list of preference? Short films posters, theatre posters, feature film posters, vfx, etc.

and why?

As an artist, I cannot rank or grade my design formats because each medium has its own appeal and authentic charm. Each has a narrative of its own. But since I am a cine lover to the core, film poster designing have a special place in my heart.

What criteria do you look for while accepting an assignment - (a) money, (b) time given (c) production banner (d) rapport with the client (e) the subject of the assignment for films, plays et al?

Initially, when I started to work I had no clue about the right remuneration to charge so I usually accepted the offer price. But if you ask me in 2023, I would say all of the stated factors matter. But even if I get a good amount of money from a client who I am not comfortable working with, I try to avoid that. Because, for me, a creative comfort zone, rapport and ethical wavelength also matter. I need to understand the theme, visualisation of the story when I am getting the script narration before a project is assigned. Of late, I have learnt to say 'no' more often which I did not do earlier.

You are a completely self-trained designer and artist. Do you feel the lack of training at any point? Please explain.

I would not exactly say that I am untrained. My school art teachers played a significant role in shaping my knack for art. I have no certificate or formal degree from any government or private art institution. I think, if you are driven by your ambition and creative sense, then formal training is not a mandate. I learnt along my profession. YouTube design tutorials and reading a lot of designing books and journals on current illustration trends and techniques have been a great guide for me in learning about the nuances and intricacies of publicity design.

How do you define art and designing linking it to your kind of work?

Though what we do is considerably commercial but me and my team's core intuition is to always uphold the aesthetics of every art form. We try to celebrate the traditional art mediums as much as the new technological breakthroughs.

Please mention five of your best feature film poster assignments till date and list them in your order of preference.

Though, like I said, I don't grade my work according to preference, but some projects leave a great emotional aftertaste. My top five would be Kedara, Nirbhaya, Kolkata Chalantika, Swastik Sanket and Mahalaya.

You said you ask for the script of a film before you begin working on it. Please explain why and the same for book covers.

Yes. I demand for the script or the theme of the book I'm designing because I need to understand the premise. A filmmaker gets two to two-and-a-half hours to establish a film and an author gets more than 200 to 300 pages to narrate his story. But, a designer gets just one canvas to portray the entire essence of the narrative. So, knowing the nuances, the aesthetics, the conflicts and the nature of the characters help me to encompass the subject matter.



Mahalaya poster designed by Ekta Bhattacharya

Where do you see yourself five years from now?

I see myself running the same company with a bigger team, with more challenging projects, expanding our VFX wing in a grand way in this city, bringing back a lot of creators and artists in Kolkata who had left the city, aiming to generate more employment in the art and creative field. Also, we have completed producing and executing our first TVC for a reputed hospital. I have conceptualised the entire thing. Hence, I am looking forward to produce more good contents in future.



Shoma A. Chatterji is a freelance journalist, film scholar and author. She has authored 17 published titles and won the National Award for Best Writing on Cinema, twice. She won the UNFPA-Laadli Media Award, 2010 for 'commitment to addressing and analysing gender issues' among many awards.

Reflecting artistry

Today, handloom weaving employs millions of people worldwide, preserving centuries-old techniques and allowing artisans to showcase their exceptional craftsmanship capabilities. In many regions, weaving remains a family tradition passed down through generations, with each weaver contributing to the preservation and evolution of their cultural heritage. These artisans use traditional methods to create fabrics that are not only beautiful but also durable and sustainable.

Each region produces fabrics imbued with distinctive patterns, colours, and materials that reflect regional identities, histories, climates, and cultures. For instance, the vibrant Kente cloth of Ghana is celebrated for its bold patterns and is worn during important cultural ceremonies.

The delicate weaves of Japanese kimonos, the Nishijin-ori silk weaving in Kyoto, the intricate ikat patterns of South-east Asia, the opulent brocades of India's Banarasi silk, and the robust woollen textiles of the Andean regions of South America all highlight the diverse applications and aesthetic sensibilities of handloom textiles around the world.

Contemporary fashion

As per reports, the global handloom textile market size will reach USD 12 billion by 2025, expanding at a compound annual growth rate of 4.8 per cent. Growing consumer preference for organic, ethically sourced, and sustainably manufactured clothes drives this upward trend. Moreover, young designers worldwide recognise handloom fabrics' aesthetic appeal and inherent charm, integrating them seamlessly into modern apparel designs catering to varying tastes and lifestyles.

The handloom product market on the other hand is projected to be valued at USD 8,190 million in 2024 and is expected to rise to USD 18,179 million by 2034. The global handloom product market is expected to evolve at a CAGR of 8.30 per cent during the forecast period.

Luxury brands such as Versace, Roberto Cavalli, Prada, Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Ralph Lauren, and Burberry are increasingly incorporating traditional handloom elements into their collections. For instance, Gucci's incorporation of traditional Ikat patterns in their high fashion pieces reflects a fusion of modern aesthetics with traditional craftsmanship.

Additionally, emerging designers introduce new interpretations of classic handloom styles, breathing fresh life into traditional crafts while connecting with consumers interested in exploring uncharted territories within fashion. A prime example is the innovative work of Indian designer Gaurang Shah, who revitalises ancient weaving techniques to create contemporary fashion statements.

India stands out as a hub for handloom textiles, producing approximately 120 million meters of fabric per year. Among all Asian countries, India accounts for 60 per cent of handloom production. Its rich cultural heritage makes Indian handloom fabrics incredibly attractive to designers seeking inspiration for innovative clothing lines.

Local going global

Ethnic wear, such as saree, salwar kameez, lehenga, sherwani, dupatta, shawl, remain favourite choices, particularly for Indian weddings. However, Indian handloom manufacturers are now branching out into western wear categories, including dresses, skirts, blouses, jackets, trousers, and accessories like bags and belts. By incorporating intricate embroideries, vibrant prints, delicate laces, and luxurious silks, designers offer modern interpretations of traditional Indian attire, attracting Western audiences seeking sustainable and authentic ethnic fashion statements.

Indian handloom producers collaborate with international designers to bridge cultural gaps and further mutual understanding through creative exchange, leading to increased export sales of handloom products. The collaboration between Indian weavers and international designers highlights how traditional Indian textiles can be reimagined to appeal to global fashion markets.



Fancy designer blouses

International markets provide lucrative opportunities for handloom artisans to expand their customer base, diversify product offerings, obtain better pricing, and improve manufacturing processes. Handloom products are widely available on online platforms such as Amazon Handmade, Etsy, Alibaba, and eBay, enabling smaller producers to compete with larger corporations and attract global buyers.

This access extends beyond just retail transactions and allows artisans to establish partnerships with designers and brands willing to promote their creations on a broader scale. Consequently, handloom weaving gains visibility and credibility, resulting in increased profit margins and job opportunities.

On the downside, however, international markets present challenges such as unfair competition from mass-produced goods, loss of authenticity due to commercialisation, exploitation of labour, copyright infringements, lack of protective laws, and vulnerability to currency fluctuations. Artisans must navigate these complexities carefully while safeguarding their intellectual property rights and retaining cultural integrity.

Strategic collaborations

Global brands interested in adopting handloom fabrics into their collections can benefit greatly by forming strategic partnerships with local craftsmen. Building mutually beneficial collaborations facilitates ongoing communication, constructive feedback, continuous improvement, and revenue sharing mechanisms.

Partnerships based on trust, mutual respect, transparency, and accountability can unlock tremendous potential for shared growth and prosperity. Working together allows local artisans to develop specialised skills, experiment with novel designs, diversify their portfolios, secure bigger orders, utilise improved technologies and machinery, and increase competitiveness in international markets.

Addressing environmental concerns arising from handloom production becomes increasingly important in light of rising global consciousness surrounding climate change mitigation and resource conservation. Handloom production relies heavily on manual labour, necessitating minimal use of electricity and fuel compared to machine-based operations. Most traditional practices are sustainable and environment-friendly.

The rise of e-commerce has also been pivotal in bringing Indian handloom to a global audience. Online platforms have enabled artisans and small-scale producers to reach customers worldwide without the need for intermediaries. Social media and digital marketing have further amplified their reach, allowing artisans to tell their stories and showcase their products to an international audience. These digital tools have democratised access to global markets, enabling even the smallest artisans to gain visibility and recognition.

People around the world can play a pivotal role in supporting traditional handloom communities by purchasing handmade products from local vendors, attending craft fairs, visiting museums exhibiting handloom works, writing reviews on review websites, spreading awareness on social media platforms, engaging in conversations about handloom craftsmanship, donating funds to charitable organisations supporting artisans, and advocating for policies conducive to preserving traditional craft knowledge and skills.

Ruchi Verma is a media researcher with The History and Heritage Project – A DraftCraft International Initiative to document details, analyse facts and plug lacunae generated by oversight or to further national or foreign agenda in History and Heritage Across India and Beyond Borders.

It's not climate change, it's human callousness

*The recent unusual flooding in Dubai, the unprecedented heat wave in India and many other parts of the world, has triggered a debate on "Climate Change." **Raju Korti** argues that all disasters resulting from the phenomenon are basically manmade and regrets governments across the globe being insensitive in addressing the issue.*



Climate Change

I am fundamentally opposed to the term "vagaries of nature". It is an expedient way to blame the Nature for all the ills humans suffer. The phrase often implies a randomness or unpredictability in natural occurrences, suggesting that Nature operates without discernible pattern or purpose. As a compulsive student of Climate Physics (my own coinage, of course because it is never taught as a proper subject in science curricula), I find the term patently flawed in its implication.

No disasters are artificial, they are all man-made, including those laid at the doorstep of what is being bandied as "climate change". Admitted, Nature though sometimes complex and sometimes unpredictable, operates within the framework of intricate systems and laws that govern the universe. I call it Climate Physics that hasn't reached the depths of human understanding. It is not altogether surprising that there are very few who observe the phenomena from weather patterns to geological processes rather than treat them as mere whimsical fluctuations.

Dismissing natural disasters as vagaries undermines all serious efforts in scientific principles at play and diminishes the awe-inspiring intricacy of the natural world. In the hurry to dismiss the issue with a tinge of scrappy research, it is often forgotten that it is through rigorous study and exploration that we uncover the order and beauty within what might initially appear as chaos.

Climate Physics doesn't get the attention it deserves and the efforts to understand "climate change" often gets lost in a maze of confusing facts and figures that vary geographically but with little efforts to co-relate them and present a plausible model. In simpler words, we are just not able to delve deeper into the fascinating mechanisms that govern our planet and universe.

It is no secret that humans are primarily responsible for virtually all global heating over the last 200 years. Greenhouse gases are warming the world faster than at any time in at least the last 50 years and humans love to pay more lip service to the cause

than any steps on ground. It is obvious that the efforts to contain or mitigate the adverse effects of climate change and bring a semblance of order to rampaging Nature, have been significantly less. Governments across the globe are either indifferent or do not think the issue is weighty enough to expend money and worthwhile research. Far from being inclement, Mother Nature has been kind, giving humans umpteen hints that there is scope for mitigation.

Most people think climate change means warmer temperatures. That, however, is just a superficial exterior and beginning of the story. Because the Earth is a system, where every other parameter is connected, change(s) in one area has the potential to influence changes in all others. The adverse and all-pervasive effects of climate change have been spelt out with regular alarm -- intense droughts (dry and wet), water scarcity, severe fires, rising sea levels, flooding, melting polar ice, catastrophic storms, declining bio-diversities, and the unprecedented but ubiquitous heat waves all over the world. The last one was the dominant news other than our pathological obsession for politics.

The flip side of rising presence of greenhouses gases means rise in carbon footprint, causing global temperatures to soar. The scientific consensus should be clear: Human actions are the dominant driver of the perceived climate changes over the past century with profound implications for ecosystems, weather patterns, and human societies worldwide.

At the cost of being a naysayer, I will dare say that further warming of our atmosphere is now impossible to avoid. It appears to have reached an irretrievable point-of-no-return. While the ecosystems get destroyed, the Earth will become inhabitable for many species, leading to extinctions and redistribution of species, threatening food production with alien pests and diseases. Man, in his superior wisdom might manage to outlive a bit longer but the doomsday clock is ticking rapidly and how! If the consequences of climate change -- impacts on agricultural economies like India -- are especially dangerous for the poorest. Nature will not leave it to crooked politicians to eradicate poverty.

The potential human cost will be catastrophic that no budgets will be able to take care of. A rise in sea levels threatens hundreds of millions in coastal communities and cities across the globe -- our own Mumbai, now billed as the third biggest city in the world -- at risk. Epidemics could force large-scale migrations by 2050 which is just 25 years away. The next generation will be condemned to watch and endure as humans cause Mother Earth's degeneration.

Coastal areas around the world are diverse and vital ecosystems where land meets the sea. These regions are characterised by a dynamic interface of land, water, and air,

supporting unique biodiversity and human livelihoods, they also play a crucial role in global economies, providing resources like fisheries, tourism opportunities, and transportation hubs.

As these take a hit, they face significant challenges such as erosion, pollution, and climate change impacts, underscoring the need for sustainable management and conservation efforts to protect these invaluable environments for future generations.

I read in a journal that according to latest research evaluating 44 countries, emissions arising as a result of population growth wiped out two-thirds of the reduction in emissions arising from greater energy efficiency between 1990 and 2019. Meanwhile, solutions such as reforestation (which in India are more of cosmetic photo ops) may be more difficult to implement with more people needing food and land.

In its landmark report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) specifically identified high population growth as a "key impediment" to hitting the critical target of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees C above pre-industrial levels.

The projections on "climate change" are scary. It has been overemphasised that global surface temperatures have increased 1.5 degrees F (0.8 C) on an average with a rise in acceleration in the last 50 years. The culprits are far too many and well known to bear any repetition.

The IPCC report vindicates my contention that the turning point has been since 1970, until which, Nature was well within its limits. Satellite observations suggest that the rate of sea level rise globally since 1992 has been twice as rapid as it was during the previous century.

Climate action calls for significant concerted efforts globally and need enhanced financial investments by governments and businesses. But there is no will, and therefore, no way. Governments have money for populist measures but none for the Earth's population. Green economy is a mere figure of speech.

A complex interplay of factors that include political inertia, vested interest in fossil fuel industries and societal reluctance to make necessary lifestyle changes will thwart any reversal.

Short-term economic priorities often take precedence over long-term environmental sustainability, leading to insufficient policies and investments in renewable energy and carbon reduction strategies. Moreover, the global nature of the issue makes international cooperation and consensus challenging to achieve, further exacerbating the problem. We are only condemned to watch as climate crisis and its impacts devastate ecosystems and human societies worldwide.



Raju Korti is a senior journalist with over four-decade experience of working in media institutions.

A boost for natural farming

Bharat Dogra finds out that the focus behind providing an impetus to natural farming remains on establishing a direct link between ecologically protective farmers and health-conscious consumers. Once farming communities move in this direction, its consolidation will enable better quality seeds and saplings as well as know-how and other help in a more organised way.



Women farmers are the real strength of the Tikamgarh Model of farming

Thanks to the efforts of Srijan, a voluntary organization, the Tikamgarh Model of farming, harnessed in Madhya Pradesh has emerged as a potential boost in encouraging small farmers to adopt natural farming practices, with special emphasis on encouraging women farmers, as well as diversifying crops with multi-layer vegetable gardens and small fruit orchards.

Now that these farmers have a higher diversity of crops grown using natural farming methods (and avoiding chemical fertilizers and pesticides), the next obvious step is to try to increase the income of farmers by taking their produce directly to consumers who value healthy food.

However, this would involve additional effort on the part of the farmers to take up food processing activities as well. Value addition with processing activities, which are taken up keeping in view health and nutrition value of food, also brings new livelihood support and income to rural communities.

Once farming communities move in this direction, the consolidation efforts also make it possible to receive inputs like better quality seeds and saplings as well as know-how and other help in a more organised way.

Women farmers are a very important part of the Tikamgarh model. Saroj Kushwaha of Pathari village is a woman farmer who has adopted natural farming practices with a lot of commitment and has also encouraged and helped several other farmers to do so.

She has started a natural farming centre on her small farm of about four acres or so with the help of Srijan. She has initiated a multi-layer vegetable garden and has enrolled for training as a 'goat doctor' so that the goats of her village can now be treated within the village with her help.

Not too far from this village is another inspiring woman farmer Phoola Devi, who is very poor. Although she owns a small piece of land, she has grabbed attention and won appreciation from the villagers for her hard work in creating a beautiful fruit orchard on this land.

Such sincere women farmers are the real strength of this organization, which has now also been registered as a company, the Ken Betwa Women Farmer Producer Company. This company has 2300 shareholders, who are mostly women farmers of Tikamgarh district.

The name Ken-Betwa is derived from the local rivers of Bundelkhand region—Ken and Betwa rivers---and the message sought to be conveyed by this name is that just as it is very important to protect these rivers for the prosperity of the region, it is also important to protect the sustainable livelihoods of small farmers.

Instead of being too ambitious, this effort has come up with the sale of a limited number of products initially for direct sale to consumers. Orders from health-conscious consumers are coming in based on its website information and other avenues of approaching consumers. Although this effort is already getting good response from big cities like Mumbai, the organization aims to keep a balance between such orders and sales closer to home. The products being marketed include cold press groundnut and mustard oil, ghee based on the milk of local breeds of cows, graded and packaged groundnuts, kodon and kutki millets, arhar and moong pulses.

By using cottage and village-scale processing, this effort ensures additional advantages which may be lost in large-scale processing. Healthier, more nutritious edible oil can be obtained while oilcake remains available for local dairy animals instead of being lost to the wider market or the export market.

Farmers get their payment quickly. Often the produce is collected right from their doorstep so that they do not have to spend money and time in the sale effort. At some of the processing centers women farmers can come and use the equipment available here for the processing of the produce which has not been sold to the company. Whatever profits the company makes remain with the company of which they are the shareholders.

Rakesh Singh and Kamlesh Kurmi of Srijan who have been closely involved with the initial planning of this venture say, "The idea is not to make a big splash with too many products but instead to emphasize quality control and establish credibility. Once this is achieved other gains will come in due course. We have several innovative ideas which will be implemented when things stabilize a bit."

A side activity of this effort has been to also make available some bulk farm produce (such as wheat to biscuit makers) to bigger procurers. However, the focus remains on establishing a direct link between ecologically protective farmers and health-conscious consumers.

The writer is Honorary Convener, Campaign to Save Earth Now. His recent books include India's Quest for Sustainable Farming and Healthy Food, Man over Machine and A Day in 2071.

A blatantly sexist mindset

Rashmi Oberoi strongly believes that every person is unique in his/her own way and if left to themselves, without the added baggage of peer pressure, social norms, various discriminations, will bloom in natural manner and stand out as individuals. The strange norm of 'changing' for other's perception is leading to full-fledged narcissists.



Body shaming among teenagers

I find that people are getting more covetous with time... Their perceptions about day-to-day things are leaning towards the bizarre slowly but steadily. Apparently, loud make-up, flashy clothes, being brand-conscious and all that glittery razzmatazz with these fake, put on accents is what is 'in' and the rest of us are 'out'. And to top that, a weird perception rules that only the 'thin' can be successful or look smart or make it big? What hogwash!! And how did bigotry get so rampant?

I was actually dumb-struck when I watched Vidya Balan being questioned by a reporter if she had thought about losing weight for glamorous roles? What kind of an idiotic question is that? I can only call someone who thinks like this: A dim-witted imbecile! Of course, her response to this cretin was tasteful and tactful but she gave it back to him in a swift blow... I wouldn't have been this kind in my retort, frankly speaking.

I cannot for the life of me understand the connection between her weight and her movie roles. She is an actor par excellence and isn't that what matters and not her weight? Otherwise, it leads us to believe that Bollywood is ruled by the 'skinny' and the rest just melt away into thin air! Fat shaming seems to be in vogue in India...it is fashionable to criticise and look down upon people especially in our so-called metropolitan cities where I believe the 'educated' live? Do they?

While no one begrudges an individual's attempts to improve their health, the attention paid to the weight woes of these otherwise talented women is unsettling. Lauded as heroes when they shift a few kilos, they are seen as, well, big fat failures when they don't. And this alignment of form and function isn't the sole preserve of the entertainment world, either.

Recent studies show that overweight women across many sectors earn 12-15 per cent less than their non-obese counterparts, while also struggling with a lack of promotions and wrongful terminations. And that's if they can land a job in the first place! This shocking data once again shows discrimination at its peak. Obesity discrimination is the last acceptable form of discrimination. An individual in the work place must be judged on their intellect and not their size. Size has no relevance regarding an individual's workplace capabilities.

Despite shifts over history, women are still looked at and evaluated in relation to the way that they look more than men are. This scrutiny is not just about a woman's body, but about the values attached to it. A non-normative body invites questions

about why it is that the woman being scrutinised doesn't conform to a particular model of femininity or beauty. There would be a range of reasons why women's appearances are the way they are, but often negative values that imply laziness or craziness are attached to this scrutiny.

I know for a fact that such discrimination exists abroad too but in India it is widespread and getting out of hand. On a recent holiday abroad, I was happy to notice that no one cared how you dressed and what you wore... Everyone has a life you know and it is not the other person's life to concentrate on but your own. The words that reflected the general public walking on the streets was: Suave, Simple, Elegant and Classy! I was completely confident in my body and wore dresses and shorts without a hundred prying eyes either ogling or glaring at me. I could dress in the clothes I had always wanted to dress in and not feel uncomfortable.

Back home, I rarely dress the way I did overseas. This is a real shame. The most unobtrusive outfits here get cat-calls and leers. Even an innocuous t-shirt and a pair of jeans are not demure enough for the public. It's the way things have always been. The patriarchy has the country in its iron grip and the women collude with it. To speak out is to live a life of singular daily harassment. We don't question it. We stick to our 'traditions' - traditions which dictate that female foetuses are routinely aborted and female new-borns murdered and that's just scratching the surface. This shaming goes much deeper.

It is a known fact that disrespectful treatment and medical fat shaming, in an attempt to motivate people to change their behaviour, is stressful and can cause patients to delay health care seeking or avoid interacting with providers. Some people, especially those in the public eye, are forced to look to professionals to help them present themselves in the best way possible. This is where an image consultant comes in. Unfortunately, both these areas have turned into money-making businesses as they live off people's shortcomings, fears and inhibitions. It is a vicious circle. You are moulding a person into something that they are not and people are paying big money to change into something that isn't them to begin with.

I firmly believe, every person is unique in their own way and if left to themselves, without the added baggage of peer pressure, social norms, various discriminations, they will bloom in their natural manner and stand out as individuals. Self-empowerment must come from within...the confidence...the glow...the inner beauty and not be forced under unnatural circumstances. The strange norm of 'changing' for other's perception is leading to full-fledged narcissists!

Sexist micro aggressors are around – they exist on structural levels and personal levels and in many cases, they are entrenched in our culture and society. But we need to be aware, and we need to deal with them swiftly and boldly. ~ “I rarely meet men in real life as extraordinary as ones on film, and rarely see women on film as extraordinary as ones I know in real life.”

Rashmi Oberoi, an army officer's daughter and army wife is passionate about writing and has authored two story books for children – My Friends At Sonnenshine and Cherie:The Cocker Spaniel. Her third and latest book – “Blues, Hues & All Things Wonderful” has short anecdotes. She continues to write articles and middles regularly.

VIRENDER HARJIDAS DEVGAN (1934-2019)

A fight master in real life too!

Virender Harjidas Devgan, nee Veeru (1934 –2019) was a celebrated Bollywood stuntman, action choreographer, film director, actor, producer, and screenplay writer. From a self-effacing stand-in stuntman, he rose to be one of the most prominent action directors, bringing in innovative action sequences, executing them to perfection. Always ahead of his time, despite a technologically-challenged environment, he left his mark at a time when pure action, without VFX, was the order of the day. As mentor, he created job opportunities for innumerable stuntmen.

In 1957, aged 14, he left Amritsar and moved to Bombay along with friends dreaming of becoming successful and famous. They travelled by train to Mumbai ticketless. Consequently, caught by the police at Virar station they were taken to a Magistrate, where, they were told to either pay the whole fine or spend a week in the lock-up. Due to the lack of money, they opted for prison.

Reaching Mumbai, they realised that life was not that rosy. While his friends left, he continued, subsisting on jobs as car cleaner to carpenter and made rounds of film studios seeking a career in Hindi films. Soon he realized acting wasn't for him and looked for alternatives in the same industry. He started learning martial arts and thus began his journey as a Bollywood stuntman with the film Anita.

He later worked as fight master in many films, and stuntman to many noted Bollywood heroes. With his appreciable work, he became an action choreographer in 1974 with the film *Roti, Kapda Aur Makaan*, thanks to the break given by Manoj Kumar.

As a producer, he produced *Hindustan Ki Kasam*, *Dil Kya Kare* and *Singhasan*. As an assistant director and co-producer, he worked on *Vishwatma* and *Mera Patti Sirf Mera Hai*. He is also credited with the grand debut film entry in the 1991 *Phool Aur Kaante*, of Ajay who did the iconic bike split scene for the first-time riding on two bikes.

In 1992, he wrote the script for the film *Jigar*, starring Ajay Devgan of a fighter battling odds. He made his directorial debut with *Hindustan Ki Kasam* (1999) starring his son Ajay Devgan and Amitabh Bachchan. Although an expensive film of

that time, it flopped but he tried to shoot never-before seen action scenes far better than Bollywood was used to.

His body of work included more than 200 iconic films, like *Kranti*, *Mr. Natwarlal*, *Mr. India*, *Shahenshah*, *Tridev*, *Lal Baadshah*, *Prem Granth*, *Khoon Bhari Maang*, *Boxer*, *Shahenshah*, *Dilwale*, *Jigar*, *Himmatwala*, *Phool Aur Kaante*, *Ek Khiladi Bawan Pattey*, *Dil Kya Kare*, *Khatron Ke Khiladi*, etc. As an actor, he also did small roles in films, *Sourabh*, and *Singhasan and Kranti*. Veeru won the Zee Cine Lifetime Achievement Award in 2016.



Ajay termed his father the true Singham in his life. "He is a man who came to Bombay at that point in time with ₹ 4 in his pocket, wanting to become something, struggled, washed and lived in taxis, did not eat food for eight days at times, worked hard, became a street fighter from there till Ravi Khanna saw him and asked him whether he would become a fight director. From there, his growth from nowhere to becoming India's topmost action director is remarkable."

He further added, "I have seen him getting so much respect that some of the biggest actors would touch his feet, wanting to work with him. By the time I was born, he had enough money. He has 50 stitches in his head and has broken every bone in his body."

He was a kind man with a great sense of humour and extremely professional. To him, the safety of actors and his fighters' team was of utmost importance. Due to poor health and old age issues, he rarely made public appearances. He passed away of cardiac arrest, aged 85.



A. Radhakrishnan is a Pune based freelance journalist, poet and short story writer.

C. RAMOJI RAO (1936-2024)

Publicity-shy media visionary

Cherukuri Ramoji Rao was born on 16 November 1936 in Pattaparupudu of Krishna District, Madras Presidency in an agricultural family of poor means and his early life was a bitter struggle as the family had to go to great lengths to keep the wolf from the door.

Ramoji had his formal education and then shifted to Delhi where he worked as an artist in an advertising firm. However, his entrepreneurial instincts soon surfaced and the first venture that he set up on his own was the Margaradarasi Chit Fund in 1974 which even today stands tall as one of the biggest firms in the business. He also developed an abiding interest in the media business and started his own newspaper 'Eenadu' in Telugu which scaled great heights and was the number one newspaper in the composite Andhra State.

Ramoji Rao who sensed the growth of TV quite early also launched a whole basket of channels under the name ETV. Eventually most of these channels were acquired by Reliance though Rao retained the Telugu channels.

Although Ramoji Rao remained apolitical right through his life, he was instrumental in the rise of the late chief minister N T Rama Rao (NTR) who had floated the Telugu Desam Party. Rao used the reach of his publications to ensure the defeat of the Congress party and a runaway victory of the TDP. Later he would throw in his weight behind NTR's son in law Chandrababu Naidu.

He had a long rivalry with Congress leader Rajasekhara Reddy who died in a plane crash while still the CM of Andhra Pradesh. The rivalry however continued after Reddy's son Jaganmohan Reddy took office as CM of Andhra now no longer a composite state after the bifurcation of the State into Andhra and Telangana.

But the media was not the only vocation for Ramoji Rao who branched out into film production under his banner 'Usha Kiron Movies' and the company produced several blockbuster movies including 'Mayuri' which featured an amputee Sudha Chandran in the title role. His production 'Nuvve Kavali' won a National Award and Rao was also the recipient of several Filmfare and Nandi awards as well.

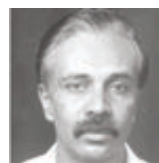
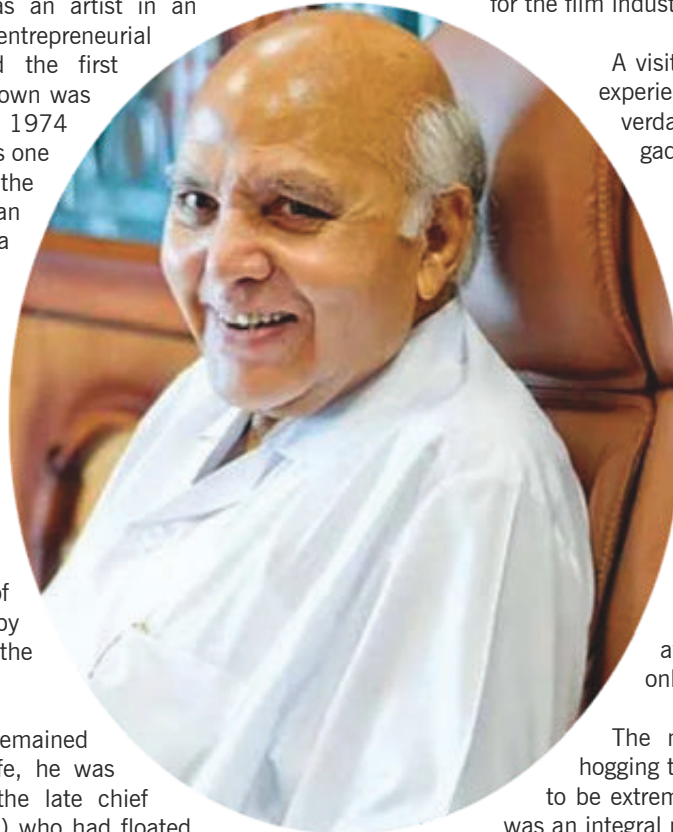
Rao's claim to fame really centred around the construction of the world's biggest film making facility, Ramoji Film City on the outskirts of Hyderabad. Stretching across 2000 acres, Ramoji Film City has found a mention in the Guinness Book of World Records. Many mega budget films including 'Bahubali', 'RRR' etc., have been shot in Ramoji Film City and the studio is a one stop film making facility for the film industry.

A visit to the facility is a jaw dropping experience as the opulent sets, the verdant green atmosphere and the gadgets installed are all world class.

Rao also ventured into the fast-moving consumer goods business with 'Priya Foods' and 'Ushodaya Foods and Beverages' which continues to be in great success across the country. He also served as Chairman of the Dolphin Group of Hotels and Kalanjali.

A recipient of several awards and honours Ramoji Rao was also the recipient of the Padma Vibhushan, the second highest civilian honour awarded by the Government next only to the Bharat Ratna.

The media baron never believed in hogging the limelight and was also known to be extremely publicity shy and though he was an integral part of the print and visual media seldom gave interviews. Rao passed away on 8 June 2024 at the age of 87 and the media lost one of the main votaries for press freedom who never fought shy of taking on the establishment. A workaholic to the core, Rao remained active and committed to his various interests till his last breath.



C.V. Aravind is a Bangalore-based freelance journalist.

CAPTAIN HANEEF UDDIN VIR CHAKRA (1974-1999)

The Operation Thunderbolt hero

Captain Haneef Uddin hailed from Delhi and was born on 23 August 1974. He lost his father when he was barely eight and had two brothers Nafees and Sameer.

His mother Hema Aziz was a classical singer. Haneef graduated in science from Shivaji College, Delhi. He was a talented singer and was crowned 'Mr. Shivaji' in his college. Haneef was extremely disciplined, responsible and ambitious and was keen to join the army. He was trained in computer science but shunned lucrative offers for an army career.

He was commissioned into the Army Service Corps (ASC) on 7 June 1997. Officers commissioned into ASC are posted to an infantry unit for a year to gain field experience and he was posted to 11 Raj Rif (Rajputana Rifles). The unit was located in the Siachen region and was later deployed in Turtuk in Ladakh during the Kargil war. Captain Haneef was a jovial and popular figure among his troops.

He would use his singing prowess to lighten the mood in his camp. He would always carry his music system with him. He would often sing songs for his troops to keep them relaxed and motivated in a difficult region and treacherous climate. It was very early days of Kargil war when there was less information available about the enemy troops.

A company of 11 Raj Rif was deployed in Operation Thunderbolt on 6 June 1999 at an altitude of 18,000 feet in the Turtuk region. Their mission was to capture a position in the region which would facilitate the army to monitor the movements of the enemy troops better. Haneef volunteered for this operation as it was his nature to lead from the front.

He set off with one junior commissioned officer and three other ranks. They made significant strides on the nights of 4 and 5 June and captured nearby positions. They captured the adjacent position and set out their advance on 6 June to capture the position they desired.

They were undeterred by an altitude of 18,500 feet and extreme temperatures. They were however spotted by the enemy and fired upon. A firefight followed, against an enemy equipped with heavy artillery.

Haneef was more bothered with the safety of his men than of himself. He took up a position and rained bullets on the enemy. In the exchange, he was badly injured. But he kept engaging the enemy until his men were safe from the enemy fire. He ran out of ammunition and was shot from all directions. He succumbed to his injuries, just 200 meters from the position they set out to capture.

He was martyred at twenty-five after two years of service. For the display of exemplary leadership and gallantry beyond the call of duty, he was awarded the Vir Chakra posthumously.

The Sub-Sector West was renamed as the Haneef Sub-Sector, and it is where the Indian Army defies death every day. "There cannot be a greater statement on his valour than his death which came while fighting the enemy," said his proud mother.

The Army Chief General Ved Prakash Malik, visited Haneef's mother and told her that the body of her son could not be recovered due to the site being under enemy fire. She said she did not want another soldier to risk his life to get her son's body back, but would like to visit the site of his sacrifice.

His body was retrieved after 43 days. He was buried with full military honours in Delhi. Hema Aziz made the pilgrimage to war site with her other two sons.

'Ek pal mein hai sach saari zindagi ka; Iss pal mein jee lo yaaron, yahan kal hai kisse dekha' (The truth of our lives is encapsulated in one moment; Live this moment, who knows what tomorrow holds) were his brother, Sameer's words. Haneef lived by its spirit.



Contributed by Renu Prakash from the data bank of Late Brig. Suresh Chandra Sharma.

CHARTER
ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE FOUNDATION
firmly believes in

1. Adherence to the Constitution
 2. Equality before Law
 3. Accountability of those in Positions of Power
 4. Basic Amenities for All
 5. Freedom of Expression
 6. Justice without Delay
 7. Universal Right to Primary Education
 8. Health for All
 9. Population Management
 10. Alleviation of Poverty
 11. Eradication of Child Labour and all other forms of Forced Labour
 12. Dignity for the Differently-Abled
 13. Equality of Gender, Caste and all other Socially Disadvantaged Groups
 14. Removing Corruption from all Spheres of Life
 15. Upholding India's Rich Cultural Heritage
 16. Promotion of Scientific Temper
 17. Separation of Religion from State
 18. Promotion of Communal Harmony
 19. Emphasis on Rural Development
 20. Concern for Environment
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WHO AM I?



Am I a Hindu first or an Indian first?

Am I a Muslim first or an Indian first?

Am I a Christian first or an Indian first?

Am I a Buddhist first or an Indian first?

Am I a Brahmin first or an Indian first?

Am I a Dalit first or an Indian first?

Am I a South Indian first or an Indian first?

Am I a North Indian first or an Indian first?

Am I the President of India first or an Indian first?

Am I the Prime Minister of India first or an Indian first?

Am I the Commander-in-Chief first or an Indian first?

Am I a supporter of any 'ism' first or an Indian first?

Am I a white-collar/blue collar worker first or an Indian first?

Am I a youth/senior citizen first or an Indian first?



In all cases you are Indian First, Last and Always.
Be a Proud Indian. Make this country Great, Strong and United.



Sadanand A. Shetty, Founder Editor
(October 9th, 1930 – February 23rd, 2007)

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