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## **Save the fabric of tradition**

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- **Haat and soul for tradition** [Jaya Jaitley](#)



**Taking tradition forward** [Uzramma](#)

### **TOPICS**

**arts, culture and entertainment, crafts , fashion, clothes and dressing**

## **Craft and textile experts and students came together to suggest ways to revive the country's textile traditions at 'Thari', a two-day seminar in the city**

A two-day national seminar on textiles titled 'Thari', organised by the Department of Fine Arts, Stella Maris College, Chennai, was attended by craft and textile activists, experts, faculty and students. The delegates outlined achievements in the field of textiles, present projects, innovations, sustainability, market trends, and gave recommendations for the future.

Began Jaya Jaitly in her keynote address, "How do we honour our textile traditions?" The writer, social activist and president, Dastkari Haat Samiti, New Delhi, is known for conceptualising Dilli Haat which provides a platform for Indian craftspersons to sell their craft.

Uzramma, a goldsmith and founding trustee, Dastkar Andhra and Malkha Marketing, Hyderabad, combines traditional and cutting-edge technologies to suit the contemporary context. Earlier, cotton was subjected to baling and unbalancing, both violent processes, and its natural sheen and elasticity were lost. A small group of engineers and field activists combined technology with social process, creating the Malkha model which Uzramma has established as a self-sustaining eco-friendly entrepreneurship model involving the rural folk.

Radhika Ganesh, director, Marketing and Branding, Syllogic Consultants, Chennai, brought a fresh perspective on sustainability in her address "Is the Colour of Success Green?"

### **Colours and textiles**

Priti C. Nartiang, assistant lecturer, Patha Bhavan, Vishva Bharati University, Shantiniketan, spoke about colours that dominated textiles.

Dr. Arputha Rani Sengupta, art historian, and former professor, National Museum Institute, New Delhi, presented a historical perspective on silks from the Central to the South Asian regions, used for funerary purposes.

Meenakshi Singh, faculty of textile design, Pearl Academy, Jaipur, provided insights into "pattu weaving", a Rajasthani tradition, practised in the districts of

Barmer and Jaisalmer. The technique involves extra weft ornamentation. Traditionally, the shawl was woven for bridegrooms, using sheep, camel wool or cotton. URMUL, an NGO working in Bikaner, has introduced a revolutionary change in the weaving techniques.

Sr. Fatima Furtado, assistant professor, Department of Fine Arts, Stella Maris College, spoke about Poothukuli, part of Toda culture in the Niligiris. A pastoral community, the Todas are known for their white cotton shawls embroidered with black and red motifs. Their women-centric hand skills are gradually changing with the manufacture of contemporary, market-driven products.

Day 2 began with the exploration of craft ecology in Sowriyur, a village in Salem District. Bamini Narayan and Ramaa Ramesh, in conversation with K.V. Sengodan, highlighted the impact of the changing economic, social, psychological and cultural scenario on the weavers. A master weaver, Sengodan hails from a village near Salem.

Regardless of marginalisation caused by market uncertainties, mechanisation and globalisation, there have been attempts at revival of traditional weaves through design intervention. This important aspect was brought out by Mallika Madhavan, assistant professor, Department of Fine Arts.

Deepti Mehandru, assistant professor, Department of Fine Arts, spoke on 'Psychology in Design Intervention Methods'. She threw light on the pressures the weavers face from machine-made fabrics.

### **Contemporary touch**

P. Thennarasu, Director, Indian Institute of Handloom Technology, Salem, chaired the next session which began with Dr. Anitha Mabel Manohar, professor, Fashion Design and head, Research, NIFT Chennai, speaking about fashion.

Dr. Sumithra Dawson, associate professor, Department of Fine Arts, highlighted new identities in Contemporary Mainstream Handlooms, and showed telling visuals of some horrendous design developments in saris.

V. Bhanurekha, and T. Rasigha from Kumaraguru College of Technology, Coimbatore focussed on the trends in the handloom sector in that region. The main centres for silk and cotton saris are Sirumugai and Tiruppur, and Vadhambachari and Negamam. Kora weaving, a laborious process, is done in Pulliyampatti area.

The speakers advised upgrading of looms, standardisation, and that at least one of the three processes — shedding, picking, and beating — be left manual.

The panel discussion ‘Tradition in the Modern’, was moderated by Jaya Jaitley with the panellists Uzramma, P. Thennarasu, Bamini Narayanan, A.Z. Ranjit, and Dr. Bessie Cecil engaging in a lively discussion.

There is no Government unit like the Lalit Kala Akademi for art and Sahitya Akademi for literature to preserve and promote craft-based knowledge. A proposal by Jaitley for a Hastkala Akademi has been approved by the Government.

Besides highlighting the problems and suggesting solutions, the primary aim of the seminar was to sensitise the students. For as the old guard moves out, it is the younger generation that should grab the baton and carry on.

Keywords: Indian textile traditions, Thari