

for sustainable development

# POWER & CREATIVITY

## Traditional Craft

Varanasi  
Chanderi

## Creative Communities

Vrindavan  
Tsunamika  
Kumbham Murals  
Katha

## Intangible Heritage

Kutiyattam

## Heritage for Development

Rajasthan  
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Pull-out



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HIMACHAL  
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# *Be Conscious!*

## *Be in!*

Dear Readers,

Weekend family expeditions to the shopping mall, a night out at a fancy restaurant in the city, travels abroad... With its multi-trillion Rupees economy, annual GDP growth rate of 9% and rising urban middle class, India is headed towards an era of consumerism never before experienced.

But there is another side of the picture that most of us are at least dimly aware of: the increasing gap between haves and have-nots; unplanned urbanisation and over-exploitation of natural resources; threats to our cultural and natural heritage; the plight of impoverished farmers and artisans; and the rapid disappearance of local small-scale industries and traditions.

Is the fashionable lifestyle of the urban consumer the engine of India's growth, or will it in fact prove incompatible with sustainable development in the long run? The magazine you have in your hands was created by people who firmly believe in shopping and having fun – and that there are ways of doing so that will actually help the sustainable development of our country. As the choices available to the Indian consumer proliferate in our globalised world, this magazine spotlights the quality, diversity and creativity that exist within India itself.

Launched in association with the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), and in collaboration with SRISTI Innovations/Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad (IIM-A), *Power of Creativity* Magazine aims to reveal the creative wealth of India and tell you about innovative ideas, initiatives and individuals in the areas of traditional crafts, heritage conservation, tourism, engineering, environmental protection and local empowerment.

The magazine itself is an expression of the Power of Creativity. Our logo was developed by Chiara and Sian, two young designers from London's Royal College of Art. The layout was done by a team of NIFT teachers and students, and the photo and the design of the enclosed TRIFED brochure by Vidid and Jonathan, young students from NIFT.

Featured in this first issue of *Power of Creativity* Magazine are two of the most emblematic textiles of India – hand-crafted Varanasi brocade and Chanderi weaving. While the beauty of the products is enticing, little is known about the struggle of the artisans behind them, who face tough competition from the machine loom and other emerging countries.

As part of its initiative to support local creativity for community empowerment, UNESCO New Delhi is collaborating with the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Ltd (TRIFED) to market tribal arts and crafts internationally. The brochure on *Tribes India* inserted in the magazine is one of the first outcomes of this joint endeavour, with innovations underway to make shopping at TRIBES a learning experience.

India abounds with examples of creativity serving local empowerment. Tsunamika – a little doll made out of left-over scraps of cloth designed by Upasana Design Studio in Auroville – now provides a livelihood for fisherwomen of the Tsunami devastated coast of Tamil Nadu. Humble terracotta art revived by the designer Jinan B in the small village of Aryuvacode in Kerala has rescued the villagers from an economic and creative slump. The NGO Friends of Vrindavan makes cash out of trash by creating colorful baskets which are marketed internationally.

In a different sphere, a creative individual, Margi Sathi, has rekindled the ancient art of Kutiyattam Sanskrit Theatre, while with extraordinary entrepreneurial skill, Jaipur Virasat Foundation has promoted the concept of “festivals for development” as a means to showcase the range of Rajasthani cultural traditions – places, peoples and skills – and link them to our global world. Meanwhile, instead of rejecting parents unable to afford school tuition for their children, the creative minds of Khata have developed livelihood activities for mothers within the school itself.

Heritage conservation is another area where ingenuity is required. How can we make it a source of local development? How to link the growing flow of tourists to the sustainability rather than the destruction of heritage sites? How can visitors access these wonderful places and stay there in comfort with minimum negative impact on the local communities and the environment, while generating new employment and social enhancement opportunities for them? And how can innovation in technology serve visitors and inhabitants alike? Our magazine aims to answer these questions with examples from Rajasthan and Karnataka of governments and associations that are working to safeguard India’s heritage. The Honey Bee Network of creative grassroots innovators also showcases some ideas to improve visitors’ experience at World Heritage Sites in India. Read them and get some ideas for your next holiday trip!

For my colleagues and I at UNESCO New Delhi Office, putting together this first issue of the PoC Magazine, and more generally, working in India has been an extraordinary privilege. We thank the many people of the many worlds within this country who are supporting UNESCO in offering a platform for social change.

Making globalisation socially inclusive, and pegging growth to the maintenance of cultural and natural diversity by creatively merging tradition with modernity, can be India’s greatest contribution to the world.

Let us collectively refute the divisive forces of growth and halt all forms of bigotry. Through conscious choices when you shop, eat out and go on holidays, and by promoting social justice in your daily life at home and work, you too, can contribute to the lasting growth and strength of India. We look forward to receiving your comments, ideas and articles on the power of creativity for sustainable development for the next issues of the magazine.

**Minja Yang**

Director, UNESCO New Delhi Office

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# TRADITIONAL CRAFT





## *Weaving a Legacy*

**TO OWN VARANASI BROCADE IS TO POSSESS A TREASURE OF DISTINGUISHED CRAFTSMANSHIP. THE TEXTILES REVEAL THE SUBTLE ARTISTIC SENSITIVITIES OF THEIR WEAVERS, DISTINGUISHED BY EFFECTIVE COLOUR COMBINATIONS, INTRICATE PATTERNS EXECUTED TO PERFECTION AND THE USE OF GOLD AND SILVER ZARI.**

**BY RACHEL ARORA AND NAVNEET RAMAN**

**I**t is said that when Buddha attained *Nirvana*, his body was wrapped in a Benares fabric, which shot rays of dazzling blue, red and yellow. As ancient a text as the Rig Veda refers to the *hiranyadrapi*, a shining, gold-woven cloth. The Mahabharata mentions a similar *manichera* and the Ramayana describes the demon god Ravana as donning a gold fabric. *Pali* literature mentions the *Kaseyyaka* (silk of Benares) worth a hundred pieces of silver.

For literally ages, the ancient and mystical city of Varanasi has been a centre of silk production, and it is still one of India's most significant silk-weaving centres, famed above all for its brocades. Weavers work continuously to produce one fine design after another.

Traditionally, silk came from Bengal, Central Asia or Italy. It now comes from Malda in Bengal, Kashmir or Japan. The weavers work on both punch card and jacquard looms. Weaving is a collaborative process: a



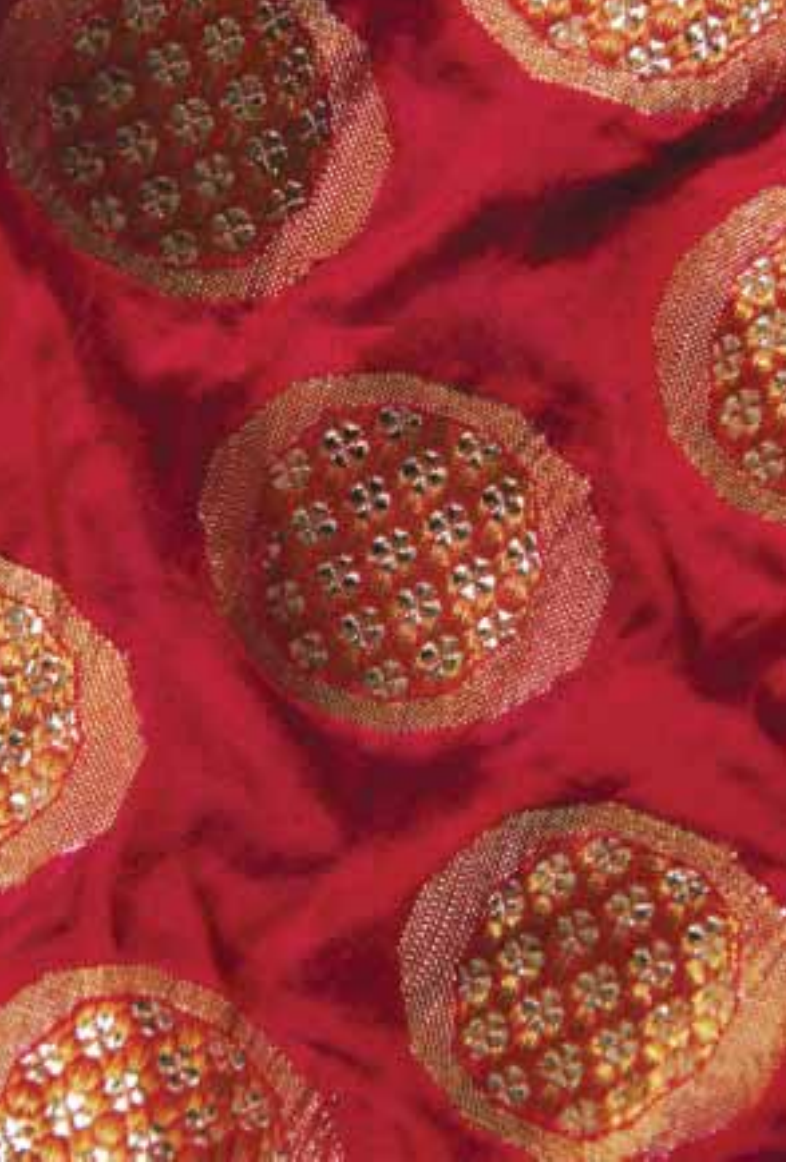


designer stands behind the loom and does the patterning by arranging the correct sequence of over 3,500 warp threads. Another designer manages the several spools of different colours in the brocade and operates the shuttles weaving the base.

The traditional Varanasi weaving centres famous for their distinctive styles are Madanpura and Alaipura. Madanpura is known for its traditional and sophisticated designs and shades, woven on light fabrics. Alaipura on the other hand produces heavy brocaded material mainly used in furnishings. Either way, to own Varanasi brocade is to possess a treasure of distinguished craftsmanship. The textiles reveal the subtle artistic sensitivities of their weavers, distinguished by effective color combinations, intricate patterns executed to perfection and the use of gold and silver zari. This thread, known as *kalabattun*, consists of finely drawn gold, silver or base metal thread wound around a silk core.

Brocade designs draw inspiration from other artistic media as well as from the beauty of the materials themselves. Some are composed according to the principles of *meenakari*, a kind of gold enamel jewellery: it forms the basis for the pattern executed with extra threads of gold and glittering, jewel-like colours. Another rich style boasts complicated patterns of hunting scenes where a flowing creeper intermingles with animals, birds, elephants with howdahs, hunting parties and flowers. And the

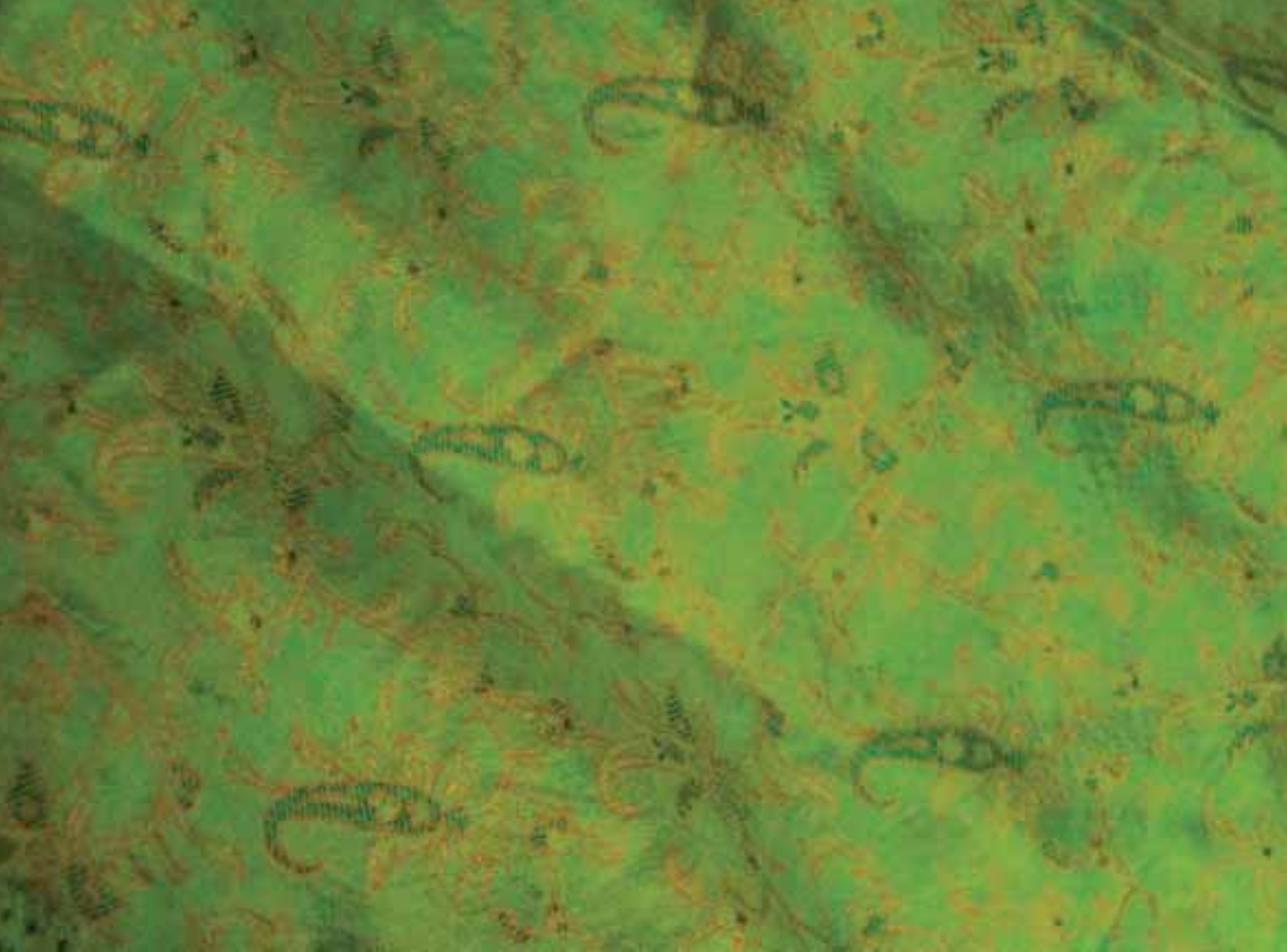




## *Uma Prajapati on the Plight of Varanasi Weavers of India*

We were quite moved on hearing about the hardships being faced by the Varanasi weavers. A craft of great value was lying in shambles. For several months the weavers had no jobs and were living lives of misery and utter poverty. They were facing problems like starvation and debt and had no means to sustain themselves. Dealing with the condition of weavers striving to preserve this ancient craft was extremely touching. Today, we are equipped for modernisation but we need to be sensitive towards our heritage as well. Numerous funds are allotted each year for the weavers but nothing reaches them. Our efforts were aimed at making the weavers and the families self-reliant enabling them to earn a decent wage for themselves. A beautiful craft needs to be cherished for generations and shouldn't fade away with time.





famous variety of gold tissue with strikingly delicate patterns of temple scenes or *jaal* work in gold and silver is known as *Ganga-Yamuna*, for the two colours of thread.

Sadly, the great legacy of Varanasi weaving has suffered in recent years from the pressures of globalisation and competitive practices. The relatively high cost of raw materials and therefore of woven products led to a decline in demand. Traders with access to raw materials and markets were able to manipulate prices to increase their profits at the expense of the weavers, while imported fabrics from other countries placed further strain on the traditional craft of Varanasi, and the act banning power looms from producing saris was not seriously implemented.

The hardship faced by the weavers has finally caught the government's attention and led to a flurry of initiatives to save this cultural legacy from extinction. Both the Union Ministry of Textiles and the State of Uttar Pradesh's Department of Industry have established agencies in the city to support the silk saree industry and the weavers. Cooperative societies have been formed to give them greater strength in negotiating fair terms for their work. A government-run Weavers Service Center provides technical support to the weavers, such as courses in designing





## *Kriti Gallery Brings Varanasi's Weavers to the World Once More*

BY MOE CHIBA

The ancient city of Varanasi may seem a world away from England's teeming capital, London, but it was not always so. Among the many articles displayed at the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, held at London's Crystal Palace in 1851, there was fine brocade exhibited by two weaver brothers from Varanasi, Mohamand Suleman and Abdur Rehman. They received medals for the excellence of their work, and their brocade joined the other products presented at the Exhibition to form the collection of London's Victoria and Albert Museum, where it still proudly represents the fame of Varansi craftsmanship.

The demise of India's Rajas and aristocratic families has brought to a close the glory days of Varanasi's weaver communities, who must now struggle hard against competition from cheap machine-loom brocades. However, some weavers are finding new hope in the Kriti Gallery, a modern art gallery in Varanasi owned by Navneet Raman. Still only in his early 30s, Raman is busy travelling the world with weavers from Varanasi to revive the original fame of the town's brocades, and most importantly the dignity of its master weavers.

Designers from all over the world use the skills of master Varanasi weavers like Haji Haseen Mohamed – known locally as Haseen Bhai – to develop fabrics which are sold to high-end fashion industries. Some of the most gorgeous works at the India Fashion Week in New Delhi were made possible by Haseen Bhai's skillful hands. Sadly, he is yet to receive full credit from the Indian fashion industry for his creativity and artistic contributions.

Today, thanks to the promotion of Kriti Gallery, Haseen Bhai directly showcases his masterworks in art galleries abroad, including the UK, France, Germany and the USA. More than mere fabric, his creations are now widely recognised as real works of art – just as was the work of Mohamand Suleman and Abdur Rehman back in 1851.

In today's world, as technology and computerisation exercise increasing control over the textile industry, Kriti Gallery reminds us of the people behind the products, and the power of creativity to transform traditional craftsmanship into contemporary beauty.

To know more about the activities of Kriti Gallery, visit [www.kritigallery.com](http://www.kritigallery.com)



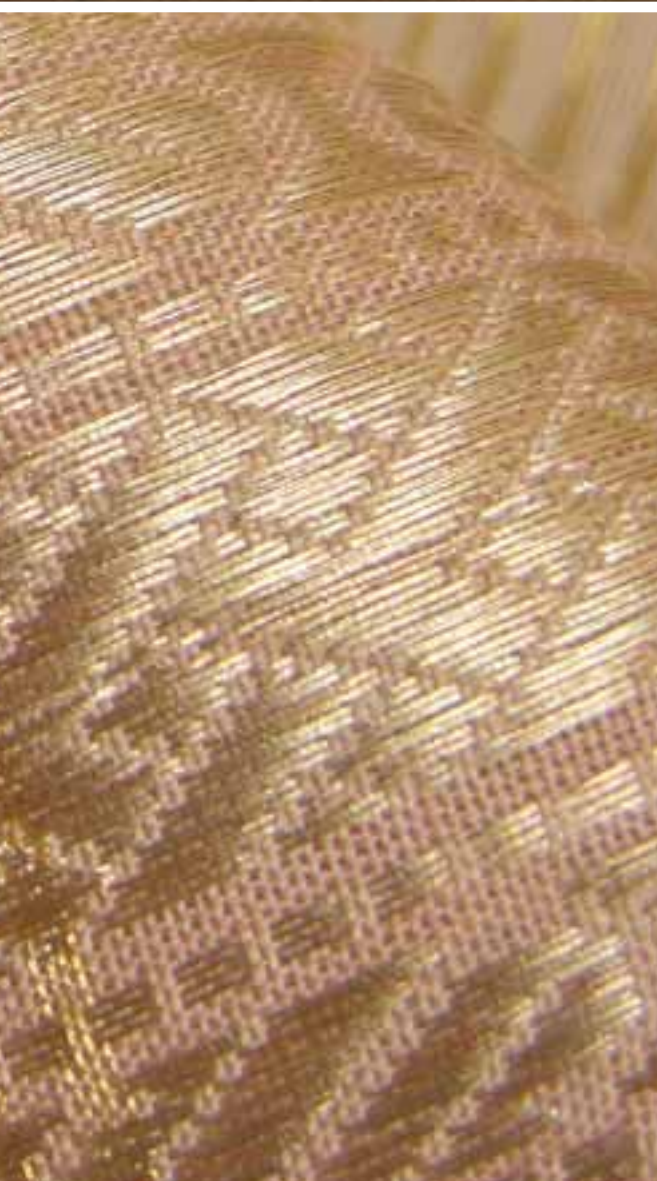
and dyeing, and training camps in rural areas. Other programmes send designers to institutes like NIFT and NID, or provide training in computer-aided design. The cooperative societies have also been linked to the raw materials market, and quality control is assured through testing.

On the marketing side, brand ambassadors have been appointed, an urban *Haat* with 45 shops is being built in the city, and the establishment of a Silk Mark and Handloom Mark will assure customers that the products they are buying are of pure silk or have been woven on a handloom rather than a machine loom.

Gradually, the weavers whose hands hold the secret of those rich brocades are reclaiming their livelihoods, and giving back to Varanasi its age-old fame as a centre of one of India's most revered crafts. ■







## *Girls from Chanderi Start Dreaming Big*

**HOW DOES A TRADITIONAL INDIAN CRAFT LIKE THE WEAVING OF SAREES SURVIVE IN A MODERN, GLOBALISED WORLD? FOR THE HANDLOOM WEAVERS OF CHANDERI, GETTING ORGANISED WAS JUST THE START. WHAT FOLLOWED WAS THE CREATIVE EMPOWERMENT OF A WHOLE NEW GENERATION OF YOUNG WOMEN.**

BY SHIVAA RAWAT

**C**radled in the heart of India, beyond the plush forests and scenic valleys, Chanderi is a small weaving town in Madhya Pradesh. It has been a centre of weaving for centuries. With more than 3,500 weaving families, almost 60% of the population is directly or indirectly dependent on the handloom business. The delicately spun Chanderi saree in silk or fine cotton, patterned with magnificent Chanderi temples, constitutes an important part of the heritage of this region.



The drape, the artistry and the sheer majesty of the Chanderi saree is a secret passed down from generation to generation, echoing the grandeur of a bygone era.

However, Chanderi has not escaped the general crisis faced by the traditional crafts sector in India. The decrease in the demand for the traditional saree and the competition from cheap imported machine-loom textiles gradually drove the Chanderi weavers community into severe difficulties. Lack of direct access to raw materials and markets led to exploitation by middle-men. A single drop of oil staining the textile could deter buyers and ruin an entire month of hard labour. Many weavers found themselves on the verge of ruin, and newspapers reported tragic instances of suicides.

This was the situation that led to the creation of Bunkar Vikas Sanstha (BVS) in 2004. With the guidance of the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) and the Madhya Pradesh Department of Rural Industries, some 60 weavers came together in a self-help group, becoming full-fledged entrepreneurs and managers of their own business, from material procurement to order taking and sales. By doing away with their traditional dependence on master weavers and traders, BVS was able to give significant wage increases to its weavers and distribute profits among them. Today,





with more than Rs. 8.3 million in sales under its belt, BVS is an apex body of 13 self-help groups comprised of more than 100 handloom weavers, filling big orders from retailers like FabIndia and the Craft Councils of Calcutta and Delhi.

Establishing the weavers of Chanderi on a more solid and equitable economic footing was just the beginning. The next step was to expand the possibilities for their work and open doorways to new livelihoods. UNESCO took up the challenge along with BASIX and One World South Asia, by introducing a Community Multimedia Centre in Chanderi in late 2006. The Centre has three computers with internet access and a photocopy machine. This relatively straightforward set-up opens up a host of possibilities. The Centre enables the community to access information on vital issues such as education, health, employment and human rights; the computers can be used by the weavers to develop newsletters or a website to promote their work and their community; and in time the Centre could be run as a cyber café, bringing additional income to the community.

Workshops quickly raised awareness among the weavers of the potential of information





technology to improve their livelihood. They were trained in the use of office applications and the internet, the set-up of a community webpage and the management of the Centre. Girls were given priority in the training, and when two computer design workshops were organised with the cooperation of National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), fifteen of the most enthusiastic and skilful young women were selected to attend. They became familiar with specialised software applications for design, and were taught how to use colour effectively to improve their designs, along with the importance of line, shape, texture and pattern.



As part of their assignment, the girls designed beautiful carry bags for Chanderi sarees and invitation cards, and a collage poster of Chanderi with pictures of local motifs and textiles. On a visit to the Bunkar Vikas Sanathan office they took photographs of the motifs of traditional sarees, so as to learn cataloging along with the basics of taking and storing digital photos. Some of the girls were assigned the task of creating new designs incorporating traditional Chanderi styles, for conversion into fabrics by BVS.

Despite frequent electric power cuts that interrupted the workshop, the girls enthusiastically completed their creative assignments on time. Mothers seemed to be





the happiest about this opportunity for empowerment for their daughters. “Count on me to send my daughter to the workshop; if she is lazy, I will whip her till she attends the training,” one of them winked when asked whether she would not be nervous about having her daughter attend the workshop.

In a small town like Chanderi, there had been hardly any job opportunities for girls after finishing school. A basic knowledge of office and design applications has provided the 15 workshop participants with a new role within the community, and this in turn helps them generate income. These 15 young women will themselves become trainers, disseminating the knowledge they have acquired for the benefit of the community.

The burgeoning success of the Community Multimedia Centre can be measured by the girls’ overwhelming enthusiasm about the workshops and their desire to carry forward their families’ weaving legacy with a new-found pride. As one of them said, “It is more about self-sufficiency than earning higher profits. More than a few extra bucks, it’s our independence that we cherish.”

The women of Chanderi have begun to dream big. ■



# INTANGIBLE HERITAGE



# Kutiyattam

BY DR. P. VENUGOPALAN & MOE CHIBA

**KUTIYATTAM, THE OLDEST SURVIVING FORM OF SANSKRIT THEATRE IN KERALA, IS ON AN UPSURGE THESE DAYS AFTER ITS PROCLAMATION AS ONE OF THE UNESCO MASTERPIECES OF ORAL AND INTANGIBLE HERITAGE IN 2001. THE NUMBER OF ARTISTS ACTIVELY PURSUING THE ART IS ON THE RISE, ALONG WITH THE NUMBER OF SPECTATORS. THE CONTRIBUTION OF A NEW GENERATION OF ARTISTS IS VITAL, FOR THEY PRESERVE THE TRADITIONAL VALUES OF THE ART FORM WHILE INNOVATING AND GIVING NEW MEANING TO HELP IT KEEP PACE WITH CHANGES IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY. THIS IS WHERE THE REMARKABLE ACTOR MARGI SATHI STEPS IN.**

In a dark room lit by torches, the face of the demoness suddenly beams with joy, wide-eyed with maternal compassion at the sight of baby Krishna. She cannot help but admire the beauty of the baby. We can see her mind waver between the sudden rise of love and the order from the king that she kill the baby she has been entrusted with. After much hesitation and torment, she resolves to take the baby in her arms and feed him from her poisoned breast. As the baby sucks at her breast, the demoness's face looks still and peaceful: the satisfaction of feeding a baby has momentarily assuaged the distress of accomplishing the king's order. But the *mizavu* drum plays an anxious rhythm. The demoness suddenly opens her eyes, which are now filled by inexplicable fear. She tries to pull the baby Krishna from breast. But he grows heavier and stronger. The demoness struggles in vain to remove him, but the baby will drain away all her energy until she dies.

The audience is breathless as it watches the last agony of the demoness. As the actor, Margi Sathi, ends her performance, applause rises in the hall. The appreciation might seem surprising, since Kutiyattam is known for its intricate theatrical codes, which are not easily understandable to the non-initiated public. But Margi Sathi, one of the leading figures among the new generation of Kutiyattam artists, can captivate the minds of even the least-educated audience, so eloquently do her movements and gestures recreate the realm of Indian epic theatre.

Born in the Thrissur District of Kerala, Sathi joined Kerala Kalamandalam, the premier arts academy of Kerala, at the age of eleven to study Kutiyattam. After completing an eight-year diploma course, she did a post diploma with merit scholarship, followed by another two years of study under a scholarship from the Government of India.

In 1988, Sathi joined Margi, Thiruvananthapuram's premier cultural institution, founded in 1974 for preserving the traditional classical art forms of Kerala. A programme of revitalisation of Kutiyattam was started in 1990 with support from the Kendra Sangeet Natak Academy. Since then, Sathi has been learning new performance texts, rehearsing them and staging at least one performance every week at Margi. A top artist in the field, Margi Sathi leaves no stone unturned in her effort to preserve the traditional aspect of the theatre. In all her performances, she strictly adheres to tradition and has managed to maintain



## Kutiyattam, a Brief Introduction

Kutiyattam is the oldest surviving form of Sanskrit theatre in Kerala. This dance form dating back some 2000 years, and based on the work of dramatists like Bhasa, Kulasekharavarma, Sakthibhadra, was traditionally performed exclusively for Brahmins in the precincts of temples called Kuthampalam. The play is characterised by a highly codified grammar of stage performance including make-up, mudras (hand gesture) and facial expressions, which are defined in the manuals known as Attaprakarams and Kramadeepikas. The former describes the different moves of actors and how they enact the prose or verse in the drama, while the latter lays emphasis on the background information not explicit in the text of the play as well as make-up details and the manner of stage entries and exits. The play is accompanied by *slokas* (songs in Sanskrit verse) and drums called *mizavu* to reinforce the context of the narrative.

Just like pantomime, the extraordinary feature of Kutiyattam lies in the capacity of the actors to recreate the stories and events with facial expressions and gestures. Currently, several associations in Kerala are working actively for the promotion of this ancient art and also give performances all over India.

For further information, visit: [www.kutiyattam.in](http://www.kutiyattam.in)



unadulterated the rustic charm of the art form along with the authenticity of its traditional grammar and expressive eloquence.

Margi Sathi was one among several of her contemporaries who got an opportunity to present the role of Sita, in Acts I, III and VII of *Ascharyachoodamany*, an ancient choreography revived by Margi and on which she worked for about 18 years, a formative period in her performing career. Her continuous stage experience led her to embark on the writing of a performance manual in Malayalam, which was published in 1999. *Sreeramacharitham Nangiarkoothu* is a new choreographic text on the Ramayana, which had been traditionally played exclusively by male actors and was conspicuously inaccessible to female performers. In the preface to this work, Guru P.K.N. Nambiar, a distinguished authority on *Nangiarkoothu*, writes, "It is indeed a Herculean task to script a performance manual for the Ramayana theme, which has a plenitude of tense dramatic situations woven around a structured story line, and which strictly conforms to the highly sophisticated technical formats and ritualistic concepts of Kutiyattam and is also complete in itself. The author who ventured to produce this comprehensive manual deserves by all means the loftiest of compliments."

*Sreeramacharitham Nangiarkoothu* opened the door to women performers to present not only Sita's role but

also the roles of all the male characters such as Rama, Ravana, Lekshmana and Hanuman. This step initiated the emancipation of women in Kutiyattam theatre. Sati's other choreographic work, *Kannaki Charitham*, defies convention by taking as its primary source a non-Sanskrit text – *Silappadikaram*, which is a classic from the second century BC written in the Dravidian tongue of Tamil. It is remarkable for the power of the heroine, Kannaki, who vividly illustrates the Shakespearean adage "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned".

Margi Sathi has performed in several European countries as well as in the USA. In October 2001 she performed at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris before a specially invited assembly of more than 500 guests from all over the world, to mark the proclamation of Kutiyattam as a UNESCO Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage.

Margi Sathi is both a preserver of the great traditional art form of Kutiyattam and an innovator. She defies convention by creating new choreographies for female performers, yet her work is based on her solid knowledge of tradition. Her inspirational efforts and achievements have been instrumental in the revival of Kutiyattam as a traditional art form, holding out the firm prospect of a new generation of budding artists falling in love with the richness of Kerala's magnificent heritage. ■



# CREATIVE COMMUNITIES



## *Friends of Vrindavan*

CLEANING UP MAY NOT BE A BIG INCONVENIENCE FOR MOST OF US, BUT WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN TWO MILLION VISITORS LAND ON YOUR DOORSTEP? AN INNOVATIVE ORGANISATION IN THE TOWN OF VRINDAVAN IN UTTAR PRADESH HAS FOUND THE ANSWER, TURNING WASTE BAGS INTO BASKETS – AND TRASH INTO CASH!

BY JAMES BAER

**Y**ou know the feeling: your guests have just left after a big celebration at your home, and the place is a mess. Time to get to work and make things tidy. Cleaning up may not be a big inconvenience for most of us, but what do you do when two million visitors land on your doorstep? An innovative organisation in the town of Vrindavan in Uttar Pradesh has found the answer, turning waste bags into baskets – and trash into cash!

Vrindavan is the town with the two-million-guest headache. It has been the place for a party ever since Lord Krishna favoured it for his transcendental pursuits. Since at least the 16<sup>th</sup> century, pilgrims have flocked to Vrindavan. At festival times, hoards of devotees, *sadhus* and saints gather at the temples to perform religious rites. Flowers are sold as offerings, and feasts are consumed. It's a scene familiar to other cities in India, but Vrindavan, with just 70,000 residents, suffers more than most from the influx of pilgrims and tourists over the course of each year. The residents and leaders of the town are happy to see them, but they do wish they'd take their trash home with them.

That, of course, is not about to happen. Instead, floral waste from the rituals is dumped in the river Yamuna, while unconsumed food is thrown into the streets, with no regard for where it goes and who will clean it up.



If it's not collected right away it attracts pigs and stray dogs, and eventually it ends up blocking the drains.

Faced with a cash-strapped municipality that couldn't cope with post-party clean-ups on this scale, a local NGO, the Friends of Vrindavan (FoV), made an unusual offer to the town back in 1997. Privatised the street cleaning, they said, and we'll take care of the central area of Vrindavan for the next two years – for free.

FoV's street cleaning team was a big hit. The dirtiest area of the town was selected and cleaned on a regular basis, along with the frontages of all the major temples.





The team was also invited to provide cleaning services in the run-up to big festivals and other functions. Special garbage collection rickshaws were introduced in place of the smaller old-fashioned handcarts, and ramps were built at garbage facilities to speed up the unloading of all the rubbish. Soon, Vrindavan was looking much improved, to the delight of its residents and the pleasure of its pilgrims.

But this was just the beginning for Friends of Vrindavan. After two years of hard – and free – work, FoV was a household name, and the organisation decided to capitalise on the goodwill it had generated by getting the recipients to subscribe for its services. Businesses in the main market were happy to pay once they saw how improved cleanliness led to increased sales, and the programme was soon replicated in other parts of town.

Eight years later, FoV's programme now combines community participation with environmental





sustainability and financial success. Alongside its street-cleaning activities, FoV has begun a pilot project for daily house-to-house garbage collection in a ward of 1,500 households. The key workers in this are the rag-pickers, members of the harijan community who have traditionally been associated with collecting household waste. FoV has helped them organise to advocate for fair payment for their services, while also providing training to improve their work standards.

Meanwhile, through a process of education, householders are learning to segregate their garbage. The bio-degradable elements are turned into compost, using the so-called vermin method – which has nothing to do with rats! Instead, it's worms that transform the waste into high-quality organic manure. Because it's all-natural, there are no environmental downsides, unlike with chemical fertilisers. The organic manure is sold in



bulk to hotels, ashrams, nurseries and farms, and retail to visitors at FoV's own nurseries. These sales help sustain the cleaning programme.

And what of all the plastic, that non-degradable bane of modern life? This is where trash combines with creativity and crafts in an unusual way. Residents are urged to save their plastic carry bags from shopping centres and the vegetable and fruit markets. Women members of the harijan community recycle these into hand-woven baskets, which are sold internationally. This cottage industry is helping some of the community's poorest to earn a living.

Even with all these achievements under its belt, Friends of Vrindavan is not resting on its laurels. Education efforts continue among schools and homes to encourage residents to reduce and recycle their waste. And plans for the future include an independent venture that will provide the town with its own self-sufficient waste-recycling plant, processing up to 100 tonnes of garbage into high-quality manure daily. FoV hopes that it will provide the region's farmers with an economical alternative to expensive and environmentally harmful chemical fertilisers. Lord Krishna is doubtless smiling upon the bright sustainable future of his favourite playground. ■

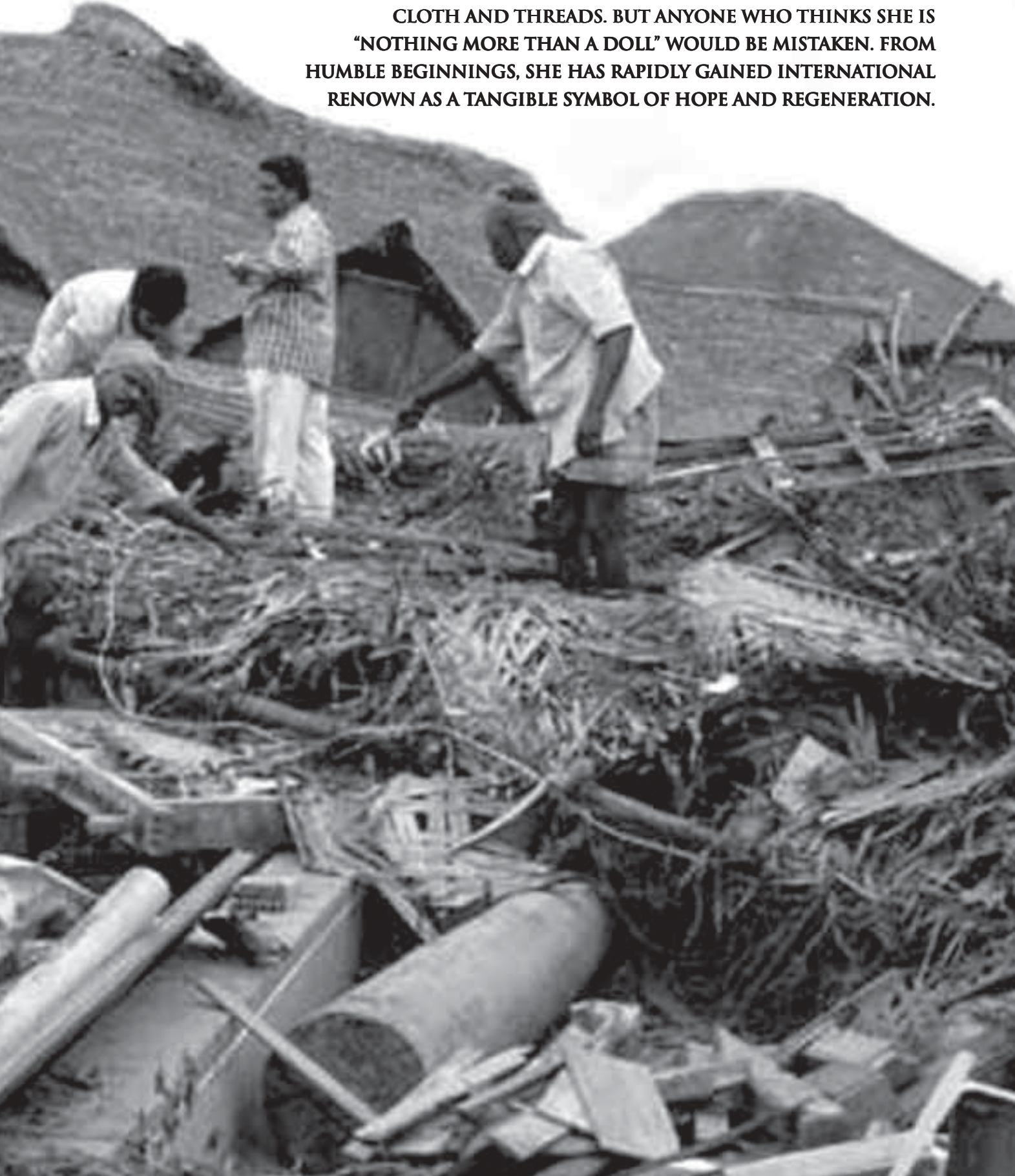




*5,000 families were affected  
in and around Auroville in  
Tsunami, December 2004*

# *Tsunamika,* *An Emblem of Survival*

TSUNAMIKA IS A DOLL MADE OF BITS AND PIECES OF LEFTOVER CLOTH AND THREADS. BUT ANYONE WHO THINKS SHE IS "NOTHING MORE THAN A DOLL" WOULD BE MISTAKEN. FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS, SHE HAS RAPIDLY GAINED INTERNATIONAL RENOWN AS A TANGIBLE SYMBOL OF HOPE AND REGENERATION.



BY RACHEL ARORA

The tsunami that struck South Asia on 26 December 2004 hit the coast of Tamil Nadu hard. Washed away with countless houses and villages was a significant part of the state's fishing industry. With livelihoods destroyed, the possibility of long-term recovery beyond the immediate needs of food and shelter was thrown into question.

Among the groups working to help those affected by the disaster was one started by Auroville, a self-described "intentional community" on the coast of Tamil Nadu. In February 2005, a handicraft workshop was initiated at the Upasana Design Studio in order to teach life skills to the fisherwomen from seven of the villages in and around Auroville. And that was the birthplace of an unlikely but remarkable figure – Tsunamika.

Tsunamika is a doll made of bits and pieces of leftover cloth and threads. But anyone who thinks she is "nothing more than a doll" would be mistaken. From humble beginnings, she has rapidly gained international renown as a tangible symbol of hope and regeneration.

Tsunamika was conceived as a way for women to provide income for themselves, but few anticipated that her popularity would lead to employment for more than 180 fisherwomen. What is more remarkable still is that Tsunamika is not for sale. She is the perfect example of the "gift economy" – people give and receive her as a present, and upon hearing the story that lies behind her, many are inspired to donate time or money to support the burgeoning Tsunamika Relief and Rehabilitation Project. They spread the word about Tsunamika and give her to more people in their turn. The donations received from around the globe enable the women who make Tsunamika to earn income for each doll they create.

Tsunamika now comes in several guises - pin, hair clip, book mark, key chain, pencil decoration, paper clip, and *rakhi*. She is used by teachers, school children, NGOs and corporations in 50 countries. So much more than a mere doll, she has found innovative uses in post-disaster





*Tsunami Survivor with Tsunamika Doll*





*Designers initiated in training the village ladies*

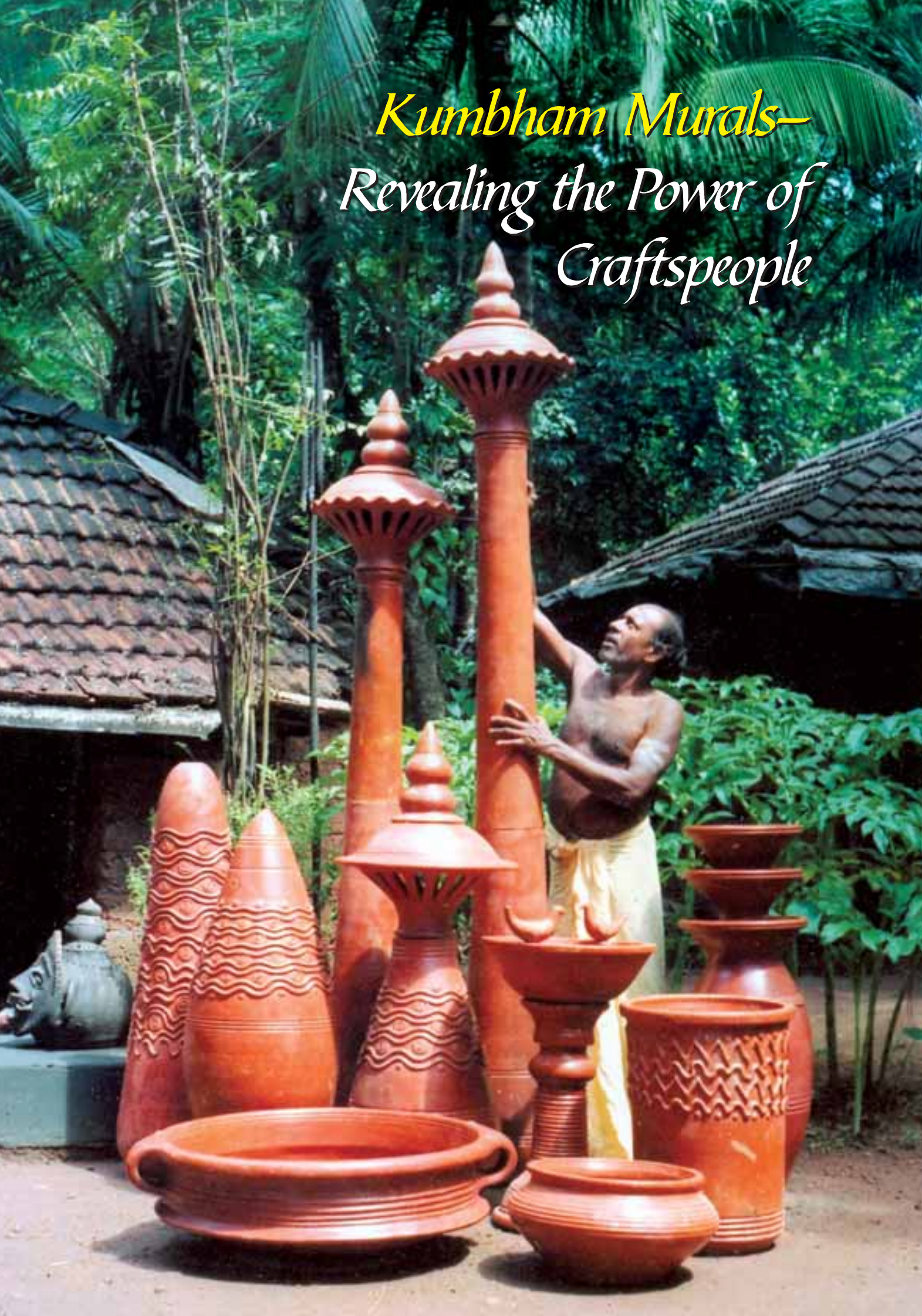


trauma counselling, women's empowerment, and education. As every child knows, dolls are a perfect vehicle for telling and enacting stories, and a Tsunami storybook is in the pipeline. Dolls can also embody the hopes and dreams of those who possess them, and Tsunami's own story connects powerfully with many who receive her, offering hope and inspiration.

Meanwhile, the women who create Tsunami are finding themselves empowered not just economically, but through the deep bond they feel with those who receive her. Their creativity has given them the means to re-establish a livelihood for themselves and their families, and connected them more firmly to the world. ■



*Kumbham Murals—  
Revealing the Power of  
Craftspeople*



FROM HOUSEHOLD ITEMS TO ARCHITECTURAL AND LANDSCAPING PRODUCTS, TABLE ACCESSORIES AND GARDEN FURNITURE, YOU WILL MARVEL AT THE CREATIVE INGENUITY HIDDEN INSIDE TERRACOTTA - A HUMBLE YET MILLENNIUM-OLD CRAFT TRADITION. LOOKING AT THE EXQUISITE PRODUCTS MARKETED BY KUMBHAM MURALS FROM ARUVACODE, A TINY HAMLET NEAR NILAMBUR IN THE MALAPPURAM DISTRICT OF KERALA, YOU WOULD HARDLY BELIEVE THAT THE ART WAS ONCE IN DANGER OF VANISHING. BUT THAT WAS THE SITUATION IN 1993, WHEN JINAN B. STEPPED IN AS CHIEF DESIGNER OF DASTAKARI HAAT SAMITIRI, A CRAFTS NGO, TO TRY AND PULL THE COMMUNITY OUT OF A CREATIVE AND ECONOMIC DEPRESSION. AFTER THE INITIAL PROJECT PERIOD OF 6 MONTHS, JINAN STAYED ON AND ESTABLISHED KUMBHAM MURALS AS A HUB OF COMMUNITY REVIVAL. HERE IS THE UNIQUE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF “DESIGNER MEETS ARTISANS”, AS TOLD BY JINAN B.

BY JINAN B.

I had been leading a semi-nomadic life for some time while experimenting, learning and placing myself within different communities in different parts of the country. That changed when I came to Kerala to work with the potters’ community in Aruvacode. My stay was originally supposed to be for six months. At the time, Kerala was a far cry from the kind of place I would normally find interesting, because it seemed devoid of almost all traditional craft and folk culture.

I had felt impelled to go to Aruvacode by a news report on how a simple potters’ village had changed to become a hub of sex workers. The reason for this drastic transformation was a flood of cheap products made of steel, aluminium and plastic, which quickly replaced pottery in the markets. In earlier times, local artisans had always responded excellently to the local needs of the people, as a strong cultural bond held the user and the producer in unison. But every nuance of modernity brought with it newer difficulties for the potters. With a collapse in the demand for locally made earthenware, the artisans were left a troubled and distressed lot. Unable to keep pace with the fancy needs of the new consumer and deprived of their traditional labour, the women of the



village were forced into sex work. That was the situation I hoped to turn around, by revitalising traditional pottery crafts in the village.

#### A “DO NO HARM” TRAINING METHOD

A fundamental premise of the training at Aruvacode is the cultural, aesthetic and creative superiority of the trainees, compared to the “developed” mainstream of Indian society. So the training programmes basically attempt to help the individuals regain the wisdom and confidence which is embedded within their own communities and culture.

During the first training conducted in 1993, it was very difficult to convince the women about their abilities. We began with drawing straight lines, circles, etc. in free hand and only then moved on to exploring clay and making objects that gave free vent to their imagination. But that changed after I came across a potter girl in Mana Madurai scooping out the opening of a smokeless *choola* in a perfect circle! I realised the futility of importing training methods such as drawing lines and shapes that were better suited to urban people alienated from an artistic heritage. I re-assessed my understanding





of the indigenous/traditional process of transmitting skills, and our subsequent training programmes incorporated rather than ignored these traditional aspects.

My recent work in initiating creativity among the potters' children has convinced me that the intervention of trainers in natural learning processes should be restricted to erecting a fence against outside influences that corrupt the genuine aesthetic sensibility and sense of perfection of the craftspeople. The realisation dawned on me that what is actually happening in the name of teaching and training rural and artisan communities is all too often the corruption of their sense of knowing.

### **DESIGN PROCESS & PRODUCT EVOLUTION**

One of Kumbham's most significant feats has been in the area of design and product development. Ongoing efforts and experimentation have helped Kumbham introduce a range of product designs from household items to architectural and landscaping products, table accessories, garden furniture and even the prototype of a complete living space. I wanted the aesthetic quality of whatever they made to be rooted in their own culture. I therefore limited my role simply to incorporating utilitarian aspects into their creations. It was a slow process and the products that evolved were developed at a natural pace.







All these efforts did not automatically ensure that the potters could now earn a living through their craft. Marketing of crafts poses challenges to the livelihood of a completely different nature. All through the late nineties I had been spending lots of time with architects around the country, trying to get them to apply crafts in their work. But the architects seemed unable to break free from preconceived thought processes. Over the years I have realised that architects, designers and artists – in fact the entire range of professionals churned out by our western-oriented education system – display a complete lack of appreciation of crafts as living traditions. Even when some of them liberally “apply” craft in their works, what they seek is an ethnic effect that feels mummified and museum-curated.

The western model of design methodology is a “factory process” which bypasses craftspeople - their community, their knowledge systems and their culture. Even in a very practical sense, in a country like ours, such a factory approach cannot provide solutions to problems related to livelihood of millions of rural people. What my interactions with architects finally taught me was that it is necessary intervene at several levels to change the attitudes of a host of players, if we are to safeguard the wealth of rural creativity.

Despite these challenges, I’m deeply satisfied that our work has borne fruit. The impoverished artisan community that had been unable to conserve its traditional crafts has become a group of potters whose skills are once again in demand. About 500 products have been introduced by Khumban, and they grace corporate offices, prestigious hotels such as Taj and fine private residences. And they are available at shops in all the major cities of South India as well as Delhi. ■

*To learn more about the work and the products of the Khumban murals: [www.kumbham.org](http://www.kumbham.org)*





## *Katha*

THE AIR IS FILLED WITH THE DELICIOUS AROMA OF FRESHLY BAKED CAKES AND COOKIES. WOMEN CAN BE SEEN HURRYING THROUGH THE KATHA KHAZANA BAKERY, ENGROSSED IN THE TASK OF CREATING MOUTH-WATERING CONFECTIONS THAT HAVE MADE THEIR WAY INTO THE HEARTS AND SOULS OF CONNOISSEURS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, INCLUDING THE TAJ GROUP AND HCL WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT THE HANDS BEHIND THESE DELIGHTS BELONG TO WOMEN WHO WERE ONCE POWERLESS AND INSECURE, ANXIOUS ABOUT WHAT THE FUTURE HELD FOR THEM.



BY RACHEL ARORA

### **A RAVAGED PAST AND A RAY OF HOPE**

The small winding lanes splashed with dirt and grime gave way to tiny mud houses where thousands of children lived in the grip of extreme poverty and unhygienic conditions. In New Delhi's Govindpuri, children with no education, no food and no proper place to live were caught in the claws of ignorance and illiteracy, with no scope for visualising a bright future. Their parents left them unattended, the mothers working as domestic help in big homes and the fathers either unemployed or earning a negligible wage that could not support their family.

Katha Kazana, a self-help group for mothers established by the NGO Khata, emerged as a solitary helping hand for the women of Govindpuri. It all began in 1990, as part of a community revitalisation programme that aimed to be a catalyst between society and underprivileged children, between families and the government working at a grass-roots level. Project Katha Khazana was launched as part of this new co-operative for mothers. Women soon found themselves stepping into new roles, becoming part of the economic mainstream and shouldering the responsibility of providing for their families which had traditionally rested with the menfolk. It was the emergence of a new era in Govindpuri. Katha Khazana is now an independent business, catering lunches for corporate offices and selling bakery products. Its primary customers include corporates like HCL, the Taj Group of Hotels and NGOs like Navdanya and CRY.

### **EDUCATION FOR LIVELIHOODS**

Katha Khazana is just one aspect of what Katha does. Initiated by Geeta Dharmarajan in 1988, the group's main focus is the overall education and entrepreneurial training of the residents of Govindpuri.

The path has not been an easy one, but Katha has been able through education to offer new rays of hope.

Kathashala, a learning centre for children, men and women, introduced the power of creativity to enhance learning. Kathashala is divided into three parts: a pre-school with a crèche for the children of working women, the school proper and a support centre. Each of these place nurture the talents of their students, enabling men, women and children to become skilled workers and even take on the role of trainers themselves.

The crèche for working women provides relief to all mothers in the area by offering them the option of leaving their children to the care of Katha. The nominal enrolment fee of Rs. 100 includes daycare and health facilities, along with a meal each day. Mothers in their turn are educated about child welfare.

### A RADICAL MODEL

Kathashala has evolved as a *gurukul* for all, envisioning an education that will build the abilities and sensitivities of the child, providing her with the skill-set to gain employment in a rapidly changing economic scenario. But this is no ordinary educational institution. Imagine going to a school where there are no books, no fixed syllabus, no fixed teachers or students. That is what Kathashala is! *Katha* means “story”, and the unique and dynamic strategy of storytelling was adopted as the basis for education. A theme is picked quarterly, and stories are formed which stay in sync with the government syllabus on the basis of the child’s level. All subjects, including arithmetic, science, English and arts revolve around the theme. The theme’s various aspects are analysed rigorously to see what can be learned from them. The theme is discussed by teachers at every level, and research sessions are organised, based on which different teaching modules are created. This process is known as *Vidduniya*.

By letting learning revolve around storytelling, art, theatre and music, the imaginations of the children are tapped, enabling them to learn from the environment rather than just becoming bookworms. They are simply less likely to forget things that they have learned from their basic surroundings. *Kathashala* has over one thousand children enrolled in the school today, of which 400 are from the nearby government school, frequenting the support centre for tuition and additional support that will harness and further develop their skills.

### LEARNING AND CREATING

Katha has branched out into other related aspects of training and education. Katha Information Technology and E-commerce School (KITES) is a computer and IT education centre backed by a specialised faculty. There are basic and advanced education courses for children and adults. Meanwhile, at the School of Entrepreneurship the skills and interests of children and adults are identified and they are given specialised training in a variety of arts and crafts. These are later



sold in handicraft marts and exhibitions, as a means of generating revenue for the children and their parents. Various vocational trainings are also offered, including electrical, baking, tailoring and cutting. Katha also arranges for experts to come and buy the students’ products and services, which in turn generates revenue for them. Come Diwali, Katha is buzzing with creative activity, as children create beautiful candles, *diyas* and cards which are sold in *melas* and shops.

Dilli Haat is one of the major buyers of Katha’s handicraft products. The famous crafts market in Delhi is one of the places where you can get a delicious taste of the fresh baked cakes and confections at which the children have become adept. Need a birthday cake? No problem – Dilli Haat is the place to go, and you can enjoy your celebration knowing that the children of Govindpuri are better off as a result.

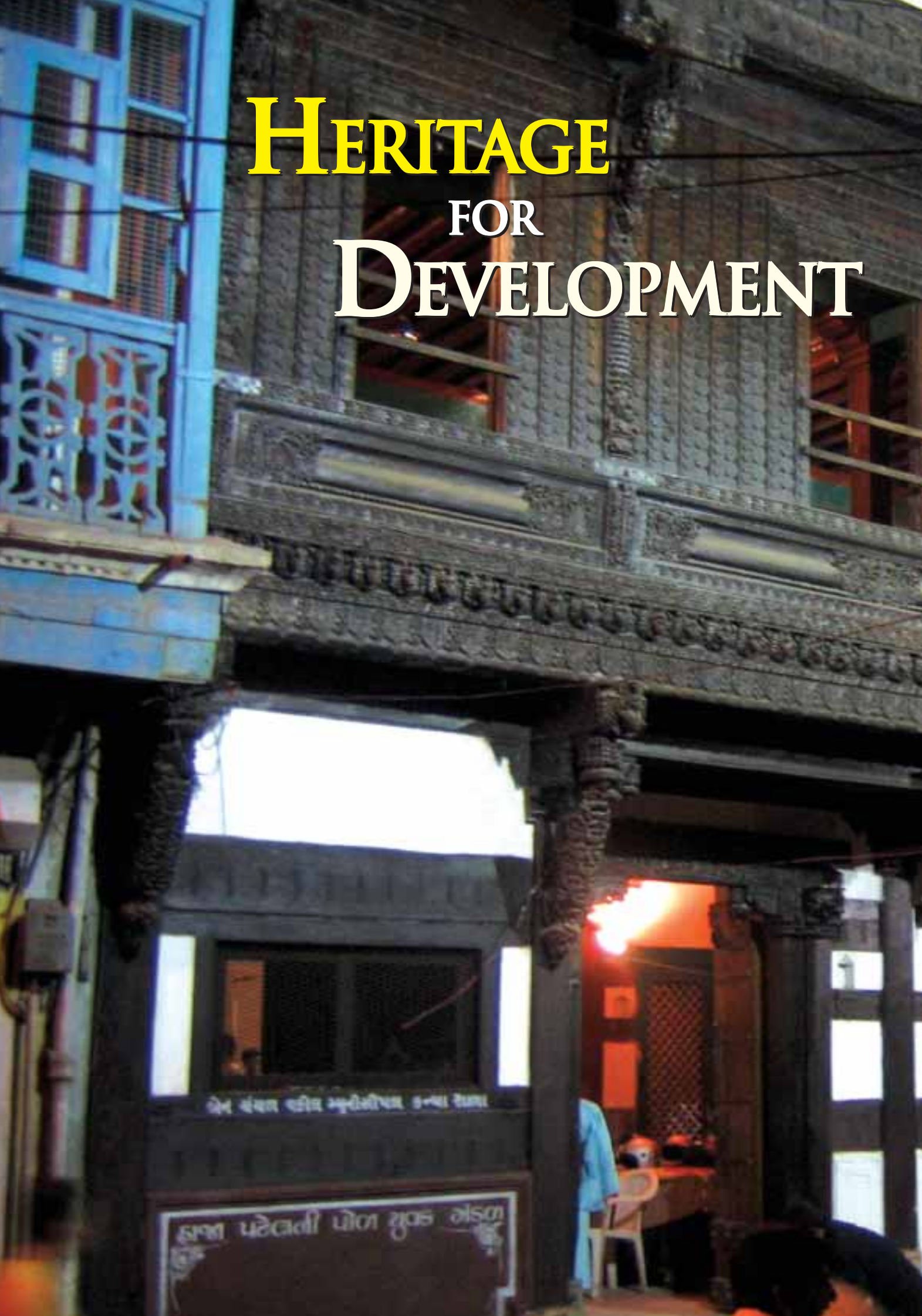
### OUT ON THE STREETS

Katha sees outreach as an important part of its mission, and the students are the best people to do it. Katha has three RTVs fully equipped with computers and books. Every week, children studying in Katha go out, gather street children at traffic signals, and sit below the trees to talk with them about education and its benefits. Sometimes the street children are brought to Katha to enjoy snacks and make new friends. Over 45,000 street children are covered under this project. Excursions to the zoological gardens and museums are organized on a regular basis to enhance the learning process. Katha also has community schools operating in ten remote areas of India where people are living below the poverty line and struggling to survive. Katha Community Schools (KCS) work with the children, who often fall prey to child labour, stressful migration and various forms of abuse.

Katha has brought about a radical change in the lives of economically backward children and their families, helping them to find their voice and providing them with the necessary skill sets to stand on their own feet. With other centres located in Mumbai, Chennai and Calcutta, Katha is using the power of creativity to strive for the establishment of a better society nationwide. ■

To learn more about the extraordinary activities of Katha, consult: [www.katha.org](http://www.katha.org)

# HERITAGE FOR DEVELOPMENT



श्री १०८ श्री गणेशाय नमः

श्री १०८ श्री गणेशाय नमः



# *The Heritage House*

## *A New Horizon for Urban Development*

HERITAGE HOUSES BRING PEOPLE, INITIATIVES, AND MONEY TOGETHER TO MAKE HERITAGE PRESERVATION A VITAL ELEMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. SOME CITIES IN INDIA AND OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD HAVE ALREADY TAKEN THE INITIATIVE TO HOST A HERITAGE HOUSE.

BY NICOLE BOLOMEY



*A house in Ahmedabad: before and after restoration*

**H**ow best to show the residents of an historic city that the heritage of their buildings is one of the best resources for improving their lives?

Restoring a heritage building, even if it is just a simple house, can be a real engine for economic development. But as with so much in life, it's seeing that is believing. That is why the concept of the "heritage house" has become popular in Europe and Asia. A heritage house is generally a traditional house within the heritage zone of a city that is carefully restored. The heritage house makes local people aware of the potential of their own historical buildings, and it encourages support from both public and private groups to use their heritage as a tool for social development. Heritage houses demonstrate how conservation and restoration can reduce poverty,

generate employment, help with waste management, improve water systems, and encourage environmental regeneration as a whole. The local craftsmen involved in the restoration of the heritage house are then able to use their experience in other properties.

The concept of a heritage house includes more than a physical property, however. The house plays host to a team of technical experts, which supports the process of heritage based development of the area, ranging from the organisation of exhibitions and workshops to giving technical advice; and from the development of project proposals to tap a variety of existing government schemes to establishing credit schemes for private restoration projects.





*Consultation with inhabitants, Ahmedabad*

The heritage house serves as a focal point, disseminating information through partnerships with research organisations. It brings people, initiatives, and money together to make heritage preservation a vital element of sustainable development. Some cities in India and other parts of the world have already taken the initiative to host a heritage house.

### **AHMEDABAD—PERFECTLY RESTORED**

A few years ago the city of Ahmedabad took the initiative to develop the Ahmedabad Heritage Centre, which is very similar to a heritage house. A team formed by the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation in collaboration with the French government supports access to credit for homeowners and offers technical advice on architecture and engineering for restoration. 60 buildings have been perfectly restored so far, enhancing not just the appearance of the city to visitors, but the quality of life of the low-income families who live in these houses. In recognition of this, a representative of the Ahmedabad Heritage Centre recently received a Citizens' Award.

*A house in Ahmedabad: before and after restoration*





*Restored Traditional House, Luang Prabang, Lao PDR*

### **LUANG PRABANG—HARMONISED CITY**

The inclusion of the city of Luang Prabang in Laos on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1995 was the impetus to successfully restore its architectural heritage. The establishment of a heritage house brought together several government ministries, private actors and civil society groups, and attracted sizeable amounts of funding from abroad. Many of the six hundred classified buildings have now been restored along traditional lines. The people of Luang Prabang have created what is today an architectural treasure trove, guided in the construction, repair, and extension of their houses by the heritage house. And Laotian cultural ministry officials reckon that this experience has significantly affected not just Luang Prabang's prosperity, but the way development is conducted throughout the city.

### **RHONE RIVER—A NATURAL ENTITY**

Unique in its own way, the Rhone River Centre (*Maison du Fleuve Rhone*) project brings together the knowledge, usages, and territorial entities associated with the most highly developed river of France. The Centre is the country's only cultural and scientific institution of its kind. Its main objective is the promotion of the Rhone River's

cultural, natural, scientific and economic values and its role for common prosperity.

Over the past fifteen years, the Centre has developed cultural projects, conferences, workshops, and pedagogical activities for youth, and a Rhone Festival. An interesting plan in the pipeline is the introduction of a large multimedia unit for presenting programmes on the river environment, using a large-scale three-dimensional model.

### **VARANASI—A PALACE OF RIVER AND HERITAGE**

As one of the oldest cultural hubs of India, the city of Varanasi is steeped in traditional culture, myth, and legend. In order to keep alive this heritage, a network has been established between the local chapter of Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), the Benares Hindu University, the Mayor and Municipal Administration of the city and other stakeholders. Together, they are founding a heritage house called the Palace of River and Heritage. With technical support from the French Rhone River Centre, it is planned to revive a ruined historic property high above the River Ganga. The project will cover a range of activities, from exhibitions to a research library on the history and culture of Varanasi. But the core activity remains the establishment of a technical team giving advice to people who wish to restore their houses. ■



*East Façade of Amber Fort Palace*



*Exquisite Paintings on Ganesh Pol*



## Amber Fort

### *A Conglomeration of Ancient Legacies*

BY JYANESWAR LAISHRAM

**ANY EXPLORATION OF INDIA'S GREATEST TOURIST ATTRACTIONS IS INCOMPLETE WITHOUT A VISIT TO AMBER FORT, NEAR JAIPUR. THE AESTHETIC LURE OF INDIAN ARCHITECTURE IS GREATEST IN ITS ANCIENT MONUMENTS, AND AMBER FORT IS NO EXCEPTION. THIS CONGLOMERATION OF ROYAL PALACES, PRINCELY HAVELIS, AND OTHER ANCIENT STRUCTURES PROMISES TO ENTRANCE VISITORS EVEN MORE, THANKS TO A BOLD AND AMBITIOUS RENOVATION PROGRAMME THAT IS NOW UNDERWAY.**

Located in a valley of the Aravalli Range, the fort palace of Amber is a fascinating blend of both Hindu and Muslim architecture, reflecting the styles of its various builders. Over centuries, they created the complex whose layers of history are still visible today. Amber Fort's imposing appearance against the skyline is enhanced by its stone ramparts and its towers of green quartzite, red sandstone, and white marble. Gateways and *chhatris* are set handsomely into the exterior. From the ramparts there is a panoramic view of Moata Lake, which was used to provide water to Amber, feeding the *hamaams* and fountains inside the fort palace.

Built over a span of 138 years during the reigns of various kings, the fort as it exists today owes most of its construction to Maharajaha Mansing I (1589-1614). The original fortifications metamorphosed into imperial architecture under Maharaja Jaising (1621-77). Although a magnificent fortress for many decades, Amber's glory degenerated after the kingdom's capital shifted to Jaipur during the time of Maharaja Jaising II (1699-1743).

Though much of the fort lies in ruins now, the astute visitor can sense the fascinating times it





represents. Ruined *havelis* remind you of Amber's heyday during the era of the Rajasthani kings. If you have ever seen maharajas travelling on the backs of huge elephants in movies, then you have an idea of the modern visitor can still experience on the approach to any of Amber Fort's three main entrances. Inside, the palace offers a sequence of courtyards progressing from the most public to the most private. Most of the courts for royal functions were constructed on the east side with views of Moata Lake, whereas other support activities were housed on the west side.

Every corner of the palace has its own particular function. For example, Jaleb Chowk – the lowest one – was for mass gatherings. The Diwan-i-aam was used for public hearings and the Diwan-i-khaas for the main administrative functions, while Zanana Chowk (also known as Mansingh Mahal) was a residential area. Of all the courts, Diwan-i-khaas – the most important in the political hierarchy – is the most formal, with exuberant architectural decorations.

It is easy to sense the bygone beauty of these courtyards, where baradaris, water bodies, gardens, and gateways articulated the settings. The entire palace is punctuated by vividly decorated chambers. There are frescos painted in vegetable colours, such as on Ganesh *pol*, the elaborate mirror works of Sheesh Mahal, artefacts in stone and sandalwood, and the dazzling paintings on the walls of the dining room. The gorgeous latticework of *jalis* adorns most of the

**INSIDE, THE PALACE OFFERS A SEQUENCE OF DIFFERENT COURTYARDS PROGRESSING FROM THE MOST PUBLIC TO THE MOST PRIVATE. MOST OF THE COURTS FOR ROYAL FUNCTIONS WERE CONSTRUCTED ON THE EAST SIDE WITH VIEWS OF MOATA LAKE, WHEREAS OTHER SUPPORT ACTIVITIES WERE HOUSED ON THE WEST SIDE.**

facades, modulating the harsh light and creating patterns on the floors and walls of the *havelis*.

Despite the activity generated by the tourism industry, Amber Fort is more resonant of former glory than of present-day magnificence. A certain melancholy can still be felt in the rather decayed edifices dotting the rugged landscape. Abandoned in 1728, the fort palace remained unused or misused for more than 277 years. But now the present government of Rajasthan has embarked upon an ambitious plan to bring the ancient fort back to life. In 2005, it initiated a conservation report together with a proposed renovation and assessment plan for the entire complex. Many areas were found to be suffering serious decay due to seepage of moisture, roof leakage, and blocked drains. In addition, modern architectural accretions disfigured the historic ambience of the monument.

*One of the Courtyards inside Amber Fort*



*Lake and hills near Amber Palace*



*Interior and grill work of Amber Palace*



*Interiors*

In order to implement the renovation, Amber Management and Development Authority (ADMA) was established with funds from the government for the renovation project in 2006 and 2007 for which conservation architect Dr. Minakshi Jain was appointed. As of now, the authority has started to restore two of the courtyards, the west façade and the eastern entry areas. In their attempt to restore the spatial ambience of the monument, the authority has removed various modern buildings around the fort. Funds have been allocated to implement tourist attractions such as sound and light shows and elephant alighting platforms. It is estimated that 45 percent of the lost images of Amber palace will be restored by the end of the project. The authority expects that the west areas will be fully revitalised within two years.

The strategic plan for Amber Fort focuses not just on the fort palace but on tourism as a broad conservation and development strategy. This goes beyond physical renovation to cover visitor management, the discreet addition of physical



*Carved Marble Panel*

*North Wall of Jaleb Chawk*



*West court area, passage being repaired*

**GREAT EFFORT IS BEING EXPENDED TO RE-ESTABLISH THE REAL ESSENCE OF THE FORT PALACE OF AMBER. BUT STILL AN IMMENSE AMOUNT OF EXPERTISE, MANPOWER, AND RESOURCES IS REQUIRED.**



*Ceiling*

facilities for tourists, and tourism promotion. An estimated Rs 48,33,84,000 has been sanctioned for the overall reconstruction strategic plan.

Great effort is being expended to re-establish the real essence of the fort palace of Amber, and an immense amount of expertise, manpower, and resources is still required. It is estimated that funds for subsequent phases in 2008 and beyond will be raised through partnership and donation drives within and outside India. But there is no doubt that the fort palace of Amber is soon going to sport a new look – one derived from olden days. You will have to be there to experience it! ■



## Deogarh

BY MITA KAPUR

**DEOGARH MAHAL IS A STRONGHOLD OF ONE OF THE SIXTEEN UMRAOS OF MEWAR, DATING BACK 300 YEARS. TEN YEARS AGO, NAHAR SINGH JI, THE RAWAT OF DEOGARH, OPENED THE FORMIDABLE GATES OF HIS PALACE TO GUESTS, GIVING NEW MEANING TO WORDS LIKE RESTORATION, CONSERVATION AND HERITAGE.**

**S**tark, silent boulders rose out of the Earth. The road snaked through the rugged terrain, past cactus flowers and stretches of sun-burnt grass. The brown earth blushed purple under my gaze, the landscape preparing me for the drama that was to unfold. The gold of the desert climbed up the stone and lime walls of the mahal, zooming in on the domes, the courtyards that beckoned, the terraces that lured. Immense, powerful, standing tall, like a sentinel. What was it? A time capsule? Antiquity played silent music as I walked up the stone steps smoothed by millions of footsteps that had trudged up to the palace. I knelt down to touch the stones, wanting to feel their oldness, to hold history in my palms. History plays a virtual reality game here. Ages ambush. I was shunted into a past which thrives in the now. A painted arched doorway with a temple of the 'kuldevta'. Hands joined together instinctively: the place







commanded respect. This was Deogarh Mahal, a stronghold of one of the sixteen Umraos of Mewar, dating back 300 years. Ten years ago, Nahar Singh ji, the Rawat of Deogarh, opened the formidable gates of his palace to guests.

Up till now, words like “restoration”, “conservation” and “heritage” had remained a rather confusing cacophony. But as I climbed higher, turned into narrow passages, reached the courtyard with the marble throne and was accosted by old paintings, huge cauldrons, cracks on the walls, a heavily carved wood *palki* that served as a bar trolley (big enough to be a bed, should you get drunk!), those words began to sink in and make sense. But this was just the beginning. A labyrinth of uneven staircases, narrow alleys, brackets, trellised windows and doorways unfolded the plot. Mysteries unraveled slowly. Each turn that I thought would take me away, brought me closer to horses streaking by, swords clashing, battle cries. Each room opened up a tale. There was romance and intrigue, espionage and action, dreams and daring, passion and pilgrimage. Yes, spaces translated to feelings. Yes, interiors spoke of the spirit. Yes, walls stood witness to the passage of centuries, just as they were built. As they were meant to be.

I didn’t need an aerobics instructor with all the “step ups and step downs”. The sheesh mahal, room no.1,





took my breath away. Belgian mirrors burst light into myriad hues. Nahar Singh ji's cradle, its original red velvet preserved under a glass top, served as a table. Plump cushions in royal reds and ermines for you to lie back on and look into mirrors that reflected back so much more than just appearances. The sitting room in the suite, where I chose to have my tea by the jharokha like a maharani, looked into the main courtyard. Even the tea was poured from a brass *ketli* with a handle. Bunches of grapes glowing from Murano glass lit up the ceiling. The arch behind the bed draped in coloured beads merged into the traditionally patchworked bedcover. A love seat sunk deep into an arched window, a *munshi* style writing table, old sepia photographs of the family casually clustered on tables. Ranjit Singh's portrait sparks off stories of his love for



opulence, evident in the grandeur of the sheesh mahal he had made.

Nahar Singh ji, an educationalist and a historian, has inculcated in his family a deep understanding of the nexus between history and restoration. “How that age was lived and by whom” is the basic principle of all restoration work done in the palace. The family employed no architect, but took the work into their own hands, with the three ladies, Bhooratna Prabha Kumari, Namrata Kumari and Bhavna Kumari being the creative brains of the restoration. The brothers, Veer Bhadra and Shatrunjay put into action all that was planned. Each room has its own character and colour, its own “vintage”. Bhavna recalls pulling out old blocks of a particular period to have fabric printed to suit each room, to suit the person who had lived there and his

period. An intrinsic and detailed study of Deogarh’s history in all its components has gone into the making of the mahal. Old furniture, paintings, frescoes and architectural styles are used as emblems to create a recurrent theme. The lotus on the domes and arches finds itself repeated in a lotus-shaped swimming pool.

It’s a tour in itself to go around the palace. Each room reveals an effort that has been not simply to redo walls and halls, but to create a whole atmosphere, keeping its culture alive. Walking on the terraces (there are so many), the town and the lake sprawl before you. The domes are symbols of life itself. The circular *ghada* denotes wealth, the next circular piece, *amal* denotes health, the third circle stands for prosperity. Earthy charm, rooted in the local *mitti* forms the weft and warp, the corners and the coves of the place. “We are



unique in our oldness. We are not a “*fad property*”, haven’t used art deco or zen designs to sell ourselves.” It’s just simply them. Lamps stand on elephant *ghantis*, old cannon balls round off flower beds instead of rounded river pebbles “imported” from the Ganges. Silk borders on curtains that were designed like old *chicks*, *pankhis* and brass torches used as lights. Deogarh serves as a case study in product originality. It is an experience, not just another heritage hotel.

Bijay Vihar, named after Bijay Singh ji has railway shutter windows and old style railway sinks. The bed sits regally with a backdrop of intricate jaali work and you can bathe nestled in *mehrab*s with pigeons cooing on the ledge. The Jogmaya has an old Durga temple in the bedroom. A heavy riveted wooden door guards it. A high dome over the bed gives the room an uplifted feel. Red muslin curtains, velvet love seats, a writing table and coloured glass windows add to the enchanting mood.



The Gokul Ajara is a vital combination of low dado of painted processions, gopis surrounding Krishna, with inlaid mirrors in floral motifs on the walls. Low ceilings give this room a warm, cosy ambience. You step through the study area into the bedroom, old carved and hand painted wooden chests work as bed side tables. The blinds, sheets, bed spreads are all in colours that are very Rajasthan, the fabric and the block prints are local. The bathing robe, tailored in the *anrakha* style, is made from local fabric by the residents of Deogarh. The bathing area is partially open to the skies with a Gulmohar peeping in. Relaxing in the Jacuzzi strewn with rose petals, holding a fistful of sun drenched sky...sheer bliss!

The *homto* has an elephant procession running on its walls in natural stone colours that have faded over the years. Kishan Kunj, a Hawa Mahal look-alike, has a canopied ceiling of stars, trellised windows in stained glass evoking images from Krishna's life. Kishan Singh ji, to whom this room is devoted, was a believer. Ironically, Jaswant Niwas, where a plot to poison Jaswant Singh ji's beloved queen was thwarted, now serves as the honeymoon suite. (The queen was saved by the Rawat himself who tasted the poisoned food before she could.) Mayur Mahal makes you behold a peacock in coloured glass and semi-precious stones as you climb down an old wrought-iron stair case from the sitting area into the bedroom, which has windows running down from the ceiling.

The West Wing, originally the *zenana*, the Mythology Wing, the Chitrashala dedicated to artists like Raja Ravi

Verma and Bagta, Baijnath, Chokha, all from the Deogarh School of painting, valorise culture and a very Rajput grain of life. This word in fact means means *raj* (*dharti*) ka *put* (*putra*) not, as is commonly believed, the son of kings. As *raj puts*, they have done a worthy job of restoring and conserving the ages within the walls, the cracks, the crevices. Copper switches, sinks and taps are all locally manufactured. It's quite clear that slick development like shiny marble was not the aim. Instead, it was to protect a way of life. It would have been a folly to fill a 16<sup>th</sup>-century fort with French period furniture. The terraces are used for moonlit dinners, cane *moodas* are left casually for guests to sit on and take in the sounds, smells and sights of the town. Serenity lives here. It seeps into your being as you meander your way through narrow passages, peep out of balconies, cross courtyards, encircle a huge *kadai* which balances your morning cuppa. Simplicity is rampant. Belief in the old is what is new. Fifty-five rooms spell out "We are your home, while you are here."

All this and yet much more. All hi-tech facilities are available. The air conditioning is non-obstrusive, the Oyster showers melt into mosaic walls, Internet connections are in place. There are televisions, but who needs them around here? And why go in for a massage in a regular padded massage room when you can get it done under the sky, with the crisp morning breeze fanning you, birds chirping and soft silence kneading out all the tension knotted in your shoulders? Antiquity adds a freshness. In *Khamagani hokum*, reverberates the cultural identity of Deogarh. ■



## *Festival to Boost*

**TOURISTS THRONG JAIPUR TO WITNESS THE FINE ART AND RICH TRADITIONS OF THE CITY, BUT THEY RARELY GIVE MUCH THOUGHT TO THE LIVELIHOODS OF THE ARTISTS WHOSE HANDIWORK OR PERFORMANCES ARE SEEN AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF THE CITY'S FAMOUS PALACES AND OTHER MONUMENTS.**

BY JAMES BAER

Rajasthan is known as a land of colours and festivity. This culturally vibrant state offers lively cities, golden deserts, magnificent forts and rich crafts. In recent years, visitors to Jaipur – the famous Pink City and the state's capital – might be forgiven for thinking that there is more year-round music and festivity filling its streets than ever before, and they would be right. For that, they have the efforts of some creative and entrepreneurial residents of Jaipur to thank, people who have heard the fascinating and complex stories of Rajasthan's performing artists and craftspeople, and seen the sorrow that sometimes lies behind their smiles.

Tourists throng Jaipur to witness the fine art and rich traditions of the city, but they rarely give much thought to the livelihoods of the artists whose handiwork or performances are seen against the backdrop of the city's famous palaces and other monuments. These are the people who have preserved the traditional crafts for which Rajasthan is renowned, carrying forward a legacy passed on to them for generations. Yet thousands of local artists live in extreme poverty and wake up each day wondering how they will survive. Their meagre earnings are incapable of supporting their families.

This is the paradox of Rajasthan: while rich in traditional arts, crafts, historic habitations and cultural resources, it is considered one of the most backward of India's states, with low economic and life security indices. It has an unparalleled range of arts, crafts and traditional practices still passed on within the family. But as economic pressures mount and traditional ways are questioned, such practices are being abandoned by the younger generation, in a process that will be inevitable unless arts and crafts are connected to increased income.



The threat of a vanishing cultural heritage galvanised a group of concerned citizens of Jaipur who already had a successful history working with crafts, arts, education, heritage and tourism. In 2002 they formed the Jaipur Virasat Foundation (JVF) to address the socio-economic crisis being faced by the state's artists and craftspeople. The Foundation is motivated by a vision that goes far beyond the concept of charity, to make traditional culture economically viable while at the same time promoting Rajasthan on the international stage.

It's a big challenge: how do you meet the goals of protecting cultural diversity, alleviating poverty and creating sustainable economic development? JVF founder trustee Faith Singh believed it was possible to find a way of empowering both the urban and rural poor, enabling them to earn a secure livelihood by providing a basis to combine traditional skills with the needs and opportunities of modernisation. Singh's confidence came from her twenty-five years of experience working with the clothing line Anokhi, which she founded. Anokhi has sustained the year-round, full-time livelihood of several hundred people employed in designing and producing block-printed fabrics, and has inspired numerous similar



enterprises. Singh was convinced that what had worked for one traditional Rajasthani industry, enabling its practitioners to compete and succeed in a globalised world, could work for other aspects of culture also. But with such a diverse range of cultural practices and products, a different approach would be needed.

That approach is called "Festivals for Development." JVF decided that the best way to showcase Rajasthan's cultural traditions – and to make it economically attractive for their practitioners to keep on working in





the field – was to take a leaf out of the book of the many cities round the world that offer cultural festivals. And so, for the past five years, the Jaipur Heritage International Festival has offered a range of cultural events – performances, exhibitions and shows – that showcase traditional arts and crafts. While based on the Pink City, the Festival draws artists, performers and craftspeople from around Rajasthan, and visitors from much further afield than that. What began as a community initiative, organised by a group of committed citizens and professionals, has grown to be supported in its more recent incarnations by the Governments of India and Rajasthan, by UNESCO and by motivated individuals and companies.

From this beginning, the Festivals for Development programme has taken new directions. Spring 2007





saw the Jaipur Literature Festival presented in conjunction with the Heritage International Festival, attracting such world-famous writers as Salman Rushdie and William Dalrymple. In October 2007, JVF has expanded its programme to present a Rajasthan International Folk Festival (RIFF) in Jodhpur. Jodhpur RIFF highlighted some of the region's most vital cultural assets – the singers, dancers, instrumentalists and storytellers of more than 15 Rajasthani folk communities, many unknown as yet to the outside world. Joining them will be performing artists of national and international standing, making Jodhpur RIFF a unique combination of local and world music.

These festivals are not just a short burst of activity. Quite apart from the constant planning that is necessary to develop a varied and full programme for discerning audiences, Festivals for Development stimulates year-round creative work in local schools and communities, inspiring innovative interventions in cultural tourism, crafts and design. The hope is to combine these with initiatives in urban planning, management and restoration that are being undertaken by the state government of Rajasthan, JFV and others to conserve the historic environment of Rajasthan's cities.

Notwithstanding the annual struggle for financial resources – sponsors and donors – to make each year's festivals happen, and the daunting long-term challenge of taking the festival model to other towns and cities in the region, JVF is optimistic about the future. Faith Singh prefers to look far forward, just as the traditions JVF is working to preserve reach far into the past. She observes, "The late Komal Da, the great authority on Rajasthan cultural traditions and local knowledge, who opened the eyes of so many of us to



the value of local knowledge and arts and crafts, advised me at the beginning of this journey called JVF that we should think for seven generations."

While busy planning for this year's and next year's festivals, JVF keeps a clear eye on its long-term vision: that tradition need not fall victim to inevitable modernisation, but instead can be a vital component of that process, delighting visitors and tangibly enriching the quality of life of some of Rajasthan's poorest but most creative citizens. ■



Hoysaleswara Temple, Halebid

## *Hoysala Heritage: A New Destination for Bangalore's Yuppies ?*

TOURISM ALL OVER THE WORLD LARGELY RELIES ON LOCAL HERITAGE AND CULTURAL RESOURCES. THE CULTURAL WEALTH OF INDIA IS NOT LIMITED TO ITS MASSIVE MONUMENTS AND SITES, BUT IS ALSO FOUND IN ITS NATURAL LANDSCAPE AND THE CHARM OF EVERYDAY LIFE, INCLUDING OLD HOUSES, STREETS AND MARKETS, RITUALS AND FESTIVALS, CRAFTS, DANCES, MUSIC AND TRADITIONAL CUISINE... TOURISM NEEDS TO LEARN HOW TO PROMOTE CULTURAL ASSETS IN AN INCLUSIVE MANNER, IF IT IS EVER TO BE SUSTAINABLE. SUCH IS THE CHALLENGE FOR KARNATAKA STATE GOVERNMENT, WHICH, ALONG WITH UNESCO, HAS INITIATED THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW HERITAGE ITINERARY ON THE HOYSALA KINGDOM IN THE SOUTH OF THE STATE.



BY SHIVAA RAWAT & MOE CHIBA

Driving down from Bangalore on a bumpy, dusty road for four hours amid farms and small towns of unplanned modernity, one is not prepared for the spectacular sight that awaits at Belur and Halebeedu: spectacular temples that take the breath away with their fine detailing and skilled craftsmanship. Located in the Hassan district of Karnataka, the sites of Belur and Halebeedu were the capital seats of the Hoysala Empire from the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century until the early 14<sup>th</sup> century CE.

According to Karnataka folklore, a young man, Sala, encountered a tiger near a temple which he struck dead. And as the word “strike” translates to “hoy” in Hale Kannada (Old Kannada), thus the name Hoysala was derived. The Hoysala Empire of South India is known for its exquisite temple architecture, which is an offshoot of the Western Chalukyan architectural style, with distinct Dravidian influences. And the Chennakesava Temple at Belur and the Hoysaleswara Temple at Haleebidu are two of the finest examples of Hoysala art.

Begun over 900 years ago, the Chennakesava Temple took 103 years to complete. Its facade is filled with intricate sculptures and friezes, with no portion left blank. The Hoysaleswara temple, too, is a masterpiece in terms of its sculptural detailing and walls that are covered with an endless variety of gods and goddesses, animals and dancing girls. This magnificent temple, guarded by a Nandi Bull, was never completed, despite 86 years of labour.

The Hoysala temples are an architectural marvel: built on a platform 3-5 feet high, they have a star-shaped plan and are made of balapada kallu, or soapstone, which is elaborately carved. The temple sculptures themselves replicate this emphasis on delicate craftsmanship, with a focus on depicting the beauty and grace of the feminine physique.

However, these temples are not the only marvels left by the Hoysala empire. If you are willing to roam around Belur and Halebeedu on the bumpy unpaved roads, you will be amazed to discover a number of further jewels of Hoysala architecture, hidden within small villages like Belavadi, Arkere or Doddagaddavalli.

Besides the beautifully carved temple complexes, the Hoysala region also abounds in lakes, tanks and step wells that are well worth seeing. The distinctive regional style is further reinforced by the houses, with white, single- or double-storey walls topped by sloping, clay-tiled roofs. The paved stone streets, and the houses’ ornate doors, their handmade clay tiles and decorative brackets and columns add to the ambience of these historic towns. Entering one of these houses offers a wonderful surprise at the sight of massive, richly carved pillars which, the owner will proudly explain, date back to the time of his great great-grandfather.

Recognising the immense potential of the region as a major tourist destination, especially for Bangalore yuppies craving









an escape from the daily hassle of noise and traffic in the big city, Karnataka State, in association with UNESCO, initiated a process in 2006 of developing a new heritage itinerary stretching from Belur and Halebeedu to the adjoining villages, on the theme of the Hoysala Kingdom. The itinerary aims to expand the benefits of tourism across the region, by encouraging tourists to stay at least a night or two in Belur and Halebeedu and spend their money in ways that will benefit the local population.

The aim of the State Government is not to create yet another luxury tourist facility exclusively for the rich foreigners. Too often around the world, enterprises like that are established to the detriment of the needs of the local population. Karnataka is following a different model, one that realises that tourism must serve local empowerment, because a development strategy which does not secure the support of local population can never be sustainable. This means, for example, providing not just the infrastructure for hotels or guest houses, but improving basic infrastructure for the local population, including water, electricity supply, sewage and garbage disposal.

Giving local people the chance to benefit economically from tourism is just the beginning of Karnataka's holistic approach. Hand in hand with this goes a strategy to help local communities appreciate the importance of preserving the local heritage and culture that constitute the primary assets for tourism development. In the context of growing globalisation and urbanisation, the cultural monuments on one's own doorstep can easily be seen as unfashionable or unimportant. Belur and Halebeedu have suffered from a general disregard for the ancient structures beyond the main temples. Fort walls, moats and

*Garuda Pillar, 12th Century Old Kannada Inscription, Halebidu*





water gates have either been demolished or have not been fully excavated. New construction around the temples threatens to undermine the unique heritage value of the sites, depriving the local population of their most precious asset for empowerment. Promoting an appreciation of their rich cultural heritage amongst the local people is therefore very important, and will become easier as the local population begins to benefit from the tourism in the region.

From this point on, possibilities abound. Tourism doesn't have to be limited to visiting the major temples: it can provide alternative, supplementary means of employment for the local population. Traditional handicrafts such as soapstone sculptures and wood carvings using traditional motifs can be marketed with both traditional and innovative designs. People can be trained to cater for foreign visitors, presenting local cuisine in an attractive manner. And the plentiful number of local associations for dance and music could be mobilised. The queen of Hoysala was known to be an excellent dancer: Karnataka's plans for the sites could keep her spirit alive and well, to the delight of visitors and the well-being of Hoysala's modern-day inhabitants. ■

## *Indian Heritage Passport Programme UNESCO Endorsed Quality Heritage Tourism*

Tourism is a double-edged sword. While it is one of the fast growing business sectors in India, contributing to 6% of India's GDP, its economic and social impacts remain very uneven between and within States. The impact of large-scale tourism on the environment is often negative; the majority of the revenue generated by large international tour operators tends not to flow to the destination but back to the country of the operators; and while tourism benefits from the marketing of natural and cultural heritage, heritage preservation rarely benefits from the revenue that is generated.

In support of the Indian Government's efforts to make a tangible link between tourism and local empowerment, UNESCO, with the endorsement of the Union Ministry of Tourism and Culture, launched in 2006 the concept of the "Indian Heritage Passport" as a means to market quality tourism destinations, facilities and initiatives which are aimed foremost at encouraging the holistic protection and promotion of local cultural and natural heritage, the education of travellers, and concern for the local environment and local employment generation. Only those tourism destinations and facilities complying with some of the above criteria will be promoted under the Heritage Passport label. Five States – Karnataka, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal – have agreed to launch pilot projects for the programme. The Karnataka Hoysala Itinerary will be one of such itineraries to be promoted under the Heritage Passport.

## *Linking Heritage and Livelihood*

*Kishkinda Trust in Hampi, Anegundi*

LINKING HERITAGE TO LIVELIHOOD IS NOT ALWAYS AN EASY TASK, AS EFFORTS TO CONSERVE TRADITIONAL SETTINGS IMPOSE CERTAIN CONSTRAINTS ON THE LOCAL POPULATION. NO ROAD WIDENING, NO POSSIBILITY OF NEW CONSTRUCTIONS; THE OBLIGATION TO MAINTAIN THE TRADITIONAL FAÇADES OF HOUSES AND TO USE SPECIFIC TRADITIONAL MATERIALS FOR CONSTRUCTION... IT'S NO WONDER IF HERITAGE IS OFTEN PERCEIVED BY THE LOCAL POPULATION AS HAMPERING DEVELOPMENT RATHER THAN BEING A SOURCE OF THEIR EMPOWERMENT. THE KISHKINDA TRUST REMEDIES SUCH A VIEW BY BRINGING LOCALS INTO HERITAGE BASED SMALL-SCALE BUSINESSES. AMONG THE TRUST'S MANY PROGRAMMES IS THE ADAPTIVE RE-USE OF TRADITIONAL HOUSES AS TOURISM FACILITIES. MS. SHAMA PAWAR SHAPIRO, THE FOUNDER TRUSTEE OF THE KISHKINDA TRUST, RECOUNTS HER EXPERIENCE.



*World Heritage Site of Hampi: an elaborated traditional water system combining utility and architectural beauty*

BY SHAMA PAWAR SHAPIRO

**A**negundi, the cradle city of Hampi, is located to the north of the Tungabhadra River. The village has a distinct character, with humble, whitewashed flat-roofed houses with inner labyrinths that contrast with the four main roads that form a simple square.

With its many ancient temples, Anegundi falls within the core zone of the Hampi World Heritage Site, declared by UNESCO in 1986, thus requiring the local population to maintain its traditional buildings and appearance. However, for the villagers of Anegundi to be truly involved in conserving their historical surroundings, they needed to be self-sufficient.

The Kishkinda Trust (TKT) was born out of this simple insight: that for any heritage conservation to take place in

Anegundi, it must first and foremost benefit the people of Anegundi economically, culturally and socially. Raising community awareness and participation in heritage conservation for development are conducted from the community training centre established with UNESCO support in 2001.

With further support from the Ministry of Tourism and UNDP, TKT initiated the Rural Tourism Project in 2004, aiming to link tourism with the preservation of the physical and cultural characteristics of Anegundi village. By converting several old houses into tourism facilities, the project has provided expanding employment opportunities to the local people, enhancing their lives.

Among our activities, the *rangoli*, or clean street competition, was one which made a huge impact on the improvement of the village atmosphere. *Rangoli* is a simple and traditional method of keeping the entry of the





*Handicraft shop settled in a traditional house in Anegundi*



*Landscape of Hampi - Anegundi*



*A Traditional House in Anegundi*





*Traditional house converted into a guest house*



*Seens from the village of Anegundi*







*Handloom workshop: craft development constitutes one of the important activities of The Kishkinda Trust*

house pleasant and pure, with the floor swept with cow dung and decorated with rice or stone powder patterns. The competitions greatly encouraged the women villagers to be part of the heritage conservation endeavour.

The simple yet versatile spaces of the old houses really spur the imagination of The Kishkinda Trust's members to develop various uses for the structures. The buildings have been converted into attractive guest houses, craft shops, libraries and restaurants. Seeing the growing interest among the community is exciting. No fewer than 90 house owners have approached us so far to restore their houses as tourism facilities.

There is no dearth of inspiration for TKT as it comes from what surrounds us. The striking boulder formations, the river and the combination of rice and banana fields contrasting with massive stone structures create an atmosphere of miniature paintings.

The simplicity of the village setting of Anegundi provides a real sense of comfort that any visitors would be happy to experience, especially after seeing the awesome monuments of Hampi. Today, several areas within the village have become small oases, inspiring visitors and the local community alike with the benefits of conserving heritage as source of local empowerment. This is a real achievement for us, and one we're very proud of. ■

*(Established in 1997, The Kishkinda Trust (TKT) assists the villagers of Anegundi at a grassroots level to build capacity in order to incubate businesses and to conserve their historical heritage. TKT runs several unique programmes which are seamlessly integrated with the lives of the local people and which empower them economically. To know more about the programmes of the Trust, visit <http://www.thekishkindatrust.org>.)*





*The standing remains of the bazaar at Vittala Temple, one of the four grand temple complexes in ancient Vijayanagara, now part of the World Heritage Site of Hampi*



## *Innovations That Work*

WHAT DO INDIA'S MOST ANCIENT MONUMENTS HAVE TO DO WITH ITS MOST RECENT INNOVATIONS? HOW DO HISTORY AND TECHNOLOGY FIT TOGETHER? STROLLING ROUND THE PRIMEVAL, BOULDER-STREWN LANDSCAPE OF HAMPi IN KARNATAKA, AND MARVELLING AT THE RUINED TEMPLES THAT HAVE BEEN PRESERVED THERE, MODERNITY CAN SEEM A LONG WAY AWAY. BUT THIS UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE, ONE OF TWENTY-SEVEN SUCH SITES IN INDIA, MAY SOON BE PART OF A VERY CONTEMPORARY KIND OF PROCESS, AS A HOTBED OF EXPERIMENTATION FOR TECHNOLOGIES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

BY JYANESWAR LAISHRAM AND ANTOINE POIRSON



**W**orld Heritage Status virtually guarantees that a cultural site will see an increasing influx of visitors, and UNESCO and the State Government of Karnataka are focusing on the development of Hampi for tourism in ways that will enhance, rather than damage, the area and contribute to the economic well-being of its local residents.

One of the challenges is to provide proper facilities for visitors to the Hampi site, which extends over nearly one hundred square miles. Water, electric power and transportation all need to be provided without polluting or otherwise damaging the environment. After all, tourists eventually leave after their visit, but the residents call Hampi home. Low-cost, environmentally friendly and sustainable: these are the watch-words for the technology that is needed at Hampi. And a possible source for a range of solutions has emerged in the Honey Bee Network. It's not high-tech, but it is undeniably creative, innovative – and Indian!

The Honey Bee Network is a coalition of independent organizations that do research on grassroots innovations and ideas that come forth not from academia or research laboratories, but from people in towns and villages around the country who see problems and dream up practical solutions. They are inventors pure and simple, focused on finding simple but effective ways to make life easier, more productive, or more efficient, particularly in the many parts of the country where infrastructure is deficient. Often their ideas are based on cultural knowledge that is specific to their region, but the applicability may be much wider.

Over the past ten years, with the support of the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad (IIMA) and with active collaboration of the entities such as Society for Research and Initiative for Sustainable Technologies and Institutions (SRISTI), National Innovation Foundation (NIF), Gujarat Grassroots Innovation Augmentation Network (GIAN) as well as volunteers from all over India, Honey Bee Network has gathered an extensive database of nearly 10,000 grassroots innovations, forming a knowledge centre for formal and informal scientists, policy makers, other innovators, green entrepreneurs, and educationalists all over the world. Some of these ideas have already been developed as commercially viable products, and UNESCO is hopeful that some of the best of them will be tried out at Hampi, to help the site's sustainable development as a tourist attraction. If they are as successful, their use could be extended to other World Heritage sites. Take a look at some of these ingenious innovations below – you may come across them on a future visit to a UNESCO World Heritage Site!

#### **Solar-Powered Boat by Ganesh Ghimire, Assam:**

A motorboat that runs without fuel may sound impossible, but this solar-powered boat uses a panel that stores the sun's energy. The boat has an aluminium propeller instead of a heavier iron one, so that it takes less energy to run. It's also less noisy than a conventional boat – and completely pollution-free. The solar-powered boat can provide rides on bodies of water for tourists without spoiling the tranquillity of the natural surroundings. And it's particularly useful for water-borne adventurers who wish to observe wildlife, since it allows for a silent approach.



**E-bike by Kanak Das, Assam:** Riding a bicycle over bumpy terrain can be tiring, but the e-bike takes a lot of the strain out of the activity. It runs on a 12-volt battery that is recharged automatically when the bike is being ridden, allowing the rider to travel without pedalling much of the time. What's novel about the e-bike is that its battery is recharged by the forces induced on bumpy tracks. This makes it ideal for rural, off-road travel. A spring under the seat captures the energy released from the thrust of riding on the rough track and converts it into electrical power. The e-bike has better pick-up speed than normal mopeds, cruises at 10 km/h and can go more than twice as fast if the rider chooses to pedal. While the range of the battery is limited – about 2 km – this is plenty for many visitors to tourist sites, and external recharging of the battery allows for trips of up to 10 km, enough for the hardest of adventurers at a World Heritage Site!

#### **Natural Water Cooler by Arvind Bhai Patel,**

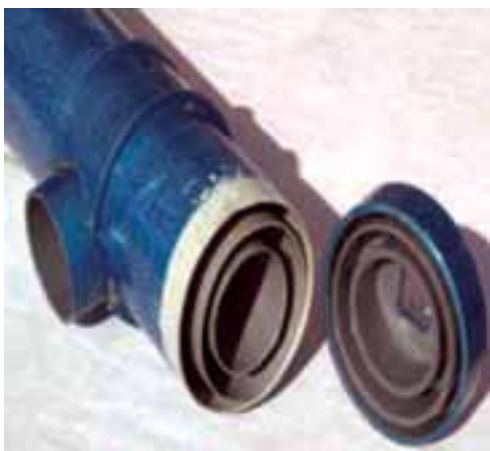
**Ahmedabad:** Given the increasing awareness of global warming and the ways in which consumption of electricity



contributes to this threat, a nature-friendly, non-polluting water cooler sounds like a good idea. The natural water cooler is a low-cost, energy-efficient, and environmentally friendly innovation that both cools and filters water. A unique aspect of this invention is that no external power is needed to run the cooler. Such technology is tremendously useful in remote villages where no electricity is available, not to mention public places like railway stations, bus stops and libraries.



**Zero Head Water Turbine by Nripen Kalita, Assam:** Generation of energy can be a difficult and costly procedure. The zero head water turbine is an answer to frequent power cuts and high monthly electric bills. Invented by Nripen Kalita, the turbine is a low-cost, energy-efficient design that harnesses flowing water to generate electricity as well as to pump water for further use in many purposes like irrigation and other agricultural purposes. In a country like India where lack of electricity is one of the most vulnerable factors in rural areas, the zero head water turbine is particularly valuable concept. It can generate two kilowatts of electricity – more than enough for normal domestic use, and with applications for public sites such as tourist centres, too.



**Septic Tank Baffle System by Rajesh TR, Kerala:** Getting rid of waste isn't something we spend too much time thinking about, but it's essential for maintaining healthy surroundings, whether at home or in public places. When piped sewage systems are not available, a septic tank is the solution, but maintenance can be a

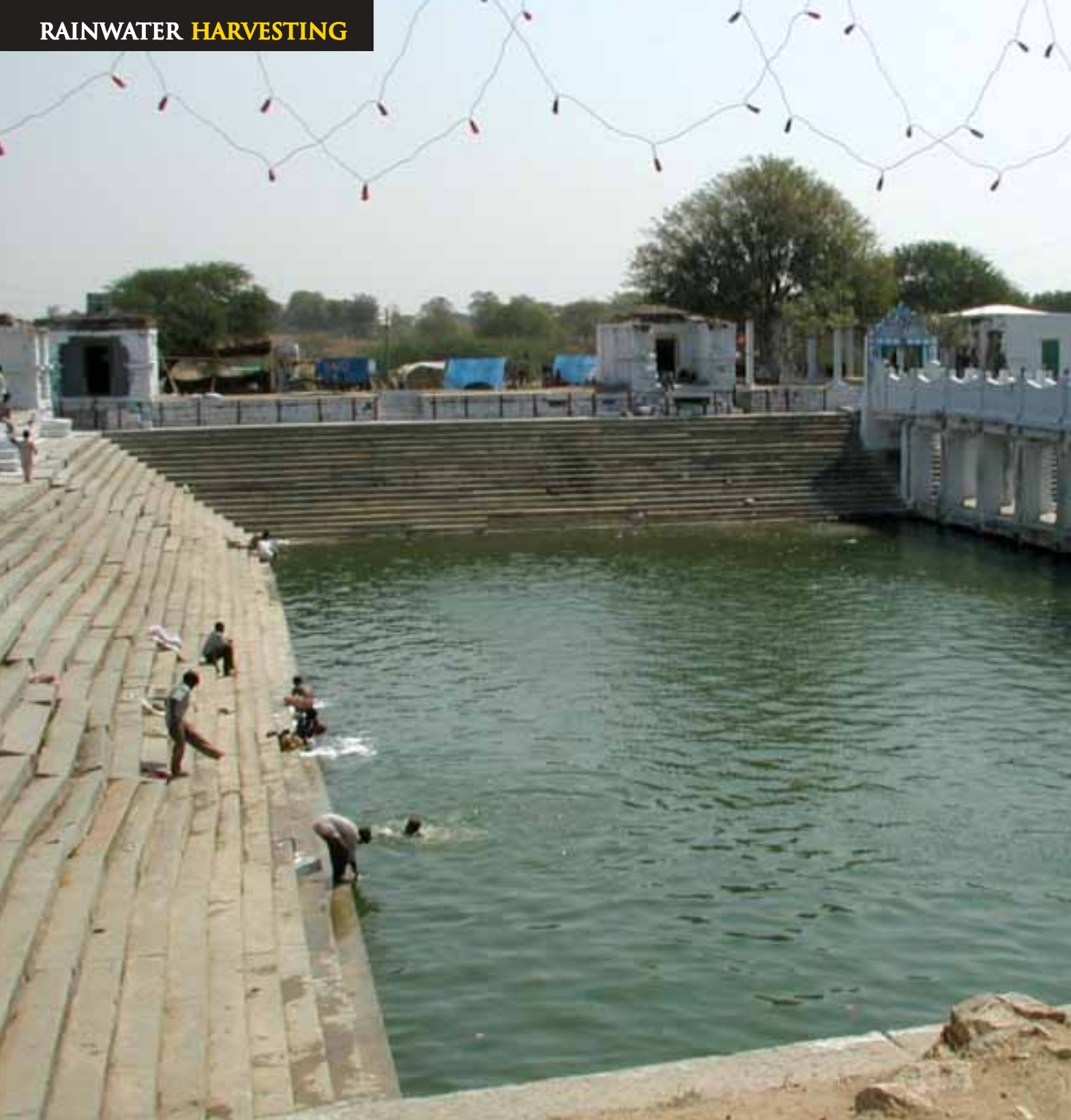
problem. That's where inventor TR Rajesh comes in, with his septic tank baffle system. It's an effluent filtering device that is technically more advanced than a normal septic tank, yet it is more easily affordable and requires no skills or technical knowledge for maintenance. It also reduces the space requirement as compartmentalization of the tank is not required and the tank can also be made in many shapes and forms when this baffle system is integrated into it.



**Beauty Care Umbrella by Dulal Chaudhury, Assam:** In India's seasonally changing climates, umbrellas serve more than a single function: they protect from the sun as well as the rain. This umbrella from Brahmaputra Valley, Assam, is made of mechanically weaved muga silk. The change in process from manual weaving to mechanical weaving does not just make the umbrella waterproof and stain-resistant, but it also protects the skin from ultraviolet (UV) rays on sunny days. The silk blocks 80 percent of UV rays, as against 40 percent that are blocked by a normal umbrella. So the user can look stylish and stay healthy!



**Camel-Driven Bus by Mewaram Jangid and Radhey Shyam Mishra, Rajasthan:** This invention, which originated in Rajasthan in 1980, was developed to transport schoolchildren. The driver uses reins to guide the camel, and the four-wheeled, double-decker unit comes with brakes in case the camel gets too enthusiastic! The camel bus can transport up to 80 children at a time. It's a simple and affordable local solution for mass transport over shorter distances. ■



## *Sustainable Practices in the Hospitality Sector: “A Wake-up Call”*

**GROWING ECONOMIES LIKE INDIA AND CHINA ARE GENERATING CLASSES OF PEOPLE WHO WANT TO EXPERIENCE TRAVEL LIKE NEVER BEFORE. WITH THE HOTEL INDUSTRY EXPERIENCING A BOOM IN INDIA, EXPERTS BELIEVE HOTELIERS CAN ACT RESPONSIBLY TO REDUCE THE STRAIN ON LOCAL WATER RESOURCES. HOW? BY COLLECTING RAINWATER.**



*Temple tank, Andhra Pradesh (Rangareddy District)*

BY SHIVAA RAWAT

In India, water is honored as “Lok Mata” – the folk mother – and rivers and water bodies were traditionally given the status of *tirtha*, a sacred body. However, the pressures of modernity are exerting an immense pressure on the country’s water resources. Unrestrained urbanisation and industrialisation are depleting underground water tables; aquifers are being over-pumped and rivers are dying or declining.

By 2005, the per capita availability of water in India, which had been 5,000 cubic meters per year in the 1950’s, had been halved to about 2,500 cubic meters. The Central Ground Water Board estimates that at present level of exploitation and misuse, the reservoir of underground water will dry up entirely in fifteen States by 2025. By 2050, fresh drinking water is expected to become very scarce as well.

This looming crisis does not just affect the domestic, agricultural and industrial sectors. Water consumption patterns in the tourism sector are also intimidating. According to a recent report, the average water consumption of a typical five-star hotel room is 1,500 litres per day. A 50-room hotel will therefore consume 75,000 liters per day just for its guest rooms, not to mention the additional water requirements for the kitchen, garden and swimming pools.

Hotels are like industrial plants that work round the clock, and the continuous use of water and energy is inevitable. However, some establishments are learning to conserve water and reduce their consumption. Simple procedures like regular monitoring for leaks, turning off irrigation systems when it is raining, and installing low-flow toilets and shower heads make a big difference. Some hotels make sure their kitchen staff don’t use running water to thaw frozen food or wash vegetables. And out in the gardens, the buzzword is xeriscaping: keeping only native, drought-tolerant plants that thrive on a minimal amount of water.

A more long-term investment to conserve water is rainwater harvesting: collecting rainwater by a variety of methods and directing it into the ground to prevent water levels from declining. Historically, Indians have been the world’s greatest water harvesters. Archaeological evidence shows that water harvesting was practised from ancient times. Harvesting systems proliferated – whether fed by rain, streams or rivers – and different ecological zones had systems adapted to local needs. In Rajasthan there were artificial wells built in chains; Southern Magalia developed an intricate network of bamboo pipelines to carry water over inhospitable terrain and to function as a drip irrigation system for betel leaf



*Dug well, Madhya Pradesh (Ujjain District)*



*Terrace farming, Uttarakhand, Kumaon*



*Roof top harvesting*



*Recharge tank, Andhra Pradesh (Mahbubnagar District)*

plantations. The Mughal-era groundwater based supply system in Burhanpur town in Madhya Pradesh is so well engineered that people use it even today.

In general, however, ancient recharge systems and structures such as tanks fell into disuse with the passage of time, particularly as land was taken up for construction and people began to rely on the government to provide water. In cities today, most rainwater flows into storm drains and is lost. But as water availability becomes an increasing concern, attention is being turned once more to methods for rainwater harvesting. This takes two main forms: storage of rainwater on the surface for future use, and using rainwater to recharge groundwater levels. In agriculture, rainwater can be harvested through techniques such as terrace farming, contour trenching, and so-called micro-catchments. Gully controls, check dams and percolation ponds are used to harvest water or run-off from streams. Direct surface run-off harvesting includes roof-top water collection, temple tanks, tankas, kundis and ooranis.

Hotels are learning that rainwater harvesting is not just a simple and cost-effective way cut to recharge aquifers: it has other advantages too. Rainwater is ideal for irrigation and other operations that do not require potable water. Using rainwater for laundry operations can significantly reduce the consumption of detergents and other laundry chemicals, because it is soft and free from dissolved minerals and heavy metal impurities.

The benefits of rainwater harvesting have spurred a commitment among leading hoteliers to educate, motivate and train their staff in water conservation practices. Orchid Hotels, ITC Hotels, Ananda in the Himalayas and the Taj Group of Hotels have set up systems to address the issue of water conservation. Bathroom water efficiency and drip irrigation are just the first steps. For example, comprehensive rain water



harvesting systems have been installed in all ITC hotel buildings. Given that it's not unusual for the roof of a hotel to be 60,000 square feet in size, the amount of rainwater that can be conserved in this way alone is considerable. India's water problems are serious and threaten to become colossal. So it is encouraging that the country's own heritage of water technology points the way towards a solution. ■

Check dam, Andhra Pradesh



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The Central Council for Research in Ayurveda and Siddha [CCRAS] is an apex research organization for the formulation, coordination, development, promotion of research activities in Ayurveda & Siddha in the Country. The research activities include Fundamental & Literature research, Drug research, Reproductive & Child health care research and Bio-Medical Instrumentation research etc.

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Golden Triangle Partnership (GTP), Ayurvedic Pharmacopoeia committee (APC) & Extra Mural Research (EMR) Projects on Ayurveda/Siddha & related topics.

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**Back Cover**