

The revival



Khadi and traditional textiles and crafts of Rajasthan dominated the Rajasthan Heritage Week 2015, organised by the Rajasthan Khadi and Village Industries Board held in Jaipur from December 3-5. Part of the Textiles Development Programme of the state, the event was a grand expo by 24 well-known designers besides weavers from Rajasthan and elsewhere. The theme of the event was 'Handmade just the way Irish linen has been promoted by Ireland. From casual and corporate to formal and bridalwear as well as men's creations to grand collections of sarees, the shows were a veritable feast for the eyes as fabrics of supreme variety were displayed in all their resplendent glory. Top designers put their creativity to the test on to the fabulous khadi and block printed materials and gave them a haute couture feel. **MEHER CASTELINO** reports.

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RITU KUMAR: Ritu Kumar's collection 'The Thar Desert' was a mélange of Rajasthani fabrics and crafts. Using mica mirrorwork and ajrakh along with wool embroidery from Kutch, Kumar used these for high-fashion ethnic garments in khadi and handloom. The dazzling wool embroidery highlighted ponchos and slim kurtas, while the eye-catching block prints in blue, grey and black were turned into kurtas with embellished skirts along with bandhani that made an appearance for dramatic angarkhas. The camel harnesses of the Ship of the Desert were turned into impressive head gear for the finale creations.



BIBI RUSSELL: Bangladeshi designer Bibi Russell's collection 'Fashion for Development' was an ode to khadi, crafts, kota doria and prints. Russell has worked for months with weavers and craftsmen of Rajasthan and her collection was a labour of love featuring the crafts of the state. Turning traditional textiles into wrap skirts, palazzos, tonal weave sarees, dhoti pants, waistcoats and kimono style covers, she gave a stylish heritage twist to womenswear. Her men's line featured leheriya, kurtas, jackets, sherwanis, dhotis and cuffed trousers.





HEMANT TREVEDI: Hemant Trevedi's story, woven around khadi and hand block prints, were in tones of black, brown, beige, rust and white. For women, Trevedi conjured layered gowns with sexy slits, slashed skirts, trousers, sarongs, harem pants, lungis and lehengas along with stitched sarees with cholis. For men, there was a mix of Indian and western wear as capris, cargoes, shirts, jackets, kurtas, bandhgalas, sherwanis, hoodies and belted waistcoats made dramatic entries. Loose drop-crotch pants in khadi were teamed with asymmetric waistcoats, while shaded brown/black sherwanis in khadi made a regal impact.

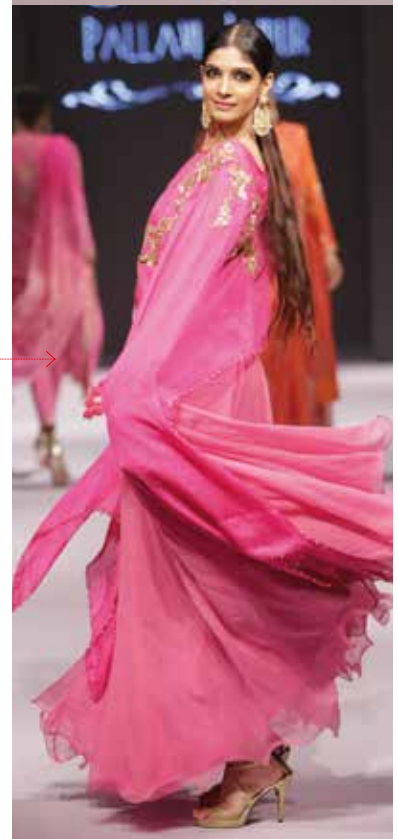


THE SMALL SHOP: Bangalore pair Jason and Anshu, for their label 'The Small Shop', displayed stylish casualwear for both sexes. Mixing interesting weaves with prints and solids, they brought in hand-knitted and woven tunics and jerseys in handlooms. Batwing coats, cowl neck dresses, cropped pants, shirts, trousers and kurtas were part of the collection. The prints and motifs were unusual with animals like elephants, camels and birds highlighting the garments.



PUJA ARYA: Jaipur's Puja Arya's stylish westernwear and sarees had a quirky vibrant touch featuring appliqué and crafts for the embellishments. Mixing stripes, geometrics, polka dots with quilting, the tent dresses, coats, palazzos, midis and mix of vibrant colours like yellow, orange, black, red and rust came across as effortless.

PALLAVI JAIPUR: The label created by Pallavi Murdia that is one of Rajasthan's most popular brands, presented a festive line in khadi and handloom. Colours moved gently from ivory to yellow, orange, black, and then red. Mixing silks, tie-dye with handlooms and embellishing them with Rajasthani crafts like mukaish, aari tari, dabka, zardosi, gotta patti, resham, sequins and crystals, Pallavi had swirling kurtas, caped gowns, dual colours for ombré jackets, sarees with kurtas, palazzos and flared dresses. Shararas appeared with kurtis, while panelled khadi silk flaming red lehengas glittered with zardosi work. She used a variety of fabrics like moga doria, suta doria, muslin and SF Khadi, which is spun in Bikaner.





ASIF SHAH: Asif Shah proved that khadi and handlooms are not only for festive wear. He used handwoven wool and cotton fabrics, which were the basis of his corporate collection. Presenting sharply cut tuxedos with contrast satin and velvet shawl collars, he added well-constructed jackets in pastel striped weaves with printed shirts for men. Moving to bundgalas, Jodhpuri trousers and jackets, he brought woollen sherwanis for formalwear. Womenswear also followed the corporate path with khadi wool suits, pencil skirts with waistcoats and jackets, striped coat dresses and baggy pants. The collection then moved to printed cotton minis, skirts, peplum tops and a few multi-coloured halter gowns.



LARS ANDERSSON: Swedish designer Lars Andersson, known for his luxury hand knitted apparel, used khadi yarn for his off-white collection of knitted unstructured clothes for men and women thereby giving a totally international feel to khadi. Completely deconstructed with raw edges, seams and hems as the focal point of the garments, the ultra-baggy skirts, kimono wraps, layered baggy tunics, kaftans, and wrap tops for women were the relaxed looks of the range. He offered an almost fluid sheer line also for menswear, which was quirky and almost prehistoric as the knitted fabric was draped as dhotis, tees, hoodies, long tunics, lounge jackets and a summer cover with pockets.



KAARYAH: The Kaaryah label's motto is 'Fits that Flatter', and it selected khadi and cotton and added Rajasthani techniques like abhala and bandhani. The brand brought in a wide range of clothing for the global woman starting with pencil skirts, blouses, minis with laser hemline detailing, layered dresses, leheriya covers for jumpsuits, halters with skinny pants, butterfly sleeve blouses, shorts, high waist trousers, petal hem creations and flared shorts with jackets.

JAIPUR MODERN: The Jaipur Modern label has a large following and uses Rajasthani fabrics and crafts. The brand's aim is to promote 'Made in India' with which it pays homage to the crafts and artisans of the country. Wool khadi was used for knee-length coats with interesting borders, while printed maxis were ideal for summerwear. A variety of blouson style batwing maxis, wrap dresses and long flowing gowns were additions to the women's line. Menswear was casually stylish with kurtas, shirts and shorts completing the look.





NATURE ALLEY: Tara Aslam and Naina Satish presented 'Nature Alley' that highlighted khadi patchwork for layered dresses, sacks, boleros and asymmetric striped tunics. Jumpsuits, pleated pants with butterfly sleeve blouses, smocks, wrap blouses and slashed dresses with bandhani covers, shirt waisters were ideal causalwear. The men's section moved from shorts, dhotis, jackets, cropped pants, to quilted machined waistcoats and flared short jackets.



AJAI VIR SINGH: That khadi cotton and wool are ideally suited for menswear, was proved by Ajai Vir Singh of the 'Conscience' label from Sri Lanka. Working with white as the base khadi colour, Singh played with the shirt designs, which were highlighted with contrast or tonal stripes with geometric designs for the kurtas and shirts. Colour blocking in grey, white, pale sea green and maroon was added to trousers as patches or horizontal stripes.



ROHIT AND ABHISHEK KAMRA: Rohit and Abhishek Kamra created 'Modem Maharaja', a royal line of formal and weddingwear for men using Rajasthani khadi wool. Working closely with weavers, the duo created fabric textures for garments. Checked bundhgalas in wool had contrast cuffs, and kurta shirts were teamed with checked trousers. Tie-dye kurtas, sherwanis, Jodhpuri jackets, double breast coats, black/red abstract prints for kurtas with waistcoat and red trousers were teamed with short hunting jackets. The ombré black/red breeches worn with smartly cut jacket or suit made up the menswear look.



THE MASTERS: The master weavers and block printers were national award winners who hailed from Kaithoon in Kota district where they weave magical kota doria sarees as well as print the most exquisite fabrics. The ten sarees by Nasruddin Ansari, the 2012 national award winner, featured kota doria in rainbow shades and glittered with gold and brilliant colours. Shades of lilac, white, blue, slate, mustard, orange, black and mauve were the base of patterns that moved from floral, dots and abstract to swirls.



Mohammed Yasin Ansari, the other award winning master weaver of kota doria sarees, unveiled eight beauties in shades of purple, blue, pink, white, orange and mustard with varying motifs.



The 2014 national award winner **Mushtakeem Kachara's** ten kota doria sarees were a dream in a kaleidoscope of gorgeous motifs that ranged from fruits, florals, leaves to paisley on stunning colours.



Ram Kishore Derewala, an award-winning printer, presented nine sarees with a variety of hand block prints that ranged from paisley and floral to geometric in the typical hues of rust, ivory, yellow, black, beige and blue.



Sabir Bhai's expertise with leheriya and tie-dye was evident when he presented nine works in rainbow hues of blue, black, white, deep pink, maroon, grey, brown and green.



AK Pandey, another master hand block printer, unveiled nine sarees with amazing block prints in blue, olive, rust, black, brown and ecru.



Abdul Majeed's block prints were presented as kalidaar kurtas with the Tree of Life design. Lehengas, cholis, wide palazzos, multicoloured kameezes and four sarees with floral and paisley prints completed his collection.



DESIGN OASIS: Manish Saksena, for his brand Design Oasis, has always been an admirer of khadi and handlooms. He worked magic with kota doria sarees in deep muted shades with motifs and leheriya effects as he draped them in a variety of forms for women, as well as dhotis for men. The motifs of the sarees drew inspiration from animal, paisley, floral and geometric forms.



RTA KAPUR CHISTI: Another revivalist handwoven sari collection, which was displayed in amazing drapes, was by textiles historian Rta Kapur Chishti whose brand Taanbaan is well known. Rta Kapur Chishti is a recognised scholar and editor of the 'Sarees of India' volumes on Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal as well as 'Handcrafted Indian Textiles—Tradition and Beyond'. The sarees were in a wide range of colours—white, yellow, green, orange, beige, red, ink blue and indigo with intricate designs and horizontal stripes. Working with kota doria and khadi, the collection appeared as dramatic layers and drapes teamed with jackets or boleros for women and as dhotis with shirts for men.

VIMOR: The Vimor label started in Bangalore around 1974 by the late grand old lady of handlooms Chimy Nanjappa is now run by her daughter Pavithra Mudayya and granddaughter Vipra. The gorgeous temple silk sarees from Vimor were desired by every woman in Bangalore and owned by top Bollywood stars and celebs. Mudayya created the beauty of colours and designs for the khadi, kota doria and handloom sarees in Rajasthan in just one month. Adding woven shawls and stoles to the sarees along with dhotis and sarongs, the collection was a grand presentation of stripes and colour blocking for men and women.



IMPRESSIONS

* **Vasundhara Raje**, chief minister of Rajasthan: We are determined to give our khadi and handloom the tag of luxury, which it rightly deserves.

* **Rajeeva Swarup**, principal secretary, MSME, Government of Rajasthan: We have initiated a Textiles Development Programme for the development of traditional textiles of Rajasthan, by providing a platform for a dialogue between our artisans and leading fashion designers, wherein both can learn from each other and mutually benefit.

* **Malvika Singh**, co-chair, Sub-Group in Tourism, Government of Rajasthan: This project was conceptualised to benefit the textile artisans of Rajasthan in a manner that would create intervention without interference.