

Kakriti

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editor's note

India is a country full of rich traditions and all these are colorfully portrayed in a variety of physical forms. From paintings to carpets, creativity oozes out of this country's culture and traditions.

This country has a rich heritage of handicrafts and handiworks which dates back centuries, from the era of kings and queens which has ebbed slowly over the years to today's technologically dominant world.

This magazine aims to revive that glorious culture and portray the best of India to the new generation. It also aims to throw light upon the miraculous handicraft workers who keep our magnificent heritage alive.

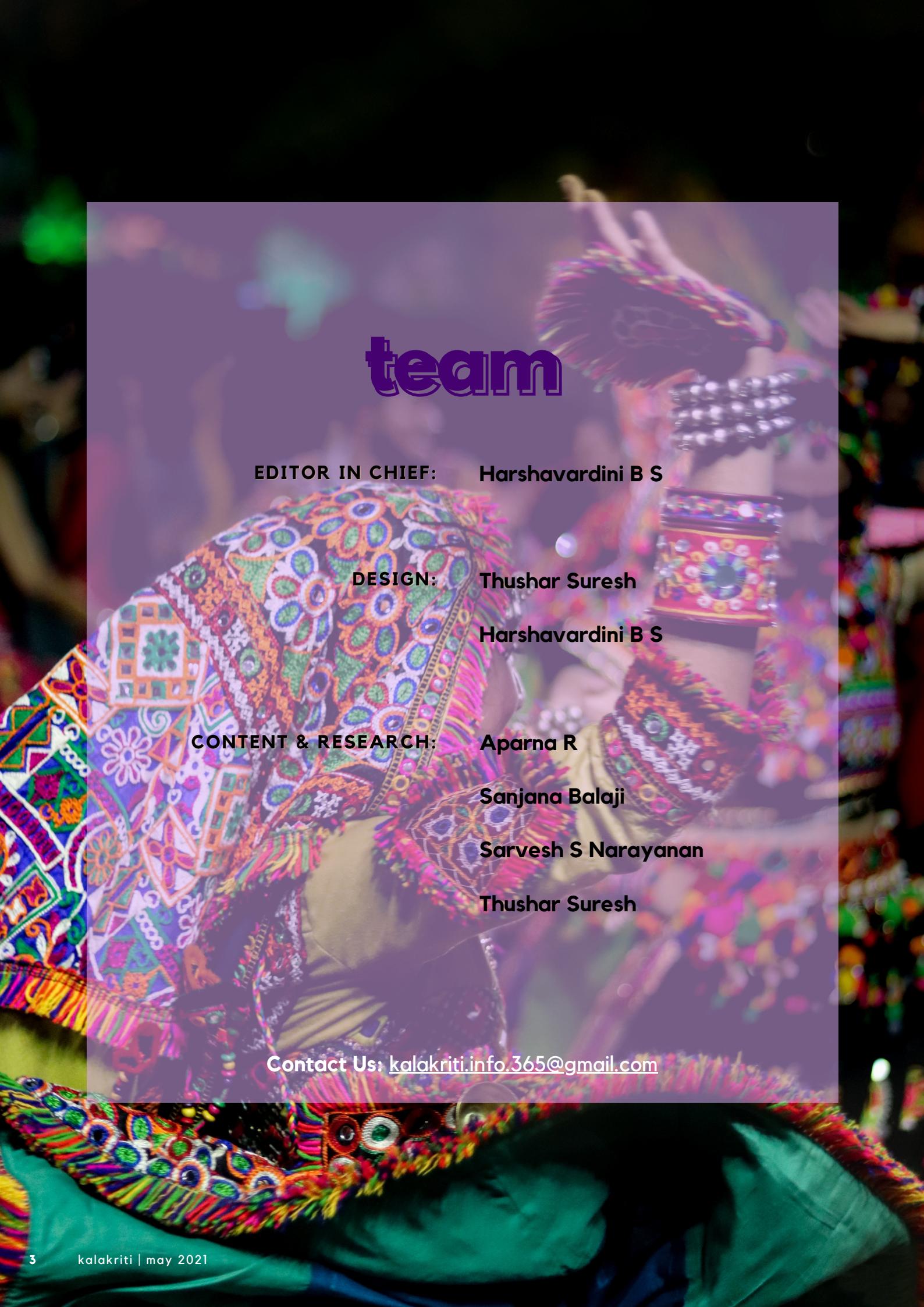
It is a culmination of the creativity which can be found in India and more than that it's a tribute to the plentiful diversity India holds in its soul.

It gives me the utmost pleasure to present to you all the first issue of Kalakriti! Happy reading and may India's culture flourish and thrive through generations to come.



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JEWELLED TAPESTRIES:

The Rich Textile Handicrafts of Gujarat

words by aparna r

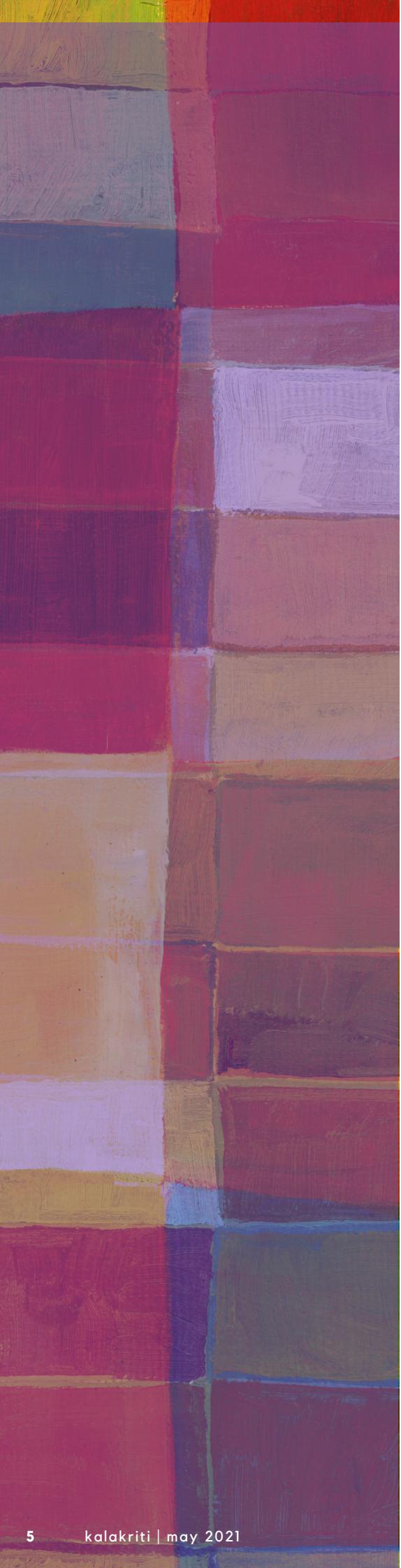
Textile production has long been a hallmark of Indian culture, and the state of Gujarat is no exception. Rightly named "the Jewel of the West", it is a land of rich cultural and artistic heritage. For us, the state is reminiscent of vibrant tie-dye fabrics of all the colours of the rainbow, elegant zari embroidery fit for royalty, and tasteful and delicate block prints, among so many others. A majority of these handicrafts have been handed down from ancient times; which only serves as evidence for their timeless beauty. In this issue, we will be exploring a variety of indigenous Gujarati textile handicrafts, delving into their history and appreciating the tireless hands that bring them to life.

Rogan Painting:

Rogan painting is one of the rarer handicrafts of Gujarat. The word "rogan" comes from the Persian word for varnish or oil; hence Rogan painting refers to the art of hand-painting cloth with paints made of boiled vegetable oils and natural colours. These are used to create intricate motifs of geometrical flowers, animals etc. It is available in the form of wall hangings, tablecloth, curtains, sarees and skirt borders. The art form was widely practiced in the Kutch region around 300 years ago. However, with the advent of industrialisation, cheaper textiles became more readily available and the art form died out, with only one family in Kutch, the Khatris, practicing it. It saw a further rise in popularity in the late 20th and 21st centuries, with the adoption of the iconic "Tree of Life" motif. However, due to the pandemic situation and a consequent reduction in tourism and exposure, their popularity is once again at a standstill.

Zari:

Zari embroidery is one of the oldest handicrafts of Gujarat. Made of yarns of precious metals like gold and silver woven into intricate designs on silk fabrics, this magnificent piece of art simply oozes grandeur. Zari making centres are mostly concentrated in the Surat village. It was even granted a Geographical Indication tag in 2010. The origins of Zari date back to 1700-1100BC, it goes so far back that there are mentions of it in ancient Indian literature like the Ramayana and Mahabharata. The craft is said to have been brought to India by Persian migrants, but flourished in Surat during the Mughal rule. Due to the eventual decline of royal patronage, the craft is now restricted to a few pockets of the nation. Imitation zari is more common in the present day, using cotton or plastic threads as their core.



Bandhej Tie-Dye:

Bandhej or *Bandhani* is well known for its bright colours and iconic dotted pattern which are characteristic of traditional Gujarati culture. It is made with extreme sophistication; by tweezing tiny sections of fabric and dyeing it, a variety of designs can be created. *Bandhej* is handmade, and is commonly found in the form of sarees. The craft is exclusively carried out by the Khatri community of Kutchh and Saurashtra. It is also done in Rajasthan. It is believed to date all the way back to the Indus Valley Civilisation, as early as 4000BC. Depictions of *Bandhani* sarees are found in the Ajanta cave paintings of the life of Buddha (6th century AD). Even in the present day, the main colours used for this process are naturally derived, making it a through-and-through organic Indian product. Culturally, as with other fabrics different colours are taken to convey different meanings. For example, red *Bandhej* is considered auspicious for brides.

Hand Block Printing:

Almost everyone has, at least once, heard of block printing. As the name suggests, the process involves first carving designs into a wooden block, and using it to print those designs onto cloth by hand. Indian block prints have made incredible impacts on patterns and prints in 19th century England. Indian floral motifs served as inspiration for British designers in the 1800s. Gujarat remains as one of the largest producers of block printed fabrics.

Ajrakh is a form of block printing practiced in Rajasthan, Gujarat and some areas of Pakistan. It is usually available in the form of shawls. The exact origins of *Ajrakh* are unclear; however, patterns that bear resemblance to it have been found on ancient Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Mohenjo-daro artefacts, most notably, the royal couch of Tutankhamun. A common pattern observed on most *Ajrakh* prints is that of dots between two lines. A large fraction of these designs is influenced by the Mughal era and their idea of using circles and their interaction to symbolise balance and order. The *Ajrakh* is an integral part of Sindhi culture. They are commonly gifted as a token of hospitality and worn on festive occasions and cultural events. Recently, there has been a rising demand for these prints, which allowed the expansion of businesses following their adoption of synthetic chemical dyes in addition to the previously used natural ones.

Other prevalent forms of block printing in Gujarat include *Batik*, vegetable printing and *Sodagiri*.

The textile arts of Gujarat are truly stunning; however, this is not all that this majestic state is known for. Stay tuned to our next issue for more on the beautiful handicrafts of this state.



ALL ABOUT HANDCRAFTS-

interviewed by Sanjana Balaji

Amruta Gadre is the founder and owner of 'All About Handcrafts', a venture made to deliver products with an indegenious touch to them.

Instagram handle: https://www.instagram.com/all_about_handcrafts/

E-commerce website: <https://www.allabouthandcrafts.in/>



Hello Amruta I hope you're doing well and thank you for agreeing to do this interview.

Hello, I'm doing wonderfully Sanjana and it was my pleasure.

So to start this interview off, I must say that after going through your profile and doing some background research on you, I find that the work you do is quite intriguing and diverse. Talk me through how this interest in handicrafts came about. Take me as far back.

I've always had an affinity for the creative arts. As far as saying maybe since I was born! I effectively started honing into my abilities when I was in school but they were primarily part of projects or extra-curricular. But I never thought of it as a business venture. But in 2017, as I recall, I started making small accessories like earrings and gave them to my parents and few close friends who encouraged me to pursue this semi-professionally. I obviously didn't think of it that seriously but still kept doing this as a leisure activity. Cut to December 2019 was when I actually seriously started this handicrafts venture pre lockdown. I originally started off with jewellery but have since then expanded into other products as well.

You mentioned you started indulging in this from school. Was that your first ever introduction to this? Talk me through the course of establishing this business.

So since I made my first official handicraft pieces in 2017, my friends were pretty much my first unofficial customers and they told me that I had a knack for this skill and wanted me to pursue a business promoting this. So gradually I started researching regarding the logistics to establish a venture while being preoccupied with work as well and December 2019 was when I decided to take the leap of faith. And this lockdown has been gracious to me where I've gotten a lot of spare time to focus on the expansion of my business.

That's wonderful to hear! So I assume this isn't your full time job. What is your occupation otherwise? And how are you finding it managing both the worlds?

I'm a student of Architecture currently in my 4th year. I won't lie but it does get difficult at times to manage the media pages and track orders while juggling between curriculum as well. But after my graduation, I plan to allocate more time and resources to this. And I must say that my architecture background does help in this business since there is a shared acumen for design and creativity. I remember the first earrings I made were quite rudimentary when I look back at it now but now, I've come a long way in terms of a developed sense of design, the type of materials I use, etc. and I'd have to attribute my architectural background to this.



Oh great! It's lovely to see your enthusiasm to make this a big venture someday. So I was going through your Instagram profile and the sheer diversity in the amount of products that you make was so engaging to me as a viewer. You mentioned that you started by making jewellery so I want to ask why you decided to branch out into making other products of jewellery, decorations because usually when people have a startup, they consider it is safe option to stick to one variety or a limited variety of products but you have been very bold to branch out into different products quite early and I wanted to know what made you do that?

That's an interesting question. So the reason I wanted to branch was primarily my customer demographic. I mostly got orders from females and women regarding jewelry and other feminine accessories and was often asked by male customers to make products that they would want to buy for themselves and I gave it a good thought considering it was a good incentive to expand my market. Hence I decided to do that and venture into making products that can cater to multiple sections of the society.

It's amazing! So for a contextual recap could you tell us what products are involved in making currently and what do you think you can further expand into?



ALL ABOUT HANDCRAFTS

Currently I am involved in the making of most of the Jewellery items like earrings, necklaces, pendants, anklets, etc. Apart from this I make decorative items made out of wood with clay casting. I also make planters from Terracotta which are hand painted. There is another project that I am currently involved in which is Lippan art which involves clay and mud work in combination with mirror work. This is a traditional form of art from Kutch and something I've been practising to get better at and judging my progress, I still have a long way to go! I've also made some Madhubani paintings in the past but I have to work on perfecting that skill too and maybe include it in some of my designs.

I see. Well something that I often ask artists, which I want to ask you as well is that, is there a common theme or style that runs through all your works? And how does your cultural background influence it, if at all it does?



Well for starters, it's all about hand crafted items! But to descriptively put it, it would be about an amalgamation of the traditional art form and the contemporary style of work. I've even made pizzas and french fries on my earrings! The intricacy and detail of the craft is preserved and a novel element of joviality is mixed into this concoction of creating. And yes, my cultural background does play a significant role in this process. I'm ethnically Maharashtrian but I've lived in Bhopal for the longest time. Watching those handicrafts had piqued my interest in this a long time ago. I've taken a liking to the Gujarati art forms because of my peers and even been wanting to delve into Bengali culture. So culturally, I do not associate with one particular state and that, I think, is what makes an artist special. It's their fluid, malleable and transformative nature.

That's amazing! So since you'd told me earlier about the initial challenges that you faced when you were starting out and I'm sure you have to face a new set of them at every step. If you had to compare the challenges of the past and the present, how would you do it? Also has the pandemic helped or made it worse?

So initially, the biggest challenge was to find a way to establish the business because there is no background for the business. The logistics, the customers and all that. Right now, my challenges are having a limited customer base and how to reach them on point. And honestly the pandemic has been very gracious to me. It gave me the time and space to operate on a better scale. I got the opportunity to make a website for authentic publicity and receive more orders than before.

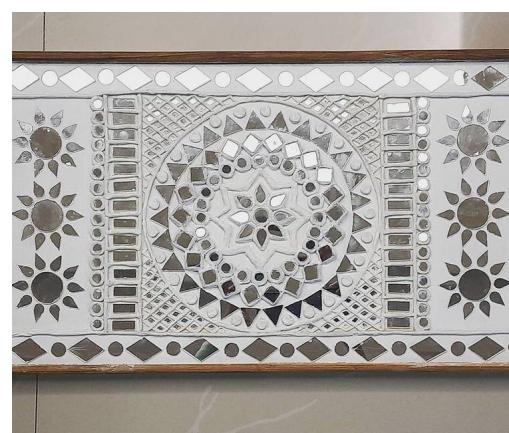
Not only that, Social media has been a blessing. Simply put, it helped me reach a wider audience and expand my business. Most of my customer mob has been from places outside of the local region and they've found me through Instagram and Facebook. Like my standard customer base consists of people in almost 16 cities outside of Bhopal where I have no individual identity.

So nearing the end of this interview, I want to know what your visions for your business are in the future and how far you are from achieving them.

So since I am an architecture student, I want to integrate my curriculum knowledge with my passion for handicrafts and pursue something in interior design for living/ working spaces. I also want to expand my production and supply to larger places with the help of a fully working team. It might take me 2 years to build a capable team because I am very particular about the people I want to work with and I will have to teach them aspects of the company like design, my working objectives, mission statement, etc. I also want to establish my own firm in this manner. I also hope to cater to an audience outside of India in the process and introduce them to the wonders of our country! And completely out of context, but I also want to become a professor for some time and teach people about this culture of handicraft design.

I'm glad you think this way! With this, we come to the end of this interview. Thank you for agreeing to this and I hope all your dreams come true.

Thank you! I'm glad that it has worked out that way. It was lovely doing the interview. Take care!



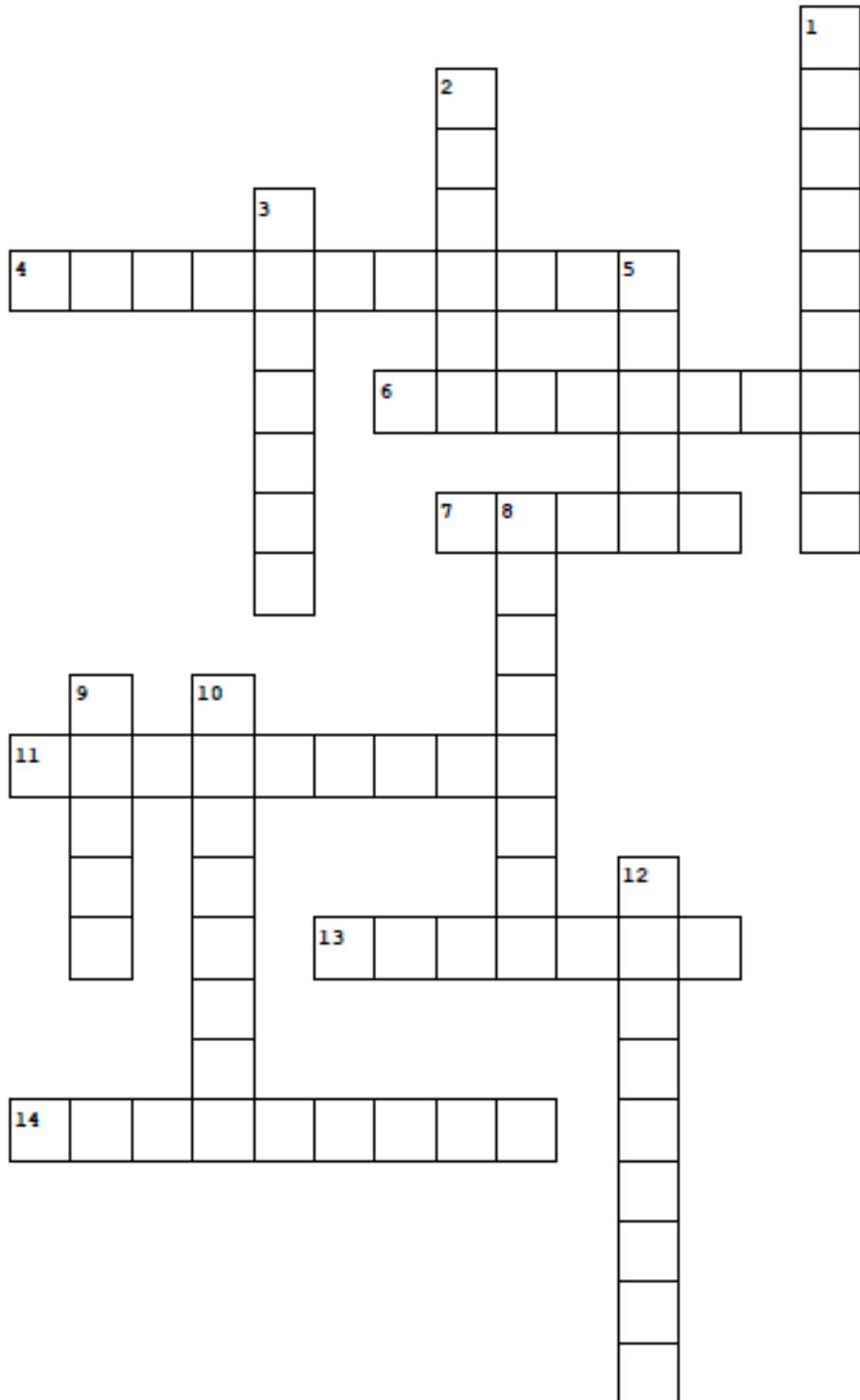
crossword #01

ACROSS

4. ornament piece to adore elephant's forehead
6. gujarathi embroidery
7. painting from kutch region of Gujarat
11. Tamil dolls crafted from Red Sandalwood
13. apex of temples in Tamil Nadu
14. mat made from murta plant's fibres

DOWN

1. Aeschynomene based Craft
2. stitching technique from West Bengal
3. artform from Madhya Pradesh
5. metal handicraft from Himachal
8. ceremonial bow from Kerala
9. tribal character art from Maharashtra and Gujarat
10. wool obtained from changthangi goat
12. saari design work from srikalahasti, Andhra Pradesh



1. Which textile handicraft is mentioned in ancient Indian epics such as Ramayana and Mahabharata?

- a. Zari
- b. Bandheji Tie-Dye
- c. Block printing
- d. Kancheevaram

2. What is the significance of the colour red in Bandhej work?

- a. brightest color
- b. shows vitality
- c. auspicious for brides
- d. can be seen from distance

3. Which language does the word Rogan originate from?

- a. Latin
- b. Persian
- c. Arabic
- d. Mexican

4. What do circles symbolise in block printing?

- a. symmetry
- b. balance and order
- c. immortality
- d. everything ends where it begins

5. What motif is most famous in Rogan painting?

- a. calligraphy motifs
- b. tree of life motif
- c. floral motifs
- d. geometric motifs

6. Which textile handicraft originated in the Indus Valley Civilisation?

- a. banaras
- b. bandhej
- c. kalamkari
- d. chanderi

7. What name is given to the state of Gujarat as a token of its rich heritage?

- a. Jewel of the West
- b. Diamond of India
- c. Gurjar of the Lions
- d. Sabarmati's eye

ANSWERS

- 1- a. Zari
- 2- c. auspicious for brides
- 3- b. Persian
- 4- b. balance and order
- 5- b. tree of life motif
- 6- b. bandhej
- 7- a. Jewel of the West

from the founder's desk

Cybercycloid was borne from a desire to unfurl a boundless space for creativity; to nurture creators from all fields and help them answer their true calling.

Kalakriti is our first step on that long road. We built this platform to bring to light the splendor of the Indian handicraft industry and the hard work of the entrepreneurs building their businesses through social media.

We wanted to showcase the beautiful works and the equally beautiful people who bring them to life. More importantly, we wanted to strengthen the bond between creator and customer by unearthing their stories.

Keeping with that spirit, one of our forthcoming ventures will be an E-commerce platform that enables these creators to exhibit and market their products to a larger customer base.

During these difficult times, we hope these stories spark inspiration in you; and help connect us through the beauty of art.



Aditya Trivedi
Founder and CEO



Cybercycloid is a team of creative, technologists, ping-pong fanatics, driven, passionate, and honest professionals working on designing, building and scale epic mobile, web and desktop apps, taking over-the-top privilege and innovative approaches.

Our aim is to collaborate with entrepreneurs and growing businesses. We at **Cybercycloid**, ensure one achieves their goals by leveraging the passion for techno, empathy for the user and substantial experience in product.

Services we provide include an existing product or a new idea, a mobile application or a desktop site, simple designs or complex mechanism, our team has favourable skills to get the job done flawlessly.

We are passionate about transparency, reliability, trust and excellent customer care – we aren't satisfied with our creation until you are. We understand your goals and deliver according to your values.

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