

Threads of innovation



GROUND REPORTING

Sustainable Fabrics Weaved Out Of Lotus Stem

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Sanajing Sana Thambal, a unique and innovative start up where fabrics are weaved out of lotus stem, was founded by Bijiyashanti Tongbram in 2018. A botany student from Thanga village, Manipur, she has carved a niche for herself in the world of green textiles and uplifted the local women of her community through her creative endeavour. Her ingenuity has transformed an overlooked natural resource into an iconic representation of sustainability and resourcefulness.

Weaving wonders

As a botany student, she had lot of knowledge about plants - their medicinal values and economic impact. But the creative stride in her made her go beyond the books and venture into an unexplored area. For the first time ever, she devised a method of her own to convert lotus stems into fibre and then into



Thanga's local women crafting fibres

fabric. "I didn't have any person or books to learn how to weave fibre from lotus stems. It took me around one year to figure out how to make these innovative fibres on my own," she recalls. This breakthrough was the stepping stone to her career and at 24, she was a proud owner of a startup that coexisted on sustainability and fashion.

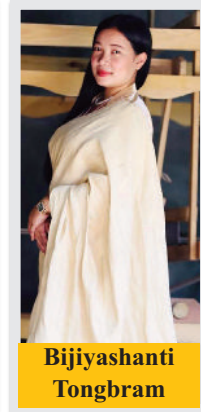
Unique creation

The abundant availability of lotus stems in her hometown in Loktak Lake inspired her to creatively exploit this neglected resource into



Stoles from lotus-based fibre

luxury and sustainable fabrics, even though it was a challenging road. "It's a time-consuming process. Around 6000 stems are used to make one 12-by-65-inch stole," she confesses, explaining the dedication and craftsmanship that goes into making these eco-friendly products. This labour-intensive process is a mix of both tradition and innovation. It produces soft, durable fabrics adaptable to different climatic conditions. Lotus stem fabrics have unique properties that distinguish them from other fabrics. "They keep the person who



Bijiyashanti Tongbram

wears them cool in summer and warm in winter," she mentions, highlighting its uniqueness.

Seizing the moment

Due to lengthy production process and hefty production costs, the fabrics are expensive and need specific marketing efforts. The hardest thing is promoting these goods and convincing customers about their worth. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appreciation of her inventiveness in the radio broadcast 'Mann Ki Baat' was her big break. "It had a huge impact on

my entrepreneurial journey when he mentioned and appreciated my work in the show," she says. Now she has customers from Delhi, Kolkata, Guwahati as well as international buyers from Italy, Indonesia, and the United States.

For a better tomorrow

Bijiyashanti provides employment and empowerment to more than 50 local women in her village. In a community where fishing was the only source of income, her enterprise has provided a stable livelihood. "I train these women to produce lotus-based textiles and provide employment," she mentions, as she has created a model of economic empowerment rooted in sustainability. She loves to bring innovation and social impact together by exploring lotus-based fibres. She supports lifelong learning and advises aspiring women entrepreneurs to maintain their focus. "Dream big, work hard, and aim to make Mother Earth happy," is her straight forward but impactful counsel. [G I](#)

Pics: Darsh Keshri, XI S & Paras Salgotra, X A, AIS Gur 43



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