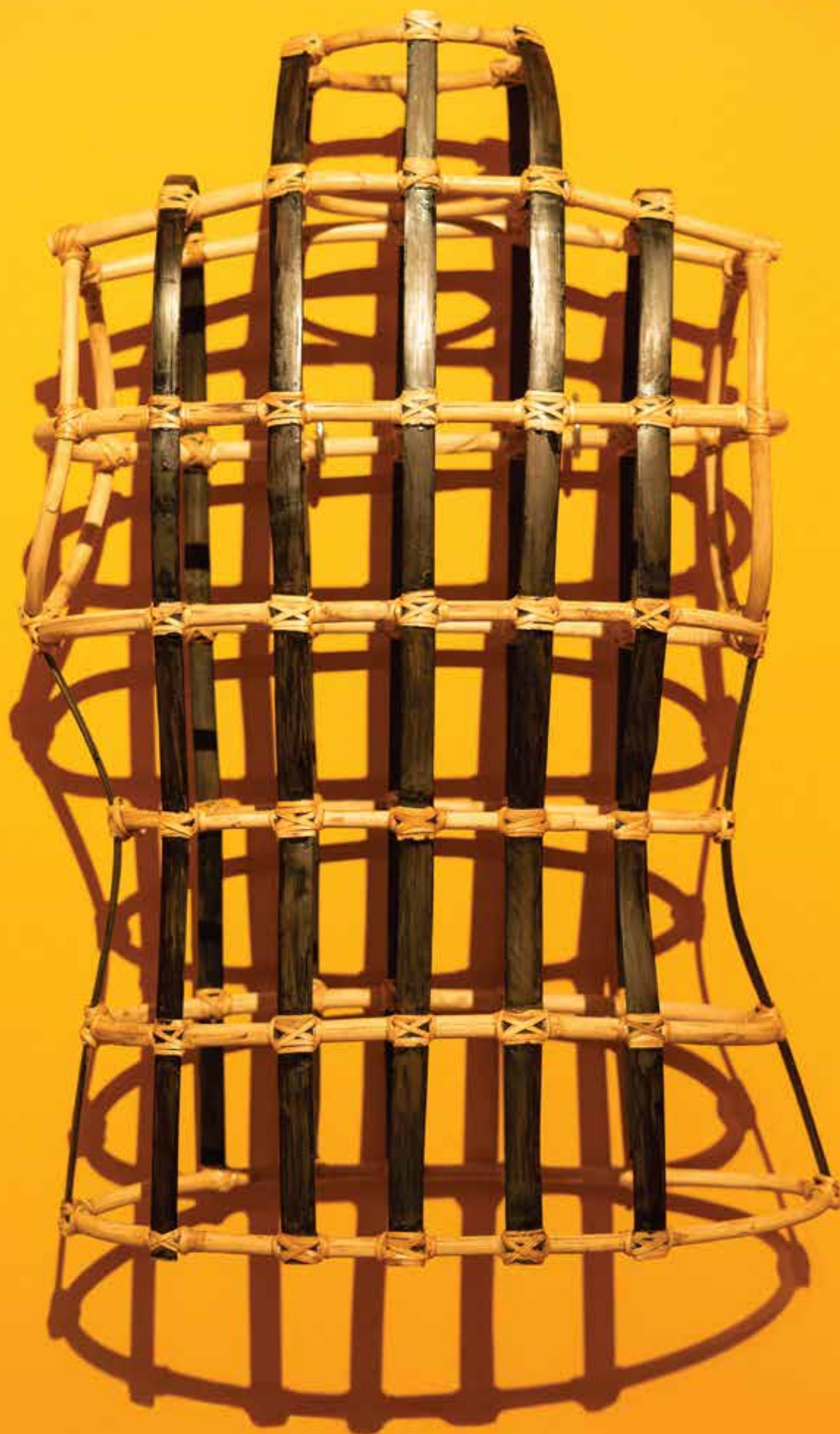


JOURNEYING ACROSS THE HIMALAYAS

5-15 DEC 2024



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Sohini Dey, supported by
team Royal Enfield Social Mission

Design: The Paper Planes Agency

Nupur Joshi Thanks, Art Direction
Sanjana Mehta and Avanti Poyekar, Design
Menty Jamir, Photo Editor
Supported by team Royal Enfield Social Mission

Printing Partner

Indraprasth Printers

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on-ground support teams.

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INTRODUCTION

For over seventy-five years, the Himalayas have been Royal Enfield's spiritual home – an enduring source of inspiration and a region whose communities, culture and landscapes we have been privileged to engage with. From the earliest journeys of exploration to our ongoing work in conservation and community resilience, this bond has evolved into a deeper partnership in the last few years.

The inaugural edition of Journeying Across The Himalayas,

marks a significant milestone in this shared journey, presenting a platform to amplify the voices of Himalayan communities for wider audiences. Held at the Travancore Palace in New Delhi from December 5th to 15th, 2024, the festival was conceived as a gathering and an invitation to step into stories told by those who call the Himalayas home. Staged in Delhi, a popular entry point to the Western Himalayas, it invited urban audiences to experience the region's landscapes and lived realities firsthand. In the process, it aimed to cultivate awareness, empathy and responsibility among participants.

The curation drew directly from Royal Enfield's Social Mission:

our commitment to partner with 100 communities in building adaptive capacity in the face of climate change. Years of engagement have taken root across these geographies, growing into an ecosystem of youth fellows and partners. The festival became their stage – a multi-disciplinary confluence where storytelling, contemporary art, music and marketplace converged, translating years of cumulative effort into accessible and resonant experiences. Over three days, more than 50 Himalayan communities, 200 artists and creative practitioners, 150 experts and 200 institutional partners came together in celebration of this journey of collective action.

The installation for Royal Enfield's Green Pit Stops,

realised through artist Vishal K. Dar's 'The Long Road', translated our sustainable traveller facilities planned across popular routes in the Himalayas into immersive visual and spatial narratives. Visitors explored how vernacular infrastructure and similar community-run facilities can offer practical and culturally grounded solutions for responsible travel.

As part of The Himalayan Knot,

Royal Enfield Social Mission's textile and pastoral land conservation programme, the curation spotlighted artisanal craftsmanship from the region. 'Risha' by Aratrik Dev Varman and Jisha Unnikrishnan celebrated Tripura's traditional narrow textile weaving tradition, while 'From Folk to Fabric' illustrated how craft carries knowledge, identity and ecological understanding across generations. Beyond its role as catalysts for livelihood creation and conscious consumer choices, the initiative explored textiles as sources of cultural pride and continuity through storytelling. The launch of the Himalayan Knot Design Prize with VOGUE India extended this vision, inviting emerging designers and students to work with Himalayan artisans to create capsule collections that sustain craft communities.

The Himalayan Hub

is a collective learning centre and from where Royal Enfield Social Mission's fellowships and grants are supported; young changemakers engaged through the Himalayan Hub took centrestage at the festival as they highlighted the agency of youth in community action. Over 70 fellows and grantees from our partnership with Green Hub created a multimedia space, framing forest ecosystems as a metaphor for interlinked initiatives. The exhibition 'the shape of the wind is a tree' reflected the elemental work of our first cohort of the Himalayan Fellowship for Creative Practitioners, in partnership with The Foundation for Indian Contemporary Art, mapping sites of remembering and pathways of return.

The exhibit for The Great Himalayan Exploration (TGHE),

a partnership project with UNESCO, retraced three years of documenting the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of Himalayan communities through rider-researchers. Curated artefacts were presented as vessels of the indigenous wisdom and creativity that were revealed during the experience. Along with National Geographic's video display of the exploration in Ladakh and the photo exhibition series 'Ehipassiko / Come and See', audiences were invited to follow explorers in uncovering these cultural experiences for themselves, engaging with the region as more mindful travellers.

Winter Sports,

a long-standing yet underappreciated part of Himalayan heritage, were celebrated through the Ice Hockey exhibit by Ladakh Arts and Media Organisation. It traced decades of the sport's history in India to contemporary milestones, centering it as a source of community cohesion and youth development in the region.

A key highlight of the festival experience were the Keystone Species

installations that reimagined art and technology for conservation and ecological storytelling. Manveer Singh AKA Plasticvalla's sculptures of the snow leopard, golden langur and Himalayan brown bear – crafted from recycled materials – posed questions about the impacts of tourism and the issue of solid waste in wildlife

habitats. Riverbank Studios' 360° VR wildlife experience offered rare close-up encounters with snow leopards in their high-altitude habitat, while Bobbee Singh and Arjun Raina's snow-leopard inspired motorcycle and Suket Dhir's bespoke riding jacket paid tribute to this iconic species.

Helmets for India,

Royal Enfield's road safety programme, welcomed visitors with 'Helmet Hyphae' — the giant helmet art installations made of sustainable mycelium. The initiative, which believes in channeling the power of art to change mindsets, collaborated with India Foundation for the Arts to transform 18 helmets into canvases for personal and social expression. Twelve artists, including creatives from the Aravani Art Project, used this platform to raise awareness around road safety, inclusion and empowerment, demonstrating how functional objects can carry narratives of social change.

The Himalayan Bazaar,

a thoughtfully curated retail space to showcase craftsmanship and produce from the Himalayas, became the tangible culmination of the festival's ethos; by generating over ₹20 lakh in three days, the marketplace offered direct support to artisans, craftspeople and producers. Beyond commerce, the Bazaar exemplified the festival's long-term goals of creating a living ecosystem where creators, mentors, partners and audiences all contribute to a greater whole.

2024 Edition in Numbers

50+ Communities
200+ Partners
100+ Speakers
200+ Creative Practitioners
6,000+ Visitors

8.6

AUDIENCE RECOMMENDATION SCORE*

Audiences **willing to recommend** Journeying Across The Himalayas to their friends, family or colleagues, on a scale of 1 - 10.

8.3

AUDIENCE RATING OF THE FESTIVAL*

Audience **rated the quality** of various kinds of exhibits and programming on a scale of 1 - 10.

96.97%

From the Himalayan communities said the festival **effectively showcased** their community's unique identity and challenges*.

87.08%

Stated that the festival has **improved their awareness** of artforms and cultural artefacts from Himalayan communities*.

82.87%

Audience members attended a Royal Enfield event for the first time*.

*As per the Impact Assessment study by ArtX Company.

Being the first edition, the festival carried no precedent, yet impact measurement was embedded from the start. The Art X Company, a third-party festival intelligence company, developed a festival report using the AEAE (Amplify, Empower, Accelerate, Evaluate) framework, assessing engagement and generating learnings that can help inform future editions and cement a long-term, systemic approach. Early findings shed light on the resonance of the festival: 96% of participants from Himalayan communities felt their identities were represented and 87% of audiences reported a deeper understanding of Himalayan arts and culture.

Journeying Across The Himalayas was never meant to be a one-off event. From its inception, the vision has been to create a recurring and structured platform that strengthens market linkages and collaborations, and nurtures Himalayan voices across disciplines and regions. Each subsequent edition will build on this foundation, deepening dialogue and expanding opportunities for sustained impact.

This catalogue is therefore a 'guide'

in more ways than one; it has been deliberately kept open-source for others to gain inspiration from or to build on – and perhaps, even to nudge them into participating in this Himalayan story. It is also a mirror for our own growth, capturing the first steps in what we hope will be an annual celebration of the power of collective action. And with that spirit, we look forward to meeting again in the years to come.

Bidisha Dey
Executive Director, Eicher Group Foundation

ONE CULTURE

**A SPOTLIGHT ON INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE
FROM FOLK TO FABRIC
REVIVING RISHA
DANCING TO THE TUNES OF SIFUNG HARIMU AFAD
A TASTE OF THE MOUNTAINS
EXPERIMENTS FROM THE FOOD LABS**



A Spotlight on Intangible

Cultural Heritage

A savoury tea that offers warmth and the promise of good health in Ladakh's bitterly cold days, an avian headgear that serves as a ceremonial attire for men in the Nyishi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, black clay pottery moulded by women in a Nagaland village. The cultural heritage of a community finds expressions in many ways, from the most ceremonial artefacts to the smallest of everyday objects. UNESCO defines these as Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills that communities, groups and individuals in a country, recognise as part of their cultural heritage. At present, 15 elements from India are inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of ICH and Humanity, leaving much more — in quantity and diversity — to be uncovered.

In 2022, UNESCO and Royal Enfield joined hands to document and promote the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of India with The Great Himalayan Exploration (TGHE), which draws rider-researchers to document the living heritage of the Himalayas. Since then, 200 ICH practices have been identified across the Eastern and Western Himalayan regions. The Eastern Himalayas were covered during the first two editions of TGHE (2022-23), which took rider-researchers across the states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram,

Nagaland, North Bengal, Sikkim and Tripura. Marking the beginning of the Western Himalayas leg in 2024, Ladakh became the site for the third edition of TGHE which covered 12 practices including the preparation of *gurgur cha* (butter tea) and *skyu* (Ladakhi soup), clay pottery in Likir, metalwork in Chilling, and archery traditions in Kargil and Zaskar among others.

Be it handlooms and handcrafts, cuisine or sports, many of the practices and traditions in the Himalayas are linked to livelihoods. Even as the project builds a national inventory for ICH practices, the aim is to foster knowledge exchange and maintain the sense of cultural continuity. The rider-researchers get a chance to engage firsthand with many of these communities, experiencing their living heritage and returning with documented knowledge. They become vehicles of transmitting this knowledge, helping to educate people as they unfold the creative genius and adaptability of local communities.

These documentation efforts came to life with an audio-visual showcase by National Geographic, a TGHE collaborator, at the festival. Here are the traditions and artefacts that were part of this compelling presentation.

Mukha Shilpa

Majuli, Assam

Majuli mask making, or *mukha shilpa*, is unique to the Majuli island in Assam, a skill passed on in traditional learning centres known as *sattras*. A mask maker, locally known as a *khanikar*, traditionally starts with a bamboo frame, layered with clay from the Brahmaputra river, cow dung, and cotton cloth to create anthropomorphic mythological beings with snouts, demons with bloodshot eyes and flared nostrils. Due to floods and land erosion, Majuli today is only a fraction of its original size and the impact of climate change continues to gnaw. There is no surety that the *sattras* that exist on the shores one season will survive the next; of the 65 *sattras* that originally came up in Majuli, only 22 survive.



Beading Traditions

Arunachal Pradesh



Beads are a cornerstone of cultural identity and wealth among the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, particularly for women. Beads serve as heirlooms, passed from mother to daughter — usually the eldest — and are sometimes buried with the woman after her death. While designs and usages vary among tribes, certain patterns emerge: beads are typically worn by women of all ages and occasionally by men in simpler, single-strand forms. Beyond their aesthetic appeal, beads carry social memory, even tracing trade and migration routes of tribes across generations.

Byopa

Papum Pare, Arunachal Pradesh

The *byopa* is a distinct headgear fashioned by the men of the Nyishi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh. A cultural icon of the people, the feathered cap is used to flaunt their unique identity during important occasions. Recognised by the bird's beak that sits atop a knot of hair above the forehead, the *byopa* has seen several modifications to its most distinctive feature. Due to conservation efforts to protect the endangered bird species, the bird's beak was replaced by fibreglass, and later, wooden replicas. With community support, traditionally-made *byopa* with hornbill beaks are now a thing of the past.



Ao Black Pottery

Mokokchung, Nagaland



Changki village holds the unique distinction of being the only Ao Naga village in Nagaland with pottery-makers, a craft regarded as a divine gift to its women. This sacred art was so integral to the Ao community that no village would dare invade Changki, knowing it would deprive the tribe of its essential earthen utensils. The process of creating these pots was as remarkable as their legacy. Women ventured deep into forests to find a rare, specific clay which was painstakingly carried home, mixed with water, and pounded to achieve the right malleability. Tools steeped in tradition guided the shaping process—a mushroom-shaped stone tool, potsuro, for inner moulding; a spatula-like stick, limusoba achok, for striking and smoothing; and posukro, a wooden club, for achieving the desired size. The pots were then carefully dried by the fire before being baked to iron-hard perfection beneath layers of dried leaves.

Gurgur Cha

Hargam, Nubra Valley, Ladakh

Known locally as *cha khante* or *gurgur cha*, butter tea is a quintessential symbol of Ladakhi culture. Its origins can be traced to the 13th century when Chinese brides introduced tea culture to Tibet. The Tibetans modified it with *demo* (female yak) butter and salt, creating *bo jha* or *po cha*. This unique preparation travelled to Ladakh's Tibetan-Buddhist communities, where it became known as *gurgur cha*, named after the rhythmic sound of the *dongmo* (churner) as the ingredients are blended. This beverage is a remedy for the region's harsh winters and an antidote to dry desert summers. For outsiders, its savoury flavour—a mix of tea leaves, milk, salt, and butter—often comes as a surprise, more akin to a light soup than tea.



Metalworking in Chilling

Chilling, Leh, Ladakh



The village of Chilling is home to Ladakh's renowned metalworkers, their ancestry traced back to Newari craftsmen from Nepal, invited in the late 16th century by King *Sengge* Namgyal to create a monumental copper statue of Sakyamuni Buddha at Shey Palace. Impressed by their craftsmanship, the king granted them land at Chilling, a resource-rich area with copper from the Zaskar River and charcoal from thorn bushes. Metalworking in Chilling remains largely unchanged, with artisans using simple tools such as hammers, anvils and goatskin bellows (*bhutpa*) to craft their wares. The process includes heating the metal in coal-fired hearths, shaping it with precision and soaking finished products in apricot water to achieve a polished finish. Only three of seven families continue this labour-intensive craft, their handmade products robust enough to last generations.

Tsepo

Aranu, Nubra Valley, Ladakh

Known as *tsepo*, the conical backpack baskets have served as an economic lifeline for locals in Ladakh over centuries. They are used for carrying everything from firewood to vegetables, manure to animal feed and even babies—the snug form of the basket is said to comfort the baby rocking on the mother's back as she works in the fields. Traditionally, in winter or during breaks from their labour, women would spin or knit while men made these baskets using willow branches and dried stalks of *chipkiang*, a grass native to the fertile banks of the Indus River. Both *chipkiang* and willow are known for their durability and are able to withstand Ladakh's harsh, sub-zero temperatures and strong winds. Gathered in the summer and soaked for two weeks to soften, these materials are then expertly woven into baskets and mats.



Jaapi

Assam



The Jaapi, a traditional hat worn in Assam, derives its name from the word *jaap*, referring to a bundle of *tokou* (palmyra leaves). The conical hat is woven from a local type of bamboo, *jaati baa*, and the leaves of the palmyra palm tree. Today, a modernised version, and perhaps the most recognisable kind of *jaapi* — the *fulam jaapi*, named after blooming flowers, is widely used in Bihu dances and finds mentions in Bihu folk songs. However, the *jaapi* comes in all sizes, colours, designs and functions – the Bodo-Kacharis are primarily agriculturalists and, thus, the *haluwa jaapi* or *panidoi* is most used by farmers in the field as protection from the sun, while the *tupi* or *varun jaapi* is used as a protective hat against the rain.

From Folk to Fabric

An exhibition of indigenous textiles and artefacts, curated in collaboration with community members, echoed the spirit of oral tradition and folklore, carrying forward the voices and wisdom of Himalayan communities.

**The Himalayan Knot
Textile Exhibition**



From Folk to Fabric

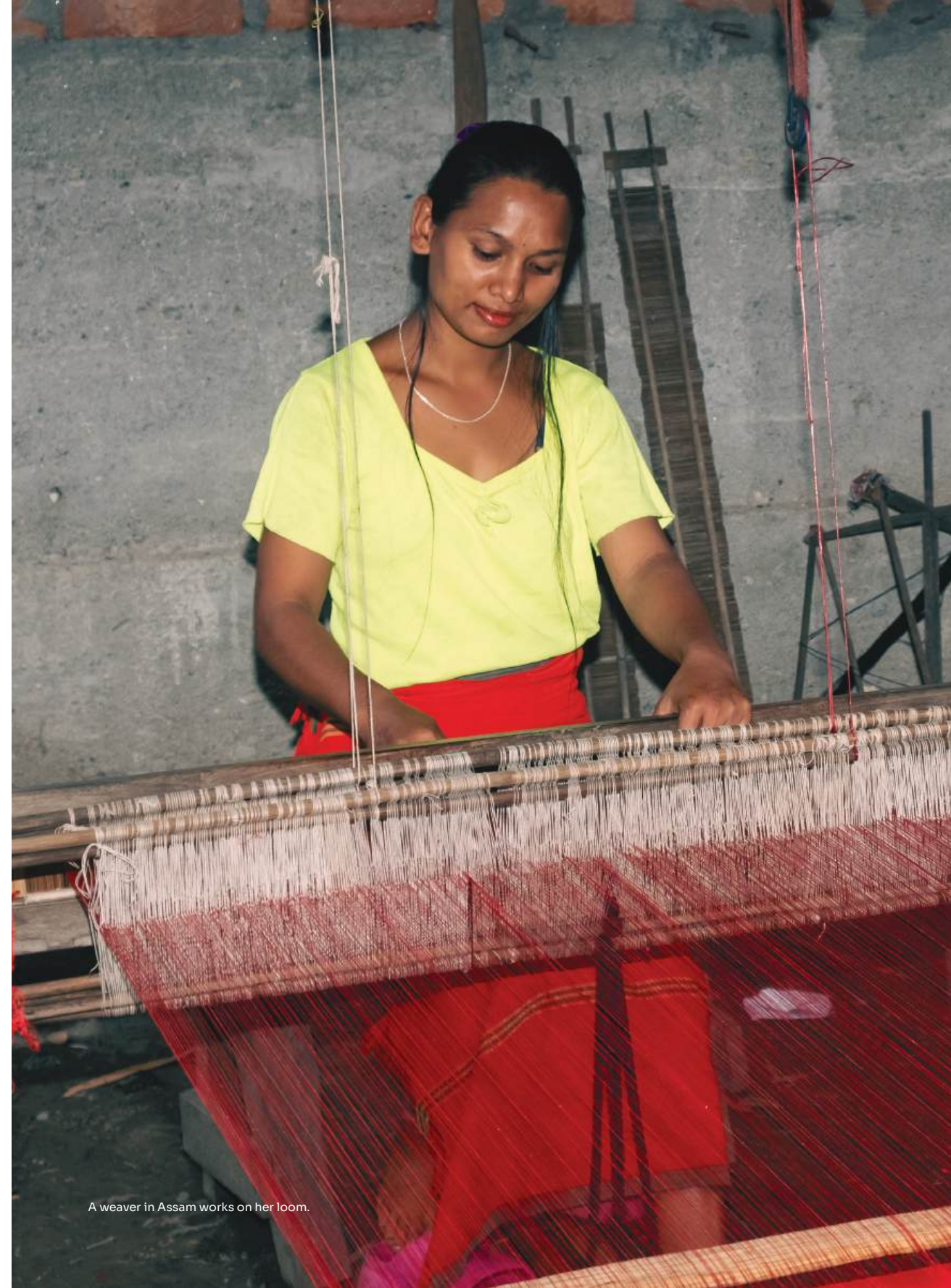
The textile traditions of Manipur's Tangkhul Naga community are woven with stories. Take for instance the Zingtai village's *Mansingla Kashan* (a version of the wrapped garment worn by women across communities in North East India). Legend has it that Ayi Leimava, a fairy, taught Mansingla the art of weaving. Zingtai Mansingla, blessed by Rong Kameo (the spirit of the lake), was renowned for her beauty as much as her weaving, and her legendary motifs and patterns, and celestial gifts, inspired the intricate designs seen in the textiles till date. Another Tangkhul story narrates Yonangla Kashung Philava, who received the recipe for the dye used in the *Luirim Kachon* shawl in a dream.

These folklores became the inspiration for Ukhruul-based designer Easternlight Zimik's installation at the "From Folk to Fabric" exhibition during the festival. Zimik, who runs the clothing label East, used folktales to draw attention to textiles and artefacts that are embedded in Tangkhul community life, from ceremonial *Raivat* shawls to baskets and woven artefacts.

Folklore anchored "From Folk to Fabric"—evident in the name—a textile exhibition presented as part of The Himalayan Knot, showcasing the material culture of communities in the Himalayan region. This exhibition was a homage to the sartorial cultures, storytelling, and traditional ways of life in Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Ladakh, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikkim. Textiles emerged as conduits of myths and legends, values and stories to be passed down generations. "They are living documents of the land and its people, expressing shared memories, identity, and a unique ethos," stated the exhibition note.

"We wanted the exhibition to be representative of the nine states and union territories, and relatable for people who came to see the exhibition," says Ikshit Pande, curator of the showcase. Pande, who leads brand strategy at Royal Enfield Social Mission, found inspiration in his travels through the region with Royal Enfield Social Mission for The Himalayan Knot. "As I spent time interacting with different communities, I often heard stories and folklore centered around weaving," he says. "Weaving and textile practices are a living heritage and folktales become an important tool for intergenerational transfer of such practices. Folklore is used as a medium to make the younger generation understand textile practices and believe in them. And, how certain textiles were woven to mark a variety of ceremonies, and serve as a means for storytelling."

Previous: Women artisans in Himachal Pradesh working on The Himalayan Knot project.



A weaver in Assam works on her loom.



A campaign still from The Himalayan Knot collection
by Royal Enfield x EKA x Looms of Ladakh.



An Eri stole woven by artisans in Assam
for The Himalayan Knot collection.



Artisans in Kashmir work over cups of kahwa and snacks.



To assemble the exhibition, Pande sought out the knowledge of artists, curators, academics, designers and creative professionals rooted in local communities. Apart from Easternlight Zimik, the showcase included contributors such as textile anthropologist and founder of Ladakh Arts and Media Organisation, Dr. Monisha Ahmed (Ladakh and Kashmir); textile designer, Kevisedenuo Margaret Zinyü (Nagaland); Kullu-based social enterprise, The Woolknitters (Himachal Pradesh); multidisciplinary industrial designer and social entrepreneur, Sonam Tashi Gyaltsen (Sikkim); the women's weaving initiative, Aagor (Assam); crafts entrepreneur, Charlee Mathlena (Mizoram); and wool innovator Anand Joshi (Uttarakhand).

Every contributor shared a distinct folk story or sartorial belief system to anchor their installation at the festival. In Nagaland for instance, weaving has been a women-led practice. The exhibition featured a folktale of the Khamniungan community dating back to times when headhunting was a common practice. The story goes: as a village woman from the Lushing clan sat weaving, an adversary broke into her home. Defending herself, she used her weaving tool—the *long*—to kill the intruder. At a time when women's strength and bravery was often underestimated, the story presented women at the centre of a heroic act aided by the tools of weaving. Contributor Margaret Zinyü added other stories to this yarn, rooted in nature and culture, such as the *Elloinui*, a collective name for orange wild rhea plants and Himalayan stinging nettles, which were spun and woven into loin-wraps for men and women. "Clothing in this context was never seen as a luxury but as an extension of the community's environment and values: humble, practical and deeply connected to nature," said Zinyü's installation statement.

Stories of divinity and genesis recurred among the folklore. From Ladakh, contributor Dr. Monisha Ahmed drew on a story of how a Buddhist lama transformed demons into humans by teaching them to weave. Among Assam's Bodo community, a folktale credits the beginning of



Top: Local wools on showcase.

Opposite: Textile details, traditional garments and accessories on display at "From Folk to Fabric".

weaving to Asagi and Bwisagi, two fairy sisters. The duo would weave, finding their muse in nature, which remains a dominant influence in the community's colourful textiles. For the Lepcha community in Sikkim, weaving clothes from nettle fibre symbolised their connection to traditional knowledge and the land, particularly Dzongu, believed to be inhabited by deities and spirits and considered a sacred place. "These are stories that the audience can take home with them, and view crafts from a different lens,"

adds Pande. "We also had photographs and objects, so that people can visualise what the atmosphere in such communities may be like."

Everyday life of the community lay at the heart of Anand Joshi's story of the *Loi* fabric from Uttarakhand. "The origins of the *Loi* are said to lie with the mountain-dwelling communities, who relied on the hardy sheep grazing the alpine meadows for their wool," said his statement. "With hands hardened by labour but hearts softened

by tradition, women would spin the wool into fine threads, dyeing them in hues inspired by nature—earthy browns, snow whites, and muted greys." From a biting winter landscape, emerged the *loi*, light and warm, a companion for shepherds and a symbol of respect and affection for guests. Anchoring every story and exhibit of "From Folk to Fabric" was this sense of kinship—with nature, with history and heritage, and with each other.



A view of the exhibition at the festival.



The Moon Shawl

Jammu and Kashmir

“You can always look at the moon but can you look at the sun? The sun will make you blind in a minute. So, the weavers drew inspiration as they gazed at the moon.”

Chhotelal Bharany, renowned shawl collector, Delhi 2013



The Weaver is a Problem-Solver

Himachal Pradesh

“Weaving requires profound discipline and dexterity to untie complexities; it involves crossing two threads the warp and the weft, one vertical, and one horizontal, one stretched tight, the other intertwining the first. To produce a textile, the two threads need to be bound together otherwise, the weaving work will remain fragile. Hence in ancient Buddhist belief, a weaver is akin to a problem solver, someone who is adept at bridging silos and bringing greater connectedness.”



Never Turn Back

Mizoram



Tawlhloh, in the Mizo language, means ‘to stand firm’ and ‘to never turn back’. It is said that before going into battle, Mizo warriors would drape themselves in the *Tawlhloh puan*, a testament to their vow to hold their ground. As the legend goes, the warrior Darhnawka requested that his wife weave him a cloth large enough to cover his body in death if he were to fall in battle. This cloth represented his preparedness to face danger without turning back.

The *Tawlhloh puan* speaks of cultural resilience, the valour of ancestral warriors, and the historical journeys of the Mizo people. According to oral tradition, the origins of this *puan* lie between the rivers Run and Tiau, hinting at deeper historical and migratory narratives embedded in Mizo folklore.

Reviving Risha

Tripura's Narrow Textile
Weaving Tradition

Ahmedabad based Tilla Design Studio's installation at Journeying Across The Himalayas 2024 celebrated the *risha*, a traditional breastcloth worn by women in Tripura. Aratrik Dev Varman, founder and lead designer of Tilla, and designer Jisha Unnikrishnan—researchers and collaborators for the project—map the textile's past and present.

Risha is a narrow textile, no more than 30cm wide and 160cm long, woven and worn by women of the 19 or so indigenous tribes of Tripura. It is worn as a breastcloth wrapped around the upper body in conjunction with the *rignai* which is a wider cloth worn as a wrapped skirt. Made on a simple backstrap loom fashioned locally out of bamboo, these textiles have existed since antiquity and are indicators of a self-sufficient way of life characteristic of tribal societies in the North Eastern region of India.

Inspired by the *risha*, we conceived an artwork to look at the process of its making rather than the finished textile. The installation draws from the simple ingenuity of the backstrap loom in which the warp threads are set up with only a few sticks of bamboo, allowing the weaver to make this loom light, mobile and inexpensive. This is especially significant in the context of shifting or *Jhum* agriculture followed by tribal communities.

The multi-stripped composition consists of two sets of intersecting threads, criss-crossing to reveal a play of opacities in six segments, and is a direct reference to the tribal textiles of Tripura.

The *risha* embodies the creative spirit of every tribal community in Tripura, a textile that is representative of a sense of collective identity. Unlike other cultures in the North East, which also employ wood and metal to make objects of everyday use, the Tripuri's proficiencies are expressed through bamboo and textiles.

Each of the communities weave their *risha* in a particular way, which makes it different either in colour or in composition from those worn by women of other communities. The Tripuri women have a long band called the *risha bata* that runs vertically along the centre of their *risha* with extra weft motifs on either ends of the textile, while the absence of any extra weft motifs is characteristic of the Reang, who use only thin vertical stripes of red, black, indigo and white. A typical *Chakma hadi* is red with black borders, with a horizontal

yellow-and-white pin-stripped body while the notable use of lac pink in thick plain stripes is identifiably the Mogh community's preference.

The last century has seen a gradual decline of both *risha* wearing and weaving, with the breastcloth being replaced by other items of clothing such as the *chador*, saree blouses, etc. used to cover the upper body. The reasons for this are complex and varied as communities have migrated, inter-married and been exposed to external cultural and political influences. At Tilla, we have been collecting and documenting examples of this textile, worn by commoners and royalty alike, some that date as far back as the mid 1800s in the hope of furthering our understanding of this traditional craft.

While the *risha* has transitioned from being a garment for everyday use to acquiring symbolic status in the context of modern-day identity politics in the North East, the skill of weaving on the backstrap loom is still alive and practiced by many women within the tribal community. The central agenda of this project is the revival of *risha* weaving and we hope that the extensive documentation of this tradition and its supporting context might inspire weavers, designers and textile researchers to look more closely at this craft practice and see scope for further exploration in its unique aesthetic.



Textiles on display.

An installation showcasing the process of *risha* weaving.
 Dimensions: 3ft x 14.5ft
 Material: Teak wood frame with cotton and lurex yarn
 Artists: Tilla Design Studio, Ahmedabad | Aratrik Dev Varman and Jisha Ummikrishnan
 Commissioned by: Royal Enfield Social Mission/The Himalayan Knot
 Year: 2024

Dancing to the Tunes

The folk performance troupe from Assam, who sang and danced their way into the audience's hearts at Journeying Across The Himalayas 2024, is not only preserving its traditions but also transforming it for an inclusive and progressive future.



Members of Sifung Harimu Afad on stage at the festival.

of

It was the early days of winter in Delhi, but springtime bloomed in the courtyard of Travancore Palace on day four of the festival. Twenty members of the Sifung Harimu Afad were on stage, performing the *Bagurumba Mwsanai*, also called the butterfly dance, the main traditional dance of the Bodo community of Assam.

Traditionally performed in spring, it symbolises renewal, joy, and harmony with nature. The lyrics of *Bagurumba Mwsanai* reflect the camaraderie of Bodo women, who gather after a long day in the fields to tease, share stories and celebrate their solidarity through choreography and movement.

The Sifung Harimu Afad (SHA) is a performing arts troupe based out of Rowmari in Bodoland, initiated with the support of the Chirang-based NGO The Action Northeast Trust (The ANT). Since 2014, they have been on a mission to revive Bodo folk music, dance and drama, training nearly 1,000 young talents and inspiring cultural pride. Led by Bodo youth, the Sifung troupe has turned the community's fading traditions into a vibrant movement with performers now shining at district, state and national platforms. They also have the support of the Royal Enfield Social Mission, which partners with cultural practitioners through partner NGOs to strengthen heritage-based livelihoods. The group's work goes beyond performance, creating a sustainable future for Bodo dance and music.

The troupe's performance at the festival referenced the rhythm of daily life in Bodo villages, the energy of seasonal celebrations and the grace of dance traditions passed down through generations. It presented a dynamic blend of Bodo dance forms including, for instance, the *Bwisagu Mwsanai* which marks the arrival of the Bodo New Year in mid-April during the Bwisagu festival. An expression of gratitude

and new beginnings, it celebrates endless possibilities of the year ahead. The troupe also performed the *Na Gurnai Mwsanai*, a dance that depicts Bodo women fishing with traditional tools like *jekai* and *kobai*. Centred on a communal activity where women come together at dawn, chatter while fishing and rush home at sunset to prepare meals for their families, it celebrates shared labour, resilience and the unseen rhythms of life. Their costumes, intrinsic to the performances, played a key role in storytelling – the patterns of the *jwmgra*

Sifung

(scarf) evoking images of butterflies, warriors and agricultural life. Each movement, whether a leap mimicking a butterfly's flight or a synchronised step reflecting collective labour, was deeply symbolic. Even as their dance evolves with time and local cultural influences, SHA is focused on restoring traditional steps, ensuring consistency across regions while staying true to historical forms.

Formed under the aegis of The Ant, SHA was set up with the aim to revive Bodo music and dance—increasingly replaced in recent years by technology and popular entertainment—and popularise it among the youth. The initiative follows a "Learn, Do, Teach" philosophy – an approach that has not only promoted tradition but also sparked a quiet transformation within the community. Most SHA members are the first in their families to receive formal training in Bodo dance and music. They are also transcending gender barriers, with women as both musicians and dancers. In a culture where women were once discouraged from touching the instruments that defined their identity, a few dared to challenge the notion that a woman's place was solely on the dance floor, proving that excellence in playing the *Kham*, *Sifung*, and *Serja* was not a question of gender but of passion and perseverance.

Harimu

Early attempts were met with skepticism and resistance – a belief so entrenched that some feared the act of a woman playing an instrument could "ruin" its sanctity. Still, as these women persisted, the tide of public opinion began to shift. With each performance of the ancient art form, they paved the way for future generations to embrace a progressive outlook that would only enrich their cultural heritage.

Extending beyond performance, SHA is also involved in reviving the art of crafting traditional instruments, some of which are pending GI (Geographical Indication) certification. With the number of skilled artisans dwindling, the group has taken up the mantle to ensure that the sounds of musical instruments such as the *sifung*—with its five holes symbolising the elemental forces of nature—continue to resonate. Enabling the practice of the *kham* (drum), *serja* (string instrument similar to a violin), and other instruments, these efforts ensure that the musical backbone of Bodo culture remains vibrant and accessible.

Afad

A Taste of the Mountains

A conversation between chef Anumitra Ghosh Dastidar and researcher-curator Mary Therese Kurkalang spotlighted the culinary heritage of the Eastern Himalayas at Journeying Across The Himalayas 2024 but the real treat for the audience came after the talk with an afternoon feast of the region's ingredients and singular recipes.

"I love the cooking methods of boiling, steaming, mixing raw ingredients together without overcooking," says cultural curator and social researcher Mary Therese Kurkalang. "Every ingredient in the mix retains its texture and taste, and when combined with other ingredients – creates a plethora of tastes, like a mouthful of rainbow."

Guests at the festival got a taste of this rainbow during a Food Lab experience and conversation between Mary and Anumitra Ghosh Dastidar, chef and founder of the Goa restaurant and art/research project Edible Archives. Titled "Food Heritage for a Resilient Future - tracing the Eastern Himalayas", the session between Mary and Anumitra spoke about the array of ingredients available across the region, many of which are unique and little known-about in other parts of India, the deep relationship of cuisine in community life, and the impact of climate change on ingredients and nutrition.

Anumitra has been part of Royal Enfield Social Mission's initiatives for a few years, drawing from her engagement with cuisines around the Eastern Himalayan region. "I am curious about how ingredients are used by local communities, but it is the ingredients themselves that excite me much more," she says. Anumitra observes that conversations around food often focus on recipes. "For example, when people speak of *Jadoh*, a Khasi dish from Meghalaya, they don't mention the type of rice used in the dish. But these are the details I am interested in." The knowledge of ingredients is crucial in understanding the connections between food and nature as well as culinary habits and community.



(L-R) Mary Therese Kurkalang and Anumitra Ghosh Dastidar in conversation.

Mary, who led the conversation with Anumitra, adds, "From my perspective, it was important to present the ingredients in relationship to the landscapes and cultures of the region and its diverse contexts - related to history, market, forests, water, climate and cultural significance and ways in which different communities think about what and how they consume, preserve and nurture."

Now growing in popular imagination, with gourmet offerings, new restaurants and other culinary options, the cuisines of the Eastern Himalayan states have always been distinct. While Anumitra highlights the seasonality of the ingredients as a great distinguishing factor, Mary notes the practices and ancient knowledge in which consumption is steeped. "For those who continue to live close to the land, forests and rivers, there is a wisdom with which food is consumed and prepared. A certain banana that is given to babies, herbs and rice varieties that are especially used for



Guests at the festival enjoy the culinary spread by Anumitra Ghosh Dastidar.

those with diabetes, the practice of 'nose to tail' for animals and plants, foods which are consumed according to season... and much more."

Following the conversation, Anumitra presented a sumptuous spread of ingredients and delicacies spanning the region—displays of raw ingredients, rice, vegetables, herbs and foraged greens, and cooked items. "We had everything from smoked meats and dried fish to *axone* and *tungrymbai* (forms of fermented soybeans)," says Anumitra. Everyone was invited to taste, touch and smell the ingredients, which, the chef adds, can sensitise an audience to unfamiliar recipes and enable them to move past stereotypes.



Unique ingredients from the Eastern Himalayas on display.

Underpinning the conversation and food was an intention to highlight the value of preserving and sustaining this cultural heritage. Anumitra notes that it is important to be attuned not only to the "diversity of ingredients but also their usage" in the face of changing climate conditions. "Nutrition is lost when visibility and use of an ingredient is lost," she says. "But with knowledge, a community can find another way to eat even if a crop fails." Mary notes that the history of food has always been linked to change and policy. "For those who continue to live close to their food sources and have deep and lived understanding of taking, without mindlessly extracting, they will perhaps continue to thrive. This depends on whether the forests and lands, and rivers they live with, will not be taken over," she says.

Experiments From the Food Labs



Cuisine is a window into the life of a community. For communities in Himalayan region, their food is intimately tied to local landscapes, seasonality and ways of life. The distinct ecology makes these regions home to unique ingredients and traditional recipes fold generations of culinary knowledge and time-honed processes into their steps. Processes of steaming and

boiling, fermenting, pickling and smoking differentiate community recipes, creating memorable taste and flavours. Food also becomes a conduit for manifold stories. For some, it represents the adventures of foraging and discovering new ingredients; for others, it may be the experience of nurturing a garden or cooking a special meal or sharing the kitchen with loved ones.



Panelists on stage for “Gourmet Stories from the Kitchen Garden”.

A series of conversations and culinary experiences, during Journeying Across The Himalayas 2024, focused on the role food plays in the everyday lives of communities living in mountains. Local culinary traditions, the role of specific ingredients and personal stories of cooking and sharing took centrestage in the panel, **On The World's Stage: Recipes From The Himalayan Homes**. Moderated by journalist Sourish Bhattacharya, the conversation featured food evangelist Athan Zimik; Grace Muivah, Founder of Ngarum Coffee; and Tanisha Phanbuh, Founder-Director of Tribal Gourmet.

For **Gourmet Stories from the Kitchen Garden**, chef Pankaj Sharma and Shalini Philip, Co-founder of

The Farm, Chennai swapped stories from helming kitchen gardens and the value of growing their own food. Joining them were women who helm the kitchen and facilities at Pit Stop Kharu, the green pitstop by Royal Enfield in Ladakh, with their own stories and recipes.

In another delectable session, Namrata Sundaresan, Co-founder of Käse Cheese served a platter of stories and cheese to the audience. The session, titled **Tasting Indian Artisan Cheese - Global Inspiration, Local Creation** showcased how startups such as Käse Cheese were putting a distinctly local spin on recipes and food staples from around the world. Say cheese!



A glimpse from the panel, “On The World's Stage: Recipes From The Himalayan Homes”.

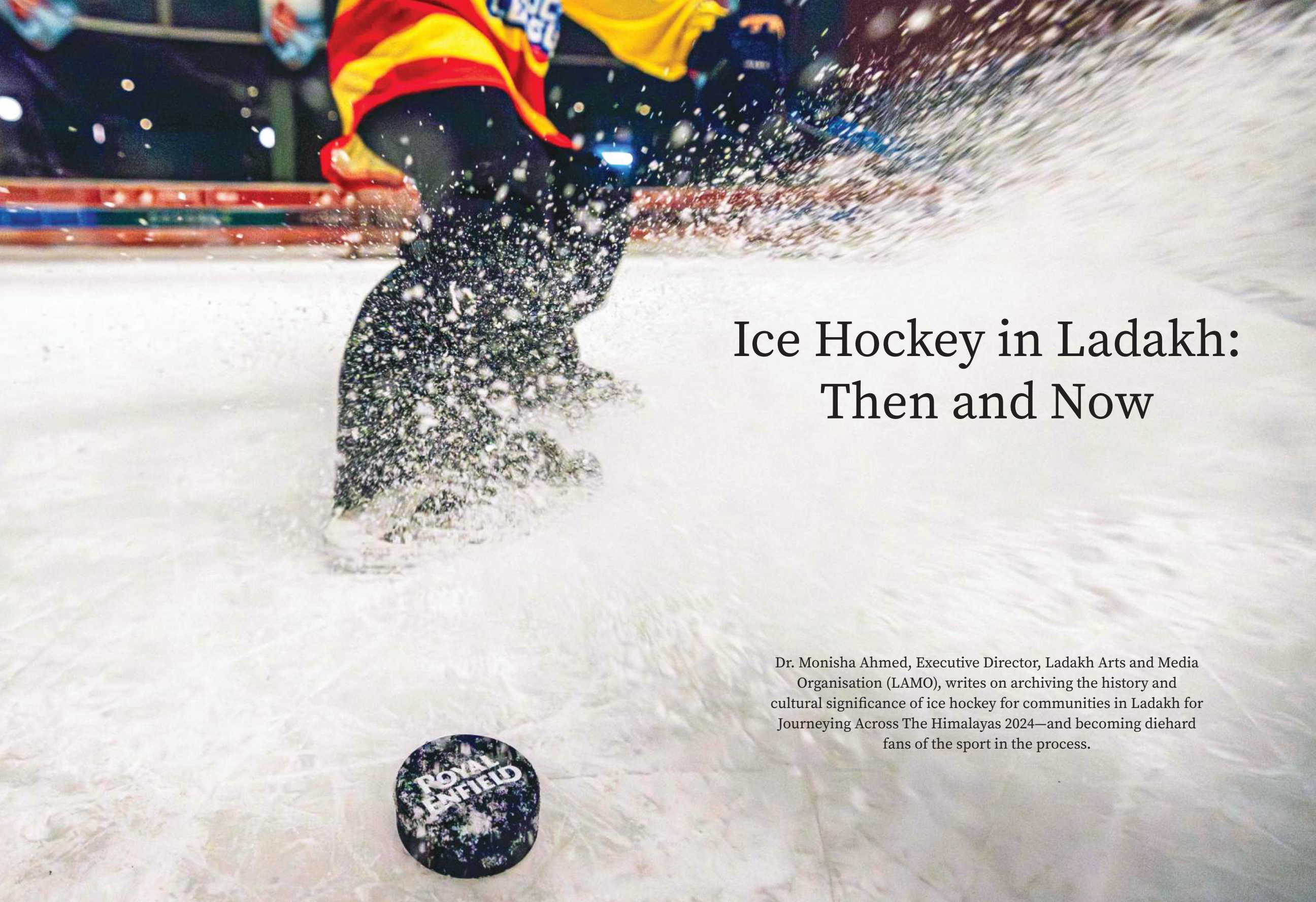
TWO COMMUNITY

ICE HOCKEY IN LADAKH: THEN AND NOW

MOTORCYCLE DIARIES

STITCHING CRAFT AND COMMUNITY WITH CONTEMPORARY DESIGN

VIGNETTES FROM THE MOUNTAINS



Ice Hockey in Ladakh: Then and Now

Dr. Monisha Ahmed, Executive Director, Ladakh Arts and Media Organisation (LAMO), writes on archiving the history and cultural significance of ice hockey for communities in Ladakh for *Journeying Across The Himalayas 2024*—and becoming diehard fans of the sport in the process.





Ice hockey players and coaches with Darryl R Easson (centre) during a training session in Delhi, during the festival.

“Working on this exhibition was a completely new experience for me, as I knew very little about ice hockey since I’m not particularly into sports. But after conducting research and interviewing players, I developed a deep appreciation of the game,” says Nawang Lhaskit. “What really stood out for me was the passion and dedication of the players. During the interviews, I could feel their emotional connection to the sport and, at one point, I was moved to tears by one player’s story.”

Lhaskit, who is assistant librarian, archivist, and accountant at LAMO, echoes my sentiments and that of Taniya Kouser’s (media officer at LAMO). Our worlds seldom overlapped, and perhaps the closest I’d ever come to an ice hockey player was Noor Jahan as she’s an art conservator and has worked on wall paintings at LAMO. In October 2024, Tsewang Dolma (Regional Lead, Ladakh – Eicher

Group Foundation), approached us to curate an exhibition on ice hockey in Ladakh. Honestly, it took me by surprise, but also made me realise how little I knew about the sport, its history in Ladakh and the people connected to it.

We were fortunate to have LAMO’s Projects Director, Tashi Morup, and creative director, Aaron Dana. Tashi enlightened us on the game. He had not only played for the Skara Club, but had also covered several matches at Karzoo Pond—the water body in Leh which freezes into a natural rink in winters—since 2000 when he worked as a journalist. His collection of newspaper clippings got us started with our literature review and a list of players to be interviewed. Aaron’s reflections were different, as he had grown up on the fringes of Karzoo Pond; he recollected the excitement of matches but also the tribulations of loud noises and cars blocking his gate!



A photograph of ice hockey players on the Karzoo Pond rink in Leh, displayed at the exhibition.



In the short span of time that we were given to put this exhibition together we had to think and work fast. Only I had seen the venue, so conceptualising the exhibition in the given space was difficult for others. Layouts changed constantly, and though Aaron worked meticulously on his 3D representation of the space, he knew that the actual space would be different once we got there! What material objects could we include and how could we depict the game's history in a manner that was informative and yet visually appealing? Our final curation depended on archival images, material objects in the form of early gear used for ice skating, trophies and a goalie's uniform.

We were fortunate that people trusted us enough to loan some of their most precious objects – cups and trophies won at matches, certificates and medals. The timeline helped us visually depict the game's trajectory in Ladakh. But ultimately, we realised the exhibition depended on individual player's stories that needed to be heard. Through the film, made by Wasim Inshaq Malik and Taniya, we attempted to showcase a sampling of players across generations, and had them narrate their own stories. It was important to bring in other voices who had an impact on the development of the sport in Ladakh, and we reached out to the Canadians from Hockey without Borders.



We realised that many people were also missed and that we did not speak with enough women, but the schedule was tight.

"In Ladakh, Ice hockey is more than just a game—it carries deep emotions and meaning," says Taniya. During the course of our research into this topic, it soon became very clear that Ice hockey is without a doubt a growing culture in Ladakh, and one that has benefited from the extreme cold climatic conditions of the region. It resonates with this quote from a 2020 feature on ice-hockey in the publication, *Stawa*: "Each winter people in Ladakh remove two things from their storeroom. The first is the traditional 'Bukhari' [stove] to stay warm and the other is a pair of ice skates to use on frozen ponds and lakes."

The sport's growth is founded on the sheer sweat, determination and commitment of young men and women to not just play the sport, but to excel in it. There are stories of playing with little or no equipment, fashioning the tin from army ammunition boxes into blades, dodging parents to go out and skate or stealing an older sibling's skates even if they were two sizes too big. It is also a story of women's emancipation, as they refused to be just dancers between games but demanded to be included in the competitive matches.

Opposite (Top): An archival image of the final match of Trishul Ice Hockey Tournament 1982, in Ladakh, between the Army and civil team at Karzoo Pond rink.
Opposite (Bottom): Ice hockey players at the tournament.

“With no year-round ice rink and only two months of practice, they step onto international platforms, carrying the hopes of an entire community and striving for victory despite the odds. The pressure is immense, but their determination is even greater. I truly hope that one day we will see a Ladakhi team competing and excelling against the biggest names in the sport,” adds Taniya.

From the first games played by army personnel posted at a remote village in Changthang after the 1962 Sino-India war, to a game now widely played across the region, and one that has positioned Ladakhi players on the national and international stage—what better success story than this. The Royal Enfield Ice Hockey League just makes it better.



Images Clockwise from Top Left: Trophies on display; a view of the exhibition; a pair of ice hockey skates among the exhibits.

Aaron Dana

Monisha Ahmed

Nawang Lhaskit

Taniya Kousar

Tashi Morup

Tsering Chonzom



Motorcycle Diaries

What makes a journey meaningful? Three rider-researchers contemplate the significance of riding in their lives, and recount anecdotes from The Great Himalayan Expedition in collaboration with UNESCO.

Between August and October 2024, a group of passionate motorcyclists made their way across Ladakh on a singular quest. As rider-researchers for Season Three of The Great Himalayan Exploration (TGHE) in collaboration with UNESCO, they were chroniclers and explorers, living with local communities across the union territory and documenting their rich cultural heritage. During Journeying Across The Himalayas 2024, they gathered on stage—for a panel discussion titled “Looking beyond Landscapes - the role of rider researchers” to narrate their experiences of TGHE and the role such expeditions can play in preserving living traditions and cultural heritage in the Himalayan region. Moderated by Clifton Shipway, motorcycle adventurer and content creator, the panel featured Dr Maral Yazarloo Patrick, BBC 100 influential women of the world; motorcyclist Thejaswini Channamallikarjuna; Jose Louies, Chief Executive Officer, Wildlife Trust of India; and Muteeb Zoheb, Motorcyclist and Founder, Art of Motorcycle. Here, Clifton, Muteeb, and Dr Maral reflect on their journey and the transformative role of riding the roads into new horizons.



A woman dressed in traditional Brokpa attire.

Clifton Shipway Photographer, philanthropist

There's a kind of poetry in the way a motorcycle moves through the world—a language only riders understand. And when that machine is the Royal Enfield Himalayan 450, and the terrain is Ladakh, India, every kilometre becomes a verse, every corner a punctuation mark in a story written in dust, wind and elevation.

For me, riding has never been about escape—it's about immersion. Our journey began in Likir, a village nestled in the Indus Valley, surrounded by stark mountains and overlooked by a centuries-old monastery. Though known to a few tourists for its gumpa and peaceful landscapes, Likir holds a lesser-known treasure: one of Ladakh's last living traditions of handmade pottery. Here, in a modest home at the edge of the village, we met Lamchung and his son Rikzin—the last potters still practicing an art that has all but vanished from the region.

Their process is elemental: mining raw clay from the mountains, pounding it by hand, and shaping it on a simple wheel. We rode into their world not just as observers, but as participants—kneading clay, digging in the dirt, even firing pots in a makeshift kiln fuelled by yak dung and river moss. It was humbling, and strangely sacred. This was more than craft—it was heritage etched into every curve of a pot.

Further west, near the town of Kargil, lies the village of Hardass, a place not often marked on maps, but rich with cultural resonance. It's home to the Balti people, a community with roots in Tibetan and Central Asian traditions. Once part of the Baltistan region,

now divided by borders, the Balti culture survives here in fragments—one of the most hauntingly beautiful being their tradition of ghazal singing. We sat beneath fruit-laden apricot trees, listening as voices rose in soulful harmony, weaving tales of love, longing and nature.

Our final destination was Garkon, part of the Dah-Hanu region, often referred to as the Aryan Valley. The people here—known as the Drokpa or Brokpa—are distinct in both appearance and tradition. With Indo-Aryan

heritage and an oral history that stretches back thousands of years, their culture is unlike any other in Ladakh. Women wear elaborate floral headdresses, their garments woven with symbols that speak of fertility, seasons and identity. Textiles here aren't just clothing—they are language. Riding into



Garkon felt like stepping into another time. The community welcomed us with warmth, and through their stories and garments, we caught a glimpse of a culture fiercely proud of its roots yet quietly slipping from the modern narrative.

Journeys like this remind me that the road is not just a line between two points—it is a mirror. It reflects not just the landscape, but who we are and what we value. And sometimes, if we are lucky, it shows us what we might lose if we don't slow down and pay attention. In Ladakh, I didn't just ride—I listened, I learned, I carried stories in my panniers. And in a way, that's what the journey was always meant to be.



A view of the Likir monastery.

Muteeb Zoheb Influencer, founder of Art of Motorcycle

A journey, to me, is a continuous exploration—of landscapes, cultures and my own limits. It is not just about covering miles but about immersing in the experience, embracing the unexpected, and growing with every ride. The road teaches patience, resilience, and the beauty of being present in the moment. Whether it's the thrill of new terrain, the warmth of people I meet, or the solitude that fuels reflection, every journey leaves a mark, shaping me not just as a rider but I look forward to the unexpected moments that make every journey unique. It is the thrill of watching the landscape transform with every mile, the chance encounters that turn into unforgettable stories, and the challenges that test both my skills and resilience. More than just the destination, I crave the feeling of complete freedom—where the road, the ride and the present moment become all that matters.

When I ride, my awareness sharpens—it's as if every sense is heightened. I become completely in tune with my surroundings, noticing the smallest

details that might otherwise go unnoticed. The way the light shifts on the horizon, the scent of the earth after rain, the subtle changes in road texture—all of it becomes part of the experience. Every ride is a sensory immersion, where the world isn't just something I pass through—it's something I truly feel.



One of the most memorable and transformative rides I have ever experienced was the Royal Enfield Social Mission's Rider-Researcher programme (TGHE Season 3) in Ladakh. As many times as I have travelled to the region this ride was truly special. We stayed in a homestay in Aarano village, near Nubra, where we immersed ourselves in the local way of life—experiencing their food, culture, and traditions firsthand. Meeting the local children and seeing their joy as they sat on the Himalayan 450 was a reminder of how simple moments can create lasting connections. This ride reinforced that travel isn't just about covering distances—it's about embracing the experiences that shape us along the way.



Dr Maral Yazarloo-Patrick
Fashion Designer, motivational speaker

A journey is a way to add meaning to life. It's a path to self-discovery—to understand myself better, to reflect on what it means to be human and to explore our deeper purpose. Every ride teaches me something new about life and about who I am becoming. I call my bike and my rides one of my important sources of happiness. It's how I stay grounded in an overwhelming world. It's not just a hobby; it's my therapy, my reset button. I make sure to go on a good ride at least once a month or every two months. It keeps me sane, centred, and connected to myself.

I look forward to the time I get to spend with myself—the solitude, the clarity, the quiet moments under my helmet where even the sound of the engine becomes a kind of rhythm in my head. It is a different kind of peace. I even look forward to those still pauses under a tree, where there's no noise—just nature being alive

around me. I cherish the honest, fleeting conversations with strangers on the road, the colors and textures of their clothes, the pieces of fabric or accessories I collect and later frame. I crave the chai at roadside dhabas, the taste of local food in small villages. On the road, even for a few days, I feel like I'm living life to its fullest.



On a motorcycle, awareness isn't optional. It is survival. I am hyper-aware of everything: the smallest movement, a dog at the roadside, a villager crossing with his bicycle. Sometimes it feels like I can read minds. I notice colours, expressions, nature and the tiniest shifts in the environment. My sensitivity heightens—I see more, feel more and connect more deeply when I ride. The Himalayas are my favorite journey. I countdown to the days until I can go back. There's something about its silence and scale that resets everything inside me.

Stitching Craft and Community

59

Giving young Indian designers and students a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to collaborate with Himalayan artisans, winners of the first edition of The Himalayan Knot Design Prize by Royal Enfield x Vogue India were announced at Journeying Across The Himalayas 2024.

India is the land of endless textile tales, abounding in handmade and crafts traditions of countless communities spread across the length and breadth of the country. The Himalayan communities add their own, singular stories to this sprawling assemblage. The region's many vocabularies of materials, weaves, embroideries and embellishments are distinct to every community which have preserved their skills and cultures through centuries.

When Royal Enfield conceived of The Himalayan Knot Design Prize in 2024, the intent was clear: making this diverse heritage accessible to a new generation of design creatives. The competition offered Indian students and emerging designers an opportunity to work with Himalayan communities, aiming to engage their talent in making a positive change for crafts that continue to remain under the radar in India's growing fashion and design landscape.

The competition is rooted in The Himalayan Knot textile conservation project by Royal Enfield Social Mission, which brings Himalayan craftspeople together with leading Indian designers and grassroot organisations for long-term collaborations. For the first season of The Himalayan Knot, designers Sushant Abrol of Countrymade and Sonam Dubal had collaborated with the Action Northeast Trust (the ANT) for Eri silk and Bodo weaves respectively while Rina Singh of Eka worked with Looms of Ladakh on sheep wool, creating capsule collections for Royal Enfield

and undertaking capacity-building and new design interventions for artisans. The Himalayan Knot Design Prize extends the core ethos of this project, seeking to engage emerging Indian designers and redefine sustainable fashion.

In collaboration with *Vogue India*, winners of the first edition of the prize were announced during Journeying Across The Himalayas 2024. An intensive process leading up to the finals had hundreds of designers and students from around India applying for the competition with swatches, artistic concepts, and business proposals. The jury round to choose the winners was held on the final morning of the festival in Delhi with two groups of five designers and five students.

The five-member jury for the final round included Rochelle Pinto, Head of Editorial Content at *Vogue India*; Bandana Tewari, journalist and sustainability advocate; designer Rahul Mishra, known for his handcraft-driven couture; Monisha Ahmed, textile anthropologist and co-founder of Ladakh Arts and Media Organisation (LAMO); and Manvi Sinha, independent director at Eicher Motors. Their evaluation looked beyond aesthetics to assess applicants' goals, community impact, and ability to work collaboratively with artisans. For the designer prize, finalists were also expected to offer a business plan and an outline of how their engagement would benefit the community and enable future innovations.

Opposite: A campaign still from The Himalayan Knot project, Royal Enfield x Countrymade for The Woolknitters.

with
Contemporary Design



Top (L-R): Siddhartha Lal with Saurabh Maurya, winner of The Himalayan Knot Design Prize in the designer category, and Rochelle Pinto.
Bottom: Himani Sharma (centre), recipient of the Student Internship Prize.



The winners were announced in the evening, marking the grand finale of the festival. A fashion presentation and panel discussion by *Vogue India* were part of the evening, along with musical performances and a Himalayan dining experience. Saurabh Maurya won The Himalayan Knot Design Prize in the designer category. Co-founder of the fashion label MARGN, Maurya received financial and mentorship support for up to INR 20 lakh, and is now in the process of co-creating a capsule collection with Himalayan artisans. He is also developing a business plan and infrastructural systems for the community.

Himani Sharma, an alumni of the Indian Institute of Crafts & Design (IICD) took home the Student Internship prize. She received a four-month placement with designer Suket Dhir, one of the collaborators of the next edition of The Himalayan Knot project, an opportunity to work with artisans in Ladakh. The experience not only deepened her understanding of Himalayan craft but also led to a full-time position after the internship, showing how the prize can serve as a stepping stone to future success.

The Himalayan Knot Design Prize

Finalist Designers

Drishti Modi and Rashmick Bose, Lafaani

Lhanzey Palden, Mapcha

Manjushree Saikia, Ura Maku

Saurabh Maurya, MARGN

Stanzin Palmo, Zilzom

Finalist Students

Himani Sharma

Kalyani Prasad

Lakshay Mahwar

Naysa Sharma

Prateeksha Chaudhari

Fashioning Craft Stories

As part of the evening, *Vogue India* curated the Muse Experience, pairing five exceptional designers from the Himalayan region with Indian supermodels showcasing their unique textile-driven designs. Jenjum Gadi drew inspiration from Arunachal Pradesh's Galo community, and its Mopin festival, for an ensemble worn by Saud Khan.

Easternlight Zimik dressed model Carol Gracias in a *kashan*, a new-age take on a garment traditional to the Tangkhul Naga community of Manipur.

Shweta Gupta presented the Harsil dress on Archana Akil Kumar, exploring textures on contemporary textiles which are inspired by Himalayan sunsets.

Manjushree Saikia, of Ura Maku, collaborated with Rabanne Victor who wore an ensemble combining the Assamese Eri Silk along with hakama-style silhouette.

Padma Yangchan merged Ladakh's Bok and Sulma garments into contemporary designs, worn by Sonalika Sahay.



Top and Opposite: Guests at the grand finale of Journeying Across The Himalayas, 2024.

VOGUE x ROYAL ENFIELD



Conversations on Fashion and Responsibility

The evening also included a panel discussion titled *"From the Peripheral to the Personal: How Fashion Influences Our Understanding of Sustainability"*. Moderated by Rochelle Pinto, the session featured Tewari, Mishra, Ahmed, stylist Ekta Rajani, and Siddhartha Lal, Executive Chairman, Eicher Motors Limited, along with stylist Ekta Rajani, and jury members of The Himalayan Knot Design Prize – Dr. Monisha Ahmed, Rahul Mishra, and Bandana Tewari.

The discussion situated the Himalayan Knot project within a framework of artisanal fashion and sustainability. Panellists spoke about the role of fashion in shaping consumer perceptions of sustainability, the importance of supporting artisanal communities, preserving authenticity and ethical design while scaling up, and the renewed interest among Gen Z in the provenance and conscious make of clothing among other subjects.



(L-R) Rahul Mishra, Bandana Tewari, Rochelle Pinto, Ekta Rajani and Dr. Monisha Ahmed.

Vignettes from the Mountains



For well over a decade, Indian photographer Manou has travelled around India documenting individuals and communities in India. His distinctive image-making and storytelling took him on journeys with The Great Himalayan Exploration over the past two years, documenting the cultural practices and daily lives of people in the region. Here are glimpses from his time in Ladakh, displayed at *Journeying Across the Himalayas 2024*.



EHIPASSIKO / COME AND SEE

The exhibition was titled "Ehipassiko", a Pali word meaning 'come and see'.

A poster for the exhibition features a diptych of Otga taking a dip in a freshly filled pool of glacier-fed water in Aranu, Nubra Valley, and the moon rising on the way from Chilling to Nimoo.



A traditional shirt worn by locals displayed at a museum in Garkon village.



Dolma Yangskit, 72 and Diskit Zomkar, 43 dressed in traditional finery. The mother and daughter were photographed at their home in Kargil's Garkon village.



A woman carries the day's harvest home from the fields in Aranu, Nubra Valley. Coriander blooms pop in a bouquet of greens.



Manou's visual storytelling explores ideas of self-expression, identity, and street style in India. His popular blog, Wearabout, has featured in several homegrown and international publications.

CONSERVATION

STRIPES OF SHAN
BUILDING BLOCKS OF RESPONSIBLE TOURISM
ART OF THE MATTER
POSTCARDS FROM LADAKH IN VIRTUAL REALITY
NAVIGATING "THE LONG ROAD"
THE FUTURE IS GREEN

Stripes

of

Shan

The snow leopard, a keystone species vital to the Himalayan ecosystem and symbol of the region's unique cultural and ecological heritage, became the muse for a line of Royal Enfield custom builds and textiles displayed at Journeying Across The Himalayas 2024.

If the Himalayas are Royal Enfield's spiritual home, the snow leopard – known as "Shan" in Ladakhi, is an embodiment of the mountain range. The majestic and elusive animal is a keystone species vital to the high-altitude ecosystem and a symbol of the region's unique cultural and ecological heritage.

The snow leopard became the inspiration for SHAN, a line of custom Royal Enfield builds and a biker jacket showcased at the festival.

In collaboration with Bobbee Singh, Suket Dhir and Arjun Raina, the project explored the significance of the animals in their rugged ecology and their increasing vulnerability in the face of looming climate change. Here is an inside at the designs and inspiration behind them, in the words of the creators.



Bobbee Singh

A Classic 350 embodying the snow leopard

The founder of Old Delhi Motorcycles, Bobbee Singh has spent a lifetime building vintage bikes, particularly vintage Royal Enfield bikes. For SHAN, Singh presented a custom Classic 350 mimicking the cat's posture and power in its body. The snowy colour palette, paint and upholstery scheme elevated the inspiration. "It began with a whisper — the arc of a tail curling in snow. From that fleeting trace, Shan took form. Her tail balances more than her body — it carries legacy," he said of the inspiration. "Shan, named from the Ladakhi word for this elusive predator, is born of that same grace. Her form wraps around a sanctuary of steel, made to roam and to retreat. Art in motion, forged to endure."





Arjun Raina

Translating topography on a Himalayan 450

To customise the mountain-dwelling Himalayan 450, Arjun Raina turned to Saltoto Kangri, the highest peak in Ladakh, for inspiration. The topography of the region, part of the snow leopard's habitat, became graphic lines on the body of the off-road focused motorcycle. "Crafted from carbon fibre, a fundamental element intertwined with life itself, SHAN reflects her deep connection with civilisation and Mother Earth," Raina said about the design, describing it as "a striking embodiment of adventure and resilience."

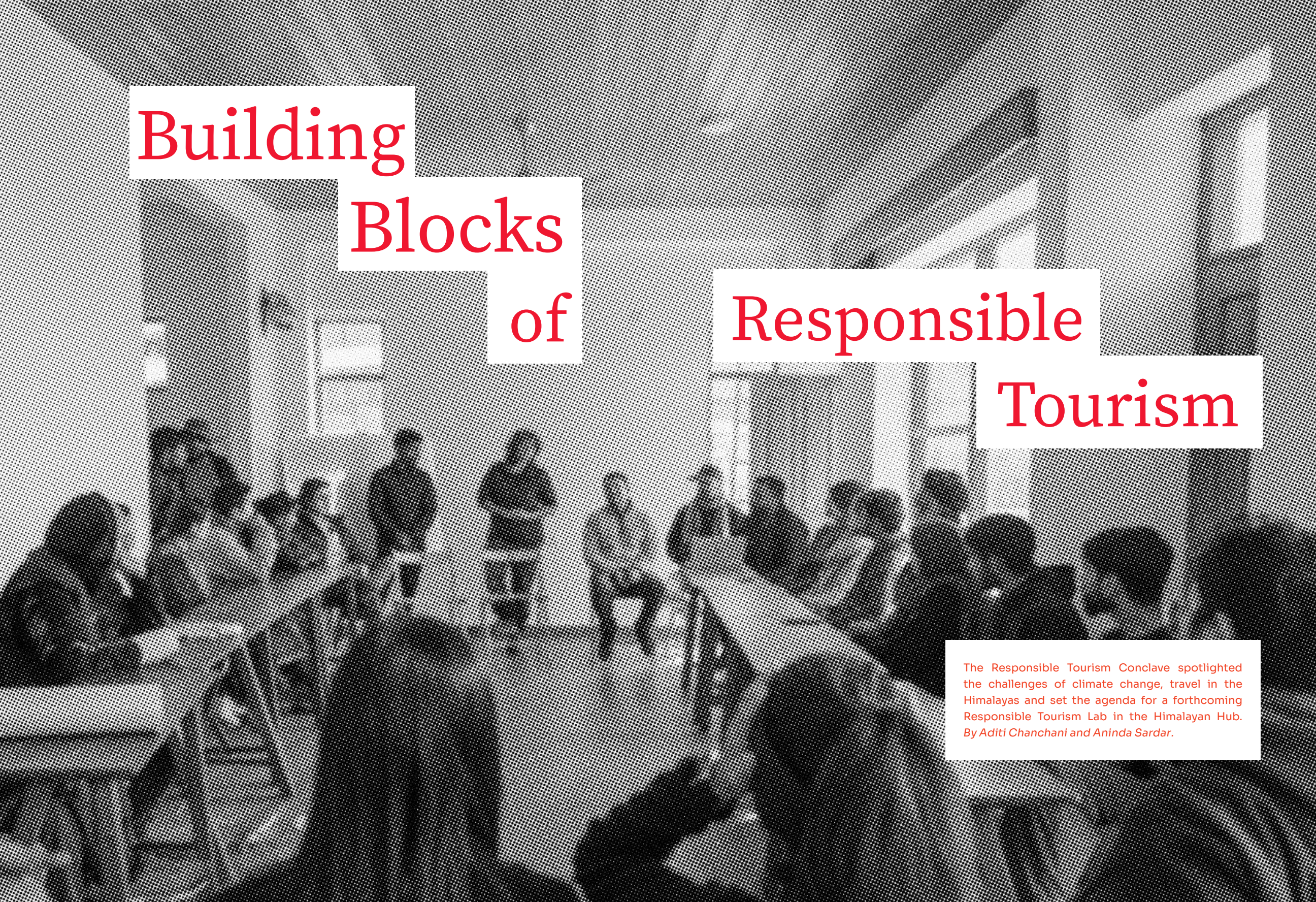


Suket Dhir

Patchwork stories of Ladakh and the snow leopard

With his custom Snow Leopard Biker Jacket design, fashion designer Suket Dhir turned the spotlight on sustainable fashion and the mindful use of resources. The label's design philosophy is rooted in "longevity, quality, and enduring style," incorporating the use of natural fibres and handcrafted designs. "Committed to sustainability, we cherish every square inch of our textiles, transforming even the smallest remnants into meaningful creations," says Dhir. "These remnants are meticulously hand-cut and stitched to tell the story of Ladakh—its breathtaking landscapes, vibrant flora and fauna, and the elusive snow leopard. In our designs, the Snow Leopard, adorned with a symbolic red helmet representing safety and self-preservation, rides a Royal Enfield, embodying the spirit of adventure and freedom that echoes through Ladakh's rugged terrain, blending tradition with bold purpose."





Building Blocks of Responsible Tourism

The Responsible Tourism Conclave spotlighted the challenges of climate change, travel in the Himalayas and set the agenda for a forthcoming Responsible Tourism Lab in the Himalayan Hub.
By Aditi Chanchani and Aninda Sardar.



Himalayan Hub at Theog, Himachal Pradesh.



The Himalayas may be millions of years old but it remains a majestic natural wonder—its snow-clad summits an ever-humbling sight. Royal Enfield’s “spiritual home”, the mountain range spans six countries and has more than 100 peaks that exceed 7,000mt. It is home to more than 50 million people and a travel destination for many more. In 2023 alone, the Indian Himalayas were visited by over 100 million people (Niti Aayog & Ministry of Tourism, India Tourism Data Compendium 2024). While the thriving tourism sector is a key driver of the local economy, the ever-increasing pressure on the region’s natural and cultural systems makes it untenable.

In the past decade, climate change has brought a wide-ranging set of challenges for the Himalayan region, and climate-related disasters have increasingly become the norm for this unique

ecosystem. The Indian Himalayas saw a total of 580 landslides through 2024, a staggering 14.52% of all landslides across the globe. There were bigger calamities from the year before – floods in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and the Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) in Sikkim.

Tourism in the context of climate change remains a complex challenge at both global and local levels, and solving them demands a multi-stakeholder approach. There is an urgent need to collectively revisit and rethink mainstream notions of travel and tourism in this iconic landscape. The Responsible Tourism Conclave, held on the final day of Journeying Across The Himalayas 2024, brought together some of the finest minds and industry experts to discuss possible solutions to preserve its environment, biodiversity and communities.

A community-first vision

While the administration plays a key role at a policy level, that by itself is not adequate to address the problem holistically. The tourism industry has to adopt sustainable practices and the traveller has to be inspired to make a behavioural shift. At a fundamental level, tourism has to be planned keeping the local communities at the centre. It is, therefore, imperative that we come together to focus on the multiple areas of interventions that can ensure feasible, incremental programmes to set the agenda for responsible tourism in the Indian Himalayan region.

As a key initiative, the Himalayan Hub, a collective learning centre for climate resilience and a physical manifestation of the Royal Enfield Social Mission strives to work with communities and the natural systems to cope and thrive. The Responsible Tourism Lab (RT Lab) housed in the Himalayan Hub, is envisioned as a platform for interaction and an incubator of innovative ideas to resolve tourism-related challenges, seeking to build adaptive abilities and inspire a movement towards sustainable tourism.

One of the aims of the Responsible Tourism Conclave was to delve into the granular details of establishing the RT Lab. Over multiple sessions, we sought to understand how such an innovative lab concept should be shaped, its focus areas and possible goals.

The programme included sessions with the likes of CB Ramkumar, vice chair of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) and Dr Anu Kumari Lama, tourism specialist, Sustainable Mountain Tourism Component, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) who spoke about the global and regional perspective. Soity Banerjee, Project Editor at Outlook Responsible Tourism Initiative highlighted the role of media in advocating for responsible tourism while Milena Nikolova, Chief Behaviour Officer from Behaviour Smart threw light on the topic of Harnessing Human Psychology in Tourism. Over 18 organisations participated in the Conclave, sharing insights from their work on tourism which is supported by Royal Enfield Social Mission. While discussions were wide and varied, some key directional elements became evident, setting the foundational principles of the RT Lab.



Lalnunsiami (Siam) (left) and Daisy Lalthantlangi (in pink - right) from Mizoram GH-RE RT Fellows who have also received the Royal Enfield Conservation Grants.

Chief among these principles is the idea of the **RT Knowledge Hub** for the Himalayan region to be a platform to map, collate, share and promote research, best practices, and innovations in sustainable tourism. It aims to support and collaborate with organisations, communities and businesses by providing accessible data, training resources, tools and applicable frameworks to contribute to the preservation of the Himalayas' ecological and cultural heritage while enhancing local livelihoods and strengthening local governance.

Community-led tourism and smaller enterprises such as homestays often face challenges in accessing wider markets and sustaining demand. The **RT Market Linkage programme** will be designed to close this gap by supporting tourism enterprises and destinations previously nurtured through our initiatives. It focuses on enhancing market readiness, improving visibility and building connections locally and globally with Royal Enfield networks and travel platforms to ensure long-term viability.

Principles of Change

The third area of focus was on catalysing **Behaviour Change**. Whether it's influencing the conduct of tourists or shaping the practices of service providers in the tourism industry, the goal is to transform how visitors engage with destinations—their environment, biodiversity and local communities. Embedding such strategies into tourism initiatives can promote more mindful, responsible and sustainable tourism experiences across the Himalayan region.



Fellows at Himalayan Hub at Theog, Himachal Pradesh.

Several other ideas also emerged as crucial factors in shaping the vision of the RT Lab—ranging from cultural preservation and digital transformation to policy advocacy. As we embark on the journey to establish the Lab, our foundation will be built on supporting and amplifying the work of our partner organisations, while creating a collaborative space for innovation and learning. The interest and enthusiasm shown by Himalayan communities so far signal a future full of promise—one where communities are resilient, thriving and empowered to determine their own destinies.

Art of The Matter

Created by artists, collectives, and organisations from across the country, the art installations displayed at the festival found common ground in their ecological inspirations, considered use of materials, and the conflation of art and activism.

Sculptural Installations Spotlighting Keystones Species

Manveer Singh
(Plasticvalla)

Ecological awareness grounds the works of Manveer Singh, known popularly as Plasticvalla. “When I would go door to door collecting plastic, people would sometimes call me that. I claimed it for myself as a nickname, or rather a brand name,” says the Delhi-based artist. In his community-led practice, Manveer uses plastic, particularly MLP (multi-layered plastic) packaging—which is hard to recycle and often ends up in landfills—to create works that are both art and a call to action.

For the festival, Manveer created a trio of sculptural installations spotlighting Keystones Species. The first was a zero-fibre sculpture of a snow leopard, incorporating a variety of packaging materials including four quintals of ghost nets sourced from Chennai. A metal armature filled with plastic bottles comprised the inner structure of the animal which stood on a cracked landscape layered with materials like beer cans and renditions of metropolitan homes. Bollywood movie songs inspired the names of all the works in the series, and the snow leopard installation is titled: “Ye Tera Ghar, Ye Mera Ghar.” Manveer is yet to see a snow leopard in real life. “I visited Ladakh a few times but never spotted the animal. What I saw instead was the abundance of buildings and the impact of tourists. In the face of our unsustainable development, the snow leopard is fighting for its home.”

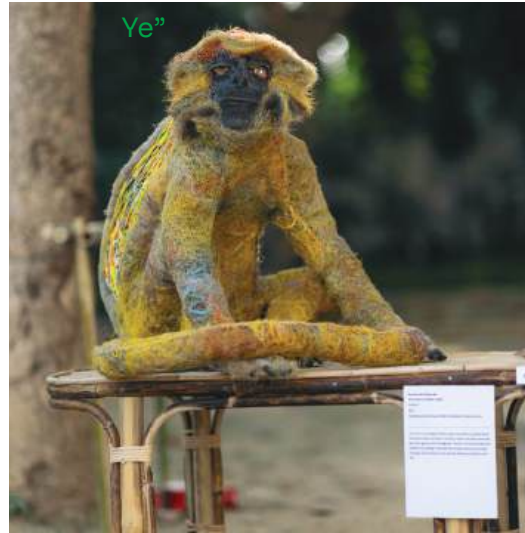


The brown bear was the protagonist of the second installation, titled “Lag Ja Gale” – derived from the animal’s association with teddy bears. The sculpture depicted a slash across the bear’s stomach stuffed with plastic. Finally, “Kho Na Jaae Ye”, an installation of three golden langurs which Manveer had little knowledge of before undertaking the project. “I was intrigued by their appearance, and their eyes which look almost human,” he notes. “For the sculptures, I used mirrors to create eyes—so we can see a reflection of ourselves when we gaze at them.” The faces were made of discarded tyres, another relic of urban living and development.

“Lag
Ja Gale”



“Kho
Na
Jaae
Ye”



“Ye Tera Ghar,
Ye Mera Ghar”



Helmeted Hyphae XXL Collective

Among the first things visitors saw, as they walked past ticketing kiosks and welcome signs at the festival, were two supersized motorcycle helmets resting on each side of the main hall's entrance. This was “Helmeted Hyphae”, a singular installation by XXL Collective which creates art projects and experiences for brands, individuals, and institutions. “Since we were working around the “Helmets for India” programme, we wanted to create something centred on helmets. At the same time, we saw this as an opportunity to work with new material,” Maria Talib and Sethuraman H of XXL Collective say. “We chose a familiar form so that the focus would be on the unique material rather than an unfamiliar shape.” The material was mycelium.

The root-like structure of fungi, mycelium, has gained popularity as a sustainable material which can be applied to a variety of products and designs. For the two sculptures of “Helmeted Hyphae”, mycelium panels were layered on top of an engineered wood frame accompanied by jute cladding. Embedded in the art was a vision of circularity—of finding the means of conscious production and consumption through the use of materials that grow in nature and

return to it. “Mycelium offers a sustainable and environmentally friendly alternative that can inform the shape and design of the final object. It's novel enough that each art-piece made from it is among a very limited number worldwide, yet it's accessible enough for practical use,” Maria and Sethuraman say. The helmets rose in a garden setting, flowering plants and shrubs fringing their edges. The artistic team chose botanicals aligned with species endemic to the Himalayan region.

Adding to the installation's immersive quality was the soundscape – “Ears to the Ground”, created by Krishna Jhaveri and Sanaya Ardeshir – which featured beats mirroring the growth of mycelium. “It unfolds in slow, deliberate passages that evoke interconnected threads of growth, renewal, regeneration, and the possibilities of the unknown,” observe Maria and Sethuraman. “This multi-sensory layer added depth and immersion to our presentation, making the audience more attuned to the subtle and profound connections within the environment.”



Entanglements

sā Ladakh

At first glance, “Entanglements” instantly brought a mountain to mind. Set up in one of the verandahs of Travancore House, the installation comprised sturdy ropes descending from a high window in the shape of a hill. On the floor, rocks of different shapes and sizes, tethered the ropes. Looking closer, one found each rock bearing words and doodles – a smiling face, a wheel, a sprig, a butterfly.

Conceptualised by sā Ladakh, “Entanglements” sought to reach many goals with one work of regenerative art. On one hand, it explored the intertwined relationship of landscapes,



with two key regions in focus—the Himalayas and the Aravalli range. We wanted to connect landscapes and geological formations and how our interactions with the landscape mean for the future,” says Raki Nikahetiya, co-founder of sā Ladakh. “We also wanted to engage with students and the youth to talk about climate but in practical ways.”

In this endeavour, the team at sā Ladakh collaborated with The Child Trust, a Delhi-based NGO working to promote and protect child rights. Students from the Samgra Shiksha Kendra, located in Kulasera (Greater Noida) painted the rocks in response to a question of what they would leave behind for the future. During the course of the festival, the young participants also visited Travancore House to see “their own stories” as part of an exhibition.

Nikahetiya also highlights the significance of the materials used to create the installation. The team worked with rubble collected from old, broken houses, and ropes—all of which have been earmarked for reuse in the school. The conscious use of materials, as well as the deep engagement with children and young adults, are integral to sā Ladakh’s initiatives and its model to create land art. “We have a direct influence as we work, on the people, landscape, and all living things. We work in collaboration in nature and it requires deep, multigenerational thinking,” he says. “Where does the material come from, how does the community engage with it, and what happens to it afterwards? The way we work thinks about how we can have the least negative impact and maximise the positive output.”

Ghost Net Requiem:

Turn the Throttle, Change the Narrative

ReNet: An initiative of OneEarth Foundation

Through the days of Journeying Across The Himalayas 2024, a tall, colourful tangled mass stood at the centre of the Himalayan Bazaar in the venue. Mounted by ReNET, an initiative of the Goa-based OneEarth Foundation, “Ghost Net Requiem” was crafted from discarded fishing nets in red and yellow, black and blue. At the turn of an ignition and throttle, the installation would start spinning.

The site-specific installation shed light on the impact of Abandoned, Lost, and Discarded Fishing Nets and Gear (ALDFG) on marine life. Marine conservation is one of the key areas of focus for OneEarth Foundation, a non-profit co-founded by Ferdin Sylvester and Aditya Kumar to promote biodiversity, circular economy, and environmental sustainability. “Ghost Net Requiem”, an awareness campaign about fishing net waste in the guise of art, found its inspiration in an unlikely muse: Buddhist prayer flags. “When the prayer flags fly in the wind, they bring positive energy. In contrast, ghost nets floating in the water are death traps that end up killing dolphins, turtles and other species critical to marine ecosystems,” said Ferdin. “The whole idea is to bring attention to this problem prevalent across coastal regions in India.”

OneEarth Foundation’s ReNet initiative aims to establish end-to-end solutions for fishing net waste by repurposing them into product innovations and revenue-generating models for fishing communities. The installation at the

festival incorporated discarded nets and other materials collected from communities in Goa over six months. “Used nets are usually discarded during the monsoons when fishing stops. With no local collection mechanism, people often sail with these nets to the high seas and discard them in the waters,” Sylvester said. Unlike a lot of other plastic waste, public awareness about ghost nets is limited. Yet, around 6,40,000 tonnes of discarded fishing gear enter oceans globally every year. Positioning ghost nets as art objects, Sylvester said, can turn public attention to this lesser-known, yet ever-growing ecological crisis.





Images of Installations
Top: Ghost Net Requiem
Centre: Helmeted Hyphae
Bottom: Entanglements

Postcards from Ladakh In Virtual Reality

A trio of 360 VR films, by Doel Trivedy and Gautam Pandey of Riverbanks Studio, brought visitors closer to experiencing the lives of people in Ladakh and its rugged landscapes where snow leopards prowl.

“She is the apex predator on these mountains,” a voiceover says as a snow leopard glides into the frame, cub in tow, traversing rocks and ridges. The animal is the protagonist of the 360 VR film, *Into The Mountains*, her arrival marking a happy ending for filmmakers Doel Trivedy and Gautam Pandey, who have spent months setting up camera traps in Drass (Ladakh) and waiting for the world’s most elusive big cat to make an appearance. It makes for an entry worthy of a movie star.

Into The Mountains was one part of the three-episode cinematic 360 VR series produced by Riverbank Studios exploring the wildlife, people and culture of Ladakh, which were presented at Journeying Across The Himalayas 2024. Ladakh’s otherworldly landscapes—and the life this seemingly desolate region has sustained over centuries—spread across the vision in hyperreal detail. If the sight of the snow leopard inspired awe, the view of a garbage heap growing bigger and bigger evoked pure horror. The latter has left many viewers shaken, says Pandey. It is partly the scene itself—an eyesore of PET bottles mounting in a pristine place, but technology—stereoscopic VR with spatialised sound—enhances the impact.

If theatres make the act of watching a film a larger-than-life spectacle, a 360 VR experience offers a more intimate sense of immersion. “In films, we can make people look in a certain

direction with sound and framing, but with VR the audience can feel a sense of control,” says Gautam. “One doesn’t feel like they are being told, there is a firsthand experience.” Coming from a family of filmmakers (his father is Mike Pandey, founder of Riverbanks Studios and director of acclaimed films such as *Shores of Silence*), Gautam’s work is rooted in driving awareness and policy for wildlife and biodiversity conservation. At Riverbank Studios, with Doel Trivedy, every production aims to entertain as much as it educates—be it the award-winning film, *Gyamo - Queen of the Mountains* or the series *Snakes SOS*.



Image: A young visitor at the festival experiences the VR films.

With these 360 VR films, the intention was to offer a fresh perspective on visuals from mountainous, Himalayan regions. “We thought about how some of these areas are beyond most people’s imagination and areas which only the brave of heart would want to explore,” says Doel. “Using such an experiential technology where the viewer is taken to the edge of snow-covered mountains and high-altitude lakes without leaving the comfort of their sofas - we were very excited by this new way of making people care about an area which was totally inaccessible for them.”

The Himalayan region can offer the illusion of permanence, but its fragility becomes apparent in real-time amid the onslaught of climate change. “Some places don’t feel like they can be broken - like the ocean. Or Ladakh, which seems so expansive and millions of years old and seemingly so far away,” Gautam adds. “The thought was how we could make stories that people can relate to, and connect their lifestyle to the problem. And, people who don’t care about wildlife should find this watchable.”

While the snow leopard clinches the lead role in one film, the other films approach Ladakh from different directions. In *Remember my Story*, filmmaker Stanzin Dorjai Gya stands on the edge of the high-altitude lake Pangong Lake, recalling his grandfather’s stories of sacred rivers which sustained lives and traditions but now face the adverse impact of climate change and accelerated human activity. And in *Where Earth Meets Sky*, the people of Hanle village await the black-necked cranes’ return—an annual visit that is growing increasingly perilous.

The three films focus not only on its protagonists—they weave people, folklore, cultures and everyday lives into the narratives. “In India wildlife and people really have no boundary and this is what makes our connection to nature so beautiful and ancient, and so difficult to understand for many people who are far into a developed way of living that they have truly lost these connections,”

Doel adds. “Once we knew we had to tell the story of the snow leopard, we knew we had to tell the story of the lakes, the people and all the other species that make this entire region one of the most fragile yet rich biodiverse areas on the planet.” Stories are shaped by interactions and relationships, by camaraderie and conflict. A kitchen, offering warmth and comfort in winters, becomes part of the snow leopard’s story. A glimpse of brown bears is juxtaposed by the stories of weary locals on high alert from the sudden appearance of wild animals in their settlements. “When you watch a film, it’s what’s in a frame,” Gautam says. “There’s a whole other story outside it and that’s what we try to show.”

“The festival was such an engaging space for people to have experienced the films. I have had so many people reach out to me - artists, photographers, even hoteliers who were there and were just blown away by the beauty of the landscape inside the VR headsets.”

Doel Trivedy



Navigating
“The Long Road”



THE LONG ROAD

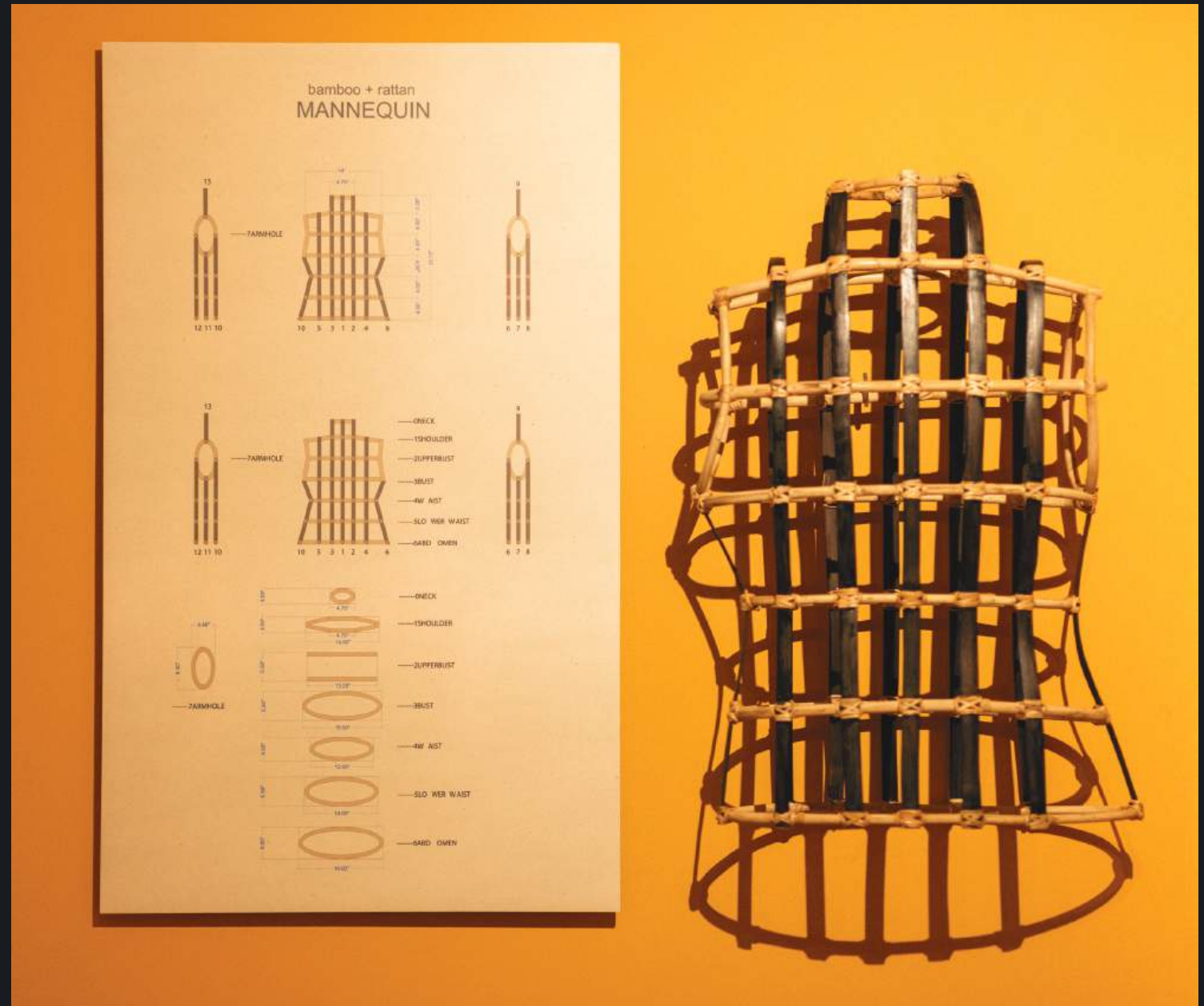
Curated by artist and architect Vishal K Dar,
The Long Road was an exhibition like no other at
Journeying Across The Himalayas 2024—showcasing
the architecture of Royal Enfield's Green Pit Stops and
The Himalayan Hub through an artistic lens.



The Long Road showcased Royal Enfield Social Mission's key architectural sites, focusing on the intersections between architecture, climate, community development and heritage. Artist and architect Vishal K Dar, who curated the exhibition, is known for creating iridescent overlays upon diverse kinds of public spaces— well-known landmarks, as well as abandoned and disused sites. The exhibition design imagined the space as an architect's studio, featuring scale models, drawings and photographs among other objects.

Royal Enfield Social Mission's Green Pit Stops are helmed by local communities, particularly women, and situated on routes popular among riders and travellers.

Also part of the exhibition, The Himalayan Hub facility in Theog, Himachal Pradesh, is a learning centre to build climate resilience among local communities.





Sustainably designed with ecological balance and regional architectural traditions in mind, these Green Pit Stops create livelihood opportunities while offering essential amenities for riders, including sanitation, tourist information, basic first aid and curated culinary and cultural experiences.

“Highways play a pivotal role in integrating national landscapes into public imagination. They also speak of a democracy of movement and macroeconomics. But they are also a reminder of all that gets left behind.”



A scale model of Pit Stop Kharu in Ladakh. Unveiled in 2024, it was the first Green Pit Stop, designed by architect Sandeep Bogadhi and drawing inspiration from traditional Ladakhi rammed earth architecture. A team of seven women, trained in hospitality and facility management, now run Pit Stop Kharu.





The second Pit Stop is set to open in Babeli, Himachal Pradesh. Designed by Rahul Bhushan of NORTH, in the Himachali Dhajji style, the facility will also be women-led and impact more than 1000 women from 125 SHGs.

“Royal Enfield’s Green Pit Stops explore architecture as an expression in the history of civilisation-making. Architecture becomes many things – a document of its times, a mirror of its makers, a time-capsule.”

The exhibition aimed to showcase to their audience how these architectural projects played an important role in bolstering local economies and upholding intangible cultural heritage while also fulfilling needs of travellers and public hygiene practices.

CONTENT AND EXHIBITION DESIGN
Studio Vishal K Dar

DESIGN TEAM
Akanksha Kakde/ Amrita Debnath

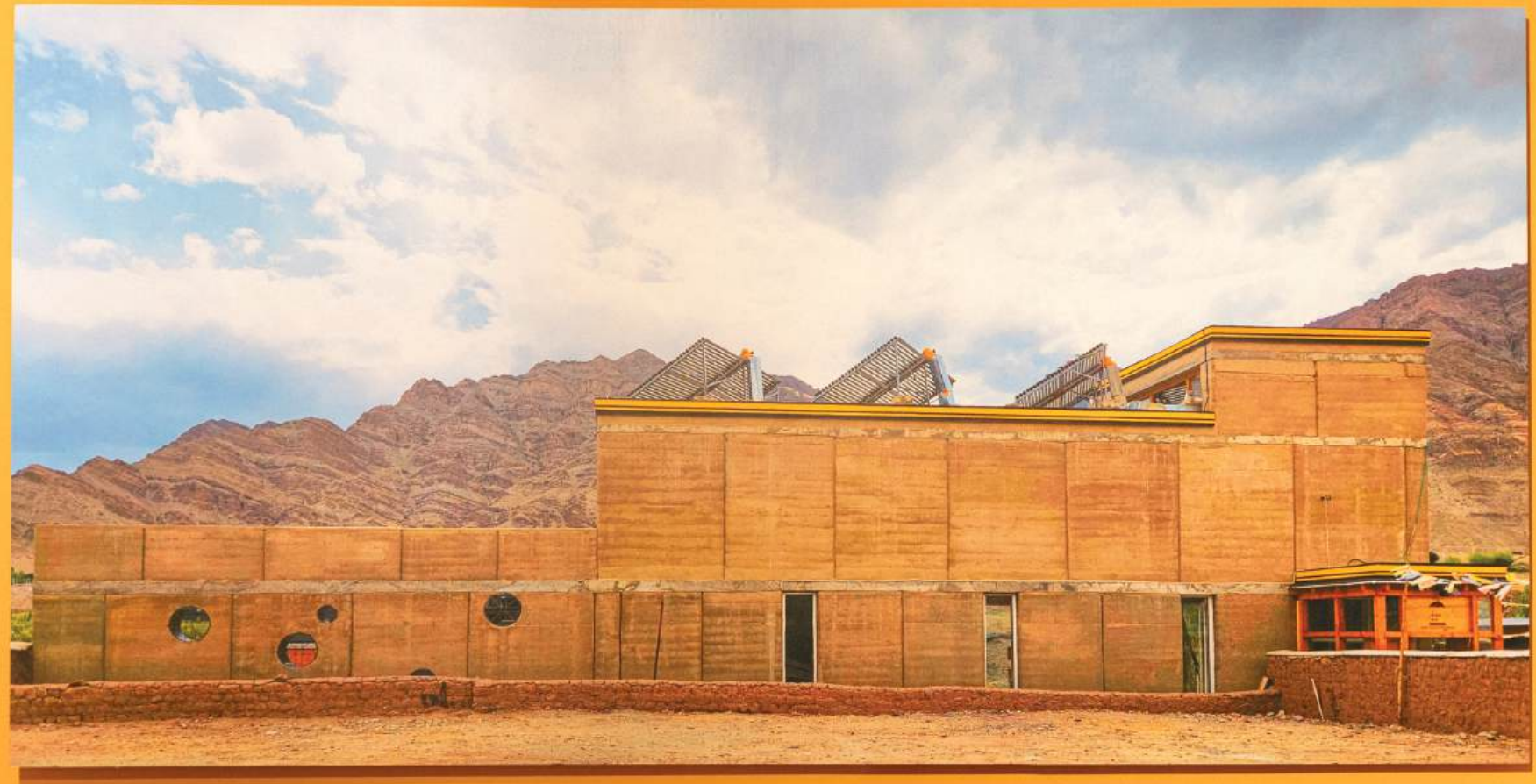
PRODUCTION TEAM
Elias Malik/ Gulshan/ Ikramudin/ Neeraj

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PIT STOP KHARU, LADAKH
Earthling: Architect, Sandeep Bogadhi

BABELI, HIMACHAL PRADESH
North: Architect Rahul Bhushan

THEOG CAMPUS, HIMACHAL PRADESH
Designkari: Architect, Parush Grover
Atreyi & Co: Designer, Atreyi Halder





The Future Is Green

Six standout Green Hub conservation projects from the North East and Western Himalayas which are fortifying the region's ecology, biodiversity, and communities.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has,” said Margaret Mead, the late American cultural anthropologist and author. At Green Hub, these words seem to come alive. Established in 2015, Green Hub began as a yearlong video fellowship to nurture young changemakers aspiring to work in the areas of conservation and climate action. The programme aims to hone their skills and equip them with resources to undertake action-led initiatives for their surroundings and community. At *Journeying Across The Himalayas 2024*, Green Hub fellows showcased their work through films, photos and soundscapes in an immersive multimedia space.

Over the last decade, Green Hub has expanded from the North East—where its first office was set up in Tezpur, Assam—to Central India in 2021, and the Western Himalayas in 2023. The Green Hub - Royal Enfield Responsible Tourism Fellowship, initiated in 2022, and the Green Hub-Royal Enfield Conservation Grants build on the initiative's mission, enabling responsible travel and community-based conservation projects. Here are six such projects helmed by young grant recipients—from promoting millet cultivation to protecting the Bengal florican—each working to document biodiversity and community lives, and resolve environmental concerns in parts of the Western Himalayas and the North East.

Western Himalayas

1.

Mota Anaj (मोटा अनाज)

By Bimla Devi

Village Chawari, Mandi, Himachal Pradesh

Mota Anaj is a women-driven initiative, led by Bimla Devi, as part of the Conservation Grants programme, dedicated to reviving traditional millet farming in the Mandi district. Once a staple for mountain communities, millets such as *ragi*, *jowar* and *bajra* have gradually disappeared from local diets with the advent of the Green Revolution and the easy availability of grains like rice and wheat.

Due to changing climate patterns—erratic rainfall and unpredictable sowing seasons—farmers in the region face increasing challenges. However, millets, known for their high nutritional value and climate resilience, are naturally suited to the mountainous terrain. Recognising this, Bimla Devi is empowering women farmers by educating them on the benefits of millet cultivation and encouraging its revival in their fields.

Beyond farming, *Mota Anaj* also focuses on enhancing the value of these traditional grains. Women involved in the project are growing millets and producing five varieties of millet-based biscuits—made from *jowar*, *bajra*, *ragi*, *kangni* (foxtail millet), and *kodra* (kodo millet). Through this initiative, they are rediscovering forgotten recipes and creating new economic opportunities, ensuring that these superfoods regain their rightful place in the community's diet and livelihood.

2.

Cultivation of Medicinal Herbs

जड़ी बूटी का कृषि करण

By Bhagi Chandra Singh and Anandi Devi

Village Bageshwar, Juni, Uttarakhand

In the small village of Jhuni, two conservation grantees, Bhagi Chandra Takuli and Anandi Devi, are leading an initiative to cultivate medicinal herbs, addressing both the environmental and economic challenges. Over time, the excessive extraction and climate change have pushed several medicinal plant species to the brink of extinction. By encouraging local farmers—especially women—to grow these herbs, the project aims to conserve biodiversity while creating sustainable livelihoods.

A key aspect of this project is empowering 15 women to cultivate medicinal herbs on 1 *nali* land (approximately 200sq mt per person). This practice not only prevents fields from remaining barren but also safeguards crops from destruction by wild animals such as monkeys and langoors. By repurposing unused land for herb cultivation, the project ensures that natural resources are utilised effectively while preserving traditional knowledge of medicinal plants.

Beyond conservation, the initiative provides women with an independent source of income. By growing and selling these herbs in local markets, women can strengthen their economic stability and contribute to the revival of traditional farming practices.

3.

Birds and Buffaloes

By Karamat Ali and TaufEEK Alam (Karamat)

Kotdwar, Near Jim Corbett National Park, Uttarakhand; (TaufEEK) Gurjar Basti, Haridwar, Uttarakhand

Karamat and TaufEEK, two young boys from the Van Gujjar community, arrived at Green Hub unaware of their deep-rooted connection. It was only after joining the fellowship that they discovered they were from the same family lineage. Their experiences have culminated in a

documentary film on the Van Gujjars, juxtaposing the experiences of community members who remain forest-dwellers with those who have been rehabilitated to urban areas.

Karamat lives on the outskirts of Jim Corbett National Park with his family, tending to their buffaloes and coexisting with the wilderness. His profound understanding of nature, honed over years of living in the forest, allowed him to share stories few had heard—such as how buffaloes naturally create firebreaks, preventing forest fires, and how their hooves carve small water holes, sustaining wildlife.

TaufEEK comes from a rehabilitated Van Gujjar community. Under the guidance of his elder brother, Taukeer, he became an avid birder, learning the vital role birds play in the ecosystem. Together, Karamat and TaufEEK hold countless stories—tales of their people's deep bond with nature, the changes they have witnessed and their hope to preserve their way of life. *Birds and Buffaloes* is their first film, with fellow batchmates Varun Chauva and Murup Namgyal.

North East India

4.

Green Tirap

By Chajo Lowang & Sara Khongsai

New Tupi Village, Tirap District, Arunachal Pradesh

The New Tupi village in Tirap is a model for change. Winner of the 'Chief Minister's Cleanest Village Award' in 2021, New Tupi's strong environmental ethic provides a solid foundation for fostering conservation awareness. Yet, the region faces severe threats to its biodiversity due to widespread hunting for recreation and timber logging. Limited livelihood opportunities and lack of ambition

among younger generations further fuel these unsustainable practices. Chajo Lowang and Sara Khongsai are leading the Green Tirap initiative through fieldwork, documentation and community engagement. Among ongoing efforts, they have documented species in the district to publish a book, highlighting its biodiversity and the urgent need for its protection.

At the core of the project, is an aim to involve the community, particularly children and youth, in conservation education while introducing sustainable livelihood alternatives. Through awareness and empowerment, Chajo and Sara hope to inspire long-term stewardship of Tirap's rich natural heritage.

5.

Bengal Florican Conservation at Kokilabari Seed Farm

By Rangjalu Basumatary

Kokilabari Seed farm, Rangapani, Baksa District, Assam

The Bengal Florican (*Houbaropsis Bengalensis*) is a rare bird. Listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List, fewer than 1,500 birds remain across the Indian subcontinent, Cambodia, and Vietnam, severely threatened by habitat loss, hunting, agricultural expansion, and human encroachment. In India, the largest breeding population—of 20–25 floricans—is found in the Kokilabari Seed Farm within the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), Assam where Rangjalu Basumatary is spearheading efforts to safeguard the species.

A member of the Manas Maozigendri Ecotourism Society (MMES) since 2017, Rangjalu has previously helped establish Zankla Studio, a social enterprise reviving traditional Bodo heritage toys; he is also a Field Assistant at WWF-India, working on human-wildlife conflict, elephant

radio collaring and camera trapping projects. The conservation action plan at Koklabari takes a multi-layered approach. Encouraging sustainable farming practices enables the creation of florican-friendly habitats in the region. A volunteer group, known as the Florican Army, tackles real-time threats such as hunting, feral dogs and fires. Finally an 'Save the Bengal Florican' campaign aims to spread awareness and lead public action to protect these birds.

6. Community Driven Waste Management Solutions, Teirei Forest

By Lalhmunsiami & Daisy
Mamit District, Mizoram, India

The small village of Teirei Forest, in the Mamit district, faces growing environmental challenges due to increasing waste, population growth, shrinking farmland and declining self-sufficiency. While a shift from traditional practices to store-bought commodities has led to a sharp rise in waste, inadequate waste disposal infrastructure—such as a shortage of dustbins—and lack of awareness have increased pollution levels, including the contamination of local rivers. Former Green Hub Responsible Tourism fellows Lalhmunsiami Pachuau and Daisy Lalthantluangi are working to change this scene. Lalhmunsiami has previously led rural waste management programmes in Arunachal Pradesh whereas Daisy worked to promote natural farming and market linkages in Assam.

Lalhmunsiami and Daisy are translating their knowledge and learning to create awareness about waste management in Teirei Forest village. They encourage community participation and promote eco-friendly alternatives such as bio-enzymes, composting, and natural cleaning solutions. The initiative aims to foster a cleaner, more sustainable future for Mamit through education and collective action, setting an example for other communities in Mizoram.

The Green Hub showcase at Journeying Across The Himalayas 2024.





FOUR

CREATIVITY

MUSE LADAKH
HELMETS FOR INDIA
THE SHAPE OF THE WIND IS A TREE
DON'T STOP THE MUSIC
WORKSHOPS AT JOURNEYING ACROSS THE HIMALAYAS 2024
REEL LIFE OF THE HIMALAYAS
THE JOURNEY OF A SONG

Muse Ladakh

Where the Wind Tastes of Forgotten Songs

Artist Raghava KK's first visit to Ladakh became, through acts of serendipity, the inspiration for an immersive installation celebrating inner journeys and the beauty of change and transformation.



“I went to Ladakh with no plans, no preconceived ideas and no trekking boots.”

To experience “Where the Wind Tastes of Forgotten Songs” one needed: time and a sense of wonder. Artist Raghava KK’s multimedia installation, which lit up the entrance lobby of Travancore House during the days of the festival, transported viewers to a night spent in rugged Himalayan terrain. Stars shone by the thousands over mountains speckled with life, colours, textures and hidden details. Animals, flora and fauna, human figures and mythical creatures moved along this landscape, perennially shape-shifting and pulsating.

The installation emerged from Raghava’s first visit to Ladakh, last year, not long before he was commissioned to create the work for the festival. “It came as a coincidence, as the best things in life usually do,” the artist says. Last year, his friend—the photographer Sam Mohan—invited him to visit him in Ladakh and see the Himalayas. “I told him I would be there one day,” says Raghava who lives in Bengaluru. But when another friend called, almost at the same time insisting on a holiday to Ladakh, it seemed that the universe was indeed sending a message.

Ladakh gripped Raghava’s attention, and imagination, from the moment his flight cleared the clouds and began its descent through the mountains. “I felt as if all my thoughts had disappeared,” says the artist. Ladakh’s otherworldly landscapes flecked with endless shades of brown, the stars and galaxies abounding across its night sky, wild horses running through groves, the Indus river cutting through valleys and mountains, the enduring silence and sense of fragility—each of these became a narrative thread woven into his installation. “I wanted to talk about what it feels for a human being living in a chaotic, urban [sprawl] to walk into this faultline that’s ever-growing, a fragile and delicate place that offers so much to the world, and a community that embraces every paradox.”

The title of the work – “Where the Wind Tastes of Forgotten Songs” – evoked taste and touch, sight and hearing. “It engages every sense all at once,” says Raghava, recalling the phenomenon of synaesthesia. “I wanted to talk about falling in love with the silence, magic, confusion, conflict.” The assemblage and contradictions—of sights and sounds, ideas and emotions—underpinned a story of change. Technology, which Raghava describes as a “tool for transcendence”, aided this artistic goal—a single character could contain up to 600 variations, pieced together in multiple combinations to create imagery that kept evolving. “Everything is in flux, in movement, transforming slowly—I wanted someone to get lost in the infinite details of each character,” he adds.

Opposite: A glimpse of the installation, “Where the Wind Tastes of Forgotten Songs”.



“A successful work of art invites you to look again, to have a conversation.”

Raghava sought to present the Himalayas not as a symbol of permanence or as a mountainscape waiting to be conquered. It was instead a “mystery refusing to be solved”, a call for engagement and dialogue. The thought extends to the practical as much as the philosophical. The Himalaya is a fragile ecosystem, whose future demands conscious engagement and action. It is also ever-shifting, its contours restructuring through the long road of time. “Where the Wind Tastes of Forgotten Songs” transformed these qualities into an inner experience—or, as Raghava says, “a journey into the self, the unknown and the mystical.”

Helmets for India

Art for Change by
India Foundation for the Arts (IFA)

Partnering with India Foundation for the Arts, Royal Enfield Social Mission's road safety initiative brought together 12 Indian artists to reimagine the helmet. The results are a celebration of colour, artistry, and lessons in safety, equality, and freedom.

Can a helmet be a canvas? Helmets for India (HFI), transforms the riders essential into a medium of artistic expression. The road safety initiative by Royal Enfield Social Mission applies art and creativity to spread awareness among riders about wearing a helmet every time they set out on their bikes.

At Journeying Across the Himalayas 2024, a collaboration between Royal Enfield Social Mission and India Foundation for the Arts (IFA)—a non-profit that funds and supports art and culture related projects—presented helmets designed by 12 artists from around the country. Drawing from every artist's vocabulary and diverse inspirations, each helmet sought to narrate a one-of-a-kind story. One helmet became a figurative love letter from the artist to her beloved cat while another evoked a lush, graphic landscape with banyan trees playing protagonists. Memories of riding—through Pune's expanding cityscape and Goa's coastal scenery—came alive in painterly details. The helmet also became a base for artists to draw out messages of equality and solidarity, community and a sense of belonging. Here is a glimpse of the 12 helmets and the artistic minds behind their makeover.



Debangshu Moulik

Bold lines and colours characterise Pune based artist Debangshu Moulik's works. An alumni of Abhinav Kala Vidyalaya, Pune University, his works conflate inspiration from comic books, animation and art history. Apart from exhibiting his art across India, he has also collaborated with brands such as Google, Meta, Samsung and Levi's. Debangshu's helmet is an ode to memories of riding his bike around Pune over six long years. "Through this piece, I hope to depict the flow state of movement and the impressions of the world and people as they whizz by, reflecting the essence of these cherished memories."



Aditi Mali

"The design is inspired by my own life with my cat (Maau)," says Aditi Mali in her artist note. A cartoonist, visual artist and cat mother from Pune, Aditi explores life's nuances through her comics and art. The helmet offers a glimpse of what's going on in her brain when she ventures out, perched on her scooter. A poem sums up the feeling:

wherever I go
i think of you
on my way home,
i think of you
on my way out,
i think of you
dear cat maau."



Aravani Art Project

Bringing together communities, the Aravani Art Project believes in purposeful artistic interventions. Empowering the transgender community lies at the heart of this trans and cis women art collective whose artists work with diverse groups of individuals, arts institutions, corporations, government organisations and NGOs. The two helmets created by the collective depict a “journey of gender expression and affirmation.” The artist note adds: It reflects the transition into womanhood, a path marked by transformation, self-discovery, and a spectrum of emotions. These emotions, much like nature, are vast and uncontainable – sometimes as turbulent as the waves of the sea, and at other times as radiant and untamed as blooming wildflowers.”



Indu Antony

Multidisciplinary artist Indu Antony’s work explores the intersections of memory, freedom, and gender. Besides helming her longstanding public art project, Cecilia’ed, she is the founder of Namma Katte, a Bengaluru-based women’s community arts and leisure centre, and the self-publishing unit Mazhi Books. Indu has also co-founded Kanike, a community art centre in Bengaluru. Her helmet design is a response to the “unwritten rules” that shape women’s lives. “This helmet represents more than just the physical safety it offers; it symbolises the emotional armour I built to overcome societal barriers. Every detail in the artwork reflects both my resilience and the small victories that slowly pieced together my self-confidence,” she states. “With this piece, I aim to honour the journey of women who navigate similar paths and to inspire those who continue to push against these barriers.”



Nirupa Rao

A botanical artist based in Bengaluru, Nirupa Rao’s works abound in life and natural beauty. Drawing from field visits and collaborations with natural scientists, the artist emphasises precision as much as aesthetics. A former National Geographic Storytelling Fellow (2020), Nirupa has illustrated a number of books and directed animated shorts; she also designs book covers for eminent authors including Amitav Ghosh. “This helmet is inspired by the immense banyan trees (*Ficus benghalensis*) that overhang state highways in southern India,” says her note. “Many birds and animals survive on their fruit – such as the Malabar grey hornbill (*Ocyrceros griseus*), whose outstretched wings call to mind the freedom of a great bike ride.”



Gagan Singh

Delhi-based artist Gagan Singh’s practice is rooted in an exploration of drawing through the medium of books, paper, and site-specific installations. He graduated with an MA in Fine Arts from Kent Institute of Art & Design RC (2005). “I’ve always been interested in neuroscience—how the brain functions. By drawing out these faces, these expressions, I wish to express thoughts of the rider out into the open.” As a wearable object that covers the head, the helmet became an ideal canvas for Gagan to invert how people process thoughts: “to let the brain be out, the conscious, the subconscious...making the mind free, freer—letting others catch these thoughts, being exposed to them, while the rider produces, gives birth to many more.”



Indu Harikumar

Indu Harikumar is an award-winning artist, author and educator who has exhibited globally and in India. She has written and illustrated several children's books and is currently working on her first book of comics on relationships. Beyond building online communities through her work, Indu has used art as a tool for healing and protest in physical spaces. Women riders take the spotlight in her helmet, with the artist using anecdotes and photographic references to create her artwork. "All rides, all rights", her design, "captures in graphic stories the trials and triumphs Indian women navigate as they revel in and reclaim their right to all roads."



Siddhesh Gautam

Delhi based multidisciplinary, mixed-media artist, designer, writer and an Ambedkarite, Siddhesh Gautam's visual documentation spans the anti-caste movement, global warming and gender equality. His helmet design "We Are the New Royals: Everyone Is Royal Under the Blue Sky" is rooted in the Indian Constitution, described as "a blueprint for a new kind of royalty in newly independent India: equal citizenship." "Seventy-five years later, this journey toward equality has seen both triumphs and setbacks – moments of mourning and celebration, of silence and song," he adds. "This work honours and celebrates this complex legacy, paying tribute to the visionaries who championed the movement for justice and equality."



Atia Sen

Born and raised in Delhi, artist Atia Sen explores the relationships and dynamics between human beings and their natural surroundings in her work. In her take on the helmet, Atia chose Goa—where she currently lives—as her muse. "As a rider deeply connected to this vibrant state, the textures, hues and landscapes I experience on my journeys are integral to my creative process," she says in her artist's note. "This helmet serves as a reflection of Goa's unique flamboyant spirit – the play of light, the shifting textures of sand, sea and sky, and the rich palette of colours that define its beauty."



Osheen Siva

Surrealism, sci-fi and speculative fiction meet ideas of decolonisation, queer politics, feminine energy and Dalit Futurism in Osheen Siva's oeuvre. Evoking alternative realities and narratives, their technicolour works have been displayed from Chennai to Melbourne at exhibitions and public spaces. Hailing from Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu, Osheen is currently based in Goa which inspires their "Rooted Futures" helmet design. Themes of "coexistence, symbiosis and environmental consciousness" are expressed in a speculative take on the state's biodiversity. "This body of work positions the natural world not merely as a backdrop but as a dynamic participant in narratives of resilience and regeneration," states the artist's note.



Sabari Venu

Going by @MeanCurry on Instagram, Sabari Venu is an independent creative director, comic artist and animator based in Bengaluru. With a background in design and advertising, Sabari's art offers his take on socio-cultural themes with a serving of humour. He also contributes to media publications and collaborates with various brands on creative campaigns. "This series explores everyday symbols of safety and security, while experimenting with different ways to use the helmet as a canvas," Sabari says of his helmet design. "Each piece playfully reimagines familiar tropes to reflect on various ideas of protection."



Devika Sundar

For artist Devika Sundar, art can be a therapeutic tool as much as a form of expression. Her vividly detailed mixed media works bring anatomy to mind—human or otherwise—pondering on ideas of memory, resilience and the synergies between living things. A former winner of the BMW X India Art Fair 'The Future is Born of Art' Commission (2023), Devika has displayed at a number of solo and group shows, and also served as curatorial lead for exhibitions. "In this hand-painted helmet, I delve into an internal mindscape of unfurling patterns and shapes, inspired by the textures and sensations of oceanic and cosmic forms," she notes in her statement.

THE SHAPE OF THE

The first edition of the Himalayan Fellowship for Creative Practitioners, in collaboration with Royal Enfield Social Mission, culminated in an exhibition at Journeying Across The Himalayas 2024. Here, FICA team members Dev Kakkar, Ishwari Arambam, and Vidya Shivadas reflect on the fellowship's year-long journey and finding a shared vocabulary of creativity.

WIND IS A TREE

Presented as a culminating exhibition at the festival, *The shape of the wind is a tree* brought together and presented the works and processes of ten creative practitioners from across the Himalayan region. Rooted in ecological thinking and grounded in place-based knowledge, the exhibition reflected a year-long journey of shared inquiry, fieldwork and collaborative making by the first edition of participants awarded the Himalayan Fellowship for Creative Practitioners, 2023-24.

The exhibition took its name from a line in American poet Wendell Berry's *Elegy* whose eco-poetic oeuvre inspired and reflected FICA's (Foundation for Indian Contemporary Art)

journey with the Fellowship through the year. It served as a meditation on interconnections between people, landscapes, ecology and histories, and the prevalence of shared eco-anxieties due to unsteadiness of climate and urgencies of cultural erasure. Even as elegies are tinged with a sense of loss and sorrow, Berry directs us to the terrain of the post elegy. This poetic form acknowledges that beginnings and endings exist simultaneously, and are constantly in play with each other.



Opposite: A view of the exhibition, *The shape of the wind is a tree*, at the festival.

DRAWING

Our journey towards this wonderful process began with an open call to practitioners in June 2023. We invited people, individuals and collectives to propose creative projects geared towards slower, eco-sensitive modes of thinking, oriented towards working with others in their communities and being responsive to sites, and having strong creative and pedagogical outcomes. The Fellowship came along at a time where FICA's institutional interests, geared towards building platforms for artists, was trying to find ways to access practitioners working in these far-off places. This aligned well with Royal Enfield Social Mission's initiatives to empower communities and individuals in the Himalayan region.

UPON

Building this platform becomes especially pertinent for a dialogue around practices that engage with the ecological and cultural dimensions in a continuum, that see the rich topography with its immense biodiversity in relationship with cultural forms and ways of life. The Fellowship developed as a learning space anchored in critical and creative engagement with the Himalayan region without compromising on its complexities, cultural nuances, multifaceted identities and ecological sensitivities.

It was an experience for us to find such a warm, collaborative and talented group of people to align our interests with, for our first cohort of creative practitioners, which comprised:

Bwiswmuthi Eco-Reverence Ensemble
(BERE) Collective

Ishan Chrungoo

Joshua Sailo

Kunga Tashi Lepcha

Millo Ankha

Mo Naga

Radio Henvalvani

Shikargah Collective

Soujanya Boruah and Shyam Lal

Tsering Motup Siddho



Top: An installation by BERE Collective during the festival.
Bottom: Joshua Sailo in performance.



Top: Visitors interact with Ishan Churungoo at his DIY photo studio, PhotoShoto.
Bottom: Exhibits from Millo Ankha's work on totems in Arunachal Pradesh.



An important part of the Fellowship process was building a shared vocabulary—words and concepts that carried personal, collective and cultural significance. Fellows were invited to offer terms that were critical to their practice.

The BERE collective, who were thinking about development in the Dheel Bheer lake in Assam, specifically how tourism is affecting its ecology, gave us the word “bithorai” which means sprouting anew from the old. Ishan Chrungoo, who travelled around village fairs and *melas* in Himachal Pradesh and Jammu with his DIY photo studio called PhotoShoto, offered us the word “play”: as a methodology to navigate publics and places where women and children come together and find spaces for enjoyment and leisure.

The Shikargah Collective, working the traditional folk theatre form Bhand Pather in Kashmir, explored a series of translations—in language (Kashmiri to Urdu) and in form (theatre to film). Building new contexts for Bhand Pather plays, they focused on the double bind between the words “hunting” and “haunting” in the word Shikargah as their offering.

Aarti Bisht, Aastha Chauhan, Rajendra Singh Negi and Ravindra Singh Gusain, associated with Community Radio Hevalvani in Chamba, Uttarakhand, built upon localised issues, ways of life and ecologies to foster awareness and discussions about socio-political and cultural change through their widely popular Garhwali radio station. The phrase they gave us, “mitti, paani, jangal aur hawa” (earth, water, forest and water), continues to resonate in Garhwali life.

Mo Naga has been working on reviving the traditional tattooing traditions of North East India, and extending this to set up a tattoo garden that brings together locally sourced plants relating to the tools and dyes used in the process. His choice of word was “huichi”, a Uipo word for tattoo practice to speak of the simultaneous disappearance of the word and the practice.

LIVING

eternal realm for the Lepcha people of Dzongu. The Lepchas believe the Ronyong—a major tributary of the Teesta river where future hydel projects are planned—serves as a pathway for spirits to journey into the afterlife and reunite with their ancestors.

Soujanya Baruah and Shyam Lal’s multimedia installation dealt with the issue of mental stress among the Gaddi shepherd community in the Dhauladhar range. Sharing the Gaddi phrase “pakhla ghah” (stranger grass), the term shepherds use for previous alien grass now growing in the landscape, they noted how changes in the grasslands and landscapes are felt most palpably by the herds and the herders.

Tshering Motup’s project was centred on Ladakhi kitchens as sites of constant transformation and shaped by recent trends in tourism-centric consumerism. He gave us the words that related to the space – a phrase like “thabchi korey”, often used for kitchen essentials such as utensils and other accompaniments, that also express their cultural and social significance in the local society.

Joshua Sailo worked with Mizo folktales, thinking through body and dance, and developing a vocabulary of movement that could reanimate stories that have receded from public memories. The phrase he highlighted was “culture chu a kal char char” (Culture is fluid, moving, changing course).

VOCABULARY

Millo Ankha’s work focused on the totems and their importance for the indigenous world view of the Apatanis. Based in Ziro, Arunachal Pradesh, her words expressed the relationships between “miji agung”, referring to the ritual language or speech used exclusively by the Apatani Nyibus (shamans) which addresses the *uuiis* (spiritual beings) and *migung*, a form of ordinary prose spoken every day. Today, forms of expression like poetry and storytelling are considered part of *migung* and the Apatanis are constantly straddling these two realms.

Kunga Tashi has been documenting hydro projects on the Teesta river and its tributaries, and the struggles of the Lepcha community in Sikkim through his photographic series, *Children of the Snowy Peaks*. His offering was the word “mayel lyang”, believed to be an



Top: A work by Tsering Motup Siddho on display.
Bottom: Snapshots from Mo Naga's tattoo garden.



Top: Radio Henvallani on showcase.
Bottom: A guest watches a screening by The Shikargah Collective.



Image: Exhibits by Soujanya Boruah and Shyam Lal.



This multidirectional lexicon was but one manifestation of the vibrant engagements that fellows undertook through the year. It was a year of many learnings and realisations, of participation and experiences via each artistic journey. Each project was uniquely placed and yet they crisscrossed in the ways they spoke about identity, ways of thinking about continuity and rupture, effects of tourism and development, and the intertwined ways of understanding the environment and cultural practices. Seeing the dynamism of the exhibition

only strengthened our belief in the necessity of such a fellowship to enable the emergence of a strong Himalayan collective voice.

We look forward to more of these possibilities unfolding as we delve deeper into the region, make stronger networks, facilitate more art and position it as a potent and critical site from which change may flow, through which dialogue may be possible and through which perspectives may grow, through which we may come together.

Don't Stop The Music

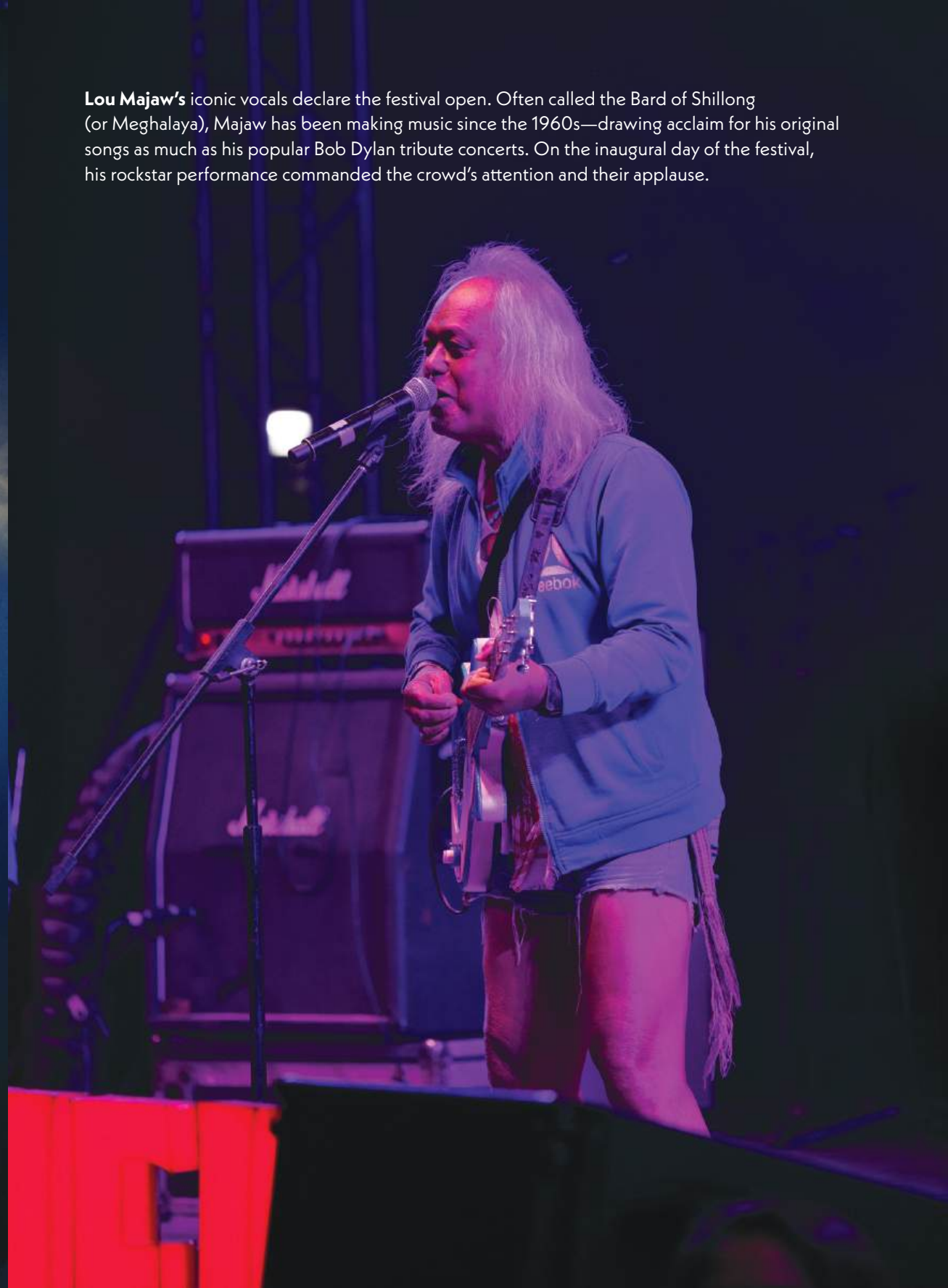
There is no language as powerful as music. It can tell the stories of people and communities and transcend the barriers of place, time and language. It can bind people together in a shared love of rhythm and melody. At Journeying Across The Himalayas 2024, the musical lineup brought together some of the finest artists of the Himalayan region.





Parvaaz captivates the crowd. Formed in 2010, the indie rock band has built a legion of fans for its music over the years, singing in a mix of Urdu, Hindi, and Kashmiri. Khalid Ahamed, Fidel Dsouza, Bharath Kashyap and Sachin Banandur, the present lineup of the band, brought a decade worth of hits to the festival stage.

Lou Majaw's iconic vocals declare the festival open. Often called the Bard of Shillong (or Meghalaya), Majaw has been making music since the 1960s—drawing acclaim for his original songs as much as his popular Bob Dylan tribute concerts. On the inaugural day of the festival, his rockstar performance commanded the crowd's attention and their applause.



Singer and composer **Joi Barua** has made music since he was a child growing up in Digboi, Assam. Barua has sung across genres and media—from advertising to movies—and in multiple languages including Assamese. Playing with his band at the festival, the musician had the crowds singing along to his tunes.



Bipul Chettri is a hitmaker. Hailing from Kalimpong, the singer and songwriter has come to be known for songs that celebrate the beauty of the Himalayas and the lives of people living in the mountains. Performing with The Travelling Band, his constant concert companions, Bipul presented his contemporary take on Nepali folk music and mountain songs.



Members of the **Ao Naga Choir** in performance. Established in 2009, the choir has found great popularity for its tunes that pay homage to the musical traditions of Nagaland. Referencing local music, instruments and other aural traditions, they are taking the region's musical heritage to the world.





Singer, Songwriter, Poet. **Alif**, the multi-hyphenate artist from Kashmir, narrates the stories of his home in music and lyrics. His renditions, both recreations and originals, have brought Kashmiri folk songs to new audiences. At *Journeying Across The Himalayas 2024*, Alif performed some of his popular numbers, their tunes tugging at the heartstrings of listeners.

A folk music group founded by Sarvjeet Tamta, **Himali Mou** performs community songs of the Garhwali and Kumaoni region. The artists sang a medley of Pahadi music accompanied by the bansuri (flute), harmonium, dholak and hudka (single-headed drum).



Taba Chake strikes a tune on stage. The singer from Arunachal Pradesh has played a pivotal role in spotlighting music in the Nyishi dialect. For over a decade, he has popularised Nyishi songs, in the process preserving his tribe's traditional language and contemporised it in a soundscape that is utterly distinct.



Balti Ghazal artists from Kargil bring their vibrant musical heritage to stage. More than just a musical genre, the Balti ghazal is a cultural conduit for the Balti language and community. The music, shaped by history and diverse influences, pays tribute to history, community traditions, and multicultural influences.



Workshops at Journeying Across The Himalayas 2024



Head In The Clouds

A helmet decorating workshop by Sethu(ram)an

The helmet is a crucial safety gear for riders, but it can also be a medium for creative expression. At Journeying Across The Himalayas 2024, a workshop by Sethu(ram)an, multimedia artist and Art Director of St+art India Foundation and XXL Collective, gave participants a chance to express their creativity on helmets. Taking cues from Himalayan headgear, Sethu(ram)an and his cohort worked with textiles, beads, feathers, and other materials to create unique, customised designs.



Toy Making With A Purpose

Playtime with upcycled materials by Zankla Studio

Based in Baksa, Assam, Zankla Studio creates delightful decor objects and toys handmade using traditional textiles and natural materials. Kirat Brahma, founder and CEO of Zankla, brought some of the studio's much-loved designs for a workshop at Travancore Palace. Toy Making With A Purpose introduced participants to the joy of making their own dolls and stuffed figures using textiles, scraps and waste materials. Who said sustainability can't be fun?

The **Dobom Doji Collective** brought a bright energy to the stage with their music, rooted in the myths and folklore of Arunachal Pradesh. Frontman Dobom Doji draws inspiration from the ritual chants and tonal qualities of his father, a shaman, turning his music into a conduit of culture and faith.



The Living Earth

Learning to love nature with Green School, Gobuk

This workshop was an adventure of its own kind. Young students and nature enthusiasts learnt how to discover and appreciate the biodiversity and natural wonders of their surroundings with a series of activities—ranging from bird watching to eco-crafting. Helming the workshop were Joyshree Gogoi and Tahaj Hussain, environmental educators and facilitators from Green School, Gobuk. A singular institution in Arunachal Pradesh, the school's educational model is rooted in fostering among children a love for nature.

Crafting Stories in 60 Seconds

Making Reels with Green Hub Western Himalayas

Fellows from the Green Hub Western Himalayas made storytelling seem like child's play as they took participants of their workshop through the nitty-gritty of making Reels. From framing the right moment to editing and finding the right music, the sessions covered all the little details that go into the making of a compelling story for social media. Double tap? Yes, please!



Where Warp And Weft Meet

Julie Kagti weaves a tapestry masterclass

Tapestry weaving is a popular practice across the Himalayan region—a traditional craft that narrates myriad stories of cultures and communities. Julie Kagti, renowned textile artist and founder of Curtain Call Adventures, gave participants at her tapestry weaving workshop a firsthand glimpse of the craft and its significance for Himalayan communities while guiding them through the basics of weaving their own designs.

Growing A Helmet

Reimagining mycelium with The Fungamental Co

Mycelium, the root-like structure of mushrooms, is a wonder of nature. Its many uses and applications was the topic of The Fungamental Co's workshop, Growing a Helmet. Dr. Tapodhara Majumdar, a fungal biotechnology specialist led the workshop with researcher Rashmi Swami who works on developing agricultural waste into functional products. After an illuminating session on mycological innovations and materials, participants worked with mycelium foam boards to create their very own helmet holders—putting their learning into action.



Wool Spinning Workshop

The Woolknitters spin a yarn

Based in Himachal Pradesh, The Woolknitters is an initiative to empower local artisans and help them earn a livelihood through skills like knitting and weaving. Shanta Thakur, a spinner with the organisation, led a workshop teaching participants at the festival the art of spinning wool—an essential step that turns fibre into yarn and is practiced among many communities in Himachal Pradesh.

"You fall only when your time comes," said a youthful Kurumba honey hunter in the Nilgiris, as he set out to scale a 300ft cliff on a flimsy forest vine ladder. It was 1996, and we were filming *Honeyhunters of the Blue Mountains*. I had asked him if he was ever afraid. His answer was profound. He had no fear for his own life as he swung free between the ravines. His fear was for the forest, and the bees, for the fading birdsong and dwindling waterfall that had once cascaded in a torrent throughout the year. Twenty years later, I asked a young mother in a Himachal Pradesh village what she most wished for her child in the future. Her answer was immediate and unschooled: "Flowing springs, living forests, safe food from our fields and fresh, clean air. I don't want the city to come to our village."

As a filmmaker and a development consultant, I have had the opportunity to work close to nature for over 30 years – working with conservation, wildlife, communities and stories from the ground in different parts of India. Across these decades, the cast of characters may have changed, but the concerns have remained constant. Stories of people and places, species and landscapes. Some forgotten, some disappearing, some contested - the margins and the mainstream, humans and animals, forests and factories, villages and cities. Stories of conflict and loss, of conviction, vision and victory.

NIJAZ & THE HIMALAYAN BROWN BEARS - Vijay Bedi & Bahar Dutt (ROUNDGLASS SUSTAIN)
 RE-IMAGINING LEADERSHIP | HANSA - Rintu Thomas | Sushmit Ghosh (BLACK TICKET FILMS) SUNDARBANS: LIVES, JHUM - THE SHIFTING LANDSCAPE - Tashi Lhazom & Andrew Tkach
 DEVTA ACTIVIST - Imrana Khan (DUSTY FOOT PRODUCTION) ON THE BRINK | ASIATIC BLACK MANAS - RETURN OF THE GIANTS - Praveen Singh Martin Dohm (THE GAIA PEOPLE)
 THE SHEPHERDESSE OF THE GLACIERS - Stanzin Dorjai Gya (HIMALAYAN FILM HOUSE)

FILMS

Reel Life of the Himalayas

Three days. Thirty six films. resilience. Curator Shibani assembling a compelling across the Himalayan

BALPAKRAM - MYSTICAL LAND OF THE ETERNAL WINDS - Debashish Nandi | Andrew Tkach
 DAMPAH MATHIR - THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE - Lalvohbika Hrahsel | Pradeep Hegde (ROUNDGLASS SUSTAIN)
 THE BUGUN AND THE LIJCICHLIA - LOG DRUM OF PESSAO - Wanmai Konyak | Millo Tako | Chonglise Sangtam | RIVERS OF HOPE - Doel Trivedy | Gautam Pandey (RIVERBANK STUDIOS)
 RE-IMAGINING LEADERSHIP | KAMLA - Rintu Thomas | Sushmit Ghosh (BLACK TICKET FILMS) GYAMO - QUEEN OF THE MOUNTAINS - Doel Trivedy | Gautam Pandey (RIVERBANK STUDIOS)

CHANGLANGSHU - Wanmai Konyak | Green Hub Fellows
 ALL IS NOT WELL WITH THE MARMOT - Roundglass Sustain
 LIVELIHOODS AND LANDSCAPES - InHERIT Ashoka University
 BEAR - Akanksha Sood (THE GAIA PEOPLE) BELONGING Pooja Rathod
 Dhalaria (MOON PEAK FILMS) NO WINTER HOLIDAYS - Rajan Kathet - Sunil Pandey (SALPA FILMS)
 SAVING THE LAST REFUGE: NARPUH WILDLIFE SANCTUARY - Pelevisio Mayese (GREEN HUB)
 APRIL SHOWERS BRING MAY FLOWERS - Neha Dixit (ROUNDGLASS SUSTAIN)

SCREENED

Endless stories of hope and resilience. Curator Shibani assembling a compelling lineup of movies from region for the festival

UNVEILING SIANG - Lobsang Namgyal (GREEN HUB)
 RESERVE - Shaleena Phinya (GREEN HUB) BEARS ON THE BRINK - Andrew Tkach | Abdullah Khan
 THE EGRET RIVER LIU - Wan-Ling WINGS OF HOPE - Gurjan Menon | Roundglass Sustain
 WE SANGTAM - REVIVING THE LOST CULTURE HUBUANANG GANGMEI | Manisha Helai (GREEN HUB)
 (GREEN HUB) BLURRED BOUNDARIES - THE MISHMI AND THE FOREST - Imrana Khan (DUSTY FOOT PRODUCTION)
 THE WALL OF SHADOWS - Eliza Kubarska (ALTEEF)

When I was asked to curate the film screenings at Journeying Across The Himalayas 2024, it was an invitation back into this world. While the underlying thematic focus was on compelling films and sensitive stories that represent the people, culture, practices, biodiversity and landscapes of the Himalayan Region, in the limited time available, we also reached out to include stories from communities and landscapes of other regions as well.

As we reached out to the ecosystem, the programme began to take shape in a matter of days. Community filmmakers from Green Hub, the Round Glass Sustain library, films from the Alt Eff selection, the Voices from the Roof of the World series, On the Brink, individual documentaries, independent filmmakers and production houses generously offered powerful stories to be screened. With just a few weeks in hand, we received over a hundred films — a treasure trove of stories crafted with effort and care. The 36 films that were screened over the three days were a mix of stories from experienced, international, award-winning filmmakers, as well as young filmmakers from across Himalayan communities.

Being part of a multidisciplinary festival with simultaneous programming, the biggest test was to sequence the films in a way that would work for an audience that kept moving from one part of the venue to another. This was perhaps the biggest challenge – because no matter which film one missed, it was a loss for the viewer!

An interaction with Guru Rewben at Journeying Across The Himalayas 2024 gives the dadra, a genre in Hindustani semi-classical music, a brand new dimension with the influence of Blues and forgotten melodies of the Tangkhul Naga community. *By Abhilasha Ojha.*

THE JOURNEY OF A SONG



I met Padma Shri Guru Rewben Mashangva for the first time in 2023, at Royal Enfield's Motoverse in Goa. I was interviewing Rewben on a panel, talking to him about his music, the love for his craft, and his leading role in the revival of several indigenous instruments of his community—the Tangkhul Naga tribe of Manipur. In an engaging session, Rewben got out several of his instruments, playing them one by one on the stage, giving us a glimpse of some of the rare melodies, which he'd heard as a child from his elders. "For me, the revival of my region's rich music was important," he said.

Strumming the guitar, Rewben held us in rapt attention, playing original compositions and folk songs that he revived painstakingly over decades of music research and practice. The conversation finished with an impromptu *jugalbandi*. "What if we were to combine a traditional *raag's aalap* from Hindustani classical music and combine it with Blues," I wondered. "Let's do it," Rewben chimed, and what followed was an improvisation that combined *raag-aalap* along with Rewben's deep baritone belting out notes in the Blues genre.

As the crowd cheered, it struck me – what does an artist crave on stage? It's not the applause by the audience (that has its virtue, of course); it's not even the joy of listening to your voice (though it's important to pay attention to the voice so you don't go *besura* or off-key). What's most important when two artists



of ideas and how different streams of influences can come together. The shared knowledge, the respective creative journeys, the understanding of *bhaav* or emotion as it exists in Blues or Jazz or any Western music genre, and amalgamating with Hindustani classical or semi-classical genre, can be profound. If my voice, while taking *aalap*, rests on 'pancham' how does it fare for Rewben to apply a harmony on that note in his unique style? And when the voices merge, what are we seeking as artists? A melody, yes, but one that allows us to celebrate the unity that symbolises India. It allows us to create a song that can stitch – even if temporarily – together whatever is torn in the fabric of humanity today, give a sense of hope to heal broken hearts, revive dreams, and create an impact.

Perhaps that's why creative partnerships are so important – the synergy allows us to be in a world where we can all belong to one another, worshipping a religion of creativity, and breathing with a sense of purpose to keep doing what makes us feel alive and valued.

Last year, when we took the stage at Travancore Palace, to celebrate the inaugural session of *Journeying Across The Himalayas*, our *jugalbandi* began, once again, with

the intent to search for a new language from the existing musical notes. I took a popular *dadra* "Jamuna Kinare Mer Gaon", which some experts have attributed to the 17th century Malwa folk poet Chandrasakhi. It was set to tune by Kumar Gandharva, one of India's foremost classical musicians, in Raag Maanjh Khamaj, a raag in which one finds quite a few semi-classical songs in the genre such as *thumri*, *bhajan*, and *ghazal*. When Reuben and I sang this, it was to understand how we could bring together our shared *riyaaz* (musical practice), put something for the audience on stage, and give our shared creativity a song to sing, and a dream to envision. Up next: we plan to record a song together, taking a timeless Hindustani classical music melody together, and fuse it with another timeless melody rooted in Western music or folk melody.

In a world where borders are made, where uncertainty lives, where politically motivated machinations threaten humankind, a song can still dwell peacefully and make a difference. My interaction with Reuben showed that it was a possibility. What we end up doing, you'll find out soon.

Image: Padma Shri Guru Rewben and Abhilasha Ojha in conversation.

FIVE CONVERSATIONS

PANELS AND TALKS

Panels

Catalysing Climate Action Through Education: Pedagogy & Practice

Can education spark climate action? This session explored how integrating climate studies and sustainability into mainstream curriculum can reimagine education. Amitav Virmani, Founder and CEO of The Education Alliance, moderated the conversation with Bhavya George, Programme Coordinator, Climate Change, Keystone Foundation; Gayatri Raghwa Nayantara, Environment Education Consultant, UNEP India Office; Siruguri, Nature Education Coordinator, Green Hub and Canopy Collective; and Dr. Soumya Prasad, Co-founder and Research Scientist, Nature Science Initiative, Dehradun. The experts spoke about innovative tools and frameworks to inculcate ecological awareness among students and enable them to drive change. Place-based sustainability education, connecting students to their local environments and communities, and hands-on activities emerged as other key areas of intervention.



HE Drukpa Thuksey Rinpoche at Journeying Across the Himalayas.

Keynote

Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Union Minister of Culture and Tourism, delivered the keynote address on the inaugural day of Journeying Across The Himalayas. Recalling memories of his own rides on a Royal Enfield bike, Shekhawat spoke about sustainability and responsible tourism, and the significance of the Himalayan region in Indian history and cultural imagination.

HE Drukpa Thuksey Rinpoche Chairman, Druk Padma Karpo School

"I always feel that the Himalaya is like a mother for the nation and for the world. It is one of the few places where humans live in a way that is still connected to nature, not fully dependent on modernisation and technology. The Himalaya holds real strength, intelligence, and wisdom, and from it, the world and the nation can still learn a lot. Our duty now is to keep the Himalaya alive, to preserve its essence before it becomes fully consumed by modernisation."

Edited and excerpted from the panel titled "The Essence of Mountain Life." HE Drukpa Thuksey Rinpoche; Mike Pandey, filmmaker and founder, Riverbank Studios; and Pema Wangmo, indigenous cultural activist, spoke to moderator Shoma Chaudhury, Founder & Director of Lucid Lines



**Shivani Thakur,
Founder, The Woolknitters**

"Craftspeople create not just with their hands and legs, but with their mind and intellect as well. Every part of their being is engaged in the act of making, and that is what gives life to their craft. To me, they are the true backbone of the entire industry."

Edited and excerpted from the panel titled "Communities, Crafts and Conservation". The panel featured Anurita P Hazarika; Shivani Thakur; Aratrik Dev Varman, Founder and Lead Designer, Tilla; and Dr. Monisha Ahmed, Executive Director, Ladakh Arts and Media Organisation. Shefalee Vasudev, Editor-in-Chief, The Voice of Fashion, moderated the panel.

**Enabling The Olympic Dream:
From The Himalayas To The World**

Moderated by Nikhil Naz, Consulting Editor, Sports, ITGD - Editorial, the panel reflected on ice hockey's role for community building in Ladakh and its potential for global sporting excellence. Shiva Keshavan, Member, Athletes Commission, Indian Olympic Association and Athletes Commission, Olympic Council of Asia; Chewang Motup Goba, Founder, RIMO Expeditions; Dr Noor Jahan, General Secretary, Ladakh Women's Ice Hockey Foundation and Head, Women's Development, Ice Hockey Association of India; Abhay Dogra, President, Ice Hockey Association of Himachal Pradesh; and Darryl R Easson, Coach, National Ice hockey teams of the UK and Hungary were part of the conversation. It highlighted initiatives like the Royal Enfield Ice Hockey League, the Blueprint for the Development of Ice Hockey in Ladakh and emphasised the need for greater awareness of the sport and the contribution of key stakeholders to its growth.

Art In The Time Of Crisis

At a time when the impact of ecological disasters looms large on the planet, art can serve as a vital platform. It can express, with empathy and creativity, the beauty and fragility of our natural world. In this panel, Raki Nikahetiya, Co-founder of sā Ladakh and Sandeep Sangaru, Multidisciplinary Designer and Educator, explored how artists can respond to the current environment, inspire awareness, spark emotional engagement, and mobilize public action towards environmental preservation. Vidya Shivadas, curator and art critic, moderated the panel.

The Pastoral Life

Stanzin Norboo, amateur herder and General Manager of The Students' Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL) and amateur herder was in conversation with Dr. Monisha Ahmed, Executive Director, Ladakh Arts and Media Organization, about the pastoral lives of indigenous communities around the world and their deep-rooted connection to their environment—from the land to the flora and fauna.

**Divya Vasudev
Joint Director and Senior Scientist,
Conservation Initiatives**

"The North East is different. It's new, it's adventurous, and it has stunning landscapes at a crossroads of biodiversity and sustainable living. There is rapid, unplanned development coming, and there's a lot to learn from the landscape."

Responsible tourism is about collaboration with communities. It's about helping them conserve their forests while sharing the beauty of their land with others. It's not just about tourism, it's about pride, conservation, and the connection people have with nature and wildlife."

Edited and excerpted from the panel, "Responsible Tourism As A Catalyst For Conservation". Journalist Bahar Dutt moderated the panel, featuring Gautam Pandey, Director, Riverbank Studios; Sanjay Sondhi, Naturalist and Founder, Titli Trust; and Dr. Tsewang Namgail, Executive Director, Snow Leopard Conservancy - India Trust; and Divya Vasudev.

Gender and Climate Change

Bano Haralu, Project Lead, Wildlife Conservation Society - India, moderated this panel centred on the role of women in climate action with Urvashi Butalia, Co-founder, Zubaan; Sahana Ghosh, Associate Editor, Nature India; and Seno Tsuhah, Indigenous Womens' Leader, Chizami, Nagaland. Together, they reflected on the dynamics between climate crisis and gender. The adverse effects of climate change extend from women's health and livelihoods to their education and economic opportunities. The panel aimed to offer solutions for women to navigate these challenges and how media and storytelling can play an empowering role for them in climate conversations.

A Web of Hope: Fellows Adda

Over the past decade, the video fellowship programme Green Hub has driven social change by training and mentoring Himalayan youth to drive environmental and social change. A group of fellows from the programme gathered at the festival to speak about their experiences, navigating challenges, and leading transformational initiatives in their surroundings. Rita Banerji, Project Director of Green Hub moderated the conversation with Bina Nitwal and Ganesh Singh Bisht from Uttarakhand; Wanmei Konyak, Jitender, Mhobo from Nagaland; Sara Khongsai and Chajo Lowang from Arunachal Pradesh; and Tsangpo Dawa from Sikkim.

Nurturing a Nursery, Building a Forest

A conversation with Green Hub mentors on how their diverse experience and practices help to create a nurturing ecosystem for Green Hub fellows. The panel featured Rajkamal Goswami, Conservation Scientist, ATREE; Raviraj Shetty, Founder, Narrative Practices of India and Wellness Lab; Rintu Thomas, Founder, Black Ticket Films and Himalayan Story Lab; and Rishu Nigam, Development and Media Consultant, Climate Action and Community Dialogue. Moderated by Rita Banerji, Project Director, Green Hub.

Anurita P Hazarika Executive Director (In Charge), North East Network

"The weavers that we work with are not just weavers. The loom is their identity, their style statement, their feminist politics. The loom is a long narration of a woman from a weaver to a producer. It is not just a happy-go-lucky pastime tucked away in a corner for years. The loom and the weaver have not been identified, not given due recognition, not compensated. We became facilitators, the enablers to develop sisterhood, feminist solidarity and encourage feminist leadership in women."

Rahul Bhushan Architect and Founder, North

"Our people are mostly shepherds and agriculturists. They grow their own food, weave their own clothes. Shelter is very personal, and so is culture. Rituals, practices, and ancestral wisdom are integral to life here. If landscapes and environment change, everything else changes too."

Growing up in Shimla, I imagined replacing all the concrete buildings with local houses and trees. Shelter and environment are as important as clothes and food. Architecture is always a response to living conditions. As activities change, architecture changes, but it is important to preserve heritage, learn from it, and adapt it to today's time. It's not just about building. It's about creating an ecosystem, living together as a community, giving people hope, and shaping the future for our children. Our destiny has to be written by our own hands, and our actions and choices define what we leave for the next generation."

Edited and excerpted from the panel, "Building In The Himalayas: Harmony In Design". Moderated by Amit Gupta, Founder and Editor-in-Chief, STIR, the panel included Sandeep Bogadhi, Founder, Earthling Ladakh; and Zeenat Niazi, Chief Advisor, Circular Economy and Climate Resilience Programmes, Development Alternatives, and Rahul Bhushan.



Talks



Niels Peter Jensen at Journeying Across The Himalayas 2024.

MILAN MOUDGIL

Mountaineer and Photographer, presented a talk titled "Kailash-Manasarovar – A Journey in the Footsteps of Sven Hedin and Swami Pranavananda". Exploring the journeys of a Swedish explorer and an Indian ascetic in the last century, three decades apart, Moudgill showed how their visits and a sense of adventure transformed the Kailash-Manasarovar region from a mythical place to a geography rooted in reality. Moudgill sketched the two characters and their journeys with extensively researched anecdotes, archival materials, contemporary photos and an examination of the debates they triggered.

NIELS PETER JENSON

Adventure Rider, TV Host and Road Safety Advocate, turned the spotlight on road safety and helmets for riders in a talk, titled "Helmets For India - Art for Change". Jensen has been striving to promote helmets and road safety for bikers for several years, and presenting helmets as a canvas for art and self-expression has been a key part of his initiatives.

**ARJUN VAJPAI, MOUNTAINEER,
ON MELTING GIANTS: WHY
HIMALAYAN GLACIERS MATTER
TO 3 BILLION LIVES**

"Some of the largest parts of the glaciers have actually receded back. There were large high altitude lakes which have absolutely disappeared. Kilometres and kilometres of glaciers are just melting every year."

**MAROOF CULMEN, CULTURAL
STORYTELLER & VIDEO CONTENT
SPECIALIST, ON TECHNIQUES OF
MODERN STORYTELLING**

"It's not just about telling a story, it's about preserving a culture, an identity, and a legacy. It's about seeing the person behind the performance."

Once the story is documented, the real challenge is to condense its richness into a format that resonates with today's audience."



Maroof Culmen at Journeying Across The Himalayas 2024.



CURATING THE ‘HIMALAYAN BAZAAR’

Beans or beanies? Plushies or pottery? Give us one of everything. Puneeta Chadha Khanna, curator of the Himalayan Bazaar, on assembling an array of diverse crafts and indigenous staples at Journeying Across The Himalayas 2024.

For as long as I can remember, the Himalayas have fascinated me. I was born in Uttarakhand and grew up travelling and living across Kashmir, the North East and Uttarakhand—thanks to an Armed Forces background. Years later, I feel a sense of belonging with the entire region.

Over the last six years, I have been curating retail experiences led by small, artisanal and natural brands in the food and wellness space. It has been a joy to see so many independent, conscious brands flourish and grow with exposure to the right target audience. Many brands are also reviving heirloom recipes and drawing from ancestral knowledge. I am also deeply interested in our crafts and textiles and feel that we have an obligation to preserve our heritage.

When Royal Enfield Social Mission approached me to curate the Himalayan Bazaar at Journeying Across The Himalayas 2024, I was instantly hooked. The thought of putting together a showcase of products made by the resilient and talented communities of the Himalayan region was very exciting. It was also a daunting prospect, due to the sheer number of products on offer, the varied categories and the different levels of craftsmanship and price ranges.

Poring through the lists of products from each organisation, we decided to focus on categories rather than the individual organisations. We felt that a customer who walks into the Himalayan Bazaar should find an aesthetic display which showcases the best offerings from the region, and makes it easier to choose what they want to buy. Or perhaps harder, considering the number of covetable products on offer. Grouping by category also enabled us to showcase the rich diversity within the regions.





We divided the display into four sections. The apparel section featured sarees, shawls, scarves and jackets. It was fascinating to see the creativity in textiles emerging from the coldest parts of the country—from hardy jackets from Himachal Pradesh and woven textiles from Uttarakhand to the vivid, colourful needlework of the Bakharwal communities and the sophisticated embroidery of artisans from Kashmir. The knits section—which turned out to be a particular hit among shoppers during the exhibition—showcased the skill of artisans and their ability to adapt to new trends. The designs went from classic cardigans to patchwork jumpers, slouchy oversized sweaters, and chic vests, along with beanies, mufflers, and scarves. A line of delightful stuffed toys swiftly made its way into everyone's shopping baskets.

The home sections included linen, pottery and baskets from the North East. Finally, the food and personal care section which included spices, lentils, dry fruits and cheese. The abundance here was equally amazing: take our Himalayan pulses and spices wall for instance, which showcased 12 types of *rajma* (kidney beans) as well as other pulses. Or the wealth of spices which ranged from *jakhya*, a wild mustard grown in Uttarakhand, to Meghalaya's *lakadong* turmeric. A testament to how diverse our food palette can be if we don't confine ourselves to the produce of industrial farming. It underlined our responsibility as consumers to buy wisely and support heirloom seeds and hence biodiversity.

During the course of the festival, I observed how visitors engaged with the labels and products. Products that offered functional value for consumers in their daily lives were instantly popular, as were clothing designs that combined crafts traditions with contemporary fashion sensibilities. Artisans and communities need intervention to keep doing what they have done for years while ensuring it resonates with urban consumers. At the same time, we also need to value handcrafted, small-batch products and be willing to pay a premium for them. The future of craft and indigenous knowledge lies in this balance.

HIMALAYAN

BAZAAR

Brands and Organisations At The Himalayan Bazaar

Aagor Bodo Weaves, BTR, Assam
Anandini Himalaya Tea, Himachal Pradesh
Aranyam, Meghalaya
Avani, Uttarakhand
Bakarwal Crafts, Jammu
Bandipora Weavers Producer Company, Kashmir
Cafe Turtle Organics, Uttarakhand
Pit Stop Kharu, Ladakh
Chubako, Sikkim
Cloket, Assam
Darima Cheese, Uttarakhand
Earthen Tunes, Telangana
Himal Prakriti, Uttarakhand
It's All Folk, Arunachal Pradesh
Kilmora, Trans Himalayan
Kullvi Whims, Himachal Pradesh
Ladakh Bites, Ladakh
Longpi, Manipur
Looms Of Ladakh, Ladakh
Makon, Manipur
Mononi, Himachal Pradesh
Muga Weaves, Assam
Pangi Hills, Himachal Pradesh
Pine Cone, Trans Himalayan
Saneki Weaves, Assam
Tarai Blue, Uttarakhand
Tarubi, Manipur
The Woolknitters, Himachal Pradesh
Way Of Living Studio, Assam
Zaina, Kashmir
Zankla Studio, Bodoland, Assam
Himalayan Bookstore By Full Circle

The Himalayan Knot Shop

Countrymade x The Action Northeast Trust
EKA x Looms of Ladakh
Jenjum Gadi
Namza Couture
Sonam Dubal x The Action Northeast Trust
Saldon_2112
SWGT
Ura Maku

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Born from the shared passion and collaborative spirit of artists, storytellers and communities, *Journeying Across The Himalayas* is a living testament to the power of collective action. Our deepest gratitude goes to all those who brought this vision to life and continue to inspire its journey forward.

Thank you to all artists, collaborators, contributors, creative practitioners, speakers, Himalayan Communities, Royal Enfield Social Mission partners, Eicher Group Foundation team, the travel and motorcycling community.

Aastha Chauhan	Arjun Vajpai
Abdullah Khan	Art and Culture Organisation Kargil
Abhilasha Ojha	Athan Zimik
Aditi Mali	Atia Sen
Akanksha Sood	Atreyi & Co.
Akshay Sharma	Bahar Dutt
Alif	Bano Haralu
Amit Gupta	Baokhunguri Eco-Reverence Ensemble
Amitav Virmani	Bhavya George
Andrew Tkach	Bina Nitwal
Anumitra Ghosh	Bipul Chettri and the Travelling Band
Anurita P Hazarika	Bobbee Singh
Ao Naga Choir	Cab Experiences
Aratrik Dev Varman	Chajo Lowang
Aravani Art Project	Chandra Shekhar
Arjun Raina Suket Dhir	Chef Pankaj Sharma

Chonglise Sangtam	Indu Harikumar
Codesign	InHERIT Ashoka University
Darjeeling Dobom Doji Collective	Ishan Chrungoo
Debangshu Moulik	Jisha Unnikrishnan
Debashish Nandi	Jitender and Mhobo
Designkari	Joshua Sailo
Devika Sundar	Julie Kagti
Divya Vasudev	Khayal Ladakhi
Doel Trivedy	Kumud Mishra
Dorje Stakmo	Kunga Tashi Lepcha
Dr. Archana Kumar	Ladakh Arts and Media Organisation
Dr. Monisha Ahmed	Lalvohbika Hrahsel
Dr. Soumya Prasad	Lamthanglian Vaiphei
Dr. Tapodhara Majumdar	LIU Wan-Ling
Dr. Tsewang Namgail	Lobsang Namgyal
Eliza Kubarska	Longform
Gagandeep Singh Grover	Lou Majaw & Band
Ganesh Chandra Beri	Manisha Halai
Ganesh Singh Bisht	Manou
Gaurab Talukdar	Maroof Culmen
Gautam Pandey	Martin Dohrn
Gayatri Raghwa Nayantara	Mary Therese Kurkalang
Grace Muivah	Mashangva
Green School, Gobuk	Milan Moudgill
Gunjan Menon	Millo Ankha
HE Drukpa Thuksey Rinpochey	Millo Tako
Himali Mou	Mo Naga
Hubuanang Gangmei	Mordicai Panmei
Ikshit Pande	Moti Shah
Imrana Khan	Munmun Dhalaria
Indu Antony	Namrata Sundaresan

National Geographic	Rita Banerji
Neha Dixit	Roundglass Sustain
Niels Peter Jensen	sã Earth
Nirupa Rao	Sabari Venu
One Earth	Sahana Ghosh
Osheen Siva	Sandeep Bogadhi
Padma Dolkar	Sandeep Sangaru
Padma Shri Guru Rewben	Sanjay Barnela
Pankaj Sharma	Sanjay Sondhi
Parvaaz	Sara Khongsai
Peleviso Mayese	Seno Tsuhah
Pema Wangmo	Sethu(ram)an
Plasticvalla aka Manveer Singh	Shaleena Phinya
Pooja Rathod	Shalini Philip
Pradeep Hegde	Shefalee Vasudev
Praixit Kafley	Shikargah Collective
Praveen Singh	Shivani Thakur
Promod Saikia	Shoma Chaudhury
Puneet Chadha Khanna	Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat
Radio Henvalvani	Shubham Lodha
Raghava KK Studio	Shyam Lal
Rahul Bhushan	Siddhesh Gautam
Rajan Kathet	Siddho
Rajendra Singh Negi	Siruguri
Rajkamal Goswami	Soujanya Boruah
Raki Nikahetiya	Sourish Bhattacharyya
Rashmi Swami	Stanzin Dorjai Gya
Ravindra Singh Gusain	Stanzin Norboo
Raviraj Shetty	Sunir Pandey
Rintu Thomas	Sushmit Ghosh
Rishu Nigam	Taba Chake

Tanisha Phanbuh
Tashi Lhazom
The Woolknitters
THF Fellow Joshua Sailo
Tsangpo Dawa
Tsering Motup
Tsewang Nurboo
Urvashi Butalia
Varun Sikka
Vidya Shivadas
Vijay Bedi
Vishal K Dar
Wanmai Konyak
Women from Pit Stop Kharu
XXL Collective
Zankla Studio
Zawn Lai
Zeenat Niazi

OURS



TO



TELL

SECOND EDITION

Journeying Across the Himalayas 2025 theme, “Ours to Tell”, beckons you to look at the Himalayas as a living archive of stories, identities, traditions — reclaimed, reinterpreted, retold by those to whom they belong.

“Ours to Tell” seeks to platform first-person narratives that reflect the spirit of the Himalayas through the voices of its people and communities. Through curatorial approaches that actively collaborate with Himalayan communities the festival will explore the intersections of Himalayan identity and community, indigenous knowledge systems, language and oral traditions, circularity and conservation, visual arts and material culture, culinary heritage, and performing arts.

Beyond documentation, the festival becomes a melting pot of diverse narratives. Serving as a platform to celebrate the layered histories and contemporary expressions that shape the Himalayan cultural landscape, it reflects the spirit of “Ours To Tell” in all its diversity.



DECEMBER 4-10, 2025
TRAVANCORE PALACE, NEW DELHI

A first-of-its-kind multidisciplinary festival, ‘Journeying Across The Himalayas’ celebrates the stories of and from the iconic region bringing together contributors, partners, creative practitioners, and communities for an ode to Royal Enfield’s spiritual home — The Himalayas.