

THE EASTERN DIVA

a hand crafted journey



THE
ESTERN
DIVA

About The Eastern Diva

The Concept:

The concept of The Eastern Diva came up with the vision to promote the best of handloom products of North eastern states. Essentially The Eastern Diva is looking towards west and to a wider world market for spreading sustainable fashion through handloom !The North Eastern region of India is the store house of exceptional weaves, patterns, fabrics which are inspired by nature.The Eastern diva works on the weaving clusters of Assam ,for the promotion of the beautiful and authentic weaves of the region in the world market. Assam is the only state in India which boasts of availability of all the wild types of silk : Mulberry, Muga, Eri and Tassar silks.Apart from these some vegan silks, like banana fibre, bamboo silks are also used.



In Assam alone, there are nearly 1.4 million weavers, out of which 1.2 millions are women. Yet weaving is still an unpaid, unrewarded job. Our efforts are on to bring weaving related jobs as lucrative jobs, wherein a family can sustain, thus retaining weavers in the work. We have created our fully equipped, aesthetically developed manufacturing clusters with our own looms through which we ensure 12 months of employment to our weavers. Also from time to time we promote the self help groups of the region associated with the loom craft.

The Eastern Diva Ideology :

In all our creations we tried to maintain the rich Assamese weaving tradition while incorporating a few modern practices mostly not in designs but in practices towards waste managements, making our products sustainable and of low cost .The focus area for achieving sustainability are as below:

- 1) The distance between buyer and producer(us) is the shortest, we are connected to you , and hence no middleman cost is involved. Our customise tab is your one click getaway to your dream attire.
- 2) Our fully equipped manufacturing units, along with permanent farm to fabrics supply chain ties, wherein the cost of production is minimised.
- 3) Mostly our office space, and godown are restricted to minimal expenses. Therefore, huge stock is not carried ,at the same time we can take up huge orders too as we have enough numbers of looms in working condition. We sell our products to resellers, retailers and direct buyers.
- 4) We have not hired professional models or did not carry out elaborate photoshoot . But our models are part of our venture as well as mostly carried out in in-house locations. Hence, putting a big check to overloads.

The products:

Handwoven Fabrics, sarees, Mekhala sadder, stoles, jackets and readymade garments made by handwoven fabric.

From our looms we create the magic of East Himalayan traditional weaving marvels, that are treasured for generations . We weave with natural silks and cotton .We produce yardage, silk sarees, traditional wraparounds, stoles, scarfs, warm Eri shawls, and Mekhala sadors. From the yardage we move on to our readymade garments sectors . You will be glad to know that all our readymade garments are also

stitched by manual sewing machines, which also is generating employment and minimising wastes of fabrics .

In readymades, we prepare two segments :furnishings and wearables. Jackets made of Eri fabric, cotton skirts, ready to wear silk gowns, designer ensembles of natural silks, frocks, blouses, tops and pants are few of the examples. In home furnishings category we make cushion covers, runners and placemats. We can customise variety of products on pre order basis.



Our Existence :

We are an all women social enterprise working in the remotes of Assam, where vastly weavers are available. Our parent company Laxmipriya decor came into existence in 2011. The handloom branch ,namely The Eastern Diva started manufacturing from 2020.



Our magical hands

The tribal weaving community of Bodo, Rabha along with non tribal Assamese weavers are very much present in the area of Buxsa district. We have about 50 weavers with us who are fully trained and possess magic in their hands. Mostly they learnt weaving from their childhood with staying around their domestic frame looms, but we gave them training to enhance their skills and speed.

Nature of work :

We primarily and essentially work with only natural yarns like Muga silk, Eri silk, (non violence silk), Tussar silk , Mulberry silk and cotton. We use natural dyes to colour Eri silk yarn . The natural dyes used here are from the plant kingdom, notably roots, berries, barks, leaves and wood . Mostly madder , henna, trifla, indigo , turmeric are used.

For mulberry silk we use azo free dyes. Yarns are processed with hand to get the right thickness and density. The mill spun yarns are also used to produce fine thinner silk sarees . After the processing of yarns , begins the real story ! Our design team conceive the idea and like a mother , the weaver puts every single thread carefully , rightly to make the fabric grow very slowly inch by inch, bit by bit like for a baby in a mom's womb, she dreams the best for the to be born, thus putting colours through the shuttle , in between the warp and weft threads, progressing the weaves.



After countless hours of hard work, days after days...a handwoven fabric piece is born..a perfect creation from slow fashion.

Promoting Slow fashion

Slow fashion is a way to identify sustainable fashion solutions, based on the repositioning of strategies of design, production, consumption, use, and reuse, which are emerging alongside the global fashion system, and are posing a potential challenge to it. The Eastern diva is committed to slow fashion and SDGs related to the industry.

Our work is following the Slow fashion principles of using Eco-Friendly materials, choosing organic dyes and leaving the minimal or no environmental footprints.

Techniques

We use wooden frame looms, fitted on to the ground. We also use pit looms made of bamboo and wood, which is fixed on wet grounds. Our yarn processing utilises weaving accessories, shuttles etc that are all made of wood, recycled bamboo and hence 100% eco friendly materials. Also we use traditional wooden drum to prepare warp which itself is a very interesting and traditional process wherein the natural



yarns are directly readied for warp, without the yarns losing their natural fibre constitutes.

For, heavy , colourful modern design to suit rich pieces, our looms have been fitted with graphics design card jacquard equipments, which is operated by the feet movement of the weavers. The entire weaving process of the fabrics follow without using any chemicals. Thus our fabrics are eco friendly and leaves almost zero foot prints.

Background of Assam as a weaver state

The North East region of India, is the store house of exceptional weaves, patterns, fabric which are inspired by nature. All the eight states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura have a wealth of crafts that deserve both recognition and rewards.

Our main work area is inside the beautiful state of Assam. Nestled among the blue hills and green valley lies the state of Assam-the gateway to North East India. Situated in the foothills of the Himalayas and on the banks of the mighty Brahmaputra, Assam is also renowned for its wild silk production along with the quintessential tea gardens. Silk rearing and weaving dates back to centuries. In Assam making your own cloth by weaving it is an integral part of its culture. Almost every village in Assam is host to generations of silk producing communities. The history of highly skilled weaving culture of Assam dates back to Ahom dynasty, where the kings and queens ordered the weavers to make exclusive silks for them. The Vaishnavite saint of the region, Srimanta Sankardeva (15-16th century), used his prowess and exceptional knowledge to help weavers prepare the famous Vrindavani Vastra, depicting the life stories of Shri Krishna. This piece of cloth puts Assam in the top of all weaving practices of the world. This piece is in The British Museum, and marvels thousands of onlookers everyday.

Shading light on the silks of Assam

Muga

Muga Silk and Assam has been in existence since time immemorial. GI tagged to Assam, Muga is the pride of Assam. Though there are no definitive records or journals mentioning the origin of Muga Silk in Assam, it is generally believed that it was during the time of Ahom Dynasty (1228 to 1828) that Muga Silk was woven in the socio-economic fabric of the state. Muga is one of the rarest silks in the world. Due to its golden nature, it has now come to be known as the Golden Silk of Assam as it is found only in the state. The silk fibre is a very strong organic natural fibre and is derived from semi cultivated silkworms named *Antheraea assamensis*. One of the most significant properties of the fabric is its longevity as it has been seen time and again to outlive the wearer thus making it an heirloom piece for every owner. Cultivated mostly in the Garo hills of Assam, the muga silk is extracted from the cocoons of *Antheraea assamensis*. The silk worms are fed on som, sualu, mejankari, pan-chapa tree leaves. Typically, it takes about 1000 cocoons to produce 125 grams of silk and about 1000 grams of silk for one saree. The average production per acre of land is 400 grams of silk.

Eri

From the moths *Samia ricini* Eri or Non violence silk is produced, The name "eri" is derived from the Assamese word "era", which means "castor", as the silkworm feeds on castor plants. Also called ahimsa, endi or errandi in India.

Predominantly found in Assam, Meghalaya and Nagaland, Eri silk yarn has some unique properties hence it is known as an all-weather fibre. For its isothermal properties. Eri silk, also called peace silk is a non-violent silk which does not require to kill the moth to extract the fibre. The moth leaves the cocoon after spinning and flies off. For this reason, eri silk is the preferred material of Buddhists and Vegans. Unlike other silks that require the pupa to be inside of the cocoon when degumming, these worms survive and leaves the cocoon for the boiling process. The term 'Ahimsa' or 'Peace silk' or 'Non-violent silk' is derived due to this process.

Mulberry silk :

In Assam known as Pat silk, derived from Bombyx Mori worms, known for its luxurious quality, and provides one-of-a-kind softness to textiles. Very much indigenous to Assam, the Morus or mulberry /Nooni trees are the staple food for the worms. These trees and the dependent worms provide great natural sources for shiny silk.

These yarns can be dyed easily to all colours, and hence is the most demand variety of silk. Smooth in nature, the silk retains their fibres, and durability only if the fibres are hand processed.

Tussar silk

Tussar silk is produced from larvae of several species of silkworms belonging to the moth genus Antheraea. Tussar silk is coarser and less glossy compared to traditional mulberry silk. It has a textured surface and is often valued for its natural, earthy tone. Used as cheaper copy of muga silk. It is hand woven to make beautiful sarees, stoles and fabrics.

Banana Silk : Banana silk is a vegan silk made from the stems or stalks of banana plants used to produce textile with a natural shine. The banana silk producers make use of the fiber of the trees' shoots to produce silk. The process begins with simply the boiling of shoots in lye and the procedure of yarn-making process begins. Textiles are produced by weaving weft prepared by the silk, in our looms.



From the founder's desk

I, Deedhiti Saikia, take immense pride in running this economically stable and environmentally sustainable weaving venture.

My vision for The Eastern Diva is somehow embedded with my gratitude to mother nature and my mother land. I am a strong preacher of uniform development across the regions but with environmental sustainability.

My entire work follows the single principle of attaining economic stability through environmental sustainability. Though educated in the capital city of Delhi, I went back to my roots to generate employment through traditional jobs which had been the base of the ethnicity of the region. We pay attention to customer needs and feedback, and revamp our work to fit in. Patience, perseverance and inneration had been my key strengths, which led me to sustain this work. Also, walking the talk in terns of promoting slow and sustainable fashion, had been my life motto. I take the opportunity to thank my esteemed clients. Your patronage has been a driving force behind our success, and I am deeply appreciative of it. Your trust and loyalty in my brand has been invaluable and I am eternally grateful for it. Thank you for your continued support, towards The Eastern Diva.

