

## The Nilgiris Threaded Story: Toda Textiles on Display

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From the misty hills of the Nilgiris emerges *The Nilgiris Story*—an evocative showcase featuring a curated line of **shawls, scarves, home textiles, and linen saris**, meticulously handcrafted by **Toda artisans**. This exhibition is not just a visual feast; it's a narrative woven in threads — tracing centuries of craft, identity, and quiet revival.

### Craft Heritage Rooted in the Hills

The **Toda tribe**, a pastoral and indigenous Dravidian community from the Nilgiri hills of Tamil Nadu, is celebrated for its distinctive embroidery tradition—locally known as **pukhoor**, meaning “flower.” Today, women bring this craft to life using red, black, and occasionally blue threads, embroidered on coarse white cotton. Their precision — so refined that the final product appears woven rather than stitched — underscores their unmatched skill.

Each embroidery piece is entirely **reversible**, with both sides crafted to perfection. Traditionally, the textured “rougher” side becomes the display surface of choice. The patterns represent the Toda worldview—sun, moon, buffalo horns, creatures, and geometric symbolism—rooted in their pastoral and spiritual beliefs.

### A Cultural Showcase with Contemporary Resonance

Organized by **Coonoor & Co**, this exhibit offers a fresh but authentic expression of Toda craftsmanship — translating century-old methods into contemporary wardrobe and home décor items. Shawls, scarves, accessories, and linen saris are featured, accompanied by conversations exploring the art's evolution and its resonance in today's design landscape.

Social media teasers attest to the craft's resurgence: “The current exhibition is a curation of shawls, scarves, home textiles, and linen saris, original art, handcrafted by Toda artisans.”

### Creativity Meets Empowerment

By extending the application of Toda embroidery beyond traditional cloaks to scarves, saris, and home textiles, the showcase amplifies both visibility and opportunity. This act of *creative translation* allows the craft to remain relevant—for modern consumers who value heritage storytelling and artisanal authenticity.

### Safeguarding Legacy with Geography's Seal

Toda embroidery received **Geographical Indication (GI)** status in 2013, legally recognizing its regional and cultural specificity and ensuring rightful credit to the Toda community. This certification is a crucial step toward protecting craft integrity, encouraging preservation, and enhancing artisan income.

### Why This Matters

Element

Significance

**Traditional Technique** Complex counted-thread embroidery done freehand—reversible and beautifully precise.

**Cultural Continuity** Motifs and patterns, like buffalo horns and celestial bodies, echo tribal lineage.

**Modern Curation** Retains authenticity while expanding into wearables and décor.

**GI Protection** Legal protection ensures Toda artisans own and benefit from their craft heritage.

**Global Resonance** Interfaces heritage with contemporary design, appealing broadly to ethical buyers.

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