

Dakkhan Ko Chira: Vinay Narkar Revives the Deccan's Lost Textile Heritage in Chennai

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Dakkhan Ko Chira: A Tribute to the Deccan's Textile Heritage in Chennai

Chennai welcomes a rare celebration of the Deccan's rich textile traditions with Dakkhan Ko Chira, an exhibition curated by textile revivalist Vinay Narkar. Hosted at Amethyst, the showcase brings together saris, Maratha miniature paintings, jewellery-inspired designs, and architectural motifs, offering a contemporary lens to centuries of craft heritage.

From Courtrooms to Looms

Vinay Narkar's journey from corporate lawyer in Mumbai to textile revivalist is as intricate as the weaves he champions. His fascination began with a sari commissioned for his wife in Solapur, which garnered acclaim from family and friends. A pivotal moment arrived when Oscar-winning costume designer Bhanu Athaiya admired a shawl he had created for dignitaries at the Solapur International Film Festival, urging him to pursue designing full-time. Narkar soon resigned from law, relocating to Solapur to immerse himself in the textile traditions of Maharashtra and the Western Deccan.

"My legal training helped immensely in research, particularly for my book *Vastragatha*, which documents the textile traditions of the Western Deccan in Marathi," he shares.

Celebrating Forgotten Weaves

The exhibition highlights both known and rediscovered textiles, including the rare Joth sari, identifiable by its Ikat-stripped border, recreated in collaboration with Pochampally dyers and Gadwal weavers. Beyond saris, Narkar explores the broader cultural context—Maratha miniature paintings, jewellery, and architectural motifs—to tell the story of the region's rich visual identity.

"The exhibition is about reviving the Deccan's textile culture in its entirety. From architecture to jewellery, every element tells a story," Narkar explains.

Rewriting Deccan's Textile Narrative Challenging misconceptions, Narkar emphasizes that Paithani is not the only iconic weave of the Deccan. His research sheds light on other lost traditions and aims to expand revival efforts beyond saris, including stitched garments like the recently launched Parkar Polka, inspired by Maharashtra's chaniya choli.

The Dakkhan Ko Chira exhibition offers visitors a window into the Deccan's cultural and textile legacy, encouraging a renewed appreciation for the region's intricate craftsmanship.

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