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**RAISING THE BAR:
G-QCON 2024 SETS NEW STANDARDS
IN HEALTHCARE EXCELLENCE**

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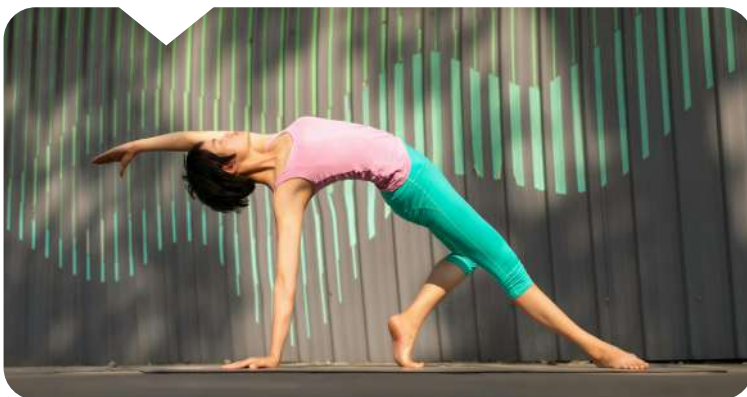
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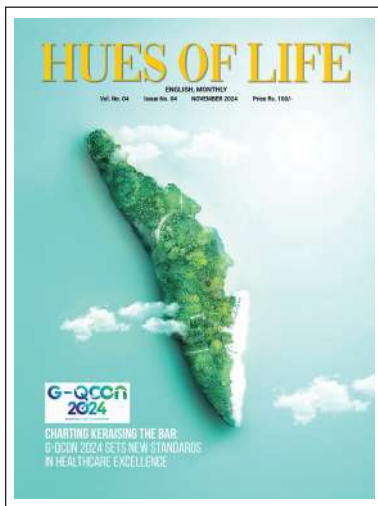
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**ARANMULA KANNADI: THE
LEGENDARY MIRROR THAT
REFLECTS KERALA'S HERITAGE**

HUES OF LIFE

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Editor's Desk

Dear Readers,

As we enter November, the pages of Hues of Life open to reveal tapestries of ideas and experiences that speak deeply to the essence of living well. Each article within this edition carries a message that invites one to pause, reflect, and embrace the beauty and significance of life's offerings-be it by nurturing the self, our surroundings, or people around us.

Food is a universal language of love and survival, which features on the pedestal of honouring the importance of World Food Day. It reminds us of our importance in making sure that nutritious and sustainable meals are accessible for all. This theme sways seamlessly into our feature on rooftop farming - a modern rooted practice, the vanguard champions sustainability and urban self-sufficiency turns concrete jungles into verdant landscapes of hope.

From nourishment of the body to nourishment of the soul, we meditate on these two practices: embracing simplicity and stillness in a world that celebrates complexity. These articles guide us gently toward finding balance, reminding us that the true art of living lies in mindfulness and letting go of the unnecessary.

Our travel piece on Darjeeling ushers you into the serene landscapes of the Queen of the Hills. The lush tea gardens, quiet monasteries, and cool mountain breeze remind one of the therapeutic power of nature and the joy of exploring destinations that whisper tales of history and culture.

For one, this edition bravely probes into the miracles of science and compassion through an introspective look at IVF treatment. It's a story of hope, perseverance, and the relentless human spirit as modern medicine continues to give so much to the dream of parenthood for so many.

The stories you're about to read have a lot in common—we adapt, we innovate, and we connect. Whether it's growing food for ourselves and others or traveling to new places or making choices for our well-being, each step shapes a more meaningful life.

We hope this edition of Hues of Life inspires you to embrace the extraordinary within the ordinary, to celebrate progress while cherishing tradition, and to find joy in the smallest acts of care for yourself, others, and the world we all call home.

Warm regards,

Nijith Raj
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RAISING THE BAR

G-QCON 2024 SETS NEW STANDARDS IN HEALTHCARE EXCELLENCE

Sree Gokulam Healthcare Institutions Host a Transformative National Quality Conclave in Trivandrum

It was an extraordinary coming together of healthcare professionals, thought leaders, and policymakers in Trivandrum who witnessed the galaxy of national quality conclave, G-QCON 2024, by Sree Gokulam Healthcare Institutions. Coinciding with World Quality Day on November 14 at Hotel Gokulam Grand, the programme underlines not only the critical necessity of innovation but also excellence in context with health care. This massive conference was the setting for meaningful debates and actionable insights into advancing healthcare quality and performance - an impressive milestone to the sector in India and beyond.

Sree Gokulam Healthcare Institutions is, in every sense, the realization of the vision nurtured by Shri. Gokulam Gopalan, the visionary leader, multifaceted entrepreneur, philanthropist, and an inspiring leader of our times. Recognized as a beacon of innovation and integrity in the business world, his endeavours stretch much beyond commerce itself and embody deep commitment to societal development. Under the aegis of such visionary leadership, Sree Gokulam Healthcare Institutions has evolved into an epitome of excellence and compassion in the healthcare industry. G-QCON 2024 is a testimony to his forward thinking of raising the standards of healthcare and



imparting a quality and reliability culture to the industry.

Dr. Manojan K.K., Vice Chairman of Sree Gokulam Healthcare Institutions and Chief Patron of G-QCON 2024, presided over the event and Hon'ble Minister for Public Works and Tourism Adv. P.A. Mohammed Riyas inaugurated the conclave. Addressing the audience as the keynote, Dr. Manojan went ahead to explain that health tourism harbours transformative potential—a strong movement poised to change the face of the healthcare industry in Kerala. He observes that the unique combination of leading-edge medical facilities and the practices of the traditional healing world have created a holistic ecosystem for domestic as well as international patients.

Dr. Manojan stressed the importance of a forward-thinking approach to healthcare. Kerala's healthcare institutions are evolving rapidly, but the true measure of progress lies in our ability to anticipate and adapt to future challenges. Health tourism is not just an opportunity; it is an obligation for us to harness our resources and expertise to serve a global audience. He also underlined that quality treatment would form a healthier future generation; it requires ethical practices and strict standards, which lay a sound foundation for healthcare excellence.

Delivering an address highlighting the intrinsic relationship between quality health care and social well-being, Minister Mohammed Riyas lauded Kerala's healthcare sector for its international reputation and attributed its success to the excellent assimilation of traditional and modern treatment methods adopted. He emphasised that this was the state that has achieved unparalleled progress in medical infrastructure, something that is comparable to international standards. He elaborated on the





Dr. Sheeja G. Manoj, MD and Chief Executive Officer, Sree Gokulam Healthcare Institutions and Patron of G-QCON 2024, delivered a keynote address that fascinated the audience with the depth and lucidity of its presentation. Drawing from her long experience in healthcare, Dr. Sheeja defined quality as a dynamic, fluid process. Quality is not a destination, she observed, but a continuous pursuit of excellence that calls for irreplaceable commitment and innovation. It is pushing boundaries, after all-not in achieving results, but in inspiring confidence and trust.



Dr. Sheeja emphasised the need for greater transparency and an all-inclusive approach to quality in healthcare, she emphasized the requirement for practices that may be consistent as well as ethical. She further added that the standards achieved by healthcare institutions are actually carved out by the outcomes they deliver. Thus, aligning goals with international benchmarks plays an important role. Her speech also touched on this transformational side of technology and innovation, insisting that these factors are integral to keeping healthcare services accessible, efficient, and effective in an ever-changing world.

According to Dr. Sheeja, the resilience and adaptability of the healthcare industry stand at the heart of future success. The world needs to keep up with changes, and our healthcare institutions cannot be left behind but must, in fact, set the pace, she said, inspiring the audience with a forward-looking vision that puts patient outcomes and societal impact at the centre. Here, again, she set the benchmark very high for the rest of the discussions.

state's growing potential as a destination for medical tourism, pointing to the rising number of international patients as proof of the trust that is placed on the healthcare facilities of the state.

The minister applauded G-QCON 2024 for its invaluable contribution to advancing healthcare quality and its potential to enhance Kerala's standing as a hub for medical quality. He also pointed out that if the care offered to the patients is sensitive enough to their needs, then a strong health care system is built, and it does not matter whether it is a bigger hospital or smaller. Kerala already has this leadership, but we should continue working harder for more. He suggested that hospitals should be given perennial upgradation to ensure they reach the international standard. This, he said would elevate Kerala as a destination for quality treatment. The Minister also announced intention to offer more significant governmental support for medical tourism to increase contribution to the Kerala economy and reputation.





Dr. Giridhar G. Gyani, Director General of the Association of Healthcare Providers (India), focused on "Quality Beyond Accreditation" and dared participants to engage quality as a process and action that is holistic and sustainable. Other speakers included Dr. Lallu Joseph of CAHO and Dr. Anna George of Aster DM Healthcare, who spoke about hospital management principles

S.N. Raghuchandran Nair, President of The Trivandrum Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TCCI), was one of the notable presenters at G-QCON 2024. He put great stress on the health quality aspect in raising Kerala's status as a landmark for medical tourism. He said that managing health care to international standards is essential not only for bringing foreign patients to health care facilities but also for reinforcement of trust among the domestic beneficiaries. He underscored the fact that quality health care services in combination with Kerala's inherent advantages of natural beauty and traditional healing practices make for an unbeatable case for the state to emerge as a world leader in health tourism.

In addition to this, over 15 lectures by some of the most distinguished experts were delivered that covered all critical aspects of healthcare quality.

and how accreditation standards impact policy in healthcare.

It was on account of the extremely careful planning and co-ordination led by Mohamed Aarif M.A, GM of Quality Department of Sree Gokulam Healthcare Institutions that G-QCON 2024 became such a stellar vehicle for ideas, teamwork, and new standards in healthcare.

By engaging in dialogue and innovation, G-QCON 2024 has emerged as an exemplary event in India's healthcare landscape. It has not only reaffirmed the commitment of the institution to quality but also highlighted the role of collaboration and shared vision in elevating standards within the healthcare sphere. As Kerala continues its journey toward becoming a global leader in medical tourism, the insights and strategies discussed at G-QCON 2024 promise to play a pivotal role in shaping a healthier and more equitable future.





CELEBRATING A CENTURY OF EXCELLENCE

SBI HORNIMAN CIRCLE BRANCH

The State Bank of India's Horniman Circle Branch serves as a testament to the centuries-long history of Indian banking. This prestigious institution, marking its centenary year, is an institution still inspiring awe with its stature, historical, and architectural significance and pivotal position in shaping the financial landscape of the nation. This Grade 2A heritage structure, coming up in the year 1863 under the aegis of the Bank of Bombay, has transformed itself into a symbol of resilience and innovation in the banking industry over the years.

The momentous milestone was marked with the unveiling of a ₹100 commemorative coin by Honourable Finance Minister of India, Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, as a gesture of deep-rooted influence the branch has bestowed on India's economic history. The fifth edition of The Evolution of the State Bank of India, a comprehensive chronicle chronicling the bank's metamorphosis from 1981 to 1996, was launched by the

Minister. Shri M. Nagaraju, Secretary, Department of Financial Services, and other distinguished guests attended the event. The Indian banking annals considered the branch's importance.

Its colonial architectural grandeur makes the Horniman Circle Branch more than just a building—it is a living relic of history which has kept pace with the pace of rapid evolution in the banking sector. For decades, it has achieved the seamless confluence of tradition and innovation and become a nodal point for the delivery of key government schemes and an attempt to push financial inclusion in the market. Right from assisting national economic progress to embracing technology, the branch journey encapsulates the dynamic spirit of SBI.

Speaking at the centenary celebrations, Smt Nirmala Sitharaman explained the extra-ordinary journey of SBI from 100 branches in 1920 to over 22,640 branches today. plans to add another 500 branches in FY 2025 SBI has



emerged as the largest banking network of India. The Minister underscored the bank's digital transformation, citing its impressive customer base of over 50 crore individuals and its pioneering digital platforms such as YONO, which boasts 287 million users. She emphasized that SBI's heritage branches, like the one at Horniman Circle, exemplify its commitment to preserving history while embracing the future of banking.

The significance of the arm goes beyond its architectural and historical importance. It has been at the forefront of implementing government initiatives like the Jan Dhan Yojana, PM Suraksha Yojana, and Atal Pension Yojana that bring banking services to even the remotest corners of the nation. All these efforts epitomize what SBI seeks to do in its mission to take financial inclusion one step further by empowered citizens.



Its colonial architectural grandeur makes the Horniman Circle Branch more than just a building- it is a living relic of history which has kept pace with the pace of rapid evolution in the banking sector.



rapid change. The edition sheds light on SBI's strategic response to challenges like financial disintermediation in the 1980s. These include establishment of subsidiaries such as SBI Mutual Fund and SBI Capital Markets, where it diversified its portfolio as a platform to lay the foundation for a modern and versatile financial institution.

Technological landmarks mark this history, as SBI initiated its first fully computerized branch in 1992. Coupled with the restructurings of organizations in the mid-1990s, these technological changes enabled SBI to

ride the waves of globalization, competition, and deregulation to emerge at the forefront of global banking.

While it is the centenary of the Horniman Circle Branch, it's certainly more than a look into the



Shri C S Setty, Chairman, SBI: "This centenary celebration is not a look back at our history but rather a promise for the future. We stand committed to serving each one of Indians, pioneering innovation, and driving economic progress." That statement encapsulates the ethos of SBI, who have always been striving to meet the diverse financial needs of customers while being ahead of trends in this industry.

A significant highlight of the celebration was the unveiling of The Evolution of the State Bank of India, which offers an in-depth perspective on the bank's transformation during a period of

past. It symbolises values and vision that have powered SBI into its future. Preserving heritage while pioneering innovations in the digital space, SBI remains the cornerstone in India's financial ecosystem. Its next century makes the legacy its legacy-a beacon of inspiration for the future generations.

The Horniman Circle Branch is celebrating 100 years of its existence, restating its position as an ageless institution, facilitating and providing a bridge between tradition and modernity while further continuing to act as a pillar of trust and excellence in Indian banking.



DARJEELING

THE CROWN JEWEL OF THE EASTERN HIMALAYAS

Located within the folds of the Eastern Himalayas, Darjeeling is much more than a destination; it has been poetic and a confluence of natural beauty, colonial charm, and cultural vibrancy. Legendary in its own right as the “Queen of the Hills,” this picturesque town located in West Bengal offers an experience which transcends to anything else experienced through any commonplace thing. Relish the rolling tea plantations, majestic mountain vistas, and a mix of cultures still help Darjeeling enthrall travellers from around the world.

A Gateway to the Himalayas

The journey itself to Darjeeling is an adventure. Mist-shrouded forests and wind-twisted roads coupled with the rhythmic chug-a-chug of the UNESCO-listed Darjeeling Himalayan Railway create an air of anticipation. Iconic rides on the "Toy Train" take travellers on an original ride against a backdrop of dramatic landscapes through pristine serene hills. Its whistling steam engine and leisurely pace make it a fitting curtain raiser to the charms of Darjeeling.

Upon arrival, the first welcome sight awaiting the visitor's eyes is the breath-taking panorama of the Kanchenjunga range. At a towering 8,586 meters, the world's third highest peak meets the skyline, its snow-capped summit glowing golden at sunrise. That heavenly view-from Tiger Hill alone-is enough to bring many pilgrims to this Himalayan haven.

The Charm of the Tea Gardens

It is the emerald green tea plantations that form the very heart and soul of Darjeeling, world-famous for its exquisite tea, a brew often called the "Champagne of Teas." Treading on the emerald slopes of Makaibari, Happy Valley or Glenburn Tea Estates presents something more than beautiful scenery-it is a journey into the very art and heritage of the tea-making process.

All these laborious steps of hand-picking, withering,

rolling, fermentation, and drying the young leaves can be experienced by the guests. Most plantations also provide a tea-tasting session, whereby aficionados can identify the fine nuances of this precious drink. Staying at a heritage tea estate bungalow adds a different flavour, blending luxury with the air of plantation life.

Colonial Charm and Heritage

Colonial whispers are more visible in the structures than the architecture and the breeze of the place, Darjeeling describes the summer capital of the British Raj in stately churches, schools, and bungalows such as St. Andrew's Church and the Darjeeling Planters' Club with weathered facades of a bygone era.

The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Museum near the Ghoom station houses the memory of the Toy Train. Vintage locomotives, artefacts mention of which reveal the tale of the engineering feat that connected this distant land to the rest of the world.

Tapestry of Culture

Darjeeling is a cultural melting pot where Gorkhas, Lepchas, Bhutias, and Bengalis blend together in perfect harmony. The diversity is celebrated through festivals, cuisines, and daily life. The annual Darjeeling Carnival is a vibrant manifestation of music, dance, and local traditions, reflecting the town's creative spirit.





Eating in Darjeeling is a treat. Momos steaming hot, thukpa in bowls, and the rich Nepali-style aloo dum, all can be sampled on a culinary journey in town equal to its cultural blend. Local bazaars like Chowk Bazaar reveal artisanal crafts, woollen shawls, and traditional jewellery giving a glimpse into the region's living heritage of artisans.

Nature Adventures

Above all, Darjeeling has much to give for nature lovers. The Singalila National Park-famous for the red panda and panoramic trekking trails attract wildlife lovers and adventure junkies who come for the thrill of climbing Sandakphu-Phalut tracks to have unprecedented views of four out of five of the world's highest peaks: Everest, Kanchenjunga, Lhotse, and Makalu.

For a more serene experience, the Peace Pagoda on Jalapahar Hill offers a tranquil retreat. Built by the Japanese Buddhist Nipponzan Myohoji Order, this white stupa symbolizes universal harmony and provides a meditative space amidst the clouds.





Educational and Botanical Wonders

Apart from being a hub for preservation, Darjeeling houses institutions of worldwide repute. The Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park gives fame to rare species such as snow leopards, red pandas, and Himalayan wolves. At the zoo stands the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, which remains a tribute to Tenzing Norgay, the legendary Sherpa, who, along with Sir Edmund Hillary, was the first to summit Everest.

The Lloyd Botanical Garden, a verdant oasis in the heart of the town, showcases the region's rich floral diversity. Exotic orchids, ferns, and endemic plants thrive here, reflecting the unique biodiversity of the Eastern Himalayas.

Darjeeling has appeal without seasons. Spring and summer both offer a riot of colours with the blooming of rhododendrons and magnolias. Autumn opens crystal-clear skies into mountain gazing, and winters drape it to a serene mist with its occasional fall of snow to transform it to a dream.

Sustainable Tourism in Darjeeling

Ever so slowly, Darjeeling is embracing sustainable tourism as it wrestles against what threatens the face of its environment. Focused on preserving fragile ecosystems in combination with empowering locals are eco-friendly home stays, organic tea plantations, and initiatives implemented through local communities. The visitor is encouraged to tread lightly, respect customs, and support responsible tourism.

Not just a destination, but an experience—the Darjeeling destined to be an epitome of harmonious symphony of nature's splendour, richness of culture, and the depth of history; every corner reminds of some moment from the past and each moment breathes beauty.

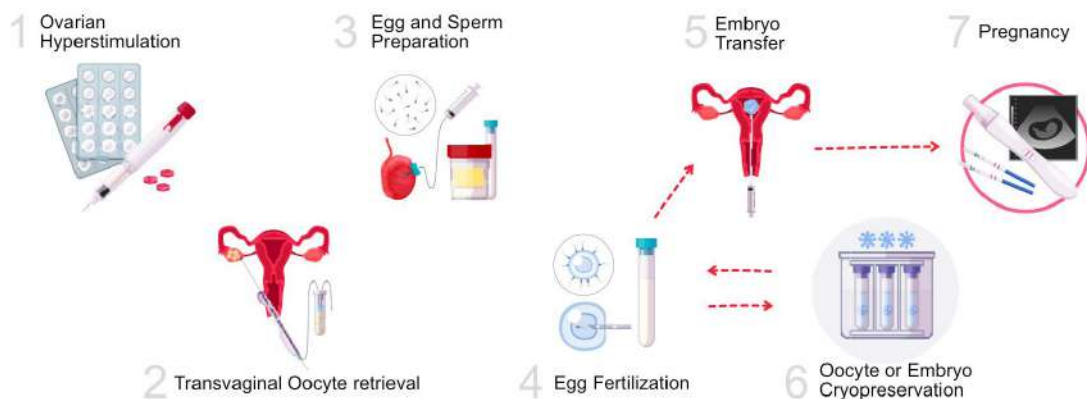
There is an otherworldly quality to the misty air, and the rustling of leaves and the far-off whistle of the Toy Train—all these come together in Darjeeling, casting a spell that stays long after one departs. Here is a retreat into nature, a dive into history, or a taste of Himalayan culture for those seeking it—a jewel on India's crown of travel destinations that has no peers.



IVF

A JOURNEY OF SCIENCE, HOPE, AND PARENTHOOD

In vitro fertilization (IVF) stands as one of modern medicine's most ground-breaking advancements, offering a pathway to parenthood for those navigating the challenges of infertility. With its origins in the late 20th century, IVF has become a transformative solution for individuals and couples, transcending medical, social, and emotional barriers. It is the merging of science with compassion that allows for the conception of life but also tells a story of how resilient the human spirit is when faced with adversity.



A Brief Overview Understanding IVF

IVF, which stands for “in vitro fertilization,” involves the process of fertilizing an egg with sperm outside the human body in a controlled laboratory environment. The resulting embryo is closely monitored before being transferred to the uterus, allowing it to implant and result in a healthy pregnancy. This technique is applied to solve problems such as blocked fallopian tubes, low sperm count, ovulation disorders, and unexplained infertility.

The process usually includes various stages, such as ovarian stimulation, egg retrieval, fertilization, embryo culture, and embryo transfer. Each of these stages requires meticulous precision and personalized care to ensure the best possible chances. The Emotional Journey

Many people's journeys into IVF begin with a mix of apprehension and hope. Struggling to conceive in itself is a roller coaster of emotional ups and downs, from societal expectations to personal aspirations of people or couples dealing with the situation. IVF seems like a tangible solution, but it's very emotionally complicated. The physical requirements of treatment, plus excitement at the prospect of success or despair of failure, can be both thrilling and exhausting.

The clinics of today understand that holistic support is vital in IVF. Be it counselling services or peer support groups, there is now a growing trend of treating



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patients' emotions in addition to their medical needs. This helps individuals build resilience as they try to sail through the process.

Advances in IVF Technology

IVF technology has become one of the most dramatic success-making applications. This is because significant changes have been made over the years in its technology to enhance success rates. To address extremely severe male infertility issues, intracytoplasmic sperm injection has recently emerged. This procedure involves the direct injection of a single sperm into the egg. Preimplantation genetic testing can screen embryos for chromosomal normalcy before implantation to rule out the risk of genetic abnormalities.

Time-lapse imaging technology, however has recently become the new frontier in developing embryos and thus observing development in real time for selection of only the healthiest to be transferred. The techniques such as vitrification, or rapid freeze method, permit much better chances of frozen embryo transfer without losses and helps in making IVF more flexible and accessible.

Accessibility and Ethical Considerations

While IVF has given hope to many families, providing accessibility remains a challenge. The cost of such treatment is high to be borne for most, especially in areas where the insurance does not cover fertility treatments. To this end, IVF now



remains a call for subsidized treatment options and a more comprehensive insurance coverage by many clinics and organizations.

Yet, ethical considerations also play a big part in the discourse around IVF. The issues of choosing embryos, surrogacy, and what is done with unused embryos sometimes bring people to a standstill. Wide open discussions by culturally appropriate policy can ensure that the practice of IVF remains aligned with societal values while respecting individual choice.

Success Stories and Impact

IVF has transformed millions of lives across all cultures and geographies, from Louise Brown, the first-ever child to be born through IVF in 1978, to millions of births since then, and immeasurable impact of IVF. Success stories abound, each a testament to the resilience and determination of those who dare to dream of parenthood.

For example, IVF has helped single parents and LGBTQ+ individuals to have their own children, defying the traditional notion of parenthood and creating an open field of inclusiveness. It also acts like a light at the end of the tunnel for countries facing decreasing birth rates, as families can now thrive despite demographic changes.

The Future of IVF

With time, IVF's future promise will actually brighten up. The promise of even more in the elaboration of fields like AI in the future will revolutionize the process of embryo selection while enhancing the success rate and reducing the number of cycles needed to conceive. Gene editing and other promised developments are controversial but may one day prevent inherited diseases among many other implications on assisted reproduction possibilities.

Moreover, a growing interest in the preservation of fertility, be it by egg freezing or by a variety of techniques, further solidifies the individual's control over their reproductive calendar. This is again a greater social change, where individual aspirations and professional ambitions live in harmony with the aspirations of parenthood.

IVF is more than a medical procedure; it's a journey of hope, resilience, and unbreakable will. It has redefined how life is being created, where there were once no solutions. As science keeps transforming, and people's perceptions about life are bound to do the same, IVF will continue being a badge of modern medicine as it empowers those who aspire to realize their hopes of parenthood. With each success story, IVF re-affirms what is possible and incredible when compassion and innovation come together in proof that the miracle of life is limitless.





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THE MINDFUL NOVEMBER

SIMPLE PRACTICES TO DE-STRESS

November arrives with a unique rhythm, nestled between the festive exuberance of October and the bustling holiday extending till December. It's a time when the air grows crisp, the days shorter, and the heart craves quiet moments of reflection. Amid this seasonal transition, there's an opportunity to reclaim mindfulness, shedding the weight of a hurried life. By embracing meditation, gratitude journaling, and the art of slowing down, November can transform into a month of rejuvenation and peace.





Meditation: Cultivating Stillness in a Busy Mind

The demands of modern life often leave little room for introspection. The mind, perpetually juggling tasks, finds itself tethered to an endless stream of to-do lists. Meditation offers a sanctuary—a space to pause, breathe, and reconnect.

This ancient practice, once perceived as esoteric, is now celebrated for its profound benefits. Studies have shown that even a few minutes of daily meditation can significantly reduce stress, improve focus, and enhance overall well-being. The key lies in its simplicity: a quiet space, a comfortable position, and an anchor for your attention, often the breath.

As you sit in stillness, the rhythm of your breath becomes a metronome, steadying your thoughts. Guided meditations, readily available through apps or online platforms, can provide structure for beginners. Alternatively, mindfulness meditation encourages observing

thoughts without judgment, letting them drift like autumn leaves on a gentle stream.

November's natural serenity provides the perfect backdrop for this practice. Mornings, bathed in soft light, or evenings, cloaked in tranquillity, invite a meditative pause. By anchoring yourself in the present, you discover that the world slows with you.

Gratitude Journaling: Finding Joy in the Ordinary

Gratitude is more than a fleeting feeling; it's a deliberate act of acknowledging the good in life. Amid the season's quieter moments, gratitude journaling emerges as a transformative tool.

Unlike traditional diaries that chronicle events, a gratitude journal captures the essence of appreciation. Each entry becomes a celebration of the overlooked—the warmth of a cup of tea, the laughter shared with a friend, the rustle of leaves underfoot. These seemingly mundane



experiences, when recognized, illuminate life's richness.

To begin, set aside a few moments each day. Write three to five things you're grateful for. They don't need to be grand gestures; often, the simplest joys carry the deepest meaning. Over time, this practice rewires the brain, fostering a positive outlook even during challenging times.

November, with its association with Thanksgiving, feels inherently attuned to gratitude. As families gather, and stories are shared, the act of reflecting on blessings becomes communal. Yet, gratitude journaling extends beyond the holiday table—it becomes a daily ritual, nurturing a mindset that sees abundance even in scarcity.

Slowing Down: Embracing the Beauty of Being

The pace of life, dictated by schedules and screens, often leaves little room for presence. Slowing down is not an act of idleness but a conscious choice to savour life as it unfolds.

This November, consider weaving slowness into the fabric of your days. Begin by reassessing priorities. Not everything demands immediate attention; by identifying what truly matters, you create space for intentional living.

Nature offers a masterclass in slowing down. A walk through a park, where trees shed their leaves in a dance of renewal, reminds us of the beauty of letting go. These moments, unburdened by haste, become anchors of calm.

Slowing down extends to how we engage with others. Put aside distractions during conversations; truly listen. Share meals without the interference of technology. These acts of presence deepen connections and bring joy to interactions often overlooked in the rush.

The holiday season, while joyous, often accelerates life's tempo. By practicing slowness in November, you enter December grounded and mindful, capable of embracing festivities without being overwhelmed by them.

The Synergy of Practices: A Mindful Month

Meditation, gratitude journaling, and slowing down are not isolated practices but



interconnected threads that weave a tapestry of mindfulness. Meditation clears the mind, creating space for gratitude. Gratitude shifts focus from what is lacking to what is present, fostering contentment. Slowing down ensures you savour these experiences, living fully in the moment.

Together, they transform November from a transitional month into a sanctuary of mindfulness. This is not about adding more to an already full plate; it's about replacing busyness with intention.

Practical Tips to Get Started

1. **Establish a Routine:** Dedicate specific times each day to mindfulness practices. Mornings are ideal for meditation, while evenings lend themselves to gratitude journaling.
2. **Create a Mindful Space:** Designate a corner of your home for these practices. A comfortable chair, a soft throw, or a candle can set the mood for reflection.
3. **Start Small:** If 20 minutes of meditation feels daunting, begin with five. Similarly, gratitude

journaling can start with a single sentence. Consistency matters more than duration.

4. **Engage the Senses:** Whether it's the aroma of your morning coffee or the texture of a cozy sweater, immerse yourself in sensory experiences to anchor the present moment.

5. **Involve Loved Ones:** Share mindfulness practices with family or friends. A shared gratitude exercise or group meditation session strengthens bonds and creates shared memories.

Embracing November's Mindful Rhythm

November is a gift—a pause between the rush. Its quiet beauty calls us to embrace mindfulness, to savour the moments that often slip unnoticed. By meditating, journaling gratitude, and slowing down, you reclaim life's essence.

In a world that celebrates doing, November whispers the value of simply being. As the leaves fall and the year edges toward its close, let this be the month you turn inward, finding peace not in accomplishments but in presence. The mindful November awaits—step into its calm embrace.

ART OF MINIMALISM

FINDING JOY IN LESS

Amidst abundance, minimalism fits into the world as a silent yet strong philosophy of thought. Not a matter of deprivation or ascetic living, but rather an aware choice of giving up excess and concentrating on what is essential. Really, it is a form of art—a careful and reflective curating of life in the quest for happiness, meaning, or purpose.

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Minimalism goes beyond a simple definition. For some, it is aesthetic design with a flavour of clean lines and neutral tones. For others, it is a lifestyle enabling them to minimize material possessions and mental clutter. What ties these two together is the belief that less is indeed more.

Minimalism, dating back to the centuries, draws inspiration from philosophies such as Zen Buddhism, a faith that encourages one to “live simply.” Modern-day minimalism has benefited greatly by giving it momentum as a reaction against consumerism, thereby providing an antidote to the way of living in modern times.

The Minimalist mentality isn't about giving everything up or living in poverty. It really is the act of intentionality retaining that adds value and letting go of the rest. This space opens up for clarity, creativity, and true happiness.

Another mostly liberating act of the minimalist lifestyle is decluttering. In general, physical clutter often represents mental and emotional chaos, and cleaning out our physical space calms our inner world, too. The act of decluttering requires





one to ask at every turn: Does the object give me joy? Is it useful? Does this object align with my current needs and values? If no, then it is time to let go. Of course, this process isn't always easy-work can be made hard by sentimental attachments. The benefits are pretty clear: an open and inviting home, as well as a lightness to shedding unnecessary weight.

Commitments also work along the lens of minimalism. Calendars filled with obligations can be as disorganized as a closet. Saying no to unnecessary activities opens us up to rich experiences and relationships.

Minimalism shifts our attention from being focused on quantity to quality. When we strip down only to the bare essentials, we begin to see these elements on another level. One beloved thing can bring so much more happiness than a dozen unused things. Even this philosophy carries over into experiences. Just like simple eating out with the family or a brisk walk in a park can be more gratifying than elaborate activities, so does a healthy conversation. Minimalism teaches us to appreciate our little pleasures and find joy in the present and the beauty of everyday life.

Minimalism very easily complements sustainable living. We consume less, waste less, and decrease our ecological footprint. Many times, a minimalist lifestyle respects the art of purchasing fewer higher-quality items, supports ethical brands, and incorporates reusing and recycling. Minimalism also promotes mindful consumption: before buying, do

you really need this, and does it add value to your life?

The benefits of minimalism extend beyond the physical, as it brings clear minds and emotionally resilient people. The space created by minimalism becomes a fertile soil for creativity and self-discovery; it pushes the real issues that concern us-our passion, goals, and relationships.

Implementing minimalism begins with small steps. Start by decluttering a single drawer or room. Evaluate your schedule and prioritize activities that bring joy and fulfillment. Adopt a mindful approach to purchases, focusing on quality over quantity. Over time, these practices build momentum, reshaping life into a more intentional and satisfying journey.

Minimalism is not about one-size-fits-all. It is a deeply personal expression of values and aspirations. Some people enjoy stripping down to the bare essentials, while others love to hold dear collections. "Minimalism's spirit lies not in rules, but freedom," she said, creating a life in all aspects that perfectly resonates with your true self.

With minimalism, we find that less does not equate to loss but rather gain. It is in fact an invitation to living life more intentional, appreciative of what one has, and enjoying the simplicity of things. As we let go of what is no longer helping us, we have the space for what truly matters: peace, clarity, and authentic happiness. Minimalism is the art of life, guiding us toward a richer, more meaningful existence.



THE IMPORTANCE OF WORLD FOOD DAY

NURTURING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Around the world, World Food Day is the annual reminder of one of humanity's major challenges: ensuring that everyone, irrespective of their location or socio-economic status, has access to nutritious food. Annually held on October 16th, under the auspices of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, this day transcends its ceremonial roots to become a clarion call for collective action toward food security, sustainable agriculture, and global solidarity.

The Legacy of World Food Day

World Food Day commemorates the establishment of the FAO in 1945—an organization born from the depths of the devastation of World War II to provide for the lowly goal of world-wide elimination of hunger and malnutrition. Its mission has evolved, crossing decades as international interconnectedness amplified complexities in a food system set against the forces of climate change, population growth, and economic inequality. Celebrated in over 150 countries this day unites policymakers, farmers, scientists, activists, and citizens concerned with critical issues regarding the production and distribution of food.

An International Perspective on Hunger and Hope

Despite remarkable strides in technology and agriculture, hunger continues to haunt millions. Recent reports by the FAO indicate that still a large part of the population worldwide is still facing food

insecurity. This paradox of such a world producing food enough to feed everyone but its inhabitants is fasting denotes the systemic inequalities embedded in distribution systems, economic policies, and resource management.

On the other hand, World Food Day brings to the fore stories of hope and innovation. The growing number of farmers adopting sustainable practices, communities revitalizing indigenous crops, and countries implementing policies that are transformative call for change, which is possible and achievable. It is this delicate balance between challenge and opportunity that makes World Food Day so profoundly relevant.

World Food Day 2024 adopted the transformational theme “Right to Food for a Better Life and a Better Future”, which indeed puts sharp focus on the fact that food isn't just a source of nutritional input but a human right. The message this year stuck to the issue of acting in unison worldwide to eradicate hunger and ensure accessibility to good-quality and reasonably priced food and promote sustainable agriculture. It was a call to reimagine food systems: how to ensure that everyone, no matter the circumstance, thrives with dignity and hope. For today serves as a strong reminder that a better future begins with fulfilling one of the most basic promises: the right to food.

Local Actions with Global Impacts

World Food Day reminds us that solutions to food challenges frequently lie within local communities.

Small-scale farmers produce more than 30% of the world's food, and often are victims of poverty and environmental degradation. Empowering these farmers with technology, education, and fair trade can greatly enhance food production and local economies.

Community-led innovations, such as urban farming, zero-waste kitchens, and farm-to-table movements, are revolutionizing how people relate to food and its consumption. Human beings can make a difference by minimizing the wastage of food and allowing for the sale of products locally through embracing sustainable consumption patterns.

The role of Technology and Innovation

Real innovation has always been something that has driven progress forward, and the food sector is no different. Precision farming, vertical agriculture, and advances in biotechnology are changing the face of growing need for food. Apps that connect restaurants with excess to those who need it, drones checking crop health, and AI-driven predictive analytics weather patterns represent where technology can deal with inefficiencies and enhance productivity.

However, technology in isolation is never the solution. Inclusive policies, ethical frameworks, and community engagement are critical to ensuring technological progress does not serve a privileged few but helps bridge the gap between the underprivileged and less favoured groups.

World Food Day: Time for Shared Responsibility

World Food Day is far more than a policy debate and international summitry. It is an appeal to each person to reflect upon their connection with food. Indeed, such a world, where surpluses coexist with scarcity, conscious choice does count. There are many ways in which one can start: reduce post-harvest losses, consume from companies that are committed to doing things responsibly, or make a voice for hunger issues are some very practical actions.

Such a transformation is further fuelled by education. Food literacy becomes part of the curricula in schools and universities across the



globe, providing guidance on healthy eating habits, sustainable agriculture, and global food systems and how they all work together. It's only through such a cultural upbringing that young minds become the champions of tomorrow's food security.

Global Partnerships for a Hunger-Free Future

On World Food Day, again, partnerships are underscored. Governments, NGOs, private enterprise, and

grassroots organizing have to collaborate to attain equitable food systems. Such efforts like the UN's Zero Hunger program and its partnerships with global organizations like the World Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) are proof that collective efforts raise the positive impact.

Not to be overlooked are the grassroots voices—the farmers, workers, and advocates who are front and centre in food production and distribution. Their voices—thoughts, hopes, and struggles—tend to keep policies and innovations grounded in real world needs.

A Future Vision

World Food Day is a journey and not just the observance of a certain date, towards the future of no hunger where there may be resources sustainably managed and this fundamental right of adequate nutrition may be enjoyed by each citizen. It requires multi-dimensional efforts and contacts to be able to handle environmental challenges, ensure inclusive growth, and ultimately develop new shared senses of responsibility.

Let us not forget on this day that what is on our plates is not only food but interdependence—from the farmer growing grains to the scientist developing drought-resistant crops every one of these links in the food chain holds a piece of the solution.

World Food Day is important because it has the ability to inspire action, foster innovation, and unite humanity in its shared mission to nurture the planet while leaving no one behind. It is from these principles that we can build a world where the security of food for everybody isn't a privilege but universal reality—a world worth striving for.



THE RISE OF ROOFTOP FARMING

CULTIVATING SUSTAINABILITY IN URBAN SPACES

Rooftop farming today provides solutions to the ever-increasing urbanization challenges. This novel innovation puts agriculture right into an urban situation, with effects such as food insecurity, environmental degradation, and the urban heat island effect becoming things of the past. This innovative way of living in cities changes their aesthetic aspect and gives a sustainable method of fresh organic produce.



Roof-top farming is actually a kind of vegetable, fruits, herbs, and small-scale livestock cultivation on the rooftops of the building in urban cities. The practice is different from simple container gardening to more complex systems like hydroponic systems and vertical gardens. Thus, rooftop farming brings agriculture close to the townspeople by reducing food travel distance between farm and plate by utilizing unused spaces.

The trend has picked up pace in the past few years. Cities like New York, Tokyo, and Singapore are at the forefront. India, too, observes interest galore in metropolitan hubs like Bengaluru, Mumbai, and Chennai.

Advantages of Roof Top Farming

One of the main benefits of rooftop farming is its mitigation capability of adverse environmental impacts of urbanization. Green roofs absorb rainwater and subsequently reduce runoff and urban flooding.

They also act as insulators, thus bringing down the temperatures indoors, which reduces the need for air-conditioning and thereby energy consumption.

Moreover, rooftop farms counteract the urban heat island effect—a phenomenon where cities tend to have higher temperatures than the adjacent rural areas due to concrete and asphalt. The vegetation cools the air and also promotes biodiversity in the urban setting by housing birds and insects.

Rooftop farming contributes to food security because communities can directly grow their food locally. Urban dwellers reap the rewards of fresh, pesticide-free produce that is healthier and more nutritious. This is especially relevant in the city because there are a very few options for affordable organic food.

For most, rooftop farming becomes another source of income. All excess produce can be sold to local markets, restaurants, or co-ops. Businesses or apartment complexes that have rooftops used for such projects experience an appreciation in property value because of the beauty and sustainability aspect.

For decades, gardening has been associated with mental health benefits. Rooftop farming is an effective therapeutic escape from the stresses of city life. Working in the soil also contributes to fitness. Beyond that, green spaces improve air quality, thus enhancing general well-being.

Shared rooftop gardens build community because it fosters a sense of belonging with the urban resident. The spaces become lively hubs for interaction, collaboration, and learning that strengthen neighbourhood bonds.



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Success Stories in Rooftop Farming

Rooftop farming projects have also become beacons of sustainability around the world. New York's Brooklyn Grange is among the world's biggest rooftop farms and generates over 50,000 pounds of organic produce annually. In Singapore, where land resources are scarce, rooftop gardens such as Comcrop have turned to hydroponics to supply fresh greens to the local markets.

Technologies Powering Rooftop Farms

New technology was able to enhance efficiency and accessibility in rooftop farming. Hydroponics and aquaponics systems enable one to grow plants without using soil, because they use nutrient-rich water. It also becomes space efficient and saves a lot more water than the regular farming.

Vertical gardening maximizes space by growing plants vertically in stacked layers. Automation and smart irrigation systems have also been innovated that will ensure ideal usage of resources while saving labour.

Use of such light growing media like coco peat and perlite makes it possible to grow crops on rooftops without exceeding noticeable loads on the structure.

Challenges and Solutions

While rooftop farming provides many benefits, it is not without its drawbacks. One of the big concerns is that of building structural strength. Not all rooftops are suited or designed to bear the added weight of soil, water, and plants. Conducting a structural assessment and using lightweight materials will help mitigate these challenges. The availability of water can be another restricting factor in other cities due to limited and inconvenient irrigation, but the use of a rainwater harvesting system or drip systems is very effective in these scenarios. Zoning rules and building codes can indeed be huge restraints to rooftop farming in some cities; lobbying and awareness may be necessary to develop enabling policies for urban agriculture.

In India, Khetify and Pindfresh make it easy for city people to produce their own rooftop farms. Such initiatives don't only educate them on sustainable farming but also provide the wherewithal to kick-start the initiative.

A Glimpse into the Future of Rooftop Farming

With increasing cities and the threat of climate change that entails a decimation of agriculture to its very foundation, rooftop farming is going to take central stage in the future of urbanization. The governments are slowly attuning to this fact and are including green rooftops in smart city designs.

Educational ventures and workshops on urban farming encourage people to adopt this aspect. Governments, businesses, and environmental organizations collaborating can even create benefits, ensuring more of these types of rooftop farms.

Rooftop farming represents one of the most beautiful harmonies between the aspects of urban living and sustainable agriculture. In a way, it transforms unused spaces into productive ecosystems, enriching city life and responding to major global challenges. Thus, upon the convergence of this initiative by the individual, community, and policymakers, this long-held dream of an independent, sustainable city could finally be materialized. Through rooftop farming, fresh produce is promoted, but more so, it nurtures a closer contact with nature, reminding one that even concrete jungles can bloom into life.

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VADAYAR POTTERY

CRAFTING THE HERITAGE OF ANCIENT CRAFT IN KERALA



The Muvattupuzha River silently winds through the silent village of Vadayar, encapsulating tradition, culture, and craftsmanship in one of Kerala's most historically definitive practices: pottery. Deeply rooted in Kerala's history and hallmarked as a symbol of ancient, long-enduring practice passed down the tests of time, Vadayar pottery is that. Such traditional crafts remain largely ignored by the more popular art forms of Kerala, yet in its humility lies the pride and perfection of artisans who have been able to mould clay into functional and artistic pieces narrating the story of the bygone era.

In a world dominated by mechanized production, Vadayar pottery remains as a testament to the fine balance between human hands and earth. This article goes deep into the history, craftsmanship, and the importance of Vadayar pottery, as well as the plight of the artisans that preserve this ancient craft.

Historical Legacy of Vadayar Pottery

Vadayar is said to be more than a thousand years old and much more in terms of pottery art that had its roots in daily life as well as rituals in the people of Kerala. Pottery was part of the region's culture, mainly served as both functional and religious purposes. Earthenware had once stored all grains, water, and oils in the home as well as played important roles at temple rituals and festivals. Although less shiny, the handmade, unglazed vessels made in the studio of the Vadayar artisans were desired for their strength and practicality. Every house in Kerala had these pots in the kitchens and storerooms.

The pottery activity in Vadayar was always carried on by specific artisan communities. The art forms and styles, techniques, and know-how passed from generation to generation were strictly through apprenticeship. It was here that the potters of Vadayar started earning reputation for their strong,



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graceful, and useful products that met every day, often mundane life needs. Beyond their practical uses, these pieces of earthenware were symbols in religious ceremonies, used to prepare offerings and hold sacred substances within them.

Like most traditional crafts, Vadayar pottery has survived the times when the society has primarily shifted from an agrarian to an industrial mode of production. There are few spots in Kerala where this traditional art is practiced by devoted artisans with a sense of dedication.



The Craftsmanship: Transformed from Earth to Art

Creating Vadayar pottery is intricate as well as very labour-intensive. This all begins with the selection of clay—the right kind. Earth, rich in minerals and conducive for shaping which the potters dig out from the banks of the rivers and fields by hand. Then, the clay is prepared for moulding; it is mixed with water and allowed to set for many days till it becomes of the right consistency.

The Vadayar potters of yore made their clay into



whatever shape they fancied on a chakram or a traditional wheel. Again, it is not just the creation of the vessel but the exactness by which it has been well-balanced and symmetrical pieces. The potter's hands, now practiced for years, move rhythmically as if effortlessly to shape clay into pots, jars, and lamps. All pieces are done with care, emphasizing the potter's oneness with the material used and their domination of the wheel.

After having been shaped, the clay pieces are put out in the sun to dry. This is the most critical process since it will harden the pottery without cracking. After drying, the pieces are fired in traditional kilns which may be fired by wood or dried cow dung. The firing process that could take hours makes the clay strong enough to be used in everyday things. Earthen hues of reds and warm



browns give Vadayar pottery an unmistakable look.

Unlike the modern pottery that is often glazed or painted to be very ornate, the Vadayar pottery stands as earthy, natural, and even more down-to-earth-today than ever since its inception close to the ground. Simplicity in design is the beauty of the pot; each is a unique creation in the hands of every potter.

An Icon of Sustainability and Custom

One of the remarkable characteristics of Vadayar pottery is its sustainability aspect inherent in it. The entire process of procuring clay and firing the final product depends on materials available in nature and traditional methods of making pottery. Thus, at a time when synthetic goods, mass produced take over most of the market, Vadayar is a symbol of environmental-friendliness and a craft made. From using a minimum amount of material to minimal wastage, the handling of materials is such that the potters show innate respect for the environment.

This sustainable tendency is seconded by the ageless characteristic of pottery itself. In fact, this traditional Vadayar pottery with emphasis on usability and longevity contrasts with the throwaway culture of modern-day consumerism. The earthenware vessels, building for longevity, are stalwarts built to last-to remind one and all of the otherwise valid skill of old in a world run by chaos.

Apart from playing a functional role, Vadayar pottery is used to make the festive and ritual functions culturally more significant. The earthen lamp, in particular, plays a sacred place in Kerala's festivals since it lights temples and houses on occasions of Vishu and Diwali. The flickering of the flames from these lamps set in earthy clay grounds conjures up a sense of continuity between



past and present, within which the spiritual and material could be put together with great effect.

The Enduring Struggles of a Dying Craft

Vadayar pottery, with all its cultural significance and long history, has reached a crossroads of uncertainty. It has been in decline year after year; few youths nowadays have opted for pottery as their profession. The increased availability of plastic and metal-based cheap, mass productions has decreased the demand for real earthenware. Therefore, it is becoming harder for potters to sustain their livelihoods.

Besides these economic factors, the manual effort in pottery-making should not be undervalued. Relatively much labour has to be expended in procuring clay, shaping the vessels, and firing in traditional kilns—all of which are highly time- and labour-consuming. Generations younger than themselves found the promise of less labour-intensive professions took away the appeal for continuing the family craft.

But all hope is not lost, for government initiatives, craft fairs, and tourism programs touting traditional art forms are indeed finding renewed energy for revitalizing the pottery of Vadayar. Many artisans have simply resorted to devising new designs that suit today's consumers without losing the original charm of the craft. Also, many potters now offer

workshops and classes on pottery, giving visitors as well as locals a chance to enjoy playing in clay.

Reviving the Craft: Towards the Future

This ancient craft is being brought in sync with the present age and thus saving the art of pottery of Vadayar. Financial aid through cultural organizations and government offices is also helping artisans carry out exhibitions to popularize the craft and tourism efforts in Vadayar to promote the craft.

New channels of access will be found by potters to people greater numbers, through cyber space, in selling their products and by educating consumers about the cultural values of handmade pottery. It is a step bridge the gap between tradition and modernity where such initiatives are formulated to save Vadayar Potters on their living art site instead of just going as a relic in the dink of the past.

Tourism too has formed a part of this revival. With the new interest shown by tourists in local experience, Vadayar pottery is an experience that provides visitors to Kerala with the very traditional craftsmanship at work. Workshops and pottery-making experiences help tourists get in touch with the artisans so they can appreciate the sheer amount of skills and artistry involved in forming these timeless pieces of art.

The Shape of the Future in Clay Ends

Vadayar pottery grows out from the very strong roots of Kerala's cultural and historical heritage. Though it has survived for long centuries of change, its future is uncertain, but the artistry involved, the skill, and the devotion in this ancient craft do give hope for survival. People are increasingly realizing that handmade sustainable products have value, which may give a niche to the pottery from Vadayar to stand out in an increasingly authentic and traditional world.

The pots, jars, and lamps created here are not just objects but a reflection of a tradition that has been in existence since centuries ago and is still shaping lives today. In the context of preserving this craft for the future, it means that generations later will enjoy the beauty of transforming earth into art, and the Vadayar pottery legacy should live on.





NETTIPATTAM HANDICRAFTS

SHINING SYMBOLS OF KERALA'S CULTURAL GRANDEUR

Nettipattam - It is one among the handicrafts portraying Kerala's rich art culture. Though Nettipattam has been a part of decorating elephants as a traditional matter during grand temple festivals in Kerala, this form of handicraft has moved ahead and from its original purpose found itself in modern decoration, in contrast with maintaining its inherent cultural values. These are the copper headpieces plated with gold and were not used like an ornament for elephants, but they had forms that represented the gist of Kerala's ancient, centuries-old artistic and traditional grandeur.

As this craft makes its way across the world and becomes increasingly very popular, it remains an exclusive item for temple rituals, and thus has become a cultural artefact that reflects spirituality, craftsmanship, and Kerala's deeply rooted heritage. In the following article, the origins of Nettipattam handicrafts, craftsmanship, and its growing global appeal are deliberated upon, in the backdrop of stressing the importance of preserving a unique cultural legacy.

Origins of Nettipattam: Ritual Wears the Legacy Mantle

The elaborate ornamentation placed on the elephant's forehead is called Nettipattam, however. Among the important temples of Kerala, festivals like Thrissur Pooram and Arattupuzha Pooram are some examples where the elephants garlanded with the prominent ornate Nettipattam face the deity. Since the elephant is said to be the physical incarnation of Lord Ganesha, a significant role is played by these elephants in the processions conducted in temples all over Kerala. In addition to the majestic look of the elephants, the imposing Nettipattam itself forms an integral part of this decoration. It is considered that adorning the elephants with such golden headpieces confers divine honor and flaunts the grandeur of temple festivals, deeply rooted in Kerala's religious and cultural traditions.

The historical context of Nettipattam occurs with relevance to the temple rituals. Such have been closely related to the hereditary lines of royal families of Kerala. The traditional temple festival was as much an expression of festivity as religious obsequiousness. It was a celebration of the opulence and majesty of local chieftains. The larger the Nettipattam is, the larger was the prestige of the temple as well as that of its patrons. The intricate designs, the gold-plated brass

used, and the sheer size reflect artistic and economic investment in them.

The adorning of elephants with Nettipattam during festivals like Thrissur Pooram became an iconic image heralding Kerala's ability to amalgamate devotion with artistic expression. Glimmering Nettipattam, alongside brightly decorated elephants, majestic temples, and cheering crowds transformed these festivals into a visual spectacle that continues to attract thousands of pilgrims and tourists to this day.

The Masterpiece: Artistry of Nettipattam

Making a Nettipattam is no less a task. It requires one artistically and traditionally skilled person put together with a great deal of patience to create one single piece. This all begins by copper sheets being moulded into the shape of a semi-circular frame allowing it to sit over the head of the elephant. The entire engraved work along the pattern—the designs might be geometric, floral or else—embodies the style of Kerala's art. After the engraving work has been done, the whole piece is then plated with a thin layer of gold. This ornament's hallmark shine in fact lies in the very layer of plating.

The true individuality in the manufacture of Nettipattam ornaments lies in the extent of detailing that goes into every ornament. The rows of ornamentation on the surface are often scattered with very minute, gold-plated medallions, beads, or figurines that cannot be missed. The more complex the design, the longer the time taken to complete it. In some big and highly intricate Nettipattam pieces, it takes months to make them, which only enhances the skilled commitment and craftsmanship of the performers.

Traditionally, the craftsmanship of Nettipattam was often passed from one generation to the next. Such traditional specialties were maintained by some particular families. The methods of these pieces of



ornamentation have mostly remained unchanged over time and is left as such, which is essentially maintaining the craft authentic. But with this growing need for Nettipattam as decorative art, modern craftsmen have made changes in both traditional and new techniques to make the entire thing appealing to a broader audience.

Cultural Meaning: More than just Icons

While Nettipattam is first and foremost associated with temple elephants and great festivals, the importance crosses the function it plays as an ornate in itself. Elephants are revered in Kerala; they symbolize prosperity, power, and godliness. For the viewers, the eyes of an elephant sporting a dazzling Nettipattam adornment do not only feast the eyes but also bring upon a spiritual effect. The elephant is attired in silks and wears an encircling golden Nettipattam. It becomes a godly presence, leading temple processions with all its might graces and dignity.

Each Nettipattam is quite unique, with a pattern and design characteristic to the temple or deity it represents. This is especially well seen in the Nettipattam used for Thrissur Pooram in Kerala as it is the biggest and most ornate because of the enormous pomp that the festival holds. The elaborate piece normally comes along with the customary umbrella called Venchamaram, ornate fans, and ceremonial lamps, all combining to marvellously display the uniqueness of Kerala's temple culture.

Besides the religious hue, Nettipattam is also a reflection of the beautiful artistic heritage of Kerala. Their designs, workmanship, and even gold plating reflect the historical might of Kerala as a state that flaunts rich metalwork and art. This composition of Nettipattam, in a way, brings art into the folds of faith because the craftsman's expertise converges with the spiritual zeal of the temple culture.

A Global Appeal: From Temple Festivals to Living Rooms

In recent years, Nettipattam has gained a new dimension of popularity, moving beyond its role as a temple ornament to become a sought-after decorative item in homes and offices. Miniature versions of Nettipattam, complete with the same intricate designs and gold plating, have found their way into modern interiors as wall hangings and centrepieces, allowing people to bring a piece of Kerala's cultural heritage into their personal spaces.

This transformation from religious artefact to global decor item can be attributed to the growing appreciation for handcrafted products and the rising interest in Kerala's traditional art forms. Artisans, recognizing this demand, have started creating customized versions of Nettipattam, blending traditional designs with

contemporary aesthetics. As a result, the market for Nettipattam handicrafts has expanded both within India and abroad, particularly among those who appreciate its cultural significance and artistic value.

Nettipattam's rise in popularity as a decorative item has also provided a lifeline for many artisans who rely on this craft for their livelihood. By adapting to modern tastes and markets, these craftsmen are able to sustain their traditional skills while catering to a wider audience. Many artisans have even started offering workshops and live demonstrations, allowing tourists and art enthusiasts to witness the intricate process of Nettipattam-making first hand.

Challenges and Preservation of a Timeless Craft

Despite being one of the most popular crafts Nettipattam is nonetheless facing challenges. Of late, costly materials such as gilding of gold plating posed to be another significant challenge against the traditional artisans who follow this craft. The other significant threat to the survival of these authentic handcrafted Nettipattam is because of the mass productions and machine-made imitations.

However, there is a great effort to salvage it still. Various organizations and governments have taken initiatives to help the artisans financially and exhibit their products and market them locally and internationally as well. Many artisans now are also selling their products on e-commerce sites to customers directly, and thus the tradition goes on living in this digital wave.

Further, there is a new push toward an awareness movement regarding the cultural significance of Nettipattam and that traditional artisans need to be encouraged. These kinds of consumer education initiatives toward the history of every piece and the craftsmanship will ensure sustainability for Nettipattam handicrafts and that this unique craft needs to flourish further in the future.

A Shining Legacy of Kerala's Artisanry

Nettipattam, an ornament, is a symbol of something more than that; it is indeed a living heritage from Kerala's artistic brilliance and cultural panorama. From the temple festival events decorated with big elephants adorning the headpieces to the modern houses where miniatures are hung as an ornament of cultural pride, it continues to captivate and mesmerize with its beauty and craft.

In a way, this old craft remains emotionally linked to the traditions of yesteryear, which define temple culture in Kerala for so many centuries. The craftsmen creating such masterpieces are not only preserving a craft but are actually gifting the world with a part of Kerala's soul. Every Nettipattam, whether adorning the elephant's forehead in front of a temple or the walls of modern houses, carries a tale of devotion, artistry, and that indestructible cultural spirit shining across generations.



KASAVU AND CRAFT

THE LIVING LEGACY OF KERALA'S HANDLOOM HERITAGE

There's something magical about handloom garments, something that captures the very soul of Kerala. Handloom is not just a craft—it's a vibe, a rhythm woven into the fabric of the state's cultural heritage. But the sad truth is that finding original handloom garments in today's market has become quite the task. Most of what we see are power-loom imitations, and it's not hard to understand why. The number of skilled handloom weavers has dwindled significantly, and with fewer people to pass on this delicate craft, we are losing a part of ourselves.

This art reflects skill, patience and love. The process of handloom weaving cannot be fast-tracked. This requires patience, strong dexterity and an acute attention to detail. But as gorgeous and intricate their creations, sustaining off of it is difficult for many weavers. The profits, in turn, are lean and for too many have resulted in a quiet exit from the craft over time.

Balaramapuram: The Epicentre of Kasavu Craft

When you say handloom and Kerala, Balaramapuram comes to mind. The name of this place is now registered as the best handloom clothed in the state. But even here, the original handloom weaving skill is slowly dying out. The market has been overtaken by the power-loom products, hence very few craftsmen still craft in traditional patterns.

Though, rather than revealing how to tell handloom from power-loom first it should be clear what type of kasavu is used in these clothes. Often associated with the traditional gold zari thread that lines their hems, kasavu adorn Kerala sarees and veshtis. In the end, there are basically 4 types of handlooms based on how costly (or a number of rates) kasavu used.

The finest kasavu is woven with real gold and silver threads, which gives these garments their stunning lustre. The second tier uses copper threads, treated with chemicals to mimic the brilliance of gold, while the third type incorporates polymer-based kasavu that lacks the richness of the other two. A simple test can reveal the quality: rub a strand of kasavu on a stone—if it leaves a golden trace, it's the finest quality. If it leaves a brass-coloured streak, you're holding a medium-grade kasavu. And if it melts under a flame, well, you're dealing with polymer kasavu.

Interestingly, garments made from the lowest quality kasavu often curl up after they've been washed

and dried—a tell-tale sign that they were not woven with high-quality materials. On the other hand, the best kasavu garments, often costing upwards of Rs. 10,000, cannot be produced on power-looms because the fine kasavu threads would break. Only the skilled hands of a weaver can handle such fragile material. And this is why the cost of high-end kasavu garments remains steep—they are quite literally handmade treasures.

Kuthampully: Where Tradition and Weaving Thrive

If Balaramapuram is known as Kasavu, then Kuthampully is the heart of Kerala's handloom tradition. This picturesque village is nestled on the banks of the Bharatpuzha river. Thrissur-Palakkad border area It is home to famous weavers throughout India and abroad. Kuthampuli is more than a weaving village. But it is a community where traditions still exist in every home. Where the rhythmic sound of a loom sets the heartbeat of life.

The Kuthampuli people have lived and lived in shackles for generations. It's not just a job for





Handloom weaving in Kerala isn't just about the product—it's about the people. It's about the weavers who pour their heart and soul into their work, who see their craft not merely as a job but as a responsibility to their culture.



them. But it's a way of life. a form of worship Every family here is involved in handicrafts using kasavu saris, double dhotis, wraps, mangals and other textiles. These garments are intricately woven and are undeniably artistic. You'll find everything from delicate floral patterns to intricate designs inspired by wall art.

Once you visit Kuthampulli, you will see why their clothes are so revered. When you walk through the village you will find that every household is busy in spinning and weaving. During the festivals of Onam and Vishu, the village lights up with bustling activity. The loom never stops even though the work is hard. But weavers are driven by passion and pride in their craft.

Kuthampulli Handloom Industry Cooperative Society was established in 1972 with just over 100 members but today has over 800 members. The cooperative ensures the preservation of traditional weaving techniques by promoting innovation. Over the years, Kuthampully weavers have branched out into designer sarees, incorporating everything from peacocks and flowers to Krishna and kathakali motifs into their creations. The peacock design remains a perennial favourite, with customers from abroad clamouring for these intricate works of art.

Despite their fame, the weavers of Kuthampully don't lead lives of luxury. While their sarees are sold for anywhere from Rs. 1500 to Rs. 3000, the profits for the artisans remain modest. Yet, for these weavers, it's not about the money. The craft is a source of pride, a legacy passed down through generations.

Preserving the Tradition

The world of handloom weaving is at a crossroads. With the increasing demand for quicker, cheaper

alternatives, the power-loom has become a dominant force in the textile industry. But there's something irreplaceable about handloom garments, something that speaks to the history, tradition, and artistry of Kerala.

Handloom weaving in Kerala isn't just about the product—it's about the people. It's about the weavers who pour their heart and soul into their work, who see their craft not merely as a job but as a responsibility to their culture. From Balaramapuram to Kuthampully, the sound of looms still echoes, even if the numbers are dwindling.

As buyers, we hold the key to keeping this tradition alive. Understanding the difference between power-loom and handloom garments is the first step. When you buy kasavu clothing, you're not just purchasing a piece of fabric—you're supporting an entire community, a way of life. You're investing in history.

For those who want to experience the true spirit of handloom, a visit to Kuthampully is a must. The village, with its backdrop of paddy fields and the Bharatapuzha River, offers a glimpse into a world where tradition and craftsmanship still reign supreme. Walking through the village during the festive season, when the looms work tirelessly to meet the demand, is a reminder of the beauty that comes from hard work, dedication, and an unbroken link to the past.

So, the next time you're in the market for kasavu sarees or dhotis, remember the hands that wove them. Think of the weavers of Balaramapuram and Kuthampully, and the legacy they carry. By choosing handloom, you're not just making a fashion statement—you're supporting the artisans who keep Kerala's cultural heritage alive.

ARANMULA KANNADI

THE LEGENDARY MIRROR THAT REFLECTS KERALA'S HERITAGE



Aranmula Kannadi, a unique alloy glass from the small village of Aranmula in Kerala, occupies a special place in India's cultural heritage. This exquisite mirror is unlike any other. Made of metal and polished to perfection. Reflecting images with exceptional clarity, what sets Aranmula Kannadi apart is not just the craftsmanship. But it also has deep cultural and spiritual significance. It is considered a symbol of prosperity and divine grace. Its ownership is believed to bring good luck and ward off negative energies. For centuries, this glass has been a prized possession in Kerala homes and continues to attract art lovers and culture enthusiasts from around the world.

Origin of Aranmula Kannadi: Historical Heritage

The origins of Aranmula Kannadi are steeped in history. Folktales and Legends Aranmula, a picturesque village on the banks of the Pampa River, is well known for its cultural importance. This is mainly due to the ancient shrine Aranmula Parthasarathy Temple dedicated to Lord Krishna. While the mirror has its roots in the same temples and dynasties of Kerala.

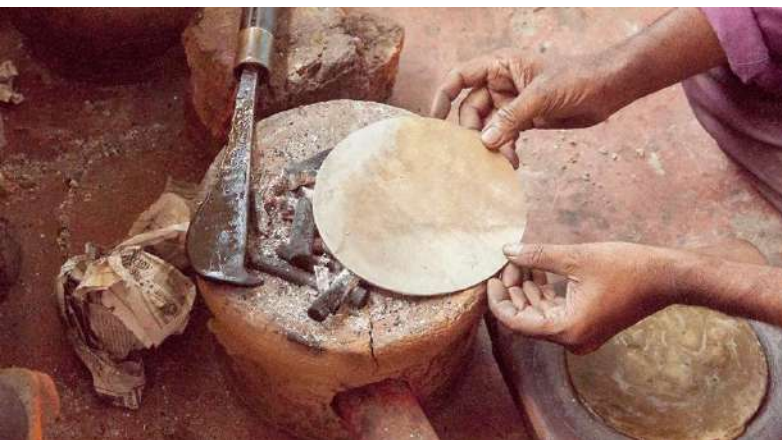
According to legend, the origins of glass began with

artisans working for the Travancore royal family. They were tasked with making special crowns for the temple deities. In this process They accidentally discovered a unique mixture of metals that resulted in a surface with a high lustre and reflective properties. Thus, the first Aranmula Kannada was born. It is believed that the mirror was given to the temple as an offering to Lord Parthasarathi (Sri Krishna) and to increase its connection with prosperity and divinity. The actual metallurgical composition of Aranmula Kannadi is a closely guarded secret. which has been

passed down from generations of artisan families. These families have preserved this rare craft. It maintains the tradition that each mirror is created with painstaking diligence. It symbolises the rich cultural heritage of Kerala.

Unique Craftsmanship- Aranmula Kannadi

It is extraordinary on all counts; what makes Aranmula Kannadi extra special is its peculiar method of production, having kept the secrecy of the method for quite a long time. Whereas the ordinary glass mirrors are made with glass and a reflector



coating applied to the backside, Aranmula Kannadi is prepared with a particular alloy of metals, polished to an extraordinary degree of smoothness. Only a few artisan families living in Aranmula knew the exact combination of metals used in the alloy, who had safeguarded the secret ever since ancient times.

The work starts with the preparation of the metal alloy, which is first heated until it reaches its molten state and then poured into a mould to give the shape to the mirror. After cooling, the surface would be polished many times with a mixture of natural ingredients and fine tools to get an absolutely perfect reflective surface. This painstaking process of polishing may sometimes take weeks, since even a minute defect has to be eschewed lest the mirror fails to show any properly reflected, undistorted image.

The frame is generally made of brass, with various designs that enhance its beauty. Traditionally, the mirror and its frame are made as one piece, highlighting the skill of the craftsmen who make them. Some of these mirrors are elaborately designed with floral patterns, others have minimal patterns, but all are examples of the skill and patience of the craftsmen who created them.

Other important features of Aranmula Kannadi are related to spiritual significance. The mirror is a sacred object; artisans often do rituals before commencing their work, seeking divine blessings for success. The mirrors are also offered in temples as a part of religious ceremonies, adding cultural and spiritual value to them.

Spiritual and Cultural Significance of Aranmula Kannadi: Actually, Aranmula Kannadi is not only for decorative purposes but also carries great spiritual significance in Kerala culture. It is believed that the mirror absorbs all negative energies and keeps evil away, and hence people gift these on any auspicious occasion such as a wedding or housewarming or any other important activity in life. In traditional households of Kerala, the Aranmula Kannadi is normally kept in the pooja room or at the entrance of the house for prosperity and to retain the positive vibe inside the house.

Apart from all its spiritual connotations, the mirror is also related to Sudarshana Chakra, which is given to the powerful wheel-like weapon of Lord Vishnu. The Sudarshana Chakra, in the metaphors of the Hindu mythology, was meant for eradication of evil forces, protection of righteousness; hence, Aranmula Kannadi is a divine object capable of offering protection and blessings to the owners.

Besides, the mirror occupies a pride of place in Kerala's cultural topography. Mirrors figure in most of the

traditional art forms and festivals of the state. During Onam, the most flamboyant festival celebrated by the people of Kerala, the Aranmula Kannadi is used as part of the decoration inside houses to signify wealth and aesthetic beauty. Exhibitions of Kerala arts and crafts do display the mirror, admired by international art collectors and lovers of culture.

Aranmula Kannadi and Kerala's Cultural Economy

Aranmula Kannadi is no mere cultural artefact; rather, it forms an integral constituent of the village economy in Aranmula itself. For all practical purposes, it is a family craft, considering that several artisan families are involved in its perpetuation. However, for whatever reasons, the laboriousness of the work plus the limited number of artisans has made Aranmula Kannadi a rare commodity indeed.

During the recent years, the Kerala government has realized the significance of keeping this ancient craft alive and extended both financial support to artisans and ensured promotion of this mirror in almost all national and international exhibitions. It finally earned the prestigious Geographical Indication tag, which legally protects its unique identity by ensuring that only the original mirrors crafted by artisans of Aranmula can be sold as authentic Aranmula Kannadi.

Despite all this, artisans are struggling to keep this craft alive. The time involved in production and the lack of interest from the next generation hinder the continuation process of Kannadi. However, through exhibitions, workshops, and government support, more people came to know about the cultural importance of Aranmula Kannadi, which continues to keep this ancient art alive for generations to come.

The Global Recognition of Aranmula Kannadi

With time, Aranmula Kannadi won international reputation for its exceptional craftsmanship and rich cultural heritage. The art collectors, museums, and cultural enthusiasts of the world evinced keen interest in acquiring this rare mirror. The mirror has been on display at various international craft exhibitions; among them are the famous Surajkund Mela in Haryana and the India International Trade Fair, besides drawing the attention of global audiences.

Aranmula Kannadi has also entered the homes of celebrities and dignitaries. Its rarity and spiritual value make it a much-coveted gift for any foreign

dignitary on a visit to India, thus allowing this mirror to play the role of a cultural ambassador of Kerala's rich heritage.

In recognition of its culturally and traditionally important benefits to the world, UNESCO declared Aranmula as a global village in 2004. It increased the prominence of the mirror on the world stage and helped the artisans acquire a larger audience, boosting the mirror's presence in the cultural markets around the world.

Challenges and the Future of Aranmula Kannadi

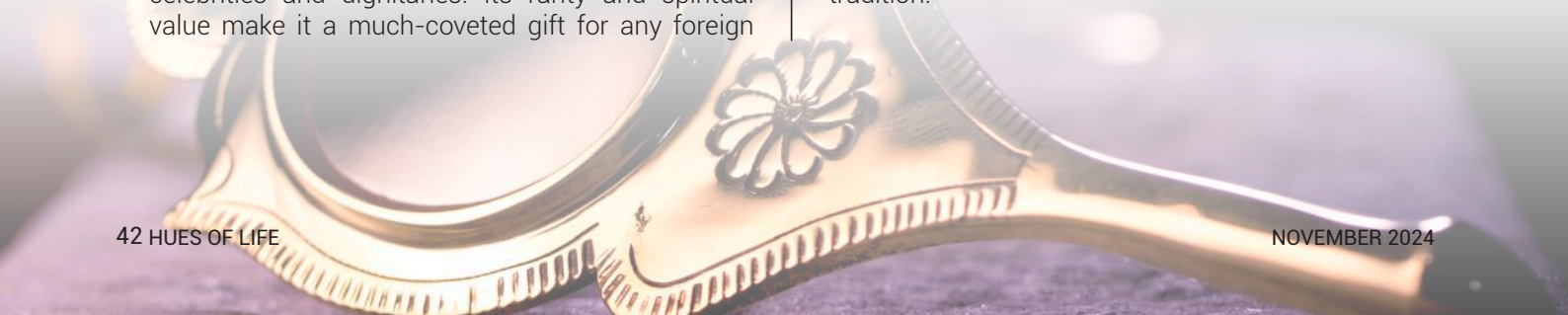
While Aranmula Kannadi still serves as the epitome of Kerala's artistry, its future is not quite free of threats. The shrinking fraternity of artisans, increasing costs of raw materials, and the laborious process of production together raise a question mark on its sustainability. Further, counterfeit versions of this mirror, sold at much cheaper prices, have also worried their creators because it doubts the authenticity and worth of Aranmula Kannadi.

Despite these, the mirror continues to reflect the ancient art of Kerala's craftsmen. Preservation and promotion of this unique art, from government and exhibition displays to international recognitions, also helped to ensure the continuity of the craft. Probably with more awareness of its cultural significance, the hope is that the younger generation will take a keen interest in acquiring this ancient art and preserving its legacy for generations to come.

A Timeless Treasure

Aranmula Kannadi is not a mere mirror; it contains the signature of Kerala in respect to its culture, handwork, and spiritual tradition. The peculiar metallurgical constitution of this mirror, apart from the minute and detailed artistry it goes through in its preparation, makes this a rare and invaluable object. Intertwined with historical mythology and tradition, Aranmula Kannadi reflects the images of not the physical but the soul of Kerala's rich cultural heritage.

Owning an Aranmula Kannadi is the possession of history, one of those timeless treasures that continues to inspire and intrigue people even today. As it begins to gain even more international recognition, the Aranmula Kannadi acts as a beacon for India's phenomenal craftsmanship and the timelessness of tradition.



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