

ROYAL ENFIELD

Sustainability Journal

2023-24



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Foreword

Presenting Royal Enfield's annual Sustainability Journal – a selection of stories from our sustainability and social mission journey through the year 2023-2024. An extension of the integrated EML Annual Report, which covers our projects in detailed metrics and analysis, this first edition has been envisioned to share the spirit of our work. It stands apart as a compendium of perspectives and voices across our projects, bringing to life our larger vision – being part of the Himalayan story.

It was about 75 years ago that the Himalayas became our spiritual home. The imposing terrain has continually tested both man and machine, shaping our journey and ambition. This connection has inspired us to partner with 100 Himalayan communities and to spark the largest rider-led movement of one million riders dedicated to sustainable explorations and to 'leave every place better.'

With a renewed commitment to the Himalayas, the Royal Enfield Social Mission began by understanding needs and issues on the ground, exploring dynamic partnerships, involving local communities and organisations with shared values.

Going beyond the regular CSR mandate, it looked towards building a roadmap that could tap into Royal Enfield's strengths, capabilities and huge circle of influence to make a meaningful impact. With the UNESCO partnership designed to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage of the Himalayas, Royal Enfield motorcycles allowed rider-researchers to reach far-flung regions to document living heritage. The project brought in new interest to the Himalayan communities and ways of life, often forgotten and far from mainstream attention. With the Himalayan Knot textile conservation project, which integrates artisanal heritage textiles into

capsule collections, Himalayan craftsmanship can now reach the world through apparel designed for the global rider community.

In the process, we discovered our role as a catalyst in building an ecosystem of collaborative action.

This increasingly holistic outlook ushered in projects and partnerships aimed at creating leaders of tomorrow. The past year was a year of many firsts, and included the beginning of the Western Himalayas Fellowship at our newly-launched Himalayan Hub in Theog, Himachal Pradesh. Along with our partnership with Green Hub in the Eastern Himalayas, these fellowships for conservation are nurturing a community of empowered youth who take control of their future, creating the first ripple that can build up to huge collective impact. The Sustainability Journal represents this

spirit of collaboration, featuring crowdsourced reflections and insights by contributors from within the Social Mission ecosystem. Each chapter will peel back the layers of our projects to reveal human stories and connections that lie at their core. We measure our success not just in milestones but in the shared journey with our partners – NGOs, community members, and other stakeholders. In line with our commitment to building a network for cross-learning, we keep our learnings open source and invite you to join us on this journey.

Thank you for being part of this annual tradition in the making. We endeavour to bring you more stories of success from the ground every year.

Sid Lal

Managing Director and
Chief Executive Officer, Eicher Motors Limited

Rebalance At RE

At Royal Enfield, purity of purpose is at the centre of our mission and values. Little surprise then that for more than 123 years, we have been in the pursuit of pure motorcycling – in search of a balance between man, machine and terrain. So, when it came to our Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) vision, we found inspiration in this purpose and extended it to a quest for balance between our objectives as a business, our responsibility to the community and the larger ecosystem that we all live in.

Sustainability is woven into everything that we do – our operations, our rides and our events and our work with the riding communities and in creating some of the world's most desirable motorcycles. Our consistent and conscious efforts of doing

business have allowed us to significantly reduce our emission footprint, making environment friendly choices and also caring for our people and the community that help us grow.

Over the course of this year, we have already taken some concrete steps towards this. Royal Enfield became the first OEM to conduct Recyclability, Recoverability and Reusability of parts in 2022 with the Meteor 350 and took it to the next stage by conducting the study on two additional motorcycles/platforms. During the process, we were able to improve the reusability and recoverability of parts to as high as 97 and 99 percent respectively. Building on this, we have just completed our first-ever Life Cycle Analysis (cradle to grave) of the Classic 350, which will help us improve our process further. For the first time ever, we have initiated a detailed ESG assessment for our key supply

chain partners, going beyond the basic requirements of BRSR regulations. Through this process, we evaluated the current strengths of these partners, identified gaps and subsequently shared improvement plans. Pre-empting the SEBI regulations for this year, we will cover ~80% of the supply chain in terms of value. Our aim is to collaborate with our partners towards a common goal of a sustainable supply chain, and through this joint exercise, improve our own processes.

In addition, our operations continue to be attuned to the growing need for resource efficiency. There has been a definite shift towards increasing our renewable energy footprint, incrementally improving process efficiencies, maintaining a positive water footprint, etc. We were also able to achieve our target of making our operations Zero Waste to Landfill (ZWL)

ahead of our committed timeline of 2030.

At Royal Enfield, we understand that decarbonisation represents just one aspect of the transformation needed to make the automotive industry sustainable. To succeed in the future, companies must embrace a comprehensive ESG agenda, encompassing an ever-growing range of environmental and social issues. We will continue to innovate, collaborate, and lead by example to integrate sustainable practices into every aspect of our operations. By doing so, we will not only ensure the longevity of our business but also contribute positively to the world we inhabit.

B. Govindarajan

Chief Executive Officer, Royal Enfield

Introduction

For those who live to travel, the road means more than just getting to a destination. It is a journey filled with stories, connections, and discoveries.

This first edition of Royal Enfield's Sustainability Journal is designed around the riding experience, placing the interactions between the explorer and communities at the heart of our Social Mission. As one navigates through its pages, they are taken through projects at familiar stops on popular travel routes in the Himalayas – Royal Enfield's 'Spiritual Home' and a region much explored and adored by our community of riders. Beyond the idea of being a land sacred to Royal Enfield, this is also a fragile and key ecosystem, which puts Himalayan communities at the forefront of climate risk. And, with less than 3% of the total CSR spending

in the country going to the Himalayan states, it was more than just familiarity that made us gravitate towards this region.

This book is not an exhaustive list of our projects and reports, nor a compilation of data, metrics and key performance indicators – all of which is documented in Eicher Motors Limited's Annual Report. This publication compiles stories and voices from across the Himalayas, giving a glimpse into our Social Mission design and thinking. It reflects the Royal Enfield Social Mission's intent to create collaborations, bringing together diverse ideas and perspectives for a holistic project design, to nurture a community-first approach and to get a wider audience interested in the idea of conservation towards safeguarding our Himalayan home.

For us, the quintessential Himalayan ride turns into a journey of opportunities for meaningful engagement with local communities and their rich natural and cultural heritage. At every turn of the wheel, you are brought closer to safeguarding the very landscapes and traditions that make every ride so special. It is here that we begin with the idea of Responsible Travel – to "Leave Every Place Better".

While there are many encouraging models of sustainable tourism, influencing behaviour for the adoption of these practices mandates a mindset change for both the traveller and the community. A lot of our work in Responsible Travel revolves around this; experiential set-ups like the Green Pit Stops or more direct interventions such as supporting homestays have set a new paradigm in how the traveller and their Himalayan hosts enrich each others' experience. Our community-run facilities are designed to communicate a simple yet profound idea: as a rider and traveller, you are a guest in someone's home. This mindset shift transforms the travel experience.

The Great Himalayan Exploration, our partnership project with UNESCO to document and safeguard Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) practices, underscores this. While helping us understand the nuances of ICH, Tim Curtis and his team at UNESCO have always emphasised a community-first approach. The Great Himalayan Exploration is not a community-based ICH inventorying project. The documentation process, by virtue of involving travellers, through hand-picked rider-researchers, creates a wider appreciation of the Himalayan communities, their wisdom and their heritage. The intimate setting of

another's home, sharing a meal from the same pot and listening to their stories becomes a humbling experience for the traveller. At the same time, these stories can travel far and wide through the visitors, inspiring many and demonstrating how small interactions can play a significant role in supporting communities and safeguarding these ICH practices.

Even as we build a national inventory for ICH practices through the partnership with UNESCO, we aim to foster knowledge exchange and maintain the sense of cultural continuity that enables communities to pass on their knowledge to future generations and across geographies. With Himalayan Knot, our textile conservation project, we have foregrounded access to markets in the design, with our Apparel team at Royal Enfield stepping in as the first customer. Much like other projects, storytelling and documentation are essential to the Knot, spotlighting and ensuring the longevity of sustainable traditions and techniques.

The Knot is a collaborative effort where we become an ally for the community-based organisations and the designer-mentors who also bring in creative innovations for wider market access to craft practitioners. We have been lucky to find our tribe here – a cohort of designers who share a similar passion for craftsmanship in the Himalayas.

Even as we worked on our projects, we continued deliberating on our mission, interrogating the remit of its potential impact and the global context, while holding the image of a future that our coming generations

would inherit. With the backdrop of climate change, securing livelihoods and ensuring well-being for communities in their own homes, right where they belong, became a recurring theme. With climate adaptation and mitigation in mind, we conceived the idea of the Himalayan Hub, a collective learning & innovation centre for Himalayan communities to become more climate resilient.

We have begun with the Western campus of the Hub going live in Theog, Himachal Pradesh even as the projects in the Eastern campus in Tezpur, Assam continue to thrive. A large part of our initiatives in the Hub are designed for youth from across the Himalayan region, who are supported through long-term fellowships, grants, living labs etc. The goal is to create an ecosystem of change-makers rooted in their communities, working in conservation action in solidarity.

At a glance, our Social Mission projects may appear diverse. Upon closer inspection, one can see how they work towards well-being and resilience while representing different facets of conservation and communities. In the high Himalayas, the Social Mission supports Ice hockey, which has emerged as a strong binding force that brings locals from different backgrounds to unite simply for the love of the game. Overshadowed by other sports in the mainstream, Ice hockey's underdog spirit is what speaks most to Royal Enfield – both of whose initial journeys have been nurtured by a small but passionate group of enthusiasts.

In many of our projects, like our road safety initiative – Helmets for India, art takes centre stage as a medium to inspire change.

With this programme, helmets become a canvas for self-expression and creating awareness around safe riding behaviour.

Much before CSR spending became a mandate, we have been engaged with communities on our education project in and around Alwar, Rajasthan, where we had a manufacturing footprint back in the day. Similarly, Eicher's three-decade partnership with Dr. Shroff Charity Eye Hospital goes beyond regular programmatic support to look at governance and institution building. In the last few years, similar engagements with communities near our manufacturing units in Tamil Nadu have informed our Local Area Development programmes.

Our work in the community space is supported by an active commitment to drive the sustainability agenda in our business operations. With purposeful longevity built into our DNA and a cohesive sustainability strategy in place, the leadership ensures accountability towards articulated goals.

This book is a labour of love and a reflection of a journey that has been non-linear. Our progress has been made possible by the conviction of our partners and a spirited team. We are a work in progress, constantly learning and evolving our mission, with our communities at the centre. This is a call to riders and travellers everywhere to join the movement to act as catalysts for positive change.

Bidisha Dey

Executive Director, Eicher Group Foundation



A man in a grey hoodie is riding a black and white motorcycle, herding a large flock of white and brown sheep across a dry, hilly landscape. In the background, another person in a red shirt is walking. The terrain is rocky with sparse green shrubs.

ROYAL ENFIELD SOCIAL MISSION

BY 2030, 100 HIMALAYAN COMMUNITIES
AND LANDSCAPES ARE RESILIENT AND
THRIVING EVEN IN THE FACE OF CLIMATE
CHANGE. ALONGSIDE, A MOVEMENT OF
ONE MILLION RIDERS IS CATALYSED TO
EXPLORE SUSTAINABLY AND REGENERATE
THE LANDSCAPES THEY RIDE THROUGH.



Green Pit Stops

*Built for the community,
by the community.*

*Planned on popular travelling
routes, bridging ecological
principles with mindful travel.*

An initiative to create livelihood opportunities for the local communities, while providing environment friendly amenities *to travellers, such as access to clean drinking water, sanitation, waste management, local and hygienic food, charging facilities, and service check-points.*

These centres are managed by Self-Help Groups of women and *serve as a platform for local communities and travellers to interact.* These pit stops are designed sustainably, using local material and architecture and also act as a showcase and marketplace for local handicrafts, art and culture.



The result of a joint initiative between Royal Enfield, the Leh Development Authority, Kharu Nambardar and the local community, Camp Kharu is Royal Enfield's first milestone **Green Pit Stop** in Ladakh – the first of many, planned on popular travel routes. A short drive from Leh city on the Leh-Manali highway (NH3), Camp Kharu is en-route to some of the most scenic tourist destinations in Ladakh, such as Pangong, Tso Moriri and Hanle. Nestled in the Kharu market, the two-storied 1,500 sq.ft archetype rammed earth architecture, stands on the banks of the Indus river, overlooking the majestic Zaskar range. Travellers can stop for rest, refreshments, tourist information – such as Intangible Cultural Heritage experiences, a list of homestays, including ones supported by Royal Enfield, riding routes and more. The facility has been operational since August 2023, with all proceeds reinvested in the community. From homemakers to entrepreneurs, a dedicated Self-Help Group of local community women from Kharu has been supported with entrepreneurship and hospitality training to run the

facility. The women, trained in bookkeeping, cooking, baking and other skills, showcased their progress at Motoverse 2023, where they put up a pop-up stall offering visitors a selection from the Camp Kharu menu. On two other occasions, the women set up shop and catered to a diverse audience, boosting their capacities while building confidence in their ability to run a successful business. At the launch of Royal Enfield's textile conservation project, the Himalayan Knot, in Mumbai, they worked alongside professional chef Prateek Sadhu, bringing flavours of Ladakh to more than 6,000 attendees. Closer home, they opened a pop-up in Leh at the inaugural Royal Enfield Ice Hockey League, which was attended by a large audience of over 6,000 local community members.

The construction of a second Green Pit Stop in Babeli, Himachal Pradesh is in full swing, and is set to open its doors later this year. Built in the traditional Himachali *Dhajji* style, this facility has been designed to showcase local crafts and food produce of the region. The Green Pit Stop will be entirely women-led, benefiting more than 1,000 women from 125 SHGs across eight panchayats. Once identified, based on skills, need and interest, these women will receive the requisite training, facilitated by Cluster Level Federation, Nayi Umang. Royal Enfield has been actively identifying sites for the construction of its first Green Pit Stop in the Eastern Himalayas.

Camp Kharu: Royal Enfield's First Green Pit Stop



Situated along the ancient Silk Route amidst Ladakh's majestic terrain, *Kharu lies at a crossroads, connecting it to various parts of Ladakh and the lands beyond.* It is witness to people traversing this landscape for trade or pilgrimage, bringing and exchanging goods and ideas over centuries. At its core sits Camp Kharu, an ode to the transformative power of the Himalayan journey.



all-weather facility
enabled through solar
room heating

painted cornices in
traditional Ladakhi style

hand-painted artwork of four
canvases by artist Jigmet
Angmo, presenting the built
heritage and natural formations
in the landscape of Ladakh

sustainable Ladakhi-style
rammed earth architecture

sheep wool and acrylic
cushion covers from Jungwa
Foundation, an organisation
in Ladakh that works with
weavers from Changthang

panoramic views of the
Zaskar range and the
flowing Indus River, which
has influenced the development
of settlements and trade routes
in Ladakh over centuries

70% sheep wool carpets
from Jungwa Foundation, an
organisation in Ladakh that
works with weavers from
Changthang

Architect's Note

Harmony by Design

Sandeep Bogadhi

The author is an architect and the founder of Earthling Ladakh, a design/build studio based in the Nubra Valley. He pursues every one of his projects in alignment with his core beliefs in respecting local ecology, employing appropriate construction methods and climate-responsive strategies, and analysing critical regional aesthetics.



Kharu serves as a critical node for travellers journeying by road through various regions of Ladakh. The primary objective was to design a demonstrative facility for traveller conveniences, underpinned by ecological principles, which would also benefit the local community. The programme encompasses public conveniences with a water filling station, aimed at discouraging bottled water sales, a café managed by the local community, and a display area. In Kharu, the site provided was a narrow strip of land along the Indus river on the south with an approach road on the north connecting to the highway. The site allowed less visibility of the building from the access/north side. However, sitting on the edge of a cliff it opens up to a striking view of the Hemis monastery and the Indus river, contrasting with other buildings that turn their backs on the river.

Architecturally, the building harmonises with its surroundings, acting as a portal that frames the context. The narrow, unremarkable path from the Kharu junction introduces visitors to a blank façade that integrates with the mountainous backdrop. Upon entering the building, a high ceiling with expansive glass windows unveils the Indus River. A wide open space, the ground floor, designed to be a lounge, has evolved into an exhibition space and accommodates different community activities. The design is architecturally restrained yet welcoming, effectively serving its intended function. The facility is universally accessible, featuring an open-to-sky courtyard leading to the café on the first floor. The café, with its strategically designed large south-facing windows, compels an appreciation of the surrounding landscape.

Rammed earth construction is used, as earth is locally available, which provides thermal insulation and is an ecologically responsible material in the region. The North facade is blank with no fenestrations other than the entrance with an airlock, blocking the colder air from the north. Solar-powered apricot blowers heat a rock bed beneath the plinth, radiating warmth throughout the building. The plumbing pipes, too, are integrated within the bed to prevent freezing during winter. The architectural design embodies the practice's ideology, creating a structure that authentically reflects its context and engages in a dialogue with the site. Here, the building recedes into the background, allowing the natural surroundings and its purpose to take centrestage.

The Women of Camp Kharu

Camp Kharu exudes Ladakhi hospitality and the aroma of homemade delicacies. The café is operated by local women who find fulfilment in nurturing their dreams through this establishment even as their lives extend beyond these walls...

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Much before the doors of Camp Kharu are open for the day, usually at 8:00 am in summer and 9:00 am in the winter months, the women who run the facility have already been on their feet for hours. All the members of the dedicated women's Self-Help Group (SHG) trained to operate Camp Kharu come from in and around Kharu, with their homes at a distance of four to eight kilometres. They rely on the goodwill of their neighbours and community members to reach their workplace. Urgain Dolma, the Secretary of the SHG, demonstrates how she gestured for a car to stop and give her a lift to work this morning. On some days, she takes a bus or may even walk the distance.

For the six women of the SHG, every day begins with prayers. The serenity of this morning routine quickly switches to an unending hustle and bustle of a typical work day. For some, it may involve getting the kids ready for school, cooking lunch for the rest of the family, going to the fields to gather vegetables and tending to their cows for fresh milk to sell in the market, or running their general store. While the women work in rotating shifts throughout the week, there is hardly any time to engage in other interests.

Chemat Lamo, the President of the SHG and the one with a creative streak, shares how she misses tailoring, weaving, knitting, designing clothes, and training other women in these skills as part of her role in the SHG. However, in between Camp Kharu and managing a handicraft store specialising in traditional table painting, she finds contentment in being able to provide quality education to her two young daughters. This sentiment echoes among the other women as well, some of whom have only studied up till primary school. Access to education



becomes increasingly difficult during winter months in Ladakh, when the extreme cold keeps students at home. The challenge is felt even more sharply in villages tucked away between gorges, hidden by rocky mountains and isolated further by weather and road conditions. In Kharu village itself, the effective literacy rate, which excludes children aged 6 and below, is 66.45%, according to the 2011 census of India. At that time, Kharu had 42 households.

Despite having to halt their education early and join the workforce to make ends meet, these women defy convention, never permitting circumstances to define their future. Trained by Royal Enfield in bookkeeping and managing all aspects of the business – from sourcing produce to greeting guests – they take charge, envisioning a future where they fulfil lifelong dreams of running a cafe of their own. Their earnings from other sources would once be just enough to cover basic necessities. Today, their salaries, only expected to grow with the official launch of Camp Kharu and rising visitor numbers from recent media coverage, have made them major contributors to their household income, earning them respect among family and neighbours.

Before the rush of riders and other travellers passing through Kharu, perhaps on their way to Pangong or to Hanle – depending on which direction they take at the fork in the road, the women bask in a moment of sisterhood. Kunzang Lamo, a farmer and shopkeeper



outside of Camp Kharu, brings butter tea for everyone and joins the circle on the floor. A bit of teasing, some serious murmurs and laughter fill the air, as the women continue shelling peas to be added to the Chu-Tagi, a kind of local pasta in Ladakh, served in warm broth.

From the classic Mok Mok or Momo to heartwarming soupy delights, Camp Kharu brings the best of a Ladakhi kitchen in its most delicious form. “It’s the magic of Kitchen King masala!” one of the women jokes, giving credit to one ingredient that makes it to many of the savoury recipes. While trained in baking and cooking as part of the programme, anyone who has had an authentic Ladakhi meal at Camp Kharu can sense the special touch of a seasoned cook and careful attention that makes each meal a special one.

“I never thought I would see the ocean in this lifetime!,” says Urgain Dolma, one of the members invited to open a pop-up shop in Goa at the Motoverse event venue. A few of them had also been selected to work alongside professional chef Prateek Sadhu at the launch of Royal Enfield’s Himalayan Knot in Mumbai. More than it being their first time in these cities, for most, it was their first time outside Ladakh. Even as they tapped into their inner child while playing by the seaside, the women displayed their business acumen, setting up shop right at the exit gate towards the culmination of Motoverse, making sure they made sales till the very end. One need not look far to realise the source of this grit and determination.



"An absolute delight to visit Royal Enfield's Green Pit Stop. Great food, great hospitality and great ambience. Can't wait to be back."

- Gul Panag

ADDRESS ONLY

Camp Kharu, Main Market - Kharu,

Kharu Block, District - Leh, UT


Ladakh

PIN CODE

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THE HIMALAYAN KNOT



A textile conservation project with built-in market linkage, The Himalayan Knot is a large collaborative effort to bring together Himalayan artisan communities, conservation specialists, craftspeople, and designers to conserve pastoral lands and spotlight craft practices through design interventions and communication campaigns. These initiatives are aimed at creating livelihoods, stopping out-migration from the Himalayas, ensuring environment sustainability and preserving the living and natural heritage of the region.



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Named after the proverbial eternal knot in Himalayan imagery and the practical knot used in daily life in the highlands, the **Himalayan Knot** is Royal Enfield's textile conservation programme and a tribute to the intrinsic artistry and timeless heritage embedded in the fabric of the Himalayas. It is a large collaborative effort to bring together artisanal Himalayan communities, urban designers, creative practitioners, social organisations, and the rider community – all knotted together by a common thread of a Himalayan story and human creativity.

The Himalayan Knot was launched in November 2023 at Mukesh Mills, Mumbai in an immersive event marked by conversations on Himalayan crafts, culture and communities. It unveiled three capsule collections, each spotlighting a different heritage textile from the Himalayas. Local artisan members were engaged in hands-on collaboration with renowned designers to create these capsule collections, tailored for the rider community and other customer segments. While rooted in living legacies and heritage crafts, these aim to generate consistent income for the local communities. It is an effort to pass on their intangible cultural heritage to future generations – and not just amongst their kin, but beyond through the global rider community. The capsule collections are available to order on the Royal Enfield apparel store, with all proceeds going back to the community through partner organisations.

As part of the Himalayan Knot project, Royal Enfield also provides infrastructure and community training through local groups, cooperatives and NGOs. Beyond sharing their artistry, the communities reveal a wealth of traditional wisdom that has been central to maintaining the fine balance with their natural surroundings. Royal Enfield has also partnered with organisations like the Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF) and Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) to conserve pastoral lands and support Himalayan communities – the first to face the effects of climate change. Learnings from such partnerships are embedded into the textile conservation projects. For instance, the Himalayan Knot collection with Looms of Ladakh cooperative first spotlighted sheep wool before the coveted pashmina, as sheep are considered less destructive to pastures than pashmina goats.

Royal Enfield Social Mission works with 145 weavers and embroiderers from five communities across Assam (Bodo, Rabha, Rajbonshi, Assamese, Bengali) and 200 women weavers from two communities across Changthang and Kargil in Ladakh. Additionally, through the ongoing work with Pata Society, 40 women trainees from two remote villages of Lahaul acquired basic skills of traditional carpet weaving, including pattern design, knotting techniques, and quality control. With partner organisation CEVA, infrastructure repair and upgradation of handloom centre is underway at Pangti, Himachal Pradesh.



Himalayan State of Mind

Bandana Tewari

The author is a lifestyle journalist, TEDx speaker and sustainability activist who has given key-note speeches all across the world about compassionate consumption, sustainability and spirituality, with a special focus on Gandhi Fashion and the need for sartorial integrity. Formerly the editor-at-large as well as the fashion features director of Vogue India, she is a member and contributor at Business of Fashion and a part of #BOF500. Currently, she is an advisor at the Global Fashion Agenda, Copenhagen Fashion Summit.

The Himalayan Knot made me ask a simple question - is there something called a 'Craft Mind?' Over the years of writing about craft, I have realised that a particular type of person loves handmade textiles. My mother was my gateway into this kingdom. As a child, I went shopping with her for saris. I noticed how her fingers traced the meandering weaves, the feel of buttis against a sheath of translucent Bengal muslin, and how she stepped out of the shop into the sunshine to ensure that the black was indeed the deepest indigo.

I met with the same spirit when I moderated a session with my Himalayan textile heroes, especially anthropologist and cultural researcher

Dr. Monisha Ahmed and Jennifer Liang of ANT - exemplary women who have dedicated their lives to forging not just a visceral bond but an emotional one with textiles that are genuinely our threads of life. If one reads between the lines, they say the nuanced language of textiles reveals the state of our humanity. As I took the stage to interview these experts at the fabulous Royal Enfield celebration of The Himalayan Knot in Mumbai, I remember nervously whispering to Shobha George, the founder of The Extra Mile and the curator of a life-altering trip to Ladakh we undertook together, "I am so embarrassed to share the platform with such experts." I said, "How can I possibly sound intelligent!"

And she said: "Just ask ordinary, curious questions, and you will get extraordinary answers." And we did.

Whether it is pashmina from Ladakh or Eri and Bodo weaves from Assam, each Himalayan craft presented in a spectacular display at the Royal Enfield event in Mumbai was embedded with heartfelt tales of ordinary people from regions that have been marginalised for generations because the Northeast was not 'mainland' India.

I can speak of this truth because I am a Nepali woman born in Sikkim - which was often mistaken for a foreign country by my friends from the rambling metropolitan cities of New Delhi and Mumbai. Physically, we, the 'Northeasterners' looked very different; our cuisine was deliciously pungent, and we had to work extra hard to be acknowledged as equals as we made our way into 'Indian' cities from the faraway hills and mountains of the Himalayas. We affected a kind of demureness, a certain inner calm, even a deliberate invisibility to not incite unwanted attention that sometimes came in the way of jibes about how we looked, how we spoke, how we dressed; the list goes on.

When I touch the textiles from the Himalayas, I immediately relate to the Himalayan state of mind that has, like its craft, met with extraordinary challenges to belong to the larger, bolder Indian landscape. Indian textiles, no matter which part of the

country they are from, have different languages, especially those woven with the waft and weft of human ingenuity, requiring immense meditative patience and practice. We also know how dramatic and powerful handicrafts are from states like Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu or Gujarat.

But the language of Himalayan handwoven fabrics is not only soft, but it's also almost secretive. They are not created to overwhelm the senses. They are a gentle invitation to savour creativity that doesn't intend to outshine, outdo or outrun any other. But suppose you have the patience to read the tales of the Himalayan waft and the weft. In that case, you will find rich stories of joyful coexistence with nature, conquering fears of the rural-urban divide within India, and the challenges of being excluded from the mainland for a long time in Indian history.

In my humble opinion, the Himalayan weavers are the perfect example and perhaps exemplary custodians of the Craft Mind. When you run your fingers through the cloth, you are reminded of the kindness of its people and the dignity of their rural mountain lifestyle. We are indoctrinated to read between the lines. The Craft Mind makes us read between the threads.

The Common Thread

Stories of artisanal weavers and keepers of traditional knowledge. From the highlands to the foothills, and from the Western to the Eastern Himalayas, these women are connected by their community resilience and craftsmanship.



LOBZANG LAMO | Weaver, Ex-CEO at Looms of Ladakh

Lobzang Lamo's journey began in the serene village of Stok, nestled 15 km from Leh city, near the Stok Kangri glacier and the historic King's palace, guarded by a towering 71-foot Buddha statue.

Lamo grew up herding sheep – a common practice essential for producing Nambu, a traditional woollen textile in Ladakh that could be exchanged in barter systems for assistance in farming. The degradation of grazing lands, increased dog attacks on sheep, and a decline in sheep population gradually led to the decline of this age-old practice. Over time, with greater exposure to education and more employment opportunities, fewer people were dedicated to agriculture and sheep herding.

Lamo's earliest memories of weaving were of observing her mother, as she wove and knit clothes. *She recalls her mother heading to the market in Leh to get dyes, with which she would hand dye the clothes that she had made. It was under her guidance that Lamo learned the craft, which would pave the way for a new chapter in her life.* In 2015, she joined a self-help group (SHG) that brought together women from across

the Chushul Valley to revive traditional crafts and provide sustainable livelihoods.

In 2017, this initiative led to Lamo and four other women from Stok and neighbouring villages starting 'Looms of Ladakh', which was known as 'Laxal' in its early days. Starting with knitted products like gloves and sweaters, the group soon expanded to include woven items such as ponchos and shrugs. In their operations, Looms utilises pashmina, sheep wool and yak wool equally, ensuring balance in production. Lamo, exhibiting her profound understanding of sustainability and the changing market demand, emphasises how it's crucial to work with all kinds of textiles equally as limiting products to a certain textile could shrink the use of another.

Lamo's leadership was pivotal in the organisation's growth, culminating in her election as CEO in 2020. During her tenure, Looms of Ladakh expanded its membership from 23 to over 400, gaining recognition and support from partners like Royal Enfield for further training and resources. The organisation's success was bolstered by increased demand and a growing realisation among women in her community of the value of the loom.



DOLMA CHONZOM | **Weaver at Looms of Ladakh**

Dolma Chonzom is one among the 400 women who are a part of the Looms of Ladakh Women Cooperative.

Kharnak is the land of her ancestors, her birthplace, and her home. And Kharnak is tough. In winter, the temperature plunges below -30 degrees centigrades. Dolma Chonzom spent most of her days without continuous electricity and running water, gave birth to her children Jigmat and Gyaskit, and devoted half of her life to her cattle at Changthang. Why? Because there's no place like home.

Year after year, Dolma Chonzom and her family would see friends and family sell their cattle to the trader who would make annual visits on his heavy-load capacity trucks. 'Not this year' the family would be firm in it's resolve to stay behind and

rough it, until the same time of the year came along once again. With increasing pressure to provide more exposure to her children, and also to tend to their health, Dolma Chonzom eventually sold their cattle and left for Kharnakling, a settlement in the outskirts of Leh. Here, Kharnakling means 'an area where people migrating from Kharnak live'.

The transition has not been without its challenges. As the Changpas adapt to a life that is less nomadic, they endure in finding ways to safeguard their traditions. Still deeply rooted in their heritage, they carry lessons the land has taught them, irrespective of where they are.

They may not be as nomadic, but their ways of resilience and resourcefulness have remained the same.



CHEENA BRAHMA | Weaver, Trustee at Aagor

Cheena Brahma, a dedicated weaver from the Bodo community in Assam, serves as a leader at Aagor Weaves, an initiative by The Ant (Action Northeast Trust) that involves over a hundred women weavers, largely from the Bodo tribe. Cheena was born in Khagrabari, near the campus of The Ant, and commutes daily from her village to work at Aagor.

Cheena attended school in Gomor Gaon, close to The Ant. After marrying a man from the same area, she initially stayed at home, handling household chores and weaving for personal use. The community traditionally uses Eri silk, known for its extraction process that preserves the silkworms' lives, and cotton to create the traditional wear – 'Gamosa' for men and 'Dokhona' for women.

Weaving, primarily done by women, is a skill passed down through generations. Cheena learned from her mother and now shares this tradition with her sister and sister-in-law.

She became part of Aagor in 2002, after which her craft became a source of

livelihood. Aagor Weaves has evolved into a large-scale weaving business, offering not only a place to weave but also a hub of knowledge exchange. Despite two decades of experience, Cheena continues to learn alongside her fellow weavers, with whom she has overcome challenges, such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused a significant drop in orders.

As a community leader and management trustee at Aagor, Cheena manages staff, conducts field visits, and performs quality checks. She went on to address the language barrier by learning Hindi to better communicate with clients nationwide.

Balancing her responsibilities at home, in the fields, and at work, Cheena embodies the tough work-life balance many women in her community face. She also notes that women from surrounding villages work at the centre, some choosing to stay full-time to increase their income due to limited employment opportunities at home.



"It was around 2007 when we got our first motorised vehicle ever. I was the first woman rider on a motorcycle and people had never seen a woman on a motorcycle before. Then I started getting my other women colleagues to ride as well. It rains a lot here, so motorcycles (are needed) because there is no other way to reach places."

Jennifer Liang, co-founder of The Ant (Action Northeast Trust), on how motorcycles have given new mobility to the women she works with

The Himalayan Knot Collection

The first set of the Himalayan Knot capsule collections, purpose-made for the Royal Enfield rider, spotlighted sheep wool from Ladakh, and Eri silk and Bodo weaves from Assam. It brought together partnerships and collaborations between ÉKA by Rina Singh and Looms of Ladakh for the sheep wool collection; The Action North East Trust (The Ant), Assam and Sonam Dubal for the Eri Silk collection; The Action North East Trust (The Ant), Assam and Countrymade by Sushant Abrol for Bodo Weaves.



Royal Enfield x EKÁ For Looms of Ladakh

“GO NORTH”

Designed by studio EKÁ for the Looms of Ladakh, the Himalayan Knot Ladakh sheep wool collection integrates traditional sheep wool practices with heritage-inspired hues and fresh silhouettes.

Looms of Ladakh is a herder-artisan-led fashion brand of 400 women member-owners with a mission to upskill traditional artisans, nurture sustainable practices, and

safeguard the textile traditions of Ladakh, all while crafting exquisite collectables that resonate with global audiences.

“The narrative with this collection draws parallels between the Person, the Place and the Product. It reimagines the explorer on horseback, who dons a pashmina shawl and wool robe, navigating the harsh and beautiful terrain of Ladakh — no different than a rider in their Royal Enfield x EKÁ for The Looms of Ladakh apparel...”

Rina Singh, founder and creative director, label EKÁ



TEXTILE & RIDING MAP OF LADAKH

- Landmark
- Riding route
- Terrain

Map not true to scale



THE HIMALAYAN KNOT

TEXTILE AND RIDING MAP OF LADAKH



Leh

Leh, a district in Ladakh, famed for scenic beauty and Buddhist monasteries, offers diverse traveler experiences—local cuisine, textiles, architecture, and rich culture, making it Ladakh's vibrant hub.



Kushok Bakula Rimpochee Airport

Kushok Bakula Airport, India's highest commercial airport at 3256m amsl, provides vital winter connectivity when Leh-Srinagar and Leh-Manali highways close due to snow.



Khardung La

Khardung La, known as K Top, was the world's highest motorable road until recently, reaching 18,380 feet. Linking Leh to Nubra Valley, it boasts Himalayan views and tough terrain for adventurers.



Nubra Valley

Nubra Valley captivates with its sand dunes, picturesque landscapes, Bactrian camels, and monasteries, reflecting its historical importance as a key stop on the ancient Silk Route.



Chushul

Chushul, pivotal in the Changthang region, supports Pashmina production from the Changra Goat, along with wool from sheep and yak. Women excel in spinning, weaving, and handicrafts in this area.



Umling La

Umling La, at 19,300 feet, overtakes Khardung La as the world's highest motorable road, reached via the majestic Hanle village, a must-visit for adventurers.



Hanle

Hanle houses the Indian Astronomical Observatory, a prime Milky Way viewing site. It hosts the Himalayan Chandra Telescope and is constructing the world's second-largest Cerenkov telescope, MACE.



Tso Moriri

Tso Moriri, nestled in Korzok village's Changthang region, ranks among India's most sacred high-altitude lakes, treasured by Ladakhis. As the largest within Indian territory, this serene azure lake spans 19 kilometers in length and 7 kilometers in width.



Pangong Tso

Pangong Tso, Ladakh's gem nestled in Changthang region at 14,270 feet, claims fame as the world's highest saltwater lake. Its vibrant blue waters create a stunning contrast with the arid mountains. Spanning 160km, one-third lies in India, two-thirds in China, making it a top destination for riders and tourists.



Tso Kar

Tso Kar, Ladakh's second Ramsar site, earned the nickname 'White Lake' for salt deposits on its shores. Nestled in Rupshu Valley, it appears white from a distance, situated 15,280 feet above sea level, approx. 160 kilometers from Leh and 50 kilometers from Tso Moriri in the Changthang region.



Kharnak

Kharnak, a Changthang Plateau nomadic community, skillfully crafts essential items from local wool. Women spin and weave sheep and

yak wool into fabric, bags, and rugs, while men create ropes, blankets, and rebo tents from yak hair.



Zaskar

Zaskar, a Buddhist region in southern Ladakh, allures adventure seekers with premier Himalayan trekking routes. Spiritual and cultural tours also thrive here, offering attractions like the Drang-Drung Glacier, Chadar Trek, traditional dairy products, and the revered Phuktal monastery.



Dha Hanu

Dha's Brokpa people, distinct with floral headgear and sheepskin coats, are said to be pure Aryans, possibly descendants of Alexander's army. Unlike most Ladakhis, they have Indo-Aryan features, lighter skin, and high cheekbones.



Turtuk

Turtuk, nestled between the Karakoram Range and the Himalayas, is among India's northernmost villages near the India-Pakistan line of control. Once under Pakistani control until the war of 1971, it's now a popular destination for its distinct beauty and culture.



Namgyal Palace

Namgyal Palace, built by King Senge Namgyal, known as the Lion King in the 17th century, is Ladakh's largest palace. Today, it's managed by the Archaeological Survey of India and a top tourist attraction in the region.



Shanti Stupa

Shanti Stupa, a top Ladakh attraction, draws 3- 4L annual visitors. It's prized for its religious significance and panoramic views, offering breathtaking sunrise and sunset vistas.



Central Asian Museum

Leh's Central Asian Museum, a four-story stone structure inspired by a historic Lhasa mansion, stands on an old caravan camp site. It explores Leh's Silk Road trade history, featuring Ladakh, Chinese Turkestan, and Tibet rooms.



NH1

NH1 is amongst the oldest national highways. It is the track between Srinagar and Leh that has been in existence since medieval times. It used to be the lifeline of Ladakh, connecting with other parts of India before the Leh-Manali road opened. It was a prime trade route for many centuries and passed through the Zojila pass over the Great Himalayan range.



NH3

NH3 runs through the upper reaches of Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh. Owing to its scenic beauty, as one crosses high elevation mountain passes such as Baralacha La, Nakee La, Lachung La and Taglang La NH 3 is the most popular route among riders visiting Ladakh.



Royal Enfield x Sonam Dubal
For The Action Northeast Trust

“HOMECOMING”

A reimagination by designer Sonam Dubal with The Action Northeast Trust a hardy silk collection. Experience ease, comfort and insulation, hallmarks of Eri silk, in a well-rounded collection made with empathy for the intrepid traveller. The Ant (Action Northeast Trust) is an NGO based in Chirang District, Bodoland, Western Assam, where it has developed a weaving centre for women weavers of the Bodo tribe.

“With this capsule collection, we have crafted a range of apparel in natural dyed colours, inspired by the elements of life—earth / wind / water/ fire / ether. Detailing like hand block printing, patchwork, thread textures and coloured striped accents evolved organically from the environment, as intuitively as the deep connection one feels with the region as they travel to the interiors of Assam and witness the interconnectedness of people and nature.”

Sonam Dubal, creative artist & fashion designer, Sanskar by Sonam Dubal

TEXTILE & RIDING MAP OF NORTH-EAST

- Landmark
- Riding route
- Terrain

Map not true to scale



THE
HIMALAYAN
KNOT

TEXTILE AND RIDING MAP OF NORTH-EAST



Arunachal Pradesh

This state, with 80% forest cover, is known for its rich biodiversity and cultural legacy. It has 26 major communities with distinct cultural, spiritual and weaving traditions. It shares international borders with Bhutan, China, and Myanmar, adding to its geopolitical significance.



Meghalaya

Sacred groves, living root bridges, waterfalls, crystal clear rivers and the world's highest rainfall – this is Meghalaya - literally 'abode of the clouds'. Key communities, like the Khasis, Garos and Jaintias have a deep connection to the land and forests with rich cultural practices, including weaving.



Nagaland

This state's rich cultural heritage, distinctive weaving traditions, stunning landscapes, warrior history, and festivals make it ideal for exploration. 17 key communities have their own traditions and practices. Weaving materials include hand spun cotton, eri silk, local nettle and bark fibres.



Guwahati

Northeast India's largest city, is a vital trade and transit hub along the Brahmaputra River. The Kamakhya temple draws people from across the world. It's a gateway to wildlife sanctuaries, textile-weaving regions, and has an international airport.



Bongaigaon

This oil town in Western Assam, borders Chirang district, renowned for Eri and Muga silk, and cotton weaving, mainly by Bodo weavers. The UNESCO World Heritage Site, Manas National Park, and the Raimona National Park are close by.



Mirza-Bijoy nagar

Near Guwahati airport, this area is known for Eri and Muga silk and earthen utensils crafted by the Kumars and Hiras. Here, the weavers, rearers and spinners are from the Rabha, Bodo and Assamese communities.



Sualkuchi

Once a quaint weaving village, is now the 'Manchester of Assam,' renowned for Muga, Pat, and Eri silk 'mekhela chadors' and apparel. While home-weaving wanes, it remains a prominent commercial weaving hub.



Tongla

Situated in the Udalguri district, skilled Bodo weavers excel in Muga and Eri silk rearing and handloom weaving.



Nameri

Located in the Himalayan foothills, this area has expert Mising and Bodo weavers who produce mostly cotton and acrylic textiles on backstrap looms. The area is known for the Nameri National Park, rafting on the Jia Bhoroli, and the nearby tea tourism destination, Balipara.



Tezpur

This town near Nameri National Park on the Brahmaputra's north bank, is a historic location where weaving was integral to cultural life. It is one of Assam's airport towns.



Lakhimpur

Renowned for Muga, Tussar, Pat, and cotton weaving, this district has the Mising, Chutia, and Ahomiya communities that play a significant role in its textile traditions.



Dhemaji

Silapathar, Jonai, and Dhemaji in the verdant Dhemaji district are hubs for Muga silk, Pat silk, and acrylic weaving by the Mising community.



Dibrugarh

A tea industry hub influenced by diverse communities, Ahom weaving traditions once yielded vibrant and intricate textiles here. Dibrugarh is Assam's eastern most airport town.



Majuli

The world's largest river island, offers rich cultural legacy from the sattras - Vaishnav monasteries, 'Bhaona' mask- making and weaving artistry of the Mising community. They work with Muga, Eri silk, cotton, and acrylic threads. Majuli can be accessed via Jorhat.



Jorhat

Known for tea and once-vibrant weaving traditions, Jorhat offers intricate and colourful Mising textiles. Here, home-weaving is somewhat dwindling.



Diphu and Hamren

Skilled Karbi artisans dominate in these hillside towns of the Karbi Anglong district. They are renowned for cotton and acrylic weaving, especially traditional woven bags.



Haflong

This picturesque hill town in Dima Hasao district anchors the weaving traditions of the Dimasa community. Weaving is done with Eri silk, cotton, and acrylic materials. The Dimasa are also known for Eri silk worm rearing.



Kathigorah

Cachar district is known for the silk and cotton weaving of the Kachari community, considered to be the first to rear silkworms and produce silk. The quilted 'laisingphee' weave here is renowned. Despite some decline in weaving, the legacy persists.

Royal Enfield x Countrymade
For The Action Northeast Trust

“COUNTRY ROAD”

Inspired by the motorcycling way of life, Countrymade's Bodo weaves collection finds a perfect match in the Bodo style of weaving to express elements of a quintessential country ride. Discover trees, clouds, hills, roads and Royal Enfields come to life using traditional Bodo motifs.

“Through weaving threads of tradition with the pulse of Royal Enfield's spirit, we found harmony in heritage and innovation; hand in hand with the Bodo community; we crafted pieces that resonate with timeless tales and roaring journeys.”

Sushant Abrol, fashion designer and founder, label Countrymade



Threads That Travel

Dr. Monisha Ahmed

The author is the Co-founder and Executive Director of Ladakh Arts and Media Organisation, Leh. She is an independent researcher, writer, and curator whose work focuses on art practices and material culture in Ladakh, a region she has been visiting for over three decades. Her doctoral degree in Social Anthropology, from Oxford University, was on the textiles of the nomadic pastoralists of Changthang, and developed into the book “Living Fabric: Weaving among the Nomads of Ladakh Himalaya” (2002). She has co-edited Ladakh – Culture at the Crossroads (2005), and collaborated on Pashmina – The Kashmir Shawl and Beyond (2009 and 2017), and published several articles on textile arts of the Himalayan Buddhist world. From 2010 to 2016, she was Associate Editor of Marg magazine.

“You can’t be a Changpa if you don’t know how to tie a knot”, Tashi Yangzom berated her Leh-returned son as he attempted to help her bring the ewes and goats together for milking. She beckoned each animal with the call they recognised, then looped and knotted the rope around their necks till they formed two lines, silently facing each other as she started milking the animals. Once she finished, she gently tugged at one end of the rope, unravelling the knots and letting the animals roam free.

The knot is essential to the daily lives of the inhabitants who reside in the Himalayas, whose vast and varied terrain has supported diverse communities,

cultures and livelihoods for centuries. It is used to keep their animals tethered or to tie a saddlebag around their back when going on long journeys, to hold their tents in place or the knot in the belt that holds their robes together in the absence of buttons. But beyond its mere function, knots, and by extension the threads they hold together, talk about family and gender relations, cultural and social practices, rituals and spirituality.

It is the same across the Himalayas, where textiles are an integral part of the lives of the inhabitants who reside here. While weaving is the predominant textile craft practised throughout the region,

others include appliqué and patchwork, felt making, and braiding. Textiles are embellished with embroidery or dyed in vibrant hues of natural colours. They are used primarily for clothing, and as covers and containers. The range of fabrics used extends from everyday homespun materials produced from locally available resources of cotton, silk and wool to elaborately patterned prestige garments made from trade textiles such as brocades, ikats and velvet. As there is a global shift to

‘fast fashion’, it is also important to recognise other, more sustainable ways of producing and using cloth.

As Royal Enfield traverses the landscape of the Himalayas and endeavours to conserve textiles in the region, each year they will present the work of individual projects and the designers who have supported their collections. Mindful of the land they live on or pass through, they quietly reveal processes that inform the choices we make.





THE GREAT
HIMALAYAN
EXPLORATION



A partnership project with UNESCO, The Great Himalayan Exploration draws rider-researchers to document the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) practices of the Himalayas. *It also nudges travellers towards mindful travel. Awareness on the ICH practices is created through publications, audio-visual content and creative showcases.*



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UNESCO and Royal Enfield joined hands in 2022 to discover, document and promote the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of India— a journey that began in the Himalayas with **The Great Himalayan Exploration**. The partnership was announced in an immersive showcase titled “Journeying Across the Himalayas”, inviting visitors to experience the culturally charged atmosphere of pristine lands through a curated art exhibition and a multi-sensory experience of the tastes, sounds, sights, and wisdom of Himalayan communities. Presently, 100 ICH practices have been identified across the Eastern Himalayas and another 100 in the Western Himalayas. Of these, 21 practices from the Eastern Himalayas were documented during the pilot ride of The Great Himalayan Exploration in 2022— an impactful start to the partnership’s objective of inventorying the heritage of Himalayan communities that risk being soon forgotten.

The second edition of the ride took place between October 2023 and March 2024,

with 45 practices being documented across eight states in the Eastern Himalayas – Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura and the northern regions of West Bengal. This was done through 12 explorations by rider-researchers who had been carefully selected over the course of the year. In the process, the programme engaged 15 Himalayan communities, including the Wancho, Rai, Mizo, Ao Naga, Gurkha, Adi, Galo and others. The programme also engaged 80 members of the motorcycling community, including influencers and journalists, to participate as rider-researchers, thereby nudging them towards mindful exploration.

A batch of 35 rider-researchers underwent an immersive capacity-building session, conducted on October 7, 2023 at UNESCO House and Bikaner House, both in Delhi. Covering a wide range of topics, UNESCO Director Tim Curtis, one of the foremost experts on ICH, addressed the rider-researchers, helping them understand the significance of ICH and its intersection with climate change.

Actor Adil Hussain took the stage with filmmaker and founder-director of Dusty Foot Production, Rita Bannerji, for a training session on how to effectively connect with local communities. The event was also leveraged as a creative showcase of the ICH practices that had been covered in the first edition of The Great Himalayan Exploration.



THIS SECOND EDITION OF “JOURNEYING ACROSS THE HIMALAYAS” RETRACED THE DOCUMENTATION BROUGHT BACK BY RIDER-RESEARCHERS, WHILE EXPLORING INDIGENOUS WAYS OF LIFE THAT SIT AT THE CUSP OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND ICH. IT BROUGHT THESE LEARNINGS TO A DIVERSE AUDIENCE SET, INCLUDING MEMBERS OF THE MEDIA, MOTORCYCLING COMMUNITY AND STUDENTS. OVERALL, THE THREE-DAY CREATIVE SHOWCASE AT BIKANER HOUSE SAW CLOSE TO 1000 VISITORS IN PERSON AND REACHED A MUCH WIDER AUDIENCE THROUGH DIGITAL PLATFORMS.

A Himalayan Symphony: Riders for Heritage Safeguarding

Tim Curtis

The author is the Director and Representative
UNESCO regional office for South Asia.

UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, is globally recognised as the UN agency mandated to protect cultural and natural heritage. One important area of UNESCO’s activity focuses on safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), otherwise known as living heritage. This includes practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, that communities recognise as a part of their cultural heritage. It usually encompasses oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, knowledge and practises concerning nature and the universe and traditional craftsmanship. UNESCO’s 2003 Convention for Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage is an international treaty signed by 183 countries, also serving to raise awareness of its importance at the local, national, and international

levels. While living heritage is central to community identity and diversity worldwide, it is often prone to various threats, including the effects of climate change we are facing today.

In an effort towards safeguarding the ICH of Himalayan communities, including ancient practices and knowledge systems related to the mountain environment that play an important role in the resilience of present and future communities, UNESCO in its ongoing partnership with Royal Enfield has entered a new phase of concerted action. Culminating in the ‘The Great Himalayan Exploration’, this remarkable journey through the Himalayas has begun discovering, documenting, and promoting India’s Intangible Cultural Heritage.

It aims to give Himalayan communities a platform to share their own stories and

to create an alternative repository for their living and intangible legacies, which are increasingly impacted by the changing climate and times. Transmitted from generation to generation, living heritage is a source of community-based resilience, which can be a driver of sustainable development in many ways. Programmes such as these help to educate people, as they unfold the creative genius and adaptability of local communities. Intangible Cultural Heritage is inextricably linked to the ways of living of communities that have endured over time. It helps them to maintain social cohesion, live in a positive relationship with the natural world as well as provide a vital source of revenue and decent work.

Royal Enfield offers riders the chance to engage firsthand with these communities, experiencing their living heritage and returning with documented knowledge. The goal is to collaborate with 100 communities to build resilience and foster a movement towards responsible travel and tourism practices. Collaborating with UNESCO, this initiative ensures a repository for this valuable documentation of traditional practices along the foothills of Himalayan states in India.

This collaboration is unique since it combines two very different sides of heritage conservation and climate action, demonstrating the interdependence between safeguarding culture and environmental

sustainability. The Paris Agreement adopted at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in 2015 emphasises that adaptation action ‘should be based on and guided by the best available science and, as appropriate, traditional knowledge, knowledge of indigenous peoples and local knowledge systems.’

One such fascinating practice identified on this journey is a unique form of papermaking known as Mon Shugu or Pui Shugu. Monpa villagers trek up to ten kilometres through the rugged slopes of Tawang to gather the bark of the ‘shugu sheng’ shrub. This isn’t just any paper. Mon Shugu is steeped in history, with Buddhist scriptures written on it preserved for generations in sacred monasteries. What makes this practice remarkable is its sustainability. Unlike industrial wood-based paper, Mon Shugu is created without cutting down trees. The process, passed down through generations, is low-energy, cost-effective, and completely free of chemical additives. The organic properties of Pui Shugu give the paper an impressive resilience against wear and tear. This traditional craft not only preserves a cultural legacy but also serves as a model of sustainable living, demonstrating how ancient knowledge can contribute to modern efforts in combating climate change.

Another compelling example of a sustainable practice is found with the Water Warriors of Spiti Valley in the freezing Himalayan desert. These

folks are a model of communities that have been facing challenges for ages due to extreme cold conditions. Their local knowledge, and respect for their past can be observed, for example, by their elaborate irrigation channels and rainwater harvesting techniques. In order to catch water for human consumption, valuable meltwater is captured through gravity-fed canals and strategically-placed containers. The application of these processes can help in formulating the existing water management strategies that are necessary, given changing rainfall patterns due to climate change in the Himalayas. If temperatures continue to rise, accompanied by erratic rainfall, the water security of this area will be reduced. It is through understanding and engaging with the traditional knowledge systems that one can enhance water security and enhance resilience to extreme weather events.

Indigenous to the Changthang region of Eastern Ladakh, the Changpas are one community facing the severe effects of climate change. In these highlands, they endure a harsh, high-altitude environment with temperatures plunging below -30 degrees Celsius in winter. Traditionally nomadic herders, they move their livestock between high summer pastures nourished by snowmelt and lower plains in the coldest months. Central to their livelihood is the production of high-quality pashmina wool, a significant economic activity in the region. The age-old practices

of the Changpa tribe, like rotational grazing areas and reserve pastures for emergencies, help maintain the ecosystem and prevent overgrazing. By rearing a mix of animals that each graze on different plants, they make the most of their pastures. This traditional knowledge has supported their way of life for centuries. Despite their historical ability to adapt to harsh climatic conditions, the Changpas now face unprecedented challenges. Their centuries-old knowledge systems for managing pastures and coping with extreme weather are proving inadequate in the face of accelerating climate change and geopolitical pressures. The tribe's resilience is being tested as never before, threatening their traditional nomadic lifestyle and the delicate ecological balance of the Changthang region.

At UNESCO, we are dedicated to protecting and safeguarding the world's cultural heritage. We must collectively ensure that generations to come can enjoy and benefit from the living traditions that connect us to each other, to our past, and through this, with our future. And this is where our work with Royal Enfield comes in. Of course, we are documenting such practices to safeguard them - particularly those endangered by climate change.

At the same time, our work is to spotlight the wisdom in these traditions so that others can become aware of and appreciate their value.



Monpa lady in prayer, Bomdila, Arunachal Pradesh. Photo Credit: Sunil Rajagopal

In the end, sharing knowledge and promoting collective responsibility is what will help us create a sustainable future. Here, we can envision it as one where culture informs our efforts towards a future, where both the environment and communities thrive through lessons from living traditions handed down by past generations, so that this might help us all reconcile our relationship with the natural world.

Lawkyntang: The Sacred Forest of Mawphlang

An aura of enchantment envelops the mind as one crosses the sprawling meadows leading to the dense sacred forest of Mawphlang, known by the Khasis as ‘Lawkyntang’. It still remains a mystery why the forest never grows out of its boundaries and into the adjoining grasslands – locals say that any attempt to grow trees beyond has always ended with the plant dying.

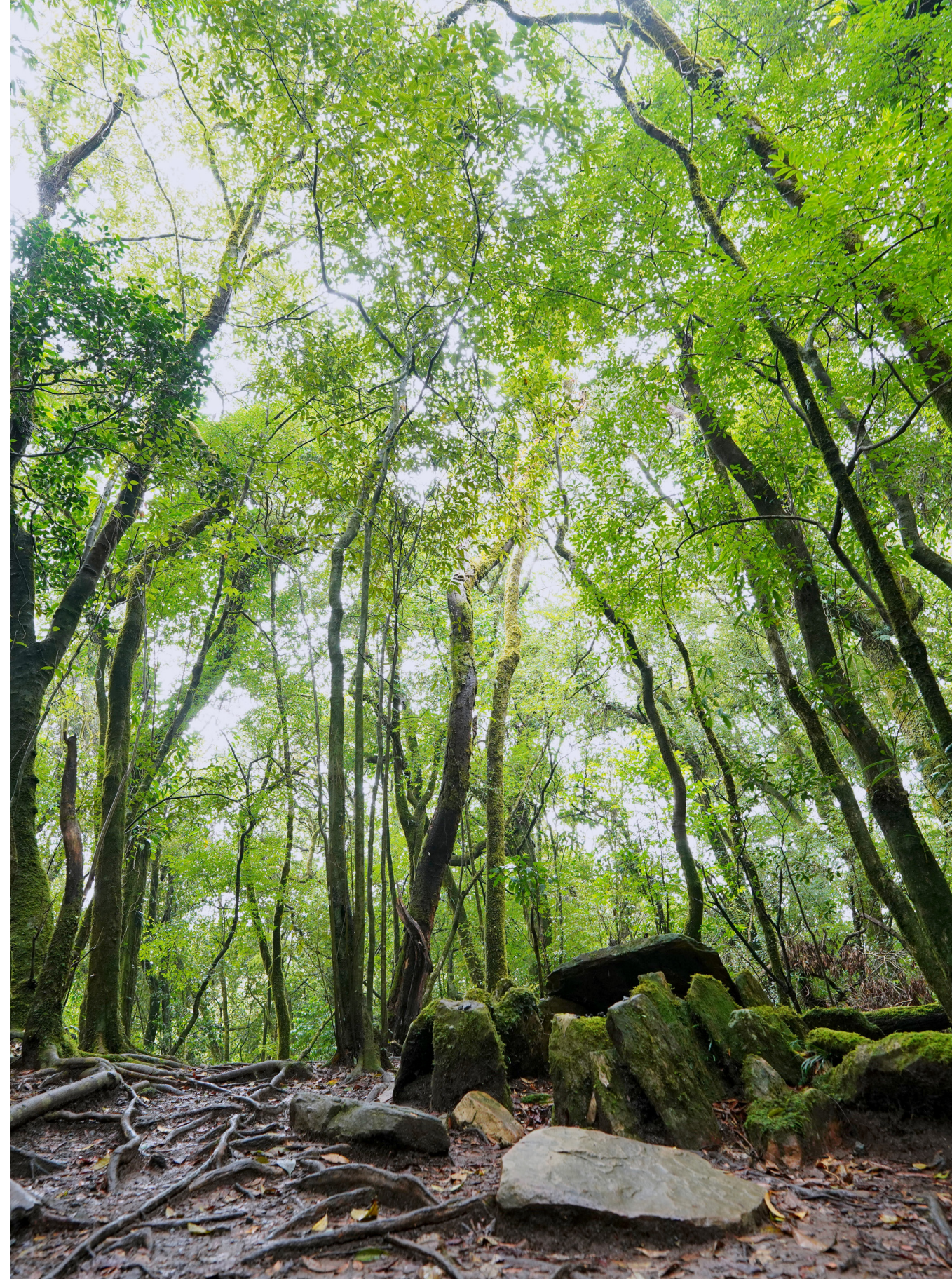
This ICH practice was documented during the first edition of ‘The Great Himalayan Exploration’ in September 2022.

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Spread over 78 hectares, *Lawkyntang* is the only “sacred forest” among the many smaller sacred groves in Meghalaya. According to the Department of Forest and Environment, there are about 125 sacred groves in the state that are under the guardianship of clans

and communities. From the Western Himalayan states of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh and further south in the Western Ghats, there are innumerable sacred groves across the country. These reservoirs of rare flora and fauna have been protected for centuries by tribal communities, and each grove is traditionally associated with a presiding deity — as is the case with the sacred groves of Meghalaya.

The *Lawkyntang* is said to be protected by *Ryngkew*, also known as *Basa* or *Labasa* – the forest deity who looks after the well-being of the village community and punishes evil-doers.



Local inhabitants have long preserved the sanctity of this forest, ensuring that it remains untouched. They warn visitors that nothing must be taken out from it — especially not for profit, lest the guardian spirit be angered. Cutting of trees, and plucking of flowers, fruits, or twigs are strictly prohibited. The gravity of these rules could be summed up in the age-old tale often narrated by designated guides about the army officers who tried to take out wooden logs from the forest. While a variation of the legend goes that the truck carrying the logs met with an accident that proved fatal, another less-morbid version suggests that the truck suddenly refused to move from its place until the logs were unloaded and put back into the forest.

Many of the stories about reckless visitors and sceptical locals attempting to transgress the forest laws would end with the protective spirit taking the shape of a leopard or a venomous snake, followed by mysterious death or injury. However, the guardian deity is sent by the gods only to protect against human abuse and is thought to be just and fair. For those who maintain good behaviour and enter without any ill intention, the spirit offers his protection.

Such stories of divine intervention and curses that befall miscreants are reinforced by centuries of

oral tradition, wittingly or unwittingly keeping the force of conservation strong among the Khasis...

Preserved in all its glory, the forest holds many plant species, including the *Engelher diaspicata*, commonly referred to as the “butterfly plant” due to its dried leaves appearing like flying butterflies when ruffled, *Rhus chinensis* (Chinese Sumac or Nutgall), *Schima wallichii* (Needlewood tree), *Lithocarpus dealbatus*, *Myrica Esculenta* (box myrtle or Bayberry) and various kinds of lichens.

However, the star attraction in the forest is the *Castanopsis Kurzii* trees and Khasi pine trees that form a dense canopy overhead and act as hosts to orchids, ferns, mushrooms, pipers, climbers, and a variety of mosses.

Apart from rare plants, mushrooms, and trees, the forest is also home to old coronation and sacrificial sites where the Khasi Syiem (traditional chiefs or kings) and Lyngdoh (ceremonial priests and leaders) held their meetings.

These are also the sites where new chiefs were anointed, and are marked by monoliths that stand today as reminders of a dignified past, even as the forest creeps around them.



Ruaithehna: Community Feasting in Mizoram

As the old Mizo saying goes, “Sem sem dam dam, ei bil thi thi”, which roughly translates to “Share share live live, eat alone die die.” Whether folklore or everyday life, food – and more specifically, sharing food – has remained integral for the Mizo community since pre-modern times, when brave men would hold lavish feasts after their hunt to feed an entire village – a prerequisite to be named an esteemed ‘thangchhuahpa’.

This ICH practice was documented during the second edition of ‘The Great Himalayan Exploration’ in December 2023.

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The origin of the Mizo harvest festival “Chapchar Kut” is often associated with the practice of hunting, calling for a variety of meat dishes to continue being served as the main features of modern feasts, known locally as *ruaithehna*. But perhaps, the most-awaited feast in today’s Christian-dominated Mizoram would be the Christmas *ruaithehna*, followed closely by New Year’s. Be it large-scale festive

events or private celebrations, traditional community feasts are still performed with the same spirit and anticipation, with only a few rules being bent.

“Chaw i ei tawh em?,” (Have you eaten?) Neighbours peering over walls and acquaintances passing by are seen greeting each other in the early hours at Mizoram. Perhaps, these pleasantries evolved as a response to the collective memory of the disastrous famines of the past, when even warring chiefs put behind their enmity, working together to feed the community. In fact, the origin of the more formal greeting “Chi-bai” points to the local food history characterised by generosity even in the face of hardship and scarcity. With “chi” or salt being

an extremely rare commodity at the time, and the quintessentially Mizo dish “bai” being incomplete without this ingredient, together, “Chi-Bai” implies that a Mizo would readily serve up the most valuable ingredient in their home as a tribute to their guest.

On the day after Christmas, residents of Khatla, like in every other locality of Aizawl, teeter down the steep slopes towards their church in groups – some with friends and others with family members. At the venue, local delicacies are being prepared on an industrial scale – large pots of pork, beef, chicken and fish curry simmer away as women seated on the floor chop seasonal vegetables

for salads and other side dishes and chutneys. Leading up to Christmas, all families pool in money for the feast and volunteers organise themselves to prepare, cook and serve the food. In villages and localities where feasts are still prepared the traditional way, designated cooks, known as ‘fatus’, are made up of men – a peculiarity in Mizo society where women usually take up the role of cooking at home. These ‘fatus’ have been trained by the generation of expert cooks before them and use this occasion to pass on recipes and training to younger men. Some neighbourhoods in urban areas, such as Aizawl, have adopted the buffet style of feasting – with local restaurants and catering



businesses promising to sell nostalgia by serving the food on plantain leaves and drinks in cups made of bamboo. Nevertheless, feasting is still done the old way in plenty of localities and in rural areas – several people sit on their haunches around a large plantain leaf or a large plate filled with rice, laden with a mix of various meats and vegetables and stew. Everyone – irrespective of social status – eats from a single large plate together in their groups. While eating with such closeness illustrates the spirit of sharing, some say that there are more practical reasons behind this practice. According to a local, aluminium plates are a relatively new introduction in

the hills and scarcity forced the people to share plates, which eventually became an enduring tradition. One humorous lady says “Maybe the parents decided it was the best way to keep the children in one place”. As the custom goes, the elders are served first at all kinds of feasts.

Towards the end of the meal, young women will carry out large cane plates with stacks of steamed glutinous rice cakes wrapped in plantain leaves. Known as ‘chhangban’, this traditional dessert tastes best with lumps of molasses and tea, and the company of family and friends.



RIDER JOURNAL I

GROUNDLED AND GRATEFUL

Thejaswini Channamallikarjuna
Season 1

Route: Guwahati - Ziro - North Lakhimpur-
Guwahati - Tawang - West Kameng - Guwahati

Kilometres travelled: 1500+

Days Travelled: 25

Motorcycle: Royal Enfield Meteor 350

Thejaswini, a former software professional and aspiring entrepreneur, has always let freedom lead the way - whether it was speeding away on a bicycle as a schoolgirl escaping boredom or quitting the IT sector to reconnect with nature. She bought her first geared motorcycle in 2015 at the age of 33.

As a software professional of nine years, I quit IT for good, going on to volunteer full-time at a wildlife conservation NGO, working alongside the forest department of Bannerghatta National Park, Karnataka. The experience expanded my understanding of nature, how individuals from different backgrounds and work cultures relate to our natural surroundings, and how ignorant so many of us are about this interdependency. In fact, this is also why I have always preferred touring on two wheels - it helps me become more connected with what's around. And while the journey with motorcycles isn't a new one, The Great Himalayan Exploration certainly came as a novelty.

To begin with, I prefer riding with a close-knit circle of maybe three to four people. Here, I had to come out of my comfort zone as we had to ride in larger groups. Most of us were meeting each other for the first time. The ride also pushed my limits - I couldn't imagine experiencing so much within just one month in my individual capacity. We all went in knowing this would be a culture-led travel experience, but I did not

expect to learn all that I did from the people I interacted with - riders and local community members alike, about tenacity, resilience and being grounded. During the project, our group documented seven unique Intangible Cultural Heritage practices in Arunachal Pradesh, touching upon different aspects of human needs and nature.





📍 Hong village, Ziro, Arunachal Pradesh

After a long, exhausting ride from Guwahati, just the sight of our destination brought a sense of peace and tranquillity. We were finally in the lap of Ziro Valley in Arunachal Pradesh. The next morning, we set out to meet the women from the Apatani tribe and document the Apatani way of paddy and fish cultivation. After a day's work of harvesting rice and catching fish while singing songs and sipping apong, or local rice beer, we sat down to relish the food they shared with us. As we ate in the company of these content and fun-loving women – some young and some old, I realised the fulfilment of literally working to get your own food.

The technique used by the Apatani tribe is perhaps one of the most advanced forms of cultivation. This is a zero-waste, chemical-free and highly efficient

sustainable method of food production, which has been practised here for 500 years now. It's a brilliant idea to cultivate fish with water-intensive crops like paddy, thus contributing towards efficient land use. The kitchen waste and the remains of the paddy plant after the harvest go back to the soil and serve as nutrition to the next batch, thus restoring soil fertility.

Fish help control algae, weeds and pests while its excreta acts as a nutrient source. Most of the Apatanis grow enough rice to sustain themselves and their extended family and friends. Today, its economic viability has been one of the challenges to keep the practice alive.

However, there is so much value in understanding such practices and exploring the benefits of sharing and incorporating them in suitable land areas to minimise socioeconomic disparities while promoting sustainable ways of procuring food.



📍 **Thrizino,
West Kameng,
Arunachal Pradesh**

During our field visit to Thrizino village in West Kameng, Arunachal Pradesh, we listened keenly as members of the Hrusso Aka community narrated folktales, like The Orchid and The Tiger, in their native language. As dinner was being prepared on the central hearth fueled by wood, we watched the traditional dance performance and soon joined in. Songs in the Hrusso language and instruments to accompany them brought along a festive ambiance, as cups of apong were passed around. Later on, the shaman invited by the

host family blessed the occasion with chants in the Hrusso language.

As I reminisce, it becomes quite evident that language forms an integral part of any individual or cultural identity. Many of us take our languages for granted, often not realising how they have allowed age-old knowledge and concepts to travel from person to person and through generations. It can be said that language helps us understand the cultural evolution of the human race as a whole.



RIDER JOURNAL II

THE RULE OF WOMEN, TRADITION AND SIMPLICITY

Maral
Season 2

Route: Guwahati - Tura - Guwahati

Kilometres travelled: 700+

Days travelled: 12

Motorcycle: Royal Enfield Himalayan

Dr. Maral Yazarloo-Pattrick is originally from Iran and currently based in Delhi, India, where she runs her own fashion design studio. The doctorate-holder from Pune University is also a women's rights activist, record-breaking solo female motorcyclist and mother to a six year old.

When I was first approached to join The Great Himalayan Exploration, I had to summon all my strength to say, "I'm sorry I can't come for the ride as I'm opening my new design studio in Delhi." But as soon as I started to talk, I surprised myself. "Thanks for the invite - I would like to be part of it!" the words escaped me, almost involuntarily.

Needless to say, I have a weakness for motorcycles and if you combine that with a ride to North-East India, one of my favourite parts of the country to visit, any opportunity is impossible to say no to. Before I knew it, all other meetings were pushed, plans changed and I found myself boarding a flight to Guwahati.

After a night of rest at Tura in the West Garo Hills, our first destination was Aminda Rangsa, a village famous for its wood carvings. I was glued to the ground,

sitting right next to the local guide who translated from Garo to English as the wood carver, Handum Marak, explained his inspiration behind each piece. Handu Marak is the last from the village to still practise this craft. He has impressively carved every intricate sculpture in the village out of trees, carefully harnessing the shape of every branch and trunk to represent motifs of Garo culture. And then there was Daisy Momin, a well-known local designer, who showcases her culture through traditional woven clothes and jewellery on national and international platforms. About 40 kilometres from Tura, at Sadolpara, we also met one of the last few remaining followers of the traditional Songsarek belief system, who still live in bamboo houses and continue following the ways of their forefathers.

The Garo Hills allowed us moments



of simplicity - a priceless gift in the modern world where we are always surrounded by unnecessary anxieties and hatred, which is worsening with the spread of social media. What made me love these hills even more was the role played by the women of the land. I couldn't help but cheer when I heard that children in the Garo culture take their mothers' surnames and that wealth is inherited by the daughters as they are the ones to keep the family together and give birth to the future. Then, there are the iconic 'Nokma' - the women village chiefs who lead the community and take important decisions regarding land use. Inspired by them, Daisy and her team dressed me in the empowering traditional Garo attire. Alas, the role lasted only a couple of hours and right when I was revelling in the joy of being an all-powerful 'Nokma', our ride leader, Kegan, gave us the sign, which meant that we had 15 minutes to gear up and be on our motorcycles!

Even today, I often think about Handum, whose connection with the

land manifested into the talent and determination that allowed him to carve a mother and child from a fruit tree. When asked what inspired him, he said it was his way of giving back to the tree, which had given him and his friends a lot of joy by letting them climb on her and enjoy her fruits all through their childhood. I remember the Garo women, whose power came with responsibility. The ones with strong faces and sunkissed tans, who could sit with their backs straight for hours as they continued weaving.

With my eyes closed, I can visualise the toy-like statues left outside the huts. These totems are built in honour of deceased relatives and decorated with all his/her favourite clothes and belongings. As I think of the lives they live - the simplicity of every day, their relationships and expectations from each other and the world around, I have to wonder if "happiness" is closer to them than to us city folks, with our dazzling lights and complicated dreams.



On The Road With Manou

Manou is a photographer based in India. A graduate of the National Institute of Fashion Technology, his work focuses on identity, self-expression, and street fashion across India. In 2010, Manou established his blog, Wearabout, which has been featured in The New Yorker, The Guardian, The Hindu, Economic Times, Museum at FIT New York, and Zeit Magazin. Since 2013, Manou has led a peripatetic life, traveling extensively within India and documenting its diverse cultural landscape.



In August last year, while I was living in Auroville, I got a call about a six-month project called The Great Himalayan Exploration, a collaboration between UNESCO and Royal Enfield. The project aims to document the intangible cultural heritage of local communities in the Himalayan region of Northeast India. My brief was to photograph the people behind various cultural practices and examine the ecosystems within

which they exist. To build context, I scanned old photos from personal albums, took pictures of living spaces and landscapes, and explored archival resources. From November 2023 to April 2024, we were in West Bengal, Sikkim, Tripura, Mizoram, Assam, Nagaland, and Meghalaya. These pictures are a visual record of the remarkable people I've met and places that left their imprint on me.



Bishnumaya just turned 100 this October. She comes from Pokhari, about 15 kilometers from Mirik town. As we spoke, she recalled old memories, her expressions shifting as if reliving those moments. She seemed elsewhere, gazing past me into the distance, and then, as if continuing a conversation with herself, she said, “Nowadays people ask about caste when they meet someone, and how is that of any use?”

She described how, when she was small, there were no proper schools in her village. She learned to read and write, however little, by arranging corn kernels on the ground to form shapes that resembled letters and numbers.

Reflecting on her long life, she added that everyone around her—friends her age and younger siblings—is dead, and she feels like a monster who swallowed them all.



Harka Bahadur Gurung. Worked as a tea collector and processor for 30 years. Now he is 83 and retired for 20 years. He is paying a quick visit to his daughter Babita (our host in Mirik).



Zodinsangi, T. Malsawmkimi, Zomuanpuii - all in class 8. Photographed during the Christmas feast at Khatla Presbyterian church.



Lalchhuanga, 85. Farmer. With Upa Lt. Daula, 95 - the eldest in the locality. Both live in Khatla. They really like how the community comes together for food and celebration during this gathering that happens every year.



Menuokho is a 25-year-old Arts student and a former state-level volleyball player. He graduated from Japfu Christian College and speaks passionately of Doyang and Dzukou. After a two-year hiatus, Menuokho is considering returning to Kene wrestling.



This is my fifth time in Nagaland. I first came here ten years ago and stayed at Kevesho's home. He is the father of the Tetseo Sisters, a well-known folk group of four sisters from Nagaland. Kevesho Tetseo, son of Nülhüprü Tetseo, was born in 1950s in Thüvopisümi village, Phek District, Nagaland. Kevesho learned how to make the Tati, a single-stringed musical instrument of the

Chakhesang Nagas, by observing elders in his village when he was young. He has been involved in Tati-making since the 1990s and produced a good number till date, even improvising it for longer life by using steel wires as strings. He tells me that the woven shawl (worn in picture) is called "thipiqhü". It is the most prestigious among the traditional shawls of the Chakhesang tribe. It is a shawl worn with humility and honour.



|| Mingi Sangma posing in front of her friends. She runs a business selling chubitchi (local rice beer).




Khinchi is Christian, and Sindri is a Songsarek belonging to one of the last animism-practising Garo communities. I learned a few words in the Achik language: Kahading bo, Methela, Namja,

and Manja. Here, I am in the extended kitchen space at Sindri's hut in Sadolpara, Dadenggre, where they are taking a break from cooking lunch.



*Responsible
Travel*



A programme aimed at enabling and promoting sustainable tourism practices by creating and promoting homestays, art and culture, working on issues related to solid waste management, WaSH interventions, access to safe drinking water, and renewable energy. *This programme works on the objectives of promoting environment sustainability, creating livelihood, preserving cultural identities of communities and encouraging conscious travel behaviour.*

PROJECT OVERVIEW



In 2019, Royal Enfield began an endeavour to act as a catalyst to inspire **responsible travel** with a call to action – ‘Leave Every Place Better’. Over the past few years, several interventions geared towards promoting responsible tourism, particularly in the Indian Himalayan region have been initiated. While these projects have their individual impacts, they intersect with each other to further the idea of responsible travel.

■ NATURE-LINKED LIVELIHOODS AND HOMESTAYS

Bridging the commitment to community and conservation, nature-linked livelihoods and homestays have been

empowering the Himalayan communities as a vital part of the Social Mission. Together with Environics Trust and People for Himalayan Development, Royal Enfield has been working in Himachal Pradesh across five Panchayats to build a Knowledge Hub. The project has been monitoring air and water quality; documenting practices of the tourism industry to work on adopting more sustainable practices, and collaborating with local self-governing institutions on tourism planning and regulation.

To support local livelihoods in the Himalayan region, Royal Enfield has facilitated setting up homestays across Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh. Twenty-eight homestays were set up last year, along with two self-sufficient community villages (Gwari and Jamala), impacting 150+ community members. Over the years, Royal Enfield has helped set up more than 70 homestays in Ladakh. Royal Enfield is working to provide market linkage for these homestays.

■ HERITAGE CONSERVATION

In partnership with LAMO and the local community of Ladakh, Walk Booklets have been created to showcase the lifestyle, architecture, arts, and culture of Nubra Valley. These help in preserving and curating new experiences for tourists, and boost sustainable livelihoods for the youth as tour guides. This project is being extended to Changthang Valley.

■ BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

Under Royal Enfield's conservation and livelihood programme in Siang, Arunachal Pradesh, a partnership project with Titli Trust identified 10 new moth species. This was recognised internationally by Tropical Lepidoptera Research Journal. To commemorate this milestone, a booklet titled "Birds, Butterflies and Moths of Upper Siang" was developed and released.

At Gori Valley, Sarmoli, Uttarakhand, rural fellowships engaged four storytellers, and a Nature Centre has been established. Community-led plantation drives were conducted, restoring local landscape by setting up native plant nurseries in Gori Valley and in Pangi Valley, Himachal Pradesh.

■ WASTE MANAGEMENT

Royal Enfield has engaged SAAHAS to draw out a detailed plan for solid waste management in Lahaul District in Himachal Pradesh. Another initiative, 'Pahadi Paheli', aims to set up systems for dry waste management processes on the traffic-heavy tourist route between Atal Tunnel and Jispa, covering 11 Gram Panchayats and 30 commercial points. A similar study was conducted in Assam with Midway Journey for villages around the Manas National Park.

The waste management model around the Jim Corbett National Park in Uttarakhand harnesses the power of community women to campaign for a

cleaner home. Known as the 'Paryavaran Sakhis', these women have shed social stigma and caste barriers to manage waste, spreading the crucial message of taking personal responsibility for the betterment of their surroundings and society. Harnessing the power of art to drive the message, road sign boards, wall murals and tiger sculptures made from plastic waste were also put up in and around the national park, sensitising tourists.

With Further and Beyond Foundation, an ambitious project took shape, transforming Chullyu village in Arunachal Pradesh into a model zero-waste community. Here, the efforts of the Nyishi community members achieved results that bolstered its status as an agro-tourism site and model to be replicated by neighbouring villages.

Making inroads in other regions of Arunachal Pradesh, Royal Enfield commissioned an art installation at the Ziro Festival of Music. Here, a model of the Royal Enfield flagship Classic motorcycle made up of single-use plastics highlighting the issue of plastic waste left behind by travellers. At Zemithang in Arunachal Pradesh, a zero-waste event was held at the Gorsam Chorten festival celebrated by the Monpa community at a 12th century Stupa.

■ WATER AND SOLAR

Royal Enfield is working on springshed management with Himmotthan Society.





Plastic tigers at Corbett National Park

The three-year-long partnership programme has benefitted over 75,000 people from 15,000 households in 210 villages across Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and the Union Territory of Ladakh.

Community Water Access Projects implemented by MUSE and Navikarna in Spiti villages of Lidang and Pangmo , and at Stongdey, Zaskar, are now providing water supply to these

remote villages throughout the year. In collaboration with the Border Roads Organisation, a water dispensing station has been constructed near the Atal Tunnel, Manali (South Portal) in the traditional Kath Kuni architectural style.

Royal Enfield, in collaboration with MUSE, also installed 80 solar street lights of 24W each along a 3 km stretch in Jispa.



Who's Afraid of Responsible Tourism?

Soity Banerjee

The author is a communicator, impact travel strategist, and Project Editor, Outlook Responsible Tourism

The other day, on the sidelines of a funeral, I had (as one does on such occasions) a rather morbid exchange with a common friend. A kindly man, whose father once hosted travellers at his homestead in the hills, he said, “If the weather doesn’t kill us [we were in the middle a heatwave], the tourists will.” Adding, for good measure... “I. Hate. Tourists!”

Now, if he thought this was an affront to a travel writer and card-carrying ‘responsible tourismwallah’, my response would have seemed anticlimactic, or worse, glib. And yet, when I looked up and said, “Same pinch! I hate tourists too!” I truly meant it.

For hand on heart, who can say they love tourists after seeing hundreds of images of traffic jams on the Rohtang Pass, with 400x cars now tunneling through the new Atal

Tunnel. Or watching yet another YouTuber peddling pahadonwali Maggi as the elixir of life, next to a breathtaking mountain of waste.

For, no matter how much we push back, how much noise we make, and how many policies we lobby to amend, seemingly, the hungry maws of Aur Dikhao Tourism continue to gnaw at our forests, coasts, rivers, mountains, culture, lives, and livelihoods. Not to mention the spectre of climate crisis, which we collectively ignore, come hell, heatwave or highwater...

Except, we stand up again, dust ourselves off, push back, make noise, and lobby for change as we have for years, every single day... Why? Because we can. Because hope is a powerful thing. And we have plenty of reasons to hope!

■ TUTTI-FRUTTI TOURISM

In a little over a decade, those of us who work in this space have watched with great pride and wonder as a quiet, counter revolution of slow, sustainable tourism gained momentum across India, often starting independently in pockets, led by communities in remote corners of the country. In time, an alternative imagination of travel emerged... One that is less extractive, and more even-handed. One that evolved even more during the pandemic, integrating everything from conservation tech and climate adaptation to e-commerce and e-experiences into plain vanilla tourism.

And now – although its early days yet – it’s transforming once again, slowly, invisibly, blurring the lines between ‘mainstream’ and ‘niche’, ‘boutique’ and ‘budget’, ‘local’ and ‘glocal’, with creative, ingenious, homegrown models, prompting us to ask... Could this be Responsible Tourism 2.0?

■ WHAT’S THE COLOUR OF CHANGE?

For the longest time, academics or experts, who don’t really have any skin in the game – unlike the owners of travel businesses – often held up scalable, replicable models on other continents “with more mature responsible tourism markets” as

inspiration. Which is all very well, except, there’s plenty of blue-skying to be done right here, under the tropical blue roof of our own country!

In the past two years, on field trips, or through Outlook’s Indian Responsible Tourism Award networks, and over many shaky, spasmodic phone calls I’ve had with friends, who run small homestays, hotels or travel companies, I’ve seen many new ideas take root. Some of these ideas simply emerged from local needs. Others from a natural desire to grow.

■ MICRO MAGIC

In case of Saw John, for instance, in the far-flung village of Webi in the Andamans, where he runs Koh Hee Homestay with his wife Dorris, the idea of creating a shared space, a cultural centre for his own community (and travellers) emerged from a desire not just to grow, but to grow together. A proud frontman for the Karen people who arrived on these shores about a hundred years ago from Burma, Saw John wants the youth in his village and curious outsiders to value traditional Karen textiles, crafts, and foods. Turns out, all this excitement about the centre has also led to talk about turning a few more homes into homestays in the village and linking them all up with the cultural hub through experiences and products. Until recently, few travellers would



Community bamboo weaving at Chulyu, Arunachal Pradesh

stray as far as Webi in Mayabunder, about eight hours away from Port Blair. But thanks to the internet, and word-of-mouth publicity for Koh Hee, the Karens are confident that soon a village of travellers will find their way to them.

Saw John or his neighbours may not have met the proud Gaddi hosts of Mystic Village in Khajjiar, Himachal Pradesh, where they also have a hive of homestays in a single village. Or the Sherdukpens of Shergaon in Arunachal Pradesh. Or the Siddi women of Yellapura in Karnataka, who have recently co-created a small cluster of mud cottages called Damami to invite travellers to celebrate both their African origins and their Indian way of life. Yet, they all are bound by the invisible power of collectivisation (not competition). Seeking success – but on their own terms.

■ BOX OF CRAYONS

Success can be tricky though. How does one navigate a situation, for instance, where a homestay becomes too popular, and the owners don't know how to turn away travellers, especially their 'own' people who start pouring in in large numbers from neighbouring towns on weekends? Do they keep adding more rooms, even if it undercuts the very idea of a homestay? The hosts at H2O House in Chamba, which is built over an old watermill,

chose not to add rooms. Instead, they saved up, and built a separate space some distance away – an experiment – designed to be a 'bridge', a gentle introduction to sustainable tourism for a new set of travellers. Will it work, or will it turn into a cookie-cutter guesthouse? Who can tell? But at least a local family in distant Chamba has the gumption to colour outside the margins.

Next door, in Uttarakhand, the women of Munsiri, widely considered one of the pioneers of responsible tourism in the region, have never coloured within the margins. In fact, at their annual summer festival of Himal Kalasutra, they seem to reach for a new box of crayons every May!

Encouraging the locals and an ever-growing community of travellers to learn something new and adapt it to their own landscape and lives, they do not shy away from new experiences. But what was especially intriguing this year is how they drew in chefs and homecooks from their own state and Ladakh and Goa to their remote villages at 8,000 feet for an easy exchange of culinary ideas.

Local ingredients and recipes outshone all else, of course. But modern techniques were not eschewed either.

Is that irresponsible (tourism)? Says who?

■ MACRO LEAPS

Speaking of modern ideas, off late the words 'climate' and 'carbon' appear with increasing frequency in conversations... because, finally, the needle is shifting on these counts.

The Blue Yonder, for instance, is actively promoting climate-resilient tours now – think visits to a farm where a climate-resistant variety of rice is grown in saline waters, or a village which needs tidal flood warning systems, or dining in the shadows of the Chinese nets in Kochi, where fishermen are forced to adapt to the climate crisis.

Meanwhile, after all these years, certification is yet to gain ground in India – especially among medium

and small travel enterprises – and sustainability standards are rarely followed or imposed by authorities. But more and more people are beginning to wonder now if it's possible to also measure carbon emissions in real time at their properties or for their tours, using reliable digital tools, ideally made in India (and therefore, affordable). Hardly a 'great expectation' in the age of Ai. Which is why, it's wonderful to see homegrown calculators being customised and tested by a handful of companies already – at wildlife lodges and adventure companies, small hotels and mountain homestays...

So, is this a final goodbye to greenwashing then? Certainly, not. But there's hope yet. Tourists and heatwaves and cranky common friends notwithstanding!



The Five Elements

Dr. Tsewang Namgail

The author is an award-winning conservationist based in Ladakh. He heads the Snow Leopard Conservancy India Trust (SLC-IT). He has done pioneering ecological work on birds and mammals in the Himalayas and published over 40 scientific articles in national and international peer-reviewed journals. Currently, he provides leadership in developing and implementing several conservation programs, including the award-winning Himalayan Homestay Program across Ladakh

All photos belong to the author

Responsible tourism is often defined as a form of tourism that promotes “better destinations for tourists” and “better living spaces for local communities”. This is often a myopic view because it represents an anthropocentric approach to tourism; wildlife and habitat hardly feature in discourses on tourism. In fact, the Cape Town Declaration on

Responsible Tourism does not mention the term wildlife even once. This is unfortunate as more and more people are visiting places where people depend heavily on ecosystem services. Recent research has shown that ecosystem services derived by a typical household in a year runs into millions of rupees. Let me drive the message home through a story.



Bird watchers at Tso Kar, Ladakh. Tourism to fragile landscapes should be sustainable and carefully monitored

During the Covid pandemic, an old man was hospitalised in Italy. When he was being discharged, he burst into tears after seeing the bill of five thousand euros. The doctors consoled him by promising a subsidy. However, the old man told the doctors that he was not bothered by the amount on the bill, but was rather saddened by his ignorance and ingratitude

towards nature for all the oxygen that he consumed over 93 long years.

This story may seem rather odd to some, but would resonate with people in the high mountains, where the air is thin and oxygen scarce. If one were to attach a monetary value, it would run into trillions of dollars.



Buddhist prayer flags called 'Lungta' symbolise the five perfectly balanced elements of nature

As long as we are connected with nature, we will thrive, but the moment we get disconnected, we will perish, just as a bubble remains intact as long as it is attached to water, but bursts the moment it detaches. Land, water, fire, air and space are the five elements that provide us with all ingredients of life and other nano-nutrients such as manganese, zinc, selenium, etc.,

that constitute the rest of the body. The importance of these five perfectly balanced elements for our sustenance is constantly reminded by Buddhist prayer flags called Lungta, fluttering incessantly on high passes across the Himalayas.

The white prayer flag represents air, blue represents space, green for water, yellow for land, and red for fire.



The enigmatic snow leopard is a cultural icon which attracts tourism, making its conservation critical

Snow Leopard Conservancy India Trust and Royal Enfield have been collaborating over the last few years to promote sustainable development in Ladakh. For any business/enterprise to be sustainable – to maintain the harmony represented by the elements – it is exceedingly important that it meets four essential criteria. First, the enterprise should start at a small scale, and second, it should be grown in

small increments, examining its impact on nature and local culture at every step. Thirdly, it should use local materials/resources, which helps the local ecology and economy. Finally, the enterprise should be co-created and implemented after consulting the locals, who are ecologically and culturally sensitive, and who know the nuances of local culture and nature to discern any adverse impacts.



Sustainable / Responsible Tourism is rooted in local culture and customs

With this partnership, Himalayan homestays, which tick all the sustainability boxes, are being rolled out to different parts of Ladakh. Beyond these, we are promoting community-based snow leopard and brown bear conservation

through a specially designed programme on keystone species. Together, we envision a Himalayan region, where humans and wildlife coexist harmoniously, finding their place within the balance of the five elements.



The forces of nature at play. Predators like the Himalayan Wolf which help to maintain the balance of their vital high altitude habitat, often come into conflict with pastoralist communities due to climate change.

“Sakhi Hai Toh Sahi Hai”

T

Three times a week, Tara Adhikari wears a determined look as she pulls her uniform T-shirt over her salwar kameez, dons her cap and safety gloves, before hopping into the driver’s seat of her e-loader – an electric vehicle to ferry goods. ‘Leave Every Place Better’, the back of her t-shirt reads, as she zooms off to work at Kaniya panchayat, Ramnagar. The region is home to the Jim Corbett National Park of Uttarakhand, which sees a lot of tourists, and as a result – a trail of waste.

Adhikari is a Paryavaran Sakhi – one of the many ‘friends of the environment’. She and a band of 22 other sakhis like herself go door to door, collect dry waste, bring it to the local waste bank and segregate it into 22 categories to ensure that two-third of their collection gets recycled.

Little by little, the sakhis are able to collect as much as 7,000 kg of dry waste each month across eight gram panchayats of Ramnagar.

A 30-year-old BA graduate who lives with her husband and two children in a joint family, Tara spends her days milking the cows, doing domestic chores and tending to her family. Her degree didn’t come handy in getting her a job in the village, where employment opportunities for women are scarce.



■ WASTE WARRIORS

“I saw how tourists trashed the place and how waste had become an issue that interfered with our daily lives,” she says. The water that irrigated their fields came with a range of filth from micro plastics to sanitary waste and the air was redolent of burning trash.

It was then that she met Waste Warriors, an NGO that partnered with the local community to collect, recycle and reduce waste. They were scouting for Paryavaran Sakhis and would go from village to village with the idea of inspiring community people to come forward. “While Bhagat Singh and Jhansi ki Rani fought for India to become free from the British, we need new

heroes who will fight for freedom from waste,” they would proclaim at public gatherings, leaving many inspired. And this was the spark that brought together the Paryavaran Sakhis at Corbett.

A total of 23 sakhis signed up and formed SHGs. While collecting and recycling waste, they earn through three sources: a monthly user fee which is levied on households (Rs 30), establishments (Rs 50) and schools (Rs 250), in addition to the sale of recyclables. They earn around Rs 4,000-4,500 a month, for 12 days of work each month. “Royal Enfield has supported us with our uniforms, regular health check-ups and by giving us three e-loaders. I feel proud wearing



my t-shirt and driving an e-loader as people wait for us to arrive,” says Tara.

Another component of their job is organising clean-up drives and awareness sessions. The women feel especially proud during the latter bit, when the villagers seek counsel from them on waste-related concerns. From carbon dioxide and methane emissions to categories of plastics and soil pollution, these women are experts on their environment.

■ AWARENESS

Roughly 12 kilometres away, Kashti Mehra and her group of five more sakhis travel from her home in Ringora forest panchayat to the neighbouring

Dhikuli Garjia and Kyari. Living in a forest panchayat mandates a low carbon footprint. With no electricity or water connection at Ringora, Kashti and her community are dependent on natural light and must fetch water from the Kosi river for their daily needs.

“Being a Paryavaran Sakhi has given us an identity. People have stopped burning waste because of us. They will segregate their trash and wait because we are there to help them with it. It makes us feel valuable,” says Kashti, a mother to three children.

Earlier, classmates used to taunt her school-going kids, calling their mother a kachra wali and other names because of her work. But the boys were quick with a

comeback. ‘You’re the one who leaves trash around. You should be called kachra wala. My mother is noble. It’s because she picks up after people like you that our village is clean,’ her sons would retort.

The mindset change isn’t just intergenerational or restricted to the family.

There are undercurrents of transformation happening along the lines of caste and gender. Women like Tara and Kashti belong to upper caste families where it is unheard of for the women to do menial labour.

Tasks concerning the handling of waste are generally outsourced to lower caste community members. But seeing the sakhis so front-footed about waste collection and segregation is a shining example for the rest on how one can transcend these barriers and work towards a cause.

“We know we’re making a difference. How many people can say that?” asks Kashti, with a twinkle in her eye.



Gobuk: A Proof of Concept for Responsible Tourism

A sleepy and lush green village in Arunachal Pradesh, Gobuk sits at the intersection of more than one Royal Enfield social mission initiative, highlighting how multiple actions are needed to achieve the singular goal of conservation...

G

Gobuk pops up quite unexpectedly, straddling the sides of the smooth ribbon of tarmac that winds its way to Yingkiong, the headquarters of the Upper Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh. It is a collection of homes housing not more than 1,200-odd residents, their livestock, and a few friendly strays. Gobuk has all the makings of a charming tourist spot without the trappings of a

conventional one. Without any hawkers on pavements or brightly lit hotels lining the hills, the land remains pristine. And that is how the residents want to keep it – making Gobuk the perfect setting for a ‘Responsible Tourism’ model to take root.

BUILDING THE TEAM

Two years ago, as part of Royal Enfield’s social mission in the Himalayas, it joined hands with the Titli Trust, a not-for-profit nature conservation organisation led by founder Sanjay Sondhi. A keen photographer and writer, Sanjay’s work revolves mostly around biodiversity conservation at

the grassroots level, conservation education and eco-tourism. The objective of this partnership was to seed a nature-linked livelihood programme involving local communities and other stakeholders. It began with a biodiversity assessment in the Upper Siang Valley that engaged local youth in conservation.

“Titli Trust’s work with forest-dwelling communities in Gobuk is seeing a positive ground-level impact. The Adi tribe, who

are a majority of the residents here, had earlier not viewed their biodiversity as a global treasure,” explains Sanjay. Given that hunting had been a way of life for this community, the project began with behaviour change interventions in the interest of conservation. Titli Trust’s work found allies in the visionary headman of Gobuk, Koni Miyu, and a trio of friends, Apping Libang, Tahaj Hussain and Joyshree Gogoi, who were Royal Enfield x Green Hub Responsible





A traditional kitchen and hearth at Gobuk village, Arunachal Pradesh

Tourism fellows. Headman Koni took the bold step of banning hunting in the village, imposing a ten thousand rupee fine on violators. At the same time, Apping, Tahaj and Joyshree started an innovative Green School in Gobuk.

THE GREEN SCHOOL

“The first time we came here, we encountered children chasing birds with catapults. We were not familiar with the Adi community’s lifestyle where hunting was an age-old practice,” explains Tahaj. The idea of the Green School was eventually picked up as a Royal Enfield x Green Hub Responsible Tourism project. The Green School is an innovative concept that engages the village children in conservation. Every alternate day, after regular school hours, the sole government primary school in the village turns into the ‘Green School’. Exercises, films, demonstrations, competitive activities and field trips are used as tools that teach the children how to identify the local flora and fauna, particularly birds, butterflies and moths. “We have spent one full year in Gobuk, and even today, the kids continue to chase the birds. But, instead of catapults, they now wield binoculars and brochures on birds and butterflies,” says a smiling Tahaj.

SPOTTING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Titli Trust’s plan hinged on five action items – namely, monitoring biodiversity and bioresources, mobilising the community, enabling sustainable

management of bioresources, reversing threats and designing sustainable community-based ecotourism models. In a remote area like Gobuk, there was a mammoth task at hand. In 2024, the two-year long study made a breakthrough with the discovery of 10 new moth species in the Upper Siang Valley – now recorded in the international scientific journal, Tropical Lepidoptera Research.

This reinforces the Upper Siang Valley as a thriving ecosystem, considering how moths play a crucial role as pollinators, actively assisting in ecological restoration in the fragile Eastern Himalayan region. The 65 days of survey conducted over the last two years has recorded more than 250 butterfly species, 650 moth species, 200 bird species and more. In May 2024, Gobuk hosted the first-ever Siang Biodiversity Meet. The week-long event saw 25 nature enthusiasts experiencing the village homestays, participating in guided nature trails and engaging in community-led activities, bringing together the idea of responsible tourism.

A two-year study conducted jointly by Titli Trust and Royal Enfield in Gobuk village of Upper Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh, led to the discovery of ten new moth species in the Eastern Himalayan region. The feat was recorded for posterity and appears here (Fig.1), as seen in the peer-reviewed journal “Tropical Lepidoptera Research.”

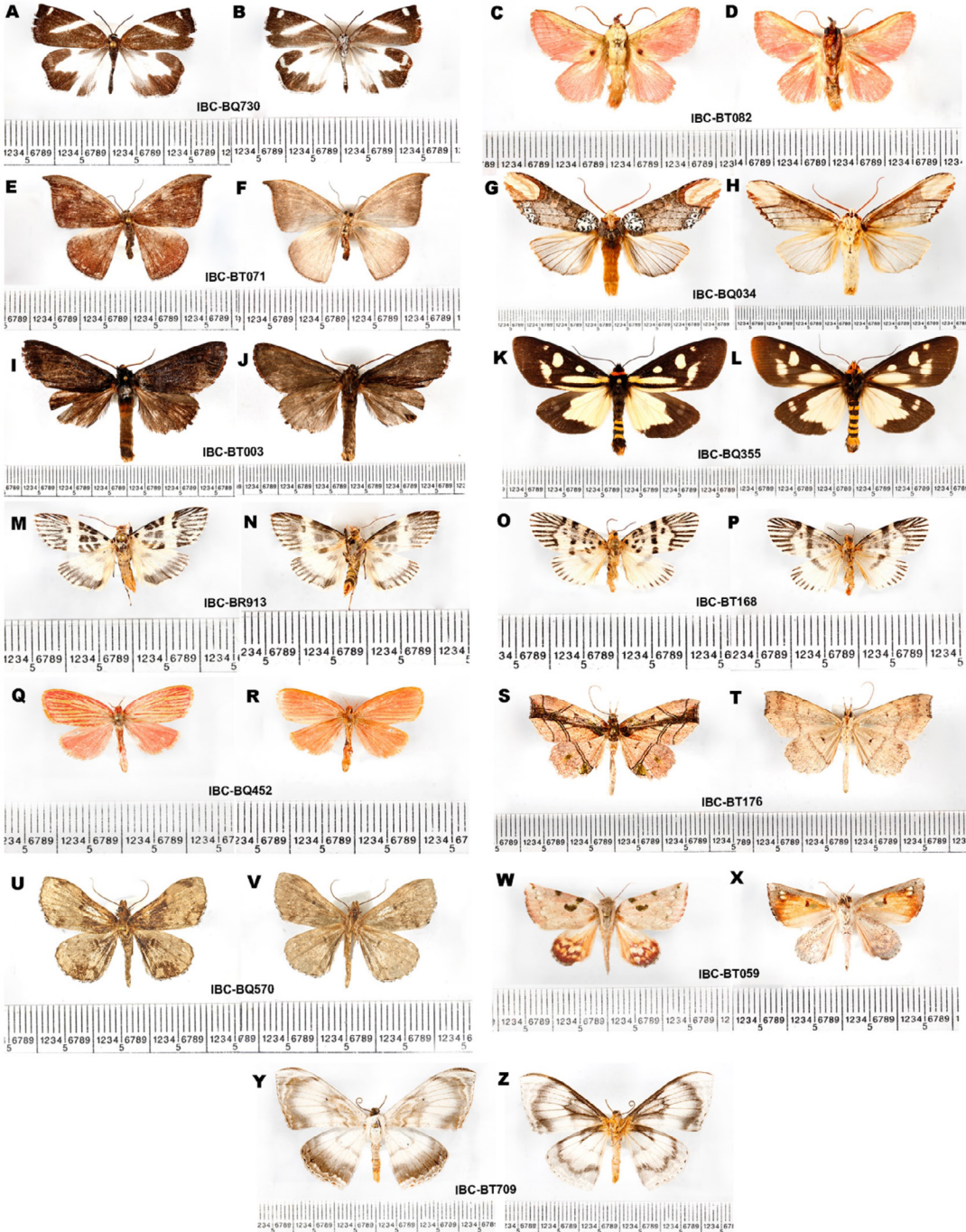


Figure 1: Dorsal and ventral views (left to right) of pinned moth specimens. A-B. *Chalcosiopsis variata*, male; C-D. *Monema coralina*, male; E-F. *Paralbara watsoni*, female; G-H. *Phalera eminens*, male; I-J. *Phalera argenteolepis*, male; K-L. *Macrobrochis flavicincta*, male; M-N. *Striatella nigralba*, male; O-P. *Striatella pluma*, female; Q-R. *Stigmatophora roseivena*; S-T. *Tamba lala*, female; U-V. *Mosopta kononenkoi*, male; W-X. *Chloroplaga pallida*, male; Y-Z. *Somatina densifasciaria*, male. Millimetres scale bar is shown under every image.

Saving Every Drop, One Trench at a Time

R

Rirkumar is a small village in Kangra, Himachal Pradesh. Nestled in the Dhauladhar valley, the village has a sub-Himalayan topography and experiences rain and snowfall during winter; from March until the advent of monsoon in July, acute water shortage poses a challenge for the communities residing here. The annual precipitation of 1200–1400mm, though considered

healthy, does little to remedy the situation, since the sloppy terrain gets less infiltration due to a higher rate of runoff. Erratic rain patterns, with fewer rainy days and intense rainfall for shorter periods, contribute to reduced groundwater recharge and have worsened water management concerns. Rirkumar Bawad, a depression spring, is a major source of water for the 61 households of Rirkumar. Every year, its water levels deplete significantly from an average of 3–4 litres per minute (lpm) in the month of March to 2 lpm in summer, thereby leaving the Rirkumar community in acute water distress, with lack of technical knowledge or sufficient funds making problem redressal an even more challenging task.

The partnership between Royal Enfield and Himmotthan Society (HMS) has helped make positive strides towards

rectifying this situation. Provision of financial resources, coupled with strong implementation support and community galvanisation, have led to several water recharge efforts, such as digging trenches. These trenches help percolate water into the aquifer and also enhance soil moisture. With the onset of monsoon, the trenches are replenished and water is stored to be used during predicted months of scarcity.

To maximise use and ensure long-term sustainability through maintenance efforts, the HMS team has worked with community members to grow saplings around the trenches. Sowing saplings and grass around trenches helps prevent soil erosion, while the fruits from saplings encourage the community to maintain the system. In addition, training sessions on operations and resource management are conducted periodically to strengthen the water security plan.

In Chamau village in Almora, Vimla Devi, a 39-year-old farmer and homemaker, begins her daily routine, which includes taking her herd for grazing, cooking meals for the family, working at the farm, fetching pails of water and so on. Of these tasks, fetching water may take the most amount of time and effort, significantly increasing during summer.

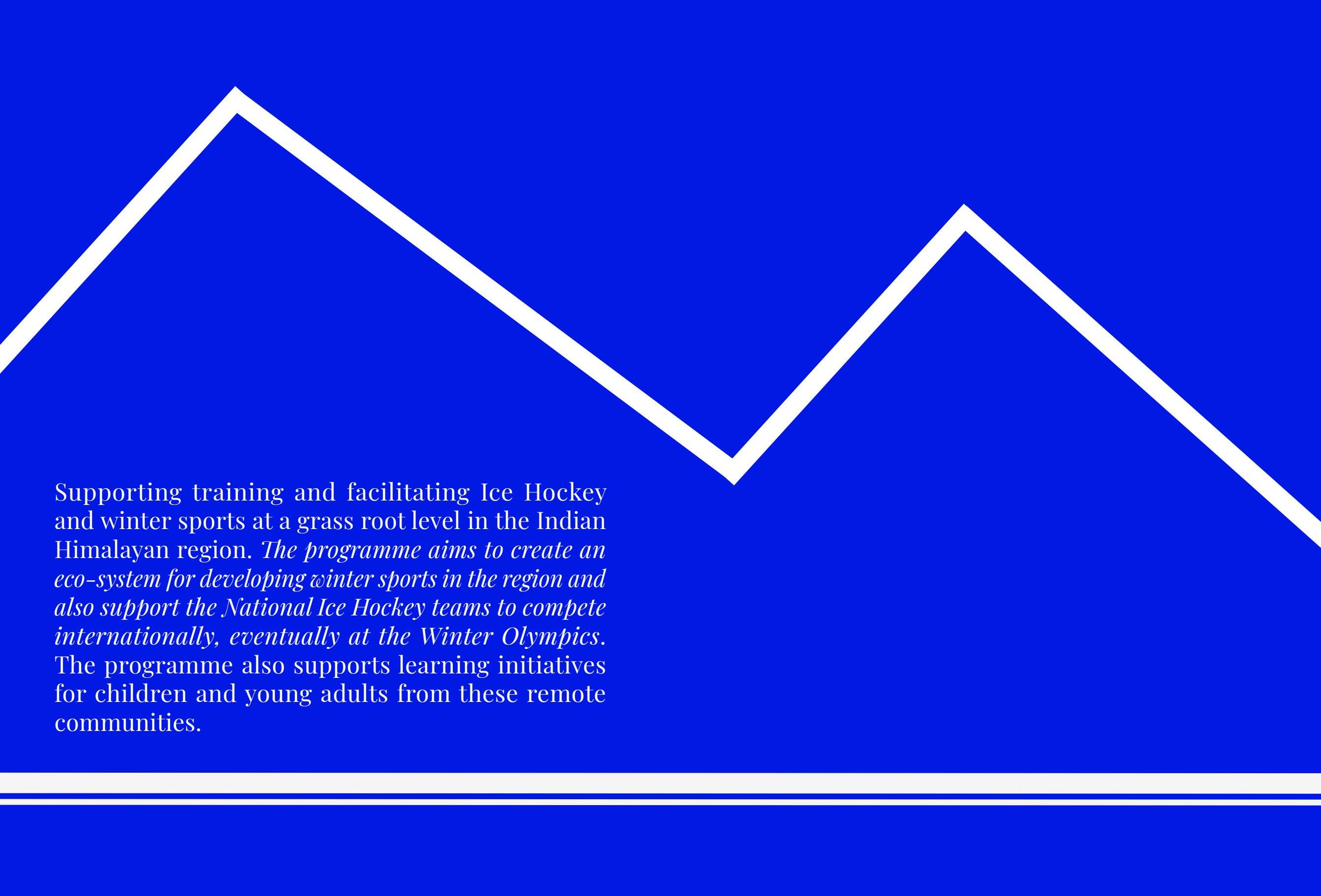
Damthariya spring, the village's major water source, runs extremely low from March to July, leading to major repercussions on the water health

of the community every season. Like with most hilly regions, the lack of water infrastructure and means to implement an appropriate scientific solution has left the community members severely disadvantaged. Identifying issues faced by Vimla and others in her locality, Royal Enfield and HMS partnered in January 2023 to work with the people of Chamau. Taking cues in water management with learnings from other sites, the Watershed User Groups (WUG) were provided with capacity-building on undertaking water infrastructure construction and planting oak tree saplings.





Rural Sports, Education and Health



Supporting training and facilitating Ice Hockey and winter sports at a grass root level in the Indian Himalayan region. *The programme aims to create an eco-system for developing winter sports in the region and also support the National Ice Hockey teams to compete internationally, eventually at the Winter Olympics.* The programme also supports learning initiatives for children and young adults from these remote communities.

PROJECT OVERVIEW



R

Rural sports is a promising avenue to meet our long-term vision of empowering and partnering 100 Himalayan communities. Sports builds resilience and pride, generates livelihood opportunities, particularly for the youth, and helps attract global recognition. In Ladakh, Ice hockey rules the hearts of the people, with over 90 percent of national players hailing from this Himalayan region. Channelling the passion and enduring spirit of the people, Royal Enfield supports Ice skating and Ice hockey in Ladakh, to potentially transform Ladakh into a coveted winter sports destination.

As part of its initiative to elevate the sport, Royal Enfield handed over ‘The Gamechanger: Blueprint for the Development of Ice Hockey in Ladakh’ to the Administration of the Union Territory of Ladakh on 7th December 2023. This first-of-its-kind blueprint document was commissioned by the Office of the Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh and is a holistic document, created with inputs

from various stakeholders, including the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF). It looks at developing a roadmap for Ladakhi players, taking them all the way to the Winter Olympics in 2042.

The blueprint document outlines the need for a competitive league as one of the crucial first steps. In line with this, the inaugural Royal Enfield Ice Hockey League was conducted in Leh. This league saw the participation of 330 players (220 men and 110 women) comprising 15 teams (10 men’s and 5 women’s) spanning Ladakh’s seven zones. The league itself saw 10,000 spectators come to the rinks in sub-zero temperatures to witness the competition on ice.

Following this, Royal Enfield conducted the first-ever Spiti Valley Cup in Kaza, Spiti valley, Himachal Pradesh where 288 players aged 12–18, competed at one of the world’s highest ice rinks at an elevation of 11,980 ft.

In addition, Royal Enfield continues to support the sport in Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh with equipment and training through the year. It facilitated a ‘Train the Trainer’ camp, where coaches from Germany trained over 20 local coaches from the region. Support was extended to the training of the 20-member Indian Women’s Ice Hockey team in the run up to the 2023 IIHF Ice Hockey Women’s Asia and Oceania Championship, where

the team reached the semi-finals. Royal Enfield has also been supporting football in the region and installed the first ever astroturf in

Changthang, providing young talent with the opportunity to improve their game while reducing injuries.



EDUCATION

Children in Ladakh are deprived of learning avenues during the harsh winter months. Royal Enfield supports programmes like winter tuitions in remote villages to address this issue through its local partners such as the Snow Leopard Conservancy India Trust, Student Association for Village Education and rZamba.

Three key projects on education, namely Creating an Alternative Learning Space for the Students of Ladakh, Foundational Learning and

Winter Bridge Programme, have benefited 500+ children in the age group 3-25 years covering 18 villages. In Lahaul, Himachal Pradesh, 150 villagers between ages 6 and 70 years across six villages successfully learned and completed the basic course on the Bhoti language through the Bodh Yig programme.

Bhoti is an endangered language that connects the community of Lahaul to their ancestry. The programme was implemented by the PATA Society.

HEALTH

In the high-altitude areas of Ladakh and Himachal, there is a high incidence of UV-related eye problems such as cataract and pterygium, even in the younger population. Due to the remoteness of the region, access to eyecare facilities is limited. Royal Enfield engaged Dr. Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital to conduct a nine-day eye

screening camp for 25 remote villages around Kaza, District Lahaul & Spiti. Over 800 villagers were screened and over 340 spectacles issued. This was followed by a week-long medical and surgical camp, where Royal Enfield supported Lady Willingdon Mission Hospital, Manali, to carry out eye and other general surgeries in Spiti.

The Making of the Blueprint

David Alfred Fitzpatrick

The author is an ex-ice hockey player, retired as the Sports Director for the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF), the international governing body of the sport. During his tenure with the IIHF, he has been on the organising committee of several World Championships and Olympic Games, including the Winter Olympics at Beijing and Pyeongchang. He has over 30 years of experience in the overall strategy, management and administration of the sport.

I have been involved as a player, a coach, a referee and as an administrator in the sport of ice hockey since I was six years old. During my 38 years of employment, I was fortunate enough to travel the world to meet with the various IIHF member-countries, helping to develop the sport, visiting and working alongside Ice hockey enthusiasts in places where the game was “under construction”.

With every new challenge, I witnessed how the game became organised and operated in different formats to meet national and regional conditions, apart from countless other unique situations.

And yet, when it came to working together with the European Business and Technology Centre (EBTC) and Royal Enfield, along with the many Ice hockey organisations and clubs across Ladakh, performing a complete assessment and analysis of the status of Ice hockey in the region presented a completely new experience for me. The initiative was designed to take a single sport and make it available and accessible for the entire local community population. In short, it was humbling to see how the local Ice hockey representatives were applying their own talents to grow the sport, using local resources, domestic and regional contacts, make-



Indian Women's Ice Hockey team participating at the IIHF Asia & Oceania Championship 2023, Thailand

shift venues, employing unique “out of the box” thinking and generating locally crafted and fabricated Ice hockey equipment. They worked with fervour and so much passion and innovation within their own communities for the love of the sport. It was simply inspiring.

The project goal of creating a blueprint document for the development of Ice hockey in Ladakh eventually led to “The Game Changer”. The book is essentially an operations manual for the growth and development of Ice hockey in the country through the Indian Himalayan region. It provides the

reader with the colourful history of the sport within the Indian context, a complete assessment of the sport as currently structured and operated in the region today, an analysis identifying the strengths, the weaknesses and the challenges to develop Ice hockey, and a detailed work plan with corresponding timelines, including measurable milestones. The interest is there. The will is there. The opportunity is there. The plan is there. All that is now needed are “boots on the ground” to follow and apply the step-by-step guidelines, creating a coordinated and all-inclusive Ice hockey programme for Ladakh.

ROYAL
ENFIELD

ICE HOCKEY
LEAGUE



Rooting for the Underdog: How Royal Enfield Revved Up Women’s Ice Hockey

N

Noor Jahan still remembers 2016 – a year of many firsts. It was the first time she and 19 others made it to the Indian Women’s Ice Hockey national team. It was also the first time they flew from Ladakh to Taipei for their first international tournament – the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) Women’s Challenge Cup of Asia (WCCOA).

For a group of girls from Ladakh, who had only practised for eight weeks each year on the frozen lakes and rivers of the upper Himalayas, borrowing gear

and equipment from the men’s team, this was a historic moment. They hadn’t hoped to win – not just yet. All they had wanted was to make the most of their love for what is often considered the world’s fastest, high-impact team sport. They returned to Ladakh with no trophies, but they brought back rich learnings on how to up their game to compete with world champions.

“If you add up all the ice time we’ve had since we were kids, it barely totals to a couple of years. That’s nothing compared to the year-round quality practice international players are exposed to,” says 28-year-old Diskit Angmo, the spokesperson and a member of India’s National Women’s Ice Hockey team. Ladakh’s first indoor ice skating rink is yet to be built. Until 15 years





ago, for lack of proper equipment, kids modified their boots with blades and made rounded pucks out of the thick soles of army boots. Noor's own grandfather, a carpenter, made her first hockey stick in the mid 2000's.

“It’s been a journey of struggle. We dream to see India at the Winter Olympics one day,” says Diskit.

For those like her and Angmo, the years of struggle repurposed itself into a deep commitment and fire to excel at the sport.

A year later, they participated in the 2017 Challenge Cup of Asia at Bangkok on the back of a crowd-funding campaign where they received financial support from thousands of donors who funded their training, accommodation, airfares, visa, team jersey, and equipment.

The girls created history with their first ever international win by beating

Philippines 4-3. More importantly, this time they brought back another integral win – friendship, solidarity and respect from around the world.

“The Blueprint for the development of Ice hockey in Ladakh got us all on the table – UT Ladakh, Ice Hockey Association of India, International Ice Hockey Federation, experts, communities, and the players. This had never occurred before. Another first was us women being asked for our views. Nobody had sought them before,” says Noor Jahan, the goaltender of the India’s National Women’s Ice Hockey team and a long-time Royal Enfield rider.

Even as the discussions were going on, the women’s team had a championship to prepare for the 2023 Asia & Oceania Championship in Bangkok Thailand. The championship was in early May but ice time in Ladakh ended in March.

“We needed practice. Royal Enfield sent us all to Thailand to get 15 days of indoor ice time with our coach Darrin Harrold,” explains Noor. Some other parties offered training support too. Harrold, a Canadian coach, had been coaching the team since 2019. The girls came fourth in the championship.

The Road Ahead

With equipment distribution and train-the-trainer programmes across Ladakh, Royal Enfield is slowly elevating Ice hockey from an amateur winter sport to a force to be reckoned with.

“The Royal Enfield Ice Hockey League really gave players across Ladakh an avenue to participate at a competitive level and excel. Going forward we hope this becomes a national league where teams from other parts of India can also compete,” says Noor.

Meanwhile, the girls are gunning for another opportunity to prove their mettle. They’re training for the upcoming Asian Winter Games in Feb 2025 in Harbin, China. With 64 categories across 11 winter sports, it will be an important tournament.

But sustenance remains a challenge. The players belong to humble backgrounds. They hold day jobs to be able to afford their commitment. Noor is an art conservator. Diskit has a job at the Leh Nutrition Project. They would love for Ice hockey to be their main bread and butter so they can give it their 100%.



A group of Indian women's ice hockey players in red and white jerseys are gathered in an indoor arena. One player in the foreground is wearing a helmet and looking down. Another player in the background is also wearing a helmet and looking towards the camera. A player in the foreground is sitting and looking towards the camera with her hand near her face. The background shows a large window with a grid pattern.

**“IT’S INDIAN WOMEN’S ICE HOCKEY
THAT HAS MANAGED TO GET THE
WORLD TO SIT UP AND TAKE NOTICE.
EMOTIONS RUN HIGH.**

**WE PLAY EACH INTERNATIONAL
MATCH HOPING THAT WE’LL
HEAR OUR NATIONAL ANTHEM
ECHO THROUGH THE ARENA”
NOOR JAHAN.**

When people think of Ladakh, they must also think Ice Hockey

Ravinder Kumar

The author is the former Secretary of the Youth Services and Sports Department of the UT of Ladakh.

In Ladakh, Ice hockey is more than a sport - it's a way of life, driven by immense passion and personal investment towards the game. This is seen across players of all age categories, coaches and those who work behind the scenes to grow and develop the sport. It ties down to the fabric of a more resilient and cohesive community, giving today's youth a physical and team-building activity over the long and harsh winter, building discipline, fitness, confidence and commitment.

Ladakh's most popular sport has many fascinating tales, tracing back to stories of fans perched atop a tree in Gupuk in the hope of catching a

glimpse of a match. Some recount how players fixed door handles to old army boots to fashion makeshift skating shoes. In fact, matches at the ice rink in Leh still easily see upwards of 5,000 fans come together to cheer for their favourite teams during the LG Cup or CEC Cup. In the high-altitude desert of Ladakh, where the air is thin and the winters are harsh, Ice hockey has emerged not merely as a sport, but as a powerful social mission. This unexpected development has turned frozen lakes and makeshift rinks into arenas of change, uniting communities, empowering women, and fostering a spirit of resilience and innovation. The social impact of ice

hockey in Ladakh is profound, serving as a catalyst for transformation in one of India's most remote regions. As India strives to become a sporting nation, driven by ever-improving performances in the global arena, several other sports, in addition to cricket, are vying to take the centre-stage. Be it football in the eastern regions; or kabaddi, wrestling and boxing in the north; traditional sports like hockey or even new sports like jiu-jitsu, kayaking etc.; are all adding to India's medal tally. India hopes to replicate its best ever performance from last year's Asian Games in the upcoming Olympics of 2024.

However, the story is not complete without looking at Winter Sports. And India doesn't need to look further than its most successful Olympian, Shiva Keshavan, a six-time Olympian, for inspiration. In Ice hockey, one of the fastest, most competitive and popular winter sports, Ladakhi players have the potential to achieve similar feats, I believe. We must work tirelessly to enable vision 2042, as set out in the The Gamechanger: the Blueprint for the development of Ice Hockey in Ladakh. For this, a tier and merit-based player development pathway, balancing training and match practice, is crucial to foster the next generation of pro players. Towards this, the Union Territory is focussed on providing world-class infrastructure and equipment along with quality coaching, driven through

a professional governance structure.

While performance at the global stage is crucial, ice hockey is perhaps as important to bind the community together in India's Himalayan states. During winter, when schools are closed, ice hockey mobilises the children and youth to come together. Thus, for the sport to grow, working towards providing quality and inclusive grassroots programmes, starting with standardised Learn-To-Play programmes, is essential. We must focus on building a team of local coaches, rinks and support structure through a bottom-up approach.

The recently concluded Royal Enfield League is a great example in this regard, where trained coaches went to eight key regions across the hinterlands of Ladakh to scout and coach talent, forming teams to compete for the winning title.

With more such interventions, both public and private, matching the passion and commitment shown by the local community, I strongly feel that Mission 2042 is more of a reality than a dream.

HIMALAYAN HUB



A collective learning centre focussed on developing solutions for environment sustainability in the Indian Himalayan Region. *The Himalayan Hub will work towards equipping Himalayan youth to become leaders in mitigating and adapting to climate change through fellowships and other programmes. The project aims to build resilience in communities, by focussing on conservation of natural resources and biodiversity, material innovation as well as propagating green and circular practices.*

The Himalayan Hub will also focus on skill building programmes, education, vocational training and livelihood enhancement for these communities along with preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of the Himalayas.





The **Himalayan Hub** is the nerve centre of Royal Enfield's Social Mission. It has been envisioned as a learning centre to work with youth from Himalayan communities, enabling them to lead change through fellowships on conservation, filmmaking, responsible tourism, entrepreneurship, art, circular economy etc. The main campus of the Hub is located in Theog, Himachal Pradesh, and the Eastern Outreach is based out of Tezpur, Assam. A greenfield project delivered in record time, the Himalayan Hub in Theog went live in February 2024. Originally an 85-year-old traditional Himachali home, the restored and refurbished building is located at a junction of popular travel routes.

The Theog campus went live with the commencement of the Western Himalayan edition of Royal Enfield x Green Hub fellowships. This one-year residential programme began with 24 fellows from Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Uttarakhand and UT Ladakh, who are learning to use film as a medium to mobilise environment conservation and social change.

Alongside, the Margshala Entrepreneurial Fellowship worked with its fourth cohort, comprising 25 fellows.

Royal Enfield also partnered with the Foundation for Indian Contemporary Art (FICA) for a fellowship to support creative practitioners from the Himalayan region working at the intersection of art and sustainability.

The Himalayan Hub's **Eastern Outreach** from Tezpur continues to bolster ongoing programmes for the second consecutive year. In partnership with Green Hub, Royal Enfield is supporting 20 Fellows from 19 indigenous communities across eight states in North-East India. Since 2022, the programme has worked with 44 Green Hub fellows, 31 Responsible Tourism fellows, and 18 youth through the Royal Enfield Conservation grant. The mission is to empower youth changemakers with fellowships and grants, enabling them to document knowledge through video archives, thus building a network of community youth involved in conservation action and sustainable livelihoods in the Eastern Himalayas.

The second edition of the Green Hub x Royal Enfield Responsible Tourism (GH-RE RT) Conclave held in February 2024 set the wheels in motion for responsible travel throughout the Eastern Himalayan region. The sessions were driven by climate champions and youth entrepreneurs who were supported by Green Hub and Royal Enfield with a six-month-long Responsible Tourism fellowship.

This initiative seeks to inspire the youth to help mainstream the idea of responsible tourism. It is a grounds-up approach where the action plan for each site is being developed hand-in-hand with communities.

Sites like Zemithang (Arunachal), Chongri (Sikkim), Laitkynsew (Meghalaya), Ampri Valley (Assam), and Nagaon (Assam) were the chosen sites for 2024, following successful projects in Chullyu, Gobuk, Labukore (Arunachal Pradesh), and Hebamlo (Nagaland) in 2023.

LIVING LABS

In the Eastern Himalayas, Royal Enfield supported the incubation of 'Living Labs'. A collective led by subject experts and thought leaders, these are dynamic, collaborative and immersive spaces with linked learning sites that include grassroot communities and cut across diverse disciplines.

- The Canopy Collective has been conceived as a bridge between science and society, wildlife conservation and community wellbeing. It presents nature education models for grassroots communities, which include innovative science and storytelling.
- The Wellness Lab works to influence the culture of mental health and wellbeing for youth, children and women.
- Conceived by Academy Award-nominated Rintu Thomas and Sushmit Ghosh, the Himalayan Story Lab works as an incubation space dedicated for indigenous and tribal filmmakers working on their debut feature documentary films.



Changing Colours in the Himalayan Landscape

Zeenat Niazi and Mohak Gupta

Zeenat Niazi is the Chief Advisor, Circular Economy and Climate Resilience Programmes, Development Alternatives.

Mohak Gupta is an Associate Programme Director, Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy, Development Alternatives.

Circularity and responsible tourism need to be seen not only as an end-of-life or waste management solution, but as a transformative force to influence foundational consumption and production patterns.

Lush green forests have historically characterised the Himalayan landscape. Now the mountainsides are grey, brown, and black, in stark contrast with the images in our memory.

The spreading grey of huge concrete dams, roads, and newly constructed buildings, each vying to go higher than the other; the brown of barren mountainsides, stripped of vegetation, cut up and pillaged for mining and sliced to make way for ever-widening highways; and the black of dry forests ravaged by forest fires, all stand testament to the damaging impacts of irresponsible human activity and unbridled growth for the sake of growth. But there are also new colours

- the mountainsides are now littered with plastic waste in myriad hues of red, green, blue, yellow, and others.

For avid travellers who have witnessed the deterioration of the Himalayas over the years, the mysticism of the mountains and the romance of the rains have given way to a strange mix of apathy and fear of its wrath during the monsoons. Every year, one awaits news of the fresh hell that monsoons will wreak on the newly-constructed four-lane highways and boutique riverside hotels and cafes. Depleting forest cover, eroded soils, dumped debris, and unstable land slopes add to the browns on the mountainside and in the water. Compounding this are impacts of

climate change that are a lived reality now, as temperatures soar, precipitation becomes sparse and intense, glaciers recede, mountain springs disappear, and water is often a contested resource. The Himalayas are facing the classic development versus environment conundrum, and unless we act now, this is a vicious downward spiral. Our ‘economic development strategies’ are accelerating ecological distress, creating conditions for a catastrophic collapse of life support systems in the Himalayan biosphere and in turn closing options for the quality of life that the economic development strategies promised.

All this does not bode well for the tourism industry, which has fast become

the mainstay of livelihoods in the region. Lack of livelihood opportunities is driving locals to abandon villages, chants of ‘the mountains are calling, and I must go’ are bringing in increasing numbers of tourists to come and have maggi and chai in the hills. The sheer impact and influence of the tourism ‘system’ with its interconnectedness to systems like infrastructure, transport, food, natural and cultural heritage, and consumption and waste, necessitate integrated thinking and urgent action. They demand private enterprise to deliver solutions that are larger than the sum of their parts. The problems seem insurmountable - almost impossible, like the rugged mountains, but in the words of Tom Hiddleston, “You keep putting one foot in



front of the other, and then one day you look back and you've climbed a mountain."

So, we start local, but we keep our sights on the summit, with acute awareness that each step we take is connected to the myriad pathways to the top ... or to the bottom. We take inspiration from traditional wisdom and base our decisions on scientific evidence. We make our decisions guided by the aspiration for local prosperity and resilience and the responsibility to minimise their local, regional and global impacts. In the present context, these choices must result in the triple good - reduce our resource and fossil footprints, create local livelihood opportunities, and ensure that the goods and services provide a decent quality of life with minimal environmental impacts. This means moving away from a take-make-use-throw way of production and consumption to a circular, regenerative economy approach that responds to the contextual biotic and abiotic resource limitations.

Circularity needs to be seen not only as an end-of-life waste management solution, but as a transformative force to influence foundational consumption and production patterns. It has the potential to positively impact food and water systems, revive dying springs, and reduce toxicity in soil and water bodies. It can help reduce waste generation and improper disposal, thus minimising pollution and protecting biodiversity in the rivers and oceans.

It can optimise resource usage in construction activity, reducing its material and carbon footprint. Notably, while doing all this, circular economy solutions can help propel economic growth by promoting innovative, localised and contextualised business models that valorise waste and drive new service models that utilise resources more effectively.

Looking at the need for innovative solutions from an opportunity context, rather than a problem lens, may provide some direction. What alternatives do we have for building materials, packaging, foods, sanitation, etc.? What actions can aware citizens take? How may we use the potential of pine wood and local grasses such as hemp for products and services? How can biodiversity conservation be a source of income? How may we harness the power of technology with social and cultural knowledge to create new value? What narratives of sustainability already exist and can be recast to shift mindsets and markets? What may be the new models that regenerate, recycle, reuse, and rebuild economies, social connections, physical infrastructure and natural resources?

Experiences in the Himalayan region lead us to believe that there are opportunities in the local social-ecological system to innovate and to deliver circularity-based solutions in the region, and drive community and policy actions that can help to protect, preserve, and regenerate ecosystems in

the Himalayas - both human and natural.

The opportunity that we have today is to become the catalyst-driving innovation through an engaged local citizenry looking for creative solutions to problems that they understand best. The need for circularity and climate

action in the Himalayan region has never been clearer. The question is, will the clarion call be heeded? Can the browns and greys be contained? Will the new reds, blues, and yellows come from flowers or plastic? Can development in the Himalayas be green again?



Nurturing a Nursery, Growing a Forest

Rita Banerji

The author is a wildlife and environment filmmaker and educator who uses videos as a storytelling medium to promote conservation. She is the Project Director at the Green Hub Project and the founding director of Dusty Foot Foundation and Dusty Foot Production.

“Most of the youth from my village work as manual labour on road-building projects. Once those are finished, where will they go for work? For a secure future, we have to go back to our roots – farming, forests, indigenous systems...”, Dechin explains. Dechin is from the Monpa tribe in Zemithang, Arunachal Pradesh. Her mother is a Brokpa, a nomadic herder who still spends six months every year in the high-altitude pastures with her yaks and cows.

“Where I come from, there is hunting, logging, and cutting down trees for sale. My dream is to spread awareness and work for conservation. In every way, wildlife is connected to us, and is essential for our survival. We must save our forests; not just talk, we must act. We must find practical solutions. We must care.” This was Vohbika Hrahsel from Mizoram, sharing his thoughts, as we sat in the Green Hub editing room in Tezpur. Vohbika put it so simply, in a matter-of-fact way, cutting through

all the noise to remind us that this is what we are working towards. We were looking at his documentation of the wildlife in the community reserve that he is trying to protect. Vohbika was part of the forest patrolling team in Dampa Tiger Reserve, which he left to fully commit to and work on conservation.

“The culture and rituals of the Nocte tribe is closely linked to the local biodiversity, and by bringing out these connections through our documentation, we hope to help the community introspect things that are disappearing and come together to create a roadmap for a better future.”

This was part of a conversation with Chajo Lowang from Arunachal Pradesh and Sara Khongsai from Meghalaya. The two young women are working together to develop a book on the Nocte people and the biodiversity of Tirap,

All these voices are from Green Hub alumni across the Northeast region of



India. At every step, the fellows have been our co-travellers and, sometimes unknowingly, our guides and teachers. It is their voices and their expressions that never allow us to get complacent. They remain our core, our reason for hope.

The Green Hub (GH) fellowship engages and empowers youth from indigenous communities and disadvantaged backgrounds in conservation action and social change. We started our work in Northeast India in 2015 and expanded to central India in 2021. Since 2022, Royal Enfield has partnered with us to strengthen the Green Hub Project in the Eastern Himalayas and expand the project to the Western Himalayas.

In the nine years that we have worked with youth, they have strengthened our belief in the kind of future that we want – self-sufficient and self-organised villages and towns that are founded on nature-linked livelihoods from the protection of natural systems, based on collective growth, compassion and well-being. A future where technology is used effectively to scale up conservation action; to revive degraded landscapes; to form market linkages that benefit the poor and create a more equitable society. A future where education is redefined to value community knowledge, and inspires children and youth to believe that their knowledge about their own roots, their surroundings, their forests, plants, food and animals is of immense value and is connected to the larger context of climate action.

The stories, places, and initiatives keep growing little by little – and will hopefully come together in the near future to have a larger ecological footprint. The Green Hub and Royal Enfield partnership is an effort in this direction – a convergence of a vision for the same future. Together, we have designed the Responsible Tourism fellowship to provide youth with grounded experience of the sector with focus in community and conservation. Alongside, the Green Hub - Royal Enfield Conservation Grants bring together youth and community members working on grassroot initiatives. With the programme spreading across the Indian Himalayan Region – the hope is that this network of youth and community members will form a web of positive action and solidarity.

As we have grown, we have always drawn inspiration from the ecosystem of a forest – one of the most resilient forms of natural architecture. In a forest, every life form, from the tiniest insect and leaf litter to the largest mammal and tallest tree, is symbiotically bound. Each element contributes to the whole, feeding the system to make the roots stronger and the canopy wider. Green Hub's pathway mirrors this natural harmony, where the fellowships are like planting seeds, nurturing the growth of our network. As each part of this network develops, it enriches the whole, creating layers akin to those in a forest. Here, nothing exists in isolation; every contribution strengthens the community, allowing us all to grow together and thrive.



A Gathering Place for Conservation, Creativity and Communities

Vidya Shivadas

The author is a curator based in New Delhi and the Director of Foundation for Indian Contemporary Art (FICA), a non-profit arts organisation that works in the field of art education and enhancing opportunities for artists via grants, fellowships and awards. She has curated a number of exhibitions at the Vadehra Art Gallery since 2002 as well as guest curated exhibitions at Devi Art Foundation, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, Edinburgh Art Festival and Serendipity Arts Festival.

In partnership with Foundation for Indian Contemporary Art (FICA), ten candidates working closely with different Himalayan communities were selected for the inaugural Himalayan fellowship for Creative Practitioners from more than 270 applicants in 2023. The fellows have spent the year immersed in their projects with guidance and mentorship from various resource persons who have engaged with their process. The selected fellows and artists collective are Aarti Bisht, Aastha, Rajendra

Singh Negi and Ravindra Singh Gusain (members of Radio Henvalvani), BERE Art Collective, Tsering Motup Siddho, ShikarGah Art Collective, Joshua Sailo, Millo Ankha, Mo Naga, Kunga Tashi Lepcha, Ishan Chrungoo and Soujanya Boruah and Shyam Lal. They investigate the potential for their practices to advance questions and thinking around the entanglements between ways of living and being, climate change, traditional knowledge and culture, and enabling ecological sustainability.

The Himalayan Fellowship for Creative Practitioners, in its first edition, engages practices across diverse disciplines and geographies in the creative arts, creating opportunities for and supporting works and programmes that underscore the necessity of linking ecological security to traditional and indigenous knowledge.

The past year has been an exciting year of gatherings – of people, resources and imaginations, among other things. For artists who are often individuated and isolated in their ideas and practices, the access to the Himalayan Hub offers the real possibility of being part of a critically poised conversation on the future of the Himalayas with other actants in the field of environment, research, social change, entrepreneurship, tourism and the academia. This widening of the networks and the spheres of action has been a welcome step to foster an understanding of artmaking as a transformative process and the artist as a change maker in the ecologically fraught Himalayas.

The Hub is able to foster capacities and connections between young people working in the region and build these important linkages.

While work of this nature is qualitative and not always high-visibility, its circle of influence is ever widening with dialogues between fellows from different programmes (art, sustainable tourism, filmmaking, environment studies), and also the different stakeholders that the fellows, in turn, include in their conversations.

For Mo Naga, it was particularly poignant to collaborate with the youth club of Khangshim village in Manipur and organise a two-day event around the endangered traditions of seed-sowing and pond restoration. The events, celebrated after nearly 50 years, saw more than a hundred members of the tribe – young and old, come together. It marked a momentous occasion for the elders who serve as custodians to indigenous knowledge and ways of being in the world, bringing the opportunity to share this wisdom with the younger generation.

What many of the fellows shared in the sessions were anecdotes of the lack of educational and employment opportunities in their own regions. They spoke about the fellowship giving them the confidence to re-engage with their long-standing projects back home which had deep resonance for them. For Kashmir-based Khursheed Ahmad, it nudged him to return to his work with the traditional Bhand Pather, which has lost its powerful voice in Kashmir today. Ahmad himself comes from a family steeped in the folk theatre form and is seeking ways to understand its current

diminished status and propose what a new Bhand Pather Movement might look like.

Millo Ankha's project is interested in closely documenting the ritualistic totemic structures in Ziro, Arunachal Pradesh made during the Myoko festival, to understand the Apatani ancestral connections to the spiritual world and the communal bonds reinforced through rituals, hosting, visiting and feasting. Ankha sees the act of braiding as an active native language, rooted in an intertwined ethnobotanical knowledge, cultural heritage and identity.

Leh-based Tsering Motup's work is a personal negotiation of selfhood and understanding Ladakhi identity in its complexity. His project brings together various aspects of the Ladakhi kitchen – its design and architecture, material objects and the culinary and craft practices associated with them, trade and farming – with a more personal exploration of the artist's own maternal Newari lineage of metal craftsmen, who migrated historically to do metalwork in Ladakh.

This ability to make connections between personal and larger collective issues was also directly linked to another observation commonly shared by the Fellows at the end of their research across the regions. They noted that field research often takes place far from the communities, which can skew the representation of those communities. This has been felt by Soujanya Boruah and Shyam Lal, whose project 'Tension' addresses the

stress among the Gaddi shepherds arising from ecological distress. For the duo, directly engaging with the Gaddi community is paramount to understand how ecological distress manifests and the resilience needed to face it.

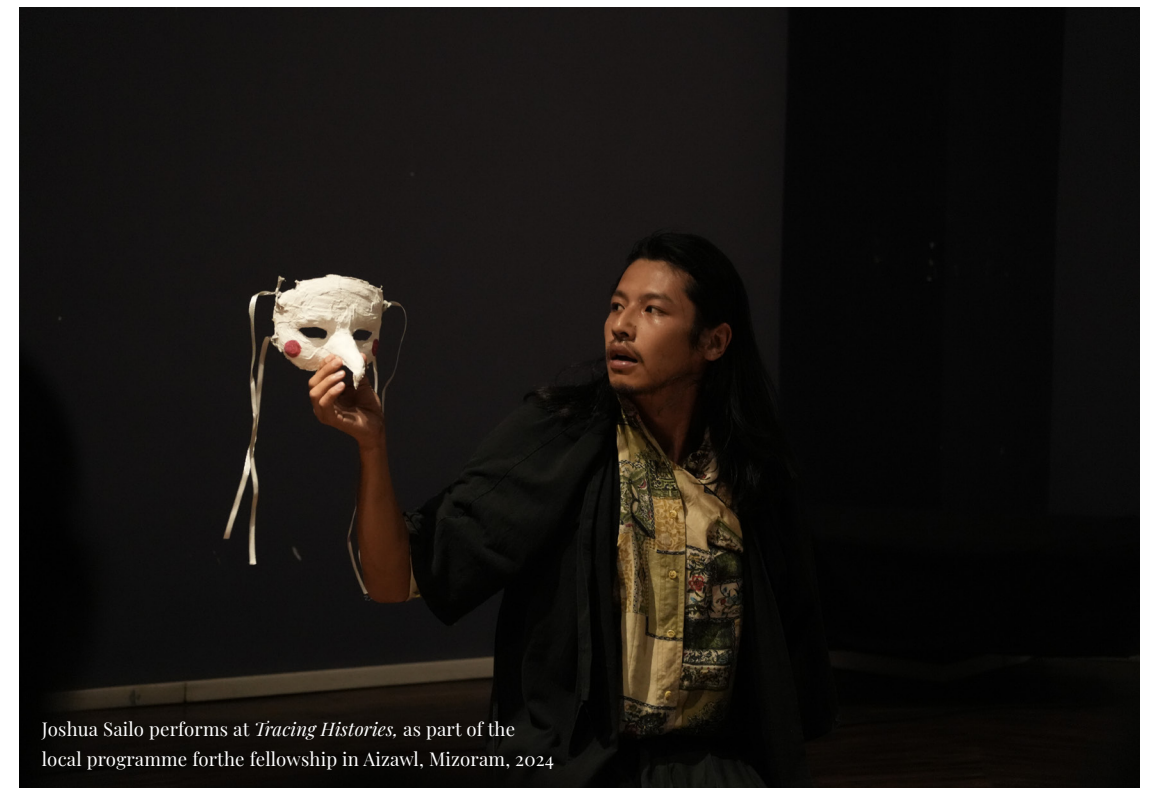
The potential of art projects to generate conversations with different stakeholders and build a process of working together through contemporary urgencies is also extremely relevant in the context of these projects. The Bere Art Collective from Kokrajhar, Assam, has been deeply engaged in conversing with farmers, fishermen and the communities in Dheer Beel, focusing on understanding the local environment and the impact of human activities on natural ecosystems. This initiative involves comprehensive research and documentation efforts aimed at raising awareness and fostering sustainable practices within the community.

For members of Radio Henvalvani in Uttarakhand, the urgency is relating to a much needed conversation about climate change through poetry and song, one that builds on the emotional resonances these cultural forms carry for their listeners.

And, just like it, these processes and practices are committed to a deep listening of places and communities. The strength of the Himalayan Hub is really about giving those voices the centrestage and to stand behind them as they propose and build a strong, grounded collective vision for the Himalayas.



At the launch of Royal Enfield's Camp Kharu in Ladakh in June 2022, a display of 'The Ladakhi Kitchen' by Tsering Motup Siddho was presented as a work-in-progress



Joshua Sailo performs at *Tracing Histories*, as part of the local programme for the fellowship in Aizawl, Mizoram, 2024

Return to Roots

Stories of homecoming of two young changemakers and recipients of Royal Enfield Grants for Conservation. Meet Seela Lepcha from Dzongu Valley, Sikkim and Wanmei Konyak from Changlangshu, Nagaland.

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THE LEPCHA MUSEUM OF DZONGU

Perched atop a hill in the Dzongu Valley of Sikkim, accessible through a trail of thick forests and uneven roads, stands a traditional wooden structure that houses the living traditions of the Lepchas. Founded by 28-year-old Seela Lepcha, fondly known as Abigail, this Lepcha museum has been christened *Sungsa Lee*, translated to mean “House of Stories”.

Seela is an alumna of the 5th Green Hub Fellowship batch from Sikkim. With the training received, she filmed the documentary “Indigenous Seed Keeper”, which earned the Runner-up Award at the Green Frames Vatavaran Short Film Competition in 2023. The film, which follows the story of a local farmer who dedicates his life to preserving disappearing indigenous seeds, spotlights the critical need for safeguarding traditional knowledge. Her training as a Green Hub Fellow not only enabled her to work on this award winning film, it also spurred Seela to embark on a new mission — building a Lepcha Museum.

The Lepchas are considered to be the first inhabitants to have settled at the foothills of Mount Khangchendzonga. Born and

raised in the lap of alpine forests, the land has bestowed upon them a unique knowledge of nature and shaped their cultural identity. Although indigenous to Sikkim, the Lepchas make up roughly about 7 to 8 percent of the population in the state today, with socio-political, cultural and environmental factors threatening their traditional knowledge systems, oral traditions and unique ways of life.

A maiden project of its kind, work to build the museum commenced in October 2022 with the help of Royal Enfield Grants For Conservation. While led by the then-26 year old Seela, it was the community of Dzongu that came together, gathering artefacts and stories to ensure the museum reflected the true essence of Lepcha culture. However, the journey was fraught with challenges. Bridging community dialogue in the midst of natural disasters, like the flash floods of October 2023 and June 2024, have made things difficult.

After an uphill battle of 18 months, the foundation for *Sungsa Lee* was finally laid down. Armed with wisdom passed down by ancestors and new learnings from experts who had come down to Dzongu to help with the project, the museum began taking shape as a blend of traditional knowledge with modern museum practices. Sungsa Lee now houses a collection of curated artefacts, and has also evolved into a space for the Lepchas of Dzongu to document oral histories and create interactive exhibits to educate and engage visitors.

As Dzongu battles the impacts of heavy rains, with the Teesta river washing away the only two bridges connecting the region with the rest of the state, Seela and Dawa, another Sikkim-based Green Hub Fellow, are looking for means to support the community. Having moved to neighbouring Siliguri for work opportunities in 2023, Seela relies on online communication for daily updates from her community members. She also makes sure to visit Dzongu at least once a month, with each return rooted in her commitment to her people, unshaken by the cards dealt by nature and circumstances.



THE GUARDIAN OF THE FORESTS

Changlangshu is a village in Nagaland, where traditions run deep, and the forests are an integral part of the community's lives. This village is home to Wanmei Konyak, a man whose life story is closely intertwined with the surrounding forest. Wanmei was born into the Konyak tribe, a community known for their rich cultural heritage and intricate tattoos. Growing up, he learned the ways of the forest passed on by ancestors, which included hunting. Yet, as he moved silently through the woods, there was always a nagging sense that something vital was slipping away.

The turning point came when Wanmei joined Green Hub, an initiative focussed on nurturing young leaders in conservation through filmmaking. It was here that he first grasped the urgent need for environmental protection. The once lush forests of Changlangshu were being decimated by deforestation, and the village faced a severe water crisis. The vibrant world he had known was vanishing. Determined to make a difference, Wanmei, along with his friends, formed the Biodiversity Management Committee (BMC) in 2018. Registered under the Nagaland State Biodiversity Board, they

committed to creating a green corridor and restoring damaged landscapes.

Understanding that true conservation requires the effort of the entire community, Wanmei actively involved the villagers in the restoration project, organising workshops, screenings, and awareness sessions to build capacities. A key aspect of the work led by Wanmei is creating nurseries based on knowledge from community elders regarding indigenous tree species. With each sapling planted and every community member who volunteered, there was a ripple effect of positive change. Together, with the support of the Royal Enfield Grant for Conservation, they have restored nearly 4-5 hectares of jhum areas since October 2022.

Wanmei continues to strive to deepen the engagement with the community, and has even begun sowing the seeds for future conservationists with nature education for children. Collaborating with Nayantara Siruguri, the Nature Education Coordinator at Green Hub, they have designed play-based activities to teach children about wildlife conservation.

Wanmei's journey of leading his community to become conservationists resonates far beyond the borders of the state. This story of returning home, reconnecting with the land while affording a pride of place to the traditions of ancestors, has now given new roots to an entire community that has become the guardians of the forests.



Small Steps to Collective Action

Prem Das Rai

The author is a member and former President of ECOSS and IMI. He is a development thinker and a specialist in Ecotourism. He is also active in the political arena and served as a Lok Sabha MP from 2009 to 2019. He is an alumna of IIT Kanpur and IIM Ahmedabad.

The Himalaya, formed by the ongoing collision between the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates, represents one of the Earth's most dramatic geological features. The range stretches over 2,400 kilometres across five countries: India, Nepal, Bhutan, China (Tibet) and Pakistan. The Northeast states, North Bengal, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh comprise the Himalayan region of the Indian Union. Its vast expanse encompasses a diverse array of ecosystems, from subtropical forests in the lower foothills to alpine meadows and barren, snow-covered peaks at higher altitudes.

The Himalaya are also at the forefront of climate change; the risks and impacts it poses are daunting, and very real and present. For example, water scarcity for both Himalayan communities and the populations in the plains fed by rivers originating from here is a major threat. Our focus, then, must move to adaptation rather than mitigation at a landscape level. The anecdotes below are from Sikkim but apply equally and in principle to the other Himalayan states as well. The Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) from Lhonak Lake at 5,200 m (17,100 ft) above sea level in North Sikkim and the subsequent

breach of the Teesta III Dam at Chungthang on 4 October 2023 left a trail of destruction along the Lachen Chu and River Teesta with 37 people losing their lives, 78 missing and countless property and assets washed away or damaged. The floods damaged critical infrastructure, important biodiversity landscapes and affected lives of people in Sikkim, Darjeeling and Kalimpong. The recovery process promises to be long and expensive.

At the time of writing this, we are witnessing the complete breakdown of National Highway NH-10 due to the rise of the Teesta bed by over ten metres due to siltation by the GLOF event. The incessant rains of May and June 2024 have flooded the Teesta River, inundating homes and causing landslides. These events are climate change-induced, exacerbated by geological factors.

The emerging societal and demographic changes in the mountains are another huge issue. Youth make up more than 60 percent of the population. About 80 percent of them are first-time literates who have moved to urban centres, and will possibly never return to their villages. They will never till their land like their parents did. This has a direct bearing on the local food

security. The ghost villages of Uttarakhand are already in mainstream literature and this is likely to be repeated elsewhere.

How do we ensure that the people living in the mountains are resilient to these insecurities?

We must start looking at the development paradigms afresh, which will require major shifts in policy and implementation. One successful example of water management is the recharging of rivulets through the Dhara Vikas programme in East Sikkim. Here, ECOSS, supported by NABARD, recharged aquifers to ensure water security to villages dependent on natural water sources, which are drying up due to climate change and overuse by townships and a nearby airport. By empowering the Panchayats, the villagers can recharge their springs and watersheds by building water retention structures alongside revitalising and regenerating natural forests and local ecology. Currently, ground water recharging programs are happening in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and UT Ladakh amongst other places across the Himalaya.

Another matter of deep concern is the uncontrolled flood of tourists coming into the mountains to escape hot summers, in numbers that far exceed the carrying capacity. Gangtok, Manali, Mussoorie and Shimla are examples of how the mountains are facing the brunt of unplanned development. They lack necessary systems for water management, sewage treatment, waste management, electricity, roads, and accommodation. The local communities are left to deal with the repercussions. Part of the solution may lie in ecotourism, which leverages the ecosystem services (ESS)

that the villages provide. This can also be an attraction for younger people to return from urban centres and find more stable and attractive livelihoods. Combining organic farming and horticulture with ecotourism is an excellent way to involve tourists who wish to stay for longer durations during summer.

Ironically, the human tragedy that will unfold due to climate change will also create these opportunities. Resilience planning must be at the heart of our new development paradigm. Here, working with nature, and not against it, is the mindset change that policy makers and governments will have to contend with. Private sector in partnership with civil society can be an important ally in this transition.

Toward this end, CSR funding of organisations like ECOSS and IMI can play an enabling role in building on the knowledge base that already exists. Advocacy and informed policy will be the way forward. However, small steps at the local level are the way to go, coupled with spawning innovation and allowing technology, including AI, to usher in better weather and disaster forecasting and ecological transformation.

It is encouraging to see a corporate like Royal Enfield take initiative to combat these challenges and strive to build resilience amongst communities through its Social Mission programmes. Interdisciplinary collaboration and collective action is critical to safeguard the Himalaya.

The Royal Enfield Social Mission through its different projects, like the Himalayan Hub initiative, and emerging partnerships can be the spark that could ignite an ecosystem of change.



|| *Mt. Khangchendzonga is believed to be the abode of the state's patron deity. This photograph was taken in West Sikkim. Photo Credit: Manou*



KEYSTONE SPECIES

A stylized archway constructed from white blocks, set against a teal background. The arch is composed of 12 blocks in the upper curve and four vertical blocks on each side. The text is centered within the arch.

Royal Enfield is extending
its conservation efforts
to *Keystone Species in the
Himalayas, with a long-
term vision of helping build
human-animal harmony in
the Himalayan landscape and
furthering the responsible
tourism mindset.*



■ BROWN BEAR

The *Denmo*, as the Himalayan Brown Bear is known in Ladakh, is the largest mammal in the high-altitude Himalayas and has a declining population. Besides poaching threats for fur and to protect herds, brown bears are increasingly coming into conflict with humans due to improper waste management from tourism and army camps.

A pair of curious sub-adult siblings recently separated from their mother foraging on freshly grown wild tulips in Mushkore valley. May 2024. Photo Credit: Kuhelika.



■ SNOW LEOPARD

The Snow Leopard (*Shan* in the Ladakhi language) is emblematic of the Himalayas. As a keystone species at the forefront of climate change impacts, they are critical for the survival of other species in its ecosystem and the landscape itself.

A snow leopard scent marking at a rock signpost in the Zaskar valley. Photo Credit: SLC-IT



■ GOLDEN LANGUR

The Gee's Golden Langur is an endangered primate species restricted to the Manas landscape in Western Assam and contiguous areas in Bhutan. It is severely threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation, often living in close quarters to humans.

Golden Langur in Kakoijana Reserve Forest. This endangered primate species is found only in the BTR region, Western Assam and adjoining forests of Bhutan. Photo Credit: Sunil Rajagopal

MARINE CONSERVATION

Royal Enfield's marine conservation projects are aimed at conserving the unique diversity of India's coastal habitats and seas by working with local communities. They are designed to overcome challenges such as marine fauna strandings, research, sea turtle protection, retrieval of ghost nets and plastics, and finding circular solutions to deal with them.

In partnership with Tree Foundation and fisherfolk in Tamil Nadu:

- Rescued and released **45 turtles**, humpback dolphins, and tiger sharks from ghost nets
- Protected **285 turtle nests** and released **>30,000 hatchlings** safely into the sea
- ~20 MT of ghost nets recovered through **166 beneficiaries**
- Capacity building for **5735 villagers** from **14 villagers**

In collaboration with ReefWatch in Goa:

- Handled **94.7% of 115 cases of live strandings** and rescued animals were examined and treated
- Managed **175 cases of dead megafauna strandings**
- Research on antibiotic resistance in marine fauna
- **Conducted 50 outreach programs** for children and other workshops





The support provided by EML has been instrumental in reaching 5,735 fisherfolk across 14 villages, fostering awareness among local communities. Their contribution facilitated the rescue and release of 45 turtles (Olive Ridelys and green sea turtles), 1 Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin and 1 tiger shark by fishermen, empowering the community to actively engage in marine conservation efforts. Together, they successfully retrieved 19,641 kilograms of ghost nets from the ocean, which was transported to the TREE Foundation for further processing. Incentives were provided to 166 members of the fishing community.

Dr. Supraja Dharini,
Tree Foundation



**A ROAD
SAFETY INITIATIVE
THAT CREATES
AWARENESS AND
PROMOTES
ADOPTION OF
HELMETS AND
SAFE RIDING
PRACTICES.
BEHAVIOUR CHANGE
PROGRAMMES
ARE DELIVERED
THROUGH THE
MEDIUM OF
INNOVATIVE ART
INTERVENTIONS.**



Royal Enfield's road safety initiative, **Helmets for India** (HFI), is a not-for-profit Artists' Collective focussed on changing mindsets towards encouraging riders to ride with their helmets on each time they get astride their motorcycles. Helmets for India strongly believes in bringing together the global motorcycling community through art to spread awareness about safe riding, where the helmet serves as a canvas for self-expression.

Channelling the power of community and art, HFI made its mark at Motoverse 2023 with a large interactive booth

at the event. It effectively leveraged Motoverse's platform to engage more than 8,600 visitors and a diverse audience of riders and artists of all ages.

The HFI booth at Motoverse attracted participants to its helmet painting workshops, fostering a creative approach to spreading awareness on helmet usage among daily commuters and passionate riders alike. In addition, a human installation encompassing an aerial performance by Omaggio Performing Company and a showcase of 12 custom helmets by international artists served as artistic expressions and powerful symbols of road safety. This road safety programme also included collaborations with various partners, promoting road safety practices, fixing potholes, installing helmet safety sign boards and spotlights near colleges in Goa.

ART FOR CHANGE

Niels Peter Jensen

The author is an avid motorcyclist, TV host, automobile and fashion designer, and runs his own motorcycle design studio by the name of NPJ Design. He started Helmets For India in 2018 with the motto to make safer roads for everyone, everywhere. Packing school lunches as a dad of four helps him stay grounded.

My parents always explained things visually; they never pointed fingers or told me, “you can’t do that”. Now that I have kids of my own, I try to follow their example because I believe it is the right way; people, whether young or old, understand and follow better when they see - not when they are given orders and ultimatums.

Before I started my professional motorcycling career, I designed and custom built motorcycles - it was then that I found the most wonderful way to express myself. Without a doubt, designing motorcycles became a big passion of mine. It’s always a unique feeling to ride motorcycles that are hand-built and customised to your personality. Plus, it has always been a great conversation-starter with the people I meet on rides through the city and it leaves a lasting impression. It’s pretty simple - people love to see unique stuff which sticks

out because it is our quirks and personalities that make us different and want to connect with each other!

When I first came to India, I was blown away by the beauty of this country - I had never experienced a more colourful place in the world. India has inspired me in so many ways and the more I travelled on my Royal Enfield, the more I discovered its magic. But the more I travelled, the more I realised that not everyone on two wheels wears a helmet. Looking at the number of road accidents, and how many lead to fatalities because of this one decision to not wear a helmet, made me want to do something about it.

But first, I had to ask myself: how do you get in touch with the younger generation and how do you get their attention? Drawing from my own experiences as a designer and my conversations with riders who would



Art Meets Safety

IND KA 08 W7137

FOR INDIA

KA04A



Rider participant at Helmets for India Road Show

take interest in my custom builds, with my parents and now with my kids, the answer came to me right away. If I wanted to change things, I knew it would only be possible - not by forcing helmet usage - but through the visual medium of art. When we decide what to wear for the day, we go for options that reflect our mood or perhaps something that shows off our personality. The same goes with your helmet - if you have one that is true to your essence and something you are proud to wear, you will want to wear it. What's more, the younger generation is all about creativity, about expressing themselves with fashion, music, street art, and always pushing boundaries.

And that is how we started Helmets For India (HFI) - Royal Enfield's road safety initiative. Since its inception, we have had some of the most well-known artists from around the world join our cause, with famous names like Street Artist DFace using the helmet as their canvas to make a change. The feedback and impact we experienced over the years at events like Motoverse, Moto GP, music festivals and many more have shown us the power of art in bringing together communities and making change

At HFI, our aim is to use art to make the world safer and more colourful on two wheels, but the movement can go beyond - you just have to think outside the box!



HELMETS
FOR INDIA

#ArtOfSafety

Legacy Programmes and Local Area Development

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*Photography:
Tom Cochrane and Fading Cultures*

I. LEGACY PROGRAMMES

Programmes focussed on facilitating education in remote communities in the Alwar district of Rajasthan and providing best-in-class eyecare through the Dr Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital.

SHIKSHAK PAHAL PROGRAMME

Eicher Motors Ltd. has been working to make quality education accessible for children of marginalised communities in Thanagazi and Umrain blocks of Alwar, Rajasthan for more than two decades. In partnership with Bodh Shiksha Samiti, the project has been running 31 schools where the focus has been on increasing children's enrollment, attendance regularity and their learning outcomes.

The curriculum is planned to provide opportunities for learning music, art, physical education, and information technology. The project covers 25 Gram Panchayats, 141 villages/dhanis, 4738 families, constituting 28727 people. In the 31 Bodhshala (schools), 5,192 children [2743 boys (53%), 2449 girls(47%)] were enrolled in FY 2023. The programme was able to establish a baseline of learning outcomes in English, Hindi and Maths, for all children. In a significant achievement, 42 girls reached the district level in kabaddi, kho-kho and football in Rajiv Gandhi Rural Olympiad, wherein 662 students and alumni had participated. As part of this project and towards promoting holistic child development, mid-day meals are provided to children

under the Poornma programme. Approximately 8,90,301 meals were served over the course of the year. The community and alumni are also engaged extensively in these community-owned schools. Eicher Motors Ltd. also supports school construction under this program.



DR. SHROFF'S CHARITY EYE HOSPITAL

Since 1996, Eicher Motors Ltd. (EML) has supported Dr. Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital (SCEH) in New Delhi – first helping strengthen the institution and governance and then supporting operations.

In the recent past, the EML-supported stem cell research project at Dr. Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital (SCEH) has contributed to improved eye healthcare options for patients through cutting-edge research. These are being implemented in the clinics at SCEH, resulting in better diagnosis of fresh frozen sectioning for eyelid margin cancer patients and treatment of autologous serum preparation and use. In the past six months, the stem cell laboratory has filed for the provisional patent for biomarkers associated with ocular surface diseases

and methods of identifying the same. Additionally, one patent has been filed, which will help in diagnosis and treatment of keratoconus. In total, 17 studies were conducted and seven research papers were published. The team also raised INR 4.83 crores to support the project, while five students registered in the PhD programme and four clinician-scientists are being trained.

The SCEH facility in Daryaganj, Delhi is a heritage building, constructed more than 100 years ago. Recently, EML supported the upgradation of the facilities, now 80 percent complete. The upgraded facility will feature private OPD chambers for ophthalmologists, which will increase its capacity to examine patients. In addition to this, for pre-surgical counselling, a diagnostic room will be added which will decongest the present room and lead to reduced waiting time.

Q & A: Re-building a Century-Old Institution

Founded in 1926, Dr. Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital (SCEH) is a non-commercial, non-profit trust setup to enable people from all walks of life and all sections of society to receive quality eye care. SCEH has a strong tradition of eye care, and more recently, ENT care. It has been known for both, its high quality as well as the compassionate treatment it has offered its patients.

In conversation with Dr. Umang Mathur, the CEO of SCEH and a practising ophthalmologist who manages the hospital's charitable functions, including the partnership with Eicher Motors Limited.

Q1: SCEH is nearly 100 years old. And Eicher Motors has been a partner for 3 decades. Could you tell us about how this journey began and developed?

SCEH was established on 4 ½ acres of land in the busy Chandni Chowk area, across from the Red Fort in Delhi, by

the founder Dr. SP Shroff with the support of the British government. With its intent to serve society, SCEH was soon established as an institution of repute and remained true to its mission to make a significant impact on the eradication of blindness. But it remained a purely charitable hospital dependent on donations and managed by a trust.

In the 1960s, SCEH struggled to remain in touch with the growing requirements of eye care and slowly the quality of services declined. So much so that in the early 90s, the trust was finding it increasingly difficult to manage and there was a thought to hand the management back to the Municipal Corporation.

That is when Mr. Vikram Lal and Eicher stepped in, around 1996. It took a couple of years to rebuild the structure and management with Eicher even deputing its own employees at different levels. What was even more remarkable about Eicher's role in this revival was that during this period, Eicher was going through its own share of troubles and there were no government regulations in place to necessitate such an involvement.

Dr. Steven Roy, a sports medicine doctor from Oregon who moved to India to join Eicher's healthcare consultancy also proved instrumental in establishing quality standards and streamlining operations at SCEH. During this transition, SCEH moved from a pure charity model to a cross-subsidised model. This meant patients who could pay could make the

charitable side of the mission self-sustaining. This also allowed SCEH to bring in the best doctors and technology and significantly scale up its operations.

Q2. What has been the impact that this partnership has made? What are the main areas where SCEH and Eicher have worked together?

By 2002, the Outlook Magazine had rated us among the top 10 institutes in the country. When I joined in 1998, we did about 700 surgeries annually. During Covid we were doing about 30,000 and last year, we did 71,000 surgeries and were able to reach some 20-lakh people through our clinics and other outreach programs. We also now have an outpatient facility that handles close to 1200 patients a day. We are the second largest Eye Bank in North India with about 2,000 corneal transplants annually.

When the partnership began, Eicher helped create the vision, mission and to build the infrastructure and capabilities to become a sustainable practice. Once established, there has been support towards improving standards, expanding facilities, interests and research. For example, we are working on futuristic research on stem cells, creating opportunities for artificial cornea development, tumours of the eye, genetics etc. in collaboration with renowned organisations like ICMR, DRDO, DST etc.

SCEH has a board mandate that 50% of the work that we do should be

completely free for the economically disadvantaged. Using this commitment and our technical strength, we've been able to become a major player looking at community eye care in North India with outreach in UP, Uttarakhand, Haryana and Rajasthan. As part of our public health programs, we screen populations and have established 87 Vision Centers, which are primary care clinics.

We have an academy through which we train doctors who come to us for experience through a much sought-after fellowship programme. Some 70 fellows are part of the long-term programme, and another 100-odd are part of short-term programmes annually. We also run a unique programme to train 12th pass women from lower socio-economic backgrounds as eye care paramedics.

Q3 SCEH works with other corporates as well. What sets Eicher apart from the rest?

SCEH partners with many large international NGOs and funding agencies. What I have observed is that most prefer to engage only at a project level because they create boundaries with respect to what they support and what they don't.

Eicher is invested in institutional building and in creating strong fundamentals and structure to ensure long-term, effective delivery of impact.

This reflects in where we are now – any organisation in a not-for-profit space which does 50% of its work for free would



otherwise be on thin ice financially.

Q4 Is the current CSR climate in India conducive for more such partnerships?

The 2% CSR spending mandate from the government stimulates everyone to act. We have seen a shift in the last three years where our support is gradually transitioning from international NGOs to domestic CSR support (nearly 65% now). On the downside, I believe there has been a loss of emotion and passion towards the cause itself. There is a danger of CSR becoming simply a line function due to multiple regulations, need for impact assessments and ESG focus; it may also be restrictive in terms of scale and direction.

Q5 Can you tell us about some interesting models or programs in eye care?

Eye care is now highly evolved in India. 70% of eye care surgeries are done outside of government facilities, with the not-for-profit space contributing significantly. While India may have the highest number of blind people in the world, this is largely a function of population. We have brought the prevalence of blindness down to less than 2% in the last two decades. Besides ours, there are many successful models elsewhere, specially in South India which are delivering high quality, impactful work.

One of our unique initiatives is the Eicher-supported Driver Care program for truckers along the Golden Quadrilateral. Many accidents occur because drivers

never had a proper eye checkup and they are always on the move; the Driver Care Program was designed to address this. It uses a fully equipped mobile van, which is used to check not just vision but basic diagnosis like blood pressure and other ailments. Processes have been created for making and delivering spectacles in a seamless manner without disturbing their travel routine.

Q6 What are some of your focus areas for the coming year(s)?

We are well on our way to achieving our goal of being able to handle 100,000 surgeries by 2027 and should be able to touch 1,50,000 by 2030. We are also focusing on geographic expansion and establishing centres for research on unknown and rare eye diseases. We already have the paediatric ophthalmology Center of Excellence, which is now one of the world's best training centres. We are working with Johns Hopkins University on artificial intelligence applications for remote imaging and diagnosis. We also hope to start construction of a new hospital with a capability to perform 100,000 surgeries.

I will reiterate that Eicher has been instrumental in not just reviving but driving SCEH to where it stands today. Our success even in other fields where Eicher has not directly contributed can be attributed to their integrity of purpose, a clear vision and commitment to institution building, instilling the right culture and value systems on which to grow from.

II. LOCAL AREA DEVELOPMENT

Supporting local communities near our manufacturing units with holistic development programmes focussing on health, WaSH, environment sustainability, education, livelihood etc.

For years, Royal Enfield programmes have focussed on the holistic development of communities residing in the vicinity of its factories. From skill development, education and healthcare to WaSH and livelihood, several projects were carried out under Local Area Development in various parts of Tamil Nadu.

The Royal Enfield Academy For Technical Skills in Chennai run in partnership with the **Centre for Entrepreneurship Development** (Tamil Nadu), aims to empower unemployed youth through free technical training and placement in the automobile sector. To facilitate this, five technical labs at the RRASE College of Engineering in Chennai have been set up. In 2023, a total of 3,196 students were trained and 99% of these youth were placed.

Conducted in partnership with the **Madhi Foundation**, the TN Soars programme focuses on imparting quality education to children in government-run and government-aided schools of Tamil Nadu. The project was delivered through the Ennum Ezhuthum mission. This is a pathbreaking multi-stakeholder approach where teachers, children, administrators, parents and the entire

ecosystem around a child are considered as stakeholders in the child's education.

To start with, 18 of the 21 recommendations of Madhi Foundation were implemented, impacting 36,700 schools, 80,000 teachers and more than 13.75 lakh students. Weekly and monthly assessments were carried out in all government schools in 38 districts. More than 80,000 teachers were trained in the use of proper classroom management techniques and how to co-create ideas on student-centric approaches, among others. Currently, 88% of the students are at the appropriate grade learning level while for the other stakeholder - Sandbox, this figure is at 55.67%.

Another education initiative, conducted in partnership with **Rural Education and Action for Liberation** (REAL), has impacted 323 school children, including 154 girls, and 14 teachers. The programme focuses on improving infrastructure, children's academic performance, health and hygiene, and finally, raising awareness about Child Rights and Child Protection.

In partnership with the **Network for Quality Education**, Royal Enfield's strategic education programme in Tamil Nadu facilitates state education reform in collaboration with the Commissioner of School Education. Through this, 37,500 schools will be impacted, with an outreach to more than 59 lakh students and 2.5 lakh teachers.

In FY 2023-24, more than 99% of students

completed the battery test and 100% schools completed the test in the area of sports. More than 98% of schools now have adequate books for all their students and 6,029 schools have language labs to help 8.7 lakh students take a step towards improved spoken English skills.

With **Ekam Foundation**, Royal Enfield initiated a healthcare programme to reduce the child and maternal mortality across four panchayats, namely Chennakuppam, Nattarasampattu, Vallam, and Valayakaranai of Kanchipuram and Chengalpattu district.

Under this programme, more than 844 home visits were conducted in the villages to track high-risk cases, including antenatal and postnatal mothers, and infants under the age of 2. The programme was able to reach out to 59 antenatal mothers, 60 prenatal mothers and 197 children. In addition, three modern labour rooms have been constructed at three Primary Healthcare Centres in Oragadam, which has resulted in a 50% increase in deliveries at these healthcare centres

In partnership with **CARE**, Royal Enfield's livelihood programme has supported 200 women entrepreneurs by building capacities through Self Employment and Entrepreneurship Development centres. So far, 584 women have been trained in collectivisation and 394 in entrepreneurship. 150 women were actively supported to start individual enterprises while another 96 were supported

to form collective enterprises.

Conducted in partnership with **Habitat for Humanity**, Royal Enfield's WaSH interventions promote healthcare, including preventive healthcare, and hygiene in various villages in Tamil Nadu. Under this programme 1,674 stakeholders have benefited from the construction of 150 toilets, four community water purification plants to improve access to clean drinking water and 75 groundwater recharging systems in houses. These interventions have resulted in 150 families having access to clean and hygienic toilets, the water purification plants working as a social enterprise run by local self-help groups, establishing of infrastructure to potentially contribute 7,000 litres of water per household through rainwater harvesting and 26 children and teachers getting access to the safe handwash stations.

Royal Enfield supported the National Skill Development Mission through its Skill Development Centres (SDC) in Coimbatore and Lucknow, which provide training for youth in the automotive industry. The SDC in partnership with **TVS** at Coimbatore, trained a total of 607 youth with a placement rate of 83%. In Lucknow, the SDC partnering with **Don Bosco Technical Society** was able to successfully place 252 candidates and introduced a new programme to train women as telecallers for the automotive sales industry.



Cyclone Michaung, Chennai. Photo Credit: Sunil Rajagopal

In response to the recent floods in **Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand**, Royal Enfield provided emergency relief across five districts – Kullu, Kinnaur, Simla, Kangra & Mandi. to communities affected by landslides, floods and heavy rain in July and August, 2023. The relief work included distribution of blankets,

taraulins, NFI kits, WaSH kits and ration. Repair work was undertaken for damaged houses and schoolchildren were provided with educational support. In addition, two ambulances were provided for rescue operations. The relief work was carried out in partnership with People for

Himalayan Development, CASA, Jagori and Shiksha Learning Centre.

In the wake of the more recent climate events in **Sikkim**, Royal Enfield worked with partners and authorities to provide relief to impacted communities. When the state of **Tamil Nadu**

witnessed heavy rainfall and subsequent floods during Cyclone Michaung in 2023-24, Royal Enfield worked with partner ATSWA Trust to extend resources to 2,500 affected families in the Tiruvottiur region.



GREEN BUSINESS OPERATIONS

Royal Enfield has articulated its vision of becoming a Global Motorcycling Brand with a well-defined roadmap ahead of it. In the last couple of years, *Sustainability has been identified as a strategic pillar that supports this long-term, global brand vision and as a commitment to drive an active agenda towards the environment and society at large.*

Through our green business operations, several projects have been implemented for resource efficiency and for managing our carbon footprint.



RECYCLABILITY
RECOVERABILITY
REUSABILITY

Circular by Design

I

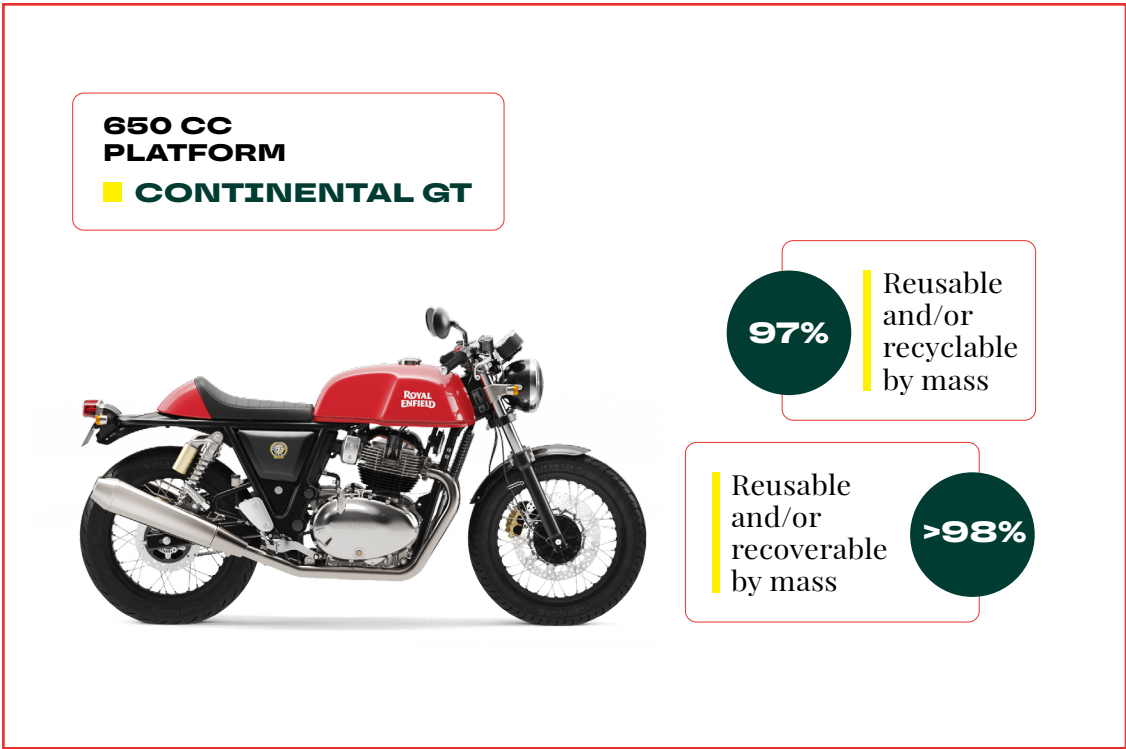
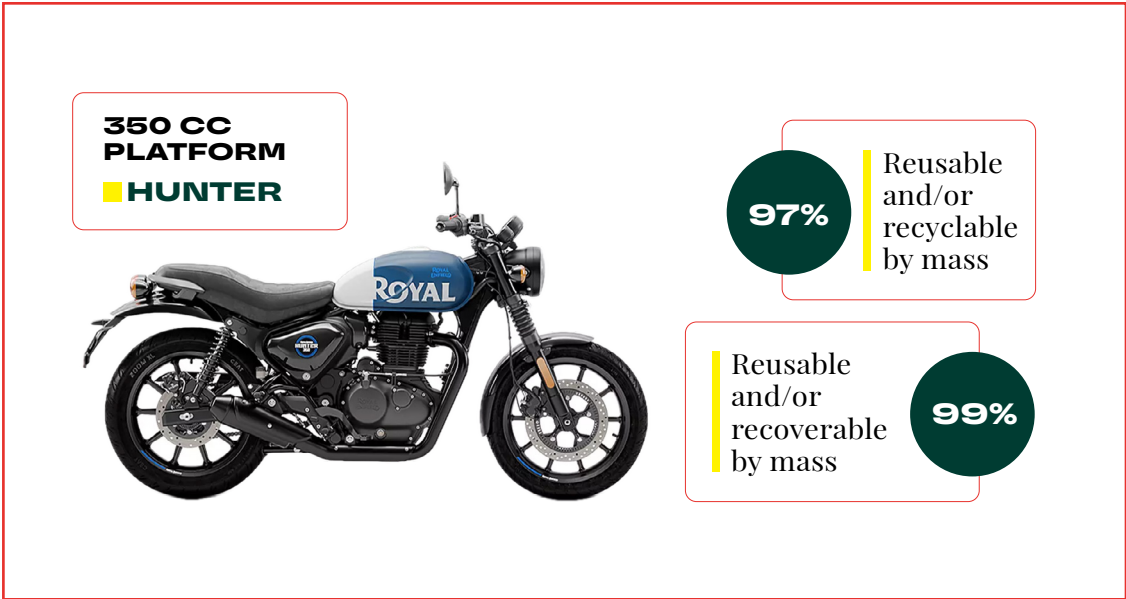
In an era where responsible use of resources is paramount, doing more with less is becoming a norm across industries. In the new world order, circularity – turning the products of today into the resources for tomorrow – is fast gaining resonance. Earlier, in most industries, product footprint was mostly equated with emissions. With the evolution of sustainability concepts, this thinking has undergone a change. At Royal Enfield, product footprint is viewed with a holistic approach.

While most companies approach sustainability through the compliance filter, the intent at Royal Enfield

is to explore the transformative potential of sustainability for both the brand and the business. In keeping with this, Royal Enfield was the first two-wheeler Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) to have conducted an RRR study of a full vehicle as per AIS 129 (not mandatory) by evaluating its Meteor model. Building on this, a complete study has been conducted for the Hunter and GT as representative of all 350cc and 650 cc platforms, which further improved on the learnings from the Meteor.

Circularity has become a demand from conscious consumers, in addition to regulators. Royal Enfield already stands for purposeful longevity as against planned obsolescence. In line with this, every motorcycle at Royal Enfield is designed through a holistic approach that has transitioned from an original focus

■ RRR STUDY





At Royal Enfield, product footprint is viewed with a holistic approach.

on function, quality and cost to the additional dimension of emissions over a lifetime as well as material circularity. As an OEM, the endeavour involves identifying, classifying and managing all materials and substances present in the motorcycles. This is a rigorous process, given the complexity of automotive supply chains and development processes.

■ **WHAT MAKES ROYAL ENFIELD PRODUCTS RRR-FRIENDLY?**

Royal Enfield motorcycles have been known for their robust build, road worthiness and longevity. Commitment to this philosophy means a product design, which is sturdy and remains planted to the road for all use cases. This also means usage of considerable amounts of metallic parts, which naturally makes them recyclable.

Today, Royal Enfield products and services have become benchmarks for world-class quality. The continuous evolution of these motorcycles and the long-term availability of spare parts ensures an extended useful life. This also helps in reducing waste footprint and promotes a more sustainable approach to transportation.

At the time of design, the inventory of materials and substances required is prepared with equal weightage assigned to performance and circularity. After this, there is

collaboration with suppliers to create the product bill of materials (BoM) that minimises the environmental footprint — including once the vehicle is dismantled. Each part or material type is linked to its specific end-of-life treatment cycle. This improves traceability and availability of product data across the entire life cycle, including End of Life Vehicles (ELV). Finally, product compliance is verified against the specific regulations of the target market.

The RRR certification process involves calculating the weight of different materials based on the intended design (fluids / batteries / oil and air filters / tyres / catalytic converters / metals / plastics / rubbers / glass, etc.). The materials are then grouped for recyclability and recoverability and calculated as a percentage of the total weight of the vehicle. The certification also involves auditing the manufacturer’s facility against the requirements of AIS 129. In order to limit the ecological footprint of a motorcycle, its entire life cycle, from design to production and use phase, as well as end of life needs, are considered. The goal is to help customers keep products in use as long as possible through high quality service and maintenance facilities and ready availability of spares. In addition, buy-back schemes enable refurbishing and reuse, potentially giving materials and components a second life through RRR.



■ **ELV / RRR REGULATION IN INDIA**

The GOI formulated an ELV regulation AIS 129 to minimise the impact on the environment, as well as energy use. Section Part-2B specifically talks of RRR and it is established for a new vehicle at its time of production and requires being at the minimum levels mentioned below:

- Reusable and / or recyclable to min. of 80 % by mass, and

- Reusable and / or recoverable to a min. of 85 % by mass
- Recyclability is the potential for recycling of component parts or materials diverted from an end-of-life vehicle. Recovery means, reprocessing of the waste materials in a production process, for the original purpose or for other purposes including processing as a means of generating energy.



**EMISSION
INTENSITY AND
RESOURCE USE**

Treading Lightly



Climate change is the greatest challenge that humanity faces today. As a mitigation measure, at COP21 in Paris, a plan to keep the global temperature increase to <2°C above pre-industrial levels was agreed upon by member countries. To achieve this target, countries have individually established Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which are climate action plans. NDCs are usually captured in the form of emission or emission intensity targets.

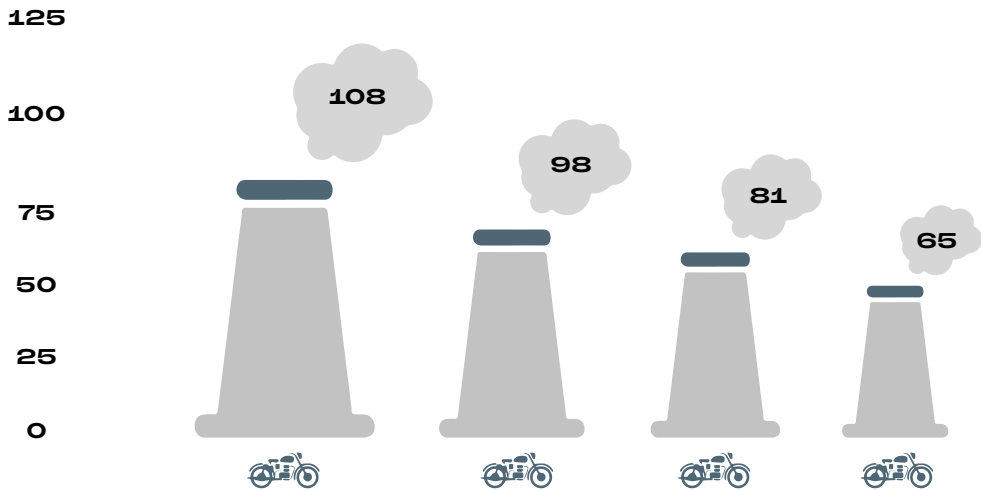
Over the last few years, Royal Enfield has been diligently tracking and

improving the emission intensity for its products. This has entailed optimising processes, design and resource use.

As a result, Royal Enfield has been able to reduce the emission intensity per motorcycle by nearly 40% in three years, to 65 Kg Co2e/motorcycle in FY 2023-24.

Emission intensity measures the amount of GHGs released per unit of activity or output and scale. This usually comprises Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions, which are directly within the company’s ambit.

EMISSION INTENSITY (Kg Co2e/motorcycle)



FY21

- MWp rooftop solar at Oragadam.
- Energy saving initiatives at Vallam
- Waste heat recovery from paint shop oven & compressor.
- BLDC for air supply units
- VFD for high load equipments
- LED lighting at Vallam

FY22

- 113 MWp GCP solar plant in Feb’22. Benefits accrued in FY23
- LNG as an alternative to LPG

FY23

- Energy saving initiatives at Oragadam
- Waste heat recovery from paint shop oven & compressor.
- BLDC for air supply units
- VFD for high load equipments
- LED lighting at Vallam

FY24

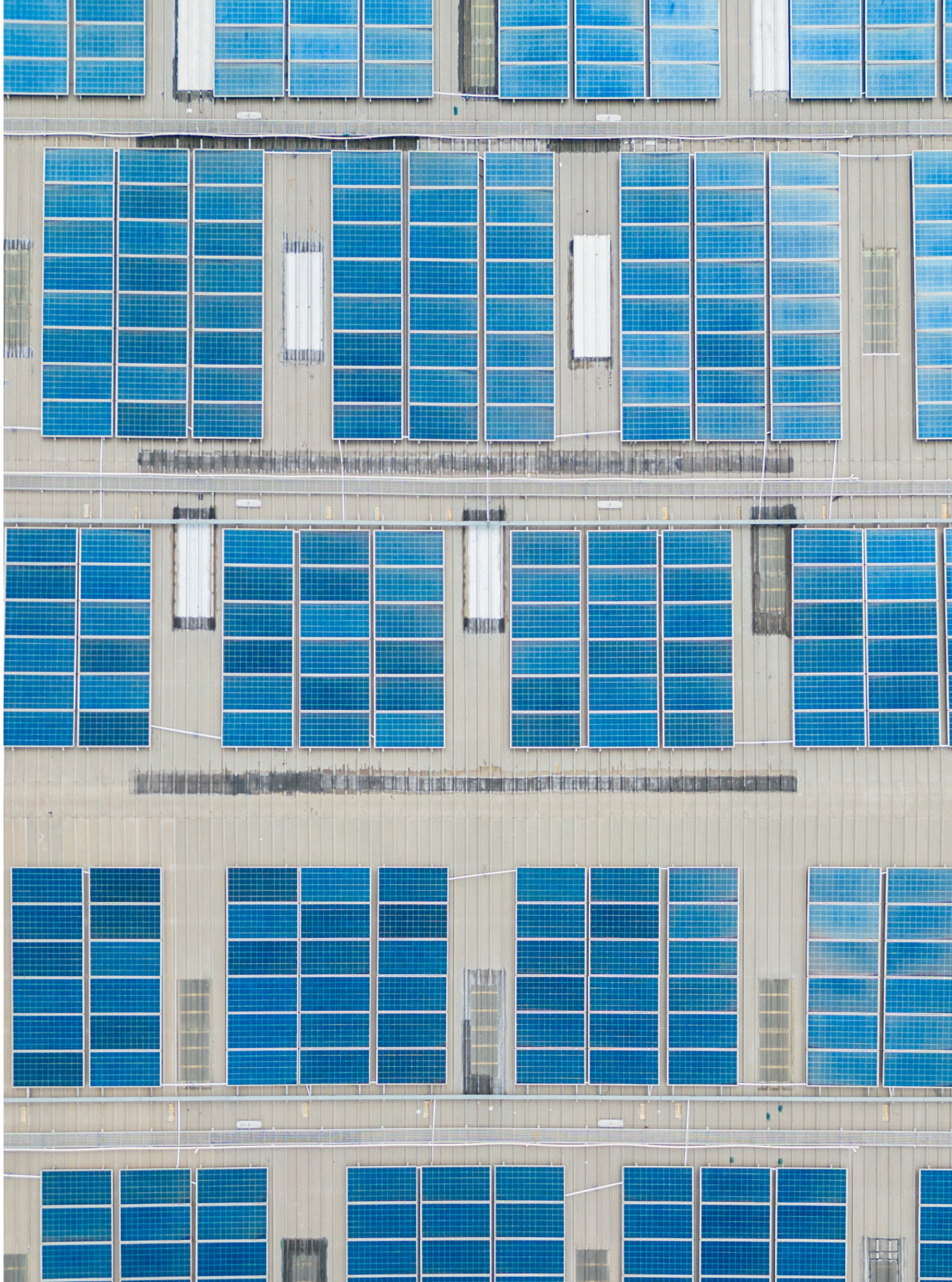
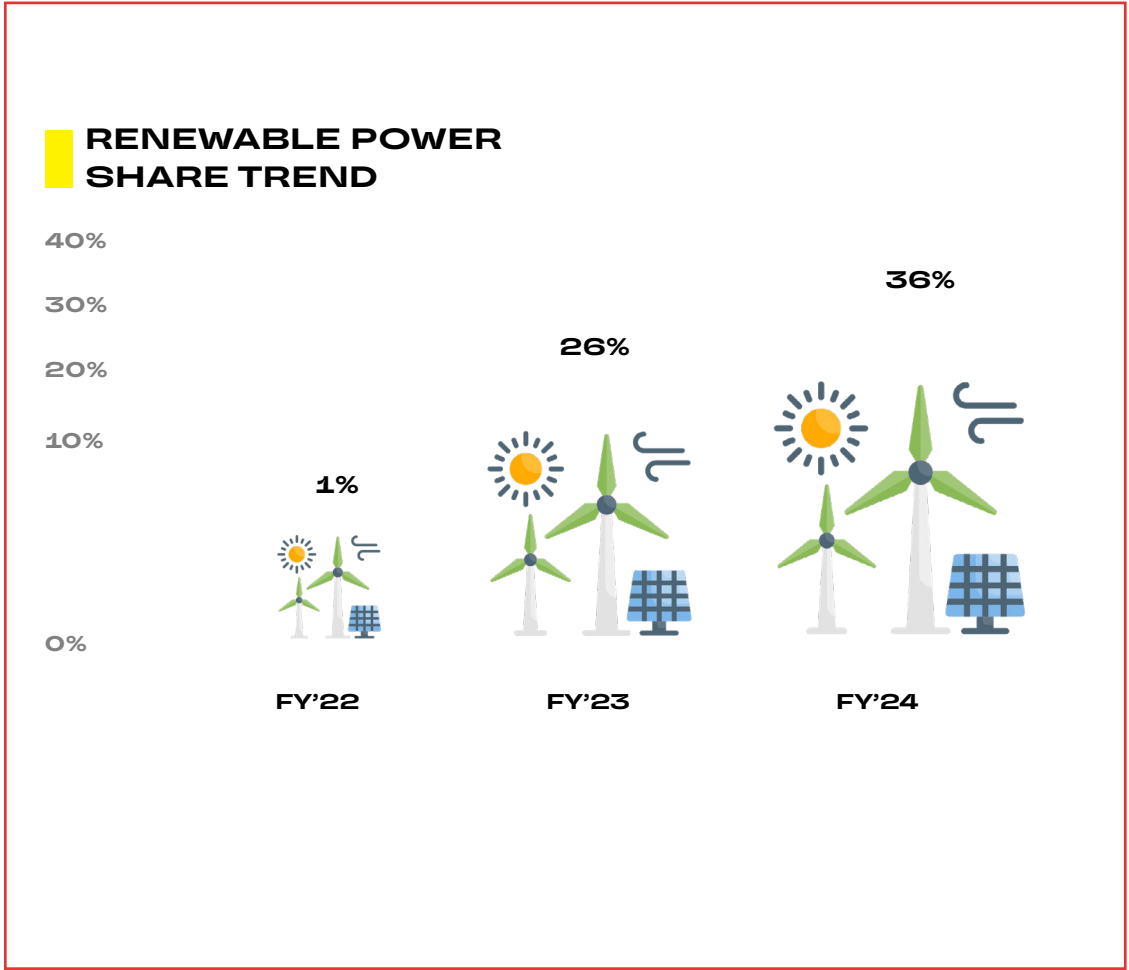
- MWp rooftop solar at Vallam
- 75 KWp rooftop solar at GHQ
- 3rd party green power purchase
- 9 MWp GCP solar - WIP

The annual decline in emission intensity is also due to the gradual shift towards renewable power – which is a mix of captive solar power plants, open access renewable power and green power purchase.

Tracking emission intensity provides insights into the direction a company is taking in terms of commitment to emission reduction and climate change action. It is also useful to evaluate investments required

for decarbonisation measures. Royal Enfield understands that improvements in intensity alone do not guarantee reductions in total emissions.

With this in mind, a complete inventory of GHG emissions at corporate level has been prepared. This will ensure that targets are both environmentally and economically sustainable and contribute to the global effort of mitigating the effects of climate change.



■ **WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

Water is one of earth’s critical resources and constantly under stress with hyper-local impacts that directly affect communities, health and wellbeing as well as economic development. Globally, at least 1.7 billion people live in water basins depleted by overuse and by 2030, a 40% shortfall in freshwater resources is predicted. 21 Indian cities including Delhi will have run out of groundwater by 2030.

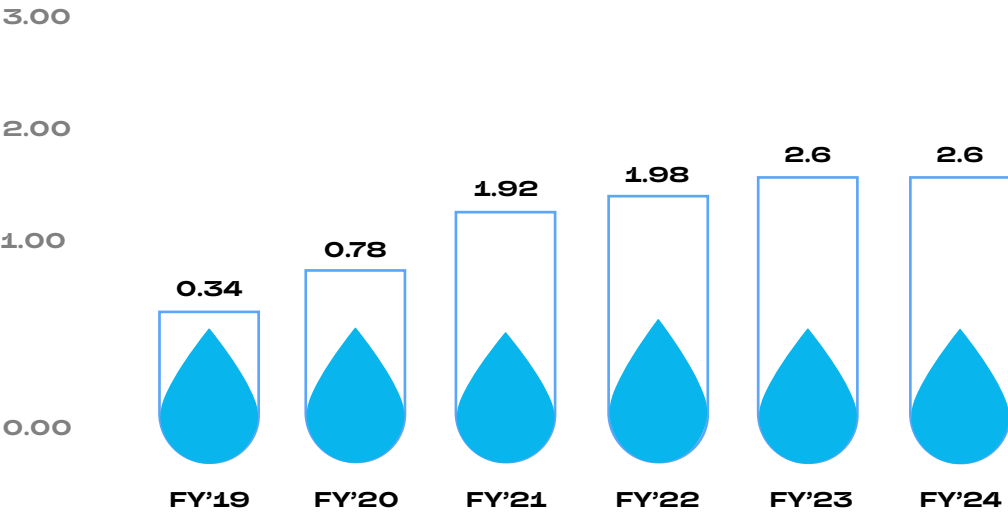
Royal Enfield understands the need for water stewardship and having a positive impact on the communities around it. For the brand, being water positive means efficient use of water in all operations and returning more water than consumed.

This has been done through diligent individual and collective action, which addresses governance, balance, quality, sanitation and hygiene issues. These efforts are addressing water use efficiency at production facilities and workplaces while also collaborating with communities to restore and enhance watersheds in local areas and as part of Royal Enfield’s larger social mission.

Over the years, concrete steps have been taken at different levels to incrementally reduce water use footprint. Water positivity has grown in leaps and bounds to 2.6 in the current year from 2019 levels.



■ **WATER POSITIVITY**



■ **KEY INITIATIVES TAKEN UP IN EACH YEAR**

FY20

- Dedicated focus on the recycle and reuse of wastewater across units
- Manufacturing process tweaked to operate with treated water
- Treated water used for irrigation, with no discharge

FY21

- Reduction in consumption of fresh water by methods, such as recycle and reuse, procuring TTRO (tertiary treated RO water for process) for processes
- Installation of rain water recharging structures to improve underground water table
- Efficient tap nozzles at facilities

- Elimination of fresh water usage for chemical cleaning by replacing with RO-treated water
- Saving water by collecting condensate from cooling systems at the Tech Centre

FY22

- Rainwater harvesting pond & treatment system commissioned at Oragadam
- 670 KL of rainwater utilised for plant operations

FY23

- 29,416 KL of rain water harvested and used for plant operations

TOWARDS A CLIMATE-RESILIENT FUTURE

IMPACT ACHIEVED
(FY 2023-24)

716 MWH

of energy savings

0.65 GJ/
MOTORCYCLE

energy intensity in
manufacturing units

19.4%

Reduction in emission intensity
from FY 2022-23

WATER POSITIVE OPERATIONS

IMPACT ACHIEVED
(FY 2023-24)

3,63,772 KL

Total water recycled/treated

3,59,821 KL

Total water reused

0.21 KL

KL /MOTORCYCLE



TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE VALUE CHAIN

Synergy in the Supply Chain

R

Royal Enfield is driven by its strategic vision – REBALANCE, and sustainability is a critical fourth pillar of this vision. In keeping with this vision, the brand has adopted conscious business processes and continually strives to have a comprehensive approach to sustainability. This is not only limited to products but extends to the entire value chain. Recognising the vital role played by partners, Royal Enfield is actively working with them to co-create a sustainable supply chain.

A sustainable supply uses environmentally and socially responsible practices at every stage, ensuring standards for the OEM and their suppliers ecosystem. This includes all aspects of the ESG spectrum, including consequences for workers or local communities.

CREATING A SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY CHAIN AT ROYAL ENFIELD


Royal Enfield is collaborating with its supply chain partners and actively encouraging them to evolve as responsible businesses. In 2023, the journey was initiated by piloting an ESG assessment exercise across 12 Tier 1 suppliers.

Learning and building on this pilot, ESG assessment was successfully extended to an additional 50 suppliers in FY 2023-24. Suppliers were selected for the assessment based on the criticality of auto components

supplied and the value of procurement. The assessment was carried out through an extensive questionnaire based on the nine principles of the BRSR Core and covering all aspects of the ESG spectrum. Capacity building and training of partners was built into the process.


These engagements served as opportunities to foster collaboration, share best practices, and meet the SEBI Mandates for ESG disclosures in BRSR Framework (for the value chain applicable to the top 250 listed entities by market capitalisation).

EXPECTATIONS FROM SUPPLIER PARTNER




ENERGY:

1. 50% Reduction in GHG Emission by 2030
2. Long Term Net Zero Target for Scope 1, 2 & 3




WATER:

1. 50% Water used in operations is fully replenished and achieve ZLD
2. Water Positivity in operations




CIRCULARITY:

1. Zero Waste to Landfill
2. Promote Reduce, Reuse & Recycle
3. Design & Manufacture using circular economy Principles




SOCIAL:

1. Best in class Human Rights policies
2. Promote DEI; >30% workforce, >20% leadership team are Women
3. Implementing regulations as per Factories Act and policies in line with DEI and responsible governance



HEALTH & SAFETY:

1. Healthy LTIFR Management
2. 100% Resolution of H&S Complaints
3. 100% Adherence to safety PPE's
4. Trained ERT Teams and Communication
5. Accessibility of Operational Health care



SUSTAINABLE SOURCING:

1. Integration of social, ethical and environmental factors for selecting suppliers
2. Value chain partners to mandate the sustainability requirements further upstream (Tier 2, Tier 3 etc.)

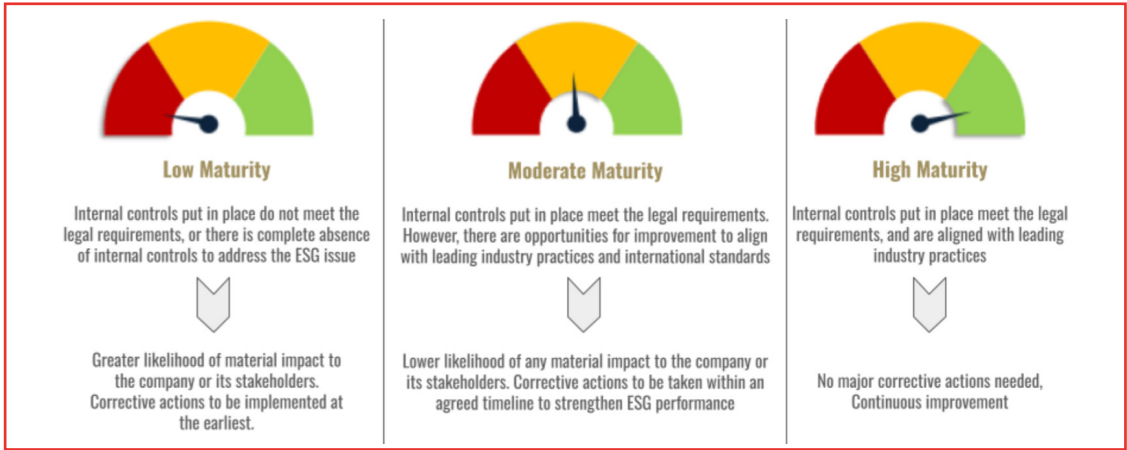
We were able to achieve this by assiduously developing and sticking to a distinct methodology

- 1. Developing an ESG Baseline Assessment Framework in line with leading ESG standards and peer practices to evaluate supplier performance on key metrics, including environment performance, employee welfare, governance practices and policies.
- 2. Capacity-building sessions conducted for the selected suppliers to appraise the developed ESG framework and process for undertaking baseline assessment. A detailed information request list was created as per the requirements of the ESG framework and circulated to suppliers.
- 3. A detailed assessment of the supplier information and practices was carried out through desk-based review and on-site assessment. Management interactions including engagement

with supplier’s ESG representatives were undertaken to finalise the data.

- 4. Gap Analysis & Performance Improvement Plan:
 - Analysis of the assessed supplier data and benchmarking it with the requirements of the ESG assessment framework to assign a baseline maturity rating.
 - Gaps and areas of improvement were identified in the existing ESG practices of the supplier.
 - An ESG Performance Improvement Plan was developed including corrective actions to be taken by the supplier for strengthening ESG performance.
 - Continuous collaboration with suppliers to bridge the identified gaps.

- 5. During the annual supply meet, 15 Suppliers were awarded under sustainability category for their effective collaboration and sustainability initiatives.

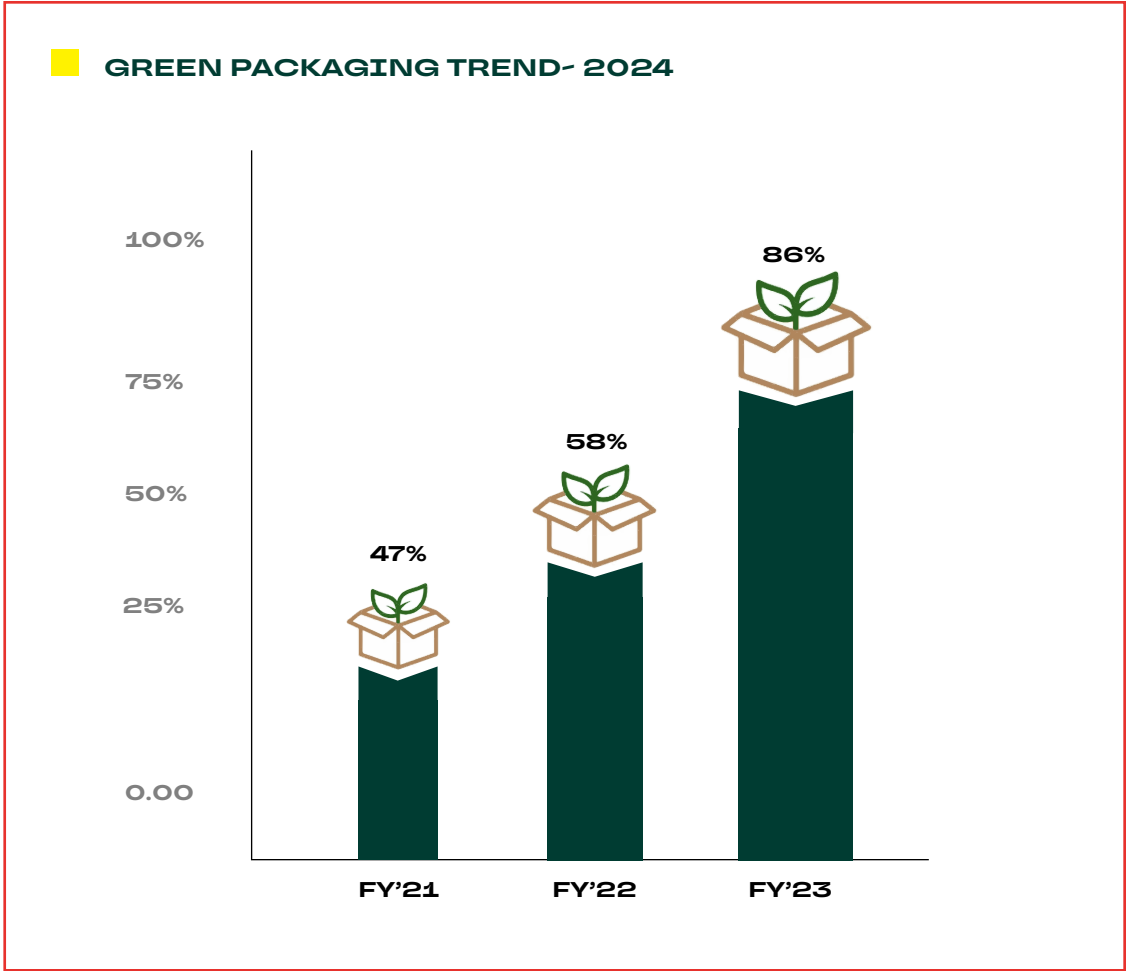


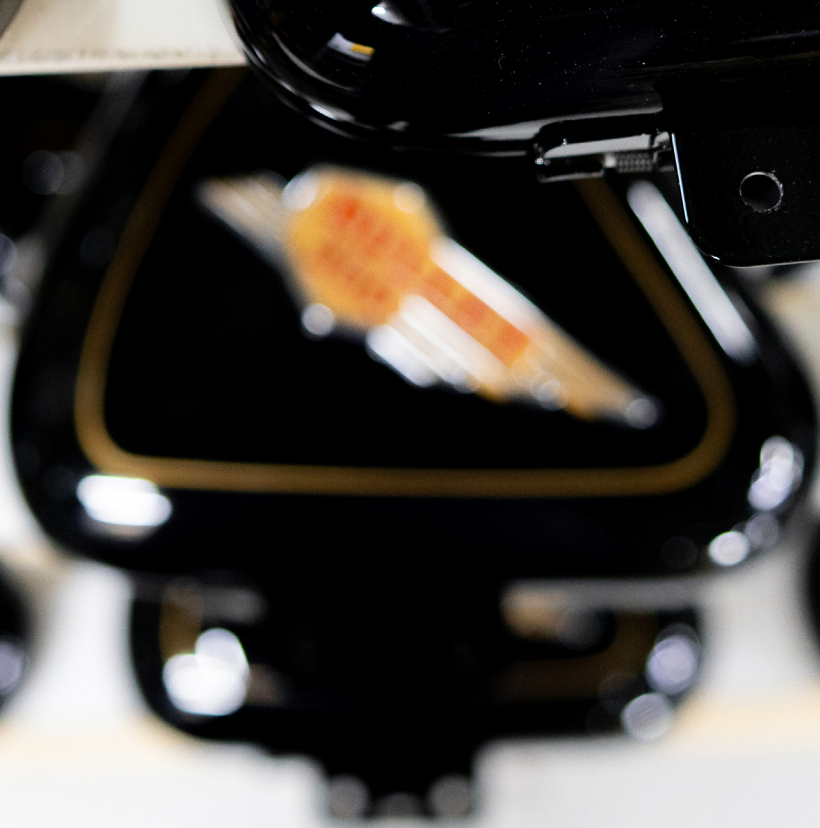
SUPPLY & PACKAGING

An initial study in 2022 found that 47% of incoming parts were supplied via returnable packaging.

In line with Royal Enfield’s focus on circularity in operations, it set out to eliminate the daily generation of one-time packaging waste, such as carton boxes, one-time-use polycovers, gunny bags and wooden boxes.

A collaborative exercise with identified suppliers was initiated to convert to green packaging. As a result of efforts year on year, the brand has been able to scale up to a cumulative 80% green packaging in the supply chain. One-time-use packaging has been replaced with returnable packaging material like bins, pallets & PP boxes, trolleys etc. That said, Royal Enfield is well on track to achieve 95% green packaging during FY 2024-25. This also has a beneficial impact on recurring costs.





86%

green packaging implementation



■ THIS TRANSFORMATION TO GREEN PACKAGING WAS IMPLEMENTED BY:

- Consolidating data on returnable and non-returnable packaging for direct parts inwarding.
- Matrix created for parts-wise aesthetic / non-aesthetic / cluster-wise suppliers
- Engaging with every supplier operating with non-returnable packaging and capacity building provided to raise awareness about the advantages of green packaging including the reduction in waste generation and cost benefits.
- Non-aesthetic parts suppliers were approached first for simple open bin implementation.
- Rental solution was implemented for aesthetic parts after a trial and successful demonstration
- We are also ensuring control over the transformation process by making a Returnable Packaging sign-off mandatory for any new parts.

In addition to this, 100% returnable packaging will be implemented for parts of all upcoming models before handing over for regular procurement.

Efforts have also been extended to other parts of the value chain. The brand has deployed carton packaging conversion of its orders with Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified carton suppliers. By March 2024, 65% of the Genuine Motorcycle Accessory packaging had already been transformed, and efforts continue to achieve 100% sustainable packaging.

■ THE IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY CHAINS

Creating a sustainable supply chain has the following benefits:

- Meeting the increasing regulatory compliances and sustainability

benchmarks for value chain

- Ensures supply chain resilience. As an example, high turnover rates, unsafe working conditions, low wages or insecure employment can reduce work effectiveness and directly affect availability of parts for a consumer
- End-to-end supply chain transparency
- Reduce emissions and costs
- Meeting investor interests on ESG
- Increased consumer awareness and preference for brands committed to managing the social and environmental impacts of their business decisions
- Mitigating environmental and social impacts including long-term impacts on ecosystems and climate change

By the end of FY 2023-2024, we had assessed 62 of our direct materials suppliers. We will continue to extend this project to cover our value chain in a phased manner.



To build on our efforts in design, circularity, responsible resource use, and the value chain, we also conducted a **Cradle to Grave Life Cycle Assessment (LCA)** for the Classic 350, our best-selling motorcycle. The comprehensive end-to-end life cycle analysis captured the environmental impacts of the product in line with ISO standards 14040 / 14044 and identified key areas to focus on.



SKF India

Alagesan Kesari, Head of Automotive Business for India & SEA, SKF

I wish to express my gratitude to Royal Enfield for recognizing SKF India's sustainability initiatives. This acknowledgment is not just a testament to our efforts but a reflection of our enduring partnership and shared vision. Eicher Motors stands tall among global automotive companies in the ESG and CSR space. Your ranking within the top 15% globally and top 3 in India and an impressive 8th out of 89 in the Sustainalytics Assessment speaks volumes of your commitment. A commitment that we are proud to contribute to, through our ESG reporting and assessments. Our purpose at SKF, rotation for a better tomorrow, resonates with Royal Enfield's vision. It is this synergy that drives our collaborative spirit on our journey to sustainability.

PHOTO ESSAY

GLOBAL HEADQUARTERS, CHENNAI

A platinum-rated green building, the GHQ is a seamless integration of renewable energy, efficient design and natural spaces.





Royal Enfield's GHQ is linear with a small frontage; the arrival court acts as a transition from nature to urban.



The building structure is designed such that none of the work and common spaces have any columns within them, allowing for better natural light penetration through the building. It also increases the amount of available space, giving additional flexibility for realignments and reuse.



Terracotta tiles mounted on stainless steel cables interspersed with planters form a system of operable louvres that act both as a shading device and a rainscreen.



A hybrid construction technology, combining a pre-engineered steel framework with concrete cast in situ.



An integrated campus uniting the brand's Marketing, Design, R&D, Engineering and other departments under one roof.



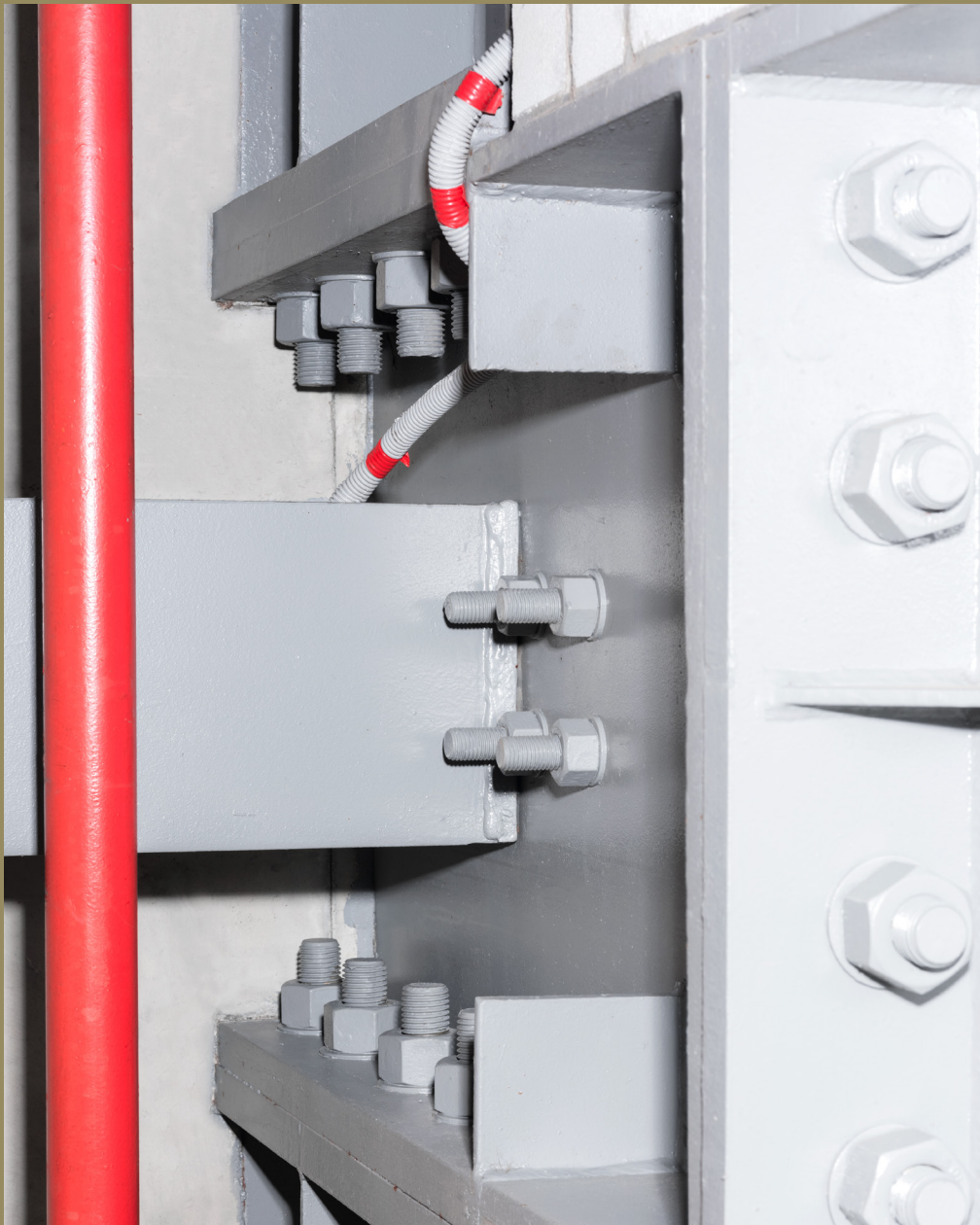
Spaces that are completely democratic and enable social interaction between varied departments and encourages informal meeting spaces.



An effortless merging of landscapes, open green spaces, water bodies and sustainable design.



The building has adopted several measures to conserve water.



Appropriately for a brand renowned for its rugged and metal-rich motorcycles, this highly engineered building uses significant amounts of steel, which has the quality of being 100% recyclable as a material.



Natural light is made available throughout the building to minimise use of artificial light.



The architecture of this building is a harmonious blend of technological and engineering innovation, environmental responsibility, and explorations into workspace and productivity. It is representative of Royal Enfield's attempt to push barriers and existing paradigms to achieve a global standing while remaining anchored to its identity at home.

DECODING SUSTAINABILITY WITH FORUM FOR THE FUTURE



Forum for the Future is a leading global sustainability organisation that has partnered businesses, governments and civil society for the past 30 years to accelerate the transition to a just and regenerative future. Forum uses a systems thinking approach to help organisations navigate complex problems to help them become future-fit. They work with transitions happening in the energy system, the food system, and in the purpose of business and society in the economy.

James Payne is the Global Head, Purpose of Business Transition. He is at the forefront of Forum For the Future's 'Transformational Strategies' work globally to help organisations move towards regenerative, net positive goals and pursue ambitious systems change strategies.

Anna Biswas is the Managing Director for India at Forum For The Future. Her work centres on helping organisations understand the opportunities before them in the future and their role in making it happen.

We caught up with Anna Biswas and James Payne from Forum for the Future, who have played key roles in developing Royal Enfield's sustainability strategy. The conversation delves into how sustainability is shaping the corporate world and how they view the progress made by Royal Enfield.

Q: Of late, there has been a lot of discussions on "corporate sustainability", often in conjunction with or as a synonym for other terms such as "sustainable development" and "corporate social responsibility." How are they different or related?

James: These framings are associated with slightly different approaches. Sustainable development is a much broader term with a societal lens. Corporate social responsibility tends, at times, to have more of a charitable outlook, especially outside India. Corporate sustainability, on the other hand, has the

ESG lens. The challenge with ESG is that it often only looks at the impacts on a business. In the end, it doesn't matter what you call something as long as organisations have genuine commitment and necessary levels of ambition to drive tangible change.

Anna: The definition of sustainable development was based on the idea of enabling future generations to have the same access and same privileges that we have right now. A sustainable or responsible business defines how you make your money, and as for CSR, how meaningfully that money is spent.

James: We would advise a much broader understanding of a corporate's sustainability that considers both the impacts of the issues related to core business strategy while also understanding the impacts the business is having on the world, and addresses those explicitly.

Q: Where does India stand in terms of responsible behaviour by large corporates, and what have been the changes in the industry's stand on sustainability?

Anna: I don't think any country has got this one cracked completely, with different pathways being taken and driven by policy regulation and industry norms. Also, what is happening elsewhere does impact India's approach to responsible behaviour. While policy and regulations do have a role, investors, supply chain partners, employees and customers demanding conscious or responsible behaviour from organisations are drivers too.

What I do notice is that the fluency with which people talk about ESG in India is far greater now. However, we must be cautious about the direction it takes. For example, 80% of a sustainability team in an organisation is focussed on reporting rather than doing impactful work. It's equally important to tell the story to be able to inspire others to do more. Further, the 2% CSR spending rule is unique to us and is a potential superpower if utilised strategically. India is not there yet but we have the foundations to grow from.

Q: How important is governance in terms of driving sustainability? And how is it influenced by investor interests? What are the likely priority areas?

James: We're generally seeing greater focus on corporate governance around sustainability. This is heavily driven by investor interests, regulations and growing stakeholder expectations. Governance can be thought of in two ways. One is the tangible aspect of governance with a structure, business strategy and then formal policies and procedures.

This is where businesses focus their attention on. However, this is not sufficient because it's almost like an iceberg. That is where soft governance comes in. This is typically centred around business leadership, culture and informal decision making. The best strategies and roadmaps are not going to be delivered without this being ingrained into company culture.

Anna: When we look at investor interests, ultimately you need to consider why they're asking these questions and it's predominantly because they're worried about whether their investment is going to grow or at least remain safe. There is also the element of compliance and managing risk as well.

Q: How was your experience working with Royal Enfield, and would you like to share some insights on how the sustainability strategy was devised? What were its core components?

Anna: Royal Enfield reached out to us because they were looking for a way of devising a strategy that was deep and meaningful, to make the best of its strengths as a brand and its passion. The fact that we could start from a place where we weren't starting from zero and Royal Enfield already had purpose in what it was trying to do was immensely helpful.

The process of developing the strategy was a multi-stage iterative approach involving people across the organisation. This is a strategy with long-term purpose that encompasses trends from political to regulations to the environmental as well as social. Not to mention the kind of products required and their impact on different types of customers and markets.

We think the strategy really does represent what Royal Enfield really wants to stand for and what it wants to see the world turn out to be. An example of this is how Royal Enfield's Social Mission has adopted the Himalayas as its Iconic Landscape to work in. This really resonates with the brand's spiritual connection to the Himalayas. There was also the understanding that the Himalayas are such a critical natural feature deeply affected by climate change and already facing problems from tourism, waste and social and ecological fragmentation.

The strategy then speaks not just to the people within Royal Enfield but to the wider world, including value chain partners, the riding community and society in general.

Q: Forum continues to be closely associated with Royal Enfield in different capacities. How do you perceive the progress we have made?

James: I think what is impressive is the way the business has engaged around a brand-led vision and played to its own strength. There is an appetite to understand and a commitment to bridge innovation gaps. Royal Enfield was able to articulate a very powerful and inspiring brand vision and

then leverage the man, machine, terrain theme to a larger, impactful context.

Anna: It is all well and good to have lovely titles and roadmaps, but problems arise when the rubber hits the road. One suddenly realises that several things need to be fixed before the actual thing that you want to do can be done. But Royal Enfield has shown the passion and the belief to make this happen. First, by having the senior leadership keyed in and then, by building a solid team to implement this.

Q: Forum played an important role in conceiving the idea of the Himalayan Hub. How do you envisage the Hub growing organically? Also, how will Forum's Futures Lab concept fit in at the Hub?

Anna: The Himalayan Hub is such an exciting idea because it is a sort of physical and yet intangible knowledge sharing space that would enable communities and landscapes to build their resilience in the face of climate change. We want to acknowledge how one aspect of the Hub was originally inspired from the Green Hub, also supported by Royal Enfield, in the Northeast. We are essentially looking at creating a network of self-supporting and inter-connected future change makers from the communities. Our Future Lab's concept element is designed to build the capacity of these changemakers to be able to foresee what is coming their way and lead change in a way that is very much facing into the context. The second element is the circularity pillar, which is built around helping people develop hyperlocal solutions to their own problems, with global replicability and applications. The third element is the community spaces

which would ensure that learning and the cross pollination of knowledge takes place by bringing communities together.

Q: Forum is involved with different groups across the world for creating sustainability strategies. How different or similar is the approach taken by Royal Enfield and where do you think we are in terms of global levels?

James: I think, in terms of the strategy and the way that you are linking the business and the brand into this strategy, it is absolutely world class. Where I feel Royal Enfield really stands out is your leverage of CSR funds for

your unique social mission in the Himalayas. It is really inspiring and as good – if not better, than anything that I've seen globally. That said, the space is dynamic and there is a lot to do.

Anna: I love the fact that you are so deeply rooted to one place with the strategy, but also thinking and acting quite globally. What is also different is the fact that Royal Enfield is in it for the long game. You are making progress in a very Royal Enfield way; with an attitude of 'let's get up and do stuff with our hands and get this done'. It is really encouraging to see things happen on ground, because we believe in impact.

Thank you

AAGOR DAAGRA AFAD • ADIL HUSSAIN • ANUMITRA GHOSH • ATSWA • BDO-KULLU • BODH SHIKSHA SAMITI • BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY • CARE • CENTRE FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT • CHURCH'S AUXILIARY FOR SOCIAL ACTION • COLLECTIVE EFFORTS FOR VOLUNTARY ACTION • CONSERVATION INITIATIVES • DISTRICT YOUTH SERVICES AND SPORTS LAHAUL • DON BOSCO TECHNICAL SOCIETY • DR. SHROFF CHARITY EYE HOSPITAL • DUSTY FOOT FOUNDATION • EARTHLING LADAKH • EKAM • ENVIRONICS TRUST • EUROPEAN BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY CENTER • FURTHER & BEYOND FOUNDATION • GROUND REALITY TRUST • GUL PANAG • HABITAT FOR HUMANITY • HIMMOTTHAN SOCIETY • HIMAL PRAKRITI • ICE HOCKEY ASSOCIATION OF INDIA • ICE HOCKEY ASSOCIATION OF LADAKH • ICE HOCKEY ASSOCIATION OF LAHAUL SPITI • INTACH • INTERNATIONAL ICE HOCKEY FEDERATION • JAGORI RURAL CHARITABLE TRUST • JUNGWA FOUNDATION • LADY WILLINGDON HOSPITAL • LADAKH ARTS AND MEDIA ORGANISATION • LADAKH ECOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT GROUP • LADAKH WINTER SPORTS CLUB • LADAKH WOMEN ICE HOCKEY FOUNDATION • LIVING LABS • LOOMS OF LADAKH • MAKER'S ASYLUM • MARGSHALA • MUSE • NARMOHAN DAS • NATURE CONSERVATION FOUNDATION • NAVIKRANA TRUST • NMCT • NOT ON MAPS • PATA SOCIETY • PEL DRUKPA CHARITABLE TRUST • PEOPLE FOR HIMALAYAN DEVELOPMENT • PRABAL GURUNG • REAL • REEFWATCH • RZAMBA • SAAHAS • SAMRAT SOM • SHUBHAM LODHA • SIFUNG HARIMU AFAD • SNOW LEOPARD CONSERVANCY INDIA TRUST • SONAM DUBAL • SUSHANT ABROL • SĀ LADAKH • THE ACTION NORTHEAST TRUST • THE CORBETT FOUNDATION • THE EDUCATION ALLIANCE • THE FOUNDATION FOR INDIAN CONTEMPORARY ART • THE MIDWAY JOURNEY • THE TREE FOUNDATION • TITLI TRUST • UNESCO • USHA MAHAJAN MEMORIAL SOCIAL SERVICE ORGANISATION • VARUN SIKKA • VIKAS MAURYA • WASTE WARRIORS SOCIETY • WILDLIFE TRUST OF INDIA • WOOLKNITTERS



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A Royal Enfield Social Mission Initiative
