

December 17, 2011

The fabric of society

PRIYADARSHINI PAITANDY

Puducherry-based Upasana attempts to revive the country's traditional textiles



ALL FOR A CAUSE Uma Haimavati, founder of Upasana

Fashion seems to have developed a conscience of its own, these days. Upasana, in Puducherry, founded by Uma Haimavati, is one such brand with a mission. It was launched in 1997 with the objective of representing India through its textiles, and reviving traditional designs and creativity by empowering the local artisans. But after the tsunami in 2004, Upasana got involved in projects that reached out to people and touched their lives.

Traditionally clad, with two ponytails and a smiling face... say 'hello' to Tsunamika, a little handmade doll. "We started Tsunamika as a way of trauma counselling fisherwomen affected by the Tsunami. Around 500 women were trained to make the dolls; some of them took it up as a means of livelihood.

Uma's next venture has been to protect the weavers' community in Benares. “Even if a million people in India buy a Benares, we can solve the weavers' problem,” says Uma, whose efforts have instilled a sense of self-respect in the weavers.

This month, Upasana launched its latest venture — Paruthi. “Paruthi is India's local organic brand. We want to make quality cotton products for the domestic market, and not for export,” says Uma.

By wearing a Paruthi garment, you are caring for India, its farmers and the environment,” says Uma.

She signs off, saying, “We are riding the wave of fashion to pass on a social message.”

PRIYADARSHINI PAITANDY