



Google Arts & Culture

# Unheard Stories of Women in India

Lesson plan  
created with



## Introduction

# Unheard Stories of Women in India

Explore unheard stories of women in India and learn about some historical and living figures who have made an impact.

This lesson is suitable for anyone but is recommended for students aged 14-16 years and is designed to support you as you explore Google Arts & Culture stories related to the lesson topic.

You can complete the lesson on your own working at home, with a group of friends, or in your classroom. They are designed so that you can work through them at a pace that suits you.

If you get stuck, you can talk to a teacher or parent.

Throughout the lesson you will have tasks to complete and questions to answer, so that when you reach the end you will have used a range of skills to create something of your own that demonstrates your knowledge and understanding of the subject.

All you need to get started is any device with internet access.

Are you ready to learn more about how women have influenced culture in India in the arts, crafts, and sciences?

Things you'll need to complete this lesson.



Tablet, laptop or computer with access to the internet.



Paper or a notebook and pen to make notes as you go.



Drawing materials such as colouring pens and pencils, paper etc.



Scissors, glue, scrap paper and general stationary items.



Art materials, specifically paints and brushes.



A printer would be beneficial but not necessary – why not draw instead?

## Explore & Discover

# Unheard Stories of Women in India

## What can you expect to learn?

In this lesson, you will review the lives and work of some famous women who lived in the past few centuries. Then you will discover the findings of some successful scientists. Finally, you will explore India's traditional arts and crafts to see the role women have in creating beautiful items to wear or use.

## Activities to complete

1. Write a letter to your mayor to promote the life of a famous medical doctor.
2. Unscramble words that are in use in the arts and crafts of India.
3. Write your diary entry on a famous person from the past.
4. Take the end of lesson quiz to review what you have learned.

## Outcomes you will achieve

- Appreciate the life of a famous courtesan who lived 200 years ago.
- See how traditional crafts are used to make beautiful objects.
- Understand the role that women have had on science in India.
- Discover the pioneering work of a famous doctor from the last century.
- Learn more about yoga and the impact it has made on women.

Look out for the following tips which tell you what to do when during the lesson.



Key information to remember and help guide you through the lesson.



Estimated time to complete a section or activity within the lesson.



Optional headphones to listen to videos and audio recordings.



Explore online content. Discover videos, stories, and zoom into pictures.



Activity - time to design, make or write something of your own.



## Vocabulary

### Words to look out for in the lesson

activist, artisan, basketry, bamboo, block printer, bobbin, caste system, cocoon, collage, community, courtesan, diwan, dyed, embellishment, embroidery, era, fabric, guru, handicraft, handloom, jutti, loom, metaphor, migrant, motif, muse, neuroscience, Nizam, patron, piping, poet, practice, production, project director, research, rocket scientist, sahib-e-diwan, sarong, stole, subcontinent, tapestry, textile, trinket, weave, workshop, yarn, yoga



Princess Playing Polo (Jodhpur), National Museum - New Delhi



# What is this Lesson About?

India is a country with a rich and diverse culture. In this lesson, you will learn about women who broke through barriers to achieve great success and pave the way for future generations. You will discover three women in science, and explore interesting arts and crafts created by women.



This lesson will take around 120 minutes.

## Indian Women in Culture

# Elements of the Lesson

India is seen as one of the most diverse countries in the world, with a wide variety of religious beliefs and a rich history. This has created a fascinating cultural heritage, some of which we will explore in this lesson.

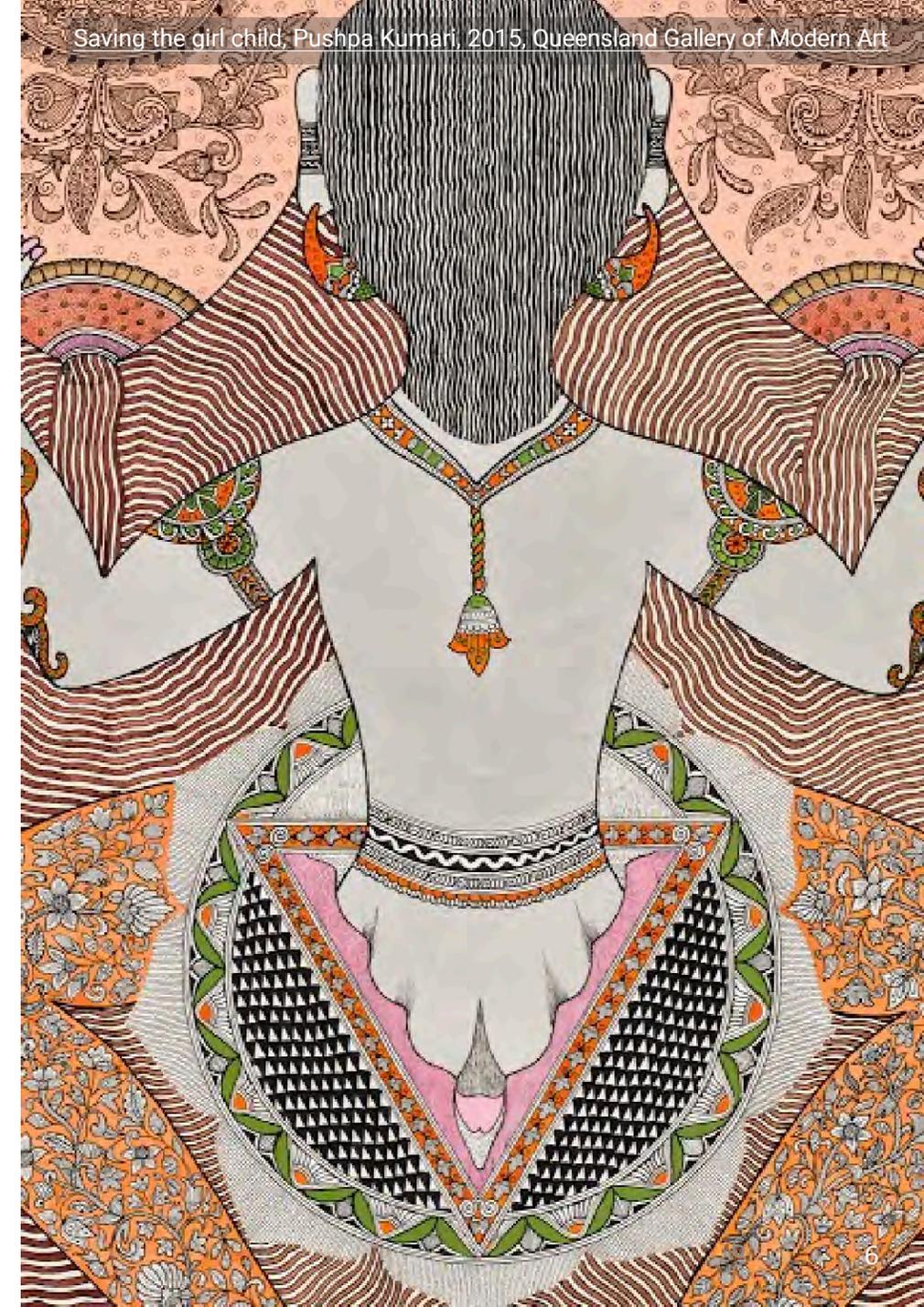
India is a country making great strides in scientific fields. You will learn about successful Indian scientists including a rocket scientist, a neurobiologist and a forgotten heroine in medicine.

As well as learning about scientists, we will explore the lives of a poet, a guru, and an activist, who were able to influence change and enrich the lives of women in India.

Finally, you will explore the rich traditions associated with arts and crafts in India. Learning about the women who are continuing the legacy of traditional skills, working with textiles, materials and weaving.



Consider making notes on the stories you read as this will help you for the end of lesson quiz.





Portraits of Rani Sethu Parvathi Bayi and Rani Sethu Lakshmi Bayi of Travancore, Museum of Art & Photography

# Poetry, Yoga, and Activism

In this chapter, we will review the lives of three inspirational Indian women; a poet, a yoga guru, and an activist.



This chapter will take around 40 minutes.

# The Poet, the Guru and the Activist



[Portrait of Chandabibi, 20th century, Salar Jung Museum](#)

## Mahlaqabai Chanda Poet

A famous Urdu poet and courtesan. She was the first woman poet to have their works compiled in a diwan (a type of Urdu poetry collection).



[Sita devi ji, The Yoga Institute Mumbai, India](#)

## Sita Devi Yogendra Guru

Sita Devi introduced yoga to women. Her book, '*Yoga Physical Education for Women*' has been welcomed as the first book on yoga for women written by a woman.



[Portrait of Tarabai, Ekta Singha, 2016, Zubaan, New Delhi, India.](#)

## Tarabai Shinde Activist

A leading feminist activist in the 19<sup>th</sup> century who published an important book. This challenged the patriarchy within the Hindu religion. She also wanted to abolish the caste system.



Mahlaqabai Chanda was a poet and courtesan in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. She was well-respected in the court of the Nizam, the ruler of Hyderabad. There she was celebrated for her wide-ranging skills, her intelligence, and her wit.

Born in 1768 in Hyderabad, Chanda Bibi was adopted by her aunt in her early years, where she was able to access a varied education. She proved to be a talented child, learning Urdu and Persian at a young age. She also started writing poetry and by the age of 14, was skilled physical activities like archery and javelin as well.

Chanda became a favorite of the Nizam, and was held in high regard. She was given the title 'Malaqabai', meaning 'moon faced'. She became part of the nobility, rode to battles and was consulted on matters of the court.

Chanda was Urdu's first woman "Sahib-e-Diwan", a title bestowed on her as the creator of a personal collection of poetry. She wrote in both Urdu and Persian, although only some of her Urdu works remain.

Discover more about her poetry by clicking the link below.

[Explore](#)





Sita Devi Yogendra was a pioneer in yoga, particularly yoga for women. Her book, '*Yoga Physical Education for Women*', is a handbook showing correct postures and demonstrating how yoga is practiced. It is a ground-breaking text, noted for being the first book about yoga written for women, by a woman.

Sita Devi had little knowledge of yoga before she married Shri Yogendraji in 1927. She studied the art and practice of yoga and within two years, took charge of the women's section of The Yoga Institute, which was established by her husband. Together they became known as the mother and father of yoga and worked tirelessly to support others.

As it is an important part of 20<sup>th</sup> century culture and society, Sita Devi's book has been included in the Crypt of Civilization, to be opened in 6000 years. As well as writing her book, Sita Devi contributed to many articles for yoga journals and was a well-recognized, trusted voice for yoga and the health benefits associated with it.

[Explore](#)





Tarabai helping Savitribai and Jyotiba open the shelter for women, Ekta Singha, 2016, Zubaan



Tarabai Shinde was an activist and writer in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, who challenged the treatment of women and the caste system in India. Her first and only published work 'Stri Purush Tulana' (*A Comparison Between Women and Men*), was published in 1882 and is widely accepted as the first modern feminist text to come from India. At the time it was widely criticized and remains controversial.

Since she did not have access to a formal education, Shinde was home-schooled by her father. He was a radical thinker and made sure she had an education despite there being no local school for girls. She learned Marathi, Sanskrit and English and was an avid reader.

Although she was married at a very young age, her marriage was an unusual one for the time. Her husband moved in with her family, rather than the other way around and this afforded Shinde more freedom and flexibility. She became actively involved in the rights of women and the discrimination women faced based on the caste system.

[Explore](#)



### Activity 3

# Diary Entry



Research further about one of these three women and then produce a diary entry capturing your thoughts and opinions about what they stood for, their achievements, and how this may have impacted your life.



Imagine you have just met them, or you were present at one of the key moments or events you have read about.

Write around 100-200 words and remember this is your diary, so make it personal.



### Extra Challenge

Now consider the other two women you have studied and add a diary entry for each one. It should be around 100-200 words per person.

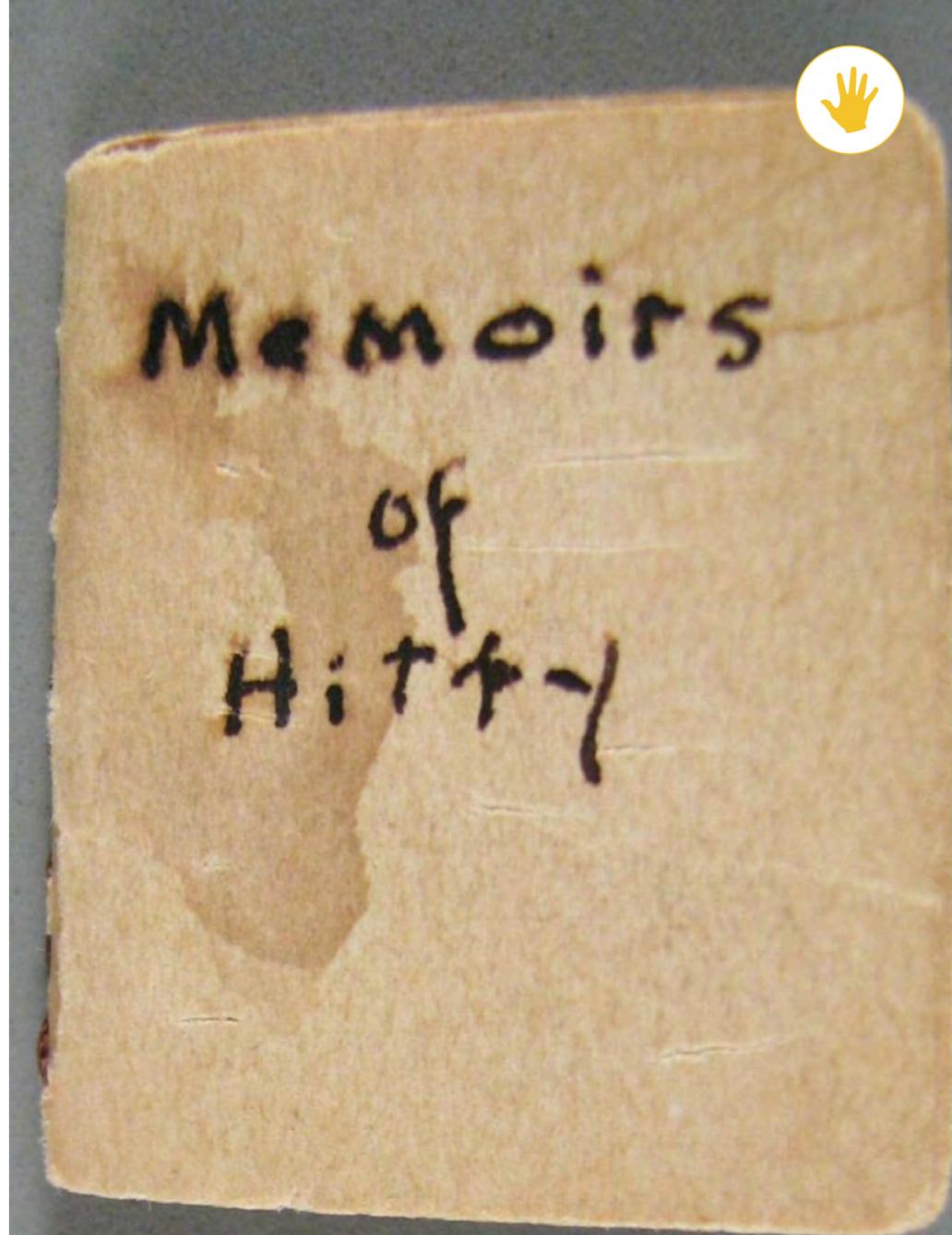


You can use these additional links to learn more about these women or learn more about what they did:

[Mahlaqabai Chanda](#)

[Yoga and You](#)

[Savitribai Phule – fellow activist and first women teacher in India](#)



10 to 15-minute activity



# The Scientists

In this chapter we will review the life and works of three leading scientists. Watch two women talk about how they have excelled in their respective fields and went on to hold eminent posts. Then learn about a trailblazer, who worked in the field of cancer treatment and did much for women's rights in India.



This chapter will take around 40 minutes.



## Anuradha TK Space Scientist

Anuradha TK works in the field of satellites and communications. She is the most senior female scientist at the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), which leads the Indian Government's space programme. She began working there in 1982.

Working as Geostat Program Director, Anuradha has worked on many key satellite projects and launches. She led the development and launches of key satellites such as GSAT-12 and G-SAT 10, amongst others.



Explore



After the video make notes on the following.

What started her interest in Space Science?

How did her childhood differ to others which allowed her to pursue her interests?



## Vidita Vaidya Neuroscientist

Vidita Vaidya's work focuses on emotions and the brain, particularly looking at depression. She studies how different conditions and emotions cause, and are affected by, changes in the brain. She also looks at how the brain reacts and changes when medication is taken.

Vaidya is a Professor of Neuroscience and a Principal Investigator at the Neurobiology lab at TIFR (Tata Institute of Fundamental Research) in Mumbai.

Watch the video to know more about her story and the different roles she plays apart from being a neuroscientist.



Explore



After the video make notes on the following.

What is Vidita's main advice for young girls anywhere?

What started her interest in neuroscience?



Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddi was a pioneer doctor and social activist. She was born in 1886 in the Tamil Nadu area of India. At the time, she would have been expected to marry at a young age and follow the boundaries set out for her as a woman. However, Reddi was fiercely independent and challenged social expectations.

Reddi was sent to school by her father, which was not common at the time. Having passed her exams, she applied to a college that traditionally only accepted male students. She was initially refused due to her gender; however, she was backed by the Maharaja and became the first woman admitted to a male college. From there she went to study medicine at Madras Medical College and became a House Surgeon at a government hospital.

Reddi's impact on the lives of women and girls has been significant and wide-ranging. As well as her role as a medical doctor, she is most known for being the first female legislator in India. A role which gave her the platform to successfully put reforms in to place that improved women's rights in India.

[Explore](#)





## Activity 2

# Promoting Dr. Reddi's Life



You have decided that you want to let more people know about Dr. Reddi's life and achievements. You would like to see a statue erected in her honor in the place where she was born. Write a letter to the mayor suggesting that the town erect a statue in her memory.



Your letter needs to be compelling and point out her achievements and why she should have a statue in her honor.

The letter needs to be around 200-300 words and should include all the things you have learned about her in the lesson.



### Extra Challenge

The letter was a success! The statue has been erected.

You are still determined to do more. Consider the next steps, what else can you do to let more people know about her achievements?



Write notes on at least three additional things you would do to get her noticed. What kind of campaign could you run? How will you get the word out to people?



[Dr. Rakhmabai Writing Letters to the Times of India, Pranisha Shrestha, 2016, Zubaan](#)



15 to 20-minute activity



# Arts & Crafts of India

India is a diverse country, which has a rich tradition in arts and crafts. A lot of traditional Indian crafts have been created by women. Enjoy the colors, styles and music!



This chapter will take around 40 minutes.

# Arts and Crafts Produced by Indian Women



[Patiala Jutti: Women embellish Jutti, 2018, Dastkari Haat Samitit](#)



[Lambani Embroiderers in Sandur, Karnataka, 2006, JD Centre of Art, Bhudaneshwar](#)



[Sualkuchi Weaving: Silk weaving of Assam Anuradha Pegu, weaver and National Award recipient, 2018, Dastkari Haat Samiti](#)



[How Ringaal craft products are made colourful, Project FUEL, 2018, Project FUEL](#)

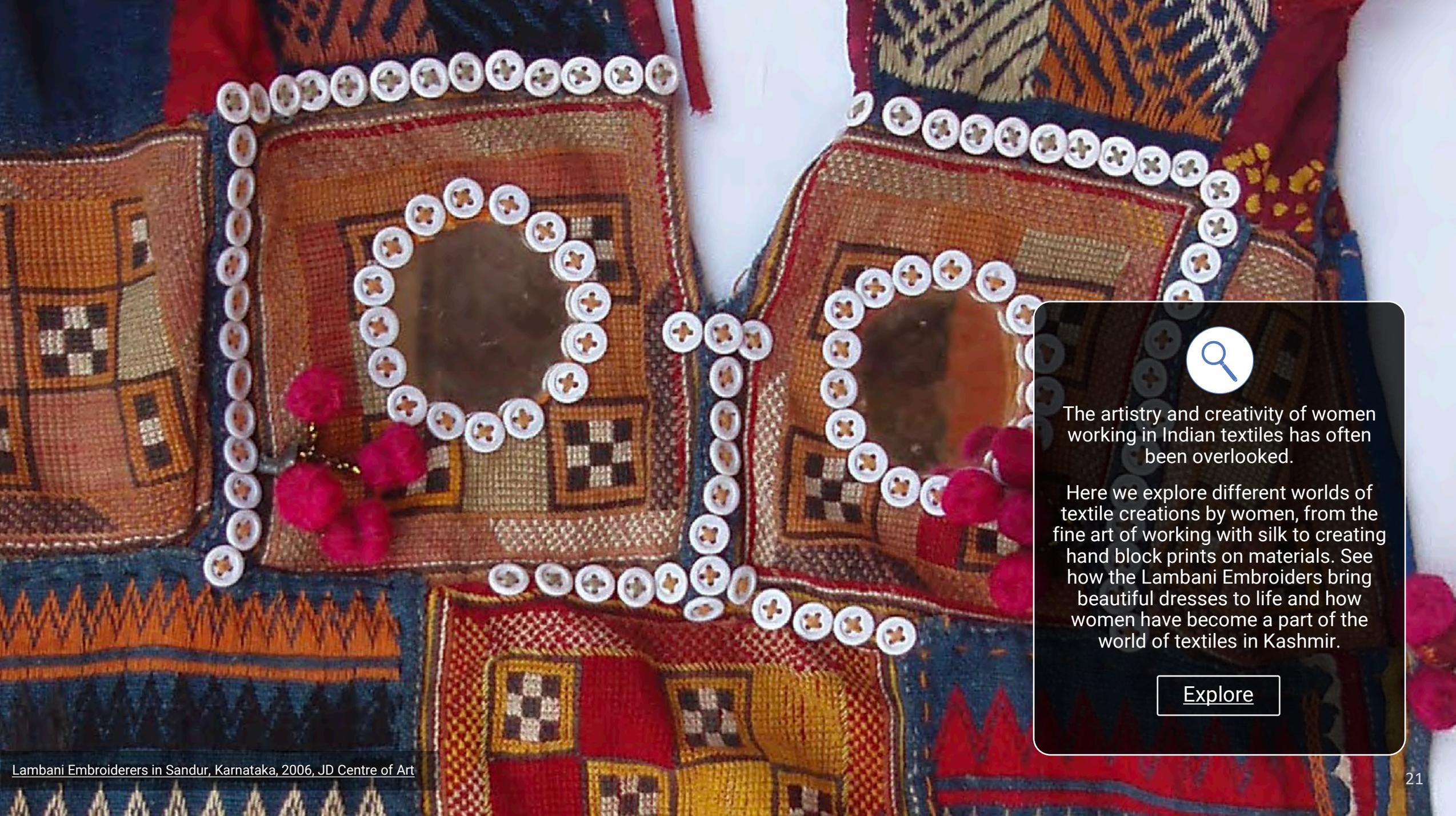


The jutti is a type of shoe made of leather with extensive embroidery. Traditionally, family groups in the Punjab, North India, made the jutti together. However, it is now more common for machines to manufacture the footwear.

There are still traditional methods used to produce the shoes, and today most of these are created in small workshops. Men take on the role of making the shoe. Women artisans then take over the embellishment process. They use embroidery and other items to decorate the shoes. The results are beautiful shoes that sell locally and elsewhere.

Juttis have been made more affordable to ordinary people, using modern, less expensive materials in the production.

[Explore](#)



The artistry and creativity of women working in Indian textiles has often been overlooked.

Here we explore different worlds of textile creations by women, from the fine art of working with silk to creating hand block prints on materials. See how the Lambani Embroiders bring beautiful dresses to life and how women have become a part of the world of textiles in Kashmir.

[Explore](#)



Assam is a state in northeastern India. It is famous for tea and silk. There are three types of silk in the region, golden muga, white pat and warm eri silk. The area is world-famous for its silk weaving techniques. Traditional weavers exist across the area, but it is rare for someone to rise above the craft industry to form a fashion house.

One such person is Anuradha Pegu, who has brought her tribe's designs to the world. She is from the Mishing tribe of Assam and grew up weaving and learning about the arts and crafts. Today she leads a fashion house, an exclusive brand specializing in showcasing traditional motifs from across Assam.

[Explore](#)



Rangaal basketry is a craft that is practiced in Uttarakhand, northern India.

It involves making objects for the home. The artisan weaves bamboo to create items such as baskets or storage containers. Discover more by clicking on the 'Explore' link below.

[Explore](#)



### Activity 3

# Scramble words



Art comes in many forms. Do you think you can unscramble these words to identify the ten art terms and materials mentioned in this lesson?

1. ba boom = *bamboo*
2. sinatra
3. co co no
4. eddy
5. berried yom
6. crab if
7. almond ho
8. groans
9. ex title
10. ave we

Need help? Check out the Vocabulary page in this lesson plan.



#### Extra Challenge

Making up anagrams can be fun. Try creating anagrams for the following terms:

tapestry, basketry, block printer, yarn, bobbin, embellishment, jutti, workshop.



[Lady on Charkhain Khadi Cooperative, Sandur, Karnataka, 2006, JD Centre of Art](#)





## Activity 4

# End of Lesson Quiz

See if you can recall what you have learnt from this lesson. How many questions can you answer without going back through the pages.

1. Mahlaqabai Chanda was famous for being the first women poet with a volume of poetry. What title did she gain from this?
  - a) Diwan-e-Sahib
  - b) e-Diwan
  - c) Sahib-e-Diwan
2. What material is used to create household storage items in Uttarakhand?
3. How old was Vidita Vaidya when she became interested in the brain?
4. In what year did Tarabai Shinde and her friends open a school for lower-caste women?
5. Which part of India is famous for producing the jutti?
6. What started Anuradha's interest in space science?
7. What year did Dr. Reddi open her hospital for cancer patients?
8. What main items do Lambani Embroiderers use to embellish their textiles with?
9. What was the name of the book written by Siti Devi on yoga?
10. What tribe is Anuradha Pegu from, and what material does she weave?



[arcade game: Computer Quiz Nutting Associates, 1968, The Strong National Museum of Play](#)





Patiala Jutti: Women embellish Jutti, 2018, Dastkari Haat Samiti

## Want to Learn More?



Now you've completed this lesson you may want to continue to find out more about unheard stories of women in India. [This](#) is a good starting point to find out more, and [this](#) explores other Indian crafts, art, design and architecture.

### Activity 3 - Answers

## Can you work it out?

Here are the answers to the anagrams. How did you do?

- |               |             |
|---------------|-------------|
| 1. bamboo     | 6. fabric   |
| 2. artisan    | 7. handloom |
| 3. cocoon     | 8. sarong   |
| 4. dyed       | 9. textile  |
| 5. embroidery | 10. weave   |

### Activity 6 - Answers

## End of Lesson Quiz

Here are the answers to the quiz. How did you do?

- |                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| 1. c) Sahib-e-Diwan | 6. Moon landing in 1969                             |
| 2. Bamboo           | 7. 1935   |
| 3. 13 years old     | 8. Mirrors, buttons, metal trinkets, cowrie shells. |
| 4. 1848             | 9. Yoga Physical Education for Women                |
| 5. The Punjab       | 10. Mishing Tribe and silk weaving                  |

