



Goan Floral Artistry. The Intersection Of Design And Culture.

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Abstract:

Flowers please the mind and grant prosperity. Flowers are at the epicentre of Indian culture for every occasion, Indians use flowers to decorate doors. Varmala, (A garland a bride puts on the bridegroom's neck during marriage ceremony) to different ornaments for various occasions are a part of ancient ayurvedic texts. The Indian woman loves to adorn herself; she has always worn flowers in her hair with since Vedic era. In southern India even today, women wear flowers in their hair regularly. From the epic Ramayana to Gita, flowers are an eternal part of Indian culture. A sight to behold is the Temple's God and Goddess idols always ornamented with flowers, an offering wholeheartedly given by worshippers and accepted by God, that is the Hindu belief. To use flowers to personal beautification is noted in ancient ayurveda texts. These flowers also have a spiritual significance. Goddess Laxmi sits on a lotus. In kalidasa's Abhijnana Shakuntala. Shakuntala is compared to the delicate jasmine flower. Her accessories were flowers and leaves. In another work of Kalidasa Meghduta, it is mentioned that the powder of Lodhara flowers was applied as face powder. The Mallika flowers have been used by women to promote wellness and beauty. The Indian culture gives a lot of importance to flowers. Goa has many temples and several are famous for stunning decorations with flowers on and around the idol. This trickles down to the local community who work in the vicinity of these temples. A sustainable cycle of flowers which the flower ladies, devotees and the priest comply to.

Keywords - Goa, Flowers, Flower craft, Hair accessories, Sustainable, Temple

Introduction

The Bhagavad Gita, the Indian crown jewel of spiritual literature, has hymns dedicated to nature and the enigmatic world of flowers, speaking of their beauty but also as metaphors that transcend spiritual philosophies that translate into encapsulating the cycle of life, duty, and cosmic truth[1], [5]

Floral Power

Flowers have many legends, life to death, and purity to passion, flowers also have many other meanings in myths and legends. From tender buds to beautiful flowers, they are associated with youth, beauty, and pleasure. Flowers wilt and die, thus representing fragility which represents passage from life into death. From the Vedic era, flowers have enhanced the physical beauty of men and women.

People irrespective of their social status were fond of using flowers directly or indirectly to decorate their body. Garlands for weddings, flowers for rangoli and even decorating houses. Flowers are used to celebrate birth; we decorate the crib on the day of the naming ceremony of the child. After an individual dies, we garland

our beloved person and bid them adieu.

As described in the Indian book Meghaduta written by great poet Kalidasa around 2500 years ago. The women decorated different parts of the body with a variety of flowers from the knot on their hair and parting of the hair. Jasmine buds to decorate like white pearls on their hair. They even wore floral crowns. The description of Shakuntala the heroine of Kalidasa in Abhigyan Shunkatala around 2500 years ago is that she is wearing floral ornaments. Beauty of a women enhances when flower jewellery is worn and the inner beauty is elevated. It is believed that fragrance of flowers helps to ward off negativity. Shakuntala is wearing 'fragrant floral necklace, earrings and even bracelets and is writing a love letter on a lotus leaf to king Dushyant. This can be also seen in a painting by Raja Ravi Verma

Hindu ceremonies behold flowers in the highest regard, revering them in high esteem as manifestations of purity, innocence, and divinity. Flowers connect humans and the divinity. Flower garlands are offered to deities, saints, and Gods as a mark of respect. They represent the grandeur of the universe. Their transient beauty and scent convey our devotion and their petals convey that life gives us small fleeting nature with a multitude of small moments, while the pristine core symbolizes the soul seeking moksha (liberation).

In India, flowers have spiritual importance. It is more than a ritual. Offering flowers to God is a traditional way to seek blessings. In the temples, the priest gives flowers to the devotees as part of the prasad and women wear them on their hair. All flowers have their significance and symbolism. It is a way of reflecting the devotee's pure-hearted devotion. Flowers of the Lotus and Marigold, guide us toward more profound truths serving themselves as nature's spiritual guides, inspiring souls to seek enlightenment. Lotus is the most powerful spiritual flower, known as a "Womb of the world". It represents spiritual ascent and is central to Hindu philosophy. Lord Shiva and Goddess Laxmi both love white lotus. This is the reason for devotees to offer the lotus flower to them. It denotes purity of mind, serenity of human nature, and spiritual perfection. It also symbolizes the sun and rebirth. Valmiki Ramayana the ancient text - Ayodhya Kanda in Prose Sarga 118 Seeta agrees to the instructions given by Anasuya Devi on the duties of a devoted wife. At the end of the conversation with Seeta Maa, Anasuya Devi requests her to ask for a boon, as she was highly pleased with her, Anasuya Devi bestows clothes, heavenly flowers and ornaments upon her. "They will be ever be worthy of you and will remain intact (even after constant use)".

The Indian woman is the epitome of beauty. She loves to dress literally from head to toe. Indian women traditionally have learned the art of scenting their hair. Some techniques are drying hair over burning incense, and massaging with fragrant oil. Another age-old tradition is tying Gajras and flower garlands to the hair after a head bath to infuse scent. Hence, the women wear flowers every day in their hair from their gardens. Almost all houses in towns and villages have a house garden in their yard and growing flowering plants is common. The ladies love to pluck a few fresh flowers every day for pooja. Offering to their deity at the temple in the house and using them to adorn themselves. Flowers are also used as symbols of hospitality. That is why we give flower bouquets when we visit someone. We present flowers to recovering patients and visit them to make them feel better. In the metropolis, floral bouquets beautify households and many people have flowering plants on their balconies and apply the same principles mentioned above. The classic balcony plants are hibiscus and jasmine and also pink periwinkle. In Harvard University, a study involving the impact of flowers on mood, researchers found that they elevate the mood and flowers in homes helped people with a higher sense of compassion and happiness. All festivals are incomplete without flowers. Marigold is one such flower that beautifies the entrance door of our houses. It is popular on the Indian sub-continent including Goa. No festival is complete without marigold. Toran's are hung on the top of the doorway as a symbol of welcome and prosperity. Marigold is called a gendaful in Hindi and is a lovely orange-gold colored flower used on all auspicious occasions. It symbolizes purity, auspiciousness, and the divine. They are supposed to ward off negativity and evil spirits. The aboli is a local flower, loved by Goans which is a native to their culture. "The aboli is on the verge of obliteration from memory despite being intrinsic to the Goan culture". Nirmala Institute of Education (NIE) decided to take a detour and hold a flower fest, a theme of the annual Abolianchem fest, a culture fest dedicated to the Cossandra infundibuliformis (firecracker flower) locally known as the aboli flower. The sad part is that aboli is on the verge of being obsolete. Not only these flowers are used for religious rituals, but also garlands and gajras of aboli are offered to the temple god and goddess.

The ladies love to wear them in their hair. The three main types of aboli are ratan, sadim and pixim. These are in yellow to orange color hues. Wild varieties of blue and purple can also be seen in the hinterlands of Goa. Aboli has to be given the status of the State flower according to heritage activist Prajal Sakhardande. In Goa and southern India, women are seen wearing a saree and adorning their hair with sweet-scented jasmine gajras, which not only gives fragrance to the hair but also gives a whiff of the perfume as she passes by. Adorning gajras in hair by a married woman is considered auspicious or “Sumangali”. Jasmine is another flower favourite of women to wear in their hair. It is sweet smelling and light in weight to wear in the hair. The delicate white colour flower signifies innocence and purity. It is therefore used in the groom’s veil (sehra) and the bride’s hair. The Mogra and Jasmine are also used by Goans and Maharashtrians as a mundaval (a kind of floral headband) for the bride and groom.



Source BVMR creations



Source: Shilpa Gaitonde

The Flower craft of Goa and its love for flowers

One of Goa’s most endearing crafts is the art of weaving flowers and floral wreaths into decorations for temples and churches. Goa’s cultural landscape has plenty of temples. Almost every village has a temple dedicated to the gram deva. The villagers visit this temple irrespective of their caste or religion. Outside every big or small temple, we see ladies selling garlands of flowers as an offering for God. Within the temple premises, we see almost every lady staying in the complex wearing at least one floral accessory on their head. Ladies usually wear beautiful garlands of flowers known as gajras or venis but are locally called fatias (hair accessories). They are woven with a myriad of colorful flowers bound with a thread in the form of a garland. These garlands are called as “haar” or “sor” in the local Konkani language.



Source: Shilpa Gaitonde

What is a Gajra?

The Gajra was first written about in the Vedas in 1500 BCE. The 16-step bridal adornment or the Solah Shringaar is incomplete without the gajra, and is the last step in bridal adornment. Some cultures in the world have used flower garlands for beautifying hair, ornamentation, celebration, and ceremony. The ancient art of flower making was practiced to make exotic garlands and gajras. A gajra is a single-line woven garland of flowers that can be worn in the hair. It can be flat or rolled like a wire. A thread is used to tie these flowers together. Gajras are normally made with Jasmine, Bakuli (barleria), and Aboli (Cossandra). There are many

types of jasmine available. Chameli, Madanban, Mogra are different species of these lightweight flowers. All of these are used to make gajras.



Source: Shilpa Gaitonde

What is a veni or fati?

A veni is a flat-style floral arrangement of flowers woven together in a layer. These veni's can be made with various flowers, jasmine, and local karvanda buds, aboli, shevanti. How is the veni made? The making process is similar to making a tatting lace. 2 strands of these banyan threads are used, the flowers are inserted, a knot is made, and then a reverse double knot is made to hold the flowers in place. In most venis, you cannot see the knot from the right side. It is concealed and beautifully made.



Source: Arthi WFJ

What is a satha veni?

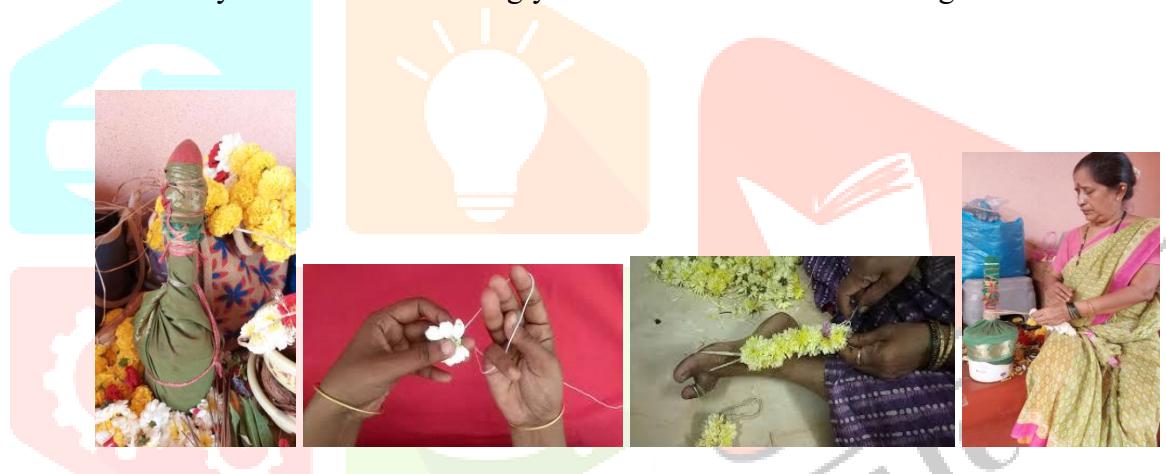
A layered floral arrangement in three different colors. A satha veni is a multi-layered veni and is quite heavy to wear on the hairstyle. Worn by brides for their wedding ceremony it goes well with their traditional attire, either above the plait or on a bun. The making of these venis is more complex but similar to making rows in a crotchet. These layers and styles are made in different colour combinations to enhance the look.

The life of flower sellers in Goa

As a family from Goan origin, but living in Mumbai, visiting Goa and staying in the temple complex with my family and especially with my grandparents was an annual affair. We would stay at the Shantadurga temple in the dharamshala (A place for devotees to stay), which became a home for a week to a fortnight, and then proceeded to our family home in the village. The Shantadurga temple in Kavlem, Goa temples have its own unique architecture. The golden idol of Goddess Shantadurga is beautifully decked out in flowers and is a feast for the eyes. Every day she is gracefully draped in a new saree and flowers are changed to enhance the look accordingly, in various colour combinations. One of my favourite pastimes was sitting with the flower vendors and learning the art of making Gajras and haars. I spoke with flower vendors who sit within the Shantadurga temple premises.

Her name is Jeevan. She started learning since she was 14 years, she went to school but left in 6th standard and started to learn this art. She has won competition in bouquets and flower making. These flower vendors are mostly local women staying in the villages near the vicinity of the temple. Namrata is another flower vendor I spoke with. Her mother-in-law was a flower vendor and she has continued in the same profession; she too makes beautiful venis. These flower sellers help to add some extra income to their household by selling flowers. Normally they come early in the morning by 8.00 and then leave by afternoon 2.00 p.m. The poojas

are held in the temple during this period and many people buy flowers during the morning time, these vendors then take a lunch and siesta break. This is also done on a rotational basis so that someone is manning their stalls during the lunch break. They are back at their stalls from 3.00 -7.00 p.m. Even though these women are not well educated they understand how to do mathematics and economics of business, and can calculate profit and loss smartly. The flowers used by these women in the 1970s were either from their home-grown gardens or were locally sourced. Chafa, Chameli, Aboli, Dathura, Bel, Hibiscus, Bakuli with other flowers. Going to the jungle to source them was not unknown. Nowadays, the markets of Ponda and Margoa are flooded with flowers, as the demands have increased. Due to the influx of tourists and Goa being a destination wedding place the prices of flowers have soared. Once these flowers were available at affordable prices but now are quite expensive. These ladies may also have understood that it is a lucrative business in the tourist season and have worked out the economics accordingly. The next generation of theirs are all working and don't want to continue in this profession, maybe then we will have professional flower makers doing this job in the future. The other temple that offers a beautiful sight to see is the Mhalasa Narayani at Mardol bedecked in white jasmine and is locally called jayo. This 'Jayo Puja' is celebrated with zeal and devotion every year at Shree Mahalsa Temple Mardol by Naik Fulkar Samaj from Mardol. For this Jayo Pooja the temple is fully decked with 'Jayo' (Jasmine) and completely decorated which is breathtaking. To see this beautiful decoration and seek blessings of the Goddess devotees from all over Goa throng the temple. At Mangueshi, since the temple is dedicated to Shiva, we see lotus and bel garlands. The Grand temples The Mangueshi temple at Mardol, The Shantadurga temple at Kavlem, and the Mahalasa Narayani Temple are known as the grand temples of Goa. Grand temples assume an ethereal quality when floral decorations change every night for the nine ritual nights that marks Navratri before Dussehra. Different fragrant flower garlands have an important and traditional role in every festival and accordingly the deities are decorated with garlands.



Courtesy: Flower Vendors of Shantadurga Temple

A sustainable way of making Gajras and venis

The flower arrangements that are offered to the gods and goddesses are made in a truly unique manner. The best part of this flower-making is that it is completely sustainable. The banana tree is normally grown in the backyard, where the kitchen waste water is directed and recycled for its growth. The banana plant has a succulent tree stem, instead of a wooden one. These banana trees flower only once to give banana fruits and it is mandatory that they need to be cut. The banana tree propagates from underground rhizomes near the 1st one. We need to cut the banana tree from the stem, so that another tree can propagate. This banyan stem is then cut and dried so that the fibres can be removed to make threads. These threads are made from dried banyan stems. The banana fibre is a strong natural fibre. These fibres are biodegradable and very durable. It has a tensile strength, fineness and spin ability. These threads are used to make these garlands. These threads are dry, so before making the garlands these threads are put in water and then used, this gives them the required elasticity to knot them easily. The garlands are made with a classic spiral knot. At the end, it is knotted again and the leftover thread is kept hanging to tie a knot when someone wishes to wear it on the head or can be extended as required. No needle is used for these processes, it is handmade. In the olden days, they would use their big toe to make the venis, but maybe people probably didn't like the idea of the foot being used for offering to the god. In the temples where the G.S.B communities' deities reside; it is considered improper to offer flowers not woven with banyan thread. Nowadays, they have made an indigenous wooden tool to hold

the thread and then weave this floral art. After these flowers are offered to the God and Goddess, the next day at about 6.00 a.m., in the morning, the temple removes the flowers from the deity. These are dried up and used as manure for the flower beds in the temple premises or even in the gardens of the priest's homes. These dried flowers are used as a fertilizer for the gardens, since there are no threads; this is a perfectly sustainable ecosystem that doesn't harm nature in the entire process. An alternate sustainable way that has been adopted by temple committee is the flowers offered to the Goddess are dried. Powder is made and mixed in dhoop masala. Dhoop is made using these dried-up flower petals which are then bought by devotees.



Source: Courtesy Flower vendors

How do devotees and tourists play an important role in the economy of these families?

After the Portuguese came to Goa and began their conversion a lot of Hindu families fled Goa and settled in neighbouring states, therefore they have their family deities in Goa. This forms a large part of pilgrimage tourist to visit the temple. A lot of these tourist visit their deities in festivals and even Jatras (A fair, a periodical festival in honour of an idol). The belief is that the Goddesses love flowers and hence most pilgrimage tourist give large amounts of flowers for the Goddess to be decked. Same is true with the male Gods too. The flowers vary for each God and Goddess depending to whom a person is praying to. This culture can be seen all over India. The offering of flowers is also seen outside churches too.

Another interesting legend is about Navadurga in Madkai. This is another magnificent temple that has a unique idol dedicated to this goddess who is famous for her tilted head. The story unfolds thus, a wealthy Goan merchant promised the goddess that he would place flowers worth Rs 1000 (this is about 400 years ago). This merchant could not find flowers in the market that day. So, he paid the money for whatever was available. The goddess tilted her head to acknowledge the merchant's devotion.

Tourists on the other hand offer the deity flowers as a form of conveying their devotion as per Hindu faith. The tourist offers flowers also as it gives a sense fulfilment to their prayers. They add to the economics and hence increase the profits for these sellers.



Courtesy: Jayo Festival by Golden Goa



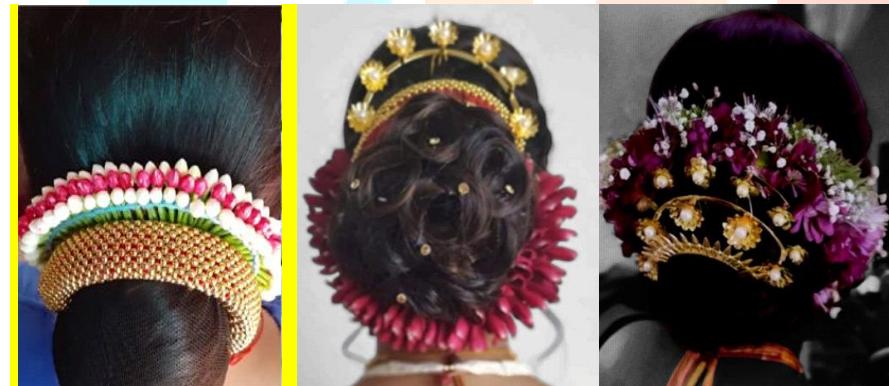
Shantadurga Sausthana: Kavlem Goa
Mangueshi Sausthana: Priol Mardol Goa

The Goan style of wearing flowers.

How can flowers be styled in different ways for bridal and other occasions?

The Goan style of dressing up their hair is different. The Goans have a variety of gold hair accessories which they wear according to the occasion. Some of these accessories are Pakkhe, Peacock hair chains, hair pendants and U pins called kadkadya and hair venis.

In Goa the flowers are invariably styled along with these gold hair ornaments.



1

2

3

1. Source: Urvi's Creativity YouTube #NewStylefati #freshflowersveni #bridalveni
2. Elegance Unisex Salon Sanquelim Goa
3. Hairstyles Goa

The Indian mainstream media and the flowers.

For centuries, the white and aromatic jasmine flower has remained synonymous with romance within the subcontinent. All the old Indian movies till the 1970s had a shot where the hero would either buy a Gajra or coyly tie it in the hair of the heroine. After the 70s with the advent and influence of the Western culture, the style of putting flowers in the hair diminished. After a brief hiatus, the gajra found its way again into the hearts of young Indians as well as the diaspora abroad. This love affair transcends the borders of the subcontinent and goes beyond the hero and heroine romance to invoke reflection, nostalgia, and community. Tabu is resplendent in red and gold, gajra in hair, for Vikram Phadnis's collection at a Mumbai fashion show in most Bollywood. At high-profile weddings these days, we see celebrities wearing gajras and this has made a big

comeback. Deepika Padukone and Alia have worn gajras in their hair on Indian wear. The latest floral creation was worn by Radhika Merchant for her Haldi ceremony at her pre-wedding, the floral dupatta draped over her shoulders.

The Gajras and the NRI community

In November 2022 in New York a pop-up was held by diaspora-driven brand "No Borders" and the fresh jasmine flower stand became an instant hit. The South Indian American community was thrilled. They said "While our distance from the subcontinent limits us from freely accessing handlooms and heritage pieces, the jasmine flower is ubiquitous. It's a piece of home we can easily access, wear, and inspire us".



Photo Courtesy Kanika Karvinkop



Model Anaa Saber displays a long gajra trail at the Jacquemes show

Since the document you provided primarily discusses the cultural and spiritual significance of flowers in Goa and does not explicitly describe a research methodology or approach, I will create a general

Objectives

Flowers are an essential part of cultural and religious practices in India, such as in temples, festivals, weddings, and rituals. Promoting flower culture helps maintain and enhance these traditions.

As Goa is also a wedding destination, flower decorations for weddings is an excellent way for these local flower sellers to make beautiful garlands and venis, it will sustain them and add to their income.

Being a wedding destination locale eco-tourism can be promoted to encourage sustainable practice through flower and sustainable decoration.

By promoting flower farming the rural community can do horticulture farming and have better income opportunities.

Materials and Methods

Locale of Study

The study was conducted in Goa, a state located on the western coast of India, renowned for its unique cultural and ecological diversity. Goa has a rich floral heritage, deeply embedded in its traditions, rituals, and daily life. The region's diverse ecosystems, ranging from coastal areas to hinterland forests, support a wide variety of flora, which has been utilized in religious practices, cultural events, and daily adornment.

Methodology

Data were collected through a combination of field surveys, ethnobotanical interviews, and literature review. The fieldwork was conducted over a period of six months, during which primary data were gathered from multiple rural and urban locations across Goa. Special focus was given to areas where traditional use of flowers is prevalent, including temples, markets, and cultural sites.

1. *Field Surveys*: Field surveys were conducted to document the floral species used in various cultural practices. Participants were observed during key cultural events such as weddings, temple rituals, and festivals where flowers play a significant role.

2. *Ethnobotanical Interviews*: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with local florists, artisans, temple priests, and elderly residents who possess traditional knowledge of flower use. These interviews aimed to gather information on the cultural significance, historical usage, and symbolic meanings associated with specific floral species. Each interview was recorded with the consent of participants and transcribed for analysis.

3. *Photographic Documentation*: Flowers used in cultural practices were photographed in situ. These images were catalogued and classified according to species, color, and cultural context.

4. *Literature Review*: A comprehensive review of existing literature was conducted to supplement field observations and interviews. This included published articles, ethnographic studies, and historical texts related to the cultural and spiritual use of flowers in Goa.

Results and Discussions

Floral Identification and Classification

The floral species identified during fieldwork were catalogued using a standard floristic approach. Specimens were collected from various locations, and the plant species were identified using local and global floras, including [mention key references used for plant identification]. Plant taxonomy was confirmed through comparison with herbarium records and consultation with local botanists.

Data collected from ethnobotanical interviews and field observations were analyzed qualitatively. Thematic analysis was applied to interview transcripts to identify recurring themes and patterns in the use and symbolism of flowers. Categories were developed based on the flowers' cultural significance, symbolic meanings, and their association with specific rites and rituals.

Quantitative analysis was conducted to assess the prevalence and diversity of floral species used in the different cultural contexts observed. Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts and percentages, were used to summarize the data and provide an overview of the most commonly used flowers across different events.

Ethical Considerations

This research adhered to ethical standards of anthropological and ethnobotanical studies. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and they were assured that their personal information would be kept confidential. All floral collections were made with respect to local customs and regulations, ensuring that no endangered or protected species were harmed during the study.

Indian floral culture is rich and diverse, reflecting the country's varied traditions, beliefs, and customs. Each flower has its own cultural significance depicting different aspects of life. Flowers are represented in different forms of Indian art, dances and Textiles [6], [7]. Its influence is reflected in the aesthetic representation of this nature beauty [8], [9]. This has led to a floriculture in India, its cultivation has promoted economic growth in rural areas. This floriculture also fosters environmental awareness and a deeper understanding of biodiversity and environmental conservation. The traditional knowledge associated encourages sustainable practices that protect the eco system. The results of Indian floral culture are profound and far-reaching, influencing

spirituality, art, social customs, and economic activity. Its ability to intertwine with various aspects of life makes it a vibrant and essential part of India's cultural heritage.

Conclusion

Considered as the universal language by many, flowers transcend emotional, racial, and national barriers to express a wide range of feelings [10]. Flowers have a vocabulary of their own. They convey thoughts without the need to speak words and transcend emotions without the need for words [11]. People have been using flowers to deliver a message for thousands of years. Through a gift of a single blossom, the person on the receiving end of that floral gift would exactly understand what the sender wishes to convey. Indians consume a lot of flowers for festivals, weddings, and even in our day-to-day lives [12]. This sustainable model can be implemented, it will aid in the environmental impact by recycling floral waste as a fertilizer. This simple model can be applied in societies and houses. Especially in southern India where banana trees are in abundance, it would be easier to train the florist to bring about a larger change in the societal framework. To help to minimize climate change and understand sustainability. Small steps taken, help to create a larger change for mankind.

Acknowledgements

Flower sellers in vicinities of the temple premise.

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