



Azim Premji University Colloquium Series

Topic: Stranger than fiction: The true story of the Indigenous Cotton Textile Industry of India (ICTI)

Speaker: Uzamma, Decentralized Cotton Yarn Trust, Hyderabad

Date: January 22, 2015 (Thursday)

Time: 2.00 to 3.30 pm

Venue: 10th Floor Auditorium, Pixel A, (Azim Premji University)

About the Topic

The talk deals with the relation of the historical past of the ICTI to its present and future, and explores the social factors that enabled this industry to dominate world trade in cotton textiles for 1800 years. Today the handloom industry is in decline, cotton farmers are committing suicide, the mainstream textile production in the country labours under a mountain of debt and holds less than 5% of world textile trade. What were the historical reasons for this incredible decline – was it really a natural outcome of technical progress? Why are cotton farmers forced to grow long-staple hybrids of American cotton when it was the Indian varieties that produced the best cloth in the world? And what is the future for the ICTI? What is the significance of the Malkha initiative? This talk will share insights uncovered during 25 years of involvement with the ICTI.

About the Speaker

Uzamma has been associated with the cotton textile industry of India since 1989. In 1992, She founded Dastkar Andhra, a not-for-profit research consultancy for the industry, which continues to be active in the fields of natural dyeing and marketing of cotton handloom fabrics after her retirement in 2005. In 2005, she founded the Decentralized Cotton Yarn Trust which is setting up small-scale units to process raw cotton to yarn at field locations using small-scale machinery spinning and handlooms. These units enable field-to-fabric cotton processing at village level, eliminating the damaging stages of baling & unbaling of cotton. The product is a cotton fabric named 'Malkha' with slubbed texture and improved lustre, absorbency and durability.

Uzamma is committed to the cause of promoting the artisanal mode of textile production as a viable economic activity for the future. She is a practicing goldsmith trained under the contemporary British jeweller, Catherine Mannheim, at the City of London Polytechnic, London. At present she is fully involved in the project to set up small-scale cotton field-to-fabric production units.