

# THE HINDU

INDIA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER SINCE 1878

Printed at Chennai, Coimbatore, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Madurai, Delhi, Visakhapatnam, Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi, Vijayawada, Mangalore, Tiruchirapalli, Kolkata and Hubli

## Sinhalese weaving skills in a new light

Madhur Tankha

**NEW DELHI:** He embodies in his contemporary woven art the native spirit of his island country. And now Sri Lankan architect-cum-designer Tilak Samarawickrema will demonstrate for the first time in India how he has combined traditional Sinhalese weaving skills with modern designs. A series of two dozen wall hangings will be on display at a 17-day exhibition at Gallery Art Motif in Lado Sarai here beginning April 1.

Tilak's unique contemporary art is rooted firmly in the Sinhalese artisan tradition and spans the entire gamut from wall hangings to carpets, passing through an entire spectrum of weavings. His motifs are inspired by the decorative ceremonial clothing and the costumes of Sinhalese dancers.

"When I was studying and working in Italy, the city of Milan used to be the pulse of the design world. I was heavily influenced by industrial design and architecture of Milan," he

says.

After 12 years of stay in Italy, where he worked as an artist and designer, Tilak returned to his motherland in 1983. "In 1986, the International Labour Organisation appointed me as designer of the National Design Centre of Sri Lanka. So I got involved in craft development. Whatever I had assimilated during my stay in Italy, I used it to productive use in design development in Sri Lanka. I trained young designers and revived the craft tradition." To begin with, Tilak first comes out with innovative designs on the computer. Later, the "oldest weaving village" in Sri Lanka and his design studio work jointly to come out with contemporary woven art.

"My works are executed by hand by skilled weavers from Talagune, where age-old traditional techniques of dyeing and weaving cotton are preserved," he adds.

Tilak uses vibrant colours and sees to it that his yellows, reds and oranges are well balanced by blacks and greys.



**DONNING A MODERN LOOK:**

A wall hanging by Sri Lankan designer Tilak Samarawickrema.