At a time of global economic collapse due to the pandemic crisis, creative communities find themselves in shocking conditions. Museums are closing their doors, furloughing staff, cancelling exhibitions. Cultural institutions are at a loss for major projects they have sponsored. Artists are not able to get
to their studios, or pay their bills, and are at risk from cancelled exhibitions or commissions, or for productions at all. Aspiring young artists are not able to complete graduation form their universities.

The mindset is either one of panic, ennui, rage or resignation.

This newsletter takes a look from participating voices around the world, at creation during this critical time. The world is “Zooming” with meetings, town halls, online classes webinars and workshops. NGO’s are trying to pick up the pieces and pace to get ahead for recovery in unknown times in the near and far future. Creative solutions are being made in concert and with the alliance of partnerships in ways not explored before.

CULTURAL SHIFTS, DISINTEGRATION & FREE FALL

‘STUDIO AS REFUGE’

A collection of artworks created during lockdown with a collective statement by faculty & students...

‘The University in Kolkata discontinued on-campus teaching from 16 March. Realising we were in for a long haul, the Dept. of Graphics-Printmaking started working virtually soon after. The only way artists have of dealing with trauma is to take solace in the space of making - we share with you the studio as refuge.’

- Submitted as a collective to ‘The Environmental Situation Room’ a curated project by Helen Frederick, Curator Kala Chaupal to seek environmental responses to the pandemic by Department of Printmaking, Fine Arts @ Rabindra Bharati University.

The collection is available for viewing in a 4 part series @kalachaupal on Instagram & Facebook

Dr Bertrand de Hartingh
Counsellor for Education, Science and Culture, French Embassy in India / Ambassade de France en Inde and Director, French Institute in India (IFI)

Alice Audouin
Founder and Chair of Art of Change 21, and Cofounder and former chair (2008-2014) of the French association COAL Art & Sustainable Development.

Jack Rasmussen
Director and Curator of the American University Museum at the Katzen Arts Center.

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Dr Bertrand de Hartingh
Counsellor for Education, Science and Culture, French Embassy in India / Ambassade de France en Inde and Director, French Institute in India (IFI)

“France in India opened a brand new decade as well as the year 2020 with a retrospective exhibition of international artist, Gérard Garouste at the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi. Supported by the French Ministry of Culture, Institut Français, Galerie Templon and the National Gallery of Modern Art, this was a rich opportunity to get acquainted with the even richer life of a very rebellious artist. A life and work informed by Dante and Don Quixote, the Torah and the Talmud, and in a format conventionally unconventional.” - writes the Counsellor

TRUTHS AND MYTHS

“Coinciding with this was another cultural note provided by the first visit to India of France’s Minister of Culture. The year couldn’t have augured better. Around the same time COVID-19 landed on Indian shores. In less than 50 days, the Garouste retrospective came under lockdown. As abruptly as this sentence…..

(cont. on the next page)
March also halted in their tracks, a brilliant set of thinkers, writers, philosophers, publishers, translators, artists and even scientists, who were to convene in France on occasion of Livre Paris 2020. The largest literary and publishing moment of Europe, where India was to occupy a place of honour, was thus off. Art Basel Hongkong was already over and out. Milan Fashion Week and thereafter. Tour de France. Cannes...

As I write, summer looms over Europe, sans the flavour of the arts.

Nations are locked and “social” distancing has entered our vocabulary. Art events, museum visits, cinema screenings, public performances and a good part of what constitutes culture are in the future tense. And who knows how far that future extends.

But as the eternal optimist, I am not going to be prevented from consuming culture, albeit differently, possibly more closely. Yes, technology has brought art into our homes and rendered the world even smaller. Venues have shifted. And I decide how, when and what to see. I am exposed to choices not known to me before.

“Creation need not stand opposite to collapse. Today is the most opportune moment to revisit Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter’s construct of Creative Destruction - a “process of industrial mutation which alters economic structure from within, destroying the old and creating a new”. Or Darwin’s theory of the extinction of old forms as being the almost inevitable consequence of the production of new forms.”

- writes the Counsellor

Aren’t you seeing this principle at work in urban renewal, sustainability, literature, the arts and definitely technology? I already mentioned art and Internet. Consider the upsurge in gaming. Does it not offer a fresh alternative, an interactive and lucrative platform for designers, artists, performers and all kinds of creative energies?

Taking this further, isn’t this creative destruction an intrinsic part of the artistic process itself? Ask Marcel Duchamp or Picasso or Damien Hirst.

“I know the suddenness of the blow has knocked everyone out and recourse is wanted. There’s anxiety, uncertainty. But thereafter adaptation is the way forward. Who better understands the certainty of uncertainty than the creative community?”

- writes the Counsellor

India And France: The Literary And Cultural Exchange!
India will be the guest of honour at the Paris Book Fair 2020, while France will be guest of honour at the New Delhi World Book Fair 2022. In preparation of these events, there is an ongoing series of activities happening in both countries. AABP interacted with Vincent Montagne and Jean-Claude Perrier to know more.

Crisis always brings opportunity. Shifts in themes, practices, media and even education will in turn will render art more economical, ecological, accessible. I see the art ecosystem emerging rejuvenated, stronger, smarter and simply more relevant. It will never be content with only witnessing 'history', but will actively participate. Many are already documenting this episode in their own expression. In short, here's a perfect moment to listen to Debussy's "silence between the notes".

“Gérard Garouste, in his memoirs, 'A Restless Man' made his stand clear -

"Artists today are like mountaineers who have conquered Mount Everest. They can decide whether to climb without ropes or ice axes, going backwards, chest bared, outdoing everyone else. Or they can follow the footsteps of the great masters, search for their own feelings, their own sensations on the roof of the world. I opted for the later.”

The French Institute in India welcomes all collective engagement and discussion related to the creative and cultural space.

Dr Bertrand de Hartingh is a historian, curator and diplomat who helms the educational, scientific and cultural network of France in India.

As contributed to the Roundtable Dialogue around Creation vs Collapse @theChaupalSpeaks @kalachaupal, April 2020

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Are we certain there’ll be a Future after COVID9?

The end of the coronavirus crisis will not spell the end for other big global crises related to environmental issues. This current crisis might be the first episode in a long series. Covid-19 might be followed by other environmental and sanitary crises, because our world is now global, dysfunctional and climate change is worsening everything. So, the times that follow Covid-19 can’t be called the Future. Between now and the possibility of a Future, as we navigate and weather the middle of the storm, the goal is to implement a new kind of world where everything will have to be different, from energy to eating, shopping to transport. We will have created a more sustainable world where we will afford to have a Future again - only then will we be able to manage the risk.

During this ecological transformation, people’s vision of what health, nature, wealth, beauty... are will change too, and this is where artists will play a very important role. They are the torchbearers and the accelerators of the Future: a space for new possibilities, a moment where we can dream again. The other word for this Future is Freedom.

In this current storm, we have great environmentally and socially engaged artists, crafts persons rooted in local history and in touch with nature: they are the people we need to make the Future happen. Their current challenge is to get through the crisis, to survive the crisis. The most important people in the post-COVID world are the ones who are especially impacted now. In this period of crisis, solidarity is growing. They will be helped and they will create new ways to be helped.

I am sure that selfishness and competition will decrease, and that the role of the artist as someone who promotes generosity and cooperation will rise again.

As we face a collective challenge, our answer will be collective, both socially and environmentally. Art is a wonderful means to unite people, as art can engender a common goal, a common... Future.

Engaged artists will be stronger after the coronavirus crisis. They have to be! They have to bring us to the next step, when the Future will be back on Earth!

Alice Audouin
Founder and Chair of Art of Change 21, and Cofounder and former chair (2008-2014) of the French association COAL Art & Sustainable development.
The pandemic is a tragedy for people all over the world, and it is probably in poor taste to discuss the inconvenient disruptions to our little art world in the same breath. Nevertheless, the arts are going to play an important role in making the country whole again. We must adjust to this new world and plan our comeback.

On March 14, students, faculty, and staff were told to leave campus. Classes were to be taught remotely, and staff would telework. The museum was closed with six exhibitions still on the walls, caught in limbo, and we were locked out. And, even as our spring shows passed their ending date, the art remained on the walls and will most likely stay there until June.

I wanted to believe our seven summer shows could go up in mid-June. But, as the virus marched through the population, it became clear we weren’t even going to be able to enter the museum before June and, in any event, art transporters and storage facilities were closed and nothing was going to move in time to allow us to install any shows before July.

I canceled the summer shows and prepared for the fall. We then learned the university was down $27 million from lost tuition and rental fees over the summer, and a decline in enrollments is expected for the fall semester. The result is the university directed the museum to drastically cut its budget and eliminate a total of 14 exhibitions over the next 15 months.

We have been able to keep our team intact, working on our future reopening and ramping up our online presence. Fortunately, there are still graduate assistants able to work remotely, and they are walking me, slowly, with baby steps, through this new virtual world of directing a museum through Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Dropbox, etc. We don’t know what the new “normal” will be, but we plan to be ready.

Jack Rasmussen, PhD, Director and Curator
American University Museum at the Katzen Arts Center
4400 Massachusetts Ave. NW
Washington DC

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ARTIST VOICES IRAN

‘BE SAFE’ by Alizera Jamshidi

Every society has superheroes or heroes based on their needs, possibilities, views, knowledge, ideas, fears and hopes, and looks up to them as an embodiment and symbol of their ideas, wishes, desires, and as saviours.

Depending on the circumstances of a society, the heroes form and appear appropriate and correspondent as figures along the spirit of the age. The heroes have an intersubjective present from individuals and the smallest social circles such as a family and in the wider picture as global village; in the latter case they are superheroes and this potential and actual presence takes place and prevalence.

Nowadays, based on rituals associated with media’s stardom, and the superhero’s social influences as well as rites of worshipping them, which could be considered as a mythical-religious order, there is an organized, network-based and coded system that is the common denominator, organizer and relator between superheroes. Heroes can be artists, actors, animated figures, prophets, saint, kings, warriors, politicians, clergymen, coaches, writers, athletes, theorists, scientists, and so on; They can dress up and take on the role of leaders or saviors of society objectively, mentally, or a combination of both of them. But how can the real hero that is necessary for society be recognized as a false hero?

What is the subject and the significance of the hero? What is the necessity of heroes for dynamism, growth, solidarity and unity of societies? In other words, who is the hero? Why is the hero? What is the function and impact of a hero? And are we able to imagine, picture, form or choose our heroes anymore? And if so, on what basis? Maybe there is a question that must be answered appropriately.
‘ISOLATION’ An Art Performance by Shikha Patel

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ARTIST VOICES INDIA

‘MY HEART BREAKS’ by Symran Bhue

My heart breaks thinking about migrant/daily wagers forced to go back to their villages, unfed dogs on the streets; However, for most of us, it is also a time for introspection/reflection. It’s a happy time for the environment as well: the pollution levels have gone down and animals are returning to their habitats. There is a lot of uncertainty; we all need a little bit of patience.

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‘MY HEART BREAKS’ by Rebecca Solnit, Author

“This is an extraordinary time full of vital, transformative movements that could not be foreseen. It’s also a nightmarish time. Full engagement requires the ability to perceive both.”

From Viruses to Algorithms, We Are Always Under Threat
Joseph Nechatal, Digital Artist
Hyperallergic, April 19, 2020

What can we learn from the exponential unleashing of viral codes, as they circulate and duplicate beneath the surface of your cultural and physical world? “Visually undetectable, its (the Corona-19) algorithmic exponential pulse is, however, felt, lurking in the shadows, stalking you. In this sense, viruses parallel the ubiquitous surveillance you associate with networked electronic information, and the flickering of its translucent forms. Indeed, the principles of algorithmic viruses — semi-autonomous, machine-vampiric pieces of digital code — are an essential trait of techno-cultural logic. Like these digital algorithmic viruses, actual deadly viruses can transform narratives precipitously — hence their beguiling, almost magical, powers.

Alonso Cedillo, “Oil Venus” (2018) 3D print, 15 x 12 x 19 cm (image courtesy the artist)
THE GREAT LOCKDOWN

India Today: IMF Gita Gopinath

As the global economy grapples with the impact of the novel coronavirus pandemic, IMF’s Chief Economist Gita Gopinath has insights on how the world should respond to the economic virus and the way forward, during the India Today Group’s E-Conclave. Corona Series. www.indiatoday.in

On April 14, the Trump administration announced that it will cut funding to the World Health Organization (WHO). The WHO coordinates initiatives to improve the health of communities around the world. By cutting funding to the WHO, the Trump administration is putting hundreds of millions of people worldwide at risk to contract the coronavirus. And as long as health resources are underfunded, the coronavirus will continue to spread, and our world and its people will remain in grave danger.

The United States must restore full funding to the World Health Organization (WHO), especially as the Coronavirus threat continues to grow worldwide. Instead of spending vast amounts of money on wars and weapons for dictators, we should invest in the WHO and ensure our national security by protecting the health of all people. The WHO hasn’t had all the answers in this unprecedented pandemic, but its work can help save lives.

-Sunjeev Bery, Freedom Forward

Is it too soon to look for silver lining of the coronavirus pandemic?
So, what comes next? Therapist Dawn Delgado writes in a Psychology Today article, “As we individually and collectively rise and rebuild, we may just uncover these gifts of post-traumatic growth”:

- Centring of priorities
- Clarified core values
- Stronger connections with friends and loved ones
- Deeper connectedness to purpose
- A more grounded global community
- Appreciation of life

THE CORONA VIRUS IS GIVING THE EARTH A REST
With streets emptied world-wide, cars and planes at rest, and people quarantined to their homes, our earth is breathing again. The frantic pace of humanity has been managed by the virus, and given us time to think about climate change with eye opening observations.
Some people respond to suffering by turning it into art. That’s true even with the harrowing experience of a pandemic. 

In the early 1400s, an Englishman named John Cooke composed Stella celi, a hymn to the Virgin Mary referencing the Black Plague which, according to some sources, wiped out half of Europe. Its text speaks of the “ulcers of a terrible death” but also the assurance that “the star of heaven ... has rooted out the plague.” Cooke’s hymn is unlikely the first direct musical response to a major pandemic, but it is one of the earliest. Many more composers, over the millennia, have been inspired to write music in times of crisis.

https://www.npr.org/sections/deceptivecadence/2020/04/13/827990753/when-pandemics-arise-composers-carry-on?

Why the 1918 Spanish flu defied both memory and imagination

Books, music, artworks and memorials help ensure that victims of pandemics are remembered. But while the Black Death, AIDS and Ebola outbreaks are firmly part of our collective cultural memory, the Spanish flu outbreak has not been. Medical historian and author Mark Honigsbaum explains why.

Words by Mark Honigsbaum 25 October 2018
https://wellcomecollection.org/articles/W7TGAAAP5F0eKS

IN SEARCH OF THE SILVER LINING OF COVID-19

WHILE THE PANDEMIC CONFINES US TO OUR PERSONAL SPACES, IT ALSO OFFERS A TIME TO PAUSE, RECORD,

Epidemics and Society: From the Black Death to the Present - Frank M. Snowden Yale University Press (2019)

It’s not a new message, but it bears repeating. Snowden, a historian at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, has assembled a vast amount of evidence, some the fruit of his own research. His global history spans more than a millennium of outbreaks, covering diseases from bubonic plague to smallpox, malaria, the respiratory illness SARS, Ebola and beyond. He rehashes the long history of scapegoating, violence, mass hysteria and religiosity that have accompanied epidemics, but only to speculate on their longer-term social, political and cultural consequences.

https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-03048-8

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Assam’s rural fair keeps centuries-old barter system alive

Sumir Karmakar, DHNS, JAN 18 2020, 17:35 IST
UPDATED: JAN 18 2020, 17:38 IST

The woman farmer belonging to Karbi tribe came down the hills not just to buy goods of her choice but to be part of an occasion that has kept the centuries-old barter system alive. Parbati exchanged the ginger with dry fish, rice cakes, curd and relis...

Read more at: https://www.deccanherald.com/national/east-and-

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n=34,000 respondents in 28 countries. (Oct 19-Nov 18, 2019). Selected countries shown. Source: Edelman Trust Barometer
CULTURE4DEVELOPMENT: CALL FOR ACTION

The Kala Chaupal Trust invites artisan, artisan communities and designers to support artisans through contributions of ideas in making #culturalmasks. These masks can be a source of income and a trendsetting model for income generation and livelihoods of the artisans. Please write to us on: leenika@kalachaupal.org or contact us on 9999880758

Amitava Ghosh, the Jamshedpur-based vice president and founder secretary of Kalamandir, which works with artisans facilitating local resource mobilisation and capacity building, has been closely working with the mask makers of Jharkhand. Now, along with Gurgaon-based Leenika Jacob of the Kala Chaupal Trust, Prabhat Kumar Mahatao (who Amitava refers to as the ‘chhau guru’), and the artisans of Seraikela, they have created a prototype of chhau PPE. In this the mask is made the traditional way, layering paper mache, cloth and clay, with an additional three ply fabric used inside to cover the nostrils.


Jharkhand’s chhau dancers and artisans take a battle stance against

COLLABORATIONS WITH:

https://www.200millionartisans.com/
CULTURE4DEVELOPMENT: ACTIONS by THE KALA CHAUPAL TRUST

COLLABORATION.INNOVATION.INTERDEPENDENCE

The Kala Chaupal Trust is a catalyst for change in driving affirmative action at the grass root level by bridging the intersection between arts, cultural heritage, local economies & communities to achieve the global policy of balanced, inclusive, sustainable development goals in India.

How are we working towards achieving these Goals?

INTERDEPENDENCE: Interlinking arts, culture and ecology
- Creation of a sustainable arts, culture & heritage biosphere that can co-exist with the modern & contemporary Indian and global society.
- Using these biospheres to create opportunities for future generations by preserving & enhancing the knowledge & use of traditional arts & culture resources that feed into economy.
- Working towards sustainability to maintain balance among different socio-cultural elements and the environment.

COLLABORATIONS: Harnessing technology for change
- KC creates & curates content & communication strategies and narratives using technology as an enabler
- Collaborations & partnerships with governmental agencies, corporations, academia, NGO’s and international cultural institutes to help bridge the gap between preservation of India’s arts & cultural heritage
- Conservation of its ecosystem & biodiversity & thereby influencing holistic socio-cultural change at all levels of the developmental value chain.

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CULTURE4DEVELOPMENT: ACTIONS BY THE KALA CHAUPAL TRUST

SHARING OUR OBJECTIVES APPROACH

Disaster management
Kala Chaupal is home to the Odisha Arts Park, a disaster management training centre. A detailed training manual is available for free on our website at www.kalachaupal.org.

Rising 4 Odisha
Odisha has been recently declared a heritage craft origin from the Purulia district. It houses the Raghurajpur Village, a home to crafts like ‘pata painting’, palm leaf painting, paper mache, and more. Several of the artists here also win Odisha awards for their excellent work - art forms that are currently in danger of being lost forever.

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The Kala Chaupal Trust invites ARTISTS, THINKERS, MAKERS & CREATIVE COMMUNITIES to a dialogue in THE ENVIRONMENTAL SITUATION ROOM by Helen Frederick, Curator, The Kala Chaupal Trust.

The curated brief seeking responses from communities is as follows towards Climate Action and SDG's to impact behaviour change and an “Artist Action to Sustainability” directly and indirectly.

“YOU are invited to the global situation art project. Send experimental images, texts, designs, robotic diagrams, any and all forms of collective concepts for innovative environmental change. Respond to the transformation YOU are experiencing during OUR world-wide crisis, and the need to preserve life from disease, to protect and restore the world’s environment, its oceans, air, forests and populations; and to activate a creative virtual

THE ENVIRONMENTAL SITUATION ROOM- a repository of global creative responses towards the environment. Under this we have just initiated a GiveIndia fundraiser to support a 100 visual artists who will be unable to support themselves and their families in this economic downturn. NON-PROFIT https://fundraisers.giveindia.org/nonprofits/the-kala-chaupal-trust
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nIRYiKbsx_k
PROJECT 'Kalakaron ki Chaupal' https://fundraisers.giveindia.org/projects/469
Images of lockdown: A short note by Susanta Pal

“Lockdown is a whole new experience. It was beyond imagination that the whole world could be stunned in this way. We are all terrified at once by the attack of an unknown invisible enemy. In this crisis, there is almost nothing to do but give time to family and art. Besides, having so much free time, I often see the old travel pictures on my computer. May be we want to look back at good memories while facing difficult times! And another thing is, none of us can move out to our favourite places in this captive life. This time, my mind didn’t support to produce the kind of art works, I have been doing for so long. I chose to draw things that people wanted to get during this pandemic. We have witnessed long queue in front of grocery, vegetables and medicine shops since the lockdown began, because these are the primary things for survival. It seems people being much more realistic in this present situation. I am doing small format water colour of desirable objects of daily necessities and landscapes from the memories of travel.”

Water Colour artworks as submitted by Susanta Pal, PHD Student/Scholar in The Department of Printmaking, Rabindra Bharti University, Kolkata to The Environmental Situation Room as an artistic testimonial of the current times.
The function of the studio is now a sanctuary of creation, EXCEPT IF YOU LOSE IT.

‘During the writing of this newsletter we lost the great artist Zarina Hashmi (1937-2020). Zarina left many gifts to the art world through her minimal drawings, prints, and sculptures, and particularly with our theme in this newsletter, Zarina Hashmi stood for the idea of permanence through love of family and home, even when facing many challenges.’

A HOME IS WHERE YOU MAKE IT

One of a portfolio of prints focusing on the conceptual representation of the ‘home’, which has been central to Zarina’s work since the early 1980s. Brought up during the partition of the Indian subcontinent, Zarina experienced a seismic shift in her own national identity. Her home town of Aligarh, once part of the British Raj, became West Pakistan and then modern-day Pakistan. Following her marriage to a diplomat she moved around a great deal: over the years she lived in 25 different locations across Europe, the Middle East, Latin America and Asia. This nomadic way of life anticipated our modern globalized world and contributed towards Zarina’s unique conception of nationality and origin, with eroded distinctions between place, home and location.

“A major national museum cancelled a large commission [of mine]. I don’t think most salaried curators understand artists are actually small businesses with substantial financial responsibilities. I think artists are the most optimistic people. We rent commercial real estate, pay commercial real estate taxes, pay for insurance, electricity, and heat before we buy one brush, tube of paint, or block of clay. And then most of us work alone day after day, year after year, decade after decade, on something we believe is important, serious, hoping someday someone will trade us money for some of that work. If that isn’t optimism, I don’t know what is. I’m obligated to pay the studio rent, [but] even if I was eligible for the [US government’s] Small Business Administration money, it would have been tiny, and would go straight to the landlord and cover less than 3 months. Artists are pretty much on their own. Art supply stores and foundries are closed now, so I’ll use materials I already have. It might not be the best business model, but it’s a meaningful way to spend a life.”

Patricia Cronin. Photo by Grace Roselli for Pandora’s BoxX Project.
“The Kala Chaupal Trust would like to gratefully acknowledge collaborative artworks and writings that are freely contributed and shared in this edition of The Chaupal Speaks, April 2020.

The Kala Chaupal Trust is also deeply indebted to the individuals and teams at Institut Francais and Republique Francaise who worked with us in collation of this newsletter.”

HELEN C. FREDERICK is an American Artist, Activist, Curator, The Kala Chaupal Trust and the Founder of Pyramid Atlantic Arts Center.

PREMILA SINGH is an Artist, Author and the Co-Trustee of The Kala Chaupal Trust.

LEENIKA JACOB is the Managing Trustee of The Kala Chaupal Trust.

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JACK RASMUSSEN Director and Curator of the American University Museum at the Katzen Arts Center.

DR. PAULA SENGUPTA Professor & Head Dept. of Graphics-Printmaking Faculty of Visual Arts Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata Bharati University.

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REFERENCES

THE HINDU OUTLOOK RESPONSIBLE TOURISM BUSINESS STANDARD 200 MILLION ARTISANS

COLLABORATORS

MASKBOOK BY ARTOFCHANGE21 KALAMANDIR NGO & THE CHAU MASK MAKERS