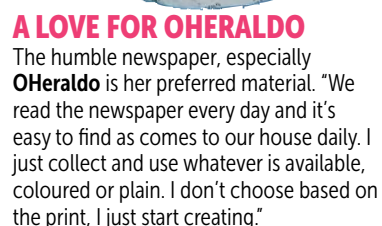


Fourteen-year-old **Leandra Rodrigues** from Mandur transforms newspaper like O'Heraldo into beautiful handcrafted art. She draws inspiration from YouTube to create decorative items

In a quiet corner of Mandur, Tiswadi, a 14-year-old girl is turning what most people consider waste into works of art. Leandra Rodrigues, daughter of Lency and Nifa Rodrigues, is a Class 10 student at Shri Dayanand Arya High School, Neura. But beyond her schoolbooks and exams, she's quietly mastering a unique skill, crafting showpieces out of old newspapers. The creativity runs in the family, Leandra's mother, Nifa, introduced her to crafting by teaching her how to make stocking flowers. "My mother was my first teacher. After that, YouTube became my guide," says Leandra.



Leandra mostly works in the evenings, after studies or during school vacations. "If I'm free and don't have assignments, I start crafting around 8.30 in the evening," she says. Although she hasn't received orders yet, she hopes to sell her work in the future after completing her Class 10 exams. "Right now, my focus is on studies. If I get orders, I'll need more time, and that's difficult during exam time."



What began as a summer holiday experiment has now become a passion. "I started working with newspaper crafts when I was in Class 5, just before the lockdown," Leandra explains. "I learnt everything from YouTube. Whenever I saw something interesting, I tried to recreate it." Her creations range from flower baskets and stars to jewellery boxes, pen stands, key holders, and decorative wall panels, all made entirely from folded and rolled newspaper. "I don't colour my pieces," she says. "I like to show that it's made of newspaper. Keeping it natural is part of the charm – and colouring takes more effort too!"

Besides crafting, Leandra has a flair for performing arts too. She enjoys acting and singing and once participated in a tiatr for the tiatr competition. She acted in Ashley Mendes' tiatr, 'Ek Ghoddi', directed by. "That was about three years ago," she recalls fondly. "I enjoy performing, but for now, I'm more focused on my craft and schoolwork."

As the only child in her family, Leandra has found a quiet, creative outlet that not only keeps her occupied but also shows how much beauty can come from the simplest materials. With her talent, patience, and an eye for detail, she's a shining example of how 'waste' can truly become 'wealth'.



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