

May 2023

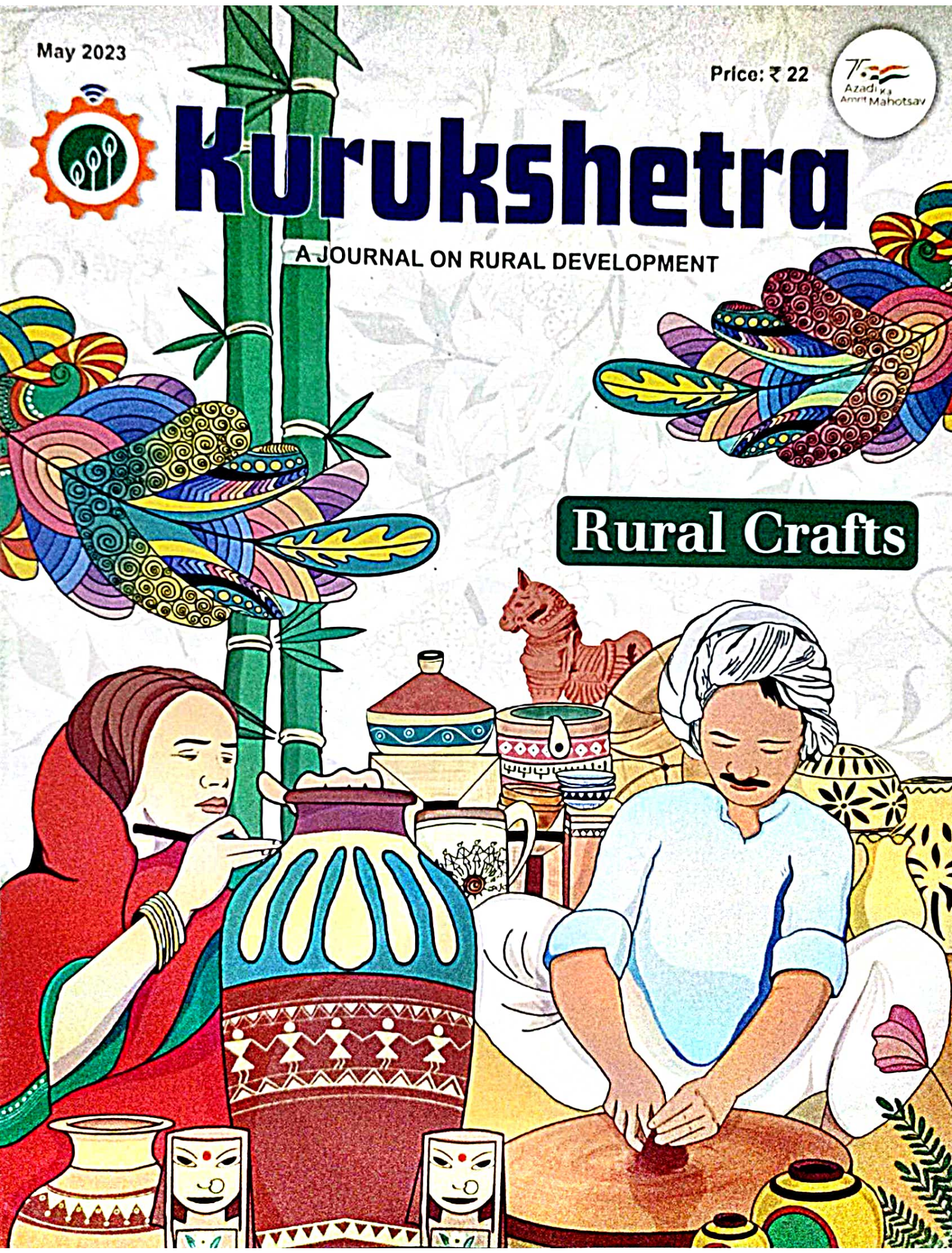
Price: ₹ 22



Kurukshetra

A JOURNAL ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Rural Crafts





Potential of the Rural Crafts

I

**Avinash Mishra
Madhubanti Dutta**

India has a rich tradition of rural crafts passed down from generations. These crafts are a source of livelihood for many rural communities; provide opportunities for skill development and entrepreneurship thus increasing the potential to contribute significantly to the economy. Rural crafts can be a significant attraction for tourists visiting India. The government can incentivise local communities to offer homestays and community tourism experiences, generating income and employment opportunities. The government can encourage conservation efforts, such as protecting wildlife and promoting eco-tourism. Thus, there is an immense potential for rural tourism in India. The government is playing a crucial role in realising this potential by investing in infrastructure, promoting local crafts and traditions, supporting homestays and community tourism, and promoting sustainable tourism practices. By tapping into the unique attractions of Indian villages, rural tourism can be a source of income and employment for local communities while preserving India's rich cultural and natural heritage. In this respect, the government can promote rural tourism and create

infrastructure to showcase the traditional crafts of various regions. This will not only generate employment for local artisans but also increase the income of the local community.

One District One Product (ODOP) is one such rural development program initiated by the Government of India to promote traditional industries and handicrafts in every district of the country. Under this program, each district is identified based on its specific product and efforts are made to promote it through branding, marketing, and infrastructure development. The program aims to create employment opportunities and enhance the income of rural artisans and entrepreneurs while also preserving traditional crafts and skills. By promoting local products and preserving traditional crafts and skills, the program can enhance the income and standard of living of rural communities while also contributing to the country's overall development. The government has identified eight craft villages nationwide under the 'Linking Textile with Tourism' initiative to promote crafts and tourism at a single

*The authors are Advisor (Tourism, Water Resources), NITI Aayog and Young Professional, NITI Aayog.
Email: amishra-pc@gov.in and dutta.madhubanti@gov.in*

India is rich in history, culture, and natural beauty, and many villages are home to unique tourist attractions. Rural crafts can be a significant attraction for tourists visiting India, which also provides opportunities for skill development and entrepreneurship. These crafts are a source of livelihood for many rural communities and have the potential to contribute significantly to the country's economy.

location. The aim of this initiative is to bring together the rich cultural heritage of India's traditional crafts and the growing tourism industry.

Additionally, the 'Linking Textile with Tourism' initiative aims to allow tourists to experience India's rich cultural heritage through its traditional crafts. The government promotes tourism in these craft villages by developing infrastructure such as homestays, tourism information centers, and cultural events. The Hon'ble Vice President of India, had referred to India's

The eight craft villages that have been selected under Linking Textile with Tourism initiative are as follows:

1. Raghurajpur (Odisha)
2. Tirupati (Andhra Pradesh)
3. Vadaj (Gujarat)
4. Naini (Uttar Pradesh)
5. Anegundi (Karnataka)
6. Mahabalipuram (Tamil Nadu)
7. Taj Ganj (Uttar Pradesh)
8. Amer (Rajasthan)

craftsperson's as ambassadors of India's heritage and a beacon of Indian culture. He had emphasised the importance of recognising and preserving India's traditional crafts and skills and has advocated for promoting these crafts to generate employment opportunities. He also advocated for developing a robust infrastructure for promoting traditional crafts, including establishing craft museums, exhibitions, and galleries. He emphasised the need to create and promote modern technology to enhance the reach and visibility of traditional crafts and support these products' marketing and branding.

Rural tourism can also promote sustainable development by preserving and promoting traditional crafts and skills, supporting local agriculture and food production, and promoting eco-tourism activities. By highlighting the unique cultural heritage of rural areas, rural tourism can foster cultural exchange and promote understanding and appreciation between urban and rural communities. This can help to stem the migration of young people from rural areas to cities in search of better job opportunities and can contribute to the overall development of the rural regions.

The United Nations World Tourism Organization has chosen Telangana State's Pochampally Village as one of the top tourist destinations (UNWTO). Pochampally is a village located in the Nalgonda district of the Indian state of Telangana. The village is famous for its handloom industry, particularly for its Pochampally sarees, which are also known as Ikat sarees.

Pochampally sarees are made using a unique dyeing technique, which involves tying individual yarns in a particular pattern before they are dyed. This results in a distinctive design that is characteristic of Pochampally sarees. The village is also known for producing other handloom products such as dress materials, bedspreads, and upholstery. The Pochampally Handloom Park, which was established in 2018, is a major attraction for tourists visiting the village. The park showcases the history and development of the Pochampally handloom industry and provides a platform for weavers to showcase their products. It also serves as a training center for aspiring weavers.

Furthermore, agencies like the Crafts Council of India, Tribes India, Saras by the Ministry of Rural Development, and state emporiums have existed for

The government is supporting rural artisans, enabling them to start their businesses and become self-sufficient. Converging economic opportunities in rural areas reduce the need for people to migrate to urban areas, in search of employment opportunities. The G20 can play a vital role in portraying Indian handicrafts in the global ecosystem, by providing market access, financial assistance, skill development, intellectual property protection, and cultural diplomacy.

years to raise public awareness, give cottage industries access to bigger markets, and aid them in adapting to changing market demands. The local cultural goods created using centuries-old esoteric knowledge, skill sets, and local labour supply organically embody the "Made in India" ideology and the "Aatma Nirbhar Bharat" values.

According to the Annual Report 2020-21 released by the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, the exports of handicrafts from India have been growing steadily in recent years. In FY 2019-20, the exports of handicrafts were Rs. 19,171 crore, which increased to Rs. 20,151 crore in FY 2020-21 despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The government has taken various measures to boost the exports of handicrafts, including setting up of export promotion councils, participation in international trade fairs and exhibitions, and providing financial assistance to artisans and craftspeople. It is possible that the exports of handicrafts from India will continue to grow in the coming years.

Rural Craft Curbing Migration

Rural craft can create economic opportunities that help curb migration. Rural craft industries can provide employment opportunities to people in rural areas, which can help them, earn a livelihood without having to migrate to urban areas in search of work. This can help curb the migration of people from rural to urban areas. Rural craft can also create opportunities for entrepreneurship, where people can start their craft businesses and sell their products to a broader market. Rural craft can also attract tourists interested in the local culture and arts. This can create more economic opportunities for people in the region and reduce the need for migration. Rural craft can provide a source of income diversification for people in rural areas, which

can help them become less reliant on agriculture or other traditional livelihoods. This can reduce the need for migration in search of better economic opportunities.

The Ekta Mall at the Statue of Unity in Kevadia, Gujarat, is fundamental to rural craft promotion. The mall offers local artisans and craftsmen a platform to showcase and sell their products to tourists and visitors from across the country and the world. It provides a platform for local artisans to showcase their skills and sell their products to a larger audience. This can help promote rural crafts and provide local artisans with a livelihood. The Ekta Mall can encourage entrepreneurship among local artisans by providing them with a market to sell their products and helping them set up their businesses. The Ekta Mall can attract tourists and visitors to the area, thereby boosting the local economy and creating more economic opportunities for the local community. The Ekta Mall at the Statue of Unity in Kevadia, Gujarat, can be a fundamental approach towards rural craft promotion by providing a platform for local artisans, encouraging entrepreneurship, preserving traditional crafts, promoting local culture, and boosting tourism.

Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat

The commitment to developing sustainable and responsible tourism is essential for promoting tourism in rural areas while preserving these regions' natural and cultural heritage. The pledge to embody the philosophy of 'Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat' can also promote intercultural exchange and understanding as travellers from different regions of the country explore rural India's diverse and rich cultural traditions. To achieve this goal, all stakeholders must develop sustainable tourism practices that benefit

Rural craft industries can provide employment opportunities to people in rural areas, which can help them, earn a livelihood without having to migrate to urban areas in search of work. This can help curb the migration of people from rural to urban areas.

the local communities and preserve the environment. Travellers also have a critical role in promoting responsible tourism by being mindful of their impact on the environment and local communities. They can stay in eco-friendly accommodations, support local businesses and crafts, and participate in responsible tourism activities that benefit the local communities. Conclusively, the commitment to developing sustainable and responsible tourism in rural areas is essential for promoting tourism while preserving these regions' natural and cultural heritage. It is a goal that requires collective efforts from all stakeholders to nurture and promote responsible tourism practices that benefit the local communities, the environment, and the travellers.

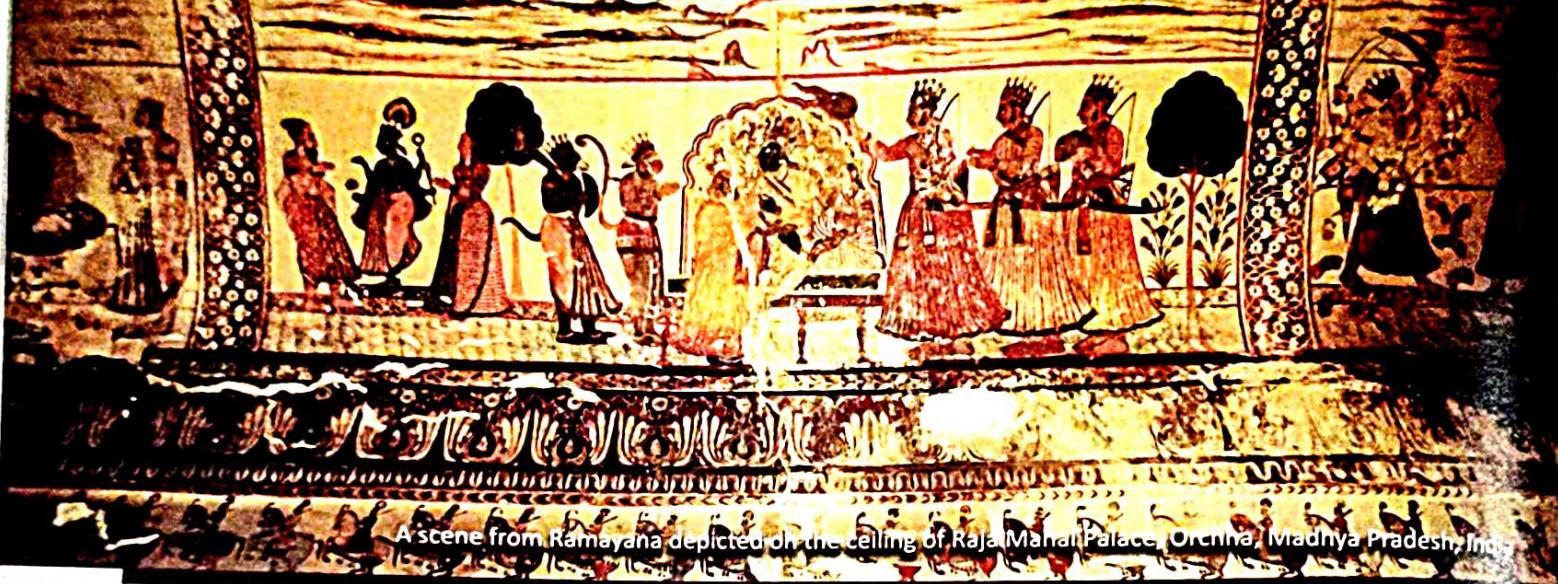
The Hon'ble Prime Minister had addressed a webinar on 'PM Vishwakarma Kaushal Samman', where he talked about the significance of traditional Indian crafts and skills and how they can be leveraged to promote tourism and generate employment opportunities in rural areas. He emphasised preserving and promoting traditional arts and crafts through initiatives like the Vishwakarma Kaushal Samman. The Hon'ble Prime Minister stressed the importance of these vocations in village life alongside agriculture, alluding to Gandhi ji's Gram Swaraj philosophy. "It is crucial for India's development path to empower every sector of the community for its growth," he remarked. He also added, "Our aim is for today's Vishwakarmas to grow into tomorrow's entrepreneurs .

Global Recognition

The G20 can help provide Indian handicrafts with better access to international markets. This could be done by reducing trade barriers, simplifying customs procedures, and promoting trade fairs and exhibitions. Many Indian artisans lack access to capital and financial resources needed to expand their businesses. The G20 can provide financial assistance to these artisans in the form of loans, grants, and subsidies, which can help them invest in new technologies, expand their product range, and increase their production capacity. The G20 can also invest in skill development programs for Indian artisans. The G20 can work with the Indian government to strengthen the country's intellectual property laws and enforcement mechanisms, which would help protect the designs and techniques used by Indian artisans. Finally, the G20 can leverage its soft power to promote Indian handicrafts globally. Examples:

1. The Saras Aajeevika Mela is an annual event organised by the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, to showcase and promote rural livelihoods and products. The event provides a platform for rural artisans, craftspeople, and entrepreneurs to showcase their products, interact with buyers and consumers, and explore business opportunities. The mela usually features a wide range of products such as handicrafts, textiles, food and beverages, organic produce, and other traditional and artisanal products from different regions of the country. The event also includes cultural performances, workshops, and seminars on rural development and entrepreneurship.
2. The Surajkund Crafts Mela showcases the rich cultural heritage of India and provides a platform for artisans, craftspeople, and performers from all over the country to display their skills and creations. The event attracts a large number of visitors, including tourists, art enthusiasts, and buyers.
3. Aadi Mahotsav, the mega National Tribal Festival at Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium in Delhi, celebrates the spirit of tribal culture, crafts, cuisine, commerce, and traditional art in an effort to present tribal culture on a national scale. It is a yearly project of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs' Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation Limited (TRIFED).

Rural Crafts through Ritualistic and Indigenous Traditions



A scene from Ramayana depicted on the ceiling of Raja Mahal Palace, Orchha, Madhya Pradesh, India

Craft forms have been present since the earliest human civilisations, and while the Indus Valley Civilisation is one of the earliest to provide evidence of their existence, archaeological findings suggest that they have been in use since the beginning of human history. From the earliest times, people have used their creativity and ingenuity to fashion tools, clothing, and decorative objects using materials such as stone, bone, wood, clay, and fibers. As human societies became more settled and organised, crafts took on new importance, with skilled artisans producing objects for trade, religion, and other social purposes.

Hemanth Menon

Rural crafts in India often have a strong cultural and religious significance and are rooted in the traditions of the communities that create them. Many crafts are created for specific purposes such as religious ceremonies, household use, and agricultural practices. For example, the creation of pottery in rural India has a long history and is deeply intertwined with the agricultural practices of the community. The pottery is used for storing and

transporting water, grains, and other agricultural produce. Similarly, weaving is another rural craft that has a strong cultural significance and is often used to create fabrics for traditional clothing, religious ceremonies, and household items such as rugs and blankets. Additionally, many crafts are also created for religious purposes such as the making of idols, lamps, and decorative items used in temples and other religious spaces. These crafts are often passed down from generation to generation and

The author is a national coordinator with SPIC MACAY. Email: hemanth@spicmacay.com

The art of creating Jhabua dolls plays a significant role in the livelihood of rural people of Madhya Pradesh. These dolls are produced in various shapes & sizes and painted with a range of vibrant hues.



are created using traditional techniques and materials that have been used for centuries.

Tracing the Legacy

Rural crafts in India have a long and rich history, dating back thousands of years. India has a diverse population and a rich cultural heritage, and this has led to the development of many unique rural crafts over the centuries.

The earliest evidence of rural crafts in India dates back to the Indus Valley Civilisation, which flourished around 2600 BCE. Archaeological excavations have revealed evidence of pottery making, weaving, and metalworking in this ancient civilisation. These crafts continued to be practiced and developed over the centuries, with each region of India developing its own distinct styles and techniques. The crafts of the Indus Valley civilisation are a testament to the skill and ingenuity of the people who lived there thousands of years ago. Many of these crafts, such as pottery, basketry, weaving, and jewelry making, are still used today.

From the earliest times, people have used their creativity and ingenuity to fashion tools, clothing, and decorative objects using materials such as stone, bone, wood, clay, and fibers. As human societies became more settled and organised, crafts took on new importance, with skilled artisans producing objects for trade, religion, and other social purposes. The evolution of clothing throughout history is a fascinating topic that provides insights into the cultural, social, and economic changes that have occurred over time. In ancient India, cotton was one of the primary fibers used for making clothes, and spindle whorls and loom weights were used for spinning and weaving cloth. The Vedic period saw the importance of textiles in religious and social customs, with references to various types of fabrics and their colors mentioned in the Vedas. Dyes and embroidery also became popular during this time.

During the Mauryan Empire, the production of textiles was promoted, with specialised workshops set up for weaving and dyeing fabrics. This was facilitated by a well-developed trade network that enabled the exchange of textiles with other regions. The Mughal period witnessed a flourishing of the textile industry, with the development of various textile arts such as block printing, chikankari embroidery, and zardozi work. Luxurious fabrics such as silk and brocade also became popular during this period. The Mughals brought skilled craftsmen from Persia and Central Asia, who introduced new techniques and styles to India. Today, Indian clothing continues to be a symbol of the country's rich cultural heritage. From the unstitched garments like saris and dhotis to the stitched ones, every form of clothing has withstood the test of time. The craftsmanship and techniques used in the production of Indian clothing are unparalleled, with intricate embroidery, block printing, and other embellishments making each garment a unique work of art.

Craft forms have been present since the earliest human civilisations, and while the Indus Valley Civilisation is one of the earliest to provide evidence of their existence, archaeological findings suggest that they have been in use since the beginning of human history. Serendipitous discoveries can frequently arise from unguarded experimentation. The accidental realisation that striking rocks together could create sparks and start a fire led to the discovery of fire by early humans. With light, came shadows. In some sense, shadows became a form of entertainment. The exploration and

manipulation of shadows as a form of entertainment eventually led to the development of various art forms. As people became more skilled in crafting, they began to embellish their creations, using a variety of materials and techniques to produce more intricate and aesthetically pleasing works of art. This marked the beginning of a rich tradition of art and craftsmanship that continues to evolve and thrive in modern times. Tholpavakoothu and Tholu bommalata are traditional forms of shadow puppetry that originated in South India. Both Tholpavakoothu and Tholu bommalata involve the use of leather puppets that are intricately carved and painted. These puppets are then used to tell stories, usually drawn from Hindu mythology. The puppets are manipulated by puppeteers, who stand behind a white screen and shine light on the puppets to create the shadows. Audiences are often captivated by the intricate movements of the puppets and the mesmerising play of light and shadow that brings the stories to life. Over time, these forms of puppetry have become integral parts of cultural festivals and celebrations.

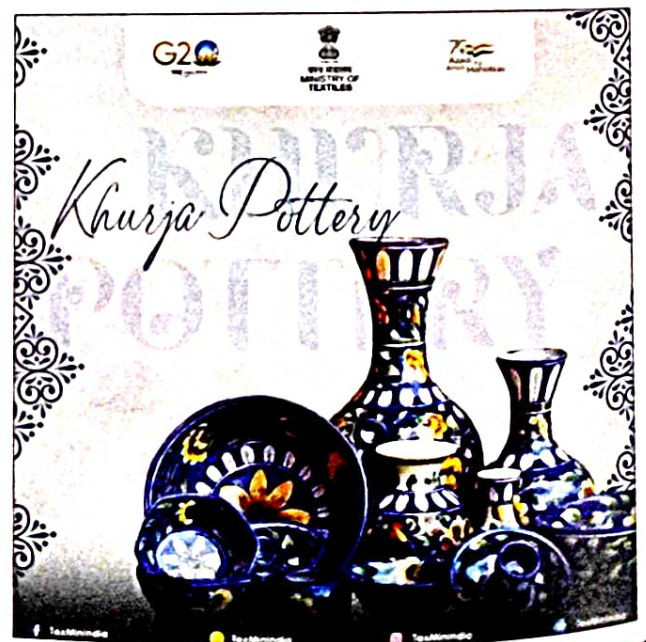
In certain communities, the practice of puppetry is also believed to have therapeutic properties. According to this belief, the puppets are able to absorb negative energies and illnesses from the audience, and the puppeteer can then symbolically destroy these negative forces at the end of the performance. This is thought to help purify and heal the community, both spiritually and physically. Puppetry has always been an integral part of India's rich cultural heritage and traditions. In addition to Rajasthan known for Kathputli, puppetry is also popular in other parts of the country, such as Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka. Each region has its own unique style and techniques of puppetry, reflecting the diverse cultural influences and traditions that have shaped India's history. In fact, some of the earliest references to puppetry in India can be found in ancient texts such as the Natyashastra and the Mahabharata, which describe the use of puppets in theatrical performances.

Toys and puppetry often go hand in hand, and many traditional Indian toys are also made using similar techniques and materials as puppetry. For example, wooden dolls and toys made from natural materials like clay and bamboo are popular in many parts of India, and are also often used as props in puppetry performances.

Kondapalli toys are believed to have originated during the Vijayanagara Empire. According to local folklore, the Aryakshatriya community, known for their wood-carving skills, first created Kondapalli dolls. The Vijayanagara kings patronised these artisans, encouraging them to make toys for children. The initial Kondapalli dolls were simple and made of unpainted wood. However, over time, the artisans began experimenting with different shapes and designs, resulting in more intricate and colorful dolls. The artisans also incorporated themes from everyday life, mythology, and folk tales into their designs.

During the festival of Sankranti, celebrated in January every year, Kondapalli dolls are used to create a display called Bommala Koluvu. This traditional practice involves arranging dolls and figurines of various deities, mythological characters, and everyday life scenes in a specific order on a wooden platform. These dolls are also used in other Indian festivals and ceremonies, such as Navratri and Diwali, and are popular as gifts and souvenirs.

Khurja pottery, the traditional pottery, derives its origin from Uttar Pradesh. The pottery items made with this craftwork are dazzling & vibrant characterised by exotic painted floral designs, soothing shades of blue & brown colour on white background which adds to its elegance.





Wall painting at Junagarh Fort, Bikaner

Rituals and Traditions in Art and Craft

Before beginning any craftwork, many communities observe certain preparatory rituals. One common tradition is the purification of the workspace by sprinkling holy water or lighting incense sticks to ward off evil spirits and invite positive energies. The Channapatna toy-making community in Karnataka performs a small puja to the tools they will be using and prays to their ancestors for their blessings before starting to make toys. Viswakarma Puja is yet another example.

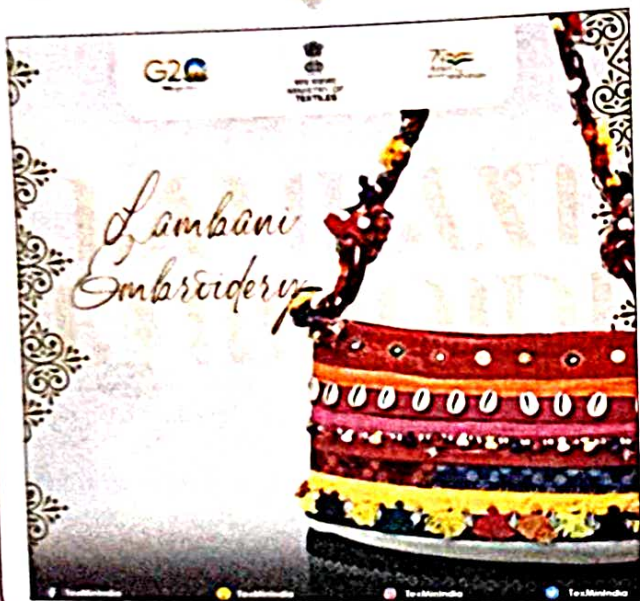
Similarly, Kutchi artisans in Gujarat follow the "Gadhvi" tradition by lighting a lamp in their workshop, singing folk songs, and praying to their patron saint for blessings and protection. In some communities, craft-making is associated with specific festivals and rituals. During the Dussehra festival in Odisha, the artisans of Pipli make beautiful applique work on cloth, which is used to decorate the idols of Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra, and Subhadra. They also perform a special puja before starting work on the cloth.

Craftspeople in some communities also observe certain fasts and abstain from certain foods while working on specific crafts. For instance, metalworkers in the Dhokra community in Chhattisgarh fast during the process of making brass and bell metal crafts.

Some crafts are associated with particular seasons or lunar phases. The Madhubani painters in Bihar, for example, only paint during the waxing phase of the moon, which is considered auspicious for creativity and growth. Another example is the Kalamkari art of Andhra Pradesh. Before beginning the painting process, the artisans fast and purify themselves through ritual bathing. They then draw the outline of the design using a bamboo stick dipped in a mixture of water and cow dung. This is followed by the application of natural dyes obtained from plants and minerals, which are mixed with buffalo milk to increase their adherence to the fabric. In addition, craftspeople also sing traditional songs and recite prayers while working on their crafts. These songs not only provide a rhythmic accompaniment to their work but also serve as a way to honor their ancestors and seek their blessings for a successful outcome. The traditions and rituals associated with craft-making in India are a testament to the deep cultural and spiritual connections that artisans have with their crafts and the materials they use.

Rural crafts in India are also an important item of utility in the places of worship, serving both practical and symbolic purposes. For instance, in Hinduism, the art of making clay idols of deities is an ancient craft that has been passed down for generations. These idols are

Lambani embroidery is majorly practiced by the tribal gypsies of the state of Karnataka. This artwork illustrates the lively, free-spirited, & enthusiastic lives of this community. Beads, shells, cowries, and low denomination coins are used to adorn the edges of the pieces.



used during festivals and rituals as a representation of the divine. Similarly, in Sikhism, the making of the chauri is an important craft. It is used to fan the Guru Granth Sahib as a sign of respect and devotion. Additionally, in Jainism, the art of making intricate rangolis is highly valued. They are used during festivals and ceremonies to welcome deities and guests into the home. The intricate carvings and paintings on the walls of temples and calligraphies in mosques not only add to the aesthetic value but also depict stories and philosophies associated with the religion. The use of diyas, lamps, and incense sticks is also common in Hindu and Buddhist temples, which not only provide light but also symbolise the removal of darkness and the attainment of knowledge. Similarly, the carpets and prayer mats used in mosques serve as a symbol of cleanliness and also provide a comfortable surface for the worshippers to pray. In Christianity, artifacts such as crosses, rosaries, and chalices are crafted with intricate designs and precious materials, symbolising the importance and sanctity of the objects. The craft of pottery is also used to create sacred vessels and containers for the sacraments.

Representation of Traditions through Crafts

Crafts in India often serve as a representation of various rituals and traditions. For example, the Warli tribe of Maharashtra creates intricate paintings on their walls and floors, which depict scenes from their daily lives, religious beliefs, and important events like weddings and harvests.

Painting is a strong medium for representation of observances, whether they are religious, cultural, or social. While paintings were originally created to depict mythological scenes, over time they have also begun to incorporate real-life scenarios and events. During the British colonial period, Indian artists began to create paintings that depicted the daily lives and cultural practices of the Indian people, as well as scenes of British colonial life.

Ganjifa is a traditional card game that originated in Persia and was brought to India during the Mughal era. The game involves using a set of circular cards, each with a unique design and symbolism. The cards are made using various materials such as ivory, tortoise shell, and even cloth. One of the fascinating aspects of Ganjifa is the representation of various Hindu gods and goddesses on the cards. Each card depicts a different deity, and the players must memorise their significance and symbolism to play the game effectively. For example, the Chandra or moon card represents the goddess Chandi, who is associated with strength and power. Depiction of traditions is not restricted to paintings, but also embroidery and other forms of crafts. Chamba Rumal and Sanjhi Paper cutting are a few examples.

Rural crafts in India continue to be an important part of the country's cultural and economic landscape. The evolution of these crafts reflects the cultural, social, and economic changes that have occurred over time, and they remain a vital part of India's cultural heritage. Today, many rural crafts in India face challenges such as a lack of recognition, dwindling demand, and competition from mass-produced goods. However, efforts are being made to preserve and promote these crafts, including through government initiatives, participatory movements including SPIC MACAY, and collaborations with designers and entrepreneurs. With continued support and awareness, the rural crafts of India can thrive and continue to be an important part of the country's cultural and economic identity. □

Betting Big on Bamboo

The restructured National Bamboo Mission is helping build a complete value chain linking growers, marketers and consumers in order to realise the potential of the bamboo sector.

B S Purkyastha

Recently on Twitter, Nagaland Minister Temjen Imna Along shared pictures of leak-proof bamboo bottles made in the north-eastern state. "Bamboo dene ka nahin, bamboo se pani peene ka... Known as green gold, bamboo has unlimited potential and its usage in creating eco-friendly products will do wonders to mother nature. Kudos to all entrepreneurs from North East India who

are working to harness its true potential," he tweeted in his avuncular style. That tweet drew hundreds of responses from netizens across the country, asking how they could place orders, indicating that there is much demand for unique bamboo products, and only the linkages between producers, artisans, manufacturers and marketers need to be strengthened to ensure a sustainable value chain.



The author is a freelance journalist. Email: ideainks2020@gmail.com



Today, the king of the grass family is being used in new ways, and customers are lapping them up. From bottles and biomass pellets to tableware and toothbrushes, bamboo is proving to be a versatile product, which can be bent, split or compressed to make different kinds of products. As a sustainable, eco-friendly and affordable alternative to plastic, wood and even aluminum, it offers a unique value proposition. Bamboo, today, is being celebrated globally as the building material of the future because of its excellent structural properties, sure and sustainable availability and its minimum ecological impact. Modern technologies allow use of bamboo as a durable and high-quality wood substitute. Premium products such as bamboo flooring, laminated furniture, mat boards, strand lumber, etc., have huge international demand with big pro-poor financial impact and employment potential. Bamboo bridges and pre-fabricated houses have large potential in defence, disaster management and low-cost housing. Pack-flat and knockdown furniture are novel concepts. Hence, a focused approach towards blending tradition, technology and sustainability can lead to manufacturing at scale value-added products at par with global standards.

Green Gold: India's Bamboo Wealth

India's bamboo resources are the world's second-largest, with around 136 species spread across 13.96 million hectare area. FSI, 2021 estimates shows that Madhya Pradesh has the maximum bamboo bearing

area (1.84 m ha) followed by Arunachal Pradesh (1.57 m ha), Maharashtra (1.35 m ha), and Odisha (1.12 m ha). The total number of bamboo culms has increased by 13,882 million as compared to the assessment of 2019. The total estimated green weight of bamboo culms at national level is 402 million tonnes. However, according to National Bamboo Mission, the annual production of bamboo in India is 14.6 million tonnes only and the annual yield varies from 1 to 3 tonnes per ha. India is exporting bamboo and bamboo products to over 154 countries. During the year 2020-2021 (April-November), India exported bamboo worth USD 140.47 million and imported USD 107.0 million.

Hence, despite the growing stock both within and outside forests, India is a net importer of bamboo. It indicates that there are more opportunities to capitalise on market potential by increasing production and establishing the right value chain environment. Rising awareness about the need to use sustainable and eco-friendly products, increasing investments in infrastructure development and the use of sustainable construction materials are the major growth drivers for bamboo today. With versatile uses as a building material, paper pulp resource, scaffolding, food, agriculture implements, fishing tools, weaving material and a substitute for rattan, plywood and particleboard industries, it is an important resource for a country like India. Bamboo has tremendous untapped potential for transforming India's rural economy. Bamboo based products are one of the oldest traditional cottage industries in India, with women working not only as part of the labour force in the micro and small-scale formal and informal manufacturing units, but also as self-employed artisans. Handicrafts, furniture making, jewellery making, shoot processing, incense stick production, fabric/fibre extraction typically see a sizeable female workforce participation. Examples of successful women-led enterprises in these segments are also many. Altogether, about 8.6 million people depend on bamboo for their livelihood, mostly in rural and remote areas. Thus, bamboo can provide environmental, economic and livelihood security to rural communities.

National Bamboo Mission: Helping Realise the Commercial Potential

Recognising the positive impact that bamboo can have on the Indian economy, especially the rural

economy, the government of India has been working through the National Bamboo Mission (NBM) for this. The Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare under the Ministry of Agriculture is implementing the Restructured National Bamboo Mission (NBM) since 2018-19 for the development of complete value chain of the bamboo sector to link growers with consumers starting from planting material, plantation, creation of facilities for collection, aggregation, processing, marketing, micro, small & medium enterprises, skill development and brand building initiatives in a cluster approach mode. The NBM is implemented through State Bamboo Missions and Bamboo Technology Support Groups. Further, the government has approved

two externally aided projects for the development of bamboo sector in the North Eastern region.

As per the NBM Operational Guidelines, assistance to beneficiaries is provided by the Implementing Agencies under various components including MSME units such as handicrafts, cottage industry, furniture making, jewellery making, shoot processing, incense stick production, fabric/fibre extraction, Common Facility Centre, bamboo board/mat/corrugated sheet/floor tiles making, bio energy extraction, etc. Till now, the restructured NBM has helped establish 416 product development and processing units for developing the bamboo value chain.

TABLE 1: Bamboo Product Development and Processing Units set up during 2018-19 to 2022-23 under NBM

Product Development and Processing Units set up from 2018-19 to 2022-23 (as on 31.01.23)			
	Activity		No. of units set up
1	Establishment of processing units for value addition of Bamboo (in Nos.)	Setting up of unit for cross cutting, slicing, splitting, knots removing, shaping etc.	81
2	Management of Bamboo waste in primary processing units (in Nos.)	For making of value added products like pellets and activated carbon.	37
3	Establishment of Micro/Medium processing units (in Nos.)	a) Handicrafts/Cottage industry	86
		b) Furniture making	46
		c) Jewellery making	12
		d) Bamboo shoots processing	24
		e) Incense stick making	94
		f) Fabric/Fibre extraction	03
		g) Common facility centre (CFC)	24
		h) Bamboo board /mat/corrugated sheets /floor tiles making	5
		i) Bio Energy extraction	3
		j) Activated Carbon product	1
		k) Ethanol Gassifier	0
	Total		416

Source: <https://loksabha.nic.in/Questions/QResult15.aspx?qref=46598&lsno=17>

Beyond the North-East

While the north eastern part of the country immediately comes to our mind when we think of bamboo, several other states including Madhya

Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Karnataka, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Kerala are also home to bamboo cultivation and processing units.

Last year, 22 bamboo clusters were inaugurated in nine states -- Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Assam, Nagaland, Tripura, Uttarakhand and

Karnataka. Let us look at how the 416 bamboo product development and processing units set up in the last 5 years are distributed across the country.

TABLE 2: State-wise detail of Product Development and Processing Units including Micro/ Medium Processing units established during 2018-19 to 2022-23 (as on 30.11.2022) under NBM

S. No	States	Processing units for value addition of Bamboo	Management of Bamboo waste in primary processing units	Micro & Medium processing units	Total
1	Andhra Pradesh	-	-	-	-
2	Bihar	-	-	1	1
3	Chhattisgarh	4	-	-	4
4	Gujarat	-	-	-	-
5	Himachal Pradesh	1	-	4	5
6	Jharkhand	2	-	7	9
7	Karnataka	5	3	3	11
8	Kerala	-	-	-	-
9	Madhya Pradesh	16	11	52	79
10	Maharashtra	8	3	8	19
11	Orissa	3	1	22	26
12	Tamil Nadu	-	-	-	-
13	Telangana	-	-	-	-
14	Uttarakhand	1	1	7	9
15	Uttar Pradesh	-	-	5	5
16	Arunachal Pradesh	3	3	48	54
17	Assam	-	-	4	4
18	Manipur	3	-	2	5
19	Meghalaya	2	-	7	9
20	Mizoram	3	3	20	26
21	Nagaland	7	4	14	25
22	Sikkim	1	1	28	30
23	Tripura	22	5	65	92
Other Institutes					
1	BTSG, KFRI (Peechi)	-	1	1	2
2	BTSG, ICFRE (Dehradun)	-	-	-	-
3	BTSG, NECBDC/CBTC (Guwahati)	-	-	1	1
	TOTAL	81	36	299	416

SOURCE: <https://pqals.nic.in/annex/1710/AU2259.pdf>

The NBM has identified three existing institutes -- North East Cane and Bamboo Development Council (NECBDC), Guwahati, Indian Council of Forest Research & Education (ICFRE), Dehradun and Kerala Forest Research Institute (KFRI), Peechi, Kerala to impart skill development in cane and bamboo sector. NECBDC, in turn, has identified five centres in the North-East for training local people in product development and processing. These institutes are:

- (i) Training-cum-Production Centre, Ukhrul, Manipur
- (ii) Bamboo Technology Park, Jote, Arunachal Pradesh
- (iii) Integrated Cane and Bamboo Development Project at Tamenglong, Manipur
- (iv) Incubation Centre at Sairang, Aizwal, Mizoram.
- (v) Incubation Centre at Hi-Bermiok, Berthang, Sikkim.

Unique and Versatile Products Made from Bamboo

Let us check out some of the unique products that are being created with bamboo, not just in labs and factories, but by do-it-yourself entrepreneurs and artisans too!

First and foremost is the 200-metre-long bamboo crash barrier installed on a highway connecting Chandrapur and Yavatmal districts in Maharashtra. In a tweet last month (March), Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Shri Nitin Gadkari said, "An extraordinary accomplishment towards achieving #AatmanirbharBharat has been made with the development of the world's first 200-metre-long bamboo crash barrier, which has been installed on the Vani-Warora Highway."

Named "Bahu Balli", it underwent rigorous testing at various government-run institutions, such as the National Automotive Test Tracks [NATRAX] in Pithampur, Indore, and was rated as Class 1 during the Fire Rating Test conducted at the Central Building Research Institute [CBRI] in Roorkee. It has also been accredited by the Indian Road Congress. This crash barrier offers a perfect alternative to steel and addresses environmental concerns since the recycling value of bamboo barriers is 50-70 per cent, while that of steel barriers is 30-50 per cent. The bamboo species used in the making of this barrier is *Bambusa Balcoa*, which has been treated with creosote oil and coated with recycled High-Density Poly Ethylene (HDPE).

Recently, an IIT-Bombay graduate Aankansh Chaurvedi designed eco-friendly headphones using bamboo which is 70 per cent biodegradable. Helped by the bamboo lab staff at IIT-B, who were actually

bamboo craftsmen, his creation is durable, flexible and lightweight too. While it took him three months to sketch, design and produce his first prototype, the design is a value proposition with the potential to replace other designs. Remember, bamboo is a naturally acoustic and therefore, could be used to make speakers and other audio products too.

Innovators have been building bicycle frames out of bamboo. From frames to handlebars, stems, seat forks, fenders and wheel rims, all are made of bamboo. And these bamboo bikes are suitable for riding in all terrains and can even outperform regular bikes in some ways. Since it absorbs vibration better than any other frame building material, it considerably reduces fatigue. It also withstands rough use better than carbon fibre or thin-walled aluminium, so leaving it out in the rain would not cause much damage. Given that India is among the top bicycle manufacturers in the world, this is an idea that can be capitalised on.

Bamboo is also increasingly being used to make fabric. Bamboo-derived fibre (usually marketed as rayon from bamboo) has the ability to absorb moisture along with natural breathability – making it perfect for bedsheets, towels and even summer clothes and sportswear. This is another reason why we are also seeing niche brands coming up with bamboo-based baby wipes and toilet paper.

Not only are these innovations eco-friendly, manufacturing of these products at scale can give a fillip to rural industrialisation as well as agro-based industries, ensuring employment in rural and remote areas of the country.

Together, the implementing agencies provide training to farmers/artisans/field functionaries and entrepreneurs. So far, 12,119 persons including farmers, artisans, field functionaries and entrepreneurs were trained during 2018-19 to 2022-23 under the scheme. Self-help groups (SHGs) of women who have been traditionally involved in making bamboo products, have been at the forefront of receiving skill enhancement training in making agarbattis, furniture, etc., followed by disbursement of micro-loans which have helped them to earn decent incomes, set up small units and become financially empowered.

The NBM also has the critically important component of propagation and cultivation under which financial assistance is provided for establishing bamboo nurseries and plantations in non-forest government as well as private farmlands, community lands, arable wastelands and along irrigation canals, water bodies, etc. Since bamboo can grow on marginal land, not suitable for agriculture as an agroforestry/farm forestry crop, bamboo plantations can optimise farm productivity and income thereby enhancing livelihood opportunities of small and marginal farmers, including the landless and women. The NBM has identified ten commercially important bamboo species for promoting quality bamboo plantation. For achieving economies of scale it is imperative that preference be given to Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs), Cooperatives, Village Producers' Organizations (VPOs), Self Help Groups (SHGs), Cooperatives and the like.

Taking Bamboo Products to National and Global Markets

Given that it is the people in the rural and remote areas who are mostly engaged in the processing of bamboo and making of bamboo products, reaching out to markets in urban centres, especially outside India, can be a major challenge. As such, e-trading is of much importance in accessing new markets and ensuring lucrative remuneration. Across the value chain, stakeholders are regularly advised to use enam.gov.in and gem.gov.in portals for marketing and procurement. The GeM portal has a dedicated window for registration of bamboo products as well as bamboo processing machines to add visibility in the electronic market space for government procurement. Along with this, more than 20 Bamboo Mandis (bamboo market

place) have been approved for promotion and e-trading of bamboo. Similarly, North Eastern Handicrafts and Handlooms Development Corporation Ltd has also created its online shopping portal for promotion of Bamboo. Recently, Bamboo Technical Support Group South Zone, Kerala Forest Research Institute (BTSG-KFRI), launched a bamboo information website (<https://www.bambooinfo.in/default.asp>) for better knowledge sharing and collaboration for development of the bamboo industry. This is an exclusive website for bamboo information including bamboo species, cultivation, activities of BTSG-KFRI, and a database of artisans, researchers, farmers, plantations and nurseries is maintained by BTSG-KFRI.

Not just the domestic market, processing units also need to look at the opportunities for marketing bamboo products globally. For instance, bamboo charcoal has very limited use within the domestic market but has huge demand in the international market. Thus, export of bamboo charcoal would ensure complete utilisation of the bamboo waste and thus make the bamboo business more profitable. The world import demand of bamboo charcoal has been hovering in the range of USD 1.5 to 2 billion and has been growing at the rate of 6 per cent in recent years. Bamboo Charcoal for Barbeque sells for about Rs. 21,000 to Rs. 25,000 per ton in the international market. Besides, it is also used for soil nutrition and as a raw material for manufacturing Activated Charcoal. Rising import demand is witnessed in countries like USA, Japan, Korea, Belgium, Germany, Italy, France and UK at negligible import duty. While biochar production protocols are yet to be standardised in India, biochar from bamboo residue has huge potential for use in improving crop production and mitigating climate change in India and needs to be explored. Since every part of the bamboo tree can be used, the ideal has to be zero waste. □

References

1. <https://www.bambooinfo.in>
2. National Bamboo Mission
3. Press Information Bureau
4. Lok Sabha questions

J&K: Changing Dynamics of Handicrafts Sector

In recent years, handicrafts have gone through a substantial transformation as a result of a number of causes, including globalisation, shifting preferences among consumers, and improvements in technology. These shifts have not only brought about difficulties for the industry, but they have also helped to reinvigorate the handicrafts industry and opened up new prospects for artists. Nonetheless, it is necessary to balance maintaining traditional handicrafts and welcoming new advancements in the sector to ensure the industry's continued success.

T

Irtif Lone

he handicraft sector in Jammu and Kashmir has a long and rich history dating back centuries. The region has been famous for its traditional crafts, including shawl weaving, embroidery, carpets, wood carving, papier-mache, and copperware. These crafts were not just a means of livelihood for the artisans but also a way of preserving the region's cultural heritage. The handicrafts sector has long been an integral part of the culture and economy of J&K. Jammu and Kashmir is home to some of the finest and most unique artisans living across the globe. A wide variety of items such as Shawls, Carpets, Crewelwork, Papier Mache, Copper work and Wooden items are crafted by skilled artisans in the region, providing significant employment opportunities to many people.

Handicrafts have been traditionally passed down from generation to generation, preserving cultural heritage and promoting unique and authentic art forms. In J&K, handicrafts are produced across the region, providing employment opportunities to people otherwise excluded from the formal economy, generating income for small businesses and local

communities, and promoting entrepreneurship and economic growth.

The handicraft sector relies heavily on human labour, creating many employment opportunities and representing a significant opportunity to raise the overall living standards among the population attached to the sector. These products are often crafted with hands using only simple tools, which serve both for exquisite and practical purposes.

Handmade items from Kashmir have gained appreciation from all around the world for the breathtaking designs, functional versatility, and high-quality workmanship that distinguish them. People worldwide have been delighted for centuries by the artistic ingenuity and skill of the Artisans, which is reflected in a vast variety of products.

History

Shahl Hamdan a Persian Sufi saint who lived in the 14th century is credited with making a substantial contribution to the development of handicrafts in Jammu and Kashmir. He travelled to Kashmir in the 14th century, bringing with him a number of skilled craftsmen

from Persia, who introduced new techniques and designs to the local artisans. The Jammu and Kashmiri handicraft sector saw significant growth during the period. The craftsmen brought innovative approaches to calligraphy, wood carving, shawl weaving, carpet weaving and metalwork, all of which were influenced by the styles of the Persians.

During the time of the Mughal emperors, Jammu and Kashmir was significant hub for the manufacturing of shawls. They were great patrons of arts and crafts and supported the growth of the handicraft business in the region. The Mughal emperors were responsible for much of the development of the region's handicraft sector. The shawls made in this area had a high level of demand and were shipped to other regions of India and Europe.

Handicrafts in the Present Day

One major factor that has impacted the handicraft and handloom industry is globalisation. With increased access to international markets, handicraft and handloom products can reach a global audience. This has led to increased demand for unique and authentic handmade products from around the world.

The handicrafts sector in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has undergone several changes recently, leading to several challenges faced by the sector today. The J&K government has taken several measures to address these challenges in recent years. One of the key initiatives has been to provide support to artisans in the form of training and financial assistance. The government has also set up several regional handicraft development centres, which provide facilities for producing and selling handicrafts.

Another significant development in the sector has been the increasing use of technology to promote and market traditional handicrafts. Many artisans now use online platforms to sell their products and reach a wider audience. This has helped to boost demand for traditional handicrafts and provide a new source of income for artisans.

Overall, the government's initiatives and the increasing use of technology are helping to revitalise the sector and promote the region's rich cultural heritage.

Changing Dynamics

While recognising the potential and importance of the Handicraft sectors and the role they can play in

bringing economic upliftment with particular focus on more than 3.5 lakh artisans associated with the sector, the Government of Jammu and Kashmir introduced a holistic policy for Handicraft and Handloom sector "Wool Processing, Handloom and Handicrafts Policy-2020".

The policy aims to expand the horizons of the sector and facilitate the creation of new markets globally, besides raising the standard of living for craftsmen by providing them with better wages and safeguarding the state's rich cultural history and distinct character for future generations. The policy envisions implementing a multifaceted approach that will involve the promotion of crafts, establishing credit links, the availability of raw materials, marketing, training, and developing infrastructure, among other things.

The policy was the impetus for launching several innovative programmes designed to assist craftspeople and many other related stakeholders in the handicraft industry. These programmes concentrate on providing financial assistance to indigenous artisans as well as cooperative societies, fostering capacity building and the transfer of skills from master artisans to new generations of artisans, and opening up new markets through promotion and exhibitions that are held all over the world.

Geographical Indication Tagging for the Crafts in J&K

One of the most significant issues that the handicraft industry in J&K has been confronted with is the practice of selling machine-made items as handcrafted products. This practice has raised significant doubts about the authenticity of the products available. Therefore, the Government of Jammu and Kashmir has, over the years, consistently encouraged and promoted genuine handmade handicraft and handloom products to exhibit the region's diverse cultural traditions and historical artefacts on the global stage.

The initiative of G.I certification and labelling under the Geographical Indications (G.I) Act of India was first introduced in the year 2007 for the purpose of preventing the cheap machine-made-fakes from damaging the genuine Kashmir Handicraft brand, which is a part of Kashmir's century-old heritage. GI registration is an acknowledgement that the craft has a unique identity and is only produced in particular geographical regions.

The initiative has marked a significant improvement

in the sale and export potential of handicraft and handloom products, particularly Pashmina Shawls and



Carpets. The GI label with a user-friendly QR-Code has allowed the buyer to verify the authenticity of the purchased product hassle-free by simply scanning the label on his built-in mobile phone scanner. So far, more than 20,000 labels have been issued in Pashmina and Carpets.

The labelling has been a massive success as it has been able to restore consumer confidence by assuring the buyer about the genuineness of the product. This year, 13 more crafts have been brought under certification and labelling, including 5 registered GI crafts vis-a-vis Kashmir Sozni, Kani Shawl, Kashmir Walnut Wood Carving, Kashmir Paper Machie and Khatamband as well as to certify and label Non-GI Crafts like Copperware, Willow Wicker, Silverware, Filigree.

This has brought the distinction to J&K of becoming the only State/UT in the country to label all its crafts, which will go a long way in restoring customer trust.

Srinagar as UNESCO Creative City

Srinagar's inclusion in UNESCO's creative city network for arts and crafts has brought with it the opportunity to promote its traditional handicrafts on a worldwide scale. Building on this, the department of Handicrafts also started Crafts Safari's to augment and strengthen the handicraft ecosystem by connecting buyers with artisans across the city.

Also, the handicraft industry in Kashmir has a long tradition of producing sustainable and eco-friendly

products using natural materials and traditional techniques. The growing interest in sustainable and eco-friendly products has led to a renewed appreciation for handmade goods globally.

E-Commerce Platforms

In recent years, one of the most critical problems for this whole sector has been reaching the broader audience in awe of the craftsmanship and creativity generated in the valley. Most craftspeople have sold their products through intermediaries or by establishing showrooms in already-established markets, having a tremendous economic effect on the artisans.

The rise of e-commerce platforms has impacted the Handicraft Industry tremendously. Many artisans and weavers are now able to showcase their products on online marketplaces, reaching a broader customer base and increasing their sales.

Now, with the expansion of the internet and e-commerce, these craftsmen now have access to new markets where they may sell their items. They may now connect with more individuals by utilising e-commerce, social media, and other digital methods. This has allowed them to raise their revenue and extend their consumer base. In addition, these artisans no longer need to rely on intermediaries or go to the market to sell their wares. Companies may now communicate directly with their consumers, allowing them to obtain better rates for their products. This has been a big boon for the artisans, enabling them to make more money and sustain their livelihoods more effectively.

E-commerce platforms support artisans, weavers, and craftsmen by providing a marketplace to sell their products online. This allows them to reach a global customer base and sell their products without the need for a physical store. Many e-commerce platforms, such as Etsy, Amazon Handmade, and Handicraft Mall, are designed for artisans and craftsmen. They provide features tailored to their needs, such as customisable storefronts, accessible product listing and management tools, and secure payment processing. These platforms also provide artisans access to analytics and customer data, which can help them better understand their customers and improve their marketing efforts.

(To be continued on page no. 29)

Transforming the Quality of Living for

The middle class plays a critical role in the Indian economy, serving as the backbone of society and driving economic growth and stability. The middle class has gained immensely from incisive yet simple remedies introduced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the last nine years. This is primarily attributable to the Prime Minister's emphasis on the middle class and his vision for "ease of living". The Modi led government introduced initiatives to support the middle class, including increasing access to affordable medicines and devices, cheaper loans to make education more accessible, low-interest personal loans, expanding metros and airways for convenient and affordable travel, and providing low-cost internet services.

The Modi administration has therefore aimed to reduce the tax burden on the middle class, resulting in more disposable income in their hands. As a direct result of these reforms, the enormous potential of the Indian middle class has been unleashed, with a myriad of opportunities knocking on the door.

Building Healthy Lives for a Fit Middle Class

Prime Minister Modi's government has introduced various initiatives to improve the accessibility and affordability of healthcare for the middle class. In line with Prime Minister Modi's mission of affordable and quality healthcare for all, A ceiling was placed on the price of coronary stents and knee implants in 2017.



Low-Cost Pharma: Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP)



90 Fold Increase in Jan Aushadhi Kendras between 2014-15 and January 2023



PMBJP medications cost 50% to 90% less than medicines available in the market



Savings of around Rs. 18,000 crores over last eight years

World's Largest Health Insurance Programme: Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana

Nearly 18 crore Households given Compensation

Rs. 50,400 crores Monetary Benefits in cases of Hospital Admissions

4.3 crore Authorised Hospital Admissions

26,000+ Empanelled Hospitals



Ayushman Bharat and Jan Aushadhi together helped poor & middle-class patients save around Rs. 1 lakh crores in healthcare expenditure

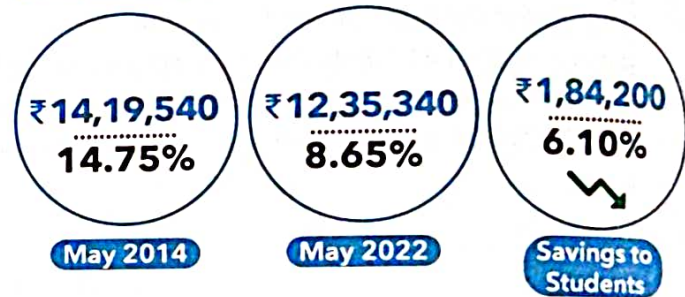
Investing in Education for Enhanced Opportunities

The Modi government has implemented various policies to make education more affordable by increasing funding for public schools and colleges, expanding financial aid programs, and providing low interest-rate loans for students who want to pursue higher education. The National Education Policy (NEP) announced in July 2020 gave a new direction to India's massive education system. It set new standards for the education sector, shifting the focus of the government from setting up schools to improving the quality of education that prepares students for the future.

Making Education Accessible: Financing through Low Cost Loans

Cost Savings more than Rs. 1.84 lakh

- Rate of Interest for Rs. 10 Lakh Loan for 5 yrs
- Loan Amount Payable (In Rs.)



PM Modi flagging off the Vande Bharat Express from Una, Himachal Pradesh to Delhi.

“The middle class is a huge force to fulfill the dreams of a prosperous and developed India. Just as the youth power of India is the special strength of India, similarly the growing middle class of India is also its great strength. In order to empower the middle class, our government has taken several decisions in the past years and has ensured Ease of Living.”
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi

Socially Securing the Middle Class

Schemes introduced by the Modi government such as Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme (CLSS) under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-U) and Special Window for Affordable and Mid-Income Housing Projects (SWAMIH) have made it easier for the middle class to achieve their dream of owning a home.

the Middle Class

Middle Class: From Renters to Owners

Home Loan Burden Reduced by

Rs. 48,000 crores



Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban: CLSS

6.15 Lakh

beneficiaries from the middle-income group availed subsidy

Special Window for Affordable & Mid-Income Housing Projects



20,500+ Homes Completed in 30 tier 1 and 2 cities since 2019



Further Target **81,000 homes** in next three years

The Modi administration has implemented policies aimed at reducing interest rates across the board, thus stimulating economic growth by making borrowing more affordable.

Great Drop in Interest Rates: A Win for Consumers



Home Loans: Savings of Approx. Rs. 82,990 pa on every loan due to **3.65% drop in RoI**



3% Reduction in Car Loan Interest Rates between 2014 and 2022

More Money in the Hands of the Middle Class

Union Budget 2023-24 Increases Concessions for Middle Class



Full Tax Rebate Total Income up to Rs. 7 Lakhs



Standard Deduction of Rs. 50,000 Salaried Individuals



Surcharge rate reduced from 37% to 25% Income above Rs. 2 crore

Drop in RoI Boosts Auto & Home Loan (Personal) Uptake

% Loan Availed

14.9% December 2021

20.2% December 2022

4%+ Decline in Effective Income Tax Rate between 2013 and 2022



The Middle Class Entrepreneurial Boom

Make in India and Aatmanirbhar Bharat, the twin mantras of the Modi government, have supported employment generation. The government is pushing India's entrepreneurial environment to generate more jobs, which has had a multiplier impact. The middle class has now shifted from being a job seeker to a job provider.

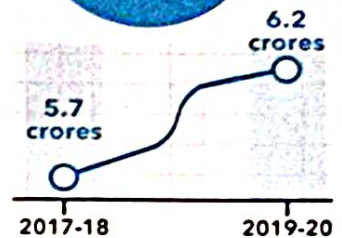
Aatmanirbhar Bharat: Making India Self-Reliant

1.3+ crore MSMEs benefited from the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme.

Guarantee cover increased by Rs. 50,000 crore



Rise of Jobs in the Manufacturing Sector



Tech-Powered Middle Class

The Modi administration's focus on making India digital ready is evident in both supply and demand side interventions. This is reflective in the increased coverage of mobile phones and network connectivity to the hinterland and reduced prices of mobile data. Measures to bring down the cost of component parts of digital devices such as mobile phones, laptops and tablets have allowed for cheaper prices and improved accessibility.

Connectivity on a Budget: The Cheaper, Better Internet Solution

Cheapest Internet Data in the World: Cost of internet data reduced 25 times in the last 9 years

232% Increase in Internet Connections



1,238% Increase in Broadband Connections



266 Fold Increase in Average Monthly Data Consumption per Wireless Data Subscriber

*All data refers to increase between 2014 & 2022

Evidently, the Modi government has implemented various policies and initiatives aimed at supporting and empowering the middle class. These efforts have focused on increasing money in the hands of the middle class directly and indirectly. In the last nine years, the government has endeavoured to provide greater access to healthcare, education, housing, and financial resources, as well as promoting entrepreneurship, innovation, and economic growth. Middle-class people have saved massively and increased their discretionary income due to lower taxes and borrowing rates. After the GST, domestic goods and restaurant meals are cheaper. Since 2014, Prime Minister Modi's infrastructure push has reduced middle class household spending. The UDAN scheme has made air travel cheaper and middle class households no longer prefer trains as a result of this. People are therefore switching to public transportation and saving money without sacrificing comfort. Thus, by investing in the middle class, Prime Minister Modi has helped build stronger and more prosperous communities, with greater opportunities for individual growth and success.

(Continued from page no. 25)

There has also been the rise of successful startup ventures from within J&K, which have created a brand and today have become go-to places for the products originating from Kashmir, Kashmir Box and Kashmir Origin are examples of two such startups.

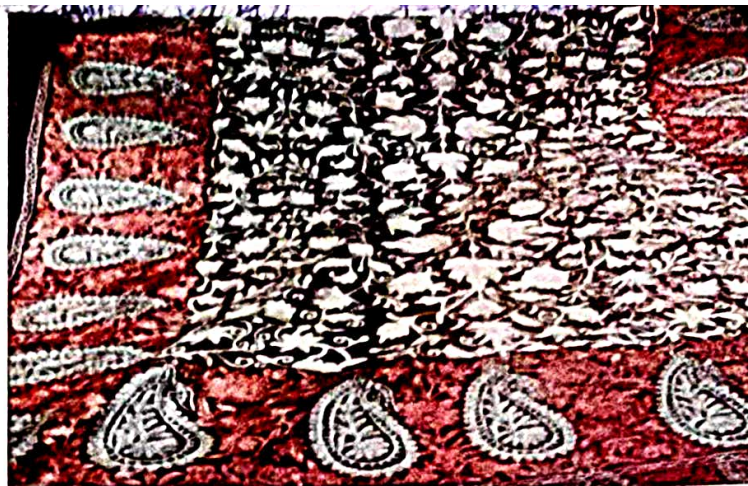
Kashmir Box

Kashmir Box began operations almost ten years ago and has since grown to become a very well-known brand for purchasing products originating from Kashmir. They bring the exquisite and labour-intensive work of Kashmiri craftsmen to the attention of clients who value aesthetic value and high-quality craftsmanship. The company has contributed to the creation of sustainable livelihoods for the craftspeople in Kashmir by facilitating connections between buyers and artists. Additionally, the company has facilitated the realisation that traditional Kashmiri goods can be sold and shipped across the globe with relative ease and profitability thanks to the intervention of technology.

Kashmir Origin

Another e-commerce platform, Kashmir Origin, was started by four friends with complementary skill sets and passion for the handicraft industry. Started in 2019, the platform is an online boutique for authentic Kashmiri handicrafts. Kashmir Origin works directly with artisans from the region, bringing their products to customers worldwide. They have created a unique supply chain for the crafts, by classifying them into broad categories and in each craft, having associated with five master artisans. The requirements and the demand for customised products are shared with the master craftsmen, who have more than 50 artisans associated with each of them.

The purpose of the supply chain is to provide a marketplace for the crafts, so helping the artisans to be recognised for the quality of their work and making it easier for them to sell their items. The supply chain also includes a quality assurance system and produced to meet the standards of the buyers. This helps ensure that the customers are provided with quality products. It also ensures that the craftsmen receive an appropriate portion of the earnings from the sales of their products. This contributes to creating a sustainable life for the artisans and helps guarantee that the crafts are conserved and passed down through the generations.



From creating employment opportunities to reviving some of the dying crafts, Kashmir Origin is building an inspirational and encouraging story.

Conclusion

The handicrafts sector in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has undergone several changes in recent years. Traditionally, the region has been known for its rich cultural heritage and the production of various handicrafts. However, due to various factors, such as the rise of mechanised production, the sector has faced several challenges in recent times. The J&K government has taken several measures to address these challenges in recent years.

Another significant development in the sector has been the increasing use of technology to promote and market traditional handicrafts. Many artisans now use online platforms to sell their products and reach a wider audience. This has helped to boost demand for traditional handicrafts and provide a new source of income for artisans.

Though the handicrafts sector in J&K has faced several challenges in recent years, the government's initiatives and the increasing use of technology are helping to revitalise the sector and promote the region's rich cultural heritage. The handicraft industry has been the backbone of the economy in many countries, providing employment opportunities, promoting cultural heritage, and contributing to economic growth.

The industry has the potential to continue to play an essential role in the global economy, provided that appropriate measures are taken to support and promote it. Handicrafts have been a significant contributor to the economy of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) for centuries. The region is well-known for its rich cultural heritage, and handicrafts are essential to its cultural identity. □

Rural Crafts for Livelihood



Craft production can act as a big source of livelihood after agriculture. Arts and crafts are constituents of India's 'Creative Economy'. Handicrafts have a demand both in Indian and international markets. Government interventions like National Handicraft Development Programme and Comprehensive Handicrafts Cluster Development Scheme and Livelihood initiatives of corporates are important, but, clubbing crafts with tourism, to offer immersive experiential tourism, can also fetch monetary benefit to the artisans.

Dr. Suyash Yadav

The artefacts, like statue of the dancing girl, jewellery, found at the sites of Harappan civilisations, are testimony to the fact that handicrafts have long been part of Indian tradition. From earlier times, India has a rich tradition of handloom weaving. Earliest evidences of such activity go back to the Indus Valley civilisation.

Rigveda, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Greek historian Herodotus, Kautilya have mentioned not only spinning and weaving but also the high quality of silk and cotton with reference to India. Indian textiles were traded and exported to different countries around the globe. French navigator Francois Pyrard de Laval wrote, "Everyone from the Cape of Good Hope to China, man and

*The author is Assistant Professor, Institute of Tourism Studies, University of Lucknow, India.
Email id: yadav.suyash@gmail.com*

woman, is clothed from head to foot in the product of Indian looms." Daniel Defoe, an English novelist, stated that "Everything that used to be made of wool or silk, relating to either the dress of women or the furniture of houses, was supplied by the India trade". A paper by Exim Bank of India (2019) mentions the untapped export potential of India's 'Creative Economy' and stated that arts and crafts are constituents of India's creative economy. Craft means an occupation, trade, or activity requiring manual dexterity or artistic skill. In the rural areas, traditional crafts production is carried on simply for everyday practical use. Handicrafts in India are not only pleasing to the eye but have a utility as well. In Indian terminology, handicrafts are referred as, 'hastshilp', 'dastkari', 'karigari', 'hastkala' etc.

Geographical Indicators and Associated Handicrafts

Geographical Indication (GI) is a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or reputation that are due to that origin. Crafts landscape is so vast in India, therefore, an attempt has been made to tabulate (see below), popular GI in 'handicraft' category. GI tagging may encourage preservation of biodiversity and know-how of local natural resources. If supported well, it can induce a spirit of entrepreneurship. Labour-intensive nature of GI offers a potent solution to boost the employment-to-population ratio in India. It may reduce urban migration.

States /U.T	Geographical Indications (Handicraft) -As per GI Act 1999
Jammu & Kashmir	Kani Shawl; Kashmir Hand Knotted Carpet, Papier Mache, Pashmina, Sozani Craft, Walnut Wood Carving, Khatamband.
Himachal Pradesh	Chamba Chappal, Rumal; Kangra Paintings; Kinnauri Shawl; Kullu Shawls; Lahauli Knitted Socks and Gloves.
Uttarakhand	Aipan; Bhotiya Dann; Ringal Craft; Tamta Product.
Uttar Pradesh	Agra Durrie; Banaras Brocades and Saree, Gulabi Meenakari Craft, Hand Block Print, Metal Repousse Craft, Wood Carving, Zardozi; Chunar Glaze Pottery; Farrukhabad Prints; Firozabad Glass; Ghazipur Wall-hanging; Gorakhpur Terracotta; Handmade Carpets of Bhadohi; Kanpur Saddlery; Khurja Pottery; Lucknow Chikan Craft, Zardozi; Mau Sarees; Mirzapur Handmade Dari, Pital Bartan; Moradabad Metal Craft; Nizamabad Black Pottery; Saharanpur Wood Craft; Varanasi Glass beads, Soft Stone Jali Work, Wooden Lacquerware and Toys.
Bihar	Applique (Khatwa) Work, Bhagalpur Silk, Manjusha Art, Madhubani Paintings, Sikki Grass Work, Sujini Embroidery Work.
North-Eastern States	Muga Silk & Gamosa -Assam; Idu Mishmi Textiles-Arunachal Pradesh; Chakshesang Shawl-Nagaland; Shaphee Lanphee, Wangkhei Phee, Moirang Phee, Pawndum, Ngotekherh, Hmaram, Tawlhlohpuan, Mizo Puanchei -Manipur
West Bengal	Baluchari Saree; Bankura Panchmura Terracotta Craft; Bengal Dokra, Patachitra; Dhaniakhali Saree; Madurkathi; Nakshi Kantha; Purulia Chau Mask; Santiniketan Leather Goods; Santipore Saree; Wooden Mask of Kushmandi.
Odisha	Berhampur Patta (Phoda Kumbha) Saree and Joda; Bomkai Saree and Fabrics; Dhalapathar Parida and Fabrics; Gopalpur Tussar Fabrics; Habaspuri Saree and Fabrics; Khandua Saree; Konark Stone Carving; Kotpad Handloom Fabric; Orissa Ikat, Pattachitra; Pipili Applique Work; Sambalpuri Bandha Saree and Fabrics.

States /U.T

Geographical Indications (Handicraft) -As per GI Act 1999

Jharkhand	Sohrai – Khovar Painting.
Chattisgarh	Bastar Dhokra, Iron Craft, Wooden Craft; Champa Silk Saree and Fabrics.
Telangana	Adilabad Dhokra; Cherial Paintings; Gadwal Sarees; Narayanpet Handloom Sarees; Nirmal Furniture, Paintings, Toys and Craft; Pambathi Metal Craft; Pochampally Ikat; Siddipet Gollabhama; Silver Filigree of Karimnagar; Telia Ruma; Warangal Durries.
Andhra Pradesh	Allagadda Stone Carving; Andhra Pradesh Leather Puppetry; Bobbili Veena; Budithi Bell and Brass Metal Craft; Dharmavaram Handloom Pattu Sarres and Paavadas; Durgi Stone Carvings; Etikoppaka Toys; Kondapalli Bommalu; Machilipatnam Kalamkari; Mangalagiri Sarees; Srikalahasthi Kalamkari; Udayagiri Wooden Cutlery; Uppada Jamdani Sarees; Venkatagiri Sarees.
Tamil Nadu	Arani Silk; Arumbavur Wood Carvings; Bhavani Jamakkalam; Chettinad Kottan; Coimbatore Wet Grinder; Eathomozhy Tall Coconut; Kallakurichi Wood Carving; Kancheepuram Silk; Kandangi Saree; Karuppur Kalamkari Paintings; Kovai Kora Cotton Sarees; Madurai Sungudi; Mahabalipuram Stone Sculpture; Nachiarkoil Kuthuvilakku ('Nachiarkoil Lamp'); Narasinghapettai Nagaswaram; Narayanpet Handloom Sarees; Pattamadai Mat; Salem Fabric, Silk; Swamimalai Bronze Icons; Temple Jewellery of Nagercoil; Thanjavur Art Plate, Doll, Netti Works, Paintings, Veenai; Thirubuvanam Silk Saree; Toda Embroidery.
Kerala	Chendamangalam Dhoties and Set Mundu; Alleppey Coir; Aranmula Kannadi Screw Pine Craft of Kerala; Balaramapuram Sarees and Fine Cotton Fabrics; Brass Broidered Coconut Shell Craft of Kerala; Cannanore Home Furnishings; Kasara god Sarees; Kuthampully Sarees; Maddalam of Palakkad; Payyannur Pavithra Ring.
Karnataka	Bidri Crafts; Channapatna Toys and Dolls; Guledgudd Khana, Ilkal Sarees; Karnataka Bronze Ware; Kasuti Embroidery; Kinhal Toys; Kolhapuri Chappal; Molakalmuru Sarees; Mysore Rosewood Inlay, Silk, Traditional Paintings, Ganjifa Cards; Navalgund Durries; Sandur Lambani Embroidery; Udupi Sarees.
Maharashtra	Karvath Kati Sarees and Fabrics; Kolhapuri Chappal; Paithani Sarees and Fabrics; Puneri Pagadi; Solapur TerryTowel; Solapuri Chaddar; Warli Painting.
Gujarat	Agates of Cambay; Jamnagari Bandhani; Kutch Shawls, Embroidery; Patan Patola; Pethapur Printing Blocks; Pithora Paintings; Rajkot Patola; Sankheda Furniture; Surat Zari Craft; Tangaliya Shawl; Warli Painting.
Madhya Pradesh	Bagh Prints of MP; Bell Metal Ware of Datia and Tikamgarh; Chanderi Sarees; Leather Toys of Indore; Maheshwar Sarees and Fabrics.
Rajasthan	Bagru Hand Blockprint; Blue Pottery Decorative; Kathputlis of Rajasthan; KotaDoria; Molela Clay Items; Phulkari; Pokaran Pottery; Sanganeri Hand Block Printing; Thewa Art Work.

Source: www.ipindia.gov.in

Importance of Crafts

Since decades, handloom and handicraft industry, part of the unorganised sector in India's economy, has been the backbone of India's rural economy and provides employment to a significant number of people

apart from agriculture. According to official estimates, India is home to 7 million artisans. However, data from unofficial sources indicates that the artisan strength is as high as 200 million. India's craft heritage has an inherent regional uniqueness. Villagers inherit skills

of art and craft from their ancestors and continue to produce handicrafts which have a demand not only in Indian markets but in international markets also which can fetch us foreign exchange earnings. India Brand Equity Foundation states that crafts production can give India a competitive global advantage as the sector has the scope of becoming a billion-dollar market. The US, UK, UAE, Germany, France, Latin American countries, Italy, Netherlands, Canada and Australia are key countries that import handicrafts. Handicraft exports from India reached Rs. 25,706.3 crore (US\$ 3.5 billion) in 2019–20.

Challenges

India's association with crafts is beyond utilitarian. Textiles are symbolic of social, cultural and geographical influences of the region. In the barter era, markets were predominantly local, textiles and crafts were created for self-use and for exchange with others. Now things have changed, major challenges posed at craft practitioners, include the following:

- **Sea Change in Business Practices:** Unawareness to gauge market, negligible knowledge to optimise social media to reach out to clients, nitty-gritty of digital payment mechanisms, low penetration of technology, inaccessibility of funds and poor institutional framework.

- **Stagnant Wage Growth of Artisans:** Despite their superior skills, wages have not kept pace with the income growth experienced by other sectors, resulting in drifting away of younger generation from the sector. As per Fourth All India Handloom Census 2019-20, 66.3 per cent of the weaver households earn less than Rs. 5,000/- per month.

Interventions of Government, Corporate Sector and NGOs.

To overcome these challenges, government has launched several initiatives. Office of Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India, implements various schemes for development of artisans, like, National Handicraft Development Programme and Comprehensive Handicrafts Cluster Development Scheme, which emphasises on an integrated approach for development of handicrafts in a holistic manner and aims to provide sustainable livelihood opportunities to the artisans. The scheme has the following components: design and technology up-gradation, human resource development, baseline survey and mobilisation of artisans under 'Ambedkar Hastshilp Vikas Yojana', direct benefit to artisans, infrastructure and technology support, marketing support and services, research and development.

'Shilp Guru' Awards and National Awards are given by Ministry of Textiles, to give recognition to legendary crafts persons, for their excellence in craftsmanship and valuable contribution to Indian handicrafts and textiles sector. TRIFED is a national-level apex organisation functioning under the administrative control of Ministry of Tribal Affairs. Its main activity includes retail marketing development of tribal handicrafts and handloom products.

Tata Trusts is a philanthropic arm of Tata conglomerate. Trust addresses poverty and the conditions that lead to it. It has ventured into many well-crafted initiatives, aimed to create robust livelihood opportunities to improve rural income through modern farming practices, water management, soil conservation, livestock and animal husbandry, market linkages, 'crafts', etc. 'Antaran Initiative' (launched in 2018) of Tata Trusts, supports India's traditional artisans in finding new markets and customers and addresses the challenges mentioned above. Mentioned in the table (see table on page no. 32, 33), Gamosa artisans of Assam, Venkatagiri





Sarees and Kondapalli toy manufacturers of Andhra Pradesh, Gopalpur Tussar Fabric and Ikat sarees weavers of Odisha have been beneficiaries of Antaran initiative. NGO activities are also there, like that of Community, Craft and Heritage division of Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH; founded in 1984), which works with craft clusters to develop community based enterprise. It works on reviving and promoting dying skills. It assists artisan groups in finding lucrative outlets for their products and provides marketing linkages and platforms.

Crafts and Tourism

Tourism and crafts are interlinked. A tourist wishes to carry craft souvenirs as a memoir of their travel. According to the UNEP and UNWTO (2005) report on 'Making Tourism More Sustainable, A guide for policymakers', it is estimated that tourists spend around 40 per cent of their budget on souvenir purchases and other craft products. One of the key components of the craft tourism experience is to engage the tourist with the local crafts people and production process. This not only increases the consciousness of the tourist about the crafts people and craft processes but also makes the tourist aware about the social, cultural and environmental challenges associated to craft sector (Baruah & Sarma, 2016). Experience is the element that adds value to the tourist product and can therefore be a competitive advantage for tourism (Campos et al. 2015). Crafts are also a part of rural tourism experience. 'A village that values its gastronomy, its crafts and

its people', is a key parameter, to decide the award for 'Best Tourism Villages', by United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). Village known for GI 'Pochampally Ikat' from Telangana (refer table above) was selected as one of the best tourism villages by UNWTO in 2021.

In July 2022, Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, announced an initiative called, 'Linking Textile with Tourism', where 8 Craft Villages, at Raghurajpur (Odisha), Tirupati (Andhra Pradesh), Vadaj (Gujarat), Naini (Uttar Pradesh), Anegundi (Karnataka), Mahabalipuram (Tamil Nadu), Taj Ganj (Uttar Pradesh), Amer (Rajasthan), have been selected for overall development, wherein craft promotion and tourism are being taken up with the aim of creating remunerative livelihood option for artisans via tourism.

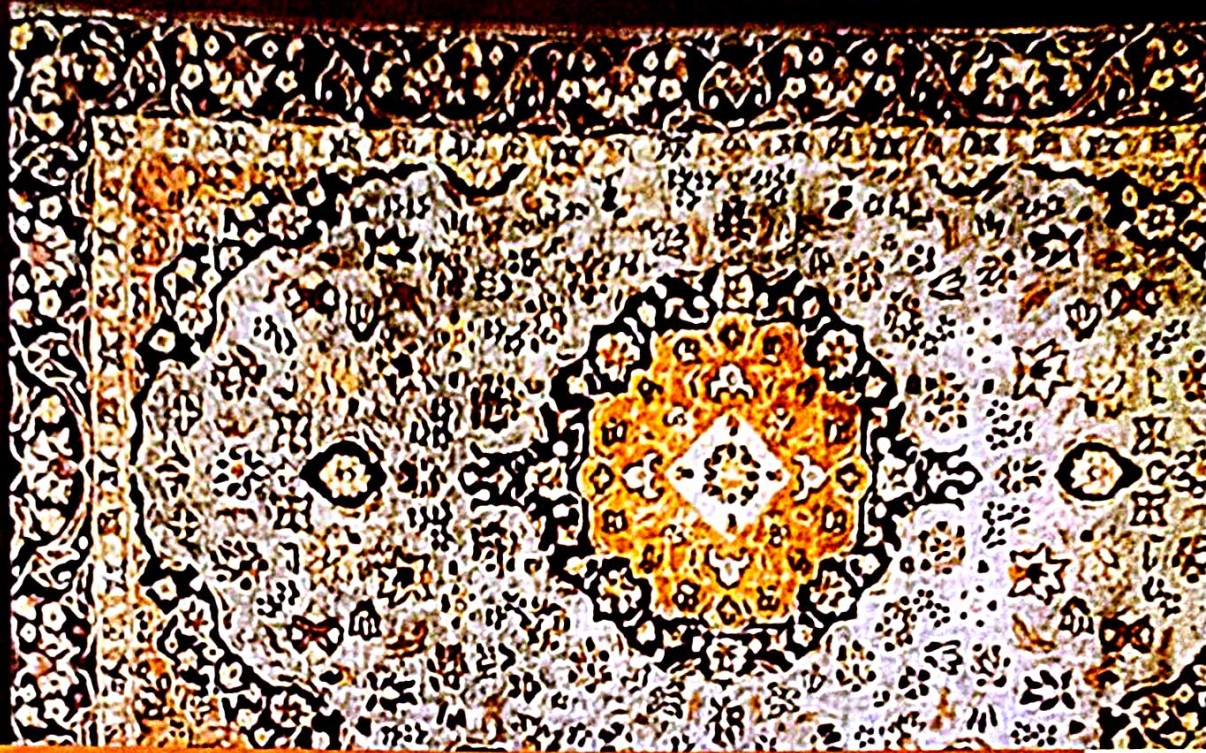
Conclusion

Artisan economy is all-pervasive and crucial for inclusion, as it mainly comprises of women and marginalised groups. It can act as a big source of livelihood after agriculture. Credible data on crafts is woefully incomplete and this acts as a great hindrance in the welfare of the sector. Corporate orders for craft forms involve a higher volume; this in turn ensures a greater impact on livelihoods. To capitalise those orders and ensure client satisfaction, aiming at customer delight, following things have to be dealt by the artisan community: securing an advance, delivering quality product, meeting technical specifications, sticking to timelines, ensuring uniqueness of craft, pricing in accordance to value etc. In the age of digital Darwinism, online visibility (including use of e-commerce) is critical to optimise the latent potential of the sector. NGOs are also creating an impact in crafts sector by bridging the distance of creating the products and earning a business. Announcement to establish 'Unity Malls' pan India, in Union Budget 2023, strengthening platforms like 'Crafts villages' are much needed. □

References

1. Campos, A.N., Mendes, J., Oom do Valle; P., & Scott, N. (2015). Co-creation of tourist experiences: A literature review, *Current Issues in Tourism*
2. Baruah, U.K, Sarma M. K. (2016) Tourists Expenditure on Shopping & Souvenirs: An Analysis of Association(s) Across Trip Typologies, *Amity Journal of Management Research*, Vol.1(1)

Fostering Rural Crafts through One District One Product



One District One Product (ODOP) is a welcome initiative taken by Government of India to foster inclusive development by exploiting export potential of local economy. It is foreseen that the benefits of development should reach to the last-mile citizen and that can be ensured by the public policy interventions, which are effective and sustainable.

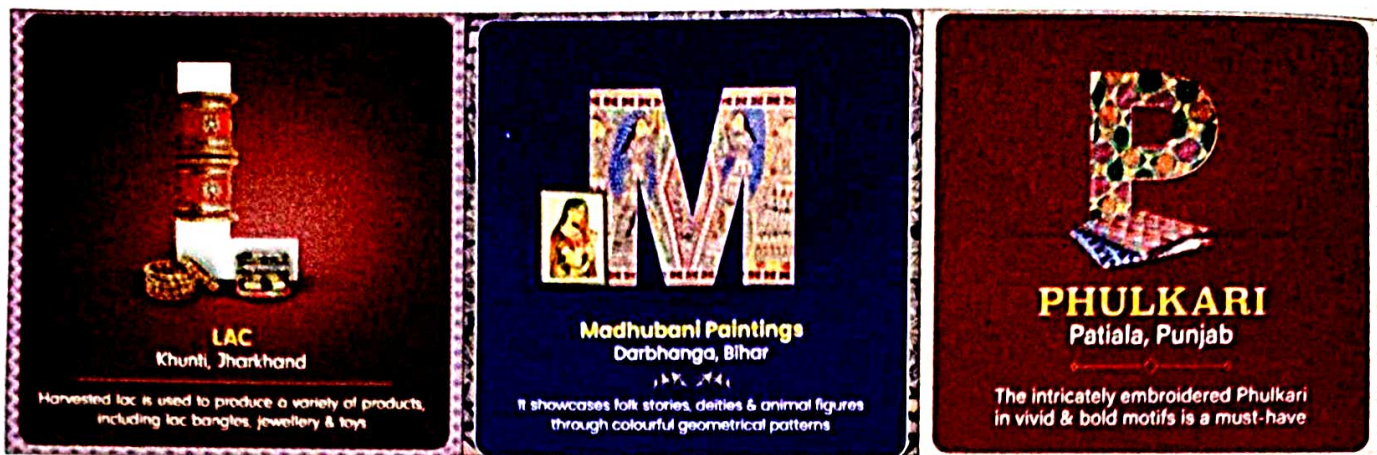
T

**Dr. Amiya Kumar Mohapatra
Tamanna Mohapatra**

he manifestation of 'inclusive development of India' can be evident from its impact and incidence on regional and balanced development. Enlargement of people's choices, capabilities and their active participation must be embedded in the agenda of inclusiveness for the triumph of true democracy. The success of 'Democracy and Swaraj' depends upon 'how we plan for the unplanned, how we get the best out of everyone and how we honour and acknowledge

their contributions'. In a broader framework, to ensure contributions from all people and places in the development agenda.

India is uniquely placed in terms of demographic dividends, with over 62 per cent people in the country fall in the age group of 15-59 years which is expected to rise up to 65 per cent by 2035. This demographic dividend of India can be leveraged only when we will able to transform this section of population into



goldmine of productivity and prosperity by creating an entrepreneurial eco-system and in-situ development. India's growth trajectory has positive impact on its overall development and consequently on export potential, especially in the post COVID-19 regime. According to International Monetary Fund (IMF) data, in 2023, 94 economies are projected to grow below pre-pandemic level. However, among the top ten economies, India and Japan are consistently growing above the pre-pandemic level during the 2021, 2022 and 2023 (projected). India is in a bright spot in the global ecosystem, recovering significantly from (-) 6.6 per cent GDP growth in 2020-21 to 8.7 per cent in 2021-22 and 6.8 per cent (projected) in 2022-23 and is able to emerge as manufacturing hub in the world economy, in spite of global growth spillovers on account of COVID-19 pandemic.

In recently unveiled Foreign Trade Policy, 2023, the Government of India focuses on new potential export areas, wherein clearly dwelt on districts as export hub to increase India's share in the world export. In this regard, 'One District One Product' (ODOP) is a welcome initiative taken by Government of India to foster inclusive development by exploiting export potential of local economy. It is foreseen that the benefits of development should reach to the last-mile citizen and that can be ensured by the public policy interventions, which are effective and sustainable.

One District One Product Initiative

Inclusive development agenda focuses on making balanced regional development and that can be achieved by various ways and means. Based on that principle, central government has implemented 'One District One Product' (ODOP) in India. The concept of 'One District One Product' of India, basically

an augmented version of a Japanese business development concept 'One Village One Product' (OVOP) - which aimed to promote localised products and services to improve the standard of living of the local people and for making the presence of local contribution in nation-building. This OVOP model (1979) was later emulated in other countries too.

In India, Uttar Pradesh is the first state to implement the ODOP program in 2018, in the line of OVOP model to revive their indigenous art and crafts enterprises by providing financial and marketing support to artisans and craftsmen. The sole aim was to recreate, revive the lost creative products and process to safeguard the traditional knowledge. Thus, the primary objective is to create a sustainable environment for the art and craft products.

Considering the success of ODOP initiative in Uttar Pradesh, the central government has embarked upon implementation of ODOP in all the states and UTs of India, as a strategic and transformational steps towards realising the true potential of a district. ODOP envisages that each district must export a product and develop it as a brand with its own identity. This scheme includes both agricultural and non-agricultural products, including food grains, food stuffs, handicrafts and handlooms and other essentials. ODOP will help in attaining balanced regional development across all the districts of the country and will enable socio-economic development across the nation. The very purpose is not only to increase the sale within the state and nation, but also have export potential. This initiative will help in reaching buyers outside India but also transform local traditional skills into profit-making ventures. It is an initiative that provides hand-holding support to the

local/rural economy by improving the backward and forward linkages of selected products in a particular district.

The ODOP scheme has been merged with the 'Districts as Export Hub' (DEH) initiative of the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), Department of Commerce. Under DEH aegis (a) State Export Promotion Committee (SEPC) and (b) District Export Promotion Committee (DEPC) have been constituted in all the states/UTs. Support of institutional mechanism is extended to all states/UTs for export promotion and to address issues if any. In this process, 1068 products are identified from 765 districts under the ODOP flagship program to boost the vocal for local initiative. The functioning of exports hubs are being done by adopting bottom-up approach; comprising local resources and involving youngsters. The very purpose of it to convert a district into an export hub by identifying and supporting a product which has great export potential. It is already being adopted all over the states/UTs to realise the true potential of each district in terms of their contribution to export and nation's income by creating a brand identity.

ODOP Initiative and Rural Crafts

The ODOP initiative covers agricultural products, textile, other handicrafts and it was found that this initiative has a tremendous positive impact on art and crafts, especially the crafts in particular. India produces most exquisite handicrafts that grabbed the attention of the whole world. Each region has a unique form of craft which depicts and represents rich heritage of Indian culture and history. ODOP initiative is aimed to give a big push to traditional and indigenous industries of each district, in the line of their competencies and productivities. This will optimise production, productivity, income, preservation and development of local crafts, improvement in product quality, and skill development. The major goals of ODOP are: (a) To promote and produce indigenous art and crafts, (b) To preserve traditional

knowledge, (c) To support artisans and craftsmen, (d) To support livelihood and employability of rural/local community, (e) To boost exports through vocal for local, and (f) To attain balanced regional development.

The major art and crafts encouraged under the ODOP scheme includes: Rogan arts, Folk paintings, Warli art, Lace art, Kathputli paintings, Chitrakar paintings, Phad paintings, Mithila paintings, Fabric paintings, Tanjore paintings, Sujani, Sanjhi art and Pattachitra; Carpet and Floor coverings, Woodwares, Cane and Bamboo crafts, Conch-Shell crafts, Horn and Bone crafts, Stone carvings, Stone Inlays, Terracotta, Wood carvings, Wood (Turning & Lacquer Ware), Lac bangles, Beads crafts, Sital Pati, Kite making, Jute crafts, Meena Kari and Kauna, Pot work, Pottery and clay work, Hand printed textiles scarves, Embroidered and Crocheted goods, Zari work, Rugs and Durries, Costume and Puppet, Textile (Handloom), Textile (Hand Embroidery), Thewa, Crewel, Tie and Dye, Paper machie, Dry flower and Metal images (Folk) etc. This brief list (Table 1) reflects the rich art and crafts produced in India and now being promoted through ODOP initiative to preserve indigenous art and crafts and the traditional knowledge.



Kutch Embroidery
Kutch, Gujarat

Globally recognised for its diverse styles that use a unique blend of stitches, patterns, and colours

Table 1: Select List of Art & Crafts and Places of Production

Art and Crafts (Products)	Main Places of Production (City / District / State)
Zari (Zardozi Embroidery)	Surat, Bareilly, Varanasi, Agra, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Vadodara, Lathur, Jaipur, Barmer
Carpet	Bhadohi, Varanasi, Mirzapur, Agra, Jaipur, Bikaner, Kashmir, Panipat, Gwalior, Elluru. In states like West Bengal, Uttarakhand, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh
Rugs and Durries	Agra, Bhadoi, Mirzapur, Jaipur, Panipat, Kashmir, Bhavani, Navalgund, Warangal, Jaisalmer, Barmer. In states Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh
Textile (Handloom)	Bahraich, Bhuj, Karimnagar, Patan, Varanasi, Nawan, Shaheer, Boudh
Textile (Hand Embroidery)	Lucknow, Barabanki, Unnao, Sitapur, Rae Bareilly, Hardoi, Amethi
Textile (Hand Printing)	Hyderabad, Machalipattanam, Varanasi, Farrukabad, Bagh, Behrongarh, Indore, Mandasar, Burhanpur, Ahmedabad, Rajkot, Kutch, Bagru, Chittroli, Sanganer, Jaipur, Jodhpur. In states like Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan
Wood (Carving)	Bhopal, Nagpur, Chennai, Madurai, Mysore, Kashmir. State like Manipur
Wood Inlay	Mysore, Bengaluru, Bijnor, Saharanpur. In states like Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka
Wood (Turning & Lacquer Ware)	Etikoppaka, Ernakulam, Chennapatna, Chitrakoot, Davangere, Medak, Sankheda, Varanasi
Stone Carvings	Agra, Bhubaneswar, Puri, Jaisalmer, Cuttack, Cuddapah, Bankura, Kanchipuram, Patna, Mysore, Rajkot, Gwalior, Puducherry, Mahanandi
Stone Inlay	Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Agra. State like Rajasthan
Cane and Bamboo Crafts	Lakhimpur, Bongaigaon, Guwahati, Agartala, Nelaghar. In states like Assam, West Bengal, Odisha, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura
Pottery and Clay Objects	Asharikandi, Bulandshahar, Bhadravati, Nizamabad, Pune, Chandrapur. State like Assam
Terracotta	Several parts of India like Pottery
Horn and Bone Work	Lucknow, Moradabad, Sambhal, Sarai Tarin, Honawar, Gajapati, Jodhpur, Thiruvananthapuram. In states like Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Kerala
Folk Paintings	In states like Odisha, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh
Conch-Shell Crafts	In states like West Bengal, Tamil Nadu
Theatre, Costumes and Puppet	In states like Odisha, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Kerala
Metal Images (Folk)	Ujjain, Bhopal, Varanasi, Khurai, Bishnugarh. In states like Manipur, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh

Source: Compiled by the authors

ODOP Prospects and Benefits

The ODOP GeM Bazar is launched to promote sales and the procurement of ODOP products across the country. Now, due to creation of own e-market place and ODOP e-Mart, artisans are able to sale their products in the e-commerce platform. All the efforts are made to making local and exquisite art and crafts to available in the international market through improved

visibility, organised marketing, quality packaging and by international collaborations. The ODOP products are showcased in the international platforms through various agencies and institutions including World Economic Forum. As a result of ODOP scheme, indigenous and traditional local art and crafts which are made/produced at district level have gained an immense popularity both nationally and internationally.

The scheme has enormous benefits (Table 2) for the local and rural community, for different states and for the nation, which can be categorized as under:

Table 2: ODOP Prospects and Benefits

S. No	Particular Section	Prospects and Benefits
1	Local/Rural/Community Development	In-situ employment and livelihood; Local empowerment; Better standard of living; Decline in rural-urban migration; Empowering rural women & self-help groups; Local and grass-root development; Sustainable local income
2	Promoting and Preserving Art, Craft and Culture	Culture-based development; Revival of aboriginal art and crafts; Preservation of local art and crafts; Fostering of traditional knowledge; Creating awareness and owning responsibility
3	Skills and Training	Skill enhancement and development; Promoting localised entrepreneurship & innovation; Community-based development; Skilling, reskilling, and training; Support of artisans and craftsmen
4	Nation-building	Promotion of tourism; Local to global approach; Export promotion and potentials; Source of foreign exchange earnings; Ensures inclusive growth; Reduction of inequality and poverty; Growth of MSME sector; Regional and balanced development; Contribution to national income; Contribution to the Aatma Nirbhar Bharat

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Issues and Challenges

In spite of a lot of positive outcomes, artisans and craftsmen are facing a lot of challenges over the years such as poor institutional arrangements, lack of adequate funds, inaccessible funds, ineffective backward and forward linkages for marketing, low adoption of technology, lack of marketing skills including marketing intelligence etc.

Way Forward

The ODOP scheme has significantly boosted the confidence of artisans and craftsmen, and rural entrepreneurs; and their holistic approach towards life, self-reliance, and socio-economic empowerment. This provides viable livelihood by creating in-situ employment opportunities and boost the socio-economic well-being by adopting new promotion, production and marketing systems. Although, there are array of challenges, yet artisans and craftsmen under ODOP schemes have been evolving with resilience and agility in learning, adaptation to the market dynamics, scouting for newer opportunities, leveraging the digital and e-commerce platforms, etc., taking their products to the doorsteps of their customers not only nationally, but also internationally. The scheme is

further strengthened by launching ODOP Bazar in the government e-Marketplace. Simply stated, the ODOP initiative has been receiving a lot of accolades and awards for its bottom-up approach and its contribution to integrated development of the India.

This initiative will certainly correct the skewed development towards urban and will foster all-inclusive and balanced regional development of the nations by empowering rural economy in particular, by addressing unemployment, poverty, income inequality, and rural-urban migration issues. This will help in attaining inclusive development through localised and regional empowerment. Increasing awareness, better marketing facilities and well-founded public policy supports added great momentum in the ODOP implementation and outcome; and thereby making India a stronger economy in attainment of Aatmanirbhar Bharat. Aatmanirbhar Bharat - the self-reliance is the new currency, not only it makes the country self-sufficient but also enhances global positioning of India and records its contribution in the global economy. Aatmanirbhar Bharat in true sense not only focuses on how to contribute the best for self (India) but to others (world) as a part of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbhakam' which is aptly reflected in ODOP initiative. □

Traditional Bell-metal industry of Assam

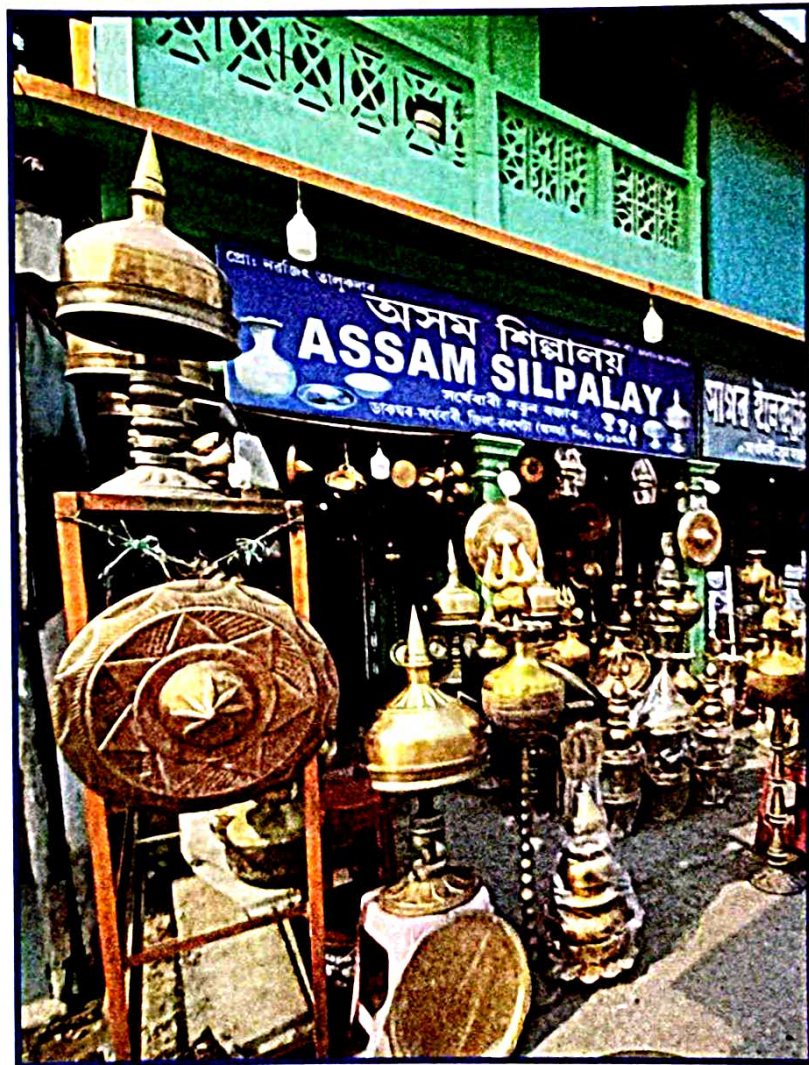
Bell-metal products manufactured in Sarthebari have a very wide range, covering as many as 108 items in all. Among them, however, certain popular items constitute the core of the industry; these are – ‘kanhi’ (traditional Assamese dishes and plates), ‘baati’ (bowls of various shapes and sizes), ‘bota’ (round trays with a stand) and ‘taal’ (cymbals of several varieties used as religious musical instruments).

Dr. Tapati Baruah Kashyap

About 75 km west of Guwahati is located Sarthebari, a small town, which is the centre of Assam’s centuries-old traditional bell-metal craft industry. Almost every family in a cluster of nine villages here has a small ‘kanhar-shaal’ – a bell-metal manufacturing cottage unit – in which four to six persons on an average manufacture various articles from bell-metal, all by using traditional tools.

It is difficult to find the exact period when this industry had actually taken off. The earliest available recorded historical evidence say that Kumar Bhaskarvarman, a very prominent seventh-century king of ancient Kamarupa (as western Assam was then known as) had sent a set of cottage industry products from his country to Harshavardhan, the emperor of Northern India who used to rule from Kanauj, and those included some ‘kansa-patra’ – utensils for serving and drinking water. Around the same time, when the famous Chinese traveler Hiuen Tsang visited Kamarupa during his tour of India, Kumar Bhaskarvarman had given him a set of ‘bhor-taal’ (large temple cymbals) made of metal.

“Close to 1500 persons, all male, belonging to nine villages are engaged in about 300 units in and around



The author is a Guwahati-based writer. She has so far published 15 books in English and Assamese.
Email: tapatibkashyap@gmail.com

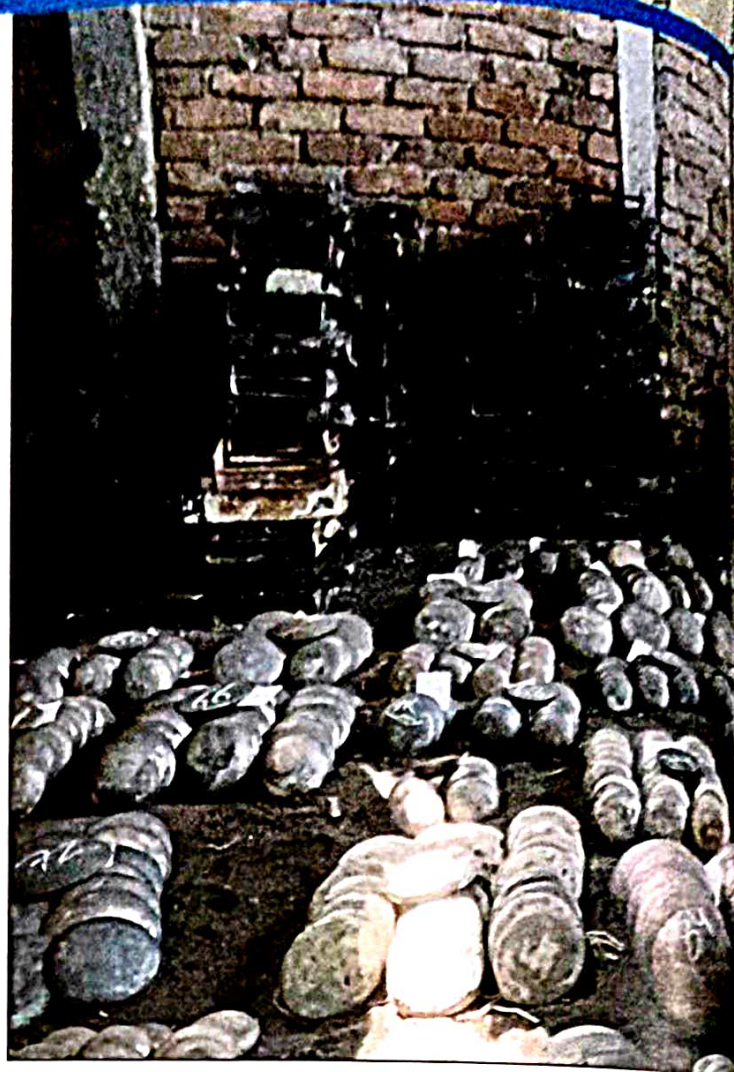
Sarthebari where they exclusively produce various articles in this bell-metal industry. Additionally, a few hundred others earn their livelihood by selling the products across Assam. Some of them run showrooms in Guwahati and other towns, while some even go door-to-door as vendors with the products," said Bhabesh Talukdar, president of Assam Cooperative Bell-metal Utensils Manufacturing Society Ltd, also known as Asam Samabay Kahar Sangha. This cooperative society, which has about 2,000 members, was established way back in 1933. The nine villages are Sarthebari, Namshala, Gamora, Karakuchi, Palla, Lachima, Amrikhowa, Batiya and Kamarpara.

While artisans worked individually in an unorganised manner since ages, they were generally victims of exploitation of private traders. It was Kohiram Das, the first graduate from Sarthebari, who after obtaining his BA degree from Victoria College, Coochbehar, set up a cooperative society among the artisans in order to pull them out of exploitation. Though not all artisans have become members for various reasons, Das is revered as father of the present-day bell-metal industry of Assam, Talukdar said.

Raw Materials

Bell-metal is an alloy comprising copper (78 per cent) and tin (22 per cent). Since, Assam does not produce either of them, hence, bell-metal is collected in three ways. "Bell-metal comes as scrap from different places like Ghaziabad, Moradabad, Faridabad, Kanpur and Kolkata. Earlier, our people also used to procure copper and tin and melt the two proportionately to make the alloy here. But, over the decades this practice has stopped. Some people also collect broken or discarded bell-metal utensils from households across Assam, which is recycled by melting here," informed society secretary Manoj Kumar Bhuyan.

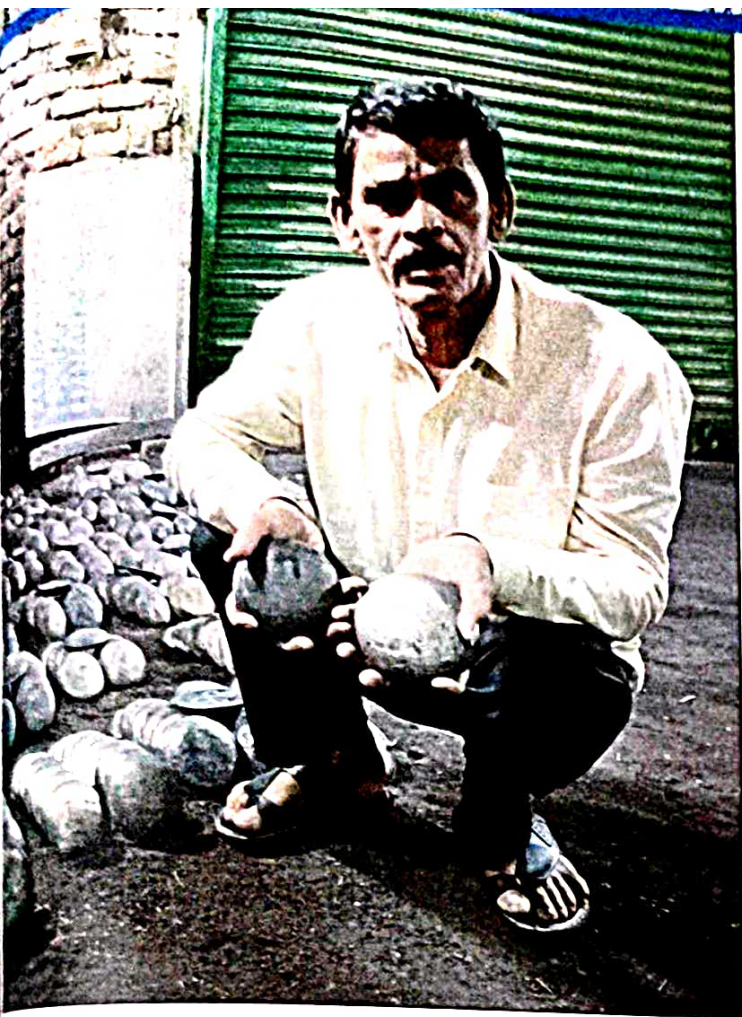
Bell-metal scrap, the raw material for this cottage industry, currently costs about Rs. 1150 per kg. Sarthebari's requirement of raw materials is anywhere between 500 and 600 metric tonnes per annum. Of this, the cooperative society procures about 50 to 60 tonnes, and the remaining comes from private suppliers. "Most of the cooperative members collect raw materials from our society. But, the non-members get their supply from private sources," Bhuyan said. Given this situation, private parties have a stronger grip over the overall bell-metal industry.



The cooperative society has a furnace unit of its own where bell-metal scraps are melted and then made into lumps of various fixed weights. The lumps are then pressed in a rolling machine into round flat shapes like a roti. Every morning member-artisans of the cooperative society collect their quota of these flat pieces, beat them into the required shape, polish them with their traditional tools, and then hand those back to the society. Private suppliers too provide flattened pieces to the artisans, and then collect back the manufactured items in the same process. Both, the cooperative society and private suppliers make payment to the artisans for the work done on a daily basis.

Artisans are paid in terms of weight. The rate is Rs. 300 per kg. Thus, if an artisan collects ten kgs of flattened pieces, then he is paid Rs. 3000 as wage or making charge. Ten kgs of such flat pieces generally make 20 dishes of 500 grams each or 25 dishes of 400 grams each. If they make bowls, then the total number will vary according to the weight of each bowl.

A typical kanhar-shaal unit comprises of five to six artisans. The head artisan in whose house the kanhar-



shaal is located is called 'oja kanhar', and his assistants are called just 'kanhar'. Since, the flat plates are to be given final shape in one sitting, hence, each unit has to complete its work within the same day. "Because of this, artisans start work at around 5 AM and continue till up to 7 PM or more, in order to finish the products in one sitting," society secretary Bhuyan informed. The wage paid by the society or the private suppliers is thus distributed equally among the artisans, with the oja-kanhar getting a slightly bigger share.

The finished products collected by the cooperative society go out to its 16 sales outlets spread across Assam. The private parties on their part sell them through a network of private outlets. There is a clear price difference between articles sold by the cooperative society and those by the private parties. "We keep a margin of Rs. 200 to Rs. 300 per kg of finished items while selling them through our outlets. From this we have to make a profit even after running the outlets, so that we can give dividends to our shareholders at the end of every financial year," said Society president Talukdar. Each shareholder on an average gets a dividend of Rs. 3000 per share per year. Those holding more

share units get more returns, he added. The Society also charges eight to ten rupees per kg of raw material from the artisans for making the lumps and flattening them. The private players charge about Rs. 20.

"But then, we must admit that every artisan works more than 12 hours a day. And though they are skilled workers, the arithmetic is such that they cannot earn more than Rs. 500 per day," Society president Talukdar pointed out.

Product Range

Bell-metal products manufactured in Sarthebari have a very wide range, covering as many as 108 items in all. Among them, however, certain popular items constitute the core of the industry; these are – 'kanhi' (traditional Assamese dishes and plates), 'baati' (bowls of various shapes and sizes), 'bota' (round trays with a stand) and 'taal' (cymbals of several varieties used as religious musical instruments).

The 'kanhi' itself has ten varieties including the plain simple 'uka kanhi', while the 'baati' has thirteen varieties. Among them the 'maihang kanhi' and 'maihang baati' are considered most prestigious, being once manufactured exclusively for the Ahom royalty. Special 'baati' are also manufactured for use in the Vaishnavite Satra monasteries of the state. They also make six varieties of the 'lota', and four varieties of 'kalah' – both utensils for serving and/or storing water. The 'bota' (round trays with a stand) also comes in 15 varieties, each having a separate nomenclature. Yet another very important product is the 'taal' or cymbals. "All cymbals used by different communities in Assam in religious singing or festivals are manufactured here. There are five major popular varieties; among them the bhor-taal, used in the Vaishnavite monasteries and naam-ghars is the largest," society secretary Bhuyan informed. The 'bhor-taal' and the small 'khuti-taal', however, are the two highest-selling cymbals; while the first pair is a needed in every traditional Assamese naam-ghar (community prayer house), the smaller pair is a must in bihu performances.

"We also get orders for making bell-metal utensils including gongs and cymbals from Buddhist monasteries in Arunachal Pradesh and Bhutan. Some communities of Arunachal Pradesh on the other hand place orders for large bowls which they require for some of their traditional rituals and festivals," pointed

out Adhar Chandra Deka, a retired Principal of the Sarthebari Higher Secondary School, and a member of the cooperative society for over six decades. Buddhist monastery cymbals again have four varieties, he said. The artisans also make various other articles required in temples and monasteries, which include bells, incense-stick holders, multiple lamp (diya) stands, guru-asana, idols, and rings required for various kinds of knife-handles.

Though one of the basic objectives of the cooperative society is to provide raw materials to its member artisans, it has not been able to meet the entire demand. Thus, steps in some mahajans (middlemen) who take advantage of the situation and make money by investing through raw materials as well as loans. "We have been able to supply only about 50 to 60 tonnes per annum, which on an average costs Rs. 1150 per kg," Talukdar informed.

Government Support

It was in 1956, the Government of Assam had established a five-tonne capacity rolling machine at Sarthebari. That machine, however, became obsolete after lying unutilised due to lack of skilled manpower to run it. In 2007, the cooperative society set up its own rolling machine which continues to be in use. This single machine however cannot meet the industry's entire demand, pushing the artisans in to the mercy of private suppliers. In 1973, the Government of Assam had established, a Common Facility Centre with a melting machine, three polishing machines, one drilling machine and a weighing machine. But, while artisans did not get motivated to leave their traditional home workplace and shift to the centre, absence of trained personnel to run the machines soon led to its closure.

In 1987, the Government of Assam waived off sales tax from handmade bell-metal products. This came as a major relief for the cooperative society. During 2003 and 2004, the State Bank of India, for the first time, extended loans to the Sarthebari artisans. The Government of Assam released Rs. 157.34 lakhs under the State Priority scheme for the Sarthebari bell-metal industry in 2013-14. Moreover, a sum of Rs. 50 lakhs was also provided to 280 of bell-metal artisans during that year. In 2013-14, the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Government of India had sanctioned Rs. 49.15 lakhs for 15 SHGs covering 315 artisans of Sarthebari under Baba

Saheb Ambedkar Hastshilp Vikas Yojna (AHVY). A sum of Rs. 49.76 lakh was also sanctioned by the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), for setting up a Common Facility Centre and Rs. 100 lakh for a raw material bank. But, the facility centre is yet to come up.

In September 2022, Assam Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma announced waiver of loans totaling about Rs. 5 crore which the Sarthebari bell-metal artisans had earlier taken from different banks. He also declared conversion of the loans as grants.

Potential Market

In addition to demand for religious and traditional handmade bell-metal items in Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim, there is also in store a big market for Sarthebari in several nearby countries. Buddhist monasteries and temples in Bhutan, Myanmar, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Nepal require several types of musical instruments (cymbals) and utensils. There is also scope of covering Assam's bell-metal industry under the Act East Policy and other ambitious government schemes, which in turn will give a new lease of life to the artisans. Assam's international border with Bhutan is only about 70 km from Sarthebari. Assamese households on the other hand continue to remain the major market, as every family in Assam uses bell-metal utensils both in day-to-day life to weddings and religious functions.

Heritage Tag

Hand-made bell-metal craft is part of Assam's rich heritage. Though many machine-made items are also available in the market (made in Moradabad, Kanpur, Bengal etc), Assamese people strictly prefer the hand-made ones in various occasions like marriages, death-rituals, religious purposes and festivals. People prefer those with intricate carvings made with primitive tools over machine-made designs. The hand-tools used by the artisans include niyari (anvil), chalti, sara (tong), kun (hand-operated lathe), khonta (file), hammer etc. "Given the exclusive nature and rich age-old tradition, there is a crying need for protecting the traditional industry under Trademark and Geographical Indications. This is required in addition to technology upgradation, skill development, meeting raw material scarcity, product diversification, and market promotion among others," pointed out Tridib Kumar Konwar, Circle Officer, Sarthebari.

Freedom Hero

As the country celebrates 75 years of Independence, bell-metal artisans of Sarthebari proudly remember Pushpa Kanhar, a master artisan who had played a major role in the January 1894 'Raij-mel' – peasants' uprising – of the area in protesting against increased land tax by the British. As a local officer tried to persuade the villagers to pay tax, Pushpa Kanhar took the lead and asked the people to defy the order. While some people even beat up the local officer, Pushpa Kanhar was arrested and sent to jail for six years. In jail, he refused to work like other convicts and insisted that he be given bell-metal work to do. His insistence prompted the jail authorities to arrange a kanhar-shaal for him inside the jail premises. Remaining busy in his shaal, Pushpa Kanhar manufactured a special kind of 'kanhi' (plate) and 'baati' (bowl) for use of the jail inmates, which soon came to be known as 'jail-kanhi' and 'jail-baati.' Pleased with his skill and innovation, the government commuted his jail term by one year. After coming out, he shared the

design with others, and artisans of Sarthebari continue to make 'jail-kani' and 'jail-baati' even today. Local people claim that a pair of these utensils were later also sent to an exhibition in London. □

References

1. An Account of Assam. Francis Hamilton (Ed Dr Suryya Kumar Bhuyan). Department of Historical & Antiquarian Studies, Guwahati. 1963.
2. Assamese Businessmen: From Maniram Dewan to Robin Dutta. Dr Anjan Kumar Baruah. Jorhat. 1995.
3. Prak-Oupanibesik Asamar Arthanaitik Itihas. Dr Raktim Ranjan Saikia. Assam Publishing Company, Guwahati. 2022.
4. Sarthebarir Aitihyamandita Kanh-shilpa. Parbati Patowari. Sarthebari. 2022.
5. Website of Department of Industries, Government of Assam.



**Entrepreneurship
Development
Institute of India
Ahmedabad**

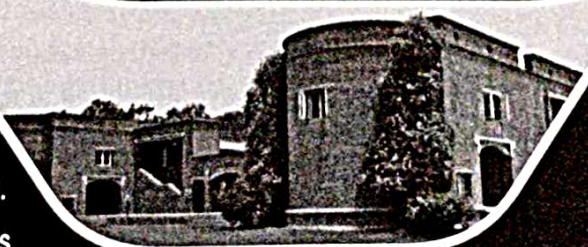
Who can Apply ?
Post Graduate / Master's
or equivalent Degree in
any discipline with
First Class

fpm.ediindia.ac.in

**Fellow Programme
in Management
(FPM) 2023-27**
Approved by All India Council for
Technical Education, New Delhi
A 4-Year Fellow Programme

**Monthly
Stipend
&
Contingency
Support**

**Recognized as the
Centre of Excellence
by the Ministry of Skill
Development and
Entrepreneurship,
Govt. of India**



**P. O. Bhat - 382428,
Dist. Gandhinagar, Gujarat, India.**
**(+91-79) 6910 4900 / 5000
+91-97236 18419**
fpm@ediindia.org
**www.ediindia.org
www.ediindia.ac.in**

**• A unique first-of-its-kind
research programme to create
thought leaders in entrepreneurship.**
• Fellowships to deserving candidates.

• EDII also offers Post Graduate Diploma In Management Programmes •

Promotion and Development of Handloom and Handicraft Sector



Pottery, Stone Craft, Metal Craft, Wood Carving, Woven, Embroidered, Painted, Printed Textile and Jewellery are some of the prominent crafts of India. The handloom and handicraft sector is an unorganised and decentralised industry in rural areas of the country and being labor intensive, is next only to agriculture in terms of employment generation.

T

**Rita Prem Hemrajani
Madhulika Tiwari**

hroughout the civilisations, art and craft has been an integral part of the culture and lifestyle of rural communities. The flexible and diversified nature of the different regions of the country has given birth to and supported many different types of arts and crafts. Diversity, heritage, culture, tradition, trade, are some of the layers across verticals like economy, religious celebrations, gender equality, cultural

events and art forms, when we talk about India in general. The history of Indian crafts and art is as old as the Indus Valley Civilisation and has been evolving since, with the growth of civilisations. These defining characteristics have been preserved in spite of the political and cultural influences that the region has been subjected to over the centuries. However, India has assimilated the different cultures and evolved as a stronger and resilient country.

*The authors are Managing Director and Senior Officer, National Handloom Development Corporation Limited.
Email: mdnhdc@nhdc.org.in and madhulikatiwari@nhdc.org.in*

While political changes kept on affecting the economy and the equations of different rulers amongst themselves, art and artists were generally patronised by the rulers across the country, irrespective from where these rulers belonged to. In India, the ruling class (Kshatriya) was distinct from the trading class. Hence, trade and commerce remained largely specialised, just as the other classes, maintaining continuity for centuries.

The different art forms developed as a combination of factors like easily available raw material, environment, legacy skill transfer, religious beliefs and local agricultural traditions. Hence, each region had a distinct identity and trade and commerce defined and strengthened this identity. For example, the clay pottery in Aurangabad village near Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh has grown due to availability of the particular clay nearby and is a source of livelihood for this village. Similarly, Kanjeevaram sari has motifs drawn from nearby temples and is worn on auspicious occasions. Saris in Madhya Pradesh were similarly patronised by the royalty. Similarly, Jamdani, Kota Doria, Paithani have unique regional influences.

The dyeing industry grew in the western part of India and saw bagru, lehariya, Bandhej, and Sanganeri blockprinting. Bangle making and lacquer jewellery were grown around lacquer producing areas, like Rajasthan. Marble is found around Rajasthan and lot of inlay and carved furniture and decorative items made can be seen in palaces of those areas. The craftsmanship of Indian artisans represented through the Taj Mahal, one of the seven wonders of the world, needs no introduction. Similarly, the furniture in south India has sandalwood with a lot of inlay work and figurines representative of elephants, closely associated with the temples there.

Silk weaving is carried out across India using different varieties of silk yarn. While most of the silk used is Mulberry, Tussar silk is more popular in eastern India due to large scale Tussar cocoons grown here. India has the unique position of having all four varieties of silk, including Eri and Muga silk grown in the northeast. Rural crafts of India are incomplete without mentioning Pashmina, a goat wool fabric from Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir. Kani Shawls, Sozni and Aari embroidery products made from Pashmina are in high demand.

With the arrival of the East India Company and industrial revolution, the urban landscape underwent transformation like the West. The economy of the



Kodapalli toys (around four hundred years old traditional craft of Andhra Pradesh)



Clay pottery wheel



Dhokra -The art of metal casting



Madhubani Painting from Bihar



Phulkari embroidery from Punjab



Bamboo Handicraft from North East



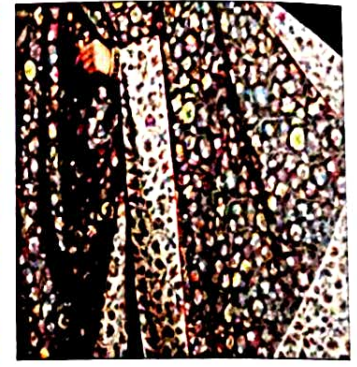
Patola Saree from Patan,
Gujarat



Paithani Saree from
Maharashtra



Muga Saree from Assam



Pashmina Kani Shawl

country was systematically damaged and the textile trade was one of the worst affected. Rural landscapes had the advantage of less mobility and more continuity of traditions and so was the case with art and handicrafts. The traditions, religion, culture, clothing, home decor and food, etc were so intertwined with each other and a way of life, that they were inseparable and passed on through generations without any formal documentation. The production of art and crafts declined during British rule due to the absence of patrons of crafts and the commercial pursuits of the Government. However, it survived due to local need and support. Brassware or similar metals used in religious ceremonies were a local need. Also, expensive crafts of silver decoration like filigree or bidri work were supported by the elite and the surviving royal families. Similarly, brocades like Banarasi saris with pure gold and silver zari or muslin, also referred as woven air, were patronised by the wealthy class. Some of these arts were preserved due to passion of the families, like the salvi family of patan, Gujarat,

are the original Patola sari weavers (using resist dyeing technique) and so is Ashawali sari in Mansa, Ahmedabad which involves Minakari technique of extra weft with coloured yarns. Dhaniakhali saris of West Bengal are a symbol of freedom struggle.

Pottery, Stone Craft, Metal Craft, Wood Carving, Woven, Embroidered, Painted, Printed Textile and Jewellery are some of the prominent crafts of India. The handloom and handicraft sector is an unorganised and decentralised industry in rural areas of the country and being labour intensive, is next only to agriculture in terms of employment generation.

Many initiatives are taken to standardise the products, like Handloom Mark, Silk mark, India Handloom Brand (IHB) to indicate quality certification. Also, to protect the origin and identity of these crafts Geographic Identification tagging is being done. Government is also supporting the handloom and handicraft sector through various schemes for production and marketing of these craft items. □