Daisy Tanwani with an artisan



OF HOPE

Dignity of labour

This entire period has been nothing short of a nightmare for the handloom weavers of Varanasi. The clanking of the loom was replaced with pin-drop silence, but patrons like designer Smriti



SMRITI

MORARKA

Morarka of the label
Tantuvi did her bit to
bring the essentials into
their homes. She says,
"The state government, I
must say, was extremely
forthcoming in providing sufficient food
grains to the marginalized, hence meeting
their basic needs wasn't
the biggest challenge. It
was the loss in fruitful
occupation as a result of

diminished demand, which was the real demotivator for these weavers. We took a step forward and took on more budgeted projects from clients, which ideally our looms would not have the time to do in normal times. This helped us give these artists both dignity and meaningful occupation."

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Extending support

Similarly, designer
Gautam Gupta of the label
Asha Gautam, who calls his
weavers an "extended work family".



ensured that work didn't stop for anyone. He shares, "The times were tough but last year's lockdown made us prepare better. We made sure their basics like food. medical expenses. and work ing facilities were covered. As our designs

are vintages and most weavers work from their homes, they were not sitting idle. I believe the handloom sector needs more and more design intervention to make it viable. We added a policy of basic pay to all the workers associated with us and also ensure they are vaccinated at least with one dose. Some funds were segregated in case any worker or his/her family faces tragic loss."

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Our artisans are the makers of our story and it was our turn to stand by them during the pandemic, feels Daisy Tanwani, CEO of brand Pinklay Speaking about her in-house initiatives to help the workers, she says, "We didn't have to let go of anyone and doubled our artisan strength across the last 2 years. We increased the number of artisans in our fold to approximately 400, of which 50% are women. As soon as the government eased curfew relaxations, we began working with all social distancing norms in place. We understood that there was only one way to get through this, keep working without compromising on safety. For artisans, it was not an either-or situation, so we added another facility so they could spread out and sit."

Tanwani also facilitated accommodation and other necessities for outstation employees and ensured strict
transportation and sanitinisation
norms at work. "It was a tricky and
scary feat to achieve but together we
managed," she informs, "We realized that many of our women artisans couldn't travel to work so we
ensured that work travelled to
them safely. There were clusters of
families as far as 150 km from the
city that were continuously provided
work like embroidery, kantha, pompom making etc. We consciously
included many semi/un/skilled women

in our workforce from the families of our artisans for errands like packaging, thread cutting etc. Everyone was given paid time off to get vaccinated and recuperate."

model in handloon sari by TANTUVI

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- DAISY TANWANI, CEO, BRAND PINKLAY