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Impact of the Pandemic on Indian Artisans & Handicrafts and the Revival Strategies

Overall, 80% of the sector is propelled by MSMEs and they need to be aided and incentivized to formalize employment of artisans and weavers.

Guest author



The handloom and handicrafts sector generates employment upwards of 20 million people in India making it the second biggest sector after agriculture. India is also the world's second-largest textile exporter and 90 percent of the world's handloom is made in India. Yet, it was one of the worst-hit sectors during the Covid -19 pandemic. Handcrafts, while beautiful, are non-essential discretionary items, hence, were first to

damage was colossal.

But then, as they say, there is opportunity in adversity. There are several steps that can be taken to resurrect the weakening sector:

Policy and Financing

‘Atmanirbharta’ is the cornerstone of India and the easy availability of microloans for master weavers and craftsmen will make artisans enterprising and independent. The government must formulate policy that incentivizes seasoned craftsmen who generate employment within communities.

Overall, 80 percent of the sector is propelled by MSME’s and they need to be aided and incentivized to formalize the employment of artisans and weavers. This will ensure job security and offer social and medical cover.

Craft Intervention and Innovation

To make handicrafts more relevant to the modern world, artisans need support, education and in many cases skill upliftment to make newer modern products. Subsequently, also mediums to reach the right target audience. The premier design schools should introduce greater craft design engagement initiatives.

The sector lacks trailblazers who can take advantage of technology and the e-commerce boom because the younger generation is not too enthusiastic to carry further the legacy of generational art forms in lieu of better prospects. Greater digital access at the panchayat level especially for handicrafts is needed to bridge the gap between talent and the target audience. This will also help in nurturing collaborative and creative energy between budding designers and artisans and minimize exploitation by middlemen.

An international showcase of craft by sending artisans to international conferences, trade shows, etc will lead to greater credibility for the crafts.

No Art Without Artisans

For decades artisans have worked in anonymity with no recognition from designers and brands. The need of the hour is a shift in mindset from ‘artisans working for you to working with you’. Designers and brands must take a lead in changing the rules of this partnership. This will fortify trust and send out a bigger message to the younger generation to carry on with the crafts.

Educate, Collaborate and Build

Present-day customer is more involved in their buying decisions. Brands must seize this opportunity to educate customers about the heritage Indian crafts, the process, and the value they add to the merchandise. Only when made in India is perceived as a desirable tag, will artisans get their due in recognition and pay.

At Pinklay, we are fortunate to be building a responsible business that keeps artisans central to our brand narrative. From 2 to 400 artisans, our made in India sustainable business is committed to preserve and promote the arts and artisans of India. Because, they are precious, feature unmatched talent, and are heirloom-worthy.

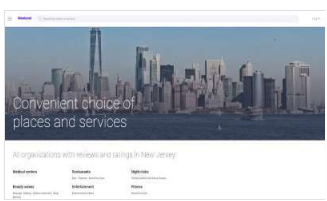
- This article is penned by **Daisy Tanwani, Founder and CEO, Pinklay.**

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