

## Contribution to Informal Economy; Voice of Women Artisans of India

Maahi A. Mehta

Independent Researcher, Women Entrepreneur & Sociology Student, INDIA.

Corresponding Author: [mailboxofmaahi@gmail.com](mailto:mailboxofmaahi@gmail.com)



[www.ijrah.com](http://www.ijrah.com) || Vol. 4 No. 2 (2024): March Issue

Date of Submission: 31-03-2024

Date of Acceptance: 14-04-2024

Date of Publication: 27-04-2024

### ABSTRACT

Art is not just a part of life; for some, it's life itself! and this life is being lived to the fullest by the women artisans who not only nourish the art like their own kin but also help in promoting the GDP and shaping the economy of the country. According to the International Trade Centre, women make up for 70% of the global handicraft workforce. Here, through this exhaustive research, we shall analyze the contributions, challenges, solutions and outcomes of the voice of women artisans in India and how India's GDP has got a boost indirectly with women artisans taking the center stage.

A KPMG study estimated that approximately 7.3 million people depend on handicraft and allied activities for livelihood. The handicraft and handloom sector in India is a Rs 24,300-crore industry and contributes nearly Rs 10,000 crore annually in export earnings. Women Artisans of India and the tribal communities gearing up with their act is truly inspiring amidst the brand market of the world where handmade threads and knots are giving a run for the money to the machine made and robotic assembled goods.

Vocal for local and its impact which not only promotes self reliability in the tourism sector but even sustainability and is environment friendly is another feature that is touched upon with reference to Indian handicrafts and emergence of new startups promoting ancient Indian techniques is another interesting feature. Self help group and NGOs supporting the economic development especially during the COVID pandemic times where this industry was the worst hit has been the life savior of this massive industry. Digital empowerment ensuring higher market reach and faster market capture is the tool that does the trick with women artisans voicing in their concerns and asking for a leading hand not for their support from the masses but an indirect upliftment via awareness generated in the market. This awareness is the gateway to Education.

**Keywords-** Indian Economy, Handicraft, vocal for local, handicraft industry, women artisans.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### *What is a body without clothes?*

It's the same as the sky without the stars that give meaning to it and define various streams in society like Astronomy, Astrology, Quantum physics and Stargazing. Similarly, the role of clothes is not just limited to the piece of cloth covering oneself but it showcases the look, style, creativity and skill of the labour in charge- it does so better when it comes from the hands of a woman artisan.

Handlooms in India epitomises the cultural richness of Indian Art and tradition. Some traditional handloom productions are passed down from generations in lineages and are hence concentrated

in the hands of few. According to the 4th All India Handloom Census, the country is home to over 3.5 million handloom workers today, of which 72% consist of women.

Women artisans are predominantly in the weaving sector of handicraft production. They weave the Banarasi sarees in Uttar Pradesh to Kanjivarams in the state of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh; From Mekhela Chador of Assam to fine hand crafted Kutchi kantha and Rabaari work in Kutch and Saurashtra region of Gujarat.

This research has taken into account 4 major Handlooms -Each from North, South, East and Western region of India. The artisans were taken on call and their stories recorded in cliched style with Pen & Paper; each word weaving into stories untold.



**Source:** <https://www.unodc.org/southasia/frontpage/2014/April/india-artisans-turn-entrepreneurs-an-innovative-model-seeks-to-reduce-vulnerabilities-that-lead-to-human-trafficking.html>

Despite Govt. Of India issuing the handloom mark, MUDRA loans and subsidized rates of Interest to the women artisans, these women particularly from major rural backgrounds face problems of commutation and raw material procurement near the town of Chettinad in Tamil Nadu from where the Chettinadu Cotton saris are manufactured and the women are mostly dependent on the

menfolk as they are not well versed with driving and commutation. *CHETTINAD THARI* dealing from Alwarpet, Chennai is one such business run by a woman who takes into account the entire production of Chettinad saris by having their own production unit and distribution is mainly handled by her better half and helpers to ease the sale of products.



**Source:** <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/the-sparkling-embroideries-of-kutch/ggVxpL8wMm7sKA>

Another major problem faced by women artisans in Kutch Area of Gujarat is lack of education and exposure especially when it comes to marketing their finished goods. They have to have tie ups with middlemen and dealers who then outsource it to boutiques and in this whole marketing chain, the women artisans are paid less as compared to the charges levied by the end source. However, steps are being taken by NGO *shrujan* and enterprises like *Kutchkutir* who are overseeing fair trade practices and ensuring right wages and pricing of the handloom and hand crafted products.

Women artisans who work double hard during pregnancy or in old age are rewarded double but lack of connection to the outside world in daily dealings make the market grim and they have to depend upon the menfolk with the vicious cycle running in loop.

The plus point however comes amidst the Women artisans of North East wherein Govt. schemes are being employed to help them come to the forefront and thus curb trafficking of women and children lured into trafficking on the pretext of working in big cities. UNODC intervention has ensured optimum utilization of

handicraft industry generating employment and preserving dying art of handloom weaving in Assam and Meghalaya regions. Their only concern is that the new generation wants to explore other avenues and if at all they support the Artisan community, they would want to do it from an urban setup.

Chikankaari handwork done by Chhoti begum from Lucknow who had to migrate to tricity region and work as maid/Cook as the factory shut down and this hit hard on the poor artisans who had no formal education but just mere basic skills passed down from generations or learnt on the job training is the hard hitting problem with no male helping hand and with responsibility of big families to support. Had there been the roof of education, artisans like Chhoti begum wouldn't have disappeared after her interview amidst the bustling Indian population!

Statistics show that there are in total 27,48,445 Rural handloom artisans comprising of SC/ST/BC as compared to their Urban counterpart accounting to 3,96,394 artisans. Lack of capital and weavers has led to this difference.

## II. CONCLUSION

Women just need a boost in their production and this can happen only with self help groups and NGO's

working for women upliftment at the mental level as even today when economically women are becoming financially independent, their inner voices are unheard or are sidelined with the burden of responsibilities and societal norms. Education, Freedom to choose and follow their dreams and gender equality in terms of goal accomplishment is the need of the hour.

Rest as the saying goes - **“Empowered Women empower women!”**

## REFERENCES

- [1] Handlooms.nic.in  
<https://handlooms.nic.in/assets/img/Statistics/3736.pdf>
- [2] www.unodc.org  
<https://www.unodc.org/southasia/frontpage/2014/April/india-artisans-turn-entrepreneurs-an-innovative-model-seeks-to-reduce-vulnerabilities-that-lead-to-human-trafficking.html>
- [3] The sparkling embroideries of Kutch  
<https://artsandculture.google.com/story/the-sparkling-embroideries-of-kutch/ggVxp-L8wMm7sKA>