

Accelerating *Indian Craft* Businesses

*Leveraging
Technology & Innovation
for Craft Startups*



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Startup Oasis is India's leading regional incubator, that works with a vision to 'Create Future Startup Capitals' in the country. Startup Oasis' focus is on catalysing start-up ecosystems in Tier II & III cities, where a wave of disruptive innovations still needs to be cradled. With its well-structured and validated interventions, Startup Oasis promotes innovative social, women-led, craft and technology-based enterprises. A joint initiative by CIIE.CO and RIICO, Startup Oasis is recognised as Technology Business Incubator (TBI) by the government and is registered as a Section 8 Company. Startup Oasis has its focus on four verticals - Social Entrepreneurship, Regional Tech-based Innovation, Women Entrepreneurship and Craft Entrepreneurship.



Photo Credit: Fabriclore



CIIE.CO is a social impact endeavour of IIMA established with the goal to accelerate development by creating scalable and innovative entrepreneurial solutions accelerating development and crunching time required to reach the un(der)served. CIIE.CO played a pioneering role in the Indian entrepreneurial ecosystem – conceptualising and running multiple evangelising and early stage seeding initiatives in Healthcare for masses, Agritech, Fintech for inclusion, Clean Tech, Civic Tech, Deep Tech where traditional capital does not flow in. CIIE.CO has been entrusted with more than INR 100 Crore by 15+ Corporate CSR's and multilateral agencies since April 2014 to assist/reach out to 95+ impact focussed entrepreneurial start-ups.



The Craft Catapult

by Startup Oasis

The Craft Catapult is the Annual Accelerator Program by Startup Oasis where select craft start-ups that are leveraging technology and innovation to build profitable and scalable business models, are offered technology support, patent support, business advisory, market connections, visibility and network as well as access to funding.



FOREWORD

A Fresh 'Theory of Change' for Craft

Nagarajam Prakasam
Advisor, *The Craft Catapult*

WE NEED CHANGE

Change is a problem everywhere. But we need that change. And change is possible. We need authenticity, target the right customer, have the right product positioning and strong storytelling. Craft should be a luxury and aspirational, else artisan is paying that subsidy. Craft does not need a pity story of grant, social impact, assistance for the poor artisan, rather narrative should be of pride for authentic craft.

OUR APPROACH

Japan considers artisans as artists and they are then respected accordingly. India considers software engineers more valuable than craftspeople. India has the same number of software engineers as artisans, around eight million; where the average IT engineer gets a monthly salary of over a lac, an artisan does not even get ten thousand a month.

The craftsman/entrepreneur needs to use technology to strengthen the supply chain, traceability, Blockchain and other processes. Right platform for selling craft that is innovative and effective. Give proof of authenticity using technology. They must use their imagination and technology to create a strong story. 'Make wrinkles (of khadi) fashionable', Confer 'Wow Factor' to the craft products, Make 'Error' hallmark of originality and handmade (like Jaipur Rugs

does), no discounts needed – an Audi is never sold at a discount. No need to make craft viral on social media – Rolex is not viral, as it's not meant for all.

CRAFT OUR SUPER-POWER

Craft has the super-power to make consumption sustainable, a sector that can lead in sustainable production and consumption both. Tesla sold carbon credits to Fiat. Entrepreneurs in craft need more focus, need to learn to say No, take hard decisions, build on their unique strength, discover their core. They need to get to the right customers. Entrepreneurs need to focus on innovation. There is some innovation happening through concepts like upcycling and recycling. Traditional yet contemporary is the key.

A startup needs innovation across products, processes and platforms. The second generation of artisans will remain in craft and assume new functions like marketing, design, etc. We cannot wait for 70 years for artisans to get over the trap of migration and/or suffering. Nor can we wait for our entrepreneurs to learn from their own mistakes. An intervention that defines a new theory of change and catalyses craft businesses is needed. I believe *The Craft Catapult* is a much needed intervention, and we will make sure we go a long way. ■

MESSAGE

Recreating Craft

Chintan Bakshi
CEO, *Startup Oasis*



India has a very rich tradition and knowledge of crafts covering unique techniques and materials like spinning and weaving of textiles, natural dyeing, metallurgy, block printing, furniture making, wood and stone craft. Some of these traditions are living traditions which have been around for more than a 1000 years. It was the rich heritage crafts of India that made India the largest economy in the globe before pre-Industrial times. Seen as the backbone of Indian's non-farm rural economy, handicrafts account for 15-20 percent of the country's manufacturing workforce.

In the last 30 years, companies like FabIndia, Good Earth, One More have been able to use modern management methods and innovative supply chain models to bring a lot of these crafts into the mainstream Indian and international consumer markets. The USP of these craft-based products have been their unique aesthetics as well as their inherent sustainability. Companies like FabIndia have been able to "mainstream" Indian crafts.

While the Internet and the other rapidly evolving technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning, Blockchain have disrupted traditional industries creating new opportunities, significant positive impact has been witnessed in the Crafts sector. Start-ups like Jaypore, LallO, GoCoop have built successful business models integrating technology with the traditional crafts as stories of initial success.

Startup Oasis has been at the forefront of supporting technology enabled craft start-ups. Being based out of Rajasthan, we soon realized that many designers and entrepreneurs were trying to build sustainable for-profit business models around the rich crafts and heritage of the state. Rajasthan has had some success stories like Jaipur Rugs, Anokhi, Kilol etc that have inspired other first-generation entrepreneurs to build other similar business models around the rich crafts heritage of the state.

At Startup Oasis, we have seen startup entrepreneurs innovating across the value chain of crafts, the major areas of innovation being:

- * Design Innovations, start-ups developing new products using a traditional craft.
- * Material Innovations, start-ups using / introducing new materials in traditional crafts
- * Supply chain innovation, start-ups using technology to bring more efficiency and transparency in the craft supply chain
- * Marketing innovations, start-ups using technology to develop new customer acquisition channels or significantly enhance the customer experience.

Craft Start-ups are the catalysts that can bring new technologies and best business practices into the craft sector, providing the necessary efficiency, transparency and linkages between the artisans and the markets. ■

MESSAGE

Positioning Craft in the Startup Ecosystem

Pallavi Tak

AVP, Startup Oasis. Editor, Accelerating Indian Craft Businesses

2014-16 | CRAFT - BY DESIGN AT STARTUP OASIS

Startup Oasis, since its inception was mandated to have 'Craft' as one of the focus areas, the incubator is based in Rajasthan - a craft hub - being one reason, also for its regional approach to promoting innovations. We believe that just as Silicon-Valley has been a fertile ground for innovative technology start-ups, Rajasthan should be for innovative crafts. This is a well-thought conscious decision and now we are making this mission national.

2017 | THE INVESTABILITY GAP IDENTIFIED

Initially, a sector-agnostic social accelerator program was actioned with eight social start-ups. Whilst most of the other start-ups got funds, craft start-ups could attract none. Though great with their products and impact, craft start-ups seemed relatively less investible to the investors. They would compare craft start-ups with their counterparts from other sectors and expect similar volumes & scale. In some cases, business models and innovations also remained weakly pronounced for these craft businesses. This gap needed to be bridged and a unique Theory of Change defined for craft businesses hereon.

2018 | FUNDING: A MILESTONE ACHIEVED

We launched our first sector-specific program, Social Accelerator in Crafts, Culinary & Livelihood (SACCL, which is The Craft Catapult 1.0) under INVENT, a program

funded by DFID and supported by TDB. Other prominent partners for the accelerator were Indian Institute of Crafts and Design, Jaipur Rugs and Morarka Foundation. The objective was to discover a unique 'theory of change' specific to these creative social start-ups from craft and culinary, while facilitating investments. SACCL supported fourteen start-ups, out of which eight start-ups got funds. This became a milestone.

Additional interesting features of this accelerator program were:

- * Cross-pollination and collaboration among the cohort members, like- Abira Creations co-created sustainable products with the cohort members.
- * Start-ups that got non-funded support also witnessed increased revenues, besides a steep learning curve. Dressfolk witnessed 1.5x growth in less than six months.
- * Funded start-ups then became part of a twelve months incubation program, like Khanak Design Studio and Cottonrack.
- * Social impact and interest of the artisans got ingrained in the business models.

2019 | POSITIONING CRAFT

The Craft Catapult (TCC) was launched with 'Value Chain and Technology Infusion in the Craft-sector' at its core. The eleven-startup cohort represented all stages, scales and aspects of the value-chain in the craft sector. The cohort had a good combination of well-

established brands such as Mura Collective, Karomi and Aavaran; new & promising interventions such as - P-Tal, Desi Hangover, Mulberry One and Greenwear; innovative tech-platforms such as Megastore, Amounee, Indi Collage and Perfit 3d. Cohort represented a complete craft-ecosystem, laid a fertile ground for cross-pollination.

Partners were onboarded keeping in mind specific needs & functions, like design & technology, market connect & communication, supply-chain & artisan engagement, investability & funding. The start-ups underwent a transformative journey and a steep learning curve, while their evolution was both on entrepreneurial and enterprise levels. TCC not only intended to catapult craft start-ups but also catalyse the overall craft ecosystem. **The vision was to initiate a multiplier effect that positions craft in the start-up ecosystem more aptly and effectively.**

Important features of TCC program were:

- * Craft roundtables with stakeholders organised in Jaipur, Delhi and Ahmedabad, to get a 360 degree perspective. Participants were CSRs, Craft Experts, Design & Craft Schools, Investors, established Craft start-up founders, designers, angels, multilateral organisations, embassies, craft councils, bureaucracy, foundations and incubators.

- * Impressive investor interest in almost all the start-ups at the Demo Day, that was organised at the end of the program.
- * Market access earned by start-ups such as Mulberry One and Mura Collective
- * IPR process initiated for a few start-ups, such as Mura and Desi Hangover along with awareness about Cultural IP.
- * Foundations were inspired to rebuild their legal and business architecture such that economic sustainability could prevail via a robust business model such as Commitment to Kashmir (CtoK)

2020-21 | BEYOND AND TOGETHER

Future shall bring more promise for craft, for the merit this sector inherently holds and the value craft start-ups bring to the table. Startup Oasis' craft initiative in the form of upcoming TCC 3.0 and Centre of Excellence for Craft, should just be two of the many dedicated endeavours. The potential of Indian crafts is yet to be fathomed and actualized by the Indian start-up ecosystem, and this calls for more collaborative & focused efforts.

We have come this far for our commitment towards the sector, immense support from the partners and dedication of our start-ups. And now, we invite you to be a part of this amazing journey! ■



The Craft Catapult (TCC)

National Science and Technology Entrepreneurship Development Board (NSTEDB) of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Govt. of India sponsored Startup Oasis' The Craft Catapult 2.0 for the year 2019-20, under its NIDHI Accelerators scheme. Such support is granted to Technology Business Incubators (TBIs) like Startup Oasis to:

- Fast track the growth of potential start-ups through rigorous mentoring and networking support.
- Attract subject matter experts, mentors, and angel investors to get associated with TBIs.
- Build a vibrant startup ecosystem, by establishing a network between academia, financial institutions, industries and other institutions.
- Act as a hub for several incubators in the region, so that high-potential start-ups can be fast-tracked for increased exposure and validation.



Functional Partnerships

Before the launch of The Craft Catapult, a concerted scouting effort was carried out by Startup Oasis for valuable and functional partnerships with Corporates, and Organizations working in the Crafts domain. 'Craft Roundtable' Series was conducted in Jaipur, New Delhi and Ahmedabad, to make the entrepreneurs and key stakeholders from different regions aware of the program.

There were a total of 14 partners onboarded for lending their support to The Craft Catapult cohort in the areas specified below:



Technology & Innovation

- * RUTAG IIT DELHI: To provide the much-required Technological Intervention in Manufacturing Processes for Artisans/Weavers.
- * ZOHO: Access to ZOHO Suite complimentary for all the cohort start-ups, besides customized Technology Support for the start-ups.



Knowledge & Design

- * Indian Institute of Crafts & Design (IICD) – Access to Design Labs for the cohort start-ups. IICD also was instrumental in providing knowledge support in terms of networks (including faculty) throughout the programme.
- * National Institute of Design (NID) – Collaborated on organizing a Design Workshop for the Craft start-ups, where the institute faculty guided founders on the advanced product design principles.



Vertical Integration

- * Jaipur Rugs: Change Management: The entire cohort visited the Jaipur Rugs headquarter in Jaipur to understand more on scaling up of businesses and pricing strategies. Mr NK Choudhary also conducted a live exclusive session on 'Founders Mentality'.
- * Supply Chain Management: A curated field trip was organized to the 3 villages of Rajasthan where Production, Packaging, and Designing of the rugs is carried out in a phased manner for Jaipur Rugs.



Exhibitions & Institutional Sales

- * DIRECT CREATE: To provide Market Access via their experiential stores worldwide, and global business clientele via exhibition opportunity with their global partner network.
- * International Market Access
- * INDOLOGY: Access to Live Studio tour of Indology to understand more on dynamics of TV e-commerce business, and explore this growing channel for product marketing and sales.



Marketing & Sales

- * GoCoop: Assistance on Cluster Management for cohort start-ups.
- * iTokri: Provided integration opportunity for curated startup products on organizations' online sales platform.



Capital

- * GivFunds: Provision for small working capital finance (< INR 20 Lakhs), and easy terms in comparison to market rates.
- * Caspian Impact Investments: Debt Funding (>INR 1 Cr) opportunity based on unit economics criteria and requirement.
- * Upaya Social Ventures: Equity-based funding (INR 35 Lakhs) based on investment thesis and evaluation.



Product Integration

- * Concern India Foundation: Access to business exhibitions organized by Pause for A Cause including the world renowned Kalaghoda Art Festival.

Program Stages & Timeline

The Craft Catapult 2.0 was launched on 10th September 2019 with the launch of the official website, along with the application portal. A flurry of social media creatives was posted and promoted on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter handles of onboarded partners and affiliates to spread the awareness about the programme, and attract applications



Mode of Application

Applications were received online via the F6S platform integrated with the TCC website. The applications were sought from diverse start-ups working in a variety of Crafts such as handlooms, pottery, jewelry making, stone/metal carving, traditional hosiery and/or any startup who deem to fit in the crafts value chain.

The application criteria used are indicated below:

- * Post-MVP / Growth stage start-ups with direct or indirect livelihood impact and having some sales traction / business model validation.

- * Startup businesses with a strong technology component integrated into their business model or looking for deepening the technology integration to enhance the business value.
- * Start-ups innovating in one or more links of the Crafts value-chain as depicted in the graphic, through the use of some technology.



Selection Process

- * The Internal Team of Startup Oasis (SO) went through the 158 applications received for Screening purpose. After weeding out the proxy, and the incomplete applications, there were a total of 120 applications for the next stage.
- * The CIIE and SO team internally evaluated them based on predetermined parameters, and the 1st Round Evaluation result was shared shortlisting 85 start-ups.
- * The 2nd Round Evaluation included the onboarded partners and experts-cum-mentors. The F6S platform provided for allocation of selected applications to a third-party (here partners) where they could provide their individual scoring against the listed parameters for each assigned application. Each application was assigned to 2 different partners/mentors to maintain normalcy. After collating the scores for all applications, Z-score normalization was done to neutralize any deviations. Top 45 start-ups were shortlisted for the final round.
- * Final 3rd Round Evaluation was conducted via in-person Interview Calls with all the shortlisted 45 start-ups to understand their needs and aspirations better before admitting them into the program.

Cohort

The cohort comprised the following eleven start-ups, besides three not-for-profit organisations (GVCS, Jawaja, CtoK)

- * Perfit 3D helps e-commerce clients upload inventory faster and cheaper via 3D scanning of products
- * Greenwear manufactures and markets garments from yarns and fabric made through solar powered looms by women in villages
- * Amounee is a marketplace for authentic regional textile crafts, based on Artisan to Customer philosophy, empowering the artisans with market intelligence
- * Indi Collage builds a platform for fractional retail spaces enabling craft brands to expand without renting out expensive physical spaces
- * P-Tal markets handcrafted brass, copper and bell metal utensils made by Thatheras community of Punjab
- * Karomi works with traditional artisans of Kolkata to make the most innovative Jamdani craft fabrics/apparels, using random design and yarn twist as their strengths.
- * Mulberry One provides traditionally sericultured, manually reeled, and pit-loom weaved organic silk fabric, works closely with artisans from Bihar and West Bengal

- * Aavaran makes women wear and home decor using traditional Rajasthani Dabu craft and color fastened indigo-dyed print.
- * Megastores provides an online marketplace for authentic handicraft products sourced directly from the artisans
- * Desi Hangover manufactures retail shoes made from upcycled leather by traditional artisan cobblers from Kolhapur

Interventions & Sessions

September 2019

The Craft Catapult's (TCC) official launch took place in September 2019. During this month, while innovative craft start-ups from across the country applied for this six-month, one of its kind accelerator programme, the TCC team worked closely with the TCC partners to chalk out a concrete plan to make this journey full of learnings. Filling the lengthy and detailed application form needed some patience, but that was worth the invested time.

October 2019

While the world celebrated 'International Craft Day' in this month, TCC welcomed this festive month with the announcement of the Final cohort for TCC on 26th October 2019. After a rigorous round of evaluation stages with partners, the most deserving start-ups formed the cohort for TCC, and started their journey with Startup Oasis.

November 2019

This month saw action on the ground. TCC cohort start-ups, partners, experts and team Startup Oasis met together in Jaipur, to embark on a collective journey of co-creation and transformation. Craft eco-system started getting catapulted in one of the most meaningful manners, hereon.

MODULE 01: 20-22nd November (3 Days), Jaipur

The focus was on business strategy and enforcement of a robust business model, besides interesting knowledge sessions. A handcrafted Diagnostic Panel, to match individual needs of a start-up with a panel of industry experts. Together a roadmap was crafted for the next six months for each start-up, milestones set, success metrics determined.

December 2019

Delhi welcomed TCC and the onset of winters added flavor for the cohort. The canvas was painted with inputs on design and product-market fit. The gear shifted, more power added to the cohort and rigor enhanced. Clearer GOALS than ever and strategy saw implementation.

MODULE 02: 20-21st December (2 Days), Delhi

The emphasis was on review of the strategy framed in the last contact session and action taken thereafter, while framing canvas for a fresh Diagnostic Panel on Design & Product-Market Fit. Here on, technical assistance on design and business growth-hacks became more hands-on for the start-ups.

Mentors worked closely with the start-ups to tread to the final outcomes decided for each start-up.

January 2020

Jaipur as always was brimming with creativity and literary engagements across the city. The Jaipur Literature Festival takes the whole city under its influence this month, while the Kite Festival adds rainbow-colors to the sky. TCC added the perfect craft flavor to the season, by bringing the best from the craft sector to Jaipur. Creative excellence drenched the very pores of the city, while the start-ups collected here to experience yet another stint with TCC.

MODULE 03: 29-31st January (3 Days), Jaipur

TCC took the start-ups on a live-case study of Jaipur Rugs, that does not cease to mesmerize the craft world and beyond, with its innovation, with team building and business diversification being at the core. The start-ups met the technology masters in the finely designed Technology Diagnostic Panels, where technology became the super enabler for each kind of craft – in product, process, traceability, delivery and packaging. New avenues for use of technology discovered and practiced.

February 2020

The cohort met at a yet new location – IIM Ahmedabad, to start its final leg of the journey. The finishing school took over, where the financial model got chiseled under the close guidance of experts. The start-ups got investment ready at the leading incubator of the country, CIIE.CO via help from the team in perfecting their investor pitches. This was also an opportunity for TCC to share with the world its journey via Demo Day. Outcomes were measured, further plans of action created beyond March 2020, and the graduation ceremony for TCC took place.

MODULE 04: 26-28th February (2.5 Days), Ahmedabad

TCC reached Ahmedabad to get polished on investment and communication of their businesses. Stories are not only to be created, but also told – told efficiently. Start-ups got inputs on how to showcase their businesses and products. An Investment Diagnostic Panel took place for each start-up, along with the business communication strategy being framed. The grand finale, TCC Demo Day attracted investors, influencers, leading business houses, Government bodies, multilateral organizations and incubators who witnessed the cohort that had transformed and accelerated.

Progress Tracking & Outcomes

Since there was considerable progress tracked and monitored for most of the start-ups, each startup was evaluated on the following parameters across the Accelerator duration:

- * Starting Point for TCC (the reason they were selected for the program)
- * The Breakthrough (the biggest pivot(s) made)
- * Demo Day Transformation (the endpoint status from TCC perspective)
- * Investor Feedback (including the various interests they've garnered)
- * Learning Curve for Founders (Change in the Founders' Mentality)
- * Technology adoption and innovation pronouncement ■

Defining Crafts

India's crafts is as diverse as its populace. But just as the idea of India, we believe that craft has a diverse universe of opinions on what constitutes craft.



[countable, uncountable] an activity involving a special skill at making things with your hands
 -Oxford Learner's Dictionaries

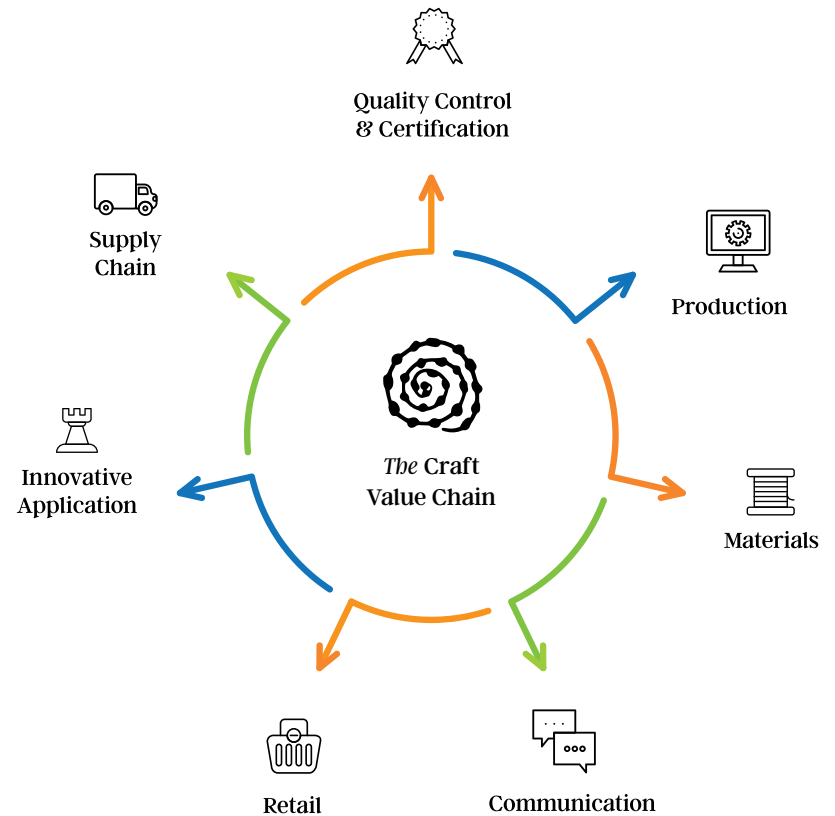
Products that are produced by artisans, either completely by hand or with the help of hand-tools or even mechanical means, as long as the direct manual contribution of the artisan remains the most substantial component of the finished product... The special nature of artisanal products derives from their distinctive features, which can be utilitarian, aesthetic, artistic, creative, culturally attached, decorative, functional, traditional, religiously and socially symbolic and significant.
 -UNESCO

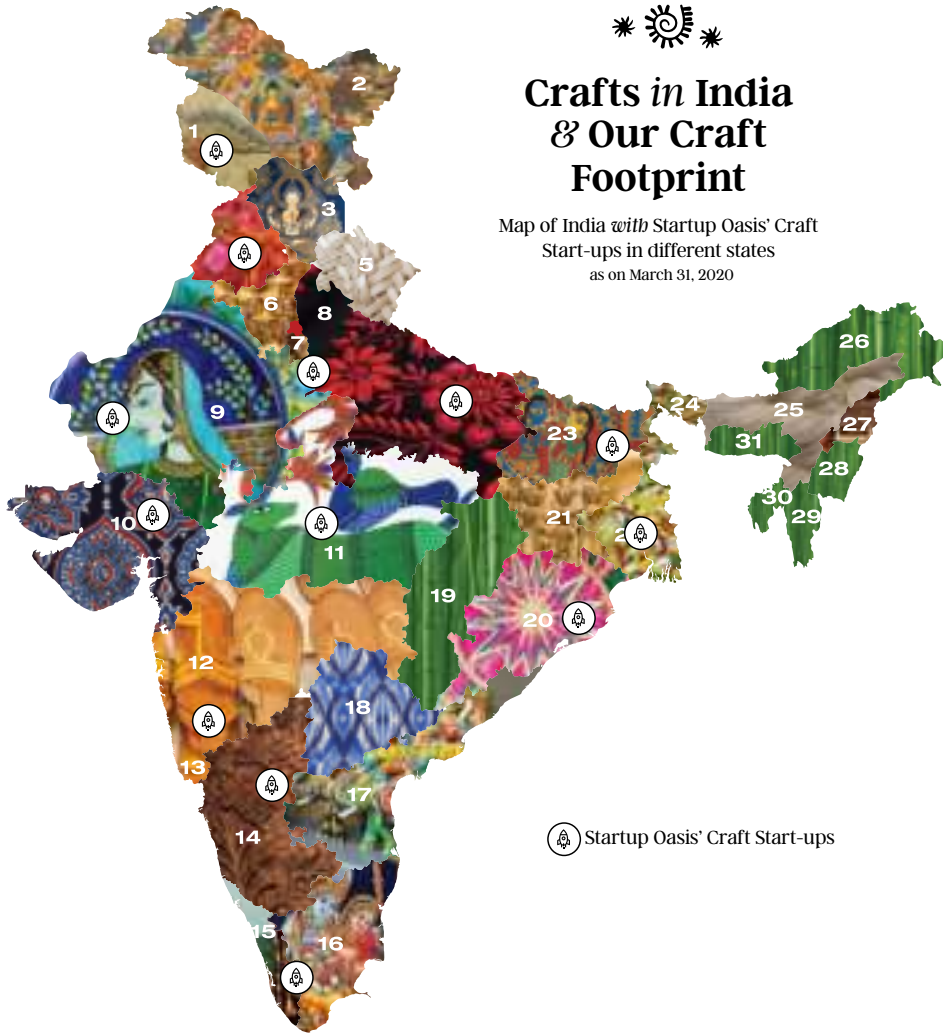
The panorama of Indian crafts is a patchwork quilt of many hues and shades of meaning, reflective of interactions with social, economic, cultural and religious forces. And the craft world is full of contrasts, a universe of utility products and sacred objects, articles for ritual use and ephemeral festival crafts, representing many levels of refinement - from the simplest to the most technically advanced. Likewise there are many perceptions of the term 'craftsman', ranging from a manual labourer to a worker of high artistic excellence. Craft, then, is situated in a complex milieu, a dense matrix of many strands and Elements.
 -Aditi Ranjan and M.P. Ranjan, *Handmade in India*



Value Chain in Crafts


Strengthening the Craft Value Chain to leverage forward and backward linkages















Crafts in India & Our Craft Footprint

Map of India with Startup Oasis' Craft
Start-ups in different states
as on March 31, 2020

 Startup Oasis' Craft Start-ups

DISCLAIMER

Map not to scale. These are representative images of some of the crafts of each state. In no case are they a representation of all the crafts of India. This map is a generalized illustration only, and is not intended to be used for reference purposes. The representation of political boundaries and the names of geographical features do not necessarily reflect the position of the Startup Oasis or any of its partners on international issues of recognition, sovereignty, jurisdiction or nomenclature.

- 1 **Jammu & Kashmir**
Craft: Papier Mache
 Zaina by CtoK
- 2 **Ladakh**
Craft: Thangka Painting
- 3 **Himachal Pradesh**
Craft: Thangka Painting
- 4 **Punjab**
Craft: Phulkari & Bagh Textiles, Brass Metals
 P-Tal
- 5 **Uttaranchal**
Craft: Basketry
- 6 **Haryana**
Craft: Brass Ware
- 7 **Delhi**
Craft: Embroidery
 Mura Collective, Indi Collage, Dressfolk
- 8 **Uttar Pradesh**
Craft: Chikankari, Zardozi
 Greenwear
- 9 **Rajasthan**
Craft: Blue Pottery, Block Printing, Gota work, Dabu Printing
 Iro Iro, Khanak, Aavaran, Gangsutra, Fabriclore, Cotton Rack, Sutrikaar, Shefcoz
- 10 **Gujarat**
Craft: Ajrak, Kite Making
 Amounnee
- 11 **Madhya Pradesh**
Craft: Gond Painting
 KhaDigi
- 12 **Maharashtra**
Craft: Kolhapuri Chappal, Terracotta and Pottery, Warli Art
 Desi Hangover, Abira, Megastores
- 13 **Goa**
Craft: Crochet and Lace Work
- 14 **Karnataka**
Craft: Sandalwood Carving, Banjara Embroidery
 Fabric Monde
- 15 **Kerala**
Craft: Vallam (Boat Making)
 Perfit 3D
- 16 **Tamil Nadu**
Craft: Thanjavur Kalamkari
- 17 **Andhra Pradesh**
Craft: Telia Rumal, Kondapalli Toys
- 18 **Telangana**
Craft: Ikat
- 19 **Chattisgarh**
Craft: Bamboo
- 20 **Odisha**
Craft: Sikki grass
 Kalaghar
- 21 **Jharkhand**
Craft: Dhokra
- 22 **West Bengal**
Craft: Kantha, Patachitra
 Karomi
- 23 **Bihar**
Craft: Madhubani painting, Mulberry Silk
 Mulberry One
- 24 **Sikkim**
Craft: Choktse Tables
- 25 **Assam**
Craft: Eri Silk
- 26 **Arunachal Pradesh**
Craft: Bamboo
- 27 **Nagaland**
Craft: Cane Baskets
- 28 **Manipur**
Craft: Bamboo
- 29 **Mizoram**
Craft: Bamboo
- 30 **Tripura**
Craft: Bamboo
- 31 **Meghalaya**
Craft: Bamboo

We have classified prominent start-ups that we have accelerated and incubated in Craft which also includes start-ups in The Craft Catapult program.

Design Innovation

Karomi
Mura Collective
Aavaran



Material Innovation

P-Tal
KhaDigi
Cotton Rack
Khanak Design Studio
Iro Iro
Sutrakaar
Shefcoz




Inclusion

Megastores
Indi Collage
Perfit 3D
Desi Hangover
Fabriclore
Fabricmonde
Dressfolk



Business Model Innovation

Amounee
Greenwear
Mulberry One
Abira
Kalaghar
Zaina by CtoK
Gangsutra





Accelerating
Design Innovation
in the Crafts



Powering Design and Market Intervention

Organization: Indian Institute of Crafts & Design (IICD)
Author: Dr. Toolika Gupta, Director

India has had a long history of handicrafts and till the last 50 years or so, they were all sustainable. Colonialism is a glaring example of India's handicraft businesses. Post-independence much impetus was given to industrial design, as it was the need of the hour and unfortunately, crafts were ignored as slow processes and objects of the drawing room. They were only supported with subsidies and were treated like children with disabilities. In current times, India has begun to realise the potential of its crafts sector and the need to leverage this Craft Sector for providing sustainable products, employment and a decent lifestyle for people of all economic backgrounds, by identifying and filling –in the design and market gap.

Crafts are not thought of as mainstream – there are policies being made and money being spent on them but no monitoring of quality, design and possible market interventions are being thought at a larger scale, people who work in the craft sector, need proper guidance to take their businesses forward. This is due to the lack of educational set-ups that address the craft sector. Also once the products are made by 'Craft-Cluster Initiatives' of Design Schools, the market opportunities are not many and thus it still remains a problem.

In today's age when mass production of goods made by non-biodegradable materials is a threat to the environment, a slight change in the raw material is more desirable.

We need to focus also on the waste products that are used as raw materials for newer objects of use. This waste material can be processed and used as raw material by the craft communities living nearby.

Practically the two most important factors here are design intervention and market intervention:

Design intervention – to help them create meaningful and consumable products that will be bought by the people for utility instead of consuming articles with high adverse global impact.

Market intervention - to help them get visibility in the main market and to give to them a platform to sell these products.

With this aim in mind, IICD encourages innovation in all its educational programmes. It was a key moment when IICD and Start Up Oasis signed an MoU to promote both design intervention and market intervention in the craft sector. We have worked together to make the right kind of moves to enable craft businesses and innovation for sustainability.

TCC has been instrumental in giving the right kind of hand holding for new sustainable businesses to grow. Citing examples of two IICD alumni, Khanak Designs, Mudita and Radhesh with their brand – Golden Feathers, and Bhaavya – Brand Iro-Iro, are both incorporating innovation and sustainability,

while giving a new lease of life to the craft sector.

Khanak Designs – It is heartening to see someone so dedicated to innovation. Radhesh, with his background in textiles and his post-graduation from IICD, recycled chicken feathers (which are a nuisance to the environment, as told by the Butchers), to create a completely new yarn. This is a breakthrough! He separated chicken feathers into tail, neck, wings, etc, sterilized them, spun them and created a completely new yarn. He used this yarn to weave fabrics lighter than Pashmina, which were easy to wash and dry. His spinners and weavers come from economically weaker backgrounds and marginalised communities. Since he has generated employment in certain tribes of Rajasthan, his products were being sold by Tribes India, a government agency. It is a perfect example of innovation, sustainability and employment generation. But the next step was to focus on how to scale it up, what was the right way to do business, here TCC has been of immense help and has shown the right way to entrepreneurship. Understanding business plans, taking an innovation from the sampling stage to production with profits, and to help in investments, were the focus of the program.

Similarly, Bhaavya Goenka, with her brand Iro-Iro, had used recycled waste fabrics



from an export house to create / weave new fabrics after shredding the waste fabric. The newly woven fabric was used to create jackets and other garments / accessories, with zero-waste patterning. This is a leap in sustainable design practices. Again with a background in textiles and a 4 year undergraduate program from IICD, she was equipped with the right kind of know-how for sustainable innovation, but with the help of TCC, she learnt the right way of business planning and execution.

TCC has been instrumental in giving new life to the craft sector. IICD is glad to have partnered with TCC to host the sessions and be cog in the wheel of sustainable innovation.





The Story of an Innovation

Organization: Karigar Weaves

Author: Jaideep Mehta, MD

The seed of an initiative in a craft related product, germinates on the love of it. The inspiration follows, the passion develops. The next thing one knows, a few years have passed, and the seed has grown into a plant. The medium could be hand woven textiles, brass, cane, wood, leather, just about anything that nature has to offer.

Human connections develop. The artisan, weaver, craftswoman, all of them come together to offer their skills, acquired over generations. The founder of such craft related business models now develops an instinct for innovation. This, the founder realises, was latent, hitherto untapped. Thus begins the story of innovation, the skill of the hand perfectly matched with the creativity of the mind.

Mura, Karomi, and Aavaran are three such success stories. But their strategies for growth, scaling their processes, and reaching out to the marketplace, are significantly different and ultimately one of convergence.

While one places a huge investment in organic processes, environmentally sustainable scaling, the other could be painstakingly working with the weaver to expand his mind, to new ideas. One of them is inspired to look at the traditional art of tie-dye, turn it around, and voila, emerge with a whole new technique. These are people who love what they do, and along the way, have also developed a burning need to sustain the communities. It is to such innovators that the

marketplace responds, with commercial opportunities, a platform to showcase, and reach out to the customer.

All of the above three enterprises embody a deep understanding of the marketplace, the will to take on commercial pressures, and the realisation that this is an ever-changing world. They've got to reinvent themselves, almost with each sunrise. B2B opportunities, B2C potential, exhibitions amongst other tactics. They have demonstrated their openness to acquiring these skills and marketing their craft. Coupled with their pride in their artisan, and the passion for their craft, is all they need, to scale new heights. ■





STARTUP

Karomi- The Handloom Tree

FOUNDING TEAM

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About

Karomi makes designer Jamdanis



Vision

The vision is to create a luxury range in Jamdani with a clear focus on reviving the fine muslins of Bengal.



Story

Launched in 2007, Karomi works with over 150 weavers across Bengal to create a premium and yet-to-be experienced aesthetic in the Indian handloom sector. The main purpose behind its setting up was to create quality and design driven textiles, sustainably, at the grassroots level. The founders wanted to break the misconceptions that Handmade equals ethnic, handmade equals substandard and that handmade equals cheap.

The initial couple of years were tough. The distance between the weaving village and the main city was about 250 kms. After several months of reaching out, they made contact with a single weaver to explore various weaving techniques on the loom. Unfortunately, says Sarita Ganeriwala, Co-Founder, Karomi, "the weaver was not only unaware of the true potential of his own loom but also wary of stepping out of his comfort zone of plain weave."

But consistent hard work, patience and perseverance won the day and in a matter of months, this same weaver was producing work that stunned him and left him proud. Since then the team grew from strength to strength and before long, they had a dyer, finisher and quite a few weavers to realise the Karomi dream. Starting with one weaver in one cluster in Bengal in 2007, today Karomi works with 5 clusters and provides work directly and indirectly to over 500 artisans.

Using the traditional pit-loom method of weaving, their speciality lies in employing the age-old technique of "Jamdani" weave - an extra weft weaving style unique to Bengal. Strongly rooted in the textile traditions of our country, Karomi seamlessly weaves the old and new, colours and composition, technique and innovation. The design mission is to bridge classic and contemporary to create concept handlooms working with natural fibres - silk, wool, cotton and linen. The yarns are always hand-dyed, a lot of which are natural dyes.

Besides weaving, which is the prime focus, Karomi also works with hand-block printing and kantha embroidery (a type of embroidery craft in the eastern regions of the Indian subcontinent). As the team started to explore Jamdani in depth, they realised that there are 3 main pain points that need solving. First, that authenticity is lacking. A lot of people are selling fabrics woven on jacquard looms as Jamdani. Second, what is readily available in the market is too traditional. Third, there is very little exploration in terms of yarns being used and the fabrics being produced from those yarns. The Karomi team worked on these three pain points and created contemporary designs to cater to growing demand.



Products

The main products are sarees, dupattas, stoles and garments, but the team is also working on textile art and bags.



Innovation

Karomi excels in “design driven” Jamdani. When exceptional skill and long hours of labour combine to weave intricate patterns on the loom, a JAMDANI is born. Add to this, imaginative thinking, artistic sensibility and a “Karomi Jamdani” is born. Karomi believes that it “s not just about making handwoven textiles, it’s about making wearable woven art.”

The concept of randomness in design patterns and designs with very large or no repeats has, what Karomi believes “ensured Karomi Jamdanis cannot be copied on jacquard looms. Thus, guaranteeing their customer an authentic Jamdani.” Moreover, the complexity and newness of the patterns make it highly difficult for the competition to copy them. Whimsical play of forms and the formless, has disrupted the grandmotherly perception of Jamdani, making it a more creative and contemporary weave that is artistic and future forward.

At Karomi, texture, drape and feel of the fabric weaved is very important. This is why the team is constantly exploring new yarn blends and twists and experimenting with almost all parameters of the loom. As a result, interesting new fabric surfaces are born. Karomi’s Bauhaus collection, showcasing contemporary Jamdani, is all about innovation at yarn level wherein, differing counts of hand spun cotton have been hand-dyed and hand-twisted to achieve a visually granular and yet, an extremely soft and not so easy to crush fabric.



Funding

Bootstrapped.



One Big Learning at Startup Oasis

Craft and handmade needs to be positioned correctly in the market and the right customer for our craft - Jamdani - is the luxury market. Sarita feels that the Karomi team “learnt that Jamdani is our core strength and that we should channel all our time and resources into further strengthening that. Going forward, sustainability and authenticity are becoming the bywords for all businesses. We are already both sustainable and authentic. We just need to tell our story better.”



Awards so far

In 2012 and 2014, Karomi received the UNESCO Award of Design Excellence for handicrafts.



Sales Channels

They have both B2B and B2C sales. The B2C sales are mainly through exhibitions and through consignment to other stores across the country. Very soon they will have their own e-commerce site up. They plan to launch their own website by Q3 of 2020.



STARTUP

Mura Collective

FOUNDING TEAM

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About

Crafting exquisite craft using the Shibori technique



Vision

Make available high quality products to create economic and social prosperity in the remotest of rural communities through contemporary, natural and handmade products using Shibori craft.



Story

Mura Collective was started in 1998, as a response to what Founder, Kusum Tiwari says, was “a deeply felt personal need and intent to establish workspaces for marginalised (special needs) persons.” The rest was, quite literally, “done by the Universe.” A chance meeting with the late Mr. Toofan Rafai, the grand old dad of natural dyes got the promoters hooked to Natural dyes, specially Indigo. A subsequent chance “stumbling upon” the Kyoto Shibori museum catalogue, completed the magic! Two decades later, the magic continues. However, it’s not without its challenges.

Being pioneers in bringing Shibori into mainstream textiles, the biggest challenge was establishing norms for quality in Shibori as against prints and other forms of Textile design. “Since there was no available material on the technique itself, every new design or material or dye colour required its own process of trial and error to produce high quality products. Being a small enterprise, funds, especially working capital (owing to the long production cycle) was always tight. Leaving no availability of funds for marketing, advertising or hiring professionals,” says Kusum.

She firmly believes that “there is a growing awareness and sensitivity towards the impact of our decisions on our environment, especially amongst the rapidly growing urban upper middle class segment . An average 40+ educated, well travelled woman wants to wear handmade, fairly traded, natural textiles, is willing to pay a high price for it, but also demands quality and durability.”

There is a big gap in the demand and supply in this segment. Mura is trying to bridge that gap by making available high quality, contemporary, natural and handmade products using Shibori craft, which has a high aesthetic appeal for this above mentioned segment. As a result, their design vocabulary has evolved continuously to cater to this segment. A great deal of focus for Mura is on bringing out new designs, while keeping their “MURA” aesthetic, as well as always maintaining high standards of quality, that they have come to be known for.





Products

Sarees, scarves and stoles, shawls, as well as stitched garments (stylish as against fashionable) both ethnic and western. Some garments for men too.



Innovation

The Mura Shibori process has the Unique feature of using varying numbers of layers of a specific cotton fabric ('03' fabric) to sandwich the actual material on which the Shibori design is being made. The number of layers of '03' varies according to:

- * The material being designed (example cotton, or wool or silk, etc)
- * The thickness of the material
- * The colour in which the Shibori dyeing needs to happen
- * The design of Shibori

Each time a design or a colour is being sampled on particular fabric, experiments are done to evaluate the number of layers of lining fabric to be used on top of the material and below the material, to ensure the output has all the characteristics of MURA Shibori, namely:

- * Gradation of colour, light and dark, throughout the product
- * The clarity of design throughout the product, in all the layers
- * A diffused quality of the design

These characteristics distinguish between MURA Shibori and all other Shibori available in the marketplace. Application for complete patent (IP) on unique Shibori design innovation is in process to stop design copy infringements.



Funding

Bootstrapped



One Big Learning at Startup Oasis

The founders found the session on Founder's Mentality as the most powerful. They found "the importance of both speed and scale, for long term survival, and how this can be achieved, while holding the Founder's Mentality in the Organisation" as a key learning.



Awards so far

UNESCO Seal of Excellence four times (2005, 2008, 2014, 2018).



Sales Channels

Exhibitions and B2B sales. Some sales from the Mura workshops.



STARTUP

Aavaran

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About

Creating fashionable apparel using local crafts for the global audience



Vision

Aavaran's vision is to promote the traditional Dabu (Mud Resist) printing, specifically of Mewar region of Southern Rajasthan. It is to promote traditional dyeing and printing technique using natural dyes and print. It is also to revive and survive the craft and the craft community. It is also to make it nationally and internationally acclaimed.



Story

Aavaran was conceptualised and founded in 2011 by Alka Sharma, a textile designer and enthusiast. She was "keen to revive and sustain the traditional craft of Dabu, hand block printing using a mud resist technique and carry forward the tradition of Indigo dyeing as practised in Akola and Udaipur Region in Rajasthan." She wanted to ensure the economic empowerment of indigenous craft persons in the region. So, in 2009, she formed a self help group to support the artisans and took a five year project under " Baba Ambedkar Hast Shilpa Yojna", Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, to train women. Thus Aavaran was first established in Udaipur, Rajasthan, by the Centre of the Study of Values (COS-V), a leading NGO, for the development of rural communities of southern Rajasthan, focusing on women and child development.

Aavaran began its journey by participating in several exhibitions across the country with a limited collection of apparel and home furnishings. The response was tremendous and hugely encouraging to expand both the business and offering of the label. Soon Aavaran began to offer select women's wear collections to leading stores including Amethyst in Chennai, Options in Ahmedabad, Organ in Delhi and Hyderabad, Melange in Mumbai, Ensemble in Delhi and Azaa in Mumbai. The label continues to participate in exhibitions and showcases across India to enhance the visibility of the Dabu Craft. Now a selection of Aavaran garments and accessories are also available internationally in stores in New York, USA, Korea and Japan. Aavaran has three outlets- Udaipur and Jaipur in Rajasthan and in Bengaluru, Karnataka.

Earlier the artisans in Akola only made Phentiya (traditional hand block printed skirt) and only two inits practiced block printing and sold products, while other local artisans made products for their own use. Today, Aavaran employs more than 100 people in its design and production departments as well as exclusively supports more than 100 people in its design run training centres in the villages of Debari, Matin, Kanpur and Zawar in Rajasthan. Here, women are provided training by Aavaran in machine stitching and handwork like basic embroidery, button making, paper craft and currie making. This offers a unique platform for interaction and learning between designers and craft people, building a closely knit community with a well connected network, which acts as a rich source of varied craft skills. Inspired by current fashion, the label also contemporaines traditional motifs. Aavaran is not just a business for Alka, it is a means of "providing livelihood for the rural artisans as well as reviving the technique of dabs and collaborating with design experts to make it relevant and popular."



Products

Aavaran's extensive product range offers a wide selection of women's wear of sarees (in mulberry silk, kota doria, kota silk, tussar silk and cotton), stylish kurtas, trendy shirts, tops, stoles, duppattas, pyjamas and skirts. A menswear line includes shirts and kurtas. The children's range has shirts, dresses, tunics and kurtas and a home furnishings selection comprising of bed linen, durries, tableware, cushion covers, quilts, kitchen accessories and aprons.



Innovation

Aavaran has used a variety of designs within the range of indigo dye fabrics, which vary in scale and intricacy to create a series of different collections derived mostly from Indian crafts. Aavaran takes pride in its specialisation of indigo dyeing (Process IP Patentable), as well as other natural dyes to wider colour options to customers. Intending to carry forward the tradition of indigo dyeing as practiced in Akola (70 kms from Udaipur) Aavaran has retained the quality of indigo as well as improved it, by focusing on the rubbing fasteners of the indigo dye and experimenting to achieve multiple tonal indigo qualities. The majority of natural dyes are organic from plants, roots, berries, bark, leaves and wood. Aavaran has also worked on Ayurveda, based on the 5000 year old philosophy of Ayurvedic medicines, health and healing found in ancient Vedic texts. 'Ayur' in Sanskrit for health, 'veda' means wisdom, and 'vastra' is cloth or clothing. Ayurveda clothing is made from organic cotton fabric treated with a precise combination of herbs and oil to promote health and help cure ailments. Based on the principles of restoring balance and stability within the body and strengthening the immune system, the clothing is worn to treat a broad range of physical conditions. Manjisthavastram, Haldivastram, and Neelvastram are the specific collections in this category. Healing properties aside, Ayurveda cloth is attractive simply for its organic and sustainable features, it is completely free of synthetic chemicals and toxic irritants.



Funding

While in the beginning, Aavaran got funded by the Ministry of Textiles, it has since been managing on its own.



One Big Learning at Startup Oasis

Alka feels it was a whole new learning right from "being more structured, to understanding the importance of B2C, to the importance of online presence as well as understanding how to make pitches for funds." It was a great learning, "meeting a whole new set of people who are sailing in the same boat."



Awards so far

Manufacturing Award for Micro Enterprises from Udaipur Chamber of Commerce and Industries.



Sales Channels

Aavaran has 3 stores, one each in Udaipur, Jaipur and Bengaluru. They also participate in various exhibitions in domestic and international markets and have dispatched consignments to various stores like Kilol, amethyst, fabindia and Seasons. Aavaran also exports to Japan, USA, Turkey, Australia, Korea.



Bringing
Material Innovation
in the Crafts



Protecting *the* Innovation in Craft

Organization: Cultural Intellectual Property Rights Initiative
Author: Monica Moisin, Founder

The business of craft is inherently different from the classic business theory based on simple input-output schemes and fast return on investment. It is far more complex, with deep ramifications into the socio-cultural context, inevitably shaping cultural identity and creating social impact.

The stakeholders involved in the craft space are no longer just profit-orientated entrepreneurs but cultural entrepreneurs - an identification that implies broad responsibilities, the capacity to act for the benefit of the many and long-term visionary mindset.

Thomas H. Aageson defines cultural entrepreneurs as "Risk-takers, Change-makers and Visionaries who organize cultural, financial, social and human capital to generate revenue from a cultural activity. Their innovative solutions result in economically sustainable enterprises that enhance livelihoods and create cultural value and wealth for both creative producers and consumers of cultural services and products." As a member of The Craft Catapult cohort, this is the category you want to be part of.

Crafts are part of the intangible cultural heritage of a cultural group, a community, a tribe or a nation. In the language of the World Intellectual Property Rights Organisation (WIPO) they are known as traditional cultural expressions and are



Cultural sustainability is based on the principle that the current generation can use and adapt cultural heritage only to the extent that future generations will not be harmed in their capacity of understanding and living the multiple meanings and values of this heritage.

part of a living body of knowledge referred to as traditional knowledge. Traditional knowledge is developed, sustained and passed on from generation to generation within a community, often forming part of its cultural or spiritual identity and as a living body of knowledge, it is susceptible to craft innovation and sustainable development. This awareness is essential in understanding the relationship between craft as intangible cultural heritage and craft as a means of generating revenue. In building business models for the craft economy in India it is essential to look at what has sustained craft communities for centuries in this country.



There is no need for replicating models of the West when sustainable development models are part of Indian traditional knowledge.

The concept that governs these models is cultural sustainability. Cultural sustainability is based on the principle that the current generation can use and adapt cultural heritage only to the extent that future generations will not be harmed in their capacity of understanding and living the multiple meanings and values of this heritage.

At The Cultural Intellectual Property Rights initiative, we are pioneering the development of culturally sustainable business models based on benefit-sharing schemes for cultural entrepreneurs engaging in collaborations with craft communities and strongly believing in India's unique opportunity to position itself globally as a cultural sustainability front-runner.

Cultural Sustainability is engrained in the Indian social context and cultural DNA. ■



Working Capital for *the Crafts*

Organization: Givfunds Social Ventures

Author: Irwan Malhotra, Co-Founder

Working Capital is the lifeblood of any business. It is basically the funds that you need in order to run your business on a day to day basis. It also denotes all receivables/assets which would convert into cash within a year, net of all liabilities/payables which are to be settled in the same period. For any startup, to manage its working capital, is one of the key struggles. Many start-ups are growing as the leadership team as they understand the importance of working capital in business strategy.

Often, start-ups are focused on creating new products and customer experiences without appropriate financial or discipline and run out of cash quite close to demonstrating product/market fit. According to a recent study, over 94% of new businesses fail during the first year of operation. Lack of working funding turns out to be one of the common reasons.

One of the start-ups in our portfolio is KhaDigi, which we got introduced to by Startup Oasis. It not only provides dignified regular employment to artisans mainly spinners and weaver, it has at the same time revived the age old tradition and art with a contemporary twist to the fabrics, bringing sustainability and go-green innovation ideas. KhaDigi has developed 150+ new khadi and handloom fabrics using organic cotton, bamboo yarn, soybean fibre yarn and mulberry silk yarn. KhaDigi is also running a pilot with solar powered charkhas (Spinning wheel for weaving Khadi). Today, KhaDigi works with 500+ weavers, about 100

artisans involved in different processes, and produces about 20,000 metres of fabric a month and sells them to designers, retailers, exporters etc. While discussing the working cycle with Umang, the founder of KhaDigi mentioned that at the early stages they had no CC lever and the whole operating model was working capital intensive.

Short term working capital funds helped KhaDigi in cash flow management, increased the sales and helped them gain financial discipline. Today, there are several incubation centres that have funds and they want to invest in people, ideas, product development. To get an investment from there one has to submit a big business plan, CA proof, financials etc. However, funds are really fast in processing, they give short term funds to organizations that otherwise would not have access to working capital funds because interest rates are so high and they don't have the kinds of margins. Short term funds at times becomes very helpful for small start-ups, for example, if someone can actually buy raw material in bulk or take a discount from the suppliers with upfront cash payment for INR 3-5 lacs, and start repaying INR 40/50k each month, it can in turn increase their sales and impact more people. It's like a low cost fast mode fund, one can do investment, and then start earning and repaying. Money is the bloodline of any business. When would you require funding depends largely on the nature and type of the business. ■



STARTUP

P-Tal

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P-Tal

**About**

P-Tal sells handcrafted brass copper and bell metal products, which are scientifically proven to be healthy and are made by the UNESCO listed Thathera community of Jandiala Guru, Punjab.

**Vision**

To create a technology enabled marketing platform for Thatheras all across India, and to be synonymous with the word brass, copper and bell metal.

**Story**

As an entrepreneur, when Kirti Goel, Founder, P-Tal, started she was not thinking of converting it into a full time business. She comes from a design background and initially collaborated with Enactus at Sri Ram College of Commerce (SRCC). Enactus, as stated on their website, brings “together a diverse network of university students, academic professionals and industry leaders around the shared mission of creating a better and more sustainable world.” Designers, believes Kirti, can create, “but to get the hang of numbers and sales comes only with some experience.” They started with a beneficiary problem and saw an unfulfilled gap in the market. There are 1200 Thatheras across India, with very little work. The Thatheras are a community in India that make metal household utensils. In 2014, the craft of the Thathera community of Jandiala Guru was included in UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, the only craft to get such status.

“Nobody in the market is trying to fill in this gap focusing on the craft”, says Kirti. P-Tal is working to fill that gap. Copper, she states “not only kills harmful bacteria in water but adds nutrients necessary for your body and helps in proper absorption of it. It improves your skin and premature aging of the human body too”. Equally passionate about Brass, she says, it “preserves 95% micro nutrients, utensils made up of brass were used for cooking ages ago, why not continue the Indian authentic way of improving your health”

**Products**

Their main products are Copper Water Dispenser, Chapati Box and Masala Daani.

**Innovation**

Application of Electrophoretic Lacquering, which is a bit expensive but well-researched technology containing an anti-tarnish additive to keep metals bright, clean and durable.

**Funding**

Grant from the Government of Punjab. Bootstrapped as well.

**One Big Learning at Startup Oasis**

We “learnt the importance of backing all the data with research, learned about the importance of planning and got a lot of clarity on working towards the future”, says Kirti Goel, Founder, P-Tal.

**Awards so far**

Letter of appreciation from UNESCO for the work undertaken “with the Thatera community of Jandiala Guru, Amritsar, in reviving their handicraft practice” and SKOCH Governance Award 2019.





STARTUP

KhaDigi

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About

KhaDigi is an Innovative Handloom/khadi textile company making sustainable fabrics working with hand spinners and handloom weavers across 10 clusters in 5 states. They “only make sustainable fabrics by using natural or plant-based fibre yarns such as cotton, bamboo, soy-bean waste”, says Umang Sridhar, Founder KhaDigi. They work with “500+artisans out of which 70% are women. We sell these fabrics to retailers and designers directly.”



Vision

In 2017, KhaDigi was officially launched with a thought in mind - An initiative that not only empowered artisans to make tangible returns from their skills, but also create a product that is market friendly as well as eco-friendly.

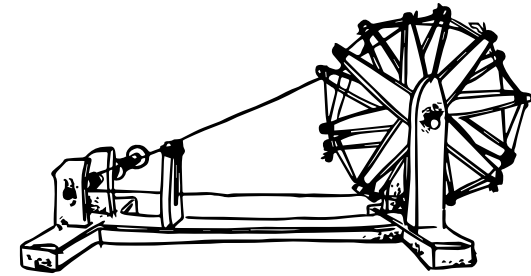


Story

Growing up in a small village of Bundelkhand region of Central India, Umang saw the problem of migration first hand. But, completing her higher education in a big city, just brought this problem head-on. She was “angry seeing skill being wasted, and families barely surviving, all because there was no value for their art. All because there has been a process lying at the heart of fabrics, that made the fabrics cheaper, but also made the artisans poor.” So she founded KhaDigi, a start-up working with traditional skilled hand spinners and handloom weavers across 10 clusters of 5 states in India and making textiles which are 100% sustainable ensuring skilled-based employment opportunity, fair trade and 100% use of natural and regenerated fibres like organic cotton, bamboo and soybean waste.

While she was studying at the National Institute of Fashion Technology, she started exploring the true challenges in the sector - interacting with artisans, their families and other stakeholders first hand. With research and ideation spanning across 2 years, she felt that she “understood the need to create an ethical system that connected artisans directly to the market and providing sustainable products in a domain where unsustainability had been the norm.”





Products

KhaDigi deals in a variety of fabrics and off-loom products such as Khadi, bamboo cotton, bhanderi, home furnishings, sarees, drapes, Khadi tee-shirts and bags.



Innovation

KhaDigi developed 150+ new fabrics by using and creating new blends on handloom and Khadi. Products like bamboo Khadi, bamboo cotton, soya silk and mulberry blend with cotton. They also upgraded the existing traditional looms to four shaft looms and started making high quality self-textured fabrics.

Their approach has been towards strengthening the backend i.e. up-skilling the artisans and upgrading their tools and machinery. They also work on smoothening of logistics at the cluster level. On the front end, we have collaborated with all aggregators who sell fabrics to designers and retailers or direct to customers.



Funding

Funding from Startup Oasis, Aartech Solonics Pvt. Ltd. and Givfunds.



One Big Learning at Startup Oasis

Umang had a range of learnings at Startup Oasis. She says that she understood “financial management, market oriented product development, customer segmentation and also to focus on our strengths.”



Awards so far

Forbes 30 under 30 Asia 2019 (Social Entrepreneur)
Recognised by TDB as 15 women commercializing their technology.



Sales Channels

B2B fabric sale to retailers and designers.



STARTUP

Cotton Rack

FOUNDING TEAM

Rameshwari Kaul and Vinayak Sharma

WEBSITE

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CONTACT EMAIL

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About

A sustainable and responsible alternative to fast fashion



Vision

Cotton Rack was created with a vision to create a minimalistic brand that is both humane and environmentally friendly. Made with handspun and handwoven design, each product is created with classic designs that resonate with both the Indian and International audience.

Rameshwari Kaul, Co-Founder, Cotton Rack, states that “the current global apparel market is worth \$1.34 trillion a year (Euromonitor) in retail sales and has reported a 47% increase in shoppers looking for sustainable clothing. Khadi alone saw a sale of \$462 million in 2018-2019 in India. The current low carbon footprint fabric market worldwide is \$73 billion. Fashion industry which is the second most polluting industry after oil has caught global attention making the consumer lookout for sustainable and ethical fashion.”



Story

Cotton Rack is the brainchild of two people who come from different backgrounds in design but share the passion to create a cherish-able product. Rameshwari Kaul and Vinayak Sharma. Vinayak earlier worked for a menswear brand and realized that there was a market gap of minimal and sharp clothing for women in natural fabrics and Rameshwari who had been working in the handicraft sector wanted to go back to roots and work directly with artisans. The realized dream of these two is – Cotton Rack.

The team had been analyzing the market gap for minimal clothing in handcrafted fabrics that could cater to both Indian and International audiences and this became, what they say is the “core of Cotton Rack.” While following minimal design aesthetics was easy, it wasn't easy to source genuine handspun and handwoven fabric. It took us two years to identify the clusters and 4 years to eventually “start one of our own in Jammu & Kashmir.”

Today they directly work with up to 25 artisans for spinning and weaving and hope to keep the list growing because each cluster produces an indigenous textile that has different properties and hence it becomes “easy for us to explore a variety within the realm of handcrafted textiles.”

The idea behind Cotton Rack is simple. It is to make good designs in the most responsible way.



Products

Cotton Rack currently focuses on womenswear clothing and has recently added night wear and men's shirts to their product list.



Innovation

The USP of Cotton Rack lies in creating contemporary apparel for a global audience in sustainable handspun textiles:

- * Cashmere Cotton, is their specialty fabric woven in Jammu & Kashmir, which is a 100% cotton-based fabric with aesthetics of pashmina wool, making it ideal for wearing across seasons.
- * 100% ethical and fair wage brand
- * 98% Biodegradable
- * 45% of products with almost zero carbon footprint
- * Zero to landfill (our waste is further upcycled into products)



Funding

Funding from Startup Oasis.



One Big Learning at Startup Oasis

Coming together with other start-ups at Startup Oasis reinforced “our belief that collaboration is the way forward.”



Sales Channels

Cotton Rack follows a B2C approach in selling and the products are sold both online and offline. In online space, the products are sold through its own website, www.cottonrack.com and through their page on www.etsy.com. In offline space, the products are sold through stores in Jaipur and Chennai as well as through B2C events held in major metropolitan cities.





STARTUP

Khanak Design Studio

(now Mudita & Radhesh Pvt. Ltd.)

FOUNDING TEAM

Mudita Srivatava and Radhesh Aghari

SOCIAL

[@muditaandradheshpvt.ltd](#)
[f /pages/Khanak/1507523016146837](#)
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About

Fabric made of Chicken Feather



Vision

In India, 75% people eat chicken as food. In 1 kg of chicken, you will get 650gm chicken meat and 350gm garbage. Now what is in this garbage, so this has inner cells, skin and feathers. This garbage is thrown in the gutter, water bodies, and landfills or in an open land by the butchers who cause water pollution, air pollution, flue and other health hazards. Khanak wants to make a sustainable industry for the weaver, artisans and for the country by up cycling it.



Story

During their college days, Radhesh, the Co-Founder of Khanak, got a classroom project in which he was asked to 'convert a waste into a utility product'. He came and told Mudita about this and they started discussing it further. Mudita adds, "both of us were passionate about doing something different, unique and out of the box and here was an opportunity to challenge ourselves."

Radhesh is a Chicken lover, "he can eat chicken 24-7." One evening, he went to a butchery shop to buy chicken and asked the butcher to give 1 kg of Chicken. He noticed that the chicken was of 1 kg but the meat was only 650 gm. Then he thought that "I am paying for 1 kg and getting only 650 grams then what about 350 gms". He asked the butcher this question. The butcher replied it is all waste.

After a minute Radhesh saw the waste and asked the butcher "what do you do with this waste". He replied, saying "we throw it into the gutter". Radhesh kept on thinking about the garbage. Next morning he told Mudita the story and said: "I can do my project research on this waste". He went to his class and shared his idea with his faculty and batchmates but everyone started laughing at him and making fun of him. He told Mudita about what happened in the class. And that is when both of them decided to take up this project as a challenge. They went to the library and started their research. In 2 weeks, they made a paintbrush and Radhesh submitted that brush as part of his research and once again people made fun and the faculty gave just passing marks and bad feedback.

But they were happy with what they did, ignored everyone and continued their research. In 2014 at their final Project and last jury, Radhesh presented this research to the jury. Till that date they had processed the garbage and converted it into a fiber. Radhesh told the jury that he was nervous but started telling them about his research. Mudita "was standing outside his jury room and watching his jury as he was busy telling about his research and jury members were just listening to him. After 1 hour 25 minutes he finished telling about his research, ended his jury presentation and said thank you to everyone. It was then that the jury member Mr. Chandra Shekhra Bheda said "Done", and he replied, "Yes Sir". Mr. Bheda stood up and gave a salute to Radhesh and told Radhesh that this was his first jury in which he couldn't ask any question because he never thought about this innovation. "That was a proud moment for us and then we started celebrating our success," says Mudita. It was then "that came into our lives, the God of weaving Mr. Kurma Rao. He said your research is not yet complete, don't



celebrate half success, “who will make yarn from this fiber”. It was then that they started their research again and made yarn. In 2015, “we set the yarn on the handloom and named it Chicken on the loom and converted the yarn into fabric.”



Products

Upcycled feather woollen product such as shawls, stoles, mufflers, jackets and quilts.



Innovation

We developed 6th natural woollen fiber by upcycling Chicken butchery waste. The fiber is 10 times warmer, softer and durable than other existing natural and manmade fiber. We also have sensitized 26 natural processes. We have a patent for the same as well.



Patent

A Method of Making Feather Wool and Fertilizer by recycling from Chicken Butchery Waste



Funding

Funding from Startup Oasis.



One Big Learning at Startup Oasis

One of the most important learnings for Khanak has been that “there are lots of natural resources available in the world, which we can use or upcycle, away from synthetics, which can cause environmental damage.”



Awards so far

- * 9th CII Design Excellence Award For Design For Social Impact And Sustainability
- * 9th CII Design Excellence Award For Over All Category Of Industrial Design
- * 10th Aegis Graham Bell Award For Innovation In Clean Tech





STARTUP

Iro Iro

FOUNDING TEAM
Bhaavya Goenka

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About

Upcycling textile waste to create sustainable designer fabrics whilst leveraging the artisans unique strengths.



Story

For Bhaavya, Founder, Iro Iro, “it started with a question that why was it that something as personal and as celebrated as clothing had to be so polluting and so tragically cruel to its creators?” Exposed to the insides of the textiles industry since childhood, she started working on a project in systems design module in the 3rd year of design school at Indian Institute of Crafts and Design, Jaipur, focused on the “system of family apparel manufacturing units.”

Research showed “how big a problem textile waste is. Zero waste is intrinsically Indian and it became imperative for me to communicate that. I then formulated a business around this idea at IIM-A where Iro Iro won the best project award.”

Whilst undertaking further research, Bhaavya came across the following key problem areas:

1. At the apparel manufacturing unit: They were producing waste and dealt with it at the end by either sending it to the landfills or the kagzi community to down cycle it into paper which causes a lot of fuel emissions. It “needed a system intervention.”
2. At the weaver level, the weavers she worked with were given handlooms at 12 rupees a loom post-independence. They had always been weaving Khadi, therefore, could develop their skills and pass them on but the craft could never develop a character of its own. With the onset of 2008, they had not been receiving enough work, therefore, had to move to alternative jobs. However, weaving remained something that they could do from their homes without having to move to metro cities where their quality of life vastly depleted.

Iro Iro grew from 3 weavers in 2017 to a family of 18 weavers by the end of 2019. Many of them are women who were not allowed to work outside of their homes but now decided to learn to weave and earn an independent income. When “we had started out the weavers didn’t even have bill books now they have a company of their own and a society recognized by the government. More such weavers in nearby villages have contacted us who we are trying to induct in our ongoing work. So far we have upcycled 5000 kg of waste, generated work for 20 artisans”.



Innovation

Upcycle: Iro Iro did a few things to innovate. “We saw rug weaving through a lens of quality and creativity which builds a unique value proposition for the weavers to sustain and evolve their craft practices. We then designed zero waste collection for existing and new clients using their and/or our waste which gives them a unique story to tell their customers and appear green.”, says Bhaavya.



Sales Channels

B2B engagements, Growing on B2B2C presence. Iro Iro had the opportunity to collaborate with many kinds of businesses. “We are up-cycling waste that comes from a luxury heritage hotel in India into bespoke bed linens and curtains in a way that each room has its own character.”

Design houses from Singapore and Japan who have their manufacturing in India have sent us their waste to develop a capsule collection of outerwear for them. After one batch was successfully upcycled and made into zero waste jackets and accessories Iro Iro is now working on an arrangement in which the clients can send them their waste regularly and they can come up with ways to upcycle it according to the market they are catering. They collaborated with a kids’ brand based in San Francisco and created upcycled products for them so that they could introduce upcycling to children. These products were sold in a pop-up in San Francisco. “We also collaborated with a Jaipur based design house to develop a hand-woven zero waste collection, the designer there is 20 years my senior so I get to learn a lot from this regular collaboration”, says Bhaavya.

All of these activities not only allowed Iro Iro to upcycle all the offcuts produced in our factory but also re-use textile waste from different stages and sources that other conscious businesses were producing. This way they also got to appear green and have a unique story to tell to their existing client base.



What are we looking for

Collaborations and B2C presence: Iro Iro wants to collaborate with organizations and people both nationally and internationally who share our personal and business values. They also want to reach our customers directly through their e-commerce platform.



Roadmap

They are in the process of forming a design and marketing team. They have already been selling to customers directly in Japan through stores and have a brand agent there. They plan to participate in an International trade fair. They have also applied for fair trade certification and shall be getting it soon. Bhaavya wants “to reach our customers directly through online and brick mortar stores. Therefore we are planning to have our own e-commerce platform and a unique traveling physical experience of our products that we can take to our target customers at various places.”





STARTUP

Sutrikaar Creations

FOUNDING TEAM
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About

The string of traditions woven together to form the fabric of legacy is SUTRAKAAR



Vision

Our vision is to become a pioneer at transformative textiles - a step towards a sustainable future!!!



Story

The label was started by Neerja Palisetty. This Studio has been a long term dream for Neerja in becoming a reality and "I thank GOD in helping me realize it." Her journey in this life began by being born in a family of weavers from Ponduru, a village in Andhra Pradesh. Ponduru is well known for the finest handspun and hand woven cotton Khadi fabrics. The strong family roots with a legacy and tradition of 400 years of weaving played a "vital role in shaping me into the person I am today."

From the time she graduated "I had this dream to set up my own weaving studio." However, life had different plans for her and her dreams took a back seat. She pursued various jobs in the fashion industry and academics. Simultaneously, with "my father's guidance I had been doing research on Sustainable Design and Sustainable Textiles." She presented research papers in various international conferences regarding the same. "Finally, the experience in these fields gave me enough confidence to pursue my dream".

Sutrikaar Creations was set up in Jaipur, almost 3 years ago, to encourage experimental handloom weaving. Sutrikaar handcrafts eco-textile creations with waste paper and natural materials. The idea is to juxtapose crafts with post-consumer waste such that they can promote fair trade, craft empowerment, zero-waste and ethical fashion. Today paper waste contributes to being one of the third largest pollutants on Earth and "our aim is to use as much of this waste and transform them into beautiful products."

Neerja believes that "in the segment of fashion Accessories, there is a huge gap of availability of alternative solutions, (sustainable, green, eco-friendly), with upcycled/ recycled materials having unique designs which are trendy and chic." They try to follow the 4 R's in their designs: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Respect. Given below are some of the SDGs that they aim to achieve:

- Responsible Consumption and Production
- Sustainable Cities and Communities
- Gender Equality
- Decent Work and Economic Growth
- Climate Action





Products

Their main products are women's fashion accessories – totes, clutches, zip pouches and sling bags. They also make products for home décor, interiors, stationery and corporate gifts.



Innovation

Their innovation is hand spinning and weaving of waste newspaper and waste handmade paper.



Funding

Bootstrapped



One Big Learning at Startup Oasis

Neerja has learnt a lot of things, but the most important one is to “focus on market fit and viability of my creations”.



Awards so far

Neerja has been awarded the Superwoman of the Year- 2018, by ABP news



Sales Channels

Exhibitions, retails outlets and customization.



STARTUP

Shefcoz

FOUNDING TEAM

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About

To become a pioneer in developing Indigenous Nettle Textiles through Craft



Story

After a short stint in the corporate world, Shefali Tambi co-founded a VC funded mass e-commerce company. She then realised her calling of being a Social Entrepreneur in the field of Craft and Co-Founded Shefcoz. Through Shefcoz, she wants to solve the problems of “overdependence of handloom textiles on cotton and silk, contemporary design sensibilities and lack of market connections.” Her biggest challenges have been getting “wholesome credible business solutions to craft, striving for bigger social impact and to develop an ecosystem for artisans for responsible textile practices”.



Products

Saris, stationery and souvenirs



Innovation

- * Shefcoz is wanting to solve the issues of Chanderi being too stiff, sheer and fabric slippage. Hence, they changed the yarn from cotton to Soya. Soya Yarn is made from soya bean plant waste which is converted to natural yarn through a viscose process. It has better tensile strength, better dye capability, isothermal property and the fall of the sari is better.
- * They have helped in reviving old techniques. Handloom “has limited techniques,” says Shefali. Hence with every technique, they started working on technicals of the loom to have an infinite number of looks from each technique. This has given a “very distinctive and new vocabulary to our chanderis.”
- * They are working on developing Nettle Yarn which grows as a weed in the upper areas of Himalayas. Nettle, being a fast fiber and hand spun by the locals, is not commercially viable at the moment. However, they have achieved considerable success in making the yarn fine with the blend of organic cotton.



Funding

Bootstrapped



One Big Learning at Startup Oasis

“Focus on One Category,” says Shefali.







Business Model
Innovations

Crafts Entrepreneurship: A BPM Approach

Author: Arun Grover, Independent Consultant

The Craft Sector, as an evolved form of the Handicraft sector, is recognized as a major industry in India with annual value add estimated somewhere between Rs. 12,500 crores and Rs. 25,000 crores for FY 2019-20 depending on the reference source. A textbook definition of the Handicrafts sector refers to it as the processing of materials by hand and with hand tools. The materials utilized for creation of the craft products were historically natural but over a period in the last few decades, have expanded to include industrially processed and sometimes recycled material as well. The nature of the industry however remains largely traditional with limited modern influence.

The intricate technical skills required for crafts production, have helped in no small measure to preserve the diverse cultural heritage of our country in terms of ideas, forms, materials and work ways. These very localized skills have been handed down from generation to generation through a master-apprentice structure, operating as a labor intensive production process, mostly localized to a small area, usually a cluster of villages.

The manual processes in handicraft production however, have not been immune to the aggressive adoption of automation across all aspects of our modern lives. Hence these processes have also incrementally evolved, where (semi) automated production



While this love of a perfectly crafted end product gives immense satisfaction to the connoisseur, it unfortunately doesn't feed the stomach nor does it agree with the principles of sound business.

processes have replaced either partially or wholly the manual processing, mostly consciously and sometimes contrary to better judgment, surreptitiously as well.

This partial automation without a holistic business process management mindset has led to a lop-sided industry structure wherein the industrially processed 'fakes' are sometimes being passed off as traditional handicrafts while the middle men still thrive at the expense of the artisans. The artisans, as always are stuck in poverty in a low value add production cycle with their traditional skills being eroded with each passing day. While a comprehensive analysis of the end to end value chain of the handicraft sector is beyond the scope of this article, this is an

attempt to highlight a few systemic points which if adopted by the Crafts entrepreneurs could result in quick wins for them.

Beyond the Creative and the emotional stirrings

In my experience of working with small size (with annual revenues of less than 30 Lakhs) Craft enterprises, it was quite apparent to me that the first and foremost reason that the entrepreneur chose this specific area of business was his / her love of the craft, the aesthetic, the skills and the personal satisfaction derived out of being associated with that perfect end product.

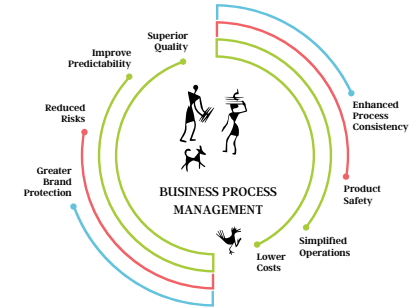
While this love of a perfectly crafted end product gives immense satisfaction to the connoisseur, it unfortunately doesn't feed the stomach nor does it agree with the principles of sound business. A dissociation from basic economics and basic process management has rendered many an enterprise launched with sustainable goals & fair trade in mind, to flounder and adversely impact all participants in the value chain.

Adopting the BPM (Business Process Management) Approach

A textbook definition of BPM describes it as a collection of methods to discover, model, analyze, measure, improve, optimize, and automate business processes. The processes can be easily put into a grid as a combination of four different parameters viz. Structured, Unstructured, Repeatable and Variable.

These processes operate under the overarching guidelines of gateways, conditions and business rules. Such processes when put into a visual diagram, gives the entrepreneur an end to end view of the business highlighting inputs, outputs, handoffs, decision points and risks.

In the context of a small Crafts enterprise, a simplistic visual understanding of the end to



end value chain in terms of SIPOC (Supplier, Input, Processing, Output and Customer) would be a good starting point to first understand the linkages and then improve the processes. A template is provided below for reference.

Plan B for Production

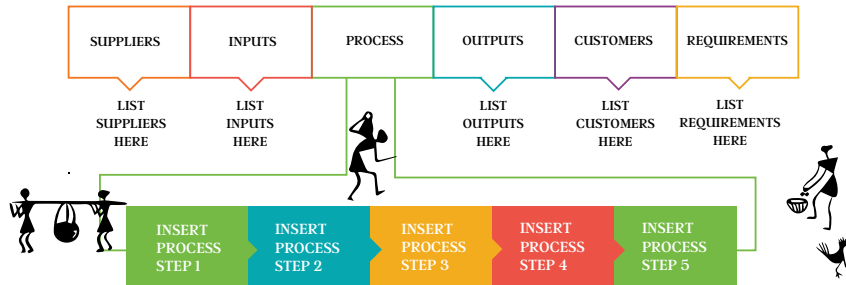
Most small craft enterprises suffer at the hands of mercurial craftsmen and workers further aggravated by unprofessional raw material suppliers each contributing to inconsistent output. This results in the entrepreneur losing credibility in front of the customers in terms of quality, quantity and delivery timeline issues. Hence it is always advisable to have an alternate / back-up plan for each stage of production.

Forecasting through the Seasonal Rhythm - Escaping the exhibition mindset

The niche finished wear market which constitutes a large proportion of the handicraft market operates in a seasonal cycle with clear timelines. It is thus best for the small entrepreneur to follow the forecasting benefit offered by such an established rhythm to get their collection in place in time through timely design inputs, sampling, market testing, production and launch.



SIPOC DIAGRAM -- INSERT PROCESS TITLE HERE



Forecasting through the Seasonal Rhythm - Escaping the exhibition mindset

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Quite a few of the small entrepreneurs that I have interacted with are caught up in a hand to mouth existence by selling through exhibitions across India. Over a period of time these exhibitions have substantially increased their participation fees and raised entry requirements while being subject to the vagaries of an inconsistent economy. It is thus advisable to think beyond this punishing schedule and work with the rhythm of the industry while using exhibitions as a Plan B.

The Portfolio Approach and the thumb rule of Craft Economics

An easy trick to ensure sustainable revenues is to think in terms of collections which



A dissociation from basic economics and basic process management has rendered many an enterprise launched with sustainable goals & fair trade in mind, to flounder and adversely impact all participants in the value chain.



Photo Credit: Fabriclore

correspond to diversified portfolios in finance that ensure expected returns at reduced risk. Having the right mix of fast moving, slow moving, mass-market and premium products distributed through a mix of channels (both offline and online) ensures minimum revenues with possibility of capturing the upswing in demand and profitability.

An additional aspect is for the entrepreneur to be clear about product / collection pricing, which is usually expressed as a thumb rule in terms of multiples of direct cost (COGS in accounting). This rule of thumb ensures profitability even for those who are not numerically inclined.

In Summary

It is thus advisable for the entrepreneur to think beyond the individual emotional connect and also not to reinvent the wheel. The use of established process oriented thinking (Business Process Management), having a Plan B for managing production, following the seasonal rhythm and deploying thumb rules for product pricing within the right collection mix, would result in quick wins for the crafts entrepreneur. ■

Marketing is Key to Success!

Organization: Concern India Foundation

Author: Nidhi Basin, Dy CEO

Marketing small businesses is a unique challenge. A crucial feature of any successful business is a smart marketing plan. Whether the goods are sold through a physical store or craft bazaars or virtual stores – the first thing to do is to identify your customers and make sure they know about you. Simply put, the idea of marketing is to connect your business value to your desired customer base. Next on, plan out how to reach out to the customers. Social media networks like Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest are excellent ways of marketing, without spending much money. Importantly, most people are familiar with these platforms.

Creating the content for social media or content marketing requires not just a flair for words but a studied method. It entails the process of creating meaningful content, expressed in crisp, relatable language which the end-user will be drawn to. Quality of the products(s), durability and cutting-edge value adds will surely arouse the curiosity and attention of a discerning readership. Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) must also be creative and continuous. This B2P (Business to People) marketing model necessitates continuous upgradation in a reader-friendly mode.

Social media is undoubtedly an important tool of communication and is widely employed by many for gaining a clientele. However, mediocre content, without a sharp focus on the aspirations of the market segment being catered to, can be a wasted effort. For example, Instagram users who

follow fashion influencers are always actively looking to purchase new styles. Ensuring availability of quality fashionwear, sharing images of fashionistas clad in those styles are steps towards which a clothing retailer can build a loyal and consistent direct sales channel.

Much is talked about continuity and sustainability in the field of Indian craft and textiles, and numerous organisations are actively working towards trying to uphold and continue Indian crafts which have survived millennia. While there is no doubt that they are rich treasures, and there is an urgent need to sustain them, along with retaining the high level of the purity of the craft, it is imperative that innovation is able to give a facelift to these crafts to cater to contemporary trends. There is an abundance of the old in our country. The importance of its continuity and availability cannot be denied. But if its sustainability has to grow, it must also come out with new design and new



It is imperative that innovation is able to give a facelift to Indian crafts to cater to contemporary trends.

ideas for its usage, while remaining faithful to the purity of the craft. It is in evolution that our continuity lies. Clothing is a prime example: by using Indian textiles in contemporary designs, designers and manufacturers will attract more buyers.

People should come and want to buy what is being created. Designers have to continuously innovate to offer something new. A case in point are the Baster crafts – the cire perdue or the lost wax technique, while the folk figures and wall hangings still sell, a slow death can be averted by introducing new items with the same techniques. This will help to enhance business and make more money for the artisan in the long run. For example, it was once suggested to craftsmen in Bastar to create a new mould and make side tables for the drawing rooms in the shape of drums and the like for living rooms. That would be a completely new item and yet continue the beautiful craft.

In clothing too, the same would apply to khadi for instance, or say the beautiful art of shibori which went from India to Japan (where aesthetics are probably more global) and back to India via the new trade routes. The new trade routes are fashion magazines. So, when an endeavour is made to allow a craft to evolve, foresight entails not only taking into consideration the technique but what will excite people. A new beginning was made with the re-emergence of shibori by several small design houses, and Shibori clothes suddenly became the rage to the point that bandhani was eclipsed for a while. Fortunately, there have now been fantastic innovations in that field too, reviving it again. But, revival doesn't mean making it more expensive. It means rethinking a craft with national and global perspectives, and not necessarily repeating what has been done for a long time. Take 'M' – a design house we've been following with great interest and a lot of



Creating the content for social media or content marketing requires not just a flair for words but a studied method. It entails the process of creating meaningful content, expressed in crisp, relatable language which the end-user will be drawn to. Quality of the products(s), durability and cutting-edge value adds will surely arouse the curiosity and attention of a discerning readership

admiration off and on, for the beautiful way their design is reflected in their clothing, in the colours they use and the variety of textiles they work with. But after a decade they are floundering for lack of good sales! To remedy this problem, and grow bigger, they will need to market steady lines of stitched clothing with new design palettes each year. There is the need for capital, and earning a steady income, because without money it is not possible to continue a craft, or sustain a design house, or start-up: everything flows with the inflow of money.

Marketing, therefore, in its current avatar, is the key to successful selling! ■



Improvise and Adapt for Growth!

Organization: TIE Global

Author: Mahavir Pratap, Chairman

Exports are Critical

The craft sector in India, is not only varied but is enormous. With multi-talented artisans and craftspeople, with umpteen materials and processes, and the ability to create great design and products by the pool of talent that India has, it makes it tough to compete with or replicate. But despite having such great art, craft and artisans, it does not get the true value and respect that it deserves. Improvisation and adaptation to what the consumer needs is the key to the growth of this sector. Multi-products for different sectors of the society and the world at large is very important. The exports hence become an important component in providing feedback and value to the product and the crafts person.

Go for Last Mile Connectivity

The international market not only needs great designs and products, but also good marketing, sales, packaging and branding. All these and exposure of the product in the right market, at the right price and at the right time is very critical. While there is synergy and alliance between the designer and crafts person, the last mile to get this product rightly placed across the globe is missing and a right alliance or partnership along with the right education is also the need of these start-ups. Hope they will find their way and graduate to being successful exporters as well of the products that they have created.

“

Improvisation and adaptation to what the consumer needs is the key to the growth in the craft sector.

TCC is a Game Changer

On the onset, I would like to congratulate the entire team at Craft Catapult and Start-up Oasis for creating such a great program, with exquisitely chosen start-ups, a pool of varied mentors and above all the right hand holding and environment for them. I feel this program has a great potential to churn out the right kind of start-ups in the craft sector. Here is wishing all of them the very best and also the entire team of Craft Catapult. Keep it up!!!





Age of the Individual - Powered by Technology

Organization: Direct Create

Author: Sheela Lunkad, Founder

Technology, a word that straddles all aspects of human life today can be famously described as the application of knowledge to the practical aims of human life or to changing and manipulating the cultural environment with the use of materials, tools, techniques, and sources of power to make life easier, more pleasant and productive. The 19th century gave the tools of technology to the industrial producer. The 21st century I think belongs to the individuals collaborating! Just look at the billion-dollar start-ups like YouTube, Uber, Airbnb, Fiverr, TaskRabbit, Upwork, Freelancer, all emerging as the centerpiece of the global economy through the power of individualized distributed collaborations. Most skills that are powered by these emerging technology companies have existed forever - like homestays or Taxi service or making personal videos etc. Still, when we apply the power of mobile, internet technology, process design and design thinking to reinvent the "usual", we see a rapid and tremendous transformation, as seen with these flagbearers of collaborative start-ups. The paradigm shift that distributed collaborative technology brings to the crafts space in India is a game-changer for the millions of highly skilled members of the Artisan communities and also the 1.3 billion-strong consumer market.

Emerging Lifestyles

The ongoing changes in climate, healthcare, and depleting natural resources are forcing

us to relook at our patterns of living and consumption. This unsustainable lifestyle created by the last century has birthed from industrial methods of production. The new awareness about our environment is impacting demand patterns amongst the new generation of consumers. The Millennials and Gen Z are questioning the dubious trade-off of choices made by industry in the pursuit of growth without looking at the impact this continuous growth has had on the planet and human health. It has led to a growing and gradual rise in the demand for sustainable and local produce, which is also designed and styled for global standards as well as quality parameters.

The confluence of Demand and Technology

The new collaborative approach to business which is not centralized under a brand name but instead operated on a platform and serviced by "experts" is shaping the future of consumption. These platforms enable tremendous power of choice at the hands of the consumer to select not from hundreds of brands but millions of individual creators and service providers, each individually traceable and approachable. For the Handmade sector, the elements that define it are Designer and the Artisan/Craftsman. If we add a technology platform, the result is start-ups such as Etsy, DirectCreate, Kickstarter and Quirky. Each one is targeting a very different segment and business model.



Still, the underlying idea is to power the individual through organizing technology-led platforms.

Craft in the Age of the Gig Economy

There is an immense value that small scale producers bring to the table and the uniqueness that the inherent character of craft led products bring to the culture at large. The future of consumption is fast looking for alternatives to mass production and the generic merchandise it brings. The booming online retail and consumption sector is rife with small producers, yet most people are unaware that countless more have always existed and created for generations. Bridging the gap between their talents and the market that is hungry for innovation is the absolute need of today. In short with collaboration platforms, the consumers have the choice of

creating as per their own requirement and making it happen with the shared knowledge and creative energy, all deployed through dependable processes and systems.

The question now is do we really need to build a crafted information highway, knowing fully well that it is not only expensive but also a herculean task to bring this unorganized sector of millions into an organized whole. I believe we do!!! Global income disparity is creating a highly differentiated world and its time to pour all our time, energy, money and resources into creating an equitable world that can develop cutting edge products for all to love and experience. It is only when the hand meets the creative mind and the collaborative heart, can this truly be successful! ■



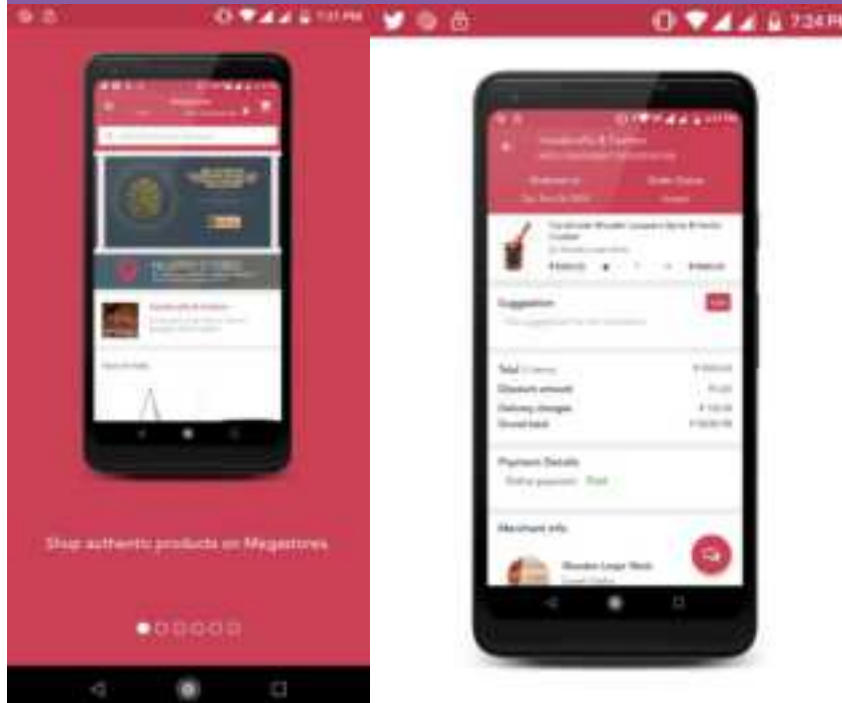
STARTUP

Megastores

FOUNDING TEAM
Kailash Tulsi Gajara

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About

An online marketplace for artisans and organizations to sell their authentic handmade products globally under their own brand name whilst ensuring quality at a fair price for customers.



Vision

To become the world's number one destination for authentic handmade products.



Story

When we think of handicraft or handloom, we think of "rural" or "villages" says Kailash Tulsi Gajara, Founder of Megastore. He is from Kutch. Kutch is the biggest district of India with a 45K sq. km area having diverse culture and traditions. Kailash believes that "in the old days, these traditions could only be very well preserved in the form of art and craft as very few people were literate. This art is not just the handicraft, it is the transmission of feelings that the artist has experienced while making the product. Being from Kutch, we have seen the craft since childhood. It has been part of our lives. And its beauty is mind blowing. Most of the crafts have their own story but are at the verge of extinction unless documented now. When the artisan leaves the craft work, and goes to do some labor job, the entire team working with the master artisan ends up being unemployed," says Kailash. Handloom is the 2nd largest employer in rural India after agriculture with more than 200 million artisans but their avg. monthly income is less than Rs. 5000. In the past 30 years, more than 2 million artisans have quit the craft work. His foray into the sector has made him realize that "that the artisans are mostly old aged and the new generation is unwilling to take the craft forward as they don't find economic growth by working in the craft sector. Also, they don't have basic know-how of business which makes them fully dependent on middlemen and traders to market their products. Artisans cannot start a physical retail store because it's not affordable in the cities where their customer belongs. They are currently only able to market through exhibitions. What happens now is that they don't get decent money for their hard work and they lose their identity. Also, even after the exponential growth of Indian handicraft exports, there is no improvement in artisan's standard of living."

On the other hand, "the customers find it difficult to buy authentic handmade products. Also, customers end up paying a high price, sometimes they are duped by local traders and end up buying machine products in the name of handicraft." While doing their ground work, Kailash and his team realized that these artisans need a hand holding approach to overcome these problems using technology interventions. Thus they started building an ecosystem to "connect and bring all the stakeholders involved in the craft industry using technology. And Megastores.com was born." Currently, the Megastores team size is 25 members with Pankaj Bhanushali and Heema Mav looking after marketing and finance respectively. "We make sure that the artisans are tech enabled enough to market their products digitally. Our team personally visits artisans, makes their stories, documents their craft and at the same time checks the authenticity of the product. We provide complete product cataloging for free which includes product photography, writing product descriptions and specifications. This helps the artisans create their own brand and get the due credit for their art work."

This way every product on Megastores is "directly sold by the artisans with their stories. Customers get the complete know how of not only the product but also the craft and the



artisan too. As the customer is able to shop directly from the artisan, reducing in between sales channels, assures that the product is available at a fair price. Every purchase on Megastores.com ensures preservation of our culture and further nurtures these age old traditional craft forms along with promoting sustainable living." By bringing NGOs, brands along with the government on one single platform "we create an ecosystem solving these problems & ensure fruitful collaborations" Two major challenges that they have faced are :

Servicing the remotest pin codes. To service the remotest pin code we have successfully been able to establish trust points - nearest pickup and drop point easily accessible to both the artisan and the courier partner.

Convincing the artisans to sell online using the technology for marketing their products. To get the artisans comfortable with selling online, we do workshops and provide merchant onboarding service free of cost. We also train the younger generation from the artisans family as they are the most tech savvy.



Products

A marketplace of artisanal products such as bags, jewellery boxes, kurtis and footwear.



Innovation

They "work directly with the artisan on the ground ensuring an authentic buy to a customer at a fair price. In the last 400 days our team has met 350 artisans visited 50+ villages across 4 states, on boarding 250 artisans with 50+ crafts resulting in more than 4500 authentic products available for sale online. NGOs like Shrujan, Khamir, Qasab, Sewa and Kalarakshya have also collaborated with Megastores.com. Service charge on sales is the main source of the revenue which ranges from 8 - 30% as per the type of the merchant. Currently for the artisans, Megastores charges only 8% as commission on sales, while listing and cataloging is free. For government organizations, NGOs and brands we charge up to 20% for the service and also for the cataloging." Also, they do offline exhibitions for artisans which also generates a major chunk of the revenue. For the near future, Megastores is also working on "AR/VR enabled virtual exhibitions for engaging customers and converting sales via experience in-store feature in collaboration."



Funding

Bootstrapped



One Big Learning at Startup Oasis

There are "many great learnings. One big learning is that we understood how to keep business models simple and unit economics should be positive. At the same time, one needs to explore new opportunities constantly and adapt for continued enhanced growth."



Awards so far

- Best Entrepreneur Award at The Big Idea Summit, Mumbai. www.thebigidea.in
- Best Startup with Social Impact for the year 2019 at India Leadership Awards
- Selected Alpha Startup at Web Summit in Portugal for the year 2018
- Selected Startup at the Insprenuer 3.0 by High Commission of India in Singapore



Sales Channels

e-commerce



STARTUP

Indi Collage

FOUNDING TEAM

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About

Indi Collage is a fractional retail platform which assists craft based start-ups and brands to expand into new markets without incurring the overheads of expensive retail.



Vision

The vision is to make Indi Collage the largest network for fractional retail.



Story

Anuradha Singh is the Co-Founder of Indi Collage and Samprada in Delhi. She is a Textile designer by profession and has been actively involved in a large number of fashion exhibitions and multiple stores across India.

She has faced numerous challenges since inception such as “finding the right space in a good location at the right time of the year, managing stock delivery through transporters, local taxes, arranging for display materials, finding the right help, making sure that the POS machine works etc. Most important is the space itself; most halls are too big and expensive, large platform exhibitions are too expensive with low footfalls, at the end of the day we incur losses.” Providing a seamless experience for the exhibitors is key.

Fashion retail (ever since Demonetization, introduction of GST and other market factors sales have been dropping year on year) is going through one of its deepest slowdowns. As many in the industry struggle to stay afloat and cut down overheads Indi Collage provides prime retail space to curated brands for short durations of two or three days at a fractional cost. By fractional retail “we mean sharing the cost of retail space, just as the concept of co working space here we share the retail space and hire the space for 2/3 days instead of opening new stores or spending on high overheads related to interiors of the space, rentals etc.. Indi Collage leverages the existing retail spaces and does short duration pop ups”.

They started from one physical space Indi Collage gallery in Hauz Khas, Delhi. “We have now reworked on our business model and have started listing established retail stores in various cities across the country. We now have our presence in 7 cities”, says Anuradha.



Products

Indi Collage helps lease out spaces with established retail stores to curated designers for short durations for their pop ups.





Innovation

The concept of pop ups is well established abroad. However, no such platform exists in India. Indi Collage is the first to start such a platform to lease out shelf spaces or hanger spaces in established retail stores for short durations at a low cost in a curated manner. Indi Collage is leveraging existing capacities and bringing better value for all stakeholders retailers, designers and customers. Currently, it is working on driving Web Analytics for the online platform to capture customer (probable) preferences and insights and feed this into an AI algorithm, enabling in-store experiences to bridge the gap between virtual and physical sales channels.



Funding

Bootstrapped.



One Big Learning at Startup Oasis

Through the program “we were able to see the scale we could reach and are working to completely change the business model. We are now using technology to change Indi Collage into a platform listing established retail spaces and leveraging the existing capacities.”



Sales Channels

Revenue is generated through rental & commissions.



STARTUP

Perfit 3D

FOUNDING TEAM

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About

Perfit is an e-commerce product cataloging solutions helping sellers to photograph, process and publish product images to their webstore.



Vision

Over 1 million products are published to e-commerce stores daily. "We believe that every product which is ever published online would be digitised using the Perfit system. We believe that Perfit will be the go to solution for e-commerce sellers to list their products to their websites and other marketplaces, says Eobin Alex George, Founder of Perfit 3D.



Story

Perfit started with 3D body scanning for custom garment manufacturing. "We moved into this domain of small 3D scanners to digitise products for e-commerce product listing a year back. We are currently facing difficulty reaching out to our prospective customers since this is a solution slightly ahead of its time. We are getting better enquiries from the west than in India because of the cheaper availability of photographers in India," says Eobin. "Over 1 million products are published to e-commerce stores daily. This is a time consuming, labour intensive and expensive process. Most sellers that we are in touch with are looking for a better solution to digitize products to their webstores."

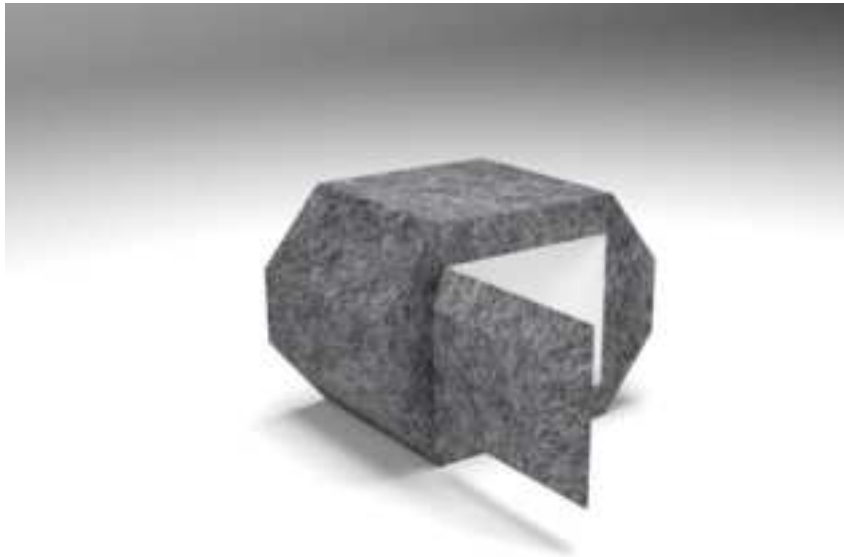
The Perfit solution is a simple light box with an automated arm for either a DSLR camera or a high-end phone to be attached, which can generate data for 3D scanning the product. This data is used to generate professional quality enhanced product photographs. This along with Ai generated tagging information and content are pushed to the seller's webstore or a 3rd party e-commerce platform.



Products

- 3D scanning solutions for digitising objects
- Solutions for publishing product data to an online webstore.





Innovation

Perfit uses a smart hardware and an AI driven cloud solution to digitise, process and publish product listings to multiple web stores and marketplaces. Perfit is the only product to do this in a seamless method with 6 Patents (Indian IP) on hardware and software combined.



Patents

1. User motion tracking performance calculation using pose estimation.
2. Product Digitization System
3. On Demand Apparel Production
4. Augmented Reality Display System
5. Recommendation based on 2D and 3D Body Images



Funding

Funding from Unicorn Ventures.



One Big Learning at Startup Oasis

It is important to "ask necessary simple questions" and have "clarity on the sales process", believes Eobin.



Awards so far

Next Big Idea 2018 by Zone Start-ups
Queensland India Innovator Program Top 2 companies in India.
Kerala Startup Mission Best Product Retail.



Sales Channels

Pre-paid model. Pay per SKU billing.





About

Desi Hangover is working towards the revival of the 20,000+ families involved in the art of shoe making in Kolhapur and Belgaum by developing modern, classy, casual sandals using the age old Kolaphuri craft of footwear making.



Vision

They want to make Desi Hangover a global fashion brand built on the elements of Indian craftsmanship.



Story

Co-Founded by Hitesh Kenjale, his journey with the artisan community was rather an accidental one. He was in his third year engineering and had gone on a cultural exchange program post his fifth semester to Egypt. While he was there for 45 days a lot of his fellow interns in the house, interns that came from all across the globe came to appreciate the local Kolhapuri chappal that he used to wear. This got him and Lakshya (his co-founder) surprised and they started thinking why this ancient craft of India could not reach the global audiences around the world. The Italian craftsmanship was world renowned while “our artisans never got to reach such matured markets that appreciate and value such craftsmanship.” They also realised that there was no Indian fashion brand in the world even though India is known for its designs and varied art forms. They decided that when “we go back to India we will try to study these ecosystems.” Once in India the Co-Founders Lakshya, Abha (then my professor in college) and Hitesh decided to study this.

Back in Jan 2013, he visited the artisan clusters around Kolhapur and got to experience the harsh realities faced by the community. The community was struggling to earn a livelihood and was facing severe social and cultural issues to escape poverty. Several state and central government initiatives had repeatedly failed and the artisans were exploited by the middle-men, leaving the community to survive on hope. On the other hand, they could see a massive pool of talented artisans who just lacked the right ecosystem and were helpless. The traditional model was outdated and was filled with inefficiencies from sourcing of raw material to the overall supply chain. Innovation was the need of the hour. On one of his visits to the cluster, he met a 61-year-old artisan. The artisan poured his heart out to Hitesh asking, “Son, we have been involved in this art for generations and now our products no longer have a market. We do not have farmlands or other sources of income. Please help me understand how we survive?” That was a defining moment for Hitesh and “we decided to help them in whatever way we could alongside my college with a vision to create a sustainable livelihood for the community.” This activity evolved into Desi Hangover. 20,000+ families of rural cobbler communities in the district of Kolhapur and Belgaum are facing the possibility of extinction due to their inability to adapt to the changing times and reach the right market for their craft, pushing several of them to end their lives or migrate to nearby towns and settle for meager jobs. The artisan communities (belonging to the marginalized Dalit and Chambhar castes) are skilled in the art of shoe making and have been involved in the trade for generations. The community is facing severe social issues and cultural barriers to escape poverty since a large section of the population is uneducated, leather workers were treated as Dalits (Untouchables), low social status and they are extremely low on self-confidence. “We are solving the issue by developing a modern ecosystem through infusion of technology, skilling, and providing access to world class resources.” Clients



STARTUP

Desi Hangover

FOUNDING TEAM

Hitesh Kenjale, Abha Agrawal
and Lakshya Arora

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such as FabIndia, Globus, Jade Blue and export contracts from major brands have enabled “us to drive sustainable impact in the communities”, says Hitesh.

Impact

1. Engaged a team of 70+ artisans families across the marginalized communities and enabled them to live a life of dignity.
2. Recognized women as cobblers (50% of our workforce). Women were always seen as a cobbler’s wife despite being a very important part of the process, we ensured they get the recognition and respect they deserve.
3. Achieved a 3X increase in revenue for the artisans. Adopt and run a school for the kids of these artisans in the same village, enabling better opportunities for the generations to come.
4. Enabled Artisans to recognize the value of their craft via fair wages. With 80+ POS (Points of sale) across India, Malaysia, Singapore and US and 50,000 + customers globally, we have been able to drive conscious fashion and empathy as a part of their lifestyle.



Products

Upcycled leather handmade shoes that fall under the umbrella of conscious fashion.



Innovation

They have introduced machinery that has enabled the artisans to comply with global standards and achieve efficiency that enables scale. The machines are held at the Community Production Units (CPUs) which can be accessed by all the artisans (shared resource). The CPUs are proving to be the powerhouse for quality and innovation at the cluster level. To exemplify, a “simple electric lace-cutting machine reduces a 3-day manual work up to 3 hours with the standard output and reduces time by as much as 95%.” They have also introduced Data-driven processes using ERP systems to map efficiency, wastage, and areas of improvement, enabling improvement in production and assuring possible partnerships with credible distribution channels. They have a strong RnD in the process to find and use sustainable raw materials for production - like upcycled leather, recycled TPR soles, upcycled packaging, and tech-based impact tracking mechanism by using the NFC technology, enabling the artisans to be a part of the green fashion revolution.



Funding

Bootstrapped



One Big Learning at Startup Oasis

Startup Oasis “has helped us realise the craft sector as something that has enormous potential to scale and at the same time impact the India story in the true sense.”



Awards so far

National Rookie champion, Enactus Canada; Top 100 start-ups. Maharashtra startup week; Top 50 fashion brands, LBB India



Sales Channels

They have Omni channel sales. Major channels being at multi brand outlets, white labelling for large brands, e-commerce, Amazon USA and export to Singapore, USA and Malaysia



STARTUP

Fabriclore

FOUNDING TEAM

Vijay Sharma, CEO

Anupam Arya, VP MARCOM &
Strategy

Sandeep Sharma, Product
Development, Operations, Customer
Support & Administrative Finance

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About

Fabriclore is India's first organized brand of artisanal, contemporary and designer fabrics.



Vision

An integrated textile cum bespoke stitching brand covering both wearable and home furnishing space by bringing a rich legacy of hundreds of artisanal Indian textile crafts and contemporary fabrics under an organized process.



Story

After spending about 13 years in Abu Dhabi, Vijay Sharma, Co-Founder., Fabriclore, returned to India to start his first venture in the Oil & Gas Industry. He successfully ran it for about 10 years which aided his experience in business management. Anupam, after completing MBA in Marketing from Amity Business School, Anupam Arya, Co-Founder, started his career with Luminous India (initially in corporate planning and then as patent researcher). Anupam then took up a Corporate Planning and Marketing Communications role with Maccaferri India (an Italian conglomerate in Geosynthetics and Civil Engineering). Anupam later joined Vijay's venture in planning and communications roles.

Sandeep Sharma, Co-Founder, briefly worked in the same venture that Vijay founded and later went on to join the family business in the textile domain. Sandeep also briefly experimented with Naaari.com (a women centric online store for Indian casual wear) while he was running his family business into surplus textile domain. Insights learned from naaari.com proved critical in the foundation of fabriclore as the very idea of people buying just fabrics online intrigued all three of them and they eventually founded Fabriclore in 2016.





Products

Artisanal and contemporary fabrics across a variety of material categories and crafts



Innovation

Fabriclore has been a pioneer in the way fabrics could be sold online to consumers. Our website, its navigation, quality of presentation, tailormade experience enabling buying as less as half a meter of fabric have given us tremendous brand recognition in a very short span of time. Another product innovation that has helped us command distinction over the market is fusion of traditional crafts with new materials that artisans don't have the capacity to explore.



Funding

Bootstrapped. Subsequent funding from Mr. Sanjay Goel and Startup Oasis.



One Big Learning at Startup Oasis

Startup Oasis has been "our primary gateway to the investor community. A validation of our business from the team has immensely helped us gain credibility in the circuit," says Vijay.



Sales Channels

e-commerce - Fabriclore earns entirely from its official brand website i.e. fabriclore.com





STARTUP

Dressfolk

FOUNDING TEAM
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About

Bringing quality handcrafted textiles to the market at reasonable prices whilst ensuring adequate prices for artisans.



Vision

Dressfolk aims to bring sustenance and ethics back to fashion.



Story

Nitin Mehrotra, Founder, Dressfolk, studied finance and used to work in an investment bank in Mumbai.

His management was quite happy with his work and never imagined that "I'd do anything remotely related to fashion. During that time, an accident happened in Bangladesh where 1200 garment workers died in a factory collapse. It was probably the first time the dark side of fashion was shown to the world. I was shocked to read how it happened. I started researching fashion and discovered that in the last two decades, the prices of clothing had gone down significantly but the prices of raw materials went up" This, he believes, "doesn't happen in any other industry."

The whole model of fast fashion was built on unethical labour where the labourers are exploited to the rock bottom. I knew that this model could live only till the time consumers get to know the reality." Few months later, he was on a Rajasthan trip where he discovered handcrafted apparel for the first time. Tourists flocked to the shops. "I knew this could be an answer to breaking the monotony of fast fashion. Thus, the idea for Dressfolk was born".

Having no background in fashion was both a blessing and a disadvantage for Nitin. Coming from outside, it gave him a fresh perspective. However, he also didn't know anyone in the industry and had to learn the basics from scratch. That took some time. It took a great deal of effort for him to build the right team.

Dressfolk has evolved from a woman's fashion company to a brand advocating transparency in fashion. They have served customers in 22 states in India and across 3 continents.





Products

Women's apparel with a focus on western dresses.



Innovation

At Dressfolk, they've "developed a robust supply chain where we do not keep any finished inventory. Each piece is made to order and we deliver pan India within five-six business days." They are also working on optimizing the supply chain to offer the handcrafted apparel at reasonable prices to the customers even after ensuring the artisans are paid fairly.



Funding

Bootstrapped followed by loans from a bank. Startup Oasis has also funded.



One Big Learning at Startup Oasis

Startup Oasis introduced Nitin to "experts in the crafts domain who have immensely helped us in making our products better and reaching out to skilled artisans and weavers."



Awards

They have been published in Fashion Revolution (UK), Vogue (India), LBB and The Hindu. They were also amongst the top 5 start-ups in TiE Rajasthan's Smashup 2019 event.



Sales Channels

More than 90% of the sales come through its website



About

Fabric monde is a B2B platform that connects small-scale weavers with urban markets and premier brands.



Vision

To be a leading manufacturer providing superior quality products and services at competitive prices. We want to be a globally innovative and competitive business providing 100% genuine services to our customers. We are committed to total customer satisfaction by providing quality products & services.



Story

Pursuing her dream of making the country the sourcing hub for sustainable textiles, budding entrepreneur Jyothirmayi Dakkumalla quit a high-paying job and set up a firm which is now aiming at Rs 25-crore revenue by 2020.

Hailing from a middle-class family in Andhra Pradesh, she joined a top IT major as junior executive soon after getting a degree in electrical and electronics engineering. However, her desire to achieve more in life made her quit and pursue post-graduation in MBA at IIM-Lucknow. Soon after, she accepted a job at another top IT major at an annual salary package of Rs 21 lakh. But the entrepreneur in Jyothirmayi was yearning for more, so she bid adieu to this job too. Now in her late 20s, she said it was one of the toughest decisions in life (to quit the job) to pursue the dream of setting up her own company.

"It was tough. My family was disappointed and advised me to continue in the IT job. After six months of discussions with them, I went ahead and resigned in order to set up my company. That is how Fabric Monde was born in 2016", she says.

"Fabric Monde was born out of the idea of catering to the demand and love of the urban markets towards indigenous handloom products. Evolved from there, today we are working on a global supply chain for the fabrics to support and enable fashion brands to source fabrics in a sustainable way. Part of our success story is the support that we received from the ITBT&ST department, government of Karnataka. Through a tech-enabled platform, we intend to support small-scale businesses and fashion brands to optimise the supply chain for their sourcing needs."

"We have optimised the supply chain for over 5,000 fabric products from 20+ states across India. We are working on interlinking the different levels of the supply chain in the textiles industry. Starting from the seed to the end fabrics, we would like to aggregate and build a network of different people dealing with fibres, yarn, dyeing and weaving on our platform. Leveraging this data and optimising the movement of raw materials within the textiles industry can have a big impact on the overall cost and the impact that it has on the ecosystem", says Jyothi.



STARTUP

Fabric Monde

FOUNDING TEAM

Jyothi Dakkumalla, Co-Founder & CEO

Ranjith N, Co-Founder & CTO
Hemalatha Kanneganti, Co-Founder & COO

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Products

Fabric Monde Sells Handcrafted Fabrics. The platform manages a portfolio of 20,000+ fabric SKUs and their stock which is coming across 400 suppliers from 20 states in India.



Innovation

1. They leverage technology and benefit small vendors to make their products accessible to mainstream fashion brands and bring inclusivity to the weaver communities.
2. The technology by Fabric Monde uses a two-fold approach. An app is used by weavers to upload their swatches and then the use of 3D technology allows top brands to view the material in real time.



Funding

Fabric Monde has received funding from IIM Bangalore as well as from Startup Oasis.



One Big Learning at Startup Oasis

"The Startup Oasis intervention has greatly helped in providing opportunities to connect with various relevant networks, angel investors and crafts ecosystem. It has helped us understand the importance of impact and sensitized us to work with craft communities for an all round value creation."



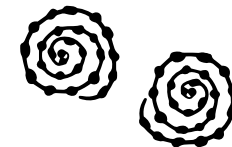
Awards

- * Top 50 start-ups in India recognized by Department of Science and Technology (DST) and IIM Calcutta (IIMC) in SMART 50
- * Top 10 in Social Venture Challenge(SVC) conducted by Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)
- * Forbes 30 under 30 Asia



Sales Channels

B2B





Empowering *Inclusion*
through Technology:

Diving Deeper into the Ecosystem of
Artisanal Communities

Why Humanity Matters!

Organization: Jaipur Rugs

Author: Nand Kishore Chaudhary

Why Crafts?

My love for weaving and the weavers since the beginning is the basis of this company, so how could have I chosen anything but craft?

All for Humanity

I only see humanity in the people in the grassroots, don't see them for their caste or religion. I see them for their capabilities and their potential. I believe an individual can do anything if given the right push and resources. This is what we do at Jaipur Rugs; help individuals realize their highest potential. I have always believed that business is all about human connections and with the way technology is advancing, it has become easier to connect humans with each other. It'll create new growth and new opportunities for all.

Identify Leaders

Making a product without quality makes no sense, now we are working on zero-defect, zero wastage and on-time delivery and it was very hard to implement this. In order to achieve this, we have identified apt people in our villages and have and still are co-working with them to take the responsibility. Identifying the leaders amongst our frontline will help us achieve these goals.

Customer is Queen

The upcoming entrepreneurs should see humanity in the craft-persons and not machines, take into consideration their potential and capacities and harness it well. Furthermore, one should always keep in

mind the customer while taking decisions; in an essence listen to your frontline.

An Anecdote

Once there were three artisans in a village and all of them were working on creating spiritual idols. When the first artisan was asked about what he was doing? He replied that, "I'm just breaking stones"; then the second one was asked the same question to which he replied that, "I am crafting a beautiful design"; and eventually when the third person asked then he said that, "There is a power, perhaps God, hidden inside this piece of stone, and I'm carving the same out of it so that people from all over the world can come and get blessed by it."

So you see, the difference lies in approach, in perspective of things. Our frontlines are artists creating their unique pieces of art, and our job is to help them grow on this path. Remember, they don't work for us, we work for them.

Future is Exciting

Exciting times ahead, as the younger generations and craft entrepreneurs are more empathetic and understand business as well. The idea of totality and conscious capitalism is the way ahead.

The Craft Catapult is Enriching

I really liked it; I even got to learn so much from all the participants. It was very enriching. They have a curious mind and are ready to learn and unlearn. ■

Financing the Crafts

Organization: Caspian Impact Investment

Author: Sushant Bhatia, Nishanth Nandakumar & Emmanuel Murray

Parents being protective of their progeny, would never let anything adverse happen to their child. Right from recording those first baby steps, to lining up all kinds of direct and indirect insurance plans, they do their best to prepare their children to face the world.

Start-ups are like children to the founders/parents. Craft enterprises, like other start-ups, are fragile and delicate in their infancy. The good thing though is that they are usually run by very passionate parents who want the infant to grow into a healthy all-rounded adolescent.

As we know, the right quantum of nutrition provided at the right time is the key to growth. Amongst multiple nutrients required by a start-up, funding is critical, and one of the key growth factors in it is working capital (WC) required for day-to-day operations.

In an ideal world, suppliers get paid on time, and everyone is at peace. Every enterprise's wish is to minimise the gap between receivables and payables, ideally receive first and pay later, but this is difficult to achieve for most start-ups, especially for craft start-ups, where they have to pay either in advance or in a few days to their vendors (usually artisans), and the buyers end up paying after a credit period of 30 to 90 days in case of B2B models, or need to hold inventory in case of B2C models. Craft enterprises also have an additional responsibility of helping these artisans not just earn more, but also reduce their drudgery, and help them become part of the formal financial and



Photo Credit: Zaina by CloK

social security systems, challenges that lead to an even bigger working capital gap.

The funds available for start-ups to grow are limited. Most entrepreneurs obviously want to tap friends, family and well-wishers to pitch-in. The external well-wishers and investors ready to take a bet at this stage are few.

When investors put-in money as Equity, they want the funds utilised for aspects like hiring key persons & product development,



to enable exponential growth, and very little to be utilised for day-to-day operations (WC). The other source is Debt. Let's say someone is willing to lend money to resolve your WC issues without requiring property as security, and in lieu charge a higher rate of interest. Sounds fair? It may be, and may appear like a great option due to its non-dilutionary (ownership stake of the entrepreneur remains undiluted) and tax-deductible nature of interest expense, a loan is an inflexible commitment, that, if not evaluated properly, can cripple one's business. But equally, you don't want your kids to be left behind, and want the best future for them.

Hence, some amount of self-evaluation by the parents can clear the haze in evaluating whether debt is the right option.

Here are some questions for promoters of start-ups to consider before they say yes to debt:

Cash is the King and Queen. What about everything in between?

The simple rule of borrowing is to borrow only when one has 'clear' visibility of cash flow. Despite having a sizeable order book, realizing cash in hand is the cornerstone of the ability to borrow and subsequently repay debt. What does 'clear' mean? As you move from left to right of below sequence, 'clarity' reduces: Cash-in-bank > Invoices to repeat customers > Invoice to new customer > Formal Purchase Orders

Am I managing information well enough?

Can I share my previous month's Financial Statements (P&L) within 5 days of the month-end? Am I aware of yesterday's sales numbers? Are my statutory dues paid on-time regularly? Do I track the debtors and payables religiously?



Craft enterprises, like other start-ups, are fragile and delicate in their infancy.

If the answer is yes to all these questions, rejoice! You don't need to have an ERP and highly paid professionals to achieve this. You need the right people with some skills and 100% transparency. You may begin with an available template or a self-developed excel sheet that tracks various financial and operational indicators. Your baby has to be transparent while showing this homework.

3. What is the real cost?

If a lender offers financing at 20% per annum rate of interest, it might seem formidable, and even lead you to reconsider borrowing. However, the "real" cost of the loan and what one intends to do with the money needs to be carefully thought through. Compared to a personal loan of 12-13% pa, sure, it does seem expensive, but if the money is going to be utilized to churn-out a product which gives a margin of 30% or more, a 20% interest rate loan may be definitely worth considering.

Though options of low-cost financing for the craft sector are at the moment limited, schemes like Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) which offers collateral free credit facilities to SMEs must be first explored with your bank, before moving on to options like NBFCs and venture debt funds.

Another cost that is often not factored-in is



time. If you require funds in 60 days, but you foresee the loan being available not before 180 days, or an unclear timeline, the rate of interest might become a secondary consideration.

Do I have positive unit economics?

Unit economics refers to the direct revenues and costs of a business expressed on a per unit of product/service basis. This can be quite different from profit being made at the gross level. Profit at the unit level usually indicates sustainable profits, whereas one-time cutbacks to expenses (for example start up founders forgoing salary) and lesser employees at the early stages, could temporarily reflect in marginal aggregate profits. Since it is highly likely that founders will not be willing to eat just Poha for the rest of their lives, unit level profitability is a crucial long-term profitability factor for self-evaluation (and credit evaluation!).

Do you want a partnership or a loan transaction?

Do you feel the lender understands your business? Can he become a long-term partner? Do you value the interaction and people? If the answers appear negative on two or more questions, you should reconsider. Afterall, you wouldn't want to share your baby with someone who doesn't understand and appreciate your aspirations.

Acknowledging how serious you are about the future well-being of your baby, we are confident you will make an informed choice. We hope the above insights help you in taking a decision that best works for you, and more importantly, prevents throwing your baby out along with the bath water! ■

The Commercials Of Crafts: The Irony & the Neo-colonial Exploitation

Organization: Aadyam Handwoven, An Aditya Birla Initiative

Author: Manish Saksena

It has been a luxury that the craft sector has afforded for way too long. The luxury of being an art, hence not to be seen as commercial to be maneuvering the dynamics of changing markets. A luxury that has cost us its slow death as we ignored the fact that the artisan at the ground level of course does it for the sake of the craft but is still dependent on it for his living too.

From being crafted for the patrons and its connoisseurs in days of yore it was then relegated to the market that may or may not have cared for it once the royalty faded away.

Thankfully it stayed a norm to use handloom and handcrafted through the 50s right until 80s for lack of access largely to anything similar or competing.

The mill sector however started to eat into the handloom market slowly and steadily. A welcome change for the upgraded Indian, as they discovered freshness and superiority in brands such as Garden Vareli for sarees and Bombay Dyeing for home textiles with their superior marketing and wide distribution and reach. Globalization and influx of imported products in the 90s finally overshadowed its relevance both in terms of pricing benefit and variety and newness.

This was bound to be as India was moving

ahead in mechanization and growth. What we did forget was to carry along our largest industry with skilled artisans for handcrafted and handwoven products. Our pride and our signature.

Revival through social trends in the 80s in urban India with its jargons of “Ethnic “ and “Jholawala” did bring about its patronage but only to a select set. Majority had by then lost the art of appreciating and patronizing this precious craft. While the trend helped the market a bit but what it also subtly did was to also alienate the masses and make it a wave that implied it to be for the select few. The trend continued till about recently when a decade back it found its new age patrons who began to use social media and reminded a larger set of its glory.

However by then it had the romance of the bygone era, the superiority of possession from the last generation, the access to a limited market, the packaging of new fangled designers who claimed to restore and revive it. This new “ avatar “ made it seem an act of benevolence, an act of prestige and elevation and the “crafted” came back into the market as a niche product at an elevated price. The tragedy and the irony of it is that the creator remained where he was. He continued to earn his daily wages much the same. Wages ... a misleading nomenclature. Only the marketers and the promoters aptly

found an opportunity to repackage the same differently to an uninitiated audience & perhaps an ignorant generation that had not seen much of it in its living gy.

What this did was to fragment & polarize the market on two extremes. The direct weaver markets continued to showcase for want of business in unorganized retail set ups or events or haats which were mostly frequented by an audience less appreciative of the craft behind it and therefore looking for reductions or bargains thereby creating poor returns to the craftsmen themselves. On the other end there were high end designers celebrating crafts or high society events and pop ups which compelled the exhibitors to mark up the product unrealistically to meet the retail costs and hence upping the market without any benefit passed on to the weaver/ craftsmen community. This has further led to the frustrations of the weavers as the market with glorified pricing is reducing the affordability. Thereby for every weaver who can access the premium market has created 1000 weavers who have felt disillusioned and left the craft.

The role that e-commerce and NGOs are doing is commendable work by being the distribution, marketplace or the B2B market creators and is a great hope for the future. However there is a big potential by both e-commerce players and offline players to create a vast middle market that sits at a price point that is commercially viable and has the perfect retail ambiance to provide dignity to the product for a larger audience affordability and a wider reach to counter the overtaking niche channels that are lending craft a luxury tag and milking the exclusivity angle without passing on the benefits to the creators. The right & elevated retail environment of a well priced “value to premium” market creation will ensure that the discounting and bargaining and exploitation will be countered. Fair prices



Craftspersons thrive when we make the market thrive with access and reach and affordability.

will once again relegate the niche market to its niche position and not be the face of this craft industry.

The markets have to co-exist. The idea is not to go against either. But when luxury becomes the face it clearly comes with the message of “limited” and “exclusive” and hence small. Then why must we worry about the dwindling craftsmen? Let them perish for there is only a small market. That's the irony. They will only thrive when we make the market thrive with access and reach and affordability.

Each craft has its own price. The pricing in this case is largely dependent on the amount of time it takes to create a product as it is all handcrafted and there is no speeding or efficiency mechanism to bring in price benefit. The pricing therefore needs to follow the same logic and create a band that encompasses this variance.

Bucketing it either as luxury or as cheap & dowdy are counterproductive. The crafts in India have a unique position compared to the West as fortunately it still is a living legacy and is not extinct or rare. The craft remains and in its most purest authentic form. The idea should be to resuscitate it while it lives. Not make it luxury and exclusive and then extinct over time. Thriving craft is an accessible living craft. ■



Celebrating the First Steps of Women in Craft Entrepreneurship

Author: Kashika Sud

The author is currently undertaking a Doctoral Thesis at IIM Ahmedabad on Leadership and Women Entrepreneurs!

Statistics on entrepreneurial activity in India often refer to the sixth economic census (2013-2014), which marks the women participation at 8.05 million women-owned enterprises out of 58.5 million businesses (Ref 1). The number today has risen slightly, with 20% of all enterprises being women-owned enterprises (13.5-15.7 million) (Ref 2). A recent report by Google and Bain & company titled “women entrepreneurship in India – powering the economy with her” uncovers an abysmal picture beyond these absolute large numbers. The study reports most of these enterprises as single person enterprise and many of these being women-owned only on documents, without indeed running the business (Ref 2). However, on the bright side, it projects an opportunity to accelerate the quantity and quality of entrepreneurship to create 30 million women-owned enterprises with a potential to solve India's employment woes (generating 150-170 million jobs by 2030).

India particularly is an economy of upsetting gender gap, with the world economic forum's gender gap report ranking India 142nd out of 149 countries on gender gap prevalent in indicator group “economic participation and opportunity” (Ref 3). This translates to lower labour force participation rate by women, and fewer opportunities for them to become leaders and professionals, despite a growing economy and an increase in the proportion

of working-age women in the population. The bleak prospects are reflected in lower rates of women entrepreneurship, where India ranked 52nd among 57 surveyed countries (Ref 4). Despite these numbers portraying a dismal state, women's presence is felt at almost all echelons of the working world. Working women and female family breadwinners are no more a myth.

One such bright area is the start-up space, where we see active participation from women along with substantial portfolio pitches. India has seen drastic growth in women entrepreneurship, given the government policies and socio-cultural transformation. Today women entrepreneurs are not necessarily family backed businesses; rather, they are many first-generation entrepreneurs coming from all walks of life, widening the purview of avenues women can venture and sustain. Women are experimenting with fields that have been traditionally associated with men and finding a firm hold too. Entrepreneurship itself has conventionally been a bastion of male domination, now seeing an influx of women entrepreneurs.

The craft sector here represents an enormous opportunity; and India is a treasure trove of traditional art and unique crafts, which offer high aesthetic character. Indeed, India is a heartland of traditional crafts with



almost every state contributing exclusive and impeccable heritage to the assortment. Artisans engaged in crafts form the backbone of India's non-farm rural economy and act as forebearers of the family's heirloom artistry. Historically artwork received royal and aristocratic patronage, which lost relevance post-independence and industrialisation. Over the past three decades, artisans have slowly vanished, as much as 30% left traditional craft due to fall in incomes, loss of markets, lack of resources to scale and value chain integration (Ref 5). Hence, there is a need for market infrastructure and aggregators to facilitate a network of artisans, manufacturers, retailers and large brands, to nurture partnerships.

Women play a crucial role in fostering this collaboration. Though liberalisation, social transformation and access to higher education have contributed to women-owned enterprises, we still witness industry-

based segregation, where women explore in limited spheres of business ventures, explicitly relating to lifestyle, retail, caring and nurturing, etc. The Indian woman has witnessed a significant transformation, especially in the economic realm, triggering an innate need to blend economic growth with life ambitions. We often find a quirk of enmeshed personal goals with career goals, working in their favour. They passionately nurture the entire relationship, which is visible in their endeavours. The enterprise is not just a job for them, but becoming an entrepreneur is a significant part of their identity. Thus making them put their heart and soul into building an authentic relationship and thereafter making the enterprise.

However, as a society, we are still besieged with social prejudice, inequality, irrational judgements and harassment of the women entrepreneur operating at different levels of



the value chain. We are thus making the journey of the founder of a start-up or the woman artisan equally challenging. Crafts have traditionally been a family legacy, and women form a vital commune of the skilled craft. Craft start-ups can realise the potential of the craft sector by being instrumental in the lives of marginalised communities, marginalised gender groups, and bringing prosperity to an entire family. Nurturing the craft sector not only supports livelihood for millions but ensures a new lease of life to the dying Indian culture and traditions. And nurturing this sector gives a whole new meaning and purpose to the life of the nurturer, wherein the process, she creates an identity and economic independence for herself.

Predominant agenda of many of these women-owned start-ups is in defence of human dignity. Despite the economic and organisation inclusion of the artisans, much needs to be achieved on their social and human front. Dastkar has been one of the harbingers of change and upliftment in the sector. Collective actions of some of these start-ups that we met (from Mura to Mulberry one to P-Tal), from the visibility of the product to security of the artisans, from wage stability to improved working conditions, from job security to leadership opportunities, each of these is an expression of liberation, a step in collective or solidarity towards an overarching cooperative movement of women and labour.

Finally, it is still a long way to go for women entrepreneurs, being a women leadership movement in a patriarchal society, needs building blocks at both conceptual and attitudinal level of the society. But what needs to be done prior is raising awareness among the entrepreneurial community, funding members, artisan community, and accepting, respecting and learning from each other's way of organising. Building of alliance and sharing leadership with an open mind-set, dismissing the primordial biases can create a thrust of opportunities for women entrepreneurs and support in their true upliftment and empowerment. ■

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STARTUP

Amounee

FOUNDING TEAM

Megha Das and Nikunj Thakkar

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About

Growth centred global digital marketplace for the grassroots level weavers and artisans



Vision

Where every citizen wears local and the maker gets their deserved due.



Story

As a young student at National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) Megha Das, Co-Founder of Amounee went to Jodhpur in Rajasthan to work with the Bandhani artists there as part of a college project. Bandhani is a traditional tie-and-dye art from India, predominant in the states of Gujarat and Rajasthan. The students realised that the artisans who produced the tie-and-dye dupattas (scarves) got a paltry INR 4.25 per piece.

The selling price in the local market was INR 100 per piece and it steadily increased as the scarves travelled to reach larger markets. At that point of time, they sold for INR 500 in metros. Once she graduated from NIFT, Kangra, she got a job that “most people her age would give their right arm for.” She worked with the international designer Manish Arora, but “my heart stayed with the artisans who did not earn what they deserved”, says Megha.

As she travelled to village clusters sourcing fabric, she realized the system was “equally unjust everywhere.” Her inner calling to work with the artisans at the grassroots level got the better of her. “I resigned to take up a project with the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India.”

She went to the rural district of Surendranagar in Gujarat to work with the weavers there. “I found only a handful whereas official documents had 500 of them listed. Undaunted, I took some pictures of their woven creations and put them on the internet. That led to a sale of INR 18,000. I realised there was no dearth of interested buyers. The problem was the lack of connection between the weavers and the market for their products. Amounee was born to fill that gap.”

Amounee is a digital platform that connects artisans directly to their buyers. The artisans earn what they deserve: the full value of their products. There are no middlemen involved to make profit from the artisans’ work while they get paid a pittance. Once the journey began, she soon realised that just augmenting the sales was not enough. The weavers and artisans need to be connected to the larger market scenario by themselves. It is critical for them to get the feel directly. In came the technology as part of Amounee’s initiative.





Products

Authentic and certified Indian crafts directly from the artisans.



Innovation

Amonee's focus begins, after the product has been sold. They believe in data and analysing them. Smart creating and selling "has always been our motto." As of now, Amonee is exploring artificial intelligence (AI) to build Market Intelligence MIS/ Dashboard for artisans to grasp market trends as part of design intervention automation. The focus is on sustainable market trends, color trends as well as fashion shows.



Funding

Bootstrapped, followed by funding from Startup Oasis.



One Big Learning at Startup Oasis

Startup Oasis has helped "us eliminate thousands of thoughts and channelise them in the right direction," says Megha.



Awards so far

Won 1st prize in Vibrant Gujarat (Women's Category)



Sales Channels

e-commerce





About

Greenwear is an enterprise that is establishing a decentralised and environment friendly textile value chain aimed at creating market access for yarns produced by rural women using Solar Charkha.



Vision

Greenwear envisions a world where tradition and technology are woven together to serve nature and mankind with the same attention. Greenwear intends to create 5000 livelihoods of rural women and artisans through solar charkha spinning and allied activities.



Story

Abhishek Pathak, Founder of Greenwear, is a textile designer by education, a social entrepreneur by passion and fervent admirer of traditional textiles and crafts. Abhishek has nine years of professional experience including designing for international brands, working with rural enterprises and artisans for business development and exploring e-commerce as a potential marketplace. He successfully executed a pilot project for Mission Solar Charkha as Chief Executive Officer of Bhartiya Harit Khadi Gramodaya Sansthan for three years and led textiles and crafts initiatives in Drishtee Foundation for three years. His research paper on 'Significance of CSR initiatives in Indian Handicrafts' was selected to present at the UGC National level seminar and received several awards. Abhishek was initially hired as a professional to help set up operations of Mission Solar Charkha where as its CEO, he soon realised that to create the impact of reaching millions of women through Solar Charkha, he would have to bring market connectivity for the yarns and fabrics produced.

Textile Industry is the second largest polluter in the world and holds potential to drive economic growth of poor and marginalised communities. Greenwear aims to adjoin these two factors by providing market linkages to a decentralised rural textile value chain which starts with Solar Charkhas installed at households of rural women. Solar Charkhas can produce eight times more yarn than the traditional manual charkha and involve significantly lesser drudgery. The Government of India launched Mission Solar Charkha in June 2018 aiming to train women to operate solar charkhas and looms. At the end of the three months training program, the women purchase 10 spindle solar charkha through access to a loan arrangement. Currently a non-profit organisation, Bhartiya Harit Khadi Gramodaya Sansthan (BHKGS) has trained around 3000 women on Solar Charkhas.

Greenwear plays the role of procuring the yarns produced by rural women through BHKGS and manufacturing fabrics and garments out of these. Greenwear distributes the yarns in traditional textile clusters of UP and Bihar to engage handloom and solar-loom weavers. Greenwear has established its own garment manufacturing unit in Barabanki (UP) where it creates garments for its own retail stores, school uniforms and brands like W and Aurelia. The organization, states Abhishek, "aims to build an organisation that combines traditional skills and technical interventions catering to mainstream fashion industry by increasing efficiency of cottage industry caring environment and ecosystem."



STARTUP

Greenwear

FOUNDING TEAM
Abhishek Pathak

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**Products**

Solar Vastra, Khadi Fabrics and Garments.

**Innovation**

Using Solar Power to create fabrics.

**Funding**

Funding from IIM Calcutta Innovation Park, Upaya Social Ventures and Ananya Finance for Inclusive Growth Pvt Ltd.

**One Big Learning at Startup Oasis**

Abhishek's biggest learning has been to "never compromise with the soul of the organisation while testing market opportunities and driving growth".

**Awards so far**

1. Winner of Janhit Jagran Social Enterprise Challenge 2018-19 in Poverty Alleviation.
2. Top 10 in Tata Social Enterprise Challenge 2019-20.
3. Top 10 in Villgro's Powering Livelihood Program.
4. Special Mention at National Solar Summit 2019-20.

**Sales Channels**

Job work of weaving and tailoring
Retail of solar vastra
e-commerce





STARTUP

Mulberry One

FOUNDING TEAM

Madhulika Choudhary
Meeta Mastani
N.K Choudhary

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About

Mulberry produces hand-spun hand-woven mulberry silk fabric admired on both the domestic and international textile markets, while providing employment to agricultural workers and traditional artisans in Bihar and Bengal.



Vision

To improve and develop the already existing skill base in rural India and produce high value silk fabric with low environmental impact. They also aspire to improve the standard of living in rural India by giving farmers, sericulturalists, spinners and weavers the opportunity to work in their villages; in their small farms and homes.



Story

The family lands in Bihar were in the process of being given away to male members of the family. Madhulika Choudhary, Co-Founder, Mulberry One acquired a small portion of the land and established an organic mulberry plantation in a non-traditional region reclaiming a chemical and pesticide intensive banana plantation. "My actions were viewed with great deal of suspicion and hostility as I was very clearly disturbing the balance of power in the community. I have since acquired 20 acres and I am in the process of converting these to Mulberry Plantations," says Madhulika.

She is a female farmer in a traditional male dominated profession in Bihar. She relocated to India from London where I worked as a Social Worker and Practice Educator for 20 years. The entire family was relocated which "has been unsettling and full of challenges for the children."

She has experienced hostility and obstacles from the village as her "presence and style of working is changing the status quo in the village particularly for female workers and dalit women and men." SHE says she continues to face a great deal of abuse and threatening behaviour both verbal and physical. Over time "I have built a social and professional network and sought the help of local police in order to continue to work safely."

Though there are several programmes to support sericulture in the region both from central (Central Silk Board) and state government "I have been unable to access training and funding because of bureaucratic obstacles and corruption. I have found ways around it by organising and delivering training with the help of indigenous and traditional sericulture practitioners from a neighbouring district of Malda in West Bengal." She believes that there are some pros and cons of her project – the project has "very low environmental impact and low infrastructure cost but the practice is not scientifically up to date. The project is isolated and excluded and does not get the benefit of research, training and development in sericulture. "I am constantly trying to learn and share knowledge but it is an uphill task. Working alongside the central and state government is crucial to achieving full potential in sustainable growth and creating opportunities for employment."

Cash flow problems have had a negative impact on the development and growth rate of the project to make it sustainable. "I have had to divert resources into equipment and training," she says.



At the very initial stages it became clear selling cocoons would not be economically viable for me and value addition was necessary. "I am now selling silk fabric. Every stage of value addition comes with increased financial and technological risks. The journey is uncharted and full of unexpected gains and learning. I now have 7 regular customers. We see ourselves as an extension of our customers team and as a true partner in the end to end process. We have developed Silk and Silk Cotton fabrics to meet design needs and price points of our customers", she adds.

Mulberry One, she believes, is solving the following problems, "high quality sustainable fabric, increasing rural employment, reducing rural urban migration,; low environmental impact, resource efficiency and zero waste."

The fashion industry accounts for "8-10% of global carbon emissions and the second biggest consumer of water – with consumers becoming more aware of sustainability issues the fashion industry is looking to align itself with fabric suppliers who use healthy environmental practices; harmonious with nature, without excessive burden on the environment."

Mulberry One, she says, is involved at every stage of fabric production – and can offer the customer transparency and traceability in the supply chain. "We have our own plantation where we not only do sericulture but carry out Research and Development that we share with the entire region. We also work with small and marginal farmers – who are mostly women and carry out cocoon aggregation. This soil to silk project is working with 30 agricultural workers and sericulturalist; 10 spinners and 20 weavers." Mulberry One was conceived with the aim to sell cocoons. But we soon realised that every stage of value addition would increase revenue and also widen the impact.



Products

They sell fabric, silk and silk cotton mixes. It is Hand-Spun and Hand-Woven.



Innovation

The uniqueness is their commitment to transparency and traceability. Their product is completely handmade using heritage skills.



Funding

Bootstrapped



One Big Learning at Startup Oasis

"To increase impact we have to increase revenue", says Madhulika.



Awards so far

1. Awards from Katihar District: 2018 Female Entrepreneur
2. Appreciation Certificate from Law Department for Social Enterprise on Women's Day 2019



Sales Channels

B2B



STARTUP

Abira

FOUNDING TEAM

Priyanka Khandelwal and Anju Bansal

WEBSITE

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About

Abira sells eco-friendly hand-crafted fashion accessories, made by marginalised women, to retail fashion brands in bulk and invest back their profits into learning and development of our artisans.



Vision

They aim to empower women so that she becomes stronger and more confident especially in controlling her own life. They accomplish their vision through life learning training. It is an integral part of "our culture which aims to explore the real her inside every woman. Life learning training includes activities such as travel, role model talks, group discussions on social issues, inspirational movies, Yoga, meditation, giving back opportunities, self reflection activities and spiritual learning," says Priyanka Khandelwal, Co-Founder, Abira Creations.

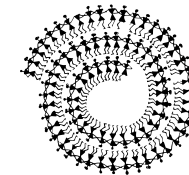


Story

Priyanka Khandelwal, believes that the lives of many women around her "has been defined and controlled by the people around them. They replaced their aspirations with adjustments. Considered atrocities their destiny." She and her co-founder Anju Bansal always thought that all this happens because "we let it happen." They always wanted to become internally strong to be able to take control of their lives and envision every woman to take control of their lives too. That's why Abira started. The word 'Abira' means 'Strong Women' in Jewish. "We are creating Abiras at Abira Creations."

Initially, Abira started with the life skill training to achieve their vision but then "we realised our beneficiaries are not interested in it. Their basic needs weren't fulfilled and we were trying to serve intellectual needs. This is the reason we started selling products and creating livelihood. Once they started earning, they also started learning." As the fashion industry is strongly moving towards sustainability, there are hardly any suppliers supplying sustainable accessories in bulk. Their aim is to become the biggest supplier of handcrafted fashion accessories from India.

"We ensure consistency of design in handcrafted products. Our Jewelry and other fashion accessories are made of eco friendly materials using various art and craft techniques. All our products are made by marginalised women across India," says Priyanka



**Products**

Jewellery, bags, scarves and corporate gifts.

**Innovation**

Their “uniqueness” is what Priyanka believes is “merchandise consulting.” Most of the brands “do not have a design team inhouse for jewellery. We work as an extended arm of their designing and merchandising department. We understand their garment and/or customer mood boards and share a matching range of eco-friendly handcrafted fashion accessories solutions,” says Priyanka.

**Funding**

Bootstrapped, followed by funding from Startup Oasis.

**One Big Learning at Startup Oasis**

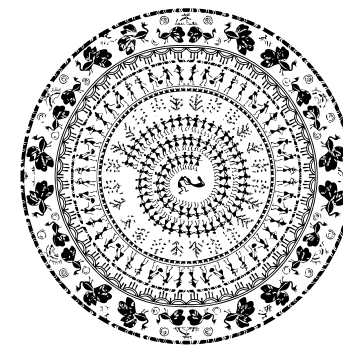
Priyanka believes that growing the organisation with “collaborations is our biggest learning. We were earlier trying to do everything ourselves and were depending on just our resources.”

**Awards so far**

Savitri Sammaan Award by Maharashtra One

**Sales Channels**

They sell to B2B brands such as Global desi, AND as well as Reliance Retail on consignment.





STARTUP

Kalaghar

FOUNDING TEAM

Megha Agarwal & Shipra Agarwal

WEBSITE

www.kalagharstore.com

CONTACT EMAIL

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About

Kalaghar creates sustainable fibre based products by leveraging the strength of artisanal communities.



Vision

To create an ecosystem which fosters empowerment of rural artisans, through consistent livelihood opportunities and fair wages.



Story

Belonging to a “Marwari business family, the idea of creating our own business had always excited us,” says Megha Agarwal, Co-Founder, Kalaghar. While being inclined towards the social sector, they wanted to build a business which creates social value. While Megha was doing her internship with Milaap, an online micro lending startup, her elder sister and she often discussed the struggle of small Self Help Groups (SHGs) and rural artisans to sell their products because of lack of exposure to new technologies and trends. So, one day the idea of starting something which amalgamates the skills of SHGs, NGOs and artisans with the aesthetic sense of the new generation designers cropped up. “We don’t want to push handicrafts into homes but want to create products which add values to the homes of our customers. Products with utility and culture,” says Shipra.

This was the sentiment which inspired Shipra and Megha Agarwal to start Kalaghar in Odisha, which engages with grass-root artisans, NGOs and self-help groups, towards livelihood creation and economic empowerment of all stakeholders including the artisans. Kalaghar currently works with about 60 artisans, mostly women, who are skilled in Sabai grass weaving. Most of the artisans and SHGs “were more than glad with the idea of working on new product ideas, but some of them were skeptical. As our core team members were all women, a few NGOs thought we were not serious about the plan and will drop it at the first sign of trouble. It took a lot of persistence and consistent follow up to gain their confidence,” says Megha.



Products

Sustainable natural fiber based home decor products and lifestyle accessories.



Innovation

Innovation for Kalaghar is in creating products with contemporary designs, fusion of materials and impact structure for their artisans.

Cluster Building which includes

1. Incentive to cluster champion
2. Bottom up approach of Management
3. Fortnightly Meetings with artisans
4. Direct bank transfers in beneficiaries account

Craft Research includes

1. Standardization: Craft techniques to decrease the time required and regular exploration workshops
2. Product Fusion: Material & Embellishment
3. Physical workshop space to ensure brainstorming and community building within artisans



Funding

Funding from Startup Oasis.



One Big Learning at Startup Oasis

It helped "us reflect on our entire business model and structure. This in turn, empowered us to reform it from a more informed and holistic perspective," says Megha.



Awards so far

1. Among the two awarded in "Best emerging start-ups" by StartUp Odisha during International Trade Fair conducted by MSME India in Bhubaneswar.
2. Incubation Support : Surge Impact, Startup Oasis, Selected in final cohort of Upaya
3. Monthly grant of Rs 22K received by Startup Odisha.



Sales Channels

B2B: Customer Segment - Outright Purchase by online stores(National & International), exporters, interior designers, trade expos and cold mailing

B2C: Niche online marketplaces, exhibitions and direct walk-ins



STARTUP

Zaina by CtoK

TEAM MEMBERS

*Shareholders - Shruti J Mittal,
Shradha Ghunsola, Gulshan
Nanda, Laila Tyabji, Manjari
Nirula and Gita Ram*
Managing Director – Shruti J Mittal
*Operations & Financial Planning –
Shradha Ghunsola*

WEBSITE

www.CtoK.org.in

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About

Zaina by CtoK will be a curated marketing platform brand that provides a contemporary and authentic line of handmade products from Kashmir (covering all crafts of the Valley) which creates the finishing touches to complete your great look.



Vision

What Tanishq is to the unorganised Gold and Jewelry market, we want to make the Zaina by CtoK brand to the unorganised hand crafted products of Kashmir – “A promise of trust and quality” says Shruti Mittal, a stakeholder of the new venture.



Story

Zaina by CtoK is a venture of the NGO Commitment to Kashmir (CtoK). Through this social enterprise, they intend to enable Kashmiri artisans to reach out to otherwise inaccessible buyers and new markets (both B2B & B2C) with a focus on providing sustained and long term business opportunities to them.

The region of Kashmir has witnessed widespread violence over the last 3 decades. Dwindling tourists, design professionals and industry have isolated the highly skilled artisans of the Valley from change and contemporisation. CtoK, the NGO, came in and through its various facilitation programs and capacity building measures has helped create products suited for urban customers.

While they encourage artisans to sell directly to the customers, they had realised that due to frequent disruptions in communication channels (such as internet and phone lines) many marketing opportunities had been lost by the artisans. On the demand side, there were many customers (B2B and B2C) who were disappointed at not being able to access the rich skills of the region to provide new and different products to their customers.

This was the key reason for CtoK to venture into the commercial space. However, the key challenge was to firstly convince the team (the Trustees) to start this enterprise. Despite having experts from the craft field (Padma Bhushan's like Gulshan Nanda and Laila Tyabji and other craft leaders) each with over 3-4 decades of experience working in Kashmir, there was reluctance to start a social business. The key reasons for this reluctance were that the management was worried that the commercial organization would take over the guiding philosophy and operations of the NGO. There was a very small team managing the NGO which was already very stretched and adding a company would only add strain to the otherwise stretched resources of the organization. There was also a “readiness” issue to put in start up capital by the trustees “as they were already on several boards and didn't want to take any more risks at this stage of their lives”, says Shruti.





Products

Home décor and lifestyle products – trays, bowls, platters, lights, cushions, rugs, bags, stoles, dupattas and saris. We will want to actually also get into fabric. Our products are made with the rich hand skills of Kashmir such as papier mache, walnut wood, copper, pashmina, namda (wool felting) and embroideries such as crewel, chain stitch, ari, sozni and tilla.



Innovation

CtoK's strength is in its nuanced understanding of the crafts sector and context of Kashmir which has led to the creation and successful performance of high quality handicraft products in urban markets. We have been working in the Valley for over eight years and have established close to 30 craft enterprises. The platform will be leveraging on CtoK's past success of creating business worth more than 3 crore for the craft entrepreneurs it has supported through design, technology and market support. This will be the first of its kind platform in Kashmir which works on offering a curated line of handmade products from the region and for the artisan community in a Fair Trade manner.

Also, many of the products that our NGO has created, have used innovative processes such as the process of wool felting to make garments, using papier mache surface embellishments to create a new look and feel to the craft skill and lend itself for the packaging industry. We will also be providing craft experiences to customers and design professionals for them to experience Kashmir and the authenticity of the products and the makers.



Funding

Bootstrapped



One Big Learning at Startup Oasis

The biggest learning at Startup Oasis "was how to approach our work as a business and not as a development activity. If we do business right with all the right values, then the development will also happen," says Shruti. They subsequently formed the brand 'Zaina by CtoK'. Another learning for them was "to view the business proposition always from the point of view of the customer and not the maker. This was an important learning for us as we are an NGO and for us, we always take decisions keeping the artisans in mind." In addition to this it was "insightful to understand how pitches are actually made to investors and funders".



Awards so far

CtoK the parent NGO has won the LEXUS 2019 award for 'Design for Social Impact'.



Sales Channels

Their revenue model will be e-commerce (selling on other portals as well as creating our own store), organizing solo exhibitions, interior design projects and marketing of craft experiences.



STARTUP

Gangsutra

FOUNDING TEAM
Harshita Rathore

CONTACT EMAIL
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About

Providing a market for artisanal products created by artisans.



Vision

Gangsutra provides an international platform to the artisans across the globe.



Story

A couple of years ago Harshita Rathore, Founder, Gangsutra, had an opportunity to work with a very renowned organisation in Delhi. They were doing an “amazing job in the art sector in a lot of clusters across India.” During an occasion when a large number of the artisans gathered at our organisation Harshita got an opportunity to interact with the artisans. While interacting with the artisans she got to understand the “exploitation and the difficult life they have been going through. This gave me sleepless nights and I started wondering how I can help”. Since then “I started eating, walking, sleeping, talking GangSutra,” says Harshita. “I realized I am born in a wonderful family and married in an amazing family and blessed at every step. I wanted to share the blessings with the lesser privileged ones. At that time we were staying in Delhi and my husband had a good job in a well known company.” One fine day she decided to move back to Jodhpur where she could start the platform where the artisans could sell their products.

She moved log, stock and barrel. She “worked hard to start this retail destination for the artisans and wanted to start in my hometown. I started this in our drawing room as I couldn’t afford paying rent as I knew I wouldn’t be able to generate those kinds of revenues.” Once she started, her husband always asked “what’s your business plan?” She had no clue what he was talking about. Facing opposition from many sides, Chintan and Pallavi from Startup Oasis got in touch with them and there has been “no looking back” since then.

Creating the brand has been a “long journey though it was only three years but each day was a great struggle.” Reaching out to people was tough because of the family she came from. People in Jodhpur were not very aware of the organic or handcrafted craft nor were they interested in buying. They would rather buy “branded stuff instead of the organic pure and handcrafted product that can bring food on the plate of the artisan”. Money was a great hurdle. Though initially GangSutra was funded by her husband as there was no market, hence funding became tough. After three years she moved from her home to a market space which was in the heart of the city.





Products

Their best selling products are a) Personal Care Products such organic creams, handcrafted soaps, skin and hair care, shampoos and oils. b) Shawls and stoles such as Pashmina, Khadi, Woolens c) Food items such as Amla Jams, Hibiscus Jams, Honey, Hibiscus Syrups, Vegan food and vegan chocolates d) Gift items such as photo frames, pebbles, wooden and stone boxes, and incense sticks



Innovation

They are under one roof. "We have everything that can be created by two hands and each product has a story. It is created with love and passion by artists across the country", says Harshita.



Funding

Bootstrapped



One Big Learning at Startup Oasis

The primary learning was the definition of the store as "a retail fair trade destination for self sustainable livelihood". She had a passion to give a platform to the artisans but had no clue "I was supposed to create a business plan or anything like that." She learned what is the segment I should target, accounting, finances, legal aspects, storytelling and everything that a business should be fully aware of. Today, she says, the existence of the GangSutra brand "owes it all to Startup Oasis"



Awards so far

Women Power by JCI Jodhpur



Sales Channels

Store in Jodhpur





Photo Credit: Fabriclore

Expanding the Craft

ROUNDTABLE MUSINGS

The Craft Catapult held 3 roundtable conversations with experts in the field at Delhi, Jaipur and Ahmedabad. The objectives of the round table discussions were to reach out to the experts in these three important centers and absorb their suggestions to further strengthen the program as well as understand the future of the craft sector. We have provided executive summaries from each of the roundtables for your ease:





ROUNDTABLE DELHI

People Present: Ritu Setbi, Chairperson, The Craft Revival Trust | Gitaram, Chairperson, Crafts Council of India | Julia Karst, Head of Project, GIZ India | Rujuta Paradkar, Head, Arts, North India, British Council | Prof. Dr Sudha Dbingra, Head (FOTD, FDP, Bridge Prog.), NIFT | Latba Tummuru, Dastkar Andhra | Sreejith Nedumpully, Svakarma Finance Pvt. Ltd | Nirupam Srivastava, Vice President, Hero Corporate Service Pvt. Ltd

Craft as an Artform: Make craft premium, aspirational, luxury. Why do artists earn much more than craftspeople? Is there a need for a separate discipline of 'the business of craft' just as there is for 'the business of art' or art management / marketing, or in a similar vein, 'the business of fashion'. Craft is functional, everyday utilitarian, not purely decorative. Just like marketing art is done by a separate set of professionals and not the artists themselves, perhaps a need for the same in marketing craft.

Value Handmade: Majority of customers are not educated about handcrafted products and the perceived value of handmade is low. Many customers prefer cheaper, handloom looking, low maintenance powerloom, screen print etc. Hence the need for educating the customer and creating a differentiated and a 'differentiated looking and appealing' product to counter factory made.

Ensure Value for the Artisans: Master craftspeople are usually the ones profiting the most. It is the artisans with the middle level skill who do not really get appropriate value for their skill. Skill training and artisanal awareness of value for their work will go a long way in ensuring value for the artisans.

Let a 1000 Businesses Bloom: Rather than having one business of 1000 crores, we must have a thousand businesses of 1 crore. The attempt must be to enable a larger number to get basic incomes from their skill based income generating activity.

Empower the Second Generation: Second generation may not want to follow the craft profession of the family. May want to if craft is as attractive an employment proposition as compared to others available. Desk jobs are preferred; even craftspeople do not want their children to be artisans but get desk jobs. Therefore a cultural challenge as well. Schools like Somaiya kala vidyalaya of Kala raksha or the Handloom School by Women Weave must be studied and replicated to train gen-next to make craft into an income generating activity parallel to other occupations.

Design Intervention: For craft to survive, good quality, cutting edge design, an intervening agency could be created (a center of excellence for crafts) to enable manifestation of the creative potential of the artisan.

Market Intelligence: There is a lack of market intelligence for the craft entrepreneur. Craft sector needs market intelligence especially with regards to fashion trends, quality innovations amongst other measurables.

Social Impact Mapping: In addition to quantitative mapping of revenues generated, a qualitative mapping of social impact needs to be done.

Scaling up as per Market Demand: Scaling up of the craft form depends on any particular craft form and its intrinsic nature / character / scope for training and bringing more artisans into the fold. The opportunity to scale may also be a function of market demand. Scaling up can be done via a specific focus on market intelligence and creating expertise in the value chain accordingly. Making entrepreneurs out of artisans can greatly help in scaling up craft.

Technological Accessibility: Appropriate technology and its accessibility is important and much required for market linkages, production processes as well as establishing authenticity of the craft form.

Product Focus: Make a great product and the customers will come. Spend time on making the product. It is only then that a product should be marketed.



ROUNDTABLE JAIPUR

People Present: Sharda Gautam, Head, Crafts, Tata Trusts | Ayush Kasliwal, Creative Director, CEO AKDPL | Siddharth Agrawal, Owner, Silkasia | Nainish Tikoo, Director, Partnerships, Indus Action | Mukesh Gupta, Director, Operations, Murarka Organic Food Ltd. | Jubi Pandey, Technical Lead, Lady Bamford Foundation | Manuj Goel, Co-Founder, Indology

Collaborative Effort: No one is helping anyone, the entrepreneur is certainly not helping the underprivileged. It's a partnership/collaborative effort with artisans and many other stakeholders. There should be equitable value for all stakeholders including artisan partners.

Openness: Artisans and Artisan Entrepreneurs need to be more open, adaptable to the vagaries of the ever changing market. Designers/merchandisers/ entrepreneurs must interpret these for the artisans appropriately. Consistent skill upgradation and quality orientation required, along with use of technology to optimize processes. All of EPCH marketing platforms including their exhibitions can be explored for selected start-ups.

Study the Best Practices: Best practices of the industry must be studied (in design, product development, artisan cluster management, supply chain organization, marketing and media management, business and financial modelling) and adapted by start-ups for maximizing returns.



ROUNDTABLE AHMEDABAD

People Present: *Siva Devireddy, Founder & CEO, GoCoop | Manish Saksena, Lead Adviser, Aadyam | Monica Moisin, Founder, Cultural Intellectual Property Initiative | Philine Kriependorf, Project Director, Space10*

Leverage the Domestic Sector: The opportunity in the domestic market is rather too large to be ignored. Every mainstream retailer now also has a sustainable fashion brand such as Ancestry by Future Group, Swadesh in Project Eve and ajio.com by Reliance Retail etc. This is besides mainstream craft or semi craft retailers like Fabindia and Jaypore.com. Getting the economics right across the value chain is of prime importance and must be looked into towards sustainability of the sector. Perhaps figuring out a hybrid supply chain, where the simpler processes are mechanised and only the high value add processes are handmade, could be the way out.

Develop Success Indicators for Craft Enterprises: The indicators should have a balanced outlook of social impact along with ensuring the metrics necessary for valuation of the enterprise.

Market Access: Market access and technology are critical enablers and should be vigorously pursued by craft organizations.

B2B: B2B as a relevant model for early traction rather than every startup trying to build a B2C brand – focus on building a robust business model rather than brand.

Beyond the Conventional Items: The participants felt that more craft enterprises should go beyond high end fashion (Sarees, Stoles etc) and look at interiors, utility items etc

Consolidate: Since most start-ups are accessing the same customer segment, start-ups could consolidate marketing activities on a shared platform to avoid huge marketing costs.

MENTOR MUSINGS

Exhilarating, exciting and a huge learning experience

Sarika Narayan
Independent Consultant

This is how I would describe my 'crafty' journey with startup Oasis via SAACL, INVENT and TCC programs.

Prior to my engagement with SO supported craft enterprises, I came with an orientation of non profit and also commercial retail in the sector. I associated the concepts of 'start up' and 'scaling up' mainly with commercial businesses, esp technology. Across three years of mentoring, guiding, and leaning from craft businesses of SO, I understand that craft businesses can be evolved into start up models and can be scaled up optimally, with a view towards maximising value to each stakeholder in the chain, as well as retaining, rather, evolving, the intrinsic character of the craft form and technique.

CraftInIndia is the second largest employment sector after agriculture, necessitates its development, oriented towards capacity building, skill upgradation, collaborative design innovation and product development, all aimed at transforming traditional skills into products that have contemporary appeal, thereby providing craft communities with a source of permanent employment and sustained incomes.

Keeping all of the above in mind we attempted to design and implement an accelerator program which would literally catapult early stage (eg Mulberry One, P-Tal) or not so early

stage (Eg Mura Collective which has more than two decades of experience in the sector) craft businesses into financially viable, value oriented enterprises sustaining and creating livelihoods as well as growing and evolving craft aesthetic and talent.

So Khadigi, which I first encountered as a fledgling, faltering startup. Digitally printed khadi making organization desperately looking for a market, now customizes khadi yardage in a plethora of textures, counts, colors (including natural dyes) and price points, to not just a variety of craft design houses and brands like Kilol, Anataya but also to mainstream, large format retailers like Project Eve of Reliance Retail. Abira Creations (funded by Startup Oasis) with their vision of 'empowering women so that they become stronger and more confident in controlling their own lives' and so that marginalized women, discover the 'Abira' (Hebrew for 'strong woman') within themselves, has mobilized about 190 women from 'kacchi bastis' to learn jewelry making skills as also to manage their own organization and are now marketing via leading fashion retailers like Ajio.com and Project Eve.

The fun part for me personally was to bring to the cohort of TCC, many craft enterprises and brands that have been a part of my own network. I have known Mura Collective since the mid 90s, Aavaran and Karomi I



Photo Credit: Dr. Pallavi Tak

have consulted with, Mulberry One and CtoK are both headed by former colleagues from Dastkar and Indicolage are one of my favourite haunts for craft exhibitions in Delhi. With revisiting, rethinking, fresh introspection and new perspectives thrown up by TCC, much aided by the intensive mentoring clinics by sector and industry stalwarts, their 'business' journeys are likely to be supremely value oriented as also harmoniously integrated with their 'craft' journeys. So it will be for other craft ventures who I have met through TCC such as P-Tal, which has been motivated to build an effective team, fine tune and focus on

selective, value oriented marketing channels, and communicate their product USP most effectively to the target audience. Another one is Desi Hangover which is honing its road map towards optimizing an artisan base of about twenty thousand.

I have been fortunate enough towards empowering the entrepreneur and the craftsman (and all other stakeholders) while all the time respecting the craft. TCC is SO's attempt to build models of excellence for developing and strengthening the craft eco system in India. ■



POST SCRIPT

The Post Covid Era for Craft: Why Range will be key and not Hyperspecialization

Anmol Gupta

Co-Founder, White Mountain Collectives. Editor, Accelerating Indian Craft Businesses



When we were designing the first Macintosh computer, it all came back to me. If I had never dropped in on that single course in college (calligraphy), the MAC would have never had multiple type spaces or proportionally spaced fonts.

- Steve Jobs, 2005 Commencement Address at Stanford

These are COVID times. Industries are witnessing a titanic shift. This seismic event will forever change how we look at the world. I have been fortunate enough to have been associated with the craft industry - as an outsider, and not someone who has been exposed to it for long. I am more of a generalist, not specialist or hyperspecialist. This, I feel, has given us a very different perspective of the craft industry and its stakeholders since the past two-three years.

Early signs of a transformation are already

there. Some have switched to providing PPE Kit such as 3 Ply Masks, Safety Goggles, Shoe Cover, Safety Gloves and other medical supplies. The craft eco-system has been nurtured with the hearts and minds of millions of entrepreneurs, thought leaders and artisans. So why the Steve Jobs quote in the beginning? Well, it is because the industry will have to go beyond its existing domains of work - which it is just doing by providing medical textiles.

Many of the start-ups nurtured by Startup Oasis are doing just that - FabricMonde, Aavaran, Khanak Design, KhaDigi, are working towards providing medical kits. The need of the hour is adaptability and cross-learning. COVID presents an opportunity to Indian craft start-ups to reorient themselves for a new world. As Nobel Laureate Santiago Ramon Y Cajal, the father of modern neuroscience observed about about some of the most celebrated Nobel prize winners who also happen to have dived into different activities, "To him who observes from afar, it appears as though they are scattering and dissipating their energies, while in reality they are channelling and strengthening them".*

As I worked on this report over the past few months, speaking to and indulging into the craft sector, we found immense reserves of



creativity in all of them. Their ability to cross-learn, being actively engaged in their work and apply skills from different industries will propel these craft start-ups to a different game changing orbit. They act, learn from mistakes, recalibrate and create.

Paul Graham, computer scientist and co-founder of Y Combinator said in a speech he wrote but never delivered, "Instead of working back from a goal, work forward from promising situations. This is what most successful people actually do anyway...I propose instead that you don't commit to anything in the future, but just look at the options available now, and choose those that

will give you the most promising range of options afterward".**

Ingenuity will be tested by how the craft start-ups inter-weave from different industries, and create post covid organizations, which magnify their new strengths and create profitable enterprises with a social heart. Will they be creating ISRO space suits next? There is much to be excited about. ■

* Range by David Epstein

** Paul Graham, "What You'll wish You'd Known," www.paulgraham.com



THOUGHTS ON A POST COVID WORLD FOR THE CRAFTS OF INDIA FROM EXPERTS AND Start-ups

Crafting Out of COVID

We are going to see a significant change in demand patterns for craft products, the demand which has been significantly offline so far will shift online and there would be more focus on essential everyday products. Markets would take a long time to recover and I think it is going to take at least a couple of months or more before people start visiting markets and start buying products like how it was before. But, there would be a stronger consumer focus on ethical and sustainable products and where most craft products fit in very well. This should help greatly in the recovery of the craft sector. It is very important for start-ups to communicate strongly, through their online presence, how crafts and handmade products are not only better for the environment but also for the communities.

Siva Devireddy, Founder, GoCoop

This period has given time to all businesses to rethink and reshape and re-assess. Much like that for the craft world too, it is a pause time to identify and segregate craft and the craftsman basis their capabilities to either produce their most exquisite pieces or the most useful. Meaningful design intervention on both ends is critical to avoid production beyond need. Consumption would be cautious. The consumer would either spend on a craft for its irresistible gorgeousness or for the sheer utility at a competitive price. In both the cases, their wages must get protected either by higher value or effective scale.

Manish Saksena, Lead Advisor, Aadyam Handwoven

We witnessed the failure of the classic approach to the craft economy where the relevant metrics are consumption and production and craftspeople are reduced to being the workforce. It is time for a system change in India. The transition to a value-based craft economy where craftsmanship integrity and community well-being prevail.

Monica Boṭa-Moisin, Founder, Cultural IP Rights Initiative

People are going to be much more health conscious, hence our brand is going to be building on those lines.

Kirti Goel, Founder, P-Tal

I had been stressing on textiles being an Environment Devil since the inception of my brand. We have worked in direction where we embrace local culture, local purchases, atelier formats and personalised services. The current Epidemic has validated our direction and thought process. Post Corona, there will be a long time before the situation normalises but post the wave of correction, it's a boon for brands like us. Our upcoming work in nettle is all about this and we see a bright future for brands like us.

Shefali Tambi, Founder, Shefcoz

It's going to be tough as retailers and designers will take time to launch their collections but we are planning to focus on essential items and ultra-luxury items for clients. Exports market seems to become more sustainable fashion oriented, so we stand a good chance there.

Umang, Founder, KhaDigi

It's a difficult time for all of us, however I feel, after this experience people will have become more conscious about their lifestyle choices and there will be more inclination towards buying sustainable and eco-friendly products. When we portray that our workplace is following all the stipulated regulations to maintain safety of our customers as well as workers, our products will be in great demand.

Neerja Palisetty, Founder, Sutrikaar Creations

It makes even more sense since all businesses will have a cash flow crunch. Reaching out and finding new market links will be mandatory for survival, especially for small businesses. We can help here, Indi Collage can play a pivotal role in finding these spaces, helping designers create market links at low costs. At the same time we can help retailers with incremental incomes with their existing locations, creating more interest in the store and increasing cross buying within the stores.

Customers can have access to new products in their neighbourhood or at their trusted stores. In coming times consumer behaviour is going to change towards local flavours, hand crafted and sustainable products. Travel will be curtailed, individuals with disposable income will spend more locally and on niche products.

Anuradha Singh, Co-Founder, Indi Collage

Global supply chains will be shattered post COVID and every country will look inwards to be self sufficient in every aspect. Our local talent and ecosystems will be a major focus to deliver for the country in the future as primary suppliers.

Hitesh Kenjale, Co-Founder, Desi Hangover

It is quite early to do any estimate right now. The plus side we see is that our sales predominantly come from the domestic market than international. According to prelim predictions the global economy could reel under recession except India and China post Covid which is a consolation for us. We foresee that a cash impetus even in the form of subsidised debt could certainly put us back on track. Though our estimates for year 2020-21 could take a hit but we could continue to scale barring one or two quarters.

Vijay Sharma, Co-Founder, Fabriclore

We are a direct to consumer company and our major sales channel is our own website. The current COVID crisis can lead to improvise digital shopping and digital transactions. People would also be more cautious of their consumption and might tend to buy products that are environment friendly.

Nitin Mehrotra, Founder, Dressfolk

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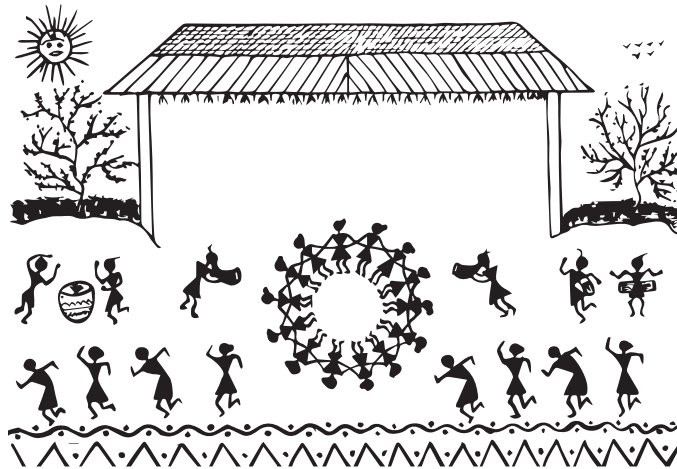
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