

India has a rich tradition of rural craft passed down from generations. These crafts provide opportunities for skill development and entrepreneurship thus increasing the potential to contribute to the economy. The government is playing a crucial role in realising this potential by investing in infrastructure, promoting local crafts and traditions, supporting homestays and community tourism, and promoting sustainable tourism practices.

### **One District One Product (ODOP)**

- It is a program initiated by Government of India to promote local industries in every district.
- Under this program, each district is identified based on its product and efforts are made to promote it through branding, marketing and infrastructure development.
- It aims to create employment opportunities and enhance the income of rural artisans and entrepreneurs while also preserving traditional crafts and skills.
- Eight craft villages have been identified nationwide under the 'Linking textile with Tourism' initiative to promote crafts and tourism at a single location. They are-
  - Raghurajpur (Odisha)
  - Tirupati (Andhra Pradesh)
  - Vadaj (Gujarat)
  - Naini (Uttar Pradesh)
  - Anegundi (Karnataka)
  - Mahabalipuram (Tamil Nadu)
  - Taj Ganj (Uttar Pradesh)
  - Amer (Rajasthan)
- The aim of this initiative is to bring together the rich cultural heritage of India's traditional crafts and the growing tourism industry.

### **Rural Tourism**

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

### Rural Handlooms

- Agencies like the Crafts Council of India, Tribes India, Saras by the Ministry of Rural Development, and state emporiums have existed for years to raise public awareness, give cottage industries access to bigger markets, and aid them in adapting to changing market demands.
- According to the Annual Report 2020-21 released by the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, In FY 2019-20, the exports of handicrafts were Rs. 19, 171 crore, which increased to Rs. 20,151 crore in FY 2020-21 despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Rural Craft Curbing Migration

- Rural craft industries can-
  - Provide employment opportunities to rural people and help them earn livelihood. This can help curb the migration of people from rural to urban areas.
  - Create opportunities for entrepreneurship, where people can start their craft businesses and sell their products to a broader market.
  - Attract tourists interested in the local culture and arts. This can create more economic opportunities for people in the region.
  - Provide a source of economic diversification which can help them become less reliant on agriculture and traditional livelihood.

All of these steps can reduce the need for migration in search of better economic opportunities. The Ekta Mall at the Statue of Unity in Kevadia, Gujarat, is fundamental to rural craft promotion.

### Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat

- The pledge to embody the philosophy of 'Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat' can promote inter-cultural exchange and understanding as travelers from different regions of the country explore rural India's rich and diverse cultural traditions.
- All stakeholders must develop sustainable tourism practices that benefit local communities and preserve the environment.
- Travellers can stay in eco-friendly accommodations, support local businesses and crafts, and participate in responsible tourism activities that benefit the local communities.
- It is a goal that requires collective efforts from all stakeholders to nurture and promote responsible tourism practices that benefit the local communities, the environment, and the travellers.
- In a webinar on 'PM Vishwakarma Kaushal Samman', the Prime Minister talked about the significance of traditional Indian crafts and skills and how they can be leveraged to promote tourism and generate employment opportunities in rural areas.

### Global Recognition

- The G20 can help provide Indian handicrafts with better access to international markets by reducing trade barriers, simplifying customs procedures and promoting trade fairs and exhibitions.
- It can provide financial support to artisans in the form of loans grants and subsidies which can help them invest in technology, expand their product range and increase their production capacity.
- It can work with the Indian government to strengthen the country's Intellectual property laws and enforcement mechanisms which would help protect the designs and techniques used by Indian artisans.
- Example-
  - **Saras Ajeevika Mela**- It is an annual event organized by Ministry of Rural development, Government of India to showcase and promote rural livelihood and products. This event usually features wide range of products such as handicrafts, textiles, food and beverages, organic produce and artisanal produce from different regions of the country.
  - **Surajkund Crafts Mela**- It showcases the rich cultural heritage of India and provides a platform for cultural heritage of India and provides a platform for artisans, craftspeople, and performers from all over the country to display their skills and creations.
  - **Aadi Mahotsav**- The mega National Tribal Festival, a yearly project of the Ministry of Tribal Cooperative Marketing development Federation Limited (TRIFED) celebrates the spirit of tribal culture, crafts, cuisine, commerce, and traditional art in the effort to present tribal culture on a national scale.

### RURAL CRAFTS THROUGH RITUALISTIC AND INDIGENOUS TRADITIONS

Rural crafts in India have a strong cultural and religious significance and are rooted in the traditions of the community that create them. Many crafts are created for specific purposes such as religious ceremonies, household use, and agricultural practices. For example, pottery and weaving. These crafts are often passed down from generation to generation and are created using traditional techniques and materials that have been used for centuries.

### Tracing The Legacy

- The earliest evidence of rural crafts in India dates back to the Indus Valley civilization, Archaeological excavations have revealed evidence of pottery making, weaving, and metalworking in this ancient civilisation. These crafts continued to be practiced and developed over the centuries, with each region of India developing its own distinct styles and techniques.

- The Vedic period saw the importance of textiles in religious and social customs, with references to various types of fabrics and their colors mentioned in the Vedas. Dyes and embroidery also became popular during this time.
- In ancient India, cotton was one of the primary fibers used for making clothes, and spindle whorls and loom weights were used for spinning and weaving cloth.
- During the Mauryan Empire, the production of textiles was promoted, with specialised workshops set up for weaving and dyeing fabrics. This was facilitated by a well-developed trade network that enabled the exchange of textiles with other regions.
- The Mughal period witnessed a flourishing of the textile industry, with the development of various textile arts such as block printing, chikankari embroidery, and zardozi work. They brought skilled craftsmen from Persia and Central Asia, who introduced new techniques and styles to India.
- As people became more skilled in crafting, they began to embellish their creations, using a variety of materials and techniques to produce more intricate and aesthetically pleasing works of art. This marked the beginning of a rich tradition of art and craftsmanship that continues to evolve and thrive in modern times.
- Examples-
  - Tholpavakoothu and Tholu bommalata are traditional forms of shadow puppetry that originated in South India. In addition to Rajasthan known for Kathputli, puppetry is also popular in other parts of the country, such as Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka.
  - Kondapalli toys are believed to have originated during the Vijayanagara Empire. During the festival of Sankranti, celebrated in January every year, Kondapallidolls are used to create a display called Bommala Koluvu.

### Rituals and Traditions in Art and Craft

- Before beginning any craftwork, many communities observe certain preparatory rituals. One common tradition is the purification of the workspace by sprinkling holy water or lighting incense sticks to ward off evil spirits and invite positive energies. For example-
  - The Channapatna toy-making community in Karnataka performs a small puja to the tools they will be using and prays to their ancestors for their blessings before starting to make toys. Viswakarma Puja is yet another example.
  - Kutchi artisans in Gujarat follow the "Gadhvi" tradition by lighting a lamp in their workshop, singing folk songs, and praying to their patron saint for blessings and protection.
- In some communities, craft-making is associated with specific festivals and rituals. For example, during the Dussehra festival in Odisha, the artisans of Pipli make beautiful applique work on cloth, which is used to decorate the idols of Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra, and Subhadra.

- Craftspeople in some communities also observe certain fasts and abstain from certain foods while working on specific crafts. For instance, metalworkers in the Dhokra community in Chhattisgarh fast during the process of making brass and bell metal crafts.
- Some crafts are associated with particular seasons or lunar phases. The Madhubani painters in Bihar, for example, only paint during the waxing phase of the moon, which is considered auspicious for creativity and growth. Another example is the Kalamkari art of Andhra Pradesh.
- Rural crafts in India are also an important item of utility in the places of worship, serving both practical and symbolic purposes. For instance, in Hinduism, the art of making clay idols of deities is an ancient craft that has been passed down for generations. In Sikhism, the making of the chauri used to fan the Guru Granth Sahib is an important craft. In Jainism, the art of making intricate rangolis is highly valued.

### Representation of Traditions Through Craft

Crafts in India often serve as a representation of various rituals and traditions. For example, the Warli tribe of Maharashtra creates intricate paintings on their walls and floors, which depict scenes from their daily lives, religious beliefs, and important events like weddings and harvests. Painting is a strong medium for representation of observances, whether they are religious, cultural, or social.

### Conclusion

Today, many rural crafts in India face challenges such as lack of recognition, dwindling demand, and competition from mass-produced goods. However efforts are being made to promote and preserve these crafts, including through government initiatives, participatory movements like SPIC MACAY, and collaborations with designers and entrepreneurs.

### BETTING BIG ON BAMBOO

Known as Green Gold, Bamboo has unlimited potential and its usage in creating eco-friendly products will do wonders to mother nature. There is a big demand for bamboo products, and only the linkage between the producers, artisans, manufacturers and marketers is needed to be strengthened to ensure a sustainable value chain. The restructured National Bamboo Mission is helping in this area to build a complete value chain, link growers, marketers, consumers in order to realize the true potential of bamboo sector.

### Green Gold: India's Bamboo Wealth

- India's bamboo resources are world's second largest, with around 136 species spread across 13.6 million hectare area. FSI 2021, show that Madhya Pradesh has the maximum bamboo bearing area (1.84 m ha), followed by Arunachal Pradesh (1.57 m ha), Maharashtra (1.35 m ha) and Odisha (1.12 m ha).
- India is exporting bamboo and bamboo products to 154 countries.

- Despite the growing stock both within and outside the forests, India is a net importer of bamboo. It indicates that there are more opportunities to capitalize on market potential by increasing production and establishing the right value chain environment.
- Right awareness about the need to use of sustainable and eco-friendly products, increasing investments in infrastructure developments and the use of sustainable infrastructure materials are the major growth drivers for bamboo today.
- Bamboo has tremendous untapped potential for transforming India's rural economy.
- Bamboo based products are one of the oldest traditional cottage industries in India, with women working not only as part time work force in MSMEs but also as self-employed artisans.
- About 8.6 million people depend upon bamboo for their livelihood, mostly in rural areas. Thus bamboo can provide environmental, economic and livelihood security to rural communities.

#### **National Bamboo Mission: Helping Realize The Commercial Potential**

- The Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare under the Ministry of Agriculture is implementing the Restructured National Bamboo Mission (NBM) since 2018-19 for the development of complete value chain of the bamboo sector to link growers with consumers starting from planting material, plantation, creation of facilities for collection, aggregation, processing, marketing, micro, small & medium enterprises, skill development and brand building initiatives in a cluster approach mode.
- It is implemented through State Bamboo Missions and Bamboo Technology Support Groups.
- As per the NBM Operational Guidelines, assistance to beneficiaries is provided by implementing agencies under various components including MSME units such as handicraft, cottage industry, furniture making, jewellery making, shoot processing, fabric/ fibre extraction, common facility centre, Bamboo board/ mat/ corrugated sheet/ floor tiles making, bio energy extraction, etc.

#### **Beyond the North East**

- The NBM has identified three existing institutes- North East Cane and Bamboo Development Council (NECBDC), Guwahati, Indian Council of Forest Research & Education (ICFRE), Dehradun and Kerala Forest Research Institute (KFRI), Peechi, Kerala to impart skill development in cane and bamboo sector.
- NECDC, in turn, has identified five centres in the North-East for training local people in product development and processing. These institutes are:
  - (i) Training-cum-Production Centre, Ukhrul, Manipur
  - (ii) Bamboo Technology Park, Jote, Arunachal Pradesh
  - (iii) Integrated Cane and Bamboo Development Project at Tamenglong, Manipur
  - (iv) Incubation Centre at Sairang, Aizwal, Mizoram.

(v) Incubation Centre at Hi-Bermiok, Berthang, Sikkim.

- Together the implementing agencies provide training to farmers/artisans, field functionaries and entrepreneurs.
- Self-help groups of women (SHGs) who have been traditionally involved making in bamboo products, have been at the forefront of receiving skill enhancement training in making furniture, aggarbattis, etc., followed by disbursement of micro-loans which have helped them earn decent incomes, set up small units and become financially independent.
- NBM also has the critically important component of propagation and cultivation under which financial assistance is provided for establishing bamboo nurseries and plantations in non-forest as well as private farmlands, community lands, along irrigation canals, etc., optimizing farm productivity and thereby enhancing livelihood opportunities of small and marginal farmers including the landless and women.

### **Taking Bamboo Products to National and Global Markets**

- Reaching out to the markets in urban centres, especially outside India, can be a major challenge for people in rural and remote areas.
- E-trading is of much importance in accessing new markets and ensuring lucrative remuneration.
- Across the value chain, stakeholders are regularly advised to use [enam.gov.in](http://enam.gov.in) and [gem.gov.in](http://gem.gov.in) portals for marketing and procurement.
- The GeM portal has a dedicated window for registration of bamboo products as well as bamboo processing machines to add visibility in the electronic market space for government procurement.
- Along with this, more than 20 Bamboo Mandis (bamboo place) have been approved for promotion and -trading of bamboo.
- Recently the BTSG, Kerala Forest Research Institute has launched a bamboo information website ([www.bambooinfo.in](http://www.bambooinfo.in)) for better knowledge sharing and collaboration for development of the bamboo industry.
- Export of bamboo charcoal would ensure complete utilization of bamboo waste and make the bamboo business more profitable.
- The world import demand of bamboo charcoal has been hovering in the range of USD 1.5 to 2 billion and has been growing at the rate of 6 per cent in recent years.
- Biochar from bamboo residue has huge potential for use in improving crop production and mitigating climate change in India and needs to be explored. Since every part of the bamboo tree can be used, the ideal has to be zero waste.

The handicraft sector in Jammu and Kashmir has a long and rich history dating back centuries. It is a home to some of the finest and most unique artisans living across the globe. A wide variety of items such as shawl, Carpets, crewelwork, Paper Mache, copper work and wooden items are crafted by skilled artisan in the region, providing significant employment opportunities to many people. The handicraft industry heavily relies on human labour, creating many employment opportunities and representing a significant opportunity to raise the standard of living among the population attached to this sector.

### History

- Shahi Hamdan a Persian Sufi saint is credited with making substantial contribution to development of handicrafts in Kashmir. He travelled to Kashmir in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, bringing with him a number of skilled craftsmen from Persia, who introduced new designs and techniques to local artisans.
- The craftsmen brought innovative approaches to calligraphy, wood carving, shawl weaving, carpet weaving, and metal work, all of which were influenced by the styles of the Persians.
- During the time of Mughal emperors, Jammu and Kashmir was a significant hub for the manufacturing of shawls.
- The shawls made in this area are of high level of demand and were shipped to other regions of India and Europe.

### Handicrafts in the Present Day

- One of the major factor that has impacted the handicraft sector is globalization. With increased access to international markets, handicrafts and handlooms can reach a global audience. This has led to increased demand for unique and authentic handmade products from around the world.
- The J&K government has taken several measures to address the challenges faced by the industry in recent years. One of the key initiatives has been to provide support to artisans in the form of training and financial assistance.
- The government has also setup several regional handicraft sectors which provide facilities for producing and selling handicrafts.
- Many artisans now use online platforms to sell their products and reach a wider audience. This has helped to boost demand for traditional handicrafts and provide a new source of income for artisans.

### Changing Dynamics

- The government of J&K has introduced a holistic policy “Wool Processing, Handloom and Handicrafts Policy-2020” with the aim to expand the horizons of the sector and facilitate the creation of new markets globally ,besides raising the standard of living for craftsmen by providing craftsmen with better wages and safeguarding the state’s rich cultural history and distinct character for the future generations.
- It was impetus for launching several innovative programmes designed to assist craftspeople and many other related stakeholders in the sector and concentrate on providing financial assistance to indigenous artisans as



well as cooperative societies, fostering capacity building and the transfer of skills from master artisans to new generations of artisans, and opening up new markets through promotion and exhibitions that are held all over the world.

### Geographical Indication Tagging for the Crafts in the J&K

- The initiative of G.I certification and labelling under the Geographical Indications (G.I) Act of India was first introduced in 2007 for the purpose of preventing the cheap machine-made-fakes from damaging the genuine Kashmir Handicraft brand, which is a part of Kashmir's century-old heritage.
- The initiative has marked a significant improvement in the sale and export potential of handicraft and handloom products, particularly Pashmina Shawls and Carpets.
- The GI label with a user-friendly QR-Code has allowed the buyer to verify the authenticity of the purchased product hassle-free by simply scanning the label on his built-in mobile phone scanner.
- 13 more crafts have been brought under certification and labelling, including 5 registered GI crafts vis-a-vis Kashmir Sozni, Kani Shawl, Kashmir Walnut Wood Carving, Kashmir Paper Machie and Khatamband as well as to certify and label Non-GI Crafts like Copperware, Willow Wicker, Silverware, Filigree.

### Srinagar as UNESCO Creative City

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

### E-Commerce Platform

- The rise of e-commerce platforms has impacted the handicraft industry tremendously. Many weavers and artisans are now able to showcase their products on online marketplaces, reaching a broader customer space and increasing sales.
- Artisans may now connect with more individuals by utilising e-commerce, social media, and other digital methods. This has allowed them to raise their revenue and extend their consumer base.
- Companies may now communicate directly with their consumers, allowing them to obtain better rates for their products. This has been a big boon for the artisans, enabling them to make more money and sustain their livelihoods more effectively.
- Many e-commerce platforms, such as Etsy, Amazon Handmade, and Handicraft Mall, provide features tailored to their needs, such as customisable storefronts, accessible product listing and management tools, secure payment processing and access to analytics and customer data, which can help them better understand their customers and improve their marketing efforts.

- There has also been the rise of successful startup ventures from within J&K, which have created a brand and today have become go-to places for the products originating from Kashmir, Kashmir Box and Kashmir Origin are examples of two such startups.
  - **Kashmir Box**- Started ten years ago, the company brings exquisite and labour-intensive work of Kashmiri craftsmen to the attention of clients who value aesthetic value and high-quality craftsmanship. It has contributed to the creation of sustainable livelihoods for the craftspeople in Kashmir by facilitating connections between buyers and artists.
  - **Kashmir Origin**- Started in 2019, the platform is an online boutique for authentic Kashmiri handicrafts. Kashmir Origin works directly with artisans from the region, bringing their products to customers worldwide. They have created a unique supply chain for the crafts, by classifying them into broad categories and in each craft, having associated with five master artisans.

### Conclusion

Though the handicrafts sector in J&K has faced several challenges in recent years, the government's initiatives and the increasing use of technology are helping to revitalise the sector and promote the region's rich cultural heritage.

### RURAL CRAFTS FOR LIVELIHOOD

In the rural areas, traditional crafts production is carried on simply for everyday practical use. Handicrafts in India are not only pleasing to the eye but have a utility as well. In Indian terminology, handicrafts are referred as, 'hastshilp', 'dastkari', 'karigari', 'hastkala' etc.

### Geographical Indicators and Associated Handicrafts

- GI is a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or reputation that are due to that origin. Crafts landscape is so vast in India, therefore an attempt has been made to tabulate popular GI in 'handicraft' category.
- GI tagging may encourage preservation of biodiversity and know-how of local natural resources. Also, labour-intensive nature of GI offers a potent solution to boost the employment-to-population ratio in India. It may reduce urban migration.

### Importance of Crafts

- India's craft heritage has an inherent regional uniqueness. Villagers inherit skills of art and craft from their ancestors and continue to produce handicrafts which have a demand not only in Indian markets but in international markets also which can fetch us foreign exchange earnings.

- India Brand Equity Foundation states that crafts production can give India a competitive global advantage as the sector has the scope of becoming a billion-dollar market.
- The US ,UK, UAE , Germany , France, Latin American countries, Italy, Netherlands, Canada and Australia are key countries that import handicraft.

### Challenges

- **Sea Change in Business Practices:** Unawareness to gauge market, negligible knowledge to optimise social media to reach out to clients, nitty-gritty of digital payment mechanisms, low penetration of technology, inaccessibility of funds and poor institutional framework.
- **Stagnant Wage Growth of Artisans:** Despite their superior skills, wages have not kept pace with the income growth experienced by other sectors, resulting in drifting away of younger generation from the sector.

### Interventions of Government, Corporate Sector and NGOs

- To overcome these challenges several, government has taken several initiatives. Office of Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India, implements various scheme for development of artisans, like, National Handicraft Development Programme and Comprehensive Handicrafts Cluster Development scheme, which emphasizes on an integrated approach for development of handicrafts in a holistic manner and aims to provide sustainable livelihoods opportunities to the artisans.
- The scheme has components like: design and technology up-graduation, human resource development, baseline survey and mobilization of artisans under ‘Ambedkar Hastshilp Vikas Yojana’, direct benefits to artisans, infrastructure and technology support, marketing support and services, research and development.
- ‘Shilp Guru’ Awards and National Awards are given by Ministry of textiles, to give recognition to legendary crafts persons, for their excellence in craftsmanship and valuable contribution to Indian handicrafts and textiles sector.
- TRIFED is a national level apex organization functioning under the control of Ministry of Tribal Affairs. Its main activity includes retail marketing development of tribal handicrafts and handloom products.

### Crafts and Tourism

- One of the key components of Craft tourism experience is to engage the tourist with the local crafts and production process. This not only increases the consciousness of the tourist about the craft and craft processes but also makes the tourist aware about the social, cultural and environmental challenges associated to craft sector.

## Conclusion

Artisan economy is all-pervasive and crucial for inclusion as it mainly comprises of women and marginalized groups. It can act as a big source of livelihood after agriculture. NGOs are also creating an impact in crafts sector by bridging the distance of creating the products and earning a business. Announcement to establish 'Unity Malls' pan India, in Union Budget 2023, strengthening platforms like 'Crafts villages' are much needed.

### FOSTERING RURAL CRAFT THROUGH ONE DISTRICT ONE PRODUCT

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

#### One District One Product Initiative

- The concept of ODOP is basically an augmented version of Japanese business development concept 'One Village One Product' (OVOP) which aimed to promote localised products and services to improve the standard of living of the local people and for making the presence of local contribution in nation-building.
- Uttar Pradesh is the first state to implement ODOP in the line of OVOP to revive their indigenous art and crafts enterprises by providing financial and marketing support to artisans and craftsmen. The sole aim was to recreate, revive the lost creative products and process to safeguard the traditional knowledge.
- After the success of ODOP in Uttar Pradesh, the centre has embarked upon implementation of ODOP in all the states and UTs of India.
- ODOP envisages that each district must export a product and develop it as a brand with its own identity.
- It includes both agricultural and non-agricultural products, including food grains, food stuffs, handicrafts and handlooms and other essentials. It will help in attaining balanced regional development across all the districts of the country and will enable socio-economic development across the nation.
- This scheme has merged with the 'Districts as Export Hub' (DEH) initiative of the Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), Department of Commerce.
- The functioning of exports hubs are being done by adopting bottom-up approach; comprising local resources and involving youngsters.

#### ODOP Initiative and Rural Crafts

- ODOP initiative is aimed to give a big push to traditional and indigenous industries of each district, in the line of their competencies and productivities.

- This will optimize production, productivity, income, preservation and development of local crafts, improvement in product quality, and skill development.
- The main goals of ODOP are:
  - a) To promote and produce indigenous art and crafts
  - b) To preserve traditional knowledge
  - c) To support artisans and craftsmen
  - d) To support livelihood and employability of rural/local community
  - e) To boost exports through vocal for local
  - f) To attain balance regional development
- The major art and crafts encouraged under the ODOP scheme are: Rogan arts, Folk paintings, Warli art, Lace art, Kathputli paintings, Chitrakar paintings, Chitrakar paintings, Fabric paintings , Tanjore paintings, etc.

### ODOP Prospects and Benefits

- ODOP GeM Bazar is launched to promote sales and the procurement of ODOP products across the country. Now, due to creation of own e-market place and ODOP e-Mart, artisans can sale their products in the e-commerce platform.
- These products are showcased in the international platforms through various agencies and institutions including World Economic Forum.
- As a result of ODOP scheme, indigenous and traditional local art and crafts which are made/produced at district level have gained an immense popularity both nationally and internationally.

### Issues and Challenges

- Poor institutional arrangements.
- Lack of adequate funds.
- Inaccessible funds.
- Ineffective backward and forward linkages for marketing.
- Low adoption of technology.
- Lack of marketing skills including marketing intelligence etc.

### Way Forward

This initiative will certainly correct the skewed development towards urban and will foster all-inclusive and balanced regional development of the nations by empowering rural economy in particular, by addressing unemployment, poverty, income inequality, and rural-urban migration issues. This will help in attaining inclusive development through localised and regional empowerment. Increasing awareness, better marketing facilities and

well-founded public policy supports added great momentum in the ODOP implementation and outcome; and thereby making India a stronger economy in attainment of Atma-nirbhar Bharat.

### TRADITIONAL BELL-METAL INDUSTRY OF ASSAM

Bell metal products manufactured in the small town Sarthebari (about 75 km west of Guwahati) have a very wide range, covering as many as 108 items in all. Almost every family in the cluster of nine villages here has a small 'kanhar-shaal' a bell-metal manufacturing cottage unit in which various articles from bell-metals are made all by using traditional tools. Some earn their livelihood by selling their products across Assam while some of them run showrooms in Guwahati and other towns, while some even go door to door as vendors with products.

#### Raw Materials

- Bell- Metal is an alloy comprising copper (78 percent) and tin (22 percent).
- Since Assam does not produce either of them, hence, bell-metal is collected in three ways, it comes as scraps from different places like Ghaziabad, Moradabad, Faridabad, Kanpur and Kolkata. Some people also collect broken and discarded Bell-metal utensils from households, which is then recycled by melting.
- Bell-metal scrap, raw material for this cottage industry, currently costs about Rs. 1150 per kg.
- The cooperative societies have a furnace of their own where bell-metals are melted and then made into lumps of various fixed weights.
- The lumps are then processed in a rolling machine into round flat shapes like a roti.

#### Product Range

- The Bell-Metal products manufactured in Sarthebari have a very wide range, covering as many as 108 items in all, certain popular items constitute the core of the industry these are-
  - 'Kanhi' (traditional Assamese dishes and plates).
  - 'Baati' (bowls of various shapes and sizes).
  - 'Bota' (round trays with a stand).
  - 'Taal' (cymbals of several varieties used as religious musical instruments).

#### Government Support

- In 1956, the Government of Assam had established a five-tonne capacity rolling machine at Sarthebari which became obsolete after lying unutilised due to lack of skilled manpower to run it.
- In 1973, the Government of Assam had established, a Common Facility Centre with a melting machine, three polishing machines, one drilling machine and a weighing machine.
- In 1987, the Government of Assam waived off sales tax from handmade bell-metal products.

- The Government of Assam released Rs. 157.34 lakhs under the State Priority scheme for the Sarthebari bell-metal industry in 2013-14.
- In 2013-14, the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Government of India had sanctioned Rs. 49.15 lakhs for 15 SHGs covering 315 artisans of Sarthebari under Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hastshilp Vikas Yojna (AHVY).
- A sum of Rs. 49.76 lakh was also sanctioned by the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), for setting up a Common Facility Centre and Rs. 100 lakh for a raw material bank. But, the facility centre is yet to come up.

#### Potential Market

- Buddhist monasteries and temples in Bhutan, Myanmar, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Nepal require several types of musical instruments (cymbals) and utensils.
- There is also scope of covering Assam's bell-metal industry under the Act East Policy and other ambitious government schemes, which in turn will give a new lease of life to the artisans.

#### Heritage Tag

Assamese people strictly prefer the hand-made ones in various occasions like marriages, death-rituals, religious purposes, and festivals. The hand-tools used by the artisans include niyari (anvil), chalti, sara (tong), kun (hand-operated lathe), khonta (file), hammer etc. "Given the exclusive nature and rich age-old tradition, there is a crying need for protecting the traditional industry under Trademark and Geographical Indications. This is required in addition to technology upgradation, skill development, meeting raw material scarcity, product diversification, and market promotion among others.

### **PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF HANDLOOM AND HANDICRAFT SECTOR**

- The history of Indian crafts and art is as old as the Indus Valley Civilisation and has been evolving since, with the growth of civilisations. These defining characteristics have been preserved in spite of the political and cultural influences that the region has been subjected to over the centuries. However, India has assimilated the different cultures and evolved as a stronger and resilient country.
- The different art forms developed as a combination of factors like easily available raw material, environment, legacy skill transfer, religious beliefs and local agricultural traditions. Hence, each region had a distinct identity and trade and commerce defined and strengthened this identity. For example, the clay pottery in Aurangabad village near Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh has grown due to availability of the particular clay nearby and is a source of livelihood for this village. Similarly, Kanjeevaram sari has motifs drawn from nearby temples and is worn on auspicious occasions.

- With the arrival of the East India Company and industrial revolution, the urban landscape underwent transformation like the West. The economy of the country was systematically damaged and the textile trade was one of the worst affected. Rural landscapes had the advantage of less mobility and more continuity of traditions and so was the case with art and handicrafts.
- The traditions, religion, culture, clothing, home decor and food, etc were so intertwined with each other and a way of life, that they were inseparable and passed on through generations without any formal documentation.
- The production of art and crafts declined during British rule due to the absence of patrons of crafts and the commercial pursuits of the Government. However, it survived due to local need and support. Brassware or similar metals used in religious ceremonies were a local need.
- The handloom and handicraft sector is an unorganised and decentralised industry in rural areas of the country and being labour intensive, is next only to agriculture in terms of employment generation.
- Many initiatives are taken to standardise the products, like Handloom Mark, Silk mark, India Handloom Brand (IHB) to indicate quality certification. Also, to protect the origin and identity of these crafts Geographic Identification tagging is being done. Government is also supporting the handloom and handicraft sector through various schemes for production and marketing of these craft items.