



## Role of Women in craft based NGOs to strengthen sustainability in India

MS. RAKHI WAHEE PRATAP

(Associate Professor, NIFT Hyderabad)

Craft in Indian context not only describes an individual's aesthetic expression but it is also a medium of socializing and uniting a community. Sensitivity of crafts has always matched the sensitivity of women. Many Indian crafts from olden days were practiced by woman folks after completing house hold chores, the older women shaped up products and guided the younger ones to continue the tradition. These crafts have shaped many "Ritual and Spiritual" textiles of India. In the present scenario they are being explored, practiced, designed, produced and marketed by women in various NGOs.

The paper will present case study of NGOs which are craft based and have been lead by the woman who have not just revived crafts but has utilized it as tool in providing meaning to several lives. The focus will be on different work models utilized for uplifting the skills of woman and how the interaction has created a sustainable model for the society. The paper will touch upon various developments in the form of social change which are mushrooming from these NGOs resulting into a wholesome society.

**Keywords: Sustainability, Women empowerment, self help groups.**

### **Introduction**

Products produced either by hand or by hand operated mechanism is called craft products in which artisan's skill contribution carries the major share of the craft goods. The crafts utilize sustainable raw material as primary component and the contribute towards creative, utilitarian and aesthetic appeal of the product, which is governed by the socio, cultural and geographic features of the place where the craft metamorphose (1). Craft in Indian context not only describes an individual's aesthetic expression but it is also a medium of socializing and uniting a community. Each region in India especially urban areas is comprises of varying geographical components, plans, hills, up hills, deserts etc. but the common essence will be the same. Males look after a more physical and rigorous work wear as females are expected to do household work which requires dedication, sympathy and care. Women have always utilized their spare time into creative activities and thus craft has nurtured out of this creative expression adorned by skill and uniqueness. Sensitivity of crafts has always matched the sensitivity of women. Many Indian crafts from olden days were practiced by woman folks after completing house hold chores, the older women shaped up products and guided the younger ones to continue the tradition. Craft has always stays unanimous to the region specific; this unfolds its sustainable aspect. These crafts have shaped many "Ritual and Spiritual" textiles of India with its raw material specific to a region making it a complete sustainable outburst of expression .From the olden times to the present scenario they are being explored, practiced, designed, produced and marketed by women in various NGOs. Thus woman, craft, NGOs and sustainability is interconnected to fetch promising future.

### **Craft and Sustainability:**

(2) Jatin Bhatt, 2010 argues that handcrafted products not only are the primary component of the culturally dominating industry but has an essence of the techno aesthetic understanding , this showcase the sustainable factor in a major way to relate an understanding of the environment and material with which each craft is composed of. Craft immersed from uniqueness and components which are need base, its connectivity envelops ethical concerns, which makes it more appealing. (3) In the present scenario of decreasing resources at a vast speed, environmental concerns due to industrial production has become a major concern , craft provide a complete solution , its resource which indicates sustainable components and ethical means of production and concern for environment makes it a wholesome idea for the society. Craft is an ethically driven movement for conscious consumption which advocates a thoughtful introspection before making buying decision.

### **Women Empowerment through NGOs and sustainable crafts:**

(4)"Poverty may be defined as a human condition characterized by sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights".

NGOs. Main focus is to provide equal opportunities to all genders, therefore women empowerment is one of the important aims, achieved through sustainable system involving craft activity. (5) M. Kumaran, states that to promote to assure gender equality, NGOs focusing on women empowerment keep up a continuous movement to win over an all over developed frame which provides social and financial strength in domestic and individual's literacy parameters, it is further adds that gender equality is not a feature with single component of financial perspective but it can holistically referred to religious, communal, political, financial and domestic equality.

Gender equality and equity need to come from various fronts such as the religious, communal, political, economic and household fronts. It is important that an overall and positive change takes place to assure woman empowerment. All spheres of society could understand the importance of woman empowerment to promote it with positive concern if a long term social change is expected; an NGO has the capacity to imbibe it in a planned manner into income generating opportunities.

(5) M. Kumaran also focuses on the relation of communities and the NGOs. Of grass root level and adds a healthy communities have the capacity to generate self help NGOs within itself, supported by empowered women leaders to strengthen welfare programs by exploring opportunities for these communities. Focus of these organizations is to assure short-term and easily moldable and adaptable skills such as required in cottage industry. These NGOs which are self sufficient in terms of area knowhow but at times are flexible enough to generate tie ups with other NGOs. Such models of NGOs. Have proved to be big success not only urban areas but also in rural clusters. Similarly (6) S. Sen , 1999 states that primarily the focus of such groups was based on Initial conceptual frameworks for voluntary organizations which promotes ideas of self-help and community service for a social impact. (7) Appell states that Descriptions of NGOs is not very specific it requires various undisruptive roles to provide support in various capacities like being intermediaries, self help groups, reformist, visionary, transformist , adaptive , flexibility, pragmatic, idealistic, participatory, change agent, alternatives, flexible, creative, democratic, and advocacy

#### **“ABHIHARA” an NGO with a commitment:**

The organization is based on the above mentioned objective with a sustainable backup, It is a woman empowered organization based in Telangana state of India. It is committed to strengthening women's financial perspective in the society by providing technical, social and skill based up gradation. The organization is headed by Ms. Sudha and her team comprises of committed and competent members. As men have migrated to the cities in search of better opportunities; women are faced with challenges to handle domestic and social responsibilities

*The objective* of the organization is to uplift social welfare and livelihood of the rural women, because lack of direction and opportunities due to social restrictions create hindrance in terms of providing financial stability. The organization supporting women by providing opportunities for strengthening the knowhow in handloom sector, primarily jobs related to weaving sector. Enabling women and their family to understand and reduce the gap between financial organizations.

#### **Methodology:**

It includes capacity building by providing specific training workshops for skill development, introducing women into cotton supply chain and cotton farming. Time to time collaborative training from similar help groups market accessibility is also encouraged.

- *Natural Dyeing workshop*-- The organization conducts workshops for the weavers to understand natural dyeing. Though the weaver is not required to know dyeing as the primary concern but the knowledge will provide an understanding of the limitation and benefits of the process .This will also help to develop a mutual understanding with the dyer community and come up with workable solution thus resolving work and dyeing related issues with them. The exposure to know application of natural dyes will also provide a sustainable edge to the weaver which has a growing demand not just overseas but also domestically. As these weavers have communal bond with the dyer community, this will give way to new preview for fresh designs and colour pallet.
- *Jewelry Design workshop*: It is important to imbibe sustainability component at each stage. The women workers who are from weaver community or otherwise come across waste fabric during and after weaving process, sometimes even at packaging stage, were taught methods to reuse and up cycle them which is an important ethical consumption tool. The women were taught to use the fabric to make jewelry with contemporary design inputs. The nature of the training program was small scales which provided women workers, a complete utilization of their spare time and generate opportunities for strengthening financial aspect. It also helped to absorb the optimal usage of resource in a creative outburst.

- *Tribal embroidery workshop*: Small scale industry is feasible to understand and execute under Sustainability strengthening. Women folks are trained to embroider as per design requirement of each garment and fabric. The concept can also help new entrepreneurs and workers at small scale. The product include apparel to soft home furnishing goods which can be crafted with aesthetic appeal by these women folks.
- *Skill up gradation program* : Various skills which are required in apparel design like stitching , embroidery and pattern making is also taught to these women to be self sustained entrepreneurs or employee. The program is called “Vende - Matram” Initially based on the already acquired or known skills , participants are divided among 2 – 3 groups and the level of their skill accuracy is measured accordingly training is provided with the help of expert trainers . the program received tremendous appreciation and attracted new participation.
- *Better Marketing opportunities are introduced*—Craft women and their small scale and self help groups are introduced to open market systems and international opportunities for exposure to better markets.

*Speed breakers*: The organization does has some difficulties in running the welfare programs and conducting workshops:

- Lack of Discipline due to female participant who are also expected to perform their domestic responsibilities without any excuse of joining the workshop. A lot of cooperation is required by the family of the participant otherwise they can't concentrate on the work.
- Customization lacking in government schemes: Each program has different requirements which depends on the location, no. of participants, deliverables etc. getting help from the government becomes difficult as they don't allow flexibility for the program.

*Outcome*: The developmental program has fetched various social benefits:

- Financial stability—Regular employment has provided regular flow of income to the workers and beneficiary , bank are approaching the workers due to their improved credibility.
- Better lending facility—improvement in the financial situation has provided the entrepreneurs with better loan options for expanding opportunities. This way more social acceptance and local sourcing improves sustainability in social framework.
- More and more livelihood is created by encouragement at the design, sourcing, marketing and packaging front.

#### **Conclusion :**

It is not always easy for every government to penetrate into the social, financial and economic structure of its population. Sustainability requires a wholesome benefits to all classes and especially woman condition need to be improved, therefore NGOs empowered by women self help groups have the flexibility to penetrate and can benefit at the grass root level. Women leading these NGOs. and being the beneficiaries are assuring a structural growth for our society. Rightful utilization of opportunities by these NGOs. can be beneficial at the grass root level. Localization in terms of raw material and labor sourcing can treat several social barriers and constrains.

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