

Shraddha's innovative attempt to rope in the senior citizens of Z1 Estate, Bhubaneswar **for promotion of Handloom on the 16th May 2023**

As a part of its innovative initiatives for empowering the handloom weaver's for increasing their earning substantially, "*Shraddha*" in collaboration with the Z-1 Senior Citizens' Welfare Society, Bhubaneswar organized an interaction program on the 16th May 2023 evening in "Pran" the Conference Hall.

Initiating the discussion, Shri Gurudas Brahma, Vice President of the society introduced the guests and touched upon the objectives of the meeting aiming at mobilizing the support of senior citizens inmates of the Z1 estate for promotion of handloom.

Shri Sabyasachi Mohapatra, noted film maker, President of the society dwelled upon the importance of handloom in the socio-economic-cultural fabrics of Odisha and expressed his keenness for its promotion for solving the twin problems of poverty and unemployment with active support of the civil society organizations.

Dr Sanjay Kumar Panda, President, *Shraddha* shared his experiences on promotion of handloom spread over the last four decades in Odisha and at the national level. He referred to the inherent strengths of handloom and identified the impact of disruptive technology as the prime factor behind the decline in the number of handloom and handloom weavers.

He recollected his personal experiences while working as the Director of Textiles, Odisha in 1990, when the average skilled weaver was earning about Rs 200 per day, which was **8 times the wage of unskilled** labour (Rs 25). As compared with it in **2022**, weaver's earnings have increased to about Rs 500 per day, which **has gone down substantially**, as being only twice the daily wage of the Unskilled labour (Rs 250). This aberration in **income has adversely affected the life**, access to basic amenities, of the weavers at personal and social levels. It has led to the younger generation losing interest in their traditional occupation and going out for other jobs. Dr Panda stressed on the need for a paradigm shift in the approach to promotion of handloom, keeping in view the salient features of young India in the 21st Century. He passionately advocated for increasing the income of the handloom weavers substantially to be the fulcrum of the new strategy. In this context, he stressed the exclusive (*Khas*) nature of handmade products and production of high value, high quality, new design, new fabrics as the key to face competition and restore its unique place in the textile world. He expressed confidence that this is possible by empowering the educated, smartphone friendly, young primary producer weavers with digital technology to contact the customers with taste for handmade products and disposable income directly as the surest way to success. This will involve encouraging the Primary producer weavers to do business in a different way on "D 2 C" (Direct to Customer) by using Information technology-based tools for (i) Generating awareness about the product Handloom (ii) Contacting buyers & getting their preference (iii) Weaving quality fabrics accordingly (iii) Sending the product by speed post courier and (v) Getting sale proceeds online into the bank account.

He dwelled upon the subject for about an hour with interesting references. He appealed to the senior citizens present, to recapitulate the example of squirrel *making small yet meaningful contributions to the making of the Ram Sethu* in the *Ramayan* and support promotion of handloom in their own small way, which will have a big impact.

In this context, he specifically referred to support **(i) for generating awareness, increase pride & confidence of the handloom weavers (ii) handholding the Weavers and Handloom Startups (iii) Widening the Consumer base on social media and by word of mouth with your friends, neighbors, & relatives and (iv) purchasing handloom for wearing/ gifting to friends / relatives directly from the weavers.**

Dr Panda summed up his talk by referring to the Odia couplet

“ ଅନ୍ଧାର ବୋଲି କର ନାହିଁ ଗୋଲ, ଭୁବନ ଚିଏ ଦିଅ ଜାଲି, ହୁ ହୁ

ଜଳିବ ତହିଁରୁ ସହସ୍ର ଦୀପାଲି, ଭୁଅନ୍ଧକାର ଯିବ ଚାଲି।” ହୁ ହୁ

“Let us not shout that there is darkness all round, rather let us light a Dipa (earthen lamp) each, from which thousands lamps will glow, and the darkness will go for ever”.

National award-winning weaver, Shri Sarat Kumar Patra and his spouse, Smt Josodhara Patra were felicitated in the meeting. Both of them participated in the discussion along with show and sale of handloom fabrics, which was a grand attraction for the distinguished lady participants on the eve of the Savitri festival.



