

# Dwindling handlooms find hope in Gen Next

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**Ahmedabad:** As a teenager, Mehul Padhiyar, a native of Bhujodi, Kutch, was trained in the art of Kutchi weaving under the watchful eyes of his grandfather. "The intricacy of warps and wefts and the sheer manual labour it takes used to deter people from taking it up even then. But my grandfather insisted on carrying forward the legacy. Under the quota for artisans, I have got admission to the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) Gandhinagar for a course in textile design," says Padhiyar.

## NATIONAL HANDLOOM DAY

"My younger brother was not interested in weaving and he never learnt. And he is not alone. There are many youths who opt for contract-based work or simply move away to other vocations. My stint at NIFT will be different and enriching because I am exposed to many more styles, techniques and products that will also enrich my core competence," he adds.

As the 10th National Handloom Day will be celebrated on Wednesday, state-based artisans are cautious

## GOVT BOUGHT HANDICRAFTS WORTH ₹7CR IN 2023-24

The state govt on Tuesday said that the Gujarat State Handloom and Handicrafts Corporation bought handicrafts worth Rs 6.90 crore from 3,200 craftsmen and artisans during 2023-24. Wednesday, Aug 7 is being observed as National Handloom Day. The statement said that the handloom and handicrafts development corporation registered turnover of Rs 25 crore from the sale of items from Garvi Gurjari outlets. State govt officials said that the sector is not only an important employment generator but also has a significant women participation. While state-level celebrations will take place in Ahmedabad, NIFT Gandhinagar will mark the day with an exhibition of handloom crafts from Gujarat and other states, and a fashion walk. At EDII, an event will mark the recognition and felicitation of major handicraft traditions of Gujarat.

about what the future looks like. While Gujarat has multiple handloom legacies with geographic indication (GI) tags such as patola from Patan and shawls from Kutch, most of them need govt support and handholding due to higher costs and prices compared to machine-made fa-



bric.

So be it the double-cloth Sujani weaving of Bharuch or cotton kasota weaving of Chhota Udepur, the state is a treasure trove for connoisseurs of handloom. But the longevity of this craft depends on new ideas and innovation, say experts.

For example, the Tangaliya weaving of Surendranagar – associated with the Dangasiya community and sheep and goat wool – has expanded its base by embracing cotton to create similar patterns. Jaha Rathod, president of the Tangaliya Weaves' Association, says the craft was

on its deathbed in the early 2000s with most of the artisan families abandoning it for more profitable ventures.

"But getting a GI tag in 2008 was a turning point. It opened the doors to govt support, innovations through educational institutes and identity in Gujarat and outside. Traditional artisans of this seventh-century art only worked with wool. But today one even finds cotton-silk and Merino wool renditions," says Rathod.

Jaydeep Vankar, another NIFT student from a family of weavers, says that traditional kilts are no longer in demand due to their dimensions and weight. "But the same is used for making dupattas, stoles, smaller kilts and so on. In the past few years, we have even experimented with articles such as neckties based on demand," he says.

Prof Satya Ranjan Acharya, coordinator for the Hastakala Setu scheme at the Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII), says the scheme has helped 57 artisans for authorized GI tag use and new design developments. "This recognition helps them go to B2B marketplaces, collaborate, get orders domestically and internationally, and participate in GI exhibitions," he says.