

Grassroots Upliftment through Artistic Production: A Critical Survey of the Economics of Indigenous Craftsmanship

Aryaman Gupta

Maharaja Sawai Man Singh Vidyalaya, Rajasthan, India

INTRODUCTION

Asian crafts are distinguished by the materials utilized (for example, bamboo), the talents employed, and the methods of production. The new worldwide Sustainable Development Goals lay a strong focus on local jobs, and environmental management, and even include craft in passing by mentioning the necessity for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products. The carbon footprint of product sales is lower than that of the formal sector, and raw material harvesting has a lower environmental effect because it is done locally without the use of motorized transport. Asian policies place a high value on artisanal items produced locally (Ellis & Lo, 2019). This is so because, despite the minute local size of craft firms, the sector contributes significantly to national economies. According to UNESCO reports, for instance, Visual Arts and Crafts account for more than half of cultural employment in Thailand. For the great majority of items, eco-local production of Asian crafts is linked with a concentration of local sales in which products have a defined role in the local market. All of these methods, markets, and indigenous products originate from centuries of history contributing to the economies of these indigenous markets. but have recently been threatened by a number of pressures ranging from economic to environmental (Ellis & Lo, 2019). Moreover, these traditional artisan practices have not stayed static or limited to a particular place or group, but have expanded well beyond traditional ways of production. Crafts that are mostly exchanged within the community as practical or daily goods are being commercialized to meet different purposes. Changing socioeconomic conditions have also compelled artists to market objects of daily use, bringing the craft from the country to the urban. by combining traditional manufacturing practices with modern production processes (Chutia & Sarma, 2016). Whilst indigenous craft and artistic practices bring about of a lot tourism to Asian countries, the aforementioned economic pressure of running out of business and extreme commercialization to satisfy tourist needs has made the relationship between Asian craftsmanship and the economy slightly tricky. The arts of Asia and other third-world countries are now being generated in the form of 'tourist art' for the aesthetic satisfaction of the dominating world. Many indigenous crafts, particularly for this external group, have evolved from 'traditional and sacred arts' to 'useful art and fine art', and 'secular arts' (Chutia & Sarma, 2016). This often steals from the authenticity and originality of the craftsmanship that the Asian nations thrive on. Despite the several pressures on craft makers to manufacture cheap imitations of cultural things in order to sell them to visitors, there is also evidence that large North American and European stores are seeing a growing market for distinctive handcrafted products. Responding to this demand while keeping the local economy viable may determine the future of artisan manufacturing in many developing nations (Ellis & Lo, 2019).

BACKGROUND

The majority of craft manufacturing has its roots in pre-industrial cultural legacy and tradition, with people sourcing or cultivating materials to manufacture practical things. Many technologies and procedures that are still in use today were devised or evolved thousands of years ago, frequently before historical records existed. Patterns, textures, dyes, and finishing materials also date back to antiquity (Ballyn, 2019). South Asian indigenous art is also derived from incredibly rich crafts that have been passed down through generations, complicated designs, patterns, painstakingly made landmarks, temples, and carvings – all of which are great marvels of quality craftsmanship. Arts and designs were largely depictions of people's daily lives and geopolitical situations. Archaeological investigations have revealed that the manufacturing era of a specific handicraft object may be deduced from its production process, pattern, and material utilized (Din, 2014). Throughout South Asia's history, indigenous crafts and artwork have served as a means of exhibiting culture and history. One significant element is that it evolved through history. For example, obtaining local raw materials was and still is congruent with the idea of eco-localism in informal industry. Because the supply is typically not manufactured, gathering and collecting resources from the natural environment is only feasible when the

process is informal. India is an example of this, where craftsmen go out and gather Madur themselves to maintain and perpetuate their ancient art form (Bardhan & Bhattacharya, 2022). This procedure is what distinguishes indigenous artifacts and renders them so valuable. In fact, UNESCO has worked for several decades to enhance these indigenous Asian crafts with a global knowledge of their socio-cultural and economic function in society. UNESCO has helped in bringing Asian indigenous art to the world stage by integrating training, production, and marketing efforts, as well as enabling the necessary collaboration among pertinent national institutions, regional, international, governmental, and non-governmental organizations (Vencatachelum, 2019). South Asian traditional art and craft have become significant drivers of developing economies as a result of their recognition. These craftsmen and their crafts play an important part in the development of revenue and employment, and it has also been recognized globally as a strategy for poverty alleviation. It is a method of maintaining and fostering cultural and artistic customs, such as multiple traditional artisan methods and talents passed down from generation to generation. Many nations preserve their major distinctive cultural history through heritage crafts (Yang et al., 2018).

However, this industry has faced a number of problems, including industrialization and globalization. Industrial manufacturing has progressively displaced traditional handcrafted production in countries all over the world during the last century. This has resulted in the loss of traditional markets for craftsmen and crafters in South Asian nations, who are unable to compete with the financial and industrial efficiency of volume manufacturing brought about by modern technology and mechanization (Wood, 2012). This significant transformation has also robbed indigenous craft of its distinctiveness. Changing socioeconomic situations have also compelled artists to offer things of common necessity, bringing the craft from the country to the urban marketplace by fusing traditional manufacturing practices with mass-production technology. It may appear to be at odds with the original value of the arts and crafts, but it has supported the increase in mass tourism, which helps the worldwide reach of traditional crafts, therefore establishing a market for foreign audiences. Indian workmanship is an excellent illustration of this. India has established itself as one of the world's top exporters of handicrafts. Indigenous artistry clearly has a complicated link with the socioeconomic components that these Asian countries present.

DISCUSSION

Despite exploitation and commercialization, indigenous arts and crafts remain vital in South Asian countries. This is owing to the traditional craft sector's financial, cultural, and long-term contributions to these developing countries. Craftsmanship provides a framework for explorations of how moral, ecological, and environmental principles are manifested through, specific materials, processes, and objects, as the link between consumption, resource depletion, industrial production, and environmental degradation enters the mainstream discourse. In recent years, fresh marketplaces have emerged, especially among urban consumers, who have the pocket and will to invest in handcrafted indigenous art, with ethical, environmental, and social values attached to it (Wood, 2012). Traditional craftsmanship in South Asian nations is now often understood and analyzed based on their connection to the local region, relationship with the self, and attribution to the environment (Bardhan & Bhattacharya, 2022). For example, because customers understand a product's externalized environmental and social costs as it proceeds from extraction through manufacture, transport, consumption, and disposal (Wood, 2012), Indian craftsmen are ideally positioned to enter into this burgeoning market. Kantha, a quilting custom of women in former Bengal (West Bengal in India and Bangladesh), is a popular practice in many Bengali homes to retain worn-out clothing and reuse them for various purposes. With crafts like Kantha, which epitomizes recycling and sustainable fashion in today's day and age, traditional craftsmanship has become a major contributor to the nation's sustainability quotient (Bardhan & Bhattacharya, 2022).

This kind of sustainability and unique craftsmanship also has a massive market in other South Asian countries like Pakistan, often sustaining rural artisans and their economies. Pakistan has a long history of producing arts and crafts such as textile, embroidery, beadwork, block-printing, patchwork, woodcrafts, ceramics, jewelry, stone-carving, and so on, with migration by Persians, Greeks, and Arabs adding their distinct cultures to the craft heritage of Pakistan. Indigenous arts and crafts are produced extensively in all regions of Pakistan, primarily in rural areas. The handicraft sector contributes considerably to the production of funds and employment for the country's economic and social sustainability. According to current figures, the handicraft industry alone accounts for 13.54% of all employment in Pakistan (Yang et al., 2018). This is a perfect showcase of how imperative indigenous craftsmanship is for developing countries like Pakistan. Similarly, these marketplaces cannot prosper unless there is a socio-cultural component attached to the crafts being made. For example, in several communities around Colombo, Sri Lanka's capital, there are numerous traditional artisan families and heritages that have been passed down for decades.

The bulk of the people who live in these villages have descended from prominent traditional craft families that served Kandyan Kings and Buddhist temples from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. Embodied cultures, such as family

practices, rituals, norms, and beliefs, as well as skills in traditional handicrafts, have been passed down through generations and are vital to most people's livelihoods. The villages themselves might be viewed as symbolic manifestations of the larger Sinhalese culture and identity, shown through everyday activities. Apart from maintaining the rural economy, these villages also help to preserve Sri Lankan culture throughout the country through indigenous arts and crafts (Daskon & McGregor, 2012). Furthermore, several national and international programs and institutions aided in the preservation of such indigenous crafts and rural economies. Post Independence, for example, the recognition of the critical importance of design and product development to the crafts led to the establishment of Regional Design Development Centres in 1956, as well as Weavers' Service Centres, Indian Institutes of Handloom Technology, the National Centre for Textile Design, and other organizations that built the framework that was supportive of the sector. The National Institute of Design (NID) in Ahmedabad was founded in 1961, while the National Institute of Fashion and Technology was founded in 1986 (Sethi, 2019).

While the South Asian artisan markets benefit from this combination of economic, social, governmental, and sustainability factors, commercialization and globalization have made it difficult for the traditional community to compete with inauthentic craft. Due to industrialization, burgeoning growth in substitute products, rapid changes in consumer tastes, and scarcity of raw materials, Pakistan's handicraft industry has lost its market position because machine-made products are much cheaper and handicraft products require complex labor work with low-profit margins. Furthermore, rising raw material prices and a weak marketing network have made this sector even more unpleasant (Yang et al., 2018). Commercialization of these delicate crafts, however, is essential to appeal to a bigger clientele. For example, unlike Pakistan's handicraft, Dilli Haat in Delhi, India, allows visitors to engage with artisans, purchase craft pieces, sample ethnic cuisine, and be transported briefly to the magical world of Indian art and heritage without ever leaving the premises. This depiction of indigenous arts and crafts has aided many craftsmen and generated employment and opportunities for people in need (Sethi, 2013).

CONCLUSION

Crafts are a vital cultural asset for every nation since they represent the culture and customs of a certain location. Craft manufacturing is an important aspect of the economies of numerous developing countries. Furthermore, the relevance of indigenous craft tradition for the development of disadvantaged nations has been extensively recognized in the literature, thus it becomes important and justifiable to pay attention in terms of proper policy measures to maintain and preserve the craft heritage. In these countries, the economic approach to the craft has mostly focused on the sector's impact on export and artists' capacity to earn a living. Up to this moment, such an approach has guided the policies that have been enacted for crafts. However, because of the natural components of indigenous workmanship, most artisans work in the traditional or unorganized sector, rendering them particularly vulnerable to abuse and low pay in South Asian nations. They have a lower level of living as a group than the rest of society. Despite the government's best efforts, obstacles such as a lack of policy implementation and a concentration on the macro perspective have rendered the programs ineffectual. And, while the crafts industry is important in emerging nations, the prestige of the craftsman in society is fast eroding. They, on the other hand, need credit for their innovative work and for carrying on the legacy in the form of prizes and admiration for their usage practices. It will not only encourage craftsmen to continue their work, but it will also make a positive impact on the community by paying attention to this sector (Yang et al., 2018). The difficulties that craftsmen and craftspeople confront when attempting to sell indigenous items are numerous and have been holding the industry back for decades. As commercialization threatens the industry's survival by promoting hyper-competition that disadvantages indigenous artists and artisans, extensive reforms at several levels are necessary to make the sector more sustainable (Khan, 2022).

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