

Shuttles and Needles advocate handloom weaving for persons with special needs: A scope to do a longitudinal impact study.

Abstract:

Naresh and Kalyani Pramod, promoters of Shuttles and Needles, started the company to promote the creative use of technology, especially handlooms. The genius of the business is to promote leisure craft through handweaving. They realized it could lead to people's creativity showcasing through their production. Apart from being a leisure craft affordable in the urban areas, they saw an opportunity to create a livelihood for the rural. More importantly, handweaving was promoted to people with intellectual and developmental disorders to improve their cognitive and motor skills through guided weaving and create an interest in using their energy more productively. This requires a detailed longitudinal study to establish the impact.

Keywords: Handweaving, emotional well-being, livelihood artistry, innovation and creativity.

This working paper is based on discussions with the promoters of Shuttles and Needles¹, Naresh and Kalyani Pramod, at their Chennai studio in Indira Nagar, Chennai. Kalyani Pramod is a Designer, Artist, Fibre artist, Design teacher, and Mentor. Naresh is a Textile Engineer from Chennai and has worked extensively in the industry before they promoted the company Shuttles and Needles in Chennai, which now has a branch in Bengaluru. They have plans to go across locations in India.

After completing his education in textile engineering, Naresh worked with the industry in multiple capacities, especially with the technology of weaving, looms, and materials like cotton, wool, and others. His interest was more in the creative use of technology, especially handlooms, rather than orienting towards mass production through automated weaving. Though he is experienced and has a few consulting and investment businesses, he started focusing on a new creative service, using handloom skills for people development. He was thrilled by the idea of creating space for many individuals who wanted to pursue creative pursuits through weaving with marginal investment and from home or any other limited space.

Kalyani Pramod is a multidisciplinary artist, designer, educator, and creative director of Common Threads, a fiber arts studio in Chennai, India. She graduated in textile design from the National Institute of Design, India, in 1983. Her work incorporates sculpture, mixed media painting, pottery, and two- and three-dimensional textile art². Kalyani and Naresh found common ground of interest in co-promoting Shuttles and Needles as a for-profit company to make a difference to the society of creative thinkers and artists interested in this segment.

The genesis of business started with promoting leisure craft in India through handweaving. Naresh said, "Handweaving in India is seen as an activity of people located in remote areas

with limited access to resources use handweaving as a livelihood and hence not been commercially well received by the customers except those who feel as a need to support poor artisans. This needs to change, and artisans' skills and ability to exploit creative people's passion and time for more productive outcomes were important. This led us to see the avenues. Though leisure craft weaving is popular in the USA and other developed nations, it was a non-starter in India as the right resources like modern looms, yarns for leisure craft, and spaces for teaching weaving were non-existent.”

They looked at the second scope of business: creating livelihood engagement through NGOs who could consider weaving with different materials for the gifting segment. This was more for creating employability and income generation for a class of society who could gainfully use their skills and be creative. They may not be able to work full-time but work through an NGO. An added aspect of this stream is that of promoting weaving among people with intellectual and developmental disorders to improve their cognitive and motor skills through guided weaving and create an interest in using their energy more productivelyⁱⁱⁱ. While discussing their business, it was observed that such persons, caretakers, and NGO staff came to buy yarn material and other accessories for their work. Naresh said, “We are working with more than 40 NGOs in this project, which has a social orientation and not-f-r-profit component”.

We infer from our discussions that handweaving has helped to calm such persons, and the family is happier with the outcome of this training and investment in looms for the better emotional well-being of everyone involved. It is beyond the scope of our study to do a longitudinal analysis of such impact to show how it works as an occupational therapy. Naresh and Kalyani are keen to facilitate through their customer relationship to populate a scientific study. The outcome can help with a broader recommendation of initiating an action plan by the policymakers, medical professionals, and philanthropists to increase the scale of adoption of such a therapy.

Disclaimer: This article was written by Prof. N Chandrasekaran, IFMR GSB, and Prof. Indira A, Consultant and Economist, Bengaluru, to invite professionals to undertake projects directly involving Shuttles and Needles. This is only an academic interest and is not engaged in promoting the company.

References:

ⁱ <https://shuttlesandneedles.com/>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.commonthreadsstudio.com/about>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://shuttlesandneedles.com/pages/occupational-therapy>