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# Traditional handicrafts of Nyishi: socio-cultural heritage, economic livelihood and challenges

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**Abstract**

Handicrafts are a unique characteristic of the Nyishi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, India. Artisan skills and techniques have shaped the Nyishi people's social, cultural, and economic life. These handicrafts have been practised through traditional rites, social ceremonies, and economic activities, and are virtually impossible without costumes, gongs, and other traditional artefacts. They have become part of the Nyishi cultural heritage and traditional identity. Crafts have been an important source of income for tribal artisans and a mechanism for poverty reduction and livelihood sustainability of rural artisans. Handicrafts reflect the wisdom of the past, scientific knowledge, the concept of humanity through religion and politics, everyday activities, games, and leisure, and above all, the story of humanity creating its moralities through the ages (Joseph Marie Essomba, 1982). Through arts and handicrafts, the social, economic, cultural, and political arena of the Nyishi has been diversified since time immemorial. The artistic works and products are eco-friendly and are made using naturally available materials. These skills and techniques are, however, now threatened by the rapid changes in socio-cultural life and the quick penetration of modern, sophisticated technology into the tribal landscape. People's preferences tend to shift towards imported, ready-made items. Nyishi arts and crafts are made to meet basic individual needs shaped by their natural environment and context. In this paper, the author identifies the socio-cultural and economic significance and factors contributing to the vanishing of such artistic works of the Nyishis in terms of handicrafts and suggests possible measures to preserve such practices through sustainable management, thereby enhancing cultural exchanges, promoting cultural tourism, encouraging future generations of artistic innovations, and upholding the rich cultural heritage of the Nyishis.

**Keywords:** Nyishi, handicrafts, livelihood, eco-friendly, cultural heritage

## 1. Introduction

Indigenous craft knowledge is an important and popular element among tribal groups worldwide. Tribal groups, still in a primal stage of development even today, are richly endowed with traditional craft-making, evident in their customs, traditions, and indigenous faiths and practices, as seen in festivals, rituals, homes, and day-to-day life. As social animals, humans have developed and transformed natural resources into artistic crafts to meet domestic needs, with designs that reflect their customs, traditions, and other cultural practices. Tribal societies' lives are incomplete without traditional handicrafts, which play an important role in preserving their identity and manifest the uniqueness of their culture and traditions. This knowledge has

been inherited from generation to generation. UNESCO (1997) defined handicrafts as items produced by artisans, either entirely by hand or using hand tools or mechanical means, provided that the direct manual contribution of the artisans remains the most essential component of the finished product. It is made using sustainable raw materials that reflect the unique aesthetic, traditional, religious, artistic, cultural, decorative, functional, utilitarian, and social significance of the communities in their worldview. Forests are the main source from which people extract raw materials such as canes, bamboos, wood, etc., for various sorts of crafts, and by virtue of having a higher percentage of forest cover and diversity of floral species in the tribal dominated areas, they have always been at an advantage in realising the same with ease. Various tribes in Arunachal Pradesh use indigenously produced handicrafts in their households in daily life. Handicraft is a large, popular encyclopaedia reflecting the wisdom of the past, scientific knowledge, the concepts of humanity and the universe, religion, everyday activities and trades, games, and leisure, and above all, the story of humanity creating its immortality through the ages (Essomba, 1982). According to him, through artwork, man expresses the evolution of human intelligence and gives satisfaction rather than shape or form. The most beautiful and artistic cane and bamboo work is making a variety of huts, which are knitted so fine and compact (Borgohain, 1995; Roy, 1960/1997). Consumer demand for handicrafts has been leading these products to new heights at the local and national levels. Besides, handicrafts are gaining worldwide recognition because of their eco-friendly nature; however, traditional handicrafts also face many challenges. The raw materials used to prepare the handicrafts are cane and bamboo. Other crafts famous in the state are woodcarving, carpentry, ivory crafts, metal crafts, pottery, paper making, and blacksmithing, which depend on many other raw materials. Woodcarving and artistic skills among the Wancho tribe of Arunachal Pradesh are closely associated with their age-old religious and cultural practices (Tag, Das, Pallabi, Singh, & Palit, 2008).

The Nyishi, one among many tribes in Arunachal Pradesh, live mainly in East Kameng, Papum Pare, Keyi Panyor, Upper Subansiri, Kurung Kumey, Kra Daadi, and Kamle districts, pockets of Bichom district and the neighbouring state of Assam. The Nyishi artistic skills and techniques of making traditional handicrafts have been transmitted from one generation to another through hands-on practice, myths, legends, tales, folklore, and folksongs. Handicrafts are an extraordinary feature of the Nyishi tribe, reflecting a sense of beauty and enriching their social, cultural, and economic lives. These skills have shaped and transformed the socio-cultural and economic landscape of the Nyishi people since time immemorial. They have manifested these arts and crafts through traditional rites and rituals, which would have been virtually impossible without products like costumes, gongs, and other traditional artefacts made by tribal artisans. These crafts are an important source of livelihood income and play a vital role in poverty reduction. Arts and crafts are the dynamic aspects of the tribal culture (Ramya, 2015). Arts and crafts can be understood as documents that reflect the knowledge, beliefs, practices, religious and social activities, political ideas, and moral values of different societies. The history of human civilisation shows that artistic expressions have provided insight into cultural change and intellectual development. Hence, handicraft artworks may not merely be viewed as artistic products but also as a means through which societies communicate their perceptions, feelings, values and understanding of the world around them. Through arts and handicrafts, socio-cultural and economic development has been visible and fulfilling in the Nyishi community. Handicraft items convey mysterious value, sanctity, and meaning in Nyishi traditional culture. Their values span household activities, agricultural practices, fishing, hunting, social, religious, and political realms. Although some arts are produced for aesthetic beauty, others go beyond beauty and symbolism; still others carry the history of culture and humanity. However, the Nyishi's artistic skills and techniques are threatened by the rapidly changing socio-cultural and economic life, and the overwhelming dominance of the technological world in tribal landscapes. Now, people prefer more imported, ready-made items than locally made handicrafts. Appropriate measures in the context of the Nyishi community need to be taken to protect

these artistic works before they vanish in the wake of scorching competition; otherwise, the people will have nothing in their hands for cultural exchanges, promoting tribal cultural tourism, encouraging future generations of artistic innovations, and upholding the Nyishis' rich cultural heritage.

## 2. Research Gap

The present research has focused on the social, cultural, and economic significance of handicrafts among the Nyishi tribe, but there remains a significant gap in empirical research on their contribution to the livelihood sustainability of the Nyishi handicrafts in socio-cultural, economic, and environmental contexts. The socio-economic conditions of Nyishi artisans, employment opportunities, income generation, market access, commercialisation, transmission of traditional knowledge and institutional effectiveness and support have received relatively little attention. Therefore, this research focuses on the role of handicrafts in contributing to socio-cultural and economic sustainability and livelihood characteristics of Nyishi artisans, identifies the major challenges and opportunities and provides suitable recommendations for economic and cultural sustainability.

## 3. Objectives

To examine the role of traditional handicraft in the socio-cultural and economic livelihood sustainability of the Nyishi community and the challenges and prospects for preservation and sustainable development

## 4. Study Area

The present study area covers the Sagalee sub-division of Papum Pare district of Arunachal Pradesh. Geographically, the study area extends between $27^0$10' N and 27°26' N latitudes and 93°17' E to $93^0$40' E longitudes. Administratively, the sub-division comprises six circles, namely, Sagalee, Leporiang, Toru, Silsango, Parang, and Mengio, covering a total geographical area of approximately 1,658.38 sq. km. The area is characterised by hilly, mountainous terrain and forested landscapes, drained by the Pare River and its sub-tributaries. The weather and climate vary from hot, humid sub-tropical conditions over the foothills to cooler mesothermal conditions over the higher altitudes. The area receives a good amount of rainfall, and temperatures that favour luxuriant growth of vegetation and numerous species of birds and animals. The favourable climatic conditions support biodiversity and soil fertility, which in turn favours tropical evergreen and tropical deciduous forest types. The famous trees like Halong (*Diptrocarpus*), Hollock (*Terminalia Myriocarpa*), Titachampa (*Atrocarpus*) for woodcrafts, bamboo like Hatey Aae commonly called Kako (*Dendrocalamus hamiltonii*), Hoju Aae common named Jati bamboo (*Bambusa tulda*), Helap Aae (*Dendrocalamus spp*.), Tyav Aae (*Phyllostachys spp.*), Hoos Aae common name Bijuli (*Bambusa Pallida*), Deb Aae (*Dendrocalamus giganteus*), Hevi Aae (*Dendrocalamus brandisi*) etc. and Cane species like Tasser Aaso (*Calamus acanthospanthus*), Risin Aaso (*Calamus floribundus*), Teech Aaso (*Calamus flagellum*)Takkeq Aaso (*Calamus inermis*) and Tasser seerch Aaso (*Calamus gracilis*) are grow available in the area. The area has a predominantly rural economy, with agriculture and horticulture as the main economic activities and handicrafts as one of the subsidiary rural economies. The unique geographical and socio-cultural characteristics of the study area provide a suitable field for examining the specific objectives.

## 5. Materials and Methods

The study relied on data collected from primary and secondary sources. The primary data were collected from field surveys and interviews with artisans using semi-structured questionnaires. The interviews and field surveys were conducted using a random sampling method among Nyishi artisans. Artisans of both sexes and different age groups were interviewed to fulfil the objectives of the research. Selected villages

were identified, and households were randomly chosen for the survey using an interview schedule. In addition, focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with artisans, experts, intellectuals, and community leaders to gather their ideas, obtain relevant insights, and identify gaps in the interview schedule.

Secondary data were gathered from published and unpublished theses, books, journals, magazines, seminars, and conference papers. The purpose was to gather broader ideas about existing works related to Nyishi arts and handicrafts and the limitations of the work so far. These methods, techniques, and ideas helped in understanding and gathering information on when, where, how, and why handicrafts play an important role in the lives of the Nyishi people and what could be done to revitalise this artistic sector to preserve cultural heritage, economic livelihood, and sustainable management.

Data collected were tabulated, analysed, and interpreted using a mixed research method. The quantitative data collected were coded, tabulated, analysed, and interpreted using appropriate statistical measures. These data were used to examine household size, age, education qualifications, income generation, types of handicrafts, gender participation, raw materials availability, market access, years of experience, and contributions of handicrafts to household livelihoods.

The qualitative data collected using semi-structured interviews and group discussions were analysed thematically. The responses from artisans, experts, intellectuals, and community leaders were carefully examined, and themes of social, cultural, and economic significance, sustainable livelihoods of handicrafts, traditional knowledge, skill transmission, livelihood opportunities, resource availability, challenges, opportunities, and constraints were identified. Both qualitative and quantitative data were examined and compared to draw some recommendations and remedial measures for the sustainability of traditional Nyishi handicrafts.

## 6. Results and Discussion

The Nyishis have their unique traditional handicrafts, mostly made of cane and bamboo. They are not behind in this venture; rather make a variety of handmade products using traditional skills and techniques, with various eye-catching designs. Nyishis are artistically minded and gifted with skilled fingers (Mandal, 2014; Sharma, 2015). Skilled fingers, flexible hands and excellent designs in various arts and crafts are in their very blood (Ete, 2014). The technology and instruments used are simple but creative. The Nyishis, who live in the hilly forested areas of Central Arunachal Pradesh where modernisation and globalisation have recently reached, have developed traditional artistic skills to meet their daily needs without exploiting the natural environment. The social, cultural, and economic aspects of the Nyishis community have been shaped and reshaped by arts and crafts practices since time immemorial. Earlier, handicraft items were made and used in limited areas, such as socio-economic activities, household use, agricultural implements, and weaponry. However, these items have been used in diverse areas, including social, cultural, and economic spheres. It's become a significant cultural heritage, economic livelihood, and identity of tribal communities. Canes and bamboos are significant, accessible raw materials, available for any handicraft items, starting from the construction of houses, fences, bridges, etc., to household uses, viz., baskets, winnowing fans, mats, haversacks, water tubes, drinking mugs, strainers, fishing traps, dressing items, war, and chase, and the like. Womenfolk involved in handicraft production were meagre in past, but they are significantly increasing in the Nyishi community at present. The most beautiful and artistic cane and bamboo crafts are noticed in varieties of hats and baskets of different shapes and sizes (Handique, Rethy, Dutta, Das, & Doley, 2010). Baskets of different shapes and sizes are made as needed and named accordingly.

To promote handloom and handicraft products and generate self-employment, the Directorate of Textiles and Handicrafts under the Government of Arunachal Pradesh runs 92 weaving and crafts centres and 1 Handloom Development and Quality Dyeing unit in the state. To popularise handloom and handicraft products manufactured by industrial units in the state, the department has participated in various trade fairs, festivals, and exhibitions in and outside the state. Besides, the Department of Textile and Handicraft, Government of Arunachal Pradesh is running 22 Emporia and 18 Showrooms cum Sales Counters in the state, as well as 3 Emporia and 3 showrooms functioning outside the state, one each in Delhi, Kolkata, and Guwahati. The Department has undertaken several programmes, including participation in and organising of exhibitions to create awareness among local entrepreneurs and artisans in the state. One such annual event is Hathkargha Mela (State Handloom Expo) under the National Handloom Development Programme.

The achievements of Craft/Weaving Centres as on 31st March 2024 are shown in the table below

**Table-1: Achievements of Craft/Weaving Centres in Arunachal Pradesh as on 31-03-2024**

| ***Particulars*** | ***Units*** | ***Value of Production of Craft during the year 2023-24 (in Rupees)*** | ***Annual Sale Proceeds of Emporium and Show Room cum sale counter during the year 2023-24 (in Rupees)*** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Craft/Weaving Centres | 92 | **10932769** (One Crore Nine Lakhs Thirty-Two Thousand Seven Hundred and Sixty-Nine Rupees) | **14533326** (One Crore Forty-Five Lakhs Thirty-Three Thousand Three Hundred and Twenty-Six Rupees) |
| Trainees in Craft/Weaving Centres | 793 | | |
| Handloom Development Centres and Quality Dyeing Units | 01 | | |
| Emporium | 22 | | |
| Showroom cum Sale Counters | 18 | | |

***Sources****:* Statistical Abstract of A. P., Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Govt. of A.P., Itanagar, compiled from various years.

## Handicrafts Made of Canes and Bamboos

The lives of the people of Arunachal Pradesh are intricately woven around the natural environment, especially the forests, where bamboo, canes and their products are accessed. Thus, one cannot imagine rural life without these species (Sarkar & Sundriyal, 2002). From a commercial point of view, bamboo resources are prominent, fast-growing and the most viable alternative timber material that may be used to revive plywood production units in the state. To make these products, a large quantity of bamboo is collected from forests, and others are cultivated in their own plots. Bamboo plays an important role in the socio-economic development of indigenous communities. People rear many bamboo plants in and around their homesteads as well as in paddy fields. Many bamboo species are available in the reserved forest. In many parts of the state, they are used as fodder, food, primary construction materials, and for making a variety of useful items. The use of bamboo in traditional construction techniques, including flooring, roofing, pillar and beam posts, ceiling, and fencing, remains largely undocumented (Sundriyal, Upreti, & Varuni, 2002). Arunachal Pradesh has a rich tradition of bamboo and cane handicrafts. These products reflect the rich and varied culture of the tribes inhabiting the state, and the products featured represent the wide range of handicrafts produced in the state. The Department of Textile and Handicrafts under the Government of Arunachal Pradesh was set up to develop the sector, promote economic conditions and provide self-employment opportunities to weavers and artisans through various state-sponsored development schemes and projects.

The traditional cane and bamboo products are high-quality, premium, locally designed, and representative of tribal cultural identity.

### A. Social and Cultural Significance of The Nyishi Handicrafts

Nyishi handicrafts comes and important place in the social and cultural life of the Nyishi community in Arunachal Pradesh. Handicrafts not merely decorative and utilitarian objects but also represents as community's identity, traditions, beliefs, skills, indigenous knowledge, and their relationships with nature. These significances are multiple and can be understand in following areas.

#### i. Preservation of Traditional Cultural Identity

Nyishi handicrafts played an important role in social life beyond economic value. Each item has its own importance and value in daily life. A quick look at Nyishi history shows that handicrafts dominated their social activities. They represent distinctive elements of Nyishi culture and identity. Their designs, motifs, materials, techniques, methods, and skills help preserve traditional knowledge about the community's heritage and contribute to significant and visible cultural belongingness.

#### ii. Intergenerational transfer of Traditional Knowledge and Craftsmanship

Handicraft skills and techniques have been traditionally transmitted from one generation to another, from older persons to younger through families and community networks. They passed skills and techniques of weaving, basketry, cane and bamboo work, ornamentation, and traditional craft-making to the younger generation. Thus, indigenous knowledge has been transferred to the younger generation through handicraft practices.

#### iii. Representation of Traditional Beliefs, Symbols and Artistic Expression

Nysihi handicrafts are not merely functional objects, but also communicate cultural meanings and values from one generation to another. It is an important form of cultural representation, reflecting traditional cultural beliefs, social values, cultural identity, and artistic creativity of the Nyishi community. Many handicrafts are associated with traditional customs, rituals, ceremonies, and relationships with nature. Thus, the use of handicrafts helps in preserving traditional knowledge and practices. Their designs, symbols, patterns, materials, and objects become symbols of social identity, status, community belongingness, and cultural heritage

#### iv. Strengthening Community Solidarity

The production, preparation, and collection of handicraft materials involve participation and cooperation of family and community members. This collective participation in the preparation and production of handicrafts and using them in different social and cultural occasions has built strong interpersonal relationships and community solidarity.

#### v. Play a Vital Role in Social and Cultural Ceremonies

Nyishi traditional craft objects play an important role in ceremonies, festivals, marriages, religious rituals, and other community occasions. They are also used as gifts, agreements, and symbols of acceptance in social relationships. Handicrafts symbolise and share social values and cultural practices.

#### vi. Social Status and Identity

Rather than mere decorative items, Nyishi traditional handicraft objects, ornaments, clothing, and accessories communicate age, gender, social identity, power, responsibility, cultural affiliation, and ceremonial roles of a person or family.

### vii. Gender Participation

Women's participation in handicraft making was limited in weaving and small crafts production in earlier days. But now, significant change is visible, and women have become strong contributors to producing a variety of crafts in the Nyishi Community. They play an important role in household livelihood activities and contribute to the welfare and development of the community. The skills, techniques and awareness in the handicraft sector are significantly improving among women.

### viii. Youth and Cultural Continuity

Youth play an important role in maintaining and transmitting traditional knowledge from one generation to another. They are the main agents of preservation and continuation of traditional knowledge, beliefs, customs, practices, language, arts, crafts, festivals, and social values over time. In the Nyishi community, young people are the important carriers of traditional knowledge. They learn this knowledge, skills, and techniques from their parents, grandparents, elders and community members during festivals, ceremonies, rituals, and other social occasions and pass on these cultural knowledges to the next generation. Their role in cultural continuity includes the transmission of traditional knowledge, preservation of traditional handicrafts, language and oral traditions, participation in festivals and ceremonies, use of modern technology for documenting and promoting traditional knowledge, balancing tradition and modernity and cultural entrepreneurship through improved designs, marketing, tourism, and online platforms.

### ix. Indigenous Knowledge and Environmental Relationships

The Nyishi community possess detail and long-term relation with their environment and they have depth knowledge of forests, rivers, plants, animals, weather, and seasons where they live and, these knowledge helps them to understand and adapt their environment**.** These traditional practices often emphasis on sustainable use of forests, water, wildlife, and other natural resources. Nyishis traditional belief, and customary practices contribute in protection of plants and animals and judicious utilization of natural resources through biodiversity conservation and environmental adaptation.

### x. Cultural Adaptation and Modernisation

The Nyishi traditional knowledge of handicraft has been adjusted with changing social, economic, technological, and environmental conditions while retaining important elements of their cultural identity. New tools and improve techniques, designs according to contemporary tastes, market demands, combined with traditional materials and modern materials and promote traditional products through social media and online platforms. Its helps in traditional handicrafts to retaining relevant in changing societies and hence remain balance between innovation and cultural preservation.

### xi. Cultural Promotion and External Recognition

Nyishi handicrafts promote culture and receive recognitions in several ways, like cultural festivals and fairs and allow visitors to learn about Nyishi culture. Participation in exhibitions and craft fairs in district, state, national and other exhibitions and gives an opportunities artisan to highlight their traditional products to a wider audience. It’s become an important item of cultural attractions where people from other communities comes and learn about its meaning and values. The Department of Textile and Handicrafts, Government of

Arunachal Pradesh, and other cultural institutions provide opportunities for training, exhibitions, marketing, and promotion. This external recognition can create opportunities for cultural preservation and livelihood development.

### xii. Social Sustainability

Nyishi handicrafts help in preserving traditional craftmanship and cultural knowledge and improving the livelihoods and social well-being of artisans. It strengthening cultural identity, encourage equal participation of women and younger generations, create employment opportunities and preserving traditional skills. Handicrafts contribute long term social sustainability of the Nyishi community by supporting artisans, improve skills, provide trainings, improving market access and documenting traditional knowledge.

## B. Economic Significance of the Handicrafts

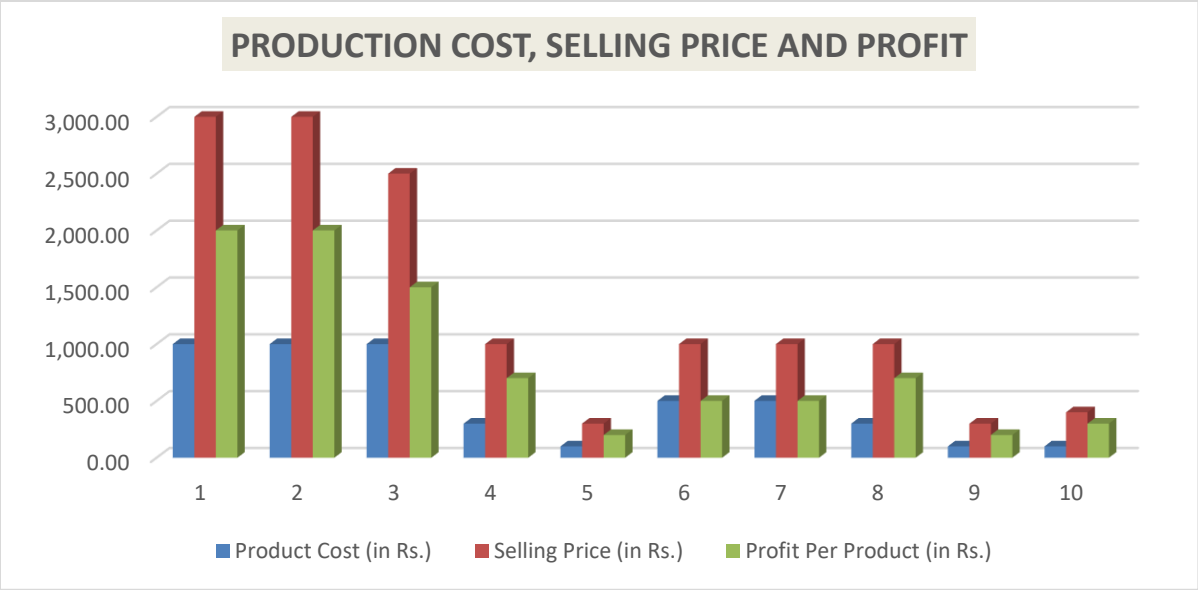
Besides agriculture and horticulture, handicrafts have considerably economic significance specially in the rural and tribal communities. Handicrafts provides, income, employment and provides self-employment and livelihood for artisans' communities. The Nyishis artisans, both men and women, are involved in the entire production process from gathering of raw materials to designing and marketing finished products. Handicrafts require ample time and energy because all work and production are done manually. Further, to design and finish the products, one must be an expert in all aspects of the work. The prices of handicraft products vary as per designs, sizes, and quality of materials used. These prices depend on production cost and the selling price. Nyishi handicrafts become source of supplementary income for artisan household. Many Nyishi artisans undertake handicraft production at the household that provide individuals, particularly women and rural households to engage in self-employment. Its complement agriculture, wage labour, livestock rearing and other livelihood activities. Hence, handicraft contribute the livelihood diversification in the Nyishi community besides agricultural activities. Nyishi women actively involve in handicrafts production particularly in weaving, beadwork, embroidery, and other traditional items and increase their participations in economic decision making and strengthening their financial independence. With economic valuation Nyishi handicrafts provides powerful potential opportunities in cultural tourism where visitors can connect with the cultural heritage, skills, values, and traditional knowledge of the community. Handicrafts opened wider scope for young generation to carry entrepreneurship development for the self-sustenance and livelihood sustainability. Handicrafts productions ensure that the traditional skills are transferred from older generation to younger people.

**Table-2: Product Cost and Selling Price of Some Handicraft Items in the Study Area**

| Sl. No | Products | Labour Hours (Average) | Product Cost (in Rupees) | Selling Price (in Rupees) | Profit Per Product (in Rupees) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Bopia/Bopa (Hat) made of canes | 20 | 1,200.00 | 4,000.00 | 2,800.00 |
| 2 | Nara (Backpack) made of canes & bamboos | 20 | 1,000.00 | 3,000.00 | 2,000.00 |
| 3 | Iging/Egye (Basket) made of canes & bamboo | 15 | 1,000.00 | 3,000.00 | 2000.00 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | Mura/Dotam (Stool) made of bamboo & canes | 08 | 1,000.00 | 2,500.00 | 1,500.00 |
| 5 | Bukshih (Sheath/knife cover) made of bamboo | 04 | 300.00 | 1,000.00 | 700.00 |
| 6 | Bukshih (small-size sheath) made of bamboos | 03 | 100.00 | 300.00 | 200.00 |
| 7 | Upyu (Winnowing fans) made of bamboo | 05 | 500.00 | 1000.00 | 500.00 |
| 8 | Hibung (Beak) made of woods | 03 | 500.00 | 1000.00 | 500.00 |
| 9 | Tamak (Belt) made of fibres/ ropes | 05 | 300.00 | 1000.00 | 700.00 |
| 10 | Nale/Ryukle (Sword handle) made of bamboo | 02 | 100.00 | 300.00 | 200.00 |
| 11 | Piiter/Pattar (Chicken Coop) made of bamboo | 02 | 100.00 | 400.00 | 300.00 |

***Source:*** Field Survey




The table shows that profit earned from the product cost is significantly variable and is vary from items to items. From the above table products like Bopia, Nara and Iging requires higher labour hour and higher product cost and small products such and Bukshis and Nale requires less labour hour and lower product costs but still having additional income to the artisans. These profits are obtained from the labour, skills, and abilities of the artisans. Profit is calculated by deducting the selling price minus production cost. People engage in many other activities at home, but handicraft work is considered as a subsidiary to their livelihood

income. Income generated from handicrafts has become a sustainable livelihood for artisans, and it helps in reducing rural poverty, to some extent. These handicrafts are not commercially viable at present due to other related problems.

## 7. Challenges

The main problems faced by craft workers as well as the State Industries are: (a) lack of technical knowledge by the craftsmen, (b) lack of interest, determination, and patience among craft makers, (c) lack of working capital in the occupation, (d) lack of marketing facilities, (e) shortage of organisational strength, (f) incapable of competing with other modern products, and (g) lack of entrepreneurs. The success of handicraft products depends on the industries and marketing facilities. The above table shows that there are no well-organised industries or market facilities within or outside the state. There are only 22 emporia and 18 showrooms cum sales counters in the state. Advertisements through television, radio, newspapers, and participation in exhibitions and trade fairs at local, regional, national, and international levels are scanty. As a result, the growth and development of industries and handicraft products are below optimal and have yet to reach national and international customers. Lack of technical knowledge, awareness, market facilities, transport and financial resources among artisans and youth are major challenges.

## 8. Suggestions

i. To make artisans technically skilled and equipped, proper training should be imparted to tribal youth and craft workers to improve quality and designs.
ii. Technical and managerial institutions may be set up to provide skill-based training to youth and existing tribal entrepreneurs.
iii. The state government may arrange and encourage entrepreneurs to participate in expos and trade fairs conducted within and outside the state or even abroad.
iv. The state government and competent agencies should conduct awareness campaigns among the young generation to appreciate the importance of indigenous knowledge of handicrafts and craft-making. Such awareness programs will motivate tribal youth to draw out ways to preserve this knowledge system and develop new ideas and techniques to continue the socio-cultural heritage.
v. Financial support for entrepreneurs, monitored by government agencies, should go hand in hand.
vi. To do this, banks must play a vital role in providing credit assistance to local entrepreneurs.
vii. If handicraft products must be outsourced, people need to improve the quality of designs, finishing, and polishing.
viii. Artisans and other stakeholders need to be broad-minded and develop harmonious relationships with outsiders.
ix. At the same time, product prices should be set at reasonable rates. Local people should develop village institutions or social forums to impart oral and practical knowledge and transmit skilled techniques and labour in handicrafts to the young generation so that such knowledge may be passed on and preserved from the present generation to the next.

## 9. Conclusion

Studying indigenous knowledge of handicrafts is significant and indispensable for tribal societies. This knowledge is related to the socio-cultural and economic life of artisans. It is part of their identity, uniqueness, and heritage. Handicraft products are growing at a snail's pace in the study area due to a lack of industries, training centres, and other logistical support. Setting up small-scale industries is not difficult; local entrepreneurs should be encouraged to establish these industries. Small-scale and cottage industries

are potential income-generating sectors of the state that provide livelihoods for the people. These sectors can provide gainful employment to unemployed tribal youth. Therefore, these sectors cannot be ignored in academic discourse. Lastly, integrated research for the growth and development of the previously mentioned industries, emphasis on marketing facilities for handicraft products, and concerted efforts of policymakers for the rapid development of these industries in the service of handicrafts.

***Conflict of Interest:*** *The author declares no conflict of interest.*

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