



REMEMBERING THE FORGOTTEN ART OF WEAVERS ON THIS HANDLOOM DAY

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Shilpi Jain and Safir Anand share their views. The Handloom Day, a Government initiative that started in 2015 to revive the roots of handlooms in India, was celebrated on August 7th with vigour across the country. The Ministry of Textiles did its part to promote the entrepreneurial spirit of artisans by organizing an event in collaboration with the Fashion Design Council of India (FDCI) that saw leading fashion icons call for #HandloomEveryday, and leading companies also came out with their own ways to give importance to India's handicrafts. For instance, Amazon launched an online handicrafts store called Karigar and offered discount on various products made by artisans and weavers. There is certainly a need to preserve the country's incredible art of making high quality handloom products with extraordinary skills and craftsmanship, which are unparalleled in the world. What weavers painstakingly create on hand-operated looms are duplicated on machines and sold off as originals



for a heavy price. For this, the Government has adopted the certification mark that serves as a guarantee for the buyer that the products being purchased are genuinely hand woven. Similarly,



the premium India Handloom brand differentiates the handloom products in terms of quality, through which the customers are assured that the product quality is high because of proper texture, use of good quality yarns and safe dyes. But, most of the buyers are ignorant about these certification marks and the weavers are not willing to invest in them as it is a voluntary process that involves a registration fee and periodical Government checks. Moreover, due to the weavers' lack of affordability to promote their products at a significant scale, the handloom products are losing their significance in the market. Hence, a few small steps such as promotion of these certification marks by the Government, exemption of GST on handloom products, and encouragement to companies for promotion of handloom products as part of their CSR initiatives could be some of the ways in which it can be ensured that the delineated areas for handlooms are not unduly encroached by the power looms and mills.

