

## In Assam, Bodo looms are now weaving success stories

Till two years ago, 45-year-old Motori Brahma, a Bodo woman from Rowmari village in Assam, was doing menial jobs to feed her family of five, including her ailing husband. That's history now.

A weaver by profession, Brahma, along with a group of 130-odd tribal women weavers, is now earning a handsome sum of money. The products of the Bodo weavers of Chirang district have clients across Indian metros and as far away as the United States.

But it is the recently opened 'The Ant' boutique in [Bangalore](#) that the weavers feel will help make Bodo handloom and handicraft products commercially viable. The boutique has already started attracting connoisseurs for its unique collection of handloom and handicraft items from across India's northeast.

Supporting the cause of these poor Bodo women of Chirang is The Action Northeast Trust (The Ant), a voluntary organisation based in Assam's Bongaigaon district that makes best use of their weaving talent.

It was under its initiative that poor and debt-stricken Bodo women, having great weaving skills, formed a weavers administered trust - Aagor Daagra Afad in 2002. Today they are selling their products under the brand name Aagor, which in the Bodo language means design.

'The motive behind setting up the boutique in Bangalore is to make the handloom products of Bodo women commercially viable. Till now, we have been supplying the products to various brand names across India and the US. But the boutique is an independent attempt by the bodo weavers,' Sunil Kaul, founder member of The Ant, told IANS.

'The boutique is the result of five years of our work and planning. We're also planning to open up similar boutiques across India,' Kaul added.

Along with selling Aagor's cotton and trendy silk fabrics, the Bangalore store is also pulling crowds for pottery items from Manipur and bamboo and cane products from Mizoram and Tripura. The boutique also has a cafe and bookstore.

'Our attempt is to merge traditional designs with modern sensibilities in various handloom and handicraft products. We are happy that buyers have shown great interest in our products,' said Nandini Mosahary, a weaver and sales executive of Aagor.

'Soon we're going to patent all our designs as they are all unique and carries the age-old tradition of bodo handicraft,' she said.

Starting off with just five weavers, the trust today has 130 permanent weavers. Last year, the trust sold goods worth Rs.7.5 million. It also engages other poor rural women, if needed when it get huge orders from buyers.

'A total of 400 weavers worked for us last year,' Mosahary said.

'Almost 80 percent of the weavers, when they initially join the trust, are poor and debt stricken. But

weaving is changing the fate of many such women and we're proud to say that the programme has reaped huge benefits,' said Kaul.

After being the guiding light for weavers, The Ant recently transferred the money and stocks to the trust.

'We'll soon transfer the complete management of the trust to the weavers,' said Kaul.

*Maitreyee Boruah* ( © IANS / India eNews)