

Handmade paper, palm leaf, cane for India's 'green' artisans

Craftsmen gathered in [Bangalore](#) from across the country are popularising eco-friendly traditional artwork, with their raw material ranging from palm leaves to the roots of trees to cane.

'To paint, I always use handmade paper and natural dyes made from flowers and vegetables. I don't depend on synthetic colours and emulsions. I believe in using eco-friendly substances for my artwork,' painter Ashok Kumar Das, a Madhubani painter from Bihar, told IANS.

He is among 60 craftsmen at an exhibition-cum-sale.

'At a time when global warming is threatening the entire mankind, it's advisable to adopt green methods for artisans like us also,' added Das, whose paintings have become hugely popular among the art connoisseurs of Bangalore.

Dhaniram Sahu, an artisan from Orissa, makes good use of palm leaves 'tadpatra' to make intricately designed wall hangings.

'Palm leaves are readily available in Orissa and I don't have to cut trees to get raw materials for my artwork. I respect nature and its products and want others to do so,' smiled Sahu.

The 14-day-long exhibition-cum-sale will end Dec 13. The event has been organised by Cauvery, the brand name of the Karnataka State Handicrafts Development Corporation Limited.

The exhibition features artisans from Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh, who are showcasing their indigenous crafts.

Popular Kannada actress Priyanka Upendra while inaugurating the exhibition said traditional artisans were adopting green methods and showing the way to others.

'All the products are the best of Indian traditional handicrafts. It's nice to see so many beautiful artwork under one platform. Moreover, the artisans are making good use of readily available forest material, without hampering mother earth,' added Priyanka.

Be it tree roots turned into beautiful decorative items or slippers by young craftsman Chandra R. from Bhatkal, or colourful toys made from cane sticks by 18-year-old Khizar from Ramnagar, beautifully designed handicraft products made from easily available raw products are being sold here.

Famous sandalwood incense sticks from Karnataka and terracotta idols and woodcarving figures are also drawing crowds in hordes to the exhibition.

'As part of our continuous process of growth and innovation, we're now training the artisans to adopt more and more eco-friendly measures and avoid using toxic products and animal parts. Moreover, buyers also prefer eco-friendly products,' said an official of Cauvery.

'Not only have artisans completely stopped using animal parts like ivory and horns in their craftwork, the use of toxic chemicals like zinc oxide and lacquer ware, once an integral part of their work, has

become a strict no-no now,' the official added.

The corporation, established in 1964, sells its product under the brand name of Cauvery. Thousands of artisans from across the state regularly taking training in technical and design development to upgrade their skills from its experts.

The corporation also provides bank loans and 50 percent subsidy on raw products, such as sandalwood, silver and zinc to registered artisans.

In India, the crafts sector is still the second largest provider of employment after agriculture, and a number of agricultural communities depend on crafts for their survival in periods of drought, famine or natural disasters.

'It's heartening to see craftsmen adopting green and eco-friendly measures in their artwork. It's good if our forest covers are not destroyed in the name of traditional art,' said Aroonima Choudhury, a visitor at the exhibition.

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