

Jiyo! – Freedom with a brand owned by the artists

Jiyo a term that is synonymous to spirit of triumph signifies a sweet sense of belonging. *Jiyo*, A word that may be small but evokes enormous zeal and excitement. Famous quotes like “*jiyo aur jeene do*” (live and let live); *Sar utha ke jiyo* (live with head held high) and *jiyo hazaron saal* (live a thousand years) exemplify the resilient spirit of *jiyo*. Here are few lines picked from the composition of Sahir Ludhianvi so true to the life of an artist

u eḡ Nqk dsft; kḡ u l j >ḡk dsft; ks - live with your head held high
xeka ck nḡ Hkh vk,] rks eḡḡk dsft; kA – live with a smile even if grief drowns you

Jiyo – an initiative that has immensely helped me realize my endeavor of providing financial sustainability to the skilled. The thought sheltered behind *jiyo*, is creation of a lucrative market, which is traditional at the same time in its offerings and approach. Government enterprises viz. khaadi and saras seem to be losing their appeal amongst the youngsters against foreign brands like Benetton, Coca Cola and indigenous brands like Weekender and Provogue. NGO's like SEWA, Urmool and Rangasutra had to set up commercial entities, abiding by fresh regulations laid down by the finance ministry. But unfortunately none of them could earn either brand equity or a distinct identity for themselves. The task of displaying the traditional forms of art would be met by “*Jiyo!*” which would be the first company in India, employing skilled but vulnerable artisans and at the same time providing them an ownership of shares of upto 70%. This program has been conceptualized with valuable assistance from the World Bank and Japan Social Development Fund.

Jiyo! has commenced as a unique indigenous brand conveying the message believe, buy, belong - *Jiyo* is the first company of its kind to incorporate the interest of various art forms, literature, music (both folk and classical) herbal medicines etc. to name a few. Activities like market survey; formulation of new designs, better services and production and the task of putting them across markets would be undertaken by *Jiyo*.

The distinguished identity enjoyed by India can be accredited to its plethora of art forms and its rich tradition. Imitation and westernization can seldom be referred to as modern. Figures indicate that most tourists visit India in order to witness its living skills and its tradition. But the efforts in terms of preserving these art forms being put forth by the public and private sectors are nothing but inadequate.

One very alarming concern in my opinion is that, there are plenty of tall claims regarding the upkeep of art. But sadly the children of the very artists that we focus upon are not skilled enough to keep their tradition alive. Our approach lacks encouragement and adequate guidance. Since in today's era we designate so much importance to other well paying vocations that this indifference towards art comes as no surprise. It is thus imperative to acquaint the children with ancestral art forms along with academic education.

Interest in art and culture has now been compressed and people seldom have a thorough knowledge about it. The lust for fame and overnight success has marred the vision of the people.

3 years ago, I had strongly worked in the favor of "Creative and Cultural Industry" along with encouraging 'The Intellectual Property Rights' whilst I was the Vice chairman, Creative and Culture Industry, Planning Commission, Government of India.

In my report to the government, I pressed upon the fact that traditional trade forms an indispensable part of the economy of India and is a vital source of employment as well. This commercial unit has a tremendous potential to become a national and international trade since it is one of the rapidly expanding sectors of the world. But my expectations with government regarding the report have not been met effectively.

The government should not forget that this sector has employed nearly 45% to 48 % of the entire population and the people associated with this very sector are losing their source of livelihood. Mechanization has badly hit agriculture and other large Industries alike. This is certainly not a favorable sign for an industry that is already on the threshold of thinning.

The government spends approximately 10,000 annually under the employment guarantee scheme. If the first hundred thousand people allied with the traditional skill face unemployment then the government will have to incur an massive sum of 50 billion to ascertain them the benefits of this scheme. Ironically the sum involved in their developmental programmes is much less than this amount. This simply defies the old saying 'prevention is better than cure' since the government is ready to spend a huge sum on their re -employment but fails to spend a fraction of that sum on their growth.

Small-scale industries would benefit greatly if the government supports companies like *Jiyo* in their endeavor to promote their products and services boosting sales. The model of intermediary channels should be avoided since it prevents the artists to receive the maximum benefits out of their creations. I have always supported this idea and probably the failure of schemes like Anandgram and Nehru Kala Kunj can be accredited to this. The fact that these measures of re-settlement can lead to empowerment of the underprivileged artist class is not understood. *Jiyo* is an initiative for all those deprived communities and this time we are destined to be successful since it has minimal government involvement.

The prime aim of *Jiyo* is to fortify the lives of the weavers and craftsmen by means of development and alternative livelihood. 'COLLEGE FEES COLLECTION' initiated in Muzzafarnagar, Bihar is part of this programme. It seeks to train the girls in Sujni and provide them partnership in *Jiyo* Company. Preference would be given to those who wish to pursue further education but cannot afford to fund their studies.

At *Jiyo* we would try and make sure that we take cognizance of the changing market trends and demands. Our attempt would be to equip the artists to cope with these

challenging market situations. For instance, the traditional Painters are being acquainted with animation and digitalization in order to open new avenues for them

Under *'jiyo-sadak nashta'* – Road side snacks we are surveying the range of the local foods being sold at various railway and bus stations across the country. The idea behind this programme is to help make the street food more fresh, presentable, wholesome & hygienic to attract more people. We have commenced with the Guntoor region of Andhra Pradesh.

Jiyo-Taj Mall, another proposal, exhibited the folk and classical arts with craft demonstration in a novel manner in Agra. European and American Organisations appreciated and invited to organize similar event on a more grand scale during 2011-2012.

"Jiyo-1001 saris" is yet another venture to revive the lost art of saris viz. dharmavaram, venkatgiri, gadhwal, Kothak Kota,

These projects are dedicated to welfare of artists, but it is also imperative to note that only those artists would be able to gain the most who are committed and honest to their profession and have an earnest desire to achieve greater heights with their intrinsic skills.

Come; let's unite ourselves to this cause, which is epitomized by the slogan Believe, Buy, Belonging. This mission that initiated in Delhi, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar will soon take the entire nation in its stride.

I would be thrilled to help people who wish to help themselves.

Let us all hope that this mission is an overwhelming success and accomplishes its desired aspirations.

Jai Hind
Rajeev Sethi