

# Cultural Entrepreneurship : Two Successful Cases from Odisha

*Dr. Goutam Saha  
Lipsa Mohapatra*

## Cultural Entrepreneurship and its Importance in Odisha

Cultural Industries are defined as those industries which produce tangible or intangible artistic and creative outputs. Those industries have the potential for wealth creation and income generation through the exploration of cultural assets and the production of knowledge-based goods and services (both with social and cultural meanings). According to a report of UNESCO and EY (formerly Ernst & Young), Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) generate US\$2250 billion a year, i.e. 3% of world GDP and employ 1% of the world's active population. Cultural and Creative Industry (CCI) revenues exceed the revenues of telecom services and employ more people than the car industry of Europe, Japan and the USA combined (UNESCO, 2020). In 2018, 1.2. million cultural enterprises in the EU generated 155 billion Euros. The term cultural industries are used very closely with the concept of creative industries. Whereas the notion 'cultural industries' emphasizes the cultural heritage and traditional and artistic elements of creativity, the notion of "creative industries tends to emphasize individual creative talent and on the exploitation of intellectual property." For the formidable growth of Cultural Industries, Cultural entrepreneurship

is imperative. Therefore, analyzing the successful traits and practices of cultural entrepreneurs is immensely important. However, it is not easy to succeed as a cultural entrepreneur as art, culture, and business are generally unconnected.

Odisha is a land of art and culture. Odisha's art and craft constitute a significant portion of the cultures of the state. Odisha is known for its handloom Ikkat, sand art, stone arts, pattachitra, palm leaf paintings, jhoti-chita and murjya and many more. Odisha also boasts of the glorious tradition of dance and music. Odissi music, Odissi dance, Chau dance, Gotipua dance and other folk and tribal dances of various regions speak of Odisha's rich cultural heritage. These all provide a massive opportunity for the growth of cultural industries in Odisha. In this perspective, studying the successful cultural entrepreneurs of Odisha provides a different scope for economic growth and job creation in Odisha. Our study attempts to analyze the successes of two cultural entrepreneurs – Padma Shri Dr. Chaturbhuj Meher (Handloom Weaver and Entrepreneur) and Padma Vibhushan Sri Sudarshan Sahoo (Stone Artist) with respect to three criteria/factors for successful cultural entrepreneurship. These factors are chosen from modern research literature

on cultural entrepreneurship. The study also includes their lives, journeys, personality traits, entrepreneurial capabilities and their processes of adaptation to macro-environments. They have transformed Odisha's heritage crafts into successful entrepreneurial ventures. They have won several national and international awards and recognition, established good relationships with governments and stakeholders and created a livelihood for local people without losing the cultural shine of their roots in Odisha.

### **Entrepreneurial journey of Padma Shri Dr. Chaturbhuj Meher and Padma Vibhushan Sudarshan Sahoo**

Dr. Chaturbhuj Meher started his journey as a handloom weaver when he was just nine years old in Subarnapur district. Due to the financial crisis in his family and as there were no other options for livelihood in his village, he started learning the art of handloom making. However, he was very passionate about it. Apart from learning traditional tie and dye weaving techniques (Bandha) from his locality, he travelled exhaustively across the country to acquire knowledge of different techniques related to handloom as an artist of Weaver Service Centre, Government of India. Through his passion for knowledge, he became an institution of the Indian handloom sector. A self-educated man of Indian traditional knowledge of handloom, he can speak, read and write Odia, Hindi and Bengali. Even In his 80s, he used to work more than seven hours daily, trying to innovate and experiment with new product development on the handloom. Apart from being a passionate knowledge seeker, he exceptionally understood the dynamic of the handloom business. He sold saris to Bollywood

celebrities, industrialists and many elite customers across the country. He understood his customer segments very well, and started an organized retail format *Meher's* in Bhubaneswar to attract city customers as well. At the same time, he constructed a factory named *Vayan Vihar* in Sonapur with training and research facilities, decent quarters and a temple for his artisans (Small Piloting Plant at Manamunda, Sonapur). Artisans, along with their families can stay and work in a pleasant environment within the premises of *Vayan Vihar*. His networks with government officials, suppliers, artists and artisans from other states, local communities, and high-end consumers are exemplary. People can learn tie and dye skills free of cost and even earn money while learning in this centre. Experienced artisans can do innovation and research under his continuous guidance. He worked towards safeguarding his designs from being copied by machines. His many awards and accolades helped him build a brand image so that he successfully converted this image into brand equity for his enterprise and handloom clusters of Sonapur.

Sri Sudarshan Sahoo is a renowned Indian sculptor who hails from Puri, Odisha. He was awarded the second-highest civilian award Padma Bibhushan in 2021. He lost his father when he was just nine years old. After that, he left his school to earn for his family as the only bread earner. However, sculptures of Konark Temple inspired him to be a great artist. He acquired the artistic skill of traditional sculpting from his guru Shri Bhubaneswar Mohapatra and Shri Kanya Maharana. His knowledge of India's spiritual heritage and Odia traditional culture is phenomenal. He is a voracious reader and has the knowledge of the four Vedas. The Shrimad

Bhagabat Gita has shaped his thought process and made him unique. He got tremendous influence from the Vedas, which tell about Indian traditional sculpture art. He is a first-generation sculptor, a non-traditional artist. He primarily focuses on his thought process, dexterity of his hands and tenacity. He has been to several places in India and abroad related to his art, which helped him learn the global business and cultural environments. This gave him enough confidence to establish Odisha's art form at a global level through his work. His craftsmanship and exposure helped him understand the global consumers' requirements and designed his products accordingly. It helped him to position himself as a successful entrepreneur. He also made artefacts on wood and fibreglass to attract different segments of consumers. To establish a proper workshop, showroom, and facilities for artists, Mr Sahu created a state of the art museum in 1977 at a prime location in Puri. It attracts tourists and dignitaries from worldwide to see and feel the inheritance and continuous development of traditional sculptures. He established a Buddhist temple in Japanese-style at the craft Museum. It proves the internationalization of his thought

process. In 1991, he established an art and craft village in Bhubaneswar with the allotment of land by the government of Odisha to facilitate training for aspiring sculptors of the country. It is an institution that showcases the living heritage of Odisha's age-old stone craft in an eco-friendly environment constructed with a Buddhist philosophy. The aim is to teach the students of any caste, creed and nationality in an Indian traditional way. Students/artists do Yoga, meditate, worship their God, and eat simple vegetarian food and focus completely on learning the craft.

### **Criteria for Successful Cultural Entrepreneurs and Analysis of two Odia Cultural Entrepreneurs**

Research suggests that there are three important factors or criteria for the success of cultural entrepreneurs. These are 1) personality of the entrepreneur 2) process of cultural entrepreneurship 3) context or environment that influences their personalities ( Suwala, L., 2015). Let us explain those criteria and analyse the successes of two Odia cultural entrepreneurs with respect to these three criteria.

<b>Detailed Criteria for Successful Cultural Entrepreneurship</b>	<b>Dr. Chaturbhuj Meher</b>	<b>Sri Sudarshan Sahoo</b>
<p><b>PERSONALITY:</b> According to research the following questions are essential to study for analyzing the personalities of cultural entrepreneurs.</p> <p>1. With a great passion and commitment towards their art, can they convert and polish raw artefacts and ideas into valuable</p>	<p>It is found that Dr Chaturbhuj Meher has successfully converted his art into valuable cultural products by several elites/celebrities in India and abroad. He exhibited his outstanding skill in weaving Bomkai and Bichitrapuri Saree in fine count threads. These technical innovations have</p>	<p>Sri Sudarshan Sahoo has also been able to take his craft to a global forum. His art of stonework is sold at premium prices across the globe. He has been equally popular in different states of India and different countries for many years. To diversify his product categories for the urban consumers, he</p>

<p>cultural products or services ? Can they convince more artists, curators and patrons, acquire funds, collect donations, and forecast market trends and consumer taste through prudence, courage and faith ?</p> <p>2. What distinguishes cultural entrepreneurs from artists, performers or curators is their focus on abilities to validate and augment prices, develop novel cultural ideas, methods and artefacts.”</p>	<p>made these traditional Sarees and the art popular in the country and abroad. His successful retail venture: Meher’s in Bhubaneswar city, proves his refined understanding of urban consumers and their tastes. He effectively converted his government job in getting more comprehensive knowledge of Indian handloom, acquiring resources for his innovations and creative expressions, getting a name and fame for materializing his vision of blossoming the art of tying and dying in particular and handloom in general and creating a centre of training and research for budding handloom artisans.</p>	<p>ventured into the manufacture and sale of fibreglass work very profitably. He acknowledges getting government support from the state and the centre for materializing his vision of creating new generations of stone craft artisans.</p>
<p><b>PROCESS:</b> Research suggests that in the entrepreneurial process, there is a “need to balance between the creative, functional and productive component of cultural entrepreneurship with an emphasis on the latter”.</p>	<p>Dr. Chaturbhuj Meher’s balance in this regard is phenomenal. He has a loom in his bedroom where he practices, researches and innovates new techniques of handloom weaving. He has developed several catalogues of his designs for premium and semi-premium customers. Vayan Vihaar has several quarters to accommodate many artisan’s families who can stay, learn and work within the same premises.</p>	<p>Sri Sudarshan Sahoo took ten years to make some of his artefacts sell at premium prices in the country or abroad. It shows his creative side that always aims for excellence. However, for the mass market, his studio has a massive range of stone, fibreglass and wooden products. This shows his understanding of the market, customer segments and alternative product choices and his balance between three sectors.</p>
<p><b>CONTEXT:</b> Successful cultural entrepreneurs develop a proper environment or context. It comprises successful social relationships, permanent</p>	<p>Chaturbhuj Meher’s innovation on Bandha or “ Tie or Dye” weaving in fine silk fabric satisfied high-end consumers trends, tastes and lifestyles. It</p>	<p>Sri Sudarshan Sahoo established ‘Sudarshan Crafts Museum’ in 1977 at his birthplace Puri and ‘Art and Craft village’ in 1991 at Bhubaneswar. Through these two</p>

exchange and face-to-face contacts with artists, cultural intermediaries and curators, observation of consumers' trends, tastes and lifestyles." Apart from this, the cultural entrepreneur should not merely be considered a lonely individual, pursuing a personal vision but also a social agent embedded in cultural communities to get cultural recognition. Spatial and cognitive proximity to cultural districts, milieus or neighbourhoods – in other words, agglomerations of cultural activities – enhance each entrepreneur's ability to observe, assess, and learn from the success and failures of others."	highlighted the weavers of Sonepur at the national/ international level and increased their earnings. He founded Vayan Vihar in 2002 at his birthplace Shonpur to develop tie and dye textile art through training and research. He envisions the art of handloom as his life and soul. He aims at developing this art to greater heights by constant evaluation. He desires to enrich the art before handing it over to the next generation. He is successfully chasing his vision and is always vocal and concerned about the issues of handloom artisans.	Institutions, he successfully built consumer connect, created a proper learning environment and platform for new generations of artisans, prudently took the help of State and Central Government to promote this ancient artisanship and create opportunities for the artisans. He is also equally vocal for the cause of artisans.
--	--	--

### Conclusion and Scope:

From the analysis, we can find that both the entrepreneurs are equally successful as cultural entrepreneurs in terms of their personalities, entrepreneurial processes and contexts. So their lives, entrepreneurial journeys and their activities are very important cases to study for achieving success in the field of cultural entrepreneurship. Apart from new generations of cultural entrepreneurs, the paper may also be helpful for the policy makers to frame policies for promoting cultural entrepreneurship and for mentoring start-ups in this field.

### References:

1. [https://www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/About\\_ITC/Where\\_are\\_we\\_working/Multi-country\\_programmes/CARIFORUM/stat\\_clt\\_industries.pdf](https://www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/About_ITC/Where_are_we_working/Multi-country_programmes/CARIFORUM/stat_clt_industries.pdf)

2. <https://en.unesco.org/news/new-report-shows-cultural-and-creative-industries-account-295-million-jobs-worldwide>
3. [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Culture\\_statistics\\_-\\_cultural\\_enterprises](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Culture_statistics_-_cultural_enterprises)
4. <https://studymoose.com/art-and-culture-of-orissa-essay>
5. <https://mycitylinks.in/i-wasnt-awarded-my-work-was-padma-vibhushan-sudarshan-sahoo/>
6. <https://odishabytes.com/padma-vibhushan-for-odisha-sculptor-sudarshan-sahoo/>
7. Suwala, L. (2015): Cultural entrepreneurship. In: F. F. Wherry, J. B. Schor (Eds.): *Encyclopedia of Economics and Society*. Los Angeles: Sage, pp. 513-515. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781452206905.n202>

Dr. Goutam Saha, Associate Professor, National Institute of Fashion Technology, Bhubaneswar.

Lipsa Mohapatra, Assistant Professor, National Institute of Fashion Technology, Bhubaneswar. Email : [lipsa.mohapatra@nift.ac.in](mailto:lipsa.mohapatra@nift.ac.in).