

# LET'S GI MELA

Report, October 2024



# Introduction

The Let's GI Mela was organised by the Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF) in collaboration with Futuremakers by Standard Chartered Bank on 9 October 2024, at the Standard Chartered Bank Campus, Chennai. This event was part of the ongoing DIGI (Digital Cluster Development Programme for Geographical Indication Destinations) initiative. The Mela aimed to highlight the importance of Geographical Indication (GI)-tagged products, which represent the cultural and artisanal heritage of specific regions. By showcasing products from three prominent GI clusters, the event sought to bridge the gap between traditional artisans and modern consumers, promoting both digital inclusion and artisanal craftsmanship.



# Clusters at the GI Mela

The event focused on GI-tagged products from three different clusters—Salem silk, Pattamadai Pai, and Toda embroidery. Key objectives included raising awareness about the significance of GI tags in preserving cultural heritage, engaging the audience in the artisanal process, and enhancing the economic prospects of local artisans through direct sales. Additionally, the event aimed to showcase the potential of the digital ecosystem in boosting online presence and blending traditional and modern techniques. It also sought to demonstrate the broader mission of the DIGI project, which empowers artisans by utilising digital tools to access wider markets and sustain their crafts.

Steady footfall from employees at the Standard Chartered Bank campus

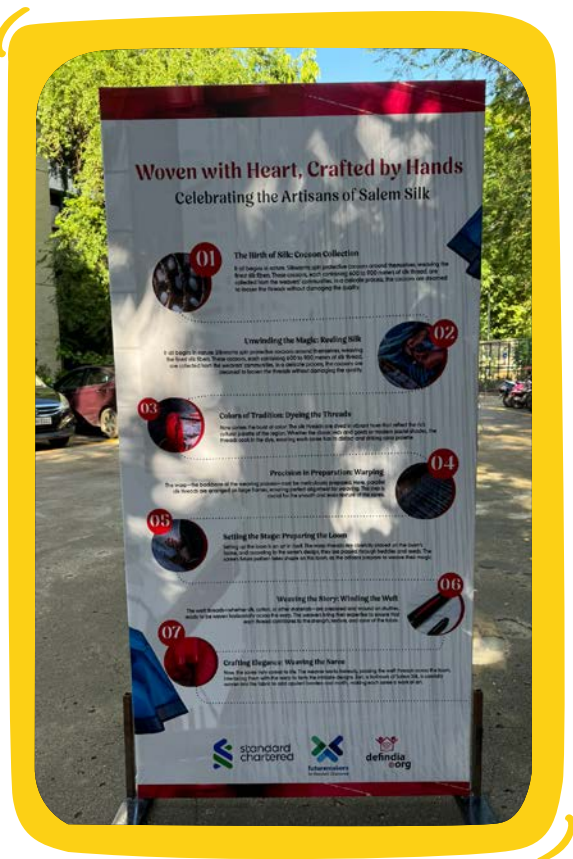
ensured a lively exhibition, which ran from 9:00 AM to 7:00 PM. Three principal stalls showcased the GI-tagged clusters, featuring exquisitely crafted silk sarees, veshtis, and dupattas at the Salem stall; intricately woven Pattamadai Pai mats, handbags, and table mats at the Tirunelveli stall; and elegant Toda embroidery shawls, key-chains, and other handcrafted items at the Nilgiris stall.





# DiGI Tea: Creating Entrepreneurship through GI Development

In addition to these artisanal exhibits, DIGI-TEA added a unique flavour to the event by offering local, handmade delicacies such as spices, coffee, tea, and chocolates from Ooty, along with the famous Tirunelveli halwa. However, DIGI-TEA is more than just a food stall—it is a DIGI entrepreneurial initiative designed to instil, explore, and execute entrepreneurial skills among rural women.



Aswini Sin, a young participant from Ooty, described it as giving her a “sense of belonging and financial independence.” Through this programme, women from different clusters came together to sell local delicacies/ products as a part of their small business, encouraging them to explore new opportunities beyond their traditional handloom and artisanal crafts.

Additionally, the Digikargha stall curated a collection of handloom products from across the country,

including sarees and kurtas, handbags, etc providing a national perspective on traditional craftsmanship.

For many artisans, this was their first time travelling outside their villages to participate in an exhibition. Directly interacting with a larger audience, without the involvement of middlemen, allowed them to share their stories and showcase their products first-hand.

Ramzan Beevi, a middle-aged artisan from Pattamadai, expressed her



joy at stepping out of her village for the first time, appreciating the face-to-face feedback she received for her handloom work. For her, this was a liberating experience after years confined to the four walls of her weaving room. This opportunity not only boosted the artisans' confidence but also opened their eyes to the potential of such initiatives, motivating them and others to participate in similar ventures in the future.

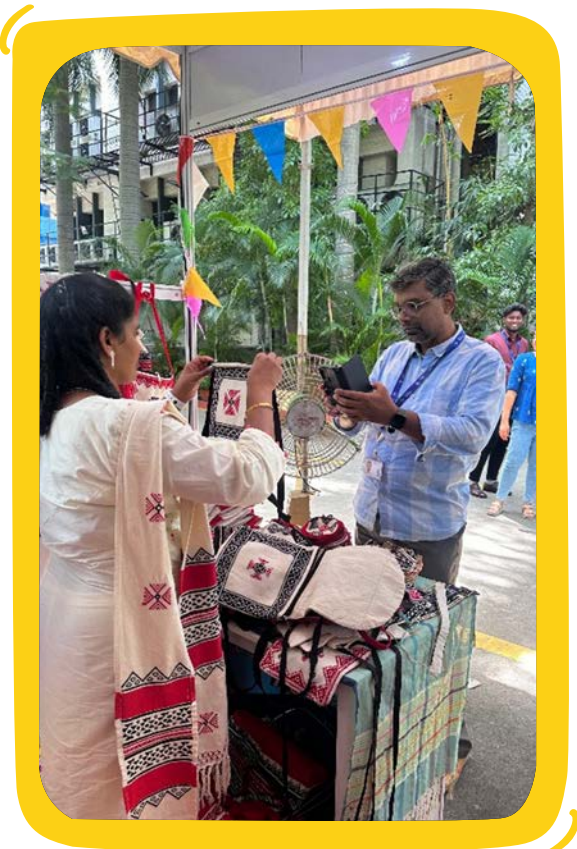
DIGI, as an initiative, has empowered artisans by integrating their traditional practices with a digital approach. Through digital literacy sessions, social media workshops, entrepreneurial skill training, and lessons on cataloguing and branding, artisans have learned how to harness the digital space to grow their

businesses online. For instance, Kaviya Sin, an artisan from Ooty, has begun showcasing her work on Facebook and is now open to online orders. Fathima, an artisan from Pattamadai, successfully sold a bulk order of Pattamadai Pai products through an Instagram sale. Pooja, an artisan from Salem, is even curating her own logo to market her products online!



# Major Reflections from the Mela

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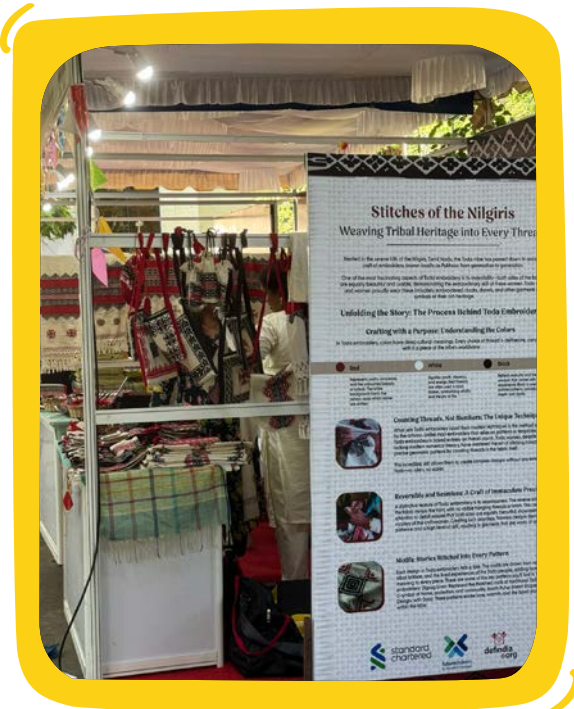


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The Let's GI Mela successfully connected attendees with the traditional craftsmanship of GI-tagged products, leading positive

feedback from both customers and artisans. By showcasing not only the final products but also the artistic processes behind them, the event provided artisans with both a financial boost and emotional encouragement to continue their work. Through this exhibition, DIGI effectively conveyed the importance of supporting unique and authentic products that embody India's rich cultural heritage, while promoting both digital and artisanal empowerment.



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