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Artificial Intelligence: Meet Indian Loom Artisans

By Manisha Aryal on November 13, 2025



On the balcony of a building facing the road to Pattamadai in Tamil Nadu, four Pattupai artisans gathered at midday to meet Digital Empowerment Foundation's Cluster Coordinator Vinoda Sin to [learn how to use artificial intelligence](#).

A predominantly Muslim village along river Thamirabarani, Pattamadai has been home to generations of women weaving Pattupai—mats crafted from locally harvested korai grass. The grass is carefully processed: soaked, pith removed, split into fine strands, and dyed before being woven into intricate patterns.

Each humble floor loom demands precision and coordination: nimble fingers manipulate the warp threads, long needles pass korai weft through the shed, and swift feet operate the loom’s mechanism, backs arcing over ornate patterns that can take weeks, even months, to complete.

The mats’ meticulous craftsmanship has earned the artisans a GI tag, and embody a choreography passed down like whispers from mother to daughter.

Artificial Intelligence: Meet Artisans

The artisans—Muhaideen Meena, Mydeen Meena, Segu Fatima, and Amina—had never used AI prompts before, yet they quickly adapt. The session started by scrolling phone galleries for a photo of a mat leaning against a cluttered wall.

Within seconds, AI reimagined the mat as a wall hanging framed by brass lamps and cushions, then as a runner on a minimalist dinner table. Each transformation placed their craft into settings the weavers had never seen.



Mydeen Meera’s eyes widened at the possibilities: centuries of tradition meeting an unlimited digital canvas. For rural entrepreneurs unable to afford high end photographers and staging at glamorous locations, AI-

generated backdrops allow them to test aesthetics—from Bollywood-chic to ultra-modern sleek—for the price of a data plan.

Vinoda explained that Instagram’s algorithm rewards novelty: high-quality images keep feeds fresh; varied backgrounds show colors that appeal to buyers, guiding future design; and carousels can document the journey—from korai fields to finished mats in upscale lofts in Mumbai or Manhattan.

Initially I’d wondered if introducing AI would feel like stringing neon lights across an ancient heritage site. Yet diamond lattices echoing Islamic geometry remain human code, memorized by kerosene light long before WiFi arrived. Technology doesn’t weave these mats, but for the artisans, it certainly widens the stage.

As the session wrapped up, Muhaideen Meera tried one last prompt: Make office woman in red saree carry laptop sleeve. Up popped a poised professional carrying her laptop.

Eyes sparkled. The artisans saw their work not just as static artifacts, but as lifestyle products for markets beyond Tirunelveli.

I left Pattamadai with a table runner and an observation: cutting edge technology, offered respectfully, can extend tradition across continents. Looms will stay; and patterns will endure. But backgrounds, and with them these women’s futures, may change.

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