



Marin Kaman
Tribal Artisan
Mekhela Weaver

A smartphone for smart marketing is what Marin Kaman wants

An android phone is the only device that Marin Kaman from Assam yearns for. He is not a gadget fan. It's just that he feels that a smartphone will pull him and his family out of poverty. And bring in financial freedom and independence.

Kaman, 31 is a farmer from the Dolaghat district of Assam. He lives with his parents, wife, and six-year-old son. The family survives on the crops produced on their small patch of land. "We sow Rice, mustard, etc., and sell it in the local market," says Kaman. "This takes care of our monthly expenses," he adds.



As a kid, Kaman always saw his mother weave *Mekhela*, a traditional art form from Assam at home. But it is at 17 years of age that he learned to weave the garments. "I had cleared my matriculation and got interested in weaving," says he. Due to poverty, he could not continue his higher education.

While he occasionally dabbled into weaving, it was after his marriage that he seriously got involved with the craft. "My wife was into weaving and is good at it. I saw her and mother make these beautiful fabrics and it piqued my interest," he says.

Since *Mekhela Chaddar* (Traditional Blanket), jackets, *Gamosa* or *Gamcha* (towel), etc., are worn by all tribals during the marriage, festivals, and other special occasions, Kaman felt that here was a market to be explored.

Hence, he took full interest in the art and business of weaving. He later also decided to innovate with the designs. “These garments are in demand and people want new designs. So we continued to work on it,” he says.

Kaman’s hopes were further fueled when he was selected for the Tribal Entrepreneurship Development Program (TEDP) where he was trained in digital marketing tools in the month of May 2021. The workshop jointly organized by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) and National Industry Body, ASSOCHAM trains tribal artisans to promote their products online and have a sustainable income.

“We learned to create our business page on social media sites and many participants also received online orders within few days of it. This made me happy and optimistic about my future,” he says.



Though Kaman has created his Facebook business page, he has been unable to check the response to it. This is because he has a simple mobile phone. “I had borrowed my brother-in-law's smartphone for the workshop. So do not have immediate access to it,” he says.



Excited about the prospects, Kaman wants to buy an android phone as soon as possible. “I am looking for an affordable smartphone,” he adds.

Moreover, to serve the prospective clients he also wants to employ more women in his team. “There is a lot of demand for traditional garments like *Mekhela*, *Gamosa*, etc., but it takes time to deliver. Hence, I will employ more women to get the orders made,” he says.

While Kaman could not study further due to financial reasons, he wants his son to get a good education. “And with digital marketing enhancing my business, I think I will be able to provide him one,” he concludes.