

How Pankaj S. Chadha Is Reviving India's Lost Craft Legacy

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What began as a creative pursuit during student days — sketching, doodling, exploring art — has evolved into a full-fledged mission for Pankaj S. Chadha. Today, under the label Pankaj S Heritage, he describes himself not merely as a fashion designer but as a *curator* of India's fading textile and embroidery traditions.

“For me, it's not enough that we practise art for ourselves,” Chadha recalls. “Rather, we must ‘take it out to the world’ — ensuring that the beauty of traditional craft is witnessed, while preserving its authenticity and novelty.”

Having graduated from a fashion institute (in New Delhi), he spent years understanding the fast-fashion and ready-to-wear world. But eventually, the urge to reconnect with legacy, handwork, and meaning pulled him toward reviving India's ancient textile heritage.

Breathing Life Back Into Age-Old Crafts

What sets Pankaj S Heritage apart is its deep involvement with artisan communities across India. The label currently works with roughly **15 artisan clusters** in regions like Srinagar, Lucknow, Rampur, Jaipur, Udaipur, Murshidabad, Burdwan, and Kochi.

Whether it's the delicate “hawa ka kaam” embroidery — a technique so intricate it feels like the needle is stitching mid-air — or layering multiple crafts (chikankari, jamdani muslin weaving, gota patti, beetle-wing detailing), the creations are more than outfits — they're works of heritage, stitched by master artisans whose techniques were on the verge of extinction.

One example: a 400-count muslin saree handwoven in West Bengal, later sent for chikankari embroidery in Lucknow, then to Rampur for baadla work, followed by gota patti from Rajasthan — and finished with delicate beetle-wing embellishments. The result: a couture piece that carries the soul of India's regional crafts in a single ensemble.

Quality Over Quantity

In an age where fashion often rewards speed and mass production, Pankaj S Heritage chooses patience. The atelier reportedly makes only about **30 chikankari pieces annually** — each handcrafted with meticulous care.

Chadha believes that rapid production undermines craftsmanship. Instead of churning out seasonal lines just for business, his emphasis is on creating heirloom-quality pieces — garments that stand out for their skill, their story, their soul. “Our job is to be custodians of craftsmanship — not merchants of fast fashion,” he says.

Educating Patrons — Couture With Context

When someone visits the atelier, Chadha doesn't just show them garments — he walks them through the history, technique, and lineage of each embroidery style. From wall-hanging sample-charts documenting different stitches to

showing the origin of fabrics and crafts, the experience is curated to be more like a mini-museum than a boutique.

This approach challenges the consumer mindset: clothing becomes more than fashion — it becomes heritage, identity, and conscience. It's a way to ensure that buy-in isn't just about looks or trends, but respect and understanding of craftsmanship.

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