

A REVIEW OF HANDLOOM EXPORT UNITS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The Handloom sector plays a very important role in the country's economy. It is one of the largest economic activities providing direct employment to over 65 lakh persons engaged in weaving and allied activities. As a result of effective Government intervention through financial assistance and implementation of various developmental and welfare schemes, this sector has been able to withstand competition from the power loom and mill sectors. This sector contributes nearly 19 percent of the total cloth produced in the country and also adds substantially to export earnings. Handloom is unparalleled in its flexibility and versatility, permitting experimentation and encouraging innovations. The strength of Handloom lies in the introducing innovative designs, which cannot be replicated by the Power loom sector. Thus, Handloom forms a part of the heritage of India and exemplifies the richness and diversity of our country and the artistry of the weavers.

Keywords: Handloom, Power loom, Innovative Designs, Weavers, Khadi and Village Industries

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The handloom industry rolls its carpet back to the ancient times. The very first fragment of Indian handloom was excavated from the parts of Egypt. After that, finely woven and dyed cotton fabrics were found in Mohenjo-Daro (Indus Valley Civilization). There were some more excavations that speak of the golden history of Indian handloom. In fact, traditional handloom style has been one of the oldest forms. Even, the Vedic literature has mention of Indian weaving styles. Apart from this, few examples are also seen in Buddhist era scripts about the woolen carpets.

Prior to imperialism and colonization, all the natural fabrics (silk, cotton and jute) were hand-woven and Khadi was among the prevalent materials at that point of time. Later on, the mechanical system created ways for the faster completion of spinning and weaving. After the introduction of machinery, the technicalities were given due care and the finesse came in a better way. This also helped the weavers, embroiders and hand-printers to create new designs. At the time of British, the export business of cotton and silk also started. This enabled the Indians to showcase the talent of their expertise in other countries also. Indian handloom created a special place for itself in India and abroad too. With so many varieties of handloom from different states, India has collected a precious wealth of innovation. After all, this has lead to the emergence of India as the most richly cultured country.

The Office of the Development Commissioner for Handlooms has been implementing, since its inception in the year 1976, various schemes for the promotion and development of the handloom sector and providing assistance to the handloom weavers in a variety of ways.

Some of the Major Programmes Relate to the handloom sector are:

- Modernization and Up gradation of Technology
- Input Support
- Marketing Support
- Development of Exportable Products
- Publicity
- Infrastructural Support
- Welfare Measures
- Composite Growth Oriented Package
- Research & Development

Handloom Products in India

Handloom industry in India is best known for its distinctiveness, style, traditionalism and modern technology. Each and every state in India has the capability of boasting innovative printing, weaving, embroidery and designing trends. And it is this art form that gives them their individuality. What makes the handloom industry significant is the use of fine textured fabrics, exclusively beautiful patterns, trendy outlook and sheer finesse in the product. In fact, handloom industry has tried its hands on almost every product that can be thought off. From saris to suits, lehengas, skirts, stoles, scarf's, shawls, jackets and many more. Handloom industry in India has flourished to a large extent.

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|-----------------|------------------|
| • Sarees | • Caps |
| • Suits | • Slippers |
| • Kurtas | • Bed Linens |
| • Shawls | • Table Linen |
| • Skirts | • Cushion Covers |
| • LehangaCholi | • Curtain |
| • Dhotis | • Bags & Purses |
| • Sherwanis | • Carpets |
| • Kurta Pyjamas | • Mats |
| • Jacket | • File Covers |

Prominent Handloom Materials in India

Handloom in India has always been a centre of attraction. It is because dressing styles have an essence of magnetism in them that people tend to adopt some or the other trend on every occasion. Moreover, there is some sort of exclusivity in each state's handloom craft, whether it is printing technology or weaving style. And in all this, the importance of material lies in the way it is used for weaving or printing. Each and every material in India is a significant

part of handloom industry. At some points, it is the sheer texture of material that creates magic; while at other levels, it is the softness of material that tends to hold attention.

From cotton to georgette, chiffon, silk, muslin, wool, crepe, Pashmina, synthetic and jute, handloom materials tends to give exclusivity to the whole piece of art. During carving an art on these materials, they are either used singly or are mingled with other material to create a wholesome effect. The style of Indian clothing is popular worldwide as it makes use of various kinds of handloom materials and creates something exclusive from it. Saree, salwar kameez, lehenga choli, sharara, skirts and churidar suits are some of the gifts that handloom department has given to us.

- Silk
- Cotton
- Pashmina & Wool
- Chiffon
- Crepe
- Georgette
- Jute
- Muslim

The relation of Indian clothing and handloom is ages old. From making a particular material to weaving it with threads or printing it, handloom materials undergo so many processes. After that, they are designed into stylish dresses for the people to adorn their body. It is because of this that handloom department in India is taking every care of the developments.

Using Dyes

The process of resist dyeing, tie-dyeing and yarns tie-dyed to a pattern before weaving were the basic techniques of indigenous dyeing of village cloth. Shellac was used for reds, iron shavings and vinegar for blacks, turmeric for yellow and pomegranate rinds for green. Before the artificial synthesis of indigo and alizarin as dye stuffs, blues and reds were traditionally extracted from the plants indigo era, anil and rubiatintorum (madder-root). These were the main sources for traditional Indian dyes. Even today, the Kalmkari cloth of Andhra Pradesh is printed with local vegetable dyes. The colours being shades of ochre, deep blue and a soft rose derived from local earths, indigo and madder roots.

Printing

Andhra Pradesh has made a significant contribution to the history of hand-printed textiles in India. Printing is native to the land, its pigments being obtained from the flowers, leaves and barks of local trees and its chemicals obtained from clay, dung and river sands. A new technique has been developed in the northern sectors where warp threads are lined, measured and tied to the loom and then printed. The warp-printed material is a specialty of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

The ideal seasons for block printing are the dry months. Excellence is achieved only if the block is freshly and perfectly chiseled. The designs are produced by artists and the designing is kept within the discipline imposed, the type of yarn, the dyes used and the weaving techniques, by the nakshabandhas (graph-paper designers). India also produces a range of home furnishings, household linen, curtain tapestry and yardage of interesting textures and varying thickness, which have been devised by using blended yarn. Muslims were forbidden the use of pure silk, and the half cotton half silk, fabrics known, as mashru and himru were a response to this taboo. Given the wide and exciting range of handloom it is not surprising that the rich and beautiful products of the weavers of India have been called "Exquisite poetry in colourful fabrics."

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chavda Dharmendrasinh (2001)¹ has viewed that retail major Pantaloon's has tied up with Andhra Pradesh Handloom Weavers' Co-operative Society and National Institute of Fashion Technology to launch a new women's ethnic wear range made from handloom. The handloom will be sourced from APCO. Another retail chain, Shopper's Stop is also reported to have shown readiness to pick up handloom from APCO.

Sundari B. Shyama (2001)² has analyzed the case of the cooperative societies, whether they have helped or hampered the handloom industry. Secondly, he has advanced a theory "that its own qualities of resilience and dynamism have enabled handloom weaving to survive with some degree of strength." Thirdly, they contend that a countrywide policy to the problems of the handloom sector is not the right solution; and that any pragmatic attempt to alleviate the difficulties of the handloom weaver ought to be location-specific and regional in character.

Devarajan R (2002)³ has noticed that there are two schools of thought concerning the traditional industries in India. One school regards them as an atavistic survival of pre-industrial economic organizational structure. The other school regards them as the repositories of a heritage of skilled craftsmanship.

PTI (2003)⁴ has pointed out that the government has set up a core Group to enable adequate and timely flow of credit to the handloom sector, a onetime special rebate scheme for sale of handloom fabrics with a provision of Rs 100 crore was also under finalization for liquidating existing handloom stocks. A special contributory insurance scheme covering one million weavers would be launched soon.

Kumar P.S. (2003)⁵ has pointed out that Khadi and Village Industries Board keeping with its mission to uplift the rural poor, provides financial assistance for establishing Village Industries. These Village Industries make use of the locally available raw materials and help to build up a strong rural economy in terms of money and wealth.

Mishra Ashis (2003)⁶ has observed that the handloom products of any region with all its embedded quality and design represent the culture of that region. Their cultural mix can be created by picking up the best and most marketable designs from each type of product, cross-cultural product designs can be generated and their definite marketing activity can be ensured through an adequate marketing decision system for the resurrection of a dying species such as the handloom industry in Ganjam district.

Agencies (2004)⁷ has pointed out that the sale of handloom clothes in Andhra Pradesh has gone up following Chief Minister's call to people to wear handloom dresses at least once a week to generate demand in the market and help the crisis-ridden sector. This was supported by a massive promotional campaign launched by the government through exhibitions and discount sales.

It has been pointed out by Bhatnagar Subhash (2004)⁸ that in handloom industries successful models for scaling up ITC's E-Chaupal is the best example of the scheme aimed at up gradation of infrastructure support and skill for handloom weavers, besides strengthening the production base by modernizing the looms.

Sivakkannan M. (2005)⁹ has pointed out that The Handloom Export Promotion Council (HEPC) is well aware of its role as a catalyst in revitalizing the handloom industry in the context of the post-Multi-Fiber Agreement era to cater to the increasing global demand.

Jayaswal Rajeev (2005)¹⁰ has noticed that desi looms are fast changing into dollar minting machines. Growing demand for ethnic Indian products abroad has caught attention of foreign entrepreneurs. Encouraged by the growing foreign interests in Indian handicrafts business, domestic exporters have decided to set up handicrafts and handloom stores abroad.

Vashisht Dinker (2006)¹¹ has observed that the industry players feel that given the right encouragement and suitable policy changes the quantum of exports can go up further. The exporters of Panipat don't have to go too far to get ready cotton. The city has a cotton spinning industry of its own that comprises of 35 units. Power scarcity is a big problem. Power tripping is rampant and it lead to a waste of time and also results in losses.

PTI (2006)¹² has pointed out that the textiles ministry was taking steps to increase the reach of the Handloom Mark label scheme, launched to popularize hand-woven products and to ensure their genuineness. Two labels had been designed - one for the domestic market and the other for certifying export products - by the National Institute of Design.

PTI (2007)¹³ has noted that the handloom sector was highly decentralized and dispersed, that efforts have been made to organize handloom weavers into cooperatives during the last fifty years. It suggested that interest on credit to weavers should be lowered from 12 per cent, which was same as that given to industries. It also favored waiving of interest on loans availed by handloom units with poor financial health.

Sehgal H. K. (2009)¹⁴ has examined that as far as the garment export sector is concerned, there have been mixed signals: continuing world economic downturn; some late recovery, however temporary and for some people; recent Rupee appreciation and with a new Government, expected to be stable, assuming charge.

Shijina Shiji (2009)¹⁵ has marked that the weaving process is central to the quality of the rug. As a matter of fact, handloom rugs and carpets is an age-old profession practiced by village artisans. It is indeed unfortunate that the handloom rug making units are under threat of closure as they are encountering stiff competition globally from power loom units.

Prachi (2010)¹⁶ has observed that Indian handloom is growing in its popularity not only among the people in India, but also among the people admiring Indian handloom and Indian handicrafts from around the globe. In spite of having distinct styles and ways of weaving, there is a lot of exchange of styles that happened among the diverse Indian handloom styles.

TNN (2011)¹⁷ has mentioned that the state government has taken several decisions to encourage weavers to boost handloom industry in the state. The state government with the cooperation of the Centre has formulated several schemes to ameliorate the socio-economic conditions of the weavers belonging to the handloom industry.

Sunderarajan P (2011)¹⁸ has noticed that weaver cooperative societies had become financially unviable since, many weavers were not able to repay their dues because of economic stress.

IANS (2011)¹⁹ has noted that Indian consumers need to change the thinking; they need to think 'swadeshi' rather than 'videshi'. The greatest tragedy weavers' face is being ignored not just by people but by designers as well. The fashion industry is a very powerful platform to convey the message across the masses that fashion is more than chic dressing; there has to be an essence to it.

CONCLUSION

The handloom industry has developed substantially over a period of time. It is spread through the entire country. Most of the handloom units are run either as sole-proprietors or on partnership basis, the owners lack the needed professional outlook in the overall handling of their units. Therefore many of them are not even aware of the modern techniques of marketing such as product development, brand promotion, packaging, advertising, market surveys and demand forecasts. To maximize their sales volume, it has become very important for them to know how to get maximum returns by using different marketing strategies. There is a need to study and implement marketing practices in order to increase export and provide customer satisfaction.

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