



## Handicrafts and Textiles of India



**Magic of Gifted Hands:  
Empowering Handicraft Artisans**  
Shantmanu

**Sustaining Artisans Economically**  
Hena Naqvi

**Crossing the Seven Seas**  
Ranjeet Mehta

**SPECIAL ARTICLE**  
**Women, Hunar and Looms of Hope**  
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**Chief Editor's Office** : Room No. 660, Soochna  
Bhawan, CGO Complex, Lodhi Road New Delhi  
110 003 **Phone:** 24362971

**Yojana (English)**: Room No. 647, Soochna Bhawan,  
CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi - 110 003.

**E-mail (Editorial)** : [yojanace@gmail.com](mailto:yojanace@gmail.com)

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Let noble thoughts come to us from all sides  
Rig Veda

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## Handicrafts & Textiles – The Pride of India

Every region in India has its unique handicraft tradition, mostly using locally available material. Being a labour intensive sector, it supplies employment to lakhs of artisans all over the country. While for many artisans and workers, making handicrafts is a full-time livelihood, it also serves as an alternate source of income for the agricultural workers, who keep themselves employed in this sector during lean periods in agriculture. Womenfolk in farm families also use this as a means of gainful employment after their menfolk go to the fields. The handicrafts and textiles sector is a major source of livelihood throughout rural India.

The sector is also an important foreign exchange earner, as it has very high export potential. Indian handicrafts and textiles are in great demand abroad with their unique motifs and colourful textures. Indian handicraft products like shawls, jewellery, bags, wooden carvings, embroidered material are all popular at international levels as well.

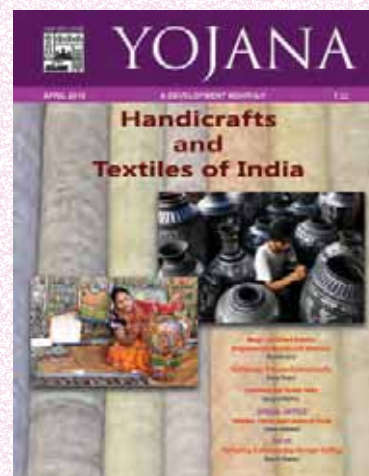
Every student of Indian history knows about the artefacts that were found at the site of the famous Mohenjo-daro and Harappan civilizations. The statue of the dancing girl, the jewellery – all are testimony to the fact that handicrafts have been part of Indian tradition since the period of the Indus Valley civilization, if not earlier. Subsequent races and dynasties continued this glorious tradition, incorporating their individual styles and using specific materials, be it wood artefacts of Saharanpur, bidri work in Andhra Pradesh, the floral motifs of the Indo-Persian style, the rich zari work found in Kanchipuram silks, the puppets of Rajasthan, et al.

The heritage of Indian textiles also goes back to the Indus Valley civilization, where homespun cotton was used to weave clothes. Every region has its typical textile tradition. The rich Kanchipuram silk sarees of the South, the muga and tussar silks of the north east, the grand Banarasi sarees, the Chanderi cotton and silks, the pashmina and shahtoosh shawls of Kashmir, the brightly embroidered textiles of Rajasthan and Kutch, the phulkari work of Punjab, all epitomize the richness of India's textile tradition. Indian silk and jute garments are famous all over the world and in global demand.

Skilling of artisans has been receiving focused attention. Skilling helps to familiarize the artisan with latest technology and designs and helps upgrade the product to international standards, thus, leveraging the sector's inherent strength as a macro-economic driver.

Women form a very big chunk of workers in this sector. Their skilled hands help produce very delicate handicraft and textiles – be it the Channapatna wooden toys, embroidery work on textiles, carpet weaving – women form the backbone of this sector. Empowering them economically and socially is, therefore, crucial.

As an ancient tradition, many of these artisans have learnt their skill from their forefathers and have attained a very high level of skill and specialization in their art. This is what makes this industry so unique as compared to other sectors where skills and techniques can largely be learnt in a college or academy in a formal way. It, thus, becomes even more imperative that this ancient tradition is not allowed to die. The relevant stakeholders need to ensure that this ancient art flourishes and its skilled hands are economically self-sufficient.





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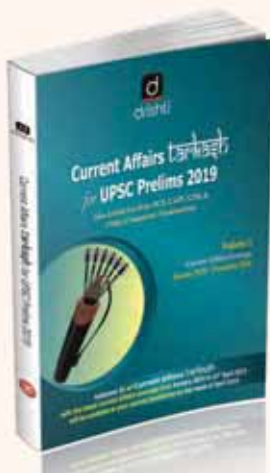
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YE-862/11/2018

# Magic of Gifted Hands: Empowering Handicraft Artisans

*Shantmanu*

**T**he origin of Indian handicrafts goes back to the early man living in caves and giving creative expression to his/her emotions through various carvings made on rocks. It travelled through the ages through various forms of skill, techniques, art forms preserved in various folk traditions and aesthetic expressions. The artisans of India have always been recognized for their craftsmanship, sense of design and color. The excavations of Mohenja daro and Harappa show that even during the second millennium before Christ the excellence of Indian artisans was established and was recognized world over. The cottage industry provided not only employment to the rural artisans but also played an important role in building a parallel rural economy. Even now the small scale and cottage sector helps to solve social and economic problems of the artisans, by providing employment which also includes a large number of women and people belonging to weaker sections of the society.

Handicraft is rightly described as craft of the people and in India it is not just an industry as the word is commonly understood but is the aesthetic expression of the artisans which not only fulfills the daily needs of the people but also satisfies their aesthetic desire. The definition of handicrafts as per Honorable Supreme Court in Louis Shoppe judgment decided on 12.03.1995 says “it must be predominantly made by hand. It does not matter if some machinery is also used in the process. It must be graced



*Masterpiece of Plastic Inlay on Wood by Shilp Guru Awardee Shri Rupan Matharu from Hoshiarpur, Punjab*

with visual appeal in the matter of ornamentation or inlay work or some similar work lending it an element of artistic improvement. Such orientation must be of a substantial nature and not a mere pretence”.

The handicrafts sector plays a significant and important role in the country’s economy. It provides employment to a vast segment of craftspersons in rural and semi urban areas and generates substantial foreign exchange for the country,

while preserving its cultural heritage. Handicrafts have great potential, as they hold the key for sustaining not only the existing set of millions of artisans spread over the length and breadth of the country, but also for the increasingly large number of new entrants in the crafts activity.

There are approximately 70 lakh handicraft artisans in the country, which includes 20 lakh artisans related to the carpet sector, practicing more than 500 types of crafts such as Metal Engraving,

**The handicrafts sector plays a significant and important role in the country's economy. It provides employment to a vast segment of craftspersons in rural and semi urban areas and generates substantial foreign exchange for the country, while preserving its cultural heritage. Handicrafts have great potential, as they hold the key for sustaining not only the existing set of millions of artisans spread over the length and breadth of the country, but also for the increasingly large number of new entrants in the crafts activity.**

The author is Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Ministry of Textiles, Government of India.



*Masterpiece of Stone Carving by Shilp Guru Awardee Shri Kalpataru Maharana from Cuttack, Odisha*

Zari Zardosi, Teracotta, Stone Carving, Phulkari, Wood Inlay, Chikankari, Cane and Bamboo, Wooden Toys, Blue Pottery and Kutch Embroidery. Out of these, 35 crafts have been recognized as “Endangered Crafts” such as Assamese Jewellery, Rogan Painting, Sanjhi Crafts, Ganjeefa Cards and Chamba Rumal and 92 crafts have been registered under “Geographical Indication Act” like Ganjifa cards of Mysore, Kashmir Paper Machie, Madhubani paintings, Kathputlis of Rajasthan, Odisha pattachitra, Varanasi Glass beads and Warli painting of Maharashtra. 56 per cent of the artisans are female.

The handicraft artisans are mostly working in an un-organized set up which makes them prone to exploitation by middlemen. The handicraft sector has challenges of working capital, poor exposure to new technologies, absence of full market intelligence and institutional framework. Series of efforts have been taken to redress these problems and the sector is now witnessing good growth in terms of product development, domestic sales and exports during the 12th Plan.

The office of Development Commissioner (Handicrafts) is the nodal agency in the Government

of India for craft and artisan-based activities. It assists in the development, marketing and export of handicrafts, and the promotion of craft forms and skills. The assistance is in the form of technical and financial support, including in the form of schematic interventions implemented through its field offices.

As the nodal agency, the Development Commissioner spearheads the country’s efforts to promote the handicrafts sector. The office supports the artisans and the sector through its six regional offices at Mumbai, Kolkata, Lucknow, Chennai, Guwahati, and New Delhi and its 53 field units.

Market Linkages are provided through various domestic and international marketing events organized throughout the year in various parts of the country. Domestic marketing platform is provided by organizing Gandhi Shilp Bazaar, Crafts Bazaar, etc and organizing handicraft exhibitions in prominent shopping malls of the country. International Marketing platform is being provided to awardee artisans through participation in international marketing events.

The handicraft awards namely Shilp Guru Award, National Award, National Merit Certificates and

Design Innovation award are amongst the highest awards for the meritorious handicrafts artisans of the country. The objective is to give recognition for encouragement to outstanding craftspersons to maintain excellence in craftsmanship and keeping alive our old traditions. Every year, 10 Shilp Guru awards, 30 National Awards (including 5 National Awards to women artisans and 5 National Awards for promotion and development of endangered crafts), 40 National Merit Certificates, and 3 Design Innovation awards on co-creation basis are being conferred to the meritorious artisans.

India is one of the important suppliers of handicrafts to the world market. In the changing world scenario, craft products exported to various countries form a part of lifestyle products in the international market. The impact is due to the changing consumer taste and trends for the 7 million craft persons who are the backbone of the Indian handicraft industry possessing inherent skills, technique and traditional craftsmanship quite sufficient for the primary platform. However, in the changing world market, these crafts persons need an institutional support at their places of work i.e. craft pockets for value addition and for the edge with







*National Handicrafts & Handloom Museum at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi*

other competitors like China, Korea, Thailand etc. There is a high demand for Indian utilitarian and traditional crafts in the domestic and international markets. A total of 199 lines of products are now being produced and exported from India. India has been a large exporter of handicrafts over the years and the exports trend has been increasing year by year. The top ten countries contributing to export of handicrafts items (major items being art metal wares, wood wares, hand printed textiles, embroidered and crocheted goods) during the last five years are USA, U.A.E., United Kingdom, Germany, Netherlands, France, Australia, Italy, Canada, Latin American countries, Japan and Switzerland.

India is the world's largest producer and exporter of handmade carpets since 2013-14. Currently, India's share is 35 per cent of total global exports. About 85 per cent of total production in the country is

exported to more than 100 countries. USA accounts for 45 per cent of total exports and Germany, UK and UAE together account for 20 per cent. China and countries of South America like Brazil, Mexico, Chile and Ecuador are emerging markets. Indian handmade carpets are renowned worldwide for their beautiful designs, variety, craftsmanship, eco-friendly dyes and quality services at competitive prices. India is the only country that makes handmade carpets that start from 16 knots per square inch to 2500 knots per square inch and also uses more than 10 types of raw materials and makes carpets in all sizes, shapes and colors.

Access to economic independence through the handicraft sector can address the livelihood issues and would lead to income generation in rural areas. Also, skill upgradation and development in handicraft sector is an excellent approach for development of artisans, poverty reduction and

providing income generation which would also help in achievement of sustainable development goals.

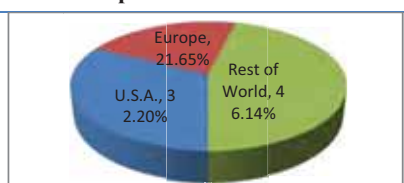
As recognition of India's contribution, India was made the Partner Country in the world's oldest and one of the best exhibitions "Ambiente". In the Ambiente 2019, which Germany organized w.e.f. 8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> February, 2019 with India as partner country, more than 4500 companies from 80 countries participated. 517 Indian companies participated in the show displaying exquisite Christmas decoration, fashion jewellery, wooden handicrafts items, textiles furnishing, leather products, lamps and lighting, ceramics along with live demonstration of crafts skill by renowned mastercraft persons, GI craft display and Theme pavilion showcasing sustainable ecofriendly "Make in India" crafts from India.

National Handicrafts & Handloom Museum at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi is popularly known as Crafts Museum. The Museum's Architect facilitator is famous Architect Charles Corea. It is an amazing place to visit and enjoy the artwork and handwork of artisans and weavers. The museum experience can be learning and educative as people can directly meet the Master craftspersons, purchase the artefacts directly and can have a visual through craft demonstration. The museum is very spacious and the galleries display the cultural heritage of handicrafts and handlooms. □

(E-mail: [smanu@ias.nic.in](mailto:smanu@ias.nic.in))

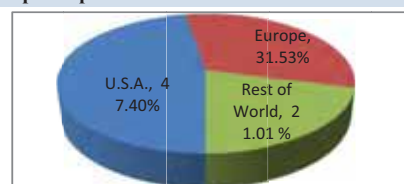
#### Direction of Handicrafts Export

<b>USA</b>	<b>32.20%</b>
<b>Europe</b>	21.65%
<b>Rest of World</b>	46.14%



#### Direction of Carpet Export

<b>USA</b>	<b>47.40%</b>
<b>Europe</b>	31.53%
<b>Rest of World</b>	21.01%



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YE-802/11/2018

## Sustaining Artisans Economically

*Hena Naqvi*



A

wide range of beautiful handicrafts form one of the most significant traits of the rich cultural heritage of our country.

Be it *Kutch* embroidery of Gujarat or *Zari-Zardozi* and *Chikankari* of Uttar Pradesh, wooden toys of Karnataka or bamboo craft of Assam, puppets of Rajasthan or *Sikki*, *Tikuli* and *Madhubani* arts of Bihar; all these are not only the traditional arts of the respective provinces but also form an important source of alternative income for the artisans. This is one of those market segments that have led India to establish its distinct identity in the international market.

Handicrafts include the products produced by hands /and or a combination of hands and simple technology. Like the unique diversity of our country, our handicrafts are also very diverse and can be placed in innumerable categories. Some of these may be decorative, religious, historical, artistic, ornamental, daily utilities, symbolic and so on. The sector also includes village-cottage industries, handloom and carpet sectors. Handicrafts are known for their use of locally available raw materials. This is again a huge range consisting of natural and artificial inputs like bamboo, clay, stones, threads, canes, fabrics, beads, glasses, natural and artificial dyes, motifs, metals, ceramics, and glasses, to name a few.

Our country is gifted with a rich range of beautiful handicrafts. Almost every state of the country has its unique handicrafts. These products are a part and parcel of the culture of the concerned communities. Passed on from generation to generation, these handicrafts have the potential of sustaining the artisans economically. Contribution of this sector to the Indian economy is immense.

The author is State Programme Manager-Communication & Research with 'SAKSHAM', Department of Social Welfare, Government of Bihar.



Almost 70 per cent of our country's population residing in rural areas is directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture as the primary source of livelihood. In non-agricultural or lean seasons, handicrafts become an alternative means of subsistence for this population and safeguards them from food insecurity. In this way, handicrafts become an important source of livelihood for a large chunk of the Indian population. There were 68.86 lakh artisans as per the census of handicrafts conducted during 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan. The magnitude and strength of this sector can be very well understood from this fact. The

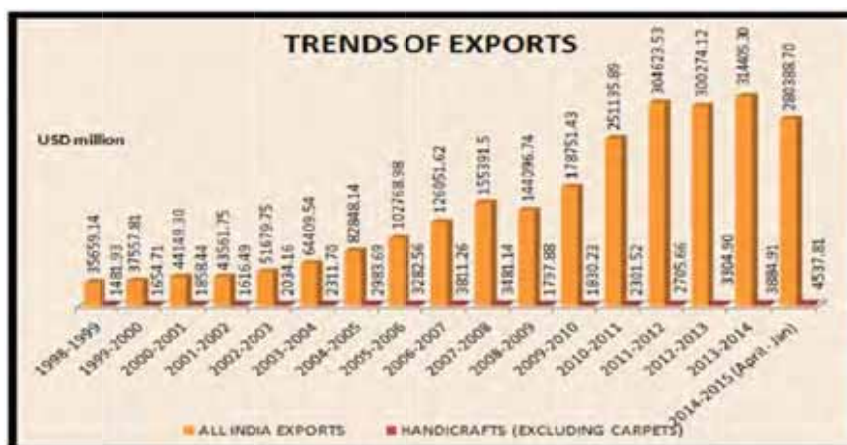
sector provides employment in various forms to the artisans. This can be production of raw materials like motifs, production of finished goods and their marketing.

There is another sub-segment of this sector employing another set of people. They are the people engaged directly or indirectly in export of handicrafts. The export segment of handicrafts is emerging as a potential source of foreign exchange earnings. Figure-1 establishes the fact that export of handicrafts is on a rising trend and heading towards a significant share in the domain of all India exports.

According to government sources, it was estimated in the year 2015-16 that total production of handicrafts including handmade carpets was to the tune of Rs.41,418 crores and export of handicrafts was Rs.30,939 crores. The figures prove the role of this sector in the Indian economy.

Purchase of Indian handicrafts by domestic and foreign tourists as a

Figure:1



Source: Website of Office of Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Ministry of Textile, GoI

### Handicrafts bring fame to their practitioners

Smt Godavari Dutta, the octogenarian practitioner of Madhubani or Mithila painting has recently been awarded the Padma Shri award as a gesture to recognise this time-tested handicraft of Bihar. Godavari Dutta has been nurturing this art for last fifty years. She has showcased her art in several countries. As a result of the dedication of Smt. Dutta and some other artists, this genre can be seen in a new form in Bihar; right from Madhubani railway station to walls of various public places in Patna.



souvenir is a tourism ritual. Handicrafts add value to the tourist spots and attract tourists providing an income for local artisans and other petty vendors/service providers in the surroundings. Since most of these vendors and service providers belong to the unorganised sector, there is hardly any data available on the income earned by them with an indirect support from the handicrafts sector. Still, it is evident that there is an important contribution of handicrafts to the tourism sector of the country.

Due attention has also been given on the marketing of these valuable products. Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH) organises product-specific shows and also

‘Indian Handicrafts and Gifts Fair’ bi-annually. There have been efforts like product based-exhibitions and live demonstrations by artisans for promoting these products abroad.

Market Development Assistance (M.D.A) and Market Access Initiative (M.A.I.) envision better marketing of these products through fairs, exhibitions and producers-buyers meets. ‘India Handloom Bazaar’, an online marketing portal is based on marketing of the handicrafts through facilitating direct interaction between buyers and sellers. Around four hundred *Hastkala Sahyog Shivirs* were organised in two hundred districts in October 2017 that supported a large number of weavers and artisans

in strengthening their micro enterprises through various measures.

The focus is now on the artisans and their enterprises to utilise the facilities enabling them to contribute towards our economy as well as socio-economic upliftment of the community. The artisans and their associations should move forward to get Geographical Indication (GI) tag to enhance the credibility of their products. GI tag is the sign on the product showing its region of origin. Some of the handicrafts which have received GI tag are-Kangra paintings, Varanasi brocades and saris, Bustar wooden craft, Villianur terracotta works etc.



On a macro level, initiatives to strengthen the sector will support in preserving this cultural heritage and transferring it to the next generation as a potential source of livelihood. While on the micro level, various socio-economic issues like unemployment, poverty, migration and indebtedness will be addressed. In turn, these will add to strengthening of the Indian economy and thereby ameliorating the conditions of Indian society. □

(E-mail: [hena.naqvipti@gmail.com](mailto:hena.naqvipti@gmail.com),  
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## DO YOU KNOW?

### Various Crafts in India

#### Zari

Zari is an even thread traditionally made of fine gold or silver used in traditional Indian, Pakistani and Persian garments and curtains, etc. Four types of zari are produced in India, namely, real zari, semi real zari, imitation zari and plastic zari. Real zari is made of silver and electroplated with gold, whereas semi real zari has a composition of copper coated with silver and gold electroplating. Surat is the home of zari industry in India. Other clusters producing zari are Bareilly, Varanasi, Agra, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Vadodara, Lathur, Jaipur, Barmer, etc.



#### Leather Footwear and other Leather Articles

The leather industry, including leather footwear, is one of the oldest traditional industries in India. The major production centres in India are Chennai and Ranipet in Tamil Nadu, Mumbai in Maharashtra, Agra, Lucknow and Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh, Jalandhar in Punjab, Delhi, Karnal and Faridabad in Haryana, Kolkata in West Bengal, Jaipur and Jodhpur in Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha, and Calicut in Kerala.



India is also known worldwide for its leather products. Leather products such as jackets, lampshades, pouches, bags, belts, wallets, and stuffed toys are exported from India in large quantity. Leather bags and wallets account for major portion of total exports.

#### Carpet

Carpet industry is one of the oldest industries in India, and is primarily an export oriented industry. Various kinds of carpets include hand-knotted woolen carpets, tufted woolen carpets, handmade woolen durries, and pure silk carpets. Major centers of carpet production are Bhadohi, Varanasi, Mirzapur, Agra, Jaipur, Bikaner, Kashmir, and Panipat, Gwalior, West Bengal, Uttarakhand, Karnataka and Elluru in Andhra Pradesh.



#### Rugs and Durries

India is one the leading producers of rugs in the world. Various kinds of rugs produced in India are namda (felted rugs), gabba (embroidered rugs), wooden pile rugs, cotton rugs, etc. Rug production is concentrated in Agra, Bhadoi, Mirzapur in UP, Jaipur in Rajasthan, Panipat in Haryana, and Kashmir in Jammu and Kashmir. Regions known for durrie making are Panipat, Bhavani in Tamil Nadu, Navalgund in Karnataka, Warangal in Andhra Pradesh, and Jaisalmer and Barmer in Rajasthan.

#### Handloom

India is a major handloom producer in the world, accounting for 85 per cent of the total production globally. Handloom contributes 14.6 per cent to the total cloth production in the country (excluding wool, silk and yarn). There are 470 handloom clusters, of which 230 clusters have more than 1,000 weaving looms. Out of these 230 clusters, 41 clusters have over 25,000 weaving looms. Major clusters in India are Bahraich, Bhuj, Karimnagar, Patan, Varanasi, Nawan, Shaher, Boudh, etc. Handloom industry is the second largest employment generator in India, next only to agriculture.

#### Textile Hand Embroidery

In textile hand embroidery, embellishment is made on fabric with threads and sometimes with other materials. There are many popular embroidery clusters such as chikankari and zardozi of Lucknow, katha of Bengal, pulkari of Punjab, kutchi embroidery of Gujarat and kashidakari of Kashmir. Zardozi has been traditionally prevalent in Lucknow and the six surrounding districts of Barabanki, Unnao, Sitapur, Rae Bareli, Hardoi and Amethi.

## Textile Hand Printing

Hand printed textiles is a craft in which cloth is dyed with hand or printed using shapes. Various types of hand printing practiced in India are block printing, batik, kalamkari (hand printing by pen) and bandhani (tie and die). Some of the important centers of this craft are in Hyderabad, Machalipattnam, Varanasi, Farrukabad, Bagh, Behrongarh, Indore, Mandar, Burhanpur, Ahmedabad, Rajkot, Kutch, Bagru, Chittroli, Sanganer, Jaipur and Jodhpur.

## Cane and Bamboo

Cane is largely used for furniture making, whereas bamboo is used for making jewellery and decorative utility items like lamp-stand, umbrella handles, partitions, screens, flower pots, baskets, walking sticks, tool handles, fishing rods, tent poles, ladders, toys, fans, cups, mugs, mats etc. Assam (Lakhimpur, Bongaigaon, Guwahati, etc.) and Tripura (Agartala, Nelaghar, etc.) are recognized as prominent places for cane and bamboo products both nationally as well as internationally. Assam is home to about 50 species of bamboo. Other major cane and bamboo handicraft centers are Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh in North Eastern region, West Bengal, Kerala, and Odisha.



## Filigree and Silverware

Filigree is an extremely ancient technique dating back to 4000 years ago. Filigree work is performed on silver and involves significant precision and technicality. Two major clusters of silver filigree in India are Karimnagar in Andhra Pradesh and Cuttack in Odisha. The practice in Karimnagar is about two centuries old. However, it is also practiced in Warangal in Andhra Pradesh. Key raw materials used are silver wire, tracing sheet, copper, charcoal, dilute sulphuric acid.

## Metal Ware

The metal crafts of India display intricate craftsmanship and fine art in shaping gold, silver, brass, copper into exquisite designed images, idols, jewellery, and utility items. Different categories of handicrafts that come under metal ware are brass metal ware of Moradabad, metal bidri work and bell metal in Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and so on. India is the largest brassware producer in the world. Major clusters of brassware are Moradabad, Murshidabad, Madurai, Salem, Cuttack and Haryana.



Bidriware is a metal handicraft that originated in Bidar, Karnataka. The term 'Bidriware' originates from the township of Bidar, which is still the main centre of the unique metal ware. It is a form of encrusted metal ware, where one metal is inlaid on to another. Bidri products include a diverse range of objects including hukka bases, bowls, boxes, candle stands, trays, jewellery and buttons. It travelled from Iran to Ajmer in Rajasthan in the 13th century AD, and from there to Bijapur and flourished during the reign of the Deccan Sultanate. It is also practiced in Aurangabad district in the state of Maharashtra and Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh. The basic metal used for Bidri is the alloy of zinc and copper.

## Jewellery

Jewellery making is considered as the most distinctive and highly artistic craft in India. India has well-established capabilities for hand-made jewellery, both in traditional and modern designs. Major centers of handmade jewellery are Delhi, Moradabad, Sambhal, Jaipur, Kohima (Tribal), Nellore, Mysore, Nalgonda, Nizamabad, etc. Nearly 500,000 goldsmiths and 6,000 diamond processors are estimated to be present in India.



## Pottery and Clay Objects

There is a wide range of pottery and clay crafts in India. Most popular forms of pottery include blue pottery, black and red pottery, roulette ware, and dull red and grey ware. India has a rich tradition of clay crafts and pottery throughout the country. Asharikandi in Assam is the largest cluster in India, where terracotta and pottery

craft is found. Other clusters are Bhadravati, Bulandshahar, Nizamabad, Pune, Chandrapur, etc. Potters are the fourth largest amongst the artisanal groups in India. It is estimated that about 10 lakh people are involved in this craft.

The main raw material for this craft is ordinary clay, derived from the beds of water bodies.

### Terracotta

Terracotta is similar to pottery, in which craftspersons use local clay available in river beds to make items such as lamps, candle stands, figures of deities and animals, etc.

### Folk Painting

Indian Folk paintings are pictorial expressions of village painters which are marked by the subjects chosen from epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata, Indian Puranas as well as daily events. There are several vibrant folk painting types in India in different stages.

The Gond tribe of Madhya Pradesh is engaged in floor and wall painting. Warli is vivid expression of daily and social events of Warli tribe in Maharashtra. Rajasthan is famous for Phad painting done on cloth. Other types of paintings are Pithora painting in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, Madhubani painting of Bihar, Chitrakar painting of West Bengal, Patachitras in Odisha, and Kalamkari in Srikalahasti, Andhra Pradesh.



### Coir Twisting

Coir is a natural, eco-friendly, water proof and exceptionally tensile fibre extracted from the nuts of coconut palms. It is found in abundance and is used for manufacturing a wide range of eco-friendly toys, mats, brushes, mattresses, wall hangings, key rings, pen stands and other home decoratives. This craft is primarily produced in Odisha (Sakhigopal, Puri, Pipli, Bhubaneswar, Batamangala and Kendrapara). It is also produced in Kerala (Ernakulam).

### Theatre, Costumes and Puppets



This craft involves making objects related to festivals and for use in performing arts. Making puppets is one of such crafts, which has a rich tradition in India. There are four types of puppets - glove, rod, shadow and string. Puppets from different parts of the country have their own identity. These are produced in several states including Odisha (Kundhei nach, Kathi Kandhe, Ravanachhaya), Karnataka (Gombeyatta, Togalu Gombeatta), Andhra Pradesh (Tholu Bommalata), Tamil Nadu (Thol Bommalattam, Tolpavaikoothu), Rajasthan (Kathputli), Bihar (Yampuri) and Kerala (Tolpavakoothu, Pava-kathakali).

### Grass, Leaf, Reed and Fibre

Traditionally, natural fibres have been used in all cultures for making utilitarian products. Different parts of the plant are used for preparing various handicrafts such as footwear, basketry, mats, chiks, bags, lampshades and boxes. Fibres can be extracted from the bark (banana, jute, hemp, ramie), stem (banana, palm, bamboo), leaf (palm, screw pine, sisal, agave), husk (coir), seeds (cotton), and grass (sikki, madhurkati, benakati, munj). Fibre is found in many states including Maharashtra (sisal), Kerala (palm leaf, korai grass), Tamil Nadu (palm leaf, korai grass), Assam (shitalpatti), Meghalaya (shitalpatti), Bihar (Sikki and Munj grass), etc. Major centers of this craft are Almora and Dehradun in Uttarakhand, Goa, Ernakulam in Kerala, Kullu in Himachal Pradesh, Midnapur in West Bengal, etc.



Source- [handicrafts.nic.in](http://handicrafts.nic.in) portal



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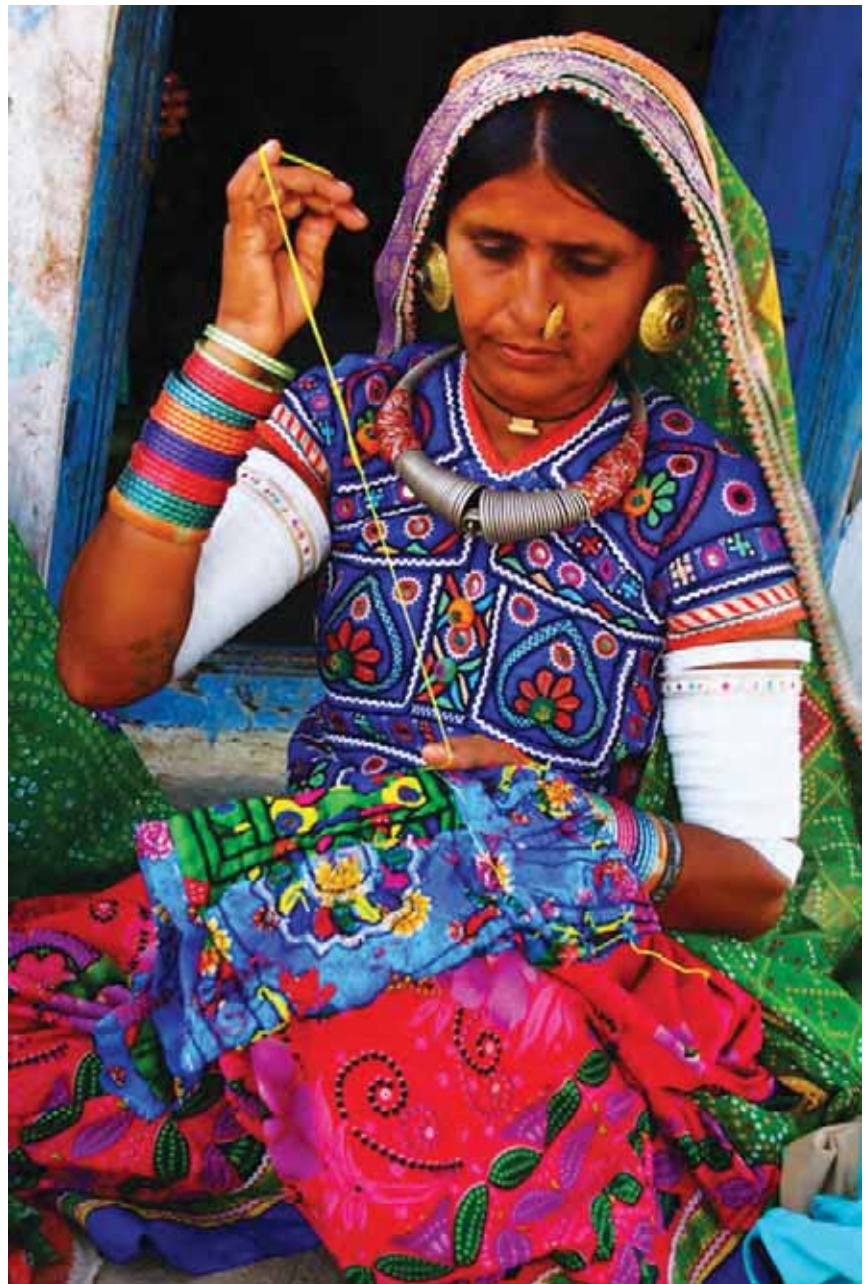
## Contributing to Economic Growth

*Shishir Sinha*

**T**irupati (Andhra Pradesh) and Raghurajpur (Odisha) are separated by over 1100 kilometers but one thing brings them closer and that is their association with project of linking 'Textiles with the Tourism.' These are the first two centres chosen for a project aiming to give textiles and handicrafts a new dimension.

Tirupati does not need an introduction but Raghurajpur does. This craft village is located near the temple city of Puri in Odisha and famous for its pattachitra, palm leaf art, traditional stone carving and idol making with papier-mâché. It has kept its age-old craft traditions alive. It is connected through Bhubaneswar-Puri national highway. It is home to just 140 families, and perhaps India's only village where every household is involved in producing handicrafts. It has a crafts library, an interpretation centre, an amphitheatre and guest houses. The village is hosting not just Indians but foreigners too and earning more. Tourism has given a new identity to this village and the best part is that nearby villages have also benefitted from this identity.

This initiative has helped, even in a limited way, the traditional sector to get a face lift. Also, it is helping this sector to contribute more to the economic growth. No doubt, the textile sector has been one of the oldest industries in India currently estimated at around US\$ 150 billion and expected to reach US\$ 250 billion soon. It contributed seven per cent of the industry output (in value terms), 15 per cent in export earnings and over two per cent in GDP



(Gross Domestic Product) of India in 2017-18. Overall textile exports during fiscal year 2017-18 stood at US\$ 39.2 billion.

Similarly, during the first seven months of the fiscal year 2018-19 (April-October, 2018), textile and apparel exports stood at US\$ 22.9

The author is a Financial Journalist.

billion. This industry is now on the way to becoming the second largest manufacturer and exporter in the world, after China. It is intrinsically intertwined with the rich cultural heritage and traditions of the country. The fact that 45 per cent of textiles and apparel are exported to developed countries is a testimony to the unique brand of Indian textiles.

Textiles and handicrafts have been a key source of employment. As per the latest available Annual Survey of Industries data, number of persons employed in the organised Textile and Wearing Apparel Sector is around 26,48,238 in 2015-16 and 26,94,280 in 2016-17. Further, the handloom sector provides direct and indirect employment to 43 lakh weavers and allied workers. There are 68.86 lakh handicraft artisans. The handloom and handicrafts sector together provide about 111 lakh employment both in the organized and unorganized sector.

### Handicrafts Sector

It is mainly an un-organised and diversified sector with estimated 70

lakh artisans practicing 32 broad crafts categories throughout the country. To organize and standardize the Indian handicrafts, approximately 22.85 lakhs artisans have been trained under 'Pachchan' initiatives. Moreover 35 crafts have been identified as endangered crafts and 92 crafts have been registered under Geographical Indication Act.

For standardization of carpets, carpet rating scheme has been formulated, but handicraft items are mainly hand made. The beauty of handicrafts lies in the artistic hands of the artisans and each handicraft product is different from the other even if it is made by the same artisan using the same raw material. In an effort to establish authenticity of handmade products there is a scheme of handicraft mark. There is a direct marketing portal for handicrafts artisans to provide direct market access facility to genuine handicrafts artisans including tribal artisans working in the far-flung areas. Any handicraft artisan registered under 'Pachchan' can utilize this portal for marketing their products. Till date 302

**Textiles and handicrafts have been a key source of employment... Further, handloom sector provides direct and indirect employment to 43 lakh weavers and allied workers. There are 68.86 lakh handicrafts artisans. Handloom and Handicrafts Sector together provide about 111 lakh employment both in the organized and unorganized sector.**

number of artisans have been registered in the portal.

### Cotton

Cotton has been a most important component of the textile and handicraft sector. In order to protect the interest of cotton farmers, the Minimum Support Price (MSP) has been increased for 2018-19 by 28 per cent and 26 per cent for Medium Staple Cotton and Long Staple Cotton respectively. Also, to pass on the benefit of MSP and to ensure remunerative price to a large section of cotton farmers, there is a nodal agency called Cotton Corporation of India (CCI). Also, if prices of seed cotton (kapas) touches the MSP level, this agency purchases entire quantity of kapas (FAQ grade) offered by the cotton farmers in various APMC market yards at MSP rates.

According to Cotton Association of India, cotton export is likely to come down to 50 lakh bales (lb) this season i.e. October 1, 2018 to September 30, 2019, ending September against 69 lb registered last year due to lower crop output this year.

**Table 1: Share of Textile in GDP**

Year	Share of Textiles and total manufacturing to GDP (Gross Domestic Product) at GVA (Gross Value Added) (In per cent)		Share of textiles to total manufacturing at GVA (In per cent)
	Textile	Manufacturing	
2013-14	2.16	18.08	11.92
2014-15	2.33	17.14	13.6
2015-16	2.22	17.84	12.43
2016-17	2.36	18.21	12.65

Source: National Accounts Statistics, 2015, 2016, 2017 & 2018.

**Table 2: Employment**

Year	Number of persons employed in		per cent age of employment in Textile Sector to total employment in manufacturing Sector (in per cent)
	Textile and Wearing Apparel Sector	Manufacturing	
2013-14	24,74,903	1,35,38,114	18.28
2014-15	25,26,610	1,38,81,386	18.20
2015-16	26,48,238	1,42,99,710	18.52
2016-17	26,94,280	1,49,09,052	18.07

Source: Annual Survey of Industries

**Table 3: Export Textiles and Apparel including handicrafts**

(in US\$ Million)

Year	Textiles	Apparel	Total
2009-10	13,812	10,722	24,533
2010-11	18,559	11,627	30,186
2011-12	22,353	13,731	36,084
2012-13	22,275	12,949	35,224
2013-14	24,914	14,990	39,904
2014-15	23,285	16,833	40,119
2015-16	22,322	16,966	39,288
2016-17	21,643	17,368	39,011
2017-18	22,516	16,705	39,221

Source: DGCIS

### Challenges for Textile Sector

Growth of the textile sector depends not just upon the domestic market, but equally on the export market. Textile and apparel exports have been reported at around USD 39-40 bn in the last four years. As per trade data, exports have been reported at USD 26.63 bn during April to December 2018 which is an increase of 2.5 per cent over the previous corresponding period.

Manufacturing costs of textile sector in India is higher due to the fragmented structure of the industry and presence of MSMEs (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises). One of the key challenges which India faces is duty disadvantage of up to 9.6 per cent in important consuming markets like the European Union as compared to competing countries viz. Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Turkey and Pakistan which have zero duty access.

Now, in order to meet these challenges, there is a package for garments and made-ups sectors. It offers Rebate of State Levies (RoSL) and labour law reforms and relaxation of Section 80 JJAA of Income Tax Act. Products such as fibre, yarn and fabric in the textile value chain are being strengthened and made competitive. Assistance is being provided to exporters. Also, interest equalization rate for pre and post shipment credit for the textile sector has been raised from 3 per cent to 5 per cent.

### Future of Textile Sector

Challenges exist, still the future appears to be bright for the sector. The export demand is likely to rise and at the same time domestic sector is set to expand. Income is rising and so is the ability to afford branded and high-end products. At the same time many of the global big brands are setting up shop here. This brings potential firms for local sourcing, which is another good news. However, there are many challenges too and among them the most important one is the export competitiveness. □

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## Women, Hunar and Looms of Hope

*Syeda Hameed*

**D**uring the ten years, when I served on Planning Commission of India I looked after the Handlooms and Handicrafts sector. My experience with handlooms and

handicrafts can be encapsulated in two incidents, two stories which define my lifelong relationship with this sector.

Let me begin with a story of a woman who created a big success story of this very sector. A woman who

dreamed big and provided livelihood to thousands of women and men. Ahilyabai was her name, a simple girl from a town called Beed in Maharashtra. During one of his tours, the ruler of the Holkar state Maharaja Malharrao spotted her at a Teej festival. Something about



her struck the ruler and he chose her as the bride of his young son Khonde Rao. Ahilya came as a child bride to Maheshwar in 1753. Some years later Khonde Rao Holkar suddenly died. The young bride prepared for Sati. As she was about to ascend his funeral pyre, the Maharaja stopped her. 'You must live my child, Maheshwar and the heir to our throne needs you'. It was, thus, that Ahilyabai Holkar became the regent for her son and ruled Maheshwar from 1765 to 1795.

Gradually she became privy to her praja's daily life. Every day after morning prayer she would sit on the



ramparts of her Fort and listen to their petitions. The more she listened the more determined she became that no one in her *riyasat* would be denied a decent livelihood. She thought of ways she could ensure a *rozgar* for them which was not seasonal but all year round. She learnt that at a hundred 'kos' distance was a town called Burhanpur known for its rich tradition of handloom weaving. It was from there and from next door Mandu that Ahilya brought skilled weavers to her realm. She called them with their looms to her *riyasat* and ordered them to teach the art of weaving to the men and women of Maheshwar. The skills were acquired fast enough but now they needed something unique, which today would be described as their USP. They needed to weave patterns which would carry their special stamp. She thought about this as she watched the Narmada flow beneath her Fort, clear and blue, creating thousands of patterns with its waves. Narmada or Rehwa, as it is called is regarded as 'mother' because its fertile banks feed people all year. It was from Rehwa and her deep faith that she drew inspiration. She would create the pattern of the weave from the various moods and shapes of the Narmada wave.

Maharani Ahilyabai Holkar, thus, introduced weaving in 1765 to provide a sustainable means of livelihood for the people of her town. Weavers from Mandu and Burhanpur trained them day and night. Her vision and foresight is etched all over Maheshwar town – along the ghats, in the temples, in her palace – in exquisite stone carvings-stone

The author is a Padma Shri Awardee, and Indian social and women's rights activist, educationist, writer and a former member of the Planning Commission of India.

carvings which became the design guide for thousands of weavers. They wove these designs on the looms creating the exquisite Maheshwari sarees. Maheshwar palaces and temples have no precious stones or gold leaf work. Yet they boast of the most unique and beautiful architecture in the world because through them a benevolent Queen provided *roziroti* for her *praja*. And today, 250 years later, these designs still continue to ensure that the people of Maheshwar do not go to bed on empty stomachs.

It was this story which took me to M.P. in April, when outside temperatures spiked to a blistering 45°C. It provided a template called 'hope' to the 65 lakh handloom weavers in the country.

The Rehwa centre is built next to the Ahilyabai Palace, just above the Ghats. Its location is symbolic-it was from here that handloom weaving entered the portals of Maheshwar.

The weavers I met here were full of energy and ideas. They were proud that they made a decent living through their skills. Some do their own work; some work for Master weavers. Almost all do their own designing. They told us the story of their success. Three decades ago there were less than 25 looms left in Maheshwar. Weavers began to move out in search of work. Then, in 1979,

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the scion of the royal family, Richard Holkar, started the Rehwa Society to instil life into the dying weave of Maheshwar. He travelled around the country showing the work, holding exhibitions and creating a brand name. Holkar retained traditional designs but introduced new colours and changed the *nauwari* (nine yard) sari to six yards. The momentum caught on and orders began to pour in. Today, there are 1750 looms in Maheshwar. They have diversified into dress materials, *dupattas*, furnishings. “Our town is the only place in the country where new looms can be profitably set up,” the weavers told us with pride. “We can easily accommodate new-comers.” It is not that weavers in Maheshwar are not poor. 60 to 70 percent of the weavers here are BPL but they are much better off than Benaras weavers. And, with every passing day, their lives are improving.

What the Queen started, her scions continued and Rehwa was born. As I entered the Rehwa Centre I felt I had walked into a completely different world. Around a beautiful tree covered courtyard women were quietly working at looms. 60 percent of the 120 workers at the society were

**What the Queen started, her scions continued and Rehwa was born. As I entered the Rehwa Centre I felt I had walked into a completely different world. Around a beautiful tree covered courtyard women were quietly working at looms. 60 percent of the 120 workers at the society were women.**

women. Their children attend the crèche and the school run by Rehwa. Ahilya School is located next door, in a large building open to children of all weavers. Mid-day meals are provided. There is a Health Centre with doctors and visiting specialists for the Rehwa weavers and their families. The society provides every employee with a two-room house and two looms. Most of them have been around for the last 15-16 years. They work from 10 am to 5 pm and earn between Rs 100 and 150 per day. When they retire or perchance get disabled they receive a monthly pension of Rs 500 to Rs 1000. This explains why the Rehwa sarees are costlier; these social costs are also built in.

My second story is about the handloom intervention of Bollywood’s most loved star, a man called Aamir Khan.

“*Aap humko kalakar samajhtey hain...magar asli kalakar to yeh hain..*” Aamir Khan, the creator of *Taare Zameen Par* and *Three Idiots* was facing the camera. Kareena Kapoor was standing by him. In the background was the modest home of a Chanderi weaver Hukum Singh and his family. Aamir was pointing to a wooden loom strung with 50,000 threads.

**The story began like this.**

For five years I had been struggling with how to improve the condition of the hunarmand weavers and artisans of our country. I had traveled to many handloom centres – Benaras, Maheshwar, Pochampally, Paithan, Kota, Kancheepuram, Barabanki. I had seen artisans at work in Jodhpur, Molela, Mayurbhanj, Badohi, Chamba. Everywhere, I had seen despair; the hands that could weave dreams, that could create beauty were becoming listless. The youth was either not learning or unlearning the teachings of their forefathers. They were pulling rickshaws, picking





raggs, their creativity was just ebbing away.

Whenever I touched a handloom fabric I found it magical in its beauty and flexibility. But I saw a bleak future; that very same fabric gathering dust in a heap of disused stock! The thought that the collective memory of coming generations would become devoid of this knowledge was deeply disturbing. They will never see a Himroo or Kaani Shawl, they would never touch the Kinkhwab fabric into which stories of Arabian Nights were woven. At that low point of my life, I met a man who would turn the page and blow to bits the doomsday predictions for the handloom sector. Aamir Khan at the time was preoccupied with *Taare Zameen Par*. He and I talked for a few minutes at a small dinner. In those few minutes I told him about the steady decline of our most skilful artists, the weavers. I told him the story of *Dhake ki Malmal*, of how an entire bale of muslin could be passed through a ring. And how loyal servants of the empire cut off the thumbs of the weavers, so they would not create competition for the mills of Birmingham.

Aamir listened intently. Then many months passed. One day I got a message that he wanted to meet me. I went to see him with a young colleague, who, over time, has become the sector's most outstanding

advocate. I told Aamir that the lives of lakhs of weavers and artisans depended on this decentralized and dispersed sector which embodies the traditional wisdom, cultural wealth and secular ethos of our polity. He listened fascinated to the story of how this environment friendly, energy saving form of art has secured India's place among the best in the world. I ended with the words of Nizamuddin, an old weaver of Benaras, spoken at a Planning Committee Consultative Group meeting

*"Bunkar sara jeevan bunta hi gaya  
Apna kafan hi na bun saka..."*

Many months later, I was sitting on a flight when I heard about Aamir's handloom coup. "Aamir is all over the media with handlooms." I rushed

I told Aamir that the lives of lakhs of weavers and artisans depended on this decentralized and dispersed sector which embodies the traditional wisdom, cultural wealth and secular ethos of our polity. He listened fascinated to the story of how this environment friendly, energy saving form of art has secured India's place among the best in the world. I ended with the words of Nizamuddin, an old weaver of Benaras, spoken at a Planning Committee Consultative Group meeting

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to download youtube. There he was, walking with Kareena. In the darkened streets of Chanderi, past the Khooni Darwaza, to the home of Hukum Singh, a small time weaver of Chanderi saris. Everyone's eyes became glazed when these two top stars and icons, worshipped by millions across the globe, walked into their one room house and apologized for being "bin bulaye mehmaan."

With sensitivity born of excellent upbringing, Aamir broached the subject closest to their hearts; livelihood, markets, middlemen. They all spoke





in turn. “We make Rs. 50/- a day.” “Two of us earn Rs. 6000 for 3 months work.” “But the sari we weave sells for 25,000/- in the retail market.”

“Can you weave material for a suit for me,” Amir asked. “Why not, sahib. Of course we can.”

“I will buy this sari (Chanderi, black and gold) for Kareena ji, this one (Chanderi white and gold) for my wife, Kiranji. I will pay you the market price, not 6000/-, not wholesale.” While Amir spoke, the camera caught the woman weaver, Ramvati who stood at a distance in awed silence. A little girl child held on to Amir’s hand with dreamy eyes. Amir and Kareena sat at the loom, learnt to pass the thread through the bobbin, work the shutter and the first line of the tana bana was created by the combined work of these two novice weavers; handlooms had been branded by Amir and Kareena.

Film stars are known to charge exorbitant fees for a single jhalak. Amir, India’s top star freely gave the gift of his name, his time and his talent for lakhs of hunarmand men and women. ‘Let handlooms become the fashion creed of the youth of 21<sup>st</sup> century globalised world’ were his last words to millions of his fans and viewers.

So, today, we celebrate the hands of handloom weavers and handicraft artists in the words of the poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz:

Ye haath salamat hain jab tak iss khon mein hararat hai jab tak Ye shaam o sahr ye shams o qamar ye akhtar o kaukab apne hain Ye shams o qamar ye tabl o alam ye maal o hasham sab apne hain

Until these hands survive until this blood freely flows

These mornings evenings these constellations these stars

This tablet this pen these drums these banners

This glory this splendour...it is all ours

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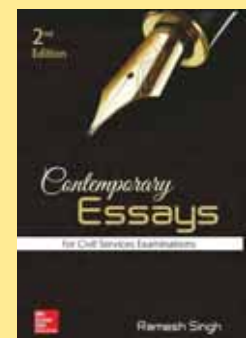
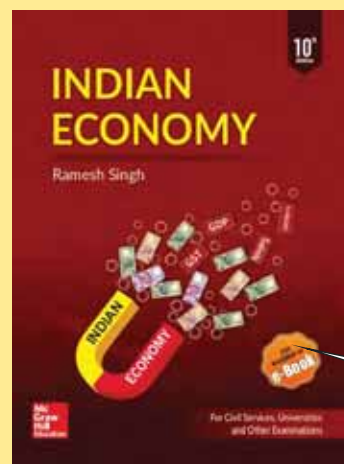
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## Crossing the Seven Seas

*Ranjeet Mehta*

**I**ndia is a country of rich culture, history and traditions. It is one of the major producers and suppliers of handicraft products in the world for several decades. During recent years, the importance of handicrafts has surged due to its cultural and economic value. The small scale industries - including handicrafts play a major role in the development of the economy of both developed and the developing countries equally. Handicrafts can be defined as products which are produced either completely by hand or with the help of tools. The handicrafts industry of India essentially mirrors the aspects of the age old civilization of India. No wonder the phrase 'unity in diversity' is so applicable to our country.

Each state has its unique handicraft products which reflect the diverse nature of the Indian handicrafts industry. The entire industry, being decentralized, is spread all over this huge subcontinent, concentrated both in the rural and urban areas. The Indian handicrafts industry essentially falls under the cottage industry category. Despite this fact, it is a high employment intensive sector, employing over 6 million part

**Besides being an employment generator, the handicraft industry is economically viable, because of low capital investments while the potential for export of the various handicraft products is considerably high. Hence, it is an important foreign exchange earner for our country.**



time and full time artisans (inclusive of the carpet manufacturing sector), including women and a large section from the weaker strata of the society. Besides being an employment generator, the handicraft industry is economically viable, because of low capital investments while the potential for export of the various handicraft products is considerably high. Hence, it is an important foreign exchange earner for our country.

Around 95 per cent of the total industrial products of the world are produced in small workshops run by less than 100 people. For instance, Japan is a developed country but it has 84 per cent of small and medium scale industries. When we look at the Indian handicrafts industry—it is highly labor intensive, cottage based and decentralized. Most of the manufacturing units are located in rural and small towns, and there is huge

The author is Principal Director in PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, New Delhi.

market potential in all Indian cities and abroad.

Some of the important hubs of the Indian handicrafts industry are Moradabad (also known as the 'Peetalnagari'- city of brass, noted for its brass artifacts), Saharanpur (noted for its wooden artifacts), and Ferozabad (noted for its exclusive glass handicrafts), in Uttar Pradesh. Other important handicraft producing hubs are Jaipur (famous for its exotic quilts), Bagru and Sanganer (printed textiles) and of course, Jodhpur (famous for its unique wooden and wrought iron furniture), in north western Rajasthan. Kutch (the coastal state of Gujarat) also needs a special mention because of its exotic embroidered handicrafts and Narsapur (Andhra Pradesh) famous for its lace handicrafts. These are only some of the well-known handicrafts of India though the actual list is unending.

There is huge demand for Indian handicraft products in both the national and international markets. To match the demand and supply with quality, there is a need to have greater technological support and culture of innovation. The importance of the handicrafts sector cannot be underestimated in India as it is one of the largest employment generators and accounts for a significant share in the country's

exports. Both- state and regional clusters—contribute significantly to handicrafts exports. Although this industry is fragmented, with more than seventy lakh regional artisans and more than 67,000 exporters/export houses promoting regional art and craftsmanship in both domestic and global markets, handicraft exports from India stood at US\$ 2.42 billion from April to November 2018. During this period, exports of various segments registered positive growth like Shawls and Artwares (77.50 per cent), Woodwares (23.57 per cent), and Miscellaneous Handicrafts (19.74 per cent). Indian handicrafts are exported across geographies, with the top 10 destinations being the US, the UK, the UAE, Germany, France, Latin American countries (LAC), Italy, the Netherlands, Canada and Australia.

The demand for the handicraft sector will increase in future due to the developing fashion industry and sectors like retail and real estate that offer enormous demand for handicraft products. E-Commerce and Internet have emerged as prominent distribution channels to market and sell handicraft products. India's handicraft exports are expected to cross Rs. 24,000 crore mark by FY 2020-21 as per a study by ASSOCHAM. Promotion methods like building brand image, conducting road shows and craft festivals in

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**The demand for the handicraft sector will increase in future due to the developing fashion industry and sectors like retail and real estate that offer enormous demand for handicrafts products. E-Commerce and Internet have emerged as prominent distribution channels to market and sell handicraft products.**

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target countries and also point of sale publicity through attractive display and banners together with marketing tools like innovative and appealing packaging need to be extensively used by the Government and other councils. The Government, in partnership with private sector, needs to encourage integrated enterprise development by providing supporting services such as local centres for skill training, product adaptation, vocational training and entrepreneurship development.

### **Indian Textile Industry**

The Indian Textile industry is one of the largest in the world with a large raw material base and manufacturing strength across the value chain. India is the largest producer and the second largest exporter of cotton in the world. India is also the leading consumer of cotton. Domestic textile and apparel





industry contributes 2 per cent to India's GDP and accounts for 14 per cent of industrial production, 27 per cent of the country's foreign exchange inflows and 13 per cent of the country's export earnings. The textiles and garments industry in India that employs 45 million people is second only to the agriculture sector in terms of employment. The textile sector in India is dominated by women workers, with 70 per cent of the workforce being women. In the Indian textile and apparel sector, the sub sectors of weaving, processing and garmenting are fragmented and lack the requisite scale for success in global markets. Most of the manufacturing units have small capacities and low manufacturing efficiencies which make it difficult for them to compete in global markets.

At 50 per cent of world production, India is the largest producer of raw jute and jute goods in the world. India is also the second largest producer of silk in the world. The Mill sector, with 3,400 textile mills having installed capacity of more than 50 million spindles and 842,000 rotors is the second largest in the world.

India is the second largest producer and exporter of cotton in the world at \$6.3 billion, marginally close to China. India has emerged as the largest producer of cotton in the world with the production of 345 lakh bales in 2016-17 and second largest exporter

after China. Currently, the cotton industry is sustaining livelihoods of 5.8 million farmers and 40-50 million people engaged in other activities like processing and trading.

India is the second largest producer of silk in the world, producing around 18 per cent of the world's total silk. Mulberry, Eri, Tussar, and Muga are the main types of silk produced in the country. It is a labor-intensive sector. In India, textiles have evolved over a period of thousand years. They are important for their attachment with the culture, which has been shaping Indian societies for hundreds of years. The history of textiles dates back to the period when the Indian subcontinent did business with Kabul, the Balkans and the European countries.

Most of the international brands like Marks & Spencer, JC Penny, and Gap acquired most of their fabrics from India. The cotton yarn accounts for 70 per cent of India's textile exports. Knitted garments account for almost

**India enjoys a unique advantage of having abundant raw materials and presence of manufacturing in all segments of the textile value chain. The time has come for the industry to discard outdated technology and modernize its machinery to be globally competitive.**

32 per cent of all exported garments. According to a report, the Indian textile industry covers 61 per cent of the international textile market and over 20 per cent of the global market.

The domestic demand for textiles is likely to remain robust from end-user segments, supported by a strong rise in private consumption expenditure during the rest of FY19. Also, textile exports are likely to rise, with apparel exporters benefitting from the depreciation of the Indian rupee against the US dollar. The Indian rupee depreciated at a higher rate against the US dollar over April-August 2018 than the currencies of key apparel-exporting nations, as per India Ratings and Research. The rating agency has maintained a stable outlook for the cotton and synthetic textiles for the remaining FY19. As of now, it looks that the sector profitability is likely to improve gradually, with players passing on increased raw material prices to end-users, given the healthy demand, a depreciating rupee and waning impact of structural issues. However, the positive impact of improved demand and profitability may be partly countered by sticky working capital requirements.

### Conclusion and Way Forward

India enjoys a unique advantage of having abundant raw materials and presence of manufacturing in all segments of the textile value chain. The time has come for the industry to discard outdated technology and modernize its machinery to be globally competitive.

The industry needs to focus on innovation and value addition for improving global competitiveness of Indian textiles and apparels. Innovation such as promoting waterless dyeing by adopting new technology is also needed. We have to come up with innovative and exclusive products if we have to expand our footprint in the global arena. The continued growth and global competitiveness of the textiles industry can drive the economy to new heights.

However, the sector also needs to improve supply chains and

**Affordable raw material and labour and great strides in textile technology could together make India not only a preferred but a formidable destination for foreign investment in the textile and garment business. From the standpoint of the luxury fashion sector, what is particularly interesting is that the other half of India's textile story is about handlooms, a subsector which could play a big role in forging the global luxury industry ahead. The industry's focus should be to recreate the inherent talent of Indian weavers.**

internal systems, focus on research and development, cost optimization (saving cost by vertical integration, etc.) and scaling-up to achieve greater competitiveness and command a higher share in the production and export of top items traded in global markets. The industry has to rise to the occasion and ensure that the share of India's exports increases by diversification in products and explore newer markets. Quality has to be the mainstay for India to sustain exports in the global market especially when we are facing stiff competition from countries like Bangladesh and Vietnam. With rising income levels and steady growth of the retail industry, the textiles sector is expected to experience a high growth trajectory in future due

to strong domestic consumption as well as increasing demand in global markets.

Business leaders around the world have India in their sights — and with good reason. Several major international apparel and manufacturing players have invested in India already. These include textile machinery manufacturers Rieter and Trutzschler, and vertically integrated fashion brands like Zara and Mango (Spain), Promod (France), Benetton (Italy), Esprit, Levi's and Forever 21 (USA). Affordable raw material and labour and great strides in textile technology could together make India not only a preferred but a formidable

destination for foreign investment in the textile and garment business. From the standpoint of the luxury fashion sector, what is particularly interesting is that the other half of India's textile story is about handlooms, a subsector which could play a big role in forging the global luxury industry ahead. The industry's focus should be to recreate the inherent talent of Indian weavers.

Never forget how Khadi, a handspun fabric became Gandhi's symbol of self-sufficiency during the British Raj. It is a *tour de force* in the textile sector, providing the perfect context for a meaningful discourse. It narrates a universal tale of how a handmade fabric can find soul-stirring reference in today's highly volatile and fast paced environment. Industry and all stakeholders must continue making their sustained efforts to effectively position India as the main source for textile items ranging from raw materials to finished products and handicrafts. □

(E-mail: [ranjeetmehta@phdcci.in](mailto:ranjeetmehta@phdcci.in), [ranjeetmehta@gmail.com](mailto:ranjeetmehta@gmail.com))



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# Perfecting Craftsmanship through Skilling

*Gaurav Kapoor*

**T**he pride of India lies in the treasures of India's crafts and textiles. Indian weaving traditions and handicrafts have existed since time immemorial and have been a representation of the many unique sub-cultures within the country. India is the world's second-largest producer of textiles and garments and ranks in top three in export of handicrafts. Abundant availability of raw materials such as cotton, wool, silk, and jute as well as a skilled workforce have made the country a leading sourcing hub for the global textile market. Preservation of Indian weavers and craftsmen is the need of the hour, because the world is taking notice of our immensely unique heritage, and the time is ripe for artisans and craftsmen to reap the rewards.

Like any other industry, the handicraft and textiles sector is associated with its fair share of challenges and rewards. It constitutes an important segment of the Indian economy as it is one of the largest

**The elevating employment opportunities in the textile and handicraft sectors and its allied industries, will make these sectors more prosperous. Further, these sectors are an important source to express art and skill in crafts and promote our culture by making crafts and textile items available locally.**

employment generators after agriculture. The sector employs about 7 million people. The people involved in these sectors need to be abreast of proper technologies to meet the needs of various sectors. Textile and Handicraft companies, on the other hand, should keep enough skilled manpower to be at pace with innovation.

Skilling opportunities in various job roles like- auto loom weaver, power loom operator, Shuttleless Loom Weaver - Projectile, Beam Carrier and Loader, Fitter-auto loom weaving machine, etc., have given an impetus to the industry. The sector is also a useful tool to leverage women empowerment as they constitute majority of the workforce in this segment. Various efforts have been

made towards technology upgradation, infrastructure development, export promotion etc.

To spearhead and address the immediate need of the textile industry, successful efforts were made in developing 72 Qualification Packs (QPs), out of which 71 have been cleared by National Skill Qualification Committee (NSQC). These 71 QPs constitute the requirements of about 80 per cent of the workforce engaged in textile industries, majorly the textile mill sector. TSSC is now developing standards for other workforce in critical segments such as wool, silk, jute, technical textiles and quality control.

When it comes to handicrafts and handlooms there is hardly any part of India which is not known for its



The author is Senior Head, Advocacy & Communication, National Skill Development Corporation.



**The textiles and handicrafts industry have, until recent years, relied mostly on traditional production processes that are labor intensive, involving many long, complex steps. With the advent of Industry 4.0 – where digitization, the World Wide Web, mass customization and pace are shaping the processes, these industries are also positioned to spur and speed up.**

especially crafted and women items. This is a vast and versatile industry. Be it the silk from Assam or the cotton from Bengal, the Pashmina from Kashmir or the Kanjeevaram from South India, they all have their own story to tell and have their place in the market. No matter how much technology advances, the skill in the hands of people has its own charm. There is a lot of tradition that has been passed on through generations which is no less than the magic of skilled hands.

Indian textile industry has strengths across the entire value chain from natural to man-made fiber to apparel to home furnishings. The sector contributes about 27 per cent of the country's foreign earnings due to export, 2 per cent to the gross domestic product (GDP), and 13 per cent to the nation's export. Simultaneously, handicraft exports from India increased by 1.65 per cent year-on-year between April-November, 2018 to US\$ 2.42 billion. Thus, the modernization, growth and all-round development

and skilling of these industries has a direct bearing on the improvement of India's economy.

The textiles and handicrafts industry have, until recent years, relied mostly on traditional production processes that are labor intensive, involving many long, complex steps. With the advent of Industry 4.0 – where digitization, the World Wide Web, mass customization and pace are shaping the processes, these industries are also positioned to





spur and speed up. With increasing emphasis on quality, the demand for skilled labor has increased.

Almost 87 per cent of the handloom households hail from rural India and only 13 per cent are from the urban areas. The handloom industry plays an important role in women empowerment due to employment of a lot of women in this sector. Handloom fabric production contributes to about one fifth of India's total fabric production and US\$ 35.34 million to total fabric export.

Craftsmen and artisans can produce products in unlimited

numbers without any negative impact on sustainability. India can achieve higher growth rates of finished products such as apparel, home furnishing and technical textiles. This would maximize employment generation and value creation within the country. The development of these segments in India is not only socially significant in terms of creating more employment opportunities, women empowerment and eradication of poverty and destitution, but also a harbinger of growth in terms of enhancing national income, exports, and entrepreneurship, given that some segments in the textile chain

are capital-light and have less gestation period for commissioning the project.

The elevating employment opportunities in the textile and handicraft sectors and its allied industries, will make these sectors more prosperous. Further, these sectors are an important source to express art and skill in crafts and promote our culture by making crafts and textile items available locally. Apart from the United States and Europe, which account for about two-thirds of India's textile exports, China, the UAE, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, the Republic of Korea, Bangladesh, Turkey, Pakistan, and Brazil are some of the major markets for these exports.

With focused efforts the country is expected to lure significant global businesses to India. It is envisaged that the Indian market will continue its upward trajectory in the years to come leveraging its inherent strengths and macroeconomic drivers. ◻

(E-mail: [Gaurav.kapoor@nsdcindia.org](mailto:Gaurav.kapoor@nsdcindia.org))

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## Khadi's Journey: From Gandhi's Khaddar to Fashion Symbol

*V K Saxena*

**E**ven after more than seven decades since India gained its hard-won independence, Khadi continues to inspire and amaze people around the globe. And, if the growth of Khadi in the recent past is any indication, the signature fabric of the nation has emerged as a tool of economic transformation en route fashion.

Khadi, as Gandhiji believed, is not only the tool of self-reliance or symbol of nationalism, rather it can also play a vital role in the economic growth of the nation. In 2017, the low-profile Khadi industry saw sales worth Rs 50,000 crore. Products manufactured in villages by small-scale industries and social entrepreneurs, most of which are run by women, also saw huge demand. The sales of village industry produce, or Gramodyog also grew in the last fiscal. The astounding growth registered in production and sale

of khadi products in recent years established the fact that khadi is a versatile and timeless fabric.

The average khadi sales through departmental sales outlets also witnessed a marked increase. Over 30 thousand charkhas were distributed between 2015 to February, 2018 thereby creating over 14 lakh jobs. From Environmental Day to Yoga Day, from the installation of the world's largest wooden charkha at Delhi's IGI Airport to installation of monumental steel Charkhas at Sabarmati Riverfront, Ahmedabad, Motihari in East Champaran Bihar and Connaught Place New Delhi, from Khadi showings in South Africa to honeybee box distribution among women workers and farmers, Charkha enablement across Punjab

to the resuscitation of the worn-down Gandhi Ashram of Sewapuri near Varanasi and the Khadi-draped train that carried people from Pentrich to Pietermaritzburg in South Africa in June 2018—the many landmarks are significant.

Efforts have been made to involve corporate brands and PSUs to provide the largest spectrum for Khadi for repositioning khadi on the textile map. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was also signed with the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) for better design development and training at different Khadi institutions. Not only that, recently an interaction was organised with CEOs of Retail Chains and Designers at WTC Mumbai, The objective was to give

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The author is Chairman, Khadi & Village Industries Commission, New Delhi.



retail presence to Khadi in major malls and retail stores. Another innovation in the form of ‘Khadi Mitra’ is on the cards, where the housewives could sell Khadi with a very nominal capital investment initially.

It is proposed to open Khadi outlets outside the country to promote products made using the indigenous handspun fabric in the global markets as interest has been shown from Dubai, Chicago, Mauritius and South Africa. People in these places are interested in opening Khadi outlets under the franchisee model.

It was the increasing USP of Khadi that even the world of celluloid could not resist showcasing its legacy and beauty. In the recent blockbuster ‘Manikarnika’ the lead actress has shown the Queen’s love for the country’s heritage fabric Khadi in this epic biographical film. For promotion of this signature fabric the attire of the lead casts of this movie was sponsored by KVIC. Khadi is connected to India’s voice of Independence since time immemorial. We all know that in 1926, Gandhiji upheld Khadi as the symbol of swaraj and spun the final yarn of India’s fabric of Independence. But, perhaps few people know that some seven decades before Gandhiji’s tryst with Charkha, a girl born in Varanasi as Manikarnika or Manu, not only mastered reading the Vedas and Puranas, riding and sword fighting, but also learnt weaving before becoming the Queen of Jhansi.

In a bid to increase cotton supply to Khadi institutions, six cotton sliver plants have been upgraded. The plants’ production capacity will be increased by 40 per cent from the current four million kgs to 5.6 million kgs a year. Most of the plants are more than three decades old and it is necessary to change technology for better supply.

Recognising the importance of enhancing the wages of Khadi artisans to a moderate level and in order to ensure that khadi profession provides sustainable life support, remuneration per hank (a coil or skein of yarn) have been increased from the existing Rs 5.50 to Rs 7. As many as 143 defunct Khadi units have been revived and steps are afoot to start production at 124 more units. As many as 89 and 63 new Khadi institutions were registered in 2015-16 and 2016-17 respectively and have started production.

Individuals, PSUs and Corporates have been urged to contribute for providing Charkhas – the Gandhian tool of self-reliance – to the artisans – predominantly women. PSUs have been approached for deploying their CSR funds towards empowerment initiatives of Khadi artisans and the Khadi institutions. REC (Rural Electrification Corporation) was roped in to revive the legacy of the Sewapuri Ashram. Last year, contribution of Rs 7.9 crores was received from various companies like ONGC, ITPO, Aditya Birla Group, JK Cement, GMR, NCCCL etc. IMC Chamber of Commerce

recently donated Rs 20 lakh and discussions with IOC, HPCL etc are on for larger CSR funds for Khadi activities – which, in future would change the face of Khadi activities across the nation.

To popularize the khadi brand, huge charkhas have been set up at IGI Airport and Connaught place. Charkha Museum and Khadi Haat have been also been opened at Connaught Place in New Delhi.

One must not forget the words of Mahatma Gandhi that the spinning wheel represents the hope of the masses – who lost their freedom. It was Charkha that supplemented the agriculture of the villagers with dignity. Any wheel is symbolic of changing times, revolving fortunes of people and reminiscent of justice that does not discriminate between people or epochs of history. A wheel is always seen as a unifier and an icon of our past, present and future. When Emperor Ashoka used the wheel as ‘Dharma chakra’ and installed it in edicts around his empire, he had just one intention in his mind - establishing ‘social justice, indiscrimination and reducing inequalities’ of every hue. That symbolism he established in Indian society is an asset of immemorial heritage. Chakra, as a propagator of ‘dharma’ still revolves at the core of our social value system. And values of inheritance do not change with passing time. □

(E-mail: chairmankvic2015@gmail.com)



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# Growth and Development: Woven in Threads of Northeast

*JV Manisha Bajaj*

**T**he textile industry is one of the oldest in India and is intrinsically linked to a range of traditions and cultures that is a reflection of the diversity that prevails in our country. The industry has a range of segments under its umbrella – hand-woven, an unorganized segment on one end, to capital-intensive on the other. One of India's biggest strengths lies in it being the largest producer of jute and cotton and the second largest producer of silk globally.

By value, the textile industry accounts for 7 per cent of India's industrial, 2 per cent of GDP and 15 per cent of the country's export earnings. India exported \$ 39.2 billion worth of textiles in the 2017-18 fiscal year.

In terms of global ranking, India is ranked 2nd in textile export. European

**There is increase in share of industrial activity in all eight states in the region, with Meghalaya, Tripura, and Arunachal Pradesh recording the highest growth. Most development indices also show a positive performance in the region when compared to other states in India. This is just the beginning of the growth story and one can see that the textile industry will be acting as a pivot of this growth.**



The author is lead anchor and news reader in Doordarshan with over 3 decades of experience in the creative medium. She has written many articles in leading magazines and newspapers on multiple social issues like elder care, women empowerment, inter-caste marriage, girl child, Indian culture, north-east heritage etc. She has written books on social issues and women emotions. She has already done some work on the North East region like traditional games of the region, temple heritage "Rediscovering Hinduism" and "Ek Safar Ek Dastan" etc.





Union is the largest market for Indian textile and apparel products followed by the USA. In 2016-17, the share of exports to EU was 25 per cent whereas that to the USA was 21 per cent.

Among all these numbers one can spot another interesting data point, that the strength of India's textiles industry lies both in the hand woven sector as well as mill sector. Traditional sectors like handloom, handicrafts and small scale play a big role in the growth of the textile industry. In fact, the handicraft sector of India is one of the largest employment generators with a significant share in India's exports.

Some of the important pointers of Indian textile industry are as follows:

- India covers 61 percent of the international textile market
- India is the largest producer of jute in the world
- India is known to be the third largest manufacturer of cotton across the globe
- India holds around 25 percent share in the cotton yarn industry across the globe
- India contributes to around 12 percent of the world's production of cotton yarn and textiles
- India is the second largest producer of silk in the world, producing around 18 per cent of the world's total silk

In short, India is the second largest producer of fibre in the world. If we look closely, we will find that North-east is one of the biggest contributors to the growth of the textile industry.

But the next question that comes to mind is what the states have to offer in terms of textiles and what significant contribution can they make to the textile industry.

North-east India occupies a unique and important place in the indigenous textile culture of India. The people of the hilly areas and the valley areas of North-east India display heterogeneity in terms of varied eco-cultural and ethno-linguistic characteristics though all of them generally belong to the same Mongoloid ethnic group. However, each ethnic group has its own distinct, dynamic set of traditions, mythology, history and social structure. Textiles and dresses are probably dominantly identifiable cultural aspects which show the resemblances as well as the differences among the ethnic groups that are produced and used by them.

The traditional dress of an ethnic group plays a major role in showcasing the ethnic identity. Each ethnic group has its own designs and colour combination. Different motifs and designs of textiles have relationship with the rituals and religious life of the people of North-east India. The method of weaving also varies according to region and ethnic groups. The materials used for textiles has a

**To understand the craft traditions of north-eastern India, one must know the terrain, its people and their way of life. In this area, as is in most other parts of India, crafts are not practiced as a hobby, nor are they a commercial venture; they are very much an integral part of the life and customs of the people. There are multiple traditional crafts prevalent in the region which are governed by the local conditions.**

varied range - cotton, wool, Eri, Muga and orchid skin, animal hair are used by different ethnic groups.

There are 23.77 lakh handlooms in the country of which 16.47 lakh handlooms (69.28 per cent) are in the North East region as per the handloom census of 2009-10. In fact, handicraft and textiles is among the key 'watch sectors' of North-east and development and modernization of the textile sector in the North Eastern states is being given the highest priority.

If one gets to know more about the handicrafts and textiles of the region, one would realize the potential of the region.

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A common factor that binds all the states is –

**Weaving** - It is practiced alike by all tribal groups in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and in the valley of Assam. There are only a few exceptions, such as the Nokteys of Tirap in Arunachal Pradesh and the Khasis of Meghalaya who do not weave.

Meghalaya is known for establishing tradition of high quality weaving. Arunachal Pradesh weaves are famous for their beautiful colour combinations. Exceptional are the Sherdukpen shawls, Apatani jackets and scarves, Adi skirts, jackets and bags, Mishmi shawls, blouses and jackets and Wancho bags and loin cloths.

Naga shawls, also known as the angami naga, are famous for their bright colours and bold embroidery of animal motifs. Dress material generally depict ancient Naga tales. The handlooms of the numerous tribes of Nagaland showcase traditional patterns and the rich, vibrant colours have successfully fused with modern garments.

Traditionally, every household in Tripura had a handloom and locals rarely ever purchased cloth from the market. Each cloth was lovingly woven

at home and decorated with embroidery. The striking feature of Tripura handlooms is the vertical and horizontal stripes with scattered embroidery in different colours.

It is the women who are the real clothiers of this north-eastern region. Whether it be the Monpas and Sherdukpens of Kameng, the Mishmis and Khamtis of Lohit or the wives of the Wanchoo chieftains of Tirap in Arunachal Pradesh, or any of the Naga tribes, or even the Assamese in the plains, it is the women who weave unlike the rest of India, where men predominate the weaving profession.

**Silk** – Northeast India has the potential to produce the country’s finest silk products, the same of which can be exported outside the country, elevating the economic standard and status of the Northeastern states besides putting Northeast onto the cultural map of the world. Assam is the 3rd largest producer of silk in the country and leading among the north-east states. On the other hand, Manipur produces almost 100 per cent of the country’s Oak tussar silk and is the highest producer of Mulberry silk among the North east

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states. Whereas, Tripura focuses on production of only Mulberry silk with end to end solutions.

“Assamese women weave fairy tales in their clothes,” so said Gandhi. Known for its exquisite silk, Assam is home to various types of silk, of which Muga is the most coveted and exclusive. In days gone by, weaving was one of the primary qualifications required for women to marry. To date, weaving is linked very intimately with the day to day life of Assamese tribes and the silk woven by various tribes, are valued highly nationally as well as internationally.

**Bamboo and Cane Craft** – This is another traditional art form which runs through various states of the region. Due to the weather conditions





of the region, it creates a conducive environment for the growth of bamboo. Mizos (people from Mizoram) take great pride in their cane and bamboo work. Expert basket makers, they etch and notch designs into soft cane fibers and use the baskets for numerous purposes.

Over 16 tribes live in the state of Nagaland. Most are adept at wood, metal and bamboo handicrafts. The women of Nagaland also make gorgeous, colourful ornaments from bamboo and cane decorated with beads, shells and feathers.

An Assamese life revolves around cane and bamboo goods. Since both bamboo and cane are grown in abundance here, most household articles, accessories and instruments are made of these materials. However, the jappi, a traditional sun shade, still remains the most significant bamboo article. The jappi shade was used to welcome the great Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang who visited Assam around 642 AD.

**Carpets** - You can find the most ancient form of carpet weaving in Sikkim. The traditional pattern of weaving is done by the 'Bhutia' community which requires a frame and an exclusive manner of weaving. You can see the hard work put in by the locals in the intricate designs of the carpet. Arunachal too is well known for carpets. Arunachal Pradesh is divided into 3 major groups depending on their culture and handicrafts; the Buddhist tribes consist of the Sherdukpens and Monpas and also to some extent the

Khowa. The Aka and Mijis comprise another group, while the Membas, Khambas, Khamtis and Singphos comprise the last group. Each tribe has a unique culture and their handicrafts are great as souvenirs for those visiting Northeast India. When you see a bright colourful carpet with floral, geometric or dragon designs, chances are that the carpet is from Arunachal Pradesh. In recent years, these carpets have begun to be exported and are a major livelihood activity of the women.

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**Wooden and Metal Products** - Known as a symbol of true art of India, Sikkim excels in wood carving. Sikkim brims with beautiful monasteries, heritage buildings and temples, the architecture of which is adorned with symbols and icons carved in wood. Not only that, you can see the special wood carving with papier-mâché in the mask dances of Sikkim. Pemayangtse Monastery is a fine illustration of carved wooden sculptures and wood carvings.

Wood carving is also associated with the culture and tradition of the various tribes in Arunachal Pradesh. Wood carving is a significant hobby of the Wanchos of Tirap. Their skilfully crafted and designed wooden articles have a special place in Arunachal handicrafts.

As far as skill of wood carving is concerned, some of the finest woodcarvers in India come from the Wancho, Konyak and Phom tribes in Nagaland. The icons that best define the Naga's skill in woodwork are carved mithun heads, hornbills, human figures, elephants, tigers and the log- drums or xylophones that are laboriously hollowed out of the trunks of big trees. Woodcarving is also associated with their religious beliefs. In fact, Naga arts and crafts-black smithy or metal craft is popularly found among the local tribes because of their affinity towards weapons such as spears and daos. The Rengma tribe is considered to be the best Naga black smith and you can get beautifully decorated spears as take-aways.

A variety of traditional utensils and fancy articles are manufactured in Assam. Gold, silver and copper too form a part of traditional metal craft of the state.

There are many more areas where the region offers great traditional articles and beautiful artifices like pottery, toy making, and traditional jewellery to name a few. Till a few

years ago much was not known about the various handicraft and textile treasures of the region.

In recent times, many young faces have emerged in the fashion industry showcasing the garments, weaving and patterns from the north east.

Earlier this year, during the Lakme Fashion week, models walked down the ramp in shades of ivory, a thin black strip stood out in their otherwise restrained ensembles — it had striking motifs of the Meitei tribe. It was Manipur-based designer Richana Khumanthem's ode to her land and its traditions.

“Indians are finally learning to be more inclusive,” stated fashion commentator Prasad Bidapa. “The Northeast is a vibrant society that is very youthful and international in its thinking. Today, designers are leading from the front. Many models, too, come from the region. I hope to see more and more joining the industry.”

Till two years ago, Atsu Sekhose from Nagaland was probably the only well-known designer from there. Now there are Jenjum Gadi from Arunachal Pradesh, Khumanthem from Manipur, Daniel Syiem from Meghalaya, Aratrik Dev Varman from Tripura and Karma Sonam from Sikkim. Their USP: use locally sourced, locally made textiles and promote such identities.

Some designers have also made a name internationally. One of the best known names from the North East to shake up the fashion world is Atsu Sekhose who celebrated the completion of a decade in the fashion industry with his Fall-Winter cocktail collection 2017. An Angami Naga, Sekhose attributes much of his design style to his roots in Nagaland, imbibing a modern adaptation of tribal patterns, colours and textiles from his native region.

Similarly, a native of Meghalaya, Stacey Pongener Syiem has created a niche for herself in the UK with

her urban tribal fashion brand Little Hill People. Her culturally infused, contemporary fashion wear, apparel and accessories are the epitome of innovative designs using traditional weaves and beads of the tribes of North East India.

The north-east region, by way of its location, enjoys key advantages as much as it throws up challenges for businesses.

The situation, however, has improved significantly in the last few years. There is increase in the share of industrial activity in all eight states in the region, with Meghalaya, Tripura, and Arunachal Pradesh recording the highest growth. Most development indices also show a positive performance in the region when compared to other states in India. This is just the beginning of the growth story and one can see that the textile industry will be acting as a pivot of this growth. □

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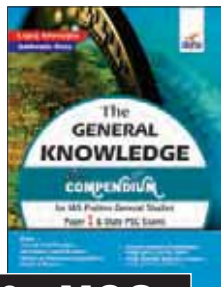
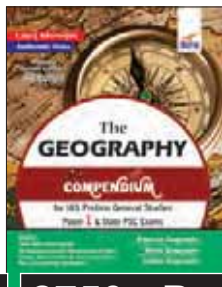


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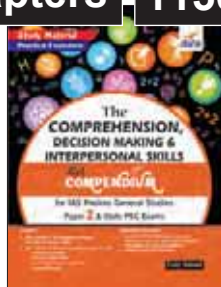
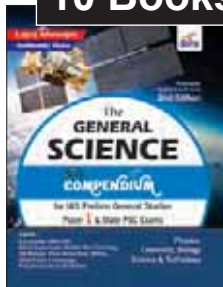


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## Celebrating India's Creations

*Sunil Sethi*

**I**ndia's leading craft advocates were all hands on deck, as they came together to showcase India's mastery of crafts and its adaptations in spatial design. India was the partner country at Ambiente 2019 this year and India Pavilion was a profusion of installations that took India's textile and technique, and placed them on a global map.

All eyes were on India, as this textile haven geared up to fulfill its role as the partner country at Ambiente 2019, the world's greatest trade platform that aims at creating conversations around and uplifting the creative industry. Taking charge was the Office of the DC Handicraft, Ministry of Textiles and Government of India, who in collaboration with Messe Frankfurt India unveiled the India Design Concepts on the lines of 'The Future is Handmade'. The project aims at bringing to the forefront a multitude of age-old Indian textiles developed by expert artisans and designers to fit the need of the hour. In addition to exposing the world to India's offerings of wondrous weaves and strenuous techniques, this opportunity also put India's artisans and designers on the global map of design and décor.

An extension of celebrating India's creations was the structure of the showcase, titled 'India Pavilion' which mimics the conformation of a step well. From *Agrasen ki Baoli* in Delhi to *Birkha Bawari* in Jodhpur, step wells have been constructed all over India for its utilitarian purposes. Still relevant today, it is honoured

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for withstanding the test of time to emerge as an example of good design.

The India Pavilion was home to some of the most ingenious collections crafted by a variety of

The author is Founder of Sunil Sethi Design Alliance



With skilled artisans, contemporary ideation and craft advocates on board, along with the support of the Ministry of Textiles, this project came together to be one of the greatest narratives of India's art, design and culture. The amalgamation of sustainable textiles and techniques with physical spaces drove not only awareness of crafts and their versatile nature, but also opened up opportunities for the craftspeople of India.

experts in the field, through which Indian heritage was a recurring theme.

What looked like an uber modern interior set up, The Collection 'Neel', a Modular Sofa Set, was the perfect alchemy of the traditional technique of Odisha Ikat and modern form, a leap towards contemporizing an age old craft while preserving the roots of it's origin.

Also taking Indian material to the future, who with their carefully crafted 'Vana' meaning forest, use Indian wood with unique grain, and a colour palette that ranges from pale to darker streaks. The ability to engage complex inlay in wood with fine joinery of stained wood veneer as furniture and intricately aligned complex shapes was the key of the curation.

In complete contrast to Vana's structure centric collection was 'Rachana', an amalgamation of different fabric alterations to create surface effects. Each product represented different aspects of nature

in an abstract way. The inspiration was exotic treasures from nature and developed as experimental variations in various materials and new stitches to create exclusive textile art.

While 'Rachana' explored the organic, 'Amaaya' paid homage to the dynamism and traverses of metal and translated them to functional and bespoke design. The collection was an ardent compilation of intricate patterns and simplicity of finishes, fulfilling the requirements of a modern home in all spheres.

The fifth collection looked at transforming real spaces into surreal dimensions. Bent on experimentation and inspired by the skills learnt from working with traditional Indian craftsmen, showcased was the highest quality of hand blown glass possible in the form of a Peacock. The Pillars were made by blown glass and casted in Brass, inspired by the architecture of Stepwells.

Present at the India Pavilion were personalities who lead

the movement towards championing Indian crafts such as Naseer Ahmad Mir who won the National Award for his relentless work and tremendous skill in weaving together the intricate and delicate Kani shawl, in a technique that resembles the making of a carpet. Winner of the Shilp Guru award in 2015, Inder Singh, celebrated for his acquired skill in the metal craft of Meenakari, that had been passed on to him by his ancestors. While Mr. Singh lent his expertise in enameling,





winner of the National Award in 2016 Amrit Lal Sirohiya of Rajasthan was in attendance for his expertise on cutting, carving and polishing gemstones. Also in attendance was Tapas Kumar Jana, winner of the National Award and specialist in the lesser-known craft of creating masland mats out of fragile grass, which is produced in the district of Midnapore.

With skilled artisans, contemporary ideation and craft advocates on board, along with the support of the Ministry of Textiles, this project came together to be one of the greatest narratives of India's art, design and culture. The amalgamation of sustainable textiles and techniques with physical spaces drove not only awareness of crafts and their versatile nature, but also opened up opportunities for the craftspeople of India. This showcase also focused on the importance of giving due credit to the source, by adding a 'geographical indication' tag, which verifies a product that may have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin. Administered by the Registrar of Geographical Indications, this simple action safeguards the intellectual property of numerous craftspeople.

This presentation was an acknowledgment of the country's vast human resources and opened opportunities for social and economic reform through meaningful work. It aimed at evoking a sense of pride, nostalgia as well as hope, with designs and installations that take from the past and create for the future. India Pavilion was a leap towards spreading the message that craftspeople inherit and further, are the keepers of the country's intangible cultural heritage, and are equally capable of creating new cultural identities through their innovation as anybody else.

The India Pavilion received a lot of appreciation and enquiries from buyers all over the world. ■

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YE-1067/2018

## Reference Annuals 'Bharat 2019' and 'India 2019' Released

The Reference Annuals 'Bharat 2019' and 'India 2019' were released by the Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting on March 7, 2019. These have been compiled by the New Media Wing and edited and published by Publications Division under the Ministry.

This is the 63rd Edition of the prestigious publication.

Speaking on the occasion, the Secretary said that every edition of these Reference Annuals sets new publishing benchmarks. Highlighting their immense popularity, he said that these books are read not only by young readers and those desirous of knowing about the development of the country, but also by foreigners who want to get authentic information about India. He also informed that these books will be carried along by the Indian Delegation participating in London Book Fair, 2019.

The Secretary also appreciated the humongous work that goes on behind collation of material for the books and work involved in editing the collated material to ensure that all the facts presented are complementary to each other.

Director General, Publications Division highlighted the popularity of the Reference Annuals.

'Bharat 2019' and 'India 2019' are available at Book Gallery, Soochna Bhawan, CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi. They can also be purchased from major book stores across the country.

Print version can also be purchased online through the Bharatkosh e-payment gateway-[www.bharatkosh.gov.in](http://www.bharatkosh.gov.in).

## Compilation of Selected Speeches Released

Compilation of selected speeches of the Prime Minister were released in a function organized by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting at National Media Centre, New Delhi on March 8, 2019.

Spanning five volumes, the books, brought out by Publications Division, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, were released in Hindi as well as English.

On the occasion, the efforts put in by Publications Division in bringing out these volumes were appreciated.

These books are available at Book Gallery, Soochna Bhawan, CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi. They can also be purchased from major book stores across the country.

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## London Book Fair

At London Book Fair-2019, the India Pavilion of the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India laid special focus on 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. The London Book Fair (LBF) which is one of the biggest global book fairs with the largest rights centre was held from March 12 to 14, 2019.

The India Pavilion at the London Book Fair was inaugurated by the Director General, Publications Division and Shri Vikram Sahay, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting on March 12, 2019. On display at the India Pavilion were The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (CWMG) brought out by Publications Division, one of the largest publishers of Gandhian Literature. This 100-volume series forms the core of most Gandhian titles published even today. Running into over 55,000 pages, intricately connected across the series as an integrated whole, the series is a monumental document of Gandhiji's words which



he spoke and wrote, day after day, year after year. The original series took 38 years (1956-94) in the making and it has also been successfully digitised by Publications Division.

Other qualitative works on Gandhiji which were on display included Mahatma (in 8 volumes) and Gandhi in Champaran by D.G. Tendulkar, Romain Rolland and Gandhi Correspondence, M.K. Gandhi - An Indian Patriot in South Africa by Joseph Doke and Gandhi – His Life and Thought by J. B. Kripalani.

The India Pavilion also displayed the digital version of the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi

brought out by Publications Division, apart from various other titles on culture, history and folklore of India. An interactive digital media experience on the life and times of Mahatma Gandhi, Statue of Unity and other major achievements of India were available at the Pavilion.

As part of the London Book Fair, a Seminar was also organised at the London Olympia on the topic “The making of the print and electronic versions of The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi”. Mahatma’s vision and works were shared with the



global community during the Seminar. The participants of the Seminar were apprised that the 100-volume series of CWMG is available online in searchable format for free

browsing on the Gandhi portal of the Ministry of Culture, as also on Gandhi Heritage Portal hosted by Sabaramati Ashram Preservation and Memorial Trust.

Taking the initiative further, the Ministry of I&B, in collaboration with Indian High Commission, London, also organised a talk by eminent Gandhian, Prof. Satish Kumar on the topic “Gandhian Model for Sustainable Development” at India House, London.





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## Telling A Story In Fabric

*Avantika Bhuyan*

**I**f you were to see the red-and-white stripes of the Endi cloth, belonging to the Karbi tribe, or the black cotton *pani gamcha*, or the cotton towel cloth of the Meitei women, you would realise that each piece of textile from the northeast of India tells a story. It sheds light on vibrant myths and legends, folklore, natural phenomenon and everyday chores.

An interesting article on the textile traditions of the region can be found on the *Google Arts and Culture* site, which showcases the collection from the Indian Museum, Kolkata. “Textiles and dresses are probably dominantly identifiable cultural aspects which show the resemblances as well as the differences among the ethnic groups that are produced and used by them. The traditional dress of an ethnic group plays a major role in showcasing the ethnic identity. Each ethnic group has its own designs and colour combinations. Different

motifs and designs of textiles have a relationship with the rituals and religious life of the people of North-east India,” it states.

The one aspect that binds the region together is the practice of generational textiles such as the Eri shawls of Assam or the Naga shawls -- ones which have been passed down through centuries. These may include ritual dresses as well as everyday garments. “When I was travelling through Nagaland, a lady told me that they didn’t wash their ceremonial shawls. They were simply sunned, put to use, sunned again and stowed back,” says writer-curator Minhazz Mazumdar. Dr Mita Chakrabarty of the Indian Museum, who organised an exhibition on northeast textiles, concurs, and further adds that there are certain shawls and wrappers that only the chief of a tribe is allowed to wear. So, those garments also act as markers of the stature of a person within an ethnic group as well.

“Whether it is the Reang tribe of Tripura or the Apatanis of Arunachal, each has its own signature motifs and colour schemes. For instance, the Adi-Gallong tribe in Arunachal, has python as its identification mark,” says Chakrabarty.

In Mizoram, one can look at the history of generational textiles in two prominent tribes: Lushai and Lai. “There are certain resemblances between the two. For instance, both have a wraparound skirt, which is called *puan* in Lushai and *thihniin* in Lai. But the differences lie in the raw materials,” says Lisa Lalmuankimi Pachuau, a researcher from Delhi University, who did a paper on traditional weaving

**...if you were to trace the journey of weaves across the northeast, a beautiful story would be revealed to you, about indigenous communities making wonders out of what was locally available.**

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The author is a Delhi-based freelance journalist and has been writing on food and culture for more than a decade now.



centres in Mizoram along with Ritu Mathur and Kiran Kapoor. The study, which appeared in the *International Journal of Applied Home Science* in April 2018, describes a *puan* in detail: “*Puan* in Mizo language can mean any piece of cloth, and when it is tied on the waist and worn as a lower garment, it is still called *puan*. It is normally a yard in length and from 44 inches to 54 inches in breadth. The decorative weaving done on the surface of the cloth is known as *zeh*. *Puan* was the only garment, during the earlier period, worn by both Mizo men and women.”

One can get many more instances of textiles, from within the Indian Museum collection, on the *Google Arts and Cultural Institute* site. For instance, there is a headdress, made of white coloured cotton cloth, used by the Meitei ethnic group of Manipur. At the front is an exquisite floral

motif, and the back is embellished with *jori* ribbons. Then, there is a *kakat-bandha*, or towel cloth, belonging to the Bodo ethnic group, which is a narrow piece of yellow-coloured cloth with embroidered work and cotton fringes on either side. It is used as a waist band. Also, interesting are *jang jenatuan*, or black cotton open drape cloth, belonging to the Kuki ethnic group, and off-white skirt, embellished with red, black and white lines, used by the men of Kabui Naga tribe. “*Thotsepfhe* (white shawl) has embroidered designs at one end. The embroidered wavy designs are present on the body of the shawl and these are kept within a squarish box. Four pieces of cloth are stitched together to get the required length of the shawl. It is used by the Angami Naga ethnic group,” the site states. “*Galuk* is a black coloured sleeveless jacket, made of cotton. The jacket is decorated with a few patches of embroidery work with red, white

and golden thread. It is used by males of Galong ethnic group.”

Various books and publications, in the past, too have highlighted the textile traditions of specific tribes of the northeast. For instance, one can find extensive details of the garments of the Apatani and Mishmi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh in the book, *Indian Textiles: Past and Present*, by GK Ghosh and Shukla Ghosh. The authors talk about how the Apatanis were known to be one of the most important trading tribes, and a link for marketing goods between Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Tibet. This had a huge impact on their own textile culture as well. “They wear Eri silk of Assam, wool of Tibet, in addition to their own cotton apparel. The Apatani men wear loin cloth with a cane plaited loop around their body, and a cloak of white quilted cotton with borders of light blue and red bands. The Apatani women wear a short skirt of coarse greyish cloth reaching just below the knee, a short-sleeved jacket of the same material, a cloak reaching down to the knees,” mention the authors.



Across the northeast, one can see the practice of back strap loom weaving. “Put around the hip, it combines the body and technology. The loom’s design also shows the development of thought in the human brain,” says Mazumdar. The practice of weaving is customised according to a community’s daily schedule. She mentions that in Nagaland, women weave in the morning, tend to the fields, look after the kids and then come back to weave again.



In Manipur, it is believed that the Meitei women are born weavers. A study, titled *Handloom Weaving: The Traditional Crafts of Manipur*, published in the Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge, 2010, mentions that the *khwang iyong*, or the loin loom, was traditionally used by the Meiteis. Then, the throw shuttle loom made an appearance in the 11<sup>th</sup> century followed by the fly loom. The study also talks about the traditional weaving tools such as the bamboo and wooden spools and *tareng*, a wooden charkha. Dyes used to be extracted from leaves, roots and barks, while *muga* silk was used to weave the *rani phee* or women's chaddar and cotton in *wangkheiphee*. "Animal or insect motifs such as the *lamthang khut-lator* snake design, and *sangai*, or deer design, were used," it states. Today, wooden spools have been replaced by plastic ones. In Mizoram too, cotton is no longer grown locally, rather synthetic yarn is used. In fact, across the northeast, mixed yarn, sourced from Ahmedabad and Surat, is being used. "Now we use semi-automatic and automatic shuttle looms. The loin loom takes longer and is used in a limited way. However, if you look at the garments that I have inherited from my grandmother, you will see that they have fine motifs, which the semi-automatic looms can't create. Hence, you will see that a lot of contemporary motifs make an appearance in the market today," says Pachuau.

However, if you were to trace the journey of weaves across the northeast, a beautiful story would be revealed to you, about indigenous

communities making wonders out of what was locally available. In the past, in the absence of sequins, beetle skin and cowrie shells were used as embellishments. "For me, that connect is very important. I don't like these new-fangled labels such as Ahimsa silk. Look at materials such as *muga*, this rare golden, buttery material, whose sheen increases over the years. It is an example of how, even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, nature can impact production, as the textile is dependant on silk worms thriving on trees. I am very unhappy with these new mixes of *tussar* and *muga*," says Mazumdar.

This closeness to nature can be reflected in every colour and pattern, and these vary from the chunky, geometric, double woven Naga textiles to the very delicate *dupattas* from Manipur, which has a jamdani-like feel to them. "Mizos are masters of geometry, very mathematical in their patterns. In Assam, it was considered obscene to wear colour. Only the royal family used to wear certain select hues. In other parts of the northeast too, the colour palette is limited to red, green, blue and black," says Mazumdar.

For instance, the Lusai make use of red, white and black, while the Lai textiles are dominated by reddish browns and olive green. "If you look at Lusai garments, the designs are mostly small and stylised geometrical in shape, with the motifs inspired by domesticated animals such as the *mithun*. In Lai, one will not see much of stripes, but the motifs will be placed horizontally or vertically. These are

inspired by scenes from everyday life and feature birds, a mother hen with her chick, and more," says Pachuau.

Living close to tempestuous rivers, there are folktales galore about floods and natural calamities, which also find their way into the Mishing weave. For a previous article, I was told that one of the recurring patterns in a Mishing weave is the diamond, which symbolises the *changghar* – a structure significant to the tribe's wellbeing. It is a house with raised platform, built with the help of timber, bamboo and thatch, to protect the families from the pouring rain and flood. In that piece, which appeared in the *Mint Lounge*, I was told by Desmond Kharmawphlang, a 53-year-old folklorist and professor at the North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, about his sojourns within the small jungle villages in the Ri-Bhoi district of Meghalaya, one of the few places in the northeast where ground looms are still used. "The Bhois [a sub-group among the Khasis] have myths around the evolution of cotton and how the loom was created out of a body of a monster. I have come across designs and patterns that owe their origins to folk songs about the cycle of growing flowers. These too have found their way into textiles," he said.

Today, one can find contemporary designers experimenting with these traditional techniques and motifs. For instance, artist-designer Anjungla Imchen, draws on her own personal experiences – ranging from the visual vocabulary of her hometown in Nagaland to her experiences in Santiniketan, to create a series of contemporary *kantha* embroideries. "I wish we could stop seeing northeast textiles only in the ethnographic context. The way the traditional weavers have played with the same colours and designs to create hundreds of patterns could offer such a lesson in design and spatiality to design students. There is so much to learn from them," says Mazumdar. □

(E-mail: [bhuyan.avantika@gmail.com](mailto:bhuyan.avantika@gmail.com))



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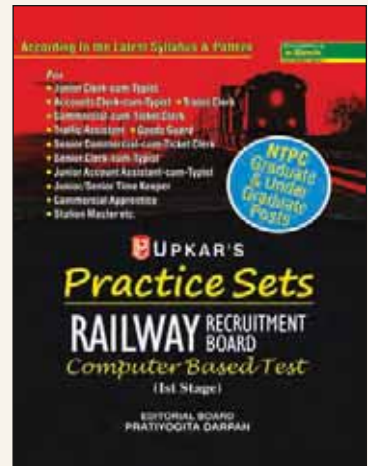
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