



Handlooms Handmade in India.

KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT *The handloom sector of India is an important part of the country's socio-cultural traditions. India produces nearly 95 percent of the world's hand woven textile. The government of India has been promoting and encouraging the handloom and handicraft sector through a number of programmes and schemes. Due to various policy initiatives and schemes such as cluster approach, aggressive marketing initiatives and social welfare measures, these sectors have shown positive growth and the income level of weavers has improved. The government expects that export of handloom products is likely to register 30 to 35 percent growth during the current financial year despite the global economic slowdown. Despite their cultural and economic importance, however, both handlooms and handicrafts sectors suffer from perennial problems of weak infrastructure, inadequate availability of inputs at regular prices, poor supply chain systems and ineffective marketing and sales practices. Limited private entrepreneurial support has increased the sectors' dependence on Government resources. Further, the lack of synergy between handlooms, handicrafts, and khadi and the village industry sectors leads to inefficient utilization of resources. Although these sectors are distinct, they have an undercurrent of commonality. The sectors, therefore, need to be administered with greater synergy. In this context, the 12th Five Year Plan is a unique opportunity to make a decisive and permanent change. The Steering Committee on Handlooms and Handicrafts has suggested that there be greater convergence between Handlooms, Handicrafts, and Khadi & Village Industries. The same will be attempted within the Planning Commission. This will mainstream handlooms and handicrafts as legitimate branches of the small and micro-industry in India and diminish the artificial divisions that compartmentalise administration of common sectors. It is suggested that the first venture of this synergistic endeavor be a brand building and sales exercise under the trade name of "Handmade in India".*

Introduction.

The sectors of Handlooms and Handicrafts embody the rich traditional, historical and cultural diversity that distinguishes India from the rest of the world. Be it the *kashida* embroidery of Kashmir, Naga *morungs*, *paitkar* art work from Jharkhand or the *bhandhej* and *toran* from Gujarat, each of these crafts is enriched with centuries of dedicated refinement and has a unique story to tell. Equally importantly, these two sectors constitute the only industry in the country that provide low cost, green livelihood opportunities to millions of families, supplementing incomes in seasons of agrarian distress, checking migration and preserving traditional economic relationships. With women contributing the majority of pre- and post-loom labour and accounting for over 50% of artisans in the country, and a significant mass of weavers/artisans consisting of scheduled castes, schedules tribes and religious minorities, the two sectors also represent the economic lifeline of the most vulnerable sections of our society. In the country today handloom production is the 2nd largest employment generating activity after agriculture.

Production and Exports

The contribution of the handloom sector to textile production and exports is significant. During 2010-11, the production of handloom fabric was 6903 million square metres, while the share of handloom cloth to total cloth/textile production (comprising handloom, mill and powerloom) was about 14%. The production of handloom cloth during the last six years is given in table below.

Handloom Cloth Production over the years

Year	Cloth Production(million square meters)
2005-06	6108 (+6.75%)
2006-07	6536 (+7.00%)
2007-08	6947 (+6.29%)

2008-09	6677 (-3.89%)
2009-10	6806 (+1.93%)
2010-11 (Prov.)	6903 (+1.42%)
2011-12 (Prov.)	5775

Note: Figures in brackets indicate % increase/ decrease over previous year.

Source: Planning Commission.

The increase in production, despite growing competition from mill-made and decentralized power loom sectors, is heartening. Statistics on exports of handloom products available from 2009-10 onwards, indicate that exports rose by 32% in 2010-11 as compared to the previous year. During 2011-12, total exports in the first seven months had already reached almost 90% of the exports during the whole of the previous year. Figures are given in the table below:

Export of Handlooms

(In Crores)

Year	Target	Achievement
2009-10	N.A	1252.81
2010-11	1350.00	1662.89
2011-12	2250.00	1483.21(April-Oct 2011)

Source: Planning Commission.

Owing to their importance in India's development and livelihood policy, the Government of India has introduced various policies along with programmatic interventions for the handloom and handicrafts sectors, aimed at generating sustained, productive and gainful employment with decent working conditions for the entire weaver, artisanal

and ancillary worker population. While a majority of the programmes have yielded positive results, several factors – demographic,

social, technical and cultural – have led to a situation of only partial fulfillment of the policy objectives. Consequently, the extent, nature and structure of employment creation and sustenance in these sectors remains a major concern for policy makers. In addition, inadequate infrastructure, poor marketing support and ailing distribution networks has weakened an already fragile supply chain system. Of particular concern in this scenario is the steady erosion of livelihoods in the crafts and handloom sectors due to increased competition from machine manufactured products. On one hand, lower-priced industrial products are displacing craft products amongst lower-income consumers in both urban and rural markets. On the other hand, craft products are facing increased competition from branded, value-added products amongst higher-income consumers, especially in urban areas. With the absence of a concerted, market-oriented approach to revitalize the sector, improve service delivery and efficacy of schemes, India is closer today to losing a heritage that could be its greatest competitive advantage in a homogenous global marketplace. The impact of the economic downturn has been most severely felt by weavers and artisans, majority of whom belong to the marginalized social groups. They are, therefore, far more adversely impacted when faced with market fluctuations and infrastructure gaps as well as the challenges posed by the growing machine-made products.

Schemes/Programmes for the Handloom Sector in the Eleventh Plan

The objective of the 11th Plan for the handlooms sector was to develop a strong, competitive and vibrant sector that would provide sustainable employment leading to economic development, particularly of rural areas. The vision was to target growth in terms of doubling the country's share in the global market and ensure higher socio-economic status for the artisan community. Major programmatic interventions planned for the 11th Plan were as under:-

- i. Cluster based approach: Organisation of over 36.88 lakh weavers into handloom clusters, and 375 new artisanal clusters covering 4 lakh artisans.
- ii. Census: Carrying out a census and mapping exercise to determine the presence of crafts and craftspeople across the country, along with their skills. Issue of photo ID cards to weavers and artisans.
- iii. Availability of Working Capital and Credit: Assisting weavers and artisans to obtain credit facilities relevant to their requirements.

- iv. Availability of Raw Material: Creating raw material banks and ensuring timely availability to individual weavers and artisans at reasonable prices.
- v. Social Security: Launching Health and Life Insurance schemes to improve the quality of life of weavers and artisans; To Cover 83.92 lakh weavers/ancillary workers and 40.80 lakh artisans; Launching schemes for Distress Relief, Pension and Thrift Fund.

In pursuance of the above objectives, during the 11th Plan, the Government of India implemented five Plan schemes that were administered through the Development Commissioner for Handlooms, Ministry of Textiles, of which two are Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) and three are Central Sector Schemes. A new CSS, namely 'Revival, Reform and Restructuring Package for Handloom Sector' was introduced during 2011-12 to revive the Handlooms sector. The various Schemes were:

- Integrated Handlooms development Scheme.
- Marketing and Export Promotion Scheme.
- Mill Gate Price Scheme.
- Handloom Weavers Comprehensive welfare Scheme.
- Diversified Handloom Development Scheme.
- Revival, Reform and Restructuring Package.
- Integrated Skill Development Scheme.
- Handloom Reservation.
- Special Requirements of North Eastern Region.

Conclusion.

A unified 'Handmade in India' brand should be promoted for Indian craft products, and back-end capacity building services and welfare support to producers should be provided to enable them to compete in the market - All the three sectors of handloom, handicrafts and khadi and village industries deal with 'craft' items, which is a common thread that runs through these three sectors. This calls for a holistic approach in formulation and implementation of policy for all the three sectors together. The administrative division between handlooms, handicrafts, khadi, coir, micro-industries and other cottage industries, prevents efficient conceptualization of programmes, budgetary allocations and promotion and branding of Indian crafts for all the sectors in a unified manner. Global best practices are currently moving towards a broader rubric of promoting and commercializing creative and cultural industries in a holistic framework. In a rapidly integrating global market place, the focus, therefore, should be on promoting a unified '**Handmade in India**' and removal of artificial divisions that compartmentalize administration of common sectors, thereby leading to more efficient utilization of resources and improved performance of the sectors.

Effective steps should be taken by the corporate sector as well as by the Central and the State Governments to popularize the use of handloom and handicraft products within their enterprises/Departments.