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## The Indian Handloom: Boon to the Nation in Jeopardy

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### **Abstract:**

*Country's ideology in terms of consistent dynamic changes sets a drastic deviation when it comes to paying equitable attention to all available resources, which thus really further leads to be playing a vital role in contributing towards collective remarkable growth in all respects. Our State being highlighted with numerous affluent set of inherited Art seems to have a shift in focal point with upcoming major tech driven philosophies and it can be observed from past decades that our dear country is in no mood to even introspect to delve for such assets. The reasons why it lost the deserving value and what possible transitions it can bring if addressed correctly will be discussed to denote the hidden value. The unique identity of handloom sector and the prevailing issues faced by this sector will also be discussed.*

**Keywords:** Value, Identity, Handloom

### **1. The Evolution of Indian Handloom Industry**

Evolution of Indian Handloom weaving art is shrouded in the mists of Antiquity. Mohen-jo-daro & Harappa, and the Indus Valley Civilization were the source which led the discovery of woven cotton and bone made needles. Even the Rigveda and the epics of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana dwell upon the craft of weaving at length. This ancient art has the strong evidences of presence as the epics of the Mahabharata, the Rigveda, and the Ramayana, these too witnessed the craft weaving at length. The weavers of those times were true masters, their capability was such awe inspiring that even legend refers to the fabulous semi-transparent saree, that was considered as a great technical feat of work, worn by Amrapali, the famous courtesan. Egyptian tombs at Fostat too have the traces of cotton fabric. In ancient times China was too a huge importer of our fabrics. In 13<sup>th</sup> century, Indonesia was the country where silk was used to be exported. Prior to the period of British East India Company, Europe and other eastern countries were the destination where Indian cotton was supplied in huge quantity.

Three major types of weaving traditions that marked the beginning of Hand weaving:-

- The Rural: Representing the familiar, unchanging images of rural life. These are abundantly full of joy and life, with figures of plants, animals and humans.
- The Classical: Revolving around royalty and court life. Here the forms and symbols varied according to the patronage of the ruler. Symbols and myths were rendered graphically, with elegance and style.
- The Tribal: These were usually bold geometric patterns and weaves in strong primary colors usually woven on simple bamboo looms.

Gujarat had been the focal point of weaving in the past. The true focal point from where the art of weaving can be marked is Gujarat. Though in 1300 A.D. major transitions made the weavers to diversify in and settle up in different areas like Delhi, Ajmer, Agra, Madras, Banaras. Murshidabad and the Saurashtr of South had the best of the silk weavers, both of this special art custom originated from Gujarat itself.

### **2. The Concept of Value**

Value as per the general inference is the further enhancement to the actual offering which can be felt and which when experienced by the customer creates a positive influence in every possible respect, it can be in the form of repurchase, recall or anything.

Not just talking about the handloom industry it can be observed many times that by some commissions/ omissions the value delivery part is highly neglected. Analysis clearly indicates that it is a matter of shortsightedness manifested in the form of many mistaken actions and orientations. (Ramaswamy 2009)

The possible causes for the same can be; 1. Marketing of such industry has been excessively preoccupied with marketing mix elements. 2. Submerging marketing to just implementation issues. 3. Clinging to segmenting the prospect market and neglecting the customized or niche group. 4. making exaggerated product promises.

### 3. Underlying Harsh Reality of Handloom Sector: The Problems

In this section the emerging issues in Handloom sector has been studied various investigators probed to figure out core issue areas and extensive review of the same has been done to [present their views. Elavarasi Janardhan (2008) identified the major issues faced by the artisans of India, the population of these artisans was identified in different three segments- the self employed, wage earner, co-operative members (clusters made by the Govt.). The author identified the gaps of Market shifts, middle men involvement, space unavailability, seasonal constraints, and lack of demand. Jyoti Narzary (2012) studied the Marketing problems and prospects of handloom and handicrafts industry in B.T.A.D. (Bodoland Territorial Area Districts). The author considered the sample size of 200 respondents who are the producers and retailers of the handloom and handicrafts Products. The methodology comprised of survey and observation. Besides that pre-designed questionnaires were distributed to the respondents who are the producers, retailers and also the consumers of the handloom and handicrafts products for collection, sampling and analysis of data. Issues identified by the author were- Lack of Accessibility of market information, Lack of awareness among the customer about product features, Promotion and Advertising of Handloom, Quality Control, Lack of Logistics Management. Author further suggested that the logistics management, innovative promotional and advertising campaign, continuous feedback from customers, availability, accessibility and visibility of the product are factors from marketing point of view. Pricing strategy must be formulated on the basis of the market demand, the segment that is targeted, cost of the production, value added to the product and brand image of the product, efforts should be done to bring superior quality in handloom products the pre and post loom process development should take place. Innovative and faster weaving processes and techniques to increase efficiency of weavers as well as loom will make handloom more competitive and profitable, Establishment of Quality and Tradition in customer's mind, generating loyalty through long-term customer relationship and high quality service to increase in sale's volume of Handloom Products are required, To keep logistic cost and cost of raw material low, decentralized spinning mills can be established in the handloom cluster level, Traders should change their attitude towards weavers and market. They should not become obstacles between market and weaver. Kuldeep Singh (2012) analyzed the Handloom sector and depicted the major problems as Modernization and Up gradation of Technology, Input Support, Marketing Support, Publicity, Infrastructural Support, welfare Measures, Composite Growth, Oriented Package, Development of Exportable Products, Research & Development. Reseracher concluded the notion that most of the handloom units are working as sole-proprietors or on partnership basis and there is lack in professional outlook in the overall handing of their units, many owners are required to be familiar with modern techniques of marketing such as product development brand promotion, packing, advertising market, surveys and demand forecasts. A study conducted by Academy of Management Studies in 2006 on Customer satisfaction laid objectives as to study the general perception & expectation of the customers and the extent to which the same meet, identification of deficiencies/ weaknesses and shortcomings in scheme implementation and to suggest methods to overcome. They identified key attributes to measures customer satisfaction as timeliness delivery, product quality, pricing of the products. Then these attributes were grouped in two segments and ranking was done on how important do a customer feel the attribute is important for him. Analysis revealed that customer consider 'availability of credit facilities', 'product quality', 'reliability in timely delivery' are the most important aspects. Seemanthini Niranjana (2001) revealed that there a need to devise appropriate structural support system that could help the industry to identify its potential. For that matter, a major shift in existing perspective is required. Nevertheless it is traditional activity that is on the verge of decline, handlooms must be approached as a productive industry and as a major generator of employment. The problem of migrant weavers has to be taken up seriously. The problem area this sector suffers are- Credit needs, Input support, Product Reservations, Research needs, lack of Market requirement information, by designing realistic appraisal of the handloom industry particularly in Andhra and identifying potential growth areas, and suggested possible strategies for intervention based on field experience. The study drawn both primary and secondary data through field visits, compiling government documents for instance a schedule was formulated with the intention of getting some base level data on products woven, marketing agencies, wages. Results were further presented in Statistical and qualitative form.

### 4. Present Time Problems Faced by this Sector

Plethora of writings are available to read about the loopholes this sector suffered but though a closer look is needed at a quite micro level to understand each level this offering passes through. Out of extensive review of recent literatures following loose ends can be observed;

- Final products processed through Handlooms are highly priced.
- Availability of such products is a major issue.
- Designs and patterns need modification as per the ongoing trends.
- Advertisements and promotion is a backdrop for this sector.
- Before processing such offerings, market surveys are needed to analyze the need.
- Handloom products lack in terms of customization.

### 5. Aspects on which it is Loosing Value

The basic format of value suggests that there are four types of values which are classified into two broad segments;

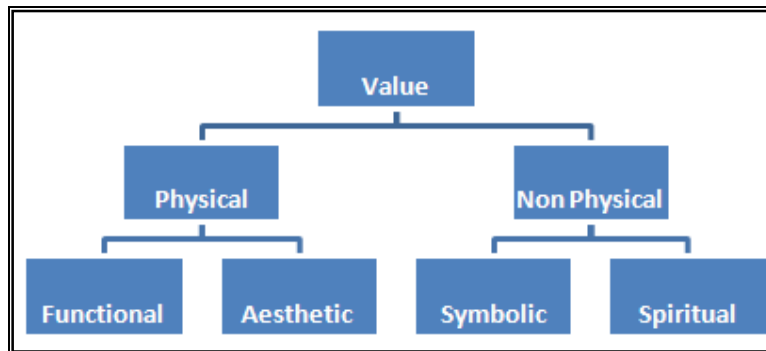


Diagram 1. Types of Values- V.S. Ramaswamy

The non physical type of value is more significant, as per the symbolic value they express symbolically customer's personality, taste, status and modern or conservative attitude. The highest value is spiritual—whether the product has nobility or benevolence in its making, or in operating or in its disposal (Navin Mathur 2007). The handloom sector of India do possess the symbolic value but are confined to a particular segment of mass who are more in touch or associated with this area- like people who are inclined towards the historic background of hand woven products which engraved from Gandhi's era. The oriental concept too suggested values in terms of three major categories;

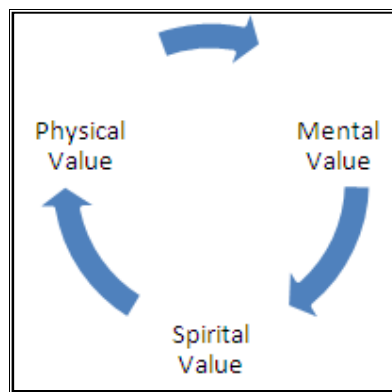


Figure 1: Oriental concept of value: Value the basics by V.S. Ramaswamy

## 6. USP's of Handloom products

The hand loom products are certainly distinguished as compared to the power loom final products in many ways.

- The texture of hand woven material can be easily identified and it has its own unique niche.
- Un-uniformity in the weave is there, the rustic look has the underlying charm.
- More threads and weave per inch and woven which makes the fabric of each product soft.

## 7. Silver line of Handloom Sector Growth in a Dark Cloud of Technology Inspired Industries

Frost and Sullivan (2005) studied the world market for craft and arrive at the current effective market for such products, aims to understand the trend in imports of various product categories in the major markets, gain comprehensive insights into what products categories are in demand in the major markets and which are the major suppliers of these product categories, assessing and evaluating the level of competition among the major exporters of various craft product categories, especially the threat and degree of competition that India faces from other Asian countries. Fayaz Ahmad, Aasif Hussain Nengroo (2013) analyzed the handloom sector of Jammu and Kashmir particularly the area Budgam was taken for study. Author viewed the growth of sales of J&K State Handloom Development Corporation, and analyzed the growth and performance of handloom sector in district Budgam.

The study was descriptive and analytical and was based on both primary and secondary sources of data. The secondary data was collected from Directorate of Handloom Department J&K Govt. and various issues of Economic Survey and Digest of Statistics, Directorate of Economic and Statistical Planning J&K Govt. besides various journals and periodicals have also been utilized. The primary data have been collected by way of sample survey of 100 handloom unit holders of district Budgam and the required information was generated. The collected data was then analyzed and interpreted with use of some statistical tools to arrive at afore said objectives. Year wise production and employment generation was presented and on the basis of that the return generated was calculated. The author outlined that handloom industry occupies a position of strategic importance in the economic structure due to its significant contribution in terms of output, exports and employment and at the same time this industry is relatively cost inefficient. It is labor intensive sector, does not rely on scarce resources, does not cause pollution and is environment friendly. Therefore, the social cost benefit ratio, of all vestments in this sector is very high. The paper found that the

growth rate of the Handloom development corporation was 29 per cent during 2004-05 and after that it has decreased up to 2008-09, than it increased and in 2010-11 it was 21 percent, which means that the handloom corporation has enabled to increase the sales of handlooms. A very significant increase in production of handlooms during the study period was also observed. Author recommended that it is essential that firstly, introduction of advanced techniques like computer-aided designs would help the weavers to develop new motifs. Counseling bodies comprising of professional, trained counselors who belong to a similar background should be constituted for the benefit of weavers and secondly that the Government realizes the urgent need for a shift in policy regarding the sector, so as to allow it to flourish. Nihar Dash (2007) investigated in the area of Potentiality in Boudh Districts of Orissa. The main objective of this study was to analyze the socio-economic condition of weavers of selected villages, to find out different components of handloom based livelihood, to find out the different marketing channel for weavers at various point of time in these villages through market mapping, to analyze the supply and demand of handloom products and have a comparative analysis of market and consumer preference, to find out the market's influence on the handloom based economy and livelihood of weavers in the study area, To collect information on possible models for strengthening the handloom sector and for ensuring socio-economic well-being of the weaver community. Focus group Discussion was opted by the investigator to elicit the information. For primary data schedules were used and one to one interactions were conducted. The researcher further concluded by finding that the weavers are no more interested in having any middlemen and wants to foster a direct linkage with the market. It has also been found that traditional way requires the entire family to engage but one person get wage so they suggest, every individual work should be recognized and reforms should be incorporated in wage structure. Author found that there are three cornerstones to buildup enhanced livelihood situation- sufficient and timely supply of raw material, proper wage system and appropriate marketing of finished goods.

## 8. Conclusion

Harnessing the potential of the handloom sector really requires quality investment in specific aspects. Sustainability is the core thing which can be the principal result if the issues relating to the sector are dealt correctly. For that we need to focus on;

- Handholding the artisan through the value chain.
- Building strong market linkages.
- Promoting decentralized production model,
- Formulating multi stakeholder approach.

If the prevailing bondages are addressed rightly the sector can lit up tremendous growth on vivid aspects.

- **Employment and Income:** being the second largest employer, the very obvious productive outcome is the Employment generation and providing livelihood to big masses.
- **Migration:** The right proportion of the working people for urban and rural would be maintained if the problems are combated.
- **Economic Growth:** approximately 400USD market is currently prevailing for handicraft and handloom sector on the global front and India as of now is contributing less than 2 percent, it clearly indicates that there is huge scope for this sector.
- **Competitive advantage:** Likewise Japan and Korea the affluent set of inherited art of weaving can be one of the USP or expertise for the country. It merely requires proper development.
- **Environment Friendly:** The sector also considers the notion of preventing the ecology to a great extent. Natural and organic materials are promoted to process the final products.
- **Social Empowerment:** on the social front as well, the sector steers to attain many pros like empowering and engaging women in production activity, it also provides the valuable return to the future generation with the unique art that inherited from long years back.

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