



# YOJANA

MAY 2024

A DEVELOPMENT MONTHLY

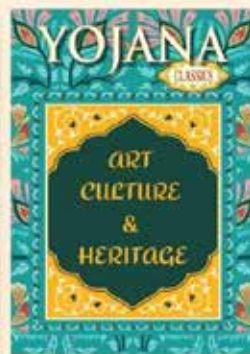
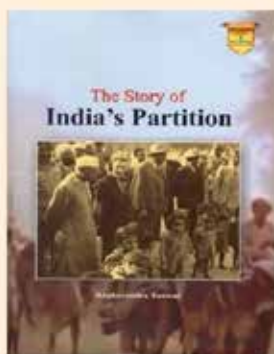


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**YOJANA**, a development monthly published since  
1957, is a theme-based journal providing in-depth  
analyses and views on socio-economic issues in  
the broader framework of government policies.  
Although published by the Ministry of Information  
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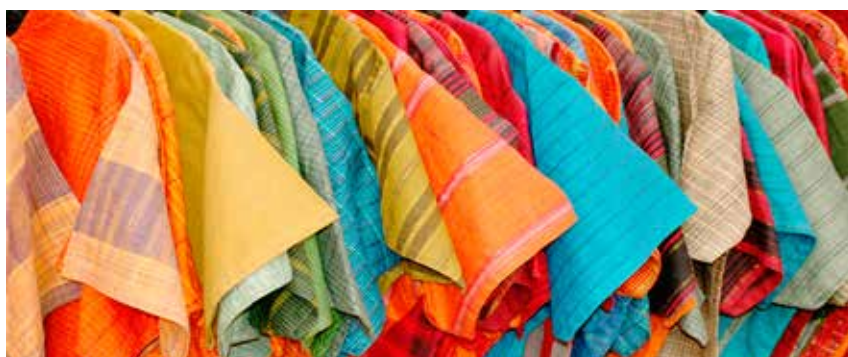
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**YOJANA** is published in Assamese, Bengali, English, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu.

## Threads of Tradition

In the intricate weave of India's cultural fabric, the handloom industry stands as a testament to the country's rich heritage and artistic prowess. From the snow-clad valleys of Kashmir to the sun-bathed shores of Kanyakumari, India's diverse landscape is adorned with a kaleidoscope of hand-woven treasures, each bearing the indelible mark of centuries-old traditions and craftsmanship. We seek to embark on a journey through the intricate threads of India's handloom legacy, celebrating its unparalleled beauty and significance in the socio-economic milieu of the nation.

At the heart of India's handloom heritage lies the profound legacy of its weavers, whose skilled hands have breathed life into some of the world's most exquisite textiles. The handloom sector, ranked second only to agriculture in India's unorganised sector, serves as a vital source of livelihood for over three million artisans across the country. From the detailed Pashmina shawls of Kashmir to the vibrant Bandhani sarees of Gujarat, the handloom industry embodies the ethos of sustainable craftsmanship, rooted in tradition yet adaptable to modern sensibilities.

One cannot overlook the global recognition garnered by Indian handloom products, which serve as ambassadors of the country's cultural richness on the international stage. Through meticulous artisanship and unwavering dedication, Indian weavers have carved a niche for themselves in the global market, with exports surpassing \$300 million annually before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite facing challenges such as fluctuating market demands and competition from machine-made textiles, the resilience of India's handloom sector remains unwavering, buoyed by initiatives aimed at enhancing international demand and promoting indigenous branding.

Indeed, the story of Indian handlooms is not just one of economic significance but also a narrative of cultural resilience and identity preservation. Across the length and breadth of the country, handloom clusters such as Bhujodi in Kutch, Ashavalli in Ahmedabad, and Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh serve as bastions of tradition, where age-old weaving techniques are passed down from generation to generation. These clusters not only sustain local economies but also foster a sense of community and cultural pride among their inhabitants.

As we immerse ourselves in the panorama of India's handloom heritage, it's crucial to acknowledge the collaborative efforts that have shaped its trajectory. Various stakeholders, including government bodies, artisan communities, and industry players, have contributed to nurturing and elevating this cherished legacy. Through initiatives aimed at skill development, market access, and resource provision, a supportive ecosystem has emerged, fostering the growth and visibility of India's handloom sector both domestically and internationally.

In the current edition of Yojana, we bring together insights from various subject experts and scholars, shedding light on the multifaceted dimensions of India's handloom industry. Through scholarly discourse and informed analysis, we strive to unravel the fineprint of India's weaving traditions and underscore their enduring relevance in an ever-evolving world. As we navigate the diverse weave of India's handloom heritage, let us reaffirm our commitment to preserving and promoting this timeless legacy for generations to come. We are certain that the intricate storytelling in the articles to follow will inspire you to know your weaves and celebrate the rich legacy behind them. □

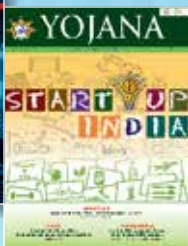
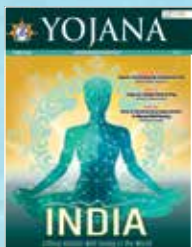




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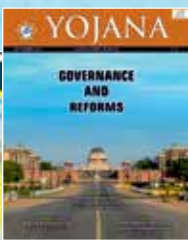
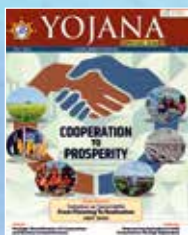
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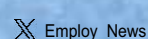
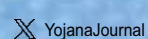
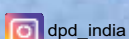
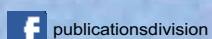
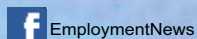
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# VIBRANT WORLD OF WEAVES

## REGIONAL DIVERSITY IN INDIAN WEAVING

**RTA KAPUR CHISHTI**

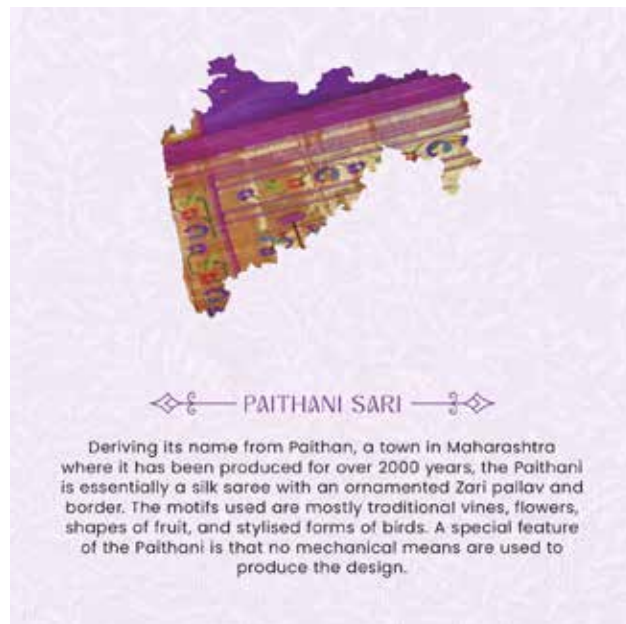
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**W**eavers, printers, and dyers represent a unique mathematically competent yet aesthetically tuned resource group in the villages, small towns, and big towns. Whereas the educated designer would be calculating fabric structure from the number of threads per centimetre, the weaver would offer calculations from the other end, translating hanks of yarn into fabric structures by weight.

Beginning the journey through India in the deep southwest, predominantly 'white', state of Kerala. White was the predominant base colour in all parts of India before the advent of chemical dyes in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Not only because of the compulsion of a warm-to-hot climate but also

because the limited availability and expense of natural dyes, white was also a traditional statement of purity, austerity, and restraint. The aesthetics of white seem to cut across class and community in a range of ways, from weighty, strong drapes for the not-so-privileged to fine counts and even silks for the well-to-do. A wedding sari was often just *kora* (unbleached), unwashed, and sprinkled with *haldi* (turmeric) to mark the auspicious occasion.

Chemical dyes and cheaper substitutes for zari (gold metallic yarn) inadvertently opened the door to social change, which had not found adequate expression till then. The extravagant use of colour and shiny surface embellishments we so commonly associate with India today is an expression of 20<sup>th</sup>-century freedom enhanced



by post-Independence exhilaration and freedom from regional and community moorings.

Weavers in Kerala were reticent and shy to speak of their 'limited' pattern elements, though they warmed up as soon as they realised that the elegance and restraint of their well-woven predominantly white drapes were appreciated. Their well-woven ground was highlighted by the limited colour of use in borders, which were replaced with gold for special occasions, culminating in a ribbed colour or gold end piece that was elevated from the ground. These are widely seen in the weaving of *Mundu veshti* and *Kasavu* saris as well as dhotis in most parts of Kerala, beginning with the finest in *Balarampuram* in the south. There are simpler versions of these being woven in *Kasargod* and *Chendamangalam* further north. Handlooms and mills in Kerala are also well known for a range of home linens, such as towels and sheets in compact weaves, which are well-known within India and beyond.

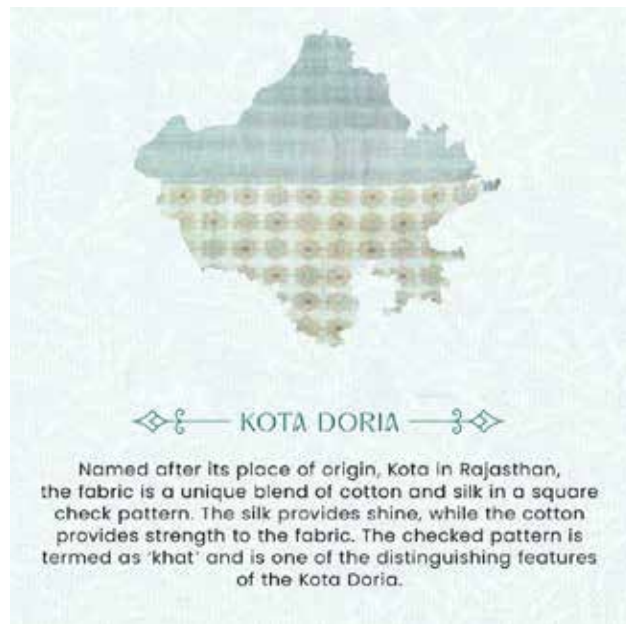
Moving northwards through Karnataka, Goa, and Maharashtra, which are intimately related yet distinctly apart in their myriad plains, shots, stripes, and checks, often combining cotton and silk in numerous ingenious ways.

In Karnataka, cotton and silk centres of weaving in places such as *Molakalmuru* with yarn resist and patterned elements in warp and weft and *Ilkal* with its three shuttle weaving and extra warp patterning continue to thrive. Along with cotton in *Udupi*,

*Kollegal*, and *Rukmapur* for their well-known saris and fabrics. *Navalgund* floor coverings, *Guledgudd* for its *Khana* blouse fabrics in cotton and silk. It is worth noting that many of the silks that cannot be hand-reeled in other parts of India, including Kashmir, West Bengal, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh, are sold in Karnataka to be woven into the weft of what is referred to as dupion silk, which uses an uneven slubbed weft yarn with a fine silk warp to make a fabric that has more texture than the evenly spun silks.

Goa was an unexpected revelation as the only state with a legacy of weaving being banned by the





Portuguese. Weavers literally went underground into basements and dug out for their looms. The demand from faithful *Kunbi* farm labour, *Koli* fisherwomen, and *Dhangad* shepherds provided a ready market for their woven saris. Despite the threat to life or punishment, they continued well into the early 1990s, almost 30 years after 'liberation,' succumbing to cheaper saris from neighbouring states. The complexity of checks and colour combinations was what distinguished them from their neighbours.

In Maharashtra, we find a wide base of cotton cultivation in the area of *Wardha* and silk cultivation in *Vidarbha* and *Gadhchiroli* in the south-east. The eastern region of Maharashtra is well-known for its *Nagpur* and *Puneri* silk and cotton saris. Moving towards the west, the *Karvat Kathi* and *Jote* and *Patal* saris in pure silk make use of cotton-silk mixes in the body and borders in ingenious ways to create a well-woven ground with heavier borders. The entire range of Maharashtra sari culminates in the use of *Paithan* cotton and silks using the interlock tapestry technique to create a wide range of patterns, which have become increasingly well-known and have seen a revival of interest among both the weavers and the users. Several villages in *Amravati* are also weaving *durrie* floor coverings.

Gujarat has a wide producer base of weaves, prints, and *Bandhini* fabric resist, which was earlier restricted to the *Kachch* region but has now spilled

over to *Saurashtra* and the mainland as well. It is Gujarat's mechanised textile industry that has grown immensely, especially post-independence, and its outdated mill machinery has also spilled over to create vast power loom-producing belts in places such as *Surat* as well as *Ichalkaranji*, *Malegaon*, and *Bhiwandi* in *Maharashtra*. It is the entrepreneurial skills so innate to the Gujaratis that have enabled the few weavers and printers to survive with help from marketing agencies such as *Gurjari* in the 1970s and later other NGOs and private agencies.

Though *Rajasthan* had a hand-spinning and weaving legacy of floor coverings, *durrie*, as well as plain fabrics that were printed over for stitched women's wear, lower and upper garments, as well as men's dhoti, shirts, and upper drapes. Though hand spinning and weaving have seen limited growth, they have proliferated in prints and the mill sector, especially for men's formal wear.

*Punjab* and *Haryana*, which have since become separate states since 1964, had a wide base of coarse fabric weaving for home linen, floor coverings, and everyday wear, which has given way to a large extent to the mills. Embroideries that were widely practiced, especially in coarse cotton shawls and decorative home use, have now moved to finer chiffons and *chignons* and are still popular with the stitched *salwar kameez*. The mills that have grown immensely post-independence are largely known for their machine-knit wear



along with wool fabrics and shawls, both printed and plain.

Himachal Pradesh, which was also a pre-1964 part of Punjab, has always been well known for its *kullu* and *kinnaur* fabrics and shawls, as well as home products for floor and bed linen, including blankets and headwear. These have grown widely in post-independence India, with an exuberant use of colour and pattern.

Jammu and Kashmir, as well as Ladakh and Uttarakhand, have a wide base of wool spinning of coarse to fine *Pashmina* sheep and goat wools, which are handwoven into a wide variety of *khudrang*/patterned self-coloured fabrics for apparel and shawls, blankets for everyday use, and special occasions. These were later embroidered on the outer edges or all over in spectacular nature-inspired floral patterns of varied quality and design. Coarse wool was also compacted into *namda*/felted floor coverings of varied natural colours or accented with dyeing or embroidery. The rich inheritance of weaving wool tweeds has also seen some growth and support. Kashmir,

along with Bishnupur in West Bengal, were the only two areas where mulberry silk was traditionally cultivated, and post-independence saw the rise of silk spinning and weaving.

Madhya Pradesh and the newly created state of Chhattisgarh reveal how a widespread base feeds the well-known centres of weaving, such as *Chanderi*, *Maheshwar*, and *Bilaspur*. Almost 2000 km from east to west, it has had a long tradition of cotton cultivation, hand-spinning, weaving, printing, and dyeing. Though hand-spinning has largely receded, its weaving base has grown, especially in the three well-known centres mentioned above. The supply of *Tussar* from the central state of Chhattisgarh and its cotton from mills within the state has seen some proliferation, along with the increasing output from places such as *Sausar* with its range of cotton fabrics and saris, though *durrie* weaving has also grown in many parts of the state.

Uttar Pradesh has a wide base of sari production in fine cotton: woven, embroidered, and printed, culminating in the finest technical and aesthetic





virtuosity seen at the trade and cultural centre of Varanasi. This cultural capital has absorbed weaving skills from the entire state as well as from as far away as Persia after the setting of Mughal *karkhanas* and has had a long-standing trade with Tibet and other parts of South Asia. It has been woven especially for the south Indian market as well as Bengal in the east, and it has absorbed weavers from diverse states as well. Therefore, the famed *gethua* heeled lifted, *Kadhwa* looms embroidered, *phekwan* through shuttle weaving, and *Katarwa*, or cutting of threads on the underside, have given it a wide variety of fabrics, from more transparent oraganzas, *chinons*, and chiffons to the heaviest all-over patterned silk brocades, which have kept its fame alive to the present date.

Bihar, Bengal, and Odisha have shared a past but evolved distinctly. Bihar has grown in its range of *tussar* fabrics for home use and apparel, as well as saris, especially from the Bhagalpur region, which have seen a revival since the 1980s. Specifically, the *Maldehi* and *Laldehi* saris have inspired a range of warp and weft self-patterned *tussars*, which had

all but disappeared since the 1950s due to the proliferation of furnishing and fabrics for garments and home use. Its cotton range has also grown in the Nalanda region since the 1990s.

The southern half of Bihar, now the newly created state of Jharkhand, boasts a wide range of coarse cotton saris for its tribal communities as well as *tussar* cultivation, spinning, and weaving. The potential for spinning and weaving is immense and has grown in the NGO sector specifically. The weaving of home products such as cushions, floor coverings, and bed linen has also proliferated in this region.

West Bengal has seen greater continuity in its sari weaves, though it has lost its coarse-count cottons due to the upgrade of loom technology. Its fine cottons have proliferated, "there is an explosion of colours now, an explosion of patterns," says Parimal Das in village Joygopalpur, district Nadia.

With the drum warp preparation of 30 saris at one go, "sari production has become less laborious and more profitable," says another young weaver in Fulia, district Nadia, while describing hank sizing instead of brush sizing and the introduction of jacquard, which enlarged the scale of the patterning. Quality may have suffered in this process, but the market for West Bengal's products, both woven and embroidered, has grown immensely.

Bishnupur's indigenous mulberry silk and that of the *tussar* like *Maldah*, were distinct in the quality of their weight and lustre. Though weavers decry their loss of status, as they compare their present in relation to the past when half the cost of





a sari comprised their wages!

The seven north-eastern states, all well known for their weaving skills both in warp and weft patterning, with access to a wide variety of cottons and silks, such as *Eri* in its various shades of white and the golden *Muga*, are making their presence felt in all parts of India.

Assam is known for its *Mekhela Chador*, *Gamcha*, and the increasing production of saris.

Arunachal's *gale* and *galuk* have also been increasingly seen and produced.

In Tripura, *Risha*, *Pachhara*, *Lysemphree* local regional apparel, and *Chadar* weaving have been increasingly seen.

Talking of Mizoram, *Puanchei Puan*, *Tawlhloh Puan*, *Ngotekherh* or *Puan Hruih*, *Hmaram Puan*, *Thangchhuab Puan*, and *Pondum Puan* are increasingly recognised.

In Meghalaya, the weaving of the *Ka Jainsem* and Silk Stole has visibly grown.

In Manipur *Innaphee*, *Wangkheiphee*, *Phi matek* (Chunni), *Chunni Rani phee*, *Plain Phanek*, *Stripe Phanek*, *Khudai*, and *Lengyan* (*Gamachha*) have made their impact.

In Nagaland, upper drapes such as *Sangtam*, *Sema*, *Nye-myon*, *Nikola*, *Ze-liangs-rong*, *Rhiko*, and *Alungstu* and lower drapes such as *Azu Jangup Su*, *Mechala*, *Neikhro*, *Moyer Tusk*, and *Sutam* for men and women are woven for their specific tribal communities that are increasingly recognised.

In Odisha, cotton and silk-patterned saris of exceptional quality lost ground to the yarn-resist *ikat* saris that have gained wider markets. Some exceptional patterned cottons are

in Patna Museum, but in Narsinghapur, district Cuttack, with the increasing dependency on the mercerised yarn, which does not require sizing, such as saris with mixed yarns with cotton in the ground and *tussar* and silk in the patterning, have now been discontinued. Fortunately, there are weavers such as *Bhikari Sur* in village *Gopalpur*, district *Jajpur*, who described the *Saat Phulia Jala Tussar Sari* with seven rows of the *Kantaphul*, *Gendupful*, *Padamphul*, or *Kadamphul*. The daily-use saris were woven in cotton and, for special occasions, in *tussar*. In both, the extra weft or extra warp ornamentation was in heavier *tussar*, natural or coloured. It gave a unique lustre and shine to the sari. Several such saris were woven for the *Kalinga Vastra* collection and sold in 1996.

Moving southwards along the eastern coast, we come to Andhra Pradesh, another meeting point of north and south, with coarse-to-fine cottons, admixtures of silk, and a range of weaving skills, including loom embroidery, yarn resistance, and surface dye painting and printing. Coarse cottons were most widespread, though young people today 'would not be able to carry them' says Narasamma in village Yemmiganur, district Kurnool. To finer counts in places such as Guntur with "simple two-finger width borders in *pattubadi* densely woven in dark ripe colours... as the older women do not wear petticoats and nothing shows through." To the finest cottons in *Venkatgiri*, *Uppada*, and *Gadwal*, with borders and end pieces in silk favoured by royalty and the well-to-do. "The specialty of *Venkatgiri* is *chelnetha* cross-shaded beating, which gives a fine, light body that enhances the zari edged with silk borders. You see, the *chelnetha* sari looks good even after washing, any other without starch will hang like





a dog's tongue," says a weaver. The heavy silks of *Armoor*, *Narayanpet*, and *Dharmavaram* emerged with increasing patronage and market outreach.

Andhra Pradesh leads us directly into Tamil Nadu, the culmination of our journey, marked by a refining and defining of motifs, an enigmatic colour palette, and a mastery of cotton and silk, distinctly or in combination. From a wide range of coarse to fine cotton whites, coloured and stripe or checks, we realise how the weaver community has been able to maintain quality... "As the sizing of the long warp.... needed the effort of at least ten to thirty people, mainly family and relatives," says a weaver in Chengalpattu, district Kanchipuram. This way, the weaver was supported by at least ten members from the paternal and maternal sides, referred to as '*mamanum machanum*.'

From *oosi vanam* needle fine stripes to *thandavalam* bold paired stripes, in cotton or silk or both coded by name or scale, a number of variations of stripes, checks, and *Korvai* three shuttle temple spire forms, the Tamil Nadu design repertoire widens as it spreads out to absorb

complex warp and weft patterns inspired by nature and temple architecture as well. The accuracy in terms of colour, scale, and fabric structure is what distinguishes the saris of Tamil Nadu.

There is no need to castigate increased mechanisation in principle, either socially or economically, and in reality, it need not conflict with the hand-skills sector. The hand-skills sector is, in effect, the base R&D laboratory for developments that can take place both within it and in the increasingly mechanised systems of production. It provides the ideal space for both design and technical innovations, which may not receive the due attention they deserve in a faster production mechanism preoccupied with higher turnovers in less time. We are industrialising to achieve in seventy to a hundred years what the world attempted in two hundred and fifty years of industrialisation. Moreover, we are climbing the fast bus as the rest of the world is trying to find ways to get off it as the negative impact is becoming more forceful with climate change and the impact on ecology.

In the contemporary context, despite the growing compulsion to industrialise and globalise, there is also an increasing awareness of ecologically viable and sound growth. With her rich resources of skilled hand-spinning and weaving, India is advantageously placed to show the way in balancing the slower but highly skilled production sectors with the mechanised and high-technology end.

Although the segments of cart linings, home furnishings, etc. have largely been taken over until the early 21<sup>st</sup> century by manufactured alternatives, the draped garment, especially the sari, remained a mainstay. Today, it is a fast-vanishing garment for everyday wear; the sari will survive as special occasion wear. Indian women today may show a preference for stitched garments and western wear of easy-to-maintain wash-and-wear fabrics. Yet, the sari persists both as a symbol of identity and formality. Interestingly, the sari is asserting a growing presence in the boardrooms of multinational corporate organisations, in the law chambers and courts, and among the new power professionals who are conscious of their identity and wish to draw strength from it. □





# WEAVES OF INDIA

## COLLABORATION AND CROSS-CULTURAL INFLUENCES

From their ancient origins to their evolution through centuries of cultural exchange, weaving in India reflects a continuum of traditions, innovations, and influences that persistently shape the nation's unique textile legacy to this day. These collaborations allow the timeless beauty and craftsmanship of Indian textiles to evolve and thrive, ensuring the endurance of the country's rich weaving traditions for generations to come. In recent years, a global resurgence of appreciation for these textiles has reinforced the significance of India's weaving heritage, fostering pride and identity within weaving communities. The growing collaboration in recent years between traditional weavers and contemporary designers has significantly reshaped the landscape of Indian textiles and the weaving community itself.

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**PROF USHA NEHRU PATEL**

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**I**n the ancient land of India, where myths and legends danced amidst the whispers of the wind, there existed a tale as old as time itself—a story of gods, demons, and the mystical art of weaving. High in the celestial realms of the gods lived a divine artisan of unparalleled weaving skill and creativity named Vishwakarma. His ethereal fabrics adorned the heavens, shimmering tapestries rivalling the stars.

However, Vishwakarma's creations sparked envy in Vritra, a powerful demon lord.

Determined to steal the divine secrets of weaving, Vritra descended upon the mortal realm, his dark presence shadowing the land. He demanded Vishwakarma's knowledge, threatening chaos if it was refused. Undeterred, Vishwakarma, guided by wisdom and courage, met Vritra's challenge head-on: a weaving competition to decide their fate.



For seven days and nights, the village of Hastinapura bore witness to a spectacle unlike any other. As Vishwakarma and Vritra wove their destinies, the fabric of reality trembled under the weight of their cosmic duel. In the end, brute strength and dark magic failed before the power and purity of Vishwakarma's artistry. His final masterpiece was so magnificent that even the heavens wept in awe. Defeated and humbled, Vritra vanished back into the shadows.

Even today, the weaver's legend echoes a timeless reminder of creativity's power, unwavering courage, and the enduring victory of light over darkness. With every thread woven in India, a legacy lives on—a myth of gods and demons, of weaving and wonder, forever woven into the fabric of time. The art of weaving remains a sacred gift, entrusted to those with pure hearts and divinely guided hands.

Beyond its mythical origins, weaving is deeply embedded in the social and, importantly, economic fabric of Indian communities. For centuries, it has provided livelihoods to countless artisans and their families, serving as a means of sustenance and economic empowerment.

The rich tradition of weaving stretches back millennia. Historically, weaving in India can be traced back to the ancient **Indus Valley Civilisation (3300–1300 BCE)**, where evidence of cotton cultivation and textile production has been unearthed. Archaeological findings such as terracotta figurines, pottery, and seals depict individuals draped in intricately woven garments,



indicating a deeper understanding of weaving techniques and textile craftsmanship.

The **Rigveda (1500–500 BCE)**, the oldest known text in the world, further cements weaving's importance. The Rigveda also contains references to weaving, emphasising the importance of textiles in ancient Indian society. The weaving was not only a practical necessity but also held religious and ceremonial significance, with fabrics used in rituals, offerings, and as symbols of prosperity and status.

This tradition of patronage has continued throughout history. Later on, as the **Achaemenid Empire** expanded into the north-western regions of the Indian subcontinent, it facilitated cultural exchange by introducing Persian motifs, techniques, and weaving traditions to the region. The **Mughal Empire (1526–1857)** further shaped Indian weaving, particularly in the development of luxurious textiles like brocades, muslin, and velvets. Mughal emperors, patrons of the arts, fostered a flourishing textile industry, commissioning exquisite fabrics for courtly attire and gifts.

European influence also played a pivotal role in this cross-cultural exchange. The arrival of European traders and colonisers in the 15<sup>th</sup> century brought about significant transformations. The demand for Indian textiles, particularly cotton and silk, fueled the expansion of textile manufacturing centres and established European trade networks. Moreover, the introduction of mechanised looms and synthetic dyes during the colonial period further revolutionised production methods, paving the way for mass production to cater to both domestic and international markets.

Royal patronage also played a key role. Indian rulers, kings, nawabs, and *rajahs* were also avid patrons. They commissioned elaborate fabrics for ceremonies, religious festivals, and courtly attire, ensuring a constant demand for skilled weavers. Weaving guilds and artisan communities flourished under this royal patronage, producing exquisite textiles adorned with intricate patterns, motifs, and embellishments.

Building upon this rich legacy, weaving transcends its historical roots, becoming a potent





symbol of India's enduring creative spirit and cultural transmission. It elevates itself beyond mere craftsmanship, evolving into a vibrant social and cultural cornerstone. This deeply ingrained tradition has been inextricably linked to the nation's identity for millennia, embodying the values, beliefs, and heritage woven into the fabric of diverse communities.

This intricate interplay of warp and weft extends far beyond the loom, becoming a metaphor for the cyclical nature of life itself. The craft of weaving is intertwined with the daily lives, beliefs, rituals, and traditions of Indians from every stratum of society.

Woven into the very fabric of folklore and mythology, intricate garments adorning deities and heroes serve as enduring symbols of power, status, and identity. From the elaborate sarees donned by women during auspicious ceremonies to the humble cotton worn by farmers, weaving serves as a unifying thread, binding together the layers of diverse Indian cultural beliefs.

Skills and techniques honed over generations ensure this knowledge is passed down, creating a lineage of revered master weavers whose expertise is celebrated for its enduring value. The intricate threads woven together into a cohesive fabric mirror the interconnected strands of Indian society, each contributing to the vibrant tapestry of the nation's cultural heritage.

Contextualising India's weaving traditions, with their roots dating back to antiquity, reveals a rich cultural heritage. From their ancient origins to their evolution through centuries of cultural exchange, weaving in India reflects a continuum of traditions, innovations, and influences that persistently shape the nation's unique textile legacy to this day.

Across the nation, distinct weaving styles and techniques have emerged, each reflecting a unique regional identity. Following is a list of a few

famous for their unique styles, techniques, and philosophical underpinnings:

**Banarasi silk weaving**, known for its opulence, elegance, and intricate patterns, embodies the concept of 'Shringar' (ornamentation) in Indian culture. Motifs inspired by Mughal art and the use of metallic threads reflect an emphasis on beauty, adornment, and celebration. Often associated with weddings, festivals, and auspicious occasions, these luxurious fabrics symbolise prosperity and good fortune.

**Kanchipuram silk weaving** is imbued with the philosophical concept of 'Dharma,' representing righteousness, duty, and virtue. Renowned for their rich texture, vibrant colours, and distinctive zari borders woven with gold or silver threads, Kanchipuram silk sarees are a testament to meticulous craftsmanship. Using traditional pit looms and techniques passed down through generations, skilled artisans create these labour-of-love textiles. Often worn during religious ceremonies and auspicious occasions, Kanchipuram sarees reflect the wearer's adherence to tradition and moral values.

**Paithani weaving** embodies the concept of 'Lakshya,' symbolising aspiration, goal-setting, and spiritual elevation. Prized for their intricate weave, vibrant colours, and peacock motifs (representing



beauty, fertility, and divine protection), Paithani sarees are considered a mark of luxury. Traditionally crafted from pure silk with gold or silver threads, these sarees feature a unique 'tapestry weaving' technique where the design is woven directly into the fabric rather than embroidered or printed.

**Patola craft** from Gujarat, particularly Patola sarees, exemplifies the concept of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (the world is one family). Crafted using the double ikat weaving technique, these textiles feature intricate geometric patterns and motifs symbolising harmony, balance, and cosmic order. Patola sarees celebrate the cultural diversity and communal harmony of Gujarat, reflecting the unity of humanity amidst differences.

India's weaving traditions, far from mere utilitarian crafts, have become a woven tapestry of cultural identity. As these traditions navigate the currents of modernity, a renewed interest in their preservation and evolution promises to ensure their continued vibrancy, allowing them to inspire future generations of artisans and textile enthusiasts. The growing collaboration in recent years between traditional weavers and contemporary designers has significantly reshaped the landscape of Indian textiles and the weaving community itself.

Traditional weaving communities across India have long struggled to adapt to changing market demands, dwindling artisan populations, and competition from mass-produced textiles. Collaborations with contemporary designers have provided a much-needed platform for these artisans to showcase their skills, preserve their craft heritage, and secure sustainable livelihoods. By infusing traditional techniques with modern design sensibilities, these collaborations help to make traditional textiles relevant to contemporary

consumers, thus ensuring their continued survival and evolution.

Spearheading this revival movement are renowned designers like Sabyasachi Mukherjee, Anita Dongre, Rahul Mishra, Himanshu Shani, and Aneeth Arora, among others. Through their works, they reflect a profound respect for India's textile heritage and a commitment to its preservation. Through collaborations with traditional artisans, they've breathed new life into these age-old practices.

However, their influence extends beyond mere preservation. Their keen eye for contemporary aesthetics allows them to experiment with colour, texture, and design, resulting in modern interpretations of traditional textiles that resonate with a global audience. This cross-pollination of ideas also fosters a spirit of experimentation and innovation, not only in textile design but in production methods, ensuring the continued evolution of these time-honoured crafts. By introducing new materials, weaving techniques, and dyeing methods, the designers foster a spirit of innovation while maintaining respect for tradition's integrity.

The fusion of traditional and modern elements results in unique and innovative textile creations that hold a global appeal. These collaborations empower traditional communities in several ways. Artisans gain access to new markets, design expertise, and business opportunities. The cultural exchange fostered by these partnerships cultivates a deeper global appreciation for India's textile heritage. Indian textiles, imbued with contemporary aesthetics, grace international fashion runways, showcasing the richness and diversity of the nation's cultural legacy.



Furthermore, ethical practices and sustainability are key considerations. Many designers prioritise fair trade practices, ensuring artisans receive fair wages and work under ethical conditions. By promoting organic farming for natural fibres and utilising natural dyes, the reliance on harmful chemicals is reduced, minimising environmental pollution and preserving traditional techniques. Ethical sourcing extends to eco-friendly materials and processes, minimising waste and resource consumption.

Designers don't simply incorporate heritage crafts into their work; they empower artisans. Training programmes and workshops facilitate knowledge exchange and technical upskilling, ensuring the continued relevance and competitiveness of traditional weaving practices. Artisans gain opportunities for skill development and capacity building, allowing them to enhance their entrepreneurial skills and adapt to evolving market trends.

By leveraging their networks and platforms, designers open doors to wider markets for these communities, both domestically and internationally. They showcase the artistry of these artisans,

introducing their work to a broader audience. This not only increases sales but also fosters economic stability and growth opportunities for weaving communities.

Traditional weaving techniques, handed down through generations, are safeguarded and celebrated to ensure their transmission to future generations. In recent years, a global resurgence of appreciation for these textiles has reinforced the significance of India's weaving heritage, fostering pride and identity within weaving communities. The partnership between designers and traditional weavers, marked by mutual respect, fairness, and environmental responsibility, has bolstered the resilience and vibrancy of this heritage.

These collaborations allow the timeless beauty and craftsmanship of Indian textiles to evolve and thrive, ensuring the endurance of the country's rich weaving traditions for generations to come. Weaving in India signifies more than mere craft; it embodies the nation's traditions, history, and values. It stands as a testament to the ingenuity, creativity, and resilience of its people, weaving together the threads of the past, present, and future into a timeless fabric that shapes India's identity. □



# INDIAN WEAVES PROMOTING SUSTAINABILITY

**LALIT KUMAR GUPTA**

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**Today, as the world embraces sustainability as a guiding principle, the significance of Indian weaves has only magnified, and at the forefront of this movement stands the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI), playing a pivotal role in ensuring the sustainability of cotton farming and weaving practices. The introduction of the 'Kasturi Cotton Bharat' brand, with its end-to-end traceability using blockchain technology, is a groundbreaking initiative, setting a new standard for transparency in the cotton textile value chain to uplift the valuation of Indian cotton and promote the rich textile heritage of India by combining traditional craftsmanship with a touch of luxury.**

**C**otton holds immense significance in India, not just as a crucial commercial crop but also as a symbol of the country's rich textile heritage and as an emblem of tradition, artistry, and sustainability. With a rich heritage spanning centuries, Indian weaves have not only adorned

millions but have also sustained livelihoods, particularly in rural areas.

India boasts a rich legacy of weaving that dates back thousands of years. Each region of the country has its own distinct weaving tradition, characterised by unique techniques, motifs, and materials. From the intricate brocades of



Choosing local products will help in developing the local markets, provide support to weavers and will create employment and will help in the overall development of the domestic economy.

Let's support our weavers by purchasing our country's finest handloom products and let's promote them together by sharing them to the whole world with the hashtags below.

#myhandloompride

Varanasi to the vibrant ikats of Telangana, Indian textiles are celebrated for their unparalleled craftsmanship and artistic expression.

What sets Indian weaves apart in the quest for sustainability is their inherent eco-friendliness. Traditionally, Indian weavers have relied on natural fibres such as cotton, silk, jute, and wool, sourced locally and processed using age-old techniques that have minimal impact on the environment. These fibres are biodegradable, renewable, and support biodiversity, unlike synthetic alternatives that contribute to pollution and resource depletion.

Furthermore, traditional Indian weaving practices are deeply ingrained in local communities, fostering a sense of social cohesion and economic empowerment. Weaving clusters scattered across the country provide livelihoods to millions of artisans, often in rural areas where alternative employment opportunities are scarce. By supporting Indian weaves, consumers not only

invest in sustainable fashion but also contribute to the preservation of traditional crafts and the welfare of artisan communities.

Today, as the world embraces sustainability as a guiding principle, the significance of Indian weaves has only magnified, and at the forefront of this movement stands the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI), playing a pivotal role in ensuring the sustainability of cotton farming and weaving practices.

CCI functions as a central nodal agency to undertake Minimum Support Price operations for cotton to safeguard the economic interests of cotton farmers in the country. This initiative serves as a shield for cotton farmers, especially during

times of market volatility, preventing exploitation and ensuring remunerative prices for them. However, CCI's commitment to sustainability extends beyond ensuring fair prices for cotton farmers, and it emerges as a pioneering force in this endeavour, spearheading efforts to promote sustainability through the promotion of Indian weaves.

Despite the many virtues of Indian weaves, challenges persist in their journey towards sustainability. Competition from mass-produced textiles, a lack of infrastructure, and dwindling interest among the younger generation pose significant threats to traditional weaving communities. However, these challenges also present opportunities for innovation and collaboration. By leveraging technology, investing in skill development, and fostering partnerships with stakeholders, Indian weavers can overcome hurdles and thrive in a rapidly changing world. In order to support local textile

and handicraft businesses, CCI has been at the forefront and encourages all its esteemed buyers, employees, and other stakeholders under the jurisdiction of its branches, as well as the corporate office, to purchase gift articles through weavers, artisans, and local and small businesses. These efforts are being made to strengthen efforts to preserve the indigenous craft of India on the one hand and to promote environmentally friendly products in the country on the other.

In a strategic collaboration with the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), CCI further amplifies its impact on sustainability. KVIC, the sole statutory entity authorised to manufacture Indian national flags, relies on CCI for its cotton supply. By offering competitive terms through daily e-auctions, CCI ensures that KVIC units procure their raw cotton sustainably. Thus, every tricolor unfurled across the nation bears testament to the patriotic fervor embodied

by CCI's sustainable practices.

The introduction of the 'Kasturi Cotton Bharat' brand, with its end-to-end traceability using blockchain technology, is a groundbreaking initiative, setting a new standard for transparency in the cotton textile value chain to uplift the valuation of Indian cotton and promote the rich textile heritage of India by combining traditional craftsmanship with a touch of luxury.

As the world grapples with environmental challenges, initiatives like those undertaken by the CCI serve as beacons of hope. By marrying tradition with innovation and sustainability, CCI not only preserves the rich heritage of Indian weaves but also paves the way for a brighter, greener future. Through partnerships, campaigns, and a commitment to local artisans, CCI exemplifies the transformative power of promoting sustainability in every thread of Indian craftsmanship. □

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# UNRAVELING THE RICH TAPESTRY: EXPLORING RARE WEAVES AND TEXTILES OF GUJARAT STATE



Nestled in the western part of India, Gujarat is not only known for its rich cultural heritage but also for its exquisite textiles and weaving traditions. In this article, we will delve into the fascinating world of rare weaves and textiles of Gujarat, with a particular focus on Bhujodi weaving of Kutch, Ashavalli sarees of Ahmedabad, Mashru textiles, and Patola silk sarees.

**AROHI BEN PATEL**

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**O**ver the centuries, Gujarat has been a melting pot of diverse cultures, each contributing to the vibrant tapestry of the state's textile heritage. Among the plethora of textiles produced in Gujarat, there are some rare weaves that stand out for their intricate craftsmanship, unique designs, and historical significance.

## **Bhujodi Weaving: Preserving the Legacy of Kutch**

Located in the arid region of Kutch, Bhujodi is a small village that has become synonymous with traditional weaving techniques and exquisite textiles. The artisans of Bhujodi are known for their

mastery of handloom weaving, producing a wide range of textiles that showcase the rich cultural heritage of the region.

One of the most remarkable aspects of Bhujodi weaving is its use of locally sourced materials such as sheep wool and camel hair, which are spun and woven into intricately patterned fabrics. The artisans of Bhujodi employ traditional techniques passed down through generations, using pit looms to create textiles that are not only visually stunning but also durable and functional.

Bhujodi weaving is characterised by its bold geometric patterns, vibrant colors, and intricate designs, which are often inspired by the natural



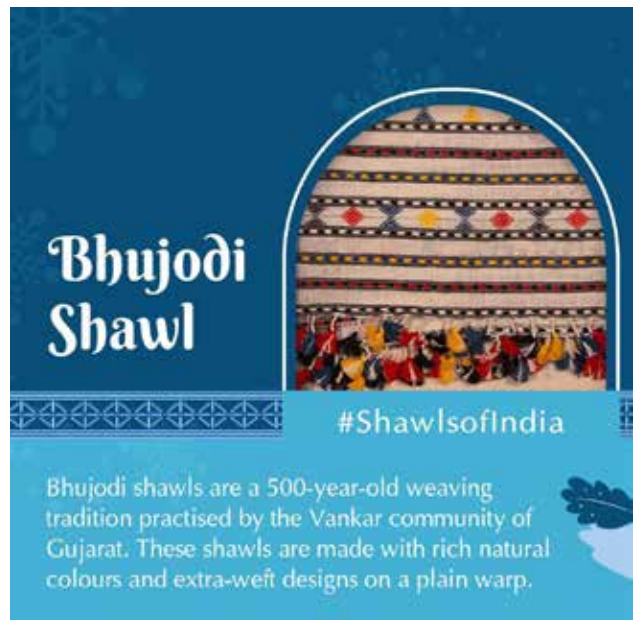
beauty of the Kutch region. From shawls and blankets to rugs and wall hangings, the textiles produced in Bhujodi reflect the rich cultural heritage and artistic traditions of the region.

Despite facing challenges such as changing market trends and competition from machine-made textiles, the artisans of Bhujodi remain committed to preserving their craft and passing it on to future generations. Initiatives aimed at promoting Bhujodi weaving, such as training programmes, exhibitions, and marketing campaigns, have helped raise awareness about the unique cultural heritage of the region and provide economic opportunities for the local community.

### Ashavalli Sarees: Exquisite Elegance from Ahmedabad

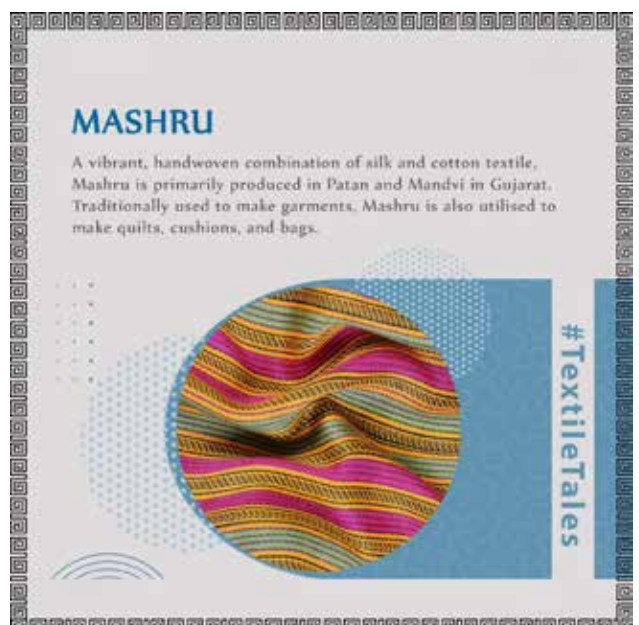
In the bustling city of Ahmedabad, amidst its narrow lanes and ancient monuments, lies the rich tradition of Ashavalli sarees. Renowned for their timeless elegance and exquisite craftsmanship, Ashavalli sarees have been a symbol of luxury and sophistication for centuries.

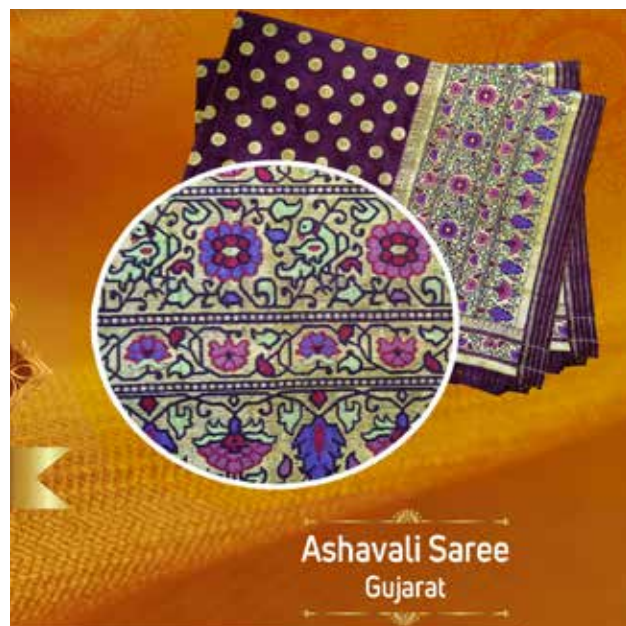
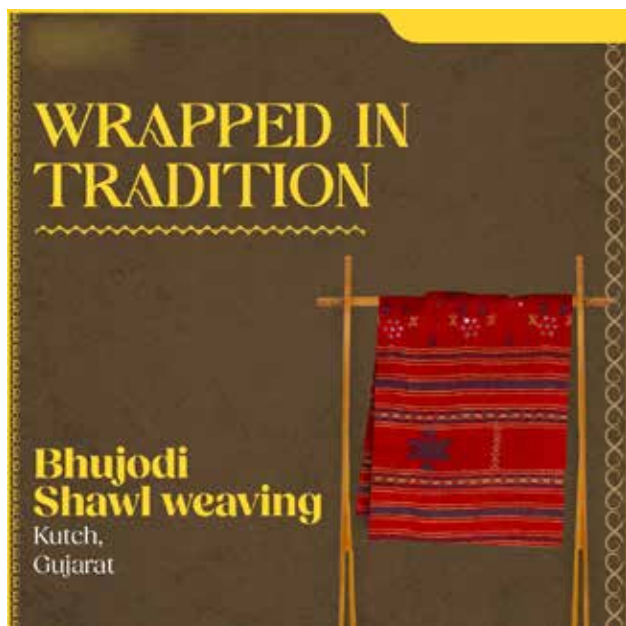
The history of Ashavalli sarees can be traced back to the Mughal era, when the art of weaving flourished under royal patronage. The artisans of Ahmedabad perfected the art of handloom weaving, using fine silk and cotton yarns to create intricate designs that adorned the sarees worn by nobility and aristocracy.



What sets Ashavalli sarees apart is their intricate weaving techniques, which include kadwa (brocading), jala (openwork), and buta (motif) work. Each saree is a masterpiece of craftsmanship, with every thread meticulously woven by skilled artisans to create stunning patterns and designs.

The motifs used in Ashavalli sarees are often inspired by nature, with floral, paisley, and geometric designs being common themes. The use of vibrant colours and luxurious fabrics adds to the allure of these sarees, making them highly coveted by collectors and connoisseurs of fine textiles.





Despite the advent of modern weaving technologies, the artisans of Ahmedabad have remained steadfast in their commitment to preserving the tradition of Ashavalli sarees. By combining traditional techniques with contemporary designs, they continue to create sarees that are both timeless and relevant in today's fashion landscape.

### **Mashru Textile: A Fusion of Silk and Cotton**

Mashru textile is a unique blend of silk and cotton, traditionally worn by both Hindu and Muslim communities in Gujarat.

Mashru fabric is characterised by its distinctive checkerboard pattern, created by alternating bands of silk and cotton threads in the warp and weft. This ingenious combination of materials results in a textile that is not only visually striking but also durable and versatile, suitable for a wide range of garments and accessories.

While Mashru weaving was once widespread across Gujarat, it is now practiced by only a handful of artisans, making it a rare and coveted textile. Efforts to preserve and promote Mashru weaving include providing training and financial support to artisans, as well as creating awareness about the cultural significance of this unique craft.

### **Patola Silk Sarees: The Epitome of Elegance**

No exploration of Gujarat's rare weaves and textiles would be complete without mentioning Patola silk sarees. Originating from the Patan

region, Patola silk sarees are renowned for their intricate double ikat weaving technique, where both the warp and weft threads are dyed before weaving, resulting in mesmerising geometric patterns that seem to dance across the fabric.

The process of creating a single Patola saree can take several months to a year, as each motif is painstakingly crafted by master artisans. What makes Patola silk even more unique is its reversible nature, where the design appears identical on both sides of the fabric, showcasing the extraordinary skill and precision of the weavers.

Historically worn by royalty and aristocracy, Patola silk sarees are now cherished as heirlooms and symbols of elegance, making them highly coveted among collectors and connoisseurs of fine textiles. Despite the labour-intensive nature of their production, the demand for Patola silk sarees continues to grow, with artisans adapting traditional designs to suit contemporary tastes.

The rare weaves and textiles of Gujarat are not just fabrics; they are a testament to the rich cultural heritage, artistic ingenuity, and skilled craftsmanship of the artisans who create them. From the intricate patterns of Bhujodi weaving to the timeless elegance of Ashavalli sarees, Mashru textiles, and Patola silk sarees, each textile tells a unique story of tradition, innovation, and exquisite beauty. □

# **KHADI** THE ICON OF INDIAN INDEPENDENCE

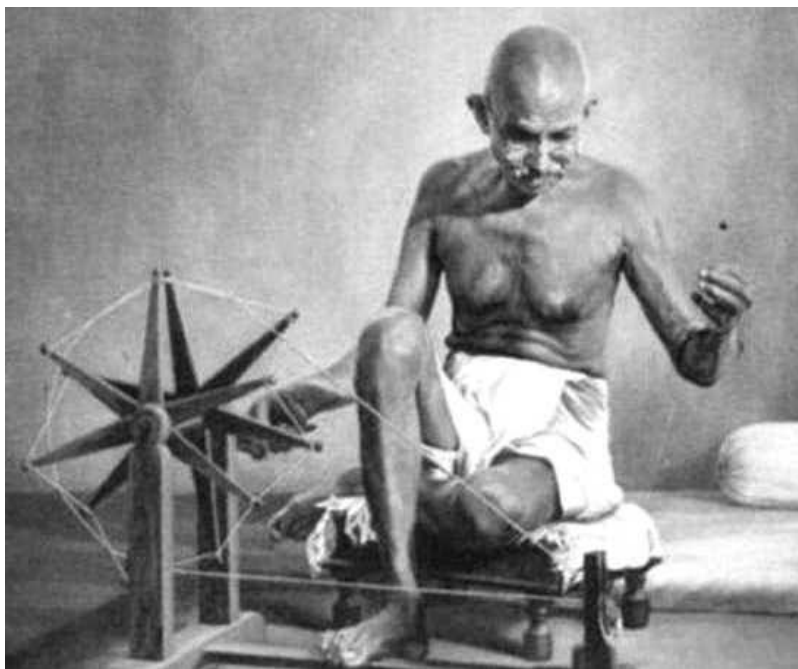
**A ANNAMALAI**

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**Khadi spirit means fellow-feeling with every living being on earth. It means a complete renunciation of everything likely to harm our fellow creatures. And if we are to cultivate that spirit amongst the millions of our countrymen, what a land this India of ours would be!**  
(CWMG, Vol. 34, p.520)

**I**t was during the Champaran Satyagraha in 1917, that Gandhiji encountered the plight of the farmers of Bihar. He met a woman in the Bhilwara village and it was during his discussion with her that he realised that she was unable to change her sari simply because she did not have another one. The plant which is the source of indigo dye for clothing was

the central issue of the Champaran Satyagraha and the same cloth was a costly commodity for the farmers. At one time in the past, we were one of the top cotton cultivators. But our cultivators were deprived of the same product made of cotton. The cotton had gone to England as raw material and again came back to India as the finished product as cloth from Manchester and Lancashire.



Gandhiji also came from a place where a spinning and weaving culture prevailed. After the East India Company got control of the market of the Indian subcontinent, things changed drastically. To cater to their own needs, English rulers destroyed the textile culture of Indian rural people.

### Traditional Textile Knowledge

Indian indigo-dyed cotton *ikat* was found in a Pharaoh's tomb, the rose madder cloth was unearthed at a Mohenjo-daro site along with spindles, Greek and Roman traders' accounts describe the fine fabrics from the Indian subcontinent. Ajanta and Ellora paintings depict the various designs and styles in the textile materials. Each and every part of India had its own style of textile design - design while weaving, dyeing, printing, etc. The quality of the cloth also varied from region to region. In fact, we have pioneered in the art of textile technology.

India's cloth was the pride and glory of the country and even some countries banned the import of cloth from India! Our clothes decorated the royals of many countries. These were also the hand-spun and hand-woven cloth, Khadi of the past!

The Industrial Revolution extended its ugly tentacles and power-loom industries in England crushed Indian textiles. The newly enacted laws, in

consonance with the British colonial policy, paved the way for a new trade practice. All the cotton grown in India was to be exported to England at very low prices while British mill cloth flooded the Indian markets.

Lakhs and lakhs of Indian spinners and weavers became unemployed and were literally thrown out on the streets. The pride of India—hand-spun, hand-woven cloth, was forcibly allowed to die and with it, the vast reservoirs of precious traditional textile knowledge too disappeared.

### Khadi Movement

As Gandhiji put it. "It was in London in 1908 that I discovered the wheel. I had gone there leading a deputation from South Africa. It was then that I came in close touch with many earnest Indian students and others. We had many long conversations about the condition of India and I saw in a flash that without the spinning wheel there was no *Swaraj*. I knew at once that everyone had to spin. But I did not then know the distinction between the loom and the wheel, and in *Hind Swaraj* used the word loom to mean the wheel." (CWMG, Vol.37, p.288)

As suggested by Gokhale, Gandhi toured India to have hands-on experience with the conditions of the Indian people. He saw face-to-face the poor conditions of the villages. The farmers were out of employment for almost half the year. The Champaran incident also intensified his feelings and he wanted to identify a supplementary occupation for the farmers that would help utilise their time and energy for gainful employment. Spinning and weaving came to his mind. He introduced weaving in the Ashram with the support of the textile mill owners of Ahmedabad. He soon realised that this process again supported the Indian industries and did not directly benefit the farmers. Gandhi met an energetic lady, Gangabehn Majumdar at the Second Gujarat Education Conference in Broach, and entrusted her with the work of finding out the traditional way of spinning and its instruments. That was the situation in India!

"At last, after no end of wandering in Gujarat, Gangabehn found the spinning wheel in Vijapur in

the Baroda State. Quite several people there had spinning wheels in their homes but had long since consigned them to the lofts as useless lumber. They expressed to Gangabehn their readiness to resume spinning, if someone promised to provide them with a regular supply of slivers, and to buy the yarn spun by them. Gangabehn communicated the joyful news to me.” (CWMG, Vol.39, p.391)

He ignited the spirit of nationalism through the Swadeshi Movement and made khadi the symbol of nationalism. He, through the Khadi Movement, positioned his non-violent weapon to strike at the very foundation of colonial exploitation!

The reinvention of hand spinning and hand weaving was put in place by Gandhiji through his trusted friends like Gangabehn, Maganlal Gandhi, and other ashram friends. Khadi was tested first among the Ashramites and Gandhi decided to take it forward on a nationwide movement later on.

Gandhi introduced the new piece of hand-spun, hand-woven cloth under a new 'brand name' khadi. He also gave a philosophical foundation to khadi.

## Spirit of Swadeshi

“Khaddar is the concrete and central fact of Swadeshi. Swadeshi without Khaddar is like a body without life, fit only to receive a decent burial or cremation. The only Swadeshi cloth is Khaddar. If one is to interpret Swadeshi in the language and in terms of the millions of this country, Khaddar is a substantial thing in Swadeshi like the air we breathe. The test of Swadeshi is not the universality of the use of an article that goes under the name of Swadeshi, but the universality of participation in the production or manufacture of such article. Thus, considered mill-made cloth is Swadeshi only in a restricted sense. For, in its manufacture only an infinitesimal number of India's millions can take part. But in the manufacture of Khaddar millions can take part.” (Young India, 17-6-1926)

He had the ground for the revival. of the Swadeshi Movement and he insisted that his countrymen should boycott the foreign cloth. He ignited the spirit of nationalism through the Swadeshi Movement and made khadi the symbol of nationalism. He, through the Khadi Movement,



positioned his non-violent weapon to strike at the very foundation of colonial exploitation!

He proposed Khadi as part of the programme to reconstruct the rural economy in a decentralised pattern. It became part of the freedom struggle. He toured countrywide to popularise the Khadi Movement.

### Khadi Economics

Khadi Movement also paved the way for the empowerment of the villagers, especially women. One of the major reasons for the large number of women's participation in the Indian freedom movement was certainly the Khadi Movement.

He said, "Khadi is the only true economic proposition in terms of the millions of villagers until such time, if ever, when a better system of supplying work and adequate wages for every able-bodied person above the age of sixteen, male or female, is found for his field, cottage or even factory in every one of the villages in India; or till sufficient cities are built up to displace the villages so as to give the villagers the necessary comforts and amenities that a well-regulated life demands and is entitled to. I have only to state the proposition thus fully to show that Khadi must hold the field for any length of time that we can think of". (Khadi - Why & How, p.35)

The decentralised system of production would certainly lead to equal distribution of income. Rajaji observed, "You cannot distribute the wealth equally 'after' producing it. You won't succeed in getting men to agree to it. But you can so produce wealth as to secure equable distribution 'before'

producing it. That is Khadi".

"Khadi is the sun of the village solar system. The planets are the various industries which can support khadi in return for the heat and the sustenance they derive from it. Without it, the other industries cannot grow. But during my last tour I discovered that, without the revival of other industries, khadi could not make further progress. For villages to be able to occupy their spare time profitably, the village life must be touched at all points." (Harijan, 16-11-1934)

### Icon of Independence

Charkha became the icon of the independence movement and khadi became the identity of nationalism. India witnessed a major shift from colonial power to people's power. Common people once feared policemen in this country but with Gandhi's introduction of a non-violent strategy, policemen feared 'khadi people'. Purely an economic activity became a powerful political weapon.

Cotton is environmentally friendly, suitable for our weather conditions, good for skin and body, and a natural product. It applies to all cotton products including mill-made. But the testing stone will be the production, distribution, and consumption. For khadi, the production itself will be eco-friendly with appropriate technology to suit the producer. The decentralised production will also help in the distribution of income to the masses through which we can increase the purchasing power of the people. □

(Reproduced from the October 2016 issue of Yojana)

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# UNIQUENESS OF KHADI

- Khadi is the proud legacy of our national freedom movement and the father of the nation. Khadi and Village Industries are two national heritages of India. One of the most significant aspects of Khadi and Village Industries (KVI) in the Indian economy is that they create employment at a very low per capita investment.
- Khadi is defined as 'any cloth woven on handlooms and hand-spun from cotton, woollen, or silk yarn in India, or the combination of two or all of these yarns'.
- Khadi sector is using traditional technology in spinning and weaving (hand-spun or hand-woven), by adhering to a metric count system (S twist yarn), which is totally differentiated from the mills/handloom sector (as they are using Z twist yarn with an English count system). Further, the Khadi sector has its own technical/ quality parameters for both spinning and weaving, which are totally different from the mill/ handloom sector.
- Khadi made out of natural fibres like cotton, silk, and wool with hand-spun or hand woven process has more softness, which makes it cool in summer and warm in winter.
- Further, Khadi is mostly dyed with natural dye like indigo, alizarin, red-coloured rust iron with jaggery fermented water, yellow-coloured using pomegranate and Myrobalan thereby making it a skin-friendly, eco-friendly, comfortable, breathable, zero carbon product. Besides, a certain quantity of Khadi is also made of organic cotton. With these unique characters, Khadi fabric is sustainable.
- Khadi production by mass from the rural area, which reaches the have's and richest of the rich people.
- KVIC is retaining national traditional heritage craft in the weaving segment by producing heritage Khadi varieties like Andhra Pondure Fine Khadi (with usage of 100% organic cotton and usage of old age traditional process), 300 to 500's muslin Khadi, Tasser Silk Khadi, Spun Silk Fabric out of silk waste, etc. The muslin Khadi fabric produced out of more than 300 count of yarn cannot be produced by any equipment/ machine which is such a heritage process is still with KVIC.

– **Vinit Kumar**, Chief Executive Officer, KVIC



# HANDLOOM PRODUCTS OF INDIA: FROM LOCAL TO GLOBAL

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**The 'India Handloom' mark aims at ensuring that exporters procure high-quality fabrics on time and establishing a unique image for authentic hand-woven products from India. This article presents an international perspective for Indian handloom products by analysing relevant data in terms of major markets, export trends, main handloom products for exports, etc. It also outlines the global opportunities for Indian handloom products and the challenges they may face in international markets.**

**T**he handloom sector represents a significant chunk of handwoven products in India. The handloom products are a living testimony of exemplary artisanship, showcasing the culture and civilisation of India. They are produced across various states of the country, such as Pashmina (Kashmir), Phulkari (Punjab), Chikankari (Uttar Pradesh), Muga Silk (Assam), Naga Shawls

(Nagaland), Pochampally Ikkat (Telangana), Kancheepuram Saree (Tamil Nadu), Mysore Silk (Karnataka), Bandhani (Gujarat), Paithani (Maharashtra), etc. The handloom sector is ranked number two after agriculture in India as an unorganised sector providing employment to more than 3 million people. It is also the largest cottage industry in the country, with around 24 lakh looms (IBEF, 2024).

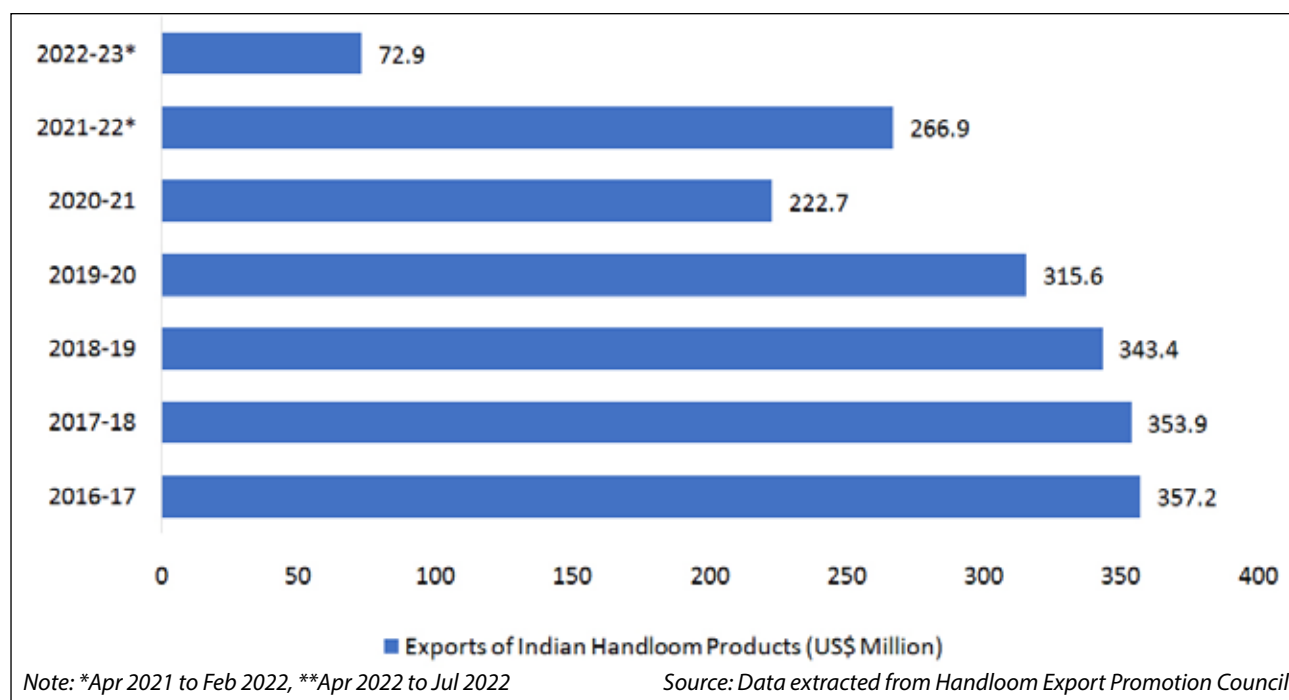
**Table 1: HS Codes of Handloom Products**

HS Chapter	Product Type	HS Codes
50	Silk	5007 90 10
51	Wool, Finer coarse animal hair, Horsehair yarn and Woven fabric	5112 90 50
52	Cotton	5208 31 21; 5208 41 21; 5208 49 21; 5208 59 20; 5209 11 11; 5209 11 12; 5209 11 13; 5209 11 14; 5209 11 19; 5209 51 11
57	Carpet and other textile floor covering	5702 42 30; 5705 00 24; 5705 00 42
58	Special woven fabric, Tufted textile fabric, Lace, Tapestry, Trimming, Embroidery	5802 10 60
62	Articles of apparel and clothing accessories, not knitted or crocheted	6214 10 30; 6216 00 20
63	Other made-up textile article: Set, Worn clothing and worn textile article, Rag	6302 21 10; 6302 51 10; 6302 60 10; 6302 91 10; 6304 19 40; 6304 92 11; 6304 92 21; 6304 92 31; 6304 92 41; 6304 92 81; 6304 92 91; 6304 99 91; 6304 99 92; 6307 10 30

Source: Authors' compilation from Handloom Export Promotion Council

Though Indian handloom products are produced in small towns and villages, they are recognised globally. These products have recognition all over the world for their uniqueness, quality, variety, and endurance.

The producers of these products, the weavers of India, are also globally recognised for their hand-spinning and weaving skills. This global recognition helps create sizable export markets for various handwoven products from India.

**Figure 1: Exports of Indian Handloom Products (US\$ Million)**

This article presents an international perspective for Indian handloom products by analysing relevant data in terms of major markets, export trends, main handloom products for exports, etc. It also outlines the global opportunities for Indian handloom products and the challenges they may face in international markets.

### Internationalisation of Indian Handloom

The handloom products have been assigned specific codes by the World Customs Organization under its Harmonized System (HS) of classification.<sup>1</sup> The HS codes for various handloom products are provided in Table 1.

The exports of Indian handloom products were more than US\$ 300 million each year from 2016-17 to 2019-20 (pre-Covid-19 years). The exports declined by 30% immediately after Covid-19 in 2020-21. Though some recovery can be observed in 2021-22, they are yet to reach the pre-Covid level. The export trends of Indian handloom products (pre and post Covid) are presented in Figure 1.

Indian handloom products have significant demand in more than 20 countries in the world, mainly developed countries and the Middle East. Among these countries, the US is a major market and accounted for around 40% of export demand for India's handloom products in international markets in 2021-22. The top ten export markets for Indian handloom products and India's handloom exports to these countries from 2018-19 to 2022-23 are presented in Table 2.

The major items in India's handloom exports include mats and mattings, carpet, rugs, bedsheets, cushion covers and other handloom articles. While home decor products, including bed linen, curtains, table and kitchen linen, cushion covers, etc., contribute more than 60% of the exports of Indian handloom products, mats and mattings constitute around 30% of such exports. Most of these products are exported from four major cities, namely, Karur, Panipat, Varanasi, and Kannur. These cities produce bed linens, table linens, kitchen linens, toilet linens, floor coverings, embroidered textile items, among others, for export markets (IBEF, 2024).



**Table 2: Top 10 Export Markets for Indian Handloom Products (Figures in US\$ Million)**

Country	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23*
USA	94.2	100.5	83.1	105.3	58.1
UAE	16.3	11.2	3.4	5.9	12.7
Spain	25.2	33.4	10.1	13.9	12.5
UK	17.8	17.3	19.0	22.9	11.9
Italy	16.5	10.8	9.0	11.3	8.9
Australia	13.5	11.1	10.7	9.4	8.0
France	13.9	12.1	9.7	11.8	7.2
Germany	14.7	12.3	9.9	10.6	6.0
Netherlands	12.1	8.3	5.4	5.4	5.6
Greece	5.7	5.2	3.5	5.6	4.9

Note: \* 2022-23 data only for few months and not for entire 2022-23.

Source: Handloom Export Promotion Council Data

### Branding of Handloom Products: 'India Handloom' Trade Mark

Introduction of 'Handloom Mark' provided the customers assurance that the concerned handloom product is authentic. Since quality of product is also an important dimension for customers apart from authenticity, the 'India Handloom' provided a branding of handloom products that are of 'high quality with zero defects and zero effect on the environment.' The mark aims at ensuring that exporters procure high-quality fabrics on time and establishing a unique image for authentic handwoven products from India.<sup>2</sup> 'India Handloom' has also been registered as a trade mark (logo shown in Figure 2) under the Trade Marks Act, 1999.

### IPR protection for Indian Handloom Products in International Markets

Intellectual property (IP) protection for handloom producers in India is granted through the Geographical Indications of Goods Act, 1999, and the Designs Act, 2000. These acts intend to provide IP protection to exported handloom products not only in India but also in foreign markets.

### The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration & Protection) Act, 1999

The Geographical Indication (GI) tag is conferred on a product that is recognised by its specific place of origin. The GI tag conveys the authenticity and source of a product and its

associated qualities. In India, the GI tag has been provided to a number of handloom products, including 'Pochampalli Ikat,' 'Chanderi Sarees,' 'Solapur Chaddar,' 'Mysore Silk,' 'Kacheepuram Silk,' etc. The GI status of these handloom products ensures that they are not copied and produced by machines. It helps the weavers of these products overcome the price disadvantage as the machine-made products are cheaper as compared to the handwoven products.

### Potential Global Opportunities

Indian handloom products have new opportunities in spite of significant technological advancements in the production of machine-made products. In present times, a lot of the focus of buyers and sellers is on sustainable products. The new generation is style-conscious but environment-savvy and prefers products that are stylish but do not cause harm to the environment.



**Figure 2: Logo of 'India Handloom' Trade Mark and Products covered under the Trade Mark**



these products helped create a niche market in other countries over the years. The artisans of handwoven products have experimented with their designs and fabrics to cater to the demands of new generations. As a result, Indian handloom products are endorsed today by international models and celebrities. Therefore, it could be concluded that the handloom products of India are making significant global imprints with their local characteristics. □

Handloom products satisfy both of these requirements for the new generation. Handwoven products are unique, stylish, culture-oriented and environment-friendly. Growing e-commerce and the availability of digital platforms provide further opportunity for handloom producers to tap international markets, even from small towns and remote locations.

Notwithstanding these opportunities, handloom products face the significant challenge of keeping the tradition of hand weaving alive. With more emphasis on education and increasing the availability of better-paying skilled jobs, traditional artisans are not inclined to bring their new generation to the hand-weaving profession, which is labour-intensive and mostly low paying. The producers also face competition from machine-made fabrics, which are often cheaper as they are less labour intensive. The competitive disadvantage becomes more severe as the machine-made products look like replicas of handwoven products, and therefore it becomes difficult to differentiate between a machine-made product and an authentic handwoven product.

### Conclusion

The handloom products from India represent tradition and modernity at the same time. The unique designs, quality, and variety of

### Endnotes

1. The HS classification is a method of assigning numerical codes to classify products in foreign trade. Customs authorities use the HS codes for identifying products for the purposes of levying custom duties and collecting trade data.
2. <https://www.indiahandloombrand.gov.in/pages/background>.
3. Based on information available at <https://www.textilecoach.net/post/ipr-protection-to-handlooms-in-india-an-overview>.

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3. Ministry of Commerce and Industry (2021), 'Market-Access-Initiative-MAI-Scheme-2021'. 19 July 2021
4. PIBNote (2023), 'Foreign Trade Policy 2023 announced', <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseFramePage.aspx?PRID=1912572>
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9. <https://www.textilecoach.net/post/ipr-protection-to-handlooms-in-india-an-overview>.



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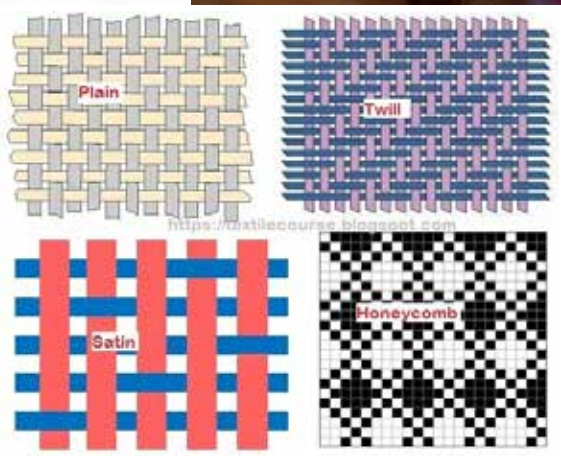
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## DO YOU KNOW?

# WEAVES OF WOVEN FABRICS

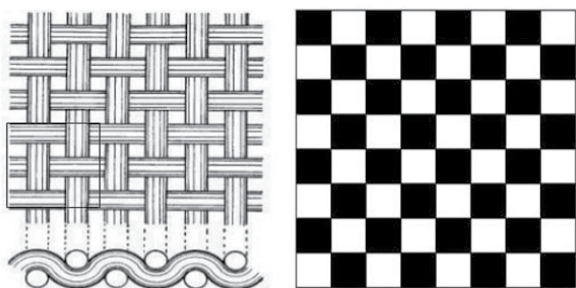
The weave is the interlacement of warp and weft yarns to produce a woven fabric. Fabrics are manufactured in wide varieties and designs. The basic weaves are plain, twill, and satin. All the others are derivatives of these basic weaves or their combinations. Various weaving techniques like plain, twill, satin, honeycomb, huckaback, crepe, and others produce diverse fabrics including velvets, double cloth, and tubular constructions.



*Different basic weaves structures*



## Plain Weave

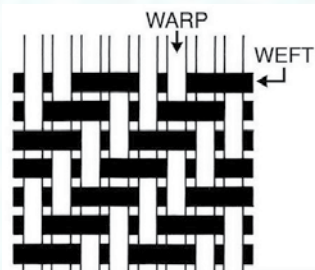


Plain is the simplest weave, in which warp and weft threads interlace in alternate manner as shown, giving maximum number of interlacements.

This maximum interlacement imparts firmness and stability to the structure. Atleast two ends and two picks are required to weave its basic unit. A minimum of two heald frames are required for this weave. It is used in cambric, muslin, blanket, canvas, dhoti, saree, shirting, suiting, etc.

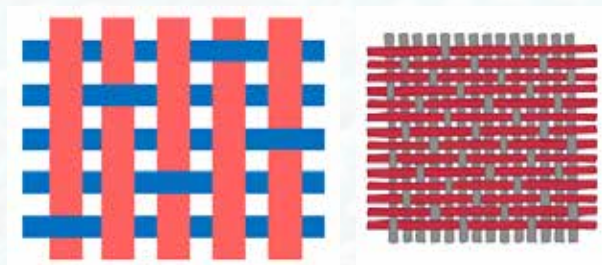
## Twill Weave

Twill weave is another basic weave that is well known for its diagonal line formation in the fabric due to its interlacing pattern. This weave



and its derivatives are used for ornamental purposes. Twill has a closer setting of yarns due to less interlacement, imparting greater weight and a better drape as compared to the plain weave. In simple twill, the outward and upward movement of the interlacing pattern is always one that imparts a diagonal line to this design. The direction of the propagation of the twill line classifies twill into right-hand or left-hand twill. Twill weaves find a wide range of applications, such as drill cloth, khakhi uniforms, denim cloth, blankets, shirtings, hangings, and soft furnishings.

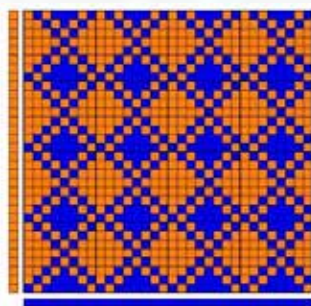
### Satin & Sateen



Satin/sateen is a basic weave that does not have any regular pattern like twill. The surface of the fabric is either warp- or weft faced. Satin is warp-faced, which means that all the surface of the fabric will show the warp threads except for the one threaded interlacement with other series of yarn. If it is weft-faced, then it will be known as sateen, which means that the fabric surface will mostly show the weft threads. These weaves have the fewest interlacement points among the basic weaves. Due to this, it gives the surface of the fabric more lustre and smoothness. With this weave, it is possible to use a cotton warp and silk filling, having most of the silk appearance on the surface of the fabric. It is used in sarees, blouse materials, dress materials, bed spreads, furnishing fabrics, curtain fabrics, etc.

### Honey Comb Weave

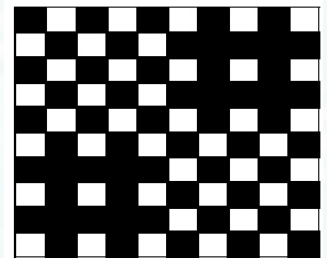
This name is given to this weave due to its honeybee web-like structure. It makes ridges and hollow structures, which finally give a cell-like appearance. In this weave, both



warp and weft threads move freely on both sides, which is coupled with the rough structure. The fabric made by this weave has longer floats all over the fabric. Due to this reason, it is radially absorbent of moisture. This property made these weaves useful for towels, bed covers, and quilts. Most commonly, these weaves are constructed on repeats, which are multiples of four in ends and picks.

### Huck a Back Weave

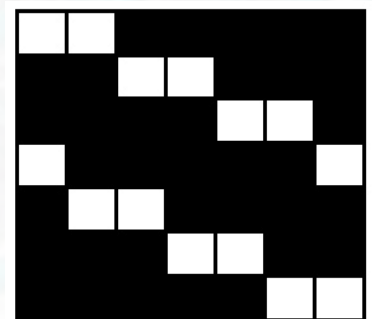
This weave is largely used for cotton towels and linen cloth. It has longer floats in two quadrants, which makes it more moisture-absorbent. This weave is a



combination of longer floats of symmetric weaves in two quadrants and plain weaves in the remaining two quadrants. Plain weave gives firmness to the structure, while longer float weave increases the absorbency of fabric, making it suitable for the above-stated purpose. Sometimes, longer float symmetric weaves are used in combination with plain weaves in huck a back weave, which is also termed honeycomb huck a back weave.

### Crepe Weave

Crepe weave refers to the weave that does not have any specific pattern. The weave may have a little bit of the appearance of twill, but it does not have the



prominence. They make small patterns or minute spots with a seed-like appearance all over the fabric surface. The weave may be used separately or in combination with other weaves. Crepe weave is frequently employed in making the ground of the figured fabrics. In simple words, crepe weave is used to create a rough appearance. If we make crepe weaves with crepe yarns, this combination will give a remarkably pebbly or puckered appearance.

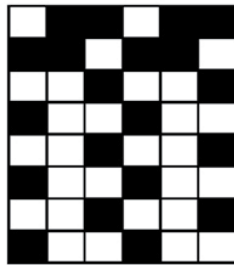
### Bedford Cord Weave



This is a special class of weave that forms longitudinal warp lines in fabric with fine sunken lines in between. This fabric is used in suits for ornamental purposes. The method of constructing this weave is simple. The repeat of the weave is calculated by multiplying the cord ends by two. The resultant value will be the total number of ends of the weave repeat. The pick repeat is four for this weave. The weave repeat (warp ends) is divided into two halves to construct it. The first and last ends of both halves are treated as cutting ends. Plain weave is inserted on these cutting ends. These plain ends behave as sunken ends in the Bedford cord.

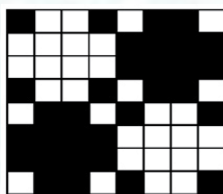
### Welts and Pique

A pique weave consists of plain face fabric, which is composed of a series of warp and weft threads along with a series of stitching threads. This weave is unique due to the formation of horizontal lines (weft-wise). This weave requires two beams, one for the plain weave threads and the other for the stitching ends. The word 'welt' refers to the pique construction, when the indentations make deep or hollow (sunken) lines appear in the cloth.



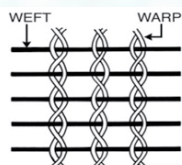
### Mock Leno Weave

The weave is constructed in four quadrants. The first and third quadrants have symmetric weave, and the second and fourth quadrants have opposite weave to the symmetric weave. The perforated fabrics are made with this type of weave. This effect is achieved by reversing the symmetric unit of the weave in the alternate quadrants. So, these weaves are produced in sections that oppose each other.



### Leno Weave

Also known as gauze or Cross weaving, Leno weaving is a weave in which two warp yarns twist and grip tightly around the



weft yarns. This makes for a more open weave that can be woven tightly for shirting or left completely loose to resemble netting or mesh.

### Backed cloth

The weave combines two or more different weaves, but the weave on one side is not visible on the other side. For example: sateen on the face side and twill on the back side are woven with appropriate stitches. Using this weave, two different types of yarn can be woven on the face and back sides of the fabric. For example, linen on the face side and cotton on the back side can be woven. This combination will give good comfort to the wearer, along with an elegant appearance.

### Terry Pile

This weave is unique in nature because it produces loop piles on the fabrics. These weaves are used in toweling fabrics. More popularly, these towels are known as Turkey towels or terry towels. These towels are more popular for their water absorbency.

### Velvets and Velveteens

These are cut-pile fabrics more popularly used for rich furnishing and made-up fabrics. They are also used for jewel boxes, car upholstery, etc.

### Double cloth



Double cloths are fabrics, in which there are at least two series of warp and weft threads, each of which is engaged primarily in producing its own layer of cloth, thus forming a separate face cloth and a separate back cloth. The purpose of the construction is to improve the thermal insulation value of a fabric with a smart facial appearance. Double cloths are used as different types of decorative cloth, such as – sofa covers, furnishing cloths, curtain fabrics, bed covers, pillow covers and other home textiles. It is also used for the production of winter garments, quilts, belts, different types of industrial fabrics, etc.

### Tubular cloth

It is a double cloth woven without stitching points between the face and back fabrics. When we take out the fabric from the loom, it will be a tube made of fabric.

Source: MyGov

# WEAVING AS A LIVELIHOOD

**MALVIKA HALWASIYA**

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**I**ndia has a rich history and tradition of weaving in handlooms with each region having special designs and using a variety of raw materials. According to some estimates, the handloom industry may be the largest source of employment in India next only to agriculture.

Unfortunately, the lack of reliable data regarding this sector is but one of the many challenges that it faces today.

The other big challenge faced by the sector is competition from products made by the powerloom which are much cheaper and available in much larger quantities. The prevalence of

machine-made goods has lured many weavers away from traditional hand-weaving techniques.

Another challenge for the weavers is fast-changing fashion and design preferences. Most weavers work at home in villages and rural areas, with the loom being at the centre of the weaver's home. Few weavers have formal training in the design and marketing of products, especially those which are in demand in urban centres.

Thus many weavers, instead of passing their skills to the next generation, choose to encourage their children to work in offices, in the hope of a better life. However, it can also be seen that women are joining in this trade, unlike in earlier times. With



proper design and structural support, women have come forward to take part in weaving in many prominent organisations of the country.

However, with the current interest in handmade and sustainable products, there is renewed hope for weavers. Weaving by hand produces no emissions and uses natural raw materials. It is sustainable in every sense of the term. Today, several Indian fashion designers are working with rural weaving clusters international fashion houses too are showing interest in Indian handicraft and handloom practices. Urban clientele too are realising the importance and beauty of hand-crafted products and are prepared to pay a premium for them.

The other positive development is the advent of e-commerce. Weavers have easy access to whole new markets, information, and connectivity, and they can choose to market their products online. Some organisations and corporate houses are supporting weavers in the entire value chain from providing raw materials to marketing their products.

Not many other countries can boast of such a rich culture of hand work particularly handlooms. It is a rare privilege to have weavers with such skill and knowledge even today and we must each do our bit to understand, support, and encourage handlooms. □



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## OUR BOOKS

# MADHUBANI PAINTING

Author: Mulk Raj Anand  
Price: Rs 315, Language: English



**T**he art of Madhubani is purposive mythology. Not art in the sense of 'significant form' of the West. The paintings are legends to which the folk turn to pray in their daily rituals. The sources of the folk art of Madhubani lie in the dim areas of silence, an approximation to the heightened moments of creation itself. Through a mystical transformation of brush movements, the artist transforms the bodies into spirits: the flowers and birds enliven paintings that dare to reach the depths.

Squatting on the cow dung-plastered floors of their homes, which are surrounded by mango and banana groves beyond a green pond, women daily paint pictures. They have been doing this ritual colour work for generations.

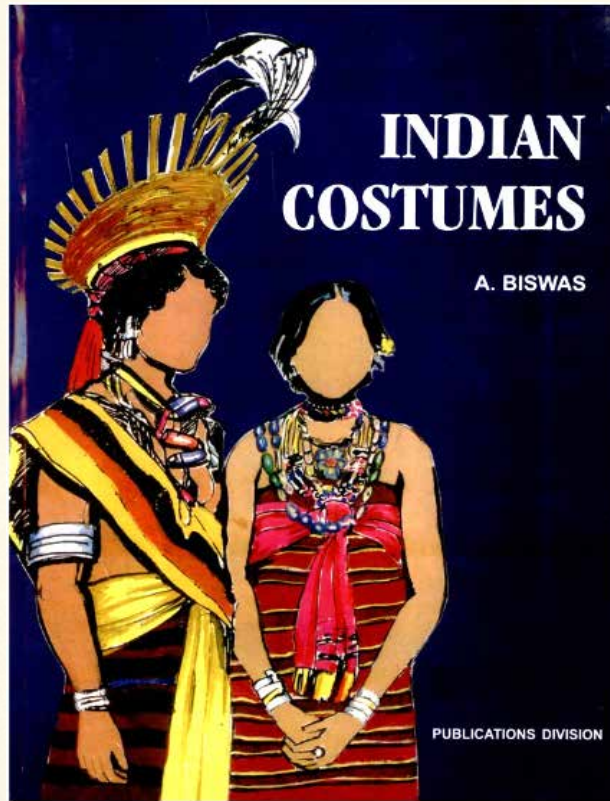
The author, Mulk Raj Anand, was a distinguished writer of novels, short stories, and critical essays in English and an art and literary critic. He wrote diverse books on aspects of South Asian culture, and taught at various universities. He was awarded the International Peace Prize in 1953, the Padma Bhushan in 1968, and the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1971. □

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# INDIAN COSTUMES

Author: A BISWAS

Price: Rs 175, Language: English



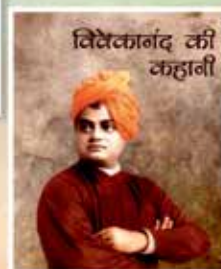
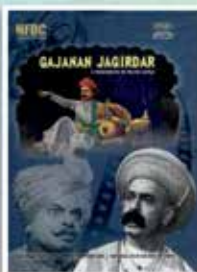
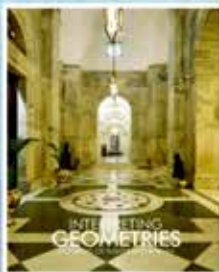
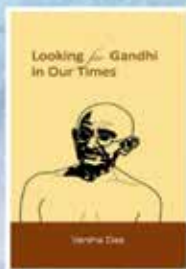
**T**he costume is a cultural representation of the people. It provides a vital clue to their customs, tastes, and aesthetic temper — in other words, their way of living.

The community decides what to wear and how to wear it. It also decides about the distinctions to be made based on sex and age, class and caste, religion and region, occasion, and occupation. Costume is truly a kind of dressing-table mirror of the time and the people. As thinking changes, so do the styles and dresses. People tend to acquire old tastes and adjust to new needs and circumstances. Foreign conquests, exotic ideas, and new influences also bring about changes.

This book, which is sufficiently illustrated, depicts in detail the dress transformation that has taken place over the ages in our country, known for its diversity. A Biswas, the author, is not just a well-read man but also a much-travelled person who has several books to his credit. □

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YojanaJournal

ISSN-0971-8400  
Total pages - 56  
Published on 19 April, 2024  
Posted on 25 & 26 April, 2024

RNI No. 949/57  
U(DN)-56/2024-26 licenced to post without  
pre-payment at RMS, Delhi  
Postal Registration No. DL(S)-05/3230/2024-26  
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