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Handicrafts and Textiles - The Pride of India - Introduction

- Every region in India has its unique handicraft tradition, mostly using locally available material. Being a labour intensive sector, it supplies employment to lakhs of artisans all over the country.
- The sector is also an important foreign exchange earner, as it has very high export potential. Indian handicraft products like shawls, jewellery, bags, wooden carvings, embroidered material are all popular at international levels as well.
- Every student of Indian history knows about the artefacts that were found at the site of the famous Mohenjodaro and Harappan civilisations. The statue of the dancing girl, the jewellery - all are testimony to the fact that handicrafts have been part of Indian tradition since the period of the Indus Valley Civilisation, if not earlier.
- The rich Kanchipuram silk sarees of the South, the muga and tussar silks of the north east, the grand Banarasi sarees, the Chanderi cotton and silks, the pashmina and shahtoosh shawls of Kashmir, the brightly embroidered textiles of Rajasthan and Kutch - the phulkari work of Punjab, all epitomise the richness of India's textile tradition.
- Women form a very big chunk of workers in this sector. Their skilled hands produce very delicate handicraft and textiles - be it the Channapatna wooden toys, embroidery work on textiles, carpet weaving - women form the backbone of this sector.
- As an ancient tradition, many of these artisans have learnt their skill from their forefathers and have attained a very high level of skill and specialisation in their art. The relevant stakeholders need to ensure that this ancient art flourishes and its skilled hands are economically self-sufficient.

Magic of gifted hands - Empowering Handicraft Artisans

The origin of Indian handicrafts goes back to the early man living in caves and giving creative expression to his/her emotions through various carvings made on the rock. The excavations of Mohenjodaro and Harappa show that even during the second millennium before Christ the excellence of Indian artisans was established and was recognised world over. The cottage industry provided not only employment to the rural artisans but also played an important role in building a parallel rural economy.

Definition -

The definition of handicrafts as per Honorable Supreme Court in Louis Shoppe judgment decided on 12.03.1995 says “it must be predominantly made by hand. It does not matter if some machinery is also used in the process. It must be graced with visual appeal in the matter of ornamentation or inlay work or some similar work lending it an element of artistic improvement. Such orientation must be of a substantial nature and not a mere presence.

Importance -

- The handicrafts sector provides employment to a vast segment of craftspersons in rural and semi urban areas and generates substantial foreign exchange for the country, while preserving its cultural heritage.
- There are approximately 70 lakhs handicraft artisans in the country, which includes 20 lakh artisans related to the carpet sector, practicing more than 500 types of crafts such as Metal Engraving, Zari Zardosi, Teracotta, Stone Carving, Phulkari, Wood Inlay, Chikankari, Cane and Bamboo, Wooden Toys, Blue Pottery and Kutch Embroidery.
- Out of these, 35 crafts have been recognised as “Endangered Crafts” such as Assamese Jewellery, Rogan Painting, Sanjhi Crafts, Ganjeefa Cards and Chambal Rumal and 92 Crafts have been registered under “Geographical Indication Act” like Ganjifa Cards of Mysore, Kashmir Paper Machie, Madhubani Paintings, Kathputlis of Rajasthan, Odisha pattachitra. Varanasi Glass beads and Warli painting of Maharashtra, 56 percent of the artisans are female.

Challenges -

- The handicraft artisans are mostly working in an unorganised set up which makes them prone to exploitation by middlemen.
- The handicraft sector has challenges of working capital, poor exposure to new technologies, absence of full market intelligence and institutional framework.

Government agency -

- The office of Development Commissioner (Handicrafts) is the nodal agency in the Government of India for craft and artisan based activities.

- It assists in the development, marketing and export of handicrafts, and the promotion of craft forms and skills.
- The assistance is in the form of technical and financial support, including in the form of schematic interventions implemented through its field offices.
- Market linkages are provided through various domestic and international marketing events.
- Domestic marketing platforms is provided by organising Gandhi Shilp Bazar, Crafts Bazar etc. and organising handicraft exhibitions in prominent shopping malls of the country.
- International Marketing Platform is being provided to awardee artisans through participation in international marketing events.

Awards -

- The handicraft awards namely Shilp Gurus Award, National Award, National Merit Certificates and Design Innovation Award are amongst the highest awards for the meritorious handicrafts artisans of the country.
- Every year, 10 Shilp Guru Awards, 30 National Awards (including 5 National Awards to women artisans and 5 National Awards for promotion and development of endangered crafts), 40 National Merit Certificates, and 3 Design Innovation awards on co-creation basis are being conferred to the meritorious artisans.

Export potential -

- There is a high demand for Indian utilitarian and traditional crafts in the domestic and international markets.
- A total of 199 lines of products are now being produced and exported from India.
- The top ten countries contributing to export of handicrafts items (major items being art metal wares, wood wares, hand printed textiles, embroidered and crocheted goods) during the last five years are USA, UAE, UK, Netherlands, France, Australia, Italy, Canada, Latin American Countries, Japan and Switzerland.
- India is the world's largest producer and exporter of handmade carpets since 2013-14. Currently, India's share is 35 percent of total global exports. About 85 percent of total production in the country is exported to more than 100 countries.

What needs to be done?

- Access to economic independence through the handicraft sector can address the livelihood issues and would lead to income generation in rural areas.

- Also, skill upgradation and development in handicraft sector is an excellent approach for development of artisans, poverty reduction and providing income generation which would help in achievement of sustainable development goals.

Prelims fact - National Handicrafts and Handloom Museum at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi is popularly known as Crafts Museum. The Museum's Architect facilitator is famous Architect Charles Correa.

Sustaining Artisans Economically

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

Role in rural areas -

- In non-agricultural or lean seasons, handicrafts become an alternative means of subsistence for 70 percent of the rural population and safeguards them from food insecurity.
- There were 68.86 lakh artisans as per the census of handicrafts conducted during 11th Five Year Plan.
- The sector provides employment in various forms to the artisans.
- Another segment of people are engaged directly or indirectly in export of handicrafts.

Market -

- According to government sources, it was estimated in the year 2015-16 that total production of handicrafts including handmade carpets was to the tune of Rs 41,418 crores and export of handicrafts was Rs 30,939 crores.
- Purchase of Indian handicrafts by domestic and foreign tourists as a souvenir is a tourism ritual.
- Due attention has also been given on the marketing of these valuable products. Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH) organises product-specific shows and also 'Indian Handicrafts and Gifts Fair' bi-annually.

- Market Development Assistance (MDA) and Market Access Initiative (MAI) envision better marketing of these products through fairs, exhibitions and producers-buyers meets. 'India Handloom Bazaar', an online marketing portal is based on marketing of the handicrafts through facilitating direct interaction between buyers and sellers.

Way forward -

- The artisans and their associations should move forward to get Geographical Indication (GI) tag to enhance the credibility of their products.
- GI tag is the sign on the product showing its region of origin. Some of the handicrafts which have received GI tag are - Kangra paintings, Varanasi brocades and saris, Bustar wooden craft, Villianur terracotta works etc.

Conclusion -

On a macro level, initiatives to strengthen the sector will support in preserving this cultural heritage and transferring it to the next generation as a potential source of livelihood. While on the micro level, various socio-economic issues like unemployment, poverty, migration, and indebtedness will be addressed.

Contributing to Economic Growth

Tirupati (Andhra Pradesh) and Raghurajpur (Odisha) are separated by over 100 kilometres but one thing brings them closer and that is their association with project of linking 'Textiles with the Tourism'.

For Prelims -

Raghurajpur - This craft village is located near the temple city of Puri in Odisha and famous for its pattachitra, palm leaf art, traditional stone carving and idol making with papier-mache. It is home to just 140 families, and perhaps India's only village where every household is involved in producing handicrafts.

Textiles with Tourism -

This initiative has helped, even in a limited way, the traditional sector to get a face lift. Also, it is helping this sector to contribute more to the economic growth.

About Textiles -

- The textile sector has been one of the oldest industries in India currently estimated at around USD 150 billion and expected to reach USD 250 billion soon.
- It contributed seven percent of the industry output (in value terms), 15 percent in export earnings and over two percent in GDP of India in 2017-18.
- Overall textile exports during fiscal year 2017-18 stood at USD 39.2 billion.
- Textiles and handicrafts have been a key source of employment. As per the latest available Annual Survey of Industries data, number of persons employed in the organised Textile and Wearing Apparel Sector is around 26,48,238 in 2015-16 and 26,94,280 in 2016-17.
- Further, the handloom sector provides direct and indirect employment to 43 lakh weavers and allied workers. There are 68.86 lakh handicraft artisans. The handloom and handicrafts sector together provide about 11 lakh employment both in the organised and unorganised sector.

Handicrafts Sector -

- It is mainly an unorganised and diversified sector with estimated 70 lakh artisans practicing 32 broad crafts categories throughout the country. To organise and standardise the Indian handicrafts, approximately 22.85 lakh artisans have been trained under '**Pahchan**' initiatives.
- For standardisation of carpets, carpet rating scheme has been formulated. In an effort to establish authenticity of handmade products, there is a scheme of handicraft mark.
- Any handicraft artisan registered under 'Pahchan' can utilise this portal for marketing their products.

Cotton -

- In order to protect the interest of cotton farmers, the MSP has been increased for 2018-19 by 28 percent and 26 percent for Medium Staple Cotton and Long Staple Cotton respectively.
- Also, to pass on the benefit of MSP to ensure remunerative price to a large section of cotton farmers, there is a nodal agency called Cotton Corporation of India (CCI).

Challenges for Textile Sector -

- Manufacturing costs of textile sector in India is higher due to the fragmented structure of the industry and presence of MSMEs.
- One of the key challenges which India faces is duty disadvantage of up to 9.6 percent in important consuming markets like the European Union.

What is being done?

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

Crossing the Seven Seas

The handicrafts industry of India essentially mirrors the aspects of the age old civilisation of India. No wonder the phrase 'unity in diversity' is so applicable to our country.

Each state has its unique handicraft products which reflect the diverse nature of the Indian handicrafts industry. The Indian handicrafts industry essentially falls under the cottage industry category. Despite this fact, it is a high employment intensive sector, employing over 6 million part time and full time artisans (inclusive of the carpet manufacturing sector), including women and a large section from the weaker strata of the society.

Besides being a employment generator, the handicraft industry is economically viable, because of low capital investments while the potential for export of the various handicraft products is considerably high.

The Empire -

- Around 95 percent of the total industrial products of the world are produced in small workshops run by less than 100 people.
- The Indian handicrafts industry is highly labour intensive, cottage based and decentralised. Most of the manufacturing units are located in rural and small towns, and there is huge market potential in all Indian cities and abroad.

Important hubs of Handicrafts Industry -

- **Uttar Pradesh** - Moradabad (also known as the 'Peetalnagari' - city of brass, noted for its brass artefacts), Saharanpur (wooden artefacts), and Ferozabad (exclusive glass handicrafts).
- **Rajasthan** - Jaipur (famous for its exclusive quilts), Bagru and Sanganer (printed textiles) and Jodhpur (unique wooden and wrought iron furniture).

- **Others** - Kutch (Gujarat - exotic embroidered handicrafts) and Narsapur (Andhra Pradesh - lace handicrafts).

Exports -

- Exports of various segments registered a positive growth during April to November 2018 like Shawls and Artwares (77.50 percent), Woodwares (23.57 percent) and Miscellaneous Handicrafts (19.74 percent).
- The demand for the handicraft sector will increase in future due to the developing fashion industry.
- E-Commerce and Internet have emerged as prominent distribution channels to market and sell handicraft products.
- India's handicraft exports are expected to cross Rs 24,000 crores mark by FY2020-21 as per a study by ASSOCHAM.

Indian Textile Industry -

- India is the largest producer and the second largest exporter of cotton in the world. India is also the leading consumer of cotton.
- Domestic textile and apparel industry contributes 2 percent to India's GDP and accounts for 14 percent of industrial production, 27 percent of the country's Foreign Exchange inflows and 13 percent of the country's export earnings.
- The textiles and garments industry in India that employs 45 million people is second only to the agriculture sector in terms of employment.
- The textile sector in India is dominated by women workers, with 70 percent of the workforce being women.
- At 50 percent of world production, India is the largest producer of raw jute and jute goods in the world. India is also the second largest producer of silk in the world.
- India is the second largest producer and exporter of cotton in the world at \$6.3 billion, marginally close to China.
- India is the second largest producer of silk in the world, producing around 18 percent of the world's total silk. Mulberry, Eri, Tussar, and Mugga are the main types of silk produced in the country.
- The cotton yarns account for 70 percent of India's textile exports. Knitted garments account for almost 32 percent of all exported garments. According to a report, the Indian textile industry covers 61 percent of the international textile market and over 20 percent of the global market.
- The domestic demand for textiles is likely to remain robust from end-user segments, supported by a strong rise in private consumption expenditure during the rest of FY19.

Way forward -

- The industry needs to focus on innovation and value addition for improving global competitiveness of Indian textiles and apparels. Innovation such as promoting waterless dyeing by adopting new technology is also needed.
- The sector also needs to improve supply chains and internal systems, focus on research and development, cost optimisation (saving cost by vertical integration, etc.) and scaling-up to achieve greater competitiveness and command a higher share in the production and export of top items traded in the global markets.
- Quality has to be the mainstay for India to sustain exports in the global market especially when we are facing stiff competition from countries like Vietnam and Bangladesh.
- The industry's focus should be to recreate the inherent talent of Indian weavers.

Perfecting craftsmanship through skilling

Indian weaving traditions and handicrafts have existed since time immemorial and have been a representation of the many unique sub-cultures within the country.

Like any other industry, the handicrafts and textiles sector is associated with its fair share of challenges and rewards. It constitutes an important segment of the Indian economy as it is one of the largest employment generators after agriculture. The sector employs about seven million people.

Skilling opportunities -

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

Need for skilling -

- The sector contributes about 27% of the country's foreign exchange earnings due to export, 2% to the GDP, and 13% to the nation's exports.
- Simultaneously, handicraft exports from India increased by 1.65% year-on-year between April to November, 2018 US\$ 2.42 billion. Thus, the modernisation, growth and all-round development and skilling of these industries has a direct bearing on the improvement of India's economy.

- The textiles and handicrafts industry has, until recent years, relied mostly on traditional production processes that are labour intensive, involving many long, complex steps.
- With the advent of Industry 4.0 - where digitisation, the World Wide Web, mass customisation and pace are shaping the processes, these industries are also positioned to spur and speed up.
- The elevating employment opportunities in the textile and handicraft sector and its allied industries, will make these sectors more prosperous.
- Further, the factors are an important source to express art and skill in crafts and promote our culture by making crafts and textile items available locally.

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

Even after more than seven decades since India gained its hard won independence, Khadi continues to inspire and amaze people around the globe.

Details -

- In 2017, the low profile Khadi industry saw sales worth Rs 50,000 crore.
- The astounding growth registered in production and sale of Khadi products in recent years establish the fact that Khadi is a versatile and timeless fabric.
- Over 30,000 charkhas were distributed between 2015 to February, 2018 thereby creating over 14 lakh jobs.

Historical Background -

- We all know that in 1926, Gandhi ji upheld Khadi as the symbol of Swaraj and spun the final yarn of India's fabric of independence.
- But, perhaps few people know that some seven decades before Gandhiji's tryst with Charkha, a girl born in Varanasi as Manikarnika or Manu, not only mastered reading the Vedas and Puranas, riding and sword fighting, but also learnt weaving before becoming the Queen of Jhansi.

Efforts by Government -

- Efforts have been made to involve corporate brands and public sector units to provide the largest spectrum for Khadi for repositioning Khadi on the textile map.

- A memorandum of understanding was also signed with the National Institute of fashion technology for better design development and training at different Khadi institutions.
- Another innovation in the form of 'Khadi Mitra' is on the cards, where are the housewives could sell Khadi with a very nominal capital investment initially.
- It is proposed to open Khadi outlets outside the country to promote products made using the indigenous handspun fabric in the global markets as interest has been shown from Dubai, Chicago, Mauritius and South Africa.
- In a bid to increase cotton supply to khadi institutions, six cotton sliver plants have been upgraded.
- Individuals, public sector units and corporate's have been urged to contribute for providing Charkhas - the Gandhian tool of self-reliance - to the artisans - predominantly woman.
- PSUs have been approached for deploying their CSR funds to words empowerment initiatives of Khadi artisans and the Khadi institutions.
- REC (Rural Electrification Corporation) was roped in to revive the legacy of the Sewapuri Ashram.

Growth and Development - Woven in Threads of Northeast

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

In terms of global ranking, India is ranked second in textile exports. European Union is the largest market for Indian textile and apparel products followed by the USA. In 2016-17, the share of exports to EU was 25% where as to that to the USA was 21%.

Important information -

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

- India covers 61% of the international textile market.
- India is the largest producer of jute in the world.
- India is known to be the third largest manufacturer of cotton across the globe.
- India holds around 25% share in the cotton yarn industry across the globe.
- India contributes to around 12% of the world's production of cotton yarn and textiles.

- India is the second largest producer of silk in the world, producing around 18% of the world's total silk.

Northeast India -

- North East India occupies a unique and important place in the indigenous textile culture of India. The traditional dress of an ethnic group plays a major role in showcasing the ethnic identity. Each ethnic group has its own designs and colour combinations. Different motifs and designs of textiles have relationship with the rituals and religious life of the people of Northeast India. The materials used for textiles has a varied range - cotton, wool, Eri, Muga and orchid skin, animal hair are used by the different ethnic groups.
- There are 23.77 lakh handlooms in the country of which 16.47 lakh handlooms (69.28 percent) are in the North East region as per the handloom census of 2009-10.

Common factors binding all states -

- **Weaving** - It is practiced alike by all tribal groups in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and in the valley of Assam. There are only a few exceptions, such as the Nokteys of Tirap in Arunachal Pradesh and the Khasis of Meghalaya who do not weave. It is the women who are the real clothier of this north-eastern region. Whether it be the Monks and Shedukpens of Kameng, the Mishmis and Khamtis of Lohit or the wives of the Wanchoo chieftains of Tirap in Arunachal Pradesh, or any of the Naga tribes, or even the Assamese in the plains, it is the women who weave unlike the rest of India, where men predominate the weaving profession.
- **Silk** - Assam is the third largest producer of silk in the country and leading among the north-east states. On the other hand, Manipur produces almost 100 percent of the country's Oak tussar silk and is the highest producer of Mulberry silk among the North east states. Whereas, Tripura focuses on production of only Mulberry silk with end to end solutions.
- **Bamboo and Cane Craft** - Due to the weather conditions of the region, it creates a conducive environment for the growth of bamboo. Mizos (people from Mizoram) take great pride in their cane and bamboo work. Expert basket makers, they etch and notch designs into soft cane fibres and use the baskets for numerous purposes. Over 16 tribes live in the state of Nagaland. Most are adept at wood, metal and bamboo handicrafts.
- **Carpets** - You can also find the most ancient form of carpet weaving in Sikkim. The traditional pattern of weaving is done by the 'Bhutia' community which requires a frame and an exclusive manner of weaving.

- **Wooden and Metal Products** - Known as a symbol of true art of India, Sikkim excels in wood carving. Sikkim brims with beautiful monasteries, heritage buildings and temples, the architecture of which is adorned with symbols and icons carved in the wood. Pemayangtse Monastery is a fine illustration of carved wooden sculptures and wood carvings. Wood carving is also associated with the culture and tradition of the various tribes in Arunachal Pradesh. Wood carving is a significant hobby of the Wanchos of Tirap. Some of the finest woodcarvers in India come from the Wancho, Kenya and Phom tribes in Nagaland. The icons that best define the Naga's skill in woodwork are carved mithun heads, hornbills, human figures, elephants, tigers and the log-drums or xylophones that are laboriously hollowed out of the trunks of big trees.