

Handloom industries in Himachal Pradesh: An overview

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Abstract

Handloom weaving is the cultural heritage of the people of Himachal Pradesh and an indispensable part of the lives of people of Himachal Pradesh. Their activity includes a wide range of handloom products which are sufficient to meet the local needs but it gradually took a turn towards commercialization. The local weavers besides following their ancestral traditions and skills are intentionally making some alterations in the products to cater to the needs of modern buyers. In the present study an attempt is made to know about the handloom industries in Himachal Pradesh. Handloom industry is basically labour intensive and utilises traditional techniques in production process at lower cost. The products of handloom industry face a lot of problem of extinction prior to getting the brand name. This paper sheds light upon the various schemes and problems of handloom industries in Himachal Pradesh.

Keywords: handloom, govt. scheme, Himachal Pradesh

Introduction

Himachal is the land of snowy mountains, with abundant rainfall and rich forests have not been able to keep pace with the development in the plains because of inherent problems of topography, climatic conditions lack of roads, transportation, terrain and consequent isolation. But despite their tough life, the people of Himachal Pradesh are talented and working hard which reflects their art and craft. The arts and craft of any region is a reflection of its environment, people and traditions. In the hilly regions of the state, there are many nonstop activities of making several handicrafts throughout the year. Handloom weaving is the cultural heritage of the Himachali people. There are many cottage industries in districts Kullu, Manali, Kinnaur, Chamba, Lahaul and Spiti. From the upper reaches of Lahaul & Spiti down to the lowlands of Kangra valley, every district has its own speciality. There is a vast variety of beautiful handloom and handicraft products in these districts. The extreme cold winters of these districts necessitated wool weaving. Thus, the cold climate prevalent is suitable for sheep and goat husbandry, which are necessary for fulfilling the demand of woollens. During the period of slack season and heavy snow fall, everyone engaged themselves in making handloom products in their homes. In Kullu, Manali, Kinnaur, Chamba, Lahaul and Spiti every household owns a pit loom and every one engaged themselves in spinning yarn on a spindle. These local people weave for themselves as well as for commercial purposes. They use raw material that is wool, which is available locally and worsted yarn is imported from outside. The Pashmina is the first grade wool derived from the domesticated animals known as Pashmina Goats. The Spiti area is well known for Pashmina wool. Wool of the wild Himalayan sheep and ibex is also used in certain areas. These wild animals, with the onset of summer, shed the fine fleece, which grows beneath the rough outer hair by rubbing

themselves against thorny shrubs and rough rocks. The shepherds visiting high altitude pastures in mid-summer collect this high grade fleece to be converted later into fine yarn.

A traditional weaver is the one, who weaves wool on the khaddi and develops some good quality and warm but coarse products. The coarseness of the product differs it from power loom product.

Handloom industry is a kind of specialized form of cottage industry where the production of commodity takes place in the surroundings of homes and the family members engaged themselves for production purpose. Basically it is a homemade product, produced through machineries commonly used at homes by the tradition of generation. It is unorganized in nature. The commodities of these industries are basically consumable products and that are being produced through the utilization of the traditional techniques. These cottage industries are a good source of employment for the survival of livelihood.

Importance

In Himachal Pradesh, handloom industry plays a very important role in the state economy. The uniqueness and speciality in weaving makes them famous on the national and international levels. Due to state government intervention through financial assistance and implementation of various developmental and welfare schemes, now these handloom industries of the state have been able to compete from the power loom and mill sectors. These products reach to the people by selling through setting stalls in fairs, exhibitions and through setting special shops in different districts and states. This sector is contributing towards export earnings also. The handloom sector is the most important earning sector after agriculture providing direct and indirect employment to the

weavers in Kullu, Manali, Chamba, Mandi, Lahaul and Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh.

Major Player of Handloom Industry in State

- All India Handloom Apparels Pvt. Ltd.
- Himachal Pradesh State Handicrafts and Handloom Corporation Ltd.
- Handloom Export Promotion Council
- Institute of Handloom and Textile Pvt. Ltd

Problems of Handloom Industry in Himachal Pradesh

Handloom industry is fundamentally labour intensive and utilizes a traditional technique in the manufacturing process which are not cost effective at all and that makes the production at higher cost. The weavers are using “khaddi” as a handloom machine. Although the output of these machines is low as a weaver needs to travel across the breadth of the “khaddi” while laying the thread yet they are producing original product. Some new mills have started operation in Himachal and due to which the conversion time from wool to thread has become shortened but again the power looms are the biggest beneficiaries

Loom industries in Ludhiana (Punjab) copied the Himachali shawl which has a low cost. A handloom shawl may take about a week to manufacture whereas power looms churn out thousands in a day. This production pose economies for power loom products and it makes a little difference between handloom and power loom for ignorant customer. They not only supplied cheap and inferior varieties of shawls but also offered huge discounts to tourists.

At the market front, most of the buyers fail to understand the difference between handloom and power loom products. Pashmina – a brand name for handloom products some time ago is hijacked by power loom one.

The sheep is sheared twice in a year at specified centres, primarily controlled by the wolfed. A significant proportion of the wool is procured from nomads, who travel from Ropar in Punjab to Manali and above. For a sheep owner the security/care of the sheep is the biggest challenge. Their major concern lies in the ‘Sheep Insurance’ clause that requires the dead body of the sheep to be presented for claiming insurance (it becomes quite impossible for them to get a sheep out of drowned water or to get one from the deep valleys).

Many time wool stockyards infested with rats or roof leakages affected the wool stocks. Inefficiencies at these steps cause a rise in the wool procurement cost. Wool procurement, shearing facilities, wool storage etc. need to be looked into while these concerns are being addressed.

Protection to handloom industry in Himachal Pradesh

Himachal Pradesh specializes in making fine shawls. Like Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh also produces fine and precious shawls, which are in high demand by tourists from all over the world were being copied in the Ludhiana belt get relief, by taking Kullu shawl under the Geographical Indication of Goods Act, 1999. The Act will prevent manufacturers from outside the state from using the moniker "Kullu shawl" and will be penalise up to Rs. 2 lakh or imprisonment up to three years or both. Now Kullu shawl is

safe after getting brand name ‘BHUTTICO’. Instead of this state and central government are providing financial and non-financial support to sustain them in the market.

The H.P. State Handloom & Handicrafts Corporation Ltd is playing an important role in helping to promote the handicraft and handloom of the state. E-commerce is also being encouraged to widen the market and audience to whom the handlooms of Himachal Pradesh are available. Training courses are also offered with the aim to increase the skill of weavers in various crafts. It is provided in different cluster. The Kullu handloom cluster benefited 5000 weavers, the Gohar handloom cluster benefited 354 weavers and lastly, the Reckong Peo handloom cluster benefited 600 weavers. In recent years, two further clusters have been sanctioned for the districts of Chamba and Mandi. Together, these benefited over 1000 artisans in the areas. Furthermore, the government has sanctioned two skill upgrading centres in Chamba district. The state handloom corporation also has 15 production centres in Himachal state and these provide pre-loom, loom and post loom facilities to weavers belonging to a lower financial strata.

Main Products of Handloom Industry

Shawl

Shawls are basically the product of Kullu, Kinnaur, Chamba and upper part of Sirmour district but it is used all over India. These shawls have geometrical design on both ends. Besides geometrical designs, the shawls are also woven in floral designs, which may run all over or the corners or on the borders only. They use bright colours viz. red, yellow, magenta pink, green, orange, blue, black and white for patterning while white, black, and natural grey or brown are used as the base in these shawls. But in the present times keeping in mind the customer demand, these bright colours are being replaced gradually by pastel colours. Price of any shawl depends upon quality of wool and the width of patterns used in it. Due to the high cost of labour involved in the sorting of fine pashmina fiber, the shawls prepared from pashmina wool are expensive.

Loi

Loi is also termed as chaddar by the local people. It is a gent’s shawl, which is usually bigger in size. Loi is woven with light woollen fabric and is usually plain or with a narrow border at the ends. These are generally available in shades of brown, grey and white. Pashmina Loi is the costliest ones.

Border

Borders are narrow laces which are woven only on tiny handloom. These are long stripes having varied widths depending upon design. Initially, local weavers weave them to use for shawl, caps but now these borders are being used for decorating other handloom products also, like jackets, neck ties, ladies suits, etc. Pure wool is used for weaving the borders. The designs are almost similar to those of woven in the shawls.

Cap

It is an important part of a local man’s attire/apparel/garments especially in Kullu district. Alike Kullu district, in some of the

other districts also, cap is an important part of male's attire. The designs of the caps represent the area like Kullu cap, Kinnauri cap and Bhushari cap. The price of a cap depends on the cloth used and the pattern on the border.

Pattoo

Pattoo is the traditional dress of local women folk of district Kullu, Manali, Kinnaur, Lahaul and Spiti. It looks like a shawl but is thicker, heavier and longer than the shawl. These pattoos are used by people to warm up bed in winter and is also worn over the clothes (suit, which consists of shirt up to knees and salwar / pyjama) by the women in the hilly and snowy area as it is a very comfortable dress, which allows them to do their daily chores besides keeping them warm.

Pattern

These are the special type of pattoo designed beautifully with different colours, wear by ladies in functions. The cost of pattern depends upon the colour combination, pattern used and the quality of wool used.

Muffler

Muffler is a woollen article worn around neck. It is woven usually with pashmina, merino or angora wool having threads of different colours. The process of weaving muffler is same as that of shawls, but the smaller looms are used for mufflers. Gents mufflers measures 1.70 meters x 0.30 m, while ladies mufflers are little bit longer in length with same width.

Patti

Patti is a short width coarse fabric made of sheep wool. It is woven on the handloom. Patti fabric is generally used for making close neck coats, pants, pyjamas, jackets. Initially women folk used this patti as pattoo, which was thicker and heavier than the pattoo. It is used by local people for making chola, i.e. male gown. It is made from the wool obtained from the first shearing of a lamb is used.

Thobi

Thobi is a type of floor covering, which is spun from goat hair. It is woven in 2 portions of half width and later joined from the centre with very complicated stitches. It is rough in texture, but provides warmth. Thobi is usually plain or available in checks or bands of black and gray. The size of the thobi varies from 2.15 x 0.9 m to 3.5 x 1.50 m and weighs approximately 600-800 gm. Thobis are generally woven for fulfilling personal needs; they are seldom produced for sale.

Numdha

Numdha is the local name for a mattress, which is made by felting the wool rather than weaving it. It is prepared by mixing low quality wool with a small quantity of cotton. Numdhas are usually plain or decorated with embroidered colourful designs. These mattresses come in different sizes as 1.82 x 0.91 meters or 3.65 x 3.04 meters. The price of numdhas depends on its size, quality of wool and the pattern.

Gudma

Gudma is a soft but heavy blanket, which is woven especially

in the Kullu valley as this place has a special kind of clay that is used to clean and finish a Gudma. It is made of Byang wool having long fibres. Gudmas are woven in natural wool colours and finished with red or black trimmings. Size of gudmas is similar to those of numdhas. Cost of gudmas also varies according to size.

Various Societies and Corporations for the Promotion of Handloom Industry

1. Himachal Pradesh State Handloom and Handicrafts

Corporation Limited, Shimla: The main purpose of corporation is to promote and develop handloom and handicraft industry in the state by imparting training to weavers/artisans, to improve their skills in weaving and also provide financial and raw materials assistance. Approximately 400 to 500 weavers are trained yearly predominantly in the craft of carpet weaving, shawl, 'dories' weaving and blanket weaving. In addition, the trainee craftsmen and women are given a stipend for training. It also assists entrepreneurs in setting up units in their areas by providing subsidy. The corporation helps in the marketing of handloom and handicraft product of local entrepreneur through showrooms. It carries out the message of industrialisation to the unemployed youth who are unaware of the self-employment outlets provided by the industrial sector.

2. Himachal Pradesh State Handloom & Handicrafts Development Co-operative Federation Ltd.:

It is an apex institution of the state of Himachal Pradesh in the field of handloom & handicrafts. 'HIMBUNKAR' is the name which was registered on 20th January 1984. In 2007, the name of the apex society was change to the H.P state handloom and handicrafts development cooperative federation limited. It performs the functions like production, marketing and trading. The apex federation has a program known as production plan. Under the production plan weavers societies are given raw material like yarn and designs different kind of products on their own handlooms and the weaver cooperative societies in turn get the wages and the incentive for the products manufactured by them. The federation is also running some workshops in which some weavers work directly. Weaver's societies also keep their product on consignment basis with their federation. Sometime depending upon the marketing requirement these products can also out rightly purchased from the cooperative societies. Main products being dealt by the federation include kullu shawls, kinnauri, shawls, stoles, mufflers, jackets in all kind of design and colours.

The federation markets the products through its own showrooms by conducting exhibitions and with the help of marketing tie-ups with different marketing agencies like Ministry of Textile Govt. of India, State Handloom and Handicraft Corporation, H.P. Tourism Development Cooperation. Showrooms of the federation are located at manali, kullu, Bhuntar, tanogi, shimla, nahan and palampur. In winter season lots of exhibitions are organized by the federation in various parts of the country. Himbunkar also organize training program for weaving, dying and designing from time to time. The federation has

successfully completed few projects like support to training and employment program from Ministry of Child Development, Ambedkar Hastshilp Vikas Yojana from the Ministry of Textiles, Marketing and Promotional Schemes from Ministry of Textiles.

3. **Export Industry:** State govt. setup Himalayan Bodh Women's Cooperative Society for the manufacture and export of handloom & handicrafts in district Kullu. Another industry Maharaja Carpets deal in manufacture of mats, carpets, woollen shawls. Ganpati Handloom, Handicraft & Weavers Cooperative society India, society Rams lila and A.B. Kullu also export handicrafts and handloom in the state.
4. **The Himalayan Weavers Handloom, Handicrafts Industrial Co-operative Society Ltd.:** This organization is working for the welfare of handloom weavers and handicraft artisans in the hill area of north western Indian Himalaya. This organization is registered on 18th October, 1996 with the share of state government by the Himalayan weaver's men and women group. Their main aim is to create and sustains employment for Himalayan weaver's men and women group in District Mandi Himachal Pradesh. This organization is working to increase the demand for its handmade products by marketing globally,

participating in various international trade fairs, buyer seller meetings, e-marketing etc. It also encouraging the eco-friendly products by using natural fibre, vegetable colour dye, saving energy "not using power looms" by applies hand weaving techniques. This organization has adopted various measures and techniques to provide high quality and eco-friendly products to the world market and it is also evolved in many environmental activities.

Handloom Scheme Implemented in Himachal Pradesh

1. Integrated Handlooms Development Scheme: From financial year 2014-2015 funds are being released under Comprehensive Handlooms Development Scheme (CHDS), component of National Handloom Development Programme (NHDP)

- **Cluster Development Programme:** Block-level cluster approach has been adopted for development of handlooms. This provides for integrated and holistic development of cluster by implementing need-based interventions. During the period 2007-08 to 2015-16, a sum of Rs.374.11 lakh were released, benefitting 6470 handloom weavers. Details of cluster sanctioned are as follows:

Table 1

Year	No. of cluster sanctioned	Central share (Rs. in lakh)	Amount released (Rs.in lakh)
2007-08	2	91.18	23.93
2008-09	---	0.00	0.00
2009-10	2	100.17	32.60
2010-11	3	127.78	66.75
2011-12	---	0.00	90.24
2012-13	---	0.00	42.61
2013-14	1	49.76	16.15
2014-15		0.00	0.00
Block level cluster	----	0.00	0.00
2015-16	3	285.46	101.83
2016-17	---	---	---
Total	11	654.35	374.11

- **Group Approach Project:** During the period 2008-09 to 2015-16, 57 Group Approach Projects were sanctioned and a sum of Rs. 258.2 Lakh was

released, benefitting 905 weavers. Details of Group Approach Projects are as follows.

Table 2

Year	No. of Cluster Sanctioned	Central Share (Rs. in lakh)	Amount Released (Rs.in lakh)
2008-09	7	29.58	23.86
2009-10	33	136.20	106.14
2010-11	17	92.47	72.17
2011-12	----	0.00	54.61
2012-13	----	0.00	1.45
2013-14	----	0.00	0.00
2014-15	----	0.00	0.00
2015-16	-----	-----	-----
Total	57	258.25	258.25

- **Marketing Incentive:** 10% of average sales of last 3yrs to be shared 50:50 between GOI and state Govt.

Table 3

Year	Amt. Released (Rs. In Lakh)	Weavers Covered
2007-2008	-----	-----
2008-2009	-----	-----
2009-2010	-----	-----
2010-2011	105.16	16345
2011-2012	198.60	29271
2012-2013	143.79	14938
2013-2014	-----	-----
2014-2015	-----	-----
2015-2016	-----	-----
Total	447.55	60554

II. Marketing and Export Promotion Scheme: From 2007-2016 total amount 3.36 crore were sanctioned on different

marketing and export promotion scheme by GOI and state government.

Table 4

Year	Name of Events Sanctioned/Organised	Amount released (Rs.in crore)
2007-08	10 district level events	0.17
2008-09	13 district level events	0.26
2009-10	02SHE,25district level events	0.51
2010-11	02SHE,30DLE	0.61
2011-12	02 state level expo,30DLE	0.58
2012-13	02 SHE,05DLE sanctioned	0.32
2013-14	02 SHEs&10DLEs	0.39
2014-15	02 SHEs&10DLEs	0.18
2015-16	02 SHEs&16DLEs	0.24
Total		3.36

III. Handloom Weaver's Comprehensive Welfare Scheme: This scheme is implemented with the components of (1)

Health Insurance Scheme (Health Insurance Cover) and (ii) Mahatma Gandhi Bunkar Bima Yojna (Life Insurance)

Table 5

Policy Year	Weavers Covered under Health Insurance Scheme	Weavers Covered under Mahatma Gandhi Bunker Bima Yojana
2007-08	---	610
2007-09	10940	9915
2009-10	12679	5596
2010-11	11900	5501
2011-12	12030	6217
2012-13	12030 (1.4.13 to31.3.14)	6349
2013-14	1.4.13 to31.3.14	4673
2014-15	12030(upto30.9.14)	6161
2015-16	--	4940
Total	71609	49962

Note: In 12th plan up to 30.9.2014th scheme was implemented by office of the Development Commissioner for Handlooms and now the scheme is being implemented by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) pattern.

Concessional Credit to Handloom Sector

Concessional credit margin money @Rs.10,000/-per weaver is provided and loan to the handloom weavers is given at 6% interest by way of interest subvention by Government of India subject to maximum of 7% so far total 791 credit cards have been issued by banks. An amount of Rs. 677.80 lakh has been

sanctioned and loan disbursed of Rs.664.05 lakh so far.

iv. Financial Package for Loan Waiver

- In Himachal Pradesh 372 functional primary weaver's cooperative societies claim in respect of I Appendix and 171 PWCS, 370 individual weavers and 26SHGs has been approved of Rs.10.66 crore
- SIMRC has vetted total claim of Rs.10.66 crore

v. Yarn Supply Scheme

- Supply of yarn at mill gate price: Yarn supplied to Himachal Pradesh are as under

Table 6

Year	Quantity(in Lakh Kg)	Value(Rs.in Lakh)	No. Yarn Depots
2007-08	0.017	7.44	8
2008-09	0.46	297.74	
2008-10	0.577	358.44	
2010-11	2.978	525.44	
2011-12	13.845	1710.71	
2012-13	20.574	2173.72	
2013-14	25.55	2949.25	
2014-15	30.70	4000.31	
2015-16	42.11	7275.92	
Total	136.811	19298.97	

- b. 10% Price Subsidy on Hank Yarn: 57 pass books have been issued up to March, 2015 under the scheme. Yarn supplied to Himachal Pradesh 10% component of the scheme since its inception is as under

Table 7

Year	Quantity(in Lakh Kg)	Value(Rs.in Lakh)
2012-13	0.26	44.78
2013-14	0.39	64.36
2014-15	1.08	2081.61
2015-16	1.09	4653.14
Total	2.82	6843.89

- vi. **Procurement of Sheep and Angora Wool:** One of the major functions of the Wool Federation is the procurement of sheep and angora wool at remunerative prices. The procurement is undertaken at field level throughout the year for which purpose procurement camps are organized at village/block level from time to time.

Table 8: Sheep Wool Angora Wool

Sr. No.	Year	Purchase	Value	Purchase	Value
		Qty. (Kgs.)	(Lac)	Qty.(Kgs.)	(Lac)
1.	2010-2011	1,94,197.328	87.91	100.000	0.60
2.	2011-2012	1,15,040.440	56.09	4.600	0.03
3.	2012-2013	75695.330	42.28	1.770	0.01
4.	2013-2014	61923.750	34.27	-	-
5.	2014-2015	52211.550	28.78	-	-
6.	2015-2016	----	-----	---	----
	Total	4,99,068.398	249.33	106.37	0.64

- vii. **Sheep Shearing:** The achievements of sheep shearing which is being undertaken by the Federation for the last five years at village/pasture level are as under:

Table 9

Sr. No.	Year	Sheep Sheared
1.	2010-2011	56,272
2.	2011-2012	71,297
3.	2012-2013	78,492
4.	2013-2014	86,235
5.	2014-2015	62,349
Total		3,54,645

- viii. **Sheep Wool Scouring:** The Federation has a modernized plant for wool scouring and carbonizing in Banuri, Palampur. The achievements of the plant for the last Five years are as under.

Table 10

Sr. No.	Year	Wool Processed (in Kg.)
1.	2010-2011	42,314,000
2.	2011-2012	58,600,000
3.	2012-2013	73,686,000
4.	2013-2014	33,070,000
5.	2014-2015	4,032,700
Total		2,11,702,700

ix. RAP/RIP Scheme: This scheme is implemented by DIC to train un-employed youth in various vocations like handloom weaving, tailoring, knitting, carpentry, pula making, kilta making and black smithy etc.

Conclusion

Handloom industries form an indispensable part of the lifestyle of the people of Himachal. But economic conditions of the craftsmen / weavers /artisans, who are passing this tradition from one generation to another is not satisfactory although various scheme have been implemented for their upliftment due to non-availability of raw material, insufficient quantity, poor quality and very high cost of raw material. Thus, raw material depots can be started at craft concentrated areas or the quality of local woollen yarn can be improved by carrying out research. The handloom weavers also have to compete with the shawls manufactured on power looms. Certain efforts have been made on the part of the Government to impart some technical knowledge about these looms to the weavers. As regards marketing, which is the most crucial problem, the craftsmen should be assisted in marketing their products directly from their looms to the market.

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