

## **Handloom: Indian Heritage in need of Innovation and Revival for Economic transformation**

**Safoora Habeeb\***  
**Dr. Naseeb Ahmad \*\***

### **ABSTRACT**

*Indian Textiles is several centuries old and is an economically significant sector of the country. Handloom is seen as one of the most vibrant Indian cultural heritage that has an important place in the textile industry. As per 3<sup>rd</sup> Handloom census, the sector enfolded around 43 lakhs people engaged in weaving and allied activities that majorly constituent rural and semi rural livelihood. It's a cottage industry of India comprising mostly women of about 77%. Despite of being an important sector that supports one of the largest chunks of unorganized sectors of the country it's withering at the hands of modernity. In the era of Power-loom and Technical Textiles the Indian Handloom sector needs revitalization to survive. It is high time to safe guard Handloom sector with innovation and revival to defend the livelihood of unorganized workers, preserve the rich Indian heritage and make the sector a significant contributor of Economic transformation of India. This paper is a comparative study of Innovative intensity of Handloom small business and small scale Technical /powerloom textiles. Structured and unstructured interviews have been conducted with 19 handloom business and powerloom/technical textile business; both at small scale level. Findings show greater Innovative Intensity in Technical/ powerloom small business than small handloom business. Also challenges of Handloom textile industry is studied through Fishbone diagram with suggestive measures.*

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**Key Words: Innovative intensity, Handloom, Powerloom, Technical Textiles**

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\* Senior Research Fellow – Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi,  
E-mail: safurahabeeb@gmail.com

\*\* Associate Professor – Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, E-mail: nahmad3@jmi.ac.in

## INTRODUCTION

The handloom sector is seen as pride of textiles in India. It's a cottage industry that provided livelihood to millions of people who belong to the weaker section of the society. The traces of handloom industry reveal its existence since the most ancient times of India. Right from Indus Valley civilization, Vedic period, Mauryan period, Moghul period, British period to this modern India of 2017; weaving has been an economically significant activity. India due to its abundance of cheap manpower, craftsmanship and capacity to grow cotton plants has always been a popular name in painted and printed cotton cloths. Indian Handloom had a glorious past due to its excellent intricacies and unparalleled artistry.

The second view of Handloom is from the perspective of sustainability. It consumes minimal power and eco-friendly and possesses all the capability to grow and innovate. This is the sector which requires lesser capital to get started and work with very low investment. Rural and semi - urban India where cottage industry has been a major source of livelihood, Handloom is a significant economic activity. According to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Handloom census 43 lakh people are involved in weaving and allied activities; out of which 38 lakhs are adults. From adult people 77% are women and are actively engaged in handloom cottage industry. That shows more than 3/4<sup>th</sup> of the adult strength comprise of women workers playing an active major role in handloom industry. In the context handloom can be seen as empowerment tool for women who further support their families.

Handloom is a pride that India carries as cultural heritage. It needs to be preserved, survive and grow further. Moreover, the domestic consumption and exports can play a vital role in national development. The sector has all the ingredients of providing livelihood, eco-friendly inputs & output for sustainability, scope of innovation and show-casing the rich cultural heritage of the country. Though the advent of power loom textiles has taken the market due to quicker and cheaper fabrics and handloom has been left much behind. The role and significance of technical textiles cannot be denied but it has definitely replaced the handloom consumption. Technical textiles have created the unemployment and underemployment in handloom cottage industry; though its own significance cannot be subsided due to its advanced quality requirements for various uses. The healthy and symbiotic existence of both technical textiles and handloom textiles are

important. The current situation for handloom is staggering due to dominance of power-loom and technical textiles. The rescue of handloom cottage industry that provides livelihood to weaker sections of Indian society, majorly women is the need of the hour.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To compare the Innovative Intensity of Handloom sector with Technical Textiles
2. To study the challenges of Handloom Industry through Ishikawa/ fishbone Diagram.

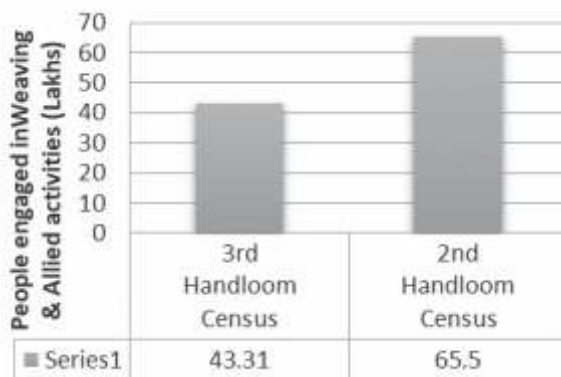
### **REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY**

Indian Textile industry is an old and economically significant sector of the country. It has great employment potential after agriculture. 45 million directly and 60million people indirectly derive employment from the sector. The sector contributes 14% of the industrial output and shares 5% of India's GDP. The sector employs both skilled and unskilled workforce due to its vast and well establishment employment capacity. Indian Handloom is the largest in the world (Paneersalvam & Radhakrishnan) has a special place in the textile industry of India.

Currently, this 'Generational legacy' handloom industry is facing numerous problems and challenges to survive and grow. Ranging from inadequate wages of weavers, dependency on middle men and poor marketing skills are few to mention (ibid). The declining tendency of handloom industry is apparent is statistics released by Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India. In comparison, statistics of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Handloom census show deteriorating condition of the sector.

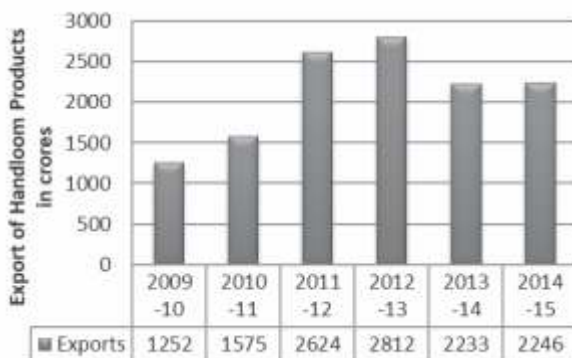
As referred to Table.1, in 3rd handloom census the number of people engaged in weaving and allied activities are 65.5 lakhs that declined sharply to 43.31lakhs in 2nd handloom census. This decline attributes to the fact that young generation are losing interest to take up weaving as their livelihood profession. The major reason behind this disinterest is the low remuneration for weavers.

**Table.1 Source: Handloom Report (GOI)**



As referred to Table.2, Exports of Handloom products (in crores) show a staggering trend. As with the time and technology the export could not keep up the pace. Exports in the year 2013-14 and 2014-15 have declined when compared to previous two years. This clearly shows the decay of the handloom industry and urgency to respond to the threats and challenges of the industry. It is high to look deeper into the problems and rectify them in accord.

**Table.2 Source: Textile Commissioner Office and HEPC**



Addressing the weaver's problem of too low remuneration at small scale level, transfer of technology of weaving artistry skills to young generation, lessening the role of middlemen so that benefit can directly go to the weavers/artisans/ craftsman are the major problems to pay heed. Experts believe that innovation in Handloom industry is necessary for survival and

revival. Delivering the quality and innovative products through handloom business would have competitive advantage to be demanded in domestic markets as well as abroad. Expectedly, promoting livelihood at small scale level and increase in exports would have significant share in national development.

Innovation as defined by National Knowledge Commission (2007), as the introduction of new or improved goods/services or operational processes or organizational/managerial processes. In fact, innovation is any degree of measurable value addition that takes place. Innovation in handloom products needs to be promoted and preserved through Geographical indication (GI), which is defined under 'Trade-Related aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)' (Gonela et al, 2013). Geographical indication recognizes the geographic origin of the product that confirms its quality, reputation and originality of the location.

The innovative intensity is defined as the ability to produce innovative products. To measure the innovative intensity of Handloom industry and Technical textiles the standardized scale has been used. The scale is developed by EIM – Small Business Research Consultancy; located at Zoetermeer, Netherlands. Transformation model of Innovation has been used as the basis for the development of scale consisting 13 dichotomous indicators. This scale is developed in year 2000 by EIM – Small Business Research Consultancy; located at Zoetermeer, Netherlands.

For this study, data has been collected from 19 Handloom small scale business and 15 powerloom/ technical textiles small scale business. Using the standardized scale of Zoetermeer (2000) Innovative intensity has been calculated. Further on software package SPSS 21 is used to compare the innovative intensity score.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

The mean Innovative Intensity score of Handloom small scale business = 4.26; SD = 1.48

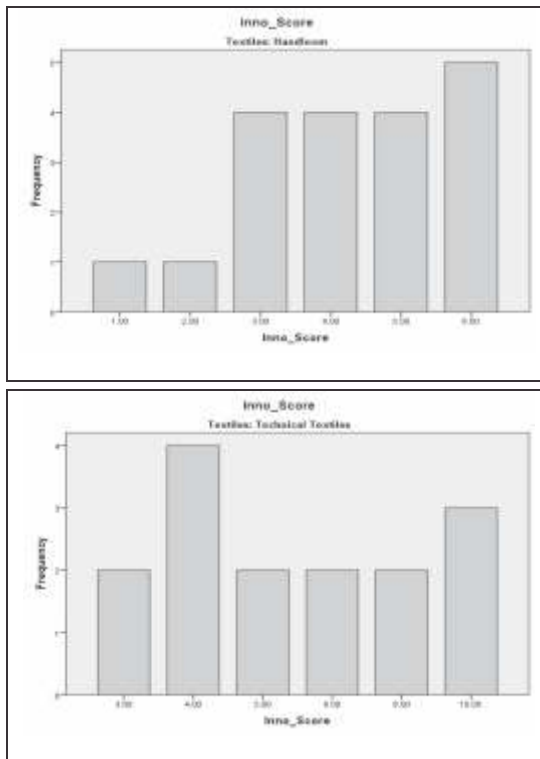
The mean Innovative Intensity score of technical textiles small scale business = 6.00; SD = 2.56. Independent t test shows this difference between the industries as significant.

		Independent Samples Test				
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Inno_Score	Equal variances assumed	6.344	.017	-2.479	32	.019
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.333	21.239	.030

Referred from Table.3, Equal variances not assumed (as the violation of homogeneity of variance amongst the groups,  $p=.017 < .05$ );  $t = -2.333$  (21.239)  $p=0.030 > 0.05$

The innovative intensity of small-scale technical textiles is significantly higher than small scale handloom business. But the innovative score of handlooms is more compact/ homogenous than technical textiles. Technical textiles have greater variation of innovative score as apparent from Standard deviation.

**Figure.1**



The frequency distribution of Innovative Intensity score of Handloom and Technical Textiles as depicted in figure.1 shows more homogeneity of handloom than technical textiles.

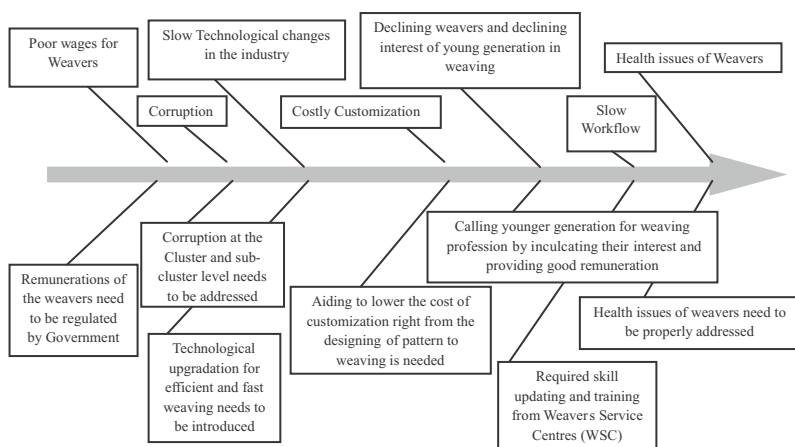
The handloom score ranges: Minimum = 1 and Maximum = 6

The technical textiles ranges: Minimum = 3 and Maximum = 10

### **Study of Challenges of Handloom industry through Fishbone diagram**

The numerous challenges faced by small scale handloom business and weavers has been studied from the interviews conducted.

**Figure.2 Ishikawa/ Fishbone Diagram**



Fishbone diagram of challenges and issues faced is drawn on the basis of the inputs given by weavers, small handloom businesses and cooperative societies of weavers. The interviews have been conducted at National level 'Special Handloom Expo' at Handloom Haat – an initiative of Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India from 16<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> of August 2017, Janpath New Delhi.

The solution of the problems detected is proposed through Ishikawa diagram.

### **DISCUSSION**

Revival of Handloom industry in terms of innovation and growth is a proven remedy for millions of rural inhabitants. Handloom is their source of livelihood that has all the ingredients to flourish and bring prosperity to the

down trodden poor weavers of the country. Despite of the mentioned fact, handloom is decaying and weavers are growing aged with their skills. Young generation do not prefer handloom weaving as their livelihood profession due to poor remuneration. They find better wages in tailoring and as construction labourers and have no interest to stay in handloom. Aged weavers face health issues, and after the age of 40 years they are unable to work with fine yarns to weave handloom cloth. The innovative intensity of handloom small business is significantly lower than powerloom and technical textiles.

Though government is doing lot to support the ongoing of handloom industry by establishing Weavers Service Centres (WSCs), Clusters and sub-cluster, Educational establishments like Indian Institute of Handloom Technology (IIHTs), National Handloom Development Corporation (NHDC), provision of subsidized yarns and dyes and many more in the row, yet the full benefit has not been realized. The roots of handloom lie with its weavers and their situation is pathetic. Presence of aged weaver and lack of young blood in the industry has made it less innovative intensive. It is high time to realize the need of revival and recognize the slackness in the initiatives of the government. The capability to transform the economy of rural India, Handloom cottage industry has a significant role to play. Thus, it is inevitable to focus Handloom cottage industry to survive, innovate and expand to co-exist with Powerloom and technical textiles.

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