

## INDIAN HANDICRAFTS IN THE ERA OF GLOBALISATION

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**Abstract:** Today, in the era of globalisation with almost each and every product going global there has been an increasing demand for them in each and every sector of Indian Economy. Exports and imports play a vital role in the economic development of a country . The ability of a country to diversify its trade round the globe stands important for its overall industrial relations. The Handicraft industry of India occupies a very important position in country's development in terms of being a generator of income as well as employment to millions of artisans. The present paper aims to have an insight into the Handicraft Industry of India and looks at the increasing impact of globalisation on Indian Handicrafts as well as the craft persons by throwing light on its exports as well as employment. It also tries to study the role of government in context of handicrafts and the challenges as well as opportunities ahead. The study makes use of descriptive statistics on the basis of secondary data obtained from the relevant reliable sources.

**Keywords:** *Handicraft Industry, India, culture, exports.*

**Introduction:** The first technology of a human is the one created with his hand and one of the best creation of his hands is the handcrafted items made by him. India is one of the major suppliers of handicrafts to the world market. The industry is highly labour intensive and decentralises and is spread all over in both the rural and urban areas. A number of artisans are engaged in this industry on part time as well as full time basis and provides employment to more than six million artisans across the globe. Globalization which mainly refers to the integration of economic, political and cultural systems within the country as well as outside the national boundaries has become an issue of debate everywhere. The development of internet has helped in this process by enabling the business to be carried on effectively and efficiently. The flow of information has been so fast that a number of people have incorporated the use of handcrafted products in their modern day businesses thus paving the way to their sustainability in the long run. This paper mainly deals with the role of Handicrafts in the modern globalized world. The Handicraft Industry of India is one the oldest industry of India which is the preserver of the age old culture and tradition of India. The industry has proved over time and again that it has captivated the hearts of people by way of its skilful art and craftsmanship by producing the pieces of art which are handcrafted or make use of simple tools. Indian artisans have been able to carry forward the legacy of culture as well as traditions. Indian Handicraft industry offers a wide variety of crafts ranging from bronze, bell metal, jute and ceramics to wooden handicrafts. The industry is highly labour intensive and is widely spread over rural and urban areas.

The history of the Handicraft sector of India dates back to almost 5000 years proving that the sector is as old as the civilisation itself. In earlier times people used to live in colonies which were known as tribes. The Handicraft sector of India has also highlighted its importance in the sense that it has become an integral part of the lives in the sense of being a provider of employment to millions of artisans throughout the dimensions of the country.

“Items or products produced through skills that are manual, with or without mechanical or electrical or other processes, which appeals to the eye, due to characteristics of being artistic or aesthetic or creative or being a representative of the cultural or religious or social symbol practices whether traditional or contemporary. These items or products may or may not have a functional utility or can be used as a decorative item or gift”. (**EPCH Circular, 2011**).

A definition of Handicrafts given by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization at International Symposium on “Crafts and the International Market: Trade and Customs Codification” held in Manila, Philippines’, October 1997 defined Handicrafts as the products which are produced completely by hand or with the help of tools. The mechanical tools may be used so long the direct manual contribution of the artisan remains the major component of the finished product.

The Handicraft products have the basic characteristics of being utilitarian, aesthetic, artistic, creative culturally attached, decorative, traditional and significant. The market for the Handicraft products has been growing due to the increase in the potential of these products in the global market. A large number of handicraft products are being produced by the artisans throughout the country which includes the people from tribal areas as well. (**Kumar & Rajeev, 2013**). Small and medium enterprises play an important role in the economic development of the country and thus in the increase of domestically produced products (**Madura, 2013**). A major feature of the Handicraft Industry is that it requires less amount of labour as well as capital and provides more employment to artisans as it is highly labour intensive and is also eco-friendly amount of capital. The Handicraft industry of India is scattered all over the country with the predominance of small and tiny units. The sector plays a very significant role in the generation of employment, as well as foreign exchange. The Handicrafts of India speak a story of their richness of traditions. The level of popularity as well as demand for the Handicrafts of India is very high due to the uniqueness of the products being produced. Each state of India is having its specialisation in the production of handicrafts the major products include wood wares, metal wares, hand printed textiles, paintings etc. (**Abirami.P., et.al**). The increasing demand for the Handicraft products in terms of being preferred as gifting options has also transformed the country as a giftware market to promote the interest of the consumers. (**Kumar and Rajeev, 2013**). The Indian Handicraft Industry occupies a very unique place among all the other industries since it is a representation of the rich culture and tradition of India. (**Ghouse, 2012**). The origin of the Indian Handicrafts is quite ancient and has a rich history of diverse culture and traditions which has always occupied a very special place in the terms of beauty, diversity and dignity. (**Vats, 2014**). The changes in the society as well as its needs has led to the changes in the economy as well as its economic structure with a lot of such changes coming due to the liberalisation and globalisation process. The true potential of the Handicrafts of India lies in its ability to generate employment for such a vast population who lives both in the rural as well as urban areas. (**Hashmi, 2012**). A

significantly different features of Handicrafts is that the same item has its production in different regions but stands different in terms of its production in other states and the uniqueness is brought in terms of size, type, utility, etc.(Khan and Amir,2013).

**Table 1: Types of Handicraft Products**

Name of the Craft	Raw Material	States famous for the craft
Art and Metal Ware	Metal (silver, Brass)	Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh,Rajasthan
Wooden Art Ware	Teak, Sal, Oak, ebony (wood)	Uttar Pradesh, Punjab ,Jammu and Kashmir.
Hand Printed Textiles	Fabric	Gujarat , Rajasthan
Embroidered goods	Fabric	Amritsar, Jaipur, Lucknow, Kashmir
Marble and soft stone crafts	Stones	Agra, Jodhpur
Paper Maiche craft		
Terracota	Clay	Gujarat, West Bengal, Delhi, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu.
Zari and Zari goods	Zari	
Imitation and Fashion jewellery	Metal , Lac	Jaipur, Delhi, Gujarat, Moradabad, Sambhal
Leather craft	Leather	Kohlapur, Kanpur, Indore, Barmer
Clay craft	Pottery	
Jute		West Bengal, Assam,Bihar
Bamboo and cane craft	Bamboo	Assam, Tripura and West Bengal
Bone and Horn craft	Bones	Orissa

Source: Compiled by Author(s)

**Table2: Various items of Handicrafts in India**

Sr.No	Name of the handicraft	Items
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1	Bamboo Handicrafts	Baskets, dolls, toys, chalani
2	Cane Handicrafts	Trays, baskets, stylish furniture etc.
3	Bell Handicrafts	Bells, candle stands, donari.
4	Bone and Horn Handicrafts	Birds or animal figures
5	Brass Handicrafts	Vases, table tops, ornament boxes
6	Clay Handicrafts or Pottery	Terracotta pottery,
7	Dhokra Handicrafts	Dhokra jewellery, candle stands, pen stands and different kinds of showpieces.
8	Jute Handicrafts	Bags, office stationery, bangles and other jewellery.
9	Paper Handicrafts	Paper Maiche
10	Shell Handicrafts	Conch Shell, tortoise shell and sea shell.
11	Silver Filigree or Tarakashi Handicrafts	Meenakari, Khulla Jaal flowers and leaves.
12	Weaving or Embroidery Handicrafts	Cloth production
13	Wood Handicrafts	Axes, utensils, lamp shades, candle stands, jewellery boxes, bangle holders.

**Source: Compiled by author(s)**

**Export Promotion council for Handicrafts:** The Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts was established in the year 1986-87 with a major objective of promoting, supporting, protecting, maintaining and increasing the exports of Handicrafts. It is an apex body of handicraft exporters who promote the exports of Handicrafts and help in projecting the image of the Indian handicrafts globally. The council has also created the necessary infrastructure for the promotion of exports and has also provided marketing facilities as well as information which can be availed both by member exporters as well as importers. Apart from this it also aims at offering the professional advice as well as the services to the members for the purpose of technology upgradation. It helps in the organization of fairs as well as exhibitions, interacts

between the exporting community and the government at both the central as well as State level.  
(epch.in)

**Table 3 : Exports of goods and services as (a percentage of GDP) from 2012 to 2020.**

Year	Exports of goods and services as a percentage of GDP
2012	24.5%
2013	25.4%
2014	23.0%
2015	19.8%
2016	19.2%
2017	18.8%
2018	19.9%
2019	18.4%
2020	18.7%

**Source:** <https://databank.worldbank.org>

Interpretation: The table shows a consistent change in the exports of goods and services in the form of percentage from the year 2012 to 2020. In the year 2012 where the percentage share of exports in the GDP was 24.5 followed by a slight change upward in 2013. After that it has been declining till 2017 followed by a slight increase in 2018. Thus, there has been a consistent change in the percentage of exports of goods and services from India.

**Handicrafts and Globalization :** The term globalization may be defined as the process for the integration of various economies of world without creating any sort of hindrance s in the free flow of goods and services and capital, thus signifying the internatioGlobalization may be defined as the process of integrating various economies of the world without creating any hindrances in the free flow of goods and services, technology, capital and even labour or human capital. Therefore, it signifies internationalization plus liberalization, through which the world has become a small global village. ( S. Muthukaruppan)

Globalization of Indian crafts has a very glorious past and a history of very rich and diverse culture and tradition and have occupied an important place in maintaining the glory of this country. The versitality of the various materials which are used in the making of various items of handicrafts such as wood, stone, metal, grass, glass, cane and bamboo has made all these products unique. With the advancement of time Indian society has undergone a number of changes and opened up the economy by adopting globalisation. The increasing opportunities for the Indian crafts in the globalized world was seen when the exports of the handicraft products showed an increase from approx. 1200 crores to approx. 32,553.crores by 2022. The growth of handicrafts sector in India saw an increasing trend in the growth during the phase

of globalization . The Handicrafts and Handlooms Exports Corporations of India(HHEC) , a Government of India undertaking which was established in 1962 has been involved actively in the promotion of handicrafts as well as handlooms. The prospects of the growth of this industry lie in the diversification of crafts and in a highly competitive market like India there is a great need for these crafts to be ahead of its all competitors .

**Exports of Handicrafts:** The Handicraft exports from India are one of the major sources of revenue for the country. India is very well known for being the largest exporters of handicraft items throughout the world. The Handicraft industry owes to its credit of being the provider of employment opportunities to more than six million people including women who can fully utilise their talent so as to earn a proper livelihood. The exports of Handicraft are of great importance because of having low capital investment and generator of foreign exchange income. The development of Handicrafts in India has been related to exports during the last many decades. The Tenth Five year Plan recorded a total production of handicrafts amounting to Rs. 28,813 crores of which handicrafts were of Rs. 11,525 crores which were consumed at domestic level and the remaining were exported to various countries. Similarly, the 11<sup>th</sup> Five year plan recorded the decline in the production of handicrafts to Rs. 17,557 crores. The year 2021 -22 has witnessed an increase in the exports of handicrafts from 25,680 crore to 33,253 crore , however the sector holds tremendous potential in terms of having the capacity to strengthen the exports further. (Pib,delhi,28<sup>th</sup> June.2022) .

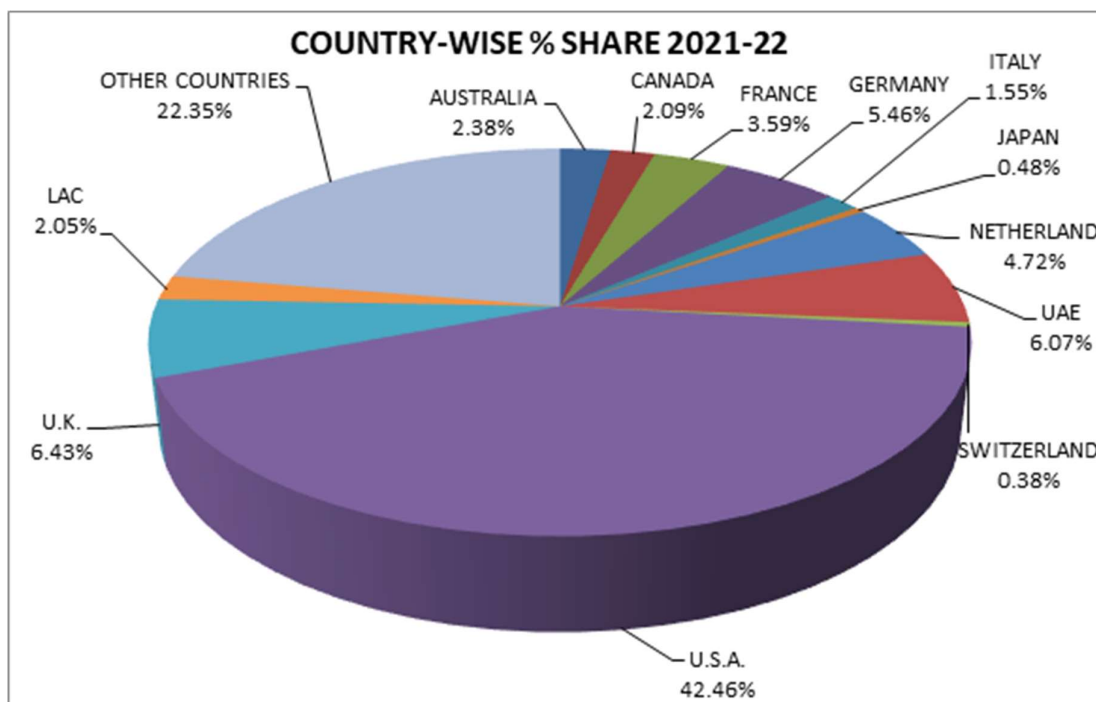
**Table 4 : Exports of Handicrafts from India**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Exports of Handicrafts (in crores)</b>	<b>Annual Growth Rate</b>
<b>2012-13</b>	<b>13892.59</b>	<b>-----</b>
<b>2013-14</b>	<b>19103.98</b>	<b>0.37512</b>
<b>2014-15</b>	<b>20082.53</b>	<b>0.051222</b>
<b>2015-16</b>	<b>21557.12</b>	<b>0.073427</b>
<b>2016-17</b>	<b>24392.39</b>	<b>0.131524</b>
<b>2017-18</b>	<b>23029.36</b>	<b>-0.05588</b>

2018-19	25548.97	0.109409
2019-20	25270.14	-0.01091
2020-21	25679.98	0.016218
2021-22	33253.00	0.2949

Source: Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts

Figure 1: Country wise Percentage share of Handicrafts in 2021-22



Source: Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts

Table 5: Export of Handicrafts from India in Percentage in 2021-22

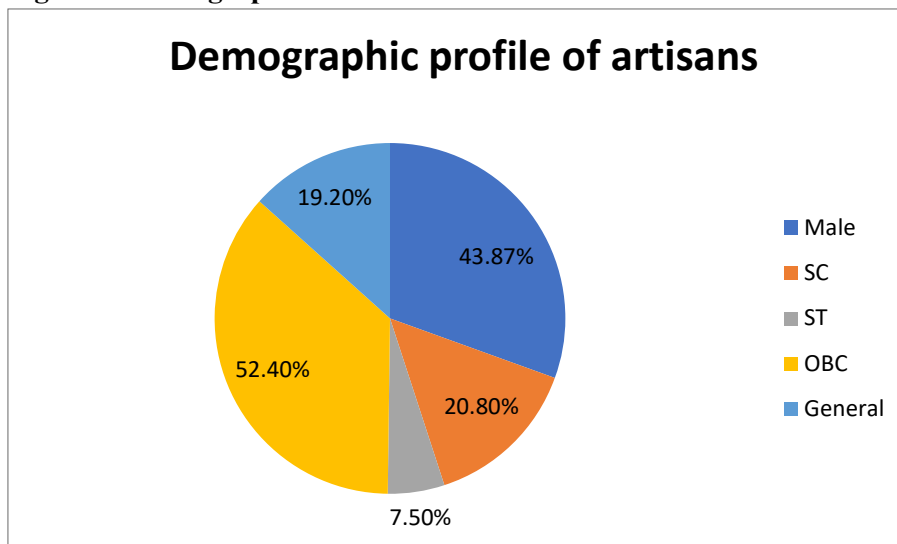
Country	% share in Exports of Handicrafts from India
Australia	2.38%
Canada	2.09%
France	3.59%

Germany	5.46%
Italy	1.55%
Japan	0.48%
Netherlands	4.72%
UAE	6.43%
Switzerland	0.38%
U.S.A.	42.46%
U.K.	6.43%
L.A.C	2.05%
Other Countries	22.35%

**Source: Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (epch.in)**

**Employment of Artisans:** The Handicraft industry has been a generator of employment for more than 7 million artisans but the last census for artisans was conducted in 2013 in which the enumeration of crafts persons was made. After that no effort has been made for the count of crafts persons in India. Pehchan initiative is one of the recent efforts in which the number of enrolled artisans are to provide for registration and identity cards to the handicraft artisans and link them with the national database. 72 categories of craft which include miscellaneous craft categories are issued to the Handicraft artisans

**Figure 2: Demographic Profile of Artisans**



**Source: Compiled by Author(s)**



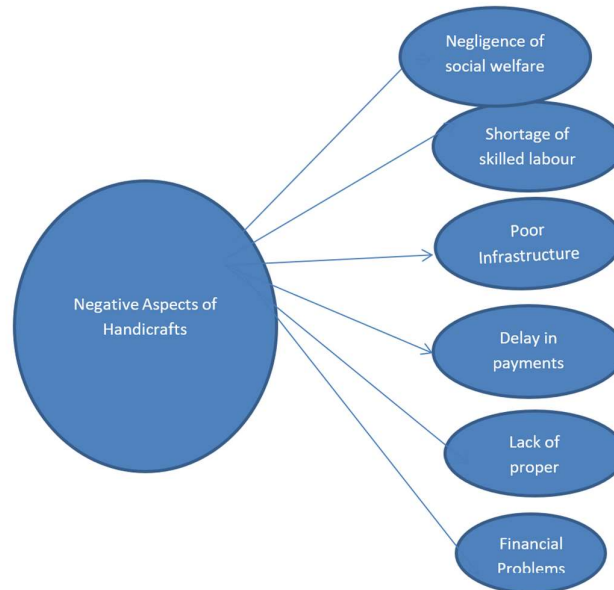
**Impact of Globalisation on Handicrafts:** The Small Scale Industries in India have been suffering from a number of problems and a mix of opinions exists among the people as to the effects of the globalisation on Handicraft Industry also.

**Positive Impact of Globalisation on Handicrafts**



The small scale industry in India has been suffering from lack of technology in which the foreign companies play a vital role by the introduction of new technology and now-how and also opened up the opportunities for entering the world market. This may lead to the creation of more opportunities for generation of employment. The major products of handicrafts have an excellent hold in the world market and most of these results have been due to the global coverage of these crafts.

**Negative Aspects of Globalisation on Handicrafts**



A number of issues have been faced as regards the negative aspects of globalisation on Handicrafts as it requires huge investment and as a result its growth in terms of units, employment and exports has somewhat fallen down. Moreover, the lack of reliable and static infrastructure as well as lack of proper technology has somehow created hindrances in the way of smooth flow of work in this industry.

**Government Intervention and Crafts :** The Handicraft sector is functioning under the aegis of Ministry of Textiles, Government of India and is currently implementing two umbrella schemes since the 12<sup>th</sup> five year plan namely National Handicraft Development programme and Comprehensive Cluster Development Programme. During the Ninth five year plan, the office was implementing 34 schemes at the of Handicrafts, however this number was brought down to 8 generic schemes 10<sup>th</sup> plan. Out of these 8 new generic schemes 7 schemes were implemented in the 10<sup>th</sup> FYP. During the 11<sup>th</sup> Five year plan, eight existing schemes were clubbed and converted into six schemes and then two more schemes were introduced. At the beginning of the 11th Plan, the eight existing operational schemes were clubbed and converted into six Schemes. Subsequently, two more Schemes were introduced. The schemes are centrally sponsored schemes and are implemented through the Development commissioner of Handicrafts. They aim at providing the welfare measures to the artisans and also provide for the holistic and sustainable development of the handicrafts sector.

Presently there are two major schemes for the Handicraft Sector :

National Handicraft Development Programme

Comprehensive Cluster Development Programme

**National Handicraft development Programme(12<sup>th</sup> FYP) :** The National Handicrafts Development Programme is a Central Sector Scheme, and the assistance is made available to the implementing agencies such as Handicraft Corporations which are both at Central and State level, NGOs etc. The programme encompasses a number of schemes as follows:

**A. The National Handicraft Development Programme has the following components:**

- 1) Ambedkar Hastshilp Vikas Yojana (AHVY),
- 2) Design and technology Up gradation

- 3) Human Resource Development.
- 4) Marketing Support and Services
- 5) Research and Development

**a) AMBEDKAR HASTSHILP YOJANA:** The Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hastshilp Vikas Yojna (AHVY) was launched in 2001-02 with an objective of need-based integrated development of potential handicrafts clusters across the country. AHVY Scheme introduced a comprehensive cluster approach for the development of the handicraft clusters, with a focus on empowerment and sustainability of artisans.

**This scheme has the following sub schemes:**

1. **Dastkar Shastikaran Yojana:** The Dastkar Shastikaran scheme has the following sub components as community empowerment for mobilisation of artisans into Self help groups ,preparation of diagnostic study reports, Wage compensation to cluster manager and comprehensive development support.
2. **Design and technology Upgradation:** The scheme operates in terms of development of design and technology workshops, integrated design and technology development projects, providing assistance to exporters and entrepreneurs and commercial market intelligence by way of design and technical colour forecast.
3. **Human Resource Development :** This scheme aims at providing training through established institutions ,provision of handicrafts training programme, providing training through Guru shishya programme and training of the trainers.
4. **Direct benefit to artisans:** This scheme aims at providing benefits by way of Rajiv Gandhi Shilpi Swasthya Bima Yojna, Bima Yojna for Handicraft Artisans, providing support to artisans in indigent circumstances, Credit guarantee Scheme, Interest Subvention Scheme Issue of ID cards and creation of Data Base. Shilp Guru Award, National Award and National Merit Certificate for outstanding contribution in Handicrafts sector.
5. **Infrastructure and Technology Support:** The scheme involves the setting up of Mini Urban Haat, emporia, marketing sourcing hubs, design and craft schools, handicraft museums, design banks, craft based resource clusters, common facility centre and raw material depot.
6. **Technology Up gradation Assistance to Exporters:** This scheme includes the setting up of testing laboratories, crafts village, integrated Handicraft Park, Construction of office buildings

**b) Marketing Support:** This scheme involves the participation in domestic marketing events in India in the form of Gandhishilp Bazaar, craft bazaars, exhibitions ,hiring of built up spaces in the events which are organized by other institutions, organising national handicraft fair, craft awareness programme and demonstration programme. It also provides assistance for participation in marketing events abroad as folk craft festivals of India, road shows, cultural exchange programme and compliance and other welfare measures,conducting of buyer seller meet in India and abroad ,providing for publicity and brand promotion.

**c) Research and Development:** The scheme of research and development includes conducting of surveys and studies on different topics such as specific crafts, availability of raw materials, living and working conditions of artisans, living and working conditions of artisans,

areas which require specific studies for the upliftment of weaker sections as well as conducting of workshops, seminars on the issues which are concerned with the specific nature related to handicrafts.

**d) Direct benefit to artisans:** This scheme includes many sub schemes such as Rajiv Gandhi Shilpi Swasthya Bima Yojna, Bima Yojna for Handicraft Artisans, support to Artisans in Indigent Circumstances, credit guarantee scheme, Interest subvention scheme, Issue of ID cards, awards for outstanding contribution in handicraft sector.

**e) Infrastructure and Technology Support:** The scheme includes the setting up of urban haat , mini urban haat, emporia, handicraft museums, design banks, craft based resource clusters, integrated handicraft parks, construction of office buildings etc.

**B. Comprehensive Handicrafts Cluster Development Scheme (Mega Cluster Scheme )** :The Comprehensive Handicrafts Cluster Development Scheme (Mega Cluster Scheme). The major objectives of the Mega cluster approach is to gear up the infrastructural and production chain at the Handicraft clusters which have been unorganized for a long period of time and could not keep pace with the high levels of modernization and developments. The major prospects of this sector lie in the infrastructural upgradation, machinery modernization ,designing prospects and technical know –how. There are 9 Handicraft Mega clusters which have been sanctioned in Naraspur,Moradabad,Mirzapur, Srinagar, Jodhpur, Barielly, Lucknow, Kutchh and J&K.

**Challenges :** The major challenges faced by the industry include:

- Lack of infrastructure which includes proper workshops.
- Unawareness among the craftsmen about the international requirements and the market.
- No coordination between the government bodies as well as the private owners.
- Lack of proper information about the market trends.
- Lack of awareness among the artisans as well as the manufacturers about various government schemes.
- Lack of promotion strategies for the products.
- Lack of the ability to reach the masses.
- Lack of the interest of the masses to keep up with the profession as it requires lots of patience.

**Conclusions and Suggestions:** The era of globalisation has opened the doors for rapid industrialisation in India as the world is becoming interconnected but despite of the globalisation in the present world which mainly targets at profit making the replacement of culture is made with the global brands at many a times. Thus there is an urgent need to look for the preservice of the culture along with the meeting the needs of the market. Despite these challenges being faced by the industry there is emerging demand for the handicraft goods in different countries like USA, UK, Germany, France etc. Moreover, taking into consideration the idea of sustainability which is the utmost need of the hour and the great export potential of this industry today the fashion industry has been showing increasing interest in these crafts. Certain points need to be considered for improvement:

- There has been a declining trend in the number of artisans who are ready to work in this industry as it is a work of patience. Many of the artisans have left their ancestral occupations due to this factor. Moreover, they are not much paid for this work so the urgent need of the hour is to gather the lost interest of these artisans in the work by offering them higher wages and also creating awareness on their part about the schemes of government.
- More and more emphasis is required to be given on design innovation which can help in the craft revival, thus creating increased demand of the crafts in the world as well as national and local market.
- Since the goods are facing competition in the market from cheap machine made goods but this fact can also not be ignored that the handicrafts goods produced do not make any compromise with the quality. The goods need to be competitive to survive in the global market.

The Indian Handicraft industry holds a great potential for development as it is having adequate manpower as well as raw material. The craft of India has made people mesmerised with their creativity, aesthetic and utilitarian value. There has been a considerable change in the buying patterns of consumers, thus the industry needs to mould itself to cater to the changing needs.

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