



Challenges and Opportunities: Tribal Community and Handlooms in Uttarakhand, India

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Received: 27.10.2022; Revised: 13.12.2022; Accepted: 17.12.2022

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Abstract: The textile business in India is extremely fragmented and labor-intensive. Unorganized Sectors and small and medium industries dominate the textile industry. Foreign investors are not interested in investing in the textile industry, which is also a source of concern. The Governments policies in India and tax structure do not favour this business. The textile sector is extremely competitive, and the current environment necessitates enterprises benchmarking their products against the finest in the world and attempting to improve quality and manufacturing procedures. The study was proposed to provide information about the textile industry in India and to discuss the prospects, difficulties and recommendations for their upliftment with special emphasis on the Bhotiya community handlooms.

Keywords: Handlooms • India • Bhotiya Community • Challenges • Opportunities

Introduction

The fabric manufacturing industry occupies a prominent position in the Indian economic system (Khatua, 2000). It specifies among the most essential human requirements, which is specific clothing (Kuznets, Simon 1971). From the fundamental requirement of raw materials to the final merchandise, the Indian textile industry acts as a self-regulating system, with enormous value expansion at each stage of processing (Gherzi 2000). This entire industry is treated as a self-contained and resourceful industry, from the production of raw materials to the transportation of finished goods, with significant value added at each stage of the process; it is seen as a major contribution to the national economy (Mishra, 1993). After China and the United States, India is the world's third-largest cotton producer, and it is also the world's second-largest cotton consumer, after China (Whalley, 1997). Following China, India is the world's second-largest fabric producer (Sreenivashan & Kashturi 1984). Following horticulture, the Indian fabric and garment industry is the second most important economic activity in

terms of creating a huge number of jobs. The entire Indian fabric manufacturing business is one of the notable supporters of the whole yield of the rapidly rising Indian contemporary area; it accounts for 14% of all industrial manufacturing in India (Sundar & Shetty 2001). The growth of the Indian fabric manufacturing industry, as well as the contribution of the fabric manufacturing sector to India's GDP, which now stands at 4%, is significant. It is also one of the country's most important sources of fare profit, accounting for roughly 16-17 percent of all out-fare earnings. Its current offer in the manufacturing value added is valued at roughly 12%. (Sengupta, 2001).

The Indian handloom industry is one of the country's oldest and largest cottage industries, having a long history of exceptional craftsmanship stretching back thousands of years and embodying the lively Indian culture. Indian artists, who date back to Egyptian Babylonian times, possessed such great command over their fabrics that they were admired around the world for their



generations-old hand spinning, weaving, and printing abilities.

Historically, the handloom industry could be found in every state of India, and each region had its own unique take on its handloom product, such as the Tie and Die technique from Rajasthan, Chanderi from Madhya Pradesh, or Jacquard from Uttar Pradesh. Due to their rich variety, the Indian Handloom Industry had a constant high demand in the Indian market as well as all over the world for their craftsmanship.

About Bhotiya Community

The Bhotiya community is a tribal group that lives in the higher Himalayan gorges of Uttarakhand's Kumaon and Garhwal geo-cultural areas. The shaukas of Kumaon, as well as the tolchhas and marchhas of Garhwal, belong to these communities (Das 1982). The word "bod," which is the traditional Tibetan term for Tibet, inspired the Bhotiya community's peculiar name. Now, the term "Bhotiya" has become a phrase that is regularly used throughout Nepal, as defined by the Indian constitution (Negi & Kandari 2017). The bhutiya moniker is also occasionally used, but it is more frequently associated with the inhabitants of Sikkim state (Das 1982).

The Bhotia Himalayan weavers' community is largely responsible for Uttarakhand's weaving industry. Other weaving communities in the area include the Rompas and Kolees. The textile sector produces a wide range of products, from every day like socks, caps, scarves, sweaters, and mufflers to more specialist items like shawls and carpets.

Traditional textile designs, which have been passed down from generation to generation, perfectly reflect the peacefulness and grace of the Himalayas. The motifs used by traditional weavers in Uttarakhand occasionally display fascinating influences from neighboring states such as Tibet, Nepal, and China. Regardless of these influences, Uttarakhand's traditional textiles always have their own distinct ethnic

identity. Himalayan climate, as well as native sheep farming traditions, have aided the region's natural development of the woolen sector. Weavers are primarily rural women from hill tribes who use very basic tools and techniques to create stunning hand-woven goods. It's incredible to see how the people of these Himalayan communities have managed to keep some of their age-old craft techniques and methods alive. Primarily the handloom businesses are run as a family business, however, there has been a steep decline in their number. According to (Kumar, S. 2021), family businesses do not survive beyond second and third generation.

Challenges Faced by Bhotiya Community

Among all the weaving communities, the Bhotiya community has the exclusivity for making thulama or chutka. But there has been a visible shrink in the number of Bhotiya tribals.

One major challenge is that Bhotias are unable to obtain raw materials from Tibet, therefore they must rely on a different form of wool called Australian wool, which is derived from Himachal Pradesh's Gaddi tribes (Mehta 1960). Home-grown wool in the same villages is considerably more difficult. As a result, all tribe members are reducing their flocks of sheep and goats and it is becoming a source of concern that a few households are keeping their sheep and goats in the villages (Negi & Khandari 2017).

Everyone begins to use new techniques and modern equipment that are filled with cutting-edge technology. In the woolen industry, a loom is employed. However, the Bhotias group is still unable to apply the aforementioned strategies to their business activities. It has been discovered that only the tribes of Uttarkashi use modern equipment in the woolen business. Topi, mufflers, shawls, pankhi, thulma or blankets and carpets are the most popular goods made by the weavers



residing in Chamoli District around Badrinath shrine (Bhatt 2016; Samal et.al 2010).

Bhotiya tribe people practice woolen crafts in the entire Chamoli district. Bhotiyas are traditionally a trading community (Kumar, S., Kumar, S., & Rawat, 2021). As a result, the majority of the original residents lived in their own environment and remained isolated from the rest of the world until a few centuries earlier. According to (Majumdar, 1944), the Bhotiya community lives in the mountains and woodland and majority of times rely on the food from farming and hunting. However, in recent years, a small number of these tribes have formed alliances with higher social levels. In this sense, their socio-social situation has changed as a result of their transformation into non-ancestral networks.

It has been discovered that the demand for engagement and occupation created by the rise of the art and craft sector can provide locally accessible resources that may be used to expand the handicraft sector of Uttarakhand.

Employability prospects can be divided into three categories: (1) Self-employment (2) Consistent Employment (3) Daily Wages.

Literacy is quite low in both rural and urban areas. The majority of Bhotia families are unable to send their children to school and rely on their assistance at home, with the goats and sheep, or in the family business. Medical facilities are scarce, particularly in Uttarakhand and Himachal's remote highland regions, and when they are present, they use both indigenous and contemporary medications

Opportunities for Bhotiya Community's Handloom Occupation

After agriculture, the handloom sector is the most important economic activity, employing more than 30 lakh weavers directly and indirectly. This sector accounts for almost 22% of total cloth production in the country, as well as a significant portion of the country's export revenue.

The Uttarakhand government is giving services in the training programme with the support of master craftsmen to simplify the state's artists through the establishment of a department named "Udyog Mitra" in each district business centre. The state government plans to launch three urban haats initiatives in Dehradun, Nainital / Haldwani, and Haridwar. Recently, the Indian government has partnered with state governments to launch a programme called "EkIkrit Hathkargha Vikas Yojana," which will assist individuals in delivering excellent export goods through group training. Furthermore, trifled have inspired artists in indigenous societies to create arts and crafts objects. Special Tribe's shops are developed to promote their distinctive tribal handicrafts and arts by purchasing the crafts from tribal artists at compensable rates and selling them at such sort of shops, as well as staging exhibitions at various cities across India from time to time.

The government has made many measures to improve the condition of living of the Bhotiya Tribe. The promotion council for handlooms in Uttarakhand has aggressively promoted and concentrated on growing their participation in fairs promoting local handlooms all across the country, which is one of the primary efforts made. The Uttarakhand Handloom & Handicraft Development Council is the state's top body for promoting handicrafts and handlooms in the state. The UHHDC is a body that has been established by the government of Uttarakhand. It serves as a catalyst for motivating, guiding, and sorting out craftspeople, as well as providing regular stages for coordinating contacts between creators and specialists, producers, and buyers. Woolen handlooms, cotton handlooms, silk products, items made from other natural fibers, and a variety of other creative mixtures are all under the control of the state.



Recommendations for Development of Bhotiya Community

A robust policy framework, coupled with a dedication to implementation, will undoubtedly secure the industry's bright future. Some of the remedial measures could be summarised as follows: i) A shift in the weaver's perspective is required. They must be focused on improving their skills, knowledge, and technology through some type of grass-roots extension/exposure program in order to assure product quality, increased efficiency, and increased productivity levels. (ii) Co-operative societies should be created as the handloom industry's nerve centres. Each society should be provided with sufficient working cash to ensure that its operations function smoothly. NABARD, State Co-operative Banks, District Central Co-operative Banks, and other institutions are now providing financial aid to the handloom industry. (iii) The weaving industry must adopt a market orientation that is collaborative. It should respond to changing market demands and give the necessary linking support to individual weaver societies, as the average weaver is unable to research market trends and implement them in their own production unit. For marketing purposes, the business mostly relies on conventional buyers from lower income levels. The market outlet should be expanded to include customers from higher socioeconomic groups. Government-sponsored Training programs should be organized to get the new entrepreneurs acquainted with the tricks of the trade. Special rules and relaxations should be provided for women entrepreneurs (Kumar, S et al. 2021). This could include product developments tailored to the preferences of those in the upper income bracket. Another key measure that will boost the marketability of their products is the introduction of handloom product branding. A national handloom research centre should be established to do research on customer

demands, styles, spinning technology, building materials, and other concerns.

Conclusion

Authors after reviewing the various factors affecting the Bhotiya community, their occupation, challenges, and opportunities have presented recommendations. The reviewed literature and publications by the government indicated that a keen focus should be on the development and preserving the culture and traditions of the Bhotiya community. It is also identified that the government also is focusing on the development of the Bhotiya Community. This review article sheds light on various challenges and opportunities faced by Bhotiya community and presents the recommendations operating at various levels of an organization developing for their lives.

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