



Santosh Gangwar, Minister of State for Ministry of Textiles and Kirron Kher, Member of Parliament, BJP at IHB store



Prime Minister, Narendra Modi and Santosh Gangwar, Minister of State for Ministry of Textiles at IHB launch



'INDIA HANDLOOM' BRAND: INVIGORATING TRADITIONAL WEAVES OF INDIA

India Handloom Brand (IHB), an initiative of the Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India, is on a mission to revamp the Indian handloom industry and turn it into a thriving sector. The brand is looking to establish a significant offline and online presence in India and also eyeing the potential of export markets.

By Namita Bhagat

India's rich and diverse textile heritage continues to exude its age-old charm even today! The textile tradition varies from region to region and finds connoisseurs in India and abroad who admire the craft and value the skill and labour that go into weaving the magic of Banarasi, Kanjeevaram and Kota Doria sarees; or producing a beautiful piece of Chikan, Phulkari, Kashmiri, Kantha or Zardorzi embroidery. Not just women, many a man cannot resist the elegance of Indian cotton, khadi and silk materials when they want to dress up 'ethnic'.

Handloom is one of the ancient cottage industries in India. Decentralized and largely unorganized, it provides direct employment to a sizeable rural population besides engaging many indirectly. However, over the last few decades, the industry has been struggling due to the influx of a plethora of modern fabrics and mechanization of textile manufacturing. Hand-woven fabric making is a time-intensive process and poor marketing added to its woes. Save for the government patronage, the handloom industry would have vanished into oblivion.

In recent times, the Government of India has taken several measures to put the sector back on track. The launch of India Handloom Brand (IHB) by Ministry of Textiles is one such step which aims to revamp the handloom industry and turn it into a thriving business for all stake holders.



– Alok Kumar,
Development Commissioner (Handlooms)

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The brand story

IHB was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the occasion of first National Handloom Day on August 7, 2015. The day commemorates the spirit of "Swadeshi" movement started in 1905 during the national freedom movement to resurrect indigenous products and production practices. Earlier in 2006, the government had introduced the "Handloom Mark" scheme to provide assurance to the consumers on authenticity of handloom products, but it did not cover the aspect of quality assurance. However, the India Handloom Brand stands for originality as well as quality of handloom products.

The Office of Development Commissioner for Handlooms has been entrusted with the responsibility to promote and market the IHB products.

Alok Kumar, Development Commissioner (Handlooms), states, "The aim of India Handloom Brand is to promote the production of niche handloom products having high quality with traditional as well as contemporary designs, zero defects and zero effect on environment." As per him, IHB will differentiate high quality handloom products in the market and assure the consumers by endorsing quality of handloom products in terms of use of 100 percent natural raw material, safe dyes, high level of colour fastness, GI Compliance, other quality parameters and by ensuring social and environmental compliances in their production.

The registration under IHB is granted to certain specified eligible entities in respect of identified product categories which meet prescribed quality standards. The registration process includes stringent testing of samples in government laboratory. "Since October 2015, out of 700+ samples submitted, only 172 registrations in 42 product categories have been granted," Kumar informs.

The brand has come up with its own website, www.indiahandloombrand.gov.in, to facilitate the handloom producers to register online with IHB. It contains all the information that the producers, retailers and even consumers will find useful.

Unique proposition

The concept of "India Handloom" is to brand the handloom products, which are exclusively catering to the "quality" need of the socio-environmentally conscious consumers. The brand focus is to preserve the sanctity of the traditional hand-woven textiles as it incorporates a more contemporary look to the styling. The collections are made using textiles from different parts of the country to create



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Managing Director, Central Cottage
Industries Corporation of India Ltd (CCIC)

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a distinct identity and promote India’s vibrant culture and heritage. Synonymous with comfort, style and fashion, IHB is looking to develop a niche market space for assorted range of quality handloom products targeted especially at the younger consumers.

Product range

IHB offers a variety of handloom products sourced from some of the exotic locations of India. The product range comprises Saree: Balarampuram Cotton, Banaras Brocade Silk, Banarasi Butidar Silk, Baluchari Silk, Jamdani Cotton, Kota Doria, Tancoi Silk, Chanderi, Kancheepuram Silk, Pochhampally and more; Fabrics: Banaras Tancoi Silk, Banaras Cut-Work, Plain Tussar, Ikat, Pochampalli, etc; Salem Silk Dhoti, Kullu Shawl and Pochampalli Bedspreads, etc.

Partners in mission

The Office of Development Commissioner (Handlooms) has partnered with leading retail stores (government, cooperatives and private outlets) to sell India Handloom Brand products. The partner stores will set aside an exclusive area within their premises for

showcasing and selling IHB branded products only. Some of them include: Central Cottage Industries Emporium (owned by Ministry of Textile); Andhra Pradesh State Handloom Weavers Cooperative Society Ltd. (APCO); Maharashtra State Handloom Corporation Ltd. (MSHC), Assam Apex weavers & Artisans Cooperative Federation Ltd. (ARTFED); J&K State Handloom Development Corporation Ltd. (JKSHDC); Bhutti Weavers Co-op. Society Ltd. (BHUTTICO); Telangana State Handicrafts Development Corporation Ltd. (TSHDC); H.P. State Handloom and Handicrafts Development Cooperative Federation Ltd. (Himbunkar), along with well-known private stores like Biba Apparels (Delhi), RMKV Silks (Chennai), Shantalata Silk (Bengaluru), Kalaniketan (Mumbai) among others. Aside brick-and-mortar stores, IHB has also joined hands with some online players.

Creating offline presence

The first ever IHB store was rolled out in March 2016 at Central Industries Cottage Emporium, Janpath, New Delhi. The brand has already entered into agreements for opening of IHB sales counters at 72 retail stores throughout the country, of which four are now operational at Delhi, Bengaluru, Mumbai and Chennai. Significantly, all current four stores are located within the Cottage Emporia.

On association with IHB, Pramod Nagpal, Managing Director, Central Cottage Industries Corporation of India Ltd. (CCIC), says, “We are happy to be a part of India Handloom Brand products. The IHB logo will be an assurance to customer of quality and indigenouness. It is a great initiative by the government to display the hand-woven strengths and sell the original and high quality products made by natural dyes. As the Govt. is taking a number of initiatives to promote weavers, we are committed to provide original and high quality IHB logo products to our customers”.





Kumar at IHB added, “The store is an excellent retail platform provided by CCIC, exclusive for India Handloom Brand high quality product. The government has been making efforts in popularising indigenous products and this provides an ideal platform to showcase and sell the wide array of products in the textile segment that our country has been producing.”

With rapid expansion underway, several new IHB outlets within the Cottage and other partner stores are expected to start functioning soon.

Leveraging the online

The brand is also leveraging the online route to reach out to customers far and wide. As of now, it has signed up with nine e-commerce portals, viz. Amazon, Craftsvilla, Flipkart, eBay, Weavesmart, Chasingsuns, GoCoop, Gaatha and Sareez.com. These shopping websites will cater to different regions keeping in mind the country’s vastness and scattered nature of handloom industry. They are creating page/link for IHB-approved products as well as Handloom Mark products. The weaver/cooperative agencies are being trained by the partner websites on uploading their products.

In Kumar’s words, the e-commerce initiative allows weavers/agencies to get better price for their IHB products and immediate payment to level of 92 percent of sale price. Most importantly, they are

able to connect with the world and get recognition. The success of the initiative can be assessed from the fact that one of our partner portals was able to register 24 societies covering over 23,000 weavers whilst other has covered 542 weaver/agencies, hosts 9,000 handloom products and achieved around ₹100 lakh sale in the last three months. With the concept gaining wider acceptance as mark of genuinity, several more e-commerce platforms have expressed interest to sell IHB-approved handloom products.

Benefit to weavers

The weavers – the backbone of Indian handloom industry – are socially and economically marginalized. The government has been focusing on encouraging Indian artisans and empowering them. IHB too envisions creating pride of ownership among the weavers as to getting their products registered with it after complying with specification and testing. The premium branding will enable the weavers to use superior quality raw material and make fine quality products and increase their sales and earnings. The IHB logo on the products will help them earn consumer trust for quality. What’s more, the registered users are given assistance for institutional finance, design development, technical assistance under the National Handloom Development Program, as per prescribed guidelines.

Kumar elaborates how the brand works for benefit of the weavers. “The effort is to link the handloom weavers/producers to the best retail stores directly, wherein

their products will be showcased and sold. As such, the weavers will be able to get better rates, get regular and continuous business throughout the year and also make their products available across India. IHB took the first step in this direction by organizing Buyer– Seller meet in Hyderabad early April this year, where 72 suppliers showcased their products and retail stores like CCIC, RMKV, VASANSI, PSR Textile, Radha Silk, Handloom House, etc. and various e-commerce partners participated. ₹70 lakh worth orders were placed in the meet itself apart from 26 business inquiries.”

The strategy is to promote the sales of handloom products by facilitating supply of quality products to consumers and generate repeat sales resulting in better remuneration to handloom weavers. Moreover, the use of e-commerce will help handloom weavers in remote areas to have access to a larger market and fast disposal of their products yielding them better realisation of their produce.

The way forward

According to Kumar, IHB’s endeavour to create linkages between weavers and retail stores and e-commerce portals has begun to fructify. A large number of handloom weavers from across the country have started showing interest in joining the IHB initiative. The brand is now looking to establish a significant countrywide presence via the offline and online channels and would also like to tap the high growth potential of exports markets.

