

A Preliminary Review of Gujarat's Handicraft Sector with Special Focus on State Government's Initiative to Promote the Sector

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Abstract

Handicraft sector world over is mostly decentralized and unorganized sector, largely dominated by local artisans. The state of Gujarat in India has also been blessed with a prosperous and vibrant tradition of handicrafts, however the sector has been predominantly home-based or MSME businesses which is again substantially decentralized and unorganized in tune with worldwide scenario in the industry. Until recent past, handicraft units in Gujarat were highly scattered and there was absence of common integrated structure and mechanism to document and map artisans and their art in different parts of Gujarat.

Craft of Gujarat is Gujarat Government's initiative to link craftsmen across the state. It is a common and integrated web portal essentially designed to connect rural craftsmen and to consumers across the globe. It is the first ever initiative in entire nation, which was envisaged by INDEXT-C, which comes under Cottage and Rural Industries sector- Industries and Mines Department, Government of Gujarat. The craft of Gujarat is a unique platform which gives opportunities to all the artisans of Gujarat to display their talent to a huge segment of potential customers and art connoisseurs around the world. Craft of Gujarat is a governmental entrepreneurship effort to revive the handicraft sector cluster and grouping of craftsmen through information technology interface. How far it would boost the exports of handicrafts is still an unanswered question. This Research Paper attempts to trace the roots of art and handicraft sector of Gujarat along with the details of State Government's Initiative to promote the sector so that the entrepreneurs in this sector get a global market to showcase their traditional art with enhanced business opportunities.

Keywords: Cluster Development, Entrepreneurship, Handicraft, Unorganized Sector, Sustainable Development.

Introduction

The sector of Handicrafts embodies the rich traditional, historical and cultural diversity that distinguishes India from the rest of the world. Be it the Kashida embroidery of Kashmir, Naga Morungs, and Paitkar art work from Jharkhand or the Bhandhej and Toran from Gujarat, each of these crafts is enriched with centuries of dedicated refinement and has a unique story to tell. Equally importantly, these two sectors constitute the only industry in the country that provide low cost, green livelihood opportunities to millions of families, supplementing incomes in seasons of agrarian distress, checking migration and preserving traditional economic relationships. With women contributing the majority of pre- and post-loom labour and accounting for over 50% of artisans in the country, and a significant mass of craftsmen consisting of scheduled castes, schedules tribes and religious minorities, the sector also represent the economic lifeline of the most vulnerable sections of our society.

Despite their cultural and economic importance, however, both handlooms and handicrafts sectors suffer from perennial problems of weak infrastructure, inadequate availability of inputs at regular prices, poor supply chain systems and ineffective marketing and sales practices. Limited private entrepreneurial support has increased the sectors' dependence on Government resources and the lack of a universally recognized definition of 'handicraft' remains a challenge. Further, the lack of synergy between handlooms, handicrafts, and khadi and the village industry sectors leads to inefficient utilization of resources. Although these sectors are distinct, they have an undercurrent of commonality. The sectors, therefore, need to be administered with greater synergy.

The announcement of the New Economic Policy (1991) and the opening up of the Indian economy to global players, the Indian handicrafts sector is now confronted with unique set of challenges (Craft Economic and Impact study, April 2011).

India has to face stiff competition from the other developing nations (e.g. China, Turkey, Pakistan, Morocco for hand-knotted carpets; China and Pakistan in textile and handlooms)(Kathuria,1986). Even though there is tremendous potential, the sector is yet to build up a large share in Country's total exports (Uttar Pradesh Development report, 9th Plan). Gujarat, being a prominent handicraft preparing state of the country, is not an exception. In the present paper we would be discussing in detail the initiative state Government of Gujarat to promote Handicraft sector in the state with Craft of Gujarat web portal as the specific case of reference. Craft of Gujarat isGujarat Government's initiative to link craftsmen across the state. It is a common and integrated web portal essentially designed to connect rural craftsmen and to consumers across the globe. It is the first ever initiative in entire nation, which was envisaged by INDEXT-C, which comes under Cottage and Rural Industries sector-Industries and Mines Department, Government of Gujarat. The craft of Gujarat is a unique platform which gives opportunities to all the artisans of Gujarat to display their talent to a huge segment of potential customers and art connoisseurs around the world. Craft of

Gujarat is a governmental entrepreneurship effort to revive the handicraft sector cluster and grouping of craftsmen through information technology interface. We have tried to critically review Gujarat's Handicraft markets and the potential role of e-commerce in enhancing the exports of Handicrafts, with a specific case of Craft of Gujarat web portal.

Review of Literature

Crafts in Gujarat: An Overview

The story of Gujarat unfolds with succession of races and amalgamation of different cultures; resulting into a magnificent fusion of new ideas and traditions. The continuity of such diverge culture of Gujarat has been made vibrant till today, by the craftsman of this state. The Craftsman or 'Kaarigars' (as said locally in Gujarati) of the state have for centuries produced exquisite objects for daily and ceremonial uses. They have taken aid of locally available materials and applied ingenious skills and techniques combining it with right imagination. Every natural resource- clay, wood, stone, metal, cotton, yarn, animal hide and various flora – has been adopted and fashioned, in an array of designs.

Most of the craft traditions that remain alive today are traced to the ancient Indus Valley civilization, of which present day Gujarat was once a part. The rich maritime history of the state also dates back to that period. In mythology, Gujarat is where Lord Krishna came to settle, in Dwarka. Over centuries many communities and tribes arrived and established a place for themselves here. Coming from all directions, by land and sea, some from as far away as Central Asia and Africa, these communities assimilated with the local population and they have created a unique milieu. As a part of many empires and kingdoms-from Mauryan to the Greek, Gupta, Maitrak, Chaulukya, Delhi Sultanate, Gujarat Sultanate, Mughal, Maratha and finally the British-Gujarat constantly benefited from new influences, the imprints of which are still found abundantly in the stone architecture of the state.

Gujarat is made of four distinct cultural zones- North Gujarat, Kachchh, Saurashtra (including Kathiawad) and South Gujarat-each displaying the uniqueness in terrain, people and practices that exist here. Today, the state is home to 289 distinct communities that follow different faiths, customs and traditions. Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, Muslims, Parsis, Christians and their sub-sects, along with pastoral and nomadic tribes, have co-existed for centuries. What bind the people together are the Gujarati language and the activities of day-today life. Preservation of self-identity in this multicultural environment is an innate impulse that is magnificently manifested in the craft traditions, folklore and festivals of the state.

Each village or cluster of villages was once a self-sustained unit, when specialist craftsman produced clay ware, textiles, metalware and other items for local consumption. Over a period of time,certain unique crafts evolved in a particular place or region/district of the state :the 'Patola' at Patan, the lac-coated wood crafts of Sankheda, are just some examples

Table 1. Handicraft Clusters in Gujarat

| Sr No | Products/Arts | Districts/Cluster Practiced Art |
|-------|----------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Aari Bharat | Kutch |
| 2 | Ajrakah | Kutch |
| 3 | Applique/ Patchwork | Vadodara, Patan, Kutch, Ahmedabad |
| 4 | Bamboo mats & Bakets | Dangs, Narmada, Tapi, Navsari |
| 5 | Bandhani (Tie & Dye) | Jamnagar |
| 6 | Beads Accessories | Junagadh |
| 7 | Beads Embroidery | Junagadh |
| 8 | Brass & Copper ware | Mehsana |
| 9 | Brocade Weaving | Surat |
| 10 | Coir | Bhavnagar, Banaskantha, Surendranagar |
| 11 | Dhabla, Tangalia, Sujani & Shawl | Surendranagar, Bharuch, Kutch |
| 12 | Embroideries | Navsari, Surat, Kutch |
| 13 | Hand Block Printing | Kutch, Ahmedabad, Jamnagar |
| 14 | Handloom Weaving | Mehsana, Amreli |
| 15 | Kharek & Paako Bharat | Kutch |
| 16 | Leather Applique | Kutch, Banaskantha |
| 17 | Leather Craft | Kutch, Banaskantha |
| 18 | Leather Embroidery | Kutch, Banaskantha |
| 19 | Ludia Carved Furniture | Kutch |
| 20 | Mashru | Kutch |
| 21 | Metal Armaments & tools | Kutch, Rajkot |
| 22 | Metal Bells and Wind Chimes | Kutch |
| 23 | Mud Relief | Kutch, Surendranagar |
| 24 | Mutwa Bharat | Kutch |
| 25 | Natural Textiles | Ahmedabad |
| 26 | Patola (Double Ikat-Patan) | Patan |
| 27 | Patola (Single Ikat) | Patan |
| 28 | Potter's Wheel | Kutch, Surendranagar |
| 29 | Puppet | Ahmedabad, Kutch |
| 30 | Puppetries | Ahmedabad, Kutch |
| 31 | Rabari Bharat | Kutch, |
| 32 | Rogan | Kutch, |
| 33 | Sandstone | Mehsana |
| 34 | Sankheda Furniture | Vadodara |
| 35 | Silver Jewelry | Tapi, Rajkot, Banaskantha, Vadodara, Dahod |
| 36 | Silver Ware | Kutch |
| 37 | Surf Bharat | Kutch, Banaskantha |
| 38 | Terracotta Statuettes | Banaskantha |
| 39 | White Metal | Gandhinagar, Mehsana, Surendranagar |
| 40 | Wood with Metal | Bhavnagar, Rajkot |
| 41 | Zardosi | Surat, Ahmedabad |

(Source: Prepared by Authors)

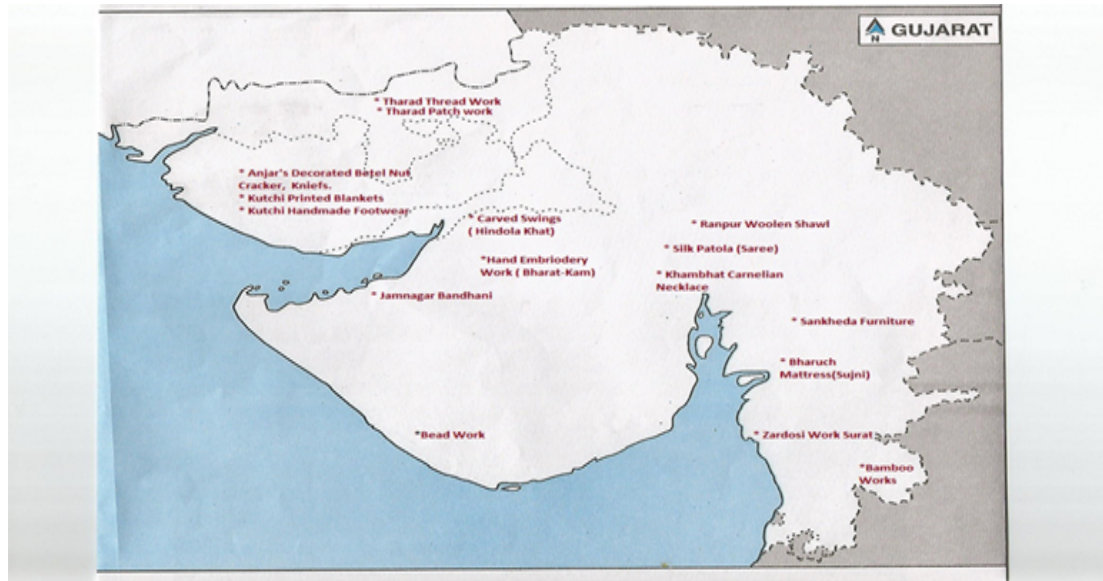


Figure 1. Concentration of Various Handicraft Clusters (Source: GHHDCL)

Thus, the crafts of Gujarat remain alive since prehistoric times until today, can be attributed to the process of continual evolution and the adaptation to changes in social, political and economic trends

Handicrafts of Gujarat hold an important position in the international markets as well because of their variety, color, forms, their utility, usage value and a tradition of historical lineage on which they are based. The cultural entrepreneurship of the state has helped in shaping the identity of the traditional handlooms and handicrafts. A great range of ethnic communities live in the region, most maintaining traditional dress and crafts of many sorts, including weaving, dyeing, printing, bandhani, embroidery, leather work, pottery, woodwork, and metalwork. Originally, crafts existed integrated into local social systems. Design was an integral part of craft, as the artisan was designer, producer and marketer simultaneously.

The organizations may be cooperative, a self-help group, a sakhi-mandal, a section 25 company, a private enterprise or a government organization, the various handicrafts of Gujarat are Textile base embroidery, applique/ patchwork, bamboo craft, bandhani, bead flair, hand painting carved wooden treasure, various types embroidery, hand painted textiles, puppets, coir, leather craft, metal craft, embellished wooden craft.

The most commercial and marketable crafts are textile based embroidered products. There are 27 districts in the state and each one has a distinct community engaged in a form of embroidery. The various types of Aari, Neran, Aahir, Mutwa, Paako, Kharek, Jat, Rabari, Suf, Mochibharat, Jardosibharat, Sadubharat, Chakanbharat, Mukko, Gotanv, Katrichopat, Chakan, Kambira, Khuditebha, and traditional tie and dye and bead work. Block printing Kalamkari and weaving, Patola weaving, Ajrakh, Bandhani, Rogan and Ikat, Mashru.

This traditional handicraft are given value addition, designed and developed into products viz- range of home furnishing, garments, accessories and home décor etc.

The Main characteristics and strengths of the handicrafts of Gujarat are that they are a reflection of cultural and traditional values

- These are highly commercialized crafts and among the most exportable products
- They give employment to thousands of artisans and their family especially women in the household
- They are secondary source of income to the agrarian community, ethnic community and are a mechanism of relief measures to the government of Gujarat at the time of drought, famine, earthquakes and cyclone to Kutch and other regions of Gujarat.
- From the above it is clear that marketing is the weakest link in the handicraft sector at national and state level.

The Role of Government

To cater to the demands of fine skills of craftsmen, Government of Gujarat established the Gujarat State Handicrafts Development Corporation in 1973, later renamed as the Gujarat State Handloom & Handicrafts Development Corporation Ltd (GSHHDC) since 1979. The craft sector in Gujarat is regulated by cottage and rural industries which come within the purview of Department of Industries and Mines, Government of Gujarat. The major objective of GSHHDC has been to recognize, revive, and develop handicrafts and handlooms of Gujarat. It also provides marketing assistance to the artisans by way of procuring the products and selling through its chain of Garvi-Gurjari emporia. Another objective of this institution was to organize exhibitions for selling and creating awareness of handloom, handicrafts among its prospective buyers. Institution also guides the artisans in the field of design development, also arranges for skill up-gradation programs for artisans.

Table 2.Objectives and Schemes of GSHHDC

| Objectives | Schemes & Programmes |
|----------------------------|--|
| Skill-upgradation | KUTC (Kutir Udoyg Training Center), Cluster development, Gramodyog Vikas Kendra, Short Term Training-KutirMandir, Carpet Training. |
| Technology up-gradation | Toolkits, Looms/Charkha replacement, Pug mill |
| Credit Support | Bankable Schemes (Shri Vajpayee Bankable Yojana, JyotiGramadyogVikasYojana, PMEGP-GOI), ManavKalyanYojana-Equipment Subsidy |
| Marketing Promotion | Rebate, Exhibitions, Fairs, Haat, Procurement of Material. |
| Infrastructure Development | Urban Haats, GVK, Modernization of Training Centers, Up-gradation of Khadi Mandirs |

(Source: Prepared by Authors)

Table 3. Various kinds of Assistance Provided by GSHHDC

| Sr. No | Kind of Assistance | Details of Assistance |
|--------|--|--|
| 1. | Diagnostic Survey & Project Report | Maximum upto Rs 1 Lakhs. |
| 2. | Skill Up gradation | Maximum upto Rs. 7 Lakhs |
| 3. | Design & Development | Maximum upto Rs.5 Lakhs |
| 4. | Modernization of Tools & Equipment | Maximum upto Rs. 5 Lakhs (Subject to Govt. Contri. 75 % Beneficiaries Contribution 25 %) |
| 5. | Publicity & Broadcasting | Maximum upto Rs.20 Lakhs |
| 6. | National –International Fair & Exhibition (One time) | Maximum upto Rs. 1 Lakhs |
| 7. | Publicity | Maximum upto Rs. 2 lakhs. |
| 8. | Exports of products | Maximum upto Rs.10 Lakhs |
| 9. | Common Facility Centre | Maximum upto Rs.20 Lakhs |
| 10. | Managerial subsidy (Per Beneficiaries Rs.10,000/-) | Maximum upto Rs. 5 Lakhs |
| 11. | Managerial subsidy | Rs. 5000/- per month for one year |
| 12. | Service Charges (a) For the Project upto Rs.50.00 Lakh (b) For the Project above Rs.50.00 Lakh | 5 % of the project cost or Rs.50,000/- whichever is less 5 % of the project cost or Rs.1,00,000/- whichever is less. |
| 13. | For the better development of cluster can occupy other expert for latest technology, Design, Special Training, Guidance. | Special expenditure up to Rs.2 Lakhs |

(Source: Prepared by Authors)

Handicraft sector is home based industry, the artisans work from their home and cluster in their regions. For e.g. SEWA has adopted DWCRA scheme of government and formed cooperatives which subsequently took a form of section 25 company. These products are assembled in urban areas while the production bases are in the rural for most of the organizations. The raw material is transferred from a centralized office to the regional sub-centers and from there to the villages where the artisans live. Along with raw materials the designs and its prototypes are communicated through a coordinator who normally is a master artisan (master-craftsmen).

The products are priced adding the cost of production which included the raw material cost-cost of fabric, thread, labor-value addition by artisans, cost of stitching, distribution cost, and transportation cost. Normally these organizations do not add the profit margin. The more the sales the more artisans get work and the approach is that these artisan get full employment - 365 days a year and all of them registered with an organization get work.

Most of the organization in Gujarat have common marketing strategy with artisan as its Centre; the strategies used for marketing the different forms of crafts are mostly similar.

- Retail outlets –emporium (sales throughout the year)
- Exhibitions and Tribal melas (Occasional-Couple of times in a year)
- Government supported fairs and clusters (Annual event-once in a year)
- Haats- newly developed concepts
- Exports
- E-portal

The study of the various organizations present in Gujarat gives the outcomes that these organizations face many challenges which are as follows:

Being largely unorganized and home-based they lack support, the support to bring them into the mainstream market. The major challenge with respect to marketing of their product at regional, national and international level. Lack of Access to sale the products.

With globalization, liberalization and other economic changes, there are threats to the traditional areas of employment with regards to the product development. The efforts by the Government and related agencies are mostly ineffective and there is a lack of a common integrated structure and mechanism. They lack networking and hence do not have standardization of raw material, quality, and products. They require support and inputs for their capacity building, their production bases, the inputs in design development and quality control. They require a revamping and building brand to market the products. The artisan, core to the sector-mostly women, mainly remains poor, vulnerable and devoid of socio-economic security and full employment, thereby questioning the sustainability.

With advent of time INDEXT-C (Industrial Extension Cottage) was established with the objective of promoting cottage sector activities in an organized way. Its creation was suggested in the State Industrial Policy of 1990-95 and it was registered on 3-12-1992. INDEXT-C is provided with the role of catering to the needs of the cottage sector and rural artisans. It provides guidance through open house meetings, undertakes publicity of cottage sector products like handlooms and handicrafts, and promotional work like providing market to the artisans of co-operative societies by organizing fairs, festivals and expos, conducting survey and identifications of artisans. INDEXT-C is coordinating the overall activities of the cottage sector to motivate and guide the artisans to upgrade the quality of their products and bringing those artisans and their markets close of each other. One such project initiated by INDEXT-C is Craft of Gujarat

Table 4. Various Supporting Organizations to Handicraft and Art

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Craft of Gujarat Organization Structure</p> | <p>A Governing Board has been set-up for undertaking activities in accordance with the policy decisions and for providing guidance to achieve the objectives of the organization. 10 Chief Executives of Boards/Corporations associated with the development of the Cottage and Rural industries will be the permanent members of the organization. Where in Commissioner, Cottage and Rural Industries is the chairman by virtue of his designation. In addition to this experts/representatives of Government, Semi-Government and some voluntary agencies directly or indirectly connected with development of Cottage and Rural Industries not exceeding 12 can also be included in the Governing body.</p> |
| <p>Gujarat State Handloom Development & Handicraft Development Corporation Limited, Gandhinagar.</p> | <p>It is providing raw materials and arranges marketing of goods produced by weavers who are not included in the co-operative sector. It also provides technical guidance for new designs, equipment-tools and training. It provides raw material to handicraft artisans and arranges for the sale of goods produced by them. It develops designs through its own production centres. A museum has also been set up and an emporium has been started.</p> |
| <p>Gujarat State Khadi and Village Industries Board, Ahmedabad</p> | <p>The Board is engaged in providing training, to adapt modern technology, and to cover more and more people in the khadi programme, surveys are undertaken along with wide publicity and its sale. Efforts are also being made for improving the quality of Khadi, increasing production and arranging marketing. It also extends financial assistance to organizations associated with it for rural industries and their activities.</p> |
| <p>Gujarat Rural Industries Marketing Corporation Ltd. Gandhinagar</p> | <p>It provides facilities to rural artisans for marketing their goods. As the artisans are not organized they have to depend for sale of their finished products on intermediary agents and private traders and as such they get much less return as compared to their hard work put up by them. With the taking over of the marketing work by the corporation they will comparatively get more return.</p> |
| <p>Gujarat Matikam and Rural Technology Institute, Gandhinagar</p> | <p>The Institute is engaged in developing new machines, in modifying existing designs of machinery to enable the rural artisans to produce improved quality goods with less labor by modifying and producing new and useful machines. It also helps in popularizing and publicizing new technologies.</p> |

(Source: Prepared by Authors)

Craft of Gujarat: Web Portal

Craft of Gujarat is the web portal started by INDEXT-C on 07/08/2010 it is the portal mainly designed to connect rural craftsmen to consumers across the globe. The project was started with the idea of giving opportunities to all the artisans of Gujarat to exhibit their talent to a large section of potential customers & art connoisseurs across the world. The thought eventually took shape as www.craftofgujarat.com and created a platform that allows a consumer to navigate to craftsmen products through various craft forms, product categories, and geographical location; and connect with artisan directly. Since this being an online portal, it is beneficial to artisans in terms of cost saving, in setting up physical stores and selling their art products. The portal also provides a holistic exposure to artists whose talent was hidden behind fairs and exhibitions only.

How this portal is unique?

The website has been developed and currently maintained by M/s. Cyber surf (India) Pvt. Ltd. The uniqueness of this project lies in the fact that it gives strong online presence to the people, who are in no way connected to the information technology advancements. These people are completely unaware about the reach and effectiveness of a web presence. And still, with the Platform, they are reaping benefits of the web and now the whole world has become their market place. The inquiries from interested customers are sent to the artisans directly by means of SMS. Currently, the portal has around 300 registered artisans and more than 900 products are listed on the platform.



Figure 2. Craft of Gujarat website

The portal has been developed after extensive research of the various types of handicrafts and artisans. In Gujarat Currently, the portal showcases 62 types of different types of craft. The structure of the site is designed in such a way that it offers the visitor various ways of exploring the portal. The visitor can search the portal either by the craft form, product category or by the geographical listing. The portal offers crafts forms like Appliqué/ Patchwork, Bamboo Craft, Bandhani (Tie & Dye), Beads Flair, Hand Painting, Carved Wooden Treasure, Embroideries, Hand Block Printing, Handloom Weaving, Hand Painted Textiles, Namdah, puppetries, Coir, Leather Craft, Metal Craft, Embellished Wooden Crafts, Stone Finesse and Clay Dexterity. All these craft forms are covered under various product categories like Decorative, Textile-Apparels, Textile-Shawls/ Stoles, Textile-Home Furnishing, Fashion Accessories, Costume Jewelry, Furniture, Toys and Puppets, Teracotta & Ceramics, Religious/Ritualistic Products and Earthen Articles. The complete website is SEO optimized for relevant keywords that potential audience will search for and the search engines will list the website in top pages of “natural” or “organic” search results. The website is created with importance placed on notions of contrast, simplicity and impact of visual communication to make sure that the presence is "call to action" oriented. A key interesting feature of the website is the artisan search engine wherein artists can be searched based on combination of different factors like name, type of craft and location. From the reach point of view, impressive number of inquiries has been received from international customers.

Role of DICRC for Craft of Gujarat

Craft of Gujarat as portal can come live due to efforts of DICRC-Design Innovation and Craft Resource Centre (DICRC), CEPT University, Ahmedabad, India. The major activity which DICRC did for Craft of Gujarat was to map and indentify the cluster of Craftsmen and their crafts.

DICRC’s major activities are to conduct dedicated research, documentation and organize programs, workshops and projects related to Craft and Traditional and Vernacular Interior Architecture. These are realized through detailed research, mapping, documentation, and analysis of Craft and Traditional and Vernacular built environment; Craft workshops and Innovation internship and fellowship programs; Training, curriculum development for craft and providing a platform for discussion, seminar, and forum for role of craft in Interior Architecture at national and International level. Through these programmes and partnerships, DICRC’s key goal is to promote and encourage the study of crafts and to propagate the information to reach wider audiences and broaden their networking. DICRC also functions as an interface between creative persons, artisans and the industry, interlinks all sides to create the basis for the implementation of innovative idea in the field of crafts within the current interior architecture education as well as practice. DICRC also offers consultancy, training, internship and fellowship opportunities. It is a productive platform where design thinking engages with a range of crafts and traditional knowledge.

It has five major focus areas, which are Research & Documentation, Innovation and Development, Education and Training, Application and Collaboration and lastly Resource Building & Dissemination.

➤ **Research & Documentation**

To Identify, map, document and analyze Traditional & Vernacular Building (TVB) and Space Making Crafts (SMCs) & Space Surface Crafts (SSCs).

And to conduct research and analysis of craftspeople, craft communities and clusters related to building sector.

➤ **Innovation & Development**

To conduct Collaborative Craft Design workshops related to SMCs and SSCs with the core idea of ‘innovation in craft’ and ‘innovation through craft’. And to organize, evolve and offer collaborative innovation internships and fellowship programs to craftspeople and designers.

➤ **Education & Training**

To develop various craft based educational modules, and training programs.

➤ **Application and Collaboration**

To create and develop effective relationships leading to collaborative activities and synergies involving design partnerships with industry, business, universities NGOs, other organizations and various individuals related to the craft sector. To undertake Craft Design and Craft Research projects understanding the multi layered structure of craft practices. And to bridge the gap between design and craft practices.

➤ **Resource Building & Dissemination**

To collect, categorize and classify data for the dissemination to increase awareness within society about SMC and TVB. And to establish a resource bank for knowledge dissemination between craftspeople, scholars, designers and professionals through online Craft Design Resource Lab, exhibitions and print media.

Conclusion and way ahead

Despite all problems Indian handicraft export value crossed Rs 1220 Crores in 1990-91 and Rs.17,276,41 Crores in 2005-06 which was significant achievement, but still it is way to go in this field one of the major competitors of Indian handicraft in the international market, China, Outweighed India in global market in spite of the growing demand of Indian handicraft. In fact, China’s outward oriented strategy after 1979 was one of the important factors contributing to its success. Export culture of China was facilitated by mainly three

factors, first the pro-active export strategy, second joint participation by local authorities and third active involvement of investors from Hong Kong and Taiwan, whereas in India, export was not free from government control, laws related to export were standardization process, declining investment in the sector and high freight cost further added to the problem. Nevertheless, the major strength of Indian Handicrafts are India was bestowed with natural resources like (bamboo, cane, horn, jute, leather, etc.) diversifies range of handicrafts (based on regional traditions), cheap labor lowered the production cost to large extent (Competitive study of Handicrafts sector in China, May.2012, Ernst & Young).

Another key aspect of enhancing better performance of the large workforce in the handicraft sector should be aimed to create a self-sufficient workforce by grouping and educating them. This workforce should also be able to provide employment opportunities for large number of people, thus contributing to the overall cultural & economic growth of the country. Gujarat Government exactly did the same by initiative like ‘Craft of Gujarat’

With such an technology backed e-commerce venture, the concept of crafts tourism is also taking shape, with designers and design researchers leading tours to Gujarat from other countries, and facilitating interactions with artisans – giving the opportunity to experience craft techniques and production process first hand. The support for documentation of crafts and their traditions, by way of conducting primary research is been fulfilled by various state level and national level design institutes like National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad and CEPT University Ahmedabad. The role of the Gujarat State Handloom and Handicrafts Development Corporation has completely changed now. Today, the domestic requirement of Gujarat’s crafts has multiplied fourfold than the demand in export markets. A kaleidoscope of classic, folk, tribal and kitsch is the theme of our times. The time has come to bring in more reforms and to keep up with the changing trends. Craft sector now needs to operate as a profit center, facilitating artisan needs by setting up raw material banks, organizing trade fairs at national and international levels, and the setting up of more access points to the market. Leveraging the IT technology to its fullest potential can also be worthwhile idea to be pursued.

Though it could contribute in a great way in export, the handicrafts sector was never in priority of government, it was only supplemented by a few schemes by central government (Thakur, 2012). There was no vision of assembly line production of handicrafts as the sector was facing challenges to augment the quality of handicraft and finding niche in domestic and international market. Craft of Gujarat is a Governmental entrepreneurship effort to revive Crafts & Handicrafts sector by grouping of craftsmen, through technology interface. The Craft of Gujarat web portal has helped the artisans in production, design and technology and as well as to capture a good market for the crafts. With such good promotional measure by the government and various non-government organization helping the sector there is a bright future for the traditional artisans. How far it would boost the exports of Handicrafts overall

along with its sustainability, it is still an unanswered question, which calls for further academic research.

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