

Craft Revival and Product Diversification through Design Intervention- *Punja Durries* of Madhya Pradesh

Meghna Sinha*, Prriyadarshini T**

*Fashion Design Student, Symbiosis Institute of Design, Pune, Maharashtra, India- 411 014

**Faculty In-Charge, Fashion Design Department, Symbiosis Institute of Design, Pune, Maharashtra, India- 411 014

Email-meghnas49@gmail.com

Abstract – India is a country having a diverse culture, which is deeply rooted in its history and traditions. The epitome of India lies in the art and craft, which symbolizes the culture, tradition and societal values. Traditional textiles witnessing fine craftsmanship, provides exotic range of products. The intricate workmanship of the handlooms gives this segment a unique identity of its own. These craft traditions, perfected through generations of practice are repositories of traditional wisdom of shape, form, technique, colour and in larger context, a way of life. Handloom sector is one of the oldest and the second largest industry next to agriculture providing direct and indirect employment in the country.

Indian Handicrafts, which constitutes a significant segment of the decentralized sector of the economy, its export has reached a commendable height. Indian folk art and crafts which are the integral parts of the Indian culture and tradition are in high demand amongst the global consumers. One such craft is *Punja Dhurries* of Sidhi and Rewa district of Madhya Pradesh originated from Punjab and Rajasthan.

The *Punja* weaving technique produces weft-faced design in a dhurrie (decorative floor covering) in which the warp is made of cotton yarn, and the weft is made of wool/cotton/jute or hemp yarn. The tensile strength of cotton yarn in the warp provides a strong base to the dhurrie. A claw-like device, called *Punja*, is used by the weavers to densely and firmly pack the weft yarn in a way the warp yarn is hidden. This technique results in producing identical design on both sides of the dhurrie. *Punja Dhurries* are mostly woven in bright colours using numerous motifs comprising of stripes, check, squares, and pictures of birds, animals, human figurines, plants etc. The designs are varied and are skilfully made to enhance its aesthetic appeal. They are used on floors, beds and diwans.

Punja Dhurries are gradually gaining importance over carpets. The reason is that, they are easy to maintain and are versatile. The increase in globalisation gives hand crafted products a great opportunity in both domestic and international markets. Data collected during the primary research reveals the artisans grievances and concerns about the minimal domestic and international market linkage.

It can be called a family business, which improves with time as all members significantly contribute and earn their livelihood. However, with the advent of technology in the modern era, art and craft are facing serious problem ranging from manufacturing, marketing, sales and pan-availability for use. The younger generations in absence of assured remuneration, do not prefer to continue the weaving tradition. Hence, migrating from villages to cities in search of better lifestyle is preferred. Sales are products are becoming more and more competitive and traditional artisans often find their crafts languishing due to lack of design inputs to meet ever changing consumer demands. Other factors related with the depletion of this craft is the lack of entrepreneurship, skill development, marketing of products and archiving the techniques and process involved.

The present paper focuses on the revival of *Punja Dhurries* of Madhya Pradesh. It is an exploratory study to analyse the possibilities of product diversification of the existing craft. Attempts are being made by illustrating and developing potential ideas through design intervention, thereby revitalizing a languishing craft and bridging the gap between the consumer and the craftsman. After personal interactions, using structured and semi-structured questionnaire with focused groups characterised by their lifestyle, it was observed that the scope of responsible and strategic design intervention lies in creation of utility based products which integrates the social, economic, ecological and cultural aspects and thus help in the revival of this craft.

Research Methodology- The present study aims to identify the original features of craft and the changes that had taken place to revive the craft in its conventional form and character. The following methodology was used to achieve the objectives of the study. This study used mixed methods, such as a literature review and structured interviews with the dhurrie weavers in Siddhi and Rewa districts of Madhya Pradesh. Secondary research data was conducted with the study material available through books and research papers available.

Data Analysis- A detailed content analysis was considered the most effective tool for understanding of responses. The data was analysed qualitatively with the help of the information collected, and it was completed with photographs and Punja Dhurrie samples. The findings from questionnaire were qualitatively.

Intervention- Intervention was taken up for the revival and preservation of this traditional craft and community. Also, to widen the product range and profit margins of the weavers, a sample of different Dhurries with varied dimensions were developed for different purposes and the design layouts for the same was illustrated with hand sketches and later developed digitally. Design interventions are being made by keeping the essence and originality of the craft intact. Ideas were suggested regarding a few changes in the layouts of the surface designs of Punja Dhurries

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