

YOJANA SUMMARY

WEAVES OF INDIA

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VIBRANT WORLD OF WEAVES REGIONAL DIVERSITY IN INDIAN WEAVING

Weavers, printers, and dyers represent a unique mathematically competent yet aesthetically tuned resource group in the villages, small towns, and big towns.

Regional Weaving In India

A. Kerala

- Kerala is predominantly known for its 'white' culture and traditions.
 - White was the predominant base colour in all parts of India before the advent of chemical dyes in the late 19th century.
 - White was also a traditional statement of purity, austerity, and restraint.
 - Chemical dyes and cheaper substitutes for zari (gold metallic yarn) inadvertently opened the door to social change.
 - The extravagant use of color and shiny decorations in India today is a result of 20th-century freedom.
 - This style was boosted by the excitement following Independence. It also reflects a break from regional and community traditions.
- Weavers in Kerala were initially shy about their simple designs but warmed up when their elegant, mostly white drapes were appreciated.
- Their work features limited colors on the borders, often replaced with gold for special occasions. This culminated in a ribbed colour or gold end piece that was elevated from the ground.
- This style is common in *Mundu veshti*, *Kasavu saris*, and *dhotis*, especially from Balarampuram in the south.

B. Karnataka

- In Karnataka, weaving centers like Molakalmuru and Ilkal continue to thrive with unique techniques.
 - Molakalmuru is famous for yarn resist and patterned elements in warp and weft and Ilkal for its three shuttle weaving.
- Udupi, Kollegal, and Rukmapur are known for their saris and fabrics. Navalgund produces floor coverings, and Guledgudd is famous for Khana blouse fabrics.
- Karnataka also weaves dupion silk, known for its textured fabric made from uneven weft yarn and fine silk warp.

C. Goa

- Goa was an unexpected revelation as the only state with a legacy of weaving being banned by the Portuguese.
 - Weavers literally went underground into basements and dug out for their looms.
 - The demand from faithful Kunbi farm labour, Koli fisherwomen, and Dhangad shepherds provided a ready market for their woven saris.
- The complexity of checks and colour combinations was what distinguished them from their neighbours.

D. Maharashtra

- In Maharashtra, cotton is widely grown in Wardha, while silk is cultivated in Vidarbha and Gadchiroli.
- The eastern region is known for Nagpur and Puneri silk and cotton saris. In the west, Karvat Kathi, Jote, and Patal saris use cotton-silk mixes creatively.
- The range of Maharashtra saris includes Paithan cotton and silks using interlock tapestry techniques. Several villages in Amravati are also weaving durrie floor coverings.

E. Gujarat

- Gujarat has a wide producer base of weaves, prints, and Bandhini fabric resist. It has vast power loom-producing belts in places such as Surat as well as Ichalkaranji, Malegaon, and Bhivandi in Maharashtra.

F. Rajasthan, Punjab & Haryana, Himachal Pradesh

- Rajasthan had a hand-spinning and weaving legacy of floor coverings, durrie, as well as plain fabrics that were printed over for stitched women's wear.
- Punjab and Haryana, which have since become separate states since 1964, had a wide base of coarse fabric weaving for home linen, floor coverings, and everyday wear.
- Himachal Pradesh, has always been well known for its kullu and kinnaur fabrics and shawls.

G. Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh and Uttarakhand

- Jammu and Kashmir, as well as Ladakh and Uttarakhand, have a wide base of wool spinning of coarse to fine Pashmina sheep and goat wools.
- These wools are handwoven into a wide variety of khudrang/patterned self-coloured fabrics for apparel and shawls, blankets for everyday use, and special occasions.
- Kashmir, along with Bishnupur in West Bengal, were the only two areas where mulberry silk was traditionally cultivated.

H. Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh

- Madhya Pradesh has well-known centres of weaving, such as Chanderi, Maheshwar, and Bilaspur. The supply of Tussar from the central state of Chhattisgarh and its cotton from mills within the state has seen some proliferation.

I. Uttar Pradesh

- Uttar Pradesh has a wide base of sari production in fine cotton: woven, embroidered, and printed, culminating in the finest technical and aesthetic virtuosity seen at the trade and cultural centre of **Varanasi**.
- Varanasi, a cultural and trade hub, showcases the finest craftsmanship, influenced by Persian weaving skills and Mughal karkhanas.
- The city is known for techniques like gethua, Kadhwa looms, phekwan shuttle weaving, and Katarwa, offering a diverse range of fabrics.

J. Bihar

- Bihar has grown in its range of *tussar fabrics* for home use and apparel, as well as saris, especially from the Bhagalpur region, which have seen a revival since the 1980s.
- The Maldehi and Laldehi saris have inspired a range of warp and weft self-patterned tussars. Its cotton range has also grown in the Nalanda region since the 1990s.
- The southern half of Bihar boasts a wide range of coarse cotton saris for its tribal communities as well as tussar cultivation, spinning, and weaving.

K. West Bengal

- West Bengal has seen greater continuity in its sari weaves, though it has lost its coarse-count cottons due to the upgrade of loom technology.
- Bishnupur's indigenous mulberry silk and that of the tussar like Maldah, were distinct in the quality of their weight and lustre.

L. North Eastern States

- **Assam** is known for its Mekhela Chador, Gamcha, and the increasing production of saris.
- **Arunachal's** gale and galuk have also been increasingly seen and produced.

- In **Tripura**, Risha, Pachhara, Lysemphree local regional apparel, and Chadar weaving have been increasingly seen.
- Talking of **Mizoram**, Puanchei Puan, Tawlhloh Puan, Ngotekherh or Puan Hruih, Hmaram Puan, Thangchhuab Puan, and Pondum Puan are increasingly recognised.
- In Meghalaya, the weaving of the Ka Jainsem and Silk Stole has visibly grown.
- In Manipur Innaphee, Wangkhei phee, Phi matek (Chunni), Chunni Rani phee, Plain Phanek, Stripe Phanek, Khudai, and Lengyan (Gamachha) have made their impact.
- In Nagaland, upper drapes such as Sangtam, Sema, Nye-myon, Nikola, Ze-liangs-rong, Rhiko, and Alungstu and lower drapes such as Azu Jangup Su, Mechala, Neikhro, Moyer Tusk, and Sutam for men and women are woven for their specific tribal communities that are increasingly recognised.

M. Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu

- In **Odisha**, some exceptional patterned cottons are in Patna Museum.
- In **Andhra Pradesh** Coarse cottons were most widespread. To the finest cottons in Venkatgiri, Uppada, and Gadwal, with borders and end pieces in silk favoured by royalty and the well-to-do.
- **Weaves of Tamil Nadu** are marked by a refining and defining of motifs, an enigmatic colour palette, and a mastery of cotton and silk, distinctly or in combination.
 - Tamil Nadu's sari designs range from fine needle stripes (*oosi vanam*) to bold paired stripes (*thandavalam*), in cotton, silk, or both.
 - The region features diverse patterns like stripes, checks, and Korvai three shuttle temple spire forms.
 - Inspired by nature and temple architecture, these saris are distinguished by their precise color, scale, and fabric structure.

Conclusion

In the contemporary context, despite the growing compulsion to industrialise and globalise, there is also an increasing awareness of ecologically viable and sound growth. With her rich resources of skilled hand-spinning and weaving, India is advantageously placed to show the way in balancing the slower but highly skilled production sectors with the mechanised and high-technology end.

KNOW YOUR WEAVES

1. Pochampally Ikat

- Originating from Nalgonda District, Telangana State, Pochampally Ikat have traditional geometric and abstract patterns.
- Created by transforming yarns in different colours, through tying (resisting) and dyeing the exposed areas repeatedly before weaving, they are woven in both cotton and silk.

2. Paithani Sari

- Deriving its name from Paithan, a town in Maharashtra where it has been produced for over 2000 years, the Paithani is essentially a silk saree with an ornamented Zari pallav and border.
- The motifs used are mostly traditional vines, flowers, shapes of fruit, and stylised forms of birds.
- A special feature of the Paithani is that no mechanical means are used to produce the design.

3. Patan Patola

- Originating from Patan region of Gujarat, Patola is a double ikat saree in which the warp and weft are tied and dyed by the exact counting of threads before being woven on a hanging loom.
- Patola silk sarees are known for their vibrant colours, bold geometric designs, and intricate detailing.

4. Kancheepuram Silk

- Inspired by the temples of Kancheepuram in Tamil Nadu, the sarees are masterfully woven with mulberry silk in both warp and weft and have solid colour borders and pallavs using intricate korvai and petni techniques.
- The exquisite Kancheepuram sarees have pure zari embellishments and captivating motifs, from peacocks, elephants to horses.
- They are complemented by Rudraksham, Thalampoorekku, and Mayil Chakra designs.

5. Kota Doria

- Named after its place of origin, Kota in Rajasthan, the fabric is a unique blend of cotton and silk in a square check pattern.
- The silk provides shine, while the cotton provides strength to the fabric. The checked pattern is termed as 'khat' and is one of the distinguishing features of the Kota Doria.

6. Banarasi Satin Tancoi Sari With Zari

- Intricate designs in multi-colors interwoven in a satin weave; Adorned with small intricate motifs like flowers, small birds, peacock and parrot motifs.

7. Kunbi Sari

- Goan Adivasi cotton sari is universally known as the Kunbi sari. The saris were originally made in Goa on handlooms and is also mentioned in Tribal folk songs

8. Pashmina Woolen Sari

- Known for its fineness, warmth, softness, desirable, aesthetic value, and timelessness in fashion.
- The fibre is deftly hand-spun by Kashmiri women on local Charkhas. The hand-spun yarn is then delicately woven on Handlooms by local weavers.

9. Mangalagiri Sari

- A popular handloom product from the state of Andhra Pradesh, it has a zari or golden thread work embellished with a Nizam border and Pallav.

10. Paturu Cotton Silk Sari

- Lightweight saris with a plain Zari border. Pallav is woven with stripes whereas the body generally is plain

11. Gopalpur Tussar Silk Sari

- Registered under the Geographical Indications of Goods Act 1999 in 2012. The motifs used are birds, chakra (wheel), and animal motifs inspired by nature.

12. Mekhala Sari

- A popular sari from the Assam state in India. Decorated with zari figures inspired by traditional Assamese motifs.

13. Ikat Sari

- Woven in a flying shuttle loom in the intricate double ikat style. Patterns are transformed into yarns in different colors by tying and dyeing the exposed area repeatedly.

14. Kanchi Cotton Sari

- Speciality in and around the city of Kancheepuram District, Tamil Nadu. Broad borders and pallav with traditional motifs.

WEAVES OF INDIA - COLLABORATION AND CROSS-CULTURAL INFLUENCES

- With every thread woven in India, a legacy lives on—a myth of gods and demons, of weaving and wonder, forever woven into the fabric of time.
- The art of weaving remains a sacred gift, entrusted to those with pure hearts and divinely guided hands.
- Beyond its mythical origins, weaving is deeply embedded in the social and, importantly, economic fabric of Indian communities.
- For centuries, it has provided livelihoods to countless artisans and their families, serving as a means of sustenance and economic empowerment.

Evolutionary Journey

- Historically, weaving in India can be traced back to the ancient **Indus Valley Civilisation (3300-1300 BCE)**, where evidence of cotton cultivation and textile production has been unearthed.
 - Archaeological findings such as terracotta figurines, pottery, and seals depict individuals draped in intricately woven garments, indicating a deeper understanding of weaving techniques and textile craftsmanship.
- The **Rigveda (1500-500 BCE)**, the oldest known text in the world, contains references to weaving, emphasising the importance of textiles in ancient Indian society.
 - During this era, weaving held religious and ceremonial significance, with fabrics used in rituals, offerings, and as symbols of prosperity and status.
- Later on, as the **Achaemenid Empire** expanded into the north-western regions of the Indian subcontinent, it facilitated cultural exchange by introducing Persian motifs, techniques, and weaving traditions to the region.
- The **Mughal Empire (1526-1857)** further shaped Indian weaving, particularly in the development of luxurious textiles like brocades, muslin, and velvets.
- The arrival of **European traders and colonisers** in the 15th century brought about significant transformations.
 - The demand for Indian textiles, particularly cotton and silk, fuelled the expansion of textile manufacturing centres and established European trade networks.
 - The introduction of mechanised looms and synthetic dyes paved the way for mass production.

Role of Royal Patronage

- Royal patronage also played a key role. Indian rulers, kings, nawabs, and rajahs were also avid patrons. They commissioned elaborate fabrics for ceremonies, religious festivals, etc.
- Weaving guilds and artisan communities flourished under this royal patronage, producing exquisite textiles adorned with intricate patterns, motifs, and embellishments.

Weaving-Symbol of India's Spirit

- Weaving in India transcends its roots, symbolizing creative spirit and cultural transmission. It evolves into a social and cultural cornerstone, integral to daily lives, beliefs, rituals, and traditions.
- Weaving unites diverse cultural beliefs and preserves skills through generations of master weavers.
- Reflecting ancient traditions and continuous innovations, it shapes India's unique textile legacy.

Regional Weaving

- **Banarasi silk weaving**, known for its opulence, elegance, and intricate patterns, embodies the concept of 'Shringar' (ornamentation) in Indian culture.
 - Motifs inspired by Mughal art and the use of metallic threads reflect an emphasis on beauty, adornment, and celebration.

- **Kanchipuram silk weaving** is imbued with the philosophical concept of 'Dharma' representing righteousness, duty, and virtue.
 - Renowned for their rich texture, vibrant colours, and distinctive zari borders woven with gold or silver threads, Kanchipuram silk sarees are a testament to meticulous craftsmanship.
 - Kanchipuram - sarees reflect the wearer's adherence to tradition and moral values.
- **Paithani weaving** embodies the concept of 'Lakshya', symbolising aspiration, goal-setting, and spiritual elevation.
 - Prized for their intricate weave, vibrant colours, and peacock motifs (representing beauty, fertility, and divine protection), Paithani sarees are considered a mark of luxury.
- **Patola craft** from Gujarat, particularly Patola sarees, exemplifies the concept of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (the world is one family).
 - Crafted using the double ikat weaving technique, these textiles feature intricate geometric patterns and motifs symbolising harmony, balance, and cosmic order.

Challenges And Way Forward

- Traditional weaving communities in India face challenges like changing market demands, declining artisan numbers, and competition from mass-produced textiles.
- Collaborations with contemporary designers help artisans showcase their skills, preserve heritage, and secure livelihoods.
- These partnerships enable experimentation with color, texture, and design, creating modern, globally appealing textiles.
- Designers introduce new materials and techniques, fostering innovation while respecting tradition.
- Artisans access new markets and business opportunities, and the cultural exchange enhances global appreciation of India's textile heritage.
- Ethical practices, fair wages, and sustainability are prioritized, promoting organic farming and reducing reliance on harmful chemicals.

Conclusion

- Traditional weaving techniques, handed down through generations, are safeguarded and celebrated to ensure their transmission to future generations.
- In recent years, a global resurgence of appreciation for these textiles has reinforced the significance of India's weaving heritage, fostering pride and identity within weaving communities.
- The partnership between designers and traditional weavers, marked by mutual respect, fairness, and environmental responsibility, has bolstered the resilience and vibrancy of this heritage.

INDIAN WEAVES PROMOTING SUSTAINABILITY

- Cotton is vital in India, symbolizing the country's rich textile heritage and sustainability. India's weaving legacy spans thousands of years, with each region having unique techniques, motifs, and materials.
- What sets Indian weaves apart in the quest for sustainability is their inherent eco- friendliness.
 - Traditionally, Indian weavers have relied on natural fibres such as cotton, silk, jute, and wool, sourced locally and processed using age-old techniques that have minimal impact on the environment.
- Traditional Indian weaving practices are deeply ingrained in local communities, fostering a sense of social cohesion and economic empowerment.
- Weaving clusters scattered across the country provide livelihoods to millions of artisans, often in rural areas where alternative employment opportunities are scarce.

Role of Cotton Corporation of India (CCI)

- The Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) functions as a central nodal agency to undertake Minimum Support Price operations for cotton to safeguard the economic interests of cotton farmers in the country.
- CCI's commitment to sustainability extends beyond ensuring fair prices for cotton farmers.

Functions of CCI

- Competition from mass-produced textiles, a lack of infrastructure, and dwindling interest among the younger generation pose significant threats to traditional weaving communities.
- By leveraging technology, investing in skill development, and fostering partnerships with stakeholders, Indian weavers can overcome hurdles and thrive in a rapidly changing world.
- In a strategic collaboration with the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), CCI further amplifies its impact on sustainability.
 - KVIC, the sole statutory entity authorised to manufacture Indian national flags, relies on CCI for its cotton supply.
 - By offering competitive terms through daily e-auctions, CCI ensures that KVIC units procure their raw cotton sustainably.

UNRAVELING THE RICH TAPESTRY: EXPLORING RARE WEAVES AND TEXTILES OF GUJARAT STATE

A. Bhujodi Weaving: Preserving the Legacy of Kutch

- Located in the arid region of Kutch, Bhujodi is a small village that has become synonymous with traditional weaving techniques and exquisite textiles.
- One of the most remarkable aspects of Bhujodi weaving is its use of locally sourced materials such as sheep wool and camel hair, which are spun and woven into intricately patterned fabrics.
- Bhujodi weaving is characterised by its bold geometric patterns, vibrant colors, and intricate designs, which are often inspired by the natural beauty of the Kutch region.

B. Ashavalli Sarees: Exquisite Elegance from Ahmedabad

- The history of Ashavalli sarees can be traced back to the Mughal era, when the art of weaving flourished under royal patronage.
- What sets Ashavalli sarees apart is their intricate weaving techniques, which include kadwa (brocading), jala (openwork), and buta (motif) work.
- The motifs used in Ashavalli sarees are often inspired by nature, with floral, paisley, and geometric designs being common themes.

C. Mashru Textile: A Fusion of Silk and Cotton

- Mashru textile is a unique blend of silk and cotton, traditionally worn by both Hindu and Muslim communities in Gujarat.
- Mashru fabric is characterised by its distinctive checkerboard pattern, created by alternating bands of silk and cotton threads in the warp and weft.

D. Patola Silk Sarees: The Epitome of Elegance

- Originating from the Patan region, Patola silk sarees are renowned for their intricate double ikat weaving technique, where both the warp and weft threads are dyed before weaving, resulting in mesmerising geometric patterns that seem to dance across the fabric.
- The process of creating a single Patola saree can take several months to a year, as each motif is painstakingly crafted by master artisans.

- What makes Patola silk even more unique is its reversible nature, where the design appears identical on both sides of the fabric, showcasing the extraordinary skill and precision of the weavers.

KHADI THE ICON OF INDIAN INDEPENDENCE

Khadi spirit means fellow-feeling with every living being on earth. It means a complete renunciation of everything likely to harm our fellow creatures. And if we are to cultivate that spirit amongst the millions of our countrymen, what a land this India of ours would be!

- During the Champaran Satyagraha in 1917, Gandhiji discovered the severe hardships faced by the farmers in Bihar.
- In Bhilwara village, he met a woman who could not change her sari because she only owned one. This highlighted the plight of the farmers, who struggled with the high cost of cloth despite indigo, the source of dye, being central to their issues.
- Historically, India was a leading cotton cultivator, but British colonial practices sent raw cotton to England, where it was processed and returned as expensive cloth from Manchester and Lancashire, depriving Indian farmers of affordable textiles.

Traditional Textile Knowledge

- Indian textiles, known for their intricate designs and high quality, were historically prized globally, with evidence found in ancient Egypt and Mohenjo-daro.
 - Indian indigo-dyed cotton ikat was found in a Pharaoh's tomb, the rose madder cloth was unearthed at a Mohenjo-daro site along with spindles.
 - Greek and Roman traders' accounts describe the fine fabrics from the Indian subcontinent.
 - Ajanta and Ellora paintings depict the various designs and styles in the textile materials.
- However, the Industrial Revolution and British colonial policies devastated India's textile industry. Cheap raw cotton was exported to England, and British mill cloth dominated Indian markets, causing massive unemployment among Indian spinners and weavers.

Khadi Movement

- In 1908, Gandhiji realized that the spinning wheel was essential for Swaraj, inspiring him to promote spinning and weaving as supplementary occupations for farmers.
- After touring India and witnessing villagers' hardships, he introduced weaving in his Ashram with the support of Ahmedabad textile mill owners.
- Recognizing the need for direct farmer benefits, he entrusted Gangabehn Majumdar to revive traditional spinning methods.
- Through the Khadi Movement, Gandhiji ignited nationalism, using khadi as a symbol of self-reliance and non-violent resistance against colonial exploitation.
- With help from trusted friends, khadi was tested in the Ashram and later became a nationwide movement, embodying Gandhiji's philosophical vision.

Spirit of Swadeshi

- Gandhi ji in Young India (17-6-1926) wrote that:
 - Khaddar is the concrete and central fact of Swadeshi. Swadeshi without Khaddar is like a body without life, fit only to receive a decent burial or cremation. The only Swadeshi cloth is Khaddar.
 - The test of Swadeshi is not the universality of the use of an article that goes under the name of Swadeshi, but the universality of participation in the production or manufacture of such article.

- Thus, considered mill-made cloth is Swadeshi only in a restricted sense. For, in its manufacture only an infinitesimal number of India's millions can take part. But in the manufacture of Khaddar millions can take part.
- He ignited the spirit of nationalism through the Swadeshi Movement and made khadi the symbol of nationalism.
- He, through the Khadi Movement, positioned his non-violent weapon to strike at the very foundation of colonial exploitation!
- He proposed Khadi as part of the programme to reconstruct the rural economy in a decentralised pattern. It became part of the freedom struggle.

Khadi Economics

- The Khadi Movement empowered villagers, particularly women, and significantly increased their participation in the Indian freedom movement.
- Khadi provided a viable economic solution for millions of villagers, offering work and wages until a better system emerged or urbanization provided necessary comforts and amenities.
- This movement was crucial in promoting self-reliance and economic stability in rural India.
- The decentralised system of production would certainly lead to equal distribution of income.
- Rajaji observed, "You cannot distribute the wealth equally 'after' producing it. You won't succeed in getting men to agree to it. But you can so produce wealth as to secure equable distribution 'before' producing it. That is Khadi".
- Khadi is central to the village economy, with other industries thriving from its benefits. However,
- Gandhiji realized that khadi alone couldn't progress without reviving other village industries. For villagers to utilize their spare time effectively and for overall economic growth, a holistic approach to improving all aspects of village life is essential.

Icon of Independence

Charkha became the icon of the independence movement and khadi became the identity of nationalism. **Purely an economic activity became a powerful political weapon.**

UNIQUENESS OF KHADI

- Khadi is the proud legacy of our national freedom movement and the father of the nation.
- Khadi and Village Industries are two national heritages of India. They create employment at a very low per capita investment.
- Khadi is defined as 'any cloth woven on handlooms and hand-spun from cotton, woollen, or silk yarn in India, or the combination of two or all of these yarns'.
- Khadi made out of natural fibres like cotton, silk, and wool with hand-spun or hand-woven process has more softness.
- Khadi is mostly dyed with natural dye like indigo, alizarin, red-coloured rust iron with jaggery fermented water, yellow-coloured using pomegranate and Myrobalan thereby making it a skin-friendly, eco-friendly, comfortable, breathable, zero carbon product.
 - Besides, a certain quantity of Khadi is also made of organic cotton. With these unique characters, Khadi fabric is sustainable.
- Khadi production by mass from the rural area, which reaches the have's and richest of the rich people.

HANDLOOM PRODUCTS OF INDIA: FROM LOCAL TO GLOBAL

- The handloom sector represents a significant chunk of handwoven products in India. The handloom products are produced across various states of the country
- Few examples include: Pashmina (Kashmir), Phulkari (Punjab), Chikankari (Uttar Pradesh), Muga Silk (Assam), Naga Shawls (Nagaland), Pochampally Ikkat (Telangana), Kancheepuram Saree (Tamil Nadu), Mysore Silk (Karnataka), Bandhani (Gujarat), Paithani (Maharashtra), etc.

Performance of Handloom Sector

- The handloom sector is **ranked number two after agriculture** in India as an unorganised sector providing employment to more than 3 million people.
- It is also the largest cottage industry in the country, with around 24 lakh looms.
- Though Indian handloom products are produced in small towns and villages, they are recognised globally.
- **Export of Indian handloom products**
 - The exports of Indian handloom products were more than US\$ 300 million each year from 2016-17 to 2019-20 (pre-Covid-19 years).
 - The exports declined by 30% immediately after Covid-19 in 2020-21. Though some recovery can be observed in 2021-22, they are yet to reach the pre-Covid level.
- **Regions where Indian handloom products are in demand**
 - Indian handloom products have significant demand in more than 20 countries in the world, mainly developed countries and the Middle East.
 - Among these countries, the US is a major market and accounted for around 40% of export demand for India's handloom products in international markets in 2021-22.
- **Major items in India's handloom exports**
 - The major items in India's handloom exports include mats and mattings, carpet, rugs, bedsheets, cushion covers and other handloom articles.
 - Most of these products are exported from four major cities, namely, Karur, Panipat, Varanasi, and Kannur.

Branding of Handloom Products: 'India Handloom' Trade Mark

- Introduction of 'Handloom Mark' provided the customers assurance that the concerned handloom product is authentic.
- The 'India Handloom' provided a branding of handloom products that are of 'high quality with zero defects and zero effect on the environment.'
- 'India Handloom' has also been registered as a trade mark under the Trade Marks Act, 1999.

IPR Protection for Indian Handloom Products in International Markets

Intellectual property (IP) protection for handloom producers in India is granted through the Geographical Indications of Goods Act, 1999, and the Designs Act, 2000.

Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration & Protection) Act, 1999

- The Geographical Indication (GI) tag is conferred on a product that is recognised by its specific place of origin.
- In India, the GI tag has been provided to a number of handloom products, including 'Pochampalli Ikat,' 'Chanderi Sarees,' 'Solapur Chaddar,' 'Mysore Silk,' 'Kacheepuram Silk,' etc.

Potential Global Opportunities

- Today's buyers and sellers emphasize sustainable products, aligning with the new generation's preference for stylish yet eco-friendly items.

- Handloom products meet these demands, being unique, stylish, culture-oriented, and environmentally friendly.
- E-commerce and digital platforms enable handloom producers to access international markets, even from remote areas.
- However, the tradition of hand weaving faces challenges as education and better-paying skilled jobs discourage artisans from continuing this labor-intensive, low-paying profession.
- Additionally, handloom products compete with cheaper machine-made fabrics that often resemble authentic handwoven items, making differentiation difficult.

Conclusion

- The handloom products from India represent tradition and modernity at the same time. The unique designs, quality, and variety of these products helped create a niche market in other countries over the years.
- Therefore, it could be concluded that the handloom products of India are making significant global imprints with their local characteristics.

WEAVING AS A LIVELIHOOD

- According to some estimates, the handloom industry may be the largest source of employment in India next only to agriculture.
- Unfortunately, the lack of reliable data regarding this sector is but one of the many challenges that it faces today.
- The other big challenge faced by the sector is competition from products made by the powerloom which are much cheaper and available in much larger quantities.
- The prevalence of machine-made goods has lured many weavers away from traditional hand-weaving techniques.
- Another challenge for the weavers is fast- changing fashion and design preferences. Few weavers have formal training in the design and marketing of products, especially those which are in demand in urban centres.
- Thus, many weavers, instead of passing their skills to the next generation, choose to encourage their children to work in offices, in the hope of a better life.

Ray of Hope

- With the current interest in handmade and sustainable products, there is renewed hope for weavers. Weaving by hand produces no emissions and uses natural raw materials.
- Today, several Indian fashion designers are working with rural weaving clusters international fashion houses too are showing interest in Indian handicraft and handloom practices.
- The other positive development is the advent of e-commerce. Weavers have easy access to whole new markets, information, and connectivity, and they can choose to market their products online.
- Some organisations and corporate houses are supporting weavers in the entire value chain from providing raw materials to marketing their products.

Conclusion

- Not many other countries can boast of such a rich culture of hand work particularly handlooms.
- It is a rare privilege to have weavers with such skill and knowledge even today and we must each do our bit to understand, support, and encourage handlooms.