

# “Handicraft Sector in Jammu and Kashmir: An Overview”

Tahir Ahmad Khan, PhD Candidate at MUIT, Lucknow

## Abstract

*The crafts and cultural traditions of J&K are deeply rooted. Here, the crafts reflect unequalmeasure its history, landscape and way of life. Handicrafts have a special socioeconomic significance in J&K. Keeping in view the vast potential in handicrafts for economic activities like generation of employment and revenue. Being eco-friendly, this sector suits to the state as it is more labour intensive and less capital intensive in nature, therefore, having scope for employment generation at a large scale. J&K handicraft products are worldwide famous for their attractive designs, functional utility and high quality craftsmanship.*

## Introduction

According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization/Information Technology Community (UNESCO /ITC) International Symposium on “Crafts and the International Market: Trade and Customs Codification”, Manila, Philippines, October 1997:

*“Handicrafts can be defined as products which are produced either completely by hand or with the help of tools. Mechanical tools may be used as long as the direct manual contribution of the artisan remains the most substantial component of the finished product. Handicrafts are made from raw materials and can be produced in unlimited numbers. Such products can be utilitarian, aesthetic, artistic, creative, culturally attached, decorative, functional, traditional, religiously and socially symbolic and significant”.*

The world faces challenges in eradicating poverty to meet the millennium development goals, as the number of people living below the poverty line increases (Okech 2010). Therefore the world needs to set out critical measures to ensure that low income and marginalized groups such as artisans, petty business people and disabled people meet their basic needs on a sustainable basis (Ke & Liying 2010). One way to achieve this is through well planned, supported and managed tourism sectors and sub-sectors that lead to substantial poverty alleviation (Markwick 2001). The informal handicraft industry is one of these sectors, a potential source of employment, leading to empowerment, economic development and rural development (Binns & Nel 2002; Follad 2006). The industry does not require extensive capital investment to start up a business, and

therefore it gives both women and other marginalized groups an opportunity to engage easily in the informal handicraft industry, and for them to gain an income that will sustain their livelihoods (Peach 2007).

## ***1. OVERVIEW OF INDIAN HANDICRAFT INDUSTRY***

In the contemporary state of affairs existing in the Indian economy, the handicraft sector has emerged as a focused area of interest for the scholars' community, academicians, practitioners and other allied stakeholders. The sector has proven very instrumental in uplifting the regional growth particularly in rural areas and therein minimizing the imbalances prevailing in the economy. The incredible feature of the handicraft sector to contribute towards sustainable development has attracted the attention of present researchers because of the fact that the sector satisfies not only the existing set of millions of artisans but has a concern for the large number of new entrants in the handicraft sector. Handicraft products are mostly defined as items made often with the use of simple tools, and are artistic or traditional in nature (Yojana, 2006). Handicraft products are simply as the objects made by the skill of the hand carrying a part of the creator as well as centuries of evolutionary tradition. India ranks as one of the major suppliers to the total production and supply in the world handicraft industry and the industry is located almost all over the country in rural and urban areas.

The Indian handicrafts industry is highly labor intensive cottage based industry and decentralized, being spread all over the country in rural and urban areas. India, being a developing country where Handicraft Sector is one of the emerging sectors playing a vital role in the economic development of country. The sector is estimated to employ Rs 68.86 lakh artisans at present and the export of handicrafts including handmade carpet up-to October 2014 has been Rs. 17265.11 crores which shows an increase of 23.16% over the same period in financial year 2013-14, and the plan allocation during 2014-15 is Rs. 247.00 crore invalid source specified. Government of India has taken many initiatives to promote and preserve this sector because of its cultural and several other peculiarities. For a country like India, where labour is abundant and capital scarce, the argument for handicrafts industry is very strong. Handicrafts can be set up anywhere in the country and thus can help in removing the regional disparities. Handicrafts enriches Indian heritage while combining in these crafts both utility and beauty. The Handicraft industry has played a significant role in enriching the industrial base of the country. Indian handmade goods have, over the years, become the most dynamic sector

for upliftment of Indian economy. Exquisite handicrafts using diverse raw materials are sourced from different parts of the country. This includes art metal ware, wood ware, hand printed textiles and scarves, leather crafts, hand knotted carpets and embroidered goods, wood design, shawls as art ware, stone carvings, imitation jewelry and miscellaneous other handicrafts. In India, handicraft production is a major form of employment next to agriculture and constitutes a significant part of the export earning economy. Indian handicrafts sector has also attained a prominent place in foreign exchange earnings.

## ***2. HANDICRAFT INDUSTRY OF JAMMU & KASHMIR: AN***

### ***INSIGHT***

The state of Jammu and Kashmir is famous throughout the world for its scenic beauty, bracing climate and craftsmanship skills. It was during the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, popularly known as Budshah or the great king who ruled Kashmir from 1420-70 AD that handicrafts were introduced in Kashmir. The king Zain-ul-Abidin hired skilled craftsmen from Central Asia to train local inhabitants in a number of handicrafts which were till then altogether unknown to the people of the state. Since then craft legacies continued and got encouragement and patronage from different rulers, princes, visitors to the valley, thus skills passing on from generation to generation. Jammu & Kashmir has comparative advantage in producing high quality and world famous fabrics of Pashmina and Kani shawls, silken, woolen and cotton fabrics and crafts like paper-mach, wood work, Tila work, Sozni, Crewel, etc. These products are famous world over because of their unique craftsmanship. Handicrafts in Jammu and Kashmir present a fascinating spectrum of creative imagination and design that is intimately woven into the life pattern of its people. The agility of local artisans coupled with their artistic imagination reflected through a wide range of products has delighted people world over for centuries.

The J&K Handicrafts Department is playing a vital role in promoting handicrafts products in rural as well as in urban areas by providing financial and technical assistance to unemployed youth and artisans of the state for setting up micro and small units in industrial sectors under various schemes. Around 8500 persons are trained annually through 553 training centers in the state. Handicraft activities occupy an important position in the economic structure of J&K State. The Kashmiri handicraft products have earned worldwide fame for

their attractive designs, functional utility and high quality craftsmanship. Handicrafts sector generates substantial foreign exchange for the country, while preserving its cultural heritage. It is also an important source of income for seasonal agricultural labour force. It acts as an instrument in increasing the living standard of rural people. It has great potential, as they hold the key for sustaining not only the existing set of thousands of artisans spread over length and breadth of the state, but also for the increasingly large number of new entrants in the crafts activity. As on 31.03.2014 there were 3005 handicrafts societies registered with a membership of 15084. The department provides managerial subsidy on tapering basis @100% first year, 66%, 2nd year; and 33%, 3rd year to the pass out trainees which is paid for formation of cooperative societies. During the year 2014-15, 82 societies have been formed with a membership of 902 by the end of November, 2014. (Annual Report, 2014). The most important crafts of handicraft industry of Kashmir are embroidery, Shawls, Crewels, Namda, Chain stitch, Papier mache, Costume, Jewelry, Kanishwals and Carpets hold a significant share in the overall production and export of the state. The department of handicrafts promotes sale of handicraft goods by organizing expos/exhibition/craft bazaars within and outside the state. (DES, 2014) Due to several problems faced by handicrafts entrepreneurs like exploitation of intermediaries this sector doesn't show any remarkable growth like other sectors. So the government should address the problems and should take the corrective measures in order to boost this sector. Nevertheless, in-order to meet the challenges of this dynamic tastes and preferences of the customers handicraft producers must be more responsive in adapting designs to buyer requirements, provide timely production and delivery, and improve quality and efficiency in view of increased price competition and consumer expectations.

### ***Contribution of handicrafts to state economy (GSDP)***

<b>Year</b>	<b>Production in terms of Crore Rs.</b>	<b>GSDP at Current Prices</b>	<b>Percentage Share to the Economy</b>
<b>1999-2000</b>	<b>633.03</b>	<b>15659.81</b>	<b>4.04</b>
<b>2000-01</b>	<b>696.33</b>	<b>16699.53</b>	<b>4.17</b>

2001-02	765.94	18039.53	4.25
2002-03	775.00	20325.91	3.81
2003-04	821.53	22194.43	3.70
2004-05	887.00	24265.04	3.66
2005-06	900.00	26537.22	3.39
2006-07	950.00	29029.74	3.27
2007-08	1614.59	31793.04	5.08
2008-09	1100.00	21235.52	5.18
2009-10	1050.00	2100.92	5.45

Source: Economic Survey J & K, 2010-11

Year	Carpets	Woolen Shawls	Paper Machie	Other Items	Total	Year wise %of total productin	Growth rate (Increase/decrease)
2003-04	450.53	275	13.5	82.5	821.53	5.62	—
2004-05	425	315	24	123	887	6.07	7.97
2005-06	425	310	30	135	900	6.16	1.46
2006-07	450.5	320	35	144.5	950	6.50	5.55
2007-08	761.27	420.58	37.92	394.82	1614.59	11.05	69.95
2008-09	457.6	303.45	35.49	303.46	1100	7.53	-31.87
2009-10	638.17	201.03	10.15	151.15	1000	6.84	-9.09
2010-11	735.1	343.1	38.32	533.78	1650.3	11.30	65.03
2011-12	624.7	702.2	102.7	385.73	1815.33	12.43	10
2012-13	643	656.3	145	398.91	1843.21	12.62	1.53
2013-14	684.05	631.2	141.24	559.33	2017.82	13.82	9.47
Total	6294.92	4477.86	613.32	3212.32	14599.78	100	

Source: Economic Survey J & K, 2014.



## ***Conclusion***

The handicraft sector occupies an important position in the economic structure of J&K state. Being eco-friendly, this sector suits to the state as it is more labour intensive and less capital intensive in nature, therefore, having scope for employment generation at a large scale. J&K handicraft products are worldwide famous for their attractive designs, functional utility and high quality craftsmanship. In the absence of large scale industries in the State, handicrafts remained a key economic activity from times immemorial. Crafts like shawls, crewels, namdha, chain stitch, wood carving, costume jewelry, kani shawls, paper mashi, and carpets hold a significant share in the overall production and export of the state. Silken carpets in particular constitute a specialty having no parallel in quality and design at national level and therefore, it occupies an important position in the international market. In economic terms it helps in generation of aggregate employment and raising per capita income of state and hence contributes to State Gross Domestic Product (SGDP) in particular and National Income in general. Jammu & Kashmir handicraft industry facilitates technical know-how between state skilled manpower and international market players through foreign exchange. Though the strength and opportunities exist in J&K handicrafts industry, but need exists to develop and implement strategies in order to explore and develop the hidden agenda thereby adding the value to socio-economic contribution of J&K handicraft industry to the state.

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