

National Handloom Day – 2015

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The hand woven and handmade products of India not only form an integral part of the rich Indian culture and heritage but also are widely appreciated all over the world for its exquisite design, superb colour combination and skill. These household activities in the unorganized sector provide livelihood to millions of people in the rural areas after agriculture. Labour intensive in nature, requiring minimum capital it has checked migration to urban areas and reduced adverse impact on the environment.

In recognizing the significant importance of handlooms in generating the age old tradition, culture and heritage of our country as well as in production, export and employment, and acknowledging the contribution of millions of handloom weavers of our country, Government of India decided to celebrate August 7 as National Handloom Day beginning from this year. Accordingly Union Ministry of Textiles issued guidelines to observe this day in a befitting manner. This included organization of programmes in the handloom weavers concentrated areas, where weavers are to be gathered and deliberate on handloom sector, weaving, raw material design, promotion, welfare of weavers etc. Also directives were issued to felicitate national and state level awardees in this sector and to undertake intensive activities with organization of handloom

workshops, exhibitions, and live demonstrations. As a moral boosting gesture Government of India also appealed to all government employees, school and college students and others to wear handloom fabrics to mark the occasion.

Observance of National Handloom Day on 7th of August has a hoary past and relates to the epic freedom struggle of India. During the struggle for independence, Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation had stressed on the need for hand spinning handloom weaving and wearing Khadi fabrics. As a matter of fact, this formed an integral part of our Swadeshi Movement. On August 7, 1905, in Kolkata, the then Calcutta, at its famous Town Hall, under the Chairmanship of Maharaja Mahinder Chandra Nandy, resolved and observed to wear handwoven and



condemned the use of British powerloom fabrics. From then on, every year August 7 is being observed as Handloom Weavers Day by many co-operative societies. Several Handloom clusters in different parts of the country are convening events as per their capacity to attract the attention of the Government to understand their plight and to ensure improvement in their economic condition. Demand for observance of August 7 as Handloom Day was first raised by Hon'ble Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) from Telengana Anand Bhasker Rapolu in a special mention on March 3, 2015 in Rajya Sabha. After several rounds of examinations by Textile Ministry consultative Committee, Government of India announced August 7 to be observed as National Handloom Day from this year.

Accordingly the first National Handloom Day was launched by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in a national level function at Chennai. Government of Odisha in Handlooms, Textiles and Handicrafts Department observed the first National Handloom Day in Gopalpur of Jajpur District famous for tusser production. National and State Handloom awardees were felicitated and solar lantern and Geographical Indications certificates were distributed among the weavers. A tusser printing unit of a project cost of Rs.21.30 lakh was inaugurated at Gopalpur on this occasion.

According to 2009-10 census the state has 40,683 weaver families where as 192,000 weavers are engaged in weaving and related activities. There are 534 registered primary co-operative societies and 43,652 looms are in functional state. Annual business to the tune of Rs.200 cr. is achieved under the Co-operative fold. The apex organizations viz *Boyanika*, *Serifed* and *Sambalpuri Bastralaya* play a significant role in procurement, production and

marketing of the products. To bring improvement in the socio-economic condition of the weavers and promotion of handloom sector, various developmental and welfare schemes are implemented through both Central and State Government. A Chief Minister's special package has already been announced for the weavers and tusser farmers of the state. Besides weavers are being provided with work-shed, skill up-gradation training, cluster development programme, marketing of products, yarn subsidy, solar lantern and utility kits etc.

Since time immemorial Odishan handloom has attracted the attention of art lovers connoisseurs, fashion designers and eminent personalities of our country. Who can ever forget the elegance of the Odissi dancers clad in the traditional outfits on a stage? Above all Lord Jagannath, the Supreme Lord of the Universe is also fond of exotic Odishan handloom. His biggest daily ritual *Badasinghara Besha* is incomplete without offering of the *Gitagovinda Khandua*. However only Governmental assistance is not sufficient for sustaining the livelihood of those engaged in this profession. It is imperative that more and more people develop keen interest in buying and wearing handloom fabrics in order to preserve this rich heritage. And observing August -7 as National Handloom Day is a pragmatically bold step in this regard.

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