

ABSTRACT

Handloom and handicraft are deeply embedded in tradition and rituals of our everyday life. Either in form of utility or artifact it has always made us contented. Being playing these roles, it is also a major source of income generation in Indian economy. It contributes through both domestic and export market and in past few years its contribution has kept increasing. So, it can serve as major economic asset also rather than just cultural asset. India is a land full of art –craft and regional diversity. This has enabled it to be second employment generating sector after agriculture. This makes it more crucial to utilize these craft at the fullest to sustain the livelihood of people relying upon it as well as in contributing economic growth of the nation.

Mashru is an indigenous handloom fabric of Gujarat, traditionally woven in Patan & Kutch-Bhuj. It has served the need and aspiration of Muslims, local folks of Gujarat and neighboring states for centuries. *Mashru* was discovered as a solution to wear silk without breaking the religious norms of the Muslim community. In Muslim community it is prohibited to wear silk by men except in critical situation like war and infection. To meet this unique obligation, this extraordinary fabric was developed where they can feel silken luster without breaking their religious law. It comprises warp of silk and weft of cotton in satin weave where silk lies at the surface and cotton below it touching the skin. Though it was initially developed for Muslim community, later it penetrated in wardrobe of many Hindu community, their rituals & customs. In fact, it became the part of staple costumes of many communities and families like royal family of Bhuj, Rabaris of Gujarat and Rajasthan and few tribal communities of Madhya Pradesh. Since its inception, it was practiced in many states of India like Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu including Gujarat but at present it is practiced in Patan of Mehsana district and few villages of Kutch-Bhuj only. In these centers too, its growth had been marginalized leading to diminution of artisan practicing it and the loss of numerous native designs.

Gujarat has been widely known as productive place for growth of art and craft. Somehow, unlike other popular craft, *Mashru* was not nurtured adequately to flourish in this productive land. It needed strategic design solution, constant demand, wide application, appreciation and promotion for its apposite growth. The association and affiliation of modern lifestyle, consumerism, behavioral change, urge of speeded mode of production at low cost had severely hindered the growth of indigenous products. Industrialization has set handloom and handicraft in the queue of sunset industry without realizing the fact that a huge population had been

dependent upon it which can distress the economy at grass root level. Its prolonged existence other miscellaneous issues brought *Mashru* at the verge of extension. At present, *Mashru* weavers are facing stiff competition from cheaper power loom imitation. Since *Mashru* of this region has not been explored adequately till date in terms of design, history & significance. Therefore, this study was undertaken to trace its history, to understand its design idiom as well as to re-establish *Mashru* through new design and development and its product diversification. For this, researcher adopted mix method which comprised of descriptive cum exploratory cum experimental study where case study, interview, group- discussion and observation method were employed. Data was collected from weavers and traders of Patan and Bhujodi, Mandavi and Godhra villages of Kutch-Bhuj. Details of artisans were gathered using snow ball and purposive sampling.

On the basis of primary & secondary data, historicity of *Mashru* were traced to have possibly Indian origin in contrast to conventional view having foreign origin. To understand its design language & significance; different design samples and motifs were collected from weavers, traders, private artifact collector and resource centers. Collected designs were identified in three major categories: stripe, *ikat*, & *Butii Mashru*. Emphasizing on existing infrastructure possibility in terms of design development, stylistic feature of craft and market study, new design were conceptualized and selected designs were developed in above stated categories. Total 8 fabrics were developed – 5 in stripe, 2 in *Ikat* & 1 in *Butti*. The varied used warp yarn content was cotton, rayon, mulberry, tasar, and Korea silk. Acceptance of developed fabrics were assessed in terms of percentage wherein opinion was gathered through digitally administered opinionnaire. Responses were collected from consumers and textile experts regarding material, placement, color combination, technique used and overall design appeal. The results discovered that the among all varieties; overall male respondents preferred maximum & equally design 3 & 6; female respondents preferred design 5 on the basis of overall aesthetic appeal.

The development of design went through huge struggle. Mapping artisan's skill, employment of varied techniques including lost one, convincing & motivating artisan to weave in diverse material, technique was although tough but were collectively achieved with the help of artisans in long way. I would appreciate Janakbhai (weaver), who at the age of seventy also took the challenge to work. His passion for his work, love and respect towards the *Mashru* is the motivation behind his work. Channelization & establishment of entire value chain is essentially needed here. Young generation too needs to be sensitized towards the value of their associated craft to bring deeper connect, motivation & growth for *Mashru*.