



## Regional Representation-Narsapur Mega Cluster Lace & Crochet from Narsapur

India's concentrated crochet lace cluster is abundantly spread around Narsapur, East and West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh, making it a self-proclaimed womens' industry owing to its 1,60,000 plus home based lace makers. More than 80% of this artwork is exported while some of these products are made for appreciative clientele in the domestic market. It is interesting to see how some new (artisan turned) entrepreneurs who have benefited from EPCH's skill development workshops, entrepreneurship development programs (EDP), etc. have further honed their skill potential with the establishment of the International Lace Trade Centre (ILTC) at Narsapur, set up by EPCH under the aegis of O/o Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India. Skill development and up-gradation has always been one of the top priorities of EPCH and in line with the same, EPCH has already trained well over 5,000 individuals at West Godavari & East Godavari Districts of Narsapur that contain the lace & crochet making cottage and household based industry. IHGF Delhi Fair-2016 featured a regional representation from this Cluster and participating artisans and entrepreneurs share their learning and enthusiasm.

The elegance of lace & crochet created by around 10 enthusiastic artisans, crafts persons, self-help groups and entrepreneurs dedicated to the craft greeted one at the display area of Narsapur. They brought to this fair, a variety in hand made lace-embellished as well as lace-total home textiles like table cloths, coasters, bedcovers/spreads, cushion covers, curtains, apparel, hand bags, motifs, doilies, soft toys, accessories to apparel, pin cushions, cellphone covers, etc. These are fine hand woven crochet work in subtle shades with occasional splashes of bright colours in natural dyes.



First time participant, Bhimadhuni Kameshwari has been in this profession since 10 years now but this was her maiden foray to a fair like EPCH. She deals in jute cushions, throws (kind of bed sheets) beautifully designed with a combination of different colours. She also brought to this show, neck adornments, bed sheets and cushion covers. She has learnt the craft from her grandparents

and is happy at the initiatives taken by the government towards upliftment of artisans in her region.

"It is a great platform to showcase the power of talent hidden in small parts of the country," said Mucharla Bharti who has been working in the lace & crochet industry since the last 10 years. For her too this was the first experience of dealing with overseas buyers at an international fair. She shared that

lace making started as a hobby but soon became a source of employment for her. She specializes in ponchos, textile home décor items like table covers and bed sheets.



B Girija thanked EPCH's team led by its Executive Director, Mr. Rakesh Kumar, for giving this opportunity where she can come in direct contact with buyers. She has also attended an EPCH workshop and benefited from it. "The problem that we face is the role of middlemen in our profession besides health problems like swelling up of fingers and eye strain," she says and adds that making a crochet bed sheet takes 1-2 months but the artisan is paid very little and a high margin is earned by the middleman. Her product profile includes bed sheets, cushion covers, toys, doilies, skirts, shrugs and ponchos but her



skills are properly manifested in an innovation that combines crochet with 'kalamkari' and uses techniques like cutwork, tie and dye.

A second time participant, K Madhavi specialises in crochet and lace work for home decor, bed sheets, cushion covers, table linen and similar products as well as apparel lines like ponchos, crop tops and children's wear. She makes lace doilies with a blend of jute. Her enterprise works with domestic buyers in Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai. She looks forward to working for buyers in overseas markets with support from EPCH.



range of home decor, ponchos, full dresses, scarves, beachwear and patch worked apparel to overseas markets.



Himasari Lace & Co., represented by MT Naidu manufactures and exports 100% handmade crochet laces, trimmings, motifs, garments, home textiles and doilies used as table linen trimmings. Mr. Naidu's 25 years of experience in this profession has given him a lot of market exposure. His company engages a workforce consisting primarily of women, who work from home. With USA and Japan among export markets, their main products comprise bed sheets, curtains, full dresses and home décor. A regular participant at IHGF Delhi Fair, he is "very satisfied" with



S Venkataratnam with a team of 100 to 150 workers is associated with a cooperative society called, Crochet Lace Park and works under the brand name, Alankriti. Their main



products are cushions, home decor, curtains, bags, earrings, dolls, necklaces, toys, ponchos and patch work. They deal in table cloths and dress material that blends fabric with lace. Besides catering to a customer base in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai, they export to Sweden. Off late they have an online presence



and sell their goods on flipkart.com. S Venkataratnam has been part of the International Lace Trade Centre, set up by EPCH under the aegis of O/o Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Ministry of Textile, Govt. of India.



the response he gets through this platform. Sri Adarsa Women Mutually Aided Co-operative Thrift & Credit Society was represented by T Ranga Nageshwari who has 20 years of work experience in the industry to her credit. They started working aided by the Ambedkar Hastashilp Vikas Yojna that mainly

targets the integrated development of the society and is aimed to promote handicrafts. In 2002, they started with a project that helped the workers to learn new designs, market situations, etc. in lace & crochet craft making. They participate in other fairs & exhibitions in India as well. Besides catering to the domestic market in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai, they export indirectly USA and UK. "This fair is a gift to us, as we are able to directly showcase our products," she said and added that the need of the hour is an appeal to the Govt. to conduct more of such programs so that the role of middlemen is eliminated and the artisans get due worth for their hard work. ■





# Regional Representation - Jodhpur Mega Cluster

## Crafts Persons from Jodhpur display splendour of traditional skills

Jodhpur, the "Sun city" of India, is one of the most renowned production clusters for internationally sought after furniture & accessories and home décor made out of different kinds of raw material like recycled wood, cast iron & wrought iron, stone, etc. To assist the stakeholders, the Govt. of India declared Jodhpur, a Mega Cluster of wooden handicrafts. The Office of Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Ministry of Textiles entrusted the task of promoting and enhancing exports from Jodhpur to EPCH. In this regard, EPCH has set up a trade facilitation centre and is carrying out skill development of artisans; market interventions (domestic & international); market related capacity building & brand promotion. IHGF Delhi Fair-2016 featured a regional representation from this cluster and participating artisans and entrepreneurs report of their learning, exposure to the international market and business enquiries.

Balotra, a city in the Barmer district of Rajasthan, risen to international fame owing to its enticing mud resist technique of textile block printing called Dabu, was represented by State Award Winner, Chipa Yousuf Yaseen and his textile crafts donning beautiful Dabu prints. His eagerness to share about this craft and its demand among premier domestic as well as international brands is an added bonus. Balotra is known for its traditional hand block printed textiles done with wooden blocks and dyed with soft shades of Indigo and natural dyes (usually yellow and red) onto hard weaving cotton. Today



synthetics are also used as a variation bringing down the cost of the finished product by 40 to 50%.

"But the beauty of Dabu comes out best on cotton," Yousuf informs. The motifs are as old as 200 years. This is a family tradition and the city where this technique was a way of life in the bygone era, now has a few artisan families carrying forward this craft. The realization of its commercial viability is giving this craft a new lease of life and Yousuf couldn't be happier about it as he proudly shares about the people of his caste-'Chipa' who are carrying this inheritance forward. Besides enjoying a good demand overseas, this craft is eagerly embraced by connoisseurs in India, he said, showing his

display range of hand printed textile scarves and home textiles. Yousuf's enterprise manufactures bedspreads, pillow covers as well as artisanal apparel and have worked with leading Indian textile brands like Fabindia and Anokhi, besides few export markets. Their canvas bags and tie & dye products are popular in USA, he informed. At IHGF, he received sampling orders for bed sheets and for a first time exhibitor at the fair, this looks very promising.

A 350 years old art of making hand printed invitations (premium) and royal announcement cards through a painstakingly done block printing process was displayed by Khusboo Singh, daughter of a State Awardee who taught her this skill. Her artistic and "laborious but rewarding" venture partnered by her mother Priti. Since she is the only one pursuing this art in India she carries a rare legacy on her shoulders. On the first look, her cards seem elegant with traditional Rajasthani motifs but a closer look reveals the intricacy created totally by hand, using engraved steel hand-



held stencils and vibrant dyes. They also specialize in monogram printing for



royal clientele and premium customers. Her stall displayed samples of stencils and cards including a wedding card she made for Jodhpur's royal family. Each pattern/motif involves as many stencils as the colours involved and it is time taking as one dye has to dry completely before the next is applied.

The craft of art metalware was represented by Sadan Singh Rathore of Shri Kanuj Handicrafts, Jodhpur. About



20 years into this business, he designs as well as customizes as per buyer requirements. He has displayed boxes and animal figurines in wood with brass inlay work. He supplies to the local market and is glad to report of buyer enquiries through this participation.

Rajasthan's tie & dye leheriya work on textiles was brought to this display by Mohd. Asif who counts bed linen,



women's suits, sarees and dupattas among his main products. The mediums used are cotton, semi-chiffon, and

cotton-satin. They supply to stores across India and even have stores in two cities. He has 4 brothers and 4 nephews who help in the work besides a team of 4 to 5 artisans.

Hand carving on camel bone to bring out home décor and gifting products is another craft Rajasthan's Jodhpur region is famous for. At this collective display area of Jodhpur mega cluster, it was represented in form of intricately carved decoratives, mirror frames, dresser items, utility boxes, etc. embellished with fine detailing and typical Rajasthani animal and bird motifs, by Sanna Handicrafts from the city, that enjoy a presence in the domestic market and are keen to venture into direct exports. They work with 10 to 12 artisans and this total

handwork based enterprise uses various hand tools limiting the use of machines only for drilling. They have received



many enquiries and look forward to order placing soon.

The famed craft of camel bone inlay in wood as well as intricate perforation & latticed work on wood ware from Jodhpur appeared in the form of animal and bird figurines as



well as decorative boxes and small furniture pieces, put up by a father son duo- Chetan Lal Meghwal and Kaishav Kishor from Shilp Gram, Jodhpur. They supply these products made by artisans in the family, to



exporters in Jaipur and through this maiden participation, wished to meet overseas buyers for direct exports. "We are only keeping a nominal margin on these handicrafts to attract buyers," they shared. They are also keen to start an online presence for domestic retail sales. They have attended EPCH seminars in Jodhpur and benefited. Another participant from Shilp Gram was Toga Ram who specializes in furniture made of mango wood, like chairs, dressers, wall units, stools with leather seats, etc. He also displayed decoratives like totally hand carved figurines. He belongs to the Suthar cast of Rajasthan who have inherited a heritage of exquisite carpentry. This is their family tradition and the inception of business could date back to decades.



For two women artisans, Lalita and Shanti this was a maiden exposure to an international market and a fair of such magnitude. They were very impressed and Shanti has even decided to urge

her two daughters-in-law, also practicing this craft, to participate in the next edition. They specialize in applique work on cushion covers, bed sheets, bags and selections in women's apparel. Mirror work and typical Rajasthani folk motifs are common in this 98% hand labored worked



with the sewing machine restricted to stitching and fortifying corners / borders of the products. This craft is not taught in institutions but women in Rajasthan's Barmer district just know it just like a "must-learn" recipe in their households.

Traditionally, they practiced this craft to bring out products of everyday use or to give away as wedding gifts to daughters. Gradually, this was used to earn livelihood as women set out to make these products for sale in local markets and places of tourist interest. "We are here due to Gramin Vikas evam Chetna Sansthan (GVCS) and its association with the Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts, they say, expressing gratitude for the grooming and fine-tuning of their skills that are in turn making their products suitable for various international markets and as a result, empowering women in the region." "It also breaks the monotony of our lives and gives us a lot to look forward to," they say.

Gramin Vikas Evam Chetna Sansthan (GVCS), a women oriented social enterprise, strives to rectify aspects of the value chain that discourage women to continue a tradition and to create a society void of exploitation and deprivation. Their Secretary, Vikram Singh Chaudhary says, significant support came with the Ministry of Textile's Comprehensive Handicrafts Cluster Development Scheme for the Jodhpur Mega Cluster.

This connected them to the Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH) that guides and supports skill development and training programs besides offering the platform of international fairs like IHGF Delhi Fair to connect directly with overseas buyers. "The returns have been more than rewarding," he says and adds, "the benefits these artisans get through this fair go a long way in giving them the fundamental international market exposure, besides instilling a long lasting confidence in them." They are actively engaged with 11,000 artisans-7000 applique specialists and 4000 adept at embroidery. The prevalent embroidery techniques in this area are - *soof, pakka, kambiri, kharak, kachcha* and *sindhi*.

More products made by artisans connected with GVCS were also on display at the fair. There, a cheerful representative - Jogram Jee, explains about the home textiles & made-ups on display and this Fair Trade initiative that better



the lives of many in rural areas around Barmer. This was their 5th consecutive participation in an EPCH fair.

To assist the stakeholders with modern infrastructure, latest technology, design innovations, skill development and appropriate market linkages, the Government of India declared Jodhpur, a Mega Cluster of wooden handicrafts. The Office of Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Ministry of Textiles entrusted the task of promoting and enhancing exports from Jodhpur to EPCH. In this regard, EPCH has set up a trade facilitation centre and is carrying out skill development of artisans; market interventions (domestic & international); market related capacity building and brand promotion. ■