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HAND WEAVING: CRAFTING PROGRESSIVE PATH FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

India has rich craft heritage of hand-woven textiles that have had strong historic, social and cultural relevance. In today's era, use of technology and digitization is growing in every sphere of life and as a consequence hand craft skills are getting languished. Hand-weaving, a craft for which Indian textiles were renowned world over has lost prominence with time. The textiles that were woven with great skill and patience are now being mass produced on power looms with minimal effort and in much lesser time. The traditional hand weavers are making exodus to alternative means of employment. In such a scenario, hand weaving craft needs to be redirected to be able to subsume products that find greater social and-economic relevance in extremely dynamic market environment. The hand crafted aspect of hand-weaving should be made an opportunity to explore unseen areas that are not possible with mechanized working. Hand weaving can be a wonderful means of reusing and up-cycling soft and pliable waste to convert it into products of value. The possibility of delicate and sensitive manual handling of materials makes the craft special and advantageous than regular machine weaving. There have been efforts around using leather scraps, fabric cuttings from garment production, waste embroidery threads, waste papers, starting and end of warp sheet, waste leno selvedge from automatic looms as weft material to be woven with finer but stronger warp. One of the challenges in using this waste is to first process it into thin, linear strips of considerable length, either by tearing waste pieces straight or cutting in circular spiral that may be opened to get the linear strand. The preferred weave is plain weave as it imparts required strength to the woven fabric and also keeps the thick weft in place. The fabric, thus woven, is unique as-the irregular thickness of weft gives a distinctive texture and it allows combining of very different materials. Proper sorting of waste according to material, size color and texture improves the quality and aesthetics of the woven fabric. Interesting hand-crafted woven surfaces may be achieved with prior planning of colors, yarn count, weaves, materials or their combinations. The fabric woven is heavy weight and use of unconventional materials renders it varying characteristics that make it suitable for a variety of applications, from apparels to accessories to furnishings. A cohesive and collective effort in this direction may help in creating economic and social change at rural and urban level as it has the potential to provide sustainable design solution to reuse the waste and at the same time support economy by sustaining employment for the existing hand weavers.