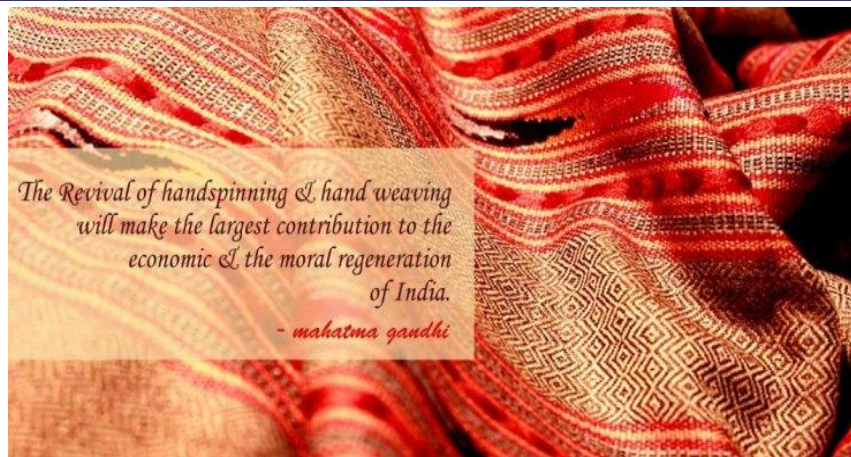




Handloom Sector

Context:

- Sixth edition of National Handloom Day was celebrated on 7th August 2020 which was marked by announcements by Ministry of Textiles.



Some of the announcements were:

- The termination of the handloom, powerloom, wool, jute and silk boards – **To reduce bureaucratic red tapes.**
- The integration of plans for the sector with other ministries like Tourism, Culture, Women & Child development – **To synergise efforts of multiple ministries.**
- National Institute of Fashion Technology students and faculty are to guide nine Weavers' Service Centres. This is a good move for their revival as many have potential – **Infusion of knowledge & skills into weavers.**

What is importance of handloom sector?

- **A hallmark of Indian culture:** Almost every state of India has a unique handloom product to offer such as Phulkar from Punjab, Chanderi from Madhya Pradesh, Ikat from Andhra Pradesh, Dacca from West Bengal, Brocade from Benares.
- **Global Recognition:** Indian handloom is rich in variety and is appreciated all over the world over for its craftsmanship and intricacy of designs and thus holds huge potential in global textile market.
- **Employment Provider:** The handloom industry is one of the largest unorganized sectors of economic activity in India providing employment to 43.31 lakh weavers from rural and semi-urban areas.



- **Rural Centred Industry:** According to the Fourth All India Handloom Census 2019-20, 31.45 lakh households are engaged in handloom, weaving and allied activities, out of which 87% are in rural areas and the remaining 13% are in urban areas.
- **Large Female Workforce:** Most of the weavers are women and people from economically disadvantaged groups and 77% of the adult weavers are women.
- **Easy to Start** as it entails minimal use of capital and power
- **Aligned with Sustainable Development** due to environment friendly production processes
- **Flexibility to innovate** due to the specialty in the weave of the textiles in each region that is developed based on location, climate and cultural influences.
- **Livelihoods to weaker Sections of Society:** Nearly 68% of the handloom workers belong to SC, ST & OBC groups.

What are government intervention for promotion of the sector?

- The **National Handloom Development Programme** which provides concessional credit, support to several block level cluster projects, marketing assistance.
- The government also has yarn supply schemes, export promotions, Geographical Indication of goods, E-Dhaga app and several other schemes and initiatives.

What are challenges?

- **State handloom boards** (wherever they exist) are not enough as their outreach and vision are limited to the state and responses often depend on vote shares.
- **Ineffective Implementation:** The Handloom Mark is emphasised, but methods for ensuring its purity are not clear.
- **Skill gaps to access IT infrastructure:** If weavers have to avail of all knowledge from a special handloom portal, they need connectivity, computers and digital knowledge, which is lacking for majority of weavers.
- **Anti-Gandhian approach:** The declaration of intent of recent announcement is to sell handlooms at “the highest price at the highest level”. Selling



expensive cloth to the wealthiest will shrink, not expand the market. The poor man's cloth has been taken over by powerlooms.

- **Increasing Raw material costs:** From cotton, silk, and woollen yarn to dyes, costs have increased and so has the shortage.
- **Reduced Governmental Financial Support:** The Textile Association of India stated that the budget allocation for the textile sector came down to Rs 4,831 crore in (2019-2020) from Rs 6,943 in the previous fiscal.
- **Accessibility Issues:** Poor infrastructure, older looms and inaccessibility to reach prime markets have made lives of handloom weavers even more difficult.

Way Ahead:

- Local production for local markets is a brilliant strategy and needs encouragement.
- Need to implement the recommendations of Satyam and Ajai Shankar committee reports.