



Sustainable Global Leadership... India's cup of tea!!!

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Indian Textile Industry: Rebrewing the traditions and stepping into sustainable leadership while the global geopolitical issues are at peak and the only country under limelight is our dear country called as **Aatmanirbhar... Bharat!!!**

India is rising to become a global superpower in manufacturing and we are all stepping up with the evident growth across all sectors of manufacturing. However, when it comes to textiles, the role of leadership was our past glory; we were clothing to entire world. But today is not the time to complain or talk about the unfavourable US tariff barriers.

Let us concentrate on our strength of our country which is our tradition. Yes, it is the ace card because today's buzzword "sustainability" is derived from natural resources which was our tradition for many years.

Sustainable History of India's Textile Industry

In past, we have used most of the natural fibres like cotton, silk, wool, Jute, etc. and used natural dyes with natural extracts. Indian traditional clothing e.g. bandhanis, silk sarees, dress materials, cotton sarees, undergarments, dhoties, lungis, shirts & turbans, woollen trousers, jute packaging materials, etc were all natural.

We were back then in sync with the environment and there was neither talk or knowledge of man made fibre industry by using variety of chemicals or fertilizers or pesticides for natural fibres.

The so-called organic farming practiced today was the traditional practice. The natural cow dung was manure for nourishment of the plants. The future is heading us back to our roots. Our ancient history always had crops growing naturally for many years on the same farmland, being harvested by the farmers from generation to generations.

So, it was 100% sustainable and had complete traceability about the fibres. In other words, we are just retracing our footprints back to the origin of cultivating naturally, but with the help of modern science and social pressure from the compliance side & with much needed technological advances from hand looms to super productive shuttle less looms.

Future of sustainable textile industry

Today, if we are not sustainable then our days are numbered. The new generations are demanding sustainable products. No cheating with Mother Earth any more. So, when it comes to textiles, one of the largest consumer-driven segments, there is no excuse for not practicing sustainability.

I think, looking at the sustainability innovations, more and more natural fibre sources are being identified, tested, tried and adopted in the markets, the trend of natural is definitely catching upper hand and we are going towards more natural products to take care of the environment, including reducing wastage & utilities like power & water, reusing waste by recycling, use of renewable energy & practicing concepts like zero liquid discharge.

Moreover, we should understand that global warming will also demand more use of natural fibres. Most of the woollen garments are now poly-wool, which may switch over to cotton wool. And that's where again we will be having more prominence of using even blends of cotton in various proportions and forms.

Similarly, some developments may happen for certain uses of technical textiles, they would also demand sustainable technical textiles. Because ultimately, whatever we produce has to be recycled back in the process and not end up on landfills.

Merits of Indian Textile Industry

In our recent past, the British invasion set up very large textile units in India. And you would see that most of the textile mills that have more than a hundred years of presence in India were mainly exporters to the entire globe. And, back then, India was equipped with spinning and weaving operations and processing used to take place in Europe.

But now, we have the ability to produce in India as per fashion trends that are developed in any part of the world in no time. Moreover, developed countries are not allowing polluting textile processes. And hence, instead of selling only cotton yarn, we need to go back to our roots and start having a complete value chain by which we can produce the entire finished product as required by that country. Logistic systems are also going to see rapid changes in the coming years and faster cargo movements will be in force.

We will also see a change in the development of dyes and chemicals. A lot of innovations and research are focused on using natural dyes and eco-friendly chemicals. So, a sustainable way is not a difficult choice for India, but a choice to revisit history and bring our practices back and uplift them with today's modern

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techniques for efficient, consistent and faster processes. The picture is now very clear; we know the techniques; we have the raw materials; we are well versed with the technology to deliver with the utmost care to nature.

Natural resources

We have the complete value chain right from the fibres up to garments with natural resources. And nowadays, what is most important is the marketing techniques, which we have in our backpacks. In fact, we are leaders as producers for most of the raw materials.

We are number one in the cotton cultivation area, number two as far as total cotton production is concerned. and there is a huge area of improvement in cotton yield, if we practice right techniques. We can increase our production by 50% by adopting good farming techniques. We are also global rank 2 in silk & the largest jute producing country.

In Spinning, India is already producing its own machines and has good capability to spin all types of yarns. We just need to add post-spinning machines to complete self-sustainability in Spinning sector. We are one of the major leaders in yarn supply to the entire globe, and that would be our strongest point, as we have around 31.2% Cotton Yarn market share in the entire globe. We also have very good quality and a variety of fabric manufacturing technologies.

Our biggest challenge here is that we have good weaving preparatory machines, but we do not have modern technology for rapier, water jet or air jet shuttle less looms.

In fabric processing, we have a good scope to strengthen the value chain by adding the much-needed processing setup. We have to progress a lot from the technology point of view; we need to have continuous bleaching and dyeing ranges, as well as appropriate finishing machines, which are a prerequisite. Since the European cost of manufacturing is drastically increasing, it is making it difficult to keep the operating cost optimum.

This is an opportunity for us; this is where we need to pitch in and start understanding that in the near future, our competition will be only with Chinese or Turkish machinery manufacturers. So, before China takes over European brands or join hands with them, let us be prepared for machinery making in India. Maybe consulting firms like us can help Indian machinery producers in identifying the right partners & devising strategic road-map.

Most of our fabric processing units are very old with average age of 25 - 30 years. So, these machineries need to be modified on priority. Because when we are using old technologies, the

operating costs are very high, and we will not be able to compete with modern technologies, like European, Japanese, Chinese, Turkish, Taiwanese or Korean.

The operating cost is where we need to be more focused. We need to start using renewable energy to reduce our cost of production and scale up our operations. We need to modernize and upgrade our existing setup as per the target market technology requirements.

When it comes to garmenting or made-ups, the most important Dominant factor for all to fall in place is the skilled personnel. No doubt India has a large population, but we need to invest in garmenting, which will be a good job creation program and well deserving value addition.

We should train our people with the necessary skillset & have proper systems and procedures to understand the techniques and also the complete certified compliant setups to cater to the organised branded markets.

Assistance in production optimizations with many techniques, like ERP solutions or complete plant automation, is a must going forward. Understanding use of Industry 4.0 and 5.0 standards is the smart way to cope with the market needs. We need to use latest finished product designs to the customers with best manufacturing techniques by opting for modern production techniques with lower operating costs than competing countries.

Innovative solutions

The sheer dedication needed for the core of innovation. Dedicated continuous research on all of our requirements and understand that even today's requirements are going to change tomorrow. And hence, research needs to be continuous. Various projects should be given to the academic researchers, engineers, as well as to the fibre science people, so that we will be innovative.

The government can play a major role in identifying such research institutes; we should also not to think of the existing research institutes which are been there for many years. We need to create some new institutes with think-tanks, even the PhD students from textile engineering or the chemical industry need to be given projects by which they can produce something different. Obviously, appreciation is the key for keeping the torch of research enlightened and recognise them with awards/ rewards for successful innovations.

Requirement of technology

The technological requirement for sustainable solutions would be totally different than what is available right now. We need to develop different techniques, different fibres, we can

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develop technology ourselves. And we can be pioneer in developing sustainable technologies. At the same time, it will boost the sustainable efforts of the country.

For example, a shirt can be produced by using a spunlace technology. We can use different fibres & finishes as per the fabric design. So instead of using dyes and chemicals, we can give a different fabric appearance by using different mechanical treatments like embossing. Such new designs would be highly appreciated by Gen Z and all future generations.

People do not mind paying more for new techniques, new value addition for sustainability. An affordable price range will tick all boxes of “New & trending” in the market and people will be ready to try them out.

Collaborative Approach

When we are aiming at becoming a superpower in sustainable textiles, we may not have to be the only ones to offer all the sustainable solutions. From the future point of view, there would be competition mainly between China and India as far as technology is concerned, because most of the European producers may not be affordable, we need to strategize and join hands with right partners. Then, the collaborative approach by having joint ventures or technology exchange MOUs or having FTAs with certain countries, we can target good manufacturers and start the process for bringing them to India and producing those technologies with a collaborative approach. The success would

be much faster with collaborative approach rather than to innovate something from scratch.

Road map for growth of India

We need to sew all the points together and devise a strategic solution that enables us to become sustainable global leader. Therefore, complete innovation in fibre science can be achieved through new cultivation techniques, the use of sustainable dyes and chemicals, reliance on natural resources, understanding our strengths, and capitalizing on this with comprehensive R&D and an innovative approach to process parameters. Our government also should give incentives for such efforts.

Coming to the actual manufacturing process, adopting to appropriate technological advancements, with lower operating costs & strategic marketing in the target markets. Using renewable energy with sustainable approach, imparting skill development & raining tprograms, understanding the best techniques for a particular process, use of Artificial intelligence are the tools for becoming global leader.

Also, multi-skilling people would be one of the major things that we will have to adopt. If we start practicing these techniques with strategic inputs from right & resourceful consultants in each field, I think sky is the limit for Indian textile industry & we will enjoy the position of global leadership.

Sustainability is what we have practiced in past. Let us practice it once again with professional approach.

Let us sip... the success... and enjoy Indian tea!!!