

# INDIAN HANDICRAFTS IN GLOBALIZATION TIMES: AN ANALYSIS OF GLOBAL-LOCAL DYNAMICS

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*Regular article*

*Received: 13. April 2010. Accepted: 23. December 2010.*

## ABSTRACT

Globalization – which refers to the growing integration of societies, economies and cultures around the world, has become one of the most hotly-debated topics and key area of research among the policy makers, statesmen, corporate, politicians and academia respectively over the past few years. As India opens up her doors to the multinationals during the era of economic reform and liberalized market, putting an end to the ‘license raj’, it is not only the economies that often meet in the global market sphere, but also the people and cultures, which bring a new dimension to the multi-cultural setting. What we can see in present day modern world is that there is always a cross-cultural interaction between the ‘local’ and ‘global’ and the much discussed ‘global village’, is now not just a possibility but a reality despite many contradictions. Talking about Indian Handicrafts, which constitutes a significant segment of the decentralized sector of the economy, its export has reached at a commendable height. Indian folk art and crafts which are the integral parts of the Indian culture and tradition, are in high demand among the western consumers. Again, foreign fashion industry borrows a great deal from Indian appliquéd motifs Saree designs, an ethnic Indian wear. Needless to say, the borders between the world cultures are now eroding out and becoming irrelevant, therefore prompting to call it as a deterritorialized world.

But notwithstanding, the real concern for many of us is that, can the ‘local’ really meet with the ‘global’ by truly sustaining its localness? The biggest problem in the Indian Handicraft industry is that the village craftsmen remain concerned that with free trade and mass production, hand-made products from other parts of the world will out price the products of their hard labour. So the basic question arises, is globalization a panacea for every human problems that the mother earth is facing now? With a brief theoretical understanding, this paper looks at globalization’s increasing impact on Indian handicrafts and crafts persons. It tries to assess how far globalization serves as an opportunity and threat to the artisans. The role of the government in promoting the crafts and protecting the artists will also be discussed before concluding the paper.

## KEY WORDS

globalization, handicraft, global, local, glocal

## CLASSIFICATION

JEL: O53, R33

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## INTRODUCTION

Globalization, which refers to the integration of economic, political, and cultural systems across the globe, has become one of the fashionable buzzwords in both academic and political debate these days. It is a process which refers to the growing socio-economic interdependence of countries world wide through rising size and variety of transactions of goods and services, capital flows, widespread diffusion of technology across border and moreover the interaction and interdependence of people and culture throughout the world. Reduction of poverty and rapid economic growth in countries like India, China, and other countries that were poor few years ago, proposes sufficient promises about globalization. At the same time increased inequality among people and economies as well as large-scale environmental degradation has also generated significant opposition and concerns both in national and international level. Globalization simply refers to increasing connectivity, integration and interdependence in the socio-economic, technological, cultural, political and ecological spheres. The very concept has many sub-processes which includes, enhanced economic interdependence, increased cultural influence, rapid advancement of information and communication technology, and novel governance and geopolitical challenges that are increasingly binding people and culture of the world more tightly making a global village.

As according to The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy [1], in popular discourse, the term globalization is understood as a little more than a synonym for one or more of the following phenomena/processes: the pursuit of classical liberal policies (or “free market”) in the world economy (or what is called as “economic liberalization”), the growing dominance of western (or even American) politics, economy, and culture (which can be called as “westernization” or “Americanization”), the proliferation of new information technologies (or the “Internet Revolution”), as well as the notion that humanity stands at the threshold of realizing one single unified community in which major sources of social conflict have vanished (something that many address as “global integration”). The Encyclopedia Britannica defines globalization as the process by which the experience of everyday life is becoming standardized around the world. To Friedman, Globalization is the integration of markets, finance and technologies in a way that is shrinking the world from size medium to size small and enabling each of us to reach around the world farther and cheaper than ever before [2, p.6]. Similarly, Martin Albrow defines globalization as all those process by which the peoples of the world are incorporated into a single world society, global society [3, p.10]. Again Arjun Appadurai considers it on the bases of five scapes under which current global flows occur. As he says, they occur in and through the growing disjunctures between ethnoscape (people), technoscape (machinery), financescape (money), mediascape (images) and idea scape (ideas) [4, p.301]. A. Giddens called globalization the direct consequence of modernization. He defined it as “the intensification of world wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice-versa. This is a dialectical process because such local happenings may move in an obverse direction from the very distanciated relations that shape them. A local transformation is as much a part of globalization as the lateral extension of social connections across time and space.” [5, p.64]. Nowadays, globalization has laid to the end of geography and also the death of distance. Geography and national border have become obsolete concepts. Drastic development in the technologies of transport and communication has made available of everything at everybody’s doorstep. The World Wide Web (WWW) and Internet have helped this process, enabling business to communicate more smoothly and efficiently and sparking what some have called the “Third Wave” of economic growth [6, p.9]. Even in India, in the local supermarket/hypermarket, different products of American and European origin catch the

attention of its home consumers. So fast is the information flow as well. It is surprisingly a phenomenon that many foreign fashion shows are run these days with Hollywood models wearing the appliqued motifs saris designed by Indian fashion designers. This instance adds to growing demand for Indian folk creations like, appliqué umbrellas in western sea beaches. This shows how tradition meets with modernity these days. Globalization has put both east and west into one compartment and makes a single village – a global village. As we know, globalization produces varieties of responses in the field of culture. Sometimes global culture gets inhabited in local spheres making a micro global, and sometimes local culture mounts to the height of the global-dome making a macro local and yet again sometimes both global and local culture produce a hybrid one – a glocal<sup>1</sup>. This is the magic of globalization these days. This paper basically deals with two discourses. First, that globalization creates a world that is increasingly becoming homogenous in nature spreading the dominant culture across the globe. Second, that world cultures are becoming more and more diverse leading to heterogeneity in its form and content. And that there is always the interface between the global and local leading to plurality/hybridity. It is in between these debates that my argument for Indian handicrafts evolves.

An earlier version of this paper was presented in the 2008 Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, Inc (AAS), Atlanta, USA, 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> April 2008.

## **THE INTEGRATION – IMPERIALISM DYNAMICS**

The first discourse as mentioned above talks about the question of homogeneity/uniformity. There are again two arguments on how the world is gradually becoming one and homogeneous. One that the world is really becoming integrated socially, culturally and economically with the free flow of ideas, values, images etc from one part of the world to other and vice versa. Two that the integration is not a two way process and is imperialistic in nature i.e. the predominance of developed over the underdeveloped, occident over orient, first world over third world. This is the argument behind the integration-imperialism dynamics. Let me to carry forward the discussion.

It is now a well-known fact that due to globalization and technological revolution, ideas, images, and information are moving worldwide freely and very rapidly. Many claim it as the process of cultural interconnectedness and as a sign of global cultural integration. In recent decades the volume of the global circulations of the cultural goods has been increased. According to S.L. Croucher, in terms of printed matter, music, visual arts, cinema and photographic, radio & television equipment shows, the value of cultural imports and exports almost tripled from \$67 billion in 1980 to \$200 billion in 1991 [3, p.15].

Similarly the proportion of world trade in cultural goods rose from 2,5 % of all imports in 1980 to 2,8 % in 1997 [3, p.15]. But how far these global interconnectedness is a two way process? The narratives below show the increasing imperialistic venture of western and American culture. Commercialization of media and the cultural symbols as well as artifacts and the global wave driving for the pursuit of profit using ‘culture’ as a commodity, constitute the sole force of ‘cultural imperialism’ theses. Introduced by Herbert Schiller, the term ‘cultural imperialism’ is referred to the way in which large multinational corporations, including the media, of developed countries dominated developing countries.

Supporting the cultural imperialism theses in a very provocative article, D. Rothkopf wrote: “It is in the general interest of the United States to encourage the development of a world in which the fault lines separating nations are bridged by shared interests. And it is in the economic and political interests of the United States to ensure that if the world is moving toward a common language, it be English; that if the world is moving toward common

telecommunications, safety, and quality standards, they be American; that if the world is becoming linked by television, radio, and music, the programming be American; and that if common values are being developed, they be values with which Americans are comfortable” [7, p.43].

In the United States the largest single export sector constitutes its films and television industry. The growing gap between rich and poor countries, massive class difference within countries and equality being conspicuous in its absence is obvious. In the economic sphere, a UN report issued in 1999 shows that the combined wealth of the world's three richest families was greater than the annual income of 600 million people in the least developed countries. Three-four decades ago, the gap between the richest fifth of the world's people and the poorest was 30 to 1, by 1990, it had widened to 60 to 1, and today it stands at 74 to 1 [3, p.23]. As stated in the estimate of the UN, during the second half of the 1990s, the world's 200 richest people have doubled their wealth to more than \$ 1000 billion, and the number of people living on less than a dollar a day has remained unchanged at 1,3 billion [8, p.112]. It can be said from the various statistical informations that the West is a privileged part of the globe and enjoying the privileges in most of the arenas. In 1997, the combined wealth of the 350 billionaires of the world was greater than the annual income of the 45 % of humanity [9, p.157]. Statistics suggest that ‘the ratio between the incomes of the richest and the poorest country was 3:1 in 1820, it became 35:1 by 1950 and rose up to 72:1 in 1992. In the year 2000, the richest one percent of world's population received as much income as the poorest 57 % [10, p.438]. The numbers show globalization's biased ramifications to an extent as discussed above.

In the cultural sphere, the global diffusion of Levi's, McDonalds, MTV and Coca Cola-Pepsi-Cola has shown increasing assimilation of local cultures into the American culture or what could have been said as Americanization, or McDonaldization or in Hannerz's interpretation of ‘Cocacolonization’ and Benjamin Barbers's terminology of ‘Mc World’. Americanization is a process that refers to the growing influence of the United States of America on the culture of other countries, as a result substituting a given culture with the American one. McDonaldization refers to the global spread of the fast food restaurant.

So, from this perspective, it is claimed that cultural globalization is spreading cultural imperialism. J. Bhagwati points out: “if the 19th century was British, a time of Pax-Britanica, and the 20<sup>th</sup> century was American, when Pax-Americana prevailed, the 21<sup>st</sup> century which many feared would be Japan's, a Pax-Japanica promises to be American again” [11, p.108]. The argument can be again backed by another report, which shows world wide exports of programming hours, of which over 40 % come from the USA Of those, imported by Europe, 44 % are from the USA Of imports to Latin America, 77 % are from the USA In the case of Canada, 70% of imports are from the USA. and for Africa, South of the Sahara, 47 %. Conversely the USA imports only 1 % of its commercial programming and 2 % of its public service programming [8, p.63].

## **THE GLOBALISATION – GLOCALISATION DEBATE**

The second discourse that I intend to discuss here is related to the worldwide diversification of culture rather than unification, that there is increasing number of heterogeneity in world cultures rather than homogeneity. One of the arguments that carry forward this discourse is the ‘glocalization’ theses. Under this scheme of thought, it is believed that global culture does not replace the local, rather goes with the latter hand in hand. Instead of assimilation of local culture into global ones, there is accommodation of the two, as a result producing a hybrid culture. The scholarships on globalization and development literature term it as ‘hybridization’ or ‘creolization’. Coined by Roland Robertson, ‘glocalization’ refers to the process where, global culture conforms to the local conditions without replacing the local. He

predicts a pluralization of the world as localities produce a variety of unique cultural responses to global forces [12, p.36]. As he says, ‘glocalization’ theses emphasizes that it is a process of the global creation of the local and, moreover, the localization of the global [13, p.4].

The same happens with ‘McDonaldization’. According to G. Ritzer, who invented the term, ‘McDonaldization’ “is a process whereby the principles of the fast food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world” [14, p.49]. But the argument that favors the cultural pluralization debate is that McDonald’s in non-Western countries usher in difference and variety, producing new, mixed social forms. “McDonald’s may have penetrated the far corners of the globe, but when the Indian residents enter the local McDonald’s in New Delhi or Mumbai, they choose between 100 % beefless Moharaja Mac or vegetable Mc Nuggets with Mc Masala sauces [3, p.27]. Similarly, as said by Appadurai “for the people of Irian Jaya, Indonesianization’ may be more worrisome than ‘Americanization’, as ‘Japanization’ may be for Koreans, ‘Indianization’ for Sri Lankans, and ‘Vietnamization’ for the Cambodians [3, p.28].

Increase in global communication due to the advancement of information technology, integration of world economy, collapse of the Soviet Union, rise of international and regional mechanisms of government like the UN and the EU like factors have accelerated the process of globalization. Apart from creating social inequality and different global risks like that of ecological and health ones, globalization certainly promotes many other unwanted consequences. Rise of depression, farmer suicides, upsurge of religious and ethnic violence as well as civil wars, increase in urban violence and in clandestine, illegal survival strategies, growth in trade in prohibited products and Mafia-type organizations etc represent a major danger for the global economy [15, p.177]. At the same time many observe that there are both winners and losers from this complex process. Thus, the forces of globalization can also be means in pursuit of greater equality, democracy and prosperity. The poor countries also gain out of it. For example, the UNESCO has estimated that for music, printed matter, visual arts, photography, radio, television and other media, the share of just the developing countries had risen from 12 to 30 per cent in 20 years ending 1998 [11, p.111].

So it is in this backdrop that I analyze the case of Indian handicrafts and craftspersons in subsequent sections. My point of reference is, it is not always true that distinct societies are day by day becoming more and more alike. The local cultural values are not assimilated into the global or more particularly Western/American cultures; the argument that is forwarded by the Cultural Imperialism theses. Instead there is fragmentation and greater diversity in the cultural sphere bringing plurality/hybridity/heterogeneity. Globalization doesn’t bring total homogeneity. ‘Glocalization’ is one of those scholarships that supported the latter discourse. This paper discusses how in the age of globalization Indian hand-made goods have become highly responsive to the choices of the global consumers. The global-local combination brings multiplicity to the local craft forms. This will be depicted here elaborately. But first let me give an outline of the Indian handicrafts in the modern liberalized market.

## **THE GLOBALIZING CRAFTS**

India has a history of rich and diverse cultural tradition. And among its diversity, the legacy of India’s craft culture always occupies a special place owing to its beauty, dignity, form, style and aesthetics. “To write about Indian Handicrafts is almost like writing about the country itself. So vast, complex and colourful, and yet with a simplicity and charm, difficult to attain under comparable conditions” [16, p.1]. It is a fact that Indian handicrafts have very ancient origin and of high quality. They have customarily received royal and aristocratic patronage and handicrafts men were honoured by other communities. The versatility of the

various materials used in Indian handicrafts items, such as wood, stone, metal, grass, glass, cane and bamboo, textiles, clay, terracotta and ceramics, makes these products truly unique. Emphasizing on the greater value of the arts and crafts, T.M. Abraham wrote: “the world of art and craft is as valuable as the world of science, philosophy or ethics. Like art, crafts reflect the state of human society through the individual. Craft treasures like art’s, give us a glimpse into the core and kernel of the collective mind and societies through the mirror of individual mind that created them” [17, p.2]. As said above there are numerous varieties of art crafts in India which are made with attractive designs and meticulous craftsmanship. Referring to one of the India made craft jewellery, the anklets used by peasant women at Bundi in Rajasthan state of India, during a lecture in 1901, Sir T. Wardle wrote: “I bought for a few annas a bronze chain anklet, but all cast in one mould together, quite a common thing, but so wonderfully made that one of our best foundry owners told me he did not think anyone could do it in Europe” (cited in [8, p.20]).

With the passage of time, Indian society and economy has changed enormously. It opened up its economy and adapted to globalisation in the early nineties. Major changes initiated as a part of the liberalisation and globalisation strategy included scrapping of the industrial ‘license raj’ (referring to the regulated and controlled economic policy by the state for running business), reduction in the number of areas reserved for the public sector, amendment of the monopolies and the restrictive trade practices act, start of the privatisation programme, reduction in tariff rates etc. Many Indian companies have started becoming respectable players in the International scene. The liberalisation of the domestic economy and the increasing integration of India with the global economy have helped step up the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rates. In the year 1991-92, the GDP growth was just 1,3 %, but in 1992-93 it touched the figure 5,3 %. Year 1996-97 saw a high figure of 7,8 %. In 2003-2004, our GDP growth was 8,5 %, in 2005-06, 9,0 % (Quick estimate) and in 2006-07 it was 9,2 % (Advance estimate), see [19] for details. Although there has been a comparatively low growth rate in between, for example the year 1997-98 (5 %), a global comparison shows that India is now the fastest growing economy just after China. Indian economy experiences the existence of both traditional handicrafts and modern mechanised production. True, industrial capitalism has brought machine-based mass production. But keeping pace with tradition, the Indian handicrafts industry still shows its importance.

Since the advent of globalization in 1991, India has experienced a lot and accordingly the society has undergone many changes in different spheres. Though the forces of globalization have ample positive effects in the long-run in many sectors of our economy and society, some of its biased ramifications against the poor in many cases have worried different thinkers and planners in our country. If we suspend the later for a moment, one of the growing sector benefited out of it, is the Handicraft industry. The case of the handicrafts sector can be discussed here from both macro and micro level; macro level – taking its contribution to the Indian economy through export and micro level – in terms of its employment potential.

The growing opportunity for handicrafts in global market is observed when the Indian handicrafts export crossed Rs 1220 crores in 1990-91 from merely 10 crores in the mid fifties [20, p.7]. Again it increased to Rs. 7157,64 Crores in 1998-99 and Rs. 9270,50 Crores in 2000-01. It had reached at the peak of Rs. 17 276,71 Crores in 2005-06 [21]. Further the Indian Handicraft Export Council has estimated the export of handicraft goods will touch Rs 32 700 crore by year 2010 [22]. Table 1 presents the extent of the exports of different handicrafts products from 1998-99 to 2006-07.

Figure 1 shows the export trend of the handicraft products. It is clear from the graphs that the total handicraft export is increasing over the years. The figure shows distinct trends for two

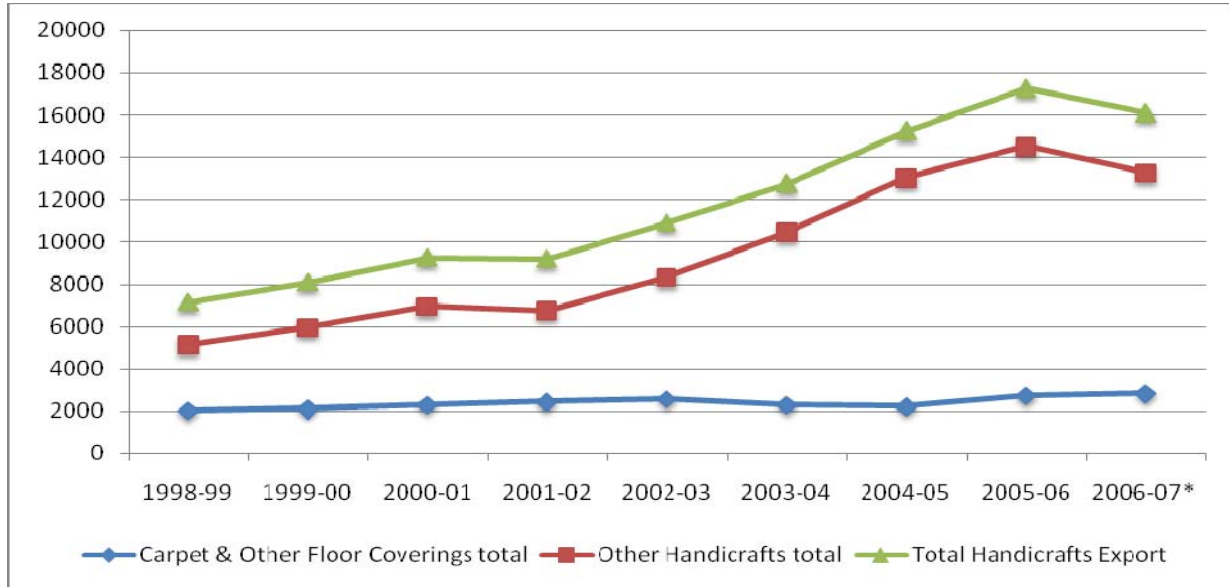
**Table 1.** Handicrafts Items Exported from India, 1998-1999 to 2006-2007 (Rs. in Crore) [21].

Items	1998-1999	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007 (up to I.07)
<b>Carpet &amp; Other Floor Coverings</b>									
Woolen	1783,32	1888,45	2045,96	2152,69	2293,79	2015,11	1974,00	2512,11	2571,05
Silk	136,46	153,93	167,03	198,27	209,42	198,69	187,25	181,70	215,23
Synthetic	94,16	93,65	102,16	85,17	87,05	86,24	61,95	56,05	62,15
<b>Total</b>	<b>2013,94</b>	<b>2136,03</b>	<b>2316,15</b>	<b>2436,13</b>	<b>2590,26</b>	<b>2300,04</b>	<b>2223,20</b>	<b>2749,86</b>	<b>2848,43</b>
<b>Other Handicrafts</b>									
Art Metal ware	1329.16	1497.18	1778.10	1758.90	2165.21	2642.42	3364.93	3662.98	3391.04
Wood ware	286.04	394.95	434.44	431.88	511.35	609.07	721.18	853.06	803.72
H.P. Textiles Scarves	1033.98	1158.05	1276.75	1221.59	1466.52	1611.43	1848.76	2053.70	2182.97
Embroidered & Crochet Goods	1209.42	1584.36	1964.78	1931.97	2477.75	3286.05	4199.86	4711.45	4117.84
Shawls as Art wares	48.48	21.50	27.20	27.01	32.70	43.27	53.65	110.23	152.62
Zari & Zari Goods	74.95	83.52	142.32	134.04	159.47	210.54	252.28	347.05	237.18
Imitation Jewellery	104.10	113.64	121.68	117.53	138.79	161.90	200.56	274.86	259.45
Misc. Handicrafts	1057.57	1116.40	1210.08	1146.58	1391.62	1900.46	2391.48	2513.52	2124.13
<b>Total</b>	<b>5143.70</b>	<b>5969.60</b>	<b>6955.35</b>	<b>6769.50</b>	<b>8343.41</b>	<b>10465.14</b>	<b>13032.70</b>	<b>14526.85</b>	<b>13268.95</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>7157.64</b>	<b>8105.63</b>	<b>9270.50</b>	<b>9205.63</b>	<b>10933.67</b>	<b>12765.18</b>	<b>15255.90</b>	<b>17276.71</b>	<b>16117.38</b>

categories of handicraft exports. There is not much change in export of carpet and other floor coverings category where as other handicraft category has registered an impressive growth in last decade. It is worth mentioning here that the latter constitutes major share in total exports. Barring the year 2001-02, where the export figure was dropped a little; all other years show an increasing trend. Besides the downward movement of the graph for the year 2006-07 is apparent due to its midyear estimation. The carpet and other floor coverings category has not shown good progress in export.

This might be due to the world wide popularity of Carpets from the countries of the Middle-East. So the expanding handicraft export in post-liberalization era shows the growing opportunity in a liberalized market. Table 2 shows the major destinations of Indian handicrafts. As may be seen here USA continues to be the largest market for Indian handicrafts items. Exports to this market in 2004-05 registered a significant growth of 20,49 per cent over the previous year.

The other important destinations in this respect that witnessed phenomenal growth during the period are: Germany (43,08 %), UK (32,39 %), Switzerland (31,13 %), and Netherlands (26,80 %). Figure 2 shows the country wise export of Indian handicrafts in the year 2006-07. The USA still continues to be a major market for Indian craft goods followed by UK. Germany and France are other major destinations.



**Figure 1.** Export of Indian Handicrafts from 1998-99 to 2006-07. Data for the year 2006-07 is up to Jan 2007.

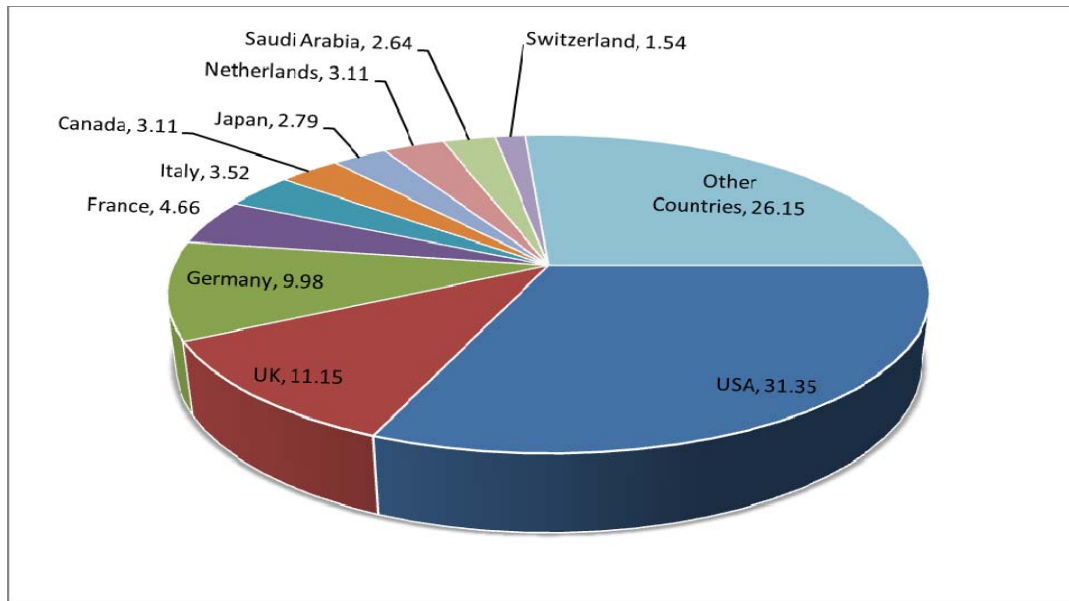
**Table 2.** Export of handicraft items (excluding hand knotted carpets) from India to some major countries for years 2002-03 to 2004-05 (Rs in Crore) [21].

Country	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	% change in 2004-05 over 2003-04
USA	2630	3201	3857	20,49
UK	939	1130	1496	32,39
Germany	918	968	1385	43,08
France	385	483	540	11,80
Italy	289	356	425	19,38
Canada	272	328	393	19,82
Japan	279	331	381	15,11
Netherlands	219	291	369	26,80
Saudi Arabia	194	241	291	20,75
Switzerland	136	151	198	31,13
<b>Total (All India)</b>	<b>8283</b>	<b>10465</b>	<b>13033</b>	<b>24,54</b>

During the globalization phase, the growth in handicrafts sector amounts to increasing demand for ethnic and culture-specific goods as a result of growth in world tourism [23, p.4]. There is an increasing global trend of spending on home furnishing and an increasing global reaction to the homogenization of mass-produced goods, not to speak of the growing preference for substituting goods based on synthetic materials with goods based on environment friendly natural raw materials [23, p.4]. Indian Handicrafts are said to be just another precious stone of its great culture and heritage. Whether it is the intricately decorated metal craft or some marvelous marble inlay work or some superb paintings or spectacular wood works, Indian handicrafts are going places with their ethnic designs and flourishing textures.

Although, the importance of craft in contemporary Indian social and economic life is growing day by day, there is no universally accepted definition of the term in India. As the Task Force on Handicrafts definition (1989) puts it: ‘Handicrafts are items made by hand, often with the use of simple tools, and are generally artistic and/or traditional in nature. They include objects of utility and objects of decoration’ Many Indian handicrafts have aesthetic richness and decorative values which have become world famous. For example the artisans who made





**Figure 2.** Country wise Export of Handicrafts (in percentage) from India in 2006-07 [21].

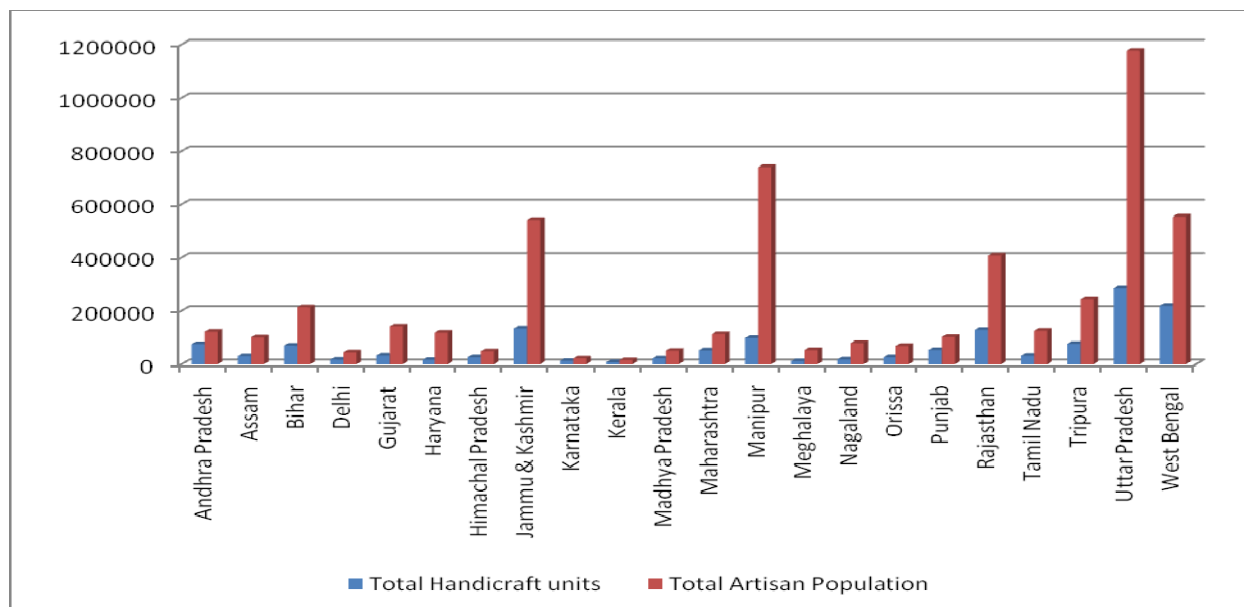
patta chitra and applique work exclusively for the religious functions in the Lord Jagannath temple in Puri, Orissa developed their skill to make these crafts internationally well-known [22]. Add to it, the Madhubani paintings of Bihar, Kalighat paintings of West Bengal and a number of striking metal crafts, stone carvings and wood carvings from Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh have become popular both in our native as well as international markets [22].

In the micro-level, it could be assessed that in India handicrafts constitute a significant segment of the decentralized sector of its economy and it provides employment to millions of artisans scattered especially in the weaker sections of society such as SCs, STs and the women, producing goods worth thousands of Crores of Indian Rupees per year. Because increased export of handicrafts products as shown in Table 1 amounts to increase in employment and income. The Annual Report of various years of the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India suggests that the employment in this sector in 1997-98 was 52,92 lakhs which became 58,41 lakhs in 2001-02 and 60,16 lakhs in 2002-03. In 2005-06, 65,72 lakhs people were employed in this sector. Based on the National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER) survey of 1995-96, of the total workforce engaged in handicrafts, 47,42 % are women of which 37,11 % are coming under the backward communities like Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes. Indian handicrafts sector forms the second largest employment sector -second only to agriculture.

The skilled hand of the Indian craftsmen is its most important and yet most invisible resource. It is to be perceived with concern and with a precise understanding of its value. Because once lost nothing can replace it. India has been the exporter of crafts for ages. To quote D.N. Saraf, the workmanship of the Indian craftsmen is so exquisite that throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries India was known to other countries on the trade route more by her crafts than by her art, religion and philosophy [24, p.52]. As the data shown above clarifies, remarkable progress has been made in exports of handicrafts since India's Independence. The Handicrafts and Handlooms Exports corporations of India Ltd (HHEC), a Government of India undertaking established in 1962 has been involved in promoting Indian handloom fabrics in the west. There is a vast scope for India's handicrafts exports to grow further.

In the age of globalization, where efficiency meets success, Indian handicraft's further prospect lies in diversification of products and markets. In a highly competitive market, Indian handicrafts need to be ahead of the competitors in keeping themselves informed of current market trend and changes in fashion and design of the consumers.

Figure 3 shows the number of total handicraft units both household and non-household sector and total number of craftpersons in some selected states. States having artisan population below one thousand have been left out.



**Figure 3.** Handicraft units and Artisan population in Selected States 1995-1996.

## THE REAL CHALLENGE

In this section I discuss the plurality/hybridity debate in general and Glocalization in particular, in reference to the hand-made traditional goods of India subsequent to which will be discussed issues and concerns for handicrafts industry in a globalizing state. My understanding is that many local craft forms in a liberalized/competitive market are responding remarkably to global conditions. As I have already mentioned the global-local combination brings multiplicity to the local craft forms. Herein let me bring the case of Chandua craft into the fore.

**Glocalization of Chandua:** The Applique work like Chandua of Pipili, in Puri district of Orissa state of India is an internationally well known craft, having its own age old history, which is thought to have been used to decorate the temples since 1054 A.D. The Applique work in Orissa is mainly practiced in Pipili, a town in the Puri district situated on the Jagannath trunk road nearly 20 km from the state capital Bhubaneswar and 40 km from Puri town. The work of Chandua weaving (Appliqué work) is confined to people of darji castes with surnames of Mahapatra and Maharana. Broadly stated, the appliqué work refers to the cut out decoration or ornament fastened to a larger piece of material or surface. So it is a technique by which the decorative effect is obtained by superposing patches of coloured fabrics on a basic fabric. The appliqué units manufacture a variety of items, such as, canopy (Chandua), decorative umbrella, bed cover, window screen, vanity bag and different wall hangings. These articles are made by the use of simple types of raw materials like, coloured cloth, glasses, threads etc. the skilled craftsmen fashion a number of attractive designs including different animals and birds like elephants, lions, parrots, swans, peacocks etc.

Most of the designs are highly artistic and traditional in nature. But these days some of the modern designs are also being experimented with to suit to the tastes and the preferences of the foreign tourists keeping an eye over the market. The process of making Chandua remained largely unchanged for the past few centuries but during the last two three decades these have undergone tremendous changes. The Chandua makers attribute two reasons for such change in the appliqué work; the first reason is the changing taste of the customers and the second is the commercialization of the products [25, p.66]. They are of the opinion that 'when the very survival of the appliqué work owes it to the tourists, it is rather the choice of the tourists that has effected a change on the products and its making style. Customers want the products to be cheaper and attractive. Artisans go for more profit, at times ignoring the quality' [25, p.66]. The traditional products like Chhati (large umbrella used during religious ceremonies), Batua (special type small bag to carry betel leaf and other accessories), Bana (flag) etc are fast disappearing from the appliqué market and instead wall hangs, garden umbrellas, lamp sheds, cushion covers and letter bags are now prepared as they are very much in demand by the tourists. Besides, in accordance with the demands of the consumers, attractive motifs like coloured Surya Mukhi Parrot, Dancing Peacock, Elephants are gradually getting withdrawn and more and more of monochrome and patch work are in use [25, p.66]. The changes that accommodate the local art of Chandua making with that of the demands of the foreign tourists and global consumers make the product a unique and different one; in many ways different from the traditional Chandua craft therefore producing a 'glocal' i product. These products are traditional in art form but modern in appearance, therefore a global creation of the local. So it is, as Robertson points out, a process where the local is globally institutionalized [26, p.172]. Moreover, the home consumers are largely affected by the process of modernity and globalization. In many cases the choices of both the global and local consumers match therefore adding incentive to the changing pattern of Chandua.

Originality threatened: In market economy, emphasis is given to the consumption pattern of the people. In Dipankar Gupta's opinion, if the customer wants a product, it must be available, even if the social costs are high [27, p.78]. So the artists are bringing in changes in different artifacts to meet with the demands of the people. In many respects the contemporary artisans retain traditionalism in their craft while simultaneously producing for a global consumer or local tourist market [28, p.459]. The problem is not with 'Glocalization' of the products, nor with its change or creativity. M.A. Nettleship, in his paper on 'Atayal' aboriginals of Taiwan remarked 'who can conceive of art without creativity?' [29, p.86]. The real problem arises when originality is threatened in the very process of innovation. So the capability of the artisans to face the new challenges of making artifacts with new designs at lower costs to meet the new needs of consumers in the environment of globalization is yet to be built up [23, p.6].

In Orissa for example, in the appliqué sector, as said above it has been observed that competition amongst the artisans, use of low quality inputs and use of readymade and machine made items have often brought down the standard of the work. Something exceptional in the market that may be liked by the tourists initiated change in the appliqué works [25, p.67]. According to an artist who owns Nilam Appliques (name of the shop) in Pipili town of Orissa, 'we have to bring changes since the consumers want variety'<sup>2</sup>. Such increased diversity in the number of items produced has not only seen in appliqué works of Pipili but also witnessed in patta-paintings, tassar-painting, silver filigree, brass work and stone carving [30, p.210].

The profit motive attitude of the Chandua producers in the market liberalization age has adopted new styles and techniques. The traditional practice of hand weaving is gradually replaced by machines. Customers want the products to be cheaper and attractive. Artisans go

for more profit, at times ignoring the quality. Many artists during my personal interaction with them said, we find no reason why we should not behave according to the behavior of the market. They say if they stick to the undemanding traditional form, they have to search for their bread elsewhere. However this is not the only issue that haunts the artists and craft makers in India. In the following paragraphs, I analyze few other concerns for handicrafts industry in the age of globalization and market economy.

**Disappearing Patron-Client Network:** The expanding handicrafts sector with voluminous export discussed in the previous section shows the growing opportunities in the market economy. However, it could be traced that with prospects, there lies great threat to these indigenous creations too. If we analyze the historical past of the Indian arts and crafts, then during the medieval times, the kings and the rulers of the land had given patronage to the crafts and the artists were supported by them. Even Jajmani system worked well for the artists. But after that, the British period in India proved to be a complicated time for this sector. The Indian handlooms also had a similar fate during this period. The British authorities intentionally promoted the machine made foreign products in Indian markets. India had to supply the raw materials like raw cotton and the British factories had to provide the fine clothes. “So the traditional handicrafts of India which were then world famous were systematically destroyed to create a market for British products” [31, p.350].

Then after independence the Government of India as a matter of policy wanted to revamp the craft tradition of our country and promote the small scale and cottage industries. It is an altogether different issue how much the craft sector got benefited out of the government sponsored schemes. But it is the present liberalized market system where the craft industry faces vulnerabilities. As there has been the evolution of the modern market economy, the artisans have lost their holds over the old patron-client business network and jajmani relationship. In the globalization times, though with their products going global and increasing demand for it, there is a rise in the handicraft sector economy, still the artisans have become increasingly dependent on middle men and trader entrepreneurs who pay the artisans wages on piece rate bases. The low bargaining power of the artists in a liberalized and comparatively more competitive market has forced the artisans to depend upon the middle-men. The government’s initiative to create cooperatives has not become much successful. Craft workers who have little formal education and are rarely organised are subject to many exploitative work conditions. Again as stated by T.J. Scrase, the opportunistic middle men exploit these precarious labour conditions to their financial benefit [28, p.452].

A study by M. Ciotti, on the ‘Chamar’weaving community of Manupur in Banaras (Varanasi), of Uttar Pradesh state of India shows that the actual weavers do not deal with the final customers. The weavers used to consign their products – Saris, to merchants and wholesalers, who then proceed to have the Saris polished and ready for marketing [32, p.343]. Working as daily-wage laborers before independence people in the Chamar community were hired as apprentices on the handlooms of Muslim master weavers in Banaras who gradually trained the Chamars the art of weaving Silk Sari finally making them a weaving community. But the beginning of the 1990s, with the onset of liberalization, the handloom sari industry lost its momentum leading to the disappearance of the craft and weavers abandoning their occupation to join the rank of unskilled casual laborers [32, pp.321-322].

**Shifting Occupation:** A large section of the artisan population in India is illiterate and is devoid of formal education. Poverty again makes them become more vulnerable. As a result most of the artists are now a days choosing to shift to other professions rather than to stick into their hereditary occupation. A study by Soma Basu suggests that the weavers of Pattamadai mats of Tamil Nadu in general and women artists in particular are increasingly

shifting to the profession like beedi rolling, which is faster and easier and which earns higher returns [33]. A report of the census conducted by National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) in 1995-96 suggests that, the handloom sector boasts of 3,4 million weavers, whereas in 1987-88, it was 4,3 million [34, p.7]. A UN report suggests that over the past three-four decades in India the number of artisans has declined by at least 30 % with many joining the ranks of casual labourers and the informal economy [28, p.449]. Another report by N. Biswas suggests that the 'Keithel', the traditional market run and managed by women in Imphal, Manipur is coming under attack. It is here, the Manipuri women sell their different coloured hand woven clothes. The report suggests that all over the Northeast, forces of globalization and privatization, backed by hegemony of the state machinery are ousting the indigenous women's markets and production centers [35].

Hand made vs Machine made: Another problem is that the village craftsmen in our society remain concerned that with free trade, mass production; embroidery from other parts of the world will out price their own crafts. As K. Basu emphasizes: "though globalization has so far served the handicrafts sector well, there is no denial that some of these products will come under attack and India will not be able to word that off" [36]. It has been observed that many quotidian crafts are replaced by cheap machine made finished items these days. Plastic sandals are replaced by the leather made chappals, clay pottery items are being replaced by plastic plates, jugs etc. A local newspaper report reveals that nowadays in Orissa various small scale industries have been facing enormous problems and have failed to compete with the Chinese companies who have intruded into the Orissan market with their low cost products [37]. The precarious condition of the artisans and the crafts is again highlighted when globalization has separated the crafts from the actual artisans. For example various factories in China as said by T.J. Scrase, now mass produce and market 'sari' cloth, based on Indian designs, therefore making a 'virtual artisan' where the craft itself survives in a hybrid form that may or may not be produced by the original workers [28, p.459]. So there is an urgent need for the Indian government to invest more in this sector.

Diminishing Home Market: As mentioned previously, India has a distinguished craft heritage. K.K. Subramanian however remarks that the aim is not to use the craft goods merely as a reminder of past glories but as a dynamic force to accelerate economic development [23, p.5]. So the export of Indian handicrafts should not be seen as the only parameter of development of this sector. There should be a push from the domestic market, too. During the post-liberalization phase "although the rise in income of the middle-class and growth of the tourism industry helped in cultivating the notion of interior decoration and raising the domestic demand for ethnic crafts, the favorable effects of this tendency was not powerful enough to overcome the dampening of the change in consumers' preferences from the traditional to modern consumption needs under the influence of liberal imports of cheap machine made products and many other factors of globalization regime" [23, pp.5-6]. Thus the traditional crafts need to be beautiful and cost effective and maintain proper quality in order to find a place in the competitive market. Moreover, notwithstanding the increasing rate of growth in export of craft products from India as shown in Table 1 and in Figure 1, it is yet to meet with its potential.

## **THE GOVERNMENTAL INTERVENTION**

Although India adapted to liberalisation policies in early nineties, the handicrafts sector continued to get state intervention. Handicrafts being a state subject defined in our constitution, the development and promotion of crafts are the responsibility of the respective state governments. The Central government through various developmental schemes plays the role by supplementing their efforts. As the Annual Report [21] suggests, for the holistic

growth and development of the handicrafts, the government during n-th five-year plan has implemented few generic schemes. These can be discussed below.

1. Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hastshilp Vikas Yojana: The basic objective of this scheme is for a sustainable development of handicrafts through the participation of craftspersons. This scheme is implemented through: (i) social Intervention, i.e. mobilizing the artists, (ii) technological intervention; assisting for design and technological upgradation, reviving the languishing crafts etc., (iii) marketing interventions and (iv) financial interventions.
2. Marketing Support and Service Scheme: This scheme is developed to create awareness of Indian craft products among the people through: (i) organizing marketing events, (ii) providing services in the form of entrepreneurship and (iii) providing financial assistance to state handicrafts corporations and NGOs for opening new Emporia, etc.
3. Design and Technology Upgradation Scheme: The scheme aims to supply modern tools, upgrade artisans' skills, preserve traditional crafts and revive rare crafts through (i) departmental activities (by giving training in Regional Design & Technical Development Centres etc.) and (ii) outsourcing (to Shilp Gurus or Heritage Masters, of design and technology upgradation).
4. Export Promotion Scheme: It intends to promote export of handicrafts, including hand knotted carpets and floor covering from India. The main components of this scheme are (i) product Development, (ii) publicity and marketing and (iii) social and other welfare measures.
5. Research and Development Scheme: The basic objective of this scheme is to create a regular system of obtaining feedback on economic, social, aesthetic and promotional aspects of various craft goods. It also addresses issues related to WTO. Survey or study of specific crafts on which adequate information is not available, looking at the working conditions of the artisans etc are the major thrust areas under this scheme.
6. Training and Extension Scheme: The scheme aims at enhancing the capacity building of staff of DC-Handicrafts, artisans, NGOs etc.
7. Bima Yojana for Handicrafts Artisans: The Yojana provides life insurance protection to the artisans, either male or female in the age group of 18-60 years. It is being implemented in association with the Life Insurance Corporation of India Ltd (LIC).
8. Special Handicrafts Training Projects: Under this programme, the office of the DC-Handicrafts takes initiatives to upgrade the skills of existing as well as new craftspersons, enhance employment opportunities in the handicrafts sector, transfer skills Master Artists to new trainees etc.

Apart from the above schemes, the government is also taking special measures for promotion and development of crafts by popularizing the products and encouraging the artists. In terms of variety of handicrafts and celebrated craft products, India is one of the richest countries. The most important contribution to its craft heritage has been of the *Shilp Gurus*, the Heritage Masters, who have innovated, and contributed on their own to the traditional craft forms. They are in fact leading lights of handicraft sector and are sources of inspiration for the younger generations. Office of the Development Commissioner (DC) – Handicrafts, Ministry of Textiles, Govt of India has decided to honour ten *Shilp Gurus*, every year starting from the year 2002.

Besides, the All India Handicrafts Board was established in 1952 to study the problems confronting the handicrafts, to improve and develop the production techniques and new designs to suit the changing tastes and to promote marketing in India and abroad [16, p.9]. But unfortunately most of the governmental schemes have failed to produce visible results. Since Handicrafts come under the state list, each state has set up its own handicrafts policy.

The states assist those crafts and artisans who have viable market and high export potential. The languishing crafts in turn suffer a lot. In spite of several developmental schemes that exist for them, the craftspersons are unable to reap the benefit as they lack the assets and strong institutions favoring their cause. So, the state governments should follow the Central government directives, utilize its funds, grants and loans and work for the development of craft goods taking sincere efforts.

The biggest problem while implementing the developmental schemes is the lack of proper knowledge on handicraft units and number of artisans. In 1993, the Development Commissioner (DC), Handicrafts planned to conduct an All India census of Handicrafts Artisans and the task was given to the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), New Delhi [38]. But even today we have a decade old data on handicraft artisans based on the same NCAER survey report of 1995-96. 'Now a complete census of the handicraft artisans is being planned to conduct during the 11<sup>th</sup> five year plan beginning from 2007-08 over the five year period covering 20 % of the districts every year, giving due representation to all the major crafts'<sup>3</sup>. So, a proper statistics is inevitable for appropriate intervention.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

As India opens up her doors to the multinationals during the era of economic reform and liberalized market, putting an end to the license raj, it is not only the economies that often meet in the global market sphere, but also the people and cultures, which bring a new dimension to the multi-cultural setting. The magic of globalization is that during the modern times, there is always a cross-cultural interaction of both the 'local' and 'global' and notwithstanding many contradictions, global village is now not just a possibility, but a reality. Needless to say, the borders between the world cultures are now eroding out and becoming irrelevant. The whole world is now interconnected.

But despite, the present day globalization is also branded as a drive for profit making. The Cultural/Economic Imperialism theses describe it as replacement of the local culture by the global. 'When Coca-Cola or Kentucky's chicken want the freedom to open branches in China or Russia, their primary motivation is not love for the Russian or Chinese people, but the profits they will derive from such a venture' [39]. In globalization days and for the people in India, what is important is not the availability of McDonald's and Kentucky's brands in New Delhi or Mumbai, but rather the availability of and accessibility to South Indian *Dosha*, North Indian *Rajma*, and Orissan *Dalma* in the streets of New York, Stockholm and Toronto [40, p.114]. Again it is also of the view that, not replacement rather the global-local interface brings up plurality/hybridity to the cultural patterns. So there is accommodation against assimilation.

Referring to the issue of handicrafts and cottage industries, the Indian government after independence promoted the handmade products, supporting with financial assistance and so on. Following the statistics of the handicrafts exports, it could be traced that during the present day of globalization, the local handicraft products of our country have enough opportunities in the home and global markets. But the precarious condition of the artists needs careful interventions. It can be said that the government have been taking different measures to make the handicraft products globally competitive and the condition of the artisans better. After 1990s, when the adoption of liberalization policies theoretically demanded a complete withdrawal of state from different sectors and to give market a free-hand, the Indian government to some extent continued its support to this sector; in many cases this effort is lackadaisical though. So the policies need to be implemented wholeheartedly by the government agencies and more particularly the state governments because these have not shown productive results. As said before one of the important reasons

for why many government schemes have not been so fruitful is the lack of proper knowledge about the target group. A complete knowledge on the target group could well distribute the developmental schemes of the government.

Globalization as such is not a 'not-to-be-touched' concept. After all it gives an opportunity for socio-cultural and economic exchanges, interactions and interrelations. But the ways the rich countries manipulate and exploit the marginal is a matter of grave concern and raise our anxieties. Apart from creating social inequality and different global risks like that of ecological and health ones, globalization certainly promotes many other unwanted consequences. Therefore J. Stiglitz wrote: "globalization today is not working. It is not working for many of the world's poor. It is not working for the much of the environment. It is not working for the stability of the global economy ... The problem however is not with globalization, but how it has been managed" [41, p.214]. So, globalization has become a reality, which cannot be denied. To safeguard its dim features however, we need to bring a common consensus by curtailing the monopoly of the developed nations.

On the other hand talking about the landscape of the Indian Handicrafts, it is the time for fuller support, both financial and skill based, from the government to the local yet valuable craftspersons of our great cultural heritage since once lost nothing can replace it. The illiterate poor artists and the vulnerable crafts still need strong support from the government, not half-heartedly with a withdrawal motivation, rather with sincere and genuine efforts. So the government should spend more money in this sector in promoting and marketing the crafts and giving training to the artists. In addition, various co-operatives, voluntary associations also need to put sincere efforts for the better working condition of the artists. For example DWARAKA (Development of Weavers and Rural Artisans in Kalamkari Art), an organisation supports hundreds of Kalamkari artists of Andhra Pradesh by providing loans for the education of their children and providing medical and marriage expenses [42]. Similarly 'Dastakar' an NGO facilitates skilled artisans from different states to sell their products through its various exhibitions [43].

One of the major concerns is that, the production base in Indian handicrafts sector is much unorganized. The craftsmen use traditional tools and techniques for which the production base is very weak. So, for improvement in the quality of production, it is necessary to upgrade the skill of the artists who should be supplied with quality raw material and adequate financial assistance. At the same time care should be taken for innovation but it should not root out originality. Besides, the marketing and export of the products need special attention. The craftsmen should also be properly exposed to the market leaving a little room for the intrusion of the middlemen. To make the craft products globally acknowledged and commercially viable, steps should be taken together by the ministry of Information, Commerce and Tourism. Besides, the Indian government could make different Memorandums of Understanding for export of crafts goods to foreign countries while dealing with trade related agreements [44, p.16].

And last but not the least proper care should be taken to popularize craft products in home markets creating awareness among the home consumers. This will multiply the demand so also the production. Handicrafts items should be developed keeping in mind the current fashion and style of the consumers, so that they will easily accept ethnic crafts with modern features. However attention should be given to maintain originality of the products.

Interestingly, multinational institutions like the World Bank, the ADB, and the UNESCO etc. are pointing to handicrafts sector and cultural industry as an increasingly important source of employment creation and sustainable income generation and view that support for cultural industries should be redefined as an investment in the development rather than as expenditure [45].



Originally started as a part time activity among the rural folks, handicrafts have now transformed into a flourishing sector having sizable and sustaining market demand and significant economic potential. Needless to say, at present handicrafts have substantial contribution for employment generation and country's exports. Therefore, it has occupied a significant place in the economy and society of India. With the onset of globalization there are enough opportunities for Indian hand made products made by its skillful artists in both the home and foreign markets. Yet there are risk-prone terrains too. So a combined effort of people, government and civil society is needed to save and promote this unique cultural asset of the vast nation.

## REMARKS

<sup>1</sup>The term 'Glocal' here refers to Roland Rebetson's concept of 'Glocalisation' referring to the dialectical and contingent interchange between global and local cultures,

<sup>2</sup>Based on my field work in Pipili, Orissa, India conducted in June, 2007 and July-November, 2008,

<sup>3</sup>Based on the news report from the office of the Development Commissioner, Handicrafts, <http://handicrafts.nic.in/tenders.census%20study.htm>, Accessed on 25<sup>th</sup> Nov, 2007.

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## INDIJSKI OBRTI U DOBA GLOBALIZACIJE: ANALIZA GLOBALNO-LOKALNE DINAMIKE

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### SAŽETAK

Globalizacija – u značenju rastuće integracije društava, ekonomija i kultura u svijetu – postala je jedno od najintenzivnije razmatranih tema i ključno područje istraživanja donosioca odluka, državnika, korporacija, političara i nastavnika tijekom nekoliko zadnjih godina. Kako Indija otvara svoja vrata multinacionalnim tvrtkama tijekom razdoblja ekonomskih reformi i liberaliziranog tržišta, završavajući time razdoblje “kraljevstva licenci“, nisu samo ekonomije te koje se sreću u sferi globalnog tržišta nego također i ljudi i kulture. To uvodi novu dimenziju u multi-kulturalno okruženje. U današnjem modernom svijetu može se uvijek primijetiti međukulturno međudjelovanje između lokalnog i globalnog. Pritom često promišljano globalno selo više nije samo mogućnost nego stvarnost usprkos mnogim kontradikcijama. Kad je riječ o indijskim obrtima koji čine značajan segment decentraliziranog sektora ekonomije, njegov je izvoz na zavidnoj razini. Indijska narodna umjetnost i obrti integralni su dio indijske kulture i tradicije, znatno traženi na zapadnjačkom tržištu. Također, zapadnjačka modna industrija uzima mnogo od indijskih motiva dizajna sarija, etničke indijske nošnje. Nepotrebno je isticati, granice između svjetskih kultura nestaju, postaju irelevantne i pozivaju na uvođenje pojma deterritorijaliziranog svijeta.

Usprkos tome, stvarnu zabrinutost postavlja pitanje može li *lokalno* susresti *globalno* zadržavajući pritom svoju lokalnost? Najveći problem indijskih obrta je u tome što su mjesni obrtnici zabrinuti kako će zbog slobodne trgovine i masovne proizvodnje rukotvorine iz drugih krajeva svijeta biti manje cijene od proizvoda njihovog rada. Dakle, postavlja se pitanje je li globalizacija razlog za svaki problem čovječanstva? Uz kraću teorijsku podlogu, članak razmatra rastući utjecaj globalizacije na indijske obrte i obrtnike. U članku se nastoji razmotriti u kojoj je mjeri globalizacija mogućnost, a u kojoj prijetnja za obrtnike. Također se razmatra uloga vlade u promociji obrta i zaštiti obrtnika.

### KLJUČNE RIJEČI

globalizacija, obrt, globalno, lokalno

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