

Pochampally handloom cluster receives IPR protection

Pochampally is a small town in Nalgonda district of Andhra Pradesh, a handloom cluster is known for its very unique *Ikat* design for centuries. It has about 5000 weavers who weave the handloom with traditional design called *Ikat*. With the objective of converting this uniqueness into commercial value, the Textiles Committee launched a cluster initiative under its Cluster Development Programme to facilitate the local associations “Pochampally Handloom Weavers’ Co Op. Society Ltd”, an autonomous society registered under the society Act 1860 and “Pochampally Handloom Tie & Dye Silk Sarees Manufactures Association” an association established under the law are the two bodies that are responsible for production and marketing of Pochampally *Ikat*. The Directorate (Handlooms & Textiles) Government of Andhra Pradesh, Weavers Service Centre (WSC), APTDC, NABARD have been involved in the process of GI registration. The services of APTDC used for filling before GI registry and NABARD has provided funds under its DRIP to cover the costs involved.

The famous Pochampally *ikat* tie-and-dye sari has won Intellectual Property Rights protection, more than a year after its first applied. It is the first traditional Indian craft to receive this status of geographical branding. The design won protection in the Geographical Indications category. This will protect the Pochampally handloom sari from unfair competition and counterfeit. An estimated one hundred thousand weavers in Andhra Pradesh may benefit from the granting of Intellectual Property Rights to the traditional tie-and-dye fabric, which has seen falling demand due to competition from cheaper fabrics copying from their design.

A workshop on “Geographical Indications in India” held on 18th December '04 at Hyderabad. The workshop was organized jointly with Andhra Pradesh Technology Development & Promotion Centre (APTDC), Geographical Indications Registry and Textiles Committee. The key faculties were Shri S. Chandrasekharan, Controller General-Patent Designs, TM & Registrar of GI; Shri T. C. James, Deputy Secretary, DIPP, New Delhi; Shri V Ravi, Joint Registrar of TM, Trademark Registry, Mumbai and Shri Natrajan, Assistant Registrar, GI registry, Chennai.

While inaugurating the workshop, Shri T. Satyanarayana Rao, Director of handlooms and Textiles, Government of Andhra Pradesh, said there was a need to create awareness even among top bureaucrats of what this act was about and how states can intervene to protect the interests of such GI goods. Several products were unique to each region like Pochampally in Andhra Pradesh. He regretted that people tend to wake up only when someone else infringes on their rights as in the case of Basmati rice He also elaborated the importance of filing GI's for product.

Shri. D.P. Jadeja, Director/ Coordinator (CDP), Textiles Committee, Mumbai addressing the participants said “it gives a great pleasure to be here amongst all of you on this day when the distinguished handloom of pochampally will finally get its due recognition and congratulated all the members and stakeholders of the cluster for the same. He said such awareness programme will go a long way in preparing us for the challenges of a globalized economy.”

“Protecting through the GI system would perhaps be the first step towards a total overhaul of production and commercial practices in Pochampally and go a long way towards strengthening and developing the cluster. The new generation and the weavers in Pochampally are keen to learn the skill and Pochampally products are amenable for diversification to suit latest fashion trends. Moreover, development of an export market of apparel fabric and furnishing is not far-feted thought. GI protection in cluster like pochampally can covert potential opportunities into ground realities’ Jadeja said.

K. Subodh Kumar, Counselor (Technology) said that the famous handloom designs have now been granted intellectual property (IP) right under the Geographical Indications (GI) category, two days back and we are waiting for an official letter from the authorities in this regard.

According to a GI Registry official, the textile cluster will get the soon certification. GI registry officials say the entire process takes about a year to complete. The application for registration of Pochampally *ikat* was filed with GI registry on December 15, 2003. So far the fledgling registry has received 20 application

for GI certifications. The certification promotes economic prosperity of producers of goods in territory, provides legal protection to Indian geographical indications for boosting exports and prevents unauthorized use of a registered GI certification.

It is a national-building exercise. The law was set in motion on September 15, 2003. The law is wide enough to cover, agri foods, natural products, food, industrial designs and handicrafts says assistant registrar V. Natrajan at the workshop. Although there is only one office in India at Chennai for geographical indication for the entire country, Natrajan said the registry was looking at making the entire process online so that people and communities in the remotest part in India could access.

Under Geographical Indications, a product and its attributes are linked to a specific region; in this case the ikat fabric is linked to Pochampally. A GI can also be a non-geographical name like Basmati rice. Producers spend time and money in developing products that are unique to their territory. They should, therefore, be protected from misappropriation and unfair competition. Besides, consumers should also be protected from the misuse of the GI associated with the product. Although registration of a GI is not compulsory, it provides a legal protection to product to facilitate action against infringement. The registration of a GI is valid for a period of 10 years and it can be renewed thereafter.

As a WTO member country and signatory to TRIPS the Parliament of India passed the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act 1999. The Act provides for the registration and better protection of the GIs relating to goods. While the act does not make a provision for individual ownership, any association of the persons or producers or any organization or authority representing the interest of the producers of the concerned groups can apply for registration in accordance with the provision of the act. Unlike intellectual property rights (IPRs), GIs were community properties. Copyright, Trademarks, Industrial designs, Patents, Layout designs of integrated circuits, and Protection of undisclosed information are other types of IPRs.

Champagne from the Champagne district of France; Scotch whisky from Scotland; Pochampally ikat from Pochampally. The Powerloom clusters at Solapur and Salem also following the path of Pochampally cluster.

Historical background

Pochampally, located near the capital city of Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad, is probably one of the most flourishing centers of modern handloom industry and producing *ikat* saris on a large scale. The weavers in Pochampalli are basically Hindus of the Padmasali or Devang communities who have been residents for long and have thus adopted the local dialect and social norms. These weavers produce ikat textiles with geometrical designs, and have also recently started experimenting with all-Indian styles.

It is believed that *ikat* technique was brought to Pochampalli from Chirala, another town in Andhra Pradesh, a couple of generations ago, perhaps as early as 1915 when the workshops in Chirala are said to have been weaving *ikat* saris, turbans etc.

One of the reasons why Pochampalli saris find a better market in India and abroad is, the weavers use modern synthetic colors instead of the expensive vegetable dyes for dyeing, thereby not only bringing down the cost of production, but also getting a chance to be more creative by trying out complex designs.

Since the 1960's Pochampalli *ikat*-weavers were influenced by the paolu designs of Gujarat. The reasons for this influence could be many. Migration of the weavers could be one of them. However, there are some experts who feel that more than migration it could be influence of the print media, which could be one of the major reasons. "Weavers have probably seen the Gujarati designs either in a magazine or might have actually seen one of the patola fabrics. It is also possible that weavers came across the designs at a handloom exhibition and copied the design," say some experts.

How these are woven

The yarn for the warp and the weft is stretched on warping blocks in the form of quarter circle. They consist of one strong peg, connected with a circular segment of a wooden plank, studded with about 35 pegs at regular intervals. The thread - warp as well as weft - is stretched on it and divided into a number of sets. Later the designs are tied in the sets, while the yarn is held on the warping block.

For dying the yarn is taken off, but when dry, it is again stretched, partly opened and tied again for dyeing, a process which can be repeated several times. The red and brown shades, between white and black, are achieved using alizarin dyes. For this the cloth is first soaked in a mixture of castor oil and alkaline earth, then dried, again soaked, dipped in alizarin paste and finally boiled till it becomes red. For the brown shades, iron splinters are added to the color. Dissolving iron splinters in vinegar produces black color.

Modern *ikats* of Andhra Pradesh, which are simple and use at the most three colors and purely geometrical designs, are of good quality and sell competitively, but there are some experts who feel that they never attain the technical perfection of other *ikats* of say Orissa or Gujarat as they feel that the weavers of Andhra Pradesh usually make them with the aim of saving time and material and thereby compromise on quality.