

Weaving Social Development: An Exploratory Study of Adapting Traditional Textiles Using Indigenous Organic Wool for the Modern Interior Textiles Market

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Abstract : The interior design profession aims to create aesthetically pleasing design solutions for human habitats but of late, growing awareness about depleting environmental resources, both tangible and intangible, and damages to the eco-system led to the quest for creating healthy and sustainable interior environments. The paper proposes adapting traditionally produced organic wool textiles for the mainstream interior design industry. This can create sustainable livelihoods whereby eco-friendly bridges can be built between Interior designers and consumers and pastoral communities. This study focuses on traditional textiles produced by two pastoral communities from India that use organic wool from indigenous sheep varieties. The *Gaddi* communities of Himachal Pradesh use wool from the Gaddi sheep breed to create *Pattu* (a multi-purpose textile). The *Kurumas* of Telangana weave a blanket called the *Gongadi*, using wool from the *Black Deccani* variety of sheep. These communities have traditionally reared indigenous sheep breeds for their wool and produce hand-spun and hand-woven textiles for their own consumption, using traditional processes that are chemical free. Based on data collected personally from field visits and documentation of traditional crafts of these pastoral communities, and using traditionally produced indigenous organic wool, the authors have developed innovative textile samples by including design interventions and exploring dyeing and weaving techniques. As part of the secondary research, the role of pastoralism in sustaining the eco-systems of Himachal Pradesh and Telangana was studied, and also the role of organic wool in creating healthy interior environments. The authors found that natural wool from indigenous sheep breeds can be used to create interior textiles that have the potential to be marketed to an urban audience, and this will help create earnings for pastoral communities. Literature studies have shown that organic & sustainable wool can reduce indoor pollution & toxicity levels in interiors and further help in creating healthier interior environments. Revival of indigenous breeds of sheep can further help in rejuvenating dying crafts, and promotion of these indigenous textiles can help in sustaining traditional eco-systems and the pastoral communities whose way of life is endangered today. Based on research and findings, the authors propose that adapting traditional textiles can have potential for application in Interiors, creating eco-friendly spaces. Interior textiles produced through such sustainable processes can help reduce indoor pollution, give livelihood opportunities to traditional economies, and leave almost zero carbon foot-print while being in sync with available natural resources, hence ultimately benefiting the society. The win-win situation for all the stakeholders in this eco-friendly model makes it pertinent to re-think how we design lifestyle textiles for interiors. This study illustrates a specific example from the two pastoral communities and can be used as a model that can work equally well in any community, regardless of geography.

Keywords : design intervention, eco- friendly, healthy interiors, indigenous, organic wool, pastoralism, sustainability

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