

# The key to the handloom crisis

Author - Neeta Deshpande, Published on - 6.3.2014

Andhra Pradesh is home to a diversity of exquisite handloom weaves renowned for their craftsmanship and aesthetic appeal. However, this beauty is hardly reflected in the lives of weavers, where motifs of distress and deprivation are dominant. Though they toil from dawn to dusk enmeshing warp with weft, the lives of these skilled artisans are in perpetual crisis. To address this grim scenario, the Malkha initiative is making a modest attempt to relocate the chain of cotton handloom production back within the rural economy. By placing all components of textile production in the hands of weavers and artisans, the intervention seeks to make them autonomous owners of their means of livelihood.

Malkha, a neologism that conjoins the words Malmal and Khadi, is the brand name of natural-dyed handloom cloth produced by the Decentralised Cotton Yarn Trust in Andhra Pradesh. The distinctive feature of Malkha fabric is that, unlike other handloom interventions which use yarn manufactured by large-scale spinning mills, Malkha's yarn is manufactured in the villages themselves using special machines designed for small-scale handloom production. Thus, the Malkha process seeks to obviate the capital and resource intensive components in the conventional chain of the industrial manufacture of cotton cloth, thereby shrinking the overall ecological footprint. Fundamentally, it attempts to rescue cotton yarn and textile production from the monoculture of industrial textile manufacture, and reestablish it within the rural economy, to empower weavers and artisans through stable livelihoods

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