

A Review :

Use of indigenous dyes for economic upliftment and sustainable livelihood

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Colouring yarn is a creative and lucrative art nurtured and patronized through centuries. Until the turn of 19th century fabric were coloured using dyestuff obtained from nature as they were the only colouring substances available at that time. The muted earth colours yielded by these indigenous dyestuffs were considered as harmonious as they go together giving pleasing results.

Indigenous dyeing on textiles is now being popularized globally by the continuous effort of the nature lovers. The problems caused by the synthetic dyes to the human lives and environments have come to an alarming level today. Hence, there is an urgent need to have an alternative for the hazardous synthetic dyes. One such immediate solution is to explore the use of natural dyes. In recent years, a growing interest in the revival of natural dyes has been manifested. This interest is a result of worldwide movement to protect the environment for indiscriminate exploitation and pollution by industries. Natural dyes are being reborn but they lack colourfastness to various agencies like washing, sunlight, crocking etc. Mordents are used to improve colorfastness to dyes. To some extent adding selected mordant in the natural dyeing both is accepted provided the character of the natural dye is unaltered and the eco-system is not deteriorated. Hence, the coloration of textiles with natural dyes and with natural mordent is advantageous and appreciable towards the health and environment point of view.

Ethnic communities throughout the NE region of India, with long standing dye traditions around which revolved a way of life with socio-cultural implications was not left untouched. By the early part of the last century, the global phenomena

of synthetic dyestuff had rapidly permeated into the indigenous craft. It all but destroyed the knowledge skills acquired over centuries to perfect and inevitably eroded, because a cheaper alternative requiring little or no skill was readily available. Today, throughout the multiethnic communities of the northeast the craft is either lost or in the status of a languishing craft.

Moreover, the North East region is a veritable treasure house of vibrant traditions of weaving worked upon by a large work force of women who have kept the craft alive. The weavers incorporate intricate and unique motifs through indigenous dyed yarn that reflect socio-cultural significance giving it regional identity and specialty not found anywhere in the country.

Appropriating the use of natural dyes as value addition in the handloom products represent, a niche marketing direction. Such initiatives have gender implications since weaving and dyeing is the domain of women. Increase income benefits will ensure women weavers' sustainable security. By this value addition, a revival on the use of natural dyes will conserve an intangible heritage.

In general, population growth, poverty and the search for short-term economic gains among local populations are at the root of the threat to biological diversity, or biodiversity. So far, no concrete initiative has been taken to promote the sustainable use of biological diversity at the global level. This would require specific action and a certain amount of planning by Governments, local communities and the private sector.

NGOs have played a major part in the revival of indigenous dye practices in world communities having a vibrant past, where the craft is slowly languishing or

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