

Traditional *Kota Doria* saris- An innovative allure

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■ **ABSTRACT** : In a continuous changing world of textiles with ever growing challenges and competitive environment, innovation in traditional weaving crafts has become essential for their long lasting existence. *Kota Doria* weavers are also experimenting with yarns, motifs, and colours to meet the contemporary demands of consumers without changing *Khat* -a recognizing characteristic of this craft that gives a unique squared check pattern to the textile for which it is famous and is not found in any other textile. Innovations in this craft had transformed the textile from plain turban cloth to saris designed in varied range of motifs with additional richness incorporated by use of zari. Cotton yarns in both warp and weft directions are replaced by silk and zari, vibrant rich colours along with naturalistic and stylized motifs has given a new variety to the craft making the fabric more appealing. Amenability of creators according to market needs is enriching this craft heritage.

■ **KEY WORDS** : Traditional hand weaving, Pit-loom, Design, *Khat*

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Hand woven crafts are beautiful representation of Indian cultural heritage, distinctive handlooms are known for their distinctive features. One of the finest Indian hand woven textiles is traditional *Kota Doria*, this almost weightless textile is very popular for its gossamer feel, sheerness, and corded texture. It is woven in few villages of Kota, Bundi and Baran districts of Rajasthan. It is believed that in 17th century Rao Kishore Singh, a general in Mughal army, brought few weavers from Mysore and settled them in Kaithoon, a village nearby Kota. The tradition of weaving gradually died out in Mysore, but subsequently this craft flourished in Kaithoon. Owing to the original parentage, earlier these textiles were called "*Masuriya Malmals*", and as now it is being woven in surrounding villages of Kota, so named "*Kota Doria*". The early weavers of plain *Kota Doria* handed down their art of weaving generation to generation enriching and imparting new dimensions in this craft in an innovative way. The original fabric made by *Kota Doria* weavers was turban cloths for royalties; later odhnis were also weaved which were draped on rituals and occasions by women of Oswal and Marwadi communities of Rajasthan. Further, adapting and modifying the textile –a new product line of

saris were woven which is still continued in this craft. Along with remarkable innovations in designing of the traditional *Kota Doria*, its unique hallmark- *Khat*, are still preserved to lend a square-check pattern in the weave itself, thus making it a distinctively fine textured fabric with intricate craftsmanship. Innovations always involve high risk factors, because consumer may or may not pay for the ideas which are implemented in the product, but in traditional hand woven *Kota Doria* textile, it is evident that, innovations always added more and more splendor to this fabric, and consumers appreciated it. Master weavers of *Kota Doria* handloom sector are now involving innovation by deliberate application of market trends and consumer tastes, they are now using their imagination to enlarge the design repertoire by synchronizing traditional style with modern sense.

Jain and Singh (2011) mentioned that Indian and international designers have shown a numerous designs using the versatile *Kota Doria* in recent collections, which have ranged from apparel for men and women to accessories like handbags and pouches to home furnishings that include diaphanous window coverings and delicate lampshades.

Dewan (2008) wrote that since 1970 with the advent of