

# The Glorious Years of the Man-made Textiles Industry

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The Textile Industry in India has been in existence since time immemorial. Earlier the industry was based on natural fibres like, cotton, silk and wool.

In the 1950s, man-made textiles made their appearance on the textiles scene. First we had the Rayon-Viscose, Bemberg and Acetate. Their resemblance to natural silk led to the term 'art-silk'. Their soft feel and easy-care properties combined with low cost, resulted into immense popularity with the consumers. Later on, we had the Polyamides (Nylon), the Polyacrylates (Cashmilon) and the most popular, the Polyesters. That was the time when the term 'Synthetics' was established. Blending of different fibres i.e. man-made with natural and man-made with each other, opened the floodgates of development. Further enhancement took place when yarns and fibres were dyed and blended. Texturising of Polyesters opened up yet another line of progress. All these innovations and developments were responsible for making man-made textiles the hot favorites with the customers. That was the era, which could be termed the 'glorious years of man-made textiles industry'. Along with the textiles, other supporting industries like machinery for blending, spinning, texturising, weaving, processing and printing also flourished. Industries of dyestuffs, chemicals and auxiliaries had kept pace admirably. This period lasted for approximately two decades i.e. 1960s and 1970s. Towards the end of 1970s, the powerloom sector sensed the advantages offered by the man-made textiles industry and jumped into the fray. This spelt disaster for the organized sector, which could not match the cost advantage offered to the consumer by the powerloom weavers.

Towards the beginning of 1980s, the organized sector of the man-made textiles industry, being unable to stand in competition, was compelled to pull down the shutters. Many well-known names were struck-off the list. The man-made textiles industry which was at one time a composite, well-organized entity, was split into two segments-the powerloom

weavers and job-processors. This is the situation as it stands at present. However, the situation in the present scenario is also far from satisfactory. Due to excessive production and limited demand, this combination has also suffered a setback. The process-houses are facing the additional pinch due to three factors (1) The recent awakening and stringent laws for proper effluent treatment (2) The insistence on use of Eco-friendly dyes and chemicals, particularly from exporters of fabrics and (3) Steep increase in the costs of all inputs with no possibility of increasing the processing charges. Many process-houses have felt the pinch of these developments and have been forced to close down. The same is the fate of the ancillary industries like machinery, dyes, chemicals and auxiliaries.

In the midst of this entire gloomy atmosphere, it is desirable to mention some of the very old established industries, which, despite the adverse factors have not only survived, but continue to enjoy a prestigious and profitable position. What is the secret of their success and longevity? Of course, we cannot expect them to disclose the secret. What we can understand is that their '*mantras*' are creativity, innovation, upgradation, keeping pace with latest developments, strict cost control, stability, building up customer's confidence and above all, sound and dynamic management.

The situation as stated above is bound to cause depression. However, there is always a ray of hope. The garment industry is well established, not only in the local market but, is also exporting in a big, ever-increasing way. Surely, if the textile industry, particularly the man-made textiles can cater to the garment industry and produce fabrics meeting international standards and prices, there is a hope of revival. There lies the challenge of the future.

Many technician friends of the past generation, including the author, have lived and worked through the glorious era of the textile industry in general, and man-made textiles industry in particular. Even though the present generation may be passing

through a difficult period, we hope the times will change for the better.



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