Chapter-1
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Handicrafts of a country reflect the culture and the custom of a Country and play a vital role in the country’s economy also. India has got proud possession of many ancient handicrafts which are backbone of the rural economy of many regions and many sections of the society. Handicraft is the second largest industry in India; second only to that of agriculture (Katiyar, 2009).

Handicrafts constitute a significant segment of the decentralized sector of our economy. Its importance is felt when it is assessed that it provides employment to lakhs of artisans especially in the weaker sections of our society and the women. It produces goods worth thousands of crores of rupees per year (Jena, 2007). With its wide range of beautiful, artistic and exquisite handicrafts, India is one of the significant suppliers of handicrafts to the world market.

In addition to providing good employment opportunities, the sector enjoys economic significance also. Mathew (2011) reports:

Handicraft is a labour intensive sub-sector with high potential of employment for poorer section of the society in rural areas. It is economically important because of the low capital investment, high
value addition, and negotiable import content and high potential for export earnings. India is one of the important suppliers of handicrafts to the world market...The Plan (10th five year plan) expenditure for the sector has grown from 71.65 crores in 2002-03 to ₹ 220 crores in 2009-10. (p. 25)

The government has shown concern for the sector and has increased the budget allocation enormously due to its equally lucrative revenue benefits through contributing in the Gross Domestic Production and also by income through exports. The export ratio of the handicraft sector over a period depicts promising picture. However, far from its peak in 2006-07, the export decreased tremendously till 2008-2009 and later in the following years the graph shows continuous rise reaching to 12975.25 crores in 2011-12.

Figure 1. Export earnings from handicraft sector
Textile-Handicrafts have always retained a significant place in the entire gamut of handicrafts. Since clothes are the basic need of the civilized human society, and they fulfill the desire of decoration and distinction too. Hence, textile-handicrafts became popular very early and have survived the test of the time.

One of the surface ornamentation techniques for clothes is dying and printing. Many traditional methods of resist dyeing to create patterns have been prevalent in India for times unknown. Bandhej or Bandhani, Batik, Patola or Ikat are a few techniques of resist dying that are being practiced in specific regions of the country even today.

One of the well known handicrafts of resist dying is known as Bandhani or tie-dye. Bandhani is a complex and sophisticated method of adorning cloth by way of manipulation of dyes with the resist material, generally thread.

1.1 Bandhej or Tie and Dye

Bandhej is a traditional method of resist-dyeing practiced in India since ancient times. The craft is quite productively popular in the states of Rajasthan and Gujarat. The technique involves tying and dyeing of cotton or silk cloth. The untied cloth reveals many patterns of colours dyed on it.

It is believed to be an ancient craft on the basis of evidences and references found in the historical survey by the researchers. However, being
an integral part of Indian cultural and social life, the craft has never ceased to
be the part of Indian way of life. Chattopadhyay (1975) puts it in words:

The wide variety evolved over the centuries because of its close links
with the religious and social customs of the different people. The
survival of this craft in the face of powerful competition from machine
printing of some of the Bandhani designs proves how deeply it
continues to be in the life of the people and retains its own inner
dynamism. (p. 28)

1.1.1 Origin of Bandhej. Bandhej is an antique craft and has been
practiced for times unknown. When the world was in its tender infancy, going
back to the era of Indus Valley Civilization, the dyeing technique used in the
ancient city of Mohenjo-Daro was by binding individual areas of cloth in
order to shield them from the dye, today known as Bandhani (Mathur, 2000).

Etymologically, the word has been derived from the verb bandana,
which means to tie a knot. The word was adopted in English in the 18th
century as Bandana signifying a spotted handkerchief. Later, the word
Bandhej became prevalent to mean a technique of resist dying and the product
itself as a variety of textile.

Various varieties of this technique are produced and consumed in
many parts of the world. Tie and dye or Bandhej was popular in South East
Asia where it was known by the Malay term Plangi. It is known as Shibori in
Japan where the art of tie and dye had reached its zenith ages ago. In Japan
this technique was probably introduced from China around 400 B.C. It has been practiced since then till now. The craft became popular in the United States quite late in the mid-1950s. However, in India it started very early. In about 400 AD, Indian traders introduced dyeing technique to Java where the art of Batik was developed.

Historically, tie and dye is believed to have fully developed in China during the T’ang dynasty (618-906 A.D.) and in Japan during the Nara period (552-794 A.D.). Ample availability of silk and hemp, which are very receptive to the resist technique, made this art flourish by leaps and bounds in these countries. Chinese knew the art of skillfully turning, folding and tying the silk or cotton in a way that when the cloth was dipped, different parts of the fabric would absorb the dye and some others won’t absorb. This resulted in bringing out different designs on different parts of the material to show color more intensely than other areas (Chattopadhyay, 1975). The art was a part of their cultural heritage in China. There was a clear-cut hierarchy in the society and there were norms and taboos related to clothing among the people. The only people who were allowed to wear the tie-dyed clothes were either priests or the wealthy. The use of specific colours was also restricted to the particular class and creeds in the ancient Chinese society.

Some scholars believe that the technique might have originated in central Asia and passed from there to India and Japan, the two countries in
which the practice achieved true popularity and high levels of craftsmanship. The earliest surviving examples of Bandhani cloth, as opposed to description of it, date back no further than the 18th century; they are from tombs in the central Asia (Stone, 1996).

1.1.2 Indian Bandhej. Indian tie-dyed cloth’s antiquity is too hard to trace. To quote from landmark speech of Abbott the former Chairman of the Board of the Australia-India Council (AIC) in Sidney:

Excavations at Fostat have revealed Gujarati resist textiles with patterns identical to those which have been discovered in recent times in Indonesia. The excavations at Fostat date from the late 13th - 14th centuries to the 17th century and have produced fragments of cotton resist textiles, the majority having an origin which could loosely be described as Gujarati. (para 2)

Bandhej garments have been a part of daily life as well as of rituals and customs for both the poor and the opulent. People from a cross-section of society wear Bandhani garments.

In North India a special pattern of Bandhej named Leheria is worn by all married women on the auspicious occasion of Teej festival in the Hindu calendar month Shrawan. Two specific kinds of Bandhani patterns that are majorly produced and consumed in Rajasthan are Peela or Piliya and Pomcha. These two patterns of Bandhani have their cultural significance and are used on occasions of marriage and child-birth. Rajasthan and Gujrat are
the most productive centers of Bandhani garments. However, there are other less productive centers also where it still continues to be produced. To quote George (1997):

*Bandhej* technique is worked in north Bihar to create bold patterns in single colours. The same technique is also used in Madurai in Tamilnadu for the production of Sungrdhi sarees. These are made by a group of people who originally came from Saurashtra but later settled in the area. (p. 75)

1.1.3 *Bandhej* in Gujrat. Bandhani is an ancient art practiced in great many places. In Gujrat state Jamnagar, Anjar, and Bhuj are famous for it. Wada (2002) writes:

The Kutch region which borders Pakistan and faces Arabian sea is home to ten thousand Bandhani artisans working with cotton and silk....The rulers of Kutch patronized Bandhani which is still used in religious ceremonies, festivals, dowries, and weddings. (p. 28)

Bandhani of Jamnagar, Mandvi and Bhuj are famous for their intricate designs and patterns, which are used, in wedding outfits called Gharchola and sarees. The tie-dyed fabrics of Gujarat are perhaps the best produced in India. It is produced on superfine cotton called mulmul/muslin sometimes combined with gold checks and motifs worked in the Jamdani technique.

The commercial centre of Gujarat, Ahmadabad is also famous for its traditional Bandhej fabrics. Popular for its intricate designs and the lovely
hues, the traditional Bandhej fabrics in Ahmadabad are in great demand all over the country.

The highest intensity of Bandhani dyeing is in Kutch, but some of the best works are from Jamnagar and Saurashtra, on the Southern coast of Gulf of Kutch. It is said that the entire Bandhani tradition of Gujrat is manifested in the Gharchola, which means the women’s house garment and there are two varieties in which it is produced. Gharchola is the essential item in the girl’s dowry (Chattopadhyay, 1985). The Gharchola is made with 12 beds of roses as prominent design. It is called Barah Baag locally. The exquisite design is symbolic of Gujrat’s traditional Bandhani craft.

1.1.4 Bandhej in Rajasthan. Rajasthan is home to a great variety of customs and crafts. Here one finds that age-old skills are still thriving. The state still produces some of the most artistic and exciting artifacts that are famous all across the globe. The textiles of Rajasthan have a fascinating range like Hand Block-printing, and Bandhej that are famous across the country and abroad. Bandhej, an ornament of Rajasthan culture enjoys place of pride in the realm of handicrafts. It is one of the finest arts of heritage of Rajasthan, which is not only surviving but also thriving day by day. It has become most renowned art and has got fame across the globe. Rajasthan is particularly famed for its traditional and subtle designs of Bandhej.

This exquisite and highly sophisticated handicraft is a unique cultural heritage of Rajasthan. There are colourful Leherias, Mothadas, and turbans of
Chunar befitting the *Rajput* pride and splendour and the women’s apparel include *Lehangas, Kurtis* and *Kanchalis of Bandhej*. Even today the former rulers have tie-dye work of their choice done by the professional master dyers, who have inherited this craft from their forefathers, who served the royal family.

Jaipur, Sikar and Jodhpur are major productive centres of *Bandhej*, while Pali, Barmer, Udaipur and Nathdwara are the other centres. Sikar produces some of the finest *Bandhani* clothes and they produce a range of patterns which are made for different communities in Rajasthan, Punjab and Haryana (Dhamija, 1977). A special form of *Bandhani* work, which is highly valued for the delicacy and intricacy of its designs, is known as *Chundari*. The *Sikari Bandhej*, a form of the *Chundari*, from Sikar in Shekhawati, is known throughout India. The *Chundari* technique, in fact, is a combination of the *Bandhani* and the direct printing process. While making it, wooden blocks with nails are pressed on folded cloth to imprint the design and the raised portions are then tied with a string coated with a dye-resistant paste. The fabric is then dyed. Opening of knots, result in beautiful patterns of designs which are magnetic and attractive. *Chundari* from Sikar is famed across the country.

The exquisite cloth with multi-coloured waves tie-dyed on it, used as turban (locally called ‘*Safa*’) is especially famous of Jodhpur. *Safa*, which is used by the males is tied on the head in such a way that one end hangs down
to the waist on the back. Tie-dyed safas of Jodhpur are supplied in the entire country and are worn on special social occasions.

In Rajasthan the tie and dyed clothes are still used on all the auspicious occasions and form a significant part of a woman’s choice of clothing, particularly in rural areas. The state is famous for the simplest of designs to the ones depicting the war scenes, cultural festivals or Rasleela.

The craft is practiced extensively in the state. Interestingly, every region has got some specialty and variety in its production of Bandhani. Difference may be in colour, variety of design and motifs or in fabric.

1.2 Designs and Patterns

The beauty of the resist dyeing rests on the folding and then binding or tying resulting into patterns. Various motifs are popular in different regions like Barah Baag, Gharchola and Bavan Baag in Gujrat. Similarly, Leheria and Mothada designs have special linkage with the culture of Rajasthan. These special wave like and stripe designs are very old and still find market all across the country.

These traditional designs such as Leheria, Mothada and Gharchola etc. are still produced and are in prevalence due to their demand in the market. However, some of the patterns used earlier have become obsolete. Some really elaborate motifs were made in tie and die work such as Rasleela (depicting Krishna dancing with Gopis) and portrayal of a hunting scene are
now available only in the museums or in the collections of national award winner artisans.

Kumar (1999) relates that during early phase in Rajasthan, tie-dye was done on a kind of ordinary coarse cloth in Barmer and Jaisalmer regions of western Rajasthan and some adjoining areas of Pakistan. Very simple and ordinary design of tiny squares and dots was invariably used. However, in the nineteenth century Kota-Masooria and Muslin came to be used for this purpose. This art touched great heights in nineteenth century.

1.3 Dyes and Colours of Bandhej

Today the modern dyes are all synthetic whereas in olden days there were all vegetable and natural dyes. Earlier, the fabrics were marinated for several days and in contrast only few minutes are needed now for chemical dyes to take effect. The assiduous task of collecting herbal dye-plants and extracting the dyes are not mentioned anywhere in the news in the fashion industry. The modern dyers are enthusiastically taking up tinned colours to replace the original ancient natural dyes. Similarly, the traditional natural dyes have become obsolete in making of Bandhej clothes also. Only artificial modern dyes are prevalent due to their easy to use quality.

The colours that are predominantly used in Bandhani are yellow, red, green and pink. These colours have cultural affinity with the state of Rajasthan. Colours have their own connotations in the socio-cultural context.
As red colour has always been associated with marriage, in Rajasthan as well as in some other states, the bride wears a *Bandhej* saree of red colour while during the religious ceremony of marriage. The red and yellow *odhani* called *Piliya* or *Peela* derived from the Hindi word *Peela* for yellow colour, is also associated with socialization and rituals in Rajasthan.

### 1.4 Production

The process of making *Bandhej* is mainly divided in three parts. First is designing which is followed by tying and dying. The design to be dyed is imprinted or outlined onto the fabric with the help of wooden or iron blocks (Figure 2) using fugitive colours. Later, the cloth is sent for tying. The tier-women pull on the marked dots of the fabric and winds thread skillfully around the protruding cloth (Figure 3 & 4). After tying the fabric is thoroughly washed to remove the imprint. The cloth is then dipped in the dye. Next it is rinsed thoroughly, squeezed and dried (Figure 5). Then tied again (Figure 6) and dipped in a darker colour. This process is repeated again and again as per the desired outcome of pattern and colours. If the cloth is to be dyed in multi-colours, light colours are dyed first (Figure7). The tied area resists the dying process and retains the colour earlier dyed to it or the original colour of the grey-cloth as the case may be. When the folds of the cloth are pulled apart in a particular way, untying the knots reveal magnificent patterns. Variation in all the stages of production like designing, tying and dying done by the artisans reflect changes through time and place.
1.4.1 The supply chain. As Bandhej clothes contribute substantially to the economy and export earning of the country, it is an important trade activity having a long and complex supply chain. This handicraft requires raw material in the form of fabric and undergoes various processes of production and finally through distribution it reaches to the consumer. The supply chain
in the handicraft industry in India is generally long with many intermediaries involved. The artisans are working in a decentralized mode in their clusters and have connection with the outside market through some indirect link. The intermediaries organize and coordinate the work supplying inputs, specifying quality expectations and delivery dates, making payments and providing market access (Jones & Shaikh, 2005).

In Bandhej there are many steps, in the production process from raw material to the finished product, each involving different people and separate financing. Production entails designing, tying and dyeing thus all the artisans involved have significant role in supply of the final product. All the stages affect the cost of the product and the time cycle of the product process. It makes the entire process complex. The sourcing of raw material, complexity of the production, and distribution makes supply chain a challenge. The finished product reaches to the end user through many intermediaries under trader’s category. The profitability depends on the best practices adopted at each stage by the respective stakeholders. Besides this, they have to work in a sequential order, so any obstacle at any one stage affects the other affecting the entire chain. Hence, it is imperative to study entire supply chain.

1.5 Relevance of the Study

Bandhej is a widely accepted textile craft. Bandhej garments are worn by people from all castes and creeds and from all classes of society. High
class women wear pure silk sarees with Bandhej patterns tie-dyed on them, whereas lower classes wear it on cotton and synthetic clothes. Similarly, youngsters of the urban culture wear Bandhej t-shirts and skirts, whereas rustic folks wear Bandhej safas and chunaris. In nutshell, Bandhej is liked by all and is a popular apparel-craft which finds a significant place in one’s wardrobe in the state and outside. References have been made by textile historians and authorities like Dhamija, Buhler and others about this craft as a cultural wealth. Anecdotal evidences suggest that no systematic study has been done so far on Bandhej handicraft. Here it becomes important to explore this unexplored area.

Crafts are an integral part of our history and tradition. In Bandhej thousands of artisans are engaged, their traditional wisdom and centuries of dedicated refinement have made this craft popular all around. Hence documenting and preserving the integrity of the craft was thought essential. The study is planned with the aim to investigate the Bandhej craft in terms of design, dye, fabric and technique with the past and present perspectives and also to see any regional differences.

Besides the craft, the craftsman has a key role to play, in this long preserved art. Moreover, Bandhej is the sole source of employment for these people in the state. They prepare clothes so fine and delicate that their work finds an international market. The craftsmen are not registered with any
government or non-government agency. The sector is unorganized. Even various departments of government do not maintain any kind of data of the artisans involved in the craft or data related to export or production of the *Bandhej* craft. There is no welfare programme running exclusively for these artisans.

Only one effort was done by Commissioner of Industries, Government of Rajasthan under State Cluster Development Programme, where 40 clusters were identified to conduct a diagnostic study. The Jodhpur tie and dye cluster was one out of them in the year 2006-2007 where cluster development activities were started. It reported that there were 12 pockets or centers where the tie and dye work were done and one thousand artisans survive on meager earnings and many have left. Here, it becomes relevant to explore the socio, economic, techno and health conditions of the artisans, to examine the sustainability of this craft.

In the last two decades distinct personalities have been awarded for their contribution in this field. Besides this the craft has a great potential as a business activity also. Hence, in order to make it competitive the supply chain needs to be examined.

1.6 **Statement of the Problem**

In view of the above relevance, the study titled “Study on *Bandhej* Craft of Jaipur, Sikar and Jodhpur” focuses on analyzing the present state of
the Bandhej craft and craftsmen with aesthetic, economic, trading and health perspectives.

1.7 Objectives of the Study

1.7.1 To study the general profile of the artisans involved in Bandhej Handicraft.

1.7.2 To study the changes in the Bandhej craft production process in terms of technique and fabric selection of the past with present.

1.7.3 To compare the Bandhej craft in terms of design dyes and colours of the past with the present.

1.7.4 To study the supply-chain (raw material to finish product) of Bandhej craft.

1.7.5 To examine the issues and challenges of supply chain of the Bandhej craft.

1.7.6 To find out various health hazards that the artisans have to face during the various stages of product processing.

1.8 Assumptions

• There will be differences in the process of production pertaining to techniques, fabrics, designs and colours among the cities owing to their regional/geographical backgrounds.

• There will be difference in the production and sales of the artisans and the traders respectively.

• There must be some hazardous effects arising out of the occupation of the artisans.
1.9 Hypothesis

1.8.1 There is no significant difference in the mean monthly production of the artisans of the three cities.

1.8.2 There is no significant difference in the mean monthly sales of the traders of the three cities.

1.10 Limitation of the Study

• The sector is highly unorganized and no direct source list of the target population could be found.

• Some of the respondents were reluctant to participate and cooperate with the researcher while conducting the interview.

1.11 Delimitations

• The study was confined to Jaipur, Sikar and Jodhpur cities.

• The artisans engaged solely in Bandhej craft were studied.

• Only the most productive families were chosen as samples for the study.

• Museums in Rajasthan viz. Albert Hall (Jaipur), Lalgarh Palace (Bikaner), Ummed Bhawan (Jodhpur) and Rao Shekhaji Museum (Sikar) were visited.

1.12 Operational Definitions

1.12.1 Handicraft. It refers to the art and craft of making certain articles made by the artisans with their hands without the help of any machines.
1.12.2 **Bandhej/Bandhani.** It refers to a particular textiles handicraft in which garments are produced with resist dying technique. In it cloth is tied with thread and then dyed in a way that the tied part resists the dying process.

1.12.3 **Artisans.** Artisans in the present study refer to the people whose work is to accomplish some part of the process in the making of *Bandhej* garments. These are designer, tier, and dyer.

1.12.4 **Traders.** It refers here to the people who are engaged in buying and selling of either grey material or the finished products of *Bandhej*. The categories identified in the study are: greyman, manufacturer, wholesaler, and retailer.

1.12.5 **Technique.** It refers to the way or method used by the artisans followed in the production of *Bandhej* garments.

1.12.6 **Design.** Design in this study refers to the patterns of dye-resist dots on clothes.

1.12.7 **Health Hazards.** It indicates to the harmful effects arising out of the production process of *Bandhej* on the artisans. It may be due to the use of harmful chemicals or because of physical postures and extended labour hours.