Ms. Isha Jaswal  
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Dear Ms. Jaswal:

On behalf of the International Trade and Finance Association (IT&FA), a tax-exempt, non-profit educational institution [501(c) (3)] incorporated in the United States, I thank you for participating in the 26th annual conference of the association, meeting in Los Angeles, CA, May 22-25, 2016. The conference theme was "Leading Issues in International Trade and Finance."

At the conference you presented an important scholarly paper: "Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Changing Structure of Textile and Clothing Trade (with Special Reference to Asian Economies)" co-authored with Professor Halima Sadia Rizvi.

We look forward to your participation in the 27th annual conference to be held in Poznan, Poland, in May 2017.

Sincerely yours,

[Signature]

Alfred E. Eckes, Ph.D., Ohio University Emeritus Executive  
Vice President  
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TEXTILE INDUSTRY: INDIA’S SECOND LARGEST EMPLOYER, BUT WHAT’S REALLY IN FOR THE WORKERS?

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ABSTRACT

The seeds of Indian Textiles were sown early in Indus Valley Civilization and constituting one of the essential needs of human beings, demand for textile and clothing shall never come to a halt. Currently textiles industry is of critical importance to our national economy since it is the second largest after agriculture in terms of providing employment opportunities. Moreover, this sector absorbs a sizable number of people belonging to the weaker sections of the society in general and women in particular. Hence, advancement of this sector has direct bearing on our development and nation building. Notably, a substantial number of firms in this industry cater to the global retail giants. However, in the wake of enormous competition on account of global integration the employers attempt to cut costs wherever possible which in turn affects the overall working environment in this industry. This paper, thus, tries to explore the working conditions of workers engaged in this sector with the help of various studies conducted so far. Consequently, the study concludes that working conditions are inhumane and dismal. Employers prefer contractual labourers who are paid less than legal minimum. Women workers who are majorly employed in this industry fall prey to sexual exploitation, economic discrimination in contrast to their male counterparts and absence of facilities of toilets and creches. Studies bring out cases of child labour where children are treated like slaves. Overall, the working environment is stressful, over-tiring, unhealthy and hazardous.

KEYWORDS
Textile industry, hrm, working environment.

INTRODUCTION

The legacy of Indian textiles can be traced back to the use of dyes and printing blocks around 3000 BC (Chandra, P. 2006). Also, evidence from the Middle East suggests textiles trade from Indus Valley Civilization existed as early as 2350 BC. The archaeological surveys and studies discovered spindle and cotton stuck to silver vase some 5000 years ago, revealed that the spinning and weaving of cotton was known to the Harappa civilisation. During the medieval period, the Muslim conquest of India considerably impacted India’s culture on one hand and witnessed increased foreign relationships on the other. It was during this time period that India’s trade relations with Europe became active. The first mass fashion market in Europe was engendered by the bulk import of Indian cotton cloth after 1660 (Horwell, V. 2004).

By the 17th century India became the world’s largest economy and its textiles were celebrated worldwide. In fact, India was the world’s chief producer of cotton textiles and the leading exporter of textiles to Britain. The increased desirability of chintz (multi-coloured Indian prints on cotton) in Europe led to the formation of East India Company in 1600 which in turn was mainly responsible for textiles export from India to Europe (Trentmann, F. 2009).

The British textile industry remained small and competitively insignificant against its Indian counterparts throughout the 17th and first half of the 18th century (Broadberry, S. e.t.al. 2005). The combination of block-printed or hand-painted, yet washable and cheap cloth was unachievable in the West but possible in India due to its organisation of agriculture, sophistication in natural dye chemistry and low but not exploitative wages for skilled craftsmen (Horwell, V. 2004). Nevertheless, with industrial Revolution, the productivity of British’s labour in the production of cotton textiles increased dramatically. Consequently, by the end of the 18th century British textiles increasingly displaced those of India’s from their home markets and subsequently took over Indian markets as well.

With the colonization of India, India’s textile industry rapidly declined until it became a net exporter of raw cotton. At the end of the 19th century, the once leader in the export of textiles started to import textiles that it needed. British government policies left India technically impoverished. Thus, India’s economic decline which corresponded with the collapse of the Mughal Dynasty and the beginning of the British Raj in the mid-19th century not only showed a down fall to its leading textiles production and exports but the downfall of the country as a whole.

INDIA’S TEXTILES INDUSTRY: CURRENT SCENARIO

Textiles and clothing form the basic necessity of life hence its demand will never be out of order. With respect to India, its textiles industry has an overarching presence in the economic life of the country. Presently it contributes nearly 14 per cento industrial production, 4 per cent to the GDP and 17 per cent to the country’s export earnings (Annual Report 2011-12, Ministry of Textiles).

Very importantly, this sector is India’s second largest employment provider after agriculture. It employs over 35 million peoples directly which in turn contains a huge number of SC/ST and women.

This sector is comprised of the following major sub-sectors:
• Cotton/Man-Made Fibre Textiles Mill Industry
• Man-Made Fibre/Filament Yarn Industry
• The Wool and Woollen Textiles Industry
• The Sericulture and Silk Textiles Industry
• Handlooms
• Handicrafts
• The Jute and Jute Textiles Industry
• Textiles Exports

The segment of Jute Industry plays an important role in the National economy of India by generating employment for 0.37 million workers in organized mills and about 4.0 million farm families (ibid). Additionally, a substantial number of people are engaged in jute trade. Moreover, India has an overwhelming global presence in terms of production of raw jute and jute products. Evidently, India accounted for 60 per cent of world’s production of jute and allied fibres in 2007-08 (ibid).

With regards to Silk, India stands to be its second largest producers in the world. In turn, sericulture and silk industry provides lucrative occupation to about 7.25 million people in rural and semi-urban parts of India (ibid). Moreover, it employs a sizeable number of workers from economically oppressed sections of the society particularly the women.