

PROCESSING CLUSTER BHIWANDI, THE POWERLOOM HUB

A small town in Maharashtra, Bhiwandi is known for its bustling powerloom fabric manufacturing activities. Whole economy of Bhiwandi depends on its fabric manufacturing on powerloom. Bhiwandi supplies low cost fabrics to millions of people in lower middle class and below poverty line segment population in the country. It is because of Bhiwandi, millions of low income population of India that can hardly afford buying high priced goods, is able to meet their clothing requirement at reasonable prices.

For other clusters which are supplying cheaper processed and finished fabrics for the masses, Bhiwandi is the source of raw material. However Bhiwandi is required to do something more. It should come out of the list of suppliers of cheap fabrics, to the suppliers of value added products for higher income groups and export too. This may not only change the image of Bhiwandi cluster but may also enhance the living standard of people of Bhiwandi.

- **Location :**

Bhiwandi is a small town in Maharashtra. Maharashtra is known for its textile manufacturing activities for centuries. Mumbai was once a largest textile centre, but for the longest ever strike in the world in 1982, which changed the total scenario. Industry in Mumbai became sick and workers migrated to nearby towns for work or returned to their villages. Bhiwandi was one of the

BHIWANDI LOCATION MAP



destinations which grew up with the second hand looms purchased from the sick units in Mumbai and Ahmedabad.

Bhiwandi is 30 kms away from the Municipal limits of Mumbai. Textile activities are household activities, scattered around whole Bhiwandi and in Saravali industrial area. The processing activities at Bhiwandi have developed because of it's proximity with the major textile marketing and trade centre, Mumbai. Commencement of textile processing activities at Bhiwandi could be traced back to 1970s. Hand and power processing co-exist in Bhiwandi. Peculiar feature of Bhiwandi processing cluster is that even blended shirting fabric is processed by hand processing units. Low power tariff, cheap labour, entrepreneurial talent, proximity to Mumbai (a benefit for Mumbai traders to carry out trade activities at Mumbai with goods being physically at Bhiwandi, thus saving octroi, toll tax, sales tax and other such taxes which are either lower at Bhiwandi or are not there at all), etc

have been few of various reasons for development of Bhiwandi cluster so big in size.

- **Industrial profile :**

Processing industry at Bhiwandi caters the processing needs of giant powerloom industry of this area.

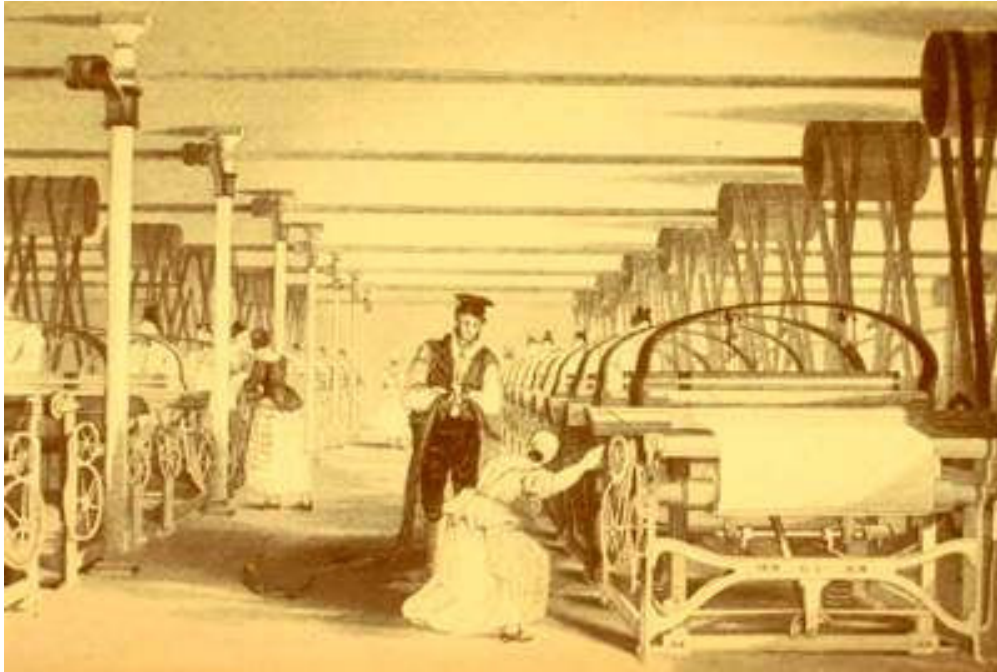
Grey fabric from Bhiwandi goes to almost all major woven fabric processing clusters like Pali, Balotra, Jodhpur, Jetpur, Sanganer, Bagru, Barmer, Banswara, Bhilwara, Surat etc. Processors from such clusters have set up their powerlooms at Bhiwandi. For printing of fabric in certain clusters like Jetpur, Jodhpur etc., bleaching operation is carried out at Bhiwandi. Number of processing units at Bhiwandi are as under :-

Type of units	Number	Annual Capacity
Power processing units	26	90 million metres
Processing units having hand / power operated primitive technology machines	20	25 million metres
Total	46	115 Million metres

Bhiwandi is an old unplanned town with narrow streets and unorganised drainage system. It has however other infrastructure facilities like post and telecommunication facilities, better connectivity to Mumbai and national highway, quite a large number of warehouses, a large transportation network, easy and cheap labour from nearby villages and north India, good craftsmanship existing from long olden days, grassroot workers for generations, low power tariff and taxes and

proximity with vast market and trade resources of Mumbai. It has got two Powerloom Service Centres and a strong powerloom weavers' association.

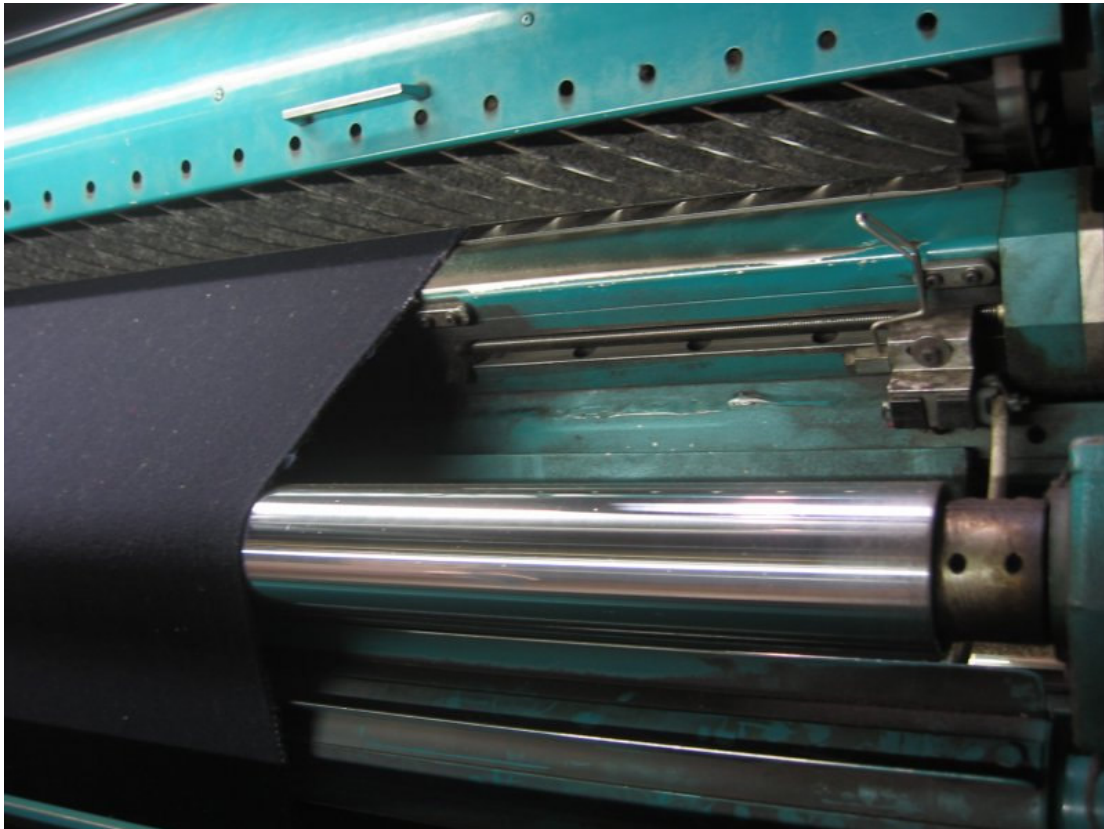
PICTURE OF POWERLOOM AS IT EXISTED IN OLDEN DAYS



Technology used in processing is primitive to medium. Hi tech process houses have not come up at Bhiwandi so far. Bleaching is done using the same age old technology of immersion in cemented tanks filled with bleaching powder in water or bleach liquor added in water. For mercerising, washing etc. primitive technology locally fabricated machines are used. This is a great impediment in quality processing. In primitive technology sector, locally fabricated jiggers are used to carry out many processing operations and printing is done on cold tables. In better technology units flat bed and rotary printing machines are installed. Shearing & Cropping machines are used to shear fabric to cut protruded / loose threads from the

surface of the fabric. Dry finishing is done through calendaring, Shreigners and embossing machines. Some wet finishes like softening, silicone and resin finishing are done on stenters.

SHEARING MACHINES



- **Product profile :**

Products manufactured at Bhiwandi are blended shirting and dress material of polyester / viscose as well as 100% cotton or 100% manmade fabrics. For power processing segment, following products are common :-

S.No	Product	Nature of fibres	Width	Price range per metre
1.	Shirting	48 x 52 Poly / Viscose & Poly/ Cotton	89 cms to 147 cms	Rs.15-60/-
2.	Dress material	65 x 35 PV&65x35 PC, 100% Cotton	120 cms	Rs.18 - 50/-
3.	Shirting	100% cotton	89 cms to 147 cms	Rs.15 - 70/-
4.	Man made Shirtings	100% Polyester, filament x filament	89 cms to 147 cms	Rs.10 - 40/-
5.	Man made Suiting	100% Polyester Blended Px V & Px C	140 to 152 cms.	Rs30 - 90/-
6	Suiting	100% Cotton	147 to 152 cms.	Rs 50 - 110/-

For hand processing segment, the varieties are coarser, 100% cotton fabrics generally used for cheaper sarees for lower income groups and 100% cotton bleached mulmuls. These varieties are bleached on job work basis for hand processing clusters like Pali, Jetpur, Jodhpur etc. for carrying out printing. Some hand processing units at Bhiwandi also carry out processing of blends. Following varieties are processed :

S.No	Product	Nature of fibres	Width	Price range per metre
1.	Bleached sarees	100% cotton	117 cms	Rs.12 - 15/-
2.	Bleached Mulmul	100% cotton	117 cms	Rs.10 - 13/-

3.	Blended / Man made shirting	50 / 50 PV, 100% Polyester	112 cms	Rs. 8 - 20/-
----	-----------------------------	-------------------------------	---------	-----------------

Whole Bhiwandi almost works on job work basis. Job charges are fairly squeezed and quality of processing is secondary consideration. Fabric is received in loose form (usually uncovered) for processing. It is stored on dirty floors near grease / oil spilling machines in the process house and delivered so, after processing, without bothering for stains, dust, dirt etc during handling and transportation.

BLENDED SHIRTINGS



Job charges for bleaching by hand processing units vary from 50 paise to Rupees 2/- per meter and for power

processed dyed / printed, finished material Rs.2/- to Rs.20/- per meter depending on the quality of fabric and process to be carried out. Middlemen are in picture everywhere. Owner of the fabric is sitting somewhere else. Middlemen takes the fabric on his behalf, gets it processed by paying job charges and sales it on behalf of the owner. In the process, he makes money. He squeezes the powerloom weaver for grey fabric on one hand and the processor on the other. This leads to unhealthy competition among the weavers as well as processors, who compete among themselves to offer lower job charges during the process of negotiation. This affects the industry and many units close down due to unhealthy competition and increased overheads, cost of dyes, chemicals, labour etc. Workers employed are on contract basis. One cannot expect the same worker coming for doing a job in his unit. In the process, an individual by not getting an opportunity to work in the same unit / process / machine on a repeated basis, is never able to perfect himself for a particular job. This affects the quality of work / product. Due to squeezed margins, the processors can not employ highly paid technically qualified / trained / experienced shopfloor personnels and hence there is a limit to which improvement can be achieved in this cluster.

Unhealthy practice of performing job with squeezed margin is also not good for quality processing elsewhere. It is akin to a hawker selling his goods in competition to a show room, offering the goods at very cheaper rate and the price conscious buyer buys it from such hawker for price advantage, disregarding the quality. Showroom can not cut his price beyond a

certain level since his goods have been produced using certain standards of quality, which involve increased cost due to high priced quality inputs of raw material, human resources and various other overheads.

Though majority of fabric processed in Bhiwandi is for lower segment domestic market, some quantity is also processed in quality process houses and is used by merchant exporters for export purpose also.

- **Environmental responsiveness :**

Infrastructure in whole of Bhiwandi is very poor with narrow and congested roads and poor drainage facility, except in MIDC area. As such it is very difficult to control the pollution caused by processing activities in the units within the municipal limits. However in MIDC area a common effluent treatment plant would take care of pollution caused by processing units in MIDC area.

- **Problems and mitigation :**

- i) As long as middlemen remain active, the price war for job charges would continue and quality will suffer. A strong perception is required to be developed among the processors, for quality for survival. If the quality is produced, people are there to pay for it. We should not buy the argument that even if we produce quality goods, who is going to pay higher job charges for it.
- ii) It is in the interest of the powerloom and processing units located within the municipal limits to move to outskirts in a planned manner

or in MIDC area or textile park with world class infrastructure and support services, for better quality and competency in the changed market scenario.

- iii) Powerloom manufacturers and processors of Bhiwandi should upgrade their machines with the help of Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme of Govt. of India, Ministry of Textiles, to produce high value goods for export market too. This will not only bring Bhiwandi on the world map of textiles but would also enhance the living standard of people of Bhiwandi, with better earning from their activities.
- iv) Industry lacks in technical inputs. Technically qualified and trained personnels are not there. Textile processing is a very complex area, where absence of scientific knowledge impairs the quality and competency and results in wastage of dyes and chemicals and increase of pollution. Nearby ITIs may undertake the job of producing technically qualified manpower to work on shop floor level in textile processing units of Bhiwandi.

Prepared by Ram Asrey Lal, Dy Director (Chemical Processing), under the guidance of the Textile Commissioner, Mumbai and material based on :

1. Report of Processing Sector in Maharashtra prepared by Regional Office of the Textile Commissioner Mumbai and discussion with the representatives of processing industry at Bhiwandi.

2. Inputs from Shri K. K. Sharma an eminent processing expert in the area.