

LOCAL TO GLOBAL: A STUDY OF KOLHAPURI CHAPPAL

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Article History: Received: 31st Dec 2025 Accepted: 15th Jan 2026 Published: 22nd Jan 2026</p>	<p>The Kolhapuri Chappal's journey from local roots to global recognition is a testament to its timeless appeal and cultural significance. The Kolhapuri Chappal gained royal patronage from the Chhatrapatis of Kolhapur, particularly Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, who promoted local artisans and craftsmanship. This endorsement elevated the chappal's status, making it a symbol of rustic elegance and strength. In the 1970s, the Indian footwear found a new international fanbase. In 2019, Kolhapuri Chappals received a Geographical Indication (GI) tag, formally recognising their unique regional origin and traditional methods. The Kolhapuri Chappals manufactured are of two major types 1) Export Variety 2) Fancy Variety. The total production of export variety and fancy Kolhapuri Chappals is estimated to be crores annually. Kolhapuri Chappals are mainly exported to China, Japan, France and Australia. From rural villages to luxury runways in Paris, Kolhapuri Chappals have proven that authentic craftsmanship, once empowered, can conquer the World. From the bustling lanes of Kolhapur to fashion ramps in Milan, Kolhapuri Chappals have made an extraordinary journey.</p>
<p>Keywords:</p> <p>Kolhapuri, Local, Global, Employment, Geographical Indication (GI)</p>	

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1. Introduction:

The story of the Kolhapuri Chappal or Kolhapuri Paytan begins in the 12th century, in the city of Kolhapur, from which it takes its name. Originally, these chappals were created by skilled artisans for specific communities – sturdy, heavy-soled versions for farmers; lighter, ornate versions for nobles and courtiers. Each pair was crafted to suit the wearer's life and work.

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Kolhapuris were once known by many names – Kapashi, Kachkadi, Bakkalnali, Pukri – each indicating the village where a particular style was made. Even today, their design varies subtly by region, but the core elements remain: open-toed, often with a toe loop for grip; plaited or braided leather uppers; and tough, flat soles made from buffalo hide. The decorative touches – golden cords, delicate punching, floral patterns – are all done by hand.

Production is still largely centered in Kolhapur, Sangli, Satara and Solapur in Maharashtra, and Bagalkot, Belgaum, Dharwad and Bijapur in Karnataka. In neighborhoods like Subash Nagar in Kolhapur, families from the Chamar community continue to work with leather, cutting, skiving, stitching, polishing – a process that can take up to six weeks per pair. Traditionally, all materials were natural – buffalo hide, goat leather, and stitching cords made from the buffalo's tail – though in recent years, nylon and synthetic substitutes like vegan leather have crept in.

The 1960s and 1970s counter-culture movement introduced Kolhapuri Chappals to Western markets, where they became a fashion statement. International designers and celebrities now endorse these sandals, blending traditional craftsmanship with modern aesthetics.

Kolhapuri Chappals are made by Charmakar artisans, who pass down this skill from generation to generation. The characteristics of the Kolhapuri Chappals are each pair gone through 30 to 40 steps of hand cutting, stitching, tanning and polishing. These chappals are made purely by leather. No nails or any other metal materials are not used while making this chappals.

2. Statement of Problem:

Kolhapuri Chappal (Paytan) is very famous foot ware not only in Maharashtra but also famous in the nearby states like Karnataka, Goa, Hyderabad etc as well as in whole of the India. This Chappals are also demanded from the foreign countries. Due to the Kolhapuri Chappals the leather industry in Kolhapur, Sangli and Satara District in Maharashtra getting a boost.

The main aim of the present study is to focus on the how Kolhapuri Chappals (Paytans) become local to global, its impact on the employment generation and its contribution in the financial market.

3. Objectives of the Study:

- i. To know the domestic demand for Kolhapuri Chappal (Paytan).
- ii. To know the international demand for Kolhapuri Chappal (Paytan).
- iii. To know the impact on employment generation due to Kolhapuri Chappal (Paytan).
- iv. To know the challenges before Kolhapuri leather industry.

4. Research Methodology:

For this study the secondary data was collected from the various sources like books, research papers, internet etc.

Primary data was collected from some makers and seller from the Kolhapur as well as from neighbor cities like Kapashi and Lingnur.

5. Review of literature:

- i. This article reported by Basu S.K. titled with “Status of leather Industry in India” states regarding the Leather tanning sector per year production to be 2 billion sq. ft. Which is said to be 10% of leather requirements. Compared to other countries, India stands second in the production of leather goods and Leather Footwear. In Indian leather market approximately 1,950 million pairs i.e., 95% from total production are sold in domestic market itself. Whereas, leather goods exported from Indian market, contribute to total of 44.32% from this sector. It can be said as from the leather footwear sector, 54% of them comprise of Men’s’ goods including footwear, 37% of them are women leather goods and lastly 9% contribute towards Kid’s section. Indian Leather industry thus has a production capability of nearly 63 million pieces (annually) and stands out in the international market. Therefore, from this article it can be concluded that giving Kolhapuri Chappals a remarkable place in Indian Leather goods not only will encourage the local Artisans but will also provide them livelihood. This exploratory study will also revile about the importance of sustainable leather goods and can create a miracle in leather industry by experimenting in different Leather goods. (1) (Basu S. K., April- May 2011, PP.9)
- ii. (Athavale, March 2020) IJNRD2403330 International Journal of Novel Research and Development (www.ijnrd.org) d228 c228 © 2024 IJNRD | Volume 9, Issue 3 March 2024| ISSN: 2456-4184 | IJNRD.ORG The writers of the project, “Evolving an ICT Platform for a Traditional Industry Transforming into Entrepreneurs” have described about Indian Leather and Footwear Industry. The brief of this project was to tech artisans’ new technology and usage of new machinery to produce the Kolhapuri Chappals with various designs and marketing, as these are handmade products, under ICT (Information and Computer Technology) intervention. The project report also states that after implementing ICT the income of the artisans is seen increased and also the process of making chappals have gained speed. Thus, this report talks about how technology has evolved by changing the lives of the artisans, similarly if such more projects could take place for the artisans related to the Raw materials or giving them knowledge about the trends and also about the large market place of Vegan products, it will definitely create large amount of income for them as well as they will be a large part of the Indian Vegan Footwear Industry.
- iii. (B. Bowonder, S. Sadhulla and Akshay Jain, 2006) The report published by The Economic Times, talks about the major challenge that the Chamkars had to face was related to Beef Ban in Maharashtra. For the past decade, activists, educational institutes, politicians and administrators have been all trying to resuscitate this struggling sector, which has strived to grow out of its cottage industry roots. Kolhapur’s business isn’t driven by small units, instead, it is dozens of family-run operations within the city and a two- or three-hour drive that comprise this ecosystem. This lack of scale has led to their downfall since they don’t have the heft to upgrade their capabilities — either in terms of skill or tools of their trade. For the past five or six years, the business has been slowly sinking and thousands of crafts people are wondering when to flee this burning ship. Artisans don’t have the financial strength to deal with mounting losses, improve their skills and then consider expanding into related segments such as accessories. Reviewing the article on Beef ban it is now seen that the Kolhapuri Chappals are either made from Fake leather or original chappals can be made only by those artisans who have license to make them out of original leather (animal leather by these artisans is brought from some neighbouring states of Maharashtra, and no animal is killed to take their hide, that animal hide is used who are dead naturally and not killed.). The government yet again should think about various training programmes for these artisans giving them knowledge about upcoming industry trends to revive this traditional art.
- iv. An article related to Kolhapuri Chappals, formulated about how the artisans are having major challenges due to Covid-19 pandemic. Covid-19 has majorly affected many industries and forcing them to shut down, the traditional Kolhapuri Chappals industry is also on same way, yet there are very few of them practicing the actual traditional art. Many efforts have been put up by the artisans by keeping up with trends and catering the international market yet there is still a need to encourage them with conducting different programme. The report has mentioned that recently, Union Commerce and Industry

Minister Piyush Goyal said that export of Kolhapuri Chappals could fetch ₹7,500 crore. For instance, firms that manufacture the Kolhapuri Chappals could enter into agreements with five-star hotels whereby this footwear could be kept in the almira of the guestrooms. Customers could then try these out and buy them, should they like it. Such initiatives should be on larger scale as to encourage the local artisans and taking them into international market where they could present Indian handicrafts, with this Government should also allot some funds for the artisan's encouragement to stop the traditional art from vanishing.

6. Data Analysis:

In the 1970s, the Indian footwear found a new international fanbase: American hippies. Drawn to their handcrafted appeal, associated in the West with a sort of bohemian charm, Kolhapuris were packed into suitcases and carried across oceans. From there, they began to appear in boutiques and vintage stores across the US.

In 2019, Kolhapuri Chappals received a Geographical Indication (GI) tag, formally recognising their unique regional origin and traditional methods. This accreditation was as much about cultural preservation as it was about economics. Once seen as a symbol of elegance and tradition, Kolhapuris have struggled in the face of low-cost imitations, falling demand, and tightening environmental restrictions on leather tanning.

Despite these challenges, the sandals have shown remarkable staying power. While the Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce is now working to patent Kolhapuri Chappals to protect the design worldwide and prevent unauthorized use, their appearance on Prada's runway has had a short-term silver lining for Kolhapurimakers. Since the controversy, The Times of India reported the interest in Kolhapuris has surged, with online sales at an all-time high. Younger Indians are rediscovering the sandal's legacy – not as a relic but as a living symbol of their heritage.

6.1 Domestic Demand for Kolhapuri Chappals:

Kolhapur is well known for its local arts and Handicraft market. Kolhapuri chappals a specialty is manufactured by the local cobbler community and skilled people dedicated to this art and is famous throughout India and abroad. There are 15 co-operative societies of Kolhapuri chappals manufacturers in the district employing thousands of people directly or indirectly i.e., Artisans, dealers, raw material suppliers, helpers and others. The Kolhapuri chappals manufactured are of two major types 1) Export Variety 2) Fancy Variety. The total production of export variety and fancy Kolhapuri chappals is estimated to be crores annually. Within the city centrally located Shivaji Market has a concentration of 150 shops of which most exclusively deal with Kolhapuri chappals. The rest of the production of fancy variety is sold locally and rest in Mumbai, New Delhi, Ahmedabad, Bangalore and other commercial centers in the country through dealers and other retail outlets.

The market value was estimated around ₹15,000 crore and Kolhapur specific industry turnover was around ₹3,00 crore. Annual production figures vary, but significant volumes are produced, with some data suggesting around 6,00,000 pairs produced annually, with 30% export.

6.2 Global Demand for Kolhapuri Chappals:

Kolhapuri Chappals are mainly exported to China, Japan, France and Australia. From rural villages to luxury runways in Paris, Kolhapuri Chappals have proven that authentic craftsmanship, once empowered, can conquer the World. From the bustling lanes of Kolhapur to fashion ramps in Milan, Kolhapuri Chappals have made an extraordinary journey. Once seen as humble village footwear, they are now celebrated across continents as symbol of heritage, sustainability and timeless design.

In the 20th Century, Kolhapuri Chappals reached in Mumbai and Delhi markets through traders. From this market non-resident of India carried them abroad, making them a fashion statement in UK, USA and Middle East.

Today, exports spreads Twenty plus countries, from Europe to the Gulf, where Kolhapuri loved for their comfort + style fusion.

Top Ten Export Destinations for Kolhapuri Chappal
(shipments between Oct 2023 – Sep 2024)

Rank	Country	Export Shipments
1.	Mauritius	121
2.	United States	109
3.	Australia	32
4.	Nepal	21
5.	United Arab Emirates	16
6.	United Kingdom	15
7.	Monaco	13
8.	Canada	9
9.	Fiji	8
10	Japan	7

Together, these top 10 countries cover a significant share—approximately 34% + 31% + rest of all i.e. 35% Kolhapuri chappal shipments from India

Broader Export Context: All Leather Chappals

Total leather chappal shipments (all types) from India: 989 shipments between Oct 2023 – Sep 2024, by 52 exporters to 166 buyers

India leads global leather chappal exports with a staggering 14,340 shipments (likely including other footwear categories)

6.3 Employment Generation due to Kolhapuri Chappals industry (backward linkage only):

As per the report in 'The Hindu' dated June, 2025 in Maharashtra and Karnataka approximately 20,000 artisan families have been crafting these chappals by hand for generations.

6.4 Challenges in the Kolhapuri Chappal Industry:

- i. Fake Products: Fake and cheap products which are not qualitative are available in the market which may cause diminishing the faith of the public on the Kolhapuri Chappals.
- ii. Lack of Branding: Except few manufacturers, many manufacturers make the Kolhapuri Chappals and sale it as Kolhapuri without giving its own brand. Which may cause to lose the authenticity of the product.
- iii. Price Competition: As compared to the Kolhapuri Chappals other foot wears are very cheap. Therefore, people may buy these chappals occasionally.
- iv. Less availability of raw material: For Kolhapuri Chappals raw material required is leather. To fulfil the increasing demand, it is not easy to get the leather from market.
- v. Limited Global Reach: Most of the seller do not export directly due to lack of digital skills.

7. Conclusion:

Kolhapur is well known for its local arts and Handicraft market. Kolhapuri Chappals a specialty is manufactured by the local cobbler community and skilled people dedicated to this art and is famous throughout India and abroad. There are 15 co-operative societies of Kolhapuri Chappals manufacturers in the district employing thousands of people directly or indirectly i.e., Artisans, dealers, raw material suppliers, helpers and others. The Kolhapuri Chappals manufactured are of two major types 1) Export Variety 2) Fancy Variety. The total production of export variety and fancy Kolhapuri Chappals is estimated to be crores annually. Within the city centrally located Shivaji Market has a concentration of 150 shops of which most exclusively deal with Kolhapuri Chappals. The rest of the production of fancy variety is sold locally and rest in Mumbai, New Delhi, Ahmedabad, Bangalore and other commercial centers in the country through dealers and other retail outlets.

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**“KOLHAPURI CHALLALS ARE NOT JUST FOOTWEAR – THEY ARE INDIA’S GIFT TO THE WORLD”****References:**

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