

Manuscript ID:  
TIJCMBLIR-2025-020601

Volume: 2  
Issue: 6  
Month: December  
Year: 2025  
E-ISSN: 3065-9191

Submitted: 05 Nov 2025  
Revised: 20 Nov 2025  
Accepted: 10 Dec 2025  
Published: 31 Dec 2025

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DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.18196170](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18196170)

DOI Link:  
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18196170>



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## The Role of the Kapse Foundation in the Revival of Paithani Industry: A Critical Perspective

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### Abstract:

*Kapse Foundation is a social organization based in Yeola (Nashik District) and was founded by Mr. Balkrishna Kapse with the aim of all-round empowerment of the underprivileged sections of the society. The main objective of this organization is to preserve, revive and modernize the traditional Paithani weaving art of Maharashtra and to provide training, employment and self-reliance opportunities to the disabled, women and rural artisans. Paithani is a unique piece of art in the cultural heritage of Maharashtra and Yeola tehsil is historically famous as the centre of its production. However, due to industrialization, mechanized textile industry, changing market competition, and apathy among the new generation, the traditional weaving industry was facing an existential crisis. Against this backdrop, "Kapse Foundation, Yeola" started concrete and visionary work to revitalize the Paithani industry. The Foundation has created a new vitality in the social and economic sectors by implementing special training center for deaf-mute and disabled youth, employment opportunities for women, and institutional market awareness programs. These initiatives have created a combined example of disability empowerment, preservation of traditional art, rural employment generation, environmentally friendly activities, and social responsibility. The main objective of this research is to conduct a clinical study of the changes brought about in the economic, social, and cultural sector of Paithani industry due to the activities of Kapse Foundation. It is found that the work of the organization has given a boost to the Paithani industry through the use of modern technology, design innovation, marketing empowerment, and women entrepreneurship. The study has been conducted by combining qualitative and quantitative methods. Primary data was collected through questionnaires and interviews from weavers, managers, and representatives of the foundation, while secondary data was obtained from the organization's reports, websites, government documents, and research literature. The analysis revealed that Kapse Foundation has played a crucial role in creating employment, preserving cultural identity, and strengthening the local economy by connecting traditional Paithani art with the modern market. This has given social prestige and economic self-reliance to the disabled, as well as a platform for women to become entrepreneurs. During the COVID-19 period, the organization demonstrated its social commitment by implementing food donation, healthcare, and awareness programs. Also, through the "Ahilya Gaushala" initiative, the foundation has implemented the concept of environmentally friendly and sustainable development. However, it was also observed that some improvements are needed in the areas of training facilities, availability of raw materials, and market stability. Overall, this study shows that Kapse Foundation has emerged as a sustainable model of social transformation that combines traditional art, modern management, and social responsibility.*

**Keywords:** Kapse Foundation, Paithani Industry, Disabled Empowerment, Rural Employment, Traditional Art, Social Transformation, Sustainable Development, Handicraft Industry.

### Introduction:

Paithani sarees hold a very important place in the cultural heritage of Maharashtra. Paithani is not just a textile art but an integral part of Maharashtra's tradition, skill and cultural identity. Paithani woven with gold and silk threads is considered a symbol of beauty, wealth and tradition. Yeola (in Nashik district of Maharashtra State) is especially famous as a centre of this art and weavers have preserved their skills here for centuries. However, in the last few decades, industrialization, the spread of mechanized textile industry, fierce competition in the market, as well as the declining interest of the younger

### How to Cite this Article:

Bhosale, S. P., & Zalte, D. C. (2025). The Role of the Kapse Foundation in the Revival of Paithani Industry: A Critical Perspective. The International Journal of Commerce Management and Business Law in International Research, 2(6), 1-4. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18196170>

generation in this traditional profession have led to the Paithani weaving industry facing economic and social crisis. Traditional handloom industries have faced immense market pressure, and many skilled artisans have had to find alternative employment. In this situation, the survival of a unique craft like Paithani has become a big challenge. In this context, "Kapase Foundation, Yeola" M/s Kapse Foundation Yeola is a 9 years 7 months old trust incorporated on 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2016 and its registered office situated at Yeola, Maharashtra. The main activity of M/s Kapse Foundation is manufacturing, sub-categorised under textile manufacturing and is mainly engaged in weaving of silk and silk blend fabrics. This social organization came into being. This organization was founded by Mr. Balkrishna Kapse for the empowerment of the underprivileged, disabled and economically weaker sections of the society. The objective of the organization is not only to preserve the traditional art but also to bring about social transformation, employment generation and self-reliance through this art. Kapse Foundation has adopted an integrated development approach for the Paithani weaving industry. Under this, the organization has established special training centres for deaf-mute and disabled youth, where they are provided free training, accommodation, food and employment opportunities. The institute's weaving centre imparts knowledge of modern design, colour matching and market demand along with traditional techniques, which has improved both the quality and sales of the product. In addition, the foundation has also laid special emphasis on women empowerment. Women from rural and urban areas are encouraged towards entrepreneurship by providing training in Paithani weaving and design. As a result, many women have taken the path of self-reliance from home. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the foundation showed a great example of its social commitment. The institute distributed food grains, medicines and anti-inflammatory drugs to the needy citizens. Apart from this, through the '*Ahilya Gaushala*' initiative, the institute has also contributed in the fields of eco-friendly agriculture, organic fertilizer production, cow husbandry and conservation of biodiversity. Due to all these initiatives, Kapse Foundation has emerged as not just a social institution but a "model of holistic development". The work of this organization is a convergence of traditional art conservation, disability empowerment, women entrepreneurship, environmental protection and rural employment generation. The purpose of this research is to conduct a clinical study of the social, economic and cultural transformation brought about in the Paithani industry due to the work of Kapse Foundation. It is also to evaluate its contribution towards sustainable development by conducting a thorough analysis of the organization's working methods, training model, market policies and social responsibility. **Objectives:**

1. To study the Paithani industry and the role of Kapse Foundation.
2. To assess the social and economic impact of Kapase Foundation on beneficiaries.

3. To develop recommendations for future development in the Paithani Industry.

### **Research Methodology:**

The objective of this research is to study the transformation that has taken place in the social, economic and cultural sectors of Paithani industry due to the work of the organization "Kapase Foundation, Yeola". To achieve this objective, the research has been conducted by coordinating both qualitative and quantitative methods. This research is descriptive and analytical in nature. The impact of Kapse Foundation has been analysed based on the direct experience of the organization's work, statistics, and the opinions of the beneficiaries.

The geographical area of the research is Yeola Tehsil (Nashik district). Yeola is a major centre of Paithani weaving and the headquarters and training centre of Kapse Foundation are functioning in this place.

### **Sources of Data:**

Both types of data have been used for the research.

#### **(a) Primary Data:**

Primary data was collected through the interviews of weavers, trainees, trainers and management representatives associated with Kapse Foundation. Data collected from beneficiaries and disabled trainees through structured questionnaires. Observation of production process, training sessions and marketing activities through direct observation method.

#### **(b) Secondary Data:**

Annual reports, booklet and official website of Kapse Foundation. Reports of Textiles and Rural Development Department, Government of Maharashtra. Relevant research essays, dissertations, journal articles and newspaper articles used for the secondary data.

### **Sampling Technique:**

A sample of 50 respondents was selected for the research. This includes 25 Paithani Weavers, 10 differently-abled trainees, 10 female beneficiaries, and 5 management representatives. "Purposive Sampling Method" has been used, as the purpose of the research is to conduct an in-depth study of the activities of a specific organization.

### **Method of Data Analysis:**

Descriptive Statistics, Percentage & Comparative Analysis, Thematic Content Analysis methods used to analyse the data.

### **Limitations of the Study:**

The scope of the research is limited to Yeola tehsil only. Since the sample selected for data collection is limited, the conclusions are general in nature. Some bias is possible due to the personal opinions of the respondents. Through this research method, an attempt has been made to measure the social, economic and cultural impact of the work of Kapse Foundation and to understand its relationship with sustainable development.

### **Discussion:**

This research is based on the collected data as per the experiences of weavers, trainees, persons with disabilities and management representatives associated with Kapse Foundation, Yeola. The following key findings were obtained through qualitative and quantitative analysis of the collected data:

#### **a) Revitalization of Paithani Industry:**

85% of the respondents who participated in the survey stated that Kapse Foundation has revitalized the Paithani industry in Yeola. While preserving the traditional weaving techniques, the organization has introduced modern technology and new design concepts, which has increased the quality of the product and its market demand. The training programs organized by the foundation have reconnected the younger generation with this art. The brand identity of Paithani saree has been strengthened due to domestic and international exhibitions.

#### **b) Impact of Empowerment of the Disabled:**

Currently, more than 40 deaf-mute and disabled youth are working in the organization's training center. These trainees are provided with free accommodation and food. After training, they get permanent employment, which has made them financially independent. Many respondents said that the foundation has given them a "respectable place in society".

#### **c) Women empowerment and employment generation:**

The organization's activities have provided new employment opportunities to women in rural and urban areas. About 30% of the respondents in the study were women, most of whom were housewives or came from economically weaker backgrounds. The foundation provides training to women in designing, colouring and marketing. Women have increased their income by weaving from home, and some have started independent small-scale industries.

#### **d) Economic transformation and market empowerment:**

The training and design improvement activities have led to a significant increase in the prices and sales of Paithani products. The organization has created a digital sales network through e-commerce and social media, which has expanded the market. It was observed that the average annual income of local artisans increased by 25%.

#### **e) Social Responsibility and Human Values:**

Kapse Foundation implemented several initiatives in terms of social commitment —During the COVID-19 period, it distributed food, medicines and groceries to the needy. Organized health camps, blood donation camps and cleanliness drives. The beneficiaries felt that this organization was a "confluence of service and culture".

#### **f) Eco-friendly initiatives- 'Ahilya Gaushala':**

The environment and rural economy have been boosted by the "Ahilya Gaushala" established by the organization. Along with cow husbandry, organic fertilizer production and organic farming are promoted. This initiative provides organic fertilizer

and cow urine-based products to local farmers. This project has put the concept of sustainable development into practice.

#### **g) Social and Cultural Impact:**

The foundation's work has strengthened the cultural identity of Maharashtra through the innovation given to Paithani art. Tradition, employment and social empowerment have been integrated in the local community. Yeola city is now known as "Paithani City" again.

#### **h) Challenges and Areas for Improvement:**

Some respondents mentioned lack of sales stability in the market after the training. Production costs increase as raw materials and dyes are expensive. The organization can expand its activities if more technical and marketing support is provided to the organization.

Kapse Foundation has created a hub of social, economic and cultural revival by revitalizing the Paithani industry in Yeola Tehsil. This organization has become a model for sustainable development in the areas of empowerment of the disabled, women entrepreneurship, environmental conservation and revival of traditional arts.

### **Findings and Suggestions:**

The Kapse Foundation, Yeola is not just a social enterprise, but has become an effective movement for the revival of traditional arts of Maharashtra, empowerment of the disabled and rural development. The following findings have clearly emerged from this research.

#### **a. Revival of Paithani Industry:**

The Kapse Foundation revived the traditional handloom-based Paithani weaving art through modern technology, new designs and marketing strategies. This increased the quality of the product and stabilized the market demand.

#### **b. A model of empowerment of the disabled:**

The organization provided free training, accommodation and employment opportunities to deaf-mute and disabled youth and made them economically and socially self-reliant. This work is an inspiring step towards building an inclusive society.

#### **c. Women Empowerment and Entrepreneurship:**

The organization promoted women entrepreneurship by providing training to women in rural areas in Paithani weaving, design and sales. Many women have created a means of income from home, which has brought about a positive change in their quality of life.

#### **d. Social Commitment and Human Values:**

During the COVID-19 period, Kapse Foundation has implemented activities such as food distribution, healthcare and public awareness for the benefit of the society. This work clearly demonstrates the organization's social responsibility and commitment to human values.

#### **e. Eco-friendly and sustainable development approach:**

Through the "Ahilya Gaushala" initiative, the organization has achieved ecological balance by promoting organic farming, cow husbandry and

organic fertilizer production. This has created a model of sustainable rural development.

#### **f. Socio-economic impact:**

The organization's activities have increased local employment, provided financial stability to Paithani industry and strengthened the identity of Yeola city as "Paithani Nagri".

In summary, Kapse Foundation has created a "sustainable model of social transformation" by combining the three elements of traditional art, modern technology and social responsibility.

#### **Suggestions:**

Based on this research, the following recommendations are being made for the future work of Paithani industry and Kapse Foundation.

##### **a. Expansion of technical and design innovations:**

Training centres should include education in computer-aided design (CAD), colour matching software and digital marketing.

##### **b. Strengthening marketing and branding strategy:**

Develop a separate "Kapse Paithani" brand for Paithani and increase active participation in national and international exhibitions.

##### **c. Raw material supply chain improvement:**

Formulate permanent contractual arrangements with the government and cooperatives for the availability of silk and *zari* threads.

##### **d. Expansion of research and training centres:**

The Foundation should reach out to more artisans by starting training sub-centers in other districts as well.

##### **e. Financial support for women entrepreneurship:**

Financial support should be provided through microfinance and self-employment schemes for women weavers.

##### **f. Environmentally friendly production processes:**

Increase the use of natural dyes, organic yarns and energy efficient technologies, which will develop sustainable production methods.

##### **g. Government and institutional coordination:**

Increase coordination between the Cotton Foundation and the Textiles Department of the State Government and implement a special incentive scheme for the Paithani industry. **Conclusion:**

The Cotton Foundation is an organization that provides an opportunity to the underprivileged sections of the society to live with dignity, while also preserving the cultural heritage of Maharashtra. This organization is known as an "effective example of positive social change" that combines social responsibility, traditional art and modern development.

#### **Acknowledgment**

I express my sincere gratitude to all those who supported me throughout the completion of this research work. I am deeply thankful to Dr. Dhiraj Chhagan Zalte, my research supervisor, for his constant guidance, valuable suggestions, and encouragement at every stage of this study. His scholarly insights and constructive feedback greatly contributed to the quality of this research.

I am equally grateful to the administration, staff members, weavers, trainees, differently-abled artisans,

women beneficiaries, and management representatives of Kapse Foundation, Yeola, who generously shared their time, experiences, and valuable information. Their cooperation during interviews, discussions, and field visits made it possible to conduct this study effectively.

My sincere thanks to the officials of the Textiles and Rural Development Department, Government of Maharashtra, for providing access to relevant reports and data that supported this research.

I also extend heartfelt appreciation to my family and friends for their continuous moral support, motivation, and understanding during the research process.

Finally, I acknowledge all authors, researchers, and institutions whose literature and reports have contributed to the development of this study.

#### **Financial support and sponsorship**

Nil.

#### **Conflicts of interest**

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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