

SHIVPRIYA TEXCHEM · KNOWLEDGE SERIES

Solapur. Terry towels and the bedsheet trade.

Solapur built a national business out of two products — jacquard bedsheets and terry towelling — and secured a GI tag to protect one of them. It is a specialist cluster in a country of generalists.

GI tag

Solapur Chaddar and Solapur Terry Towel are both protected

~25,000

looms estimated across the cluster

Jacquard

the weaving capability the town is built around



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CHAPTER 01

Two products, done properly

Solapur is unusual among Indian textile towns in having a narrow product focus. It makes bedsheets and towels, and it has made them for long enough to have institutional depth in both.

PRODUCT	NOTES
Solapur Chaddar	Jacquard-woven cotton bedsheets with a GI tag; the town's signature product
Terry towel	Towelling in a range of qualities, also GI protected
Bath and kitchen linen	Made-ups built on the towel base
Furnishing fabric	Jacquard capability extended into upholstery and furnishing
Grey and processed fabric	Supporting output alongside the specialist products
Handloom	A surviving handloom segment producing traditional qualities

What a GI tag actually does. A Geographical Indication protects the **name**, not the technique. It stops a producer elsewhere calling their product a Solapur Chaddar, and it gives the cluster a marketing asset — but it does not by itself guarantee quality or prevent competition.

CHAPTER 02

How a towel is actually made

Terry towelling is the cluster's technically demanding product. Its quality is decided by a small number of construction variables that buyers routinely ignore in favour of GSM alone.



Terry needs two separate warp beams — the ground warp and the pile warp

01 Two warp beams

A tight ground warp and a slack pile warp. The difference in tension creates the loops.

02 Pile ratio

The ratio of pile warp length to ground warp length. This is the number that matters most.

03 Loop density

Loops per unit area. Together with pile height this decides absorbency and feel.

04 Yarn choice

Rotor yarn for pile bulk and absorbency; ring yarn where a softer premium feel is wanted.

05 Finishing matters

Softeners improve handle and can reduce absorbency — the classic terry trade-off.

GSM tells you what a towel weighs. Pile ratio tells you whether it works.

CHAPTER 03

Leading names across the cluster

Solapur's base is a large number of small and medium units, with a smaller number of established names in the organised towel and made-up trade.

TERRY TOWEL

Towelling and bath linen.

01 Established towel units

Organised terry weaving and made-up manufacture

02 Job-work weavers

Terry capacity sold to traders and brands

03 Made-up converters

Cutting, hemming and packing of towel products

04 Export-facing units

Towel manufacture for institutional and export buyers

05 Hotel linen suppliers

Institutional towel and linen supply

BEDSHEETS & CHADDAR

The GI-protected signature product.

01 Chaddar weaving units

Jacquard bedsheet manufacture

02 GI-registered producers

Units authorised to use the Solapur Chaddar mark

03 Handloom co-operatives

Traditional handloom chaddar producers

04 Jacquard specialists

Design and jacquard weaving capability

05 Bedsheet traders

Distribution into the national market

YARN & PREPARATION

Inputs into the cluster.

01 Local spinning mills

Cotton yarn for towel and sheet weaving

02 Merchant yarn traders

Sourcing yarn from Tamil Nadu and Gujarat

03 Rotor yarn suppliers

Bulk yarn for terry pile

04 Sizing units

Warp preparation for the weaving base

05 Dyed yarn suppliers

Colour yarn for jacquard designs

CHAPTER 04

How the trade is organised

Solapur combines a co-operative and small-proprietor base with a growing organised segment serving institutional and export buyers.

Small units dominate

A large number of small weaving and made-up units, many family run.

Traders distribute

National distribution largely handled by traders rather than by the manufacturers.

Institutional demand

Hotels, hospitals and government supply are a significant and steady segment.

Export is smaller

Export presence exists but is modest against Panipat and the Gujarat towel belt.



Solapur, Maharashtra - Photograph: Jadhavv91 — CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

CHAPTER 05

Who Solapur competes against

Solapur's two products are both contested by larger, better-capitalised clusters. Understanding that competitive position explains most of the town's current strategy.

PRODUCT	MAIN COMPETITION	SOLAPUR'S POSITION
Terry towel	Gujarat towel belt, Panipat	Smaller scale; competes on established craft and mid-market quality
Bedsheets	Panipat, Erode, Karur	GI protection and jacquard design capability as differentiators
Institutional linen	National organised suppliers	Competitive on price and reliability for regional demand
Export made-ups	Karur, Panipat, Gujarat	Underweight; scale and compliance are the constraints

The scale problem. Solapur's competitors have built very large integrated towel and made-up plants. Solapur's strength is **design depth and craft continuity**, which serves the mid-market well but does not win large export contracts on cost.

CHAPTER 06

What limits the cluster

Solapur faces the standard constraints of a small specialist cluster, plus one that is specific to its geography.

- **Water scarcity.** Solapur is in a drought-prone belt, and towel processing is water intensive.
- **Scale.** Units are small relative to competing towel clusters, limiting export competitiveness.
- **Power cost.** As across Maharashtra, tariff is a persistent competitive disadvantage.
- **Ageing looms.** A significant plain-loom base limits width and productivity.
- **Labour.** Skilled jacquard and terry weaving labour is ageing and hard to replace.
- **Market access.** Distribution through traders limits margin capture and brand building.

CHAPTER 07

What is shifting

The cluster's direction is toward better-finished products, institutional supply and using the GI as a genuine commercial asset rather than a certificate.

01 GI commercialisation

Efforts to make the Solapur Chaddar mark actually mean something in the market.

03 Made-up integration

Moving from selling fabric to selling finished, packed products.

05 Design investment

Jacquard design capability as the differentiator against commodity competition.

02 Institutional supply

Growing focus on hotel, hospital and government linen contracts.

04 Modernisation

Slow conversion to shuttleless and wider looms for the towel segment.

06 Water management

Recycling and treatment investment forced by regional scarcity.

CHAPTER 08

Buying from Solapur

Solapur suits buyers who want mid-market towel and bedsheet product with design depth, at moderate volumes.

01 Specify pile ratio, not just GSM

For towels this is the number that determines absorbency and perceived quality.

03 Confirm GI authorisation

If you are buying on the Solapur Chaddar name, confirm the producer is registered to use it.

05 Match volumes to the unit

Units are small. Large orders need to be spread or placed with the organised segment.

02 Test absorbency

Run a sink test on the finished product. Softener over-application is the usual culprit.

04 Check the yarn

Rotor pile yarn for absorbency and bulk; specify it rather than leaving it to the weaver.

06 Verify shrinkage

Terry and cotton sheeting both shrink. Get a tested figure before bulk.

How Shivpriya reads it. Solapur is a **design and craft cluster before it is a volume one**. For mid-market towel and jacquard bedsheet programmes it offers depth that larger commodity plants do not — provided your volumes fit the unit sizes here.

IN CLOSING

Two products. One protected name.

Solapur is a narrow, deep cluster in a country of broad, shallow ones, and its terry and jacquard capability is genuinely distinctive. If you are sourcing towels or jacquard bedsheets, talk to us — and specify pile ratio before you specify GSM.

TALK TO US

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