

A'bad gives herbal hues to Levi's

Chitra Unnithan | TNN

Ahmedabad: Until Europe invented chemical dyes for textiles, indigo from the Sarkhej farms near Ahmedabad lent colour to most fabrics woven in the west. Sarkhej indigo was a valuable export from India in the 15th century.

Centuries later, as the wheel turns a full circle — with the western markets going big on eco-friendly textiles — Gujarat's prominence in herbal dyeing is being rediscovered by leading international jeans brands.

Levi's has started sourcing organic fabric from an Ahmedabad-based firm, Aura Herbal Textiles, for its herbal T-shirts. Aura Herbal was incubated at Indian Institute of Management-Ahmedabad's Centre for Inno-

preneurship.

"We are working with Levi's to provide organic material for their herbal T-shirts. The company is likely to launch the product in Europe and US this year. Fabrics are manufactured without involving chemicals at any step," says Arun Baid, who started the company in 2002 with wife Sonal.

When contacted, Levi's, however, refused to comment on the development.

introduce herbal undergarments in India this year besides foraying into retail business. "In conventional dyeing, around 8,000 chemicals are used to dye fabric.

Some chemicals may affect skin adversely. But, we aim to add eco-friendly products not just to earn money but also to prevent global warming and pollution related to textiles," says Baid, who already has over 500 clients in Europe, US, Australia and Asia besides being associated with

the Taj Spa Hotels supplying entire bath range, spa collection and home textiles.

Aura set up its plant in Ahmedabad with seed funding from GVFL Limited, a state government-promoted venture capital fund. The company sources herbs and other raw materials through made-to-order contracts with farmers in Madhya Pradesh and parts of South India.

"Our target turnover is Rs 4 crore this year and we aim to double it over the next couple of years," says Baid, who has plans to enter the capital market in a few years' time.

The company is certified by Global Organic Textile Standard, a leading processing standard for textiles made from organic fibres worldwide and has a US and India patent for herbal dyeing.

