



Status of Handloom Industry in Rajasthan (with Special Reference to Bikaner)

Dr. Rajni Sharma

Associate Professor in Economics, Government M.S.College for Women, Bikaner, Rajasthan, India

Small and cottage industries occupy a unique place in Indian Economy. As late Jawahar Lal Nehru said “small industry can help considerably in the economic development of the nation. Unemployment presents the most difficult problem today and development of village industries could certainly play a prominent role in solving it.”

The importance of cottage and small industry was realized by the government after independence. The effect of Gandhian philosophy regarding cottage and small industry received great support. The population pressure is tremendously high on agriculture, keeping this view in mind, the development of cottage and small scale industries is the only solution of under employment.

Among various cottage and small-scale industries, handlooms enjoy the pride of place. Handloom craft is a small industry in terms of tools and technology but a vast industry in terms of its employment potential. As the agriculture sector is already overburdened, this industry can absorb the excessity of rural labour force. Till the 19th century when there were no machines for the production of cloth, the handloom industry was the sole supplier of the cloth for the entire need of the nation. In modern era when modern and highly computerized textile industries are established, it still occupies a strategic position in India's socio-economic set up. Notwithstanding the fact that the handloom is seemingly an outdated tool for cloth production in this nuclear age, most people still look at it as a symbol of glorious past of the entire human race. The handloom products are not mere pieces of decoration but also a source of livelihood of several millions of artisans and their families, taking into account the importance of the industry, this research paper throws a light upon the present status of the industry in Bikaner, Rajasthan.

The survey aimed at studying the working and living conditions of workers employed in handloom sector in Bikaner. To fulfill the objectives, field visits and personal interviews are taken with weavers, so the data were collected from primary as well as the secondary sources

WORKING PROCEDURE

The whole process is divided into two parts mainly:-

1. Spinning
2. Weaving

In handloom industry, yarn is the chief raw material, this may be either cotton yarn to prepare cotton products or the woolen yarn to produce woolen products. During survey it is found that although there are samities and bunker Sangh for providing the raw materials but due to paucity and mismanagement of funds, major part of raw material is provided by the private owner. Now samities/Bunkar sangh provide only marketing facilities to the weavers.

SPINNING

In handloom sector all the weavers and spinners belong to economically weaker sections of the society. Most of them are SC and ST- These casts are Meghwal, meena, kumhar, Kumawat, khati and Muslims etc. during survey this is found that spinning is the family occupation. Mostly women and children are engaged in spinning. Younger one learns the art from their senior family members. Only few of them get training through panchayat samiti. The produce is largely used for weaving cloth for domestic use. literacy among women is very low in villages of Bikaner. The women plays an important role in handloom as she prepares yarn and performs all the steps that finally put the yarn on the loom for the weaver to start the weaving process. Spinning charges are very low.



WEAVING

In the study area weaving is of two types-

1. cotton weaving- woven with cotton yarn to make khes, loyee, bedsheets, towels and cotton dhoti etc.

2. Woolen weaving- woven with woolen yarn to make woolen carpets, blankets, namdas and shawls etc.

Bikaner has its own importance from the viewpoint of woolen handlooms like woolen carpets, namdas etc. that are exported to the foreign countries. They reflect the vigour and vitality of the artistic traditions of the district. Their simple folk art, bold colour scheme and attracted designs invest these fabrics with an unsophisticated grace.

These weavers do weaving for private entrepreneur or samities, so they do not face the marketing problems. Private owners/samities provide raw material to weavers in lump-sum amount on their credit ability. The task of spinning is performed by women, the weaving and sitting at the looms absolutely men's job. At least two weavers are needed at loom. Majority of weavers are illiterate males and weaving has been a traditional profession for them.

Despite the loan and subsidy provision from the government on looms and kargha, the weavers do not avail this facility due to ignorance, low repaying capacity and corruption.

WAGES

There are differentiated rates of wages in cotton and woolen weaving. The wages depends on 'counts', thickness and quality of the product. The wages varied from Rs.5.00 for gauze cloth to Rs.85 for Marino Blanket which is meager amount because it includes wages for the whole process of weaving i.e.-to bring raw material, spinning, weaving etc. these processes engage at least six to seven family members. The wage is divided among these members. Hence an individual gets a nominal amount that is insufficient to fulfill the basic requirements.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The survey indicates that the handloom sector in Bikaner district is in crisis. Most of the handloom units are closed due to close competition with power looms.

The handloom cluster is now looking for target market to cater to. With the decline in royal patronage the weavers have lost the market for exclusive hand-knotted carpets / galichas in retail market. The consumers have also shifted from patronizing power loom products in comparison to handloom products due to their low price range.

Carpet weaving is also facing competition with artificial fibre made carpets. The yarns are required in more quantity for meeting fast changing demands of the consumer, hence they cannot rely on handspun yarns which is produced in less quantity as well as is more expensive than the mill spun yarns.

Due to unawareness of latest market trends, weavers are still doing traditional designs that seems outdated in this world of fashion'. with the globalizing economy wherein the consumer's requirements are changing at a greater speed, they are unable to map the trends and requirements.

Due to low wages and irregular availability of job work most of the weavers are from handloom weaving. The most stunning factor is that they are converting themselves into construction labourers to satisfy their basic needs.

SUGGESTIONS

The government should encourage this industry by evolving new techniques, by providing marketing facilities to save the weavers from the clutches of intermediators.

To protect the sector, some type of production should be kept reserved for hand spinning and weaving to avoid the unhealthy competition with power looms.

Government should provide subsidy on purchasing of raw material rather than providing it through karghaghar etc. as weavers are not capable to purchase expensive raw material from open market

If handloom industry survives, there will be ample job opportunities in villages. This will help the youth to get job in their natural environment rather than to go to urban areas. This will also check the problems of Urbanization to some extent.

So it should, however be our endeavor to give the handloom industry its right place because handloom fabrics serves as standing monuments of our culture, art and civilization and wherever they go they act as our 'cultural ambassadors'. There is an emergent need of today's consumer to understand that handloom craft is a slow process and is unique in itself, it has its own identity and to support such craftsmen the craft has to be respected and identified for its uniqueness. Also the weavers have to keep their indigenous craft alive by passing it on to their generations and documenting it for further sustainable practices.



REFERENCES

- 1.Saraf, D. N. (1985). Indian Crafts Development and Potentials, New Delhi, Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 158-160
- 2.Singh,vijay veer(1991), status of handloom industry in India,rajasthan economic journals.p 75
- 3.over view of the trends in handloom market (1995),quarterly economic journal
- 4.Gulati,H.N.(1998), Handlooms,KhadiGramodyog
5. Nambiar,ACK, Development of Handloom Industry: a field view International Journal of Development planning Literature p 113-124.