

## **Handicraft Sector: The Comforting Sector of Employment Review**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

The employment is a requisite if one wants to have a normal life, decent meals and a place to stay; it socializes the people and gives them some survival and esteem feeling in the society. Besides that Employment boosts personal well fear, morale integrity and self confidence. In India economy is diverse where employees are employed in agriculture, handicraft, a wide range of modern industries, and a multitude of services sectors. Despite of having multitude sectors of employment, agriculture sectors so far is the leading sectors of job provider and facilitator of basic essential for the survival of life. The handicraft sector is one of the prominent allied sector of agriculture and important sources of employment in India, which forms second leading source of employment in most of the under-developed as well as developing countries. However, providing mere employment is not enough in today's competitive and demand driven market. Satisfying the existing employees and motivating new entries is the strategy of surviving. In this paper we will try to explain the employment importance of the handicraft sector and the economy value of handicrafts for the individual and for the national economy.

**Keywords:** Indian handicraft sector, Employment, Importance of Indian handicrafts, Job problems

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### **INTRODUCTION**

India is a diverse economy encompasses of agriculture, handicraft, a wide range of modern industries, and a multitude of services sectors, categorized under private and public sectors. Unfortunately, neither the public nor the private sector is able to provide enough jobs for the expanding labor force in India and in other developing nations. Employment is the backbone of development and failure of providing meaningful employment is the catastrophic development failure of a country. In India despite of having multitude sectors of employment, agriculture sectors so far is the leading sectors of job provider and facilitator of basic essential for the survival of life. However, the allied sectors of agriculture like Handicraft,

Handloom sector are also prominent source of employment in developing countries as well as in under-developed countries especially in India. These allied sectors of agriculture are categorized under informal sector of economy in India and the workers working in agriculture and its allied sectors fall under the brand name informal workers (International Labor Organization [ILO], 2012).

The informal sector or unorganized sector provides jobs to the rural as well as to urban people since the time immemorial especially handicrafts which has provided income to people since when there was no other option of income. The handicraft art of came to us through lot of complications and adversities and with the

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progress of time its definition has changed to accommodate the demands of market. Until 20<sup>th</sup> century all activities except fine arts were considered handicrafts and attracted only secondary attention in society but the scenario changed since the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century many countries came forward for the promotion and protection of handicraft sector. Handicrafts can be defined as products which are produced either completely by hand or with the help of tools. It is specified that handicrafts are part of a much larger home accessory market, which includes handcrafted, semi-handcrafted, and machine-made goods. Mechanical tools may be used as long as the direct manual contribution of the artisan remains the most substantial component of the finished product (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization/ Information Technology Community (UNESCO/ITC).

The Indian handicrafts industry is highly labor intensive, cottage based and decentralized. The sector is an important and integral aspect of village and cottage industries, which is spread all over the country from east to west and from north to south mostly manufacturing units are located in villages and small towns. The rural India is almost perfectly agriculture based and a small part of the rural Indian population is engaged in small industries like handlooms, handicrafts, and other traditional produce. Indian handicraft items range from wooden stone, metal, glass, bamboo, cane, clay, terracotta ceramics, and textiles. The most popular items in Indian handicrafts are *brass-ware*, pen holder, vases, candle stand, Christmas items, ceramic pots, carpets and other products of paper. Various states of India such as Manipur, Tripura, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Kashmir, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala are popular for its handicraft collection. Each State offers a wide range of handicrafts; with its own identity and the handicraft items represent quality of craftsmanship from the respective states (Sheikh, 2012). However, due to the rising demand of machine made goods, extinction of craftsmanship and government negligence unfortunately leads these traditional industries under threat of sleep or decline (Din, Mir and Bhushan, 2014).

The gamut of the sector lies in the local availability of raw material, low capital

investment and flexibility of working time and sector certainly yields a high ratio of value addition from a low investment. Despite of multi-benefits of the sector, employment is one of the exceptional contributions for the development of nation as well as the development of individuals itself. The people who were engaged directly or indirectly in this sector were 65.72 lakh in 2005-06 to 76.17 lakh in 2010-11. Out of 74.17 lakh, 24.7% are SC, 2.3% are ST and 47.4% are female i.e. around 17.92 are SC, 3.10 are ST and 35.15 lakh are females (Planning Commission, 2012). The sector with other small scale industries has shown double digit growth from last ten years which is not seen in most of the hard sell players of the economy, (Rathod, 2007). Handicrafts of Indian has been exhibiting a striking export performance from last few decades and have very high potential for export and foreign exchange earnings for the country (Ghouse, 2012).

#### Literature Review

No doubt handicrafts are unique expressions of a particular culture or community through local craftsmanship and materials. But with an increased market and modern concept of globalization, the products are becoming more and more commoditized and artisans find their products competing with goods from all over the world and the goods made up of machines. It is no longer possible to look at traditional artisan communities and their products in isolation from global market trends and competition so the modern trends needed to be introduced in such art and craftsmanship otherwise this art is getting diminished and may come to end in near future. The best way to protect this important sector of the economy and cultural expression is to find the problems associated with it and come with the innovative techniques to solve that problem. The below literature gives the brief view about the importance of this sector and the development associated to it, it is actually the work previously done for the necessary improvement of this sector.

(Herald, 1992) elaborated in his study that in many developing nations, handicraft production is a major form of employment and in some countries it constitutes a significant part domestic as well as of the export economy. More

specifically, artisans have been identified as the second largest sector of rural employment after agriculture not only in India but also in many countries of the world. Further in his study he has observed that machine made craft is forecasted as an escalating business units as against to handicraft products is unlikely to decline significantly in future.

(Morris, Walter and Turok, 1996) concluded that it is due to negligible start-up capital, flexible work hours, the ability to work at home and freedom to manage one's own business, handicraft production has crosses all sectors of the modern global economy through preindustrial to industrial and post-industrial regime. Further in the study they say that artisan production has flourished because handicraft products offer distinct advantages such as income for those who have limited access to the cash economy and more importantly, unlike many other forms of labor, handicraft artisan can avail the benefit of degree of labor independence.

(Ganesamurthy, 1998) has highlighted the importance of rural industrialization especially handicrafts industry. *Murthy* says in his study that handicraft provides ancillary income, helps to distribute the workforce, improves the life standard of working section and increases the use of local raw material with that it promotes creative talent of the artisans.

(Iyler, 1999) emphasized that the handicraft is one of the important portions of cottage industries and such industries are dominated by underprivileged labor class, which provides more employment to the backward classes of the population and the extremely low income of the people associated with this sector. In the study author further says that the problem faced by the handicraft industry is raw material which is in scarcity due to the miss management of the resources.

(Grag and Dhingra, 2000) In his study mentioned that the sector of handicraft is largely environment-friendly and it needs not as much of energy for the consumption and consciousness on these issues, this is the sector where fair trading practices are possible and its growth is fast as compared to other sects of the economy. All those factors make the sector powerful player of the country's economy and significant tool for tackling unemployment.

(Yavari and Nourmah, 2001) has discussed that handicraft sector is an ultimate source of rural, urban as well as tribal areas. For their all round development, improvement in handicraft can result in generating greater jobs and the better income for such kind. Further, they stated that other consequences of better handicraft industry is, it can reduce the migration from rural to urban cities as proven in earlier, it provide the fringe income for rural and tribal people and with the improvement in respect of income it automatically leads towards will be social equilibrium, ethnic heritage and national identity preservation.

(Government of India, 2002) The Ministry of Tourism and Culture, has decided to carry out a Survey of Foreign Tourists for the "Expenses which they expend on Handicrafts in India. The main objective of the survey was to find out how much the visiting foreign tourists spend on handicrafts for India. The field level survey was launched by NPC during Sept. – Oct., 2002 in six major cities of India. It was found that the places where foreign tourists reach its handicrafts become important aspect for their visit. Further surveying body recommended that if country needs to increase its handicraft markets it must concentrate on tourism industry for its boost.

(Methew, 2004) the study of author looks the topic in a different way; he says that it is the government of any nation who needs to provide attention towards strong Small and Medium Enterprises, which is the important commitment of any nation towards international bodies for the up-lifting of a privileged group. He further says the policy of the nation towards such enterprises must be such that it provides mechanism by which the demography of small and medium enterprise sector itself becomes a matter of public security.

(Subrahmanyabala, 2004) in his study made an important point that the focus of every nation especially India must be the collaboration of ancient art with the modern technology and strengthening of financial infrastructure support in order to make the Small and medium industry grow internationally. This leads in generating employment for the nation with that it would be a tough competition to the international market and improve the national income. Further author says even though the small and medium industry

suffered due to globalization but this industry has potential to provide numerous benefits to local as well as to foreign market in terms of growth of units, employment, output and exports.

(UNIDO and UNESCO, 2005) even the institution like UNIDO & UNESCO is in the favor of developing this sector as they believe that the handicraft sector plays the critical role in the development of the countries especially this sector can improve the tourism of the nation which can generate enormous jobs for natives.

(Ngo, 2005) in his paper presented at the workshop on promotion of craft village-based tourism along the west-east corridor, has explained that strength of handicraft and tourism development in the scheme of the socio-economic approach, and discusses the overall strategy of implementing the tourism and handicraft development project in any country. These sectors are approaching from both the macro perspectives as dogmatic level and micro perspective as village activities for the upliftment of such areas.

(Rathod, 2007) in his study has analyzed that handicraft sector with other small scale industries has shown double-digit growth from last ten years which is not seen in most of the players of the economy, more importantly handicrafts of India has been exhibiting a striking export performance from last few decades. The study has focused that, what India need is the attention for simplified legal and regulatory framework for the betterment of small and medium industries. Further, in his study author said that no doubt that globalization has both opportunities and challenges for this sector but better strategies, good governance, sufficient and accessible finance, suitable infrastructure and competitive environment in handicraft and small scale industry will raise the Indian Industry as a whole.

(Jena, 2008) in his study related to globalization, of Indian handicraft has revealed that Indian economy experiences the existence of both traditional handicrafts and modern mechanized production. Further states that Indian economy has experienced both positive and negative impacts because of globalization process. But one of the sectors benefited out of it, is the Handicraft industry. Since 1991 the era

of globalization, Indian handicraft export has reached at a commendable height.

(Malekjani, 2008) states in his study that the main strategies for the protection any economy is the aggressive approach against the destructive effects of the price fluctuation and instability in the market. Handicraft products have capability to stabilize the price of other machine made products and can easily develop the handicraft sector by doing so. Further, in the study author states that handicraft sector is capable enough to generate constant foreign income and this sector is so economic friendly that it improves both the socio-economic sustainability of the country hand in hand.

(Shetty, 2009) in his study has mentioned that it has become easier for the consumers to buy their handicraft items especially gift items and for manufacturers or artisans to reach out to the consumers where the modern facilities like virtual shops and business to business buying is possible. This modern technology has created business directories in order to meet the demand of the consumers and outline presences of handicrafts. Further states that if such technology reaches to the every manufacture the middlemen will not exploit any of the artisans. Government of India need to indulge them in this for stopping unfair trade practices.

(Azman, 2010) emphasized that this sector requires the advocacy of the government for flourishing and enhancing its product in the international market, strengthening such industries is a key to sustainable development and thus development and extension of rural and tribal population through traditional method to improve the status of the sectors in a community in which poverty has been deeply rooted.

(Arindam, 2010) also is in opinion that the sector of handicraft has potential of economic improvement without any effect on sustainability. He further identified that handicraft will play pivot role in strengthening the cultural identity, heritage preservation which contributes to the overall development of the national economy with that author states that handicraft sector provides opportunities for entrepreneurs, creates jobs for workers, brings foreign currency to the domestic country through promoting exports and creates demand for the artisans.

(Lin and Li, 2010) quoting from (Huilin, 2007). Has revealed that the domestic culture must needed to be promoted through industries and handicraft work should be encouraged to export which in result promotes the cultural through products to the eternal market by doing so it will lead to further protection of cultural security against cultural imperialist powers. They prefer handicraft sector for the preservation of culture because handicrafts are the unique way to express the culture and to reach the maximum population.

(Mohapatra, 2011) In his study states that large-scale inflow of machine made painting items at relatively lower making changes compete with the hand-made products, putting the craftsmen at a great disadvantage. He further highlights some of the problems in his study such as aged craftsmen are not being protected by the government, lack of capital in the hands of the craftsmen to modernize the handicraft work is the great hindrance to the progress of the craft and marketing of the finished products is a problem for the artisans because he cannot do the manufacturing as well as marketing work at a time.

(Liebel and Ror, 2012) the important aspect of this sector is that there is no discrimination on the basis of sex and caste it provides employment to the mix population that is male, female, schedule cast and schedule tribes of the society. Further, it is said that it is the time for the government to recognize and raise technical training to encourage for self-employment of the artisan who has been involved in their life to survive and beautify the world through natural products.

(Ahanger, 2012) Depicted In his study that there are lots of institutions for promoting modern design in handicrafts and it has become the important option for career and profession for modern age of people. Handicraft sector has become the important player of economy due to its significances. It is advantageous from the economical point of view, it need low capital investment, in return it yields high ratio of value addition and high potential for export and foreign exchange earnings for the country.

Many other studies do not consider handicraft work only as a profession but also as a way of earning income. Both men and women

earned a living through handicrafts but at the same time these studies has noted the problems related to the sector too, they have noticed the problems like workers work separately, and their social, economic and political premises and objectives were different.

## **DISCUSSION**

1. Handicraft sector is one of the promising sectors of the economy and employment all it needs is an attention from government to transfer such industry into a well - organized industry, where workers working on the crafts will be delighted if they will be brought under the provisions of employment laws and additional employees will be motivated towards this sector.

2. To see the change in real sense country need to follow *Gandhian* and *Chinese* approach to this Art and craftsmanship. The concepts like, introducing vocational courses at the senior secondary level as that will emerge highly employable after three years of which most of the time is spent in practical training in the industry will be very productive for the national economy and personal development of artisans.

3. State government needed to come forward for the welfare of the sector, it needed to develop institutes for skill development and conduct industrial training at every district so that interested people can avail the benefits of such institutes. Further, the state must take some steps to eliminate the number of middlemen in between artisans and ultimate customers.

4. The schemes like MGNREGA and other employment needed to be united to this sector. Instead of paying millions on schemes for no work, the government must spend the same amount for developing firms of handicraft at best levels for the artisans and craftsmen, which in result not only provide employment to local artisans but also will keep track of money spent and its return.

5. Technology is one of the essential need of today's world artisans and others who are related to this sector need to develop modern strategies for marketing of handicraft goods, they must not rely on an old system of marketing i.e. is hawking. The best strategy is to assign marketing job to industries which experts in marketing and give marketing work to the

companies which have a brand name in the market for its successful market penetration.

6. Indian entrepreneurs must be given a chance to visit different exhibitions throughout the world to imitate new designs and seek orders from different locations of the globe and also let foreign operators visit the domestic city's exhibitions to promote new materials and designs.

## CONCLUSION

It was found that handicraft business is mainly a cottage industry type, where the family members of the master weaver work with him. Due to the high educated unemployment level, it was found that at certain units even people with good education were working for meager rewards or accompanying their family in such units. Sixty percent of the weaver's reported facing health ailments: knee pain, backache, headache, respiratory ailments and joint pain. Weavers work in an arrangement with the contractor through the debt cycle and one of the respondents told of having a debt of Rs Three Lakh. Weavers have ready access to credit but their daily wages are reduced to Rs 180 –190 day. Awareness about reduced wages brings in the feeling of being exploited. If a hand-made fabric, a coat, a pair of shoes or a hat, was made and sold by a man, it was mostly a question of a profession strictly regulated by law, which had a tax liability, was mainly open to men only, required formal training. Further, it is also found that the sector can be one of the leading source of employment as well as a sources of national income if the sector will be given due consideration from Government, whether state or central for its protection, promotion, and development. The sector can bring huge foreign currency to the nation as it is famous throughout the world because of its aesthetic value and uncontaminated form.

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