

VOCATIONALIZATION OF ART: A CREATIVE APPROACH TO PROLIFERATE WORK EMPLOYABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY (WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO REMOTE AND BACKWARD AREAS OF AGRA DISTRICT)

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Abstract: Agra, home to the symbol of eternal love and one of the seven wonders of world, the Taj Mahal; is well-known for its art of Carpet and Durrie Weaving, Zardozi Embroidery with silver and gold and Inlay Work of precious stones on Marble. The arts of Agra are unique in its richness and beauty and have been patronized by royalty in the past. These art skills provide employment to millions of people, majority of whom belong to the weaker sections of society or to other backward areas. Their skills are based on traditional technologies and ideas from previous generations and also limited to a particular product only, which easily become outdated in the fast changing era. So these people need the skill, capacity to innovate and respond flexibly to the changing demands of the market. It is against this background the survey and need assessment is being undertaken in the remote and backward areas of Agra District.

This research paper is an attempt to study the present status of carpet and Durrie weavers of Agra district with a review of their arts for the regulation of vocationalization and evaluate for the sustainability and employability. It aims to study the present scenario, identify the problems and investigate the opportunities available to enhance the productivity to raise the standard of living. The paper is divided into three parts. Part one embodies introduction, significance and objectives of the study. Part two review the research methodology and analysis of the survey. Final and third part includes results, discussion, recommendations and conclusion of the study.

Keywords: Inlay, Sustainability, Vocationalization, Zardozi.

Introduction: Indian art works signify rituals, practices, customs, habits and ceremonies continued in a society from generation to generation and are passed on through written materials, art forms, and shapes or through an oral narration. Crafts are an integral part of the village tradition in India and often mirror their lifestyle (Handicrafts Industry, 2013)[1]. The craft sector is mainly located in rural areas provides employment to many millions of people, majority of whom belong to the weaker, more

vulnerable sections of society or to other backward classes. Despite the implementation of the number of skill development programs for creating gainful employment and to improve the living conditions of remote India, development of these areas is still a major challenge (Shah, A. 2007)[2]. Even after so many years of independence a large number of people live in miserable conditions of remote and backward areas of India and for whom earning even for survival is a big challenge.

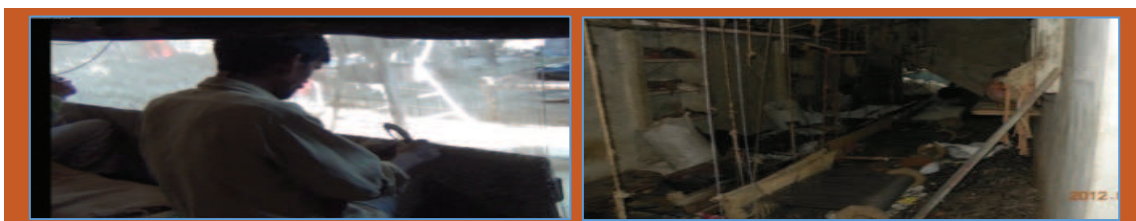


Figure 1: Working Areas



Figure 2: Ramgarh & Abhodayapur

In the face of constant struggle, most artisans have given up and moved away from their traditional occupations. The skills evolved over thousands of years are being dissipated and blunted (Sood, 2013)[3]. Urgent thoughts need to be given to alternative formats for learning and training as we face a future of surging urban migration, issues of deskilling and unemployment (Yadav, 2006)[4]. Despite the efforts of government and the implementation of policy designed to strengthen the sector, artisans themselves continue to be marginalized, their average earnings often well below the stipulated minimum wages (Wood, 2012)[5]. Studies indicate that neither the crafts persons nor their progeny want to join the crafts sector, only lack of available alternatives forces them to do so. They would not mind the tradition coming to an end (Sood, 2013)[6]. The most crucial component to ensure employment, i.e., sustainable livelihoods in craft occupations, is the market (Jaitly, 2008)[7].

Significance of the Study: The paper conceives of the socio-economic development of the people of remote and backward areas from a status of vulnerability and unemployment to employment or enterprise. In the present era of globalization where capital, technology, high skill and productivity play a major role in labour market, low quality of jobs and low productivity is directly related to low level of skills. Creating interest and improving skills among weavers, workers and artisans will help large number of such communities to ensure income. This changing phase of technology requires an individual to be specialized in their specific skill. In order to project various vocational skills effectively in the changing international context; and for India to enjoy the fruits of demographic dividend, there is a vital need to impart training, thereby benefitting weavers, workers and art persons to become more flexible and creative. One of the sources to impart skill and enhance specialized manpower is through Vocationalization.



Figure 3 Ramgarh



Figure 3 Abodayapur

Vocationalization is “the benefit of knowledge and skills to increase opportunities, sustainability, livelihood, empowerment and socio-economic development” (Mavlean, R. 2009).

It is against this background the survey and need assessment is being undertaken on the Carpet and Durrie weavers in the two remote areas of Agra District. Agra is a district situated in the extreme southwest corner in the state of Uttar Pradesh, is a home to the symbol of eternal love and one of the seven wonders of world, the Taj Mahal. Area of district is 4027 sq. km. According to 2011 census, Agra district has a population of 4,380,793. In the Indian Handicrafts industry Agra is holding a very distinguished place. Over 7200 small scale handicraft units are functioning in Agra, which are providing employment to around 13000 carpet weavers and Zardozi workers. Around 70 export units are running in Agra and turnover of these units are about Rs. 450 crores (Mohammad)[8]. The crafts of Agra have a unique style and have been patronized by royalty in the past. They speak of the rich tradition of craftsmanship that has developed over years. The

most significant and renowned craft is the craft of Zardozi or silver and gold embroidery, the well-known Inlay work of precious stones like Lapis Lazuli on marble and also the art of carpet and Durrie weaving (Indian Villages, 2013)[9].

An intense study is conducted in two remote villages of Agra district, Abhodayapur and Ramgarh. Ramgarh is a village 50 km. from Agra and 20 km. from Tundla. Here 80% of the population is involved in Carpet weaving though their main occupation is Agriculture. The other village Abhodayapur, is a very remote area in Fatehpur Sikri in Agra district, which is known for the art of Durrie weaving. Here cotton and wool are mainly used for weaving.

Colourful rugs are also manufactured out of rags. Weavers work for the exporters or on the contract basis. Weavers get designs and the raw materials by weight from the exporters or middlemen. After completion, the product is weighed again given back to the exporter or middlemen.

The weavers are not aware of the market or even about the customers’ needs. They have to work according to the choice of the middlemen or

exporters. In Abhodayapur all the preparation work is carried out by women like cleaning, cutting, and sorting out the rags but in Ramgarh a large number of women are engaged in weaving. In Abhodayapur women work for 8-9hrs per day and get only Rs. 3 per kg for such work.

Heap of rags lie scattered all over the working area and outside also. The working areas could be their houses or could be a small workshop belonging to

exporter or contractor with no electricity so they are totally dependent on natural light.

In Abhodayapur wooden looms are used for weaving but in Ramgarh, for hand knotted carpets vertical looms are used and some weavers are using looms made of iron also. Floral patterns with animals and trees in different styles and colours are used in carpets.



Figure 4: Working Conditions in Abhodayapur

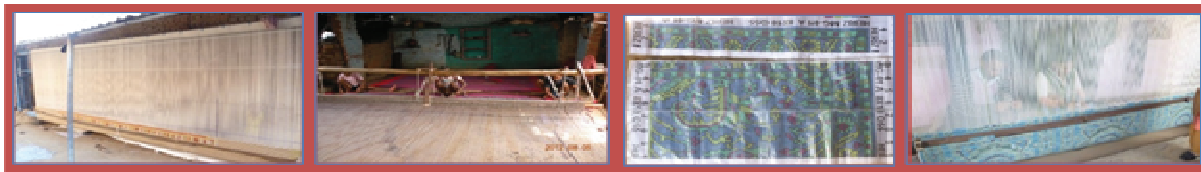


Figure 6: Vertical Iron Loom in Ramgarh

Figure 7: Horizontal Wooden Loom in Abhodayapur

Figure 8: Design

Figure 9: Weaving

Objectives:

- To study the present scenario of carpet and Durrie weavers of remote and backward areas.
- To identify the problems associated with this sector.
- To investigate the opportunities available to enhance the production and productivity in these areas to raise their standard of living.

- To identify the scope of exposure to trends, skills and ideas that enable learners to better adjust to their work which in turn improves their living conditions.

Research Methodology:

The research design is the “backbone” of the research plan developed by the researcher that holds the research project together. The study undertaken is of “descriptive research” in nature, in which information is collected without changing the environment.



Figure 10: Collection of Data

- **Primary data:** The primary data for research is collected through questionnaire and interviews.
- **Sample Area:** The respondents selected for this are basically carpet and durrie weavers of remote areas of Agra District (Abhodayapur and Ramgarh).



Figure 11: Durrie Weaving in Abhodayapur



Figure 12: Carpet Weaving in Ramgarh

- **Research Scale:** Five-point Likert scale

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

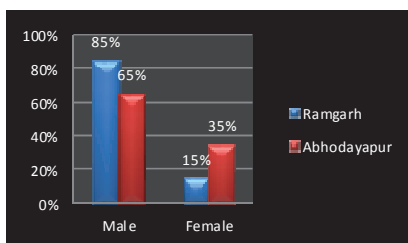
- **Contact Method:** Personal interview is taken as an instrument for contact method. Interviews are conducted with the carpet weavers of Ramgarh village and Durrie weavers of Abhodayapur.
- **Sample and Sampling Technique:** A total of 20 carpet weavers and 20 Durrie weavers are participated in the study. The study is aimed at recounting the problems and need of vocationalization among the carpet and durrie weavers of Agra district.



Figure 13: Researcher with weavers

Analysis of survey taken from workers:

➤ **Gender Analysis:** Both men and women are involved in Carpet and Durrie weaving. Women are more engaged in the preparation of yarn. Women turn to worker for a number of reasons to support their family, social and cultural constraints and absence of other alternatives are some of the reasons to work.



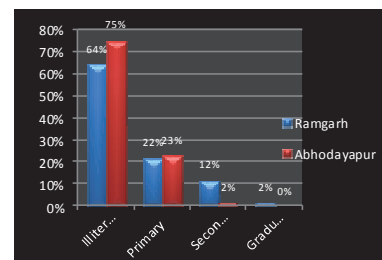
Source: Primary Data

In Ramgarh around 15% women and 85% men are engaged, in Abhodayapur 35% women and 65% men

are involved in work.

➤ **Education**

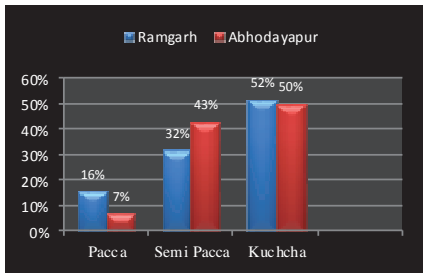
These figures show that the weaving requires the entire household to work in some capacity. This means that children miss school resulting in low education levels, because of which it is difficult for them to talk or bargain with traders and middlemen. This is very sad that with so much of government schemes and initiatives still 64% (Ramgarh) and 75% (Abhodayapur) of these people are illiterate though these people or workers are interested to educate their children.



Source: Primary Data

➤ **Type of House**

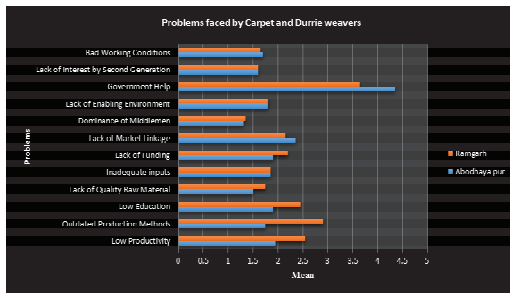
These people are really living at the mercy of nature they even do not have home to live safely. Only 16% of Ramgarh and 7% of Abhodayapur workers possess pucca house.



Source: Primary Data

Problems Faced By Carpet And Durrie Weavers:

The Handicrafts sector of Agra District is facing several problems such as unorganized marketing and inadequate market information, power breakdowns, no support for product development. These people are living in very low economic conditions. Majority of them are working from their home and they don't have even electricity at home.



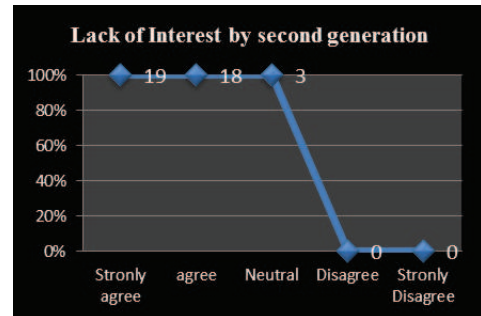
Source: Primary Data

Major difficulties confronted by carpet and durrie weavers of Ramgarh and Abhodayapur are poor working conditions, Low productivity, unorganized production, Low education, Low quality of raw material, Lack of funding, no interaction between customer and artisans, Lack of market linkages, dominance of middlemen, outdated production methods, Lack of enabling environment, no support by state and central government, no interest by next generation.

Results and Discussion:

• **Lack of interest**

Weavers are not interested (75%) to train their children. They don't want their children to take this vocation and after seen their parents struggle children are also inclined to pursue other trades.



• **Help from government and industry:** The majority of workers are not aware about various government schemes like loan at concessional rates, free tools, subsidies etc. some of them have artisan cards but they claim that government schemes are not properly implemented so they are not able to access the facilities given by the government. Lack of awareness is the biggest issue with these artisans.

• **Opportunities available to enhance production:** Crafts production generally takes place in households, with family members engaged in different aspects of the process. Artisans find it challenging to buy quality raw materials at affordable prices. In the absence of raw materials they find it hard to compete with the market. There are no opportunities to enhance the production as craft sector is informal in nature and most of the workers are illiterate or are very less educated and they have no knowledge about the techniques or the opportunities available to increase the production and also they have no financial capabilities to upgrade technology or undertake any type of training to upgrade production.



• **Exposure to trends, skills, ideas enable learners to better adjust to their work**

Artisans believe that proper training to some specific skill will enhance their workmanship and also they will get the opportunities to enter the world of work after successful completion of training. After getting knowledge of market, raw material, availability of government schemes they can work more efficiently and also there will be no breaks between their works so that they can earn no regular basis which will in turn enhance their living conditions.

Recommendations:

1. It is essential to search for and recognize the skills and the potential for development and provide necessary improvements to make a person marketable and also concrete efforts are needed to upgrade the slow nature of production.
2. The artisans have no knowledge about the schemes run by government for their betterment if given information they will be benefitted. Joint

efforts should be taken by the state, central government and also social workers to improve the condition.

3. To achieve this goal sustainable training in the form of Vocationalization of existing craft has to be worked out. This would help in the preservation, modification and dissemination of craft in the remote and backward areas.

Conclusion: It can be concluded that the art and crafts sector in India has vast potential to improve livelihood opportunities. Though, there are too many challenges for the art persons in Agra District as they are mainly concentrated in the remote and backward areas of city.

After conducting this study it can be said that the Vocationalization of art has the potential to transform the economic uncertainty, alleviate poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, increase work employability, sustainability thus improving the quality of living of these artisans.

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