

Tangaliya Weaving: A Languishing Handicraft of Surendranagar District

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Abstract:

Indian handloom and handicraft artefacts are incredibly famous all over the world for centuries. They have created their own place in consumers' perceptions and preferences. Tangaliya Weaving is one of those arts which involve Hands (skills), Head (intellect) and Heart (involvement and dedication) of artisans. It is an amazing art of creating wonderful dotted designs by making colourful knots on warps while weaving which looks dazzling from both the sides of the fabric. This amazing dotted woven textile art has been practiced by Dargasia Community of Surendranagar district of Gujarat. Tangaliya weaving is an indigenous craft of Saurashtra region which is about 700 years old. Previously this art was practiced in many villages of Ahmedabad and Rajkot district too; but nowadays it is mainly practiced in a few villages of Surendranagar district only. This craft had received the GI (Geographical Indication) recognition from the central government in 2009 which needs to be renewed in the nearer future.

At present, the fact is that the market for Tangaliya woven textile is being deteriorated day by day. History says that the villages of this region were cherished with the musical sound of looms before 15 - 20 years; but now most of the units have been closed down due to machine made production and changing trends. This art is languishing and many artisans have switched over the occupation or started weaving the products like carpets, mats, rugs and other products from textiles wastes. Besides, the majority of Tangaliya artisans don't want their children to learn this art. Hence, the future of such a precious handicraft doesn't seem safe & secured and its sustainability is in question. Hence, this paper portrays a realistic picture of this art and artisans involved in this work so that appropriate policy implications can be designed to revive and rejuvenate this unique handicraft.

Key Words:

Tangaliya Weaving, Daana Weaving, Woven craft, Rural Entrepreneurship, Rural artisans, Geographical Indication.

Introduction

Indian handloom and handicraft artefacts are incredibly famous all over the world for centuries. They have created their own place in consumers' perceptions and preferences. Tangaliya Weaving is one of those arts which involve Hands (skills), Head (intellect) and Heart (involvement and dedication) of artisans.

This wonderful dotted woven textile art has been practiced by Dargasia Community of Surendranagar district of Gujarat. Tangaliya weaving looks like knots/beads on fabric and so it is known as 'Daana' weaving too. It is an amazing art of creating wonderful dotted designs by making colourful knots on warps while weaving which looks dazzling from both the sides of the fabric.

The artisans tactfully make beautiful designs by twisting a contrast coloured thread around warps and thus create various colourful motifs and designs. The designs are not traced or drawn on the fabric but just by applying own skills and imaginations, artisans create wonderful designs. Such art demands high degree of accuracy, experience, skills and creativity.

Tangaliya weaving is an indigenous craft of Saurashtra region which is about 700 years old. There is a famous folklore behind this art. It is a combination of peculiarities of two communities- Shepherd and Weavers. A young boy of shepherd community married a girl of weaver community. So, he was socially boycotted by his community and started living with shepherd community. Here, he started weaving with the use of sheep wool. Thus, this Tangaliya art came in to practice.

Previously Tangaliya was practiced in 8 talukas and 26 villages of Surendranagar district. Tangaliya Hastakala Association represented by National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) applied for G.I. number and this craft received the G.I. (Geographical Indication as TANGALIYA SHAWL) recognition from the central government in 2009 for various types of goods like Textile and Textile goods; Clothing Includes Shawls, Sarees, Stoles including rumals; and Home furnishings, Rugs and Mats.

Traditionally products like Ramraj, Charmalia, Dhunslu and Lobadi were produced but now various kinds of products like dress materials, dupattas, jackets, bed-sheets, cushion covers, shawls, etc. are also made keeping in view the need of time and demand. Generally natural as well as synthetic fibres like wool, cotton, silk, acrylic and viscose are used for weaving.

Previously this art was practiced in many villages of Ahmedabad and Rajkot district too; but nowadays it is mainly practiced in a few villages of Surendranagar district only. Some weavers at Bajana, Bhathariya, Dedadara, Sayla, Sudamada and Vastadi have still continued weaving Tangaliya work but many from them have diversified their product line today due to various reasons.

The fact is that the market for Tangaliya woven textile is being deteriorated day by day. History says that the villages of this region were cherished with the musical sound of looms before 15 - 20 years; but now most of the units have been closed down due to machine made production and changing trends. This art is languishing and many artisans have switched over the occupation or started weaving the products like carpets, mats, rugs and other products from textiles wastes. Besides, the majority of Tangaliya artisans don't want their children to learn this art. Hence, the future of such a precious handicraft doesn't seem safe & secured and its sustainability is in question. Hence, this paper portrays a realistic picture of this art emphasizing

on the problems faced by artisans involved in this work so that appropriate policy implications can be designed to revive and rejuvenate this unique handicraft.

☞ **Objective of the Research Study:**

The main objective of this research work is to study the problems faced by Tangaliya weavers and the main reasons responsible for the Tangaliya handicrafts to be languished.

☞ **Methodology:**

The research was carried out to study the picture of Tangaliya handicraft artisans of Surendranagar District in Gujarat. The study is based on the data collected from 50 rural artisans engaged in Tangaliya weaving. An interview schedule was used as a data collection tool. Moreover, 10 experts such as Government officials, NGO workers, designers, handicraft experts and representatives of village/Taluka/district level institutions were also contacted and interviewed to have authenticated information in this field. The received data were processed through Excel and SPSS.

☞ **Major Findings of the Study:**

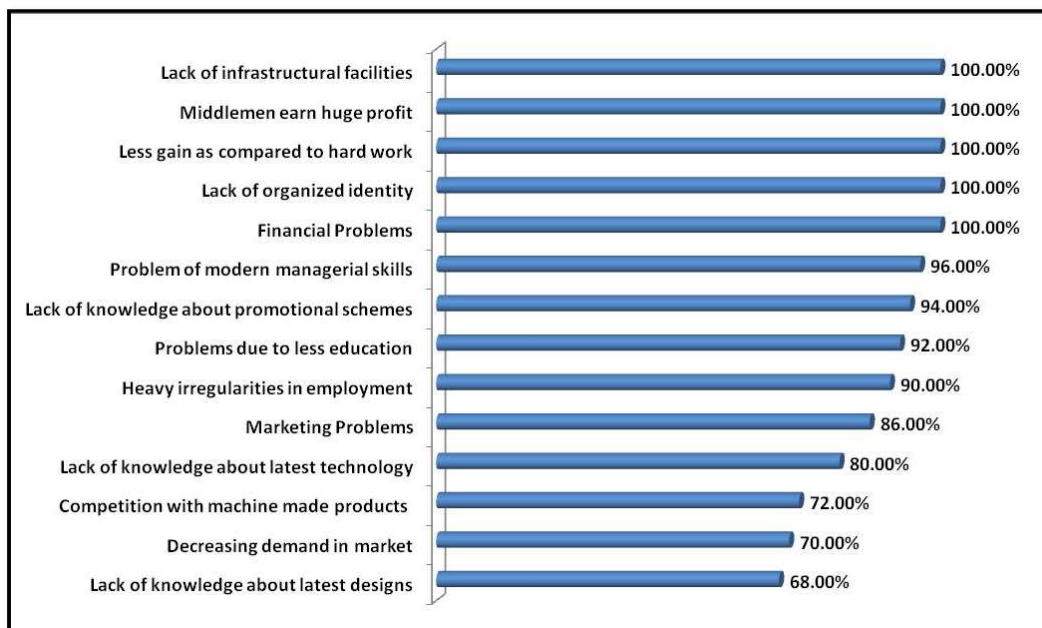
Main findings of the present research study are as follows:

- In present research study, 50 Tangaliya weavers from six different villages of Surendranagar district have been selected as the representative of the population. As the hereditary features play a significant role in this handicraft, majority of the artisans learnt this crafts hereditarily without any formal training. Out of total 50 respondents, 86% artisans gave their opinion that the Tangaliya handicraft was languishing despite various promotional measures to revive this craft.
- But the allocation of Geographic Indication Number (G.I. Number) to the artisans had given the recognition and identity to this craft. Despite very less number of artisans of Tangaliya art were found during the field visit, as majority have started weaving other products such as carpets, mats, rugs, Khadi, floor coverings, woolen shawls, cotton shawls, etc.
- It seems that the younger generation is now taking less interest in this work as 68% respondents were 31 to 50 years old, while 20% were of more than 50 years. The age of only 12% artisans was 30 years or less.
- 48% of total Tangaliya weavers did not want their children to learn this work at all; while 36% wanted that their children should learn the handicraft for hobby or side activity but

should not adopt it as their main occupation. Only 16% told that they wanted their children to adopt this handicraft as occupation. Hence, the sustainability of this handicraft is in question, as the propagation chain seems disturbed or not strong enough to yield fruitful results.

- Inference about the propagation of handicraft in the next generation also depends on the attitude of children towards handicraft. But in 68% of families, children were not interested to learn this form of handicraft weaving, while in 17% families, children were interested to learn this work just for hobby but they were not ready to accept it as their occupation. Remaining 15% respondents told that their children were ready to accept the weaving work as their occupation but they were not sure about Tangaliya weaving.
- Majority of the artisans opined that this occupation was making a negative effect on their social status, as such craft had been considered as mere labour activity having less gain. Therefore, artisans were considered as 'Labourers not Artists'. Further the major problems faced by Tangaliya weavers are as follows:

Figure: 01 The major problems faced by Tangaliya weavers



Source: Field work.

- It is shown in the above figure that all the respondents under the study were found having inadequate infrastructural facilities to run the business efficiently and to live a good lifestyle. Furthermore all told that the middlemen earned a huge amount of profit leaving

a very small pie of cake for the actual producer/artisans. Majority sighed that since they were settled in rural areas, direct marketing was not possible in all the cases. Hence they had to depend upon middlemen. They were helpless due to economic, social, educational and managerial limitations. They cried that sometimes their products were sold at unbelievably high prices at sophisticated showrooms for elite class; but the actual creators were starving poors. They also discussed their experiences of being exploited by the intermediaries.

- It was also observed during the field visit that many of the successful artisans had stopped working as artisans but were engaged in trading only. They used to get work done by other artisans and had created monopoly in region. They had expanded their business having good contact in markets. Thus, they continued with the vicious cycle of exploitation at the same time provide employment to needy too. Hence, mostly all expected government intervention to solve such imbalance which was an alarming situation against the sustainability of rural handicraft artisans. Further, they were feeling that as compared to hard work involved in total production process, gain was very less. Hence, they were facing financial problems.
- 96% of respondents were lacking modern managerial skills to manage their craft as business while 94% artisans were not having awareness about various promotional schemes launched by government. Only 28% weavers had Artisan Identity Card either issued by Ministry of Textiles, Government of India or Office of Commissioner of Cottage and Rural Industries, Government of Gujarat; while 72% didn't have such identity card.
- 92% of artisans were facing problems due to low level of education. It must be noted that 4% artisans were totally illiterate, 20% had studied up to pre-primary level; while 24% had studied up to primary level. 36% of artisans had studies up to secondary level while only 16% had gained education higher than secondary level. It shows that though the literacy rate seems good, the awareness about higher education has been observed very low. This has been observed as one of the most important limitations of the artisans leading to many more limitations in terms of efficiency, confidence and entrepreneurship.
- 30% respondents lived in nuclear family while 70% still lived in joint family system. 66% were BPL card holders and 58% artisans did not have any another occupation other than weaving. In 42% families, 2 family members were engaged in weaving work while 3 or

more members were engaged in this work in 52% of families. Weaving is a long process require huge amount of time and efforts in pre and post weaving procedures. Hence, generally all the family members were found directly or indirectly contributing in this work. Therefore, if we calculate the per head income, the picture is very shabby. Per head monthly income was less than Rs. 5,000 in 88% of weaver respondents while only 12% earned more than it.

- 70% artisans told that there was a heavy fluctuation in demand and 90% told that there was no regularity or continuity of work. Obviously such irregularity of work results in to irregularity of income. Majority of artisans commented that the said handicraft activity had failed to provide uninterrupted and continuous employment. Hence, it had become difficult for them to rely solely on this occupation. Therefore majority of them had adopted another occupation also as a source of income other than handicraft such as agriculture, labour work, business, government contractual jobs, private jobs or other job-work.
- 86% replied that they were facing marketing problem due to having less less information about market and marketing. They were very good in production but mere producing the articles does not serve any meaning. Majority of them were lacking appropriate knowledge about target market hence relying upon various channels or middlemen resulted in to huge exploitation.
- 80% artisans did not have knowledge about latest technology and know-how; while 72% told that many machine made textile products were available in the market and they were so powerful competitors.

☞ Conclusion:

Thus, the bare fact is that the allocation of G.I. number is certainly an appreciable effort of government but it is not sufficient to protect the interest of artisans. There must be some robust system to revitalize and rejuvenate this exclusive handicraft. Such artisans keep the magnanimous legacy alive and animated through their intrinsic skills and art. They pour their heart to shape a product. Hence, the handicraft artifacts are not only physical products to be consumed insensitively but they are the reflection of our cultural heritage and prosperous history. Although a number of schemes and programmes have been designed to promote the handicraft sector in India, the implementation has still not brought the targeted results. The lacuna must be found out through impact assessment and an efficient audit system as soon as

possible otherwise such crafts will be totally languished as they have started disappearing progressively at a great speed.

It is not the accountability of government only to help or promote the art and artisans but it is a moral responsibility of every Indian to respect and contribute wholeheartedly to protect and the languishing luster of handicrafts. Today Tangaliya art seem struggling for its existence, who will save it from being destroyed or ruined? Me, you or all of us...???

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