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MAJOR PROBLEMS OF RURAL ARTISANS: A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The skill of rural artisans continues to be old and technology is traditional. Their economic status is far from satisfactory, which makes their marketing power also weak at both selling and buying levels. Their education level is low and their linkages with rural developmental institutions are either non-existent or weak. Their shyness, weak communication power, and tendency to remain "small" and "satisfied" are some of their other problems. The rural artisans like potters, carpenters, weavers, shoemakers, blacksmiths etc. are facing many difficulties and problems these days. The importance of their artwork is decreasing in their respective villages and adjoining towns. The quality of their output is decreasing and they have to face great competition with the



industrial sophisticated products. Major factors which are responsible to their failure in this regard were explained in this paper.

KEYWORDS: Major Problems, skill of rural artisans, old and technology, low economic and social status.

INTRODUCTION –

The rural artisans constitute an important class in the rural economy. Yet, they enjoy very low economic and social status. In fact, they are no better than agricultural labourers. According to 2001 census, there were about 6.9 million rural artisans engaged in

various crafts. They are engaged in producing a wide variety of products like carpets, brassware, earth ware, textiles and artistic pieces for the local people. They also supply a wide variety of implements to agriculturists. The conditions of rural artisans deteriorated with the advent of industrialization. The globalization and economic liberalization further aggravated their conditions. The rural artisans are facing a number of problems. They are poor, scattered and un-organized. They have very poor productive base. They face problems in procuring raw materials and institutional finance. They do not

have the benefit of an organized market and therefore they continued to be exploited by the middlemen. Most artisans face the problem of declining demand for their products. Manufactured commodities of industry are cheap and refined as compared to goods produced by local artisans. As the rural artisans are poor, they borrow. But, the borrowed amounts are not put to productive uses due to prevailing economic conditions. Rural artisans can stay in their own villages and enhance their incomes if only enough employment opportunities are available. Over the years, the artisans' financial position has been declining, and they are discarding their professions in large numbers. Hence, in the proposed study a humble attempt will be made to assess the

socio-economic conditions of rural artisans in Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives of the proposed study are as follows.

- 1.To trace the origin and growth of artisan class and their role in rural society of India.
- 2.To find out the major problems confronting by rural artisans in sample area,

1. Non-Availability of Raw Material

Due to industrialization these rural artisans are facing the problems of non-availability of raw materials. For this raw material they have to depend upon the middle men and dealers on very high prices and even of the poor quality. So these rural artisans have to shift as a labour to agriculture sector. The non-availability of raw material problem as reported by sample artisans is given in table 1.

Table 1
Sample Artisan rating of the Problem of non-Availability of Raw Material

S. No	Artisan Class	Very High	High	Low	Very Low	Unable to Decide	Total
1	Weavers	31 (25.83)	40 (33.33)	34 (28.33)	10 (8.33)	5 (4.17)	120 (100.00)
2	Carpenters	36 (30.00)	34 (28.33)	25 (20.83)	24 (20.00)	1 (0.83)	120 (100.00)
3	Potters	37 (30.83)	43 (35.83)	21 (17.50)	16 (13.33)	3 (2.50)	120 (100.00)
Total		104 (28.89)	117 (32.50)	80 (22.22)	50 (13.89)	9 (2.50)	360 (100.00)

Source: Field Data

It is clear from table 1 that nearly 61.39 per cent of sample artisans reported the problem of procuring raw material is very high to high. To be precise 28.89 per cent reported very high and 32.50 per cent reported high intensity of raw material problem. In this regard potters top the list with 66.66 per cent and the carpenters are at the lowest with 58.83 per cent. Around 36.11 per cent stated that the problem of raw material is low to very low. Among them 22.22 per cent declared that the problem is low and 13.89 per cent as very low. Nearly 2.50 per cent of respondents were unable to respond.

2. High Cost of Raw Material

In the present day the prices of all goods is sky-rocketing. Under these conditions low and middle income artisans were unable to purchase raw material even if it is locally available. The intensity of the problem of high cost of raw material as enunciated by sample respondents is given in table 2.

Table-2
Sample Artisan rating of the Problem of High Cost of Raw Material

S. No	Artisan Class	Very High	High	Low	Very Low	Unable to Decide	Total
1	Weavers	57 (47.50)	56 (46.67)	2 (1.67)	3 (2.50)	2 (1.67)	120 (100.00)
2	Carpenters	49 (40.83)	63 (52.50)	4 (3.33)	2 (1.67)	2 (1.67)	120 (100.00)
3	Potters	21 (17.50)	32 (26.67)	35 (29.17)	29 (24.17)	3 (2.50)	120 (100.00)
Total		127 (35.28)	151 (41.94)	41 (11.39)	34 (9.44)	7 (1.94)	360 (100.00)

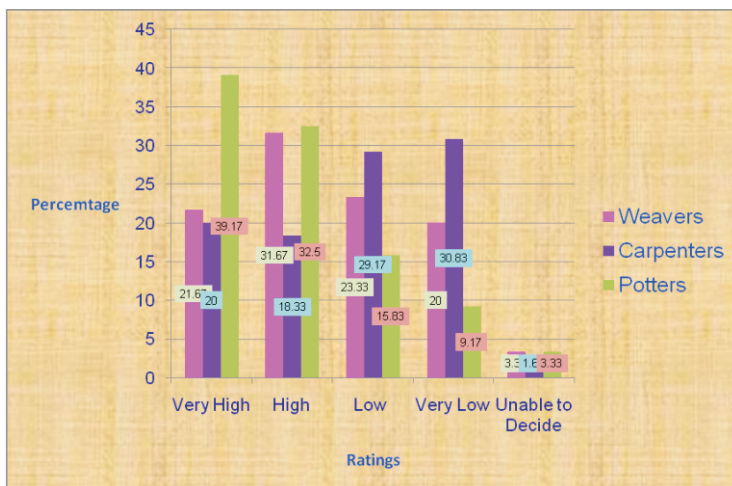
Source: Field Data

It is evident from table 2 that good number of sample artisans encountering the problem of high cost of raw material. Nearly 77.22 per cent of artisans reported that the problem of high cost of raw material is high or very high. In this regard weavers stood at the top of ladder with 94.17 per cent and followed by carpenters and then by potters with 93.33 per cent and 44.17 per cent respectively. As per the reports of 11.39 per cent of respondents the problem of high cost of raw material is low. About 9.44 per cent opined that the problem of high cost of raw material is very low. With regard to low and very low rating of the problem of high cost of raw material potters top the list with 29.17 per cent and 24.17 per cent respectively. Nearly 1.94 per cent of respondents were unable to rate the problem of high cost of raw material.

3. Use of Old and Obsolete Machinery and Equipments

Most of the artisans basically engaged in handicraft or handloom business are using their old and obsolete tools, machinery and equipments which caused a drastic effect upon the quality and quantity of their output. The problem of using old and obsolete machinery as reported by sample respondents is given in Figure1.

Figure-1
Sample Artisan rating of the Problem of Using Old and Obsolete Machinery and Equipments



Source: Field Data

Figure 1 reveals that nearly 27.50 per cent of respondents accepted that the problem of using old and obsolete machinery and equipment is high. In this regard potters tip the list with 32.50 per cent and carpenters stood at the lowest rung of the ladder with 18.33 per cent. About 26.94 per cent rated the problem of using old and obsolete machinery and equipment is very high. The problem of using old and obsolete machinery and equipment is low and very low as per the opinions of 22.78 per cent and per cent respondents respectively. 10 out of 360 were unable to rate the intensity of the problem.

4. Lack of Financial Assistance

These rural artisans have to depend on money lenders for their financial requirements, who charged a great interest to their loans. However, government has announced loans on concessional rates and finance for tool-kits and equipments, yet that is not enough. They are still waiting to be awarded which can help them to survive their business and linked to the modem industries. The problem of lack of financial assistance as reported by sample respondents is given in table 3.

Table-3
Sample Artisan rating of the Problem of Lack of Financial Assistance

S. No	Artisan Class	Very High	High	Low	Very Low	Unable to Decide	Total
1	Weavers	57 (47.50)	43 (35.83)	13 (10.83)	5 (4.17)	2 (1.67)	120 (100.00)
2	Carpenters	41 (34.17)	35 (29.17)	21 (17.50)	19 (15.83)	4 (3.33)	120 (100.00)
3	Potters	48 (40.00)	42 (35.00)	14 (11.67)	11 (9.17)	5 (4.17)	120 (100.00)
Total		146 (40.56)	120 (33.33)	48 (13.33)	35 (9.72)	11 (3.06)	360 (100.00)

Source: Field Data

The data in table 3 shows that the problem of lack of financial assistance appears as the major problem for all kinds of artisans comparing to other problems. The intensity of the problem of lack of financial assistance is very high to high as per the statements of 73.89 per cent of sample artisan respondents. The problem of lack of financial assistance is rated as low by 13.33 per cent of respondents. Nearly 9.72 per cent of respondents considered the problem of lack of financial assistance as very low. Around 3.06 per cent of sample artisan respondents were unable to decide. There are no larger variations among three sample artisan classes.

5. Seasonal Demand of the Products

The demand of the product of rural artisans like, potters, weavers, carpenters etc. are quite seasonal in nature. There are so many factors which affect their sales such as crops, festivals (Holi, Diwali, Dussehra, Ugadi etc.), marriage and other social and cultural factors. In addition the maximum part of their sale is on credit because their main customers are rural persons, who make their payments on the crops and in exchange of food grains. They get their necessity goods throughout the year from these rural artisans. Hence, these poor artisans get their payment only two or three times in a year. The problem of seasonal demand for the products as reported by sample respondents is given in table 4.

Table-4
Sample Artisan rating of the Problem of Seasonal Demand for the Products

S. No	Artisan Class	Very High	High	Low	Very Low	Unable to Decide	Total
1	Weavers	14 (11.67)	20 (16.67)	35 (29.17)	48 (40.00)	3 (2.50)	120 (100.00)
2	Carpenters	10 (8.33)	13 (10.83)	34 (28.33)	58 (48.33)	5 (4.17)	120 (100.00)
3	Potters	27 (22.50)	28 (23.33)	34 (28.33)	28 (23.33)	3 (2.50)	120 (100.00)
Total		51 (14.17)	61 (16.94)	103 (28.61)	134 (37.22)	11 (3.06)	360 (100.00)

Source: Field Data

It is crystal clear from table 4 that the problem of seasonal demand for the products is high among the potters compared to other two artisan classes. Good number of potters reported the problem of seasonal demand for their products, as most of their products get demand during summer. Nearly 45.83 per cent of potters rated the problem of seasonal demand for their products as very high to high. In all, 31.11 per cent of respondents rated the problem of seasonal demand for their products as very high to high. Around 28.61 per

cent of respondents rated the problem of seasonal demand for their products as low and another 37.22 per cent as very low. Nearly 3.06 per cent of respondents denied to respond.

6. No Means of Transportation and Communication

These poor artisans are lacking the various facilities of transportation and communication in rural area. They have to depend on the means of transportation provided by the landlords on high charges. In addition to this they have no distribution centre from where they can distribute their products. They have to get to fairs and melas organised in the cities, where they can get some fair prices of their artwork. The problem of seasonal demand for the products as reported by sample respondents is given in table 5.

Table 5
Sample Artisan rating of the Problem of Transportation and Communication

S. No	Artisan Class	Very High	High	Low	Very Low	Unable to Decide	Total
1	Weavers	24 (20.00)	27 (22.50)	34 (28.33)	33 (27.50)	2 (1.67)	120 (100.00)
2	Carpenters	15 (12.50)	22 (18.33)	41 (34.17)	39 (32.50)	3 (2.50)	120 (100.00)
3	Potters	47 (39.17)	42 (35.00)	11 (9.17)	15 (12.50)	5 (4.17)	120 (33.33)
	Total	86 (23.89)	91 (25.28)	86 (23.89)	87 (24.17)	10 (2.78)	360 (100.00)

Source: Field Data

It can be inferred from table 5 that the problem of transportation and communication is very high as per the reports of 23.89 per cent of respondent artisans. Around 25.28 per cent of respondents considered the problem of transportation and communication as high. With regard to very high and high level rating of problem potters stood at the top of ladder with 39.17 per cent and 35 per cent respectively. It is because of the breakable nature of their products demands good transportation facilities. Nearly 23.89 per cent and another 24.17 per cent rated the problem as low and very low. On the other hand, 2.78 per cent were unable to decide the intensity of the problem of transportation and communication

CONCLUSION

One of the national aims is to increase the purchasing power of the rural people by providing them suitable employment after increasing productive activities in the villages. In this context, development and innovations in the traditional occupations need to be supported on some priority basis. The essential component of any social development programme is the development of manpower resources. In a labour surplus economy, there is a tendency to adopt a complacent attitude towards skill development particularly in the rural areas.

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