

Safeguarding Traditional Handloom Craftsmanship of District Mau Uttar Pradesh

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ABSTRACT:

India is bestowed with rich cultural and natural heritage in the form of tangible and intangible. India has one of the oldest cultures in the world. People have made our country rich and wealthy with their intellect, ability talents and skill right from the beginning of Indus-Valley Civilization till today. Indian culture has diversities in form of religion, caste, dance, food, music, dress, languages, arts, skills, customs, traditions etc. Safeguarding handloom craftsmanship is one of the approaches for preservation of intangible cultural heritage and it is one of the main motivations driving the conception and ratification of 2003 in UNESCO. The case study has been carried on handloom industry of Mau district of Uttar Pradesh. Almost every household has a loom, which is used for making sarees, loincloth, suits etc. in Mau. These handlooms are facing challenges from power loom now a day, leading this intangible culture to an end. Thus, this intangible culture needs to be preserved and safeguard.

KEY WORDS: *Traditional Craftsmanship, Handloom, UNESCO, India*

INTRODUCTION

India is a combination of many small worlds. Indian subcontinent, the land of diversities formed by its size and population, varied geographical distribution of lands, linguistic, religious, racial and other varieties. Many traditions, customs, rituals and common elements of culture and religion bind them. The people of India remain heterogeneous in language, racial composition, customs, habits and several other characteristics of everyday life (Narang, 2003). The work of India's craftspeople spreads across the length and breadth of our land, which is seen in cities and towns, by-lanes and villages. A small crafted object of India has the capacity of becoming an object displayed in the finest museums of the world. Moreover, the same object is often merely an object of utility for a particular community which never thinks of it as a great art. It is often a lack of knowledge of the variety of cultures, techniques, meanings, uses and relevance of such handcrafted objects that allows us to neglect their beauty and take our cultural heritage for granted (NCERT, 2011).

In recent times, the term cultural heritage has changed content substantially. It has also includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our progeny, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts (UNESCO 2020). Knowledge on the intangible cultural heritage of different communities helps

with intercultural dialogue, and encourages mutual respect for other ways of life. Intangible cultural heritage is not only necessary for the cultural manifestation itself but rather the wealth of knowledge and skills that is transmitted through it from generation to generation. The information based on social and economic value of this transmission of knowledge is important for minority groups and for mainstream social groups within a State, and is as important for developing States as for developed ones (UNESCO 2020). Despite growing globalization, intangible cultural heritage is an important factor help in maintaining cultural diversity throughout the country. Apart from a lot of cultural as well as natural heritage, a total of 13 Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) elements from India have been inscribed till date on the UNESCO's representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. However, the traditional craftsmanship is not included yet in the list of UNESCO as ICH of India. It is now significant to work on various famous crafts of India and to take certain initiatives to make plans for safeguarding the craftsmanship of India. Therefore, the present study has been undertaken with a view to safeguard traditional handloom craftsmanship of district Mau, U.P.

TRADITIONAL CRAFTSMANSHIP

Traditional craftsmanship is possibly the most tangible expression of intangible cultural heritage. The 2003 UNESCO convention is mainly focused on the skills and knowledge involved in craftsmanship rather than the craft products themselves. They mostly emphasized on encouraging artisans to continue to produce craft and to pass their skills and knowledge onto others, particularly within their own communities. Traditional craftsmanship comprised of various tools such as clothing and jewellery; costumes and props for festivals and performing arts; storage containers, objects used for storage, transport and shelter; decorative art and ritual objects; musical instruments and household utensils, and toys, both for amusement as well as education (UNESCO 2020).

METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on the primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data was collected with the help of direct questionnaire to the respondent to collect the information pertaining to the status of handlooms and other problem facing by handloom weavers of Mau town.

STUDY AREA

Mau town is the district headquarters of Mau, is a part of Azamgarh Division. It is a small industrial town located on the banks of River Ghaghara (Saryu). Formerly, it was known as Mau Nath Bhanjan and lies approximately 90 km from Varanasi. The district is bounded by Ghazipur district on the South, Ballia district in the East, Azamgarh district in the West, and Gorakhpur and Deoria district on the east. The Mau district is known for textile product, and apparel manufacturing industries apart from its rich cultural heritage. There are a lot of establishments that process fiber into fabric and fabric into clothing and other textile products. Almost every household has a loom, which is used for making sarees, loin cloth, suits etc. The sarees made here are beautifully embroidered by craftsmen with zari yarn. These are in great demand in Uttar Pradesh as well as other states. Mau is known for saree production, zari work and kashidakari work. In fact, Mau is considered as the powerhouse of textile weavers in Eastern Uttar Pradesh (U.P. Gov., 2020).

Handloom

Handloom sector plays a very important role in the country's economy. There are about 30.23 lakh handlooms and over 70 lakh handloom workers in India. Uttar Pradesh harbor about 3.2 handlooms. Handloom sector contributes nearly 19 per cent of the total cloth produced in the country and also adds to a great extent to export earnings (Handloom Census, 2015-16). Weaving became an important and developed industry in the four districts namely, Varanasi, Gorakhpur, Mau and Azamgarh of eastern Uttar Pradesh. The handlooms are very powerful tools over power loom in the introducing innovative designs. Handloom become a part of the heritage of India and illustrates the fruitfulness and productiveness and diversity of our country as well as the artistry of the weavers. In this way, the handloom sector becomes an everlasting part of the cultural heritage of India. Therefore, Indian handloom containing elements of art and craft makes it a perspective sector for the upper segments of the domestic as well as international market. However, the sector is also surrounded with a lot of problems (Dwivedi et al. 2019). Different areas of Mau district such as Mirzahadi Pura, Raghunath Pura, Mustafabaad, Bulakhi Pura, Chittanpura, Keyaritola were investigated for the study of handloom craftsmanship. Now a days, handloom are facing serious threats and their numbers are decreasing day by day because of the different factors such as introduction of powerloom, globalization, liberalization and increased costs of different raw materials used in saree production. Handlooms had been dissolved due to the threat caused to the weavers in mid 1980's in the area Mirzahadi Pura, Raghunath Pura, Mustafabaad, Bulakhi Pura, Chittanpura. Due to the threats the handlooms were collapsed at greater speed. Handlooms were converted to paddleloom then these looms were converted to the powerloom for easiness of the production of the cotton sarees. Keyaritola is the area where the handlooms are still present up to date in non working condition. Neighbouring areas like Walidpur, Kopa, Ghosi, Kheirabaad, Madhuban, have still got handloom into existence in working condition. The famous sarees of these handlooms are Kota Check Saree, Anchal And Shoulder, Sattan, etc.

Following are the main cause for the decreasing handloom in the Mau areas apart from globalization and industrialization.

1. Increased Cost of Raw materials and low cost of saree: Handloom of Mau district is used to produce cotton sarees. These handmade sarees is famous worldwide for its uniqueness. These cotton sarees are elegant and beautiful. These handloom are hard to maintain because it require much hardwork and time for production of these cotton sarees workers work very hard and spend their much time and energy for the cotton saree production. Accordingly to the hardwork, the wages are much lower than their work . The cost of sarees are also much lower in market comparatively with the cost of other sarees.

2. Competition of handloom sarees of Bombay and Surat: The saree of Bombay and Surat are much more beautiful and easily available for usage according to customer. Sarees of Bombay and Surat are of textile industry which mean production of much more saree in less time. The time parameter is relatively a greater factor for the production of sarees which have to compete in market. The handloom cotton sarees of mau district are beautiful and elegant but require much time and labour work for their production. This time taking and labour hardwork have to pay much effort for working and high competition in the textile market. The first step to tackle the textile the

market is the time of production. Thus handloom sarees have to give tough competition for its existence with the sarees of Bombay and Surat. In today's world the production of product at given time of good quality at low wages of labour and less labour work is needed at industrial level for good money making due to high labour work the cost of the saree of handloom increases much, which have effect on the textile market. As comparision to the sarees of the Thus due to high cost the handloom sarees are less sellled in market and due to decrease in the selling of handloom saree the brings a cyclic adverse effect on the handlooms and labour hence, this competition of saree with saree of bombay and surat leds to the disappearance of the handloom in district mau.

3. Synthetic thread

Synthetic thread are the thread used in the production of the saree. The production of the saree get directly affected by the synthetic thread production type quality, cost, availability. The main important factor are cost and availability of the synthetic thread.

3 a. Cost of synthetic thread: The cost is the main reason for the marketing of object or material. The cost of the synthetic thread are much lower than the cost of the normal or cotton thread which are used in handloom industry for manufacturing of cotton saree. The handloom saree required varieties of threads colour for making the look of saree most beautiful and thus, varieties of colors and the cost of synthetic threads are lower. The low cost of synthetic thread replaces the handloom threads and cotton and thus the synthetic thread had overcomed the cotton thread but the cotton threads in handloom were much compatible and easier to use. Thus, the synthetic thread replace cotton thread and this synthetic thread were having great difficulty in running or usage at handlooms. These threads were not compatible thus the handloom started to disappear from the district.

3 b. Availability of synthetic thread

The synthetic thread were easy to produce handle and crafts effective thus the workers and craftsmen prefer this thread and this has increased the production of the synthetic thread. Thus, increase in the production of synthetic thread had made the availability of synthetic thread. These threads when easily available have advantage over cotton thread. This incompatibility led to the less working and technical fault of handloom and this result to the dissolution of the handloom craftsmanship at district, Mau.

4. Socio-economic condition

The Socio-economic condition of weavers are not good as they faced difficulty especially due to weak organisational structure, administrative failures, financial disincentive, poor infrastructure, decentralized looms, poor marketing etc. Majority of weavers are illiterate and get less wage work more than 8 hours a day. They also faced difficulties in marketing, finance, supply of yarn, high price of raw materials and various policies adopted by the government for the development of handloom industry. They are following the traditional occupation and it is highly concentrated. There are various categories of weavers such as Independent weavers, weavers working under master weavers, weavers working for co-operative societies etc. Hence, the Industry is household

based work carried by the entire family spread across thousands of villages and towns in the country and required to strengthen adequately for meeting the emerging challenges of the socio-economic life of the traditional weaver (Khare, 2019; Shazli and Munir, 2014).

SUGGESTIONS:

In light of above facts, it becomes important to safeguard the traditional handloom skills. The sector needs well strategies for the development of markets and export markets in both national as well as international level. Following are the suggestions for safeguarding and wider economic growth and prospectus of handloom sector.

- The planners and policy makers of India should address the need of the craftsmen and their craftsmanship and the issue has been touched in complete form. In all of the states of India Crafts Boards should also look after the problems of the craftsmen and their crafts.
- The emphasis should also be done on the promoting the dying crafts by way of initiating market links, entrepreneurship skills, organizing crafts melas and bazaars so that the craftsmen should export their products and honoring the craftsmen with best craftsman of the state, providing scholarship, etc.
- There should be establishment of various heritage centres so that the visitors can experience the weaving tradition at each level of its process.
- There should be opening of various handloom training centre. Training of Handloom weaving twice a week.
- Weavers should practice weaving in the centres on daily basis.
- Raw material must also be started in the centres.
- There should be a museum so that they can exhibit their products.

CONCLUSION

India has a rich cultural heritage of Handloom Industry having the largest Handloom Industry in the world. In India, the weaving practiced is very old. From the present study, it is concluded that Handloom weavers in Mau District are traditionally weaving as their primary occupation are in a cheap condition, due to poor socioeconomic condition. However various adverse conditions lead to decline their socioeconomic conditions. Majority of weavers are wage weavers working for more than 8 hours day accompanied by the entire family and working under the control of master weavers. This industry is declining day by day therefore it becomes necessary to take initiatives for the safeguarding of this traditional handloom craftsmanship.

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