

HUMAN FACTOR IN HANDICRAFTS

CH. RAMAPRASADA RAO and K. VENUGOPALA RAO

In a capital scarce and over populated country like India, handicrafts occupy an important place. In this paper the authors point out that handicrafts sector has not been given the importance it deserves. With the help of an empirical study, the role of human factor in handicrafts sector has been analysed. The authors suggest that a separate financial corporation should be set up for the development of handicrafts. Financial and other assistance should be provided to the families engaged in handicrafts.

Handicrafts play a vital role in the economic life of any country. Indian Handicrafts are custodians of a rich cultural heritage. Handicrafts offer solution to India which is characterised by unemployment and foreign exchange crunch. Handicrafts are labour-intensive and are more suitable to a country like India where the crying need is for rapid increase in employment and production of goods which need the least amount of capital. Thus, the Handicrafts industry which is essentially a small scale cottage industry is not only helping to solve social and economic problems of the artisans but also becoming a large earner of valuable foreign exchange for the country. The industry is currently providing employment to more than three million artisans. Hardly is there a village or a city of any importance without artisans and craftsmen. The industry is both rural and urban. It transcends sectarian, linguistic and communal barriers. Therefore, the problem of the handicrafts industry is that of the premier home industry, national in its significance, cosmopolitan in its range and heterogeneous in its character. Handicrafts have not received as much attention as they deserve. The Government agencies are not giving financial filip to handicrafts industry to the required extent. The performance of the existing institutional infrastructure both for financing and marketing of handicrafts is far from satisfaction. Artisans depend on the middlemen for raw materials, finance and market for the finished products because of their illiteracy, ignorance and poverty.

It is often said that, though the exploitation of natural resources, availability of physical and financial resources, international aid and creation and development of markets play predominant roles, none of these factors is more significant than efficient and committed human factor. A nation

Dr. Ch. Ramaprasada Rao, is Professor & Head, S.K. Institute of Management, S.K. University, Anantapur (A.P.).

Dr. K. Venugopala Rao, is Lecturer, S.K. Institute of Management, S.K. University, Anantapur (A.P.).

with an abundance of physical resources will not benefit itself unless the human factor makes use of them. In fact, the human resources are solely responsible for making use of physical and natural resources and for the transformation of raw materials into finished goods. The survival, development and performance of an organisation, although not solely but heavily, depends on the quality of human resources. The days of treating the man as a commodity or a factor of production have gone. The contribution of human factor is significant and profound compared to that of other factors. This is more so in unorganised sector than in organised sector.

From the national view point, the human resources can be defined as the total knowledge, skills, creative abilities, talents and aptitudes obtained in the population whereas from the view point of the individual enterprise, they represent the total of the inherent abilities, acquired knowledge and skills as exemplified in the talents and aptitudes of employees. Those organisations that are able to acquire, develop, stimulate and keep outstanding workers will be both effective and efficient. The significance of human resource need not be overemphasized in handicrafts as they are made mostly by human hand with the help of simple tools and equipment. The craftsmen with their innate skills, transform handicrafts into an expression of art.

OBJECTIVES

The following are the objectives of the study :

1. To identify the size of family members and hired workers engaged in the craft.
2. To examine such aspects as number of hours of work, number of idle days, wages and fringe benefits.
3. To suggest suitable measures to overcome the problems faced by artisans.

METHODOLOGY

For the collection of required data in the study, the survey method has been adopted. In this survey, primary data have been collected by way of field survey through pre-tested, structured schedules prepared for the purpose and through personal interviews. The secondary data and information are collected from the records of the office of the Development Commissioner for Handicrafts, Ministry of Textiles, All India Handicrafts Board, and Andhra Pradesh Handicrafts Development Corporation, Hyderabad.

SAMPLE DESIGN

Out of 21 major handicrafts in the State, as many as 10 crafts have been selected on the basis of provision of employment. Table 1 shows the sample

design and also the crafts chosen. The sample has been fixed at 25 per cent of the household units existing in each craft.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the findings and recommendations of the study.

SIZE OF FAMILY MEMBERS AND HIRED WORKERS.

All family members are involved in handicrafts irrespective of their skills. Keeping all this in view, the human resource in handicrafts is divided into family members and hired workers. There are as many as 1,240 persons involved in the functioning of all the handicrafts under study. Over two-thirds (64.27 per cent) of them are family members and the rest are hired workers. Out of the total 443 hired workers, 393 (88.71 per cent) are male and 50 (11.29 per cent) are female.

Table 1 : Sample Design.

Sl. No.	Name of the craft	No. of Units in the craft	Sample size	Percentage
1.	Imitation Jewellery	110	28	25
2.	Sheet Metal	114	28	25
3.	Miniature Bronze Icons	97	24	25
4.	Lacquerware Toys	121	30	25
5.	Wood carvings	118	30	25
6.	Painted wooden/Kondapalli Toys	81	20	25
7.	Woolen Pile Carpets	122	30	25
8.	Cotton Durries	120	30	25
9.	Kalamkari Prints	119	30	25
10.	Stone-studded Bangles	119	30	25
Total		1,121	280	25

Source : Field Survey.

HOURS OF WORK

Generally, workers work for eight hours a day in the organised sector. Even in the case of unorganised sector, where workers are hired, the working hours are fixed. In the case of handicrafts, the units are owned mostly by the artisans themselves and the production activity is carried on by the artisans. Depending upon the nature of work and product, the artisan carries on the work. In order to understand how many hours an artisan works during a day, an enquiry is made. Out of 280 sample, 77 respondents (27.50 per cent) are working between eight hours and less than eight hours. 203 respondents (72.50 per cent) are working more than eight hours a day. Thus, an overwhelming majority of the respondents are working more than eight hours a day for their livelihood.

IDLE TIME

Handicrafts industry is an unorganised sector. There is no certainty that the artisans have work to do every day. The reasons for this may be several like lack of demand for the articles, lack of finance, lack of raw materials etc. In view of this, an attempt is made to find out that how many days in a month the artisans remain idle without any work. A majority of the artisans (163 respondents) are remaining idle for six days in a month. Over 20 per cent of the respondents (59 respondents) are lying idle for five days to eight days. The rest (48 respondents or 17.4 per cent) are remaining idle for below three days.

WAGES

Artisans in handicrafts hire outside workers along with family members. The outsiders are paid on time-rate or piece-rate system basis on the nature of work. As many as 183 respondents (65.36 per cent) have stated that they pay monthly wages (time-rate) to the workers. While 97 respondents (34.64 per cent) have said that they pay piece-rate. Hence, an attempt is made to know the amount paid to the workers by way of wages irrespective of time-rate and piece-rate. There are as many as 105 respondents (37.50 per cent) who have stated that they pay monthly wages ranging from Rs.401 to Rs.500. While 26.79 per cent (75 respondents) have mentioned that they pay monthly wages ranging from Rs.301 to Rs.400. 45 respondents (16.07 per cent) have said that they pay wages ranging from Rs.501 to Rs.600. While 13.21 per cent (37 respondents) have stated that they pay wages ranging from Rs.300 and below. However, there are only 18 respondents (6.43 per cent) who have said that they pay monthly wages ranging from Rs.601 and above to the hired workers.

FRINGE BENEFITS

Employee benefits, sometimes called fringe benefits are compensation other than wages or salaries. Employers provide fringes partly to raise employee morale; to meet their social responsibility and to make more effective use of their workforce. Employee benefits contribute to the maintenance of employee morale. Employee benefits are meant to maintain employees' favourable attitude towards the work and work environment. Fringe benefits are provided to hired workers in handicrafts by the artisans. The artisans show concern to the welfare of their workers by providing such benefits as lunch, tea, cinema, clothes, medical and financing the education of workers' children. As many as 212 respondents (75.71 per cent) have stated that they occasionally provide free lunch, tea and give money to go to cinema to their workers. While 37 respondents (13.21 per cent) have said that they bear medical expenses of their workers. As many as 19 respondents (6.79 per cent) provide clothes occasionally. However, there are 12

respondents (4. 29 per cent) who have stated that they finance the education of their workers' children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the recommendations :

1. Idle time for artisans on account of finance and raw materials must be reduced. Andhra Pradesh Handicrafts Development Corporation should supply scarce raw materials to all the craftsmen belonging to different crafts, through raw material depots. It is also suggested that commercial banks may simplify the bank procedures and formalities for giving loans.
2. Wages paid to the hired workers by the artisans must be increased. This is possible if the artisans get remunerative prices for their articles. The Andhra Pradesh Handicrafts Development Corporation should buy the articles from the artisans directly and should pay the dues promptly.
3. Fringe benefits must be given to the hired workers by the artisans to boost the morale of the hired workers.
4. There must be a separate financial corporation for the development of handicrafts.

The craftsman carries on the activity in the house, where he resides. The family members assist him at various states of production. Therefore, it is very difficult to identify a particular family member with a particular work in production of handicraft goods and the time spent on the job. It is also very difficult to estimate the magnitude of employment in handicraft industry. All family members work from dawn to dusk. But, the female family members participate in the craft, after attending to their domestic chores. However, it is very difficult to distinguish family members, on the basis full-time and part-time contribution to handicrafts. By and large, all the male and female family members are involved in the crafts. Usually, the artisans do not hire outside labour on part-time basis. Hence, all the hired workers in all crafts are full-timers. Moreover, only skilled labourers are hired by the artisans. In conclusion, mostly family members are engaged in the craft. In a very few crafts, outside labour is engaged. Majority of the artisans work more than eight hours a day for their livelihood. An overwhelming majority of the artisans remain idle for six days in a month on account of lack of demand, finance and raw materials. Wages paid to the hired workers by the artisans are abysmally low.

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