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ROLE OF RURAL ARTISANS IN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRY: AN ANALYSIS

Economics

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ABSTRACT

The Indian art of weaving, dyeing, printing, embroidery etc., has been legendary. The craftsmanship of Indian goldsmiths and jewelers is equally ancient and reputed for its creativeness and captivating charm. Indian silks, carpets, ivory, rosewood and sandal wood products have been famed, far and wide. Artisans produce and continue to produce an amazing range and worked objects in bronze, copper, brass and bell metal. It is learnt from the records of Indian history that at a time when the west of Europe (the birth place of Industrial system), was inhabited by uncivilized tribes, our country was famous for the wealth of high artistic skills of her craftsman. The First Five Year Plan emphasized the need for technical improvement in traditional artisan and craftsmen village industries. The different program/schemes had been launched for the improvement of the artisans and craftsmen during the first plan period. The extensive Program for village crafts was prepared with the objective of increasing rural employment. National levels boards for handicrafts (1953) small scale industries (1954) coir and silk boards were established. As for the recommendations of the international perspective planning team (1953-1954) four regional extension institutes, were established to provide technical guidance. Twelfth Five Year Plan, handicrafts production is expected to double between 2012 and 2017 and exports are projected to grow at the compound annual rate of 18 per cent during the same period. As a result, the craft sector will employ an additional 10 per cent of individuals per year up to that time. Crafts constitute one of the primary sub-sectors within Creative and Cultural Industries, defined by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as "industries which produce tangible or intangible artistic and creative outputs, and which have a potential for wealth creation and income generation.

KEYWORDS

INTRODUCTION

Since ancient times and craftsmen have been the bases of India's rural economy cultural diversity, art and religion. Fashion and a large export that flooded the markets of the Middle Eastern and Western World. According to a recent study dwindled to a third indicating a continuous downward slide of these invaluable micro-cultures. Indian artisans are a principal actor and pillar of the rural society. The rural artisans engaged in traditional villages and cottage industries occupied a place of honour in the society. The artisans are an important factor in the equation of Indian society and culture. The village communities of crafts man have always been the center of the traditional crafts of India. Artisans can be defined as those people who can provide concrete form to their expression and feelings. According to the tradition of India, an artist is only considered accomplished when his repertoire of art consists of works in ten different materials. These are wood, brick (terracotta/stone lime (stucco) plaster, sugar, ivory, yantra and flat drawing and painting. This versatile technical skill of the Indian artists is unique and is visibly present in the neat and complete workmanship, which is found even, is decadent art. Thus craftsmanship is mostly defined as items made by hand, often with the use of simple tools is generally artistic and/or traditional in nature.

The Indian art of weaving, dyeing, printing, embroidery etc., has been legendary. The craftsmanship of Indian goldsmiths and jewelers is equally ancient and reputed for its creativeness and captivating charm. Indian silks, carpets, ivory, rosewood and sandal wood products have been famed, far and wide. Artisans produce and continue to produce an amazing range and worked objects in bronze, copper, brass and bell metal. It is learnt from the records of Indian history that at a time when the west of Europe (the birth place of Industrial system), was inhabited by uncivilized tribes, our country was famous for the wealth of high artistic skills of her craftsman. The muslin of Decca, the calicos of Bengal and the saree of Banaras were well known to foreigners. In fact, the rural artisans such as potters, carpenters, weavers, cobblers, blacksmiths, tailors, goldsmiths, plumbers etc. helped the mainly agrarian rural economy to sustain on its own. These traditional artisans of different trades, who checked the exodus of youths from villages, helped village economy to be self-sufficient. Gandhiji thought that if these traditional artisans of different trades are not fully supported and protected from the mass producing big industries, the villages will never be self-sufficient. Gandhiji wanted production by masses and not mass production, by a few as he was sure that mass production would kill the artisans and pollute the village economy. His prophecy holds good even today.

Development of Artisans in India

In the post-Independence era an impressive growth of village industries in terms of size, employment generation, net domestic product, exports earning etc., has been recorded. The development of cottage industries is an integral part of the overall economic, social and industrial development of the country. Keeping in view the importance of these Industries, the Government of India has paid special attention in planning for economic development. In order to promote the growth of village industries, a variety of supportive measures have been adopted by the Government. Some of the important measures are; reservation of certain goods for exclusive production in the Village and Cottage Industries, provision of adequate financial support; provision of various measures for export assistance for export promotion, provision of training of management skills to the entrepreneurs and establishment of regional information centers.

Rural artisans predominantly operate in the unorganized household sector. Artisans/ manufacturers are household members practicing handicrafts activity jointly at their residence, who if need arises employ other handicraft artisans for work. In many regions of the world, the handicrafts sector has been identified as the second largest sector of rural employment after agriculture. The handicrafts industry has over the years contributed significantly to the employment and foreign exchequer of the country. It is omnipresent with each state contributing through one or more crafts and has made tremendous progress during the last decade. However, despite the large production base the market at international level is still unexplored. India's share in the world handicraft exports is less than 2percent. There is, therefore, an urgent need to raise the share of India's exports from about 2 per cent to 4 per cent of world exports in the next 5 years thereby ensuring that the contribution of exports sector to the growth of the economy is further enhanced.

In fact, the concerted efforts for the development of village industries were taken in the first two five year plans that the rural art crafts or artisanal sector had a specific role to play in the Indian economy.

First Five Year Plan (1951-56)

In the first Five Year Plan, the village industries were treated as an integral part of agriculture. The central place was given for the rural artisans in the first Five Year Plan. The same approach was sufficiently pronounced in the first and second five year plans. It was considered desirable to start regulator programs for the wellbeing of the artisans in rural India. The emphasis was laid on improving the village and cottage industries to reduce the dependence of agriculture and the creating the provision of generating employment to the farmers during the off-season (slag season and the emphasis was on local consumption). The First Five Year Plan emphasized the need for technical improvement in traditional artisan and craftsmen village industries. The different program/schemes had been launched for the improvement of the artisans and craftsmen during the first plan period. The extensive Program for village crafts was prepared with the objective of increasing rural employment. National levels boards for handicrafts (1953) small scale industries (1954) coir and silk boards were established. As for the recommendations of the international perspective planning team (1953-1954) four regional extension institutes, were established to provide technical guidance. The importance of the setting up of industrial co-operatives both as an agency for developing village industry and as an essential channel for extending financial assistance to village artisans was emphasized.

Second Five Year Plan (1956-61)

The second plan was attempted to revitalize the village and cottage industries sector which was considered as a static part of the economy. The second plan emphasized to rejuvenate the industrial activity in rural areas and making the village industrial sector as an efficient decentralized sector closely integrated with agriculture on the one hand and with large scale industries on the other. The Karve Committee (1955-56) was constituted to determine the specific Government policy regarding rural artisan and village industries. On the advice of the village and small scale industries (karve) committee (1955-56) and in consonance with the Industrial Policy Resolution (1956), the artisanal crafts were made an integral part of the whole plan for the country's industrialization. The plan has given importance to provide infrastructural facilities to artisans stating that "improvement of housing conditions of artisans should be an important item in the Program of decentralized industrial development as often the house of the artisan is the work place, while framing projects under rural housing Program, the requirements of village artisans should be kept especially in view. The Karve Committee made different recommendations regarding mutual relation of (Balutedar) rural artisans with other big industries, protected area of production for village industries and so on. Specifically the Karve committee gave recommendations in respect of rural artisan and rural industries to protect the interest of village industries and to establish **"Block Level Village Artisans and Village Industries Co-operative Societies".** The second plan also included the policy of providing satisfactory arrangement for marketing research, rural electrification and improvement of housing conditions of rural artisans, credit and finance etc.

Third Five Year Plan (1961-66)

The emphasis was on the program of introduction of improved tools and equipment to the artisans and craftsmen. The better credit facilities were also emphasized in this plan. In 1962, Rural Industries Project Program (RIP) was launched to faster the growth of rural crafts and small scale industries and to bring about wider dispersal of industries. In the first phase of the program 49 areas throughout the country were chosen by the Government. In 1969, it was decided to transform this into a national program. So by 1974 there were 111 projects, each project covering 3 to 5 community development blocks. The program of introduction of improved tools and equipment's has been implemented in India. The programme of improvement of Ambar Charkha, Oil Grannies, Equipment's used in hand pounding of paddy in KVI sector, Coir spinning Equipment's, cottage basin in place of 'Charkhas' for reeling in sericulture and equipment's and tools used in handicrafts.

Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74)

During this plan period, 14 major commercial banks were nationalized. One of the important objectives of the Nationalization of commercial banks is to supply the cheap credit to the door steps of the weaker sections like rural artisans and craftsmen. The traditional artisanal crafts had been obtained the required credit and improve their occupations. It spelt out a "Ten-point Program", for the village and small industries sector for providing suitable infrastructure for their growth. The Khadi and Village Industries (Ashok Mehta committee) Committee had suggested in techniques with a view to bringing Khadi and village industries to a viable level. The Committee has suggested a single comprehensive authority called the "Rural Industries Commission" to plan and coordinate the rural industries which includes traditional industries. They emphasized to be placed on a variety of positive measure of assistance including liberal credit, adequate supply of raw materials, provision for technical assistance and improved appliances and different excise duty etc. In order to achieve decentralized industrialization, growth centers for rural industrialization were adopted as a part of the Backward Area Development Programs in the Fourth Plan.

Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-79)

The rural industrialization programs were extensively used during the Fifth Plan Period. The industrial policy 1977 (The Janatha Government) is noted for its thrust in the growth of village industries. The policy stated that "it is the policy of the Government that whatever can be produced by small and village industries must only be so produced".

Accordingly, reservation of production of the commodities that can be produced in the small scale sector was increased from 180 items to more than 500 items. For the first time in industrial history, a "tiny sector" was defined as one with location in towns with a population of less than 50,000. District industries centers were set up to promote the growth and spread of small scale industries. The fifth five year plan stressed to facilitate the attainment of some major tasks for the removal of poorly and inequality in consumption standards of artisans dependent on traditional industries for fuller and additional productive employment and improvement of their skills so as to improve the levels of earnings. The plan recognized that" a significantly large number of persons already dependent on traditional industries like handlooms, sericulture, coir, khadi and village industries are living below the poverty line. Therefore, the principal objectives are to facilitate the attainment of the major tasks for the removal of poverty through creation of large scale opportunities for fuller and additional productive employment and improvement of their skills so as to improve their level of earning".

Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85)

Many programs were organized during the sixth plan to revitalize and develop existing traditional village industries as well as modern industries. In the sixth Plan, the promotion of village industries continued as an important element in the development strategy particularly because of their very favourable capital- output and high employment intensity. During this plan the main objective for the development of artisans was the improvement in their levels of production and earnings through measures like up gradation of skills and technologies and production oriented marketing and creation of additional employment opportunities for artisans. They stressed the need for development efforts in the proposed plan to they wanted to generate opportunities for full time employment in their industry in rural areas. The national scheme of training of rural youth for Self-Employment was initiated with effect from 15th August, 1979. This scheme aims at equipping the rural youth with necessary skills and technology to enable them to take to vocations of self-employment. The courses under the scheme are designed for youth with the necessary preliminary skills in the handling of vocations like spinning, weaving, blacksmiths, welding and carpentry. The training scheme envisages organizational and optional linkages with other institutions. Supporting services like credit marketing, supply of raw material, design developments etc. are also provided to the trainees well in time. The problem of obtaining raw materials and lack of marketing arrangement have derived the artisans of a good part of the earning which should have accrued to them. The National Bank of Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) was set up to provide refinance facilities loans and advances to artisans.

Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90)

This plan was aimed at strengthening of infrastructure facilities of various levels, improve, productivity and quality and to lessen the dependence on subsidies. The Seventh Plan aimed at the optimum utilization of existing capacities of artisans through supply of adequate inputs including credit and raw materials. The plan paid much attention for improving general levels of welfare of artisans through better working conditions, welfare measures and security of employment.15 Importance was given for strengthening of infrastructural facilities. The plan also pleaded for preservation of craftsmanship and art heritage.

Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97)

The Eighth Plan was emphasized the need for revitalizing and strengthening the village. The Eight Five year plan as rightly emphasized need of revitalizing the village traditional industries and cottage industries with view generate more employment productivity in the rural economy. The improvement skills, employment and productivity of such large artisans would make a major dent on the removal of poverty by uplifting the stranded of living rural population.

Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002)

During the Ninth Plan, the government initiated various schemes to strengthen the village and cottage tiny industries and small scale industries through technology up gradation, modernization, enabling them to enhance the quality it brought about the introduction of modern management practices, providing marketing and other key inputs, increasing availability of credit\loans from financial institution and banks against materials supplied, etc. the Government gives the priority to rural development and rural artisans with a view to generating adequate employment and eradication of poverty .Under the tenth five year plan the government provide financial assistance through regional bank to agriculture and rural development. A Plan scheme, the Indian Leather Development Programme (ILDP) was launched during the Ninth Plan for integrated development of the Indian industry at a total outlay of Rs. 14.50 crore. This scheme provided the much- needed financial assistance to the tanner is for their technological up gradation and better capacity utilization and to undertake adequate pollution control measures.

Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007)

In this plan period, the policies formulated for the encouragement and empowerment programs related to village artisans are implanted in the rural areas. . Concerted efforts are being made through the schemes to enhance the productivity, income and socio- economic status of weavers by upgrading their skills and providing essential inputs. Social security and welfare of artisans is another area which is being given special attention. Schemes like work shed-cum-housing, health package for artisans, group insurance, etc., are being implemented.

Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012)

This plan document rightly said, "Village industries have an important role in generating employment at comparatively low cost" the plan identifies the Khadi Village industry and traditional industry industries as one of the sector with "prospects for high growth in output and creation of new employment opportunities". The artisan's credit card was introduced during the eleventh plan. The eleventh plan has stress the financial inclusion with view covering more of the weaker sections particularly rural artisans and women into the banking fold. Many artisans who had left the sector, started to get involved in the industry. Despite the difficulties faced by the sector in the Eleventh Five Year Plan, it has shown resilience and is growing stronger.

Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-2017)

The twelfth plan has concentrated on the new economic policy which brought about many changes in the Indian economy. The small scale and micro enterprises keeps on progressing but the pace of the progressing but the pace of progress and the growth is very slow in this fast changing word under Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG).

According to the Twelfth Five Year Plan, handicrafts production is expected to double between 2012 and 2017 and exports are projected to grow at the compound annual rate of 18 per cent during the same period. As a result, the craft sector will employ an additional 10 per cent of individuals per year up to that time. Crafts constitute one of the primary sub-sectors within Creative and Cultural Industries, defined by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as "industries which produce tangible or intangible artistic and creative outputs, and which have a potential for wealth creation and income generation through the fostering of cultural assets and the production of knowledge-based goods and services."

CONCLUSION

The Economic conditions of the rural Artisans are very poor in the ear of the Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization. The economic conditions of the rural Artisans in India have been deterioting since the launching of LPG in India. The goods and services relating to the Artisans have been flooded in Indian markets with the low prices. For instance the tashkar silk saree came from China is cheaper than the silk saree manufactured by our Indian waivers. The rural Artisans did not give any protection of their good by government. Hence, they are not in a position to compete with the foreign goods. The Artisans are closing their sheds and becoming agricultural labour and also involved in Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Program in the rural areas government should protect the interest of the rural Artisans and save the lives of rural Artisans.

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