

Chapter IX

CONCLUSION

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Handicrafts are facing the stiff challenge from machine-made goods and efforts should be made for the revival and survival of handicraft items. It has been observed that emphasis should be given on modification and development to improved tools and equipments, which are acceptable and comfortable to the artisans for the production of high quality products as well as are economically viable. These products will then be in a position to surpass the machine made items and will be the prized attraction and possession of the customers. The quality of the products should have to be of International standard. Market intelligence, taste, trends and preferences of the customers are also required to be identified and design diversification shall have to be undertaken accordingly. The price of the products should be competitive and economical too.

It has been observed that there is a need of employment by development of handicrafts sector through locally available resources which may be utilized for the development of handicrafts sector. Employment opportunities can be categorized in three segments namely (1) Self-Employment (2) Regular Employment (3) Daily Waged. Employment efforts should be made to engage the un-employed hill youth for providing them Self-Employment through various development schemes on priority basis.

Various financial institutions have identified financing promotion and development of Handicraft as one of its thrust area and have introduced several measures to enlarge and diversify the credit and developmental activities in the field of industrial Development. They have been providing refinance to banks against the loan for manufacturing, processing and service activities in small, tiny, cottage and village industries including handicrafts. At the same time, a large number of NGOs have realised the importance of income generating activities for rural, poor and have diversified into enterprise promotion through training and saving and credit programme through groups. They have been able to develop a close and enduring relationship with the rural people. These NGOs articulate the local people's needs and aspirations, and translate them into effective action/plans and implements them with people's active participation. The synergic approach and planning between tourism industry and

handicrafts sector can create new milestones in the prosperity and economic growth of the country.

Various schemes like Training Cum Production Centres, Rural Entrepreneurship Development Programme, Training for/by Master Craftsmen, Market Oriented Training, Artisan Guides, Mother Units and Common Service Centres of the government helps artisans for generation and enhancement of livelihood opportunities both in terms of income and employment in sustainable, demonstrative and cost effective manner. There is a growing need for awakening and planning for recognition of handicrafts as a potential sector of Indian economy for optimum utilization of natural resources through human force for creation of self employment and natural wealth. The strength of handicrafts lie in largely inherited creativity and skill of craft persons, traditional and cultural base, low capital investment and high value addition. The opportunities are focused on growing export market especially in developed countries having preferential taste for handicrafts, awareness and usage of handicrafts in dress and lifestyles, technological possibilities for reducing of drudgery and improving qualities

The weaknesses of handicrafts industry rest upon being unorganized with dispersed production bases, lack of working capital at producer's end, diversity of input needs making co-operativisation difficult, market intelligence and perception and the attitude that craft is mainly decorative and non-essential. The challenges and threats to the craft and craftsmen are from growing competition in export market in view of WTO, continued low return weaning craftsman away from their traditional occupation, scarcity of raw material due to depletion and non-presentation of natural mediums and competition from machine made goods.

Analysing the status position of craftsperson in the present scenario, a craftsperson represents the profile of a person with great skill, creativity and capability for self employment, but lacking in finance, and unsure of the market and constantly at the mercy of intermediaries who have access to both finance and market. Therefore, from the planning point of view, it shows that handicrafts sector is full of possibilities for employment and export, but highly disorganised and difficult to service. The approach to planning must be aimed at sustaining the strength and rising to

opportunities, and removing the weakness may be converting them to strength and coping with the threats

It is somewhat amazing that Traditional handicrafts persist within our modern society. Mass production and the availability of new industrial materials and processes are among the most powerful forces adversely affecting the persistence of traditional arts and skills. For well over a century, the traditional hill weaver has been unable to compete with the textile mills. As soon as there were plastic producing bags and containers, the handmade basket declined in practicality. Now that with the induction of traditional design in carpet, ritualistic Brass and copper ware by industries the cheaper substitute are available, it is becoming special to wooden design temple, monasteries, furniture, clothes etc. Our industrial society, what's more, has depleted the environment of a number of resources once used by traditional craftspeople. Cane strips used by basket weaver earlier for binding the basket are rare to find in the hill. Chap plank of good quality for making house and its accessories that is becoming difficult to find have how is it, then, that these weavers, basket makers and other artisans still practice their skills in Darjeeling hill? Fortunately, there are a number of factors that encourage the retention and development of hill crafts. However, various central, state and local agencies have been successful in bringing attention and respect to some traditional heritage in different part of India. Moreover, for this in retrospect, we can credit governmental policy with the revival of certain nearly extinct handicrafts, Government agencies chose to encourage traditional crafts. .

However the study area lacks the efforts of such agencies. Beside the lack of any concrete intervention undertaken by the Government in the past towards developing and initiating a comprehensive approach for scientifically exploitation of area specific advantages and opportunities, as are provided by the nature, so as to promote the expansion of such niche based manufacturing activities, the scarcity in the availability of local raw material and inadequately development of marketing network for selling of goods and articles produced by rural industrial have been recognized two most important factors behind the unsatisfactory growth in establishing various industrial activities in different geographical locations of the state. As unemployment rates remain high in Darjeeling hill , present economic trends are undoubtedly having a similar impact on the retention and development of handicraft industries.

Other than governmental policy, there are many factors that could stimulate the development of traditional crafts. Recently, rise in the cultural activities have sustained a rise in popularity which some attribute to an ethnic revival. Such revivals have the potential to instill pride in cultural elements that set one ethnic group apart from another. The distinctive stylistic difference in design of cloth, artifacts becomes a source of ethnic pride that in turn encourages the growth of that handicraft . This phenomenon may be somewhat related to the general search for quality that is being experienced in market trends today. As consumers in an industrial society, we are constantly bombarded with cheap, poorly fabricated, mass-produced, self-destructing products. The words "handmade," "old-fashioned," and "Traditional handicraft" have in many cases come to represent quality. After all, the quality of a handmade woolen carpet, Yatha coat speaks for itself for decades if not centuries. On a cold night, Grandma's Nambu (Namda)-woolen blanket takes on value, especially if it is only a memory you have as you shiver under a rayon blanket. Undoubtedly, our nostalgic groping for the "good old days" has some relation to a perceived quality of life made possible by traditional ingenuity. Throughout the villages in the Darjeeling hill where farming, plantation and forestry are important, crafts suited to the agrarian life proliferate. There are traditional craftspeople who still carve the finest artifact.

Handicraft industries are an alternative to help maintain steady economic development at local level, and they also create jobs, facilitate the accumulation of financial resources, and contribute to the accumulation and transmission of industrial technology. It plays an important role in intra-community relations, helping to build trust between individuals and providing a foundation for collaboration. These industries are one of the factors that give local communities their unique character. They are a prop for local people's livelihood, while also playing part in the maintenance of social stability and, in many cases, coming to symbolize the sprit of community. The prosperity or decline of local industries thus has a major impact on the economic foundations of the locality and on its economic and social development. However, in the past, there has been a tendency to neglect traditional industries. Some are located in remote areas and have transportation problems, while others have fallen into decline through lack of innovation. In those industries where efforts have been made to diversify, the industry's products have some time lost their special features that gave

the industry its unique character. In this context, attempts are to be made with suitable policy measure for the development of traditional craft in the hill areas of Darjeeling.

The products of handicraft in Darjeeling hill consists of a diversified range viz, Hand-woven products, Embroidery, Thanka painting, Decorative wood crafts, Ornamental and religious wood carvings, Crafted wooden furniture, designed and other wooden artifacts, Basketry, Silver craft, Copper-Brass craft, traditional ritualistic and folk musical instruments, etc. Moreover, statistics on variety, output or employment in the handicraft sector are almost non-existent, but based on a variety of sources the present research study makes a qualified guess that the handicraft sector provides employment around twelve thousands artisans. While much of the artisans has taken handicraft as a complementary activity to a main occupation (mainly agriculture). This complementary activity provides precisely that of extra income needed to bring a household above the “poverty line”. As such, the handicraft sector may be even more important from a poverty reduction point of view than the above-mentioned employment figures indicate. The total value of output is estimated at above Rs 50 crores (US\$ 10 million). Traditional Bamboo craft alone probably account for about 30% of the handicraft sector in terms of employment and output. However, the product does not reach the classified market as it is consumed locally. Production is mainly for the domestic market. A more functional and cheaper imported product increasingly replaces traditional products.

A conclusion is therefore drawn that Darjeeling hill has to export its handicraft products if it is to maintain, or increase, the present level of employment and generate income in the handicraft sector. Some enterprises have already started to market certain niche products on niche markets such as boutique type of silk dresses, table clothes and napkins, home decorative items (viz. cushion and bed covers), bags, souvenir wooden items, Silver craft etc. These items are, however, typically rather expensive as compared to corresponding functional products being mass-produced in several parts in the world. As such, these exports are unlikely to compensate for the declining domestic market and cannot generate the larger numbers of jobs needed. There is therefore a need to identify product categories that are bought in large quantities in the domestic and international market and could be produced in Darjeeling hill on a large scale, based on its low wages and traditional skills. One such product category may be

woolen carpets and Silver craft, maybe with traditional patterns. In Nepal 15 years ago, there was only an embryonic carpet industry, but they had much the same preconditions at that point in time as Darjeeling hill has today, viz. low wages, traditional weaving skills and interesting traditional patterns. Then Nepal started to import good quality wool from New Zealand and good chemical dyes from Switzerland and combined those raw materials with the traditional weaving skills and the traditional Nepalese patterns. Thus, Nepal was able to find a specific market position in the international carpet market and is today exporting around US\$ 100 million annually from a domestic carpet industry providing employment for about 60,000 people. Another example of potential future large-scale handicraft based production may be the gem and jewelry industry. This industry in Thailand alone provides employment for 1.2 million people and generates export revenues amounting to US\$ 2 billion annually. Thailand is trying to move up to the medium- and high-end markets of the gem and jewelry market as it is increasingly feeling the competition in the lower-end, labour intensive market segments from India, China and Vietnam. Darjeeling hill with its domestic resources may be in a position to compete in this huge global market too. It may be worthwhile to explore more in detail the global large “mass handicraft” markets into which Darjeeling hill may tap based on traditional skills, patterns and low wages

In light of the importance of the handicraft sector, it would be advisable to prepare a master plan for development of the sector as well as including handicrafts as a “priority sector” under the Law on Domestic Investment to enable the sector to benefit from incentives under this law. Other types of support may include the introduction of an accreditation system for “living” preservation and promotion of handicrafts as well as the merger of current efforts to support and promote the handicrafts sector into *one* centre, a National Handicrafts Centre. Beside, handicrafts, activities are largely carried out by very small or micro-sized units and households, support regarding raw material supply, training, exports, etc. could preferably be provided by “clustering” of such units. In this context, the application of the Japanese “one village, one product” concept, the Vietnamese “occupational villages” concept or the Thai “One Thomboune, one product” concept may offer interesting opportunities in ‘Darjeeling hill Area’.