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Socio- Economic Condition of Banarasi Sari Weavers: A case study of Lohta, Varanasi District

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ABSTRACT

Banaras has a long route in history and it has been famous as prominent commercial centre in north India. From the very beginning of the civilization, trade and commercial has been the main centre of the attraction and has flourished very well done due to its river side location and its linkage with many parts of India as well as abroad namely Nepal, Bangladesh, China, Thailand. In the present study, we have analyzed the socio economics profile and the problems of Banarasi weavers in Lohta. This study is based on both primary and secondary data source. A primary survey was conducted in Lohta, consisting of 200 respondents chosen random only. The study revealed that the situation of the weavers was worrying they were feeble due to illiteracy, financial constraints, health problems and poverty.

KEYWORDS: Banarasi weavers, socio- economic status, weaver's problems, health problem, poverty

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INTRODUCTION

Varanasi is one of the seven sacred cities of India. Banarasi sari are the pride product of Varanasi and it has contributed a lot in popularizing of Banarasi art craft but in the recent past the glory of the profession has faced and is still on a decrease. Banaras (now Varanasi), the temple town of U.P. is known for world famous brocades and sarees. The sarees are among the finest sarees in India and are known for their gold and silver brocades or zari fine silk and opulent embroidery. The Mughals patronized this art and Persian art and craft easily be noticed. Impact of person culture on the particular profession led to adoption of it predominantly by Muslims. Slowly this profession passed from one generation to another and this became community dominant. Mughal inspired designs such as intricate winning floral and foliate motifs, kalga and bel, a string of upright leaves called jhallar at the other edge of border is a characteristic of these sarees. Other features with small details, metallic visual effects, pallus, jal (anet like pattern) and mina work.

The condition of sari weavers has deteriorated in the recent past and the weaving industry is highly endangered. The causes can be shift competition with artificial fibers, absolute machineries, shortage of economic resources and Govt. aids, lack of technical experience return, lack of raw materials, competition with Chinese silk and south India silk. One of the prominent causes which have led to its down fall is the monotony in design and look. Socio- economic status is combined of economic and sociological total measures of a person's work experience and of an individual of a family is economic and social position in relation to others based on income education and occupation. The socio-economic condition of weavers is pitiable. Extreme cases of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, lack of public awareness, degrading condition of health and segregated nature of living are found.

OBJECTIVES

In the present study an effort has been made to analyze the socio- economic condition of Banarasi sari weavers and their problems in Varanasi. The major objectives of the study are

- To know, education status, health status, housing condition and environmental condition of sari weavers.
- To know the economics condition of sari weavers, and its consequences on the living standard.
- To provide some remedial measures to overcome weavers problems

METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on primary and secondary data obtained from different sources. The primary data have been collected by using well structured questionnaire. For these purpose 200 women respondents were interviewed to collect some information in different area of Lohta. Secondary data has been collected from published and unpublished reports by the government, departments and societies of the handloom sector and also from books, periodic journals and various websites related to present research study.

MAJOR FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Socio- economic survey is a process by which qualitative facts are collected about the social and economic aspects of the community of weavers. For this purpose the data is collected from 200 sample respondents. A structured questionnaire was given to the respondents to collect primary data. The data is analyzed by using the tables on the basis of age, sex, literacy, size of the family, income per month and health ground.

Table 1 records the demographic information of the weavers. During data collection it was found that most of the weavers belonged to middle age group of 16-59 years, because the productivity is relatively more at this age due to their physical capabilities. Younger generation in the weaver's community preferred to take employment in the cities after their higher education. Therefore their involvement is very minimal in weaving. On other hand involvement of older people was less due to their physical health, strength and visual problems.

Table 1 Classification of the respondents on the basis of age

| Sl . no. | Age group | Male Number of respondents | Female Number of respondents |
|----------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 | Younger (Below 15-25) | 16 | 6 |
| 2 | Middle age (Between 16-59) | 130 | 32 |
| 3 | Old Age(Above60) | 12 | 04 |
| | Total | 158 | 42 |

Source: Primary Survey

The weaver's communities have realized the importance of education and the children. Now days they are aware about the role of education and therefore they develop their career by higher education. Nearly one fifth of the weavers were educated up to secondary level, and nearly on fourth up to middle (table 2).

Table 2 Educational level of respondents

| Status | Number of respondents | Percentage |
|---------------|-----------------------|------------|
| Illiterate | 56 | 28 |
| Primary | 44 | 22 |
| Middle | 40 | 20 |
| Secondary | 36 | 18 |
| Sr. Secondary | 20 | 10 |
| Graduation | 04 | 2 |
| Total | 200 | 100 |

Source: Primary Survey

Housing condition represents the economics status of the households in the study area it was found that 15% weavers have Kachcha house, 25% of the them semi-pucca and 66% have pucca houses (table 3).

Table 3 Residential condition of respondents

| Sl.no. | Types of house | No. of respondents | Percentage |
|--------|----------------|--------------------|------------|
| 1 | Kachcha | 30 | 15 |
| 2 | Semi-Pucca | 5 | 25 |
| 3 | Pucca | 132 | 66 |
| 4 | Total | 200 | 100 |

Source: Primary Survey

According to the table 4, 50% of the respondents are earning between Rs. 25001-50000 per year. 30% of the respondents income less than Rs. 25000 per year. Only 5% of the respondents earn above 75000 per year.

Table 4 Annual income of the respondents

| Sl. No. | Annual Income (in Rs.) | No. of respondents | Percentage |
|---------|------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| 1 | Below 25000 | 60 | 30 |
| 2 | 25001-50000 | 100 | 50 |
| 3 | 50001-75000 | 30 | 15 |
| 4 | Above 75001 | 10 | 5 |
| | Total | 200 | 100 |

Source: Primary Survey

According to table 5, 50% of the respondents are working 8 to 12 hours per day. 30% of the respondents are working up to 8 hours per day and 20% of the respondents working more than 12 hours per a day.

Table 5 Working Hours per day of the respondents

| Sl.No. | Working hours per day | No. of respondents | Percentage |
|--------|-----------------------|--------------------|------------|
| 1 | Up to 8 hours | 60 | 30 |
| 2 | 8-12 | 100 | 50 |
| 3 | Above 12 hours | 40 | 20 |
| | Total | 200 | 100 |

Source: Primary Survey

A type of employment is one of the main causes of dissatisfaction with their work. Only 20% had permanent employ while 10% working as daily wages and almost 70% weavers working on contract bases (table 6).

Table 6 Types of Employment of respondents

| Sl. No. | Types of employment | No. of respondents | Percentage |
|---------|---------------------|--------------------|------------|
| 1 | Daily wages | 20 | 10 |
| 2 | Permanent | 40 | 20 |
| 3 | Contractual | 140 | 70 |
| | Total | 200 | 100 |

Source: Primary Survey

Table 7 show the mode of payment of the respondents of study area in which 50% of the respondent's payment is on credit bases. 30% of the respondents purchases the raw material on cases bases. While other 20% of the respondents mode of payment is on the basis of case and credit.

Table 7 Mode of payment given to respondents

| Sl. No. | Mode of payment | No.of respondents | Percentage |
|---------|-----------------|-------------------|------------|
| 1 | Cash | 60 | 30 |
| 2 | Credit | 100 | 50 |
| 3 | Cash and Credit | 40 | 20 |
| | Total | 200 | 100 |

Source: Primary Survey

Table 8 shows the major health ailments and the major health problem 56% respondents suffering for heart problem. 40% respondents are suffering Muscle pain and 82% has T.B., 8% has Asthma and 20% of the respondents are suffering from the weakness of the eye-sight.

Table 8: Health Problems faced by respondents

| Sl.no. | Health problem | No. of respondents | Percentage |
|--------|-----------------|--------------------|------------|
| 1 | Asthma | 16 | 8 |
| 2 | T.B. | 24 | 12 |
| 3 | Muscle Pain | 80 | 40 |
| 4 | Visual Problem | 40 | 20 |
| 5 | Hearing Problem | 44 | 22 |
| 6 | Heart Problem | 112 | 56 |

Source: Primary Survey

CONCLUSION

Weavers are the main pillars of textile industry. But they are the bottom of economic pyramid of this sector. They are suffering among due to their poor socio-economic condition, most of the wearers are illiterate they are facing financial problems, they are not directly linked with selling of their products so they are not able to take benefits. This industry is facing the problem like production cost of the sari is very high so these costly saris are not able to fulfill the daily need and taste of the consumer, lack of proper organization and many more. The condition of the workers is very bad; they are getting low wages for this work. These all factors affected the industry and workers. So efforts are needed otherwise this industry will be only in the history of Banaras. There has been since efforts from Govt. organization in the form of improvement trusts, credits, banking facilities.etc and also bring awareness in social, education and health related matters.

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