

# Role of Human Resource in Handicraft Industry in India



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## Abstract

Indian handicrafts are the true representatives of one of the oldest civilizations of the world. The vast cultural and ethnic diversity has enabled a variety of motifs, techniques and crafts to flourish on this land. Handicrafts sector plays a vital role in the Indian economy, contributing significantly in generating foreign currency for the country. It provides opportunities for a gainful employment (directly and indirectly) to about 6.4 million artisans.

Human Resource is the most important factor of handicraft Industry. One can't imagine for the existence of handicraft Industry in the absence of human resource because it is only the dynamic factor, which keep this industry in existence. Now-a-days the human resources have different faces. They perform different kinds of duties from the point of the imagination of handicraft products till the delivery of finished products to the customers. The importance of human resources in handicraft industry can be imagined with this fact that they perform administrative, operational and strategic duties in this industry, which are the most important and inevitable features of it.

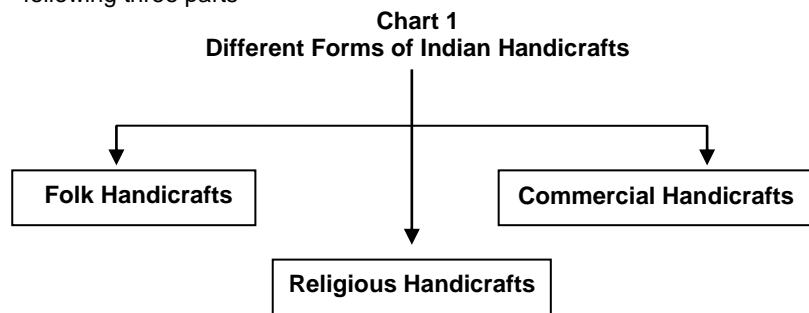
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## Introduction

### Overview of Indian Handicraft Industry

In spite of the rapid social and technological changes that are taking place in the society, crafts are an integral part in the life of an Indian. In the Western world, special artists create craft objects and these products are considered as luxury items. But in India like many other developing countries, it is the main source of employment for a vast majority of the population, next to agriculture.

Handicrafts can be defined simply as objects made by the skill of the hand and which carry a part of the creator as well as centuries of evolutionary tradition. It can range from the simple clay-lamps to the diamond-studded precious items. Handicrafts of India may be classified in following three parts-



Folk Handicrafts are created by the craftsmen for their personal use or for a limited client base. This craftsmanship is the specialty of a particular area. There are craftsmen who are specialized in creating textiles or jewellery which meet the criteria set up by a particular group of people, usually a particular caste or community. They have their own distinctive designs and styles.

Religious Handicrafts are developed around religious centres and themes. These craft items are connected with religious institutions and relevant ceremonies. Various religious places in India are specialized in particular craft items. For example, Kanchipuram in Tamilnadu specializes in weaving clothes for religious ceremonies, particularly made of silk materials.

Specialized craftsmen of a particular group, who are specialized in a particular skill and who can completely master a specific craft item, are classified as Commercial Handicrafts. They even have sub-groups,

which work for particular groups. The tools and techniques of commercial craftsmanship may vary. Weavers, dyers, printers, goldsmiths and carpenters are some of examples of commercial craftsmen.

#### Aim of the Study

The main aim of present research study is to enumerate the importance of HRD in Handicraft Industry in district Saharanpur and to draw the attention of the government, owners of the handicraft industry and the artisans towards the importance of this industry so that the present status of this industry may be uplifted to the satisfactory level and it may prove helpful in contributing to the economy of district Saharanpur as specific and to the country as a whole.

#### History of Handicrafts in India

Trade links between India and the rest of the world existed from ancient period. Handicrafts remained an important commodity in world trade from primeval age and export of handicraft items was also an important part of the Indian economy of that time. India, being the home of cotton, traded textile products with the Far East and the Western world. Indian textiles and handicraft work on that with the help of *permanent dyes* were accepted throughout the world. Roman trade documents mention that *printed silk* was exported from India to Europe from the 6th century A.D. The Arab sailors supplied the Indian handicraft items to the Far- East.

Under the good patronage of the early Mughals, India's handicrafts reached its pinnacle of perfection. Crafts like carpets, textiles and jewellery were developed into fine arts. The famed Mughal Emperors namely Akbar, Shahjahan and Jahangeer invited skilled craftsmen from all over the world and blend their native ideas with Indian craft techniques and skills. Brocading and velvet manufacturing developed rapidly in India than in their native Arabian countries. But with the break-up of the Mughal Empire and the growing enmity between the smaller Princely States, local crafts of India lost their centuries old royal patronage.

As the East India Company started interference in India, the volume of trade of handicraft items reduced dramatically. England flooded the Indian market with its cheap machine-made items, which ousted the homemade crafts work of the country. A number of craftsmen were turned on the breadline overnight. Those, who continued with their traditional craftsmanship, had to compete with the cheap and standardized machine-made goods and didn't struggle for a long period. Indian handicrafts faced its worst period at that time. Only patronage of Princely States and Local Jamidars supports a little to the aged old handicraft culture of the country.

Gandhiji's *Swadeshi Movement* focused on the plight of the Indian craftsmen and on the need of reviving the ancient craft traditions of the country. He struggled a lot for the survival of craftsmanship in India and for the betterment of craftsmen.

After Independence, *The Handicrafts Board* was set up to look into the difficulties of the dying handicrafts products. Financial support was provided to different handicraft sectors and awareness campaigns were launched at national and international levels to promote handicraft items. Slowly demand grew up for these items both in India

and abroad. Recent export figures show that India is continuously making progress in many handicraft commodities. In the present India, the handicrafts industry is widely dispersed. Each region is specializing in one or other type of handicraft activity.

Despite the continuous growth of handicrafts industry in India, the average earnings of the craftsmen when compared to other fields are very low. Hence, the younger generation of craftsmen is moving on to other fields. Improving educational system and lifestyles of the middle class people contributes a lot for eroding of the native crafts in India. Cheap plastic items have now flooded the market and people have left out the age-old clay, wood and metal containers. Also they have moved onto wearing synthetic clothes avoiding comfortable cotton woven items, just for their patterns and low cost. The need of the hour is to provide assistance for the craftsmen for the improvement of their techniques, make easy availability of good raw materials, promote direct marketing channels and provide credit facilities and other socio-economic benefits which are enjoyed by the organized sector of the country.

#### Wood-Crafts Industry of India

The tradition of woodcraft exists in India for ancient times. The early wood-carved temples of south India are the witness of the fact. Different regions of the country had developed its own style of structures and carvings in the arena of wood craft. Local traditions and locally available wood varieties influence them a lot. Number of other handicrafts items has been developed in woodwork all over India. Toys for children, utility goods and religious objects are the main ones.

The whole of North India has a tradition of carved wooden doors with intricate designs, brass inlay and trellis work for the windows.

**Assam**, which has extensive forests, has a rich tradition of wood works. Their places of worship included large carvings of mythical figures like, Garuda, Hanuman, Nandi etc.

**Nagaland** has a tradition of manufacturing statues as well as commemorative pillars in wood.

**Manipur** is an important centre for Tarkashi, metal thread work, done in wooden furniture.

In **Bengal**, the clay houses have large wooden pillars and beams with intricate carvings.

In **Kashmir**, the houses are lined with wood, with ceilings worked in geometrical patterns and lattice-worked windows made up of pieces of wood locally known as *Pinjara*. The state also produces many wood carved items like furniture, screens, boxes, bowls, etc. These are mostly prepared from walnut wood, which is in abundance here.

**Tamilnadu** has a well developed tradition of woodcarving used for decorating houses and temples. The Tanjore dolls made of wood form a part of the rituals followed here and they are also used for educating small children.

**Andhra Pradesh** has a tradition of manufacturing woodcarvings for religious centres. The Tirupathi red dolls are meant for sales for the pilgrims.

**Kerala** state has one of the richest traditions in woodcarving. The houses of the state have carved pillars and beams. Most of the houses have a carved family temple.

Sankheda in **Gujarat** is an important centre for lathe-worked lacquered furniture. The surface is painted with designs on a lacquered background. Wooden blocks for printing of textiles items are also made in Gujarat. The design is first stencilled on the wood and then the intervening spaces are chipped out.

**Karnataka** is specialized in sandalwood carving. Earlier the deities were carved out of sandalwood but now boxes are their speciality. The *Srigandha* variety of sandalwood is used for this purpose. Mysore city developed an intricate form of ivory-inlay on wood. The ceilings and doors of Mysore Palaces are expressions of this special skill of its artisans.

In **Orissa**, the main deity of the famed Puri temple and Lord Jagannath is reproduced in wood. A number of wooden masks are also made for the traditional Sahi-Jatra.

In **Uttar Pradesh**, Saharanpur is an important centre in woodcarving. Screens and room-dividers with carved patterns and ivory-inlays with minute details are produced here. Nagina is another important wood carving centre of U.P.

Thus the woodcraft is an old cultural tradition of India dispersed all over the country more or less in different ways. It is not only associated with spiritual items but also a great source of decorative export products.

#### Contribution of Handicraft Industry in Indian Economy

Indian handicrafts are the true representatives of one of the oldest civilizations of the world. The vast cultural and ethnic diversity has enabled a variety of motifs, techniques and crafts to flourish on this land. Handicrafts sector plays a vital role in the Indian economy, contributing significantly in generating foreign currency for the country. It provides opportunities for a gainful employment (directly and indirectly) to about 6.4 million artisans ([www.jagran.com](http://www.jagran.com)).

The handicrafts sector is characterized by low-capital investment and high value-addition, reflecting its high potential for contribution to the Indian economy. The promotion of handicrafts is the primary responsibility of the State Governments. However, the Office of the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts) has been implementing various developmental schemes at the central level to

supplement the efforts of the States for the promotion of handicrafts sector.

Indian handicraft industry has generated big demand all over the world due to its unique appeal and craftsmanship. The following table 1 presents the figures of exports of handicrafts products from India during study period

**Table 1**  
**Study of Exports of Handicrafts Products from India (From 2000-01 to 2009-10)**

Year	Value of Products (Rs. in Crore)	Fixed Based Indices	Chain Based Indices	Trend Values
2000-01	9270.50	100.00	100	5887.60
2001-02	9205.63	99.30	99.30	8657.79
2002-03	10933.67	117.94	118.77	11427.98
2003-04	12765.16	137.70	116.75	14198.18
2004-05	15255.90	164.56	119.51	16968.37
2005-06	17276.71	186.36	113.25	19738.56
2006-07	20963.11	226.13	121.34	22508.76
2007-08	25278.35	272.68	120.58	25278.95
2008-09	28326.51	305.56	112.06	28049.15
2009-10	34259.14	369.55	120.94	30819.34

Source: Annual Reports of Ministry of Textile (2000-01 to 2009-10), Government of India, New Delhi.

Table 1 reveals the facts that the exports of handicraft products from India increased from Rs. 9270.50 crore in 2000-01 to Rs. 34259.14 crore in 2009-10 registering an increase of 269.55% during the study period. The trend of the same remained moving upward throughout the study period. The chain base index numbers bring this fact into light that generally the annual growth rate of exports of handicraft products from India fluctuating from 12.06% to 21.34% during the study period barring the years 2001-02 in which it slashed down by .07%.

The figures of table 1.1 don't present a satisfying view of progress of export of handicraft products of India in the present globalized trade environment and make an indication to do something more fruitful for exploiting the complete handicraft export avenues of the country.

Table 2 presents the figures related to share of selected sub-sectors of handicrafts industry in total exports of handicraft items from the country from the year 2000-01 to 2009-10.

**Table 2**  
**Share of Handicraft Products of Selected Sub-Sectors in Indian Handicraft Exports (from 2000-01 to 2009-10)**

Year	Carpet	Metal-Craft Items	Wood-Craft Items	Embroidery Items	Other Products	Total	
2000-01	Value	2315.15	1778.10	434.44	1964.78	2778.03	9270.50
	%	24.97	19.18	4.69	21.19	29.97	100.00
2001-02	Value	2436.13	1758.90	431.88	1931.97	2646.75	9205.63
	%	26.46	19.11	4.69	20.99	28.75	100.00
2002-03	Value	2590.26	2165.21	511.35	2477.75	3189.1	10933.67
	%	23.69	19.80	4.68	22.66	29.17	100.00
2003-04	Value	2300.04	2642.42	609.07	3286.05	3927.6	12765.18
	%	18.02	20.70	4.77	25.74	30.77	100.00
2004-05	Value	2223.20	3364.93	721.18	4199.86	4746.73	15255.90
	%	14.57	22.06	4.73	27.53	31.11	100.00

2005-06	Value	2749.86	3662.98	853.06	4711.45	5299.36	17276.71
	%	15.92	21.20	4.94	27.27	30.67	100.00
2006-07	Value	3421.18	4653.81	1014.61	5951.43	5922.08	20963.11
	%	16.32	22.20	4.84	28.39	28.25	100.00
2007-08	Value	4628.47	5452.54	1266.45	7057.72	6873.18	25278.35
	%	18.31	21.57	5.01	27.92	27.19	100.00
2008-09	Value	5005.29	6328.14	1334.18	8078.72	7580.17	28326.51
	%	17.67	22.34	4.71	28.52	26.76	100.00
2009-10	Value	6468.13	7739.14	1709.53	10394.22	7948.12	34259.14
	%	18.88	22.59	4.99	30.34	23.20	100.00

**Source: Annual Reports of Ministry of Textile (2000-01 to 2009-10), Government of India, New Delhi.**

It is clear from the analysis of table 2 that Carpet and Metal-Craft handicraft items enjoyed the maximum part of total handicraft export of the country which remained between approximate 35% and 45% of total exports of handicraft during the study period.

On the other side, Embroidery items are increasing its' share in total exports of handicraft from the country during the decade taken for the study. The share of Embroidery items in total handicraft export was only 21.19% in the year 2000-01 which increased to 30.34% in 2009-10. It is a good sign for the growth of this particular sub-sector of handicraft industry.

The share of Wood-Craft items in total export of handicraft products from India remained almost static during the study period. It was 4.69% in the year 2000-01 and reached to 4.99% in 2009-10. Though the wood-craft industry has got a significance place in the handicraft sector of India yet it seems that it is not properly admired and catered by the authorities which are responsible for promotion of export of handicraft items of India. There is an urgent need to pay sincere attention for the improvement of export of wood-craft items of the country for the promotion of wood craft industry in India.

#### **Significance of Human Resource Development in Handicraft Industry**

Human Resource is the most important factor of handicraft Industry. One can't imagine for the existence of handicraft Industry in the absence of human resource because it is only the dynamic factor, which keep this industry in existence. Now-a-days the human resources have different faces. They perform different kinds of duties from the point of the imagination of handicraft products till the delivery of finished products to the customers. The importance of human resources in handicraft industry can be imagined with this fact that they perform administrative, operational and strategic duties in this industry, which are the most important and inevitable features of it. One can study the importance of human resources by studying their roles at different levels with the help of following headings-

#### **Human Resource as an Administrator**

The administrative roles of human resources include policy formulation and implementation, records maintenance, welfare administration, legal compliance etc. related to the handicraft industry. The top level human resources (Managers) work as policy makers. They help in making the policies regarding the recruitment of employees, their remunerations, development & promotion, arrangements of finance, up keeping of their handicraft units, satisfaction of customers and legal formalities etc.

They also work as Administrative Experts.

They see the overall administration of their handicraft units from the point of starting the handicraft activities to the point of the satisfaction of customers, employees and the owners of handicrafts' units. Further, they have to satisfy all the queries raised from the side of customers, local authorities and State Government. Besides, they have to maintain the standard of their handicraft units by their administrative skills.

The top-level human resource also works as an advisor. The Human Resource managers perform their functions by advising, suggesting, counseling, and helping the line managers in discharging their responsibilities relating to grievance redressal, conflict resolution, employee selection and training, providing information regarding labor laws regarding the workers engaged in handicraft industry etc.

Thus, it can be said that the Administrative roles of top-level human resources have their immense importance in handicraft industry and it cannot be ignored at any level.

#### **Human Resource as a Manager**

Managerial role of human resource are strategic in nature and include recruiting, training and developing the artisans and employees of the handicraft units, coordinating human resource activities with the actions of managers and supervisors throughout the organization and resolving differences between employees working in the handicraft units.

Handicraft managers have to use their experience to good effect while laying down lucrative career paths to new recruits without increasing the financial burden to the handicraft units. Apart from talent acquisition, talent retention is also important in handicraft industry. To this end the top level managers have to find skill deficiencies from time to time, offer meaningful training opportunities and bring out the latent potential of the staff through intrinsic and extrinsic rewards which are valued to the employees.

Moreover, the handicraft manager is often deputed to act as a linking pin between various departments of the handicraft unit. The whole exercise is meant to develop with divisional heads, using personal relations and communication skills of human resource executives to the maximum possible extent. He also acts as a mediator in case of friction between groups of employees and tries to maintain harmony in the handicraft unit.

Thus, it can be said that also the managerial role of top-level human resource have their

paramount importance in handicraft industry and it cannot be over-looked at any stage.

#### **Human Resource as an Artisan**

The success of handicrafts increasingly depends on the knowledge, skills and abilities of its artisans and workers working at different levels as they help in establishing a set of core competencies that distinguish their handicraft units from their competitors. The innovativeness of artisans keeps the handicraft unit in profit. The strategic role of Human Resource Management of the Handicraft Industry focuses attention on how to enable ordinary artisans to turn out extraordinary performance, taking care of their ever-changing expectations.

In this way it can be concluded that also the role of artisan is the most important feature in handicraft industry and it cannot be under estimated in any way.

#### **Conclusion**

In the end, it is worth mentioning that the whole Handicraft Industry is the hub of human resources. If this human factor is excluded from this industry, nobody can imagine the existence of it. If one peep into the deeps of handicraft industry, it is found that this industry depends only on human resources at every level whether they are the owners, managers, supervisors, artisans or other working staff. Each of these human resources has its separate immense importance in handicraft industry and nobody of them cannot be ignored or undervalued.

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