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TRADITIONAL ARTISANS OF ODISHA: PROBLEMS, PROSPECTS AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE CRAFT

Abstract

Handicraft sector in Odisha has undergone tremendous change in the last couple of decades. The precarious nature of handicraft sector of the state indicates towards serious problems at the grassroots level, which need to be understood and examined to recapture the glory of the craft tradition and bring welfare to the artisan communities. In this context, this paper aims to explore the everyday lives of traditional artisans of Odisha, to map out the problems related to the craft. The objective of the paper is to examine the living and working conditions of the artisans and document the problems of artisans relating to the availability of raw material, production, marketing and sustainability of the craft. Based on an empirical study of 1000 traditional artisans practicing ten different crafts, this study revealed that the artisans are facing several challenges concerning production of their craft, which need to be addressed for sustainable livelihood of the artisans as well as long-term availability of the craft.

Keywords: *Traditional artisans, Handicraft, Crafts of Odisha*

Introduction

Handicrafts are distinctive expressions of art, culture, and tradition of a society, which help in retaining the society's unique historical heritage. The Encyclopedia Britannica defines handicraft as 'occupation of making by hand usable products graded with visual appeal. Handicrafts encompass activities that require a broad range of skills and equipment, including needlework, lace making, weaving, printed textiles, decoration, basketry, pottery, ornamental metalworking, jewellery, leatherworking, woodworking, glassblowing, and the making of the stained glass' (Venkatesan 2009). The traditional handicrafts of Odisha have played a crucial role in representing the state's cultural elements and traditional ethos throughout the world. Handicrafts artisans of Odisha are well known for their flawless craftsmanship, quality of design and sense of colour. Nevertheless, it is beyond ambiguity that an average traditional artisan

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leads a precarious, fractured and marginalized existence. Despite the recent scenarios of economic globalisation and market connectedness, the traditional handicraft artisans still live in peripheries of both global and local capitalist economies (Sankaran 2018; Scrase, 2003). The unorganised nature of handicraft industry creates further hurdles to this sector. Handicraft sector in Odisha has undergone tremendous change in the last couple of decades. Notwithstanding the higher cultural and traditional significance of Odisha's handicraft items, last decades have witnessed a downward trend in terms of export of craft items from the state and the number of employments the sector has generated (GoO 2014). As per the available estimate, employment generation through handicrafts and cottage industries in Odisha has declined from 36,900 in 2001-02 to 9,200 in 2011-12; which further declined to 5,793 by 2017-18 (GoO 2018). Such a precarious nature of handicraft sector of the state indicates towards serious problems at the grassroots level, which need to be understood and examined to recapture the glory of the craft tradition and bring welfare to the artisan communities. In this context, this paper aims to explore the everyday lives of traditional artisans of Odisha, to map out the problems related to the craft. The objective of the paper is to examine the living and working conditions of the artisans and document the problems of artisans relating to the availability of raw material, production, marketing and sustainability of the craft.

The paper is based on primary data gathered through empirical research from 1000 traditional artisan households, engaged in 10 different types of craft occupations, such as (1) appliqué work, (2) brass & metal ware, (3) cane & bamboo craft, (4) conch & seashells, (5) dhokra work, (6) grass, leaf & fiber craft, (7) horn & bone craft, (8) pattachitra painting, (9) silver & filigree work, and (10) stone carving craft. 100 artisan households were randomly identified from each of these craft occupations for empirical data collection. Personal interview, observation and Focused Group Discussion (FGD) were used as relevant techniques to collect the required data from the field. The paper is divided into five sections. Following the introduction, the second section provides an overview of the institutional context of the handicraft sector in Odisha. The third section reviews the theoretical literature pertaining to traditional craft and modernity, and the fourth section discusses the results and findings of the study. The fifth section provides summary and conclusion of the study.

Institutional Context of Handicraft Sector in Odisha

The Directorate of Handicrafts & Cottage Industries, Government of Odisha has identified and approved 49 categories of handicrafts, which are grouped into the following four categories based on their development potential and present status in the market:

- Crafts with high development potential
- Crafts with declining development potential

- Languishing craft
- Newly emerged crafts

Table 1 depicts a detailed mapping of these four broad categories of crafts (see Table 1):

Table 1: Classification of Major Craft Items of Odisha based on Development Potential

| Crafts with high development potential | Crafts with declining development potential | Languishing crafts | Newly emerged crafts |
|--|---|--------------------|----------------------|
| Stone carving | Wooden painted toys | Horn work | Coconut shell |
| Brass and metal craft | Artistic Footwear | Lacquer work | Root craft |
| Dhokra casting | Artistic mat | Solapath | Straw craft |
| Silver filigree | Batik painting | Beattle nut work | Carpet Craft |
| Cane and bamboo craft | Cloth flower | Art leather | Artificial Bonsai |
| Appliqué and craftwork | Durry carpet | Clay toys | Soft toys |
| Pottery and terracotta | Embroidery | Theatrical dress | |
| Palm leaf and engraving | Gopa craft | Paddy craft | |
| Art and textiles(fie and dye) | Korea leaf products | Jai khadi work | |
| Tribal jewellery | Seashell | | |
| Fibercraft | Meta craft | | |
| Coir craft | Palm leaf decorative | | |
| Costume jewellery | Papier Mache | | |
| Jem stone processing | Sabai grass products | | |
| Golden grass | Wooden craft | | |
| <i>Patta</i> and tasar painting | Zari | | |
| Jute craft | | | |

Source: Dash, 2011

Some of the prominent handicrafts of Odisha include: Brass and metal works, Silver filigree work, Appliqué work, Stone Carving Stone wire, *Pattachitra* Horn work, Lacquer, Golden Grass, Ivory, Wood Work, Artistic Mat, Wood Carving, Wooden painted toys, Sea-shell work, Palm leaf, Clay toys (Terracotta), *Solapith* work, Customs jewellery, *Dhokra* casting, Paper machine, Cane & Bamboo works, etc. In Odisha, numbers of artisans are engaged as both full time and part in the handicraft sector, making it their source of livelihood. According to estimates, 1.30 lakhs artisans are engaged in different handicraft sector in the state (Kanungo 2015). Odisha has 271 craft clusters and 27,369 Self Help Groups (SHGs) and 193 Artisans Cooperative Societies. Bhubaneswar, Puri and Konark are the prominent three *Urban Hats* of Odisha.

The institutional mapping of the handicraft sector in Odisha involved the following organisations, which are responsible for the promotion of the crafts in Odisha.

State Cooperative Handicraft Corporation –Utkalika

The ‘*Utkalika*’ is the Odisha State Co-operative Handicrafts Corporation

Limited, which is organised under the state industry department. *Utkalika* is the apex cooperative society, which provides marketing support to other primary handicraft communities and artisans. It takes initiatives to organise marketing possibilities both inside and outside of the state through organising exhibitions.

Craft Council of India (CCI)

In Odisha, the CCI helps the artisans to concentrate on securing better livelihoods from craft production in the context of making the traditional craft skills relevant and marketable. The CCI arranges exhibitions, sales, design, education, training, product development, trade contacts and market feedback.

Directorate of Export Promotion & Marketing, Odisha

The Directorate of Export Promotion & Marketing, Odisha is the Nodal Agency, which gives marketing support to the registered industrial units and the rate contract holding industrial units of the State Government. It has been set up to promote the export of goods from the State of Odisha and to provide marketing assistance to Small-scale Service Institutes (SSI) units of the State.

State Institute for Development of Arts & Crafts (SIDAC)

SIDAC facilitates the SHG, Cooperative Societies and associations of craft persons to arrange initiatives to promote capacity building, transfer and upgrades the craft and art skills to the next generations. SIDAC takes efforts to raise funds to the craft welfare programs by grant and loans through state and central government policies and also expands existing schemes and programmes.

National Small Industries Corporation (NSCI)

NSCI acts as a service provider for development of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) in Odisha, with special emphasis to the educated unemployed youth in search of self-employment through up-gradation of the existing facilities. It promotes entrepreneurship development and provides financial assistance for skill up-gradation initiatives.

‘Traditional’ Craft in an Age of ‘Modernity’: A Theoretical Understanding

Modernity and traditional craft may sound antithetical to each other, considering the former’s emphasis on standardize mass production using machine tools and the latter’s reliance on hand-made production at households with no or limited outside labour. Traditional artisanship can be understood as skills or occupations that mostly produce artistic goods manually, which are

passed to successive generations (Venkatesan, 2009). These occupations are deep-rooted in tradition and focused on subsistence economies, predating industrial revolution. However, this may not lead one to conclude that all old occupations are traditional. Many occupations, which have been practiced since ancient times – such as teaching, medicine, music, construction, etc. – are now considered as modern, because of their adaptation of new technologies and incorporation of new institutional frameworks. It is important to highlight that tradition and modernity cannot be distinguished based on chronological timelines of ‘old’ and ‘new’, but are complex social phenomena that invokes a distinction based on embedded ideologies and values of rationality, production technologies, knowledge system, levels of mechanization, systems of governance and integration with global capitalist modes of production and marketing (Hoselitz, 1960; Huntington, 1971; Inkeles, 1969; Lerner, 1958; Levy, 1965; O’Connel, 1976). Corollary, instead of temporal considerations of old and new, traditional occupations are based on their traditional mode of practicing the occupation, the knowledge system from which the skill sets are drawn, institutional framework within which these occupations function.

Prior to industrial revolution, all forms of production, including those that required highly skilled labour, were carried out using simple tools and raw materials from nature. However, with the advent of industrial revolution and modernity, traditional artisan mode of production was replaced with mechanized mass production and circulation of goods in global capitalist markets. The traditional handicraft system too has come in close proximity with modernity, resulting in significant changes in the design, production and craftsmanship of the occupation. Commodity based production, fashion-oriented market and modern means of transportation of artisan goods are generating big market for traditional handicraft sector, but at the same time, it is jeopardizing the heritage of traditional crafts, questioning its very existence and authenticity. Several scholars have highlighted the negative impact of modernity on traditional handicraft sector and how the poor artisans have to bear the brunt of mechanization and commercialization that accompany modernisation and economic development (Jena, 2010; Parthasarathy, 1999; Vedakepat, 2013). These works often regarded modernisation, capitalist economic development and globalization of market as hurdles for sustenance and sustainability of the handicraft sector. However, in the wake of debates about critique to industrialism (Steinberg, 1986), limits to growth and modernism (McCutcheon, 1979; Meadows, 1972), sustainable livelihood frameworks (Chambers and Conway, 1991) and the renewed interest in socio-cultural and indigenous dimensions of development (Agrawal, 1995); handicraft sector is now being perceived as a source of sustainable livelihoods and a medium of expression of plural cultural identities of the subaltern. Instead of viewing modernity as a threat to traditional crafts, this new paradigm has begun to stress the potentials of handicraft sector to address the problems of unemployment and out-migration, and to promote sustainable development, livelihoods, creative diversity and indigenous identity (UNESCO,

1995, 2006). Considering the potentials of generating rural non-farm employment, foreign exchange and non-capital-intensive growth of the handicraft sector, there has been a change in attitude of government and policy makers towards this sector. Consequently, the handloom sector, which was once considered as a 'sunset industry' and burden to the welfare state, is now being perceived as "hope-looms" for its promises of sustainable and inclusive growth (Planning Commission, 2007).

However, does this mean that the newfound interest in the handicraft sector and the emerging paradigm highlighting the indigenous culture can be perceived as anti-modern? Instead, it can be argued that the revival of interest in handicraft sector is neither an anti-modernist ideology of rejecting the western/modern values, nor any nostalgic romanticism with primordial identities and pre-industrial modes of production (Ratnam, 2011). This points towards syncretism of old and new, tradition and modern, a celebration of cultural pluralism and an amalgamation of creative human dexterity with precision of machine. Taking clue from recent developments in social theory (Eisenstadt, 2000, Dussel, 1993, 2000; Rodriguez Magda, 2004, 2019) we may conceptualise such changes in handicraft sector as a move towards 'trans-modernity', which breaks away from hegemonic and homogenizing forces of western modernity. Modernism entailed a complete rupture from pre-industrial economic organisations, traditional social fabrics and plural cultures; and their replacement by principles of modern/western scientism, rationality and universalism. On the contrary, 'global trans-modernism' refers to transformations brought about by various contemporary global processes and technological innovations, which at the same time recognize the diverse and plural cultural identities of the subalterns, who were pushed to margins by the project of modernity, and hence hitherto remained at the periphery (Aliaga-Lavrijsen, 2018; Rodriguez Magda, 2011). In this conceptualization of trans-modernity, the hegemonic universality of the modernisation project gets replaced by 'pluriversality' of the inter-connected, globalized world, with a planetary vision of sustainability (Dussel, 1985). Viewed in this sense, transmodern handicraft sector, therefore, represents an amalgamation of plural cultures and creative diversity; multiple modes of production, involving hand-crafted skills and machine production; hybridization of traditional aesthetics and modern sensibility. It is not uncommon to see contemporary handicrafts manifesting such hybridization of machine production and hand-crafted items. However, such a conceptualization of transmodern handicraft requires an understanding that 'traditional handicraft' is neither static nor ahistorical, but as a dynamic sector, which is constantly evolving and redefining the relationship with the past and the present; and challenging the monolithic, totalizing, unidimensional and hegemonic view of development (Ratnam, 2011).

Results & Discussion

For the purpose of empirical study, a representative sample of 1000

traditional artisan households was drawn from 10 different craft occupations, spread across six districts of Odisha. The details of the identified craft, district, block, Panchayat and the villages from which the 1000 sample artisan households were drawn are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Sample Design and Crafts identified for Empirical Work

| Name of the Craft | District | Block | Gram Panchayat | Village | Sample |
|---------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|--|-------------|-------------|
| 1. Appliqué Work | Puri | Pipili | Pipili NAC | | 100 |
| 2. Brass & Metal Ware | Khordha | Balianta | PratapSasan | Rathijema | 100 |
| 3. Cane & Bamboo | Gajapati | Rayagada | Kainpur | Kainpur | 100 |
| 4. Conch & Seashells | Puri | Puri | Puri Municipality | | 100 |
| 5. Dhokra Work | Dhenkanal | Dhenkanal | Saptasajya | Sadeibareni | 100 |
| 6. Grass, Leaf & Fiber | Kendrapara | Kendrapara | Kapileswar | Jajanga | 100 |
| 7. Horn & Bone Craft | Gajapati | Parlakhemundi | Parlakhemundi NAC | | 100 |
| 8. Pattachitra (Painting) | Puri | Puri | Malatipatpur | Raghurajpur | 100 |
| 9. Silver & Filigree Work | Cuttack | Cuttack | Cuttack Municipal Corporation | | 100 |
| 10. Stone Carving | Khordha | Bhubaneswar | Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation | | 100 |
| Total: 10 Crafts | 6 districts | 9 blocks | 3 Municipalities, 2 NACs, 5 GPs | | 1000 |

Source: Field Survey

The everyday life of artisans is an amalgamation of their material existence and non-material imaginations of craft design and creation. Therefore, instead of adopting a cultural approach to the craft, the present study attempts to comprehend the interconnectedness of the objects of craft (including its artistic appeal, creativedexterity and symbolic meaning) and different stakeholders of the craft sector in a transmodern world (Fabian & Szombati-Fabian, 1980; Venkatessan, 2009; Banerjee and Malakar, 2020). The study, thus, begins with the assumption that the lived realities of the artisans are intertwined with their prevailing socio-economic conditions and craft production.

Socio-Economic Profile of Traditional Artisans of Odisha

Out of the 1000 respondents interviewed for the study, 820 (82 %) were male, and the remaining 180 (18 %) were female. Based upon the skill of the artisans and the nature of engagement with the production process, we identified two broad types of craftspersons, i.e. master craftspersons (66.5 %) and helpers (33.5 %). A master craft person is typically a skilled person with sufficient experience of producing the craft, while the helper is a new entrant into the craft production, who is still in the process of learning the skills of craft making.

Caste, Education and Housing: Caste remains as the most prominent social identity in India, which determines access to several other resources in life. It is not only an instrument of spatial and social segregation of people, but also is an element of occupational segregation. The first entry of Table 3 depicts the distribution of artisans into different social categories (castes). It can be deduced from the data that the majority (55.9 %) of the artisans belonged to OBC category, followed by General Caste category (22.8 %), and Scheduled Castes (14.7 %). Only 6.6 percent of artisans belonged to the Scheduled Tribe (ST) category. A substantial majority of artisans (69.3 %) reported having completed their high school, followed by 12.7 per cent, who

have studied up to intermediate level. The number of illiterate artisans in the total sample was very less (1.6 %) (see entry 2 in Table 3). A majority of the respondents (61.5 %) resided in nuclear families. Less than one-third of the respondents (30.2 %) lived in *pucca* houses, around one-fourth (26 %) lived in *kutch* houses; and the remaining (43.8 %) lived in semi-*pucca* houses. A substantial majority (89.6 %) reported to be staying in their own houses (see Table 3).

Table 3: Social Category and Housing Conditions of Artisans

| Indicators | Categories | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------|----------------|-----------|------------|
| 1. Caste | ST | 66 | 6.6 |
| | SC | 147 | 14.7 |
| | OBC | 559 | 55.9 |
| | General | 228 | 22.8 |
| 2. Educational Attainment | Illiterate | 16 | 1.6 |
| | Primary | 115 | 11.5 |
| | High | 693 | 69.3 |
| | Intermediate | 127 | 12.7 |
| | Graduate | 49 | 4.9 |
| 3. Family Type | Nuclear Family | 615 | 61.5 |
| | Joint Family | 385 | 38.5 |
| 4. Type of House | Kutch | 260 | 26.0 |
| | Semi- pucca | 438 | 43.8 |
| | Pucca | 302 | 30.2 |
| 5. Ownership of House | Rented | 104 | 10.4 |
| | Own | 896 | 89.6 |

Source: Field Survey

Economic Status, Assets and Liabilities: Obtaining income data from respondents engaged in any informal sector is a challenging task. We, therefore, took utmost care in gathering this data from the respondents by inquiring their expenditure, selling of handicrafts, agricultural productions from land etc. We urged the respondents to consider their recent spending to arrive at their monthly income, since most of the respondents did not have any fixed source of monthly income. The first entry in Table 4 depicts the distribution of the respondents based on their reported monthly income. Out of the total 1000 respondents, 369 respondents (36.9 %) stated that they earned up to Rs. 10,000 per month, while little less than one-third (30.7 %) earned between Rs. 10,001 to Rs. 20,000 per month.

Poverty remained as one of the main challenges for the artisans. The present study revealed that more than half of the respondents (53 %) belonged to Below Poverty Line (BPL) category (see Table 4). Along with inquiring their poverty status, we also attempted to understand the debt situation of traditional artisans of Odisha. It was revealed that more than one-third of the respondents (37.3 %) were indebted due to several reasons (see entry 3, Table 4). Some of these respondents reported that poor socio-economic background, the financial liability of household and absence of proper marketing opportunities to sell

their handicraft produces were the significant factors, which compelled the artisans to borrow from local money lenders.

One of the ways to improve the economic condition of traditional artisans of Odisha is by making them a part of the financial inclusion process and enhances their economic security. Both financial inclusion and socio-economic security play a significant role in economic well-being and poverty alleviation process (Karmakar, Banerjee & Mohapatra, 2011; Chakravarty & Pal, 2013). We, therefore, made an attempt to examine the access of traditional artisans to formal and informal financial institutions and economic security. Data presented in entry 4 of Table 4 revealed that less than half of the artisans (41 %) had access to formal financial institutions like banks, and a meagre 7 per cent respondents possessed credit cards. Further, the study revealed that less than one-third of the respondents (31.6 %) were covered under life insurance schemes (see Table 4). It was a general opinion among the traditional artisans that they do not have any additional money to save in bank accounts. Further, it was stated that earning from the craft is just enough for subsistence, and hence, they did not feel the need to connect with formal financial institutions.

Table 4: Economic Status and Financial Inclusion of Artisans

| Indicators | Categories | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1. Monthly Income (in ¹) | Up to 10,000 | 369 | 36.9 |
| | 10001-20,000 | 307 | 30.7 |
| | 20,001- 30,000 | 134 | 13.4 |
| | 30,001- 50,000 | 156 | 15.6 |
| | 50,001-100,000 | 32 | 3.2 |
| | More than 1,00,000 | 2 | 0.2 |
| 2. Poverty Status | APL | 320 | 32.0 |
| | BPL | 530 | 53.0 |
| | No Response | 150 | 15.0 |
| 3. Indebtedness | Indebted | 373 | 37.3 |
| | Not Indebted | 627 | 62.7 |
| 4. Financial Inclusion | Bank Account | 410 | 41.0 |
| | No Bank Account | 590 | 59.0 |
| | Possessed Credit card | 70 | 7.0 |
| | No Credit card | 930 | 93.0 |
| 5. Socio-economic security | Possessed Life Insurance | 320 | 32.0 |
| | No Life Insurance | 680 | 68.0 |

Source: Field Survey

Access to Basic Civic Amenities: Access to basic civic amenities like water, sanitation, energy, health care and education forms an important indicator of socio-economic development of a community. Since access to water and sanitation has a direct bearing upon health conditions, well-being of a population largely depends upon the source of water and availability of sanitation. Table – 5 depicts artisan household's access to different civic amenities and sources of these civic services. It is indicative from Table 5 that more than half of the artisan households (53 %) had access to secured sources

of water such as house tap (16 %) and pipe water from public stand post (37 %); while remaining accessed water from tube wells (37.9 %) and wells (9.1 %). Concerning sanitation facilities, nearly three-fourths of the respondents (74.2 %) had access to Individual Household Latrine (IHHL) in their premises, and the remaining (25.8 %) defecated in the open. With the current development agenda of *Swach Bharat Mission* (SBM) and Open Defecation Free (ODF) villages, such a finding is a matter of concern. Development intervention in this regard is undoubtedly needed to provide basic civic amenities like water and sanitation to traditional artisans of rural Odisha.

Along with water and sanitation, we also considered the availability of energy for cooking and lighting as essential services; and thus, inquired to understand the energy situation among the traditional artisans of Odisha. Half of the respondents (50.6 %) used traditional sources of cooking energy like burning of fuelwood, and another one-third of the respondents (35 %) depended on the LPG for cooking. A substantial majority of artisan households (93.3 %) used electricity as the source of energy for lighting.

Access to better health care and education forms two important indicators for enhancing human development. Concerning access to health services, we inquired about type and ownership health services available to traditional artisans of Odisha. Data presented in entry 5 of Table – 5 exhibit the types of health services availed by the traditional artisans. More than three-fourth of the respondents (79.2 %) accessed modern medicine (allopathy) for treatment of their ailment, while the remaining depended upon alternative medicines like homeopathy (13.1 %) and Ayurveda (4.9 %) and Unani (1.1 %). With regard to educational status of the children of the traditional artisans of Odisha, it was reported that out of the 1000 artisan households, 593 households had school-going children in the age group of 5 to 15 years of age. However, to our utter surprise, not all of these 593 artisans households were sending their children to school. It is evident from entry 6 of Table 5 that 95 respondents (16 %), who had school-going children at their home stated that they never send their children to school. This is a matter of concern in a context where there is so much emphasis on total literacy by the government. Despite relevant schemes like *Sarva Sikshya Abhiyan* and Mid-Day Meal for school going children in rural areas being operative, it was a matter of concern to observe non-school going children among the artisan households.

Table 5 – Access to Basic Civic Amenities

| Indicators | Categories | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1. Access to Water (Sources) | House Tap | 160 | 16.0 |
| | Public Stand Post | 370 | 37.0 |
| | Tube Well | 379 | 37.9 |
| 2. Sanitation | Well | 91 | 9.1 |
| | IHHL | 742 | 74.2 |
| 3. Sources of Energy | Open defecation | 258 | 25.8 |
| | Fuel Wood | 506 | 50.6 |
| 4. Sources of Lighting | LPG | 350 | 35.0 |
| | Electric Heater | 74 | 7.4 |
| | Kerosene Stove | 70 | 7.0 |
| | Electricity | 939 | 93.9 |
| 5. Access to Health Care (Sources) | Kerosene | 44 | 4.4 |
| | Bio Gas | 17 | 1.7 |
| | Allopathy | 792 | 79.2 |
| | Homeopathy | 131 | 13.1 |
| | Ayurvedic | 49 | 4.9 |
| 6. Educational Attainment of Children | Unani | 11 | 1.1 |
| | Quack | 8 | 0.8 |
| | Others | 9 | 0.9 |
| | Attending school | 498 | 84.0 |
| | Not attending school | 95 | 16.0 |

Source: Field Survey

Procurement of Raw Materials for Craft Production

Each of the ten handicraft items selected for the study required a different kind of raw materials. The craft items such as brass and metalware, silver and filigree work, dhokra are the metal-based craft items and mainly used the bronze, silver, gold and copper as the raw materials. For grass and fibre crafts and bamboo and cane crafts, the artisans mostly depended on local varieties of the grass, bamboo and cane as the raw material. Artisans usually procured these raw materials from local and communal places of the immediate environment. The appliqué and *pattachitra* (paintings) craft are made out of textiles. Besides the different patterns and colour of the textile, varieties of natural resources from the surroundings were used as agents for bringing colour and texture in it. While the clothes (textile) were purchased from the market, they were processed using local varieties of materials to make them ready for using in craft production. For the horn and bone craft, the craft persons got raw materials from the different body parts of the animals. Mostly the artisans collected these raw materials from local surroundings and hardly depended upon market or the suppliers. Likewise, in seashell based crafts, the artisans collected the shells of conches and other sea animal varieties to use them as raw materials. In some cases, they procured it from local vendors, who gathered them from seashores.

Sources of raw materials: Our discussion with the artisans revealed that the craft persons satisfied their needs of raw materials primarily through

three ways, i.e. self-collection from nearby surroundings, purchase from a local market and procuring from designated suppliers. However, it is pertinent to mention that these three sources were not exclusive from each other. In most occasions, artisans used a combination of two or three sources to procure raw material in a timely and sustained manner. Artisans obtaining raw materials from the supplier stated that it turned out to be the most trusted source for them. The supplier typically is a middle-man who often provided raw materials to the artisans in credit. Often the supplier also procured the finished products of the artisans. However, raw materials from the supplier always came with specific conditions such as a higher rate of interest and selling the finished product only to the supplier in a price lower than the market. Albeit these problems, the artisans who preferred supplier over other sources stated that they got raw materials from suppliers in the right time and a sustained manner.

Distance covered to procure raw materials:Artisans had to cover distances ranging from 1 to 50 km to purchase raw material for their craft. While for some raw materials they had to travel a longer distance, some others were available in the local market. Even for self-collection also the artisans had to go to different locations to procure them. In case of those who obtained from the supplier, they travelled relatively lesser distance, as the supplier either delivered the raw materials at home or in a centrally located place from where the artisans collected them. Nearly half of the respondents (42.6 %) stated that they could procure their raw material within five km of their residence, followed by another 29 per cent who had to travel between six to 10 kms. Only a few respondents (0.8 %) stated that they had to travel a longer distance between 40 to 50 km to procure raw materials. It was calculated that mean distance (average) covered by artisans to procure raw material was 10.55 km with lowest and highest distance being 1 and 50 km respectively

Problems in procuring raw materials:Problems of accessing raw material for the production of the craft were identified by almost all the respondents of our study. Several constraints such as lack of availability of raw material, lack of money to buy, the distance to the place of availability, lack of transportation facility to access the raw material were identified as the main limitation related to the raw materials. Since each respondent provided more than one responses regarding constraints, we adopted the **Multiple Response Analysis (MRA) Technique** using **SPSS** software to analyse the responses. MRA technique is a suitable method to analyse mutually inclusive categories opinions, where each respondent provides more than one response and hence the percentages of response do not add up to 100.

To assess the significant constraints faced by the traditional artisans of Odisha, we asked them to list out the most crucial constraints faced by them. In the process, we obtained 2372 responses regarding constraints (as the artisans identified multiple constraints) and analysed them using **SPSS**

software. Data presented in Table – 6 indicate that lack of finances to purchase raw material either from the local market or from supplier/vendor was the most commonly identified constraints. Out of the total 2372 responses we obtained in total, 27.1 per cent of the responses were for this constraint. Lack of finance was followed by other identified constraints such as lack of availability (19.1 %), lack of time (15.3 %), lack of transportation (13.3 %), distance covered for accessing raw materials (12.8 %), and a limited number of suppliers (12.4 %).

Considering the 1000 number of cases, 64.2 per cent of respondents identified lack of finances as the major challenge in accessing raw material. Likewise, 45.5 per cent reported lack of availability in the local market or nearby surroundings as the main constraints. Other factors like distance covered and limited number of suppliers were identified by a few artisans as the major constraints (see Table – 6).

Table 6: Major Constraints in Accessing Raw Material

| Constraints identified | Frequency of Responses | Percentage of Responses | Percentage of Cases* |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Lack of finances | 642 | 27.1 | 64.2 |
| 2. Lack of availability | 454 | 19.1 | 45.5 |
| 3. Lack of time | 362 | 15.3 | 36.2 |
| 4. Lack of transportation | 315 | 13.3 | 31.5 |
| 5. Distance | 304 | 12.8 | 30.4 |
| 6. A limited number of supplier | 295 | 12.4 | 29.5 |
| Total | 2372 | 100.0 | - |

* Percentages do not add up to 100 as multiple responses were obtained

Craft Design and Development

Craft development and design mostly varied depending upon the type of craft. To understand craft development and design, we inquired about the kind of craft, the end-users of the crafts, the target group of the artisans and the factors influencing the design and development of the crafts.

Type of craft: We may broadly identify two types of crafts in the handicraft sector, i.e. crafts of everyday use and elite crafts. Crafts of daily use are usually part and parcel of household use. These crafts, made out of locally available raw materials are also an integral part of agrarian livelihood systems. These include bamboo, grass and fibre pots for storage, sitting and sleeping mats, utensils made out of metal and brass, and several other items used for everyday purposes in household. The elite crafts usually are artistic and aesthetic items used mostly for decorative purposes. These crafts products are generally costlier than products of daily use. The target group for these crafts include tourists, hotel industries, offices, etc. Elite crafts include statues, paintings, bigger metal products, etc.

Table 7: Type of Craft

| Craft Name/Type | Everyday Use | Elite Craft | Both | Total |
|-----------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Appliqué | 87 | 9 | 4 | 100 |
| Bamboo cane | 100 | 0 | 0 | 100 |
| Brass and metal | 82 | 18 | 0 | 100 |
| Dhokra | 3 | 0 | 97 | 100 |
| Golden Grass | 91 | 9 | 0 | 100 |
| Horn craft | 54 | 46 | 0 | 100 |
| <i>Pattachitra</i> Painting | 14 | 85 | 1 | 100 |
| Seashell | 74 | 24 | 2 | 100 |
| Silver Filigree | 3 | 50 | 47 | 100 |
| Stone carving | 16 | 83 | 1 | 100 |
| Total | 524 (52.4 %) | 324 (32.4 %) | 152 (15.2 %) | 1000 (100 %) |

Source: Field Survey

Data pertaining to types of craft in different handicrafts presented in Table 7 revealed that artisans practising bamboo and cane products, appliqué, golden grass products, etc. mostly produced crafts of everyday use. Whereas, artisans engaged in *pattachitra* (painting), silver filigree, horn work and stone carving mostly produced elite crafts. Some of the artisans also reported that they produce both type of crafts for day-to-day household use as well as crafts of aesthetic and high economic value.

End-users of the craft: Sustainable production of a craft depends upon its demand in the market place. To understand the demand of the craft product in the market, we inquired about the end-users of craft items as well as the social background of the target group. Different craft items had a different set of customers and target groups. The artisans who targeted upper-class customers expected to get a higher return for their craft compared to those who produced for lower and lower-middle-class customers. At the same time, the artisans producing for lower and lower-middle class customers were more assured of getting customers for their products owing to the everyday nature of their craft. Data pertaining to the social background of end-users of different crafts presented in Table 8 revealed that 91 per cent of the traditional artisans practising *pattachitra* painting targeted upper-class customers, followed by stone carving (74 %), horn craft (72 %) and silver filigree (71 %). On the contrary, artisans targeting lower class customers were relatively higher for golden grass (58 %), bamboo & cane (54 %) and appliqué (46 %). Majority of the artisans practising the seashell craft (63 %) reported targeting middle-class customers, mainly the tourists who visited the sea beaches (see Table – 8).

Table 8: Social Background of the End Users of different Handicrafts

| Craft Name/ Social Background | Lower Class | Middle Class | Upper Class | Total |
|----------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-------|
| Appliqué | 46 | 24 | 30 | 100 |
| Bamboo cane | 54 | 41 | 5 | 100 |
| Brass and metal | 32 | 37 | 31 | 100 |
| Dhokra | 0 | 48 | 52 | 100 |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Golden Grass | 58 | 32 | 10 | 100 |
| Horn craft | 10 | 18 | 72 | 100 |
| <i>Pattachitra</i> Painting | 6 | 3 | 91 | 100 |
| Seashell | 20 | 63 | 17 | 100 |
| Silver Filigree | 0 | 29 | 71 | 100 |
| Stone carving | 0 | 26 | 74 | 100 |
| Total | 226 (22.6 %) | 321 (32.1 %) | 453 (45.3 %) | 1000 (100 %) |

Source: Field Survey

Factors influencing the craft design: Several artisans reported about changes in the design and development of the craft with the passage of time. Artisans identified several factors like an expansion of the market, new-age customers, changes in the taste and demand of customers as valid reasons, which have brought changes in the design and development of craft products over the years. Based on our empirical research, two broad factors were identified, which significantly influenced the design and development of the craft and subsequent changes therein. While for some artisans it was market demand, for others, it was the hereditary training, which influenced the design of their craft. Data presented in Table 9 revealed that more than half of the respondents (53.4 %) stated that their design was influenced by the market demand, whereas, 28.7 per cent stated that it was their hereditary training, which influenced the design of their product. It was interesting to observe that influence of hereditary training was relatively higher in the case of bamboo & cane craft (96 %), and brass metal craft (93 %). Further, 61 per cent of the artisans practising golden grass craft stated that their design was influenced by both hereditary training and market demand. The influence of market demand on craft design was higher in the case of horn craft, appliqué, seashell, silver filigree and stone carving (see Table – 9).

Table 9: Factors influencing Design of Craft

| Craft Name | Factors Influencing Design | | | Total |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | Market Demand | Hereditary Training | Both | |
| Appliqué | 87 | 9 | 4 | 100 |
| Bamboo cane | 4 | 96 | 0 | 100 |
| Brass and metal | 7 | 93 | 0 | 100 |
| Dhokra | 39 | 27 | 34 | 100 |
| Golden Grass | 39 | 0 | 61 | 100 |
| Horn craft | 100 | 0 | 0 | 100 |
| <i>Pattachitra</i> Painting | 86 | 3 | 11 | 100 |
| Seashell | 67 | 9 | 24 | 100 |
| Silver Filigree | 55 | 45 | 0 | 100 |
| Stone carving | 50 | 5 | 45 | 100 |
| Total | 534 (53.4 %) | 287 (28.7 %) | 179 (17.9 %) | 1000 (100 %) |

Source: Field Survey

Production of the Craft

The working condition available to the artisans significantly influences

efficiency as well as the outcome of their production. We, therefore, tried to understand the process of craft production by way of investigating the working conditions of artisans while they produced their crafts. Working conditions of the artisans were investigated on important indicators like availability of space and tools for craft production, safety measures adopted at the workplace and their perception about working condition. Based upon their relationship to the working unit, we observed two types of craft person engaged in the production process, i.e. the owner of the craft unit (58.7 %) and worker (41.3 %). In most cases, the owner was the master craftsman, who served as the owner-entrepreneur of the production unit; and the workers were the helpers, who were paid in wages for their work. 60.5 per cent of the respondents stated that they worked in a household unit, whereas the remaining 39.5 per cent reported working in non-household units. An inquiry also was made to understand the number of artisans involved in the working unit. Majority of the respondents (76.4 %) reported that they worked with other co-workers at the working unit, whereas less than one-fourth (23.6 %) reported that they worked alone (see Table – 10).

Table 10: Nature of Working Unit of Craft Production

| Indicators | Categories | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1. Relation to production unit | Owner | 587 | 58.7 |
| | Worker | 413 | 41.3 |
| 2. Nature of production unit | Household unit | 605 | 60.5 |
| | Non-household unit | 395 | 39.5 |
| 3. Artisans involved | Work alone | 236 | 23.6 |
| | Work with co-workers | 764 | 76.4 |

Source: Field Survey

Workplace and adequacy of space, tools and equipment: The workplace plays a vital role in artisan's life as they spend most of their productive time here. Data presented in Table 11 revealed that majority of the artisans (57.3 %) produced their craft within their household premises and the remaining 42.7 per cent worked at a designated workshop (see entry 1, Table – 11). When we looked craft-wise, it was revealed that most of the artisans producing bamboo & cane crafts (86 %), dhokra (100 %), golden grass (99 %), horn craft (74 %), pattachitra (73 %) and seashell craft (73 %), worked at their home. On the contrary, artisans practising appliqué (73 %), brass & metalware (72 %), silver filigree work (92 %) and stone carving (95 %), mostly produced their craft in the workshops.

Along with the location of the workplace, we also inquired about workspace and tools and equipment available for work to the traditional artisans of Odisha. Majority of the respondents (53.6 %) reported that they have to work with inadequate working space. However, concerning the availability of tools and equipment, the majority (61.3 %) reported about the adequacy of tools at the workplace (see entry 2 & 3, Table – 11). Concerning different crafts,

we observed that except for pattachitra, seashell and stone carving, the artisans expressed their displeasure about the size of the working place. A special mention should be made here about the brass & the metal craft, where the artisans not only have to work in small areas but also in unhealthy and less safe working places. Since these artisans have to melt the metals to give different shapes, they have to work in high temperature and smoke. Further, the small size of the workshop increased the possibility of health hazards for the artisans of this craft.

Table 11: The Place of Craft Production

| Indicators | Categories | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1. Location of workplace | Household premise | 573 | 57.3 |
| | Workshop | 427 | 42.7 |
| 2. Adequacy of workspace | Adequate | 464 | 46.4 |
| | Inadequate | 536 | 53.6 |
| 3. Adequacy of tools & equipment | Adequate | 613 | 61.3 |
| | Inadequate | 387 | 38.7 |

Source: Field Survey

Physical condition at the workplace: Our inquiry about the physical condition of the workplace concerning the availability of lighting and proper ventilation revealed that more than 70 per cent of the respondents were satisfied with their working place (see entry 1& 2, Table – 12). Only in case of craft persons engaged into Dhokra (82 %), horn craft (70 %) and brass & metalware craft (59 %) reported that they faced constraints of adequate lighting arrangements at the workplace. Concerning the availability of proper ventilation, the majority of the craft persons engaged into dhokra (81 %) and brass & metalware craft (60 %) reported limited ventilation at the workplace. This is because, for these two crafts, the artisans have to work in close rooms with fire for melting the earthen or metal crafts to produce their finished products. Safety and security become an important factor in the production of craft as some of the practices involved risk. More than one-third (36.9 %) of the respondents reported that the craft into which they are engaged into involves certain amount of danger. It was important to point out that we could identify a kind of pattern in danger of craft production. Not all the crafts involved an equal amount of risk. There are specific crafts where the perception of danger was felt more than the other crafts. For instance, majority of respondents engaged into brass & metalware (61 %), dhokra (84 %), horn craft (63 %), silver filigree (57 %) and stone carving (62 %) reported that the craft production involves danger. For the rest of the crafts, the perception of danger was relatively less.

Table 12: Physical Condition and Perception of Work Safety

| Indicators | Categories | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1. Adequacy of lighting | Adequate | 707 | 70.7 |
| | Inadequate | 293 | 29.3 |
| 2. Proper ventilation | Adequate | 737 | 73.7 |
| | Inadequate | 263 | 26.3 |
| 3. Perception of workSafety | Perceived as dangerous | 369 | 36.9 |
| | Perceived as safe | 631 | 63.1 |

Source: Field Survey

Issues Related to Marketing of the Craft

Finding the right market opportunity to sell the handicraft products remains crucial for the craftsmen as their livelihood is dependent upon this. Data presented in Table 13 revealed that majority of the respondents (65.5 %) were able to get the right kind of marketing opportunities. In contrast, slightly more than one-third (34.5 %) of the respondents reported having constraints in marketing their crafts. Data from different crafts depict that nearly half of the artisans producing brass & metalware (51 %), horn craft (52 %) and silver filigree (52 %) faced constraints in marketing. In the case of golden grass, almost all the craft persons (96 %) were satisfied with their marketing channels and reported that they were able to sell their products in the market. The study revealed that while a majority of the artisans (65.5 %) were able to get the right kind of marketing opportunities to sell their products, more than half of the respondents (51.1 %) were not satisfied with the return that they got from the market (see entry 2, Table– 13). Satisfaction over market return was observed to be very low among the artisans producing dhokra (90 %), seashell (75 %), brass & metalware (69 %), *pattachitra* (painting) (66 %) and golden grass (63 %). This reflects the sorry state of affair regarding marketing opportunities for traditional artisans of Odisha. Artisans adopted several modes to find a right market for their product. Three significant modes emerged as dominant channels through which the artisans marketed their products. Entry 3 of Table 13 depicts, while nearly 40 per cent of the respondents adopted direct marketing mode to sell their products, 41.8 per cent marketed their products through middle-men. The remaining (18.4 %) reported being selling their products through cooperative societies.

Table 13: Issues Related to Marketing of the Craft

| Indicators | Categories | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1. Selling the product in the market | Able | 655 | 65.5 |
| | Unable | 345 | 34.5 |
| 2. Satisfaction with return | Satisfied | 489 | 48.9 |
| | Unsatisfied | 511 | 51.1 |
| 3. Mode of marketing | Direct marketing | 398 | 39.8 |
| | Through middle-men | 418 | 41.8 |
| | Through cooperatives | 184 | 18.4 |

Source: Field Survey

Conclusion

The traditional artisans of Odisha have withstood the test of time and have adapted themselves to the changing times and tastes of customers. Yet, our study revealed that the artisans are facing several challenges concerning the production of their craft, which need to be addressed for sustainable livelihood of the artisans as well as long-term availability of the craft. One of the major challenges in the handicraft sector has been sustaining the interest, demand and production of the craft in the contemporary globalised times. Our study identified changes in the design, market preferences, choice and taste of the consumers, competitive machine-made products and overall retaining the interests of the present generation as major factors, which are challenging the sustainability of the craft. Based on the finding of this study, several suggestions and policy recommendations are extended for the sustainability of the craft as well as upliftment of socio-economic well-being of the craft persons:

- A central place to buy and store the raw materials should be provided at the cluster level.
- Access to institutional credit, financial subsidies and technological support should be provided to artisans.
- More training centres should be opened at the cluster level for upgrading skills.
- More workshops and seminars should be conducted to raise awareness about various welfare schemes available for the promotion of handicrafts.
- Handicraft industry should be connected with cultural tourism to promote the crafts.
- Public-Private Partnerships should be encouraged in the handicraft sector.
- To eliminate the impact of middle-men handicraft sector should be connected with cooperative agencies, NGOs and SHGs.
- To increase the efficiency of craft exports, cargo and shipping charges should be relaxed

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