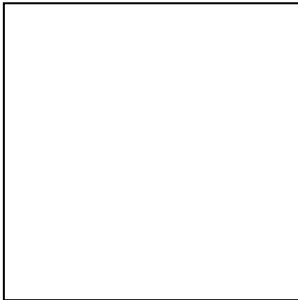


Session 11

[Thursday 4th period 2.0 hours Hall A]

Development of the handicraft sector

Speakers



Speaker:
Rajan Bhowmik

Topic:
The Preservation of Tribal Culture- A Heritage of the Wooden Crafts World: A Case Study of the North East Corner



Speaker:
Pankaj Aggarwal

Topic:
Strategy for Socio-Economic Sustainability of Artists of Channapatna of India



Speaker:
V Ramakantha

Topic:
A Road Map for Strengthening the Solid Wood Based Handicraft Sector of Manipur, India



Speaker:
B Siddapa

Topic:
Efficiency Resources (Forest and Credit) Use by SHG's for Socio-Economic Transformation of the Karnataka Economy



Speaker:
Mangala de Zoysa

Topic:
Rediscovering Traditional Wood Product Industries in Sri Lanka: Promotion of Cultural Heritage, Improvement of Rural Livelihood and Expansion of Export Earnings

Preservation of Tribal culture – A Heritage of the Wooden Crafts World: A Case Study of North-East Corner

Rajesh Bhowmik¹

Abstract

Timber is abundant in India's North-East region and local inhabitants take advantage of extensive forest areas. There are many differences in the lifestyles and artforms of the peoples of the hills and plains, they all add to the cultural life of the region. The impact of wood working is significant in all societies, including tribal and non tribal. The traditional artisans use different woods according to factors such as longevity and textural quality. Wooden crafts experience wider demand among tribal groups as they are used as daily household objects. In this way, wood is used for a wide range of purposes, from decorative household activities to wooden sculptures or crafts. The tribal communities of Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh etc. are highly skilled in making wooden ornaments.

One of the most important types of wood carving found in North-East India is the traditional mask. The magnificent wooden masks from this area are used in traditional dances by the Khambas and the Membas of North Sian of Arunachal Pradesh.

Other works, such as the "memorable pillar" depicts the community's relationship with the carved images of persons of the past. The Nagas are fond of decorating their houses with carved out images in the pillars and beams of their houses with their ritualistic beliefs. Drums carved out from wooden logs are also used in rituals or festivals. The Monpa tribe of Bomdila district of Arunachal Pradesh makes a variety of bowls of varieties design and shape out of wooden log.

These products which are made of wood have a greater demand not only in the N-E region, but also all over India.

This study examines contemporary modern society and the attempts to promote this traditional product to a more global market. Different Govt. institutions, Ngo's and SHG's have taken different initiatives to develop the existing culture as well as traditional-indigenous practices in order to strengthen the sustainability of tribal wooden crafts.

Key words: cultural influences and crisis, traditional practices, primitivism vs. modernism, dominant culture, losing traditional behavior, preservation of existing cultural values.

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Strategy for Socio-Economic Sustainability of Artists of Channapatna of India

Pankaj K Aggarwal², P R Triveni and S C Joshi

Abstract

Chennapatna, the toy town of Karnataka in peninsular India is home to more than 5,000 skilled craftsmen called “chitragars” who have long been involved in traditional wooden lacquered toys and ivory craft. As in any other cottage industry, the middlemen in the distribution channel take a disproportionate amount of profit. These middlemen generally make double the amount that they pay to toymakers, who themselves make only a meager profit. This in turn results in lack of interest amongst the artisans.

*Wood turning requires extremely close grained and moderately hard wood. Hale wood (*Writia tinctoria*) is the most suited wood of this region which unfortunately is fast dwindling. Research institute like Institute of Wood Science & Technology, Bangalore has identified alternative species like rubber wood, Acacias etc, to overcome the problem. However, convincing the toymakers about the utilization of these species is the greatest challenge and efforts have been initiated by the institute in this direction. If these alternative species are used by the artisans, it will help to upgrade their socio-economic status due to its greater abundance as well as cost effectiveness.*

It is essential to enhance the skills of artisans by identifying trainee-facilitators in the field of design, creating master crafts persons with upgraded skills, awareness in effective technology, communication skills and marketing strategies. There should be regular skill and technology upgradation as the market is driven by new innovations. For this, private and government sectors should come forward in providing training. The other parameter by which artisans can be encouraged is to expose them at national and international trade fairs so that they acquire advanced knowledge at international level. The most important aspect for social upgradation and recognition of the artisan is to give them due respect and prestige. Their work should be recognized and rewarded appropriately. This will motivate other artisans also. Networking of artisans with related departments, research institutions and artisans is also a very important factor in the overall development of this sector.

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A Road Map for Strengthening the Solid Wood-Based Handicraft Sector of Manipur, India

V Ramakantha³, A N Kumar, Mohendra Pratap Singh and N C Talukdar

Abstract

Manipur, a northeastern state of India, bordering Myanmar is nestled in the folds of Eastern Himalaya and sustains a large proportion of the rich biodiversity of the Indo Burma biodiversity hotspot. Manipur has a rich cultural heritage which includes an ancient and still thriving art and craft industry. The fine craftsmen of Manipur have developed insights into the quality of wood, and as of now, apart from every household having a handloom, the State boasts of more than 400,000 artisans involved in handicrafts, the highest number in North East India. Apart from the cane and bamboo sector, solid wood carving constitutes a major component of handicraft industry in the state. A large number of solid wood species such as Melanorrhoea usitata, Phoebe chinensis, Dipterocarpus turbinatus and D. tuberculatus that are preferred by the artisans are restricted in distribution to Indo - Myanmar border area and hence representative in the Indian context. However, in the recent past, supply of such traditional timbers has dwindled to a great extent owing to rampant deforestation happening due to slash and burn type of cultivation and other factors. According a report of the forest department, a total of 173 km² area of forest vanished within a span of two years between 2003 and 2005. This paper looks at the solid wood based handicraft industries both in the valley and hills of Manipur, the species used exclusively, and assessment of the demand-supply situation and its impact on the handicraft sector. Considering the fact that there is a paucity of research data, the paper, apart from documenting the existing information, explores the possibility of strengthening the handicraft sector.

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Efficiency Resources (Forest and Credit) Use by SHG's for Socio-Economic Transformation of the Karnataka economy

B Siddapa⁴

Abstract

Credit and forest resources are the major inputs used by productive units (SHG's) irrespective of sectors such as primary, secondary and other services. About 43 percent of the total energy consumed in third world countries (by more than 2 billion people) is met by use of biomass fuel. This is equivalent to 22 million barrels of oil per day, which is saved from consumption. In India about 80 percent of rural people are dependent on wood fuel for cooking their food and 65 percent of the total fuel wood is collected from the local fields free of cost and also from forest and community wood lots.

India is one of the mega- biodiversity regions in the world, with a richness genetic species and eco-system diversity. This heritage system must be conserved for future civilization. It is one of the lowest in the world in possession of per-capita forest land, which is 0.1 ha and has worsened with the increase in population and increase in use of forest land for farming and domicile purposes.

The forest area of Karnataka state, in the south of India, stood at 32467 Sq Km as of December 1999, which is 16.93 percent of the total area.

Poor families including small marginal farmers and rural artisans have extremely limited access to credit in much of the developing world. Nearly 80 percent of women belonging to such societal groups do not possess institutional credit in these countries. Poor families have no capacity to save and deposit in the banks, but the banks should help them with a loan to invest in their well versed occupations, as out of the income generated the banks should recover the loans. This type of scheme of savings mobilization will have positive results for the banks as well as poor families. State and Central Governments have framed various income and employment generation programmes exclusively for the benefit of weaker sections.

The self help groups (SHG's) are voluntarily formed associations of the women members of up to 20 members in order to produce single community and earn income to solve their common problems such as poverty and unemployment in a particular place. In Karnataka 1.3 lakh SHG's have been performing their activities well in different productive fields such as dairy (0.4 lakh SHGS), agarbathi, sandal(0.2 lakh SHGS), wooden handicrafts, dolls, carpentry, statues, furnitures (0.3 lakh SHGS), handmade embroidery, tailoring, basket, mat, maps, panipuri, hotels, petty business, fruit trading (0.2 lakh SHGS), and processing small industries, poultry, piggery, coconut products, manure making , khadi products, pot maker(0.2 lakh SHGS). The women member's strength and their contribution (SHG's) is still improving and contributing much towards the socio – economic transformation of the society.

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Credit and forest products are the major inputs used by the productive units irrespective of the sectors such as primary, secondary and services. Among the various inputs used in the process of production, the co-relation between the credit and forest based inputs occupied a decisive place not only in third world countries but also in advanced countries of the global economy. About 43 percent of the total energy (wood fuel) consumed in the third world countries, by more than 2 billion people, is met from biomass fuel. This is equivalent to 22 million barrels of oil per day. In India about 80 percent of rural people are dependent on wood fuel for cooking their food and 65 percent of the total fuel wood is collected from the total fields on free of costs and also collected from the forest and community wood lots⁵.

Tree crops form a major source of food in many parts of the world. They provide healthier food and boast a high nutritional quality compared to common contemporary foods. The fruits, nuts, berries, edible leaves etc obtained from trees are rich in carbohydrates, fats, proteins, minerals and vitamins. They satisfy the entire food needs of the rural community at times of food shortage. Trees are also more reliable and consistent in food production than seasonal food crops such as cereals. If these trees are grown and managed properly, food production from such a source can be found available throughout the year with little effort and minimum investment⁶. The main tree crops which meet the consumption habits of the community are banana, pineapple, passion fruit, papaya, nuts and seeds, cashew nut, palm oil, coconut products, edible seeds, edible leaves, sap and sugar, tree for spices, medicine tree for firewood, tree for fodder, forest garden, teak, neam, spices, ginger turmeric and so on.

India is one of the mega-biodiversity regions in the world, with a richness of genetic species and eco-system diversity. This heritage system must be conserved for future civilization⁷.

Despite this, India is one of the lowest in the world in terms of possession of per capita forest and which is only 0.1 ha. This situation is worsening with the increase in population on the one hand and the related increase in using of more and more forest land for farming as well as domicile purposes on the other hand⁸.

Karnataka Economy

Karnataka State is one of four making up the the South Indian Economy. The others being Andrapradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The coverage of forests in these states are given in the following table:

⁵L.K. Jha and Sen Sharma, Forestry for the People, of 908 Jha-Ashish Publishing House, New Delhi, 1994, p 169

⁶P.K. Thampan “ Tree Farming for food and nutrition” Peekay Tree Crops Development Foundation, Cochin, 1994, p.3

⁷ Government of India, My Forest, Quarterly Journal, Special Issue, Vol-35, December 1999, Bangalore p 343

⁸ Ibid, 344

Coverage of forests in 4 south Indian States as per 1991 and 1999 assessments

Sl.No	State	Total Geographical area (sq km)	Total forest covered (sq km)		Dense forest (sq km)		Open Forest (sq km)		Mangrove forest (sq km)		Percent of forest area	
			1991	1999	1991	1999	1991	1999	1991	1999	1991	1999
1	Andra Pradesh	275068 (43)	47220	44229	25017	24190	21874	19642	399	397	17.2	16.4
2	Karnataka	191791(30)	32199	32467	24856	24832	7343	7632	-	3	16.8	16.93
3	Kerala	38863(6)	10292	10323	8421	8429	1871	1894	-	0	26.5	26.56
4	Tamil Nadu	130058(21)	17713	17078	9757	8659	7909	8398	47	21	13.6	13.13
	Total	635780(100)	107494	104097	68051	66110	38997	37566	446	421	18.5	18.20

Source : UAS, National Afforestation and Co-development Board, Banglaore, 2001 p.1

The above table suggests that the four south Indian states total geographical area is 635780 sq km, among which the Andra Pradesh share was 43 percent, Karnataka share was 30 percent, Tamil Nadu share was 21 percent and Kerala share was 6 percent. The percentage of forest area to the total area in the year 1994 was in Andra Pradesh 16.4 percent, Karnataka 16.93 percent, Tamil Nadu 13.13 percent and Kerala 26.56 percent. Including all the four states the coverage of forests area to the total area it was 18.2 percent, which is less than one fourth of the total area.

Credit and forest products used by SHG's of Karnataka Economy

Credit plays an important role in acquiring forest products in particular and natural resources in general. Poor families including small marginal farmers and rural artisans have extremely limited access to credit in much of the developing world. In some of the African countries nearly one percent of total numbers of borrowers use institutional credit, in Latin America and Asia (excluding Taiwan) only 15 percent of poor families could succeed in getting institutional finance. Nearly 80 percent of women in particular and weaker sections in general (such as small-marginal farmers, agricultural labourers, rural artisans, retail traders and people of small means of productive assets) have not possessed institutional credit in these countries⁹.

Rural society in these countries is plagued with mass poverty, illiteracy and a conservative and fatalistic outlook. Only a small percentage of rural and urban population belonging to the weaker sections of society will have surplus liquid funds. They are not in a position to negotiate with banks unless the banks are convinced about the safety and facility of withdrawal as and when they are in need of money. However, the rural and urban population belonging to this group is a potential market for deposits. It is not possible for these groups to save first a certain amount of deposits and then undertake investment in agriculture or allied activities. It would be more realistic to help them with a loan to invest in their occupation and out of the income generated the banks should recover the loans. This type of scheme of savings mobilization would benefit both the banks and the poor families. With increased

⁹ World bank, Agricultural Credit-sector Policy paper 1972, Washington, Dc p.1

income from such investment will augment the savings capacity of the poor and consequently increase bank deposits¹⁰.

Objectives of the study:

1. Most developing countries at global level have been pursuing the policy of inclusiveness in gainful production and employment activities
2. Exclusive groups have been involved in generating income through NGOs or SHGs
3. The state and central governments have been encouraging the exclusive groups to include other groups through interest subsidies, asset subsidies, fixed capital subsidies and so on by implementing various schemes

The state and central Governments have framed various income and employment generation programmes exclusively for the benefit of weaker groups, i.e small marginal farmers, agricultural and non-agricultural laborers, rural artisans, women and the socially marginalized peoples in the Karnataka.

Government Schemes for Self help Groups (SHGs): SHGs are voluntary organizations which have been formed by female members of up to 20 in order to produce a single commodity and higher incomes to solve their common problems such as poverty, and unemployment. These groups have founded their own projects (unit) and the necessary training is given by the Department of women and children development¹¹. The department has provided training to the members of the SHGs concerning the combination of wood forests trees and soil based resources with the capital goods to be used in the process of production.

Other schemes include: (a) a revolving fund of Rs.5000 is to be given to the each of SHG to take up income generation activities (b) kit material cost of Rs.600 is to be given to purchase 9 registers and Zinc trunks to all the groups (c) an incentive of Rs.5000 is to be given to each group at the time of identification of Income Generation Activities (IGA) (d) additional incentives of Rs.15000 and Rs.20000 per group has been given awarded when the group savings reaches up to Rs. 1 lakh and more than Rs.1 lakh respectively (e) the government has given 6 percent interest subsidy to each SHG for bank loans of Rs.25000 to Rs. 1 Lakh (f) the government has held exhibitions and market mela for the products of SHGs for promoting sales (g) the Ministry of Women and Child Development has organised training for skill development, in groups consisting of 25 members, with Rs.12500 provided for conducting this training. Besides this the department has also given training for orientation, communication skill, book keeping, credit management and social issues in 4 phases. Although the gender disparity remains wide with respect to employment, income and other field in rural and urban areas of Karnataka, the government's steps in this direction may be helpful in providing employment and generate income through the SHG's. The total number of groups having bank linkages and open bank accounts only for keeping saved money, total savings accumulated, loan amount disbursed by the SHG's to the members, total loan amount repaid by the members to the SHGs and total repayment amount to bank is illustrated in the following table in each division of Karnataka as on March 2011¹²

¹⁰Masich A.M.A, "A critique of the Methodology adopted by others in evaluating the role of financial institutions in Economic development" Indian Economic Journal, Vol LXI, April 1981, Bombay, PP 56-57

¹¹Government of Karnataka, Various circulars issued by the Ministry of Women and Children Development, Bangalore, Pp 12-13

¹²Ibid

SHG's consolidated statistics on various transactions performed as on March 2011

Sl.No	Name of the Division	No. Of SHGS	Total No. of graphs having bank linkages	No. of Groups opened account only for keep saved amount	Total No. of women of all categories in SHG's
1	Bangalore	49676(38)	44799(40)	5426(32)	711269(38)
2	Belgaum	28783(22)	23927(21)	3219(19)	440536(23)
3	Gulbarga	23509(18)	19401(17)	5697(33)	327602(17)
4	Mysore	28032(22)	24773(22)	2758(16)	417140(22)
	Total	130000(100)	112900(100)	17100(100)	1896547(100)

Source : Government of Karnataka, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Bangalore adopted and modified table,2011 (Figures in the brackets are percentage to the total)

The above table highlights that out of total 140000 SHGs in Karnataka, 130000 have reported to the Government and are involved in various activities such as dairy, readymade garments, blanket marketing, marketing of seeds and manure production and sale of papad, spices and agarbatti, production and sale of soap and detergent, various type of handicrafts etc¹³. The representation of SHGs from the Bangalore division was 38 percent, the Belgaum and Mysore division was 22 percent each and the Gulbarga division was 18 percent. Out of the total number, 112900 groups have a good bank linkage and the representation from the different divisions in the state was almost similar in its percentage. Many groups have opened their bank accounts only to keep a saved amount, as they were unaware of the workings of bank transactions before SHG membership. The total membership of women in all the groups in the state was 189654. The total female population in the state in 2011 census was 25877615, with 1896547 women being members of SHGs as of march 2011, which accounts for 7.32 percent.

A similar number of SHGs, in their respective divisions, kept savings in the savings deposit account, took the total loan amount from the banks and the entire amount was repaid. The loan amount was then disbursed by the SHGs to their members and the members in turn repaid the SHGs.

The SHGs savings, bank transaction and SHGs transactions as on march 2011

Sl.No	Divisions	SHGs	Savings accumulated (in cro)	Loan amount taken from bank (in cro)	Bank Loan repaid(in cro)	Loan from SHGs	Loan repayment to SHGs
1	Bangalore	49676(38)	397.74(42)	541.03(46)	774.46(56)	1328(49)	701116.96
2	Belgaum	28783(22)	189.59(20)	242.97(21)	172.13(13)	398.32(15)	314.62(79)
3	Gulbarga	23509(18)	160.37(17)	139.92(12)	130.68(10)	320.33(12)	220.63(69)
4	Mysore	28032(22)	194.60(21)	257.77(21)	296.54(21)	687.56(24)	603.45(88)
	Total	130000(100)	942.30(100)	1181.69(100)	1373.81(100)	2734.91(100)	2255.66(82)

Source : Government of Karnataka, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Bangalore adopted and modified table 2011 (Figures in brackets are percentage to the total)

¹³ Ibid p 15

The above table demonstrates that the SHGs of the 4 divisions of Karnataka States numbered 130000, which started their production process with zero balance. Similarly SHGs have been involved in using various types of forests resources locally available to initiate production. By selling the products they could earn an income and save surpluses after meeting consumption needs and liabilities. They have been able to keep Rs.942.3 crores in the bank. The saved amount in Bangalore division was Rs.397.74 crores which accounts for 42 percent, in Belgaum division it was 189.59 crores, which accounts for 20 percent in Gulbarga Division, it was Rs.160.37 crores, which accounts for 17 percent and lastly in Mysore division it was Rs.191.6 crores which accounts for 21 percent. Furthermore these groups have taken out loans from various banks to meet their needs to the extent of Rs.1181.69 crores. The four divisions SHG's borrowed amount was Rs.541.03 crores, Rs.242.97 crores, Rs.139.92 crores and Rs. 257.77 crores respectively, which accounts for 46,21, 21 and 21 percent respectively. All the SHGs have repaid the entire bank loan within a specified period so the repaid amount of the SHGs was Rs. 1373.81 crores (including interest part). The repaid share of the 4 divisions was Rs774.46 crores, Rs.172.13 crores, Rs.130.38 crores and Rs.296.54 crores respectively and the same was accounted for 56,13,10 and 21 percent respectively.

Besides the bank loan, the SHGs have borrowed finance from the various public and private sector banks and advanced loans to their women members to the tune of Rs2734.71 crores, with figures of Rs.1328.7 crores, Rs.398.32 crores, Rs.320.33 crores and rs.687.56 crores respectively for the Bangalore, Belgaum, Gulbarga and Mysore divisions and which account for 49,15,12 and 24 percent respectively.

The members of the SHGs have also repaid their group loan to the extent Rs.2255.66 crores as on March 2011. The repaid performance was 82 percent in general. The repaid amount of the respective 4 divisions was Rs.116.26 crores, Rs.314.62 crores, Rs.220.63 crores and Rs.603.45 crores, which accounts for 84,79,69 and 88 percent respectively. The repayment performance of the Gulbarga (69 percent) and Belgaum was (79 percent) very low compared to the counterpart divisions.

Forests and Socio-economic Transformation

Social transformation means change in the social status of the households in the society while economic transformation means a change in the consumption habits and which leads to better standard of living of households in the Karnataka State¹⁴. Due to the fact that the governments have been encouraging to the Non-government organizations, self help groups and the service institutions for a decade¹⁵, the forests played a vital role in building the production structure of the SHGs by contributing various forest resources to them. In Karnataka State leading 1.3 laks SHGs are functioning and mainly stands the various forest based resources¹⁶. Many SHGs (0.4 lakhs) depend upon dairy, and the required cattle fodder is provided by the forests. Other SHGs (0.2 lakhs) depend upon Agarbatti, the sandal and other required wood for sticks is provided by the forests. Other SHGs (0.3 lakhs) depend upon the wooden handicrafts such as dolls, carpentry, statues, furniture's, interior decorators and so on. Some of the SHGs (0.2 lakhs) engaged in various type of hand-made embroidery, tailoring, basket, mat making, panipuri, self help serviced hotels, petty business, plantation of

¹⁴Nanjundappa D.M, Area Planning and Rural Development, Associate Publishing House, New Deli, 1981, P.3 and series of lectures delivered by the Author in 1990-1991.

¹⁵ Government of Karnataka, Annual Report, Bangalore 2009-10. P 173

¹⁶ Government of Karnataka op. Cit, various circulars, pp.12-13

anthorium, flower trading, fruit trading etc and for all these activities forests is the main source of production. SHGs (0.2 lakhs) have also been involved in small processing industries, poultry farming, piggery, sericulture, coconut product, yarehulu manure making, khadi products, weaving spinning activities, soil based pots and household cooking products produced by the SHGs of Karnataka.

The female members of the (20 lakhs) SHGs have been living at below subsistence level before the membership of the SHGs, because of their contribution to their households was almost nil. That means zero savings¹⁷. Whereas after becoming SHG members, each female member's average savings per annum was Rs.6800. This is one of the outstanding achievement of the women involved. Their strength and their household contribution is still improving and contributing much towards the socio-economic transformation of the households of either in rural or in urban areas of the state.

¹⁷ Ibid

EFFICIENCY RESOURCES (FOREST AND CREDIT) USED BY SHG'S FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION OF KARNATAKA ECONOMY

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Since 35 years

1. Co-relation of credit and forest inputs

- Credit and forest products are the strong inputs used by the productive units irrespective of the sectors such as primary, secondary and services. Among the various inputs used in the process of production the co-relation between the credit and forest based inputs occupied a decisive place not only in third world countries but also in advanced countries of the global economy

2. Wood fuel save the oil consumption by 22 mm barrel per day.

- About 43% of the total energy(wood) consumed in third world countries by more than 2 billion people is met from wood fuel
- In India about 80 percent of the rural people is dependent on wood fuel for cooking their food and 65 percent of the total fuel wood is collected from the total fields on free of costs and also collected from the forest and community wood lots.

3. Importance of tree crops

- The tree crops form a major source of food in many parts of the world. They provide healthier food and improve the nutritional quality of the present days usual food.
- If the trees are grown and managed properly food production from such a source can be found available throughout the year with little effort and minimum investment

4. Diversification of forest land into farm and domicile purpose in India

- India is though rich in genetic species and eco-system diversity but which is one of the lowest in the world in possession of per capita forest and which is being 0.1 hecter and this is worsen with the increase in population on the one hand and increase in using of more and more forest land for farming as well as domicile purposes on the other hand.

5. Coverage of forest area in South Indian 4 states.

- 4 south Indian states total geographical area was 635780 sq km, among which the Andra Pradesh share was 43 percent, Karnataka share was 30 percent, Tamil Nadu share was 21 percent and Kerala share was 6 percent, the percentage of forest area to the total area during the year 1994, in Andra Pradesh 16.4 percent, Karnataka 16.93 percent, Tamil Nadu 13.13 percent and Kerala 26.56 percent. Including all the four states the coverage of forests area to the total area it was 18.2 percent.

6. Most of the people belongs to weaker sections remained outside the institutional credit in developing world.

- The credit occupied and played a big roll in acquiring the forest products in particular and natural resources in general. The percentage of poor families including small marginal farmers, rural artisans receiving a very small percentage of credit in different parts of the developing world. In some of the African countries nearly one percent of total numbers of borrowers use institutional credit, in Latin America and Asia (excluding Taiwan) 15 percent of poor families only could succeed in getting institutional finance. Nearly 80 percent of the people belongs to the women in particular and weaker sections in general have not possessed institutional credit in these countries

7. Bankers should first help the poor with a bank loan and than expect deposit

- Bankers in these areas can spread the banking habit and encourage thirsty habits to these poor. It is not possible to these groups to save first a certain amount of deposits and then undertake investment in agriculture or allied activities. It would be more realistic to help them with a loan to invest in their well versed occupation and out of the generated income the banks should recover the loans.

8. Objectives of the study

1. Most of the developing countries at global level have been pursuing the policy of inclusion of the exclusives in gainful production and employment activities
2. The exclusive groups have been allowed particularly and involving them in generating the income through the NGOs or SHG's
3. The state and central governments have been encouraging the exclusive groups to bring them in inclusive groups through the interest subsidy, asset subsidy, fixed capital subsidy and so on by implementing various schemes

9. Meaning of women SHGs and its objectives

- The SHGs are the voluntary organizations which have formed by the women members of upto 20 in order to produce single commodity and earn income to solve their common problems such as poverty, unemployment in a particular place.

10. Government of Karnataka's programmes for SHGs

- The women and children development department has been given training to the members of the SHGs about the combination of wood forests trees, soil based resources with the capital goods to be used in the process of production in Karnataka.

11. Production activities of SHGs in Karnataka

- Out of total 140000 SHGs in Karnataka 130000 SHGs have reported to the Government and involving in various activities such as dairy, readymade garments, blanket marketing, marketing of seeds and manure production and sale of papad, spices and agarbatti, production and sale of soap and detergent, various type of handicrafts etc.

12. Bank transaction account of women members in SHGs

- Out of total groups 112900 groups have a good bank linkage and the representation from the different divisions in the state was almost similar. Among the total groups have opened their bank accounts only keeping saved amount, as they have not known anything about bank transaction before the SHGs membership. The total women membership of all the groups in the state was 6.5 Lakhs. The total women population in the state in 2011 census was 2.58 Crores and the population 6.5 Lakhs women became the members of the total SHGs as on march 2011 which accounts for 2.51 percent.

13. Saving performance of the SHGs in 4 divisions of Karnataka state

- By selling the products they could have earned some income, out of which saved some income after meeting the consumption needs and all their liability and they have been keeping money in savings account of the bank to the tune of Rs.942.3 crores, it is one of the achievement of SHG's. The saved amount in Bangalore division was Rs.397.74 crores which accounts for 42 percent, in Belgaum divisions it was 189.59 crores, which accounts for 20 percent in Gulbarga Division, it was Rs.160.37 crores, which accounts for 17 percent, lastly in Mysore division it was Rs.191.6 crores which accounts for 21 percent.

14. Socio-economic transformation means

- Social transformation means change in the social status of the households in the society, economic transformation means a change in the consumption habits and which leads to better standard of living of households in the Karnataka State

15. Most of the SHGs products are Forest based one.

- many of the SHGs (0.4 lakhs) depends upon dairy, the cattle required fodder is provided by the forests, the some of the SHGs (0.2 lakhs) depends upon Agarbatti, the sandal and other required wood for sticks provided by the forests, some of the SHGs (0.3 lakhs) depends upon the wooden handicrafts such as dolls, carpentry, statues, furniture's, interior decorators and so on.

16. Forest is the main source of hand made products in Karnataka

- The some of the SHGs (0.2 lakhs) engaged in various type of hand made embroidery, tailoring, basket, mat making, panipuri, self help serviced hotels, petty business, plantation of anthurium, flower trading, fruit trading etc and for all these activities forests is the main source of production. The some of the SHGs (0.2 lakhs) have been involving in processing small industries, poultry farming, piggery, sericulture, coconut product, yarehulu manure making, khadi products, weaving spinning activities, soil based pots and household cooking products have produced by the SHGs of Karnataka.

17. SHGs have been helping much for socio-economic transformation of Karnataka state.

- After becoming the membership of the SHGs each women member average savings per annum was Rs.6800. It is one of the outstanding achievement of the women member. Their strength and their household contribution is still improving and contributing much towards the socio-economic transformation of the households in rural or in urban areas of the state.

Rediscovering Traditional Wood Product Industries in Sri Lanka: Promotion of Cultural Heritage, Improvement of Rural Livelihood and Expansion of Export Earnings

Mangala De Zoysa¹⁸

Abstract

The handicraft sector has become a major contributor to sustainable economic development and the eradication of poverty in local economies. The global handicrafts industry accounts for a market share of more than US\$100 billion. Wood-based handicraft industry is one of the oldest wood product industries in Sri Lanka. With the development of the export industry, the demand for wood-based handicraft products has been increasing rapidly during last few years. One of the main objectives of the establishment of Ministry of Traditional Industries and Small Enterprises Development was the development, marketing and export promotion of handicrafts. Hence the paper review the relevant literature and attempts to discuss the rediscovering traditional wood-based handicraft industries in Sri Lanka in terms of promotion of cultural heritage; improvement of rural livelihood; and expansion of exports.

Sri Lanka's cultural heritage and skilled craftsmanship have had a great influence on the production of handicrafts using natural raw materials, which is essentially a cottage industry. Wooden masks are used for curative rituals and for demon propitiation. Wooden crafts are linked with ancient Ayurvedic concepts of disease causation. A wide variety of traditional drums and musical items are among the other interesting wood-based handicrafts. Ebony carvings of Lord Buddha and elephants are popular in Sri Lanka. All these industries are highly diverse and depend almost entirely on the local wood supply for raw materials, and employ a large number of rural people. Manufacturers adapt to the varying requirements of buyers. These handicrafts are best purchased from the villages themselves or from government run "Laksala" outlets. The wood-based handicraft industry is presently catering to the domestic and overseas markets with the involvement and investment of the private sector. Sri Lankan exporters have adopted testing of handicraft products prior to cross-boundary transportation. Sri Lanka has adopted flexible policies in order to encourage more foreign investment and exports and regularly participates in leading international trade fairs. It could be concluded that the wood-based handicraft industries in Sri Lanka not only make some contribution but also have high potential to promote the cultural heritage, improve the rural livelihood and expansion of exports.

Key words: *Wood-based handicraft, cultural heritage, rural livelihood, exports*

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1. BACKGROUND

Handicraft goods are generally considered traditional creative works made with natural materials and traditional techniques (Wikipedia, 2011). Handicrafts found in Moen jo Daro, Sindh Indus Valley Civilization (3000 BC-1700 BC) are the first known items of this kind on Indian subcontinent (Wikipedia, 2011). Handicrafts are a unique expression of art which represents a culture, tradition and the heritage of a specific country. Every country has its own unique handicraft style continuing diverse historical aspects in beautiful forms of handicrafts. The array of handicraft items is very wide and made up of many different materials. However, wood-based handicraft items are very popular and are in huge demand worldwide due to their excellent craftsmanship. High standards of quality, social and environmentally responsible production as well as cultural authenticity of handicraft play an important role in promoting handicrafts and gaining consumer confidence which will strengthen presence in new markets (UNESCO, 2011). In the wood –based handicraft products sector, items include wooden toys, sport goods, educational items for children, household items, furniture, sculpture and toys, ceilings etc. The handicraft sector is one of the major contributors to sustainable economic development and the eradication of poverty in local economies. Apart from earning revenue, wood-based handicraft industries provide additional employment to the people living in rural areas. The global handicrafts industry accounts for a market share of more than US\$100 billion (Craft Central, 2011)

Wood-based handicrafts have a long tradition in Sri Lanka which has a vast forest resource and a variety of timbers. Sri Lanka has a large variety of traditional handicrafts and tradition of making handicraft is as old as the nation. The wood-based handicraft industry is one of the oldest wood product industries in Sri Lanka (Sri Lanka Export Development Board, 2011). Today the wood-based handicrafts of Sri Lanka include the adaptations of the traditional and contemporary handicrafts during the long and eventful history since 800 BC and under numerous foreign invasions, especially by South India; and by three European nations, the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British (Wijeratne, 2011). The industry depends entirely on the local wood supply. Most wood-based handicraft manufacturing companies are small-scale enterprises with low volumes of production that cater the domestic markets, foreign tourists as well as target export markets (Perera and Vlosky, 2009). A wide range of exclusive wood-based handicraft items combine utility and beauty adding elegance to the lifestyle. Gift boxes, toys, educational items for Montessori school children, household items, wall hangings, fancy jewellery, figurines, sculpture, lacquer products, ornamental products and seasonal decorations are some of the woodcraft items produced in Sri Lanka (Sri Lanka Export Development Board, 2007). With the development of the export industry in Sri Lanka, the demand for wood-based handicraft products has been increasing rapidly during last few years. The wood-based handicraft sector in Sri Lanka has a customer base in many countries such as Australia, UK, Germany, France, Japan, Middle East, New Zealand and USA.

For this reason, efforts to rediscover traditional wood-based handicraft industries in Sri Lanka has become a practical importance with the view of social and economic development of the country while preserving cultural heritage and the natural environment. This paper reviews the relevant literature through a search methodology and attempts to discuss the rediscovery of traditional wood-based handicraft industries in Sri Lanka in terms of promotion of cultural heritage; improvement of rural livelihood; and expansion of exports.

2. PROMOTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

2.1 Recognize Important Traditional Wood-based Handicrafts

The history of Sri Lankan wood-based handicrafts dates back several millennia. Sri Lanka has ancient ties with India and has a close relationship with its cultural styles of handicrafts. Sri Lanka's cultural heritage and skilled craftsmanship have been passed down through the ages and have had a great influence on current wood-based handicrafts (Sri Lanka Export Development Board, 2007). A wide range of handicraft items made of wood combine utility and beauty and elegance. Wall hangings, fancy jewelry, figurines, sculpture, lacquer products, gift boxes, toys, educational items for pre-school children, household items are some of the woodcraft items produced in Sri Lanka

Carvings of Lord Buddha: The three dimensional carvings of ebony Lord Buddha are popular in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka's arts and crafts including the traditional wooden handicrafts are largely influenced by the beliefs and customs of Buddhist culture. Most Sri Lankan arts originate Buddhist religious beliefs, represented in many artistic forms including wood-based statues of Lord *Buddha*

Elephant Carvings: Wood-based elephant carvings are the most popular handicraft item in Sri Lanka as elephants play a key role in Sri Lankan culture, religion and history. The expert craftsmen can turn a log of wood to a figure of an elephant almost looking alive with only the help of a chisel and mallet. They are made of Mahogany, Ebony, Teak, Nadun, and Coconut. They can turn a hard kernel of the log of Ebony wood to a figure of a black elephant almost looking alive with the help of a chisel and mallet.
(<http://www.mysrilanka.com/travel/lanka/art/handy.htm>)

Traditional Drums: Wide variety of traditional drums and musical items are among the other interesting wood-based handicrafts. Sri Lankan Drum Tradition is believed to go as far back as 2500 years. Although in ancient times there were some 33 different types of Sri Lankan drums, today one will find only about ten and the rest are known in name only. The Drums in use today are: Geta Bera (Bera Drum), Yak Bera, Davula, Thammattama, Udakkiya, Dakkiya, Bummadiya, Hand Rabana, Bench Rabana, Dandu Beraya. The drum is turned out of wood taken from the Kohomba, Ehela, Kitul, Jack or Milla trees. The drum is painted with lacquer. Openings on the sides of the drum are covered with skin of a monkey, cattle, buffalo, goat or the stomach lining of a cow. The strings that are used tighten the sides are from a deerskin or cattle skin. The drum is fixed to the waist or hung on the shoulder of the player and the sound is controlled by applying pressure on the strings. The drums are played on both sides with hands; one side is played with the hand while the other side is played with a stick; or played with two sticks. (Asian Recipe.com, 2011).

Traditional Masks: Wooden masks are made out from the timber of the 'kaduru' (Nux vomica or Blazar) tree and the carving of the mask is a tradition that passes from generation to generation. Kaduru trees grow in the marshy lands bordering paddy fields. There are three main types. The wood used for these masks is called "Diya Kanduru" (nux vomica or Blazar). The reason for using Diya Kanduru is for its lightness, durability, non-cracking, resistance to insects and easiness of carving. The masks are colorful creations with faces of gods, humans, demons and beasts and are used mostly in religious processions and offerings. The masks have colorful hues and details painted in bright colors. Different traditional masks including the devil masks will even last for 150 years which indicates the quality of the

wood-based handicrafts (Paranamanna, 2011). Historically, wooden masks each have their own distinct characteristic style and shape (Naga, Gurulu, Mayura, Gini, Raaksha, Dahaata sanniya, Kolam, Nadagam). These masks make colorful and dramatic interior décor of truly authentic value. Three different types of masks are used for different purposes such as: 1. Sanni mask: Sanni means sickness and there are 18 sicknesses hence there are 18 sanni masks; 2. Kolam mask: Kolam mask used more in dramas and commonly seen in the Southern part of Sri Lanka. “Aatha Kolama, Arachchi Kolama, Police Kolama, Jasaya and Lenchina are some of them; 3. Raksha mask: Used in many functions and features comes as Gurula Mask (Gurula is a mythical bird), Cobra mask, Peacock mask...etc. (<http://www.mysrilanka.com/travel/lanka/art/handy.htm>)

Puppets: The history of puppetry in Sri Lanka can be traced from the 19th Century. Wooden make-shift dolls an ancient form of art carving out intricate details on the faces of the dolls and dressing them to look like actual humans. A puppet interprets the Sinhala term ‘rukada’ the human figures made out of wood, as image and dancing doll. ‘Rukada’ and means ‘miniature figure’ or ‘replica’ or ‘doll’. The puppets are carved in a variety of wood particularly ‘kaduru’ (Nux vomica or Blazar) that happens to be light in weight and easy to carve on. The people have great interest in puppetry and pay gratitude to the traditional artists who preserved this form of ancient traditional art (Cader, 2011).

Cane and Other Products: Cane products like tiny baskets and jewellery boxes are neat and strong. Wood-carved decorative panels are used widely in Sri Lanka in the trade of interior decoration too. Traditional craftsmanship of all types of Sri Lankan traditional handicraft and related products made from well seasoned indigenous wood which are pest and insect free and the products are everlasting. Wooden handicraft industry usually uses timber species such as Jack, teak, mahogany etc., which are mostly obtained from home gardens and well managed forests (Sri Lanka Export Development Board, 2011)

2.2 Facilitating Curative Rituals and for Demon Propitiation

Wooden traditional masks are very much a part of Sri Lanka’s culture and folklore. The masks are originally used for curative rituals and for demon propitiation. There is a strong and undying connection between religions with tradition masks that afford curative power for physiological problems and they were used in rituals, dramas, and curing sickness, and other fine creations mastered by the articulately skilled artisans (Senevirathne, etal., 2010). Wooden mask making is a specialized craft of the southern province. These masks were originally used for curative rituals and for demon propitiation. Popular wooden handicraft masks of the “Yakun Natima” and other dance rituals of Sri Lanka are carefully crafted ritual with a history reaching far back into Sri Lanka's pre-Buddhist past. Carved from wood and pigmented with natural hues and resins, the wooden masks are infused with a spirit and animation which command attention. Ritual performances use each mask for a specific purpose and it is believed that masks provide curative benefits for physiological problems. Sanni mask represent 18 sickness, Kolam mask used more in dramas such as Aatha kolama, Arachchi kolama, Police kolama, Jasaya and lenchina. Raksha mask used in many functions and features comes as gurula mask (gurula is a mythical bird), Cobra mask, Peacock mask etc. (Senevirathne, etal., 2010)

2.3 Popularizing Carved of wood Combined Ancient Ayurvedic Concepts

The yakun natima, or devil dance ritual of Sri Lanka is a carefully crafted ritual combining ancient Ayurvedic concepts of disease causation with deft psychological manipulation. “Ayurveda” is not only a form of medication but also a total way of life which is a gentle method of treating the root causes of illness in both mind and body. Medicated steam bath is specially recommended for certain skin diseases, to eliminate impurities from the body and to reduce fat. Herbal roots heat the body thoroughly in a traditional Margosa (Azadiracta Indica) wooden box. The head stays outside the box and thus remains cool. The curative effects of the herb vipers penetrate the skin, while waste products are excreted with the sweat. (<http://www.lanka.com/sri-lanka/ayurveda-sri-lanka-101.html>)

2.4 Performing Traditional Dancing and Procession

Mask Dancing: The traditional mask is an ornamental facial decorative wear used in entertainment and dancing in rituals, dramas, and curing of sickness and disease (<http://www.mysrilanka.com/travel/lanka/art/handy.htm>). Traditionally wooden masks were used for curative rituals and exorcism. Today, masks are more commonly seen in religious processions, theatrical and cultural concerts. Drums normally accompany the dances, especially the mask dancing connected with rituals and the folk play Kolam. During the ancient times drums were used for pleasure and rituals, as well as used in the Buddhist Temples for the many ceremonies. Some of the functions are: Ana Bera - to inform the people about orders from the King; Vada Bera - drums played when a criminal is taken for beheading; Mala Bera - drums used in a funeral procession; and Rana Bera - drums used by the army when going out to meet the enemy (Asian Recipe.com, 2011). Bench Rabana is the biggest of the drums used in Sri Lanka. The special feature of this drum is that it is played at a time by two or more people. They use both hands. This drum is commonly used presently for New Year festivals and there are many special rhythms played on them. It is mostly played by women. Even the present society both in villages and cities commonly use drums on special occasions during the life span of people, from their birth to the death. Drums are often used in the Buddhist Temples as well as in government and private places for the many ceremonies. Mala Bera drums are still used in almost all funeral processions (Asian Recipe.com, 2011),

Puppets Dancing: The Sinhala terms ‘rukada keliya’ and ‘rukada natima’ mean a puppet show. There is ample evidence in literature to prove that puppet shows had been a form of entertainment which was popular by the year 1832. The master puppeteers and vocalists make these wooden dolls walk, talk and behave like humans. The public who come to view the puppet shows are entertained with re-enactments of incidents that occurred in the village or in many instances characters found in Buddhist literature and chronicles are added. Puppetry is said to have begun in the Southern part of Sri Lanka where the village people preserved puppetry with sheer dedication, passion and love (Cader, 2011). There is a great deal of talent in the artistes that keep puppetry still alive. The efforts made to combine dedication of the puppeteer families that live in all corners of this island who have come forward to support and keep the tradition alive (Cader, 2011). The Traditional Puppet Art Museum was inaugurated in 2007 in the hopes of keeping the tradition alive and reviving the old form of art. The Museum hopes of keeping the tradition alive facilitated by the Department of Cultural Affairs as well as the Arts Council of Sri Lanka. Many school and university students visit the puppet museum and never get tired of watching the plays and entertainment.

3. IMPROVEMENT OF RURAL LIVELIHOOD

3.1 Preservation of Traditional Technology and Cottage Industry

The production of wood-based handicrafts is essentially a cottage industry. The Sri Lankan Handicraft industry reflects traditional craft skills, cultural and religious values of local people. Many kinds of wood-based handicrafts are produced in Sri Lanka with technologies gifted from generations. Traditional wood-based handicrafts are produced in different parts of the country as home based cottage industries where intricate skills are passed down in generations. Products are turned out making use of natural raw materials by means of time tested age-old techniques. The traditional skills have been preserved with its purity, resulting in the continuance of characteristic identity of Sri Lanka wood-based handicrafts. The National Chamber of Handicrafts of Sri Lanka founded in 2004 is a private sector association of craftsmen and women who have come together to uplift their business, while maintaining the traditions of Sri Lanka's handicraft industry island-wide which are engaged in the production of handicraft items. "LAKSALA" under the Ministry of Rural Industries and Self Employment Promotion was set up to preserve and develop traditional skill of the craftsmen. "LAKSALA" serves nearly 3500 leading master craftsmen/entrepreneurs producing handicrafts item at Rural/Cottage industry level.

3.2 Supply of Natural Wooden Raw Materials

All the wood products industries are highly diverse in Sri Lanka and depend almost entirely on local wood supply for raw materials (Perera and Vlosky, 2009). One of the major problems encountered by the producers of wooden handicrafts today is dwindling supplies of timbers such as ebony and quality soft and hard woods. With the high cost of wood raw materials and the increasing price of logs, the profit margin of handicraft industry is reduced. The entrepreneurs try to trim production costs by lowering workers' wages, bringing them to the verge of poverty. The government has to intervene to rectify this shortfall by creating special plantations for sourcing raw material for the wood craft, especially to protect natural forest resources of the country.

3.3 Creation of Employment Opportunities

At present a large number of craftsmen engaged in the production of traditional wood-based handicrafts. The wood-based handicraft industry in Sri Lanka employs a large number of people in both urban and rural areas. There are over 9000 wood-based handicraft industrial plants employing around 28,000 people (Sri Lanka Export Development Board, 2011). The Kandyan Arts and Crafts Industrial Centre manufactures, deals and exports traditional Sri Lankan handicraft items including wood-based handicrafts. The center directly employs 30 highly trained personnel and over 6000 traditional handicraftsmen (http://www.kandyanarts.com/about_us.php, 2011)

3.4 Market Promotions and Increase Income

The growth potential of the wood-based handicraft industry is very high in view of increasing per capita income in the domestic market and high demand in foreign markets. Miniature replicas of the low-relief wood carving and other handicrafts done by the traditional woodcarvers can be bought at fair prices. The industry is dominated by private sector enterprises accounting for about 95 percent of the total market share (Chandrasiri, 2009).

These crafts are best purchased from the villages where they are produced as well as from the government run “LAKSALA” outlets. LAKSALA is the only state owned organization in Sri Lanka providing marketing and export promotion of handicrafts through 14 provincial purchasing points and 23 sales outlets. Visitors can buy traditional handicrafts being displayed at these craft villages in Battaramulla and Sigiriya. Talented craftsmen produce these items while using the common facilities available at these centers and market their products at these villages (Sri Lanka Export Development Board, 2007). Many wood-based handicrafts have a good demand from the many tourists and the producers earned a good profit from the crafts. A traditional mask manufacturer earns about Rs. 40,000 a month by selling masks to ‘Laksala’. There is an increase in monthly income during the festive season between November and February with the arrival of tourists to Sri Lanka.

4. EXPANSION OF EXPORTS

4.1 Worldwide Publicity

Sri Lanka has gained a worldwide reputation for its ancient tradition of wood-based handicrafts (Senevirathne, et al., 2010). Sri Lanka regularly participates in leading international trade fairs such as the Frankfurt International Trade Fair ‘Ambiente’ and ‘Nuremberg International Toy Fair’ in Germany. Many buyers visit the Sri Lanka pavilion at these fairs and are impressed with the product quality and price (Sri Lanka Export Development Board, 2007). The Sri Lanka Export Development Board recently launched the official website of Sri Lanka Expo 2012, www.srilankaexpo.com, which gives a high level of publicity to wood-based handicrafts. Private sector industries also give publicity for their wood-based handicrafts through their professionally designed websites. The Traditional Puppet Art Museum in Sri Lanka has achieved international standards in the art scene and opened many doors for Sri Lankan puppetry in many foreign venues. Many local and foreign school and university students visit the Traditional Puppet Art Museum and spend hours listening to the stories and explanations.

4.2 Product Development

Due to evolving consumer tastes and trends in the changing world scenario, the wood-based handicraft industry requires changing designs, patterns, product development, and production techniques in the face of fast growing global competitiveness. Manufacturers also have the flexibility to adapt to the varying requirements of buyers and product to suit their requirements. However, Sri Lankan handicraft manufacturers have the advantage of servicing a thriving and emerging tourist market and are therefore exposed to the different requirements and tastes of a large cross section of buyers from overseas markets (Sri Lanka Export Development Board, (2007). The Wooden toy industry in Sri Lanka is an established industry with over 50 exporters and over US\$ 70 million annual exports. Most of the products are value-added products with value addition depending on the design, method of production, and quality of the final product (Chandrasiri, 2009).

4.3 Market Expansion

The wooden handicrafts industry presently caters not only to the domestic market but also to overseas markets. Tourists can find excellent collections of Sri Lankan handicrafts in shops and stores throughout the country. Foreign tourists can gain a valuable insight into the manufacturing process of the handicrafts at the “Craft Villages” in Battaramulla and Sigiriya

and also have opportunity to purchase items in one place (Sri Lanka Export Development Board, 2007). Sri Lankan exporters in the past served niche markets with limited production capacity. Although they have potential to penetrate into new foreign markets, they do not properly invest in marketing or advertising their products. The main reasons for less of export capacity are the difficulties in meeting buyer-required product volumes and maintaining timely delivery of orders (Perera and Vlosky, 2009). Recently, wood-based handicraft exporting has become an emerging sector in Sri Lanka with the involvement and investment of the private sector (Weerawardena, 2003). Sri Lankan exports handicraft mainly to the U.K., USA, India, Maldives, Saudi Arabia, France and Germany (Sri Lanka Export Development Board, 2011).

4.4 Maintain Standards and Quality Assurance

Quality-oriented woodcarving manufacturers pay exquisite attention to the detailed needs of both local and foreign buyers. There are many leading exporters of wooden-based handicrafts in Sri Lanka. Their products are manufactured by highly skilled and experienced craftsmen and they supply high quality products to foreign customers. They are capable of manufacturing quality products to customer specifications. Furthermore the products are biodegradable and thus environmentally friendly in both sourcing and disposal. Wood-based handicrafts made using FSC certified treated wood at the international quality standards have also become very popular and created a heavy demand from international markets (Sri Lanka Export Development Board, 2011). Sri Lankan exporters have adopted phytosanitary testing handicraft prior to cross-boundary transportation to control for dispersion of pests and destructive organisms which can be transmitted with wood products and packaging materials (Perera and Vlosky, 2009).

4.5 Government Commitments

The Sri Lanka Handicrafts Board better known as “LAKSALA” was established on 17th January 1983, under the National Crafts Council & allied Institutions Act No. 35 of 1982. One of the main objectives of the Ministry of Traditional Industries and small enterprises development, which was established on 30th April 2010, is the development, marketing and export promotion of handicrafts. Sri Lanka has adopted flexible taxes and policies, and export of wood-based handicraft products are exempted from duties or subjected to concessionary duty rates in order to encourage foreign investment and exports (Perera and Vlosky, 2009). The export Development Board (EDB) worked out several measures to provide policy support on export development, quality standards, and import policies to promote wood-based handicraft industry. Similarly, the Ministry of Industrial Development and Ministry of Rural Industries offered policy support on import of machinery, production technology and supply of raw material. Ministry of Technical and Vocational Training offered skill development programs (Chandrasiri, 2009).

5. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Sri Lanka promotes its cultural heritage through traditional wood-based handicrafts; facilitating curative rituals and for demon propitiation; popularizing wood carving combined with ancient ayurvedic concepts; and performing traditional dancing and procession. Wood-based handicrafts have improved rural livelihoods to some extent by preserving traditional technology and cottage industry; creating employment opportunities; market promotions and

increasing income. Worldwide publicity; product development; market expansion; maintenance of standards and quality assurance; and government commitments have made some contribution to the expansion of the exports of Sri Lankan wood-based handicrafts. Expansion of local wood supplies for raw materials; maintaining products with high quality standards; investing in marketing and promotional activities to promote products at competitive market prices are required to rediscover the wood-based handicraft industry in order to make contribution to socio-economic development of the country.

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