

Research Paper :

Carpet weaving industry of Warangal - A field study

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ABSTRACT

An attempt has been made to study the present status of Warangal - a carpet weaving centre. Unlike that of many fields progress in this area has not been marked in steady increment. The main aim of the study was to identify the status of carpet weaving, its set up, functioning and the problems faced by the weavers and reasons for decline in demand for carpets. The study results revealed that the condition of the weavers was pathetic; they were handicapped due to illiteracy, inadequate finance, majority worked for master weavers, inadequate infrastructural facilities and marketing bottlenecks.

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Key words : Carpet, Looms, Problems of weavers

India is one of those countries where people customarily sit on the floor. Carpet weaving in India is a traditional handicraft, passed down from one generation to the next for hundreds of years. Carpet weaving is predominantly a rural based cottage industry, which is mainly export oriented and highly labour intensive. This industry is the backbone of the rural economy in carpet producing areas, which otherwise would largely depend on agriculture as there is less industrialization in these areas. The carpet industry has flourished to include a strong local tinge, while preserving the highly stylized and idealistic Persian standard. The Indian namdah, a kind of felt rug, durries or carpet, is an all-purpose article, indispensable to daily life.

The carpets of Warangal, in Andhra Pradesh have a strong local flavour. Carpet weaving in this southern state is generally rather coarse and loose. Warangal has long been an important carpet-weaving centre. The industry took root when the Mughal army moved into the Deccan carrying it with the camps (Chattopadhyay, 1976). Carpets were bound to thrive in this region, as it was great cotton growing and weaving area. Warangal had been a cultural centre under the old regimes and the soil was ready for any such transplantation. Very soon the Warangal carpet weavers were able to make their mark abroad with their fine work. A very good specimen of this is in South Kensington museum and the story goes that when it was being woven, a change of needle became necessary for

almost each knot, as the patterns were very complicated.

The Warangal weavers have also composed their own designs with some of the old flavour. For instance the Persian Lancelot leaf is here transformed into a flower. Once again the names of patrons passed on to designs in addition to some of their own, like mehbub khani, teerandas khani, hashim khani, dilli khani, thotti khani etc. Carpet weavers are naturally conservative and as long as their patrons remain content with the classical patterns, the weavers prefer to repeat or to further refine earlier models.

The durries and carpets of Warangal are really the pride of the state (Shrilakshmmi and Padma, 2002). They were known for their beauty throughout the world because of their fine weaving and pleasing and harmonious colour combinations. Warangal carpets made great impact on the European markets and had a large share in exports till early twentieth century. But now, Warangal carpets have lost their quality and stability and durries have replaced carpets due to high cost of carpets and lack of demand in the market. In order to study the past and present status of Warangal carpet industry, products, export, problems faced by weavers, reasons for decline etc. this study was taken up.

Selection of locale:

Warangal, a district of Andhra Pradesh was selected for the study. It is a famous carpet weaving centre.