

COTTAGE INDUSTRIES

TRICHIN-POLY

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The Cottage Industries of Trichinopoly

AND HOW TO DEVELOP THEM

1. Name, location and population of Taluk:—

Trichinopoly Taluk bounded on the North by the Coleroon, on the East by Tanjore District, on the South by Pudukota State, and on the West by Kulitalai Taluk, has a rural population almost equal to that of the Urban. Its area is 33 1/2 square miles

2 The main agricultural products are: paddy and some dry crops such as Ragi, Cholam etc. Sugar-cane is grown here and there. Garden vegetables, plaintain cultivation and betel growing also are found. The groves of Cocoanut and Mango trees are very common.

Paddy is largely utilised for local consumption. Some quantity is exported to neighbouring districts. The other crops are mainly for local consumption. Some vegetables and betel are exported to the neighbouring Taluks and Districts. Brown Sugar manufactured from sugarcane is partly utilised for consumption and partly for exportation to Bombay, for being sent to the foreign refineries.

Cocoanut and Mango are locally consumed and are also exported a great deal. Mangoes are cut and dried and are exported as dried preserves to Burma. This industry is of recent growth.

The urban products are:— Cotton cloth, Silk cloth, jewellery, cigar manufacture, ruby-shaping, oil-pressing, tanning leather, metal works, silver trinkets and vessels, brass trinkets and vessels, confectionery, shoe-making, etc. All these products are more for export than for local consumption.

3. Agriculture and cattle grazing are the occupation of more than 45% of the people. Industries connected with the above products constitute the occupation of 25% of the population and the remaining 30% are merchants, petty traders, brokers, money-lenders, coolies, mendicants, beggars and officials in public and private service and barbers and dhobies.

4. (a) Average wages in Agricultural operations:—males 4 as., females 2 as., children 1 anna.

(b) Average wages in industries are nearly double that of Agricultural wages for males and Children. While for females, where they are employed, the average wage is almost the same as in agricultural works.

5. Sugar-cane pressing, Oil pressing, tanning, harness making, shoe-making, cigar manufacture, jewellery making, metal works including brass and silver vessels and trinkets, cotton cloth, silk cloth weaving, lace making, mat weaving, tailoring, rope making etc., are the industries of the Taluk.

6. All these cottage industries have been in existence in the Taluk from time-out-of-mind. Sugar-cane pressing, mat-weaving and rope-making take place in rural tracts; while the remaining industries are in urban area. Cotton weaving to some extent takes place in rural parts also. But these rural parts are engaged in weaving only inferior and rough cloths without any lace work.

7. Of 25% of the population engaged in various industries nearly 20,000 are in weaving industry; 10,000 in jewellery including silver trinkets, vessels and brass and other metal vessels and image moulding. About 10,000 are in cigar manufacture. The remaining 30,000 are engaged in the minor industries of mat making, tanning, smithy works, brick laying, pottery, oil-pressing, rope-making, tailoring, sugar-cane pressing, etc.

The wages in jewellery stand higher being about Re. 1 per day. The wages in cigar and weaving are almost the same being about 6 as. on an average. The wages in

of textile industry from the mill competition is due to the lace embroidery in varieties innumerable.

The training in both kinds of textiles above mentioned is obtained not from a school or workshop, but the training is imperceptibly and easily obtained by apprenticeship of a peculiar kind.

Young children even below 5 years are sent to a cottage weaver to help him in unskilled labour at first. In the course of two or three years the child picks up necessary knowledge to be a skilled labourer helping the weaver. Clubbing several looms in one place and yielding to the master weaver and thus make a factory business of the industry has been altogether a rarity being repugnant to the self-respecting feelings of the local weaver.

So, the system has been out and out a cottage industry system without any tendency for becoming a factory one. Whatever may be the inclination of the cottage weavers elsewhere, it is purely individualistic and independent master-weaver system in Trichinopoly, as every weaver hates to be a Journeyman and tries to be an independent Master-weaver the moment he is able to lay by a small capital.

Female workers are employed in cotton as well as silk-weaving. All females as well as

children are employed in subsidiary work. The females spend all their time, excepting the cooking time, in subsidiary work of unravelling skeins of raw silk, and cotton yarn and in sizing the warp, etc.

9. In the case of silk textiles, raw silk from Collegal in Mysore, and from Rampur, Cazinbazaar, Maldha, etc., in Bengal are largely used. No foreign silk such as from Japan, China, etc. is used for the local silk weaving. The raw materials except lace and dye-stuffs are entirely Indian, the labour is Indian and texture in case of some of the cloths is enviable and most durable. So, if silk-khadi is a desirability, as I believe it should be one. Trichinopoly-silk-stuffs deserve the best encouragement.

In the case of cotton weaving, roughest as well as finest cloths with lace borders are manufactured. The coarse cloths are woven in rural parts, while the finer counts are woven in urban area particularly in Woraiyur. The cotton yarn used for the looms are all mill made. The finer counts are foreign, while lower counts are supplied to some extent by Indian mills. The lace also for the most part is supplied by Indian mills of Surat, Coimbatore, etc., while French lace, though was losing ground for some time, has since revived its attraction.

The price of silk yarn has been subject to wildest fluctuations during the last five years.

There are several sorts of raw silk according to fineness. The coarsest raw silk costs Rs 20 per viss, while the finest of the Indian produce costs Rs 50 per viss. The foreign ones of China are supposed to be extra-fine costing even 60 or 70 Rupees per viss. These foreign silks are used in Tanjore, Canjeevaram & other parts for weaving Hindu female-cloths and some male-cloths also. The average price for the roughest sort may be fixed at Rs. 18 per viss, while that for the finest ones at Rs. 45 per viss. Foreign silk is out of the question in Trichy.

Cotton yarn also has been subject to ruinous fluctuations ever since the Great War. The middle men have been making enormous profits by the rise in price which became three times and even four times as high as before in the case of almost all counts. Lower counts are supplied from Madura, Coimbatore, Ahmadabad and other Bombay presidency mills. Japan counts also are largely used. The price at present is almost normal. Lace is supplied from Surat and other Bombay mills. Foreign lace is not avoided. Lace also has been in wild fluctuation and has risen during the war to double the price. Surat lace is now competing almost successfully with French lace which is supposed to be unrivalled. Lace factory in Madras is also making progress. Hand-made lace has been driven out of the field and it was confined to copper thread.

Once, about 80 years ago copper thread industry formed the source of earning for one or two thousand people in this Taluk.

There is practically no difficulty in getting the aforesaid raw materials. There are importers who serve as middlemen and reap the profits due to fluctuation. But the tendency on the part of individual weavers to import these raw products themselves without the intervention of the middle-men is increasing and profiteering is going down.

10. Till now the custom has been to purchase the raw products from the Sowcars or middle men. But now the workers are trying to get the raw materials directly from the place of supply. This tendency is increasing.

11. All the industries are going on, not in groups or factories. Such a system is out of taste with the people of this place. Pure cottage industry system in which the males of the house drive the loom or conduct the work while the females help and children undergo apprenticeship is in vogue. There may be rare cases of master-artisans or weavers clubbing several journey-men workers under them and supervising them. Independence is the watch word of every artisan or weaver who may, under pressure of circumstances, hire himself out, but make himself an independent master as soon as he gets a small capital.

There are a very few co-operative societies in this place when compared with the number of cottage industries that lend themselves to the co-operative organisation.

12. In silk industry, articles of Mahomedan wear mentioned in the previous paragraph are woven. In cotton industry articles of Hindu wear are woven. These are used by Mahomedans also. These industries have sprung on account of the Mahomedan and the Hindu rulers' patronage as mentioned above. Their origin is therefore purely historical and not economic.

13. The artisans never make their own implements. They purchase them from carpenters and smiths.

14. The silk goods are exported to all countries of Mahomedan habitation in this presidency as well as outside the presidency. Nizam's dominions have been consuming much. Some patterns such as Hamru, Tafta, etc were being exported to foreign countries such as France also, where they were used as table cloths and ornamentations. Some of the patterns such as silk angavastrams and Urumals are being exported to the western coast and the Malabar District. From the latter place they are exported to Rangoon.

The cotton cloths are exported largely to the neighbouring districts and are also consumed locally. All the finished products are purchased by the middle men and are exported by them. In a very few cases, less than 5%, the articles are hawked about by the producer himself.

15. As these industries are now more or less on the decline, a large market will be quite welcome. The quality also can be bettered if there is better encouragement. The quality at present is also on the decline and may be improved with better patronage. Though there is no organisation, orders are promptly met.

The articles are durable generally though there are some in both silk and cotton weaving, which are inferior, to meet the demand of cheaper articles. The workers are quite reliable and can work to orders if sufficient wages are vouchsafed.

16. As already mentioned in a previous paragraph, the training is obtained domestically and not in a workshop or school. It forms part of the family duties to instruct children in the art.

17. The designs or patterns are originated locally. No pattern is studied from outside. The wants, if ascertained by a change of taste

are supplied by introducing the change desired. For example, silk angavastrams were rare a decade or two ago. And they were unknown in the local industry then. But these silk angavastrams are woven everywhere in the city to meet the increasing demand. So also in the case of cotton industry. 'The Home-rule-embroidery' was found out to be a desirability and it has been introduced recently. So the weavers adapt themselves to the varying tastes of the consumers. But in the case of articles of Mahomedan wear, there has been practically no change in pattern. The Khamkwabs, Hamrus, Taftas, Gulbadans are almost the same as they had been 4 or 5 centuries ago. Though some of these patterns have undergone a deterioration in order to meet the demand for inferior sort, this deterioration is partly due to the poverty resulting from the suicidal and unhealthy competition among the middle men who purchase these for exportation and to the precarious condition of the workers who cannot but sell in times of sloth their finished products to meet their daily wants.

Some new designs also were introduced and found to be a success. Under the auspices of the ephemeral Sowrashttra Weavers' Association silk hand-kerchiefs and turbans were introduced by the writer himself and found out to be a success. But as the society was wound

up for reasons mentioned, the patterns could not be sufficiently advertised and they lost their ground.

18 There is no special difficulty with regard to any industry. The only difficulty is that the workers cannot be united against the middlemen who are sharp enough to create disunion among the workers and that there is none to help the workers in seasons of slackness. A co-operative society with a subsidy mentioned above will relieve the workers a great deal.

19. Though the out-put in cotton and silk industry has increased, the quality in some cases has gone down. This is as already mentioned, due to the unhealthy rivalry among the middlemen to attract more orders to themselves by supplying cheaper articles. In trying to lower the price they unconsciously put a premium on deterioration in quality which goes on indefinitely until the article loses its name. To give an example, Hamru, a particular silk pattern, which was so fine and durable that it attracted French orders, has now completely lost its name.

20 The following is the suggestion for improving the condition of the industry and of the artisans of all classes.

1. Co-operative associations under the supervision of business men instead of under

mere accounts-checking Inspectors and Registrars. The supervisors must be men of practical knowledge who can instruct the societies as to the demand of the articles produced and suggest means of efficiency.

2. The introduction of power-looms such as fly-shuttle instead of the old fashioned loom.

3. Periodical lectures on trades and business to enlighten the workers as to the benefit of co-operation and union,

4. A sufficiently large capital to purchase the finished products of not only members, but of all the workmen in a particular trade. The capital required in the case of silk industry is three or four lakhs of rupees and two lakhs for cotton industry.

In the case of all other industries this "Grinding system" still persists. The people in cigar and jewellery industry are slightly better off, whereas those in other industries are in a miserable state. The cobblers, mat-makers, potters, and agricultural labourers are on the border of starvation and death. All these can be helped by co-operative organisation with sufficient subsidies. I have confined myself to silk and cotton industry in this paper, simply because they form the important cottage industries of the place which have added to the glory of this place in historic

times. The art of jewellery is almost perfect and needs no improvement. The cigar factory workers require help in the form of co-operative societies mentioned above.

21 As observed before, almost every industry has got a body of sowcars or merchants who supply raw material to the workers. These middle men are inclined to take as much from the workers and give them as little as possible. The ordinary worker till now has been in the back ground without any knowledge of the external world. The middle men who are not much better than the workers with regard to the knowledge of the external world, have at least been in the hereditary profession of importing raw materials and supplying them at as high a price as possible to the workers and take the finished products of the workers at as low a price as possible. Thus the Grinding system, as I would call it, or sweat-system as it is called in the case of master and servant system, is very common in Trichinopoly. No industry is free from it, while weaving industry has had the lion's share of it. But this is gradually being attacked by the workers ever since the Great war, the Opener of the Eyes of the Mass, put them in the right track. The most ignorant worker came to know of where dye-stuffs are manufactured and how they would suffer, if a foreign importation is suspended. The tendency on the part of the workers to order for raw materials individually

or to combine together and order for their necessities is increasing. So, this is just the time for the intervention of Co-operative department which has not been doing all that it can. Again the Department is not properly manned in as much as there are no business experts in it. There are in the Department men who have taken Degrees with a good deal of theoretical knowledge but without a practical hand. Some of them are more useful for auditing than for training, educating and informing the societies of the places where and time when they can purchase raw materials cheapest and sell their finished products dearest. Merchants of such experience if appointed, as Inspectors, Assistant Registrars, etc, will be of invaluable service in giving business clue to the societies. And such men are not wanting in these days of business failures for want of capital. They will also give the clue for breaking the back of capitalistic oppression. Again the co-operative department only recently entered into the industrial field. In Trichinopoly the first industrial co-operative society was the Sow-rashtra Brahmana Weavers' Co-operative Association under my presidency. The object of it was to set free the individual weavers from the clutches of greedy middle-men who never look into the interest of the weavers. *These middle-men try to out-do each other in lowering the price of the finished products and*

send them on to their customers outside the place at as low a price as possible, but without entrenching on their own profit. Thus in each trying to get more customers without affecting his own profit, the middle-men entrench upon the wages of the poor, helpless weaver who cannot but sell his finished product to meet his daily wants, both productive and unproductive. The only escape from such a 'Grinding system' was found out to be a co-operative association. But this association which was then the first of its kind in the Presidency, being connected with silk weaving industry, was fated to be short-lived on account of want of capital. The business required 3 or 4 lakhs and the Government would not come forward with any sufficient grant, loan, or subsidy and the rules would not permit a loan more than 5 times the subscribed capital which was insignificantly small when compared with the want. So, if a State Industrialism is far from the scope of local government, at least a subsidy to the extent mentioned above will be a boon for the weavers and a boon for a very good cottage industry which cannot be killed by all foreign competition in as much as it is indissolubly bound up with the religious custom and social custom of a people who would not give up their patronage for all the world.

Above all, mass education is most urgent with regard to the economic condition and

improvement. In the case of agriculture, oil-engines and scientific manures are still rare, and a propaganda work among the agriculturists through co-operative societies is urgently wanted.

22. In addition to the fact that the following existing industries should be improved with co-operative societies and state loans necessary, some new industries may be successfully introduced.

The industries that require help and improvement are:—

1. Mat making, rope-making from cocoanut and hemp fibre. A large number of Kuravas who otherwise waste their time in begging may be usefully employed in rope-making and mat-making. A few of them are in rope-making business. Their energy and tact may be diverted into the above industries. The raw materials necessary are largely available in and round the Taluk and the labour is only waiting for the business.

2. Precious-stone grinding is another existing industry requiring organisation for better work.

The following new industries must be introduced without further loss of time so that there may be no further economic loss:

1. PAPER-PULP Manufacture is the most lucrative industry that may be started in Trichinopoly. The bamboo forests on the slopes of the Pachai-malai and Kolli-malai hills would supply enormous raw materials for the business. And they can be carried at a cheap rate from the hill-sides to the Kulitalai Railway station, and brought to Trichy for work. The labour necessary is very small and the out-turn will be enormous with a small oil-engine for crushing the bamboos. In these days of paper famines, this real economic source of the country can be tapped by the starting of this industry which requires but a small capital. The Municipality can take up this remunerative enterprise and earn a good deal without burdening the people with taxation. Pressure may be brought upon the Municipality by the Government to undertake this business, if the Government itself is not prepared for direct industrialism.

2. KHADI INDUSTRY. This is a very good industry for engaging the idle, rich and middle-class women-population and to the agriculturists in time of no cultivation. A large section of the wage earners are thrown out of work in which they are employed in certain part of the year, as seasons of slackness. Even officials and public servants in their leisure moments may find a very good relaxation from their mental worry and work in turning the charka (Wheel) for spinning and add to

the national resource of the country. The out-turn of a full time worker is not sufficient to pay him even a living wage. So, a co-operative association with a large subsidy of about 2 lakhs of rupees to encourage the industry may be started and the workless people may be engaged for a living wage. There is a great demand for such a hand spun yarn for the looms in the locality and it would serve as a famine relief for the poor and precarious people who are only too many and always eager for work in these days of perpetual famine and frequent starvation. This city like almost all great cities has an imminent beggar problem to solve. The Khadar spinning will be one of the best means for solving the problem.

3. The Hydro electric power available from the perennial flow of cascades in Pachai malai and Kolli-ma ai hills in the District, can be best utilised for various industries and for lighting and traction purposes in the municipal areas of the District. The crushing of quartz for extracting manure, of bamboo for paper-pulp and a number of other industries including water-pumping may all be conducted with the power. But the scheme requires state initiative. It has been opined by some of the foremost economists, that the Hydro electric scheme of the Niagara-falls can be better and more efficiently managed by the State than by the people. Even in such advanced

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countries like the Dominion of Canada, state management in such affairs has been considered a desirability. Much more must it be so with the benighted province of Madras. It may be a profitable concern, apart from the economic regeneration, it may occasion if the Municipality or District Board undertakes the business with a provincial subsidy. A better remunerative enterprise for the local bodies can hardly be imagined.

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