

## **BOOK REVIEW**

**"MASS POVERTY AMONG ARTISAN'S IN FIVE VILLAGES AND ONE TOWN OF KHAIRPUR MIR'S DISTRICT SINDH: ITS CAUSES AND REMEDIES"** by Prof. Lal Bakhsh Jiskani, published by Pakistan Study Centre, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Year 2008-09, [pages: xv + 73], price Rs.300/- PB

Review By:

**Lawal Muhammad Anka**

PhD Research Scholar, Sindh Development Studies Centre  
University of Sindh, Jamshoro

## **INTRODUCTION**

Mass poverty among artisans in five villages and one town of Khairpur Mir's district of Sindh is one of the important books of the year in Sindh. The Author discloses new information engages in profitable analysis and draws conclusions. The book deals with the deteriorating socioeconomic conditions of artisans engaged in producing arts and crafts of Sindh. It was based on six research projects assigned to Faculty Members of University of Sindh Jamshoro. The book covers six crafts (1) Banarasi (2) Wood Work (3) Rallis (4) Embroidery (5) Pottery and (6) Basketry and Mats. All these crafts and many more crafts were deeply rooted in the 5000 years of Indus civilizations.

The author strongly criticize NGOs and donor agencies operating in Khairpur where the rate of unemployment is very high which forced head of family and jobless youth to committing suicide and indulging in illegal activities in order to survive. NGOs are not working properly to alleviate poverty particularly in Khairpur and other parts of Sindh.

The author traces the history of the art of weaving as a unique craftsmanship that was found in the Indus valley five thousand years ago. It was proved by the discovery of the spindle wholes, bobbins and a dyer's workshop at onward.

The oldest cotton fragment was found at Moenjodaro, has sixty ends and twenty pics per inch and is made of 34-count tread. According to Herodotus Sindhian cloth was widely used in Egypt and the Mediterranean region around 5000 BC.

## **PROFITABLE ANALYSIS**

The author says that the cotton cloth of this country is so nice that it can easily pass through a finger ring. It is one of the finest cloths in the world that is equal to none. Rouri has the reputation of producing silk cloth called daryai. Fabric or Banarasi was produced in Sindh right from the times of Mohenjo-Daro. Many European businessmen and merchants from Portugal, the Netherlands and United Kingdom were buying cloth in Sindh particularly in Thatta, Nasarpur, Hala, Gambat, Kandiaro, Rohri and Sehwan in the seventeen-century.

The greatest achievement made by the thousand of weavers was that they exported their production to Iran, Iraq and Turkey this has contributed to building trade and commerce relations between Pakistan and these countries. There are about forty thousand weavers of alicio lunges as noted by pottenger a European traveler who was on a visit to Pakistan and stayed in Thatta at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. The author further said that it was mainly due to large number of textile production that Thatta, Lahr Bunder Sehwan and Karachi were counted among the large industrial and commercial centres in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The author describe Banarasi silk as the most intricate and most precious especially the sarees with beautifully woven patterns and motifs in gold, silver and richly ornamented borders, it is elegant, durable and is available in various combination of colors. The importance and acceptance of the Banarasi silk, led the Muslims of Delhi to migrate to Pakistan after independence to establish their workshops in Lahore, Karachi and Khairpur Mir's in Sindh.

The data presented by the author revealed that majority of the artisans are living under the poverty line as most of them spend what they earn without any savings this add to their poverty problems. About 98 percent of the respondents revealed lack of financial support either from the government, and NGOs and donor agencies. Survey data further shows that artisans wanted to introduce new trends in design in the present silk cloth to improve this cannot be done without financial support. The possibility of the rural artisans to increase their income is based on improving the quality of cloth if the quality is improved they will earn if not

they remain in poverty. Sample respondents also revealed that for the last sixty years they did not receive training to improve their performance in the silk trade. Other problems faced by artisans were shortage of wood, as raw material in Khairpur, their product is inferior in quality and cannot compete with artisans in cities, lack of electronic equipments and workshops for producing modern furniture, lack of regular supply of electricity, selling less than the money they invest, high cost of wood, lack of facilities for drying fresh cut wood. Data shows that only artisans of luqman Mohalla have all the facilities and equipments, they live in pacca houses and have access to gas, roads and markets and produce high quality products and live a better life as compared to rural artisans.

Ralli artisans are very poor and cannot afford to purchase raw materials for ralli due to lack of funds, under the prevailing scenario they remain in huge debt, they are forced to go to middle men for loan as the last option. Sometimes they had to sell their products at throwaway prices. This situation pushes them to poverty.

Data further shows that embroidery artisans prefer to produce by hand this is of high quality than using machines. It is a painstaking work with low income spending about six to seven hours a day. They live in Katcha houses without access to electricity gas and clean water; they have no proper training to improve their performance in their trade. High prices of raw materials, lack of funds to expand their business and lack of credit from NGOs and microfinance banks are some of the various problems faced by embroidery artisans.

Both rural pottery and living crafts artisans face similar problems as other artisans, they do not have the resources to buy equipments for their profession they live in poor conditions under the poverty line, no credit facilities, they produce low quality products, lack of training and financial support from govt. and NGOs. In comparison with their urban counterparts they earn good money due to high quality product and enjoy good living standard with sound financial base.

## **FINDINGS CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The major finding of the author was that government, policy makers and PPAF ignored artisans in general and that was why

they remain in abject poverty. They need infrastructure and training of modern skills according to the need of the global market. He recommended that there is a need to provide linkages with artisans of other province and regions like SAARC for mutual cooperation and for the promotion of arts and crafts. There is a need for improvement in work ethics, innovative thinking, traveling from one region to another can increase the earning and prospects of these artisans. Government should provide low cost housing schemes to artisans. Micro credit banks and NGOs should provide training and loans to rural artisans in particular so that they can go out of poverty. This humble work should be replicated in other districts of Sindh to cover more areas that were not covered by this author with a bigger sample size. Rural poverty is a collective responsibility of all businessmen, landlords, farmers, industrialists, politicians and local people had to put heads together to address the menace of poverty among artisans in Sindh.

---