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## GLOBALIZATION OF LACE INDUSTRY – A CASE OF NARSAPURE IN ANDHRA PRADESH

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### ABSTRACT

The lace industry or rather the techniques of crocheting was introduced into this area by missionaries around 1860. In other words, the lace-making was introduced by the wife of Scottish Missionary who wanted to help their converts, mostly untouchables, or Adi Andhra, during a time of famine in West Godavari of Andhra Pradesh. The exploitation of subsistence production of the lace workers of Narsapur, has enabled some men of the area to become capitalist 'manufactures' engaged in export trade, this integration of the labour of these women into a world system of capital accumulation has not will not transform them into free wage labourers.

### Introduction:

Lace is one of the hand-made ornamental fabric by looping, knotting, plaiting into specific patterns. Therefore, lace creation is the skill of using the techniques mentioned above to generate beautifully woven lace in different ways. A multiplicity of trimmings can be made with lace which includes bags, bed spreads, purses, clothing and many more varieties. However, these products are beautiful and attractive and help in creative very pleasing atmosphere in the homes and as well as in the offices. The most of the home accessories are decorated with round or square lunch on sets, the tea tables with oval sets. There are also teapot covers with centers to match for round tables which would be of high decorative value. On the other hand, particularly the lace product is its artistic based value. It can be used as an accessory to any kind of clothing to add elegance and style and hence highly preferred in the fashion technology and fashion shows. Here is no machinery involved in the manufacture of lace products except a hooked needle.

In this connection, the Lace creation is approved in putting-out system and workshop manufacturing. Underneath the putting-out system women in the household prepare the lace items for the agent or middlemen who in turn hands over the lace items to the exporters. In this system there is no relationship between the exporter and worker and the entire relationship is carried-out between the agent and the worker. Exporter employed several agents who visited the artisans at certain intervals gave them the thread and the designs their customers abroad had ordered and after a certain time they came to collect the finished articles. Women sometimes also did the finishing work-stretching, sorting out etc., of lace in the house of the exporters. The artisans were paid piece rates. Agents were engaged on commission basis.



However, the Narsapure has the globally recognized as Lace industry since several decades in West Godavari of Andhra Pradesh. The lace business at Narsapure is a stable industry which produces lace-goods for the worldwide marketplace. Subsequently, the Crochet lace industry is one of the significant handicrafts with a highly artistic demand. In recent times, the Lace industry is one of the important handicrafts with a highly artistic appeal, providing fruitful employment to nearly 2 lakhs poor middle class women artisans of Godavari Delta at their homes. The exploitation of subsistence production of the lace workers of Narsapur, has enabled some men of the area to become capitalist 'manufactures' engaged in export trade, this integration of the labour of these women into a world system of capital accumulation has not will not transform them into free wage labourers.

At the national level, the Indian heritage has been a conglomeration of numerous skills and crafts that have been followed for generations across the length and breadth of the country. Though most of these find their humble origins in the remote villages of India, these artistic skills are slowly finding their way into the economic mainstream and commercial marketing. But, by and large, these crafts have remained as home-based vocations and as such have not gained the attention and popularity they deserve. One such little known handicraft is the crochet lace making. The system of lace making is workshop manufacturing. There is a general division of work between men and women in this system the lace making including Chethipani is done by female workers. Whereas checking, repairs, finishing, washing, ironing, packing and forwarding are performed by male workers. The average numbers of workers were 140 with each employer on salary basis. The putting-out system and workshop of lace working employed in different lace industries at Narsapur, West Godavari District, where the entire lace making business is carried-out.

Anyway, the Narsapur is a small township in the West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh, sitting pretty on the right bank of Godavari, the lifeline for the large tracts of fertile lands. The womenfolk of the farming community began to use their leisure time to create wonderful artifacts from colorful lace. The tradition which began roughly 150 years ago spread amongst the households. The artistically woven lace work products were either gifted or exchanged at social gatherings. In course of time, women who felt a need to augment their income devoted more time and effort to produce lace products and sell them for value. But, like in every field, the lack of proper organization and the entry of middlemen meant an exploitation of these womenfolk and their lace products. While the beautiful creations made by the villagers after hours and days of painstaking handwork were bought out for a smidgen, traders sold them off in cities for a whopping price.

### **Narsapur Lace Industry Development**

From the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the Lace industry has been continuing living hand-made business in the Narsapur Small town of Andhra Pradesh. Nevertheless,



the history of the lace industry in and around Narsapur in the West Godavari District is closely linked to the history of colonial penetration into this area. Already before the Dutch, East India Company had opened a factory in Palakol and choose Narsapur as their port in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Narsapur had been an important trading point, mainly for the export of excellent textiles produced by the spinners and weavers in the hinterland. Narsapur seems to have reached the zenith of its prosperity in the last quarter of the 17th century, under the English East India Company and they provide part-time employment to the poverty stricken women of this area.

According to Maria Mies, “The lace industry or rather the techniques of crocheting was introduced into this area by missionaries around 1860”. The origin of the lace industry is closely connected with the history of the mission in the Godavari Delta. In 1837 George Bear and William Bowden came to Narsapur where they founded the Godavari Delta Mission. They settled down in the abandoned “Dutch House” near the Holland Wharf in Narsapur. Women seem to have been the first to learn the craft of lace making. There are two versions about its origins. One version has it that ‘Irish Nuns’ introduced the art of crocheting around 1860. According to another version, lace making was introduced in 1862 in this area by Mr. and Mrs. McCrae from Scotland who had joined the Godavari Delta Mission.

On the other hand, during the famine years of 1877-78, lace making became a means by which the missionaries tried to help the poor women to earn their livelihood. In the early phase the missionaries gave thread to the women and taught them some patterns then they collected the finished goods and sent them as gift parcels to friends and dignitaries in Scotland, England and Ireland in order to collect donations from them for missionary work. Mrs. Cain had started lace work in Dummagudem of West Godavari District in 1882, lace making become a regular production process under the initiative of her. In 1900 the brothers Jonah and Joseph started exporting lace on regular commercial lines. They wanted to give work to the poor women, but at the same time they changed the production of lace from a non-profit activity aimed at solicitation donations and aid for the poor women into a value producing business. Messrs Jonah and Joseph organized the production of lace along the classical and putting-out system. The lace industry at Narsapur seems to have been a fairly stable business since Messrs Jonah and Josef stated to export lace. Later in 1908 K.Soma Raju started exporting lace regularly on purely commercial lines, which gave a great boost to the growth of lace export in West Godavari District.

Though, the State Government with an objective of overall development of Andhra Pradesh economy is focusing on the development of labour-intensive and export oriented industry for generating both sustainable employment and valuable foreign exchange. Creating a brand name ‘Alankriti’ and establishment of lace park in a cooperative setup with a corporate framework and outlook at Narsapur to give a



strong image to lace business. Establishment of Alankriti Lace Park at Narsapur is the first step in this direction in the year 2004 by Sri Sanjaya Jaju IAS, District Collector. This Lace Park has been conducting training programmes for women and given the encouragement for women workers. West Godavari District in Andhra Pradesh is the centre place for the handicraft crochet lace and especially Narsapur is the heart of this lace craft. Narsapur is a remote place in West Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh. It is famous for the crochet lace product. For many women at Narsapur area of West Godavari District, crochet lace is the chief livelihood and has become the main craft in terms of employment generation. It is estimated that around 2 lakh women are involved in this craft which is a major foreign exchange earner for the country. The foreign exchange is expected to the tune of 42 to 50 crores (U.S. \$ 9 million) per annum in Indian currency. The lace park came out of this dream. This organization brings the desperate, scattered women groups into self-help groups under one umbrella, brings in experts from outside for educating and training these groups, allows experiments in improving the designs and skills and makes the groups self-sufficient to market their own produce and decide their own future. The lace park's vision is to have uncompromising attitude on quality, professionalism that sparks discipline, hard work and adherence to schedule, something that was not known earlier in this sector.

The Lace entered into the lives of the local poor women as a means of livelihood and to mitigate their financial problems to some extent and to keep them away from the daily grind of the bondages of life. Lace making came as a hobby but later on became a craft and now it is a profession. Almost every household in the rural areas at least one pair of hands are always busy knitting and knotting simple cotton thread into beautiful designs. Lace making became a part and parcel of the cultural life of the rural women folk. For rich and middle class it may be hobby but to the poor rural it is the chief means of livelihood. The craft spread to the neighbouring villages with a radius of 50 kilometers around Narsapur. Lace making can be seen in Narsapur, Sitarampuram, Palakol, Mogaltur, Elamanchili, Poduru, Achanta, Penugonda, Peravali, Penumantra and Tanuku mandals and other parts of West Godavari and Razole, Tekisettipalem, Antharvedi and Sakinatipalli of East Godavari District.

### **Summing Up**

The crochet lace industry has high potential for women employment and foreign exchange earnings. The women in their part time are pursuing this work and producing laces in different design according to the orders of exporters and it is not a direct profession to earn their livelihood, they are not aware of the actual cost of the raw material used for the lace making and the value added after the lace is prepared and the rates at which the finished lace is sold in the market. In other words, their work is totally restricted to their labour only. Therefore, artisans are earning very less amount as remuneration in this lace making process.



It is observed that the employment conditions of lace workers are not as expected due to middlemen. As the workforce is predominantly female, the major reason for taking up the lace making work is to supplement family income. The nature of work of female includes hand work, joints, bordering and lining. In case of male workers the work includes checking, repairing, finishing, washing, ironing, packing and forwarding. It can be stated that the lace making is dominated by women workforce with a marginal number of male workers. The income of the lace workers is less than their expenditure and hence they are indebted. The physical working environment for the lace workers is congenial but they are not given the statutory leaves and holidays. The Minimum Wages act, 1948 is applicable to the lace workers but the wages paid to the workers are not as prescribed under the Act. There is lot of differences between male and female workers wages. The social security legislations like Employees Provident Fund Act, 1952 are applicable to lace workers which are not implemented so far. The Factories Act, 1948 is applicable to the lace making workshops to provide health, safety, welfare, paid holidays, leave with wages. But in practice no employers is implementing the Acts for the benefit of the lace workers.

As India opens up her doors to the multinationals during the era of economic reform and liberalized market, putting an end to the license raj, it is not only the economies that often meet in the global market sphere, but also the people and cultures, which bring a new dimension to the multi-cultural setting. The magic of globalization is that during the modern times, there is always a cross-cultural interaction of both the “local” and “global” and notwithstanding many contradictions, global village is now not just a possibility, but a reality. Needless to say, the borders between the world cultures are now eroding out and becoming irrelevant. The whole world is now interconnected, But despite, the present day globalization is also branded as a drive for profit making and it as replacement of the local culture by the global.

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