



A Study on Nimble Fingers' Magic - Narsapur Lace Park

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Abstract:

For women at Narsapur area of West Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh, Crochet Lace is chief livelihood and has become the main craft in terms of employment / livelihood generation. It is estimated that around 1,60,000 odd women are involved in this craft for their livelihood. Crochet Lace has also become one of the crafts, which yield major foreign exchange expected to the tune of 30 to 50 crores worth in Indian currency. Establishment of Lace Park at Narsapur of west Godavari District is also a step in this long march.

Keywords: employment, Lace Industry, Universe

Introduction:

Crochet Lace Industry is one of the important Handi-Crafts with a highly artistic appeal. It provides employment to poor, uneducated and middle classes female artisans of Godavari Delta. It was introduced about a century ago in the Godavari Delta area by Mr & Mrs Macrase of Scotland to provide part time employment to the female artisans. Since inception about 300 designs have been developed by the local and trained designers.

Lace Industry now a days in widely spread and developed globally. It fetches more foreign Exchange to the Country by exports . Narsapur Lace Industry contributes a significant share in exporting Lace Items. The present study focused on the working conditions and the perceptions of the women Lace Workers in Lace Park and its allied society groups. Let the thresholds of freedom be opened to rural women artisans. Let Half of the Lace Universe be liberated from exploitation. Let

thousands of flowers bloom. Let the never ending long march begin with this small step.

As the saying goes, "When the thinking few combine with the industrious many, there is no looking back!"

Lace Park is now acting as a liaison between the local women and middlemen. The lace park provides training to the local women. The trained women are extremely quality conscious to produce high quality articles. The lace park tries its best to avoid the middlemen and to create marketing facilities directly with the entire word. The findings shows that lace park is one of the innovative organisation for empowering women.

As Narsapuram is the end point of the district and completely rural background, the Government has taken a right step in establishing the lace park to empower women and to stop migration to urban areas. As the state is reeling under draught conditions for the last seven



years there is a high degree of migration from the villages towards cities.

This park is the first one to get a project sanctioned under the AHVY (Ambedkar Hasthsilp Vikas Yojana) from the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Ministry of Textiles, New Delhi. The First Handicraft project in India to get an amount of Rs. 5.85 Crores. The duration of this project is 3 years. It is said that a little enthusiasm and lots of hard work can make a dream come true and give a definite shape to ideas. The Lace Park story is no different. Within a mere six months of its conception it has touched the lives of thousands of local women and has brought hope into their lives of a more definite and clearer future.

Lace means:

An ornamental fabric made by looping, knitting, plaiting or twisting threads into definite patterns. Hence, lace making is the art of using the techniques mentioned above to create beautifully woven lace in different patterns. The thread used is twisted mercerized cotton yarn made of superior grade of cotton.

It holds a certain amount of artistic value, because of the technique used in making it. It can accessorize any kind of clothing and fit into any ambience.

All it requires is a hooked needle and cotton thread to make lace. The material may be cheap. The tools may be simple, but the product is highly valuable and the craft is priceless.

Organizational Building.

The methodology used for the study comprised both Primary and Secondary data. In the Primary data

collection survey has been conducted on the women lace workers. A sample of 90 women workers has been selected and a structured questionnaire has been administered on the respondents.

Lace Development Scheme With a view to providing adequate employment to the artisans engaged in the crochet lace industry and improving the quality and status of thus important foreign exchange earning craft, the Government of Andhra Pradesh has Introduced a scheme for the development of the Industry at Narsapur to advice the artisans on improved methods and to introduce new and attractive designs with a view to expanding the overseas markets.

This scheme also helps the exporters in sewing large orders and executing them promptly. The exporters are given all necessary assistance. Suggestions and guidance are also given in the matter of packing and other technical aspects.

Through the efforts made under this scheme several new designs are put in and they have been able to gain rapid popularity. Any new design suggested by the overseas customers is also brought into value vague and follow up action. It taken to secure substantial demand for these goods. Since the implementation of this scheme there has been a considerable progress in exports and the foreign importers are actively coming forward with their orders with in the short period since the implementation of this scheme, the exports have risen considerably and there is good potential for expansion.

Means of production and the Production Process: "The means of production the women need are very simple; they consist of the hooked needle, their hands, their eyes and the thread.



The Crochet needle is made of Steel, 125mm in length and 3mm thick. Formerly, the steel needle was imported from Manchester, now they are made in India. The women either buy them in Seetarampuram, according to the quality, or they have them made by the local blacksmiths.

The raw material required for the production of lace is only cotton thread. Before 1951, Thread was also imported from Manchester. The special quality needed for this type of lace was called "Diamond Thread". After 1951 Miss. Alexander & Finales are manufacturing this type of thread in India. Thread company in Bombay and J & P coasts in chennie (which had originally been a central import agent for Manchester thread but had then started manufacturing thread). There is also the lace exporters buy thread.

The counts of the thread are 10, 16, 20 and 27 indicating the thickness of the thread. The thickness of the thread has an incline on the quantity of production. The women use mainly thread of 20 counts. Formerly the thread used was mainly white and ecru. But today other colors are also used particularly for fancy blouses, skirts and jackets, to be sold in Western, but also for dueled, ovals, rounds etc.,

The thread is one bobbin of 2,000m. Length up to 1960 it was supplied on cards of 100 yards (91.5m). Some time's also small bobbins of 200m. are used because the exporters feel that the thread will be dirty when the women have finished a bobbin of 200m. Sometimes the measuring of the thread is alone in meters, sometimes in yards and the wages fixed very accordingly.

As there is no fixed machinery

or equipment for lace making the women can do this work anywhere in the house or out side the 'house. Whenever they have times, they carry the little basked with the thread the needle and the finished work wherever they work. They do a bit of crocheting while they are cooking whenever there is no other housework to be done. The labour time for crocheting is split up and spread over the whole day. Some women start on this work as early as the sunrises. These are mainly women and girls who do not have to contribute to the necessary morphing household work like fetching water, milking the buffalo's cooking in the morning has been completed (1 Dam) till they have to begin to prepare the evening meal (around 4 p.m.) and then they work again after evening meal.

There are three different types of lace work.

1. Chetipani (or) Handwork
2. Athukupani (or) Joint or attachment work
3. Kazakuttu (or) Bordering and Lining,

1. Chetipani: It is the elementary work, it consists of maiming one pattern, of "flower" which then later on will be joined to other such patterns to make a whole piece.

2. Athukupani: It means that joining together of the various patterns.

3. Kazakuttu: It consists of filing lace borders to pieces of cloth or joining several cloth pieces, squares, rounds, ovals by lace bordering into a whole piece like a table cloth or pillow case.

Whereas in a factory, a number of technological inputs are necessary to subdivide the work process, in the diffuse factory, spread over many villages, this function is taken care of the mediation of



agents and Athukupani specialists.

The last state of production process is the finishing and stretching of the lace goods. This is always done in the houses of the exporters or traders. The agents bring the lace articles from the artisans. They are first weighed, as the exporters and traders want to make sure that they get the equivalent amount of lace for the thread they have given to the agents after that, the lace is stretched, made flat and washed and dried.

The women who do the joining together of the various parts is not only highly skilled, because this work needs special dexterity and talent, but they are also women who enjoy the confidence of the exporters. There are the only workers, who know the shape, the size and the compositions of the finished articles. They also have an idea of the churning tastes of the foreign customers.

The exporters keep the designs and the particular composition of an article as their trade secret because with the rise of more exporters in the lace business they all compete with each other for new designs. That is the reason why only treated workers do the attachment work for the exporters. The organization of production along the putting out system and the horizontal of labour were not only means to minimize labour costs but also mechanisms by which the exporters tried to wrest control from the actual producers over their products.

It seems, however, that they never fully succeeded in this effort with more exporters and agents entering the lace business, more Athukupani workers were needed. And, as can be expected, many of the women who were

able to do this work also became agents in the course of time. These were women who were both craft women and also knew something of the business. They earned about the prices in the local markets, they had to deal directly with exporters, and some of them or their husbands, later to start a business on their own thus the competition among the traders grew.

Nimble fingers' magic – lace park:

The Government of Andhra Pradesh focuses on the development of labour intensive garment industry for generating sustainable employment to nearly 3 million people and enhancement of textile and related exports to Rs. 5000 crores by year 2005 to Rs. 15000 crores by year 2020. To realize this vision, the Government is thinking of several projects like establishment of Textile parks, Apparel Parks, Carpet Parks, and also Lace Parks. Much progress has been achieved in this direction and the vision is slowly coming in to fruition.

For women at Narasapuram area of West Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh, Crochet Lace is chief livelihood and has become the main craft in terms of employment / livelihood generation. It is estimated that around 1,60,000 odd women are involved in this craft to their livelihood. Crochet Lace has also become one of the crafts, which yield major foreign exchange expected to the tune of 30 to 50 crores worth in Indian currency. Establishment of Lace Park at Narasapuram of West Godavari District is also a step in this long march. At Lace Park, the vision is 'to bring new things to life, where the self-help helps.

In a tiny corner on the south east coast of India lives a community of women whose fingers spin magic. The art of lacework the women possess here is a source of income to many poor income



groups. This income is very meager part due to the exploitation by the middlemen and part due to their own failings in producing quality. Its here that an intervention was needed to lend a voice these women by constructively organizing them into groups, improving upon their skills and add quality consciousness by allowing them space to produce for themselves.

The lace park came out of this dream. This institution brings the disparate women groups under an umbrella, brings in express from outside, allows experiments in improving the designs and skills flourish and opens avenues for the women groups to market their own produce and decide their own future.

Our vision is to have uncompromising attitude on quality, professionalism that sparks discipline, hard work and adherence to schedules, something that has hitherto been bane of the effort in this sector.

The Mission of Lace Park is to enroll those they serve – women groups, customers, suppliers, staff and partners, in the acceptance of their inherent right to have an abundance of beauty, life, vitality and love. Our aims is to successfully market our products throughout God's world while maintaining the highest possible standards of quality.

Lace Park signifies this paradigm change. Being the only lace park in the world is no mean achievement and the brightness on the women's face says this all. We have decided not to look back hereafter.

The corporate vision:

- ◆ It is a courageous organization.

- ◆ It leads in all the markets focusing on the lace products.
- ◆ It is obsessed with meeting the commitments.
- ◆ It respects and challenges each other and confront issues with a sense of urgency.
- ◆ The park values creative passion.
- ◆ It creates compelling value for worldwide customers and stakeholders.

History of lace:

- L – Ladies
- A – Attractive
- C – Crochet
- E – Embroidery

It is more than 150 years old and was introduced by a couple of Irish ladies in the small village of Narsapuram. It was they who taught the local women this delicate craft as a means of bringing them out of their impoverished state and keeping their minds off the daily grind of a life in bondage. The local women soon made lace making their hobby and the craft grew and flourished. Soon, every household of every village had at least one pair of hands busy knitting and knotting simple cotton thread into beautiful designs. Over the years, this little pastime grew into the only means of livelihood for some families and supplement to their income for many others.

Over the years, this little pastime grew into the only means of livelihood for some families and supplement to their income for many others. This craft caught on and spread to all the neighbouring villages within a radius of 50 miles. It is a salient part time job of the women of Narsapuram and Palakol of the West Godavari District and Razole



Taluka of the East Godavari district. Lace workers are also spread over, Mogalturu, Yelamanchili, Poduru, Achanta, Penugonda, Peravail, Penumantra and Tanuku Mandals.

So far a total 51 no. of societies at village level have been formed and registered, while covering nearly 10,000 women in the 6 Mandals. They are:

- | | | | |
|----|--------------|---|----|
| 1. | Narasapuram | — | 13 |
| 2. | Mogalturu | — | 7 |
| 3. | Elamanchili | — | 6 |
| 4. | Palacole | — | 8 |
| 5. | Poduru | — | 7 |
| 6. | Veeravasaram | — | 10 |

It is proposed to establish the Lace Park as Cooperative / Corporate set up with Public / Private participation by roping in entrepreneurs interested to participate.

Forming Lace Self Help Groups

Converting Lace Self Help Groups at village level in to 'Village level Cooperative Societies'.

Enrolling all Village level Cooperative Societies in to a federal Society (Apex Society) at district level with headquarters at Narasapuram

The Federal Society / Corporate body is to procure orders from all reputed Domestic / International organizations and distribute lace orders to the village level lace workers through local Cooperative Society. They procure lace so produced from them and arrange for marketing of lace according to the orders already received. With the concept, benefits under decentralized and centralized structures both in production

and marketing can be availed off. Further the profits of centralized marketing will also be passed on to the gross root level lace workers.

The federal society will join the lace Park as stake partner on par with corporate entrepreneurs. The total women members in the lace park are 10,000 and total groups are around 850.

The Management

The Project is under the direct control of the District Collector. A committee with the following members under the Chairmanship of Collector has constituted and the committee oversee the implementation of Project by having periodical reviews.

Table 1: The Management

Collector	Chairperson
PD Velugu - DRDA	Member - Convener
R.D.O.,Narasapuram	Member
AD Handlooms &Textiles	Member
Nominee from the financing Bank	Member
Member of Federal Society	Member
Representative from Corporate Body	Member

One result oriented, dynamic officer from any government department/from outside has been appointed to implement the project who is under the direct control of the Collector & Dist. Magistrate , W.G., Eluru and at the overall control of the committee. With the establishment of the Lace Park, we can contribute our share of contribution to reach the vision 2020 in a perspective manner.



Employment opportunities can be generated to thousands of rural women to ameliorate their economic conditions.

The establishment of Lace Park at Narasapuram should not be by chance but by choice. It is a recognition to the sweat of rural women who have been exploited by middlemen for decades together and it should remain as a symbol for women empowerment in a true spirit

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Directors (Self Help Groups):

This board consists of one President, one Vice President and one Secretary and six Directors. All are

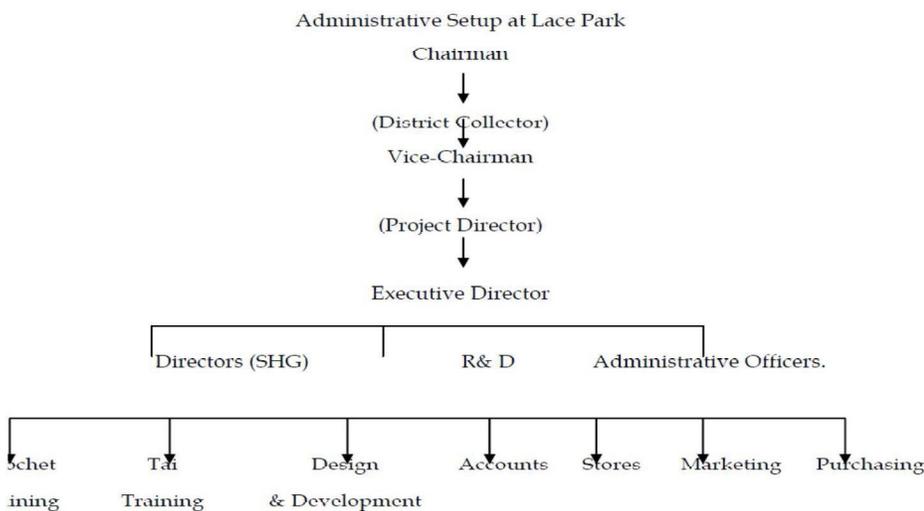
women representatives and elected from Mutually Aided Cooperative Societies. This body is elected from 97 villages comprising of 51 Self Help Groups and more than 10000 women are members of this group.

Administrative setup at lace park :

The lace park consists of Chairman (District Collector), Vice Chairman (Project Director) and under him works the Executive Director.

Practically the Executive Director is a key person in managing the entire organisation. Under the Executive Director the following team works. They constitute Administrative Officers, Directors (SHG) and R&D wing. Under the Executive Director the time office, Canteen, etc. works. There is no branch for this lace park organization anywhere till today.

Organisational Structure



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Findings:

The following are the findings of the study.

1. Out of 90 respondents, 54 are unmarried. This reveals that single status women are more dependent on Lace Park, to have a livelihood on their own even after marriage.
2. It is found that the majority of the women workers are enjoying their jobs.
3. It observed that the job security is perceived to be good by 95.56 per cent of the respondent.
4. 60 per cent of the respondents stated that their superiors are interesting them with good responsibilities on their works.
5. Work freedom is perceived to be high in the Lace Park has stated by 61.11 per cent of the women workers.
6. 54.44 per cent of the women workers felt that their personal status got

enriched as a result of their works in the Lace Park, however, 45.56 per cent stated negatively in this aspect.

7. It is found that the salaries paid by the lace park are low. 56.67 per cent respondents said that they are dissatisfied with their salaries in the lace park. The remaining 43.33 per cent convey their satisfaction on the salaries.

8. Majority of the workers have good relations with their peers and superiors.

9. Most of the respondents (68.89 per cent) stated that the management of the Lace Park is not receptive of their suggestions.

10. 88.89 per cent of the women lace workers revealed that their works are duly recognized by the management.

11. It is found that the most of the workers (95.56 per cent) are really satisfied and motivated on their work in the Lace Park and stated that they want to continue in their works, in coming future.

12. It observed that number of women workers dissatisfied with the policies of the management.

13. It is found that there are less promotional channels in the organisation.

14. The women workers in the Narsapur Lace Park identified factors like hard work, increase in turnover (sales), quality improvement in the production as key factor for the development.

Conclusion

The present study reveals that women lace workers are very much happy with the management's attitude and their treatment. The women in Narsapur in and around villages are immensely



benefited by the economic support extended by the Narsapur lace park. Thanks to the present district collector and his men who are pursuing the lace park which became a torch bearer in the lives of unemployed rural women folk.

'Work is worship' is the prescription of every religion, culture and civilization of the world. Work done by an individual produces outputs which benefit others in the society. It helps to fulfill the needs and purpose of life of both the producer and consumer. A person who does the work feels happy and fulfilled when his achievement brings appreciation and satisfaction for his quality work. This gives greater incentives and interest to do further quality work. This is a cycle i.e. quality work, satisfied customers, happier employees and, therefore, a better quality of life for all.

On the basis of analysis of the survey on women workers, it can be concluded that, by and large and women workers have good motivation on their job. It is found that, irrespective of the money they receive from the Lace Park, they are really work aholics, dedicated and enthusiastic. It is upto the management of Lace Park to make use of this strength of employee motivation. If the management can enhance salaries and improve welfare measures, the lace park will definitely reach greater heights in future.