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**STUDY ON THE PROBLEMS IN BENARASI SAREE PRODUCTION AND WAYS
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STUDY ON THE PROBLEMS IN BENARASI SAREE PRODUCTION AND WAYS TO OVERCOME THEM

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ABSTRACT

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Benarasi is gorgeous, delicate and well known clothing in Bangladesh. It has a great demand in local and international market especially for bridal costume. Benarasi industry is one of the traditional cottage industries of Bangladesh. Recently it has attracted large number of consumer in our country as a result of the campaigning of the boutique houses marketing strategy for traditional style clothing which proved that the Benarasi still has great appeal among people. Our neighboring country is exporting Benarasi products. Bangladesh also has potential to export Benarasi product. But in Bangladesh Benarasi industry is heading towards extinction day by day. Where Benarasi industry in Bangladesh is still dependent in handloom the Indian Benarasi industry is power loom based. The amount of people involved in Benarasi industry is also reduced to great amount within past few years. Also about 70% of the Benarasi workers are not well trained. In my survey, I try to find out the problem in Benarasi saree production and try to find out the ways to overcome them to save the gorgeous traditional clothing.

Key words: *benarasi saree, problems, overcome, loom*

INTRODUCTION

The gorgeous and delicate piece of cloth which is known as Benarasi was not an indigenous craft of Bangladesh. Its origin can be traced to a northern city in India which is called Benaras. During the Mughal regime this industry flourished in the subcontinent. By the 1930s Dhaka set up its own Benaras Silk Industry Centre in Becharam Dewry, in the old town. Sarees were priced at Rs.150 and a bridal saree fetched a princely price of Rs. 400. The main market outlets were in Sadarghat market, Islampur of the old town and by the 1960s the posh newly built New Market near Nilkhet. One significant stimulus was in the 1940's resulting from political changes, the movement for Independence from the British and finally the desire for a separate homeland for Muslims. The result of these factors brought about the migration of large populations from one region of India to another who packed up their looms in 1946 and came with high hopes to Dhaka to start a new life. Their second and third generation families are now residents in Mirpur. According to the Bangladesh Handloom Board the migrant community set up the Benarasi industry in Mirpur and Mohammadpur areas of Dhaka city in 1950. These two areas still remain the hub of Benarasi producing activities in the country. However, the Benarasi industry is no longer limited to the geographical area of Mirpur. Now the villagers in Manikganj, Sirajganj, and Tangail etc. are also producing Benarasi saris. Some of the producers are now willingly shifting their looms to impoverished areas of North Bengal like Rangpur and Dinajpur where the labor is cheap and abundant. (Akhter 2013)

Present Status of Benarasi Industry in Bangladesh

The Benarasi workers of Dhaka city are mostly concentrated at the section No-10, No-11, No-12 of Mirpur. According to the BenarasiPalli Owners Association at present there are total 999 owners, 11000 weavers, 25 designers, 25 color masters, 3000 support staff involved in this industry. (Democracy Watch Bangladesh 2008) The work condition in this industry is also taking toll on the weavers and others associated with the occupation. These Benarasis are made in small rooms with no ventilation support or proper lighting facilities. The work is hard, but the remuneration is low. So the craftsmen are becoming far less interested in pursuing the occupation which their ancestors held dear to their hearts. Recently government has been showing some concern for the small industries in the country.

However there has been no apparent reflection of these high sounding words and promises on the ailing Benarasi industry of Bangladesh. The price of raw materials is still soaring, government has no marketing policy to export Benarasi abroad and the workers are simply plunging into the black hole of poverty. As mentioned by the Benarasi craftsmen, in 2006 Bangladesh Tant Board allocated BDT 45 lakh for 249 looms at nominal interest rate for distribution among the weavers. However, the fund did not reach the genuine Benarasi craftsmen. The government's initiative basically benefited many non-craftsmen (internal migrants) who used the low-interest loan to set up looms there. There is no denying the fact that government on its part also faces problems like presence of middlemen or the lengthy bureaucratic process of implementation in executing its stated program. But if this situation continues it will be difficult to save this industry from ruin. Both government and non-government sectors need to work hand in hand to improve this gloomy situation.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Different types of yarn are used, like- cotton, polyester, rayon, rolex, viscose, braid, silk, jari etc. Yarns are imported from foreign countries like China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, India, Taiwan and Pakistan through

different agencies, which are then sold to the local markets. The entrepreneurs buy the raw materials from local market.

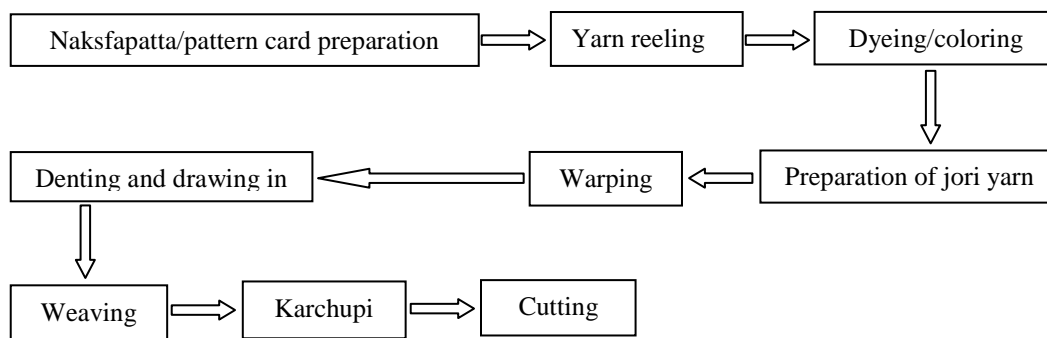
Preferences of yarn imported from various countries, as given below-

Countries	Percentage
China	61
Japan	13
Vietnam	11
Others	15

Quality of yarn from china is good whereas rest prefers yarn from japan, Vietnam, korea, india, Pakistan and Taiwan. (Rahman 2006)

Since the beginning, Benarasisaree were woven on ‘pit-type’ handlooms, where a weaver sits with his legs in the pit. The looms are installed within the houses but separated from the living areas and are being run mostly by family members and partly by hired labor. In recent times, power looms are also inducted. Sarees produced on handlooms are different from those created on power looms in terms of designs and even production process. Production of a saree on handloom undergoes many stages- the silk called katan is reeled, bleached and dyed. The dyed yarn is prepared for tana (warp) and bana (weft). The length of yarn reeled on a five feet long warp cylinder is sufficient for six lengths of a saree (33 meters). Yarn for the weft is reeled on a small (few centimeters long) cylindrical object and the process is called naribharna. Many such reels are needed to complete a saree. It issued in shuttle (dhirri) and used to bring out designs (buti) on sarees. Once set-up, six sarees are produced in a row till the warp yarn is exhausted.

Flow Chart:



Preparatory Process/ Making NakshaPatta:

To create nakshapatta the artist first draws on the graph paper with color concepts. Now those designs are of varying kind. But most universal kinds are kalka, buti and flower and foliage. This becomes the functional aspect of art which is not far off from the people life cycle. In modern days one can see geometrical designs have come in, but it lacks appreciation. As traditional folk design remains the base appeal for Benarasi saree.

Once design is selected then small punch cards are created those are guides for particular which color thread has to pass through which card at what stage. For one small design one requires to create hundreds of perforated cards to implement the concept.

Once those perforated cards are created those are knitted with different threads and colors on the loom and according to design those are paddled in a systematic manner that the main weaving picks up right color and pattern to create the design and weave as well.

Weaving Process:

The yarns are not in the optimum condition to enter the looms directly so as to produce fabrics. Package size; build another factor make it necessary for the yarn to be further processed to prepare it to be handled efficiently during fabric manufacturing.

Various steps for preparatory process of yarn for weaving are as follows:

Reeling:

Reeling is a skein preparation operation (generally the preparation of skeins prior to dyeing). The reeling machine is fed by yarn packages and winds the yarn onto a reel, thereby forming the skein. Winding can be carried out either modifying the yarn crossing angle or by adjusting the skein width up 400 mm. The warp yarns of 20-30 sarees (140210 yards) are reeled like spring in a big reel. The diameter of the warp yarn reel is normally 6m. The diameter of the weft yarn reel is normally 54cm and it has a speed of 400 rpm. Warp yarn skeins can reach 2kg weight.

Dyeing (coloring):

The dyeing process is aimed at giving yarn to its intended color, crucial to its ultimate use. The process of application and fixing of a dye normally with the intention of obtaining an even distribution through the yarn. The dyeing process of Benarasi is done manually with Acid dye. Name of some dyes-acid red, acid orange, acid blue, acid feroza, acid golden, acid black, kachagolapi, kachabasonti.

Preparation of Zari yarn:

Zari yarn is composed of two types of materials- core yarn (polyester) and twisting yarn (plastic). Different types of yarns are used for Zari yarn, like-

- Cotton-12's, 16's, 30's.
- Polyester- 150, 300, 450.
- Rayon- 120, 300, 450.
- Cotton, viscose- 30's.
- Rolex (used for covering the core yarn)
- Cotton jute- 30's
- Synthetic yarn
- Silk
- Jorjet- 120, 115. (Rahman 2006)



Fig. 1. Zari yarn preparation

Imported yarns are taken under primary reeling, then secondary reeling and then twisting. Generally 2 ply of core yarn (cotton/ polyester/ rayon) is twisted with one ply of Zari (filament yarn) to produce 1 ply of complete Zari yarn.

When the bobbin of Zari yarn is produced, then it is heated by water steam for 30-40 minutes. Then this heated yarn is wound in required bobbin for required size.

Warping:

After dyeing colored yarns are sent to the weavers, but these yarns are not completely dried. So at first they are dried. To arrange a convenient number of warp yarns that can be collected in a sheet form and wound into a warp beam. The dried yarn is prepared for Tani (warp). The length of yarn reeled on a five feet long warp cylinder is sufficient for twenty lengths of saree (140 yds).

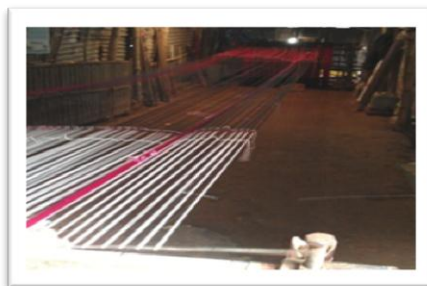


Fig. 2. Warping process

Warping is aimed at preparing the weaver's beam to be set up on the loom.

Denting and Drawing-in:

All the warp threads have to be threaded through the heald eyelet and its gap in the reed prior to weaving. The heald is the part of the loom that is used to move the warp threads up and down. The threads pass through eyelets on the heald. For a simple weave pattern alternate eyelets are moved up to raise the corresponding warp threads, and the threads between are moved down. When the shuttle travels back their positions are reversed. The reed is like comb and its purpose is to control the separation of the warp threads.



Fig. 3. Denting process

Weaving:

Weaving is carried out on a loom where warp yarns run lengthways from back to front. Using a shuttle, weft yarn is threaded widthwise. The position of the warp thread was then reversed and the weft sent back in the opposite direction. On the conventional loom, the warp beam is mounted at the back and the warp yarns are conveyed to a cylinder called the cloth roll, which is at the front of the loom and which the fabric is rolled as it is constructed. Supported on the frame between this two cylinders (warp beam and cloth beam), the warp yarns are ready to be interlaced by the filling yarns that run in the width of the cloth, thus producing the woven fabric. Three fundamental operations of weaving in any loom are as follows:

- Shedding: Raising specific yarn by means of the harness or heald frame.



Fig. 4. Shedding

- Picking: Inserting filling yarns through the shed.



Fig. 5. Picking

- Beating up: Pushing filling yarn firmly in place by means of the reed.

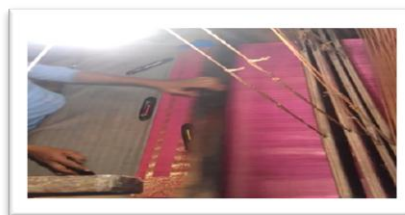


Fig. 6. Beating up

Finishing Process:

Karchupi: Karchupi is a special kind of intricate thread work, which is used to make dress materials more attractive. It is the process of embedding puthi, zari and other decorative materials by means of a special needle as sharp as fish hooks.



Fig. 7. Karchupi

Cutting: Cutting is a finishing process which is carried out to made cut work saree. This type of saree prepared on plain ground texture after removing of the floated thread which are not design (woven) during the weaving process. Cutting provides a good transparent look of the fabric.



Fig. 8. Cutting

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Training:

Most of the Benarasi workers don't have any institutional training. These thing hindrance their versatility to produce more product like scarf, wall-mat, three-piece for Shalwar, Kamiz, bed-cover, pillow cover, purse etc. As per idea given by the owners and workers around 30% of the workers are trained from various social and industrial group whether rest of the workers have learnt the process from their senior members of the family.

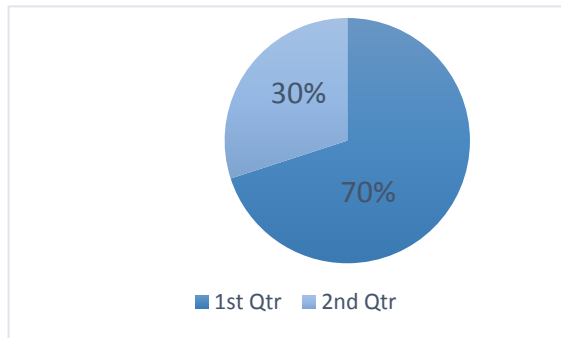


Fig. 9. Training percentage chart

A comparative study of hand jacquard loom and mechanical jacquard loom:

Topics	Hand Jaquard loom	Mechanical Jacquard loom
Time to complete a saree	16-18 ours	12 - 13 hours
Workers salary/saree (BDT)	700-2000	500-1800
Production rate	3-4 sarees/week	5-6 sarees/week
Scope of design	Less	More
Initial investment	Less	More
Let off mechanism	Manual	Motor controlled

Types of yarn used in Benarasi saree production:

Type of yarn	Count
Cotton	12'S, 16'S, 30'S
Polyester	150D, 300D, 450 D
Rayon	120D, 300D, 450D
Cotton-Viscose	30'S
Cotton Jute	30'S
Jorjet	80D, 120D, 150D
Mast slice	30'S
Rolex (Used for decorative zari yarn)	95-L, M-5, 211, 214

Problems of Benarasi Saree Production

- High cost of raw materials is one of the main problems of Benarasi production.
- Lack of variation in design is one of the causes of decreasing demand of Benarasi. On the other hand, open market policy pursued by the Government has opened the country to Indian sarees. Indian sarees for their cheaper prices, varied designs & availability usually lure more local buyers.
- Lack of publicity is another cause of less demand of Benarasi saree.
- The wages of the Benarasi workers are not sufficient and not regularly paid.

- ❑ Because of inadequate financial and technical supports the entrepreneurs cannot produce standard quality of sarees in large amount.
- ❑ The market of Benarasi is mostly limited within the country. As there is no attempt for exporting Benarasi, so it has no access in international market.
- ❑ Traditionally the throw-shuttle pit looms are used for sari weaving which require lots of energy & time. The poor economic condition, absence of government aids and unavailability of financing agencies have forced Benarasi sari weavers to stick to manual looms.

Recommendations to overcome these problems:

- ❖ Government can take steps to import the raw materials and then sell it directly to the entrepreneurs.
- ❖ Designers should be given technical training by professional designers so that designs and color combinations of sarees can be improved and modernized.
- ❖ Government should check the floodgate of cheap Indian sarees and the possibilities of export of Benarasi sarees to international market should be explored.
- ❖ The publicity of Benarasi sarees should be increased by arranging Benarasi Fair, Fashion show, giving advertisement in Fashion magazines throughout the year, so that people will know more and become interested about Benarasi sarees.
- ❖ Entrepreneurs should be encouraged to initiate the trend of making not only saree but also other products like scarf, wall-mate, stole etc. to meet international demand.
- ❖ Hand looms used by the weavers should be modernized as user-friendly.
- ❖ Working environment and wages of the weavers should be improved.
- ❖ Training in weaving, management, costing and pricing, fund management should be given to the employers.
- ❖ Establish contacts with the suppliers and marketing personnel fund management.
- ❖ Introduction of women friendly technology.
- ❖ There should be one particular working area for all Benarasi workers of different sectors for working.
- ❖ Benarasi workers of all categories like Weavers, Entrepreneurs, Thread processors and dyeing workers, Loom makers and Designers should have a separate association of their own, which could be contacted to provide any kind of support by various organizations.
- ❖ Each saree should contain trademark of its origin.
- ❖ Government should take necessary steps to ensure infrastructure development of the working place of Benarasi workers, such as water supply, electricity supply, drainage and sanitary facilities, road constructions etc.

CONCLUSION

I tried to find out the production problems of Benarasi saree. Mirpur BenarasiPalli is a traditional industry. For surviving this industry, there is no alternative way unless to give proper attention to resolve the problem of the production along with the evaluation of the workers. Being a traditional area, there is needed structural development, future safety and proper value of workers. The important fact is that they need trade union, where the worker can raise their demand about their rights and grievances. Proper utilization and development of the worker is one of the conditions of surviving the traditional industry of Mirpur BenarasiPalli. So, equally government, non-government institution, literate and conscious people should come forward to take necessary steps. Otherwise, one day this Benarasi can be lost from our industry like as Dhaka muslin saree.

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