

Nurturing Lay-Women as “Field Trainers”

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Abstract- MGIRI nurtured as field trainer the locally available lay-women of Wardha for designing new products from Khadi. It was decided to prepare handbags from Khadi, according to the needs and problem of different segments of the society, a series of new designs of Khadi handbags were prepared at MGIRI. With the help of trained human-resources of MGIRI several experiments in training and production were conducted. The aim of the institute in conducting these experiments was to finalise the pathway for creation of more and more employment for the general mass as well as to give new dimensions to fashion accessories using *Khadi*. Field trainers nurtured by MGIRI were engaged by different organizations of Wardha, to organise training in bag making. The experiment is to bring about plausible changes in the rural mentality. The idea is not only to enhance the present earnings but also produce worthwhile supplementary employment.

Index Terms- Artisanal Industry, Khadi-Crafts, Fashion Accessories, Designer Handbag, Lay-women, Field Trainer, Skills Upgradation, Value Addition, Plausible Turnaround

I. INTRODUCTION

At the time of independence India was the poorest nation. The planned approach of economic development has used all the models of growth; socialist, mixed and now neo-capitalist. The GDP growth is impressive but the social disparity has been glaring. The chasm is widening and that has been causing a problem. Village continues to be the centre of all socio-economic considerations, but neither the agriculture has improved nor the village craft. (Mishra, S. P., 2012a)

The official patronage to small scale, rural or cottage industries does not appear to have made a noticeable impact on the problem of rural-urban migration. The establishment of cottage and village craft emporia and training of artisans and design workshops has also not mitigated the situation. (Ibid).

The *Khadi* and handloom sectors do seem to continue providing an additional source of income in villages. It is, however, doubtful if these industries, left to themselves, have the inherent strength to face competition by the modern mill sector. The problems responsible for the poor progress of village industries were well summed up by the Third Five Year Plan (1961-62 to 1965-66):

Rural artisans are usually dispersed in a large number of scattered villages and this, combined with their low standard of literacy and poor economic condition, is a considerable

impediment to rapid implementation of development programmes.

Among the other factors responsible for the slow progress of village industries' programmes have been the general lack of previous experience in regard to the development of these industries, lack of trained and qualified field trainers, location of production centres in unsuitable places, lack of adequate funds and organization for procurement of raw materials in bulk and failure to introduce more efficient techniques of production. Even such technical improvements as were introduced did not go far enough to secure a material increase in productivity. They did not, therefore, gain general acceptance. (Government of India, 1961).

During the year 2008, Mahatma Gandhi Institute for Rural Industrialization, (MGIRI) Wardha decided to conduct few innovative experiments with *Khadi* both on product diversification and employment generation. It was believed that Self Help Groups in the villages can make eco-friendly handicraft products using *Khadi*. Value addition of locally available *Khadi* at village level will create a big spectrum of employments opportunities. Areas as growing the fiber will be involved in this industry and surrounding villages will be engaged in product, prepared from the fabric. *Khadi* is prepared on the loom & hence is rough, has a crushed look and coarse textural quality, but it is far superior to mill-made fabric and most suitable to design craft products like fashionable handbags, room decorations like sofa cover, cushion cover, etc. (Mishra, S. P., 2012b)

It was decided to begin the experiment by designing handbags using *Khadi*. Today the handbag has an almost iconic status in the world of fashion. There are many uses of bags right from domestic to professional ones. These days various styles and designs of bags have come in the market they have the power to attract the customer. The changing trend and living style have also influenced their choice. Some bags are designed with the help of traditional materials and this gives them a unique traditional appeal. Bags have really changed the outlook of the whole world. People are very much inclined to purchase well designed bags. Bags have also played a major role in making human life much better.

MGIRI is designing the contemporary handbag not only with the single medium but also by using associated material. It was decided to design *Khadi* handbags with the help of skilled persons who were available in the area itself. Technically skilled persons were selected and nurtured as technology advisors. Based on the needs and problems identified, a series of new

designs of *Khadi* handbags were prepared at MGIRI, Wardha. MGIRI collected the first-hand feed-back of the market through different self help group's production center to reorient its design and education/training system. With the help of technology advisors, an experiment in nurturing lay-women as field trainer was conducted during the period of January to March 2009. With the help of these experiments, the institute aimed to create more and more employment for the general mass as well as to give a new dimension to the fashion accessories with the help of *Khadi*.

Present scenario of village craft industry : The urban population is the main customer of craft industry. Today the living standard of urban society has changed completely and a huge gap has developed between the life style of rural and urban society. Only one person manages the village based craft industry. The artisans and SHGs are quite far from the exposure of latest technology and management practices, like-

- information about good quality raw material at a reasonable price,
- availability of latest tools and technology,
- targeted customer,
- like and dislikes of targeted customer and
- Marketing network.

Present module of entrepreneurship development programme : In India the entrepreneurship development programme was organized by NGOs. Their target is as follows-

- to get financial approval of entrepreneurship development programme from state/central government organizations,
- to identify a national/regional expert
- to identify a group of trainees
- to organize a workshop/training programme

In most of cases prior to the training, they were without a detailed survey of the artisan's cluster specially the management, technological and marketing gaps. The curriculum of almost all training programme approved by different agencies were pre-decided. On the other hand the educational standards of participants were not uniform, so pre-decided curriculum for rural participants and SHGs is not making any remarkable impact. The trainers are interested to transfer the skills of few articles/items as per the pre-decided curriculum. After training the artisan/SHGs starts the production with available raw materials in their localities. The local market or haat is in their reach for marketing of finished products. In most of cases the quality of finished products are sub-standard and out of desire of local market. The NGOs are not interested in the marketing aspect of artisanal business because NGOs are basically non-profitable organizations. So, how can these trained village groups fulfill the following needs, in order to start the business –

- loan
- quality and at a reasonable price raw materials
- to identify the targeted customer to sell the of finished products and
- quality control.

In such a situation it is not easy for artisans and SHG members, to set-up a successful business. There is a great need for a bridge between rural craft industry and targeted customer, for a steady support in terms of technology, fashion and quality control to craft industry. Creation of field trainers in every nook and corner of the district will fill this void.

Proposed module to support SHGs : For a steady flow of design, technology, quality control and marketing support to clusters/SHG's it is necessary to develop n-number of the "field trainers" within the area of the cluster itself in the following way-

- 1) Nurturing of locally available lay-women as "field trainers".
- 2) For appropriate solutions of specific problems regional experienced technology advisors and national experts must be consulted.
- 3) Providing continuous guidance and quality control to artisan's clusters/SHGs to develop products based on cultural heritage & present market trend.
- 4) To encourage the field trainer to set-up their own business and marketing network.
- 5) Marketing of finished products prepared by SHGs, through the brand name & marketing network of field trainers.

II. METHODOLOGY

It's a case study of a hands-down experimental transformation process observed and documented by the research team. The qualitative research technique with triangulation approach was used to document the experiment and its outcome which spanned over a period of one year from April 2012 to March 2013 in Wardha. The investigators had become a part of the training and the production process. Data cleaning was done and verified with a cross verification with the project beneficiaries and moderators.

III. R&D OF MGIRI FOR EMPLOYMENT GENERATION

To conduct experiment on "Nurturing lay-women as "Field Trainer" for designing of *Khadi* Designers Bags, a training was organised at the MGIRI campus from 10th January to 10th March 2009. (Dhone, J., etal, 2009) The ladies belonging to the middle income group with minimum matriculation and maximum intermediate educational background and staying in Wardha itself were involved to study the need of bags on different occasion. In the first phase of this experiment, trainer's were not only nurtured but also convinced for accepting the technique. The two month training programme was conducted in two parts-

a) first month training was organized on exploratory entrepreneurial learning method. Here the trainer becomes a facilitator giving the material and information, setting the tasks on concept of design based on the need of different class of customers and leaving the learners to find out for themselves and

b) second month training was organized on presentation entrepreneurial learning method. The trainer presents the skills in cutting & stitching and shows the trainees how to do things. (Government of India)

The participants were facilitated to understand the concept to design a bag, based on the different class, categories & age group of customers and their needs & problems. In this experiment they were provided help in selection of colour, shape and size of bags.

Classification of customers according to income : With the help of participants different categories/classes in the society and their purchasing competency for craft products like designer handbags and designer jewellery were identified as presented in Table-1.

Table-1, Classification of customers

S No	Class of customers	Monthly income range (Rs)	Monthly capacity to spend for craft products (Rs)
1a	Lower class- daily wages	5000 to 7500/-	50/-
1aa	Lower class- business	7500 to 10,000/-	50/-
1b	Lower class- Job, Working in shops, etc	10,000 to 15,000/-	100/-
1bb	Lower class- Own business like shops	15,000 to 25,000/-	100/-
2a	Medial class Working in good org	25,000 to 30,000/-	150/-
2aa	Medial class - Own business	30,000 to 45,000/-	150/-
2b	Upper-middle class- job	45,000 to 55,000/-	200/-
2bb	Upper- middle class-business	55,000 to 75,000/-	250/-
3a	Higher class-job	75,000 to 90,000/-	500/-
3aa	Higher class-business	90,000 to 1,00,000/-	750/-
4a	Upper higher class-job	1,00,000 to 1,25,000/-	1000/-
4aa	Upper higher class-business	1,25,000 to 2,00,000/-	1500/-
5a	Creamy class-job	2,00,000 to 5,00,000/-	2,000/-
5aa	Creamy class-business	5,00,000/- & above	5,000-10,000/-

Classification of customers according to age group : groups of customers according to the age groups as shown in Table-2. During the training the participants were identified the different

Table-2 Classification of customers according to age group

S NO	Class of customers
1	Students of nursery standard
2	Students of primary standard
3	Students of matriculation standard
4	College going student boys
5	20-25 years unmarried college going young girls
6	20-25 years office going ladies/ housewife
7	25-30 years office going ladies/ housewife
8	30-40 years office going ladies/ housewife
9	40 years and above office going ladies/ housewife

Classification of bags according to the requirements : After classification of different classes of the society, the participants identified the following varieties of bags based on their needs and use.

- a) Shopping bag
- b) Traveling bag
- c) School bag
- d) Collage bag
- e) Office bag
- f) Excursion bag
- g) Party bag
- h) Tiffin bag
- i) Bottle cover

- j) Money purse
- K) Casual bag
- l) Daily use shoulder bag
- m) Utility shoulder bag

Concept for composition of bags : It was observed that the mechanical type of conventional training makes instant impact only during the period of training, so it was planned to organize training with logic and concept, which will have a permanent impact not only in designing a new product but will also have the power to change the life-style of the participants. In the first phase of the experiment, trainer's were nurtured and convinced to act as a facilitator only during the process of

teaching of this technique. It was very difficult to explain to the trainers that the lay-women will design the bag without any direct guidance. The trainers were exposed to practical demonstration. During the demonstration, the participants were asked a series of logical questions like, if they are really willing to design a handbag for a teenager specially for the purpose of tuition. They also had to figure out questions like-

- In which class is the teenager studying?
- What is the amount of books he is required to carry for tuition?
- What will be the maximum size of the books he is needed to carry?
- What colour will be preferred by the teenager and his friends?
- Will they prefer to carry the bag on the shoulder or on the back?

After demonstration the trainers were instructed to just guide the participants, they will not provide any answer or solution to queries of the participants. They will try to inspire the participants to find out the solution themselves. Once the participants are able to ascertain the solution, their moral status will automatically boost-up because they will feel that the solution was obtained by them themselves and it is result of their own finding. As a result they will never forget the process and the result. During these experiments they were given assistance in the selection of colour, shape and size of bags.

The curriculum was designed in such a way, that the participants will feel that the complete task of designing was done just by them. The concept of training focused on three major issues which are discussed in depth in following paragraphs-

- 1) **Dimensions of bags :** During the year 2008, the Rural Craft and Engineering Section of MGIRI organised three conventional trainings (Table -4) and it was observed that specially for ladies in general, it is quite difficult to remember the dimensions of bags. During the discussion with the ladies, who were experienced in tailoring their own garments at Varur, the point became clear that they tended to take the help of each other in cutting of garments. They said that the finalization of dimensions and cutting of garment is a tough job, and hence they took the help of each other often during the process of cutting, they wasted the entire fabric. So now it was decided, that during the training, the dimensions of bags will be decided by the participants themselves. Once the dimension is fixed by the participants, they will neither forget it nor ask anyone, as they had decided it. For the finalization of dimensions, they were shown how to determine the volume of the bag with respect to need and utility. For example on an average how many books will a student of sixth standard carry?. So average size of books was calculated along with some extra margin. It was necessary to consider that along with the books, he will need other items like, instrument box, lunch box, and water bottle, etc. Taking all this into consideration dimensions were decided and bags were designed. From now onward before chalking

out any new bag they will verify the needs and utility, and only then they will decide the ultimate dimension.

- 2) **Colour and design of bags :** Colour was another big issue. It was observed that they selected a series of contemporary colour for their own use, but preferred colours like blue, red for bags. This means that they were aware about current trends in fashion but they were unaware about the choice of different classes and age groups. Hence we had to create the awareness about life-style of different classes of society and the need and problems of customers belonging to different age groups. They were asked to visualise the colours of garments used by different class of society. The bags designed will have to be either matching or in contrast with the dress of the target group.
- 3) **Cutting and stitching techniques :** Cutting and stitching techniques are skill oriented, which can be acquired by tutoring and practice. So it was decided that when the participants select the fabric and decide the dimension of bag as per the need of customer, the trainers of MGIRI will give training in detail about the cutting and stitching skills for the said bag. And when they are able to prepare their own design, they will be taught five different designs, which will cover almost all techniques of cutting and stitching.



Figure 1, Cutting of fabric, teaching by doing

IV. ACHIEVEMENTS

After completion of training the participants identified the following parameters to design a bag-

- 1) utility of the bag,
- 2) the shape & size according to the utility of bag,
- 3) colour & appearance according to different class of customer.



Figure 2 Khadi bags designed by participants

During the training, the participants prepared bags which had a modern touch. Even today these designs are still in demand in the market. No one has been able to modify these designs. In that particular training programme, five participants successfully completed the training. Out of these five, four are actively engaged in the process of bag manufacturing and, two of them are working as a field/master trainer. Table-3 is shows the tangible benefits accrued by the beneficiaries from the MGIRI experiments. The following paras give a brief description about them -

1) **Mrs Jayshri Bhamkar** belongs to a family of middle income group with an intermediate educational background. After completing the training, she has started preparing bags as per the orders of the customers form in her locality. The Swadashi Bhandar, Sevagram, Maharashtra, has contacted her to make the bags on the basis of fixed payment. The Swadashi Bhandar, is already manufacturing *Khadi* garments. Now they have told her to prepare bags with the left over material or wastage collected from readymade garment unit. So she collects suitable pieces of fabrics and then aims for perfect matching. But many times due to non-availability of matching fabric in the waste material, she has to buy fresh fabric in order to obtain perfect matching which she desires. In such a case, the Bhandar provides her the fresh fabrics. The Bhandar provides the complete attachments and fitting of bags. With the help of the available material she creates her own designs for bag, purse and mobile cover. Usually she begins the process after lunch around 12 noon and works until evening but after that, she has to pay attention to her household duties. When she gets urgent order she has to work late in the night too. Normally she earns Rs150 to 200/- per day.



Figure 3 Mrs Jayshri Bhamkar stitching the Khadi bags

Different organizations of Wardha have engaged Mrs Bhamkar as a master trainer. During 2012-13, MGIRI Wardha, also hired Mrs Jaysree Bhamkar as a master trainer to organize a series of training programmes in the manufacturing of Khadi Designer Bags and for this work she was paid Rs7500/- per month. In the month of Feb 2013, she has successfully managed the training independently.



Figure 4 Jayshri Bhamkar with participants of Khadi bag making & officers of MGIRI

2) **Mrs Shubhangi More** stays near the bypass road which is 8 km from Wardha. After receiving the training, she has started to prepare school bags, tuition bags and ladies bags. In her area, people are mostly from the middle income group. So naturally their priority regarding school bags is affordable price and durability. In the beginning they tended to purchase the raw material for school bags from town and used to come to her in order to get good quality school bags. For this she would get upto Rs50/- per bag. Now she herself purchases raw materials in bulk from the nearest town which is Nagpur. She has invested about Rs50,000/- in order to purchase raw material & heavy duty sewing machine. Now in a day, she is able to prepare three to four bags and earns about Rs 5000/- per month. Now she has put up her products for sale through the shops of her father and sister. Further she is planning to increase the numbers of sale counters as well as production capacity of her unit.

3) **Mrs Vandana Kale** – has received motivation for social work from her husband who is himself a famous social worker, Mr Vijay Kale. After receiving the training, she has started preparing school bags and many other handy utility bags specially for ladies. In less than three to four hours she is able to cut the material atleast for ten bags and along with this within two to three days she is able to produce the finished product. She purchased raw materials worth Rs30,000/- made bags from it and sold them for about one lacs rupees, so she carried a profit of around 50 to 60 thousand including the labour charges. She sold the bags at her place itself. But now she is planning to brand her product and to acquire a sale counter at Wardha .

Different organizations are hiring her as a master trainer to conduct training for making bags. In the year 2010, she has trained five batches of tribal ladies from Amravati district. During 15th Feb to 15th April 2013 a NGO sponsored to organize a residential training programme in bag making for ten tribal

ladies from Asthi, Arvi and Karanja blocks of Wardha district. Mrs Kale recived Rs10,000/- per month as an honorarium. The training hours were little different than the usual ones. It started from 10 am and finished around 7.30 pm, with full discipline. She is a dedicated parson hence she expects the participants to be as disciplined and dedicate as her. But when she sees the participants not paying attention, she becomes disturbed. Then she has to explain the importance of concentration in work because only then the work will become fine and fetch good price. They should not compromise in quality. This is specially true when working with sewing machine. During valedictory function of the training Ms Vibha Gupta, member of MGIRI's General Council paid a visit, personally took interest in everything and conversed with the participants. She was very impressed with the quality of bags prepared during training.



Figure 5 Mrs Vandana Kale organized training for tribal ladies on making of bags

4) Mrs Ishavari Dhanvij - After completing the training she started manufacturing bags as a side business along with the ladies dress- making business as she is already involved in dress designing business since quite long. During the off season in her own business, she takes up bag production. As a result she is busy all the time. She has become successful in maintaining balance in both the works. This gives her a steady flow of income throughout the year.



Figure 6 Mrs Ishavari Dhanvij stitching bags

Table : 3 Results of the innovative experiments conducted during Jan-March 2009

S No	Name of training programme	Period	No of beneficiaries who successfully completed the training	Income before training	Income after training Rs	Monthly income Rs
1	Nurturing of lay-women as a "Field Trainer" for Designing of Khadi Designers Bags	10 th Jan to 10 th March 2009	5(4 are involved in production cum training)	Housewife & stitching ladies Rs50-100/- per day	Rs150/- per day after doing the household works	Monthly income Rs4000/- per person from manufacturing of bags & Rs5000 to 10,000/- per month for organising different trainings.

Table-4, Khadi Designer Bags Training and Workshop

S No	Name & Place of Workshop	Date	No of participants successfully completed	In collaboration
2008- 2009				
1.	Preparation of “designer bags” of jute, canvas & khadi fabric at MGIRI Wardha	6 th June to 25 th June 2008	7	Mahila Arthik Vikas Mahamandal
2.	Preparation of “designer bags” of jute, canvas & khadi fabric at MGIRI Wardha	12 th to 21 st June 2008	12	DRDA Wardha
3.	Preparation of “designer bags” of jute, canvas & khadi fabric at Seloo, Wardha	July to August 2008	10	DRDA Wardha
4.	Designing of khadi designer bags at MGIRI Wardha	September 2008	1	Experiment along with Mrs Chitra Bhagat to nurturing as a field trainer.
5.	Nurturing lay-women as a “Field Trainer” for Designing of Khadi Designers Bags	10 th Jan to 10 th March 2009	5	MGIRI, Wardha.

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