

CAN BOTTLENECK OF THE PROSPECT OF TRADITIONAL SSI BE INEVITABLE?

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Abstract *Small scale industry (SSI) though sounds small but has a pivotal role in the sustenance of a nation's economy. But unfortunately many traditional SSI have gradually plunged towards darkness and lost in the past. Jari industry is one of the traditional SSI existing in India, especially in Howrah, Bengal. The study portrays number of problems appearing forth in the smooth journey of a progressed rural economy depending on the jari industry in the context of Howrah district. Unlike many other traditional crafts, the jari industry gave the bent down torso of rural economy a steadiness to stand against in the battle with their underdeveloped standard of life. But jari industry, a very old but important in terms of its popularity and low pollution, is under the threat of destruction like many others in the past, and puts up a question whether the vintage SSI can be saved from being extinct or not.*

Keywords: *Small Scale Industry, Jari Industry, Financial Problem, Governmental Ignorance, Future Prospects*

INTRODUCTION

Indian fashion in terms of designed apparels is very famous all over the world. This apparel fashion is highly indebted to jari industry of this country. Jari work consists of a special kind of embroidery done with gilded threads on sari, veils, and blouse pieces especially prized by Marwari women (Banerji, 1972). Even in nineteenth century the description on jari can be found in the write up of Watson (Watson, 1866), the author of a classic catalogue of Indian fabrics, where the jari is defined as twisted silver thread with a golden shine, a widely used material on the borders or surface of decorated cloths. It was generally woven on cotton or silk, or embroidered by hand. No other major industry was so closely associated with silk and, occasionally, with cotton weaving (Roy, 1999). The popularity of jari even in that time is evident in the write up. The handloom weaving, untouched by the progress of power-looms, clearly demonstrated the mesmerizing artifacts of the contemporary jari workers. The craft is said to have originated at Banaras, Uttar Pradesh, the "infant industry" gradually expanded its branches in Western India. The growth of this appealing industry was very apparent when it laid its footstone in the district of Howrah, West Bengal. In 1966-67 about 150 artisans with 10-25 apprentices, were known to be operating in the villages of Dakshin Kolar, Natibpur (Domjur P.S.), Dhaulagari (Sankrail P.S.), Panchla, Uttar Panchla (Panchla P.S.), Deulpur, Jalalsi (J.B.Pur P.S.), Theatta and Baikhali (Uluberia P.S.). They were all muslims with a keen artistic

sense and a flair for embroidery work. The industry from that point of time has been largely under the control of the *mahajans* (Entrepreneurs) of Burrabazar (Kolkata) who normally supply the materials including gold and silver jari procured from Surat in Saurashtra (Banerji, 1972).

The spread of jari industry in Howrah largely owes to the many skilled workers from the districts, who were famous for jewellery setting and polishing and got engaged in jewellery industries in Maharashtra and Gujarat since nineteenth century. After two or three generations, some of them gradually learnt the art of jari-craft and came back to native district Howrah to start this industry with vigor.

The jari industry even from the very beginning was under the cloud of different problems, like the competition from Western Europe garment designer industry, financial crunch, and poor domestic markets etc. Though at present the domestic market is prosperous, many new problems have been added to make the life of a jari worker very appalling. The existing geographical or sociological literatures are, however, have not focused to those problems, which is essential to nurture the Small Scale Industry (SSI) in India in the present context, when Central Government is also framing different acts (Misra and Puri, 2009) like New Small Enterprise Policy 1991 (NSEP- 1991), Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Act 2006 (MSMED Act- 2006) etc for this purpose ("Project Profile on Zari embroidery", 2011). This work unfolds the painful saga of jari workers in Howrah district and tries to explore possible

remedies in a research based discussion which can be very useful to put up a solid framework of this country in terms of SSI, and thus in the field of employment and trade.

STUDY AREA AND ITS SELECTION

Howrah, one of the smallest districts in West Bengal, is situated between $22^{\circ} 12' 30''$ and $20^{\circ} 46' 55''$ north latitude and $88^{\circ} 22' 10''$ and $87^{\circ} 50' 45''$ east longitude. It was transferred from Burdwan Division to the Presidency Division under Govt. of West Bengal Notification No.999-G.A. dated March, 4th, 1963 (Banerji, 1972).

Howrah district has an area of 1467 km² with a population of 42, 74,010 (according to 2001 census). Howrah district is chosen for the study because jari works are primarily concentrated in this district of West Bengal. In the districts like Hooghly, East Midnapore and South 24 Parganas too, jari works and workers are found though quite insignificant.

DATABASE

A. The collection of primary data through survey and interviewing of officials.

B. Collection of secondary data is from-

- Census of India, 2001
- District Industries Centre, Howrah, 2006.
- Statistical handbook, Howrah, 2005.

METHODOLOGY

Main methodology of the present research work is broadly divided into two parts:

- Statistical analysis, and
- Cartographic representation.

The statistical analysis mainly incorporates data collection, tabulation and analysis. Data have been collected both from primary and secondary sources. Primary data have been collected from field study. Total sample families of 500 have been selected from all 13 blocks as dominant economic activity which included about 1550 jari workers of Howrah district.

A detail field survey has been conducted during 2008 to 2010 to gather the knowledge of different problems the jari workers are facing there. The sources of secondary data are mentioned earlier in database.

Table 1 gives the percentage distribution of total workers of Howrah district in the 13 C. D. (Community Development) blocks of West Bengal and also percentage distribution of jari workers in those blocks. The study blocks are selected in terms of importance, employment and concentration of workers in jari industry.

In West Bengal it is only the Howrah district where jari works are concentrated in large numbers. In no other district, such large concentration of jari workers is found. The reason behind this non-uniformity in concentration of jari workers is already discussed in the section Introduction. In Howrah district, jari workers constitute about 11.02% of

Table 1: Percentage distribution of jari workers in different C. D. blocks of Howrah district

Sl.No.	C.D.Block	Total workers	% of total workers	Total jari workers	% of jari workers
1	Panchla	79819	37.3	49900	62.3
2	J.B.Pur	79167	35.2	24781	31.3
3	Sankrail	100026	34.4	11400	11.4
4	Udaynarayanpur	61719	35.9	1177	1.9
5	Uluberia-I	55107	30.3	6005	10.9
6	Uluberia-II	49581	30.6	25380	51.2
7	Amta -I	72162	36.1	23575	32.67
8	Amta-II	61303	32.4	4535	7.4
9	Bagnan-I	55528	29.0	1975	3.56
10	Bagnan-II	45330	31.0	597	1.32
11	Shyampur-I	60400	33.1	3400	5.63
12	Shyampur-II	54933	32.1	463	0.84
13	Domjur	106523	34.2	5410	5.08

Source: District Industries Centre, Howrah 2006 and Census of India, 2001.

total workers. The entire 13 C.D. blocks of Howrah district contain jari works as major economic activity other than agriculture. There are 2 blocks where jari workers constitute over 50% of the total workers. They are Panchla (62.3%) and Uluberia-II (51.2%). Second largest concentration of jari workers are found in Amta-I (32.7%), J.B.Pur (31.3%) and third largest concentration is found in Sankrail (11.4%) block. The percentage distribution of jari workers in remaining 8 blocks are below 10% of the total workers. The distribution of jari workers among 13 blocks of the district reflects the significance of jari works as an economic activity. In the backdrop of closure and sickness of industries in Howrah district which has become a common phenomenon not only in W.B. but throughout India, a large number of workers from other occupation have shifted to jari works. As jari industry of Howrah district is becoming an important economic activity both in terms of income and employment generated, entire 13 C.D. blocks are taken into consideration for the field survey. Accordingly, survey has been conducted in all blocks during the period 2008 to 2010.

DIFFERENT PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH JARI INDUSTRY IN HOWRAH DISTRICT

The jari industry faces problems which are unique. Today, the industry is in the throes of crisis. The main problem being faced by the industry includes infrastructural problems, costly raw materials, competition from other small scale industry in the national market, modern technology, power etc.

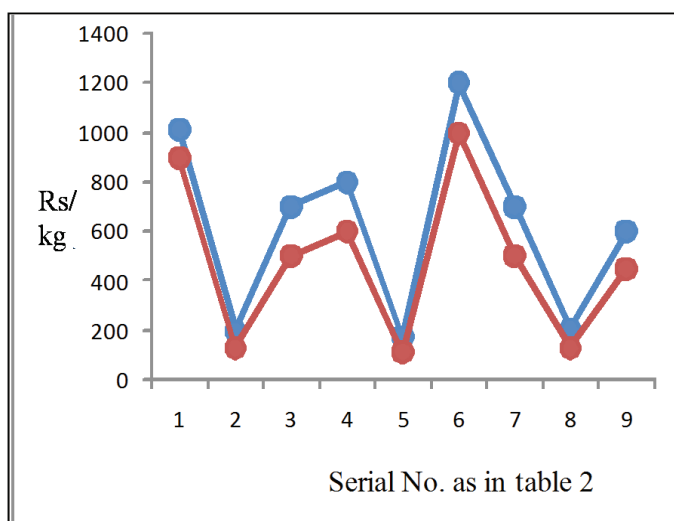
Raw Materials Problems

The main raw material for jari industry is the pieces of cloths/ sarees or the pieces of orna, salwar on which the jari embroidery is made (Pramanik, 2011). This is supplied by the *ostagars* who keep in contact in the main market and take the orders. Other raw materials needed for jari industry can be divided into two basic parts, pure and infrastructural raw materials. Pure raw material comprises of different embroidery materials like *kasab, tiki, builen, dapka, chir, duri, salma, moti* etc., whereas the infrastructural raw material is nothing but the machinery like *dhadda/ adda*, special needle for embroidery, *sujan* machine (used for creating *khaka*, which is needed for design printing on the cloth.) etc. The workers can get machineries locally using locally expertise. The main problem comes in the procurement of pure raw materials. The *ostagars* generally purchase the raw materials from Burrabazar, Kolkata and sell those to the jari workers with a higher rate. There is no fixed rate and since the workers do not have other alternatives, they have to rely on the *ostagars*. An overview is available in this regard in

Table 2 where the difference between prices in local market and Kolkata market has been depicted graphically.

Table 2 shows that the *ostagars* get a very handsome profit by selling raw materials. Figure 1 also depicts this fact.

Figure 1: The comparative graph between price rate of Kolkata and local markets. The blue line indicates price rate in local market. The red line indicates that in Kolkata market. The serial numbers in x-axis are described in table 2.



The jari workers have to purchase as it is impossible for them to go to Kolkata market for buying raw materials. The *ostagars* have their monopoly to sell the goods, as there is no governmental policies to check their domination. Government, both central and state, have not constructed any co-operative organisation; even there is no such private companies or NGO for distributing the raw materials to jari workers in a proper price. There is a marked discrimination in the allocation of raw material, imported components for production and selected imported equipments to the large scale sectors versus small scale sectors by the governments.

The *ostagars* (middlemen) purchase materials in small quantities and apart from being charged high prices, their supply is highly irregular. The supplies always prefer large bulk order of the large scale sector and the small units are neglected. Even the supplies are qualitatively unsatisfactory. In the case of procuring semi-finished materials like jari sarees, brush, mill made yarn there is a lot of difficulty.

All these reasons cause the small scale industry under-performing, which has turned into less profitable and sometimes leads the unit to become sick. Around 40% of the jari embroidery has become sick because of inadequate availability of raw materials (Progress Report of the Scheme, 2006). Sometimes the sizable quota of raw materials is procured by bigger units to be sold into the black market while the genuine small scale units do not get adequate raw

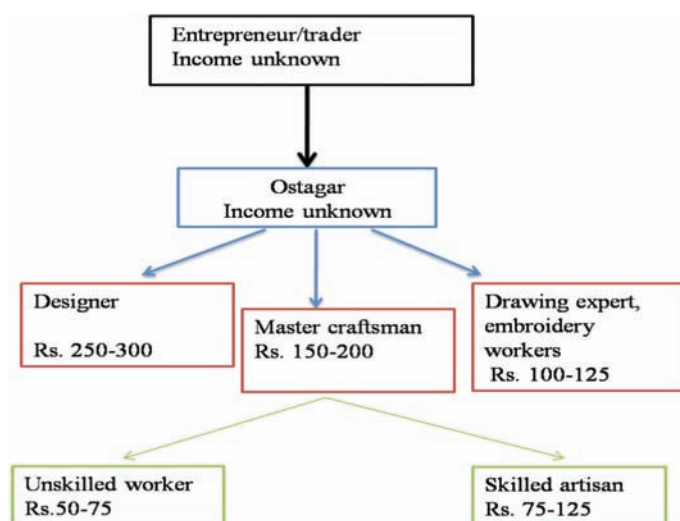
Table 2: The comparative price list of raw materials for jari industry in Howrah local market and Kolkata market

Serial No.	Raw material	Price in local market (in Rs.)	Price in Kolkata (in Rs.)
1	Kasab	1010/kg	900/kg
2	Tiki	200/kg	130/kg
3	Builen	700/kg	500/kg
4	Dapka	800/kg	600/kg
5	Chir	177/kg	111/kg
6	Kasab Duri	1200/kg	1000/kg
7	Salma	700/kg	500/kg
8	Moti	210/kg	130/kg
9	Kirkira	600/kg	450/kg

Source: Field survey, 2008-10.

materials. This problem is far more acute for the unregistered jari embroidery. Thus, genuine entrepreneur are not able to develop their factory units because of non availability of raw materials.

Figure 2: The chart showing structure of per day income (in rupees) hierarchy.



Oppressive Activities of *Ostagars* (Middlemen)

The *ostagars*, due to their high domination have monopoly in getting the orders from entrepreneurs and to supply them from the jari workers, often long for extra profit. Figure 2 shows how wages are non-uniformly distributed among the different levels of jari industry and profit taken by middlemen. For example, a jari clad zardousi saree whose manufacturing cost is between Rs. 9000 and 10000, is sold to the *ostagar* for Rs. 10000 to 11000. *Ostagar* sells this to the entrepreneur/ traders at approximately 50% profit

and the profit of the trader may range from at least 30%-50% profit, depending on the selling area. This is an example for a high quality dress material, though for low quality material the percentage of profit remains same. If the trader exports it to outside India, the profit may jump to a level beyond our expectation. Figure 2 shows the hierarchy structure of the income per day in the jari industry.

Although it is worthwhile to point out that the *ostagars* have also certain limitations to get the orders from the traders/ entrepreneurs which depend on the corresponding global and Indian economical positions. During the gulf war in nineties, global economical recession in 2009-10 made the demands of jari apparels very scanty.

Financial Problems

The jari embroidery has very little capital investment capacity. For prospering of their units they do not have proper facilities at cheap credit. Therefore, they have to depend upon the money lenders who charge very high rates of interest. The commercial banks and other units of State Government, who provide some of the financial assistance or loans to those units, require a security at repayment in the form of guarantee or mortgage of assets which are sometimes not possible for the small jari industries. Besides, these commercial banks and other units take time to sanction such loans, which make the small jari embroidery units inoperative until such time. Sometimes government policies like loan squeeze etc. make the problem more acute. Compared to the credit facilities available to the large scale units, the share of small scale units are ready to dispose their product at cheaper price and release their investment as quickly as possible and in such circumstances they have little bargaining power on stock holding capacity.

The *ostagars* or traders also construct big factory units where 50-100 jari workers can work. These factories do not obey the Indian labour laws for which jari workers get painstaking experience to work there. Child labour is also encouraged there which is very unfortunate to Indian socio-economic conditions. Sometimes jari workers are compelled to go there for a stable job but the profits remain same to them if they work in their houses.

Recently, State Government has introduced the idea of 'jari card' to the jari workers, which they can use to get rupees one lakh to two lakhs as loan to their savings bank accounts. But as long as the facility is not stable, the workers will face problem. Also, it is unknown what interest rate the government will charge.

Marketing Problem

Proper marketing is a key factor for the growth and stability of jari embroidery and for the survival of poor jari workers. The large-scale factory units of rich *ostagars* or traders (big factories comprising 50-100 jari workers under the owner) can spend lavishly on advertisement to promote their sells. They procure the services of consultants and specialists to prepare marketing plans for penetration into domestic as well as foreign markets. But the small scale units (household units of jari workers) cannot afford this kind of capital investment to market their goods. They do not have any organized system of marketing. Therefore, they are compelled to depend upon the mercy of middlemen who tend to exploit them. Even the government agencies have tendency to exploit these units. Moreover, these small jari embroidery units mostly produced such products which cannot stand the competition from the high tech product of large scale industries. The potential demands for handicrafts and other artistic products which cannot be produced by large scale units remain underdeveloped due to lack of any encouragement on the part of the government.

Since the workers cannot have the opportunity to sell or advertise their artifacts to either the customer or the government, they do not get profits according to their hard-work.

Lack of Modern Technology

The tools used by the small jari industries are mostly primitive and obsolete. The jari industries have been neglected and very little attention have been paid to develop technologically upgraded machinery or tools suitable for them. Thus, in this modern era, jari embroidery is inefficient and is not able to produce sophisticated goods in competition with large scale jari industries.

The recent modernization of machinery is used by large scale industries which have the power to purchase modern machines is proving a big hurdle to the small scale jari workers. Panchla and Ranihati, the area where a huge number of jari workers are involved, two big jari embroidery machines have recently been procured, which resulted a big loss of employment to jari workers there. If this trend continues, the small scale traditional hand-craft jari artisans will face big problem to continue their work and survive. This, although inevitable, is a big threat under the mask of modernization towards the poor jari workers, who will have no other alternative than to change this traditional embroidery works and to shift to other employment.

Lack of Electrical Power

Power shortage and frequent power cuts have played havoc with small jari industries. Though progress of electrification on a limited scale has taken place in the small scale units, many units are not electrified even today, for them the non-availability of power and over all power cuts in recent years have resulted in the downfall in production output. The demands of kerosene oil is huge in jari industry but comparatively the industries are not provided kerosene adequately by the government in fair price, for which they have to lean towards black market, which results a heavy loss to them.

Scale Output

These industries cannot compare with the large organised units who purchase the materials in bulk. The need of concession and adequate availability of raw materials to these units through state agencies is evident. A solution of this problem has to be found by the government if this sector is to play significant role in employment and output generation.

Industrial Sickness

The main causes of sickness are as below:

Internal Factors

Lack of adequate working capital is said to be the most important cause of industrial sickness. Most often the financial agencies cut down on delay the release of working capital leading to stringency at funds which affects the productive operations.

External Factors

The external factors are numerous and include problems relating to the availability of raw materials, power, capital equipments and the fiscal or monetary problems of the governments. Lack of demand, habit or fashion also considerably affect the operation of the industries particularly those in the traditional areas of production.

Legal Hurdles

The laws relating to excise duty, sales tax etc. are also major irritant in the efficient operation of these enterprises. This is especially in view of the fact that these units are run by persons having minimal managerial or organisational skill.

Physical and Health Problems

Although small scale industry like jari industry seems very fine regarding the health of the workers, due to prolonged typical posture the workers suffer from mild to severe backache. They also suffer from eyesight problems. The workers do not have the money for adequate treatment in good hospitals. These result the loss of working capability to the workers.

Other Associated Problems

- i. The communication via roads is very bad in the study area villages. The “Pradhanmantri Gram Sarak Yojana” is still unsuccessful in these areas, which results the costing of bringing raw materials higher. The workers have to rely on their bicycles for bringing the materials, without having proper vehicles.
- ii. The working area lacks proper shade for sunlight and rainfall. This proves fatal to jari embroidered apparels. The clothes get damaged and the workers have to sell them at a very low price as reject by-product.

SUGGESTIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

The jari industry is not very much known to general public, as well as to the government, although a large number of people have been shifted to this industry leaving agricultural works for a better employment. The medicines of subsidy and exemption have been given in an overdose in many small scale industries by the government, but jari industry is overlooked. In our opinion, it is better to have target oriented policies instead of universally applicable fiscal incentives, to increase these jari industries’ competitiveness as well as sickness using its own mettle.

Capital Structure

A major cause of sickness is the inherent weakness of the capital structure of the small scale jari industry. The weakest link is the financing of the capital structure. Timely release of the funds and adequate provision of working capital is necessary for the survival of this small jari embroidery industry. Further, liberalization of capital structure of modernizing of these units irrespective of the amount invested in modernization is necessary as long as the financial obligations to institutions are discharged with a reasonable time after modernization process is completed.

Reallocation of Resources Within the Jari Embroidery Units

An important aspect of the reformed programme in the jari embroidery sector could be the reallocation of capital of those sectors within this category in which these units have innate advantage vice versa large scale operations. These units enjoy natural advantages in many areas where decentralized production or services could be provided with the use of local structures. This gives them a competitive edge over the large scale production system. Such sectors like manufacturing of components and products requiring large labour input, catering to the local demand of articles made through traditional methods etc. should be given preference in funding.

Quality Upgradation

Quality upgradation is required to more exacting demands of an open economy. Domestic biasness of jari embroidery output, as well as the potentially enormous international market, requires standard of production superior to what the industry have been used to.

Export Trust

If the modernization process is completed soon, there is little doubt that in many areas the small jari embroidery and traditional sectors can perform very well in the international market. It is advisable that promotional agencies and financial institution may short list jari embroidery units with export potential and extend further help to enhance their export capabilities. If the selected units are provided with information and marketing support to enable them to draw up unit specific scheme for modernization, that will cut costs and maximize output. If such an objective is adopted then the products of the jari embroidery units would be competitive

in the international market. To some extent, the cost of such services could be maximized by a consortium approach on thorough specially designed target oriented fiscal majors.

Proper Marketing

There should be some policies to remove the monopoly of the middlemen in jari industry. Some focused marketing policy along with subsidy from the government is very important. The recent creation of “Jari Park” at Surat is a significant step for this, where people from all over the world come and see the best designs of the workers and can purchase easily from there, thus avoiding the middlemen. The idea can also be taken in this state to improve the fate of this small scale industry.

Others

1. There is no direct link at this trade with the fashion designers. As a result, the skill for generation of marketable designs is lacking here. For this purpose, an infrastructure mechanism with introduction of CAD (computer aided design) technology may be a good help.
2. The industry consumes various kinds of raw materials in huge quantity (other than fabric). Some of the raw material items can be produced with the help of technology already adopted in some places of other states like Gujarat (Surat). It can be presumed that the technology might be available with SISI (small industry service institute).
3. An organised marketing agency having close linkage with those part of the world where demand of such craft is existing and as well as increasing, may generate the necessary sustainability and economic improvement for these sectors in the district including new generation of employment.
4. In the other state like Gujarat, Maharashtra there is an organised marketing council who studies technically with its economic prospective and keep close linkage with the part of the world where the demand of the jari products is increasing. But it is not in West Bengal. Such council should be created who also take the help of fashion designer for production fashionable products by jari embroidery. The domestic market should also be formed.
5. After the age of 50-55 years the workers take retirement for their eye-strain and some other diseases. A medical council should be formed for the convenience of such workers.
6. Working shed for the group of artisans who do not possess sufficient space for work at their residence.
7. A special training on value added items with prospective designs may be taken up as a pilot project.
8. The NGOs should come into the picture by providing assistance to get funding to the workers, training in design creation, modern fabrications, by extending helping hand to create awareness about the huge prospect of this industry to the general people and government. Some NGOs have already got involved which are:
Gondalpara Nabin Pragati Seva Samity Panchla, Tentulberia Gram Unnayan Samiti Panchla, Azad Welfare Society Panchla and Sankrail etc (Progress Report of the Scheme, 2006). They are mainly involved in Panchla and Sankrail. More NGOs are needed in this high time of jari industry's survival urgency.
9. Provision should be made so that workers get work throughout the year, because at present workers are engaged only for few months.
10. According to the observation there is no union or association of artisans which are very essential for safe guarding the interest of workers.
11. Most villages with jari works are not connected by *pucca rasta*; there should be an effort for development of road and network.
12. Artisans should have easy access to financial support and loan. Recent introduction of “jari card” can be a big opportunity to the workers if policies are taken firmly.
13. The artisans can be given the name of unorganised industrial workers, for which they can be provided with provident fund, medical benefits, gratuity, pension etc. for their betterment and to keep the prospect of this traditional art lively.
14. For smooth functioning and growth of the industry there should be establishment of co-operatives.

PROSPECTS OF JARI WORKS IN HOWRAH DISTRICT

Growth and expansion of jari works in Howrah district to a great extent is the result of closure and quite a good number of traditional industries, from where a large number of unemployed or displaced workers are shifting towards jari industry, people from agricultural sector are also coming to this industry mainly because of more earning. Current trend of the industry shows that if the present trend of growth continues the industry will further expand.

The district has large number of local craftsmen and skilled or trend persons who have vast experiences and knowledge of jari works. All these factors together further accelerate the prospect of development and expansion of this industry. The present scenario of instability in the industrialization process has further opened up the avenues of expansion of jari works. For employment generation and earning jari work is highly suitable but the policy intervention from the part of State and Central Government is highly urged for a bright future.

CONCLUSION

The sudden arising hurdles in the path of progress of rural industry seem to be looming large to take a devastating view. Jari industry, once showed a very suitable path to walk to get into shelter in the tyranny of the havoc of recession and the fall of the balance of agricultural economy, is now also seeking chances of survival but their little involvement in the colossal war for the existence of a rural balanced economy is nothing more than a preparation of some gibberish condolence after the death. During a long time, the rural economy has got the little opportunity to move out from the darkness, holding the shining string of jari, which now-a-days seemed to have slipped out of their grip. The flames of the torches of a few NGOs are even unable to light up the candles for guiding the path of their victory of achieving desired life. The green meadows which they waited for a long to view seemed to be a futile dream, mainly due to the lack of knowledge of the common people and the government, and the non co-operation of government and a little number of NGO's. The jari industry, although a small scale one, but in rural life it

raises its importance from an ordinary craft to an inevitable one. The morality allows without can give fret them to death and can give a slightest of the clues to solve the riddles of the suddenly seen problem and to take the life of rural place, holding the small scale, to the 'larger than life'.

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