



Social entrepreneurship in folk art- A study about changing dimensions of bandhani work in Gujarat

Shabnam

PhD Scholar, Department of Social Work, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India

Abstract

A conceptual understanding about the core terminologies associated with this article includes that of entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, folk art, traditional cloth-art form, Bandhani work and women artisans of Gujarat state. The evolution of the Bandhani women artisans in Gujarat has been traced concisely and the changing market dimensions with time has been reflected upon. Further, an attempt has been made to draw intersectionality between social entrepreneurship and the traditional cloth-art form of Gujarat- Bandhani in the state of Gujarat.

Keywords: social entrepreneurship; folk art; bandhani; Gujarat; women artisans

Introduction

The concept of entrepreneurship has started gaining momentum in tremendous ways in the contemporary time period. Entrepreneurship has been defined by Knowledge Commission of India (2008) as “The professional application of knowledge, skills and competencies and/or of monetizing a new idea, by an individual or a set of people by either launching a new enterprise or diversifying from an existing one (distinct from seeking self-employment as in a profession or trade), to pursue growth while generating wealth, employment and social good.” Social entrepreneurship relates to recognizing and resourcefully pursuing opportunities to create a social value and henceforth crafting innovative approaches to address critical social needs (Duke, 2014) [5]. Folk art can be associated with traditional decorative or utilitarian art of the people that are often an expression of community life and are distinguished from academic or self-conscious of cosmopolitan expression (Merriam Webster Dictionary). The traditional cloth-art form provides a representation of the shared experiences of a community. In these art forms, cultural practices, values and beliefs are deeply rooted and they provide a common language of expression for different communities (Kanika, 2015) [8]. The word ‘bandhani’ has been derived from Sanskrit etymology which means ‘to bind or to tie’. So, the bandhani work is a form of tie and dye textile which has been decorated by tugging the cloth with fingernails and forming a design (Craftatlas). Women artisans are skilled craft workers who create different functional and decorative products with hands by using traditional tools and methods (Hunter, 2021) [7].

Social entrepreneurship and folk art

Bulsara and Chandwani (2012) have studied social entrepreneurship in India. Their study revealed that social entrepreneurship is an all-encompassing nomenclature which is used for depicting the process of bringing about a social change on a major and impactful scale in comparison to the traditional non-government organization structure. During earlier times, the organizations which addressed key social issues were assumed to be idealistic, philanthropic with entrepreneurial skills. In India, the concept of social

entrepreneurship is gaining more momentum because the government is very keen on its promotion, not only by funding or advising for it but by enabling it. The author studied about the growing trends of social entrepreneurship in India and the new initiatives taken up by various social entrepreneurs. The paper also roughly touches upon the various theories of social entrepreneurship.

Sharma (2015) [14] studied about the tribal folk arts of India. The territory of Indian land is well known for portraying its cultural and traditional vibrancy through its conventional arts and crafts. The different regions and states in India have their own distinct cultural and traditional identities which are displayed through their various art forms. Every region in India has its own style and pattern of art, which is known as folk art. In India, the tribal and folk art are very ethnic and simple, and yet colorful and vibrant enough to showcase about India’s rich cultural heritage. Additionally, the folk art in India has tremendous potential in the international market because of its traditional aesthetic sensibility and authenticity.

Else (1988) [6] studied about the composition of Indian textiles, its tradition and technology. The study revealed that bandhani, in certain geographical areas can be used for tie dyeing yarns. The author laid emphasis on *Chunari* which is a term used for the tie dyed fabric when it is in veil form for married women and is worn in this manner, primarily in the Gujarat state. There is a traditional value associated with the red color and spotted patterns. It symbolically represents girlhood, love and marital happiness. Apart from this, the author revealed that bandhani is also worn as a drape over embroidered skirts or in standard sari form.

Additionally, the author also studied about the multi-step procedure involved in making this cloth-art form. One method which was used to tie the fabric is to dampen the cloth, place it over a block of wood that has nails embedded into it in the form of a design, pinch up a tiny bit of the fabric at the tip of each nail and wrap it with waxed thread. A pointed metal fingernail may be worn or young women cut and shape their fingernails to assist in the tying process. If points are tied at the base, leaving the tip free to receive the dye, a ring-shaped pattern occurs. If the entire point is wrapped, the result is a spot. The tied fabric is placed in the

lightest dye bath, and is tied and dyed again as many times as needed to achieve the desired color pattern. The tied areas resist the dye leaving the pattern in the color of the previous dye bath. The ties generally remain on the textile until it is sold; the fabric may be opened at one corner to show the color scheme. If the ties are left, the purchaser knows it is not a printed imitation. As the tied threads are removed and tiny spots, squares, or circles emerge, some are in the form of birds, elephants, flowers or dancing girls (Else, 1988)^[6].

Intersectionality between social entrepreneurship and Bandhani work in the context of Gujarat state

Clifford (2018)^[2] studied about balancing local tradition and global influences, its design and business education for traditional artisans in Kachchh district of Gujarat state. The author analyzed the recent development of design education for hereditary artisans in India with a specific focus on handloom weaving. The study focused on case studies of two different institutes. These were Somaiya Kala Vidya (SKV) along with its predecessor Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya in Kachchh district of western India and The Handloom School in Maheshwar, Madhya Pradesh. The study weaves together data collected from ethnographic case study fieldwork, with sociological and anthropological theories of craft learning, knowledge and social mobility, to show the ways in which design education for hereditary artisans can challenge dualisms between informal and formal knowledge, and hierarchies between artisans and designers. The study also demonstrated ways in which graduates innovate within their traditional knowledge set and repertoire of designs to meet the tastes of high-end urban and global markets (Clifford, 2018)^[2].

A report on '*Handicrafts in Gujarat- Handloom and Handicrafts Shopping in Gujarat*' issued by the government of Gujarat reveals that handicrafts have been an integral part of the lives of Gujarati people. The diversity of Gujarat can be positively depicted through the art and crafts collection. One can see unique and beautiful amalgamation of stitches, colors, patterns and embroidery. The handicrafts of the state have flourished due to their traditional value, special appearance, perfection and colorfulness and have become the pride of Gujarat. In particular, the tie-and dye products called Bandhani or Bandhej are best produced in Jamnagar and Kachchh region of the Gujarat state. The garments made from Bandhani are available in many patterns and each one of them is different. Different types of pattern include *Chokidal*, which is a primary pattern of square, elephants and other animals and *Kambaliya*, which has a pattern in the centre and different designs in the border. These can be found in Jamnagar, Mandvi and Bhuj regions of Gujarat state (Report on Handicrafts in Gujarat, 2019).

A report on '*Art and Craft of Gujarat*' issued by Gujarat Tourism, Government of Gujarat studied that Gujarat has an array of rich variety of crafts. The embroidery, bead work, wood crafts, printed and woven clothes, pottery and tribal art are the expression of the folklore and festivals. The wide range of the works of craftsmen and woven with the social and cultural shade of the region from where they have come up with is original in nature and in their craftsmanship. In the contemporary times, we can see that from the huts and villages of craftsman in small regions of the state have adorned many houses of elite and hotels in India as well as abroad. The diverse ranges of products have been acclaimed domestically as well as globally. Additionally, these forms

of activities have helped in creating sustainable employment opportunities and income generation to the artisans working in the area of handicrafts and handloom, which is a non-farming sector of our Indian economy (Report on Art and Craft in Gujarat, 2020).

Shah and Patel (2017)^[13] assessed about the problems and challenges faced by handicraft artisans. The sector of handicrafts has immense potential to provide employment opportunities to many artisans across the countries who have further converted their skills to occupation. The women artisans of Gujarat are well known for their well versed skills of '*Needle and Thread*'. Initially their art work was mainly used for domestic purpose but later due to the demand in the market, it was produced on a large scale.

Conclusion

Art has always played an important role in shaping perspectives in the society. It is an important form of medium and expression through visual, audio and performing artefacts. It helps in keeping our cultures alive and for social exchange as well. Folk art particularly associates with the cultural life of communities. In this paper, we had emphasized on the Bandhani cloth-art form of Gujarat. Additionally, we had attempted to draw intersectionality between social entrepreneurship and this traditional cloth-art form. This study concludes that despite of efforts by the government as well as non-government organizations, the handicraft sector continues to suffer in India, in general and Gujarat, particularly. The primary reasons can be lack of education, unorganized sector, low capital, poor exposure to new technologies, absence of market intelligence and a poor institutional framework. There is need to develop proper institutional mechanism to enhance the lives of traditional artisans, especially women artisans engaged in the Bandhani work so that their their standard of living improves and their work gets recognized as well.

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