

A Survey on the Socio-economic Conditions of Labour in Brassware Industry of U.P. (With Special Reference to District Mirzapur)

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Abstract

The paper concerned is descriptive in nature. The objective of this paper is to investigate the socio-economic conditions of labour in brassware industry of Uttar Pradesh with special reference to District Mirzapur. The study presented is based on random sampling and secondary data. The brassware industry of Mirzapur is labour-intensive using old and outdated techniques of production. It is famous for brass utensil manufacture along with brass chakka sheets. The labour engaged in this industry are very poor and owners of the industry humiliate them and give them less wages, long working hours, no employment guarantee, improper working and living conditions. The workers are unskilled, lack of education, health and sanitation facilities. The poor socio-economic condition of labour leads to low productivity which in turn is leading to less growth of brassware industry.

Keywords: Socio-economic condition, brassware-industry, Mirzapur district, Darza casting.

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1. INTRODUCTION : INDIAN HANDICRAFT SECTOR

The Indian Handicraft sector is gaining more and more importance day by day. Now a days, handicrafts are utilized for creativity, art and style to decorate homes, offices, showrooms, galleries etc. Handcrafted art wares and giftware have gained lot of importance not only in domestic markets but also in generating international business contributing to foreign revenue generation.

The handicrafts sector provides employment to a large number of workers in rural and urban areas and also contributes substantially in foreign exchange generation and also preserves India's rich cultural heritage. In the present scenario, these craftsmen need institutional support to meet the changing consumer taste and trends. The drawback of this sector is that there is a lack of educated workforce, and they have poor exposure to new technologies, market intelligence etc. The labour class engaged in this sector has poor working and living condition, no social security lack of education and health facilities.

1.1 U.P. Brassware Sector

India is one of the major exporters of handicrafts in the world market of which Uttar Pradesh holds a significant place. It is the hub of metal ware handicraft products and contributes significantly in the foreign revenue generation. It produces a range of items from utility goods to variety of art and decorative pieces of brass.

Most popular of all the brass craft originating from India comes from the city of Moradabad. It is the biggest exporter of brass wares in the country and rightly acquires the name Brass City. *The other brass manufacturing centres in Uttar Pradesh are Varanasi, Jalesar, Mirzapur, Aligarh etc.* **Moradabad** is the biggest centre of brassware manufacture and is popular for 'Kalai ke bartan' Varanasi is also an important centre of brass articles known as trays, plates, singhasan, sketches of Gods and Goddesses. Infact the repousse work of brass is popular in Varanasi.

Mirzapur is more important for the production of brass utensils and brass chakka sheets which are used as raw material in most of the brassware manufacturing centres in the state. There are a number of non ferrous rolling mills in which labourers are busy in the manufacture of domestic brass utensils and brass chakka sheets.

Jalesar is a small town and tehsil of Etah district in U.P. but it is famous all over the world for the production of Ghungroos and puja bells.

Aligarh is a place of world fame for the manufacture of locks of different types. The locks are generally made of brass.

Hathras, Bahraich, Johkaura and Moth (Jhansi District) are very small centres of brassware production.

Mathura is very important places of pilgrimage and there is enough demand for puja articles, a few artisans from other centres have migrated here and started to manufacture small puja articles and to sell them to local pilgrimage.

Badhua Kalan in Sultanpur district is being developed as an ideal industrial estate. The artisans from other centres have also migrated here and manufacture fancy items made by brass.

1.2 Significance of Labour

'Socio-economic conditions' is a wide term and does not only include the social and economic conditions of the labour, but also includes the conditions under which the labour live and work, their health and physique, education and training and so on so forth.

In a broad sense the term covers two aspects-the economic conditions as well as social status of labour. The scope of economic conditions of a labourer does not only include his total family income per head, but also includes the size of his family and the level of his savings or indebtedness.

Therefore, these two aspects also will be an essential part of this study within the economic conditions. The other aspects social status is a wide term and includes his living and working conditions, standard of living of his family, his health and physique, education and training and lastly the attitude of the society towards his work.

Labour is an important factor upon which the development of any industry depends to a great extent. An efficient and carefree labour does not only improve the quality and quantity of its production, but also brings a new range and variety of its products. It is more important in case of a handicraft like brassware. Therefore, it is inevitable that the labour could not only be provided with healthy working conditions in the factories but also be provided from all sorts of facilities to raise their standard of living and status in the society.

A labour which is within the clutches of poverty and disease cannot be expected to be efficient and skillful in his working, therefore, the labour should be free from all sorts of worries, which may adversely affect their efficiency.

Brassware refers to an item of merchandise manufactured of brass and the research in hand is confined to the labour engaged in the manufacture of such wares. The demand for brass art ware especially in the markets abroad, is likely to increase in the near future and in order to cope with this ever increasing demand, the existing labour is not only to be made more efficient and skillful, but a new labour force, well acquainted with the most modern techniques and processes of brassware manufacture shall have to be trained.

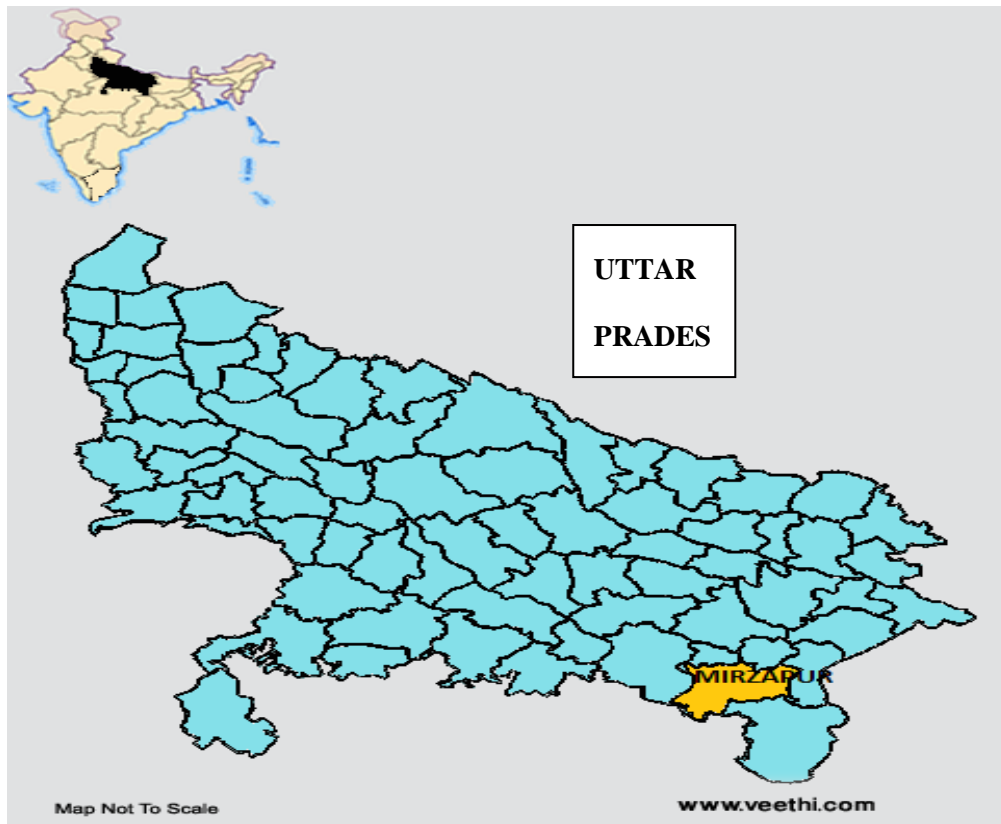
Therefore, we have done study to conduct an analytical and comparative study of the working, living and economic conditions of the labour engaged in the brassware industry in the state of U.P. and to suggest ways and means to make this labour most efficient and skillful by improving their social and economic status.

Measures should be taken to sensitize the artisans on the changing international fashion trends and the importance of innovation in products. There is also a clear need to bring policy initiatives from the central and state governments to ensure growth and development of handicrafts industry. In addition to these broader policy initiatives by the government, there are many other factors which contribute to the growth of the firms engaged in this sector. Each firm has its own set of challenges to grow and survive in the market.

1.3 Mirzapur

Mirzapur is located between latitude 23.52° to 23.32° and longitude 82.72° to 83.33°. It is spread over an area of 4521 sq. km. It is surrounded by Varanasi and Sant Ravidas Nagar on the north, Allahabad on the west, and towards south east its boundaries are contiguous with Varanasi district, Sonebhadra and the state of Madhya Pradesh. The district measures 64 km from east to west and 32 km. from north to south. District falls under the Vindhyachal Mandal and the headquarter is Mirzapur town. The district has four tehsils namely Sadar Mirzapur, Lalganj, Madiyan and Chunar. The district is divided into 12 blocks. It has 1 lok sabha and 5 assembly areas. (Wikipedia Mirzapur)





1.4 Brass Utensil Manufacturing Process

Process of Manufacture The first stage of the manufacturing process is to make shape according to Brass Utensil. This process is different for utensil made of Brass Sheet and utensil made by Casting and Moulding. For brass sheets shape is given by cutting the sheets with the help of drawn sketches of articles.

Moulding This process starts with preparation of wooden patterns and then making moulds and master moulds. Then the metal is melted and poured into moulds. Moulding may be classified as para casting and darza casting.

Para casting In this method the pattern of the Utensil to be manufactured is made up of wood and these form a few model pieces are cast which are to be used in making moulds on a large scale. Such mould is called Para which is made from special type of clay known as Chikni Mitti.

Darza Casting In order to prepare a darza two flat dishes with raised rims are used. The dishes when put on one another creates a hollow on the side which is meant for pouring metal.

Brass Sheets The raw material for making brass sheets is brass billets which are heated in a furnace and pressed in a rolling mill. The Sheet items are manufactured by the following methods:

Beating/Hammering Method According to this method brass sheet first cut according to size and shape, then these sheet are heated in furnace and then beaten by hammer to attain the desired shape.

Pressing Method This process is used for manufacture of articles having hollow in their shapes. Sheets after being cut in proper shape is then affixed with dye and pressed with power.

Spinning Lathe Method. In this method a die either of iron or wood is prepared and put on the thick iron roller and a brass sheet is placed between the die and the iron roller which is usually driven by power.

Soldering and Scraping Soldering refers to joining parts of metal, Scraping is to clean articles with iron tools in order to make the utensil smooth and better looking.

Engraving Engraving is the sketching of design on the surface of the article with the help of sharp, pointed steel tool.

Polishing Polishing is the final step of brassware manufacture which gives final finish and shine to the brassware.

2. METHODOLOGY

Since the brassware industry is totally unorganised, scattered, and confined to the cottages of the artisans, no published data regarding working living, and economic conditions of the labour is available. The first hand data and information is collected from the selected units at random. For this purpose a detailed questionnaire was prepared and investigated from 30 units of brassware manufacturer, exporters, dealers of Mirzapur. There is no well knit organisation either of the artisans or of the dealers or of the Government in this industry from where the required information may be had and relied upon.

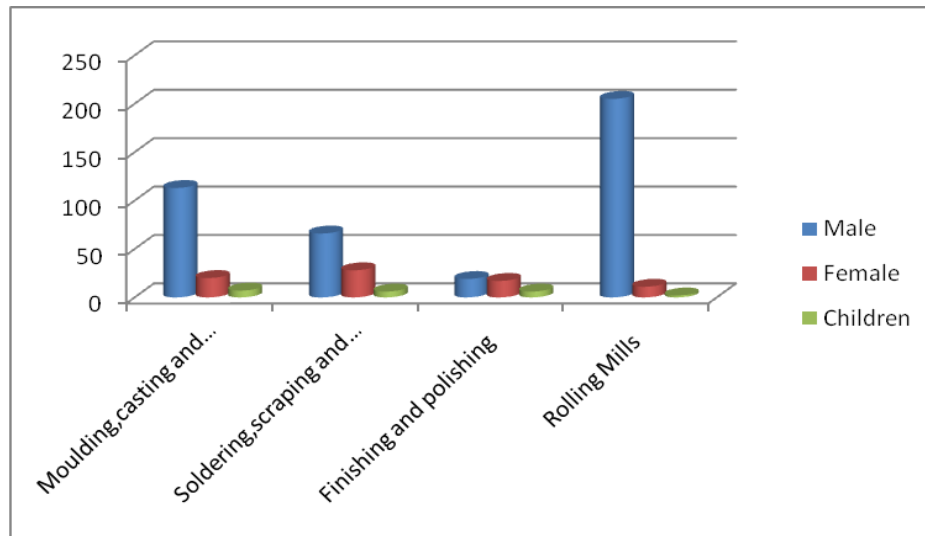
Secondary data is collected from the U.P. State Brassware Corporation, State Industries Department and U.P. Handicrafts Board and State Labour Department which will be used to draw some fruitful conclusions.

2.1 Brass utensil making unit at Mirzapur

SEX WISE DISTRIBUTION OF LABOUR IN DIFFERENT PROCESS OF BRASSWARE INDUSTRY OF MIRZAPUR IN 2018-19 *

Name of Process	Male	Female	Children	Total
Moulding, casting and pattern making	113	20	7	140
Soldering, scraping and engraving	66	28	6	100
Finishing and polishing	19	17	6	42
Rolling Mills	205	11	2	218
Total number of workers surveyed in 30 units of brassware manufacturers				500

*Self investigation of 30 units at Mirzapur



The above table and chart depicts the sex wise distribution of labour in different process of brassware manufacture in Mirzapur. The percentage of male workers is more as compared with their female counter parts in various processes. In case of rolling mills the role of female workers and children is insignificant as compared to the male workers.

Name of Process	Average wage rate per day for 8 hours in Rupees.
Silli-Gulli or Billet making	350
Pattern making, moulding and casting	260
Soldering	220
Scraping	200
Engraving	180
Enamelling	260
Polishing	180
Skilled rolling mill workers	4500 per month
Unskilled rolling mill workers	3400 per month

Source: Survey work

There were less number of children involved in brassware manufacture. Total 30 brass manufacturing units of Mirzapur were surveyed which comprised of 500 workers.

3. PROCESS WISE WAGE RATES IN BRASSWARE INDUSTRY OF U.P. IN 2018-19 *

*Self investigation of 30 units at Mirzapur

On the basis of random sample survey of 30 brass manufacturing units in Mirzapur the average rate of wages is depicted in the above table.

- Silli-gulli making has the maximum wage rate (though below the wage recommended by Minimum Wage Act) as it requires the maximum amount of physical labour. The labour works near the furnace for the whole day with hammer in his hand.
- Pattern making, moulding and casting also requires strenuous work near furnace.

- The process of Soldering and Scraping are less hazardous as compared to the above process. Although they lead to respiratory problems in workers if safety measures like masks are not used.
- Engraving and enamelling require less amount of physical labour thus less wages.
- Polishing being the last process of brassware manufacture also leads to health issues due to its strong odour.
- In non-ferrous rolling mills specially at Mirzapur the average monthly wage rate of skilled and unskilled labour is fixed by mill owners.

Thus, the aforesaid table depicts the **poor economic conditions** of labour engaged in Brassware industry of Uttar Pradesh (with special reference to Mirzapur).

4. WORKING AND LIVING CONDITIONS OF LABOUR

The working environment exerts a deep influence on a person's health, efficiency and quality of work. Most brass utensils manufacturers of Mirzapur work in their houses which lack proper ventilation and lighting. Moreover, no safety equipments were found during the survey in household brass manufacturing units. These working conditions are hazardous to their health in long run. Moreover, most of the workers indulge in eating tobacco based Paan Masala, Bidi Smoking and drinking local alcohol which further worsens their health as well as economic condition. The workers except for rolling mill workers do not get work regularly .

Mostly the household suffer one or more of the following conditions:

- lack of access to water protected from outside contamination,
- lack of access to sanitation facilities that separate human waste from human contact.
- lack of adequate living area.
- lack of housing durability the structures are on hazardous land and are unable to withstand extremes in climate and are not pucca houses.

Poor Living Conditions affects workers and their families. Living in these types of living conditions influence the mental health of people. Children living in poor quality environments can be a lasting effect on their life. Workers are mostly affected by poor living conditions because of the financial strain on them, not being able to provide for their families. Not only there is poor living space but more people get sick as well because they live so close to each other, disease spread rapidly. And often lack of medical care become fatal as well. People generally do not seek health care from government sources when household members fall sick, the household respondent was asked why household members do not generally use government health facilities. In almost all cases, the three most commonly reported reasons for not using government facilities are the poor quality of care, the lack of a nearby facility, and excessive waiting times at government facilities.

Extreme poverty permeates through the society where production is low and goods and services never leave the community gets trapped in a stagnating economic cycle. Workers incomes fall below the given poverty line due to lack of work hours and low wages. Largely because they are earning such low wages, the working poor face numerous obstacles that make it difficult for many of them to find and keep a job, save up money, and maintain a sense of self-worth.

5. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The U.P. brassware industry especially in Mirzapur is confined to the cottages of artisans. It is scattered and unorganized. The major findings of socio-economic conditions of brass ware industry of U.P. (special reference to Mirzapur) are as follows:

- **No job security** – Workers of brassware industry of Mirzapur lack permanent jobs and remain devoid of social security benefits. There is complete lack of trade unions to safeguard the interest of artisans.
- **Bleak economic condition**- The workers of Mirzapur brassware industry have poor economic conditions. They are entangled in the clutches of poverty and debt traps.
- **Unsatisfactory working conditions** – The unorganized sector has poor working conditions and long hours of work and low wages. No measures of safety and security at workplace.
- **Poor living conditions** – The labour class usually live in houses with poor ventilation, sanitation and lighting. The houses are too small and family members are high in number. Moreover, many artisans work at their dwellings which further worsen the living conditions.
- **Lack of education, health facilities and training**- Mostly the workers engaged in brassware industry of Mirzapur are illiterate or have only basic primary education. They do not have access to minimum health needs.
- **Outdated technology**- The brassware industry of Mirzapur is basically labour intensive and uses old and outdated technique of production.
- **Low productivity**-The poor socio-economic conditions of labour decreases its productivity and leads to a bleak growth of brassware industry.
- **Decreased demand of brassware and increased cost of raw material**- After demonetization and introduction of GST the cost of raw material has risen. Thus, it may decreasing the profit margin.
- **Labour migration from brassware industry**- Due to increased price of raw material and decrease in profit of artisans, they are shifting from brass industry to other works for sustaining their livelihood.

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