

# *Developmental Initiatives for the Revival of "Tonk Namda"- A Traditional Felted Floor Covering of Rajasthan*



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*Source: Textile Review*

# **Developmental Initiatives for the Revival of "Tonk Namda"- A Traditional Felted Floor Covering of Rajasthan**

**By: Dr. Anjali Karolia & Surbhi Sardiwal**

**Source: Textile Review**

*Namda is a local term used for felted wool floor coverings. It is a traditional floor covering, made out of coarse variety of wool. Rich hues and exquisite designing are the hallmarks of the handcrafted Namda. Namda comes from the root word 'Namata', which is a Sanskrit word and it means woollen stuff. Namda making is practiced as a craft in several cultures, especially the countries throughout Asia, viz. Iran in Persia, Afghanistan and several places in Laddakh, Kutch and Kashmir and Rajasthan in India.*

For centuries Indian arts and crafts have been distinguished for their great aesthetic and functional value. India has the widest variety of crafts anywhere in the world. The Indian handicrafts industry is highly labour intensive cottage based industry and decentralized, being spread all over the country in rural and urban areas. Numerous craftsmen are engaged in crafts work on part-time basis. The industry provides employment to a large number of women and people belonging to the weaker sections of the society. The quality and diversity of Indian handicrafts had caught the attention of exporters. Government began to set up various ventures for promotion & preservation of traditional crafts.

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Namda making is practiced as a craft in several cultures, especially the countries throughout Asia, viz. Iran in Persia, Afghanistan and several places in Laddakh, Kutch and Kashmir and Rajasthan in India.

The craft of namda making is not native, to Rajasthan. It is known to have come from distant land of Iran and Laddakh. Rajasthan (Tonk) has served as a prominent market for namda decoration and work in the past.

The present study was an attempt to reflect the present scenario of this handicraft industry and specifically to the socio- economic profile of the craftsmen involved in the traditional namda craft. Detailed emphasis was laid on synthesising the initiatives taken by various developmental agencies for preserving, promoting and developing the traditional namda craft so as to propose several suitable recommendations regarding the developmental interventions.

## **Methodology**

For attainment of the formulated objectives a descriptive research design was planned and the data was gathered with the aid of questionnaires, field visits, informal discussions and observation. Purposive sampling method was used to select 20 officials from various governmental and non- governmental agencies.

The 12 governmental agencies and 8 non-governmental agencies selected as samples were:

### **Governmental agencies:**

1. Udhyog Mandir, Amer, Jaipur.
2. Khadi Gramodhyog Saghan Vikas Samiti, Bassi, Jaipur.
3. Rajasthan Sarvodaya Sansthan, Gopalpura, Jaipur.
4. Rajasthan Khadi Gramodhyog Sanstha Sangh, Bajaj Nagar, Jaipur.
5. Rajasthan Adim jati Sevak Sangh, jhalana Dungri, Jaipur.
6. Lok Seva Sansthan, Bajaj Nagar Jaipur.
7. Vinoba Seva Samiti, Tonk Road, Jaipur.
8. Khadi Gramodhyog Mandai, Banipark, Jaipur.
9. Panchayat Samiti, Khadi Gramodhyog Sangh, jhotwadajaipur.
10. Gramodhyog Vikas Samiti, Indira Bajar, Jaipur.
11. Gramya Handicraft Emporium, Mansarovar, Jaipur.
12. Vikas Khadi Gramodhyog Sansthan, Lalkothi, Jaipur.

### **Non-government agencies:**

1. Dr. Ambedkar Welfare Society, Kalipattanam, Vikas NagarTonk.
2. Gramin Vikas Samiti Bijlanagar, Malpura, Tonk.
3. Gramotthan Sansthan Nagar, Gram Nagar, Malpura.
4. janhit Gramin Vikas & Mahila Kalyan Samiti, Ranoli( Peeplu Tehsill, Tonk.
5. Nirman Sansthan Deshma, Village Deshma, Diggi, Malpura.
6. Rajeev Gandhi Sewa Sansthan, Civil Lines, Tonk.
7. SamuhikVikasSansthan, Niwai.
8. Mahilajagrati Samiti, Chhani.

These agencies were working for the implementation of the schemes generated by the central and the state government for the promotion, preservation and diversification of traditional crafts including the namda of Tonk. These developmental agencies work individually or in collaboration with various academic and research institutes for practically implementing these schemes and policies. Out of these 20 samples, 60% of the agencies were located in Jaipur and rest 40% were in Tonk and nearby villages. One person administering at the managerial level was interviewed from each agency. The information was gathered with the aid of tools like personal and telephonic interviews with the officials, visits to the workplaces, and observation coupled with information gathered from the official sites of the various selected organisations.

The selected samples of the developmental agencies were interviewed and the responses were analysed in the descriptive and tabular form. After a detailed study of the findings several suggestions and recommendations were formulated which are summed up in the following paragraphs.

### **Results & Discussion**

The results of the study revealed that Namda craft is being practised as a traditional family craft mainly by the muslim community on hierarchical basis in Tonk, Rajasthan. However contemporarily several hindus have also started involving themselves in this heritage craft.

The government's vision is to help transform the Indian craft sector through innovation, education and integrated development. Several agencies working in collaboration with government and independently introduce fresh approaches, revitalize traditional craft concepts, cultivate visionary leadership and provide inspiring platforms for interaction

and exchange. These aim at establishing partnerships with organizations and institutions to generate employment opportunities, enhance traditional skills and build resources for the handicraft industry.

Today the craft is at a very deplorable state, there has been several major changes which had diluted its status to merely an income earning source rather than the traditional family craft.

The findings of the study revealed the present status of the namda craft and the craftsmen. Major problems faced by the craftsmen included the absence of specific market for selling which indicated a clear need of provision of market facilities, opportunities & support services to craftspeople. Increased role of government is required. Measures are also needed for improving the economical status of the craftspeople as they avail very low wages which ultimately leads to shifting of occupation by the craftsmen. Furthermore, there is no noticeable link between rural craftspeople & the urban consumer. There is also a need to generate awareness among the consumer groups about the intensive labour & elaborate techniques involved in such creations, this will lead to better understanding of consumers for more dignity to craftsmen and their craftwork. The namda craft in comparison with other crafts has no specific recognition or encouragement by government.

The selected sample agencies had varied field of working like, provision of financial assistance to the craftsmen, marketing assistance, employment facilities, and other related benefits.

**Table 1: Work details of the developmental agencies N=20**

		Percentage
Area of working	Financial assistance to the craftsmen	25
	Marketing assistance	5
	Employment facilities & other related benefits	35
	All the above	70
Tie up partners	State government organisations, all khadi institutions and academic and research organisations	70
	Academic institutes	10
	Khadi organisations	20

The findings regarding the workforce constitution of agencies showed that majority of the agencies had a workforce ranging from 10- 20 % where the ratio of males was very high as compared to females. All the selected agencies worked for various causes like revival of the craft, welfare of the artisans and for fulfillment of their aims several measures were adopted which included training of craftsmen, raw material supply, provision of design inputs, organization of trade fairs/ exhibitions, product diversification and other developmental programs. Several central and state government projects were undertaken by the selected development agency samples and their major concentration was handloom sector, skill upgradation of the craftsmen and promotion of handicrafts through exhibitions and trade fairs.

**Table 2: Constitution details of the developmental agencies N= 20**

		Percentage
Workforce constitution	10- 11	45
	11- 20	45
	20-30	10
Objective of working	Craft revival	95
	Artisan welfare	5
Projects taken up in last 10 years	KVIC projects	20
	All state government projects	45
	Projects of both central and state government	35
Major focus	Craft revival and progress	10
	Employment generation	10
	artisan upliftment, financial upliftment, stability, improvement of living standards, and skill upgradation	80

With regards to the duration of the developmental projects launched by the developmental agencies a mixed response ranging from a period of 3 months to 1 year was availed. A similar response was attained with regards to the sole aim of namda revival project, the responses ranged from the main aim being the protection of dying craft to rehabilitation of the craftsmen coupled with employment generation.

For the evaluation of the success of the implemented namda project various different criteria were judged like number of artisans joining the craft as an occupation after project completion and economic and developmental status of the craftsmen and the extent of attainment of formulated objectives of the project.

The target group included the women, underdeveloped sections of the society and several old and new craftsmen especially those who were abandoning this traditional craft. The major areas of project implementation included Rajasthan, majorly the villages of Tonk district. Majority of the respondents felt a positive impact and improvement in the status of the traditional namda craft after the implementation of the namda revival project.

**Table 3: Details regarding the namda project N= 20**

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		Percentage
Duration of the project	1-6 months	70
	7 months-1 year	30
Success rating	Below expectations	40
	Non satisfactory	30
	Desirable level	30
Evaluation of success	Number of craftsmen joining the craft as an occupation after the completion of the project	45

	Calculated based on the economic and developmental status of the craftsmen.	25
	Attainment of formulated objectives decides the success percentage of the Namda project	20
Target group	Women oriented	10
	Rural and all local people especially from the underdeveloped sections of the society	30
	Old and new craftsmen especially those who were abandoning this craft.	60
Percentage of the craftsmen taking up the craft as occupation	10- 30% of the participants	36
	30- 50% of the participants	17
	50% and above	47

**Table 4: Forthcoming planning details of the developmental agencies**  
N=20

		Percentage
Future plans	Diversification of namda craft	45
	Launch artisan upliftment program	15
	Program according to the demand of the situation	20
	No information about forthcoming agenda	20
New aspects to be included in future programs	Shortcomings and the drawbacks of the previous programs will be overcome	35
	Improvement of serviceability, marketability and quality with proper utilisation of the allocated funds, and moth proof treatment for the namda	40
	Newer design implementation and consistency in sale	15

The findings regarding the basis of wage payment of the trainees included payment on monthly basis, piecewise basis and attendance basis. The major funding source for the developmental agencies was the central and the state government's annual policy budget. The annual budget distribution included the raw material, infrastructure, staff salary, stipends and other payments. The findings revealed that the launched loan schemes were easily managed by the craftsmen.

**Table 5: Economic details regarding the namda project**  
N=20

		Percentage
Basis of wage Payment	Monthly basis	35
	Piece basis	30
	Attendance basis	15
Stipend categorisation	Yes. Type of the work pursued, attendance and quality of work.	40
	No. A set pattern of stipend distribution.	60
Fund source	Central and the state government's annual policy budget.	70
	State government agencies including the Zila Udhog Kendra, RUDA, Panchayat Samities, Dle.	20
	Budget of various organisations and loans from financial institutions, both private as well as government	10
Annual budget distribution pattern	Raw material	20
	Infrastructure	20
	Staff salary	20
	Stipends and other payment	40

To popularize their schemes the developmental agencies used various different communication channels which included audio, video and print media which included bulletins, handouts, FM radios, newspapers, pamphlets, hoardings, magazines, etc. the responses revealed that all the utilized publicity channels were considered suitable by the agency officials.

**Table 6: Details of information channels used for the publicity of programs**  
N=20

	Types of Channels	Percentage
Informative Channels	Audio, video and print media	25
	Media in conjugation with other channels like meetings with local leaders and local bodies like panchayats.	40
	Field visits and promotional camps	35

After probing into the situation and discussions with the officials as well as the craftsmen, several suggestive measures and recommendations were formulated according to their opinions and need of the hour. Some suggestions formulated regarding the quality aspect included major concern by the government about raw material quality, the government should ensure good quality raw materials at reasonable prices to the namda makers. Maintenance of quality of the products by all the manufacturers was another major aspect to be looked into so that the traditional namdas do not get culminated or diversified into viscose based items.



## **Suggestion**

After probing into the situation and discussions with the officials as well as the craftsmen, several suggestive measures and recommendations were formulated according to their opinions and need of the hour. Some suggestions formulated regarding the quality aspect included major concern by the government about raw material quality, the government should ensure good quality raw materials at reasonable prices to the namda makers. Maintenance of quality of the products by all the manufacturers was another major aspect to be looked into so that the traditional namads do not get culminated or diversified into viscose based items.

Suggestions formulated regarding the design development laid emphasis on integration of basic skills of namda making and design. Additional input about introduction of new designs was also suggested to make the traditional namdas effectively compete with the carpets. Inclusion of variety in the namda and namda related products was also highlighted as there lies a scope for developing several items based on namdas in accordance with the present demands. It was also suggested that traditional namda makers should be promoted as against other in terms of loans, design development, etc. and it should be ensured that the art retains its originality as well as the families solely dependent on namda craft get sustainable livelihood out of the craft.

With regards to the marketing facilities the suggestions included people's participation in improving and securing trade by identification of appropriate markets as per manufacturers' range and quality, promotion of direct marketing through exhibitions, awareness about the present needs and demands and availability to local people, establishment of various new marketing linkages and adoption of various new and innovative marketing techniques and channels for product promotion.

Government agencies should be encouraged to take steps and initiatives to buy their products. This will also save precious public money as namda is much cheaper than carpet.

There was felt a need regarding information and awareness about credit facilities along with credit requirements for improving their scale of business, to tryout and explore new markets, for entrepreneurs to start their own business, for buying carding machine to improve economic status. (carding machine is quite expensive and most of them are unable to buy it due to lack of funds), for tapping new market channels, to expand business for product development and diversification along with introduction of new designs. Need credit for consumption as well. Some monetary help for children's education and to start own production for other income generation activities.

Several other suggestions formulated for provision of miscellaneous facilities included establishment of Industrial namda factories for generating greater employment, increment in the wages of daily wage labourers and provision of better health facilities for instance, some special measures should be taken to tackle with the problems of occupational hazards like asthma / breathing problems and skin diseases that are very common in namda makers. In addition to all these it was also suggested that the government should find out some chemical treatment or other measures to preserve namda as stocking namda poses a big problem because it is highly prone to some worms/ insects.



## **Recommendations**

After looking into the situation several necessarily required recommendations were formulated which are as follows:

1. More human approach towards credit disbursement is needed to break the vicious money lender cycle. Banks and financial institutions have to step up field activity to win the trust of the people, disseminate credit knowledge and facilitate easy accessibility.
2. An integrated intervention is needed for overall improvement of socio-economic status. With special emphasis on health, hygiene and education, specially of a girl children.
3. SHG's (Self help groups) can be initiated with savings and credit may be disbursed to them. Lending of loans or any other kind of financial assistance should be group based to maintain peer pressure.
4. Quality Control should be ensured.
5. Upgradation of skills of existing craftsmen should be done rather than forming new groups for skill improvement and enhancement.
6. Income generating activities in the namda manufacture should involve women to improve economic conditions of the namda craftsmen at later stage.
7. There should be some kind of employment arrangements for lean seasons should be made, so that the craftsmen do not indulge in very low paid jobs as is very common among the daily wage labourers.
8. Bank credit should be provided with in an artisan friendly manner on easy terms and conditions so as to not burden them.
9. Steps should be taken to eradicate the middlemen in between to minimise traders' and craftsmen' exploitation.
10. Availability of Common Facility Centre for namda craft and craftsmen.
11. Small cooperatives can be started and formed on no profit and no loss basis.
12. Approach should not only be systematic but also little slow to match their pace and get maximum participation from the craftsmen.
13. There should be no bar in terms of product· diversification in concern with namda.
14. Some kind of technical support and technology transfer in terms of implements are required for better output and skill upgradation of the craftsmen.

## **Present schemes for the development of namda craft and craftsmen**

The various government and non government developmental agencies selected as samples have several developmental schemes going on presently. These programs were formulated either by central and the state government, non- government or co-operative societies. Few of them named by the officials were, SFURTI program, Ready Warp Scheme, Rojgar Yojna, Sanganeri Block Printing program, Several loan schemes, khadi projects, RSIC scheme, sandalwood carving, Tie and dye, tailoring workshop, applique project, knitting project, soft toy making, rehabilitation of the namda craftsmen, and namda development project.

With the information gained through the discussions it was found that almost all the agencies were aware of the namda revival project, however several respondents stated that the project was merely a paperwork. And the approximate year range stated by all the

agencies was between 2003-2005. Regarding the duration of the project there was no specific response 70% respondents stated 1-6 months, 30% agency official stated 7 months - 1 year as an approximate range of duration of the namda project.

## **Conclusion**

Namda as of now, is almost a dying industry. The battle might have been lost but the war can and should be won. This traditional craft, although in a declining trend, has some distinct advantages. With appropriate kind of intervention and support a turnaround can be brought to the industry as well as the people. The biggest problems facing the industry are the lack of market promotion and the lack of suitable credit facilities. These problems again, stem from the lack of education and knowledge of people in the trade. With some investment and proper marketing, good amount of money can be made out of this trade.

This art needs all the possible encouragement to make the workers enjoy contentment arising out of their creativity, charming designs made with rainbow colors and exquisite workmanship. This is the dream in their eyes that they long to fulfill.

## **Acknowledgement**

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