Chapter 3

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Sitapur, a district located 80 kms away from Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh is famous for its hand made dari (cotton carpet). The dari (cotton carpet) making industry is spread all over the district, and is predominantly handled by the Ansari caste of Sitapur. The Ansaris dominate almost all of the dari (cotton carpet) manufacturing process in the district. They are involved in production as weavers, and even manage and participate as child labour. A strong sense of brotherhood and a desire to be involved in the upliftment of the community are the main reason for their concentration in dari (cotton carpet) manufacturing industry.

The factory owners have direct links with the yarn suppliers, and the purchase are made directly, without the involvement of any third party. Most of the yarn is purchased from Panipat, Maharashtra, Delhi and Kanpur through the involvement of the yarn agents. Factory owner also have their own agents and distributors, and this helps them keep an eye on the entire manufacturing process at the production level. They also have their own suppliers who control production.

During its manufacturing, a dari (cotton carpet) passes through different stages, each made possible by the contribution of different sets of employees. The distributors, suppliers, weavers, knotters are permanent employees of the factory, and lastly the factory owner are the people responsible for production.
Child labours also play an important role in the manufacturing of dari (cotton carpet).

Agents supply yarn to the supplier for weaving. Some suppliers have their own looms. The number of looms may be fifteen to twenty, and hired weavers on contract basis are kept to handle the work. The rates are decided by the suppliers and the working hours are fixed with a one hour lunch break in the middle. These suppliers get orders directly from the agents of a factory.

There is another category of suppliers, who get order from the agents; and then distribute it to the weavers found in the interior areas of the district. Some weavers put up their own looms, while others work on looms which are rented.

Generally, dari (cotton carpet) weaving is done in the interior areas of a district. After completion of the work, the weaver returns his order to the supplier, and collects his wages. The incomplete dari (cotton carpet) is then handed over for knotting and clipping. This is the area in which child labours are mainly involved. It is usually children in the age group of 6-14 who are involved in the processes of knotting and clipping. It has also been found that a small percentage of the workers involved in the process of clipping are women; but these are only those whose children are involved in knotting. Otherwise, there is no evidence whatsoever which points out the direct involvement of women in this profession.

After knotting and clipping have been done, the supplier takes the dari (cotton carpet) and returns it to the agents or distributors. These dari (cotton carpet) are then taken to the factory where they are classified according to
quality. The dari (cotton carpet) are then packed, and then they are sent from the factories to their final destinations by either road or rail or even by air.

The retailing of the dari (cotton carpet) is exclusively controlled by the factory owners, who have direct links with national and international bulk buyers. This gives a huge profit to the factory owners, because dari (cotton carpet) are in high demand in both the national and international markets. On the national level alone, the annual turnover of the factories in the district Sitapur is about 90 crores whereas the export turnover could not be estimated, because except two three factory owners, most of them hide about their export business.

3.1 Mode of Production

The dari (cotton carpet) making industry is an unorganized sector, in the sense that a majority of the employees are not the direct employees of the factories. There is virtually no contact between the employer and all of the employees involved. Another factor is that the dari (cotton carpet) making industry is basically a home based industry especially in the small villages; where sometimes the entire population is involved in different stages of the manufacturing in addition to their primary occupations.

The suppliers from Sitapur, Khairabad and Laharpur generally put up their own looms on their own land, or rent it. But, in the villages of the above mentioned tahsils, people generally set up two-three looms, or even one, if their financial condition is not very good. The weavers are paid on the basis of per square feet of woven dari (cotton carpet), the knotters are paid on the basis of number of knots and the workers involved in mounting threads on wheels
are paid on the basis of number of threads mounted. Therefore, it can be seen that most of the process, except the dyeing of the yarn and packing of dari (cotton carpet) are completed in the homes of the employees involved.

The yarn is the most important raw material involved in the production of dari (cotton carpet), and this is purchased usually from the mills of Panipat, Kanpur, Delhi, Maharashtra. The wooden frame, which is an essential part of the production is usually made by putting lengthwise and breadthwise the two wooden parts, or addas of the frame.

Both the factories and the household manufacturing units are interdependent upon each other for their work. The factories provide employment to the population residing in surrounding areas. Usually the operations run smoothly, except when workers start creating problems, which then hampers the overall production speed, and the orders cannot be completed on time.

Then there sometimes arises the problem with the ready stock producers, which happens when the orders cannot be met by the factory owners or employers, and they have to rely on the dari (cotton carpet) supplied by the independent ready stock producers, which come at a rate fixed by dari (cotton carpet) producers. The factory owners are bound to purchase these dari (cotton carpet) because they do not have other options. It is ultimately, these independent producers who make the most profit in such a situation, on the one hand because they can dictate their terms to the factory owners, and on the other hand, they can dictate their terms to the workers, who are in any case, needy for work. These independent producers manufacture their dari (cotton carpet) in the off-season time and make profit during the peak marketing
season. These producers come in handy to the factory owners in times of sheer crisis.

The dari (cotton carpet) made in Sitapur are sold in the Indian market as well as abroad. The two main types of dari (cotton carpet) manufactured in Sitapur are the cotton mats and the shahneel (a refined form of cotton) mats. There is only one manufacturer of woolen dari (cotton carpet), and that is the Passendipurwa block in the Laharpur tehsil.

3.2 Labour Force

Because dari (cotton carpet) making passes through various stages, both skilled and unskilled labours are involved in the production. Skilled workforce is important because only they can skillfully weave the dari (cotton carpet). Training for weavers starts after the age of fourteen, because an appropriate height or rather length of the leg of the trainee is required for the job. A trainee acquires skilled workmanship by the end of a year and a half. So, normally, people enter into apprenticeship at the ages of sixteen or seventeen.

The process of dyeing does not require expertise, because the ratio of colour is decided by the supervisor. Every factory has its own supervisor. The rest of the dari (cotton carpet) manufacturing process also does not require specialized skills, so it is handled by both skilled and unskilled force. Knotting requires trained skills and so does clipping, so this stage of dari (cotton carpet) production is handled by the child trainees usually. Initially Knottting and clipping are done under the supervision of elders because mistakes are liable to be the reason for loss on the part of the worker. Usually, an age group of 9-14 are involved in this stage of the production.
Collecting and packing of *dari* (cotton carpet) does not require skill, so this stage of production is taken over by people who are in dire need of employment but have no skills. There is no age limit required in this section. Here, work is done on the basis of daily wages.

Permanent employees of the industry are better financially than the temporary employees. They have direct link to the employees, and are benefited in a number of ways. They open bank accounts and save money from their salaries in them. They are even helped by the employers in times of crisis. But this is not so for the non-permanent workers involved with the factory. They get paid only when they work and receive no help from the employers. A majority of the skilled workers fall in to this category.

### 3.3 Production Process

The very first process involved in the *dari* (cotton carpet) making industry is the dyeing of the yarn. This is either done manually or by machines. After dyeing the yarn is dried in the shade. The prerequisite condition here, set by the exporters and importers both, is that the dye should be izole free chemicals, because izole is harmful to the skin, and may cause a number of skin problems. When the orders are placed, a stringent check is made of the chemicals used in the dye. If there is any shortcoming the orders are cancelled and a new yarn supplier is looked for.

After the dyeing, the yarn is mounted on the wheels and this work is usually handled by the women. After, the mounting the threads on wheels starts the weaving. The loom is made by the carpenter with the help of iron and wood attachments. Then on an unpaved floor, a deep area is dug and the loom is
installed in it, for firm placement. Then the loom is mounted with the yarn. The yarn that is fixed on to the loom rods is known as the reet, and that which is hand held is known as the peek. Weaving also involved the legs. Of the reet and the peek, one is vertically placed and the other is horizontally placed. By this the weavers can inculcate different designs into the dari (cotton carpet). Usually weavers weave upto a maximum length of 48” x 72” – 80” size dari (cotton carpet)s. If the order for a bigger dari (cotton carpet) is made, a bigger loom has to be constructed, and on such looms two workers are involved at a time on such looms, huge floor dari (cotton carpet) and bed dari (cotton carpet) are made.

After weaving, knotting and clipping are started. Here, mainly child labours are involved; sometimes they are assisted in this work by the women. After the knotting and clipping, the dari (cotton carpet) are classified according to their quality and are sent to their destinations.

3.4 Working Condition

Initial processes of the dari (cotton carpet) is an industry based process, while the rest takes place at home. Therefore, it is imperative to analyze the working conditions of both of these units.

Our field work visits show these home based manufacturing units reveal the existence of poor working conditions. The houses are small consisting of a couple of rooms, a verandah and a courtyard. The houses are made of mud and the verandah have thatched roofs or plastic sheets. Looms are often to be found in the front verandah. The weavers and other child labours sit on the floor. Knotting requires the weavers to be seated in the same position for 5-6 hours at
a stretch. This puts a constant strain upon the eyes, hands and legs of the weavers. As a result of this, most weavers are known to suffer from backbone pain.

Like weaving, knotting also requires utmost concentration. And since, children are largely employed in this section, they tend to suffer from an early age as compared to the adults. Knotting puts tremendous strain and pressure on the eyes and fingers, because a close contact, both of the eyes and the hands, are required with the threads. The children either sit on their haunches (a position of being sitting on the hips) or on jute mats placed on the mud floors. Even while clipping, the children tend to inhale dust and, therefore, suffer from breathing problems. Working conditions, on the whole, is unhygienic in these units. Also, these conditions cannot be improved because this is a predominantly unorganized unit and there are no permanent employees here. Work is only done to earn a livelihood, and little attention is paid to improve the working conditions. Primarily, the suppliers are concerned only with the delivery of the finished products, and this adversely affects the psychology of the workers, who become concerned only with delivering the finished products on time and collecting their wages. So, little or no effort is made to improve the working conditions in these home based units. Compared to these, factories are better organized as units. The factories are clean with a hygienic environment, facilities for fresh, drinking water, toilets and lunch rooms are available. Since, the only work done in the factories is the dyeing of the yarn and packing of dari (cotton carpet), in addition to official work, there is a small number of workers present in the factory premises, hence, the orderliness in the factory. The workers, in these factories, work in big halls with asbestos roofs
and with proper arrangement of lights and fans. Some employers give them a lunch break of two hours. So, the condition of the workers in the factories is much better than in the home based units.

Workers in the home based units are wholly responsible for their work, so they make an effort to make the least possible mistakes, because they know that they will be facing the losses entirely on their own. In factories, however, working conditions, though not lenient, are not so stringent as well. The employees do not get punished for minor mistakes, though they do get penalized for not completing their work on time. Either their wages may be cut down, or if their mistakes persist, the worker may be terminated from his services for inefficiency. When extra work has to be completed in a short time, the workers are provided with tea and food as well.

In the area in which the research study was carried out, the degree of exploitation was not as high as in the other places. The maximum punishment meted out was the cut in wages, and occasionally, if the loss was irrecoverable, the employee was terminated. However, no evidence of physical punishment or beating was found. Wages are fixed at rate of per piece at the beginning of the job, but fixed payment is made later on the basis of performance of the employee. The job is also turned into a permanent one in the factory.

3.5 Wages

There is no uniform payment mode and structure in the dari (cotton carpet) industry. The per piece rate system is the most widely used mode of payment. However, in the home based unit, the wage structure and system is different. The workers in factories receive a fixed salary at the end and a certain
amount of it is deducted and transferred into their account in the form of provident funds. In the home based unit, however, the wages are made on the basis of work done. A 12” x 24” dari (cotton carpet) gets a weaver a payment of Rs. 9; whereas 20” x 32” gets him Rs. 15. A 48” x 80” size fetches Rs. 45. A weaver usually weaves 2-3 dari (cotton carpet) of 12” x 24” and 20” x 32”.

When a dari (cotton carpet), bigger in size than there is made, two people share the wages as two people are involved in the making of such dari (cotton carpet).

The wage structure in case of knotting and clipping also follows the same pattern. 24 knots get 0.50 paisa, 48 knots get .75 paise and 96 knots fetch Rs. 1.00. If the knots are not properly done, the suppliers deduct the wages.

The per piece rate system also largely depends upon the bargaining done between the employee and employer. Due to it being an unorganized industry, the dari (cotton carpet) manufacturing businesses have no unions, which will be responsible for the welfare of the workers – wages, working conditions and working hours. Workers have to work on the conditions and terms put down by the suppliers. In cases of protests on wages, the worker is deprived of his work and has to suffer the condition of unemployment.

3.6 Working Hours

Most of the respondents of our field were full time employer. There was no reported case of unemployment. In factory based units, the work hours are 9 AM – 6 PM, with an hour break for lunch in the summer season; and 10 AM – 5 PM with half an hour lunch break in the winter. However, in home based units the working hours are not fixed. Normally, work starts early morning and
continues till evening, with a break for lunch. But, the lunch break is not a fixed time, and is adjusted according to the work. Because of absence of electricity, workers work in the day time mostly; and so summer work time is more prolonged than winter work time.

After the completion of the dari (cotton carpet), the suppliers, usually by himself, collects the finished dari (cotton carpet), but sometimes the workers return their completed work to the suppliers by themselves, then starts the official work in the factory. First, the factory owner checks each dari (cotton carpet) for its weaving, knotting, clipping etc., then classifies the dari (cotton carpet). After this, instructions are given for packing of these dari (cotton carpet).

### 3.7 Retailing of Dari (Cotton Carpet)

After manufacturing, the dari (cotton carpet) is taken by the factory owners to the market. Since, all products, after being manufactured, are brought to the market, it becomes imperative to define the term market, because it is, eventually the market which is the base of every economy. In our economy contracts are always made in a ‘market’. There are markets for labour, for entrepreneur services, capital, investments as well as mutual funds. Each of the above mentioned markets comprise of smaller, more specialized markets. To take an example, the labour market consists of numerous submarkets for each kind and grade of labour – labour for the steel industry, rubber industry and so on. A market exists when there are many suppliers of a particular good or service and many persons on organizations seeking that particular good or service (Johnson, 1966).
A number of companies are engaged in the *dari* (cotton carpet) manufacturing in Sitapur district. The pioneers were the Makka Miyan Hafiz Wajid Ali, which are now no longer existent. The leading manufacturer today, are Eastern *Dari* (cotton carpet), Haji Jalees, Liyaqat Ahmad, Afaque Ajhmad, Maulana Riazuddin, Hafiz Akvari, Ayaz Ahmad, Ilyas Ahmad and Ikram Ahmad. The factories are mainly situated in and around Sitapur, Khairabad and Laharpur.

Every Saturday, Monday and Wednesday, *dari* (cotton carpet) manufacturers both from these renowned firms and small scale business men gather at the city centre, i.e. GREEkganj in Sitapur and sell their goods in the Dari Mandi (*dari* (cotton carpet) market) situated there. On other week days, the yarn agents come with their yarn samples.

As Sitapur is a large scale manufacturer of cotton mats, therefore business men and dealers not only come in from Sitapur and its surrounding districts, but also from as far as Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Kashmir. They come on the market days, go through the samples available and place orders for samples and designs which are then sent by the local businessmen, manufacturers to dealers to their addresses by rail or roadways. Orders which are placed from districts adjoining Sitapur are taken away on the same day by suitable conveyance means. As there are a large variety of *dari* (cotton carpet) to choose from in the *dari* (cotton carpet) market, every customer selects according to his requirements. Some businessmen also purchased *dari* (cotton carpet) from the factories if they were not able to come on market days. However, export quality *dari* (cotton carpet) are not sold in
this market, because, they are of high quality and very finely manufactured, and therefore costlier and this makes them less saleable in the Indian market. Also manufacturers pay special attention to the details of manufacturing of these dari (cotton carpet), because the slightest errors renders entire orders to be cancelled.

The firms which manufacture these dari (cotton carpet) do not have direct contacts with the exporters. Their link to these exporters are through businessmen or dealers based in Delhi or Panipat. Once the dari (cotton carpet) are finished in Sitapur, they are transported by the factory owners to Delhi or Panipat from where they are exported.

The only firm in Sitapur, which is acknowledged at the international as well as the national level is that of Haji Rafeeq Ansari. Also, the uniqueness of this firm lies in the fact that it is the only one of its kind which has direct client – manufacturer relationship with the exporters. Germany, United Kingdom and France are a few of the countries with which this firm has direct market service relationships. Therefore, owing to its popularity and unique position, Haji Rafeeq Ansari contribute to the export of 40 per cent of all export quality dari (cotton carpet) manufactured in Sitapur. The sale of all its dari (cotton carpet) give this firm a turnover of 25 -30 crores annually. It has a branch office in Delhi, run by a family member. It is here that export orders are dealt with. The exporters provide sample designs to this office which is then readied and brought for checking. After the order is passed it is manufactured and then supplied by aeroplanes to the required destinations
Chapter 4

Socio-Economic Profile of the Factory Owners and Child Labour