

# Traditional skilling - A road map for future

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## Abstract

Traditional skilling has been a neglected area from the livelihood perspective. The existing structure in the state of Arunachal Pradesh has addressed only a part of skilling process of handloom and handicrafts. The other areas of skilling needed in construction, farming etc. have not been tried out or there an attempt to create an environment of demand for these articles. This paper is an attempt to address a road map for creating an environment of demand for traditional articles. This will encourage demand for traditional skills. Once the demand is created for these services, youths will be encouraged to go for gainful traditional skills.

**Keywords:** Traditional Skilling, Demand, Environment

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“I am anxious that they should advance, but I am even more anxious that they should not lose their artistry and joy in life and the culture that distinguishes them in many ways”

Jawaharlal Nehru

## INTRODUCTION

The tribal societies of Arunachal Pradesh had developed the technology available with them base on the natural resources near their surroundings and villages. Some of them were sourced from the neighboring tribes through barter system. Many a time the skills involved in making these articles were not shared with other tribes as these were the monopolies of those particular tribes which was trading it. The transactional relationships between tribes were base on the exclusive point of men or women from the tribes. These transactional relationships were also kept between families of clans from different tribes. These contacted tribal families played the role of middle man in their societies to procure articles from other tribes. These chains played the role of transfer of materials and articles of daily use or ceremonial use in the closed tribal societies in Arunachal Pradesh. Over the time, the exchanges of articles of daily and ceremonial use were also exchanged in the border huts where people from different parts of the land came for trade. With the change in living styles of the tribal people, these articles of daily use were substituted by industrially produced articles sourced from the plain areas. Many a time these articles were durable in nature but inorganic in content. With the changing life style of an agrarian joint family system of living to modern rent seeking and job seeking society, the traditional skills involved in the manufacturing of articles have been affected by want of patronage.

## **OBJECTIVES**

This paper is an attempt to suggest a road map for traditional skills involved in manufacturing of articles in the changed economic conditions of the tribal people living in Arunachal Pradesh.

## **TRADITIONAL SKILL**

Traditional skill means skill set required to bring out traditional handicrafts, handlooms and other construction activities. Traditional skills were necessary part of the labour available in the tribal society that existed in the past. Be it construction of house or agriculture, exchange of labour was a way of carrying out works in the villages. Traditional skills added productivity in the labour put in by the community. So there was a mechanism of constant exchange of traditional skill technology amongst the members at the time of community house building, agriculture, hunting or making cloths. The beauty and elegancy of the output was appreciated by the community members and others when they were exchanged. There was a constant demand for these articles and in many cases these were used a medium of exchange.

Skilling these traditional arts were part of life in the villages. These were learned in the community dormitory, building of houses, farming, during religious festivals or as individual to individual. The motivation of learning these arts were because of the demand that existed in the society. There are instants cases of people achieving prosperity in tribal senses due to skill full works of their handicrafts. They were community leaders and good tradesmen in their community. With the integration of tribal society with modern society, many of the traditional articles were replaced by industrially produced articles. The demand for such goods faded away.

Government of Arunachal Pradesh, though its Industries Department started handicraft centers at various districts. The objective of these centers was to provide training and encourage the trainees to make a livelihood out of the traditional skill. But this has not brought in any much perceptible change in the living standards of the trainees in terms of their earnings or livelihood. The main reasons may not be due to their inefficiency but mainly of external factors. The environment of demand for these traditional skills were not created or conceived by the policy makers in framing a holistic approach to skilling these people and making them relevant to the market forces.

The Industries Department has been bifurcated into Industries Department and Skill Development & Employment Generation. But this has not addressed the issue of livelihood of those people perusing traditional skill. More over employment generation and skill development provided by the new department does not address the issue of traditional skill as the objective of skilling the youths in these schemes are oriented towards demand from the industries. It has also been observed that many of the youths engaged in these conventional trainings come back to the state where there are fewer job opportunities for them. Therefore the need of traditional skilling and its road map is needed for the state to engage its young population into economic activities closed to their home.

## **CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT**

Focus of the industries department was in providing training into handicraft and textile works of the State. There is no policy existing in the state for other traditional skilling like house building or bridge building etc. These skills have survived the time on need based. Many of these skills will die a natural death as modern and efficient ways of doing things have replaced them. An also traditional architect and design have been replaced by conventional designs.

There is need to identify the traditional skills which has the potential to create a livelihood for the people close to their homes. For this an environment of demand for these traditional skills has to be created. Demand can come only when these are converged with the tourism policy of the State. As tourism grows there will be a demand for traditional feel of the place. Currently tourism and industries departments have no mechanism in this regards. The idea of heritage villages has come up but these are of ad hoc basis. Heritage villages should be identified in different parts of the States and they should be made a part of tourism circuits approved by the government. The department of Research, Art & Culture, Industries, Agriculture, Rural Development and Tourism should carry out the process of identification, propagation and marketing of traditional life style into a comprehensive tourism policy of the state. This will create an enabling factor demand of traditional skills.

Sustaining the traditional skills is depended on the availability of raw materials. Many of these are found in the natural forests of the State. Identification of these species and protection and exploitation of them in a sustainable way may be carried out by Environment & Forest department. Engagement of this department is very crucial in the success of this

## **IDENTIFICATION OF SKILL AREAS FOR LIVELIHOODS**

Once the enabling environments for these traditional skills are identified and a policy framework is placed. The next step is to carry out skill audit in terms of availability of manpower to propagate the traditional skill in the state. There are craft centers available in the state, which can be roped in to service these objectives of livelihood creation.

The industrial training institutes should also have training module on traditional building of houses, bridges etc. Different tribes have different traditional designs, training institutes should be divided into clusters and they may service the needs of the area under their influences. There should be a policy of encouraging traditional housing inspired designs in public spaces. These institutes should provide technical supports in traditional skill areas of constructions. School children in the state should have classes on traditional crafts. They may be encouraged to acquire traditional skill in making articles and handlooms.

## **MOVING AHEAD**

The success of these efforts will only be sustainable if they provide a decent livelihood to the masses involved in these traditional activities. This is where the importance of marketing

through Tourism department comes into play. Currently the focus is mainly on festivals and places. Integration of traditional products as souvenir, homestay in traditional homes, participation in house construction, farming, festivals will create demand for these traditional articles, ware etc. which will create a demand for traditional skills there by engaging people in economic activities. The state's tourism policy has to incorporate one of the objectives as creating an environment for demand of traditional arts.

## CONCLUSION

Traditional skilling will need a holistic plan involving various government machineries planning within their own capacities but converging with the overall ecosystem of sustaining the traditional arts. Exchange of ideas and training amongst the existing departments engaged in various activities which are related to promotion of traditional arts has to be done to ensure the efforts are put in a coordinated way. Conducive environment will encourage youths to engage in gainful traditional skill. This will solve a large problem of unemployment in the state who does not want to move out of the state for works.

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