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"From Ritual to Retail: The Reorganisation of Appliqué Production at Pipili, Odisha"

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Abstract:

In recent years, literature on global labour transformation has expanded significantly, illustrating the various ways it shapes the lives of individuals across the world. However, much of this scholarship focuses on changes primarily related to industrialised commodity production and its impact on labour, often neglecting the shifts in labour use patterns within rural craft economies that are increasingly integrated into urban and global tourist markets. Drawing on empirical data from Pipili, a craft village situated in the Indian state of Odisha, this paper examines how global norms are reshaping artisanal production organisations in rural areas, particularly through the commodification of cultural goods. Specifically, it focuses on the traditional appliqué crafts of Pipili, which were once produced primarily for religious purposes but are now being reoriented to align with emerging market trends.

Key Words: *Globalisation, artisans, Pipili, Craft, Production, Appliqué*

Introduction:

A growing body of empirical research has documented labour transformation in the era of globalisation, particularly under late capitalism. Much of this scholarship has focused on the reorganisation of work within industrial production systems. However, limited attention has been given to artisanal production systems, which continue to support a significant portion of the population in the rural areas of many Third World countries. This article seeks to explore patterns of labour

organisation within one of India's prominent artisanal industries, which has become an integral part of the expanding global craft economy.To a large extent, the global and urban interconnectedness of this rural craft economy can be seen as a by-product of the series of socio-economic and political changes in India following the adoption of liberalisation policies. Like many indebted nations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, India was compelled by global financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to adopt neoliberal "free market" reforms in response to its economic crisis. Initiated in the 1990s, these reforms led to significant economic shifts, including the removal of restrictions on foreign investment and the restructuring of financial sectors.

The broader social and cultural impacts of these economic transformations became more apparent only after two or more decades, most notably in the changing patterns of consumption. The shift from tap water to bottled mineral water, from herbal remedies to international cosmetic brands, from local shops to department stores and shopping malls, and from Doordarshan to 24×7 entertainment channels, all signal a profound transformation in everyday life. In this context, scholars have pointed to the emergence of a new Indian middle class driven by consumption. As Ganguly-Scrase and Scrase (2009) observed:

Economic liberalization has resulted in massively expanded, homogeneous mass of wealthy, Indian middle classes who have been the principal beneficiaries of liberalization, profiting immensely from the new opportunities for education, jobs and *consumption*. Liberalization is a mythical 'El Dorado', where new opportunities abound and fortunes are to be made, a myth largely promulgated by the *commercial media*, private enterprise and politicians alike. (Emphasis added)

The intense penetration of capitalist markets through media institutions has further facilitated the adaptation to changing lifestyle values, desires, and aspirations in the post-liberalisation era (Featherstone, 1991). Consumers have moved beyond traditional spending habits focused on essentials such as food, groceries, and clothing. Instead, they increasingly seek lifestyle commodities that promise greater quality, taste, and aspirational value. Over the years following India's economic liberalisation, commodities that are new, trendy, and fashionable have gained prominence and cultural legitimacy. Chaudhuri (2001) argues that the new Indian consumer is global and cosmopolitan, and their consumption patterns reflect a shift from the "desi" to the "ethnic," and eventually to the "branded shelf." This transition marks a broader shift in fashion and

identity, closely tied to global circuits of exchange and aspiration. These consumers are increasingly seen as “teleological individuals” (Simmel, 1904), always experimenting, restlessly striving, and guided by their personal convictions.

This changing consumer ideology, characteristic of the late phase of capitalist development, has profoundly shaped the reproduction of popular arts and crafts, influencing how their production is organised in the contemporary context. Scholars have documented the reorganisation of work processes in response to these new consumer sentiments (Nakatani, 2001, Hendrickson,1996, Chibnik & Scrase,2005).

The appliqué craft industry, examined in this article as a case study, exemplifies this transformationOnce confined to a small locality and regarded as “indigenous” or “desi,” Pipili’s appliqué craft has been rebranded as “ethnic” in the global marketplace, aligning with the postmodern commodification of culture. Craft makers are now increasingly altering their design aesthetics and production strategies to suit consumer preferences. Since the late 1990s, they have experienced a growing demand for their work, which now spans religious, decorative, and utilitarian items. These crafts have become part of the expanding trade in “ethnic and tourist arts” (Graburn, 1976), signalling the ongoing commercialisation of craft production in Pipili’s appliqué industry.

Appliqué crafts, featuring both traditional and contemporary motifs, now appear on large hoardings, tourist pamphlets, and are marketed through catalogues and online platforms. These crafts have also become the subject of numerous exhibitions, television programmes, newspaper articles, and websites in recent years. The contemporary consumers of these crafts differ significantly from traditional patrons—such as elites, temples, monasteries, or the rural masses. Today’s consumers are largely urban-based and exhibit a distinct preference for 'ethnic' products.

Tourist craft sales exemplify the monetised yet culturally rooted exchanges that lend value to these goods, which are often purchased as tokens of nostalgia or to symbolically reconnect with traditional experiences. Tourists are frequently encouraged to visit craft villages, take photographs, and are often presented with brochures or business cards that highlight the artisans' work. Reflecting on shifting global market trends in crafts, Nash (1993:10) observed:

> Yet artisans are not unaffected by the market forces that inspire much of their production. Feedback, based on sales or promotional agents, regarding the

popularity of certain items or designs inevitably influences future production. This can be positive or negative depending on the channels of communication

Understanding these transformative processes offers insight into how the commercialisation of artisan production mediates the binary between gift-giving and commodified exchange, two spheres often framed as oppositional. Drawing on from empirical study of the appliqué industry at Pipili, this article argues that the twin forces of globalisation and economic liberalisation have disrupted traditional consumption patterns and ways of engaging with handcrafted goods. The ongoing flexibilization of the Indian economy in the post-liberalisation era has enabled rural craft industries to adopt global production norms and carve out niche markets in the contemporary age. As craft makers in Pipili increasingly move towards a commercialised market economy, they find it necessary to reorganise their production processes, particularly in terms of labour hiring practices, investment in tools and technologies, and the integration of new sources of raw materials. These emerging modes of capital and labour organisation reflect the features of commodity production. The proliferation of capitalist labour forms, technological adoption, and the rise of flexible production norms in the appliqué industry would not have been possible without the support of the state. The state's growing emphasis on poverty alleviation and rural development has significantly encouraged the growth of craft production in rural areas. Artisanal industries are now seen as possessing strong 'economies of scope' with the potential to generate large-scale employment. As a result, the state has actively promoted craft-based livelihoods through initiatives such as credit facilities, insurance and health coverage, tourism development policies, and expanded craft marketing channels. These policy interventions have played a crucial role in reshaping the organisation of artisanal production in Pipili.

Appliqué crafts and craft makers of Pipili

This section provides an account of appliqué crafts and the communities engaged in their production. The term *appliqué* is derived from French and refers to a decorative art technique (Mohanty, 1980). It involves superimposing patches of colourful fabric in various shapes and sizes onto a base fabric, stitched together in intricate patterns. Thus, appliqué is not merely a process of attaching patches, but a creative practice that results in aesthetically rich designs on a variety of craft items. The history of appliqué in Odisha can be traced back to the medieval period (Pattnaik, 1993). It is widely believed that the craft evolved under royal patronage to meet the religious requirements of Lord Jagannath. According to legends and folk narratives, appliqué items were

originally created to serve the Jagannath temple in Puri—used primarily to adorn the three principal deities: Shri Jagannath, Balabhadra, and Subhadra, as well as other deities in the temple surroundings.

These crafts also attracted the attention of royalty and nobility, including Maharajas, Sultans, Nawabs, Zamindars, wealthy merchants, and other connoisseurs of art and architecture. Appliqué works were highly valued for decorating royal courts, ceremonial spaces, and religious festivals. Historical records indicate that Pipili's appliqué products were once dispatched to distant places such as Nepal, Bhutan, Bihar, and Rajasthan.

Traditionally, artisans produced items like *Batua* (purse), *Kothali* (pouch), *Pasa-Pali* (dice mats), *Pataka* (flags), *Chhati* (umbrella-shaped canopies), *Chandua* (temple decorations), *Alata* (hand fan), and *Trasa* (banners), with distinct uses for the local market and temple rituals. The most prominent example of this tradition is seen in the brightly coloured cloth covers of the three chariots used during the *Rath Yatra* (Car Festival), where the deities are carried annually through the streets of Puri.

During this festival, appliquéd canopies are symbolically used to protect the deities from extreme weather. The colour schemes of the chariots are predesignated and cannot be altered: Balabhadra's chariot, *Taladhwaja*, is draped in green and red; Subhadra's *Padmadhwaja* or *Darpadalana* is covered in red and black; and Jagannath's *Nandighosha* is adorned with red and yellow. This colour tradition has been maintained for generations. Devotees also believe that offering flags and banners, often sourced from Pipili, secures the blessings of Lord Jagannath. Traditionally, red, yellow, and black fabrics are used in banner-making, and many pilgrims purchase these items on their journey to Puri.

The *Darji* caste is historically recognised as the pioneer of appliqué craft in Odisha, with the largest concentration found in Pipili, a block within the Puri district. While *Darjis* across India are generally associated with a broader religious identity, the Darjis of Pipili identify as Hindus. Their caste origin myths and occupational history further reinforce this religious affiliation. The *Odisha District Gazetteers: Puri* offers a detailed ethnographic account of this community, noting their unique cultural and religious practices in relation to their craft.

> Originally tailoring profession was a monopoly of the Muslims. The *Darji* caste in Odisha is mainly divided into two groups, v.i.z., *Kayastha* and *Sudra.* The former consists of the immigrants from Bengal who have taken

> to sewing and have gradually crystallized into a separate endogamous group. The *Sudra Darji* appears to be recruited from various castes. They rank higher than the Kayastha *Darji* and water is accepted by the higher castes from them. The usual surname of the *Darji*s is Mahapatra, Mohanty and Das(Senapati ,1977).

The Darji caste communities are dispersed throughout many regions of Odisha; however, in Pipili, they specifically form part of the *Shudra* varna. Local historians suggest that the Darjis were originally settled in Pipili by the ruling king, who appointed them to provide services to the Jagannath temple. In return for their contributions, the community was granted a share in the temple's daily ritual offerings.

Today, not all Darji families are directly involved in the traditional *Darji Seva* rendered to the Jagannath temple in Puri. Instead, many now produce crafts for the commercial market, although a few of their caste members remain engaged in crafting for religious ceremonies and reside closer to the temple. These artisans often emphasize their religious connection to the temple, claiming that their relatives still supply items to the Jagannath temple. This strategic invocation of traditional affiliation helps position their crafts as authentic and sacred in the eyes of buyers, thereby enhancing their market value.

Some artisans even state that, when necessary, they assist their caste kin near Puri by supplying craft items for temple use. The commercial success of appliqué crafts has encouraged innovation and experimentation with new designs. Artisans are increasingly specialising in unique, unconventional product lines. Consequently, modern appliqué items now far outnumber the older religious ones such as *Chhati*, *Trasa*, *Adheni*, *Alata*, and *Batua*. Today, craft makers produce a wide range of items for both functional and decorative purposes, including wall hangings, bed covers, sofa covers, garden umbrellas, bags, letter holders, folders, and dress materials.

Traditionally, the appliqué craft industry was based on household production aimed at subsistence. Craft workers either owned their means of production or procured raw materials from local markets. Tools such as scissors and needles were simple and locally sourced. The main raw material, hand-spun cloth known as *khaddar*, was typically acquired from local weaving communities. Additional materials, like wooden frames for umbrellas and stands, were provided by local carpenters. Production was family-centric, with domestic and kinship networks managing the entire process.

However, local craft organisations in Pipili have undergone significant changes, resulting in wide-ranging consequences for the industry. These transformations must be situated within broader global capitalist shifts. Capitalist development is often equated with the transition from household-based production to mechanised, large-scale manufacturing. Yet, the evolution of capitalist production is not always linear or uniform across sectors.

David Harvey (1990) argues that since the 1970s, capitalism has undergone radical changes, with the economic motor shifting from massive industrial complexes to smaller and medium-sized production outfits. These smaller units either meet the demands of corporate subcontracting or respond directly to consumer markets. As Harvey (1990:155) puts it, "Economies of scope have beaten out economies of scale." In this context, micro and small entrepreneurs increasingly target niche markets. Cooperatives, small businesses, and individual artisans now design their products to appeal to specific consumer groups. As a result, information on consumer tastes and fashion trends has become essential—even for the smallest producers, including peasant communities (Vergas-Cetina 1999).

This transformation is accompanied by the rise of new strategies and methods of production. Systems like "putting-out"—where pieceworkers produce goods at home using materials supplied by merchants—have become prevalent (Cook and Binford 1990; Littlefield 1979). These flexible systems allow artisans to adapt to shifting market demands. While much of the existing scholarship has focused on industrial production, less attention has been given to small-scale rural artisanal industries that produce for global consumers. This section aims to highlight the case of Odisha's appliqué craft workers to illustrate how they operate under the broader logic of flexible accumulation and neoliberal political economy.

Flexible craft production at Pipili

The shift of appliqué production towards commercialisation has significantly transformed the organisation of its production processes. With the rise in craft demand during the 1990s, both traditional and non-traditional craft makers found it necessary to hire casual labourers to fulfil large orders. The conventional model of relying solely on family labour proved inadequate to meet the needs of an expanding consumer market. As a result, household spaces traditionally used for craft-making gradually evolved into full-fledged workshops. Today, it is not uncommon to find artisans renting external premises to operate their workshops more efficiently.

The growing demand for appliqué crafts also led many artisans to adopt new technologies and explore alternative sources of raw materials in order to accelerate production. However, some continued to produce within the household framework, treating craft-making as a supplementary income source without significantly altering their traditional methods.

This evolving landscape reflects the emergence of a simplified model of commodity production within the appliqué craft industry. As Friedman (1978) notes:

> Capitalist production, in the classical sense used here, involves two classes, one which owns the means of production and another which labours; the two are connected through the wage relation, in which an entrepreneur purchases labour power from others in order to set in motion his means of production. Household production involves only one class, which both owns the means of production and provides the labour power to set them in motion; relations of production within the enterprise are based not on the wage contract, but on kinship. *When household production is specialized and competitive, and means of production and subsistence must be purchased, it is simple commodity production* (Emphasis added).

This production process marks a clear departure from the traditional, more subsistence-oriented mode of production. In the earlier organisation of the appliqué industry, craft-making activities were confined within households, relying on basic tools such as needles, threads, and scissors. The work structure reflected a rudimentary use of techniques and labour, rooted in familial and kinship networks.

However, as craft makers gradually experienced an increase in consumer demand, they began to introduce incremental changes in organisational patterns, such as the occasional hiring of labour and the use of simple mechanical tools. The more substantial organisational restructuring of the craft industry, in response to the rising export and tourist markets of the 1990s, has become increasingly evident in recent decades.

Flexible production has emerged as a key strategy in this transformed landscape, particularly in the way the craft industry is now oriented towards global markets. The contemporary appliqué sector exhibits a diverse organisational structure, where both household-based and workshop-based modes of production coexist. Nevertheless, the

growing dominance of workshop production represents a significant shift, especially in terms of labour hiring practices.

Today, small, medium, and large-scale production units operate simultaneously in Pipili. The existence of this spectrum of production workshops demonstrates the industry's resilience and adaptability in an era where commercial motives increasingly shape craft production.

Changing labour organisation patterns

Traditionally, the labour organisation of the craft industry relied heavily on unpaid domestic labour, where all members of the household—including women and children—were engaged in the craft-making process. In the contemporary context, however, the industry has incorporated wage labour alongside unpaid household labour to cater to a highly competitive, commercially driven market.

Many artisans I met in Pipili primarily produce crafts in workshops to meet the growing consumer demand. A workshop typically refers to a room or space that functions as a worksite, where labourers are employed either on a monthly salary or a task-based payment system. Most workshops are owned by the artisans themselves and are operated within their household premises, with wage workers hired either part-time or on a piece-rate basis. However, rented workshop premises are not uncommon in Pipili. These workshops often serve dual purposes—not only as production spaces but also as storage facilities for raw materials and finished products.

Workshop sizes vary widely, from very small units with just two or three temporary workers to larger operations employing more than twenty workers, and sometimes engaging hundreds or even thousands of piece-rate workers. In the appliqué industry, most crafts are produced on a made-to-order basis, reducing entrepreneurial risk compared to other export-oriented businesses. Larger production units typically receive bulk orders from buyers, and the volume of such orders often depends on the artisan's reputation and credibility. Darji and Muslim artisans, in particular, have long-standing recognition for their craft-making skills among national and international buyers.

Large artisan-entrepreneurs often travel to other regions to procure raw materials at lower prices from wholesalers, as local market rates tend to be higher. They resort to local shops in Cuttack, Bhubaneswar, or Puri only during emergencies. In contrast, smaller entrepreneurs usually buy materials through retailers, particularly in Cuttack—

the largest wholesale market in coastal Odisha. Previously, wholesalers supplied fabric throughout the year, but with fluctuating market demand, artisans now purchase materials as per their current needs. The use of diverse types of fabric in appliqué production is a recent phenomenon, reflecting the industry's diversification in design and product range to suit changing consumer preferences.

New technologies have also been introduced to produce a wider variety of crafts in less time. Stitching and cutting machines are widely used, as traditional hand stitching and cutting are both time-consuming and costly. For example, in manufacturing appliqué bags, machine stitching is necessary to handle thick, coarse fabrics efficiently and with less manual effort. This shift has necessitated the recruitment of labour with specific technical skills. However, the increased use of machines has not diminished the need for manual labour, as most artistic elements are still completed by hand.

The expansion of market demand has led to a growing need for both daily wage and piece-rate labour in the industry. Nonetheless, the labour hiring process is far from uniform across the sector; rather, it exhibits significant variability depending on the scale of production, type of products, and the strategies adopted by individual entrepreneurs.

The big artisan entrepreneurs employ both full-time and part-time workers on a wage basis. Full-time wage-earning workers, much like those in other production units, typically work around eight hours per day in the appliqué workshops. Monthly wages vary depending on workers' skill levels and the volume of work completed within a given period. Workers operating sewing machines earn more compared to those engaged in hand stitching, as their technical skills are considered of higher value. Similarly, workers responsible for cutting tasks generally receive higher wages than those limited to hand stitching. However, the most lucrative wages are reserved for those with multitasking abilities. Workers who can perform multiple tasks—such as cutting, tailoring, and selling—tend to earn significantly more than their counterparts who specialize in only one activity, regardless of the number of hours spent working.

Temporary workers are hired during specific periods to meet seasonal demand spikes. Employing full-time hand stitching workers is often considered uneconomical due to the seasonal nature of demand in the craft industry. As noted earlier, craft production is primarily driven by advance orders, with demand peaking during festive seasons like Christmas and Diwali. To adapt to this fluctuating market, flexible labour arrangements have become common. The "putting-out" system is widely used, wherein large artisans

subcontract work to nearby areas during peak demand seasons. It is generally easy to find part-time hand stitching or machine stitching workers in rural areas like Pipili due to prevailing conditions of poverty and low literacy.

In such an environment, appliqué craft making has emerged as a viable source of supplementary income, especially for women. Many view stitching as an opportunity to support their households financially. This supports the prevalence of the putting-out system in Pipili. Under this system, employers "put out" raw materials to home-based workers, who then return the finished products in exchange for payment. This approach stands in contrast to production based solely within household units.

The putting-out method is especially relevant when fabrics have already been shaped through machine stitching and require decorative enhancements—such as the hand-stitched appliqué motifs. However, remuneration in this system is very low. Many piece-rate workers report being paid as little as 20 to 60 paisa for stitching a small motif. Although hiring piece-rate workers has become integral to the production system, artisans admit they typically engage these workers only during peak tourist seasons, particularly from November to February. These months coincide with high tourist inflows to the Golden Triangle region and are marked by various religious and cultural festivities, leading to increased demand for craft products.

Manufacturers often express reluctance to employ weavers on a permanent basis for three main reasons: limited workspace, the financial burden of paying higher wages to in-house weavers, and logistical inefficiencies. On the other hand, many workers—especially women—prefer not to take on full-time employment in workshops. They cite their inability to balance household responsibilities with fixed working hours, as domestic duties are viewed as their primary obligation. Many women view craft work as a natural extension of their domestic roles—such as stitching and embroidery—which aligns with their traditional skill sets and social expectations.

This ideology plays a crucial role in shaping the self-perception of women artisans in the appliqué industry. For instance, Bimala, a resident of Ward No. 6 who stitches *kanguara* or *mudias* at home, remarked that the nature of the work allows it to be performed alongside other household chores. Yet, she is hesitant to identify herself as a "worker." As she said:

> "I am not a *Chandua* karigar; the people from Darji Sahi make *Chanduas*. I just stitch some *kanguras* to earn a little extra money from home. My household

> responsibilities are many, and I do not have the time to do such work regularly. My brother knows a *karigar* at Pipili bazaar who sells craft pieces to local retail shops in the craft village."

Many like Bimala work for small or large artisans on a piece-rate basis, yet do not identify themselves as workers or *karigars*.

The process of subcontracting and the associated labour arrangements vary significantly from workshop to workshop. Smaller workshops subcontract less work, whereas relatively larger units outsource more tasks and hire more workers regularly to meet their production demands. Workers engaged in this way are locally referred to as *karigars*. The relationship between *karigars* and commission agents or manufacturers is typically contractual. Workers often stop working for one manufacturer and join another in the same locality if they are offered higher wages or if they feel mistreated by their current employer.

Capitalist penetration into production processes is often accompanied by gendered forms of discrimination. One such manifestation is the feminisation of the labour force, coupled with wage disparities. The appliqué industry employs nearly 80 per cent women workers, most of whom are engaged on a piece-rate basis. In this industry, skilled status is largely reserved for men, particularly those who perform the crucial task of cutting. Workers who operate sewing machines are considered semi-skilled, while piece-rate workers—often women—are regarded as unskilled.

Women are mostly preferred for hemming work, which enhances the aesthetic appeal of the crafts. However, this labour is poorly compensated despite the considerable time and effort involved. Hand stitching, which is typically done by women, is considered less important than machine stitching. Male workers, on the other hand, often perform multiple roles, such as cutting, stitching, and marketing. As a result, they receive higher wages compared to their female counterparts.

Mr. Nayak, a workshop owner in Pipili, explained:

> “Women cannot perform cutting tasks. The scissors used for cutting are very heavy, and the work requires significant physical strength. Therefore, only men are able to carry out cutting efficiently. Women are more suited for hand stitching.”

The average salary for a multitasking worker (involved in both cutting and machine stitching) ranges from ₹3,000 to ₹5,000 per month. Prafulla, an 18-year-old boy who works in Mr. Nayak's workshop, shared:

> "I am a boy, and that's why I have to earn more than the girls—I have to manage everything at home, after all. I can't survive on the meagre wages that the girls are getting. When I first started working in this sector, I used to earn only ₹500 per month by doing odd jobs like folding cloth, preparing iron frames (used for making wall hangings), and sorting different coloured fabrics. I was very young then, and ₹500 was enough for me at the time. But now I have to take care of my entire family. So, I decided to learn all the skills required to make the craft. I learned fabric cutting by working under different cutting masters. Now, since I can do both cutting and stitching, I earn more—around ₹2,500 per month."

However, many employers believe that girls can earn equal wages if they perform equally well as boys. Ranu, an artisan worker at Sakuntala's workshop located near Bhubaneswar, told me how her sister used to earn as much as ₹6,000 per month while working in her employer's workshop before marriage. She had to leave the job afterwards due to the pressure of household responsibilities.

Interestingly, although girls generally receive less pay than their male counterparts, they rarely express their dissatisfaction directly to the employer. Most often, their form of protest is to quietly quit the job, since finding another employer or starting their own small workshop is not considered difficult.

In the production of appliqué work, a large workshop may employ anywhere from 700 to 1,000 piece-rate workers, while smaller workshops may engage around 200. Most piece-rate workers are hired for hand stitching. However, large workshops also employ temporary workers. Although housing facilities are not extended to all categories of workers, it is not uncommon for employers to provide accommodation to unmarried girls who work full-time in their workshops. Typically, these accommodations are part of the employer's household premises. Extra workers are hired during high-demand seasons.

Employers are usually very attentive to the needs of these unmarried girls, considering them the backbone of their business. The salaries of workers staying in these hostel-cum-workshops vary widely, as there is no standard pay structure for temporary workers. Nor are there fixed working hours—employers allow workers the freedom to

earn as much as they can, depending on how much time and effort they put into the work.

One example is Dipa, whom I met through an informal connection while looking for domestic help in Delhi. While talking to Dipa, a 22-year-old temporary worker from Pipili, she shared:

> "I worked in Pipili for three years along with some friends. I first got the job offer through one of them who told me about the work she was doing. My employer was a Muslim artisan and a very kind person. He took good care of us. I even wanted to invite him and his wife to my uncle's wedding, but my parents didn't allow it because he is a Muslim. Still, I will invite him to my wedding. We used to live in one of the three residential units he owns in Pipili Bazaar. He gave us a room to share and also provided good food. Out of respect for our Hindu beliefs, he served us on separate utensils. During their festivals, they would lock the kitchen while preparing beef so the smell wouldn't disturb us. He paid all of us equally, regardless of who worked more or less. So, we focused on completing the stitching tasks as a team rather than worrying about whose responsibility it was. I was really happy there, surrounded by like-minded girls—we laughed, chatted, and had fun. But I had to quit the job because my parents did not want me to continue working in a Muslim household."

In another interview, Gita, a temporary worker at a Pipili workshop, said:

> "The *Chandua* making work has allowed us to earn. We are not educated like you, ma'am, so we can't expect government jobs with good salaries. But by working here, we can at least manage our own expenses. The more hours you put in, the better your income. One can earn anywhere from ₹1,200 to ₹5,000 or ₹6,000 per month in a workshop. Though it's still very little for me, since I have to support my entire family after my father passed away, who else will offer more to someone like me who is uneducated?"

The existence of large workshops and a hired labour force has, to a great extent, enabled artisans to adopt diverse entrepreneurial strategies in recent years. This shift reflects a deliberate move by local artisans to manage their expanding businesses. The style of entrepreneurial activity, however, varies from one manufacturer to another, depending on the mode of organisation and the size of the production unit. As the scale of manufacturing units increases, operations become more systematic and sophisticated.

The workshop mode of production has enabled artisans to produce large quantities of diverse appliqué items to meet the demands of a growing export and tourist market.

Although traces of hired labour existed prior to the liberalisation of the economy, the use of paid labour was not as widespread. Traditional craft makers typically hired paid workers only occasionally, particularly during festive seasons when they received bulk orders for religious or ceremonial crafts. However, as the market expanded to cater to a more diverse and global consumer base, the industry underwent a significant organisational transformation. This brought about notable changes in both work organisation and labour processes.

Thus, contemporary appliqué production does not merely represent a continuation of past practices; instead, it has been fundamentally reshaped by new market forces in the era of globalisation.

In addition to piece-rate labour, the industry continues to rely on unpaid family labour. This labour pattern, rooted in tradition, has proven effective even in the current context. Small households, not only in Pipili but also in the surrounding areas, still engage in craft production either on a piece-rate basis or through self-employment by involving domestic labour. In such households, all members—including children, women, and the elderly—often participate in craft making. Some families engage in this work year-round, while others participate seasonally, particularly during busy or festive periods when large orders are received. The use of piece-rate workers remains a preferred labour hiring strategy within the industry, as it helps reduce production costs and allows for the manufacture of crafts at more competitive prices.

Conclusion

The appliqué craft industry in Pipili has undergone significant transformation with the onset of globalisation. It stands as a classic example of how rural artisanal communities have been integrated into the world economy, particularly as they began to find international consumers for their crafts in the post-liberalisation era. The increased demand for crafts has led to the emergence of capitalistic forms of labour and capital organisation. Crafts are now predominantly produced in workshops employing hired, piece-rate workers.

The availability of a cheap labour force—particularly women home workers—has enabled employers to adopt flexible labour strategies that align with the volatile trends

of the craft market. New technologies, such as embroidery and cutting machines, have been introduced to facilitate the mass production of craft items. As a result, the economic condition of appliqué craft makers has improved, as these new technologies have allowed them to access global markets more effectively.

However, the workshop mode of production has not completely replaced the primordial characteristics of the craft industry. Many artisans continue to rely on unpaid family labour to earn a supplementary income. The state's policy initiatives directed towards supporting craftsperson's have served as a blessing in disguise, enabling many to consider craft production as a viable livelihood option—especially in a region afflicted by adverse weather conditions, poverty, and low agricultural income.

Although the number of successful women artisans remains lower than that of their male counterparts, their participation is steadily increasing. This growth is supported by state agencies seeking to make the craft industry more inclusive by promoting microcredit programmes in rural areas. Women entrepreneurs are increasingly finding craft making a suitable livelihood option, benefitting from government support aimed at empowering women through microcredit-based enterprises. The transformation of the artisanal industry in Pipili provides a compelling lens to understand the ways in which the dominant market forces shape the local micro industries in the country side of India

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