



## A study on the adoption, innovation and current status of the ancient craft of *Durrie* weaving

Kapila P\* & Kaur G

Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana 141 003, Punjab

\*E-mail: prernaats@pau.edu

Received 25 August 2020; revised 18 August 2022; accepted 03 August 2023

The craft of *Durrie* weaving has undergone many changes over the last few decades. This traditional craft, which was a common household practice initially, is still practiced in some districts of Punjab. The craft is learned mainly from the elders of the family as there are no formal training centres to impart the skill and preserve the art form. Majority of the respondents are involved with the craft along with the senior members of the family. *Durrie*, rugs and foot mats are the most common articles prepared by the artisans. High cost of production and low wages for the artisans as well as lack of a good marketing network are the major challenges faced by the respondents. Absence of attractive promotion opportunities on a regular platform is hampering the demand for these traditional products which are a part of our heritage and need to be preserved for our future generations.

**Keywords:** Artisans, Craft, *Durrie*, Traditional, Weaving

**IPC Code:** Int Cl.<sup>23</sup>: A47G 9/00, D03D 29/00, D04B 39/06

India has been a land of rich traditional heritage. Each region of the country has its unique specialization in the art and crafts which have been an integral part of the livelihood of specifically the rural population. These crafts which have developed over the years and are part of our cultural heritage are not only genuinely creative, made using locally available tools and raw materials, but are also the modes of expression for the rural women who used to find an outlet through the craft which was mainly a community activity. These masterpieces of crafts have survived through various odds and have continuously adapted to suit the changing needs and requirements of the generations in order to stay contemporary to the times along with retaining its traditional flavour. Textile industry of India was quite developed even during ancient times which can be seen from the traces of fabric found during excavations. The value addition done to these textiles makes them unique in the world and though the process is quite time and labour consuming, the uniqueness of these handicrafts makes them a much sought after product in the world.

In order to maintain the uniqueness of these crafts, the skills of the artisans were transferred from one

generation to another and have managed to retain its regional and unique flavour giving rise to a widely dispersed handicraft industry of India. One such craft comprises *durrie* weaving in Punjab. The state of Punjab is one of the richest and most prosperous states of the country and the same richness flows over towards a rich tradition of art and craft also. The state is famous for one of the most luxurious embroidery called *phulkari* and has many other different crafts associated like carved and inlay wood work, *tilla jutti*, *nala* making, *khes* weaving and *Punja durries*<sup>1</sup>. *Durrie* weaving was once a daily pastime of most rural households and it was considered a leisure time activity mainly of rural women. The *durries* made by weaving techniques got its name from small equipment called "*Punja*" in the local dialect, which was mainly used for beating and filling of weft threads in the weaving process. These are flat woven rugs, traditionally used as floor covering or a bedspread or for sitting on the floor during any sort of gathering. The *durries* were made by two different methods depending on the purpose of the floor covering and the design requirement. As weaving was a household activity for rural population, a small loom was available in every family. Striped, multicoloured *durries* were made on pit loom and were mainly used

\*Corresponding author

as bed covering. Basic stripes were used in the construction which are faster to make and can be made by basic knowledge of loom operation. As the *durries* were supposed to be covered by a bed sheet, not much emphasis was laid on the designing part<sup>2</sup>. The *durries* which were used as floor covering were made on *adda*, (Fig. 1) an elementary loom and were made in multiple colours and designs after dyeing the yarn which was also spun at household level using a spinning wheel. The traditional form of weaving was, and even today, practiced mainly by women, and this skill was passed to the next generation by elders of the family. The practicing of this craft required very basic tools and raw material along with skill set which was developed with practice. The scope of designing increased as one gained expertise through practice (Supplementary Fig. 1). The girls used to learn this skill at a very young age and practicing the same continued in the leisure time under the guidance of elders of the family. The *durries* produced were mainly utilised within the household. The girls used to weave the *durries* in intricate and traditional designs and the best pieces were kept aside to be used as part of the bride's trousseau. However, as per "Bridal *durries* of India" rich landlords used to commission such *durries* from various households to be used in large gatherings which used to lead to some income generation for the poor households<sup>3</sup>.

*Durrie* weaving was also undertaken as a cottage industry which could be as flexible as the weaver wanted, and the products were sold by hawkers in nearby villages or local markets. In few places in India like some villages around Meerut city, this craft is practised using old worn out clothes. The *durries* are also sold on exchange basis by the artisans where *durries* woven with yarn made from old recycled fabric are exchanged for old clothes from urban household. However, *durries* in Punjab are made by dyeing the yarn in different colours as per design requirement and then weaving this yarn to create designs like *leheria*



Fig. 1 — Artisans involved in *Durrie* manufacturing

design, animal motifs, and bird motifs in which most commonly used motif is of peacock (Supplementary Fig. 2), geometrical (Supplementary Fig. 3) and floral patterns (Supplementary Fig. 4). The dyeing was initially done using vegetable dyes but later use of chemical dyes became more common as dry colours were easily available in the village shops<sup>4</sup>.

This traditional craft form has undergone many changes and has been trying hard to adapt to changing times. There was a time when its survival was at risk as it faced a threat by mechanized and commercialized floor covering industry which came up in Panipat. The rural people started getting more exposure to the city life and the handmade *durries* of bridal trousseau were replaced by machine made *durries*. The modern bed with its spring mattresses had no place for woven *durrie*. However, the efforts to preserve the heritage were made by some volunteer organizations, and the interest of urban people towards the beauty and grace of traditional crafts resulted in a renewed demand for these handmade craft products. The interventions led to usage of this craft in creating other articles apart from floor mats and those articles also found an urban market to some extent. However the demand is still constrained due to *durries* being viewed as a traditional product and not as a utilitarian product by the urban consumers. There is need to create a market for the niche product and identify the constraints faced by the artisans. The present study was undertaken to understand the challenges faced by *durrie* weavers of Punjab and the implications of following the craft on their physical and financial wellbeing.

### Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in three districts of Punjab namely Patiala, Ludhiana and Amritsar. It was found that the craft is not practiced in all the villages of Punjab these days; hence three villages were selected from each of these districts where rural women were involved in *durrie* weaving. Purposive sampling technique was followed to select the villages as well as the respondents and only those respondents who were practicing this craft were selected for the study. An interview schedule was prepared and a total of fifteen respondents from each district were asked to provide their responses. The respondents were within the age group of 20-35. The findings were tabulated and assessed to identify the present status of *durrie* weaving craft in villages and the challenges faced by the respondents.

## Results and Discussion

The craft has traversed through times within the families and has been a household venture. The craft was practised during leisure time and the common place where it was practiced used to be a place to share experiences, recipes, wisdom, learning and also skill and designing among village women. Though the common places have shrunk even in villages and the families are confined to their homes even during leisure time, the learning about *durrie* craft has happened without any formal training network. It was seen from Table 1 that majority of the respondents learned this craft from an elder women from the family only, mainly mother or grandmother. It was also seen that majority of those families which were still practicing it were those who used to get some monetary benefit from this craft earlier. The practicing of craft for personal use has reduced a lot. Only one respondent informed that she has learnt the craft from a training program organised under Integrated Skill Development Scheme run by Power loom Service Centre of Amritsar. Though the training was on power loom, still she learned about the weaving technique and was able to incorporate it on handloom for weaving of *durries*. A large number of respondents from Punjab (26.67 %) learned the craft from their friends also.

A traditional craft can lead to excellent occupation opportunities if practiced in the right context and adaptations are made as per requirements of the contemporary times. Globalisation and internet marketing has opened excellent avenues for the resurgence of traditional crafts of India. The need is to provide enough incentives to the artisans so that they are motivated enough to adopt the skills they have inherited and adopt it as occupation which provides them substantial financial benefits<sup>5</sup>. The awareness about the craft was found to be present even among the young generation but the respondents were willing to practice the craft only if assured of good monetary benefits. As per Table 2, a majority of the respondents

(42.2%) from all the districts adopted the craft as occupation as it was a family profession and the adoption of craft for being a reason for generating subsidiary income was found to be more in district Amritsar. Three respondents from Ludhiana district said that they have adopted the craft due to interest in the same but the number of persons who had adopted the craft as occupation due to interest was very less in Patiala and Amritsar. It was seen that 28.89% of the respondents had adopted the craft in order to utilize free time and the percentage of such respondents was found to be 66.67% from Amritsar district.

The crafts of India are usually associated with experienced persons of family passing over the skill to the future generation and the transfer of such skills through a mechanism of organised coaching is quite rare. Most of the crafts have survived over the years through this manner only. The traditional crafts usually get infused with contemporary designs as the present generation is conversant with digital media and more adaptable towards new ideas and combinations. As depicted in Table 3, the respondents were happy to be involved with craft as it helped them in becoming financially independent without being employed by someone else and the restrictions of a regular job. The number of respondents who were involved in the craft along with mother or other senior members of the family was found to be 71% while only 29% respondents in the state were involved alone with the craft. However, upon discussion with the respondents, it was found that these respondents had started the craft work along with some senior member of family only, who later discontinued with

Table 1 — Means of learning the craft

S. No	Means of learning	Percentage of respondents in each district			Total
		Patiala	Ludhiana	Amritsar	
1	From mother or grandmother	80	53.33	66.67	66.67
2	From friends	20	33.33	26.67	26.67
3	Training centre	-	-	6.66	2.22
4	Self Help Group	-	13.33	-	4.44

Table 2 — Reasons for adoption of craft as occupation

S. No	Reasons for adoption of craft as occupation	Percentage of respondents in each district			Total
		Patiala	Ludhiana	Amritsar	
1	Family profession	66.66	33.33	26.67	42.22
2	Interest in craft	6.66	20.00	6.66	11.11
3	To utilize free time	13.33	33.33	40.00	28.89
4	Generate subsidiary income	13.33	13.33	26.67	17.78
5	Any other	-	-	-	-

Table 3 — Generations involved with *durrie* craft

S. No	Generations of your family presently engaged with <i>durrie</i> craft	Percentage of respondents in each district			Total
		Patiala	Ludhiana	Amritsar	
1	Involved alone	20.00	33.33	33.33	28.9
2	Involved with mother	60.00	26.67	20.00	35.5
3	Involved with other senior members of family	20.00	40.00	46.66	35.6

the weaving work due to health or other issues. In Patiala district, around twenty % respondents were involved with the craft alone while 33.33% were involved alone in Ludhiana or Amritsar district.

The *durrie* craft has evolved over years and the motifs used mainly depended on the intended use of the *durrie*. Bridal *durries* were made with most elaborate motifs while the *durries* for daily use were made in simple stripes as the amount of time required for weaving depends mainly on complexity of the design and dexterity of the weaver. Some designs required yarn to be tied after a particular length and dyed in different colours so that warp yarns can also be of different colours, while in simpler designs, warp was of one colour and design element was added by using different colours of weft yarns<sup>6</sup>. As evident from Table 4, *Leheria* design was most preferred design in Patiala district followed by Geometrical designs while animal designs were most preferred by respondents of Amritsar district. The respondents from Ludhiana preferred birds, *Leheria* and animal motifs equally while geometrical designs got most preference in Ludhiana. Overall preference for *Leheria* designs was seen among all the three districts and in some cases, animal and bird motifs were prepared only on customer demand.

The craft of *durrie* weaving developed over the years and the primary product was floor or bed covering only. However the products found little usage in modern households and acquired only the heritage value. There was little diversification in the craft till some 20 years back. Kaur (2002)<sup>7</sup> conducted a study on the consumer preferences for innovative articles made by *durrie* weaving technique in Ludhiana city and discovered that wall hangings, cushion covers, footwear, Table runners, key holders and hair bands were the most preferred articles by city customers. As per Table 5, *durrie* is the primary product prepared by the respondents, 26.67% girls from Amritsar are involved in preparation of other articles also like cushion covers, car seat covers and

hand bags. Durries of different sizes as per customer demand are prepared by 77.8% respondents while 11.1% were preparing Table runners of different sizes. Foot mats prepared by this technique were manufactured mostly at Amritsar while rugs were prepared at Ludhiana district. Most of the respondents were involved in a variety of products and were not limited to manufacturing durries only. Though the power loom industry at Panipat is giving stiff competition to rugs manufacturers in terms of design, color availability and cost, the niche product has managed to create its dedicated customer base. The respondents were of the opinion that there is still a lot of scope for design adaptations and colour schemes employed by them for their products to find good price realization and regular demand.

The respondents from all the districts were of the opinion that weaving *durrie* craft is far from being a mechanical job as there is continuous thought, innovation, passion, satisfaction and dedication that goes into the manufacturing process. The entire process gives them a sense of freedom and identity and if they are able to sell the products at good rate, that is additional benefit. But marketing within the village or with personal contacts is not very lucrative and is one of the major challenges for weavers. As the Table 6 shows, all the respondents from Patiala were selling durries in their own village while around 60% from Ludhiana and 67% from Amritsar were able to find buyers within the village. Selling through

Table 4 — Preferred motifs in *durrie* craft

S. No	Preferred motifs in <i>durrie</i> craft	Percentage of respondents in each district			Total
		Patiala	Ludhiana	Amritsar	
1	<i>Leheria</i>	46.66	20.00	26.67	31.11
2	Floral	06.66	13.33	13.33	11.11
3	Animal	13.33	20.00	33.33	22.22
4	Birds	06.66	20.00	13.33	13.33
5	Geometrical	26.66	26.67	13.33	22.22

Table 5 — Innovations in products manufactured

S. No	Innovations in products manufactured	Percentage of respondents in each district			Total
		Patiala	Ludhiana	Amritsar	
1	<i>Durries</i>	100	80.00	73.33	77.80
2	Rugs	33.33	53.33	40.00	42.22
3	Foot mats	20.00	33.33	46.67	33.33
4	Table runners	-	20.00	13.33	11.11
5	Any other	-	13.33	26.67	13.33

\*Multiple responses

Table 6 — Marketing Network followed by respondents

S. No	Marketing network followed	Percentage of respondents in each district			Total
		Patiala	Ludhiana	Amritsar	
1	Own village	100.00	60.00	66.67	75.56
2	Middleman	13.33	53.33	80.00	48.90
3	Wholesalers	-	20.00	-	7.50
4	Direct from customers	100.00	20.00	53.33	57.78
5	Exhibitions and fairs	13.33	46.67	33.33	31.11

\*Multiple responses

middleman was also quite common with almost 49% respondents utilizing the services of a middleman to sell their products. Respondents from Patiala (100%) and Amritsar (53.33%) were getting a lot of orders from direct customers also and were able to get much better prices for the products in comparison to any other marketing network followed. Around forty seven % respondents from Ludhiana were also able to market their products through exhibitions and fairs though it was rare to find them attending these fairs themselves. The marketing in such case is majorly done through some male family member. Only three respondents from Ludhiana district were found to be selling the product through wholesalers.

The craft has deep roots in the traditional and cultural diversity of the state due to its uniqueness. The craft which was a common household activity only 2-3 decades back has to face multiple challenges today. The major challenge faced by the weavers was the high cost of production and low wages that they receive for the hard labour involved in creation of a craft item. The girls need to be self motivated to pursue this craft as government incentive or even excellent market demand is missing for the traditional item<sup>8</sup>. Very few respondents faced the challenge of inadequacy in availability of raw material as cotton is a staple crop of Punjab and hence yarn or fiber is easily available for taking up the production process. As the process requires very basic loom set up, hence insufficient number of looms was a challenge faced by only 7.50% respondents. Table 7 depicts that around forty seven % respondents from Amritsar faced the issue of exploitation at the hands of contractor mainly in terms of financial remuneration for their products. The girls from Amritsar were of the

opinion that even though basic raw material is available, there is lack of variety in the same because of which they are unable to bring diversification in their product and create products to cater to the demands of modern consumers.

The most important challenge faced by the weavers was found to be marketing of the product they were manufacturing. The girls were willing to work hard if they could be assured of good remuneration for their products. To understand the gaps and challenges faced by the weavers, they were asked to identify the most prominent challenge faced by them in marketing of their durries. It can be seen from Table 8 that more than fifty % of the respondents were of the opinion that there is not enough demand for the product in eyes of modern customers and hence it is difficult to make the venture of craft commercially viable. Still they were hopeful that if a proper marketing network can be established with the help of any outside agency, like Project *Trinjan* started by *Kheti Virasat Mission*, their marketing challenge can be handled effectively. As evident from Table 8, around fifty eight percent respondents were of the opinion that if they can get inputs regarding colour combinations and diversification in articles from some expert, their products can be marketed well as lack of commercially marketable articles is another major challenge faced by these respondents. They are hopeful that if they can get attractive promotion through proper marketing technique followed, their products can get good visibility as lack of attractive promotion was another challenge seen by around 69% of the respondents.

*Durrie* making is not only a highly skilled job, it also requires bending on the loom for a long period,

Table 7 — Challenges faced in *Durrie* weaving

S. No	Challenges faced in <i>durrie</i> weaving	Percentage of respondents in each district			Total
		Patiala	Ludhiana	Amritsar	
1	Inadequacy in availability of raw material	-	06.66	13.33	06.66
2	Poor quality of raw material	66.66	33.33	46.67	48.89
3	High cost of Production	100.00	93.33	86.67	93.33
4	Insufficient number of looms	-	06.66	13.33	07.50
5	Low wages	100.00	93.33	100.00	97.78
6	Exploitation at the hands of contractors	13.33	33.33	46.67	31.11

\*Multiple responses

Table 8 — Challenges faced in marketing products

S. No	Challenges faced in marketing products	Percentage of respondents in each district			Total
		Patiala	Ludhiana	Amritsar	
1	Lack of demand	40.00	46.67	66.67	51.11
2	Lack of marketing network	66.66	80.00	73.33	73.33
3	Less profit margin	80.00	93.33	86.67	86.67
4	Lack of commercially marketable articles	86.66	46.67	40.00	57.78
5	Inability to understand consumer preferences	13.33	33.33	20.00	20.00
6	Lack of attractive promotion	100.00	46.67	60.00	68.89
7	Any other	-	13.33	-	04.44

\*Multiple responses

Table 9 — Health challenges during manufacturing

S. No	Health challenges during manufacturing	Problems	Percentage of respondents in each district			Total
			Patiala	Ludhiana	Amritsar	
1	Respiratory problems	Congestion	-	20.00	6.66	8.89
		Asthma	-	13.33	20.00	11.11
2	General health problems	Back ache	66.66	80.00	73.33	73.33
		Cervical Spondilites	33.33	53.33	46.67	44.44
		Eye strain	6.66	33.33	26.67	22.22
		Fatigue	33.33	26.67	13.33	24.44
		Hunchback	-	13.33	33.33	15.56
		Cuts	13.33	6.66	20.00	13.33

\*Multiple responses

adjusting the warp yarn on the loom and then each weft is painstakingly passed through the warp yarns to create a patterned product. It requires taking care of the design so that each coloured weft is passed at correct time and through correct warp yarns. As some respondents are involved with spinning their own yarn also, doing that on a spinning wheel leads to release of a lot of small fibers which can cause breathing issues for susceptible people. The most common health challenge found among the respondents was of back ache (73.33%) while only around nine % of them faced the challenge of congestion due to fiber dust. None of the respondents from Patiala district faced any respiratory problem while weaving. As per Table 9, a large number of the respondents (44.44%) were found to be suffering with the problem of cervical spondylitis. It was seen that respiratory problems were not affecting the respondents but general health problems and fatigue due to physical labour was challenging for some of the respondents. Eye strain was also a challenge faced by 22.22% of the respondents as the work involved proper coordination of eyes and hands to create beautiful designs. However discussion with the respondents revealed that they were willing to handle these challenges if they were rewarded monetarily for their efforts.

### Conclusion

Hand weaving is one of the oldest and most common craft evidence of which can be seen in even the most ancient civilizations. *Durrie* craft is an adaptation of weaving technique and used to be a household activity in the rural Punjab just few decades earlier. The craft is still practiced in some villages of Punjab either as an income generation activity or for household purpose. Where it is used for

income generation, the respondents are facing challenges with marketing of the product and feel the need for diversification towards more commercially viable products which have better acceptance for modern customers and the products are relevant and contemporary in usage apart from their heritage value. There is need for Government initiative towards revival of the craft and provide proper marketing network and design input to the artisans so that our heritage craft can be preserved for future generations. The constraints faced by the artisans need to be addressed in the right context and all the stakeholders need to be taken in consideration while making attempts to address the challenges faced by the artisans of *durrie* craft.

### Supplementary Data

Supplementary data associated with this article is available in the electronic form at [https://nopr.niscpr.res.in/jinfo/ijtk/IJTK\\_22\(03\)\(2023\)611-617\\_SupplData.pdf](https://nopr.niscpr.res.in/jinfo/ijtk/IJTK_22(03)(2023)611-617_SupplData.pdf)

### Acknowledgement

This study was well supported by the scientific and technical staff of *Krishi Vigyan Kendras* of Patiala, Ludhiana and Amritsar which is gratefully acknowledged. The authors also thank the Director of Extension Education, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, for providing support and guidance for the above investigation.

### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

### Authors' Contributions

PK and GK conducted surveys at rural parts of District Amritsar, Ludhiana and Patiala and collected

data from various villages of these districts. Both the authors provided critical feedback and helped in preparation of manuscript. The authors read and approved the final manuscript.

### References

- 1 Yadav S & Rose N, Punja Durrie: A Diminishing Textile Craft of Haryana, *Int J Curr Microbiol App Sci* 8 (2) (2019) 2659-2665.
- 2 Yadav N, Sangwan N & Khambra K, Durrie Weaving as Income Generation-An Exploratory Study, *J Hum Ecol*, 24 (1) (2008) 41-45.
- 3 Shankar A & Housego J, *Bridal Durries of India*, Grantha Corporation (1999) 135-137.
- 4 Gill R, Assessment to revive craft of Carpet making among weavers of select border villages of Punjab, *Asia Pacific J Res*, 17 (2) (2019) 98-105.
- 5 Bains S, Kaur R & Sethi M, Durrie weaving - Resurgence through contemporary use, *Pantnagar J Res*, 17 (2) (2019) 161-167.
- 6 Hussain A, Protection and promotion of traditional crafts and occupations in globalising India: A case study of weavers of Mau, Uttar Pradesh, *Int J Res Soc Sci*, 6 (9) (2016) 323-337.
- 7 Kaur J, Consumer preferences for innovative articles made by Durrie weaving technique, M Sc Thesis, Punjab Agricultural university, Ludhiana (2002).
- 8 Varshney T, Glimpses of the precarious world of artisans and employment opportunities in Dhurrie Craft of Sitapur, U.P, 10.13140/RG.2.2.21837.67048/1 (2020) (Retrieved on 10.05.2022)