

# EXAMINING THE LIVELIHOOD STATUS OF BAMBOO BASED ENTREPRENEURS: AN ASSESSMENT OF RISHI DALIT COMMUNITY IN BANGLADESH

Sk Mashudur Rahman\*

## ABSTRACT

*This paper examines the scenario of work and livelihood pattern of bamboo-based entrepreneurs in rishi Dalit community of Tala sub-district under Satkhira district of Bangladesh. The main focus of this study is on different dimensions of work and livelihood pattern of rishi Dalit entrepreneurs such as entrepreneur's experience, working hours, income, average cost per unit, value, place of sale and distribution channel etc. for manufacturing the product in rural Bangladesh. The study mainly relies on primary data collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) among the 20 entrepreneurs of bamboo craft in the sub-district. It also highlights the possibility that technological advancement can limit the role of rishi Dalit entrepreneurs and their mastery over the bamboo-based manufacturing products. To improve the quality of bamboo-based products and its marketing strategy, appropriate measures need to be taken immediately so that this type of traditional product can be protected and preserved.*

**Keywords:** *Bamboo craft, Rishi Dalit entrepreneurs, manufacturing, livelihood, working environment*

---

\* Joint Director, Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD), Kotbari, Cumilla, Bangladesh. E-mail: mashudur.rahmanbard@gmail.com

## 1. Introduction

Entirely depending upon bamboo crafts for his livelihood, Nitypado Dash (47) says:

*By using my own hand and two or three types of scissors, I can make all kinds of bamboo products. Generation after generation, we have grown up with the belief that all the surrounding people hate us as Rishi, and treat us as social outcasts. They do not like to buy our products, so, we have worked hard to overcome this social barrier. If one invests more labour into bamboo crafts he/she will be more benefited.*

Like Nitypado, currently many *rishi* entrepreneurs are engaged in producing different types of bamboo-based products, using their limited resources, without any support or intervention from government or non-government organizations (NGO) or self-help groups. But they are unable to earn a decent livelihood from their crafts in modern Bangladesh.

Dalit communities, especially the *rishi* people, constitute a marginalised group but with a great potential. Their mastery over bamboo crafts will prove to be a profitable entrepreneurship, if they could be integrated into Bangladesh society. These entrepreneurs are victims of human rights violations, limited employment opportunities, fragile livelihoods and low social status. Entrepreneurs play a very important role in the socio-economic development of Bangladesh and *rishi* Dalit community can contribute to a great deal in this regard, if they are accepted as equals with other entrepreneurs.

Since the Empire of Ballal Sen (King of Gour during the middle of 12th century AD), social differences were generated in Bengal's society and caste categories like Brahmin, Khatrion, Baishya, and Sudra originated. *Rishi* community in Bengal is a specific untouchable backward community of *sudra*-society (Pal, 2011). This term indicates that *rishi* community is a self-attributed designation for a group of people traditionally regarded as untouchable and unsuitable for making personal relations. In the context of traditional Hindu society, the status of *rishi* community has often been historically associated with occupations regarded as ritually impure, such as leathery work, butchering, or removal of rubbish, animal carcasses, and waste etc. Engaging in these activities was considered to be polluting to the individual, and this pollution was considered as contagious. As a result, *rishi* community was generally isolated and banned from full participation in Hindu Social life. As an isolated group traditionally, they handle animal skin, make and polish shoe, remove dirty things and also produce different handicrafts by using skin, cane and bamboo in their domestic sphere. They mainly live in Khulna, Satkhira and Jessor district of Bangladesh and in each *para* (habitat) of *rishi* community producing bamboo craft is a common phenomenon whereby some of them are traditionally skilled in producing different products made of bamboo.

Entrepreneurship is a process in which individuals develop an economic activity by assuming project risk (Schumpeter, 1935). Entrepreneurship development is an important aspect of bamboo craft-based *rishi Dalit* empowerment. *Dalits* need to be encouraged to start-up businesses in order to improve their standard of living as well as the overall status of the economy of Bangladesh. If Bangladesh is to live up to the agenda of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the slogan of which is "No One Left Behind", Bangladesh will have to address the obstacles faced by Dalit communities urgently. The country is proud of its record of having one of the best levels of achievement on the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000-2015 and wants to do the same with the SDGs. Here is one way to accomplish that goal but the Government or the people of Bangladesh haven't thought much about this aspect yet. This article intends to help Bangladeshi and international readers to understand the abysmal situation of Dalit entrepreneurs, especially the bamboo craftsman of *rishi* community, which in turn may help to create a demand for their bamboo products. Thus, bamboo craft-based entrepreneurs can play a more significant role, as they rightfully should, in Bangladesh's drive to make the SDGs a reality by 2030. And if this happens then that would be the real contribution of this article to the development of both the bamboo craft-based *rishi* Dalit entrepreneurs and of Bangladesh economy.

Most Dalit entrepreneurs of bamboo craft face various problems ranging from inadequate access to financial support, lack of social networks in the absence of their kin groups in their line of business, and control of markets by Hindu business caste groups or Muslim entrepreneurs. These, along with lack of social capital, make the situation of the Dalit entrepreneurs in Bangladesh vulnerable.

The lives of bamboo craftsmen of *rishi* Dalit represent a tale of unmitigated misery, neglect, discrimination, deprivation and marginalization. A major focus of this study is to understand and explain this paradox as well as suggest how it can be reversed. This article attempts to present a systematic description of bamboo craft-based *rishi* Dalit entrepreneurs' 'life and livelihood pattern.

## 2. Literature Review

In the case of Dalit entrepreneurs, Deliege (1992) argued that they are excluded based on geographical separation and social distance, and their marginal social position owing to their relationship to impurities associated with death and organic pollution. Dalits are denied the control of the means of production. Fredericks (2010) suggested that belongingness as experienced in everyday relations constructs the kinds of sentiments on which societies of exclusion (and inclusion) are based. Fredericks makes the case for the importance of the everydayness of belongingness and attachment, and the memory and

tradition it reinforces as a means of appropriation and territorial isolation. Dalit's exclusion by ascription has an economic dimension also through the way in which untouchables are "denied control of the means of production" (Deliege, 1992). Leach (1960) also suggested that caste classifications facilitate divisions of labour free of competition and expectations of mobility inherent in other systems. Cohen (2016) argued that the dominant understanding of social inclusion and social exclusion needs to go beyond the dyadic mode of reasoning in contemporary globalized societies. With special reference to migration and citizenships, he adopted nine perspectives at three different levels to understand social inclusion and social exclusion in contemporary global world. These are individual (micro), societal (meso) and structural (macro) levels. Dillard and Dujon et al. (2012) argued that the meaning and application of social inclusion is a multi-level approach to the social aspects of sustainability. By citing case studies from developed and developing countries, they explored inclusion in economic sector, community health and wellbeing and in community resources and resilience.

Burden and Hamm (2004) argued that in some context, characterization of work, as an important form of social participation through which citizenship status and social inclusion can be achieved, is itself potentially exclusionary. They argued that viewing work as a moral obligation and a necessary part of self-esteem can be problematic where opportunities are low in some occupations and geographical locations. Rimmerman (2013) explored national and international perspectives on social inclusion of people with disabilities. He looked at biblical, theological and historical aspects on current views of inclusion. In addition, he explored effective strategies for promoting social inclusion and advocated for both human rights and social protection strategy by national and international bodies. He also emphasized declarative and abstract rights to be translated into domestic laws. Silver (1995) mentioned that France first adopted the term social inclusion in 1970s. Disabled and various destitute groups were referred through the lenses of social inclusion and exclusion. Contemporary meanings of social inclusion and exclusion are rooted in France. Buvicic (2005) defined social exclusion as an individual inability to participate in the basic political, economic and social functioning of society, and it involves "the denial of equal access to opportunities imposed by certain groups in society upon others" (as cited in Throat & Newman, 2007). In the light of the emphasis on inclusion in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Silver (1995) argued that social inclusion and exclusion are context-dependent concepts. Nation-states and localities have their own mechanisms which influence the process of economic, social and political exclusion. She reminded that, while social exclusion is condemned as unjust, at the same time, social inclusion or openness has its own problems too. Social inclusion means acculturation that can lead to the decline of group ways of life, identity, language, solidarity, and group practices as well. She argued that, while social inclusion is a good objective, it all depends on the context.

There is a need to theorize Dalit's social inclusion or exclusion. The concept of social exclusion or inclusion was prominent in the policy discourse in France in the mid-1970s. The concept was later adopted by the European Union in the late 1980s as a key concept in social policy and in many instances replaced the concept of poverty (Rawal, Navin, 2008). If I am allowed to do an oversimplification of popular and dominant ideas of social inclusions championed by scholars such as Silver, 1995; Rimmerman, 2013; and Cohen, 2016, by and large, most scholarships on social exclusions view that marginalized people need access to economic resources to become a productive member of the society, their marketable skills and knowledge can be utilized which in turn help them improve their socio-economic conditions. These theories view poor or marginalized people as victims of larger social processes. Lack of state interventions, and dominance of market logics are viewed as two main villains of domination and subjugation of marginalized people. They see marginalized people as victims of institutionalized domination and subordination without having any agency or power to fight back against it. Thus, they advocate a framework of inclusion through access to education, health and other basic services and the entitlements of them as human beings and citizens. Popular and dominant proponents of social inclusion such as Silver, 1995; Rimmerman, 2013; and Cohen, 2016 argued for social integration, social cohesion and advocated removing barriers to social inclusion. The attempts to include Dalit entrepreneurs in the mainstream society are driven by many national and international NGOs and donors. Lately, the government of Bangladesh has also taken minimal initiatives in the form of declaration of quota system to secure their jobs. Despite all, it is found that a viable framework of inclusion programme is yet to be formulated in the context of Bangladesh. However, following a Bourdieuan model (1977), in contemporary market-based societies, three forms of capital such as economic, social and cultural, are necessary for any individual to make a decent living. Entrepreneurs of Dalit community in Bangladesh lack all these three forms of capital. Hence, they are in need of accumulating these capitals.

### **3. Methodology of the Study**

This is an empirical, explanatory and analytical study. A combination of approaches has been adopted to collect qualitative and quantitative information. It is now widely recognized that there is no one best method for collecting data. A combination of methods was used to elicit information related to research objectives and question. Several methods such as sample survey, focus group discussions, case studies and observations were applied for this purpose. Seasonal calendar and SWOT analysis were collected from the bamboo-based entrepreneurs, concerned stakeholders and individuals. Available data were incorporated through tables, boxes, wherever applicable.

The field work of this study was conducted in 5 *rishi paras* from 5 villages of Magura union of Tala sub-district under Satkhira district, a southwestern district of Bangladesh. There are 4,011 *rishi* households dwelling in 37 villages of 12 unions of Tala sub-district. From this population, all bamboo-based entrepreneurs who fully depend on this entrepreneurship were selected which makes up a total sample size of 20 bamboo craftsmen of *rishi* Dalit community.

#### 4. Findings of the Study

Bamboo is the species of grass belonging to the family *Graminae* and is distributed naturally across the tropics and subtropics (Lobovikov et al., 2007). In many parts of the world, bamboo still forms an essential part of the livelihoods and cultures of tribal and rural communities by being the primary source of housing material, food, agricultural implements, and domestic utensils (Vantome et al., 2002; Yuming et al., 2004). Depending on this species the *rishi* Dalit entrepreneurs have also developed a particular livelihood pattern. Livelihood basically indicates peoples' means of making a living as a process of accessing various livelihood capitals. The nature of livelihood capitals held by a family is considered in making decision about the available livelihood strategies, and the risk associated with such decision. In *rishi* Dalit community as a pattern of livelihood, bamboo craft is the mirror of culture, tradition and aesthetics of the entrepreneurs who create them. It is sometimes more precisely expressed as artisanal handicraft which includes a wide variety of work where useful and decorative objects are made completely by hand or by using only simple tools. It is a traditional main sector of craft for *rishi* entrepreneurs and applies to a wide range of creative and designing activities that are related to making things with one's hands and skill. Common examples include work with bamboo, cane, leather, jute, plant fibers, etc.

A traditional economic activity for the *rishi* entrepreneurs is weaving bamboo products. The *rishi* entrepreneurs have been doing this for generations. Thus, they have expertise in this area. Bamboo products are the basis of the livelihoods of those who make them.

Bamboo is also used to make a variety of household and fancy products including furniture. This type of craft tradition in Bangladesh has revolved around religious beliefs, local needs, as well as the special needs of the patrons and royalty, along with availing the opportunity of foreign and domestic trade wherever feasible.

Craft of bamboo is one of the oldest crafts in *rishi* community of Bangladesh. They have provided the rural people with most of their essential requirements. In this craft, male entrepreneurs generally go out to collect bamboo, cut it and split it. Then female entrepreneurs finish off the bamboo products. Only during rainy seasons, when male entrepreneurs cannot go out to collect the raw

materials they help their wives and sisters to make the products. Children too join in, becoming apprentices to their older family members and learning how to master the craft.

Bamboo craft is thus an important source of livelihood for the *rishi* entrepreneurs. Empirical data on bamboo and cane craft-making entrepreneurs' working hours, income, average cost per unit, value, place of sale and distribution channel are presented below.

**Table1: Entrepreneurs' average years of experience, hours of work & daily income by years of experience in bamboo crafts occupation**

Experience (Years)	No. of entrepreneurs (%)	Average (%)		
		Years of experience	Hours of work	Daily income (BDT)
Below 10	10.00	9.00	7.00	175.00
11 to 20	40.00	16.25	8.75	176.00
21 to 30	15.00	30.00	6.33	170.00
31 +	35.00	37.85	7.00	175.00
All	100.00	20.12	7.60	174.65

Note: BDT means Bangladesh Taka (currency), 84 BDT = \$ 1

Source: Field Work, 2019

Bamboo craftsperson's have an average of 20 years' experience in their craft. For almost 8 hours of work per day they earn an average daily income of BDT 175. There seems to be no consistent correlation between their hours of experience and hours of daily work. Elderly entrepreneurs, both male and female, who can no longer handle the heavy bamboo, prepare bamboo strips or do manageable bamboo crafts at home.

**Table2: Distribution of average per unit cost and their value by type of product**

Type of product	Average per unit		
	Cost (BDT)	Value (BDT)	Earning (BDT)
Jhuri	80.00	250.00	170.00
Dhala	35.00	60.00	25.00
Khula	30.00	80.00	50.00
khachi	35.00	85.00	50.00
Chalun	50.00	110.00	60.00
Kharoi	75.00	160.00	85.00

Source: Field Work, 2019

*Jhuri* is the most expensive type of bamboo to acquire (80 BDT) but it is valuable and fetches the highest price, so it is the most profitable. *Khari* is almost as expensive as *jhuri* (75 BDT) but its product price is lower and only produces half the profit of *jhuri*. Other types of bamboo are cheaper and less profitable.

**Table 3: Distribution of sale procedure by place of marketing of the entrepreneurs**

Market	Sale procedure of entrepreneurs (%)			
	Total	Wholesaler	Retailer	Both
Local market	50.00	5.00	40.00	5.00
Village	50.00	-	45.00	5.00
Total	100.00	5.00	85.00	10.00

Source: Field Work, 2019

Entrepreneurs selling their bamboo products in the village or in local market are almost equal in number. The vast majority of bamboo producers sell on a retail basis, though very few sell as wholesalers too. No women were found selling bamboo though they may be involved in sales from home.

### Case Study 1: Sapon Kumar Dash

Sapon Kumar Dash has been engaged in bamboo crafting for more than 16 years. Previously, he was engaged in leatherwork but changed his business after suffering a major loss. His wealth is only a fraction of an acre of land. On this land, he produces rice which feeds the family for part of the year.

Bamboo craft is the main activity of Sapon Kumar Dash (55-years old). As an entrepreneur, he purchases a piece of ordinary quality bamboo at BDT 70 or BDT 80. The costs and selling price of per products made by Sapon Kumar Dash are recorded in Table 4 below:

**Table 4: Per Unit Cost, selling and selling place of entrepreneur Sapon Kumar's products**

Products	Per unit cost (BDT)	Per unit selling (BDT)	Selling place
Basket for carrying mud	20-25	50-60	Local Dolua market that is normally held on each Monday and Friday
Basket for carrying cow dung	20-25	40-50	
Basket for working in the field of betel leaf	30-35	50-60	
Big basket (Khachi)	40-45	70-80	Local Patkelghata market that is
Small basket (Chotokhachi)	40-45	50-60	
Big Kharo	90-100	300-350	

Small Kharo	40-50	100-150	normally held on each Saturday and Wednesday
Taba	20-25	50-60	
Changari	20-25	70-80	
Dala	15-20	50-60	

Source: Field Work, 2019

Entrepreneur Sapon Kumar mentioned that the advantage of this work is that it can be done with his family. As raw material, he uses green bamboo and its branches. Hook, sharp knife and hands are used for this purpose as tools. Business is good in April and May. This is the time of soil-related work on the farm. This time is also the season of summer fruit and thus the demand for baskets is quite high. During the monsoon, business is not good and sometimes the goods are sold at low prices or left on the shelves.

Business is also good in October and November. At this time, the demand for baskets and *changari* is high. In the months of December, January and February, small, medium and large baskets are in great demand. Many weddings take place in these months. He thinks that the market for baskets has expanded as compared to earlier. In the past, baskets were sold at BDT 10-15, but now he gets BDT 40-50. However, over this period the availability of bamboo branch (*kunci*) has decreased. In September and October, new branches of bamboo are available and at that time, 5-6 pieces of *kunci* are sold at BDT 10. He said that two baskets can be made with a good quality *kunci*.

In the months of June, July, August and January the demand for bamboo-made fishing pots is high. However, lately, with the availability of plastic baskets, the demand for bamboo-made baskets is falling. The selling period of baskets for carrying fish and mangoes is very short (25-30 days). Another traditional product being replaced by modern manufactured versions is scales for measuring. He mentioned that, in the previous few days, he had sold various types of bamboo-made products for BDT 1,100-1,200 after purchasing green bamboo at BDT300. He has to pay BDT50 per week to the Grameen Bank for a loan of BDT 30,000.

Every week, Sapon spends three days in searching for bamboo in his locality from morning until noon. Generally, he begins work in the afternoon and continues working until 10pm. He cuts bamboo in the afternoon and at night he weaves baskets and fish pots. His wife helps him in this. He says that, because of this work he is suffering blood pressure disease frequently and he often has to go to the doctor.

Sapon views that even a traditional entrepreneur needs a significant amount of capital. If he purchases bamboo from the village and then sells it back to the villagers as retail products, he can earn a lot of profit. He learned this knowledge in his own interest and he has no training. He loves his work as a bamboo

craftsman. Even though the villagers tell him that this work will destroy his body, he does as much work as he can.

### **Case Study2: Nitypado Dash**

Entrepreneur Nitypado Dash (47) and his family are completely dependent on his bamboo craft for their livelihood. His wife's name is Purnima Rani Dash. They have two sons, both married and living in their own houses. Nitypado resides in Dhulanda village in Magura Union. He has no formal education and his wife has studied up to Class 3 at the age of 8 years.

Nitypado has only a fraction of an acre of land. This land cannot even feed his family. Thus, bamboo craft is vital to them for earning a living.

Entrepreneur Nitypado Dash learnt this craft from his father and his neighbors in his early years. He is very well known in his area as a bamboo craftsman, he added. Some *rishi* entrepreneurs believe that it is a taboo to work with bamboo on Sunday but Nitypado only takes a holiday on *Bishakarma*, a Hindu religious day. He says that he makes all kinds of bamboo products using only his hands and 2 or 3 kinds of scissors. He can make many kinds of bamboo cages, fences, sticks (*sola*), baskets, and fish traps.

According to Nitypado, two species of bamboo (*talla* and *valku*) are available in his locality and only *talla* species are good for making products. A good quality of *talla* bamboo sells for BDT 120 and its market price as products becomes BDT 400 to BDT 500. In April and May, demand for mango-carrying baskets and other large baskets called *auri* is very high. In June, July and August, Nitypado is busy making and selling fish traps. From November to December, he makes baskets for carrying vegetables and turmeric. He sells various types of baskets throughout the year. "For any type of product that is made from good-quality *talla* bamboo, the quality is definitely higher than that of any kind of plastic product," he assures. However, he admits that the influx of manufactured plastic products is destroying the market for bamboo products.

As an entrepreneur, Nitypado sells his products from his house as well as in various local markets. He collects the raw material (*tallabansh*) from surrounding villages. *Talla bamboo* is also available in some local markets. To promote bamboo-made crafts, entrepreneur Nitypado suggests a plan of action for the Government:

- Impose ban or restrictions on the use of plastic products
- Accelerate the production of *tallabansh* (bamboo)
- Provide interest-free loans to entrepreneurs
- Involve educated *rishi* people in this profession as entrepreneurs, not just the uneducated who have few other options

- Advertise bamboo-made products through social media and ensure access in the local markets as well as in big markets

Nitypado concludes, “All the neighboring people hate us because we are from *rishi* community. They do not like to buy our products. It is a social barrier or misconception.” He thinks that the only solution to this is more entrepreneurship development and self-help. He says that any *rishi* who invests his time and labour in this entrepreneurship will earn a profit.

**Chart 1: Seasonal Calendar of Bamboo Craft Entrepreneurs**

Duration	Level of Business Activity	Products produced/Services engaged in
April-May	Good	Producing baskets for carrying mud, mango, jackfruit, etc. wholesale or retail
June-July	Low	Itinerant discounted marketing of unsold stocks
August-September	Low	Rainy season – little can be done, sales are rare
October-November	Good	Producing and selling baskets for carrying fish, turmeric, vegetables, paddy etc.
December-January	Average	Selling back stock of baskets produced in October and November
February-March	Good	Weaving of baskets of all kinds and sizes

Source: Field Work, 2019

**Chart 2: SWOT Analysis of Bamboo Craft Enterprises**

Strength	Weakness
Bamboo is profitable for those who are patient and tenacious in production and sales – even though somewhat seasonal	Low income
Almost anyone can do it – a little training or physical strength is needed	Not possible to diversify into other businesses – bamboo will take all capital, time and effort
Lifelong working opportunity	Profit per item can be small
Many different types of tasks make it interesting	Product and raw material can be big/difficult to handle/transport/work on
The whole family can work together	Transport to and from markets can be difficult – roads are often undeveloped, flooded, etc.
Capital requirement is small	Markets are not well-developed or organized
Knife, axe, hook, scissors and hands are all the tools needed	

---

Products can be sold from home as well as in markets	Producers and sellers are poor and/or entrepreneurs are mostly illiterate
Product is price-competitive	Is the craft getting obsolete?
Environment-friendly product	Bamboo products are less durable than their competitors especially plastic products
Entrepreneurs can choose what to produce and there are lots of choices	

Opportunity	Threat
Training is rare but can have a big positive effect on the number and quality of products produced	Plastic goods are cheap, high-quality competing product, popular and easily-available to customers
Bamboo-related products can be exported although this opportunity has not been well-developed	Storage cost of products is a problem for low-income entrepreneurs
New raw materials can be developed	Easy availability of natural substitutes for bamboo has not been developed but could be
Government can provide some limited assistance	
Potential to market bamboo as an eco-friendly product	Climate change induced salinity can cause massive reduction in bamboo supply over time: this has already been noted in some areas where salinity in groundwater has killed off the bamboo plants
Potential as a niche market, while plastic is “just for everyone” could be developed	

Source: Field Work, 2019

## 5. Major Observations regarding Challenges faced by the Entrepreneurs

- There is a need to cultivate more bamboo as the raw material is not in abundance.
- Other alternative livelihood opportunities for bamboo-based *rishi* entrepreneurs need to be identified.
- Demand for bamboo products is sometimes seasonal, so entrepreneurs have to sit idle and suffer financial loss for long periods if they have no other sources of income.
- All entrepreneurs of bamboo crafts are facing marketing challenges.
- Bamboo craft-based entrepreneurs need subsidies to be economically viable and capable of assuring a secure and sufficient livelihood.
- Often the quality of inputs used in bamboo craft production is not really up to the mark: centuries of poverty have created a culture of making do with whatever is easily and cheaply available with a notion of “near enough is good-enough”.

- Bamboo products are less durable than modern alternatives, causing a decline in demand over time.
- More and more, *rishi* products are acquiring a brand of “low quality at a low price”, producing insufficient incomes. Also social inferiority is a drag on their ability to demand better prices, such as “*rishi* products only deserve a discounted price” and “I am not a fool to give a lot of money to a *rishi* for his product”.
- Most of the *rishi* people are in need of occupational and entrepreneurial training, if not basic education.
- Bamboo products of *rishi* Dalit community have significant export potential, but the *rishi* entrepreneurs neither have the capital, nor the awareness and overseas network and nor they have training to exploit the export potential of their products.

## 6. Strategies for Future Development

The following strategies are recommended for the development of bamboo craft-based industry in Bangladesh and making the industry economically viable:

**Supply of bamboo:** Government of Bangladesh can lease the fallow land for cultivating bamboo which may ease the uninterrupted supply of raw material. This initiative will encourage the bamboo craftsmen to continue their traditional work.

**Innovation in Product Design:** The *rishi* Dalit usually produce conventional bamboo craft. Aside from these, diversified alternates should be introduced. The sector offers a great scope for a variety of artistic items with a slight skill up-gradation of the bamboo craftsmen. Realizing the globalization scenario, some bamboo craftsmen forayed into product diversification, thereby breaking a regional monopoly of traditional bamboo craft. The craftsmen need to diversify the products and create new market for selling those products.

**Improving Manufacturing Technology:** The production technique and manufacturing technology should be modernized. New equipment, working timetable, and skill training are most important. If the bamboo craftsmen from the *rishi* Dalit community use machine for weaving the bamboo products, they can save times and money too.

**Need for Training and Assessment:** It is recommended to improve skill of the bamboo craftsmen through proper training in production, quality and innovation. Trainings will widen the craftsmen’s viewpoint; make them realize the necessity of quality work and a planned competitive market and effective management.

**Financial Assistance:** Governments, banks and other financial institutes may provide credit facilities to the entrepreneurs. A form of self-help group is needed for providing credit facilities, promoting personal savings, and thus, creating new opportunities for the bamboo craftsmen. Proper promotions and actions should be taken to popularize the loan scheme.

**Establishment of Co-operative Society:** The bamboo-based *rishi* Dalit entrepreneurs need a co-operative society for community union. They should work together for their community. This cooperative society may provide entrepreneurial skill training for manufacturing standard bamboo products.

**Marketing Support and Services:** Domestic and international marketing policies should be formulated for bamboo craft. To encourage the small entrepreneurs of this industry a planned marketing vision is must. Marketing support is needed to facilitate the artisans to get a good return of their hard work which will make them more passionate about their skill. Craft fair should be organized and promote to ensure good marketing of products.

**Alternate Employment Thoughts for Slack Period:** In the slack period, the craftsmen stay unoccupied. It is suggested that alternate employment initiatives for the slack period should be thought to provide uninterrupted income to the bamboo craftsmen.

**Making Policy at the National Level:** It is extremely important to make policies at the national level to protect both tangible and intangible heritage of the country.

### **Raising Awareness**

- It is universally accepted that for saving the handicraft of any place awareness about the products among local people is very much important.
- Creating national awareness for protecting the bamboo craft is a must. Research oriented books can be published to preserve the designs and artistry of bamboo craft. Workshop can be arranged with skilled craftsmen. Ensuring the participation of academic and non-academic craftsmen in these workshops is necessary. Exhibitions of different bamboo products can be arranged with the help of Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) at the national scale.
- Students of fine arts should engage in a rigorous programme that simultaneously develops their conceptual, technical, and formal skills as future bamboo craftspersons. If the study of bamboo craft is opened as an independent subject at the university level in Bangladesh or a separate institute may be opened so that interested persons may study the craftsmanship as a subject and later make it their profession.

## 7. Conclusion

It has been observed that bamboo craft-based entrepreneurs think that knife, axe and hand are sufficient tools for making bamboo related diverse products. It is also an environment-friendly product and needs very little amount of capital for making these types of products. Bamboo products are less durable as compared to plastic goods; that is why, the demand for bamboo products is decreasing day by day. But it has been observed that as a showpiece item it is in great demand in other countries as well as in the big cities in our country. In Bangladesh this product has a good demand in the months of April, May, October and November. But climate induced salinity intrusion and an increase in disaster such as flood is a major threat for growing bamboo which might reduce the raw material for such crafts. On the other hand, bamboo crafts offer lot of advantages for *rishi* entrepreneurs. The whole family can participate in making the products, costs are low, profits per product are high, so these entrepreneurs can survive in the kind of low volume market that they have lived in for centuries. Yet, the traditional market is seasonal and only produces a good income during the harvest time. Moreover, raw bamboo supplies are dwindling due to salinity in soil and natural disasters. Young *rishi* people are turning towards agricultural employment for a better, income and thus the craft knowledge is fading. The product is highly vulnerable to competition from plastic products and other alternative cheap products. Due to the above reasons bamboo craft is on the verge of being obsolete in the next generation in spite of several business opportunities existed in the enterprise. In order to save this traditional craft from being extinct, various microcredit organizations, State and non-government organizations will have to intervene for providing training and finance to help *rishi* bamboo workers to produce high-quality, decorative and export-oriented products and market them in different cities of Bangladesh and overseas. If this can be made possible, bamboo products as well as the *rishi* Dalit community can have a better future finically and socially both.

## References

Bourdieu, Pierre. "Les rites d'institution." Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales 43 (1982): 58–63.

Burden, Tom and Tricia, Hamm. (2004), Responding to Socially Excluded Groups, In, Janie Percy-Smith (Ed.), Policy Response to Social Exclusion (Pp.184-200), New York: Open University Press.

Cohen, Robin(2016). Reconsidering social inclusion/ exclusion in social theory: nine perspectives, three levels. academia.edu

Conte, T.J. The effects of China's grassland contract policy on Mongolian herders' attitudes towards grassland management in north-eastern Inner Mongolia. J. Polit. Ecol. 2015, 22, 79–97. [CrossRef]

Deliege, Robert. (1992), Replication and Consensus: Untouchability, Caste and Ideology in India, *Man* 27 (1) 155-173.

Dillard, Jesse, and Dujon, Veronica, et. al. (2012), *Understanding the Social Dimension of Sustainability*, UK: Routledge.

Duffy, Katherine. (1995), *Social Exclusion and Human Dignity in Europe: Background Report for the Proposed Initiative by the Council of Europe*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. Dan Allan 2013 *the Sociology of Social Indusion*, Sage Publication.

Fredericks, Bronwyn (2010), What health Services with rural communities tell us about Aboriginal people and Aboriginal health, *Rural Society* 20. (10-20).

Leach, Edmund Ronald (1960), Introduction, In Leach E. R. (Ed.), *Aspects of Caste in South India, Ceylon, and Northwest Pakistan* (PP-1-10). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Lobovikov M. Paudel S, Piazza M, Ren H, Wu (2007), *World bamboo Resources, a thematic study prepared in the framework of the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2005*, Rome (Italy): Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Non-Wood Forest Products Series-18

Rawal, Navin. (2008), Social Inclusion and Exclusion: A Review, In *Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*. Vol. 02.

Review, In *Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*. Vol. 02.

Pal, T. 2011. Geography of Urban Cobblers (Muchi or Shoemaker): An Overview in Bolpur Town, West Bengal, India. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 2(3):1-5

Rimmerman, Arie (2013), *Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities*, USA: Cambridge University Press.

Schumpeter, J. A (1935), *The Analysis of Economic Change*, *Review of Economic Statistics*, 17.4, 1-10

Silver, Hilary. (1995). Re-conceptualizing social disadvantage: Three paradigms of social exclusion. In Rodgers G., Gore C., Figueiredo J. B. (Eds.), *Social exclusion: Rhetoric, reality, responses* (pp. 57-80). Geneva, Switzerland: International Institute for Labour Studies, United Nations Development Programme.

Thorat, S., & Newman, K.S. (2007). Caste and economic discrimination: Causes, consequences and remedies, *Economic & Political Weekly*. 42 (41), 4121-4124.

Vantomme, P, Markkula A, Leslie RN, editors (2002), Non-wood forest products in 15 countries of tropical Asia: an overview, Bangkok (Thailand):FAO-Regional office for Asia and the Pacific.

Yuming Y, Kanglin W, Shengji P, Jiming H. (2004), Bamboo Diversity and Traditional Uses in Yunnan, China, Mountain Res Develop. 24(20):157-165.

