

EMERGENCE OF LEATHER WORKING SCHOOLS IN UNITED PROVINCES (1915-1940)

Ishan Khan*

Abstract

Leather Industry is one of the most important industries in India and has a very great scope of development in the field of the social, political and economic status of the country. Leather was widely demandable thing in colonial India due to use in military and civil purpose. India is one of the greatest producers of hides and skins in the world. United Provinces have a substantial share in India's export trade in hides and skins and play an important role in the production of leather and in the leather trade. The Government of United Provinces had taken suitable steps for the development of this important industry. In spite of this, Government of United Provinces were starting a number of tutorial classes and leather working school in various cities of United Provinces for the improvement of technology in the leather industry. This paper will highlight the situation in opening the leather working schools in united provinces during colonial India. This paper will also focus on the policies sanctioned by the Govt. regarding the opening of leather working schools in united provinces. This paper will also highlight the function of leather working schools and show the importance of technology in leather industry in this province.

Keywords: Leather working school; United Provinces; Leather industry; Hides & Skins; Government.

* **Ph.D Scholar, Department of History, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University (A Central University), Vidya Vihar, Raebareilly Road, Lucknow (U.P.).**

Introduction

India is one of the greatest producers of hides and skins in the world. The world's production of hides and skins has been estimated to be between 76 and 102 million of the share of India was about 25 and 33 percent; of the world's production in 1934.¹ United provinces have a substantial share in India's export trade in hides and skins, and play an important part in the production of leather and in the leather trade. The leather industry was the 2nd rank next to the textile industry in India during colonial India and it was recognized as a 'key' industry. The leather industry deals with many of branches such as flaying of hides and skins, preservation and curing, manufacture of leather articles. In this process, Govt. of united provinces were taking suitable steps for the development of all the four branches if this important industry. Till the period of First World War, the leather industry was reached the first position in the manufacturing of leather goods for the army purpose and civil demand. In the year of 1914, many of tanning factories and leather production factories were set up in the various parts of India and in cities of United Provinces. In order to develop the raw hide industry, the Govt. had sanctioned a number of demonstration parties which carry on an intensive propaganda to educate the owners of cattle, butchers in the slaughterhouses and the flayers in correct methods of flaying and curing by actual demonstration. Govt. of United provinces were taken such suitable steps in the development of the leather industry with regard to opening the leather working schools in various part of united provinces for the correct knowledge of leather manufacture such as Cawnpore, Agra, Fatehpur, Meerut, Bahraich, Allahabad, Barabanki, etc.

Leather Working School at Cawnpore

It was decided in a board meeting that the first leather working school would be opened at Cawnpore on 1st December 1915 and after the interview for the post of Assistant Head Master, Director of Industries decided to appointed to Mr. D.N. Rozdon as Assistant Head Master, officiating as Head Master, for a period of one year on a salary of Rs 250 per mensem (three months) with no allowance for quarter, that at the end of eleven months. Govt. proposal involved an expenditure of Rs 4,825 during that year.² There were some general features and functions of this new opening leather working school are as follows:³

- A. Age Limit** – It was recommended that candidates should be between 12 and 14 years of age.
- B. Class of Pupils** – An artisan class might be formed subsequently, but the aim should be to secure the young lad and teach him the right way to do things before they have had an opportunity of learning the wrong of way. Experience shows that the sons of Chamar were at this age peculiarly receptive.
- C. Qualification** – Students should have passed the lower primary standard.
- D. Stipends and Scholarships** – It was recommended that any stipends be paid to pupils as it should not be necessary to pay students to learn. But Scholarships might be granted to meritorious pupils for good progress and satisfactory attendance.
- E. Syllabus** – the course of instruction in the making of boots and shoes would be complete in itself and would be graded somewhere as follow:-
- The anatomy of the foot-broad principles
 - Drawing
 - Plane Geometry-elementary
 - Methods of measurements
 - Lasts
 - Clicking and cutting, with special reference to the quality and value of the different parts of the hide
 - Fitting
 - Bottoming
 - Finishing
- F. Period of course** – Course would be desirable a period of two years. After the duration of six months, schools should be practicable to pay Rs 3 for three months to the pupils.
- G. Staff** – It would be a Head Master, whether it would Indian or foreigner. A well-qualified assistant would be needed to aid in the instructional work; four mistries for practical help and demonstration work, a store clerk, and the usual manual servants.
- H. Building** – A building containing four rooms each 20' X 20' would suffice for a good many years; a hostel was not required but quarters for Head Master might be provided.
- I. Furniture** – Common work-benches, cutting boards, deal tables and stools would form the bulk of this, together with the usual appurtenances of an office.

J. Tools and Plant – The only machines needed would be two sewing machines – one for heavy and one for light work, and an eyelet machine. These were inexpensive. The tools would be the usual implements common use.

K. Stores –It would be sufficient to provide tanned leather and stores for production 250 pair's boots and shoes or their equivalent in other items of leather work. The sale of products should provide funds for replacements.

L. Location – The school should be situated in Cawnpore city.

M. Cost – The total cost of this school should be estimated as Rs 35,000/-.

Leather Working School at Cawnpore was started as an experimental measure on 4th January 1916 with five students only. But till October 1917, there were 43 students admitted in that school on the rolls out of which 14 were local residents and the rest were from outstations such as Saharanpur, Meerut, Aligarh, Agra, Mathura, Bareilly, Lucknow, etc. Of the 43 students on the register 31 were classified as Muslim, 3 were belonging to a shoe-maker class, 8 were Christians, and one was Brahman. The school was at that time in a rented building which was situated on the road to Nawabganj opposite Allenganj, Cawnpore. There were no fees for students and tools and implements were supplied free for training. No stipends were paid to pupils, but scholarships were being awarded to meritorious pupils for good progress and satisfactory attendance. The schools hours were from 10 am to 4 pm with 15 minutes break at midday. Students had the educational qualification when they were admitted to that school were 4 entrance standard; 10 middle standards; 23 upper primary standard and 6 lower primary standard.⁴ The method of instruction followed in that school was based on oral and written. The training given was in through kept with the general requirements of the local and provincial trade and especially aid producing efficient hand workmen. Schools were recognized by manufacturers and trading classes in the province and elsewhere, and it was not expected that pressed students would have any difficulty in finding good employment in factories or commencing small business on their own account. A student, who had got special training, had, after successfully completing his course and passing his first batch on August 1917, got an appointment as a master workman on the pay of Rs 40 per mensem in a factory.⁵

The school had done a great deal of practical work and fully employed in the making of boots, shoes, hold alls, bed straps, belts, trunks, dark bags, and other articles which were generally

supplied to Govt. officers, and which was taking a keen interest in the products of the school. The work done by the students of the school had always been officials who had elicited administration from officials who had visited the school as well as from the general public. The sale proceeds of the goods manufactured at the schools to Rs 1636, 2 annas and 9 paise until Oct 1917 and provided funds for replacements.⁶ The main feature of the training provided in the school was intended not merely to give useful information and practices, but to developed and disciplined the mind both generally and with special reference to problems which must be faced in business life after the school career was over.⁷ There was no other leather working school of that type in India at that time but the government was decided to set up the other school in united provinces on a permanent basis. The consensus of opinion was that the establishment of that school would encourage and foster the growth of the leather industry and would help to turn out more efficient labour for existing factories. Till October 1917, the recurring expenditure on the school was Rs 6,600, including of the officiating Head Master at Rs 275 per mensem.⁸

In 1920, the numbers of students were raised up to 45 and there had been a very large demand for students from employers and the school had not been able to cope with this demand. The ex-students were employed and well-spoken of by Messrs Cooper and Allen Company, North-west Tannery, Govt. Harness and Saddlery Factory, Messrs. Carlton and company Lucknow, Baroda Government and other employers. A large number had started was undoubtedly due to the ease with which students find remunerative employments. So, the Govt. decided to the appointment of a store keeper and a workshop attendant for the leather working school, Cawnpore. In December 1920, Govt. had increased the pay scale of Mr. Rozdon was Rs 500, 20 annas and 600 paise per three months. The designation might be altered from Head Master to that of Principal and the grant of free quarters or a house rent allowance in lieu would be considered when the new building for the leather working school in Creet's compound would be ready.⁹

Leather Working School at Meerut

Meerut was famous for making sports goods through leather. So, Govt. proposed to establish a new leather working school at Meerut on the basis line of the leather working school, Cawnpore. With regard this in resolution no. 23 passed by the Education section on 19th January 1919 that to the opening of a leather working school at Meerut, the board had an opinion that there was room

for such a school since leather industry already exists there on a large scale, and needs improvement. The committee supported Lala Madhusudan Dayal's request for the establishment of a school in Meerut on the basis line of school at Cawnpore. This would help the students of the school to find employment at Delhi and such other places after completing their education.¹⁰ The Govt. sanctioned the estimate of cost for leather working school at Meerut¹¹ was Rs 7848/-. The total charge, viz. Rs 7,848 had been entered into the schedule of new demands of the year 1920-21.¹²

Leather Working School at Agra

Dayalbagh institute was made very significant and deserving contribution to growth and advancement of the footwear industry in golden words in Agra. Dayalbagh tried to the development of industries at a time when depressed and discouragement was the order of the day and the young man felt frustrated owing to the keen competition of the British industries.¹³ Dayalbagh made authorities for taking under its own management the Govt. Leather Working School that was having its precarious existence in the city. The advantages to the luminous of leather working school were manifest as they were able to enjoy full facility for making shoes and processes under the expert guidance of the factory training in performing an operation on the shoe machine. Hundreds of young men had received useful training in footwear crafts in the Dayalbagh Leather Working School.¹⁴ But Dayalbagh authorities were admitted only those students who belonged to Radhaswami sects. So, Govt. recommended to Dayalbagh Institute to reserve as many as half seats for Muslims or for Hindus who did not belong to the Radhaswami sect. Govt. sanctioned the grant to Dayalbagh for such types of students. In this grant, Govt. sanctioned Rs 10,000 per annum should be made to the Dayalbagh Model Institute, Agra on 11th October 1925.¹⁵

Government Tanning School at Fatehpur

For the development of cottage tanning, Govt. of United provinces sanctioned the tanning classes for improving the method of tanning. Govt. was set up a new Govt. tanning School in Fatehpur which was started in 1927 for training artisans in tanning. A large number of young men from this province as well as from other provinces had taken advantage of the facilities available at this school. Tanning industry had made rapid strides in recent years and needed trained personnel

to handled modern machines and use of scientific processes of tanning. In order to meet this demand, it was proposed to admit high school passed student belong to science stream. So, school was equip them with training on the latest methods of tanning on a more sound and scientific basis. It was necessary to provide qualified staff and strengthen the existing equipment at the school. Further, the school was ideally suited for starting classes in leather goods manufacture also, as the raw materials required for the class would be readily available at the school. The students of this class would also have the advantage of knowing the rudimental of tanning which was an allied trade.¹⁶ Govt. also made the prospectus of the Govt. Tanning School at Fatehpur .¹⁷ After some time, Govt. sanctioned another proposal for starting a leather working class of 2 years' duration and strengthening the existing staff and equipment at the Govt. tanning School, Fatehpur. ¹⁸ The total cost of that proposal in the budget year was estimated to be Rs 1,05,700/- (Rs 38,700 recurring and Rs 67,000 non-recurring) and the total ultimate cost would be Rs 44,900.¹⁹

Leather Working School at Bahraich

The Noorul Uloom Leather working school at Bahraich was established at the end of 1937. This institution had 50 students in a batch and several subjects of leather manufacturing thought along with Arabic and Persian because its sources of income were insufficient. The inspection report of Govt. said that the school was located in a commodious house played at its disposal by the Raja of Nanpara, who charged no rent. In spite of Raja of Nanpara, it was said that the school would serve no useful purpose.²⁰ In this school, a new instructor, an ex-student of leather working school, Cawnpore had been engaged. He was an intelligent and efficient young man. He was visited the Bahraich since a few months before. He was very much impressed with the earnestness of the organizers and its teachers. He also looked that they were producing marketable goods and advised them to apply for a grant to Industries Department. With a request for a grant to this school, the Govt. recommended a grant of Rs 600/- for a year and it would be recommended an annual grant for this school in Bahraich in the year of 1938.²¹

Leather Working School at Allahabad

Till 1937, another leather working school was set up at Allahabad for the training of the students in making leather in this region. The British Govt. had proposed the actual expenditure for this

school was Rs 8065/- annually. The subjects taught in this school were Boot and Shoemaking techniques and making of leather suitcases techniques. The number of students had been taken admission in the first batch was 20 in this school. The duration of the course was two years. The British Govt. had also provided the stipends and scholarships approximately Rs 240/- for the poor students in this school. The British Govt. also proposed grant-in-aid of Rs 4112/- for the development of this school.²²

Leather Working School at Radauli, Bara Banki

Till 1937, another leather working school was set up at Radauli, Bara Banki by the British Govt. in this region. The British Govt. had proposed the actual expenditure for this school was Rs 3405/- annually. This school was famous for its training in leather work. The number of students had been taken admission in the first batch was 10 in this school. The duration of the course was two years. The British Govt. had also provided the stipends and scholarships approximately Rs 60/- for the poor students in this school. The British Govt. also proposed grant-in-aid of Rs 1370/- for the development of this school.²³

These leather working schools which were existed in different parts of United Provinces played an important role in the development of the leather industry and improvement of traditional and European techniques of leather production. These schools provide high qualified artisans to the emerging leather factories all over the country. These schools also played an important role in the improvement of socio-economic conditions of the leather workers who were getting their jobs in leather factories all over the country and abroad also.

Conclusion

Govt. of United provinces took place many steps and proposal to promote the leather industry, and set up many leather working schools in various cities of united provinces such as Cawnpore, Meerut, Agra, Fatehpur and Bahraich, etc. for trained the artisans with modern technique to improve the quality of leather and leather products. Govt. sanctioned much money on these types of schools in which manufacturing of leather and tanning process might be taught by the expert instructors to improve the quality of artisans with regard to leather craft. So, it can be said that these leather working schools in united provinces played a vital role to promote the leather

industry since 1915 and still worked in present time at Kanpur and Agra named similarly as Government Leather Institute.

Notes

¹Shrivastava, L. N., (1934). Leather Industry, p. 1.

²UPSA (Uttar Pradesh State Archives, Lucknow), Industries Dept., File no. 180/1915, Box no. 195, p. 3.

³ Ibid, pp. 5-6.

⁴ Ibid, p. 20.

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid, p. 21.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Progs. Of Govt. of United Provinces, Dept. Of Industries. File no. 180/1915, pp. 96-97.

¹⁰ Progs. Of Govt. of United Provinces, Dept. Of Industries. File no. 149/1919, p. 19.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 20

¹² Ibid

¹³ Misra, S. (1980). Living and working conditions of labourers in leather industry in Agra. Unpublished Ph. D. thesis. Agra: Institute of Social Studies, Agra University, pp. 11-12.

¹⁴ Ibid, pp. 13-14.

¹⁵ Progs. Of Govt. of United Provinces, Dept. Of Industries. File no. 674/1921, p. 7.

¹⁶ UPSA, Industries Dept., File no. 13/1955, Box no. 04, p. 1.

¹⁷ Progs. Of Govt. of United Provinces, Dept. Of Industries. File no. 318/1928, pp. 42-43.

¹⁸ UPSA, Industries Dept., File no. 13/1955, Box no. 04, p. 69.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ UPSA, Industries Dept., File no. 731/1937, Box no. 412, p. 1.

²¹ Ibid, pp. 1-2.

²² Annual Administration Report on the working of the Industries Department of the United Provinces for the year ending March 1936, p. 2.

²³ Ibid.