

The Role of carpet weaving women in the rural economy of Afghanistan

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ABSTRACT

Afghanistan is a country where 50% of the population is women and they play an important economic role in the leadership of family centers, the role of Afghan women is very important in the development of the country's economy visibly and invisibly. The Afghan carpet, which is world-renowned and unique in terms of its gender, nature, color, and design, has always been an adornment of Afghans' reception rooms, both inside and outside. Even wealthy non-Afghan families in Europe and America make their homes with this exquisite carpet. Also, this industry is one of the important export items of our country, and Afghan businessmen earn huge sums of money from this product every year. But these beautiful carpets and other handicrafts that amaze the viewer are woven by the weak hands of women and girls. Who spend 98% of their precious life above wooden workshops and in rooms full of dust, dim light, and sometimes humid while thousands of worries and troubles bother them.

Keywords: *Carpet, rural women, Development, Industry, Self-sufficiency*

Introduction

The history of carpet weaving, as far as is known, goes back five to six thousand years before Christ in West and Central Asia, and from the past to the present day, northern Afghanistan, which is considered the main center of carpet weaving, it has produced the most important and unrivaled carpet in the world. Therefore, the value and credibility of North's carpet can be traced back to its old and extensive connections with different aspects of people's lives in this land. The kings of this country considered North's carpets as a valuable gift to their peers and went to the most colorful and patterned carpets. Also, brides saw North's carpets as the most important part of their dowry and a symbol of their wedding glory.

Therefore, North's carpets have had their special value and credibility in different periods of history.

The carpet industry can be a great opportunity for entrepreneurship in Afghanistan, but now this industry is facing many problems. However, technical workers in the carpet industry have been able to produce the best carpets in the world with little wages. Afghan carpets are very popular among enthusiasts in world markets.

In terms of quality and texture, North's carpets are woven in more than thirty designs and types, including Morigal, Morikhan, and Babasadiqi designs, elephant feet, and wood colors, which are the most famous and delicate styles. In national and international reputable exhibitions that showcase carpets from other countries, North's carpets have been recognized as the best in terms of color, quality, and design. It is clear that any chemical combination cannot replace natural and plant-based colors and can have adverse effects over time. Any psychological perception of a stimulus can lead to psychological and mental breakdowns if not addressed properly.

Outline

Women should be recognized as a major force for potential economic growth in rural areas, as in our society, women have an equal role with men in the progress and economic growth of society. If urban and educated women take the initiative to work in government jobs and work in non-governmental institutions and consider it their duty to serve the country and promote economic growth, the role of rural women who live in villages is even greater. Because most rural women, in addition to doing household chores, are engaged in animal husbandry, poultry farming, agriculture, processing agricultural products, cooking, wool weaving, carpet weaving, sewing, embroidery, and other activities. In addition, in rural areas, women have a greater role than men in the family economy and domestic activities.

But is the carpet industry a point of convergence between art and economics? This industry has been able to not only bring its own artistic identity to the brink of eternity but also gain its national value and credibility. Over time, it has played an effective role in developing exports and thereby reducing unemployment and increasing national income. Although the basis of the economy in the north is agricultural and animal husbandry resources and its export is considered as one of the sources of monetary income, the carpet industry can also be considered effective in the economic growth and development process of the north for various reasons. It can be regarded as a key to many economic and social problems, as well as a solution to them. Carpet weaving is an ancient tradition in northern Afghanistan and according to statistics, about one million people are employed in this industry. However, what is certain is that only a small portion of the beautiful and delicate carpets of the north are exported as country products with many challenges outside the country. Unfortunately, the main profit goes to traders from other countries, especially Pakistani traders, because due to the lack of necessary infrastructure for washing and other carpet processes and final payments for carpets, a large volume of woven carpets are transferred to Pakistan and after the final stages, they are exported to the world market under the name of that country.

The importance of research

The carpet is one of the most ancient products of humanity, which was initially created out of necessity to solve problems. Essentially, carpets are associated with nomadic and

equestrian tribes. This is because humans at that time needed the means to protect against moisture and provide warmth while also being easy to transport quickly from one place to another during migration. Thus, the basic requirement for carpet weaving is wool and the ability to weave it. Carpet weaving has maintained its position throughout history due to its necessity and has become an ancient industry in many countries.

Research Objectives:

Throughout history, Afghanistan has been one of the world's leading exporters of handmade carpets. This reputation is owed to the hard work of carpet weavers and women living in the western and northern regions of Afghanistan. The products of this industry, which are offered to both domestic and international markets, include hand-woven carpets with various designs and patterns. One of the most famous groups of these carpet weavers is the Turkmen minorities who live in the northern provinces of the country. Despite being one of the most expensive commodities in the country and abroad, those who produce these products live in poor economic conditions.

The objective of this research is to highlight the importance of the carpet industry as a major source of income for rural residents, especially women who have lost their economic capabilities during years of war. This industry is a good factor in creating job opportunities and eliminating poverty.

The carpet weaving industry in Afghanistan has a long history and in recent years has become the largest sector of Afghanistan's export industry. This industry has been mainly invested in the northern provinces of the country, and countries that import Afghan carpets include Pakistan, Russia, India, United Arab Emirates, Turkey, England, the United States, Holland, Denmark, Brazil, Canada, Iran, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan.

Key Questions:

1. Do women carpet weavers have a role in the country's economy?
2. Does the carpet industry, which is specifically for women, grow and develop without the support of men?
3. Does the lack of access to sufficient materials affect women's progress in the carpet weaving industry?
4. Is there development in the carpet industry without government attention?
5. At what level can women carpet weavers contribute to the country's economic development?
6. Can Afghanistan's exports also formulate and implement such an economic policy?

Background of the Research

In ancient times, the Babylonians and Persians (9th century BC) knew about carpets. They covered their mansions and palaces with carpets and even made beautiful carpet walls. It is said in the old literature that your heart is full of knowledge, uses blue and red colors and you have to perform a valuable industry for your life. The beauty of the sky is also compared to the beauty of carpets. Similarly, there are notes about carpet dye materials in ancient books. If Nile and red colors are mentioned as the primary colors of carpets. (It is interesting to note that these two colors also form the colors of Afghan carpets. Because for centuries, blue and red have been used in the texture of Afghan carpets. (yadgari, 2011: 4 – 8)

Carpet is also one of the ancient products in Afghanistan, and apart from that, this country has been the heart of Central Asia, the homeland of nomadic tribes, horsemen, and shepherds, and for this reason, it is considered one of the main centers of carpet weaving, which fortunately has maintained its position to this day because the weaving of carpets and shepherds have been interconnected for centuries. Different tribes known for carpet weaving have sheep flocks or sometimes carpet weaving tribes keep their flocks of sheep to collect high-quality wool and carpets. If the first-class weavers in the provinces of Badghis, Herat, etc. use personal shepherd wool and other kinds of wool for their own Mori one-thread and two-thread carpets and other high-quality carpets. Also, the owners of Qaraqul sheep use Qaraquli wool for this industry. (Ghobar, 1987: 11 – 13)

In some European works, ancient Iranian carpets are categorized into two categories: Iranian and Iranian-Aryan and their design style and colors are differentiated from each other, and these Iranian-Aryan carpets were originally meant to be the products of Ariana carpets, which is Afghanistan. Because they were offered to international markets by Iranian merchants, the word Iranian has also increased in Aryan words. So that Afghanistan is noticed from a historical standpoint as the cradle of this industry in very ancient times, to the extent that Alexander the Great (334 BC) also mentioned capturing beautiful carpets in this land and bringing valuable carpets from the east as a gift to his mother (Olympias). (Poga chenikwa, 1978: 15 -18)

In the Islamic period, especially during the Ghaznavid era (999-1150 AD), carpets were used as a floor covering and decorative element in different cities of their influence, especially in the surrounding areas of Bactria or Balkh, which was called Al-Balad in Arabic or the mother of cities. For almost the first time, carpets were woven for religious purposes, i.e., prayer places. The oldest prayer place in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo has a Mihrab role and was built in Ramadan 902 AH, which was built by the workshops of carpet weaving in Khorasan. (Janis, 1968: 60)

In another scientific work related to Eastern carpets titled "The Science of Eastern Carpets," written by Geyawar vavranti and published in Leipsic in 1922, the first information about the various designs and flowers of Eastern carpets was given to Europeans by Arab historians in the Middle Ages. (Ashura, 1965: 14 – 16)

The art of carpet weaving in the East reached its peak in the 7th century AD and went through various stages of development. Especially during the Sassanian era, the Arabs obtained many spoils of carpets that have been preserved to this day. In the 14th and 15th centuries during the Timurid period, which was a time of scientific and industrial development, especially in painting and miniature art, Afghan carpets, especially the Herat style, reached their peak of development and have maintained their reputation as a source of unique carpet styles and the production of the highest quality Afghan carpets until today. Robert Clancy describes the beauty and elegance of the Herat carpet design in his book, stating on page 78 that except for some Isfahan products, most carpets exported to Europe under the name "Isfahan" are actually from Herat. (Sediqyan, 2015:163 – 167)

Similarly, Hermann Haack writes in his book "Authentic Carpets," published in 1956, that "like the Sara band style, the Herat style has influenced almost all carpet weaving areas except for Turkmenistan." It can be inferred from this that the Herat style and design have had a significant impact on carpet sources and weaving in neighboring areas. Especially clear evidence of the influence of the Herat style can be seen on some types of Iranian and

Anatolian carpets. Adam Olearius, a librarian, who traveled to the East in 1639 to see the countries of the East, wrote in his memoirs, "The carpet industry in Herat amazed me in Khorasan. I saw many Indian merchants there." The book is titled "Eastern Carpets."

The design of Herat carpets during this era was influenced by the painting and miniature art of the famous Afghan artist Behzad. In addition to the colors used in the Herat style, which were natural and obtained from sources such as plum roots for reddish hues, pomegranate skins for yellowish hues, and madder roots, the extraction of colors from these plants is still practiced in some areas of Herat and Badghis today. (Sadat,2011:126 – 138)

The carpet weaving industry in Afghanistan developed significantly after this era, and Afghan carpets were exported to a wide range of countries by others in the 17th and 18th centuries. Initially, carpets were made for the use of families and tribes and had less of a commercial aspect. When they were used for trade, they were usually purchased by foreign merchants, especially those from neighboring countries, and sold to other markets around the world. According to "The Science of Eastern Carpets" on page 67, "In the 19th century, European traveling salesmen visited major carpet production centers. One of the major centers for selling Afghan and Baloch carpets was marketed to European markets by Russian merchants (Tzarist Russia). Baloch carpets are distinguished from other Afghan carpets in terms of their color, design, and texture."(Herman, 1956: 138 – 142)

Clachy writes on page 212 of his book that in the 8th century, Herat carpets were a significant commodity in London markets. He describes the design and border of Herat carpets, which are decorated with specific flower and leaf designs. These flowers and leaves are arranged in such a way that they also form different shapes, such as animal shapes like fish, etc. The borders of these carpets also have distinct shapes and designs, which are characteristic features of Herat carpet weaving. (Amiri,2011: 83 – 85)

After World War II, Afghan carpets were purchased through London markets and sold to other parts of the world. At that time, there were numerous Afghan representatives in London. Although Afghan carpets were previously sold to European markets by third parties, Afghanistan maintained its reputation for its ancient and eastern product, the Afghan carpet. Olershan sheurman notes in his book on pages 63 and 64 that Afghan carpets also have specific shapes and designs based on their production source, and based on these characteristics, carpets made in different regions such as Qarqin, Khiwa, etc. can be easily distinguished from each other. He also explains the difference between Baloch carpets and other types of Afghan carpets, which are related to their different colors. (Sediqyan,2015: 52 – 54)

Hermann Haack writes in his book on page 58 about authentic carpets: "Those who wish to deeply understand and identify eastern carpets must first study the geographical location of their production sources. Similarly, anyone who wants to distinguish eastern carpets from each other based on their production sources must know that eastern carpets are one of the four main sources of carpets and this connection must be made systematically. Otherwise, even if some information is obtained, the research will still be uncertain." These four sources are Anatolia, the Caucasus and Armenia, Persia, and finally Central Asia, including Turkistan and Turkmenistan, and their southern states such as Bukhara, Afghanistan, and Balochistan. (Herman, 1956: 36 – 38)

Rodlif loygy compares Iranian and Afghan rugs in his work, noting that Iranian rugs are usually adorned with plant motifs such as flowers, branches, and leaves that are similar

and harmonious with each other. In contrast, the designs and patterns of Afghan nomadic rugs are mostly natural geometric shapes that are appropriately divided over the surface of the rug, and these patterns are mostly placed side by side without uniformity or are connected linearly. It should be noted that the design and pattern of Afghan rugs have evolved over the centuries. In ancient times, rugs in Afghanistan were 100% woven by women, and now most of them are woven and completed by this group. All of these designs, patterns, and flowers in Afghan rugs are the product of the imagination and creative abilities of young Afghan girls who have a special interest in beauty and decoration. Therefore, during the weaving process of the rugs, they express their imaginative abilities and intellectual talents in Afghan rugs. Each flower and design in Afghan rugs are an independent shape made up of separate elements.

These designs and patterns in Afghan rugs are derived from the shapes of young girls' jewelry, household utensils, children's shapes, and some household ornaments such as almonds, silverware commonly used by Afghan women, "chamcha gul" (a spoon-shaped flower), "adam haq" (a child's shape), "kunjak gul" (necklace for girls), "qach naag" (branch of a tree), "tanga gul" (old coin), and The shape of wheat that the young maidens of different regions of Afghanistan tie on their hats has a source. All of these terms are related to young girls and their future lives, which is why the comparison made by Western authors about Afghan rugs is accurate in this regard. (Lutfy,2013: 7 – 9)

The flowers in Afghan rugs have been created over different centuries, and it is speculated that Afghan nomadic tribes initially produced monochromatic rugs in natural wool colors such as black and white. Later on, black and white striped rugs were woven, which is still a common practice in the production of woolen rugs in Afghanistan. Over time, as tribes learned to extract dyes from plants and vegetation, colored rugs became more prevalent. Initially, these rugs had either one color or a four-square pattern, but gradually, geometric shapes emerged, which are now associated with young girls and women. These shapes have been woven into Afghan rugs for several centuries and have taken on the form of flowers and patterns, with each flower and pattern being composed of separate and distinct elements. To this day, this description remains true. There are 57 different types of Afghan rugs, each named after the region or tribe that produces them. The materials used to weave these rugs are all made in Afghanistan, including the looms and other equipment. (Rahimy,2011: 31 – 37)

Contribution of textile industries to export development.

Afghan rugs with their attractive designs and artistic craftsmanship have been shining for years among the carpets of the world. In the global market, beautiful eyes are drawn to the art studio of Afghanistan. The carpet industry can be considered a point of convergence between art and economy.

Afghan carpets have not only preserved their artistic identity but have also played an effective role in developing exports, reducing unemployment, and increasing national income. (Fayez, 2012: 17 – 21)

Although agriculture and animal husbandry are the basis of Afghanistan's economy, the export of agricultural and livestock products is considered one of the sources of the country's foreign exchange earnings. However, for various reasons, the carpet industry can also contribute to Afghanistan's economic growth and development process and can serve as a knot-opener for many economic and social issues. On the one hand, the raw materials needed for carpet weaving are mainly supplied within Afghanistan, and on the other hand, this art has

been a common tradition in the country for centuries, and many people are employed in this industry. (Wafa. 2011: 19)

Using domestic production leads to an increase in economic level and improvement in the country. The National Unity Government is trying to support Afghan entrepreneurs so that better quality domestic products can be offered to the market.

One of the most valuable domestic products in Afghanistan is carpets. Afghan carpets won the Oscar Industry Award at the largest international exhibition held in Hanover, Germany in 2013. In this exhibition, 2,600 different countries participated. The Oscar Industry Award was used to recognize the superiority of color and specific designs in Afghan carpet production. It was unique in its kind. The governments of the time have regular plans for the progress and development of the industrialists in the illegal sectors so that they can strengthen the domestic industrialists. (Rayt,2009: 84 – 88)

To support and strengthen the private sector, Afghan Finance Minister visited the Afghan Carpet and Kilim Center. Supporting the private sector is one of the major policies of the Afghan government, and it can bring about economic self-sufficiency for Afghanistan. The Afghan Carpet and Kilim Center have received approval from the Good Weave International organization and ISO-9001 for various aspects of the carpet industry, including wool production, various types of felt, and hand-woven Afghan carpets. The center has also created the first Afghan carpet training institute called "Sheep to Sheep," which teaches various aspects of carpet weaving. Supporting domestic investors in advancing the country's progress and self-sufficiency is an effective policy for the government and national unity. Creating transit facilities, providing long-term credits and loans, and building necessary infrastructure can attract and encourage carpet weavers and provide opportunities for the growth of this industry and related industries such as wool production, cutting, washing, and design. This can also provide relief for millions of unemployed people. In addition to economic benefits, attention to this issue has many positive social implications, such as reducing migration and crimes that are caused by unemployment. It is expected that with government participation in infrastructure and attracting necessary investments, as well as private-sector collaboration, this industry will have significant growth in the coming years. The hard work and efforts of Afghan artisans can lead to success and prosperity for the Afghan carpet industry, which can play an effective role in developing exports and, in turn, the economic development of Afghanistan. (Sayar,2005: 15 – 18)

The stages of the evolution of the carpet industry in Afghanistan:

Afghan carpets were exported to a wide range of countries in the 17th and 18th centuries. Initially, carpets were made for family use and had less commercial significance. When they were used for trade, they were usually purchased by foreign merchants, mainly from neighboring countries, and then sold to other markets around the world. In this regard, one Western researcher in his book "Eastern Carpets" states: "In the nineteenth century, European traveling merchants went to major carpet production centers. The bulk of Afghan and Baluchi-Afghan carpet sales were offered to European markets by Russian traders. (Yawar,1990: 65-68)

Carpets were mostly limited to the northern provinces of the country and were not particularly well-known in other provinces. Although carpets were woven in different parts of Afghanistan before, the peak of carpet weaving in Afghanistan was between 1990 and 2008.

During these years, carpet weaving expanded throughout Afghanistan, and this was the starting point for the expansion of this industry in the country.

The role of women in the evolution of the carpet industry in Afghanistan:

During this period, Afghanistan was introduced as one of the well-known countries in the field of handmade carpets, producing more than two million square meters of carpets annually. After the promotion of colorful carpets in Afghanistan, this industry experienced significant growth in the country. Colorful carpets played a significant role in the popularity and expansion of Afghan carpets. Moreover, the naturalness of all stages of weaving colorful carpets was the main reason for distinguishing Afghan carpets from other types of carpets. Colorful carpets have high quality, and this type of carpet can be easily distinguished from other types. Colorful carpets are made from wool, as its name suggests, and this gives a special shine and beauty to the carpet.

The most important factor that made Afghan carpets globally famous was the 100% natural materials used, which are naturally processed from start to finish. The second important factor is the process of weaving Afghan carpets, which is entirely manual and requires a lot of work. Our carpet weavers say, "Weaving a carpet is like building a wall from hair." It is challenging to imagine the stages where wool turns into a strong and decorative wall.

Problems of carpet weaving women at Home

As can be seen, turning to this profession in childhood and adolescence shows a higher graph. Additionally, innocent children become addicted to drugs such as opium from birth because they need to remain calm and not disturb their mothers while they work on their carpets. A woman named Safargul from Ghazni said, "I give my children a small amount of opium until the age of two, just enough to keep them calm. When they turn two and are weaned off breast milk, I wean them off opium too. I know it's harmful, but if I don't give them opium, who will weave my carpets?" If a young girl sits in the workshop for too long to avoid the pain of carpet weaving, she gradually starts using opium. Thus, a carpet weaver mother takes care of her child for up to two years. Later, when the child grows up and can solve their problems, the poor mother doesn't even have time to wash her hands or face, and the child is left responsible for taking care of their sister or brother.

Although having children creates difficulties for carpet weaver women, on average each woman has 5-6 children. When a woman with 8 children was asked why she doesn't prevent childbirth, she said, "It's God's will. If someone defies God's will, they sin."

Another woman who lost her child due to excessive opium use said, "My first child died due to the effects of excessive opium use. In addition to losing my child, I also suffered from my husband's abuse. I accepted many difficulties but didn't give my children opium."

Carpet weavers mostly deprive their daughters of education and upbringing, as mentioned above, and engage them in this profession from childhood. In general, women interviewed said they learned this profession from their mothers. A mother is often the one who naturally creates the opportunity for her child's exploitation and unconsciously traps them in her bitter fate.

When 207 mothers of carpet weavers were asked if they wished their daughters would also become carpet weavers, 93 said no. 114 women said yes for various reasons. 51 said they

wanted their hands to be light. 46 said it would be shameful if their daughters didn't weave carpets and the price would be lower. They say (Turkmen say a girl who doesn't weave carpets is shameless), meaning that a carpet weaver's daughter has a high status. People in the community are more interested in choosing a bride who weaves carpets because a carpet weaver bride can pay for her wedding within two years.

In general, this class of people believes that if a girl goes to school, she will be delayed in carpet weaving. Their motto is that girls should learn carpet weaving and take care of household chores, while boys should go to school and study. Of course, educated carpet weaver girls have a life free of pain and sorrow, but none of them, including their excellent apprentices, have time for household chores and preparation for school and exams. And most of their peers avoid them because of their lack of cleanliness and hands stained with carpet dye, which in turn causes children to become discouraged from continuing their education. When asked about the reasons for the illiteracy of women and girls, they listed various reasons: 265 women said that 85 of them said that our people do not promote girls' education. 68 of them said that their fathers did not allow them to go to school. 56 said that at the time when we should have gone to school, there was no girls' school in our area. 24 of them spent their time weaving carpets due to poverty, misery, and lack of opportunity to go to school. 21 of them considered unfavorable conditions and disorder, namely the war period, as the reason for not studying. Four of them were not allowed by their brothers to go to school, and three said that their parents did not have the blessing of literacy. Three said they did not know the language as the reason for not going to school, and only two said they were not interested in going to school.

A young girl who has overcome many difficulties to reach the eleventh grade said that every day before going to school, her mother harasses her so much that she finally cries because her mother suggests that she no longer goes to school because people speak badly about them. But the poor girl tries hard to continue her education and complete the twelfth grade. When asked about this, her mother replied, "Our people are afraid of the shadow of education. Believe it or not, many relatives have cut off their relationships with us because we let our daughter go to school. I can stop her from going to school right now, but my heart aches for her because she cries a lot."

From the above information, it is clear that carpet weaver women are generally illiterate and a few who are engaged in lower-level professions may be deprived of the blessing of literacy due to marriage or carpet weaving work.

Another problem that carpet weaver women face is marriage. The contradictions in this area are surprising. Some girls get married at a young age, and some marriages take place at older ages. Out of 300 women who were supported by the Rabia Balkhi Skills Support Office, 225 of them were married, including 84 young widows. 141 of them were married, including 75 bachelors, 17 of whom were young adult daughters who missed the chance to get married due to various reasons such as family economic necessity, father's death, and lack of opportunity. The remaining 58 were other daughters between the ages of 10-18 who were eligible for marriage according to local customs and traditions. However, in the marriage and spouse selection section, none of them were decision-makers, and most decisions were made by their fathers or, in the absence of their fathers, their brothers or sisters' husbands. While in this sacred Islamic matter, the consent of both parties is essential and accepted. These oppressed women are still unaware of their dowry and sometimes another girl is substituted.

Their marriage is more of buying a production machine than forming a family and producing offspring. When asked how long they have not woven carpets after marriage, they answered as follows: 39 of them said they had no vacation and started weaving carpets the day after the wedding. 101 of them said they started weaving carpets from one week to 15 days after the wedding. And 85 of them said they had more than a month off.

In the situation that carpet weaver women are in, which we have been reminded of, other women who are also engaged in professions such as embroidery, carpet weaving, kilim weaving, chador weaving, jacket, and sock knitting, etc. face similar problems. That is, in reality, all women who are engaged in production activities at home and are considered part of the informal economy face various problems.

Health problems of carpet weaving women

Because all hard work is harmful to health, carpet weaving and other similar jobs such as rug weaving also harm the health of those who engage in them. A survey conducted by the Rabia Balkhi Skills Support Office with 300 carpet weaver women revealed the following results:

- 91 of them complained of joint pain, especially in their feet, back, and shoulders.
- 70 of them suffer from headaches, depression, and sadness.
- 50 of them have stomach problems.
- 25 of them have various gynecological problems.
- 24 of them have eye problems (either blurred vision or pain).
- 8 of them admitted to giving their children drugs, even though signs of addiction are visible in their facial expressions, eyes, and way of speaking. However, they deny this issue. This hidden activity also severely damages their personality.

Health warnings:

Most doctors say that many skin types are sensitive to carpet materials, which causes skin diseases in carpet weavers. At the same time, respiratory doctors also consider one of the major respiratory problems of carpet weavers to be caused by unhygienic conditions of the materials used by carpet weavers. These doctors recommend that families never place carpet materials inside their homes and within reach of their children to minimize the side effects of this issue. In addition to these two, joint pain and bone diseases are among the diseases caused by carpet weaving. Physicians say that this issue should be taken seriously and that children can develop bone diseases due to this difficult job. These doctors still emphasize that "children under the age of eighteen should not engage in carpet weaving due to the completion of bone growth age; because the bones of these children are soft and vulnerable and may cause various diseases in these children from bone deformities or their bones may grow incompletely."

Insignificant income

Carpet weaving has a low income. This job takes a lot of time and its wages cannot provide for many families. Although this job may be profitable for carpet investors and traders, it is insignificant for its employees. Moreover, most carpet weavers start this profession in childhood, which can expose these children to numerous health, well-being, and psychological damages due to the side effects of carpet weaving. Nine-year-old Zainab is one

of those children who currently resides with her family in Kabul. She has become an apprentice weaver and has earned 150 Afghanis for her three months' work from her employer. She is satisfied and happy with this small income and says she wants to buy a headscarf with the money. Zainab adds that her mother told her to "learn the carpet design." Perhaps this is the hardest part of carpet weaving because it is complex and ambiguous. She says that after learning the carpet design with her mother and brother at home, she rents materials to weave a carpet. She says that carpet weaving was difficult at first, but she has gotten used to it every day.

In Kabul, employers pay 2200, 2400, and 2500 Afghanis per meter of carpet woven. However, this amount of money is not paid equally by every employer. According to some reports, carpet weaving was one of the major professions of Afghan immigrants in Pakistan in the 1990s. In addition, after the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan, this profession gained serious momentum. But now, the Afghan carpet market has almost stagnated. Therefore, this profession has also remained behind its past momentum. Despite all this, many people have made a living through this profession so far. However, according to many people's beliefs, the difficulty of carpet weaving cannot provide good wages for child laborers and their families. Moreover, the side effects of carpet weaving and its impact on the health of children and women in Afghanistan are severely reported.

Hand weaving women's carpets as an industry

In the current economic conditions, creating employment is considered one of the important policies of the government. Carpet weaving and rug making are practical industries that, with low and fixed costs and the use of simple equipment, create significant employment opportunities in the country's economy. In addition to weaving, this industry also creates other activities and jobs that increase employment rates, including yarn spinning, dyeing, designing, finishing, exporting, and trading.

Rug weaving and employment for women

Rug weaving is a profession that is most prevalent in villages and outskirts of cities, which provides income for the people in these areas and increases the production of carpets and rugs, contributing to the growth of the industry in the country. If rug weaving is supported by the government and private centers in these neighborhoods and areas, it can prevent active labor migration to cities and can greatly help maintain order and security, leading to the development and progress of the country. (Mehdi zada Kabuli,2009: 23- 25)

The Role of Women in Afghan rug designs

In the early days of the rug industry, it was not as widespread as it is now and was mostly limited to a few northern provinces of the country. The flowers used in rug designs at that time had different names, including Filpai, Saroqi, Mori, and others. In terms of color, flower, and design, which have been mentioned in this article before, currently, more than 500 types of rugs are made in Afghanistan, some of which have been innovated by companies or even rug weavers themselves.

In the 1990s, multicolored rugs became prevalent, with various flower designs even including foreign designs. During this period, a person named "Haji Khal Mohammad" introduced a new design into rug patterns that later became famous under his name. Initially,

yellow colors were used in multicolored rugs, but later Ziegler patterns were employed. Later, various patterns were introduced into the rug industry, such as Aynayi, Bakhtiyari, Sirapi, Harisi, and others, which were then innovated by companies in the rug design sector and presented to the market as multicolored rugs. Around 1997, very delicate rugs called "Kazakh" were introduced to the market by Afghans. Since then, many innovations have been made in rug designs, usually carried out by the companies themselves. The warp, weft, and colors of these rugs are all made of dyed wool. (Ikdar, 2011:120)

The function of pregnant women during pregnancy

The role of pregnant women during pregnancy is important. If there are no specific pregnancy-related issues, they can continue most jobs until delivery. In some cases, it is beneficial for the mother to leave the house and do some work to reduce attention to their pregnancy and pressure from unawareness of pregnancy-related problems, especially during the first trimester when the mother copes with nausea and pregnancy stress. Sitting for a long time is risky for pregnant women as it can cause blood clots in veins, especially veins in the legs. The solution is for pregnant women to stand up and move every two hours, or at least shake their legs to reduce the risk of this problem. They should also wear loose clothing when working and avoid sitting for long periods. They should not tire themselves during this period and should rest as soon as they feel tired. Regarding activities that require a lot of activity, it is not a problem for pregnant women to do them since they are used to it. However, they should avoid lifting heavy loads and never carry heavy things during pregnancy. Pregnant women should avoid going up and down too much. They should stop working and rest before they get tired and start working again. Organize mealtime so that they are not hungry while working, as fatigue and hunger lead to a decrease in fetal movements and are worrying for the mother. Fatigue causes premature labor; uterine contractions begin and the patient may complain of constant abdominal pain. Chemicals such as paint and dust from polishing are harmful to pregnant women, so they should use a mask while working and avoid them as much as possible. Pregnant women should work no more than the minimum working hours per week. Research recommends that pregnant women work 24 hours a week, meaning they work 4 hours a day. Women who work more than 32 hours a week during pregnancy are more likely to have a crying baby or give birth to a baby weighing less than normal. In addition, pregnant women also face problems during this period. (Arto,1993: 13-17)

Conclusion

Despite the widespread use of advanced machinery in all fields around the world today, Afghanistan's traditional handicraft industries, especially carpet weaving, still hold particular importance both domestically and internationally. Afghan carpets are highly valued worldwide, and account for more than 20% of the country's total exports, making it a major export product. Unfortunately, those who have the most valuable share and contribution to the country's exports are not receiving any significant financial or moral rewards. These individuals, most oppressed and helpless women at home, work long hours and their wages do not equate to the difficult and exhausting nature of their work. Afghanistan's labor laws do not recognize them and their contribution to the domestic production of the country is often ignored because they belong to the informal economy. Moreover, they have to take care of

their children, have no right to education, no right to choose their spouse, and can be sold like a machine or a carpet weaving device.

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