

# DRAWBACKS IN AGRA FOOTWEAR INDUSTRY

**\*Dr. Musheer Ahmed**

## Abstract

*Agra, India's most diverse as well as most tightly knit footwear cluster is a prime example of an artisanally rooted, low caste cluster with predominantly cottage/small scale manufacturers. It was specialized in cheap hand made build up shoes. Agra is characterized by a caste based artisanal community that makes and a traders community that sale.*

*The shoe industry in Agra is characterized by an abundance of highly skilled workers and concentration of necessary ancillary units. In addition Agra has a well developed whole sale market both for raw materials and shoes. The ancillary factories also exist for the production of leather board, microcellular rubber sheet (MCR), EVA sheets, shoe lasts, PVC, TPR, PU unit sole, air mixed PVC sole and footwear tools, equipments and machines. The rapid changes that have taken place by a way of technological development, transformation of specialized skills, organizational improvements on one hand and tremendous changes in demand for variety of shoes both in domestic and international markets on other hand, were responsible for the growth of this industry in Agra.*

### Agra Footwear Industry:

Agra is one of the important centres for shoe production in India since medieval Mughal Era. The footwear industry was constantly growing and gradually occupied one of the most prestigious places in the country. But it is the most tragic that footwear industry did not follow any regulated pattern of development, some grew in to most modern and sophisticated and while other remained old and traditional.

Agra is a larger footwear manufacturing center, in India, having around 60,000 skilled workers and providing employment to around four lack persons in around mostly 5,000 cottage (home based), SMEs entrepreneurs producing about 90 million pairs of shoes and 110 million pairs of sandals and chappals annually, which satisfies approximately 53% of the domestic requirement of the footwear. Traditionally, this has also been a center of cottage industry production, based on family run production units operating from home, however as the production volume increased, these individual units converted into the organized units, there by improving working standards and conditions. About 25% population of Agra city is directly or indirectly earning their livelihood through this industry.

### Drawbacks of Agra Footwear Industry:

Although Agra Footwear Industry is the oldest and largest footwear manufacturing and export centre of India still it suffers from certain drawbacks some of which may be summarized as under:

### A. Inadequate Sanitary Facilities:

The condition under which a worker works has a great impact on his health, efficiency and quality and also on his psychology of work. It is said, environment creates a man and hence, if we improve the environment, we will improve the man to get the best out of him.

Section 11 and 12 of factories Act, 1948 states that the occupier is required to keep the factory premises clean. He should make arrangements for sweeping and removing dirt and refuse daily.

During the course of investigation, it was found that about 70% of factories under survey were not cleaned daily. It can be seen in the table 15.

**TABLE - 15**  
Cleanliness and Disposal of Wastes and Effluents

S.No.	No. of Factories	Health measures
1	18	Cleanliness and Disposal of Waste and Effluents.
2	33	No Disposal of Waste and Effluents and no Cleanliness.
Total	51	

It is evident from the table that there was proper cleanliness and disposal of wastes and effluents in only 18 factories that comes to only 35%. The cleanliness in other factories was almost unsatisfactory.

Section 11 and 12 of factories Act, further states that the factory premises should be whitewashed once in

**\*Dr. Musheer Ahmed, Dept. of Business Administration Aligarh Muslim University**

14 months or revarnished and painted once in three years. All doors, windows, frames, etc should also be painted or varnished at least once in five years.

It was noticed that some factories were not repainted and white washed for many years. Only 19 factories, out of 51 taken for survey were white washed properly. The doors of most of the footwear units were also not repainted for many years. Hence, dirt was accumulated at various places and spider webs were found. These all things make the environment inside the factory polluted.

Section 14 of the factories act, 1948 connotes that accumulation and inhalation of dust and fumes, which is injurious for the health of workers, should be removed by taking effective measures but the measure to prevent it have not been adopted by Agra footwear manufacturers.

There is lack of sanitary facilities in Agra footwear industry. A few factories have brick laid floors, while some have stone paved floors; in some factories the floors are uneven. It is not possible to clean uneven floor properly.

The floor in footwear industry of Agra District may be classified into three categories floor made of brick, pucca floor and Kaccha floor. The following table shows classification of floor in Agra footwear industry.

**TABLE - 16**  
Classification according to Floor

S. No.	No. of Factories	Condition of floor
1	27	Brick laid floor
2	12	Pucca Floor
3	12	Kuccha Floor
Total	51	

Under survey work of 51 factories, it was found that 27 factories had brick laid floor. That was uneven. Only 12 factories out of 51, had pucca floor but that was not cleaned properly, while the remaining 12 factories had kuccha floor. The kaccha floor creates a lot of dust and dirt in the factory. The same was found in these factories.

Some footwear factories were cleaned in the morning once in a day, while some were cleaned once in a week. Dust and dirt was not removed properly. It was also found that there was no cleanliness in almost all the factories the atmosphere was found to be quite unhygienic for the labour. Dustbins were not kept for waste materials. These all things result into unhealthy environment inside the factory.

During the survey, it was also found that there was no proper drainage system in most of the footwear units. Labour in Agra footwear industry work under humiliating conditions. They work in a polluted environment. The conditions are unhygienic which may affect the health of the labour and cause many diseases. They are not able to breathe properly.

When asked about the sanitary facilities from the manufacturers, they told that it is not possible to keep the factory clean all the time, as the manufacturing process of footwear creates a lot of waste. This argument is not correct, as there is waste in almost all the industries and manufacturers can keep the factory clean.

Dirty environment inside the factory may cause a negative effect on labours' health. The smell in the air may affect their respiratory system. The polluted environment inside the factory affects their lungs, disease like tuberculosis, asthma, bronchitis, etc may spread. This is actually happening in Agra. The incidence of tuberculosis and other chest diseases is as much as 30% of total labour population in this industrial city of Uttar Pradesh.

Unhygienic surroundings become the cause of their bad health and they suffer from the problem of backaches, the dust and dirt affect their eyesight, the labour also suffer from the diseases like short sightedness, cataract etc. During the course of investigation, it was found that about 30% workers taken for survey were suffering from these diseases. They get tired soon. To remove their tiredness, they pick up some bad habits like smoking, drinking and Gutka chewing, etc.

Polluted environment is not only harmful for labour, but also for the employer. The labour does not work willingly in unhygienic condition. As a result, the production is low. This in the loss of employer also. All the labour want cleanliness inside the factory. A neat and clean environment in the factory improves labours' health, saves them from various diseases, brings their interest towards work and also brings happiness and loyalty towards employers.

**b. Lack of proper illumination and natural lightening:-**

Lack of suitable lighting is one of the serious problems affecting labours' eyesight section 17 of the factories Act, implies that adequate and sufficient provision should be made for natural and artificial lighting. In Agra footwear industry, there are no suitable arrangements, of natural and artificial lighting, therefore, the workers have to work in low light which is very injurious for their eyes. The lighting situation in the factories under survey is given in the table 17.

**TABLE - 17**  
Condition of Lighting

S. No.	No. of Factories	Condition of Lighting
1	29	Bad and Insufficient Lighting
2	22	Sufficient Lighting
Total	51	

The data in table 17 shows that there was sufficient arrangement of lighting only in 22 factories. There was insufficient lighting arrangement in 29 factories. The lighting in these factories was found to be unsatisfactory.

The researcher found that in these factories, there

was only one bulb or one tube light in every room and shoes were being manufactured in inadequate lighting. The researcher found no side windows for natural lighting in most of the footwear units.

Problem of power is one of the most serious problems being faced by all industries in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The labour has to suffer the most. The quality of the power supply in Agra is neither continuous nor up to the mark, as there are many voltage fluctuations, load shedding and frequent tripping.

The electric power supply in Agra is out for 5 to 6 hours daily. The manufacturers of registered companies use generator and can afford its expenses. There is not much problem to the labour working in registered companies viz., Davar Shoes, Metro and Metro, Roger etc.

But the labour in small-scale and cottage units are facing too many problem due to short supply of power. It is not possible for small scale manufacturers to use generator. During the course of investigation the researcher found that most of the footwear manufacturers do not have generator.

Some of the manufacturers are so poor that they manufacture shoes at their homes, they do not employ labour, instead, all family members help in producing footwear. When they are too poor to employ labour, how can they use generator?

There is obstruction in production due to irregular power supply. There is less effect on manual labour but they also do not want to work in the absence of light. This causes loss of wages and productivity. Shortage of power brings unwillingness to work, as a result many workers who come from villages, leave the work and return to villages for farming. Newcomers knowing the fact that there is shortage of power in Agra, do not want to come to Agra. Hence, Agra footwear industry suffers from the lack of newcomers. Many workers complained that there is no electricity for almost 5-6 hours daily and they have to work in every condition whether there is light or no light, otherwise they loose their wages. Inadequate lighting at the place of work decrease labour's efficiency and as a result, the output decreases. Most of the factories situated in Agra are old. If the factory premises are old and the environment inside the factory is dirty, the natural lighting becomes unsatisfactory. Moreover, dust and dirt gets accumulated on the walls, which makes the lighting worse, it affects the eyesight of labour and labour feel themselves tired soon in the absence of proper lighting. As a result, they do not take interest in work. It is a fact that natural lighting is more beneficial than artificial lighting but arrangement of natural lighting is difficult for the manufacturers who have already established their factories, while it is easier for the manufacturers who want to enter in this field or who want to renovate their factories.

### **c. Poor Ventilation:**

Adequate ventilation is necessary for labour's good health. The rooms in most of the footwear factories in Agra are small and in some of the rooms, there is not even one window. The factories are not adequately ventilated by circulation of fresh air and labour feel suffocated. The waste

in the factory makes the air polluted. Section 13 of the factories Act, states that the factory premises should be adequately ventilated by circulation of fresh air. For providing adequate ventilation in the factories, the act stresses that the building should be constructed in such a way that there should be provision for cross ventilation in each room for fresh air.

In Agra footwear industry, the manufacturers of newly established units had taken care of it and the construction of their factory provided for adequate ventilation. But in case of old units, the provisions of adequate ventilation were quite unsatisfactory. The researcher visited various footwear units and found that there were no exhaust fans in all the small-scale and cottage units for the circulation of fresh air. Exhaust fans were found in a few registered companies. The situation of ventilation in the factories chosen for research is given in the table 18.

**TABLE - 18**  
Condition of Ventilation

S. No.	No. of factories	Condition of ventilation
1	34	Ceiling fans
2	16	Ceiling fans and exhaust fans
3	1	Table fans
Total	51	

The above table shows the condition of ventilation in Agra footwear industry. It is evident from the table that there were ceiling fans in 34 units taken for survey, while the exhaust fans were found only in 16 factories. Table fans were found in 1 unit. Thus, a large number of Agra footwear manufacturers, have not set up exhaust fans in their factories only a few of the manufactures, who are engaged in exports, have set up exhaust fans in their factories. A few manufacturers producing footwear at their residential houses have not set up even ceiling fans. Only one table fan was running there, that was insufficient for workers. Moreover, the rooms in Agra footwear industry were very small and congested.

The following table shows the condition of rooms in Agra footwear industry.

**TABLE - 19**  
Condition of Rooms

S. No.	No. of Factories	Size of Rooms
1	12	Big and Airy
2	21	Small and Congested
3	18	Small but Airy
Total	51	

It is evident from the table that only 12 factories had big and airy rooms. There were sufficient number of doors and windows. The other 18 factories had small rooms but they were airy, as there were 2-4 windows in these factories the remaining 21 units out of 51 had small and congested rooms. Small and congested rooms make the environment polluted.

D. Inadequate Temperature and Humidity:

The climate of India is better than the climate of other countries. It is too much hot in summer seasons. In Agra too, the climate is hot and the temperature is very high. Section 15 of the factories Act, enumerates that comfortable temperature should be maintained in every workroom and artificial increase in humidity should be controlled by the use of purified water. Among the several factories, when the researcher visited a factory during the research, he found that many workers were working in a small room. They were cutting the upper part of the shoes and some of them were pasting the soles. They all were manual workers. It was the month of August and time of noon, so it was quite hot. The owner of the factory had generator but he did not use it even when there was no electricity. Other rooms were inside the factory. The workers working there were feeling suffocated.

The situation of temperature in the 30 factories taken for survey is given in the following table.

**TABLE - 20**  
Condition of Temperature and Humidity

S. No.	No. of Factories	Condition of Temperature
1	38	Bad and Hot Temperature
2	13	Adequate Temperature
Total	51	

The table given above shows the condition of temperature in Agra Footwear Industry. It is evident from the table that adequate temperature was maintained only in 13 units, comprising all the registered units. The remaining 38 units had bad and hot temperature. There was humidity also. They do not feel much problem during winter season but they feel themselves tired soon in summer season. When the temperature is high in the factory, the workers, ability to work does not improve. It is not possible for them to work properly in humidity and high temperature. Although the workers have become habitual to work in hot climate, if the condition is improved, their efficiency will increase. Moreover, they will not feel tired and irritated.

e. Lack of Proper Space for Workers:

The congested place affects the workers' health to a great extent, therefore, the workplace should not be overcrowded by workers. During the survey of 51 units, the researcher found the place to be congested where the workers were working. As a large number of units in Agra are household units, there was no proper space for workers. In some of the household units, about 5-6 workers were working in a small room. Congested place is harmful for labour in various ways; it gives birth to unnecessary fatigue and makes the air polluted. The researcher found that about 5% workers were suffering from asthma. It also affects the proper development of their body. Most of the employers in Agra footwear industry are not providing the minimum space, as specified in the factories act, 1948.

**TABLE - 21**  
Condition of Working Space

S. No.	No. of Factories	Condition of Working Space
1	12	No problem of Working Space
2	39	Problem of Working Space
Total	51	

The table given above shows the problem of working space in Agra Footwear Industry. During the survey the researcher found that problem of working space do not exist in 12 units, while in remaining 39 units the problem of working space was observed.

f. Dissatisfactory conditions of Latrines, Urinals and Spittoons:

During the survey of 51 units, the researcher found the facility of latrines and urinals was unsatisfactory in most of the footwear units surveyed. Neither these have been properly constructed, nor cleaned with detergents and disinfectants on a regular basis. Hence, they give out foul smell. The factories Act, 1948 calls upon the employer to make proper arrangements for latrines, urinals and spittoons with proper lighting and ventilation. These should be properly cleaned with detergents and disinfectants. Further, these facilities should be separate for male and female workers.

**TABLE - 22**  
Condition of Latrines, Urinals and Spittoons

S.No.	No. of Factories	Condition of Latrines, Urinals and Spittoons
1	27	Worst, No facility of flush, No separate arrangements for male and female, No spittoons
2	24	Average, Flush facility available, No separate arrangements for male and female, No spittoons
Total	51	

During the course of investigation the number of latrines and urinals were found to be 2-5 in almost all the units those were not sufficient in proportion to the number of workers. There were no separate latrines for male and female workers. Among the 51 units taken for survey, there was no facility of flush in 27 units. The researcher found that the condition is better in the registered companies. There were also no spittoons in any of the units under taken for survey.

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