

A CONTEMPORARY CASE STUDY ON TERRACOTTA CRAFT AND ITS WORKER IN PANCHMURA: WEST BENGAL

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Abstract

West Bengal is one of the largest producers of Terracotta pottery in India. Terracotta industry is one of the important cottage industries in terms of its unique design, structure, lustrous finishing and a cord of communicating and transforming culture of concern region. The Indian state West Bengal has rich cultural heritage, due to the region of many different rulers in the past, arts and crafts in West Bengal underwent many changes giving an artistic diversity today in forms of traditional handicraft, terracotta, painting and carving. Now a day's terracotta artisans are facing different problem basically economic and technological also they are lacking with proper marketing strategies. So in this research paper the main focus is to identify and understand the socio economic, demographic, and cultural profile of artisan's community in Panchmura village located in Bankura district of West Bengal. This research also emphasis on major challenges and difficulties of this Terracotta industry and their possible recommendation.

Keywords: Terracotta craft, Local community, Socio economic status.

INTRODUCTION

The word terracotta taken from Latin "Terra" and "cotta" which means backed earth, it is the art of creating glazed or unglazed porous earthenware, figurines and other decorative materials from clay which is dried and fired in temperature around 1000°C giving it a distantly orange, red, brown, yellow, grey color. Terracotta is an ancient art form, perhaps one of the first expressions of creativity of human mind. In 7000BC terracotta figurines of mother goddess, male gods, some terracotta ornaments, various material that can be used on daily basis, pots and many other things have been excavated from various sites of Indus valley civilization like Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Lothal, Kalibangan, Mehrgarh etc, providing that the art flourished in the Indian sub continent long before it was used elsewhere. In West Bengal Terracotta hubs are very popular in Panchmura village near Bishnupur in Bankura district. Historically Malla Kingdom indulge in a lot of cultural activity and invite high cast Brahmins, expert craftsman and masons to Bishnupur who through the amalgamation of religion and cultural transformation in the society is well captured through the terracotta embossed on the walls of various temple. The cultural transformation in the society is well captured through the terracotta craft embossed on the walls of various temples, towers and smaller objects in the region. Many scholars have interpreted this as a translation of the primitive Sanskrit literature into mainstream Bengali narratives that allowed the emergence of popular cults in Hinduism like Durga, Krishna and Kali. The terracotta temples in Bankura are mostly Radha-Krishna temples which drew inspiration from Vaishnavism.

In Panchmura Village of Bankura district the kumbhakar community is producing majestic Terracotta craft which acts as the symbolization of culture. They can best express their cultural traits, traditional way of life, ritual components through various craft items. Through this craft practice they can retain their age old pottery craft practice along with a sustainable economic growth. This artisan stands in an important and prestigious position in Indian history and culture. They are the communities who always play a significant role in transmission of

materialistic and non materialistic culture and its evolution through this craft items. Although Panchmura terracotta hub of West Bengal has lots of potential but the artisan of this locality still suffering now a days with various difficulties, the first problem financial. The income level of maximum artisan is not that up to the mark, along with it they are lacking with modern skills and technologies, marketing strategies, in few cases low levels of education etc (Gangopadhyay and Sen, 2019).

According to the various official data there are around 50000 member of person are directly involved with various important cottage industries in Bankura district of which nearly 4000 people are employed only in pottery activity. The terracotta industry in bankura is still dependent on family labour and also involved some old technique. In panchmura village there are around 130 families whose primary occupation is pottery. The potters of Panchmura fall in the category of OBC (Other Backward Classes). A large number of families of this potter's society are inconceivably poor. Many of them do possess BPL cards (Ghosh B.K,2014). Although the government of India as well as West Bengal government has taken number of projects for the overall development of the artisan and other cottage industries. The MSME department of government of West Bengal has taken various schemes to patronize the craft art along with its sustainable growth in future. The major programs under taken by the directorate of micro, small, medium, enterprises government of West Bengal are: District level Fairs, Reimbursement of Travelling Allowance, Daily allowance and carrying cost of handicraft artisan. Celebration of handicraft week and awards to handicraft artisans, Old age pension to Handicraft & village industry artisan (in West Bengal about 3200 handicraft and village industry artisan- of age above 60year having no other source of income – are provided with a monthly pension of Rs 1000/- under this scheme), Artisan credit card (ACC): Government laid stress on issuance of ACC to the handicraft artisan for providing requirements of working capital of carry out their activities incessantly where handicraft artisan can avail a lone of maximum Rs 2 lakh from banking institution.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Terracotta industries in India are one of the important employments generating cottage industry. In which Panchmura in Bankura district of West Bengal is one of the leading area in our country apart from a huge no potential, the artisan of this area suffering from various socio-economic problem and still remain backward compared to the other communities. They are mainly suffering due to economic resources as well as advance technological skill.

OBJECTIVES

Terracotta is one of the old and traditional cottage industries of Bengal as well as for Panchmura village of Bankura. The main objective of this study is

1. To analyze socio economic condition of artisans.
2. To identify the problems faced by the artisans of terracotta and pottery crafts and its possible recommendation.
3. To create awareness about terracotta and pottery craft and its economic viability.

STUDY AREA

Panchmura village is situated in Bankura district where nearly 300 artists are engaged in terracotta craft making activities. Panchmura village is come under Khatra sub deviation of Bankura district are the leading production unit of terracotta work. This area is located between 22°58'00"N to 22°58'00"N and 87°10'10"E to 87°16'67"E. It has an average elevation of 68m from mean sea level. The total population of this area is about 730 (as per 2011 census). Although from recent panchayat data in last10 year 10% rise in population is seen, on that basis around 800 populations will be there. According to the census data the maximum no of people of this village are associated with making terracotta crafts.

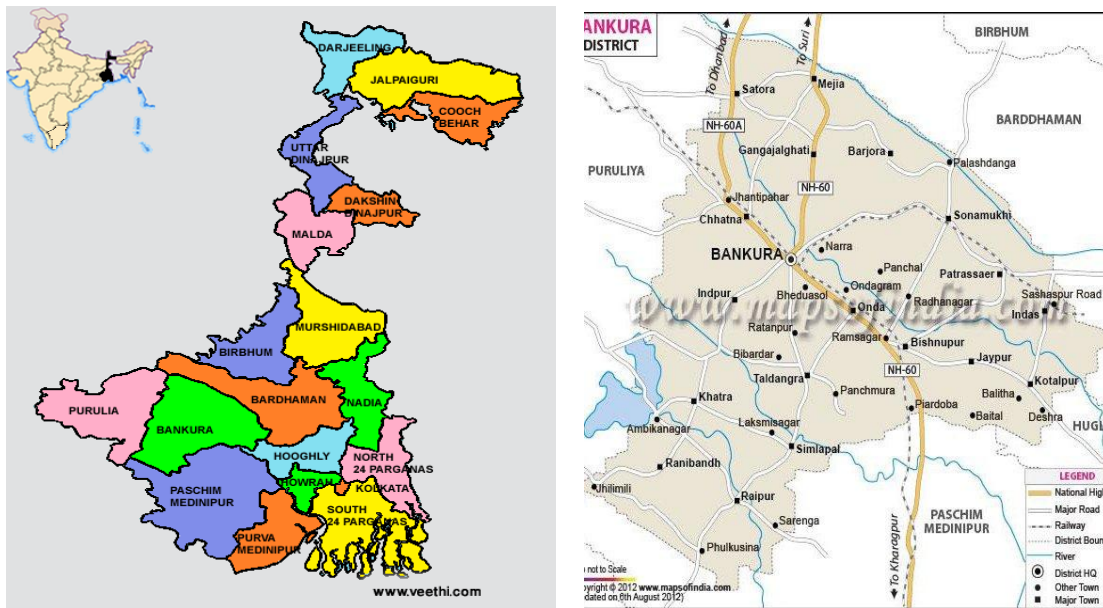


Figure: West Bengal & Panchmura in Bankura District (source- pinterest.com)

REVIEWS OF LITERATURE

For the research purpose various books, articles, of various author of national and international publication of folk art culture taken under consideration for review. Most of the research work focused on nature and dynamism of terracotta craft, evolution of techniques etc. some of this are Saraswati, B (1979), in the book "Pottery-making cultures and Indian Civilization", shows that how India gave a vital space for pottery in history and that's the reason why that period was called ceramic age. Pottery making in the Neolithic age helped anthropologists a lot in studying the lifestyle of people living in that era. There are many communities and tribes which practices pottery making and are totally dependent on pottery art for their financial requirements Beaudry, Marilyn P., (1987), in the article, "Traditional Potters of India" describes about the great artist M. Palaniappan who is also a member of Kumhar potter caste and produces both utilitarian and ritual pottery. The article majorly focuses on the ceramic art work of Palaniappan and Jhithru Ram.

Skibo and Feinman, (1999), in the book, "Pottery and People", show an interconnected relation between pottery and people from around the world. Numbers of researchers have given their views on different aspects of pottery such as manufacturing, productions, distributions, consumption, specialization and standardization. The book is a blend of varieties of pottery culture from different parts of the world and people of tremendous differences who are involved in pottery making culture are introduced. It shows how pottery is an integral part of people belonging to certain castes and tribes.

Asher, Frederick M., (2003), in the book, "Art of India", different area potteries are shown and mainly terracotta products at different part of the world are studied. Various pottery styles from number of past areas are edited in such a way that it involves all the technologies and processes of pot making are studied. The book includes all the art forms found in India in which pottery was one of the major art forms practiced in almost every part of India.

Sikdar and Chaudhuri, (2015), the article, "Pottery making tradition among the Prajapati Community of Gujarat, India" shows that how still some of the communities practicing their ancestral occupation of pottery making and one of them "Prajapati" community of central Gujarat, India. The community uses the same technology of pottery making which their forefathers used. From raw materials to the final product, they use the same process. This

community has brought a traditional touch to the world of pottery and playing a significant role in promoting the art of pottery

Sharma.B and Sezhiyan.T.,(2013) in their scholarly research publication focused on the traditional heritage and cultural significance of folk art & craft as well as handicraft. They analysed the role of handicraft in regional development of rural craft hub in particular reference of the state Sikkim, in India. They suggested some efficient global marketing strategies for achieving the global platform of handicraft sectors.

Towseef.M.U.D.,(2014). in his scholarly publication focused on the role of Indian traditional handicraft sector in employment generation, skill enhancement and regional development. He also defined the simplistic procedure of production of various handicrafts by using paper, wood, clay, tree bark, stone, bamboo, metals in an sustainable and eco-friendly manner

Sahoo. M.P., Joddar. P., Biswas. P., and Sarkar.B., (2016) in their research paper described the magnificent role of Terracotta cottage industry for accelerating the regional development in these rural craft hubs in a very sustainable manner. He also identified the role of this pottery craft in women engagement and women participation in this regard.

METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted in Panchmura village of West Bengal. The research conducted in two parts. In the 1st Part around 150 respondents were finalized for the study and all the data collected through structured questionnaire, in the second part again interviewed some residents to know the actual status , problem and demand of their daily life.

ANALYSIS

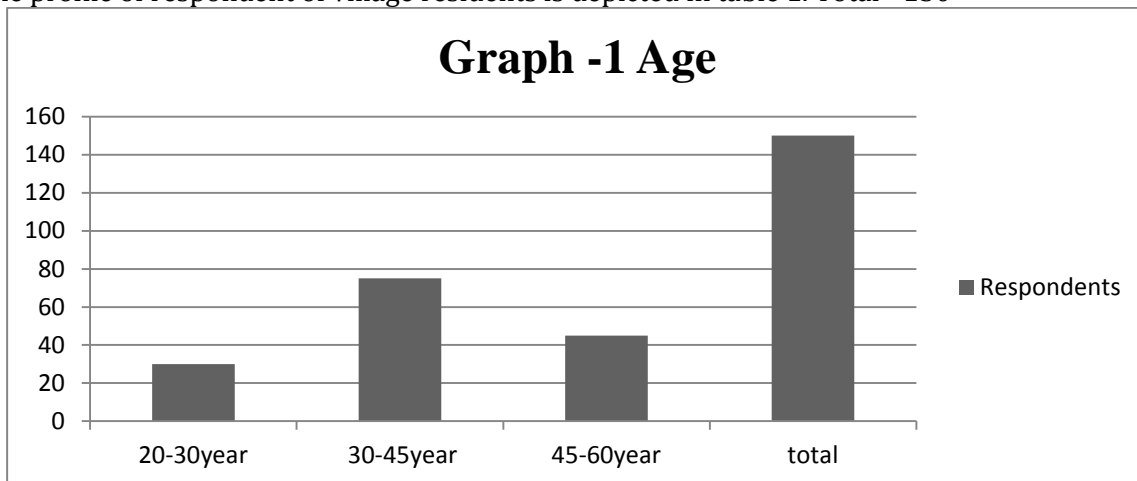
The bellow Table represents the demographic profile of the respondents in Panchmura village.

Table- 1 Profile of village Respondents

Description	No of Respondents		Percentage (%)
Age	20-30	30	20
	30-45	75	50
	45-60 and above	45	30
Marital Status	Married	95	63
	Unmarried	55	36
Gender	Male	85	56
	Female	65	43
Occupation	Depends on pottery only	122	81
	Other then pottery	28	19
Family Type	Nuclear Family	40	27
	Joint Family	110	73
Education	Up to secondary	90	60
	Higher secondary	36	24
	Graduate and above	24	16
Family Income	Below 5000	30	20
	5000-10000	60	40
	10000-20000	48	32
	Above 20000	12	8

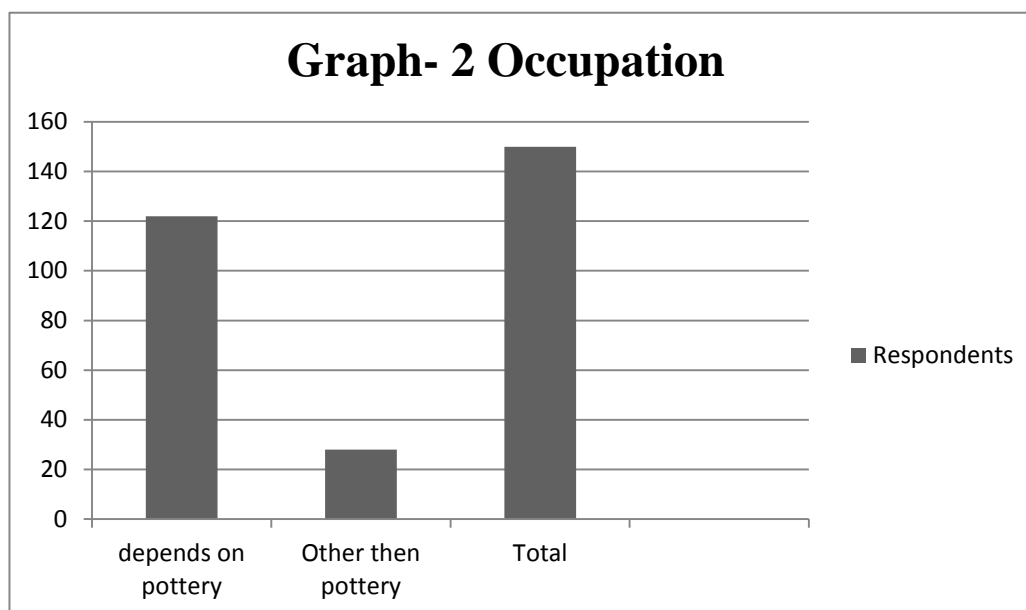
(Source: computed by author)

The profile of respondent of village residents is depicted in table 1. Total =150



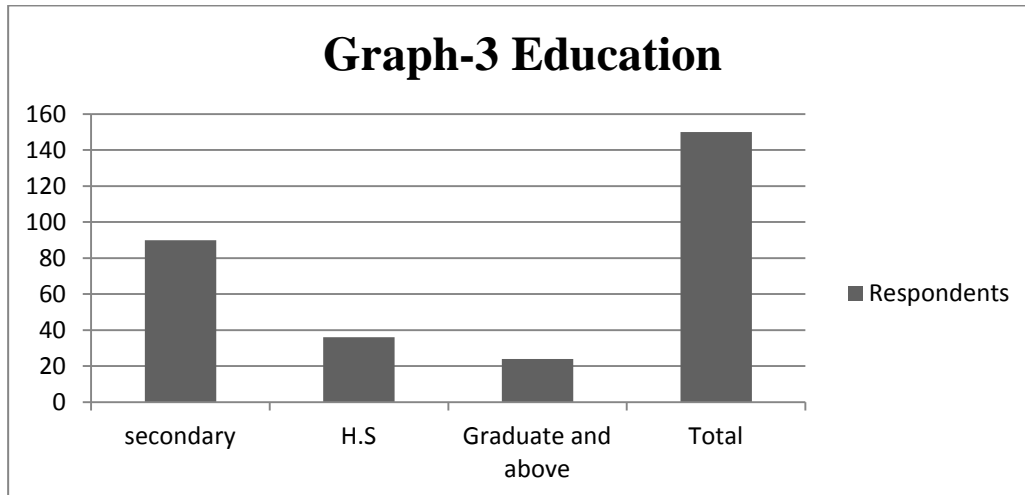
From the above graph -1 we can see maximum artisans are from age group of 30- 45 year which is 50% of the total respondents. Age group determination is important not only to determine their age or maturity but to know their life experiences about this craft.(Sharma and Sezhiyan,2013).

From the table 1 we can see along with 56% male and 43% female population also engaged with craft making activities which show near about equal participation of male and female in pottery.

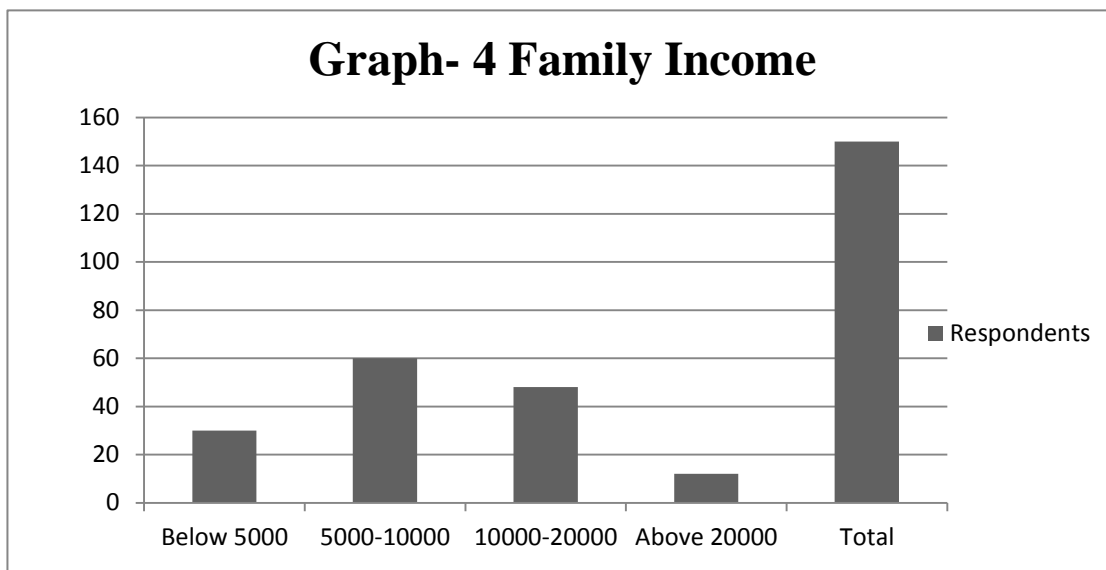


During the research it was found the local community is highly depends on craft making industries. Around 81% of people are directly involved with it while 19% of the respondents associated with other works.

From the table 1 we can see maximum respondents belong from join family (73%) whereas only 27% are from Nuclear family, from this percentage we can understand that this terracotta craft making industry basically run with the help of family cooperation.



From the above table 1 it can be said maximum artisan respondents are belong from literary level of primary to secondary (10th) i.e. 60% of the total respondents. 24% belong from Higher Secondary (H.S) where as graduate respondents are only 16%. Education is an important parameter for accessing social and economic development for any community throughout the world. Here we can see the percentage of higher literacy in this community is very poor. For that reason they are lacking with new and advance technical skill.



Family income is another important parameter for understanding the socio-economic status of the respondents. From the above table we can see that only 8% of respondents belong from monthly income group of 20000/- and above. Whereas 40% belong from Rs 5000-10000 monthly income group, 32% represent from Rs 10000-20000 income group per month and finally only 27% of the respondents belong from below Rs 5000/- income group per month which is itself a huge percentage because now a days it is just an impossible task for any family to fulfill all daily requirements within this much of amount.

From the above survey report we can understand that it is a home based cottage industry where male and female both are equally involved. They are producing various religious idol specially the long neck horse of Bishnupur area is very famous. The overall economic condition of the locality is not very much satisfactory, as well as they are lacking with higher education hence they are also lacking with technological innovation and proper skill development. In the next

part of this research few question was placed in front of them.

1. What all are the challenges they are facing with their craft making.
2. Whether they get sufficient support from government and other non government organization.

On the basis of details discussion with them some major issues they are facing now days can easily identified, this are...

- The financial condition of the artisans of that village are not satisfactory
- They are basically depends on the old technologies for their craft making
- Young generations are not much interested to carry on their family business because minimum income can possible from this craft work.
- Although it is a craft tourism center, very less amount of tourist comes to visit their place that because of lack of infrastructure and accommodation. Whereas maximum tourists prefer to visit Bishnupur to see the terracotta work on the walls of the various temples located there.
- Many of them are not getting financial assistance from government properly
- They are also lacking with marketing strategies. Now a day's online marketing are very popular but they don't have much idea of online marketing and basically depends on the local market.

CONCLUSION

As per the above discussion it can be said that Panchmura village has huge amount of opportunities to flourish its own way. The thing which is needed for its basic development is support from government as well as non government organization, on the basis of the survey some suggestible recommendation are given below.

Firstly the popularity and the attraction of the place need to be increase when more tourists will come to visit that place, the area will automatically benefitted economically for that purpose accommodation and infrastructures of that area need to be developed. Next Proper financial assistance along with other facilities like health, Insurance, proper bank loan facilities on behalf of government need be ensure. For better promotional activities- media participation, online promotion, arrangement of fair, and above all the place need to be represents as terracotta tourist hub.

Modern technologies for the betterment of craft making and also to decrease the cost of production need to be incorporate. It also needs to remember that young generations are the future of any work so it's also important to motivate them to carry on these arts of culture. Hence the local bodies, NGO's and the other organizations can arrange some activities to encourage them.

Modern training and entrepreneurial management skill must be organized by government and other organization for quality up gradation, and finality its need to ensure that their product should reach to the global community or market.

The terracotta Industries is the pride of Bengal art and culture not only the Panchmura this art is also popular in some other part of India. The growth and development of this craft sector must retain in terms of its export and marketing. There should be more encouragement from the Government or from the State Craft's council to promote the Craft at National Level. More Exhibitions and Sales outlet should be done so that common people get to know more about the Terracotta Craft. Also a good Network should be build at National Level to bring out the Terracotta crafts to the tourists. The Craftsman should be given liberty to experiment with their crafts so that more new design or pattern can be generated. The Craftsmen should be given exposition to the outer world so that they know what people like and what they should add more to their crafts. It requires engaging the local artisan in this terracotta craft art round the

year for securing their employment and earning opportunity. If all the above recommendation maintain properly then it can assume that old glory of this craft industries will revive.

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