

PROSPECT OF TRADITIONAL CRAFT IN PRESENT ECONOMY: A STUDY OF EARTHEN DOLL OF KRISHNAGAR, WEST BENGAL

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ABSTRACT

Art and culture are inseparable limbs of civilization. It represents the practice, religious beliefs, and indicates spiritual upliftment and represents societal system of that period. Clay pottery is an ancient craft in India. The art of Clay Pottery grew along with the Civilization. Thus, the history of clay pottery is as old as the history of human civilization. Pottery has a unique tempting appeal. Its association with religion and usage in religious ceremonies has given a deeper significance and a wider dimension. . In this fast changing and unstable market situation, when we concentrate deeply on market demand, we sometime became ignorant about our native product of significant potentiality. A little more nourishment can give that product a neck to neck competition with contemporary goods. In addition to that we have the age old historical heritage with this product, as earthen dolls in West Bengal. Earthen Doll is not only enriched with age old tradition, but also singular in its symbolic representation.

Key words: Craft, clay doll, heritage, prospect, art, market.

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1. INTRODUCTION

“Civilization [culture], being a process of long and complex growth, can only be thoroughly understood when studied through its entire range; that the past is continually needed to explain the present, and the whole to explain the past.” E. B. Tylor.

The traditional folk art of Indian Clay Pottery, particularly of Bengal, is considered exceptional and best in the world. Indian are reflects the fusion of Social and religions

conditions prevalent during the contemporary period when they were made. : Clay art in India is said to be very mystical because it incorporates the five vital elements like Air, Fire, Earth, Water and Ether. Various excavations in Mohenjadaro & Harappa have unearthed several clay items in various forms and figurines. This age old method has been passed on from generations and is actually the most sustainable art form which has seen so many changes but still kept its place in our hearts

Handicrafts sector occupies an important place in the economy of West Bengal as it contributes significantly to employment generation and export earnings. The economic importance of the sector also lies in its high employment potential, low capital investment, high value addition and a constant, if not increasing, demand both in the domestic and overseas markets. The sector provides employment to more than 3 lakh craft persons mostly from rural areas. There is one name – Clay Doll of Ghurni (PS Krishnanagar, District Nadia), which seems to play an important role in the export market of decorative products. This industry is spread all over the area, including Kalipur, Bhatjangla, Pal Para, Halder Para, Sandhya Para etc. There are many small units which are employing the similar process of manufacturing and producing similar products but facing similar opportunities and threats. In West Bengal, Ghurni is not the only cluster, which is actively involved in the craft of making Clay Dolls. But in terms of content, approach and style, it's undoubtedly a unique of its kind. These dolls are unique in their realism and the quality of their finish; which truly represent a breakaway from the traditional form. Our religious belief and practices are mainly depends on the narratives. Hindu narretives are based on the symbols and stories. Every region has its own story, belief and story of God and Goddes by their own. Ghurni of Krishnagar are celebrate human life ,religion by presenting nature, daily life activities, human body and domestic goods through their craft.

2. BACKGROUND OF ANCIANT ART OF KRISHNANAGAR, NADIA DISTRICT

The place Ghurni, is widely known by its nearby town, named Krishnagar. Previously, Krishnagar was known by its old name Rewe. Krishnagar was the name came from Maharaja Krishnachandra, who was a great art and music lover and barrowed the potters family from nator of Bangladesh and established them in Krishnagar.

Clay Art and Culture in West Bengal: The reproduction of mankind is a great marvel and mystery.

Had God consulted me in the matter, I should have advised him to continue the genanderation of the species by fashioning them out of clay. — Martin Luther

West Bengal is a attractive area for examine clay art as it has a traditional enriched history of making earthen dolls . From the ancient time ,till today ,a lot many art lover are surviving and enthusiastically involve in the craft. Ignoring all the adversities the craftsman continuously managing and passionately trying to rejuvenate its lost glory.

Understanding the Genre and Forms: A review of several scholars has given thick descriptions of certain forms with the aim to aid to the identification of the forms. One of such descriptive studies was done by P. C. Dasgupta (1958). With an exhaustive description of some of the important figures. He argued for the analogies in art forms of the site with other terracotta yielding sites of Bengal. He also noted the relatedness of Sunga style with stone depictions of Bharut, Sanchi, Bodh Gaya and Bhaja. Early Historic terracotta forms and had also some astonishing similarity with certain forms with corresponding north Indian terracotta art forms (Gupta, D. 1959). Several scholars have attempted to describe the terracotta forms found from different sites. Bautze (1989) focused on various seated figurines in th and argued

that it is difficult to correlate with exact gods and goddesses of Hindu mythology. With a descriptive study of such toy material he argued that the paucity of historical records made it difficult to identify the actual use of such carts. Mukherji (1991) gave a detailed description of 18 terracotta forms found from different important terracotta yielding sites of West Bengal. Since, a variety of winged earthen art style occupy an important position in findings several scholars have given descriptive account of such important interpretation.



Figure 1 Bengal Art & Craft, Krishna nagarer matir murti pic 2 thirty-seven-year-old mechanical engineer Satyanarayana of Hyderabad who made for occasion for hoil. launched “Taste Buds” a chain of tea stalls on December 11, 2015, across Hyderabad. Instead of using plastic or paper cups, he serves his customers in cups shaped like glasse

Citing examples of inscriptions found in pots, pitchers and lamps from ,De (1996) with a descriptive study showed that there was migration of communities from north-west India to Lower Bengal. He further stated that pottery and terracotta items represented a) lifeways of people, b) popular myths, especially epic, churning of the ocean, aquatic and marine life and motifs. These indicate high level of artistic activities in ancient Bengal.

Rita Datta (1991) gave a descriptive account of certain female and also male figures from Farakka which are housed in State Archaeological Museum, Kolkata. She concluded that fan-shaped headdress of these figures with vertical scratches were typical to that of Kushana period and the associated finds from the habitation deposit also confirmed a Kushana affiliation.

Religious affinity of the terracotta materials have been done by Mukherjee (1996). He studied several figurines, plaques and seals from different sites of West Bengal .

Bengal’s association with Buddhism. Taking material evidences from sites like Tamluk, Tilda, Chandraketugarh, and Karnasuvarna, he argued that evidences such as *Vihara*, *Stupa*, *Buddha* head, *Jataka* scenes, *Bodhisattava* figures and heads, *Torana*, seated *Buddha*, suggested a strong influence of Buddhism in West Bengal. King Ashoka, Fa-Hien, and Hiuen-Tsang were also influential over Bengal culture. P. C. Dasgupta (1958) also mentioned about the similar influences through the study of terracotta art forms.

S.S. Biswas (1981: 111) argued “...In the perspective of an ancient tradition and changing style through epochs these earthen art eloquently compliment the culture... They indeed provide a valuable source of material needed for reconstructing some of the forgotten chapters of the socio-cultural history of the country. The ethnic groups, their daily life, their costumes, jewellery, headdress, etc., In a more recent paper Jayaswal (2002) gave a detailed description of the ritual use of contemporary terracotta art forms exchanged through *jajmani* system.

3. ECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF THE CITY

As a whole, Krishnanagar is an agricultural distribution centre. The economy is primarily based on small- to medium-scale agro-industries and trade. The surrounding region produces rice, jute, ceramics, mangoes, cattle, poultry and fish. There is unrealized demand for building large food storage, refrigeration and processing plants. There are a few sugar mills. Many expertise are to be found in this heritage city. Halwaikars or moyras (who prepare sweets) of Krishnanagar are famous. While they produce all varieties of sweets, there are some which bear the hallmark of the city. 'Sarbhaja' and 'Sarpuria' are inventions that mark the talent of Krishnanagar's halwaikars. The shop of "Adhar Chandra Das" is famous for the above-mentioned sweet variants. Despite the economic boom in India in the 21st century, so far there have been no major industrial investment proposals for the town.

This pottery is very popular and in most of the international exhibitions held since 1851 - in London, Paris and Boston -

Krishnanagar clay dolls have won medals and certificates and also great admiration from the Europeans. The exquisite craftsmanship of these artisans have earned them laurels and accolades from the British royalty like Queen Victoria as well as other important people of the British Raj and Catholic Popes in recent times. The first rewarded artist was Sri Ram Paul (1819-1885). Presently the eminent artists are Sri Biren Paul, Goutam Paul, Ganesh Paul etc. Many artists of this region went abroad and engaged as an engraver to create temple image mosque, monuments etc. As late as 1990, when the Government of Russia wanted a bronze figurine of Rabindranath Tagore for display in one of their national parks, they sought the help of master craftsman Kartick Chandra Pal to give them a clay model. Paul provided it and later converted it into a bronze sculpture. The Pal families are inseparable from the history of the clay dolls of Krishnanagar. At present there are about 100 old families at Ghurni area, belonging to the Pal family, who are actively engaged in clay modeling.

Clay pottery is an ancient craft in India. The art of Clay Pottery grew along with the Civilization. Thus, the history of clay pottery is as old as the history of human civilization. Pottery has a unique tempting appeal. Bengal archaeological finds in Pandu Rajar Dhupi and elsewhere have proved that a high degree of skill and excellence was achieved by Bengal Potters in those remote past days. Kumbhakars, the traditional potters, have been working on their wheels in the villages of West Bengal and have been turning out numerous items of clay products to cater the domestic and religious needs of the community.



Figure 2 These are the tools, today's artisan are using for better craft.

4. HINDRANCE TO REJUVENATE THE ART IN CONTEMPORARY TRADE

Clay doll industry flourished in different villages of west Bengal according to the local need of that particular area, and there is also some technical differences of making, from areas to areas. There is a significant influence in socio cultural practice of earthen doll in west Bengal .The geographical diversity has influenced to evolve the doll industry with multiplicity. Different type of constraints being faced by households engaged in this pottery as their profession. Though clay dolls makers are trying to continue their livelihood among lot many adversities, but we can broadly categorized in two main constraints that should address very quickly. One is infrastructural & economic constraints and other is marketing constraints. Clay work is labour intensive and time consuming.

After spending a whole day to make a doll, they got a very little price. Then they have to think where they going to sell it. Most of the makers depend on the village near by market, which they called “haat”, held biweekly or tri-weekly in a adjoining place near village. Sometimes we can see the lot number of earthen products in different village fare held in different occasions. Those village fair (mela), artesian also expect to earn some extra money. It is not only the unavailability of proper market, for which earthen doll industry is lacking to emerge. A conscious scrutiny reveals several other reasons also. Some problems that creating hindrance to evolve pottery as industry, are mentioned bellow:

4.1. Present Status of the Craft and Craftsman

In Bengal handicraft items are sold at prices above reasonable in showrooms. However, it is a sad fact though that these art forms are in a miserable dying condition as in most parts of India. A considerable lot has been said about this by Ministries, Development Blocks, NGO’s but significant little done for their survival and glorification. It was under such dire circumstances that the kumbhakaras (potters) of krishnanagar, together with enterprising individuals, realized that they have to be the masters of their destiny if they wanted to prevent the extinction of the centuries old Bengal terracotta art. And thus the struggle for existence began and Terracotta and Clay handicrafts came to the surface and gradually reaching a National and International Platform.

It is our socio-cultural duty to undertake the endeavor for preservation of handicrafts and Art work at first place and continuation at the second place and that too without affecting their nativity. That is why we are trying to focus at the concerned fact from anthropological and ethnographic point of view. But at the same time it is also true that only the process of archiving these local art forms will not be of any direct help for the folk artists at individual level.

Survival of the fittest, the law of the world, is witnessed in this instance. The constant effort to keep afloat goes on. If we agree that compromise is the rule of any game, then for these artists it is a mode of life. As patrons and lovers of this art form, we can at the least make an effort to help keep this art alive. The next time I go to one of these outlets, I will definitely get them as gifts for my friends and family members. And I am sure they will only be too happy to flaunt authentic Bengal terracotta in their homes and be noticed and appreciated by everyone.

4.2. Objectives of Interest and Effect

In this work of earthen doll study, it is seen as one of the important material expression of past and present people reflecting different interrelated facts of culture which can be

understood through a study on multidimensional aspects of clay craft. Scholars and individual of different field and empathetic attachment explore the art in multiple way and drew the attention of authorities to take necessary steps. The study on a) the socio –economic condition and business of earthen doll industry of Krishnagar, Nadia district, b) examine the trend of business and product of earthen doll c) to analyze the factors of adoptability of new approach from processing to marketing and its impact. d) to determine the challenges of the craft in present context from the perspective of the businessman and craftsman e) to know the Government policy, facilities and business awareness for development of earthen doll industry helped enormously think for better prospect of earthen doll as industry to government and craftsmen also. The positive outcome is that, Under the Government MSMS scheme ,339 cluster have been made and 15 billion dollar has been sanctioned ,clay pottery also comes under this umbrella, report 2014-15. In this year 200 cr has been declared for rejuvenate this industry. A new effort started about this by Ministries, Development Blocks ,NGO's but significant little done for their survival and glorification.

5. METHODOLOGY

The success of this kind study depends on the potential approach of survey. The strength of well structured questionnaire helps to conduct the study in an unbiased manner. The basic purpose of the research is to explore a particular craft of a specific geographical area, and to evaluate the socio economic prospect related with craft. Though, the subject had aroused the interest of many scholar and academicians of several disciplines as a topic of interest.

5.1. Source of Data

The source of data is both primary and secondary in nature. The method of the collection of data is survey. An investigation through observation or personal interview with structure questionnaire can be appropriate to collect the necessary information for the study. Data collection from the contemporary clay doll makers and users involves ethnographic technique such as-

- Direct observation and observation in a way involving participation.
- Interviewing pragmatically in non structured and /or semi structured format

And most importantly all the previous works including ,published books and research papers as well as unpublished works ,doctoral thesis and master dissertation on different aspect of the earthen doll art of Bengal have been taken into consideration.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The predominant factor become how earthen doll product stand up to satisfy the consumer and can survive with other product of same genre. So, priority is given, how a product is successful in its appeal to the consumer. A careful examination can turn the fate of clay doll art to its present miserable condition, shifting to prosperous product with cultural and economical importance. Lack of importance and ignorance and an all round unorganized system gradually killing the huge possibilities clay pottery. Easy way to solve the problem is to urge to solve it. This is our duty to preserving the age old form of art and its basic beauty of nativity. All over the world, every civilized country chose the way to marching ahead in a balance of protecting their basic culture and amalgamating with modern technique and approach. Many suggested that necessary technical research and should require that how can the form of art be represented with its essential reality with modern demand. Fusion is necessary not only inter cultural spectrum but also in its making, in its basic ingredients and manufacturing. Experts of traditional doll makers with mutual exchange modern professional knowledge with modern technicians can emerge new form of making and products. Critic

says that it will be an unethical shift from the original one, but priority of steps demand first to established the economic relevance of the product first and to create a environment of surviving of the artists.

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