

Original Article

The role of ethno-cultural values of Terracotta craft in promoting socio-economic status of Kumbhakar artisans: A micro level study of Panchmura village in Bankura, West Bengal.

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Abstract: *The terracotta pottery items of Panchmura village of Bankura are popular in India as well as in global market. The terracotta horse bears symbolic value of local ethnic culture and becomes an international repute. Though the terracotta horse and elephants are possesses its default market in national and international domain but still other pottery items need to be improve its design and appeal to cope up the customized need in order to achieve overall a new height. In the present study thrust is given on folk and cultural potentialities of age old terracotta craft and its impact on living standards of Kumbhakar artisans. In addition a briefing of socio-economic status and crisis of Kumbhakar artisans of Panchmura village are analyzed in present context. It also suggests some recommendation to overcome various issues. This research study is based on primary as well as secondary database. A village level primary survey was conducted during the month of April and May, 2024, consisting 50 sample respondents chosen through random sampling technique. The study outcome revealed that the situation of artisans was worrying as they were faint due to lack of corpus, illiteracy, financial insecurity, poor earning, inadequate government support and health issues.*

Keywords: *Terracotta, socio-economic status, living standards, folk and cultural values, Panchmura.*

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INTRODUCTION:

The red, black, yellow and other colored soils are obtained from different layers of the earth's surface. Any type of clay can be used to make figurines, pots, dolls and other small objects. It is hardened by firing to make it hard and durable and is called 'terracotta'. The material painted on raw clay dissolves in water, so it is not appropriate to call it 'terracotta'. As the oldest tradition, terracotta art is valued and respected everywhere. But its technical construction technique is time-consuming and complicated, so it is not readily available. This art is done in a special place. Appreciation for the terracotta work of "Panchmura village" of Bankura district has spread across the country and abroad. Its production capacity is limited due to the complexity of craftsmanship and work, so it is not possible to meet

the needs of the industrialists. Some opportunistic idol artists try to please the puja organizers by sprinkling alternative colors on the idols and dust in the eyes of the general audience. This incident is unfortunate for the real artists. All the idols and vessels collected from the soil of Harappan Mohenjodaro during the prehistoric period are intact even after many ages (Kumbhakar, 2018). Those marks are also not drawings on the ground, but undoubtedly burned. It is a well-known experience that clay idols are durable and suitable for human consumption by burning them. It goes without saying that pottery is the oldest invention of human civilization. This terracotta work is called 'terracotta' in Latin. Many people still live in rural areas. They often have to dig holes in the ground to dig wells, ponds, house foundations.

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I can see open sedge mixed with loose soil in various places (Ghosh, 2014).. They will say that pottery is used in home cooking and various household earthenware. This is open. In the near future, various information about the usefulness of terracotta pots, pits, idols mixed in the ground will come to the hands of researchers (Sahoo et al, 2016). This may not be enough to uncover the correct history. Therefore, a repository system is essential to maintain status quo.

Study area at a glance:

Panchmura village in West Bengal is renowned for its 'Terracotta' craft, a traditional Indian art form dating back to the Indus Valley civilization.

The village, located in the Khatra subdivision of Bankura District, is known for its fertile alluvial soil and abundant clay. The craft village is a popular tourist attraction, with a population of around 800 in the last decade. The village's terracotta crafts, featuring erected neck horses, represent the folk practice and the royalty of the Malla kingdom in Bishnupur. Panchmura, located at 22°58'00"N-22°66'67"N and 87°10'00"E 87°16'67"E, has Terracotta crafts as a major economic practice . Over the last decade, there has been a 10% population increase, with terracotta items attracting religious appeal and adorning interiors.

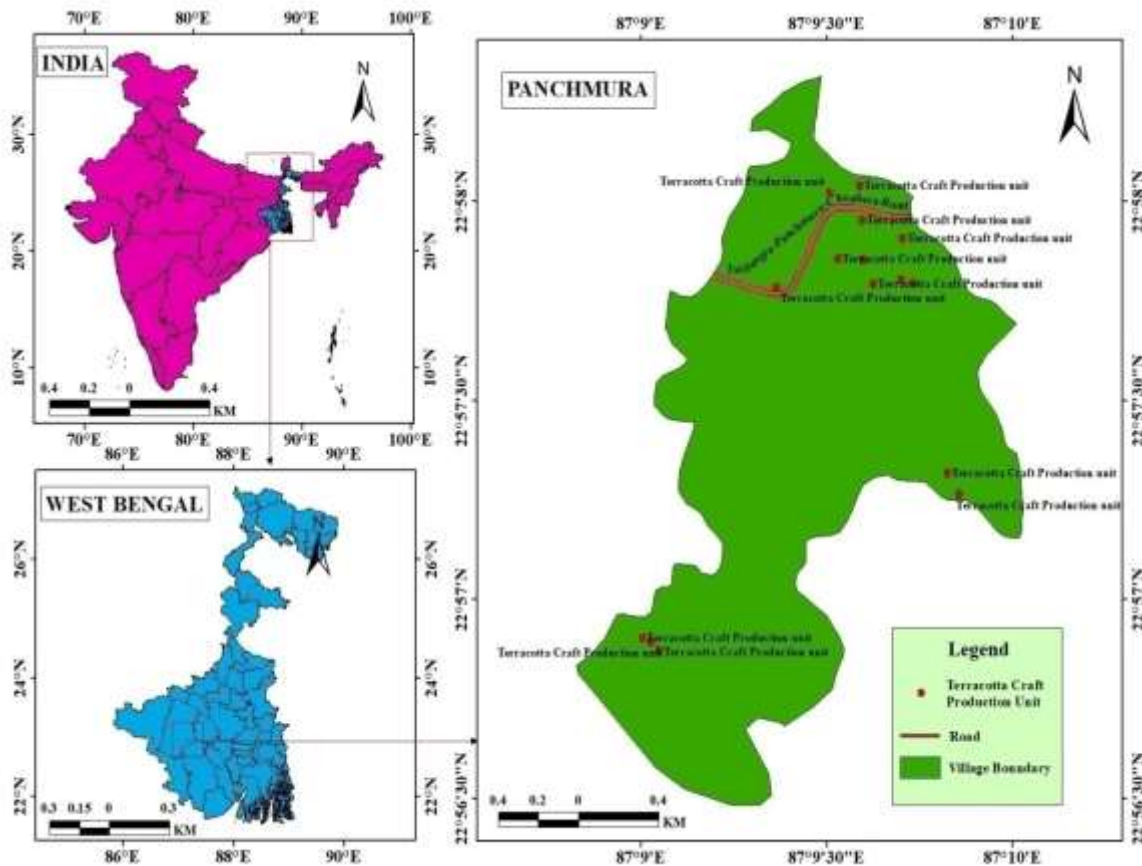


Fig:1- Study area village

METHODOLOGY:

The study uses primary and secondary data sources, including archival analysis, to study the terracotta sector at Panchmura village. The primary database has collected through field survey executed during April and May, 2024 and secondary database is collected from various publications by agencies and NGO's, newspaper, magazines etc. By using simple random sampling, 50 artisans has been selected for executing the entire survey.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

- i. To find out present socio-economic status of the artisans.
- ii. To find out the role of cultural potentialities of Terracotta practice in developing the craft village as well as artisans living standard.
- iii. To find out major problems and suggests some policy recommendation for Terracotta craft.

Cultural values of Terracotta items:

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS:

People are involved in handicraft activities	No of respondent	Respondent(%)
1-4	27	54
5-7	20	40
7 and above	3	6

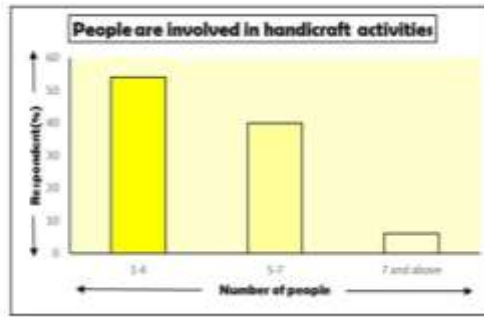


Table: 1- No of family members engaged in craft practice

Fig: 1 no. of family member engaged in craft activities

In Panchmura around 40% artisans have engaged in craft man ship with a number with a family member of 5 to 7. Around 54% artisans people having family member 1 to 4 engaged in craft main ship .

Table: 2

Factors for choosing terracotta practic	No of respondent	Respondent (%)
Self employed	12	24
Family business	22	44
Low investment	12	24
Profitable prospects	4	8

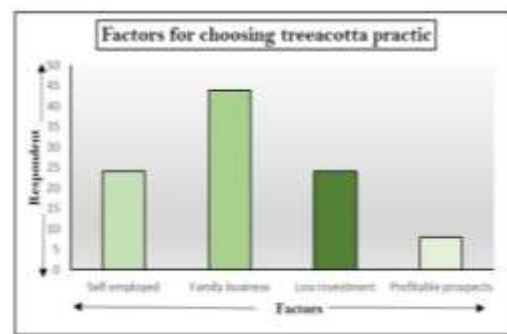


Table: 2 Factor for choosing terracotta practice

Fig: 3 Factor for choosing terracotta practice

Interpretation

Majority of the artisans (44%) have engaged in craft practice to sustain their family business. It provides self-employment opportunities with a minimal investment option.

Type of employment in handicraft	No of respondent	Respondent(%)
Part time	2	4
Full time	48	96

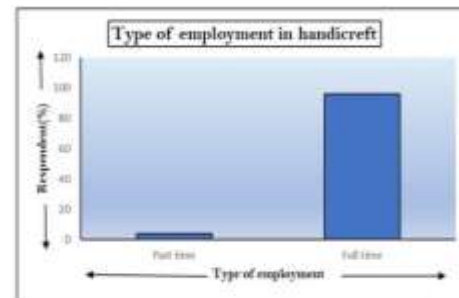


Table: 3 Types of employment

Fig: 4: Types of employment

Interpretation

Majority of the artisans (96%) have engaged in full time basic practice .

Type of product produce in handicraft	No of respondent	Respondent(%)
Decorative items	16	32
Household product	4	8
Ornaments	6	12
Pottery	22	44
Others	2	4

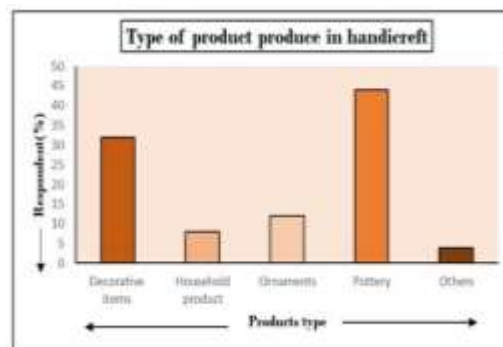


Table: 4 Variety of craft items

Fig: 5 Variety of craft items

Interpretation

Mostly the terracotta items having dominance of pottery and decorative items .

The product is sold	No of respondent	Respondent(%)
Village market	28	56
Town /City	16	32
Outside of the state	6	12

Table: 5 – The nature of craft market



Fig: 6 The nature of craft market

Interpretation

Mostly the terracotta items have been sold in adjoining village market. Few of them carried for town ship market.

Trained artisans	No of respondent	Respondent(%)
Yes	44	88
No	6	12

Table: 6 nature of artisans training

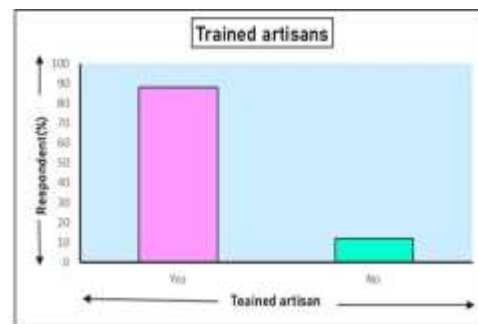


Fig: 7 nature of artisans training

Interpretation

Around 90% artisans have trained for marketing terracotta items.

Do you have artisans card	No of respondent	Respondent(%)
Yes	48	96
No	2	4

Table : 7 status of having artisans card

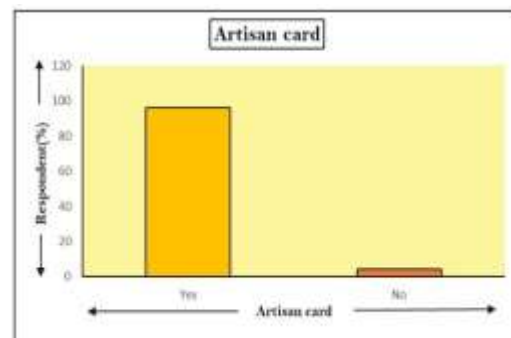


Fig : 8 status of having artisans card

Interpretation

Most of the artisans (96%) have their own artisans part.

You avail govt. schems for handicraft	No of respondent	Respondent(%)
Yes	33	66
No	17	34

Table: 8 status of availing Govt. schemes

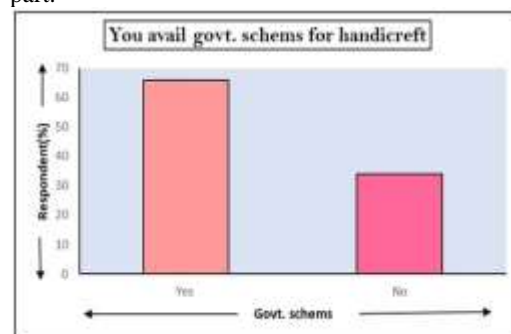


Fig: 9 status of availing Govt. schemes

Interpretation

Around 66% artisans availed various government schemes.

You receive any help from NGOs	No of respondent	Respondent(%)
Yes	12	24
No	38	76

Table: 9

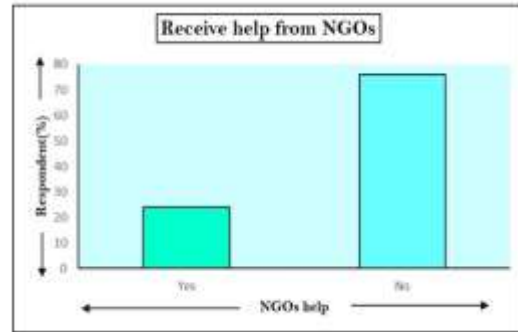


Fig: 10

Interpretation

Most of artisans remain deprived in receiving assistant from NGO .

Borrow money for crafts	No of respondent	Respondent(%)
Yes	36	72
No	14	28

Table: 10: Nature of money borrowing

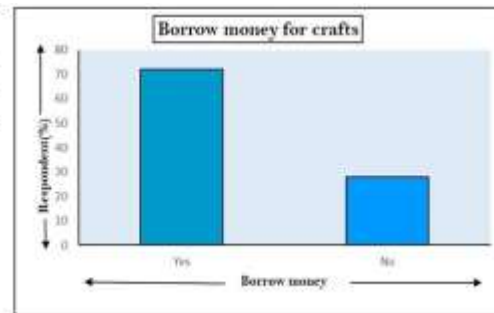


Fig: 11 Nature of money borrowing

Interpretation

As far the low capital assets, the artisans were mostly bound to borrow money from various banks and other agencies.

Source of borrowing	No of respondent	Respondent(%)
Bank	9	18
Cooperatives	26	52
Money leader	9	18
Relatives	4	8
Own money	2	4

Table: 11 Source of borrowing money

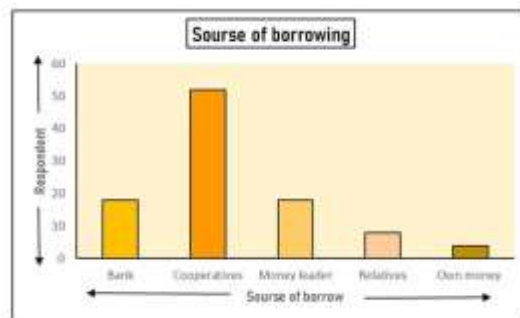


Fig: 12 Source of borrowing money

Interpretation

Mostly the artisans (52%) have borrows their fund from local co -operative bank (BGGV).

Income from handicraft per year	No of respondent	Respondent(%)
< 40000	4	8
40001-60000	7	14
60001-80000	32	64
>80000	7	14

Table: 12 Income level of artisans (per year)

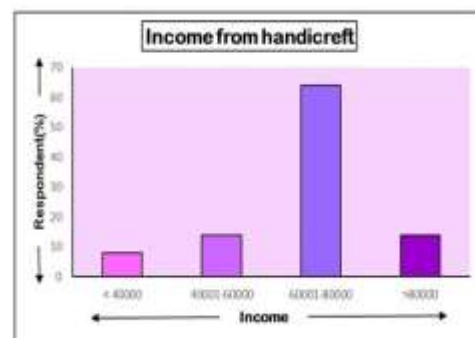


Fig: 13 Income level of artisans (per year)

Interpretation

Mostly the artisans belong from low to moderate income range around 64% artisans have an annual income range between 60 k to 80 k .

Problem of handicraft artisan	No of respondent	Respondent(%)
Raw materials	1	2
Marketing	10	20
Transportation	18	32
Training facilities	3	6
Technology	2	4
Funding issue	16	32

Table: 13 Major problem faced by the artisans

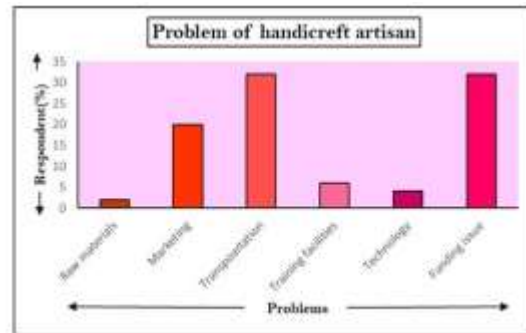


Fig: 14 Major problem faced by the artisans

Interpretation

The artisans of Panchmura village have been suffering by poor transportation issue. In addition due to lack of capital, infrastructure and advertisement, the artisans have faced various marketing related issues .

Folk and cultural significance of Terracotta craft:

In the month of Baisakh, the wheel made entirely of clay is closed. It starts from the day before Chaitra Sankranti. Shiva chanting and Charak Puja started all over the country on this day. On the day before Sankranti, he spins the wheel all day till a little night and makes necessary quality items. The wheelbarrow potter builds the Shivalinga with all the last clay on the wheel. The next day Shiva Linga and Mahadev are blessed by sprinkling five durbas, paddy and aber on top of the newly constructed Shiva Linga. During Sankranthi, the construction work of the works built in Dhaka is completed. After that from 1st Baisakh complete wheel work is stopped. 'Chak Puja' is performed on an auspicious day of Jaishtha month. The auspicious day is Saturday on the odd day after the 1st Jaishtha Kan. One of the seven odd days between August 25 and 15 must fall on a Saturday. So every year break is not equal. Since all the potter

families in the village perform the Dhak puja on the same day, efforts are made to make the puja festival joyful. On the day of puja, the children of Palkirta Para perform songs, plays, dances, recitations, jokes, etc (Kumbhkar, 2018).

Tourists attraction:

In Panchmura village round the year tourists arrival is found. Specially in the month of November and December, a huge crowd of tourists is noticed. Recently tridhara temple becomes the centre of tourists attraction in this region.

Symbolic values and authenticity:

The unique and age old terracotta craft motifs attract buyers for its ethnic appeal and elegance.

Eco-friendly practice:

Practicing terracotta is a manual, eco-friendly method of making splendid craft items by using locally available terracotta soil. The artisan doesn't hamper trees for its production purposes. This eco-friendly livelihood option doesn't pollute the concurrent environment or negatively impact biodiversity.

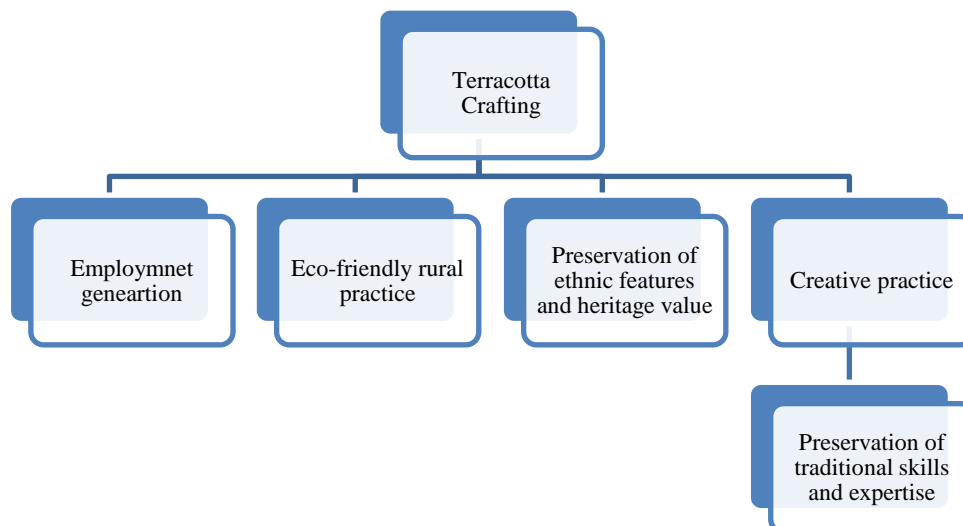


Fig: 15- The role of terracotta practice in promoting village economy and livelihood status of corresponding artisans (Source: Waktole, 2016)

MAJOR FINDINGS:

- i. As it is a family business hence majority of the artisans and their family members engaged in this craft practice.
- ii. The educational status along with knowledge regarding modern skills and techniques need to be updated.
- iii. More than half of the artisans have faced various health hazards like knee problem, back pain and spinal cord issues.
- iv. The artisans often sell their artifacts in local and regional market.
- v. A few of them have participated in international craft fairs and festivals to promote their craft items.
- vi. The women artisans sometimes feels burdened with responsibility as home maker and engaging in craft practice.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION:

- i. The artisans need to update their skills and expertise in order to cope up the customary need.
- ii. More skill oriented training and workshops need to be attended by the artisans.
- iii. An effective marketing strategies need to be taken.
- iv. The artisans should well aware about their health issues. They should take care of their family members. Some preventive health care check, routine check-up should be very needful in this regard.
- v. The local co-operatives and banks may need to provide various financial aid to keep progression of craft practice.

CONCLUSION:

The study reveals that Panchmura's terracotta artisans, primarily inherited the craftsmanship have faced poor socio-economic conditions, earning minimal wages despite working over twelve hours a day. Despite this, the majority of the community delimits within a range of middle to low income, engaged with master artisans or family-owned units. The raw material for terracotta practice is primarily purchased locally. Traditional terracotta artifacts have been modified to meet consumer demands from various socio-economic positions. It includes providing raw materials, special training, and financial assistance. To improve consistency and uniformity, the terracotta sector needs to be centralized, allowing for the marketing of diversified terracotta items (both decorative and utilitarian) and a new panorama. The terracotta craft items have a promising market, but the State Government must focus on improving the socio-economic status of local artisans and publicizing them through advertisements, exhibitions, and trade fairs.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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