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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TERRACOTTA COTTAGE INDUSTRY IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC LIVELIHOOD OF PEOPLE- A CASE STUDY OF BANKURA TERRACOTTA CRAFT HUB

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ABSTRACT

Bankura district is famous as a hub of small cottage industries in West Bengal, and “terracotta” cottage industry plays a great role in this sector. Terracotta cottage industry is originated in Panchmura village of Taldangra block adjacent to Bishnupur block of Bankura district and the market area of terracotta products mainly located in Bishnupur municipality (ward no. 2&3). Various types of Terracotta artworks are being manufactured in this village like terracotta horse, Manasha jhar (Hanging clay lamps), doll, women’s water pot, the tribal art, models of monkey, cat, astray flower vase, horse, ganesh (Hindu God), incense sticks stand, and Terracotta jewellery etc. Every members of the family join into this profession including the children. The economic condition of the potters of Panchmura village and the people dependent on the terracotta industry in the Bishnupur Municipality is not so healthy. As the production cost is very high than the labour cost, the producers could not be benefitted. Another reason of this backward condition is the presence of “Middle Man”. The middle men purchase the handicrafts from producers at a very low rate and sell it in the market at profitable cost. This is very much unsatisfactory to the producers. In recent times to increase the interest on this profession and to make alive of these traditional artworks, the state government, state craft’s council and central government issue many awards, organize numerous exhibitions and grants aid to terracotta cottage industry for encouraging and helping the producers. As a result the producers get motivated and interested to make new design terracotta handicrafts to get recognition in the world market.

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INTRODUCTION

Terracotta cottage industry in Bankura is one of the most important sections of Bengal art pottery. Bankura art form is an ancient form than the art form of Krishnanagar (Amar Nath Shaw, 2011, Page: 40). The Kumbhakar or potters of Panchmura village of Taldangra block adjacent to Bishnupur block of Bankura district first initiated to make the famous Bankura horses (Fig.1). The ‘Bankura Horse’ has now come to be regarded as a symbol of the artistic excellence of Indian rural handicrafts - a fact which finds confirmation in its use as the official crest-motif of the All India Handicrafts Board. Bishnupur municipality is a trade base town. It is the largest

business corridor of West Bengal. Bishnupur plays an important role in the field of terracotta cottage industry. All products of terracotta industry of Bishnupur are bought from Panchmura village. There are 60-70 potter families lived in Panchmura village. They all are directly joined with terracotta cottage industry. Therefore the origin area of terracotta industry is identified in Panchmura village and Bishnupur municipality, ward no. 2 and 3 are identified as market areas.

Study area

Bishnupur is a famous city of Bankura district and it is in south of Bankura. Bishnupur is famous for the temple of terracotta, heritage building and mostly for his small cottage industry. Bankura is also known as heritage city. Bishnupur covered 23°06'N Latitude and 87°31' E Longitude of Bankura district of West Bengal (Municipality data).

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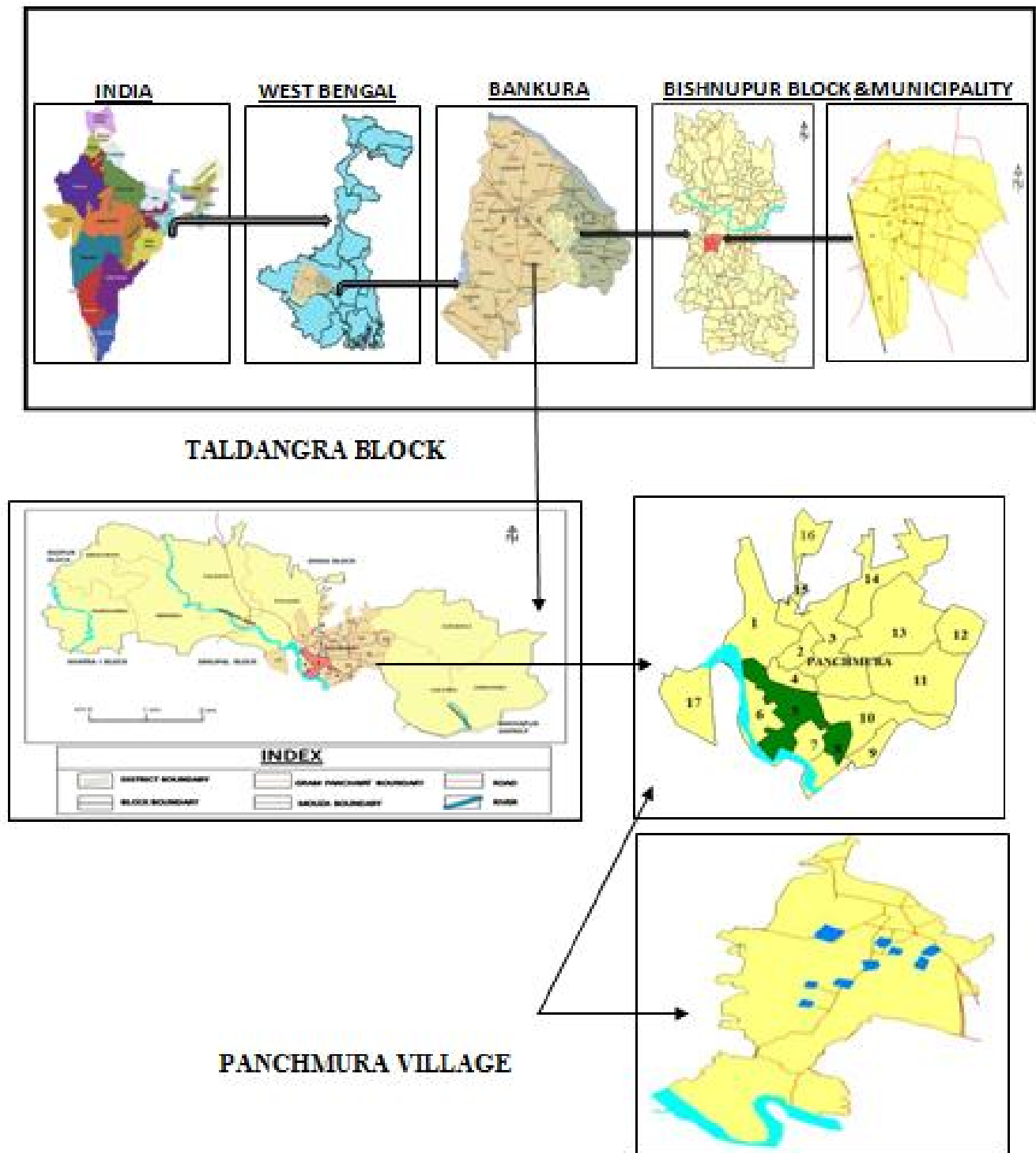


Fig. 1. Location map of Bishnupur Municipality and Panchmura: Terracota Hub

Total population of Bishnupur is 156822 (2011 Census) and Bishnupur is a municipal area. The Bishnupur subdivision is located at 150 km west to Kolkata, the capital of the west Bengal. So, our study area is Bishnupur municipality in Bankura district.

Objectives

We have set some objectives of our study as follows:

- To identify the terracotta industry clusters of the study area.
- To identify the dependency of the total population on this industry.
- To understand the impact of the terracotta industry on the social life and economy of the local people.
- To identify the status of terracotta industry whether running profitably or not.
- To understand the terracotta industry whether maintaining the tradition.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The survey is done on the basis of primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected by field survey through questionnaires keeping in tune with our set objectives. The primary data has been collected through observation, door to door interview by purposive random sampling. Whereas the different types of secondary data were collected from different governmental offices like NATMO, Census Office, Bikash Bhaban, BDO and SDO office in Bishnupur Municipality. First at the pre field stage, huge literature review, plan for collection of different data from different sources, preparation of questionnaire were done. At the post field stage we have accumulated all primary and secondary data and categorized statistically for detailed analysis and understanding and we have tried to prepare this paper using our field observation, analytical knowledge with simple cartographic methods as an instrument.

RESULTS

The Economic development of the study area is based mainly on the terracotta industry. In recent days the people of this area have a probability in shifting their job from this industry to other, due to lack of income, high price rate of raw materials, low amount of profit, high packaging cost etc. The usages of plaster of Paris, plastic, fibers are increasing day by day, which attracts people to other jobs than clay pottery. However in the traditional terracotta works, the whole sellers and retailer earn more than the producer of the products, which pushes art workers in an extremely unfavorable condition. Government loan which can be get from local co-operative society (Fig. 2) give an opportunity to provide soil, raw material and other kinds of required materials to the producers. As a result, the production and profit will also increase. It is desirable that producers should organize a market where they can directly sell their products to the customers.



Fig. 2. Panchmura Clay Potters' Co-Operative Society



Fig. 3. Various Mechanisms in Terracotta Cottage Industry

Table 1. The Cost of the Products in Terracotta Industry

| Products | Local Price | Price In Other States |
|--|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Giant Horse | Rs. 500-700 a pair | Rs. 800-1500 |
| Women's water pot | Rs. 200-300 | Rs. 400-500 |
| Manasa Jhar | Rs.500-600 | Rs. 1000-1200 |
| The tribal art, monkey, cat | Rs. 60-100 | Rs. 150-200 |
| Small doll, astray flower vase, horse, Ganesh, agarbatti stand | Rs. 2-20 | Rs. 30-60 |
| Terracotta jewellery | Rs. 50-150 | Rs.200-250 |

Source: Surveyed by Authors

Table 2. Working Population by Gender

| Category | Number | IN Percentage% |
|----------|--------|----------------|
| Male | 21 | 65.63 |
| Female | 11 | 34.37 |
| Total | 32 | 100 |

Source: Primary survey, Computed by Authors

Table 3. Non-Working Population by Gender

| Category | Number | IN % |
|----------|--------|-------|
| Male | 15 | 39.47 |
| Female | 23 | 60.53 |
| Total | 38 | 100 |

Source: Primary survey, Computed by Authors

Nowadays, the state government should take the importance of this industry and should identify its importance in local economy. If the government can understand the problems of this industry and take measure to mitigate the problems, the situation will surely be improved for the terracotta industry workers.

DISCUSSION

The Latin word 'Terracotta' means 'Baked earth'. Mainly this cottage industry developed in the area of Panchmura village, Taldangra block, Bishnupur, Bankura. The most noticeable product of this cottage industry is terracotta horse, various types of terracotta crafts and terracotta temple panel works.

Production Process of Terracotta Cottage Industry at Panchmura

To make various clay products and handicrafts in terracotta industry the producers use various processes. Like- (Fig: 3)

- i) **Preparation of the materials:** First they refine the clay to remove the impurities and then remove the small stone by net.
- ii) **Mixing of the Clay:** After that all raw materials are mixed with pure clay by the presser of legs. Then it will get well mix.
- iii) **Wheel Work:** Now with well mixed soil the potters give it various shapes by wheel. Like the four legs of horses are conical, belly is a cylindrical etc.
- iv) **Drying:** After giving a shape they keep those things in sun rays drying for 2 or 3 days.
- v) **Hand Work:** After that they design and color the dry things.
- vi) **Final Drying:** Next to that the products are again kept in the sun rays for the final drying.
- vii) **Coloring:** Finally it is decorated with various and lustrous colors.

viii) Firing: Lastly it is placed to fire for hardness. (Amar Nath Shaw, 2011, Page:48)

However through the survey, the cost of variety of artworks are been identified both in local and from outside market. (Table: 1)

Present Economic Condition

Most of the people dependent on the terracotta cottage industry originated at Panchmura village cannot run their business not so profitably and also they are not much educated. Only about 40.27% people of this area have the primary education. It is found that their socio economic condition of this area is not so healthy.

Work Participation

In the sample households, in terms of primary household occupation, most householders' primary occupation is terracotta work. Among the people those are related to the terracotta cottage industry, (Table-2) 52.32% (2015) is the male and 47.68% are female. Mainly the children are non-workers and a few female belongs to non-workers group (Table-3). The production cost of the potters in most of the cases is much higher than their labour cost or profit.

Total investment

Here most of the people live below the poverty line and most of them belong to the caste OBC. Maximum people earn from the cottage industry 'Terracotta'. They cannot invest much money for buying the raw materials required for this industry. Where 28.57% family invests between Rs.6247 to Rs. 7166 per month, 22.86% family invest between Rs.4468 to Rs. 5328 per month and only 17.14% family invest between Rs.8085 to 9004 per month. (Fig: 4).

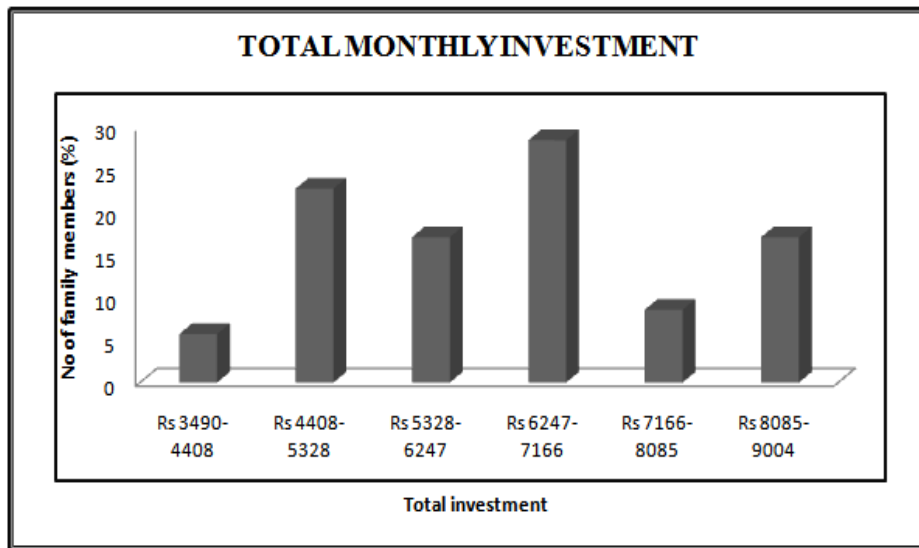


Fig. 4. Total Monthly Investments of the Terracotta Producers

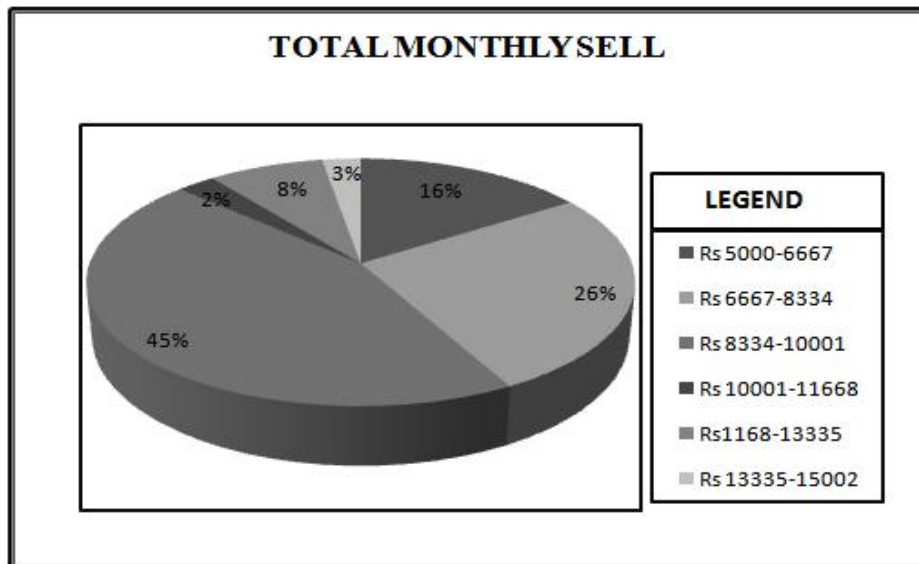


Fig. 5. Total Monthly Sell of the Terracotta Artworks

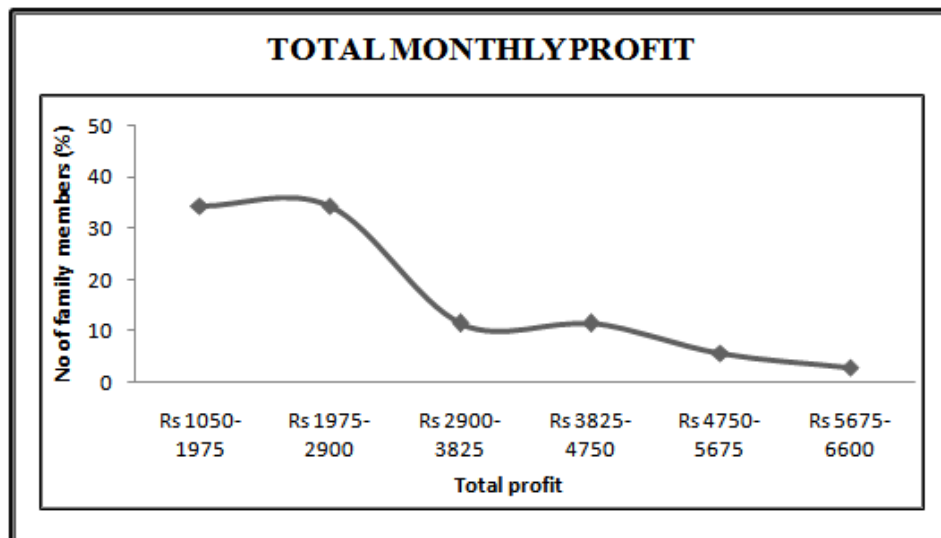


Fig. 6. Total Monthly Profit of the Terracotta Producers

Raw Materials of Terracotta Cottage Industry

Soil is the main raw material of the terracotta cottage industry. Except soil, the other important raw materials are sand, colour, rice-straw, leave and dry cow dung, water, basket etc. All of these raw materials are bought from various areas. They bring the main raw materials soil and sand from the 'pottery co-operative society' of Panchmura. The price rate of the soil is Rs 12000- 15000 per truck (3 month) (2015). They collect sand from the nearest river and whose carrying cost rate is Rs 700 – Rs. 900 per trolley. The other materials like colour are bought from Hanipur, Sonamukhi and cost rate of it is Rs 60-80 per kg. They collect the green leaves from the nearest jungle, but many of them bring it at the cost rate of Rs 50 for 30 per bag. Generally they get the dry cow dung from their domestic animals.

Other Investment Categories

The other investment category includes Electricity charge, Government tax, Labour cost, Transport cost etc.

Electricity charge

The cost of electricity charge is within the range of Rs.200 to Rs.1000 per 3 months in Panchmura village.

The Government Tax is approx.Rs.50 per year of terracotta cottage industry for house and shop rent with electric facilities.

Labour Cost

The labor cost of this area is Rs 100 to Rs. 300 per day which is critically low in comparison to their artistic ability. The middle man or the businessman are the ultimate gainer as they buy the products from the producer at a very low cost and sell to the market, 12 km away from the Panchmura village, at high prices keeping their greater profit margin.

Transport Cost

Van, truck or matador is used to bring those terracotta crafts and products to the market. Generally the fare of truck is Rs 1000-Rs. 5000 per trip, the fare of motor van is Rs 1500-Rs. 2000 per trip, and the fare of matador is of Rs 500-Rs. 1500 per trip.

Total sell

The producer-laborers of the terracotta cottage industries generally sell their products in the market through the middlemen. Sometimes they sell it from their houses when tourists approach there. These industries have maximum sell of the products in winter during the peak season of tourist's arrival. During peak season, there are 48.57% (2015) of potter families who sell between Rs.8334 - Rs.10001, 28.57% of potter families who sell between Rs.6667 – Rs. 8334, and 17.14% of potter families who sell between Rs.5000 – Rs. 6667 per month. (Fig.5)

Total profit

Total profit is the difference of total sell and the total investment like raw material cost, labor cost, house rent and

transportation cost etc. From the study it is being found that 34.29% (2015) families get a profit between Rs.1050 – Rs. 2900 per month and a very few families (2.86%) get profit between Rs.5675 – Rs. 6600 (Fig.6) per month. The profit margin is not at all satisfactory to run the business profitably. However the producers can increase their profit in winter season because of huge arrival of tourists.

Findings

Now in terracotta cottage industry with the maximum investment they only get a minimum profit, so their economic condition is in lower level. As a result most of the people attached with this industry want to shift in another job which are comparatively more profitable. The people who engaged in this cottage industry have some health issues due to poor working atmosphere. In this industry, whole seller and retailer have earned more than the producer of the products. Most of the workers and producer do not have their own land or shop. They have to take rent any land or shop for their production.

Recommendation

If the problems of this industry are handled professionally then it would go to develop a better economic condition. In view of the problems, certain recommendations may be made which may improve the economic condition as well as standard of living of this cottage industry worker to certain extent. It is needed to increase the availability of raw materials like soil, colour, sand, fire wood, selling in off season and decrease the price of raw materials and also use the modern technical process (electric woven for burning) of terracotta industrial activity. As a result, the production and profit will also increase. In this cottage industry it is necessary to increase the labor wage. It is also required to increase the sell in off-season, for that purpose, export and selling of the products in other countries is necessary. The government help in various levels is another tool for the up-gradation of industrial activity and it is necessary to reduce the involvement of middle man also. Local participation for community development, developed transport and communication system are other important factor for developing the terracotta cottage industries in Panchmura village.

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WEB LINK

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