

Performance of Pottery Industry: An Experience from Thrissur District of Kerala

Deepak K. S., M.Com, NET,

University of Calicut,
Kerala, India.

ABSTRACT

Pottery making in India is very old. It is the oldest human inventions, originating before the Neolithic period. Pottery now also running in India as a cottage industry. But we can say that these industries are not working in an efficient manner because of various complications and difficult situations. The pottery artisans are living as the poorest sections of the society. As a cottage industry of a country, pottery industry can act as an important source of employment and solution to the daily life problems of many artisans. Unfortunately the development programmes of cottage industries by the officials are not helping this industry much. We can see that many small medium enterprises are shutting down their business because of lack of adequate support at the right time. In this competitive world, where numerous substitutes are innovated and marketed, the life of pottery industry is in trouble. This paper is to find out the problems of the potters and suggest the possible solutions for the betterment of the same.

Keywords: Pottery, Neolithic period, Cottage industry, Artisan.

INTRODUCTION:

The modernisations replaced the old pottery products with the products of aluminium, hindalium and other materials. This declined the demand for the pottery cookware and other related products. Likewise the old artisan of pottery as well as other industries faced a setback from their field. Paucity of raw materials and working capital, obsolete technology, lack of diversification, low investment in fixed capital, poor marketing mechanism, inadequacy of research and developments are the main issues that face by pottery industry. Numbers of potters are living in various villages depending on this work. But the small returns because of various exploitations from the middleman and lack of the marketing tactics are destroying the life of potters. Unfortunately the government initiatives and aids for supporting the pottery industry are not satisfactory. They face problems in both production and marketing. The younger generations are not ready to take care of the business carried out by their ancestors because of these issues. As a cottage industry, once the pottery industry regain its prosperity it will be beneficial to the economy. Apart from that, the numerous health issues due to the aluminium and other materials can be minimised if the pottery industry introduced in the right way to the public. So it is really significant to study the problems and prospects of pottery industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

W.E Cox (1979) opines that before man learned to chip stone (the Palaeolithic periods) he learnt to make clay cups. Further, he stated that young children intensively love to make mud pies and from the mud pies to the mud cup is a short step. Because clay is such a fascinating medium that if a lump of clay is given to a child, he instinctively wants to create things out of it. The urge to create something is a part of the eternal instinct in man. From early times he had been creating things which, in fact is an expression of his eternal urge – the mental template. Clay is perhaps the only media through which mental urge could very well be expressed.

SK Mirmira (1987) investigated that, it was just by accident that the early man came to know about the quality of clay. He happened to see the foot prints of his legs left imprinted in wet soil during the rains which retained the same shapes when it dried up. This curious incident made him to realize that clay, if given shape in wet condition, retain the same even after it is dried.

As cited in Pathy, Das and Rao (1990) in his book "Marketing of Handicrafts" observed that "Handicrafts offer solution to India, which is characterized by unemployment and foreign exchange crunch".

Dr. Nuruzzaman Kasemi (July 2014) examined that Pottery industry of Koch Bihar district are characterized by small size of the units, family based operation, predominance of skilled workers, use of primitive tools, and wide prevalence of illiteracy among the workers. The present study shows that the pottery industry in the study area is suffering from irregular supply of raw materials, lack of working capital, obsolete technology, and lack of diversification of products, Competition from the organized sector, good marketing facilities, management problems and Lack of Research and Development Efforts etc. The artisans are often exploited by the middlemen who always squeeze the profit. The Government and nongovernment initiatives can solve the problem and develop the industries at its best level. It goes without saying that realization of policies will need very efficient and committed functionaries. Since the artisans are in the hands of stereo type machinery it may be necessary that the entire programme for the development may be marshalled through various governmental institutions.

M.Lalithambika (2016) investigated that the potters belong to several sub castes. Kumbharan, Kusava, Adi Andhra, Tamil cultured Kumbharan, Munnudayan, Kaula, Anthur Nair, Andhra Nair, Velan, Pandi Velan, Odan and Oorali Kumbharan are the 12 communities engaged in pottery work in Kerala. They are all migrants from Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. They speak separate dialect, but do not have a script. The potters were noticed that they are educationally and economically very backward irrespective of their place of residence.

METHODOLOGY:

The sample used for the performance analysis of pottery industry includes 30 potters from two Grama Panchayath of Thrissur district, Kerala. The sources of data involve both primary and secondary data. Primary data is collected through a well structured questionnaire. This was supplemented by various secondary information including internet, government reports, research reports and websites. Here the study is designed to gather descriptive information and explanation of the state of affairs. So the study is basically coming under the category of descriptive research. The study is following a non-probability sampling method. Here purposive sampling is mainly employed. The period of study is three weeks. The enquiry is made during the month of November 2018.

OVERVIEW ABOUT THE STUDY AREA:

Kondazhy and pazhayannur gramapanchayaths are situated in Thrissur district. There are around 80 families doing pottery business. The potters are used to live in a river side or near to a paddy field. The potters in Kondazhy – Pazhayannur are near to river Bharathapuzha and river Gayathri. These places are well-known for good clay. No one knows about the migration of the potters to this locality. They are settled here inherently from years ago. The Potters in this settlement are relatives, they are separated now as nuclear family and doing own business.

Places like Klilnikadavu as well as Kondazhy are the main area where the potters are settled. The potters in these localities are devoting the lord Mariamma. Every day potters start their work by devoting to their lord for good working conditions. The pots can be destroyed in many stages in the klin as well as from the potter's wheel. But the potters believe that the lord Mariamma will help them from all these adversities. For this reason they celebrating many festivals related to this lord yearly known as "Mariamma Pooja". The products from these settlements are well known for its quality. For past years the potters are used to market the pottery products themselves. They were selling their product in a basket as head load and conduct door to door selling. At that time the demand for pottery products were large. The females in the family will make the pots while the male member will sell the product in the market. The demands for pottery products were high in weekly bazaars. Products from this area were used to sell in famous Vaniamkulam bazaar and other local bazaars.

In Kondazhy a cooperative society was there which was discontinued its operation later on. Now the place is under the Khadi Board and around 15 potters live here in the courters and making pottery items in the work shed. The main problem of this area is the issues related to clay. They can't mine clay from nearby fields or riverside. Many rules and regulations are becoming the hindrance of smooth production.

FINDINGS:

In this area majority of the potters are included in the age group of Above 60. And no one is there as potters who aged less than 25. This shows the unwillingness of the youths to enter in to the pottery industry. The female potters are less in number as compared to male potters. Only a particular community who are considered as Other Eligible Community (caste wise) is involved in pot making. Pot making is considered traditionally as a community based job. Now also it is believed that pot making is the right for a particular community only. Potters are basically not educated. Here 53% among them are illiterate, while the rest only completed their primary level education. Educated people are reluctant to do pottery business as the society grading some jobs as good and other as bad according to the tradition or culture.

Monthly incomes of the majority of the potters are in between 5000 - 10000. But as compared to the cost of living of a common man it is not enough for a family to live with the basic amenities. All the potters have a monthly consumption more than or equal to their monthly income. Monthly consumption of the 70% of the potters is in between 10000 – 15000. Majority (80%) of the potters have Bank balance in between 5000-15000. But thinking about the economical situations and the cost of living we can say that their financial security is not adequate. Potters depending commercial banks more for debt purpose. Some others are depending Money lenders and other institutions for borrowing. 60% of the potters are living in own house while many other potters live in a courters cum work shed built for the potters in Kondazhy Panchayath. 47% of the potters are included as APL in Economic status. There are potters who are included in below poverty line as well as Antyodaya Anna Yojana. The Economic status of many poor potters who are suffering a lot can be seen as included in the list of Above Poverty Line. So the Classification of people on the basis of economic status is not revealing the real economic status of Potters in this locality. Majority of the potters are formed their business unit as a sole trading business. Convenience or benefits of the sole trading is the reason for this. Only a 7% of potters is doing partnership business. No other forms of business are applied here. Even though there are many potters, it is relevant to note that there are no cooperative societies in this region.

A cooperative society can help the entire potters in financial, marketing and production areas with the principle of “Self help through mutual help”. Interrupted supply of the Clay is the biggest problem before potters in this locality. Some potters say that the availability of clay is seasonal for them. 60% of potters don't have a separate space for storing of the pottery products. They either store the finished product in the work place or in their home. Apart from traditional products the potters have now started to diversify their products and thereby improving their earnings. All diversified products related to potteries are not known to many potters. Aged potters are only producing traditional products. A 40% of potters are provided a work shed from the Grama Panchayath. Apart from the problem of raw materials, technology related issues and financial issues are the other important problems that the potters are facing.

Monthly cost of production for the majority of the potters is above 20000. Clay costs more. Materials used in clay and other miscellaneous expenses are much more than their net profit. Marketing of the potters are mainly through the medium of Agents. Then the potters are depending the retailers for marketing purpose. None of the potters are evolving marketing strategies for better sales and profit. Financial constraints, lack of proper knowledge are the major weakness of the potters in terms of marketing. Lack of separate wing for marketing and exploitations by middle man are the key challenges faced by the potters. Whole potters collectively say that the government support is inadequate. Majority (60%) of potters state that they are not consuming any government initiatives for the benefits of them. 40% of potters says that they received some supports in the form of a work shed and a courters. But in the name of that now they are delisted from many projects and subsidies. Most of the potters (47%) state that the Government interactions are only nominal while the rest believes that the government initiatives are not at all useful and it involves corruption. 40% of potters never attended any kind of pottery related development programmes. But the rest attended some skill development programmes, seminars and workshops.

DISCUSSION:

Here Young people are degrading many jobs. They prefer white colour jobs. So there should be some policies by the government to attract youth to this business along with some entrepreneurial development programmes. Employment of more female potters can increase the profitability and productivity of the pottery business. Adequate workshops and skill development programmes to the female members in the unit will help to improve female participation in pottery business. Pottery business is one which is not suitable for a particular community only. So involvement of all people without caste priorities will be beneficial to the pottery business. Any

individual who trained properly can engage in pottery business. So maximum training programmes can get avail to the public irrespective of community can be fruitful. Proper education must be ensured to the potters for behaving and working properly and to lead a gentle and morale life. At the same time proper education of the children in the family also needed to make sure.

As the average Monthly income of the potters are very less, proper availability of rations through public distribution system and other welfare measures should be guaranteed. Savings habit among potters should be encouraged by attractive incentives and awareness programmes about bank deposits and other savings mechanisms. Presence of money lenders and exploitations among potters is high. So the lending mechanism of the commercial banks must be more liberal to avail credit facilities. Aged potters are not depending commercial banks and they are approaching money lenders more. Personal banking facilities should be ensured to these potters. Potters, who are homeless, must be rehabilitated with proper basic facilities. Many of them live in the work shed without basic amenities.

Economic status of the potters must be revised. Many of the eligible persons are delisted from below poverty line and Antyodaya Anna Yojana. Setting up of cooperative societies can make a good change among Potters. Adequate production facilities as well as mass marketing etc. can increase the earnings of potters. There are possibilities to form a village industry under the khadi and village Industries Act 1987. But proper awareness about all these must be communicated to the potters. Pottery business is enough to make adequate profit and for a better lively hood. So counselling and other mental exercise can be provided to potters to bring the potters into the main stream and earn maximum.

The Panchayath can earmark the clay bearing areas under their jurisdiction and make it available to the potters in that area. From less productive paddy fields the top soil can be kept aside and clay can be dug out. After mining the land reclamation can be done by filling the pit and spreading the top soil over the refill so that the paddy field becomes cultivable. Paddy fields can be used to mine clay and the low lying area can be converted to fish pond, rearing edible fish which is a profitable business and helps the food security program. Arrangement for storing the finished product is a basic requirement for a business unit. So subsidies or formation of policies to help potters for adequate storage space is much important.

The traditional products like Pots and pans are not in much demand. New products have to be developed. Decorative pottery and Terracotta mural art works have great scope, but many traditional potters have no knowledge of them. Product designing and training are needed. Modern machines and techniques like motorised wheel, mini pug millet etc. must be availed to potters in subsidized rate or loan must be provided for the same. Government should intervene either to avail raw materials in a reasonable price. For more sales government can conduct exhibitions and other promotional measures.

The traditional marketing mode of carrying head loads is outdated. To help the potters from the various exploitations by the intermediary, government can arrange online marketing facilities and other e-commerce programmes. Awareness must be given to potters in terms of marketing strategy and business ideas for better marketing in the competitive business world. Health wise advantages of pottery products compared to other aluminium steel products must be marketed in an effective way. There are various schemes introduced by the central and state governments for the upliftment of traditional artisans. But potters are not even aware of them. Potters need assistance to take advantage of these opportunities. For this purpose help desk based on local authorities are preferable. Potters who never attended any kind of development programmes should be selected and proper training must be given. Training programmes also be conducted on a regular basis. Government can Promote Pottery products like khadi (use khadi clothes once in a week) in government office and schools (Mid Day Meal programmes) as a promotional measures of pottery products. As a part of the protection of health and heritage a culture must be build up to use pottery products in home and public places (glass, pots etc...)

CONCLUSION:

The potters are considered as the first engineers in the history (M.Lalithambika). The pottery products are the proof of the tradition and culture. The evolution of mankind is through the small inventions. The art of pottery is brought up with civilization. Being an agricultural country the pottery products were inevitable in India. Developments substituted pottery products and it became obsolete. But the health issues in the substitutes and the benefits of old pottery products are now creating a good demand for the same.

As a cottage industry the potters are suffering a lot of problems in their business life. They are not able to convert the demand of the products to profits successfully. The potters are educationally and economically backward. The potter's community lives in very difficult circumstances. The pottery trading is facing severe problems. The availability of raw materials is the biggest issue faced by them. The techniques used by them for

production are primitive and laborious. They are not diversifying their products. Many of the potters are still not aware of the new technologies. For the better rehabilitation of the potter's community government intervention is much needed. The production related issues such as raw material related issues, technical issues and various marketing issues making the potters unable to earn for the daily bread. The changed marketing scenario demands new strategies. Here the potters should diversify the products and attract the consumers. For this adequate training programme must be implemented at the right time.

As a part of the protection of health and heritage, a culture must be build up. Proper assistance must be given to the potters in every area. Whatever be the strategy a helping hand from government side is warranted to protect this craft and livelihood. Unless the government decides that this traditional industry should survive and the traditional artisans are to be protected, this trade will slowly vanish.

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