

AN OVERVIEW OF TRADITIONAL HANDICRAFT INDUSTRIES OF KRISHNANAGAR CLAY DOLL, DISTRICT-NADIA, WEST BENGAL

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Abstract

Indian handicrafts, traditionally made by rural artisans, radiate a certain charm of their own that has been long admired the world over for the brilliant mix of colours and exquisite craftsmanship. The crafts of West Bengal are renowned all over the world. Amongst all the crafts of the state, the art of clay doll making is the most popular one. These beautiful, lively clay dolls structures are recorded with vibrant colours. Ghurni, in Krishnanagar city of Nadia district (West Bengal), is the place renowned for its clay sculptures and toys. The clay dolls are basically made partly by pressing and molding methods. First of all, different kinds of clay are blended and mashed, to form a dough-like material. With this dough, different parts of the sculpture are designed, by molding and pressing them to give the desired structure. Then, clay paste is used for sticking together all the separately moulded parts. The resultant object is baked in high temperature kiln. After the basic structure is formed, the dolls are painted in various vibrant colors, by brush. Putul, as the Bengalis fondly call their clay dolls, come in various types, depending upon their structure and the purpose they are made for. These dolls are a craze amongst the foreign tourists of the state, who find this art totally unique and love their vibrant colourfulness. Assessment of the industrial nature clay doll industry and its impact on society is to be discussed in this paper.

Key Words: *Putul, Artisans, Moulded*

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1. Introduction

The Indian handicrafts industries is highly labour intensive cottage based industry. This industry is spread all over India in both rural and urban areas. The industry provides employment to over six million artisans which include a large number of women and people belonging to the weaker sections of the society. The handicraft sector is economically an important sector, from the point of view of low capital investment. The Indian handicrafts are classified into two categories as Articles of everyday use and showpiece items. In West Bengal one of the best and popular showpiece industries is clay doll industry which belongs to Krishnanagar specially in Ghurni. 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. In West Bengal, Krishnanagar is an illustrious name in the field of clay doll making since long. The people who are engaged in giving shape of those fascinating dolls are mainly belong to kumbhakar community. Their quality of being perfect in giving form, feature and gesture, meticulous realism of cloths to last fold and tuck and the marvelous expressions are so identical to real ones that compel the customers and tourists to purchase all those clay items to make their way into showcase for beautification of the room. The reputations of those clay dolls have gained the high demands from international markets apart from meeting the domestic requirements. Clay doll industry of Krishnanagar, in particular Ghurni and its surrounding areas has a long historical background which dates back to pre-independence period under East India Company of British period.

2. Research Background

Before seventeen century Krishnanagar city was a rural village named 'Rewie' and the name was changed to 'Krishnanagar' by the then ruler King Raja Rudra Roy of primitive Bengal during early Seventeenth Century. After 1728 Raja Krishna Chandra took over the reign and with his active initiation by way of taking help from foreign labourers, clay dolls of Krishnanagar became a trade name for their outstanding quality in all respects. Within a short period clay artistry started to get well appreciation not only in India but also abroad. In this connection it is

necessary to mention that in the year 1851 East India Company of British India introduce in these beautiful clay-dolls an exhibition of ‘all the works of industry of all nations’ ceremony where it had gained huge appreciation. Since then this clay dolls industry has become gradually enriched and it is now enjoying the status of a small scale industry.

3. Study Area

Ghurni is a neighborhood of Krishnanagar in Nadia District in the state of West Bengal. It is the centre for the production of clay dolls, often referred to as Krishnanagar clay dolls. Krishnanagar is situated at the right bank of river Jalangee in the Nadia district. Its geographical location is $23^{\circ}24'N$ latitude and $83^{\circ}31'E$ longitude. Total area is 15.80sq.km. Ghurni, the main industrial centre, is situated to the south east of Krishnanagar. Other clay doll manufacturing villages are Sastitala, Rathtala, Kumorpara and Natunbazar which are located within the close proximity of Krishnanagar.

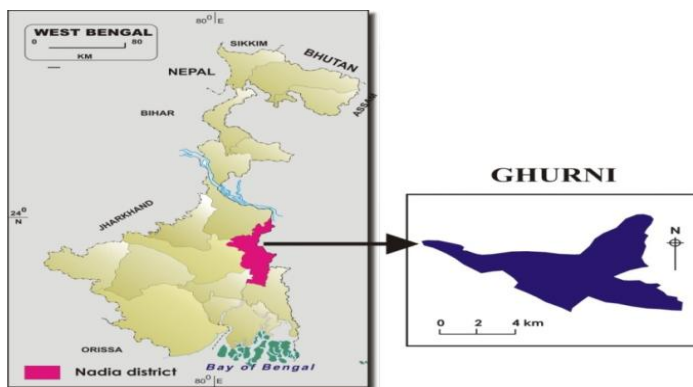


Fig. 1: Location Map of Ghurni

4. Objectives

The objectives are as follows:

- To show the present position of clay-doll industry in Krishnanagar
- to assess the impact of clay-doll industry on socio-economic condition of the workers engaged in clay-doll industry
- to highlight the core issues and to give recommendation for the development of clay doll industry.

5. Material and Methods

Ghurni has been taken as a sample village from where a reasonable picture of the industry could be ascertained. A questionnaire has been made for primary survey. Secondary data have been taken into account from census and district gazetteer. Other secondary data have been collected from Kutir & Kudhra Shilpa Adhikar, Jela Shilpa Kendra Krishnanagar, Nadia, Municipal Corporation, Mritshilpa Samabai Samity etc.

6. Result and Discussion

Clay modeling industry is one type of cottage industry. Because, every unit employs are domestic labourers. Besides, capital investment is nominal. Small spaces are needed for this clay industry and raw materials are available from local areas. But involvement of skilled labourers is highly required. Labourers are actually traditional artists. Hence, they make the clay models out of their thoughts.

7. Raw Materials

(1) Soil: - Soil is the prime material of clay-doll industry, which is available in Hanskhali, of South Krishnanagar and Paninala which is close to Ghurni. Price of the soil depends on its quality which always varies because, it is totally different from normal soil, it is basically loam in character.

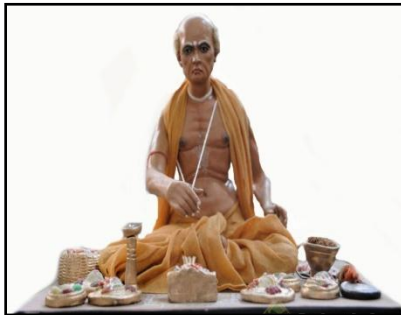
(2) Instruments: - The main instruments of clay-doll industry are- (a) Chewari –made by bamboo (b) Basua – it is also made by bamboo,(c) Brush –of different scales.

All the instruments are available in local area but sometime they also use imported ones.

(3) Colours: - Previously, clay-doll artists used only powder colour. Now they are using pastel colour, tube colour etc. They also apply Tarpin oil, Vernish, Kerosene oil etc. to give better effect on colour. Another unique application of colour is made by mixing of seed dust of tamarind and gum. Below the some sample doll which are available in Ghurni area in any time.



World famous Goddess Durga Murti



Photos of different clay doll

8. Worker's Profile

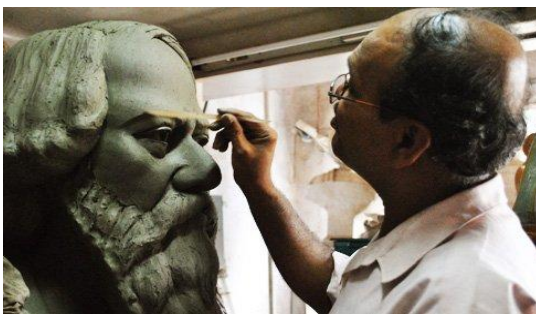
Clay doll workers are mainly classified into two broad groups. One is artists which are 20% and another is general labour which are 80% of total self employed workers. Among labourers 60% are male and 40% are female. A category of labourers including their respective wages has been given in table no. 1

Table No. 1: Categories of Workers and their wage rate/ day

Category of Workers	Percentage of Workers involved in this industry	Working Hour/ Day	Wage Rate/ Day
Clay-maker	38	8	Rs. 100/-
Colour Designer	22	8	Rs. 150/-
Structure maker	12	8	Rs. 200/-
Artist	20	8	Rs. 200/-
Model-maker	8	8	Rs. 250/-

Source: Primary Survey

Most of the workers are involved in this industry generation to generation and almost every family member is engaged into it. As per primary survey, large number of workers of this industry is involved in making clay models, specially of Hindu God and Goddess, because of their high demand. Since they are not so much skilled in other types of idols, their rate of wage is very low. Whereas, well trained model makers get higher wages, though their share is only 8%. Apart from their participation in National Level Competition, artists of Ghurni are being invited to participate in many International Exhibitions held in different countries. For their well acclaimed workmanship, some of them were even awarded.



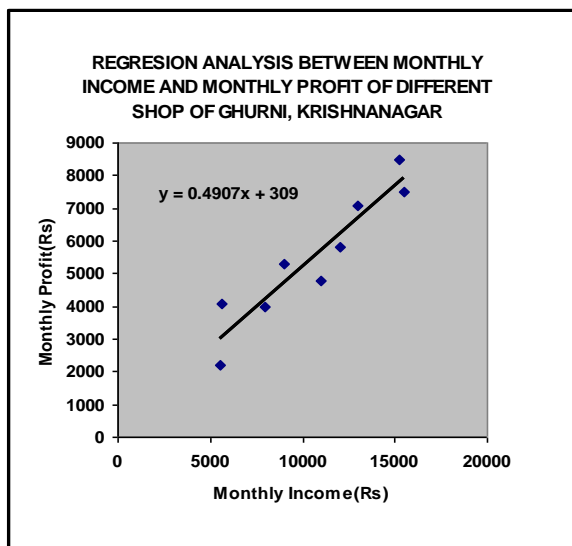
The clay doll workers

9.**Demographic Profile**

- **Age group Composition of Worker:** Most of the workers of clay-doll industry belong to age group between 15-55 years which is almost 74%.
- **Education Level:** According to the census 2011, 40% of labourers are illiterate. Only 32% have completed primary level, 25% completed secondary level and very few of them have passed graduation.

10. Economics Characteristics

- **Income level of different workers:** Monthly income of 50% labourer stands in between Rs. 1000-3000. Whereas, 27% earn not more than Rs.1000. And monthly income of few numbers of labourers (16%) varies from Rs. 3,000 to 6000. Apart from this 7% of artists earn a monthly income in between Rs. 6,000-9,000. Following diagram depicts the relationship between monthly income and profit of different shop owners of Ghurni.



Source: Primary Survey

Fig.2

- **Marketing prospects:** Clay-doll industry is highly dependent on prospect of marketing which is guided by changing demands of various customers. Hence, variety of products and perfection are of great importance to achieve a wide range of markets. At the same time potential marketing is an essential part of progress and prosperity of the clay-doll industry.

- **Different types of finished goods and their making and selling rates:** According to demand, different types of clay models are made such as small doll, dog block, human figure etc. Following table depicts the making and selling rates of such clay models.

Table No. 2: Making and Selling Rate of finished goods

Name of Finished Goods	Quantity of Finished Goods	Making Rate/ piece in Rs.	Selling Rate/ piece in Rs
Small doll	50 Pcs Per Day	Rs. 150/-	Rs. 220/-
Dog Block	80 Pcs Per Day	Rs. 120/-	Rs. 150/-
Peacock Block	10 Pcs Per Day	Rs. 180/-	Rs. 275/-
Flower Block	25Pcs Per Day	Rs. 180/-	Rs. 310/-
Human Figure	4 Pcs Per Month	Rs. 3,000/-	Rs. 5,000/-
Ganesh Block	20 Pcs Per Day	Rs. 120/-	Rs. 210/-

Source: Primary Survey

- **Selling outlets:** Since Ghurni is famous for clay-doll industry a large number of people are engaged in selling those products to customers of various statues including tourists who are come in this place for this purpose. Generally artisans are used to sell their products to local shop owners or outside businessmen. They also sell their models direct to customers as per their orders. But in most of the cases they are to depend on whole sale markets. There are agents also, who place order clay-doll manufacturers according to the demands and collect them. Besides, local markets, exporting clay doll are another job. This export exercise is not limited to different states of India but in abroad also. U.K, U.S.A, and Russia are the prominent buyers. The pattern of marketing over time is shown in table no. 3 as under:



A street of Ghurni, lined with clay doll shops



Clay doll exhibition

Table No. 3: Selling of products in different sectors

Year	Total No. of Salesman	Salesman selling their production in different sectors		
		Public Sector	Private Sector	Selling of Goods in other sectors
2010	180	3%	24%	73%
2011	260	4%	19%	77%
2012	355	5%	11%	84%
2013	459	5%	18%	77%
2014	585	7%	23%	70%
2015	632	6%	25%	69%
2016	690	8%	26%	66%

Source: Primary Survey

11. ISSUES

- Few units have a proper display area/ showroom.
- The dolls displayed in a very random way which confuses the buyer instead of impressing him/her.
- Artisans and even entrepreneurs find difficulty in communication especially during the fairs and exhibitions. It is because most of the people involved in this trade are uneducated or unaware.
- No brochure, leaflet or tag is being used.
- There is no scientific process of burning to avoid sudden breakage and defects.
- Unhealthy competition leading the customers to buy cheaper dolls made of plastic and glass fibre.
- Present young generation is less interested in taking up this craft as their profession.
- Due to unsatisfactory wages, laborious work, artists are migrating to other cities like Baharampore, Bardhaman and Kolkata for other jobs and good earnings.
- Lack of proper education and experience have become hindrance in their way of making proper marketing of the products they produce. Thus they earn poor profit margin out of sales proceeds.
- Government does not give any type of help towards clay-doll makers.

- Poor packaging system of Clay-doll is one of the major problems of clay-doll industry, specially for exporting clay-dolls to England, France Australia etc.
- Due to gradual degradation of quality, there is a large rejection in which exports reduces its popularity in the international market.

12. Recommendation

- Need a good display design and brochure which would help in expanding and communicating to target market.
- Product should be designed and displayed in a series, so that they can be arranged as a story of content, pattern or color. This would make the buyers to appreciate and purchase the products.
- Utilitarian products should be developed so that clay doll of Ghurni would reach to maximum number of people.
- Make awareness about GI (Geographical Identification) mark for their products in fairs and exhibitions which would help them to show their identity
- First and foremost necessary step is to disseminate general education and proper technical knowledge about craftsmanship, including computer generated design to the concerned people.
- Government should encourage co-operative marketing system to avoid bad competition in makers.
- Government should take proper plan for the development of the artists.
- Research and testing laboratory is an utmost need for quality control and to improve the process of burning to avoid breakage etc.
- Develop new designs and patterns according to changing demands of the market. Website, package graphics, brochures and branding may help.
- Cheap and modern packaging system is also essential for this industry to avoid breakage of goods in transit.
- Quality control is a must to maintain goodwill.

13. Concluding Remarks

The traditional tendency of buying habits of people has already been changed by advancement of science and technology. In consequence, consumers nowadays are lured by plastic products

including different types of eye catching dolls which are comparatively cheaper in price than clay dolls. Moreover, all those dolls are light, unbreakable and easy to carry. In addition, fibre-dolls have also gained a good amount of share in consumer markets. As a result, clay-doll industry is facing a hard competition. But still there is a wide scope of prospect for this industry. Because, there are people who are interested in art and culture of Bengal as was in the past and so they prefer to buy the same. More so, since all the natural elements are being used in the process of making clay-dolls, these are considered as eco-friendly products. Over and above, this industry could play a vital role in generating mass employment. So, it is very much essential for the concerned Government department to look after this clay doll industry by giving financial help with proper scheme to boost the activities of the community and nourish the culture.

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