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## SURVIVAL OF EARTHEN DOLL PRODUCTS AND THE CONTEMPORARY TRADE - AN ARGUMENT ON POTENCY OF BENGAL POTTERY

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### ABSTRACT

*In the era of globalization, every product is facing high level of competition as the market is becoming very unpredictable day by day. The predominant factor become how it is stand up to satisfy the consume and can survive with other product of same genre. So, priority is given, how a product is successful in its appeal to the consumer. 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. We can derive the socio historical context through this art form, which can raise interest of different field of studies. A careful examination can turn the fate of clay doll art to its present miserable condition, shifting to prosperous product with cultural and economic importance.*

### KEYWORDS

earthen doll, heritage, craftsman condition, product, urban market.

### INTRODUCTION

*The Dolls were an attitude. If nothing else, they were a great attitude.*

-Johnny Thunders

Earthen doll industry is a craft of age old tradition. In West Bengal it has developed mainly in two different ways. The clay prepared to develop a doll by drying it, mainly different types of God and Geddes are made, and another one is made of burn clay. Different types of household or domestic decorative are made in this type. Clay doll has fought to survive with the changing demand for its economic purpose. Not only clay doll art developed because of economic condition but different types of societal practice of rural Bengal also helped to hold its importance with the passing age. Presentation is the essential characteristics of this art, it has been claimed in many ways. The established mutual exchange need of extended rural life has given the necessary air to breathe the art so long to prove its importance. In West Bengal almost 5000 colony of doll makers exist of nearly 40,000 villages. The depressing fact is that the domestic demand of earthen product is reducing very fast and it is replaced by modern materialist product.

**TABLE 1: NAMES OF DISTRICT WITH DIVISION MAKES CLAY DOLLS**

Bardhaman Division	Jalpaiguri Division	Presidency Division
₹ Bankura	₹ Koch Bihar	₹ Howrah
€ Bardhaman	€ Darjeeling	€ Kolkata
€ Birbhum	€ Jalpaiguri	€ Murshidabad
€ Hugli	€ Malda	€ Nadia
€ Purulia	€ Uttar Dinajpur	€ North 24 Parganas
€ Purba Medinipur	€ Dakshin Dinajpur	€ South 24 Parganas
₹ Paschim Medinipur		

### CONSTRAINTS AGAINST FLOURISHING THE ART

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. 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. 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 an 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 below:

Infrastructural and Economic Constraints Non-availability of proper soil  
 Low performance of co-operative society Production depends on weather  
 High cost for modern technology High cost for modern technology  
 High cost for modern technology Next generation less interested  
 Marketing constraint Transportable cost high  
 High packing cost for large products Limited market for sale

PIC 1



Source: Artesian inherited the form making through generations (pic,goole image)

Earthen doll making industry is trying to survive amidst lot many adversities. An absence of proper marketing strategy has been pushing silently this trade and profession to the lap of gradual death. Though some of the craftsman with their personal enthusiasm trying to expand the scope of marketing, but efforts in personal label perhaps not enough to establish the deserving position of the clay art. A very few artists sending their crafts to Kolkata-Delhi through their personal endeavor, most of the people only opt for the local markets. Some of the businessmen from Kolkata come with their own interest to buy these crafts. The local crafts men cannot market their products properly because there is no proper centre or fixed place for trading of clay product and despite the assurance from government no marketing centre has been still set up. In the recent globalised market where substitute product like plastic dolls, printed pots made of stone, are securing their position in market, the demand for clay craft has also declined rapidly. Many of the artists are using artificial color to coat the items. They have no formal training for coloring and it is expensive too.

Pottery of west Bengal is well known because of its traditional history, most of which symbolizes the religious practices. Many of the objects prepared are used for religious purposes. Different types of pots are prepared for particularly for the purpose worshipping. One of them, is worth mentioning is Bankura horse. These horses are made of rich red clay and are offered to the gods and goddesses at religious ceremonies. The Bankura horse also known as Panchmura horse after the name of the place where it is made. Panchmura has gained popularity as a distinct decorative item in upper middle class family drawing rooms. The clay art is primarily an expression of the folk culture of the different regions. These highly expressive designs are the ceremonial forms of the indigenous gods and goddesses and linked to their religious beliefs (Ghose,1981). Durga in Hindu culture and belief is most celebrated goddess, so undoubtedly the most popular figure that is made by artisan., it is not only the most popular figure even the rank of artists is made during the time of Durga puja by several media houses and authorities. Craftsmen also got some publicity during this time. Saraswati, the Goddess of music and creative art, also have a popular demand because Saraswati Puja is a domestic observance, and many Bengali parents worship Goddess Saraswati, for the academic prosperity of their children and they continue to do the ritual (puja) every year. Festival brings the glimpse of smile to faces of craftsman, because this period is few among those time when they can earn some economic comfort for them and their families. Rest of the year they undergo through a really miserable time.

TABLE 2: DISTRICT WISE LOCATION OF TERRACOTTA AND EARTHEN DOLLS

Name of the districts	Name of the sites
North 24 Parganas	Chandraketugarh
South 24 Parganas	Deulpota, Dhosa, Tilpi, Atghara, Gosaba, Harinarayanpur
Purba Medinipur	Tamluk, Natsal
Paschim Medinipur	Panna, Tilda
Bankura	Dihar, Pokhanna
Birbhum	Bahiri, Kotasur, Nanur
Bardhaman	Mangalkot, Pandu Rajar Dhibi, Baneswardanga, Bharatpur
Murshidabad	Rajbaridanga, Farakka
Maldah	Mahanad
Dakshin Dinajpur	Bangarh

Ceremonial pottery is another category which involves the making of pots and vessels to be used for ritualistic offerings. Mainly for domestic uses. The mass production of such items is noticeable during the different ceremonial occasions that happen at several points of time during the whole year. Of these one popularly practiced is the Bnkura, particularly in Bisnupur, Krishna nagar, North 24 parganas etc.

**INTENTION FOR IMPROVEMENT THE SITUATION OF POTTERY**

It is obvious that if you want eat fruit from your tree the first you have to pour water to its root. The pathetic fallacy is that though that these art forms are in a miserable dying condition as in most parts of India but the earthen dolls and earthen products are sold in high prices in different showrooms in metropolises. Government is not reluctant to improve the condition of this art but that is still not become instrumental for noticeable improvement where we can feel a satisfactory growth in near future for the people engaged in this art. Some of the artisan curse the fate, and started to accept the on the long run they will not survive if they farther engage themselves in this course of profession which they inherited from their father or for father.

An eager step from administration and conscious civilian should take that will help to rejuvenate that enriched art. Proper sales promotion and advertisement can be conducted in front of interested businessman that will perhaps help to improvising the sales and reveals the possibilities of the product. Some awareness and aggressive promotional activities both in the part stakeholders and government necessarily take to established earthen product side by side modern glass or stone product of that category. At the same time a conscious scrutiny about the policy that can address the where we lacking behind. The present enquiry will help to explore the need to organize the earthen doll sector both in national and international, keeping in mind that there it noticeable demand of the product. The study also highlights the necessity to adopt new approach to survive as a product being flexible with conventional methods of manufacturing to marketing.

Tradition has its own importance. It is also applicable when we talked about the art and crafts also. Times have its own rules, that is why new thing happens and few fade out with the passage of time. This is hard reality to eternal time cycle. The superficial discussion why the clay doll is not able to survive in completion first

we have to accept the fact that it is failing to fulfill the consumer satisfaction with other goods present in market on that genre. Fantasizing is pathetic fate of this age old art more importance demand to resolve it. Ultimately, this type of sympathetic discussion is not going to help the art and artesian.

PICTURE 2 & 3: THE TRANSITION TO MATCH WITH PRESENT CONSUMER DEMAND



Source: goole image,www.goole image.com

A lot many discussion has been already made by honest intension to find out proper solution. But we cannot claim that those analyses brought any noticeable changes to the fate of people engaged in this art. Quite astonishingly, people who have spent their time and energy on this work and made field survey most of them has experienced such type of experience from the respondent. Artisans in Bengal, scattered in different areas working on clay doll, they sometimes become impulsive when people of various field or persons of academic interest want to investigate the underneath story of them. As they all know that this conversation will not help them to earn some extra money. We all know that, to solve a problem the initial steps are to understand the problem with honest intention to solve it. After that, a thorough investigation of wide area, can direct the proper and long lasting solution. But unfortunately those people engaged in the craft became untruthful about all those stuff and that is a real hindrance to develop and reestablishing the importance of clay doll industry.

**Attitude for Treating as a Product:** Government has been criticized a lot, for not being active or sympathetic enough and does the needful. We understand that, only government help or some extra funding possibly not able to make any permanent differences. If we want to see the clay dolls products will establish its place with dignity and its heritage, first we have to treat it as a product. And after that we have to follow the marketing vision which we did with other product, when it is falling from its demand. We have treat pottery industry not as a Bengal traditional art, but as a product of artistic value. We have to embark direct into to evaluate its rural limitation to universal exposition. This is the high time when the earthen doll industry needs to prepare contemporarily by leaving its traditional non technicality. For that we can get the help of marketing vivisection and management refusal, and reformation.

Proper study on clay pottery can help the enhance the rural economy in a large extent. More such works are needed for deeper understanding of the rich traditions of West Bengal. **First**, that most of the studies focus on Bengal and its district where there the trend of manufacturing and tendency of buying behavior of clay material is present, it can be small in sample but why and which socio –economic conditions is responsible should be a great help to prepare to make a new policy either accepting it or denying it too. On the other hand, there are no satisfactory or long term possible methods to promote or overall development for the craft. Most of the scholars opt for different approach of various kinds, but there is hardly any potential suggestion for permanent upliftment of age old craft. Clay pottery is association with religion and usage in religious ceremonies has given a deeper significance and a wider dimension.

**Second**, Other products made of glass even foreign product also have a demand in urban market which was once monopoly of clay product. but now earthen doll industry is failing to having attention of consumer. From consumer point of view, the product is lacking behind because of finish, its colour. It is also not attractive in newness with other product present in market. But we sometime failed to promote that it's may failed in terms of newness but it is the product of uniqueness. In context of discussion about Bengal folk culture, famous poet Rabindranath Thakur, truly shared his views to Gurusday Datta, one of the leading personality of art and culture, that we feel very excited when we talked about foreign art and craft, and we also convey our scholarly opinion about that but when we talked about the art of out next door, that is nurtured in every day household we failed to give deserving importance to them. (Ghosh, D. 2012, Paschimbonger mrit shilpo).

But no craft can survive without the support of his native support. The immediate support and inspiration that gives art the reason of celebration depends on the atmosphere and social health where it is nurtured. A helpful socio economic ambience is necessary to exist the art and evolve the art.

TABLE 3: PRICE OF PRODUCTS SOLD IN RURAL MARKET BY PRAJAPATI COMMUNITY

Sl. No.	Name of the article	Vessel type	Percentage of total no of product produce	Purpose of use	Price in local market (in Rupees) per piece
1.	Lota	Tumbler	10%	To take out water from the storage pot	Rs. 2/- to Rs. 3/-
2.	Chhota ghara	Small pot	5%	During ritual	Rs. 10/-
3.	Bada ghara	Big pot	30%	To store water	Rs. 20/-
4.	Bade matki/ matla	Water pot	15%	To store water	Rs. 70/- to Rs. 80/-
5.	Chhota matki	Small water pot	10%	To store water	Rs. 40/- to Rs. 50/-
6.	Dhachki	Pitcher		During ritual	Rs. 5/-
7.	Degra	Medium sized water container	15%	To store water	Rs. 40/- to Rs. 50/-
8.	Maan	Large sized water container	10%	To store water	Rs. 60/-
9.	Kalari	Plate	5%	To bake chapatti	Rs. 10/-

### PAST SIGNIFICANCE AND FUTURE HOPE

Bengal pottery development is very old phenomena. It is as old as human civilization. So in ancient writing from Vedic age we got the reference of pottery or kumvakar class. In wrik Veda we got the reference of clay pot. In our sub continent it is almost 5000 years old art, in support we got the archeological evidence also. And the same time the wheel of potters are became symbol of life. So it has been significantly used in many philosophical ways also.

In present days few members of potter's family have able to establish the beauty of the art in world platform. Even they are placing their work side by side with French craft. In China, Japan clay art of this land drew the attention to art lovers Those inspiring incident definitely helps to understand the potency of that age old art, but these god is not so kind for many craftsman. But people of the area have different opinion about those who have got better opportunity. There are lot many others reason who have reached the top. According to them there are lot many other condition helped them to reached there; it's not about only good craftsmanship. Though that is not new, in every form of art, serving the art and establishment through art, are two different things. But it is significant that the particular art form is successfully proving its capability in global market.

**CONCLUSION**

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 firms and to create a environment of surviving of the artists. The unhealthy difference between the price of rural and urban area should be balanced. Makers have to depend on the hat, which is the adjoining market near village held two or three days in a week. They can't afford to go the urban market for communication and its mater of expense. The whole sets of product they have to bring in nearby city, which needs a proper transport, with scientific packaging and after that a proper place to sell, it is not difficult to understand that all are became utopian thoughts for them. So they chose the immediate safe policy, sell it on near market or give it to the middleman.

So there is an all round unorganized system gradually killing the possibilities. 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. We are also not different. We have to fight together to establish the potency of craftsman in contemporary significance.

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