

A study on challenges and hardship faced by artisans of Terracotta Industry in Gorakhpur

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Abstract

The terracotta industry in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, is renowned for its unique craftsmanship and traditional pottery. The Aurangabad village of Bhathat block is famous globally for its terracotta product. Despite its cultural and economic significance, the industry faces numerous challenges that threaten its sustainability. This research paper explores the various difficulties encountered by artisans, including financial constraints, lack of modern technology, competition from industrial products, and dwindling market demand. The study also provides insights into potential solutions to revive and sustain this traditional craft.

Keywords- Terracotta, Gorakhpur, Artisans, Clay

Introduction

The word terracotta is derived from the —Terra and —cotta which is Latin in word which means baked earth. The hard, partially burned clay that is used to make pottery is called terracotta. The items in this craft are not created on a potter's wheel like those in pottery. You can easily mold terracotta clay into a variety of shapes. After being formed, it is heated to 1000 to 2000° F for hardening. Terracotta can then be made waterproof with a straight coat of glaze. The art of terracotta has a lengthy history. Up until the 14th century or so, it was actually the only clay product in use.

Gorakhpur's terracotta industry has been a significant contributor to the local economy and heritage. The artisans in Gorakhpur are mostly present around the Aurangabad village of Bhathat block. The baked clay or "terracotta" products produced from the unique soil in the Gorakhpur district of Uttar Pradesh's Bhathat area got the Geographical Indication (GI). One of the main sources of income for the people living in this district's Gorakhpur area is terracotta items. Bells, vases, Ganesha sculptures, tables, elephants, deer, horses, bullock carts, horse carts, lamps, and chandeliers are just a few of the many items created by the terracotta artists.



Government of Uttar Pradesh has started the scheme of One District One Product(ODOP) in 2018.Under this scheme terracotta is selected as ODOP product for Gorakhpur district.

Terracotta is made by shaping clay into desired forms, drying it, and then firing it in a kiln. The process can involve hand-crafting, using molds, or using machines.

Clay preparation

- Purify the clay by removing dust, stones, and other impurities
- Mix the clay with water to form a dough
- Pack the clay in an airtight container to retain moisture

Shaping

- Shape the clay by hand, or using a mold
- Allow the clay to dry in the air

Firing

- Place the clay in a kiln and fire it for several days
- Allow the clay to slowly cool

Finishing

- Hand-finish the clay
- Decorate the clay with paints, glazes, or other embellishments

The industry primarily consists of small-scale artisans who rely on traditional methods to create exquisite terracotta products. However, the sector faces multiple hurdles that hinder its growth and long-term viability.

This paper aims to analyze these challenges in detail and suggest strategies for overcoming them.

Literature Review

The terracotta industry, a traditional craft sector, faces numerous issues and challenges that have been widely discussed by scholars. These challenges range from economic constraints, market competition, technological limitations, environmental concerns, and socio-cultural factors affecting artisans.

Bhattacharya (2019) noted that the seasonal nature of demand for terracotta products, especially those associated with festivals, creates income instability for artisans.A study by Patel (2021) revealed that the lack of

mechanization and access to modern kiln technology reduces efficiency and product quality.

According to Dr. Farozan and Deepika Kumari(2024) manufacturers have faced issues due to lack of resources and adequate incentives. Uma Shankar Yadav, Ravindra Tripathi (2022) suggested that lack of government and non-government organization is required for their growth and development.

Mukherjee (2018) highlighted that the declining interest among younger generations in traditional pottery threatens the survival of the craft. Studies also suggest that cultural heritage initiatives and tourism-driven demand can play a role in revitalizing the industry (Dasgupta, 2019).

Shashi Prakash Mishra and Dr. Abdul Jilani Mansuri (2016) suggested that village industries should have access to marketing, financial, and technological support from a permanent organization in the village or area, such as the Trade Facility Center (TFC) and it will be run by a forward-thinking local businessperson.

According to Dr. Sana(2018) artisans and craftsmen of terracotta are exploited by middle men and most of the profit goes into their hand. She further stated that strategic development planning will give new platform to increase their market

Objectives

- To identify the issues and challenges faced by artisans involved in terracotta industry.
- To recommend solution for the issues and recommendation for the development of terracotta industry.

Research Methodology

The study is based on descriptive research and data is collected through secondary sources mainly through articles and research paper of some other scholars. The study is confined to the area of Gorakhpur to know the hardships faced by artisans involved in terracotta industry.

Challenges Faced by the Industry

1. **Non availability of proper raw material:** Raw materials not easily available as excavation of clay is banned and price of clay is continuously increasing.
2. **Lack of Financial Support:** Most artisans operate on a small scale and struggle to access financial aid from banks and government schemes. High production costs and limited working capital restrict their ability to expand businesses.
3. **Problem related to marketing and advertising:** Most of the artisans don't know how to sell their product and so they take the help of middlemen. The demand for terracotta products has declined due to the availability of cheaper and mass-produced alternatives. They face difficulties in marketing their products beyond local and regional markets.

4. **Outdated Technology and Techniques:** Traditional methods of production lead to inefficiencies and higher labor costs. The lack of mechanization and modern equipment affects the quality and quantity of production.
5. **Environmental Challenges:** The industry depends on locally available clay, which is becoming scarce due to urbanization and environmental regulations. Kiln firing, an essential process, faces restrictions due to pollution control norms.
6. **Skill Erosion and Workforce Issues:** Younger generations are reluctant to pursue terracotta craftsmanship due to low wages and financial instability. The lack of formal training programs and skill development initiatives results in a declining number of skilled artisans.
7. **Government Policies and Bureaucratic Hurdles:** Although government initiatives exist to support handicrafts, bureaucratic delays hinder the effective distribution of benefits. Artisans face difficulties in obtaining necessary licenses and approvals for their businesses.

Possible Solutions and Recommendations

1. **Financial Assistance & Subsidies:** The government should provide low-interest loans and subsidies to artisans to enhance production capacity.
2. **Marketing and E-Commerce Integration:** Promoting Gorakhpur's terracotta through online platforms and exhibitions can help reach a broader audience.
3. **Technology Upgradation:** Introduction of modern kilns and production techniques can increase efficiency and reduce environmental impact.
4. **Skill Development Programs:** Establishing training centers and workshops can help preserve craftsmanship and attract younger generations.
5. **Sustainable Resource Management:** Implementing sustainable clay extraction methods and eco-friendly kilns can help address environmental concerns.

Conclusion

The terracotta industry in Gorakhpur faces multiple challenges that threaten its sustainability. Addressing financial constraints, market expansion, technological upgrades, and skill development are crucial for revitalizing this traditional art form. With proper government support, innovative marketing strategies, and sustainable practices, the industry can overcome these challenges and continue to thrive in the modern economy.

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