

# An In-Depth Study of Pottery as a Livelihood through a Discussion of its Process, Shocks, Seasonality, Trends and Economics

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## ABSTRACT

Pottery is a very old livelihood. From the time people started to gather and store food in a permanent place the pottery was there. The earthen pots are the first-ever stable and long-lasting pot ever invented by human. From then to now many materials came and inventions intervene but no one can replace this old art of making a pot of soil. It is a time tested and generationally transmitted knowledge which updates its base during the course of time. This study is basically done to understand the livelihood in depth. The main focus of this study was the process, economics, shocks, seasonality, trends and the problems of this livelihood. The state, district, block and the villages are purposively selected. The tools are used to understand the livelihood are mostly participatory in nature. After a very critical and in-depth study of this livelihood, this study reviles a conceptual framework of this livelihood which can be interpreted as in such a manner that the livelihood gets a boost in the path of the highly competitive market of the present situation. A future scope of the study also revealed during the course of the discussion. The pottery which is an undetectable livelihood from the ancient time in human life, this study is a tribute to those hardworking artists who keep this art alive.

**KEYWORDS:** Pottery, Seasonality, Shocks, Trends, Economics, Conceptual Framework

## 1. INRODUCTION

Pottery is one of those old livelihoods what was created in the ancient era. Earthen materials are the tangible ancient arts and knowledge what passes through the generations and tested by the time. Many materials came and go some become outdated due to the high cost or the low durability of the vessels but earthen vessels never lose its glory. During the different era the art and the knowledge is updated by the current generations which keep it trendy in the highly competitive market. Many new inventions and materials came but in few places there has no match of the earthen pots in the society. Earthen pots are the best example of sustainable, ecofriendly and recyclable material which have a very unique character of self-replaced. There is a beauty of its no durability. The concept of sustainable village can be achieved through earthen pots, where the maker will always get a stable income and the vessels will be replaced annually by the citizens. The earthen vessels also recharge the food and drinks with rich minerals. In India the tradition of the pottery started in a very old age, it has its evidence in the excavation of early settlements like Lahuradewa and later

the Indus Valley Civilization (Wikipedia). Where ever in India there is a lack of good raw materials for the stone vessels, there the history of pottery starts. Especially in the soothers and the Easter parts of India it become very famous that people not only make vessels but also the dolls and idols. According to Gartia *et.al.* (2016) it was found that in the Munda tribal community earthen pots were used in Jharkhand. Due to the popularization of still vessels the use of earthen pot may decrease but still they are in trend whereas the materials like cupper or the brash which is much more durable do not have that much market holing.

### Study area and methodology -

This study was conducted in the Mandar village at Mandar block of Ranchi in Jharkhand. The village is purposively selected to study the potter community. The Participatory tools (Mobility map, Venn diagram, linkage diagram, problem tree etc.), case study, focused group discussions and interviews are the methods for gathering the information from community.

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**Results and discussion –**

The earthen pot making is art which take a long processing days. There are some few steps from sourcing the clay to sell it to a wholesaler the journey of a pot is given below –

**Sourcing –** Pots cannot be made from any type of soil. The potters collect the soil either from agricultural field or from nearby waterbodies. According to the potters the clay should contain the of mud and sand in a proportion of 5:2. Mainly they choose loamy soil which have a tight but smooth texture. The indigenous knowledge of the selecting soil is taught only to the sons of a potter not to the daughters. According to the community teaching this technique to their daughter is creation of the chance of piracy of their ancient knowledge. Daughters may marry in some other clan of people in such case the monopoly of this special knowledge will not belong to the potter community only but to the other clan also.

**Preparing the clay –** This work is mainly for the women, the big soil pulps are broken into small pieces and put into a vessel full of water for one night. Next day morning the excess water is drained and the soft clay is left for making the pots. In the case the family head feels there is a deficit of sand in the mixture he can add some sand into it and start to mix, roll and make the mixture bubble free. In case the mixture is not proper during the sun drying or in the oven it pots can break into pieces.

**Making of pot –** After the clay is prepared the pulps of the clay are put on a spinning wheel and with the artistic hands

of a potter it takes the structure of a pot. The wheel can be a manual one or automatic power by electricity.

**Sun drying –**

After the making of the pots they are put into the sun for drying. After the drying this pots are put into a safe place where it will wait for baking in the oven.

**Coloring of the pots –**

The pots are colored with the red hematite soil. The making of this color is also very interesting. Red hematite soil is soaked into the lime water over night, later those soils are sundried and preserved for future use. During the coloring of pots those soils are powdered and mix with water.

**Making the oven –**

For making of one oven it need 2.5 quintal of fuel to burn. The fuel includes dry grass and straw for lighting the oven, little some wood and lot of Cole for heat. It takes around 30kg of wood and rest is the Cole.

**Baking of the pots –** First the pots are put into a circular format one after one and the oven light up. Then the oven is covered with clay so from around so that the heat bake the pots very well. After that potters wait for cooling down of the oven and collect the red vessels from it.

**Marketing –** During the sundry and in weekly markets of different village they sell their products but that is also in a very low scale. Mainly they supply the product to the wholesalers who have a retail shop in the city.

**Economics of the Livelihood –**

**Table1 Cost of Production of One cycle**

Particulars	Amount	Cost in Rupees
Cost of Soil	1 Tractor	1000
Rent of the vehicle	1 Tractor	750
Cost of labour for Soil excavation	2 man day	700
Cost of Wood for oven	30 kg	300
Cost of Cole for Oven	2.5 Quintal	3000
Rent of the land	-	500
Producer's Own family labour	14 skilled man days + 7 unskilled man days	6300
Total		12550

Table no 1 Shows the cost of production for a cycle of pottery making. This is a cycle of two weeks and lots of process are going on into this cycle as described previously. As the potters are one of the landless tribes they have to purchase even the soil from the farmers, it cost around Rs.1000 for one cycle, to bring the soil to the workshop and excavation of soil from the field also take some more Rs.1450. Which need two man days laour to complete the job. After that the rent of workshop and farmers own labour cost nearly Rs.6800. Which includes 14 skilled man days and 7 unskilled man days to complete the entire job. The fuels for the oven cost another Rs.3300. It cost around Rs.12550 for the whole process.

**Table2 Products and the It's price**

Products	Cost (Rs. Per unit)	Products	Cost (Rs. Per unit)
Pitcher	50	Bowl	55
Big Lamp	10	Lamp stand	8
Small Lamp	5	Plate	35
Rice Pot	55	Piggy bank	30
Marriage pot	50		

Table no 3 shows the income from the one cycle of the production. In a cycle there are different products which are made and sold to the wholesalers. The products and their respective costs are given below in table no 2 –

**Table3 Income from one cycle of Production**

Products	Amount	Cost (Rs. Per unit)	Total
Pitcher	30	50	1500
Big Lamp	200	10	2000
Small Lamp	400	5	2000
Rice Pot	30	55	1650
Marriage pot	40	50	2000
Bowl	50	55	2750
Lamp stand	200	8	1600
Plate	50	35	1750
Piggy bank	30	30	900
Operational Loss (10%)			1615
Total Income			14535

The table three reveals that there is an operational loss from the unwanted accident and cracks in the pots. This is around 10% of the products and nearly Rs.1615 per cycle. So from a complete cycle here is a gross income of Rs.14535. From this we can estimate a benefit cost ration of 1.2 in this livelihood.

**Shocks, Trends and seasonality** – In any livelihood there are some certain shocks and seasonality what cannot be omit in any moment of time. In this case the unwanted cracks and sudden break in the pots during taking it out of the oven is a very big shock to the producers. Actually during this activity if suddenly rain comes or the change in atmospheric pressure can create a huge loss to the producers. A new potter always face this problem, but an old potter have the knowledge to protect the pots.

If the trend is discussed deeply it can be told that from the ancient period this product is in the society, it has face many change of trends from its beginning. Once there is only one another product of stone vessels were there. But in the case of cost and portability earthen pots are the people's choice that time. Later the metals came from copper to steel it has face many product but never loses its glory. But after the intervention low cost product from China a drastic fall of market holding is observed. During the festivals once there was no other choice other than earthen pots but now products from China taking all the customers to them. This drastic change in the trend is a very big issue to this livelihood now.

Seasonality is the great factor of this livelihood, according to the season the products changed in the producer's

workshop. During the summer and winter the high demand of product is there. In the summer water pots and during winter especially in the time of Diwali the demand of lamp is so high that people started making product for this season from two month before the seasons come. During the rain the work process also slow down as there was no more space for the sundry in the places. Other than that in all season people work daily very hard to earn the livelihood.

#### **Problems in the livelihood –**

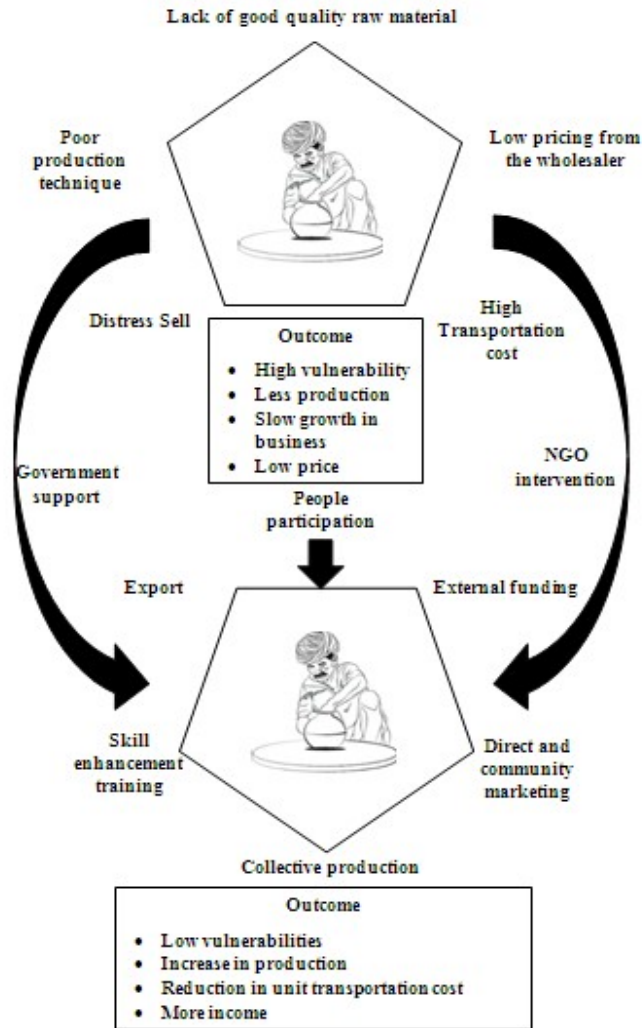
The main problem of this livelihood what are the producers faced is the lack of proper raw material (Soil) for the pottery. According to them the soil texture is not that much smooth and tight like previous days. It may like the organic content in the soil is very low that the holding capacity of each particle is become very low. It is a assumption that due to the high use of inorganic fertilizers is ruining the texture of soil.

The second problem is the low income price of the product from the wholesaler. The price what they are getting previously in the weekly markets, now the price of wholesaler are not that good, but due to the decrease in local demand there is no option other that the wholesaler.

#### **Conclusion and way forward -**

This problems are really very burning issue but everything can be solved through a collective production. If all the families nearby come together and produce like a single organization it can reduce the fixed costs of the livelihood. Reduction of this fixed cost will also decrease the marginal cost of unit product. In such case the profit will increase of each producer. Not only that people will get a strong voice to bargain with the middleman and also in future can open own retail outlet in the cities which can enhance the profit. The viability of direct marketing is not studied in this study, so direct suggestion of the direct marketing is not that much feasible. Sometimes it become a myth that direct marketing increase the profit of the producers but their the added transportation cost, one day labour cost and the losses during the transport is taking into account there is a doubt that hardly a huge profit producers get. But a scope of study is still there for the direct market linkage and community marketing. From the above all information and public communication a conceptual framework has been prepared which is given next. In case the NGO and Government take initiative to promote this livelihood and preserve this art they can help the people as per the following framework. One push from outside and inner dedication of the producers can boot the industry into a different level.

Conceptual framework -



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