



Research Paper

# Prospects and Problems of Pottery Industry of Southern Bangladesh

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## Abstract

Pottery is a name of success especially to the potters of southern Bangladesh that creates values to individuals and to the nation as well. The world is much more concern than ever about the environment friendly products which demand use of pottery product. In this connection the study comprises examination of the characteristic features of the relevant study area along with difficulties with respect to production, marketing and labor and to recommend policy measures for the development. Focus Group Discussion methodology is used to obtain information about personal and group feelings, perceptions and opinions and also can provide a broader range of information. Full time worker, part time worker, significant number of families are the major characteristics features of this industry. Paucity of working capital, low investment in fixed capital, obsolete technology, lack of research and development efforts are the major downsides on the way towards development. Despite having such difficulties export to new market, better inventory management, eco-friendly alternative and government initiative can be the prime tools for prospect of growth and development.

**Keywords:** Potter, Pottery, Pottery Products, Pottery Industry, Southern Bangladesh.

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## I. Introduction

Art means creative things. Pottery is the oldest form of art in the world as well as in our country Bangladesh. The art which is generated by using the soil is called pottery. From the very ancient age, people of Bangladesh are involved in making pottery for their personal uses and as a profession for their livelihood. The main material for pottery is soil. Other materials are water, firewood, paint etc. Not all soil can be used to create pottery product. Only clay is suitable for that. Labor with craftsmanship along with some tools and equipment formed a pottery product. As a profession, it is continuing from generation to generation among the potters. In Bangladesh, the potters are known as 'Potter Community (Kumar Samproday)' and generally known as 'Pal' as their title. They have been living in the rural part of the country for years and doing their family businesses. They produce pottery product and sell those in the local markets or to the wholesaler for meeting the national

and international demand. Pottery products mainly are of two types in terms of usability, one is for daily use and the other is as showpiece. Well known pottery products include Pipkins, Pitchers, flower vase, cake mold, dish etc. Though the demand of pottery product for daily use is reducing as it is replaced by metal products, as a showpiece for fancy people is increasing. It is generally classified as small and cottage industry in Bangladesh. As an industry, it is nature friendly, less cost allocated, creativity and physical labor based. Potters are living around the various corner of Bangladesh. In Southern Bangladesh, they were in large number prior to the independence. Though the number of potters is reduced significantly after the independence but still a handy number of potters still living in this coastal part. As it is a vastly riverine geographic region of Bangladesh, the clay is easy to find here. That is the main cause of the potters revolving around here. Once potters were in a good position economically in Southern part but decreasing the demand of pottery reduced their earning amount and that forced themselves to migrate in other professions as well as migrated to neighbor country. But still handy number of people are involved in this profession either as a family tradition or either they have no other options for livelihood. They have other problems too like heavy price of fuel, transportation problem, non-availability of credit in this sector, lack of sophistication, lack of product diversification are the other major problems. Continuous increase in govt. and non govt. patronage along with structured form of plans can be beneficiary to increase the conditions of potters and pottery in Southern part of Bangladesh. There is no or little study regarding the prospects and Problems of pottery industry of southern Bangladesh. So, this study is conducted to recover this gap.

## **II. Literature Review**

A study on pottery industry named 'Problems of pottery industry and policies for development: case study of Koch Bihar district in West Bengal, India' stated that pottery plays an important role in a predominantly rural country with a very low income and simple needs. Besides, providing employment to artisans, the sector offer job opportunities to non-artisans during slack seasons of agriculture and to other tertiary sector employees[1]. Researchers identified that red clay pottery plays an important role in a predominantly rural country with a very simple needs and low income. The methods of production remain the same age-old inferior and the products lack in standardization along with reproducibility of the same quality as scientific and technical knowledge is lacking due to illiteracy and poverty[2]. Researchers stated that the existing pottery industry (June 2014) have been facing problems with the demand as other substitutes (Plastic and metallic ware) becoming popular. As artistic object among the broader urban based markets, pottery has distinct demand. For the lower production and marketing capacity, it is comparatively tough for cottage industries to reach the large markets. Thus a scaling up of the production and marketing has potential to reach larger market with greater demand[3]. Another study identified pottery industry as a sector which is characterized by low investment, operational flexibility, local resources and domestic and export opportunity[4].

### **Pottery**

Pottery is the ceramic act of making pottery wares, of which major types include earthenware, stoneware and porcelain. Pottery also refers to the manufacture of pottery or the art or craft of a potter. By forming a clay body into objects of a required shape and heating them to high temperatures in a kiln which removes all the water from the clay, which induces reactions that lead to permanent changes including hardening and setting their shape and increasing their strength, pottery is made. Before or after firing, a clay body can be decorated. Clay must be prepared prior to some shaping processes. Throughout the body, kneading helps to ensure even moisture content. Air trapped needs to be removed from the clay body. This is called de-airing and can be performed by manually by wedging or a vacuum pug. Even moisture content can be made by the help of wedging. It is shaped by a variety of techniques after a clay body has been kneaded and de-aired or wedged. It is dried and then fired after shaping.

### **Potter**

A potter is a craft artist who uses their artistic talents to develop vases, mugs, dishes, pots, and other types of artwork. Functional pieces are created by potters that are meant to be put to everyday use. However, decorative pieces can be created by them and meant to be appreciated purely as works of art. To become a true master of the art of making pottery; forever learning and improving their craft, a potter can be trained for decades. Clay is used by a potter to develop works of art. A wide variety of clays is used to choose from, each with their unique properties. A potter chooses clay according to what they desire the finished product to look and feel like. A potter uses many different tools in this profession, including pottery wheels, molds, kilns, and carving tools. After molding clay into a desired shape, a specialized oven maker is used to dry and harden the clay. The piece is removed, painted, and then glazed after it has baked in the kiln. A professional artist must be able to constantly come up with unique, interesting, and appealing ideas.

## **Clay**

Several materials are referred to as clay. Plasticity, the malleability of the body, the extent to which they will absorb water after firing and shrinkage, and the extent of reduction in size of a body as water is removed make them different. Before or after firing, a clay body can be decorated. Clay must be prepared prior to some shaping processes. Different types and amounts of minerals compose each of these different clays that determine the characteristics of resulting pottery. Regional variations are noticed in the properties of raw materials used for the production of pottery. To be mixed to produce clay bodies suited to specific purpose, it is common for clays and other materials.

## **Chaak**

The foremost tool for pottery making is chaak. Chaakor 'wheel' shows the identity of the potter. The wheels are rotated by hand. In a chaak, the diameter of the wheel varies from 60 cm to 70 cm and the thickness varies from 6 cm to 7 cm. Providing desired shape to the clay ball in the form of a pot is the main function of the chaak.

## **Cottage Industry**

When family members carry a small scale industry by using their own equipment, it is called cottage industry. In this type of industry, labor force consists of family units or individuals working from home with their own equipment. The traditional artisanship which includes various household items produced by locally available raw materials and artistic skills has inherited from past generations. Cottage industries provide economic opportunities for the poor or the middle-income section of people through income generation and employment schemes all over the world, and especially in technologically underdeveloped and low income countries such as Bangladesh. Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) is responsible for development and construction of industrial estate with necessary infrastructure facilities for the Small and Cottage Industries (SCIs); conducting advisory and industrial promotion services including scouting and training of entrepreneurs, skill development of artisans and craftsman and creation of job opportunities, promotion and registration of small and cottage industries.

### **III. Methodology**

Qualitative and quantitative research methods were followed in this study. The study area of this study is Baghdia village of Kaloskathi Union. Kaloskathi is a union of Bakergonjupazila which is located at the southern part of Barisal district of Bangladesh. Kaloskathi is termed as the nerve center of Bakergonjupazila. Total population of Kaloskathi union is around 30,000. Over 100 families of Kaloskathi union are involved in pottery industry as their profession. Primary data were collected through field survey regarding the prospects and problems of pottery industry of southern Bangladesh. The survey was carried out during the period in December, 2021 using Focus Group Discussion (FGD) method. Four focus groups with each consists of 4-5 members have drawn from Kaloskathi union of Barisal district with simple random sampling method. Focus Group Discussion is a method of data collection which is frequently used to collect in-depth qualitative data which provides an opportunity for the participants to talk to one another about a specific area of study. FGD is chosen for the study because it is useful to obtain detailed information about personal and group feelings, perceptions and opinions and also can provide a broader range of information. The data collected from FGD is analyzed to identify similarities and dissimilarities of the various groups' opinion.

### **IV. Results and Discussions**

#### **Characteristic Features of Pottery Industry of Southern Bangladesh**

- i. Worker: (Full time worker/ part time worker): maximum full time workers
- ii. Units of production: over 10,000 pieces of units in a season
- iii. Amount of Working Capital: 35,000-55,000
- iv. Age of the people (worker): 20- 60 years
- v. Working-days of per Annam: 7- 9 months
- vi. Year of experience: 5- 45 years
- vii. Number of families who are continuing this profession: 100
- viii. Workers sex: 67% Male and 33% Female
- ix. Distance covered for purchasing raw materials: About 10 kilometers.
- x. Distance covered for the sale of products: delivery from production areas

#### **Problems of Pottery Industry**

The study area i.e. included in this study has many problems. The issues are various as well as different in feature. Most of the owners of pottery industry left the heritage enterprise. Despite the fact that a portion of the issues are exceptionally significant and unless they are tackled with proper measures, the industry will

undoubtedly dull. If proper steps are not taken, this potential business will be moribund quickly. Problems faced by southern pottery industry are as follows:

***Problem Related with Raw Materials***

Pankoj pal respondent of FGD-1 said that “*supply of raw material is regular in nature except otherwise*”. But Sumon pal respondent of FGD-4 said that “*supply of raw material is irregular in nature*”. Babul Pal respondent of FGD-2 said that “*supply of raw material is regular in nature except otherwise*” which is matched with the comment of Pankoj pal a respondent of FGD-1. Adequate supply of raw material and quality of raw material represents the quality of the product. Supplied raw materials are not fully suitable for production. So every respondent of focus group discussion recognized that after collecting the raw material again it furnish for making the production suitability. Some respondent said that there have no scope of getting raw material on credit i.e. a major problem of productivity. Sudhan Pal respondent of FGD-1 said that “*sometimes suppliers of raw material delay to deliver the raw material*”.

***Paucity of Working Capital***

Paucity of working capital is one of the major drawback in pottery industry of southern Bangladesh. Most of the owners of pottery industry have not enough money to implement the pottery business. If the potters could invest more in pottery business more output was possible in pottery industry and it will also enhance their earnings. Most of the owners could not express their enterprise for limited working capital. Respondent of FGD-2 Goutam Pal said that, “*Once I arranged a loan from BISIC*”. Another respondent of FGD-1 Kamol Pal said that, “*I manage working capital from my personal fund*” which is matched with the statement of Uttam Pal a respondent of FGD-4. As they have no enough income, they cannot arrange adequate amount of money in working capital purpose.

***Low Investment in Fixed Capital***

The potters have inadequacy in their working capital. Their investment range is around 30,000-50,000. With this amount they, cannot expand their scale of production. As their investment is inadequate in fixed capital the industry growth faces hindrances.

***Obsolete Technology***

Respondent of every focus group said that they use ancient technology for production i.e. they are not aware of using modern technology. They produce their products manually. So they cannot produce a large number of units of products. If they could use modern technology, it can reduce both their cost and time. The unrefined and outdated instruments mostly worked by hand and the method of creation far beneath the measures has extensively influenced the profitability and the nature of yield of pottery business.

***Lack of Diversification of Products***

There is no diversification of products in pottery industry in our study area and all the respondents agreed in this issue. Since this business have seasonal demand, so in dull season, workers have remained idle. Due to the lack of diversification of products, the growth of pottery industry is not fast paced. Same types of product whose demand has decreased in the market is being produced over the years. New and modern useful products is not being produced in spite of broader scale demand.

***Problem Associated with Marketing Mechanism***

In general sense, market is a place where the products get their ultimate destination. The pottery marketing in the study area is associated with two parties. In most cases, potters sell their products to the wholesaler from their production area. Only a smaller amount is direct selling. As the potters have not much market knowledge and sometimes they had to sell their products on wholesalers fixed rate, so they have to bear the high potentiality of not getting adequate amount of price from their selling. Moreover they have no co-operative marketing organizations and no government agencies regarding this.

***Problems of Management***

From the focus group discussion, we saw that most of the owners are entrepreneur and they started their businesses by investing own finance. A family head of a potter’s family is the entrepreneur, capital provider, manager, labor and seller himself. Since all the activities have to be performed by himself, as a result controlling of his business management cannot be insured.

***Lack of Research and Development Efforts***

Every respondent of focus group discussion recognized that adequate research and development is not available in the study area. They also said that there was not any organization which helps to research and develop this sector with modern technology and new techniques for production. No government or non-government agencies or schemes are not available at the study area.

### **Policies for Development of Pottery Industry**

For the development of the pottery industry of the southern Bangladesh, the following policies are recommended.

#### ***Distribution of Raw Materials***

Since the main medium of transportation is river, sometimes it takes time to get the raw material in time. If the road transport facilities can be developed, they will encourage for larger scale production. It is also suggested to set up raw material depots at suitable places to facilitate uninterrupted supply of standard raw material to the potters in appropriate quantity and quality at reasonable rates.

#### ***Product Diversification***

The pottery workers usually produce traditional products for the long time. Apart from these, nontraditional products should be produced after examining the consumers' preference and marketing orientation.

#### ***Modernization of Production Technology***

Production technology is one of the basic prerequisite to increase productivity. Efficiency of labor will increase and production time will reduce if the production method can be modernized.

#### ***Marketing Support***

With a view to promoting the well-being of the pottery workers, a good market is highly essential. Institutional arrangements or departmental support is required to ensure marketing support.

#### ***Arrangement of training***

Skilled labor is highly essential to operate modern production technology. So it is recommended to improve skill of the artisan workers through training and education of the workers in the related field. Managerial training can be ensured through proper training.

#### ***Finance Mobilization***

In most cases, household industries face inadequate finance which is the dominant barrier on the way to development. To overcome this problem, credit facilities and financial support are required for the purpose of raw materials, payments of wages and for meeting their business obligations. Government, nationalized commercial banks and other financial organization should come forward to finance the entrepreneurs providing short, medium and long term loans.

#### ***Establishment of Cooperative Societies***

Formation of cooperative societies is necessary to ensure a lead in the production of quality and standard products. These cooperative societies should take up the supply of raw material, purchase of finished goods from artisans, marketing and provision of credits.

### **Prospects of Pottery Industry**

1. Export to newer market
2. Better inventory management
3. Retail visibility
4. Government initiatives
5. Eco-friendly alternative

## **V. Conclusion**

Pottery industry of Kaloskathi union is characterized by small size of the units, family-based operation, predominance of unskilled 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 lack of working capital, inadequacy of debt facilities, obsolete technology, and lack of diversification of products, Competition from the metal products, good marketing facilities, management problems and Lack of Research and Development Efforts etc. The problem can be solved and the industries can be developed at its best level by the Government and non-government initiatives. Product variations, use of technology in production, better transportation system, proper marketing channel, skilled potters, and co-operative society among potter community can bring back those golden days of pottery industry. Both govt. and non govt. support can prosper this historic and ancient art to a different dimension.

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