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CHALLENGES AND SCOPES OF INDIAN POTTERY INDUSTRY

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Abstract : Pottery is art of making artifacts from clay hardened by fire. In the present-day India, the pottery industry is a major cottage industry in both small and big pottery concerns. Due to India predominantly being a rural country, pottery plays a crucial role, by providing employment to artisans and also to non-artisans during the lax seasons of agriculture and other tertiary sector employees.

The aim of this study is to examine the challenges faced by and the scope of the pottery industry. These challenges come in the forms of shortages of raw materials, manpower, and the lack space to dry the formed pottery, firing pottery, and storing finished goods along with the different raw materials. A major challenge faced by the industry is the variable demand which is highly dependent on festive occasions.

Even though there is an increase in sale of pottery products in the national and international markets, the industry is being affected by the changing lifestyle and the availability various alternative products.

IndexTerms - Pottery, Challenges, Scopes, Ceramics

I. INTRODUCTION

The term pottery is derived from the French word 'Poetic' or the Latin word 'Potium'. The word literary translates to drinking vessel. Since its origin, all objects made from clay and hardened by fire are termed pottery. It is a unique form of art of making artifacts from clay. It has been an indispensable part of human history. The historical evidence suggests that pottery was used as early as 8000 BCE around the Nile River. Nowadays, many kinds of earthen ware, ceramics and porcelains which are used regularly in households, scientific experiments, and electrical apparatus.

Currently the pottery industry is not a large-scale industry but is working efficiently under small scale cottage industrial groups. In a predominantly rural country with a very low income and simple needs, pottery plays an important role (Meena et. al., 2005). It provides employment to artisans and to non-artisans during the lax seasons of agriculture and other tertiary sector employees. The pottery, glassware and kitchenware industries are fast developing industries.

The industry produces various types of items, which includes traditional items and ceramic products. The traditional items of the pottery industry are the products created using locally available raw materials and employing traditional technology. Clay is used to make these products and red clay is used to color them. These items are produced using cart-wheels and different keys. Once the raw product has been produced, the items are dried and baked to develop the final product. These traditional items are not only developed for everyday household use, but also for festive occasions due to their cultural and religious significance.

The ceramic products are the modern products of pottery industry. These use different chemicals and glazes to produce the final product while utilizing modern equipment and tools. Ceramic products include different items like cup, plate, other decoration materials and gift items. These products are also exported to different countries as handicraft products.

Pottery has been adopted as a main occupation especially by the Prajapati community, which is a clay-based cottage industry. This industry has been contributing a lot in the production of cultural and traditional products. This industry has different types of products that are traditional pottery products; ceramics, stone ware, which is recently being introduced as part of ceramics. The pottery industry is majorly comprised of people from the Prajapati community. This industry is based on local raw materials and local technology. The changing lifestyle, availability other alternative products and many other issues have been threatening this industry. Thus, this study aims to examine the major challenges associated with this industry and the scope of this industry.

Traditional in nature, the industrial activities are carried on household basis and are characterized by low technology and low levels of production. The artisan himself is the proprietor and works on his own initiative and with his own capital. As scientific and technical knowledge is lacking due to illiteracy and poverty, the techniques of production remain inferior as a result of which, the products lack standardization (Kasemi, 2014 PG). The market of the products is mainly local and partly extended to urban areas. Besides, middlemen play a powerful role in marketing these indigenous products. They usually place order with the artisan and collect materials at less than the market price. The competition from the substitutes like plastic items is a major problem for its development (Lakhsman, 1966). Under such a situation the decay of this particular sector of employment poses a serious problem and obviously the rational solution seems to develop and make viable the household industries (Reddy, 1998)

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The major objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To examine the challenges associated with pottery industry.
2. To examine the scope of the pottery industry in the international market.
3. To suggest suitable policy measures for the development of the sector.

3. PROBLEMS OF DEVELOPMENT

Pottery industry is suffering from numerous problems. The problems are not only numerous but also diverse in nature. Some of these issues are incredibly crucial and unless they are addressed appropriately, the industry is bound to limp. These issues are discussed below.

Problems Related with Raw Material

Irregular supply of raw material is one of the major constraints for the development of household-based industries (Malegawekar, 1973). Irregular supply of raw material is one of the major constraints for the development of pottery industry. At times the irregular supply of the required quality and quantity of the raw materials affect the quality and size of the output of industrial units. Due to their small size, weak financial base and poor bargaining power the artisans utilize the services of middlemen to get raw materials on credit. Such an arrangement results in higher costs due to the high margins of the middlemen. Moreover, irregular supply of certain raw materials adversely affects their production schedules and delays in delivery.

Paucity of Working Capital

Paucity of working capital is another major problem of the pottery sector. Because of the lack of adequate working capital, potters are not able to buy the raw material of required quantities. The low investment results in lower production volumes and in turn yields lower profits. Due to the paucity of funds, at times the potters opt for less remunerative jobs or resort to even daily wage earning.

Low Investment in Fixed Capital

Because of low capabilities of the potters for mobilization of finance, the fund available to them for investment in fixed assets is low. Many artisans are aware of improved technique of production, but do not apply them, as it will require fresh investment in fixed capital, which they cannot afford.

Obsolete Technology

The method of production followed by the artisans is old and inefficient. Obsolete technology has a very important bearing on the productivity and cost aspects. The productivity and the quality of the output of the household industries are greatly affected by the crude and obsolete hand-operated tools and the below-standard production technique.

Lack of Diversification of Products

Lack of diversification of the product also accounts for slow growth of the pottery sector. Demand for pottery products is highly dependent on festive occasions, because of which, during slack season the artisans are forced to remain idle.

Competition From the Organized Sector

At this age of globalization, cheap machine-made goods have captured the market of goods produced by household industrial sectors. Cheap plastic articles from the highly mechanized sector introduced unhealthy competition to the detriment of decentralized production of articles by Pottery sector. In such situations, the aspect like cheapness of the synthetic plastic goods of the organized sector emerged as the strongest competitor of the unorganized household industrial sector (Subrahmanya, 1991).

Problems Associated with Marketing Mechanism

A good market for the products of pottery industry is important to promote the well-being of the artisans and small entrepreneurs. But marketing in this field has certain limitations. Firstly, due to the absence of any co-operative marketing organizations or government agency, selling of the finished products through middlemen has been a dominant feature. Secondly, the demand for the various products of these industries is largely seasonal and limited to the locality as majority of their products are substandard and do not conform to the required specifications. Thirdly, there is large competition from the mills as well amongst different units.

Thus, in the absence of any rational marketing organization, the workers of various household industries are forced to sell the products to the local traders or middlemen who manage to get away with most of the profit.

Problems of Management

In most of the units, the artisan is both an entrepreneur and laborer. They are responsible for raising their own finances, purchase the raw materials, and attend to production and marketing. Thus the main management problems include planning, coordinating, and controlling the various activities, which increase the competitive efficiency of the small producer.

Lack Of Research and Development Efforts

Appropriate research and development efforts are needed to increase the output of the industry. Due to lack of research and development efforts, the pottery industry is unable to compete with the high yielding pottery alternatives. With adequate research, the industry will be able to reach its potential.

4. SUGGESTIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

The following suggestions are recommended for the development and the improvement of economic viability of the pottery industry.

Distribution of Raw Materials

Due to the wide dispersal of raw materials coupled with the weak financial position of the artisans, it is crucial that raw material should be made available at the required time and in a close proximity to the artisan's workplaces. Thus, it is suggested that raw material depots should be setup at suitable places to facilitate uninterrupted supply of standard raw material to the artisans in appropriate quantity and quality at affordable prices. To encourage the artisans to continue their production, the government should supply raw material at cheaper rates.

Product Diversification

The artisans should consider producing products other than the traditional or utilitarian artifacts that they are currently producing. With the aid of consumer preference and market orientation examination, the artisans should be able to unlock an untapped sector within the industry and increase the scope of sales.

Modernization of Production Technology

To increase production and match the rates of pottery alternative industries, it is important for the industry to go through a process of systems and technology modernization. Every endeavor should be made to induce the workers to shift over to better tools and equipment which will help in eliminating long strenuous hours of work and low productivity.

Marketing Support

A good market for the products of household industries is important to promote the wellbeing of the artisan workers or small entrepreneurs (Rao, 1989). Marketing support can be given to workers group through institutional arrangements or departmental support, so that the workers may get a better return. To facilitate this, an organization should be set up which should be a no-profit no-loss body and should operate through hierarchical distribution collection centers.

Skill Formation and Training

To modernize the production of technology, it is important to also upskill the artisan workers. Thus training and education of the workers in respective fields would go a long way in helping improve the development process in the pottery industry. Managerial training should also be introduced for the management of the individual household units and cooperatives. This will enable the artisans to approach production from an alternative perspective and understand the advantages of industrial management.

Finance Mobilization

Inadequate finance has been one of the most important problems of the household industries. To successfully purchase raw materials, payments of wages and to meet their business obligations, the workers require credit facilities and financial support. In addition to state governments, nationalized commercial banks, and other financial organizations should come forward to finance the entrepreneurs and provide short, medium, and long term loans. Further it is suggested that finance should also be made available through post office.

Extension of Employment Opportunities During Slack Seasons

It has been observed that during the slack season, the artisans are without continuous employment. It is suggested that state government emporium and cooperative marketing agencies should procure decorative items for their stocks which can be produced during the slack season to provide regular employment to the artisans.

Formation of Cooperative Societies

There is an immediate need for the organization of cooperative societies on the sound footing so that they give a lead in the manufacture of quality and standard products (Bhattacharya, 1980). Cooperative societies should be established to give a lead in the manufacture of the quality and standard products. Such societies can enable the artisans of the study area to have a cooperative mindset. These cooperative societies should take up the supply of raw material, purchase of finished goods from artisans, marketing, and provision of credits. For this purpose, the cooperative societies should be given adequate financial assistance by the state government. Once the cooperative societies are formed, further developmental measure such as usual facilities of loan, grants, subsidies, marketing, mechanization, and equitable distribution of products can be effectively channeled

5. CONCLUSION

Pottery industries are characterized by the small size of the units, family-based operation, predominance of skilled workers, use of primitive tools, and wide prevalence of illiteracy among the workers. At present the pottery industry is suffering from irregular supply of raw materials, lack of working capital, obsolete technology, lack of diversification of products, competition from the organized sector, lacking marketing facilities, management problems and lack of research and development efforts. The artisans are highly dependent on the middlemen, by whom they are often exploited by the middlemen as they always squeeze the profit. The need of capital for increased productivity of the sector is clearly recognized. The Government and non-government initiatives can solve the problem and develop the industries at its best level. In conclusion, the realization of the suggestions listed in this paper, will require highly efficient and committed program. Since the artisans are limited by numerous constraints, it is necessary to reform the entire process of production, which needs to be marshaled by various governmental institutions.

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