



Bell and Brass Metal Craft: A Socio Economic Condition of Artisans of Assam

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Abstract: Art and Craft with the use of bell and brass metal is a age old tradition of Assam. This products are cultural pride and traditional significance of the state. Assamese people considers this products a prized possession, every household has theses products as utilitarian products or decorative items. The artisans are the integral part of this industry as they craft this products with there bare hand by beating and hammering with different hand tools. In this study artisans of Sarthebari (bell) and Hajo (Brass) is considered , as this places has the highest number of bell and Brass metal artisans. The major objective of the study is to know the socio-economic condition of the artisans. Are total of 332 artisans are survey for tis study using purposive sampling method and snowball sampling techniques. The Bell and Brass metal artisans of Sarthebari and Hajo mostly earns between Rs 6000 to Rs.15000 with a minimum savings. 75% of the bell metal artisans and 65% of the brass metal artisans who are into conventional craft making artisans have no savings.

Keywords: Socio –Economic, Snowball sampling, Art and Craft.

1.1 Introduction:

The handicraft of a country expresses the unique culture, tradition, and customs of its citizens. Apart from agriculture, the handicraft production is the next most desirable avenues of earning livelihood¹ In India, these handicrafts not only limit themselves to the arena of exporting commodity or tourist attraction but also generate the growth of a rural region. In the informal sector of India, handicrafts secure a significant role in the economy so to generate employment for the vulnerably scattered population

In many developing countries handicrafts create an opportunity for employment among disadvantaged social groups. The Indian handicrafts industries are mainly working in rural areas. These industries provide India's second largest employment to the people of the country. One of the fore most important things is that these are providing employment to those rural people who belong to the weaker section of the society².

The socio-economic status may be defined as “a position attained by any individual within a system of hierarchical social structure”.³

The SES of any community has an influence on morbidity and mortality patterns in that community or geographic region. Mostly in scientific and social studies, many times determining patient's SES sometimes

help in arriving diagnosis of an individual or family. That is why SES is always a prerequisite in history taking for health care individuals.⁴

Craft with bell metal and brass metal is a prominent handicraft industry of Assam. The artisans has a gifted art of making aesthetic motifs and products out of bell and brass metal by hammering the metal with bare hands and giving required shape of Kahi(Plate) , Bati(Bowl), Cymbal, Bell, Taal, Xorai(decorative item) etc.

This paper systematically examines the conditions of the socio-economic status of Bell and brass metal artisans

1.2 Objective of the study: To examine the socio- economic condition of the Bell and brass metal Artisans of Assam.

1.3 Data methods: Kamrup (rural) Barpeta district are selected for the study. The present study is descriptive in nature. The research remains primarily qualitative in nature because its primary attempt is to obtain qualitative insights through interview, Observation, focused group discussion. Data is collected using both secondary and primary sources. The secondary sources are government websites, newspaper and journals whereas primary data is collected using tools like observation, focused group discussion, interview.

For having richness in the information present artisans, knowledgeable artisans, elderly artisans were being interviewed. Sample techniques used for collecting data from bell and brass metal artisans are purposive sampling, snowball sampling and quota sampling. A total of 332 subjects were covered for the survey covering both bell and brass metal units. 200 respondents data could be collected for Bell metal, the proposed sample unit could not be fulfilled as the responses received were not clear and complete and 132 brass metal using Conroy's sample size table.. Chi square test, frequency, Mean, cross tabulation has been used for analysis of the data.

1.4 Demographic profile of the artisans

Demographic profiling of artisans is useful for understanding participation of artisans in crafting based on age, gender and social class. It helps in understanding the practice and perception regarding the marketing of crafted products of Sarthebari and hajo.

1.4.i Age and Social class

Maximum of the respondents of both Bell and brass metal crafts belong to the age group of 26 to 40 years. A percentage of (Bell=17%) and (Brass=11%) fall under the age group below 26 years. A very least no. of respondents are above 60 years (Bell=65%, Brass=55%). These artisans are mainly the head artisans and the instructor of the motifs and design for the craft. The table also depicts that there are no female respondents working as a Bell or Brass Metal artisans.

1.4.ii Social class of the respondents

The above table depicts that (Bell=75% Brass=75%) of the respondents belongs to general caste while (bell=25%, brass=25%) other backward classes. There are no respondents who fall under schedule caste and schedule tribe

1.4.iii Family type of the respondents

Bell (60%) and Brass (77%) metal respondents households are nuclear in structure and Bell (40%) and brass (23%) falls under the preview of joint family structure. From the observation of the artisans it was found that the respondents works with extended family members but stays in different household. In modern era, we know that the joint family institution is no more customary. However, this craft has reserved the joint family relations undamaged and with harmony. It is so because the artisans need the support and role of everyone in the family members; each process has the inevitable involvement of each member. Hence, this craft is a collaborative process, and it does not require much hiring of external labor.

1.4.iv Family Size

Bell-16% and Brass-9% of the respondents are from small family (up to 3). Again Bell-70%, Brass-53% falls under falls under the medium family size (4 to 6). 14% of the bell metal artisans have and 11% of the brass metal artisans Large family size (>6)

1.4.v Educational profile of the respondents

Education is an important identifier of socio-economic condition and plays an important role in any trade and occupation. The above data shows that only (Bell=5%% and Brass=4%) of the artisans respondents have acquired graduate degree and above, here the respondents generally are the artisans who have their own shop and Garshal(units) and have followed their forefathers established business. The researcher also acquired the information that due to lack of job prospect and having a settled earning from the ongoing crafting business they have wished to continue the process of crafting. Maximum of the artisans respondents have underwent middle school (Bell=25% Brass=16%). (Bell=20%, Brass=7%) have attended secondary school and (Bell=10%Brass=7%) have studied till senior secondary. (Bell= 10%Brass=27%) have not attended school at all.

1.5 Results and Discussion

1.5.i Relation between Age of t he artisans and craft genres

Age group	Conventional		Decorative		Both		Total
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count
25 years and below	18	31%	30	52%	10	17%	58(100%)
26-40 years	140	78%	10	5%	30	17%	180(100%)
40-60 years	55	73%	10	13%	10	13%	75(100%)
Above 60	19	100%	0	0	00	0	19(100%)
Total	232	70%	50	15%	50	15%	332(100%)

Source: Field Survey

The above table 3.4.3 reveals in the age group 25 Years and below 31% are conventional craft making artisasn,52% are decorative craft making artisans and 17% are both conventional and decorative craft making artisans. Again, in the age group between 25- 40 Years, 78% are conventional craft making artisans 5% are decorative and another 17% both decorative and conventional Craft making artisans. 73% of the artisans of 40-60 years of age group makes conventional products , 13% makes decorative items and another 13% makes both decorative and conventional products. 100% of the total respondents under the age group above 60 make conventional products

Age may influence the type of craft production undertaken by the artisans. It is depicted in the above table that artisans with the age group of 25 years and below are mostly associated in crafting decorative bell and brass metal product. Artisans with the age group of 26 – 40 years are mostly engaged in making both conventional and decorative bell and brass metal product. Artisans above 60 years are into making conventional products only they do not make any decorative products.

Table 1.5.ii Showing Work Hour w.r.t Craft Genre

Work Hour	Conventional		Decorative		Both		Total	
	Bell	Brass	Bell	Brass	Bell	Brass	Bell	Brass
4-8 Hours	30 100%	29 100%	0	0	0	0	30 100%	29 100%
8-12 hours	126 85.7%	22 27.5%	11 7.5%	50 62.5%	10 6.8%	8 10%	147 100%	80 100%
Above 12 Hours	22 100%	0	0	0	0	23 100%	22 100%	23 100%
Total	178 (90%)	51 (38.6%)	11 (5%)	50 (37.9%)	11 (5%)	31 (23.5%)	200 100%	132 100%

Source: Field Survey

Table 1.5.iii Reason for engagement in the craft

Craft type	Hereditary			To keep the tradition alive			Interested in the craft			Source of income			No other choice		
	Yes	%	T	Yes	%	T	Yes	%		Yes	%	T	Yes	%	T
Bell	200	100	200	130	65	200	150	75	20	180	90	20	140	70	200
Brass	132	100	132	100	35		80	61	13	125	94	13	100	76	132

Source: Field Survey

Table 1.5.iv Cross tab result for Reasons to continue the craft

Reasons	Responses for source of income		Total
	Yes	No	
Hereditary	210(64% approx)	122(37% approx)	332

Source: Field Survey

From the above table it can be depicted that in case of both bell and brass metal craft hereditary is the most common reason for engagement in the craft(100%). Source of income is another common reason for engagement among the bell and brass metal artisans covering (bell= 90%, Brass= 94%). The artisans of both the craft have no other choice but to carry on the crafting tradition as because they do not know and have any other source of income other than crafting(Bell=70%, Brass=76%). 75% of the Bell metal artisans and 65% of the brass metal artisans are interested in the crafting profession thereby that is the reason of engagement in the craft. 65% of the bell metal artisans and 35 % of the brass metal artisans want to keep the crafting tradition alive thereby are involve in the craft.

As shown in the table 50% of the bell Metal artisans are independent artisans while 25% of the artisans are in piece rate and 25 % of the Bell metal artisans are in daily wage. 61% of the brass metal artisans on the above table are independent artisans, rest 15% and 24% of the artisans are in piece rate and daily wage rate respectively. In case of bell and Brass the prices are fixed on the basis of the weight and type of the items.

Table 1.5. v Showing Net Monthly household income from the craft Genre

Net Household income	Conventional	Decorative	Both	Total
Up to Rs 3000	2	1	2	5
Rs.3001 to Rs. 6000	70	8	4	82
Rs 6001 to Rs 9000	80	9	18	107
12001 to Rs.15000	30	15	10	55
Rs 15001 to Rs 18000	20	5	4	29
Rs.18001 to Rs. 21000	22	2	4	28
21000 to above	8	10	8	26
Total	232	50	50	332

Source: field survey

From table 3.5.1 a it is observed that the percentage of artisans earning between 12001 to 15000 is more in decorative craft category. Again percentage of artisans is more in the income group of Rs 6001 to 9000 in conventional and both conventional and decorative craft group category. It can be seen that earning group 21000 above increases in the decorative category. Chi square test and Cramer v value is used to check to see the association between the produced craft category and net monthly income. The Chi-Square test statistics, as shown in Table (with p value 0.00), proves a significant association between the Craft Genres and Income .in case of brass metal at p value of 0.005 less than 0.01 and Cramer's V value of 0.836 (refer to table), it highlights the relatively strong association between the two variables. Similarly in case of bell metal (refer to table 1.5.v), shows Cramer's V value as .688 which also depicts a strong association between income and craft genre.

Table 1.5.vi Showing Annual saving pattern w.r.t to craft type, saving patter and craft genre

Craft Type	Craft Genre	No savings	Rs5000-rs 20000	Rs20000-Rs 50000	50000 and above	Total
Bell Metal	Conventional	135(75%)	33(18%)	10(6%)	2(1%)	180(54%)
	Decorative	3(30%)	3(30%)	2(20%)	2(20%)	10(3%)
	Both	3(30%)	3(30%)	2(20%)	2(20%)	10(3%)
Brass metal	Conventional	35(67%)	12(23%)	5(10%)	--	52(16%)
	Decorative	9(22%)	22(55%)	6(15%)	3(8%)	40(12%)
	Both	7(17%)	28(70%)	2(5%)	3(8%)	40(12%)
Total		1929(58%)	101(30%)	27(8%)	12(4%)	332

Source: Field survey

From the above presented data it is clear that 75% of bell metal conventional craft making artisans and 67% of the brass metal conventional craft making artisans has no savings at all. 18% of bell metal conventional artisans and 23% of brass metal conventional artisans has a saving from the slab Rs 5000 to Rs 20000, 6% bell metal and 10% brass meal conventional craft making artisans falls in the saving group of Rs 20000 to 50000. Only 1 % of the artisans who makes bell metal conventional crafts have a saving above 50,000.

In terms of decorative bell and brass metal artisans the saving pattern varies like 30% of the bell metal artisans has no saving, again 30% has a saving from the slab of Rs 5000 to Rs 20000, 20% has a saving from the slab 20000 to 50000 and another 20% bell metal decorative craft making artisans has a saving above 50000. These are rich head artisans and the entrepreneurs who has their own shops in the town and supply their products to different places of India and outside India. 22% of the brass metal artisans who makes decorative crafts have no savings, where as 55 %of the artisans has a saving from the slab Rs5000 to s 20000, 8% of the decorative brass craft making artisans has a saving above 50000. Along with this artisans who makes both decorative and conventional crafts has 70% of the maximum saving slab i.e. Rs 5000 to 20000, 17% has no saving at all along

with that 5% has a saving from Rs 20000 to % Rs 500000. Most of the artisans work on their own house(Bell-85%, Brass-90%) 10% of the brass metal artisans and 15% of the Bell metal artisans works in common centre like in a common shed where a group of people work together and in the cooperative society work shed.

Mostly the artisans works for the cooperative society and private entrepreneur (*Mahajan*). Surveyed results shows that 10% of the artisans solely works for the artisans 60% percent of the bell metal artisans works for the private entrepreneur/Mahajan/head artisans. 30% of the bell metal artisans works for their own and sells the product to the cooperative society/rural –urban vendors. It is also observed that the artisans sometimes also work for the NGO's/SHG depends upon the order that has been placed. Same in the case of brass metal artisans. As the brass metal artisans do not have registered cooperative society thereby they are mostly found working for the Mahajan. 75% of the Brass metal artisans worl for the Mahajan/Shopkeepers.

The artisans mainly work with their family the daily wages are mostly hired they are allotted the work the polishing the product and putting oil on it.

Table 1.5 vii Showing Cross tabulation for Net monthly income by brass metal artisans and product mix

Net monthly income	1 or 2 types	More than 2 types but less than 5 types	5 types and above	Total
Up to Rs 3000	2(100%)			2
Rs 3001 -6000	9(33%)	18(67%)		27
Rs 6001-9000	18(64%)	10(36%)		28
Rs9001-12000	3(11)	18(56.2%)	7(25%)	28
Rs12001-15000	15(75%)	5(25%)		20
Rs15001-18000			2(100%)	2
Rs18001-21000			14(100%)	14
Rs 21000 and above		2(18%)	9(82%)	11
Total	49(37.1%)	52(39.4%)	31(23.5%)	132(100%)

Source: Field Survey

The artisans in each of the traditional craft categories produce a variety of items. The number of units of production varies according to item produced. The quantity, in general, depends on size and elaboration in design. Apparently, for smaller items the quantity produced is more while for larger items the quantity is less. Below table --- highlights that 23% of the brass metal artisans producing both decorative and conventional products finds increase in the number of unit produced.

Chi-square test was conducted to see the association between the variables *Craft Genres* and *Change in Units produced* in different types of crafts. These brass artisans are creating a range of new items like *japi(Hat)* based on the archetypical bamboo *Japi*, *Kalgach(decorative vase)*, floral *gosa(lamp)*, keychain,

Statue of deities and other aesthetic items. With Cramer's 0.357 showing a low-moderate association in case of brass craft.65% of the conventional bell metal craft artisans opines that unit produce stays the same with shift in craft genre., rest 35% says that the the unit produced has decreased with conventional crafting.23% of the brass metal artisans mentions that with both the crafting genre of decorative and conventional the unit produced has increased.

Table 1.5.viii Showing Craft genre with respect to change in quantity produced

Craft Genre(Brass)	Decreased		Stay the Same		Increasead		Total
	Brass	Bell	Brass	Bell	Brass	Bell	
Conventional	10 8%	50 25%	30 23%	130 65%	12	0	52
Decorative	0	0	20 15%	5 2.5%	20	5 2.5%	40
Both	0	0	10 7%	5 2.5%	30	5 2.5%	40
Total	10	50	60	140	62	10	132

Source: Field Survey

1.6 Conclusion: Bell and brass metal artisans are the fine and diligent crafting of India, from the above study it is very clear that the artisans maintain a average lifestyle. Majority of the artisans earns in between Rs.6000 to 15,000 and usually crafts both conventional and decorative item. T is a male dominated sector because of the laborious work. Maximum of the respondents of both Bell and brass metal crafts belong to the age group of 26 to 40 years. Artisans crafting decorative items tend to save more than that of conventional crafting artisans. They mostly work for 6 to 8 hours and the business here is mostly seasonal, at the time of any customary, cultural events in the state the sales and demand for the products remain high. The artisans are mostly senior secondary passed in terms of their education. This artisans are mostly the daily wage artisans they usually stays in a room of the head artisans at the time of peak working season. Other than that (Bell-77%, Brass-84%) of the artisans have their own houses. Maximum of the sample respondents are into the crafting business for 10 to 15 years(bell-65%, brass-55%), Thereby, from the study it is prevalent that Artisans of Sarthebari and Hajo's main occupation is crafting thereby it is very important that this sector can acquire a ability to flourish, for that the the products demand has to increases which will result in a good income achievement and thereby will in a parallel way improve the socio economic condition of the artisans.

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