

The Question of Identity in Community-based Cultural Industry in Modern Context: A Case of West Bengal

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Abstract

Traditional craft base cultural industries are linked with specific local community where craft products create 'economic identity', 'regional identity' and 'cultural identity' of community. In family-based business identity is constructed through family histories, knowledge and skill of craft. Sholapith craft is a traditional ritualistic and festive craft which is associated with ethnic, cultural and occupational identity and status of Malakar community of West Bengal. It was an ethno-craft as generation wise Malakars practiced and transmit it through family enterprises. It is one of such several community-based craft productions of West Bengal undergoing globalisation and commercialization. Craft commoditization and expanding market networks lead to the shifting of family-based production units to wage labour-based modes of production units. This transformation forcing them to hire other people as labour beyond own community. As a result, changes occur in organization structure, quality of products and production for 'local use' is replaced by 'production for sale'. Involvement of wage labours one hand helps them to expand their market whereas it also brings some challenges, competition and politics in family based cultural industry. With addressing issues of insecurity and identity attached with a transformative craft production, the present study attempts to answer larger question - still caste identity matter in community-linked cultural industry?

Craftspeople from two craft production clusters (Surul and Bankapasi) have been purposively selected for present empirical study, who were directly involved with craft production. The techniques of primary data collection were observation method, semi structured interviews and case studies. The finding revealed that in the context of contemporary commercialized world, traditional craft identity of a specific community is in a transformation phase. The community-linked cultural industry is losing identity by involving more and more people from other communities with demand for production. Shola craft is no longer considered as an ethno-craft as it exceeds the habitual boundaries of an economically confined social group. The study also revealed various factors responsible for the success in the market and how they cope up with this situation by adopting various resilience strategies.

Keywords: Commercialization, Cultural Identity, Labour, Malakar, Sholapith craft.

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INTRODUCTION

Craft production is an identity-shaping process linked to ethnic and gender categories, status rankings, social identity and social class distinctions (Costin, 2008). This process intersects with various aspects of cultural domain like economic, political, social and ritual, which often create and express social identity. In organization of production, determining the effects of the commoditization of a craft good is a complex process. Crafts people create objects, and a network of relationships with consumers deeply infused with social and cultural meaning. Craftspeople identity and status also changed with products value due to commercialization in cultural industry.

The term of 'cultural industries' explains "activities which deal primarily in symbolic goods—goods whose primary economic value derived from their cultural value" (O'Connor, 2000). Cultural industries use creativity, cultural knowledge and intellectual property to produce products and services with social and cultural meaning (The Jodhpur Consensus-UNESCO, 2005). Development of cultural industry and production of cultural products - boost employment and regional development (Leriche *et al.* 2010). It contributes to the branding of a place (Power *et al.* 2004) as cultural goods are 'identity good' both at social and individual level. Traditional craft base cultural industries are linked with specific local community where craft products create 'economic identity', 'regional identity' and 'cultural identity' of community (Lowenthal, 2005; UNDP, 2004; Vecco, 2010; Bell *et al.* 2010).

In family-based business identity is constructed through family histories, knowledge and skill of craftspeople. Traditional craft practices have neither remained static nor confined to a particular region or a community. With commercialization and growing market, there is a shift in the production process and organization process, small scale production to large scale production, sale of this craft outside the previous cultural context (local level market to nation and global market), and change in demand of craft products - seasonal ritualistic production to whole year production. Crafts that were majorly traded within the community as utilitarian objects with culture-specific symbolic value (Sarma, 2008; Swanson & Timothy, 2012; Yang, 2008) are gradually being commercialized to suit other needs with little alterations.

The growing market demand of this delicate and decorative craft in varied forms as art objects (Jain *et al.* 2015) has involved other communities in the production and sale of this craft outside the previous cultural context. This has otherwise posed threat to the share of the market and pre-existing identity and authenticity of the art-forms of the Malakars. Changes in local craft production system provide an important perspective on existing changes in ethnic identity (Nason, 1984). During past few years other community members have set up workshops where similar kind of products are produced and get traded in various markets of local and regional level. Other community people create their own identity at market network through their skill and unique work. Commercialization of craft and resilience strategies by craftspeople contributes to the sustainable development of craft and communities' identity. Recent studies focus on the perceptions of Sholapith craftspeople (including the Malakars) about the marketing strategies for the promotion of the craft at the global level (Jain *et al.* 2015).

In West Bengal, scholars studied the condition of the craftspeople and craft. They try to identify craft clusters, procurement and use of raw materials and instruments, manufacturing process, marketing system of products and regional variation of products in general (Sarkar, 1976; Chakraborty *et al.* 1991; Biswas, 2008; Chanda, 2016). Different scholars have focused on historical perspective of this craft practice in West Bengal, economic transaction and its transformation during harvesting to marketing of products (Seth, 2010; Ghosh, 2012), perception of artisans on existing marketing strategy for promotion of craftsmen (Jain *et al.* 2015), need assessment, identification of basic challenges faced by craftspeople, significance of craft as a tourist product (Srivastav, 2016). Most of them focus on technological aspects of the craft (Sarkar, 1976; Ganai, 2018; Pal, 2016). But there is as yet any reckonable ethnographic study on how labours are related to craft dynamics and transformation of craftspeople identity as it undergoing commercialization.

Objectives of present study: Under this background the central objectives of this present submission are to understand- (1) Still caste identity mater in community linked cultural industry? (2) Hiring people from other communities with demand of production, does the community-linked cultural industry losing identity? (3) How the changing nature of the craft led to significant

changes in the status and the identity of the crafts people?

METHODOLOGY

Ethnographic study has been conducted among the craftspeople of two production clusters - Bankapasi of Purba Bardhaman district and Surul of Birbhum district, West Bengal. These two clusters have been selected for the empirical study because these are major production area famous for its regional varieties of the products introduced by Malakar community (service caste; provide ritualistic products to family jajmans). Beside Malakars, other community members are also involved in the production process. The first-hand, in-depth research work has been carried out in two phases among the craftspeople who possess their own history of production. First phase of visit was from October 2022 to January 2023 and second phase from June 2023 to August 2023. Traditionally the people engaged in this craft are known as Malakar.¹ In both the clusters they introduced Sholapith craft and later other community members after learning also involved in the production process.

Total number of workshops at Bankapasi and Surul is 11 and 67 respectively. A total of 278 participants were selected through purposive, convenience sampling for present study. The craftspeople, workshop owner, labours were interviewed, who were directly involved with craft production. Case studies and narratives were collected to further strengthen the study. Semi structured interviews, focus group interviews has been taken to understand the process of hiring, working guidelines, types of labours and wage, shifting of family labour to wage labour. Information on transformation of craft organizations, shifting of cultural identity, and dependency among the various stock holders has been collected through case studies. Information on division of labour, learning of the craft has been collected through observation method. The household census of each and every craftsman family of Bankapasi and Surul is taken for getting primary information regarding their ethnic identity, nature of workshops and so on. Qualitative data represent the narrative text of

¹They belong to the *Nabasakha* group of artisan class, enjoyed a respectable position in the village society and they are involved in this craft from generation to generations. They are few in number, but in every Hindu village there is at least one representative, who provides services to their village jajmans (Risley, 1891). No religious and social functions could be celebrated without the flowers and Shola products made by the village Malakars (Chakraborty *et al*, 1991).

craftspeople experiences and narratives have been interpreted according to the emerged themes.

Sholapith craft of West Bengal: A Community identity is embedded in the craft making process. Craft products are form of identity expression. Present paper deals with Sholapith craft, a traditional ritualistic and festive craft of West Bengal (Sen, 1994). Sholapith craft production consider as ethnic, cultural and occupational identity marker of Malakar community. They build their own cultural identity and status in the market network through family enterprises. It was an ethno-craft as generation wise Malakars practiced and transmit it (through cultural capital with high knowledge and skill of production) and they possess an age-old bonding with other community people (enjoy pre-existing social networks). From age old, some village have two to five families of Malakars, even some have no representation of Malakars. With simple technology and use of family labour, then they only supply flowers and Sholapith products (*pujo samagri*) at various social and religious occasions of jajmans families of their village as well as neighbouring villages. The status and importance of Malakars are high in social structure as a 'service caste'.

Impact of commercialization and transformation on craft: Production is the organized system by which human obtaining the goods and services from the nature and society (Scupin, 2000). Major components of production system are artisans, means of production, organization and social relationships of production, objects, relationships of distribution and consumers (Costin, 1998). Sholapith craft is one of such several Eastern Indian crafts undergoing globalisation and commercialization. Recent economic growth and the commercialization of the craft have created a great impact on the structural and functional aspects of craft, production and its organization. The association of family-based business or industry and cultural product shift to wage labour base industry due to increased demand of production at extended market (Beerepoot, 2004). Craft shifted from being merely a tool of survival (jajmani service) to constitute a source of capital accumulation and an increase in living standards. Craft transformation forced them to hire other people as labour beyond their own community. Malakars as incumbent (old craftsmen) face many challenges in developing their wage labour base business. Present study identifies how the craft knowledge and skills transfer between craftspeople in the context of a low-technology cluster and wage

labour base workshops. Both master craftsmen and labour-force play a role in the diffusion of knowledge and 'generation of new knowledge' for upgradation of products within this cluster (Beerepoot, 2004). Based on the involvement of community members, craftspeople can be broadly categorised into three heads: (i) Malakars produced traditional ritualistic and ceremonial products for local market demand. (ii) Malakars produced contemporary products and their products reached at different level of market. (iii) Participation of other community people and development of new small entrepreneurship.

Changing configuration of labour - family labour to wage labour: Any industry could not run without wage labour. Use of local resources and cheap labour is responsible for economic generation of craftspeople (Jadhav, 2012; Jain *et al.* 2015; Mohiud-din *et al.* 2014; Vijayagopalan, 1993). Labour is a means of production and they have specific role in the production process of cultural goods. Shola craft is a family craft. In this craft division of labour and mutual aid in production is noticed among the family members and kin members. Fieldwork data shows at Bankapasi and Surul village, still 47.43% and 2.56% workshops respectively produce with the help of family labours. With changing time and increasing demands of market, the division of labour become simple to complex form. To cope up with the contemporary demands of customers craftspeople modify their work style. All workshops were fully or partially run by with the help of wage labours. Appointment of wage labours mostly noticed at home decorative production workshops mainly produce goods for commercial purpose. Number of labours varies from cluster to cluster and workshop to workshop. During fieldwork total number of wage labours work in workshops of Bankapasi and Surul is 246 in 30 workshops and 50 in 9 workshops respectively. Major causes of dependency on wage labours are as follows: (1) due to less availability of family labour to assist (2) young generation is less interested in their family occupation- a section of them shifted in other occupation for better earning. Others were unable to manage time as they continue their studies. (3) when master craftsmen or workshop owner unable to manage huge pressure of work and order in short time and (4) to produce variety of products, to increasing the production level, reach maximum number of customer and sustaining livelihood in the competitive market. All wage labours can be classified into three categories on the basis of time spend on the workshop, receiving raw materials and delivery of finished products - permanent

labour, contact labour and seasonal labour.

Participation of other community people - hiring of labour force: Both direct and indirect participation of other community people noticed in production process. From old days indirectly involved in the production process, Malakars have to depend on some other community member (Bagdi, Dom, Savar communities) belongs to lower strata of the society not directly for production process but for collection of raw materials. Last few years, direct involvement in the production process has been noticed. With increasing demand of seasonal products during social and religious activities and at the same time demands for home decor products also rise at extended market and to manage huge pressure master craftsmen involved wage labours from within and outside the village. Wage labours belong to different castes and communities. Workshop owners employed both unskilled and skilled labour from both sexes mostly on a daily wage basis and rarely on monthly basis. It is found that now people without family background of craft also involved in this craft work. Now Sholapith craft is not considered an ethno-craft or caste base work. At Surul cluster beside Malakar community, Bramhin, Chitrakor, Mahisyo and Bagdi community involved and at Bankapasi cluster Sadhgop, Bramhin, Suri, Bagdi and Dom community people engaged.

Other community people adopted this profession for their livelihood after working as wage labours at master craftsmen workshop or by taking training through government training programme. Within few days they have become skilled craftsmen and opens their own workshops, started their own business, create their own identity in craft production. In both clusters few wage labours create own business and achieved status of master craftsman. By accepting 'adaptive strategy and innovative strategy' (Leriche *et al.* 2010) this wage labours also changed their position in the hierarchy and earn more profits.

Dilemma of hiring and learning: Malakars due to their long-term orientation and the intimate connection among family members (Le Breton-Miller, 2015), they passing on 'tacit knowledge'² (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Horizontal and vertical inter-workshop relations, 'protectionist behaviour' or 'protecting reputation' of master craftsmen enable or hinders the diffusion of knowledge within the cluster (Beerepoot, 2004). Previously Malakars didn't teach the whole process of making products to the other communities to retain skill

²Personal, context specific and informal knowledge.

within community. They produced with close kins and friends and transmit knowledge to them. They try to limit the knowledge only within their family members. The maintenance of production secrets amongst selected individuals within a community or craft production unit was commonly only associated with the maintenance of traditions, rather than with innovation and change. In what extent a master craftsman transmits his knowledge to a disciple is totally depends on him.

Master craftsmen (*guru*) transmitted their knowledge to disciple (*sishe*) of various communities. By helping craftsmen and learning small techniques of craft making slowly they are become unskilled labour to skilled craftsmen of this craft. Then disciple creates their own workshops and started their own business. Sometimes they grab the craft market better than Malakars or his teacher. Master craftsmen feel insecure to share every step with the disciple. Workshop owners try to maintain production secret from their labours and control the quality of finished products. Still there are some master craftsmen who not disclose his all secret to the learner (labours) as it can be copied by others. They engaged different labours for various types of work. After collecting each part from labours master craftsmen himself or other wage labours assembled those portions.

They appoint new permanent labour at workshops depends on various parameters - experience, knowledge and skill of work, age, willingness to learn new process and work, patience, ability of hard work, good recommendation from another workshop. The workshop owners always prefer high skilled labours because it helps them to maintain quality of decorative products and to overcome production pressure during season time. Though only few cases unskilled novices are contracting and they are trained through peer learning at workshop. In case of ritualistic production workshops criteria for hiring seasonal or contact labour is flexible - no such high quality of skill and knowledge is required rather willingness to work and time of work is main criteria.

Before starting of each season, a contract is signed between labour and owner of workshop through advance payment. Now there is no importance of verbal assurance. But once a contract paper is signed with workshop owner then the labour has to complete one year at that workshop. Labour contact signed and renewed between workshop owner and labours after Jagadhatri puja in the month of *Kartik* (October-November). When labours are satisfied with their salary, they do not changed their old

workshop. During new contact the labours select the workshop, which provide them high wage. Labour is not fixed. Every year at the beginning of season they can change the workshop specially when someone is unhappy with wages and mode of payment, even do not consider their duty leaves at the time of crisis or family problems.

Competition and politics exist among the village craftspeople or workshop owners and wage labour regarding hiring of skilled and knowledgeable labour at workshops. Workshop owners always want to continue work with same set of labours, when they are knowledgeable and skilled. To maintain it workshop owners provide extra incentives, sanction advance payment during their crisis period and allow leave at the time of family problems and needs. Sometime the workshop owners prefer to renew the contract of old labours, as they already know every detail of workshop. To compete in the competitive market a craftsman should possess three features- cope up with market demands, courage to take risk and knowledge of quality work.

Transformation of traditional craft and participation of other community people - loosing of cultural identity: During past few years with commercialisation new kind of demand took place and transformation noticed in this craft. The growing market demand of this craft has involved other communities in the production and sale of this craft outside the previous cultural context. They control production process with the help of labours. Now they have become economically self-sufficient and skilled craftsmen like Malakar craftsmen. This identity shift of labour to craftsman creates competition between Malakars and newly emerged other community craftsmen in the market network, which shift value of products and challenge traditional social identity of craftspeople. This has otherwise posed threat to the share of the market and pre-existing identity, originality and authenticity of the craft-forms of the Malakars. New extended market demand is shaping a craftsman's identity.

It is now difficult for master craftsmen (Malakars) to protect their own cultural identity as the sole bearer of the craft. Class status of newly emerged craftspeople from other communities increased now as they gradually grab the market network better than Malakars. Now they make low quality, hybrid products on a large scale in short cut methods, use of alternative products, reduce the prices of the product according to bargaining by the customers and sell in very cheap rate compare to

others. Once Malakars were essential part of local rituals, it gradually changes with participation of other communities and availability of alternative products. Though the craft practices going through commercialization, the class status of Malakars of studied clusters not changed rather position of Malakars in the market economy becomes comparatively less beyond jajmani relation. They only do this job to maintain traditional occupation and to serve the family jajmans. Loosing of cultural identity is a consequence of limitation of family-based business with expanding market network.

Social capital identity, reputation and status of master craftsman give competition to younger one: Stability of a workshop depends on its identities, status hierarchy and network or social capital. In these production clusters most workshops resembled one another in products and organisational structure. At market politics Malakars achieved the position of the advantage groups - with high skill products, ethnic identity and family tradition, financial status and pre-build social and marketing network. Those craftspeople have already received some recognition for their creation; dominate the market by virtue of their social and cultural capital. Their products not only restricted to local market rather they also produce for national and international markets. It is also noticed that those craftspeople transform and shifted their products types from ritualistic to home decorative products reached at various level market network. Even participation at handicraft fairs, supply products at Govt. organizations and act as master trainer at various training programme also dominated by those section of craftspeople. Whereas those craftspeople still engaged in production of ritualistic and cheap rate home decorative products, restrict them to fulfil the requirements of local and regional customers.

With time craftsmen (Malakars) face huge competition in this work as this work is practiced in all households and number of workshops also increased now. Malakars as incumbent (old craftsmen) face many challenges in developing their wage labour base business. Production is largely based on access to a rising market economy and independence from village patronage systems. Here a section of craftspeople creates highly individualized goods; they frequently modify their products designs according to their customers' demands, introduce hybrid and new products and maintain quality of products. This helps to create their own identity and transform their status. In long term a craftsman fame and reputation turned

into his own identity and brand value in market exchange. Through their skills, uniqueness and aesthetic presentation, they create own brand. By continuously introducing new designs and motifs into products and maintaining the quality of products, craftspeople avoid unfair competition which helps them to survive in competitive market. Status of craftspeople is highly depending on factors such as 'who they worked for' and 'the kinds of crafts they produced' (Wattenmaker, 2018). On the other hand, challengers are new and smaller workshop where craftsmen frame their actions in terms of the largest workshops.

The construction of the market network and distribution of profit: It is always not up to the craftsmen to build network and relationship with customers. Craftsmen who have the access or control over more social capital as well as cultural capital earn comparatively more profits and make their status comparatively better than others in marketing network. Craftspeople from Malakar community get little advantages in this case as it is their family occupation which builds their own identity and status. Malakars practiced and transmit it and they possess an age-old bonding with local villagers or other community people.

Whereas in case of other community craftspeople it takes a long time to establish successful social networking with his quality works as it's not his family occupation and market is already dominated by Malakars. During past few years other community members have set up workshops where similar kind of products are produced and get traded in various markets of local and regional level. They have created their own identity at the market network through their skills and unique work. After learning the craft from a workshop, they started their own business and now produce in huge quantity. For marketing of finished products, they established contact with previously known customers, middlemen, and distributors.

Distinct categories of persons have emerged with the introduction of new hybrid products - new entrepreneurship i. e. workshop owners, a middle man class, money lender, exporters, wage labours and so on. There is a social gap between the people engaged in the production process-master craftsmen or workshop owners and labours (Kottack, 1997). Even distribution of profit of exchange is not same on two studied production clusters and depends on various factors like involvement of wage labours, middleman, types of products and customers. It is found that profit amount is shared among various stock holders and

it varies in each stage. It is up to the craftsmen to build network and relationship with customers. At Bankapasi, their market is spread all over the India, craftsmen supplied ornaments to various places and customers like to clay idol makers (*mistri*), to barowari pujas or club directly and to ornaments shops and also supply to some middleman or resellers. At Bankapasi, the organization structure is following (from top to bottom) -Middleman / Exporters → Clay idol makers / ornament shop owners → Master craftsmen work with family labours → Permanent labour → Contractual labour/ daily shift labour. In case of Surul, the profits of production distributed from middleman and wholesale customers to master craftsmen to wage labours. In case of Surul village, few craftspeople supply products at local and regional markets. Their profit share is - middleman and wholesale customers → master craftsmen → wage labours. Whereas those who supply products at Govt. institutions like Biswa Bangla and Manjusha the distribution of profit is like - Exporters → State Govt. emporium shops/ stores → master crafts people → permanent labour → daily shift basis labour. In both clusters few wage labours (*karigor*) through learning and create own business achieved status of master craftsman (*shilpi*). By accepting 'adaptive strategy and innovative strategy' (Leriche et al 2010) this wage labours also changed their position in the hierarchy and earn more profits.

Factors lead some craftspeople to reach at national and global level: Apparently, people seem to be equal, but underline there is inequality, which are inherent and transmitted. In globalization and commercialization of production 'equality of opportunities' coexists with some inequality emerging. Now question is what kind of constraint which is come from within the system? During fieldwork it is observed that, those section of craftspeople and middleman participated in national and export market has possess some means like- wealth, language skills, knowledge regarding contemporary market demands and customers taste and knowledge of operating android mobile phone. The demands of contemporary market and customers taste are fulfilled by those craftsmen who get more access to these traits. They have been able to profit from this change and emerging new situation. Though these means are also varies in degree from person to person. It creates inequality among a large section of craftsmen in a region. Because of this section of craftsmen doesn't meet these requirements. Those who don't access these traits restricted themselves within the local market by producing seasonal and ritualistic products. In

case of ritualistic domestic workshops, it is observed that craftspeople crated within a community based horizontal social structure. Few craftspeople were economically and socially equal as their products only exchanged at local and regional level market. On the other hand, in few cases craftspeople shifted from ritualistic production to home decorative production, where the structure of craftspeople societies inevitable changes from horizontal to vertical. Those craftspeople who produced new kinds of home decorative products with innovation and, according to customer demand, were able to earn more income. During the study it is found that products of most of the craftsmen are limited in local level of market. But a small section of craftsmen is reached at national and international level with their products. There are various factors responsible for the success in the market, like.

Control of cultural capital: Generation wise some craftspeople build their own identity and status through high knowledge and skill of production. Their own personal identity and quality of work brings them reputation in the contemporary market network. In case of home decorative products sometime customers, middleman and Govt. institution select particular craftspeople and their products based on skill, reputation, aesthetic presentation of products. It is observed that some craftspeople other than Malakar community who possess high cultural capital but due to lack of social network and financial crisis they cannot reach outside the regional level of market. But in recent years the scenario changed little bit, as craftspeople from other community people create their own identity at market network through their capacity, skill and unique work. They not only restrict them into ritualistic products for 'internal audience' rather produced home decorative products at comparatively cheap rate to fulfil the demands of national and global markets.

Capacity of adaptability and transformability: Craftspeople produced according to the changing contemporary market demand and customer preferences. A section of craftsmen transformed their old work style, introduced new design pattern and style on products. Craftspeople who have capacity for change and adapt with this contemporary demand get success more than others, change their status and able to earn more income. Commercialization of products at national and global level noticed emergence of individuality in production, not by collectively or whole community basis. Individual craftsman or their families gained reputation and status by producing items that met the standards of the contemporary

market and customers' demand. By applying their personal style, they produce a unique product and gradually it becomes the signature of the craftsman or of his family.

Control over resources: Those craftspeople have economic capital control means of productions (raw materials, implements) and forces of production (wage labours). Economic capitals help them to store large amount of Shola and other secondary raw materials at a time, beside they engaged wage labours at workshops for large scale of production. Those craftspeople are more successful who managed all components of production and distribution.

Control of social capital: Fieldwork reveal that craftspeople require some accumulated capital as well as widespread social networks to get success in national and global market. They create networking with other craftsmen, customers, exporters and middleman, contact and collaboration with different agencies (both Govt. and NGOs) and designers. Some craftspeople gained more profits and status as real craftsmen through their connections with various agencies. Few craftsmen with government issued artisan ID were eligible to sell products directly to consumers at government sponsored exhibitions and fairs, also deliver products at govt emporiums, they could submit products for either the state or national award scheme sponsored by government. A section of craftspeople gets more exploited who produced ritualistic products and cheap rate home decorative products, but their products sale at local market or reached at larger cities through middleman and resellers. Whereas those skilled craftspeople have direct connection with larger cities, they automatically reached at national market.

Use of social media: Knowledge of use of social media and operating android mobile phone also factor for success in the market. As in case of decorative products, customers and exporters select products and order through various app like WhatsApp and Facebook. Educational status and sometime command of English language remain factors for building network and success, but not essential

A section of craftspeople gets more exploited who produced ritualistic products and cheap rate home decorative products, but their products sale at local market or reached at larger cities through middleman and resellers. Whereas those craftspeople have direct connection with larger cities, they automatically reached at national market. They are more skilled craftsmen. In case

of home decorative products sometime customers, middleman and Govt. institution select particular craftspeople and their products based on skill, reputation, aesthetic presentation of products. But in case of ritualistic products local customers shared little to no concern for these factors. Most of the time customers collect those products from local craftsmen and *doshokorma* shops (where one can buy ritualistic products).

With expand of market exchange, to grab the control over production as well as market network; traditional craftsmen (Malakars) welcome wage labours from outside their own community which one hand helps them to expand their market network whereas it also brings some challenges, competition, politics and inequality in production process and marketing process. It creates segments and identities among craftspeople - master craftsmen cum workshop owners with high skilled, new skilled craftsmen cum workshop owners and less skilled craftsmen cum wage labours.

CONCLUSION

It is observed that factors like culture and identity of craftspeople also responsible for commercialization of craft. Due to craft commoditization craft producers expand to markets outside their communities. As a result, changes occur in organization, family base production units to wage labour base mode of production units, quality of products and production for 'local use' is replaced by 'production for sale' (Littrell *et al.* 1999). At present wage labour based cultural industry increases their income as well as products demand throughout the year and also reached the national and international level of market.

It is observed that linkage between caste and occupations have undergone notable changes. The finding revealed that in the context of contemporary commercialized world, traditional craft identity of a specific community is in a transformation phase. The community-linked cultural industry is losing identity by involving more and more people from other communities with demand for production. Shola craft is no longer considered as an ethno-craft as it exceeds the habitual boundaries of an economically confined social group.

The identity-construction strategies affect the production process. There are some challenges for retention of identity among craftspeople. To meeting the needs of competitive extended market following factors play vital role - family craft

history of craftspeople, retention of tactile skills, specialized craft production creates reputation and identities. Commercialization of craft and resilience strategies by craftspeople can contribute to the sustainable development of craft and communities' identity.

Profit making mentality, production and availability of cheap rate hybrid products have affected existing market networks and create competition among craftspeople. There is a huge competition among the craftsmen as most of the products prepared by them are similar in design. By introducing new motifs into products and maintaining the quality, craftspeople can avoid competition and create their own identity and help them to survive in competitive market. Even some craftsmen and labours have potentialities. But new generation people are not feeling interest in this work as they not know about the current market demands and changes of marketing strategies. Through organizing training programmes, they should be trained and upgrade their skills according to customer taste and contemporary market demand. Government and non-governmental advantages and benefits are required both for workshop owners and labours to generate interest and carry forward this craft work.

Conflict of Interest: There is no conflict of interest.

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