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Traditional Pottery in Contemporary Scenario: A Sociological Study of Kanpur City

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Abstract: *This article discusses the response of traditional potters in Laxmipurwa, a town in Kanpur district famous for its pottery industry. The term "pottery" is generally understood to mean domestic ceramic wares. In the many literatures of prehistoric archaeology, the term "pottery" is used synonyms with ceramics. However, the term 'ceramic' which is supposed to have derived from the word 'Keramos' (Greek: potters clay) or Ceramque (French: art of the potter) has a wide range of connotations which includes pottery also. This present study deal with the potteries made by Prajapati community and examine the role of women in the pottery production process. The female potters of Prajapati community are who create the earthenware with ferma (Mould). Most of the female potters engaged in this craft are women. The potters of Laxmipurwa are aware of the modern techniques which use to increase the production of the items. Therefore, they felt the need to improve the traditional method of manufacturing. This study is an attempt to probe the factors of sustainability in a potter's community of Laxmipurwa in the district of Kanpur. The source of data involves both primary and secondary data. Primary data is collected through a semi-structured interview schedule and supplemented by various literature, web including internet, government report and research paper.*

Key Words: Traditional Pottery, domestic ceramic wares, prehistoric archaeology, ceramics, internet.

India has million potters, more than any other country on earth, and their clay techniques have been handed down for generations. Coiling and pinching a red common surface clay shape up into a cylindrical form, no matter how wide or tall, then paddling it out into a round form with a stone anvil and a wooden mallet - these are common traditional methods still performed today in India. India just has more of the so-called terracotta, earthenware, handcrafted clay culture everywhere in country than any other nation (Perryman 2000). These potters have divided themselves in nine social groups, and all the groups in general are known as 'Kumhhar'. All the potters' groups have a mythical tradition which relates their origin to 'Brahma' the creator of the world. Their rituals and ceremonies do not differ much from another local Hindu cast. Their house pattern and way of living is like an ordinary village person. Migration among the potters, is very common. They claim their migration from Sultanpur. All the groups of potters have divided themselves into two occupational categories, (a) Anternevi, those who manufacture pots by chaak (wheel) and (b) Gangapari - those who manufacture pot, Idols and Tandoor by hand and other instruments (mould). Among the Gangapari occupational category different groups of potters specialize in manufacturing of different types of pots.

In this paper, I have tried to explained the full process of pot making in which clay is turned into beautiful pots which is mostly used in rural areas in India. The art of pottery takes us back to the invention of fire a turning point in evolution of man. This study will take us through the whole process of pottery practiced by a family who have been in this line of work for many generations in Uttar Pradesh. Pots are made of clay taken especially from mud field rich in its content. The brick red raw particles in the clay are scraped off it is done so to prevent the pot from cracking due to the brittle element of rocks. This is the first step in pot making the specialty of the clay used in pot making is the stickiness. The stickiness helps in holding together the pot while molding the family takes the clay from field in U.P the refined clay is then mixed with fine sand and it is kneaded thoroughly to get the right consistency and moisture.

Pottery is also defined by the style of pottery which may be unglazed and glazed. In India, unglazed pottery is more commonly seen than glazed pottery although glazed pottery is known from ancient times. In different states and areas of India, many famous pottery cultures are existing such as blue pottery of Jaipur, Black pottery of Nizamabad,



Glazed pottery of Khurja, Paper thin pottery of Kutch, Ceramic pots of Jaipur, Karigari in Tamil Nadu, Glazed pottery practiced in Delhi, Jaipur, Amritsar, Chunar and Rampur, Black pottery of Kutch etc. Potteries of Kangra, Pokhran, Meerut, Hapur, Andreta, Kanpur Jajjhar, Birbhum and Manipur belongs to unglazed pottery and potteries of Jaipur, Khurja, Delhi and Chunar belongs to glazed pottery. The town had the Hindu caste potters who made ordinary pottery and coarser coloured ware. They used the two types of wheels or common chaak for throwing pottery, and fired their ware in a shallow circular pit called 'bhatti'.

This paper pursues to examine how and under what conditions the Hindu traditional potters of Laxmipurwa have responded to technological interventions. Before this, however, it is necessary to give a brief description of the traditional method of pottery manufacture. The traditional pot made by the Hindu potters of Kanpur included both utility ware, worship and decorative items. The utility items included the surahi (pitcher, for store water); the handi (a small cooking pot); the Karwa (a small pot, used during rituals); the cup and the lota (a drinking pots); the parai and kahtari (making curd and boiling milk); laxmi ganesh (for worship); gujriya, ridhi sidhi and toys (decorative wares).

Pottery- Pottery making is an important event of past. It has stroked the beginning of the turn in Neolithic period in human society. The development of culture started with the emergence of civilization which was indicated by the starting of mud. Pottery was introduced from different civilizations and was accepted, developed, changed, and accommodated. Few of the traditional groups in the world still maintain this tradition as their occupation. Earthenware is made by representative a fired shape which is subsequently warmed at high temperatures so it gets sufficiently hard to take up a shape. The initial step begins with the potter's tracing the mud material (which is gotten from the actual earth) from neighbourhood towns, villages, and states like Uttar Pradesh.

This material is then crushed well under the tires of a heavy vehicle what parts to fine pieces. This fine mixture is then blended in with different materials like cow compost, sand, water, and other biodegradable materials. This makes the mud wet which is valuable in making pots. Life and perseverance of the result is controlled by this cycle. Plying or squeezing assists with eliminating air rises from the mud which makes it simpler to work with. Potters at that point utilize the potters' wheel to make whichever shape is needed by turning the wheel into objects like diyas (earthen lamp), matkas (pot) or wall decorations. After it has been formed, it is left to dry, fired and afterward painted and brightened for business purposes. Uttar Pradesh arts are already prominent and pottery is yet another spectacular assertion of expertise of the artisans and craftsmen of this state. One of the preliminary skills to be obtained by the Indians and Uttar Pradesh is pottery. Initially, pottery products were used for cooking, but on account of the prevalence of metal utensils, Kumhars now make flower vase, plant beakers, piggy banks, terracotta tiles, and pots of various sizes. The oldest craft known to human culture is employing clay and water to give various concrete shapes for different purposes.

Pottery as an Art and Craft- Art in 'India' and 'Art in the Modern World' mean two very different things", says Anand Coomaraswamy in his Introduction to Indian Art. "In India, it is the statement of a racial experience (italics mine) and serves the purpose of life, like daily bread. Indian art has always been produced to a demand. India has been known as a land of Crafts and Craftsmen. An ancient chronicler of centuries gone by writes: 'One finds long established industries of the Indian peninsula asserting their excellence in a manner at once characteristic and extraordinary. The same skill is seen in metals, in ivory carving, pottery, mosaics, shawls, muslins, carpets, an excellence attained by these ingenious communities ages and ages ago, and still practising them.' Traditional Craftsmanship in our country has meant far more than skill with materials, more than manual dexterity in manipulating tools. It has meant a total operation involving the emotions, mind, body, and the vibrant rhythm that such a co-ordination generates.

The word "craft" refers to specific objects such as vases, pots, chairs, tables, covers, etc.; it also refers to the profession concerned with the creation of these objects among whose practitioners it includes ceramists, glassblowers,



furniture makers, metal workers, weavers, etc. When referring to the skilled activities with which and through which these objects are made, the term "craftsmanship" is used. This is a way to separate craft objects from the skills employed to make them while at the same time reinforcing the connection between craft and the skilled hand inherent in craftsmanship. Indian vocabularies for handicrafts are commonly *hastakala*, *hastshilp*, *dastkari* and *Karigari* all meaning hand work, they also refer to objects made with craftsmanship, i.e., specialised skills of the hand which are also artistic. For craft expressions are recognised as the experiences of the workers at a place where they happen to be working at a certain time. The chief characteristics of their output are largely the result of the needs and demands of the times.

Clay is the most ancient and natural medium for making objects of utility and meeting social, cultural, and religious needs of the community. One of the characteristics of the Indian art work in clay is its immense variety, much more so in earthen ware as this material is universally available. Harappan and post-Harappan is typical of the very early period between 900 and 300 B.C. Intrinsically utilitarian, it was suitably decorated in various colours, sometimes three shades on one, and geometrical designs, also animals and birds, humans, some in the stylised fashion which continues to this day as the *Tolk style* often with a flavour of the modern 'abstract'. This is one of the exciting facts about the continuity of Indian craft tradition. It cannot really be dated. It seems to be for all time, for it has in it the germ of truth which man is eternally seeking. It thus symbolises man's first craftsmanship. Incidentally, the potter's wheel also seems to be the first machine man invented to use the power of motion for a productive purpose. The use of fire revolutionised earthen ware, for, from this later emerged the terracotta art.

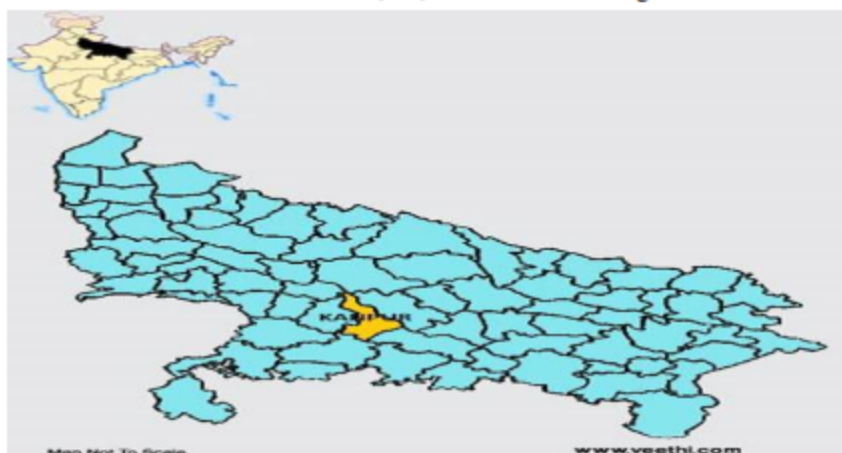


Figure 1: Map of India depicting Kanpur district in Uttar Pradesh

Setting and Methodology- This study was conducted in the Kanpur (Kakadev) of Uttar Pradesh. This area is purposively selected to study of the potter community. Kanpur was selected as a research area for several reasons. First, the production of traditional earthenware continues throughout the region; pottery made by Hindu and is found in homes (Kramer 1997), second a detail descriptive study of potters and pottery; there are also study of Indian pottery making techniques (Saraswati 1964, 1979; Saraswati and Behura 1966). We spent so much time with potters' community to collect valuable data. The Participatory tools case study, observation and interviews are the methods for gathering the information from community. Interviews schedule with most informants was accepted throughout the field work, as was the collection of detailed genealogical information. Respondents were visited repeatedly, observed their activities, and recorded; such observations produced understanding into seasonal variation in vessel production and sales, availability of clays, location and movement of work and storage areas in potters' workshops, modes of distributing pottery within and between settlements, and social relations and interactions among residents of different neighbourhoods and different settlements.

This study is based on traditional potters in two urban centres in Kanpur (Northern India) during the 2018s.



this ethnographic fieldwork was designed to identify and characterise vessels' sources, to examine the scale and diversity of pottery assemblages in settlements of differing size, and to evaluate pattern of ceramic distribution in the context of sociological relationship linking producing and sellers.

Stages of Pottery Manufacturing-

Procuring of Clay- The main raw material used in making common pottery is mud or clay. There are various types of clays, such as, black clays, yellow clays, and sandy clays. Two types of clay are commonly used-the light red or dark yellow and the so-called kali mitti (dark grey clay). The first is available in every district either on the surface of the ground or a few feet below it. In Kanpur district it is also known as pili mitti (yellow clay). Clay is a natural material found by digging the earth surface which is decomposed from the rock so clay is a mixture of rock particles and additives. Thus, pottery is not made of pure clay it includes many additives based on the properties of clay. Basically, pottery is an art of clay which gives a shape and size to the clay with the motive of creating various kinds of pots, vessels, dishes, cups, and cooking containers. The clay body is different from pure clay. Clay is made by the decomposition from the rocks and contains various minerals, plant life and animals remains and get settled within the earth's crust. Clay develops nearer to places where rivers or stream of 50 water once flowed. But clay body is the mixture of clay and other additives which form different types of clays and change their properties from other clays.

Clay Soaked- The clay used to be dug out by the middleman from the village ponds or waste lands of charge. The black clay and the yellow clay are stored in separate loads outside or inside the house of the potter. Firstly, the clay has brought and left in the open to dry. Then systematically spread in equally layer on the roof or out the road. The spread the clay on the road because the passage of transport will make the clay finer and save their time and labour. Once dry, it was pounded with a heavy wooden mallet called mungari and sifted. If any tiny impurities like small stone are left in the clay so it removed during sieving process. Then clays sifted through a wooden or iron sieve for removing the unwanted impurity which may destroy a pot. When ready, this mixture was shaped into round balls and stored either inside the house of the potter or in pits, till the superfluous moisture in it evaporated (Dobbs 1895).

Wheel Throwing- In India wheel-made pottery is made by men, in a patrilineal, and decorated by female kin. Wheel throwing is a method of shaping clay using potter's wheel. There are two types of potter's wheel, one is manual and another is electric potter's wheel. In this process, the kneaded and wedged clay ball is placed in the centre of a turntable. The rotation of wheel helps in giving proportionate shape to the pot. The clay is pressed and pulled up and down using hand movement of the potter. The potter's wheel is set in motion with the long rod before depositing the clay dough it to the middle of the wheel. The potter presses his hand into the middle of the lump of clay creating a slight depression in the middle then he works the clay up and molds it into a pot with an enlarge middle and a slightly smaller top. Water is used to shape the pot into its desired shape.

Before starting the actual process of throwing the potter takes out of lump of prepared clay from the pile and kneads it once more with his hands to bring it proper form in it. After this the clay lump is rolled into the shape of a cylinder. The size of the clay dough different according to the type of pot which a potter wants to manufacture. After the produced ware the potter scrapes of excess and smoothens the surface using a flat wooden tool. The rim of the pot is created using a thick bendy leather like cloth strip by placing the bendy stipe the top portion of the pot falls backward and becomes the rim of the pot after the decide shape is made the potters plunges a sharp iron needle like tool in the bottom of the pot. The pot is then taken of the wheel swiftly at this stage the bottom of the pot will be hollow. The rest of the clay on the wheel is molded into different pots.

Moulding Process of Pottery- There are two different types of mould method are prevalent in the manufacturing of hand-made pottery among the Prajapati women potters like moulding and pressing. Both types of methods are employed in the making small and big pots as well as in the preparation of clay idols.



Moulding Method- Prajapati women potter play very important role in manufacturing of moulded pottery. Under these techniques pots are made with the help of moulds. During this study we have find out that the moulds pottery only made by women. The Prajapati women potters made various types of idols and toys through the moulds, these moulds are also farma. A Prajapati women potter take a dough of clay and flattens it with a thapuni (anvil) upon surface of earth dressed with ash. During the process thinning the clay dough is turned from one side to the other side at regular intervals in order to obtain even surface on both the sides. During this action, to prevent sticking of clay to the anvil and to the surface of earth, fine ash is sprinkled over the clay. When the lump clay gets the shape of a thin disc, it is taken out and then placed on the head of the mould which has been dresses with ash. For bigger pots, two identical same type of bowls (forming 2 halves) are joined together. To make the bowls identical in size, they are prepared in the same mould and out of one type of clay. Before being joined together both the bowls are hardened in the sun for 15 to 20 minutes in order to save their walls from sagging.

Pressing Method- Earthen Diya, Gujriya, Murti, (God Idols) are prepared by hand pressing small lumps of clay. These wares are usually prepared by women. The whole mass of processed clay is sliced into small lumps. The magnitudes of the lumps depend upon the size of the ware to be prepared. Just before starting making the items potter dips her palms in water so as to make the clay slippery in hand. Then, they pick a dough of clay and presses it in between their both hand thumbs in a spiral movement and during this process they rotate the mould from up and down by tossing it with the left-hand fingers slowly and continuously until the intended shape is obtained.

Material for Firing- Various types of fuel and covering material are required for firing techniques. As a fuel different type of wood dust, dry leaves, cow dung and wilt leaves are mainly used. Sometime husk and chaff are also used. Baking of pots is a very laborious job. It includes a series of stages. The method of firing is of two different kinds. Firing in s kiln and open firing. Some potters of Kakadev use the open firing technique. Wood, straws and husk are used as raw materials. In this method pots are baked on a flat ground or sometimes in a pit. After preparing the firing ground, it is covered up with dry bushes and woods. Piling is the technique to prepare the firing bed. The first step of the piling of pot is centring. In this method three pot are arranged in slightly inverted position by keeping the mouth of all the pots facing the centre. The smaller pots are always kept over the bigger ones. There after the entire piling process is completed. In a Kakadev, about 200 to 300 pots can be arranged during piling. Two fire channels are made with broken pieces of pots on the top of the piled pots.

A kiln is prepared by collecting utensils of three to four days. It taken at least four hours to prepare a kiln, in this process involves four to five members of the household. Children bring utensils and those who are elders of the family prepare the kiln. They have their own method of setting up a kiln, first a thick layer of ash is laid on the ground and broken utensils are placed on it. Then fuel is poured over it, a crude vessel is placed over it, then fuel is poured on it. A furnace consumes about two handcart fuels, in which different types of fuel are used. Fuel is available here according to the season, all types of fuel are available during the summer season, but in the winter season, many problems have to be faced, fuel prices also increase at this time. Straw, cow dung and wood dust are used applying kiln, sometimes paddy husk is used.

Distribution of Final Product- Potters produce some pots like Hunde, Gullak, Matka, Diyali, Karwa and idol are made in higher percent. Most of the pots are used for storing water but some are used for other specific purpose like to make food, drink water and for ritual purposes. Earlier potters make big size grain storage pot name them Kothali. When the items are ready, some items are colored and some items are sold without coloring. It is very important to color some items, like toys, gujariya, flower pot, surahi and Laxmi Ganesh etc. the reason for coloring all these items is that they become attractive to look and sold quickly. All the potters use different types of vehicles to sell their product including horse cart, hand cart and bicycle. Some potters sell their own wares, either directly from their homes or, in few cases, from another location. All potter has their own fix shop where they sell their pots. They use to sell these products to the nearby market either directly or through local trader. Sometimes the villagers



directly buy the potteries from them. The prices of the potteries fluctuate depending upon the demand in the market. Markets for earthenware vessels are already diminishing due to the introduction of manufactured plastic, metal, and glass. During festival time like Deepawali, Navratri, Ganesh Chaturthi, and Sarasvati Puja the price of pots get increase and potters once sold thousands of diya (clay oil lamps), but now sales are dwindling because of competition from wax pots candles and electric bulbs. This decline in demand is resulting in a substantial proportion of the sons of potters leaving their hereditary occupation and going into other trades such as factory work and labouring. At this time some neighbour potters buy pots from the other potters and sold it. So many traders from other district also visit here to purchase their product. Prices of the idol are also determined according to the demand and the size of the idol (Sikdhar and Chaudhary 2015).

Table 1: The prices of various earthenware made by the Prajapati community

S1.	Name of the items	Types of earthenware	Purpose of use	Price of the pots in local market
1	Matka and Surahi	Water pot	Store water	Rs 50 - 80
2	Kalash and Karwa	Small pot	Ritual purpose	Rs 40 - 60
3	Diya	Diyali	Ritual purpose	Rs 2 - 5
4	Toys	Decorative items	Decorative ware	Rs 20 - 50
5	Idols	God, Goddess murti	Ritual and decoration	Rs 60 - 200
6	Tandoor	Chapati maker	To bake roti	Rs 300 - 400
7	Iron Tandoor		To bake roti during salak (marriage) season	Rs 400 - 500

Discussion- The manufacture of ceramics by the Kumar potters involves the technique of throwing a lump of levigated clay on to a moving wheel or chaak and mould. Member of the Kumbhar (potter) and other caste sell pottery, which is made by Hindu Kumbhar. Only a few simple tools are required for the process of producing of the wares. In this city has many active potters and shops at which the utilitarian earthenware seen throughout the reason are sold. Traditional pottery making is based on specific of manufacturing process, techniques and tools and skill. But currently these techniques evolve and take a new form with the new changing situation. This present study has explained the processes of traditional pottery making procedure and adoption of modern technique among a potter community of India. It is imperative to focus on conservation of this traditional craft and craftsman by providing them modern training with technology.

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