

TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE CULTURE ART FORMS TERRACOTTA ART OF RAJASTHAN

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Abstract

Indian civilization is always known for its terracotta craft. In our country many figures of gods and goddesses were found from the excavations shows that terracotta clay was considered auspicious to make the idols for worship. Till date at places like Molela in Rajasthan and Bengal, people in the villages make religious tiles in terracotta for their temples. Commissions were given to the potters or 'Kumhars' to make these religious tiles. In ancient India potters enjoyed a very respected position. Another name for the potters came to be known as 'Prajapati', creator of the toys, which came from Brahma who also made man from clay. There are many legends related to the clay and the creator in our culture. According to the Hindu tradition pot once used for drinking or eating is thrown away and not to be used again. After the Harappa culture and before Historical period, pottery showed deterioration, both in quality and decoration. However, the terracotta toys and heads discovered of the Gupta period were considered as the masterpieces of art. The 19th and 20th century saw the use of terracotta in the architecture. Temples at Birbhum in Bengal are the excellent examples of this style. Even 70 years back there are groups of craftsmen who are producing terracotta reliefs.

Key Words: Kumbhar- Potter, Kiln - Furnace, Bhil and Mina - Tribes of Rajasthan, Traditional Potters, Religious Tiles

OBJECTIVES

- The objective of the paper is to study the role of potters in the society.
- To study the rich cultural history of clay craft in India.
- To understand the present situation of the artists working in clay and their struggles.
- To find out the facts behind the downfall of these craftsmen.

INTRODUCTION

In India we do not have the tradition of glazed pottery. The water- pot in the Indian language is called 'Kumbh' and the man who makes these is known as 'Kumbhkar' or 'Kumbhars'. The trend of glazed pottery started with the invasion of Islam. When the early Pathan kings started building their mosques in the vicinity of Delhi, they had some craftsmen from Afghanistan who made plain blue colored and painted tiles which they incorporate in the design to give new look

to the architecture. There are traces of these tiles in the buildings erected by the Tughlaks and Lodis. Before that we had no traces of glazed pottery in India.

The great Pathan builder Sher Shah Suri first introduced the craft of glazed tiles in Bengal. Later on Muslim potters started making glazed pottery such as martabans to store pickle and jams, bowls, hukka stands, etc. Potters of Peshawar, Gujrat, Lahore, Delhi, Ajmer, Multan, Khurja, Lucknow, Chunar, Agra and Gwalior used this technique of glazed pottery.

TERRACOTTA RELIGIOUS TILES OF MOLELA

Rajasthan is known to be the most colorful state in India; it is dividing in hilly rugged south-eastern region and barren north-western region. Mina and Bhil are the original tribes of Rajastha. Molela is a small village 40 km from north of Udaipur, close to Banas river. Potters in Molela are famous for making religious tiles. These religious tiles depicts their gods and goddess in there anthropomorphic forms. Potters makes these tiles for their shrines and homes. They have been practicing this art form for last many centuries. There are nearly 40 potter families in Molela who are making religious tile and pot for cooking and eating. Since the demand of cooking pot is decreasing but the tribal people are keeping up their tradition of replacing the votive tiles and offerings in their shrines, which keeps providing work to the potters. This traditional craft is being transferred from one generation to another. Every year during the month of January, people from Bina and Gujari tribe travels to Molela to buy these religious tiles. Each group is accompanied by a priest called BHOPA who helps in selecting the perfect tile. Then they go to the Bana river and worship the tile and went back home and installed the tile in their shrines.

The deities of Molela are particularly sacred to them. They worship Dev Narainji and Pabuji for their heroic deeds. Other folk heroes are Tejaji, Kala Bhairon, Gora Bhairon, Panchmukhi, etc. apart from them they made tiles and figures of horses, elephants and many hooded snake. Terracotta Art of Molela also got the GI status. GI stands for Geographical Indication, it is a sign used on the products that have the regional origin and can be depicted from its label.



Fig A



Fig B

Shrines in rural India can be found everywhere, these are small places for prayers made under the tree, on the mountains or sometimes made up of some bricks. When their wishes are fulfilled then they made offerings in these shrines. The offerings are also made of terracotta, a horse or an elephant, etc. Sometime people offer whole army] of terracotta horses.

Prayers and offerings are integral part of our culture. Man used to prey to the powers of the nature, slowly he started giving iconographic representations to these powers, these images became complex with time. Clay and terracotta have always been the most favorite medium for the construction of these idols and offerings. Easy availability, mouldability, and once fired it can transform into a hard material are some of the features which made it favorable for modelling and casting. In different parts of our country we can find thousands of figurines of gods and goddesses and every place has its own distinctive style. We not only pray to the idols but we also try to follow the stories and beliefs associated with these idols. We heard from our parents and grandparents that each god has a power and a story which makes him or her a supreme power and we try to pass on these beliefs and faith to our coming generation.

But today the clay is only confined to idols making, other utility objects of terracotta are vanishing from our lives. Man is opting rapidly modern materials like plastic and other non-biodegradable materials for daily use. These modern materials are posing serious threat to nature and it is also becoming difficult to make younger generation understand why material like terracotta or clay is better then plastic, because according to them terracotta breaks and plastic does

not. As a kid we used to play with terracotta toys and shared a very emotional bond with them. Those dolls were reflection of our childhood and our culture. There were lots of emotions attached with them. Those toys were breakable and that's why I was really possessive and protective about them. Playing with them evoke a sense of responsibility; to take care of them.

Today toys are more about fashion, & durability; with lack of Indian tradition, and senses. There is a change in culture and general behavior of human beings, be it kids or adults. It is the impact of globalization that everyone is missing indigenous styles;



Fig C



Fig D

CONCLUSION

Today the potters are facing many problems as the demand of terracotta utility objects are decreasing rapidly, availability of raw material, production system and variation in design, marketing strategy are some of them. Lack of education is also a big reason in the downfall of the potters because they cannot take the benefit of the schemes Govt launch to help them and they cannot leave the work and travel outside there city to attend workshops and other programs. Introduction of plastic in our daily life also replaced terracotta and other eco-friendly material. Plastic took over the market and this shift in the interest is causing difficulties for the potters to continue the practice. 60% craftsman has already opted for jobs in factories.

To overcome these problems Govt have to launch such a program which can work on the overall growth of these craftsmen. Potters should know modern and energy efficient methods of firing, marketing strategy, incorporation of modern designs along with the traditional ones, use of modern tools like energy efficient

wheels and kilns, crude and heavy tools are obsolete now and continuous use of these tools will hinder the production level.

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- Fig A- Painted Terracotta Tile
- Fig B- Baked Terracotta Tile depicting Goddess riding on an animal.
- Fig C- Baked Terracotta Tile depicting the stories of Lord Krishna, On the lower side of the tile Krishna dancing on the head of many hooded Serpent.
- Fig D- Wall of a temple where people install the religious plaque, each tile was pasted during some pooja or festival.
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