

## CHALLENGES OF LIVELIHOOD SECURITY OF CRAFTSMEN: A CASE STUDY

SINI M

**Abstract:** Traditionally, craft depended communities were a crucial part of the village economy and heritage. However, most rural communities, especially the craft depended communities are struggling for their survival and sustenance. Pottery is one of the most profound crafts that dominate the local craft in the area under study. For the socio-economic upliftment of such communities and sustenance of their cultural heritage, creative and productive undertakings are essential. Integration of new technological aspects in the traditional socio-economic fabric of such community and their embellishments in tune with the modern day local demands might perhaps be the only way for the sustenance of the livelihood of these communities. Not only in the rural areas but also in the urban spaces there is an increasing demand for crafts, especially pottery items. These invisible demands needs to be appropriately tackled and managed in order to maintain its sustainability.

**Key Words:** Craft, Cultural Heritage, Value addition, Capacity Building

**Introduction:** The AnthurNairs are the traditional pot makers of Kerala and majority of them are still depending upon their traditional technology for the production process. At present also the life and culture of the people revolve around their traditional occupation i.e., pot making. The present study aims at the need for creating livelihood security for the craftsmen. For this, the strengthening of their production process and value addition of products is essential. This can be achieved by creating proper linkages between traditional and modern practices in the craft sector. In Kerala, the traditional pot makers are known in different names in different districts. In Kannur and Kozhikode districts they are called as AnthurNairs. In Palakkad they are known as Kumbaran and as Velan in Thiruvananthapuram district. Odan, Kulalan, Andra Nair, Mannu Nair, Velar etc., are the other names. Generally, the terms Kusavan and Kulalan are used by the villagers to denote the pot makers of Kerala.

The AnthurNairs were believed to be arrived from Karnataka to Kerala about 800 years back as the assistants of the Brahmins and were engaged in pot making and rearing the cows of Brahmins. The settlements of the AnthurNairs can be distinguished very easily. Traditional type of furnace (*choola*) is a characteristic of almost all the houses. This is used for baking the mud pots ready to use by keeping in high temperature.

**Materials and Methods:** In Kannur district, the AnthurNairs are mainly distributed in twenty nine different settlements. The largest number of the population is found in Mottammal (Kannapuram) and Taliparamba settlements (Sini 2004: 101). For the present study, the data have been collected from Mottammal village of Kannur district in Kerala. Personal interview and Observation were mainly employed for collecting data.

**Craft and Livelihood Security:** According to Chambers and Conway, the Livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and

social) and activities required for a means of living ([www.opendocs.ids.ac.uk](http://www.opendocs.ids.ac.uk)). Craft is an important part of intangible cultural heritage and also part of livelihood of villagers. It has a crucial role in maintaining the tradition of a region. This is again part of village economy and informal production system. These were transmitted generation after generation.

Generally, the craft practice reflects the following aspects ([www. Towards a definition of Heritage Craft](http://www.towardsadefinitionofheritagecraft.com)).

- Understanding of and engagement with materials
- The application of haptic skills and hand controlled tools
- The honing of skills learnt over time
- One-off or relatively small batch rather than mass production
- Maker impact on conception, design and aesthetics of finished product
- Cultural embedding of finished product

In fact, the pottery tradition in Kerala is a dying tradition today and is faced with the challenges of survival. It is mainly because, in most of the villages and rural areas, the pot makers are not aware of the changes happening and the new innovations to be absorbed in their arena and as a result they are mostly kept away from development possibilities.

Based on the type of technology used for production, it can be divided into three periods. During the earlier period of production, the community members used the most traditional type of wheel which requires more man power and while moulding of the product by a man, the assistance of a woman is required for rotating the wheel. The main drawback of this wheel was that, by using this only pottery items can be made. During 1960's, a slightly advanced wheel termed Double bar bearing wheel, generally regarded as the "Potter's Wheel" came into being. The main advantage of this wheel is that, one person is necessary for both rotating and moulding. With

the introduction of this wheel, even the subsidiary roles of the female folk in the production stage get vanished. This wheel is comparatively advanced than the earlier category, mainly in the making of diversified products. The modern electrically operated wheel came into practice about thirty years back and which also requires only single person's service. The advantage of this wheel is that, production/ day has been increased and the utilization of manpower gets reduced and thus eliminated the role of women. In addition to this, by using this wheel, almost all the decorative clay products and flower pots can be shaped easily.

According to Kreps (cited in Hennessy, 2010) objects stand for significant traditions, ideas, customs, social relations, and it is the story they tell, the performance they are a part of, and relationships among people and between people and places that are more important than the objects themselves. This reflects the inherent value of an object or entity in identity creation. Bala (2012) has pointed out that the Indians are losing their oral history, traditions and Intangible Cultural Heritage at a very fast rate. He also mentioned that globalization and modernization have affected oral history and Intangible Cultural Heritage. In this context, it is very important to conserve the traditional knowledge bases and livelihood of the rural craftsman.

The tradition of pot making is at vanishing stage and its safeguarding and revitalization is a matter of exigency. The pot makers are part of our national cultural entity and it is very essential to craft it as a living heritage. For this, and for the sustainable development of pot makers and their tradition, preservation of traditional knowledge is essential. So, it is imperative to safeguard this craft. According to the UNESCO convention not all the intangible heritages are safeguarded but only the one, which recognized by its community as theirs and that provide them with a sense of identity and continuity is to be safeguarded ([www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)). The main challenges faced by the pot makers (AnthurNairs) are,

- Lack of quality raw materials
- Outdated production methods
- Lack of skill upgradation and capacity building
- Lack of value addition of products
- Lack of adequate market linkages

It is seen that majority of the AnthurNairs are still dependent upon their traditional technology for the production process and are not aware of the new innovative and are faced with the challenges of survival. Creating awareness among the people to make use of their traditional knowledge and skills for strengthening their production process and value addition of their products through the application of aesthetic and technological avenues with a global-

local approach is vital. Thus, in addition to employment generation among the pot makers, the value addition of their products might be bringing international markets for their products. The Intergrated Rural Technology Centre (IRTC), Palakkad under the Kerala SasthraSahityaParishad (KSSP) has launched a major Value addition initiative by the amalgamation of traditional pottery technique of Kerala with French aesthetic technique termed decoupage, to ensure sustainability and livelihood security for potters. Decoupage is a technique in which pasting of paper cut outs on pottery or other objects and then wrapping them with several layers of lacquer. This creates the appearance of a painted article and thus forms an aesthetic object. This innovation and value addition would help the potters to find out newer markets. Blending of technologies or linkages between traditional and modern practices is essential for sustainability of pottery and to regain the markets.

To generate an expedient environment for the sustenance of cultural heritage and endogenous development of the community these aspects need to be addressed seriously and make them aware the value of their expertise and cultural heritage. Capacity building and value addition of products makes the society productive and also preserves the cultural tradition. The Craft Council (1995) points out that no Indian craft is ever purely decorative.

Generally, the public prefer modernity over tradition. For the sustenance of the community and preservation of pottery, the following key actions are essential:

- Impart training and capacity building on upgraded technology and innovations.
- Make certain the sustainable livelihood system of the community through the integration of traditional and modern/innovative technology.
- Make certain the value addition of their products and design upgradation.
- Assistance from development initiatives and promotional activities.
- Establish adequate market linkages.
- Cooperation between communities and various organizations.

Further, the documentation of such undertakings and initiatives would bring collective dealings from the people and community towards preservation and understanding of cultural heritage and also development of the community concerned. In short, sustainable livelihood strategies create sustainable livelihood outcomes.

**Conclusion:** It is imperative to promote and safeguard this cultural heritage as an asset for development. For this, linkages between traditional and modern practices are essential. In order to maintain and achieve sustained development of

traditional economic sectors especially craft sector and to safeguard the cultural heritage, investment and support in this locale is very essential. To

withstand the future situations and remain sustainable, consistency, proficiency and resource mobilization are very important.

### References:

1. Dwij Dixit , Nidhi Prajapati , Transfer of Education Towards E-Learning, Oer, Moocs; Arts & Education International Research Journal : ISSN 2349 – 1353 Volume 2 Issue 1 (2015), Pg 26-35
2. Bala, Shashi. 2012. “Digital inventories on Cultural memories on ICH: Case study of Yadav community of Haryana, India”. Retrieved from <http://network.icom. Museum /fileadmin/user-upload/conferencepapers/2012/bala.pdf>.
3. V Pradeep Raj, Tips for Effective Communication Skills; Arts & Education International Research Journal ISSN 2349-1353 Vol 1 Issue 1 (2014), Pg 9-10
4. Tawseef Ahmad Bhat, Need & Importance of Education; Arts & Education International Research Journal ISSN 2349-1353 Vol 1 Issue 1 (2014), Pg 11-13
5. Crafts Council. 1995. A Report. New Delhi.
6. Gizaw, Berhanu. 2003. “Blending of Traditional and Modern Technologies
7. Shaik John Abraham Joseph, The Role of School in Promoting Human Rights Education; Arts & Education International Research Journal : ISSN 2349 – 1353 Volume 2 Issue 1 (2015), Pg 22-25
8. Through Science”. International Conference on African Development Archives. Paper 67
9. Hennessy, Kate. 2010. “Intangible Cultural Heritage Research and Documentation”.
10. Simon Fraser University, SIAT. Retrieved from <http://www.sac.or.th/databases/ichlearningresources/images/ich-research-anddocumentationp1-50.pdf>
11. Tauseef Fatima, Women, Restitution of Conjugal Rights and Colonial ; Arts & Education International Research Journal ISSN 2349-1353 Vol 1 Issue 2 (2014), Pg 278-281
12. Rezwana Karim Snigdha, Syed Nizar Alam, A Critical Study of Perceptions of Death; Arts & Education International Research Journal ISSN 2349-1353 Vol 1 Issue 2 (2014), Pg 286-290
13. Sini. 2004. “ Wheel technology and Pottery making tradition in Kerala: A Case study”. Man and Life, 30 :( 3&4): 101-106.
14. [www.opendocs.ids.ac.uk](http://www.opendocs.ids.ac.uk)
15. Sandeep Talluri, Role of the Teacher in Safeguarding the Youth From the Transmission of Hiv/Aids; Arts & Education International Research Journal : ISSN 2349 – 1353 Volume 2 Issue 1 (2015), Pg 19-21
16. [www.unesco.org/new](http://www.unesco.org/new) Retrived 18.11.2014
17. R.Vidya, The Rights of Children To Free and Compulsory ; Arts & Education International Research Journal ISSN 2349-1353 Vol 1 Issue 2 (2014), Pg 282-285
- 18.
- 19.

Sini. M

Assistant Professor/Department of Anthropology  
Kannur University/Thalassery Campus/Palayad-670661/Kerala/India