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Problems and Prospects of Rural Artisans—A Study on Bamboo Craftsmen of Odisha, Dhenkanal District

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Abstract

In developing countries like India a large share of population typically depends upon the unorganized sector for their employment. Their main sources of income are generated from farming, daily wages or operating small unincorporated enterprises. In India the National Commission for Enterprise in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS) observed that informal employment has been more than 90% in agriculture sector, 75% in industries and more than 70% in service sector. The lockdown during Covid 19 pandemic has an adverse effect on informal sector workers and cause economic crisis. Since the business is closed and establishments are shut most of the migrant workers have run out of work and are returning to their native places. With no work, no income or no saving it is extremely difficult for them and their dependants to survive.

This paper is intended to unveil the impact of lockdown on unorganized laborers or workers of Dhenkanal district of the state in general and Parjang block in particular where most of the schedule caste and schedule tribe population earn their livelihood by way of selling bamboo crafts such as binchana (japi), basket, kula (winnow), dala (tray), patia (mat), musical instruments and furniture etc. who suffered due to problem in their marketing channels and lack of raw material availability during the lockdown of Covid 19 pandemic. The district has approximately 12 lakh population out of which 2,34,079 are Schedule Caste and 1,62,056 are Schedule Tribe who are basically engaged on making bamboo crafts and earn their livelihood. This study is particularly on Parjang block where 75 samples are collected from Patrapada Saanda and Lodhani Grampanchayat.

Keywords: Pandemic, Economic Crisis, Lockdown, Unorganized employment.

Introduction

India has a rich history and heritage of arts and crafts. Handicraft sector is one of the most employment creating sector after agriculture categorized under the unorganized sector. The National Commissions for Enterprises in Unorganised Sector (NCEUS) defines the unorganized sector consisting of all unincorporated private enterprises owned by individual and household. Most of the tribal rural people of Odisha state generally who are uneducated, they engage themselves in handicraft activities so as to earn their livelihood.

Odisha is considered as land of handicraft which is an integral part of our cultural heritage. As many as 50 different crafts are practiced by about 1.3 lakh artisans in different crafts throughout the state. The state has got best craftsmanship in the country having number of artisans honored with National Awards including Padma awards. Till the end of 2020 almost 108 craft cluster has been undertaken for the promotion and development of handicraft sector. Among all the 50 handicraft product bamboo product has a special attraction not only among the people of Odisha rather throughout the whole world. As India has the highest area (13.9 Million Ha) under bamboo and is the second richest country after China in terms of bamboo diversity. In Dhenkanal district of the state there are greater opportunities to harness the market potential by

Tapaj Kumar Patra
Research Scholar,
Dept. of Commerce,
Ravenshaw University,
Cuttack, Odisha, India

Rashmikanta Barik
Research Scholar,
Dept. of Commerce,
Ravenshaw University,
Cuttack, Odisha, India

Tushar Kanta Pany
Professor and Head
Dept. of Commerce,
Ravenshaw University,
Cuttack, Odisha, India

increasing its production and encouraging establishment of a proper value chain by the Government. Out of 1.3 Lakh artisans about 6243 artisans are from Dhenkanal district as per the data provide under Directorate of Handicraft, Government of Odisha and more than 20% of the population are engaged in bamboo related activities .The present paper is an attempt to focus the opportunities and challenges of rural artisans in general and bamboo artisans in particular of Parjang block of Dhenkanal district of Odisha state where most of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of rural and mountain areas have engaged themselves on producing bamboo crafts so as to earn their livelihood.

Key Challenges for Bamboo Craftsmen in Rural Area

1. **Unorganized production base:** In rural area there is no such specific infrastructure facilities available for bamboo craftsmen. Their production base varies from place to place.
2. **Lower level of education of the artisans:** Basically the education level of rural bamboo craftsmen is meagre in nature. They don't have much technical skills and many of them are completely illiterate.
3. **Limited marketing opportunities:** Marketing of bamboo product is a crucial part for the artisans. As we know they don't have a fixed place of market, so they are not in a position to make aware the customers regarding their products.
4. **Outdated production methods:** Due to shortage of funds bamboo craftsmen are deprived to avail modern machineries as their production method. They prefer labour intensive rather than capital intensive.
5. **Lack of information to understand the proper market need:** They don't follow any systematic market research regarding their products. Sometimes they produce more when demand is low and vice versa.
6. **Lack of financial support:** Generally rural bamboo craftsmen are very poor as their income level is very low. Production of bamboo crafts needs financial assistance. But rural bamboo artisans do not get any financial support from bank or any government agencies. This is why they are compelled to avail loan from village sahuakars and other unorganized sources with very high rate of interest.
7. **Traditional designs:** Bamboo products are traditionally designed which are not so attractive. In this era of modernization most of the people prefer technically and advanced equipments hence these traditionally designed crafts are not accepted by many of customers.
8. **Unavailability of raw materials:** Availability of raw material is a major challenge for rural bamboo craftsmen as there is no bamboo plantation. They outsource the raw materials from nearby villages which are of very poor quality.
9. **Lack of interest by next generation:** Rural bamboo craftsmen generate very less revenue from these activities and unable to serve their family. Hence young generation of the family is not interested to continue these activities and prefers to engage themselves in other allied activities.
10. **Lack of training and awareness among artisans:** Government is not conducting any specific training or awareness programme regarding bamboo products. Rural craftsmen are not even aware about various schemes provided by various government agencies

Review of Literature

1. **Abdul (2008)** reviewed the case of bamboo craftsmanship in Bangladesh and its role in employment creation along with the poverty alleviation. The study finds that most of the rural craftsman of bamboo sector are female artisans and uneducated who have inherited such skills from their parents. The traditional bamboo sector enormously contributes to the creation of employment opportunities for such rural women.

2. **Ricardo**(2012) states in his study that bamboo is a traditional cultivated plant having wide variety of uses from furniture to food. From a traditional uses to contemporary design and architecture bamboo has a significant contribution.
3. **Jamatia** (2012) focused the research on livelihood of the bamboo base and their challenges and opportunities .The study concluded that new industries application and modern construction design have both demonstrated bamboo having huge potential towards socio economic development of the country.
4. **Kanungo & Satapathy** (2016) examines the growth of cottage industries in the state of Odisha through different statistical analysis. The study was intended to unveil the growth pattern of cottage industries in Odisha and employment generation through it.
5. **Banik** (2017) proposed the research paper to analyze a broad summary of the financial analysis of rural artisans of our country and what sorts of challenges they are facing. This study concluded that most of the rural artisans belong to unorganized sector. This unorganized sector contributes a lot to the Indian economy by providing rural income through employment generation and improving their standard of living. The craft and handicraft sector provides second largest unorganized unemployment after agriculture.
6. **Bag & Behera** (2018) through his paper has reviewed the problem and prospects of handloom sector in western Odisha. The study has been undertaken among the weavers of Barpali cluster of Bargarh district of Odisha.The research paper has concluded that handloom sector is confronting with lot of challenges due to lack of skilled manpower, improper market facilities, and high cost of credit and lack of raw material availability.
7. **Jacob** (2018) made a study on successful bamboo community of Kerala state so as to know their initiatives of making bamboo mats. The study involved different stages of bamboo mat making challenges of their livelihood and their possible solution. This paper also highlights the potential of bamboo as a commercial green product having multiple applications and has a significant impact on changing local economy and helps in uplifting the indigenous tribal community of that region.
8. **Debbarma** (2019) studied the socio-economic status of rural handicraft artisans of West Tripura district of Tripura state. The objective of the research paper was to study the handicraft activities and analyze the problems and challenges faced by these artisans and to have a strategic idea about their marketing channels
9. **Lilian Magafu** (2020) studied the market system analysis for bamboo product in Ruvuma region of Tanzania. It was found that these products are rural product and hence rural market was established. The study suggested that producers of bamboo product must organize themselves in group so as to increased access to market information and supports for profit maximization.
10. **Anandkumar and Vinita** (2020) unveiled the manufacturing and market problem of bamboo product in Tamilnadu.The study was conducted using descriptive research of 415 samples collected from farmers and handicraft workers .This research paper concluded that long marketing channel, lack of processing unit and increased cost of transport and lack of storage facility that put pressure on bamboo artisan and are the barrier for this working category.

Research Gap

Many studies have been conducted to unveil the rural artisans of unorganized sector and their role in economic development and creation of rural employment in Odisha. But very limited studies are there to show its significance related to bamboo artisans and their socio economic status. So this study is intended to unveil the opportunities and challenges and opportunities of rural bamboo craftsmen. Here in this the researcher has tried to focus on the socio economic status of rural

artisans and the way of marketing their product and marketing channels along with the credit facilities and funding through various government policies. This paper will combine various related data from three villages of Parjang block of Dhenkanal district of the state.

Objective of the Study

1. To study the socio economic condition of bamboo craftsmen of Rural area of Parjang block of Dhenkanal district.
2. To study the types of product they produce.
3. To study their way of marketing of products.
4. To study the opportunities and challenges faced by bamboo craftsmen of rural areas.
5. To find out various government schemes and support available for rural craftsmen.

Research Methodology

The present study is exploratory in nature. The standard research methodology for the exploratory research is followed for this study. This paper examines opportunities and challenges of rural bamboo craftsmen in Dhenkanal district of the state of Odisha. The work is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data is collected through a structured questionnaire from around 75 respondents (rural bamboo craftsmen) of three different villages of Parjang block of Dhenkanal district. There are few interviews with those rural bamboo craftsmen to have feedback on government and government agencies and what sorts of challenges they are facing so as to marketing their products. The citations published by various scholars in Google scholar site are used to study and understand the topic deeply. This study make use of data that is available in various journals and other publications like Odisha government publication, Odisha journal of commerce etc. Different statistical tools such as arithmetic mean and percentage are of immense usage to analyze the data. Descriptive statistical tools and graphical representations of data are used to compare the data so as to have a valid and meaningful conclusion.

Bamboo Artisans of Dhenkanal District

Dhenkanal district is one of the 30 districts of Odisha in eastern India. Dhenkanal district touches its boundary of Keonjhar district on its north, Cuttack district in south and is bounded by Jajpur district in east and Angul district in west. Dhenkanal district covers an area of 4452 sq.km having a vast area covered with dense forest and a long range of hills. As per 2011 census of India, Dhenkanal district has a population of 1192811 out of which 612593 are male and 580218 are female. For the promotion of different Industrial activities, there is District Industrial Centre functioning with effect from 1st September, 1978. For the development of handicraft enterprises the schemes being implemented in the district are related to the followings, (a) Setting up of handicraft enterprises (b) Rehabilitation of handicraft artisans and (c) Cluster development programme. Out of 12 lakh population approximately 2,34,079 are Schedule Caste and 1,62,056 are Schedule Tribe who are basically engaged in making bamboo crafts and earn their livelihood.

Patarapada is a large village located in Parjang Block of Dhenkanal district, Odisha with a total 770 families. This village has a population of 3069 of which 1520 are males and 1549 are female. As per Census 2011 literacy rate of this village was 81.39% compared to 72.87% of Odisha. Out of 3069 population 223 are Schedule Caste. Most of the Schedule Caste are marginal workers who are engaged in agricultural activities and other allied activities and many of them work as bamboo artisans. In this village approximately 50 families are engaged as bamboo artisans so as to earn their livelihood.

Saanda is a large village located in Parjang Block of Dhenkanal district, Odisha with a total 1685 families. This village has a population of 7115 of which 3603 are males and 3512 are female. As per Census 2011 literacy rate of this village was 79.42% compared to 72.87% of Odisha. Out of 7115 population 1985 are Schedule Caste and 1314 are Schedule Tribe. Most of the Schedule Caste and Scheduled Tribe are marginal workers

who are working under different unorganized sectors, engaged in agricultural and other allied activities and many of them work as bamboo artisans. In this village approximately 100 families are engaged as bamboo artisans.

Lodhani is a large village located in Parjang Block of Dhenkanal district, Odisha with total 780 families. The Lodhani village has a population of 3036 of which 1481 are males and 1555 are female. As per Census 2011 literacy rate of this village was 73.77% compared to 72.87% of Odisha. Out of 3036 population 710 are Schedule Caste and 21 are Schedule Tribe. Most of the Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe are marginal workers who are engaged in agricultural and other related activities in various unorganized sector. In this village approximately 30 to 40 families are engaged as bamboo artisans.

The Government of India has several policies including promotion of bamboo plantation, strengthening bamboo based handicrafts and developing bamboo based technology application. Bamboo sector development is considered as livelihood for poor weaver section artisans and farmers especially SCs and STs. Two missions have been set up by the Government of India during the 10th 5 Year plan.

These are

1. National Bamboo Mission (NBM)
2. National Mission on Bamboo Application (NMBA)

National Bamboo Mission (NBM) :The Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India has launched the National Bamboo Mission (NBM) with 100% central assistance to increase the bamboo production, promote cottage and handicrafts industry through value addition and marketing etc.

National Mission on Bamboo Application (NMBA) : National Mission on Bamboo Application (NMBA) has been constituted under the department of Science and Technology, Government of India. It focuses on the developed and commercial technology and application in the sector.

Odisha Bamboo Development Agency (OBDA) : The government has constituted the Odisha Bamboo Development Agency to undertake the integrated development of the bamboo sector on Odisha with an objective to ensure employment generation and economic development based on available bamboo resources in the state .The focus is to establish valuable enterprises engaged in the production of high value added bamboo based products in the state. OBDA is entrusted with the overall development of bamboo sector of the state and has the following major functions.

1. Bamboo resource generation (Raising of nurseries and bamboo plantation)
2. Organisation of training and workshops.
3. Skill up gradation of artisans
4. Mat waiving
5. Incense stick making and rolling
6. Furniture making
7. Bamboo handicrafts etc.
8. Common Facility Centre (CFCs) :
9. Treatment and storage facility
10. Retail market of bamboo near village and bamboo bazaars etc.
11. As per the data provided there are 9 CFCs established in different cities of the state.
12. Promoting bamboo based industries and technology with support of National Mission for Bamboo Application.
13. Marketing linkage for bamboo based products for development of the bamboo sector.

District Bamboo Development Agency: At district level, a District Bamboo Development Agency has been constituted to implement the programme in non forest area which is headed by the Collectorate of the common district and DFO as the member secretary of the agency.

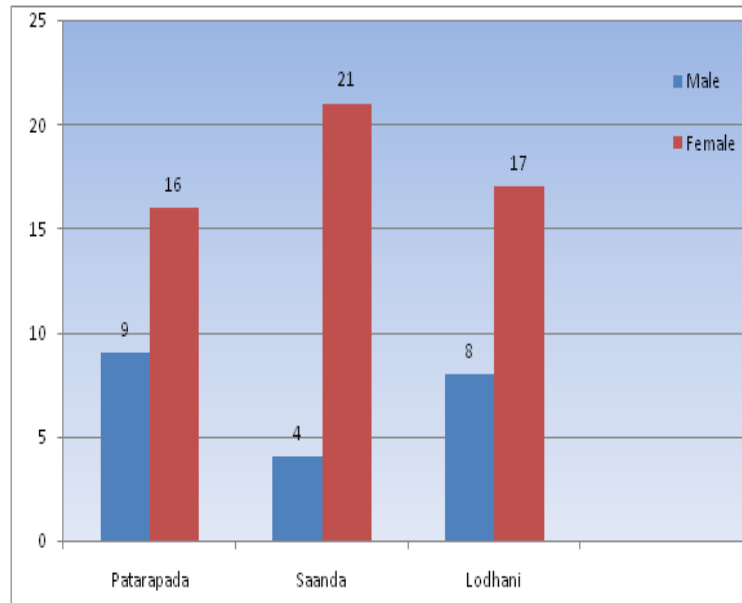
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Data Analysis

Table 1: Number of male and female engaged as bamboo artisans

Village	Male	Female
Patrapada	9	16
Saanda	4	21
Lodhani	8	17

Graph 1:



Source: Self compiled

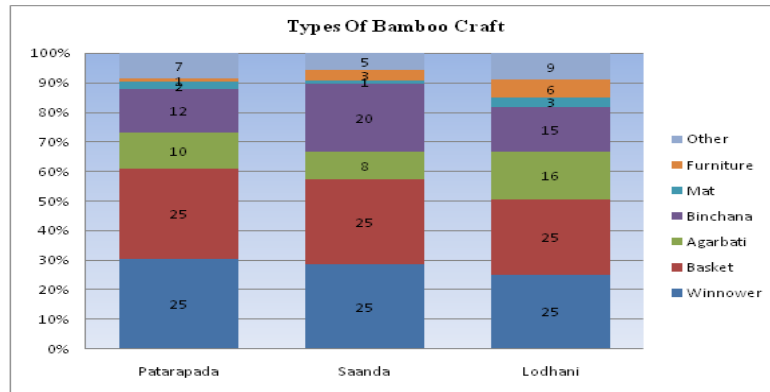
The above data truly indicates that out of 75 respondents from 3 different villages of Parjang block 21 are male and 54 are female who have engaged themselves as bamboo artisans and making different bamboo crafts. Through a structured questionnaire and face to face interview this study analyzes that in rural areas the maximum number of females are bamboo artisans who produce such bamboo crafts out of raw material. The raw material required are not abundantly available in the local area for which the male members of the family bring these bamboo outside or nearby villages by paying some amount to outsiders.

Table 2: Types of bamboo crafts produced

Village/Product	Winnow	Basket	Agarbatti	Binchana	Mat	Furniture	Other
Patrapada	25	25	3	12	2	1	7
Saanda	25	25	7	20	1	3	5
Lodhani	25	25	9	15	3	6	9

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Graph 2:



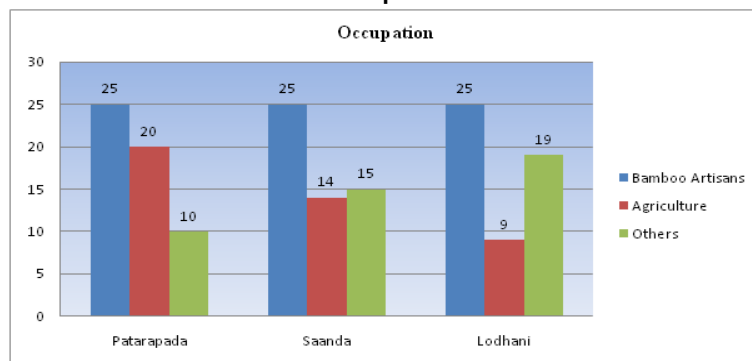
Source: Self compiled

The above data indicates that bamboo artisans of the rural area produce various types of bamboo craft such as winnower (Kula), bamboo basket (tokei), agarbatti, binchana, mat, furniture etc. But maximum of bamboo artisans know how to make winnower and basket which is really very much popular in rural area and they have learnt it from their ancestors and preparation of such product do not need any training. But some other products such as agarbatti, binchana, furniture etc. need training activities and that is why maximum of rural bamboo artisans do not know how to make such products available to the market. Only those artisans who have attended any training programme, know the preparation of mat and furniture which are demanding bamboo handicrafts.

Table 3: Various Occupation of Rural Bamboo Craftsmen

Village/Occupation	Bamboo Artisans	Agriculture	Others
Patrapada	25	20	10
Saanda	25	14	15
Lodhani	25	9	19

Graph 3:



Source: Self compile

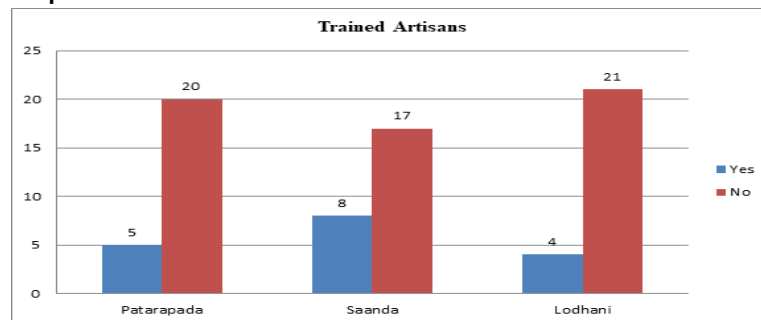
As per the data collected through a structured questionnaire it truly indicates that though bamboo art is the primary occupation of maximum of their community, still it is not sufficient to earn their livelihood. Hence they engage themselves in agricultural activities and other allied activities. Out of 75 rural artisans though all of them are engaged as bamboo craftsmen still 57% of them are engaged in agricultural activities and approximately 59% are doing other allied activities. So it can be

argued that not all of the bamboo artisans are dependent upon their primary occupation.

Table 4: Trained Bamboo Artisans

Village	Yes	No
Patrapada	5	20
Saanda	8	17
Lodhani	4	21

Graph 4:



Source: Self compile

As per the above data it is analyzed that only 205 to 305 of the rural artisans are trained and the rest are untrained who do not know new designs of producing bamboo crafts. As per the data collected, the government is conducting a very few training programs and the unaware rural artisans are not able to attend those training programmes as it is conducted at a very longer distances generally at large cities of Odisha. None of the training programmes are conducted at their nearby localities or districts.

Findings of the Study

1. It is found from the study that most of the rural bamboo artisans are not properly trained who can produce popular bamboo crafts. A very few of them are trained at district level training programmes.
2. It is also inferred that raw materials are not easily available in local areas for which the male members of the family bring the raw materials from outside or nearby villages and female members produce such bamboo crafts.
3. It is found that bamboo art is not the only occupation in which they are engaged. There is not a fixed marketplace to sell their products. So they sell their products in nearby villages and village festivals and this is why their socio economic status is not so high and they struggle to survive. Hence they are compelled to engage in other allied activities and agricultural activities so as to earn their livelihood.
4. In the era of globalisation, bamboo artisans of rural areas face very stiff competition from outside and local companies due to various plastic products and attractive designs through advanced technology.
5. The study also reveals that most of the rural artisans are not benefited through any government schemes. Credit facilities and funding is one of the major barriers for their future prospects. As most of the rural artisans are uneducated and unaware about various government policies hence they do not get any help from the government.
6. As per the structured questionnaire this paper has analyzed that during the last year their selling and marketing of bamboo products was much better than the current year. As it is an

unorganized sector and the government has very little focus upon these rural artisans so day by day demand for their bamboo product is deteriorating and they are confronting lots of problems. So their next generation are not even interested to continue this activities. AS per the data collected from 75 respondents 90% of the rural artisans commented that their next generation will not continue this occupation

Conclusion and Suggestion

Rural bamboo artisans mostly work in traditional and unorganized sector in which they are exploited by the various middlemen and because of low wages. Their economic and social condition is very poor as compared to people working in other sectors. Bamboo craft is one of the oldest cultures and heritage of Odisha for which Odisha is well known even outside our country. But nowadays various hindrances compel these artisans to go for other activities as they are not able to earn as much to survive their family. Government has not much focus on this sector and despite various efforts being taken by the government, issues like lack of implementation of policies and giving very low results. Traditionally the rural artisans had been the backbone of Indian society, yet today they are the most valuable character for development. It is also found that most of the rural artisans are unaware about the schemes and also due to lack of training facilities quality of the product could not meet the market demand. Government must prioritize this sector by providing various training ,credit facilities, low cost of financing, etc so that they will not face much problem in marketing their products. Thus in this paper an attempt has been taken to study the weakness and challenges faced by the rural bamboo craftsmen.

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