

# Problems and Prospects of Cultural Tourism Hub - A Case Study of Dokra Craft at Dariapur Village, Purba Burdwan, West Bengal, India

Paper Submission: 15/01/2021, Date of Acceptance: 26/01/2021, Date of Publication: 27/01/2021

## Abstract

Handicraft industries play an important role to promote cultural tourism as well as in the livelihood and economy of rural people of a developing country like India. The ancient Dokra craft of Dariapur village is famous for that. Dokra artisans have been traditionally making similar product from beginning till today and they are leading a simple rural life without any diversity. But in today's era of globalization, the global fashion and luxury industries are increasingly involved in trading market. Therefore, Dokra industry as a cultural tourism sector is in a difficult situation. Yet the Dokra artisans have presented their artistic tradition with reverence and love. The present research paper covers the history of Dokra industry as a cultural tourism hub, the livelihood of the artisans, opportunities for developing the industry as a cultural tourism hub and in addition to highlight the current problems or constraints in the industry, multiple proposals have been announced to address these issues.

**Keywords:** Tourism, Dokracraft, cultural tourism, Problems, Prospects.

## Introduction

Tourism has emerged as one of the top emerging industries and a fast growing sector of economy. Tourism is seen as a source of employment, earning and cultural wandering. Tourism is considered to be an important means of promoting culture and international relation. With the strengthening of handicrafts, tourists will prefer to buy locally produced handicraft products over other products. The production of handicrafts will help to diversify the tourism products and enhance the cultural experiences as well as promote tourism in the region. Indian handicraft sector represents a rich cultural heritage of nation. It is general perception that Indian handicrafts are famous worldwide since centuries.

The word 'HANDICRAFT' it self produces a beautiful picture which full of aesthetic complexion, artistic delicacy and attractive appearance. Handicraft is a powerful source of elegance, which keeps our culture and history alive and reminds us about the glory and grace of our great legacy. Handicraft production is a labour intensive activity which can actually support skilled and unskilled people who are involved in this profession. According to M. K. Gandhi, "handicrafts and self-sufficiency were directly related to the industrialization in society". Gandhi ji involved in rural reconstruction and rural upliftment through propagation of village industries which have been encouraged from generation to generations for developing rural India in particular. For making Indian economy strong and self-reliant, Gandhiji emphasized on the growth of the rural industries like khadi, handloom, handicrafts etc.

West Bengal in India is one of the most prosperous segments of such treasures. Rural Bengal is very prosperous in terms of art and craft having various handicraft players residing on this land. Handicraft as cultural souvenirs, play a vital role in tourism too. Handicraft of rural Bengal includes weaving, pottery, wood-work, stone-work, embroidery, printing, brass-work, metal-work etc. Various famous handicraft industries of Bengal are working in different places. Which are Terracotta at Bishnupur in Bankura, Dokra at Dariapur in Purba Burdwan, clay dolls at krishnanagar in Nadia, Madur at Sabang in West Mednipur, Chhau masks at Charida in Purulia, Hill craft in Darjeeling etc. through all these handicraft products, tourism industry has developed in all these regions. One such handicraft



**Prakash Shaw**

Research Scholar,  
Dept. of Palli Charcha Kendra,  
Visva-Bharati University,  
Santiniketan,  
West Bengal, India

tourist destination is Dariapur in Purba Burdwan district. The present research work discusses the Dokra art and artisans of Dariapur village in Purba Burdwan district of West Bengal. The industry of this region has responded not only to West Bengal but also to India and the world. But now this huge cultural heritage is lagging behind in the national and international court for various reasons. The present research paper seeks to present the views of the Dokracraft and artisans of Dariapur village, so that their problems and prospects will come to the notice in front of everyone. The present paper will be able to provide guidelines for government and non-government organisations and policy makers to find out various ways.

#### **Location of the Study Area**

Dariapur is a village under Dighnagar-ii gram panchayat of ausgram-1 block in Burdwan sadar north subdivision of Purba Burdwan district in the Indian state of West Bengal. It is located at 23°75'51"N and 87°42'02"E. The post office is Gonna-Dariapur. The village is under Ausgram police station. It is situated only 2 km from Guskara railway station and about 30 km from Burdwan Station.

#### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objectives of this study are –

1. To know the history of dokra craft and dokra artisans.
2. To highlight the interrelation between handicraft and tourism.
3. To find out the various opportunities and strength to concrete the Dokra craft as a cultural tourism hub.
4. To identify the present problems or constraints of Dokra craft and artisans of this study area.
5. To provide some major suggestions and recommendations to overcome the constraints.

#### **History of Dokra Craft**

Dokra' is non-ferrous metal casting using the lost wax casting technique. This sort of metal casting has been used in India for over four thousand years and is still used. Dokra is one of the ancient Indian artefacts that showcasing the culture of living and making art locally. The lost or vanishing wax casting method of metal casting, popularly known as 'Dokra', is a primitive technique, which can be traced back to the Indus valley civilization. From the Indus valley era to the modern era, a group of nomads have succeeded in this art. Initially the craft of idols was an essential part of their culture, however later on with the gradual change of time, they came in contact with the present generation and they began to enter the modern lifestyle market. Dokra damar tribes are the main traditional metal artists of west Bengal and Odisha. The tribes extend from Jharkhand to west Bengal and Odisha; are distant cousins of the Chhattisgarh Dokras. One significant nucleus of this craft is existing among related groups of families in Bikna village of Bankura and Dariapur village of Purba Burdwan in West Bengal, India. But they are now found all over India.

#### **Dokra Artisans of Dariapur**

The main residence of the Dokra artisans of Dariapur village was the Bastar district of

Chhattisgarh. From there they spread towards Bihar, Odisha and other states of India. Later in 1962 dokra artisans migrated to Bengal from Odisha. They are spread in Midnapore, Bankura, Purulia, Birbhum, Purba Burdwan districts of West Bengal. Among them the artisans of 'Bikna' village of Bankura and 'Dariapur' village of Purba Burdwan are famous. At present there are 42 dokra families live together in Dariapur village. Now they are total 188 members. They have been associated with this work for generations. They do not have ownership of land and are not involved in any activities other than this to earn money. Though they are very poor and technologically backward, yet they do not have tribal community card. Both male and female members are involved in the production mechanism. They belongs to Hindu religion and marriage system is like Bengali people is marriage the worship the Bengali Dev-Devi like Kali, Durga, Manasa, Biswakarma. At present the head of dokra community is Ramu Karmakar, a recipient of the presidential Award. The dokra artisans made statues, jewelleryes, Hindu gods, tribal gods, bowls, elephants, horses, birds, cattle animals, vermilion pot etc. Demand in domestic and foreign markets is very high due to rural simplicity and enrichment of folk motifs.

#### **Interrelation between Handicraft and Tourism**

There is a mutual relationship between tourism and handicrafts. Handicrafts are one of the factors influencing on the tourists attraction and tourism development. In the informal sector such as tourism, handicraft production is an important means of job creation. Craftsmen involved in handicraft work earn much more for the production of home-made handicrafts. In places where employment opportunities are scarce, handicraft production is important as an alternative means of employment. Tourists usually spend a lot of money on souvenirs and other craft products, as a result, tourism creates many job opportunities for poor people who sell handicraft products. Tourists are usually more interested in buying local products. As tourism-related handicraft production helps alleviate poverty, it also provides potential opportunities for women, ethnic minorities and raw material producers. Handicraft production provides financial support to the rural and urban poor. The negative effects of tourism through the handicraft trade are greatly reduced. Thus handicrafts in a particular region or place in the life of the local aborigines and at the same time it gives a deep impact with the small memento in their life. Similarly, Dokra handicrafts in Dariapur village of Purba Burdwan district impress the residents of this region and make it suitable for the developing the region as a cultural tourism hub.

#### **Methodology**

This research paper is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data have been collected through field survey and secondary data have been collected through various research papers, journals, internets, books, and local government offices to understand the importance and contribution of handicraft in tourism industry of Dariapur village and related problems and challenges.

**Review of Literature**

Considering the importance of handicrafts in our economy and society, there are various aspects of handicrafts such as sociological, economic, technological and cultural have been studied by many scholars and expressed their views as follows.

Bhattacharya. S, Mukherjee. M and Mukherjee. S (2016), in their research paper "Exploring the potential of handicraft as a promotional tool for West Bengal tourism" explores various potential and culturally rich handicrafts of West Bengal to promote tourism. In order to establish handicraft as the main tool for the promotion of the tourism industry, they discussed the problems and threats of the artisans as well as their strengths and future. For this study they used secondary data collected from various secondary sources.

Raj kumar Samanta (2015) in his article "Socio-economic status of dokra artisans- A case Study of Purba Burdwan district, West Bengal, India" has given more importance to the handicraft industry, as it can play a crucial role in making the livelihood and economy of rural people of the developing country like India. Here the author highlights on the socio-economic situation of the Dokra artisans of Dariapur Village in Purba Burdwan district in West Bengal. The main objective of this study is to know the short history and present socio-economic condition of Dokra workers. For this study he used both primary and secondary data and also it represented by various cartographic and simple calculation techniques. At the end of this paper the author in concluding remark discusses about various problems of Dokra products and workers and suggests some remedial measures to solve the problems.

Dr. Bikash Kumar Ghosh (2014) in his article "Economics of eco-friendly terracotta products in Bankura district of West Bengal, India" mentioned clearly about the economy of terracotta industry in Bankura District. The main aim of this study is to reveal the economics condition of terracotta industries and artisans in present economic perspective. The author points out the problem of contraction of the market and the presence of intermediaries. Some important barriers to the income of the family is irregular in terms of the current economy, that's very minimum. In this context, he emphasized on creating art exhibitions and markets for marketable products, so that the general public could learn more about the industry. Mainly this study is based on primary data. He has also explained the psychological aspects of the artisans. Finally, he narrated various problems associated with this industry while recommending the craft council to take initiatives to boost the industrial economy at the national level.

Patel. R and Shah. A. (2018), in their article on "Problems and prospects of rural handicraft artisans" concentrates on the problems and challenges as well as the strength and prospects for the artisans engaged in handicraft sector with special reference to Surendranagar district of Gujrat state. They used both primary and secondary data for this study. At the end they have made it clear that this

research work may provide a direction and guideline to the government or non-government organisation and policy makers to find out various means, methods and efforts to improve the incomes of rural handicraft artisans.

Chattopadhyaya. K (2016) in her book on "Indian handicraft" has told that handicrafts are a famous symbol of Indians culture. She puts forth that Indian handicraft has been successful throughout the ages due to the strong folklore they encourage. She goes on to say that it was a fancy culture and an age when individualism was cherished and valued.

**Various opportunities of Dokra craft industries**

The factors that help in the development of handicrafts and cultural tourism in Dokra village are -

1. There are a diversified and potential market in domestic and international platform in Dokra craft industries.
2. Availability of raw materials which makes it easier to bring product diversity.
3. The artisans employed in this work produce their products efficiently and maintain the cultural heritage.
4. Handicraft traits play an important role in Dokras handicraft skills. Although there are no huge infrastructural facilities, an artisan can diversify his handicrafts with his own talents and innate qualities and promote cultural tourism.
5. Good profit as compared to investment. It has been observed that the amount of profit is much higher than the amount invested in this industry.
6. There is a community museum in the village built by WBKVIB (West Bengal Khadi and Village Industries Board) for showcasing the Dokra tradition and also there is a community hall where tourists or anybody can stay with enough water and electricity facilities.
7. The village hosts an annual fair in mid-October where artists are able to collectively exhibition and sell their wares. Even they can exhibit and sell their products at annual fairs at different places at different times of the year. In this case 'kalpataru mela' of Durgapur, 'Khadi-o-hastashilpo mela' of Kolkata, 'Santiniketan mela' of Bolpur, 'Bishnupur mela' of Bankura are important.
8. Enough open space, no major competitor near by the village, huge local and foreign demand, government (Bangasree, Biswa Bangla, MSME and Manjusha are government emporium) and non-government (Bangla natok dot com, NISTADS – national institute of science technology and development studies) organization's initiatives are the main opportunity to promote the Dokra craft as a cultural tourism hub.
9. Provides employment and money to the illiterate men and women in the village.
10. Increasing marketing demand and opportunities due to social media like mobile and internet system.

**Various constraints or problems of Dokra craft and artisans**

Both Dokra craft and Dokra artisans facing many problems which constraints the development of this industry. Which are categorised in three groups. These are-

**Socio-Economic Constraints**

1. Lack of education is the main constraint for the development of this industry. There are almost 28% literate among 245 peoples. Lack of parents awareness, lacking of school nearby and poor financial condition is main cause behind it. Due to this illiteracy, there is a lack of advanced thinking about the industry.
2. They are facing various health problem. Many toxic fumes, gases enter their body while they are working. As a result, they have respiratory problems, eye problem and skin disease. Moreover, due to excessive drinking men get stomach problems, TB disease. So, they don't work for long time.
3. They have no proper space for seating, sleeping and working. Most of the families have asbestos, tin and tile roof house with a small room and a veranda. They have lot of difficulties in working to get everything done together in a small space.
4. Sanitation and drainage system in Dokra village is not so good at all. They have no individual toilet room. They use community toilet which is very dirty and unhealthy. Even drainage system is also bad. As a result, the infestation of mosquitoes, snakes and various insects increases during the monsoon season.
5. Economic problem is the main constraints for the development of the industry as well as cultural tourism. Dokra artisans are basically backward classes. They live with poverty. Their income is very low which is not sufficient for managing a household. Most of the families earn 4000 to 5000 rupees only in a month. After managing their families, there is no money a left for saving. However, some of them can save as much as 500 rupees. But it also costs for various reason. That is why most of the time they have to borrow money from banks at high rate of interest.

**Infrastructural Constraints**

1. Excessive price hikes of raw materials and fuels are currently hampering the progress of the industry.
2. Dokra artisans have an Inability to use advanced technology. Even during the monsoon season there is no specific hall or tent for making the products and storing the raw materials and products.
3. There is no provision of workshops and training for Dokra artisans from government and non-government organisation.
4. Dokra artisans become unemployed for the rest of season except during the peak season. So, their next generation is reluctant to continue in the industry.
5. The indifference of government and non-government organisation hinders the development of this industry.

**Marketing Constraints**

1. At present Dokra crafts are losing their original form due to the change in the way of life and culture of the people.
2. Most of the profits from the products are passed on to intermediaries, leaving no profit margins.
3. It goes without saying that there is not much local demand for the sale of manufactured goods.
4. Now most of the people use e-commerce to buy any products. Dokra craft is one of them. So, selling rate of Dokra products of Dariapur village is decreasing day by day.

**Suggestions and recommendations**

Following suggestions and recommendations may be taken into consideration both to promote and market of Dokra craft as a tool for development of cultural tourism. These are--

1. Financial assistance can be given to Dokra artisans so that Dokra production can be increased and they can make a living without any hassle facing them in their risky season.
2. \*The state government and the central government should provide appropriate forums for marketing and sale of products within and outside the state.
3. More attention should be paid to the fair held in Dokra village in December, so that the promotion of Dokra industry as well as local and foreign tourists would be attracted.
4. Since the arrival of foreign tourists in this region is very low. It needs various print and social media promotions to attract tourists.
5. But now a private company called Bangla natok.com is aiming to market the Dokra industry, especially its products.
6. \*A building has been constructed at Dokra industrial area for warehousing the products and for exhibition cum selling in a cooperative manner.
7. Local panchayat and block offices should take some positive steps for the development of artisans.
8. \*Dokra artisans need to be facilitated with clinic to improve their health and the provision of primary education institutions for the development of education.
9. They need to be trained at an educational institution and make the new generation interested in joining the industry.
10. Lastly it is necessary to provide economic benefits as well as low interest loans.

**Conclusion**

From above discussion it may be concluded that there is a close interrelation between Dokracraft and cultural tourism. As a cultural tourism hub, Dokra craft is famous in the state and outside. It is also evident from the above discussion that promotion and development of Dokra craft will not only lead to promote the cultural tourism of Dokra village but also help in improving the socio-economic conditions of the local artisans in a big way. Therefore the government or the state craft council should encourage and to promote this craft at the national level. More exhibitions and sales outlet should be set up for the

general public to learn more about Dokra crafts. Dokra artisans should be given more opportunities to experiment with crafts so that they can create new designs or patterns or models and they also know what the current market demand and human needs are and how to diversify the industry. Dariapur village in Purba Burdwan district has a huge tradition of Dokra industry. The region needs to be further revived as a cultural tourism destination by preserving this heritage. Finally it can be said that the government needs to take positive steps to brighten the future of this Dokra industry along with Dokra artisans.

#### **Acknowledgement**

I do hereby acknowledgement the people of Dariapur village specially Dokra para for their co-operation with me at the time of field survey. Also I would like to give special thanks to my guide Dr. M. A. Masillamani and my two brothers Kuntal and Debayan.

#### **References**

1. *Bhattacharya. S, Mukherjee. M and Mukherjee. S (2016), "Exploring the potentials of handicraft as a*

*promotional tool for West Bengal tourism", Indian journal of research, vol-5, issue-1, Jan-2016.*

2. *Das.D.K and Maji.P (2016), "Handicraft promotion vis-a-vis tourism development: A study on Bankura District, West Bengal, vol-ii, issue- xii, May-2016.*
3. *Ghosh. B.K (2014), "Economics of Eco-friendly Terracotta Products in Bankura District of West Bengal, Journal of economics and development studies, vol-2, No.2, pp.233-245, June-2014.*
4. *Patel. R and Shah. A (2018), "Problems and prospects of rural handicraft artisans", Vol-12, Issue-3, Dec-2018.*
5. *Samanta. R (2015), "Socio-economic status of Dokra artisans- A case study of Burdwan District, West Bengal, India", International journal of current research and academic review, Vol-3, No-7, pp.206-214, July-2015.*
6. *www.handicrafts.nic.in*
7. *www.ruralcrafthub.com*